

Pineywoods Audubon Fall Bird Report
(September 1 - November 30, 2012)
Compiled by David E. Wolf

This was not a particularly exciting fall season for birds in our part of the Pineywoods. In general storm activity and associated rains were infrequent, the cool fronts were mostly undramatic, and the season remained mild through the end of November. These factors made for a lackluster songbird migration, plus shorebirds were nearly absent due to the lack of suitable habitat. We did not get many post-breeding wading birds and no major raptor flights were detected. Waterfowl were an exception and both their numbers and variety were good throughout the season, especially at Kurth Lake. (Thanks for the great coverage there Louis!). Now, as I write this in late December, we are getting colder weather and waves of winter birds continue to move into and through the region. Keep watching for the more unusual ones and please send in those records, to: dewolf@myinu.net

First dates for some winter residents:

Gadwall - 100 at Kurth Lake Sept 7 (LD).
American Wigeon - 7 at Kurth Lake Oct 4 (LD).
Mallard - 10 at Kurth Lake Oct 27 (LD).
Northern Shoveler - 25 at Kurth Lake Sept 7 (LD).
Northern Pintail - one off Etoile Park Sept 1 (DW); 4 at Kurth Lake Sept 7 (LD).
Green-winged Teal - 1 in Lufkin Sept 16 (LD).
Redhead - a male with feral Mallards at Ewing Park on upper Rayburn Sept 16 was early (DW); more normal were 4 at Kurth Lake Oct 4 (LD).
Bufflehead - 25 in Ellen Trout Park on Nov 14; 62 were here Nov 18 (both LD).
Common Goldeneye - 2 off the TX 147 causeway Nov 27 (DW).
Hooded Merganser - 2 at Kurth Lake Nov 9 (LD).
Ruddy Duck - 5 at Kurth Lake Oct 27 (LD).
Common Loon - one on Kurth Lake Nov 16 (LD).
Horned Grebe - one at Kurth Lake Nov 6 (LD).
Sharp-shinned Hawk - the first migrant was one in Central Hts Sept 13 (MHW).
on Nov 10 (Kathy Greer fide CS).
Yellow-bellied Sapsucker - one in Central Hts Oct 8 (DW).
Northern Flicker - first migrant over Central Hts was Sept 24 (DW).
Red-breasted Nuthatch - one in Central Hts Sept 22 (SL, RT, DW et al; PAS field trip).
Brown Creeper - one in Central Hts Oct 18 (MHW, DW).
House Wren one in Central Hts Sept 10 was somewhat early (DW).
Sedge Wren - 3 at Alazan Bayou WMA Oct 13 (DW).
Ruby-crowned Kinglet - one in Central Hts Oct 1 (MHW).
Hermit Thrush - one on the Azalea Trail Nov 9 (LD).
Brown Thrasher - the first migrant was one at Marion Ferry Sept 16 (DW).
American Pipit - one over Alazan Bayou WMA Oct 10 (DW).
Orange-crowned Warbler - 2 at Ellen Trout Sept 28 were early (LD); the next was one at Alazan Bayou WMA Oct 13 (DW).

Yellow-rumped Warbler - 2 over Central Hts Oct 15 (DW).

Savannah Sparrow - one at Kurth Lake Oct 9 (LD).

Fox Sparrow - one in Nacogdoches Nov 16 (LS).

Swamp Sparrow - 2 at Alazan Bayou WMA Oct 10 (DW).

White-throated Sparrow - one in Central Hts Oct 15 (DW); 1 in Nacogdoches Oct 22 (LS); one on Toledo Bend Oct 28 was the first there (DB).

Harris's Sparrow - 2 at the base of the TX 147 causeway on the Nov 27 cold front (DW); one was back in Central Hts Dec 1 (DW).

White-crowned Sparrow - one at Alazan Bayou WMA Oct 11 (DW).

Dark-eyed Junco - one in Nacogdoches Oct 29 (LS) and one in Loco Valley Nov 2 (RH).

Pine Siskin - one over Marion Ferry Dec 2 (RT, DW) and 7 over Nacogdoches Dec 6 (TR). These were the first confirmed sightings but this species may have been heard as early as late Oct.

