

# New Mexico

## SARTOR O. WILLIAMS III

New Mexico experienced an exceptionally dry and mild winter, which allowed many species to linger late or overwinter north of their usual ranges, resulting in a number of interesting seasonal surprises.

Abbreviations: Bitter Lake (*Bitter Lake Nat'l Wildlife Refuge*); Bosque (*Bosque del Apache Nat'l Wildlife Refuge*); E.B.L. (*Elephant Butte Lake*); R.G.V. (*Rio Grande Valley*); Zuni (*Zuni Indian Reservation*).

## Loons to Waterfowl

The **Yellow-billed Loon** reported at Storrie L. in November was seen again Dec. 4 (BF), Dec. 10 (CR), and possibly Dec. 15 (*fide* PRS), but was not found thereafter. One–two Pacific Loons were at Conchas L., Dec. 4 & 10 (JP, CR, MP) and one was undetailed at Caballo L., Dec. 11 (*fide* PRS). Two small loons at Navajo L., Jan. 1 & 8 were reported as Red-throated (*fide* PRS), but details were equivocal. Horned Grebes occurred in small numbers at 7 locales from the R.G.V. eastward (v.o.), and included highs of nine at Conchas L., Dec. 10 (CR) and five at E.B.L., Feb. 3 (CR). Six Eared Grebes were unusual at Zuni Dec. 6 (DC), with two there Dec. 19 (JT *et al.*) and Jan. 12 (DC). Large numbers of *Aechmophorus* grebes again wintered in the E.B.L./Caballo area, with over 400 at Caballo L., Jan. 2 (BZ *et al.*), about 2000 at E.B.L., Jan. 12 (SOW), and at least 3000 at E.B.L., Feb. 3 (CR); about 40 were northerly at Morgan L., *San Juan* Jan. 3 (TR). A Clark's was late at Storrie L., Dec. 10 (CR) while single Clark's were noteworthy at L. Avalon Dec. 6 (D&JH) and Mattox L., Dec. 5 (SW, TH), the latter a first for *Lea*. No Am. White Pelicans were noted in December, but there were 20 at Caballo L., Jan. 2 (BZ *et al.*), two at Bitter L., Jan. 9 (SB, SG), and one at Brantley L., Jan. 22 (SW, TH). For unknown reasons, both cormorant species were notably scarce compared to recent years; the only Neotropics were seven at Caballo L., Jan. 2 (BZ *et al.*). American Bitterns are rarely reported in winter, so singles were noteworthy at Roswell Dec. 18 (SMB *et al.*) and *Lea* Dec. 5 (SW, TH). Lingering Great Egrets included two at Bitter L., Dec. 18 (SMB *et al.*)—and one there Jan. 9 (SB, SG)—plus singles at Caballo L., Jan. 8 (JP) and Mesilla Feb. 4 (CR, CS). Late were eight Cattle Egrets at Las Cruces Dec. 19

(BZ *et al.*); single Green Herons were unusual at Albuquerque Dec. 19 (HS *et al.*) and the Animas Valley Jan. 1 (*fide* RS), and a White-faced Ibis was early at Bosque Feb. 6 (*fide* PRS). Swans reported as Tundras included singles near Farmington Dec. 4–5 (TR), Clayton L., Dec. 5 (WC), Conchas L., Dec. 2–11 (CR, MP) and Jan. 11 (SOW, GS)—plus a “swan sp.” there Dec. 2 (CR)—and two–five at Bosque Feb. 6–11 (v.o.). Unusual was a Greater White-fronted Goose near Tinnie, *Lincoln* Dec. 3 (SMB); the only others were singles at Farmington Jan. 22 (TR) and Bosque Dec. 18 (*fide* SC). Noteworthy Wood Ducks included one–four at Bluewater L., Española, Roswell, Silver City, and Las Cruces (v.o), plus several at Rattlesnake Springs all winter, including seven there Dec. 20 (SW *et al.*); the Albuquerque population continued to thrive, with 222 counted Dec. 19 (HS *et al.*). Late was a Cinnamon Teal at Zuni Dec. 19 (CR). A ♂ **Eurasian Wigeon** was at Bottomless Lakes S.P., Jan. 20 (S. Healy), but subsequent efforts to relocate it were unsuccessful. Greater Scaup, regular in recent years on e. lakes, were at Conchas L. early December–mid-January (MP), with a high of 31 Dec. 4 (JP, LG); others (reported with details) were two each at Maxwell N.W.R., Feb. 21 (SB *et al.*) and Bottomless Lakes S.P., Jan. 21 (CR, PRS), and one at Caballo L., Jan. 2 (BZ) and Feb. 12 (CS, EW). It was a banner year for Oldsquaws, with two at Holloman L., Dec. 2–11 (CS, GE, ph. BZ) and one Dec. 12 (BN, DE), plus two at E.B.L., Jan. 22 (JP, LG), Feb. 3 (CR) & 13 (JP, LG). Small numbers of Barrow's Goldeneyes were on the *San Juan R.*—where they are now regular in winter—Dec. 10 (DC) and Jan. 15 (JP), with a high of 15–20 Feb. 26 (ph. DC). A Red-breasted Merganser were westerly at Farmington Jan. 22–Feb. 21 (TR) and seven at Zuni Dec. 6 (A. Chopito); noteworthy for the R.G.V. were 100 at E.B.L., Feb. 27 (BN, DE).

