

Upper Texas Coast Sub-regional Report, Spring '07

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

Compiled by Ron Weeks

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The Weather

Rainfall for the period as reported at Houston's Intercontinental Airport was 20.14 inches or 8.06 inches above normal.

The Best Birds

Cinnamon Teal (latest ever spring record – May 4th)
Surf Scoter (2nd latest spring UTC record – May 19th)
Hooded Merganser (1st physically documented nesting for UTC with broods from two *Brazoria* locations)
Ruff (TBRC review species)
Red-necked Phalarope (rare spring record and latest ever – May 26-30th)
Little Gull (TBRC review species)
Parasitic Jaeger (several reports of this rare spring bird)
Brown Noddy (belated summer 2006 report of TBRC review species – first UTC record)
Band-tailed Pigeon (3rd UTC record and first ever spring record – April 12th)
Lesser Nighthawk (three reports of this rare migrant)
Green-breasted Mango (first UTC record if accepted by TBRC)
Ladder-backed Woodpecker (first documented nesting for UTC)
Greater Pewee (first UTC record if accepted by TBRC)
Yellow-green Vireo (three reports of this former TBRC review species)
Veery (record ties earliest ever for UTC – Mar 26th)
Lawrence's Warbler (rare report of this well-known hybrid)
Lark Bunting (rare UTC record)
Savannah Sparrow (2nd latest ever spring record – May 23rd)
Song Sparrow (latest ever spring report – Apr 27th)
Lazuli Bunting (rare UTC record)
Hooded Oriole (rare UTC record)

The Best of the Rest

Fulvous Whistling-Duck *Dendrocygna bicolor* Large numbers were reported at Galveston's Pelican Island with 350+ estimated on 29 Apr (Ted Eubanks et al.).
Greater White-fronted Goose *Anser albifrons* One lingered at Anahuac NWR, *Chambers* until at least 5 May (m. ob.).
Snow Goose *Chen caerulescens* Two to three birds lingered at Anahuac NWR, *Chambers* with one being reported as late of 5 May (m. ob.).
Cackling Goose *Branta hutchinsii* A tame Cackling Goose that overwintered at Arthur Story Park in Houston, *Harris* lingered through the period (ph. Joe Kennedy).
Cinnamon Teal *Anas cyanoptera* A bird seen 4 May at Anahuac NWR, *Chambers* was the latest spring record ever for UTC (John Berner).
Surf Scoter *Melanitta perspicillata* A female/immature lingered until 19 May at Bolivar Flats, *Galveston* (ph. Joe Kennedy, ph. Simon Tan).

White-winged Scoter *Melanitta fusca* The only report was of one 24 Mar on the Bolivar Peninsula, *Galveston* (Jim Stevenson).

Black Scoter *Melanitta nigra* Nine were seen on 10 Mar near Bolivar Flats, *Galveston* (Mike Austin, Peter Gottschling). One bird was seen there 23 Mar (Dennis Vollmar).

Hooded Merganser *Lophodytes cucullatus* Not one but two broods were photographed in *Brazoria*. One brood was first seen 14 Apr at Shady Acres (John Lamar, ph. Charlie Brower); the birds reportedly also nested at this same location in 2006. Another brood was first reported 20 Apr near Holiday Lakes (ph. Michael Gray).

Pacific Loon *Gavia pacifica* One bird was found at the traditional Offat's Bayou, *Galveston* location on 31 Mar. That bird was joined by another bird on 14 Apr (Dwight Peake).

Least Grebe *Tachybaptus dominicus* Two were reported 30 Mar at Brazos River County Park, *Brazoria* (Don Verser). Another pair was described as "breeding" (presumably copulation) at Brazos Bend SP, *Fort Bend* on 14 Apr (Bill Godley).

Northern Gannet *Morus bassanus* One was still present 4 May along the Bolivar Peninsula, *Galveston* (Sharon Burchett et al.). Two first-year birds were recovered from *Brazoria* beaches on 29 May (fide Dana Simon).

Anhinga *Anhinga anhinga* A total of 499 tallied during a hawk watch at Sylvan Beach, *Galveston* on 11 Apr was a notable spring total (Dick Benoit et al.).

American Bittern *Botaurus lentiginosus* Two late birds were found 15 May along the tour loop at San Bernard NWR, *Brazoria* with one bird seen again at the same location on 27 May (Jim Stevenson et al.).

