

Pineywoods Audubon Spring Bird Report
February 20 – May 31, 2012

by David E. Wolf

My apologies for the lateness of this report. Excuses include “It wasn’t a very exciting spring migration” and “I’ve been busy”. Good pushes of migrants were few and far between this spring, as were rains, causing many veteran observers to long for the good old days. A cool front April 16-18 brought some movement of birds. The next push was April 29-30, when a fair variety of warblers appeared in Pecan Park and Nacogdoches in modest numbers. This should have been the beginning of our peak week, but after these days the weather was boring and we had many days with south winds to carry the migrants right over us, through May 10. A late cool front that came through on May 11 ushered in three days with widespread late migrants, especially warblers. And then it was over with!

First dates for some spring arrivals:

Ruby-throated Hummingbird - 1 male in Nac on March 9 (LS).
Eastern Wood-Pewee - 1 in the SFA Exp Forest April 16 (DW).
Scissor-tailed Flycatcher - 1 in Nac on March 16 (CW).
Northern Rough-winged Swallow - 1 at Alazan Bayou March 10 (DW et al).
Barn Swallow - 5 at Kurth Lake Feb 24 (LD).
Yellow-throated Warbler - 2 in the SFA Exp Forest on 17 March (DW).
Louisiana Waterthrush - 1 in Carrizo Creek March 15 (SL).
Kentucky Warbler - 1 in the SFA Exp Forest April 7 (DW).
Hooded Warbler - 3 in the SFA Experimental Forest March 25 (CW).
Summer Tanager - 1 female in Central Hts (LS).
Blue Grosbeak - 1 male in Nac (LS).

Migrants and lingerers:

Two Black-bellied Whistling-Ducks were seen in Diboll (especially Old Orchard Park) on 4 occasions from May 5-27 (LD); this remains our only regular site for this species in our area. A pair of free-flying Canada Geese were seen in Sabine County on April 24 and 4 were in the Patroon area of Toledo Bend (also Sabine Co) on April 26 (Viron Barbay). It may be that this species is establishing itself in our region. A pair of free-flying Mallards was first noted in the Patroon Creek area on April 26 and was still around in late May (Viron Barbay); they have rarely nested in our region. Late Blue-winged Teal were in Central Hts May 24 (DW) and Ellen Trout Park May 28 (LD), while a late migrant male Northern Pintail was at Alazan Bayou April 7 (DW). Singles Eared Grebes were on Kurth Lake March 4 and March 24 (LD). A Neotropic Cormorant was at Kurth Lake May 6 (LD). There are very few previous records from this site, although this species is now nesting on Lake Rayburn. A kettle of 63 Anhingas over Alazan Bayou March 17 was notable for the number and early date (DW). Single American Bitterns were at Alazan Bayou March 10 (SL, LS, RT, DW), April 3 (DW) and April 15 (DW). The first White Ibis were 125 in Houston Co March 17 (TR). On March 22 there were 75 at Alazan Bayou WMA (CW) and 20 were there March 31 (CS). A single White-faced Ibis was at Alazan Bayou April 15 (DW).

A migrant Osprey was at Ellen Trout Park May 3 (LD). The first Mississippi Kites were 8 over Nacogdoches April 16 (DW). A male Northern Harrier was at the Angelina Co Airport March 22-29 (LD). Two Swainson's Hawks came low over Alazan Bayou as the wind shifted to the north on April 15 (DW). A Merlin at Alazan Bayou March 10 was the only one reported this spring (SL, LS, RT, DW). A Purple Gallinule was at Kurth Lake May 26 (LD); this is our only regular site for this species. 7 American Golden-Plover were at the Angelina Co Airport March 18, with 4-5 remaining on 4 additional visits to this site through March 27 (LD). 3 late birds were there April 16 (LD) and a single late bird was in w. Nac. Co. April 16 (DW). A Semipalmated Plover in w. Nac Co April 27 was a surprise (DW). A high count of 17 Spotted Sandpipers visited Kurth Lake April 27 (LD). The last Spotted of the spring were 3 at Kurth Lake on June 3 (LD). The first Upland Sandpiper was one at the Angelina Co Airport on March 22 (LD), while the first numbers there were 6 on March 27 and 9 on March 29 (LD). The last report there was 3 on April 11 (LD). A Western Sandpiper was at the Angelina Co Airport April 16 (LD) and 3 Baird's Sandpipers were in w. Nac. Co. the same day (DW). The first Pectoral Sandpipers were 3 at the Angelina Co Airport March 27 (LD). A Wilson's Phalarope in w. Nac. Co. April 27 (DW) and 2 at the VFW pond in Lufkin May 12 (AM) were the only ones found. Five Franklin's Gulls were at Kurth Lake April 27 (LD). At least 3 **Lesser Black-backed Gulls** were along the Lake Livingston spillway on March 16 (DW, RT). This is still the only site in the Pineywoods where this species has been seen, but it has been annual in recent years. **White-winged Doves** are still rare and noteworthy in our region, though they likely are in the process of becoming established breeders, so one heard in Nac from March 21-early April and another seen in Lufkin on April 7 are noteworthy (both RS). They were confirmed breeding in Lufkin for the first time last year and were found on the 2011 Nacogdoches Christmas Count. **All reports of this species** are welcomed, until we have a better idea of how quickly they are spreading in our area. 3 Whip-poor-wills were heard in Central Hts April 1 (MHW, DW), while a Chuck-will's-widow there on April 3 was early (MHW, DW). A push of 62+ Northern Flickers over Alazan Bayou March 10 was a high count for the spring migration (SL, LS, RT, DW). The first Least Flycatchers were 2 in Nac on May 3 (DW). Fledgling Eastern Phoebes came out of the nest in late April and were found at four different sites in Nac Co from April 18-29 (DW). The season peak of 4 Warbling Vireos was in Pecan Park April 18 (DW) and a Philadelphia Vireo was on the Azalea Trail May 16 (LD). 2 Bank Swallows over Alazan Bayou April 15 were a bit early (DW). At least 1000+ Cliff Swallows east of Nacogdoches on May 12 was a notable concentration of migrants (SL). 2 Cave Swallow were first found at the Alazan Bayou bridge on April 14, a later date than the previous two years. (DW). One was at a bridge on the SFASU campus on May 3, a new site for this recent invader to our region (DW). LD had 7 at the Neches River at TX 7 Weston May 18; the first Angelina Co breeding records came from this site a few years ago. A Red-breasted Nuthatch in Nacogdoches Feb 4 was one of the very few regional reports all winter (CW). It is hard to know what to make of a **Wood Thrush** in Lufkin on Feb 29 – early arrival or over-wintering? (Jack Windsor). The only Veery reported was one on the Azalea Trail May 2 (LD). This migrant has become increasingly infrequent in our area. The only Gray-cheeked Thrush was one on the Angelina College trail May 14 (LD). A Gray Catbird heard in Nacogdoches on Feb 28 was presumably over-wintering (TR). Early March brought a good push of north-bound Cedar Waxwings, with 400 counted over Central Hts on March 8 and 500 in Nacogdoches on March 9 (DW). Single Blue-winged Warblers were at Alazan Bayou April 14 (DW) and Pecan Park April 16 (DW), while the only Golden-winged Warbler reported was a female in Pecan Park April 30 (DW). The first

