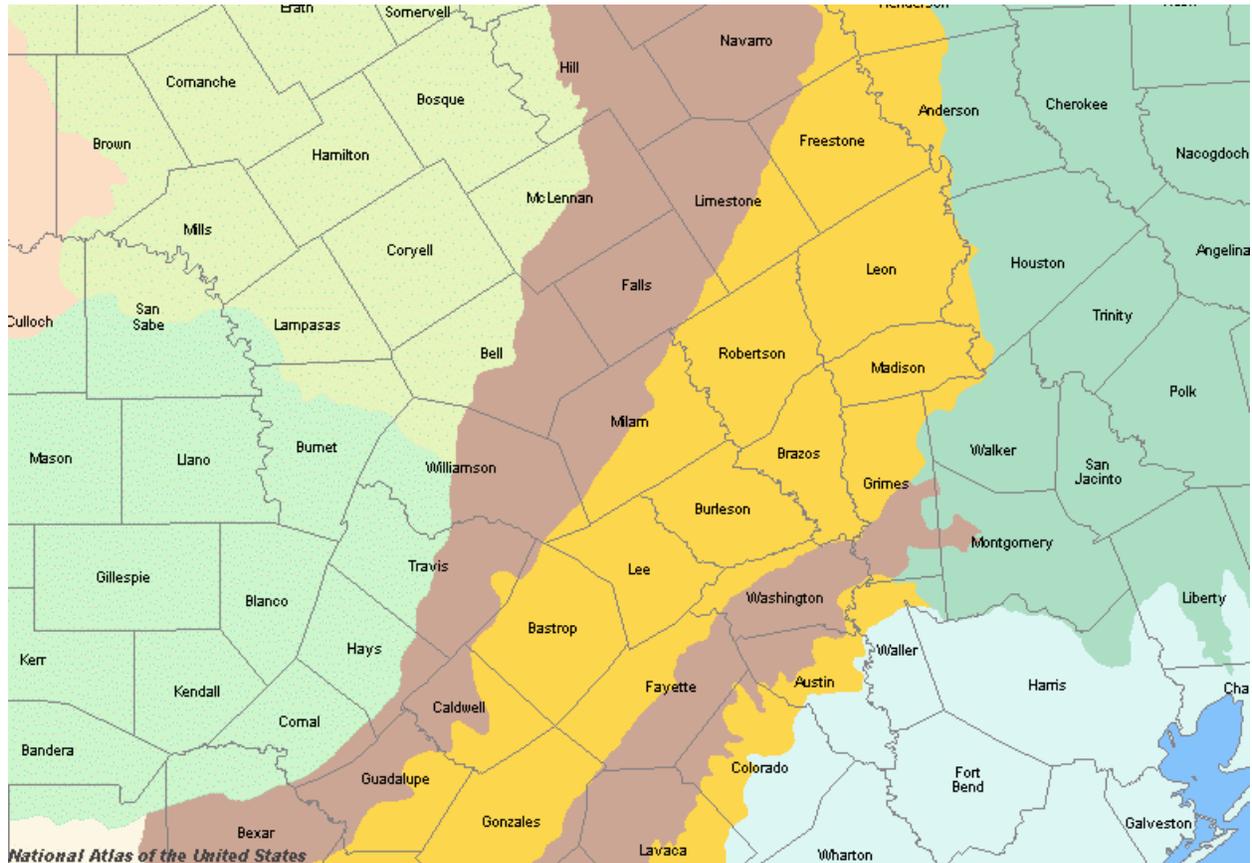


Spring 2021: Central Oaks & Prairies

By Bert Frenz

This report is reduced from over 128,000 sightings from 1 March to 31 May 2021 in the Central Oaks and Prairies region. Sightings are included for the following counties: Bastrop, Bell, Brazos, Burleson, Falls, Fayette, Freestone, Grimes, Lee, Leon, Limestone, Madison, McLennan, Milam, Navarro, Robertson, and Washington.



