

SOUTHWEST REGION

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Of course every season is affected by the events of the preceding one. Last spring was characterized by exceptionally cold weather — which may explain why local breeding species of hummingbirds were thought to be scarce around Flagstaff this summer, and why



Painted Redstarts continued to be uncommon in many of their traditional nesting areas. Last spring the migration of many species averaged later than usual — so it was not surprising that some observers described major movements of warblers, vireos and flycatchers extending into June.

Owing to the high precipitation levels of last winter and spring, the summer began with good growths of vegetation present in most areas of New Mexico. This was particularly noticeable in the prairie sections, and observers expected that grassland species might stay to nest in above average numbers — but a less-than-consistent pattern emerged. Lark Buntings, for example, were virtually absent from the eastern plains of the state, where they are sporadically known as common breeders. On the other hand, it appears that meadowlarks may have responded to the increased cover, as Westerns summered well southward among Easterns in several areas.

CHANGES IN BIRD DISTRIBUTION, OR IN OUR UNDERSTANDING OF IT — Man's propensity for building dams gives us a different picture of waterbird distribution than the early ornithologists could have had. For example: the Painted Rock country west of Gila Bend, Arizona, is a dry and desolate place, but this summer it produced among other birds 12 Brown

Pelicans and 26 Wood Storks — at the waters behind Painted Rock Dam. The significance of the birds' presence should not be overestimated, however. Immatures of both species wander north from the Gulf of California regularly, probably every summer. This year's pelicans and storks would have passed through the airspace above Painted Rock anyway; the presence of the reservoir acts merely as a sampling technique, concentrating the birds, giving us a chance to extrapolate how many must disperse across the whole of southwest Arizona.

But when birds stay to nest at these man-made lakes, that may constitute a genuine range extension. For example, New Mexico's Elephant Butte 'Lake' (actually an artificial reservoir) hosts a major colony of cormorants and herons, thus completely altering the distribution of these two families in the Southwest; two new species of herons posted New Mexico breeding records there this summer. Another remarkable case involves Clapper Rails finding potential breeding sites at reservoirs in Arizona's interior.

Of course, changes in distribution are normal events in the birdlife of any region, regardless of man's influence. Allan R. Phillips has suggested that *nearly 10%* of all the land bird species in the Southwest may undergo major distributional changes in *any given century*. He further points out that most recent range extensions here have been northward ones. The latter fact works to the birders' advantage, since we have more species to gain from Mexico than from the states to the north of us.

The species accounts below include southward records of Tree Swallow, Swainson's Thrush, and Fox Sparrow, but these are all scarce or local birds that might have been overlooked before. On the other hand, we report on continued progress by species certainly or probably involved in northward range extensions, such as White-winged Dove, Tropical Kingbird, Black Phoebe, Red-faced Warbler, Great-tailed Grackle, Bronzed Cowbird, Varied Bunting, and Five-striped Sparrow; and there are other recent invaders, such as Thick-billed Kingbird and Black Vulture, that are doing well. Will the trend continue? What will be the next invader from Mexico? The answers will only come from continued fieldwork, and that is what these regional reports are all about.

LOONS, GREBES — The Arctic Loon is a rare visitor to Arizona, generally occurring in fall or early winter, so one that appeared at Willcox May 30 was definitely out-of-season. Not surprisingly, it was found dead June 4 (MH *et al.*; spec. to U. of Ariz.). A Com. Loon in breeding plumage at Snow L., Catron Co., N. Mex. June 4 (WB) was also unusual. Four Eared Grebes at Elephant Butte L., N. Mex., June 7 (CAH) were undoubtedly late migrants, but four more at Eagle Nest L., Colfax Co., June 28 (WP) may have indicated a new breeding area; the species is known to nest at several lakes in the northern third of New Mexico. For several years W. Grebes have summered in small numbers in New Mexico, and this season produced reports from Heron and El Vado Lakes in Rio Arriba Co. (MCC, JPH), Elephant Butte (CAH), and in the Chuska Mts. (APN). Breeding probably occurs at some of these

sites, especially the northern ones; but the first definite proof of nesting in the state was the observation of a small young riding on the back of an adult at Burford L., Rio Arriba Co., July 5 (CAH).

CORMORANTS THROUGH HERONS — Non-breeding Double-crested Cormorants summered at many points in Arizona, including 25+ at Painted Rock Dam near Gila Bend, while in Rio Arriba Co., N. Mex., scattered birds were present for the first local summer records at Burford and El Vado Lakes. In the nesting colony at Elephant Butte L. hundreds of Double-crested fledged, and Olivaceous Cormorants brought off at least three young from five nests during the period. An additional report of Olivaceous Cormorant involved six at Bosque del Apache N.W.R., June 5 (DAZ, MAZ, J. Minot).

