

## SOUTHWEST REGION / Steve Alden and Scott Mills

Extremely dry conditions prevailed during April and May in marked contrast to the cool, wet spring of last year. Without exception observers commented on the lack of rainfall. High winds and above normal temperatures, a record 110°F in Phoenix May 26, were reported from many areas. Because of these conditions areas with permanent water and urban areas received a concentration of migrants while highland localities reported fewer than usual numbers. Large numbers of *Empidonax* flycatchers (Hammond's/ Dusky), Black-headed Grosbeaks, Western Tanagers, Townsend's and Wilson's Warblers were noted moving through the southern desert.

The drought conditions in s. Arizona resulted in a virtually non-existent spring wildflower crop. This failure may explain, at least in part, the delayed breeding of



desert species such as Curve-billed Thrasher, Cactus Wren and Gambel's Quail. Verdins had poor nesting success and Rufous-winged Sparrows are in greatly reduced numbers or absent. However cavity nesters and doves enjoyed normal or better than average breeding success.

Highlighting the report period were sightings of vagrant wood warblers, continued reports of Indigo Buntings and a White Wagtail.

**CORMORANTS, HERONS**—In contrast to last year's ten pairs of Double-crested Cormorants, 100 pairs were nesting at Elephant Butte Marsh, Sierra Co., N. Mex., Apr. 27 (CH). Six more were sighted at Picacho Res., Pinal Co., Ariz., Apr. 4 (GM). Two possible Olivaceous Cormorants were sighted at Elephant Butte Marsh Apr. 27 (CH). Additional nesting species at Elephant Butte Apr. 27 included 200 pairs of Black-crowned Night Herons and numerous Snowy Egrets. A Little Blue Heron was seen at Bosque del Apache N.W.R., N. Mex., Apr. 29 & May 3 (GZ). American Bitterns were seen at Picacho Res., Apr. 4 (GM), Phoenix May 3 (SD,HL,JW), and another, possibly nesting, at Kirtland, San Juan Co., N. Mex., Apr. 19-June 1 (CS).

**WATERFOWL**—At Bitter Lake N.W.R., Chaves Co., N. Mex., a single White-fronted Goose lingered until May 11 while five Snow Geese remained until May 16 (DB). Sightings of Black-bellied Tree Ducks include one at Ruthrauff Pond, Tucson, Apr. 24 (GM) and another at Canoa Ranch, Pima Co., Ariz., May 29 (MHa).

**RAPTORS**—Turkey Vultures were seen in sharply reduced numbers throughout the region; a decline that is inexplicable at present. Two White-tailed Kites were reported w. of Deming, Luna Co., N. Mex., Apr. 28 (AC). Mississippi Kites were sighted over Bosque Ref., May 21-31 (GZ). Several late Rough-legged Hawk reports were received, one 30 mi. n. of Douglas, Cochise Co., Ariz., Apr. 4 (W&SS), another (same individual)? in the same area Apr. 26 (MR *et al.*), and a third at Bitter Lake Ref., May 11 (DB *et al.*). Nesting Bald Eagles were sighted again this year on the Salt River, Gila Co., Ariz., Apr. 2 (BJ) and an immature was seen near Benson, Cochise Co., Ariz., May 19 (C&MB). Fourteen Golden Eagle sightings were received from various localities. A Caracara was observed at Carefree, Maricopa Co., Ariz., May 25 (FT) and constitutes the fifth county record. Eight Ospreys were seen during the period but only one Peregrine Falcon was reported.

**QUAILS, CRANES**—Gambel's Quail populations in s. Arizona appeared to be normal but coveys were composed of adult birds with few young. Failure of the winter rains has apparently resulted in delayed or failed breeding. Scaled Quail were visiting feeders above their normal elevation in Portal, Cochise Co., Ariz. (W&SS *et al.*). A flight of 8 Sandhill Cranes was seen over the Avra Valley, Pima Co., Ariz., Apr. 24 (SMi, SA).

**SHOREBIRDS**—Nine sightings totaling 19 Semipalmated Plovers were scattered throughout the region. A single Whimbrel was carefully described at Bitter Lake Ref., May 11 (DB *et al.*). Willets, fairly common migrants in the region, were reported in unusually large flocks. Sightings include: flocks of 38 and 75, Bosque Ref., Apr. 29 (GZ), 22 at Mormon L., Coconino Co., Ariz., May 9 (GM), 23 at Nogales, Ariz., May 29 (MH) and six sightings totaling 123 birds at Pipe Spring Nat'l Monument, Mohave Co., Ariz., Apr. 12-May 2 (RW). One Baird's Sandpiper was seen at Ina Ponds, Tucson, May 1 (HF), two Apr. 20 and two Apr. 28 at Pipe Spring

