

FINAL
North American Birds Regional Report

North Central Texas Spring 2021

Compiled and Edited by Ross Rasmussen

Regional Highlights: Groove-billed Ani, Black Phoebe, Worm-eating Warbler, Cape May Warbler, Cerulean Warbler, Black-throated Blue Warbler, Prairie Warbler, Western Tanager

Potentially Noteworthy Sightings

Western Grebe – Rare but regular were single migrant Western Grebes sighted at North Fork Buffalo Creek Reservoir, Wichita Co 10 Apr (Scotty Lofland) and from North Holiday Park, Lake Benbrook, Tarrant Co 16 Apr (John Allendorf ph)

Black-billed Cuckoo – Rare but regular with but a single spring sighting usually reported in the region was a Black-billed Cuckoo at Getzendaner Memorial Park, Waxahachie, Ellis Co 2 May (ph. Kayleigh Medeios).

Groove-billed Ani- Unexpected and casual with years between regional sightings was a Groove-billed Ani found at Meadowmere Park Lake Grapevine, Tarrant/Denton Co 28 May (ph. Chris Sanders).

Purple Gallinule – Casual in the region was an unexpected Purple Gallinule in a small marshy area behind Home Depot, Waxahachie, Ellis Co 25 Apr – 4 May (ph. Michelle Summers, Ted Drozdowski).

Piping Plover – Piping Plover pairs were found at Meadowmere Park, Lake Grapevine, Tarrant Co 23 Apr (ph. Kelly Cyr, Ted Creel) and at Hagerman NWR, Grayson Co 24 Apr (ph. Neva Damron). A single Piping Plover was found at Lake Lewisville Park, Denton Co 4 May (ph. Winston Caillouet).

Long-billed Curlew – Possibly the same Long-billed Curlew migrant from last year returned just northeast of Ferris, Dallas Co 9-11 Apr (ph. Cooper Daniels, m.ob). This species is rare east of Tarrant Co.

Ruddy Turnstone – Rare this spring with but only three reports were single Ruddy Turnstones at Oak Grove Park, Tarrant Co 20 Apr (ph. Todd Fitzgerald), at the Wise County Park, Lake Bridgeport, Wise Co 12 May (ph. Michelle Summers), and at Lake Lewisville Park, Denton Co 18 May (Winston Caillouet).

American Woodcock - Nesting records of American Woodcock are exceedingly rare in the region so two reports of hens with chicks were totally unexpected. The first was found at Dinosaur Valley State Park, Somerville Co 2 April (ph. David Gianadda) and the second was found at Lewisville Environmental Learning Center, Denton Co 7 Apr (ph. Kelsey Biles).

Glaucous Gull – A single Glaucous Gull was late and rare when found at Lake Lewisville, Denton Co 28 Apr (ph. Dave Harvey).

Pacific Loon – The Pacific Loon found at Lake Tawakoni, Van Zandt Co lingered until 18 Apr (Greg Cook, Michael James).

Glossy Ibis – Three sightings of this uncommon to rare but regular occurring species were documented: a county first Glossy Ibis 10 miles east-northeast of Ennis, Ellis Co 17 Apr (ph. Ted Drozdowski), two near the the west fork of Lavon Lake, Collin Co 24-26 April (ph. Brady Schwab, Mike Cameron, Don Stanley) and one at Village Creek Drying Beds, Arlington, Tarrant Co 15 May (ph. Colby Ayers).

Swallow-tailed Kite – A Swallow-tailed Kite over Village Creek Drying Beds, Tarrant Co 6 Apr (Ed Wetzel) was the lone rare sighting this spring.

White-tailed Kite – A mini-invasion of White-tailed Kites were found in the region this spring. Single birds were over Village Creek Drying Beds, Tarrant Co 18 Mar (ph. Colby Ayers), at Cedar Hill SP, Dallas Co 18 Mar, in Fort Worth, Tarrant Co 21 Mar (Zach Vickers), 4 miles northwest of Italy, Ellis Co 23 Apr (ph. Hap Ellis, John Fitzpatrick), in south Fort Worth, Tarrant Co 26 Apr (ph. Chris Davis), and just southeast of Elbert, Young Co (Christian Walker).

Acadian Flycatcher – Rarely reported in the central section of the region were single calling Acadian Flycatchers Flycatcher at River Trails Park, Tarrant Co 21-22 May (audio Todd Fitzgerald) and at Moss Park in Dallas, Dallas Co 22 May (audio Taylor Kirkland).

Black Phoebe - Unexpected and accidental was a Black Phoebe found along Garrison Street, Arlington, Tarrant Co 5 May (ph. Mark Monroe). The last sight records for the species were in the 1950's with the latest 7 May 1978.

Veery – The rarest migrant thrush, Veery, was sighted as expected only once this spring in Benbrook, Tarrant Co 8 May (Chris Acree, Ed Wetzel).

Worm-eating Warbler – Casual at best well west of normal range with years between regional sightings was a Worm-eating Warbler at the Fort Worth Botanical Gardens, Tarrant Co 6 May (Chris Davis).

Kentucky Warbler - Always rare west of normal range were single Kentucky Warblers at Prairie Creek Park, Plano, Collin Co 30 Apr (ph. Mike Cameron) and at Bob Woodruff Park, Plano, Collin Co 2 May (ph. Peter Assmann).

