

North American Birds Regional Report

North Central Texas Winter 2020-2021

Compiled and Edited by Ross Rasmussen

Regional Highlights: Surf Scoter, White-winged Scoter, Red-necked Grebe, Western Grebe, Anna's Hummingbird, Broad-tailed Hummingbird, Broad-billed Hummingbird, Allen's Hummingbird, Mew Gull, Great Black-backed Gull, Streaked-backed Oriole.

Potentially Noteworthy Sightings

Long-tailed Duck – Rare but regular in the region in recent years was a lone Long-tailed Duck, from Bowman Springs Park, Lake Arlington, Irving, Dallas Co 20 Feb (John Allendorf, ph).

Surf Scoter: A rare find at a mid-city pond was a Surf Scoter at Senter Park, Irving, Dallas Co 2 Dec-19 Jan (Charles Morris, mob ph.).

White-winged Scoter: A wandering single White-winged Scoter was a casual sighting in the region on a pond in a residential neighborhood along Stonewall Pkwy, Denton Co 13-30 Dec (Winston Caillouet, ph mob), and at Lake Arlington, Tarrant Co 24 Jan (Kenneth Younger, ph). This species occurs only at 5 to 10 year intervals in the region.

Red-necked Grebe – Accidental in n-central Texas east of Dallas was a Red-necked Grebe observed on L. Tawakoni, Van Zandt Co from the state park and Spring Point, 7 Feb (Ryan Shaw, Cameron Johnson, ph). This only the second known record east of Dallas Co, both from this lake.

Western Grebe – Three Western Grebes found of the Lake Tawakoni Dam Rains Co 26 Dec (Blaine Carnes, Richard Kinney) were an accidental find well east of normal range in n-central Texas. The last sighting of this species east of Dallas was in the 1990's.

Common Ground Dove – The two Common Ground Doves found in fall at Village Creek Drying Beds Tarrant Co (Colby Ayers, mob ph) lingered to 25 Jan. This sighting provided the first documented winter record for the species in n-central Texas.

Anna's Hummingbird – Accidental in the region was an easterly Anna's Hummingbird at a feeder on Locklomast Road, Dennison, Grayson Co 3 Dec – 12 Jan (Aaron Hamilton, Jack Childs, ph).

Broad-tailed Hummingbird – A Broad-tailed Hummingbird at a feeder along Westfield Ave., Fort Worth, Tarrant Co 13 Dec (Joe Castillo, ph). This species is an accidental winter visitor to n-central Texas.

Allen's Hummingbird – A female Allen's Hummingbird was at a residential feeder along Cozby Street South, Tarrant Co 31 Jan-14 Feb (Chris Acree, fide Kelly Bryan) was an accidental record for n-central Texas.

Broad-billed Hummingbird: An unexpected accidental find was a Broad-billed Hummingbird at a feeder on McCormick Ct., Fort Worth, Tarrant Co 22 Jan- 7 Feb (Brian Foltz, ph).

Sandhill Crane – Rare east of normal was a single Sandhill Crane over Dallas Southside Water Treatment Plant, Dallas Co 21 Feb (Matt DuRoss ph).

Little Gull – Uncommon locally but rarely found at other locales in n-central Texas was a single Little Gull irregularly seen at White Rock Lake and spillway, Dallas Co 19 Dec- 26 Jan (Chris Runk, Ben Sandifer, ph mob).

Mew Gull – Casual for n-central Texas was a Mew Gull spotted on L. Arlington from Richard Simpson Park, Irving, Dallas Co 28-30 Dec (Colby Ayers, Greg Cook, ph).

California Gull – A first cycle California Gull found in the northwestern section of L. Ray Hubbard from east end of Main Street, Rowlett Dallas Co 5-10 Feb (Chris Runk, Michael James, ph mob) was a rare winter observation.

Iceland (Thayer's) Gull- Rare throughout most of n-central Texas but locally expected yearly, were four single, irregularly seen Iceland (Thayer's) Gulls; the first was found at White Rock Lake spillway, Dallas Co 5 Dec - 13 Feb (Chris Runk, Cameron Johnson) and the last at 11511 Luna Road, Dallas Co 18 Feb (Greg Cook).

