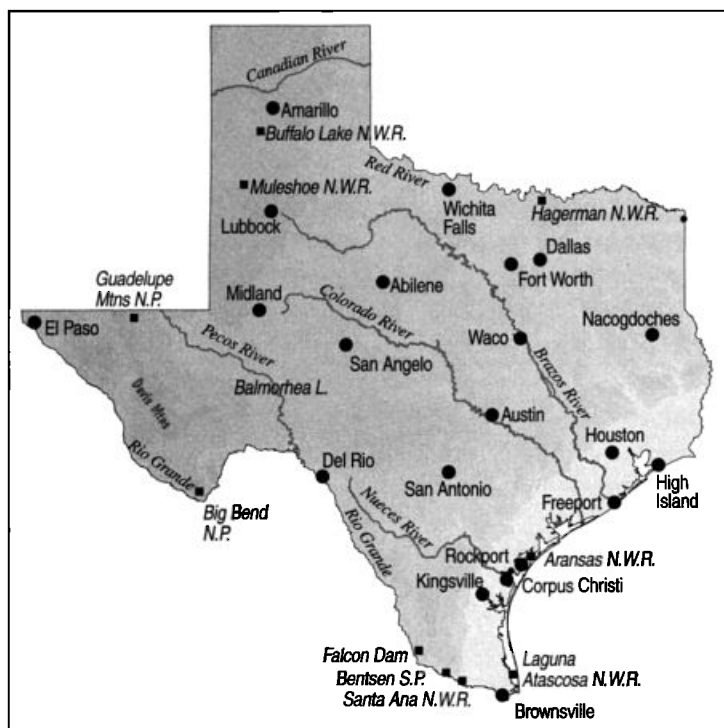


Texas



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After spectacular fall and winter seasons, it was perhaps predictable that the next avian passage would be a letdown. In most areas, both the weather and the migration were commonly termed “unexceptional.” The Trans-Pecos was cool and wet, and the Panhandle received about twice its normal rainfall, but by season’s end, most areas were at or below normal in annual totals. A wet front 28–31 March produced an unexpectedly diverse and abundant fallout in eastern, coastal, and southern Texas. Fronts moved through about every week or 10 days thereafter, with notable fallouts happening 23–24 April, 4–6 May, and a bit late on 22–25 May, although there was a striking diversity of opinion among observers (more so than usual) as to which days were best in any given area. A violent hail storm over Lubbock 30 May caused innumerable avian deaths including at least 19 Mississippi Kites; fortu-

nately the damage was localized to that area.

Elsewhere, Seyffert said they had to work hard to find migrants in the Panhandle. In Midland and much of the Trans-Pecos, the migration was “late and light,” and groups such as shorebirds, warblers, and sparrows were especially few and far between. Mark Adams pointed out, as we’ve seen in the past, that green habitat conditions in the western half of the state result in a dispersed migration (and thus migrants are perceived to be at low densities). There was a good smattering of rarities, and many elements of the winter invasions lingered well into the spring.

Abbreviations: L.R.G.V. (Lower Rio Grande Valley); T.B.R.C. (Texas Bird Records Committee); U.T.C. (Upper Texas Coast). The following are shortened names for the respective local, county, state, or national parks and wildlife refuges, etc.: Alazan Bayou, Anahuac, Balcones Canyonlands, Big Bend, Big Bend Ranch, Brazoria, Buffalo Lake, Matagorda Island, Muleshoe, Packery Channel, Palo Duro Canyon, Quintana, Sabine Woods, Santa Ana, Sea Rim, Trinity River.

LOONS THROUGH VULTURES

An exceptional Red-throated Loon this season was on L. Alan Henry, *Garza* 6 May (TM, AF). Perhaps the most cooperative rarity of the season continued to be the **Yellow-billed Loon** that remained from the winter season at S. Padre I. until mid-May (S & GC, m. ob.) Two or 3 Clark’s Grebes were in the Panhandle: one on Jim’s L., *Hutchinson* 14 Apr (EK, m. ob.) and one (or 2) at Buffalo L 21 & 25 Apr (BPi, KS et al.). Wayward Brown Pelicans were in cen. Texas at Granger L 20–22 Apr (TF), Buffalo L. 28 Apr–5 May (RGI, m. ob.), and L. Balmorhea for the entire period (BC et al.). Rare in the Midland area were Neotropical Cormorants on 13 & 21 Apr (AW, A & DK). A Magnificent Frigatebird 8 Apr at Anahuac was very early, but it portended an abundance of the species later in the warm season.

