

## Upper Texas Coast Sub-regional Report, Fall 2020

Covering: Austin, Brazoria, Chambers, Fort Bend, Galveston, Harris, Jefferson, Montgomery, Liberty, Orange and Waller

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### The Weather:

Hurricane Laura (Cat 4) which made landfall near Cameron, LA on 27 Aug, Tropical Storm Beta which made landfall 21 Sep north of Port O'Connor, and Hurricane Delta (Cat 2) which made landfall 9 Oct near Creole, LA were just three of the tropical systems that affected the area this fall. This tropical activity resulted in significant surge damage along the U.T.C., but the rainfall for the period was only 15.32 inches (38.9 cm) which was 2.75 inches (6.99 cm) below normal. The average temperature was 76.3 degrees F (24.6 C) which was 1.8 degrees F (1.0 C) above normal. Perhaps more relevant to the occurrence of rare birds were drought conditions farther west which likely forced many western species east. This along with the start of a widespread finch invasion and the tropical systems that appeared to shoot other eastern migrants south ahead of schedule made for an interesting fall season.

### The Birds:

#### Greater Scaup:

An apparently overwintering female Greater Scaup photographed 7 Aug on the Katy Prairie, *Waller* was the first summer record for the UTC (ph. Bob Honig, John Berner). Another female photographed 4 Oct 18 at Bryan Beach, *Brazoria* was early (ph. Nina Rach, Tira Overstreet).

#### Surf Scoter:

A female Surf Scoter 31 Oct at Anahuac NWR, *Chambers* was on the early side (ph. John Mariani, ph. Emily Neale).

#### Pied-billed Grebe:

A count of 110 Pied-billed Grebes 22 Nov at Pleasure Island, *Jefferson* was a notable total (Steve Mayes).

#### Band-tailed Pigeon:

A Band-tailed Pigeon found 26 Nov at the Artist Boat Coastal Heritage Preserve on west Galveston Island, *Galveston* was just the 4<sup>th</sup> UTC record and the first since 2007 (Duke Liebler).

#### White-tipped Dove:

Singing White-tipped Doves were noted for the 3<sup>rd</sup> fall in a row at San Bernard NWR, *Brazoria* with 2 birds heard 2 Aug (Joe Fischer) and one bird heard 3 Aug (Susan Heath).

#### Chuck-will's-widow:

A Chuck-will's-widow seen 30 Nov at Galveston Island SP, *Galveston* was late (Kyle O'Haver).

**Anna's Hummingbird:**

An amazing four Anna Hummingbirds were noted 29 Nov+ at Quintana NBS, *Brazoria* (Ron Weeks, et al.).

**Calliope Hummingbird:**

Immature male Calliope Hummingbirds were noted at Sugar Land, *Fort Bend* 19-26 Sep (ph. Mark Scheuerman, et al) , a second young male at the same location 1-2 Oct (ph. Mark Scheuerman, et al.), at Houston, *Harris* 5-6 Oct (ph. David Sarkozi, et al.), Kleb Woods, *Harris* 30 Oct-1 Nov (ph. Fred Collins, et al.), and 20 Nov Quintana, *Brazoria* (ph. Melissa Crookshank, Lynn Hay).

**Broad-billed Hummingbird:**

A male Broad-billed Hummingbird returned to a Mont Belvieu, *Chambers* residence 15 Nov+ (ph. Paul Fagala, et al.) and another male was found not far away in Baytown, *Chambers* 24 Nov+ (ph. David Hanson, et al.).

**American Golden-Plover:**

American Golden-Plovers are rare in fall so bird photographed at Bolivar Flats, *Galveston* 3 Oct (ph. Jeff Sexton, Clayton Leopold) and 11 Nov (ph. Jason Leifester) were notable.

**Wilson's Phalarope:**

A Wilson's Phalarope seen at Warren Lake, *Harris* 25 Nov was late (Timothy White, Bob Honig).

