

**Summer (June-July) 2006 Report for the Trans-Pecos
Prepared by Jim Paton**

In regards to precipitation, it was a season of extremes. June and most of July were extremely dry, with seasonally hot temperatures. This was a continuation of a very dry winter and spring, leaving many areas parched and bird activity low. Widespread monsoonal moisture finally arrived in late July. For example, one storm on the evening of 27July in Big Bend National Park dropped nearly a third of the year-to-date rainfall. Still, by the end of the period, most locations in Big Bend were two to four inches behind 2005 year-to-date precipitation totals. El Paso also received heavy rainfall in late July, culminating in astonishing rainfall totals on 1August, in excess of ten inches in parts of town, resulting in widespread flooding and extensive property damage. Heavy rain continued after the period through August, creating an abundance of shorebird habitat.

Relatively few birders were active, and reports from Big Bend NP were limited. However, numerous rarities were found, most notable among them being the region's first photographed White-tailed Hawk and two well documented Arctic Terns. It was an excellent summer for Broad-billed Hummingbirds in and around the Davis Mountains. Likely due to dry conditions at the time and poor breeding success, a number of Western Tanagers were seen throughout June and July in the El Paso area.

Texas Bird Records Committee (TBRC) review species in bold.

All cited observers listed at the end of the report.

WOOD DUCK – Two at McNary Reservoir, 16July+ (JP) were just the third summer record for *Hudspeth*.

GREATER SCAUP – One at Balmorhea Lake, *Reeves*, on 5June (MG) was notable, but not the first in summer for the region.

PACIFIC LOON – A Pacific Loon reportedly photographed at Balmorhea Lake on 19June (R & CG) would be a seasonal first for the region.

Aechmophorus grebes – In contrast to recent years, no young were reported from Balmorhea Lake. McNary Res. had very large numbers of summering birds – i.e. 260 on 9June (JP) – but no young were reported. Two pairs of Clark's Grebes were seen there on nests on 23July (JP).

AMERICAN WHITE PELICAN – Casual in the region in summer, lone American White Pelicans were present all period at Ft. Hancock Res., *Hudspeth*, and at Tornillo Res., *El Paso* (JP). The Tornillo bird is apparently injured but capable of feeding and has been present for several years.

BROWN PELICAN – Annual at the El Paso area reservoirs in recent years, this year's bird was a juvenile photographed at McNary Res., 20June – 8July (JP).

NEOTROPIC CORMORANT – One perched on a powerline at Terlingua on 24 June (KBe, MF) was notably out of place and believed to be a summer first for the Big Bend National Park area.

LEAST BITTERN – A juvenile Least Bittern at McNary Res. on 8 July and an adult there on 16 July (JP) were the first for *Hudspeth* and strongly suggested local breeding. One was also found at Balmorhea Lake on 30 July (SC, MR).

TRICOLORED HERON – The only report was of one at Balmorhea Lake on 8 July (SC, MR).

YELLOW-CROWNED NIGHT-HERON – An adult was photographed at McNary Res. on 16 July (JP).

WHITE-FACED IBIS – One his only dawn visit to McNary Res., Paton noted 80 White-faced Ibis leaving the reservoir to forage on 1 July. They arose from dense cattails on the relatively inaccessible north side, suggesting that nesting may well have occurred, but the birds would not be noted on midday visits. After a late start, Snowy and Cattle egrets again nested at McNary.

WHITE-TAILED KITE – One to two birds continued to hang around the Davis Mountains Preserve, *Jeff Davis*, through at least mid-June (m. ob).

GRAY HAWK – An immature in the Davis Mountains Preserve on 12 June (ML, RP) was west of and at higher elevation than the species' regular Davis Mountains haunts along Limpia Creek near Ft. Davis.

COMMON BLACK-HAWK – Though the pair has been regular at Rio Grande Village, BBNP, for years, most nesting attempts have failed to fledge any young. This year one young was fledged, first noted on 30 June (KBe, m. ob).

WHITE-TAILED HAWK – One of the great finds of the season was the juvenile White-tailed Hawk photographed by Lockwood on 2 July about one mile southeast of Valentine, *Jeff Davis*. This represents the first one photographed in the region, though there are a few previous unconfirmed records, mostly from around Big Bend. This site is about equidistant from possible source populations in south Texas, Sonora, and Durango.

PEREGRINE FALCON – An adult atop Mt. Livermore in the Davis Mountains, 11 June (ML, JP, RP) was at a location where not seen in recent years. An adult at McNary on 29 July (JP) was presumably a fall migrant or postbreeding wanderer.

LONG-BILLED CURLEW – There are records for Long-billed Curlew in every month for the region and birds can show up about anywhere at anytime, as evidenced by the bird at Hot Springs, BBNP, on 12 June (BS), believed to be a summer first for the park. 200 at Balmorhea Lake on 30 July (SC, MR) were a notable concentration.

WHITE-RUMPED SANDPIPER – Right on schedule for this late migrant, three were at Balmorhea Lake on 2June (ML). This species is reported less than annually in the region.

FRANKLIN'S GULL – Rare to casual in summer, a few Franklin's Gulls popped up here and there – 3 at McNary on 9June (JP), one on 1July near Tornillo, *El Paso* (JP), and another at the Presidio sewage ponds, *Presidio*, on 21July (ML).

