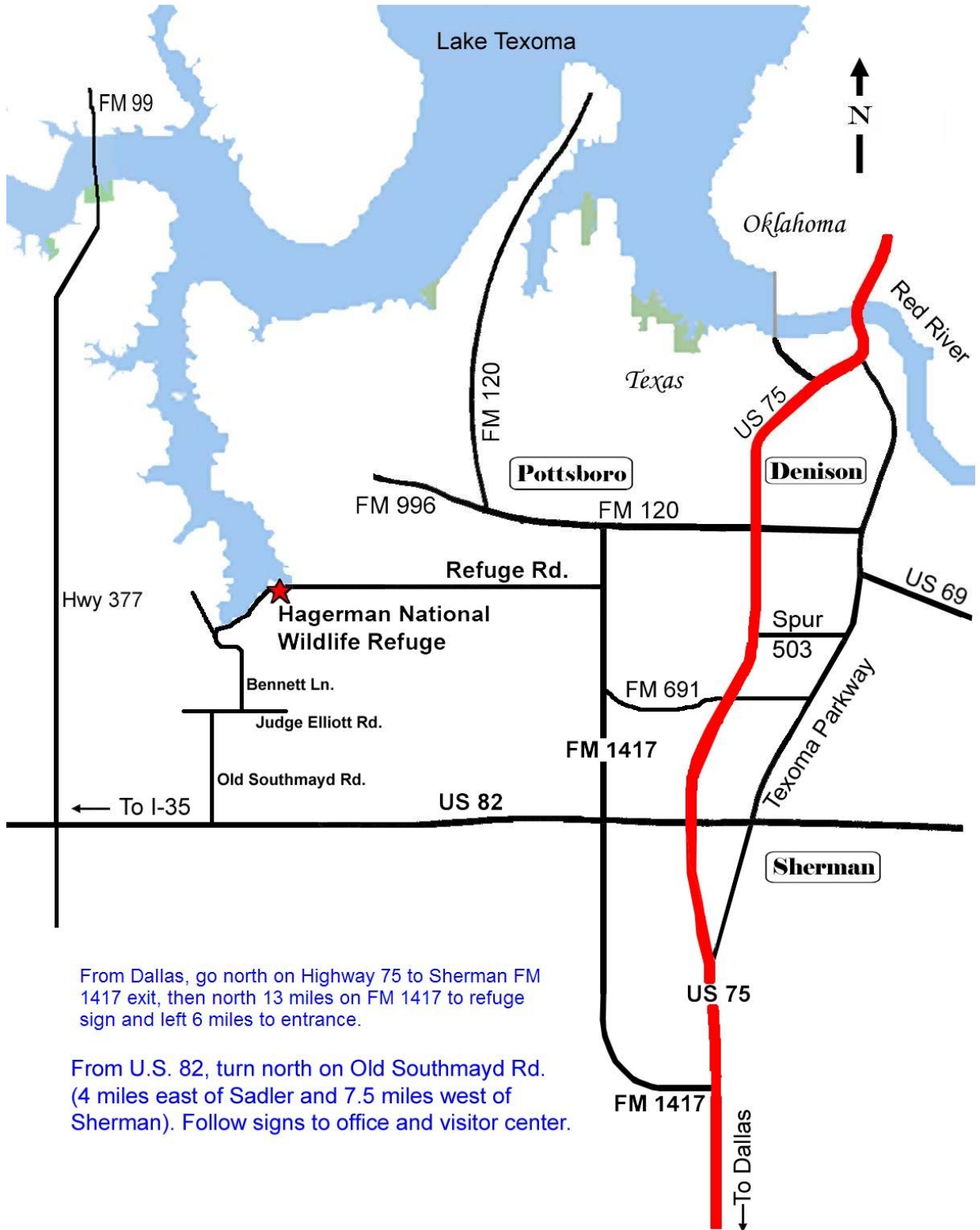


## BIRDING GRAYSON COUNTY

Excerpted from Thomas Riecke's "Birds of Grayson County," with addition of a map, expansion of the Contents for this part, Thomas's update on the Woodpecker Tree, and some formatting changes by Betsy Baker on Feb 20, 2009.

