

Winter 2017-18: Central Oaks & Prairies and East Texas Pineywoods

By Bert Frenz

This report is reduced from reported sightings from 1 December 2017 to 28 February 2018. It surveys 42 counties: Anderson, Angelina, Bowie, Brazos, Burleson, Camp, Cass, Cherokee, Franklin, Freestone, Gregg, Grimes, Hardin, Harrison, Henderson, Houston, Jasper, Leon, Liberty, Limestone, Madison, Marion, Montgomery, Morris, Nacogdoches, Navarro (southern), Newton, Panola, Polk, Red River, Robertson, Rusk, Sabine, San Augustine, San Jacinto, Shelby, Smith, Titus, Trinity, Tyler, Upshur, Walker, Washington.

WEATHER REPORTS:

none.

MOST UNUSUAL SIGHTINGS:

Fulvous Whistling-Duck – Near Dayton, *Liberty*, up to 16 out-of-range Fulvous Whistling-Ducks were present 24-28 Feb (ph. Paul & Colette Micallef).



© Paul & Colette Micallef 24 Feb 2018

Gadwall – Waterfowl numbers peaked in the Central Pineywoods in mid-February (David Wolf), including a very high count of 500-550 Gadwall at the Nacogdoches sewage ponds, *Nacogdoches*.

Redhead – A seasonal high count of 118 Redheads were present 15 Feb (David Wolf) at the Nacogdoches sewage ponds, *Nacogdoches*.

Least Grebe – Rare in *Brazos*, a lone Least Grebe was found in Wellborn on the College Station CBC 31 Dec (†ph. John Hale) and was still present the next day. It is a third record for the county.

White-winged Dove – Still uncommon and local, White-winged Doves are just beginning to colonize the Central Pineywoods. This season included up to 5 at the SFASU campus and various streets in Nacogdoches, *Nacogdoches* 15 Dec-6 Feb (Nina Rach, David Wolf, Pamela Goolsby, Rick Schaefer).

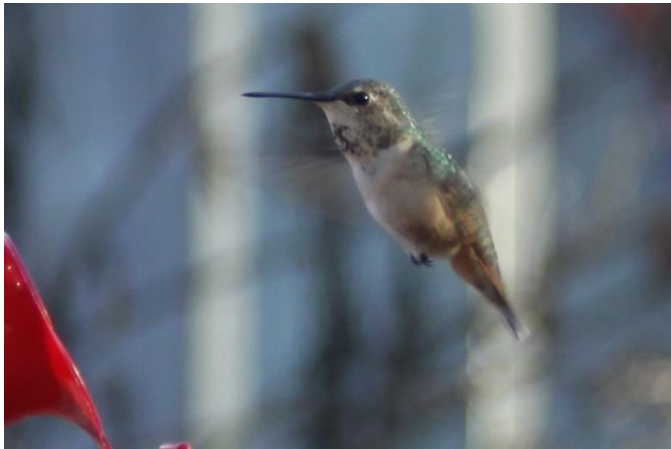
Eastern Whip-poor-will – An early Eastern Whip-poor-will, by about a week, was heard near Dayton Lakes, *Liberty* 24 Feb (†Paul Micallef).

Black-chinned Hummingbird – An early migrant Black-chinned Hummingbird passed through College Station, *Brazos* 28 Feb (ph. Helen Baines).



© Helen Baines 28 Feb 2018

Broad-tailed Hummingbird – Rarely seen in the Central Brazos Valley, an immature female Broad-tailed Hummingbird visited College Station, *Brazos* feeders 23-24 Jan (ph. Kitty Anding).



© Kitty Anding, 23 Jan 2018

Rufous Hummingbird – A Rufous Hummingbird wintered in Nacogdoches, *Nacogdoches* 31 Oct-19 Feb Cliff & Julie Shackelford).

American Avocet – Late for the Central Brazos Valley, an American Avocet was at a pond near the Texas A&M University Riverside Campus, *Brazos* 2 Dec (ph. John Hale).

Long-billed Curlew – A flock of 6 Long-billed Curlews visited farmlands near Calvert, *Robertson* 27 Dec-17 Jan (Alberto Manterola). Although rare in the Central Brazos Valley, these farmlands are the most likely local area to find them.

Dunlin – Rare inland away from the coast, single sightings of Dunlin 13 Jan (Yvette Haughney, ph. Mike Stewart) at Richland Creek W.M.A., *Freestone* and 19 Feb (†Jeremy Webster) at The Falls, Marlin, *Falls* are noteworthy.



© Mike Stewart, 13 Jan 2018

Wilson's Snipe – Perhaps more a result of lack of birders than rarity, 5 Wilson's Snipes photographed 13 Dec (ph. Sue Orwig) is only the second report for *Shelby* on eBird for the species, the previous sighting being 7 years ago.