A Least Bittern was at Alazan Bayou, *Nacogdoches* 18–23 May where the species is still very rare. Both L. Balmorhea and Imperial Res. hosted one or a few Reddish Egrets. Single Roseate Spoonbills in *Gonzales* and *Freestone* in May were early for areas off the coast. The handful of Wood Storks that descended on Brazoria 30 May was another indicator of an early dispersal of tropical avifauna into Texas. A Black Vulture was a rarity in the skies over Lubbock 14 Apr (AF).

WATERFOWL THROUGH RAPTORS

Fifteen Black-bellied Whistling-Ducks in the Hill Country provided a new record for *Mason* 29 Mar (BoF, DF). Accidental in the Trans-Pecos, 2 Fulvous Whistling-Ducks made an appearance at L. Balmorhea 5 Apr (TJ), and 3 more showed up in El Paso 28 May, staying through the period (JS, JZ, MSC, first report in 60 years!); yet another Fulvous was on the High Plains at Littlefield 6–7 May (ClB et al.). A drake **Garganey** was photographed on the King Ranch, *Kleberg* during its stay 4–7 Apr (TL, RL et al., ph. GP); there are fewer than half a dozen records of this species for Texas. Small numbers of all three scoter species were at Bolivar Flats, *Galveston* 4 Mar (JO); 2 White-wingeds were at High Island 20 Mar (CCo); and 6 Blacks were at San Luis Pass 6 Mar (CCo, FR). A Long-tailed Duck also spent the period 4–17 Mar at Bolivar (JO, m. ob.). Stuart Marcus documented the 2nd successful nesting of Hooded Merganser at Trinity R., *Liberty*; 17 fledglings successfully hatched from a nest box on or just before 5 Apr. Successful breeding by Hoodeds was also noted in *Rusk* 20 May

(GLu), and a female Hooded was seen entering a nest box in the e. Panhandle at L. Marvin 26 May (BBeh).

Along with a handful of reports in their now-expected haunts in se. Texas, there were solid sightings of Swallow-tailed Kites in *Nacogdoches* 2 Apr and 18 May and *Tyler* 22 May, where there have been very few reports in the past 20 years. A pair of White-tailed Kites made an unsuccessful nesting attempt at Alazan Bayou in Feb and Mar (JFa et al.). Breeding Gray Hawks set up territories at Santa Elena Canyon and Cottonwood Campground in Big Bend (m. ob.); a pair of Grays was present in Limpia Canyon, *Jeff Davis* from 30 Mar onward (BS, MAd, KB et al.), and an active nest also graced Anzalduas in Mar and Apr.

A colossal number of Broad-winged Hawks moved over Corpus Christi and surrounding areas 29–30 Mar (*fide* MCo); estimates ranged up to 600,000 birds, astonishing numbers for the northbound migration. Equally impressive within that movement was a report of 1000+ Broad-wingeds over the n end of Padre I. 29 Mar, perhaps a record concentration for a barrier island. In the pines of *Bastrop*, an out-of-place Zone-tailed Hawk was found about 12 May (KiK); there were also three reports in the e. Edwards Plateau in Apr and May where the species is still quite unexpected. Two observers submitted details on a possible **Collared Forest-Falcon** studied in plain view for 10 min. at Santa Ana 30 Apr (RHa, SWa); the bird was not seen subsequently, but a biologist at the refuge may have heard the species here earlier in the season. Crested Caracaras were seen three times in Mar and May in Big Bend, where the species is accidental.

