

FINAL

North American Birds Regional Report

North Central Texas Fall (August-November) 2020

Compiled and Edited by Ross Rasmussen

Regional Highlights:

Common Ground Dove, Anna's Hummingbird, Broad-tailed Hummingbird, Mountain Plover, Red Knot, Red-necked Phalarope, Swallow-tailed Kite, Hammond's Flycatcher, Cassin's Finch, Thick-billed (McCown's) Longspur, Chestnut-sided Longspur.

Overview

Irruption of northern and western species began in September and continued through November. Northern species included: Red-breasted Nuthatch, Purple Finch, Pine Siskin. Western species included: Rufous Hummingbird, Mountain Bluebird, Lark Bunting, and a variety of other western birds in small numbers (Western Bluebird, Sage Thrasher). In addition, there were single occurrences of a wide range of other vagrant western birds. Western irruption species were confined primarily to the areas west of Dallas County.

Surf Scoter – Formerly casual historically Surf Scoters are now locally uncommon to rare regular regional migrants. This fall one returned to Lake Bridgewater, 28 Oct (Michelle Summers), three were on L. Benbrook, *Tarrant* 2 Nov (John Allendorf, ph.), and one was seen from the Brockdale Park boat ramp, *Collin* 15 Nov (Mike Cameron ph. Don Stanley).

Western Grebe – Early and rare was Western Grebe at Miller's Creek Reservoir, *Baylor* 13 Oct (Ben Sandstrom, ph.). Another Western Grebe was located on N. Buffalo Creek Reservoir, *Wichita* 11 Nov (Ben Sandstrom. ph.).

Common Ground Dove – A Common Ground Dove found along CR 485, *Baylor* 24 Oct (Scotty Lofland. ph.) was, based on ebird records, the northern most record for Texas; another Common Ground Dove was found at Village Drying Beds, *Tarrant* 16 Oct - 30 Nov+ and was then joined by another; both persisted through the end of the season (Colby Ayers, m.ob., ph.).

Anna's Hummingbird – Casual at best with long periods between regional sightings was an Anna's Hummingbird at a feeder along Balcones Ln. Graford, *Palo Pinto* 24 Oct-20 Nov (Peter Gottschling, ph.).

Broad-tailed Hummingbird – Accidental in n-cent. Texas was an easterly vagrant Broad-tailed Hummingbird at a feeder along Cross Creek Dr., Kennedale, *Tarrant* 3-4 Oct (Marta Wnorowska, ph.).

Long-eared Owl – A Long-eared Owl is always a rare find so one found deep in the woods at Arcadia Park Trail, *Tarrant* 24-26 Nov (Jen Tooley, Denise Tabony Stephens, ph.) was a notable find.

Short-eared Owl – Record early for n-central Texas this fall was a Short-eared Owl at Hagerman NWR, *Grayson* 12 Oct (Jack Chiles, ph.).

King Rail – Casual, with very few recent records, was a vocal King Rail at Village Creek Drying Beds, *Tarrant* 8 Aug (Ed Wetzel).

Whooping Crane – Sightings of migrating Whooping Cranes, always a rare treat for regional birders; four were found at L. Arrowhead, *Archer*, 20-23 Oct (Scotty Lofland, ph.) and three over Bugscuffle Ridge, *Montague* 29 Oct (Byron Barton, ph.) and potentially the same individuals on the same date over Hatcher Rd, Joshua, *Johnson* (Ty Allen, ph.).

American Golden-Plover – Totally unexpected was a record regional day fall count of 39 American Golden-Plovers at N. Buffalo Creek Reservoir, *Wichita* 4 Oct (Scotty Lofland). In addition, 31 more were reported in the region via ebird reports and other reporting sites providing a stunning region fall record total of 70. Historically, American Golden-Plover are normally rare fall visitors (1-3 individuals) so this fall the species migration route was far from normal.

Mountain Plover - An outstanding casual at best sighting, normally with 10 to 20 year between regional species sightings, was a single Mountain Plover at Miller's Creek Reservoir, *Throckmorton* 26 Aug – 6 Sep (Scotty Lofland, Ben Sandstrom, ph.).

