

SOUTHWEST REGION

/ Ted Parker

Mild and rather dry weather was experienced throughout the Region during the first three months of the period. November was slightly wetter than normal in most areas, and in s. Arizona and s.w. Mexico no rain between late August and mid-November. Northern New Mexico felt its first snowfall on Oct. 10.



Though many species are still breeding in southerly parts of the Region in August, few reports of nesting activities were received. In the southern deserts, observers did note unusually large numbers of several desert species (i.e., Gambel's Quail, Roadrunner, and Curve-billed Thrasher), thus these have obviously had good reproductive success this year.

Despite the mild fall weather, the majority of migrant passerines moves through on time or slightly early, and few insectivorous species lingered, as they usually do. In great contrast to last fall, montane species like jays, nuthatches, and crossbills did not move into the lowlands in any numbers. Some reporters felt that good cone and berry crops were responsible. Post-irruption year movements of Red-breasted Nuthatch and Evening Grosbeak were reported from some lowland areas where they normally are not found, but numbers were small.

As usual, the fall months produced an interesting array of vagrants including Ruddy Turnstone, Black-legged Kittiwake, and Sabine's Gulls from the north or west, White-eared Hummingbird and Rufous-backed Robin from the south, and nine species of wood warblers from the east.

LOONS, GREBES — Since loons are uncommon and irregular transients and winter visitants in this Region, the following sightings are of interest: one on Evans L., Grant Co., N. Mex., Nov. 10-17, two on Nelson Res., Apache Co., Ariz., Nov. 12, and one at Bitter Lake N.W.R. north of Roswell, Chaves Co., N. Mex. from Nov. 16 to the end of the period was accompanied by a possible Arctic Loon (DB, JC). A number of W. Grebe reports were received. The earliest record south of summering areas was of an individual at Phoenix Sept. 28-Oct. 1. Three Horned Grebes were identified at Bosque del Apache N.W.R., Socorro Co., N. Mex., Nov. 18-25 (JD).

PELICANS, BOOBIES — White Pelicans of note were two at Picacho Res., Pinal Co., Ariz., Oct. 4 - Nov. 23, one in Phoenix Oct. 8-24, one at Farmington, San Juan Co., N. Mex., Oct. 30, and 33 milling southward high over the Tumacacori Mts., Santa Cruz Co., Ariz., Nov. 17. The only sizeable concentration of the species was at Bitter Lake N.W.R., where a high count of 500 was made Oct. 12; of these, only one bird remained after Nov. 17, with most departing before the end of October. An imm. Brown Booby was seen Aug. 26 just above Imperial Dam on the Colorado R., Ariz.-Calif. (BBa).

HERONS, BITTERNs — Cattle Egrets, still quite uncommon in this Region, were observed at Picacho Res., Aug. 9 (10), at Tucson Nov. 18, and at Bosque N.W.R. Nov. 25 (one, photographed — JD). Counts of Black-crowned Night Herons included six adults and two immatures at Portal, Cochise Co., Ariz., Sept. 9 and 25-30 at Phoenix Nov. 18 (m. ob.). The species was reportedly less common than in 1972, this fall at Bitter Lake N.W.R. An Am. Bittern at Picacho Res., Aug. 4, and one at Horseshoe Dam, Maricopa Co., Ariz., Sept. 29 were the only ones reported (GB).

STORKS, SPOONBILLS — Although only one report of Wood Stork was received, that of two birds along the Colorado R. south of Blythe, Calif., Sept. 29, Roseate Spoonbills continued to cause a great stir following their appearance in Arizona earlier in the summer. At Picacho Res., where they were first seen June 4 (24), numbers built up to 33 on Aug. 14 (Zona Brighton) and decreased to 18 on Sept. 23 (WD), two on Oct. 4, and one on Oct. 14 (Kathy Ingram). Elsewhere, 15 were counted along the Gila R. 20 mi. east of Yuma Aug. 25 (Don Wingfield, *fide* DT). These records are representative of the first invasion on record of this species in Arizona. Later in the period one was found dead at Phoenix (RN) for the third county record and another lingerer was on a backwater above Martinez L., Imperial N.W.R., Ariz., Nov. 11 (RK).

