

Fall Bird Report for Pineywoods Audubon Society

August 1 – December 10, 2016

by David E. Wolf

Boring pretty well sums up the fall migration this year. This **can** be one of our most exciting seasons, but this year there was little action of any kind. Generally it takes “interesting weather” to produce fall migrants and strays, and we did not have much weather of note this entire period. Our summer resident breeding birds quietly slipped away and there were few migrants to replace them. Lake levels remained high and post-breeding waders and shorebirds were few and far between. Waterfowl were late in arriving, with few appearing before mid-November. There was no tropical storm activity and relatively few stormy or fast-moving cool fronts, though rain for the last two weeks of August was unusual. Summer was neither exceedingly hot nor dry and temperatures remained warm into November. The first freeze for most of the area came on November 19, but the first real cold spell was Dec 8-9. With the mildness of the season, winter residents were late to appear and numbers of most were still quite low through this report on December 10. We hope that many are still lingering to the north of us and will appear as we go into winter!

Of course, there were exceptions and in the following report you will definitely find some interesting records. Thanks to all who contributed and please continue to submit your more unusual sightings to me at dewolfnac@gmail.com

5 Black-bellied Whistling-Ducks at Ellen Trout Park in Lufkin on Aug 21 were unusual and new for that locality (LD). A flock of 75 Greater White-fronted Geese over Central Heights Oct 24 (MHW) was the only report of that species and only a few flocks of Snow Geese were noted. 15 Gadwall were at Lake Nacogdoches Sept 28 (CW), while a push of 55 at Ellen Trout Park on cool Oct 27 had not been present earlier in the day (AM, LD). The first American Wigeon were 4 at Kurth Lake Oct 20 (LD) and 5 Mallards at Kurth Lake Nov 11 (LD, PAS field trip) were the first. The first Northern Shoveler was one at the TX 147 causeway on Lake Rayburn Sept 5 (CW, RH). The first Blue-winged Teal were 8 at Ellen Trout Park Sept 8 (LD), while the only high count was 450 over the TX 147 causeway behind the cool front on Sept 27 (DW). 2 Northern Pintails were at Kurth Lake Oct 27 and 4 were there Nov 15-17 (LD). The first push of waterfowl at Kurth Lake on Oct 27 brought some firsts: 4 Canvasback, 15 Redhead, 65 Ring-necked Duck and 10 Ruddy Duck (LD). The first Buffleheads were 12 at Ellen Trout Park Nov 16 (LD), while a Common Goldeneye there Nov 30 was a one-day wonder (LD). The high count on Hooded Mergansers at the Nacogdoches ponds was 45 on Nov 27 (RT). Red-breasted Merganser is a scarce but regular migrant on Kurth Lake, where there was one on Nov 11 (LD, PAS) and 4 (one male) on Dec 6 (LD).

35 Pied-billed Grebes on Kurth Lake Sept 23 (LD, DB) had increased to 75 on Sept 27 (LD) and 275 on Nov 19 (LD, PAS). An adult with 2 chicks on a pond near Melrose Oct 2 was a surprise record of late breeding (RT). The first Horned Grebe was on Kurth Lake Nov 11 (LD, PAS field trip). A flock of 40 Am. White Pelicans migrated over Nacogdoches on the Dec 8 cold front (CS). Neotropic Cormorant is not regular on Kurth Lake, but 2 were there Aug 2 and 3 on Aug 25 (both LD). 9 at the TX 147 causeway Aug 15 were more expected, while the last sighting there this fall was 2 on Sept 11 (both DW). One was at Sabinetown on Toledo Bend (Sabine Co) on Dec 6 (DB). 365 Double-crested Cormorants in the

Sabinetown area Sept 14 was a high count for early fall, but may have mostly been from a nearby breeding colony (colonies?) (DB). A flock of 12 migrating Anhinga kettled over Central Hts Sept 25 (DW), while one was seen spoardically at Ellen Trout Park through at least Nov 9 (LD). 26 Snowy Egrets at the Nacogdoches sewer ponds Sept 5 was a high count for there (CW), as was 15 at Ellen Trout Park Sept 8 (LD). One was still at Ellen Trout Park Oct 10, as well as 2 Little Blue Herons (both LD). The last Green Heron was one at Kurth Lake Oct 15 (LD). A single **Black-crowned Night-Heron**, always scarce and irregular here, was at Ellen Trout Park Aug 21 (LD). A paltry 15 White Ibis at Alazan Bayou WMA Sept 10 was the season high count (DW), while 5 juveniles there Oct 16 were somewhat late (RT, DW). Almost no Wood Storks were seen all fall, but 5 headed south high over the TX 147 causeway on Sept 27 (DW).

