

Spring 2021 Bird Report for Pineywoods Audubon Society
March 1 – May 31, 2021
(compiled by David E. Wolf)

The complex spring migration season is the most exciting time of year for East Texas birders, as throngs of migrants pour northward on their journey to their breeding grounds. Much of what we observe on the ground during this season is determined by the weather – and this spring the migration season was generally dull in March and April, despite regular cool fronts and rain events. Apparently most of the early migrants either sailed right over us or put down elsewhere. Arriving breeding birds were a mixed bag, with some appearing later than expected and others right on schedule. Almost none were especially early. Heavy overnight rains associated with a weak cool front April 29-30 did not drop many birds here, but it did bring the first reports of the later migrants. It seems likely that even nastier weather to the south of us stopped them in the coastal region. The same was true of the rain events and unsettled weather the first week of May, normally the peak of our spring migration. Finally, the unsettled and wet weather of May 10-13 brought the only big push of downed migrants that we got to enjoy locally. All four days were good (m.obs.). The species composition of these flights was mostly the expected flycatchers, vireos and later warblers, but the numbers varied from day to day, indicating that many birds were on the move at this time. After this the weather turned more normal, with south winds and warm and humid days predominating, and it quickly became clear that the spring migration was largely over with for this year. Always sad when it ends!

Thanks go to everyone who reported their sightings. Undoubtedly I missed some good ones in the mass of information received, so please send any additions or corrections to me at dewolfnac@gmail.com. The doldrums of summer are upon us as I finish this report, but the first southbound shorebirds have already been seen and passerines won't be far behind, so keep your eyes open and submit your interesting sightings to me for the summer report.

Some first dates for summer residents:

Yellow-billed Cuckoo – one in Center April 7 was our **earliest ever by one day** (J Sm); the next was a somewhat early one in Central Hts April 13 (DW).

Chimney Swift – one near Center March 21 (J Sm); in Lufkin March 25 (GH).

Ruby-throated Hummingbird – single males March 11 near Nacogdoches (Kathy Greer); March 12 in Lufkin (GH) and Nacogdoches (Judy Smith on eBird); and March 13 at two more sites in Nacogdoches (JS; Jack Rohrer).

Great Crested Flycatcher – one in Lufkin March 23 was very early (GH; ph).

Eastern Kingbird – in Lufkin area March 29 (GH).

Scissor-tailed Flycatcher – March 18 near Nacogdoches (RP)

Yellow-throated Vireo – March 13 in south Nacogdoches (AT).

Red-eyed Vireo – one at Boykin Springs March 29 (CS).

Cliff Swallow – a probable on March 7 at Palo Gaucho bridge (Sabine Co); confirmed here March 14 (DB). At TX 21 at Toledo Bend Reservoir (Sabine Co) March 11 (Jay Packer on eBird).

Wood Thrush – one in south Nacogdoches March 31 (AT).

Orchard Oriole – one in Central Hts April 7 (MHW).

Black-and-white Warbler – singles March 8 near Rusk (BW); and March 12 at North Toledo Bend WMA (DB, J Sm).

Prothonotary Warbler – near Antioch March 29 (SO).

Swainson's Warbler – April 6 in Shelby Co (J Sm).

Kentucky Warbler – 2 in SFA Experimental Forest April 12 (DW, AT).

Hooded Warbler – singles on March 18 at Alazan Bayou WMA (AT) and on SFASU campus (BB) and on March 21 at the SFA Exp Forest (CS).

Northern Parula – singles seen or heard March 2 near Huntington (JC) and Chireno (SW).

Yellow-throated Warbler – March 12 North Toledo Bend WMA (DB, J Sm); Alazan Bayou WMA March 18 (AT).

Prairie Warbler – April 11 near Huntington (JC).

Summer Tanager – singles in Pecan Park April 6 (BB) and near Antioch April 7 (SO).

Blue Grosbeak – one in Pecan Park April 6 (BB).

Indigo Bunting – one in Lufkin March 27 (GH) and another near Antioch March 30 (SO).

