

## Fall 2016: Central Oaks & Prairies and East Texas Pineywoods

By Bert Frenz

This report is prepared from 119 sightings of 46 species, plus a survey of 127,001 records submitted to eBird for the period 1 August to 30 November 2016.

### **WEATHER REPORTS:**

David Wolf, fall season, Central Pineywoods area, "Boring pretty well sums up the fall migration this year. This can be one of our most exciting seasons, but this year there was little action of any kind. Generally it takes "interesting weather" to produce fall migrants and strays, and we did not have much weather of note this entire period. Our summer resident breeding birds quietly slipped away and there were few migrants to replace them. Lake levels remained high and post-breeding waders and shorebirds were few and far between. Waterfowl were late in arriving, with few appearing before mid-November. There was no tropical storm activity and relatively few stormy or fast-moving cool fronts, though rain for the last two weeks of August was unusual. Summer was neither exceedingly hot nor dry and temperatures remained warm into November. The first freeze for most of the area came on November 19, but the first real cold spell was Dec 8-9."

### **MOST UNUSUAL SIGHTINGS:**

Black-bellied Whistling-Duck – Five Black-bellied Whistling-Ducks at Ellen Trout Park in Lufkin, *Angelina* 21 Aug (Louis Debetaz) were unusual and new for that locality.

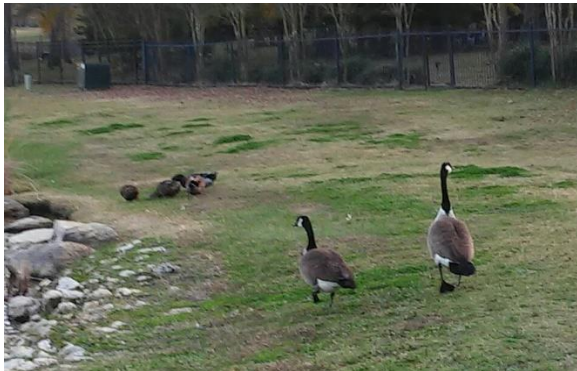
**Ross's Goose** – Rarely reported at Lake Livingston, a lone Ross's Goose was bobbing in the surf on the *San Jacinto* side 12 Nov (Bruce Neville, et al.).



© Jackie Girouard at Carter Lake



© Gus Cothran at Woodcreek Subdivision



© Nancy Thaden at Pebble Creek Country Club

**Cackling Goose** – Is it a feral goose gone wild or a true wanderer from its normal range – that is the question about a Cackling Goose that seems to be showing up at various *Brazos* sites. In 2014-16 a single Cackling Goose accompanied feral Canada Geese at Carter Lake (24 Aug 2014 to 16 Feb 2015 and again 21 Nov 2015 to 9 Jan 2016). Then 12 Nov+ (ph. Gus Cothran) a Cackling Goose (or another) accompanied Canada Geese at the pond at the entrance of Woodcreek Subdivision (1.8 miles from Carter Creek). It has also been observed free-flying with the flock over the subdivision and photographed 11 Nov+ (ph. Nancy Thaden) at Pebble Creek Country Club 3.2 miles away.

**Red-breasted Merganser** – Rare for *Waller* and perhaps the first photo-documented county record, a Red-breasted Merganser was at Prairie View 19 Nov (ph. †John Berner, Fermin Torrez, Harvey Laas).

Pied-billed Grebe – An adult with 2 chicks was a surprise record of late breeding 2 Oct (Robert Truss) on a pond near Melrose, *Nacogdoches*. A high count of 275 Pied-billed Grebes 19 Nov (Louis Debataz, Pineywoods Audubon Society) were studied at Kurth Lake, *Angelina*.

White-winged Dove – Still relatively rare in the central Pineywoods, it appears that local breeding White-winged Doves gathered in Pecan Park, *Nacogdoches*, *Nacogdoches* with 14 on 8 Nov (David Bell) and 16 on 26 Nov (Carol Wells, Ruth Heino).

Yellow-billed Cuckoo – Late sightings of Yellow-billed Cuckoo include 28 Oct (ph. Albert Stock) at Lake Dunlap, *Guadalupe* and 30 Oct (Michael Cooper) at Lone Star College, Kingwood, *Montgomery*.



© Sandy Dillard

**Calliope Hummingbird** – Not only a first county record for *Brazos*, but also a first record for the entire Central Brazos Valley, an adult male Calliope Hummingbird visited Bryan feeders 30 Oct – 4 Nov (Lisa Dillard, ph. Sandy Dillard, m.obs.).



