

Pineywoods Audubon Society Spring Bird Report
(March 1 - May 31, 2016)
by David E. Wolf

Spring is a very exciting and complex season here in Deep East Texas and this report reflects that. Many thanks to those of you that carefully recorded and submitted your sightings!

Some first dates for local breeders:

Green Heron - 1 on Dorr Creek Road April 9 (DW).

Broad-winged Hawk - singles in Nacogdoches March 24 (TH) and March 25 (RT).

Yellow-billed Cuckoo - 1 in Central Hts April 24 (MHW).

Chuck-will's-widow - 1 in Central Heights April 13 (MHW)

Chimney Swift - 1 over Nacogdoches March 11 (TH); **tied our earliest date ever.**

Acadian Flycatcher - 1 in Carrizo Creek April 27 (SL).

Great Crested Flycatcher - 1 in Carrizo Creek April 14 (SL).

Eastern Kingbird - 1 at Angelina County Airport March 30 (LD).

Scissor-tailed Flycatcher - 1 in Central Hts March 29 (MHW); 1 in Nacogdoches April 3 (TH).

White-eyed Vireo - 1 in Carrizo Creek March 15 (SL); 1 in Central Hts March 17 (MHW).

Yellow-throated Vireo - 1 in Central Hts March 16 (MHW); 1 in Carrizo Creek (SL) and 2 along Dorr Creek Road (MHW) March 18.

Red-eyed Vireo - 1 in Carrizo Creek March 31 (SL); 1 in Nacogdoches April 3 (TH); 1 at Kurth Lake April 5 (LD).

Northern Rough-winged Swallow - 2 at Nacogdoches sewer ponds March 8 (DW).

Barn Swallow - 1 in Nacogdoches March 7 (CS).

Blue-gray Gnatcatcher- 1 in Central Hts March 10 (MHW).

Wood Thrush - 1 in Carrizo Creek April 14 (SL); 1 in Nacogdoches April 17 (TH).

Gray Catbird - 1 in Nacogdoches April 10 (LS).

Kentucky Warbler - 1 in nw. Nacogdoches April 11 (TH).

Common Yellowthroat - 1 at Alazan Bayou WMA March 26 (DW).

Hooded Warbler - 6 in SFA Exp Forest March 27 (DW); 1 in Carrizo Creek on March 28 (SL).

Yellow-throated Warbler - 12 along Dorr Creek Rd (s. Nacogdoches Co) March 18 (MHW).

Yellow-breasted Chat - 1 at Alazan Bayou WMA April 7 (Da W).

Summer Tanager - 1 on Dorr Creek Road April 9 (DW); 1 in Nacogdoches April 12 (TH)).

Blue Grosbeak - 1 in Carrizo Creek April 11 (SL).

Indigo Bunting - 2 in Central Hts April 12 (DW, MHW); 2 in Nacogdoches April 13 (TH).

Painted Bunting - 3 at Alazan Bayou WMA (TH) and 1 in Central Hts (MHW) April 23.

Orchard Oriole - 4 in Nacogdoches April 12 (DW).

Bird Report:

From 1-4 **Black-bellied Whistling-Ducks** were seen on 5 occasions (April 11-May 23) from the Angelina Co AP to the Diboll area (all LD). They have been regular in small numbers in this area for many years now, but are rarely found elsewhere in our region, so **one in Nacogdoches May 17 (TH)** was significant

and **the first in the county since 2000**. Lone Canada Geese were over Douglass March 11 and in Cherokee Co March 25 (both CW). A good variety of ducks was on Kurth Lake March 31 after a strong cold front: 15 Gadwall; 10 American Wigeon; 50 Northern Shoveler; 10 Ring-necked Duck; 15 Lesser Scaup; and 5 Ruddy Duck. Very few ducks (except Blue-winged Teal) were seen anywhere after this, with the last Gadwall 4 on Kurth Lake April 7 (LD). A female Hooded Merganser was over the flooded riverbottoms at Alazan Bayou WMA May 6 (DW). A female **Red-breasted Merganser** lingered on Kurth Lake April 21-June 2 (LD) and another a female was on Lake Nacogdoches May 25 (CW). These are **our latest spring records ever by several weeks** (CW). A migrant Common Loon visited Kurth Lake May 5-12, long after the wintering birds had left (LD). 16 Pied-billed Grebes at Alazan Bayou WMA March 2 was a high count for the locality (DW), while 50 were still on Kurth Lake April 5, but only small numbers were seen after that (LD). A Neotropic Cormorant over Central Hts March 10 was a surprise (DW). Neither species of cormorant is nesting on the islands off the TX 147 causeway this year, but small numbers of both species were present in this general area, with more Neotropics seen than Double-crested (DW). 2 Double-crested were lingering at the Nacogdoches ponds May 27 (DW). The first Anhinga was 1 along Dorr Creek Road March 18 (MHW), while a flock of 25 migrants over the Angelina Co AP April 4 was noteworthy (LD). Single American Bitterns were detected at Alazan Bayou WMA April 6 (DW); April 16 (2; TH); May 6 (DW); and May 14 (DW). This last sighting tied our latest date ever (which was a CDF sighting from 1976 at this locality when it was Blount Farm!). The only Snowy Egrets reported were 5 at Alazan Bayou WMA May 6 (DW). Good counts of White Ibis were 100 over Diboll April 22 (LD); 45 at Alazan Bayou WMA May 6 (DW); 30 over the Woden area May 15 (RT, DW); and 30 at Alazan Bayou WMA May 29 (RT)..