**Red-necked Phalarope:**

Red-necked Phalaropes were found at Bryan Beach, *Brazoria* 29 Sep (Joe Fischer, ph. Martin Hagne, et al.) and the Quintana Jetty, *Brazoria* 20 Nov (Joe Fischer).

**Franklin's Gull:**

A first cycle Franklin's Gull at Morgan's Point, *Harris* 3 Oct was early (ph. James Rieman).

**California Gull:**

California Gulls were noted at Bolivar Flats, *Galveston* 24 Oct (ph. Cin-ty Lee, ph. Richard Gibbons, et al.), Galveston's Beach Pocket Park #1, *Galveston* 12 Nov (ph. Jackie Farrell, Jane Murtishaw), 20 Nov Follett's Island, *Brazoria* (ph. Joe Fischer), and East Beach, *Galveston* 29-30 Nov (ph. James Rieman, Dennis Cooke).

**Least Tern:**

Three Least Terns in Cove, *Chambers* 4 Nov were very late (David Hanson).

**Black Tern:**

A Black Tern seen at Anahuac NWR, *Chambers* 23 Nov was late (John Berner).

**Wood Stork:**

Two Wood Storks seen at Smith Point, *Chambers* 30 Nov were late (David Hanson).

**Magnificent Frigatebird:**

A total of 102 were counted at Morgan's Point, *Harris* 26 Aug during the passage of Hurricane Laura (ph. John Berner, ph. David Sarkozi). At one point, 88 birds were in view.

**Brown Booby:**

The Brown Booby numbers at Pleasure Island, *Jefferson* peaked at a staggering 44 on 19 Sep (ph. Harlan Stewart). This accumulation was believed to be due to tropical weather, but as many of 30 lingered at this location into Nov.

**Smith Point Hawk Watch Totals (15 Aug - 30 Nov Count Period)**

**Totals courtesy of the Gulf Coast Bird Observatory**

Species	2020 Total	Comment
Black Vulture	134	
Turkey Vulture	3072	
Osprey	46	
Bald Eagle	46	Record high count (previous 41)
Northern Harrier	386	
Sharp-shinned Hawk	1967	
Cooper's Hawk	930	
Red-shouldered Hawk	25	
Broad-winged Hawk	54595	
Red-tailed Hawk	137	
Swainson's Hawk	206	
White-tailed Hawk	7	
Ferruginous Hawk	0	
Harris's Hawk	2	
American Kestrel	838	
Merlin	69	
Peregrine Falcon	43	
Crested Caracara	0	Record low count (previous 1)
Mississippi Kite	6595	
Swallow-tailed Kite	142	
White-tailed Kite	4	
<b>Total</b>	<b>69250</b>	Includes unidentified raptors

**Harris's Hawk:**

Two Harris's Hawks were seen at Smith Point, *Chambers* 19 Sep (David Hanson) and one seen along Davis Estates Road, *Fort Bend* 21-26 Nov was one of few county records (ph. James Barnes, et al.).

**Zone-tailed Hawk:**

Zone-tailed Hawks continue to become more common on the U.T.C. with immatures at Cullinan Park in Sugar Land, *Fort Bend* 14 Sep (ph. Henry Jerng), Sienna Plantation, *Fort Bend* 4 Oct (video Richard Gibbons), and Brazos Bend SP, *Fort Bend* 29 Oct (ph. Simon Tan) and an adult also at Brazos Bend 15 Nov (ph. Janey Woodley, T. Peterson).

**Ringed Kingfisher:**

A Ringed Kingfisher seen in Lake Jackson, *Brazoria* 2 Nov was just the 3<sup>rd</sup> record for the county (Jennifer & Brian Kolthammer).

**Yellow-bellied Sapsucker:**

A Yellow-bellied Sapsucker at Lafitte's Cove, *Galveston* 23 Sep was early (Kris Cannon). This was the day after the passage of T.S. Beta.

**Red-naped Sapsucker:**

Red-naped Sapsuckers were seen in Hitchcock, *Galveston* 30-31 Oct (ph. Kris Cannon, ph. Sandy Kroeger, Dennis Cooke, Clayton Leopold) and Cypress, *Harris* 26 Nov (ph. Troy Hibbitts, Marla Hibbitts).

