

Summer 2014: Central Oaks & Prairies and East Texas Pineywoods

By Bert Frenz

This report is reduced from 168 sightings of 106 species from 1 June to 31 July 2014.

WEATHER REPORTS:

David Wolf, central Pineywoods, summer season, "This Summer was about as good as it gets in our area. June and July were relatively cool, with widespread ample rain. The land was lush and green, with lots of flowers and insects. It seems like it has been a long time since we've had a summer like this, though some of us remember these "good years" as more frequent in the now-distant past. Especially unusual was the cool spell from the last days of July well into the first week of August (lows in the upper 50s-60s, highs in the 80s), the media labeling this strong and rare summer cool front "The Polar Plunge". As we moved into August we got our comeuppance and temperature rose into the more normal mid-90s and higher, but as of this writing we still haven't hit the 100 deg. mark. Water levels in area lakes remained high from the rains and there was no shorebird habitat or even much in the way of shallows for the "long-legged waders".

David Wolf, Lake Sam Rayburn, 29 July, "With water levels so high on Lake Rayburn the long-legged waders were scattered and in low numbers."

MOST UNUSUAL SIGHTINGS:

Gadwall, etc. – Lingering ducks at Richland Creek W.M.A., *Freestone*, include a Gadwall 20 Jun (D. D. Currie, Dell Little, Brandon Thurston), Northern Shoveler and Lesser Scaup 21 Jun (Laurie Sheppard), Northern Pintail 22 Jun (m.ob.), Green-winged Teal 20 Jun (D. D. Currie, Dell Little, Brandon Thurston).

Ring-necked Duck – An out-of-season female Ring-necked Duck was at Kurth Lake, *Angelina* 10 Jun (Louis Debetaz).

Lesser Scaup – Lake Bob Sandlin in *Titus* still had a lingering Lesser Scaup 13 Jun (David Brotherton, Luanne Brotherton).

Ruddy Duck – A late Ruddy Duck was at Texas Eastman at Longview, *Harrison* 5 Jun (David Brotherton, Mark Edmund).

Northern Bobwhite – Northern Bobwhites were reported in *Panola* 8 Jun and *Harrison* the same day (Linda Gail Price) and in *Smith* 28 Jun (Jane Ramberg, Eileen Vennum).

Wild Turkey – Two Wild Turkeys 21 Jul (John Hale) on TX 105 in *Washington* is a good find.

Least Grebe – One of the nesting Least Grebes reported earlier at a private lake in *Washington* was seen again 6 Jul (Darrell Vollert).

Pied-billed Grebe – Pied-billed Grebes were found at Richland Creek W.M.A., *Freestone/Navarro*, throughout the period with a peak of 16 including juveniles 25 Jun (Robert Qually, m.ob.). Six were at CR3510 in *Camp* 28 Jun (David Brotherton, Luanne Brotherton). Two were at a private lake in *Washington* 6 Jul (Darrell Vollert) and others summered (Louis Debetaz) on Kurth Lake, *Angelina*, and few more were seen off the TX 147 causeway on Lake Rayburn, *San Augustine* (David Wolf).

Wood Stork – An unusually large number of Wood Storks gathered at Richland Creek W.M.A., peaking at 328 on 20 Jun (D. D. Currie, Dell Little, Brandon Thurston) in *Freestone*.

White Ibis – Large numbers of White Ibis congregated in Richland Creek W.M.A. throughout the period, with a peak of 350 on 5 Jul (Byron Stone) in *Freestone* and 300-500 the same day (Byron Stone, Dell Little) in *Navarro*.

Osprey – Ospreys again successfully nested at various Lake Sam Rayburn sites and a newly-discovered nest was found on new Lake Naconiche, *Nacogdoches* 13 Jun+ (Craig Rudolph), but no evidence of breeding success.

Swallow-tailed Kite – David Brotherton's June report for north-east Texas states, "Probably the bird of the month, a Swallow-tailed Kite was reported 'swooping down the river' upstream of Caddo Lake" in *Marion* 19 Jun (Mike Weber).