Laughing Gull – Rare in winter in the Central Brazos Valley and unusual away from major lakes, 3 Laughing Gulls were at tiny Country Club Lake, Bryan, *Brazos* 15 Feb (ph.† Ron Newhouse). An amazing count of at least 115 Laughing Gulls were at the Lake Livingston spillway, *San Jacinto* 28 Jan (David Wolf, Robert Truss).



© Ron Newhouse, 15 Feb 2018

Franklin's Gull – Late fall migrating Franklin's Gulls were 4 at Lake O' the Pines, *Marion* 13 Dec (ph. Michael Mathews).



© Michael Mathews, 13 Dec 2017

Lesser Black-backed Gull – Although now seen almost annually as singles at Lake Livingston, *San Jacinto-Polk*, with sightings this season 7 Jan (Greg Cook, Steve Glover) and 6 Feb (Carol Wells), it was truly amazing for 21 Lesser Black-backed Gulls to be counted at the west dam overlook, *San Jacinto* 28 Jan (David Wolf, Robert Truss). Also surprising was one at Lake Trinity, Sebastopol area 7 Jan (†Greg Cook, Steve Glover) where it represents the first eBird record for *Trinity*.

Forster's Tern – A high count of 570 Forster's Terns gathered at the TX 147 causeway across Lake Sam Rayburn, *San Augustine* 1 Jan (David Wolf).

Red-throated Loon – A first record for the Central Pineywoods area, a Red-throated Loon flew past the TX 147 causeway of Lake Sam Rayburn 7 Jan (†Steve Glover, Greg Cook), providing first county records for both *Angelina* and *San Augustine*.

Little Blue Heron – A rare winter sighting of Little Blue Herons were an adult and a white imm. at San Augustine Park, Lake Sam Rayburn, *San Augustine* 13 Jan (Anthony Hewetson, m.ob.).

Tricolored Heron – An out-of-season Tricolored Heron was at Martin Dies S.P., *Jasper* 3 Jan (†Jan Allen). Curiously, one was also seen at the state park one year ago January.

Cattle Egret – A flock of 16 Cattle Egrets near Lake Naconiche, *Nacogdoches* 18 Jan (Julie Shackelford) was unseasonal.

White Ibis – Remarkably, two White Ibis wintered in a farm pasture near Red River, *Bowie* 18 Dec-25 Feb (ph. Philip White, ph. Robert Boyd, ph. Eric Spink, et. al).



© Robert Boyd, 23 Jan 2018

White-faced Ibis – Rare in winter in East Texas, a White-faced Ibis was at Texas Eastman at Longview, *Harrison*, 15 Jan (†David Brotherton, Mark Edmund).

White-tailed Kite – Rare in the Central Brazos Valley in the past decade, a White-tailed Kite flew over the Rock Prairie landfill, *Brazos* 5 Feb (Simon Kiacz, Corina Giron). In the Cameron area of *Milam* a White-tailed Kite was seen 3 Dec (Greg Cook, Steve Glover) and 31 Dec (Nancy Webber).

Harris's Hawk – The first confirmed record for Harris's Hawk in *Milam* was observed 23 Dec-2 Jan (ph. Elaine Horton, ph. Gil Eckrich, ph. Randy Pinkston, ph.† Byron Stone, Ann Collins, †Nancy Webber) near Rogers.



© Byron Stone, 2 Jan 2018

White-tailed Hawk – At the edge of its range and a first county record for *Milam*, a White-tailed Hawk was seen, surprisingly with a Harris's Hawk, 31 Dec-6 Jan (†Ann Collins, †Nancy Webber, ph. Rich Kostecke) at CR 115 near Rogers.

Golden Eagle – Extremely scarce in East Texas, a juvenile Golden Eagle was found at Boggy Slough, Davy Crockett N.F., *Trinity* 12 Jan (Cliff Shackelford, †Nancy Webber, †Jane Tillman, m.ob.) during the Texas Ornithological Society meeting field trips.

Barn Owl – A Barn Owl heard as it flew over Nacogdoches, *Nacogdoches* 16 Jan (Cliff Shackelford) adds to a very few East Texas Pineywoods records.

Burrowing Owl – A Burrowing Owl observed 28 Jan (†Harvey Laas, John Berner, Larry Jones) at Muske Lane and Buller Road may well be a first county record for *Waller* [no e-Bird records, no sightings in Spoonbill reports, no references in Oberholser, no specimens at TCWC, not mentioned in Eubanks, Behrstock & Weeks].

Short-eared Owl – Very rare sightings of Short-eared Owls in East Texas included up to 4 at County Line Rd, *Rusk/Henderson* 25 Dec-13 Jan (Wanda Bosman, ph. David Brotherton, Luanne Brotherton, †Doug Ghrist, m.ob.); these are probably first county records for *Panola* and only a second record for *Rusk*.



