

NORTHWEST TEXAS BIRD REPORT  
WINTER 2020-2021  
Prepared by Anthony Hewetson

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

**BLACK-BELLIED WHISTLING-DUCK:** 14-15 Black-bellied Whistling-Ducks were at the Aquatic Center in Hereford, Deaf Smith Co from 15-23 Jan (Bob Friedrichs, m.ob, photographs) – regular enough in southern parts of the region to be not notable; northward incursions such as this still capture one's attention.

**BLUE-WINGED TEAL:** 14 Blue-winged Teals were at Lake Six, Lubbock Co on 19 Dec (Andrew Kasner, Niler Pyeatt) – becoming regular in the region as a winter but this was an exceptional number for a single sighting.

**CINNAMON TEAL:** One Cinnamon Teal was at Lake Rita Blanca, Hartley Co from 3-16 Jan (Doug Smith, Sue Smith) – exceptional this far north in the region in winter.

**EURASIAN WIGEON:** One Eurasian Wigeon wandered about various Lubbock playas, Lubbock Co from 3 Jan-15 Feb (Phillip Kite, Anthony Hewetson, m.ob., photographs) – this review species represented one of a handful of records for my region.

**GREATER SCAUP:** Two Greater Scaups were at the Lubbock Water Treatment Ponds, Lubbock Co on 19 Dec (Drew Harvey), one female Greater Scaup was at Whisperwood Pond, Lubbock Co from 19 Dec-9 Jan (Brad Shine, Jim Crites, photographs), 7-8 Greater Scaups were at Lake Meredith, Hutchinson Co from 5-7 Jan (Eric Carpenter, Rod Goodwin, photographs), and one Greater Scaup was at Gillham-Howell Park, Terry Co on 6 Jan (Jim Crites) – a rare but regular winter visitor to the region.

**COMMON MERGANSER:** 34 Common Mergansers were at Ransom Lake, Lubbock Co on 5 Feb (Drew Harvey) and 32 Common Mergansers were at adjacent Buffalo Springs Lake, Lubbock Co on 15 Feb (Brad Shine) – these might have been the same birds, given the proximity of the lakes, but, regardless a very high number for a single sighting in the county.

**RED-BREASTED MERGANSER:** Five Red-breasted Mergansers were at Lake Meredith, Moore Co on 1 Jan (Greg Cook, Steve Glover) – this is a fairly high number for any single site in the region.

**HORNED GREBE:** One Horned Grebe was at the Lubbock Water Treatment Ponds, Lubbock Co on 19 Dec (Drew Harvey) – formerly regular in the region in winter; now quite hard to find away from our larger lakes.

**WESTERN GREBE:** One Western Grebe persisted at Leroy Elmore Park through 2 Dec (Anthony Hewetson) – the last date for a bird that arrived quite early in the season.

**WHITE-THROATED SWIFT:** 19 White-throated Swifts were at Caprock Canyons State Park, Briscoe Co on 22 Dec (Peggy Trosper) – the species wintered at some canyons sites historically (per Seyffert) and appears to be reoccupying some of the sites.

**BROAD-TAILED HUMMINGBIRD:** One Broad-tailed Hummingbird persisted in an Amarillo yard, Randall Co through 26 Dec (Vicki Wilmarth, photographs) – this is the latest date on record for the species in the region and followed an exceptional fall for this, and other, western hummingbird species in the region.

**LEAST SANDPIPER:** 27 Least Sandpipers were at Post City Park, Garza Co on 30 Dec (Kathy Mihm Dunning, Tony Leukering) and 29 Least Sandpipers were at White River Lake, Crosby Co on 2 Jan (Phillip Kite, photographs) – though the species is regular, in small numbers, in winter these numbers were extraordinarily high for winter reports.

**LONG-BILLED DOWITCHER:** 12 Long-billed Dowitchers were at White River Lake, Crosby Co on 26 Feb (Mark Lockwood, photographs) and 18 were at White River Lake, Crosby Co on 27 Feb (Brad Shine) – though regular, in winter, in small numbers these were high numbers and, given that they were post severe winter weather event, had wandered in from somewhere.