ARCTIC TERN – Gustafson located an Arctic Tern at Balmorhea Lake on 1June and it was seen and well photographed by many observers through 11June. Another was photographed at Ft. Hancock and McNary reservoirs, *Hudspeth*, on 9June (JP) for a second county record. The Balmorhea bird was a *Reeves* first and these birds were just the third and fourth for the region and sixth and seventh for the state.

LEAST TERN – Rare but regular in early summer, the only report was of three birds at McNary on 9June (JP).

BLACK TERN – 98 at the El Paso area reservoirs on 29July (JP) represented a very high count for the region.

SPOTTED OWL – Two adults with two young were found along the Devil's Hall Trail, Guadalupe Mountains National Park, on 14June (LB).

GREEN VIOLET-EAR – The bird from the spring, the second Trans-Pecos record, continued in the Davis Mountains Resort through 3July (M & ME).

BROAD-BILLED HUMMINGBIRD – Broad-billed Hummingbirds appeared all over the place in the Davis Mountains this summer. From 8June+ up to four – two males and two females – frequented the Eastman's feeders in the Davis Mountains Resort. Also in the area, a female was in the Davis Mountains Resort on 14June (RP), one was at Limpia Crossing on 18June (LH), and there was still another report from Ft. Davis (fide ML). Closer to Big Bend, one was in the Christmas Mountains through at least 10July (C O-J).

WHITE-EARED HUMMINGBIRD – The male that showed up in the Davis Mountains Resort in April (ML) was joined by a female on 3June. Both birds stayed through the end of the period. A separate female elsewhere in the Davis Mountains Resort that had been present since 28 May was last seen on 22 July (M & ME).

LUCIFER X BLACK-CHINNED HUMMINGBIRD – This interesting hybrid combination was noted twice – 7June in the Christmas Mountains, *Brewster* (C O-J) and 22July+ in the Davis Mountains (ML, M & ME).

ANNA'S HUMMINGBIRD – A subadult male in El Paso, 30June – 1July (BZ), was an El Paso area first for each month and one of very few summer records for the entire state.

BROAD-TAILED HUMMINGBIRD – A female on 5June in El Paso (BZ) was notably late. The species is not known to breed in *El Paso*.

BUFF-BREASTED FLYCATCHER – Buff-breasted Flycatchers were located at four different locations in the Davis Mountains Preserve, with a male found singing at a new location (Elbow Canyon) on 12 June (KB, ML, JP, RP). The other locations had a lone male, a pair that failed to fledge young, and another pair which ultimately fledged two young (ML).

DUSKY-CAPPED FLYCATCHER – Two nesting pairs were in the Davis Mountains Preserve, but no young were noted as of 8 July (ML). In contrast to recent years, the species was not documented in the Chisos Mountains, BBNP, this summer though one was reportedly heard and briefly seen around Boot Spring on 16 June (LB).

VIRGINIA'S WARBLER – One at Rio Bosque Wetlands Park, *El Paso*, on 23 July (JS) was a very early fall migrant.

BLACK-THROATED GRAY WARBLER – Not known to breed in the range, a male Black-throated Gray Warbler was in the Davis Mountains Preserve on 13 June (ML, RP).

YELLOW-THROATED WARBLER – The returning territorial bird from the spring in the Davis Mountains Preserve was last noted on 10 June (KB, ML, JP, RP).

BLACK-AND-WHITE WARBLER – Each summer in recent years it seems that a migrant Black-and-white Warbler turns up in July in BBNP. This year's bird was at Rio Grande Village on 18 July (JH). The species is a rare but regular migrant through the region.

LOUISIANA WATERTHRUSH – A Louisiana Waterthrush was a great find at Boot Spring, BBNP on 23 July (DE, RW). The species is known as an early migrant in both spring and fall and the date fits well for a fall migrant. Louisiana Waterthrush is casual in the region.

PAINTED REDSTART – Painted Redstarts continued to be in evidence in the Chisos Mountains, but none were located in the Davis Mountains, where they are much less expected.

FLAME-COLORED TANAGER – A male was reported from Juniper Flat, BBNP on 2 July (TL). There are only five accepted state records, three from BBNP.

VESPER SPARROW – One in El Paso at Rio Bosque Wetlands Park on 7 June (JS) was a good three weeks late and a summer first for the El Paso area and, perhaps, the entire region.

DICKCISSEL – A Dickcissel was early in the Davis Mountains on 26 July (M & ME).

PINE SISKIN – Though breeding was not documented or indeed suspected, a few Pine Siskins hung around all period in the Davis Mountains – three in Ft. Davis (KB) and a few in the Davis Mountains Resort (M & ME). In addition, one was in El Paso on 21 July (JK) for a very rare summer record there.

Cited observers: Lynn Barber, Kym Beckwith, Kelly Bryan, Sheridan Coffey, Marc and Maryann Eastman, David Elkowitz, Mark Flippo, Mary Gustafson, Ron and Carol Gutberlet, Linda Hedges, Jason Heiner, John Kiseda, Mark Lockwood, Tim Ludwick, Carolyn Ohl-Johnson, Jim Paton, Randy Pinkston, Martin Reid, John Sproul, Brady Surber, Reine Womite, Barry Zimmer.