

SOUTHWEST REGION

**/Janet Witzeman, John P. Hubbard
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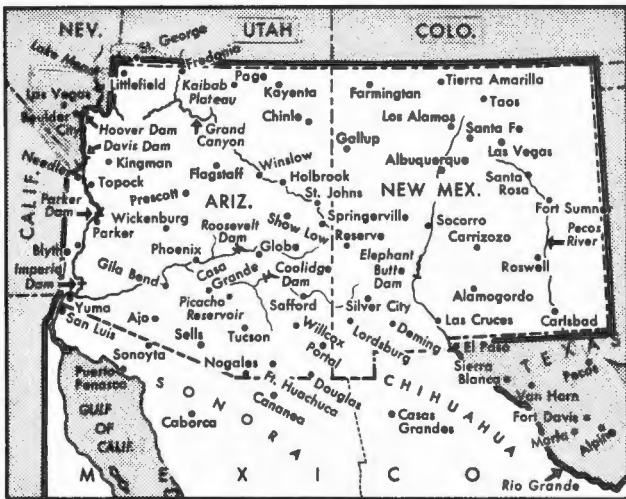
In autumn, following the breeding season, bird populations are at their highest point of the year; and so many young birds, malfunctioning navigators, are likely to stray off-course that the observer may reasonably hope to see rarities on every trip afield. But the same factors which make the season so exciting also render it difficult to predict, detect, analyze or extrapolate patterns of occurrence. This is one reason why the gradually increasing field coverage in the Southwest has continued to yield surprises every autumn.

Birding coverage was particularly good in New Mexico this autumn, with many of the more productive spots checked repeatedly during the season. Arizona also received extensive and widespread coverage, to a degree unheard of here just a few years ago. Many rarities were found; but the geographic pattern of the discoveries was quite uneven.

Inspired by the autumn 1978 discoveries in northeastern Arizona, Alan Nelson visited oasis situations in adjacent northwestern New Mexico, but his efforts met with mixed success and few vagrants. Arizona observers who journeyed to their "northeastern oases" this year were similarly jolted by the lack of eastern strays. But by contrast in south-central Arizona it was perhaps the best season ever for eastern warblers, and parts of New Mexico were also remarkably productive. The uneven productivity of difference areas suggests that (even though eastern vagrants are bound to appear in the West annually, regardless of any external influences) some factor such as local weather patterns must play a part in concentrating the vagrants in certain localities.

LOONS THROUGH IBISES — A remarkably early Com. Loon in full breeding plumage was on Ashurst L., near Flagstaff Sept. 14 (JC.DRP). Arctic Loons, rare away from the L.C.V., were seen at Upper L. Mary near Flagstaff (one, Nov. 12-17 — †CH *et al.*) and at Painted Rock Dam (two, Nov. 20+ — RBr *et al.*).

Occurrence of the Cattle Egret in this Region is still erratic and patchy. Moderate numbers were present September - November in the Carlsbad and Socorro area of New Mexico, while in s.w. Arizona a notable concentration of 250 was reported from the Dome Valley Sept. 21-23 (SG *et al.*). A few were noted in s.e. Arizona (DD), where formerly rare; new localities for the species were Chama, N. Mex., where one was captured Nov. 27 (L. Gallegos, ph., JPH), and Mammoth, Ariz., where up to 25 were present Oct. 20-27 (KVR *et al.*). Four



Louisiana Herons at Laguna Grande, Eddy Co., N. Mex., Aug. 8 (SW) established the highest concentration ever recorded for this rare visitor to New Mexico.

One of the better recent counts of Wood Stork in Arizona was 12 in the Dome Valley, lower Gila R., Sept. 9 (ST,LD); seven remained until Sept. 21 (SG). Also in the Dome Valley was a remarkable concentration of White-faced Ibis, estimated at 5000 on Sept. 9 (ST,LD).

