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North Central Texas Bird Report
Spring 2020
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.Regional Highlights and Migration Overview

Best birds this spring were Black Scoter, **Ruff**, Great Kiskadee, Red Knot, Hutton's Vireo, Worm-eating Warbler, Western Tanager, and Red Crossbill.

The first half of spring migration (April 20 – May 4) was good for shorebirds but poor for songbirds with very low numbers and diversity because of very strong south winds. However the second half of the season (May 5-20) was exceptionally spectacular for both shorebirds and songbirds because of an assist from rainy nights and resulting fallouts.

Overnight rain on 7-8 May produced both shorebird and warbler fallouts but only at localized locations that received heavy overnight rains. A regional one day record 28 shorebird species was reported on 8 May by Greg Cook and 15-16 warbler species was reported by many on 8-9 May. Counts of 12-16 warbler species per day persisted through 17 May. Migrant shorebird diversity: 35 species; migrant warbler diversity 31 species this spring (for detailed passerine species discussion see songbird section below).

Potentially Noteworthy Sightings

Black Scoter – Black Scoters, casual inland in Texas, were found on Lake Benbrook, *Tarrant* with 1 present 13-16 Mar and then 3 there 9 Apr (ph. John Allendorf).

Least Grebe – Casual in the region was a Least Grebe found at Creek Drying Beds, *Tarrant* 8 Apr (ph. Colby Ayers) which was joined by a second on 28 Apr, where they continued through 31 May (Ed Wetzel).

Western Grebe – Rare this spring was a Western Grebe at Pond C, Southside Wastewater Treatment Plant, *Dallas* 13 Apr – 13 May (ph. Roland Castaneda).

Black-billed Cuckoo – Casual in the region and in significant decline in its nesting range, were migrant Black-billed Cuckoos at Hagerman N.W.R., *Grayson* 17 May (Blaine Carnes) and at River Legacy Park, Arlington, *Tarrant* 18 May (Jim Sipiara).

Eastern Whip-Poor-will – The only Eastern Whip-Poor-Will reports in north-central Texas were one at the East Texas Arboretum, Athens *Henderson* 12 Apr (Adam Black) and one at Evergreen Apartments, *Rockwall* 22 Apr (Ross Rasmussen).

Piping Plover – Unexpected was a record day high count of 6 Piping Plovers at Hagerman N.W.R., *Grayson* 18 Apr (Logan Kote, Megan Kote). A seasonal record of 12 Piping Plovers were reported in north-central Texas this spring.

Long-billed Curlew – Rare east of Dallas were single Long-billed Curlews at Blue Sky Sod Farm, *Dallas* 25 Mar (Ted Zobeck, Ross Rasmussen) and another or the same over Trinity River Audubon Center, *Dallas* 27 Mar (Ted Zobeck).

Red Knot – For the second consecutive spring, Red Knots, which are casual inland in Texas, were reported at Lake Benbrook, *Tarrant* with 4 birds present there 5 May (John Allendorf).

Ruff – Unexpected as a species of accidental occurrence was a Ruff found at Lake Lewisville Park, *Denton* 13 May (ph. Winston Caillouet).

California Gull – Rare in north-central Texas was a California Gull at Lake Benbrook *Tarrant* 21 Mar (John Allendorf).

Black Tern – An astonishing 548 Black Terns were recorded in wet flooded sod farms along Texas County Farm Road 2135, *Fannin* 8 May (Greg Cook) after overnight storms.

Red-throated Loon – Rare in north-central Texas was a Red-throated Loon at Lake Benbrook, *Tarrant* 13-20 Mar (ph. Greg Cook).

Pacific Loon – The Pacific Loon seen from Eisenhower Park, Lake Texoma *Grayson* 28 Jan (ph. Laurie Sheppard) was last reported on 12 Mar by the cited observer.

Brown Pelican – Rare but expected annually, were two reports of Brown Pelicans. One Brown Pelican wandered to Lake Pat Cleburne, *Johnson* 18 Apr - 30 May (ph. Jimmy Aiken); 2 were at the Lake Tawakoni Spillway, *Van Zandt* 2 May (Richard Kinney).

Least Bittern – Rare this spring in north-central Texas was only one report of a Least Bittern, a single bird at Village Creek Drying Beds, 25-27 May (ph. Ed Wetzel).

