

**North American Birds Fall 2020 Report for East Texas
(compiled by David Wolf)**

The most noteworthy event of the Fall Season in East Texas was the passage of **Hurricane Laura** directly up the Texas/Louisiana border on 27 August. The storm brought hurricane force winds to 100 m.p.h. far inland, plus heavy rain and considerable damage. Several intrepid birders managed to check the dam at Toledo Bend Reservoir, *Newton* on this and the next day, and they found an amazing variety of storm-deposited birds. Especially noteworthy was the eBird entry from Greg Cook at Toledo Bend Dam, *Newton* 27 Aug. It included the following, most of which are rarely found in this region: **Whimbrel** – 1 (ph.); **Ruddy Turnstone** – 2; Sanderling – 3; Laughing Gull – 20; **Sooty Tern** – 2 (ph.); Least Tern – 4; **Common Tern** – 2 (ph.); and **Royal Tern** – 17 (ph.). Keith Andringa, Erik Atwell and Cameron Johnson checked this area early the next morning (28 Aug) and found the following present: Laughing Gull – 27; **Royal Tern** – 12; **Sandwich Tern** – 1; and **Magnificent Frigatebird** – 1. Tony Frank checked this site later that day and found most of the noteworthy birds gone, except for **2 Common, 3 Royal and 1 Sandwich tern**. Observers also checked Sam Rayburn Reservoir from the Overlook Park at the dam, *Jasper* 27-28 Aug, but the only notable birds were a **Magnificent Frigatebird** 27 Aug (Greg Cook) and single **Royal Terns** 27 Aug (Greg Cook) and 28 Aug (Tony Frank). This was the first storm since Hurricane Ike in 2008 to bring Sooty, Royal and Sandwich terns to the Pineywoods.

Included in this report are two noteworthy spates of records from the Summer Season. These are the Brown Booby reports and especially the Roseate Spoonbills nesting on upper Lake Livingston.

Otherwise the main news of interest from East Texas was the early passage of many Pine Siskins through the region from mid-Oct to mid-Nov, and the widespread appearance of Purple Finches throughout the region in Nov. Somewhat noteworthy was a spate of late sightings of Neotropical migrants, a trend we are noticing more and more with each passing year.

SURF SCOTER – There were two reports of Surf Scoter, a female in southern *Bowie* 30-31 Oct (ph. David Brotherton) and a female 15-17 Nov at Ellen Trout Park in Lufkin, *Angelina* (David Wolf, m. obs., ph.). Casual, but the most frequently recorded scoter in the Pineywoods.

RUBY-THROATED HUMMINGBIRD – Scattered Ruby-throated Hummingbirds lingered well into November again this year (m.obs.), the latest one in *Upshur* 14 Nov (ph. Mark Edmond).

ANNA'S HUMMINGBIRD – An Anna's Hummingbird in Nacogdoches, *Nacogdoches* 25 Nov (ph. Jack Rohrer) was the first in the Pineywoods region since 2011.

YELLOW RAIL – A Yellow Rail flushed at close range in broom-sedge at Lake Gilmer, *Upshur* 14 Nov (David Brotherton) was only the second regional report of this elusive species in 50 years.

WHIMBREL – A Whimbrel found at the Toledo Bend Dam, *Newton* 27 Aug (ph. Greg Cook) after Hurricane Laura moved over the area was only the third fall record for the Pineywoods.

RUDDY TURNSTONE – 2 Ruddy Turnstones were at the Toledo Bend Dam, *Newton* 27 Aug (Greg Cook) after Hurricane Laura.

SOOTY TERN – 2 storm-driven Sooty Terns were at the Toledo Bend Dam, *Newton* 27 Aug (ph. Greg Cook) as Hurricane Laura moved north.

COMMON TERN – 2 Common Terns were amidst other terns at the Toledo Bend Dam, *Newton* 27 Aug (ph. Greg Cook) and 28 Aug (Tony Frank) as Hurricane Laura passed northward. Confirmed records of this species in the region are few, though it is perhaps a regular migrant.

ROYAL TERN – At least 17 Royal Terns were found on Toledo Bend Reservoir, *Newton* 27 Aug (Greg Cook) as Hurricane Laura passed northward and 12 were still present the next morning (Keith Andringa, Erik Atwell, Cameron Johnson). Singles were also seen at the Sam Rayburn Reservoir dam, *Jasper* 27 Aug (Greg Cook) and 28 Aug (Tony Frank). 2 were seen off the TX 147 causeway on Rayburn Reservoir, *San Augustine* 23 Sept (David Wolf) after Tropical Storm Beta. Almost all records of this salt-water species inland in East Texas have been associated with major tropical storms.

SANDWICH TERN – A Sandwich Tern was amidst other storm-deposited birds at the Toledo Bend Dam, *Newton* 28 Aug (m.obs.) the day after the passage of Hurricane Laura. This was just the second time coastal species has reached the Pineywoods. The first was at the Lake Livingston Dam after Hurricane Ike in 2008.

MAGNIFICENT FRIGATEBIRD – A bit surprisingly, the only Magnificent Frigatebirds carried into the region by Hurricane Laura were singles at the Sam Rayburn Reservoir Dam, *Jasper* 27 Aug (Greg Cook) and at the Toledo Bend Dam, *Newton* 28 Aug (Keith Andringa, Erik Atwell, Cameron Johnson). Far more unexpected was one on Lake Murvaul, *Panola* 22 Nov (ph. Liam Wolff), a very odd date for this species to show up.