**Northern Flicker:**

A Northern Flicker seen at Quintana, *Brazoria* 29 Sep was early (Joe Fischer).

**Western Wood-Pewee:**

A Western Wood-Pewee was present at Quintana NBS, *Brazoria* 23-26 Oct (ph. Steve Rogow, ph. Bill Schneider, ph. Ron Weeks, ph. Melissa Crookshank, et al.).

**"Western" Flycatcher:**

A Pacific-slope/Cordilleran Flycatcher photographed at San Bernard NWR, *Brazoria* 31 Oct & 7 Nov was one of the first of an unprecedented movement into the state (ph. Wendy McCrady).

**Tropical Kingbird:**

Brazoria County's first Tropical Kingbirds were a pair first identified at Quintana 1 Aug and were seen through 30 Aug (ph. & recording Ron Weeks, et al). There were no sightings despite much checking until a "trilling bird" was photographed 15 Oct (ph. Nina Rach, ph. Tira Overstreet). Interestingly, Jefferson County's first record was of two seen & heard on 2-3 Aug at Sea Rim SP (ph. Sheila Hebert, John Whittle, ph. Steve Mayes, John Haynes, audio, ph. John Berner). A silent bird photographed in the same area 27 Aug was thought to be one of the same two birds (Timothy Freiday, Iliana Mock).

**Bell's Vireo:**

Bell's Vireos were noted at Quintana NBS, *Brazoria* 20-23 Sep (ph. Melissa Crookshank, et al.) and Houston's Bear Creek Park, *Harris* 21 Sep (Jim Hinson, Stuart Nelson).

**Red-eyed Vireo:**

Two Red-eyed Vireos at Houston's Greens Bayou, *Harris* 19 Nov were late (Vicki Crutchfield).

**Warbling Vireo:**

A Warbling Vireo at Fulshear, *Fort Bend* 12 Nov was late (Joanna Willars, Hannah Willars).

**Yellow-green Vireo:**

A Yellow-green Vireo at Quintana, *Brazoria* 27-29 Sep was of few fall records for the U.T.C. (ph. Mark Scheurman, ph. Suzanne Mottin, Jeff Schaberg, Joe Fischer, Melissa Crookshank).

**Sedge Wren:**

Two Sedge Wrens heard at Demi-John, *Brazoria* 30 Aug were extremely early (Martin Hagne).

**Red-breasted Nuthatch:**

A Red-breasted Nuthatch at Quintana NBS, *Brazoria* 22 Sep was early (ph. Melissa Crookshank). A count of 21 from the Sam Houston NF, *Montgomery* 10 Oct indicates how many birds moved south early in the migration (Ryan Call, Evan Chastain).

**Mountain Bluebird:**

A Mountain Bluebird seen at John Paul Landing Park, *Harris* 30 Nov was the first county record in many years (ph. Howard Smith, Jim Hinson).

**Townsend's Solitaire:**

A Townsend's Solitaire photographed 31 Oct at Moody Garden's in Galveston, *Galveston* was the first ever for the U.T.C. (ph. Greg Whittaker).

**Varied Thrush:**

A Varied Thrush at Surfside, *Brazoria* 13-29 Oct was a first county record and just the 8<sup>th</sup> for the U.T.C. (ph. Quentin Thigpen, et al.).

**Veery:**

Veery are very rare in fall so records from Quintana, *Brazoria* 21 Sep (ph. Melissa Crookshank, Ron Weeks), Russ Pitman Park in Houston, *Harris* 23 Sep (Barbara Stern, Mark Meyer), at Christine V. Adair Park in Houston, *Harris* 23 Sep (David Sarkozi), Rice University in Houston, *Harris* 22-25 Sep (nocturnal flight calls, Cin-Ty Lee), and Armand Bayou NC, *Harris* 26 Sep (Farokh Jamalyaria) were notable. This pulse of birds arrived at the same time T.S. Beta made landfall in the area.