Season report:

A north wind on Oct 27 brought the first big push of ducks to Kurth Lake, including 350 Gadwall; 200 Am. Wigeon; 10 Mallard; 150 Northern Shoveler; **25 Northern Pintail**; 10 Canvasback; 75 Redhead; 400 Ring-necked Duck; and 5 Ruddy Duck (LD). 100 Pied-billed Grebes at Kurth Lake Sept 9 was the first big influx (LD). The first Am. White Pelicans were 7 at Kurth Lake Sept 19 (Wayne Forrest). Small numbers were later seen in Oct-Nov from the TX 147 causeway on Rayburn (DW) and on Toledo Bend (DB), but no large flocks were detected. A Neotropic Cormorants at Ellen Trout Park Sept 16-19 was somewhat unexpected there (LD), while the last on Rayburn were 3 at Marion Ferry Sept 9 (DW). 2 Anhingas were still at Kurth Lake Oct 9 (LD) and one was at Ellen Trout Park through Nov 30 (LD). 53 Great Egrets came to roost at Ellen Trout Park on Nov 29, a good count for late in the season (LD). The last Little Blue Heron was one at Lufkin CC pond on Oct 14 (LD). The last Tricolored Herons were 2 over Marion Ferry Sept 16 (DW). A late White Ibis was at Ellen Trout Park Nov 29 and nearby Jones Park Dec 2 (LD). A White-faced Ibis was at the Nacogdoches sewage ponds Sept 17 (CW), while additional records of *Plegadis sp?* were 2 at Marion Ferry Sept 9 and a single there Sept 16 (DW). The only Roseate Spoonbill reported this fall was one over Marion Ferry Sept 16 (DW). Small numbers of Wood Storks were scattered around the area in Sept, including 2 in Douglass Sept 9 (DW) and from 7-11 in Central Hts Sept 3-7 (DW).

An Osprey visited Kurth Lake Oct 13 (LD). On Nov 27 at least 14 Bald Eagles were in view at one time around the TX 147 causeway on Rayburn, a good count (DW). Northern Harrier reports were few, but one was at Kurth Lake Oct 9 (LD) and 5 (a high count) were along the TX 147 causeway on the Nov 27 cool front, with another near Chireno that day (DW). More noteworthy was a **Swainson's Hawk** at Kurth Lake Oct 9 (LD). The only Merlins were singles at Kurth Lake Oct 13 (LD) and over Nacogdoches Nov 7 (RS). A rare **Sandhill Crane** was seen over Nacogdoches on a wet cool front on Nov 23 (MHW). A Virginia Rail was flushed in the riverbottoms at the SFA Exp Forest on Oct 22 (RS). This species is not often detected in our area, though it may be regular where there are marshes. 80 American Coots at Kurth Lake Sept 15 were the first arrivals; 400 there on Sept 20 had increased to 1500 on Oct 4; by Oct 20 there were 4500 and numbers continued to increase through November (LD). There were also 8000+ off the TX 147 causeway on Nov 27 (DW). There was very little habitat available for shorebirds this fall and few were detected. The more interesting sightings included 4 American Avocets at Kurth Lake Oct

20 (LD); a Spotted Sandpiper still at Ellen Trout Park Nov 18 (LD); a Greater Yellowlegs over Alazan Bayou WMA Oct 14 (DW); a late Solitary Sandpiper at the VFW Pond in Lufkin Oct 14 and a **very late** one there on Dec 2, only the second Dec record for Angelina Co (both LD); 12 Upland Sandpipers over Lufkin Sept 14 (LD); and a noteworthy Wilson's Phalarope at Ellen Trout Park Sept 16 (LD). An early Franklin's Gull was at Kurth Lake Sept 18 (LD) and then a rare **Laughing Gull** was there Sept 22 (LD). 45 Black Terns were off the TX 147 causeway Sept 1 (DW), while 30 Forster's Tern at Kurth Lake Oct 9 was a good count for there (LD).

