

Trans-Pecos region of Texas – Spring 2020 (1 March 2020 – 31 May 2020)  
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: After excellent year-to-date rainfall through February, the tap turned off completely in mid-March, with no rain falling through the rest of the period, rapidly drying out deserts and grasslands. Conditions were quite dry by the end of the period with normal temperatures. Water levels were again high at area reservoirs which saw very little birding action. Coronavirus had varied effects on birding efforts. The local Audubon chapter cancelled its Birdathon in early May and birders stayed close to home. On the plus side, both Paton and Zimmer were home all day all period, resulting in some excellent records of raptors and eastern warblers. First county records of Short-tailed Hawk and Red-shouldered Hawk were obtained for *El Paso*.

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:

**CANVASBACK** – A male Canvasback along the Rio Grande in central *Hudspeth* 16 May (ph. Jim Paton) was late.

**BUFFLEHEAD** – Two female Buffleheads along the Rio Grande in central *Hudspeth* 16 May (Jim Paton) were late.

**HOODED MERGANSER** – A female Hooded Merganser lingered through the period at a west El Paso, *El Paso* pond (ph. Dan Belcher); Hooded Merganser typically departs the El Paso area by the end of March.

**GROOVE-BILLED ANI** - Far less than annual in the Trans-Pecos, a Groove-billed Ani was at Rio Grande Village, Big Bend N.P., *Brewster* 9 May (Tom VandenBerg) while another was in the Christmas Mountains, *Brewster* 26 May (Carolyn Ohl).

**ANNA'S HUMMINGBIRD** - An Anna's Hummingbird west of Fort Davis, *Jeff Davis* 15-19 May (ph. Beth McBroom) was unusual for the spring.

ALLEN'S HUMMINGBIRD – An apparent adult male Allen's Hummingbird stopped for one day in an El Paso, *El Paso* yard 14 Mar (ph. Barry Zimmer).

BROAD-BILLED HUMMINGBIRD - A male Broad-billed Hummingbird was northwest of Fort Davis, *Jeff Davis* 29 Mar (Cecilia Riley, ph. Mike Gray), a female was west of Fort Davis, *Jeff Davis* 23 May+ (ph. Lorrie Lowrie) while a male visited an El Paso, *El Paso* yard 5 Apr (ph. Barry Zimmer).

AMERICAN GOLDEN-PLOVER - Four American Golden-Plovers were a bit unexpected at the Sandia Wetland, Balmorhea, *Reeves* 19-20 Apr (Dell Little, D.D. Currie, ph. Stephen Falick).

LONG-BILLED CURLEW – A carefully estimated flock of 1200 Long-billed Curlews near Dell City, *Hudspeth* 29 Mar (Grant Paton, Jim Paton) was impressive but not locally unprecedented.

STILT SANDPIPER – Much more expected in fall, eight Stilt Sandpipers along the Rio Grande in central *Hudspeth* 16 May (Jim Paton) were a good tally for spring.

RED-NECKED PHALAROPE – Always of some note in spring, 4 Red-necked Phalaropes were split unevenly between 2 *Hudspeth* locations 16 May (Jim Paton).

LAUGHING GULL - A Laughing Gull at Balmorhea Lake, *Reeves* 29 Mar (ph. Mark Lockwood) was unusual, especially for the time of year.

FRANKLIN'S GULL – Two Franklin's Gulls in Dell City, *Hudspeth* 28 May (ph. Jim Paton) were late.

WHITE-TAILED KITE – Rio Bosque Wetlands Park, *El Paso* is the only reliable site for White-tailed Kite in the western Trans-Pecos. One to 2 were seen there 10-27 Mar, then were absent before returning 30 May+ (John Sproul, m. ob.).

COOPER'S HAWK – Cooper's Hawk is increasing in El Paso, *El Paso* as a nester with 4 active nests noted this spring, 3 on the west side of town and one in central El Paso (m.ob.).

COMMON BLACK HAWK – A migrant Common Black Hawk was over El Paso, *El Paso* 4 Apr (ph. Barry Zimmer); there are only about five local spring records, mostly in early Apr.

RED-SHOULDERED HAWK – A Red-shouldered Hawk in El Paso 25 Mar (ph. John Groves) was an overdue county first for *El Paso*.

BROAD-WINGED HAWK – Three Broad-winged Hawks in *El Paso* 15 Apr – 10 May (ph. Jim Paton, ph. Barry Zimmer) were slightly above average for this rare migrant.

**SHORT-TAILED HAWK** – A light-morph Short-tailed Hawk in El Paso, *El Paso* 16 Apr (ph. Jim Paton) was a county first.

**ZONE-TAILED HAWK** – El Paso, *El Paso* had 2 records of Zone-tailed Hawk – one 3-8 Mar (ph. John Groves) likely wintered locally but one 12 Apr (Jim Paton) was clearly a migrant. There are only about a dozen records of Zone-tailed Hawk for the El Paso area.

**DUSKY-CAPPED FLYCATCHER** - With access to a lot of habitat restricted and fewer birders in the Trans-Pecos this spring, sightings of Dusky-capped Flycatcher were limited to one set of sightings w. of Fort Davis, *Jeff Davis* 24 Apr+ (Jeff Sexton, Beth McBroom, Steve Cardiff, Donna Dittmann).

