

North American Birds Winter 2020-21 Report for East Texas
Compiled by David Wolf

Not too many rarities to report from East Texas. Winter Storms Uri and Viol really hammered our region, with temperatures dropping below zero in the northern half of the region; up to a foot of snow in the northeast corner and lesser amounts (but still significant) to the south; and then an ice storm on top of the snow on 17 Feb. Many of the noteworthy records listed here were found during or just after the storms, or they were birds that had been lingering, but were last seen during or just after the storms. It may also be noteworthy that there were many bird fatalities from the storms, with Eastern Phoebe and Eastern Bluebird especially hard hit. I also received reports of dead birds of many other species. Again this winter there were multiple records of Couch's/Tropical Kingbird, Baltimore Oriole and Summer Tanager, but I have not included them as they are becoming annual at this season. – Dave Wolf

BLACK SCOTER – A female Black Scoter found in southern Bowie Co 11-20 Dec (David Brotherton) was only the fourth regional record.

RUBY-THROATED HUMMINGBIRD – An immature male Ruby-throated Hummingbird was present near Nacogdoches, Nacogdoches Co from early Dec-17 Feb and was last seen during the ice storm (Kathy Greer, m.obs.).

ANNA'S HUMMINGBIRD – An Anna's Hummingbird that was present near Livingston, Polk Co all winter was still there 20 Feb (Jerry Babcock).

BROAD-TAILED HUMMINGBIRD – A Broad-tailed Hummingbird in Tyler, Smith Co 1 Jan 1-18 Feb (Carol Moore, Janet Cook (ph.) provided one of the very few well-documented records for the region.

LAPLAND LONGSPUR – Two Lapland Longspurs near Huntington, Angelina Co during the fierce storms 18-19 Feb (James Childress; ph.) was the first Pineywoods report in 10 years. This species was formerly found in the region more regularly than in recent decades.

PURPLE FINCH – Purple Finches were widespread at feeders throughout the region all winter (m.obs.), a few feeding stations hosting up to 40 at one time.

CLAY-COLORED SPARROW – A Clay-colored Sparrow was present at Alazan Bayou WMA, Nacogdoches Co 20-28 Dec (David Wolf, Anne Tindell (ph.) and two were reported in Jasper, Jasper Co 21 Jan (Phillip Hight). Casual winter visitor to the Pineywoods at best.

FOX SPARROW – Fox Sparrow was the bird of the winter storms in the central Pineywoods and their invasion was truly remarkable. They were reported from at least 20 feeding stations in Nacogdoches Co alone, as well as from Angelina, Jasper, San Augustine and Shelby Cos. The highest count was up to 88 at once near Huntington, Angelina Co 17 Feb (James Childress; ph.), but 28 were counted in one yard in Nacogdoches town 16 Feb (Cliff Shackelford) and 15-27 were in Jasper, Jasper Co 15-18 Feb (Phillip Hight). Most feeders had fewer than 15. I have to think that this species was driven south by the storms as they had been very hard to find anywhere prior to the severe weather. Most were after 20 Feb as the weather finally abated.

YELLOW-HEADED BLACKBIRD – A single Yellow-headed Blackbird found near Crockett, Houston Co 1 Jan was very unexpected in winter (Bruce Neville, Laura Sare).

ROSE-BREASTED GROSBEAK – A Rose-breasted Grosbeak in Kountze, Hardin Co 3-6 Jan (Nancy Angell) provided one of the very few winter records for the region.

BLACK-HEADED GROSBEAK – There were three reports of single Black-headed Grosbeaks this winter, in Jasper Co 20 Jan-18 Feb (Fred Lyons); in Livingston, Polk Co 10 Feb (Bob Friedrichs, J. Berner); and in in Tyler, Smith Co for a week after the winter storms, including 20 Feb (Laura S.). This species is the most regular western stray to the region, but it is not found annually.