

Spring 2016: Central Oaks & Prairies and East Texas Pineywoods

By Bert Frenz

This report is reduced from sightings from 1 March to 31 May 2016.

WEATHER REPORTS:

David Wolf, central Pineywoods, spring season. "Though large numbers of shorebirds undoubtedly pass over East Texas in the spring we normally have very little habitat to attract them and do not see very many most years. However, with the storm activity and heavy rains this spring, a remarkable variety of shorebirds was found, especially by Louis Debetaz at the Angelina County Airport. The first notable fallout there was on stormy April 20, followed by an outstanding fallout on April 30 (LD), and a late fallout on stormy May 27."

MOST UNUSUAL SIGHTINGS:

Black-bellied Whistling-Duck – In the central Pineywoods, Black-bellied Whistling-Ducks are regular in small numbers in *Angelina* at the county airport and Diboll where they were again seen this spring (Louis Debetaz). However, they are rarely found in Nacogdoches, *Nacogdoches* where one was the first county record since 2000 on 17 May (Tyson Hart).

Red-breasted Merganser – The latest spring record for the central Pineywoods was a female Red-breasted Merganser at Kurth Lake, *Angelina* 21 Apr (Louis Debetaz) and 25 May (Carol Wells).

Wild Turkey – Wild Turkeys made a good showing in East Texas with one bird 18 Mar (Carol Wells) in *Cherokee*, 1 on 3 Apr (Greg Cook, Steve Glover) in *Fannin*, 2 on 12 Apr (Jeri Langham) in *Angelina*, 7 on 15 Apr (Jeremy Hull) in *Panola*, and 5 on 16 Apr (Evan Janson) in *Lamar*.

Least Grebe – A first record for *Smith* and a rare sighting for north-east Texas, a single Least Grebe was at Camp Tyler 9 May (Peter Barnes, ph. Mike Bloodsworth, Ellis Vonasek).

Wood Stork – Three very early Wood Storks were circling over Rose Hill Acres, *Hardin* 23 Apr (John Mariani, David Sarkozi). Typically, storks do not show up in East Texas until the beginning of June.

American Bittern – At Alazan Bayou W.M.A., *Nacogdoches*, an American Bittern was observed 6 Apr to 14 May (David Wolf), the later date tied with the latest date ever for the central Pineywoods.

Swallow-tailed Kite – There are only a handful of spring records for Swallow-tailed Kite in the central Pineywoods, so five reports this spring is remarkable: 6 Apr (Ron Randle, Bill Adams) at Alazan Bayou W.M.A., *Nacogdoches*, 19 Apr (Jeri Langham) at Boykin Springs, *Angelina*, 20 Apr (Laura Wilson) at Ellen Trout Zoo, *Angelina*, 9 May (Robert Truss) at Diboll, *Angelina*, and 25 May (Susie Lower) at *Nacogdoches*, *Nacogdoches*.

White-tailed Kite – A White-tailed Kite in *Fannin* 10 Apr (Matt White) was a good find.

Mississippi Kite – A very early Mississippi Kite 11 Mar (Mike Manson) at College Station, *Brazos* apparently was not one of the nesting pair found annually at the location as it was not seen again.

Golden Eagle – The best sighting this spring in the central Pineywoods was a Golden Eagle 16 Apr (Charles Dean Fisher) at *Nacogdoches* as there are no previous spring records for *Nacogdoches* and very few at any time in the area.

Sora – David Wolf reported, "A Sora attacked by a cat in Douglass, *Angelina* 29 April was rescued and released at Alazan Bayou W.M.A. (Carol Wells). While probably not a rare migrant, we don't get many records of this species."

Sandhill Crane – Sixteen Sandhill Cranes were noted at Pat Mayse Lake, *Lamar* 4 Mar (Steve Glover). Cranes are a rarity for East Texas.

American Golden-Plover – A good count for American Golden-Plover was made 10 Apr (Peter Barnes) at Richland Creek W.M.A. with 50 on the *Freestone* side and 25 on the *Navarro* side.

Semipalmated Plover – Seven Semipalmated Plovers at the Angelina County Airport on stormy 30 Apr (Louis Debetaz) was a great spring count.

Piping Plover – A single Piping Plover on stormy 30 Apr (Louis Debetaz) at the Angelina County Airport is the first spring record for *Angelina* and adds to a very few records for the entire Pineywoods ecoregion.

Solitary Sandpiper – A Solitary Sandpiper at the Nacogdoches sewer ponds, *Nacogdoches* 8-9 Mar (David Wolf) ties the earliest central Pineywoods record, while one at Kurth Lake, *Angelina* 21 May (Louis Debetaz) is the latest ever by one day.

Willet – A rare spring sighting for the central Pineywoods is 2 Willets 30 Apr (Louis Debetaz) at Angelina County Airport.

Whimbrel – An outstanding find for the central Pineywoods is 2 Whimbrels at Angelina County Airport 27 Apr (Louis Debetaz) as there are only 3 previous records for the *Angelina-Nacogdoches* area.

Hudsonian Godwit – This spring again Richland Creek W.M.A., *Freestone* supported up to 75 Hudsonian Godwits 13-14 May (Peter Barnes, Ed Wetzel).

