

Trans-Pecos region of Texas – Fall 2019 (1 August 2019 – 30 November 2019)

Noteworthy Bird Sightings

Compiled by Eric Carpenter and Jim Paton

Counties Covered: Brewster, Crane, Culberson, El Paso, Hudspeth, Jeff Davis, Loving, Pecos, Presidio, Reeves, Terrell, Val Verde, Ward, Winkler

Seasonal Summary:

El Paso area: It was an excellent fall for rarities, particularly eastern warblers and passerines, with a wide variety seen. Due to a lack of habitat there were no notable shorebird records. Montane irruptives were scarce with small numbers of Woodhouse's Scrub-Jays and Red-breasted Nuthatches appearing in mid-October. Clay-colored Sparrow and Dickcissel, both variable in number as fall migrants, moved through in very large numbers in September, however, by the end of the period seedeaters in general were scarce due to limited food in native grasslands.

Texas Bird Records Committee (TBRC) species in **bold**. Cited observers listed alphabetically at the end of the report.

Notable Species observed during the period:

BLACK-BELLIED WHISTLING-DUCK - A Black-bellied Whistling-Duck wandered west to Balmorhea Lake, *Reeves* 11-17 Aug (ph. Anita Meagher).

CAACKLING GOOSE – Five Cackling Geese were at McNary Reservoir, *Hudspeth* 15 Nov (ph. Barry Zimmer) where rare.

WHITE-WINGED SCOTER – A White-winged Scoter in west El Paso, *El Paso* 17 Nov (ph. John Kiseda) was a surprise; there are fewer than five county records.

HOODED MERGANSER – A female Hooded Merganser in west El Paso, *El Paso* 4 Aug (ph. John Kiseda) was extremely early and a first local August record.

RUBY-THROATED HUMMINGBIRD – Immature male Ruby-throated Hummingbirds were in an El Paso, *El Paso* yard 28 Aug (ph. Barry Zimmer) and 11-16 Sep (ph. Barry Zimmer). In recent years Ruby-throated Hummingbird has proven to be a rare but regular fall migrant.

BLACK-CHINNED HUMMINGBIRD – A Black-chinned Hummingbird in El Paso, *El Paso* 5-9 Nov (ph. Barry Zimmer) was notably late with mid-October being typical departure dates for fall stragglers.

COSTA'S HUMMINGBIRD – An El Paso, *El Paso* yard hosted lone Costa's Hummingbirds 15 Sep and 28 Nov (ph. Barry Zimmer); the species has been annual in El Paso in recent years.

BROAD-BILLED HUMMINGBIRD- The Broad-billed Hummingbird in Limpia Crossing, northwest of Fort Davis, *Jeff Davis* continued until at least 5 Sept (D.D. Currie, Dell Little, m.ob.); one was detected west of Fort Davis, *Jeff Davis* 30 Sep (ph. Lorrie Lowrie) and another was in El Paso, *El Paso* 7-17 Oct (ph. John Kiseda, Kathy Kiseda).

VIOLET-CROWNED HUMMINGBIRD - The Violet-crowned Hummingbird in Limpia Crossing, *Jeff Davis* was last seen 29 Sep (ph. Cecilia Riley).

WHITE-EARED HUMMINGBIRD - A female White-eared Hummingbird was at the feeders on the Davis Mountains Preserve, *Jeff Davis* 9-24 Aug (ph. Rich Kostecke, m.ob.) while a male was west of Fort Davis, *Jeff Davis* 6-21 Aug (ph. Mark Lockwood, m.ob.); a different female west of Fort Davis, *Jeff Davis* was noted very sporadically as late as 5 Sep and was likely the same one seen in July (Lorrie Lowrie).

AMERICAN GOLDEN-PLOVER - Single American Golden-Plovers at Balmorhea Lake, *Reeves* 22 Oct (James Barnes) and 13 Nov (ph. Anita Meagher) were well west of their normal migration route.

DUNLIN - Nice finds were 2 Dunlins at Balmorhea Lake, *Reeves* 9 Nov (ph. Mark Lockwood) and one at Imperial Reservoir, *Pecos* 28 Nov (ph. Martin Reid, Sheridan Coffey).