MOST UNUSUAL SIGHTINGS:

Fulvous Whistling-Duck – Fulvous Whistling-Ducks have not been seen in Brazos Co since 2005, so it was a surprise to find one at Moore Farms 30 Apr—1 May (John Hale, ph. Keith Andringa). Even more unusual was one 9 May (Randolph King) at Lake Waco Wetlands where the last report for McLennan Co was in 1976. More likely but still rare, eight Fulvous Whistling-Ducks were at Hornsby Bend, Travis Co., 14 Mar (ph. Adam McInroy).

Cinnamon Teal – A high count of 14 Cinnamon Teal were on Flag Pond at Lake Somerville SP, Lee Co 24 Mar (Michael McCloy) and 12 were at Hornsby Bend 14 Mar (Louise Ridlon).

Eurasian Wigeon – A first for McLennan Co., a Eurasian Wigeon was at Lake Willow / Waco WTP 5-9 Mar (ph. Fay Ratta, Jeremy Ballard, ph. Anand Chaudhary, Keith Reich, Matthew York, m.ob.)

Least Grebe – A fifth record for Washington Co., the last in 2014, a single Least Grebe was found on the Burton BBS on FM2780 and relocated the next day 23-24 May (Darrell Vollert).

Virginia Rail – Two Virginia Rails 13 Mar (rec. Jay Parker, Amy Parker) and one 18 Mar (Dina Perry) at Marlin City Lakes were the first of this species for Falls Co.

Hudsonian Godwit – Four Hudsonian Godwits continued at Sims Lane turf farms, Brazos Co until the late date of 27 May (Meredith Anderson, Garrett Hodne) and one was still present at Moore Farms, Brazos Co 28 May (John Hale).

Baird's Sandpiper – Flocks of 20-150 Baird's Sandpipers mixed with American Golden-Plovers totaled a regional high count of 500-550 Baird's at Sims Lane turf farms 16-17 Apr (Simon Kiacz, Vaishali Katju).

Short-billed Dowitcher – Hardly ever identified in McLennan Co., single Short-billed Dowitchers in the company of Long-billed were at Renner Road ponds 16 Apr and Lake Waco Wetlands 17 Apr (ph. Beau Schaefer).

Least Tern – An early migration date, a well described Least Tern was at Lake Somerville's Nail Creek Unit, Lee Co 18 Apr 2021 (Greg Cook).

Glossy x White-faced Ibis hybrid – A Glossy x White-faced Ibis hybrid was photographed at Sims Lane turf farm, Brazos Co 5 May 2021 (ph. Micky Eubanks).



Glossy x White-faced Ibis hybrid, © Micky Eubanks, 5 May 2021, Brazos County

Burrowing Owl – Rare for Brazos Co., the Burrowing Owl found in Feb at O. D. Butler Animal Science Complex was seen again 18 Mar (ph. Robert Tizard).

Monk Parakeet – Rare in Bastrop Co., three Monk Parakeets flew over The New Colony 14 Apr (Bernd Gravenstein).

Brown-crested Flycatcher – A rare migrant in Bastrop Co., a Brown-crested Flycatcher was at Harman Ranch 29 Apr (Richard Harman) where it is said to be an irregular yet annual visitor. Another was heard calling at the entrance to the campground in Riverbend Park in Smithville 21 May (Phil Rostron).

Western Bluebird – Up to seven Western Bluebirds drifted east to the Valley Mills area of McLennan Co 12-15 Mar (ph. Tim Farek) where the previous county record dates to 1964.



Western Bluebird, © Tim Farek, 12 Mar 2021, McLennan County

Mountain Bluebird – Five Mountain Bluebirds continued at Valley Mills, McLennan Co until 15 Mar (ph. Tim Farek).

Pine Siskin – Pine Siskins tarried in Brazos Co until 24 May (Shirley Wilkerson) and spring counts were topped by 325 estimated at feeders in Bryan 1 Mar (Simon Kiacz) and 230 at Woodcreek subdivision 10 Mar (Bill Eisele).

Cassin's Sparrow – A good find for Bastrop Co., a Cassin's Sparrow accompanied a Grasshopper Sparrow on Sayer's Road 2 May (Shelia Hargis). One was singing in its flight display at the CR402 Donahoe Creek bridge 5 May (Sean Mecredy), the first sighting in nearly a decade in Milam Co.

