

**Summer Bird Report for the Pineywoods Audubon Society
(June 1 - August 31, 2013)**

Compiled by David E. Wolf (dewolfnac@gmail.com)

Summer is not exactly our most dynamic or pleasant birding season – and this summer saw relatively birding activity by the PAS group. The first half of the season was moderate, and we even had several rainy spells, but by late July temperatures were into the upper 90s daily and it remained this way through the end of August, with almost no rain or interesting weather (i.e. frontal or tropical storm activity).

Two Ring-necked Ducks that summered on Kurth Lake (LD) were the only noteworthy waterfowl sightings. I did receive a belated spring report of 4 Black-bellied Whistling-Ducks near Hudson on March 23, a first sighting for the Putnam Ranch (JP). They did not stay around. A few Northern Bobwhite were seen or heard, including along Rivercrest Road on July 31 (LD), and in Central Heights (MHW, DW), Douglas (CW) and Loco Valley (RH), but this bird is barely hanging on in most of our region. Three Double-crested Cormorants at Kurth Lake on August 27 were odd there for summer (LD). Few cormorants nested on the islands off of TX 147 on Lake Rayburn this year and sightings of the rapidly-increasing Neotropic Cormorants were almost as frequent as Double-crested for the first time. The first post-breeding Tricolored Herons were 3 at Marion Ferry August 18 (DW, RT). A very rare and unexpected immature **Reddish Egret** was photographed at Cassells-Boykin Park on Lake Rayburn (Angelina Co) on August 23 by Mike Dillon, one of the NETFO birders. It was re-located at the base of the TX 147 bridge (Angelina Co side) on August 26 (LD, LS, DB) and again on Sept 8 on the San Augustine Co side of the bridge (DW, RT). This is the 1st record for Angelina County and only the 2nd for the Lake Rayburn counties; there are fewer than 10 records for the entire Pineywoods region in the last 40 years.

A good count of 270+ White Ibis left the roosts near Marion Ferry at dawn on August 18 (DW, RT); there were far more adults than juveniles.

Three barely-fledged Ospreys on July 4 on a pylon at the TX 103 crossing of the Angelina arm of Lake Rayburn (Nacogdoches County) confirmed that they again nested somewhere in that vicinity (but not on the pylons as in the past) (DW, RT). Single Ospreys visited Kurth Lake July 28 and August 27 (LD). A very rare find was a **Swallow-tailed Kite** seen near Woodland Heights in Lufkin on August 4 (GH). This is only about the 4th Angelina Co record ever. Mississippi Kites calling and seen in Diboll in June-July (RT) were likely breeding locally. No nest has yet been found in this area, but a pair or two has been present every summer for years. One over the VFW Pond in Lufkin on July 2 (LD) also raises the possibility of local breeding, while 3 over Nacogdoches on August 10 (MHW) were the first of a steady flight of migrants that continued through early September (m. obs.). On June 11 CS found a courting pair of **White-tailed Kites** in a big clearcut in Tyler County between Fred and Warren while conducting a Breeding Bird Survey Route. This species is very rare and irregular in its occurrence in the Pineywoods. The much-watched Bald Eagle nest at Ellen Trout Park in Lufkin fledged two young on April 15 (AM, m. obs.); one promptly disappeared but the adults and other youngster stayed around through the first 2/3 of May. A fresh juvenile **Sharp-shinned Hawk** at Alazan Bayou WMA August 30 (DW) had almost certainly been raised locally (breeding has been confirmed nearby in the SFA Experimental Forest in the past). Regular sightings of adult male and female Cooper's Hawks in Central Hts from May through August, with a

juvenile seen on August 31, strongly suggest that they nested nearby (DW, MHW). On the Azalea Trail in Lufkin, where breeding has been confirmed in the past, an adult was seen July 8 and a juvenile in early August (LD). Another adult was over Marion Ferry July 4 (DW, RT). This species is likely a widespread breeding bird in the Pineywoods, but due to their secretive habits they are not often detected in the summer. A family group of 5 American Kestrels was near Lake Alazan on July 25 (CW); breeding birds have not been reported in this area in the past, but between the drought and forest fires there are now many dead snags available in this area. Most other local breeding records of kestrels have been on man-made structures.

