

Central Texas – Winter 2007-2008 (1 Dec 2007 – 29 Feb 2008)

Compiled by Eric Carpenter

Counties Covered: Andrews, Bandera, Bastrop, Bell, Bexar, Blanco, Borden, Brown, Burnet, Caldwell, Callahan, Coke, Coleman, Comal, Comanche, Concho, Coryell, Crockett, Dawson, De Witt, Eastland, Ector, Edwards, Erath, Falls, Fayette, Fisher, Gaines, Gillespie, Glasscock, Gonzales, Guadalupe, Hamilton, Hays, Howard, Irion, Jones, Karnes, Kendall, Kerr, Kimble, Kinney, Lampasas, Lavaca, Lee, Llano, Martin, Mason, McCullough, McLennan, Medina, Menard, Midland, Milam, Mills, Mitchell, Nolan, Reagan, Real, Runnels, San Saba, Schleicher, Scurry, Shackelford, Sterling, Sutton, Taylor, Tom Green, Travis, Upton, Uvalde, Williamson, Wilson

Seasonal Summary: Several observers noted that the season was somewhat uneventful. Temperatures were mild, rain was in low supply and passerine numbers, most notably sparrows, were below average. The ample rainfall from this past summer season seemed to adversely affect waterfowl and shorebird habitat in some areas due to those sustained high-water levels that affected plant growth. Red-breasted Nuthatches continued their strong push from the fall and were still present in numbers at the end of the season, though few other irruptives were noted. Both Audubon's Oriole and Green Jay were present in decent numbers in the southern edge of the region, in areas where they are typically absent.

Notable Species observed during the period:

“Shangri-La” Geese – A sizeable concentration of geese wintered again in far e. *Bell* near Oenaville. The group includes a couple thousand Snow Geese, 200+ Greater White-fronted Geese, 30 Cackling Geese and a small number of Ross's Geese (Randy Pinkston, Rich Kostecke). There are no other know concentration of geese in the region and birders have only discovered this group within the last couple years, though locals have been aware of it for several years.

Cackling Goose – Two Cackling Geese in Odessa, *Ector* 15 Feb were further south than is currently expected (Mark Lockwood).

Black Scoter – The L. Pflugerville, *Travis* Black Scoter from the fall continued thru 30 Dec (m.ob.).

Common Goldeneye - Common Goldeneyes had a strong showing with a half dozen December and January reports (of 1 to 3 birds) in *Bell*, *Travis*, and *Bexar* (m.ob.).

Western Grebe – Expected now on L. Buchanan, *Llano* during the winter, 11 Western Grebe were counted there 9 Dec (Tim Fennell, Eric Carpenter).

Green Heron – Single Green Herons wintered in nw. Austin, *Williamson* (Mikael Behrens) and at Austin's L. Lady Bird, *Travis* (m.ob.). Further inland, one was near Midland, *Midland* 17 Feb (Alvin & Donna Kelly).

White-faced Ibis – White-faced Ibis were unexpected inland with one near L. Ballinger, *Runnels* 1 Jan (Eric Carpenter, Maggie Burnett), 17 at SeaBee Park, *Jones* 13 Jan (Lorie Black), 5 at L. Ft. Phantom Hill, *Jones* 27 Jan (Cole Wild) and 5 at the Abilene Wastewater Treatment Plant, *Jones* 23 Feb (Laura Packer, Kathy Hampton, Dan Symonds).

Common Moorhen – An over-wintering Common Moorhen was seen at Kirby L., *Taylor* 30 Dec (Cole Wild) and 13 Jan (Lorie Black).

Mountain Plover – The *Williamson* Mountain Plover flock was elusive and not very large, with a maximum count of 15 on 31 Dec (Tim Fennell). More impressive was a count of 85+ in w. *Bexar* 4 Jan (Helen Rezbek, Mike Creese).

Pectoral Sandpiper – Very unexpected was a single Pectoral Sandpiper at the Abilene Wastewater Treatment Plant, *Callahan* 22 Dec – 26 Jan (ph., Cold Wild, Heidi Trudell).

Dunlin – Also unexpected for the season was a Dunlin at the Abilene Wastewater Treatment Plant, *Callahan* 1-8 Jan (ph., Cole Wild, Heidi Trudell).

Lesser Black-backed Gull – Though increasing and to be expected along the coast, Lesser Black-backed Gull is still rare inland so an adult at Meadow Lake, Round Rock, *Williamson* 2 Jan – 6 Jan was an excellent find (ph., Tim Fennell).

