

SOUTHWEST REGION

Arizona, Sonora

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Weather this spring was about normal across the state with April being the wettest month in many areas. April also did heat up in many areas with some temperatures exceeding 100°F, mirroring the pattern of last year.

Migration was unspectacular in most areas of the state. A few species were notably scarce this spring including Ruby-crowned Kinglet (true also for the winter), Western Wood-Pewee, and Brown-headed Cowbird. Eastern vagrant landbirds (especially warblers) put in a particularly poor showing. Again, we received very few reports from the Lower Colorado River as birders tended to concentrate their efforts in the southeastern corner of the state. Resident birders should try to expand their coverage to include other parts of the state to better our understanding of the avifauna of poorly-covered areas. They might find that other areas are just as rewarding as, if not more so than, the southeastern corner.

ABBREVIATIONS — L.C.R. = Lower Colorado River.

GREBES THROUGH HERONS — Horned Grebe is a very sparse spring migrant throughout the state, and was previously unrecorded in the n.e. corner in spring until two breeding-plumaged birds were found Mar. 22 at Round Rock L. (BrJ). A



flock of 60 W. Grebes, containing both light and dark morphs, was found at Willow L., Prescott, Apr. 19. Numbers diminished through the period but the remaining birds (morph?) were performing courtship displays in May (CT, BT, H & AG). The W. Grebe (either morph) is not known to breed anywhere in the state away from the L.C.R. and the ephemeral Painted Rock Res.

A flock of 20+ Am. White Pelicans was at Willow L., Apr. 4-5 (CT, BT, H & AG). This was a larger than usual number for the Prescott area. An ad. Brown Pelican found at Painted Rock Dam

Mar. 10 may have wintered there (RN). There are still only a handful of records of adults in the state, and very few winter records. An Arizona Game & Fish Dept. nesting survey along the L.C.R., Mar. 21 counted at least 37 active Double-crested Cormorant nests, the majority (27) located at Goose L. in Topock Marsh (DT). An imm. Olivaceous Cormorant at Willcox from at least Apr. 12 through May might have furnished the first record for the Willcox area (†G. McCaskie, DS *et al.*). An imm. cormorant there Mar. 22 may have been this individual (†J. & A. Price).

A Least Bittern was seen at a marsh near St. David May 6 (AM). This species is a sparse transient in s.e. Arizona. The Arizona Game & Fish Dept. nesting survey mentioned above also located 155 active Great Blue Heron nests and 40 Great Egret nests (DT). Large concentrations of Cattle Egrets away from the L.C.R. and the Lower Gila R. are rare, so a flock of 160 in a field near Chandler Mar. 8 was noteworthy (B. Aylesworth).

WATERFOWL THROUGH RAPTORS — No fewer than 76 Black-bellied Whistling-Ducks were reported this spring from s.e. Arizona n. to the Phoenix region, about the same number as last spring (m.ob.). A Greater White-fronted Goose was at the Bisbee-Douglas airport sewage ponds until Mar. 25 (AM). Recently, the s.e. corner of the state seems to have been the most reliable area to find this species. A ♂ Wood Duck was at Round Rock L. in the extreme n.e. part of the state, where it is rarely reported, Apr. 14 (Brj). Extremely unusual were the two Hooded Mergansers at Many Farms L. which arrived Dec. 23, 1984 and were last seen Mar. 22 (Brj). There had been 2 previous sight records for this species in n. Arizona. A bird that baffled a few birders was the black-faced ♂ Ruddy Duck at Willcox Apr. 19-21. Thought at first to be possibly a Masked Duck (for which there is no Arizona record), the bird was seen not to have white secondary patches upon taking flight.

The number of reported Black-shouldered Kites was down to 15 this spring, with an active nest e. of Douglas (AM, R. Glinski *et al.*), but this decrease in reported individuals is probably due to Arizona birders starting to take the species for granted. An ad. Bald Eagle was photographed at the Hyannis Cattle Co. pond Mar. 8-9 (AM, K. Husmann). Bald Eagle is unusual in the s.e. part of the state during winter away from the San Rafael Valley. The unique desert-nesting Bald Eagle population n. and e. of Phoenix fledged 22 birds this spring. An unusual sight was that of an ad. N. Goshawk Mar. 18 eating a freshly killed Great Horned Owl near Rock Point on the Navajo Indian Reservation in n.e. Arizona. When startled, the hawk flew off with the owl held in one foot (Brj).