The only frigatebird reported this summer was one flying too high to be identified as to species (odds favor Magnificent Frigatebird) w. of Tacna, s.w. Ariz., June 15 (RRJ, Janet Johnson). The Magnificent Frigatebird, a summer wanderer from the Gulf of California, would probably be recorded in Arizona every year if there were more observers in the s.w. corner of the state.

The real news from Elephant Butte was that two species of herons established first nesting records for New Mexico. **Little Blue Herons** produced young from two nests during July (CAH): the species had been known only as an irregular summer visitor to the state, first recorded in 1952. The **Cattle Egret**, a very recent arrival in New Mexico (first sight record 1963, first confirmed record 1972), also nested for the first time at Elephant Butte L., with two nests producing young in July (CAH). As yet there are no nesting records for Arizona, but the presence of several Cattle Egrets at Painted Rock Dam in July (JW *et al.*) suggests that the event may not be long in coming.

WATERFOWL — The Black-bellied Tree Duck occurs sporadically in s. Arizona, and although it has nested near Phoenix, Tucson, and Nogales, most records are for late summer and early fall. Of interest, therefore, were three near Picacho Res., June 7 (SRD). The Fulvous Tree Duck, once a fairly common winter resident in s.w. Arizona, has recently been known only as a rare summer visitor; the only report this season was of one at Phoenix July 21 — end of period (RBR). A Mexican Duck with a brood of four at Centerfire Bog, Catron Co., N. Mex., June 10 (JPH) was one of the few breeding records for this form on the Mogollon Plateau. Fifteen Redheads seen July 15 in the Chuska Mts. of n.w. New Mexico showed no signs of nesting locally, but an ad. Ruddy Duck with two young there (APN) marked the first breeding record for San Juan Co.

KITES — A **White-tailed Kite** that remained at Bitter Lake N.W.R., July 11-18 (JCC *et al.*) was photographed, providing the first documentation of the species in New Mexico. There are at least four previous hypothetical records going back as far as 1944. A Mississippi Kite n.e. of Phoenix June 25 (KK *et al.*) was the second local record, and one of extremely few sightings away from Arizona's only known breeding colony at Winkelman.

CLAPPER RAIL — The Colorado R. race of the Clapper Rail (*R. l. yumanensis*: a form recalling the King Rail in its reddish coloration, several of its calls, and its preference for freshwater marshes) currently summers northward along the river to the vicinity of Topock, 300 river-miles from salt water. There is some debate as to how far upriver the bird occurred in the past: it has been found only recently in the northern areas (but rails are easily overlooked); and much of the habitat on the Lower Colorado has been altered by man (but not necessarily improved). Likewise we know nothing of the bird's historic presence (if any) on the Gila River, which flows into the Colorado River at Yuma. The first evidence of *yumanensis* on the Gila was a road-killed bird found in 1969 near Tacna, 40 mi. upriver, but 5-7 individuals have been present in marshes near Tacna every summer since (RLT). In 1970, three *yumanensis* were found far up the Gila River valley in the vicinity of Phoenix, but there were no more records in that area until this summer, when at least three individuals were present at Granite Reef Dam (RBr,RLT). A further surprise was the discovery of four this June (RLT, Dave Brown) at Picacho Reservoir, which is located in the desert halfway between Phoenix and Tucson!

SHOREBIRDS — Four Com. Snipe, including two giving flight displays, were found at Los Ojos (Park View) July 14 (MCC,JPH). This was the first evidence that the snipe may breed in New Mexico; it has nested in the Springerville region of Arizona, as well as numerous localities in Colorado. At Phoenix a lone Long-billed Curlew summered in the same area where one spent last winter; each record was a local first, and possibly both involved the same bird. A Marbled Godwit at Willcox, Ariz., June 22 (KK *et al.*) was notably early for a 'fall' migrant, and may have been a summering individual instead.

GULLS, TERNS — Non-breeding, sub-adult Ring-billed Gulls are frequent enough in summer in New Mexico — e.g. at Morgan L., El Vado L., and Eagle Nest L. in this period; but at Heron L. July 15, three Ring-billeds were certainly outclassed by the 31 California Gulls present (MCC,JPH), which apparently constituted only the fourth state record! A Laughing Gull reported June 5 at Phoenix (SB) was likely the same individual which, appearing there in May, established the fifth Arizona record. At Bitter Lake N.W.R., traditional site of the only known breeding colony of Least Tern in the U.S. part of the Region, only five adults were present through the summer and no nests were located (JCC *et al.*).

