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Texas



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It has become a tired refrain of this column, but for much of the state the key word was *dry*. Across much of the Trans-Pecos, no measurable rain fell for the entire period. It was not quite as bad for most of the remainder of the state, but below-average precipitation was the rule. This has resulted in reservoirs across the state falling to levels as much as 5 m below normal. This drought was combined with above-average temperatures for most of the winter. For north-central Texas and the Rolling Plains, the disastrous results were many large wildfires that burned thousands of hectares and even three small towns. Large wildfires also spread through the Panhandle near the end of the period, resulting in nearly 400,000 hectares burned. These hot fires removed virtually all avian habitats in their wake. In the long term, however, much of the area that burned in the Panhandle was in grassland habitats, and these fires have the potential to have a beneficial effect on the overall health of these prairies.

The dry conditions obviously have a depressing effect on avian populations. Frugivores were in very low numbers or absent from virtually the entire state. Particularly noted was the absence of American Robins, bluebirds, and Cedar Waxwings. Likewise, there was no real invasion of montane species

or finches. The only species to make an unexpectedly strong showing in the state was Rusty Blackbird. In strong contrast to the 2004–2005 winter season, the Lower Rio Grande Valley was fairly quiet. Still, there were a few rarities to add some spice to the season. There was definitely a horse race for what was the more unexpected bird this season in Texas: the Snow Bunting on South Padre Island or the Rufous-backed Robin near Bastrop!

WATERFOWL THROUGH GREBES

By Feb, when the last lingering Fulvous Whistling-Ducks have retreated and migrants have yet to arrive, the species is quite rare away from extreme South Texas; thus 6 at Bear Creek Park, Harris 1 Feb (SAI), 12 at Hornsby Bend in Austin, Travis 5 Feb (BL), and 2 present 13 Dec–10 Feb at Brazos Bend S.P., Fort Bend (BGo et al.) were all notable. A Brant in Plainview, Hale 14 Jan (ph., †JB) was just the 6th for the South Plains. Two ad. and 3 imm. Trumpeter Swans in Hutchinson 26–31 Dec (BP, ph., †LBa) and another reported near Childress, Childress 19 Jan (DS) were potential indicators of the success of recent reintroduction programs in the n. states. Three Tun-

dra Swans located s. of the normal wintering range in McLennan 31 Dec during the Waco C.B.C. were seen until 7 Feb (FB, JMu); an imm. in Morris 11–13 Feb provided only the 3rd report for ne. Texas and first since 1984 (DB, LBr). The Eurasian Wigeon reported from the fall at El Paso was seen sporadically until 15 Feb (†JSp). Blue-winged Teal were unusually conspicuous in nw. Texas, with singles at Muleshoe N.W.R., Bailey 18 Dec (AHe), at L. Meredith, Hutchinson 29 Dec (RaM), and elsewhere in Hutchinson 31 Dec (BP). A White-winged Scoter in Harrison 22–31 Dec (DB) was notable, as this species is casual in the Pineywoods. Long-tailed Duck sightings included singles at Corpus Christi, Nueces 14 Dec (JMc), Thompson Park, Potter 21 Feb (BMu), and Hagerman N.W.R., Grayson 9 Dec (BGI et al.), with 2 present at the latter location 13–26 Dec (BGI, TR, RR). An exceptionally large group of 200 Hooded Mergansers was at Hagerman N.W.R. 10 Dec (BGI et al.). Common Mergansers were found e. of their normal winter range at Hagerman N.W.R. 10–12 Dec (BGI et al.), L. Texoma, Grayson 31 Dec–2 Jan (GCo, TR et al.), and Lake O' the Pines, Marion 31 Dec (m.ob.).

Two Red-throated Loons at L. Meredith,



This second-winter Slaty-backed Gull made a one-day appearance at a private landfill near Houston, Texas on 22 February 2006. It provided the fourth record for the state and the first record of a bird not in adult (or near-adult) plumage. Photograph by Martin Reid.