Some last dates for winter residents:

Yellow-bellied Sapsucker – one in Central Hts April 7 (DW).

Hermit Thrush – one in Nacogdoches April 6 (BB).

Purple Finch – last reports of birds that had been at feeders for weeks, if not months, were one in Central Hts March 25 (MHW, DW); March 25 in Lufkin (GH); 5 in Center March 27 down to the last 2 on April 2 (J Sm); and last seen near Antioch April 5 (SO).

Pine Siskin – May 15 in Lufkin (GH).

American Goldfinch – one at Lake Nacogdoches May 21 (Cory Adams fide CS).

Fox Sparrow – one lingered in Central Hts to March 4 (DW).

Dark-eyed Junco – one migrant in Central Hts March 19 (DW).

Bird Report:

6 Black-bellied Whistling-Ducks were over south Nacogdoches April 19 and then an hour later a flock of 5 was seen over the Nacogdoches sewage ponds (DW). 20 in Diboll May 1 was a high count, but reflects their steady increase in that area (RT). On April 17 a **Fulvous Whistling-Duck** was photographed at Alazan Bayou WMA amidst a flock of 40 restless Blue-winged Teal that appeared on a blustery cold front (DW; ph.). This is our **first local record** and the first for the entire Pineywoods region since April 24, 1977 in Walker Co. An **Egyptian Goose** that appeared at the Nac ponds March 1 was seen daily through March 5 (fide pond personnel; DW) and then one showed up a few miles away at a pond off West Loop 224 in Nacogdoches March 6-11 (HW fide CS). This was likely the same bird. These are our first local reports of this exotic, which we don't want as it is aggressive and invasive. They are quickly becoming established elsewhere in Texas. A pair of **Mallards** was at Alazan Bayou WMA March 14 and a male was there April 5 (both DW), but there was no further evidence of breeding. A late pair of Blue-winged Teal lingered in Central Hts through June 2 (DW). Single female Hooded Mergansers were at Alazan Bayou WMA April 30 and May 30 (both DW). April 11 was the last date for a White-winged Dove present in Central Hts since Nov 16 (DW, MHW). The first Common Nighthawks were singles over Lufkin April 29 (GH) and Central Hts April 30 (DW). The only Eastern Whip-poor-wills reported were several heard in Central Hts March 30 (MHW, DW). Migrant Chuck-will's-widows were heard in Central Hts April 7-10 (MHW, DW) and April 11 in Nacogdoches (JS, CS). One was heard in Carrizo Creek April 24 (SL) and another heard a few miles away on April 25 was the first there in years (KG).

Shorebirds were mostly lacking or undetected this spring in spite of the many available pools of rainwater, but a few rarities were found. A **Black-necked Stilt** visited a flooded puddle in Central Hts May 28 after heavy rain overnight (DW); it was photographed nicely later that day (AT). **4 American Avocets** were photographed by the manager of the Angelina Co Airport during stormy weather on May 11 (fide GH). The only American Golden-Plover detected were 2 over the Nacogdoches Airport after a severe thunderstorm March 17 (DW) and at least one at the Angelina Co Airport April 10 (GH). From 1-8 Upland Sandpipers were found in Central Hts on 6 days from March 26-May 2 (DW). Most appeared after storms that brought heavy rains. Very few Pectoral Sandpipers were seen this spring in spite of (or because of?) the many pasture puddles available. The only Least Sandpipers found were 3 in Central Hts April 27 (DW). 10 Spotted Sandpipers at the SFASU Farm April 21 was a lot for one small pond, while 18 total were found at various puddles in Nacogdoches County April 30 (both DW). The first Solitary Sandpiper was one at Alazan Bayou WMA March 21 (DW). A **Willet** and 2 **Wilson's Phalaropes** visited the SFASU Farm pond on April 30 (DW; L Wo), while 7 Greater and 6 Lesser Yellowlegs were

present there April 21 (DW). A paltry 12 Lesser Yellowlegs there April 30 was the spring high count (DW). 16 Franklin's Gulls over Lufkin April 16 (GH) and 7 over Alazan Bayou WMA April 18 (DW) were the only reports of this species (DW). Two Herring Gulls were at Carrice Creek on Toledo Bend March 13-14 (DB) and a migrant passed low over Alazan Bayou WMA on a cold front April 17 (DW). No migrant terns other than Forster's were reported from area lakes.

