

SOUTHWEST REGION

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and Kenn Kaufman

Spring weather in the Region averaged cooler and wetter than normal, encouraging luxuriant plant growth in many areas. Many of the grasslands, in particular, were lush and green by the end of May, suggesting the condition in late July or August of a more typical year. Avian responses to these conditions were not obvious.

Last winter (as detailed in our last column) much of southeast Arizona was subjected to record-setting cold weather. Some effects of this were not noticeable until late spring. The leafing-out season revealed that huge numbers of mesquites (and often their attendant mistletoe plants) were dead or mostly dead. In the Sierra Vista region, Danforth noted an unusual scarcity of Verdins, and attributed this to the mesquite kill-off; Phainopeplas were in exceptionally low numbers away from riparian zones throughout the lowlands, undoubtedly because of the heavy mortality of mistletoe during the winter. Sparrows of several species which were in low numbers during the winter remained difficult to find through the spring migration.

Observers were active in the Region this spring, with some positive results. New Mexico had its first believable sightings of Black Rail and Lucifer Hummingbird, while photographic evidence was obtained to raise American Golden Plover and Short-billed Marsh Wren from "hypothetical" to "confirmed" status. In Arizona a singing Cerulean Warbler, multiple Mew Gulls and a most surprising Cave Swallow were all photographed; the first had been seen but once before, and the latter two were both first state records.

LOONS THROUGH WATERFOWL — At Davis Dam, Ariz., where an Arctic Loon wintered, an individual (evidently the same) lingered well into the summer. An imm. Oliveaceous Cormorant at Glenwood, N. Mex., Mar. 19 (JPH) was probably the same bird reported there during the previous period. Others were present during the season at Bosque del Apache N.W.R., at Bill Evans L., near Cliff, and e. of Douglas.

Spring strays were an ad. Louisiana Heron near Loving, N. Mex., May 28 (SW) for about the 11th state record, and an ad. Little Blue Heron e. of Yuma (BMW) May 9 (most of the dozen-or-so previous Arizona records are also for spring dates). A recently discovered heronry near Loving was comprised of Snowy Egrets and Black-crowned Night Herons; several young were banded there May 28 (SW). Two White-faced Ibises at Picacho Res., Ariz., Mar. 5 (GM) would have been exceptionally early for migrants, and thus may have represented a rare case of local wintering.

An unusual duck photographed near Mammoth, Ariz., May 6 (KVR,GR,ST) appeared to be a ♂ American × European Wigeon hybrid; this hybrid combination has been found before in North America, but not in the Southwest.

RAPTORS — The Sharp-shinned Hawk is quite rare as a breeder in s. Arizona, so of note was an active nest in the Mule Mts., found

May 13 (DD). In the Carlsbad area, Mississippi Kites were reported more frequently than in the recent past (RW,SW), and a nesting pair was found at Hobbs, N. Mex. (HS). Single Broad-winged Hawks at Hobbs May 6 & 13 (HS) were peripheral migrants, but a probable individual farther w. of Glenwood May 13 (R. Skaggs) would be exceptional.

Single ad. Gray Hawks were reported (with extensive details) at Las Cruces Mar. 31 (J. Bednarz) and e. of Roswell Apr. 22 (D. Lange *et al.*), for first locality records; the species appears to be at most, a rare straggler to New Mexico. An ad. Com. Black Hawk was present from Mar. 23 at least into May in the B. W. Delta (TB *et al.*), exceptionally far w.; not far away an imm. black hawk (sp.) was studied n. of Ehrenberg May 5 (BMW,DL). The Com. Black Hawk is a rare visitant to the Rio Grande Valley, so adults at Alameda Apr. 13 (JP) and near Isleta Mar. 30 (JND) were notable.

RAILS, SHOREBIRDS — A bird thought to be a Black Rail was seen fleetingly (but with some key details glimpsed to support the identification) at Harroun L., s.e. New Mexico, Apr. 17 (RW,SW); there are no previous state records. A Black Rail heard calling repeatedly Apr. 18 at B. W. Delta (JDB,AL) was n. of the known breeding areas in w. Arizona.

