

Texas Region

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Most of the state was well on its way out of drought conditions from earlier in 1996. In fact, record rainfalls in February in north, central, and east Texas added an exclamation point to that trend. A few dry areas still persisted, such as around San Antonio, parts of the lower Valley, and portions of the Panhandle. The winter was colder statewide than we had seen in a few years. The Trans-Pecos suffered a "hard, cold winter" (K. Bryan), with 0° F. weather in January around the Davis Mountains. Freezes penetrated deep into South Texas, but the Lower Rio Grande Valley was apparently spared. A very harsh but localized ice storm in mid-January caused massive damage to woodlands in a narrow band across central Texas, which was likened to the havoc that a hurricane might cause.

Record waterfowl flights were apparent in north Texas, but may have stopped short there, since areas to the south did not mention noticeably high numbers.

The invasion of western montane species moving to the south and east continued from the fall, but it was countered by the curious scarceness or absence of sometime-invaders like Golden-crowned Kinglets, Lark Buntings, and longspurs. Regionally, waxwings and robins clearly moved to the coast and south Texas, passing over or by other regions. As we have seen in past years when rains were spotty or when there were varying habitat conditions at a subregional level, sparrow diversity and density was very patchy, without large statewide trends.

Abbreviations: Ft. Bliss (*Ft. Bliss sewage ponds, El Paso*); G.M.N.P. (*Guadalupe Mountains N.P.*); L.R.G.V. (*Lower Rio Grande Valley*); T.B.R.C. (*Texas Bird Records Committee/Texas Ornithological Society*); U.T.C. (*Upper Texas Coast*). The following are shortened names for the respective county, state, or national parks, wildlife refuges, etc.: Anahuac, Aransas, Attwater, Bastrop, Bentsen, Big Bend, Caprock Canyon, Choke Canyon, Hagerman, Hueco Tanks, Laguna Atascosa, and Santa Ana.

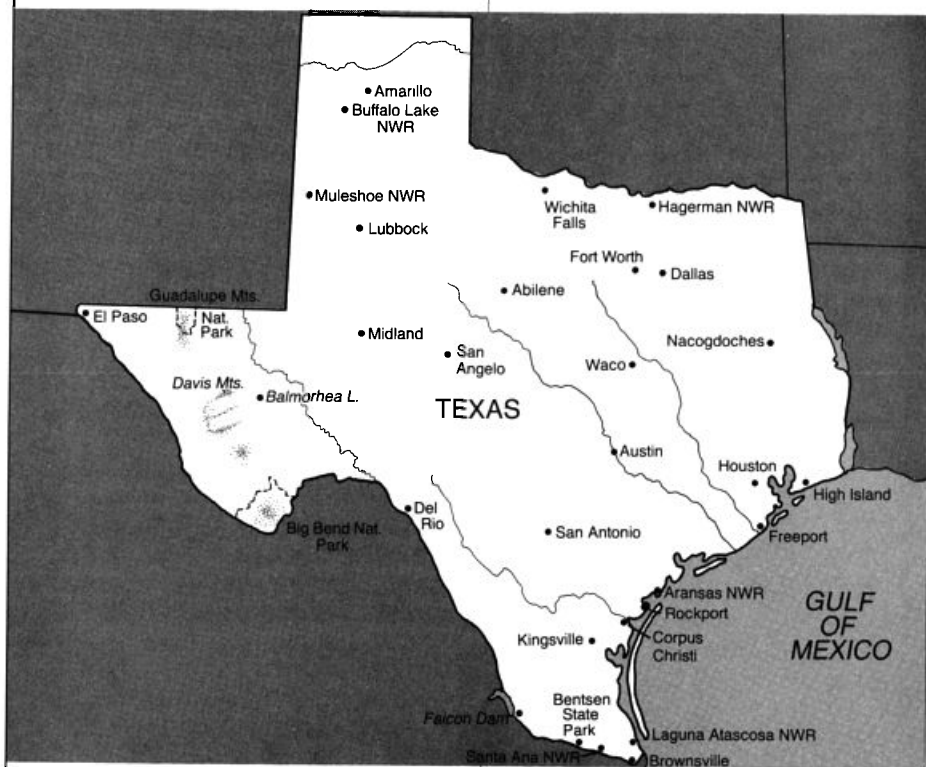
Loons to Flamingo

Red-throated Loons were more common than normal this season, with two at Canyon L., *Comal*, Dec. 8–30 († WS, m.ob.), one at L. Balmorhea Dec. 15+ († GLu, ph., m.ob.), and one–three more at Cooper L., *Delta*, Jan. 18–Feb. 18 († ph., M&KWh, m.ob.). Nine Pacific Loons

were seen during the season from Red Bluff L. to Lake O' the Pines to the coast; this species has recently been removed from the T.B.R.C. Review List. Bryan discovered the state's 4th **Yellow-billed Loon** at L. Balmorhea Dec. 21. The bird remained until Jan. 3 and was seen and photographed by many observers. Least Grebe numbers fluctuate from year to year depending on fresh water availability in s. Texas. This season their numbers were reported as quite low in the L.R.G.V. by most observers, but some exceptions included 22 at Santa Ana Dec. 11 (JI). Three out-of-place Least Grebes remained in Beaumont through the season. Twenty-eight Horned Grebes on Greenbelt L., *Donley*, Feb. 18 (KS) and 300 at Red Bluff L., Dec. 30 (BFR) provided unusually high numbers for those locations, but >1000 on L. Tawakoni during most of February was amazing (RK, BGI).

