

SOUTHWEST REGION.—The past winter may have been one of the wettest on record throughout the Region. One storm period from Dec. 13 to 21



dumped 8 feet of snow on the Santa Catalina Mountains near Tucson, Ariz. and on the mountains near Silver City, N. Mex. (*DSP, RAF*). About 5 feet fell on the level from Flagstaff, Ariz. to Gallup, N. Mex., although to the north Farmington, N. Mex. recorded only 2 feet (*APN*). Los Alamos, N. Mex. had 3 feet while Santa Fe on the other side of the valley recorded only 2 feet. Silver City's 1-2 feet was the worst in 38 years (*RAF*).

Cold following the snows kept the ground covered well into January. During the rest of the winter storms were spaced far enough apart to saturate the soil and ensure maximum plant growth. Snow packs still covering mountains at the close of the period should keep most streams active through spring.

After the cold which lasted into January, February and March averaged warmer with less wind. In lowlands flowers bloomed and insects came to life. Some nesting began, and migrants began arriving earlier than usual. Feed was in good supply when not covered by snow. No evidence was found of any great toll of birdlife due to the storms.

Two controversies are raging in New Mexico. One is over the proposed Hooker Dam on the Gila River near Silver City. This would form a lake that would back up into the Gila Wilderness Area and destroy the downstream sycamore-willow habitat where a number of Mexican species have their only range in the state. The other is a project of the Bureau of Reclamation to strip all the phreatophytes [deep-rooted plants that obtain their water from the water

table or from the layer of soil immediately above the water table—Ed.] along a 225-mile stretch of the Rio Grande from Velarde in the north to Elephant Butte Reservoir near Truth or Consequences in the south. This includes part of the Chama River from Española to Medanales and also would include Bosque del Apache Nat'l Wildlife Refuge near Socorro. The project would involve the destruction of trees on some 40,000 acres at an initial cost of \$805,000. Part of the La Joya State Game Refuge near Bernardo has already been "strip-ripped," and a similar project was carried out on the lower Pecos River in 1964. Some of these areas are now dust bowls devoid of all natural beauty. The main opposition to the project is coming from the Sierra Club and the New Mexico Game and Fish Department under the leadership of Ladd Gordon.

Loons, Grebes, Pelicans, Egret, Ibis—Single Western Grebes were seen at Farmington, Dec. 10 (*APN*), at Bitter Lake Nat'l Wildlife Refuge near Roswell, N. Mex., Dec. 11 (*VM*), and at Balmorhea, Tex. on Jan. 1, the last-named in company with 2 Com. Loons and 2 White Pelicans (*AL, et al.*). A *Castle Egret* stayed for a few days (dates?) near Phoenix (*HC, RW*). A White-faced Ibis noted at Bitter Lake Refuge on Dec. 29 had been present for several weeks (*VM*).

Swans, Geese—Three Whistling Swans were seen near Washington, Utah on Jan. 10 (*EC, BAL*); 4 were seen at Bitter Lake Refuge in late December (*VM*); and 2 to 23 were recorded near Farmington, Dec. 22-Feb. 24 (*APN, CS*). At Bosque del Apache Refuge, Canada Geese peaked at 2250 on Jan. 9; the refuge also had an earlier peak of 2840 Snow, 35 Blue and 100 Ross' Geese on Dec. 1 (*RWR*). Counts of geese on Bitter Lake Refuge on Dec. 29 were good: 800 Canada, 425 Snow, 9 Blue and 4 Ross' Geese (*VM*). A Ross' Goose also wintered near Tucson with 4 Snow Geese (*FT*). Four Canada Geese were found near Organ Pipe Cactus Nat'l Monument, Ajo, Ariz. where the species is considered rare (*RLC*).

Ducks—Except in Nevada (*CGH*), ducks were considered more numerous this winter, especially diving ducks, with an increase in counts of Ring-necked Ducks, Com. Goldeneyes and Buffleheads. A peak of 13,500 ducks on Bosque del Apache Refuge on Dec. 1 included 8000 Mallards, 3500 Pintails and 1000 Shovelers (*RWR*). Last year's hatch of Mexican Ducks will soon be released at the refuge. A Black Duck arrived at Big Bend Nat'l Park, Tex. on Dec. 10 after heavy winds (*RHW*). More Hooded Mergansers were reported at Organ Pipe Monument (*RLC, FT*), Bosque del Apache Refuge (*RWR*), Bitter Lake Refuge (*VM*), Balmorhea (*AL*), and El Paso, Tex. (*MBK*). A Red-breasted Merganser was recorded near Tucson on Jan. 1 (*FT*).

