

Upper Texas Coast Sub-regional Report, Winter 06-07

Covering: Austin, Brazoria, Chambers, Fort Bend, Galveston, Harris, Jefferson, Orange and Waller

Compiled by Ron Weeks

110 Indian Warrior Lake Jackson, TX 77566

(979) 299-0066

The Weather

Rainfall for the period as reported at Houston's Intercontinental Airport was 8.94 inches or 1.41 inches below normal.

The Best Birds

Harris's Hawk (record numbers of this rare winter visitor)

Thayer's Gull (three reports of this former TBRC review species)

Iceland Gull (TBRC review species, would be just 2nd record for Texas)

Great Black-backed Gull (four reports – not all documented - of this TBRC review species)

Glaucous Gull (three reports of this former TBRC review species)

Allen's Hummingbird (several reports of this former TBRC review species)

Black Phoebe (return of 5th UTC record)

Martin Reid's census work in Houston area landfills once again turned up many interesting gulls including the UTC's first Iceland Gull, at least one first-winter Great Black-backed Gull, a first-winter Thayer's and numerous Lesser Black-backed Gulls. The latter species continues to become more and more common with at least two reports of 10 or more individuals.

Hummingbird banding in the area turned up only 3 Black-chinneds (7%) which is well below the average in recent years. Broad-taileds were above average with 3 birds being banded versus none the previous two years.

The Best of the Rest

Fulvous Whistling-Duck *Dendrocygna bicolor* The only reports were of one 19 Dec on the Galveston CBC and two 26 Dec on the Bolivar Peninsula, *Galveston* count.

Cinnamon Teal *Anas cyanoptera* Above average numbers were found this winter with multiple birds seen at Hermann Park in Houston, *Harris*; Brazos Bend SP, *Fort Bend*; and San Bernard NWR, *Brazoria*.

Redhead *Aythya americana* A record 2577 were found 17 Dec on the Freeport CBC, *Brazoria*.

Surf Scoter *Melanitta perspicillata* One was seen at 25 Jan at Port Bolivar's North Jetty, Galveston (Stephan Tyler).

White-winged Scoter *Melanitta fusca* Reports included 2 seen 17 Dec on the Freeport CBC and 1 Jan Caplen, *Galveston* (Ted Eubanks).

Black Scoter *Melanitta nigra* A female was reported 13 Dec in Galveston (Jim Stevenson) and the same or another 25 Jan at the Galveston Ferry Landing (Liston Rice). CBC reports included 10 on 17 Dec during the Freeport CBC and one 26 Dec on the Bolivar Peninsula CBC.

Long-tailed Duck *Clangula hyemalis* Singles were seen 30 Dec at Galveston's East Beach (Jim Stevenson) and 31 Dec on the Sea Rim SP, *Jefferson*.

Least Grebe *Tachybaptus dominicus* Two birds were seen through the period at Brazos Bend SP, Fort Bend (mob). Another was seen 12 Feb+ at the Clear Lake Golf Club in *Galveston* (fide Howard Laidlaw).

Horned Grebe *Podiceps auritus* Three were seen 3 Feb near Bolivar Flats, *Galveston* (Cin-Ty Lee). Singles were found 16 Dec on the Houston CBC, *Harris* and 31 Dec on the Sea Rim SP CBC, *Jefferson*.

Western Grebe *Aechmophorus occidentalis* Two *Aechmophorus* grebes were found 31 Dec on the Sea Rim SP CBC, *Jefferson*.

Anhinga *Anhinga anhinga* An impressive 128 Anhinga seen 15 Dec set a new count record for the San Bernard NWR CBC, *Brazoria/Matagorda*.

Cooper's Hawk *Accipiter cooperii* Copulating birds were seen along Buffalo Bayou in West Houston, *Harris* where this species have been reported as nesting in recent years (Kiki Hummel).

Harris's Hawk *Parabuteo unicinctus* It was another banner winter for this species with birds reported from several UTC locations. Record counts were tallied 15 Dec on the San Bernard NWR CBC, *Brazoria/Matagorda* with four birds and 17 Dec on the Freeport CBC, *Brazoria* with six birds. Other birds were reported from Sheldon Lake SP, *Harris*; Freeport, *Brazoria* and Sea Rim SP, *Jefferson*.