© Simon Kiacz

**Buff-bellied Hummingbird** – A Buff-bellied Hummingbird 28-30 Oct (ph. Simon Kiacz) is the first *Brazos* record since 2014.

**Black Rail** – In *Waller* 28 Oct (†Fred Collins, Harvey Laas) a Black Rail was observed during a rice harvest adjacent to Buller Rd. There have been no recent records of Black Rail in *Waller*, however it likely was observed in earlier years when rice farming was more plentiful in the county.

**Purple Gallinule** – A season high count of 9 Purple Gallinules, including 5 adults, was tallied at Kurth Lake, *Angelina* 23 Sep (Louis Debataz), while 2 juveniles were still present 15 Oct, the latest ever at this location.

**American Coot** – An impressive count of 6000 American Coots 11 Nov (Louis Debataz, Pineywoods Audubon Society field trip) at Kurth Lake, *Angelina* far exceeds those found elsewhere in the region.

**Black-necked Stilt** – Rare in north-east Texas, 3 Black-necked Stilts were watched through a spotting scope and binoculars as they flew across Lake O' the Pines, *Upshur* 29 Oct (†David Brotherton, Luanne Brotherton).

**Sanderling** – A well-described Sanderling was at Lake Somerville at Welch Park, *Burleson* 23 Sep (†James White). There are 5 other records at the lake in the past 40 years.



© Ron Newhouse

**Dunlin** – With only 4 previous records at Lake Somerville in the past 42 years, the Dunlin photographed at Welch Park, *Burleson* 3 Nov (ph. Ron Newhouse) is noteworthy.

**Willet** – Scarce and very late, a Willet was at Clear Spring Park West of Lake Wright Patman, *Bowie* 16 Nov (†Mike Dillon).

Laughing Gull – A rare visitor to Lake Sam Rayburn, a juvenile Laughing Gull was observed from the TX 147 bridge, *Angelina* 11 Sep (Robert Truss, David Wolf).

Least Tern – Up to 6 Least Terns were seen 13-14 Aug (Mark McDermott, Rick Laughlin) at Cox Cemetery, *Brazos*. A single Least Tern was at the TX 147 bridge, Lake Sam Rayburn, *Angelina* 15 Aug (David Wolf), accompanied by 135 Black Terns and 6 Forster's Terns.

Caspian Tern – Caspian Terns were scattered widely inland at lakes and rivers in *Bowie*, *Angelina*, *San Jacinto*, *Liberty*, and *Burleson* this fall, the most unusual being 15 at Lake Nacogdoches, *Nacogdoches* 17 Aug (Carol Wells).

Tricolored Heron – A late Tricolored Heron was at Lake Madison Park, 27 Oct (†Barrett Riess), but much later herons were at Richland Creek W.M.A., *Freestone* 26 Nov (Laura Wilson) and Trinity River N.W.R., *Liberty* the same day (Brian Berry), and even later at Martin Dies S.P., *Jasper* 28 Nov (†David Bell).



© James White

**Reddish Egret** – Single inland Reddish Egrets were at Alazan Bayou W.M.A., *Nacogdoches* 9 Aug (†Bill Wright), at Lake Somerville, Welch Park, *Burleson* 23 Sep (ph. James White), and at Bryan's Country

Club Lake, *Brazos* 24 Sep (†Simon Kiacz). The latter is only the second record for *Brazos*, the first being in 2007).

Black-crowned Night-Heron – Scarce and irregular in the central Pineywoods, a Black-crowned Night-Heron was at Ellen Trout Lake, Lufkin, *Angelina* 21 Aug (Louis Debetaz).

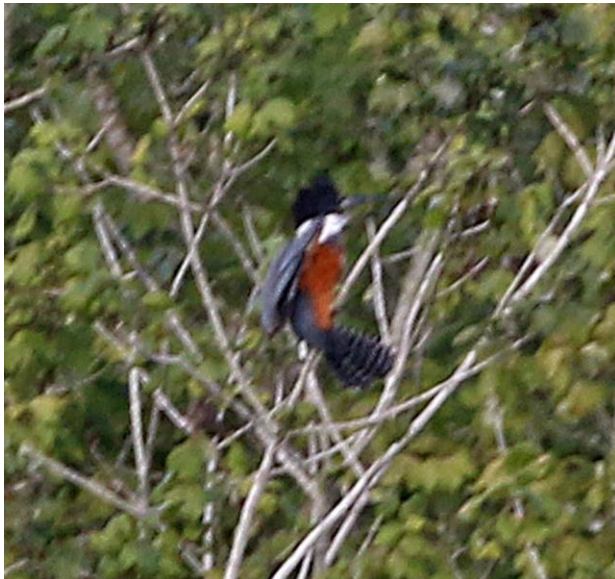


© Melissa Chadwick

**Roseate Spoonbill** – Only the second record for *Coryell*, a Roseate Spoonbill was far inland in a flooded section of Mother Neff S.P. 11-14 Oct (ph. Melissa Chadwick).

