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## **SOUTHWEST REGION**

***Arizona, Sonora***

**/Janet Witzeman**

Winter in central and southern Arizona was mild with above average rainfall except in the Lower Colorado Valley where rainfall was below normal. Northern Arizona had snow and the coldest temperatures in three years so that "the lakes, usually causing the only winter excitement, were frozen early and were just beginning to open up at the end of the period." (JC).

Weather does explain the absence of birds in the northern part of the state but does not explain the comparatively low number of passerines in the riparian areas of the lowlands.

While reading through the winter reports for the state covering the past ten years, it seemed the statements we were making about patterns that were developing or the status of sparse winter visitants were reasonable and safe conclusions. However, this winter, many of the birds themselves seemed to "fly in the face" of these conclusions, and much of this report deals with the contradicting of "labels" we have tried to pin on them.

It was a perverse season. Species which we had come to expect in



the lowlands, especially during mild winters as this one, were lower in number than usual. Numbers of warblers, especially Yellow-rumped and Orange-crowned warblers, and White-crowned Sparrows were way down. We had begun to expect high numbers of crows at Cibola and Barrow's Goldeneyes below Davis Dam (but they were absent from that area for the second year). On the other hand, species which we had come to expect in low numbers such as herons, ibis, Whistling Swan and Long-billed Curlew were all here in unprecedented high numbers.

So in the report which follows, although there are no surprising species, there are many surprises among the species that were here.

**LOONS THROUGH IBISES** — A Com. Loon at Parker Canyon L., in late December (PN, JS) and one at Painted Rock Dam Jan. 14 (RBr) were the only ones recorded away from the Lower Colorado River (hereafter, L.C.R.) where there was a total of 8 records during the period (MK *et al.*). An Arctic Loon at Peck's L., n. of Prescott Nov. 30 was the first for that area in recent years (CT). The only one recorded on the L.C.R., was on L. Havasu Jan. 15 (GR, PB, SD, HL, JW).

Up to 14 Horned Grebes were on L. Havasu during the period (MK *et al.*); three were counted on the Arizona section of L. Mead Feb. 21 (R & JW, RBr *et al.*); and singles were recorded at Peck's L., Nov. 30 (CT), at Willcox Jan. 23-25 (RF, PN) and at 2 areas in Phoenix during January and late February (RF, T. Gorman).

During this season's L. Havasu censusing of W. Grebe, the 2 color phases were tallied separately. Up to 2000  $\pm$  grebes were counted. Of these, approximately one third were light-phase birds. Numbers of both color phases peaked about the same time, during the second week of December and again in mid-February. There was a general movement of grebes from n. Havasu down to more favorable nesting habitat around the Bill Williams arm by the end of the period (MK *et al.*).

A wall-to-wall carpet of 3000  $\pm$  W. Grebes was covering L. Mohave above Davis Dam in February (VM, JW *et al.*), but relatively few were counted on the huge expanse of the Arizona side of L. Mead at the same time (m.ob.). Unexpected was one at the opposite corner of the state at McNeal Dec. 1 (AMo).

Even one Great Egret is rare in winter away from the L.C.R., and the 2 larger reservoirs (Picacho and Painted Rock Dam), so 50+ in Phoenix during December and January was an unbelievable sight (KR, RBr *et al.*). Individual Great Egrets were also at Tucson Jan. 5+ (L. Jones *et al.*) and at McNeal, n. of Douglas Dec. 7-17 (AMo). A flock of 30-40 Snowy Egrets (almost equally uncommon) near Phoenix provided a new local winter record. Higher-than-usual numbers of Black-crowned Night Herons were wintering in Yuma (90), Phoenix (80) and Tucson (14+); and as far e. as the ponds near McNeal there were 14 present all winter (AMo).

On the other hand, Cattle Egret was virtually absent from Phoenix where we have come to expect it wintering in numbers, and it occurred in areas where it is uncommon. In s.e. Arizona, in addition to the two on the Ramsey Canyon CBC, one was seen near Elfrida Feb. 20 (AMo). One at Chino Valley near Prescott Feb. 21 represented one of only a few records for that part of the state and the first

in winter (S. Hyde, *vide* CT). A Reddish Egret at Puerto Penasco, Sonora, Mex., Feb. 26-28 (TG *et al.*) may have been the same one that was present there in November.

