

**North American Birds**  
**Fall 2019**  
**South Texas**

The fall season was characterized by being dry and somewhat dull especially when compared to the previous fall. Birding overall was a bit blah and landbird migrants could be hard to come by. It was a good fall for western or more xeric species heading eastward probably due to the drought.

Per Mel Cooksey: The Coastal Bend area experienced somewhat of a western-birds-east phenomenon this fall, with species such as Verdin and Curve-billed Thrasher found as far east as the Oso Creek estuary, and numerous Pyrrhuloxias throughout the area, including North Padre and Mustang Islands. This western-based incursion apparently did not include wintering sparrows, which were scarce.

**Notable Observations:**

Surf Scoter – A Surf Scoter was observed at Matagorda Bay Nature Park/Jetty, *Matagorda* 18 Oct (Missy McAllister Kerr) while two females were reported from Delta Lake, *Hidalgo* 27 Nov (ph. Lisa Cancade Hackett et al.).

Greater Prairie-Chicken – At least 39 Greater Prairie Chickens seen on a tour of a restricted part of the Attwater Prairie NWR, *Colorado* 2 Nov (Mary Goldsby et al.) gives hope for the future of the species in the state.

Wild Turkey – Populations of Wild Turkey have exploded around the Coastal Bend in the past year or two. Apparently there are no stocking projects by TPWD. A count of 100 was made at Knolle Farms, *Nueces* 11 Nov (Adam Dudley).

Eared Grebe – An Eared Grebe seen in *Wharton* 24 Aug may have been an over summering bird instead of an early migrant (Laurie Looper) while three birds reported from Sugar House Pond, *Hidalgo* 29 Sep were probably early arrivals (Huck Hutchens).

White-tipped Dove - White-tipped Dove range and numbers have steadily expanded, but one at Blucher Park, Corpus Christi, *Nueces*, 26 Oct was unprecedented for the midtown location per Mel Cooksey (Willie Sekula).

Yellow-billed Cuckoo – A very late Yellow-billed Cuckoo visited the Valley Land Fund Lot, South Padre Island, *Cameron* 26 Nov (Huck Hutchens).

Black-billed Cuckoo – Noteworthy was a Black-billed Cuckoo seen inland and away from the coast at Lake Corpus Christi, *San Patricio* 24 Oct (ph. Skip Cantrell) while another bird reported from Bentsen State Park, *Hidalgo* 8 Nov was very late (m.ob.).

Groove-billed Ani – Groove-billed Anis lingered in South Texas this fall with the most impressive number being up to 13 birds tallied at Oso Bay Wetlands Preserve, *Nueces* 9 Nov (Matt O’Sullivan).

Chimney Swift – Late were single Chimney Swifts seen in *Hidalgo* at National Butterfly Center 1 Nov (Mary Gustafson) and Santa Ana NWR 4 Nov (Jennifer Davis et al.).

Green-breasted Mango – A Green-breasted Mango made a brief appearance 28-29 Oct at Edinburg Scenic Wetlands, *Hidalgo* (Huck Hutchens et al.).

Eastern Whip-poor-will – A late Eastern Whip-poor-will was found roosting on the top of a wall in Port Aransas, *Nueces* 11 Nov (Andrew Orgill) while another bird was seen even later at Roselawn Cemetery in McAllen, *Hidalgo* 22 Nov (Huck Hutchens).

Northern Jacana – A Northern Jacana made a brief one day stop at Estero Llano Grande State Park, *Hidalgo* 28 Oct (Huck Hutchens et al.).

Upland Sandpiper – A late Upland Sandpiper was found at the Superior Turf Farm, *Cameron* 28 Oct (ph. Lisa Cancade Hackett).

American Golden-Plover – Up to five American Golden-Plovers were present at Sugar House Pond, *Hidalgo* 7-11 Nov (m.ob.). A late individual was seen at Chapman Ranch, *Nueces* 28 Nov (ph. Jon McIntyre).

Buff-breasted Sandpiper – The largest number of Buff-breasted Sandpiper reported this fall was 400 birds near Palacios, *Matagorda* 8 Sep (Bob Friedrichs).

Pectoral Sandpiper – A latish Pectoral Sandpiper was reported from Port Mansfield, *Willacy* 14 Nov (Jim Hengeveld).

