

## RECENT NOTES FROM THE LOWER COLORADO RIVER VALLEY OF ARIZONA AND CALIFORNIA

By GALE MONSON

From May, 1943, to February, 1944, and from April, 1946, to the present time (August, 1948) my residence has been in the middle section of the lower Colorado River valley in Arizona and California. In these periods, I have been able to obtain a number of ornithological records that I feel are of sufficient value to report.

The middle section of the Colorado valley to which I refer extends from the city of Needles, California, on the north to a few miles below the town of Parker, Arizona, on the south. The section can be divided into three parts: (1) Havasu Lake National Wildlife Refuge, which lies along the Colorado River from near Needles on the north to Parker Dam on the south. It consists, in turn, of four divisions: the flooded cattail, sandbar, and dead brush swampland between Needles and Topock, Arizona; the constricted river (Mohave Canyon) between Topock and Havasu Lake; Havasu Lake itself; and the Bill Williams Delta (confluence of Bill Williams River and Havasu Lake just above Parker Dam). (2) The Colorado River between Parker Dam and Parker, bordered by a narrow strip of undeveloped riparian brushland, and including Headgate Rock Dam, a diversion structure watering the Colorado River Indian Reservation. (3) The Colorado River Indian Reservation, below Parker, mainly on the Arizona side of the river. The reservation contains a considerable acreage of cultivated farmland and also many square miles of brush and some woodland.

This paper adds several species to the Arizona state list, mentions inland records for pelagic birds, extends the breeding range of sundry species, and includes a number of unseasonal occurrences.

*Gavia stellata*. Red-throated Loon. A subadult was seen near Whipple Point on the lower part of Havasu Lake on June 8, 1948. What was very likely the same individual was seen near Needles Landing on the west side of Havasu Lake on June 15, 1948. I had the bird under protracted observation on both dates and carefully noted the shape of the bill, so I feel there is no doubt attached to the observation. This forms the first summer record of the species for Arizona as well as for the lower Colorado River valley. An earlier observation was made at Fort Mohave, Arizona, on November 21, 1947, when one was closely observed by Warren Pulich of Phoenix, Arizona. These are apparently the only valid records for Arizona.

*Colymbus auritus*. Horned Grebe. One was seen in the Bill Williams arm of Havasu Lake on April 19, 1948, in company with a flock of Eared Grebes (*Colymbus nigricollis*). This is apparently the first valid Arizona record.

*Pelecanus occidentalis*. Brown Pelican. Apparently of rare occurrence along the Colorado River. One immature was seen near Needles Landing on September 1 and 12, 1943; another was seen in the Bill Williams Delta on August 8, 1946.

*Butorides virescens*. Green Heron. One was seen in the Bill Williams Delta on December 7, 1946, a first wintering record for the lower Colorado valley above the Yuma district.

*Ixobrychus exilis hesperis*. Least Bittern. That the Least Bittern occasionally winters in the lower Colorado valley is evidenced by a male taken on the Arizona side about 1½ miles above Topock in a muskrat trap on December 13, 1943.

*Anser albifrons*. White-fronted Goose. One seen above Topock (Beal Slough) on May 10, 1947, is my sole spring record of a bird that migrates regularly through the valley in the fall.

*Chen hyperborea*. Snow Goose. Apparently a few individuals of this species come south well ahead of the main flight, which usually takes place in late November. I saw two at Icehouse Bend below Needles on October 1, 1943, a flock of five about a mile and a half below Topock on October 6, 1947, and a flock of three at Icehouse Bend on October 6, 1943.

*Mareca penelope*. European Widgeon. A male was observed on the California side at "568," just above Topock, December 16, 1947, and again on December 17 and 18. On the latter date it flew across

the state line into Arizona, creating a first record for that state. This individual was also seen by Pulich.

*Aix sponsa*. Wood Duck. A male was seen on June 7, 1946, below Devil's Elbow, in Mohave Canyon, a date that must be very unusual.

*Buteo lagopus*. American Rough-legged Hawk. One was seen above Topock on November 19, 1946, on the Arizona side, and again on November 23, 1946, on the California side. One was also noted in the Bill Williams arm of Havasu Lake on December 20, 1947.

