

## Summer 2015: Central Oaks & Prairies and East Texas Pineywoods

By Bert Frenz

This report is reduced from over 53,000 eBird sightings and personal correspondence from 1 June to 31 July 2015.

### **WEATHER REPORTS:**

David Brotherton, NETFO report for north-east Texas, summer 2015, "What a change in weather! We went from rain every day to no rain in sight and 100 degree days in just a blink. Lakes are full, shore birding should be a challenge this fall."

### **MOST UNUSUAL SIGHTINGS:**

Ross's Goose – A Ross's Goose continues to reside at Lake Bob Sandlin, *Titus* at least since 2009 and was seen yet again 25 Jul (David & Luanne Brotherton).

Gadwall – Out-of-season Gadwall were reported at La Grange, *Fayette* 17 Jun (Roger Shaw), Texas Eastman at Longview, *Harrison* 18-30 Jun (Mark Edmund, David Brotherton), and Fort Parker State Park, *Limestone* 19 Jun (Jack Kelly).

Northern Shoveler – Northern Shovelers were widespread 17 Jun with one at Pitch Fork Rd pond in La Grange, *Fayette* (Roger Shaw), four at the Lake Somerville dam, *Washington* (Kenneth Williams), and a dozen at Sore Finger Wildlife Area, *Williamson* (Tim Fennell). Yet six more were at Cox Cemetery, *Brazos* 21 Jun (Sarah & Rick Laughlin).

Canvasback – A male Canvasback was photographed on Lake O' Pines, *Marion* 24 Jun (ph. Kristi Thomas).

**Redhead** – A drake Redhead lingered at Cox Cemetery, *Brazos* 5-22 Jul (†Byron Stone, Sarah & Rick Laughlin), and is the latest summer record for the Central Brazos Valley.

**Ring-necked Duck** – A late departing Ring-necked Duck was at Cox Cemetery, *Brazos* 5 Jul (Sarah & Rick Laughlin, Byron Stone). It is the latest summer record for *Brazos*.

Reddish Egret – Out of range were three immature Reddish Egrets off Texas 7 west of Crocket, *Houston* 14 Jul (ph.† Bill Wright).

**Cooper's Hawk** – Cooper's Hawks nested for the second year at Brothers Pond, College Station, *Brazos* (Bryan Calk) and diverse sightings in *Brazos* this season included singles at William D. Fitch Parkway 10 Jun (Bryan Calk), Bee Creek Park 13 Jun (Bryan Calk), Cox Cemetery (Byron Stone), and the TAMU campus 21 Jul (Bryan Calk). Other Central Brazos Valley reports come from Anderson, *Grimes* 13 Jun (Jennifer Backo) and two at a ranch near Calvert, *Robertson* 15 Jul (Alberto Manterola).

**Purple Gallinule** – The first summer record for *Brazos* since 1971, two Purple Gallinules were described at Cox Cemetery 21 Jun – 22 Jul (†Mark McDermott, †Rick & Sarah Laughlin). This is only the fourth summer record for the Central Brazos Valley. In *Polk* at McCardell Lake, a single Purple Gallinule was observed 7 Jun (Ken Hartman) and another was at the Woodville-Cherokee Unit in *Tyler* the same day (Brent Ortego). Purple Gallinules are scarce and highly localized in the East Texas Pineywoods.

Upland Sandpiper – Six Upland Sandpipers made an early passage through the turf farm along Sandy Point Rd, *Brazos* 28 Jun (ph.†Rick & Sarah Laughlin). Fourteen were at the opposite side of the Brazos River, *Burleson* at the turf farms 4 Jul (Roger Shaw).

**Laughing Gull** – Storm-blown Laughing Gulls pushed by Tropical Storm Bill included two at the Lake Somerville dam, *Washington* 17 Jun (†Roger Shaw) and a single the same day (†Rich Kostecke) at

Granger Lake, *Williamson*. Others were one at Hebert Reservoir, *Waller* 21 Jun (†Bob Honig) and two at Lake Livingston spillway, *Polk* 26 Jun (Peter Barnes).

**Least Tern** – Summer sightings of inland Least Terns are noteworthy and this season include up to 12 terns at Richland Creek W.M.A., *Freestone* 6 Jun – 26 Jul (D. D. Currie, Dell Little, T. Wells Shartle), one at nearby Lake Fairfield State Park, *Freestone* 13 Jun (Noreen Baker, James Sipiora), and in adjacent *Navarro*, one at Richland Chambers Reservoir and two at Harbor Inn Marina 5 Jul (D. D. Currie, Dell Little). Elsewhere, up to two were observed at the Oak Point development on Lake Limestone 26-30 Jul (†Alberto Manterola) where they are a first county record for *Robertson*.

**Black Tern** – Adding to a very short list of Black Tern sighting records for *Fayette*, two terns were flying over Lake Fayette 17 Jun (Roger Shaw), perhaps storm-blown by Tropical Storm Bill. A first summer record for *Brazos* and only the second for the Central Brazos Valley, four Black Terns were at Cox Cemetery 21 Jun (Sarah & Rick Laughlin).

**Common Nighthawk** – In the East Texas Pineywoods Common Nighthawks can be seen in early June and, thus sightings 5 Jun (David Brotherton) in *Morris*, 8 Jun (Janie Henderson) in *Camp*, and 11 Jun (Odie Asscherick) in *Liberty* are typical. However, the report of one flying over Hwy 7 in *Shelby* at the late date of 11 Jul (Sue Orwig) may be unprecedented.

American Kestrel – A single American Kestrel at Carter Lake, *Brazos* 13 Jun (Bryan Calk) was at the location where the species was suspected of nesting in 2013.

Western Kingbird – Western Kingbirds are rare at the eastern edge of their range and this season include five locations in *Henderson* 5 Jun - 31 Jul (m.obs.), one at Lake Cypress Springs, *Franklin* 5 Jul (Dale Bottrell), two at Mt. Pleasant, *Titus* the same day (Steve Glover, Greg Cook), and one at the farthest eastern location in *Morris* 10 Jul (ph. David Brotherton, Luanne Brotherton).

**Bell's Vireo** – Only the second record for *Anderson* is a Bell's Vireo reported at Lake Frankston 4 Jul (†Ben Sandifer).

**Hermit Thrush** – Bewildering is a thoroughly out-of-season Hermit Thrush at a home near Crossroads, *Henderson* 25 Jul (†D. D. Currie, Dell Little).

**Pine Warbler** – Except at a few stands of pine trees, Pine Warblers retreat from the Central Brazos Valley during breeding season. So it is surprising to find one at a feeder in Kurten, *Brazos* 13 Jul (Shirley Wilkerson). The only other summer record for *Brazos* is 3 Jun 2011, a late departure.

**Eastern Towhee** – A pair of Eastern Towhees was observed and recorded singing on territory 27 Jun (†Bryan Calk) on Lone Wolf Ln, *Hardin*. On 3 Jul (†Susan Heath) another male Eastern Towhee was observed singing in *Hardin* at Fire Tower Rd. The 2001 Birds of the Pineywoods of Eastern Checklist does not record Eastern Towhee as a nesting species. However, there is a 1914 nesting record for Texas and it has been observed singing in prior years on three occasions in *Smith*, *Tyler*, and *Jasper*.

**Bronzed Cowbird** – A first county record for *Washington*, a male Bronzed Cowbird visited a feeder in Brenham 8 Jul (Darrell Vollert).

#### CONTRIBUTORS:

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Shaw, James Sipiora, Byron Stone, Kristi Thomas, Darrell Vollert, Shirley Wilkerson, Kenneth Williams, Bill Wright.