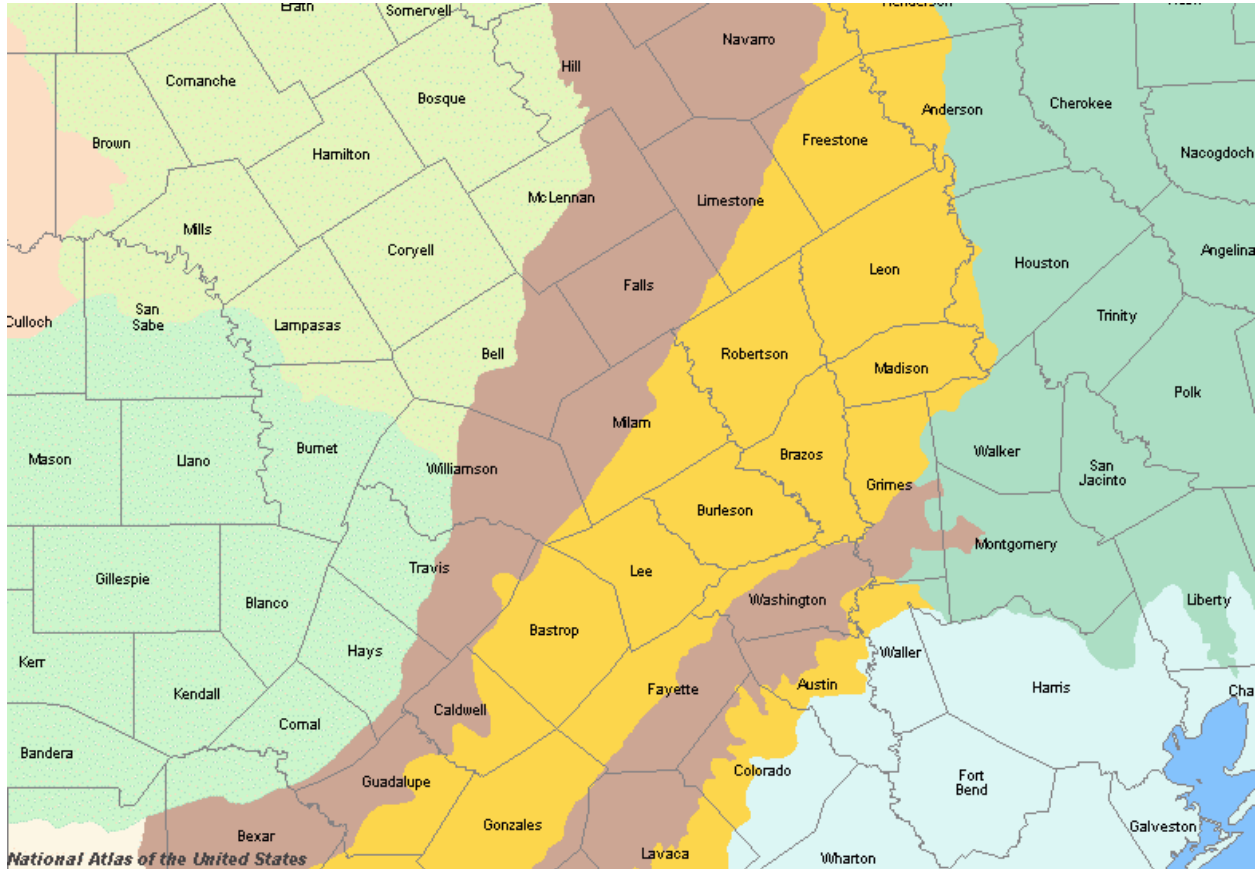


## Winter 2021-2022: Central Oaks & Prairies of Texas

By Bert Frenz

This report is from 1 December 2021 to 28 February 2022. It includes sightings from the following counties: Bastrop, Bell, Brazos, Burleson, Falls, Fayette, Freestone, Grimes, Lee, Leon, Limestone, McLennan, Madison, Milam, Navarro, Robertson, and Washington.



### MOST UNUSUAL SIGHTINGS:

**Black-bellied Whistling-Duck** – An exceptionally high count of 515 Black-bellied Whistling-Ducks were counted in Brazos Co. during the CBC 18 Dec (Bruce Neville, Donell Frank).

**Gadwall** – A high count of 3000 Gadwall were estimated at Richland Creek WMA, Freestone 28 Dec (John Garrett, Cullen Hanks).

**Northern Pintail** – A new high count for Northern Pintail at Richland Creek WMA, Freestone Co. was 4000 on 28 Dec (Cullen Hanks, John Garrett, Ash Ferlito).

**Greater Scaup** – Heavily birded Brazos Co. had only a handful of records since 1953 with only a few well documented; most recently a surprising four were at Finfeather Lake 17 Feb (Vaishali Katju).

**Common Gallinule** – Although known for several years at Carlos Lake, three new locations were discovered during the Gibbons Creek CBC 21 Dec (Jackie Girouard, Rebeckah Holtsclaw, David Scott) at small lakes and ponds near Carlos.

