

SOUTHWEST REGION

/Kenn Kaufman, John P. Hubbard
and Janet Witzeman

Torrid-zone temperatures prevailed, but there was little of avian novelty along the Mexican frontier (aside from one hummingbird, and a very good passerine that got away). The big discoveries were all farther north: New Mexico had its first confirmed instances of breeding for Wilson's Phalarope and Savannah Sparrow, and Arizona recorded its first nesting ever for Hammond's Flycatcher and first in the 20th century for Belted Kingfisher. Another highlight was the accumulation of lesser discoveries made during an intensive survey of the Pecos Valley (herein abbreviated "P.V.") in eastern New Mexico.

LOONS THROUGH HERONS—A Com. Loon was at Painted Rock Dam July 26, for one of Arizona's very few summer records away from the L.C.R. (KK *et al.*). Also very unusual for summer were two Horned Grebes in partial breeding plumage at L. McMillan, N.M., June 9 (WH). Western Grebes, first recorded breeding in Arizona in 1973 on the L.C.R., established a new nesting locality this summer, with downy young seen July 26 at Painted Rock Dam (GR). A W. Grebe seen June 18 at Weatherly L., n.e. N.M. (JPH), was e. of the usual summer range.

A new breeding locality for Double-crested Cormorant was Abiquiu L., N.M., where 3 nests were seen June 28 and later (KP *et al.*); rising waters subsequently destroyed the nests (*vide* Ed Swenson). The species was also found nesting at Painted Rock Dam for a second year (GR *et al.*). The only Magnificent

Frigatebird of the period was an immature n. of Cibola N.W.R., July 18 (TS).

A concentration of 500-600 Cattle Egrets in the Dome Valley July 7 (RM, Gwen Robinson) established a new high count for Arizona; as in recent years, 50-60 birds had been present through June. The species may well be found breeding in this area. Louisiana Herons staged an influx into the lower P.V., with singles at L. McMillan July 1 (WH), Loving July 3 (WH *et al.*), and Bitter Lake N.W.R., July 26-27 (D&SH). An ad. Little Blue Heron at Arlington July 15 (SB) followed about a dozen previous Arizona records. A Reddish Egret visited a golf course pond near Phoenix July 14-18 (PB, CH, ph—S<); there were only 3 previous Arizona records, none since 1960 (although one came close recently at Imperial Dam on the L.C.R.).

WATERFOWL—Eleven Canada Geese on the Pecos R., 27 mi n.e. of Roswell, N.M., July 24 (WH) were unexpected. A pair of Black-bellied Whistling Ducks, erratic breeders in Arizona, fledged six young at Tucson. Notable breeding records in New Mexico included single broods of shovelers at Kirtland July 29 (APN), Com. Mergansers at Medenales June 8 (C. Hundertmark), and Ruddy Ducks at Zuni June 22 (AS), while in Arizona a pair of Blue-winged Teal with four



young seen July 1 in the Chino Valley (CT) were notable. A pair of Mexican Ducks persisted at L. McMillan, N.M., where noted July 10 & 27 (WH *et al.*).

Possibly indicative of local breeding, many Redheads persisted near Zuni through June 21, when the observer (AS) had to depart; twelve were seen July 4 at Red L., on the Arizona-New Mexico border (GR, KVR). Unusual summer non-breeders included a ♂ Bufflehead and a pair of Lesser Scaup at Zuni June 21-22 (AS), and an eclipse-plumaged Com. Goldeneye at Bitter Lake N.W.R., July 19 (WH) and July 27 (NJ).

RAPTORS—At least 11 Mississippi Kites were seen July 14 in Roswell (WH) where rarely reported in recent years. The breeding colony at the Clovis, N.M., golf course was down to about five pairs, and unaggressive compared to the 15-20 that harassed golfers



Reddish Egret, Phoenix, Ariz., July 14, 1980.
Photo/Scott and Linda Terrill.

there last year (Randy Johnson). Small numbers of Marsh Hawks summered in the P.V., from Ft. Sumner s. to Loving; single adults were seen carrying food in the Artesia area June 16 & July 10 (WH).

