

Trans-Pecos region of Texas – Summer 2020 (1 June 2020 – 31 July 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: It was a hot and dry summer with only very spotty monsoonal moisture appearing by the end of the period. Most sites in the counties received less than 0.4cm for the period with many locations getting no rain. With the dry conditions and extensive drought in nearby New Mexico, some species lingered late in spring and failed breeders/early migrants began wandering south by late June/early July, making some records difficult to categorize. The species that most exemplified this were Western Tanager and Black-headed Grosbeak. High water at area reservoirs again resulted in little to no birding pressure there and few shorebird reports. A spate of Anna's Hummingbird records was unusual and a male Rose-breasted Grosbeak provided a first local July record.

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:

**BLACK-BELLIED WHISTLING-DUCK** - Out of place was a single fly-over Black-bellied Whistling-Duck at Fort Pena Colorado Park south of Marathon, *Brewster* 19 Jun (Romey Swanson).

**CINNAMON TEAL** - A pair of Cinnamon Teal at Fort Pena Colorado Park south of Marathon, *Brewster* 21 Jun (ph. Aaron Boone) was an intriguing early-summer sighting.

**REDHEAD** - Four male Redheads at Fort Stockton Wastewater Treatment Ponds, *Pecos* 15 Jun (Willie Sekula) were a nice find.

**HOODED MERGANSER** – The female Hooded Merganser that stayed through spring on a west El Paso, *El Paso* pond was last reported on 14 Jun (John Kiseda, ph.).

**ANNA'S HUMMINGBIRD** – Anna's Hummingbird is normally absent from *El Paso* in summer with just a handful of previous records, so these El Paso records were of note: a female or young male 28 Jun – 2 Aug (Barry Zimmer, ph.), an adult male 4-13 Jul (John

Kiseda, ph.), and a female or young male 12 Jul (Jim Paton). The unseasonal Anna's Hummingbird west of Fort Davis, *Jeff Davis* continued until at least 7 Jun (Beth McBroom, Donna Dittmann, Steve Cardiff).

**BROAD-BILLED HUMMINGBIRD** - The female Broad-billed Hummingbird from the spring west of Fort Davis, *Jeff Davis* continued until at least 8 Jun (Donna Dittmann, Steve Cardiff). One or more males made sporadic visits through the season nearby (Lorrie Lowrie et al.); an adult female was northwest of Fort Davis, *Jeff Davis* 19 Jun+ (Dell Little, D.D. Currie). More surprising was a male Broad-billed along the Devil's River 15 miles northeast of Comstock, *Val Verde* 11 Jun (ph. Martha Norman).

**VIOLET-CROWNED HUMMINGBIRD** - It seemed like a repeat of last summer/fall with 2 different Violet-crowned Hummingbirds in separate locations in the Davis Mountains, *Jeff Davis* 20 Jul+ (Lorrie Lowrie et al.) and 27 Jul+ (Cecilia Riley et al.).

**WHITE-EARED HUMMINGBIRD** - The only White-eared Hummingbird of the season was a female west of Fort Davis, *Jeff Davis* 30 Jun+ (ph. Beth McBroom et al.).

**SNOWY PLOVER** – Four Snowy Plovers along the Rio Grande in central *Hudspeth* 4 Jul (D.D. Currie, Dell Little) were at a site with good breeding habitat.

**HUDSONIAN GODWIT** - Extremely rare in the Trans-Pecos, a Hudsonian Godwit at Balmorhea Lake, *Reeves* 1 Jun (ph. Donna Dittmann, Steve Cardiff) was also a bit late.

**WHITE-RUMPED SANDPIPER** - A count of 6 White-rumped Sandpipers at Balmorhea Lake, *Reeves* 1 Jun (ph. Donna Dittmann, Steve Cardiff) was a nice count for the region.

**LAUGHING GULL** - A first-summer Laughing Gull wandered to Balmorhea Lake, *Reeves* 4 Jun (ph. Donna Dittmann, Steve Cardiff).

**AMERICAN WHITE PELICAN** – At least a dozen American White Pelicans over-summered at Ft. Hancock Reservoir, *Hudspeth* (Jim Paton).

**BROWN PELICAN** -A Brown Pelican visited Balmorhea Lake, *Reeves* 3-4 Jul (ph. Brittany Meagher).

**TRICOLORED HERON** – A Tricolored Heron was west to Rio Bosque Wetlands Park, *El Paso* 27 Jul (John Sproul).

**YELLOW-CROWNED NIGHT-HERON** – One to two Yellow-crowned Night-Herons were again seen throughout the period in west El Paso, *El Paso* (John Groves) where breeding has likely occurred in recent years.

**WHITE-TAILED KITE** – One to two White-tailed Kites were at Rio Bosque Wetlands Park, *El Paso* in early Jun (John Groves, John Sproul) but no nesting was reported.

NORTHERN HARRIER - A male Northern Harrier 20 miles northwest of Marfa, *Presidio* 21 Jul (Stephen Falick) may have been a bird that summered nearby.

BURROWING OWL – Burrowing Owl had good nesting success at the following *El Paso* sites: Ascarate Park, Ft. Bliss ponds, and Rio Bosque Wetlands Park (John Kiseda, m.ob.) with ten young at three Ascarate Park burrows 2 Jul (John Kiseda, ph.).

