

Summer Bird Report (Pineywoods Audubon Society)

(June 1 - July 31, 2015)

by David E. Wolf

The prolonged wet weather of this spring continued through most of June, but at the end of the month it abruptly quit raining and much of our area did not receive significant rainfall again until late October, though there were some scattered thundershowers (especially to the south of our area). In general there wasn't much birding activity and it was not especially exciting when observers did get out. Lake levels remained high from all of the rain this spring, so there was no shorebird habitat and little available shoreline for post-breeding wanderers.

Bird Report:

A Northern Bobwhite heard in Central Hts June 4 was the first in this area this year (MHW, DW), while another was heard in Douglass June 28 (CW). This species has seriously declined in our region and is no longer widespread or regular. A pair of Ring-necked Ducks was seen off and on all summer at Kurth Lake, the female as late as Sept 2 (LD). Pied-billed Grebes nested at Alazan Bayou and increased from one adult on June 30 (RT) to 9 juveniles (from several broods) on 12 July (DW) and 16 juveniles of varying sizes (and one adult) on July 30 (DW). At this time the last ponds were shrinking fast and it is not known if the young fledged successfully and were able to move to another area. They also nested at Kurth Lake, where several adults and juveniles were seen July 20 to Sept 2 (LD). For the first time in decades there were no cormorants nesting on the islands off the TX 147 causeway, though both Neotropic and Double-crested were seen in the area all summer (DW). At least 2 Double-crested Cormorants were present at Kurth Lake through July 20 (LD). At least two pairs of Anhingas nested at Kurth Lake (LD). The first recently-fledged juvenile Snowy Egret was at Alazan Bayou July 4, as were 12 fresh juvenile Little Blue Herons (DW). A Tricolored Heron at Alazan Bayou July 19 was the first (DW), while on July 30 there were 2 here (1 ad.; 1 juv.) (DW) and one was still present August 18 (CW). Cattle Egrets and a few Little Blue Herons nested at Kurth Lake for the first time in memory (LD). 65 White Ibis (almost entirely adults) were over Alazan Bayou July 30 (DW), the first sizable post-breeding movement detected. The **only** report of Wood Stork was one at Alazan Bayou August 18 (CW).

Mississippi Kites again summered in Nacogdoches and likely nested, especially on the south side of town, where 1-3 were seen June 27-at least July 20 (LS, DW), including one acting aggressively towards the mowers in Pioneer Park on July 6. Another was seen in the north part of town on July 6 (MHW), where a pair has nested in the recent past. Two fledgling Cooper's Hawks with an adult in the vicinity on June 23 confirmed breeding in ne. Nacogdoches (RW). **Common Gallinules** had a successful breeding season at Kurth Lake again this summer, with a maximum of 3 sets of adults with juveniles of varying ages seen on Sept 2 (LD). This is their only known breeding site in our area. Purple Gallinules also bred at Kurth Lake, with 2 adults with 5 juveniles seen on July 30 (LD). By September only one adult with 2 juvs. seemed to be left (LD). Two American Coots were at Kurth Lake July 30 and again Sept 2, but there was no evidence of breeding (LD). The first southbound shorebirds were 4 Least Sandpipers at a receding puddle in Central Hts July 8 (DW). Next were 5 Spotted Sandpipers at Kurth Lake July 14 (LD). A Solitary Sandpiper at Marion Ferry on July 19 was the first (DW). The first Upland Sandpiper was heard going over Nacogdoches Co. July 27 (CS). 4 American Avocets came past Kurth Lake on August 25 (LD).

Other than these few reports there were almost no other migrant shorebirds; suitable habitat was not available. Forster's Terns appeared on area lakes early, the first being 10 at Kurth Lake on July 30 (LD).

A Greater Roadrunner on June 7 near Antioch (Shelby Co) was a nice confirmation of their presence east almost to the Louisiana border (SO). A **Fish Crow** seen and heard 5 miles south of Joaquin (n. Shelby Co) on June 9 was north of their usual range on the Sabine River (CS); they have previously only been found north to near the Toledo Bend Dam (and rarely at that). White-breasted Nuthatches frequented a surprising number of feeders in Nacogdoches County this summer, both in town and out in the country, with 6 feeding stations reporting them (m.obs.). Why so many around all of a sudden? A Wood Thrush persistently singing near Alazan Bayou WMA suddenly quit singing - or disappeared - towards the end of June (SK). An American Robin was seen near Lufkin on July 19 (DW); this species is a scarce breeder in our region. A Gray Catbird was singing in Nacogdoches on July 6, in a part of town where they have nested in the past (RT), while one at Alazan Bayou July 30 was more puzzling – an early wanderer? (DW). A Louisiana Waterthrush in Central Heights July 3 was either the first wanderer of the “fall” or an early migrant (DW). A pair of Swainson's Warblers near Antioch (Shelby Co) on June 7 were likely nesting nearby (SO). Also seen here on June 7 was a **Worm-eating Warbler** (SO). Reports of this species on territory in our region have been largely lacking for several decades. The first wandering or migrant Yellow-throated Warbler was singing in Central Hts on July 7 (MHW). At least 7 Bachman's Sparrows were in song at Boykin Spring on July 7 (DW, RT) and were likely breeding due to the wet and relatively lush conditions. A Chipping Sparrow was singing in Central Hts July 11 (DW); this species is not especially common as a breeding bird locally. By mid-July the local Orchard Orioles were gathering in flocks before leaving (m, obs.).

Observers: LD = Louis Debetaz; SK = Steve Kinnaird; SO = Susan Orwig; CS = Cliff Shackelford; LS = Les Stewart; RT = Robert Truss; CW = Carol Wells; DW = David Wolf; MHW = Mimi Hoppe Wolf; RW = Richard Wright.

In Angelina County: Kurth Lake; Marion Ferry (on Angelina arm of upper Lake Rayburn)

In Nacogdoches County: Alazan Bayou WMA; Central Heights, Douglass; Nacogdoches (town)

In Shelby County: Antioch, Joaquin