

**Summer Bird Report for Pineywoods Audubon Society
(June 1 – August 31, 2022)
by David E. Wolf**

Summer is the slow season for birding in our region, with breeding activity largely over and done with by early July and only a few migrants and wanderers appearing in July and August. This summer was especially noteworthy for the **lack of rain** and **long period of very hot and dry days** beginning in early June and continuing almost to the end of August. After early June many places did not receive any significant rain until late August and even then the heaviest showers were localized and skipped many areas. Effects of the drought on the avifauna are hard to judge, but by the end of the season the vegetation was severely impacted and almost certainly some of our birds were. Nevertheless, some very interesting birds were found. Thanks to all who submitted their sightings and if I missed anything significant please let me know (dewolfnac@gmail.com).

Bird Report:

Black-bellied Whistling-Ducks summered at the Nacogdoches sewage ponds again this year, with 3 adults seen June 24, while on August 17 there was a pair with 5 nearly-grown ducklings (both DW). A pair was at Ellen Trout Lake in Lufkin July 16 (DW). How regular are they around Lufkin? August brought the **first area records of Least Grebe, not one but two!** On August 13 one was photographed in the small marshy pond at Morris Frank Park in Lufkin by Gary Hunter, but it was not recognized as a Least until days later when the photos were down-loaded. In the meantime, TP & W Biologist Gabrielle Hargrove found and photographed one at the old Jasper Fish Hatchery August 19. Word went out (especially on eBird) and it was seen through August 23 by various observers. From the photos it seems clear that these were different birds. These are only the 4th and 5th records ever for the entire Pineywoods region – and the documentation for them was great! A singing White-winged Dove in Central Heights June 26 was the first there in months (DW), while one at the base of the TX 147 causeway August 18 was unexpected (DB, DW). Numbers were again present in Center all summer (J Sm). An Inca Dove that appeared in Sabinetown July 18 was unexpected there (DB). A Chimney Swift with eggs was photographed in Sabine Co June 13 (DB). A bright adult male **Rufous Hummingbird** visited feeders just west of Lufkin August 5-9 (Jeff Reid fide CS). The first Common Nighthawk was one over Center August 18 (J Sm).

Early fall-migrant shorebirds were largely lacking, but 2 American Avocets were on a distant sandbar off of the TX 147 causeway August 18 (DW, DB). The first Spotted Sandpiper was one at the SFASU Ag Farm near Mahl on July 10 (DW), while the first Solitary Sandpiper was one at Marion Ferry July 20 (DW). The first Greater Yellowlegs was one over Marion Ferry July 20 (DW). It is hard to explain a spate of unusual gull sightings from Lake Rayburn, but they provided some very interesting records. The first was a fresh juvenile **Franklin's Gull** on the shore at McAlister Park on August 14 (DB, J Sm, DW), 5 weeks earlier than the previous fall date for the Pineywoods! Then, on August 18, a total of 5 juvenile **Laughing Gulls** appeared at the TX 147 causeway from down-lake (DW, DB). This species is a rare straggler this far inland at any season and most records of multiples have been during or just after severe tropical storms. They were eclipsed by an adult **Lesser Black-backed Gull** that appeared with 3 of them and lingered on a distant sandbar for poor-but-recognizable photos (DW, DB). This is only the **2nd record for Lake Rayburn** and one of the few regional sightings away from the Lake Livingston spillway – and it was over a month earlier than any previous Pineywoods record! A **Caspian Tern** over Toledo Bend Reservoir at Sabinetown on July 18 was noteworthy (DB). 25 Black Terns were seen from the TX 147 causeway August 18 (DW, DB).

