

# Southwest Region: Arizona

**CHRIS D. BENESH,  
GARY H. ROSENBERG, AND  
DAVID STEJSKAL**

While generally speaking this was a relatively quiet spring in Arizona, there were good numbers of western migrants reported by several observers. Additionally, several locally rare species were found at new localities, illustrating the dynamic nature of bird distribution. Rare visitors included two Fulvous Whistling-Ducks, two or three Flame-colored Tanagers, and the continued presence of at least two Eared Trogons in Arizona. Once again, Least Terns made a good showing, and from south of the border, a cooperative Rufous-capped Warbler was viewed by many birders from throughout the country.

Abbreviations: A.B.C. (*Arizona Bird Committee*); B.A.N.W.R. (*Buenos Aires N. W. R.*); L.C.R.V. (*Lower Colorado R. Valley*); G.F.P. (*Gila Farms Pond*); M.F.L. (*Many Farms Lake*); N.I.R. (*Navajo Indian Reservation*); P.A.P. (*Pinal Air Park*); P.R.D. (*Painted Rock Dam*); S.P.R. (*San Pedro R.*); S.T.P. (*Sewage Treatment Plant*); S.W.R.S. (*Southwestern Research Station*).

## **Grebes to Raptors**

At least seven individual Eared Grebes were present through the period at Willcox (m.ob.); this species was first detected breeding at this locality in 1992. A high count of 182 W. Grebes reported from Mormon L., Apr. 27 (E. Morrall) was one of the largest concentrations ever of this species in n. Arizona. Single Clark's Grebes, a scarce migrant in s. Arizona, were found at P.R.D., Mar. 5 (RBr), and at Willcox May 28–31 (J. Paton, DS *et al.*). The Brown Pelican that wintered at Arizona City was still present there May 7 (MS), while one of the two Brown Pelicans that wintered at P.R.D. was still present May 12 (m.ob.). Neotropical Cormorants are infrequently reported in Arizona away from Patagonia L., therefore two at P.R.D., May 10, with one remaining to May 17 (TC, SGa), were noteworthy. Single Little Blue Herons were reported from Sierra Vista S.T.P., Apr. 25 (B&C Arnberg), and at the Phoenix Zoo May 27 (RJ); although rare and irregular, most records of this species in the state are from the late spring.

Two Fulvous Whistling-Ducks were found at Gilbert S.T.P., Apr. 3 (DE); this species continues to be a very rare visitor to s. Arizona. Out of place, and seemingly late, was a single Snow Goose at Peck's L. near Cottonwood May 17 (TC). Spring and summer reports of Canada Geese in s. Arizona typically referred to crippled individuals, therefore a pair breeding in Scottsdale, with young present Apr. 16 (S. Schwartz), represented the first such occurrence for this species in Arizona s. of the Mogollon Rim. Single Am. Wigeons lingered late in s. Arizona, with one present at Willcox May 28 (J. Paton), and another at Kino Springs near Nogales May 29 (RH). A Greater Scaup found at G.F.P., Mar. 27 (DE) may have represented the same individual that was found during the winter nearby in Chandler.

Black Vultures seen away from normal areas of occurrence in s. Arizona included two in Sycamore Canyon Mar. 16 (LD, JBo *et al.*), and two at Arivaca Apr. 16 (JBo). At least eight White-tailed Kites were reported from around s. Arizona, the most noteworthy record being a pair nesting at Cabeza Prieta N.W.R., May 13 (D. Griffin); there are a growing number of nesting records of this species in the state. Unusual migrant records of Com. Black-Hawks included one at an unusually high elevation at Flagstaff Apr. 1 (E. Morrall), and a late individual at Cave Cr. Canyon May 10–11 (DS, DJa, J. Paton). Extremely early for a migrant, and probably representing an individual that wintered locally, was a Broad-winged Hawk found dead along W. Turkey Creek, *Chiricahua Mts.*, Feb. 25 (GM, \*U. of A.). Another imm. Broad-winged Hawk was well documented from Cave Cr. Canyon May 13 (ph. BZ, KZ *et al.*). Scarce anywhere away from the Tohono O'odham Indian Reservation in the s.w., an imm.-plumaged Crested Caracara was reported from n. of Florence May 19 (M. Weise, L. L. Ordway).

