

## **Central Texas Winter 2006-2007**

The dry fall finally changed when the much ballyhooed El Nino finally kicked in and some parts of Central Texas got decent rains in December and January. It was a mixed bag as usual for the winter but birding overall was generally lackluster with a few exceptions. No major incursions occurred with perhaps Mountain Bluebirds showing up in good numbers (for this part of the state). Pinkston reports a good concentration of four species of geese in eastern Bell County this winter with 5,000-6,000 geese being present. Bill Lupardus remarked that Midland finally had a true winter this season with prolonged low temperatures and very little moisture falling.

### **Notable Observations:**

#### Cackling Goose

126 Cackling Geese were tallied at a stock pond near Noack (near Taylor) *Bell* 29 Jan (Tim Fennell). With the fairly recent split of this species the overall distribution is still in a flux.

#### Hybrid Duck sp.

A presumed hybrid Mallard – Northern Pintail was present at Wadley Barron Park in the last week of December in Midland (Bill Lupardus). He sent a photo....it looks like a wigeon/mallard combo to me.

#### Mottled Duck

Three Mottled Ducks on Granger Lake *Williamson* on 28 Dec was interesting (Richard Kaskan) since this species is more likely to occur in this part of the state in the summer and/or fall.

#### Ring-necked Duck

Over 260 Ring-necked Ducks were tallied on Canyon Lake *Comal* 29-30 Jan (Lytle Blankenship).

#### Red-throated Loon

A Red-throated Loon on L. Buchanan *Llano* on 10-12 Dec (ph. Tim Fennell) was a nice winter find.

#### Pacific Loon

One was seen on Canyon Lake *Comal* 21 Jan (David Pueppke). It or another bird was seen there on 13 Feb.

#### Least Grebe

A Least Grebe was reported from Inks Lake Dam National Fish Hatchery *Burnet* 26 Feb (Rich Damron).

#### Horned Grebe

A Horned Grebe was reported from Cook's Slough in Uvalde on 1 Dec (Mitch Heindel).

### Western Grebe

Twenty-nine Western Grebes were tallied on L. Buchanan *Llano* on 3 Jan. *Aechmophorus* grebes were present all winter but this was the only day that any could be identified to species (Tim Fennell).

### Snowy Egret

In *Williamson* three Snowy Egrets were present on Meadow Lake in Round Rock 3 Dec–3 Feb while up to five birds were seen at San Gabriel Park in Georgetown 4 Jan–25 Feb (Tim Fennell).

### Reddish Egret

The juvenile bird at Stillhouse Hollow Lake *Bell* discovered in the fall remained through 7 Jan (Randy Pinkston/Rick Kostecke).

### Glossy Ibis

A Glossy Ibis was observed at Calaveras Lake *Bexar* on 10 Feb (Martin Reid & Sheridan Coffey).

### Turkey Vulture

Two very early (for Midland) Turkey Vultures were reported 11 Jan by Donna Kelly.

### Bald Eagle

An immature Bald Eagle seen cruising the James River *Mason* 6 Feb was interesting since it was not along the Llano River where this species tends to be seen (Dixie Feuerbacher & Bobbye Frazier).

### Northern Harrier

A Northern Harrier in *Mason* on 9 Feb was considered unusual by the observers (Dixie Feuerbacher & Bobbye Frazier).

### Harris's Hawk

A Harris's Hawk near Sutherland Springs *Wilson* on 2 Feb (Lytle Blankenship) was north of the species affinity with South Texas brush.

### Red-tailed Hawk

Red-Tailed Hawks were plentiful in *Midland* this past winter season. Up to 143 were recorded (Bill Lupardus et al).

### Rough-legged Hawk

Two sightings of Rough-legged Hawk in *Midland* this past winter season might be attributed to the colder than normal winter. One was seen on 1 Jan (Rose Marie Stortz & Mary Stortz) while another was reported on 19 Feb (Donna Kelly).