High counts of 30 Clark's (Dec. 26, GL, CS) and 68 Western (Feb. 19, AW) grebes at L. Balmorhea during the season provided the highest number of *Aechmophorus* grebes ever counted in Texas. Bryan reports, however, that a rotenone kill of all fish in the lake will be implemented this fall. It is obvious that any fish-eating birds will abandon the lake until restocking can be initiated some months later. The main purposes of the project are to create better sport fishing and to eliminate the exotic Sheepshead Minnow, which has the potential to inbreed with endangered pupfish native to the aquatic systems upstream of the lake.

A report of an imm. Brown Booby at Galveston Dec. 14 will be reviewed by the T.B.R.C. († J&LOd). Above normal numbers of Am. White Pelicans wintered in the Concho Valley, with 106 at Lake O.H. Ivie and 45 at Lake O.C. Fisher near San Angelo (DT). Double-crested Cormorants are rarely seen in winter in the Panhandle area, so one in Lubbock all season (CSt) and another at Palo Duro L., *Hansford*, Feb. 21 (CS, AW, GL) were noteworthy. Winter Neotropic Cormorant reports away from the L.R.G.V. are increasing; five were at L. Alcoa, *Milam*, Jan. 18 (RPi), one was at Kurth L., *Angelina*, Jan. 25 (NB, LD), and ≤40 were at McNary Res., *Hudspeth*, Feb. 12 (AW). Least Bittern breeds along the Rio Grande in w. Texas, but one discovered at Big Bend's Rio Grande Village Dec. 29 (KSt) was a surprise. A Tricolored Heron at L. Wright Patman Dec. 8 (MWh, MD) was very late for n.e. Texas, while two Snowy Egrets in nearby *Harrison* during most of December and early January were unexpected (GLu, DBro, ER). Wood Stork rarely occurs dur-



ing winter; singles were observed Dec. 23 at Mad I., *Maragorda*, and at Rancho Viejo, *Cameron*, Dec. 26 (BMc), while an amazing 17 were reported from s. *Cameron* Dec. 30 (*vide* JI). The Greater Flamingo of controversial origin remained at Laguna Atascosa through the period.

Waterfowl

A Black-bellied Whistling-Duck in *El Paso* Jan. 4–9 (HJ, m.ob.) furnished the first record in that area since 1989. The only Tundra Swan reports to reach us were of six birds over *Lubbock* Feb. 20 (B&JRI) and another in *Randall* Feb. 27 (DS, RSc, KS). A Brant was at L. Ray Roberts, *Denton*, Dec. 23 († BFr). Further evidence of an increasing population of Wood Ducks in the Panhandle were >60 at Palo Duro L., Feb. 22 (AW, CS, GL), the largest number ever reported in the area (*vide* KS). An apparent Am. Black Duck was in *Lubbock* Jan. 13+ (RL, ph., CSt, m.ob.). This banded duck raised some controversy concerning its origin; the record will be reviewed by the T.B.R.C. The Eur. Wigeon reported in *Grayson* last winter returned this year Jan. 4 († WM); Meyer later advised that he thought the bird may be a hybrid Eur. x Am. Wigeon, and this opinion was shared by Wormington and others. Another Eur. Wigeon (also thought by some to be a hybrid) was on the Rio Grande at Anzalduas Jan. 20+ († m.ob., ph., SB). More Oldsquaws than normal showed up, with one–two in *Beaumont* Dec. 14+ (ph., JWi, KSz), one in *Austin* Dec. 6 (BFr), one in *Harrison* Dec. 12 (GLu), and one in *Corpus Christi* during December (*vide* WS). Any scoter in the Panhandle area is a rarity, particularly a White-winged in *Lubbock* Jan. 1 (VW). A count of 450 Com. Goldeneyes in *Calhoun* Dec. 1 (PH) was noteworthy, while a possible Barrow's Goldeneye at Red Bluff L., *Reeves/Loving*, Dec. 30 (BFr) remained at too great a distance to be documented. Twenty-five Com. Mergansers on the Devil's R., *Val Verde*, Dec. 29 (SWie) and

another at Mad I., Dec. 23 were notable. Unusual in the Panhandle were two Red-breasted Mergansers at *Buffalo* L., *Randall*, Jan. 9 (LN). Four Ruddy Ducks at Big Bend Feb. 16 (AW) provided an apparent first winter record for the park. "Several" Masked Ducks were at *Brazos Bend* Dec. 22 to at least Feb. 15 (ph., m.ob.).

Raptors

Osprey has never been reported before on the Texas High Plains in winter (KS), but one was found in Palo Duro Canyon Dec. 13–21 (EK, RSc, m.ob.). Up to five Bald Eagles were in the Davis Mts./Alpine area this winter, an unprecedented number for that region (PE, KB, mo.b.), while four wintered near San Angelo (DT), three were at L. Belton (Co&JJ), and three more at L. Waco (FB). While Bald Eagles winter in good numbers on several large reservoirs in e. and n. Texas, the above locations all represent notable occurrences. Cooper's Hawks are taking advantage of the exploding population of White-winged Doves in Austin and Waco (EGW, m.ob.). A Gray Hawk was n. of its typical haunts in *Riviera* Dec. 7 (PP, EA, JH). A Red-shouldered Hawk in *Lubbock* Jan. 21 (EB) was unexpected. Continuing a recent trend, an ad. light-morph Short-tailed Hawk was reported at *Santa Ana* Feb. 15 († KT). A Zone-tailed Hawk was seen in *Colorado* Dec. 27 (PDH), another was at *Falcon Dam* Jan. 10 (*vide* TP), while yet another was in *Travis* Jan. 11 (B&JRI). Rarely seen in the Trans-Pecos, a carefully described "Harlan's" Red-tailed Hawk was near *Balmorhea* Dec. 21 (KB). A first *Rains* record was provided by a Ferruginous Hawk Jan. 26 (RK). A imm. Golden Eagle was a great find in *Jefferson* Dec. 20 (BG). Peregrine Falcons were more conspicuous inland this season, with reports at *Waco*, *Austin*, *Cooper L.*, *Tarrant*, *Palo Pinto*, *Victoria*, and *Lubbock* (m.ob.).