## **Shorebirds to Woodpeckers**

Two pair of Am. Avocets, with young, were found at Gilbert S.T.P., Apr. 30 (T. Brodner, P. Moulton, A. Dooley); this species is an irregular breeder at sewage treatment plants in s. Arizona away from Willcox, where it appears to be regular. Two Whimbrels, still an unusual migrant away from the L.C.R.V., were at Gilbert S.T.P. on the early date of Apr. 8 (SGa). A Short-billed Dowitcher described from Big L., *Apache* May 5 (GHe) would represent one of the few spring records for the state; although plumage characteristics found in the description suggest Short-billed, we still urge caution in identifying "non-calling" individuals at this season, when birds in "transitional" plumage are likely. Two Long-billed Dowitchers

found at the Kachina Wetlands, s. of Flagstaff, Mar. 13 (E. Morrall) were very early to be migrants, and may have wintered locally in c. Arizona where temperatures were unseasonably mild. In contrast, one at Willcox May 26 (ph. DS) was one of the latest spring records of this species for the state.

After last spring's huge numbers of Franklin's Gulls, only seven individuals from scattered localities were reported between Apr. 16–May 2. Greater than usual reports of ad. Heermann's Gulls were received, including one at Nogales S.T.P., Mar. 18 (GHe); one at Avondale, s.w. Phoenix, Apr. 10 (CBa); and another at P.R.D., May 5 (CBa). This species occurs in Arizona predominantly during the fall. Least Terns once again appeared in s. Arizona this spring, with two at Willcox May 14 (SGo, CW, GHR; ph. T. Doyle), and another (or one of the previous two) there May 19 (B. Neville *et al.*) and May 30 (ph. DS); there have been no fewer than 13 individuals found in s. Arizona since 1990.



**Adult Least Tern (right, with immature Black Tern) at Willcox, Arizona, May 30, 1994.**  
Photograph/David Stejskal.

The Ruddy Ground-Dove that wintered at the San Xavier Mission s. of Tucson was present through the end of March (m.ob.), and of the three that were at the P.A.P. pecan grove in January, one remained to Apr. 10 (B. Pinter). Although this species has apparently become somewhat of a regular winter visitor to the Southwest, caution is still advised in identifying *spring* individuals, as brightly plumaged Com. Ground-Doves are a source of confusion and are poorly depicted in the current field guides. A Long-eared Owl seen below Madera Canyon May 19 (DS) was out of place. At least four N. Saw-whet Owls were discovered in the Sierra Ancha Mts., n.e. of Phoenix, Apr. 22–May 19 (K. Fawcett), establishing what is likely a new breeding location for the state.

Again this spring, White-eared Hummingbirds (all males) appeared at scattered localities around the s.e. portion of the state: one was again at Ramsey Canyon beginning in mid-April and remaining through the period, while one was away from feeders in Carr Canyon May 12

(GHR); one was at the S.W.R.S., Cave Cr. Canyon, May 9–11 (*vide* DJa); one was in Portal May 12–16 (DJa); one in Cave Cr. Canyon May 16–22 (DJa); and another was in Madera Canyon May 17+ (*vide* LD). Violet-crowned Hummingbirds are still rarely reported away from known recent nesting areas in the state (*i.e.* Patagonia, Guadalupe Canyon), therefore one in Whitetail Canyon near Paradise, Chiricahua Mts., Apr. 18 (R. Taylor) was of interest. As usual, several Lucifer Hummingbirds were reported in and around Portal, once again suggesting local breeding. A persisting ♂ Eared Trogan was reported sporadically in upper Ramsey Canyon throughout the period. Similarly the individual present in South Fork of Cave Cr. Canyon was again reported once or twice during the spring (*vide* DJa) suggesting a continuing presence; both these individuals are likely remnants of the major invasion of August 1991. In addition to the two–four pairs of Green Kingfishers continuing to be reported along the upper S.P.R., two pairs were found along Sonoita Cr. s.w. of Patagonia; the status of this species at these localities in recent years has changed from that of a rare winter visitor to an apparently rare but regular breeder. A Red-naped Sapsucker found at Madera Canyon May 16 (R. Bowers, DS) was extremely late, but apparently this individual was ill and near death. The only report of Williamson's Sapsucker away from montane regions was one in Tempe Mar. 30–Apr. 1 (K. Groschupf).