## Raptors to Shorebirds

Ospreys are rare in winter, thus one in the L. Avalon/McMillan area Dec. 23 (*fide* SW) was a treat. A near-record 478 Bald Eagles were counted on aerial transects Jan. 10–12 (SOW, GS); this represented a 128% increase over averages for the early 1980s, and a 58% increase over averages for the late 1980s. Very late was a Com. Black-Hawk at Vado, *Doña Ana* Dec. 26, where it lingered for about a week (*fide* CS). Merlins were well represented from the Farmington, Santa Fe, and Maxwell areas southward (v.o.) and included singles in the east at Clovis Jan. 14 (CR) and Tatum Jan. 21 (CR, PRS), and a high of five at Roswell Dec. 18 (SMB *et al.*). Late were single Peregrines at Zuni (JT, SI)

and Albuquerque (*fide* HS) Dec. 19. An unbanded **Aplomado Falcon** was seen in the Animas Valley Feb. 8 (H. Tordoff, F. Gill), the perched individual was described as a “first-year bird.” Both Virginia Rails and Soras were much more in evidence than usual, particularly in the Gila and lower Rio Grande and Pecos valleys; 11 Virginias at Zuni (JT *et al.*) and seven at Albuquerque (HS *et al.*) Dec. 19 were noteworthy, as were nine Soras at Loving Dec. 28 (SW *et al.*) Common Moorhens made a nice showing in Eddy, with one near Loving Dec. 5 (D&JH) and five there Dec. 28 (SW *et al.*), plus one on the upper Black R., Feb. 12 (SW); nine at Las Cruces Dec. 19 (BZ *et al.*) provided the only R.G.V. report. Up to 490 Sandhill Cranes were counted near Columbus Jan. 4 (SB, SG); the cranes roost at wetlands near Palomas, Chihuahua, in Mexico, and feed in fields in s. *Luna* (*fide* GS). Very late was a Black-necked Stilt near Loving Dec. 28 (S. Vail, *fide* SW), as were 87 Long-billed Curlews near Artesia Dec. 29 (JP). Northerly were ≤four Least Sandpipers at 2 *San Juan* sites Jan. 1–3 (TR). Up to four Dunlins wintered together at Caballo L., Dec. 11–Feb. 19 (v.o., ph. BZ); farther north, a single Dunlin was at Bosque on several dates Dec. 15–Feb. 27 (v.o.). Unprecedented for winter was a probable **Stilt Sandpiper** at Brantley L., Jan. 26 (EW, LS). A possible Wilson's Phalarope at Bitter L., Jan. 14 (SMB) represented one of the very few winter reports; there are no verified January records.

