

Upper Texas Coast Sub-regional Report, Summer '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 13.01 inches or 4.48 inches above normal. Many local areas had much more rain and local flooding was common through most of July. The almost constant cloud cover kept temperatures well below normal.

The Best Birds

Cackling Goose (rare over summering bird)

Canada Goose (first UTC nesting?)

Ring-necked Duck (rare summer record)

Masked Booby (rare summer record)

American Bittern (rare summer record)

Cooper's Hawk (several sightings of this now expected summer bird)

Harris' Hawk (rare summer record)

White-rumped Sandpiper (several birds lingering into July)

Parasitic Jaeger (first summer record for UTC – 26 Jul)

Gray Kingbird (TBRC review species, 3rd UTC and 7th state record if accepted)

Blue-gray Gnatcatcher (earliest fall record tied – 21 Jul)

Cedar Waxwing (latest ever UTC spring record – 14 Jun)

Clay-colored Robin (5th straight summer at Lake Jackson site)

Gray Catbird (record number of summer sightings)

Black-throated Green Warbler (latest ever spring record – 10 Jun)

American Redstart (earliest ever fall record for the UTC – 30 Jul)

Rose-breasted Grosbeak (2nd latest ever spring record – 10 Jun)

Common Redpoll (TBRC review species, 2nd UTC and 8th state record if accepted – both UTC records are from June!)

[Check for records more recent than the UTC book.](#)

The Best of the Rest

Cackling Goose *Branta hutchinsii* One over summered at Arthur Storey Park in Houston, *Harris* (ph. Joe Kennedy).

Canada Goose *Branta canadensis* Two were found nesting in early June at the Dow Chemical site in Freeport, *Brazoria* (Tom Taroni et al). These birds appeared to be "Giant" Canadas that nest widely across the northern US. This may constitute the first UTC nesting of the species.

Gadwall *Anas strepera* A lingering bird was seen 7 Jun-4 Jul on the Katy Prairie, *Waller* (Bob Honig).

Northern Pintail *Anas acuta* Lingering birds were seen 8 Jun near Angleton, *Brazoria* (Caleb Frome) and 7 Jul at Anahuac NWR, *Chambers* (Don Verser).

Ring-necked Duck *Aythya collaris* One seen 4 Jul at Nelson Farms on the Katy Prairie, *Waller* was likely a sick or injured bird (Bob Honig). This may be just the 3rd summer record for the UTC.

Red-breasted Merganser *Mergus serrator* Lingering birds (reportedly different individuals) were seen 22 & 29 Jun at the Texas City Dike, *Galveston* (Joe Kennedy).

Northern Bobwhite *Colinus virginianus* The wet late spring and summer resulted in encouraging numbers of this declining species.

Masked Booby *Sula dactylatra* One was reported plunge diving 18 Jul off of Follett's Island, *Brazoria* (Jim Stevenson). This is extremely rare behavior as most boobies seen within sight of shore are emaciated and beached.

Northern Gannet *Morus bassanus* A total of three gannets were found beached 20 Jul on the Bolivar Peninsula, *Galveston* (Joe Kennedy). This follows on the heels of a late spring that also had an above average number of beached birds.

American Bittern *Botaurus lentiginosus* One was found 6 Jul at San Bernard NWR, *Brazoria* (Jennifer Wilson). Birds were reported in this same general location in late May. This is the first summer record for *Brazoria*.

Least Bittern *Ixobrychus exilis* Interesting were 15+ road killed birds 7 Jul north of High Island, *Galveston* (Don Verser). A total of 15" of rain fell in this area the previous day.

Glossy Ibis *Plegadis falcinellus* Singles were seen 5 Jul in *Waller* (Ted Eubanks), 15 Jul at Horseshoe Marsh, *Galveston* (Cin-Ty Lee), 20 Jul at Anahuac NWR, *Chambers* (Jim Stevenson) and 22 Jul at Pelican Island, *Galveston* (Cin-Ty Lee).