A big kettle of 70 Black Vultures in Central Hts Sept 27 may have been migrants on the cool front (DW). At least 6 Ospreys that were very active around the TX 147 causeway on Aug 15 hinted at successful breeding on the lake this year (DW). Singles visited Kurth Lake Aug 11 and Ellen Trout Park Sept 12 (both LD), sites where they are not regular. A **White-tailed Kite** at Alazan Bayou WMA July 31 was a very rare visitor (CW, RH). A belated report of **2 Swallow-tailed Kites** over Nacogdoches on April 22 (TD, JD) was the **4th record this spring! Mississippi Kites** were present in ne. Nacogdoches all summer and on July 19 a fresh juvenile and pair of calling adults **confirmed breeding**. On July 22 two juvs. were fed by the adults; birds remained in the vicinity until at least Aug 12 (TD, JD). The first migrants were 5 in Nacogdoches on Aug 1 (DWa), while the last was one over Nacogdoches Sept 29 (TD). A Bald Eagle nest was found at Kurth Lake Dec 4, with a bird seemingly incubating (Wayne Forrest fide LD). The only Northern Harrier reported was one in Central Hts Nov 25 (MHW). The first Sharp-shinned Hawks were 4 over Nacogdoches Sept 26, with 2 migrating Cooper's also seen that day (DW). The first migrant Broad-winged Hawks were 15 on the Cherokee/Anderson County line Sept 19 (BW), followed by 33 over Central Hts Sept 23 (MHW); 152 over Central Hts Sept 25 (DW); 90 over Nacogdoches Sept 26 (DW); 60 over McAlister Park on upper Rayburn Sept 27 (DW); the season high count of 300 east of Nacogdoches Sept 30 (KG); and 100 over Nacogdoches Oct 2 (TD).

A season high count of 9 Purple Gallinules (5 adults) was tallied at Kurth Lake Sept 23 (LD, DB), while 2 juveniles still there Oct 15 were our latest ever by one day (LD). Common Gallinules again nested on Kurth Lake, with a season high count of 15 (6 adults) on Sept 23 (LD, DB). 3 were still present Oct 27 (LD). 150 American Coots had arrived on Kurth Lake by Sept 27, but by Oct 18 there were 1500+ present (LD) and on Nov 11 there were 6000+ (LD, PAS). 55 Killdeer in Central Hts Oct 21 were migrants (DW). The only American Avocets were 10 at Lake Nacogdoches Sept 28 (CW) and 15 at Kurth Lake Oct 18 (LD). 2 Greater Yellowlegs were seen and heard over Central Hts Nov 9 (MHW); one was at Kurth Lake Nov 11 (LD, PAS); and 6 were near Chireno Dec 4 (DW). Single Solitary and Pectoral sandpipers at Alazan Bayou WMA Aug 7 (DW) ad 8 Least Sandpipers there Aug 14 (RT) were among the very few shorebirds seen this fall. The first Bonaparte's Gulls were 8 at Kurth Lake on Dec 1 (LD). A juvenile **Laughing Gull** off the TX 147 causeway Sept 11 was a rare visitor (RT, DW). 5 Ring-billed Gulls were already in the Sabinetown area on Toledo Bend (Sabine Co) Sept 14 (DB). A single **Least Tern** was amidst 135 Black and 6 Forster's terns off the TX 147 causeway Aug 15 (DW). This was the season high count for Black Tern, but additional sightings were 7 at Sabinetown Aug 18 (DB) and one on Kurth Lake Sept 20 (LD). 15 Caspian Terns over Lake Nacogdoches Aug 17 was a high count of a scarce migrant (CW), while one at Ellen Trout Park Aug 21 was a first for there (LD).

