

Central Texas – Fall 2020 (1 August 2020 – 30 November 2020)
Noteworthy Bird Sightings

Compiled by Eric Carpenter

Counties Covered: Andrews, Bandera, Bell, Bexar, Blanco, Borden, Brown, Burnet, Caldwell, Callahan, Coke, Coleman, Comal, Comanche, Concho, Coryell, Crockett, Dawson, De Witt, Eastland, Ector, Edwards, Erath, Fisher, Gaines, Gillespie, Glasscock, Gonzales, Guadalupe, Hamilton, Hays, Howard, Irion, Jones, Karnes, Kendall, Kerr, Kimble, Kinney, Lampasas, Lavaca, Llano, Martin, Mason, McCulloch, Medina, Menard, Midland, Mills, Mitchell, Nolan, Reagan, Real, Runnels, San Saba, Schleicher, Scurry, Shackelford, Sterling, Sutton, Taylor, Tom Green, Travis, Upton, Uvalde, Williamson, Wilson

Notable Species observed during the period:

Surf Scoter - Surf Scoters made an above average showing in central Texas with one at Hornsby Bend, *Travis* 16-17 Oct (Lisa Cole), up to 3 at the same location 29 Oct - 9 Nov (ph. m.ob.), up to 2 at Lake Georgetown, *Williamson* 6-20 Nov (ph. Tim Fennell, m.ob.), one at Lake Colorado City State Park, *Mitchell* 8 Nov (ph. James Sipiora), another on Lake Travis, *Travis* 14 Nov (Susan Andres), and one more at Granger Lake, *Williamson* 16 Nov (ph. Steven McDonald, ph. Rich Kostecke).

White-winged Scoter - Most fall seasons go by without any White-winged Scoters detected so it was nice to have a likely county first at Granger Lake, *Williamson* 16 Oct (ph. Rich Kaskan) and another bird that lingered in San Saba, *San Saba* 24-30 Oct (ph. Erich Fickle, Luella Fickle, m.ob.).

Common Merganser - A lone Common Merganser made it as far east as Tejas Camp, *Williamson* 12 Nov (Steven McDonald, Rich Kostecke).

Black-billed Cuckoo - Black-billed Cuckoo is tough fall migrant in much of Texas, especially in the western half of the state, so one in Midland, *Midland* 9 Sep (ph. Brenna Woods) was noteworthy.

Hummingbirds - An amazing and unprecedented number of western hummingbirds made their way into Texas during this season, with many lingering into winter. Rufous/Allen's are the most expected in normal years and their numbers were perhaps three or four times what is considered typical. You were in a minority this season if you had a hummingbird feeder up and didn't have a Rufous-type visit at least once, with several locations reporting multiple birds of 3 or more; as many as 6 were at the San Antonio Botanical Gardens, *Bexar* by the end of the season. Other hummingbirds from the west also appeared in unusual numbers which we will try to summarize here based on reports in eBird: Anna's were found in 16 locations, the earliest report coming 5 Sep, and 3 of the reports involved 2 birds; Broad-tailed were seen in at least 18 locations, the earliest being 8 Aug; and, Calliopes showed in 15 or more locations, the earliest also

being 8 Aug. Many of these hummingbirds were still being loyal to the feeders they were visiting as the winter season started.

Broad-billed Hummingbird - Broad-billed Hummingbirds are far less than annual in central Texas but even they seem to have been affected by conditions to the west. One Broad-billed was in Midland, *Midland* 13 Sep (ph. Deborah Whiting), another lingered briefly 10 miles southwest of Rocksprings, *Edwards* 4-7 Nov (ph. Joanna Roberts) while a real crowd pleaser was a male that decided to winter in northwest Austin, *Travis* 3 Nov+ (ph. LaDonna Castanuela, m.ob.), an overdue first county record.

Buff-bellied Hummingbird - A Buff-bellied Hummingbird wandered northward to Canyon Lake, *Comal* 3-5 Sep (ph. Greg Steeves).

Virginia Rail - The unseasonal Virginia Rail in Andrews, *Andrews* from mid-July continued and more careful study revealed at least 3 birds there 1 Aug (Justin Bosler). Not quite as out of season, but another Virginia Rail at Devine Lake, *Williamson* 23 Aug+ (Ellen O'Neil, Pat O'Neil, ph. m.ob.) was also a bit early.

