

-North American Birds – Fall 2007 Report North Central Texas Region

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Weather:

“The warm fall caused some birds to linger late. Overall the fall was dry and mild with a few cool days and little rain here (Lake Tawakoni area). Days in mid-November were still well in the 80's with near record temps in late November.” - Richard Kinney, Lake Tawakoni area

“Temperatures throughout the period were warmer than average. The period started out with normal rainfall in August. In September, we received about an inch above average and then the rain stopped. October was 2.5” below average and November 1” below average. Due to the record rainfall in June, we were still above average in rainfall totals for the year. First freeze was on November 22, followed by the first snowfall (just a few fine flakes) on November 25.” – Debra Halter, Henrietta, TX

“Well above normal temperatures prevailed throughout much of November. During the first 3 weeks of the month, there were only 3 days with below normal high temperatures at DFW Airport. During that stretch, there were 11 days with highs in the 80s, including a daily record of 84 degrees on November 20. Everything changed on November 21 when an arctic front blasted through North Texas on Thanksgiving November 22. A mix of rain, snow, and sleet fell. A wet weekend followed with more significant snowfall in western portions of North Texas on November 25. Snowfall totals were generally 1 – 2 inches. Despite the Thanksgiving cold snap, monthly temperatures were all among the 10 warmest on record. November was the 4th consecutive month with significantly above normal temperatures.” – National Weather Service report for November for the Dallas/Fort Worth area.

The report is indicative of the above normal temperatures for the region. A very late first freeze on December 16 was also quite unusual for the DFW area.

General Observations:

Good rainfall in North Central Texas earlier in the year held the promise of great birding in the fall. Area reservoirs were adequately replenished and food sources were bountiful. Despite this, many species were low in numbers (warblers and shorebirds), and others were slow to arrive (sparrows and ducks). It is unclear whether birds were slow or absent or if they were just obscured by the presence of extensive vegetation in the area. With such an abundance of food throughout the region, birds may have also foraged more expansively rather than concentrating in localized feeding areas making them seem scarcer than they actually were. In addition, shorebird habitat was down due to area reservoirs being overly full.

On the positive side, there was an irruption of Red-breasted Nuthatches into the region. Purple Finches and Pine Siskins were also observed on a number of occasions and at multiple locations. All three of these species have been rare to absent the last two years. There was a very good showing of raptors in North

Central Texas this period. This was a welcoming trend after two years of drought kept away large numbers and several varieties of raptors from the area. There were numerous reports of a wide variety of species that represented either first county records, first regional records, and/or reports of species not seen in the area for many years, if not decades. Additionally, a number of late records were submitted, presumably due to warm weather (temps in the 80s) that continued through the end of the reporting period.

As observed during the last reporting period, several species continue to expand their range including Black-bellied Whistling Ducks, Crested Caracara, Bell's Vireo, and Cave Swallows.

Sightings:

Rare for the county, a single **Black-bellied Whistling-Duck** was recorded at Hagerman N.W.R., *Grayson*, 12 Sep (TR). Twenty-five were found in *Hunt* 21 Sep (MW). Two adult and 7-8 immature **Black-bellied Whistling-Ducks** were observed 10 Nov in *Ellis*, a possible indication of nesting in the county (J&LL). A high count of 99 **Black-bellied Whistling-Ducks** was noted 21 Nov (JS) at River Legacy Parks East, *Tarrant*.

A stunning adult male **Surf Scoter** in breeding plumage was found at Village Creek Drying Beds, *Tarrant* 10 Nov (RC). A second immature **Surf Scoter** was located at Southside Wastewater Treatment Plant, *Dallas* 11 Nov (GC, BS), and yet another first year **Surf Scoter** was seen at Hagerman N.W.R., *Grayson* 30 Nov (TR).

Very rare for the region, a female **Long-tailed Duck** was found at Village Creek Drying Beds, *Tarrant* 18 Nov (JC). Another immature **Long-tailed Duck** was found 30 Nov in w. *Kaufman* Nov 30 (DDC, DL). The *Kaufman* sighting may represent only the second documented county record since 1967 (Ref: The Birds of North Central Texas by Warren Pulich 1988).

Twelve **Anhinga** continued to be seen 12 Sep (GG) at the Heard National Science Museum & Wildlife Sanctuary, *Collin* with 4 birds still in a nest. A late Anhinga was seen at Lake Tawakoni, *Hunt* 3 Nov (RB).

Uncommon and seldom seen in the region, a **Least Bittern** was recorded 26 Aug at Richland Creek W.M.A., *Navarro* (PB, DDC, DL).