CONTENTS	PAGE
<b>Area Map</b>	2
<b>Hagerman NWR</b>	3
<b>Godwin and Sandy Units</b>	3
Brushy Creek	
Sandy Creek	
Sandy Point	
Woodpecker Tree	4
Western Oil Pads	
Bennett Road (West) and Brooks Road	
<b>Big Mineral and Harris Creek Units</b>	4
Big Mineral Picnic Area	
Bennett Road (East)	
Meadow Pond Road	5
Southern Oil Pads	
Southern Agricultural Fields	6
Crow Hill Trail	
Harris Creek Bridge	
Headquarters	
<b>Meyers Branch and Goode Units</b>	6
Headquarters Low Water Crossing	
The Entrance Road	7
Goode Picnic Area	
Dead Woman Pond	
Terry Lane	
<b>Preston Point</b>	7
American Legion	8
Lighthouse Marina	
Prothro Methodist Center	
Little Mineral Marina	
Preston Bend Recreation Area	
VFW Marina	
The Tip	
<b>Denison Dam</b>	9
<b>Firehouse Pond</b>	9
<b>Loy Lake Park</b>	9
<b>Herman Baker Park</b>	10
<b>Other Areas</b>	10



Note: if the map fails to appear, click in the middle of the page. That seems to make it show up.

## **HAGERMAN NATIONAL WILDLIFE REFUGE**

Hagerman National Wildlife Refuge is the premiere birding location in Grayson County. Established in 1946, it sits approximately fifteen miles northwest of Sherman on the Big Mineral Arm of Lake Texoma. The primary role of the refuge is to provide a stopover and wintering area for migratory waterfowl, but it serves numerous other purposes as well. Over three hundred and forty-five species have been seen on the refuge proper, with several additional records coming from the fields, woodlands, and ponds surrounding it. The Refuge has been birded extensively since the 1950s by some extremely talented birders who have kept detailed records. This has provided Grayson County's ornithologists with a complete picture of Hagerman's resident avifauna and a very impressive list of rarities and visitors. It has also allowed for the observation of population trends such as the decline in nesting wood warblers.

Birding Hagerman for the first time can be a daunting task because of the size of the refuge and the fact that species diversity, numbers, and location can all vary drastically due to changing water levels. This guide separates this location description into three parts due to these difficulties. Please stop, pick up a map, and sign in at the visitor center, the refuge's funding is partially dependent on the number of people that use it. A sightings board and water fountain are available 24/7, and the office is open when the "OPEN" flag is flying.

Directions from the junction of US 75 and US 82: Take U.S. 82 West, exit FM 1417 and take it North, take a left on Refuge Road and take it all the way to refuge headquarters.

### **Hagerman NWR: Godwin and Sandy Units**

#### **Brushy Creek**

Brushy Creek Recreation Area is not actually part of Hagerman National Wildlife Refuge. It can be reached by continuing north on Old Sadler Rd. through the Sandy Creek Unit for several miles until it dead ends in a shallow bay. This can be an exceptional area for shorebirds and ducks when water levels are right, and the bottomland hardwood and riparian areas along the creek can be good for Pileated Woodpecker and White-breasted Nuthatch.

#### **Sandy Creek**

The Sandy Creek Unit of Hagerman National Wildlife Refuge is one of the most densely wooded areas in the county. The mix of older Eastern Cross Timbers and Bottomland Hardwood Forest makes for some awesome habitat for neotropical migrants and some of our more interesting woodland residents. Nesting species include Broad-winged Hawk, Red-eyed, White-eyed, and Warbling Vireos, Louisiana Waterthrush, Black-and-white and Prothonotary Warblers, Eastern Phoebe, and Pileated Woodpecker. A hike along Sandy Creek in mid-April might also uncover some of the last Kentucky Warblers breeding in Grayson County. This area is also very good in the colder months for all of our winter woodland residents. When water levels are low, and they often are, you can hike along the main creek bed in either direction, stopping at deeper pools to observe flocks of kinglets, warblers, and waxwings coming to water. There is also a foot access point on the right as you approach this unit from the main part of Hagerman. Take Crawford Road southwest towards FM 901 to drive through some of the oldest Bottomland Hardwood Forest on the refuge. Drive slowly and look for the partially destroyed old bridge on your right. This is one of the surest spots on the refuge for Hermit Thrush and Brown Creeper in late fall and winter, and it is a good place to check for migrant passerine flocks in spring and fall.

#### **Sandy Point**

Sandy Point is the best place from which to scope the Big Mineral Arm of Lake Texoma. The point is fair at best in summer, but a stop here is a must during any refuge visit from October through April. Walk around the edge of the point on the higher ground and scan the water surrounding it. Recent sightings from the point include all three mergansers, Long-tailed Duck (rare), Canvasback, Redhead, Ruddy Duck, and Common Goldeneye. It is the best place in the county to see Western Grebe, and it is also a good overlook for visiting gulls, terns, and scoters. The point also concentrates passerine feeding flocks, especially in winter. Winter Wren, Chipping Sparrow, Hermit Thrush, and Orange-crowned Warbler all spend the winter here. It is also one of the few reliable places on the refuge for Eastern Screech-Owl.