WATERFOWL — Twelve Whistling Swans, a high number for n. Arizona, were on Lower L. Mary Nov. 30 (*vide* JC). Formerly known as a common transient in Arizona, the White-fronted Goose may be on the increase again; evidence is emerging for an expected influx in mid-September. The largest flock this fall was of 110 birds on L. Havasu Sept. 10 (SG,RD), but scattered individuals and smaller flocks were seen elsewhere, most notably two on Lower L. Mary Sept. 12 (JA,†CH). Both of the "blue-winged" teal are unusual in late autumn in New Mexico; a ♂ Blue-winged was at La Joya State Game Ref., Oct. 30 (ME), and one ♂ Cinnamon was at Las Cruces Nov. 21 and five occurred at Bosque del Apache N.W.R. (hereafter, Bosque) Nov. 23 (WP).

A ♂ **European Wigeon** on Ganado L., Oct. 6 (GR *et al.*) was only the third or fourth recorded for Arizona and first for the n.e. Remarkably, another was seen the same day at Puerto Penasco, probably a first sighting for Sonora (DSj). Yet another appeared at Phoenix Nov. 6 (G. Crane *et al.*), and remained through the end of the year in the same ponds that hosted one last winter. Oldsquaws made an unprecedented showing in New Mexico with three at L. Avalon, Eddy Co., Nov. 22 (RWI), one at Bosque Nov. 23 (WP), and others rumored to be at Maxwell N.W.R., and Cochiti L. Two White-winged Scoters at L. Avalon Nov. 22 (RWI) were also unusual.

RAPTORS — Two ad. **White-tailed Kites** were photographed in Arizona: one n. of the Santa Rita Mts., Aug. 22 (P. Mattocks, D. Donham, ph., R. Hudson) and one near Hereford Oct. 27 or 28 (Pat O'Brien). Arizona had only two or three previous records, but with the recent buildup of the species in California and w. Mexico, further occurrences here should be expected. Wandering or migrant

single Mississippi Kites were noted at Albuquerque Aug. 8 (HS) & 26 (S. Brown).

No major lowland flight of Goshawks was noted, but one adult was at Bitter Lake N.W.R., Nov. 21 (WHO). A probable imm. Broad-winged Hawk was n.e. of Roswell Oct. 3 (WHO); the species is rare in New Mexico, particularly so in autumn. An imm. Caracara photographed at San Bernardino Ranch e. of Douglas Nov. 10 (DD) was exceptionally far e., and was probably a stray from Sonora rather than from the limited s.w. Arizona population.

GAMEBIRDS, CRANES — Scaled Quail are rare and local in w.-c. New Mexico, but a flock was seen Nov. 5 at Ft. Wingate (JPH *et al.*). Surveys in the Sangre de Cristo Mts., n. N. Mex., revealed the presence of White-tailed Ptarmigan on Wheeler and Latir peaks (*vide* A. Renfro); two were seen on State Line Peak Aug. 10 (R. Peterson).

As of the end of the period, 15 Whooping Cranes (including six juveniles) were in New Mexico, all on the Rio Grande between Bosque and Los Lunas. Oddly, a single bird turned up early to the s. of this area at Caballo Dam Oct. 7 (†J. Bednarz). The recent rise in Arizona's wintering population of Sandhill Cranes continued, with minimum counts of 1400± in the L.C.V., and 8300 s. of Willcox, representing a substantial increase over last year's count (*vide* Ariz. Game & Fish Dept.).

SHOREBIRDS — The shorebird migration was considered excellent in New Mexico, including the Zuni Mts. area, where notable occurrences included two Sanderlings at Bluewater L., Sept. 25 (AMc). Arizona observers were less impressed with the shorebird flight, but the lack of suitable and convenient habitat was held to be a major factor.

Eight Snowy Plovers at Bosque Aug. 19-26 (D&SH) represented only the second recent record there. Single migrant Whimbrels in notable areas were at L. McMillan, N. Mex., Aug. 26 (SW) and in the Dome Valley, Ariz., Sept. 9 (ST,LD). Red Knots, considered very rare in the Region, made a good showing this season. In New Mexico singles were photographed Sept. 1 at Bitter L. and Sept. 15 at L. McMillan (D&SH). In Arizona, following the three noted in our preceding report, Oct. 6 brought one in the Dome Valley (ST) and two at Ganado L. (GR *et al.*), the latter being the first for n.e. Arizona.

