

DECEMBER 2003 SOUTHERN HIGH PLAINS BIRDING HIGHLIGHTS

With no measurable precipitation during the month, the Lubbock area was left 9.86 inches below the expected annual total of 18.67 inches of rainfall - 8.81 inches of rain during the year was scarcely above our record low of 8.73 inches. Continuing drought, most likely, contributed more than any other factor to generally low numbers of waterbirds, water-favoring songbirds, and even songbirds in general. Upland non-passerines, particularly galliforms and raptors, seem to be holding their own. The region's two CBCs reported lower than normal diversity and much lower than normal numbers. Despite all of this, our birders got out quite a bit and did find a few treats.

As usual, the county follows the location of each sighting () and birds are listed by virtue of expected rarity or by virtue of rarity this year.

GREATER WHITE-FRONTED GOOSE: 1 at Earl Crow Park (Lubbock) on 12/6/03 (BB), 1 at Leroy Elmore Park (Lubbock) on 12/13/03 (BB), 10 at Buffalo Springs Lake (Lubbock) on 12/14/03 (AF) were the only reports for the first half of the month. From 12/15/03 on they were scattered about in relatively normal numbers.

SNOW GOOSE/ROSS' GOOSE/CANADA GOOSE were present in lower than normal numbers throughout the period.

TRUMPETER SWAN: a family of 6-7 birds were located (after 2 young were killed and 2 young/1 adult were wounded) at a playa near Lockney (Floyd) on 12/16/03 (JB, MCo). The adults were collared birds from the Iowa program; the young were unbanded. The wounded were treated at the South Plains Wildlife Rehabilitation Center (CL, RoL) though one had to be put down and the two remaining birds were returned to Iowa for use in the captive breeding program - ACCIDENTAL FOR REGION.

TUNDRA SWAN: 1 adult and 2 immature were observed at a playa near Springlake (Lamb) from 11/27/03 through 12/12/03 (JB, GM, JS, TS) but disappeared with the onset of pheasant season - ACCIDENTAL FOR REGION.

WOOD DUCK: 1 at Buffalo Springs Lake (Lubbock) on 11/30/03 (KHa), 2 near Sterley (Floyd) on 12/6/03 (JST), 2-3 near Springlake (Lamb) from 12/12/03 to 12/13/03 (BB, JS, TS), 12 at the V8 Ranch (Lubbock) on 12/20/03 (BB, BR, SR), 3 below Lake Six (Lubbock) on 12/20/03 (AF, RiL), 3 in east Lubbock on 12/20/03 (CL, RoL), 1 at Aztlan Park (Lubbock) on 12/24/03 (AF).

GADWALL/AMERICAN WIGEON/MALLARD/NORTHERN SHOVELER/NORTHERN PINTAIL/GREEN-WINGED TEAL/CANVASBACK/REDHEAD/RING-NECKED DUCK/LESSER SCAUP/BUFFLEHEAD/HOODED MERGANSER/RUDDY DUCK were all present but in lower than expected or much lower than expected numbers.

BLUE-WINGED TEAL: 1 near Springlake (Lamb) on 12/13/03 (AF), 3 below Lake Six (Lubbock) on 12/20/03 (AF, RiL).

GREATER SCAUP: 1 along the Canyon Lakes (Lubbock) on 12/20/03 (PK).

LESSER PRAIRIE CHICKEN: 1 first year male wandered into a North Lubbock yard on 12/1/03, was killed by dog, and was identified by RoL and AF -- we strongly suspect this bird got to Lubbock on its own as there are leks within 25-30 miles of Lubbock and the species is a surprisingly strong wanderer - FIRST REPORT FOR LUBBOCK COUNTY

EARED GREBE: 1 at Buffalo Springs Lake (Lubbock) on 12/14/03 (AF), 1 along the Canyon Lakes (Lubbock) on 12/20/03 (PK), 1 at Whisperwood Pond (Lubbock) on 12/25/03 (AF).

AMERICAN WHITE PELICAN: 1 over Lubbock on 12/13/03 (JH, KH).

REDDISH EGRET: 1 immature at Leroy Elmore Park (Lubbock) on 12/2/03 (BB) the last sighting of OUR REGION'S FIRST RECORD OF THIS SPECIES.

BALD EAGLE: 1 near Lockney (Floyd) on 12/14/03 (SH).

HARRIS' HAWK: 1 adult just north of Lubbock on 12/20/03 (AF, RiL).

GOLDEN EAGLE: 2 near Springlake (Lamb) on 12/13/03 (AF), 1 in northwest Lubbock County on 12/13/03 (AF), and 1 near Lockney (Floyd) on 12/14/03 (SH).