*Urubitinga anthracina*. Mexican Black Hawk. One was seen on August 25, 1946, on the Colorado River Indian Reservation several miles south of Parker. It was perched in a roadside tree, watching a Road-runner (*Geococcyx californianus*) and a bull snake cross the road. The Road-runner was "convoying" the snake, walking ahead of the slowly moving four-foot reptile, apparently interested in it but not to the point of attacking it. The little drama was over when bird and snake disappeared into the dense arrowweed along the road. The hawk watched the proceedings in uninterested fashion, made no attempt to interfere, and then flew off at my closer approach. This is the first record of a Mexican Black Hawk for the lower Colorado valley as well as the westernmost record for the species.

*Haliaeetus leucocephalus*. Bald Eagle. An adult was seen on the Arizona side of Havasu Lake opposite Needles Landing on December 3, 1943, the first record for the lower Colorado River.

*Rallus longirostris*. Clapper Rail. This species was first met with on June 6, 1948, when an adult was seen at a seepage pond just above the California side of Headgate Rock Dam. Later, at the same place, on July 9, 1948, in company with Sid Platford of Los Angeles, I saw an adult and three small young. On July 17, 1948, I saw the young and two adults. There are no other records for this rail above Laguna Dam, some 100 air miles southward.

*Charadrius alexandrinus nivosus*. Snowy Plover. One was taken in the Bill Williams Delta on September 7, 1943, the first Arizona specimen. The species appears to be a regular, although uncommon, transient along the Colorado River, where I have records extending from March 30, 1947, to May 27, 1946, and in the fall, from July 13, 1948, to early November.

*Eupoda montana*. Mountain Plover. Two were seen along U. S. Highway 66 four and one-half miles south of Needles on October 26, 1943; this is my only record for the area.

*Arenaria melanocephala*. Black Turnstone. One was seen on May 21, 1948, at Needles Landing, forming one of the few inland records for the species and the first for the Colorado valley. It was quite tame, perfectly identifiable and characteristic of action, even to its flipping over a few stones and alighting on a bulkhead.

*Numenius phaeopus*. Hudsonian Curlew. One was seen on September 15, 1946, along the Colorado River about three miles northeast of Parker. One, possibly the same individual, was collected in the Bill Williams Delta on September 17, 1946, the first specimen obtained in Arizona.

*Erolia melanotos*. Pectoral Sandpiper. One was taken from a group of three in the Bill Williams Delta on September 17, 1946, the first specimen known from western Arizona. As many as 24 were seen subsequently on one date (September 14, 1947).

*Erolia alpina pacifica*. Red-backed Sandpiper. A specimen was taken in the Bill Williams Delta on November 24, 1947. Another was seen just above Topock on December 10, 1943. There are no previous records for western Arizona.

*Limnodromus griseus*. Dowitcher. Two, still quite buff-colored, were seen in the Bill Williams Delta on July 15, 1943.

*Crocethia alba*. Sanderling. Not previously reported from Arizona. One was seen in the Bill Williams Delta on September 6, 1943; one was seen just above Topock on September 17, 1947; and one taken and two others were seen on the Arizona side of Havasu Lake a few miles above Parker Dam on September 18, 1947.

*Recurvirostra americana*. Avocet. One was seen at Topock on December 7, 1947, the first winter record for Arizona. The same winter, in the Bill Williams Delta, five were seen on December 20, 1947, and six on January 16, 1948.

*Stercorarius parasiticus*. Parasitic Jaeger. An immature male was taken in the Bill Williams Delta on October 13, 1947, the first specimen taken in Arizona.

*Larus occidentalis*. Western Gull. One collected on the Arizona side at Parker Dam on December 12, 1946, the first specimen of the species for the state, was identified by A. J. van Rossem as *L. o. occidentalis*.

