

SOUTHWEST REGION

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The word that came to mind to describe this autumn in the Southwest was "phenomenal" — if the term could be understood to mean "producing phenomena." Things *happened* this fall, or, in some cases, conspicuously *failed* to happen, and a number of patterns could be discerned against the background "noise" of rarity reports.



Despite several trips to Lake Havasu on the Lower Colorado River (the site of last year's Triple Crown of jaeger species), *no* jaegers were seen there this year — which is not to say that they did not occur. Two jaegers were seen, however, in southeastern New Mexico. The traditionally-good shorebird areas at Willcox, Phoenix and Tucson were in poor to nonexistent condition, and the paucity of rare shorebird reports herein is undoubtedly a direct result of this. Prescott, by contrast, had good shorebird flats for once.

Southward and downslope movements by a great variety of corvids, titmice and nuthatches added up to the largest fall flight in six years for these families. However, in contrast to the last big flight in 1972, the "winter finches" did not take part in the general incursion; such species as siskins, crossbills and Cassin's Finches were conspicuously scarce over most of southern Arizona, and Lawrence's Goldfinches were almost mythical.

THE NORTHEAST — A remarkable series of records was obtained in northeastern Arizona this fall. Their implications are perhaps more significant than the records themselves.

Much of northeastern Arizona is arid and treeless, but there are scattered "oases" of trees at towns, washes and springs. Past visits to such points as Teec Nos Pos (extreme north-eastern corner) had produced interesting bird records. However, there were no precedents for the trip made by ST and GHR, who went from Springerville north to Teec Nos Pos and then west to Pipe Springs, finding and check-ing as many oases as possible in the period Sept. 1-4. So startling were their results that the route was duplicated Oct. 5-8 by KK, GHR, ST and JW; some of the areas were again visited Oct. 21-

22 by GHR, EC, and KK. Among the more notable birds seen:

Wood Thrush (6th Arizona record) at Sanders Oct. 6 (ph.); **five Red-eyed Vireos** (about 9th & 11th Arizona records) at Kayenta Sept. 3 (†) and Richville Oct. 5 (†); **Tennessee Warbler** at Eager Oct. 22 (†); **Magnolia Warbler** (about 10th Arizona record) near Springerville Oct. 22 (†); single **Black-throated Blue Warblers** at Sanders Sept. 2 (ph), Ganado Lake Oct. 6, and Kayenta Oct. 7; single **Black-throated Greens** at Teec Nos Pos Sept. 3 and Ganado Lake Oct. 21 (†); single **Blackburnian Warblers** (6th & 7th Arizona records) near Springerville Oct. 5 (ph.) and Ganado Lake Oct. 6 (†); **Bay-breasted Warbler** (8th Arizona record) at Ganado Lake Oct. 6 (ph.); single **Ovenbirds** at Teec Nos Pos Oct. 7 and near Springerville Oct. 22; **seven N. Waterthrushes** Sept. 1-4; **Kentucky Warbler** (about 12th Arizona record, 2nd for fall) near Springerville Sept. 1; ♂ **"Baltimore" Oriole** at Lee's Ferry Sept. 4 (ph.); single **Rose-breasted Grosbeaks** at Vermilion Cliffs Oct. 8, Ganado Oct. 21 and near Springerville Oct. 22; and many lesser rarities.

Since all these were found in ten days' birding (or driving, with intervals of birding) by one party, it was clear that the ratio of rarities - per - vagrant - trap was much higher here than farther south in Arizona. We suspect that if coverage there continues, the known status of many eastern "accidentals" in Arizona will soon be revised drastically.

GREBES THROUGH HERONS — Arizona's "resident vagrant" Least Grebe continued through the period at Quitobaquito; another was near Nogales Oct. 26-29 (CM *et al.*). White Pelicans were more numerous than usual in New Mexico, with a new state high of 2000 at Elephant Butte L., Sept. 30, declining to 104 by Nov. 27 (DM); also notable were 20 at Eagle Nest L., Aug. 8 (BZ), 703 near Artesia Oct. 17 (D. Sutcliffe) and one near Bernalillo Nov. 1 (C. Teas, *fide* JP). A few Brown Pelicans from last summer's flight lingered in Arizona with one near Yuma and two at Painted Rock Dam still present at the end of the period. Up to eight Olivaceous Cormorants were present Sept. 13 - Oct. 22 (RLT *et al.*) at Bosque del Apache N.W.R.,

N. Mex., where now apparently regular.

New Mexico had its largest influx of Cattle Egrets ever, with records of 1-12 birds at such points as Hobbs, Bosque del Apache, Dexter, Grants, Cliff and Bayard between early September and early November. Largest numbers, however, were in the Lower Pecos Valley throughout the period, with a roost of at least 31 birds at Carlsbad through November (SW, L&RW). Louisiana Herons appeared twice in Arizona (where quite rare), with one at St. David Sept. 4 (R. Bowers) and one at Nogales Sept. 16-18 (DSz *et al.*).

