

Upper Texas Coast Sub-regional Report, Spring 2020

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

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The Weather:

Rainfall was slightly above average with 15.09 inches (38.3 cm) of rain falling during the period at Houston's Intercontinental Airport. That total was 3.36 inches (8.53 cm) above normal due largely to a very wet May. Temperatures for the period were right on the historical average. All the rain and frontal passages grounded good numbers of migrants throughout the latter half of period.

The Birds:

Mexican Duck: The UTC's first Mexican Duck was found among "park" Mallards at Houston's Deputy Darren Goforth/Horsepen Creek Park, Harris Co 21 Mar-15 Apr (ph. Letha Slagle, John Berner, et al.).

Ring-necked Duck: The latest Ring-necked Duck was a male near Brazos Bend SP, Fort Bend Co 8-11 May (John Berner, ph. Linda Martin-Rust, m.ob.).

Greater Scaup: A male Greater Scaup in Laporte, Harris Co. 13-14 May was among the latest ever for the UTC (ph. Cin-ty Lee).

Surf Scoter: The latest Surf Scoter was a beached male at Bolivar Flats, Galveston Co 30 May (ph. Don Danko, Ad Konigs, Damien Wilson).

Long-tailed Duck: A Long-tailed Duck was discovered in a spoil cell at Bryan Beach, Brazoria Co 13-28 Mar (ph. Melissa Crookshank, Brad Lirette, m.ob.). One that wintered at Cross Creek Wetlands, Fort Bend Co was present until 21 Mar (ph. Andy Liu, Elizabeth Timmer, m.ob.).

Common Goldeneye: A female Common Goldeneye present at Bolivar Flats, Galveston Co 20 Apr-8 May (Eric Carpenter, Maggie Carpenter, ph. Dorian Anderson, et al.) was an unexpectedly late lingerer.

Hooded Merganser: A Hooded Merganser at Brazoria NWR, Brazoria Co 4 May was late for the immediate coast (ph. Lynn Hay).

Least Grebe: A Least Grebe at Galveston Island SP, Galveston Co 15-24 Apr (ph. Kyle O'Haver, m.ob.) was notable for its immediate coast location.

Common Nighthawk: A Common Nighthawk calling in Beaumont, Jefferson Co 24 Mar (Sheila Hebert) was early.

Broad-tailed Hummingbird: An overwintering female Broad-tailed Hummingbird lingered in Houston, Harris Co until the very late date of 28 Apr (ph. Sue Orwig).

Rufous Hummingbird: Lingering Rufous Hummingbirds at Baytown, Harris Co (David Hanson) and Quintana, Brazoria Co (Mike Williams) remained until 12 Apr.

Calliope Hummingbird: A male Calliope Hummingbird photographed in Sugar Land, Fort Bend Co 4-17 Apr (ph. Hoiman Low, Ute Welk) was the 2nd latest ever for the UTC

Allen's Hummingbird: Wintering Allen's Hummingbirds lingered in Dickinson, Galveston Co until 3 Mar (Sonny Bratz, ph. Mike Austin, m.ob.) and Santa Fe, Galveston Co until 8 Mar (ph. Ross Foreman, ph. John Berner, m.ob.).

Buff-bellied Hummingbird: A late Buff-bellied Hummingbird was at Santa Fe, Galveston Co 9 May (ph. Ross Foreman).

Virginia Rail: A late Virginia Rail was at Bolivar Flats, Galveston Co 8 May (Hannah Willars, Lisa Li, Li Li, et al.).

Limpkin: Texas' first Limpkin was photographed at Brazos Bend SP, Fort Bend Co 6 May (ph. Christi Gallier). That bird was not found the following day despite much searching in that area of the park. It was not until some homeowners that live adjacent to the park spotted it or another outside their kitchen window 8 May that the primary location, a private shallow lake filled with Apple Snails, was discovered (ph. Rich & Sandy Jespersen). Further search efforts spearheaded by Jespersens and John Berner revealed at least two birds at that location through the period (ph. & audio Ron Weeks, ph. & audio John Berner, et al.).

Sandhill Crane: A flock of 45 Sandhill Cranes flying over the Heights area of Houston, Harris Co 5 Apr (Mark Steuer) was late for such a large group.

Whooping Crane: The two long-staying pairs of Whooping Cranes in eastern Chambers and western Jefferson Cos were confirmed as nesting (USFWS press release). These birds are known to be a part of the non-migratory Louisiana flock.

Wilson's Snipe: A Wilson's Snipe at Anahuac NWR, Chambers Co 6 May (Ethan Ellis) was later than normal.

Parasitic Jaeger: Parasitic Jaegers were offshore in Brazoria Co waters 5 Apr (ph. Ron Weeks), High Island, Galveston Co 10 Apr (Cullen Hanks, Ian Davies, Simon Kiacz, Drew Weber), and Bolivar Flats, Galveston Co (Mike Austin).