A late flock of over 50 **White Ibises** was seen at the White Rock Lake Fish Hatchery, *Dallas* 11-12 Nov (CR). **White Ibises** also lingered until 18 Nov at Lake Tawakoni, *Rains* (RB).

Very rare for the region, a **Glossy Ibis** was observed 8 Sep (GC) at Southside Wastewater Treatment Plant, *Dallas*.

After a scare year, a high count of 30-35 **White-faced Ibises** was a notable find at Lake Tawakoni, *Rains* 29-30 Sep (RK, RB).

Rare and erratic for the region, a single **Roseate Spoonbill** was noted 12 Sep at Hagerman N.W.R., *Grayson* (TR) and another on the same date at the Heard National Science Museum & Wildlife Sanctuary, *Collin* (GG).

A significant sighting was a single **White-tailed Kite** in *Johnson* 1 Nov (GC, BS_m). This is a probable first county record for this species.

A rare urban sighting of an immature **Bald Eagle** was recorded 20 Oct at the Village Creek Drying Beds, *Tarrant*, (GC). Although not particularly rare for the region, this is a very rare sighting for this location.

After two years of few sightings, **Ferruginous Hawks** were once again noted on several occasions in the region beginning with a very rare urban sighting of a single bird 13 Nov at River Legacy Parks East, *Tarrant* (JS). A high count of 13 **Ferruginous Hawks** was noted 25 Nov (DDC, DL) in *Wilbarger* and another one was reported at Cement Creek Lake, *Tarrant* 30 Nov (LB).

Rare for the region, a **Rough-legged Hawk** was reported 6 Nov (J&TK) and 25 Nov (DDC, DL), both for *Wilbarger*.

Rare for the region, a single **Golden Eagle** was observed 27 Oct in *Throckmorton* (GC, BS).

As further evidence of range expansion, single **Crested Caracaras** were noted 30 Sep in *Dallas* (GC, BS, BG) and 10 Nov in *Ellis* (J&LL).

Seldom seen in the region, a single **Virginia Rail** was noted at Village Creek Drying Beds, *Tarrant* 14 Oct (AD, m. ob.) and 8 Nov (JS).

A rare **Piping Plover** was observed at Southside Wastewater Treatment Plant, *Dallas* 27 Aug (CR). It lingered until at least 9 Sep.

A remarkably high count of 65 **American Avocets** were noted 8 Oct (RK) at Lake Tawakoni, *Rains*.

Rare for the region, a single **Ruddy Turnstone** was seen 8 Sep (GC, BS, TR) and again 29 Sep (GC, BG, RR, BS) at Hagerman N.W.R, *Grayson*.

A high count of 14 **Long-billed Curlews** was reported at Millers Creek Reservoir, *Baylor* 27 Oct (GC, BS, RR).

A great find was a very uncommon-for-the-region **Red Knot** 3 Oct at Southside Wastewater Treatment Plant, *Dallas* (BS, CR, GC).

Of note were 100 **Long-billed Dowitchers** at Lake Tawakoni, *Rains* on 8 Oct (RK).

Very surprising and a probable first county record was a pair of juvenile **Red-necked Phalaropes** found 14 Sep at Lewisville Lake Park, *Denton* (KL).

Normally uncommon for the region, **Sabine's Gulls** were observed at several locations during the reporting period including one at Lake Tawakoni State Park, *Hunt* 15 Sep (RR), an immature noted 30 Sep at Southside Wastewater Treatment Plant, *Dallas* (GC, RR, BS), another at White Rock Lake, *Dallas* 14 Oct (GC, RR, BS, CR), and yet another first-year bird at Lake Tawakoni, *Hunt* 2-3 Nov (MW).

A **Lesser Black-backed Gull** was observed 21 Nov in ne. *Dallas* (DH, JH).

Seven **Least Terns** were found 17 Aug in *Wichita* (J&TK) and 2 lingered until 16 Sep in *Archer* (SL, GC).

Very rare for the region, a single **Common Ground-Dove** was spotted at the Fort Worth Nature Center, *Tarrant* 20 Oct (CW, DDC, DL).

Extremely rare for the region, a **Parasitic Jaeger** was recorded at Lake Tawakoni State Park, *Hunt* 15 Sep (GC, DDC, DL).

A remarkable 9 **Greater Roadrunners**, including a group of 4 birds, were spotted in *Hunt* 28 Aug (MW).

Amazingly, a single **Long-eared Owl** was seen and photographed on 1 Nov (ph. CF) at a city park in *Collin*. This bird may represent only the second county record for the species, the first of which was noted in January 1980 (Ref: *The Birds of North Central Texas* by Warren Pulich 1988).