White-tailed Hawk *Buteo albicaudatus* The 15 Dec Freeport CBC, *Brazoria* tallied a new record of 37 birds.

Merlin *Falco columbarius* Observers on the 15 Dec Freeport CBC, *Brazoria* reported an amazing 30 birds – three times the previous high.

Aplomado Falcon *Falco femoralis* An immature was reported 14 Dec from Brazoria NWR, *Brazoria* (Jim Stevenson). Re-introduced birds have not reported with any frequency of late.

Black Rail *Laterallus jamaicensis* Four were found 15 Dec at Sargent, *Matagorda* during the San Bernard NWR CBC (Jennifer Wilson, Charles Brower et al) and an amazing 13 were found in this same location later in the period. These birds appear to be grouped up which is consistent with multiple calling bird so often heard in Mar.

Purple Gallinule *Porphyrio martinica* One seen 4 Feb at Brazos Bend SP, *Fort Bend* (Bill Tarbox, Bill Godley, Greg Lavaty photo) may be the first Feb record for the UTC.

Wilson's Plover *Charadrius wilsonia* A 17 Dec count of 10 (Matt White) and 31 Dec count of 16 (Ted Eubanks) from East Beach, *Galveston* were good winter counts.

Solitary Sandpiper *Tringa solitaria* One was found 17 Dec on the Freeport CBC. Another was seen 6 Jan at George Bush Park, *Harris*. A 3rd bird apparently overwintered at a private pond in *Harris* (Drew Dickert).

Whimbrel *Numenius phaeopus* One seen 3 Dec on the Katy Prairie, *Harris* was unusual as this species is extremely rare away from the immediate coast in winter (Johnnie Greene).

Red Knot *Calidris canutus* A banded bird seen 2 Feb on the Bolivar Peninsula, *Galveston* was later determined to be banded as part of Delaware Bay project (Joe Kennedy).

Pectoral Sandpiper *Calidris melanotos* An impressive 8 were seen 17 Dec at Brazoria NWR, *Brazoria* during the Freeport CBC (Brooke Nicotra).

Pomarine Jaeger *Stercorarius pomarinus* Reports included one 15 Dec on the San Bernard CBC and two 26 Dec on the Bolivar Peninsula CBC. One along with another unidentified jaeger was seen 30 Dec from the Quintana Jetty, *Brazoria* (Ron Weeks).

Parasitic Jaeger *Stercorarius parasiticus* This species was reported 16 Dec with two birds seen at Freeport, *Brazoria* (Victor Emanuel, Greg Lasley, Barry Lyon), 17 Dec at Galveston (Matt White), 26 Dec on the Bolivar Peninsula CBC and 19 Jan East Beach at Galveston (Jim Stevenson).

Franklin's Gull *Larus pipixcan* A count of 20 on 20 Dec at Houston area landfills indicates how many of these birds linger into early winter (Martin Reid). A first-winter bird seen 3 Feb along the Houston Ship Channel, *Harris* constitutes a very rare mid-winter record (Cin-Ty Lee).

California Gull *Larus californicus* An adult was at a Houston area landfill on 20 Dec (Martin Reid).

Thayer's Gull *Larus thayeri* A first-winter bird was found 20 Dec at a Houston area landfill (Martin Reid). Adult were reported 28 Jan from Galveston's East Beach and 28 Feb at LaMarque, *Galveston* (Mike Austin).

Iceland Gull *Larus glaucooides* A first-winter bird photographed 20 Dec and again on 21 Feb in a Houston area landfill would be just the 2nd for Texas of accepted by the TBRC (Martin Reid).

Lesser Black-backed Gull *Larus fuscus* This gull continues to be reported in large numbers with counts of 10 on 20 Dec at a Houston, *Harris* landfill (Martin Reid) and 11 on 18 Feb in Upper Galveston Bay, *Harris* (Cin-Ty Lee).

