

North American Birds  
Winter 2019-2020  
South Texas  
Willie Sekula

It was a dry winter in South Texas which continued from the fall and summer. Rarities were quite sparse this season.

Notable Observations:

Surf Scoter – Two Surf Scoters were detected at Delta Lake, *Hidalgo* 3 Dec (Huck Hutchens) with one bird staying to 7 Dec. Elsewhere in South Texas single birds was reported from Laguna Atascosa N.W.R., *Cameron* 30 Dec (ph. Jayme Torres, Matthew Torres, Stephanie Bilodeau, Justin LeClaire), STP Nuclear Power Plant cooling ponds, *Matagorda* 16 Dec (ph. Laura Gast, Stephen Gast) and Aransas N.W.R., *Aransas* 20 Jan (Skip Cantrell). Two birds were seen in Palacios, *Matagorda* 28 Feb (Brent Ortego, Dora Ann Ortego).

Black Scoter – A Black Scoter was seen in flight in Aransas Bay, *Aransas* 14 Feb (Skye Haas et al).

Long-tailed Duck – A Long-tailed Duck was present at Laguna Atascosa N.W.R., *Cameron* 24 & 26 Jan (ph. Patricia Verbovszky).

Scaled Quail – Nine Scaled Quail seen along Brushline Road 18 Jan (Chuck Estes) provided for a rare *Hidalgo* record.

Western Grebe – A Western Grebe was present at Padre Island National Seashore, *Kleberg* 19 Jan – 21 Feb (ph. Leslie Hoekstra; m.obs.).

Lesser Nighthawk – Two Lesser Nighthawks were observed hawking insects at Mad Island Marsh Preserve, *Matagorda* 17 Feb (Danielle Aube, Timothy Guida).

Eastern Whip-poor-will – A calling Eastern Whip-poor-will reported from Goose Island State Park, *Aransas* 29 Feb (John & Kathy Keagle) may have wintered locally.

Chaetura, sp. – Two chaetura swifts seen well at Guadalupe Delta W.W.A., *Calhoun* 31 Jan (Petra Hockey) were thought to very likely Vaux's Swifts, a species that still eludes being on the state list despite a couple of photographed records.

Anna's Hummingbird – Single Anna's Hummingbirds added some cheer to the season at Tuleta, *Bee* 6-19 Dec (ph. Linda Vegh) and Port O'Connor, *Calhoun* 9 Jan – 14 Feb (ph. Petra Hockey).

Broad-billed Hummingbird – A handsome male Broad-billed Hummingbird was discovered near Riverside Park in Victoria, *Victoria* 26 Jan (ph. Bob Friedrichs et al).

Purple Gallinule – A Purple Gallinule was spotted at Aransas N.W.R., *Aransas* 1 Dec (Rebecca Lovejoy).

American Golden-Plover – A lingering American Golden-Plover was reported southeast of Mustang Island S.P., *Nueces* 15 Dec (Clay Taylor).

Snowy Plover – An astonishing 369 Snowy Plovers were counted in a roosting flock in a restricted area of L.R.G.V. N.W.R., *Cameron* 12 Dec (ph. Justin LeClaire).

Wilson's Plover – An amazing 14 Wilson's Plovers were found in a roosting flock of Snowy Plovers 12 Dec (ph. Justin LeClaire) in a restricted area of L.R.G.V. N.W.R., *Cameron*. Other reports of note were single birds reported from JFK Causeway, *Nueces* 19 Jan (Todd McGrath) and Indian Point, *San Patricio* 12 Feb (ph. Adam Kent; Skye Haas).

Mountain Plover – The Halff Bros. Sod Farm, *Frio* hosted up to 177 Mountain Plovers this winter.

Whimbrel – Whimbrel is a scarce winterer in South Texas but this winter only a handful of birds were reported: 2 at Sargent Beach, *Matagorda* 20 Dec (Tony Frank, Mike Austin), another at Matagorda Bay Nature Park/Jetty, *Matagorda* 3 Jan (ph. Wendy McCrady) and a lone bird from Hans A. Suter W.W.A., *Nueces* 13 Jan (Peter Koper).

American Woodcock – American Woodcocks brightened a fairly dull season for the L.R.G.V. in *Hidalgo* with single birds at Santa Ana N.W.R. (Kathy Morales, Eric Julson) and Frontera Audubon 26 Dec (Susan Keefer).

