

SOUTHWEST REGION

/Janet Witzeman, John P. Hubbard
and Kenn Kaufman

No one seemed to consider this a stellar season. It was a poor season for occurrence of Mexican strays and, more importantly, it was apparently also a poor summer for breeding success in some areas.

The results of last winter's unusual cold continued to draw comment. A very noticeable effect was the killed-back vegetation in parts of southeastern Arizona, southwestern New Mexico (south of the Mogollon Plateau), and locally in the east-central sector of New Mexico. Mesquite was the most obvious victim in many areas — for example, huge tracts of mesquite bosque on the upper San Pedro River appeared lifeless at the beginning of the summer — but a number of other species of trees and woody plants were affected. Despite initial appearances, most of the plants evidently were not dead. New shoots were sprouting on many as the season progressed. However, the overall reduction in foliage, for this season at least, was substantial; although we have no data to support this contention, it seems certain that breeding success must have been reduced for birds in the mesquite associations.

Following a rather wet spring, this turned out to be a dry summer, with the usual July rains hardly materializing until a month later than normal. Some observers suggested that this may have lowered the breeding success of those grassland birds which normally nest at the time of the summer rains.

Two positive aspects of the season are worth mentioning. Observers in southeastern Arizona, taking a cue from experiments in other states, ran a "summer Christmas count" June 30 in the Ramsey Canyon circle. The numbers recorded on this count (like those of the usual winter CBCs) may have little meaning, but the intensive coverage of the CBC methodology produced some significant records. Another break from the summer doldrums was provided by Painted Rock Dam (hereafter, P.R.D.) in southwestern Arizona: the reservoir behind the dam, swelled by last winter's floods, was at its largest ever, and the great expanse of water there attracted a number of interesting birds and interested birders. Some of the records produced on the Ramsey Count and at P.R.D. will be found in the following species accounts.

GREBES THROUGH FRIGATEBIRDS — Western Grebes nested again (second actual report) at Caballo L., on the Rio Grande (CAH,DLg). Eared Grebes were found nesting at Black L., n.e. N. Mex., July 26 (WHk) for a first definite report there, while two birds at L. McMillan, s.e. N. Mex., July 29 (WHo,MA) were very unusual for the season at that locality; the presence of 40+ Westerns at P.R.D., in July (KK *et al.*) was also somewhat surprising. The usual July dispersal of imm. Brown Pelicans into s.w. Arizona occurred, with reports e. and n.e. to Patagonia and Mammoth; nine were at P.R.D., July 27 (GM,WD) and 11 were there Aug. 15 (GM,GG), indicating an unusually high concentration.

The cormorant breeding colony at Elephant Butte Marsh, N. Mex., was not occupied this year; birds evidently relocating from this col-



Immature Magnificent Frigatebird, Painted Rock Dam, Arizona, July 22, 1979. One of several that appeared in s.w. Arizona this season. Photo/Janet Witzeman.



only nested just to the s. at Caballo L., with many Double-crested and a few Olivaceous there (CAH,DLg). Double-crested Cormorants nested at P.R.D., for the first breeding records in the lower Gila Valley. At the time of discovery (mid-July) a number of adults and vacant nests were present, and the one occupied nest contained three young (ph., JW).

This was a big year for Magnificent Frigatebirds inland, and undoubtedly it was merely coincidence that it happened to be a big year also for the reservoir behind Painted Rock Dam. Nonetheless, the expanse of water at P.R.D., must have acted as a magnet, to attract and hold frigatebirds wandering over s.w. Arizona. From one to six individuals, all immatures, were seen there July 15 - at least Aug. 15 (RBr,SB, m.ob.); notable was the sighting of an ad. male there Aug. 9 (ST,LD). Frigatebirds also occurred over Cibola N.W.R., with sightings of one immature July 25, 27 & 30 (SG,CH,LM), and one over w. Phoenix July 8 (*vide* DT). Most remarkably, *nine* were circling over e. Phoenix Aug. 11 (R. Van Swinderen). Prior to this year Arizona had only about a dozen frigatebird records — all of singles except for three at Imperial Dam in 1968 and four near Tacna during hurricane Kathleen in 1976.