The first Wood Stork reported was one over Sabinetown July 18 (DB). On August 14 observers watched 8 come into the TX 103 at the Attoyac area (DB, J Sm, DW). By August 22 there were 46 at Marion Ferry in the early morning (DW), while DB counted 35 there later in the day. 4 came over Alazan Bayou WMA August 23 (CS). On August 31 there were 33 high over Central Hts in a kettle with 55 Black Vultures (DW). In September it became clear that this was the best movement of this species in our

area in years, but you will have to wait for the Fall Report to hear more about this. On June 13 a high count of 345 Double-crested Cormorants was tallied in the vicinity of a rookery in Sabine Co on a backwater of Toledo Bend near the TX 21 crossing (DB). By late June post-breeding herons and egrets began to appear. The first Snowy Egret was one at the Nac ponds June 24, while on August 16 there were 16 there (DW). On August 14 about 100 adult Little Blue Herons left the rookery/roost at TX 103 at the Attoyac and there were likely 2X that many juveniles that went largely unrecognized amidst the 3500 Cattle Egrets tallied (DB, J Sm, DW). As expected, a few Tricolored Herons were found. The first were 2 at TX 103 at the Attoyac July 20 (DW); the high count was 13 leaving the TX 103 at the Attoyac roost July 31 (DB, J Sm); one was at Marion Ferry August 4 (GH) and 3 were there August 11 (DW); 7 left the TX 103 at the Attoyac roost on August 14 (DB, J Sm, DW); and a juvenile visited Ellen Trout Park August 16 (GH). A dark-morph **Reddish Egret** watched from several vantage points on the TX 147 causeway August 18 (DW, DB) was a very rare find and only our **3rd area record** (all from this area). At least 1000 juvenile Cattle Egrets were counted in or near nests at the rookery at TX 103 at the Attoyac July 20 (DW), while on July 31 and August 14 it was estimated that 3650-3500 left the roost or were in the area (DB, J Sm, DW). This count is similar to the past two years. The only number of White Ibis were 86 leaving the TX 103 at the Attoyac roost July 31 (DB, J Sm). The only *Plegadis* ibis sightings were one at Marion Ferry August 4 and 2 at Kit McConnico Park in Lufkin August 16 (both GH). The first Roseate Spoonbill was one at Marion Ferry July 20, where one was seen again on August 22 (both DW).

Mississippi Kite continues to increase as a summer resident in the region. A nest found in a tall tree in their backyard in north Nacogdoches on June 22 fledged two juveniles that were actually seen to leave the nest early in the morning on July 7 (CS, JS). Kites were also seen over multiple sites elsewhere in Nacogdoches, including a high count of 8 at once in Pioneer Park on June 22 (DW), and around Carrizo Creek (SL) and Central Hts (DW). There were also consistent summer sightings from south Lufkin where they likely nested (GH); 4 locations in the Center area through the end of August (J Sm); and in Sabine Co (DB). Two **Swallow-tailed Kites** near San Augustine August 30 were a thrill (DB). Single juvenile Cooper's Hawk in south Nacogdoches August 30 and Central Hts the next day had likely been raised locally (both DW). A **Crested Caracara** over Central Hts school June 7 was a rare sighting (TH). Your compiler still hasn't seen one in the county! The first migrant American Kestrel came over Central Hts August 27 (DW). Recently-fledged juvenile Red-headed Woodpeckers were seen in Central Hts July 21 (DW) and Center August 28 (J Sm). 6 at McAlister Park on August 14 was a lot for this small area (DB, J Sm, DW). Single Northern Flickers in Sabinetown July 18 (DB) and near New Summerfield (ne. Cherokee Co) August 29 (CS) were a unexpected.