Glaucous Gull – A rare but recently regular winter visitor to n-central Texas was a 1st winter Glaucous Gull flying over McInnish Park, Dallas Co 15 Jan (Jeff Sexton, ph).

Great Black-backed Gull – Accidental inland in Texas and a first for n-central Texas was a single first winter Great Black-backed Gull at the Railroad Road Ponds, Lewisville, Denton Co 14-27 Dec (Christian Walker, Greg Cook, ph mob), at West Lake Park, Lake Lewisville Lake locations (14-17 Dec) and again at the Railroad Ponds 20 Jan (fide Ed Wetzel).

Red-throated Loon – A single Red-throated Loon was found off the L. Tawakoni Dam (Rains Co, restricted area) 26 Dec (Ross Rasmussen) during the CBC and in Van Zandt Co 8 Feb (Richard Kinney, Jeff Sexton) was the only reported regional sighting of the species this season.

Pacific Loon – Rare regionally but uncommon at this locality was a Pacific Loon observed from Spring Point, Lake Tawakoni, Van Zandt Co 7-8 Feb (Cameron Johnson, Richard Kinney) and the only report of the species this winter.

Brown Pelican – An adult Brown Pelican was a rare, surprising find at L. Arlington, Irving, Tarrant Co 28 Dec (Ty Allen, Todd Fitzgerald, ph.).

Harris's Hawk – A mini-invasion of Harris's Hawks was documented this winter in n-central Texas which may have been the result of poor habitat/foraging conditions in south and southwest Texas. The first of six individuals were at John Bunker Sands Wetland Center, Kaufman Co 4 Dec (Linda Dunn) and the last on the Joe Pool Lake CBC, Dallas Co 1 Jan (Sheryl Barker).

Rough-legged Hawk – Rare east and south of normal n-central Texas range was a dark Rough-legged Hawk at Dallas Southside Water Treatment Plant, Dallas Co 6 Feb (Ross Rasmussen). This species is uncommon in the northern regional Red River counties (5 reports this winter).

Ferruginous Hawk – Unprecedented in n-central Texas was an invasion of Ferruginous Hawks to the central section of the region of an estimated 12 individuals. This hawk is very rarely seen east of normal western range in n-central Texas. The first was a returning individual first sighted in fall at the Dallas Water Treatment Plant, Seagoville, Dallas Co 1 Dec-Feb 28+ (Matt DuRoss, Michael James, ph.) and the last at the above location and at Steward/Feltz Road, Tarrant Co 28 Feb+ (Ed Wetzel ph).

Cordilleran/Pacific-slope Flycatcher – A non-vocal small flycatcher photographed at McInnish Park, Dallas 9 Jan (Nick DiGenaro) was thought, based on photo examination and the recent irruption into south Texas, to be a possible Pacific-slope Flycatcher. Searches on subsequent days did not relocate the individual.

Western Bluebird – Casual to accidental east of normal regional range was a flock of up to 12 Western Bluebirds along Winscott Plover and Goforth Roads, Johnson, Parker, Tarrant Cos 24 Dec – 28 Feb+ (Ed Wetzel mob ph).

Mountain Bluebirds – At least 200+ Mountain Bluebirds were reported via ebird during January and many more were probably present in under-birded western counties.

Sage Thrasher- Small numbers of Sage Thrasher's were reported well east of normal. It is unexpected that more were present in under-birded western regional counties.

Northern Waterthrush – A Northern Waterthrush was a surprising late find at Village Creek Drying Beds, Arlington, Tarrant 4-17 Dec (Colby Ayers, ph., m.ob.). It is only the second ever December sighting for the region.

Palm Warbler – Rare in winter was a Palm Warbler along FM 2475, Van Zandt Co 9 Feb (Justin Bosler).

Yellow-throated Warbler – A Yellow-throated Warbler at Pine Grove Campground, Lake Lewisville Park, Denton 18-20 Dec (Greg Cook, Winston Caillouet) was late rare find.

Wilson's Warbler – A Wilson's Warbler observed along Indian Hills Avenue Flower Mound Denton Co 9 Dec (Katherine Cavazos) was rare find in December.

Black-headed Grosbeak – Providing the first winter records for n-central Texas were two single Black-headed Grosbeaks; the first was at a residential feeder along Fox Hill Drive, Wylie Collin Co 16 Jan (Alicia White, Mike Cameron ph) and the second along Pine Meadows Drive, Kennedale Tarrant Co 16 Feb (Don Troxell ph).