**Swainson's Thrush:**

A late Swainson's Thrush was seen at Sugar Land's Cullinan Park, *Fort Bend* 25 Nov (Tony Frank).

**Hermit Thrush:**

An early Hermit Thrush was seen in Cullinan Park in Sugar Land, *Fort Bend* 12 Sep (James Barnes).

**Cedar Waxwing:**

Early Cedar Waxwings included 3 at El Franco Lee Park, *Harris* 16 Sep (Steve Rogow) and one at Quintana, *Brazoria* 23 Sep (Ron Weeks).

**American Pipit:**

The first American Pipit was a calling flyover at Rice University in Houston, *Harris* 1 Oct (Cin-Ty Lee).

**American Goldfinch:**

Very early American Goldfinch were reported at Cullinan Park in Sugar Land, *Fort Bend* 5 Sep (Brian Berry) and at Houston's Bear Creek Park, *Harris* 13 Sep (Nina Rach).

**Chipping Sparrow:**

A very early Chipping Sparrow was noted on Follett's Island, *Brazoria* 21 Aug (Dan Coleman).

**Lark Bunting:**

Lark Buntings were noted east of their normal migration range at 28 Oct at Rice University in Houston, *Harris* 28 Oct (recorded nocturnal flight call, Cin-Ty Lee) and at John Paul Landing Park, *Harris* 24-29 Nov (Jim Hinson, Howard Smith, et al.).

**Dark-eyed Junco:**

A Dark-eyed Junco seen at Quintana, *Brazoria* 1 Oct is the earliest known fall record for the U.T.C. (Melissa Crookshank). Another photographed at San Bernard NWR, *Brazoria* 10 Oct (ph. Susan Heath) was also early.

**Green-tailed Towhee:**

A Green-tailed Towhee photographed at San Bernard NWR, *Brazoria* 29 Oct was east of normal (ph. Wendy McCrady).

**Bobolink:**

A Bobolink detected by nocturnal recording at Rice University in Houston, *Harris* 20 Oct (recording, Cin-Ty Lee) was one of few fall records in recent years.

**Western Meadowlark:**

A Western Meadowlark heard calling on the Katy Prairie Conservancy's Indiangrass Preserve, *Waller* 30 Sep was a new fall early for the U.T.C. (John Berner, Harvey Laas, Bob Honig). Two at Brazoria NWR, *Brazoria* 10 Oct were also early (Jim Stevenson, Susan Heath, Martin Hagne).

**Bullock's Oriole:**

An immature male Bullock's Oriole seen at Houston's Rice University, *Harris* 27 Sep (Cin-Ty Lee, Barbara Stern, Janet Neath) was the first of 6 reports of the species for the period and a precursor to a spectacular winter for the species.

**Boat-tailed Grackle:**

A Boat-tailed Grackle near Liberty, *Liberty* 27 Sep was away from known locations (ph. Mike Riley).

**Tennessee Warbler:**

A Tennessee Warbler at Lake Jackson, *Brazoria* 22 Nov was late (Meredith Heather).

**Mourning Warbler:**

Late Mourning Warbler were at Lake Jackson, *Brazoria* (Denis James) and Rice University in Houston, *Harris* (Cin-ty Lee) 17 Oct.

**Kentucky Warbler:**

A late Kentucky Warbler was at John Paul Landing Park, *Harris* 20 Oct (Sarah & Michael Kuzio).

**Hooded Warbler:**

A late Hooded Warbler was at the Quintana NBS, *Brazoria* 29 Nov (Joe Fischer, Martin Hagne, Ron Weeks).

**Cape May Warbler:**

Cape May Warblers were found 25 Sep at Quintana, *Brazoria* (Joe Fischer) one to two birds at Sabine Woods, *Jefferson* 17-23 Oct (ph. Mark Lear, ph. Steve Mayes, John Whittle, John Haynes, Charles Fischer, et al.), a "different bird" 30-31 Oct also at Sabine Woods (John Haynes, John Whittle, ph. Steve Mayes, et al.).