BROWN BOOBY – A sick or starving Brown Booby picked up at a private lake just south of the Toledo Bend Dam, *Newton* 6 Dec (fide Cliff Shackelford, Randy Kroll) died a few days later. Could this have been the bird independently found near Huxley on Toledo Bend Reservoir, *Shelby* 25 June (Ed Snelson) and 27 June (fide Troy Shivley) or even the one that rode a boat into Monterey Park on Lake Rayburn, *Angelina* 2 July (Carlene Fontenot)?

ROSEATE SPOONBILL – At least 6 nests of Roseate Spoonbill were found in a large mixed rookery on a private reserve near Point Blank on Lake Livingston, *San Jacinto* in early June. It is not known for sure how many young fledged, but at least 40, including juveniles, remained in the vicinity into the early fall (George Russell). This is certainly the first breeding record for the Pineywoods and may be the farthest inland that this species has nested in Texas. It may also account for other reports of spoonbills in the general vicinity, including 32 counted near Trinity, *Trinity* 8 Sept (Frank & Margaret Farese) and 35 in this area 17 Oct (Greg Cook, Steve Glover). Also noteworthy were 11 seen on upper Toledo Bend Reservoir, *Shelby* 26 Sept (John Smelser) and 2 still present lingered in Nacogdoches, *Nacogdoches* 25 Oct (David Wolf).

VERMILION FLYCATCHER – Male Vermilion Flycatchers were found near Huntington, *Angelina* 19 Oct (ph. James Childress) and near Trinity, *Trinity* 25 Oct (Susan Heath).

COUCH'S/TROPICAL KINGBIRD – A Couch's/Tropical kingbird found at a flycatcher roost in Nacogdoches, *Nacogdoches* 3-4 Sept (Cliff Shackelford et al., ph. Liam Wolff) could not be identified to species.

WESTERN KINGBIRD – A very rare in fall Western Kingbird visited Diboll, *Angelina* 19-20 Oct (Robert Truss). All 5 previous fall records for the Central Pineywoods have also been in October.

EASTERN KINGBIRD – With daily coverage from 1-11 Sept (Cliff Shackelford et al), the well-watched flycatcher roost in Nacogdoches, *Nacogdoches* peaked at 550 Eastern Kingbirds and 300 Scissor-tailed Flycatchers 6 Sept (Liam Wolff).

RED-BREASTED NUTHATCH – Red-breasted Nuthatches appeared widely in small numbers throughout the region, with the first reports singles near Boykin Springs, *Angelina* 29 Sept (Liam Wolff) and near Center, *Shelby* 30 Sept (John Smelser).

BLUE-GRAY GNATCATCHER – The season high count of Blue-gray Gnatcatchers was 215+ at the TX 147 causeway on Sam Rayburn Reservoir, *San Augustine* 11 Sept (David Wolf).

CEDAR WAXWING – 3 Cedar Waxwings seen at the TX 147 causeway on Sam Rayburn Reservoir, *San Augustine* 30 Oct (David Wolf) were notably early.

PURPLE FINCH – Purple Finches appeared early and were widespread throughout the Pineywoods (m.obs.). The earliest reports were singles in Center, *Shelby* 2 Nov (John Smelser) and Lufkin, *Angelina* 4 Nov (Gary Hunter). One had already reached the southern edge of the region in *Hardin* 13 Nov (Nancy Angell) and by the end of November nearly all bird-feeders in the regions had attracted some (m.obs.).

PINE SISKIN – A major passage of Pine Siskins appeared earlier than expected, with the first singles in Central Heights, *Nacogdoches* 14 Oct (Mimi Hoppe Wolf) and in the Angelina N.F., *Angelina* 14 Oct (Liam Wolff). Only 3 years out of the last 50 years have siskins appeared in this region as early as October (fide David Wolf). By mid-November large numbers were passing through (m.obs.), but relatively few stayed into December. How far south did this flight go?

“OREGON” DARK-EYED JUNCO – The first Dark-eyed Junco this fall was a vagrant “Oregon” in Cushing, *Nacogdoches* 17 Oct (Dennis Scheef).

BLUE-WINGED WARBLER – A male Blue-winged Warbler was found in Central Heights, *Nacogdoches* 6 Aug (David Wolf). This is early, but not unexpected as this species leaves the breeding grounds early.

NASHVILLE WARBLER – A Nashville Warbler seen in Central Heights, *Nacogdoches* 13 Nov (David Wolf) was the latest for the Pineywoods apart from a very few winter records.

PROTHONOTARY WARBLER – Truly remarkable was a lingering Prothonotary Warbler nicely photographed in Marshall, *Harrison* 26 Nov (Karen Carpenter). This species is almost unknown in Texas after late September!

BLACK-THROATED BLUE WARBLER – There were two well-described Black-throated Blue Warblers found this fall, a female in Nacogdoches, *Nacogdoches* 9 Sept (Thelma Dalmas) and a female in far southeastern *Camp* 4 Oct (David Brotherton). The first is the earliest regional fall record for this very rare migrant, while the second is a more typical date.

PALM WARBLER – A bright Palm Warbler of the *hypochrysa* race was at the TX 147 causeway on Sam Rayburn Reservoir, *San Augustine* 30 Oct (ph. David Wolf). This race has rarely been found in Texas away from the Upper Coast.

SUMMER TANAGER – A lingering Summer Tanager was first seen in Nacogdoches, *Nacogdoches* 30 Oct+ (Liam Wolff) and a very late migrant was found elsewhere in Nacogdoches, *Nacogdoches* Nov 26-28 (ph. Anne Tindell).

BLUE GROSBEAK – Two Blue Grosbeaks found in Lufkin, *Angelina* 4 Nov (Gary Hunter, ph.) were noteworthy on this late date.