

TRANS-PECOS BIRD REPORT
Summer (June-July) 2007

prepared by Jim Paton

The abundant rainfall pattern established in May for Big Bend National Park (BBNP) continued unabated through the period. Most of the park received anywhere from 12.7 cm to 19.6 cm for the period, leaving it well above 2006 year-to-date totals. The increased cloud cover helped to moderate temperatures. The rest of the region did not receive as much precipitation as BBNP and early August did not produce anything resembling the floods of August 2006.

As always, it is difficult to determine the effects of weather on birds. Bird reports were few and, again, high water at reservoirs resulted in a dearth of shorebird reports. White-eared Hummingbird and Dusky-capped Flycatcher continued their recent trend of good numbers in both the Chisos and Davis mountains. The most surprising record was of a Chuck-will's-widow, a regional first, which spent much of the period on private property in the Davis Mountains Resort. Also of note were two Anna's Hummingbirds at a residence in the Davis Mountains Resort, thought to be just the second summer record for the state.

Cited observers listed at the end of the report. TBRC Review Species in **bold**.

CANVASBACK – Two drakes at Fort Hancock Reservoir, *Hudspeth*, on 15June (JP) were certainly the same two first spotted on 4June at nearby Tornillo Reservoir, *El Paso* (BZ). Casual to accidental in summer.

REDHEAD – Nine were noted in Ft. Stockton, *Pecos*, on 21July (ML). No young were observed, though breeding has occurred here before.

RING-NECKED DUCK – Casual in summer, a male was present all period at the Presidio sewage ponds, *Presidio* (ML).

COMMON LOON – Very unusual for summer, a Common Loon was picked up at the El Paso Airport on 1June. The bird was released the next day at McNary Reservoir, *Hudspeth* (fide JSp) and was not seen again.

PIED-BILLED GREBE – A local breeder in the region, 12 were seen (three pairs with young) at Ft. Stockton on 21July (ML).

LEAST BITTERN – For the second straight July, Least Bittern was seen at McNary Res., this time a lone bird on 28July (JP), strongly suggesting breeding. This species is a very local breeder in the region.

TRICOLORED HERON – An adult photographed at McNary Res. on 9July (JP) was the only one reported and the first in several years in the El Paso area.

NORTHERN HARRIER – Though not suspected of breeding, one to two seen many times during the period at Rio Bosque Wetlands Park, *El Paso* (JSp) was unusual for summer for the El Paso area.

COOPER'S HAWK – Rare to casual in El Paso in summer, a Cooper's Hawk was spotted twice at Rio Bosque Wetlands Park, 21June and 16July (both JSp).

GRAY HAWK – Two pairs again attempted to nest at BBNP, one at Rio Grande Village-Daniels Ranch and the other at Cottonwood Campground (m.ob) though no young had been fledged by the end of the period (fide MF).

COMMON BLACK-HAWK – Like last year, the pair at Rio Grande Village had fledged one young by the end of the period (fide MF).

HARRIS'S HAWK – Local in the region and rarely seen away from known haunts, one at Van Horn, *Culberson* on 17June (ML) was notable and made for a rare county record.

LAUGHING GULL – Essentially annual in summer, the only report was of two at Balmorhea Lake, *Reeves*, on 10June (RP).

LEAST TERN – A rare but regular visitor to the western Trans-Pecos, lone birds at Rio Bosque Wetlands Park on 3June (JSp) and at Tornillo Res. 23June – 2July (JP) fit perfectly with the expected pattern of occurrence.

BAND-TAILED PIGEON – A lone bird in a west El Paso yard on 19June (JP, ph.) was most unexpected. Though it breeds within a hundred miles or so of El Paso, the species is very rare even as a migrant in El Paso and this was the first summer record for the El Paso area.

BURROWING OWL – Restoration efforts at Rio Bosque Wetlands Park, including the placement of some artificial burrows, have clearly benefited Burrowing Owls. A high count of 29 on 21July (JSp) was an excellent total.

LONG-EARED OWL – The birds which bred at Rio Bosque Wetlands Park in the spring were seen through 1July (JSp).