Pomarine Jaeger – The Kirby L., *Taylor* Pomarine Jaeger from the fall continued thru 4 Dec (m.ob.).

Anna's Hummingbird – An Anna's Hummingbird lingered near Spring Branch, *Blanco* 19 Dec – 1 Jan (ph., Leslie Linehan).

Broad-tailed Hummingbird – A Broad-tailed Hummingbird present in w. Austin, *Travis* since late August remained throughout the winter period (Judy Quick). Two other individuals were noted at separate *Travis* locations on 23 Dec (Ted Eubanks) and 24 Dec (Ed Fair). Another bird wintered near Utopia, *Uvalde* through 31 Dec (Mitch Heindel).

Lewis's Woodpecker – Less than annual, a Lewis's Woodpecker was present in far north *Midland* 1 Jan (Donna Kelly).

Red-headed Woodpecker – A rare winter wanderer was a Red-headed Woodpecker in *Midland*, *Midland* 30 Dec – 7 Jan (Sara St. Clair).

Red-naped Sapsucker – Single Red-naped Sapsuckers were noted near Elgin, *Bastrop* 2-12 Jan (Brush Freeman), on Ft. Hood, *Coryell* 24 Jan (ph., Rich Kostecke) and at South Llano River S.P., *Kimble* 25 Feb (Warren & Ellie Harrington).

Say's Phoebe – Say's Phoebes had a fantastic showing in the eastern corner of the region. Well over a dozen reports of birds were received from *McLennen*, *Coryell*, *Bell*, *Williamson*, *Lampasas* and *Travis* (m.ob.) throughout the period.

Ash-throated Flycatcher – An Ash-throated Flycatcher was studied on the Balcones Canyonland N.W.R., *Burnet* 4 Jan (Paul Sunby).

Great Kiskadee - The Great Kiskadee in Abilene, *Taylor* from the fall remained until at least 13 Jan (m.ob.). Also outstanding was a one-day wonder at Willis Creek, Granger Lake 3 Jan (ph. Tim Fennell) providing a first *Williamson* record.

Couch's Kingbird – Two Couch's Kingbirds lingered in Austin, *Travis* 4 -15 Dec (Homer Rushing).

Scissor-tailed Flycatcher – As many as six Scissor-tailed Flycatchers lingered in Round Rock, *Williamson*, with 1 bird remaining 1 Jan. Further north, 2 Scissor-tailed Flycatchers were noted 22 Dec at Abilene Wastewater Treatment Plant, *Callahan* (Cole Wild, Heidi Trudell).

Plumbeous Vireo – A single Plumbeous Vireo was in Gonzales, *Gonzales* 4 Jan (Brush Freeman).

Cassin's Vireo – A Cassin's Vireo was studied at McKinney Roughs, *Bastrop* 14 Jan (Brush Freeman).

Hutton's Vireo – Seemingly regular and less newsworthy on the plateau, a Hutton's Vireo wintered near Utopia, *Uvalde* (Mitch Heindel).

Green Jay – Green Jays pushed much further north than usual. Five or more birds were n. of Leakey, *Real* in January (Trudy Florence) and as many as fifteen birds were s. of Bandera, *Bandera* throughout the period (Martha Pendleton). Small groups were present from Jan+ in parts of *Uvalde* (Bob Rasa et al.) and throughout the period in sw. *Bexar* (m.ob.)..

Cave Swallow – Cave Swallows over-wintered in fair numbers at several locations around *Travis*, *Williamson*, and *Bell* (m.ob.).

Red-breasted Nuthatch – Red-breasted Nuthatches continued their strong showing from the fall with birds present throughout thru the end of the period (m.ob.).

Mountain Bluebird – A single Mountain Bluebird was photographed 26 Jan at Canyon Lake, *Comal* (ph. David Pueppke et al.).

Townsend's Solitaire – Not expected in the eastern part of the region, a Townsend's Solitaire was an outstanding find on Ft. Hood, *Bell* 28 Jan (Rich Kostecke).

Gray Catbird – Over-wintering Gray Catbirds included single birds in nw. Austin, *Williamson* 27 Dec+ (Mikael Behrens) and another near Cibolo, *Comal* 16 Dec+ (Susan Schaezler).