Glaucous Gull *Larus hyperboreus* First-winter birds were seen 30 Dec at Galveston's East Beach (Tom SoRelle), one found dead 20 Jan at Port Bolivar, *Galveston* (Tom Kihn et al) and 24 Feb along the Houston Ship Channel, *Harris* (Howard Laidlaw).

Great Black-backed Gull *Larus marinus* Martin Reid's census work of Houston area landfills yielded photographs of first-winter birds on 20 Dec & 21 Feb. This species was also reported with no TBRC documentation *as of press time* on 6 Dec from Galveston (Dwight Peake), 4 Feb from the Houston Ship Channel, *Harris* (Cin-Ty Lee) and 24 Feb from Humble, *Harris* (Howard Laidlaw). All records pending TBRC acceptance.

Groove-billed Ani *Crotophaga sulcirostris* Few of this species were located this winter.

Burrowing Owl *Athene cunicularia* One was seen 31 Dec on the Sea Rim SP CBC, *Jefferson*. Another was seen 27 Jan-6 Feb at Fort Travis Park, *Galveston* (Bill Hitchcock et al).

Lesser Nighthawk *Chordeiles acutipennis* One was seen 29 Jan from High Island, *Galveston* (Winnie Burkett) constituting a rare but not unprecedented winter record.

Common Nighthawk *Chordeiles minor* Nighthawks were more conspicuous than usual this winter with birds reported 12 Dec in SW Houston, *Harris* (Keith Kingdon), 8 Feb at High Island, *Galveston* (Carolyn Dill), 18-19 Feb Cove, *Chambers* (Paul Fagala).

Chuck-will's-widow *Caprimulgus carolinensis* A large nightjar seen hawking insects 12 Dec in NW Houston, *Harris* was thought to be this species (Keith Kingdon).

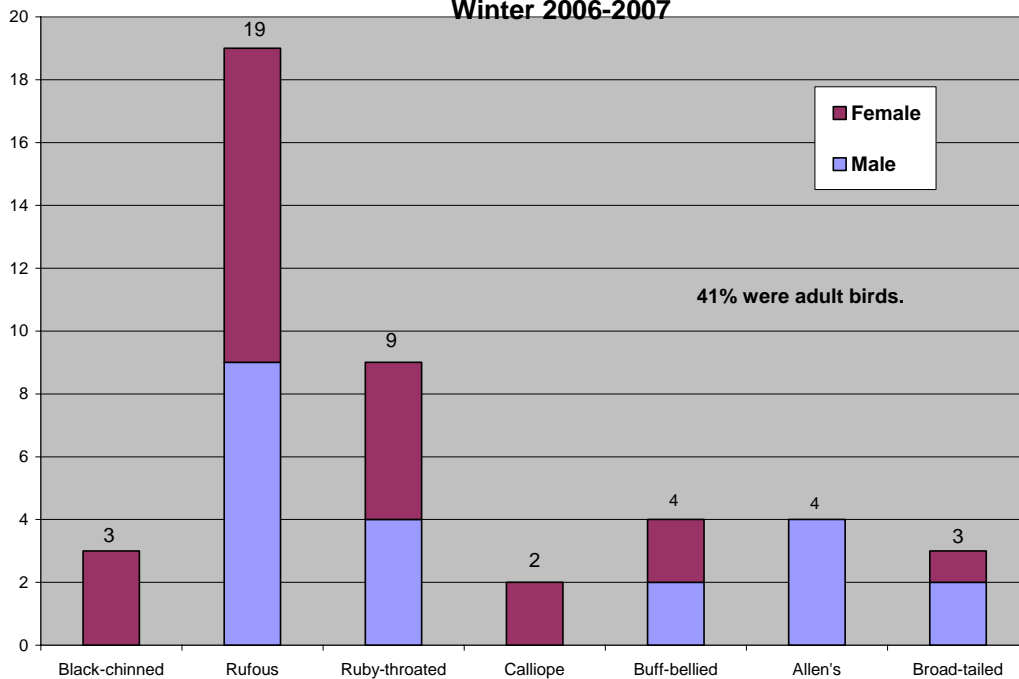
Buff-bellied Hummingbird *Amazilia yucatanensis* Above average numbers of this species were reported with 5 seen 17 Dec on the Freeport CBC alone.

