

SOUTHWEST REGION

Arizona, Sonora

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What makes for an exciting fall birding season in Arizona? It could be any one of a number of phenomena: an invasion of montane species to the lowlands, a better than average showing of eastern North American landbirds, a selection of vagrants from Mexico, or a prolonged migration of our regular transients. What would happen if all of these occurred simultaneously? The combination might produce one of the best fall seasons in recent memory. This was indeed the case during the fall of 1987. By the end of August, Arizona birders knew that this would be a fall to remember. And by late November, we were pleased to see that it was not yet over.

The editors received so many good records for the season (about twice the normal amount), our space limitations unfortunately necessitated the exclusion of some valuable records from this report. The following is a summary of the "best of the best" that we received.

ABBREVIATIONS — B.T.A. = Boyce Thompson Arboretum; L.C.R. = Lower Colorado River; N.I.R. = Navajo Indian Reservation; P.R.D. = Painted Rock Dam; S.P.R. = San Pedro River.

CORMORANTS THROUGH RAPTORS — Olivaceous Cormorants put in a good showing this season with one at Guevavi Ranch near Nogales Aug. 29 (JB) and two more there Sept. 25 (N. Guthkelch). Two to three birds were also present in n.w. Tucson Sept. 15 into October (m.ob.).

Very surprising was an imm. Little Blue Heron at Ganado L., N.I.R., Aug. 23–Oct. 9 (RF, RN et al.). This provided not only one of the few fall records for the state, but also the first report for n. Arizona. Another immature was found at Menager's Dam, Tohono O'odham (formerly Papago) Indian Reservation, Sept. 20 (SL). An imm. Tricolored Heron, a very sparse fall visitor, was found at Green Valley s. of Tucson Nov. 6–11 (†DG, G. Porter et al.).

Intriguing was the report of a flock of eight Fulvous Whistling-Ducks at Prescott Nov. 13 (†BT). Most recent records for the state have come from the L.C.R. Small numbers of Black-bellied Whistling-Ducks were widely reported from s.e. Ari-



zona n. to the Phoenix region, with the only reported evidence of nesting being two adults with nine flightless ducklings s.e. of Phoenix Aug. 15 (DS). Individual Ross' Geese were found at Tucson from early October on (m.ob.), near Fairbank on the upper S.P.R. (with 46 Snows) Nov. 4 (DK), and at Sierra Vista Nov. 19 (TC et al.). Six Ross' flying with eight Snows at Topock Marsh Oct. 31 furnished the only sighting of multiple birds (DS, RN). A very early Greater White-fronted Goose (wild bird?) was found at Youngtown near Phoenix Aug. 24 (B. Richards). At the Buenos Aires N.W.R., where this species is proving to be a regular fall migrant, five were found Sept. 17 (CD). Another individual was in n.w. Tucson Oct. 29+ (DT et al.), and a flock of 12 was observed at Topock Marsh Oct. 31 (DS, RN). A ♂ Eur. Wigeon (without supporting details) at Montezuma Well near Camp Verde Nov. 17+ was a first for Yavapai County (CT et al.). An imm. ♀ Surf Scoter, a rare fall transient, was found at the Chandler sewage ponds Oct. 27 (DS), and another individual was in Tucson Nov. 17–19 (RD). Even rarer was an imm. White-winged Scoter (without supporting details) on a small pond at B.T.A., Nov. 26+ (JS et al.).

An Osprey at Wheatfields L., N.I.R., Oct. 26 was very late for that locality (GM). An ad. N. Goshawk in n. Phoenix Nov.

26+ furnished the only lowland report received for this species (DS). A Swainson's Hawk (age? details?) was reported from Tucson on the very late date of Nov. 13 (SGo). Early were one to two imm. Ferruginous Hawks Sept. 18 near Big L. in the White Mts. (GM), one in Tucson Sept. 23 (DT), and another at Picacho Sept. 24 (GM). The Tucson bird was the earliest ever for s.e. Arizona.