**LESSER BLACK-BACKED GULL:** Two-four Lesser Black-backed Gulls were at Southeast Park, Randall Co on 14 Dec (Doug Smith, m.ob., photographs), two Lesser Black-backed Gulls were at McGee Lake, Potter Co on 18 Dec (K Dean Edwards), 1-2 Lesser Black-backed Gulls were at Lake Meredith, Hutchinson Co from 1 Jan-10 Feb (Greg Cook, Steve Glover, Vicki Wilmarth), and one Lesser Black-backed Gull was at Lake Meredith, Moore Co on 1 Jan (Greg Cook, Steve Glover) – an exceptional number of reports and very good numbers for the region.

**NEOTROPIC CORMORANT:** 1-2 Neotropic Cormorants were seen at various Lubbock playa parks, Lubbock Co from 1 Dec-28 Feb (Anthony Hewetson, m.ob., photographs) – formerly accidental in the area; now a low-density permanent resident in southern portions of the region.

**AMERICAN WHITE PELICAN:** 11 American White Pelicans were at Lake Palo Duro, Randall Co on 21 Dec (Lindsay Gredacht, Curtis Hart – regular, in smaller numbers, in the region during winter but this was another example of high numbers.

**BALD EAGLE:** 13 Bald Eagles were at the Carson Playa, Carson Co on 17 Jan (K Dean Edwards) and 25 Bald Eagles were at McGee Lake, Potter Co on 23 Feb (Micky Eubanks) – we had a surprisingly large number of reports scattered across the regions but these reports represented very high numbers by contemporary standards.

**GOLDEN EAGLE:** One Golden Eagle was seen near Paducah, Cottle Co on 3 Jan (Eric Carpenter) – though it was a good winter for the species in the region, this report was unusually far to the east for the species.

**HARRIS'S HAWK:** One Harris's Hawk was seen near Levelland, Hockley Co on 11 Dec (Brad Shine, photographs), one Harris's Hawk was seen over Lubbock, Lubbock Co on 4 Feb (Sheri Anderson), and one was seen near Brownfield, Terry Co on 22 Feb (Joel Buford, Brad Shine, photographs) – an intermittent visitor and even more intermittent breeder in southern portions of the region; good numbers for winter.

**RED-BELLIED WOODPECKER:** One Red-bellied Woodpecker was at Mae Simmons Park, Lubbock Co from 9 Dec-14 Jan (Joe Cochran, photographs), one Red-bellied Woodpecker was seen along Red Mud Road, Dickens Co on 2 Jan (Drew Harvey), one Red-bellied Woodpecker was seen near Flomot, Floyd Co on 23 Jan (Joe Heppert), one Red-bellied Woodpecker was seen at Lake Six, Lubbock Co on 13 Feb (Phillip Kite), and one Red-bellied Woodpecker was in a Lubbock yard, Lubbock Co on 27 Feb (Holly Bundock, photographs) – very rare this far west in the southern half of the region; this number of reports was exceptional.

**WILLIAMSON'S SAPSUCKER:** A stunning male Williamson's Sapsucker was at Palo Duro Canyon State Park, Randall Co from 3-26 Feb (Doug Smith, Sue Smith, m.ob., photographs) – accidental to the region; one of a handful of records for the entire region.

**RED-NAPED SAPSUCKER:** 1-2 Red-naped Sapsuckers were in a Lubbock yard, Lubbock Co from 27-28 Dec (Holly Bundock, photographs) and one Red-naped Sapsucker was at Camp Rio Blanca, Crosby Co on 7 Jan (Glenda Kelly, Matt Smith) – formerly considered accidental to the region in winter; now thought of as an annual lingerer.

