

NORTHWEST TEXAS BIRD REPORT
WINTER 2019-2020
Prepared by Anthony Hewetson

The region went through a very mild and very dry winter, kicking out a lot of lingering birds into through the season, an odd smattering of water birds, and from mid-winter on some early arrivals.

TBRC review species are in **bold**. County names are in *italics*. All cited observers are listed, alphabetically, at the end of the report.

CINNAMON TEAL: One Cinnamon Teal was at Lake Six, *Lubbock* 24 Dec (Liam McGuire), 3 Cinnamon Teals were at the Cone Playa, *Crosby* 5 Jan (Amy Packer, Jay Packer), one Cinnamon Teal was seen just south of Floydada, *Floyd* 5 Jan (Amy Packer, Jay Packer), one-2 Cinnamon Teals were at the 103rd Street x Chicago Avenue Playa, *Lubbock* 12-26 Jan (Bobby Schat, Joe Cochran), and one-2 Cinnamon Teals were at Lubbock Lake Landmark, *Lubbock* 22-24 Jan (Joe Cochran, Cenna Lyon) – the species used to be very rare in winter; it is now regular and steadily increasing in numbers.

RED-BREASTED MERGANSER: One female Red-breasted Merganser was at the Cochran County Country Club, *Cochran* 20 Dec (Will Jaremko-Wright) – very rare away from the large lakes of the region; this represents a first county record and a very rare report from a shallow-water playa.

HORNED GREBE: 70 Horned Grebes were seen at the Truscott Brine Lake, *Knox* 15 Feb (Scot Wingo) – though the species is fairly regular in the eastern reaches of my region this is an unusually high number and, therefore, noteworthy.

WESTERN GREBE: One Western Grebe at McAlister Park, *Lubbock* 2-12 Dec (Joe Cochran, Jim Crites, Jennifer Miller, Barbara Pankratz, Bobby Schat, Zachary Schwab) – this is pretty early arrival; the species usually shows up in deep winter.

WHITE-THROATED SWIFT: 2 White-throated Swifts were reported from Caprock Canyons State Park, *Briscoe* 1 Jan (Laurie Looper) – this is a reasonable number for the site during winters when it is found along canyons in the region. Per Seyffert, the species did winter at canyon sites during some periods and, based on recent reports, may be back for a bit.

RUFIOUS HUMMINGBIRD: 1 male Rufous Hummingbird was visiting feeders at a Lubbock yard, *Lubbock* 1 Dec-9 Jan (ph. Jim Crites) – this is a rare wintering species in the region; the most likely of our two wintering hummingbirds (the other being Black-chinned Hummingbird).

AMERICAN AVOCET: One American Avocet was seen near Petersburg, *Hale* 23 Jan (Bobby Schat) – though records into early winter are becoming regular, deep winter records are still remarkable.

SNOWY PLOVER: 2 Snowy Plovers were at the Skeen Playa, *Lynn* 22 Dec (Anthony Hewetson) – though winter records seem to be increasing, they remain noteworthy.

LONG-BILLED CURLEW: 5 Long-billed Curlews were seen north of Earth, *Castro* (Amy Packer, Jay Packer), 16 Long-billed Curlews were reported from Lake Benjamin, *Knox* (Michelle Summers), and 100 Long-billed Curlews were seen near Happy, *Randall* (Fred Collins, Harvey Laas) – the status of this species as a winterer in the region is uncertain but, were it a songbird, we might go with the phrase irruptive.

STILT SANDPIPER: One Stilt Sandpiper was seen at the Himmel Farm, *Crosby* 14 Dec (Kelly Himmel, photographs) – accidental to the region in winter.

SOLITARY SANDPIPER: One Solitary Sandpiper was found at MacKenzie Park, *Lubbock* 12 Jan (Glenda Kelly) – formerly unheard of in the region during winter, now casual with records every two to five winters.

GREATER YELLOWLEGS: 13-14 Greater Yellowlegs were at the Himmel Farm, *Crosby* 7-14 Dec (Kelly Himmel), 13 Greater Yellowlegs were at the Salt Fork of the Brazos River, *Armstrong* 5 Jan (Amy Packer, Jay Packer), 12 Greater Yellowlegs were seen near Becton, *Lubbock* 10 Jan (Jim Crites), 19 Greater Yellowlegs were seen near Ralls, *Crosby* 19 Jan (Kelly Himmel), 81 Greater Yellowlegs were found near Abernathy, *Hale* 16 Feb (Niler Pyeatt), and 14 Greater Yellowlegs were seen just south of Crosbyton, *Crosby* 23 Feb (Kelly Himmel) – though we get small numbers in most winters, these were stunningly high numbers for the region – the most convincing demonstration of how mild winter was, perhaps, from a shorebird perspective.