A Short-billed Dowitcher calling at L. McMillan Oct. 17 (MA,WHO) provided the fourth convincing New Mexico record; occurrence of the species in the state has yet to be documented. Westerly autumn records of Stilt Sandpipers are few in New Mexico, so four at White Sands Nat'l Mon., Aug. 19 (†J.H. Lawton) and one photographed at Bosque Aug. 20 (D&SH) were notable.

A **Buff-breasted Sandpiper** was reported and reasonably well-described from L. McMil-

lan Aug. 26 (†RWI); this would be a first record for New Mexico (and for the Region). Two Am. Avocets were seen Sept. 25 & Oct. 27 (AMc) on Bluewater L., w.-c. New Mexico, where the species is unusual. A **Red Phalarope** was well-described from Bitter Lake N.W.R., Sept. 27 & Oct. 5 (†WHO *et al.*) for New Mexico's third record. Very late for their respective sections of Arizona were single Wilson's Phalaropes at Ganado L., Oct. 15 (KK,JW,GR) and Phoenix Nov. 7 (ST&GR).

GULLS THROUGH SKIMMERS — An ad. California Gull was photographed at Elephant Butte L., Nov. 8 (D&J Hoffman) for the first verified record for s.w. New Mexico. Arizona noted a remarkable November movement of Franklin's Gulls, with 18 at Phoenix Nov. 7-8 (ST,GR,KVR), six at Parker Nov. 13 and two at Davis Dam Nov. 14-16 (SG,EF), one at Tucson Nov. 3 (DSz), and two on L. Havasu Nov. 24 (KVR,JW); the species was also recorded in New Mexico during this period. Rare inland, an ad. Heermann's Gull was at Tucson Nov. 19 (EB,GG *et al.*).

Although Sabine's Gull is generally considered a pelagic migrant, the species is recorded almost annually in the Region. This season singles were at Ashurst L., Ariz., Sept. 12 (†CH,JA), Imperial Dam Sept. 29 - Oct. 1 (SG), L. Havasu Oct. 8 (ph., SG), Loving, N. Mex., Oct. 10 (MA), and Many Farms L., extreme n.e. Ariz., Oct. 15 (GR,KK,JW). A **Black Skimmer** on the L.C.R., at Cibola N.W.R., Aug. 30 (JD,VH) provided Arizona's third record.

DOVES THROUGH TROGONS — In the Rio Grande Valley, numbers of White-winged Doves around Williamsburg were up (D. Miller). Most left Socorro by Aug. 25, but a very late one was there Oct. 30 - Dec. 3 (PB); another late individual was in Carlsbad Nov. 22 (SW). A stray Inca Dove near Springerville Oct. 13 (KK,JW,GR) was well n. of usual limits.

Several observers felt that Roadrunners were unusually numerous ("spectacularly common" — DSz) in s. Arizona. Possibly related to this abundance were reports of singles at 9000 ft near the top of Mt. Lemón, Tucson Aug. 19 (M. Larson, *vide* GM), on Signal Peak near Globe at 7800 ft Sept. 24 (DWB, *vide* BJ), and Onion Saddle in the Chiricahuas at 7500 ft Nov. 28 (*vide* SSp), as well as several sightings in the middle of Tucson — all unusual points for the species.

Although migrant Black Swifts must pass over Arizona, there are still no verified state records; a probable individual was seen over West Fork Oak Creek Canyon Aug. 31 (†CB, PMc). Two to four Vaux's Swifts were seen n. of Clarkdale Sept. 21 (†CH,DRP), for one of the few records n. of c. Arizona.