Nat'l Monument (RW) and ten at Bitter Lake Ref., May 11 (DB *et al.*). The first spring record for Maricopa Co. of Short-billed Dowitchers was two birds at Phoenix, Apr. 22-26 (R&JW *et al.*) and another May 20 (JW) nearby. Sightings of Stilt Sandpipers included one at Tucumcari L., N. Mex., May 11 and six at the same locality May 12 (CH,ES). A single Marbled Godwit was seen at Phoenix Apr. 22 (R & JW) and 15 at Morgan L., San Juan Co., N. Mex., Apr. 23 (CS). Nogales, Ariz., produced a Sanderling Apr. 15 (FW) and a N. Phalarope was seen s. of Phoenix May 9 (ST).

**GULLS, TERNS**—Twenty-one Ring-billed Gulls were sighted at Picacho Res., Apr. 4 (GM) and seven Franklin's Gulls were counted on Mormon L., May 9 (GM, W&SS). An unusual **Least Tern** was sighted at the Ina Ponds, Tucson, May 2 (HF).

**DOVES, ANIS, OWLS**—An early White-winged Dove nest with one egg was found on the w. slope of the Tucson Mts., Pima Co., Ariz., Apr. 20 (SR). Both White-winged and Mourning Doves nesting on study sites in the Avra Valley had higher breeding success this spring than in previous years (SR). A Groove-billed Ani was observed on the Gila R. Indian Reservation boundary s. of Chandler, Maricopa Co., Ariz., May 12 (AR). A Long-eared Owl was reported from Phoenix on the late date of Apr. 22 (Kathy Ingram, *vide JW*) and young Long-eared Owls fledged from a nest w. of Oracle, Pinal Co., Ariz., Apr. 20 (Rich Glinski).

**NIGHTJARS, SWIFTS, HUMMINGBIRDS**—Four Buff-collared Nightjars were counted calling along the Rio Cuchujaqui, near Alamos, Sonora, Apr. 5 (SSp, DL). Reported arrival dates for the Com. Nighthawk were Pipe Spring Nat'l Monument, May 24 (RW) and Kirtland, New Mex., May 28 (CS). Earliest reported sightings for Lesser Nighthawks were Tucson, Apr. 26 (GM,AA); Pancho Villa S.P., Luna Co., N. Mex., Apr. 27 (BM) and Bosque Ref., Apr. 28 (GZ). An unusual record of an ad. ♂ Callopie Hummingbird was reported from Silver City, Grant Co., N. Mex., Apr. 9 (AZ). A ♀ White-eared Hummingbird was reported from South Fork of Cave Creek Canyon, Cochise Co., Ariz., May 17 (GM, W&SS) and a male was sighted near Portal, Cochise Co., May 18 (IH, W&SS).

**FLYCATCHERS TO PARIDS**—Western and Cassin's Kingbirds were reported in reduced numbers at Pipe Spring Nat'l Monument during the period but appeared in normal numbers elsewhere. The most incredible find of the period was an ad. ♂ **White Wagtail**, several mi. s.e. of the juncture of the Arizona, New Mexico and Sonoran borders in Sonora, Mex., Apr. 30 (GM, CM and Vince Roth). This sighting is the first mainland record of the species for Mexico. A mixed flock of 1000+ Barn, Cliff, Rough-winged and Tree Swallows was reported foraging over irrigated agricultural land near Vicam, Sonora, Mex., Apr. 5 (SSp, DL). Of particular interest was the breeding of Barn and Cliff Swallows in s. Arizona. Both species began breeding in late April and early May, respectively, as in previous years, despite the extended drought. Seven Clark's Nutcrackers were out of place in Madera Canyon, Santa Cruz Co., Ariz., May 3 (SSp, Wynn Brown). A

Mountain Chickadee was seen and heard north of Miller Peak, Huachuca Mts., Cochise Co., Ariz., May 9, 12 (CM). The status of chickadees in the Huachuca Mts. is unclear and all reports should be forwarded.

**WRENS TO THRUSHES**—Two Winter Wrens were sighted in Ramsey Canyon, Cochise Co., Apr. 15 (CM). Reports from throughout the region show increased numbers of Mockingbirds this spring. A Brown Thrasher lingered until Apr. 25 in Albuquerque (PB). Single Rufous-backed Robins were reported at Arivaipa Canyon, Pinal Co., Ariz., Apr. 11 (FW) and Cave Creek, Maricopa Co., until Apr. 14 (EJ).