White-faced Ibis, which is usually absent from the state in winter or present only in low numbers in mild winters, occurred in unprecedented numbers at Cibola N.W.R., where there were over 50 in mid-December, and six still there in late January (MK *et al.*). A few were also found at other spots along the L.C.R., including one at Pintail Slough Feb. 27 (VM). Three were at Picacho Res., Dec. 4 (TG, MJ).

**WATERFOWL** — The species that attracted the most attention throughout the state this winter was Whistling Swan. Considered to be a scarce winter visitant, this winter the species was present in unprecedented numbers, and in places where it had not been recorded previously. The greatest number occurred in e. Arizona: 57 were counted on lakes near Show Low Jan. 8 (DT); seven near St. Johns Feb. 21 & 27 (B. Heap, S. Jarvis); seven on Luna L., near Alpine Jan. 14-Feb. 13 (DT, AMi), ten near McNeal Jan. 8 (AMo), one s. of Portal in January (S & WS) and one at Willcox Jan. 25 (JS). Farther w., 40 were at Tucson Dec. 4 (WD, EB); three at Green Valley Dec. 9-12 (GP), up to six were near Phoenix from January into March (m.ob.) and one was n. of Prescott from late December-March (CT). On the L.C.R., one was reported on L. Havasu Dec. 10, one found shot n. of Ehrenberg Dec. 10 (MK *et al.*), plus the one at Yuma (CBC).



Whistling Swans near McNeal, Ariz., Jan. 8, 1982. Photo/A. Moorehouse.

Two Brants were found—one at Cibola N.W.R., with 30 Canada Geese Dec. 2 (AK, CR, HW) and one with Canada Geese at Luna L., Feb. 13 (†AMi, N. Mooney). The majority of the 9 previous records had been from the L.C.R. More than the usual number of White-fronted Geese was recorded. Up to seven were at Cibola N.W.R. Jan. 5—at least Feb. 14 (DL, TS); two were in Tucson (GP, m.ob.) and one was at Phoenix (TG, PB) for most of the period.

Black-bellied Whistling-Ducks wintered at Tucson for the third time—at least three this year (m.ob.). A pair of Wood Ducks n. of Ehrenberg Dec. 19 was significant as the species had been virtually absent on the L.C.R., since the cottonwood-willow habitat was destroyed in the B.W. Delta. Two  $\delta$  Greater Scaup at Prescott Jan. 8 provided the second record for that area (CT). A  $\delta$  Barrow's Goldeneye at Willcox Jan. 24 at least until Feb. 21 (RO, JD) furnished only the second record for s.e. Arizona, and three  $\delta$  Barrow's Goldeneyes at Prescott Feb. 10 represented the third record for that area (H & AG). Only three to four were counted below Parker Dam (MK) and one was on L. Mead Feb. 21 (AG). Oldsquaw has been recorded 5 out of the past 7 winters on the L.C.R., and again this year when it was recorded in 2 areas: three downstream from Davis Dam Jan. 30 at least to the end of the period (VM *et al.*) and one on L. Havasu Feb. 16 & 26 (ph., MK, CR). A  $\delta$  Surf Scoter was photographed 5 mi s. of Parker Dec. 3 (CH, MK, AK, HW) and the same day another  $\delta$  Surf Scoter (that molted into an ad. male) was found just below Parker Dam and remained into March, providing the first real winter record for the state.

**RAPTORS** — An out-of-range Harris' Hawk was seen near McNeal Dec. 17 (ph., AMo). A preliminary estimate of this winter's Bald Eagle population (including 86 counted during aerial surveys) is 150  $\pm$ ; this winter the birds shifted their preference from the Flagstaff area to e. Arizona (DT). An Osprey at Nogales from late November into January was the first in winter for that area (BH).

**SHOREBIRDS** — A late Semipalmated Plover was on L. Havasu Dec. 10 (MK, CR, HW, RH); and a Snowy Plover (rare and irregular in winter) was found there Jan. 20 (RH, JJ, HW). Mountain Plovers were found again in s.e. Arizona. During January up to 30 were counted s. of Willcox (JS *et al.*).

Long-billed Curlew, considered a sparse winter visitant, was found in unprecedented numbers on both sides of the state. Six were counted near McNeal Feb. 5 (AMo) and 15 were found s. of Poston Jan. 9 (MK, BA). Also, two were n. of Ehrenberg Dec. 2 and Feb. 12 (RH, MK) and one at Cibola N.W.R., Jan. 25 (CH). Forty Long-billed Dowitchers at McNeal Feb. 5 (AMo) and one at Portal from late December into January were the first in winter for these areas. Also at McNeal were Greater Yellowlegs (20 on Feb. 5) and 1-2 Dunlin Dec. 10-Feb. 20 (AMo).

