

LOONS THROUGH CORMORANTS — Two Arctic Loons on L. Havasu throughout the period (KVR *et al.*) and one at Davis Dam Feb. 18-20 (KVR, VM) were the first to be recorded in late winter in Arizona.

Although Red-necked Grebe is still unverified in New Mexico, there have been a few sightings in the lower Pecos Valley. Adding to these was one reported, with fairly good details, at Harroun L., near Loving Dec. 30 (LW, RWI). A Least Grebe was at Quitobaquito Pond, Organ Pipe Cactus N. M., Ariz., from December at least into March; this bird may have been present there continuously since October 1976.

A late Brown Pelican was near Martinez L., on the L.C.R., Dec. 17 (DW, AEH), and an adult was seen on the Gila R., s. of Cliff, N. Mex., Dec. 13 (AG); the species is still on the hypothetical list in New Mexico. Few Olivaceous Cormorants are reported in New Mexico in winter, so one well-described from Caballo L., Feb. 4 (KZ), was noteworthy. Another Olivaceous seen with 150 Double-crests Jan. 27 at Cibola L., L.C.R., was the first ever recorded in w. Arizona (†HA).

WATERFOWL — New Mexico had more than the usual number of Whistling Swans, including singles near Farmington Jan. 12 (CS) and n. of Albuquerque Dec. 23-27 (J. Phillips), plus one or two near Alamogordo Jan. 15 – Feb. 5. (LM *et al.*). In Arizona's L.C.V., six were at Parker in late December with two remaining to mid-February, and three wintered at Topock.

Ross' Geese away from areas of regular occurrence were singles at Palominas, Ariz., Nov. 27 – Jan. 3 (RNd, MK *et al.*) and one n. of Clayton, N. Mex., Dec. 29 – Jan. 6 (W. Cook, A. Krehbiel). Although Greater Scaup are quite rare over most of the Region, they may be regular in the L.C.V.: four were seen below Davis Dam Feb. 18 (KVR), and 14-17 were below Parker Dam all winter. The highest count of Barrow's Goldeneyes this winter at their "traditional" locality, Davis Dam, was 37 on Jan. 26 (KVR, JDB). More surprising — unprecedented, in fact — was a scattering of Barrow's farther down the Colorado R., with at least four below Parker Dam all winter (m.ob.), one at Parker Dec. 23 (GMcC, JD), two below Parker in February, and probable females at Cibola Feb. 14 (TB) and 10 mi s. of Blythe, Calif., Feb. 21 (DW, JDB).

One of the most amazing records of the period was of a ♂ Harlequin Duck present from mid-December – Jan. 5 or 6 at Bitter Lake N.W.R., N. Mex. (DLB *et al.*, ph.). There was only one previous state record, November 1945, near Tres Piedras in the extreme north.

A perplexing duck seen on the L.C.R., below Parker Dam Dec. 8-13 (†AEH *et al.*) may have been either a Masked Duck — well outside the species' normal plumage and normal range — or perhaps some very unusual hybrid.

RAPTORS, CRANES — The Red-shouldered Hawk in the B.W. Delta (see last report) was observed by many through late January, but not subsequently. However, another individual — an adult — was seen near Yuma Mar. 11 (KVR, TB, JDB), for the third Arizona record. Two ad. Harris' Hawks were seen near

SOUTHWEST REGION

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The unusually warm temperatures of late fall continued through December over most of the Region, and throughout the winter in some areas. Several bird species appeared to respond to the mild conditions by wintering (or attempting to winter) farther north, or at higher elevations, than usual. For instance, most of the late-lingering shorebirds at Willcox, Arizona, mentioned in our last report, continued there until spring. Some other examples are discussed in the species accounts that follow.



Hatch, N. Mex., Jan. 26 (S. Crowe); the species is rare in the Rio Grande Valley.

As of mid-December six Whooping Cranes from the transplant experiment were known to be present in the Rio Grande Valley of New Mexico: five near Socorro and one near Hatch. The latter was apparently the same individual that was present November – Dec. 5 near Las Vegas (*fide* J. Woody). Northward migration began as expected, in February; three were seen in flight n. of Albuquerque Feb. 26 (J.N. Durrie *et al.*).

SHOREBIRDS, GULLS — A single Mountain Plover was photographed in a field e. of Rt. 666, s.e. Arizona Jan. 7 (DK,ALG). We had no previous mid-winter records for the southeast, and very few records there at any season in recent years; specimens collected there in late February, 1915, could have been early spring migrants. Two late Marbled Godwits were on L. Havasu Nov. 20 and one stayed until at least Dec. 8 (KK,ML,AEH *et al.*).