LESSER YELLOWLEGS: One Lesser Yellowlegs was seen near the Lubbock Dump, *Lubbock* 14 Dec (Bobby Schat), 5 Lesser Yellowlegs were at the Cone Playa, *Crosby* 5 Jan (Amy Packer, Jay Packer), 2 Lesser Yellowlegs were near Ralls, *Crosby* (Kelly Himmel), and 2 Lesser Yellowlegs were seen near Weinert, *Haskell* 26 Feb (Janie Henderson, Caroline Humphries, Jane Ramberg, photographs) – usually very rare in the region during winter, bordering on casual; some feel it is becoming a to be looked for member of the winter avifauna.

BONAPARTE'S GULL: One Bonaparte's Gull was at White River Lake, *Crosby* 28 Dec (Drew Harvey, Barry Keith, Rob Lee) and one Bonaparte's Gull was seen at Lake Six, *Lubbock* 5 Jan (Anthony Hewetson) – fairly regular at large reservoirs to the north (the Panhandle proper) and to the south, it has become quite rare on the Southern High Plains.

NEOTROPIC CORMORANT: One-3 Neotropic Cormorants were reported from the parks of Lubbock, *Lubbock* 1 Dec-29 Feb (Joe Cochran, Jim Crites, Drew Harvey, Anthony Hewetson, Rich Kostecke, Jennifer Miller, Bobby Schat) – the species is slowly but surely becoming a low-density permanent resident in the region.

AMERICAN WHITE PELICAN: 3 American White Pelicans were at McAlister Park, *Lubbock* 9 Dec (Jennifer Miller) and one American White Pelican was seen near Spur, *Dickens* 1 Jan (Natalie Vande Voss) – good numbers from the first report (we usually get singles) and an unusual site for the second report.

WHITE-TAILED KITE: One-2 White-tailed Kites were near the Littlefield Airport, *Lamb* 24 Dec-19 Jan (Babe Banner, Bradley Banner, Peter Keyel, photographs) and one White-tailed Kite was seen near Morton, *Cochran* 11 Jan (Hillary Thompson) – the species occasionally shows up spring through fall, even breeding on occasion, but winter sightings are quite unusual.

RED-SHOULDERED HAWK: One Red-shouldered Hawk was at Butler Park, *Lubbock* 14 Dec (Jamie Court, Drew Harvey) – another species which is slowly but surely becoming a permanent, low-density resident in the region.

RED-BELLIED WOODPECKER: One Red-bellied Woodpecker was near Davis Park, *Lubbock* 1 Dec-4 Jan (Holly Bundock, Jim Crites, Drew Harvey, Anthony Hewetson, Jennifer Miller, Brad Shine, photographs) – extremely rare this far west in the region and an unusually lengthy report with the bird on site from 1 November 2019 through 4 January 2020.

RED-NAPED SAPSUCKER: One Red-naped Sapsucker was reported from Palo Duro Canyon State Park, *Armstrong* 2 Feb (Doug Smith, photographs) – a rare but regular fall migrant, winter lingerers are close to accidental.

HAIRY WOODPECKER: 2 Hairy Woodpeckers were seen at Lake Palo Duro, *Hansford* 7 Dec (Drew Harvey, Barbara Pankratz, Bill Sain, photographs) and 3 Hairy Woodpeckers were found at Boys Ranch, *Oldham* 4 Jan (Amy Packer, Jay Packer – status in the region uncertain; appears to be expanding from its former haunts in the Panhandle proper into outlying areas as woodlands mature.

GRAY FLYCATCHER: One Gray Flycatcher was seen at Muleshoe National Wildlife Refuge, *Bailey* 15 Dec (Phillip Kite, Niler Pyeatt, Susan Thompson, Lena Zappia, photographs) – accidental to the region; the second CBC record from this site over the years!

BLACK PHOEBE: One Black Phoebe was at MacKenzie Park, *Lubbock* 12 Jan-23 Feb (Derek Malone, Manuel De Leon, Jennifer Miller, at least ten other observers, photographs) – formerly accidental in the region; now close to annual with no detectable seasonality.