### **Woodpecker Tree**

There is a tree on the eastern half of Sandy Point which harbored nesting Red-headed and Pileated Woodpeckers before it fell down. Take the road which runs adjacent to the western oil pads north from Bennett. Take a left at C pad, take a right at the first fork in the road, continue straight until you reach another large fork, take a right down the hill and park at the capped well 50 yards down on the left side of the road. There should be a large snag to the south of the parking area. [Feb 20, 2009: Thomas reports that “the woodpecker tree has now completely fallen over and no longer provides a home for Eastern Fox Squirrels, Red-headed Woodpeckers, or Pileateds, although it is now probably home to White-footed Mouse, Deer Mouse, and maybe even Eastern Woodrat.”] Other nesters along this road include Red-eyed Vireo, Summer Tanager, Indigo and Painted Buntings, and Prothonotary Warbler (in extremely wet years). It is one of the better spots on the refuge for migrant passerines, especially Swainson’s Thrush. I have also seen Bell’s Vireo here in migration.

### **Western Oil Pads**

The oil jetties on the eastern side of Sandy Point are one of the best areas on the refuge for ducks, gulls, and terns. It is not unusual to see flocks of five hundred to one thousand diving ducks tucked in between jetties during periods of high wind. E pad is one of the better jetties from which to scope the lake. There is a habitat shift from open water to marsh and scattered riparian habitat as you move down the jetties north to south. The southern jetties can be good for migrant passerines, rails, and residents such as Red-headed Woodpecker and Wild Turkey. When water levels rise these wet fields and marshes are home to dozens of nesting Mallards and Wood Ducks. When water levels are extremely low, sandy points and mudflats extend from each of the jetties, and shorebirds can number in the thousands.

### **Bennett Road (West) and Brooks Road**

These two roads constitute the western entrance to Hagerman from FM 901. They are very good in summer for residents such as Grasshopper and Lark Sparrows, Dickcissel, Indigo and Painted Buntings, Eastern Meadowlark, Red-winged Blackbird, and American Kestrel. In the winter these fields and croplands are home to Prairie Falcon (rare), Merlin (rare), numerous species of sparrows, Western and Eastern Meadowlark, and all five species of geese that winter on the refuge. This area really shines in migration, when Upland Sandpipers, Bobolinks (rare), and dozens of Swainson’s Hawks pass through.

## **Hagerman NWR: Big Mineral and Harris Creek Units**

### **Big Mineral Picnic Area**

The Big Mineral Picnic Area is the most heavily used recreational area on the refuge, as evidenced by the trash left by a few irresponsible fisherman and picnickers. Despite the high rate of human traffic, it can be a very good area to bird. White-breasted Nuthatch can often be heard here, and it is also one of the best areas on the refuge for sparrows in winter. Some of the more common species are White-crowned, White-throated, Field, Song, Fox, Lincoln’s (transient), and Savannah Sparrow. Mississippi Kite and Cooper’s Hawk have nested here, and Pileated Woodpeckers occasionally wander through the area in fall and winter. This is also where a Great Kiskadee spent the winter of 1999-2000. The small bridge on Wildlife Drive to the east of the picnic area is the best place on the refuge for Lincoln’s Sparrow, and it often holds a few warblers and orioles in migration. The picnic area is also good for summer residents such as Prothonotary Warbler, Eastern Bluebird, and Eastern Phoebe.

### **Bennett Road (East)**

The section of Bennett Road bounded by the Big Mineral Picnic Area on the east and the cattle guard on the west is extremely productive for a variety of woodland species. The road is the northern border to the largest contiguous section of bottomland hardwood forest in Grayson County. Prothonotary and Black-and-white Warbler, Red-eyed, White-eyed, and Warbling Vireo, Eastern Wood-Pewee, Great Crested Flycatcher, Barred Owl, Pileated, Hairy and Red-headed Woodpecker, and Summer Tanager are all summer residents. The best time to bird this road is during April and May, when summer residents mix with migrants. Migrant passerines are tough at Hagerman due to the abundance of quality habitat, but frequent checks and a little patience can yield some very good birds. This area is also very good in the winter for sparrows when the brushy road edges are not mowed.