Red Knot – Casual inland in Texas was a Red Knot at Lake Benbrook, *Tarrant* 9-12 Sep (Suzanne Odum, Sheila Shallcross, ph. m.ob.).

Short-billed Dowitcher – Rare this fall with only two detailed reports, were two Short-billed Dowitchers, one at Hagerman NWR, *Grayson* 30 Aug (Neva Damron) and one at Miller's Creek Reservoir, *Throckmorton* 6 Sep (Scotty Lofland).

Willet – A Willet at Hagerman NWR 31 Oct (Mike Cameron, ph.) was record late for the region.

Red-necked Phalarope – Up to three Red-necked Phalaropes were present at the Dallas Water Treatment Plant, Seagoville, *Dallas* 24 Sep – 1 Oct (Roland Castenada, m.ob., ph), were a rare find for the region.

Sabine's Gull – Rare but usually found in fall was a Sabine's Gull that made a brief stop at L. Benbrook, *Tarrant* 12 Oct (John Allendorf).

Mew Gull – Casual was a Mew Gull at Lake Benbrook, *Tarrant* 25-28 Nov (John Allendorf, Denise Tabony Stephens, ph.).

Brown Booby – The Brown Booby found during summer returned to Lake Grapevine, *Denton/Tarrant* 25 Sep - 13 Oct (Colby Ayers, m.ob. ph.). Another Brown Booby was discovered at Joe Pool Lake, Estes Park *Tarrant* 25 Nov (Carl Walker, ph.) near the pond where one was found last year.

Brown Pelican – Rare but usually found in the region was a Brown Pelican observed from the Wise Co. Park, L. Bridgeport, *Wise* 13-15 Aug (Michelle Summers, ph.).

Glossy Ibis - Rare this fall was only a single report of Glossy Ibis at Village Creek Drying Beds, *Tarrant* 2-8 Aug (ph. Charley Amos et al.).

Swallow-tailed Kite-The species of the season for many birders was Swallow-tailed Kite with up to five individuals that graced the skies of Collin and Grayson counties. The first was one over Connemara, *Collin* 11 Aug (Hongyang Choa, ph) and the last two at Fairview Park, Sherman, *Grayson* 1 Sep (Alisa Roberts, m.ob., ph.).

White-tailed Kite – Rare were reports of single White-tailed Kites southeast of Holliday, *Archer* 3 Oct (Scotty Lofland, ph.) and at L. Clark, *Ennis* 18 Oct (Rel Libscomb).

Ferruginous Hawk – Rare east of normal regional range was a Ferruginous Hawk over Nora Haney Park, McKinney, *Collin* 5 Nov (Brady Schwab, ph.) and one over the Dallas Wastewater Treatment Plant, Seagoville, 29-30 Nov (Matt DuRoss, ph. Ed Wetzel).

Golden Eagle – Casual to rare in central sections of n-central Texas was a wandering adult Golden Eagle over L. Benbrook, *Tarrant* 13 Oct (Bob Bagwell) and over Village Creek Drying Beds, *Tarrant* 19 Oct (Greg Cook, Steve Glover) and an immature Golden Eagle over Hatcher Rd., Joshua, *Johnson* 17 Oct (Ty Allen, ph.).

Least Flycatcher – A Least Flycatcher was record late find at L. Lewisville Park, *Denton* 18 Oct (Katherine Cavazos).

Hammond's Flycatcher – One of the most stunning sightings in north-central Texas was a totally unexpected easterly vagrant Hammond's Flycatcher at Colleyville

Nature Center, *Tarrant* 29 Sep (Keith Combs, ph., fide Brian Gibbons) providing the region's first record.

Say's Phoebe – A Say's Phoebe was a rare sighting east of Dallas along FM 1480, *Rains* 16 Oct (Richard Kinney).