NORTHERN SHRIKE: One Northern Shrike was at Yellowhouse Canyon, *Lubbock* 10-12 Jan (Jim Crites, Jamie Court, Drew Harvey, Anthony Hewetson, Bobby Schat, photographs) – formerly rare this far south in the region; now casual with records occurring every two to five years.

CAROLINA CHICKADEE: One Carolina Chickadee was seen at White River Lake, *Crosby* 28 Dec (Phillip Kite, Jeremy Clark, Manuel De Leon) – formerly regular in the region; now casual bordering on accidental on the Southern High Plains.

BUSHTIT: 2-4 Bushtits were at the Lubbock Cemetery, *Lubbock* 4 Dec-29 Feb (Jim Crites, Peter Keyel, Liam McGuire, at least ten other observers, photographs), 3 Bushtits were found in Amarillo, *Potter* 22 Dec (Allison Anholt, Cameron Cox), 2 Bushtits were at Buffalo Springs Lake, *Lubbock* 3 Jan (Jordan Cochran), and one Bushtit was seen in Hereford, *Deaf Smith* 7 Jan (Gregg Hitchings, Eric Wilhoit) – formerly regular in the region; retracted considerably during the 2009-2013 drought, this seemed like an irruptive event but could, if the trend continues, indicate a re-occupation of the species' former territory in the region.

HOUSE WREN: One House Wren was at Buffalo Lake National Wildlife Refuge, *Randall* 23 Dec (Deb Wallace, Lee Wallace) and one House Wren was at the Salt Fork of the Brazos River, *Armstrong* 5 Jan (Amy Packer, Jay Packer) – winter records of the species are becoming regular just to the south but these records come from the northern fringe and may represent a slight northward expansion of the wintering range in the region.

CAROLINA WREN: One Carolina Wren was found in Bull Draw, *Lamb* 1 Dec (Babe Banner, Bradley Banner) – well west of the species' expected range in the region.

CACTUS WREN: One Cactus Wren was at Thompson Grove, *Dallam* 11 Dec-24 Feb (Jonah Gula, Mel Cooksey, at least ten other observers during the period, photographs) – well north of the species' expected range in the region.

EASTERN BLUEBIRD: 20 Eastern Bluebirds were seen at Lake Palo Duro, *Hansford* 7 Dec (Drew Harvey, Barbara Pankratz, Bill Sain) and 22 Eastern Bluebirds were seen in Yellowhouse Canyon, *Lubbock* 12 Jan (Jamie Court, Drew Harvey, Anthony Hewetson) – unusually high numbers for this far northwest and west in the region.

WESTERN BLUEBIRD: 15 Western Bluebirds were located near Calgary, *Crosby* 28 Dec (Jim Crites, Jan Jannett) – good numbers for what was NOT an irruptive year into the region.

GRAY CATBIRD: One Gray Catbird was seen in a Lubbock yard, *Lubbock* 29-30 Dec (Ken Dixon) and one Gray Catbird was found in Canyon, *Randall* 7 Feb (Jared Lee) – formerly casual in the region; now closing on annual albeit in low numbers.

PHAINOPEPLA: One Phainopepla was at the Lubbock Cemetery, *Lubbock* 24 Dec (Liam McGuire, Drew Harvey) – formerly accidental to the region; now closing on annual, generally as a post-breeding wanderer or lingering winter visitor.

LESSER GOLDFINCH: One Lesser Goldfinch was found at Ransom Lake, *Lubbock* 22 Feb (Skyler Parks) – early winter (December to mid-January) sightings are becoming

regular on the Southern High Plains but deep winter (late January – February) sightings remain noteworthy.

CHIPPING SPARROW: 2 Chipping Sparrows were found at Muleshoe National Wildlife Refuge, *Bailey* 15 Dec (Jim Crites, Cinda Crosley, Rebecca Gilman, Charles Harmon) and 2 Chipping Sparrows were seen near Red Mud, *Dickens* 28 Dec (Anthony Hewetson) – formerly casual in the region during winter; now closing on annual, generally in small numbers.

AMERICAN TREE SPARROW: 51 American Tree Sparrows were seen at Lake Palo Duro, *Hansford* 20 Feb (Fred Collins, Harvey Laas) – though regular in the winter in the northern portions of this region, this was an unusually high number by recent years' standards.