## Gulls to Owls

An ad. probable **Mew Gull** was at Caballo L., Feb. 19 (JP *et al.*) for the state's 3rd report in 3 years. Bonaparte's Gulls apparently vacated the state in midwinter—last seen were 14 at Roswell Dec. 18 (SMB *et al.*) and the earliest returnees, all Jan. 22, were 94 at E.B.L. (JP, LG), two at Brantley L. (SW), and three near Carlsbad (SW) Late were three California Gulls at Heron L., Dec. 3 (CR, SG) while two–five were early at Caballo L., Jan. 22–Feb. 19 (CS, CR, JP), four at E.B.L., Feb. 3 (CR), and one at Brantley L., Feb. 5 (CR). A well-described, pale Thayer's Gull was seen by many at Caballo L., Jan. 16 (ph. BZ) to Feb. 5 (JP); a 2nd, darker Thayer's was there Feb. 19 (JP *et al.*, CS). Problematical was an undetailed Glaucous-winged Gull at Caballo L., Jan. 16 (*fide* CS), which may pertain to the above species; however, other possible Glaucous-wingeds were an “immature” there Feb. 6 (BN *et al.*) and a “first-winter” at E.B.L., Feb. 12 (CS, EW).

Band-tailed Pigeons are rare anywhere in New Mexico in midwinter, so noteworthy were two in Mill Canyon, Magdalena Mts., Jan. 23 (HS). The saga of expanding range

and numbers of White-winged Doves continued, with small numbers again overwintering in several Albuquerque locales (R. Tomlinson, A. Swain), a record 35 at Roswell Dec. 18 (SMB *et al.*), and increased numbers in Carlsbad (SW). But 2759 counted at Las Cruces Dec. 19 (BZ *et al.*) was considered phenomenal; one was on eggs there in January and feeding young by February (CS). Unusual was a single White-winged at Silver City Jan. 19 (EL), where the population is migratory. Inca Doves were conspicuous in the southeast, with six at Roswell Dec. 18 (SMB *et al.*) and others southward through the Pecos Valley (SW *et al.*); noteworthy were 11 at Tatum Jan. 21 (CR, PRS) and 92 at Las Cruces Dec. 19 (BZ *et al.*). A Greater Roadrunner was n. of range at Zuni Dec. 19 (JT *et al.*); others were at Santa Fe throughout the period (v.o.). A Whiskered Screech-Owl in the Peloncillo Mts., Jan. 1 (ph. SW) further documented year-round residency there. Northern Pygmy-Owls were seen more frequently than usual, with singles at Farmington (TR), Pilar (SB), Bandelier (*vide* PRS), Zuni (JT), and the Peloncillo Mts. (RS), and two at Bluewater L. (SI *et al.*). Notable concentrations of Long-eared Owls included five in the Animas Valley Jan. 1 (*vide* RS) and 12 at Las Cruces Dec. 19 (BZ *et al.*). Four Short-eareds at Zuni Dec. 19 (JT *et al.*) was a high number for anywhere in New Mexico; the only additional reports were singles at Bosque Dec. 18 (SC) and near Lordsburg Jan. 1 (SW).

### Nighthawks to Woodpeckers

The very mild weather of early December may have been responsible for a probable **Common Nighthawk** at Carlsbad. First found and identified as a male Dec. 2 (D&JH), it was subsequently documented, including with videotape, by several local observers as it *quietly* fed over the lights of a car dealership each evening (SW *et al.*); it was last seen Dec. 11, when the winter's first storm hit the area. There are no verified December records, and most late nighthawk reports have been believed to be Lessers. Early White-throated Swifts included six at Mesilla Feb. 1 (SB) and two at High Rolls Feb. 19 (GE).

Magnificent Hummingbirds again wintered in *Grant*, with three at Pinos Altos December–February (RF *et al.*) and two at Silver City (RF *et al.*). More surprising, however, was a ♂ **Black-chinned Hummingbird** at Silver City “all winter” (RF *et al.*). Late was a Rufous at Las Cruces until Dec. 16 (GE); a Broad-tailed was early in the Peloncillo Mts., Feb. 27 (RS). A Lewis' Woodpecker was at High Rolls Feb. 7–8 (*vide* CS), where rarely reported. Easterly was an Acorn Woodpecker at Roswell Jan. 7 (*vide* SMB). Only two Gila Woodpeckers were found on the Gila Valley

CBC Dec. 30 (RF *et al.*); more encouraging were seven in or near the Peloncillo Mts. near Rodeo Jan. 1 (RS *et al.*). Migrant or wintering Yellow-bellied Sapsuckers were in the R.G.V. from the Santa Fe area (v.o.), s. through Corrales (*vide* PRS) to Caballo (ph. BZ) and Las Cruces (ph. BZ), and e. to Conchas L. (CR) and Roswell (SMB *et al.*); an undetailed one was west in the Gila Valley Dec. 30 (RF *et al.*). Williamson's Sapsuckers lingered into December in the north at Tesuque (CR), Bandelier (SB, SG), White Rock (JW), and Zuni (JT); another was at Navajo Dam Jan. 29 (TR).