**DOWNY WOODPECKER:** This was an invasion year for the species in the region with birds appearing to come from the east to move into relatively expected portions of the region and some appearing to come from the northwest to be found in unusual spots – one Downy Woodpecker seen at Stanford Park, Yoakum Co on 25 Dec (Jayna Adams, T. Jay Adams, photographs) was illustrative of the latter pattern; much further west than the species is usually seen in the region.

**HAIRY WOODPECKER:** One Hairy Woodpecker was seen in Dalhart, Dallam Co on 31 Dec (Greg Cook, Steve Glover) – quite possibly part of the movement of birds into the region from the northwest.

**BLACK PHOEBE:** One Black Phoebe was at Lubbock Lake Landmark, Lubbock Co from 12 Dec-6 Feb (Jim Crites, Grant Beauprez, m.ob., photographs), one Black Phoebe was at MacKenzie Park, Lubbock Co from 16 Dec-14 Feb (Barry Keith, Brad Shine, m.ob., photographs), one Black Phoebe was at the Plainview Apartments Playa, Hale Co on 8 Jan (Andrew Kasner, Niler Pyeatt), and one Black Phoebe was at Lake Six, Lubbock Co on 14 Jan (Jeff Sexton) – formerly accidental in the region; close to becoming a permanent resident along watercourses in the southern half of the region.

**NORTHERN SHRIKE:** One Northern Shrike was found at White River Lake, Crosby Co on 2 Jan (Brandon Best, Rich Kostecke, photographs) and one Northern Shrike was

found near Enochs, Bailey Co on 22 Jan (Jesse Huth, photographs) – formerly annual throughout the region; closing in on accidental this far south in the region.

WOODHOUSE'S SCRUB-JAY: One Woodhouse's Scrub-Jay was found at Muleshoe NWR, Bailey Co on 20 Dec (Jim Crites, m.ob., photographs) and on 30 Dec (Justin Bosler) – accidental this far west in the region; the bird is thought to be part of the movement of songbirds from the northwest.

COMMON RAVEN: One Common Raven was seen at the V8 Ranch, Lubbock Co on 19 Dec (Drew Harvey), eight Common Ravens were seen at Buffalo Lake NWR, Randall on 2 Jan (Vicki Wilmarth), one Common Raven was seen near Miami, Roberts Co on 2 Jan (Greg Cook, Steve Glover), one Common Raven was seen near Hereford, Castro Co on 3 Jan (Greg Cook, Steve Glover), and one Common Raven was reported from McGee Lake, Potter on 24 Feb (James Hamous) – winter reports from the northwestern and western portions of the region, thought to be birds moving in from the northwest, and reports from the southeastern portion of the region, thought to be birds reoccupying the canyon country of the region are no longer notable; reports from the central counties are still of interest.

TREE SWALLOW: One Tree Swallow was reported from Buffalo Springs Lake, Lubbock Co from 11-12 Feb (Brad Shine, photographs) – a record early date for the region; it disappeared during the severe winter event slightly later in the month.

CAROLINA CHICKADEE: One Carolina Chickadee was seen at the Plainview Apartments Playa, Hale Co on 1 Feb (Andrew Kasner, Niler Pyeatt) – a very rare report this far west in the region; possibly a first county record.

MOUNTAIN CHICKADEE: One Mountain Chickadee was found in Dalhart, Hartley Co from 1-31 Dec (Nick Glover, Greg Cook, m.ob., photographs), two Mountain Chickadees were seen in Thompson Grove, Dallam on 12 Dec (Justin Bosler), one Mountain Chickadee was seen in Kiowa National Grassland, Dallam on 17 Jan (Paul DiFiore, Christian Walker, m.ob., photographs) and 1-3 Mountain Chickadees were found in Texline, Dallam from 17 Jan-6 Feb (Deb Wallace, Lee Wallace, m.ob., photographs) – part of a continuing irruption into the region.

VERDIN: One Verdin was found at Muleshoe NWR, Bailey Co on 20 Dec (Anthony Hewetson) – very rare this far west in the region.