SHOREBIRDS THROUGH OWLS — Four late Am. Avocets were found at Rucker L. in the Sulphur Springs Valley Nov. 27 (DH). Very intriguing was the godwit, sp., flushed from the side of the road near Portal Nov. 6 (†RM). Reported as a Hudsonian, the description received and the late date point to Black-tailed Godwit as actually being the more likely species! There are 3 acceptable records of Hudsonian for the state, all late April to late May, and no records of any kind for Black-tailed. Alas, we will never know its true identity. Two late Solitary Sandpipers, presumably attempting to overwinter, were observed on the Salt R. s.w. of Phoenix Oct. 21+ (DS, P. Stejskal). A Ruddy Turnstone, a very rare fall migrant in the state, was seen at P.R.D., Sept. 14 (PB, W. Beall). Another rare transient, a Red Knot, was found in Prescott Sept. 15 (BT). The only Sanderlings reported for the period were three to four juveniles at the Chandler sewage ponds Sept. 4–10 (DS, SGA) and another at Tsaila L., N.I.R., Sept. 24 (RD). Semipalmated Sandpipers were more widely reported than usual this season, with at least seven birds found: one juvenile at Ruthrauff Pond in Tucson Aug. 3–4 (RD, †KK), two birds at Willcox Aug. 21 (DK, †TC), another at Sierra Vista Aug. 27–Sept. 2 (†TC, DK), and three juveniles near Avondale Aug. 30–Sept. 4 (fph. DS). A Com. Snipe at Tucson Aug. 7 was very early (GM).

Four Heermann's Gulls, all during mid-late October, were reported for the period, with one found dead at the Snyder Hill ponds w. of Tucson Oct. 14 (* to U. of Ariz., fide TH), an adult at P.R.D., Oct. 24 (RF, RN), one at Willcox Oct. 25 (†A. Price), and another the same day at Ruthrauff Pond in Tucson (DT). An ad. Herring Gull, extremely rare away from the L.C.R., was found at Cholla L. w. of Holbrook Oct. 24 (RBr). Five Sabine's Gulls were reported, all in the n. half of the state, with an immature at Sunrise L. in the White Mts., Sept. 17 (TH, GM), an adult at Becker L., Sept. 19 and two immatures there the next day (RBr), and the last at Kayenta Sept. 27–29 (CL). A Least Tern was reported from Prescott Aug. 16 (†BT).

An Inca Dove at Willcox Oct. 13–17 was only the 2nd ever reported for the area (†M. Price). An ad. Yellow-billed Cuckoo feeding a fledgling Sept. 19 on the upper S.P.R. was evidence of later nesting than usual for the state (TC).

An ad. Ferruginous Pygmy-Owl was feeding a begging juvenile in n.w. Tucson Aug. 8; there has been little evidence of breeding for this species in the state in recent years (ph. L. Rosche). Very interesting was the report of 10+ Short-eared Owls in suitable breeding habitat at Hart Prairie in the San Francisco Peaks region Aug. 24–Sept. 1 (J. Ganey, JC, H. Reiser). Also, a belated report was received of at least three more birds present in the same area during July–August 1983 (fide JC). The dates and location of these records strongly suggest breeding in the area; Short-eared Owl is not known to nest in the state. At least one adult and four juv. N. Saw-whet Owls were found at Rustler Park in the Chiricahua Mts. Aug. 22 (†M. O'Brien), providing the 2nd confirmed nesting record of this species for the Chiricahuas in recent years.