Great Kiskadee –North Texas had a mini-invasion of Great Kiskadees. Single Great Kiskadees were found on Dunham Road, Lake Grapevine *Tarrant* 16 Apr (Brenda Bachs, Keith Pankhurst), a nest building individual at Buddy Steward Park, Cleburne, *Johnson* 24-Apr – 1 May (Jonathon Stanley, Gordon Wilcox, ph.), one at Lake Tawakoni S.P., *Hunt* 1 May (Ross Rasmussen, Ted Zobeck), one adjacent to Chambers Creek south of Maypearl Ellis 11-12 May (Gary Dollgender), one at Jetty Lake Park, Waxahachie, *Ellis*, 16 May (ph. Ted Drozdowski), and one at Lake Ray Roberts S.P., Isle de Bois Unit, *Denton* 20 May (Michelle Summers).

Hutton's Vireo – A first for north-central Texas was a Hutton's Vireo found along Spring Gap Road, *Callahan* 18 Apr (Jay Packer). The third record from the north-eastern Edwards Plateau (*fide* Jay Packer, documented in eBird).

Brown Creeper – Record late for north-central Texas was a Brown Creeper at Prairie Creek Park, *Collin*, 18 May (Ross Rasmussen, Ted Zobeck). The previous late date was 5 May.

Veery – Always a rare find in north-central Texas were 3 Veeries: the first was at Audubon Dog Canyon Sanctuary, *Dallas* 18-21 Apr (Sheryll Parker), followed by one at River Legacy Park, *Tarrant* 2 May (Greg Cook), and one at Moss Park, *Dallas* 11 May (ph. Terry Alder).

Worm-eating Warbler – Casual at best and west of normal range was a single Worm-eating Warbler at Village Creek Drying Beds, *Tarrant* 10 May (ph. Colby Ayers).

Blue-winged Warbler - Below normal numbers and rare this spring, were 3 sightings of Blue-winged Warbler. The first was found at Lake Tawakoni S.P., *Hunt* 7 May (Ross Rasmussen), one at Frisco Commons, *Collin* 12 May (Matt O'Sullivan), and one at Prairie Creek Park, *Collin* 14 May (Chuck Carlson, Martha Vannoy, Janie Henderson, ph.).

MacGillivray's Warbler – An extensive sonogram study by Taylor Kirkland and Chris Runk allowed both to conclude that the recorded song indicated the presence of the rarely reported MacGillivray's Warbler at Moss Park, *Dallas* 19 May.

Cape May Warbler – A Cape May Warbler at a pond along the west side of County Road 3515 between County Road 3523 and County Road 3533, Willis Point, *Van Zandt* 2 May (ph. Vernon

Patterson.) was an exciting rare sighting. Historically accidental in north-central Texas, this species has been found in the region 3 of the last 4 years.

Kentucky Warbler – Kentucky Warbler migrants were rare and late, one was at Lake Tawakoni S.P., *Hunt* 6 May (Shannon Love), one was in Joshua, *Johnson* 16 May (Ty Allen) and one in Edgewood, *Van Zandt* 17 May (Richard Kinney).

Palm Warbler – Palm Warbler migrants were rare this spring. One Palm Warbler was at Pecan Valley Park, Benbrook *Tarrant* 6 May (ph. Glenda Yandell) and one at South Lake Park, Farmersville, *Collin* 17 May (Blaine Carnes) was late.

Blackpoll Warbler – Unexpected west of normal reported migration range was a Blackpoll Warbler below the T&P Lake Dam, *Callahan* 30 Apr (Blaine Carnes).

Black-throated Blue Warbler – The wintering Black-throated Blue Warbler lingered at and in the vicinity of and at suet feeder at Arborside Dr., *Dallas* through 22 Apr (Taylor Kirkland, m.ob., ph.).

Black-headed Grosbeak – Above normal were five reports of single Black-headed Grosbeaks: Lake Benbrook, *Tarrant* 30 Apr (ph. Chris Acree), Miller Creek Reservoir, 1 May (Blaine Carnes), Lake Wichita, *Archer*, 9 May, (Scotty Lofland), Lucy Park, *Wichita* 9 May (Ben Sandstrom), Chat Trail, Lake Wichita, *Wichita* 16 May (ph. Scotty Lofland).

Western Tanager – Casual east of normal range and in north-central Texas was a Western Tanager at Lake Lewisville Environmental Center, *Denton* 9 May (Aaron Cummins).

Bronzed Cowbird – A Bronzed Cowbird along Byran Farm Road, *Young* 12 May (Scotty Lofland) wandered far north of normal range.

Red Crossbill – Casual in Texas east of the Trans Pecos were up to seven Red Crossbills at Lake Ray Roberts S.P., *Denton* 10-30 Mar (Jim Sipiara, ph. m.ob.).