Chachalaca to Shorebirds

There have been reports of Plain Chachalacas from n. of *Bishop*, *Nueces*, w. of *Kingsville*, and near *Alice* (MT *et al.*); these are presumed to be introduced into these areas. A count of 158 Whooping Cranes at and near *Aransas* was made during the season (*vide* PY). Snowy Plovers are not normally encountered inland during the winter; however, this season was a notable exception. Six Snowy Plovers were at L. Buchanan, *Burnet*, Dec. 7 (ph., GL, AD), one was at L. Brady, *McCulloch*, Jan. 1 (ph., BFr), and six wintered at *Imperial Res.*, *Pecos* (BJP). Up to 125 Mt. Plovers were near *Granger L.*, *Williamson*, Dec. 8+ (BFr, m.ob.), and ≤87 were near *La Joya*,

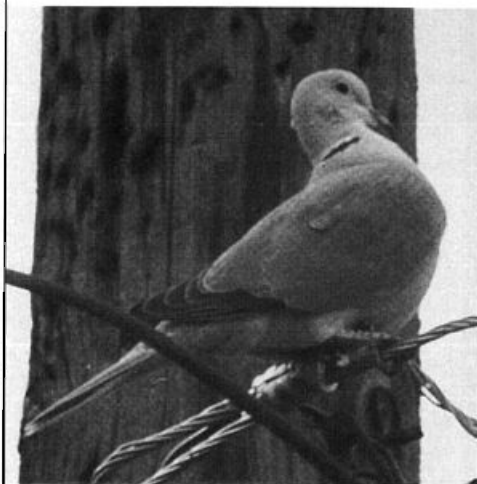
Hidalgo, Dec. 28+ (CD, m.ob.). An Am. Avocet at *Red Bluff L.*, Dec. 30 (BFr) was unexpected. Reports of wintering Solitary Sandpipers were scattered across much of the state. Once again, Long-billed Curlews in early winter surprised Panhandle observers; 65 were in *Swisher* Dec. 12 and 35 were there Dec. 20 (JRe). American Woodcocks fared much better this winter in e. Texas due to moist soil conditions, in contrast to last winter's drought (*vide* CSh).

Jaegers to Terns

A dark Parasitic Jaeger was at *Dallas' White Rock L.*, Dec. 6–13 (BGi, RR, m.ob.), a very unusual record. Another Parasitic was at *Bolivar Flats* Jan. 3–4 (CD, ML). A Franklin's Gull in *El Paso* Jan. 12 (JKi) was a big surprise. Well-documented Little Gull records included a first-winter bird at *Cooper L.*, Dec. 6–12 († ph., M&KWh), and one–two at *Mountain Creek L.*, *Dallas*, Dec. 25–Feb. 16 († KN, JD, TT, M&KWh). Black-headed Gulls seem to be annual in recent winters; this season there were 3 reports. The ad. Black-headed Gull from the fall at *Cooper L.* remained through at least Feb. 13 († ph., MWh, JD); another adult was at L. Wright Patman Dec. 28 († CM), while a first-winter bird was at *Mountain Creek L.*, *Dallas*, Feb. 9 († KN). The ad. Mew Gull in *Bexar* from the fall was last seen Dec. 14 († WS, B&JRI). The increased observer activity in studying gulls and visiting landfills has resulted in a large increase in the number of reported California Gulls. This season ≥nine different Californias were reported from *Corpus Christi*, *Galveston*, *Dallas*, and *Brownsville* († ph., m.ob.). Herring Gulls are never common at L. Balmorhea, so the presence of one–three individuals there Dec. 21–Feb. 10 was noteworthy (KB, m.ob.). Like California Gull, Thayer's Gull observations are increasing and many are well photographed. Reports from this season include ≥7 documented records from *San Antonio*, *Corpus Christi*, *Brownsville*, *Dallas*, *Lake O' the Pines*, and *L. Tawakoni*. In addition to these, two were seen at different *El Paso* locations Jan. 28+ († JPa, ph., BZ), providing the first records for that area. At least 18 Lesser Black-backed Gulls at numerous coastal locations through the period was the most ever reported in a single season in Texas. In addition, a first-winter Lesser Black-backed at *El Paso* Jan. 28 († ph., BZ) provided only the 2nd record for the Trans-Pecos. A Kelp Gull returned to *Galveston's East Beach* Nov. 30 (DP), where it was seen through the period; it was presumably the same bird reported last winter. The *Galveston Glaucous Gull* reported in the fall at *East Beach* remained



Oldsquaw in Tyrrell Park, Beaumont, Texas, December 14, 1996. Photograph/Ken Sztraky.