WATERFOWL — Late November saw an unusual movement of Whistling Swans into Arizona, with one near Poston Nov. 13 (BA, RD), one near Topock Nov. 20 (DL), one near Springerville Nov. 26 (KK, EC, BJo), 19 over L. Mary, near Flagstaff, Nov. 26 (R. Warner, *fide* JC), two at Painted Rock Dam Nov. 28 (JW *et al.*) and several other vague reports; 15 seen Nov. 30 at Burford L., n.c. New Mexico (JPH *et al.*), provided a high number and late record for the area. At least four pairs of Black-bellied Whistling Ducks nested at Nogales at the end of the summer, the first successful nestings there since 1974 (BH *et al.*).

Three sea-duck species, rare anywhere in the Region, occurred near Flagstaff. A ♂-plumaged White-winged Scoter was on Upper L. Mary Nov. 28-30 (†JC), and an Oldsquaw appeared at the same location Nov. 30 (†JC); a ♂-plumaged Surf Scoter was on Ashurst L., Nov. 5-16, and another or the same was on nearby Upper L. Mary Nov. 22-23 (JA, †CH *et al.*). In New Mexico, a ♀ Surf Scoter taken Oct. 21 on Jicarilla Res. (J. Voelzer) provided a fourth state specimen.

RAPTORS — An ad. Goshawk at Ehrenberg Oct. 15 (†BMW) was at an extreme lowland locality; the species rarely reaches the L.C.R., even in flight years, which this was not. Mississippi Kites were present into

August at Clovis and Portales, N. Mex., and probably bred at both localities (ALG). An additional Zone-tailed Hawk eyrie was found in the Jemez Mts. (B. Heinrich *et al.*), suggesting that a fairly substantial population exists in this northerly area of New Mexico; an adult was reported Aug. 22 near Las Vegas, N. Mex. (K. Carnie), a new locality for the species.

A very wild ad. Harris' Hawk n.w. of the Big Hatchet Mts., Sept. 23 (JPH) provided one of the very few records for s.w. New Mexico; one in the Manzano Mts., Oct. 9 (JP) was far from normal range and habitat (and close to Albuquerque), and may have been an escape from captivity. An aerial survey of n. New Mexico counted 91 Bald Eagles Nov. 29-30 (JPH *et al.*); 22 adults were present at one time on Navajo L., N. Mex., Nov. 21 (G. Thorne).

PTARMIGAN, CRANES — Two ad. White-tailed Ptarmigan on Latir Peak, N. Mex., Aug. 6 (CLH *et al.*) represented the first record there since 1969.

The first Whooping Crane to arrive at Bosque, N. Mex., was Ida — hatched in 1975 — on Oct. 10 (D. Rigby); by Nov. 29 there were definitely 8 of the 9 expected birds in the c. Rio Grande Valley, including three hatched in 1978.

SHOREBIRDS THROUGH TERNS — Stilt Sandpipers were recorded at Ashurst L., near Flagstaff, with one Sept. 10, two Oct. 8-9 and three Oct. 15 (CH, JA *et al.*). The species was also recorded on Many Farms L. (one Sept. 2 — ST, GHR) and during September at Prescott (*ten* Sept. 25 — CST). Although perhaps to be expected, these evidently were first records for n. Arizona. There are few fall records for the species in New Mexico, so notable were singles at Ute L., Sept. 14 (JPH) and Bitter Lake N.W.R., Oct. 8 (WSt). Arizona had perhaps more Red Phalaropes than usual, with one near Springerville Oct. 5 (ph. JW *et al.*), one near Yuma Nov. 26 (†G&DR), one at Tucson Dec. 2-3 (DSz, KK, EC) and three at Nogales Dec. 6 (BH). Good numbers of N. Phalaropes were recorded in the Lower Rio Grande Valley of New Mexico Sept. 9-23, plus singles near Las Vegas Sept. 9 and near Clovis Sept. 14 (JPH).

On Sept. 16, a possible Parasitic Jaeger was seen chasing a possible Pomarine Jaeger at L. McMillan, s.e. New Mexico (SW, L&RW). One of the jaegers was seen again Sept. 18. Neither species has yet been verified in the state.