BUSHTIT: 2-10 Bushtits persisted at the Lubbock Cemetery, Lubbock Co from 1 Dec-4 Feb (Drew Harvey, Phillip Kite, m.ob., photographs), two Bushtits were at Muleshoe NWR, Bailey CO on 20 Dec (Manuel De Leon, Rob Lee), two Bushtits were at White River Lake, Crosby Co from 1-2 Jan (Anthony Hewetson, Drew Harvey), and 26 Bushtits were at Dickens Springs, Dickens Co on 16 Jan (Mark Lockwood) – the first three reports were further west than the species is usually found in the region; the last report features an extraordinarily high count for the region.

WHITE-BREASTED NUTHATCH: One White-breasted Nuthatch was seen at Stanford Park, Plainview, Yoakum Co on 25 Dec (Janya Adams, T. Jay Adams, photographs) – very rare this far southwest in the region.

ROCK WREN: One Rock Wren was found at Mulehoe NWR, Bailey Co on 20 Dec (Manuel De Leon, Rob Lee) – very rare this far west in the region.

CACTUS WREN: One Cactus Wren was found at Muleshoe NWR, Bailey Co on 20 Dec (Manuel De Leon, Rob Lee) and on 30 Dec (Justin Bosler) and one Cactus Wren was found at Potato Springs, Dallam Co from 31 Dec-21 Jan (Josh Lefever, Gary Yoder, photographs) – part of a continuing pattern of records for the species, during 2020, far west and north of their usual range in the region.

EASTERN BLUEBIRD: One Eastern Bluebird was seen at Stanford Park, Plainview, Yoakum Co on 25 Dec (Jayna Adams, T. Jay Adams), six Eastern Bluebirds were seen in Hereford, Deaf Smith Co on 3 Jan (Greg Cook, Steve Glover), and one Eastern Bluebird was found in Coleman Park, Terry Co on 16 Jan (Bob Friedrichs) – all sightings well west of the species usual haunts in the region.

WESTERN BLUEBIRD: Six Western Bluebirds were seen in Quanah, Hardeman Co on 1 Jan (Steve Welborn) and four Western Bluebirds were found at Copper Breaks State Park, Hardeman Co on 30 Jan (Noreen Bake) – both sightings well east of the species typical winter range in the region.

GRAY CATBIRD: 1-2 Gray Catbirds were found at/near Lake Six, Lubbock Co from 1 Dec- 28 Feb (Niler Pyeatt, Anthony Hewetson, m.ob., photographs), one Gray Catbird was at Palo Duro Canyon State Park, Randall Co from 6 Dec-1 Feb (Sue Smith, Hannah Tripp, m.ob., photographs), and one Gray Catbird was in a Lubbock yard, Lubbock Co from 13-28 Feb (Glenda Kelly) – formerly casual, at best, in the region during winter, this species now appears to be at the tipping point of becoming a low-density winter resident.

SAGE THRASHER: One Sage Thrasher was found along County Road 25, Armstrong Co on 5 Dec (Amy Packer, Jay Packer), one Sage Thrasher was found south of Lubbock, Lubbock Co on 6 Dec (Anthony Hewetson), 1-2 Sage Thrashers were seen at Caprock Canyons State Park, Briscoe from 8-10 Dec (Todd Fitzgerald, photographs), one Sage Thrasher was at the Himmel Farm, Crosby Co from 10-17 Dec (Kelly Himmel, photographs), two Sage Thrashers were on the Wheeler Ranch, Crosby Co on 26 Dec (Mark Lockwood, photographs), one Sage Thrasher was found at Tahoka Lake Pasture, Lynn Co on 26 Dec (Manuel De Leon, Jennifer Miller), one Sage Thrasher was seen near Turkey, Hall Co on 23 Jan (Jesse Huth, photographs), one Sage Thrasher was seen at Lake Stamford, Haskell Co on 6 Feb (Bradley Banner, photographs), three Sage Thrashers were on the Wheeler Ranch, Crosby Co on 7 Feb (Mark Lockwood, photographs), one Sage Thrasher was seen on the Himmel Farm, Crosby Co from 8-20 Feb (Kelly Himmel, photographs), two Sage Thrashers were found at White River Lake, Crosby Co on 13 Feb (Angelina Zappia, photographs), and 2-4 Sage Thrashers were seen

at Buffalo Springs Lake, Lubbock Co from 25-27 Feb (Brad Shine, Joe Cochran, photographs) – while one or two sightings during winter is not unusual, this represented, by this species' standards, an irruptive event.