Lark Bunting – Continuing from fall and winter, Lark Buntings remained at Pitts Road in Brazos Co until 20 Mar (Michael McCloy). In McLennan Co near Valley Mills, 37 were still present 21 Mar (Beau Schaefer), down from the high count of 126 on 12 Mar (Tim Farek). Five in the Mexia area 2 Mar (Ken Wilson) were a first record for Limestone Co. Up to nine were at Shipp / Stagners Lake in Bastrop Co 8-13 Mar (Phil Rostron, m.ob.).

Green-tailed Towhee – Presumably the same Green-tailed Towhee seen in Oct and Nov, it was found again at Shipp / Stagners Lake, Bastrop Co 7-8 Mar (Jason Leifester, Bernd Gravenstein).

Bobolink – A surprisingly large flock of 20 Bobolinks were in the Belton area, Bell Co 3-4 May (ph. Steve Snyder, ph. Gil Eckrich, ph. Daniel Kelch).



Bobolink, © Steve Snyder, 3 May 2021, Bell County

Bullock's x Baltimore Oriole – A hybrid Bullock's x Baltimore Oriole was at the Baylor University campus, McLennan Co 13 May+ (Anand Chaudhary).

Scott's Oriole – The Scott's Oriole found in the Anderson area of Grimes Co remained until 5 Mar (ph. April Serig). Another, only a second record for Bell Co., was photographed at Moffat 18 Mar (ph. Gil Eckrich).



Scott's Oriole, © Gil Eckrich, 5 Mar 2021, Bell County

Black-throated Gray Warbler – Considerably east of its range, a Black-throated Gray Warbler in Smithville 30 Apr (Ron & Susan Martin) was the first sighting in Bastrop Co since 2003.

Western Tanager – A Western Tanager carrying over from the winter season was last seen in Chappell Hill, Washington Co 3 Mar (Darrell Vollert).

Black-headed Grosbeak – A Black-headed Grosbeak that had been seen sporadically at feeders in Woodcreek subdivision, College Station, Brazos Co since 1 Dec was again seen 14-22 Mar (Gus Cothran). Until this past winter, the species was rare in the county.

Lazuli Bunting – For a species not reported in Brazos Co in a decade, reports of single Lazuli Buntings at three diverse College Station locations is surprising. The first was off Elmo Weedon Road in eastern College Station 20 Apr (Donald Brightsmith), the second was four miles away in Foxfire subdivision 25 Apr (Simon Burton), and the third was six miles away at the Ecology and Natural Resource Area 11-12 May (ph. Dianne Robinson, m.ob.). Another was observed 8 May (Gregory Lewis, m.ob.) at Lake Somerville Birch Creek Unit, a first for Burleson Co. Yet another was photographed 10 May (ph. Brian Burgoyne) at near Camp Swift in Bastrop Co where it is only slightly more expected.



Lazuli Bunting, © Tyler Scott, 11 May 2021, Brazos County

CONTRIBUTORS:

Meredith Anderson, Keith Andringa, Jeremy Ballard, Donald Brightsmith, Brian Burgoyne, Simon Burton, Anand Chaudhury, Greg Cook, Gus Cothran, Gil Eckrich, Bill Eisele, Micky Eubanks, Tim Farek, Bert Frenz, 2111 Kingfisher Ln, Mission, TX 78572-5079, bert2@bafrenz.com, Bernd Gravenstein, John Hale, Shelia Hargis, Garrett Hodne, Vaishali Katju, Daniel Kelch, Simon Kiacz, Randolph King, Jason Leifester, Gregory Lewis, Ron & Susan Martin, Michael McCloy, Mark McDermott, Adam McInroy, Sean Mecredy, Amy Parker, Jay Parker, Dina Perry, Fay Ratta, Keith Reich, Louise Ridlon, Dianne Robinson, Phil Rostron, Beau Schaefer, Tyler Scott, April Serig, Steve Snyder, Robert Tizard, Darrell Vollert, Shirley Wilkerson, Ken Wilson, Matthew York.