HERONS THROUGH WATERFOWL — As with cormorants, herons also relocated southward from Elephant Butte Marsh, with many Snowy Egrets and Black-crowned Night Herons breeding successfully at Caballo L., along with a few Great and Cattle egrets and probably a pair of Little Blue Herons (CAH, DLg). The large heronry of Snowy Egrets and Black-crowned Night Herons near Loving, N. Mex., was also successful; a nesting pair of **Little Blue Herons** found there June 2 was the first for that area and only the second for the state (RW,SW). Two White-faced Ibises on the Zuni Res., July 14 and 21 (AFS) provided first local summer records, but there was no evidence of breeding.

An ad. Snow Goose at Redrock, N. Mex., seen June 12 (BJH) and June 27 (M. Lang), was an odd straggler. Black-bellied Whistling Ducks reached s.e. Arizona in numbers slightly above average; two seen at San Bernardino Ranch e. of Douglas July 20 (DD, J. Bealer) were unusually far e. Cinnamon Teal nested in areas of s. and w. Arizona where previous breeding records are few or lacking, with two broods seen near Willcox July 12 (GM), at

least two broods at Arivaca July 3 (GM,BH), three broods in the Dome Valley June 13 (SG), and one pair known to be nesting near Poston (*vide* SG).

RAPTORS THROUGH RAILS — Numbers of Mississippi Kites may be increasing in the areas of Hobbs and Clovis, N. Mex.; the species nested at both points this year (HS, R. Johnson). An ad. **Red-shouldered Hawk** n. of Mammoth July 5-6 (KVR *et al.*) was only the fourth to be recorded in Arizona and the first for summer. At an unusually high elevation and in a new area for the species was an imm. Gray Hawk studied near Paradise (above Portal), Ariz., July 23 (WR, †MT, †RS *et al.*).

The only Clapper Rails found in c. Arizona this year were three on the Salt R., e. of Phoenix June 5 (DT *et al.*).

SHOREBIRDS THROUGH TERNS — Reports of Mountain Plovers in the n.e. quadrant of New Mexico were more frequent than usual, while a nest observed near Nageezi June 11-14 (P. Pache) was only the second ever reported in the n.w. sector. The only proof of the breeding of Com. Snipe in the Region was obtained in 1936 near Springerville, Ariz., so one seen there July 7 this year (ST,GR) is of particular interest. Two at Zuni, N. Mex., July 21 & 31 (AFS) and one at Poston, L.C.R., July 18 (ph., KVR) were exceptionally early for fall migrants and might have summered locally.

Whimbrels reinforced their pattern of late-summer occurrences in Arizona, with one at Cibola N.W.R., July 16 (AL), two near Poston July 27 (CH), and one at P.R.D., July 30 (KK, GR,JW). Red Knots also occurred at P.R.D., with one July 22 (KK,RAW,JW) and two Aug. 9 (DSz); Arizona had only ten previous records. An apparent **Short-billed Dowitcher** was well-seen, and diagnostic calls heard, at Bitter Lake N.W.R., July 28 (†WHO,MA); this was only the third report for New Mexico, and the species is still undocumented in the state. In w. New Mexico, an Am. Avocet near Fence L., June 25 (AMc) and a Black-necked Stilt at Tyrone June 3 (RAF) were both very unusual and established first local summer records.

Two gull records demonstrated the drawing power of the large body of water behind P.R.D. A large dark-mantled gull seen there July 18 (†DSz) was most likely the Yellow-legged W. Gull (*L. o. livens*), from the Gulf of California, a form as yet unrecorded in Arizona. A Herring Gull in third-summer plum-

age studied there July 22 (KK,SB,RAW) provided Arizona's first summer record. Two definite and 23 possible California Gulls were identified June 26 at Heron L., n. N. Mex., for the species' third summer of occurrence there; this locality is now established as one of recent regular summering, but as yet there has been no evidence of local nesting. A Bonaparte's Gull at Sierra Vista, Ariz., June 30 (DSz,SP, GR) was very unusual for the season. Eight imm. Least Terns seen July 15 at Bitter Lake N.W.R. (WHO) represented the first evidence of breeding success in several years for that disjunct population.

OWLS THROUGH HUMMINGBIRDS — Successful breeding of Spotted Owl was recorded June 30 with one adult and two young in N. McKittrick Canyon, Guadalupe Mts., N. Mex. (W. Risser) where the species is generally considered rare, and June 22 with one adult and one young photographed in the Organ Mts. (R. C. Castetter) where not previously recorded and somewhat unexpected.