Common Gallinules nested at Kurth Lake for the 2nd year in a row, with 2 adults and 3 juveniles seen August 3 and another adult with 5 chicks a few days later (LD). These are the only breeding records for Angelina County. Purple Gallinules were first seen at Kurth Lake on July 7-13 (4 adults) and then adults with juveniles from two broods were seen July 22-August 18, with one adult and one juvenile still present Sept 3 (LD). This remains the only known site for this species in our area. At least 3 American Coots spent the summer at Kurth Lake, but there was no evidence of breeding (LD). The first Spotted Sandpiper of the fall was one at Kurth Lake July 22 (LD). A Black Tern at Kurth Lake on the odd date of July 2 was presumably an early fall migrant (LD). There were multiple sightings of Greater Roadrunners on Rivercrest Road near Kurth Lake (LD) and in the Douglas area in late July (CW). A dead Chuck-will's-widow was found at Millard's Crossing in Nacogdoches on August 26 (SL). **Red-headed Woodpeckers** were widespread again this summer and seen in many places in all three counties (m. obs.), likely in continuing response to the abundance of dead trees made available by the drought in 2010-11. The first fledgling reported was one in Central Heights on July 5 (DW, MHW). Northern Flickers were recorded near Melrose July 3 (RT) and at Kurth Lake on August 2 (LD), while this species again summered at the base of the TX 147 causeway, where breeding has been confirmed in the past (LD, RT, DW). A pair in Tyler County between Fred and Warren on 11 June (CS) confirmed that this species still summers in the southern Pineywoods. Flickers are inconspicuous and uncommon breeding birds throughout the region.

The first Least Flycatcher of the fall was at Alazan Bayou WMA August 17 (DW). An Eastern Phoebe at Etoile Park August 18 (DW, RT) had wandered in from somewhere, as there are no suitable nest sites in the immediate vicinity. On June 30 at least 15 **Cave Swallows**, both adults and juveniles, were around the Alazan Creek at Alazan Bayou WMA, and used nests could be seen under the bridge (DW). This is the 5th year in a row that they have nested here, the first confirmed breeding site in our area. Several other local sites from past years were not checked. The first Yellow Warbler of the fall was at Etoile Park August 18 (DW, RT). Several Louisiana Waterthrushes chasing around Carrizo Creek June 9 were presumably local breeders (SL). The first migrant reported was one in Central Heights July 18 (MHW). A male Mourning Warbler at Alazan Bayou WMA August 30 was the first this fall (DW). A migrant Yellow-breasted Chat visited Central Heights August 23 (DW). A Chipping Sparrow carrying food in Central Heights July 2 confirmed breeding in that area (DW). This species is inconspicuous in the summer and not an especially common breeding bird in our area. A male Baltimore Oriole at Alazan Bayou WMA campground on August 8 was more likely an early migrant than a summering bird at this site (CW); the next was one at Alazan Bayou WMA August 27, a more typical date for the first fall migrants (DW). A **Pine Siskin** that came to feeders in Nacogdoches June 7-8 was ridiculously late and a

great sighting (TD), but perhaps not too shocking given the huge flight of this species earlier in the spring. The previous latest date that I have for the entire Pineywoods region is May 27th.

Observers: AM = Allison Maxwell; DB = David Bell; TD = Thelma Dalmas; LD = Louis Debetaz; GH = Gene Hallmark; RH = Ruth Heino; SL = Susie Lower; JP = Jimmie Putnam; CS = Cliff Shackelford; RT = Robert Truss; CW = Carol Wells; DW = David Wolf; MHW = Mimi Hoppe Wolf; m. obs. = many observers.

Localities in Angelina County: Cassells-Boykin Park (on middle Lake Rayburn); Diboll; Ellen Trout Park (in Lufkin); Hudson; Kurth Lake; Lufkin; Marion Ferry (on upper Lake Rayburn); Rivercrest Road (near Kurth Lake)

In Nacogdoches County: Alazan Bayou WMA; Carrizo Creek; Central Heights; Douglas; Etoile Park (on upper Lake Rayburn); Lake Alazan; Loco Valley; Melrose; Nacogdoches (town).

In San Augustine County: TX 147 causeway on Lake Rayburn (unless specified as Angelina County side).