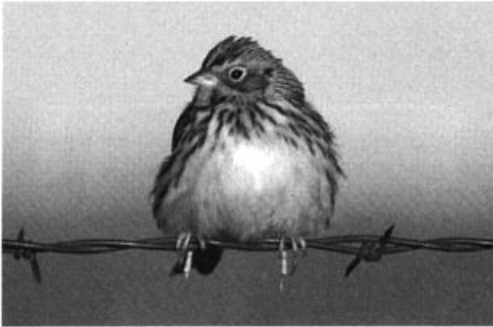
Hutchinson 31 Dec–31 Jan (BF, BiM, LSa et al.) represented just the 3rd record for the Panhandle. Four Red-throated Loon reports in n.-cen. Texas included 3 at L. Texoma, *Grayson* 31 Dec (GCo, TR). Pacific Loons were reported from L. Tawakoni, *Van Zandt*, with single birds 16–18 Dec (RKi) and 12 Feb (MWh et al.) and 2 or 3 birds there 24 Feb (BGi, GCo); one at L. Meredith, *Hutchinson* 21 Jan (BBe); 2 at L. Brownwood, *Brown* 26 Feb (DLi, DDC); and one at L. Buchanan 22 Dec (JKe). Least Grebes wintered at Austin, with an impressive total of 17 on the Austin C.B.C. 17 Dec. Good numbers were also present on the U.T.C., as might be expected, but one at El Paso 31 Dec–21 Jan was just the 2nd for the county (BJ, JKl, ph. BZ, m.ob.). Up to 18 Western Grebes at L. Buchanan, *Llano/Burnet* 19 Feb (TFe) followed a trend in recent winters. More unexpected were 2 at Granger L., *Williamson* 19 Feb (TFe) and one at Canyon L., *Comal* 28 Jan and 25 Feb (DPu et al.).

PELICANS THROUGH RAPTORS

An imm. Brown Pelican at Balmorhea L., *Reeves* 7–11 Feb was a very nice mid-winter find for the Trans-Pecos (GW, ML). Continuing a recent trend, lingering Magnificent Frigatebirds included one seen from the Bolivar Ferry, *Galveston* 9 Dec (WB) and another at the Port Aransas jetties, *Nueces* 2 Jan (MCo). At least one Least Bittern was present throughout the period at the Port Aransas Birding Center, *Nueces* (LJ). Single Great Egrets were at two Lubbock, *Lubbock* locations 1 Dec–28 Feb (AHe, TSo, m.ob.), representing the 2nd and 3rd wintering records for nw. Texas. Two Snowy Egrets at Lubbock lingered through 8 Dec (AHe). Seven Cattle Egrets at L. Arrowhead, *Clay* 4 Dec (DMc, JuM) were unexpected. A Yellow-crowned Night-Heron on the Gibbons Creek C.B.C., *Grimes* 20 Dec (J&KA, ES, LDe) was a count first. The Greater Flamingo discovered during the fall, with bands indicating Yucatan origin, was present throughout the period in *Aransas* and easily seen from Whooping Crane excursion vessels (m.ob.). Amazingly, another Greater Flamingo—but this one an escapee from captivity and of the Old World subspecies *roseus* (sometimes considered a separate species)—was discovered on the Whitmire unit of Aransas N.W.R., *Calhoun* 10–25 Jan (ph. PK). There are several instances of this subspecies escaping in the state.

White-tailed Kite has become something of an enigmatic species in the Trans-Pecos, popping up here and there at all seasons. Singles at Cattail Falls, Big Bend N.P., *Brewster* 3 Feb

(PWe), 16 km s. of Pecos, *Reeves* 7 Feb (GW), sw. of Marfa, *Presidio* 16 Dec (RDa), and along RR 505 near US 90 in w. *Jeff Davis* 3–4 Feb (ph. ML, KBr; 2 at that location on 24 Feb) were of interest. A Common Black-Hawk seen associating with a flock of White-tailed Kites 27 Dec near Mission, *Hidalgo* provided a rare record for the L.R.G.V. (DD). Harris's Hawks were found in numbers n. and e. of their typical winter range. The U.T.C. had at least six



During the past three winters, Baird's Sparrows have been detected in the mixed grasslands on the Marfa Plateau of Trans-Pecos, Texas. Habitat access is limited to roadsides, so that these few observations suggest regular wintering in the area. This bird was one of three present near Marfa on 6 December 2005. Photograph by Mark W. Lockwood.