Single ♀-plumaged Lucifer Hummingbirds were reported at Portal Sept. 14 and Oct. 10-23 (SSp), and not far away in the Peloncillo Mts., N. Mex., Oct. 4-9 (R. Scholes). A ♂ Calliope Hummingbird was seen Aug. 28-29 at Artesia (WHO *et al.*), for a local first; the species is quite rare on the e. plains. Post-breeding wandering Broad-tailed Hummingbirds reached Phoenix, with one seen Oct. 30 and three Nov. 7 (ST,GR); much more unusual were singles farther w. at the Dome Valley Sept. 6-8 (JR) and Bill Williams Delta Sept. 30 (KVR,VH).

The story of the Eared Trogon in Arizona continues: one (and perhaps a second) was in South Fork, Cave Creek Canyon of the Chiricahua Mts., Aug. 11-12 (R. Taylor, m.ob.). Those who combed South Fork on subsequent days failed to find it. But no one really believed that the bird (s) had promptly flown back to Mexico, and indeed there were possible sightings Sept. 8 (*fide* SSp) and a definite one Oct. 22 (AMc). Previously unreported in this column was a record in autumn 1978: one seen (and a diagnostic feather found) in main Cave Creek Canyon Nov. 5 (L. Kiff, K. Hansen); in that case as well, the bird could not be relocated subsequently. Our limited experience suggests that Eared Trogons do more wandering than their smaller relatives, and it is easy to see how any number of them could elude observers in the rugged Chiricahuas.

WOODPECKERS, FLYCATCHERS — A ♂ Red-bellied Woodpecker was seen in Ft. Sumner Nov. 29 (WHO); there are very few records for the species in New Mexico, where its occurrence has not yet been documented. Although Downy Woodpeckers wander regularly to lowland riparian zones in n. parts of this Region, one at Burnham, n.w. New Mexico, Sept. 29 (APN *et al.*) was in an unusually arid locale and one at Rattlesnake Springs, N. Mex., Sept. 30 (SW) was s. of the usual range.

Following the two E. Kingbirds in s.e. Arizona in June, one was n.w. of Tucson Oct. 7 (WD) and one was in the L.C.V., near Poston Sept. 4 (†SG), adding up to an exceptional number of extralimital records. Farther n. and e., one was at Zuni, N. Mex., Aug. 5 (AS) and four were seen in Apache County, Ariz., Aug. 26 (KVR). Individuals reported as Great Crested Flycatchers were at Rattlesnake Springs Aug. 29 (†RWI) and Sept. 2 (†D&SH), and another was heard n.e. of Roswell Sept. 6 by experienced observers (WHO *et al.*); the species is a very rare straggler to e. New Mexico. A Black Phoebe at Zuni Aug. 26 - Sept. 22 (AS) was n. of normal limits.

JAYS THROUGH THRUSHES — Indicative of the continuing spread of the Blue Jay in e. New Mexico were first local records at Ft. Sumner (three Oct. 15 and Nov. 27) and n.e. of Roswell (one Oct. 22), plus an adult with three fledglings Aug. 13 at Artesia, suggesting local breeding (all WHO). Cañon Wren populations in parts of c. Arizona seemed to be exceptionally high, and individuals appeared at scattered points in the lowlands s.w. of Phoenix, where very unusual.

Gray Catbirds are rarely observed in Arizona away from breeding areas, so single migrants near Portal Oct. 19 (A. Hayes, *fide* SSp) and at Globe Nov. 5 (†BJa, H. & M. Wood) were noteworthy. A surprisingly early Brown Thrasher (a regular stray to Arizona) was at Pipe Springs Aug. 15 (KVR). A Bendire's Thrasher seen and well-described at Socorro Aug. 24-26 (†PB) was a first for that area.

A ♂ Varied Thrush, a first for the Zuni Mts. area, was near Bluewater L., Nov. 8 (AMc); New Mexico has only a handful of records. In Arizona, where the species is rare, the only report was of a male s.w. of Flagstaff Oct. 20

(S. Emslie, *fide* JC). A Wood Thrush, very rare in New Mexico, was heard n.e. of Roswell Oct. 5 by an observer familiar with the species (WHO). Seven E. Bluebirds at Ft. Sumner Oct. 15, and 25 there Nov. 29 (WHO), were local firsts, although the species may be regular in migration and winter on the e. plains of New Mexico.