A new Bald Eagle nest discovered east of Lake Nacogdoches appeared to have young in early April (Ken Braddock). A migrating Osprey was over Nacogdoches March 30 (CDF) and one visited Kurth Lake May 24 (LD). My file has only 6 previous spring records of **Swallow-tailed Kite** for Angelina & Nacogdoches Counties, so to have **three seen this spring** was remarkable. The first was one low over Alazan Bayou WMA for a considerable length of time on April 6 (Ron Randle; Bill Adams). The second was one over the south side of Diboll on May 9 (RT) and the third was a late bird just east of Nacogdoches on May 25 (SL). Is this vulnerable species slowly increasing and expanding its range in East Texas? The first Mississippi Kite was 1 over Alazan Bayou WMA April 13 (DW); the one-day high count was 25 over Nacogdoches May 1 (CDF); and the last definite migrants were 2 over Pecan Park May 17 (DW). 3 (a pair and a single) soaring over the south side of Nacogdoches on May 24 acted more likely birds summering locally; singles had been seen in this general area earlier this spring and 1 was seen again on May 28 (DW). The last Northern Harrier was 1 at the Angelina Co AP April 22 (LD), while the last Sharp-shinned Hawk was 1 over Nacogdoches May 1 (CDF). Red-shouldered Hawks fledged young in Jones Park in Lufkin in mid-May (LD). Juveniles also appeared at Alazan Bayou WMA about the same time (DW) and not long thereafter in Central Hts (DW) and from the well-watched nest in Pecan Park in Nacogdoches (m. obs.). A dark morph Swainson's Hawk that passed over Nacogdoches April 16 was a local rarity, but far more remarkable was a **Golden Eagle** seen well the same day (CDF). There are **no previous spring records** for Angelina or Nacogdoches Counties (and less than half-a-dozen at other seasons). A **Sora** attacked by a cat in Douglass April 29 was rescued and released at Alazan Bayou WMA (CW). While probably not a rare migrant, we don't get many records of this species. The first Purple Gallinule at Kurth Lake was 1 on May 3; on May 12 there were 2 (LD). 2 Common Gallinules were at Kurth Lake April

19-May 12 (LD). This is the only regular site in our area for these two species. 3 American Coots were still at Kurth Lake May 12 (LD).