© David Brotherton, 27 Dec 2017

Merlin – Although single-day winter occurrences of migrant Merlins through the Central Brazos Valley are not unusual, seeing a pair of Merlins on wintering territory is perhaps a unique happening for the area. In the Gause area of *Milam* Merlins were observed repeatedly 3 Dec-16 Feb (†Donna Lewis).

Prairie Falcon – A first county record for *Milam*, a Prairie Falcon was perched on poles and flying between them on CR 264 near the Brazos River 7 Dec (Jeremy Webster).

Black Phoebe – The locally-rare Black Phoebe of last winter that returned 23 Oct to the Brazos Center Park, Bryan, *Brazos* remained until 27 Jan (m.ob.)



© Bill Morris 21 Dec 2017

Vermilion Flycatcher – A spurt of Vermilion Flycatcher sightings in unexpected places include the continuing 2 at Old Sour Lake Rd., *Hardin* 18 Dec-13 Jan (ph. John Mariani, m.ob.), the same or another in *Hardin* at Village Creek S.P. 23 Jan (†Carol Moore, Laura Wilson); a male at New Caney, *Montgomery* 30 Dec (Terrie Ford); a male at the TX 147 bridge, Lake Sam Rayburn, *San Augustine* 7 Jan (Steve Glover, Greg Cook); and an immature male at Bryan, *Brazos* 21 Jan (ph. Smiley Flores).



© Smiley Flores, 21 Jan 2018

Western Kingbird – An early Western Kingbird was at farmlands near Calvert, *Robertson* 26 Feb (†Alberto Manterola).

Scissor-tailed Flycatcher – Unexpected in January, 4 Scissor-tailed Flycatchers were at College Station, *Brazos* 12 Jan (†Betty Vermeire).

Tree Swallow – Early Tree Swallows include 5 at Martin Dies S.P., *Jasper* 3 Jan (†Jan Allen) and 3 at Kurth Lake, *Angelina* 12 Jan (Justin Bosler).

Cave Swallow – Only mild winters can keep Cave Swallows in East Texas, so noteworthy is 10 at Lake Gladewater, *Upshur* 31 Dec (ph. Linda Price), but only one there the next day. On a 33-deg New Year's Day (Bruce Neville), 2 were flying at Easterwood Airport, *Brazos* and elsewhere in the county 1-2 were reported at 4 other locations. A large flock was found on all 3 T.O.S. field trips to Kurth Lake, *Angelina* 12-14 Jan (m.ob) with a high count of 150 on 12 Jan (Justin Bosler, Theresa Wiens).



© Linda Price, 1 Jan 2018

Red-breasted Nuthatch – The very few reports of Red-breasted Nuthatch in Central Pineywoods included one in Lufkin, *Angelina* 13 Nov-1 Feb (Gary Hunter) and one heard along Dorr Creek Rd 21 Jan (Robert Truss). Elsewhere in East Texas, small numbers were reported in *Anderson, Camp, Franklin, Harrison, Houston, Jasper, Montgomery, Polk, Rusk, and Trinity*, and most were single-day occurrences.

Blue-gray Gnatcatcher – While typically a rare winter find in the Central Pineywoods, a record high of 16 were tabulated on the Nacogdoches CBC 17 Dec (fide David Wolf) and were found on 13 of the 30 T.O.S. convention field trips 12-14 Jan in *Nacogdoches* and *Angelina*.

Gray Catbird – Not expected in winter, a significant number of winter-resident Gray Catbirds were reported this season: 5-24 Dec (Carol Wells) in Douglas, *Nacogdoches*; 2 on 5-13 Jan (Shelli Ellerbe, m.ob.) at Old Sour Lake Rd., *Hardin*; one 22 Dec-2 Jan (Conor McMahon, et al.) at W. G. Jones State Forest, *Montgomery*; up to 3 on 7-24 Jan (Bert Foquet, Kurt Kguyen, ph. John Hale) at Lick Creek Park, *Brazos*; up to 5 23 Dec-19 Feb (Jeremy Webster, Jodi Henricks, Mark Vernon) at Martin Dies S.P., *Jasper/Tyler*. These are in addition to single-day sightings elsewhere in *Angelina, Bowie, Grimes, Liberty, Montgomery, Nacogdoches, Newton, Shelby, Smith, Tyler, and Walker*.

Cedar Waxwing – An amazing flock of 4000+ Cedar Waxwings invaded downtown Nacogdoches, *Nacogdoches* to feast on ornamental holly trees 7 Feb (Cliff Shackelford, Dave Wallace, Vickie Wallace).