SWIFTS THROUGH WOODPECKERS — A Vaux's Swift at Kayenta Sept. 12 was farther e. than usual and provided one of the few records of this species for the N.I.R. (CL). Three White-eared Hummingbirds were reported for the period: an imm. male on Mt. Lemmon in the Santa Catalina Mts., Aug. 12 to early September (m.ob.), a female at Portal Sept. 29 (RM), and a late individual Oct. 21 at Ramsey Canyon (T. Collazo). The Berylline Hummingbird found at Madera Canyon during July was last seen Sept. 7 (m.ob.). About one dozen Violet-crowned Hummingbirds were reported for the period, including a very late bird at a Tucson cemetery Nov. 27 (JB). An

imm. ♂ Magnificent Hummingbird was found along the S. Fork of the Little Colorado R. in the White Mts. Sept. 18 (GR). This species is infrequently reported from this area. At least one male and one ♀ Lucifer Hummingbird were present at feeders in Portal through late September (W & SS, m.ob.). Surprising was an ad. ♂ Lucifer in a Tucson yard during the first half of October (A. Cutler, SGo), representing one of the northernmost records ever. A Plain-capped Starthroat was found feeding on Agave blossoms on a hillside between Portal and Paradise in the Chiricahuas Aug. 21, and was last seen in the area Sept. 2 (†DS, KK, RT et al.). Another individual was reported from Sunny Flat Campground in the Chiricahuas Oct. 6 (†B. Brown).

A ♀ Elegant Trogon was found away from its usual habitat, in cottonwood-willow riparian growth along the upper S.P.R. near Hereford Aug. 26, nearly the same place where one had been found last fall (DK). An Eared Trogon, an extreme rarity (resident?) in the Chiricahuas, was found in Cave Creek Canyon Sept. 1 (†S. Linsley).

A Green Kingfisher was present at Guevavi Ranch Aug. 21 through November (KK, DS, RT et al.), and another was at another location in Nogales Nov. 7 (JS). Again, as last year, a few Green Kingfishers were found on the upper S.P.R. Two individual females were present Sept. 14 through the period, and a male was found Oct. 17 (DK, TC). The observers feel that Green Kingfisher is now a rare but regular summer and fall visitor (breeder?) in the area, and that the species was probably overlooked because of the inaccessibility of this area prior to 1986.

Lewis' Woodpeckers were widely reported across the s. one-half of the state, with the earliest lowland record coming from n.w. Tucson Sept. 8–9 (DT). This year's major montane invasion also brought a few Acorn Woodpeckers to the desert, with a male at Chandler Aug. 23 to at least Sept. 24 (CB, DS), a female at B.T.A., Oct. 20–Nov. 3 (CT), and a flock of five to six birds at Estrella Mountain Park s.w. of Phoenix Nov. 12 (PB). Yellow-bellied Sapsuckers were more frequently reported than usual, with an early immature at Patagonia Sept. 22 (DK), another early ad. ♂ bird at Petrified Forest N.M., Oct. 5 (CK), another immature on the upper S.P.R., Oct. 22 (TC), and another bird (age?) at B.T.A. (L. Hatcher). Unfortunately, none of these sightings was accompanied by written details. A Red-breasted Sapsucker (of questionable lineage) was found at Catalina S.P., n.w. of Tucson, Oct. 4 into December (WD, EB), and another was at Kino Springs Oct. 17 (DH). Two Downy Woodpeckers on Mt. Graham in the Pinaleno Mts., Aug. 23, were at an unexpected location (GM). A ♂ N. "Yellow-shafted" Flicker at B.T.A., Oct. 10–20 provided one of the few actual reports for this [probably overlooked] form in the state during the past 10 years (CH, P. Gallagher, CT).

FLYCATCHERS THROUGH CREEPERS — Out of place was a Greater Pewee at B.T.A., Aug. 31 (CT), and another at Estrella Mt. Park from Oct. 31 on was evidently attempting to winter at this location again (RBr et al.). An early E. Phoebe was found near Hereford on the upper S.P.R., Aug. 26 (DK), and another was found at the base of Madera Canyon Nov. 28–29 (fide SGo). A late Dusky-capped Flycatcher was found at Patagonia Oct. 25 (DJ). Normally, this species is absent after late August. At least four E. Kingbirds, far more than usual, were reported for the period, including one between Portal and Paradise in the Chiricahuas Aug. 30–31 (RD), one at Perkonville on the Verde R., Sept. 2 (BT), one at Skull Valley near Prescott Sept. 5 (†L. Frederick, C. Berry), and another s. of Elfrida Sept. 6 (R. Bailowitz, DD). A Scissor-tailed Flycatcher, a rare vagrant to the state, was found at Show Low in the White Mts. Oct. 2, providing the first record for Navajo County (P. Scholten).

