

Trans-Pecos region of Texas – Spring 2019 (1 March 2019 – 31 May 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 a dry and largely uneventful spring in the El Paso area. Once again, water was high at area reservoirs and shorebird reports were few. Tropical Kingbirds returned in early May to lone *El Paso* and *Hudspeth* sites where first found in 2018. The species appears to be consolidating its presence and is likely present at other as yet unknown sites. The most notable records involved vireos: a Gray Vireo was just the second ever for *El Paso* and a Yellow-green Vireo was a first for both *Hudspeth* and the greater El Paso area.

Texas bird Records Committee (TBRC) review species in **bold** and cited observers listed alphabetically at the end of the report.

Notable Species observed during the period:

SURF SCOTER - Two Surf Scoters were a nice surprise at Imperial Reservoir, *Pecos* 5 Apr (ph. Greg Cook).

BUFFLEHEAD – A female Bufflehead lingered late at Ascarate Park, *El Paso* through the period until 17 Jun (John Kiseda, ph.) for a rare summer record.

LEAST GREBE - A pair of Least Grebes at seldom-birded Ruidosa, *Presidio* 24 Mar (ph. Willie Sekula) was a new location for the species and farther up-river than all previous records in Big Bend country.

ANNA'S HUMMINGBIRD - The female Anna's Hummingbird that tended to a nest during the winter at Cottonwood Campground, Big Bend N.P., *Brewster* fledged 2 young in early March and went on to fledge 2 more young in a second brood in early April (ph., m.ob.); it is unknown which species this bird mated with.

BROAD-BILLED HUMMINGBIRD – An adult male Broad-billed Hummingbird frequented a west El Paso, *El Paso* yard 6-9 May (Jody Lawrence, ph.).

MARbled GODWIT - A count of 40 Marbled Godwits at Balmorhea Lake, *Reeves* 21 Apr (ph. Anita Meagher) was an impressive number.

SANDERLING - A Sanderling at Imperial Reservoir, *Pecos* 25 May (Sheridan Coffey, Willie Sekula) was late and a bit westward.

LAUGHING GULL – A Laughing Gull visited Balmorhea Lake, *Reeves* 7 May (ph. Anita Meagher) while 2 dropped in at Ascarate Park, *El Paso* 23 May (John Kiseda, ph.) where rare.

BROWN PELICAN – An adult Brown Pelican was at Ascarate Park, *El Paso* 30 May (ph., John Kiseda, m.ob).

LITTLE BLUE HERON – Much less regular in the El Paso area than Tricolored Heron, an adult Little Blue Heron was at Rio Bosque Wetlands Park, *El Paso* 25-30 Apr (John Sproul, m.ob., ph.).

REDDISH EGRET - A white-phase Reddish Egret at Imperial Reservoir, *Pecos* 18 May (Justin Bosler) was well inland, especially for the spring season.

YELLOW-CROWNED NIGHT-HERON – By late May a pair of Yellow-crowned Night-Herons had returned to a west El Paso, *El Paso* site where present the year before (John Groves). A bit to the north, another was in Anthony, *El Paso* 28 May (Melanie Hoffman).

COMMON BLACK HAWK - Unexpected was a Common Black Hawk at Independence Creek Preserve, *Terrell* 22-23 Mar (ph. Rich Kostecke et al.).

BROAD-WINGED HAWK – Rare but regular in the El Paso area, the only report of Broad-winged Hawk was one near Dell City, *Hudspeth* 4 May (Jim Paton, ph.).

SHORT-TAILED HAWK - A white-morph Short-tailed Hawk in the Chisos Mountains, Big Bend N.P., *Brewster* 23 Apr (ph. Chris Benesh et al.) was a one-day wonder and the only one reported in the region this season.

LONG-EARED OWL - A lone Long-eared Owl was loyal to a roosting spot at Dugout Wells, Big Bend N.P., *Brewster* 14-22 Mar (ph. Alice Hempel, m.ob.).

LEWIS'S WOODPECKER - The Lewis's Woodpecker in Fort Davis, *Jeff Davis* during the winter lasted until 26 Apr (m.ob.); there was a single report of a second bird joining it 24 Mar (Dennis Shepler, Fred Collins).

NORTHERN FLICKER – A male Northern Flicker in Sierra Blanca, *Hudspeth* 25 May (Dave Hawksworth) was notably late but at a site where nesting occurred in 2007.

APLOMADO FALCON - An un-banded Aplomado Falcon was around Balmorhea Lake, *Reeves* 29 Apr - 2 May (ph. Anita Meagher, ph. Stephen Falick).

DUSKY-CAPPED FLYCATCHER - Up to 3 Dusky-capped Flycatchers were in the upper Chisos Mountains, Big Bend N.P., *Brewster* 19 Apr+ (m.ob.) while birds were noted at multiple locations in the higher elevations of the Davis Mountains, *Jeff Davis* 14 May+ (m.ob.).

SULPHUR-BELLIED FLYCATCHER - Quite surprising was a Sulphur-bellied Flycatcher in Boot Canyon, Big Bend N.P., *Brewster* 25 May (ph. Emily Novak).

TROPICAL KINGBIRD – After first county records in 2018, Tropical Kingbirds returned to sites in both *Hudspeth* and *El Paso* in early May. Multiple pairs were at Ascarate Park, *El Paso* 2 May+ (John Kiseda, ph., m.ob.) with ten plus birds including fledglings documented in the summer. In *Hudspeth*, a pair returned near Dell City 4 May+ with breeding likely but not confirmed (Jim Paton, ph.).