Wood Stork *Mycteria americana* The first summer report was of 100 seen 28 Jun in north Houston, *Harris* (Steve Gross).

Swallow-tailed Kite *Elanoides forficatus* Apparent local breeding was noted at Baytown, *Harris* where an adult was photographed carrying away a Northern Mockingbird nestling (Mike & Carol Smith) and near Sweeny, *Brazoria* where two adults were seen through the period and two juveniles were spotted with them in late Jul (fide Charles Brower, ph.). Both the Baytown and Sweeny observers reported seeing these birds during previous summers. Other Swallow-tailed Kites were found 8 Jun near Dickinson Bayou, *Galveston* (Tom O'Neal), 28 Jun at Lake Jackson, *Brazoria* (Robert & Kay Looking bill), 5 Jul just east of Lake Jackson (Susan Heath), 15 Jul at Tomball College, *Harris* (Howard Smith) and 25 Jul at Kleb Woods, *Harris* (Jeff Mohamed).

Bald Eagle *Haliaeetus leucocephalus* One seen 7 Jun in East Houston, *Harris* was somewhat out of season (Danny Large).

Northern Harrier *Circus cyaneus* Although seen most summers, nesting is rarely documented. This summer family groups were noted at both East Beach and at Bolivar Flats, *Galveston* (Joe Kennedy).

Cooper's Hawk *Accipiter cooperii* Birds were seen 7 Jun at Houston's Bear Creek Park, *Harris* (Drew Dickert), 12 Jun in West Houston, *Harris* (Joe Kennedy), 9 Jul Hwy 249 & FM 2920 in Tomball, *Harris* (Fred Collins) and 24 Jul east of Garth Rd on I-10, *Harris* (Joe Kennedy). Just a few years ago this species was not known as a summer bird on the UTC.

Harris's Hawk *Parabuteo unicinctus* The only report was of one seen 31 Jul near Bolivar Flats, *Galveston* (Brooke Nicotra). This is hardly surprising given the large number seen on the UTC the last two years.

Semipalmated Plover *Charadrius semipalmatus* A count of 150 on 29 Jun at East Beach in *Galveston* was notable for the season (Joe Kennedy). Migrants typically do not arrive until early July.

Piping Plover *Charadrius melodus* The first report was of one seen 29 Jun at East Beach, *Galveston* (Joe Kennedy). One banded bird found 8 Jul at East Beach, *Galveston* (Joe Kennedy) was "a female originally banded as an adult at nest DN-05-07 at Lake Diefenbaker, SK in 2005. She was at Chaplin Lake SK last summer (Diefenbaker flooded out - it's a reservoir), and we didn't see her at either place last summer, although we were fairly late to Chaplin and Diefenbaker had flooded again, so she may have failed early at Chaplin. She was seen in the winters of 2005 and 2006 at Bolivar Flats, TX".

Solitary Sandpiper *Tringa solitaria* One found 8 Jul at Fort Travis, *Galveston* was early (Joe Kennedy).

Willet *Catoptrophorus semipalmatus* Only recently have UTC observers focused on the comings and going of Eastern (breeding) and Western (over summering) Willets. A Western Willet in worn alternate plumage noted 15 Jul at Bolivar Flats, *Galveston* (Cin-Ty Lee) was the first sign breeders returning to the UTC. By 28 Jul, Lee remarked that "Eastern Willets have almost all vacated Bolivar and have been replaced with worn alternate plumage Western Willets. The only Eastern Willets left are a few juveniles and one worn adult."

Spotted Sandpiper *Actitis macularia* One seen 7 Jul at Pelican Island, *Galveston* matched the earliest "fall" record (Cin-Ty Lee). However, there are a couple of June records that could constitute returning birds.

Whimbrel *Numenius phaeopus* This species was seen all summer at Bolivar, *Galveston* with a peak count of 14 on 21 Jun (Joe Kennedy).

