

Pineywoods Audubon Society Fall Bird Report

(September 1 – October 31, 2013)

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Somehow fall migration this year didn't seem as exciting as it should have been. It came and went and I'm still waiting for that great "fallout" that isn't going to happen. Migrants were scarce and their numbers were never great, nor was the variety. Much of the time afield it didn't seem like much was happening. But, fall is a complex season, and as I finish up this report I realize that there were many exceptions to what I just wrote and that a great many birds were seen by the observers that regularly got out and looked.

Waterfowl were generally late in arriving this fall and not in any numbers through the end of this period, not surprising given that the weather was still mild. The first geese were heard over Central Hts Oct 7 (MHW); they sounded like Greater White-fronted. The first seen were 20 Greater White-fronted over the TX 147 causeway Oct 18 (DW), with others heard in Central Hts that day (MHW). Two Canada Geese visited Kurth Lake Oct 24 (LD); sightings of this species have been few in recent years. The first Gadwall were 12 at Kurth Lake Oct 7 (LD). The first Blue-winged Teal were 10 at TX 147 causeway Sept 1 (DW) and 45 at Lake Nacogdoches Sept 2 (CS). There was a major movement of Blue-winged Teal down Lake Rayburn on the north breeze on Sept 13, when 350 were at Marion Ferry (LD, RH, LS), 730 came over the TX 147 causeway (DW) and 460 were on the flats at TX 103 at the Attoyac (DW). The next big push came with the next north wind, 510+ over the TX 147 causeway Sept 21 (DW et al; PAS). The first Northern Shoveler were 5 amidst the teal over the TX 147 causeway Sept 13 (DW). The only Northern Pintail were 5 at the TX 147 causeway Sept 21 (DW et al; PAS); 2 at Kurth Lake Oct 13 (LD); and 4 at Kurth Oct 30 (LD, DB, LS). 100 Green-winged Teal were on Kurth Lake Oct 7 (LD). The first Redheads were 25 at Kurth Lake Oct 24 (LD) and the first Canvasback were 2 there Oct 30 (LD, DB, LS). The pair of Ring-necked Ducks that summered at Kurth Lake was seen through the period (LD); the first migrant was one at Marion Ferry Oct 25 (DW et al; PAS). The first Lesser Scaup were 5 at Kurth Lake Oct 30 (LD, DB, LS).

45 Pied-billed Grebes on Kurth Lake Sept 12 was the first high count of migrants; 100 were there Sept 26; and season peak count was 300 on Oct 8 (all LD). A flock of 35 Neotropic Cormorants over Marion Ferry on Sept 7 was a noteworthy number (DW et al; PAS); other significant counts were 17 over Marion Ferry Sept 20 (DW et al; PAS) and 22 over the TX 147 causeway Sept 21 (DW et al; PAS). Single Neotropic Cormorants lingered at Ellen Trout Park and Kurth Lake throughout Sept until Oct 1 (LD). Single Anhingas were still at Ellen Trout Park Oct 29 (RT) and Kurth Lake Oct 30 (LD, DB, LS). Two Snowy Egrets were still at Ellen Trout Oct 30 (RT). The season high count on Tricolored Herons was 12 in the TX 147 area Sept 13 (DW). The **Reddish Egret** found and photographed by Mike Dillon on the Angelina Co side of TX 147 causeway on Aug 23 was re-located on the San Augustine Co side of the causeway on Aug 26 (LD, LS); Sept 8 (DW, RT); Sept 13 (DW) and as late as Oct 4 (DW), for a remarkable **date span from August 23-October 4**. This was only our 2nd area record and the 1st for Angelina County. Single Black-crowned Night-Herons at Marion Ferry Sept 13 (LD, RH, LS); Lufkin Oct 6 (RT); and Ellen Trout Park Oct 28 (DB, LD) were rare sightings, but in line with the bulk of our records. *Plegadis* ibis were relatively numerous this fall. It is assumed that most or all were White-faced rather than Glossy, but few could be