### **Meadow Pond Road**

Meadow Pond Road offers a great hike, beautiful scenery, and the best woodland birding on the refuge. Hike the road south, stopping to listen at areas that hold water. There is an old oil pipeline cut on the west side of the road which goes all the way to Big Mineral Creek. Hike this cut in winter for seven species of woodpeckers, both kinglets, Hermit Thrush, Blue-headed Vireo, Purple Finch, Red Crossbill (very rare), White-breasted and Red-breasted Nuthatch (rare), Pine Siskin, and Fox and White-throated Sparrow. In the summer the same cut can harbor Prothonotary, Black-and-white, and Kentucky Warblers, Eastern Wood-Pewee, White-eyed and Red-eyed Vireos, Pileated and Red-headed Woodpeckers, Summer Tanager, Barred Owl, Brown Thrasher, and White-breasted Nuthatch. Continue down the road to Meadow Pond to bird the most extensive marsh on the refuge. When water levels allow, this pond is good for Yellow-headed Blackbird, Marsh Wren, rails, ducks, Swamp and Lincoln's Sparrows, and bitterns. The road continues all the way down to the intersection of Big Mineral Creek and the railroad tracks, where a short dirt road makes a loop through the woods for several hundred yards. This is one of the best spots on the refuge to see migrating passerines. Meadow Pond Road is also where Haller found an adult Common Black Hawk on 3 October 2002. Birds are not the only thing you will see along Meadow Pond Road. Hike the road in the evening to see dozens of White-tailed Deer, Feral Hog, Coyote, and Bobcat. Needless to say, if you wish to get out and hike, this five mile long trail is the best place to do it.

### **Southern Oil Pads**

The southern oil pads, or O, P, and Q pads, are the best place to bird in Grayson County when lake levels permit access to them. Recent sightings here include Long-tailed Duck, Tundra Swan, six species of plovers, both Godwits, Red Knot, Brown Pelican, Sanderling, Long-billed Curlew, Cinnamon Teal, dozens of Hooded Mergansers and Least Terns, hundreds of geese (all five species) and gulls (Ring-billed and Bonaparte's, with an occasional Herring), thousands of ducks, American Bittern, Least Bittern, Sora, Glossy Ibis, Yellow-headed Blackbird, Bell's Vireo, and Lark Bunting. These pads should be the focal point of any trip to Hagerman.

Q pad will be the first pad on your right as you approach from Headquarters. Turn onto it, scanning the marsh to the west as you drive towards the tip. If water levels are right, the shallow ponds to the east will be full as well. The pond on the left is good for roosting gulls, ducks, ibis, herons, and pelicans. It can also hold quite a few shorebirds if it gets low enough. The ponds to the right are great for dabbling ducks, shorebirds, and rails. You will pass a spit of land which connects to P pad, it was formerly a road, don't take it unless you have four wheel drive. Continue out on Q pad, scanning to the left and right for ducks, Cinnamon Teal are seen here annually. Drive all the way to the tip and scan the lake for gulls and terns. When water levels are low, mudflats will develop on the main lake, and plovers, terns, gulls, and other shorebirds will use them to feed and rest.

Drive back down Q pad, turn west, drive approximately one hundred yards, and take a left into the Ducks Unlimited Moist Soil Management Unit. These fields flood and provide habitat for ibis, yellowlegs, large plovers, Willet, and pipits. They might also support rails in the future. Turn around and go across Wildlife Drive to P pad, which provides another viewing angle for the marsh on your right. It also provides your first look into the most productive marsh on the refuge. This is the best place for shorebirds in spring and fall, and it is also a great holding place for lingering ducks. Spring shorebird habitat is usually washed out by heavy rains, but fall can be spectacular. The late summer and fall of 2005 yielded Black-bellied, American Golden, Snowy, Piping, and Semipalmated Plovers, Red Knot, Willet, Marbled Godwit, Short-billed Dowitcher, and Long-billed Curlew. Terns also use these mudflats as a staging area in migration. Least, Black, Forster's, and Caspian (rare) all pass through here.