PIGEONS THROUGH NIGHTJARS — The Band-tailed Pigeon is known to be quite irregular in its movements in the Southwest. This summer the species was unusually abundant during late June and early July

in the Santa Rita Mts. and at Patagonia, Ariz.; about a dozen appeared at Flagstaff in mid-July, when the species is not normally present there (RPB); and one found June 6 in the hot lowlands of Elephant Butte L. (CAH) was certainly out of place. The White-winged Dove continued to be reported during June and July at Socorro, N. Mex., north of the species' current "normal" range (P. Basham). A Groove-billed Ani was found July 3 at Deer Creek Falls in the Grand Canyon, providing Arizona's northernmost record of this rare straggler from Mexico (G. Palsgrove, H. Messamer *et al.*). The observers, though temporary visitors, had the presence of mind to photograph the bird and forward the information to the regional editors — an example that should be noted by others. A brood of Screech Owls fledged at Farmington (APN) confirmed the breeding of this species in the far n.w. part of New Mexico; the Screech Owl is actually quite scarce in the general region of n.w. New Mexico - n.e. Arizona. Whip-poor-wills were heard at three locations in Arizona's White Mountains region: near Alpine in early June (*fide* RCC), near Blue June 11 (RBr), and near Hanagan Meadows July 5 (KK,RW). Rather surprisingly, there seem to be no previous records for the White Mts., though the species has been recorded as a migrant just to the southwest and is known to summer in adjacent ranges to the east in New Mexico.

HUMMINGBIRDS — A ♀ or imm. Lucifer Hummingbird was seen w. of Tucson July 5 (GM). Arizona specimens are few, but sight records of this species seem to be increasing; as with several other hummers, the bird's true status is clouded by problems in identification. A few Broad-tailed Hummingbirds may occur in the lowlands at any time in summer, but a male at Maljamar, Lea Co., June 24 (JPH) was east of the normal range in New Mexico. In most areas of New Mexico, Rufous Hummingbirds were reported as being scarce and appearing later than usual during July, when the species be arriving on its 'fall' migration. (For an authoritative account of the migrations of this and other western hummers, the reader is referred to a very recent paper by Allan R. Phillips [*Condor* 77:196-205; Summer 1975]). No less than five Rivoli's Hummingbirds reached n.c. Arizona: two females during July at Flagstaff (C. Lockett, *fide* SC), and two males and a female June 9 - July 1 on upper Oak Creek (JHi). Previously there have been very few records so far north in Arizona, but note that a few Rivoli's now turn up virtually every summer in Colorado, where feeders and observers are much more numerous.

Blue-throated Hummingbirds were reported from points well beyond their normal northern limit: one male on upper Oak Creek June 9 - July 1 (JHi) and another at Bandelier Nat'l Mon., N. Mex., July 5 (F. Stimson). No more out-of-range — but of considerably more interest to U.S. birders, due to the coincidence of political boundaries — was a **Berylline Hummingbird** that appeared June 27 at feeders in Ramsey Canyon, Huachuca Mts., Ariz. (C. & J. Peabody, R. LeValley, m.ob.). By early July, conflicting descriptions suggested that *two* individuals might be involved, and this was confirmed July 16 when two were seen together (SH); at least one of the birds was present

through the end of the period. The only previous confirmed records in the U.S. of this common Mexican species were in Ramsey Canyon in 1967 and in Cave Creek Canyon, Chiricahua Mts., in 1971.

KINGFISHERS THROUGH JAYS — A ♀-plumaged Green Kingfisher was reported from the Sonoita Creek Sanctuary s.w. of Patagonia July 21 (W. Risser); the species is a rare straggler from Mexico, generally occurring in fall or winter.

