

Spring 2018: Central Oaks & Prairies and East Texas Pineywoods

By Bert Frenz

This report is reduced from sightings from 1 March to 31 May 2018.

WEATHER REPORTS:

David Wolf, central Pineywoods, spring season. "Every spring is different, but this one stood out as rather unusual. Regular cool fronts, often with associated storms, marched through the region in March and April, clearing rapidly and keeping temperatures pleasantly cool for weeks on end. This undoubtedly influenced migration patterns, but these fronts did not ground large numbers of Trans-Gulf migrants (those which fly across the Gulf of Mexico) in our area. Apparently these birds were caught by the storms elsewhere. Conversely, some of the Circum-Gulf migrants (those which travel overland around the Gulf and inland) did appear in good numbers, examples including Blue-headed Vireo, Nashville and Yellow-rumped warblers and Lincoln's Sparrow. Many species, both local breeders and migrants, were late to appear. May was lacking in dynamic storm activity and after the first week it suddenly warmed up and migration simply petered out."

MOST UNUSUAL SIGHTINGS:

Cinnamon Teal – A Cinnamon Teal mixed in with Blue-winged Teals was found in a slough along Sparks Lane, *Bowie* 24 Mar (ph. Eric Spink), an area with very few such records, although, curiously, one was also found there in March of last year. Another was late 27 Apr (Caleb Gordon, Robb Brumfield) near Devers, *Liberty*.

Greater Scaup – Three Greater Scaup were described on the lake at Martin Dies S.P., *Jasper* 11 May (†Justin Bosler, Tony Frank).

Common Ground-Dove – Scarce to rare in the Pineywoods, a Common Ground-Dove was recorded calling at FM 254 and CR 107 on 19-22 Apr (recording, Tony Frank) and again 27 Apr (Tony Frank, David Sarkozi, Mark Scheuerman). This is likely only the second record for *Jasper*.

White-winged Dove – In the continuing saga of White-winged Doves colonizing the Pineywoods, the first few showed up in Lufkin, *Angelina* 21 Mar (Gary Hunter) after an absence since last August. One in *Shelby* 21 Apr (John Smelser) may be a first county record and another in Sabinetown, *Sabine* 20 May (David Brotherton) was the first report this far east. In addition, one was in south Nacogdoches, *Nacogdoches* 9 May (David Wolf) and another in north Nacogdoches 15 May (Rick Schaefer, Charles Dean Fisher).

Black-billed Cuckoo – An encore to last spring's 3 reports of scarce migrant Black-billed Cuckoos, this season produced 2 more reports, one in Lufkin, *Angelina* 11 May (Gary Hunter) and another in Nacogdoches, *Nacogdoches* 14 May (Charles Dean Fisher).

Chimney Swift – A very early Chimney Swift was distinctively chattering over John Crompton Park, College Station, *Brazos* 5 Mar (Kurt Nguyen), providing the earliest record for the Central Brazos Valley.

Rufous Hummingbird – The Rufous Hummingbird present in Nacogdoches since 31 Oct was last seen 1 Apr (Cliff Shackelford, Julie Shackelford).

Buff-Bellied Hummingbird – A Buff-bellied Hummingbird 27 Apr (†Helen Baines) in College Station is reported biannually in *Brazos* on average.

Purple Gallinule – First discovered 7 May (Cathy Liles, Elaine Owens) at Carlos Lake is a good find for *Grimes*; up to 4 were seen there through the end of the season.

Sandhill Crane – Rare in East Texas Pineywoods, a flock of 50 Sandhill Cranes flew over CR 491 near Dayton, *Liberty* 3 Mar (Colette Micallef).

Black-necked Stilt – An early arrival, a single Black-necked Stilt was at Pitts Road Pond, *Brazos* 22 Mar (†John Hale).

American Avocet – Two breeding plumaged American Avocets were early 25 Apr (ph. John Hale) at Pitts Road Pond, *Brazos*.

American Golden-Plover – Unusually high concentrations of American Golden-Plovers were present at farmlands and turf farms near Allen Farm, *Brazos*, starting with 156 on 21 Mar (Bill Eisele) and 200 on 22 Mar (David Scott). At another location across the county, at Sims Lane Rd., an incredible 1750 were counted by 50s on 31 Mar (Simon Kiacz).

Long-billed Curlew – Unexpected in March in the Central Prairie, a single Long-billed Curlew was at Sims Cutoff Lane, *Brazos* 2 Mar (ph. Ron Newhouse) and 28 Mar (ph. John Hale).