Semipalmated Sandpiper – Two tardy Semipalmated Sandpipers were discerned from accompanying Westerns at Sugar House Pond, *Hidalgo* 11 Nov (Dave Irons, Shawneen Finnegan, Ann Nightingale, Jim Danzenbaker).

American Woodcock – An American Woodcock was present in a Portland, *San Patricio* yard 12 Nov (ph. Skip Cantrell).

Red-necked Phalarope – Port Mansfield in *Willacy* was Ground Zero for Red-necked Phalarope this fall with 24 birds reported from Laguna Point Recreation Area 27 Oct (ph. Mark Conway). Lesser numbers were reported through end of Nov (m.ob.).

Red Phalarope – An injured Red Phalarope was found stunned on a street in Port Aransas 12 Oct (Andre Orgill). It was taken to a rehabilitation facility but subsequently died. This would represent a second *Nueces* record.

Parasitic Jaeger – A Parasitic Jaeger bombed shorebirds and terns on the beach at Padre Island National Seashore, *Kleberg* 8 Sep (ph. Josh Ketry, Julie Ketry).

Sabine's Gull – An immature adult Sabine's Gull was found at Goose Island State Park, *Aransas* 22 Sep (ph. Ben Horstmann). It hung out at the fish cleaning station and was cooperative to dozens of birder thus allowing for eye-popping views! It stayed through 29 Sep. Interestingly

another immature bird was found at Padre Island National Seashore, *Kleberg* 23 Sep (Milton Collins).

Western Gull – A 3<sup>rd</sup> cycle **Western Gull** was found at the Corpus Christi, *Nueces* T-Heads 22 Nov (ph. Scott Shaw). It was seen through 25 Nov (m.ob.) and is very likely a bird from the previous fall that was present in Port Aransas (across the bay).

Sooty Tern – A nice count of 45 Sooty Terns was made on the 24 Aug pelagic out of Port Aransas in *Calhoun* waters (m.ob.) while *Kenedy* produced only three birds (m.ob.).

Bridled Tern – A Bridled Tern was picked up dying along the beach on Mustang Island, *Nueces* 29 Sep (*fide* Andrew Orgill).

Cory's Shearwater – The 24 Aug pelagic out of Port Aransas produced two Cory's Shearwaters in *Calhoun* waters and one bird in *Kenedy* waters (m.ob.). A single bird was noted off Port Aransas, *Nueces* 3 Aug (Jon McIntyre) while another bird was picked up on the beach and taken to a rehabilitation facility in Port Aransas 29 Sep (*fide* Andrew Orgill).

Audubon's Shearwater – Of note were four Audubon's Shearwaters seen the 24 Aug Port Aransas pelagic trip in *Calhoun* waters (ph. m.ob.) while three birds were seen in *Kenedy* waters on the same trip. Two Audubon's Shearwaters were reported offshore in *Kenedy* 4 Nov (Jon McIntyre).

Leach's Storm-Petrel – Two Leach's Storm-Petrels were detected on the 24 Aug Port Aransas pelagic trip in *Calhoun* waters (m.ob.).

Band-rumped Storm-Petrel – Two Band-rumped Storm-Petrels were seen by birders on the 24 Aug Port Aransas pelagic trip in *Calhoun* waters (m.ob.).

Masked Booby – The 24 Aug Port Aransas pelagic trip produced an adult Masked Booby in *Calhoun* waters (m.ob.). One was picked up grounded on the beach on Padre Island National Seashore, *Kleberg* 14 Sep (Gretchen Nareff) so it was taken to a rehab facility.

Brown Booby – A latish Brown Booby was present at Port Isabel, *Cameron* 7 Nov (m.ob.).

Glossy Ibis – A Glossy Ibis seen at Salineno, *Starr* 28 Nov (ph. Mary Beth Stowe) was noteworthy for the location as was a bird present at Estero Llano Grande State Park, *Hidalgo* 1 Nov+ (m.ob.).

Swallow-tailed Kite – A Swallow-tailed Kite was reported from Max A Mandel Golf Course in *Webb* 18 Aug (Daniel Horton). A nice tally of 31 birds was made at the Hazel Bazemore Hawkwatch, *Nueces* 21 Aug (Daniel Horton).

