

Winter 2007-2008: Central Oaks & Prairies and East Texas Pineywoods

By Bert Frenz

This report is reduced from 1128 sightings of 218 species from 1 December 2007 to 29 February 2008.

WEATHER REPORTS:

none

MOST UNUSUAL SIGHTINGS:

The Bell County CBC recorded its first winter record for **Black-bellied Whistling-Ducks**, a count of 14, and 7 were also reported on the Crawford CBC in *McLennan*.

Only the second record for Central Texas, the **Black Scoter** found 17 Nov at Lake Pflugerville in *Travis* remained until 30 Dec (Sheridan Coffey, Martin Reid).

A **Horned Grebe** at Lake Somerville, seen from the *Washington* side on 17 Dec (Jan Allen) is rare, while 60 on Lake Sam Rayburn, *Angelina/Nacogdoches*, on 27 Feb (David Wolf) is a very high count.

The many winter sightings of herons and ibises were atypical, including a **Snowy Egret** as late as 15 Dec (David Brotherton, Luanne Brotherton) in *Harrison* and as early as 3 on 9 Feb (Peter Barnes, Tyler Audubon field trip) at Richland Creek WMA in *Navarro*, **Little Blue Heron** on 9 Feb (Tyler Audubon field trip) at Richland Creek WMA, **Tricolored Herons** 9 and 24 Feb at Richland Creek WMA, 10-12 **Cattle Egrets** still on 17 Dec (Jan Allen) in *Washington*, **Green Heron** 7 Jan (Jerry Kassaw) in *Smith*, **Black-crowned Night-Heron** 29 Dec (fide Peter Barnes) in *Rains*, **White Ibis** 9 Feb and **White-faced Ibis** 24 Feb (Tyler Audubon field trip) at Richland Creek WMA.

A **Sora** on the Tyler CBC in *Smith* is unexpected for 5 Jan (D. D. Currie, Dell Little).

Almost never seen in winter in East Texas, a **Common Moorhen** was observed in *Rusk* on 10 Feb (Peggy Harding, Happy King, Barbara Cavin).

Rare in winter, a **Semipalmated Plover** was at Lake Tyler, *Smith*, on 25 Dec (Jessica Coleman).

At Lake Bob Sandlin, south of Mt. Pleasant, a second year basic **California Gull** was photographed on 11 Dec (ph. Matt White); probably a first record for *Titus* as

California Gull is fairly rare in the Pineywoods, the subspecies was the unexpectedly darker-backed *californicus* rather than the expected *albertaensis*.

An adult basic **Lesser Black-backed Gull** 2-6 Jan (ph. Tim Fennell) at Meadow Lake in Round Rock is a first record for *Williamson* and only the fifth record for the central Oaks & Prairies region.

A **Buff-bellied Hummingbird** 22 Nov – 3 Dec (Shirley Wilkerson) is the first to tarry into winter in *Brazos*.

Near Bastrop-Buescher State Park in *Bastrop* on 2 Jan (Brush Freeman) was an adult male **Red-naped Sapsucker**.

An influx of **Say's Phoebes** includes multiple sightings throughout the season in *Bell*, *Coryell*, *Karnes*, *McLennan*, *Travis* and *Williamson*.

Very rare in the Pineywoods, a male **Vermilion Flycatcher** was identified 1 Dec (Peggy Harding, Barbara Cavin, Happy King) in *Marion*. Also surprising is one in Killeen on 15 Feb (Tom Whiteway), a rare winter record for *Bell*.

A new record for *Williamson*, a **Great Kiskadee** was at Willis Creek Park on 3 Jan (Tim Fennell) and another was at the Waco Wetlands on 23-24 Feb (John Muldrow, Frank Bumgardner, et al.), a first winter record for *McLennan*.

Scissor-tailed Flycatchers were both late to depart and early to arrive, including 28 on the College Station CBC 15 Dec, 3 in *Williamson* on 17 Dec and 1 on 1 Jan (Tim Fennell), 1-2 on 9-10 Feb in College Station (Betty Vermeire) and 1 at Hornsby Bend on 23 Feb (Tim Fennell).

A singing **White-eyed Vireo** at Lake Waco on 20 Dec (Eric Haskell) is the latest ever for *McLennan*, while one 17 Feb (Mike Dillon) at Wright Patman Lake is unusually early for *Bowie*.