Long-billed Curlew, © John Hale, 28 Mar 2018, Brazos County

Hudsonian Godwit – Early migrant Hudsonian Godwits in the Central Prairie include 14 Apr (Stephine Lacey) at Cotrone Dix Lane, 22 Apr (ph. John Hale) at nearby Sims Lane Cutoff, *Brazos*. At Country Club Lake, Bryan a single Hudsonian Godwit was lingered 11-19 May (John Hale, m.ob.).

Buff-breasted Sandpiper – A very rare spring migrant in East Texas and a probable first record for *Jasper*, a Buff-breasted Sandpiper was at the intersection of FM 254 and CR 107 on 19 Apr (ph. Tony Frank).

Pectoral Sandpiper – Up to 5 Pectoral Sandpipers were early migrants at Lake Somerville, appearing both on the *Burleson* and *Washington* sides, 10 Mar (Justin Bosler). An impressive 450+ Pectoral Sandpipers were at Sims Lane Cutoff, *Brazos* 31 Mar (Simon Kiacz).

Semipalmated Sandpiper – With no prior March records in the Central Brazos Valley, a Semipalmated Sandpiper at Sims Lane Cutoff, *Brazos* 28 Mar (ph.†John Hale) was newsworthy.

Laughing Gull – Inland Laughing Gulls included 9 at Overlook Park, Lake Somerville, *Washington* 10 Mar (Justin Bosler), one that flew to the *Burleson* side at Welch Park, and another one at Country Club Lake, Bryan, *Brazos* 1 May (ph. John Hale).

Caspian Tern – Two Caspian Terns were at Marion Ferry, Lake Sam Rayburn, *Angelina* 16 May (David Wolf).

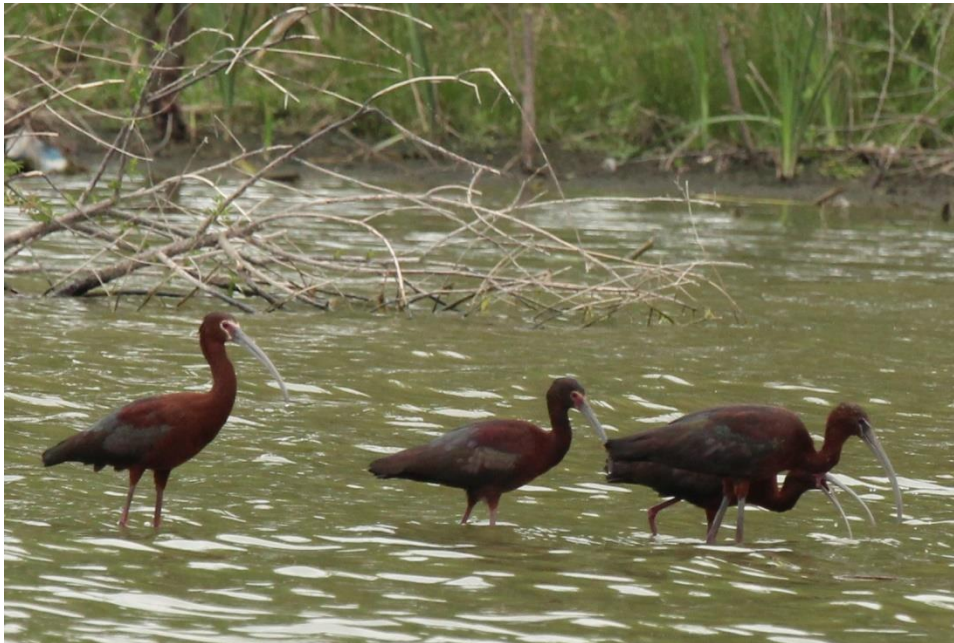
Common Loon – There are few spring records of Common Loon in the Central Brazos Valley, so one 4 May (ph. John Hale, m.ob.) at Lake Bryan, *Brazos* is noteworthy both for its rarity as well as its late date.

American Bittern – With only one prior record for *Jasper*, an American Bittern at Martin Dies S.P. 11 May (†John O'Brien, Tony Franks) is a surprise.

Tricolored Heron – Very rare in spring in *Nacogdoches*, a Tricolored Heron was at Alazan Bayou W.M.A. 11 Apr (David Wolf).

Black-crowned Night-Heron – A Black-crowned Night-Heron 2 Apr (Tyson Hart) is a rare spring sighting for *Nacogdoches*, *Nacogdoches*.

Glossy Ibis – A first record for *Brazos* and for the Central Brazos Valley, a Glossy Ibis was at Country Club Lake, Bryan 1 May (ph. †John Hale, †Mark McDermott, †Laura Sare, †Kurt Nguyen, ph. Bert Foquet).