Whooping Crane - Migrating Whooping Cranes included 2 at Granger Lake, *Williamson* 24-25 Oct (ph. Tim Fennell et al.) and a different bird there 14 Nov (ph. Rich Kostecke).

American Golden-Plover - The most westerly American Golden-Plovers were 2 at Lake Fort Phantom, *Jones* 25 Oct (Jay Packer, Amy Packer).

Snowy Plover - Some notable Snowy Plover sightings included as many as 4 that stopped at Hornsby Bend, *Travis* 14-19 Aug (Adam McInroy, m.ob.), and up to 10 at Stillhouse Hollow Lake, *Bell* 31 Aug - 2 Sep (ph. Randy Pinkston).

American Woodcock - An American Woodcock was out of place in Barnhart, *Irion* 2 Nov (ph. Kay Zagst).

Red-necked Phalarope - Red-necked Phalaropes made it as far east as Hornsby Bend, *Travis* with 2 there 10 Sep (Jeff Patterson, ph. m.ob.), and up to 4 more 21-24 Sep (ph. Jeff Osborne, Janet Davis, m.ob.).

Pomarine Jaeger - In a season of many highlights, a Pomarine Jaeger on Granger Lake, *Williamson* 1-2 Sep (ph. Rich Kaskan, m.ob.) is as notable as any others as it is perhaps the least expected inland jaeger in Texas.

Sabine's Gull - Distinctive first-cycle Sabine's Gulls were detected in the early portion of their migration window with one at Hornsby Bend, *Travis* 10 Sep (ph. Jason Garcia), another at Kirby Lake, *Taylor* 13-15 Sep (ph. Jayton Carroll), and one more on Granger Lake, *Williamson* 22-24 Sep (ph. Rich Kostecke, m.ob.).

Heermann's Gull - A striking adult Heermann's Gull, just the sixth record for Texas, was a great surprise at Kirby Lake, *Taylor* 21-22 Nov (ph. Jayton Carroll, m.ob.).

Western Gull - An apparent first-cycle Western Gull seen briefly on O.C. Fischer Lake, *Tom Green* 30 Nov (ph. Christopher Daniels) will be reviewed by the T.B.R.C.

Lesser Black-backed Gull - A second-cycle Lesser Black-backed Gull was at Granger Lake, *Williamson* 16 Oct (Tim Fennell, ph. Steven McDonald) while an adult visited the same lake 7-16 Nov (ph. Arman Moreno et al.).

Black Skimmer - Five Black Skimmers cruising over the small pond at Cuero's Municipal Park, *DeWitt* 25 Oct (ph. Tyler Miloy) must have been a strange sight with Cuero being at least 50 miles inland from the nearest bay and a solid 70 miles from the Texas coastline.

Common Loon - A Common Loon on Lake Buchanan, *Burnet* 16-25 Aug (Lee Kothmann, Justin Bosler) was likely an over-summering bird.

Magnificent Frigatebird - Puzzling were scattered sightings of lone Magnificent Frigatebirds at Twin Buttes Reservoir, *Tom Green* 4 Nov (ph. Lawrence Haller), northwest of Dale, *Caldwell* 4 Nov (ph. Jonny Scalise), at Reimers Ranch in far west *Travis* 6 Nov (Jeffrey Jackson), over Lady Bird Lake, *Travis* 21 Nov (ph. Ryan Levine), and over Granger Lake, *Williamson* 24 Nov (ph. Rich Kostecke). It seems plausible that at least the Austin area sightings mentioned here could have been the same individual.

Brown Pelican -Following after the landfall of Hurricane Laura in Louisiana, a single Brown Pelican noted the same day at Calaveras Lake, *Bexar* 27 Aug (ph. Aaron Boone) was soon joined by several others that came and went at the lake and nearby Braunig Lake until at least 23 Nov (m.ob.), with 4 being the most observed at any one time. The Brown Pelican at Granger Lake, *Williamson* from mid July remained there until at least 11 Sep (m.ob.).

American Bittern - Always good finds on the Edwards Plateau, an American Bittern was just east of Llano, *Llano* 14 Sep (Sheridan Coffey, Martin Reid) while another showed up in Boerne, *Kendall* 31 Oct (ph. Lucy Spade).