Wood Stork *Mycteria americana* Six seen 16 May flying low over Nelson Farms on the Katy Prairie Conservancy, *Waller* were apparently very early post-breeders (Scott Ramos).

Mississippi Kite *Ictinia mississippiensis* A count of 254 were tallied at Sylvan Beach, *Galveston* on 11 Apr (Dick Benoit et al.).

Harris's Hawk *Parabuteo unicinctus* The near two invasion of this species appears over as there were no reports this spring.

Broad-winged Hawk *Buteo platyterus* An impressive 10,372 were tallied at Sylvan Beach, *Galveston* on 11 Apr (Dick Benoit et al.).

Merlin *Falco columbarius* One seen 3 May at Anahuac NWR, *Chambers* was late (Peggy Baker).

Peregrine Falcon *Falco peregrinus* The El Paso Energy building pair in Houston, *Harris* was last seen 25 Apr (Debbie MacSorley). Singles seen 10 May on Follett's Island, *Brazoria* (Jim Stevenson) and 16 May at Kleb Woods, *Harris* were very late (Fred Collins).

Red Knot *Calidris canutus* Ten seen 26 May at Bolivar Flats, *Galveston* were late for so many (Cin-Ty Lee).

Buff-breasted Sandpiper *Tryngites subruficollis* One seen 13 May along FM1985, *Chambers* was on the late side (Cin-Ty Lee).

Ruff *Philomachus pugnax* One seen 16 Apr near Anahuac NWR, *Chambers* is under review by the TBRC (John Whittle et al.).

Red-necked Phalarope *Phalaropus lobatus* One was seen 26-30 May on Pelican Island in Galveston (Cin-Ty Lee et al.). There are only about a dozen accepted UTC records.

Parasitic Jaeger *Stercorarius parasiticus* There were numerous jaeger reports through the entire period from the Bolivar area with even photographed birds on 14 Apr (Helen Baines) and 24 May (Joe Kennedy) generating differing opinions among local experts. The majority leaned towards both birds being Parasitics.

Little Gull *Larus minutus* An immature bird was photographed 24 Mar along the Bolivar Peninsula, *Galveston* (ph. Jim Stevenson). This record has already been accepted by the TBRC.

Glaucous Gull *Larus hyperboreus* One seen 23 Apr at East Beach in Galveston was much later than typical (Jim Stevenson).

Brown Noddy *Anous stolidus* A recently discovered photograph of a Brown Noddy is under review by the TBRC. If accepted, this will be a first documented record for the UTC.

Band-tailed Pigeon *Patagioenas fasciata* One photographed in Houston, *Harris* on 12 Apr was just the 3rd UTC record (ph. Debra Logsdon).

Common Ground-Dove *Columbina passerina* Three to 4 pairs were noted 21 Apr in w. *Waller* (ph. Joe Kennedy) which apparently indicates an eastward extension of their breeding range. Another seen 28 Apr in NW Houston, *Harris* was interestingly late (Keith Kingdon).

Black-billed Cuckoo *Coccyzus erythrophthalmus* Three on 12 Apr at High Island, *Galveston* were early (Darrell Vollert). It is extremely rare to get multiples of this species before the first week of May.

Yellow-billed Cuckoo *Coccyzus americanus* An early cuckoo species seen 17 Mar in Houston, *Harris* was likely this species (Toni-Ann Mistretta).

Burrowing Owl *Athene cunicularia* The bird that wintered at Fort Travis, *Galveston* was seen through at least 31 Mar (m. ob.).

Lesser Nighthawk *Chordeiles acutipennis* Lesser Nighthawk reports are always difficult to sort given the similarity of the two species. However, close-up photographs of one roosted and in flight at Quintana, *Brazoria* constitutes one of the few physically documented records for the UTC (Mark Bartosik). Others were reported 3 & 10 May from w. Galveston Island (Jim Stevenson).

Whip-poor-will *Caprimulgus vociferus* Singles were reported 3 Apr along Buffalo Bayou in Katy ("Bear" Johnson) and 17 Apr at the Katy Prairie Conservancy, *Waller* (Bob Honig).

Green-breasted Mango *Anthracothorax prevostii* A mango photographed 26 Apr at Sabine Woods, *Jefferson* was most likely this species (ph. Erik Breden et al.). If accepted by the TBRC, this would be the 1st UTC record.

Black-chinned Hummingbird *Archilochus alexandri* A female remained at Russ Pitman Park in Bellaire, *Harris* until at least 1 Apr (Don Verser).