Five Snowy Plovers at Bosque del Apache May 5 (BRZ,KJZ) were the first to be reported there in several years. Occurrence of the American Golden Plover in New Mexico was confirmed this spring, with two birds present Apr. 21 at Bitter Lake N.W.R., one of them photographed (DH *et al.*). Two Ruddy Turnstones at Cibola N.W.R., May 16 (D. Ledford) provided Arizona's 8th (2nd spring) record. Two Whimbrels were near Poston in mid-April (BMW), adding to Arizona's handful of spring records for this elusive transient. Five probable Semipalmated Sandpipers were seen associating with Westerns at Bitter Lake N.W.R., May 5 (DH); the species is probably a rare-but-regular spring migrant on the e. edge of the Region.

Three pairs of Black-necked Stilts nested at Tucson (L.A. Hill, DSz *et al.*), where breeding has been very irregular. A N. Phalarope photographed above Davis Dam May 26 (BMW,SG) provided one of very few spring records for the L.C.R.

GULLS, TERNS — Mid-winter failed to produce the hoped-for gull bonanza on the L.C.R., but in mid-March the numbers and variety of gulls present at Davis Dam increased markedly. On Mar. 19-20, BMW and SG noted (among the numerous Ring-billeds) at least 250 California Gulls (a high number for Arizona), three first-winter Herring Gulls (always scarce here), and an ad. Franklin's Gull (uncommon and early). Large concentrations of gulls at Davis Dam sometimes include rarities, and in this case, Whitney's photo of a



first-winter Laughing Gull established Arizona's second confirmable record for the species (since previous sight-records are now being questioned). The real prize (although not a surprise) was the presence of multiple Mew Gulls, with one adult and two first-winter birds Mar. 19-20 (BMW,SG), sightings of probable first-winter birds extending into April, and a second-winter bird present Mar. 31 - Apr. 17. BMW's photos confirmed this as a first Arizona record, although the species has been found before on the Nevada side of L. Mead.

A Com. Tern at Ganado L., May 29 (TKK,GR,JW) was perhaps Arizona's second spring record; the status of this species in the Region is still clouded by observers' lack of understanding of the true criteria for identification.

ANIS THROUGH SWIFTS — The Groove-billed Ani, a straggler to New Mexico, is very rare there in spring, so that one at Bitter Lake N.W.R., May 23-24 (G.H.Grossman) was notable. Although Band-tailed Pigeons breed in s. Colorado and Utah, and thus must pass through or over the lowlands of n.e. Arizona, a small flock in the cottonwoods at Tec Nos Pos May 27-30 (GR,KK *et al.*) evidently established the first such record. Stray White-winged Doves beyond normal limits were at Glenwood, N. Mex., Apr. 27 (B & DM) and at Silver City in May (DAZ); a wandering Inca Dove was noted at Rattlesnake Springs, s.e. New Mexico, May 2.

Intriguing was the presence of a Flammulated Owl in the B. W. Delta, heard at the same spot Mar. 9 (TB), Mar. 31 (KK,KVR *et al.*), and Apr. 18 (JDB). The duration of stay would have been remarkable for a migrant, and the first dates preceded normal arrival in s. Arizona, leading us to wonder if the bird could have wintered locally.

A Black Swift over Albuquerque in late May (JND) provided a second local record for a species which is scarce and little-known in the Region. A *Chaetura* sp., probably (and reported as) a Chimney Swift, was seen over Alameda, N. Mex., May 27 (SW). Chimney Swifts returned to Tucson (their only "regular" Regional locale) for a fourth consecutive year, with at least five present by late May.

HUMMINGBIRDS THROUGH TROGONS — A ♂ Lucifer Hummingbird was seen and well-described at Williamsburg, N. Mex.,

Apr. 25-26 (†Doris Miller), to provide what appears to be the first reliable state record. The locality (near Truth or Consequences) is surprisingly far from Guadalupe Canyon, the point in New Mexico where the species is most to be expected. Lucifers are still quite irregular in Arizona; a probable female was seen at Sabino Canyon, above Tucson, May 6 (SS); at Portal, one of the species' more usual locales, a male was present Apr. 2 and then Apr. 27 through the first week of May. Anna's Hummingbird is quite unexpected in New Mexico in spring; a male was noted at Mogollon May 27 (B&DM).

Normally we see spring migrant Rufous Hummingbirds only in s.w. Arizona, but there were sightings of one or more ad. males at Portal in Mid-March and May 1-4 (SSp *et al.*). North of normal limits, a ♂ Rivoli's Hummingbird visited a Flagstaff feeder Apr. 25-26 (*vide* JC). A ♂ White-eared Hummingbird turned up remarkably early at Ramsey Canyon on Mar. 9, and disappeared by around May 15 (R&CH *et al.*); farther e. at Portal, a female was seen Apr. 8 (also quite early) and a male was present May 26-31 (SSp *et al.*).