### Flycatchers to Vireos

Small numbers of Buff-breasted Flycatchers appeared away from known nesting areas in the Huachuca Mts.; one was in upper Madera Canyon Apr. 1 (RH) and later in April (LD) where a pair was present last year; two were again at the S.W.R.S. in Cave Cr. Canyon

Apr. 10–14 (DJa), and one was in Rucker Canyon May 10 (RH). An E. Phoebe at St. David May 12 (DK) represents one of only a few spring state records after late March. A pair of Tropical Kingbirds returned for the 2nd consecutive year to the P.A.P. pecan grove May 4 (DS). Providing only a 2nd local record was a Thick-billed Kingbird at Portal May 13+ (ph. BZ, KZ *et al.*). Thick-billed Kingbirds were also reported from Proctor Rd., May 1+ (LD), and from the Florida Work Center below Madera Canyon Apr. 28 (LD). Two reports of Scissor-tailed Flycatchers were received this spring, including one from the e. entrance of Aravaipa Canyon Apr. 28 (D&B Stephens), and another from Ft. Huachuca May 26 (A. Decaur); this species is a rare but regular spring visitor.

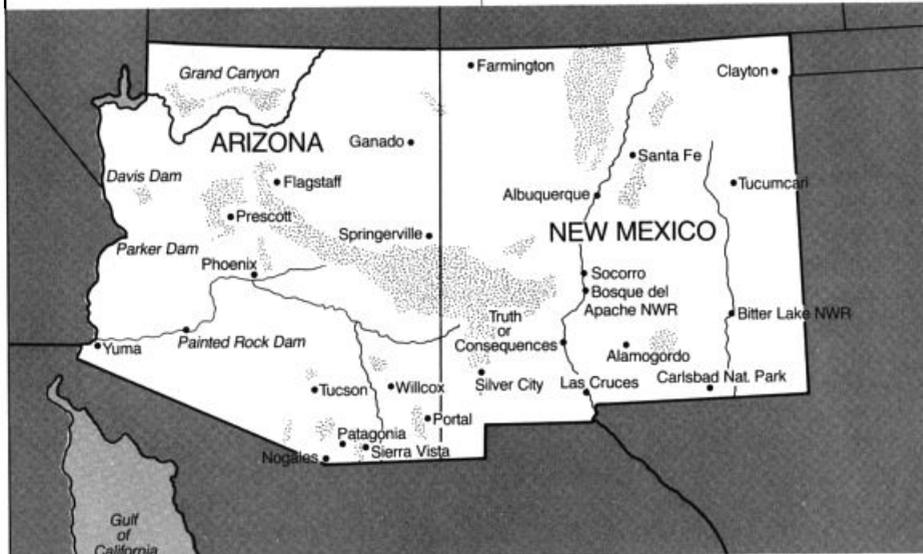
Two pairs of Tree Swallows were found nesting in snags at Mormon L., s. of Flagstaff, May 30 (F. Brandt); the only previously known breeding localities for Arizona were on the Kaibab Plateau, and at high elevations in the White Mts. Two Bank Swallows at Willcox May 30 (DS) were unusually late for migrants. A Mt. Chickadee at Florida Saddle, Santa Rita Mts., Mar. 31 (RH) was of interest as this species does not nest in Arizona s. of the Santa Catalina Mts. near Tucson; this observation may have been related to a more widespread movement of this species in the Southwest this past winter as suggested by Cornell Lab of Ornithology's Project "Feederwatch" (pers. comm. K. V. Rosenberg). A singing Townsend's Solitaire discovered in Morse Canyon, Chiricahua Mts., May 12 (RH) probably represents a very late migrant, though this species has previously been found in these mountains in July. There are no breeding records of this species s. of the White Mts. Greater-than-average numbers of migrant Swainson's Thrushes were reported around the

state beginning in mid-May; of particular local interest was one in Chino Valley May 20–24 (L. Muehlbach) providing a first local record. A Varied Thrush reported from Patagonia May 15 (B. Ambrose) provided perhaps only the 3rd spring record. A Curve-billed Thrasher found along House Rock Wash near the Utah border n.e. of the Kaibab Plateau May 27 (rDTr) was well n. of any known breeding locality in Arizona; this species has been slowly spreading N and W over the past century—stragglers have been previously reported as far north in Arizona as Kingman (one Nov. 27, 1992, and a pair there Jan. 24, 1993; K. Garrett, K. Molina). There are extralimital records from Nevada and California.

Very early for a returning migrant was a Bell's Vireo in Oro Valley Mar. 7 (GM). A Yellow-throated Vireo, still a very scarce visitor, was found at Portal May 6 (S. Russell). One of the few recent records of Red-eyed Vireo for the state was one along Sonoita Cr., s. of Patagonia, Apr. 24–30 (S. Shafer *et al.*).