Evidence of continuing rapid expansion of range, this Eurasian Collared-Dove was in Farwell, Parmer County, Texas, February 20, 1997. Photograph/Greg W. Lasley.

until Feb. 1; it was joined by another Jan. 4+ († PG, m.ob.). Another first-winter Glaucous was at Corpus Christi Feb. 26–Mar. 8 († AW, ph., WS). We reported in the fall that last year's imm. Great Black-backed Gull from Galveston was last seen Aug. 10. We have since learned that it was apparently refound Nov. 22 and remained through the period, in 2nd-winter plumage. Another first-winter Great Black-backed was at the Brownsville dump Feb. 11 († SML), and ≥one was at Bolivar Flats Jan. 26+ (B&JRI *et al.*). Continuing a trend from the fall, five imm. Black-legged Kittiwakes were reported: one from Greenville Dec. 1–2 († M&KWh), one at San Antonio Dec. 7–8 († ph., WS), one at Surfside, Brazoria, Dec. 21–22 († RWe, DD), one at Possum Kingdom L., Young, Dec. 28 († KN), and one at Red Bluff L., Dec. 30 († BFr). Inland Com. Tern reports included one at Lake O.H. Ivie near San Angelo (TM, DR, and another at L. Balmorhea Jan. 26 (B&JRI). Accidental in winter in the Trans-Pecos, two Forster's Terns were at L. Balmorhea Feb. 19 (AW).

Doves to Nightjars

Eurasian Collared-Doves continue to show up in scattered Texas localities. This season the three reported during the fall in the Panhandle in Canyon, Randall, remained all period, while elsewhere in that region another was in Amarillo Jan. 27 (RWi) and yet another was in Farwell, Parmer, Feb. 20 (ph., GL, CS). In c. Texas, ≤six Eur. Collared-Doves were seen in Austin Dec. 19 (JW). An Inca Dove in Farwell Feb. 20 (CS, GL) provided a first record for Parmer. A Com. Ground-Dove in Johnson Jan. 31 (CE) was considered very rare for n.c. Texas. For the record, the

Austin Monk Parakeet population continues to expand; dozens of nesting colonies can be found along Town L. in that city. Green Parakeets and Red-crowned Parrots continue in moderate numbers in various L.R.G.V. locations; a flock of 100 Green Parakeets frequented McAllen during the season (CD *et al.*) and 300 were reported at a Brownsville site Jan. 3 (*vide* TP). Duncan observed a Green Parakeet paired with an apparent Orange-fronted Parakeet (a certain escapee) Dec. 27 in McAllen.

A Barred Owl at Lake O.H. Ivie Dec. 23 (RD *et al.*) provided a rare record for the Concho Valley. In the Panhandle, Seyffert noted that our knowledge of the range of Barred Owls is expanding; heretofore the species was thought to be limited to the eastern-most counties, but this season ≤two were heard and seen Dec. 16–Jan. 3 along Lake Cr., Donley (KM, JRa). A Long-eared Owl was at Buffalo L., Jan. 31+ (KS), while elsewhere in the Panhandle, five Long-eareds were near Texline, Dallam, Feb. 21+ (CS, AW, ph., GL). Single d.o.r. Long-eared Owls near Van Horn, Culberson, Jan. 2 (BGi) and in Parmer Feb. 23 (CS, GL) furnished interesting county records.



Considered by many to be the most extraordinary bird of many a year, this Stygian Owl—a little-known bird of the American tropics—was seen for one day only at Bentsen State Park, Texas, December 26, 1996. Far from known localities in Mexico, it furnished a first record for the United States. Photograph/Jim Culbertson.

In the mid-1970s, a Ross' Gull in Massachusetts was touted as "The Bird of the Century." We respectfully nominate a new contender from the tropics for this title. An incredible Stygian Owl (*Asio stygius*) was discovered at Bentsen Dec. 26 († ph., NWr, JW, PW), where it was seen and photographed throughout that day by perhaps 25 fortunate observers; it was not seen on later dates, despite intensive searching. This species has a widespread but disjointed (and poorly understood) range in Mexico, Central and South America, and occupies a variety of elevations and habitats. We are unaware of records in Mexico close to the United States border; however, the species is known to show up in strange and unexpected locations. Excellent photos by the Culbertsons, Bentsen, and others show the plumage of the bird to be in excellent condition and reveal no suggestion of a captive origin. If accepted by the T.B.R.C., this will represent the first Texas (and United States) record.

Rare county records were provided by single Short-eared Owls in Erath Dec. 28 and Johnson Feb. 26 (CE). Very rare in the Pineywoods, a Short-eared Owl was seen in San Augustine Feb. 25 (RiS), while a N. Saw-whet Owl was in El Paso Dec. 17 (ph., J&PRu). Two very late Com. Nighthawks were in Dallas Dec. 22 († E&JMorm). An out-of-place Poorwill was at Bentsen Feb. 25 (JMu).

