

SOUTHWEST REGION—This winter, the bad weather in some areas and scarcity of birds was the big news. For the most part, it was generally mild



with little wind. December was unusually wet, particularly in southern Arizona. It was the wettest month in the history of Santa Cruz County (*BH*) with severe floods in Sabino Canyon near Tucson and in the Santa Cruz River (*FMT*), and in the Salt River Valley near Phoenix (*WCR*). Mountains throughout the Region were snow-covered. This lasted all winter, giving one of the best skiing seasons ever. Temperatures dropped only as low as -12 at Las Vegas, N. Mex. (*ES*); 5° in Santa Fe, and 17° in Nogales, Ariz. (*BH*); all warmer than usual. Precipitation was considered in some areas the best since 1958.

Prospects are fine for a good grass crop in Arizona. The desert is green this year and flowers are beautiful on the hills (*WCR*, *BH*). Water holes are filled and overflowing. Dry arroyos were running for months and the Santa Cruz River is making life miserable for the few cars which attempt it. Only in southeastern New Mexico were conditions called dry.

Still in most areas, bird populations were considered low. Perhaps the mild winter caused them to spread out more. Many of the "semi-hardy" species stayed farther north—even many less hardy. Both the migration and nesting started early. Some thought the use of insecticides might have cut populations, as mentioned last fall in the Great Basin Region by Dr. Scott.

Another possibility is a possible shift to the east this past fall. This was shown by evident shifts by some species, such as the Lark Buntings. In checking the fall reports such statements as these are noted: "Straits reached the Northeast in airflows from the West and Southwest;" "eastward shift of many migrants into Florida;" "unusual number of western wanderers in repeated movements of western air masses into Ontario;" "a major incursion of birds originating in the West—" from the Central Southern Region, and from the Southern Plains a listing of species which moved east, many of which were low in this Region. In South Texas we see "in moon observations two-thirds of the movement was from west to east. A sharp increase in western species."

Again listed were many species low in the Southwest Region. Unfortunately, banding operations in the West, and particularly in the Southwest, are very limited.

An attempt is being made to purchase acreage for Storrer Lake near Las Vegas, N. Mex. for a waterfowl refuge. So far only half of the desired land has been gotten. One very happy bit of news is that the unique area at Patagonia, Ariz. has been preserved through the efforts of Florence Thornburg and the Tucson Audubon Society. Three hundred and twenty acres have been purchased by the Nature Conservancy for \$150,000, including fences and upkeep. They will need contributions to help preserve this area.

Loons to Ibis—An *Arctic Loon* was captured on a wet runway at Walker Air Force Base near Roswell, N. Mex. on Dec. 16 and taken to Bitter Lake Nat'l Wildlife Refuge nearby, where it died a few days later (RDJ, JHS, VM). There was a good flight of Eared Grebes; the best for several years at Globe (BJ) and Nogales (BH), Ariz. and in the Carlsbad, N. Mex. area (VM, SW, et al.). With them were a few Horned Grebes, including one in changing plumage near Carlsbad on March 20 (SW). It is thought-provoking to note that this species, collected near Nogales, was corrected to Eared after the specimens were studied. Unusual was a White Pelican soaring with ravens over Nogales on Dec. 21 (BH). A Cattle Egret stayed near Carlsbad from Dec. 1 until Jan. 5. It was photographed (SW, JO, et al.). The *White Ibis* remained near Roswell at least into late December.

Geese—Peak numbers at the Bosque del Apache Nat'l Wildlife Refuge near Socorro, N. Mex. dropped from 8693 in 1963 to 5030 on Dec. 20. It was thought that mild winter held many in Colorado. Most had left by mid-February. This included a peak of 1837 Snow Geese on Jan. 3, an all-time high. With an increased number of Snows have been appearing more Blue Geese. In the last four years even the Ross' were seen. This winter there were 16 at Bosque on Jan. 17 (WEG); and 4 were seen at the Bitter Lake Refuge on Dec. 21 (RDJ, DLB). A White-fronted Goose once more wintered in the Nogales area (BH).

Ducks—The peak on the Bosque Refuge reached 12,902 on Dec. 20, but most had left by the middle of February, along with the cranes and geese (WEG). Two Mexican Ducks were trapped at Bitter Lake Refuge on Feb. 12, the first specimens for southeastern New Mexico (VM). A *European Widgeon* appeared in Papago Park near Mesa, Ariz. from March 10 to 22. It was seen by many and was photographed (CT, MLB). A female Wood Duck was at the Glenwood Fish Hatchery, Catron Co., N. Mex. on March 26 (BM); and at least 5 were at the Havasu Lake Nat'l Wildlife Refuge (Arizona-California border) all winter, where a male was shot on Jan. 9 (JMW). A White-winged Scoter was killed by a hunter near Rosewell on Dec. 20 (RDJ).

Hawks—The last few years have seen an increase in reports of Harlan's Hawks. One was at St. George, Utah, from Jan. 22 to March 4 (RHW).

Another was on the Bosque Refuge on Feb. 27 (PRS). One wintered near Loving, Dec. 15 till Feb. 26 and another at Carlsbad Nat'l Park, N. Mex. from Jan. 1 until Feb. 13 (SW, JP, et al.). Ferruginous Hawks continued more common than usual. Single Bald Eagles again appeared over the grasslands near Lochiel, Ariz. on Jan. 16 (BH); on the Verde River near Phoenix on Feb. 20 (MLB); and on March 2 near the Salt River, Seneca, Ariz. (GR, fide BJ). A Pigeon Hawk was at St. George on Jan. 22 (RHW).