An ad. California Gull at Caballo L., N. Mex., Nov. 29 (KJZ) was a first local record. The Region's only Sabine's Gulls of the fall were an immature at Nogales Oct. 1-3 (CM, BH *et al.*) and an adult at Bitter Lake N.W.R., N. Mex. Oct. 7 (WSt). Two ad. Heermann's Gulls were seen on the L.C.R., near Yuma Nov. 10 (†JDB); this is now an annual stray to Arizona, but with no discernable seasonal pattern. An ad. **Black-legged Kittiwake** frequented the Parker Dam region Nov. 11-19 (DSz, KK *et al.*, ph. BMW). Arizona had seven previous records, all for late fall to late winter. One Com. Tern was reported at Bitter Lake N.W.R., Aug. 22 (KJZ, BZ), and several in the Carlsbad area Sept. 16 (SW, L&RW); the status of this species in the Region away from the L.C.R., remains clouded by questions in identification.

DOVES THROUGH SWIFTS — Notable peripheral White-winged Doves in New Mexico included one at Albuquerque Aug. 9 (JND *et al.*) and two fledglings at Alamogordo Aug. 8-15 (G. Smith, *fide* LM); the species was last noted at Socorro Sept. 17 (PB). Extralimital single Inca Doves in New Mexico were at Glenwood Sept. 28 (B&DMc) and Roswell Nov. 26-28 (H. Hefley *et al.*). A remarkable concentration of six Groove-billed Anis was found Sept. 9 at Ariyaca, Ariz.; at least five remained in late October, and one through the end of the period (BH *et al.*). Arizona averages only two or three individual anis per year, but protracted stays by these are not unusual.

HUMMINGBIRDS — Blue-throated Hummingbirds outside normal limits were a male near Gallina, Jemez Mts., N. Mex., in early August (C. Austin, *fide* R. Goodman), a pair at Cloudcroft, N. Mex., Aug. 25 - Sept. 9 (SC, *fide* LM) and an imm. male at Prescott, Ariz., Sept. 15 (VM). Exceptionally late hummingbirds included two imm. ♂ Rufous at Las Cruces into December (T. Todson, *fide* W. Baltosser), and two Violet-crowns at Ramsey Canyon and one at Nogales through November (R&CH, RMa, BH).

Transcending previous records in distance north, duration of stay and lateness of occurrence was a **Plain-capped Starthroat** in Phoenix Oct. 17 - Nov. 28 (†ph. Jo Yoba *et al.*, ph. G. Metson).

WOODPECKERS THROUGH BLUE JAY — A Red-bellied Woodpecker at Rattlesnake Springs Oct. 27 (†HS) & Nov. 19 (L&RW) was a fifth New Mexico sighting (still unverified in the state). Single Gila Woodpeckers, normally sedentary, reached Cloverdale, N. Mex., Nov. 8 (JPH) and Springerville Nov. 26 (KK, BJo, EC); several also occurred near Prescott, where rare, from September on (CST). A Red-headed Woodpecker at Cloudcroft, N. Mex., Aug. 20 (SC, *fide* LM) was a rare stray.

A major movement of Lewis' Woodpeckers into the s. Arizona lowlands occurred. Scattered individuals were noted at numerous points, and many remained into the winter. Farthest from the mountains were one s. of Poston Oct. 1 and four near Parker Nov. 19 into at least December (BMW *et al.*).

An E. Kingbird, rare in s.w. New Mexico, was at Socorro Sept. 4 (PB). A die-off in excess of 100 Cave Swallows occurred Sept. 27-28 at Carlsbad Caverns (RW), possibly due to an extended period of heavy rains. A ♂ Purple

Martin was seen at B.W. Delta Sept. 25 (BMW); the species is quite rare as a migrant in the L.C.V.

On the e. plains of New Mexico, Blue Jay numbers seem to have increased in Portales; the species now appears to be resident in Clovis — where it bred this year (ALG) — and in Hobbs (HS). Migrants included singles at Los Lunas Oct. 5 (RLT), Bell L., Oct. 28 (JPH), Santa Fe Nov. 14 and later (M. Earney), Mesilla Nov. 18 (LH), and Farmington Nov. 16 & 23 (J. Eppich, APN).