Swifts to Woodpeckers

A White-throated Swift seen at Palo Duro Canyon Jan. 19 (RSc, PT) represented only about the 5th winter record in that area in the past 14 years. The Broad-billed Hummingbird from the fall in San Antonio remained until Jan. 12 (*vide* WS), and the one from Victoria remained until Dec. 7 (EG). A Buff-bellied Hummingbird was in Houston during December (J&WRi), and another provided a first for Chambers Jan. 4–Mar. 6 (ph., KD). Rare for winter, single Ruby-throated Hummingbirds were in Walker during early December (DPa), at Rancho Viejo, Cameron, Jan. 11 (BMc), and at Corpus Christi all winter (*vide* WS). At least three Anna's Hummingbirds survived the single-digit freeze in the Davis Mts. in mid-December (*vide* KB). There was a late Broad-tailed Hummingbird in the Davis Mts., Dec. 12 (KB), but of more interest were ≤nine Broad-taileds that wintered on the c. coast from Victoria to Corpus Christi (m.ob.). In addition to large numbers on the coast, handfuls of Rufous Hummingbirds wintered at such inland locations as Austin, San Antonio, Bell, Waco, Waller, and Wilson. A single hardy Rufous survived 0° F. weather in the Davis

Mts. in early January (KB). The apparent ad. ♂ Allen's Hummingbird reported in the fall in San Antonio remained until Feb. 27 (HW). The two El Paso Lewis' Woodpeckers remained through the period, while elsewhere one was at *Midland* Dec. 28+ († BLu), one was at Imperial Res., *Pecos*, Dec. 12 († BJP), and yet another was at a roadside rest on I-10 in *Pecos* Jan. 2–31 († A&MC, m.ob.). Yellow-bellied Sapsuckers were unusually scarce in s. and c. Texas all winter (*fide* PP & CS). Two Williamson's Sapsuckers were reported in the Davis Mts. during the period.

Just at the end of the season a most intriguing report hit the RBAs and Internet. A landowner at Chapeño, *Starr*, relayed a story to Roberts about a large woodpecker that he had seen on his property during late February. On Feb. 23 Roberts glimpsed a large crested woodpecker there, and then obtained better looks Feb. 26. Roberts' written description appears strongly supportive of his identification as Lineated Woodpecker, while appearing to eliminate Pileated and other large woodpecker species from the tropics. Despite a constant "birder vigil" Mar. 2+, the bird was not relocated and thus never photographed. Nonetheless, this species is one that many of us expect to occur in Texas eventually.

Flycatchers to Swallows

Very rare in winter, single Hammond's Flycatchers were identified in *El Paso* Dec. 5–26 (JZ) and at Pinto Canyon, *Presidio*, Jan. 26 (KB, D&LHe). Once again, a scattering of Dusky and Gray flycatchers wintered along the Rio Grande in *Brewster* and *Presidio*. A "Western" Flycatcher was reported at Comfort Jan. 4 (SWie). A Black Phoebe in *DeWitt* Dec. 8 (DMu) was a rare find, while \leq eight were reported in the L.R.G.V. (most around Falcon Dam) during the season. Ash-throated Flycatchers winter in small numbers on the Texas coastal plains, but one in Comfort Jan. 4 (SWie) was noteworthy. In addition to the previously mentioned *Cameron* locations, another pair of Tropical Kingbirds was in Harlingen Feb. 2 († OC). A Couch's Kingbird was at Aransas Pass Dec. 25–Jan. 23 (E&NA), while unexpected single W. Kingbirds were at *Matagorda* Dec. 23 (*fide* BO) and at Gilchrist, *Galveston*, Feb. 7 (AW). Six Scissor-tailed Flycatchers at Choke Canyon Jan. 25 (WS, B&JRI) were a surprise. A N. Rough-winged Swallow lingered at L. Sam Rayburn in e. Texas until Dec. 10 (RiS), and six Cave Swallows in *Matagorda* Dec. 23 (PH) and singles there and in *Calhoun* Feb. 25 (AW) were of interest.

Jays to Shrikes

Brown Jays have been more difficult to find in Texas in recent seasons; this winter's only reports came from Chapeño (*fide* PP). Clark's Nutcrackers made headlines for sure! This was the first season in 24 years when they were encountered in multiple locations in Texas. Reports (all photographed) included one s. of Quitaque, *Floyd*, Dec. 13–14 (TFe), one at *Midland* Dec. 28 (BLu), two at *Lubbock* Jan. 18 (GJ, PK, CSt), and one at Mertzon, *Irion*, Jan. 31–Feb. 1 (D&SMc, m.ob.). A maximum of only five Mexican Crows seen on a single day at the Brownsville dump suggests a decline in that species in Texas. Whether this is a result of less access, less interest, or changing refuse handling procedures is unknown. Common Ravens in Dallam in December and in *Midland* in January were rare on the plains. Two White-breasted Nuthatches were in Temple Dec. 30 (RPi), perhaps the only regular location for the species in c. Texas. A Pygmy Nuthatch made a rare appearance in the Chisos Mts. of Big Bend Feb. 15 (DF). The Rock Wren at Cooper L. from the fall was last seen Dec. 9 (M&KWh). Two House Wrens wintered in the Panhandle, a bit unexpected so far north (*fide* KS). Winter Wrens penetrated as far as the Rio Grande in *Presidio*, *Brewster*, and *Hidalgo*. Two Black-tailed Gnatcatchers on the Edwards Plateau at Kickapoo Feb. 24 (ML) were a bit n. of their winter range. Western and Mountain bluebirds pushed SE more than we expect. Seven Westerns in *Floyd* Jan. 30 were a rarity (TFe), as were \leq 17 in *Johnson* in January and February (CE) and seven more in *Palo Pinto* Feb. 15 (EW). Mountains penetrated as far as *Bell*, *Bosque*, *Dallas*, *Edwards*, *Hill*, *Johnson*, and *Kerr* at the margins of the Edwards Plateau (m.ob.). Townsend's Solitaires were particularly abundant in their normal haunts in w. Texas and the Panhandle. Strays made their way to *Irion* Jan. 25–26 (RD & DT); Wichita Falls Feb. 3 († DM); and Mountain Creek L., *Dallas*, Feb. 9 (KN). An apparently injured Swainson's Thrush took harbor at Texas Pt., Dec. 14 (GDu). A single Clay-colored Robin was seen at Salineño Jan. 4 (BMc). A possible Rufous-backed Robin was described from Santa Elena Canyon, Big Bend, Feb. 14 (MP, † to T.B.R.C.). Sage Thrasher was more conspicuous than normal. For example, 130 were banded (a fraction of those observed) in *Irion* in late January (RD, DT). About 10–12 were n. of La Joya, *Hidalgo*, Jan. 16 (LM, SB), a higher daily count there than one might expect. Other Sage's were at N. Padre I. (M&AC) and *Johnson*, both Dec. 28, *Young* Dec. 29 (KN), and Port Aransas Feb. 18 (E&NA). Others were reported on the e. Edwards Plateau in January and February. A Sprague's Pipit in *Midland* Feb. 1 (RS, JMe) was a nice find. From the