conclusively identified. The first were 2 White-faced at TX 103 at the Attoyac Sept 13 (DW). There were 2 *Plegadis* at the TX 147 causeway Sept 21 (DW et al; PAS); one over Alazan Bayou Sept 30 (DW); 17-21 *Plegadis* at Marion Ferry Oct 15-17 (LD, LS) and 5 still there Oct 25 (DW et al; PAS). It was a great year for **Roseate Spoonbills**. The first were 3 at Marion Ferry Sept 7 (DW et al; PAS). Additional records were 5 at TX 103 at the Attoyac Sept 8 (DW, RT); 12 there Sept 21 (DW); 60 there Oct 4 (DW) and a **remarkable count of 75** still there on Oct 17 (LD, LS). The last were 7 at Marion Ferry and 4 at TX 103 at the Attoyac on Oct 25 (DW, LS et al; PAS). On Sept 21 DB found 25 spoonbills at the Ayish Bayou crossing on Rayburn, a locality which doesn't get checked often but always has "potential". Wood Storks were relatively few this season, the highest counts 80 at TX 103 at the Attoyac Sept 8 (DW, RT) and 57 there Oct 4 (DW). 18 still at TX 103 at the Attoyac Oct 17 was a lot for late in the season (LD, LS). It was a good fall for raptors and a wide variety were detected. The last Mississippi Kites were 2 over the TX 147 causeway Sept 21 (DW). A pair of adult Bald Eagles returned to Ellen Trout Park Sept 27 and by Oct 8 they were repairing the nest (LD). There were many sightings of this species around Lake Rayburn all fall, with 2-10 seen on every field trip (m. obs.). The first Northern Harrier was a juvenile low over Central Hts Sept 19 (DW). The first migrating Broad-winged Hawk was one over Alazan Bayou Sept 19 (DW), but numbers remained low until a sudden rush came through on Oct 1, when 500 were over Nacogdoches (TR) and 300 were over Kurth Lake (LD). The next day, Oct 2, **at least 1200** were tallied over Marion Ferry (DB, LD, LS, DW), a spectacular showing for our area. No more numbers were seen and the last was one over Alazan Bayou Oct 17 (DW). One **Swainson's Hawk** kettled in a small flock of Broad-wings at the base of the TX 147 causeway Sept 21 (DW et al; PAS) and 2 were amidst the Broad-wing flight over Kurth Lake on Oct 1 (LD). This species is rare here on the eastern edge of its migratory route. Single Merlins were at the TX 147 causeway Sept 21 (DW et al; PAS) and Oct 4 (DW); perched at Marion Ferry Oct 17 (LD, LS); and at Kurth Lake Oct 30 (LD, DB, LS). Three Peregrine Falcons came over the TX 147 causeway on the north wind of Sept 21 (DW; PAS) and a spectacular juvenile was around Marion Ferry Oct 25 (DW et al; PAS). Very exciting were 2 adult **Whooping Cranes** that spent the night of Oct 19-20 at a pond in northern Angelina County; they were photographed on the latter date before they left (Don Lymbery). From the color bands visible in the photos it was determined that this pair was from the introduced "artificial" population in Louisiana (CS). A noteworthy **Virginia Rail** was found dead in Nacogdoches Oct 2, at the busy intersection of Starr and University (fide Warren Conway). This species is presumed to be a regular migrant, but it is rarely detected. Three adult Purple Gallinules were still at Kurth Lake Sept 28, while the last 2 juveniles were seen Sept 24 (LD). Five Common Moorhens were still at Kurth Lake Sept 28 and one was still present Oct 19 (LD). 1500 American Coots at Kurth Lake Oct 8 was a huge increase in numbers (LD).

It was an "OK" season for shorebirds on Lake Rayburn, not great but definitely better than the years when the lake doesn't go low enough for us to have any habitat or shorebirds! The only Black-bellied Plover was a breeding-plumaged adult at the TX 147 causeway Sept 8 (DW, RT). A few Semipalmated Plover visited Marion Ferry and TX 147 from Sept 1-17, with a season high count of 10 at the TX 147 causeway Sept 13 (LD, RH, LS). 14 American Avocets circled Lake Nacogdoches (East Park) Sept 2 and then went on (CS), while 2 visited Kurth Lake Sept 24 and one was there Oct 7 (both LD). 12 Solitary Sandpipers at Marion Ferry Sept 7 was the one-day high count (DW et al; PAS). The season high count of Least Sandpiper was 115+ at Marion Ferry Sept 20 (DW et al; PAS) and the high for Pectoral Sandpiper was 100+ at Marion Ferry Sept 7 (DW et al; PAS). Four Baird's Sandpipers at the TX 147 causeway Sept 8