Broad-billed Hummingbirds were found outside their usual Arizona range at Quitobaquito Mar. 24 (RM&K) and at Portal from Apr. 5 through most of May (SSp). In New Mexico the species occurs regularly only in Guadalupe Canyon; the fourth "extralimital" record was provided by a male at Rattlesnake Springs May 13 (†SW).

A Coppery-tailed Trogon was heard and glimpsed June 6 in the Animas Mts., s.w. New Mexico (S. Dobrott), perhaps lending credence to an as yet undocumented report from the nearby Big Hatchet Mts., Apr. 26 (D. Hansen *et al.*).

BECARDS THROUGH SWALLOWS — In Sycamore Canyon, Ariz., where the Rose-throated Becard was first found nesting last year, one nest-building pair and another single bird were found May 19 (DSz, BR, GBk). Another surprising locality for the species was Madera Canyon, where a pair was seen May 18 but not subsequently (m.ob.).

A Thick-billed Kingbird in Sycamore Canyon May 19 (DSz) was also notable, since the species is rare and irregular in the Atascosas region. A Scissor-tailed Flycatcher s. of Poston May 22 (WHJFD, VH) provided Arizona's only report this spring. The Buff-breasted Flycatcher population in the Huachuca Mts., was reportedly doing very well (GB).

S.A.

A **Least Flycatcher** was studied near Springerville May 26 (†KK, GR, EC); Arizona has few reliable records. A couple of other less definite reports were received. We should point out that it is not enough simply to say that a purported Least was singing, because some other *Empidonax* can make sounds approximating "che-beck." Details of structure, plumage, and behavior continue to be important, and of course thorough familiarity with all western *Empidonax* species is an essential prerequisite.

A first state record, and perhaps the most remarkable bird of the season, was a **Cave Swallow** found associating with Cliff Swallows

on the University of Arizona campus in Tucson May 11 (DSz). Remaining at least through June 7, it was seen by many and photographed for confirmation (Doug Cook). Details will be published elsewhere.

JAYS THROUGH THRASHERS — Scrub Jays from the winter's lowland invasion lingered into late April at Alameda, N. Mex. (JP), and in the L.C.V., where the last records were Apr. 18 at B. W. Delta and Apr. 19 at Cibola N.W.R. (*vide* SG); singles in s.e. New Mexico were noted in March at Hobbs (HS) and Apr. 18 at Otis (SW). Six Steller's Jays from the same incursion were seen near Roosevelt L., Ariz., Apr. 25 (KVR), and five near Cliff on the exceptionally late date of May 26 (RAF).

After nearly a decade on New Mexico's hypothetical list (first reported in December 1970), the **Short-billed Marsh Wren** was confirmed as occurring in the state on the basis of photographs obtained Apr. 22 at Bitter Lake N.W.R. (DH); this is the locality where the species has been reported as wintering repeatedly.

A Gray Catbird at Pipe Springs May 31 (KK) was well to the n. and w. of any known Arizona breeding locality. Single Brown Thrashers, rare stragglers to Arizona, were at Nogales in late March (RN), at Patagonia Mar. 31 (JH, RTS, RB), at Tucson Apr. 9 (L. Jones), at Tubac Apr. 28 (*vide* GG) and Phoenix May 1 (GR).

THRUSHES THROUGH VIREOS — Last winter produced no Varied Thrush invasion here, so we were surprised by reports of an individual near Portal May 14 (†D. Charles, F. & D. Gillette). A **Wood Thrush** at Hobbs May 6 (†HS) produced apparently the fifth record for New Mexico.

Two Sprague's Pipits at L. McMillan, s.e. New Mexico, May 5 (†RW, SW) were rather late. The last of the winter's Bohemian Waxwings at Farmington were seen Mar. 3, except for a remarkably late individual there May 9 (APN). Phainopeplas are very rare and irregular in s.e. New Mexico, so one at Hobbs Mar. 2-3 (HS) was notable.

A **White-eyed Vireo** was well-described from Rattlesnake Springs May 4 (†RW) for a fifth New Mexico record. Single Yellow-throated Vireos near Kayenta May 30 (†KK, GR, JW) and near Portal June 13 (†B. & M. Schaugency) provided about the 10th and 11th records for Arizona. A Gray Vireo was banded on the early date of Mar. 28 (PW) at Tucson, whence there are few records of migrants.