PIPITS THROUGH VIREOS — The status of the inconspicuous Sprague's Pipit is generally being clarified here. Seventeen were noted Oct. 16 - Nov. 13 (WHO *et al.*) in the Pecos Valley between Ft. Sumner and L. McMillan, where perhaps regular but seldom reported previously. One near Encino, c. N. Mex., Oct. 13 (D&SH) established a local but not unexpected first, while four to five seen Nov. 14 into December in the Dome Valley (SG *et al.*) was a surprisingly high count for s.w. Arizona. Rare in Arizona, a Bohemian Waxwing was seen with Cedars in Flagstaff Nov. 14 (C. LaRue, *fide* JC). The usual small numbers of N. Shrikes occurred in such areas as n. Arizona; s. of normal limits were singles w. of Phoenix Nov. 10 (ph., K. Ingram) and near L. McMillan Nov. 10 and early December (†MA, WHO).

A Solitary Vireo at the Boyce Thompson Arboretum near Superior, Ariz. (hereafter, B.T. Arboretum) Oct. 22-23 was thought to represent one of the brightly-colored e. races, rare vagrants to the West (ST, GR). Exceedingly rare in New Mexico, single Philadelphia Vireos were at Percha Dam Sept. 23 (ph., D&SH) and at Rattlesnake Springs Sept. 25 (†RWI).

WARBLERS — As mentioned in the introduction, the vagrant-hunters met with mixed fortunes, with the majority of the e. warblers being found in s. areas of the Region. The prize for the season undoubtedly was the Connecticut Warbler at Tucson Sept. 15-18 (RBr, m.ob., ph., JW, KVR, LD), thoroughly documented for Arizona's first verifiable record. At about the same time, Sept. 11, another Connecticut was reported at Rattlesnake Springs (†RWI); this would be New Mexico's first record if accepted.



Connecticut Warbler, Tucson, Ariz., Sept. 16, 1979. Photo/Janet Witzeman.

Several other very rare warblers were recorded. Arizona's ninth and tenth records for Worm-eating Warbler were established by singles at B.T. Arboretum Oct. 20-22 (KVR *et al.*) and Tucson Nov. 6-15 (EB, m.ob.); photos of the first one (ST) provided the first Regional documentation. Also very rare in New Mexico, a Worm-eating was at Rattlesnake Springs Sept. 5 (SW). Three Regional records in one autumn are particularly notable since almost all previous occurrences have been in spring.

At Rattlesnake Springs, a probable Blackburnian Warbler was seen Sept. 15 (†SH) and another or the same Sept. 17 (†SW); New Mexico has very few records. Single Blackburnians near Wickenburg Oct. 15 (J. & R. Zook), at B.T. Arboretum Oct. 20-21 (ph., KVR *et al.*) and a second individual there Oct. 21-22 (KK, GR, EC, ph. ST) brought Arizona's total to ten records for the species — seven of these in the last 2 years. New Mexico noted Bay-breasted Warblers at Rattlesnake Springs Sept. 25 & 30 (†RWI, SW), at Sierra Grande Sept. 23 (JPH, *U.N.M.), and near Cliff Oct. 2 (†JE). Arizona's seventh and eighth Blackpoll Warblers were at Tucson Oct. 19 (DSz) and Oct. 27-28 (DSz, AB *et al.*). A remarkable influx brought ten Palm Warblers to the Region; in New Mexico singles were at Sierra Grande Sept. 22 (†JE), Loving Sept. 28, Mayhill Oct. 1, Alto Oct. 12, near Roswell Oct. 14, and L. McMillan Nov. 10 (all WHO, MA); in Arizona singles were n. of Springville Sept. 22 (ST, LD *et al.*), Tucson Oct. 6 (DSz, GG), e. of Phoenix Oct. 29-30 (VH *et al.*), and s.w. of Phoenix Nov. 7 (GR, ST). Finally, single Canada Warblers were at Tucson Oct. 19 (KK, m.ob.) and the B.T. Arboretum Oct. 21-27 (GR *et al.*, ph., KVR); Arizona had only two previous records.