Calliope Hummingbird *Stellula calliope* A male in Houston, *Harris* was seen through 2 Mar (per Leslie Calvert). Another banded at Russ Pitman Park in Bellaire, *Harris* was last seen 4 Mar (fide Don Verser).

Red-headed Woodpecker *Melanerpes erythrocephalus* The past winter brought this species south of its normal wintering haunts. Perhaps these southerly wintering birds were responsible for singles seen 19 Apr at Bolivar Flats, *Galveston* (Winnie Burkett) and another 29 Apr on Galveston's Pelican Island (Ted Eubanks).

Ladder-backed Woodpecker *Picoides scalaris* A pair found 21 Apr feeding young in w. *Waller* apparently constitute the first documenting nesting for the UTC (ph. Joe Kennedy).

Greater Pewee *Contopus pertinax* One photographed 28 Apr at Sabine Woods, *Jefferson* would be a first UTC record if accepted by the TBRC (ph. Erik Breden et al.).

Western Wood-Pewee *Contopus sordidulus* One was heard calling on w. Galveston Island on 3 May (Jim Stevenson et al.).

Willow Flycatcher *Empidonax traillii* Willows were reported 3 May on w. Galveston Island (Jim Stevenson) and 13 May in Houston, *Harris* (Joe Kennedy).

Eastern Phoebe *Sayornis phoebe* One seen 12 Apr on w. Galveston Island was late (Jim Stevenson).

Couch's Kingbird *Tyrannus couchii* One seen 6 May on the Katy Prairie Conservancy, *Waller* was believed to have been the same one that overwintered at this location (Bob Honig).

Western Kingbird *Tyrannus verticalis* Larger than normal numbers of migrants were noted in UTC migrant traps this spring.

Warbling Vireo *Vireo gilvus* A count of 28 on 15 Apr at Sabine Woods, *Jefferson* was a nice modern day count (Jan & Will Risser).

Yellow-green Vireo *Vireo flavoviridis* Singles were noted 25 Apr at Anahuac NWR, *Chambers* (Erik Breden), 26 Apr at Sabine Pass, *Jefferson* (Matt Denton) and 5 May on w. Galveston Island (Dwight Peake). This represents one of the better springs ever for this vireo on the UTC.

Bank Swallow *Riparia riparia* "Several dozen" reported 23 May at various locations in *Brazoria* were late (Jim Stevenson).

Brown-headed Nuthatch *Sitta pusilla* Brown-headed Nuthatches continue to become more common in n. *Harris* with sightings from Kleb Woods (Fred Collins) and Champions Golf Course (Marsha Seyffert).

Brown Creeper *Certhia americana* One seen 14 Apr at Russ Pitman Park in Bellaire, *Harris* was the 2nd latest spring record ever for the UTC (Don Verser).

Blue-gray Gnatcatcher *Poliophtila caerulea* One seen 1 May at Brazos Bend SP, *Fort Bend* was late (Lynn Forster).

Veery *Catharus fuscescens* One heard singing at the Gulf Coast Bird Observatory in Lake Jackson, *Brazoria* ties the earliest ever record for the UTC (Cecilia Riley).

Cedar Waxwing *Bombycilla cedrorum* Cedar Waxwings invaded the coast in huge numbers with counts of around 100 birds reported all along the upper coast in mid-May (m. ob.). A few lingered into early June.

Lawrence's Warbler One was seen 11 Apr at Lafitte's Cove on Galveston Island (Ron Bruce).

Cape May Warbler *Dendroica tigrina* Three Cape May were found 26 Apr at the Willows at Sea Rim SP, *Jefferson* with at least one of them (or another) being seen until 6 May (Jan & Will Risser et al.)

Black-throated Blue Warbler *Dendroica caerulescens* The only reports were 22 Apr from Sabine Woods, *Jefferson* (Don Quaintance), 25 Apr from Cove, *Chambers* (Paul Fagala) and female 26 May at High Island, *Galveston* (Don Verser). The May bird was the 2nd latest ever for the UTC.

Yellow-rumped Warbler *Dendroica coronata* A lingering Yellow-rumped Warbler seen 6 May at Brazos Bend SP, *Fort Bend* was quite late (Marilyn Kircus).

Townsend's Warbler *Dendroica townsendi* One was reported 26 Apr at Sabine Woods, *Jefferson* (Erik Breden et al.).

Prairie Warbler *Dendroica discolor* For some reason, Prairies were seen in greater number than usual in the coastal zone. This species normally overflies the coast.