14 White-winged Doves in Pecan Park Nov 8 were a surprise (DB) and 16 were found there again on Nov 26 (CW, RH). Were these local breeders bunching up? The only Common Nighthawk

reported was one over Nacogdoches Oct 16 (CS). The last Chimney Swifts were 20 high over Nacogdoches on the Oct 14 cool front (DW). The last Ruby-throated Hummingbirds included 2 in Central Hts Oct 13 (MHW, DW) and one in Nacogdoches Oct 20 (TD, JD). The first Yellow-bellied Sapsuckers were late, with one in Douglass Oct 9 (CW) and 2 in Central Hts Oct 14 (DW). 11 tallied over Central Hts Oct 21 was a good push (DW). 32 Northern Flickers flew south over Central Hts Oct 21 and 30 were tallied over Alazan Bayou WMA Oct 22 (both DW). An American Kestrel was back along the Kurth Lake dam Sept 8 (LD). A Merlin in Carrizo Creek Sept 25 was the only report (SL), as was a Peregrine Falcon in Central Hts Sept 23 (DW).

The only Olive-sided Flycatcher was one in Central Hts Sept 13 (DW). An Eastern Wood-Pewee in Central Hts Aug 11 was the first migrant while a late push on Oct 14 produced 2 in Pecan Park and one in Central Hts (both DW). A Least Flycatcher was in Lufkin Sept 12 (LD) and "Traill's-type" *Empidonax* were in Central Hts Aug 13-15, but did not call (DW). A vague report of a **Great Kiskadee** near Pollok (Angelina Co) in late Aug (fide CS) was tantalizing and only the 3rd report ever for the central Pineywoods. 250 Eastern Kingbirds and 300 Scissor-tailed Flycatchers were carefully counted at a roost in n. Nacogdoches Sept 5 (CS); this was the season high count for both species. The last Scissor-tail was one in Nacogdoches Nov 14 (TD, JD). A late White-eyed Vireo was at Sabinetown (Sabine Co) Dec 1 (DB). 5 Yellow-throated Vireos (family group?) were in Central Hts Aug 11, while 12 Red-eyed Vireos there Aug 15 was a good push of migrants (both DW). Purple Martin roosts in Lufkin were estimated at 800 birds on July 11 (JC) and 1000+ on Aug 9-11 (LD). **25 Cave Swallows** showed up at Kurth Lake Dec 6 (LD) and 4 were over the Nacogdoches Airport Dec 11 (DW, RT). The status of this species in our region is in flux, but it now seems to be wintering regularly. The last Barn Swallow came over Alazan Bayou WMA Oct 22 (DW). **Red-breasted Nuthatches** were on the move this fall for the first time in several years. The first report was 2 near Antioch (Shelby Co) on Oct 13 (SO); the next was one in Douglass Oct 23 (CW); then came one in Nacogdoches Nov 7-14 (TD, JD); and another in Douglass Dec 1 (CW). The first Brown Creeper was one at Indian Mounds Rec Area (Sabine Co) Nov 10 (DB). The first House Wren was one at Alazan Bayou WMA Oct 2 (RT), the first Winter Wren was one in the Indian Mounds Rec Area (Sabine Co) Oct 26 (DB), and the first Sedge Wrens were 2 at Alazan Bayou WMA Oct 16 (RT, DW). The first migrant Blue-gray Gnatcatcher was one in Loco Valley July 27 (RH), followed by 2 in Central Hts Aug 1 (DW). The first significant push in Central Hts was 12 on Aug 11, followed by 20 on Aug 15 and 18 on Sept 18 (all DW). **Golden-crowned Kinglets** appeared widely in good numbers this fall and it is shaping up to be a good winter for them. The first were a single in Central Hts on Oct 21 and 6 there Oct 27 (both DW); good numbers were in Carrizo Creek Oct 28 (SL). The first Hermit Thrush was one in Carrizo Creek Oct 28 (SL). Single migrant Gray Catbirds were in Central Hts Sept 28 and Alazan Bayou WMA Oct 22 (both DW). The first migrant Brown Thrasher appeared in Central Hts Sept 12 (DW). Cedar Waxwings appeared early, with the first heard in Central Hts Nov 14 (MHW) and 15 seen there Nov 18 (DW, MHW).