At least five Clark's Nutcrackers reached Texas this winter. This one was in *Irion* County February 1, 1997. Photograph/ Delbert Tarter.

fall season, we received details of the Bohemian Waxwing at *Lubbock* Nov. 17 († JHa). This winter, 2 more reports came in: A well-documented Bohemian at *Texline*, *Dallam*, Jan. 12 († ph., JO) and another bird at *Fr. Bend* Feb. 7 († SWi). At least seven different N. Shrikes were reported from *Hartley*, *Randall*, and *Potter* (m.ob.).

Vireos to Warblers

A new winter locality for Gray Vireo was established with a bird at Colorado Canyon, Big Bend Ranch, Feb. 14 (AW). Solitary Vireos seemed more numerous in the Austin area; of note was a single Solitary at L. Ray Hubbard, *Dallas*, Dec. 22 (E&J Morm). A late migrant Tennessee Warbler was at Sabine Woods, *Jefferson*, Dec. 27 (GDu). Single Tennessee's, rare as a wintering species, were at Brownsville Jan. 5 (BRo), and at Jones State Forest, Jan. 25 (B&JRI). Late Nashville Warblers were at Sabine Woods Dec. 27 (GDu) and at the mouth of the Pecos R., Dec. 28 (SWie). Twelve Nashville's provided a large wintering group at Sabal Palm Feb. 23 (BMc, WS). An out-of-range ♂ Tropical Parula was seen at the Guadalupe R. delta, *Calhoun*, Jan. 31 (A&MC). Wintering Yellow Warblers including single birds at Mitchell L., San Antonio, Dec. 8 (WS) and Rancho Viejo Jan. 2 (BMc). At Euless, *Tarrant*, a Chestnut-sided Warbler Dec. 6 (RF) was a good winter record. A ♀ Black-throated Blue Warbler was reported at Sabal Palm Dec. 31 (CD) and Feb. 28 (KF); another ♀ Black-throated Blue was in Nacogdoches Dec. 27–Mar. 4 (D&MW). Very unusual for winter in w. Texas was a Black-and-white Warbler at Cottonwood Campground, Big Bend, Dec. 7 (BBo).

Tanagers to Finches

A Scarlet Tanager was a nice find at Houston Dec. 5 (BBe). A Pyrrhuloxia found at *Shackelford* Dec. 1 (BGi, PB) was a bit e. of its normal range. A ♀ Blue Bunting joined the male wintering at Bentsen through the season († ph., m.ob.). Away from that "expected" locality, a ♂

Blue Bunting was found Feb. 15 at Santa Margarita Ranch, *Sarr* († OC, DJ). Rare but regular, four Blue Grosbeaks were reported at 2 Big Bend localities and at Sabal Palm (m.ob.). Surprising away from the coast or s. Texas were single Indigo Buntings in *Wilson* Jan. 1 (WS, DMu) and at Kerrville Jan. 10–13 (KW). Also rare away from the coast was a Painted Bunting Jan. 14 at *Angelina* (NB). Seemingly typical for its uncommon winter appearances, a ♀ Dickcissel hung out with a flock of House Sparrows in *Wilson* Jan. 13–15 (WS). Now that it is garnering new attention as a full species, reports of E. Towhee in w. Texas are trickling in. This season one was reported from Palo Duro Dec. 6 (EK). The “sparrow highlight” of the season in far w. Texas was the widespread wintering of Clay-colored from the Davis Mts. region southward (KB). A ♀ Black-chinned Sparrow was described in great detail from China Spring, *McLennan*, Feb. 21 (MB, GC *et al.*), hundreds of miles e. of the species’ normal range. Lark Buntings were widely remarked as being in low numbers throughout their range in the s.w. half of Texas. Baird’s Sparrow were persistently reported all winter from n.e. Jeff Davis; a few individuals were reported elsewhere, but the species continued to be elusive. A Henslow’s Sparrow in *Victoria* Dec. 21 provided a first county record (ME). Le Conte’s Sparrows, very rare in the Trans-Pecos, were reported at 2 Big Bend localities and at Balmorhea. At opposite ends of the state, Fox Sparrows made news: Two wintered at Palo Duro (m.ob) and two more were at the Laureles Division of the King Ranch, *Kleberg*, Dec. 22 (MC, DMu). A Harris’ Sparrow at Panther Junction, Big Bend, Feb. 20 represented a very rare find (DF, MF). Gibbons described a Dark-eyed “White-winged” Junco observed at length among the hordes of juncos in McKittrick Canyon, G.M.N.P., Feb. 2. There is only a single specimen and one other report of this race for Texas. Simply amazing was the 2-day presence of two **Yellow-eyed Juncos** in a backyard in El Paso Jan. 13–14 († MLA). An eye-catching but apparently regular phenomenon was 7000–10,000 wintering Yellow-headed Blackbirds in El Paso in December (ph., JPa, m.ob.). Two Rusty Blackbirds found below the L. Balmorhea dam Feb. 12 were very rare for the Trans-Pecos (JMa); nearly as rare were five more at Caprock Canyon Dec. 30 (TFe). Nine Great-tailed Grackles at the sewer plant at Ft. Davis Dec. 22 provided further evidence of the spread of that species in w. Texas. A Boat-tailed Grackle in *Refugio* was a nice find Jan. 18 (CC).