Wilson's Phalarope – A late Wilson's Phalarope was reported near Eagle Lake, *Colorado* 18 Dec (Bob Friedrichs).

Red-necked Phalarope – Five Red-necked Phalaropes seen 1 & 2 Dec (ph. Carolyn Spidle; ph. Dan Jones) were lingering birds from Nov.

Parasitic Jaeger – A Parasitic Jaeger was spotted from shore at Padre Island National Seashore, *Kleberg* 22 Feb (Martin Reid et al).

Pomarine Jaeger – An adult Pomarine Jaeger was documented from a *Kleberg* beach just north of Padre Island National Seashore 1 Jan (ph. Jon McIntyre).

Mew Gull – A 1<sup>st</sup> winter Mew Gull found at Port Aransas 12 Jan (ph. Jon McIntyre) provided for a first *Nueces* and Central Coast record. The bird was present through the rest of the season (m.obs.). Amazingly a second Mew Gull was observed at Hans A. Suter W.W.A., *Nueces* 4 Feb (ph. Nick Bonomo). These two records are the first photo-documented records for the Texas coast as all prior records have been from inland reservoirs!

California Gull – Notable were single California Gulls reported from Boca Chica, *Cameron* 25 Dec (ph. Justin LeClaire), Hans A. Suter W.W.A., *Nueces* 4 Feb (ph. Nick Bonomo) and Port Aransas, *Nueces* 8 Feb (ph. Arman Moreno, Adrian Johnson).

Iceland Gull – An adult Iceland Gull was present at JFK Causeway in Corpus Christi, *Nueces* 27 Dec – 9 Feb (ph. Andrew Orgill).

Lesser Black-backed Gull – An adult Lesser Black-backed Gull was spotted flying upriver at Los Corralitos Ranch, *Zapata* 6 Feb (Justin Bosler et al).

Glaucous Gull – The only Glaucous Gull reported this winter was an immature bird seen at Aransas N.W.R., *Aransas* 28 Dec (Ben Simpson).

Black Tern – A Black Tern seen at Mad Island Marsh Preserve, *Matagorda* 16 Dec (ph. Rich Kostecke) was quite late.

Great Shearwater – A Great Shearwater was well studied from the Matagorda Bay Nature Park/Jetty, *Matagorda* 16 Dec (†Eric Carpenter, †Petra Hockey).

Common Black Hawk – A Common Black Hawk returned to a resaca in Brownsville, *Cameron* 22 Dec+ (ph. Mark. Esparza) for its second winter.

Wood Stork – A Wood Stork found on a pond near Normanna, *Bee* 28 Dec (ph. Robert Benson) was well away from the traditional winter spots in deep South Texas.

Northern Gannet – A tally of 20 Northern Gannets at Boca Chica, *Cameron* 31 Dec (Justin LeClaire) was noteworthy for southerly location.

Broad-winged Hawk – A Broad-winged Hawk reported from Goose Island State Park, *Aranas* 20 Feb (Kim Eckert et al) may have been a wintering bird while another bird seen at Hazel Bazemore Park, *Nueces* 29 Feb (Mary Beth Stowe, Debra Anderson) may have been an early migrant.

Swainson's Hawk – A Swainson's Hawk spotted at Chapman Ranch, *Nueces* 21 Feb (ph. Justin Bosler) was of note since it was well north of the species' regular wintering spots in the L.R.G.V.

Zone-tailed Hawk – Two Zone-tailed Hawks seen near Campbellton 19 Jan (Kris McDaniel, Alyssia Church) were rare for *Atascosa*.

Ferruginous Hawk – It was a good winter for Ferruginous Hawk in South Texas with mostly single birds being reported at numerous locations primarily in *Hidalgo* & *Nueces*. However, the bounty was at least five birds that wintered near Fashing, *Atascosa* (ph. Willie Sekula; Kim Garwood) due to an explosion of rodents; over 60 buteos were tallied in about a eight mile stretch of FM 99 from May Feed Lot to Fashing!

Short-eared Owl – It was a good winter for Short-eared Owl in South Texas with a high count of 23 birds reported from Chapman Ranch, *Nueces* (Skip Cantrell) while up to 9 birds were seen near Campbellton in *Atascosa* (Willie Sekula, Christine Turnbull, Kim Garwood).

