

## **SOUTHWEST REGION**

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Isolated mountains, like islands, must be explored individually: one can never predict exactly what birds will be found there, particularly in the nesting season. Sierra Grande (maximum elevation 8732 feet), a solitary eminence on the prairies of northeastern New Mexico, supports small stands of aspen, ponderosa pine and Engelmann spruce — apparently the easternmost stand of the latter. It was first visited by the Biological Survey in August 1903, but had remained virtually unexplored by ornithologists in subsequent years until this summer, when the area was the subject of a week-long visit by personnel of the New Mexico Department of Game and

Fish. Among the summering species found were such montane birds as Pygmy and Red-breasted Nuthatches, while strangely absent were sapsuckers, Steller's Jays, and juncos; other notes from Sierra Grande will be found among the species accounts that follow.



The comparison of mountains to islands has been often made in reference to the disjunct ranges of southeastern Arizona. There mountains rise abruptly from the aridlands, each range with its own distinctive combination of bird species, each range isolated and protected by the surrounding sea of desert. Hastings and Turner (1965, *The Changing Mile*; U. of Ariz. Press, Tucson) point out that, in Arizona, the changes in vegetation brought about by man's influence have occurred mainly at elevations below about 5500 feet, leaving the higher slopes relatively unaltered. The isolation of the high mountain habitats also provides for the stability of their avifaunas. To invade a new range, a bird must (besides competing with species already entrenched there) first cross the intervening deserts. It is perhaps significant that the bird life of these disjunct ranges seems substantially unchanged since the time when ornithologists first visited them — while within the present century, invading from Mexico, close to a dozen species have spread northward through the lowlands around them.

This season's most newsworthy invaders, the Berylline Hummingbirds in the Chiricahuas, were exceptions to this pattern; one wonders just how important the numerous hummingbird-feeders were in the establishing of this beachhead.

An island in another sense is the Springerville region in east-central Arizona. Situated at the northern base of the White Mountains, where conifers give way to high-elevation grassland, this area — with its deciduous trees and moist riparian habitats — has a strangely "Eastern" appearance unique in the Southwest. In this setting are found (as detailed below) Eastern Kingbirds, Gray Catbirds, Veeries and Am. Redstarts; one is not too surprised to learn that Arizona's only nesting Bobolinks were recorded near here in 1937. This "Eastern" element actually represents a duplication of conditions found locally to the north of us, in the northern Great Basin, where all of these birds are regular. As evidenced by old records, these birds have probably been around Springerville for some time; the invasion of a new southern ele-

ment was suggested by this summer's records of Great-tailed Grackle and Summer Tanager.

**LOONS, GREBES** — An odd midsummer sighting was that of a Com: Loon (in winter plumage, as southward summer loons tend to be) in the Gulf of California off Puerto Peñasco, Sonora, July 2-5 (DStj). Two pairs of Eared Grebes raised young at Prescott, establishing the first Arizona breeding records outside the White and San Francisco Mts. regions (CST); the presence of two adults June 23 at Black L. (JPH) could indicate a new breeding area in n.c. New Mexico.

Western Grebes appeared to have had good breeding success (exact statistics not yet available) on L. Havasu, where Arizona's first nesting was documented just three years ago. In n.c. New Mexico, a notable summer concentration was 25 on July 5 (JND, PF) at El Vado L., near the site (Burford L.) where the state's first verified breeding record was obtained last year. The status of the W. Grebe in this Region provides an interesting comparison to states north of us, where the species is thought to be declining.

**CORMORANTS, HERONS, ANATIDS** — Three Olivaceous Cormorants remained through the period (DStz, GM *et al.*) at Patagonia L.; there are few previous summer records for Arizona. Two or three individuals summered (GZ) at Bosque del Apache N.W.R., N. Mex. (hereafter: Bosque), perhaps signalling a further range extension up the Rio Grande Valley.

An ad. Little Blue Heron at Bosque June 18 (JND) was the only one reported; unfortunately, we received no nesting data from Elephant Butte L., which produced the first New Mexico nesting records last summer. An Am. Bittern was present June 23 at Black L. (JPH). The species is known to summer only locally in the state, with few proven breeding areas.