**VIREOS, WARBLERS**—A **Philadelphia Vireo** was carefully identified in the vicinity of Portal, May 25 (W & SS). Black-and-white Warblers were seen as follows: one at Madera Canyon May 16 (T.A.S.), one at Huachuca Canyon, Cochise Co., May 8 (DDa) and two reported in the Phoenix area May 22 (SD) and May 24 (RB). The fourth state record of **Worm-eating Warbler** was a single bird on the San Pedro R., near the Ariz. Hwy. 90 crossing, Apr. 18 (DDa). A **Blue-winged Warbler** was reported at Ute L., Quay Co., N. Mex., May 12 (CH). A Tennessee Warbler at Cedar Crest, Bernalillo Co., N. Mex., May 2-3 (BM). On Apr. 6, Nashville Warblers were noted as the most abundant bird along the Rio Cuchujaqui, near Alamos, Sonora, Mex. (SSp,DL). Despite this abundance, observers in Arizona 500 mi. to the north reported only five sightings in Phoenix, Apr. 20-24, and May 15,22; and one at Kinsley Pond, Pima Co., Ariz., Apr. 26 (SM). Lucy's Warblers were observed in very large numbers along Sonoita Creek, Patagonia, Santa Cruz Co., Ariz., Apr. 13, 29 (SS, SM *et al.*). A N. Parula was seen at Portal May 30 (SH). An ad. ♂ **Cape May Warbler**, the second New Mexico state record, was identified n. of Cliff, Grant Co., May 4 (RF). A Black-throated Green Warbler at Phoenix May 15 (SD *et al.*) was the first spring record for Maricopa Co. Two **Ovenbirds** (possibly 4) were reported at Cave Creek Canyon, and near Portal May 26&29 (W&SS, RN *et al.*). Northern Waterthrushes were reported from Phoenix, Apr. 24 (ST, SMa), and Charleston dam site, San Pedro R., Ariz., May 11 (CM) but were absent from Cedar Crest, N. Mex., for the first time in several years (BM). Single **Kentucky Warblers** were reported as follows: one in the Winchester Mts., Cochise Co., May 5 (TP), in Huachuca Canyon May 8 (DDa), at Patagonia May 11 (DDa), at Portal May 4 (W & SS) and at Las Vegas, San Miguel Co., N. Mex., May 6 (WH). The four Arizona records total one more than all previous records for this species. The first state record for **Mourning Warbler** is that of a well documented male at Pipe Spring Nat'l Mon., May 31 (RW). Single Hooded Warblers were seen at Portal, May 6-7 (W & SS), Cherry Creek Canyon, Grant Co., N. Mex., May 29 (AZ, D & MZ) and at Cedar Crest, May 5 (BM). American Redstarts were reported as follows: one female at the Arizona-Sonora Desert Museum May 20 (GM), one female at Pipe Spring Nat'l Mon., May 22 (RW), and one (sex?) Patagonia May 8 (MT,JR,HD).

**ICTERIDS, TANAGERS**—Two records of the Baltimore race of the N. Oriole were received: one at Ft.

Bowie Nat'l Hist. Site, Cochise Co., Ariz., Apr. 30 (MHo) and one at Cedar Crest May 14 (BM). An Orchard Oriole was sighted at Rattlesnake Springs, N. Mex., May 18 (MW). Western Tanagers were widely reported as abundant transients in lowland areas in Arizona during the period and were described as abundant moving through the desert near El Desemboque, Sonora, May 22 (SSp).

**FRINGILLIDS**—Rose-breasted Grosbeaks were sighted at Bitter Lake Ref., May 11 (DB *et al.*), near Portal since May 13 (IH), and at Sandia Park, Sandoval Co., N. Mex., May 7 (MHi). Male Indigo Buntings were widespread in the region. Single birds were seen at Portal, Apr. 22–May 11 (IH), Ramsey Canyon Apr. 26 (SR *et al.*), Cedar Crest May 8–23 (BM) and Seven Springs, Maricopa Co., May 2–11 (RN *et al.*). Adult ♂♂ Am. Goldfinches were reported at the Southwestern Research Station, Chiricahua Mts., Cochise Co., Apr. 26–29 (DL, GM *et al.*), Tombstone, Apr. 6–7 (DDa), and Bitter Lake Ref., May 11 (DB *et al.*). Observers in s.e. Arizona report Rufous-winged Sparrows absent or in greatly reduced numbers in their traditional breeding areas. A White-throated Sparrow remained at Portal until Apr. 20 (W&SS). Harris' Sparrows were observed at Phoenix Apr. 22 (ST) and at Silver Spring Ranch, N. Mex. (MWi). Two Swamp Sparrows were recorded in Phoenix May 16 (SMA, ST).

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