**GULLS, TERNS** — Both Glaucous-winged and Thayer's gulls have been seen with some regularity in small numbers at Puerto Penasco, Son., Mex., in recent years, but the seven Glaucous-winged and 15 Thayer's counted there on Feb. 12 were unprecedented (KK, DS). There were 2 records of Bonaparte's Gull, one on L. Havasu Dec. 4 at least to Jan. 12 (MK *et al.*) and two at Tucson through Dec. 6 (GG, WD). A Black-legged Kittiwake at Guaymas, Son., Jan. 26 was notable (†SG).

Very late Forster's Terns remained into December on L. Havasu: five Dec. 4, three Dec. 10 and one until Dec. 16 (CH, MK). Individual Caspian Terns also lingered late at L. Havasu Dec. 16 (RH, JJ, CH) and at Cibola N.W.R., Dec. 17 (JJ, RH), but seven at Yuma Dec. 20 was unprecedented (CI *et al.*).

**DOVES THROUGH WOODPECKERS** — An Inca Dove straggled E to Portal and spent the winter at feeders there (S & WS). A lone Groove-billed Ani was found at Tucson Dec. 6 (B. Terrill, M. Keasey). A Ferruginous Owl discovered near Sasabe w. of Nogales Feb. 20 (RBo) was one of only a few records of this seldom-seen species.

Peripheral Anna's Hummingbirds were a singing male at Prescott all winter (V. Plumlee), a male at a feeder in Portal Feb. 14 (SS) and one at Douglas Jan. 1-12 (AMo). Individual late Rufous Hummingbirds were at feeders in Tucson, one at least through Dec. 6 and the other through most of December (*fide* SG). A probable Calliope Hummingbird was at Ramsey Canyon again this year until Feb. 14 (ph., RBo, DD, †SG *et al.*). A Broad-billed Hummingbird wintered at

during early winter e. and n. of Prescott (CT). The large flocks of Com. Crows that have been wintering at Cibola N.W.R., for the past 5 years was reduced to only 380 this year (RH, MK). Another flock of 25 was found at a new area s. of Ehrenberg (JJ). Two out-of-range individuals were at Winkelman Feb. 19 (AG).

**NUTHATCHES THROUGH SHRIKES** — The only remaining lowland Red-breasted Nuthatch was at B.W. Delta Jan. 28 (RH) and the species became uncommon in the Prescott area as well. Brown Creepers continued to be seen in greater-than-usual numbers: ten at B.W. Delta, four at Parker, three at Cibola N.W.R. (MK *et al.*), seven at Wickenburg in December (CT) and widespread in the riparian and oak woodlands around Prescott (CT). An out-of-range Dipper was in Arivaipa Canyon Feb. 4 (R. Taylor).

Winter Wrens continued to be more numerous than usual around Prescott and two were found in the lowland riparian area near Wickenburg in December (CT). A Short-billed Marsh Wren was found near Poston, L.C.R., Dec. 23 (†RBr, †C. Kangas), but attempts to re-find it for photographic documentation failed. There are no confirmed records for the state. Another Varied Thrush (added to the two reported in fall) was found at Bisbee Dec. 20 (†DD). There were fewer W. Bluebirds, but more than usual (up to 200) Mountain Bluebirds in the L.C.V., where they invaded riparian areas (eating mistletoe berries) rather than agricultural fields. There was a high of eight Townsend's Solitaires in 4 areas along the L.C.R. (MK). Every few years there is a major invasion of Am. Robins and Cedar Waxwings and this was one of them. Incredible numbers of robins (especially in February) were roving through Prescott and Phoenix, and high numbers were in Globe and Portal. There were "more Cedar Waxwings than usual" in Prescott, "more than ever" in Globe, reported "fairly often" in Tucson and in everyone's yard in Phoenix.

Bohemian Waxwings (the first since '78-'79) were found in a new area in n.e. Arizona, at Kayenta, where there were two Jan. 8 and one Feb. 20 (CLa). Four were with 30 Cedar Waxwings north of Flagstaff Feb. 18 (R. Balda). Numbers of Golden-crowned Kinglets continued to be high in the L.C.V. at Parker (2-5) and B.W. Delta (7) (MK *et al.*); two to four were in Wickenburg in December and stayed into January in Prescott (CT). Two N. Shrikes found in the L.C.V., one n. of Poston Dec. 23 (D. Robinson) and one at Topock Jan. 15 (ph., GR *et al.*) provided the third and fourth records for that area. Farther s. one was s. of Phoenix Jan. 4 (C. Clark). Two individuals were found s. of Kayenta Dec. 23 and Feb. 24 (CL).