A lone Snow Goose summered at Bosque (GZ); individuals do so occasionally elsewhere, possibly when not completely healthy. Black-bellied Tree Ducks moved into Arizona earlier in the summer than usual, with numbers reported north to Phoenix and east to St. David beginning early in June. A new area for the species was the San Pedro Valley s. of Winkelman, where two were seen July 27 (Lee Jones).

**RAPTORS** — Seven Black Vultures appeared e. of Douglas July 25, far east of the species' normal range in Arizona (Bjo, MH). This flock was only about 15 mi. from New Mexico, in which state the species remains unrecorded (except for a few unlikely sight reports).

The Mississippi Kite, a recent arrival in Arizona, continues to establish itself. In the Phoenix area, where individual vagrants have appeared in each of the last two summers, the first known nesting pair brought off one young on the Verde R., n.e. of town (RG *et al.*); there were also at least seven pairs nesting along the San Pedro R. Optimism about the species' future in the state may be premature, however: all of these nesting areas stand to be adversely affected by the Bureau of Reclamation's proposed Central Arizona Project.

A ♀ Marsh Hawk at El Rito, n.c. N. Mex., July 29-30 (CGS), may have been an early migrant; there were no

reports elsewhere. An Osprey present June 27 - July 14 at Patagonia L., Ariz. (JL, DStz), was evidently the first summer record there.

**GULLS, TERNS** — After last summer's concentration of California Gulls at Heron L., the June 23 discovery of 34 adults and three immatures at another n.c. New Mexico locality, Eagle Nest L. (JPH), signalled a sort of repeat. Are these strictly non-breeders, or should they alert us to a possible extension of nesting range? At Willcox, a second-year California Gull present July 4 (PL.GMcCJD) represented one of few summer records for Arizona. Unusual midsummer records of Franklin's Gulls included six at Heron L., June 23 (JPH), one at Regina, N. Mex., July 4 (JND, PF), and one to eight intermittently at Willcox in late June - early July. The Least Tern is casual in Arizona's interior; an immature was at Willcox June 6 (DStz,RS,SA).

**ANIS THROUGH SWIFTS** — A Groove-billed Ani was photographed near Patagonia, Ariz., June 20 (CH,HB). Belatedly, we have received confirmation that three to four individuals were present in the same area from late June to mid-September, 1975 (RK,GJ,BH). A few anis have strayed almost annually to Arizona over the last decade, marking occurrences in every month of the year; the concentration of summer records at Patagonia suggests that nesting would be an eventual possibility there.

An injured Spotted Owl (specimen preserved) found June 6 at Mountainair, N. Mex. (Joan Bass), represents an unusual record in pinyon-juniper woodland. Fresh feathers of a Saw-whet Owl, found in July under a raptor's feeding perch (JPH), provided the first evidence of the species' presence in the Animas Mts. Whip-poor-ills were found in two areas where not reported previously: Bill Williams Mt., n.c. Ariz. (CST), and along Carrizo Creek, e.c. Ariz. (ST).

The most exciting news of the season involved the reappearance of Guadalupe Canyon's phantom population of **Buff-collared Nightjars**. Rumors of the birds' continued presence had persisted over the last 15 years, but there had been no documented records since 1958-1960, when the few U.S. specimens were taken. This season an individual was tape-recorded in the lower (Arizona) half of the Canyon on July 1-2 (WB; identity of recordings confirmed by Dale Zimmerman).

Chimney Swifts summered in Tucson (DStz, m.ob.), with two to three still present at the end of June and one seen as late as Aug. 11; so far as known, the birds did not nest.

**HUMMINGBIRDS** — The only northern peripheral report of Blue-throated Hummingbird was of a male at Molino Basin, Santa Catalina Mts., July 30 (AA). There were several northward records of Rivoli's Hummingbird, including in New Mexico singles in the Jemez Mts. June 1 (MS) and in the Sandia Mts. June 23 (DDeL); in Arizona four were at various feeders in the Flagstaff region (*vide* JHi), and one appeared in the Mazatzals n. of Phoenix Aug. 2 (ST). All of these except one near Flagstaff were  $\emptyset$ -plumaged; the early June occurrences, at least, would seem too early for immatures.