An early migrant Anhinga passed over Central Hts March 15 (DW). 3 late American White Pelicans were over Sabinetown May 10 (DB). Single American Bitterns, perhaps the same individual, were spotted at Alazan Bayou WMA March 28 & 30 and April 8 (all AT). The first Snowy Egret was one at the Nac ponds April 9 (DW). 2 **Black-crowned Night-Herons** were reported at Carrice Creek on Toledo Bend March 11 (Jay Packer on eBird). This species is not often found in our area (overlooked?). The first White Ibis were 45 at Alazan Bayou WMA April 5 (AT). The first Osprey appeared at Carrice Creek March 14 (DB, J Sm), while one over Central Heights May 25 was very late for a migrant (DW). Single migrant Northern Harriers were over Central Hts March 14; St's Rest Road April 4; Central Hts April 7 (adult male); and Central Hts April 17 (all DW). A rare **Swallow-tailed Kite** was spotted from the Angelina Co Airport entry road May 11 (GH). Cooper's Hawks was watched in territorial display flights in Nacogdoches April 9; over the riverbottom forest at Alazan Bayou WMA April 10; and in Central Hts April 11 (all DW). The only large flight of Mississippi Kites was 72 tallied over Central Hts on April 29, ahead of a stormy cool front (DW). Local breeders returned to the Carrizo Creek area April 26-27 (KG, SL). Calling Broad-winged Hawks, likely local breeders, were back in south Nacogdoches April 4 (AT) and Carrizo Creek April 5 (SL). The only sizable push of migrants reported was 242 over Nacogdoches in 2 ½ hours on April 7 (DW). It was a good spring for **Swainson's Hawk** sightings, with one over Lufkin March 24 (GH); 3 in the field at the SFA Exp Forest on the April 21 norther (L Wo); 2 in Central Hts ahead of a cool front April 29 (DW); and one at the Nacogdoches Airport April 30 after heavy overnight rains (DW). The only Merlin reported was one over south Lufkin April 1 (GH), while the only **Peregrine Falcon** was one low over Pecan Park May 2 (DW, MHW).

The only Olive-sided Flycatcher was one at Alazan Bayou May 12 (DW). Eastern Wood-Pewee was the co-dominant migrant with Tennessee Warbler in Pecan Park May 10-13, with conservative counts of 35-50 daily (DW et al). These are high numbers, but not unprecedented. Single Yellow-bellied Flycatchers were found in Nacogdoches April 30, May 10 and May 17 (all DW) and a stunned bird was photographed and released in Nacogdoches May 28 (JS). An Alder Flycatcher sang in Central Hts May 13 to confirm the species (MHW) and 3 singing Willow Flycatchers were in Pecan Park May 12 (DW). Small numbers of "Traill's"-type flycatchers were present May 10-13, but most never sang or called for positive identification to species. A **Western Kingbird** near Huntington April 10 provided our earliest local record (JC; ph.), while another was near Alazan Bayou WMA May 12 (DW). Blue-headed Vireo is a scarce spring migrant after the winter birds depart in late March, but 1-3 were reported widely April 30-May 12 (m.obs.). The first Warbling Vireo was one in Pecan Park April 8 (BB). The first Philadelphia Vireo was one in Pecan Park April 30 (DW), where 3-6 were found daily May 10-13 (DW et al). Migrant Red-eyed Vireos were prominent in Pecan Park May 11-13, with 25-30+ recorded daily (DW et al). 3 noisy **Fish Crows** were found in Lufkin April 15 (JC); 2 were in Diboll May 10 (GH); and there were several reports from the Diboll area in late May-early June (RT). This species is now becoming established locally in our area. The last Red-breasted Nuthatches of the winter invasion were near Mahl April 16 (BB) and in south Nacogdoches April 27 (AT). A singing Marsh Wren was found at Lake Alazan March 21 (AW, VW). Single Gray-cheeked and Swainson's Thrushes were netted in Nacogdoches in late April for a side-by-side comparison (BB). The only other Gray-cheeked was one in Nacogdoches May 10 (DW). The first Swainson's Thrush visited south Nacogdoches April 19 (AT) and the last was one in Lufkin May 19 (GH), while a Hermit Thrush lingered to April 6 in Nacogdoches (BB). A Gray Catbird present in Cushing to April 29 first appeared after the winter storms in mid-Feb (DS). After weeks without sightings of Cedar Waxwings a large northbound flight appeared from mid to late May (m. obs.), with a peak of 305 over Pecan Park May 12 (DW). The last were 20 in Nacogdoches May 29 (CS, JS) and 25 in Central Hts May 30 (DW, MHW).