**CEDAR WAXWING:** Though the species is a regular, low-density winter visitor to the region, the species underwent a massive irruptive event, particularly towards the end of the period with tens of reports of ten birds towards the beginning of the period shifting to tens of reports of hundreds and a few reports of thousands of birds scattered throughout the region. The severe weather event of mid-February seemed to push the birds into urban areas a bit but did not diminish the strength of the irruptive event. Two observers who have been watching birds in the region for over thirty years felt that it was the strongest Cedar Waxwing irruption during that period.

**EVENING GROSBEAK:** One Evening Grosbeak was found at White River Lake, Crosby Co on 2 Jan (Phillip Kite, photographs), one Evening Grosbeak was seen in a Plainview yard, Hale Co on 16 Feb (Melba Olsen, photographs), one Evening Grosbeak was located in another Plainview yard, Hale Co on 18 Feb (Niler Pyeatt, photographs), and 1-18 Evening Grosbeaks tended feeders and other foraging sites at Palo Duro Canyon State Park, Randall Co from 26-28 Feb (Raymond Burr, Micah Schulze, m.ob., photographs) – formerly regular to the region in winter (per Seyffert) but now rare enough to be a state-level review species.

**PURPLE FINCH:** One Purple Finch was found at Lake Marvin, Hemphill Co 21 Dec (Lindsay Gedacht, Curtis Hart) and one Purple Finch was located at Buffalo Springs Lake, Lubbock Co on 30 Jan (Brad Shine, photographs) – formerly considered casual, at best, in the region but recent winters are seeing a somewhat more regular pattern of visitation.

**CASSIN'S FINCH:** One Cassin's Finch was found in Texline, Dallam Co on 31 Dec (Greg Cook Steve Glover), one Cassin's Finch was found in the Dalhart Cemetery, Dallam on 4 Jan (Wyatt Egelhoff), and 1-6 Cassin's Finches were in Amarillo, Potter 13-18 Jan (K. Dean Edwards, Doug Smith, m.ob., photographs) – formerly casual during the winter; recent years suggest that the species might be a more regular visitor than previously expected or might be in the process of becoming a more regular visitor.

**RED CROSSBILL:** One Red Crossbill was found in Texline, Dallam Co on 31 Dec (Greg Cook, Steve Glover) – rare in the region; sightings often come during irruptive events which did NOT occur in the region this year.

**PINE SISKIN:** Though the species usually shows up in small numbers during most winter periods, and absolutely stunning irruptive event continued throughout the period with multiple reports of hundreds of birds where forage was available and numerous observers reporting previously unrecorded numbers throughout the region; particularly throughout the southern portions of the region.

GRASSHOPPER SPARROW: One Grasshopper Sparrow was found at Clapp Park, Lubbock Co on 9 Feb (Joe Cochran, photographs) – very rare, close to accidental, in the region during winter.

BREWER'S SPARROW: Two Brewer's Sparrows were found at the V8 Ranch, Lubbock Co on 19 Dec (Drew Harvey, photographs) – accidental to the region in winter

AMERICAN TREE SPARROW: Three American Tree Sparrows were found on the V8 Ranch, Lubbock Co on 19 Dec (Drew Harvey, photographs) and one American Tree Sparrow was located in the woodlands north of White River Lake, Crosby Co on 2 Jan (Brandon Best, Rich Kostecke) – formerly regular in the region during winter; now restricted to our northern counties, making these two sightings noteworthy.