Steller's and Scrub jays were widely reported from the lowlands across the state from September on (m.ob.). This was the strongest showing for these two species in the lowlands in 15 years. Much more unusual was a flock of eight Gray-breasted Jays in Tucson Sept. 30 (S. Mills). Two old records from Tucson

(Apr. 18, 1934, and Sept. 30, 1956) are the only other lowland records for this species in the state. Pinyon Jays also appeared in the lowlands this fall with two in s.w. Phoenix Sept. 25 (DS), one in Tucson Oct. 3 (RBo), and another at B.T.A., Nov. 28 (DS). Remarkable was a flock of 19 Clark's Nutcrackers in n.w. Tucson Sept. 20 (W. Matheny).

Unprecedented was the sighting of a Mexican Chickadee in Guadalupe Canyon in the extreme s.e. corner of the state Sept. 4 (TC, RK). Small flocks of Mountain Chickadees invaded the lowlands of c. Arizona at several localities starting in October (v.o.). Red-breasted and White-breasted nuthatches were also widely reported in the lowlands of s. Arizona, beginning in late August-early September (v.o.). More unusual were reports of Pygmy Nuthatches in the lowlands of c. Arizona. A flock of four to five was present at B.T.A., Oct. 4+ (DS, SGa, CT), and a flock of 10-15 birds was in n. Phoenix Nov. 26+ (DS). An early Brown Creeper was found at Patagonia Sept. 2 (TC, RK).

WRENS THROUGH VIREOS — Winter Wrens were more widely reported than usual, with most reports coming from canyons in the s.e. mountains (v.o.). American Dippers were present again in Madera Canyon Oct. 4+ (B. Healey et al.), and in Ramsey Canyon Nov. 28 (RBo).

Golden-crowned Kinglets were also present in small numbers in the lowlands from October on (v.o.). Two lowland reports of Townsend's Solitaire were received, with one in e. Tucson Sept. 20 (C. Corchran) and another in n. Phoenix Sept. 28 (BD). Very unusual, if correct, was the report of two late Swainson's Thrushes (without supporting details) at Apache Spring on the w. side of the Whetstone Mts., Nov. 21 (SL). There are no Arizona records after the first week of November. Three Rufous-backed Robins were reported for the period, with one banded e. of Tucson Nov. 5 (C. Corchran et al.), one at Organ Pipe Cactus N.M., Nov. 22 (RBo), and another the same day, remaining through December, at B.T.A. (SGa et al.). Two Varied Thrushes, rare vagrants from the Pacific Northwest, were found for the period, with one at Granite Basin in Prescott Oct. 17 (RF, RN) and another at mile 78 in the Grand Canyon Oct. 23 (L. Stevens, fide JC). Unprecedented numbers of Gray Catbirds, normally very sparse transients away from the White Mts. region, were found in s.e. Arizona, with at least six individuals reported: one at Patagonia Oct. 3 (RS), with another or the same bird there Oct. 18 (B & JE); one s. of St. David on the upper S.P.R., Oct. 9 (TC); one at Tucson Oct. 25 (P. Jenkins); another the same day at Picacho Res. (C. Green); another in Tucson Nov. 11-15 (K. Nickey); and yet another at the Arizona-Sonora Desert Museum w. of Tucson Nov. 15 (DT). Three Brown Thrashers, more than usual, were found with one at Teec Nos Pos, N.I.R., Sept. 17 (GR), one at Patagonia Oct. 25 (DJ), and another near St. David on the upper S.P.R., Nov. 28+ (TC, DK).