Tricolored Heron - The most westerly dispersing Tricolored Herons included 2 at Proctor Lake, *Comanche* 1-7 Aug (ph. Jack Sloan), one in Midland, *Midland* 8 Aug - 8 Sep (ph. Kathy Lupardus et al.), and one more at Twin Buttes Reservoir, *Tom Green* 31 Aug (ph. William Carlson).

Reddish Egret - Single Reddish Egret wandered to central Texas with one at Braunig Lake, *Bexar* 14-30 Sep (ph. Angel Poe, m.ob.), another at Lakeway, *Travis* 15 Nov (Robin Doughty), one at Kirby Lake, *Taylor* 22 Nov (Jayton Carroll, Stephen Falick) and one more on Lake Georgetown, *Williamson* 24-25 Nov (ph. Kenneth Bader).

Swallow-tailed Kite - A Swallow-tailed Kite made it as far north as Salado, *Bell* 9 Sep (ph. Charlie Plimpton) while one was east of Schertz, *Bexar* 5-6 Sep (ph. Alyssia Church et al.) and another was over Webberville, *Travis* 7 Sep (ph. Laurie Foss).

Golden Eagle - A juvenile Golden Eagle was a nice find 10 miles northeast of Camp Wood, *Real* 31 Oct (ph. Romey Swanson, Lee Kothmann).

Harris's Hawk - A Harris's Hawk made it as far north as Belton Lake, *Bell* 9 Oct (ph. Brad Burden) while 2 were 10 miles east of Eden, *Concho* 24 Oct (ph. Drew Harvey).

White-tailed Hawk - An immature White-tailed Hawk was just north of Granger Lake, *Williamson* 10 Sep (ph. Galen Stewart) while an adult was detected in nearby Thrall, *Williamson* 30 Sep (ph. Tim Fennell).

Zone-tailed Hawk - Zone-tailed Hawks continue to show signs of expansion with around Granger Lake, *Williamson* 6 Aug+ (ph. Susan Andres, m.ob.), another near Buffalo Gap, *Taylor* 23 Aug (Jayton Carroll) and one in Falls City, *Karnes* 16 Nov+ (ph. Zachary Tonzetich, m.ob.).

Ferruginous Hawk - Ferruginous Hawks have a patchy distribution in central Texas. Sightings this season included lone birds near Granger Lake, *Williamson* 16 Oct (Rich Kaskan, ph. Steven McDonald), in far west Austin, *Travis* 18 Oct (ph. Vincent O'Brien, Andy Filtness), 5 miles south of Leesville, *Gonzales* 15 Nov (Cameron Johnson, Erik Atwell, Keith Andringa), and in Fredricksburg, *Gillespie* 23 Nov (ph. Rich Kaskan, Eric Carpenter).

Flammulated Owl - Flammulated Owls are only very rarely detected as migrants so one in Midland, *Midland* 25 Oct (ph. Karen Hardie) was a nice prize.

Western Screech-Owl - A Western Screech-Owl heard near Leakey, *Real* 26 Nov (Charmaine Ganson) was on the very eastern edge of their expected range.

Williamson's Sapsucker - Williamson's Sapsuckers are only rarely detected outside the Trans-Pecos; one near Ingram, *Kerr* 11-12 Nov (Paul Sellin) and another southwest of Spicewood, *Burnet* 14 Nov (ph. Brooke Smith, Barry Lyon) were among the most easterly ever found in the state.

Lewis's Woodpecker - The only Lewis's Woodpecker was one detected at Harper Park near the community of Water Valley, *Tom Green* 15 Nov (ph. Christopher Daniels).

Red-headed Woodpecker - Three juvenile Red-headed Woodpeckers were outliers near the community of Sloan, *San Saba* 19 Oct+ (ph. Jimma Byrd).

Acorn Woodpecker - Surprising was an Acorn Woodpecker at Cave without a Name, 10 miles northeast of Boerne, *Kendall* 6 Nov (ph. Delmar Cain).