**OLIVE-SIDED FLYCATCHER** – An Olive-sided Flycatcher in El Paso, *El Paso* 9 Apr (ph. John Groves) was about 3 weeks early of more expected arrival dates.

**GRAY FLYCATCHER** – A Gray Flycatcher along the Rio Grande in central *Hudspeth* 18 Mar (ph. Bob Friedrichs) was either about 3 weeks early or had wintered locally.

**TROPICAL KINGBIRD** - A Tropical Kingbird pair south of Candelaria, *Presidio* 25 May (Dell Little, D.D. Currie) was unusual though certainly fits in with recent sightings in the El Paso area where as many as 5 birds returned to Ascarate Park, *El Paso* 1 May+ (ph. John Kiseda, m.ob.) for their third summer, still the only known location for them in the county.

**HUTTON'S VIREO** – Rare but regular in fall and winter, a Hutton's Vireo in El Paso 24 Mar (ph. John Groves) was lingering later than usual.

**YELLOW-GREEN VIREO** - Last year's Yellow-green Vireo returned to The Post Park south of Marathon, *Brewster* 9 May+ (ph. Stephen Falick, m.ob.).

**STELLER'S JAY** – At least two Steller's Jays lingered in west El Paso, *El Paso* through at least 29 Mar (John Groves, John Kiseda).

**WOODHOUSE'S SCRUB-JAY** – Small numbers of Woodhouse's Scrub-Jays remained in *El Paso* through at least 2 May.

**SEDGE WREN** - A Sedge Wren was a rarely detected prize at Balmorhea Lake, *Reeves* 12 Mar (ph. Erik Atwell).

**WESTERN BLUEBIRD** - A count of 23 Western Bluebirds at Big Spring State Park, *Howard* 14 Mar (Mark Lockwood) was notable number.

**GRAY-CHEEKED THRUSH** - A Gray-cheeked Thrush was out of range west of Fort Davis, *Jeff Davis* 14 May (ph. Willie Sekula, Kim Garwood).

SWAINSON'S THRUSH – There were 2 records of Swainson's Thrush for *El Paso* – one at Rio Bosque Wetlands Park 29 Apr (John Groves) and one in El Paso 5-6 May (ph. Barry Zimmer).

RED CROSSBILL – A complete shock, after a winter with none locally, and notably late was a Red Crossbill photographed by a game camera trained on a water feature in an El Paso, *El Paso* yard 15 May (Barry Zimmer).

OVENBIRD – An Ovenbird was in El Paso, *El Paso* 13 May (ph. Jim Paton).

BLUE-WINGED WARBLER - A Blue-winged Warbler was a great find west of its migration route in the Christmas Mountains, *Brewster* 17 May (ph. Carolyn Ohl, Jon McIntyre).

TENNESSEE WARBLER – A Tennessee Warbler was in El Paso, *El Paso* 26 Apr (Jim Paton).

KENTUCKY WARBLER – The warbler of the season for *El Paso* was the Kentucky Warbler that visited an El Paso yard 21 May (ph. Barry Zimmer) for only about the fifth local spring record.

AMERICAN REDSTART – An American Redstart was west to El Paso, *El Paso* 25 May (Grant Paton) where rare but annual.

NORTHERN PARULA – A Northern Parula in El Paso, *El Paso* 29-30 May (ph. Barry Zimmer) was rare and late.

MAGNOLIA WARBLER - A Magnolia Warbler south of La Linda, *Brewster* 22 Apr (Bonnie McKinney) was unexpected.

**GOLDEN-CROWNED SPARROW** – A Golden-crowned Sparrow in Arroyo Park in El Paso 5 Mar (ph. Kevin Lapp) was the first *El Paso* record in a number of years.

HOODED ORIOLE – A male Hooded Oriole of the *cucullatus* group, and clearly not a locally breeding *nelsoni* with which it was seen for direct comparison, in El Paso 13-29 Apr (ph. Barry Zimmer) was a first for *El Paso*. The observer felt it looked better for nominate *cucullatus* rather than *sennetti*.

NORTHERN CARDINAL – A male Northern Cardinal had returned to Rio Bosque Wetlands Park by 9 Mar (John Sproul) with 3 or more present by the end of the period (m.ob.); this is the only reliable site for the species in *El Paso*.

ROSE-BREASTED GROSBEAK – At least 3 Rose-breasted Grosbeaks were in *El Paso* 5-23 May (John Groves, John Kiseda, Jim Paton) where rare but annual; more unusual was one near Dell City, *Hudspeth* 28 May (ph. Jim Paton).

Cited observers:

Erik Atwell, Dan Belcher, Steve Cardiff, D.D. Currie, Donna Dittmann, Stephen Falick, Bob Friedrichs, Kim Garwood, Mike Gray, John Groves, John Kiseda, Kevin Lapp, Dell Little, Mark Lockwood, Lorrie Lowrie, Beth McBroom, Jon McIntyre, Bonnie McKinney, Carolyn Ohl, Grant Paton, Jim Paton, Cecilia Riley, Willie Sekula, Jeff Sexton, John Sproul, Tom VandenBerg, Barry Zimmer