Two Olive-sided Flycatchers were found in Central Hts after a crashing thunderstorm and rain on August 21 (DW). A calling Yellow-bellied Flycatcher was detected near New Summerfield (ne. Cherokee Co) August 29 (CS), while a calling Alder Flycatcher in Lufkin August 30 was confirmed by two sound apps (GH). A Least Flycatcher in Central Hts August 7 was the first migrant *Empidonax* this "fall" (DW). An adult Great Crested Flycatcher with begging recently-fledged juveniles was seen in Sabinetown June 24 (DB). Scissor-tailed Flycatcher family groups appeared widely the first 10 days of July (DW). On August 24 at least 213 came to the regular roost in north Nacogdoches, but there were only 5 Eastern Kingbirds amidst them (DW, MHW). This was the first time the roost was checked this season. Loggerhead Shrikes were present at the Angelina County Airport all summer (GH, DW), one of the few (only?) sites in our area where they are still resident and presumably breeding. A weakly-singing migrant Yellow-throated Vireo came through Central Hts August 31 (DW, MHW). A White-breasted Nuthatch was seen feeding a well-fledged juvenile in Center July 11; breeding confirmed! (J Sm). The first wandering or migrant Blue-gray Gnatcatchers were singles in Central Hts July 4 (DW) and Sabinetown July 11 (DB). A Gray Catbird occasionally snuck into a birdbath in Nacogdoches through at least mid-July (CDF) and another was seen in south Nacogdoches July 17 (DW). The last Swainson's Thrush of spring was one at Toledo Bend Dam May 24 (DB, J Sm). Wood Thrushes were still singing on territory in Nacogdoches (CDF) and Center (J Sm) through at least mid-July. A juvenile American Robin was noted in Center Aug 28 (J Sm).

Orchard Orioles largely disappeared without any large movements detected, but 2 migrants visited a yard in Center July 23 (J Sm). A late-for-spring Baltimore Oriole was in Sabinetown May 25 (DB), while an immature male Baltimore Oriole at the base of the TX 147 causeway August 18 was early for fall (DW, DB). A mob of 65 Brown-headed Cowbirds, mostly females and immatures, appeared at a feedlot in Central Hts August 16 and then a high count of 165 was there August 21 (DW). These were likely local breeders bunching up, but most then left the area. Where do they go? Very few Louisiana Waterthrushes were noted, but singles were at McAlister Park July 31 (J Sm) and August 14 (DB, J Sm, DW). The first Black-and-white Warbler was one at McAlister Park July 29 (DB) and the next was one in Sabinetown August 5 (DB). An immature male American Redstart on the TX 147 causeway August 18 was presumably an early migrant (DW, DB). Two late spring migrant Magnolia Warblers were in Sabinetown May 26 (DB). The first southbound Yellow Warbler was one in Sabinetown August 1 (DB). The numbers of this usually fairly common migrant were low the rest of the month and the high count was only 5, on the TX 147 causeway August 18 (DW, DB). A late Chestnut-sided Warbler was in Sabinetown May 26 (DB)

Observers: DB = David Bell; CDF = Charles Dean Fisher; TH = Tyson Hart; GH = Gary Hunter; G Ha = Gabrielle Hargrove; SL = Susie Lower; CS = Cliff Shackelford; JS = Julie Shackelford; J Sm = John Smelser; TH = Tyson Hart; DW = David Wolf; MHW = Mimi Hoppe Wolf.

Localities in Angelina County: Angelina County Airport; Ellen Trout Park in Lufkin; Kit McConnico Park in Lufkin; Lufkin; Marion Ferry on upper Lake Rayburn; Morris Frank Park in Lufkin.

Cherokee County: New Summerfield.

Localities in Jasper County: Old Jasper Fish Hatchery.

Localities in Nacogdoches County: Alazan Bayou WMA; Carrizo Creek; Central Heights; McAlister Park on upper Lake Rayburn; Nacogdoches; Nacogdoches sewage ponds (= Nac ponds); Pioneer Park in Nacogdoches; SFASU Ag Farm near Mahl.

Localities in Sabine County: Sabinetown; Toledo Bend Reservoir (in part).

Localities in San Augustine County: San Augustine; TX 103 at the Attoyac Bayou; TX 147 causeway on Lake Rayburn.

Localities in Shelby County: Center.