**Bay-breasted Warbler:**

A Bay-breasted Warbler near Monaville, *Waller* 27 Nov was late (Fred Collins).

**Magnolia Warbler:**

A Magnolia Warbler at San Bernard NWR, *Brazoria* 24 Nov was late (ph. Wendy McCrady).

**Blackpoll Warbler:**

Blackpoll Warblers are very rare in fall so reports from Sabine Woods, *Jefferson* 18 Oct (Mike Austin) and the Quintana NBS, *Brazoria* 22 Oct (ph. Melissa Crookshank, ph. John Berner, Brad Lirette).

**Black-throated Blue Warbler:**

A female Black-throated Blue Warbler was reported from Quintana, *Brazoria* 24 Oct (Mike Bradham).

**Palm Warbler:**

A Palm Warbler was Quintana, *Brazoria* 20 Sep was early (Ron Weeks).

**Yellow-rumped Warbler:**

A Yellow-rumped Warbler at Pine Gully Park, *Harris* 10 Oct was early (John Berner).

**Black-throated Gray Warbler:**

A Black-throated Gray Warbler at San Bernard NWR, *Brazoria* 15-19 Oct was one of 6 reports of this western warbler (ph. Wendy McCrady et al.).

**Hermit Warbler:**

A Hermit Warbler photographed at Anahuac NWR, *Chambers* 18 Oct was just the 8<sup>th</sup> for the U.T.C. (ph. Jim Highberger).

**Painted Redstart:**

A Painted Redstart found on the west side of Houston, *Harris* 17 Nov+ was a first county record and just the 7<sup>th</sup> for the U.T.C. (Ed Robinson, John Berner, et al.).

**Western Tanager:**

A Western Tanager at Sabine Woods, *Jefferson* 2 Aug was the earliest ever fall record for the U.T.C. (John Haynes) and the first of at least 7 reports of this western species.

**Black-headed Grosbeak:**

An immature male Black-headed Grosbeak at Quintana NBS, *Brazoria* 12 Oct (ph. Melissa Crookshank, et al.) was the first of 7 reports of this western species.

**Lazuli Bunting:**

Two Lazuli Buntings were reported from Fulshear, *Fort Bend* 29 Sep (John Berner).

**Dickcissel:**

A Dickcissel noted by nocturnal call note at Rice University in Houston, *Harris* 22 Nov was late (Cin-Ty Lee).

**Observers:**

Mike Austin

James Barnes  
John Berner  
Brian Berry  
Mike Bradham  
Kris Cannon  
Dan Coleman  
Fred Collins  
Dennis Cooke  
Melissa Crookshank  
Vicki Crutchfield  
Paul Fagala  
Jackie Farrell  
Charles Fischer  
Joe Fischer  
Timothy Freiday  
Richard Gibbons  
Martin Hagne  
David Hanson  
John Haynes  
Susan Heath  
Meredith Heather  
Marla Hibbitts  
Troy Hibbitts  
Jim Highberger  
Jim Hinson  
Bob Honig  
Denis James  
Henry Jerng  
Brian Koltammer  
Jennifer Kolthammer  
Sandy Kroeger  
Michael Kuzio  
Sarah Kuzio  
Mark Lear  
Harvey Laas  
Cin-Ty Lee  
Jason Leifester  
Clayton Leopold  
Duke Liebler  
Brad Lirette  
John Mariani  
Steve Mayes  
Wendy McCrady  
Iliana Mock  
Suzanne Mottin  
Jane Murtishaw  
Emily Neale  
Janet Neath

Stuart Nelson  
Kyle O'Haver  
Tira Overtreet  
Rosa Palmer  
T Peterson  
Nina Rach  
James Rieman  
Mike Riley  
Steve Rogow  
David Sarkozy  
Mark Scheuerman  
Bill Schneider  
Jeff Sexton  
Howard Smith  
Barbara Stern  
Jim Stevenson  
Harlan Stewart  
Simon Tan  
Quentin Thigpwn  
Ron Weeks  
Greg Whittaker  
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