Cooper's Hawk – Reports of summering Cooper's Hawks, presumed nesting, in eastern Texas are promising. Six different counties in north-east Texas reported sightings in June (fide David Brotherton). In *Brazos*, a Cooper's Hawk was observed 4 times (John Hale, Bryan Calk) this summer in the Wellborn area at a site well separated from a nesting site reported last season. In the central Pineywoods area, a pair with 2 juveniles was seen 27 Jul (Louis Debetaz) on Azalea Trail in Lufkin, *Angelina*.

King Rail – A King Rail was reported 14 Jun (Robert Stone) at Richland Chambers Reservoir, *Navarro*, an area where there is only one other historical report. [NEEDS CONFIRMATION].

Purple Gallinule – Following the report of a Purple Gallinule in spring, reports of nesting continued throughout the summer at Richland Creek W.M.A., *Navarro*, where it is rare. The peak count was 7, including juveniles, 17 Jul (Steve Glover, Darlene Moore). Purple Gallinules again nested successfully at Kurth Lake, *Angelina* (Louis Debetaz).

Common Gallinule – Summer reports of Common Gallinules in East Texas have been scarce in the past decade. Thus this season's sightings are significant. At Richland Creek W.M.A. gallinules were seen throughout the summer with a peak of 15 in *Navarro* 9 Jun (Caleb Frome) and of 13 in *Freestone* 5 Jul (Kim Pierce). Two adults were at a private lake in *Washington* 6 Jul (Darrell Vollert). Two pairs produced juveniles at Kurth Lake, *Angelina* (Louis Debetaz).

Black-necked Stilt – A count of 15 Black-necked Stilts 20 Jun (D. D. Currie, Dell Little, Brandon Thurston) at Richland Creek W.M.A., *Navarro* is high for an infrequent species in summer months in East Texas. Numbers increased toward the end of the season with a high of 37 on the *Freestone* side 25 Jul (Robert Qually).

Spotted Sandpiper – At Kurth Lake, *Angelina*, 4 Spotted Sandpipers 1 Jun (Louis Debetaz) was a late departure for the Pineywoods area, while the arrival of one 11 Jul is on schedule for fall migration.

Lesser Yellowlegs – A Lesser Yellowlegs occurring at the odd dates of 20-22 Jun (m.ob.) at Richland Creek W.M.A. in *Freestone* is presumably a very early fall migrant. Another 15 Jul (Mimi Hoppe Wolf) at Central Heights, *Nacogdoches*, is consistent with typical early arrivals.

Willow Flycatcher – Rarely identified in summer in the Central Brazos Valley, a Willow Flycatcher was calling 7 Jul (Keith Arnold) in College Station, *Brazos*.

Eastern Phoebe – A first for the Burton BBS route, 3 Eastern Phoebes were counted 1 Jun (Darrell Vollert) in *Washington* where this species is scarce in summer.

Western Kingbirds – The easternmost Western Kingbird was noted in Mt. Pleasant, *Titus* 1-13 Jun (Dan & Varick Cowell, ph. David Brotherton, Luanne Brotherton).

Warbling Vireo – Unexpected Warbling Vireos reported in north-east Texas were singles at Longview, *Gregg* 1 Jun (Dan Cowell, Varick Cowell) and in *Harrison* 16 Jun (Linda Gail Price).

Purple Martin – Purple Martins have gathered in *Brazos* in past years, but not since 2000 have they been in the numbers found this summer in College Station. Flocks started gathering at dusk 19 Jun (Mark McDermott) at CVS on Texas Ave. and Southwest Parkway and grew in number until they covered a block by 27 Jul (Rick Laughlin, Sarah Laughlin) when 10 000 were estimated.

Prairie Warbler – David Wolf writes, “A Prairie Warbler on the TX 147 causeway 29 Jul was either a migrant or had wandered some distance, as there is no breeding habitat close to here.” His sighting is in *San Augustine*.

Great-tailed Grackle – Breeding of Great-tailed Grackles is now confirmed at three *Nacogdoches* sites and likely at another (fide David Wolf).

Baltimore Oriole – Single Baltimore Orioles were tabulated on the BBS route in *Panola* 8 Jun (Linda Gail Price) and in *Lamar* at Lake Crook 20 Jun (Barb Bassett).

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