HARRIS'S SPARROW: One Harris's Sparrow was found at Muleshoe National Wildlife Refuge, *Bailey* 15 Dec (Anthony Hewetson, Jamie Court, Niler Pyeatt, photographs), one Harris's Sparrow was seen at Lake Six, *Lubbock* 4 Jan (Bobby Schat), and one Harris's Sparrow was seen in Yellowhouse Canyon, *Lubbock* 11 Jan (Jamie Court, Drew Harvey, Anthony Hewetson) - formerly regular this far south in the region during winter; during the recent spate of mild winters the species has become very rare.

RUFOUS-CROWNED SPARROW: One Rufous-crowned Sparrow was seen at Muleshoe National Wildlife Refuge, *Bailey* 15 Dec (Phillip Kite, Niler Pyeatt, Susan Thompson, Lena Zappia, photographs) – this is far west of the species' current range in the region.

GREEN-TAILED TOWHEE: One Green-tailed Towhee was just below Lake Six, *Lubbock* 14 Dec-4 Jan (Brett Andersen, Drew Harvey, Mark Lee, Liam McGuire, Bobby Schat), one Green-tailed Towhee was at Muleshoe National Wildlife Refuge, *Bailey* 11-18 Jan (Annette Bailey, Grant Beauprez, Cathy Nowak), and 2 Green-tailed Towhees were located in Yellowhouse Canyon, *Lubbock* 11 Jan (Jamie Court, Drew Harvey, Anthony Hewetson, photographs) – formerly casual in the region during winter; now closing in on annual albeit in small numbers.

EASTERN TOWHEE: One Eastern Towhee was found near Fritch, *Moore* 6 Dec (Drew Harvey, Barbara Pankratz, Bill Sain, photographs) – formerly casual in the region, generally during winter; now closing in on annual as a very rare winter visitor.

EASTERN x SPOTTED TOWHEE: One Eastern x Spotted Towhee was located at Buffalo Springs Lake, *Lubbock* 14 Dec (Peter Keyel, Liam McGuire, photographs) and one Eastern x Spotted Towhee was seen at Buffalo Lake National Wildlife Refuge, *Randall* 3 Jan (Amy Packer, Jay Packer) – the second winter in a row with two well-separated records of this hybrid form in the region; this has caused reviewers to look at Eastern Towhee reports far more carefully.

RUSTY BLACKBIRD: One Rusty Blackbird was spotted at Lake Palo Duro, *Hansford* 7 Dec (Drew Harvey, Barbara Pankratz, Bill Sain, photographs) and 3 Rusty Blackbirds were found at Buffalo Springs Lake, *Lubbock* 26 Dec (Drew Harvey, photographs) – the species is rare but regular to the region in winter and, as a species of special concern, this sparse wintering population is worth comment.

PYRRHULOXIA: One Pyrrhuloxia was seen near Plains, *Yoakum* 23 Dec (Tom Toporowoski) and one Pyrrhuloxia was at the Cochran County Country Club, *Cochran* 9 Feb (Niler Pyeatt) – both well west of the species normal occurrence in the region in recent years.

Cited observers: Brett Andersen, Allison Anholt, Annette Bailey, Babe Banner, Bradley Banner, Grant Beauprez, Holly Bundock, Jeremy Clark, Joe Cochran, Jordan Cochran, Fred Collins, Mel Cooksey, Jamie Court, Cameron Cox, Jim Crites, Cinda Crosley, Manuel De Leon, Ken Dixon, Rebecca Gilman, Jonah Gula, Charles Harmon, Drew Harvey, Janie Henderson, Anthony Hewetson, Kelly Himmel, Gregg Hitchings, Caroline Humphries, Jan Jannett, Will Jaremko-Wright, Barry Keith, Glenda Kelly, Peter Keyel, Phillip Kite, Rich Kostecke, Harvey Laas, Jared Lee, Mark Lee, Rob Lee, Jason Leifester, Laurie Looper, Cienna Lyon, Derek Malone, Liam McGuire, Jennifer Miller, Cathy Nowak, Amy Packer, Jay Packer, Barbara Pankratz, Skyler Parks, Niler Pyeatt, Jane Ramberg, Bill Sain, Bobby Schat, Zachary Schwab, Brad Shine, Doug Smith, Michelle Summers, Hillary Thompson, Susan Thompson, Tom Toporowoski, Natalie Vande Vuss, Deb Wallace, Lee Wallace, Eric Wilhoit, Scot Wingo, Lena Zappia