A probable Chimney Swift at Hobbs, N. Mex., June 2 (HS) was a local first. Small numbers of Chimney Swifts were seen over Tucson at points up to 3 mi apart into August; possibly the birds are nesting there, but their center of activity has not been located. Two Black Swifts were seen over Santa Fe July 8 (JPH), a local first, although there have been recent summer sightings high in the mountains nearby.

Normally we see almost no ad. ♂ Costa's Hummingbirds in Arizona after May, but this summer substantial numbers remained on the s. slope of the Santa Catalinas and the n. slope of the Santa Ritas through June and into July (GM,KK *et al.*). A Blue-throated Hummingbird in Clanton Canyon, Peloncillo Mts., s.w. N. Mex., June 11 (SW) established a first local record, although not unexpected.

A massive blooming of *penstemon* at the top of Carr Canyon, Huachuca Mts., in late June - early July attracted a major concentration of hummingbirds. Several Broad-billed Hummingbirds there during this period (GM,DD, KK) were at the unusually high elevation of 7000+ ft, perhaps unprecedented in Arizona, although a post-breeding uphill movement has been noted in Sonora. A Berylline Hummingbird at the same place June 30 (DD, RBw), one of very few ever noted away from feeders in the state, was the only one of the summer — a surprising paucity after last

year's numbers; clearly, this species' "invasion" of Arizona is an uneven process. These *penstemon* patches also produced several likely sightings of White-eared Hummingbirds, but the most definite one of the season in Arizona was an ad. male at Summerhaven July 4-31+ (BR, m.ob.), establishing the first record as far n. as the Santa Catalina Mts., since 1915 (*fide* GM). Another was noted July 19 in Clanton Canyon, Peloncillo Mts. (RW), for one of the few ever reported in New Mexico.

TROGONS THROUGH WOODPECKERS — On June 13 just n. of the Animas Mts., s.w. N. Mex., two observers (SDo, J. Dobrott) independently saw a trogon that was apparently not a Coppery-tailed. Although no definitive views were obtained, the bird was thought to be larger than a Coppery-tailed, bluish-green and red in color, and it was heard "cackling" ("chirp-chirp-twee"); the evidence suggests Eared Trogon. A ♂ Coppery-tailed Trogon recorded in the Animas Mts., several times during June and July was found to be accompanied by a probable female July 17 (SDo *et al.*); there have been very few records of the species, and no indications of the possibility of breeding in New Mexico previous to this year. Non-breeding single Coppery-tailed Trogons were found below normal elevations in Arizona on Sonoita Cr., June 28 (DSz *et al.*) and at Lewis Spring on the San Pedro R., June 30 (SP).

The Belted Kingfisher has not been found nesting in Arizona in this century, but there have been suggestive June sightings in the White Mts. region; this summer, a male stayed through the season on the Little Colorado R., s.w. of Springerville (BJo *et al.*). Very much out-of-place, however, was one seen on the lower Gila R., s.w. Arizona, June 19 (GRb).

Gila Woodpeckers are very local in extreme s.e. Arizona, and one seen July 23 at the mouth of Skeleton Canyon, Peloncillo Mts. (RM), was at a new locality. A "suspicious" pair of Lewis' Woodpeckers found in late May at Ganado, Ariz. (KK *et al.*), was feeding young in the nest there July 4 (ph., JW); this is a new breeding area for the species. Another pair in the same general area was s. of Navajo June 24 (RAF). Two Acorn Woodpeckers in Carson N.F., w. of Dulce June 13 (APN) and another nearby July 28 (AW, *fide* APN) provided first records there; the species is quite local in that part of New Mexico.

BECARD THROUGH SWALLOWS — A ♀ *Rose-throated Becard* was seen and well-described in upper Guadalupe Canyon June 9 (SW); there was but one previous hypothetical sighting for New Mexico. Another female of this species seen July 6 on upper Aravaipa Cr. (GSM) was the northernmost ever found in Arizona.