RAILS THROUGH GULLS

Yellow Rails were particularly hard to find in their expected haunts such as Anahuac (*fide* DSa). A Black Rail on the Kenedy Ranch 28 Apr may have been a first *Kenedy* record (BFr). While observers to the e. encountered a good shorebird migration, the story was different in Midland, where several normally common species were scarce. Some impressive shorebird numbers included 2000 American Golden-Plovers on the Bolivar Peninsula 15 Mar (T & PF) and up to 9000 American Avocets on Bolivar Flats 4 Mar (JO). By contrast, a single American Golden-Plover 22–29 May in *El Paso* was a great find (BZ et al.). Rare for the Pineywoods was a migrant Snowy Plover 30 Mar at Longview

(ERy, GLu). The last of the Mountain Plovers near Granger L., *Williamson* lingered to a new late date of 28 Mar (TFe). Of interest was a Red Knot at San Luis Pass 26 Apr (BK et al.); the bird had been banded on the Río Negro, Argentina in Mar 1998. Brazoria hosted a Reeve 28 Apr (JSt, RW, JL), a first for both the refuge and the county.

Quite a few observers “chased” a Little Gull that lingered in Beaumont 8–21 Apr (NBl et al.). The first record of Thayer’s Gull for the Central Brazos Valley was reported by Merkord, Vollert, and others at L. Somerville, *Washington* and *Burleson* 8–9 Apr. A Sabine’s Gull described at L. Balmorhea 21 Apr represents one of very few spring records for the state (RHa, SWa).

DOVES THROUGH OWLS

We are now at the stage of filling in the blanks for county records of Eurasian Collared-Dove, the species having spread out across the entire state. (refer to <http://www.nctexas-birds.com/eccdobigmap.htm> for the latest.) The most likely areas for new county reports will be in heavily wooded e. Texas and in sparsely birded regions of w. Texas; Big Bend got first records for the park in Apr and May. We also added records for *Bee* and *Grimes* this season. A lone Ruddy Ground-Dove was a one-day wonder in Paton’s El Paso yard 3 Apr; this bird was apparently of the paler w. subspecies. Increasingly rare in Big Bend, a pair of Burrowing Owls established a nesting territory at Tornillo Flats 29 Mar+ (MF). We received a late report of a winter Long-eared Owl in Big Bend, on the Glenn Springs Road 3 Feb (FD).

HUMMINGBIRDS THROUGH WOODPECKERS

A **Green Violet-ear** made a two-day stop at the home of Ernest Jasek in *Guadalupe* 9–10 May (m. ob., ph. MSi); another stayed 9–12 May at the Simons’ feeders near Corpus Christi; and yet another first detected 21 May near Wimberley, *Hays* remained through the period (*fide* JHan). Buff-bellied Hummingbirds continued to edge northward from the coastal plain, with additional sightings in *Bastrop* and *Washington*; *Brazos* had its 2nd and 3rd records in Apr. There were just a few unusual hummingbirds in the Davis Mts: a lone Ruby-throated was at a private feeder 6 May (M&ME), and an Anna’s was a rare spring find 25 Apr at the nearby S.P. (RR). Two Calliopes remained at an Austin area residence until 31 Mar and 9 Apr, respectively (PGe), while another, a male, lin-

gered from winter at Cayman House in Fulton to at least 1 Apr.

A wintering Ringed Kingfisher on Austin’s Town L. was resighted 9 Apr; across town the species was seen at Hornsby Bend 28 Apr & 17 May (*fide* JHan). A bit farther e. was a Ringed Kingfisher (or 2?) on a pond in *Bastrop* 21 May (LJ et al.). Conceivably these reports could represent anywhere from one to 5 different birds. Of more significance was a Ringed seen entering a nest hole on the upper Nueces R. near Camp Wood in nw *Uvalde* 19 May (DJ); a subsequent check by Tom Taylor 24 May indicated an ad. carrying food to the cavity in the river bank, first confirmation of breeding activity in the Texas Hill Country after years of anticipation. Well out of range was a Green Kingfisher in n *Harris* 7 Apr (TexBirds). A wintering Lewis’s Woodpecker at Midland was last seen on 9 Mar (FR, FBu, RMS); one in Lubbock remained until 10 Apr (RE); in the Davis Mts and nearby Alpine, there were scattered reports of single birds as late as 24 Mar and 20 Apr, respectively.