S.A.

In several Southwestern hummers the ad. males, free of any responsibility in the raising of young, may tend to occur at different times and places than the mass of females and immatures. This June, ST noted a clear altitudinal division in Black-chinned Hummingbirds along Carrizo Creek, with all the ad. males at higher elevations than the  $\emptyset$ -plumaged birds. In Costa's Hummingbird, the ad. males begin to depart from the low Arizona deserts by the first of May. It has been thought that these birds moved westward to coastal areas at that time; the possibility that some take a startling alternative was suggested when one was mist-netted at 8000 ft. in the Santa Catalina Mts., July 9 (D. Lamm, J. Luepke). To our knowledge this is by far the highest elevation at which the species has been found in Arizona.

The big news came from the border ranges. **White-eared Hummingbirds** have in recent decades been sporadic and elusive in Arizona; birders who have searched unsuccessfully there will be interested to note that the birds were in *New Mexico* this summer. A female and three males were found (\* to Smithsonian) July 13 and another heard July 14 in the Animas Mts. (JPH). This represents the largest number found together within the U.S. in recent years; it also establishes the first verified record for New Mexico! (There is one previous sight record in the Animas, June 1973.) The only White-eared in Arizona this summer was one in the Chiricahuas June 28 - July 2 (SP).

The **Berylline Hummingbird**, unknown within our borders prior to 1967, made its fourth summer appearance in Arizona — this time at the Southwestern Research Station in the Chiricahuas, where first noted June 20 (EAC,SC,WvB). By early July a pair was clearly present, and premature excitement arose when the female was seen examining a completed nest (apparently not its own?). The actual nest was discovered July 13 (ST,SRD,HL), at which time the female was incubating; as of Aug. 2 the nest contained two young (SP) which may never have fledged. Details will probably be published elsewhere. Continued appearances in the border ranges seem probable, and further expansion northward is not unlikely; the Berylline (of the large and successful genus *Amazilia*) is abundant in parts of w. Mexico, occurring there over a notably wide range of elevations.

**WOODPECKERS** — Possibly foreshadowing an extension of breeding range, a ♀ Williamson's Sapsucker was seen at Rustler Park, Chiricahuas, June 25 (EAC,SC) & July 13 (ST,SRD,HL). Although Williamson's are common in the Chiricahuas in winter, there are few summer records and no breeding records for s. Arizona. The Yellow-bellied Sapsucker in Arizona nests only locally outside the White Mts. region; a new locality is the Bradshaw Mts. s. of Prescott, where young were fledged dur-

ing the 1975 and 1976 nesting seasons (CST). A ♀ N. Three-toed Woodpecker was found June 23 in the Sacramento Mts., N. Mex. (MW), a rare sighting at the southernmost point in the species' range.

**FLYCATCHERS** — Westward reports of E. Kingbirds included one on June 1 (apparently a late migrant) at Socorro (PB) and a pair at San Ysidro, n.c. N. Mex., July 3 (JND,PF). The two individuals found near Springerville in July (BH *et al.*) were at separate locations; Arizona still lacks a breeding record. The Thick-billed Kingbird, a very recent invader (first U.S. records 1958), continues to expand its range. A pair was at a new location, Harshaw Creek, s.e. of Patagonia (ST,RG); lone pioneers in what would seem to be suitable breeding habitat were at Dog Spring, s.w. N. Mex., July 15 (JPH) and near Nogales in July (ST,RG).

Single Scissor-tailed Flycatchers — which, as we have noted, may occur in Arizona at any time during the warmer months — were found June 14 near Mammoth (GM) and July 26 w. of Elgin (DStz). North and east of its normal range was a Sulphur-bellied Flycatcher on the Gila R. near Cliff, N. Mex., July 7 (ST).

In New Mexico the Black Phoebe ranges northward only in small numbers; this summer the species nested at Alameda (CAH,DL) and two individuals were noted farther north at Canyon July 3 (JND,PF). Dusky Flycatchers are local as breeders in the mountains of the Region, so notable was the presence of at least 15 on Sierra Grande June 28-July 3 (JPH). A singing Willow Flycatcher near Phoenix July 1 (KK,JW) was one of the few recent summer records for c. Arizona.