records, including up to 2 at Freeport, *Brazoria* 26 Dec+ (JAR et al.); the Austin area had at least four sightings, with 2 near Hornsby Bend, *Travis* 8 Jan (A&JB). A Red-shouldered Hawk was near Big Bend's Santa Elena Canyon, *Brewster* 28 Feb (GLE), where the species is considered accidental. Another was at Lubbock 26 Dec (TSo), where the species appears to be becoming more regular. A Broad-winged Hawk at Santa Ana, *Hidalgo* 13 Feb (TB) was likely overwintering. Ad. Swainson's Hawks were found on the U.T.C. at Freeport, *Brazoria* 8 Jan (ph. GLa) and near Iowa Colony, *Brazoria* 12 Feb (CTL). Zone-tailed Hawks were reported from four L.R.G.V. locations, and others were detected over pastureland in *Jim Wells* 14 Feb (BCr) and over agricultural land e. of Bishop, *Nueces* 23 Feb (KT). Unexpected Ferruginous Hawks were in *Wise* 11 Jan (CC) and on Galveston I. 26 Feb (JSt). Out-of-range Prairie Falcons were found near Granger L., *Williamson* 18 Dec (ph. TFe) and at La Sal del Rey, *Hidalgo* 27 Feb (TW).

CRANES THROUGH TERNS

An estimated 15,000 Sandhill Cranes in e. *Brazoria* 15 Dec (JSt) must have been a spectacular sight, but a peak of 150,000 reported from Muleshoe N.W.R., *Bailey* 10 Jan was breathtaking (HB). Over the winter, one ad. and 4 juv. Whooping Cranes died, bringing the estimated peak flock size of 220, up 3 from last year's record 217 (TSt). A 1 Mar

count of 215 at Aransas N.W.R., *Aransas* comprised 189 ads. and 26 young. A wandering Whooping Crane was present s. of the normal wintering range near Raymondville, *Willacy* 2 Dec–25 Feb (SBe, m.ob.). The Texas portion of the U.S.F.W.S. 4th International Census of Snowy, Wilson's, and Piping Plovers conducted over several days in late Jan recorded an encouraging 956 Snowy, 66 Wilson's, and 1080 Piping (RC). Lesser Yellowlegs are less than annual in winter in the Trans-Pecos, so one at Rio Bosque Wetlands Park, *El Paso* 3 Dec–12 Feb was notable (JSp, JPa). Single Spotted Sandpipers at L. Meredith, *Hutchinson* 29 Dec (LSa) and Greenbelt L., *Donley* 1 Jan (IO) provided rare Panhandle winter records. A lingering Baird's Sandpiper at L. Tawakoni, *Hunt* 11 Dec (RB) was exceptionally tardy; a late Pectoral Sandpiper was at L. Tawakoni, *Rains* 1 Dec (RKi), while one at the Waco sewage ponds 26 Feb was the earliest ever for *McLennan* (JY). A Purple Sandpiper on the jetty at Port O'Connor, *Calhoun* 7 Feb (†BFR) was a county first. A Dunlin present 8 Jan–25 Feb at L. Meredith, *Hutchinson* represented the 2nd winter record for the Panhandle (BP). Two Stilt Sandpipers at L. Ray Hubbard, *Dallas* 3 Dec–24 Feb represented a first wintering record for n.-cen. Texas (GCo, BGi). Over 300 Long-billed Dowitchers were at L. Ray Hubbard, *Dallas* 18 Dec–24 Feb (GCo et al.). Higher-than-average American Woodcock numbers were noted nearly statewide, but this likely had more to do with the best habitat being in irrigated residential areas due to near-drought conditions than a higher wintering population. A Wilson's Phalarope lingered at Mitchell L. in San Antonio, *Bexar* well into Jan (SC et al.). Two seen flying along Galveston I., *Galveston* 17 Feb (JSt) and another 2 in *Burnet* 22 Feb (DFe) may have been very early migrants.