Pacific-slope Flycatcher - With only one prior fully documented record in the state, Pacific-slope Flycatchers staged an unexpected and major dispersal into Texas this fall. TWO (!) birds each were documented with audio recordings at both Southside Lions Park in San Antonio, *Bexar* 16 Oct+ (ph. audio Brad Wier, audio Martin Reid, m.ob.) and in Falls City, *Karnes* 8 Nov+ (ph. audio Willie Sekula, audio Martin Reid, m.ob.).

Great Kiskadee - Great Kiskadee is widespread enough now that we don't mention it that much here in recent years; still, a count of 5 together just southeast of Junction, *Kimble* 26 Aug (ph. Rhandy Helton) is impressive.

Tropical Kingbird - A pair of vocalizing Tropical Kingbirds in Rankin, *Upton* 31 Jul - 4 Aug (ph. audio Justin Bosler) and another lone bird in McCamey, *Upton* 5-12 Aug (ph. Justin Bosler) were outliers or a sign of potential expansion.

Couch's Kingbird - Northerly Couch's Kingbirds included one in Rotan, *Fisher* 2 Sep (Jay Packer) and another in Belton, *Bell* 26 Sep (Doug Orama).

Hutton's Vireo - Lone outlier Hutton's Vireos were detected 10 miles southeast of Gillett, *DeWitt* 2 Nov (Derek Muschalek) and another in Sonora, *Sutton* 6 Nov (ph. Christian Fernandez).

Plumbeous Vireo - A Plumbeous Vireo was a great find in northwest San Antonio, *Bexar* 27 Oct (Sheridan Coffey, Martin Reid).

Yellow-green Vireo - A Yellow-green Vireo was far astray from any other prior records and an exceptional find in Midland, *Midland* 26 Aug (ph. Greg Palko).

Sage Thrasher - Sage Thrashers do occasionally irrupt into the eastern part of the region some falls but this season saw the biggest irruption in many years. Birds were seen at a couple dozen locations, and often enough in groups of 2 or 3 individuals. Most noteworthy were an early individual at Commons Ford Park in west Austin, *Travis* 17 Aug (ph. Josh Lefever) and an impressive count of 11 in very close proximity at Reimers Ranch Park, *Travis* 11 Nov (Arman Moreno, Adrian Johnson).

Western Bluebird - Western Bluebirds also wandered eastward in higher numbers than usual and were still being found at new locations as the season ended. Most notable were 9 birds at Fort Hood, *Coryell* 6 Nov (ph. Noah Nei et al.) and up to a dozen west of Andice, *Williamson* 18 Nov+ (ph. Rich Kostecke, m.ob.).

Mountain Bluebird - Mountain Bluebirds made a much more impressive push east than Western Bluebirds with many large groups reported and numbers still increasing into the winter season. Some notable reports include 20 at Fort Hood, *Coryell* 14 Nov (ph. Nick Glover), up to 20 at Trading Creek Reservoir, *McLennan* 27 Nov+ (ph. Matt York), as many as 40 west of Andice, *Williamson* 7 Nov+ (ph. Rich Kostecke, m.ob.), and a lone bird that made it as far east as Granger Lake, *Williamson* 12 Nov (ph. Jack Cochran).

Townsend's Solitaire - A bit surprising is that Townsend's Solitaires did not seem to irrupt eastward like the bluebirds did. The only real notable report was 5 bird about 10 miles northeast of Camp Wood, *Real* 31 Oct (ph. Romey Swanson, Lee Kothmann).

Clay-colored Thrush - A lone Clay-colored Thrush well to the north at South Llano State Park, *Kimble* 20 Nov (ph. Alice Le Duc) and another in Yorktown, *DeWitt* 21 Nov (ph. Brian Berry) were surprising finds.

Sprague's Pipit - Rather early was a Sprague's Pipit near Granger Lake, *Williamson* 30 Sep (Tim Fennell).

Evening Grosbeak - An Evening Grosbeak over 10 miles south of Robert Lee, *Coke* 14 Nov (ph. Deborah Whiting) was the only one reported in a potential invasion that never really materialized.

Purple Finch - The farthest flung Purple Finches were one near Mico, *Medina* 11 Nov (ph. Laura Keene) and another 10 miles southeast of Mertzon, *Irion* 28 Nov (ph. Sarah Flournoy).