An *Empidonax* answering the description of a worn-plumaged Buff-breasted Flycatcher was seen July 10 in the Animas Mts. (CGS); another tentative report, not previously noted here, came from the Mogollon Mts. in August 1975 (WB). These represent the first likely reports in New Mexico since 1926. Observers should be on the alert for the species (but identify it with caution!) in the s.w. section of the state; it could reoccupy parts of its former range in New Mexico, as it has recently in Arizona.

Single W. Flycatchers at Phoenix June 9 (ST) and at Patagonia June 29 (KK) were calling, thus revealing themselves to be of the Pacific coastal form (*E.d.difficilis*), not of the race (*E.d.hellmayri*) that nests in the Arizona mountains. (Birders familiar with both forms may easily distinguish them by call: that of the coastal birds is a single ascending note, while that of the Rocky Mt. and Southwestern breeders is distinctly two-syllabled.)

**SWALLOWS, CORVIDS** — Barn Swallows are rather local as breeders in s.w. New Mexico, so a nest found in early June (JPH) at Cloverdale — the southernmost for the state — was noteworthy. Two nests of Cliff Swallows were found at Bosque June 9 (GZ), the first breeding record for the refuge.

A Blue Jay at Bosque June 22-23 (GZ) was unusual; away from the colony at Portales, there have been few summer records in New Mexico. The nesting of a pair of Black-billed Magpies at Tesuque, north of Santa Fe, was a local first (WI).

**WRENS THROUGH THRUSHES** — New Mexico's first verified breeding record for **Long-billed Marsh Wren** came from Kirtland, in the extreme northwest, where a nest with five eggs was photographed June 12 (CGS). An individual of this species at Lake Roberts, s.w. N. Mex., June 3 (O. Van Buskirk) was exceptional.

Two Brown Thrashers were at Bitter Lake N.W.R., N. Mex., June 10-24 (D.L.Boggs). Generally this species is scarce as a migrant in e. New Mexico; there are only a couple of previous summer records for the state. Gray Catbirds were locally common near Springerville again.

A summer Rufous-backed Robin sighting by a reliable observer (DStz) came from Sonoita Creek, near Patagonia, Ariz., June 27. While it is not unreasonable that individuals from the winter influx might occasionally remain into summer, there are some doubts about the two or three previous midsummer reports.

At least five Hermit Thrushes were present on Sierra Grande June 28-July 3 (JPH); while not unexpected, this is a new summering area for New Mexico. Swainson's Thrushes, uncommon and local as breeders in the Region, were again present in the Jemez Mts. e. of Cuba, N. Mex., with two seen July 4 (JND,PF). Arizona's **Veery** population — rediscovered last summer, after a 39-year hiatus — returned to the White Mountains-Springerville region, with two pairs present at least June 12-Aug. 2 (DStz,SA,m.ob). A significant extension of the E. Bluebird's Arizona range was established by the discovery of two nesting pairs in the Santa Catalina Mts. in June and a pair with three fledglings e. of the Rincon Mts., July 8 (DD,GM).

**SYLVIIDS, PHAINOPEPLAS** — A pair of Blue-gray Gnatcatchers nested on Sonoita Creek near Patagonia (BH, RS), a surprisingly low elevation, for the first local record. The news was somewhat disconcerting: it had been theorized previously that gnatcatchers there in summer would most likely be Black-capped. Meanwhile a few sight reports of Black-capped Gnatcatchers have continued to trickle in from Sonoita Creek over the last three years. Some of these are probably correct; but unlike the other Sonoita Creek specialties, this species has managed to avoid being staked out, and numerous intensive searches for it have failed.

Ruby-crowned Kinglets are rather local as summer residents in the mountains of New Mexico. A new area for the species was Sierra Grande, where at least four were seen June 28 - July 3 (JPH); several were also seen in the Jemez Mts., July 4 (JND, PF). Phainopeplas, notably erratic in their seasonal movements, moved into the pinyon-juniper woodlands around Flagstaff in much higher than usual numbers this year (RPB).

