

Summer 2009: Central Oaks & Prairies and East Texas Pineywoods

By Bert Frenz

This report is reduced from 607 sightings of 145 species from 1 June to 31 July 2009.

WEATHER REPORTS:

Darrell Vollert, 11 July, Brazos County, "Saturday morning I birded a privately owned property in the Peach Creek community in southern Brazos County. ... A duck pond on the property has lost half of its water from the drought. The exposed shoreline should be attractive to shorebirds passing through. ... The pond was overflowing in late April after heavy rains created the biggest flood on the Navasota River in 30 years. What a change of events in a few months!"

MOST UNUSUAL SIGHTINGS:

An **American White Pelican** 27 Jun (Laura Sare, Betty Vermeire) in *Burleson* contributed to the few summer records for Lake Somerville.

Only the second summer record for *Freestone*, a **Least Bittern** was found at Richland Creek WMA on 21 Jun (Dale Ohl).

Nesting **Mississippi Kites** were reported for the first time in *Bell* along Salado Creek. Although a group of sightings 8-21 Jul 2002 suggested possible breeding, it wasn't until 27 Jun (Randy Pinkston, William Pinkston) of this year that a nest attended by adults was found. Two juveniles were observed in the nest's vicinity 19 Jul.

An adult **Mississippi Kite** was observed 29 Jun (Randy Pinkston) in Centerville, a first record for *Leon* and suggesting breeding. Mississippi Kites fledged at Stephen F. Austin SHP in *Austin* by 15 Jul (Frank Farese).

First nesting **Bald Eagles** for Lake Waco in *McLennan* successfully raised an eaglet, on the nest the first two weeks of Jun (Eric Haskell, et al.), stretching wings on 14 Jun, branching on 19 Jun, free flying on 21 Jun but returning later, and at another lake location on 28 Jun.

Only the second occurrence in summer for the central Oaks and Prairies region, a **Sandhill Crane** inexplicitly was observed flying over marshes at Richland

Creek WMA in *Freestone* on 16 Jul (Tim Fennell). The first record was 8 Jul 2004 in *Fayette*.

On 30 Jul (Laura Sare, Bruce Neville) a **Willet** at the turf farms on the Brazos River bottoms of *Burleson* is only the third July record for the Central Brazos Valley and the first identified as the Eastern subspecies.

A **Laughing Gull** at Welch Park in *Burleson* 27 Jun (Laura Sare, Betty Vermeire) is the first summer record for Lake Somerville and one of a few summer records for the Central Brazos Valley.

No storm-related or other known reason accounts for the occurrence of a **Sooty Tern** found alive at Research Park, Texas A&M University, College Station on 6 Jul (fide Keith Arnold). It was taken to the A&M Veterinary Clinic where it later died and is now deposited in the Texas Cooperative Wildlife Collection. A first record for *Brazos* and adjacent counties, the few inland East and Central Texas records have been storm-related except for a 28 Oct 1991 bird in *McLennan*.

A few prior records for Richland Creek WMA *Freestone/Navarro* and now linked to the discovery of 8 **Least Terns** including 3 on nests at the *Navarro* part of the refuge 13 Jun (D. D. Currie, Dell Little).

Although rare for *McLennan*, a **Least Tern** 14 Jun (Eric Haskell) at Airport Beach Park is now the fifth time the species has been reported at Lake Waco in the past decade.

Rarely reported in June, a **Black Tern** 14 Jun (Eric Haskell) at Lake Waco in *McLennan* has few precedents: twice in *Travis*, once in *Bell* and once in *Williamson*.

A **Ladder-backed Woodpecker** in Zionsville 24 Jun (Darrell Vollert) is the first *Washington* record in 25 years.

With no recent summer records for *McLennan*, the **Brown Thrasher** found 18 Jun (ph. Billie Boesche) and two on 21 Jul in a Waco yard are rare.

A **Mourning Warbler** 4 Jun (John Hale) is the first summer record for *Brazos* and the second latest for the Central Oaks and Prairies region.

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