Though large numbers of shorebirds undoubtedly pass over East Texas in the spring we normally have very little habitat to attract them and do not see very many most years. However, **with the storm activity and heavy rains this spring, a remarkable variety of shorebirds was found**, especially by Louis Debetaz at the Angelina County Airport. The first notable fallout there was on stormy April 20 (LD, LW), followed by an outstanding fallout on April 30 (LD), and a late fallout on stormy May 27 (LD). There were also a few shorebirds at the Nacogdoches AP on the latter date (DW). 44 American Golden-Plover in Nacogdoches Co (Central Hts & Airport) on March 9 after overnight storms was the season high count (DW). The first golden-plover at the Angelina Co AP were 4 on April 1 (LD), while 20 on stormy April 20 was the season high count there (LD, LW). **7 Semipalmated Plover** at the Angelina Co AP on stormy April 30 was a great spring count, but far more surprising was a single **Piping Plover** seen the same day (LD). There are **no previous spring records** for Piping in Angelina & Nacogdoches Counties (and very few for the entire Pineywoods eco-region). 65+ Killdeer in Nacogdoches Co March 9 were likely migrants brought down by overnight storms (DW). 5 Spotted Sandpipers at Kurth Lake April 5 was the first push of migrants, while 15 there May 3 was the season high count (both LD). A Solitary Sandpiper at the Nacogdoches sewer ponds March 8-9 **tied our earliest first date** (DW), while 1 at Kurth Lake May 21 was our **latest ever by one day** (LD). The first Lesser Yellowlegs was 1 in Central Hts March 10 and the last was 1 at the Nacogdoches AP May 27 (both DW). The first Greater Yellowlegs were 2 over Central Hts March 9 (MHW) and 2 were at the Angelina Co AP April 30 (LD), but there were no other reports. **2 Willets** at the Angelina Co AP on stormy April 30 were a rare spring sighting (LD). Upland Sandpipers were recorded in both counties March 27-May 3, but the numbers were low (m. obs.). **2 Whimbrel** at the Angelina Co AP on April 27 (LD) were an outstanding find. There are only 3 previous spring records for Angelina & Nacogdoches Counties and only a few more for the entire eco-region. "Peep" of several sizes dominated the shorebird fallout at the Angelina Co AP on April 30, when LD recorded 8 Baird's; 45 Least; 12 White-rumped; 20 Pectoral; and 25 Semipalmated sandpipers. Whew! They also dominated the late fallout on stormy May 27, with 8 Baird's; 10 Least; and 45 White-rumped sandpipers plus **5 Dunlin** and the only Stilt Sandpiper of the season (LD). 2 Baird's Sandpipers stopped at a puddle in Central Hts April 5 (DW, MHW), while the first Least Sandpiper was 1 there March 8 (DW). From 1-2 White-rumped Sandpipers visited Central Hts May 6-12 and 6 were at the Nacogdoches AP May 27 (both DW). **Buff-breasted Sandpipers** were found in shorebird fallouts at the Angelina Co AP after stormy nights, the first 4 on April 20 (LD, LW) and then 4 on April 30 (LD). Though rare this species seems to appear regularly after violent spring storms. Small numbers of Pectoral Sandpipers were recorded March 9-May 27, mostly in Central Hts and at the Angelina Co and Nacogdoches Airports (DW, LD). A few Semipalmated Sandpipers visited the Angelina Co AP from April 11-May 27, with peak counts of 25 on April 30 and 45 on stormy May 27 (both LD). 2 were at a puddle in Central Hts May 17 (DW). No Western Sandpipers were reported this spring. In mid-February Roger Masse flushed up to 25 American Woodcock in his study area, but by Feb 26 not a one was found in the same area (SL). It was a good spring for **Wilson's Phalaropes**, with a female in Central Hts April 29 (MHW); 20 at the Angelina Co AP after storms on April 30 (LD); and 5 at a puddle in Central Hts on May 11, with 2 still there the next day (DW). 120+ Bonaparte's Gulls were still around the Lake Rayburn spillway and lower basin (n. Jasper Co) on April 10 (DW). 15 Franklin's Gulls at Kurth Lake March 31 and 25 over the Angelina Co AP April 30

were the only reports this spring (both LD). A **Least Tern** at the Angelina Co AP on stormy May 27 was only our 4th spring sighting ever (LD), while the only Black Tern was 1 off the TX 147 causeway May 21 (DW).

This spring brought the most reports ever of **White-winged Doves** in Nacogdoches. Though still rare it is likely that they will soon become an established part of our breeding avifauna – we’ve been expecting them. The first report was 1-2 singing birds at 4 sites in Nacogdoches north of or on the SFASU campus from at least Feb 22-April 3 (RS, CS). At least 3 were calling on campus April 14 (SS); one was singing in Pecan Park May 5 (DW); another visited a feeder in Nacogdoches May 12 (LS); and 2 were heard on May 31 (CS). In Lufkin, where they have been present longer, one came to a feeder on March 31 (Tom Newman). The first Common Nighthawk was 1 over Nacogdoches April 23 (TH). Single Eastern Whip-poor-wills were heard in Central Hts April 14 (MHW); Nacogdoches April 15 (TH); and Douglass May 2 (CW; ties our latest spring date). A fledgling Hairy Woodpecker was noted in Douglass May 18 (CW). A Crested Caracara was seen ca 2 miles east of Crockett (Houston Co) on May 24 (CS). There have been a few previous sightings from this area, but this species still has not penetrated any distance eastward into the Pineywoods. American Kestrels carrying food to a nest at the Angelina Co AP on April 11 (LD) confirmed breeding at this site. The only **Merlin** was an early one in Central Hts March 5 (DW) and there were no reports of Peregrine Falcon.