Rose-throated Becard – It was a good winter for Rose-throated Becard with a continuing female from the fall at National Butterfly Center and Bentsen-Rio Grande S.P., *Hidalgo* remained through the period (m.ob.), 2 different birds were present at Resaca de la Palma S.P., *Cameron* 1

Feb+ (ph. Justin LeClaire, m.ob.), and a male was reported from Salineno, *Starr* 24 Jan (Michael Emenaker).

Dusky-capped Flycatcher – A Dusky-capped Flycatcher visited Resaca de la Palma State Park, *Cameron* 31 Jan+ (ph. Mike Schackwitz, Wendy Schackwitz; m.obs.).

Brown-crested Flycatcher – A Brown-crested Flycatcher visited Laguna Atascosa N.W.R., *Cameron* 13 Jan (ph. Victor Stoll et al).

Couch's Kingbird – A single flock of 30 Couch's Kingbirds reported from Aransas N.W.R., *Aransas* 7 Dec (Gene Blacklock) was impressive.

Western Kingbird – Single Western Kingbirds detected on Mustang Island, *Nueces* 2 Dec (Jon McIntyre) and along the beach in far e. *Matagorda* 3 Dec (ph. Bob Friedrichs) may have been late migrants.

Fork-tailed Flycatcher – The head-scratching Fork-tailed Flycatcher mini-irruption in Texas continued. A Fork-tailed Flycatcher graced Eagle Lake, *Colorado* 11-18 Dec (ph. Fred Pratt, John Pratt) while the bird found at Rivera, *Kleberg* in the fall was present to 14 Dec (ph. Willie Sekula; Derek Muschalek). Another bird present in a flock of Couch's Kingbirds at Aransas N.W.R., *Aransas* 20-22 Dec (ph. Rick Laughlin) was hit by a car and the specimen will be held in the collection at Texas A&M. One more was near Gregory, San Patricio 3 Jan (ph. Edward Garcia) and yet still another bird was present at Valley Acres Reservoir, *Hidalgo* 12 Jan-5 Feb (ph. John Yochum; m.ob.).

Eastern Wood-Pewee – A calling Eastern Wood-Pewee documented at Anzalduas Park, *Hidalgo* 6 Dec (ph. Scott Peterson) was late.

Least Flycatcher – A Least Flycatcher was spotted at Matagorda County Birding & Nature Center, *Matagorda* 12 Jan (ph. Dominic Le Croisette).

Hammond's Flycatcher - A Hammond's Flycatcher was found near Selkirk Island, *Matagorda* 16 Dec (ph. Ron Weeks et al) while another bird visited the Falfurrias Rest Area, *Brooks* 24 Feb+.

Gray Flycatcher – A Gray Flycatcher discovered at Knolle Ranch, *Jim Wells/Nueces* 31 Dec (ph. Mel Cooksey, Arlie Cooksey) stayed throughout the season giving some cheer to a otherwise dull overall winter.

Bell's Vireo – Of note were single Bell's Vireos reported from Carancahua Bay, *Jackson* 27 Dec (ph. Bob Friedrichs) and a well described bird from Aransas Woods, *Aransas* 10 Feb (Kathleen Dvorak).

Hutton's Vireo – Two Hutton's Vireos found along the Frio River, *Live Oak* 20 Dec (Willie Sekula, Kim Garwood) were well away from the species' typical Balcones Escarpment habitat.

Cassin's Vireo – The Cassin's Vireo found at Rosehill Cemetery, *Nueces* in the fall continued throughout the season (m.ob.).

Warbling Vireo – A Warbling Vireo visited a Progresso Lakes yard in *Hidalgo* 12 Dec (ph. Dan Jones) while other single birds were reported from National Butterfly Center, *Hidalgo* 7 Feb (Doug McWhirter), and Riverside Park, *Victoria* 11 Feb (Derek Muschalek).

Plumbeous Vireo – A Plumbeous Vireo returned to Roselawn Cemetery in McAllen, *Hidalgo* for another winter.

Cave Swallow – Perhaps due to the drought, Cave Swallows were virtually absent from South Texas this winter. Normally this species can be seen around culverts, bridges and overpasses even in harsh winters, not so this season.