Tropical X Northern Parula – A Tropical X Northern Parula hybrid in downtown Austin, *Travis* 15 Dec+ (Kenny Anderson, Paul Sunby, ph., m.ob.) was well studied and illustrated the difficulties in identifying vagrant birds of this complex. The bird remained throughout the period though was largely ignored by birders after it was determined to be a hybrid.

Chestnut-sided Warbler – A Chestnut-sided Warbler was briefly studied 3 Dec in *Bastrop*, *Bastrop* (Brush Freeman) while a second individual 30 Dec – 5 Jan in New Braunfels, *Comal* (Derek Muschalek) may have been a wintering bird.

Townsend's Warbler – Quite unexpected was a Townsend's Warbler at Pedernales Falls S.P., *Blanco* 2 Dec (ph., Byron Stone et al).

Prairie Warbler – A great find at any season, a Prairie Warbler was in San Marcos, *Hays* 24 Jan (Greg Lambeth).

Palm Warbler – A Palm Warbler at Commons Ford Park, *Travis* 26 Jan+ was in the same area were one had been seen the previous winter (ph., Ed Fair et al.).

Prothonotary Warbler – Though there is an occasional winter bird along the coast, a Prothonotary Warbler near Stockdale, *Wilson* 27 Jan – 2 Feb was unexpected (ph., Chester Burrier).

Green-tailed Towhee – A cooperative Green-tailed Towhee in se. Austin, *Travis* 20 Jan+ was enjoyed by many local birders (ph, Eric Isley, m.ob.).

Clay-colored Sparrow – Solid wintering reports of Clay-colored Sparrow included one 15 Dec near Elroy, *Travis* (Byron Stone), one 20 Dec at Ft. Hood, *Coryell* (Scott Summers), one 20 Dec at Ft. Hood, *Bell* (Rich Kostecke), and another two near Peaceful Springs, *Burnet* on 2 Feb (ph. Byron Stone).

Black-throated Sparrow – Rarely detected away from their usual areas in winter, a Black-throated Sparrow north of Gonzales, *Gonzales* 4 Jan was very unexpected (Brush Freeman).

Sage Sparrow – North and east of their known range, two Sage Sparrows were in s. *Andrews* 14 Feb (Brush Freeman) while a single bird was near Lenorah, *Martin* 7 Feb (Nick Wallisch).

Golden-crowned Sparrow – A highlight of the season was certainly a cooperative Golden-crowned Sparrow discovered west of Robert Lee, *Coke* 15 Dec (Midland Naturalists, †m.ob.). The bird was presumably present all season as there were scattered reports thru 15 Jan, followed by no reports for many weeks though it was noted again in the spring (seen by Justin & Devin Bosler 20 Mar).

Painted Bunting – A Painted Bunting in a Midland, *Midland* yard 18 Dec was a first winter record for the area (Don Merritt, Joann Merritt).

Audubon's Oriole – Audubon's Orioles continued their strong northward push from the fall season. Birds were present in south San Antonio, *Bexar* throughout the period, with an incredibly high count of 29 birds on the C.B.C there 16 Dec (m.ob.).

Cassin's Finch – At least 2 Cassin's Finches were present at Abilene S.P., *Taylor* 29 Dec & 3 Feb (Cole Wild, ph., Laura Packer).

Red Crossbill – As many as 18 Red Crossbills were present at Buffalo Gap, *Taylor* 22 Dec – 17 Feb (Mark Cranford, m.ob.). Four birds were present nearby at Abilene S.P., *Taylor* 18 Feb (Laura Packer).

Cited observers and contributors:

New: Kenny Anderson, Andy & Julia Balinsky, Mikael Behrens, Lorie Black, Erik Breden, Maggie Burnett, Chester Burrier, Eric Carpenter, Mark Cranford, Grant Critchfield, Mike Creese, Gil Eckrich, Ted Eubanks, Ed Fair, Tim Fennell, Dixie Feuerbacher, Bobbye Frazier, Brush Freeman, Kathy Hampton, Warren & Ellie Harrington, Mitch Heindel, Eric Isley, Alvin & Donna Kelly, Rich Kostecke, Greg Lambeth, Leslie Linehan, Bill Lupardus, Don Merritt, Joann Merritt, Laura Packer, Judy Quick, Randy Pinkston, Helen Rejzek, Homer Rushing, Susan Schaezler, Georgina Schwartz, Chuck Sexton, Sara St. Clair, Byron Stone, Rose Marie Stortz, Scott Summers, Paul Sunby, Dan Symonds, Heidi Trudell, Nick Wallisch, Cole Wild.