Hawks, Eagles—Most areas reported very good numbers, with higher counts of Sharp-shinned, Cooper's, Ferruginous, Marsh, Pigeon and Sparrow Hawks and Prairie Falcons. There were more records than usual of Rough-legged Hawks, Golden Eagles and Peregrine Falcons. A Gray Hawk stayed near Nogales, Ariz. until at least Dec. 21 (*FT, BH*). Harris'

Hawk was considered more common near Tucson (*DSP*), and there were several reports of the species from Phoenix (*ELR*, *RPN*). Two Bald Eagles were observed on Pahranaagat Nat'l Wildlife Refuge, Alamo, Nev. on Jan. 23 (*CGH*) and 2 were present near Phoenix, Feb. 3–March 20 (*SRD*, *RPN*).

Quail, Cranes, Rail—Although most seemed to have survived the storms, there may have been some loss to Harlequin Quail near Tucson (*DSP*). Counts of quail in most New Mexico localities were good. Snows may have harmed some Turkey populations in the northern mountains, according to the state game department. The high count of Sandhill Cranes at Bosque del Apache Refuge was 5150 on Jan. 9 (*RWR*). A Virginia Rail was seen at Nogales, Feb. 4 (*BH*).

Shorebirds, Gulls—Up to 200 Mountain Plover were found east of Phoenix, Jan. 2–Feb. 13 (*RPN*, *M.A.S.*). More than the usual number of sandpipers wintered in lowland areas. Two Dunlin were present at Phoenix, Dec. 30–Feb. 20, and a Red Phalarope was observed there on Jan. 28 (*RPN*). A Ring-billed Gull was seen at Ajo on Dec. 2 (*RLC*) and a Bonaparte's Gull at Bitter Lake Refuge on Dec. 29 (*VM*).

Owls—Big Bend Park had the first Barn Owl recorded there in 30 years, a Flammulated Owl on March 20, and a *Saw-whet Owl* that was collected on Feb. 23 (*RHW*). There were more than the usual number of reports of Long-eared and Short-eared Owls.

Goatsuckers, Swifts, Hummingbirds—Desert areas in the Region had more than the usual number of wintering Poor-wills, White-throated Swifts and Costa's Hummingbirds. Anna's Hummingbirds were nesting near Phoenix, Ariz. on Feb. 20 (*EJ*, *UEM*) and at Superior, Ariz. on March 8 (*SMR*, *FT*); there are few breeding records for Arizona.

Woodpeckers, Swallows—Yellow-shafted Flickers were reported more numerous than usual from the southeastern part of the Region. A Red-headed Woodpecker was observed at Roswell, Dec. 29 (*VM*). Acorn Woodpeckers were scarce near Nogales (*FT*, *BH*), and Lewis' Woodpeckers virtually disappeared from the Region's northern areas. Swallows were early in returning to the Desert Game Range near Las Vegas, Nev. (*CGH*). On March 24, Rough-winged Swallows were breeding along the Sonoyta River in Sonora, Mexico, just below the border (*RLC*).

Jays, Chickadees, Nuthatches—More than the usual number of sightings of errant Blue Jays were reported from Albuquerque, N. Mex. (*BM*, *et al.*), Big Bend Park (*RHW*), and Los Alamos (*WCT*). Scrub Jays moved in numbers to feeders in some areas during the snowstorms. There was a scattering of lowland reports of Steller's Jays, Mountain Chickadees and Pygmy Nuthatches. The only Red-breasted Nuthatch report came from the Santa Catalina Mountains on Dec. 30 (*JS*).

Mimids, Thrushes—Mockingbirds and Hermit Thrushes were recorded more often and in greater numbers than usual. Southern Arizona experienced an increase in Curve-billed, Crissal and Sage Thrash-

ers (*UEM*, *BJ*, *FT*). Brown Thrashers were seen in Santa Fe (*JK*), Big Bend Park (*RHW*), Albuquerque (*BL*), and Las Vegas, N. Mex. (*ES*, *WH*). Robins, Mountain and Western Bluebirds and Townsend's Solitaires stayed in the highlands. A Swainson's Thrush was found at Silver City on March 10 (*RAF*), and an Eastern Bluebird was observed in Albuquerque on Jan. 29 (*RL*).