Blackpoll Warbler *Dendroica striata* One seen 28 May at Quintana NBS, *Brazoria* was late (Don Verser, Ron Weeks).

Swainson's Warbler *Limnothlypis swainsonii* For some reason, an above average number of this species was reported from the migrant traps this spring.

Hooded Warbler *Wilsonia citrina* A male seen 11 May at Quintana NBS, *Brazoria* was late for an apparent migrant (Ron Weeks).

Summer Tanager *Piranga rubra* One at Friendswood, *Harris* 27 Jan-12 Mar was yet another overwintering bird (Simon Tan).

Western Tanager *Piranga ludoviciana* There was a bumper crop of Western Tanagers this spring with birds reported from 3 Apr at Jesse Jones Park, *Harris* (Jim Hinson); 12 Apr at Corp Woods in Galveston (Michael Lindsey); 18 Apr at Quintana, *Brazoria* (Michael Gray et al.), late Apr-9 May on w. Galveston Island (Jim Stevenson); 3 May at High Island, *Galveston* (Winnie Burkett); and 5-7 May at Sabine Woods, *Jefferson* (m. ob.).

Clay-colored Sparrow *Spizella pallida* This western species was noted 19 Apr and 3 May on w. Galveston Island (Jim Stevenson).

Lark Sparrow *Chondestes grammacus* Larger than usual numbers were reported this spring. The highest number were 250+ estimated 21 Apr in w. *Waller* (Joe Kennedy).

Lark Bunting *Calamospiza melanocorys* A molting male was photographed during its 6-7 Apr stay on w. Galveston Island (Jim Stevenson).

Savannah Sparrow *Passerculus sandwichensis* One seen 23 May at San Bernard NWR, *Brazoria* was the 2nd latest ever found on the UTC (Jim Stevenson).

Song Sparrow *Melospiza melodia* One seen 27 Apr at a feeder in Cove, *Chambers* was the latest ever spring record for the UTC (Paul Fagala).

Lincoln's Sparrow *Melospiza lincolni* One lingered until 4 May at Quintana NBS, *Brazoria* (Ron Weeks et al.).

Harris's Sparrow *Zonotrichia querula* An estimate of 15+ reported 21 Apr in western *Waller* were an astounding number for so late (Joe Kennedy).

White-crowned Sparrow *Zonotrichia leucophrys* Nearly 300 total White-crowns were estimated in flocks in western *Waller* on 21 Apr (Joe Kennedy).

Dark-eyed Junco *Junco hyemalis* One seen 25 Mar in NW Houston, *Harris* was later than typical (Keith Kingdon).

Lazuli Bunting *Passerina amoena* A male was seen 18 Apr at Galveston's Corp Woods (Judy Sharp et al.). This species is has been nearly annual in recent years.

Hooded Oriole *Icterus cucullatus* A male was photographed 25 May in Seabrook, *Galveston* (ph. Victor Madamba). This species is increasingly reported but not yet annual on the UTC.

Bullock's Oriole *Icterus bullockii* One was seen 15 Apr at Boy Scout Woods in High Island, *Galveston* (Winnie Burkett et al.) A first-year male seen 16 May in e. *Waller* may have been a county first (Maggie Honig).

House Finch *Carpodacus mexicanus* A pair coming to feeder in Pearland, *Brazoria* were slightly south of the normal breeding range (Brad Lirette).

Observers

Mike Austin
 Peggy Baker
 Mark Bartosik
 Dick Benoit
 John Berner

Erik Breden
Charlie Brower
Ron Bruce
Sharon Burchett
Winnie Burkett
Leslie Calvert
Fred Collins
Matt Denton
Ted Eubanks
Paul Fagala
Lynn Forster
Bill Godley
Peter Gottschling
Michael Gray
Jim Hinson
Bob Honig
Maggie Honig
“Bear” Johnson
Joe Kennedy
Keith Kingdon
Marilyn Kircus
John Lamar
Alex Lin-Moore
Michael Lindsey
Brad Lirette
Debra Logsdon
Cin-Ty Lee
Debbie MacSorley
Victor Madamba
Toni-Ann Mistretta
Dwight Peake
Don Quaintanace
Scott Ramos
Jan Risser
Will Risser
Dana Simon
Marsha Seyffert
Judy Sharp
Jim Stevenson
Simon Tan
Don Verser
Darrell Vollert
Dennis Vollmar
Ron Weeks
John Whittle