FLYCATCHERS THROUGH CROWS

A Greater Pewee was studied 5–7 May in the Davis Mts. (D & LH); we now have about 10 well-documented records of this flycatcher in Texas (and many other reports). An Eastern Wood-Pewee was very early at Bryan 6 Mar (KA). A pair of Buff-breasted Flycatchers returned 8 May to a nesting territory in the Davis Mts. for the 3rd year in a row (GL, KB et al.). Unexpected and s. of its normal breeding range was an Eastern Phoebe on territory at Gonzales on the coastal plain 19 May (BFr et al.). The wintering Say’s Phoebe in *Harrison* stayed to 5 Mar (ERy et al.). There was a proliferation of Vermilion Flycatchers in nw. Texas: new county records were garnered in *Armstrong* 3 Apr (KS) and in *Dallam* 1 May (LSa), and a male at Muleshoe 8–12 May was joined by a female 28 May+ (m. ob.). At least one **Dusky-capped Flycatcher**, likely one of the pair first found by Richard Webster in Apr 2000, returned to the Laguna Meadow Trail in Big Bend 26 Apr and thereafter, but no nesting activity was observed (m. ob.). Out-of-range Great Kiskadees were at San Luis Pass, Galveston 25 May (JSt) and in Baytown the same week; a pair at the latter locality hung around a few more weeks and was actually seen carrying nesting material into a Loblolly Pine (MAT, DD)! Yet another Kiskadee provided only the 2nd record for Midland 6–7 May (D & JMer et al.), and the species was well-documented for the first

time in Big Bend 29 Apr–9 May (m. ob.). Perhaps similarly inspired to wander, a **Sulphur-bellied Flycatcher** was on S. Padre I., *Cameron* 5–7 May (CCo, BMc et al.); there are nearly 10 records for Texas now. A territorial Tropical Kingbird at Edinburg, *Hidalgo* 2 May was a new locality record (TBr); at least two pairs of Tropicals settled once again in Cottonwood Campground at Big Bend. A Cassin's Kingbird in Austin 23 Apr was phenomenally far e., perhaps a first area record (ML et al.). There were two May reports of Western Kingbirds in *Angelina* in deep e. Texas, where the species is very rare (DW, JFa).

Not to be outdone by the winter reports in the Hill Country, Freeman found a Hutton's Vireo 10 Mar even farther e. in Buescher S.P., *Bastrop*. A migrant Yellow-throated Vireo was a bit far w. at Big Bend 4 Apr (CCur, GHo), as were a Philadelphia in *Dallam* 1 May (first county record; LSa) and a Red-eyed in El Paso 1 May (MSc, JZ et al.). Three surprising reports of Yellow-green Vireo came from the coast: one was at Port O'Connor 25 Apr (BFr); another was at Sabine Woods 7 May (HJ); and yet another was videotaped on Galveston I. 8–9 May (JSt). A Black-whiskered Vireo reported 14–21 Apr at High I. (DQ, GM et al.) was very elusive. A few lingering Tree Swallows may have been checking out potential nesting areas in *Harrison*, *Angelina*, *Williamson*, and *Bell* into May (m. ob.); there was no documented breeding activity, however. Steller's Jays and Western Scrub-Jays were reluctant to depart their El Paso haunts, a few being reported into Mar and Apr, with one Western Scrub-Jay lingering to 28 May. However, the scattered Pinyon Jays seemed to be the most attached to the landscape. A few stayed in the Midland area into the earliest days of Mar (*vide* RMS). The latest Pinyon Jay records in far w. Texas were 16 Mar in El Paso and 18 May at Limpia Crossing, *Jeff Davis*, and a few were still s. of Alpine at the end of the period. A nesting pair of Tamaulipas Crows at Brownsville's airport were checked by birders routinely from 27 Mar through May (Jod, NBl et al.).