A Laughing Gull was observed at L. Lewisville, *Denton* 26 Dec (DH, ph. BGi). A Franklin's Gull in *El Paso* 12 Dec (JPa) was noteworthy. A Little Gull 3 Jan at Boca Chica, *Cameron* (ph. HH) was a first for the L.R.G.V. Additional Little Gulls were reported from L. Tawakoni, *Hunt* 12 Dec (ph., †MWh), L. Wright Patman, *Bowie/Cass* 15–25 Jan (†BGi, MD et al.), and *Dallas* 23–27 Feb (ph., †BGi et al.). A Mew Gull was at L. Worth, *Tarrant* 31 Dec–7 Jan (ph., †LBa). Up to 10 California Gulls were reported statewide, including an ad. in *El Paso* 12 Dec (JPa). The first-winter gull that was thought to be a possible Yellow-legged Gull continued from the fall in *Galveston* until 1 Feb (MR, m.ob.). Up to 4 Thayer's Gulls were reported from scattered U.T.C. locations. A Lesser Black-backed Gull at L.

Meredith, *Hutchinson* 11-21 Jan furnished a first Panhandle record (BP, BBe). Another was present in *Bexar* 26 Jan–19 Feb (MMS et al.), and n.-cen. Texas hosted returning birds at White Rock L. and L. Ray Hubbard, *Dallas* (BGi et al.). Large numbers of Lesser Black-backed were noted on the U.T.C., including 30+ during a 22 Feb census of *Galveston* and *Harris* landfills (MR). A Slaty-backed Gull was discovered the same day at a Houston, *Harris* landfill (ph., †MR), providing a 4th state record. A Glaucous Gull in w. *El Paso* 21 Dec–1 Jan was a local first (JPa, ph. BZ, m.ob.). Another was present in *Bexar* 26 Dec–4 Jan (MCR, MR, ph. WS). A Great Black-backed Gull at L. Meredith, *Hutchinson* 26 Dec–21 Jan (ph., †BP, †BBe et al.) represented a first Panhandle record and only the 2nd inland record for the state. First-winter birds were found at San Luis Pass, *Galveston* 30 Jan+ (ph., †TE, JSt et al.) and at a Houston landfill, *Harris* 22 Feb (ph., †MR). A rare ad. Black-legged Kittiwake was present 21-24 Dec in *Cameron* (ph., †BMc). A first-winter bird was present at *Quintana*, *Brazoria* 30 Dec–16 Jan (†RW, ph. MGr et al.). Two Forster's Terns in *Donley* 14 Jan were noteworthy for the Panhandle (BiM).

PIGEONS THROUGH WOODPECKERS

A pair of Eurasian Collared-Doves at Rio Grande Village, *Brewster* Jan 1+ was new for Big Bend N.P. (m.ob.). Continued expansion of White-winged Doves reached *Grimes* and *Rusk* (BMe) in e. Texas. Amazingly, Gehlbach recorded three instances of Eastern Screech-Owls feasting on White-winged Doves in *McLennan*. A Ruddy Ground-Dove at Estero Llano Grande S.P., *Hidalgo* 28 Dec–22 Feb (†TB, m.ob.) was the first documented in the L.R.G.V. since 1989. Barn Owls occurred in record numbers throughout nw. Texas (*fide* AHe); 8 at a *Throckmorton* cemetery 8 Dec was a large number for one location (BGi et al.). As many as 14 Burrowing Owls wintered in cen. Texas, with multiple sightings 3 Dec–19 Feb. The fall Burrowing Owl at *McFaddin* N.W.R., *Jefferson* remained through the winter (*fide* JWh). It was a good winter for Long-eared Owls on the South Plains (*fide* AHe). Four Lesser Nighthawks in *Bexar* 28 Dec (KBa) were quite late. Single Chuck-will's-widows made unexpected appearances at

Sabine Woods, *Jefferson* 5 & 14 Jan (ScG, SM). A Whip-poor-will flushed at *Freeport*, *Brazoria* 18 Dec (MA) provided one of very few winter records there. Several *Chaetura* swifts on coastal C.B.C.s went unidentified; Vaux's has yet to be documented in the state. One or 2 Buff-bellied Hummingbirds visited feeders in *Austin* through mid-Jan (SR, BiB, MaC). Large numbers of Ruby-throated Hummingbirds apparently wintered on the U.T.C., highlighted by 8 on the *Freeport* C.B.C. (CB). A male from the fall remained in *Washington* through the winter (JRe). For the 2nd winter, a female Black-chinned Hummingbird re-



Varied Thrushes made a good showing in Texas this season, including this female at *Kerrville* from 8 January (here) through 1 March 2006. This bird was a sporadic visitor to a backyard water feature and provided the first record for the Edwards Plateau. Photograph by Max Traweck.