Kinglets, Waxwings, Phainopepla, Starlings—Golden-crowned Kinglets wintered at Big Bend Park (*RHW*). There were no big flights of Cedar Waxwings. A Phainopepla was seen catching bugs in the middle of a snowstorm at Globe, Ariz. in December (*IT*). Starlings are now regular at Lukeville, near Ajo, Ariz. and were seen at Sonoyta, Sonora for perhaps the first time in Mexico (*RLC*). Thousands began usurping nesting cavities in the desert at Tucson in February (*FT*).

Warblers, Oriole, Blackbird—The *Louisiana Waterthrush* was recorded for the second time near Nogales on Feb. 17 (*BH*, *FT*). A Yellowthroat and a Scott's Oriole also wintered there. A Rusty Blackbird was observed at Big Bend Park on Dec. 10 and 27 (*RHW*).

Finches, Sparrows—A Cardinal was seen at El Paso on Dec. 30 (*MBK*), and southern Arizona counted good numbers of Cardinals and Pyrrhuloxias (*BJ*, *IT*, *BH*). A ♂ *Varied Bunting* at Big Bend Park on Dec. 28 may have been the first United States winter record (*RHW*). There were more House Finches, Pine Siskins, Am. Goldfinches and Green-tailed, Rufous-sided and Brown Towhees on the Christmas Counts. Northern finches were nearly absent, with very few sightings of Evening Grosbeaks and Cassin's Finches. The only Red Crossbill record was the 27 birds noted on the Grand Canyon Nat'l Park Christmas Count. A mixed flock of 350 Gray-crowned Rosy Finches and Brown-capped Rosy Finches was observed near Española, N. Mex., Dec. 30 (*PRS*, *MAC*); 100 of the latter species were seen near Mora, N. Mex. on Feb. 17 (*ES*) and 350 were noted near Farmington, Dec. 13–27, one of which even came to a feeder! (*APN*). On March 2, 50 Lark Buntings were seen east of Yuma, Ariz. which is a bit far west for the species (*GMcC*). A count for Baird's Sparrows in the San Rafael Valley east of Nogales on March 2–3 found at least 10 birds (*GMcC*, *et al.*). Desert areas of the Region had high numbers of Black-throated Sparrows on the Christmas Counts, including 18 in the Atascosa Highlands, Ariz.; 101 in the Ajo Mountains, Ariz.; 455 at Nogales; 224 at Organ Pipe Cactus Nat'l Monument; 5 at Patagonia, Ariz.; 42 in the Rincon Mountains, Ariz.; 77 in the Santa Catalina Mountains; 75 in the Tucson Valley; and 2 at Cliff, N. Mex. Almost all areas counted or reported Staccato-colored Juncos and White-throated Sparrows during the winter, in greater numbers where they usually are rare. There were more Tree Sparrows on the Christmas Counts, including 12 at Española, 10 at Roswell, and 200 at Las Vegas, N. Mex., as well as 1 bird seen at Farmington on Dec. 27 (*APN*). A Harris' Sparrow wintered at Las Vegas, N. Mex. (*WH*) and another at Los Alamos (*BS*), and single

birds were found in the White Mountains, Graham Co., Ariz. on Dec. 10 (*RPN*), at Pipe Spring Nat'l Monument, Fredonia, Ariz. on Dec. 24 (*BAL*), and at Española on Dec. 30 (*JT*). Unusually high numbers of White-crowned Sparrows were recorded on the Christmas Counts, and there were more than the usual number of wintering Lincoln's Sparrows. Golden-crowned Sparrows must have wandered eastward: 1 wintered near Santa Fe (*PRS*, *WIK*, *BI*); 1 was banded at Tucson on March 31 (*SMR*); 1 returned to a Tucson feeder for the third winter (*FT*); and 1 remained near Phoenix, Jan. 1–March 6 (*ELR*, *UEM*). Increased numbers of Fox Sparrows were recorded on the Christmas Counts, with 1 at Nogales, 1 at Cliff, N. Mex., and 2 at Roswell. Outside of the Christmas Count period, the species was observed at Big Bend Park on Dec. 17 (*RHW*) and 3 were near Glenwood, N. Mex. on March 24 (*RAF*). Swamp Sparrows seem to be gradually moving westward. This winter they were seen at Nogales and Patagonia, Ariz.; several were banded near Tucson (*SMR*, *FT*); and the species was reported in the White Mountains of Arizona on Dec. 10 (*RPN*). A number of Swamp Sparrows also were recorded on the Christmas Counts, including 1 at Bosque del Apache Refuge, 2 at Española, 5 at Roswell, 3 at Big Bend Park, and 8 at Balmorhea, Tex.

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