Excellent photos were submitted to confirm a June 23 report of an Eastern Kingbird near Nutrioso, in the White Mts. region of e.c. Arizona (RCC). There are scattered summer records for the northeast section going back at least to 1894, but so far the species has not been found nesting in the state. The Tropical Kingbird was considered accidental in Arizona until 1938, when the indefatigable Allan R. Phillips discovered four pairs nesting near Tucson. Perhaps the bird was merely overlooked before then; but the continual discovery of new colonies in the time since seems to indicate that the species is a recent invader from Mexico. A new locality this summer was Cook's L., between Mammoth and Hayden in Pinal Co., where a nesting pair was found June 17 (RRJ). Also, a single individual was reported May 30 e. of Phoenix (ST): there are only two previous records for the Phoenix area, one involving an isolated nesting pair in 1956. The original distribution of Black Phoebe in New Mexico is uncertain, owing to unreliable early records, but evidently the species has been spreading northward in the state during this century; Colorado had its first record in 1972. New northern records in New Mexico this summer were singles at Bloomfield for several days in the period (A. Schmidt, *vide* APN) and at Soda Dam, n. of Jemez Springs, June 20 (JND,PF). Willow Flycatchers, widespread but local breeders in New Mexico, fledged young at Elephant Butte Lake in July (CAH). The nesting of a pair of Coues' Flycatchers on upper Oak Creek, north of Sedona, Ariz. (JHi) marked a northward extension of the species' known breeding range.

Three nests of Tree Swallows were found at Elephant Butte (CAH), at the southern breeding limits of the species; while farther north scores shared mountain habitats with Violet-greens in the n. San Juan Mts. (JPH) and n. Sangre de Cristo Mts. (K. Giezantner, WP).

A Blue Jay that appeared slightly west of its normal range at Roswell, N. Mex., July 30 (MW) was unusual in that most stragglers occur during winter or migration periods.

THRUSHES, STARLINGS — A singing ♂ Veery was found July 5 s.w. of Springerville, Arizona. It was in suitable breeding habitat, and the bird's active response to tape recordings indicated it was on territory (KK,RW,JW). The only previous Arizona record involves birds collected in 1936, at almost exactly the same locality and date; thorough fieldwork in the future may prove that the species summers there regularly in small numbers. Although the species nests locally in the Colorado Rockies and the northern Great Basin states, Springerville is by far the southwesternmost

summering locality known, and the Veery is unknown as a migrant in our Region aside from a few records in extreme e. New Mexico. A Swainson's Thrush near Alpine June 9 (RCC) and another near Sheep's Crossing July 6 (KK,JW) were the first summer records for Arizona's White Mts. region, while a pair with young e. of Cuba June 21 (JND,PF) provided the first breeding record for New Mexico's Jemez Mts. The summer status of the bird in both states is rather poorly known: probably it would be found to share the mountain forests with the abundant Hermit Thrushes in many areas, were observers more aware of the differences in song.

A disturbing new aspect of the Starling problem is the possibility that it may invade the mountain forests which are home for many cavity-nesting species. Already in New Mexico the Starling nests very locally in or near pine forest areas, and to these few may be added La Cueva in the Jemez Mts. (MBS) and Centerfire Bog, Catron Co. (JPH), both at elevations exceeding 7000 ft.

VIREOS, WARBLERS — At the roadside rest stop on Sonoita Creek s.w. of Patagonia, Ariz., a **Yellow-green Vireo** was observed briefly on June 19 (Kathleen S. Zinn) and for many hours June 25-27 (BH, m.ob). During the latter period of observation the bird sang almost constantly, and showed mild interest in tape recordings, but subsequent to the 27th it could not be found again despite exhaustive searching. Interestingly, there was an unconfirmed report of another Yellow-green Vireo in Guadalupe Canyon, extreme s.e. Arizona, on May 11 (R. Buttery *et al.*). Since the species nests commonly north into Sonora it seems reasonable to expect a few 'overshooting' migrants to appear in Arizona in late spring and early summer, but we advise *extreme* caution in identification — there is only one previous record (a bird tape-recorded on Sonoita Creek in June 1969), and that could be open to question. Statistically the Red-eyed Vireo is still more likely to occur than the Yellow-green, and in fact a Red-eyed was found on Sonoita Creek July 17 (R. Dean).

A Black-and-white Warbler at Patagonia July 17 (SH) and another at Tucson July 20 (D&M King, GM) were the first July records for Arizona; the bird is generally known here as a sparse migrant and winter resident. The northern limits of Lucy's Warbler in the Rio Grande Valley are only vaguely known, but a nest found June 19 near San Marcial, Socorro Co. (CAH), is probably near the point in question. Olive Warblers were found to be very common in mid-June at Horse Camp Seep in the Mazatzal Mts., n. of Phoenix (KK,ST *et al.*), a new western limit at the n.w. edge of the species' range. This represents a genuine range extension: during intensive fieldwork at this locality in 1970-71, the species was not recorded at all (RRJ). A Red-faced Warbler seen June 24 on the Widforss Trail, North Rim, Grand Canyon N.P. (P. Post, S. Friedberg) was the first Arizona record north of the Canyon itself. The species has been gradually expanding its range during this century; the first California and Nevada records have occurred within the last five years.