You will reach a connecting road between O and P pads, take it west. Once you reach O pad, take a right and go to the tip, this is a great place to look for migrants, the trees along O pad almost always hold Yellow Warbler, Common Yellowthroat, Orchard and Baltimore Orioles, Spizella sparrows, and Indigo Buntings in migration. Less abundant but often present are Bell's Vireo, Wilson's Warbler, and Northern Waterthrush. Lark Bunting and Bobolink have been seen on the pads. O pad also holds a slightly deeper, highly vegetated marsh which is great for ducks, herons, ibis, egrets, and long-legged shorebirds like Black-necked Stilt and the two yellowlegs. This is where we had Glossy Ibis and Tricolored Heron in the spring of 2006. The entire field west of O pad floods in wet years. This supplies even more habitat for shorebirds and ducks. There is

also usually flooding across Wildlife Drive to the south of this field, which provides fairly good habitat for ducks.

The southern oil pads are best in winter and migration, but they can also be very good in summer. Pied-billed Grebe, Common Moorhen, American Coot, Common Yellowthroat and Least Bittern (rare) all nest here. As summer progresses the pads become a hotspot for the post-breeding dispersal of birds like Tricolored Heron, White Ibis, Roseate Spoonbill (rare), and Brown Pelican (rare). They are worth a stop during any season, and will usually have a surprise in store for you if you look hard enough.

### **Southern Agricultural Fields**

These fields are good in winter for American Pipit, longspurs (very rare), and Canada, Cackling, Snow, Ross's, and Greater White-fronted Geese. In migration they can hold Buff-breasted Sandpiper, Long-billed Curlew (rare), and Sprague's Pipit (very rare). The "Triangle Field" is the only agricultural field to the north of Wildlife Drive. It usually has many of the aforementioned species and it also provides another lookout from which to view the ducks feeding at the mouth of Harris Creek, especially during the evening.

### **Crow Hill Trail**

Crow Hill is an excellent place to get out of the car and take a short hike. Take the road that runs next to the Ducks Unlimited Moist Soil Management Unit to the southeast, take a right at the T-intersection and park in the large circle lot. The loop trail runs up the hill to the observation platform. You can expect common winter residents along the trail as you climb such as White-throated and Harris' Sparrows and Bewick's Wren, and there is a spectacular view of a rather large chunk of the refuge. This is not a very birdy spot but it is an excellent place to stretch your legs and check out deer and hogs.

### **Harris Creek Bridge**

The Harris Creek Bridge is one of the best spots on the refuge to look for ducks. Huge rafts of Redhead, Ring-necked Duck, Lesser Scaup, Ruddy Duck, Northern Pintail, Mallard, Gadwall, and teal feed and rest in the wide shallow bay. Long-tailed Duck, Common Loon, Common and Red-breasted Mergansers, Eurasian Wigeon, and Cinnamon Teal were some of the better birds of 2005 seen at this location. It is not uncommon to count three to five thousand ducks from this location from late November through mid January. This is a great place to observe shorebirds when water levels are low, and it is also the easiest place to see rails on the refuge because your relative elevation allows you to look down into the thick marsh vegetation. The small grove of trees to the west of the bridge is good for migrants. Orchard Oriole, Yellow Warbler, Common Yellowthroat, and Lincoln's Sparrow are all common in migration at this spot.

### **Headquarters**

The area immediately adjacent to the headquarters building can be a surprisingly good place to bird. This is a great place to do an initial scan of the lake for waterfowl, terns, and gulls. Geese often fly over on their way to and from the lake. It is also a good place to view migrant passerines flying over such as Yellow-headed Blackbirds. American Pipits, geese, and meadowlarks feed in the fields north of headquarters, and the thick brush surrounding it often holds several species of sparrows in winter. The small bushes between the parking lot and the fields are great for sparrows. Harris's, Clay-colored, and Chipping Sparrows often feed there, especially in the morning.

## **Hagerman NWR: Meyers Branch and Goode Units**

### **Headquarters Low Water Crossing**

The low water crossing north of Headquarters is consistently one of the most productive patches in the entire county. The habitat present at this location is highly variable depending on water levels. When water levels are extremely low, it is a dry cattail marsh, with the habitat becoming more aquatic as water levels rise. This is where Least Bittern and King Rail have nested in the county, and it has produced recent records of American Bittern, Nelson's Sharp-tailed Sparrow, Cinnamon Teal, Purple Finch, Merlin, and Sedge and Marsh Wrens. It is also usually fairly easy to find six to eight species of sparrows in the cattails, smartweed, and fields immediately adjacent to the area in the winter. The best way to bird the area is to go through the low water crossing and park on the small raised "island" in the middle of the marsh. Sora and Marsh Wren can be heard on either side of the road during migration and are sometimes present during the winter. The trees that line the east side of the road often hold Purple Finch in winter, and they can be good for migrants

## Birding Grayson County

such as Northern Waterthrush and Wilson's Warbler in spring and fall. Sparrows are easy to find along the brushy edges on either side of the marsh in migration and winter. The most prevalent sparrow species are Swamp, Savannah, Song, and White-crowned. Also present in lesser numbers are Dark-eyed Junco, Eastern and Spotted Towhees, and Harris's, Fox, Chipping, Le Conte's (rare), Vesper, White-throated, and Field Sparrows.