TITMICE THROUGH WARBLERS

A wintering Juniper Titmouse in Amarillo stayed until 9 Apr (SF). Cave Swallows were active at nesting colonies in *Stephens* and *Throckmorton* by 1 Apr near the n. edge of their Texas range. A truly late Ruby-crowned Kinglet was at Balcones Canyonlands 28 May (DT). A pair of Eastern Bluebirds nested in Big Bend for the first time since 1972; the

birds hatched 4 young at Rio Grande Village 8 Apr. A single male Western Bluebird that had strayed to *Limestone* in the winter was last noted 5 Mar (TJC). The latest of the winter's easterly Townsend's Solitaires was in *Travis* 13–14 Apr (PF, WB), while another was still in El Paso 28 May (JPa). Evidence of Wood Thrushes (and Yellow-throated Warblers) singing on territory at Alum Cr., *Bastrop* in late May was the first in several years (BFr). The presence of 3 singing Swainson's Thrushes on 20 May in the same area raised eyebrows, but they were probably late migrants. A Clay-colored Robin was singing from the bluffs at Santa Margarita Ranch, *Starr* 8 Apr (CDB, ESB) & 28 Apr (BMc); the species was nesting at Santa Ana in late May, and another individual was upriver on the Mexico side at Nuevo Laredo, also in late May (TBr). Farther out of range was a Clay-colored singing at L. Corpus Christi in mid-May (CBr).

The list of rare warblers in w. Texas was extensive. In simplified form, the casual species (number of reports this season in parentheses) included: Golden-winged (1), Tennessee (1), Northern Parula (3+), Chestnut-sided (2), Yellow-throated (2), Blackpoll (3, including a first for the Davis Mts.), Prothonotary (2), Ovenbird (1), and records of accidental species, Canada Warbler in El Paso and Mourning Warbler at Ft. Bliss 22 May (BZ). A singing male Colima Warbler was located in Tobe Canyon in the Davis Mts.

19 May (KB, MAd, JG et al.); this is the 3rd year in a row for the species there.

There were record numbers of Cape May Warblers on the coast, with as many as 6 on w. Galveston I. and *Jefferson* 5 May (m. ob.) and 20 the same day on S. Padre I. (BMc), there was an analogous bumper crop of Black-throated Blues as well. A Black-throated Blue in *Donley* 10 May was a new county record (KS). The willows at Anahuac hosted an eye-popping Townsend's Warbler 13–15 Apr (DSa et al.). A Golden-cheeked Warbler in e. *Stephens* 1 Apr was the first report in that underbirded area in 25 years. Of more significance was the return of 2 singing male **Golden-cheeked Warblers** to sw. *Dallas* on 7 Apr (ph. DH et al.), the first county records in 37 years. A Palm Warbler at Ryan L., *Angelina* 4 May was a very rare migrant there (LD, JaW), as was a Palm at Buffalo L. 13 May (RS et al.) and a Prothonotary at the latter locality 17 May (BPi). A Worm-eating Warbler was accidental at Midland 23 Apr (D & JMer). Seventeen territorial Kentucky Warblers and nearly that many Hoodeds on Alum Cr., *Bastrop* in late May were unexpectedly high numbers (BFr, ML). A vagrant Mourning Warbler was in Lubbock 28 May (AF). An "astonishing" coastal record was provided by a **Red-faced Warbler** at Matagorda I., 6 May (BFr), yet another indicator of the significant southwestern and tropical influx up the coast this season. Incomplete but suggestive details of a Painted