Red Knot *Calidris canutus* Diligent shorebird watchers found 3 Red Knots on 2 Jun at Pelican Island, *Galveston* (Cin-Ty Lee), 14 on 6 Jun at Bolivar Flats, *Galveston* (Joe Kennedy), and 2 on 16 Jun & 3 on 21 Jun on Pelican Island, *Galveston* (Ted Eubanks).

Semipalmated Sandpiper *Calidris pusilla* A count of 40 birds on 16 Jun at Pelican Island, *Galveston* was high for mid-June (Ted Eubanks). Also interesting was the 50/50 mix of alternate and basic plumage. Twenty were still there on 23 Jun (Ted Eubanks) and 10 were reported 29 Jun at East Beach, *Galveston* (Joe Kennedy). These records surpass the previous “spring” late of 19 Jun. Numbers dropped off with just one alternate bird seen 2 Jul and two alternate seen the next day at Pelican Island (Ted Eubanks). Ten alternate birds were noted 7 Jul at East Beach (Cin-Ty Lee). These alternate birds were likely returning birds.

Least Sandpiper *Calidris minutilla* One seen 29 Jun at East Beach, *Galveston* may have been an early returnee (Joe Kennedy).

White-rumped Sandpiper *Calidris fuscicollis* Lingering White-rumps included 10 on 21&23 Jun at Pelican Island, *Galveston* (Ted Eubanks), one there on 2 Jul and 4 in alternate or transition on 3 Jul (Ted Eubanks) and one 14 Jul in worn alternate at Pelican (Cin-Ty Lee). Away from Pelican Island were one 20 Jul at Texas City and 2 on 22 Jul at Bolivar Flats, *Galveston* (Joe Kennedy).

Baird's Sandpiper *Calidris bairdii* This species was noted 20 Jul at Brazoria NWR, *Brazoria* (Jim Stevenson).

Dunlin *Calidris alpina* Lingering birds included an alternate bird seen 10 Jun (Cin-Ty Lee) & 3 Jul (Ted Eubanks) at Pelican Island, *Galveston*, 21 & 28 Jun at Bolivar Flats, *Galveston* and 29 Jun & 12 Jul East Beach, *Galveston* (Joe Kennedy).

Stilt Sandpiper *Calidris himantopus* An alternate bird found 23 Jun at Pelican Island, *Galveston* was either late or early (Ted Eubanks).

Short-billed Dowitcher *Limnodromus griseus* A tally of 250 on both 16 & 23 Jun at Pelican Island, *Galveston* was a high summer count (Ted Eubanks).

Long-billed Dowitcher *Limnodromus scolopaceus* 8 Jul two birds at Fort Travis early was 9 Jul

Wilson's Phalarope *Phalaropus tricolor* Two alternate birds were found 16 Jun at Pelican Island, *Galveston* (Ted Eubanks) and 4 were found there on 7 Jul (Cin-Ty Lee).

Parasitic Jaeger *Stercorarius parasiticus* One was seen 26 Jul flying over west Galveston Island, *Galveston* (Jim Stevenson). Jim wrote “The bird was identified as Parasitic Jaeger due to its slender build and fairly long, point tail. It had only a hint of a breast band; not the heavy band usually seen on Pomarine. Obviously, I couldn't see the top of the head, but well after passing (good light), I could see its back was not as dark as Pomarine.” This represents the first summer record for the UTC.

Ring-billed Gull *Larus delawarensis* Seven “fresh” adults seen 31 Jul at the Texas City Dike seemed early (Joe Kennedy).

Least Tern *Sterna antillarum* Large Least Tern counts included 400 at Pelican Island on 23 Jun, *Galveston* (Ted Eubanks) and 600 at Bryan Beach, *Brazoria* 28 Jul (Ron Weeks).