The only Olive-sided Flycatcher was 1 in Douglass April 28 (CW). Migrant *Empidonax* were scarce, but all of the normal species were found at least once. A Yellow-bellied Flycatcher was in Pecan Park May 17 (DW); the first Least Flycatcher visited Central Hts April 23 (MHW); an Alder Flycatcher was in willows in Nacogdoches May 15 (DW, RT); and a Willow Flycatcher was in Pecan Park May 9 (DW). Eastern Phoebes were found nesting on Azalea Trail in Lufkin on March 31 (LD); this species doesn’t regularly breed south of Angelina Co. In Nacogdoches County, where they nest more widely, the first fledglings were seen in town on May 2 and within days fledglings were found at numerous other sites (DW). A Blue-headed Vireo was at Kurth Lake May 5 (LD). 8 Warbling Vireos in Pecan Park May 3 was the season high count (BB, DW et al). The first Philadelphia Vireo was 1 in Pecan Park May 1 (DW), while 6 in Central Hts on May 17 was the season high count (MHW). The swallow migration was generally unimpressive, but 65 Tree Swallows over the Angelina Co AP April 11 was a good count (LD). The only Bank Swallows were a few in Nacogdoches Co April 30 (TH, DW). Single Cave Swallows were seen at the Angelina Co AP several times this spring (LD) and they were again back at known breeding sites at Alazan Bayou WMA; Nacogdoches AP; near Woden; and the TX 147 bridge on Rayburn (DW et al). Two fledged White-breasted Nuthatches accompanied an adult in Pecan Park May 13 (DW, DS). A migrant House Wren came through Nac April 28 (TH). A Wood Thrush singing in Central Hts May 10-11 seemed to be a late migrant (DW, MHW) while a Gray Catbird there May 17 was also late (MHW). A single Sprague’s Pipit was still at the Nacogdoches AP April 12 (SL). Cedar Waxwings moved through in good numbers almost throughout the season (m. obs.), with the one-day high count 1100 in Nacogdoches March 8 (DW). The last sighting was 6 in Pecan Park May 18 (DW).

The warbler migration was “OK” if you got out at the right times, but the numbers were not great and there were few really outstanding days. Almost all of the expected species were reported by someone, except for Ovenbird and Blackpoll and Mourning warblers. May 3-4 were the best days in both Pecan Park in Nacogdoches and Old Orchard Park in Diboll, but there were also significant finds after storms in mid and late April. Migrant **Worm-eating Warblers** are uncommon, easily overlooked, and not detected

annually in our area, but this spring brought **4 sightings** of single birds: April 14 in extreme s. Angelina Co on the Bouton Lake Road (MHW, DW; possibly on territory); April 18 in Nacogdoches (TH); April 25 in Central Hts (MHW) and April 30 in Carrizo Creek (SL). An early Louisiana Waterthrush was heard briefly in Carrizo Creek on March 4, our earliest date ever by two days (SL). Northern Waterthrushes were scarce; the last was 1 in Lufkin May 17 (LD). **Golden-winged Warblers** were found in Pecan Park twice this spring, a male on April 27 (TH) and a female May 3 (DW). Blue-winged Warblers were also found twice, 2 on April 18 (TH) and 1 on April 27 (TH, BB, RS et al). A Swainson's Warbler heard and seen in nw. Nacogdoches April 13-27 was likely on territory (TH), as were singles near Woden on May 15 (RT, DW) and on the Diboll Breeding Bird Survey on May 23 (LD). Tennessee Warbler is our "gauge" for the volume of warbler migration on any given day in Pecan Park in Nacogdoches. The rule of thumb is that if you hear Tennessees singing there will be other migrants around! This year the first Tennessee were 2 on April 12 (DW) and 7 on April 17 (TH). Peaks were 60 on April 27 (TH, BB, RS et al); 45-50 on April 30-May 1 (TH, RT, DW et al); 75+ on May 3-4 (DW et al; season high count); and 25 (mostly females) on May 12 (DW). The only **Cerulean Warbler** was a female in Pecan Park in Nacogdoches on May 2, the day of a very windy cool front (TH). A paltry 6 Magnolia Warblers at Alazan Bayou WMA May 6 was the one-day high count (DW). Bay-breasted Warblers were found more often than usual, with 1 female in Pecan Park May 1 (DW, RT); 1 male there May 4 (DW, RH, RT) and 2 in Old Orchard Park the same day (LD); 2 females in Pecan Park May 13 (DW, DS); 1 female there May 15 (RT); and 3 (1 male) in Pecan Park (DW) and 1 in Central Hts (MHW) on May 17. The first Blackburnian Warbler, somewhat early, was 1 in Pecan Park April 20 (TH), while 6 there on April 27 was the one-day high count (TH, BB, RS et al). The first Yellow Warbler was 1 in Douglass April 20 (CW). Two Chestnut-sided Warblers in Pecan Park April 20 were a bit early (TH), while 6 there May 17 was the season high count (DW). Single late Yellow-rumped Warblers were in Lufkin May 3 (LD) and Nacogdoches May 4 (DW et al), weeks after most had disappeared. A migrant Yellow-throated Warbler giving an aberrant song (recorded) came through Central Hts April 24 (MHW). The first Prairie Warbler was one near Boykin Springs April 10 (DW, RT). The first Black-throated Green Warblers were 1 at Lake Nacogdoches March 26 (Robert Allen) and 2 in Melrose March 29 (RT), while the one-day high count was 10 in Pecan Park May 1 (DW, RT). Single male Canada Warblers were seen in Nacogdoches May 8 (TH, RT); Central Hts May 9 (MHW, DW) and Nacogdoches May 17 (2 places; CS, DW). The only Wilson's Warblers were singles in Pecan Park May 4 (DW et al) and May 6 (DW).