Great Kiskadee – Unexpected and casual at best in fall was a Great Kiskadee at Hagerman NWR, 21 Nov (Alan Gann, ph.) which potentially documents the northern most record for the species in Texas.

Philadelphia Vireo – Always a rare find in fall were single Philadelphia Vireo's along the south end of L. Weatherford, *Parker* 11 Sep (Steve Glover), along Hatcher Rd., Joshua, *Johnson* 17 Sep (Cyrus Allen), one at Colleyville Nature Center, 16 Oct (Thomas Creel, ph.).

Rock Wren – A migrant Rock Wren was a rare observation south of normal range along Winscott-Plover Rd., *Tarrant* 8-11 Nov (Christian Walker).

Swainson's Thrush – Rare this fall was only one report of a Swainson's Thrush, vagrant Lewisville Learning Center, *Denton* 29 Sep (Evan Mistur).

Sage Thrasher – What may be the start of an easterly irruption were rare early Sage Thrashers along Dad's Corner Rd., Holiday, *Archer* 19 Oct (Ben Sandstrom, ph.), along CR 222, Throckmorton 25 Oct (Scotty Lofland, ph.), at Village Creek Drying Beds, *Tarrant* 4 Nov (Austin Jones, ph.), and N. Holiday Park, L. Benbrook, *Tarrant* 12 Nov (Suzanna Odum, ph.). From 15-30 Nov four more sightings were reported.

Lapland Longspur – Rarely reported in the southern area of the region was a flock of 15 Lapland Longspurs along FM 948, *Ellis* 16 Nov (Blaine Carnes).

Chestnut-collared Longspur - Totally unexpected was a regional record early, immature Chestnut-collared Longspur at Cement Creek Lake, *Tarrant* 17 Oct (Thomas Creel, ph.). Wintering longspurs have retreated north in the region in the past 10 years and now range from rare to uncommon primarily in the northern and northwest Red River counties.

Thick-billed Longspur – Another stunning record early and east of normal regional range was a juvenile Thick-billed (McCown's) Longspur at Hagerman NWR, *Grayson* 28 Sep (Jack Chiles, ph.). A consortium of birders was consulted to determine final identification (Gailon Brehm, Mike Cameron, Jim Peterson, Chris Runk, Byron Stone). This species is a rare to uncommon November to March wintering visitor to primarily the northwest counties of the region (Throckmorton, Wilbarger, and Haskell). As the climate has changed there have been a declining number of sighting in the region as they recede to the north. However, the actual abundance status in the region is in question as the above counties are under birded.

Golden-winged Warbler – A Golden-winged Warbler was a rare find at Bob Woodruff Park, Plano, *Collin* 30 Aug (Ross Rasmussen) and the only sighting of the species this fall.

Chestnut-sided Warbler – Casual inland in fall were single Chestnut-sided Warblers at an unnamed county park at the end of Dalton Rd, *Rockwall* 16 Oct (Ross Rasmussen) and another at Colleyville Nature Center, *Tarrant* 22-23 Oct (Colby Ayers, Todd Fitzgerald, ph.).

Palm Warbler – Rare but regular migrants were single reports of Palm Warblers at Nolan River Park, Hill 4 Oct (Blaine Carnes), a possible returning bird at Village Creek Drying Beds, *Tarrant* 14 Oct-7 Nov. (Colby Ayers, ph., m.ob.), and at Paloma Creek, *Denton* 15 Nov (Carrie Steingruber).

MacGillivray's Warbler – A MacGillivray's Warbler found at Mountain Creek Preserve along the Champions Trails *Tarrant* 3 Sep (Christian Walker, ph.) was a rare fall find.

Blackburnian Warbler – Rare in fall was a Blackburnian Warbler along Hatcher Rd., Joshua, *Johnson* 10 Sep (Ty Allen) and another at River Legacy Park, *Tarrant* 23 Sep (Jim Sipiora).

Prairie Warbler – Casual was the first fall reported sighting of a Prairie Warbler since 2018, a single individual at CR 3105/3118, 21 Aug *Van Zandt* (Richard Kinney).