CHUCK-WILL'S-WIDOW – The most unexpected bird of the season was the Chuck-will's-widow found by Pinkston on Bryan's Davis Mountains Resort property on 13June. The vocal and territorial bird remained through the period (RP, audiotape KB). The species is a common nester west to the southwestern Edwards Plateau and rare a bit farther west in eastern *Val Verde* but it was not on anyone's radar for the Davis Mountains. This is thought to be the first regional record, though it is possible it could occur in riparian corridors in *Terrell* and western *Val Verde*.

WHIP-POOR-WILL – One calling in Alpine, *Brewster*, on 25-27July (ML) was unusual.

BROAD-BILLED HUMMINGBIRD – An adult male and an adult female were present all period at the Davis Mountains Resort, and were joined by a hatch-year male, 28July+ (M&ME).

WHITE-EARED HUMMINGBIRD – White-eared Hummingbird again made a very strong showing in the Davis Mountains. hatch-year bird visited feeders at one residence in the Davis Mountains Resort, 4-20July (M&ME) while five birds were present at another residence – with two females and two immature males joining the adult male from spring (ML, ph.).

LUCIFER X BLACK-CHINNED HUMMINGBIRD – A male Lucifer x Black-chinned Hummingbird hybrid visited an Alpine yard, 8-26July (ML. ph.). There are at least twelve regional records now of this hybrid combination, with nine of them coming from BBNP or the Davis Mountains.

ANNA'S HUMMINGBIRD – Two immature males in the Davis Mountains Resort (M&ME) provided a second summer record for Texas. One of the birds was present all period with the other present 20July+. The only previous summer record was of a bird photographed in El Paso, 30June – 1July2006.

DUSKY-CAPPED FLYCATCHER – As has been the case in recent years, Dusky-capped Flycatcher was conspicuous in the upper Chisos Mountains and also high in the Davis Mountains at the Davis Mountains Preserve. In the Chisos, one reported from Boot Canyon on 1June (KR) continued on spring reports from this site. Additionally, one was reported from high on the Pinnacles Trail on 12June (RP) with two there on 13July (VE, BL). Breeding was certainly suspected, but was not confirmed. In the Davis Mountains, seven birds were on the Davis Mountains Preserve on 7July with at least one pair with young (ML).

COUCH'S KINGBIRD – The nesting pair in Cottonwood Campground, BBNP, all period (m. ob.) represented the first breeding attempt for BBNP (fide MF). The pair built and defended a nest in the midst of both Western Kingbirds and Tropical Kingbirds, but it was unclear if any young were fledged.

EASTERN KINGBIRD – One at Rio Bosque Wetlands Park on 21July (JSp) was just the second July record for the El Paso area.

WARBLING VIREO – Warbling Vireo is a notably late spring migrant with birds routinely lingering into early June. It is also an early fall migrant with some on the move by late July. A bird in El Paso on 21June (JP) however was especially late.

ORANGE-CROWNED WARBLER – One in El Paso on 31July (JPo) was early, about two weeks ahead of expected arrival dates.

NORTHERN PARULA – A rare migrant in the region, one singing at the El Paso Zoo on 4June (JK) was also late.

YELLOW-THROATED WARBLER – One present for the third summer at the Davis Mountains Preserve was again noted on 22July (VE, BZ). Interestingly, the bird sang a typical Yellow-throated Warbler song during its first spring and summer but now sings a song typical of a Grace's Warbler (audiotapes KB). The bird's territory is among numerous Grace's Warblers.

PAINTED REDSTART – One to two were seen all period in Boot Canyon, BBNP (m. ob).

VESPER SPARROW – One in Rio Bosque Wetlands Park on 21July (JSp) was notably early.

VARIED BUNTING – A territorial male was found singing in the Carrizo Mountains just west of Van Horn in extreme eastern *Hudspeth* on 22July (JP, ph.). There are few county records and this is a first for this range, but the species is likely more widespread in the area than is known due to a lack of access to these ranges.

Undocumented rarities:

White-eared Hummingbird - two females noted at separate locations in the Chisos Mountains on 13July.

Dusky-capped Flycatcher - A pair on the lower on the Pinnacles Trail, 13 – 20July and two were reported along the Laguna Meadow Trail on 23June.

Observers: Kelly Bryan, Marc and Maryann Eastman, Victor Emanuel, Mark Flippo, Anthony Hewetson, John Kiseda, Mark Lockwood, Barry Lyon, Jim Paton, Randy Pinkston, Jane Poss, Kirk Roth, John Sproul, Barry Zimmer