Quail to Rails—The 49 Harlequin Quail at Patagonia on Dec. 23 was the highest count ever made. A long hunting season on them lasted into January (BH). Sandhill Cranes peaked at 3860 on the Bosque Refuge (WEG). In the Roswell area the peak of 11,000 was the lowest in many years—they apparently shifted east into Texas (RDJ). A Virginia Rail near Nogales from Jan. 30 into April was the first local record (BH).

Shorebirds—Many species lingered this winter. A Greater Yellow-legs in the Lochiel grasslands on Jan. 16 was considered odd (BH). Three Snowy Plover were at Overton, Nev. on March 25. Least Sandpipers wintered there and at St. George (RHW); and were counted at El Paso, Texas at Christmas. They were also counted in Phoenix. A Dunlin was at St. George on Dec. 28 and Jan. 22; and 8 were at Overton on Jan. 29 and March 25 (RHW).

Doves to Kingfishers—All three species of doves were low in the Nogales area, but 28 Band-tailed Pigeons seen in the Patagonia Mts. on Dec. 23, provided the first local winter record (BH). Roadrunners were unusually common around Globe (BJ). Two White-throated Swifts were at San Carlos Lake near the Coolidge Dam in Arizona on Feb. 4 and 26 (BJ). A Barn Owl and a Long-eared Owl were at St. George on Dec. 28 (RHW). Part of last fall's irruption was a Saw-whet Owl near Roswell on Feb. 2 (ANC). A Screech Owl nested in Mesa on March 16 (WCR). Anna's Hummingbirds stayed at feeders in Tucson until at least February (FMT). Some were in Nogales until mid-January for the first local winter record. The Green Kingfisher stayed near there until early February (BH). A Poorwill was found near Loving on Dec. 8 (SW) and a Lesser Nighthawk was counted at Nogales on Dec. 21 (BL).

Flycatchers to Wrens—An Eastern Phoebe was in Phoenix on Dec. 26 (SRD). A Gray Flycatcher was banded near Phoenix on March 30 (AC). Of some 23 *Empidonax* flycatchers seen on the Nogales Christmas count of Dec. 21 two collected proved to be a Dusky and a Gray Flycatcher (SMR, BH). A Blue Jay stayed at a feeder in Albuquerque, N. Mex., Dec. 7 until Feb. 19 (AM, et al.). Another stayed at Tesuque near Santa Fe from Dec. 6 into April (JCY). Both were photographed. Roland Wauer collected a wintering Winter Wren at St. George on March 24.

Mimids to Shrikes—Curve-billed Thrashers were more common than usual at Nogales (BH). One was netted in Yuma, Ariz. on Feb. 19 (AC). Robins, bluebirds, and other montane species mostly stayed

in the highlands. Only one Robin came to Mesa all winter (*WCR*); there were very few at Nogales and Globe (*BH, BJ*). These species also apparently moved eastward. Robins were much more numerous than usual at Roswell (*VM*). The *Rufous-backed Robin* again appeared in Tucson, Dec. 29, but didn't stay (*FMT, BH, RPN*). Eastern Bluebirds may be spreading into the Rio Grande Valley. This year they were seen on the Albuquerque count again, and eight were at Española, N. Mex. on Dec. 26 (*PRS, BJH*). Cedar Waxwings were low most of the period, but began to appear in numbers in March. Starlings, in a ten-year period, have become well-established in most parts of the Southwest. Up to 12 were at Magdalena, N. Mex. all winter (*JAB*), and Starlings began nesting in Mesa, Globe, and Phoenix in March (*WCR, BJ*). Three were at Lukeville on the Mexican border in Organ Pipe Nat'l Monument, Ariz., for the first time on March 19 (*WCR*).

Vireos to Orioles—Solitary Vireos were found at Loving on Dec. 29 (*SW*) and the Atascosa Highlands, Ariz. on Dec. 27 (*BH*). Many wintering warblers were reported. Included were a Palm Warbler at Carl Pleasant Lake, Maricopa Co., Ariz. from Jan. 2 till Feb. 26 (*RPN, MLB, et al.*); and a *Louisiana Waterthrush* collected on Jan. 23 west of Peña Blanca, Ariz. for the first state record (*BH*). Wintering orioles were a Scott's at Nogales (*BH*); a pair of Hooded at Tucson (*FMT, JC*); and two Bullock's in Yuma in February (*AG*).

Finches—In Nogales Cardinals and Brown Towhees were up in numbers, but all other finches were down (*BH*). There were infrequent reports of the montane species, even in the highlands. Considering the scarcity of Evening Grosbeaks, and the invasion mentioned in the East, could some of them be from the West? Another species which definitely shifted eastward was the Lark Bunting. Birders in southern Arizona considered them unusually scarce, as at Tucson, where two were seen instead of thousands (*FMT*); on the other hand, they wintered around Roswell in flocks of hundreds (*VM*); and 2000 were counted at Chinati, Texas on Dec. 30 (*REO*).

Sparrows—There were several reports of sparrows wintering north of their normal range, but they were thought fewer around Nogales and Tucson (*BH, FMT*). A Tree Sparrow was at St. George on Dec. 28; 2 Harris' Sparrows were at Santa Clara, Utah, on March 4, and one at Beaver Dam Wash, Ariz. the next day. A Swamp Sparrow was seen at St. George on Feb. 9 (*RHW*). Clay-colored Sparrows were numerous all winter near Roswell (*VM*). A photographed *Golden-crowned Sparrow* was in Tucson from February to at least April 2 (*ASW, FMT*, and many others). Betty Jackson had a White-throated Sparrow at Globe, Nov. 29 through March 16. Chestnut-collared Longspurs also joined the eastward shift with hundreds near Roswell in February and March (*VM*). They were seen in the same period near Moriarty in Santa Fe and Torrance Counties, N. Mex. (*WBL, BM, et al.*).

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