was the only report this fall (DW, RT). Four Buff-breasted Sandpipers at Marion Ferry Sept 7 (DW et al; PAS) dwindled to 2 on Sept 15 (DW et al; PAS). A beautiful juvenile **Short-billed Dowitcher** was photographed at the TX 147 causeway Sept 21 (DW), unfortunately after the field trip had departed. A dowitcher sp? over TX 147 on Sept 1 remained unidentified (DW, RT). The first Wilson's Snipe was one at Alazan Bayou Sept 30 (DW). Franklin's Gulls tend to quickly pass over our area on the fronts and this was true again this fall, when a flock of 55 came over Alazan Bayou Oct 19 (DW) and a swirling mass of 400+ was spotted from Marion Ferry on Oct 25 (DW et al; PAS). The first Ring-billed Gull was one at Kurth Lake Sept 26 (LD). A few Caspian Terns were seen on Lake Rayburn (mostly in the TX 147 area) from August 26-Sept 21, with a high count of 10 at TX 147 on Sept 13 (LD, RH, LS) and 2 at TX 103 at the Attoyac the same day (DW). A juvenile **Least Tern** came past the TX 147 causeway in a flock of Forster's on Sept 13 (DW). 7 Common Nighthawks over Central Hts Sept 13 was the season high count (DW); few others were seen. The last Ruby-throated Hummingbirds (so far) were singles in Loco Valley Oct 25 (RH) and Central Hts Oct 26 (LS). A rare **Rufous Hummingbird** was seen in Nacogdoches August 28 (LS). The first Yellow-bellied Sapsucker was seen in Nacogdoches on Sept 25 (TD), our earliest date ever by 2 days. A high count of 22 migrating sapsuckers passed the TX 147 causeway Oct 18 amidst a spectacular flight of **at least 168** Northern Flickers (DW). The first definite migrant Northern Flicker was one over Alazan Bayou Sept 22 (DW).

The only Olive-sided Flycatchers were 2 in Central Hts Sept 10, with one still there (on the same snag!) Sept 12 (DW). Eastern Phoebes were conspicuous migrants from late Sept onwards, with a one-day high count of 25+ at Alazan Bayou Oct 17 (DW). A Great Crested Flycatcher at Ellen Trout Park Sept 25 was the last (LD). CS found a **large flycatcher roost** in Nacogdoches on Sept 8, when he estimated at least 420 Eastern Kingbirds and 280 Scissor-tailed Flycatchers arriving. On Sept 10 at least 479 kingbirds and 273 scissor-tails were counted at this site by DW and RH, very close to Cliff's estimate. The numbers decreased rapidly after this. 88 Eastern Kingbirds at the TX 147 causeway Sept 21 was a good count for late in the season (DW et al; PAS). The first Blue-headed Vireo was one at Alazan Bayou Oct 17 (DW). The last Tree Swallow was one over Alazan Bayou WMA Oct 19 (DW). Cave Swallows were seen a number of times this fall: 4 at the TX 147 bridge Sept 8 (DW, RT); singles at Alazan Bayou on Sept 11 & 19 (DW); one over Central Hts Sept 17 (DW); and 2 at the TX 147 bridge Sept 21 (DW et al; PAS). It is likely that most of these were lingering summer residents rather than migrants, as this species seems to stay around later than the Cliff and Barn that share the same nest sites. A Bewick's Wren visited Central Hts Oct 22 (DW). The first House Wrens showed up Sept 23, singles in both Central Hts (DW) and Lufkin (LD), while the first Winter Wren was one at Ellen Trout Park Oct 29 (RT). Marsh Wren again proved to be a more common fall migrant than one might expect. The first was an extremely early one in *Phragmites* at the TX 147 causeway on Sept 8 (DW, RT). 6 migrants were at Alazan Bayou Sept 30 after heavy rains and the season peak was 16+ there on the Oct 17 front (both DW). 2 visited Ellen Trout Park Oct 16 (LD) and 8 were at the base of the TX 147 causeway Oct 18 (DW). A late migrant was in non-wintering habitat at Alazan Bayou Oct 27 (DW et al; PAS) and 2 were at Kurth Lake Oct 30 (LD, DB, LS). The first pushes of Sedge Wrens were 14 at Alazan Bayou Oct 17 and 11 at the base of the TX 147 causeway Oct 18 (both DW). No really big flights of Blue-gray Gnatcatchers were detected. Season high counts were 50 at the TX 147 causeway Sept 8 (DW, RT) and 80+ there Sept 21 (DW et al; PAS). The first Ruby-crowned Kinglets were 2 in Nacogdoches Sept 25 (DW) and the first Hermit Thrush was one in Carrizo Creek Oct 24 (SL). The first migrating American Robins were 5 over the TX 147 causeway Oct 18 (DW) and 40 at Ellen Trout Park Oct 29 (RT). The only Gray Catbirds were singles at Ellen Trout Park Sept

30 and Oct 16 (both LD). The first migrant Brown Thrasher was one in Central Hts Sept 12 (DW). The first American Pipit was one over Alazan Bayou Oct 20 (RT, DW).