Black Tern *Chlidonias niger* A total of 1200 Black Terns 15 Jun at San Luis Pass, *Galveston* was a nice June total (Ted Eubanks).

Black-billed Cuckoo *Coccyzus erythrophthalmus* One seen 4 Jun on west Galveston Island, *Galveston* was the 2nd latest ever for the UTC (Jim Stevenson).

Chimney Swift *Chaetura pelagica* Counts of Chimney Swifts at a known roost in Houston, *Harris* were interesting in that the peak of 263 birds was counted on 12 Jun with numbers declining steadily after that time (Pam Smolen, Don Verser).

Northern Flicker *Colaptes auratus* A rare but regular breeder in the Houston area, Northern Flickers were found 26 Jun in NW Houston (Donna Maddox) and 17 Jul (four birds) at 11th Street Park (Mary Dodson).

Olive-sided Flycatcher *Contopus cooperi* One seen 3 Jun on west Galveston Island, *Galveston* was a late migrant (Jim Stevenson). This represents the 3rd latest spring record for the UTC.

Eastern Wood-Pewee *Contopus virens* One seen 4 Jun on w. Galveston Island, *Galveston* was likely a late migrant (Jim Stevenson).

Least Flycatcher *Empidonax minimus* Singles seen 21 Jul at High Island, *Galveston* and Sabine Woods, *Jefferson* were the first returning birds reported (Don Verser).

Couch's Kingbird *Tyrannus couchii* The Smith Point, *Chambers* birds returned once again with two pair, one with at least two juveniles, found 1 Jul (John Arvin).

Gray Kingbird *Tyrannus dominicensis* One seen and videotaped on 2 Jun at Sea Rim SP, *Jefferson* was just the 3rd for the UTC and the 7th for the state (ph. Don Verser).

Red-eyed Vireo *Vireo olivaceus* One seen 5 Jun at west Galveston Island, *Galveston* was late (Jim Stevenson). Singles were seen 10&14 Jun at High Island, *Galveston* (Don Verser, Joe Kennedy). Another or perhaps the same bird was seen 7 Jul (Don Verser).

Purple Martin *Progne subis* An estimated 50,000+ were at the Sharpstown Mall, *Harris* 18 Jul (Don Verser). Another 1500 had gathered by 14 Jul at the Baytown Nature Center, *Harris* (Dwayne Liteer)

Tree Swallow *Tachycineta bicolor* Six birds photographed 31 Jul at Anahuac NWR, *Chambers* were early (Joe Kennedy).

Blue-gray Gnatcatcher *Poliophtila caerulea* Ten seen 21 Jul at Sabine Woods, *Jefferson* and 4 at High Island, *Galveston* were early for such a total (Don Verser). These tie the UTC early fall date set just last year.

Clay-colored Robin *Turdus grayi* The Lake Jackson, *Brazoria* Clay-colored Robin was first heard on 21 Jun (Tom Morris). This marks the 5th consecutive summer this bird has been heard in the same neighborhood. So far, attempts to find this bird in winter have been unsuccessful.

Gray Catbird *Dumetella carolinensis* Gray Catbirds were found in record numbers this summer with birds seen or heard at 3 Jun-15 Jul at Joseph Fiorenza Park, *Harris* (Bernd Gravenstein), 6-14 Jun at two locations at Anahuac NWR, *Chambers* (Joe Kennedy), 7 Jun on Clara Road, *Harris* (John Berner), 9 Jun-18 Jul at the Eldridge Stormwater Drainage Basin in West Houston, *Harris* (Bernd Gravenstein), 10 Jun at High Island, *Galveston* (Don Verser), 23 Jun at Teichman Rd & I-45, *Galveston* (Ted Eubanks), 12 Jun-8 Jul on Pelican Island, *Galveston* (Ted Eubanks, Joe Kennedy - up to 4 birds), 18 Jul on Castleford Street in Houston, *Harris* (Drew Dickert). A pair was also found in early Jun in Houston's Hermann Park (Bob McFarlane). Bob has also received reports over the past three years from seven localities in Houston and Harris County in the Houston Bird Survey.