Bonaparte's Gull: Late Bonaparte's Gulls included a single bird at Bolivar Flats, Galveston Co 8 May (Stephen Klotz) and two birds at Quintana, Brazoria Co 15 May (ph. Kristine Rivers).

Little Gull: Little Gulls are less than annual on the UTC, so an adult flying along the Bolivar Peninsula near Caplen, Galveston Co 22 Mar was a nice find (Cullen Hanks).

Iceland Gull: An adult Iceland (Thayer's) Gull present at Bolivar Flats, Galveston Co 24-27 Apr was the latest reported this spring (ph. Justin Bower, ph. Mike Austin, et al.). Interestingly, all shots of this bird showed its left wing drooping slightly.

Glaucous Gull: Glaucous Gulls were at Smith Point, Chambers Co 6 Mar (ph. David Henderson, Ednelza Henderson, Jonathan Henderson) on Follett's Island, Brazoria Co 12 Mar (Joe Fischer, ph. Ron Weeks), and at Port Arthur, Jefferson Co 17 Apr (Mike Austin, Judy Behrens, Tony Frank, Phyllis Frank).

Great Black-backed Gull: A first-cycle Great Black-backed Gull was at San Luis Pass, Galveston Co 23 Mar-5 Apr (Andrew Spencer, Nathan Pieplow, ph. Kyle O'Haver, et al.).

Black Tern: Four early Black Terns were at Rollover Pass, Galveston Co 1 Mar (Ash Ferlito, Ian Davies, Cullen Hanks).

Elegant Tern: An Elegant Tern was photographed at the Bolivar Peninsula Ferry Landing, Galveston Co 15 Apr (Eric Carpenter, Maggie Carpenter) will be just the 10th for TX if accepted by the TBRC.

Wood Stork: Out-of-season Wood Storks included 5 at Lakeside Park in The Woodlands, Montgomery Co 1 Mar (ph. Kevin Molloy, Sonny Bratz) and 3 near Angleton, Brazoria Co 17 Apr (Mark Scheuerman)

Brown Booby: A count of 15 Brown Boobies from Follett's Island, Brazoria Co 20 Apr (Nathan Pieplow) was encouraging given the partial die off during the "freeze".

Harris's Hawk: The overwintering Harris's Hawk at Sheldon Lake, Harris Co was last reported 29 Apr (ph. Dale Wolck). Another was at the Houston Arboretum, Harris Co 7 Mar (Ben Hobratch).

Yellow-bellied Sapsucker: A late Yellow-bellied Sapsucker was at the Edith Moore Sanctuary in Houston, Harris Co 1 May (Chris Bailey).

Olive-sided Flycatcher: An Olive-sided Flycatcher at Texas Point NWR, Jefferson Co 16 Apr (Rajesh Bhargava) was one of the earliest ever for the state.

Willow Flycatcher: An early Willow Flycatcher was at High Island, Galveston Co 22 Apr (John Coons, ph. Joan Kent, et al.).

Fork-tailed Flycatcher: A flyby Fork-tailed Flycatcher was reported on the Bolivar Peninsula, Galveston Co 14 Apr (John Garrett).

Bell's Vireo: Bell's Vireos are rare in spring on the UTC so one at Sabine Woods, Jefferson Co 14 Apr (Timothy Freiday) was notable.

Yellow-throated Vireo: An early Yellow-throated Vireo was at Sabine Woods, Jefferson Co 7 Mar (Steve Mayes).

Red-eyed Vireo: A Red-eyed Vireo at Brazos Bend SP, Fort Bend Co 19 Mar (Laura Sare) was one of the earliest ever for the UTC.

Yellow-green Vireo: Yellow-green Vireos were at High Island, Galveston Co 5 May (Simon Kiacz, Bill Eisele) and West Galveston Island, Galveston Co 7-13 May (ph. Jim Stevenson, et al.).

Black-whiskered Vireo: The only Black-whiskered Vireo report was from West Galveston Island, Galveston Co 5 May (ph. Greg Minnert).

Golden-crowned Kinglet: A Golden-crowned Kinglet that lingered at Lafitte's Cove, Galveston Co until 1 Apr (Michael Ward) was one of few Apr records for the UTC.

House Wren: A House Wren at the Quintana NBS, Brazoria Co 14 May (Martin Hagne, Denise Stephens) was the latest ever reported from the UTC

Gray-cheeked Thrush: Ninety-eight Gray-cheeked Thrushes were counted during nocturnal flight call recording at Rice University in downtown Houston, Harris Co 22 Apr. This censusing sheds interesting light on the mix of these thrushes during migration; 1191 Swainson's, 91 Veeries, and 114 Wood Thrushes were also tallied on the same date.

Hermit Thrush: Very late Hermit Thrushes were noted at Quintana NBS, Brazoria Co 21 Apr (Kristi Keller) and Lafitte's Cove, Galveston Co 26 Apr (Kristine Rivers).