### Flycatchers to Kinglets

A well-detailed but unfortunately voiceless *Empidonax* at Albuquerque Dec. 20 (G. Froehlich, D. Mehlman) was a Hammond's/Dusky-type and may have been a Dusky (*vide* HS). Farther south, single Hammond's were in the Percha area Jan. 2 (BZ) and at Las Cruces Dec. 19 (BZ). Apparently a winter first was a **Cordilleran/Pacific-slope Flycatcher** at Durling's Farm, *Doña Ana* Jan. 8–14 (S. Homan *et al.*, ph. BZ); although it never vocalized, the bird was believed to be a Cordilleran based on its vigorous reaction to taped Cordilleran vocalizations, contrasted with its lack of response to taped Pacific-slope vocalizations. An E. Phoebe was noteworthy near Tinnie Dec. 3 (SMB); singles were unusual in the west at Bosque Dec. 18 (TB, *vide* SC) and Percha Jan. 2–Feb. 5 (v.o.). Very late was a Tree Swallow at Willow L., *Eddy* Dec. 28 (TH, *vide* SW) while two were early at Mangas Feb. 9 (RF). A flock of 250 N. Rough-winged Swallows at Caballo L., Jan. 2 (K. Stinnett) furnished one of New Mexico's very few January records. Blue Jays were again in the Santa Fe area throughout the period (v.o.), including a high of six Dec 26 (PI *et al.*), and one was in the Sandia Mts., Jan. 2 (*vide* TB); the 85 counted at Roswell Dec. 18 (SMB *et al.*) were indicative of the numbers e. of the mountains. Peripheral were 57 Pinyon Jays at Silver City Dec. 18 (RF *et al.*) and three near Elk, *Chaves* Dec. 27 (CR). Eleven Black-capped Chickadees were south at Sevilleta N.W.R., Dec. 17 (RT *et al.*). Although recorded there in past winters, the 71 easterly Bridled Titmice in the Caballo-Percha area Jan. 2 (BZ *et al.*) may be a record for the R.G.V. Noteworthy for the east were three–four Red-breasted Nuthatches in Roswell Dec. 18 and Jan. 7 (SMB). Winter Wrens are not reported every winter, but this year singles were found at 5 locales during Dec. 11–Jan. 13: Corrales (*vide* PRS), 2 sites in the Sandia Mts. (HS, S. Hoffman, *vide* TB), Las Cruces (BZ), and Loving (CR). A House Wren was n. at Corrales Jan. 17 (CR). Getting an early

start on the upcoming season were singing/courting Am. Dippers at Cimarron Canyon Feb. 26 (CR) and Coyote Cr., *Mora* Feb. 27 (SB, LH). Unusual for the s.e. lowlands were two Golden-crowned Kinglets at Loving Dec. 5 (D&JH).