North of their usual range were three Harris' Hawks near Bumblebee Apr. 3 (CT). A pair of Harris' Hawks nested for the first time near Roosevelt L., Apr. 17 (J. Poe). The first major victory in the 6-year-old Harris' Hawk reintroduction program along the L.C.R. happened this spring when a pair successfully nested and fledged two young May 25-26 n. of Yuma. Over 100 Harris' Hawks from captive stock have been released on the L.C.R. since 1979 with very little apparent success until this year. Harris' Hawks have been locally extinct on the L.C.R. since the mid-1950s, with the last reported nesting in 1952 (*fide* G. Ferrier). A late Ferruginous Hawk was seen at Elfrida May 7 (AM, RT, CG), and a late Rough-legged Hawk at Douglas Apr. 19 (AM). Crested Caracara has been reported with more regularity in the Tucson vicinity recently. This spring, one was seen along the Oracle Hwy n. of Tucson Mar. 23 (DD, T. Deecken *et al.*), one near the Snyder Hill sewage ponds w. of Tucson Mar. 29 (SSu), and a few others were reported from the Tucson foothills (*fide* SSu).

GROUSE THROUGH TERNS — Blue Grouse has only recently been introduced into the San Francisco Peaks region, so a ♀ Blue Grouse near the top of Kendrick's Peak n.w. of Flagstaff May 19 was noteworthy (R. Dummer).

A late (or breeding?) Virginia Rail was heard near St. David May 6 (AM). Breeding has been suspected here but has never

been confirmed. The only Whimbrel reported this spring was one at the Hyannis Pond Mar. 25 (AM). This furnished only the 2nd record for Cochise County. Large flocks of Marbled Godwits were downed by bad weather in n. Arizona in late April. A flock of 80+ was found near Prescott Apr. 26 during a snowstorm (CT, H & AG), and on Apr. 28 more than 150 were at Many Farms L. and another 50+ at Round Rock L. (Brj). Marbled Godwit is usually a sparse spring migrant throughout the state, being especially scarce in the n.e. corner. Two Sanderlings were at Prescott Apr. 26 (CT, BT, H & AG) and three more were at Willcox May 10 (RBa, DH). A very early Pectoral Sandpiper (without supporting details) was seen near McNeal Mar. 24 (JS). There are about one-half dozen previous spring records for the state.

The first spring records of Dunlin for n.e. Arizona were obtained this year with one Apr. 16 at Round Rock L. and another there Apr. 17, and two birds at Many Farms L., Apr. 21 (Brj). Dunlin was unrecorded in n.e. Arizona until the fall of 1984. Two Stilt Sandpipers, sparse spring migrants in the state, showed up at Willcox May 10 (RBa, DH). Rarely reported in spring, two Short-billed Dowitchers were seen and heard at Moaning L. in n.e. Arizona May 27 (Brj). This may have furnished only the 4th record for the n.e. part of the state. Unusual was a Com. Snipe "winnowing" near a small marsh near Pine-top, e. of Show Low (J. Hubbard). The only breeding locality for the state is near Springerville on the other side of the White Mts.

One dozen Franklin's Gulls were reported during the period across the state, which included five adults at Many Farms L., Mar. 30-Apr. 28 (Brj). The only report of California Gull away from the L.C.R. was of two at Tucson Mar. 21 (SG, JS). A single Caspian Tern was at Prescott Apr. 16 where it is considered uncommon (BT, H & AG, CT).

OWLS THROUGH HUMMINGBIRDS — Ferruginous Pygmy-Owls were detected in their usual n.w. Tucson locations from early March (*fide* SSu), and another was found n. of the Arizona-Sonora Desert Museum May 20 (*fide* SSu). Reports of this owl seem to be increasing as more people look for it in the more extensive saguaro forests in the state. Long-eared Owl was found nesting in the n.e. corner of the state for the first time. A flock of 10+ roosted near Rock Point this past winter with two individuals remaining and nesting in May. Four young birds were still on the nest through the end of the period (Brj). On May 21, along the Barfoot Rd. near Rustler Park, Chiricahua Mts., a bird that had been misidentified by many birders as a N. Pygmy-Owl was found to be a N. Saw-whet Owl (R. Stallcup, RBo). Two birds were observed exchanging places in a tree cavity on the night of the 24th, and young were finally seen in the cavity May 31 (RBo, SSu). This was the first confirmed nesting for the Chiricahuas in more than 50 years. Interestingly, another bird had been found dead in the same area in June 1976 (*fide* JW). The Aravaipa Canyon Buff-collared Nightjars returned May 6 for the 6th straight year. In mid-May, at least four Buff-collared Nightjars were found at the base of the Santa Rita Mts. along Madera Canyon Rd., and they were seen and heard there through the period and into the summer (H. McGuiness, SSu, RBo *et al.*). This was a new locality for this species in the state.

