

SOUTHWEST REGION

/Janet Witzeman, John P. Hubbard and
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One of the prime "hot spots" this season (as last spring) was Boone's Draw, an oasis situation on the plains of eastern New Mexico, where observations and mistnet surveys by JPH *et al.*, turned up many interesting vagrants. Morgan Lake, in extreme northwest New Mexico, yielded several significant records under continued checking by APN and the other Farmington birders. A number of remarkable water birds also appeared at the ponds at Willcox, Arizona.



Actually, Willcox lies at least an hour's drive away from any of the Region's active birders; it was elevated to hot spot status by virtue of what has been called the "Patagonia Picnic Table Effect." This is the phenomenon (named after the famous roadside rest stop on Sonoita Creek) wherein the news of one good bird brings in many observers, who in turn discover more rarities, which in turn attract more observers, *ad infinitum*. Thus did Arizona's first *Hudsonian Godwit* touch off a whole series of observations.

The flashiest bird of the season however, appeared in Miller Canyon of the Huachucas: a **Slate-throated Redstart** — Arizona's first, and only the second for the United States. This Mexican stray was seen by only a lucky few. Birders who arrived too late — and found themselves wading about in seven inches of fresh snow — were not inclined to call Miller Canyon a "hot spot" by any definition.

The freak cold weather that marked the end of the Slate-throated Redstart sightings had other notable effects. This storm system moved across Arizona and into southwest New Mexico in mid-April, bringing blizzard conditions and record low temperatures at a time when many of the early migrants had already returned. Painted Redstarts — meeting unseasonable weather for the second year in a row — may have been seriously affected; they were noted as scarce in many areas. Other early migrants — Coues' Flycatchers and Black-throated Gray Warblers — also seemed to be in reduced numbers in many breeding areas. Much of the freshly emerged vegetation was frozen out. Early June found the sycamores still recuperating, thinly foliated, at Guadalupe Canyon and Sonoita Creek. At the latter location the Rose-throated Becards, which nest and forage mainly in the sycamores, were found in lower numbers than usual.

LOONS, GREBES — A spring movement of Com. Loons occurred in the period Apr. 30-May 20, with singles reported at four reservoirs up the w. side of New Mexico: Evans L. (DAZ,MZ), Roberts L. (BJH), Quemado L. (B. Sipple, G. Zahm), and Morgan L. (H.H. Lesperance, *fide* APN). Five W. Grebes were on Ganado L., n.e. Ariz., May 8 (HR). Although there is a lack of previous records from this part of the state, it may be only because of the scarcity of observers there.

CORMORANTS, HERONS — The Double-crested Cormorant's normal range in New Mexico is limited to the lower Pecos and Rio Grande Valleys; notable strays this spring were singles at Morgan L., Apr. 17-May 11 (APN,WS,CGS) and at Evans L., Grant Co., Apr. 30 (DAZ,MZ). Patagonia Lake, the site of most recent Arizona records of Olivaceous Cormorant, hosted two immatures of this species for much of the spring, as well as a few Double-crested (RS *et al.*).

A Green Heron found Apr. 26 in a tamarisk thicket at Boone's Draw (JPH) was unexpected in that eastern prairie locality. Since we mentioned last spring that Arizona's Little Blue Heron occurrences tend to concentrate in May, we are pleased to report that this season produced two more, both adults, for about the ninth and tenth state records: May 7-8 e. of Phoenix (CAS *et al.*) and May 29 at Willcox (RS *et al.*).

WATERFOWL — One or more Mexican Ducks were present during May on the New Mexico section of the Gila R., where the species is uncommon and irregular. At least one of the ducks appeared to be a typical ♂ Mexican Duck accompanied by what seemed to be a ♀ Mallard May 8 (DAZ *et al.*). A ♂ Surf Scoter photographed at Willcox May 16 (JW) provided the first documented spring record for Arizona.

RAPTORS — Notable lowland sightings of Goshawks were singles at Roswell May 16 (JCC *et al.*) and Guadalupe Canyon May 25 (WB). **Broad-winged Hawks** made three appearances: an adult in Ramsey Canyon, Huachuca Apr. 11 (DSz,M&DK,RNd), an adult at Boone's Draw Apr. 28-May 3 (JPH *et al.*), and an immature near Onion Saddle, Chiricahuas May 29 (RS *et al.*). These records seem especially interesting in light of McCaskie's recent suggestion (*Am. Birds* 29: 908) that the Broad-winged might be a regular spring migrant in limited numbers through s. California. New Mexico

produced more Zone-tailed Hawk reports than usual, especially in the Silver City area. One at Dixon Apr. 24-25 (JWh *et al.*) and a nesting pair near Los Alamos in early May (J. Longmire, *fide* Peter Pache) were at the northern limits of the species' range.