mained in *Nacogdoches*, this year until 9 Feb (RH, DW); while another was present near *Utopia*, *Uvalde* 7-13 Feb (MH). Anna's Hummingbirds staged a major invasion into Texas this winter, with multiple birds reported from cen. Texas and scattered coastal sites. A male remained at *Conroe*, *Montgomery* 10-17 Dec (LSc, ph. KAC). A stunning male Costa's Hummingbird was present in *Rockport*, *Aransas* 19 Feb–4 Mar (ph., †SuB, m.ob.). Calliope Hummingbirds were reported from *Brazoria* 20 Feb (TC) and from *Atascosa* 27 Dec–5 Jan (MGi). Single Broad-tailed Hummingbirds visited three *Travis* locations, with the longest stay from 8 Dec+ (SAs). Another Broad-tailed wintered in *Bellaire*, *Harris* (DVe). An ad. male Allen's Hummingbird in *Alpine*, *Brewster* from the fall remained until 15 Dec (ML). An Allen's recaptured in *Brazoria* (CB, DFr) had been banded three weeks earlier in *Harris*. Another ad. male, first observed in the fall in *Houston*, remained through Jan (S&AW).

Ringed Kingfishers made an unprecedented incursion into the Central Oaks and Prairies: 2 at *Hornsby Bend*, *Travis* all season (m.ob.), one at *Georgetown*, *Williamson* 1 Dec–14 Jan (TFe et al.), and another, or the same bird, 11 km downstream 18 Dec (TFe). Another Ringed Kingfisher provided a county first at *Grimes* 19 Nov–Dec (DKu), while one along the *Lampasas* R. in w. *Bell* 26 Jan–4 Feb (GCr, RPi) was also a county first. The Lewis's Woodpecker at *Guadalupe Mountains* N.P. remained through the period (JWo, m.ob.), as did 4-5 Acorn Woodpeckers in w. *El Paso* (JPo, m.ob.). The first *Williamson's* Sapsucker for *Washington* was a male seen 3 Dec (DVo) near *Chappell Hill*. A Red-naped Sapsucker at *Santa Ana* N.W.R. 18 Dec–22 Jan provided a rare L.R.G.V. record (DJ, BMc, m.ob.); another was found on the *Mad I. Marsh* C.B.C., *Matagorda* 14 Dec (BO). Unusual were multiple reports of Hairy Woodpeckers from *Harris*, *Galveston*, and *Orange* on the U.T.C.

FLYCATCHERS THROUGH SWALLOWS

It was a good winter for *Empidonax* in the Trans-Pecos, with four species reported, including a *Hammond's* (KBr) and a *Dusky* (ML) in *Jeff Davis* 17 Dec, a *Dusky* in *Guadalupe Mountains* N.P. 18 Dec (ScL), and a *Pacific-slope/Cordilleran* Flycatcher in *Hudspeth* 17 Dec (MSc, JZ). A *Hammond's* was seen in *Uvalde* 25 Dec–late Jan (ph. MH). A *Gray* Flycatcher at *Muleshoe* N.W.R., *Bailey* 4 Feb (AHe, AvH) was unexpected, as was a *Pacific-slope/Cordilleran* Flycatcher on the *Medina* R., *Bexar* 20–22 Feb (ph. RE, BD). Extralimital Black Phoebes were reported from *Randall* 9 Dec (RaM), *Harris* through 14+ Jan (SGa et al.), *Travis* 14 Jan–18 Feb (A&JB), and *Burnet* 9 Dec–11 Feb (BS). This was a banner season for wintering Say's Phoebes in cen. and n.-cen. Texas, with scattered reports too numerous to list. Amazingly, on the *Granger* C.B.C., the county roads of *Williamson* produced more Say's than Easterns! One at *Buffalo Lake* N.W.R., *Randall* 2-24 Dec (KS, JC) and another in *Fort Bend* 2 Jan (CD) were still more unexpected. Noteworthy *Vermilion* Flycatchers were reported from *El Paso* through the period (JSp), *Baylor* 11 Dec (BGi et al.), and *Brazos* 7 Jan (DVo, AF). An imm. *Vermilion* present at *Austin's* *Hornsby Bend*, *Travis* since the fall remained through 25 Feb (m.ob.). Two *lawrencei* *Dusky-capped* Flycatchers were present near *Los Indios*, *Cameron* 18 Dec+ (ph., †TFu, m.ob.). An *Ash-throated* Flycatcher wintered again at *Hornsby Bend*, *Travis* (EC). Unexpected in winter were calling *Great Crested* Flycatchers in *Brazoria* 18 & 31 Dec (RMa, RW). Three *Brown-crested* Flycatchers were