### **The Entrance Road**

The eastern entrance to Hagerman is very good in the winter for sparrows and other songbirds. If you arrive early in the morning, you may see a Barred Owl perched on the one of the posts beside the road. Eastern Bluebirds are very prevalent as Refuge Rd. turns to the north right before you reach the refuge. You can also usually find migrant passerines in the row of trees to the north of the bluebird corner.

### **Goode Picnic Area**

The Goode Picnic Area is an excellent example of the Eastern Cross Timbers habitat type. In summer it is home to resident species such as Blue-gray Gnatcatcher, Bewick's and Carolina Wrens, and Indigo and Painted Buntings. In winter the large field immediately adjacent to it is one of the best places in the county to see the reclusive Le Conte's Sparrow. The Picnic area also provides two excellent overlooks onto the lake. The first overlook is at the bottom of the dirt road which can be reached by continuing straight instead of taking the turnoff to the picnic area (this road can be less than austere, if in doubt, park at the top of the hill and walk). There was formerly an observation tower here, and it is still an excellent spot to scan the lake for ducks, terns, and gulls. The wintering population of Canvasbacks forms rafts about one hundred yards offshore from this overlook. The willows along the edge of the lake can be good for migrants. The second overlook is at the bottom of the picnic area, and it overlooks the shallow bay which extends back towards Dead Woman Pond. This bay can be excellent for ducks, and when water levels are low it is often overgrown with smartweed and cattails, providing excellent habitat for Sora, Marsh Wren, Common Yellowthroat, and Swamp and Song Sparrows.

The road to Goode Picnic Area from the low water crossing is often excellent in winter. Fox, Song, White-throated, White-crowned, Harris's, Field, and Savannah Sparrows are all common to abundant along this stretch of road, and every species of sparrow which occurs on the refuge (longspurs excluded) has been seen here at one time or another. This is also a good place to find accipiters and other hawks as they move up and down the road hoping to surprise flocks of passerines.

### **Dead Woman Pond**

Dead Woman Pond is one of the wildest areas on the refuge. A small levy and dam was constructed to back up water flowing from the creek and form a flooded riparian area, pond, and marsh. This area is good for Pileated and Red-headed Woodpeckers, Swamp and Song Sparrows, Marsh Wren, Common Yellowthroat, and Belted Kingfisher. This is also the area where the Great Kiskadee was first observed in 1999. I have seen River Otters at Picnic Pond, which is about 100 yards from Dead Woman, and the most observable beaver dam on the refuge is in Dead Woman.

### **Terry Lane**

This road will always be remembered as "The Northern Shrike Spot" due to the immature NSHR that spent the winter of '06-'07 along it. The narrow corridor of bottomland hardwood that runs along Meyers Branch is a good spot for most of our woodland residents, including Pileated Woodpecker and Barred Owl. There is also a small pond located on the east side of the road near the edge of refuge property which is good for dabbling ducks and Marsh and Winter Wren.

## **PRESTON POINT**

Preston Point is the second best place to bird in Grayson County. It may not provide the species diversity of Hagerman, but its diverse habitat types make almost anything possible. Some of the best birds of 2006 occurred here including Red-throated and Pacific Loons and California and Thayer's Gulls. The location description has been divided into sections in order to cover the area more effectively.

## Birding Grayson County

Directions from the junction of US 75 and US 82: Take 75 North, exit 120 and take it west (left), bear right onto 120 North, the various locations are located along the road in the same order in which they are presented here from south to north.

### **American Legion**

The American Legion outpost provides another lookout onto the Lighthouse Marina tires and the Little Mineral Arm of Lake Texoma. It is the first marina on the right as you travel north on 120. There is a small sign for the American Legion MIA Outpost.

### **Lighthouse Marina**

The Lighthouse Marina is the most productive marina on Preston Point. It is always worth a stop due to its excellent view of the lake. It is also the only marina on the point with restroom facilities. Park by the office and scan the tires for Thayer's and California Gull. There are often loons swimming in the marina and this is the most reliable spot on the point for Belted Kingfisher. You can walk between the RV sites to reach a better vantage point for scanning the Little Mineral Arm of the lake. Be sure to scan the small bay on the back part of the circle drive as you can often get close-up looks at loons. There will be a large model lighthouse and steel boat frame on the right side of the road to mark the turn.