Warblers were scarce this fall and few of the less common species were found. The only report of Blue-winged Warbler was 2 at Alazan Bayou Sept 11 (DW). The first Nashville Warbler was one at Marion Ferry Sept 15 (DW et al; PAS) and the first Orange-crowned was one at Alazan Bayou Oct 17 (DW). The season high count of Yellow Warbler was 21 at the TX 147 causeway Sept 1 (DW, RT), while the last was one there Oct 4 (DW). The first push of Yellow-rumped Warblers was 20 at the TX 147 causeway Oct 18 (DW). Very few Black-throated Greens were seen; the first was in Nacogdoches Sept 24 (TD). 50+ Pine Warblers on upper Lake Rayburn (San Augustine Co) on Sept 21 may have been migrants (DW). An always-rare **Palm Warbler** was at Alazan Bayou on Oct 17 (DW), Three American Redstarts in the Marion Ferry/Etoile area Sept 15 was a good one-day count for fall (DW et al; PAS), while one at Ellen Trout Park Oct 29 was late (RT). Two Prothonotary Warblers at Etoile Park Sept 17 were the last and somewhat late (DB, LD, LS). The first Northern Waterthrush was one at TX 147 causeway Sept 1 (DW, RT). 20+ Common Yellowthroats at Alazan Bayou Oct 17 was the season high count (DW), while a late migrant came through Central Hts Oct 28 (MHW, DW). A few Wilson's Warblers were seen Sept 8-Oct 16 (LD, DW). A Canada Warbler at Alazan Bayou Sept 11 was the only one this fall (DW).

First dates for arriving sparrows were: 12 Chipping in Central Hts Oct 22 (DW); 4 Field at Alazan Bayou Oct 20 (SL, LS); 2 Vesper at Alazan Bayou Oct 27 (DW et al; PAS); 6 Savannah at Alazan Bayou Oct 17 (DW); 1 Song at the TX 147 causeway Oct 18 (DW); 26 Swamp at Alazan Bayou Oct 17 (DW); 12 White-throated at Alazan Bayou WMA Oct 17 (DW); and 2 White-crowned in Central Hts Oct 24 (MHW, DW). Other sparrows of note were single migrant Lark Sparrows at Kurth Lake dam Oct 7 (LD); Alazan Bayou Oct 19 (DW); and Central Hts Oct 22 (DW). A Grasshopper Sparrow at Alazan Bayou Oct 20 was the only report (DW). The season high count for Indigo Buntings was 110 at Alazan Bayou Oct 17 (DW); 5 were still there Oct 27 (DW et al; PAS). A push of 52+ Dickcissels came over the TX 147 causeway Sept 13 (DW), while 20 were feeding in the grass at Alazan Bayou Oct 17 and 6 were still there on the late date of Oct 27 (DW et al; PAS). Migrant meadowlarks arrived widely on fronts from mid-Oct to the end of the month (DW). A roost flight of 60 Great-tailed Grackles over Nacogdoches on Sept 10 gives some idea of how numerous this species has now become (DW, RH).

Observers: DB = David Bell; TD = Thelma Dalmas; LD = Louis Debetaz; RH = Ruth Heino; SL = Susie Lower; TR = Thomas Riecke; CS = Cliff Shackelford; LS = Les Stewart; RT = Robert Truss, DW = David Wolf; MHW = Mimi Hoppe Wolf; m. obs. = many observers. **PAS = Pineywoods Audubon Society** field trip.

Localities in Angelina County: Ellen Trout Park (Lufkin); Kurth Lake; Lufkin; Marion Ferry.

In Nacogdoches County: Alazan Bayou WMA; Carrizo Creek; Central Heights; Etoile Park; Lake Nacogdoches; Loco Valley; Nacogdoches.

In San Augustine County: Ayish Bayou; TX 103 at the Attoyac Bayou on upper Lake Rayburn; the TX 147 causeway over Lake Rayburn (unless specified as Angelina County side).