LONG-TAILED JAEGER - The highlight of the season in the Trans-Pecos was an adult Long-tailed Jaeger that was seen by many at Balmorhea Lake, *Reeves* 31 Aug - 8 Sep (ph. Wendy McCrady, m.ob.).

BLACK-LEGGED KITTIWAKE – An adult Black-legged Kittiwake was at McNary Reservoir, *Hudspeth* 14-15 Nov (ph. Ad Konings, Barry Zimmer) for a third county record, one of which is of two overwintering birds.

SABINE'S GULL - A Sabine's Gull stopped at Balmorhea Lake, *Reeves* 12-13 Oct (ph. Jeffrey Jackson, m.ob.) while another was at McNary Reservoir, *Hudspeth* 17 Oct (ph. Barry Zimmer).

LAUGHING GULL- An adult Laughing gull at Balmorhea Lake, *Reeves* 30 Nov (ph. Willie Sekula) was a nice find.

LESSER BLACK-BACKED GULL - Well established along the Texas coast, Lesser Black-backed Gulls are still unusual inland, especially as you move westward; a first-cycle bird at Lesser Black-backed Gull was at McNary Reservoir, *Hudspeth* 22 Oct (ph. Ad Konings) was unexpected as was one at Imperial Reservoir, *Pecos* 28 Nov (ph. Martin Reid, Sheridan Coffey).

WOOD STORK - Late and exceptionally west was a Wood Stork at Balmorhea Lake, *Reeves* 16 Nov (ph. Anita Meagher).

AMERICAN WHITE PELICAN - A little out of place for the mountain range was a large flock of 150 American White Pelicans over Davis Mountains S.P., *Jeff Davis* 30 Sep (Mark Lockwood).

TRICOLORED HERON – The most westward Tricolored Heron was one seen by many at Ascarate Park, *El Paso* 26 Sep – 23 Oct (ph. John Kiseda, m.ob.); another one was along the Rio Grande near Rio Grande Village, *Brewster* 15 Sep (Tom Vandenberg).

YELLOW-CROWNED NIGHT-HERON - Up to 2 Yellow-crowned Night-Herons wandered to Balmorhea Lake, *Reeves* 1-7 Sep (D.D. Currie, Dell Little, Mark Lockwood).

TURKEY VULTURE – As has been the case in recent years, at least one Turkey Vulture lingered through the period in the vicinity of Rio Bosque Wetlands Park, *El Paso* (John Sproul).

OSPREY – Late Ospreys in *El Paso* were one that lingered at Rio Bosque Wetlands Park through 16 Nov (John Sproul) and one in west El Paso 24 Nov (John Groves).

WHITE-TAILED KITE – Rio Bosque Wetlands Park, *El Paso* is the only reliable site for White-tailed Kite in the El Paso area. An adult there on 14 Sep (Ad Konings) was the first there since 25 Jun and it remained through the period. Two adults were seen on 18 Sep (John Sproul) and an immature was spotted on 16 Nov (John Sproul).

MISSISSIPPI KITE – Mississippi Kite is a local nester in small numbers in *El Paso* but one near Dell City 14 Sep (ph. Jim Paton) was the first documented for *Hudspeth*.

BALD EAGLE – A subadult Bald Eagle was near Dell City, *Hudspeth* 10 Nov (Jim Paton) where rare.

COMMON BLACK HAWK – An immature Common Black Hawk at Rio Bosque Wetlands Park 14 Sep (ph. Ad Konings) was the first in *El Paso* in many years.

GRAY HAWK – An adult Gray Hawk flirting with the New Mexico line in extreme northwestern *El Paso* 3 Aug (ph. John Groves) was just the second county record.

BROAD-WINGED HAWK - A Broad-winged Hawk in Marathon, *Brewster* 2 Oct (ph. Ad Konings) was west of the normal migration path.

WESTERN SCREECH-OWL – A Western Screech-Owl at Ft. Hancock Reservoir 17 Oct (ph. Barry Zimmer) was the first in many years in that part of *Hudspeth* and one was calling in west El Paso, *El Paso* 5 Oct (Jim Paton) where recorded less than annually in recent years.