### **Prothro Methodist Center**

The pine trees on this property provide habitat for breeding Pine Warblers. They also appear to be a perfect trap during an invasion year for northern passerines such as Red and White-winged Crossbills, Red-breasted Nuthatch, Purple Finch, and Evening Grosbeak. It is approximately 0.75 miles north of Lighthouse Marina on the right side of the road. Check in at the visitors center if you want to bird the property, they are extremely friendly to birders.

### **Little Mineral Marina**

The Little Mineral Marina is located directly north of Lighthouse Marina on the east side of Preston Point. It offers many of the same viewing opportunities as Lighthouse with the caveat that there is no alternative viewing location to avoid the afternoon glare on the tires. Hit Little Mineral in the morning if you are looking for gulls. The light is still very good in the afternoon for lake-watching on the Little Mineral Arm. When strong winds blow out of the northwest dozens of loons often concentrate in the small bay to the north of the marina. It is the next stop north on 120 from the Methodist Center. There is a large sign for the Little Mineral Marina. Take a left at the Y fork inside the property and travel down to the boat ramp.

### **Preston Bend Recreation Area**

This Corps of Engineers property provides the best lookout onto the Little Mineral Arm of Lake Texoma. For reasons unknown to me, it is closed from October 1 through March 31. You can walk onto the property and scan the open water for loons. There are also several gull roosts on sand spits scattered around the property.

### **VFW Marina**

The VFW Marina on the western edge of Preston Point is the most dependable location for Red-throated Loon in North Central Texas. The loons usually arrive in late December and they will often linger into early March. Set up a scope in the parking lot above the boat ramp and scan the lake, especially to the northwest. Large flocks of gulls gather and feed out over the lake. It can also be good for bay ducks such as Common and Red-breasted Mergansers. The trees and feeders on the VFW property are often good for White-breasted Nuthatch, Pine Warbler, Hairy Woodpecker and all of the common woodland residents. To reach it continue north on 120 from the Little Mineral Marina until you reach a T-intersection. Take a right and then an immediate left and follow the signs to the boat ramp.

### **The Tip**

To reach the tip of Preston Point take a right at the T intersection of 120 but continue down that road instead of turning left. You will reach a cemetery with a slight view of the lake. Bird the cemetery first for winter woodland residents and then walk down the hill to scan the lake for gulls and loons. This lakewatch is not consistently good, but it might yield the next NCTX mega-rarity. It should also be noted that the

## Birding Grayson County

cemetery at the tip of the point and the surrounding woodland is the only reliable location for warbler fallouts in spring and fall. This area has never been birded extensively at the peak of migration, but the spring of 2008 might yield some surprises for Grayson County birders.

### **DENISON DAM**

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Denison Dam can be a very hit-or-miss place to bird, but it is always worth a check. The first place to stop is the lake overlook. Pass the entrance to the recreation area below the dam and take the last left before you begin to cross the lake on the dam. There will be a circular parking lot on your immediate right which is a good spot to scan for loons and Bald Eagle. This can also be a good spot for diving ducks during fall migration when ducks crash down in the evening to spend the night on the lake. There is also a service road which runs out along the face of the dam. An adventurous birder might walk out on this and look for Rock Wrens in the winter. Return to Highway 91 and take it back south to the recreation area. It will take you to a half-mile long road along the river, follow this road and scan for mergansers in the river and eagles in the trees along the river. This can be an excellent gulling location when they are releasing water steadily. When water levels are low it can be good for Least and Spotted Sandpiper in winter. When you reach the gate at the end of the road park your car and scan down the river. I have never missed Bald Eagle in the winter at this location. They are usually in the trees by the U.S. 75 bridge or resting on the sandbars. The trees in the picnic area provide nesting sites for both Baltimore and Orchard Orioles and I have seen Pileated Woodpecker in the bottomland hardwood along the river.

Directions from the junction of US 75 and US 82: Take US 75 North, take exit 72 (Highway 91), take a left and take 91 northwest to the dam.