At Boone's Draw, extreme e. New Mexico, the last of the spring migrants included a Hooded Warbler June

1 (JPH *et al.*). Another Hooded Warbler, a singing male, was carefully described from upper Madera Canyon in the Santa Rita Mts., Ariz., July 2 (F. Schrock). An eastern warbler in the Arizona mountains in mid-summer may seem unbelievable — but consider the history of this species: there are only five previous acceptable records of the Hooded in the state, but three of these have been in the period from late June through mid-July, and all have been at middle to high elevations.

A pair of Am. Redstarts, seemingly on territory, was found June 16 near Springerville, Ariz. (DS). The species may be a sparse summer resident in that area, but no nest has yet been found in the state. A ♀ Am. Redstart east of Phoenix June 12 - July 30 (ST) provided one of only a few summer records for s. Arizona.

ICTERIDS — As noted in the introduction, Eastern and Western Meadowlarks were found summering together in the more lush grasslands of New Mexico. Some localities and ratios recorded over 25-mile census routes in June: near Fence L., 37 Easterns and nine Westerns; near Tucumcari, one Eastern and 80 Westerns; near Floyd, 123 Easterns and 21 Westerns; and near Lovington, 94 Easterns and 97 Westerns. Great-tailed Grackles were reported breeding for the first time at Elephant Butte (CAH) and apparently near Silver City (RAF), while a lone male near Apache Creek, Catron Co., N. Mex., June 12 (CLH, JPH) was obviously a solitary straggler. A ♀ Bronzed Cowbird at Pleasanton June 10 (GM) represented the first record of the species in the San Francisco Valley of New Mexico, a new northward extension. This species is another recent invader from Mexico; it first appeared in Arizona in 1909, and was not recorded in New Mexico until 1947.

FRINGILLIDS — A singing territorial ♂ Indigo Bunting was found May 25 s. of Sasabe, n.w. Sonora, Mexico. The species was previously unrecorded in the state (SMR). Varied Buntings, traditionally scarce or local in s. Arizona, were noted this summer as unusually common and widespread in the Nogales-Patagonia region (m.ob.) and in n.w. Sonora (SMR). In addition, the species was found for the first time in the foothills of the Empire Mts., Pima Co. (SM), and there was a report of a male from the confluence of the San Francisco and Gila Rivers in Greenlee Co., June 10 (RBR). The latter sighting is north of any previous summer record for the species. Cassin's Finch is quite scarce as a summer resident in New Mexico, so of interest were reports of four in the s. San Juan Mts., July 1 (MBS) and up to four per day, June 25 - July 2, near Red River (WP).

Paradoxically, in a season when Lark Buntings were virtually absent from their 'normal' breeding grounds on the e. plains of New Mexico, a nest was found June 6 near Estrella, McKinley Co., N. Mex. (JPH); this locality is in the n.w. part of the state, where the species has not been known to breed before. Savannah Sparrows are quite local and at best uncommon in summer in New Mexico, so of note were five at Burford L., July 15 (MCC, JPH). The Five-striped Sparrows are doing well: near Patagonia, in the only known U.S.

colony of the species, four pairs plus two unmated males were present this summer; at least 12 young were fledged (SM). Singing Cassin's Sparrows were present through the period at Rodeo, N. Mex. (R. Scholes), establishing a new western 'summer-long' area of occupancy for the species in New Mexico.

Chipping Sparrows nest mainly in the mountains in the Southwest, but on June 19 an adult was feeding two young at San Marcial, on the Rio Grande in Socorro Co., N. Mex. (CAH). Several also summered at Farmington (APN). Actual summering birds should not be confused with records obtained in July, when the first migrant Chippings begin to swarm into the lowlands. The report of numerous White-crowned Sparrows on June 22 between Chama and Cumbres Pass (JND, PF) strongly suggests that the species breeds in the n. San Juan Mts., extreme n.c. New Mexico; the bird is known to summer regularly in the adjacent Sangre de Cristo and Jemez Mts., but not else where in the Region. Finally, an observer familiar with the species watched a gray Fox Sparrow as it sang in riparian brush near Red River, Taos Co., N. Mex., July 3 (WP). This is the first summer record for the state, though the species nests sparingly in the mountains of c. Colorado.

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