Golden Eagle – Golden Eagle is still a relatively rare bird in South Texas so the following birds are quite noteworthy: one was spotted at Hazel Bazemore Park Hawkwatch, *Nueces* 18 Sep with another bird there 8 Oct (ph. Daniel Horton) and one seen on a RGV Birding Festival field trip to Estero Llano Grande State Park, *Hidalgo* 10 Nov (ph. Neil Hayward; m.ob.).

Mississippi Kite – A late Mississippi Kite was reported from Santa Ana, *Hidalgo* 4 Nov (Pat Heirs, Jennifer Davis) while a flock of 10 birds migrating over Oliviera Park in Brownsville, *Cameron* 9 Nov were really late (Jim Hailey, Deborah Hailey).

Bald Eagle – Bald Eagle is being reported with increasing frequency in South Texas. Several birds were reported this fall with the most notable being a single bird in *Willacy* 14 Oct (Mary Beth Stowe) and one battling an Osprey near Chapeno, *Starr* 30 Nov (Kimberly Williams, Jana Singletary).

Prairie Falcon – Prairie Falcon can be enigmatic raptor in South Texas with some fall and winters practically devoid of the species. So this fall no fewer than seven individuals were reported with the most notable being a bird perched on a condominium practically next to a Peregrine Falcon on South Padre Island, *Cameron* 3 Oct (ph. Chris Davis)! It or another bird was seen from the tower at the Birding & Nature Center 12 Nov (ph. Javi Gonzalez et al.). This species has never been reported from South Padre Island before. A bit more mundane was a bird photographed along a busy highway in the oil boom area of Fashing, *Atascosa* 17 Nov (ph. Willie Sekula).

Dusky-capped Flycatcher – A Dusky-capped Flycatcher made a brief visit to Laguna Atascosa NWR, *Cameron* 24 Nov (ph. Javi Gonzalez).

Great Crested Flycatcher – A late Great Crested Flycatcher was seen at Santa Ana NWR, *Hidalgo* 10 Nov (Huck Hutchens, Susan Keefer).

Eastern Kingbird – A late Eastern Kingbird was reported near May Feed Lot, *Atascosa* 12 Nov (Nancy & Bill Framboise, Kathy Criddle).

Fork-tailed Flycatcher – A Fork-tailed Flycatcher made a brief visit near Odem, *San Patricio* 2 Oct (ph. Skip Cantrell). Another bird was reported from Sacahuistale Flats, *Willacy* 5 Oct (Mark Conway). A longer staying bird was at Riviera, *Kleberg* 27 Nov+ (ph. Andrew Orgill).

Eastern Wood-Pewee – A lingering migrant Eastern Wood-Pewee was present at Packery Channel, *Nueces* 17 Nov (ph. Mel Cooksey).

Yellow-bellied Flycatcher – A Yellow-bellied Flycatcher seen at the Convention Center, South Padre Island, *Cameron* 16 Nov was very late (Sue Griffin et al.).

Acadian Flycatcher – A very late Acadian Flycatcher was seen at the Valley Land Fund Lot, South Padre Island, *Cameron* 6 Nov (ph. Kristie Nelson).

Rose-throated Becard – A male Rose-throated Becard graced Frontera Audubon, *Hidalgo* 3 Aug (Adrian Johnson; ph. Arman Moreno). A female was discovered at National Butterfly Center, *Hidalgo* 24 Nov (Mary Gustafson). It resurfaced later in the year.

Cassin's Vireo – A Cassin's Vireo was studied and documented at Rosehill Cemetery, Corpus Christi, *Nueces* 24 Nov (ph. Martin Reid, Sheridan Coffey, Willie Sekula). It was reported through the end of the season.

Plumbeous Vireo – A Plumbeous Vireo found 4 Nov at Roselawn Cemetery in McAllen, *Hidalgo* was likely a returning bird from the previous winter (ph. Dave Irons et al.).

Red-eyed Vireo – A late Red-eyed Vireo was reported from South Padre Island, *Cameron* 16 Nov (Sue Griffin et al; ph. Seth Ontiveros)

Purple Martin – A latish male Purple Martin was seen near Sinton, *San Patricio* 4 Nov (ph. Skip Cantrell) but another bird reported in *Nueces* 27 Nov was really late (Dave Allen).

Verdin – In Nueces several Verdin wandered into Corpus Christi's Oso Creek floodplain this fall providing for the first known occurrence of this xeric species this far eastward.