S.A.

Although we'd rather avoid the subject, accumulated events demand this comment: every year, dozens of birders search specifically for Aplomado Falcons in s.e. Arizona. Every year, some (including a few competent, conscientious observers) claim success. But analysis indicates that *all* of these reports are based upon distant views, process-of-elimination reasoning, and the assumption that the species is "known to be present." This latter assumption is completely false in Arizona's case (although New Mexico has more recent reliable records); here, to our knowledge, there has not been a documented record for more than seventy years and not even a believable sighting within the last forty, despite published claims to the contrary.

SHOREBIRDS, GULLS, TERNS—Although there is justifiable concern for the Snowy Plover in some quarters, it undeniably succeeds in exploiting temporary conditions here. Three pairs were at Painted Rock Dam June 14 (S<, KVR,GR), and many pairs with downy young were noted there July 13 and subsequently (R&JW *et al.*). We know of only one previous instance of breeding at Painted Rock (in 1974, when water-levels and shoreline conditions were similar) and only one other breeding locality in Arizona (in artificial habitat at Willcox). At Bosque del Apache N.W.R., N.M., 15 Snowy Plovers including a flightless juvenile were seen July 19 (D&SH), for the first recent breeding record.

A single Com. Snipe was again found July 7 (GR *et al.*) at Springerville, Ariz., where the species bred historically. A Long-billed Curlew seen June 2 at Horse L. (RLT) was w. of the usual summer range in New Mexico. A

Whimbrel at Painted Rock Dam June 14 (S<,GR, ph—KVR) was remarkably early (or late?), as the species is generally a rare migrant in July-August and very rare in spring; still notable for the number and early date were six near Poston, Ariz., July 4 (MK).

Because the spring and fall migrations of **Wilson's Phalarope** seem to merge imperceptibly during June, some of us have paid too little attention to summer occurrences. That attitude might be altered by the June 30 discovery of an adult with a downy young at Bluewater L. (AM,BM,PG,TL), the first recorded breeding ever for New Mexico and the Region. Coincidentally, two pairs were found June 7-8 in apparently suitable nesting habitat near Springerville, Ariz. (DS).

With the gradual clarification of the status of gull species in the Region, summer records of California Gulls are increasing. This year one was at L. McMillan, N.M., July 21 (MA *et al.*), and three were at Painted Rock Dam, Ariz., July 26 (KK,DS,KVR,GR). Unseasonal single Franklin's Gulls in Arizona were at Painted Rock Dam June 14 (S< *et al.*) and Ganado L. July 5 (GR *et al.*), while at L. McMillan, N.M., June records of Franklin's Gulls and Forster's Terns were considered unusual (WH). At Bitter Lake N.W.R., where the Least Tern is a rare breeder, two adults and three fledglings were seen July 19 (WH). A single Least Tern near Cibola N.W.R., June 19-20 (RM,BW), provided about the seventh Arizona record and third for the L.C.R.

OWLS THROUGH HUMMINGBIRDS—

At least two Saw-whet Owls and a Long-eared Owl on Bill Williams Mt., w. of Flagstaff, during the summer, established new locality records for these uncommon and local species (CT). The Elf Owl has lost ground at its w. limits, so it was encouraging to hear of two at the Yuma Proving Grounds June 4 (G. Robinson).

Continuing its uneven march N across Arizona, the **Buff-collared Nightjar** was discovered at a new locality, Aravaipa Canyon. Up to three (or more) were heard and seen at two points in the canyon from spring into August (S&LM,TJ,m.ob.). A new n. locality for Lesser Nighthawk in the P.V. was 10 mi s. of Ft. Sumner, where a male was taken (* to Ariz. St. Univ.) and other birds observed July 9 (TH).