Red-breasted Nuthatch – The only Red-breasted Nuthatches that were reported this season were single birds at Goliad State Park, *Goliad* 6 Dec (Linda Vegh), Tuleta, *Bee* 1 Jan (Linda Vegh) and near Mathis, *San Patricio* 1 Jan (Sue Keener).

Wood Thrush – A Wood Thrush was reported sporadically from the Convention Center area at South Padre Island, *Cameron* 18 Dec – 6 Feb (Javi Gonzalez, Britney Marchan et al).

Clay-colored Thrush – A Clay-colored Thrush was found along the Heron Flats Trail at Aransas N.W.R., *Aransas* 14 Jan (ph. Robert Bowker).

Curve-billed x Long-billed Thrasher – A hybrid Curve-billed x Long-billed Thrasher was noted at Estero Llano Grande State Park, *Hidalgo* 4 Dec (Mary Gustafson) & 16 Feb (Jesse Huth, Huck Hutchens).

Rufous-crowned Sparrow – A Rufous-crowned Sparrow found at Ranch Rio Verde near Laredo, *Webb* 8 Feb (ph. Bob Friedrichs) was a nice surprise.

Orchard Oriole – An adult male Orchard Oriole was reported from Los Corralitos Ranch, *Zapata* 6 Feb (Justin Bosler et al). Another adult male was reported near Calallen, *Nueces* 25 Feb (Dave Grise).

Scott's Oriole – Two Scott's Orioles observed at the Calliham Unit of Choke Canyon State Park, *McMullen* 29 Feb (ph. Nancy Leonard) made for a rare South Texas record.

Rusty Blackbird – Rusty Blackbirds made a bit of a push into South Texas this winter with a single bird at Wesley Seale Dam, *San Patricio* 2 & 17 Dec (ph. Skip Cantrell), four birds southeast of Bloomington, *Calhoun* 19 Dec (ph. Bob Friedrichs) and two birds at Matagorda Birding and Nature Center, *Matagorda* 4 Jan (Petra Hockey).

Louisiana Waterthrush – Single Louisiana Waterthrushes were reported from Riverside Park, *Matagorda* 16 Dec (ph. Pat O'Neil, Ellen Oneil), near McFaddin, *Victoria* 19 Dec (ph. Kay Zagst, Fred Zagst) and Goliad, *Goliad* 1 Feb (Derek Muschalek).

Tennessee Warbler – At least 10 Tennessee Warblers were reported from mostly L.R.G.V. locations this season. Normally only 1-2 birds are reported on average.

Hooded Warbler – A male Hooded Warbler seen at Laguna Atascosa N.W.R., *Cameron* 8 Dec (Mary Beth Stowe, Greg Albrecht) was probably a late migrant.

American Redstart – A female American Redstart was present in Brownsville, *Cameron* 14 Dec+ (ph. Willie Sekula; Derek Muschalek).

Northern Parula – A male Northern Parula seen at Choke Canyon State Park, *McMullen* 31 Dec (ph. Kelli Heindel et al) may have been wintering. Two birds at Riverside Park in Victoria, *Victoria* 12 Jan (ph. Willie Sekula, Derek Muschalek, Kim Garwood) were wintering.

Tropical Parula – A Tropical Parula was present at Goliad State Park, *Goliad* 3 & 18 Dec (ph. Dennis Cooke; Maggie Carpenter, Eric Carpenter). One was also seen at Riverside Park, *Victoria* 4-19 Feb (David Sarkozi et al).

Magnolia Warbler – A Magnolia Warbler seen at Laguna Vista Nature Trail, *Cameron* 6 & 13 Feb (ph. Kathy Morales, Eric Julson) was likely a wintering bird.

Prairie Warbler – A male Prairie Warbler was found on a CBC scouting trip at Mad Island Marsh Preserve, *Matagorda* 15 Dec (ph. Bob Friedrichs). It was seen again 13 Jan (ph. Bob Friedrichs, Adele Pittendrigh).

Black-throated Gray Warbler – Of note were single Black-throated Gray Warblers at Aransas N.W.R., *Aransas* 20 Dec (Rick Laughlin) and at two different Laredo, *Webb* locations 6 & 8 Feb (ph. m.ob.).