MERLIN: 1 near Sterley (Floyd) on 12/6/03 (JST), 1 near Springlake (Lamb) on 12/13/03 (AF), 1 at the LEAS Nature Trail (Lubbock) on 12/14/03 (AF), 1 in a Lubbock yard on 12/18/03 (TM), 1 on the V8 Ranch (Lubbock) on 12/20/03 (BB, BR, SR), 2 in northwest Lubbock County on 12/20/03 (AF, RiL), 1 near Springlake (Lamb) on 12/21/03 (BB, AF).

VIRGINIA RAIL: 1 on the V8 Ranch (Lubbock) on 12/20/03 (BB, BR, SR).

SORA: 1 along the Canyon Lakes (Lubbock) on 12/20/03 (PK), 1 at Aztlan Park (Lubbock) on 12/23/03 (PK) and on 12/24/03 (AF), 5 along the Canyon Lakes (Lubbock) on 12/31/03 (MCa, AF).

SNOWY PLOVER: 1 at Muleshoe NWR (Bailey) from 12/14/03 through 12/21/03 (BB, SH, HH) - FIRST DECEMBER RECORD FOR THE REGION.

AMERICAN AVOCET: 1 near Springlake (Lamb) on 12/13/03 (BB, AF) - ACCIDENTAL FOR THE MONTH.

LONG-BILLED DOWITCHER: 1 at Muleshoe NWR (Bailey) on 11/28/03 (CW), 14 near Springlake (Lamb) on 12/13/03 (AF).

KILLDEER/GREATER YELLOWLEGS/LESSER YELLOWLEGS/LEAST SANDPIPER/ WILSON'S SNIPE: all present but in lower to much lower than expected numbers.

HERRING GULL: 2 first winter at Leroy Elmore Park (Lubbock) on 12/6/03 and 12/13/03 (BB), 4 in west Lubbock on 12/20/03 (MD, TS).

SHORT-EARED OWL: 1 in northwest Lubbock County on 11/26/03 (CW), 2 at Muleshoe NWR (Bailey) on 12/21/03 (BB, AF, RL).

ANNA'S HUMMINGBIRD: 1 female present in a Lubbock yard throughout the month (RE, LP) - ACCIDENTAL FOR THE REGION.

YELLOW-BELLIED SAPSUCKER: 1 below Lake Six (Lubbock) on 12/20/03 (AF, RiL).

DOWNY WOODPECKER: 2-3 along the Canyon Lakes (Lubbock) throughout the period (MCa, AF, PK, TS).

EASTERN PHOEBE: 1 in northwest Lubbock County on 11/29/03 (CW), 1-2 at Aztlan Park (Lubbock) throughout the period (BB, AF, PK, TS), 1 at MacKenzie Park (Lubbock) on 12/31/03 (MCa, AF).

NORTHERN SHRIKE: 1 at Muleshoe NWR (Bailey) on 12/21/03 (PK, BR, SR) - ACCIDENTAL FOR THE REGION.

WESTERN SCRUB JAY: 1 on TTU Campus (Lubbock) on 12/20/03 (TG).

BROWN CREEPER: 1 at Aztlan Park (Lubbock) on 12/24/03 (AF) the only report for the month.

CACTUS WREN: 1 found dead at Muleshoe NWR (Bailey) on 12/21/03 (AF, RoL).

WINTER WREN: 1-2 at LEAS Nature Trail (Lubbock) throughout the period (DC, AF, EM, TM, BR, SR), 1 along the Canyon Lakes on 12/20/03 (PK).

SEDGE WREN: 1 at LEAS Nature Trail (Lubbock) throughout the period (DC, AF, ERM, TM, BR, SR), 1 at Mae Simmons Park (Lubbock) on 12/31/03 (MCa, AF) - ONCE CONSIDERED ACCIDENTAL FOR THE REGION - STATUS UNDER REVIEW.

ROCK WREN/CAROLINA WREN/BEWICK'S WREN/HOUSE WREN/MARSH WREN: all present but in lower to much lower than expected numbers.

GOLDEN-CROWNED KINGLET: 1 east of Lubbock on 12/20/03 (JH, PH, CR, MR, LS), 1 at MacKenzie Park (Lubbock) on 12/31/03 (MCa, AF) - LOW NUMBERS.

TOWNSEND'S SOLITAIRE: 1 at the Lubbock Cemetery on 12/7/03 (AF) the only report for the month.

RUBY-CROWNED KINGLET/EASTERN BLUEBIRD/HERMIT THRUSH/AMERICAN ROBIN: all present but in lower to much lower than expected numbers.