U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service biologists, in a statewide Arizona study, reported that six southern Bald Eagles successfully fledged from five nests this spring; in 1975 five young fledged from seven nests. These are the only Bald Eagles known to nest in the southwest U.S. (*fide* Duane Rubink). All five nests are located along two small rivers in c. Arizona — two of the nests are in jeopardy due to a proposed Bureau of Reclamation dam.

TURKEYS, RAILS — Turkeys are occasionally seen in the upper part of Guadalupe Canyon. One strayed down to the Lower Sonoran riparian area in the New Mexico part of the canyon May 20 (WB). Recent specimen records have shown that Turkeys in the Peloncillo Mts. are of the race *mexicana*, a Sierra Madre form that is not known to occur in the U.S. away from the s.w. mountains of New Mexico.

Last summer (as noted in *Am. Birds* 29: 1016), Clapper Rails of the Colorado R. subspecies appeared at Granite Reef and Picacho Res. in c. Arizona. At the time Dick Todd, Arizona's leading rail authority, questioned whether these records indicated unusual wanderings or the possible establishing of a range extension. Seeking answers this spring, Todd surveyed all the cattail marshes in the Picacho and Phoenix areas; preliminary findings of Clappers were one (possibly two) again at Granite Reef Dam, one at Picacho Res., and two at a new location s.w. of Phoenix within 3 mi. of where a pair was found in 1970.

SHOREBIRDS — A high total of 26 Snowy Plovers found May 8 (KJZ,BZ) near White Sands Nat'l Mon., where the species is rarely reported, could represent a breeding population in that area of New Mexico.

Arizona's first **Hudsonian Godwit** was discovered at Willcox May 14 (MH,BJ) and remained until May 16. Photographs (JW) documented the record. Since the bulk of this species' population migrates north through the Great Plains in spring and moves south off the East



Hudsonian Godwit, Willcox, Ariz., May 16, 1976. First state record. Photo/Janet Witzeman.

Coast in fall, the spring date of this record is about what we would have "expected" in terms of proximity; two of the three acceptable past records for New Mexico (closer to the plains) also occurred in May.

Observers in this Region are urged to think twice before reporting Baird's Sandpipers in spring, especially away from the e. edge of New Mexico. Baird's is almost exclusively a Great Plains migrant in spring; it is a species frequently maligned by misidentification in some parts of the country; and of various spring sightings in Arizona, only one has even been documented by specimen or photograph. Three careful reports came from experienced observers this season: one at Painted Rock Dam Apr. 24 (ST), one at Willcox May 14 (GM,VC) and two there May 15-16 (DStz,SM *et al.*).

The Willcox sightings of Baird's combined with the Hudsonian Godwit record and perhaps the Franklin's Gulls, which were in unusual numbers at the same time, could point to a displacement of migrants from the Great Plains in mid-May. It is interesting that numbers of N. Phalaropes, normally rare in spring away from the Colorado R., occurred during the same period: 11 near Farmington May 15 (A. Williams, *vide* APN), one at Willcox May 16-23 (JW *et al.*), one at Tucson May 17 (BJ), one at Roswell May 18 (JCC *et al.*), two at Phoenix May 18-19 (RB,RWi), and one near Silver City May 20 (AZ,DAZ).

A Black-bellied Plover at Morgan L., Apr. 25-May 11 (APN,CGS) was a notable occurrence for that section of New Mexico. Two Stilt Sandpipers at Willcox May 15 (DStz,GG) apparently provided only the third spring record for Arizona. This scarcity is surprising; the species is basically a plains migrant in spring, but also occurs regularly at that season to the west of us at the Salton Sea. Sanderlings, rare in spring except in extreme e. New Mexico, appeared at Morgan L. (three to four, Apr. 28 - May 5 — APN) and Willcox (four on May 17—ST,RS). A notably high count of 24 Marbled Godwits came from Morgan L., May 7 (CGS).

There was a remarkable variety included in the reports of delayed migrant shorebirds in Arizona. Three species established record late dates: Black-bellied Plover to May 23 at Willcox (DStz *et al.*), Least Sandpiper to May 17 at Willcox (ST *et al.*), and Dunlin to the remarkable date of May 24 at Patagonia L., (RS *et al.*). Also notably late in s. Arizona were Com. Snipe to May 15, Semipalmated Plover to May 27, and Long-billed Dowitcher to June 4. These sightings came from several standard shorebirding localities. It appears that an actual phenomenon was involved, and that the concentration of records was not merely an artifact of increased coverage.