Chimney Swifts again summered in Tucson, their only "regular" Arizona locality, with two or more seen during June and July (DS,BB). In e. New Mexico, one was near L. McMillan June 3 (TH); three in Clayton June 18 (JPH) were the first reported there in several summers, although WC had seen them there in the 1970s. Eight White-throated Swifts near Mosquero, N.M., June 17 (JPH) were near the e. limits of probable breeding. A probable Black Swift over Lake Peak, N.M., marked the third summer of record there. Who will take up the challenge to find a nest?

It was a generally poor summer for hummingbird variety in Arizona, with no definite Beryllines or White-eareds, and single Lucifers only at Portal and Guadalupe Canyon. The one exception was provided by a **Plain-capped Starthroat** near Sierra Vista

June 28 (KVR,TB); Arizona has only 3 documented records, although a number of other probable reports suggest the species may be semi-regular in the Nogales region. In New Mexico, notable e. records were single ♂ Rufous Hummingbirds n.e. of Roswell July 18 and at Artesia July 19-31, and Broad-tailed Hummingbirds n.e. of Roswell June 5 and s.e. of Artesia in mid-July (WH *et al.*).

KINGFISHERS THROUGH FLY-CATCHERS—A **Belted Kingfisher** nest with nestlings was found in late May on Spring Creek, near Sedona (S. Emslie, *fide* CT; details to be published elsewhere). This was Arizona's first definite breeding in this century, although suspicious summer records have been frequent; this year, for example, one was near Portal June 7-10 (HB) and three were seen near Springerville July 7 (CH). Kingfishers also summered in small numbers in the P.V., from the Roswell area to Loving, but no nest was found (WH *et al.*).

Red-headed Woodpeckers were unusually widespread and numerous in e. New Mexico: up to 20 pairs were in the P.V., from Ft. Sumner to Artesia, with a nest found at Artesia June 20 (WH *et al.*); a straggler reached Farmington July 30 (J. Nordstrom, *fide* APN). A N. Three-toed Woodpecker was seen July 5 in the Arizona section of the Chuska Mts. (GR,KVR), for a first local record.

An E. Kingbird at Patagonia July 13 (RS) was among the very few ever seen in s.e. Arizona. Cassin's Kingbirds near the probable e. breeding limits in New Mexico were four at Seneca June 19 and one near Logan June 17 (JPH). A Tropical Kingbird in the Dome Valley, Ariz., June 9 (†RM) was probably an overshooting migrant, while a pair near Sierra Vista June 28 (KVR) indicated a new probable breeding area. An E. Phoebe at Folsom Falls, N.M., June 20 was the second recorded there, but near El Pueblo (where it bred last year) none was detected June 16 (JPH); one was reported June 10 at Bosque del Apache N.W.R. (RLT). A Black Phoebe at Zuni June 1-22 (AS) was n. of the usual range in New Mexico.

Attention to difficult identifications paid off with a new breeding species for Arizona, a pair of **Hammond's Flycatchers** with a nest in the Chuska Mts., found July 4 (KVR,GR, ph—S<); details will be published elsewhere. Remarkable was a Coues' Flycatcher in the Dome Valley, s.w. Arizona, June 9 (†RM), geographically and ecologically far removed from any breeding locale. A new summering area for the Beardless Flycatcher was the Portal region, where at least two were seen during June and July (*fide* SS).

SWALLOWS THROUGH MIMIDS—Violet-green Swallows established a first local summer record in New Mexico with three near Mosquero June 17 (JPH). Tree Swallows, only recently found nesting in Arizona, were present in numbers again at Lee Valley Res., White Mts. (DS); one in the Chuska Mts., July 4 (KVR *et al.*) suggested another possible breeding site.