MONTANE CORVIDS, PARIDS, NUT-HATCHES — Although the numbers involved were not huge, virtually every invasion-prone species in these three families made notable appearances. Steller's Jays appeared at many unusual points in New Mexico, including fair numbers around Silver City from October through the end of the period (M&SO, RAF), plus a few at such places as Santa Fe (WH), Trujillo (JPH), Glenwood (B&DMc), Mesilla (LH) and Carlsbad (RW); small flocks were also seen at many "oases" in n.e. Arizona in October. Small numbers of Scrub Jays appeared out-of-range at Williamsburg, N. Mex., Sept. 18 - Oct. 28 (DM), n. of Las Cruces Nov. 7 (LH), at Hobbs Nov. 4-30 (HS) and at Phoenix October - December; unusual numbers reached the L.C.V., with at least 18 in B.W. Delta by early October and up to six at Cibola N.W.R., by the end of the period (BMW *et al.*), plus two near Yuma Nov. 11 (SG).

A moderate movement of Black-billed Magpies occurred in the Sangre de Cristo Mt. area of New Mexico, with the species seen in Santa Fe Sept. 27 and later. Roving Piñon Jay flocks were notably widespread, reported from the Carlsbad, Elephant Butte and Las Cruces areas of New Mexico and from scattered points throughout n., s.e., and c. Arizona, with a single bird at B.W. Delta Oct. 9 (SG) marking the extreme lowland locality. Typically, the bulk of the Piñon Jay sightings were made in September and October, many involving flocks flying over arid lowlands or staying only a few days at middle-elevation points, with very few later reports. The ultimate destinations of most of these birds are unknown, but four substantial flocks settled for the winter in the foothills near Nogales. Isolated September sightings of Clark's Nutcrackers in the Chiricahuas, Mazatzals, Signal Peak, and Prescott regions of Arizona suggested that this species might invade S. but there were no later reports.

Two Black-capped Chickadees were at Pipe Springs Nat'l Mon., Nov. 24 (RBr); Arizona still has very few records. A minor invasion of Mountain Chickadees into s. New Mexico lowlands was indicated by small numbers at Glenwood (LH), Rattlesnake Springs (JPH, RW), Silver City (DAZ, RAF), Columbus, and the Organ Mts. (LH); four were also found in the Tucson lowlands. Bushtits reached the lowlands around Phoenix in record numbers, and others were reported from Tucson, the L.C.V., and c. Pinal County Ariz.

What was probably a major movement of White-breasted Nuthatches went largely unreported, since the migrants appeared in areas already inhabited by resident birds; experienced observers noted unusually high numbers at many specific points in s.e. Arizona, and birds were found in the New



Black-legged Kittiwake. Parker Dam, AZ-CA. Nov. 13, 1978. Photo/B. M. Whitney.

Mexico lowlands at Carlsbad Caverns (SW, L&RW) and Percha Dam (25 on Nov. 29 — JD, KJZ). Scattered single Red-breasted Nuthatches occurred almost throughout the s. Arizona lowlands, for a much higher total than usual. Pygmy Nuthatches, in contrast to the other two species, are extremely rare in the lowlands. One at Socorro July 28-29 (PB) was quite early; later individuals were recorded Aug. 9 and Sept. 26 at Farmington (HHL, APN), Sept. 5 at Santa Fe (JE), and Sept. 29 in Tucson (KK, GHR).

MIMICS THROUGH PHAINOPEPLA — Single Gray Catbirds at Silver City Aug. 14 (DAZ) and Alamogordo in late August (H. Waddell, *vide* LM) were locally unusual. Unprecedented was one in B.W. Delta Sept. 26 (†BMW), a first for w. Arizona. Notable were single Brown Thrashers Nov. 15-17 at Ehrenberg, Ariz. (ML, †BMW), and Nov. 18-20 at Bayard, N. Mex. (RAF). The only Rufous-backed Robin of the fall was one at Boyce Thompson Arboretum, Ariz., Nov. 18-21 (EC, LD *et al.*).

Single Varied Thrushes Oct. 19 (early) at Flagstaff (†JC, CH *et al.*), Nov. 3 near Portal (†M. Litte), and Nov. 16 in Phoenix (BB) were notable, but failed to match last year's invasion. Seventh and 8th Arizona records of the **Wood Thrush** were provided by one in the Chiricahuas Oct. 8-9 (HB, GM *et al.*) and one at Kearney Nov. 22-24 (ph., F. Reynolds). A notable influx of E. Bluebirds reached the Rio Grande Valley of New Mexico in November, with small flocks reported from Bosque N.W.R. (M. Manson), Percha Dam (DM), and Mesilla (LH), while several W. Bluebirds at Bell L., Oct. 28 were e. of their normal New Mexico range (JPH).

Phainopeplas are erratic and rare in s.e. New Mexico, and two gray females or first-year males at Carlsbad Caverns Aug. 27 (RW) provided the first record there in several years.