American Coot – Immense rafts of American Coots were found, including 8000 at Richland Creek WMA, Freestone Co. 28 Dec (Cullen Hanks, John Garrett, Ash Ferlito) and 11 200 at Stillhouse Hollow Lake Union Grove WMA, Bell Co. 12 Dec (Steve Glover, Greg Cook, Blaine Carnes).

**Whooping Crane** – A late family of three Whooping Cranes briefly visited Alligator Road in Bell Co. and adjacent Williamson Co. 28 Dec—2 Jan (Cullen Hanks, John Garrett, Ash Ferlito) and may have been tardy migrants following a very mild fall and early winter. From a colored leg band, the male crane was identified as an eleven-year-old from the natural migratory population that breeds in Canada and had been marked at Aransas NWR 6 Jan 2013 as a two-year-old paired bird.

**American Golden-Plover** – A late American Golden-Plover found at Union Grove WMA in Bell Co. 25 Nov was still seen again 7 Dec (Randy Pinkston). Two at Lake Somerville's Welch Park, Burleson Co. 20 Feb (Laura Sare) were early.

**Peregrine Falcon** – Apart from migration, Peregrine Falcons are almost always observed singly, so two falcons hunting together, cruising as a pair, and one capturing a Killdeer, was an unexpected surprise at CR 422 in Milam Co. 3 Jan (Sean Mecredy).

**Ash-throated Flycatcher** – Rare in Brazos Co., an Ash-throated Flycatcher was photographed at Nunn Jones Road 7 Dec (ph. Simon Kiacz) and more surprisingly, another was observed nearly daily 2-27 Dec (Brent Cox) at Ecology and Natural Resource area.

**Least Flycatcher** – Not expected in winter, a Least Flycatcher was at Barton Creek Wilderness Park 27-30 Dec (Cullen Hanks, John Garrett, Ash Ferlito) and another was photographed at Richland Creek WMA in Freestone Co. 30 Dec (ph. Bob Friedrichs).

**Rock Wren** – The last report of a Rock Wren in McLennan Co. was in 2008, so one in the large rocks beside Lake Waco dam 20 Dec (ph. Mike Hernandez) was a surprise. It was found at the rocks again 5-6 Jan (Caleb Clarkson, Randolph King).

Sedge Wren – A new high count for Brazos Co. was 17 Sedge Wrens 13 Dec (Simon Kiacz) at Ecology and Natural Resource area. As many as seven were in view at the same time with others calling nearby.

**Lapland Longspur** – On 19 Jan (Bill Eisele) a remarkably high count of 1400 Lapland Longspurs at Sims Lane in Brazos Co. was totaled from 17 groups of 50 in one flock flying overhead in a long string, followed by another flock of 500 joining 100 on the ground.

**Dark-eyed Junco** – Although the Slate-colored form is common, the Oregon form is reported only about 6% of the time in the central oaks and prairies region and most of these are single birds rarely seen more than a day. Thus, it is quite surprising for up to three Oregon Juncos visiting daily at a backyard feeder at a home near Centerville, Leon Co. 19 Jan+ (ph. Greg Page).

**Henslow's Sparrow** – In Brazos Co. a Henslow's Sparrow seen in the fall continued to 14 Feb (Laura Sare) at Ecology & Natural Resource area and on several occasions two were seen. Another individual was reported at Veteran's Park in College Station 12 Jan+ (Tyler Scott).

**Baltimore Oriole** – Out of season Baltimore Orioles included a male at Smithville, Bastrop Co. 30 Jan-1 Feb (Ron & Susan Martin), one at Platt Lane, Travis Co. 31 Dec (Jason Leifester) and nearby at Hornsby Bend 30 Jan (ph. Gary Holmes, Lisa Holmes, Margaret Kirby Taylor, Shelli Ellerbe).

**Cape May Warbler** – Quite unexpected and a first for Bell Co., a Cape May Warbler was at Temple 18 Dec (Randy Pinkston).

**Black-headed Grosbeak** – Rarely seen in Bastrop Co., a Black-headed Grosbeak visited Elgin feeders 24 Jan—4 Feb (Jason Leifester).

**CONTRIBUTORS:**

Blaine Carnes, Caleb Clarkson, Greg Cook, Brent Cox, Bill Eisele, Shelli Ellerbe, Ash Ferlito, Donell Frank, Bert Frenz, bert2@bafrenz.com, Bob Friedrichs, John Garrett, Jackie Girouard, Steve Glover, Cullen Hanks, Mike Hernandez, Gary Holmes, Lisa Holmes, Rebeckah Holtsclaw, Vaishali Katju, Simon Kiacz, Randolph King, Jason Leifester, Ron & Susan Martin, Sean Mecredy, Bruce Neville, Greg Page, Randy Pinkston, Laura Sare, David Scott, Tyler Scott, Margaret Kirby Taylor.