Other notable e. strays included a Prothonotary Warbler at Percha Dam Sept. 22 (ph., D&SH), very rare in autumn in New Mexico. Three Magnolia Warblers reached Arizona, with singles at Tes Nez Iah Sept. 2 (ST *et al.*), Kayenta Oct. 6 (CH), and Tucson Oct. 19-21 (WD, AB *et al.*). A Chestnut-sided Warbler was at Percha Dam, N. Mex., Sept. 29, while Arizona had singles e. of Phoenix in late October (VH, AL, ML) and at Tucson Nov. 3 (DSz).

In the "rare-but-regular" category, reports of seven Black-and-white Warblers and 14+ Am. Redstarts in Arizona seemed about normal, but only one Ovenbird and two Tennessee Warblers amounted to low totals. Black-throated Green Warblers seemed "almost numerous" at Rattlesnake Springs Sept. 26 - Oct. 4 (RWI *et al.*), and c. Arizona noted three to four Oct. 6-21. A ♀ Black-throated Blue Warbler at Percha Dam Sept. 29 (†D&SH), and singles in c. Arizona at Seven Springs Oct. 13-14 (C. Titzck *et al.*) and Tuzigoot Oct. 19 (ST) were within the normal range for dates for this straggler.

Among more typically s.w. warblers, a Lucy's Warbler n.e. of Roswell Nov. 15 (†MA, WHO) established New Mexico's first credible record e. of the Rio Grande Valley (and a surprisingly late occurrence as well). Also very late was a Lucy's at Tucson until Dec. 2, but some observers felt that the bird was injured. Two Painted Redstarts in Cienega Canyon, Sandia Mts., N. Mex., Sept. 4-8 (RLT *et al.*) were far n. of the species' normal range.

ICTERIDS, TANAGERS — Rarely reported in autumn, 12-15 Bobolinks at Rattlesnake Springs Sept. 2 (†D&SH) were notable. An E. Meadowlark s. of Parker Nov. 25 (KVR) provided only the second record as far w. as the L.C.V. Three Streak-backed Orioles, rare stragglers from Mexico, appeared at the Tucson feeder that hosted two last fall: a subad. male Sept. 27 - Oct. 20, a ♀-plumaged bird Sept. 29 - Oct. 10, and a second female-type Oct. 1 and Oct. 20-22 (GM *et al.*). A ♂ N. (Baltimore) Oriole was seen n.e. of Phoenix

Aug. 26 (GR *et al.*), for one of Arizona's few records.

At the outposts of the Com. Grackle's expanding range, at least ten, including immatures, were seen at Farmington Aug. 15-16, after several possible females were present during June-July (APN); one in Socorro Oct. 29 (ME) was somewhat s. of usual limits in the Rio Grande Valley. A Scarlet Tanager was discovered in suburban Phoenix Nov. 27-28 (ph., KVR *et al.*), for about the ninth Arizona record.

FRINGILLIDS — The distribution of the Brown-capped Rosy-Finch in the Sangre de Cristo Mts., N. Mex., is only sketchily known. In the period Aug. 3-10, the species was found on Latir, Wheeler, Jacarilla, and Pecos Baldy (Clait Braun). An individual of the easily-overlooked Grasshopper Sparrow was noted at Burnham, N. Mex., Sept. 29 (APN). In Arizona, one at Phoenix Nov. 8 (GRKK) provided the first documented record for that well-worked area, and one near the Bill Williams Delta Nov. 25 (KVR) was one of the few ever noted in the L.C.V. Two McCown's Longspurs

were photographed near Encino, N. Mex., Oct. 13 (D&SH), providing a first local record for a species whose status in the Region is still poorly understood. A Chestnut-collared Longspur near Burnham Oct. 14 (†APN) was evidently the first ever recorded in extreme n.w. New Mexico.

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