Summer 2019: Central Oaks & Prairies of Texas
By Bert Frenz

This report is from 1 June to 31 July 2019. It includes sightings from the following counties: Bastrop, Bell, Brazos, Burleson, Falls, Fayette, Freestone, Grimes, Lee, Leon, Limestone, McLennan, Madison, Milam, Navarro, Robertson, and Washington.

MOST UNUSUAL SIGHTINGS:

White-winged Dove – While White-winged Doves are found in abundance along the I-35 corridor, their arrival in Brazos was late and has been slow to build to numbers. This season, for the first time, counts in the mid to high double digits have been noted, including 65 in Bryan 24 Jul (Russell Moses), 75 at Country Club Lake 15 Jul (Warren Hardin) and 96 at Heritage Park 31 Jul (Russell Moses).

Purple Gallinule – Purple Gallinules again nested at Carlos Lake, Grimes with multiple sightings throughout the summer season, including 5 chicks 22 Jun (ph. Greg Page) and two juveniles with adults 26 Jul (Mike Rogan).
Common Gallinule – Two adults with 3 chicks were noted at Carlos Lake, Grimes 9 Jun (Darrell Vollert).

American Avocet – Two American Avocets 8 Jul (Warren Hardin) in the Brazos River bottoms were early for the Oaks and Prairies region and the earliest for Burleson.

Snowy Plover – A Snowy Plover 28 Jul (ph. Steve Glover, Greg Cook) at the Gibbons Creek Reservoir dam is a first county record for Grimes.

Buff-breasted Sandpiper – A first summer record for Lake Somerville, though expected during migration, is a Baird’s Sandpiper at Welch Park, Washington 31 Jul (†Jean Martin, †Cinda Crosley).

Least Tern – A rare record for Limestone was a single Least Tern at Park 3 of Lake Limestone at 11 AM 6 Jun (†Jeremy Webster), followed soon at 4:30 PM at a location 2.7 mi. northeast of the lake (†Greg Cook, Steve Glover). The second location was at the Leon border so it also established a rare record for that county.
Ladder-backed Woodpecker – Although not unusual in the 1960s, 70s, and 80s, there had been only 2 records since then for Brazos; now a third record is 16 Jun (ph. Smily Flores) at a home in College Station.

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Peregrine Falcon – Two Peregrine Falcons soaring very high above Lick Creek Park, Brazos 1 Jun (†Bruce Neville, †Sandy Dillard, m.ob.) are a first June record for the Central Brazos Valley, filling a gap between records 15 May and 22 Jul. Surprisingly, another (or the same?) peregrine flew low over buildings at the Texas A&M University campus 26 Jun (†Bruce Neville).

Yellow-bellied Flycatcher – A first summer record for Bell is a Yellow-bellied Flycatcher 11 Jun (ph. Gil Eckrich).
Least Flycatcher – A Least Flycatcher is the only June record for Bell, photographed at Stillhouse Park, Stillhouse Hollow Park 3 Jun (ph. Gil Eckrich). Another was observed 24 Jul (†Simon Kiacz) in Bryan, Brazos, where it is rare in July.

Vermilion Flycatcher – Rare in summer in Bell, a family group of 3 Vermilion Flycatchers were observed 23 Jun (unknown eBird reporter) in Belton.

Horned Lark – Rare in summer in McLennan—perhaps only one other dated record—up to 3 Horned Larks were watched 19 May–23 Jun (Matthew York, ph. Fay Ratta, †ph. Tyler Miloy) in cotton fields along Steiner Road.
Cedar Waxwing – An out-of-season Cedar Waxwing at Belton 21 Jun (ph. Gil Eckrich) provided the only summer record for Bell.

Bronzed Cowbird – Up to 3 Bronzed Cowbirds have been observed at Country Club Lake, Brazos since 16 Apr, seen regularly during the summer (m.ob.), and with a fourth cowbird 24 Jul (Russell Moses).
Yellow-throated Warbler – An early migrant for Brazos and only the third summer record was a Yellow-throated Warbler at Red Feather Nature Preserve, Kurten 30 Jul (ph. Mary Richards).
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