TERNS, DOVES — A Caspian Tern, which in this Region occurs regularly only as a transient on the lower Colorado R., strayed east to Phoenix Apr. 24 (ST). On the same date [rarities appear on weekends] a **Gull-billed Tern**, Arizona's third, was at the Nogales sewage ponds (CM,BH *et al.*); both previous occurrences were in May on the Colorado R. Arizona records are undoubtedly derived from the Salton Sea/Gulf of California population.

Northern peripheral records of White-winged Doves in New Mexico were one n.w. of Silver City Apr. 20 (DAZ) and one at Socorro May 2 (PB), the latter continuing a string of recent sightings in that area, where the species may be establishing itself. This species' very gradual

invasion of s. New Mexico has been proceeding since at least the turn of the century. The Ground Dove is very local and irregular anywhere in New Mexico; one was in upper Guadalupe Canyon May 23 (WB).

OWLS — A Barn Owl was noted at Farmington Apr. 29 (M. Bird, *vide* APN); the species is rarely reported in the Four Corners region. Away from a few well-known stakeouts in the s.e. mountains, the distribution of Arizona's Spotted Owl population is little-known. This spring brought first records from two ranges e. of Phoenix: one heard in the Mazatzals Apr. 24 (ST) and one seen in the Superstitions May 30 (Rnt *et al.*).

We noted last year that southwestern Long-eared Owls inhabit low elevations, away from the mountain conifers where one might expect this "Canadian" species. Most Arizona nestings have, in fact, occurred in the Upper and Lower Sonoran Zones; but we are slightly stunned when the owls choose to nest on saguaro cactus. There is one past record of such an occurrence near Coolidge, and this spring two pairs were found nesting on saguaros n.e. of Phoenix (*vide* E. Radke). Details may be published elsewhere. Long-eareds failed to reoccupy an established nest site near Oracle, probably owing to disturbance resulting from installation of a power line (HF).

SWIFTS — Bad weather in spring may be good weather in which to look for Chimney Swifts here, since such conditions bring the birds low enough so that their identification may be realistically attempted. May 3, a day of heavy rains across s. Arizona, produced sightings of two individuals over Tucson (MR) and another over Tempe (ST). The Tucson birds reappeared May 23 in the same area near the University campus (the same general area where the only state specimens were taken 24 years ago); by the end of May there were at least five birds present (DStz,RS,SA). As this report is written we are awaiting further developments.

HUMMINGBIRDS — A ♂ Costa's Hummingbird was observed Apr. 12 (JPH) in Guadalupe Canyon, where this species' status is still poorly understood. There have been a number of reliable sight records from this locality (e.g., five males there in May 1973 — TP,KK), but in the absence of specimens or photographs from the upper half of the canyon, Costa's remains on the hypothetical list for New Mexico.

A ♀ Rivoli's Hummingbird at La Cueva May 8 (MBS) established the first record for the Jemez Mts. of n.c. New Mexico. The date was notably early; a few Rivoli's are known to wander north almost annually through New Mexico to c. Colorado, but most of these northward records occur in June and July.

A Broad-billed Hummingbird was sighted occasionally during April and May (SSpf) at Portal, Chiricahua Mts., where the species is quite rare. The Broad-billed's virtual absence from the Chiricahuas is remarkable: the bird is fairly common just to the s.e. in Guadalupe Canyon; slightly farther w. it breeds north regularly to the Santa Catalinas and possibly to the vicinity of Superior, Pinal Co. (*vide* GM). A possible range extension was implied by the discovery of a pair in courtship display on the Verde R., n.e. of Phoenix May 16 (K. Ingram). All past records at Phoenix have been of single post-breeding wanderers in fall and winter.

KINGFISHERS, WOODPECKERS — The ♂ Green Kingfisher above Patagonia L., mentioned in the last report, remained through the end of the period (m.ob.).

South of its normal range in New Mexico was a Lewis' Woodpecker seen near Cliff May 8 (RAF). A Yellow-bellied Sapsucker near Paradise May 26 (SSpf) was remarkably late for the Chiricahuas, where the species is not known to breed. Unfortunately, it was not determined to what race this bird belonged, but such an unseasonable record could pertain to a straggler of the eastern or red-breasted type, both of which staged minor invasions during the winter, as detailed in the last report.

S.A.

