FIRST COUNTY RECORDS OF RED CROSSBILL IN THE PINEYWOODS REGION OF EASTERN TEXAS

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The Red Crossbill (*Loxia curvirostra*) is reported from Western Texas as a scarce and sporadic breeder in the Guadalupe Mountains (Oberholser 1974), and a probable rare or irregular nester in the Davis Mountains (Peterson et al. 1991). It is also a rare and irregular winter visitor in many parts of the state (T.O.S. 1995). Red Crossbills invaded much of Texas during the 1972–1973 winter. This invasion missed the Pineywoods region east of the Trinity River, with the exception of a single sight record in Polk Co. (Oberholser 1974). Several northern, seed-eating bird species, including the Red Crossbill, are well known for their irregular, irruptive movements. These movements are believed to coincide with times of food shortages in the species' normal range (Bock and Lepthien 1976).

On 21 November 1996, I located seven Red Crossbills in the Angelina National Forest, San Augustine Co. This represents the first reported sight record of Red Crossbill for this county, and is the first sighting of what turned out to be an invasion of Red Crossbills throughout the Pineywoods region. Since that date, numerous observers have reported Red Crossbills from a total of ten eastern Texas counties, all representing first county records (Table 1). As of 16 July 1998, I have accumulated a total of 48 Red Crossbill reports, from 23 locations in the Pineywoods region east of the Trinity River, and a single Montgomery Co. record west of the Trinity River. These reports involve single birds or flocks of up to 13 individuals. On 3 May 1997, two juvenal-plumaged Red Crossbills were seen foraging with an adult pair in San Augustine Co., representing probable breeding in that area (Lasley et al. 1997). Red Crossbill sightings were fairly regular through 15 May 1997, but only five reports for the region were accumulated for the summer of 1997. As of 16 July 1998, only three Red Crossbill reports have been received since the beginning of that year. One sighting each for the months of February, March and April. The April sighting included a flock of nine Red Crossbills in Nacogdoches County.

Red Crossbills were observed in areas dominated by mature pines (*Pinus* spp.). Much of the Pineywoods region is dominated by mixed stands of loblolly pine (*P. taeda*) and shortleaf pine (*P. echinata*). There is a wide overlap in the site tolerance of both species, however, loblolly pine is more typical along streams and near river bottoms, whereas shortleaf pine prefers drier, sandy soils (Harlow and Harrar 1950). Longleaf pine (*P. palustris*) dominates southern portions of the Angelina and Sabine National Forests, with only remnant stands remaining in other areas of the southern Pineywoods region. There has been no strong evidence

[1] Maintained in cooperation with the College of Forestry, Stephen F. Austin State University.

Table 1. First County Records for Red Crossbill in the Pineywoods Region.

County	Date	Lat/Long	No. observed
San Augustine	21 Nov 1996	31°22′N, 94°15′W	7
Sabine	3 Dec 1996	31°11′N, 93°43′W	5
Jasper	4 Dec 1996	31°04′N, 94°14′W	several[a]
Angelina	7 Dec 1996	31°04′N, 94°16′W	1
Nacogdoches	10 Dec 1996	31°30′N, 94°45′W	1
Newton	5 Feb 1997	31°08′N, 93°47′W	1[a]
Harrison	9 Feb 1997	32°40′N, 94°09′W	6
Anderson	8 Mar 1997	31°38′N, 95°19′W	2[b]
Montgomery	13 Apr 1997	30°13′N, 95°29′W	1
Hardin	21 Apr 1997	unknown	2[b]

[a] Birds heard only; visual report for these counties on a later date.
[b] Birds heard only; no known visual report for these counties.

thus far to indicate a preference by Red Crossbills for a particular pine species, though birds have been observed foraging from cones of both loblolly pine (pers. obs.) and shortleaf pine (C. Shackelford and C. Collins, pers. comm.).

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