For the third consecutive winter, a Heermann's Gull was recorded in Nogales — this year Jan. 11 (CM).



Mountain Plover, s.e. Ariz., Jan. 7, 1978. Photo/ DK

OWLS, HUMMINGBIRDS, KINGFISHERS — A flight of Saw-whet Owls reached the South Rim of the Grand Canyon, where the species had been practically unrecorded previously; beginning in mid-October, six were found dead on the roads (*fide* Bryan Brown), and three birds were called up as late as Jan. 14 (KK,EC). This flight may have been more widespread, as suggested by the record of one found dead at Puerto Peñasco Nov. 12 — possibly the first record for Sonora.

One of the Rivoli's Hummingbirds present in November in the Sandia Mts., N. Mex., was present at least until Jan. 28 (RLT). In Arizona, one Rivoli's wintered at feeders in Madera Canyon (R. Newcomer) and two at feeders at Portal (SSpf). The latter locality also had two Blue-throated Hummingbirds throughout the winter. Although it is likely that none of these birds would have survived without the aid of feeders, their presence may still have reflected the mildness of the season.

A Green Kingfisher remained from Oct. 15 at least into March near Nogales (CM, m.ob.); this is apparently within the area of normal dispersal for the population in n. Sonora.

FLYCATCHERS, SWALLOWS — A Thick-billed Kingbird was found Dec. 2 at Parker (PM,AEH; *A.S.U.). There is one previous winter record from the L.C.V. (AB 27:648). These records could reflect dispersal from well to the south in w. Mexico, rather than simple W straying from the s. Arizona breeding population. Ten individual E. Phoebes recorded in scattered localities in s. Arizona and in the L.C.V., late October–March, were probably not unusual considering the increased amount of coverage. One or two Coues' Flycatchers are generally found in Arizona every winter, but this season there were *four*: one in Tucson all winter (KK, m.ob.); another near Tucson Dec. 11 (DSz), one at Cibola N.W.R., Dec. 15 (†PM), and one in Phoenix Feb. 7 (SRD,HL).

Cave Swallows reportedly returned to Carlsbad Caverns N. P., Feb. 27 (RWI), the earliest date we have on record. A Bank Swallow was noted at Parker Dec. 23 (JD,†GMcC) and another or the same was seen Mar. 1 (KVR), too early for a normal migrant, in the same area; the species is very rare in Arizona in winter.

CORVIDS, PARIDS — Large numbers of Com. Crows again moved into the L.C.V., echoing last winter's unprecedented invasion. At Cibola N.W.R., a flock built up to 250 birds by Nov. 22 (TB,DC,JFD) and up to 500 there in midwinter (GC), and other individuals and small flocks were seen elsewhere along the L.C.V. during the season (AEH,KVR). This species is rarely reported in extreme n.e. New Mexico, but it was heard on the Dry Cimarron R., n. of Clayton Dec. 9 (JPH).

A Mountain Chickadee appeared at Cibola N.W.R., Ariz., Sept. 26 and was seen again Oct. 18 (JDB), with two there Dec. 8 & 13 (PM). There were no records for the L.C.V., prior to last winter, when one spent the season in the B.W. Delta. Another Parid formerly thought rare in the L.C.V., is the Com. Bushtit: this season four were at Poston, Ariz., Dec. 9 (DW), two were at Parker Dec. 23, and four were in the B.W. Delta Dec. 24 (KVR *et al.*).

WRENS, THRASHERS, THRUSHES — At least four Winter Wrens were found at Prescott — an unusually high number for that area (CST).

Single Brown Thrashers were at Nogales Dec. 5 to at least Jan. 5 (BH, m.ob.), Organ Pipe Cactus N. M., Dec. 18 (KK, R. Burgoon), and Flagstaff Jan. 15 (†KK,EC); the latter may represent the first midwinter record for n. Arizona.

This winter's widespread Varied Thrush invasion reached our Region mainly in c. and w. Arizona. At least two of the birds in the B.W. Delta were still present in February, and the scattered locations of sightings there during the season suggested that the total number present was considerably higher than the five reported in November (see autumn report). Elsewhere singles were at Prescott Dec. 20–21 (†V. Miller, CST), Parker Dec. 23 (†KK,EC), Phoenix Dec. 26 (†AEH), L. Havasu City Jan. 12 (GR,DSz), and Topock Jan. 26–28 (PM,KVR). These add up to Arizona's largest recorded invasion, although greatly increased coverage especially in the L.C.V., undoubtedly contributed to the high total. Hermit Thrushes were noticeably common in s. Arizona and in the L.C.V., with numbers

running from 3-5 times higher than usual, from the pine-oak areas down into the desert.