Another feature described in the winter report was a minor incursion of Downy Woodpeckers in lowland areas; lingering individuals remained at Silver City to May 7 (*vide* DAZ) and at Roswell to May 14 (JCC). Most of the winter's records probably pertained to the resident Rocky Mt. race, *leucurus* (as implied by past Arizona specimen records, and by field-identification of last winter's individuals by KK and DAZ). Intriguing, therefore, was DAZ's observation that the lingering Silver City bird, a female, was "quite white below, with heavily white-spotted wings. Considerably smaller than the male *leucurus* sometimes seen with it, it looks like any number of DW's which used to frequent our Michigan feeders." In other words this bird could have been a stray from some distance to the north. We would endorse the point recently made by Allan Phillips (1975, *Western Birds* 6:69-86) that vagrant subspecies are just as interesting as vagrant species, even if they may be more difficult to detect.

FLYCATCHERS, CORVIDS — The first Thick-billed Kingbird had returned to Sonoita Creek by May 1 (MK), slightly early for Arizona. A pair of Tropical Kingbirds appeared at Quitobaquito Springs, Organ Pipe Nat'l Mon., w. of any known breeding locality in Arizona. RS noted that they "seemed to be showing early interest in nesting," but no nest was found. The only Scissor-tailed Flycatcher reported from Arizona this spring was one s.e. of Phoenix May 22 (CAS). An Olivaceous Flycatcher found May 30 in the Superstition Mts. (RNT *et al.*) was the northwesternmost record ever in Arizona; the bird was in suitable breeding habitat, but appeared to be unmated.

A Blue Jay at Bandelier Nat'l Mon. May 22 (RWa) was w. of the usual range in New Mexico. One to four Com. Crows were present through the season (DAZ) in the Gila Valley of New Mexico, an area they may have occupied only recently. Piñon Jays remaining from the fall southward movement were in the Silver City area in dwindling numbers until the end of the period — the last large flock of 150 was seen May 9 (MZ,DAZ); and four were on the lower slopes of the Mazatzal Mts., n.e. of Phoenix May 1 (CAS). Piñon Jays (which returned to the study area near Flagstaff in May) were suffering more than their usual losses to predation because of the threefold increase in the Com. Raven population there this spring. For the first time ravens outnumbered the crows. Since whole nests containing four eggs were being

carried off by the ravens, some of the Piñon Jays were in their fourth nesting attempt at the end of the period (RPB).

CHICKADEES, THRASHERS, THRUSHES

Black-capped Chickadees were again found nesting in the cottonwood bosque at Alameda, n. of Albuquerque (CAH,DL), where breeding was first recorded in 1973; this is evidently the species' southernmost breeding colony. Remarkably, this spring Mountain Chickadees were discovered nesting (CAH,DL) in the same place, which seems an atypically low elevation. It is interesting to find the two species sympatric in an area where each could be considered unusual as breeders.

Fieldwork at Alameda (CAH,DL) turned up two nests of the Gray Catbird, another species which was first discovered in the area as recently as 1973. Catbirds are fairly widespread but very localized (as is their habitat) in the Southwest. New Arizona localities this spring were registered by singles at Portal May 19-23 (DB,SSpf *et al.*) and Sonoita Creek June 3 (Jon Winter). Western reports of Brown Thrashers in New Mexico included one at Farmington Apr. 7 (APN) and one at Dixon to May 6 (JWh, T. Thomas). Of the four known to have wintered in Arizona, at least two remained through late April - early May.

A Rufous-backed Robin found in lower Aravaipa Canyon May 2 (BJ) probably represents the latest spring record for Arizona; aside from a couple of odd July sightings, all previous records have been in the period October - April. A Wood Thrush found May 29 in Cave Creek Canyon, Chiricahuas (KJZ,BZ *et al.*), was only the fifth record for Arizona. One of the previous occurrences involved a wintering bird in Tucson, and the other three were concentrated in the last half of October; the present record is the first for a spring vagrant.

VIREOS, WARBLERS — The fourth record of **White-eyed Vireo** in New Mexico occurred Apr. 27, with one banded and photographed at Boone's Draw (JPH). A Yellow-throated Vireo was found at the Arizona-Sonora Desert Museum, Tucson May 30 (GM); there are about eight previous Arizona records, most of them for summer and early fall. The only Red-eyed Vireo reported was one n. of Nogales May 23 (RS,BH); the species was formerly considered rare to casual in Arizona, but in recent years one or more have appeared annually.