WATERFOWL — In most parts of the Region, the waterfowl migration was rather late and spotty. The only substantial concentrations reported were at Bitter Lake N.W.R., where the high count of Canada Geese was 550 on Nov. 16 (more common than last fall); Snow Geese peaked there Nov. 9 when 12,500 were estimated, and decreased to 1800 by the end of the period. The only reports of Ross' Geese were of three at Bernardo, Socorro Co., N. Mex., Nov. 10 (RT) and a possible individual at Sierra Vista Nov. 24 (RS, RN). Three early White-fronted Geese appeared at Sierra Vista, Cochise Co., Ariz., Sept. 16 (m. ob.).

In Arizona, nine Black-bellied Tree Ducks were seen at Picacho Res. Aug. 4, three in Tucson Aug. 25, one in Phoenix Sept. 29, and one immature at St. David Oct. 25 (Murray Hansen). A flightless brood of four Mexican Ducks was observed south of Willcox, Cochise Co., Ariz., on the rather late date Sept. 4 (W&BA). Since scoters are decidedly rare in this Region, a well-described Surf Scoter seen on Nelson Res., Apache Co., Ariz., Nov. 12 (DD) was interesting. Single ♀ Hooded Mergansers were noted at Tucson Nov. 8 (banded by Charles Corchran) and in

Phoenix Nov. 17 & 25. While surprisingly few Com. Mergansers were reported. Red-breasted Mergansers seemed to be more common than usual. A possibly summering male was at Cholla L., Navajo Co., Ariz., Aug. 16 (GMO), and later in the period one (sex?) was near Tucson Nov. 4 (RK), four visited sewage ponds at Sierra Vista Nov. 7-16, and one was also at Bitter Lake N.W.R., Nov. 16 (DB). I hope that observers are aware of the fact that Com. Mergansers are the more common species in both states.

RAPTORS — Relatively few hawk reports were received. As of yet, no Goshawks have been seen away from the mountain forests. Rough-legged Hawks arrived early at Phoenix Oct. 10 & 18, east of the Dragoon Mts., Cochise Co., Ariz., Oct. 12, and at Bitter Lake N.W.R., Oct. 19. Swainson's Hawks were scarce migrants in most areas, but one large concentration was reported: 68 in a recently-cut alfalfa field near Phoenix Sept. 22; these may have been attracted to the many grasshoppers present (RN, RWi). The species is an uncommon migrant in that area. Red-tailed Hawks and Golden Eagles may have had a successful breeding season this year as evidenced by good counts of immatures in the central portion of the region. Only six Bald Eagles (two imm.) were reported Regionwide. A Caracara sighted east of Flagstaff Oct. 6 (Wes Fleming *et al.*) is by far the northernmost record for Arizona. Few Ospreys were observed, and only five reports of Peregrine Falcon were received.

QUAIL — Both Scaled and Gambel's Quail enjoyed excellent breeding success, and the many young of both species observed into September in s.e. Arizona and s.w. New Mexico were probably of second broods. Strangely, Scaled Quail were down in numbers in the vicinity of Clayton, Union Co., n.e. N. Mex.

CRANES, GALLINULES — Sandhill Cranes were reported from many localities, but observers couldn't agree on whether they were arriving earlier or later than normal. Six at Willcox Oct. 1 were definitely early for that area, and they first appeared at Bitter Lake, N.W.R. Sept. 28; they peaked there at an estimated 25,300 Nov. 9 and only about 8000 remained at the end of the period. Two Com. Gallinules at Mauer Ponds near Silver City, N. Mex., Nov. 18 (RF) were very late.