PIPITS, SHRIKES — Exciting news was the discovery of four to five (or more) Sprague's Pipits in agricultural fields near Parker Dec. 23 – January (†KVR,ML,HA); the species had been virtually unknown in the L.C.V. before this winter. Three were found Feb. 4 at Rodeo, N. Mex., where the species is rarely reported (JPH).

Numbers of N. Shrikes in New Mexico during the fall and winter surpassed those which occurred in last year's record invasion, with 30-40 reported December–February. In Arizona, one at Continental Jan. 28 (MN,AB,RM) was farther s. than usual.

WARBLERS — Observer activity in several parts of the Region has reached the level where we can discern correlations between temperatures and bird occurrences. The winter warblers perhaps demonstrate the most noticeable response; in this unusually warm season, the numbers of wintering individuals and the late occurrences of some half-hardy species were remarkable.

Orange-crowned Warblers lingered in New Mexico where normally absent in winter, with one photographed at Hobbs Dec. 27 (J. Shipman) and three seen in the Carlsbad area Dec. 28-30 (RWI,LW). This species was also unusually numerous around Phoenix; it was widespread in the Tucson area, although the CBC total there was reduced by the scarcity of vegetation along the flood-scoured Santa Cruz R. (*vide* DSz). Townsend's Warblers were found at higher elevations than usual in Arizona, with one in the Mazatzal Mts., Dec. 3 (RNt), one at Portal Dec. 31 (F. Scheider), numbers in the Huachuca Mts., during December, and one at Bisbee Jan. 14 (DD), and two in Madera Canyon Feb. 11 (DSz). Audubon's Warblers were unusually common around Tucson; a fair handful of Wilson's Warblers wintered in the L.C.V. and at Phoenix; and all three areas reported good numbers of Black-throated Gray Warblers. Four Painted Redstarts remained in Arizona, with one wintering in Madera Canyon, two wintering at Portal (SSpf), and one seen Jan. 2 in the Atascosa Highlands (SM).

A Lucy's Warbler at Phoenix Dec. 3 (DSj) was very late for this species. Single Yellow Warblers occasionally linger through December in Arizona, particularly in the L.C.V., but the *four* found Jan. 12 at L. Havasu City (GR,DSz) were most unexpected; this is our first January record. Late Hermit Warblers were one at Phoenix Dec. 6 (SRD,HL) and two s.w. of Phoenix Dec. 10 (GR).

Typical December vagrants (or late low-density migrants) included a Chestnut-sided Warbler at Phoenix Dec. 26-27 (†GR *et al.*) and an Ovenbird — Arizona's 14th for 1977 — at Parker Dec. 23 (†BE,AG). American Redstarts made a good showing with three at Phoenix and five in the L.C.V., early December – mid-January. Myrtle Warblers were unusually numerous at Tucson, where singles could be found with practically every flock of Audubon's, and in the L.C.V., where at least 20 were present through the winter.

Genuine vagrants, with no previous January records in Arizona, were a **Black-throated Green Warbler** in Sycamore Canyon, Atascosa Mts., Jan. 2 (GR,†KK,DSz), a ♀ **Black-throated Blue Warbler** at Indian Gardens, Grand Canyon Jan. 11 (†W.H. Buskirk), and a **Magnolia Warbler** in the B.W. Delta Dec. 24 – Jan. 23 (†GR, m.ob.; ph. KVR).



Magnolia Warbler, B.W. Delta, Dec. 24, 1977 – Jan. 23, 1978. Photo/ Ken V. Rosenberg.

ICTERIDS, TANAGERS — Two ♂ Yellow-headed Blackbirds at Kirtland, extreme n.w. N. Mex., Feb. 13 (CS) were probably unusually early spring migrants rather than wintering birds. An ad. ♂ Scott's Oriole spent the period near Silver City (M. O'Byrne, *vide* RAF); this is likely the same individual that has wintered there for the last three years. The only Rusty Blackbird reported in Arizona this winter was a male expertly identified near Nogales Jan. 10 (†HA); it should be noted that this bird, like the Rusty near Willcox last winter, was associating with other blackbirds — in this case, Brewer's and Yellow-headed.

A ♂ Summer Tanager wintered in the B.W. Delta, being seen Dec. 24 – Feb. 24 (†DSj *et al.*). Subspecies could not be determined, but past winter specimens from Arizona (and from the West generally) have been of the e. race, *P. r. rubra*.

