

First record of the Snow Bunting for Texas

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ON DECEMBER 21, 1977, at approximately 2:45 p.m. C.S.T., a Snow Bunting (*Plectrophenax nivalis*) was found along the U.S. Hwy. 190 causeway located on Lake Livingston in Polk County, Texas. The causeway, which runs east and west for about 1.9 km across the lake, has sloping sides completely covered with concrete. The roadbed lies about 5 m above the lake level and is bordered on either side by guard rails. Most of the time, the bunting was observed feeding in sparse vegetation which was limited to areas directly under the north guard rail. Periodically, it would hop up onto the lower lip of the guard rail, apparently feeding on spiders or insects. When flushed, the bird would fly along the causeway, sometimes 100 to 200 m, but would almost always return to an area of vegetation. The bunting was observed continually until dusk and never associated with the many Killdeers (*Charadrius vociferus*), Least Sandpipers (*Calidris minutilla*), or Water Pipits (*Anthus spinoletta*) also found on the causeway. The weather was clear, cold (-2 to 14°C) and very windy (NW, 16-72 kmph) following a frontal passage two days prior.

Two days later, the bird was again located in the same area and observed by eight additional persons before it was collected. The specimen (female, ovary 2.5 x 3.5 mm., No. 1001, Natural History Collection, Sam Houston State Univ.) weighed 29.6 g. and did not contain any significant deposits of subcutaneous fat. The skull was totally ossified and stomach contents included about 70% seeds (*Chenopodium* sp., *Eleusine indica*, and *Lamium amplexicaule*), 10% spider parts (species unknown), and 20% extraneous material (mostly grit).

IN THE CENTRAL STATES, the Snow Bunting normally winters south to Kansas (A.O.U., 1957). There are three sight records (Sutton,

1967) and one specimen (Williams, 1973) for Oklahoma. Two records for Arkansas include one specimen (James, 1960) and a sight record (James, 1968), while some controversy surrounds the single specimen and only record for Louisiana (Lowery, 1974). No prior specimen or sight record exists for Texas (Oberholser, 1974); a bunting reported from Starkeville, Mississippi Nov. 14, 1977 (Jackson and Cooley 1978) was about 295 km more northerly, therefore, this specimen represents the first record for the state and is one of the southernmost records for the central United States.

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