Two Blue Jays were seen June 28 at Ft. Sumner, perhaps a new breeding locality for New Mexico, and one was in Roswell July 19 (WH *et al.*). Common Crows at n.e. limits in

New Mexico were two in the easternmost Dry Cimarron Valley June 19 and one near Logan June 18 (JPH). In Arizona, Clark's Nutcrackers are known to be regular residents only in the White and San Francisco Mts., so three in the Chuskas July 4 (GR *et al.*) and 26 on Bill Williams Mt., June 11 (CT), were noteworthy. A Curve-billed Thrasher near Oatman July 30 (†RM) was n.w. of the usual Arizona range, and several Crissal Thrashers n.e. of Roswell in June-July (WH *et al.*) provided additional n. records for the P.V.

THRUSHES THROUGH SILKY-FLY-CATCHERS—A probable Rufous-backed Robin was reported June 3-4 in Guadalupe Canyon, Ariz. (CB, †J. Frank *et al.*); the state has only one well-supported summer record. Two Veeries and three Swainson's Thrushes were singing on territory in July in the South Fork area near Springerville, the only Arizona point where either is known to summer regularly (BJo *et al.*). A very late migrant Swainson's Thrush was in Phoenix June 15 (SRD). Three Townsend's Solitaires noted June 7 in the Gallinas Mts., s.c. New Mexico (GS), provided a first local summer record.

A Water Pipit under a lawn sprinkler near Alto, s.c. New Mexico, July 2 (NJ) was well out of range for the date. Also near Alto, ten Cedar Waxwings seen July 3 (NJ) constituted the first local summer report. A probable ♀ Phainopepla was reported June 10 or 11 at Albuquerque (J. & N. Dilley), well n. of usual limits.

In the summer's most tantalizing event, an extremely competent observer had a brief view of a Gray Silky-Flycatcher flying with Phainopeplas near Patagonia July 17. Abundant in parts of w. Mexico, this species remains unrecorded in the United States. Although this individual was never relocated, and it will not be submitted as a formal record, observers clearly should keep this species in mind henceforth.

VIREOS, WARBLERS—Totally unexpected was a **Yellow-green Vireo** at a desert oasis near Theba, Ariz., July 13-15 (GR *et al.*, ph—RW). There were about 3 previous state records, none documented by specimen or photos, all May-July in riparian zones of the extreme s.e.

Orange-crowned Warblers are quite local as breeders in Arizona, so of interest were eight in the Chuska Mts., July 4-6 (GR, ST *et al.*), a pair at Rustler Park, Chiricahua Mts., July 17 (RM), and the report that the species was common throughout the summer at Hart Prairie near Flagstaff (DRP). More depressing was the news that no Yellow Warblers were found summering in the P.V., where the species might have been expected (WH *et al.*); status of Yellow Warblers in all riparian zones of the Southwest should be monitored. Evincing a gradual range expansion NW, an Olive Warbler was present through the summer on Bill Williams Mt., w. of Flagstaff; one (previously unreported) was also there May-July 1979 (CT).

Seasonally unexpected were summer Townsend's Warblers in New Mexico, one in the Sacramento Mts., June 19 (WH), and one near Taos on and around June 23 (Walton Hawk); equally odd was a Yellow-rumped

(Audubon's) Warbler in the lowlands at Patagonia July 1 (KG). Summer straggler ♀-plumaged Am. Redstarts occurred in the P.V. near Roswell June 13 and Artesia July 4 (WH *et al.*). Near Springerville, Ariz., where the species has nested previously, two ♂ Am. Redstarts were present during June and July, but no female was seen (BJo *et al.*).