Scaly-breasted Munia – Up to 2 adult non-native Scaly-breasted Munia were observed 11 Dec+ (ph. William Tarbox) at Walnut Creek Forest, *Montgomery*.



© William Tarbox 13 Dec 2017

Purple Finch – Relatively few Purple Finches invaded East Texas this winter, with limited reports of 1-6 in a dozen counties.

Common Redpoll – Extremely rare anywhere in Texas, but a third local record in 6 years, a Common Redpoll visited a black oil sunflower seed feeder 10-11 Feb (ph. Ernst Iverson) in Lufkin, *Angelina*.



© Ernst Iverson, 11 Feb 2018

Red Crossbill – Countercurrent to the paucity of Red-breasted Nuthatches and Purple Finches is the surprise of multiple erratic Red Crossbills sightings. The first was up to 20 8 Jan-2 Mar (recording, Rick Schaefer) at Lake Ratcliff, Davy Crockett N.F., *Houston*. Flight recordings sent to Cornell University (Matt Young) were identified as Type 5 calls, only the second confirmed Type 5 for Texas. Other reports include 12-13 Jan (Rick Schaefer, TOS field tour) at Hickory Creek, *Houston*; up to 12 13-19 Jan (†Chuck

Sexton, ph. A. Jean Trahan, ph. Megan Ahlgren, m.ob. T.O.S. field trip) at Saint's Rest Rd., *Nacogdoches*; 2 on 18 Feb (ph. Vas Anandagoda, Candy Anandagoda, Prairie & Timbers Audubon Field Trip) at Caddo Lake W.M.A., *Harrison*.



© Vas Anandagoda, 18 Feb 2018

Pine Siskin – David Wolf reported the Pineywoods had a modest flight of Pine Siskins, widespread in late Dec and mostly gone by mid-Feb (fide David Wolf, m.ob.).

Lesser Goldfinch – A Lesser Goldfinch wandered east of its normal range and was observed 14-17 Jan (ph. Kelly Kristen Sampeck, ph.† John Hale, †Mark McDermott) at the Texas A&M University Research Park, College Station, *Brazos*.



© Kelly Kristen Sampeck 17 Jan 2018

Spotted x Eastern Towhee hybrid – For the Central Brazos Valley, the first photographed and likely the first reported hybrid Spotted x Eastern Towhee was at the Brazos Center, *Brazos* 23 Dec (ph. Ron Newhouse). Within the Central Brazos Valley, Eastern and Spotted Towhees are historically reported in nearly equal numbers.



© Ron Newhouse 23 Dec 2017

Henslow's Sparrow – Not unusual in *Nacogdoches*, yet quite an achievement was 1-6 Henslow's Sparrows seen by T.O.S. field trip all 3 days 12-14 Jan (m.ob.) at the Nacogdoches airport.

Baltimore Oriole – Strangely out-of-season, a male Baltimore Oriole was at a Nacogdoches, *Nacogdoches* feeder 8-22 Feb (ph. Heinz Gaylord).

Rusty Blackbird – After a scattering of small numbers of Rusty Blackbirds in Nacogdoches, *Nacogdoches* beginning 8 Dec (Cliff Shackelford, James Childress, Josh Pierce), a substantial flock of 120 appeared in town 9 Feb (Cliff Shackelford, Rick Schaefer, David Wolf). Another significant flock was 150 at Caney Creek Park, *Newton* 18 Jan (Jeremy Webster).

Black-and-white Warbler – Not expected in the colder part of winter, a single Black-and-white Warbler was foraging at Lakeside Park, The Woodlands, *Montgomery* 25-31 Dec (Raymond Nojek, †Kevin Bennett, †James Barnes). Another was at Martin Dies S.P., *Jasper* 19 Jan (Jeremy Webster).

Nashville Warbler – A Nashville Warbler wintered 15 Jan+ (ph. †Colette Micallef) near Dayton Lakes, *Liberty*.



© Colette Micallef 16 Jan 2018

Northern Parula – Tying the earliest arrival date in the Central Brazos Valley, a Northern Parula was singing in Lick Creek Park, College Station, *Brazos* 28 Feb (†Simon Kiacz, †Christian Roberts) where it is known to nest.

Black-throated Gray Warbler – An out-of-range Black-throated Gray Warbler was observed 3 Dec (†Sandy Dillard, Cindi Dillard) at a feeder in Bryan, *Brazos*; it is the 5th record for the Central Brazos Valley and the first since 1989).

Black-throated Green Warbler – A late migrant Black-throated Green Warbler was present 16 Dec (†Janet Cook) at W. G. Jones State Forest, *Montgomery*.

Summer Tanager – A winter Summer Tanager was near Whitehouse, *Smith* 22-30 Dec (Jay Huner, et al.).

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