Calliope Hummingbird *Stellula calliope* A female was reported from a Houston, *Harris* yard 3 Feb+ (Jan & Will Risser) in addition to the banded birds cited in the table below.

Broad-tailed Hummingbird *Selasphorus platycercus* Reported in above average numbers this winter – see chart of banded birds below.

Allen's Hummingbird *Selasphorus sasin* This species continues to be detected in greater and greater numbers with a whopping eight birds this winter. These included reports 2 Jan-24 Feb in Houston, *Harris* (Jan & Will Risser), 5-16 Feb in a NW Houston, *Harris* yard (Jim Hinson), a young male RUHU/ALHU with a green back at Russ Pitman Park in Bellaire, *Harris* (Don Verser), a young male seen 19-21 Feb in West Spring Branch, *Harris* (later banded by Brower) in addition to four birds banded in *Brazoria* alone (Charles & Olivia Brower, Robert & Kay Lookingbill).

Hummingbirds Banded By Charles Brower, Robert & Kay Lookingbill & Brad Lirette in Brazoria, Fort Bend, Harris & Galveston Counties - Winter 2006-2007



Chimney Swift *Chaetura pelagica* A *Chaetura* swift was reported 30 Dec on the Buffalo Bayou CBC, *Harris*.

Red-headed Woodpecker *Melanerpes erythrocephalus* Several counts south of the known breeding areas had one or two birds this winter implying wintering birds pushed farther south than normal.

Red-naped Sapsucker *Sphyrapicus nuchalis* A very well-described bird found 17 Dec at Oyster Creek, *Brazoria* during the Freeport CBC was just the 2nd for the count and the 3rd ever for the UTC (John Arvin).

Least Flycatcher *Empidonax minimus* Least Flycatchers continue to be detected in ever-increasing winter numbers. It was reported from several locations with a record 8 seen on the Freeport CBC, *Brazoria*.

Black Phoebe *Sayornis nigricans* Last year's wintering bird was re-found at the Shell campus in NW Houston, *Harris* in early October and remained through the period (Steve Gast et al). Last "winter" the bird arrived on 14 Sep.

Great Kiskadee *Pitangus sulphuratus* Up to 3 of the Katy Prairie, *Harris/Waller* Great Kiskadees were in evidence this winter.

Couch's Kingbird *Tyrannus couchii* This species (or Couch's/Tropical) were reported from the Galveston & Freeport CBCs in addition to birds seen on the Katy Prairie, *Waller* (mob); Corps Woods in Galveston (Liston Rice) and Cullinan Park, *Fort Bend* (Jason Barnett).

Western Kingbird *Tyrannus verticalis* Singles were seen 17 Dec on the Freeport CBC, *Brazoria* and 31 Dec on the Sea Rim SP CBC, *Jefferson*.

Scissor-tailed Flycatcher *Tyrannus forficatus* Lingering birds were seen 3 & 12 Dec on the Katy Prairie, *Harris* (Johnnie Greene, Howard Laidlaw), 14 Dec in NW Houston (Keith Kingdon), 30 Dec in Quintana, *Brazoria* (John Arvin).

Cassin's Vireo *Vireo cassinii* One was reported 11 Dec from *Galveston* (Jim Stevenson). According to Jim, "The bird was apparently an immature, as there was virtually no difference in the back and head color. There was also no strong line of demarcation between the whitish throat and the auriculars." This species has been reported several times from the UTC, but recent reviews of photographed birds thought to be Cassin's has highlighted the significant challenge of identifying these birds. Its true status in winter this far east remains unclear.

Fish Crow *Corvus ossifragus* Four birds seen 10 Feb in Angel Park, *Harris* reflect a rising number of sightings from this area (Dave Allen).

Purple Martin *Progne subis* The first birds were seen 21 Jan at Tomball, *Harris* (fide Purple Martin Conservation Association) and Brazos Bend SP, *Fort Bend* (Joe Kennedy).