Glossy Ibis, © John Hale, 1 May 2018, Brazos County



Glossy Ibis, © John Hale, 1 May 2018, Brazos County

Roseatte Spoonbill – An out-of-season Roseatte Spoonbill was flying over the old bridge at Trinity river wetlands, *Trinity* 30 May (Bob White).

Osprey – An Osprey was incubating on a nest at 6-Mile Creek, Toledo Bend, Sabine 2 May (Cliff Shackelford).

White-tailed Kite – A White-tailed Kite hunting over a field in the Kenney area 8 Mar (†Darrell Vollert) is a good find for northern *Austin*. Another was flying at FM 159, Allen Farm, *Brazos* 24 Mar (Bill Horn).

Sharp-shinned Hawk – A rare local breeder in the Pineywoods, a Sharp-shinned Hawk was carrying food at the Davy Crockett N.F., *Houston* 15 May (Rick Schaeffer).

Cooper's Hawk – In Nacogdoches, *Nacogdoches* a Cooper's Hawk was building a nest 5 Mar and 2 juveniles about to fledge were in the nest 10 Jun (David Wolf). In Brenham, *Washington* a Cooper's Hawk was flying around a neighborhood, issuing a courtship call several times throughout 6 Mar (Darrell Vollert). While Cooper's Hawks have been reported during the nesting season in *Washington*, this is the first evidence of breeding.

White-tailed Hawk – Only the second record for *Grimes*, a White-tailed Hawk flew over Camp Allen on the *Waller* border 15 Apr (†Lisa Madry).

Burrowing Owl – One of the best sightings in East Texas this season is a Burrowing Owl photographed in a Ruby Tuesday's parking lot in Texarkana, *Bowie* 25 Mar (ph. Larenda Donovan). This is likely the only record for *Bowie*. In his book, Matt White states that the owl is a very rare visitor to north-east Texas, the most recent being over 18 years ago in Rains County.



Burrowing Owl, © Larenda Donovan, 25 Mar 2018, Bowie County

Crested Caracara – Continuing their push into north-east Texas, a Crested Caracara was seen near Palestine, *Cherokee* 31 Mar (Becky Whisenant) and a pair elsewhere in *Cherokee* 31 Mar (Carol Wells).

American Kestrel – Further evidence of local breeding, a pair of American Kestrels were present all spring (David Wolf) at Stephen F. Austin Experimental Forest, *Nacogdoches*, another pair was observed carrying food at Dorr Creek Road, *Nacogdoches* 22 Apr (David Wolf), and yet another carrying food in Lufkin, *Angelina* 4-26 May (Gary Hunter).

Western Wood-Pewee – At Brison Park, College Station, a wood-pewee studied carefully by many observers over many hours was determined to be a very vocal Western Wood-Pewee 14-15 May (†Donald Brightsmith, †Simon Kiacz, †Mark McDermott, ph. John Hale, ph. †Kurt Nguyen, ph. Bert Foquet, †Sandy Dillard, †Bill Eisele). Physical descriptions matched Western. The bird responded to a Western recording. Calling Eastern Wood-Pewees were present for comparison to the one calling like a Western. Attempts to record its call were unsuccessful, although a few poor photos were obtained. This bird was well east of its normal range and is a second record for *Brazos*, the first being in 1969.



Western Wood-Pewee, © Bert Foquet, 14 May 2018, Brazos County

Great Kiskadee – A calling Great Kiskadee at Millican Reserve 15 Apr (†David Scott) provided a second record for *Brazos*.

Couch's Kingbird – One to 2 Couch's Kingbirds have been seen annually since 2013 in winter and spring in Brenham, *Washington* without evidence of breeding. However, on 9 Mar (Darrell Vollert) 2 kingbirds were calling continuously and exhibiting courtship behavior. One was seen at the same location again 18 Apr and 10 May.

Northern Rough-winged Swallow – A rather uncommon breeder in the Pineywoods, a pair of Northern Rough-winged Swallow had a nest burrow in *Sabine* 2 May (Cliff Shackelford).

Sedge Wren – A late-departing Sedge Wren was described in Bryan, *Brazos* 5 May (†Maria Morrison).

Veery – Good finds for the central Pineywoods were single Veeries 26 Apr in Nacogdoches and 30 Apr (both David Wolf) in Central Heights, *Nacogdoches*.

Red Crossbill – Red Crossbills reported this past winter continued at Davy Crockett N.F., *Houston* where 10+ were observed and audio-recorded 2 Mar (Rick Schaefer). The recording was identified by Cornell as Type 5. Another crossbill was recorded 18 May (Rick Schaefer) and identified by Matt Young at Cornell as Type 4.