FRINGILLIDS — Space limitations preclude detailed discussion of the invasiory species, but their status in Arizona this season may be summarized thus: Cassin's Finches and Red Crossbills were scarce; Pine Siskins were common to abundant in many lowland and middle-elevation areas; Am. Goldfinches were widespread in typically small flocks; Lawrence's Goldfinches staged a fair invasion, with numbers occurring farther n. than usual, perhaps reflecting the mildness of the season.

A ♀ Rose-breasted Grosbeak was at B.W. Delta Dec. 8 (AEH) and another was at Portal Feb. 17-23 (ph. SSpf); this grosbeak seems about as likely here in winter as the Black-headed. The only Purple Finches of the season were one in the B.W. Delta Dec. 24 (KK), one at Parker Jan. 28 (DSz), and two at Prescott Feb. 5 (CST). Most unusual was a Grasshopper Sparrow near Parker Dec. 23 – Feb. 6 (DW,ML,†KVR); the species is extremely rare in the L.C.V. A Gray-headed Junco of the race

dorsalis was found in Madera Canyon, Santa Rita Mts., Ariz., Feb. 11 (DSz,SH). This race tends to be quite sedentary on its breeding grounds in the n. and c. parts of the Region, and it is rarely detected in s.e. Arizona. About 25 Brown-capped Rosy Finches were noted Dec. 23 at Miller Mesa, e.n.e. of Farmington (CGS); the species is infrequently reported in n.w. New Mexico.

Lark Buntings were present in good numbers in parts of s.e. Arizona this winter, and flocks were recorded w. to the Colorado R., in December (e.g., 74 on the Parker CBC), although numbers in the latter area dropped off in January; normally the species is rare or absent in the L.C.V. Several hundred also wintered in the Prescott region, where the species is normally present only in very mild seasons such as this one. KK points out, incidentally, that the request (AB 31: 1095) for "monitoring" of Lark Bunting populations by western bird-watchers is unrealistic. Local populations of this species, both wintering and breeding, fluctuate so drastically from year to year that no ordinary fieldwork can hope to detect overall population trends except perhaps over very long periods; even the decline claimed by the Breeding Bird Survey may be partly an artifact of observation.

Cassin's Sparrow was "the bird of the winter" in s. Arizona, according to Stotz, and records much too numerous to list support the contention that the species was more common than usual; the CBC results (*q.v.*) will provide added evidence. The reason for this abundance was thought to be the lush condition of the grasslands following the October rains, possibly combined with the mildness of the season. Apparently this plentitude extended to s.w. New Mexico, where the species is rarely reported in winter — three were found (one *) at San Simon Cienega Feb. 5 (JPH).

S.A.

For years now, Bill Harrison has sought wintering Five-striped Sparrows on Sonoita Cr., Ariz. This year he found one Dec. 11, for the first U.S. winter record. Of particular interest was the fact that this bird was unbanded — all individuals known to have been present in the area last summer were banded (*vide* SM). Another individual, banded, was seen in the same area Dec. 18 (†SM *et al.*); and in the Atascosa Mts., Jan. 2, one bird was seen in Holden Canyon (DB) and one in Sycamore Canyon (KK). The question now is whether the Five-striped always winter in small numbers or whether they, like the excess Cassin's, were responding to this season's unusually favorable conditions.

The status this season of the low-density wintering sparrows in Arizona could be summarized thus: White-throats were in about normal numbers, thus well below last year's level. Harris' Sparrows were about normal, with seven reported statewide — a new locality was Duncan, Ariz., where one was seen Jan. 18 (†TJ). Golden-crowneds were in usual small numbers over most of the state, but unusually

common in the L.C.V., with at least 15 noted during the period; two also wintered at Prescott, where unusual (CST). Last winter's prevalence of Swamp Sparrows in the L.C.V. was repeated, with the species "fairly common" (KVR) after Nov. 15, and 18 reported on the Valley CBCs. Fox Sparrows were normal over most of Arizona, but "invaded" the Prescott region, with 10-15 located during the winter (CST).

In the past, any longspur in the L.C.V. has been considered a rarity, but this winter three species occurred there. Chestnut-collareds formerly known as rare fall strays on the L.C.R., were first noted Dec. 23, and in January flocks of up to 25 were found in several places between Parker and Ehrenberg (KVR *et al.*). At least five (up to eight — one * A.S.U.) Lapland Longspurs wintered in a field s. of Parker (KVR, m.ob.); there were only three previous records (of singles) for the L.C.V. And two McCown's Longspurs found Dec. 24 in the B.W. Delta (†DSz) provided the first record for the L.C.V.

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