Cassin's Finch - A small push of Cassin's Finches made it into central Texas with one in west Austin, *Travis* 15 Oct (ph. Andy Filtness, Ellen Filtness), 2 about 15 miles southwest of Rocksprings, *Edwards* 23 Oct - 5 Nov (ph. Joanna Roberts), one north of Sherwood, *Irion* 1 Nov (ph. Dorothy Tate), up to 3 near Buffalo Gap, *Taylor* 10 Nov+ (ph. Jayton Carroll, ph. Jay Packer), and one south of Kerrville, *Kerr* 20 Nov (ph. David Hunt).

Pine Siskin - Pine Siskins also had a great season, first being detected in mid-September with numbers climbing throughout the season in all areas (m.ob.).

Clay-colored Sparrow - Clay-colored Sparrows are regular fall migrants that are usually only in the very southern edge of the region by the end of the season. Most likely due to wintering birds pushed east, there were more than usual in late fall, including 4 at Reimers Ranch, *Travis* 22 Nov (Noreen Baker) and 4 more just south of San Marcos, *Hays* 29 Nov (ph. Eric Carpenter).

Brewer's Sparrow - Brewer's Sparrows had their best showing in the eastern part of the region in many years with one about 10 miles southeast of Gillett, *DeWitt* 15 Oct (Derek Muschalek), another at Reimers Ranch, *Travis* 11 Nov+ (Jeffrey Jackson, ph. Adam McInroy), up to 2 west of Andice, *Williamson* 19 Nov+ (Brush Freeman, ph. Rich Kostecke), one at Jackson Nature Park near Stockdale, *Wilson* 26 Nov (ph. Willie Sekula) and one more south of San Marcos, *Hays* 27 Nov+ (ph. Colton Robbins, ph. Eric Carpenter).

Black-throated Sparrow - A Black-throated Sparrow was a surprising find at the San Antonio Botanical Gardens, *Bexar* 16 Sep (ph. Dina Perry) while other outliers included

2 near Gillett, Karnes 27 Aug (Derek Muschalek) and one near Cibolo, *Guadalupe* 9 Oct (ph. Paul Bogumil).

Lark Bunting - Lark Buntings were also in numbers much higher than normal in the eastern edge of their haunts and beyond. Impressive counts include more than 50 south of San Antonio, *Bexar* 6 Nov+ (ph. Sheridan Coffey, Martin Reid, m.ob.), and at least 35 south of San Marcos, *Hays* 26 Nov+ (ph. Eric Carpenter et al.).

Nelson's Sparrow - Rarely detected as a fall migrant, a Nelson's Sparrow at Granger Lake, *Williamson* 2-3 Nov (ph. Rich Kostecke, Steven McDonald) was a great find.

Green-tailed Towhee - A few wayward Green-tailed Towhees were detected with the most easterly ranging being one near Walter E. Long Lake, *Travis* 1 Nov (Owen Moorhead).

Rusty Blackbird - A Rusty Blackbird at Cook's Slough in Uvalde, *Uvalde* 8 Nov (ph. Greg Steeves) was well west of expected range.

Blue-winged Warbler - A Blue-winged Warbler was west to James Kiehl River Bend Park just east of Comfort, *Kendall* 25 Sep (Betty Dunn).

Swainson's Warbler - Out of place was an injured Swainson's Warbler picked up in Boerne, *Kendall* 31 Oct (ph. Robert Reed).

Virginia's Warbler - Virginia's Warblers on the eastern edge of their migration route included one in Rankin, *Upton* 12 Sep (Steve Glover) and another in Midland, *Midland* 14 Sep (ph. Greg Palko).

Cape May Warbler - A tough migrant in the fall, single Cape May Warblers were in Sweetwater, *Nolan* 11 Nov (ph. Justin Bosler) and at Hornsby Bend, *Travis* 14 Nov (Eric Carpenter).

Prairie Warbler - A rare bird on the Edwards Plateau, a Prairie Warbler was at Commons Ford Park, *Travis* 22-23 Aug (ph. Emily Novak) while another one was at the Junction Wastewater Treatment Ponds, *Kimble* 2 Sep (ph. Rhandy Helton).

Black-throated Gray Warbler - Black-throated Gray Warblers irrupted into central Texas like never before, with birds reported in at least 20 locations (m.ob.), with the earliest 29 Aug; all reports were of 1 bird except for 2 seen at the same time in Round Rock, *Williamson* 19 Oct (ph. Kelly Holligan).