### Gnatcatchers to Shrikes

The wintering status of Blue-gray Gnatcatchers in s. New Mexico is complicated by the presence (and poorly understood distribution) of Black-tailed Gnatcatchers in the state. This winter, well-detailed Blue-grays included one at Percha Jan. 16 (BZ), Jan. 22 (JP, LG), and Feb. 5 (JP), and two at Las Cruces Dec. 19 (BZ *et al.*). Elsewhere, a “gnatcatcher sp.” was w. of Malaga in early December (D&JH), while undetailed reports were received of one Blue-gray and seven Black-taileds in the Peloncillo Mts., Jan. 1 (RS *et al.*). Continuing the recent trend, E. Bluebirds were widespread in the e. two-thirds of New Mexico (v.o.); in the southwest, smaller numbers were in the Gila Valley, Silver City, and Peloncillo Mts. areas (v.o.). Both W. and Mt. bluebirds were widespread and unusually numerous, including in s. lowland areas (v.o.). The mild early winter allowed Hermit Thrushes to linger northward in larger-than-usual numbers, including four at Española Dec. 18 (BF *et al.*), 12 in the Santa Fe area Dec. 26 (v.o.), and three at Zuni Dec. 19 (JT *et al.*). After an off-year, Am. Robin numbers rebounded nicely, with hundreds—and in some cases thousands—reported from widely scattered areas (v.o.). Northerly for the season were single N. Mockingbirds at Farmington (TR), Clayton (WC), Los Alamos (*vide* PRS), and Zuni (CR). What was termed by some the “year of the Sage Thrasher” found the species wintering northward in relatively large numbers, especially in the upper R.G.V. from Española and Santa Fe to Albuquerque (v.o.), as well as in the Gila Valley (RF); in contrast, numbers were down in the southeast (SW). Brown Thrashers made a good showing in the east, with one–three at Tucumcari (CR), Roswell (SMB), Loving (SW *et al.*), and Rattlesnake Springs (JP, CR); two were west at White Rock Dec. 19–Jan. 15 (JW) as was one near Las Cruces Dec. 5–Jan. 10 (ph. BZ). Late were two Bendire's Thrashers in *Hidalgo* Jan. 1 (*vide* RS). Cedar Waxwings were moderately abundant in most sections of the state and were especially numerous and persistent in the Santa Fe area (v.o.). Ten N. Shrikes were found at 7 locales in *San Juan* (BF, JP, TR), *Rio Arriba* (BF, CR), *Taos* (CR), *San Miguel* (R. Irvin), *Bernalillo* (HS) and *Chaves* (JP) Dec. 1–Feb. 13.

## Vireos to Sparrows

A remarkable three Solitary Vireos were at Las Cruces Dec. 19 (BZ *et al.*), where recently the species has occurred almost regularly in early winter; these were described as two *cassinii* (ph. BZ) and one *plumbeus*. Single Hutton's Vireos were at Aguirre Springs, *Doña Ana* Jan. 15 (BZ) and Feb. 4 (CR). An Oranged-crowned Warbler was at Percha Jan. 2 (BZ *et al.*) & 7 (GS) and two were at Loving Dec. 28 (CR); the 49 at Las Cruces Dec. 19 (BZ *et al.*), however, provided a record winter high. A ♀ **Black-and-White Warbler** at Mesilla Dec. 18–Jan. 15 (BZ *et al.*) furnished the state's 2nd well-documented winter record. Two Com. Yellowthroats were heard at Las Palomas Feb. 3 (CR), while five at Loving Dec. 28 (TH, CR) were apparently the first winter records for *Eddy*. Entirely unexpected was an **Olive Warbler** at Mesilla Dec. 19 (J. Patton, B. Vaughn, ph. BZ). Far n. of the usual range were single N. Cardinals at Zuni Dec. 19 (CR) and Tucumcari Dec. 10 (CR); another was at a Roswell feeder Dec. 20–Feb. 28 (SMB). The few Am. Tree Sparrows reported were restricted to Maxwell N.W.R. (SB) and the Las Vegas area (GS, SB, CR), suggesting fewer wintered s. to New Mexico this winter. A Field Sparrow at Roswell Dec. 18 (SMB) had been regular at a feeder all fall; the only additional reports were one–three in the Rattlesnake Springs area Dec. 20 (SW *et al.*) and Jan. 22 (CR, PRS). The 49 Black-chinned Sparrows counted in and near the Peloncillo Mts., Jan. 1 (RS *et al.*) was high. Sage Sparrows, widespread in the south from Lordsburg, Albuquerque, and the lower Pecos areas southward (v.o.), were unusually abundant in *Doña Ana* all winter (CS); a Sage at Navajo Dam Feb. 26 (DC) was early. Seven Fox Sparrows were reported, all from the south at 6 locales in *Sierra, Doña Ana*, and *Eddy* (v.o.). Late for the north was a Lincoln's at Española Dec. 18 (CR). White-throated Sparrows were relatively scarce, with small numbers noted at only 7 locales (v.o.). Well-detailed Golden-crowned Sparrows included one in Santa Fe Feb. 12 (SB), plus an immature in Albuquerque Dec. 19 (HS), and an adult there Jan. 23+ (JP); undetailed were reports of singles in San Juan Jan 8–9 (*fide* PRS) and the Sandia Mts., Feb. 9 (*fide* PRS). The four Harris' Sparrows were singles at Kirtland Dec. 30 (GS), Cochiti Feb. 21 (CR), Corrales Jan. 28 (*fide* PRS), and at Bosque on various dates Dec. 11–Feb. 19 (JP). Noteworthy were five Lapland Longspurs at Eagle Nest Feb. 19 (CR) & 17, plus two n. of range Chestnut-collareds at Las Vegas Jan. 2 (CR).