Northern Wheatear – A **Northern Wheatear** discovered at Saxet Lakes, *Victoria* 26 Sep (ph. T. Jay Adams) provided some fall excitement for birders through 29 Sep (m.ob.).

Gray-cheeked Thrush – Gray-cheeked Thrush is noteworthy in the fall so single birds seen at South Padre Island, *Cameron* 22 & 26 Oct (John Yochum & John McBride), Frontera Audubon, *Hidalgo* 26 Oct (ph. Bert Wessling) and Rockport, *Aransas* 27 Oct (ph. Jack Lehman) were noteworthy.

Clay-colored Thrush – A northerly Clay-colored Thrush was reported from a Tuleta, *Bee* yard 9 Nov (ph. Linda Vegh).

Brown Thrasher – Several Brown Thrashers were reported in South Texas this fall with the most notable being a single bird present at the Birding & Nature Center at South Padre Island, *Cameron* 17 Oct – 2 Nov (ph. Javi Gonzalez et al.).

American Pipit – An American Pipit flushed from a middle school field 17 Oct was early for *Hidalgo* (Ryan Rodriguez).

Green-tailed Towhee – Rare for the barrier islands and the southerly location was a Green-tailed Towhee present at the Valley Land Fund Lot on South Padre Island, *Cameron* 28-30 Nov (m.ob.).

Brewer's Sparrow – In *Hidalgo* early Brewer's Sparrow was seen near Mission 7 Oct (Mary Gustafson) while another bird near Penitas 7 Nov (ph. Bert Wessling) was also noteworthy.

Harris's Sparrow – A handsome Harris's Sparrow made a rare visit to the South Padre Island Birding and Nature Center, *Cameron* 2-3 Nov (ph. Michelle Cano; m.ob.).

Dark-eyed Junco – A Dark-eyed Junco visited Leonabelle Turnbull Birding Center in Port Aransas, *Nueces* 1-2 Nov (ph. John Morris).

Orchard Oriole – Three Orchard Orioles seen in San Benito, *Cameron* 16 Nov (ph. Gustavo Valero) were late lingerers.

Common Grackle – A lone Common Grackle reported from Crystal City, *Zavala* 12 Oct (Steve Glover, Greg Cook) was a bit out of the species typical range in South Texas.

Worm-eating Warbler – A late Worm-eating Warbler was seen at the Valley Land Fund Lot, South Padre Island, *Cameron* 23 Oct (ph. Dan Jones).

Louisiana Waterthrush – A Louisiana Waterthrush first detected by call present on a small stream below the dam at Lake Findley at Alice, *Jim Wells* 9 Nov was perhaps a wintering bird (Ron Weeks).

Northern Waterthrush – A late inland Northern Waterthrush was found at Lake Findley, *Jim Wells* 5 Nov (ph. Rich Kostecke).

Golden-winged Warbler – Eight Golden-winged Warblers were reported from South Texas this fall with the most notable being single birds seen at Goliad, *Goliad* 19 Oct and Bentsen-Rio Grande Valley State Park 20 Oct (Christian Roberts).

Swainson's Warbler – Only one Swainson's Warbler was reported from South Texas this fall and that was a lone bird reported from Pollywog Pond, *Nueces* 19 Sep (Daniel Horton).

Lucy's Warbler – A Lucy's Warbler seen briefly but well at Blucher Park in Corpus Christi 7 Sep (Willie Sekula) was only the 2<sup>nd</sup> ever for *Nueces*. Efforts to relocate and photograph the bird were frustratingly in vain.

MacGillivray's Warbler – Two separate female MacGillivray's Warblers were reported from Pollywog Pond, *Nueces* 5 & 26 Sep (Daniel Horton).

Kentucky Warbler – A late Kentucky Warbler was in a Port Aransas, *Nueces* yard 19 Oct (Joan Holt).

Cape May Warbler – An immature Cape May Warbler visited the Edinburg Scenic Wetlands, *Hidalgo* 1 Nov (ph. Dan Hardy). Another immature bird visited the South Padre Birding & Nature Center, *Cameron* 2-5 Nov (ph. Javi Gonzalez). Most interesting was a sub-adult male found at Choke Canyon State Park near Three Rivers, *Live Oak* 15 Nov (ph. Jon McIntyre). It was seen again 16 Nov (ph. Willie Sekula; Derek Muschalek) and 23 Nov (ph. Maxine Reid).