Reports of Purple Finches in w. Texas were intriguing and controversial. Some were suspected to be misidentified Cassin’s, while those that were apparently real were theorized as being of the West Coast *californicus* race not previously documented in Texas (CS, KB, m.ob.). Cassin’s Finches

made big news in the Panhandle and w. Texas. A male was reported in Canyon, *Randall*, Dec. 31 (C&TFo), the first record for the n. Panhandle since 1973. Five Cassin’s were in Midland Dec. 6–Jan. 19 (FW), a pair of Cassin’s were at Lubbock Jan. 5–13 (KDi), and another male was in Levelland, *Hockley*, Feb. 8 (LeS). Others were reported in the Abilene area without details (*vide* LB). In the mountains of w. Texas, the species was increasing in numbers toward the end of the period and many birds were exhibiting courtship behavior, especially in the Davis Mts., where breeding has occurred in the past during invasion years. Red Crossbill numbers were down from the fall in far w. Texas, but they persisted in small numbers in several localities. In the Panhandle, the species was reported widely, with several new county records established (m.ob., ph. GL). This w. Texas invader remained in Midland to Feb. 9. Much farther east, ≤27 were at Bastrop from late January+. The species continued its unprecedented wandering in e. Texas, where Schaefer compiled at least 30 reports from 8 counties. Up to ten Com. Redpolls frequented a feeder in the Davis Mts., Dec. 2–26 († C&SF); this report will be reviewed by the T.B.R.C. Lesser Goldfinches were noteworthy e. to *Grayson* (first county record; DH, WM) and *Tarrant* (*vide* EW). Although reported as the western *hesperophilus* race, the green-backed males reported at these localities were probably sub-adults of the expected *psaltria* race. Evening Grosbeaks remained at a handful of locations in w. Texas, mostly around the Davis Mts. The species was also widespread in small numbers in several n.w. Texas counties, including *Donley*, *Gray*, *Lubbock*, *Midland*, *Oldham*, *Potter*, and *Randall*. Of more significance were single Evening Grosbeaks at Belton, *Bell*, Jan. 6–Feb. 9 (Co&JJ), and at Boerne, *Kendall*, Jan. 6 (SWie).

Continuing from the Fall invasion, Lawrence’s Goldfinches remained all season at Hueco Tanks. More records accumulated elsewhere: Two were near McNary, *Hudspeth*, Dec. 29 († BZ), and six were located at the same site Feb. 18 († JPa). At least 23 were in n.w. El Paso Jan. 19+ († ph., JPa). Adams located eight Lawrence’s on a trip through Pinto Canyon, *Presidio*, Jan. 25, and these birds were seen by many observers through at least Feb. 17. All in all, this is by far the most widespread and best documented invasion of the species in Texas.

Undocumented Rarities

In addition to the documented records listed above, we received the following reports of Texas Review List species this season with no documentation. “Black” Brant (*Milam*), Masked Duck (Aransas), Purple

Sandpiper (Port Aransas), Little Gull (Denison), Thayer’s Gull (Galveston), Great Black-backed Gull (Mad I.), Allen’s Hummingbird (Victoria), Lewis’ Woodpecker (Elephant Mt. and G.M.N.P.), and two Clay-colored Robins (*Hidalgo*).