Eastern Kingbirds occur regularly in very small numbers in n.e. Arizona, where singles were seen at Round Rock and Teec Nos Pos June 1 (DSz,SP). However, the species is almost unknown in s.e. Arizona; individuals were found at Tucson June 10 (KK,CW) and n. of Pomerene June 25 (DSz). A Thick-billed Kingbird n. of Mammoth July 18 (GM,RG) was n. of normal limits in Arizona. Arizona's only Scissor-tailed Flycatcher of the summer (but the third for the L.C.R. this year) was at Cibola N.W.R., July 10 (DC,MH). Rare in

New Mexico, a Great Crested Flycatcher at Hobbs June 1 (HS) was probably a late spring stray. At El Pueblo, N. Mex., where E. Phoebe has been reported in summer before, the first local nest was found July 3 (JPH).

Tree Swallows were found nesting at several points in Arizona's White Mts. region, where breeding was first detected just last year (DSz *et al.*). Three Bank Swallows near Zuni, N. Mex., June 3 (AFS) were probably late migrants, as the species is not known to nest in this area. A pair of Purple Martins on the upper Pecos R., July 21-22 (RLT) represented the first summer record of the species for the Sangre de Cristo Mts. Up to five Purple Martins were present, with two at an apparent nest hole, in the Hualapai Mts. of n.w. Arizona June 20-22 (TA, *fide* RSH); evidently the only previous record for the Hualapais, heretofore unpublished, involved one ♀-plumaged bird there Aug. 17, 1951 (GM).

CORVIDS THROUGH WAXWINGS — Blue Jays have not been known to summer at Artesia, N. Mex., but one was seen there July 18 (MA,WHO) and local people told the observers that several were around town. A family of Mexican Jays was observed at Bayard, N. Mex., for a first indication of nesting there (RAF). Two Com. Crows near Logan June 21 established a first, and totally unexpected, record for that part of New Mexico; surprisingly enough, in the same area Com. Ravens outnumbered the expected White-neckeds by 35 to zero on a U.S.F. & W.S. Breeding Bird Survey route (JPH). A White-necked Raven nest near Abbott June 21 (JPH) was a first for Colfax County, and the northwesternmost to date for the population on the e. plains of New Mexico.

A Gray Catbird at Cottonwood Gulch, Zuni Mts., N. Mex., July 6 (AMc) provided a local first summer record and two Gray Catbirds at El Pueblo, N. Mex., July 3 (JPH) were apparently the first to be recorded there, although they were not far downstream on the Pecos R., from known areas of summer occupancy. Single Swainson's Thrushes were singing s.w. of Springerville July 7 (ST,GR,BJo) and above Sheep's Crossing July 14 (DSz,SP); there are still few summer records for Arizona's White Mts. region. Two Veeries were singing on territory in July s.w. of Springerville, at the species' only known breeding locality in the Region (BJo *et al.*).

Two Water Pipits were seen in the Chuska Mts., N. Mex., June 29 (AW) for the first reported summer occurrence there; 1-3 were on La Mosca Peaks near Grant, N. Mex., July 10-11 — one carrying food suggested breeding which would be a local first (AM).

VIREOS, WARBLERS — A *Yellow-throated Vireo* near Amistad, N. Mex., June 21 (JPH) established a first state summer record and was undoubtedly a non-breeding straggler. In the area of Zuni, N. Mex., a Gray Vireo seen July 21 (AFS) provided a first local record. A Red-eyed Vireo at Zuni June 10 (AFS) was probably a late spring stray, but one found singing at 10,000 ft in Arizona's White Mts., July 14 (DSz,SP) was remarkable.

The end of the "spring vagrant season" is impossible to define, since occurrences of "eastern" warblers extend well into the summer. Mid-summer N. Parulas in Arizona were

on the upper San Pedro R., June 30 (SP) and at Molino Basin, Santa Catalina Mts., July 11 (†Tom & Paula Bartlett). Notable were individual Prothonotary Warblers on Bonito Cr., e. of Safford, Ariz., June 5 (ph., Tom Clark) and in Taos County, N. Mex., June 10 (WHk); and single Kentucky Warblers near Tucson June 8 (†M. Egger) and at the bottom of the Grand Canyon June 18 (RD,DL). An Ovenbird was singing in the Bill Williams Delta (hereafter, B.W.D.) June 13 (WHO,DF) and another was seen in the Magdalena Mts., N. Mex., June 19 (RLT). Wilson's Warbler is not yet known to breed in Arizona, but there have been some suggestive summer sightings; this year a pair was in appropriate nesting habitat at Phelps Cabin, White Mts., June 16 (DSz,SP). A ♀ and imm. ♂ Am. Redstart banded at Cottonwood Gulch, N. Mex., were present July 5 at least to Aug. 24 (AMc). While no evidence of successful breeding was obtained, these records are suggestive of summering — a first for the area.