**VIREOS AND WARBLERS** — Perhaps the oddest find on Sierra Grande was an apparent *hybrid warbler*, with a Yellow-rumped for one parent, collected (\* to Smithsonian) June 29 (JPH). Superficially the bird resembled a Cape May at a distance (and what would it have looked like in fall plumage?! Misidentifications, anyone?).

A **Kentucky Warbler** at Yuma June 20 (KS) was about the ninth for Arizona, and first ever for the w. section of the state. All but one of the previous occurrences involved May records in the southeast; this would seem a



plausible extension of the same pattern. Similarly an imm. ♂ **Hooded Warbler** present July 27-28 (JPH) at Pleasanton, s.w. N. Mex., correlated well with the pattern for this species in Arizona, which we described last year (*Am. Birds* 29:1018). Totally unexpected, however, were a singing ♂ **Bay-breasted Warbler** near Flagstaff, Ariz., in June (*vide* RPB) and a **Yellow-throated Warbler** at Tesuque, N. Mex., June 5 (WI).

Red-eyed Vireo, Black-and-white Warbler and N. Parula — all regular spring and fall vagrants in Arizona — are seldom recorded in summer. One of each was in Cave Creek Canyon in the Chiricahuas the first week in July (DStz, VR, PN *et al.*). Another Red-eyed Vireo was on the Colorado River s. of Blythe, Cal., June 23 (Doug Wells, KVR); other individual Black-and-whites were at Nutrioso in the White Mts., June 29 - July 6 (BJo) and near Prescott July 3 (CST); and another Parula was on the San Pedro R., s.e. Ariz., June 14 (ST, RG).

Data was received concerning northward expansion of the Arizona breeding range of two species: Hutton's Vireos were found nesting in three areas near Prescott (L. Morris, CST), and Olive Warblers nested (one pair) on Hutch Mt., s.e. of Flagstaff, both this summer and in 1975 (SF). It was learned that Orange-crowned, MacGillivray's and Red-faced Warblers have been breeding in the new localities of Hutch Mt. (SF) and Bill Williams Mt. (CST) since at least 1975.

Although Wilson's Warbler was found nesting in the Sangre de Cristo range of n.c. New Mexico as long ago as 1903, in recent years its status in the state has been uncertain; the observation of ten near Red R., June 22-23 (JPH) implies a healthy breeding population in the area. In Arizona the species has never been known to nest, or even suspected of doing so, but this summer three singing males were found June 12 (DStz, SA) and another June 16 (GM) in the White Mts., a locality already famous as an isolated outpost for nesting birds. It is possible, of course, that these birds were simply very late migrants; one such straggler was found at Patagonia on the exceptional date of June 27 (SA).

The Region's first breeding pair of **American Redstarts** was found feeding young in a nest July 14 (BJo, MH, GG) on the Little Colorado R. near Springerville, reaffirming the unique qualities of that area — and bearing out the prescience of Phillips, Marshall, and Monson, who (in *Birds of Arizona*, 1964) linked the redstart to this area on the strength of what seemed, at the time, to be thin evidence. The Region is not lacking in summer records of nonbreeding Am. Redstarts elsewhere, and in fact this summer produced more than usual, including an ad. male at Socorro June 9 (PB), another near Prescott June 12-13 (CST), a female in Cave Creek Canyon, Chiricahuas, June 25 - July 4 (EAC, SC *et al.*), a female and imm. male near Patagonia June 29 (KK, JW), and an ad. male at Pleasanton, N. Mex., July 27 (JPH).

**ICTERIDS, TANAGERS** — Bronzed Cowbirds continue to spread northward in Arizona. About six were found along the San Francisco R. near Clifton, and several were observed near Carrizo (ST); two appeared in the Prescott area in June (V. Miller, CST). This cowbird's prime host, the Hooded Oriole, is well established in all these areas, though it seems to have invaded the latter

two within this century. An ad. male Orchard Oriole west of its normal range at San Simon Cienega, extreme s.w. N. Mex., June 18 (Brian Locke) was perhaps the second summer record there.