Tree Swallow *Tachycineta bicolor* Good numbers were reported throughout the season.

Barn Swallow *Hirundo rustica* The only CBC report was of 5 reported without details from the Galveston CBC.

White-breasted Nuthatch *Sitta carolinensis* Although known to occur in *Hardin* and occasionally even *Liberty*, one seen 31 Dec during the Sea Rim SP CBC, *Jefferson* was the first UTC record in recent years.

Bewick's Wren *Thryomanes bewickii* One was found 14 Dec near *Brazoria* NWR, *Brazoria* (Jim Stevenson).

Winter Wren *Troglodytes troglodytes* Impressive numbers were noted on most all of the CBCs with San Bernard tallying a record 9 birds on 15 Dec and the 26 Dec Bolivar Peninsula count finding 13 birds.

Golden-crowned Kinglet *Regulus satrapa* Large numbers were found on even the coastal CBCs with 111 on the Freeport CBC and a record 63 birds seen on the San Bernard NWR CBC.

Sage Thrasher *Oreoscoptes montanus* After a banner fall with birds dispersing east of normal, the only winter report was of one seen 17 Dec during the Freeport CBC at Peach Point WMA, *Brazoria* (Greg Lasley et al).

Blue-winged Warbler *Vermivora pinus* A lingering individual was photographed 2 Dec at San Bernard NWR, *Brazoria* (Mark Bartosik). This is the 2nd time this species has been at this very location in Dec.

Nashville Warbler *Vermivora ruficapilla* CBC reports

Northern Parula *Parula americana* One seen 2 Dec at High Island, *Galveston* was likely a late migrant (Joe Kennedy). Another seen 7 Jan at Sheldon Lake SP, *Harris* was likely a wintering bird (Stennie Meadours).

Yellow Warbler *Dendroica petechia* Singles were reported 15 Dec from the San Bernard NWR CBC, *Matagorda* (Olivia Brower) and 17 Dec from the Freeport CBC.

Magnolia Warbler *Dendroica magnolia* One well-described bird was seen 9 Jan at Brazos Bend SP, *Fort Bend* (Jason Barnett).

Black-throated Green Warbler *Dendroica virens* This species went unreported for the season for the first time in several years.

Yellow-throated Warbler *Dendroica dominica* The latest birds were one photographed 30 Dec and seen through at least 13 Jan at a Pearland feeder (David Whipple) and another seen through 13 Jan at Arthur Story Park, *Harris* (Joe Kennedy et al).

Prairie Warbler *Dendroica discolor* The only report was of one 31 Dec on the Sea Rim SP CBC, *Jefferson*.

American Redstart *Setophaga ruticilla* One was seen 17 Dec during the Freeport CBC.

Ovenbird *Seiurus aurocapilla* Singles were seen 15 Dec during the San Bernard NWR CBC (Brent Ortego) and two 17 Dec during the Freeport CBC (Fred Collins). Another was found 10 Feb at Brazos Bend SP, *Fort Bend* (David Whipple).

Northern Waterthrush *Seiurus noveboracensis* 9 Jan Brazos Bend SP (Joe Kennedy et al)

Louisiana Waterthrush *Seiurus motacilla* The first migrant was reported 28 Feb from Brazos Bend SP, *Fort Bend* (Joe Kennedy).

Hooded Warbler *Wilsonia citrina* A female was seen 13 Jan at Brazos Bend SP, *Fort Bend* (David Whipple).

Yellow-breasted Chat *Icteria virens* 9 Jan San Bernard NWR (Michael Lindsey), also Dill

Summer Tanager *Piranga rubra* One female 14 Dec at Galveston (Ted Eubanks), another female found 15 Dec on the Freeport CBC, another 27 Jan-9 Feb in Friendswood. Galveston (Simon Tan),

Western Tanager *Piranga ludoviciana* A female was found 15 Dec near the town of Oyster Creek, *Brazoria* on the Freeport CBC (James Smith, Ron Weeks, Brad Lirette).