Black-throated Green Warbler – Seven Black-throated Green Warblers seen at Victoria's Riverside Park, *Victoria* 12 Jan was a high count for the location (Derek Muschalek, Willie Sekula, Kim Garwood).

Western Tanager – A Western Tanager reported from El Rio RV Park, *Starr* 20 Jan (ph. Scot Duncan, Will Duncan, Caralyn Zehnder) was of note for the location.

Crimson-collared Grosbeak – A Crimson-collared Grosbeak was spotted at the headquarters of Bentsen State Park, *Hidalgo* 9 Dec (Petra Hockey) while another bird visited Santa Ana N.W.R., *Hidalgo* 26-28 Dec & 13 Jan (m.obs.).

Rose-breasted Grosbeak – Several Rose-breasted Grosbeaks were scattered throughout South Texas this winter with the most notable being two birds from Riverside Park, *Victoria* 21 Dec (ph. Bob Friedrichs, Brian Berry) and a single bird seen at a feeder along Pauraque Ridge, *Bee* 8 Feb (Robert Benson).

Black-headed Grosbeak – At least seven individual Black-headed Grosbeaks were in South Texas this winter with the most notable birds being in north Laredo, *Webb* 24 Dec (Tyler Hedlund) and Refugio, *Refugio* 5 Feb (Tracey Gregorcyk).

Painted Bunting – At least a dozen Painted Buntings were reported from South Texas this season with the most notable being a female seen at Lake Corpus Christi State Park, *San Patricio* 3 Dec (Skip Cantrell) and a male reported at Laredo, *Webb* 5 Feb (Thomas Miller).

Blue Grosbeak – A male Blue Grosbeak turned up near Raisin, *Victoria* 28 Feb (Brent Ortego).

Dickcissel – Five Dickcissel were present in South Texas at various locations this winter with the most notable being a bird seen in Corpus Christi, *Nueces* 14 Dec (Matt Denton) and in Victoria, *Victoria* 21 Dec (Bob Friedrichs, Brian Berry).

#### Cited Observers

Greg	Albrecht
Debra	Anderson
Danielle	Aube
Mike	Austin
Robert	Benson
Brian	Berry
Stepahnie	Bilodeau
Gene	Blacklock
Nick	Bonomo
Justin	Bosler
Robert	Bowker
Skip	Cantrell
Eric	Carpenter
Maggie	Carpenter
Alyssia	Church
Dennis	Cooke
Mel	Cooksey
Arlie	Cooksey
Matt	Denton
Scott	Duncan
Will	Duncan
Kathleen	Dvorak
Kim	Eckert
Michael	Emenaker
Mark	Esparza
Tony	Frank
Bob	Friedrichs
Kim	Garwood
Laura	Gast
Stephen	Gast

Javi	Gonzalez
Dave	Grise
Timothy	Guida
Mary	Gustafson
Skye	Haas
Kelli	Heindel
Petra	Hockey
Leslie	Hoekstra
Huck	Hutchens
Jesse	Huth
Adrian	Johnson
Danielle	Jones
Eric	Julson
John &	
Kathy	Keagle
Susan	Keefer
Sue	Keener
Peter	Koper
Rich	Kostecke
Rick	Laughlin
Justin	LeClaire
Dominic	LeCroisette
Nancy	Leonard
Rebecca	Lovejoy
Britney	Marchan
Wendy	McCrary
Kris	McDaniel
Todd	McGrath
Jon	McIntyre
Doug	McWhirter
Thomas	Miller
Kathy	Morale
Arman	Moreno
Derek	Muschalek
Patricia	O'Neil
Ellen	Oneil
Andrew	Orgill
Brent	Ortego
Dora Ann	Ortego
Tira	Overstreet

Scott	Peterson
Adele	Pittendrigh
Nina	Rach
Martin	Reid
David	Sarkozi
Mike	Schackwitz
Wendy	Schackwitz
Willie	Sekula
Ben	Simpson
Carolyn	Spidle
Victor	Stoll
Mary Beth	Stowe
Clay	Taylor
Jayne	Torres
Matthew	Torres
Christine	Turnbull
Linda	Vegh
Patricia	Verbovszky
Ron	Weeks
Steve & Sue	Whitmer
John	Yochum
Caralyn	Zehnder