

BIG BEND NATIONAL PARK  
RARE BIRD RECORDS  
AUGUST - NOVEMBER 2008

Following is a list of observations reported by visitors and staff for the period August 1 - November 30. I've compiled only those observations for species that are listed as **Rare, Accidental, Sporadic, Hypothetical** or **Not included (?)** on the park's checklist. A "**?fall**" indicates a species which is documented for the park but not in the fall season.

**Fall Season: General Weather Patterns**

The dominant event of this fall season was the record flooding of the Rio Grande during the month of September. While the rest of the nation watched Hurricane Ike slam the Texas Gulf Coast near Galveston, a tropical depression named Lowell slipped in from the Pacific almost unnoticed and stalled over northern Chihuahua and west Texas. The system dumped huge amounts of rain over a broad area, but most significantly on the Rio Conchos watershed. The region was already saturated from heavy August rainfall, so Lowell's downpour overwhelmed Mexican dams along the Conchos and its tributaries. Mexican water officials were forced to release huge volumes of water that surged downstream into the Rio Grande. The release from the Rio Conchos, combined with heavy local runoff, created the deepest flood in Big Bend's recorded history. At this writing, the park is still involved in clean-up and repair of roadways and facilities. The impact on the river corridor itself is still being assessed, but initial inspections reveal that, in some areas, the huge flood was beneficial in reducing invasive exotic vegetation.

A comparison of current year to date precipitation with year-to-date totals through November 2007 (+ or -) fails to document the exceptional rainfall that occurred during the first two months of the reporting period. Note that approximately 90% of the reported total Fall season precipitation fell between August and mid-September.

<u>Station</u>	<u>YTD Precip</u>	<u>Change from '07</u>	<u>Aug-Nov'08 precip.</u>
Panther Junction	15.00"	-0.11"	7.06"
Chisos Basin	20.89"	-2.76"	11.56"
Rio Grande Vill.	10.07"	-2.47"	6.98"
Castolon	13.43"	-2.33"	7.86"
Persimmon Gap	13.72"	+0.22"	8.74"

**Fall Season: The Birds**

No doubt this fall season was under-reported due to flood impacts on park facilities and a closure of high Chisos backpack camps due to increased black bear activity. The resulting decline in visitation brought fewer birders and fewer reported birds. That said there were still several highlights.

Two review species were reported for the period: Carpenter observed at least two female **white-eared hummingbirds** in the Boot Canyon drainage in early August. His observations followed on the heels of Gibbons accepted record of a female white-eared in the same location in late July. A late October report of an immature male Costa's hummingbird west of the park in Terlingua has been submitted for review, complementing two other West Texas Fall season reports (pers. comm. M. Lockwood).

Two reports of male hooded warblers, one in August and a late report from November, were excellent finds, as was a lone Louisiana waterthrush in Boot Canyon in mid-August. An end of the season report of peregrine falcon along the east end of the Dodson Trail resulted in a surprise when the accompanying photos revealed not a peregrine, but rather an adult aplomado falcon. While the images aren't quite large enough, it appears to be a female with a band, echoing the March 2007 observation of a banded female just south of Dugout Wells. Hopefully more information will come available to pinpoint the date and exact location.

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<u>SPECIES</u>	<u>#</u>	<u>DATE</u>	<u>LOCATION</u>	<u>OBSERVER</u>	<u>PARK STATUS</u>
Yellow-crowned Night-heron	1juv	08/26	RGV-Nature Trail	Mark Flippo	rare
Common Black-hawk	1juv	08/06	Cottonwood Camp.	I. Karafiath	rare
	1	10/09	RGV-Nest area	R.Dean,J&J Allen	rare
	1	10/10	RGV-Store	Christina Rinas	rare
Harris's hawk	3	11/10	SE Cyn Road	Becky & Bob Cronk	rare
Gray hawk	1	10/17	RGV-Daniels Rch	Mark Flippo	late
Golden eagle	1imm	07/31	Boot Cyn/S.Rim	Eric Carpenter	rare
	1imm	08/02	Rte 15, MP 1.5	Eric Carpenter	rare
	1	11/11	Rte 11, MP 6	Rob & Angie Dean	rare
Aplomado falcon*	1f?	11/??	Dodson Trail	S&T Ehrman	?fall
*Photos. Hypothetical summer/winter, Accidental spring.					
Virginia rail	1	11/24	RGV-Nature Trail	Raymond Kutzman	rare
Long-billed Curlew	1	09/27	Heath Canyon	Lisa Turacek	unc.
<b>White-eared Hummingbird*</b>	<b>1-2f</b>	<b>08/01-02</b>	<b>Boot Canyon</b>	<b>Eric Carpenter</b>	<b>acc.</b>
<b>*Texas Review Species: Report to TBRC:Lockwood Pending review.</b>					
Ruby-throated Hummingbird	1m	09/01	Panther Junction	Rob & Angie Dean	rare
	1m	09/30	Terlingua	Mark Flippo	rare
Anna's Hummingbird	2m	10/29	Chisos Basin	Deborah Hurst	rare
<b>Costa's Hummingbird*</b>	<b>1m</b>	<b>10/26-11/31</b>	<b>Terlingua</b>	<b>Mark Flippo</b>	<b>acc.</b>
<b>*Texas Review Species: Report to TBRC:Lockwood Pending review.</b>					
Blue-headed Vireo	1m	10/17	RGV-Daniels Rch	Mark Flippo	rare

Brown creeper 1 11/13 panther Junction M.Flippo,J. Hines spo.

<u>SPECIES</u>	<u>#</u>	<u>DATE</u>	<u>LOCATION</u>	<u>OBSERVER</u>	<u>PARK STATUS</u>
Carolina wren	1	08/26	RGV-Nature Trail	Mark Flippo	rare
Mountain bluebird	6	11/25	La Noria	Raymond Kutzman	spo.
Louisiana Waterthrush	1	08/24	Boot Canyon	David Elkowitz	acc.
Hooded warbler	1m	08/03	Pine Canyon	Eric Carpenter	acc.
	1m	11/23	Cottonwood Camp.	Jeff Troy	acc.
Painted redstart	~6	08/01-02	Boot Canyon	Eric Carpenter	spo.
	1	09/10	Basin Loop Tr.	John Wray	spo.
Hooded oriole	1m	10/10	Chisos Basin	Deborah Hurst	rare