Spotted Towhee *Pipilo maculatus* Birds were reported on the Freeport and Buffalo Bayou CBCs and another bird was reported 12 Feb at Sabine Woods, *Jefferson* (Carolyn Dill).

Lark Sparrow *Chondestes grammacus* A flock of 50 was reported 10 Dec from the Katy Prairie (Jim Hinson).

Henslow's Sparrow *Ammodramus henslowii* It was apparently a good winter for Henslow's Sparrows as 3 were reported 15 Dec during the San Bernard NWR CBC and singles were found 19 Dec on The Galveston CBC, 30 Dec on the Buffalo Bayou CBC, *Harris* and 10 Jan Smith Point, *Chambers* (John Arvin).

Harris's Sparrow *Zonotrichia querula* Impressive totals of 15 to 20 birds were reported 10 Dec from two Katy Prairie locations (Jim Hinson).

Rose-breasted Grosbeak *Pheucticus ludovicianus* The only Rose-breasted Grosbeak was one seen 31 Dec on the Sea Rim SP CBC, *Jefferson*.

Blue Grosbeak *Passerina caerulea* A male photographed 3 Jan in Texas City, *Galveston* was the first winter records in years (ph. Steve Mahurin).

Indigo Bunting *Passerina cyanea* This species was missed by all UTC CBCs for the first time in many years.

Painted Bunting *Passerina ciris* Male Painted Buntings must have wintered in small numbers as they were seen 15 Dec on the San Bernard NWR, *Matagorda/Brazoria* line (Ron Weeks, Mike Lange), sometime in Dec-14 Jan in Sweeny, *Brazoria* (Lynnis Burt), 23 Dec in Orange, *Orange* (ph. Rebekah Foster) and 19 Jan in n *Harris* (Joann White).

Dickcissel *Spiza americana* Male were found 26 & 27 Dec in Texas City, Galveston (ph. Steve Mahurin) and 24 Jan at the feeders at the Gulf Coast Bird Observatory in Lake Jackson, *Brazoria* (John Arvin et al).

Western Meadowlark *Sturnella neglecta* The only reports were 15 Dec on the San Bernard NWR CBC, *Matagorda* (Charles & Olivia Brower) and 16 Dec on the Brazos Bend SP CBC, *Fort Bend*.

Rusty Blackbird *Euphagus carolinus* The only reports were from Bear Creek Park and nearby *Harris* locations (m ob).

Bullock's Oriole *Icterus bullockii* A beautiful male Bullock's Oriole was photographed in Jan at a League City, Galveston (fide Jim Stevenson).

Baltimore Oriole *Icterus galbula* A female Baltimore Oriole was photographed in Jan at a League City, Galveston (fide Jim Stevenson). Another female oriole was seen 26 Dec on the Bolivar Peninsula CBC.

Purple Finch *Carpodacus purpureus* The only Purple Finch report was of one at a feeder 4 Dec in Beaumont, *Jefferson* (Harrison Jordan).

Pine Siskin *Carduelis pinus* As has been the case in recent years there were only a few reports of Pine Siskins.

John Arvin
Mike Austin
Jason Barnett
Charles Brower
Olivia Brower
Winnie Burkett
Lynn Burt
Fred Collins
Carolyn Dill
Victor Emanuel
Ted Eubanks
Paul Fagala
Rebekah Foster
Johnnie Greene
Bill Godley
Jim Hinson
Bill Hitchcock
Kiki Hummell
Harrison Jordan
Joe Kennedy
Tom Kihn
Keith Kingdon
Howard Laidlaw
Mike Lange
Greg Lasley
Greg Lavaty
Michael Lindsey
Brad Lirette
Cin-Ty Lee
Robert Lookingbill
Kay Lookingbill
Barry Lyon
Stennie Meadours
Steve Mahurin
Brooke Nicotra
Brent Ortego
Dwight Peake
Martin Reid
Liston Rice
Jan Risser
Will Risser
James Smith
Jim Stevenson
Simon Tan
Bill Tarbox
Stephan Tyler
Don Verser
Ron Weeks
Joann White
Matt White
David Whipple
Stephen & Ann Williams
Jennifer Wilson
Adam Wood