AMERICAN PIPIT: 1 in east Lubbock on 12/20/03 (CS) and 4 in northeast Lubbock County on 12/25/03 (AF) the only reports for the month - VERY LOW NUMBERS.

NORTHERN PARULA: 1 at Aztlan Park (Lubbock) from 12/23/03 through 12/31/03 (MCa, AF, PK, TS) - FIRST DECEMBER RECORD FOR THE REGION.

COMMON YELLOWTHROAT: 1-2 along the Canyon Lakes (Lubbock) from 12/20/03 to 12/31/03 (MCa, AF, PK).

ORANGE-CROWNED WARBLER/YELLOW-RUMPED WARBLER: present but in much lower than expected numbers.

AMERICAN TREE SPARROW: 2 east of Lubbock on 12/20/03 (JH, PH, CR, MR, LS), 3 in northeast Lubbock County on 12/25/03 (AF).

LARK SPARROW: 1 north of Lubbock on 12/20/03 (AF, RiL).

FOX SPARROW: 2 on the V8 Ranch (Lubbock) on 12/20/03 (BB, BR, SR), 1 at Aztlan Park (Lubbock) on 12/24/03 (AF) the only reports so far this season.

HARRIS' SPARROW: 1 in northeast Lubbock County on 12/25/03 (AF).

WHITE-THROATED SPARROW: 4-5 at the LEAS Nature Trail (Lubbock) throughout the period (BR, SR), 1 at the Lubbock Cemetery on 12/7/03 (AF), 2 on the V8 Ranch (Lubbock) on 12/20/03 (BB, BR, SR), 1 below Lake Six (Lubbock) on 12/20/03 (AF, RiL), 2 along the Canyon Lakes (Lubbock) on 12/31/03 (MCa, AF).

MCCOWN'S LONGSPUR: 500 near Sterley (Floyd) on 12/6/03 (JST), 35 near Springlake (Lamb) on 12/13/03 (AF), 120 near Floydada (Floyd) on 12/20/03 (JST) - UNUSUALLY SPARSELY DISTRIBUTED THIS WINTER.

LAPLAND LONGSPUR: 200 near Sterley (Floyd) on 12/6/03 (JST), 3 near Springlake (Lamb) on 12/13/03 (AF) - UNUSUALLY HIGH NUMBERS FOR OUR REGION.

CHESTNUT-COLLARED LONGSPUR: 30 near Sterley (Floyd) on 12/6/03 (JST), 15 near Floydada (Floyd) on 12/20/03 (JST) - VERY LOW NUMBERS.

SPOTTED TOWHEE/CANYON TOWHEE/RUFOUS-CROWNED SPARROW/FIELD SPARROW/VESPER SPARROW/LARK BUNTING/SAVANNAH SPARROW/SONG SPARROW/LINCOLN'S SPARROW/SWAMP SPARROW/WHITE-CROWNED SPARROW/DARK-EYED JUNCO: all present but in lower to much lower numbers than expected.

YELLOW-HEADED BLACKBIRD: 1 at Buddy Holly Park (Lubbock) on 12/6/03 (BB), 1 near Littlefield (Lamb)

on 12/11/03 (JST).

RUSTY BLACKBIRD: 4 on the V8 Ranch (Lubbock) on 12/20/03 (BB, BR, SR), 2 at Mae Simmons Park (Lubbock) on 12/31/03 (MCa, AF) - FORMERLY CONSIDERED ACCIDENTAL FOR THE REGION - STATUS UNDER REVIEW.

Observers: BB=Brandon Best, JB=John Brunjes, MCa=Martin Campbell, MCo=Mark Collins, DC=Doug Cone, MD=Maureen Donohue, RE=Rosemary English, AF=Anthony Floyd, TG=Tom Gill, JH=Jill Haukos, KH=Katie Haukos, KHa=Kathleen Harris, PH=Pam Hellman, SH=Scott Hendershot, HH=Herbert Hinckley, PK=Phillip Kite, CL=Carol Lee, RoL=Rob Lee, RiL=Richmond Lee, ERM=Ellen Roots McBride, TM=Toby McBride, LP=Louise Palermo, BR=Bob Rasa, SR=Sylvia Rasa, CR=Cindy Reinhardt, MR=Marla Riddlespurger, LS=Leanna Smith, JS=Jeffrey SoRelle, TS=Tom SoRelle, CS=Cliff Stogner, JST=Jo-Szu Tsai, and CW=Clay White.

Anthony Floyd terrverts@yahoo.com
President, Field Notes Compiler, CBC Compiler
Llano Estacado Audubon Society, Lubbock
www.leas.bizland.com