A singing Bell's Vireo Oct. 16 on the upper S.P.R. was late (TC). A Gray Vireo in Chino Canyon Aug. 30 was out of place (TC, RK). Another reported (without details) from the upper S.P.R., Nov. 24, was not only out of place but was also remarkably late (TC). Two reports were received of the eastern "Blue-headed" form of Solitary Vireo on the upper S.P.R.: Sept. 26 (fDK) and Nov. 16 (fTC). There are only a few sight records of this form in the state. No fewer than three Philadelphia Vireos were present in the state this fall, with one at Becker L. (without supporting details) Sept. 5 (RF), one on the upper S.P.R., Sept. 27 (fTC), and another at B.T.A., Oct. 4 (fDS). Either a different bird or the same one was seen at B.T.A. again Oct. 23 (SGa). Philadelphia Vireo is a very sparse vagrant in the state. Four Red-eyed Vireos were found for the period Sept. 1-Oct. 15, evenly split between n. and s. Arizona.

WOOD-WARBLERS — A Tennessee Warbler, one of the more regular e. vagrants, was at Patagonia Oct. 10 (RS). A N. Parula, much rarer in fall than in spring, was at Pipe Springs N.M. on the Utah border Sept. 16 (GR), and another was on the upper S.P.R., Sept. 19-20 (TC, DK). At least four Chestnut-



Prothonotary Warbler at Phoenix, Ariz., Oct. 26, 1987. Photo/Robert A. Witzeman.

sided Warblers were found, about average for recent years. One early individual was found at Patagonia Aug. 22 (B. Scheibe). There had been no previous August records for the state. Another was caught by Amber the Cat in a Phoenix yard Nov. 12 (fide JW, DS, * to U. of Ariz.), another was found in another Phoenix yard Nov. 15 (M. Eubanks), and the last was in Tucson Nov. 17 (RD). At least three Magnolia Warblers were reported with one at Ganado Wash, N.I.R., Sept. 30 (fDS, SGa), another at B.T.A., Oct. 20 (fCT), and another s.w. of Phoenix Nov. 29 (fCB). Three Black-throated Blue Warblers were also found, with a female at Pipe Springs N.M., Sept. 17-18 (GR, JC), a male on the upper S.P.R., Sept. 25 (TC), and the last bird banded e. of Tucson Oct. 15-19 (CD). Two Black-throated Greens were found: one on the upper S.P.R., Sept. 21 (fDK) and another (with few details) in e. Tucson Nov. 7 (F. Hopf). Very exciting and long overdue was the **Pine Warbler** found in Benson (DJ, m.ob., ph.), providing the first documented record for Arizona. Evidently attempting to winter locally, the bird was glimpsed several times (beginning Nov. 6) before Jones identified it as a Pine in early December. A **Bay-breasted Warbler**, the first in the state in over 5 years, was found s.w. of Phoenix Oct. 21 (fDS, P. Stejskal). There are only about one dozen previous records for the state. A Blackpoll Warbler (without details), very sparse in the state, was found at Springerville Sept. 18 (GR). A ♀ Prothonotary Warbler was observed in Portal Sept. 7 (fD. & D. Lefkovitz) and another, apparently an ad. male, was in a n. Phoenix yard on the late date of Oct. 26 (BD et al., ph. RW). An Ovenbird was present at Sabino Canyon, Tucson, Oct. 14 (KK, LHK). A Louisiana Waterthrush (without details), possibly the same bird that has wintered here in the past, was at Patagonia Sept. 7 (RD). A very late MacGillivray's Warbler was found s.w. of Phoenix Nov. 23 (DS, SGa). A ♂ and ♀ Hooded Warbler were present at Patagonia Aug. 16-29 (fW.E. Harper, JS, JK et al.), and another late individual was s.w. of Phoenix Nov. 13 (fDS, SGa). An out-of-habitat Red-faced Warbler was found on the upper S.P.R., Aug. 4 (DK, DS), and another or the same was found s. of there the next day (TC).

Five Black-and-white Warblers, seven Am. Redstarts, and 15 N. Waterthrushes were found for the period.