SA A male Northern Parula and a mostly typical female Tropical Parula were observed copulating and in nest-building activities at Dolan Falls Ranch Preserve, *Val Verde* 24–29 Apr (JLR et al.). This area lies in the southwestern extreme of Northern Parula's range and the northernmost extreme of Tropical Parula's. Hybridization between these close relatives has yet to be conclusively documented, but this instance may give some indication as to why Texans see variation in apparent Tropical Parulas, particularly in facial patterns. The female of this pair in fact showed a bit of a white eye-crescent above the eye but none below and was in all other respects a typical female Tropical. Rowlett writes: "Her underparts were extensively rich yellow below, from chin to upper belly, immaculate and somewhat warmer (toward orange) on the upper breast; her malars were golden. While we were watching her, I noticed that she kept returning to the same area of a big Live Oak, so I investigated more closely and found her building a nest in the ball moss. We could set up the scope on the nest and watch the male bring plant fibers in and place them nearby in the tree that she would then pick up and weave into the nest. He would then fly off a few feet away and begin to sing." Rowlett and others found an apparently unmated male Tropical in Mexican White Oaks on another part of the Preserve as well. Another was at the new Magic Ridge Sanctuary, *Calhoun* 25 Apr (JJa). Tropical Parulas were also newsworthy on opposite side of the state: a nesting pair documented in the oak woodlands of Davis Mts. S.P. 24 Apr+ (MSM, JD, KB et al.) was clearly a first Trans-Pecos nesting attempt. Observers are asked to document all nesting Tropical Parulas carefully.

Redstart on the U.T.C. at Anahuac 14 Apr were submitted, and another was reported at Rockport 24 Apr (TexBirds). Yet another super-rarity on the coast (and the first away from the L.R.G.V.) was a **Golden-crowned Warbler** at Packery Channel 24–29 Apr (MH, m ob, ph. A&MC, † to T.B.R.C.). Two enticing rarities were reported in Big Bend on 9 May a Slate-throated Redstart from Emory Peak (PT) and a Rufous-capped Warbler at Sam Nail Ranch (J&WR); neither could be refound later. Another Rufous-capped Warbler was at Dolan Falls Ranch Preserve in late Apr (JLR et al.)

TANAGERS THROUGH FINCHES

Scarlet Tanagers staged the best movement through the Pineywoods that David Wolf had seen in 30 years. The species was also conspicuous on the c. Texas coast in the latter half of Apr (m. ob.). There were Scarletlets at Buffalo L. 15 May (KS) and Palo Duro Canyon 26 May (DB), and a single bird strayed to Big Bend 11–13 May (MF et al.). An Eastern Towhee at Big Bend Ranch provided a first *Presidio* record (KB, ML). A Sage Sparrow was a good find in *Val Verde* at Dolan Falls Ranch Preserve on 27 Apr (JLR). An ad. Chipping Sparrow feeding young at Ft Clark Springs on 10 May represented a rare, even unprecedented nesting on the South Texas Plains (ML, *fide* JA). Grasshopper Sparrows and Dickcissels clearly had banner years in the grassland and open shrubland of c. Texas, many lingering to breed in record numbers. Both species were also more numerous in the Texas High Plains and the w. edge of the Panhandle. Small numbers of Grasshopper Sparrows were on territory as far e. as *Waller* and *Washington*. The moist conditions in w. Texas were blamed for the lack of Baird's Sparrows sightings, a species most often encountered (at desert oases, for instance) when conditions are drier. The wintering Gray-headed Junco in *Nacogdoches* was last seen on 15 Apr (MHW), much later than the regular Slate-colored's stay. A McCown's Longspur in *Burleson* 1 Mar was the first county record in 25 years (GF). Five Rose-breasted Grosbeaks were a bit more than normal in Big Bend and the Davis Mts; another was very early at Palo Duro Canyon 9 Mar (EH). A Blue Grosbeak at an *Angelina* feeder 5 Mar may have wintered locally, as it was a month early for a migrant (J & BP). The list of tropical strays on the Coastal Bend was supplemented by a male **Varied Bunting** 25–29 Apr at Packery Channel (AC, MH, m. ob.). Bobolinks were reported more frequently in their coastal

stopovers; one was a surprise in Lubbock 25 Apr (JB); an ad. male was a striking find on Boy Scout Road in *Jeff Davis* 8 May (B & JH, MAd); yet another was at Rio Grande Village 28 May (SA).