Chimney Swifts were found again in Tucson near the Univ. of Arizona campus. This time, three were found in a neighborhood e. of campus May 13 + (m.ob.). A Broad-billed Hummingbird, an uncommon species in the Chiricahuas, was at Portal Apr. 9-10 (L. Gunn, *fide* SSp). Only one Lucifer Hummingbird, a female, was reported from Portal this spring Apr. 27 (SSp). Costa's Hummingbird is a sparse visitor to the Chiricahuas, so a male at Portal through May was noteworthy (B. Schaugency).

KINGFISHERS THROUGH MAGPIES — After last year's plethora of Green Kingfisher records in the Nogales region, there was only one report all period from the state, of a female at Kino Springs Mar. 2 (AM, DD, T. Deecken).

Reports of lingering Lewis' Woodpeckers were received from

scattered locations into April, and even to May 2 (two) e. of the Rincon Mts. at Happy Valley (CG). Surprising was a ♀ *varius* Yellow-bellied Sapsucker at Seven Springs, n. of Phoenix, May 20 (DS *et al.*). This was the latest spring date for any sapsucker in the lowlands in the state. A Downy Woodpecker was found Mar. 12 at Prescott, where rarely reported (H & AG, CT).

Buff-breasted Flycatchers had not been reported in potential breeding habitat in the Santa Rita Mts. for more than 65 years, so the two found on the n.e. slope of Mt. Hopkins Apr. 19 were a true surprise (GM). Migrating Buff-breasteds in the Chiricahuas (destination unknown) this spring included one Apr. 18 near Portal (CG, RM), one Apr. 30 in S. Fork, Cave Cr. Canyon (M. Collie, F. Knoll, *fide* SSu), and another near there May 12 (SSu). A surprise was the E. Phoebe found on the Univ. of Arizona campus Mar. 24 (TH, *U. of A.). Thick-billed Kingbirds away from their usual summer locations included one bird on Silver Cr. near Portal May 23 (AM) and another in Chino Canyon May 25 (DS, J. Sunder).

One of the Univ. of Arizona Cave Swallows returned for the 7th straight year on the early date of Mar. 7 and might have been there since late February (TH). A very early Barn Swallow was found at Willcox Mar. 9 (AM *et al.*). Probably lingering from this winter's invasion of montane species, two Clark's Nutcrackers were seen in the Pinal Mts. near Globe May 14-15 (R. Heffernon). Perplexing were the 2 reports of Black-billed Magpie s. of Tucson where one was seen near Canoa Pond in mid-March (G. Porter) and another, or the same, May 6 s. of Tumacacori (G. Porter, I. Ritch). Surely, these must pertain to wandering escaped birds.

TITMICE THROUGH WARBLERS — Unusual was a Plain Titmouse along the Santa Maria R. in saguaro habitat Mar. 4 (CT). Single Red-breasted Nuthatches lingered at 2 spots in s.e. Arizona until mid to late April.

At least one pair of Black-capped Gnatcatchers returned to Chino Canyon Apr. 4 and was seen through the period (m.ob.). In mid-May, no fewer than *eight* Black-capped Gnatcatchers were found in Sycamore Canyon w. of Nogales and were seen through the period (H. McGuiness *et al.*). This species was recorded here for the first time in June 1984. A late ♀ Mountain Bluebird was found near Willcox May 7 (AM, CG, RT), and a late Townsend's Solitaire was in Madera Canyon May 13 (RBa, DH). Swainson's Thrush is extremely rare in n.e. Arizona during spring migration, so two birds singing in cottonwoods at the Canyon de Chelly campground May 21 were noteworthy (Brj). A Varied Thrush at the Idlewild campground in Cave Cr. Canyon, Chiricahuas, Mar. 9 provided the 5th record for this area since 1977 (RM). Bendire's Thrasher was finally confirmed as a breeder in the Sulphur Springs Valley when 2 nests were found, one May 6 near Elfrida and the other near Double Adobe (AM). Individual birds have been found singing in the valley in past springs, but no evidence of nesting had been found until this year.

Gray Vireos were found again near the e. end of Redington Pass e. of Tucson (RBo, JBa), and two migrating individuals were found w. of Tumacacori (B. Buttery). The only Red-eyed Vireo reported this spring was one near Many Farms L., May 22 (Brj).

The assortment of e. vagrant warblers this spring was much lower than average. *No* Am. Redstarts and *no* Tennessees were reported. Only 7 species were represented, and this includes Black-and-white, N. Waterthrush, and the Cape May that wintered in Tucson.