SHOREBIRDS — Despite the fact that this Region has no seacoast and relatively few sizeable bodies of water, an amazing variety and number of shorebirds migrate through it. In recent years foul-smelling sewage settling ponds have attracted many unexpected rarities as well as large numbers of the more regular transients, which include Greater and Lesser Yellowlegs, Least Sandpiper, Long-billed Dowitcher, W. Sandpiper, Am. Avocet, Black-necked Stilt (local), and Wilson's Phalarope. The following records are of special interest. At Bitter Lake N.W.R. the summering Snowy Plover population was up to 41 on Aug. 8. This species was present there at least until Nov. 2, when 20 individuals were counted. Two were at Phoenix Sept. 19. Two Am. Golden Plovers were also found: one at Nogales, Santa

Cruz Co., Ariz., Sept. 26 (BH) and another in Phoenix Nov. 2-13 (ST). A flock of 100+ Mountain Plovers west of Clayton, N. Mex., Oct. 11 was rather late, and 31 in fields south of Phoenix Nov. 27 were the first for that part of Maricopa County. Black-bellied Plovers were reportedly rather common at Bitter Lake N.W.R. during the fall; the last one was seen there Oct. 26. Two **Ruddy Turnstones** were photographed south of Phoenix Aug. 4 (GB, RB); this is only the second record of this species in Arizona.

A Long-billed Curlew which spent the fall at Morgan L. near Farmington, San Juan Co., N. Mex. was last seen on the late date of Nov. 24. A Whimbrel (quite rare in this Region) was identified at Willcox Sept. 1 (StS). Two Upland Sandpipers, uncommon transients in e. New Mexico, were observed west of Roswell Aug. 12. The second Maricopa Co. record of Red Knot was obtained when four breeding-plumaged individuals were found at Phoenix Aug. 18 (RB); another was seen at Nogales Sept. 9 (StS). There are less than a handful of verified records of this species for Arizona. A Pectoral Sandpiper sighted at Bitter Lake N.W.R., Aug. 24; between one and four south of Phoenix in September and October and a late one at Phoenix Nov. 25. Two Short-billed Dowitchers present south of Phoenix Aug. 29-Sept. 5 were photographed and tape-recorded (GB, RB, RWi). A Stilt Sandpiper was noted at Phoenix Aug. 29-Sept. 5 (photographed—RWi). Near Tucson, eight were observed Aug. 31 (TP, MR), and five were at Willcox Sept. 14 (TP). The only Sanderlings reported were two s. of Phoenix Sept. 9-24 (GB, RWi). A late Wilson's Phalarope was also present in s.w. Phoenix Nov. 14-25.

GULLS, TERNS — Although few gull records were received, several are of great interest. Two Herring Gulls at Phoenix Oct. 22 and a California Gull at L. Pleasant n. of Phoenix Nov. 12 are worthy of mention. An ad. **Laughing Gull** in winter plumage was carefully studied at Pichaco Res., Aug. 25. (Joseph Morlan, M. Chamberlain); there are only two other records for the state. The only Franklin's Gull reported was one at Bitter Lake N.W.R., Aug. 14-Sept. 21. Good Numbers of Bonaparte's Gulls were reported throughout the Region, most from late October to the end of the period. Substantiating details were received for an imm. **Black-legged Kittiwake** observed at Martinez L., Colorado R., Ariz., Nov. 24 (Tom Danielsen, Tom & JoAnn Heindel). This represents the second record for the state (third Regional record) of this normally pelagic species. Another rarity, an imm. Sabine' Gull, visited a small lake south of Willcox Oct. 11-14 (TP, W&BA). Forster's and Black Terns were inexplicably scarce migrants this fall. The high count of Black Terns at Bitter Lake, N.W.R. (25 on Sept. 10) was lower than the 1972 peak count, and Least Terns were last seen there Aug. 10 (4).

CUCKOOS THROUGH SWIFTS — The latest Yellow-billed Cuckoo record was of three near Albuquerque Oct. 5. Roadrunners apparently had an outstanding reproductive year in s. Arizona and s.w. New Mexico. A Ferruginous Owl, probably the same individual found in March of this year, was still present at

Sabino Canyon near Tucson Oct. 10. Vaux's Swifts (all singles) were observed in the lowlands of s.e. Arizona seven times Sept. 22 - Oct. 8, and one was carefully studied north of Rodeo, Hidalgo Co., N. Mex., Sept. 9 by an observer familiar with the species (KK). There is no specimen of the species for that state.