SA The hummingbird feeding/banding station at Ortego's residence near *Victoria*, *Victoria*, offers a cross-section glimpse of potential winter hummingbird populations. During the reporting period (Dec–Feb), Ortego and his helpers reported one *Broad-billed* Hummingbird (on 26 Feb), 41 *Buff-bellied* Hummingbirds (with one 9-year-old recapture), 37 *Rufous*, 23 *Black-chinned*, 8 *Allen's* (two returns from previous year), 5 *Broad-tailed*, one *Ruby-throated*, 5 *Anna's*, and 3 *Calliope*. Drought conditions could have positively influenced these numbers, which are nonetheless staggering: 124 hummingbirds of nine species in one yard in one season.

reported 16 Dec in *Brazoria/Matagorda* and another 14 Jan in *Fort Bend* (ph. GLa et al.). A Great Kiskadee in *Wichita* 13 Dec–20 Feb was regionally significant (ph. GM); up to 5 were present in *Harris* (m.ob.). A well-documented Cassin's Kingbird in *Lubbock* 26 Dec was a first local winter record (TSo). A Western Kingbird in Midland 24 Feb was very early (MaC). Lingering Scissor-tailed Flycatchers were reported from *Williamson* 11 Dec (TFe), *Dallas* 21 Dec (SBa), and *Bexar* 7 Jan (HR).

A White-eyed Vireo was unexpected at Rio Grande Village, *Brewster* 10 Dec (DLe), and one in *Dallas* 3 Dec (BGi et al.) and mid-Feb (RR) were also rare. Other unusual vireos included a Cassin's in *Bexar* 7 Jan (HR), a Hutton's in El Paso 2 Jan (BZ), and a Warbling 18 Dec in *Brazoria* (NB, SM). A vagrant Blue Jay appeared at Bentsen S.P., *Hidalgo* 11 Dec (DD). A lone *Cyanocorax* jay, either Yucatan Jay or San Blas Jay, was found with Green Jays at San Ygnacio, *Zapata* 13 Feb+ (JRu, m.ob.). Observers were divided on the identity of the bird, which was certainly an escapee in any case. Two Common Ravens near Ft. Hancock, *Hudspeth* 17 Dec were locally unusual (JPa).

An astonishing 104 Tree Swallows were counted at McNary Res., *Hudspeth* 17 Dec (BZ). Northern Rough-winged Swallows n. of the normal winter range included 2 in *Nacogdoches*, *Nacogdoches* 14 Dec (DW), 4 in *Burleson* 17 Dec (CLi), and one at Village Creek Drying Beds, *Tarrant* 17 Jan (DPo). Cave Swallows continue to march northward each winter. This season, sightings of particular interest included 331 on the Gibbons Creek C.B.C., *Grimes* 20 Dec (DPH et al.) and up to 50 at El Paso 30 Jan (JSp). Tardy Barn Swallows included one in *Bell* 17 Dec (*vide* RKo) and 4 at Balmorhea L., *Reeves* 18 Dec (ML, ph. KB), while an early bird was in San Antonio 8 Feb (HR).

NUTHATCHES THROUGH WARBLERS

White-breasted Nuthatch made a very nice showing in nw. Texas, with one at Palo Duro Canyon S.P., *Randall* 10 Dec–5 Feb (RaM, LSa), 3 in *Amarillo*, *Potter* 17 Dec (PT, m.ob.), one at L. Meredith, *Hutchinson* 16 Feb (BP), and one at Yoakum County Park, *Yoakum* 18 Feb (AHe). A Brown-headed Nuthatch was well out of range at Freeport, *Brazoria* 18 Dec (DMe). A surprising concentration of 20+ Brown Creepers was noted at Sandy Creek Park, *Jasper* 2 Jan (KEI). Rock Wrens lingering from the fall included one at L. Tawakoni, *Rains* (m.ob.) through the season and one at Koehne Park, *McLennan* until 23 Jan (EH); another was at Anzalduas County Park, *Hidalgo* 29 Dec+ (MGU, KP, SP). An early Blue-gray Gnatcatcher was near Midland, *Midland*

