

**Late Fall/Early Winter Bird Report**  
**(October 20, 2009 – January 31, 2010)**

by David E. Wolf

Thanks to everyone who sent in records over this long “season” and my apologies for the tardiness of this report. There are some great sightings in it. The late fall and early winter were mild, and our first freeze did not come until early December, but the fronts got stronger after this. Early January brought the coldest weather we’ve had in 14 years and it remained chilly the rest of the month. Generally the birds did not seem to be affected by the weather and there were few discernible trends, except perhaps that numbers were low in general. Conversely, the 40<sup>th</sup> Nacogdoches CBC on Dec 19 netted 120 species, well above our average species total of 114. Keep the sightings coming in and **please note the new e-mail address:** dewolf@myinu.net

Initially waterfowl were few and late in arriving, but numbers picked up as the cold fronts became progressively stronger. First dates for arriving ducks included 4 Northern Pintail at Kurth Lake Nov 8 (LD); 6 Canvasback over Marion Ferry Oct 23 (DW); 6 Redhead at Kurth Lake Oct 24 (LD); 3 Lesser Scaup at Kurth Lake Oct 24 (LD); 2 Bufflehead at Ellen Trout Park Nov 7 (SL et al); and a female Common Goldeneye at the Nac ponds Nov 28 (RT). Of note were 47 Redheads already at Kurth Lake Nov 8 (LD); they increased to 100 here by mid-Dec. This species also appeared on the Nac ponds, increasing to 29 on the count. By early January almost all were gone from both sites. On Jan 5 at least 4000 Canvasbacks were rafting off the TX 147 causeway on Rayburn (DW). Single male Red-breasted Mergansers were good finds at Lake Nacogdoches on Nov 8 (CW) and Kurth Lake Nov 22 (LD). A covey of 15 Northern Bobwhite in the Sabine NF (Shelby Co) Sept 8 (RS) was the largest reported in our region in years. Pied-billed Grebes on Kurth Lake peaked at 150 on Dec 5 (LD), while the first Horned Grebes were 3 there Dec 13 (LD et al). An **Eared Grebe** was a rare visitor to the Nac ponds Dec 16-17, but did not stay around for the count (DW et al). Small numbers of Am. White Pelicans lingered, with 2 at Kurth Lake Jan 2 (LD) and 7 at TX 147 on Rayburn Jan 5 (DW). **5 Brown Pelicans** (all less than fully adult) were at the Lake Livingston spillway Feb 6 (DW, RT). The last **Neotropic Cormorant** this fall was an im. at the Etoile crossing of Rayburn (Ang Co) on Oct 23, but then **two singles were found on Rayburn on Jan 5**, one at the TX 103 crossing of the Attoyac Bayou (San Aug Co) and another on the Angelina Co side of TX 147 (all DW). This species has been steadily increasing in our area in recent years, but we still have **very few winter records**. Late Anhingas were 3 at Ellen Trout Nov 1 (AK, KK) and 2 at Kurth Lake Dec 5 (LD). A high count of 62 Great Egrets came in to roost at Ellen Trout Park Dec 1 (RT), while a Snowy Egret at Marion Ferry Oct 23 was the last (DW). A single late Cattle Egret in n. Nac Co on Dec 13 was a surprise (RT). The last Green Heron was one at Kurth Lake Oct 24 (LD). A single Black-crowned Night-Heron was at Ellen Trout Park Nov 1 (AK, KK); this continues to be the best site for this species in our region. A late immature White Ibis visited Alazan Bayou WMA Dec 17-18, but did not stay around for the count (DP, DW).

Bald Eagles were widespread around Lake Rayburn and elsewhere, with 21 in the TX 147 area on Oct 23 the highest count reported (DW). An adult **Golden Eagle** at Boggy Slough South (Trinity Co) on Dec 4 was a great find (CS) and one of very few records for the central Pineywoods. A wildlife tech had

reported one here a week earlier (fide CS). The only **Merlin** this fall was one at the Etoile crossing (Ang Co) on Oct 23 (DW), but then one was found in w. Nac Co. on the Nac CBC on Dec 19 (SL). A **Peregrine Falcon** on an island off the TX 147 causeway on Jan 5 & 31 (DW) was only our 3<sup>rd</sup> winter record; the first two were in the same area last winter. 2000+ American Coots were already on Kurth Lake by Oct 24 (LD). The only shorebirds of note were single American Avocet and Greater Yellowlegs along the Attoyac channel below TX 103 on Oct 23 (DW). Single Spotted Sandpipers stayed at Kurth Lake through at least Jan 2 (LD et al) and at the TX 147 causeway through Jan 5 (DW). A **Barn Owl** was seen alive in w. Nac Co on Nov 18, not far from where a dead one was found on June 8, 2008 (CW). These are only our 3<sup>rd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> local records in 40 years. Hummingbirds made news this season, with late Ruby-throateds lingering at many feeders into the last 10 days of Oct (m. obs.) and the last near Douglass on Nov 8 (CW). A female *Archilochus* near Huntington Nov 29-Dec 8 was photographed and identified as a **Black-chinned Hummingbird**, one of few confirmed reports for our area (Stan and Jan Bohon, MHW). On Oct 23 an adult male **Rufous Hummingbird** arrived back in Nacogdoches where one had wintered last year (presumably the same bird) and then a second one (female-plumaged) appeared at the same house around Nov 20 (JR, RS). Yet another Rufous showed up in Nac. in mid-Dec and stayed through at least Jan (CE); all three were seen on the Nac CBC on Dec 19.