The last Purple Finches of the big winter flight were 2 in Center April 2 (J Sm); and near Antioch April 5 (SO). Pine Siskins invaded Pecan Park in late April, with hundreds appearing April 25 (TH). 200+ were still present April 27 (DW), but most disappeared after this. There were also many in Cushing for a few days in late April (DS). The last report was on May 15 in Lufkin (GH). A push of 22 migrant Chipping Sparrows came through Central Hts April 22, plus there were 7 in Pecan Park that day (DW). Single **Clay-colored** and **Grasshopper Sparrows** at the SFASU Farm after heavy rain on April 30 (L Wo) were found again in the same area on May 2 (DW). Migrant White-crowned Sparrows included 3 in Central Hts April 22 (DW); one near Antioch April 26 (SO) and up to 6 at the SFASU Farm April 30-May 2 (L Wo, DW). The only reports of **Bobolink** this spring were 6 males at the Nacogdoches Airport April 30 (DW) and nocturnal flight notes heard over Angelina NF on two nights in late April (L Wo). A late **Brewer's Blackbird** near Huntington April 20 was eclipsed by a male **Yellow-headed Blackbird** there the same day (JC, CS.). 4 **Yellow-headed Blackbirds** were amidst the wet pastures at the SFASU Farm May 2 (DW). A male Great-tailed Grackle flew due north over Alazan Bayou WMA April 10 (DW). Was this bird a returning migrant? This species is now locally established in our area, but we still have much to learn about them. The first push of Orchard Orioles was April 16, with flocks of 13 at Alazan Bayou and 6 in Central Hts (DW). The first Baltimore Orioles were 2 in Pecan Park April 19 (DW); no large numbers of this conspicuous migrant were reported.