VIREOS, WARBLERS — In addition to those listed for n.e. Arizona (*q.v.*), outstanding records included: a Philadelphia Vireo at Whitlow Dam Aug. 28 (†RMCK) and another at Phoenix Sept. 23 (RBr) (8th and 10th Arizona records); a ♂ **Golden-winged Warbler** (4th Arizona record) Oct. 8 at B.W. Delta (†BMW); a **Blackburnian Warbler** Sept. 23 at Phoenix (†KK, JW *et al.*) and another Oct. 6 at Prescott (CST) (5th and 8th Arizona records); a Bay-breasted Warbler (about 9th Arizona record) Oct. 9 at B.W. Delta (†BMW), and another (probably this species) photographed Nov. 26 near Cliff, N. Mex. (JE); a **Blackpoll Warbler** (6th Arizona record) Oct. 12 near Tucson (GM, PW); a Palm Warbler (11th Arizona record) Oct. 10 near Coolidge (†KK, GHR); a Kentucky Warbler (13th Arizona & 3rd fall record) Oct. 28-29 at Nogales (CC, DG, ph. ST); and a Hooded Warbler (very rare in fall) that lingered Oct. 27 - Nov. 20 near Winkelman, Ariz. (ST, GHR *et al.*). Undoubtedly the most exciting warbler of the season was a **Pine Warbler** well-described at Percha Dam S.P., Nov. 29 (JD, KJZ); this was the first report for New Mexico (and for the Region) of a species exceptionally rare anywhere in the west.

Of lesser rarity (now annual in very small numbers) but still notable were: single Chestnut-sided Warblers near Prescott Oct. 2 (CST), another there Nov. 4 (BH), near Portal

Nov. 17-18 (AMc), and Nogales Nov. 19 (DSz, SP); single Black-throated Greens at Cibola N.W.R., Ariz., Oct. 23 (†BMW), Bell L., N. Mex., Oct. 28 (considered locally late — JPH), B.W. Delta Nov. 11 (BMW, GHR, KK), and Oak Creek, Ariz., Nov. 18 (†CH); single Black-throated Blues at Nogales Oct. 3 (CC), B.W. Delta Oct. 10 (†BMW), Phoenix Nov. 12 (ST), and Yuma Dec. 23 (†G&DR); and single Tennessee Warblers at Rattlesnake Springs, N. Mex., Oct. 14 (SW, RW), California Gulch, Ariz., Oct. 22 (DSz *et al.*), and Tucson Nov. 2 (KK).

A Grace's Warbler at Percha Dam S.P., N. Mex., Nov. 29 (KJZ) was extremely late and at a lower elevation than usual. A Painted Redstart at Ehrenberg, Ariz., Sept. 14-16 (ML, BMW, JDB) was well outside normal migration routes and perhaps a first record for the L.C.V.

ICTERIDS — A subad. ♂ **Streak-backed Oriole** frequented a Tucson feeder Oct. 7-18 (†GM, m. ob.), along with a dull-plumaged ♂ oriole almost certainly of this species until Oct. 22; this is a rare straggler from n.w. Mexico. Also somewhat n. of normal range was a ♂ Hooded Oriole (accompanied by possible ♂♂) at Alamogordo, N. Mex., Aug. 10 (G. Bloys, *vide* LM).

The Great-tailed Grackle population of Eddy County, s.e. N. Mex., is increasing dramatically. Where a year ago the species occurred in groups of usually less than a dozen, it is now not uncommon to find groups of 100 birds (SW).

FRINGILLIDS — Wandering ♂ Pyrrhuloxias reached Silver City Oct. 22 (DAZ, MAZ) and the Peloncillo Mts., near Rodeo, N. Mex., Nov. 6 (JPH). Arizona's only Dickcissel this fall was near Springerville Nov. 23 (†DD, JBe). A new area for Pine Grosbeak in Arizona was Prescott, where a pair was noted Aug. 17 (SRD, HL, ZB). At least one Brown-capped Rosy Finch was found Aug. 8 (JPH) on Latir Peak, N. Mex., where not previously reported in summer.

Red Crossbills, notoriously irregular in their breeding season, nested near Prescott in late August - early September (CST). A Rufous-sided Towhee seen Nov. 8 near Socorro (PB) appeared to be a female of the e. (unspotted) race; there is one other unconfirmed sighting of this form in New Mexico. Single Clay-colored Sparrows at Bell L., N. Mex., Oct. 27 (JPH) and near Las Cruces Oct. 27 & Nov. 7 (LH) were late.

Yellow-eyed Juncos are almost unknown away from the breeding grounds or at low elevations, so exceptional were singles in the Patagonia Mts., Oct. 1 (BH) and in Tucson Oct. 25 through the end of the period (GG *et al.*).

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