### Crested Caracara

Three Crested Caracaras near Wimberley *Hays* on 28 Jan (Lytle Blankenship) was interesting for the Hill Country location. This species continues to expand onto the Escarpment.

### Prairie Falcon

A Prairie Falcon northeast of Bertram *Burnet* 7 Jan (Eric Carpenter) was a good find. One in *Travis* on 1 Feb was noteworthy (Brush Freeman).

### Virginia Rail

1-2 birds spent the entire season at Hornsby Bend *Travis* (Eric Carpenter).

### Mountain Plover

The high count for Mountain Plovers in the Granger Lake area *Williamson* was 39 birds on 11 Feb (Tim Fennell). The wintering flock in western *Bexar* peaked at 100 birds on 20 Jan (Bob Doe). Even better Mitch Heindel tallied 250 Mountain Plovers near Knippa *Uvalde* on 17 Dec.

### American Woodcock

Freeman counted eight American Woodcocks near Utley *Bastrop* on 21 Jan.

### Laughing Gull

Four birds were on Lake Pflugerville *Travis* on 20 Dec (ph. Tim Fennell).

### Burrowing Owl

At least 11 Burrowing Owls were present in the Granger Lake area this winter (Tim Fennell).

### Elf Owl

Three Elf Owls at Devils Sinkhole SNA *Edwards* on 14 Dec (Mark Lockwood) provided a first winter record for the Edwards Plateau.

### Black-chinned Hummingbird

Amazingly early was an adult male Black-chinned Hummingbird near Utopia *Uvalde* on 28 Feb (Mitch Heindel).

### Broad-tailed Hummingbird

An immature male was present near Utopia *Uvalde* 8 Dec to 4 Mar (Mitch Heindel).

### Allen's Hummingbird

An adult male was present 6 Oct to 27 Feb in Heindel's yard near Utopia *Uvalde*. It was probably the same bird that spent the previous winter in his yard.

### Red-headed Woodpecker

An immature spent the winter a few miles n.w. of Utopia *Bandera* (*fide* Mitch Heindel).

### Eastern Kingbird

Amazingly, Eastern Kingbird was present at Mitchell Lake *Bexar* 26 Jan (Peggy & Bob Maslow, ph. Howard Eskin). This appears to be the first fully-documented winter record for the state.

### Scissor-tailed Flycatcher

One was seen near Bulverde *Bexar* on 20 Dec (Steve Hawkins).

### Cliff Swallow

“Slightly early” Cliff Swallows were reported from the I-20 & FM 715 underpass in *Midland* on 25 Feb (Alvin & Donna Kelly).

### Barn Swallow

One was seen in the town of Granger *Williamson* on 30 Dec (Eric Carpenter & Jim Palmer).

### White-breasted Nuthatch

A rare for the area White-breasted Nuthatch was found on the Midland CBC 30 Dec.

### Mountain Bluebird

Mountain Bluebirds staged a major eastern irruption into Central Texas with up to 22 individuals in the Killeen/Fort Hood in Jan while large flocks were encountered in *Menard* and *Schleicher* 18-23 Jan (Randy Pinkston). Ten Mountain Bluebirds were seen in a loose flock in s.e. *Blanco* 9 Dec (Byron Stone). Up to 20 birds were in *McCulloch* 11 Dec (Dixie Feuerbacher and Bobby Frazier).

### Crissal Thrasher

A Crissal Thrasher was reported from the Soda Lake area on 28 Jan by Donna Kelly; the sighting was confirmed by photo and Rose Marie Stortz saw it on the following day. This is the first Jan sighting of Crissal Thrasher in Midland County.

### Black-throated Gray Warbler

One was seen in San Antonio *Bexar* on 7 Dec (Helen Rejzek).

