

DRAFT
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North Central Texas Bird Report
Winter 2019-2020
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.Regional Highlights

This season produced some outstanding unexpected TBRC state rarities and several first or second n-central Texas regional records. Best birds of this winter were Red-necked Grebe, **Heermann's Gull**, Common Tern, Red-faced Warbler, Black-throated Blue Warbler, and MacGillivray's Warbler.

Few localized concentrations of wintering birds were present this season. However as evidenced by the CBC results and a search of ebird county sightings throughout the region, the abundance of a variety of families was well below average. Ducks, raptors, some gulls, and winter songbirds, especially some sparrow species, were noted as lower to well below numbers than average. Overall, not a winter with lots of birds which produced some slow days.

The story of winter however was the very large variety of lingering, late arrival, and wintering birds, especially passerines in many years. Late or near late county records: Pectoral Sandpiper, Yellow-crowned Night-heron, Swainson's Hawk, Palm Warbler, Summer Tanager, Baltimore Oriole, Orchard Oriole. Is this trend a harbinger of future winters caused by warmer temperatures associated with climate change?

Potentially Noteworthy Sightings

Surf Scoter – The Surf Scoter found at Runaway Bay, Lake Bridgeport, *Wise* last year returned and was found on 28 Jan (Michelle Summers).

Long-tailed Duck – Two Long-tailed Ducks at Cooper Lake, *Delta* 15-16 Feb (Blaine Carnes, Greg Cook, Dorothy Currie, ph.) were an unexpected rare find.

Tundra Swan – Two immature Tundra Swans were briefly observed at Village Creek Drying Beds, *Tarrant*, 2 Dec (John Allendorf, ph.).

Red-necked Grebe – Casual at best every 5-10 years in n-central Texas was a Red-necked Grebe at Hubbard Creek Reservoir, *Stephens* 14 Jan (Todd Fitzgerald, ph.)

Little Gull – Little Gulls are uncommon winter visitors in n-central Texas; three were found this winter, an adult observed from Bowman Springs Park, Lake Arlington, *Tarrant* 31 Jan- 5 Feb (Ed Wetzels, m.ob., ph.), one was at Joe Pool Lake *Dallas* 1 Jan (Jim Sipiora), and one at White Rock Lake, *Dallas*, 16 Feb (Chris Runk, ph.).

Heermann's Gull – The best totally unexpected surprise rarity of the season in n-central Texas was the state's fifth **Heermann's Gull** at Lake Benbrook, *Tarrant* 2-6 Dec. (John Allendorf, m.ob., ph.)

Iceland Gull – Rare but now annual and expected in n-central Texas were single 1st cycle Iceland (Thayer's) Gulls at the White Rock Lake spillway, *Dallas* 1 Dec – 3 Jan (Chris Runk, m.ob., ph), and at Hagerman NWR, Lake Texoma, Grayson 5- 6 Jan (Mike Cameron, ph.).

Glaucous Gull –Rare but now annual in the region were single first winter Glaucous Gulls at L. Texoma, Hagerman NWR, *Grayson* 17 Dec – 6 Jan (Jack Childs, m.ob., ph.) and at Stewart Creek Park Lake Lewisville, *Denton* 28 Dec. - 19 Jan (Winston Caillouet, ph.).

Glaucous-winged/Herring Gull (aka Cook's Gull). This hybrid, found on the White Rock Lake spillway (*Dallas*) 28 Dec (Chris Runk, Mike Cameron, ph.) was identified well after the sighting date when photos were carefully examined and sent to gull ID experts. This underscores the importance of close examination of immature gulls, the fact that gulls are difficult to ID and that all may not be identifiable in the field.

Common Tern – Totally unexpected in n-central Texas in mid-winter was an adult Common Tern in near full breeding plumage at N. Holiday Park, L. Benbrook, *Tarrant* 10 Jan (Ed Wetzel. ph.), possibly an overshoot after a period of strong south winds.

Pacific Loon – Locally uncommon reports of Pacific Loons in n-central Texas were two at Lake Tawakoni *Rains/Van Zandt* 28 Dec (Greg Cook, Sheryl Barker) with one there 31 Jan (Justin Bosler) while one was at Eisenhower Park, L. Texoma *Grayson* 28 Jan (Laurie Sheppard ph.)

Long-eared Owl – Always a good rare find were up to 5 Long-eared Owls at Trammel Crow Park, *Dallas* 21-26 Dec (Ben Sandifer, m.ob., ph.)

Red-naped Sapsucker – Casual in n-central Texas was an easterly Red-naped Sapsucker at Timberglenn Park, *Denton* 26 Jan-22 Feb (Kent Trulsson ph.)

Purple Martin – A male Purple Martin at Village Creek Drying Beds, *Tarrant* 14 Dec (Robert Mustell, ph.) was a first ever documented record for Dec in n-central Texas. This bird was either a record early migrant or less likely a very late lingering bird. This species arrives as early as January in n-central Texas.

MacGillivray's Warbler – Far-east of normal and out of season was a MacGillivray's Warbler at John Bunker Wetlands Center, *Kaufman* 4 Jan (Blaine Carnes, ph.).

Red-faced Warbler – Far-east of normal range and a first for n-central Texas was a stunning photo documented report of a **Red-faced Warbler** on private property near Whitney, *Hill* 24 Jan+ (Lisa Silas, ph.) All permission requests for access were denied by the private landowner.

Black-throated Blue Warbler - Amazing was a Black-throated Blue Warbler which wintered at a suet feeder at Arborside Dr., *Dallas* 1 Dec – 29 Feb+ (Taylor Kirkland, m.ob., ph.).

Palm Warbler – A Palm Warbler was late at Big Mineral Marina. Lake Texoma, *Grayson* 21 Dec (Jack Childs, ph.) while another spent the winter at Village Creek Drying Beds, *Tarrant* 1 Dec – 29 Feb (Ed Wetzel, m.ob., ph.).

Weather

Overall the region was warmer and wetter in December and January while February was cooler than normal. Rainfall to the east remained near to above normal while the west was lower than normal. January was especially wet.

Bird Group Summaries

Wintering Birds

Wintering gulls were late arriving and in well below normal numbers in many locales this winter. Although widely scattered locales reported some large concentrations of ducks most areas reported well below average numbers. Geese numbers were average.

Shorebirds

Shorebird numbers were way below average this winter. Many ponds and reservoirs were full or overflowing, significantly limiting shorebird foraging habitat.

Hummingbirds

Hummingbird feeder reports were nearly not existent this winter. Only one Rufous hummingbird was reported from a feeder..

Raptors

Hawk numbers were very low this winter.

Wintering Passerines

Many species were in below average numbers. Of note were low numbers of wrens (i.e. House and Winter), American Pipit, and some sparrow species. Smith's longspurs were not reported this winter. Rusty Blackbird numbers were in below average numbers. Some migrating northern passerines continued to pass through until January, with more than average numbers lingering all winter.

Observers (listed alphabetically by last name)

John Allendorf
Sheryl Barker
Justin Bosler
Winston Caillouet
Mike Cameron
Blaine Carnes
Jack Childs
Greg Cook
Todd Fitzgerald
Taylor Kirkland
Robert Mustell
Chris Runk
Ben Sandifer
Laurie Sheppard
Lisa Silas
Jim Sipiora
Michelle Summers
Kent Trulsson
Ed Wetzel