Rufous Hummingbirds made a good showing this period with one arriving in *Tarrant* 9 Aug (LB), another in *Denton* 12 Aug (SY), and yet a third noted in *Dallas* 27 Oct (SK). To date, the *Tarrant* bird continues to linger at a private residence. This marks the seventh consecutive year that a **Rufous Hummingbird** has wintered at the same *Tarrant* residence.

Two amazing North Central Texas county records were set for **Ringed Kingfishers** for this reporting period. One was found 20 Oct (GC, TR) at a city part on the ne. end of Lake Ray Hubbard, *Dallas* and another male **Ringed Kingfisher** was observed 13 Nov at Richland Chambers Reservoir, *Navarro* (KE). These two sightings mark only the second and third records for this species in North Central Texas, the first of which was noted in March of 2007 in *Tarrant*.

Very rare for the county, a **Pileated Woodpecker** was observed in *n. Montague* 28 Oct (JH).

Extremely rare for North Central Texas, a **Northern Shrike** was found 16 Nov in *Wilbarger* (BSu). This is a probable first county record for this species.

Continuing to expand their range into the more eastern sections of the region, a **Bell's Vireo** was noted 26 Aug at Bob Woodruff Park, *Collin* (RR). Another was reported 12 Sep at the Heard National Science Museum & Wildlife Sanctuary, *Collin* (GG) and one at Plano Outdoor Learning Center, *Collin* 22 Sep and 7 Oct (PA). Another was reported 25 Sep at Purtil Creek State Park, *Van Zandt* (RK) representing a park first.

Rare for the region, a **Yellow-throated Vireo** continued from the previous reporting period at the Plano Outdoor Learning Center, *Collin*. It was observed 2-9 Sep (PA). This is presumably the same bird that spent all summer at this location indicating possible nesting of the species.

Cave Swallows continue to expand their range east with 2 sighted at Southside Wastewater Treatment Plant, *Dallas* 14-19 Oct (GC, RR). **Cave Swallows** were also noted in *Tarrant* 20 Oct (JC, DP, CA).

Red-breasted Nuthatches made a tremendous showing in numerous counties in North Central Texas including *Collin, Dallas, Denton, Hunt, Johnson, Rains, Tarrant, Van Zandt, Wichita, and Wilbarger*.

Rare for the region and a probable first county record, 2 **Curve-billed Thrashers** were found in *n. Montague* 28 Oct (JH).

A late **Nashville Warbler** was at Lake Tawakoni State Park, *Hunt* 3 Nov 3 (RK)

A late **Northern Parula** was seen at Lake Tawakoni, *Rains* 14 Oct (RB).

A single **Blackburnian Warbler** was still singing at Lake Tawakoni State Park, *Hunt* 6 Sep (RK).

Three **Pine Warblers** in *Wilbarger* 23 Nov (GC, BS, TR) were an incredible find in the far nw. section of the region and represent a probable first county record.

Exceptional for the far western portion of the region, a **Prairie Warbler** was seen and photographed 10 Oct in *Somervell* (ph. GL). This sighting represents a probable first county record.

A great find was a **Palm Warbler** at Lake Tawakoni State Park, *Hunt* 10 Nov (LB, RB) and 15 Nov (RK). Another was found 18 Nov at Lake Tawakoni, *Rains* (RB).

Normally rare for the region, **Canada Warblers** were reported from a number of locations in North Central Texas. One was observed 1, 2, and 8 Sep at the Plano Outdoor Learning Center, *Collin* (PA). Three sightings were reported on 11 Sep: one at Rowlett Creek Preserve, *Dallas* (TD), a second at River Legacy Parks East, *Tarrant* (JS), and a third at River Legacy Park, *Tarrant* (JS). Another was found 15 Sep at Arapaho Park, *Dallas* (GC). Finally, another was spotted at Lake Tawakoni, *Rains* 3 Oct 3 (RK).

A notably high count of 2000-2500 **Lark Buntings** was worthy of note 27 Oct. The sightings were spread over five counties in the nw. portion of the region (GC, BS, TR).

A great find was a single **Pyrrhuloxia** in *Wichita*, 17 Aug (LH). This is a probable first county record.

Purple Finches slowly trickled in to several North Central Texas locations after a two year absence including five at Caddo National Grasslands, *Fannin* 18 Nov (GC, TR, BS), two in *Kaufman* 19 Nov (VP), one in *Van Zandt* 21 Nov (RK), two at the White Rock Lake Fish Hatchery, *Dallas* 26-29 Nov (CR).

An outstanding find for North Central Texas was 50+ **Red Crossbills** in *Wilbarger* 23 Nov (GC, BS, TR). The birds were found at two different locations in the county.

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