A N. Parula was found at Kino Springs May 28 (R. Stallcup). The Cape May Warbler, mentioned above, remained in n.w. Tucson until Apr. 11 (B. Meter). This was about the 7th record overall and the 3rd individual to winter. A ♂ Black-throated Blue Warbler, rare in the west in spring, was seen briefly at S. Fork, Cave Cr. Canyon, May 21 (H. McGuiness). The vast majority of spring records for the state have been in the Chiricahuas. Even rarer in the state in spring is Blackpoll Warbler, which was seen May 24 at S. Fork campground, Cave Cr. Canyon (†M.

Gavit). Three individual Black-and-white Warblers were reported, about an average number. Only one N. Waterthrush was reported this spring, at Seven Springs May 20. Hooded Warblers put in a good showing again this year with three reported. The ♂ Hooded Warbler returned to Page Springs w. of Sedona for the 3rd consecutive summer Apr. 12 (V. Gilmore *et al.*). A male was seen along the San Pedro R. e. of Sierra Vista May 25 (†M. Haraway *et al.*) and another was in Scheelite Canyon May 29 (ph. RBo). Certainly out of place was a Painted Redstart at Tinajas Altas, w. of Cabeza Prieta N.W.R., Apr. 17-18 (D. & L. Ruh, *fide* GM). There are about one-half dozen records for the s.w. corner of the state. A real surprise was the **Rufous-capped Warbler** near Comfort Spring, Carr Canyon, Huachuca Mts., Apr. 7 (†D. & L. Ruh). Two of the 3 previous records for the state were also from spring, with one having been found Apr. 8, 1978.



Male Flame-colored Tanager in South Fork, Cave Creek Canyon, Ariz., May 13, 1985. Photo/L. Page Brown.

TANAGERS THROUGH FINCHES — Without any doubt, the best bird of the season was the ♂ **Flame-colored** (formerly Stripe-backed) **Tanager** (*Piranga bidentata*) found by RM in S. Fork, Cave Cr. Canyon, Chiricahua Mts., on the morning of Apr. 11. It was seen and photographed by hundreds of birders through the period. In May, the bird paired with an apparent ♀ W. Tanager and this mixed pair successfully nested and fledged two young on May 29-30. Details of this remarkable record will be published elsewhere. This was the first recorded sighting of Flame-colored Tanager for the United States.

A ♀ N. Cardinal found at Prescott Apr. 8 (H & AG, CT) was unusual at this elevation. A singing ♂ Pyrrhuloxia at Gila Bend Apr. 29 was at the w. limit of that species' normal range in the state (DS). Only three Rose-breasted Grosbeaks were reported, all from s.e. Arizona.

A Five-striped Sparrow in Chino Canyon May 13 provided the only report from that canyon this year (B. Brokaw). In the Atascosa Mts. w. of Nogales, the reports were more favorable with 10 singing males in Sycamore Canyon May 23 (JBa, JBo) and at least two more in California Gulch May 31 (SSu, RBo). The only Fox Sparrows reported were one or two bright rusty individuals at Patagonia Mar. 9 (JS, B. Sutton). Swamp Sparrow is unusual in the Prescott area, so one there Mar. 12-13 was noteworthy (BT, CT). A Golden-crowned Sparrow at Many Farms Spring Apr. 19 provided the 2nd spring record for n.e. Arizona (Brj). The flock of McCown's Longspurs (25) w. of McNeal was last seen Mar. 13 (AM).

A ♀ "Baltimore" N. Oriole, a very sparse transient in the state, was seen at the S.W. Research Station in the Chiricahua Mts., May 25 (DS).

Small numbers of Purple Finches remained at various locations in s.e. Arizona well into April with the latest individuals (two) reported with Cassin's Finches Apr. 19 at Canoa (SSu).

Larger numbers of Cassin's Finches also remained in s.e. Arizona and in the Prescott area well into April with small flocks still being reported at various localities to the first week of May (e.g., at Portal to May 3). The latest individual reported was on Mt. Lemmon, Santa Catalina Mts., May 13 (RBa, DH). Red Crossbills departed most lowland areas by late March, but a male was still at Globe Apr. 24 (Bej). Lawrence's Goldfinches were still being reported at a few places in s.e. Arizona in early to mid-March, with a few into April, such as two with 300+ Lessers at Organ Pipe Cactus N.M., Apr. 7 (GM, S. Russell). Small flocks of Evening Grosbeaks at scattered locations across the state remained until the first week of May and to mid-May in the Prescott area (m.ob.).

CORRIGENDA — There are now at least one dozen records of Black-necked Stilt for n.e. Arizona (AB 37:943). There have been at least 7 spring records of Forster's Tern in n.e. Arizona (AB 37:943). The Sonoita pair of Black-shouldered Kites fledged four young, not five (AB 38:1048).

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