White-tailed Kite – Not often found in the East Texas Pineywoods, a White-tailed Kite was photographed at Sour Lake Rd., *Hardin* 26 Nov (ph. †Ron Weeks).

White-tailed Hawk – After the first county record last fall, White-tailed Hawk continues to be seen at Alberto's Ranch, *Robertson*, this fall on 8 Sep, 13-14 Oct, and 18 Oct (Alberto Manterola) at various locations around the ranch area.



© Jo Beth Goodrum

Ringed Kingfisher – A surprise for *Montgomery*, a Ringed Kingfisher was viewed many times at Lakeside Park, The Woodlands 5-12 Sep (†Gene Prejean, ph. Jo Beth Goodrum, m.ob.).

Yellow-bellied Sapsucker – Early arrivals are single Yellow-bellied Sapsuckers at Rose Hill Acres, *Hardin* 30 Sep (John Mariani) and at Daingerfield S.P., *Morris* the same day (Janie Henderson, Ron Baughman, Chuck Carlson).



© David Brotherton

Vermilion Flycatcher – The first county-record Vermilion Flycatcher the wintered 1 Oct 2015 to 10 Mar 2016 at Fowler's Place, *Morris* returned to the same site 2 Oct+ (ph. David Brotherton).

Great Crested Flycatcher – Establishing the latest record for the Central Brazos Valley, a Great Crested Flycatcher was at Lake Madison Park, *Madison* 27 Oct (†Barrett Riess).

Northern Rough-winged Swallow – Late was a Northern Rough-winged Swallow 18 Nov (John Mariani) at Rose Hill Acres, *Hardin*.

Red-breasted Nuthatch – Red-breasted Nuthatches were on the move this fall for the first time in several years. The first report was 2 near Antioch, *Shelby* 13 Oct (Sue Orwig), soon followed 15 Oct (Mike Dillon) at Lake O' the Pines, *Upshur*.

Bewick's Wren – Increasingly difficult to find in East Texas and especially in *Polk*, a Bewick's Wren was identified near Livingston 23 Sep (Dan & Wendy McCrady).

Golden-crowned Kinglet – In East Texas Golden-crowned Kinglets appeared widely in good numbers according to David Wolf. The first appeared 21 Oct in 3 widely separated counties: *Nacogdoches* (David Wolf), *Morris* (Linda Price), and *Upshur* (Linda Price).

Cedar Waxwing – Cedar Waxwings arrived in good numbers throughout East Texas the second week of November.

**Ovenbird** – The only report of Ovenbird in East Texas was one walking through the weeds below a bird feeding station in Tyler, *Smith* 14 Sep (†Doug Ghrist). It was a yard bird first in the past 8 years.

**Worm-eating Warbler** – The only report of Worm-eating Warbler in a 67-county area of eastern Texas was at SFA Experimental Forest, *Nacogdoches* 25 Aug (Carol Wells, Ruth Heino).

**Prothonotary Warbler** – A family of Prothonotary Warblers present all summer included two juveniles still present at the late date of 9 Sep (ph. Sue Orwig) at a farm near Antioch, *Shelby*.

**Swainson's Warbler** – Very rarely found in fall, a Swainson's Warbler was located in the SFS Experimental Forest, *Nacogdoches* 25 Aug (Carol Wells, Ruth Heino).

Yellow Warbler – A Yellow Warbler 7 Aug (†Bruce Neville) was early at Wilson Shoals Rd, *Madison*.

Prairie Warbler – A migrant Prairie Warbler was at Alazan Bayou W.M.A., *Nacogdoches* 14 Aug (David Wolf).

Lark Sparrow – Not expected at this location, 2 adult Lark Sparrows accompanied a barely-fledged juvenile at Alazan Bayou W.M.A., *Nacogdoches* 7 Aug (David Wolf).

Rusty Blackbird – Three Rusty Blackbirds at Ferndale Club, *Camp* 20 Sep (Ron Baughman, Janie Henderson) were early.

Bronzed Cowbird – A male Bronzed Cowbird in a flock of Brown-headed Cowbirds is noteworthy at the Texas A&M University campus, College Station, *Brazos* 4 Oct (Stefan Andrew). On average, there has been one report every 3-4 years in the past 52 years.

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#### **CONTRIBUTORS:**

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