Yellow-breasted Chat – Establishing a first winter record for n-central Texas was a Yellow-breasted Chat found trapped in mesh on a building and freed in downtown Dallas Co 16 Jan (Cameron Johnson, ph.).

Streak-backed Oriole – Totally unexpected was the discovery of a Streak-backed Oriole during a mid-February snowstorm in a restricted access neighborhood in Arlington, Tarrant Co 12 Feb (Paula Channell). The sighting was then photo documented by a limited number of birders and was last seen on 27 Feb (Ed Wetzel).

Baltimore Oriole – Unexpected and accidental in regional Red River counties in winter was a Baltimore Oriole in a residential yard along Canon Street Wilbarger Co 1 Feb (Terry Short, ph.); the first winter record for the county.

Family Overview

Ducks: Throughout most of December, ducks at many locales were in very, low numbers. Colder weather brought in more in late December and January to area ponds and lakes but numbers overall at many but not all hotspot locales was still well below normal this winter.

Hummingbirds

Reports of Rufous/Allen's were good following the fall invasion. It was the best winter from the birder's perspective for accidental/vagrant western hummingbirds (Anna's, Allen's, Broad-tailed, Broad-billed). Many wintering hummers died during the February snowstorm and Arctic cold blast in February.

Gulls

Rare and casual northern gulls were present again this winter. Ring-billed and Bonaparte's gull distribution was patchy and overall numbers seemed to be below average regionally.

Waders

White Ibis numbers were again unusually high at several Dallas locations but in lower numbers than normal to the east. Heron and Egret numbers seemed to be lower than past winters.

Hawks

Hawks, especially Red-tailed were in well above normal in the east, especially early in the season and very, low in the western sections of the region. An invasion of both Harris and Ferruginous Hawks was noted to the central section of region and east of their normal range. Northern Harrier numbers were well below average in the region.

Passerines

Overall, wintering passerine numbers were highly variable with some areas reporting average to above average numbers and others well below average numbers. American Robins invaded the region in huge numbers. It was a season to savor for birders because of the presence of Mountain and Western Bluebirds and Sage Thrasher's which were well east of normal winter distribution.

Based on local reporters some resident and wintering birds died in large numbers during the prolonged February arctic blast in February. The species most devastated were kinglets, Eastern Bluebird, and Eastern Phoebe. Pine Siskins were also drastically affected by Salmonella.

Over the past few years increasing numbers of wintering Summer Tanagers and Blue-headed Vireos have been reported; both are now considered as uncommon winter residents along with Say's Phoebe and in most year recent years Vermillion Flycatcher west of Dallas,

Most wintering finches were reported in well above average numbers including Purple Finch, Pine Siskin, and Lesser Goldfinch in the western half of the region.

Some sparrow species were in well below average numbers. Lark Buntings moved east in numbers and were reported in good numbers at several locations west of Dallas. For the first time in years all five longspurs were reported this winter and although irregular, numbers were above average. After a two-year absence, Smith's Longspurs were irregularly reported in low numbers (2-3) at their historic wintering area around Lake Tawakoni. Wintering numbers of this species have declined dramatically.

Rusty Blackbirds were very scarce this winter. Four reports were submitted and all were less of less than five total individuals.

Weather

Overall temperatures ranged from near average to well below average to record cold during the February winter storm. Rainfall amounts varied but some large areas of moderate drought were present because below average rainfall.

Observers

Chris Acree
Ty Allen
John Allendorf
Colby Ayers
Sheryl Barker

**Justin Bosler
Kelly Bryan
Winston Caillouet
Blaine Carnes
Joe Castill
Catherine Cavazos
Paula Channell
Jack Chiles
Greg Cook
Nick DiGenario
Linda Dunn
Matt DuRoss
Wayne Englehoff
Todd Fitzgerald
Brian Foltz
Aaron Hamilton
Michael James
Cameron Johnson
Richard Kinney
Charles Morris
Ross Rasmussen
Chris Runk
Ben Sandifer
Jeff Sexton
Terry Short
Jim Sipiora
Ryan Shaw
Don Troxell
Christian Walker
Kay Weathers
Alicia White
Kenneth Younger
Ed Wetzel**