A singing Chipping Sparrow visited Central Hts May 15 but did not stay around (DW). The first Lark Sparrow was back at the Angelina Co AP April 6 (LD) and this species was conspicuous in Central Hts from mid-March through the end of May (DW, MHW). A Dark-eyed Junco lingered in Central Hts to March 9 (DW). A White-crowned Sparrow at Alazan Bayou May 6 (DW) was the only one noted this spring. A late White-throated Sparrow visited Nacogdoches May 11 (LS), while the last Savannah Sparrows were 3 in Diboll May 16 (RT). A singing **Eastern Towhee** near Sandy Creek Park (Jasper Co) April 14-15 seemed to be on territory (Michael O'Brien, Brian Gibbons, DW). This species is poorly known and evidently rare as a breeding bird in Southeast Texas. The only **Scarlet Tanagers** seen were 2 males in Pecan Park April 12 (DW). The first Rose-breasted Grosbeak was a male in Central Hts April 13 (DW). After this through mid-May they were reported at numerous feeders and elsewhere in Nacogdoches in small numbers (m. obs.). 300+ Dickcissels thronged a field east of Nacogdoches on May 3 (SL), while a migrant female-plumaged Painted Bunting with a warbler flock in Pecan Park on May 12

was strange (DW). The howling north wind on May 2 dropped 10 male **Bobolinks** in Central Hts (DW), but these were overshadowed by **54+** males (in several flocks) at the Alazan Bayou WMA campground on May 6 (DW; CW had 9 later in the day). The next day only 1 could be found (CS, JS, TH). The first Baltimore Orioles were 3 in Nacogdoches April 12 (DW), but numbers were low all spring. The last were 2 in Central Hts May 17 (MHW).

Observers: BB = Brent Burt; CDF = Charles Dean Fisher; TH = Tyson Hart; RH = Ruth Heino; SL = Susie Lower; RS = Rick Schaefer; DS = Dennis Scheef; CS = Cliff Shackelford; JS = Julie Shackelford; LS = Les Stewart; SS = Sarah Stovall; RT = Robert Truss; CW = Carol Wells; Da W = Dave Wallace; LW = Laura Wilson; DW = David Wolf; MHW = Mimi Hoppe Wolf.; m. obs. = many observers.

Localities in Angelina County: Angelina County Airport (= Angelina Co AP); Azalea Trail (in Lufkin); Diboll; Ellen Trout Park (in Lufkin); Jones Park (in Lufkin); Kurth Lake; Lufkin; Old Orchard Park (in Diboll).

In Nacogdoches County: Alazan Bayou WMA; Carrizo Creek; Central Heights; Dorr Creek Road; Douglass; Lake Nacogdoches; Melrose; Nacogdoches (town); Nacogdoches sewage ponds (= Nac ponds); Pecan Park (in Nacogdoches); SF Austin SU campus (in Nacogdoches = SFASU); SFA Austin Experimental Forest.

In San Augustine County: TX 147 causeway over Lake Rayburn.