In a class by itself was the Hooded Warbler, with no fewer than *eight* recorded in Arizona in addition to the two in late May. Singles were noted at B.W.D., June 21 (TB), in Garden Canyon, Huachuca Mts., July 13 through August (WR,KK,DD *et al.*), in Guadalupe Canyon July 21 (WR,RS *et al.*), and at Tucson, where one was banded July 26 (PW). More remarkable were two evident *pairs*, with a male and female on Workman Cr., Sirra Anchas, June 24 (ST,LD,GW) and another male and female together near Prescott during July (*fide* CST). Bizarre as it seems, we suspect it is only a matter of time until this species is found breeding in Arizona.

ICTERIDS, TANAGERS — Three ♂ and one ♀ *Bobolinks* were found June 16 near Springerville (DSz,SP); by July 7 there were at least two females there, and a nest was found (GR,ST), for the first evidence of breeding in Arizona since 1937 when a small colony was present near Show Low. A pair of Orchard Orioles with a young cowbird at Hobbs, N. Mex., July 29 (HS) represented the first local evidence of breeding (for the orioles!), although not unexpected; more surprising was a young ♂ Orchard Oriole at Ft. Sumner, N. Mex., June 20 (JPH). Brewer's Blackbirds were found nesting at Mescalero June 12-13 (HS), for the first known instance of breeding in the entire s.e. sector of New Mexico; other birds were present and possibly nesting at Santa Rosa June 19 (JPH).

Late spring vagrant Scarlet Tanagers were noted at Petrified Forest N.P. (Visitor Center), with a male and female seen June 3 (*fide* JC) and a male there June 4 (Ron Thomas). There are only about eight previous state records. Summer Tanagers are local in occurrence on the Pecos R.; one n. of Roswell in July (WHO) provided only a second record for that area.

FRINGILLIDS — A singing Varied Bunting near Portal July 28 - Aug. 25 (RM) was probably the first to be recorded on the e. side of the Chiricahuas although the species is common just s. of this area in Guadalupe Canyon. In recent years Indigo Buntings have summered regularly in s.e. Arizona, for example, at least 20 singing males were found there this season. Apparently the first actual evi-

dence of breeding there was provided by a pair with one recently-fledged young in upper Carr Canyon July 7 (KK,EC,CMc).

A foraging ♀ and four singing ♂ Dickcissels at Ft. Sumner, N. Mex., June 19-20 (JPH) suggested the possibility of breeding in the area; this likelihood had been only obliquely indicated by the previous scattering of summer records in the state. Unusual was a singing ♀-plumaged Cassin's Finch at Farmington June 1-21 (APN). Rufous-sided Towhees were found to be common in July in the Pecos Valley between Artesia and L. McMillan (WHO), for a new area of lowland summering in this typically upland species; a Brown Towhee near Artesia July 29 (WHO) was somewhat out-of-range.

Grasshopper Sparrows were noted at several points peripheral to their limited Arizona breeding range: at least one was on territory n. of Madera Canyon in May and June (KK), four or more were singing at Arivaca July 3 (GM,BH), and one was singing at Kansas Settlement July 12 (GM). These records undoubtedly pertained to the localized Arizona-Sonora breeding race, *A. s. ammodendrus*. A singing Five-striped Sparrow in Pima Canyon n. of Tucson June 26 (GM, Tom Valega) established

the northernmost record to date; evidently a wanderer, the bird was not seen on subsequent visits. Black-chinned Sparrows summered on Silver Cr., above Portal, with six territories located in May and some singing heard into August (RM), for the first recent indications of breeding in the Chiricahuas. Two Lincoln's Sparrows near Sunspot June 11 (HS) established a first local summer occurrence and only the second such for the entire Sacramento Highlands region of s.-c. New Mexico.

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