GRAY VIREO – Although it nests in small numbers just to the north of *El Paso* in the Organ Mountains, *Dona Ana*, NM, Gray Vireo is essentially unknown as a migrant in *El Paso*; one photographed in the Franklin Mountains 27 Apr (Ad Konings, ph.) was just the second for the county with the previous one 22 Sep, 1993.

YELLOW-GREEN VIREO – A perhaps overdue local first and the farthest west ever for TX was a Yellow-green Vireo at a migrant trap in northwest *Hudspeth* 30 May (Jim Paton, ph.); one at The Post park south of Marathon, *Brewster* 4 May+ (ph. m.ob.) may very well have been a bird detected there for a few days the prior September.

VARIED THRUSH - Less than annual in Texas and usually expected in fall or winter, a Varied Thrush that stopped at Davis Mountains S.P., *Jeff Davis* 3-6 May (ph. Betty Dunn, m.ob.) was very surprising.

PINE SISKIN – A Pine Siskin in northwest *Hudspeth* 30 May (Jim Paton, ph.) was late.

GREEN-TAILED TOWHEE – A Green-tailed Towhee in northwest *Hudspeth* 30 May (ph., Jim Paton) was late.

GOLDEN-CROWNED SPARROW - A Golden-crowned Sparrow in Balmorhea, *Reeves* 17-26 Mar (Cecilia Riley, ph. Mike Gray) was a surprising find.

OVENBIRD - An Ovenbird wandered west to Devil's River S.N.A, *Val Verde* 4 May (Chris Runk).

LOUISIANA WATERTHRUSH - Out of place was a Louisiana Waterthrush in Marathon, *Brewster* 21 Apr (Justin Bosler).

PROTHONOTARY WARBLER - Rare in the Trans-Pecos, a Prothonotary Warbler was on the Window Trail in the Chisos Basin, Big Bend N.P., *Brewster* 20 Apr (ph. Missy Kerr et al.) and in Rio Grande Village, Big Bend N.P., *Brewster* 15 May (ph. Corey Ellingson et al.).

KENTUCKY WARBLER - A Kentucky Warbler singing at Dolan Falls Preserve, *Val Verde* 7 May (Rich Kostecke, Romey Swanson, Eric Carpenter) was unexpected and quite distant from any breeding areas.

TROPICAL PARULA - A male Tropical Parula first found near Big Bend's Hot Springs, *Brewster* 18 Apr (ph. Tanya Smythe et al.) was thereafter seen at around nearby Rio Grande Village through 14 May (ph. m.ob.).

NORTHERN PARULA – A female Northern Parula was west to near Dell City, *Hudspeth* 4 May (Jim Paton, ph.) for a rare county record.

MAGNOLIA WARBLER - Mostly an eastern migrant, a Magnolia Warbler in the desert at Blue Creek Canyon in Big Bend N.P., *Brewster* 29 Apr (ph. Max Wilson) must have been an odd sight.

BLACKBURNIAN WARBLER – A Blackburnian Warbler near Dell City 19 Apr (Jim Paton, ph.) was just the second ever for *Hudspeth*.

HERMIT WARBLER – Always a good find as a lowland migrant and much more likely in fall than spring, a Hermit Warbler was a surprise at Rio Bosque Wetlands Park, *El Paso* 4 May (ph. Kevin Floyd, Vicki Milne).

RUFIOUS-CAPPED WARBLER - A Rufous-capped Warbler was detected in the species usual haunts at Devil's River Preserve, *Val Verde* 6-7 May (Romey Swanson, Eric Carpenter, Rich Kostecke).

SLATE-THROATED REDSTART - The definite highlight of the season was a pair of Slate-throated Redstart in Boot Canyon, Big Bend N.P., *Brewster*. One bird was first noted 19 Apr (ph. Sandi Templeton) and found consistently for a few weeks until a pair of birds were first noted 16 May (David Larson, Jim Weber, Lynne Weber) building a nest. No successful nesting attempts were noted though the pair of birds would be seen intermittently through the rest of the spring and summer seasons.

SCARLET TANAGER - A female Scarlet Tanager in Marathon, *Brewster* 11 May (ph. Willie Sekula) was well west of typical migration routes.

NORTHERN CARDINAL – At least one, and likely two, pairs of Northern Cardinal were at Rio Bosque Wetlands Park, *El Paso* through the period (John Sproul, ph., m.ob). This is the only reliable site in the county.

ROSE-BREASTED GROSBEAK – Rare but regular, a male Rose-breasted Grosbeak was in El Paso, *El Paso* 4 May (Eddie Chew, ph., Susie Schneider).

Cited observers:

Chris Benesh, Justin Bosler, Eric Carpenter, Eddie Chew, Sheridan Coffey, Fred Collins, Greg Cook, Betty Dunn, Corey Ellingson, Stephen Falick, Kevin Floyd, Mike Gray, John Groves, Dave Hawksworth, Alice Hempel, Melanie Hoffman, Missy Kerr, John Kiseda, Ad Konings, Rich Kostecke, Rick Kostecke, David Larson, Jody Lawrence, Anita Meagher, Vicki Milne, Emily Novak, Jim Paton, Cecilia Riley, Chris Runk, Susie Schneider, Willie Sekula, Dennis Shepler, Tanya Smythe, John Sproul, Romey Swanson, Sandi Templeton, Jim Weber, Lynne Weber, Max Wilson.