SAGEBRUSH SPARROW: One Sagebrush Sparrow was found at Muleshoe NWR, Bailey Co on 22 Jan (Jesse Huth, photographs) – another surprising winter sparrow report; casual, at best, in the region during winter.

BRONZED COWBIRD: One Bronzed Cowbird was found in a Lubbock yard, Lubbock Co 1-10 Dec (Danny Hancock, photographs), two Bronzed Cowbirds were seen near Plainview, Hale Co on 12 Jan (Bob Friedrichs, photographs), and 1-3 Bronzed Cowbirds persisted in a Lubbock yard, Lubbock Co from 1-25 Feb (Kathy Teague, photographs) – the species has been inching towards permanent resident status for about five years; this was the year we documented birds making it through the entire winter season!

RUSTY BLACKBIRD: Two Rusty Blackbirds continued near Lubbock Lake Landmark, Lubbock Co from 4 Dec-3 Jan (Sheri Anderson, m.ob., photographs) and one of these Rusty Blackbirds continued at the site from 4 Jan-13 Jan (Joe Cochran, m.ob., photographs), seven Rusty Blackbirds were found at Lake Meredith, Moore Co on 1 Jan (Larry Mays, photographs), and one was found near Gruver, Hansford Co on 2 Jan (Greg Cook, Steve Glover, photographs) – formerly considered casual, at best, in the region, the species is now considered a regular, albeit low-density, winter visitor.

COMMON YELLOWTHROAT: One Common Yellowthroat was found at Baylor Lake, Childress Co on 12 Dec (Mark Lockwood) – very rare this far north in winter.

PYRRHULOXIA: Two Pyrrhuloxias were found at Lake Baylor, Childress Co on 12 Dec (Mark Lockwood), 1-3 Pyrrhuloxias were at Lake Meredith, Hutchinson Co from 12 Dec-2 Jan (Rod Goodwin, photographs, Karen Carpenter), one Pyrrhuloxia was found at Muleshoe NWR, Bailey Co on 20 Dec (Jim Crites, m.ob. photographs) and on 30 Dec (Justin Bosler), One Pyrrhuloxia was seen near Skellytown, Carson Co on 1 Jan (Greg Cook, Steve Glover, photographs), one Pyrrhuloxia was seen in Pioneer Park, Collingsworth Co on 18 Jan (Gary Yoder, photographs), and one Pyrrhuloxia was seen in an Amarillo yard, Potter Co from 13-15 Feb (Joann Pruitt) – fairly rare this far north and west in the region; this number of reports and these numbers, for this species, come across as an irruptive event.

Cited observers: Jayna Adams, T. Jay Adams, Sheri Anderson, Noreen Baker, Bradley Banner, Grant Beauprez, Brandon Best, Justin Bosler, Joel Buford, Holly Bundock, Raymond Burr, Eric Carpenter, Karen Carpenter, Joe Cochran, Greg Cook, Jim Crites, Manuel De Leon, K Dean Edwards, Paul DiFiore, Wyatt Egelhoff, Micky Eubanks, Todd Fitzgerald, Bob Friedrichs, Lindsay Gedacht, Nick Glover, Steve Glover, Rod Goodwin, James Hamous, Curtis Hart, Drew Harvey, Joe Heppert, Anthony Hewetson, Kelly Himmel, Jesse Huth, Andrew Kasner, Barry Keith, Glenda Kelly, Phillip Kite, Rich Kostecke, Rob Lee, Josh Lefever, Tony Leukering, Mark Lockwood, Larry Mays, Kathy Mihm Dunning, Jennifer Miller, Melba Olsen, Amy Packer, Jay Packer, Joann Pruitt, Niler Pyeatt, Micah Schulze, Jeff Sexton, Brad Shine, Doug Smith, Matt Smith, Sue Smith, Kathy Teague, Hannah Tripp, Peggy Trospen, Christian Walker, Deb Wallace, Lee Wallace, Steve Welborn, Vicki Wilmarth, Gary Yoder, Angelina Zappia.s