Migrant warblers were scarce all fall. A **Worm-eating Warbler** was in the SFA Experimental Forest Aug 25 (CW, RH). Migrant Louisiana Waterthrushes were in Central Hts Aug 11 & 17 (DW). A **Blue-winged Warbler** in Central Hts Aug 15 was the only report this fall. The last Black-and-white Warbler was one in Carrizo Creek Oct 28 (SL). A **Swainson's Warbler** was seen in the SFA Exp Forest Aug 25 (CW, RH). The only Tennessee Warbler was one in Pecan Park on rainy Oct 14 (DW). The first Orange-crowned Warblers were 3 at Alazan Bayou WMA Oct 22 (DW). Remarkably few Nashville Warblers were seen this fall (m. obs.). A Mourning Warbler in Central Hts Aug 30 was the only one (MHW). The first migrant Common Yellowthroat was one in Central Hts Sept 19 (MHW). The only

American Redstarts were singles in the SFA Exp Forest Aug 21 (CW) and on the TX 147 causeway Sept 27 (DW). The first Yellow Warbler was one in Central Hts Aug 6, while the one-day high count was 6 at Alazan Bayou WMA (both DW). The first Yellow-rumped Warbler was one over Alazan Bayou WMA Oct 16, late for a first (RT, DW). A migrant Yellow-throated Warbler was at Alazan Bayou WMA Sept 17 (DW), while a migrant **Prairie Warbler** was there Aug 14 (DW). 2 early Black-throated Green Warblers were in the SFA Exp Forest Aug 21 (DW), but very few others were seen. Single Wilson's Warblers in Pecan Park and Central Hts on Aug 14 were among the very few all fall (DW). A migrant Yellow-breasted Chat visited Central Hts Aug 15 (DW).

A wandering Chipping Sparrow was in Central Hts Aug 11 (DW). 2 adult Lark Sparrows accompanied a barely-fledged juvenile at Alazan Bayou WMA, where they are not regular, on Aug 7 (DW), while up to 7 were in Central Hts, where regular, through Oct (MHW, DW). Sparrow "first of season" sightings included a Fox at Alazan Bayou WMA Nov 27 (DW); 2 White-crowned in Central Hts Oct 21 (DW); single **Harris's Sparrows** in Douglass Dec 3 (CW), Central Hts Dec 4 (RT) and Huntington Dec 5 (RT); 2 Savannah in Douglass Sept 26 (CW); one Song at Alazan Bayou WMA Oct 22 (DW); and one Swamp at Alazan Bayou WMA Oct 16 (DW). The first Dark-eyed Juncos were one in Nacogdoches Oct 24 (TD, JD) and 4 in Sabinetown on Nov 16 (DB). The last Blue Grosbeak was one in Nacogdoches Oct 23 (DW). The first push of Indigo Buntings in Central Hts was 20 or more Sept 3-7(MHW). 12 female-plumaged Painted Buntings in Central Hts Aug 13 were likely locals bunching up before leaving (DW). The first migrant Dickcissel was one over Central Hts Aug 12 (DW), but few others were noted. 20 Orchard Orioles at Alazan Bayou Aug 14 was the season high count, while one in Central Hts Sept 18 was the last (both DW). The first Baltimore Orioles were up to 4 in Central Hts Sept 2-3 (MHW), but the only numbers all season were 15-20 in Carrizo Creek Sept 12 (SL). **14 Purple Finches** in s. Nacogdoches Co on the Dec 10 field trip were the first (DW, PAS); this is typically one of our very last winter residents to arrive. The first few American Goldfinch were heard over Central Hts Nov 8 (MHW).

Observers: AM = Allison Maxwell; DB = David Bell; JC = Josh Crawford; JD, TD = John & Thelma Dalmas; LD = Louis Debetaz; KG = Kathy Griffin; RH = Ruth Heino; SL = Susie Lower; PAS = Pineywoods Audubon Society; SO = Sue Orwig; CS = Cliff Shackelford; RT = Robert Truss; DWa = David Wallace; DW = David Wolf; MHW = Mimi Hoppe Wolf.

Localities in Angelina County: Ellen Trout Park (in Lufkin); Huntington; Kurth Lake; Lufkin

Localities in Nacogdoches County: Alazan Bayou WMA; Carrizo Creek; Central Heights (= Hts); Chireno; Douglass; Lake Nacogdoches; Loco Valley; Melrose; Nacogdoches; Nacogdoches sewage ponds (= Nacogdoches ponds); Pecan Park (in Nacogdoches); SFA Experimental Forest (= Exp Forest).

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