HUMMINGBIRDS — In many areas hummingbirds were said to be down in numbers, especially at feeders; this may be the result of the continued presence of abundant natural food. Despite the mild weather of early fall, Black-chinned Hummingbirds and several *Selasphorus* species left northerly breeding areas early (late August). In s.e. Arizona 13 species were recorded during the period. A ♂ Lucifer Hummingbird that appeared in Ramsey Canyon, Huachuca Mts. in early July was last seen Sept. 13. **Anna's Hummingbird**, first recorded in New Mexico just last fall, visited feeders in two localities: an ad. male north of Silver City Sept. 23 (May O'Byrne, *vide* MZ) and an imm. male at Glenwood Oct. 1-10 (Lowell Sumner, *vide* MZ). Another was present at Prescott, Ariz., Nov. 23-26 (Sallie Harris, *vide* BJ). A late Rufous Hummer was seen in Phoenix Nov. 16. A possible ♂ Rivoli's Hummingbird at Albuquerque Sept. 30 was far north of its normal range. The Violet-crowned Hummingbird was last seen in Cave Creek Canyon, Chiricahua Mts., Ariz., Sept. 11. A dead female with a partly extruded egg was found Aug. 15 in the same area. Another Mexican species, an imm. ♂ White-eared Hummingbird was carefully observed in lower Cave Creek Canyon Aug. 18 - Sept. 11 (W&SSp, KK). As usual, several wintering Broad-billed Hummingbirds returned to feeders in Tucson and Phoenix in November.

TROGONS, WOODPECKERS — A late ♀ Copper-tailed Trogon was seen Nov. 7 in Ramsey Canyon, Huachuca Mts. Com. (Yellow-shafted) Flickers were noted at Phoenix Oct. 22-25 and Nov. 18. In lower Cave Creek Canyon Acorn Woodpeckers were feeding a young bird in the nest hole on the late date of Sept. 25. The only report of Red-headed Woodpecker was of two at Albuquerque Sept. 9. Williamson's Sapsuckers were seen in at least six localities away from the mountains; one on Nov. 13 in Roswell was rather far east. An out-of-place Hairy Woodpecker was observed along the Little Colorado R. s.e. of Joseph City, Navajo Co., Ariz., Aug. 11. Two Ladder-backed Woodpeckers in Albuquerque Nov. 20 were rather north of their usual range.

FLYCATCHERS THROUGH SWALLOWS — Flycatchers apparently had good breeding success this year, but despite the mild fall weather most species departed early with few lingering to the end of the period. An E. Kingbird, a very uncommon transient in most of this Region, was seen at Elgin, Cochise Co., Ariz., Oct. 7 (RK), and the similarly uncommon Scissor-tailed Flycatcher was reported three times: one in Tucson Aug. 10 (W. Meter), an immature at San Simon, Cochise Co., Ariz., Sept. 2 (DW), and one at Bosque N.W.R., Oct. 13 (GZ). Sulphur-bellied Flycatchers were still feeding young in lower Cave Cr. Canyon on Sept. 10, but the species was gone by Sept. 19. Only one E. Phoebe was reported, an individual north of San Simon Oct. 14 (TP). A Buff-breasted Flycatcher was observed along the

Magdalena R. about 20 mi. south of Nogales in Sonora Nov. 13; the species may breed in the oak forests of nearby mountains. Three late W. Wood Pewees were in Aravaipa Canyon, Ariz., Nov. 15, and many reports of migrant Olive-sided Flycatchers were received from the lowlands Aug. 10 - Sept. 10. Late were 6 Violet-green Swallows near Silver City, N. Mex., Nov. 18, and a Barn Swallow at Bloomfield, n.w. N. Mex., Oct. 20.