*Larus argentatus*. Herring Gull. One was collected on the Arizona side of Havasu Lake about one and one-half miles above Parker Dam on December 13, 1946. The specimen was identified by van Rossem as *L. a. thayeri*, having the following measurements: wing (chord), 396 mm.; total culmen, 53.5 mm. This is the first specimen of *thayeri* for Arizona.

*Larus pipixcan*. Franklin Gull. One observed on Havasu Lake near Pittsburg Point on October 2, 1947, is the first definite Arizona record. One was also seen in the same locality on April 13, 14 and 15, 1948.

*Larus heermanni*. Heermann Gull. An adult was seen at Needles Landing on July 13, 1948, the second truly inland record for the United States.

*Columbigallina passerina*. Ground Dove. Northern records in the Colorado valley area are: one seen at Topock on August 15, 1946; one seen at the mouth of Whipple Wash, about ten miles above Parker Dam on the California side of Havasu Lake on July 28, 1943; and one seen on the Colorado River Indian Reservation on November 27, 1947.

*Scardafella inca*. Inca Dove. A small colony is present at the Colorado River Indian Agency at Parker, just across the river from California. This is further evidence that the species is extending its range to include suitable habitat along the Colorado River. It was first noted on July 18, 1946, when one was seen. Maximum numbers seen on any one date were nine (November 2, 1947).

*Asyndesmus lewis*. Lewis Woodpecker. One was seen on October 13, 1946, on the Colorado River Indian Reservation below Parker. Others were seen at later dates, with a maximum of four seen on November 3, 1946; the last was seen on January 25, 1947. One was also seen on November 11, 1947. These form the only records for the lower Colorado valley.

*Tyrannus melancholicus*. Tropical Kingbird. One was seen at Beal Slough, above Topock, and on the Arizona-California state line, October 1, 1947. I thought at first it was an unusually late Arkansas Kingbird (*Tyrannus verticalis*), but upon observing the white throat, greenish back, lack of white on a not-black tail, the yellow-orange on the belly, the gray crown, and large black bill, I knew it was *melancholicus*, which I have previously observed in the vicinity of Tucson, Arizona.

*Myiarchus tyrannulus magister*. Arizona Crested Flycatcher. One was seen on July 28, 1946, on the Colorado River Indian Reservation about two miles south of Parker. One was collected there on August 11, 1946, one was seen on May 19, 1947, and others have been noted subsequently. I have also noted it occasionally in the Bill Williams Delta, including a male taken on July 23, 1948. There is but one previous record from the Colorado Valley, at Bard, Imperial County, in California; and it is not known to breed nearer than the Big Sandy Valley in Mohave County, Arizona.

*Tachycineta thalassina*. Violet-green Swallow. To my knowledge, there are no records of this swallow's breeding in the United States at any distance below the Upper Sonoran Zone. The existence of a small breeding colony on the cliffs just below Parker Dam, California side, is therefore of interest. I first noted this colony on May 7, 1946. It makes use of the Bill Williams Delta as feeding grounds. There, on May 25, 1947, and again on June 6, 1948, I took juvenal specimens not long out of the nest. An adult male was taken on April 29, 1948, which on examination appears to belong to the race *lepida*. I also suspect the existence of a breeding colony at Copper Basin Reservoir, in the Whipple Mountains near Parker Dam, but I have been unable to confirm this.

*Iridoprocne bicolor*. Tree Swallow. Two were observed at Beal Lake above Topock on June 18, 1948. At this late date, I feel they must have been summering individuals, a very unusual status for this hot Lower Sonoran territory.

*Stelgidopteryx ruficollis*. Rough-winged Swallow. One seen at Parker Dam on October 23, 1947, is an unusually late fall record.

*Aphelocoma coerulescens*. Scrub Jay. One seen in the Bill Williams Delta on May 25, 1947, is an extremely late record for a Lower Sonoran locality. Specimens were taken in the area in the fall and early winter of 1946 near Parker Dam, in the Bill Williams Delta, and near Parker.

*Corvus brachyrhynchos*. Crow. Eight were seen with a flock of ten Ravens (*Corvus corax*) on the Colorado River Indian Reservation on December 14, 1947. This flock apparently wintered; in the same locality, six were seen by Pulich and me on February 7, 1948, and three again by me on March 4, 1948.

