

FEBRUARY 2006 SOUTHERN HIGH PLAINS BIRDING HIGHLIGHTS

With a whopping 0.18 inches of rain in February, the region slipped still further into drought, now 0.89 inches below average year-to-date totals of 1.07 inches (compounded by being 3.56 inches down in 2005), and standing water is getting pretty darn scarce. Consequently waterfowl, waders, and shorebirds are scarce and widely scattered. Wintering songbirds are also fairly sparse, particularly those dependent on wetlands or some kind of moisture content in food sources such as seeds or berries. Upland birds seem to be doing fairly well and raptors continue to thrive throughout the region though the swell of rodents generated in 2005 seems to be tapering precipitously.

As always the county is listed after the site in () and birds are listed by virtue of rarity, unusual scarcity, or unusual abundance.

SNOW GOOSE: 12 in Levelland (Hockley) on 2/4/06 (AnH) and 15-227 at the City Farms just east of Lubbock throughout the period (BB, AnH, CS) the only sightings for the month - LOW NUMBERS.

ROSS'S GOOSE: 4-25 at the City Farms just east of Lubbock throughout the period (AnH, CS) the only sightings for the month - LOW NUMBERS.

BRANT: 1 well-photographed bird was seen at Duck Pond in Plainview (Hale) on 14 January 2006 (JB) but could not be relocated - THE REGION'S SIXTH REPORT OF THIS SPECIES - A TBRC REVIEW SPECIES; A REPORT HAS BEEN FILED.

WOOD DUCK: 1 at Muleshoe NWR (Bailey) on 2/4/06 (AnH) and 10 at Stevens Park (Lubbock) on 2/4/06 (BB) the only reports for the month - LOW.

CINNAMON TEAL: 4 near the intersection of CR 2053 and CR 1795 (Lynn) on 2/3/06 (AnH) the only report for the month - LOW.

CANVASBACK: 2 near Tahoka (Lynn) on 2/3/06 (AnH), 8 at Muleshoe NWR (Bailey) on 2/4/06 (AnH, AvH), and 2 near Tokio (Terry) on 2/18/06 (AnH) the only reports for the month - LOW.

REDHEAD: 35 at Buddy Holly Park (Lubbock) on 2/4/06 (BB) an unusually high number for any one location - NOTABLE SIGHTING.

RING-NECKED DUCK: 150 at Buddy Holly Park (Lubbock) on 2/4/06 (BB) an unusually high number for any one location - NOTABLE SIGHTING.

GREATER SCAUP: 1 male at the Matador Sewage Ponds (Motley) on 2/11/06 (AnH) the only report for the month - LOW.

COMMON GOLDENEYE: 1 male at the lake just east of Whiteflat (Motley) on 2/11/06 (AnH) the only report for the month - LOW.

EARED GREBE: 1 at Muleshoe NWR (Bailey) on 2/4/06 (AnH) the only report for the month - VERY LOW.

HORNED GREBE: 2 at White River Lake (Crosby) on 21 January 2006 (LP) a late report, 2 at Muleshoe NWR (Bailey) on 2/4/06 (AnH) the only report for February - LOW.

GREAT EGRET: 1 at Maxey Park (Lubbock) on 2/4/06 (AnH) and 1 at Mae Simmons Park (Lubbock) on 2/11/06 (LS) - FORMERLY ACCIDENTAL IN THE WINTER; THIS IS THE SECOND YEAR IN A ROW THAT THIS HAS OCCURRED.

HARRIS'S HAWK: 1 adult just west of Lubbock International Airport (Lubbock) on 2/22/06 (DT) - VERY RARE IN THE REGION.

ROUGH-LEGGED HAWK: 1 near Meadow (Terry) on 2/18/06 (AnH) the only report for the month - MORE SCARCE WITH EACH PASSING WINTER.

GOLDEN EAGLE: 1 over southwest Lubbock on 2/11/06 (GJ) the only report for the season - RARELY SEEN IN OUR REGION THESE DAYS.

MERLIN: 1 near Tahoka (Lynn) on 2/3/06 (AnH), 1 at Muleshoe NWR (Bailey) on 2/4/06 (AnH, AvH), and 1 at Plains County Park (Yoakum) on 2/18/06 (AnH) the only reports for the month - LOW.

PEREGRINE FALCON: 1 at the TTU HSC (Lubbock) on 2/13/06 (AnH) - STATUS IN THE REGION UNCERTAIN.

GREATER YELLOWLEGS: 1 at Brashear Lake (Hockley) on 2/10/06 (LS), 1 near Idalou (Lubbock) on 2/11/06 (AnH), 2 near Tokio (Terry) on 2/18/06 (AnH), and 1 at the Rall's Sewage Ponds (Crosby) on 2/25/06 (AnH) - LOW.

LONG-BILLED CURLEW: 5 at the Highway 70 crossing of the Pease River (Motley) on 2/11/06 (AnH) - ACCIDENTAL FOR THE MONTH.

WILSON'S SNIPE: 1 at Muleshoe NWR (Bailey) on 2/4/06 (AnH) the only report for the month - VERY LOW.