A very late Eastern Wood-Pewee in Central Hts Oct 27-28 was heard as well as seen (MHW, DW), while the last Scissor-tailed Flycatcher was one near Alto (Cherokee Co) on Nov 13 (JP). A **Couch's Kingbird** was seen **and heard** at Kurth Lake on Jan 10 (LD, CM, LS) was likely the same individual that spent over a month here last winter. 4 **Cave Swallows** near the entrance to Boggy Slough South on TX 94 (Trinity Co) on Dec 4 were a great find and provided the **first winter report for the Pineywoods** (CS). The last Northern Rough-winged Swallows were 15 around upper Rayburn Oct 23 and one over Alazan Bayou WMA Oct 24 (both DW), while 2 Barn Swallows at Kurth Lake Oct 24 were the last (LD). A flock of 6 **Horned Larks** near Melrose on Dec 13 was unexpected (RT) and only the 3<sup>rd</sup> local report of this species in the last 15 years. The first Brown Creeper was one in Central Hts Nov 1 (MHW). A Marsh Wren was at Lake Murvaul (Panola Co) on Dec 31 (RS). Lingering Blue-gray Gnatcatchers were seen at a number of sites in Nov-Dec (m. obs.), culminating in a record-setting **12** on the Nac CBC on Dec 19. At least some were still around after the cold weather set in, with singles at the TX 147 causeway and near Diboll on Jan 5 (DW); in Central Hts through Jan 24 (MHW); and at Ang Co end of the TX 147 bridge Jan 31 (DW). 2 Gray Catbirds were at Kurth Lake on Dec 13 (LD et al) and 2 were found on the Nac CBC on 19 Dec (two parties). The **Black-and-white Warbler** found along Lanana Creek near Pecan Park in Nacogdoches on the count on Dec 19 was seen again on Jan 17 (both CW).

A flock of Lark Sparrows again wintered in Central Hts, with 4-6 seen irregularly from Nov 5 through Jan (DW, MHW), plus 3 were found in e. Nac. Co on the count on Dec 19 (RH). The first LeConte's Sparrows were 2 at Alazan Bayou Oct 24 (DW). 3 **Harris's Sparrows** at Alazan Bayou on Nov 28 were the first (RT); a flock of 3 showed up in Central Hts Dec 1 and increased to 6 during the winter (DW, MHW); and 4 were found on the Nac CBC on Dec 19 (3 parties). This is the **second good winter in a row for this species**. The last Indigo Buntings were 4 in Central Hts Oct 31 (DW). The last report of the Nacogdoches **Great-tailed Grackles** was 3 near Wal-Mart on Oct 22 (DW). **Did anyone see them after this?** We still do not have winter records for this species in our area and it may be because they leave. Flocks of Brewer's Blackbirds were found at two regular sites, 70 on Jan 5 off FM 1818 in s. Angelina Co (DW) and 100 on Jan 8 in w. Nac Co (RS). The first American Goldfinch were 3 over Alazan Bayou WMA on Oct 24,

a bit early (RT, DW). The only Pine Siskins were 2 in the SFA Exp Forest on the Nac CBC on Dec 19 (RT) and a small flock in Central Hts on Jan 7 (MHW). Among the very few Purple Finches reported were 2 females near San Augustine on Jan 14 (MA).

**Observers:**

MA = Marcus Arrequin

LD = Louis Debetaz

CE = Chuck Ely

RH = Ruth Heino

AK = Allan Kaplowitz

KK = Kara Kaplowitz

SL = Susie Lower

CM = Carroll Moore

DP = Dick Pike

JP = Josh Pierce

JR = Jack Rohrer

LS = Lynn Smith

RS = Rick Schaefer

RT = Robert Truss

CW = Carol Wells

DW = David Wolf

MHW = Mimi Hoppe Wolf

**Localities:**

**Angelina County:** Diboll; Ellen Trout Park (Lufkin); Etoile crossing (= TX 103 at the Angelina River on upper Rayburn); Huntington; Kurth Lake

**Nacogdoches County:** Alazan Bayou WMA; Central Hts; Douglass; Lake Nacogdoches; Melrose; Nacogdoches; Nac ponds (= Nacogdoches sewage ponds); SFA Experimental Forest.

**San Augustine County:** San Augustine; TX 147 area on Lake Rayburn (unless specified as Angelina Co).