JAYS — Since Black-billed Magpies are scarce in Arizona (only found in the extreme n. portion), the following records are of interest: two feeding on a bison carcass in the House Rock Valley, Coconino Co., Oct. 13, and two at Pipe Spring Nat'l Mon., Oct. 25. Blue Jays are apparently still increasing in e. New Mexico. Since most are seen in fall and winter, a pair that summered at Clayton should be mentioned. Other individuals were seen at Cedar Crest Oct. 10 and Bitter Lake N.W.R., Nov. 16.

THRASHERS THROUGH STARLINGS — Brown Thrashers were reported as follows: one in Pantano Wash e. of Tucson Oct. 13 (TP), one at Wickenburg, Ariz., Oct. 14-15 (Della Cales), and two at Hermanas, Luna Co., N. Mex., Oct. 20-21 (BMck). A Gray Catbird was seen feeding three young at Espanola, N. Mex., Aug. 4 (RWa). American Robins were more common than usual this summer in the Clayton, N. Mex. area. Rufous-backed Robins were seen at Cave Creek, Maricopa Co., Nov. 18 (Ellis Jones) and east of Tucson Nov. 21 (Charles Cochran-banded). These individuals represent the 17th and 18th records for the Southwest (and U. S.). This w. Mexican species should now be considered a rare fall and winter visitant to s. Arizona where it has occurred every year since 1965. Two Sprague's Pipits were located in the grasslands of the San Rafael Valley, Santa Cruz Co., Ariz., Nov. 24 (SC). Starlings have been descending for several years in the Clayton, N. Mex. area.

VIREOS, WARBLERS — An interesting variety of eastern vagrants was reported. Two Red-eyed Vireos were found, one in the Santa Catalina Mts. above Tucson Sept. 13 (SM), and another at Phoenix Sept. 17 (ST). There are few good fall records of this species for s. Arizona. In Arizona, single Black-and-white Warblers were reported from Cave Creek Canyon Sept. 8, and in the Phoenix area (presumably different individuals) Oct. 3, 6 & 14. A **Prothonotary Warbler** found at Silver City Oct. 14 (MZ) may represent the first New Mexican record west of the Rio Grande. Two Tennessee Warblers, rare transients in this Region and needing extremely careful scrutiny at this season, were reported: one in the Dragoon Mts., Cochise Co., Sept. 8 (DD) and another Sept. 11 in Silver City (MZ). In Tucson, a Nashville Warbler seen Nov. 24 (very late) and a N. Parula seen Nov. 25-28, both appeared after several days of unstable weather. Single Black-throated Blue Warblers, all males, appeared at Roswell Oct. 3 (Phelps White), at Hermanas, Luna Co., N. Mex., Oct. 20 (BMck), and in Madera Canyon, Santa Rita Mts., Pima Co., Ariz., Nov. 15-20. (Pam and Mark Neudorfer, SLi). Many observers commented upon the abundance of migrant Townsend's and Hermit Warblers in the mountains of e. Arizona, and two late Townsend's were seen at Kirtland, San Juan Co., N.

Mex., Nov. 11, and in the Huachuca Mts., Nov. 23. A Black-throated Green Warbler was briefly observed in Phoenix Nov. 16 (ST). The ♂ **Blackburnian Warbler** at the Arizona-Sonora Desert Museum near Tucson Oct. 8 (GMO) was the first for the state, and incredible as it may seem, an imm. ♂ **Bay-breasted Warbler** (second state record) was seen at the same place Nov. 23 (GMO, WA *et al.*). An Ovenbird found at the San Simon Cienega n. of Rodeo, Hidalgo Co., s.w. N. Mex., Sept. 9 (KK) was carefully described. In Arizona, four N. Waterthrushes were counted in the Sycamore Canyon Wilderness Area, Yavapai Co., Aug. 28-29 (RN), and singles were seen near Patagonia, Santa Cruz Co., Sept. 2, and at Portal, Cochise Co., Sept. 9. Although Am. Redstarts are regular transients in this Region, I feel that dates and localities of all records should still be published so that we may eventually better understand the nature of their rather irregular occurrence. It is interesting to note that all of the following records are of immatures or females: one in Cave Creek Canyon, Aug. 28 - Sept. 7, one in Sycamore Wilderness Area Aug. 31, two at Corrales, Sandoval Co., N. Mex., Sept. 2, several east of Roswell Sept. 3, three at Pipe Spring Nat'l Monument, Mohave Co., Ariz., Sept. 8, one at Bitter Lake N.W.R. (first refuge record) Sept. 17, and a late individual at Roswell Dec. 1. A Painted Redstart at Mormon Tank, 17 mi. north of Sasabe, Pima Co., Ariz., Oct. 5 was rather out of place.