*Sitta canadensis*. Red-breasted Nuthatch. One seen in the Bill Williams Delta on September 26, 1947, and another at Topock on September 30, 1947, are the only recent records for the valley.

*Thryomanes bewickii*. Bewick Wren. One was observed singing *sotto voce* at the mouth of Osborne Wash above Parker on August 4, 1946, apparently a very early fall arrival date.

*Turdus migratorius*. Robin. Three were seen in some mistletoe-infested mesquites on the Colorado River Indian Reservation below Parker on May 1, 1948; this is a very late date for this species.

*Hylocichla ustulata*. Swainson Thrush. One seen on the California side at Devil's Elbow on June 7, 1946, was a very late migrant.

*Myadestes townsendi*. Townsend Solitaire. Two were seen in the Bill Williams Delta on October 11, 1946; this is my only record for the Colorado valley.

*Anthus spinoletta*. Water Pipit. One seen at Needles Landing on May 9, 1947, is an unusually late spring record.

*Vermivora virginiae*. Virginia Warbler. An adult female was taken at Topock on July 23, 1946, a first record for the lower Colorado River and very early.

*Oporornis tolmiei*. Macgillivray Warbler. One male was seen on the Colorado River Indian Reservation near Parker on August 11, 1946; this is an early arrival date.

*Icterus bullockii parvus*. Bullock Oriole. An adult male was seen in a date palm-pecan grove on the Colorado River Indian Reservation near Parker on January 1, 1947, and was subsequently collected on February 1, 1947, to form the first winter record of the species for Arizona.

*Euphagus cyanocephalus*. Brewer Blackbird. A female collected at Needles Landing on June 12, 1947, is an unusual summer record.

*Piranga rubra*. Summer Tanager. A female was seen at old Beal station about six miles south of Needles, in athel trees, on January 21, 1944, by Frank B. McMurry of the Fish and Wildlife Service and myself.

*Richmondia cardinalis superba*. Cardinal. The native occurrence of this bird in California has been reported by van Rossem (Condor, 48, 1946:248). I first saw one in California, a bright male, on May 21, 1943, about two miles north of Crossroads, San Bernardino County, where it was feeding along the road on bread thrown from a passing car. This represents the first definite record for California. Since then I have frequently noted it in the vicinity of Parker Dam; on July 29, 1943, August 25, 1943, September 7, 1943, November 23, 1943, May 29, 1946, and July 12, 1948, in the Bill Williams Delta; and on various occasions along the Arizona side of the river between Parker and Parker Dam including one seen in Parker on April 11, 1946, one collected at the mouth of Osborne Wash on July 6, 1946, and one collected (from a pair) at Cienega Springs on December 4, 1946.

*Pheucticus melanocephalus*. Black-headed Grosbeak. One male seen in the Bill Williams Delta on July 2, 1947, was an unusually early returning migrant.

*Carpodacus purpureus*. Purple Finch. A flock of seven, four in male and three in female plumage, was observed at Parker Dam on November 26, 1947, my only record for the valley.

*Spinus tristis*. American Goldfinch. A female was collected on the Colorado River Indian Reservation near Parker on May 17, 1948, a very late spring date for the species. It has been identified by Alden H. Miller as *S. t. salicamans* and is the first record of the subspecies for Arizona.

*Ammodramus savannarum*. Grasshopper Sparrow. An immature was taken in the Bill Williams Delta on September 26, 1947, the first record for the valley since 1854.

*Pooecetes gramineus*. Vesper Sparrow. One seen on the California side at Parker Dam on May 20, 1946, was a very late migrant.

*Junco caniceps*. Gray-headed Junco. An immature male was collected one and one-half miles north of Topock on October 15, 1946, the first record for the Colorado valley, aside from a possible reference by Huey (Condor, 28, 1926:44).

*Spizella breweri*. Brewer Sparrow. One seen on the California side at Parker Dam on May 20, 1946, was a late migrant.

*Fish and Wildlife Service, Parker, Arizona, October 25, 1948.*