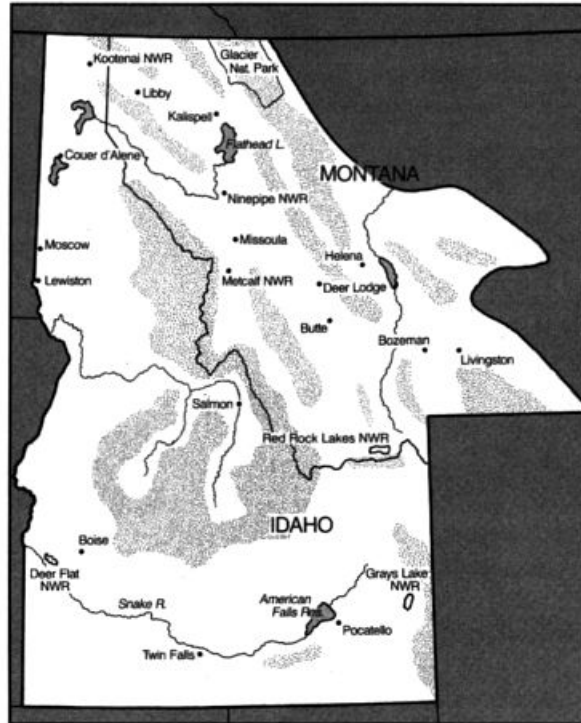
Two male **Shiny Cowbirds** were at Port O'Connor 15–22 Apr (BFR et al.). There was a flush of Hooded Orioles on the U.T.C.: a well-described male was at Quintana 12 Mar for a first *Brazoria* record (RJ, JBo), a female was on w. Galveston I., 12 Apr (JSt), and another male was at Sea Rim 18 Apr (PGi). *Hudspeth* got its first Baltimore Oriole at Indian Hot Springs 4 May (JPa, BZ). There were several U.T.C. reports of Scott's Oriole, prompting a thorough discussion about yellow orioles on TexBirds. The only fully described bird was one at Bryan Beach, *Brazoria* 18 Apr (CB). Purple Finches were relatively common in e. Texas, lingering to at least 24 Apr in *Angelina* (J & BP). The irruptive Cassin's Finches in far w. Texas remained at various sites into Mar and Apr (m. ob.). Five Red Crossbills, including one ad. male, were found 8 May in e. Texas pines in s. *Angelina* where they are exceptionally rare (MWh); a single crossbill was in *Wichita* 29 Mar (*fide* DM), and small groups were detected in Amarillo, Clarendon, Lubbock, and Midland at various times. An Evening Grosbeak was in *Limpia Canyon*, *Jeff Davis* 23 Apr (BL), and 3 were in Amarillo 1 May (RS).

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Idaho—Western Montana

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Spring 2001 weather was variable across the Region but averaged warmer and much drier than usual. In fact, this May was Montana's fifth driest in 106 years. Bird migration was rather uneventful at most locations, but Idaho's Camas National Wildlife Refuge and nearby Market Lake Wildlife Management Area hosted spectacular numbers of migrants that included three first state records and many other exciting rarities in the last two weeks of May.

This column is dedicated to the memory of Boise birder Florence Knoll, who died on 11 March. Florence was an experienced field ornithologist, frequent contributor to this journal, and a good friend to many in the birding community in both Idaho and Montana. She is dearly missed.

Abbreviations: A.F.R. (American Falls Res., by American Falls, Idaho); Camas (Camas N.W.R., Jefferson, ID); Lee Metcalf (Lee Metcalf N.W.R., Ravalli, MT); Market L. (Market Lake W.M.A., Jefferson, ID).

LOONS THROUGH CRANES

Both rare and unseasonal was a breeding-plumaged Pacific Loon in Bonner, ID 29–31 May+ (LH). As in the last few years, American White Pelicans wandered far n., with one at Lee Metcalf 7 Apr (WT), up to 40 in Nez Perce, ID 15 Apr–28 May (m. ob.), and 40 in Kootenai, ID 30 May (SS). Great Egrets also strayed n., with singles reported at Mann L., Nez Perce, ID 28 Apr–16 May (KC, m. ob.), Bozeman, MT 12 May (JP, R&RW), and in Gallatin, MT 14 May (RI). Unlike recent years, a White-faced Ibis near Challis, ID 29 May (*vide* D&EF) was the only extralimital report. Mute Swans are showing up increas-