No Ovenbirds were reported locally this spring. The only Worm-eating Warblers found were one near Antioch April 14 (SO) and a singing bird on the Dorr Creek Road May 8 (L Wo). The first Northern Waterthrush was at Alazan Bayou WMA April 17 (DW) and the last was in Central Hts May 14 (DW). Single Blue-winged Warblers visited Nacogdoches April 8 (DW); near Mahl April 14 (BB); south Nacogdoches April 17 (AT); near Antioch April 20 (SO) and Lufkin April 24 & May 6 (GH). Single Golden-winged Warblers were in Lufkin April 25 (GH); Pecan Park May 5 (DS); and Sabinetown May 5 (DB). A migrant Prothonotary Warbler visited south Nacogdoches April 6 (AT). Tennessee Warbler tied with Eastern Wood-Pewee as the dominant migrant in Pecan Park in the May 10-13 pushes, with 30-50 tallied daily, but these are not especially high counts for here (DW et al). The first Nashville Warblers were singles on March 27 in Central Hts (DW) and Lufkin (GH). The first American Redstarts were 2 in Lufkin May 1 (GH). They were prominent in Pecan Park May 11-13, with 22-35 seen daily (the high count was on May 12). Clearly different birds were involved as some days there were many adult males and other days almost none (DW et al). The only Cerulean Warblers were a female in Antioch April 28 (SO) and 2 females in Lufkin May 1 (GH). Magnolia Warblers were not very numerous in the mid-May fallouts and the only double-digit count was 10 in the Pecan Park area May 12 (DW). It was a good spring for Bay-breasted Warblers and they were recorded relatively frequently (m.obs.). The first was one in Pecan Park April 26 (DW) and 6-7 were seen daily in Pecan Park May 10-13, with males predominating the first days and females the latter days (DW et al). 10 Blackburnian Warblers in the May 11 push in Pecan Park were nice, but on May 13 **at least 18** were tallied, a very high one-day count (DW et al). The first Yellow Warbler was one in Nacogdoches April 24 (TH). 20 in Pecan Park May 4 was the first good push (DW), while the season high count was 30+ in Pecan Park May 13 (DW et al). Several observers found Chestnut-sided Warbler more numerous than expected. The first were 2 near Antioch April 28 (SO); 2 in Nacogdoches April 30 (CS, JS); and 3 in Lufkin May 1 (GH). 7 in Lufkin May 10 was a good count (GH), as was 8 in Sabinetown May 11 (DB). The high count in Pecan Park was 12 on May 11 (DW, DS). A rare **Blackpoll** Warbler was spotted in Lufkin April 27 (GH). Sizable pushes of migrant Yellow-rumped Warblers were 50 at the Nac ponds March 11 (CS) and 25 in Central Hts March 15 (DW). A Prairie Warbler was seen in Antioch May 14 (SO). Late March brought an unusual spate of Black-throated Green Warblers: 3 near Alazan Bayou WMA March 20 (AW); 1 at Alazan Bayou WMA (DW) and 2 in the SFA Exp Forest (CS) March 21; 1 near Center March 21 (J Sm); 1 in south Nacogdoches March 23 (AT); 1 in north Nacogdoches March 24 (D Wa); and 2 in Central Hts March 25 (MHW, DW). This species was also present daily in the mid-May fallouts in Pecan Park, but never was very numerous. Single Canada Warblers were in Lufkin May 10 (GH); Nacogdoches May 11 (JS) and Pecan Park May 11 (DW). The only Wilson's Warblers were singles in Pecan Park May 13 (DW) and Central Hts May 15 (MHW). It was a good spring for Scarlet Tanagers, with single males in

Pecan Park April 27 and May 7 (DW); and late females in Pecan Park May 10 (DW) and north Nacogdoches May 13 (CS, JS). A female **Western Tanager** was studied in Lufkin May 6 (GH). The first Rose-breasted Grosbeak came to a feeder in Cushing April 22 (DS). Migrant Dickcissels in Central Hts peaked at 200+ on April 26, but few remained after that (DW).

Observers: DB = David Bell; BB = Brent Burt; JC = James Childress; KG = Kathy Griffin; TH = Tyson Hart; GH = Gary Hunter; SL = Susie Lower; SO = Sue Orwig; RP = Ryan Phelps; DS = Dennis Scheef; CS = Cliff Shackelford; JS = Julie Shackelford; J Sm = John Smelser; AT = Anne Tindell; RT = Robert Truss; AW = Ashley Wahlberg; SW = Scott Wahlberg; D Wa = Dave Wallace; VW = Vickie Wallace; BW = Becky Whisenant; HW = Howard Williamson; DW = David Wolf; MHW = Mimi Hoppe Wolf; L Wo = Liam Wolff.

Localities in Angelina County: Angelina County Airport; Boykin Springs; Diboll, Huntington; Lufkin.

Localities in Cherokee County: Rusk.

Localities in Nacogdoches County: Alazan Bayou WMA; Carrizo Creek; Central Heights; Chireno; Lake Alazan; Lake Nacogdoches; Mahl; Nacogdoches (town); Nacogdoches Airport; Nacogdoches sewage ponds (= Nac ponds); Pecan Park (in Nacogdoches town); Stephen F. Austin SU campus (= SFASU); SFASU Farm (near Mahl); Stephen F. Austin Experimental Forest (=SFA Exp Forest).

Localities in Sabine County: Carrice Creek (on Toledo Bend Res); Sabinetown.

Localities in Shelby County: Antioch; Center; North Toledo Bend WMA