### **FIREHOUSE POND**

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The firehouse pond is an excellent place to bird and it is barely two minutes out of the way if you are heading towards Hagerman from Dallas or Fort Worth. Ten to fifteen Common Goldeneyes winter on this small lake along with twenty to twenty-five Canvasbacks. Other regularly occurring species include Ruddy Duck, Lesser Scaup, Ring-necked Duck, Mallard, Northern Pintail, Green-winged Teal, Gadwall, and Pied-billed Grebe. Greater Scaup is an irregular visitor. I have seen Herring Gull at this location before, although there are usually only about twenty Ring-billed Gulls. This is also one of the few locations in the county to find wintering American White Pelican. There is a Greater Roadrunner territory along the fire station driveway, and almost all of our winter woodland residents can be observed by walking the fence row towards the small spillway and birding the woods. This is also a great place to see Cooper's Hawk, and this lake is home to a family of beavers.

Directions from the junction of US 75 and US 82: Take US 82 west, exit FM 1417 and head south. Take the first right into a fire station, it should be about 250 yards from the intersection of 82 and 1417. Drive all the way down to the gate, get out and walk in through the foot access point and down to the lake.

### **LOY LAKE PARK**

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Loy Lake Park was built as a Civilian Conservation Corps project in 1934. The county attempted to turn it into a state park in the late 30s, but the idea was rejected and it is currently managed by the County Commissioners Court as a recreational area. Loy Lake is a great place for ducks in the winter and the woods below the spillway serve as a migrant trap. The same woods also harbor the county's only known nesting population of Yellow-throated Warblers.

Loy Lake's small size allows for the entire lake to be covered with a spotting scope from the top of the dam or the boat ramp. If you do not have a spotting scope, simply drive down the road which runs along the east side of the lake and scan for waterfowl as you go. Previous records of Barrow's Goldeneye, Black Scoter, and Cinnamon Teal make this location worth a stop in winter on a trip to Hagerman. When water levels are low the lake can harbor shorebirds, especially near the inflow area at the head of the lake. This same area can also be good for dabbling ducks when water levels rise.

### Birding Grayson County

The Bottomland Hardwood Forest area below the dam will hold a few migrants in spring and fall, although road noise from nearby U.S. 75 makes ear birding difficult at best. There is also a small pine grove which has attracted several pairs of breeding Yellow-throated Warblers in recent years. There are two ways to access this area. The first is to walk the top of the dam and listen for singing warblers and vireos. This is often the easiest way to see birds as it allows an eye-level view of the woods, although at a greater distance. The second is to follow the small, dilapidated path which begins at the corner of the dam nearest the parking lot and winds its way through the woods. Expect a few of the more common neotropical migrants along with an occasional surprise or two. This area is also good in winter for most of our woodland winter residents. White-breasted Nuthatch are year-round residents in the Post Oak trees near the lake.

Directions from the junction of US 75 and US 82: Take U.S. 75 North, exit and turn left on N. Loy Lake Road, park entrance will be immediately on your right.

### **HERMAN BAKER PARK**

Herman Baker Park is one of the many excellent places to bird within the city of Sherman. There is a trail which extends all the way around the lake which is good for winter woodland residents and sparrows. The lake is always a reliable spot for American Wigeon, Ring-necked Duck, and Pied-billed Grebe, and diving ducks such as Common Goldeneye occur occasionally during migration. I flushed an *Ammodramus* sparrow along the lakeshore in October of 2005 that could have been Nelson's Sharp-tailed Sparrow, but I never got a good look at the bird. It is also a good place to view Accipiters in migration, and Pileated Woodpecker has been seen in the woods below the dam. There is a small cattail marsh near the parking lot that is home to a family of beavers and it is good for Swamp Sparrow throughout the winter and Marsh Wren in migration.

Directions from the junction of US 75 and US 82: Take U.S. 75 South, exit on Houston St. or Highway 56, take it left (West), take a left on Baker Park Rd. (there should be a brown sign for the park), follow it up the hill to the church and then take a left down the hill to the lake at the T-intersection.

### **OTHER AREAS TO BIRD IN GRAYSON COUNTY**

The above list of birding locations should by no means be considered a complete list. There are numerous other exciting places to bird in Grayson County, including Eisenhower State Park, Cedar Mills Marina, Grandpappy Point, Waterloo Lake, four different Austin College field research stations, and part of Lake Ray Roberts. I was not able to cover all of these locations due to personal illness and a lack of time and experience, but they all provide exciting possibilities for Grayson County birding. One other birding location that I am still exploring is "The Hole" near the headwaters of Lake Texoma. I suspect that this location might provide one of the most spectacular gull roosts in the region. An update to this work will focus on providing much more information on birding locations in Grayson County.