Weather

March to mid-April overall was cooler than normal and very windy with wide temperature swings. Rainfall to the east remained near to above normal while the west was average to lower than normal. May brought more above normal rainfall and some days that were unusually cooler than normal.

Bird Group Summaries

This section is based on a review of all ebird reports and sightings reported to local Face Book reporting sightings. This section provides general trends.

Waterbirds

Blue-winged teal migration was strong. Most of the other wintering ducks appeared to have left by mid-March. Glossy Ibis were uncommon this spring with five well-documented birds. Herons and egrets seemed to be in average numbers.

Shorebirds, Gulls and Terns

Shorebirds had a good to great showing even though lakeshore habitat was marginal because of the continuing pattern of wet winters and springs and full lakes and reservoirs. Widely localized flooded-fields and sod farms provided some good stopover locations. Hagerman N.W.R. was great because of the water level management. Spring shorebird diversity an awesome 35 species with the Ruff being the best find.

Franklin's Gull migrants put on a show; many reported very large flocks in the hundreds in mid-April in the central section of the region. Black terns were reported in very large numbers (especially in the east) as many were downed by overnight storms. Common tern sightings were uncommon this year with five reports.

Hummingbirds

Hummingbird feeder reports of large numbers of Rudy-throats were not reported this spring. However there were reports on increasing numbers of Black-chins, especially in the eastern half of the region.

Raptors

The hawk migration was unremarkable with very few migrant flocks detected this spring. Falcons were also scarce this spring, especially Merlin.

Crows/Ravens

Fish crows expanded south and west into Dallas Denton counties and possibly into Hunt County. Northern counties west of Lake Texoma bordering along the Red River this spring also saw expansion this spring. Common Ravens continue to advance east into the western section of north-central Texas as evidenced by one found along the Lake Stamford Causeway, *Haskell* 4 Apr (Scotty Lofland).

Songbirds

Many species were in below average numbers early but average to above average in the second half of the season when compared to recent past springs. Some normally rare species were uncommon to fairly common this spring because of overnight rains during peak migration and resulting fallouts,

Vireos - Rare to uncommon migrant vireos numbers were above normal while common vireos (Warbling and White-eyed) were generally reported in below average numbers. Above normal: Philadelphia (15+), Yellow-throated (5).

Thrushes - Reports of migrant Wood thrush (6), and Gray-checked thrush (8) were way above normal. Swainson's thrush had an average spring.

Warblers - Of note were numerous reports and good numbers of Blackpoll and Bay-breasted warbler, a species often missed or in reported in very low numbers. Golden-winged (15+), Hooded Warblers (9), these species were formerly rare or casual 20 years ago are now uncommon to fairly common spring migrants in the region. However, two of the most numerous warbler migrants, Tennessee and Yellow, were in well below average numbers. Ovenbird and Mourning warbler numbers remained low again. Twenty years ago observers would report 5-10 individuals of each species/day during peak migration; now 1-2/day.

Tanagers-Scarlet Tanagers are normally rare with 1-3 sightings during migration, were in above normal numbers (6). Summer tanager numbers were strong in the east and normal in the central.

Grosbeaks and Buntings – Rose-breasted Grosbeaks reports were above average. Indigo bunting migration was strong in the far eastern counties but seemed in lower than average number in the central sections of the region. Lazuli Bunting reports were numerous (15+), continuing a trend that started years ago. The species status in the region is now an uncommon to fairly common spring migrant.

Orioles and Blackbirds – Baltimore oriole numbers were well below normal, especially in the east. Orchard oriole numbers were also below average. Bobolinks had a strong central section showing and were recorded in good numbers for the first time in 25+ years in several western counties.

Observers (listed alphabetically by last name)

Chris Acree
Tyler Alder
John Allendorf
Jimmy Aiken
Colby Ayers
Brenda Bachs
Sheryl Barker
Adam Black
Margaret Brittingham
Winston Caillouet
Mike Cameron
Blaine Carnes
Roland Castaneda
Jack Chiles
Greg Cook
Aaron Cummins
Gary Dollgender
Ted Drozdowski
Logan Kote
Megan Kote
Scotty Lofland
Shannon Love
Richard Kinney
Taylor Kirkland
Matt O'Sullivan
Jay Packer
Ken Pankhurst
Vernon Patterson
Sheryll Parker
Ross Rasmussen
Ben Sandstrom
Jim Sipiora
Jonathon Stanley
Michelle Summers
Christian Walker
Ed Wetzel
Gordon Wilcox
Glenda Yandell
Ted Zobeck