### Yellow-throated Warbler

One apparently wintered somewhere in w. *Burnet* (*fide* David Bryant). Interestingly one wintered around Utopia along the Sabinal River (Mitch Heindel)

### Palm Warbler

Dixie Feuerbacher’s yard in *Mason* hosted a Palm Warbler 14 Dec– 2 Jan. It was not seen after the big ice storm moved in on 13 Jan. A Palm apparently wintered in Common Fords Park *Travis* (Ed Fair).

### Black-and-white Warbler

A Black-and-white Warbler was reported from north-central Midland on 20 Dec (Walter Wigzell); this is the first December record and the only winter season record of this species in *Midland* according to Mid-Nat records.

### Louisiana Waterthrush

Mysterious was a Louisiana Waterthrush at Medina River Park *Bexar* near San Antonio on 28 Jan (Derek Muschalek & Willie Sekula). The bird was seen again on 14 Feb (Curt Harwerth). I suspect that it was a wintering bird rather than a migrant since it was seen on more than one occasion.

### Summer Tanager

A Summer Tanager was seen along the Medina River *Bexar* on 26 Jan (Helen Rejzek).

### Eastern Towhee

Three Eastern Towhees near the Granger Lake area *Williamson* on 10 Feb were noteworthy (Byron Stone).

### Clay-colored Sparrow

A Clay-colored Sparrow carefully observed in w. *Williamson* on 19 Jan provided a rare winter record for Central Texas (Byron Stone).

### Brewer's Sparrow

Three were seen at Canyon Lake *Comal* 29-30 (Lytle Blankenship) while one was seen near Spring Branch *Blanco* 17 Jan (Leslie Linehan).

### Lark Bunting

Bill Lupardus writes "Where are the Lark Buntings? We had only two sightings for the season both in the first week of January both sightings reported no more than thirty birds in the flock. This species is considered abundant during the winter months in Midland County. The 2006 Christmas Bird Count data will tell us where they are, but as to why they are not spending the winter with us is another good question". I suspect that this prairie species is going through a big crash. They are no longer found in the *Wilson/Karnes/Atascosa* areas.

### Henslow's Sparrow

Byron Stone reports that he observed a very likely Henslow's Sparrow briefly on the Eckhardt Tract of Balcones Canyonlands NWR on 3 Jan.

### Dark-eyed (Oregon) Junco

A female at Pinkston's feeders in Temple *Bell* 11-28 Feb was his first in 12+ years.

### Black-headed Grosbeak

A Black-headed Grosbeak put in an appearance at Susan Schaezler's in *Guadalupe* 6 Jan through the end of the period.

### Rusty Blackbird

One at Utopia Park 29 Dec was tossing leaves while wading in water (Mitch Heindel). Brush Freeman saw 100 Rusty Blackbirds in *Bastrop* on 22 Jan which is likely record number for the Austin area.

### Bullock's Oriole

The female Bullock's Oriole arrived once again 16 Jan at Don and Joann Merritt's Midland residence. This is the fourth year in a row a female Bullock's has been reported from there residence in mid-Jan.

### Audubon's Oriole

Up to four birds were seen near Utopia *Uvalde* throughout the season (Mitch Heindel).

### Cited Observers

Lytle Blankenship

David Bryant  
Sheridan Coffey  
Rich Damron  
Bob Doe  
Howard Eskin  
Tim Fennell  
Bobbie Frazier  
Dixie Feuerbacher  
Brush Freeman  
Curt Harwerth  
Steve Hawkins  
Mitch Heindel  
Richard Kaskan  
Alvin Kelly  
Donna Kelly  
Leslie Linehan  
Mark Lockwood  
Bill Lupardus  
Peggy & Bob Maslow  
Don & Joann Merritt  
Derek Muschalek  
Jim Palmer  
Randy Pinkston  
David Pueppke  
Martin Reid  
Helen Rejzek  
Susan Schaezler  
Georgina Schwartz  
Byron Stone  
Mary Stortz  
Rose Marie Stortz  
Walter Wigzell