ICTERIDS, TANAGERS—Bobolinks summer rarely and sporadically in the Region. Near Springerville, where the species nested last year, a pair was found July 7 (RD, GR, KVR); one was reported in late June at Parkview, a traditional New Mexico locality (KP). Five E. Meadowlarks singing near Logan, N.M., June 18 (JPH) were n. of usual areas. A scattering of extralimital Orchard Orioles occurred, with singles in Arizona June 14 at Theba (GR, †ST *et al.*) and near Nogales (DS), one at Glenwood, N.M., June 30 (*fide* BMCK), and another earlier nearby at Cliff (*fide* JE). A ♂ Northern (Baltimore) Oriole, very rare in Arizona, was at Portal June 4-7 (B&MS, W&SS). Single ♂ Scott's Orioles notably far n. in New Mexico were n. of Farmington June 13-14 (APN), near La Liendre and near Trementina June 16 (JPH).

Great-tailed Grackles in new or infrequent areas of occurrence included one at Hart Prairie above Flagstaff June 1 (DRP) and, in New Mexico, at least four at Ft. Sumner in June (WH), three at La Plata June 15 (APN), and one at Sandia Park June 21 (HS). Common Grackles are expanding and consolidating their New Mexico range: they bred again at Farmington (APN), and three or four adults were carrying food in June at Zuni (AS). When will Arizona get a record?

A Hepatic Tanager seen June 17 near Mosquero, N.M. (JPH), was in a new area of occurrence. Summer Tanagers were found to be numerous in the P.V., n. to Ft. Sumner (WH *et al.*).

FRINGILLIDS—Evidently Indigo Bunting populations in s.e. Arizona continue to increase; ten or more males were on territory near Portal this season, and a nest was found July 26 (W&SS). Indigos were also fairly common in the lower P.V., from Roswell to L. McMillan (WH *et al.*). Varied Buntings, invading from a different direction, had notable locality records with two near Portal during the summer (RMO, SS) and one near Sierra Vista June 28 (KVR). Southeast of usual areas, at least five Lazuli Buntings were singing near Villanueva, N.M., June 16 (JPH); seven were seen June 15 (but not later) s.e. of Artesia (MA). Painted Buntings were unexpectedly widespread in the P.V., common in the s., and in small numbers n. to 10 mi. s. of Ft. Sumner (WH *et al.*). A ♂ Painted Bunting near Mesilla, N.M., July 4-7 (L. & P. Hartshorne) was also notable.

Single Cassin's Finches in peripheral areas were at Santa Fe July 24 (JPH) and Capulin Canyon, Sandia Mts., June 21 (HS). Two Pine Grosbeaks were feeding fledglings at Sheep Crossing, White Mts., June 7-8 (DS); although the species is resident in Arizona's boreal zones, there has been little direct evidence of breeding.

Juveniles seen July 10 (CT) indicated a third definite Arizona breeding locale for Lawrence's Goldfinch: near Wickenburg,

where nesting was suspected last year. Proven nesting in the state is mostly a recent phenomenon, but a specimen in breeding condition was taken near Wickenburg in May 1953. Twenty Red Crossbills were seen in Farmington on the odd date of June 19 (APN).

Erratic in breeding distribution, Lark Buntings were present in n.e. New Mexico in June, including in Union County and between Las Vegas and Mosquero (JPH); a male near Nageezi June 28 (GS) was w. of normal summer limits. The Savannah Sparrow was confirmed as a breeding species in New Mexico when a nest was found June 30 at Bluewater L., in an area supporting several pairs (RB, BM, AM, TL); there have been summer records suggestive of nesting in the n.c. section of the state, but this area is somewhat farther s. In New Mexico, Grasshopper Sparrows are recorded in summer rarely only in the extreme n.e., so one singing near Sabinoso June 17 and one carrying food near Albert June 18 (JPH) were significant. Rufous-crowned Sparrows are rare and local in n.e. New Mexico, so noteworthy were records of 11 near Mosquero June 17 and two near Folsom Falls June 19-20 (JPH). Remarkable for the season was a Gray-headed Junco in Cave Creek Canyon above Portal June 27 (KG); the bird displayed some characteristics of the sedentary s. race *dorsalis*, very rare at Portal even in winter.

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