Clay-colored Thrush: A Clay-colored Thrush was photographed "inside southern 610 loop area" of Houston, Harris Co 26-27 Mar (Trey Morris).

Purple Finch: This winter's spectacular Purple Finch invasion lingered well into spring with the latest being two still in Friendswood, Galveston Co 26 Apr (Steve Berenzweig).

Red Crossbill: A female Type 2 Red Crossbill was still in Sam Houston NF, Montgomery Co 15 Mar (Todd McGrath).

Pine Siskin: The massive winter invasion had birds lingering at feeders all over the UTC. The latest of these were singles in Pearland, Brazoria Co 25 May (Mike Austin, Judy Behrens) and West Columbia, Brazoria Co 29 May (Charlies & Olivia Brower). The latter record is the latest ever for the UTC.

Lesser Goldfinch: Lesser Goldfinches near Katy, Harris Co 18 Mar (Hank George), Nederland, Jefferson Co 19-29 Mar (ph. Steve Mayes, m.ob.), and Friendswood, Harris Co (ph. Steve Berenzweig) was more than normal.

American Goldfinch: The latest American Goldfinch was at Sugar Land, Fort Bend Co 8 May (Mark Scheuerman).

Chestnut-collared Longspur: An alternate male Chest-collared Longspur at Bryan Beach, Brazoria Co 15-22 Mar (ph. Melissa Crookshank, Brad Lirette, m.ob.) was a 1st county record.

Clay-colored Sparrow: A late Clay-colored Sparrow was at Dos Vacas Muertas on Galveston Island, Galveston Co 7 May (ph. Dean Silvers, Ben Silvers, m.ob.).

Vesper Sparrow: A late Vesper Sparrow was near Needville, Fort Bend Co 2 May (ph. James Barnes, Ryan Shaw, Marissa Buschow).

Savannah Sparrow: A Savannah Sparrow near Needville, Fort Bend Co 19 May (Bob Friedrichs) was exceptionally late.

Song Sparrow: A well-described Song Sparrow at Sabine Woods, Jefferson Co 18 Apr was exceptionally late (Michael McCloy, Tyler Scott, Nicole Foley, Corina Giron).

Green-tailed Towhee: A Green-tailed Towhee at the Dos Vacas Muertas Sanctuary, Galveston Co 27 Apr-5 May (ph. Steve Metchis, ph. Dennis Cooke, ph. Steve Rogow, m.ob.) was the latest ever for the UTC.

Eastern Towhee: An Eastern Towhee lingered in the Tomball area, Harris Co thru 5 May (ph. Cindy Crane).

Yellow-headed Blackbird: A count of 105 Yellow-headed Blackbirds along FM1985, Chambers Co 3 Apr (Richard Preston, Van Harris) was exceptional.

Hooded Oriole: The Hooded Oriole that overwintered at Seabrook, Harris was last reported 2 Mar (Hilary Gibbs).

Bullock's Oriole: The last of this winter's Bullock's Oriole eastward invasion was a female at High Island, Galveston Co 2 May (ph. Crystal Garrett, et al.). A young male was also there 1 May (ph. John Garrett, Ian Davies, Cullen Hanks, et al.).

Worm-eating Warbler: An early Worm-eating Warbler was in the West University area of Houston, Harris Co. 14 Mar (Don Verser).

Blue-winged Warbler: A late Blue-winged Warbler was near Brazos Bend SP, Fort Bend Co 15 May (Carlos Ross, T Peterson, Miles Duboise).

Tropical Parula: A Tropical Parula was at Quintana, Brazoria Co 2 May (Mike Gfeller, ph. Mike Williams, et al.).

Black-throated Blue Warbler: A Black-throated Blue Warbler detected by nocturnal recording at Rice University in Houston, Harris Co 14 Apr (Cin-ty Lee) was early.

Yellow-rumped Warbler: A late Yellow-rumped Warbler in the Cinco Ranch area, Fort Bend Co 13 May (Helen Martin) was thought to have lingered due to a slightly injured wing.

Wilson's Warbler: A Wilson's Warbler at Sugar Land, Fort Bend Co 21 May (Ryan Shaw) was late for the UTC where few mate season migrants are detected.

Painted Redstart: The overwintering Painted Redstart in the Dairy Ashford area of Houston, Harris Co lingering until 10 Mar (Ross Foreman).

Pyrrhuloxia: A late Pyrrhuloxia was at Pearland, Brazoria 17 Apr (Pat Dinkjian).

Black-headed Grosbeak: The winter invasion of Black-headed Grosbeaks led to an impressive count of 3 at Baytown, Chambers Co 16 Mar (David Hanson).

Lazuli Bunting: Male Lazuli Buntings were at High Island, Galveston Co 11 Apr (ph. Simon Kiacz, ph. John Garrett, et al.) and Dickinson, Galveston Co 26-27 Apr (ph. Clayton Leopold, m.ob.).