4 Feb (m.ob.). Two Western Bluebirds at Palo Duro Canyon S.P., *Randall* 22 Dec (KS) were a nice find. A Wood Thrush was present the entire season at Salineño, *Starr* (P&GD, ph. KEc, m.ob.). A Clay-colored Robin in Corpus Christi, *Nueces* 13 Feb+ (MCo, m.ob.) provided the 6th county record of the species. One of the birds of the season was the ad. **Rufous-backed Robin** at Utey, *Bastrop* 7 Jan+ (ph., †BFR, m.ob.). Following the strong start in the fall, **Varied Thrushes** made a good showing, with a male in *Andrews* 17 Dec (†KH), a female at Kerrville, *Kerr* 8 Jan–1 Mar (ph., †MT), and up to 2 males in Big Bend's Boot Canyon 17 Jan–17 Feb (†DLe; ph., †EC et al.). Three Sage Thrashers in e. *Kenedy* 21–22 Feb (BFR, GP) were a rare find for the e. South Texas Brush Country. A Crissal Thrasher at Midland, *Midland* 31 Dec–24 Feb (DKe; ph., †MaC) furnished a first county record. Always a good winter find in n.-cen. Texas, 2 Sprague's Pipits were at Lewisville L., *Denton* 3 Dec (LDu), and another was at L. Tawakoni *Rains* 20 Dec (DH).

Single Orange-crowned Warblers made rare winter appearances in the Panhandle at *Amarillo* 21 Dec–10 Jan (KS) and L. Meredith, both *Potter* 29 Dec (RaM). Unexpected were single Nashville Warblers at Caddo L., *Marion* 10–28 Dec (JI) and L. Wichita Park, *Wichita* 5 Feb (SoL). A Northern Parula was at High Island, *Galveston* 6 Jan (JSt); a Tropical Parula was in San Antonio, *Bexar* 15 Dec+ (MCR, m.ob.). A Black-throated Gray Warbler lingered in El Paso until 28 Dec (BZ), a first Dec record for the El Paso area; another was in San Antonio 29 Jan (T&CF). A Pine Warbler in *Amarillo*, *Potter* 1 Dec–1 Feb (KS) represented only the 2nd winter record for the Panhandle; one in Midland 28 Dec–31 Jan (RMS, MSt) was nearly as rare. Single Prairie Warblers at Brazos Bend, *Fort Bend* 17 Dec (AW) and at Sea Rim S.P., *Jefferson* 2 Jan were nice finds; and one wintered at Sabine Woods, *Jefferson* (*vide* JWh). A Palm Warbler, perhaps a lingering migrant, was in *Williamson* 10 Dec (SH, BS). Single Black-and-white Warblers were reported from Farmers Branch, *Dallas* 7 Dec (RDU) and White Rock L., *Dallas* 17 Dec (JH); a female in Salado, *Bell* 17 Dec (RPi) provided a first winter county record. A well-described Ovenbird along the Window Trail, Big Bend N.P., *Brewster* 30 Dec (J&DC) marked the first winter record for the park; more expected was one in Dickinson, *Galveston* 18–19 Feb (BH). Winter Northern Waterthrushes included singles at Brazos Bend S.P., *Fort Bend* 18 Dec (JSt), Lake Jackson, *Brazoria* 11 Jan (JAr), and San Bernard N.W.R., *Brazoria* 12 Feb (RW, SGr). Providing yet another rare documented winter record

for the state was a Louisiana Waterthrush banded at Guadalupe Delta, *Calhoun* 14 Dec (GS); another was reported from Brazos Bend S.P., *Fort Bend* 10 Feb (BGo et al.). Providing a rare winter record for the U.T.C., a MacGillivray's Warbler was discovered on the Armand Bayou C.B.C., *Harris* 17 Dec (NB et al.). Continuing from the fall, one or possibly 2 **Gray-crowned Yellowthroats** were at the Sabal Palm Sanctuary, *Cameron* throughout the period (JiP, †BMc, m.ob.). A male Hooded Warbler at Lake Jackson, *Brazoria* 5 Feb (DFr) may have wintered locally. Single Wilson's Warblers made unexpected appearances in *San Augustine* 5 Feb (LoD) and *Angelina* 13 Feb (LoD, JWi). A Yellow-breasted Chat in *Aransas* 29 Dec (BFR, PH) provided an unusual winter record for the Coastal Bend.