WARBLERS — As more observers join the search for vagrant warblers, the numbers and variety recorded each season are steadily increasing. For example, in Arizona this spring we heard of about five Tennessee Warblers and roughly ten each of N. Parula and Am. Redstart; the latter two are becoming so regular that some observers no longer bother to report them (we would still like to hear about them, however).

Several species of uncommon interest were recorded. Single Worm-eating Warblers at Hobbs Apr. 18 & May 20 (HS) provided 7th and 8th sightings for New Mexico; the species is still undocumented in the state. A Magnolia Warbler at Tucson May 20 (DSz, SP, GG) was about Arizona's 11th. A ♀ Hermit Warbler reported at Rattlesnake Springs Apr. 25 (†RW) was exceptionally far e. for a spring

migrant; the species is generally a rare fall migrant in s.w. New Mexico. Single Chestnut-sided Warblers s. of Grants, N. Mex., May 13 (KS) and at Round Rock, Ariz., June 1 (DSz) were far w. for spring strays. Notable were a ♀ Bay-breasted Warbler at Rattlesnake Springs May 16 (KJZ) and a ♂ Blackpoll Warbler at Santa Fe May 28 (K. Giezentanner); a Palm Warbler at Nogales Apr. 27 (†DG, CC) was about the 12th for Arizona. A Hooded Warbler in Sabino Canyon near Tucson May 23-26 (B. Yelke *et al.*) fit the established pattern for this species, but one at Littlefield, n.w. Arizona, May 18 (M. Riffey, *vide* SH) was most unusual.

A few warbler species remain exceptionally rare despite the increased coverage, and this spring produced three such birds. A singing ♂ **Cerulean Warbler** was present May 18-20 in Madera Canyon (†CC *et al.*); photos (GM) made this the first documented Arizona record, although there had been one previous sighting. A **Yellow-throated Warbler** was found on the Verde R., n.e. of Phoenix Apr. 14 (KVR) for about the fourth Arizona record. And at Rattlesnake Springs, a **Canada Warbler** was well-described May 25 (†RW), for New Mexico's third record.

ICTERIDS, TANAGERS — An E. Meadowlark, associating with a group of Westerns, was found Mar. 17, n. of Ehrenberg (RD; * to A.S.U.). This was the first record for the L.C.V., although we suspect that a few, overlooked among the numerous Westerns, must winter there regularly; the E. Meadowlark remains unrecorded on the California side of the river. An ad. ♂ Orchard Oriole near Yuma May 20 (ST) was the only one reported in Arizona this season.

Both grackle species in the Region continue to expand their ranges. At Santa Fe, where a small colony of Com. Grackles is present, the first nest was confirmed in May (JPH). Commons are still scarce in some peripheral areas in New Mexico, so one at Rattlesnake Springs during the period (RW) and six at Farmington May 13-15 (H.H. Lesperance, *vide* APN) were notable; amazingly, Arizona still lacks a record of the species. At Springerville, n. Arizona, where individual Great-tailed Grackles have been recorded only since 1976, at least one pair was present this spring; one bird turned up May 19 at Fredonia, extreme n.w. Arizona (B. Lunceford). At Flagstaff, where the species was rare as little as five years ago, it is now seen commonly (JC).

A ♂ Scarlet Tanager at Santa Fe May 12 (C. Thomas) was the first to be recorded locally but New Mexico's 11th May record.

FRINGILLIDS — After being almost unrecorded in the Region during the winter, Lawrence's Goldfinches turned up in the L.C.V., in early April. A pair in the B. W. Delta was observed building a nest Apr. 18 (JDB, AL), and the birds were feeding three young by May 12; very few definite nestings have been recorded in Arizona or the L.C.V. the Verde R., in c. Arizona (where the species attempted breeding in 1978, 1977, and perhaps in previous years), two or three pairs were present at least into June, but no nest was found (GR, KVR, ST).

The Golden-crowned Sparrow at Santa Fe (about New Mexico's 12th) mentioned previously lingered until Apr. 29 (JPH), while two more were discovered at Corrales, near Abu-

querque, Mar. 9-13 (JND *et al.*). Chestnut-collared Longspurs, formerly considered very rare in the L.C.V., were noted there again this spring: about 15 (in breeding plumage, some singing) were near Poston Mar. 16 (SG, BMW), with five seen in the vicinity as late as Apr. 1. A single Lapland Longspur heard and seen flying over at Laguna Dam Mar. 4 (ST) provided the only definite record of the 1978-79 winter season.

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