## Blackbirds to Finches

A Yellow-headed Blackbird was late at Albuquerque Dec. 19 (HS *et al.*). Rusty Blackbirds are rare in New Mexico in winter, but this year six were at Percha Jan 2 (BZ *et al.*) and three–nine at Rattlesnake Springs Dec. 20 (JP), Jan. 22 (CR, PRS), and Feb. 5 (CR, CS). A good find in the west, and a local first, was a Com. Grackle at Mangas Dec. 8 (ph. RF). A Scott's Oriole at Pancho Villa S.P., Jan. 4 (SB) provided the 4th recent winter record there. There was one report of rosy-finches, a flock of about 150 w. of Bobcat Pass, *Taos* Feb. 26 that contained mostly Brown-cappeds but also ≥five Blacks and two Gray-crowned (BN, DE, CR). Southerly, and unusual for the Manzano Mts., were three–four Pine Grosbeaks at Tajiique Canyon Dec. 21 and Jan. 26 (J. de Forest, *fide* HS). Both Cassin's Finches and Red Crossbills were relatively numerous in the Jemez, Sangre de Cristo, and Sandia mountains (v.o.) but were scarce elsewhere; small numbers of both were in the Magdalena Mts., (HS) while one–two Cassin's were in the Caballo (BZ) and Silver City (RF) areas and four Red Crossbills were near Cloudcroft (GE).

The finch of the season was a probable **White-winged Crossbill** near the top of Timber Mt. e. of Caballo L., Jan. 2 (EW *et al.*). Consistent with the mild weather were two Lesser Goldfinches near Santa Fe Jan. 1 (BF) and an unusually high 55 at Albuquerque Dec. 19 (HS *et al.*). Evening Grosbeaks were relatively plentiful in and near the Jemez and Sangre de Cristo ranges, including a remarkable 400 at Bandelier Feb. 11 (CR), but were scarce elsewhere, with only small numbers at Farmington (TR) and singles in the Sandia Mts. (TB) and at Silver City (RF).

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# Alaska Region

## T. G. TOBISH, JR.

Unusually mild temperatures prevailed over the entire Region for most of winter 1993–1994. Except for February, which ended the period with a nearly month-long, late-season, high-pressure cold siege, this winter was almost warm, mostly dry and, birdwise, locally exciting. Snowcover was only locally heavy, and then confined to areas where winter bird movements are independent of weather, such as the Brooks Range and the north Chugach and west Wrangell Mountains. Elsewhere, the winter's snowpack was well-below average and failed to concentrate semi-hardy overwintering passerines. The late fall's mild weather, predominant at least over the southern half of the state, continued well into January, when a full freeze-up finally scattered lingering waterbirds to the immediate coastal hot spots at Cordova, Seward, Kodiak, and Petersburg. February was brutally cold in comparison, and northern Southeast had its third coldest February ever. Most notable in this year's winter bird highlights were late records of semi-hardy species that only occasionally overwinter. As usual, most of the season's significant reports were concentrated around the Christmas Bird Count period and especially at coastal sites. For the second consecutive year, an Asiatic component was missing from reports. Unfortunately, especially in a mild winter, many regular observers failed to report.

## Loons to Waterfowl

Perhaps as a result of mild conditions, no Pied-billed Grebes were found. The season's peak W. Grebe counts were below-average from the standard spots: near Petersburg only 85 Dec. 4 (PJW) and around Ketchikan an area total of about 230 for the season (SCH). Four Great Blue Herons near Kodiak throughout the season (RAM), a single present all season at Seldovia (LT), another near Seward into "mid-December" (WS), and one n. to the Palmer flats until "late-December" (JL) were typical numbers of post breeders w. of nesting areas. The Palmer bird is the only one that rated as an extralimital, representing about the 3rd local record.

Trumpeter Swans were notably common and widespread in Southeast, especially after December. Three at Sitka Dec. 5–19 (MLW) were very late on the outer coast,