HERRING GULL: 1 adult winter bird at Higginbotham Park (Lubbock) on 2/18/06 (AnH) - VERY LOW.

GRAY FLYCATCHER: 1 at Muleshoe NWR (Bailey) on 2/4/06 (AnH, AvH) - THE FIRST FEBRUARY RECORD FOR THE SPECIES IN OUR REGION.

EASTERN PHOEBE: 1 at Yoakum County Park (Yoakum) on 2/18/06 (AnH) the only report for the month - LOW.

SAY'S PHOEBE: 1 at Plains County Park (Yoakum) on 2/18/06 (AnH) the only report for the month - ABOUT AVERAGE.

COMMON RAVEN: 1 near Matador (Motley) on 2/11/06 (AnH) and 2 near Whiteflat (Motley) on 2/11/06 (AnH) - GOOD SIGHTINGS OF THIS FORMERLY ACCIDENTAL SPECIES FOR THE REGION.

BUSHTIT: 2 at Dickens Springs (Dickens) on 2/25/06 (AnH) the only report for the month - LOW.

BROWN CREEPER: 1 in a Lubbock yard on 2/5/06 (EM, TM), 1 at Plains County Park (Yoakum) on 2/18/06 (AnH), and 1 at the White River crossing of FM 651 (Crosby) on 2/25/06 (AnH) - GOOD NUMBERS AND NICE SCATTER.

WHITE-BREADED NUTHATCH: 1 at Yoakum County Park (Yoakum) on 2/18/06 (AnH) - NOW ESSENTIALLY ACCIDENTAL FOR THE REGION.

WINTER WREN: 1 at the LEAS Nature Trail (Lubbock) on 2/25/06 (AnH) the only report for the month - LOW.

EASTERN BLUEBIRD: 4 at the White River crossing of Highway 207 (Floyd) on 2/11/06 (AnH), 2 at the Matador Cemetery (Motley) on 2/11/06 (AnH), and 1 near Dickens (Dickens) on 2/25/06 (AnH) the only reports for the month - LOW.

SAGE THRASHER: 1 at the City Farms (Lubbock) on 2/11/06 (BB) and 6 near Bull Lake (Lamb) on 2/26/06 (AR) - GREAT NUMBERS and NICE SCATTER.

COMMON YELLOWTHROAT: 1 at White River Lake (Crosby) on 21 January 2006 (LP) the only report so far this year - VERY LOW.

CASSIN'S SPARROW: 1 at White River Lake (Crosby) on 21 January 2006 (LP, mob) THE FIRST JANUARY

RECORD SINCE 1996 and 2 at Muleshoe NWR (Bailey) on 2/4/06 (AnH) the FIRST FEBRUARY RECORD SINCE 1986.

AMERICAN TREE SPARROW: 1 at Lake One (Lubbock) on 2/11/06 (LS, mob) the only report for the month - VERY RARE IN LUBBOCK COUNTY.

CHIPPING SPARROW: 12 at Turkey Creek (Floyd) on 2/11/06 (AnH) the only report for the month - ABOUT AVERAGE FOR THIS RARELY WINTERING SPECIES.

GRASSHOPPER SPARROW: 2 near Mound Lake (Terry) on 2/18/06 (AnH) the only report for the month - OF THIS ONLY RECENTLY FOUND TO BE WINTERING SPECIES.

FOX SPARROW: 1 at Muleshoe NWR (Bailey) on 2/4/06 (AnH, AvH) the only report for the month - VERY LOW.

WHITE-THROATED SPARROW: 1 near Whiteflat (Motley) on 2/11/06 (AnH) and 1 at the White River crossing of FM 651 (Crosby) on 2/25/06 (AnH) the only reports for the month - LOW.

MCCOWN'S LONGSPUR: 28 along Dixie Lane (Lynn) on 2/3/06 (AnH), 24 near Morton (Cochran) on 2/4/06 (AnH, AvH), 15 near Estacado (Lubbock) on 2/11/06 (AnH), 85 near Petersburg (Hale) on 2/11/06 (AnH), 20 near Lockney (Floyd) on 2/11/06 (AnH), and 65 near Sandhill (Floyd) on 2/11/06 (AnH) the only reports for the month - NICELY SCATTERED BUT LOW NUMBERS.

CHESTNUT-COLLARED LONGSPUR: 12 along Dixie Lane (Lynn) on 2/3/06 (AnH), 8 near Morton (Cochran) on 2/4/06 (AnH, AvH), 60 near Estacado (Lubbock) on 2/11/06 (AnH), 140 near Petersburg (Hale) on 2/11/06 (AnH), 12 near Floydada (Floyd) on 2/11/06 (AnH), and 7 near Farmer (Crosby) on 2/25/06 (AnH) the only reports for the month - NICELY SCATTERED BUT LOW NUMBERS.

OBSERVERS: BB=Brandon Best, JB=Jason Brook, AnH=Anthony Hewetson, AvH=Aveline Hewetson, GJ=George Jury, EM=Ellen McBride, TM=Toby McBride, LP=Laura Packer, AR=Anona Roberts, LS=Leanna Smith, CS=Cliff Stogner, DT=Debbie Tennyson.

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