Chipping Sparrow – An adult Chipping Sparrow accompanied by a juvenile plumaged Chipping Sparrow was a totally unexpected find along CR 180, *Throckmorton* 15 Aug (Scotty Lofland). A review of Pulich (1988) revealed no prior confirmed breeding for the species in n-central Texas.

Lazuli Bunting – A Lazuli Bunting at the Trinity River Audubon Sanctuary, *Dallas* 25 Sep (Ted Zobeck, ph.) was an unexpected casual sighting for the season.

Baltimore Oriole – A Baltimore Oriole at the Dallas Wastewater Treatment Plant, Seagoville, *Dallas* 18 Nov (Matt DuRoss) was late.

Family Summaries (see below)

Hérons and Egrets

Average to below average numbers depending on presence/absence of suitable habitat. Overall region-wide slightly below average this fall likely due to many areas with high water levels.

Large Waders

Wood storks were present but primarily at very localized sites. The highest one-day count posted was of 31 individuals from on locale on private property. Single Wood Stork wanderers were reported in Johnson and Denton counties. Roseate spoonbills were reported in slightly lower numbers this fall. White Ibis numbers were average in the southeast while White-faced Ibis migrants were scarce and lower than average numbers in the east.

Hawks

Migrant hawk reports were better than previous falls. A large migrating flock of 275 Broad-winged hawks were observed over Wood County and reports of 1-20 were made from eastern counties. Swainson's hawk flocks of 125, 180 and 82 were reported from Throckmorton and Wilbarger counties.

Shorebirds

Overall a below average migration of shorebirds was noted this fall because of the high-water levels and associated absence of suitable foraging habitat at most locales. The following species were in below to well below average numbers: Greater and Lesser yellowlegs, American Avocet (August), Long and Short-billed dowitchers, and Wilson's Phalarope. More positive was the continuing trend of steady but small numbers fall number of Piping Plovers.

Hummingbirds

Ruby throated numbers were amazing at neighborhood feeders this fall. Rufous and immature Rufous/Allen's irrupted this fall this fall with 35+ reports.

Passerines

Passerine migration was typical of most falls with the exception of northern and western irrupting species. Irrupting species regional rough estimates based on ebird and other reporting sites; Red-breasted nuthatch (35+), Purple Finch (100+), Pine Siskin (1,000's+), Mountain Bluebird (100+), Western Bluebird (10), Sage Thrasher (8), lark Bunting (100's).

A trickle of birds reported in low numbers in August and early September. However, from mid-September to early October migrants were reported as well below average with both low daily diversity and numbers. After mid-October

wintering birds slowly trickled into the region. Black-headed Grosbeak reports from private resident feeders was above average this fall.

Weather

August was hot and wet with locally above average to well below average rainfall. The exception of the southwest section of the region which was slightly below average rainfall. September was cooler than average, and rainfall was well below normal in many locales with early leaf drop noted in some far eastern counties. October brought above normal temps and well below half the normal rainfall. November temps were above normal until the arrival of cold weather late in the month. Rainfall was again below normal.

Observers

Cyrus Allen
Ty Allen
John Allendorf
Colby Ayers
Bob Bagwell
Gailon Brehm
Mike Cameron
Blaine Carnes
Katherine Cavazos
Jack Chiles
Hongyang Choa
Greg Cook
Keith Combs
Thomas Creel
Neva Damron
Todd Fitzgerald
Brian Gibbons
Peter Gottschling
Steve Glover
Austin Jones
Richard Kinney
Roland Kirk
Rel Libscomb
Scotty Lofland
Evan Mistur
Suzanne Odum
Jim Peterson
Ross Rasmussen
Alisa Roberts
Chris Runk
Ben Sandstrom
Brady Schwab
Sheila Shallcross
Jim Sipiora
Don Stanley
Denise Tabony Stephens
Byron Stone

Michelle Summers
Jen Tookey
Carl Walker
Christian Walker
Ed Wetzel
Marta Wnorowski
Ted Zobeck