Townsend's Warbler - There were a handful of Townsend's Warblers during the season as well with the most notable being singles at Old Tunnel State Park, *Kendall* 5 Oct (Dennis Devlin, Nancy Devlin), at Stillhouse Hollow Lake, *Bell* 12 Oct (ph. Daniel Kelch), at South Llano River S.P., *Kimble* 13 Oct (ph. Ryan Behrens), and at Canyon Lake, *Comal* 19 Oct (ph. Darlene Varga).

Hermit Warbler - Lone Hermit Warblers were great finds at Rankin, *Upton* 12 Sep (ph. Steve Glover), at Cibolo Nature Center, *Kendall* 19 Oct (ph. Craig Hensley), and in Midland, *Midland* 22-23 Oct (ph. Greg Palko).

Painted Redstart - Quite out of place and totally unexpected was a Painted Redstart that turned up in south Austin, *Travis* 9 Nov (ph. Nick Weaver).

Hepatic Tanager - Single Hepatic Tanagers wandered east to Reimers Ranch Park, *Travis* 8 Oct (Jeffrey Jackson) and also to north Austin, *Travis* 19 Nov (ph. Cathy Cuddihy).

Western Tanager - At least 6 different Western Tanagers appeared at various locations on the eastern edge of the region with an early one west of Palmetto S.P., *Gonzales* 30 Aug (ph. Elaine Cowley) and the latest one being at Sun City, Georgetown, *Williamson* 13-16 Nov (Martin Byhower et al.).

Rose-breasted Grosbeak - A Rose-breasted Grosbeak was west to Midland, *Midland* 5-11 Oct (ph. Greg Palko).

Black-headed Grosbeak - The easternmost Black-headed Grosbeak was one west of Palmetto S.P., *Gonzales* 1 Sep (ph. Elaine Cowley).

Cited observers and contributors:

Susan Andres, Keith Andringa, Erik Atwell, Kenneth Bader, Noreen Baker, Ryan Behrens, Brian Berry, Paul Bogumil, Aaron Boone, Justin Bosler, Brad Burden, Martin Byhower, Jimma Byrd, Delmar Cain, William Carlson, Eric Carpenter, Jayton Carroll, LaDonna Castanuela, Alyssia Church, Jack Cochran, Sheridan Coffey, Lisa Cole, Elaine Cowley, Cathy Cuddihy, Christopher Daniels, Janet Davis, Dennis Devlin, Nancy Devlin, Robin Doughty, Betty Dunn, Stephen Falick, Tim Fennell, Christian Fernandez, Erich Fickle, Luella Fickle, Andy Filtness, Ellen Filtness, Sarah Flournoy, Laurie Foss, Brush Freeman, Charmaine Ganson, Jason Garcia, Nick Glover, Steve Glover, Lawrence Haller, Karen Hardie, Drew Harvey, Rhandy Helton, Craig Hensley, Kelly Holligan, David Hunt, Jeffrey Jackson, Adrian Johnson, Cameron Johnson, Rich Kaskan, Laura Keene, Daniel Kelch, Rich Kostecke, Lee Kothmann, Alice LeDuc, Josh Lefever, Ryan Levine, Kathy Lupardus, Barry Lyon, Steven McDonald, Adam McInroy, Tyler Miloy, Owen Moorhead, Arman Moreno, Derek Muschalek, Noah Nei, Emily Novak, Vincent O'Brien, Ellen O'Neil, Pat O'Neil, Doug Orama, Jeff Osborne, Amy Packer, Jay Packer, Greg Palko, Jeff Patterson, Dina Perry, Randy Pinkston, Charlie Plimpton, Angel Poe, Robert Reed, Martin Reid, Colton Robbins, Joanna Roberts, Jonny Scalise, Willie Sekula, Paul Sellin, James Sipiora, Jack Sloan, Brooke Smith, Lucy Spade, Greg Steeves, Galen Stewart, Romey Swanson, Dorothy Tate, Zachary Tonzetich, Darlene Varga, Nick Weaver, Deborah Whiting, Brad Wier, Brenna Woods, Matt York, Kay Zagst.