Marbled Godwit – Three Marbled Godwits were at Richland Creek W.M.A., *Freestone* 2 Apr (Susan Haney) and 2 again 13-14 May (Peter Barnes, Ellis Vonasek).

Dunlin – A rare spring migrant through the central Pineywoods, a storm-related shorebird fallout at Angelina County Airport brought down 5 Dunlin 27 May (Louis Debetaz).

Buff-breasted Sandpiper – It seems to take a violent spring storm to bring down Buff-breasted Sandpipers in the central Pineywoods and this spring it happened twice when 4 were found 30 Apr and 4 others 30 Apr (Louis Debetaz) at Angelina County Airport.

Wilson's Phalarope – More than their typical sparse numbers, 1-5 Wilson's Phalaropes were reported 3 times 29 Apr–12 May (Mimi Hoppe Wolf, David Wolf) in Central Heights, *Nacogdoches* and, in addition, 20 were at Angelina County Airport after storms 30 Apr (Louis Debetaz). A whooping 200-250 were at Richland Creek W.M.A., *Freestone* 13-14 May (Peter Barnes, D. D. Currie, Dell Little).

Least Tern – Rare Least Terns were 2 at Richland Creek W.M.A., *Freestone* 12-14 May (Jack Kelly, m.ob.) and a single 27 May (Louis Debetaz) at Angelina County Airport. The *Angelina* sighting is only the fourth spring record for the central Pineywoods.

White-winged Dove – David Wolf reports, “This spring brought the most reports ever of White-winged Doves in Nacogdoches. Though still rare it is likely that they will soon become an established part of our breeding avifauna.” Doves were reported throughout the season and found in at least 4 sites.

Eastern Whip-poor-will – Tying for the latest spring record for the central Pineywoods, a single Eastern Whip-poor-will was heard in Douglas, *Angelina* 2 May (Carol Wells). A still later one in East Texas was 15 May (Diane Silverstein) near Coldspring, *San Jacinto*.

Chimney Swift – A tie for the earliest spring date in the central Pineywoods, a Chimney Swift was over Nacogdoches, *Nacogdoches* 11 Mar (Tyson Hart, Kim Hart). The same day (Mark McDermott) one was seen at Finfeather Lake, Bryan, *Brazos*.

Crested Caracara – Two records, 27 Mar (Bruce Neville, Rich Kostecke) at Trinity River and 24 May (Cliff Shackelford) 2 miles east of Crockett add to a very few *Houston* records. Except for a single 6-year-old record, the species has not yet penetrated eastward into the central Pineywoods.

Merlin - The only Merlin report in the central Pineywoods was an early one in Central Heights, *Nacogdoches* 5 Mar (David Wolf).

Eastern Phoebe – Eastern Phoebes were found nesting on Azalea Trail in Lufkin, *Angelina* 31 Mar (Louis Debetaz) which is at the southern extremity of its breeding range in East Texas.

Vermilion Flycatcher – The rare wintering Vermilion Flycatcher in *Morris* continued to 10 Mar (Buddy Fowler).

Great Kiskadee – A first county record for *Brazos*, a Great Kiskadee was at Bachmann Community Park 6 Mar (†David Youker).

Fish Crow – Two Fish Crows were identified by call on CR NW 1030 26 Mar (Peter Barnes, David Brotherton, Luanne Brotherton) providing one of very few records for *Franklin*.

Gray Catbird – A Gray Catbird that overwintered in Bryan, *Brazos* was still visiting a suet feeder 11 Mar (Ira Greenbaum).

Worm-eating Warbler – Uncommon and easily overlooked in the central Pineywoods, 5 reports of Worm-eating Warbler are notable in *Angelina* and *Nacogdoches* 14-30 Apr (Mimi David Wolf, David Wolf, Tyson Hart, Suzie Lower).

Louisiana Warbler – The earliest date ever by 2 days was the report of a Louisiana Waterthrush in Carrizo Creek, *Nacogdoches* 4 Mar (Suzie Lower).

Cerulean Warbler – Scarce in the central Pineywoods, a female Cerulean Warbler was found 2 May (Tyson Hart, Laura Wilson) the day of a very windy cool front at Pecan Park, *Nacogdoches*.

Yellow-throated Warbler – An early Yellow-throated Warbler was observed 7 Mar (Ben Thomasson) in *Harrison*.

Eastern Towhee – Evidently a rare breeder in *Jasper*, a singing Eastern Towhee near Sandy Creek Park seemed to be on territory 14-20 Apr (Michael O'Brien, Louise Zemaitis, Brian Gibbons, David Wolf).

Summer Tanager – The female Summer Tanager that wintered in Kurten, *Brazos* was last seen 9 Mar (Shirley Wilkerson, Dan Wilkerson).

Western Tanager – A female Western Tanager was in a yard at Chappell Hill, Washington 11 Apr (Darrell Vollert). Although rare in the Central Brazos Valley, more than half of the records have been in *Washington*.

Bobolink – Bobolinks made a good showing in north-east Texas with multiple reports in *Nacogdoches* and *Red River*, topped by 54+ males at Alazan Bayou W.M.A. 6 May (David Wolf).

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