ORIOLES, BLACKBIRDS — Interesting Icterid reports included a ♀ Orchard Oriole at Phoenix Nov. 16 (ST) and a ♀ N. (**Baltimore**) Oriole in the same city Sept. 20 (ST); rather surprisingly, this was only the second sight record of this race in the state. A late ad. ♂ N. (Bullock's) Oriole was seen at Sabinal, Socorro Co., N. Mex., Nov. 18. A Rusty Blackbird, a rare straggler to this Region from the north, was observed at Rattlesnake Springs south of Carlsbad, Eddy Co., N. Mex., Nov. 25 (FW). Since Great-tailed Grackles have been greatly expanding their range northward in New Mexico (via the Rio Grande), the first record for n.e. Ariz., two males near Joseph City, Navajo Co., Aug. 16, was not unexpected. In New Mexico, where Com. Grackles are also increasing, 25 were counted near Albuquerque Oct. 8. It is only a matter of time before this species is recorded in Arizona.

TANAGERS THROUGH SPARROWS — A W. Tanager was seen in Roswell Oct. 23 (MW). As is usually the case, Hepatic Tanagers lingered into late November in the mountains of s.e. Arizona. A late Black-headed Grosbeak was briefly observed at Cedar Crest, N. Mex., Nov. 29. Indigo Buntings, which may possibly be increasing as summer residents in the Region, were noted at Cedar Crest until Aug. 17 (a male), and a female with a brood patch was banded there Aug. 11. A pair of Varied Buntings at Tombstone Sept. 18-20 was unusual. The two Dickcissels reported were on Sept. 9 at Silver City and another near Tucson Oct. 6. Very few Evening Grosbeaks, Cassin's Finches, and Red Crossbills were seen away from the Region's mountains. A flock of 100+ Brown-capped Rosy Finches was observed in the Jemez Mts., Sandoval Co., N. Mex. Nov. 27 & 29 (MS); these were a first for that area. No reports of Lawrence's Goldfinches were received. Three Brown Towhees showed up

at Roswell, where they are quite uncommon, Oct. 24, and nearby at Bitter Lake N.W.R., one was present from Oct. 29 to the end of the period. An ad. ♂ Savannah Sparrow was collected at Watson L. near Prescott, Ariz., Aug. 8; it is not known whether the bird was an early migrant or a summer resident. A Rufous-winged Sparrow was seen at Tombstone Sept. 13-25 (an easterly record), and Cassin's Sparrows apparently nested in the Chino Valley of c. Arizona, where a juvenile and an ad. male were collected Aug. 21. Following last winter's invasion of Harris' Sparrows, it is interesting that only one was reported this fall, an individual at Rattlesnake Springs south of Carlsbad, N. Mex., Nov. 25 (FW). White-crowned Sparrows were unusually common in s.e. Arizona and s.w. New Mexico this fall. They appeared very early (late Aug. - early Sept.) and immatures greatly outnumbered adults. Golden-crowned Sparrows were seen at Tombstone Nov. 2 (DD) and in Cave Creek Canyon Nov. 21 (Isobel Hicks). Reports of White-throated Sparrows were scattered throughout the Region. Single Swamp Sparrows were seen at Lee Valley Res., Apache Co., Ariz., Oct. 10, near Bernardo, N. Mex., Nov. 10, and at Sierra Vista, Ariz., Nov. 23.

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