TANAGERS THROUGH FINCHES

An exceptional find for n.-cen. Texas was a Summer Tanager in *Dallas* 18 Dec (RT et al.), while another returned for its 3rd consecutive winter to Bellaire, *Harris* (DVe et al.). Spotted Towhees were virtually unrecorded from much of the Trans-Pecos for the entire period, despite much searching. Lark Sparrows are scarce and local in winter, so a flock of 21 near L. Tawakoni, *Rains* was notable 12 Dec (MWh). A Lark Bunting was on the Katy Prairie, *Harris* 18–26 Feb (HL, SGr, HS). Grasshopper Sparrows n. of the normal wintering range include one near Morton, *Cochran* 18 Dec (AHe), one at L. Tawakoni, *Rains* 22 Dec (DH), and 2 near Mound L., *Terry* 18 Feb (AHe). Following the fall reports, 3–4 Baird's Sparrows were sw. of Marfa, *Presidio* 6–17 Dec (ph., †ML, †RDa); another was in w. *Jeff Davis* 23 Dec (†ML). Two Swamp Sparrows were at L. Rita Blanca, *Hartley* 21 Jan (BBE); the species is rare at this season in the Panhandle. A **Golden-crowned Sparrow** near Ft. Hancock, *Hudspeth* 17 Dec (MSc, †JZ, ph.) provided a 2nd county record. McCown's Longspurs graced the shores of L. Tawakoni, *Rains* throughout the period (m.ob.), with a high count of 25 on 19 Feb (GCo, DH), also here were up to 1321 Lapland Longspurs, recorded on the Tawakoni C.B.C. 1 Jan (RKi et al.). Good concentrations of Smith's Longspurs included 400–500 in *Lamar* in mid-Dec (SLo); 30 in *Harrison* 19 Dec (ER) were likewise noteworthy. One located by call and seen in flight in e. *Brazoria* 22 Dec (JSt) made just the 2nd record for the U T C. Flocks of 6 to 50+ Chestnut-collared Longspurs in *Kenedy* 2 Dec (BFR) were well s of the normal range of this species in Texas. Vying for the most extraordinary record of the season was a **Snow Bunting** at South Padre I., *Cameron* 24 Dec–6 Jan (ph., †P&RA, m ob.),

representing the 6th state record and by far the farthest south.

A Pyrrhuloxia near Anderson 20 Dec (KR, JeM, JD) was a first for *Grimes*, while another near Schmidt, Waller 12 Feb (S&AW) was one of very few records in recent years for the U.T.C. A male and 2 female Varied Buntings along Terlingua Cr., Brewster 31 Jan (EC) provided more evidence that this species occasionally winters in the Big Bend region. Very rare in winter, particularly away from the coast, a Painted Bunting was in Archer 24 Jan (ScL). A Yellow-headed Blackbird in Archer 16 Jan (ScL, DPa) provided a nice winter n-cen. Texas record. Rusty Blackbird made a very good showing in the state, with high counts in the e. half of the state that included 70 at Tawakoni S.P., Van Zandt 12 Dec (RB), 247 at Longview, Rusk 31 Dec (PB, BMe), and 110 at L. Tawakoni, Rains/Van Zandt 1 Jan (RKi). Farther w., this species made news, with 4 at El Paso 11 Dec (tJSp) and one at Muleshoe N.W.R., Bailey 18 Dec (AHe). A report of 199 Brewer's Blackbirds in Burlason 17 Dec (CLi, EO) was unusual, considering the rarity of the species in the Central Brazos Valley. A female Bullock's Oriole appeared for the 3rd consecutive year in Midland 14 Dec+ (D&JM). An Audubon's Oriole was seen near Utopia, Uvalde 20 Feb-1 Mar (ph. MH), providing a rare record for the Edwards Plateau. Lesser Goldfinches are expanding their range to the n. and e. in Texas, so one at Henrietta, Clay 19 Dec-16 Jan (GJ) was less of a surprise than it would have been a decade ago.

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