Brown Thrasher *Toxostoma rufum* Three young birds were reported from High Island, *Galveston* (Don Verser).

Cedar Waxwing *Bombycilla cedrorum* This species lingered into June this year. One was seen 2 Jun at Lake Jackson, *Brazoria* (Ron Weeks) and 8 were present on the same date at Sabine Woods, *Jefferson* (Don Verser). One was photographed 14 Jun from a group of 3 at Anahuac NWR, *Chambers* (Joe Kennedy). This is the latest summer record for the UTC.

Black-throated Green Warbler *Dendroica virens* One found 10 Jun at High Island, *Galveston* was very late (Don Verser). This record represents a new UTC late.

Prairie Warbler *Dendroica discolor* The first fall migrant was seen 31 Jul at Sabine Woods, *Jefferson* (Don Verser).

Black-and-white Warbler *Mniotilta varia* The first report was from 29 Jun at High Island, *Galveston* (Don Verser). This is the 2nd earliest fall record for the UTC.

American Redstart *Setophaga ruticilla* A female seen 4 Jun on west Galveston Island, *Galveston* (Jim Stevenson) was late. One seen 30 Jul at the HAS Dos Vacas Muertas Sanctuary on Galveston Island was the first Jul record for the UTC (Don Verser).

Prothonotary Warbler *Protonotaria citrea* One seen 6 Jul at High Island, *Galveston* may have been a very early migrant (fide Winnie Burkett).

Hooded Warbler *Wilsonia citrina* Interesting were 3 seen Sea Rim SP and 2 at Sabine Woods, both *Jefferson* and another at High Island, *Galveston* on 2 Jun (Don Verser). Since this species does not nest in any of these migrant traps, this indicates a very late pulse of migrants.

Lark Sparrow *Chondestes grammacus* Two seen 22 Jul at Candy Abshier WMA, *Chambers* (Joe Kennedy) may have been local breeders as this species has been seen there in the past.

Grasshopper Sparrow *Ammodramus savannarum* One found 10 Jun near the Katy Prairie near Stockdick School, *Harris* (John Berner) was notable since they are no longer an annual nester on the UTC.

Rose-breasted Grosbeak *Pheucticus ludovicianus* A female with an injured wing found 10 Jun at High Island, *Galveston* was very late (Don Verser). This is the 2nd latest spring record for the UTC.

Blue Grosbeak *Passerina caerulea* One to two birds were noted all summer along Hebert Road, Waller (Bob Honig). This species is a very rare summer resident on the UTC.

Indigo Bunting *Passerina cyanea* This rare summer breeder was reported all summer from *Waller* with a peak of 10 singing birds on 15 Jul (Bob Honig).

Orchard Oriole *Icterus spurius* Multiple birds were noted in Galveston on 15 Jul indicating the fall migration had begun (Ted Eubanks).

Common Redpoll *Carduelis flammea* One photographed at a seed feeder on the Bolivar Peninsula, *Galveston* (ph. Linda Vratis) will be just the 8th state and 2nd UTC record if accepted by the TBRC. Amazingly, the other UTC record was also from June!

Observers

John Berner
Charles Brower
Winnie Burkett
Fred Collins
Drew Dickert
Mary Dodson
Ted Eubanks
Caleb Frome
Bernd Gravenstein
Steve Gross
Susan Heath
Bob Honig
Joe Kennedy
Cin-Ty Lee
Dwayne Liteer
Robert & Kay Lookingbill
Donna Maddox
Jeff Mohamed
Bob McFarlane
Tom Morris
Brooke Nicotra
Tom O'Neal
Pam Smolen
Jim Stevenson
Tom Taroni
Don Verser
Linda Vratis
Ron Weeks
Jennifer Wilson