Boone's Draw yielded 14 species of warblers in the brief period Apr. 26 - May 3 (JPH *et al.*). Interesting strays there included Tennessee, Black-throated Green, and Hooded among the eastern species, and Virginia's, Townsend's, and Black-throated Gray among those of western affinity. The highlight was a ♂ **Golden-winged Warbler**, the first confirmed record for New Mexico, banded and photographed Apr. 28. Seen at Boone's Draw on the same date, but unfortunately eluding capture or photography, was a **Worm-eating Warbler** — there are only two previous sight records for New Mexico; the species remains on the state hypothetical list. Interestingly, additional sightings of Worm-eatings came from near Winkelman, Ariz., May 21 (ST), from the Santa Clara Indian Reservation, n.e. New Mexico, May 30 (RWa), and a possible one (details incomplete) from Las Cruces May 1 (G. Thibodeau *et al.*). Arizona now has six reliable sightings (all but one in spring) but again, as in

New Mexico, the species' occurrence still lacks documentation by specimens or photos; camera-wielding observers should take note.

A singing ♂ **Prothonotary Warbler** north of Tucson May 11 (D. & L. Schepler) constituted only the fourth Arizona record. Single Tennessee Warblers were in lower Guadalupe Canyon Apr. 17 (TP) and west of Gila Bend May 14 (ST); this is turning out to be one of the more frequent vagrant warblers in Arizona, though it has not achieved "regular" status yet. Nashville Warblers were reasonably common at Boone's Draw; singles or doubles were also reported from Bell L. (M. Williams), Socorro (PB), and Las Cruces (BP *et al.*), areas where this species is generally regarded as rare in spring.

The N. Parula, a sparse but regular migrant in Arizona was reported only once this spring: May 11, two males e. of Phoenix (CAS). An Ovenbird was observed May 17 in Cave Creek Canyon, Chiricahuas (BR). There are only two previous spring records for Arizona, one of those being from this same locality; by contrast, fall/winter records have numbered at least nine since 1972. Convincing details backed up the report of a ♀ Hooded Warbler in the Huachuca Mts., May 25-26 (GR, CSI *et al.*). Arizona now has at least seven acceptable records for this species, all between late April and mid-July at middle to high elevations in the southeast. A Red-faced Warbler was photographed May 16 s. of Las Cruces (KJZ), where unusual. The bird was less than a quarter of a mile from Texas, for which state it would have been the first documented record!

A Painted Redstart Apr. 28 in the Sandia Mts. e. of Albuquerque (H.R. Schwarz) was well north of its usual range. The same could be said for a **Slate-throated Redstart** (*Myioborus miniatus*) in Miller Canyon, Huachuca Mts., Ariz., discovered Apr. 10 (Robert J. Morse). Initial attempts to confirm the sighting were unsuccessful, but the bird was relocated Apr. 13 (KK, BJ, MH), photographed Apr. 14 (RNd), and last observed (BH) early on Apr. 16, at which time snow was already falling in the canyon. Full details may be published elsewhere. The only previous U.S. record involves one collected at Bell L., s.e. New Mexico, in Apr., 1962; normally the species ranges north in the Sierra Madre only to s. Sonora and Chihuahua.

ICTERIDS — Arizona noted two Orchard Orioles this season: a first-year male near Winkelman May 21 (ST) and an ad. male on Sonoita Creek May 23 (RS *et al.*). This species is now considered a regular vagrant in the state, but most occur in fall or winter. A family of six Hooded Orioles found May 19 s. of Las Cruces (KJZ) was further evidence of the species' being established in the area.

FRINGILLIDS — A ♂ Pyrrhuloxia was noted Apr. 12 (JPH *et al.*) in Guadalupe Canyon, where the species is rare and irregular. It is a question whether strays there belong to the New Mexico-Chihuahua race *sinuata* or the Arizona-Sonora race *fulvescens*; one individual of the latter has been collected nearby. There were at least ten Rose-breasted Grosbeaks reported in Arizona, slightly more than usual, the northernmost being one at Ganado May 8 (HR) and one near Flagstaff (at 8500 ft. on Hutch Mt.), May 12 (SF).

After going virtually unreported in the Region during the winter. Evening Grosbeaks appeared in April and May at lower elevations between n.c. New Mexico and n.e. Arizona; reports came from the San Juan Valley (APN, WS), Santa Fe area (JPH *et al.*), Alameda (CAH, DL), and Cedar Crest, N. Mex. (J. Sollenberger), as well as a flock of 50 at Ganado, Ariz. (HR). A ♂ Lark Bunting was noted May 15 (APN) at Farmington, where the species is rare.

Late Gray-headed Juncos were singles at Las Cruces May 16 (KJZ, BZ) and in the s.w. San Luis Mts., Sonora May 18 (JPH). The Clay-colored Sparrow's status here is still poorly known: some undoubtedly go undetected among the hordes of other *Spizellas*, yet some records are open to question due to difficulties in identification. Reliable reports this spring were one at Tucson May 3 (DStz, MH, BJ) and one at Willcox May 17 (ST, RS). There appear to be no previous May records for Arizona.

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