A **White-winged Dove** was photographed at Alazan Bayou WMA on Sept 28 (Tony Adams). This species is still rare and irregular in our area and this was the first record for the relatively well-birded WMA. Great Horned Owls were more vocal than usual in mid to late November on through December and were heard in Ellen Trout Park (LD), Carrizo Creek (SL), Central Hts (DW, MHW) and Nacogdoches (Howard Williamson). 5 Common Nighthawks over Central Hts Sept 15 was the season high count (DW). The last hummingbird was one in Loco Valley Nov 3, assumed to be a Ruby-throated; 2 were still there Oct 26 (RH). The last hummingbirds in Angelina Co were 2 near Hudson on Oct 20 (JP). A **Calliope Hummingbird** banded near Grapeland (Houston Co) in August (Jim Renfro fide CS) was only the second ever for the Pineywoods. The passerine migration was generally lackluster and few reports were received of the less common transients or significant fallouts. An Olive-sided Flycatcher visited Central Hts Sept 7 (DW); an Eastern Wood-Pewee at Ellen Trout Park Oct 9 was the last (LD); and a Yellow-bellied Flycatcher at Etoile Park Sept 9 was the only one this fall (DW). A **Couch's Kingbird** discovered at Alazan Bayou WMA Oct 10 was seen again Oct 13 and heard repeatedly and photographed on Oct 14 (DW); it was last seen on Oct 23 (CW). That same day (Oct 23) an immature male **Vermilion Flycatcher** at Alazan Bayou WMA was nicely documented with photos (CW). 6 migrant Red-eyed Vireos at Alazan Bayou WMA Sept 20 was the season high count (DW). An early **Red-breasted Nuthatch** detected in Central Hts on the Sept 22 PAS butterfly field trip (SL, RT, DW et al) was a harbinger of a major flight of this species. The next report was one in the SFA Exp Forest Oct 15 (RS) and then in the last days of October they turned up widely at feeders in Nacogdoches (many observers). Migrant Marsh Wrens were one in Central Hts Oct 1 (MHW); one at Kurth Lake on the Nov 10 field trip (LD, PAS); 2 at Alazan Bayou WMA Nov 20 (DW); and 2 at the base of the TX 147 causeway Nov 27 (DW). The first big push of Blue-gray Gnatcatchers in Central Hts was 25 on Sept 3 and the season high count was 50 on upper Rayburn Sept 16 (both DW). A migrant Wood Thrush was at Etoile Park Sept 9 (DW). 2 migrant Gray Catbirds were at Alazan Bayou Sept 20 (DW). The first Nashville Warblers were singles at Alazan Bayou Sept 15 (DW) and Ellen Trout Sept 16 (LD). 8 Yellow Warblers in Central Hts Sept 3 was a high count for there (DW). The first Black-throated Green Warbler was one in Central Hts Sept 7 (DW). A Yellow-throated Warbler at the base of the TX 147 causeway on Nov 27 was **very late** (DW); while a Prairie Warbler at Alazan Bayou WMA Sept 15 was somewhat late (DW). For some reason American Redstarts were more frequent than usual this fall, with a number of sightings in both Nacogdoches and Angelina Counties from Sept 9-October 16 (LD, DW). The first push of migrant Common Yellowthroats was 4 in Pecan Park Sept 19 and 12 were at Alazan Bayou the next day; 15 were there Sept 23 (DW). The first Wilson's Warbler was one at Alazan Bayou Sept 2 (DW), while the last was one in Lufkin Oct 14 (LD). The only Clay-colored Sparrow seen this fall visited Central Hts on Oct 1 (MHW). 2 Chipping Sparrows in Douglass Sept 9 may have summered in the area (CW). At least 2 Lark Sparrows lingered through the season and into the winter in Central Hts

(MHW, DW). A migrant Lincoln's Sparrow visited Loco Valley Nov 1 (RH). 20 White-crowned Sparrows in Central Hts Nov 20 was a good count (DW). The season peak for Indigo Buntings at Alazan Bayou was 165 on Sept 20 (DW). A late migrant Painted Bunting came through Central Hts Sept 22 (DW). 30-40 migrant Dickcissels fed in the grass at Alazan Bayou WMA Sept 2-8 (DW et al). A **Yellow-headed Blackbird** over Central Hts Sept 18 was a rare fall surprise (DW). **Great-tailed Grackles** are now a regular member of our avifauna, but the size of the post-breeding flocks in Nacogdoches this year caught me by surprise. Groups of 30-40 were seen several times at three scattered areas on the north/northwest side of town, inc 30 at Tipton Ford/Kroger's area in early Oct (CS, DW). Birds were still present in the Wal-Mart area through the end of Nov, but seemed to disappear after that (RT). We still have not confirmed this species spending the entire winter in our area. Where do they go?. 12 Baltimore Orioles at Etoile Park Sept 9 was the season high count (DW).

Observers: DB = David Bell; TD = Thelma Dalmas; LD = Louis Debetaz; RH = Ruth Heino; SL = Susie Lower; PAS = Pineywoods Audubon Society; JP = Jimmie Putnam; TR = Thomas Riecke; RS = Rick Schaefer; CS = Cliff Shackelford; LS = Les Stewart; CW = Carol Wells; DW = David Wolf; MHW = Mimi Hoppe Wolf

Localities in Angelina County: Azalea Trail (Lufkin); Kurth Lake; Ellen Trout Park (Lufkin); Ewing Park (TX 103 at the Angelina crossing on upper Rayburn); Lufkin; Marion Ferry; VFW Pond (Lufkin).

In Nacogdoches County: Alazan Bayou WMA; Carrizo Creek, Central Heights; Chireno; Douglass; Etoile Park on upper Rayburn; Loco Valley; Nacogdoches; Nacogdoches sewage ponds; Pecan Park.

In San Augustine County: TX 147 causeway on middle Lake Rayburn.