Pine Siskin – David Wolf reports, "Pine Siskins staged a widespread return flight this spring. They were conspicuous in Pecan Park and Nacogdoches, *Nacogdoches* from early Apr to 23 Apr (Charles Dean Fisher, m.obs.). From 150-200 used feeders in *Shelby* from mid-Dec through their abrupt departure on 12 Apr (John Smelser). Six were still at feeders in Sabinetown, *Sabine* 21 Mar (David Bell) and 3 were in *Cherokee* on 6 Apr (Becky Whisenant). The last were 5 in Lufkin, *Angelina* 5 May (Gary Hunter) and a few were still in Nacogdoches 7 May (Cliff Shackelford)." Elsewhere, 20 were visiting feeders in Nelsonville, *Austin* 18 Apr and 5 remained until 3 May (Darrell Vollert).

American Goldfinch – A late American Goldfinch 25 May (ph. Judy Reeves) was photographed at **XXXX**, *Bowie*.

Spotted Towhee – Two male Spotted Towhees were late departing from Tyler S.P., *Smith* 26 Apr (Boyd Sanders).

Lark Bunting – A Lark Bunting 10 Apr (†Laurie Laskiwiski) near Bremond is a first county record for *Robertson* and one of very few for the Central Brazos Valley.

Fox Sparrow – A late-departing Fox Sparrow was observed at Alcoa Lake, *Milam* 30 Mar (†Steve Glover).

Harris's Sparrow – Usually departing by the first week of April, a Harris's Sparrow 22 Apr (ph.† Mary Richards) was late at Red Feather Nature Preserve, *Brazos*



Harris's Sparrow, © Mary Richards, 22 Apr 2018, Brazos Co.

Bobolink – A good sighting for Newman Bottom, Lee is a Bobolink 1 May (ph. Rich Kostecke).



Bobolink, © Rich Kostecke, 1 May 2018, Lee Co.

Bronzed Cowbird – Bronzed Cowbirds were an attraction in *Brazos*, starting with two at Country Club Lake, Bryan 8-14 May (ph. John Hale, ph. Ron Newhouse, †Mark McDermott, †Bill Eisele, †Sandy Dillard, †Kurt Nguyen, m.ob.), followed by 4 more at Allen Farm 12 May (†Bruce Neville, Mark McDermott, Jackie Girouard).



Bronzed Cowbird, © Ron Newhouse, 10 May 2018, Brazos Co.

Worm-eating Warbler – One of the scarcest migrants and breeders in north-east Texas, a Worm-eating Warbler was found near Antioch, *Shelby* 5 Apr (Sue Orwig).

Prothonotary Warbler – A Prothonotary Warbler nest contained 5 eggs 13 May (Sue Orwig) near Antioch, *Shelby*.

Swainson's Warbler – Rarely reported in *Austin*, a singing Swainson's Warbler was off Lynn Road in the northern part of the county 21 Apr (Darrell Vollert).

Nashville Warbler – A very early migrant Nashville Warbler was at Micallef woods, *Liberty* 1 Mar (Colette Micallef).

Cerulean Warbler – Always a good find, a male Cerulean Warbler was in Lufkin, *Angelina* 22 Apr, a female on 23 Apr, and another male 2 May (all Gary Hunter).

Palm Warbler – Very rare for the central Pineywoods, a Palm Warbler was in Nacogdoches, *Nacogdoches* 1 May (Charles Dean Fisher).

Yellow-rumped Warbler – While Yellow-rumped Warblers are abundant in winter, finding 135 on Dorr Creek Road 8 Mar and 160 in one flock at Alazan Bayou W.M.A. 4 Apr (both David Wolf) is amazing.

Yellow-throated Warbler – An early adult male Yellow-throated Warbler 3 Mar (†Carl Poldrack) was at Martin Dies S.P., *Jasper*.

Canada Warbler – A Canada Warbler was at Newman Bottom 12 May (ph. Rich Kostecke), the first sighting of this species in *Lee* since 1992. [CHECK HUGH BROWN'S RECORDS IN LEE]



Canada Warbler, © Rich Kostecke, 12 May 2018, Lee County

Lazuli Bunting – Rare in the Pineywoods and likely a first county record for *Liberty*, a Lazuli Bunting was near Dayton 26 Apr (ph. Judy Lehmborg]. Another was moving through the pecan trees at Washington-on-the-Brazos S.H.P., *Washington* 28 Apr (ph. Mary Anne Weber].



Lazuli Bunting, © Judy Lehmborg, 26 Apr 2018, Liberty County.



Lazuli Bunting, © Mary Anne Weber, 28 Apr 2018, Washington County

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