TANAGERS THROUGH FINCHES — An amazing three **Scarlet Tanagers** were reported for the period: one in Madera Canyon Aug. 28 (fTC, fRK), another on the upper S.P.R., Oct. 15 (fTC), and an ad. male at Madera Canyon Nov. 28-29 (J.

Halloway, m.ob.). There had been only about 10 records for the state prior to these.

A tame ad. Yellow Grosbeak, found on the unusual date of Oct. 27 in Tucson, is probably best regarded as an escaped cagebird, as it does not fit the established early June to mid-August pattern for s. Arizona (†). Notestine). Five Rose-breasted Grosbeaks were reported for the period, including a late male at Portal Nov. 29 (W & SS). A ♀ Painted Bunting was observed there Aug. 24 (†RM). Only two Dickcissels were reported, both in s.e. Arizona. One flew over the upper S.P.R. near Hereford Aug. 26 (DK), and another was found at Patagonia Oct. 3 (W. Russell).

A singing adult and a fledgling Cassin's Sparrow Oct. 21 were quite late for a recent nesting (TC). Three individual Clay-colored Sparrows were reported for the period, with one on the upper S.P.R., Sept. 16 (†DK), one e. of Show Low Sept. 20 (†RBr), and the last at Many Farms L. (without supporting details) Oct. 7 (CK). Fox Sparrows were more widely reported than usual, with the earliest being one on the S. Fork of the Little Colorado R., Sept. 20 (GR). Swamp Sparrows were reported less commonly, but 10 at Cholla L., Oct. 24, were very surprising (RBr). At least eight White-throated Sparrows were found, most in November, but one was early at Ganado L., Sept. 30 (DS, SGa). Two imm. White-crowned Sparrows in Kayenta Aug. 28 furnished the earliest lowland fall record for the state (CL). Five McCown's Longspurs flying over Sierra Vista Oct. 21 (TC) and two more near Winkelman on the lower S.P.R., Oct. 25 (DS) were in areas where the species is not known to winter. A single Chestnut-collared Longspur flying over Topock Marsh Oct. 31 was noteworthy (DS).

The only Bobolink reported was one at Becker L., Sept. 29 (DS, SGa). A late ♂ Hooded Oriole was at B.T.A., Nov. 22 (DH). A ♀ "Baltimore" N. Oriole, a very sparse vagrant to the state, was in Prescott Aug. 19–23 (ph. V. & E. Miller).



Female-plumaged "Baltimore" Northern Oriole at Prescott, Ariz., August 1987. Photo/Virginia and Earl Miller.

Cardueline finches were generally widespread and widely reported for the period. Small numbers of Purple Finches were found around Prescott Oct. 19+ (CT), five were in n.w. Tucson Nov. 11 (JB), one was at Apache Spring in the Whetstone Mts., Nov. 21 (SL), and three more were at B.T.A., Nov. 28–29 (CT, DS). Few Cassin's Finches were reported in the lowlands, with the most unusual being a ♀-plumaged bird at Katherine Landing, L. Mohave, Oct. 31 (DS, RN). Red Crossbill was widespread in the lowlands beginning in late October, with the most unusual again being one at Katherine Landing Oct. 31 (DS). Pine Siskins first appeared at a Portal feeder Aug. 11 (W & SS), and by early September they had appeared in the lowlands nearly statewide. Lawrence's Goldfinches also staged a minor invasion from the Prescott region to the upper S.P.R., mostly singles

and small flocks, but a flock of about 60 birds was near Chandler Oct. 27 (DS). An early Am. Goldfinch was found at B.T.A., Aug. 16 (CT). Evening Grosbeaks descended into the lowlands also in small numbers during October, with up to six birds present in a Phoenix yard (one ♀ bird present since July) Oct. 10–17 (L. Shaberly), four at B.T.A., Oct. 19, with only two present the following day (CT), and an injured bird found in Cave Creek n. of Phoenix Nov. 6 (K. Ingram).

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