### Warblers to Orioles

For the 3rd consecutive spring, multiple N. Parulas were reported: one at Portal Apr. 17 (N. Moore-Craig, A. Craig), one at Madera Canyon Apr. 30–May 1 (LD *et al.*), and up to three reported from Bull Pen Ranch, near Camp Verde, May 17 (T. Linda). Very rare in spring was a ♀ Chestnut-sided Warbler found at St. David May 25 (DK). This past winter's Cape May Warbler remained in Tucson to at least Apr. 13 (PM), by which time it had molted into bright male plumage. On the heels of last fall's high numbers of Palm Warblers throughout the West, three individuals were found in Arizona during the spring; one at Elgin Apr. 29–30 (†RH), one along the upper S.P.R. May 10 (J. Kemper), and a third in Portal in mid-May (m.ob., *vide* DJa). Previously there had been fewer than 10 spring records for the state. Rare but regular in the spring, Black-and-white Warblers were reported from the upper S.P.R., Apr. 28 (JWh), from the Santa Catalina Mts., May 7 (N. Isaacson), and from St. David May 25 (DK). Seven Am. Redstarts were found between Apr. 19–May 26, all in the s.e. portion of the state. A Prothonotary Warbler at Page May 26 (†J. Grahame, C. Pinnock) provided one of the few reports ever from n. Arizona. The only report of Worm-eating Warbler was a single from Madera Canyon Apr. 28 (L. Kaufman); most of the Arizona records of this species are from spring. This was a particularly good season for N. Waterthrushes, with no fewer than 23 individuals reported between Apr. 25–May



14, a majority of which clustered around May 11–14. In a repeat performance from last spring, a ♂ Kentucky Warbler took up residence in Cave Cr. Canyon in May; this year one was present for about a week in early May at the S.W.R.S. (*fide* DJa). Also rare, but seemingly regular in late spring, were two Hooded Warblers; one was at Proctor Rd. below Madera Canyon May 23 (LD) and another was at Canello Hills May 26 (RH). Seldom seen in Arizona away from breeding localities in the mountains, a Red-faced Warbler was along the upper S.P.R. n. of Charleston May 14 (DK). Similarly scarce in the lowlands as migrants, two Painted Redstarts were at Empire Ranch Mar. 25 (GM). The highlight of the season was a singing **Rufous-capped Warbler** discovered in lower Sycamore Canyon Mar. 16+ (voice recordings, ph. †CDB *et al.*, m.ob.) providing only a 5th or 6th record for Arizona. Interestingly, this locality is within a mi or 2 (as the warbler flies) of last year's sighting in California Gulch. Despite a grueling 10 mi round-trip hike, this individual was seen by dozens of birders, a few of whom paid dearly with broken or sprained ankles and smashed binoculars. An Olive Warbler at Mingus Mt. near Sedona May 14 (M. Cantrell) provides yet another recent record for the Region, further suggesting that this species is expanding its range north and west.

A bird described as a ♂ Flame-colored x W. Tanager hybrid was observed at Bog



**Providing only a fifth or sixth record for Arizona, this Rufous-capped Warbler was found in lower Sycamore Canyon March 16, 1994, and remained there on territory for more than two months. Photograph/David Stejskal.**

Spring, Santa Rita Mts. beginning May 4 (†LD), and was apparently joined by a typical female-plumaged **Flame-colored Tanager** May 19 (†LV, †RH), with both remaining through the period. Another Flame-colored Tanager was described from Miller Canyon, Huachuca Mts., May 31 (†T. Olsen); these records will be reviewed by the A.B.C. There have been a minimum of five individuals seen previ-

ously in Arizona (assuming sightings in Ramsey Canyon in consecutive years represented the same pair). Like N. Waterthrush, higher-than-average numbers of Rose-breasted Grosbeaks were reported, with eight individuals seen between May 9–May 15 and another present at Red Rock S.P., June 1 (m.ob). A very late Swamp Sparrow was found at Willow Tank May 15 (*fide* DJa).

Late spring records of White-throated Sparrow included one from St. David May 12 (DK), another at S.W.R.S., May 12–13 (DS), and another at Portal May 23 (DJa). The Golden-crowned Sparrow that wintered at Patagonia remained to at least Apr. 20 (CDB). Singles were at the Phoenix Zoo Mar. 5 (RJo), near Portal Mar. 7–20, and perhaps the same one at Portal Apr. 21 (DJa); although this species is regular in w. Arizona in winter, it is still a scarce visitor to the s.e. portion of the state.