WILLIAMSON'S SAPSUCKER - An out of range Williamson Sapsucker was studied at Devil's River S.N.A., *Val Verde* 18 Nov (Petra Hockey).

GOLDEN-FRONTED WOODPECKER - Unusual for the Davis Mountains was 2 Golden-fronted Woodpeckers northeast of Fort Davis, *Jeff Davis* 11-30 Aug (Justin Bosler, Donna Dittman, Steve Cardiff).

GREAT CRESTED FLYCATCHER – A Great Crested Flycatcher was in El Paso, *El Paso* 31 Aug (ph. Jim Paton) where rare and less than annual.

TROPICAL KINGBIRD – Tropical Kingbirds from recently discovered nesting populations lingered at Ascarate Park, *El Paso* through Sep (m.ob) and near Dell City, *Hudspeth* through at least 27 Sep (ph. Jim Paton). The pair of Tropical Kingbirds at Independence Creek Preserve, *Terrell* during the summer was present until at least 28 Aug (m.ob.).

WHITE-EYED VIREO – A White-eyed Vireo in El Paso on the surprising dates of 28 Nov – 8 Dec (ph. Barry Zimmer) was just the second for *El Paso* and the first for both fall and winter.

HUTTON'S VIREO – Rare but regular in fall and winter, there were two Hutton's Vireos in El Paso, *El Paso*: 1 Nov – 1 Dec (ph. Jim Paton) and 17 Nov+ (ph. Barry Zimmer). Encountered only infrequently in the Guadalupe Mountains, a Hutton's Vireo in McKittrick Canyon, *Culberson* 12 Oct (ph. Willie Sekula) was a nice find.

YELLOW-THROATED VIREO – A Yellow-throated Vireo in El Paso, *El Paso* 2 Sep (ph. Jim Paton) was the earliest ever for fall. Yellow-throated Vireo is casual in the El Paso area.

PLUMBEOUS VIREO – Rare in winter, lone Plumbeous Vireos were in El Paso, *El Paso* 13 Nov (Barry Zimmer) and 24 Nov – 8 Dec (Jim Paton).

RED-EYED VIREO – A Red-eyed Vireo in El Paso, *El Paso* 28 Sep – 2 Oct (ph. Jim Paton) was both rare and record late.

YELLOW-GREEN VIREO - The Yellow-green Vireo discovered in the spring at Fort Pena Colorado Park south of Marathon, *Brewster* was documented through 3 Sep (ph. m.ob.).

STELLER'S JAY – A lone Steller's Jay in El Paso, *El Paso* 18 Nov (Jim Paton) was the only report.

WOODHOUSE'S SCRUB-JAY – Starting in about mid-Oct and remaining through the period, small numbers of Woodhouse's Scrub-Jays could be found in preferred El Paso, *El Paso* neighborhoods (m.ob.).

RED-BREASTED NUTHATCH – Red-breasted Nuthatches were limited in *El Paso* to a few reports of one or two birds mid-Oct – mid-Nov (Jim Paton).

HOUSE WREN – A House Wren near Dell City, *Hudspeth* 10 Aug (Jim Paton, Barry Zimmer) was about two weeks early.

WINTER WREN – A Winter Wren was near Dell City, *Hudspeth* 10 Nov (Jim Paton). Winter Wren is rare in the county, especially away from McNary Reservoir where one or two regularly winter.

GRAY CATBIRD – Two records of Gray Catbird were about average for fall in *El Paso*: one at Hueco Tanks State Historic Site 18-19 Oct (Jim Hailey) and one at Rio Bosque Wetlands Park 14 Nov (Zachary Tonzetich).

SAGE THRASHER – A Sage Thrasher near Dell City, *Hudspeth* 1 Sep (ph. Jim Paton) was about two weeks early.

CLAY-COLORED SPARROW – Clay-colored Sparrow is primarily a fall migrant in the El Paso area but numbers are highly variable year to year. This year saw a big push of them, especially in Sep.

RED CROSSBILL – A lone Red Crossbill in El Paso, *El Paso* 7 Nov (Barry Zimmer) was the only report.