Cape May Warbler – An adult and an immature male Cape May Warblers were briefly observed at Lake Tawakoni State Park, Hunt Co 1 May (Ross Rasmussen, Richard Kinney) were rare west of expected range.

Cerulean Warbler – West of normal range and one of the rarest migrant warblers in the region were two reports of Cerulean Warbler with singles at Pecan Valley Park, Lake Benbrook, Tarrant Co 28 Apr (John Allendorf ph), and at Moss Park in Dallas, Dallas Co. 29 Apr (Taylor Kirkland).

Black-throated Blue Warbler – Always west of normal range in the region and in higher than normal numbers were single Black-throated Blue Warblers found at River Legacy Park in Arlington, Tarrant Co 25 Apr (ph. Sam Asherfield), Pecan Valley Park, Lake Benbrook, Tarrant Co 28 April (John Allendorf) and in Joshua, Johnson Co 8 May (Ty Allen).

Prairie Warbler – A first spring Prairie Warbler was an exceptional spring sighting far west of expected range where it was fittingly sighted at Prairie Creek Park, Richardson 22-23 May (Joanne Chung, ph. Caroline Humphreys).

Western Tanager – Casual well east of normal range was a Western Tanager in Paradise, Wise Co 1 May (ph. Michelle Summers).

Family Overviews

Ducks: Waterfowl migration was slightly below to average this spring depending on location. Many individuals took advantage of early strong south winds this spring to leave early. Cinnamon teal numbers were well above normal east of normal range.

Cranes: Very unexpected this spring was the greater than normal number of Sandhill Crane migrants reported this March in the eastern half of the region. In the past most have migrated over the western half of the region.

Waders and Shorebirds

Area lakes had at best marginal habitat, however with the aid of stormy wet weather a few area sod farms concentrated and provided suitable foraging habitat this spring. It was an average season for large shorebirds with large numbers of both Hudsonian and Marbled Godwits and Whimbrels. Marbled Godwits were reported in record high numbers. The late shorebirds (White-rumps, Sanderling, turnstones) were in well below average numbers due to continuing flooding rains and lack of suitable shallow foraging habitat in the eastern two-thirds of the region.

Raptors: It was a mostly unremarkable slow season for northbound Broad-winged Hawks and Swainson's Hawks. In addition only one sizeable Mississippi Kite kettle was reported this season.

Crows: Fish Crows continue to advance south along the Rowlett Creek corridor and into the Dallas Trinity River area. At least 2 additional pairs were found this year and there were single reports from the McKinney area and south Dallas.

Passerines: Eastern Phoebe and Eastern Bluebirds numbers in rural areas were extremely low this spring and no doubt casualties of the February deep freeze. Numbers of resident and migrant swallows were near record low numbers in March with only slight improvement in numbers by late spring. Declining insect populations in the region that has been observed for several years combined with the long February deep freeze may have caused many to abandon nesting areas and/or relocate.

Overall, on most days, diversity and numbers of many passerine migrants were low which produced slow birding. However, if you were lucky to be out birding there were several outstanding days. Warblers were downed from overnight storms in late

April/early May and again 10-11 May during the normal peak migration date. Yard birders had more yard lifers this year because wet weather downed birds. On 11-12 May at Prairie Creek Park in Richardson/Dallas a combined total of 19 warbler species were recorded by birders. After May 15 migrant warbler numbers were very, low with generally less than five species and less than 5 individuals/species.

Several normally rare spring migrants were in above normal numbers and uncommon this year: Wood Thrush (9), Blue-winged Warbler (5), Hooded Warbler (8), Palm Warbler (7), Scarlet Tanager (11!), and Black-headed Grosbeak (8). Golden-winged Warbler (12) and Lazuli Bunting (18) are now uncommon to fairly, common migrants which bodes well for both populations. Overall migrant numbers continue to show a declining trend when compared to data 10-20 years ago.

Notable large number migrants included: Clay-colored Sparrows east of normal range and Pine Siskins in late April. Yellow-headed Blackbirds in very, large numbers well east of normal range, and Bobolink numbers at or near record highs in many western counties of the region. The oriole migration through Lake Tawakoni SP was again stunning with scattered daily sightings of 50 plus individuals of both species.

Weather

Overall, the weather was very unsettled this spring with colder than normal temperatures up to 20 degrees below average and well above average rainfall in many localities. Mid-May weather was very unusual with daily storms and heavy rains and subsequent flooding. Overall WET was the word this season.

Observers

Chris Acree
John Allendorf
Sam Asherfield
Peter Assmann
Colby Ayers
Kelly Biles
Winston Caillouet
Mike Cameron
Joanne Chung
Greg Cook
Ted Creel
Kelly Cyr
Cooper Daniel
Chris Davis
Ted Drozdowski
Neva Damron
Todd Fitzgerald
John Fitzpatrick
David Giandadda
Dave Harvey
Caroline Humphries
Michael James
Richard Kinney

John Kirk
Taylor Kirkland
Scotty Lofland
Michael McCoy
Kayleigh Medeiros
Mark Monroe
Ross Rasmussen
Chris Sanders
Brady Schwab
Don Stanley
Michelle Summers
Zach Vickers
Christian Walker
Ed Wetzel