Eight **Cliff Swallows** on 24 Feb (D. D. Currie, Dell Little) at Richland Creek WMA, *Navarro*, were unusually early.

Cave Swallows were reported on Austin and Bell County CBC's and 15+ were still in *Bell* on 23 Dec (Randy Pinkston). One was at Richland Creek WMA, *Freestone*, on 24 Feb (D. D. Currie, Dell Little).

Red-breasted Nuthatches invaded East Texas already in late September and were widespread by CBC time when 27 (the second highest total in 38 years) were counted on the Nacogdoches CBC (fide David Wolf). Much farther west, 4 were counted on the Crawford CBC in *McLennan*.

A **Rock Wren** on the Bell County CBC 15 Dec was the first since 1983.

Migrants not normally expected in winter in Central and East Texas include:
Gray Catbird in *Nacogdoches* on 16 Dec (fide David Wolf),
Gray Catbird in *Guadalupe* on 16 Dec (Susan Schaezler),
Gray Catbird in *Marion* on 2 Feb (banded by James Ingold),
Nashville Warbler in *Bastrop* on 7 Jan (Austin RBA),
Chestnut-sided Warbler in *Bastrop* on 3 Dec (Brush Freeman),
Palm Warbler in *Bastrop* on 29 Dec (Austin RBA),
Black-and-white Warbler in *Nacogdoches* on 16 Dec (fide David Wolf)
Black-and-white Warbler in *Nacogdoches* on 1 Jan (David Wolf, Robert Truss),
Common Yellowthroat in *Smith* on 5 Jan (D.D. Currie, Dell Little),
Common Yellowthroat in *Henderson* on 26 Jan (Tyler Audubon field trip),
Wilson's Warbler in *Washington* several months leading to 23 Dec (Darrell Vollert),
Summer Tanager in *Nacogdoches* 28 Dec – 19 Jan (Mimi Hoppe Wolf, David Wolf, Robert Truss),
Summer Tanager in *Smith* 5 Feb (Elizabeth Farley),
Clay-colored Sparrow (10) in *McLennan* on 15 Dec (Crawford CBC),

While Brush Freeman and others noted a dearth of **White-throated Sparrows** in December in *Bastrop* and nearby counties, 114 were counted on the College Station CBC in *Brazos* (fide Betty Vermeire).

A new species for the Tenaha CBC and presumably *Shelby* is a **Western Meadowlark** identified 1 Jan (David Weaver).

Rusty Blackbirds were scarce in East Texas, with the only reports being 17 in *Smith* on 29 Dec (Tyler Audubon field trip), 2 there on 5 Jan (Peter Barnes, JB Hanlon, Jamie Cantrell) and 2 in *Henderson* on 26 Jan (Tyler Audubon field trip). Yet 30 **Rusty Blackbirds** in a flock photographed at the Waco Wetlands on 5 Jan (Eric Haskell) is a first record for Lake Waco in *McLennan*.

The first reported in *Smith* in several years were 6 **Brewer's Blackbirds** on 12 Jan (Jim Day).

David Wolf reported for the *Nacogdoches-Angelina-San Augustine* area of East Texas, "**Purple Finch** was also widespread for the first time in three years. They were first noted mid- to late November and were fairly widespread "out in the wild". It was not until mid to late February that many people reported them at feeders." Elsewhere in East Texas, they were reported in *Cherokee, Henderson, Hunt, Marion, Morris* and *Smith*. In the Central Brazos Valley, there were reports in *Bastrop, Brazos, Gonzales, McLennan, Navarro* and *Washington*.

In his winter report, David Wolf writes, "The greatest rarity of the winter was **Red Crossbill**. A single bird was found in Cushing (*Nacogdoches*) on 28 Dec by Dennis Scheef (at his feeders); that afternoon David & Mimi Wolf heard and saw

a flock of 6 fly overhead, but it was not until Jan 2, 2008 that one re-appeared at the feeders and was photographed by David Wolf. Not seen again after this, nor did we ever get any more reports."

Very few **Pine Siskins** were found in East Texas this winter, with only about 6 reports of 1-5 birds each.

A male **American Goldfinch** photographed 8 Jan (Mike Hernandez) at Waco in *McLennan* was unusual in that it was in full breeding plumage.

CONTRIBUTORS:

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