HOODED ORIOLE - A nice find for the Davis Mountains was a Hooded Oriole in Fort Davis, *Jeff Davis* 23 Aug (ph. Andrew Orgill). For the second year in a row, after having wintering Hooded Orioles from the 08-09 through 17-18 winters, an El Paso, *El Paso* yard again had no birds at the end of the period (Barry Zimmer). Feral cats are suspected as perhaps the primary reason.

SCOTT'S ORIOLE – On 21 Oct a male Scott's Oriole returned for what would be its fourth winter in an El Paso, *El Paso* yard (ph. Barry Zimmer).

BALTIMORE ORIOLE – A male Baltimore Oriole in El Paso, *El Paso* 12 Oct (John Kiseda) was an excellent find.

LOUISIANA WATERTHRUSH - A Louisiana Waterthrush was far west to Boot Canyon, Big Bend N.P., *Brewster* 10 Aug (ph. T. Jay Adams).

OVENBIRD – An Ovenbird was west to El Paso, *El Paso* 7 Oct (ph. Barry Zimmer).

TENNESSEE WARBLER - Out of place was a Tennessee Warbler west of Fort Davis, *Jeff Davis* 26 Aug (ph. Lorrie Lowrie).

HOODED WARBLER - Another eastern warbler in west Texas was Hooded Warbler with single birds at Pine Canyon, Big Bend N.P., *Brewster* 12-14 Sep (Chris Runk) and at Davis Mountains S.P., *Jeff Davis* 25 Sep (Steve Whitmer, Sue Whitmer).

AMERICAN REDSTART – Rare but regular, there were two records of American Redstart in the El Paso area: an adult male at Dell City, *Hudspeth* 14 Sep (ph. Jim Paton) and one at Ft. Bliss, *El Paso* 13 Oct (John Kiseda).

NORTHERN PARULA – A Northern Parula was in an El Paso, *El Paso* yard 10-12 Sep (ph. John Groves, Ada Ibarra).

BLACK-THROATED BLUE WARBLER – A male Black-throated Blue Warbler at McNary Reservoir 17 Oct (ph. Barry Zimmer) was just the third for *Hudspeth*.

PALM WARBLER – A western Palm Warbler was at Ascarate Park, *El Paso* 27 Oct (ph. Kevin Floyd) while another was northeast of Terlingua, *Brewster* 17-18 Nov (ph. Jim Hines, Barbara Hines).

HERMIT WARBLER – More expected in fall but always notable as a lowland migrant, a female Hermit Warbler graced Rio Bosque Wetlands Park, *El Paso* 27 Aug (John Sproul).

SLATE-THROATED REDSTART - The Slate-throated Redstart pair in Boot Canyon, Big Bend National Park, *Brewster* from the spring continued to be sporadically seen through mid-August with at least one bird remaining to 13 Sep (m.ob.).

SCARLET TANAGER – A male Scarlet Tanager in El Paso, *El Paso* 7 Nov (ph. Barry Zimmer) was both very rare and record late.

WESTERN TANAGER – A Western Tanager in El Paso, *El Paso* 5 Nov (Barry Zimmer) was unexpected so late.

NORTHERN CARDINAL – Northern Cardinal is regular in *El Paso* only at Rio Bosque Wetlands Park where a pair or two has nested in recent years. A male on 15 Sep (Kevin Floyd) and a pair on 29 Sep (Nathan Davis, Kevin Floyd) were the latest reports.

DICKCISSEL – Dickcissel is almost exclusively a fall migrant through the El Paso area, with numbers highly variable year to year. This fall saw very good numbers, mostly in Sep, with some counts of ten or more.

Cited observers:

T. Jay Adams, James Barnes, Justin Bosler, Steve Cardiff, Sheridan Coffey, D.D. Currie, Nathan Davis, Donna Dittman, Kevin Floyd, John Groves, Barbara Hines, Jim Hines, Petra Hockey, Ada Ibarra, Jeffrey Jackson, John Kiseda, Kathy Kiseda, Ad Konings, Rich Kostecke, Dell Little, Mark Lockwood, Lorrie Lowrie, Wendy McCrady, Anita Meagher, Andrew Orgill, Jim Paton, Martin Reid, Cecilia Riley, Chris Runk, Willie Sekula, John Sproul, Zachary Tonzetich, Tom VandenBerg, Barry Zimmer