Cited observers (subregional editors in boldface): Mark Adams (MA), Mary Lou Alcorn (MLA), Dick Anderson, Keith Arnold, Nina & Eddie Arnold, Art Artega, Donna Artega, Mike Austin, Mike Bailey, Elayne Banks, Bill & Patty Beasley (B&PBe), Bob Behrstock (BBe), Steve Bentsen, Peter Billingham, Nancy Bird, Lorie Black, Hazel Bluhm, Bill Bourbon (BBo), **David Bradford** (U.T.C.: 18046 Green Hazel, Houston, TX 77084. email: brdfdr@tenet.edu), Craig & Karen Branton, John Bregar, Elizabeth Brooks, David & Luanne Brotherton (D&LBro), Tim Brush, **Kelly Bryan** (Trans-Pecos: P.O. Box 786, Ft. Davis, TX 79734. email: kellyb@phoenix.as.utexas.edu), Frank Bumgardner, Winnie Burkett, Howard Camp, Oscar Carmona, Charlie Clark, Chris Collins (CCo), Linda Cooke, Arlie & Mel Cooksey, Jim & Pat Culbertson, Gail Cupit (GCu), David Dauphin, Michelle Davis (MDa), Ross Dawkins, Louis Debetaz, Ken Dickson (KDi), Mike Dillon, Ken Dollar, Andrew Donnelly, Gladys Donohue, Gerald Duhon (GDu), Charles Duncan, Jon Dunn, Mark Ealy (MEa), Charles Easley, Kim Eckert, Carol Edwards (CEd), Mark Elwonger, Chuck Ely, Doug Emkalns, Pansy Espy, Ted Eubanks, Doug Faulkner, Chuck & Shirley Fellers, Rob Ferguson, Terry Ferguson (TFe), Mark Flippo, Connie & Tyler Fordham (C&TFo), Fort Worth Audubon Society, Jane Fowler, Kurt Fox, Tony & Phyllis Frank, Bobbie Frazier (BoF), Brush Freeman (BFr), Bert Frenz (BeF), Red & Louise Gambill, John Gee (JGe), Brian Gibbons (BGi), Elaine Giessel, Peter Gottschling, Bill Graber, Dell Hall, Karl Haller, Marty Hanson, Pat Hartigan (PHart), Jill Haukos (JHa), David & Linda Hedges, Jim Henderson (JHe), Jim & Susan Hengeveld, Jim Hines (JHi), Petra Hockey, Buddy Hollis, Salie Homan, P.D. Hulce, Joe Ideker, Hugh Jameson, Bob Johnson, Tom Johnson, Corky & Joye Johnson (Co&JJ), Dan Jones, Larry Jordan, George Jury, John Karges, Greg Keiran, Thomas Kent, Richard Kinney, John Kiseda (JKi), Phillip Kite, Ed Kutac, Darrell Lanford, Wesley Lanyon, Greg Lasley, Bruce & Merle Lawson, Rob Lee, Lee Lemmons, Charlie Letcher, Mark Lockwood, Guy & Joan Luneau (G&JLu), Bill Lupardis (BLu), Gail Mackiernan, Billy Mangum, Halsey Marsden, Julia Marsden (JMa), P.K. Martin, Terry Maxwell, Dan & Sue McClung, Eve

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Idaho-Western Montana Region

DAN SVINGEN

The major weather pattern this season was SNOW, SNOW, SNOW! Many mountain ranges received 150–200 percent normal snowpack. Snowdrifts, floods, mudslides, and avalanches hindered birding in many areas, but didn't preclude great birds. Idaho had three first state records within two weeks, and overall had the most interesting winter season in years. Especially exciting was the cooperative Siberian Accentor at Hailey. Tolerant homeowners, helpful local birders, and nearby Trumpeter Swan, Tufted Duck, Gyrfalcon, Snow Bunting, and Black Rosy-Finch greatly enhanced the experience for hundreds of visitors. More widespread trends included relatively high numbers of Snowy Owls, Northern Pygmy-Owls, and Pine Grosbeaks, a general lack of Bohemian Waxwings (especially after December), and an absence of "feeder finches."

Loons to Shorebirds

A Pacific Loon at Swan L., Lake, MT Dec. 15 (DC) provided a first for Latilong 15, and about the 6th record for the state. The Clark's Grebe at Deer Flat N.W.R., Canyon, during the local CBC Jan. 4 (DL) furnished a winter first for Idaho.

A Great Egret was near Hagerman W.M.A., Gooding, ID Feb. 22 (CT), where a bird wintered last year. The imm. Black-crowned Night-Heron in Lewiston, ID Jan. 2–19 (ICS, DHk), was surprising but not unprecedented.

Seasonally-rare waterfowl included a Snow Goose at Deer Flat N.W.R., Jan. 4 (AF, DL),

a Snow Goose Jan. 17 (LBa, JD, DMO, ST), and Ross' Goose Dec. 21–Feb. 8 (*fide* CO, CT) at Hagerman W.M.A. A ♂ Cinnamon Teal was found on the Stevensville, MT CBC Dec. 28 (†JHo), and a ♀ N. Shoveler visited Lewiston Jan. 4–Feb. 8 (KD, DNS, ICS, m.ob.).

Idaho Eur. Wigeon sightings included two overwintering males in Boise (MC, FK, m.ob.), six males at Sandpoint Dec. 14 (*fide* EC), a male at Marsing Jan. 20 (†PS), and a ♂ Eurasian and ♂ Eurasian x American hybrid at C.J. Strike W.M.A., Owyhee, ID Feb. 8 (DJT).

Idaho's first Tufted Duck, a male, was found amidst several thousand Lesser Scaups and Ring-necked Ducks at Hagerman W.M.A., Dec. 21 (LB, †DMo), and was subsequently seen on and off throughout winter (†DNS, †PS, †CT, m.ob.). The Harlequin Duck which overwintered on Lolo Cr., Missoula, MT (SO, m.ob.) was likely injured (*fide* PW). An Oldsquaw overwintered in Marsing, ID (ph. JG, m.ob.), a first for Latilong 17. An early December Oldsquaw in Thousand Springs Valley, Custer, ID (DF, EF) may have been the same bird seen 25 mi away last fall.

An ad. Swainson's Hawk at Columbia Falls, MT, during the first week of December was remarkably late (*fide* DC, †LH). Lingering Ferruginous Hawks were discovered on the Hagerman Valley, Gooding, ID CBC Dec. 21 (†RG) and near Bruneau Dunes S.P., Owyhee, ID Feb. 23 (SM, SP), while three were at Indian