Tennessee Warblers were 4 in Pecan Park April 16 (DW). On May 12 Dennis Scheef had a good push of warblers in Cushing, inc 5 Blackburnian, 2 Bay-breasted, 8 redstarts and 5 other species. The only other Bay-breasteds were singles in Pecan Park April 28 (DW) and Douglass May 14 (CW). Three singing male Cerulean Warblers were in Pecan Park April 18 (DW, DS). The first Northern Waterthrush was one in Nacogdoches on April 16 (DW). The only Mourning Warblers were 2 at Angelina College May 14 (LD) and one on the Azalea Trail May 21 (LD). The first Wilson's Warblers were singles on April 30 on the Azalea Trail (AK, KK) and in Pecan Park (DW), while another was on the Azalea Trail May 2 (LD) and one was in Douglass May 14 (CW).

A good count of 8 Eastern Towhees was at Alazan Bayou March 10 (SL, LS, RT, DW). Two Clay-colored Sparrows at Alazan Bayou April 27 were the only ones seen this spring (DW). A singing migrant Field Sparrow was in Pecan Park April 29-30 (DW). Two Lark Sparrows in Douglass March 12 may have been returning migrants (CW). The last Fox Sparrows were 2 at Alazan Bayou March 7 (DW). The wintering female **Summer Tanager** at the Native Plant Center in Nac was seen again Feb 17 (DW), the last definite date I have for it. Did it stay later? The only Scarlet Tanagers reported this spring were a male in Pecan Park April 18 (DW, DS) and 2 on the Azalea Trail April 28 (AK, KK). The first Rose-breasted Grosbeak came to a feeder in Cushing April 17 (DS). Upwards of 6 Western Meadowlarks were heard singing along a one-mile stretch of FM 698 in Central Hts in late Feb (DW; m. obs.); a late one was heard here April 4 (DW). A single Brewer's Blackbird in Douglass Feb 19 was one of the few seen this winter (CW), as were 20 at a regular site in w. Nac Co on 24 Feb (DW). Great-tailed Grackle - male back at Wal-Mart/Lowe's area in Nac on Feb 27 (SL). They were back at the Lufkin Wal-Mart too, from at least April 28 (LD). The first Baltimore Orioles were 5 in Pecan Park April 16 (DW).

Observers: LD = Louis Debetaz; AK = Allen Kaplowitz; KK = Kara Kaplowitz; SL = Susie Lower; AM = Allison Maxwell; TR = Thomas Riecke; RS = Rick Schaefer; DS = Dennis Scheef; CS = Cliff Shackelford; LS = Les Stewart; RT = Robert Truss; CW = Carol Wells; DW = David Wolf; JW = Jack Windsor.

Localities in Angelina County: Angelina College Fitness Trail; Angelina County Airport; Azalea Trail (in Lufkin); Ellen Trout Park (Lufkin); Kurth Lake; Lufkin

In Nacogdoches County: Alazan Bayou WMA; Carrizo Creek; Central Heights; Cushing; Douglass; Nacogdoches; Pecan Park; Stephen F. Austin Experimental Forest.