PEREGRINE FALCON – It appears likely that at least two pairs of Peregrine Falcon were in *El Paso* with numerous sightings at Ascarate Park (John Kiseda) and in the Franklin Mts. around S. Franklin Peak (Barry Zimmer), plus scattered other reports.

CORDILLERAN FLYCATCHER – A Cordilleran Flycatcher lingered in an *El Paso*, *El Paso* yard through 18 Jun (Jim Paton).

DUSKY-CAPPED FLYCATCHER - At least one Dusky-capped Flycatcher was present west of Fort Davis, *Jeff Davis* through the season (Donna Dittmann, Steve Cardiff).

COUCH'S KINGBIRD - A vocalizing Couch's Kingbird in Balmorhea, *Reeves* 7 Jun (audio Christian Walker) was a surprising find.

TROPICAL KINGBIRD – Multiple pairs of Tropical Kingbird nested for the third summer at Ascarate Park, *El Paso* (m.ob., ph.), their only known location in the county, and one was near Dell City 28 Jul (Jim Paton) for the third year at this sole known *Hudspeth* site.

WARBLING VIREO – Warbling Vireo is a regular migrant through the first week in Jun in spring and starting in late Jul in fall, but one in *El Paso*, *El Paso* 19 Jul (Jim Paton) was a bit early.

YELLOW-GREEN VIREO - The Yellow-green Vireo at Fort Pena Colorado Park south of Marathon, *Brewster* continued through the entire season (m.ob.).

CHIHUAHUAN RAVEN – 325 Chihuahuan Ravens around Dell City, *Hudspeth* 28 Jul (Jim Paton) was an impressive total for summer.

BROWN-HEADED COWBIRD – An estimated 3500 Brown-headed Cowbirds near Dell City, *Hudspeth* 28 Jul (Jim Paton) was a big total for summer.

**STREAK-BACKED ORIOLE** - An unusually plumaged Streak-backed Oriole that perhaps most closely resembled the subspecies found in central America returned to Fort Pena Colorado Park south of Marathon, *Brewster* for the second straight year 6-21 Jun (ph. Charlie Trapani, m.ob.).

LOUISIANA WATERTHRUSH - One or more different Louisiana Waterthrush put in appearances in the Christmas Mountains, *Brewster* 7-26 Jul (ph. Carolyn Ohl) while

another was northwest of Shafter, *Presidio* 23 Jul (ph. Cin-Ty Lee) and one more was 10 miles southeast of Fort Davis, *Jeff Davis* 26 Jul (ph. Chris Pipes).

HERMIT WARBLER - A Hermit Warbler was a great late-summer find at Davis Mountains State Park, *Jeff Davis* 30 Jul (ph. Don Brode).

GOLDEN-CHEEKED WARBLER - Different lone Golden-cheeked Warblers made their way to Boot Canyon, Big Bend N.P., *Brewster* 20 Jun (Josh Beck) and 30 Jun (ph. Troy Hibbitts).

BLACK-THROATED GRAY WARBLER – Early Black-throated Gray Warblers were in *El Paso* – 19-20 Jul in El Paso (Jim Paton) and at Franklin Mts. State Park 24 Jul (Dejeanne Doublet).

RED-FACED WARBLER - A Red-faced Warbler that lingered in Boot Canyon, Big Bend N.P., *Brewster* 27 Jun - 1 Jul (ph. Wyatt Egelhoff, m.ob.) was a real prize.

**SLATE-THROATED REDSTART** - A Slate-throated Redstart in Boot Canyon, Big Bend N.P., *Brewster* 16 Jun (ph. Caleb Helsel) was presumably one of last year's returning pair; sightings of this year's bird were few though, with the last one coming on 19 Jun (Mark Lockwood).

WESTERN TANAGER – A few Western Tanagers regularly drift through *El Paso* in Jul, but this was more pronounced and widespread this year, likely a reflection of dry conditions in New Mexico mountains.

NORTHERN CARDINAL – Several pairs of Northern Cardinal were present all period at Rio Bosque Wetlands Park (John Sproul, m.ob.), the only reliable *El Paso* site. More unusual was one at Keystone Heritage Park 25 Jul (Kevin Floyd, ph.).

ROSE-BREASTED GROSBEAK – A male Rose-breasted Grosbeak in El Paso 12-21 Jul (Jim Paton, ph.) was the first Jul record for *El Paso*.

BLACK-HEADED GROSBEAK – Black-headed Grosbeaks were seen at many sites in El Paso from late Jun+ (m.ob.). Though the species does not nest in *El Paso* it is normal to encounter some birds in summer, but the greater numbers this year likely reflected dry conditions in New Mexico mountains.

Cited observers:

Josh Beck, Aaron Boone, Don Brode, Steve Cardiff, D.D. Currie, Donna Dittmann, Dejeanne Doublet, Wyatt Egelhoff, Stephen Falick, Kevin Floyd, John Groves, Caleb Helsel, Troy Hibbitts, John Kiseda, Cin-Ty Lee, Dell Little, Mark Lockwood, Lorrie Lowrie, Beth McBroom, Brittany Meagher, Martha Norman, Carolyn Ohl, Jim Paton, Chris Pipes, Cecilia Riley, Willie Sekula, John Sproul, Romey Swanson, Charlie Trapani, Christian Walker, Barry Zimmer.