The presence of Yellow-headed Blackbirds in summer does not necessarily indicate local breeding; there were many such reports this season. One definite new locality was the Chino Valley n. of Prescott, where nestlings were being fed in June and July (CST). A pair of Great-tailed Grackles seen June 17 (GM) marked the first record for the Springerville region and a new n.e. limit for Arizona.

Out-of-range and unseasonal, a ♂ Scarlet Tanager was at Roswell June 19 (MW). The discovery of at least six Hepatic Tanagers at Sierra Grande, a new n.e. limit (JPH), extended the species' summer range practically to the Colorado state line. A pair of Summer Tanagers was reported July 14 s.w. of Springerville (BJo, MH, GG). This is not only somewhat north of the normal range but also about 3000 ft. higher than known Arizona breeding sites; the species can hardly be more than casual there.

**FRINGILLIDS** — Observation of four Cardinals s. of Animas, N. Mex., June 7-9 (JPH) suggests a population now being there, apparently established only recently in that area. Ten Pyrrhuloxias were seen in mid-July at Dog Spring, extreme s.w. N. Mex., an area the species did not inhabit historically; a nest with eggs found there July 15 (JPH) may well represent the first breeding record in the state w. of the Rio Grande Valley.

#### S.A.

No fewer than 38 Indigo Buntings were reported in Arizona between late May and early August (ST, BJo, m.ob.). Perhaps most notable among these were at least five singing males along the Colorado R. north of Parker, Ariz., in June and July (KVR *et al.*); there appear to be no previous summer records for the Lower Colorado Valley. The Indigo has been gradually invading c. Arizona for the last 40 years, its progress no doubt eased by the scarcity in that region of the Lazuli Bunting, which could offer it competition. One area where both species nested this summer was Granite Creek, near Prescott (CST). Despite dire predictions in the past, Indigos apparently are not being absorbed by hybridization into the Lazuli population there; isolating mechanisms seem to be holding up, maintaining the two forms as separate species. Birders interested in the vagaries of "splitting" and "lumping" should consult a recent paper (Emlen, Rising, and Thompson, 1975. *Wilson Bull.* 87:145-179) for assurance that these two buntings will likely remain "split."

A ♂ Painted Bunting at Sycamore Well, extreme s.w. N. Mex., July 7 (BJH), was an interesting straggler west of its limited breeding range in the state. Evening Grosbeak reports were scattered. Two appeared briefly on Bill Williams Mt., June 16 (CST); two were seen on Sierra Grande July 2 (JPH); several were along Carrizo Creek June 2 (ST), and the species was locally abundant on the North Rim, Grand Canyon N.P., in late July (VC, RB).

At least six pairs of Cassin's Finches nested on the N.A.U. campus in Flagstaff (RPB), establishing the first definite breeding records in Arizona s. of the North Rim. Two pairs of Brown-capped Rosy Finches observed on Truchas Peak, N. Mex., July 3 (K. Giezentanner) were notable. Summer records in the state are few, and there are no past breeding records (but see next seasonal issue!). Several pairs of Pine Siskins nested near Prescott (CST), a new locality. Two Am. Goldfinches were noted July 5 (JND, PF) at Los Ojos, n.c. N. Mex., an area where the species has been found in summer before; so far there are no nesting records for the state.

Up to nine Red Crossbills were seen on Sierra Grande June 30 - July 1, while three in the lowlands at Pleasanton, N. Mex., July 27 (JPH) were unusual. With increased coverage, Green-tailed Towhees are proving to be widespread as breeders in the mountains of n. Arizona. Nesting was reported this summer in the new localities of Hutch Mt. (SF) and Bill Williams Mt. (CST). A very late migrant of this species was on Sonoita Creek June 12 (DD).

The Savannah Sparrow is another Fringillid which occurs sparsely in summer in New Mexico but still has not been proven to breed there; three were noted at Eagle Nest June 23 (JPH), indicating that would be a likely area in which to search for nests. Cassin's Sparrows were found in two peripheral areas where last reported in 1973: e. of Globe (20 in late July, BJa) and n. of Prescott (two flight-singing July 11, CST).

Finally — in a class by itself, and defying easy explanation, was a singing ad. Harris' Sparrow at Correo, N. Mex., June 14 (JND, PF).

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