A singing E. Meadowlark was found on the e. side of Chino Valley near Prescott (L. Muehlbach); this species was an historical breeder in this part of the state, but had been absent for several years. Two singing W. Meadowlarks present at San Xavier Mission s. of Tucson May 8–19 (DS, JC, CDB) was s. of previous nesting areas in s. Arizona. A Streak-backed Oriole was again sighted at Cook's L. on the lower S.P.R. Apr. 13 (GM); this is the species' 4th or 5th consecutive year in this area, including last year's attempted nesting.

**Contributors (Area compilers in bold-face):** Charles Babbitt (CBa), Jerry Bock (JBo), Robert Bradley (RBr), Josh Burns (JoB), **John Coons** (Flagstaff), Troy Corman, Shirley Davis, Louie Dombroski, Dave Eshbaugh, Steve Ganley (SGa), **Virginia Gilmore** (Sedona), **Sharon Goldwasser** (SGo) (Tucson), George Hentz (GHe), Rick Hoyer, **Betty Jackson** (Globe), **Dave Jasper** (DJa) (Portal), Dan Jones (DJo), Roy Jones, Jeff Kingery, Ann Kovich, Dave Krueper (Sierra Vista), **Chuck LaRue** (Kayenta), Paul McQuary, Steve Mlodinow, Gale Monson, Mark Stevenson, Bob Thomen, **Carl S. Tomoff** (Prescott), Deb Treadway, Thea Ulen, Lynn VanderWerf, **Jack Whetstone** (JWh) (Sierra Vista), **Chuck Williamson** (Tucson), **Robert & Janet Witzeman** (Phoenix), Barry Zimmer, Kevin Zimmer. —*Chris D. Benesh, 2600 W. Ina Rd., Apt. 228, Tucson, AZ 85741; Gary H. Rosenberg, 8101 N. Wheatfield Dr., Tucson, AZ 85741; David Stejskal, 5755 E. River Rd., Apt. 703, Tucson, AZ 85715.*

## New Mexico

### SARTOR O. WILLIAMS III

Dry conditions prevailed throughout New Mexico early in the season, but most areas (except the southwest) received fair precipitation in May. As always in the Land of Enchantment, the birding was rewarding, with several rare waterbirds and neotropical migrant songbirds leading the way.

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

### Loons to Waterfowl

Common Loons were at 7 locales in the east and north, including two at Farmington (TR), three at Heron L. (DS), and four at Conchas L. (MP), Apr. 10–16; singles were late at Sumner L., May 7 (CR) and Brantley L., May 10 (JP). A few Horned Grebes were at 5 n. locales; five at Las Vegas N.W.R., Mar. 20 was high (BF), and two at Farmington Apr. 10 were last (TR). Peripheral were six Double-crested Cormorants in *Grant* May 14 (RF); in the north two Neotropics were at Albuquerque May 14 (TBu) and three at La Joya May 1 (WH). Notable was an Am. Bittern at Maddox L., *Lea* Mar. 26 (CR). In the southwest, 4 traditional Great Blue Heron colonies were active at Glenwood, Gila Cliff Dwellings, Cliff, and near Bill Evans L. (RF); new colonies of three–four nests each were discovered near Riverside (RF) and Virden Mar. 25 (EL). In the southeast, West reported that the egret colony e. of Loving, occupied annually since 1979 by several species including Snowies, Cattles, and Black-crowned Night-Herons, was abandoned this year; drying and pollution were the suspected culprits. Single Great Egrets wandered N to *San Juan* May 23 (TR); Cochiti L., May 18 (*fide* PRS); Zuni May 22 (DC); and Corrales May 2 (CR). The high count at Bosque was 20 May 15 (PB). A Tricolored Heron was at Percha May 17 (LG); another (or the same?) was at nearby Caballo L., May 29 (CS). An ad. **Yellow-crowned Night-Heron** was at Bosque Apr. 9 (JP, CB), where the species has appeared annually since 1990. New Mexico's second **White Ibis** of the 1990s was an adult at Percha Apr. 23 (CS, TF). Migrant White-faced Ibises were widespread April–early May (v.o.); early were 16 near Lordsburg Mar. 3 (EL). Highs were 75 at Morgan L., Apr. 15 (TR), 214 at Zuni Apr. 30 (DC), and 50 at Bosque Apr. 15–16 (GE). Certainly surprising were two imm. **Black-bellied Whistling-Ducks** at Bosque May 14 (J. Karo), the first for New