Cerulean Warbler – The only Cerulean Warbler reported from South Texas this fall was a male reported from *Aransas* 21 Sep (Susan Heath).

Chestnut-sided Warbler – A Chestnut-sided Warbler seen at Goliad State Park, *Goliad* 16 Nov (ph. James Petersen; Sam Saunders, Ulysses Ortiz) was late.

Blackpoll Warbler – Noteworthy for the fall were single Blackpoll Warblers reported from Leonabelle Turnbull Birding Center, *Nueces* 20 Oct (Joan Holt) and Brownsville, *Cameron* 30 Oct (Justin LeClaire).

Black-throated Blue Warbler – A female Black-throated Blue Warbler was seen at the Valley Land Fund Lot on South Padre Island, *Cameron* (Bill Beaty) 30 Oct while another female was reported from Frontera Audubon in Weslaco, *Hidalgo* 10 Nov (Kathy Rothman, Daphne Asbell).

Canada Warbler – A very late Canada Warbler was well documented at Valley Land Fund Lot, South Padre Island, *Cameron* 9 Nov (m.obs.; ph. m.ob.).

Golden-crowned Warbler – A Golden-crowned Warbler was banded at Las Palomas WMA, Arroyo Colorado Unit, *Cameron* 3 Nov (*fide* Justin LeClaire).

Scarlet Tanager – A late Scarlet Tanager was seen at Roselawn Cemetery, *Hidalgo* 16 Nov (ph. Rob Harbin, Brad Lirette).

Rose-breasted Grosbeak – A Rose-breasted Grosbeak reported from Rosehill Cemetery in Corpus Christi, *Nueces* 22 Nov (ph. Scott Shaw) was late. Another bird was reported from Roselawn Cemetery, *Hidalgo* on the same date (Huck Hutchens).

Black-headed Grosbeak – At least eight Black-headed Grosbeaks were reported from South Texas this fall. The most notable being a young male photographed in *San Patricio* 4 Oct (ph. Ron Weeks), a female reported from Pollywog Pond, *Nueces* 15 Oct (David Grise) and an immature/female reported from Crystal City, *Zavala* 12 Oct (Greg Cook, Steve Glover).

Blue Grosbeak – A late Blue Grosbeak visited the Birding & Nature Center on South Padre Island, *Cameron* 29 Nov (ph. Javi Gonzalez).

Lazuli Bunting – A male Lazuli Bunting was found associating with Indigo Buntings at Paradise Pond in Port Aransas, *Nueces* 16-19 Nov (ph. Mel Cooksey et al.). A female was photographed at the same location 23 Nov (ph. Janet Rathjen).

### **Cited Observers**

T. Jay Adams

Dave Allen

Daphne Asbell

Bill Beaty

Michelle Cano

Sheridan Coffey

Skip Cantrell

Milton Collins

Mark Conway

Greg Cook

Mel Cooksey

Kathy Criddle  
Jim Danzenbaker  
Chris Davis  
Jennifer Davis  
Adam Dudley  
Shawneen Finnegan  
Nancy & Bill Framboise  
Bob Friedrichs  
Steve Glover  
Mary Goldsby  
Javi Gonzalez  
Sue Griffin  
Mary Gustafson  
Lisa Cancade Hackett  
Deborah Hailey  
Jim Hailey  
Rob Harbin  
Dan Hardy  
Neil Hayward  
Susan Heath  
Jim Hengeveld  
Joan Holt  
Ben Horstmann  
Daniel Horton  
Huck Hutchens  
Dave Irons  
Dan Jones  
Adrian Johnson  
Susan Keefer  
Missy McAllister Kerr  
Josh Ketry  
Julie Ketry  
Rich Kostecke  
Justin LeClaire  
Jack Lehman  
Brad Lirette  
Laurie Looper  
Arman Moreno  
John McBride  
Jon McIntyre  
John Morris

Gretchen Nareff  
Kristie Nelson  
Ann Nightingale  
Seth Ontiveros  
Andrew Orgill  
Ulysses Ortiz  
James Peterson  
Martin Reid  
Maxine Reid  
Christian Roberts  
Ryan Rodriguez  
Kathy Rothman  
Scott Shaw  
Matt O'Sullivan  
Jana Singletary  
Mary Beth Stowe  
Gustavo Valero  
Linda Vegh  
Ron Weeks  
Bert Wessling  
Kimberly Williams  
John Yochum