**WARBLERS** — Most of the uncommon "winter" warblers that occur in the state are really late migrants that stay only into January. But this year there were two exceptions. A Chestnut-sided Warbler Jan. 6 through the end of the period (BH, m.ob.) and a N. Parula Jan. 17 through the end of the period (DS, KK, m.ob.), both at Tucson, were the first real wintering records for these species. A Palm Warbler on the Santa Maria R., w. of Prescott Jan. 16 (CT) was the sixth post mid-January winter record and the twentieth state record.

There were fewer than usual of the rare but regular late and wintering warblers in the lowlands: one Tennessee at Tucson Dec. 14 (†SG); one Townsend's s. of Tucson Jan. 24 (JBo); two Wilson's, one at Tucson Jan. 1-at least Feb. 7 (DDe, TG) and one at Phoenix Dec. 22-at least Jan. 7 (GR, KR); and two individual Am. Redstarts, at Tucson Dec. 6-21 (WD) and at Parker Feb. 21-24 (SG, CR, *et al.*). There was an additional Am. Redstart, six Black-and-white Warblers and two Yellow Warblers on the state CBCs.

**ICTERIDS, TANAGERS** — The Streak-backed Oriole at Tucson in the fall disappeared by Dec. 1, but a second bird, a male, was present at another feeder in Tucson Dec. 26-Feb. 28+ (WD, †SG). The ♂ Rusty Blackbird found at L. Havasu sewage pond in late November was joined by a female, found there Jan. 15 (GR, PB, SD, HL, JW); both remained until at least Jan. 28 when they were photographed (MK). There are only a few records from the L.C.V. Great-tailed Grackles usually leave the Prescott area in August, but this year a flock remained all winter in each of 2 areas there (CT). Eight Bronzed Cowbirds found at McNeal Nov. 20 remained throughout the period (AMo). The species is rare in s.e. Arizona.

A late W. Tanager was at Wickenburg Dec. 30-31 (CT). A Summer Tanager at Prescott Nov. 30-Feb. 18 (A. & G. Nagel, *fide* CT) represented the first winter record for that area and the farthest n. in the state.



Probable Calliope Hummingbird, Ramsey Canyon, Ariz., Jan. 7, 1982. Photo/R. Bowers.

the Desert Botanical Garden, Phoenix, Nov. 5-at least Feb. 6 (M. Axelrod, RBr). Another was seen in Madera Canyon Feb. 23 (DDe).

Lewis' Woodpeckers were numerous and widespread at middle elevations around Prescott October-March with 20+ individuals counted in one area (H & AG). Williamson's Sapsuckers continued to be seen in greater-than-ever numbers in Prescott also (CT).

**FLYCATCHERS THROUGH CORVIDS** — A late W. Kingbird was seen near Sasabe Dec. 2 (AMi). The only E. Phoebe was one near Nogales Dec. 6 (J. & B. Epler).

"Troops" of Steller's Jays (up to 40 in one group) were wintering around Prescott; and scattered numbers of Piñon Jays were found

**FRINGILLIDS** — A *Pyrrhuloxia* wandered farther N than usual to Skull Valley (4500') west of Prescott Jan. 17-19 (H & AG). Up to 90 Evening Grosbeaks plus smaller flocks were in the Prescott area during the period (CT) and five were at Payson since at least early February (*vide* SD). A ♀ Pine Grosbeak that wandered to Rustler P., in the Chiricahuas (where it has been recorded once before) was found Jan. 1 (†RM). Lawrence's Goldfinches continued to be seen at scattered localities around Prescott, Wickenburg and Tucson (CT, SG *et al.*). There were only about one third as many as there have been in the past at Nogales (BH), but  $40 \pm$  at Cibola N.W.R., was a new high for the L.C.V. (HW, JJ, RH, CH) plus scattered singles were present at the other areas in the L.C.V. during the period (MK).

The only Baird's Sparrow found was one in Gardner Canyon Feb. 13 (SG, JBa). A Clay-colored Sparrow, another sparse winter resident, was found s. of Tucson Feb. 6 (GM, WD). A Black-chinned Sparrow in Guadalupe Canyon all period into March when it was singing, was farther e. and s. than the species has been found previously in the state (DD, AMo).

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