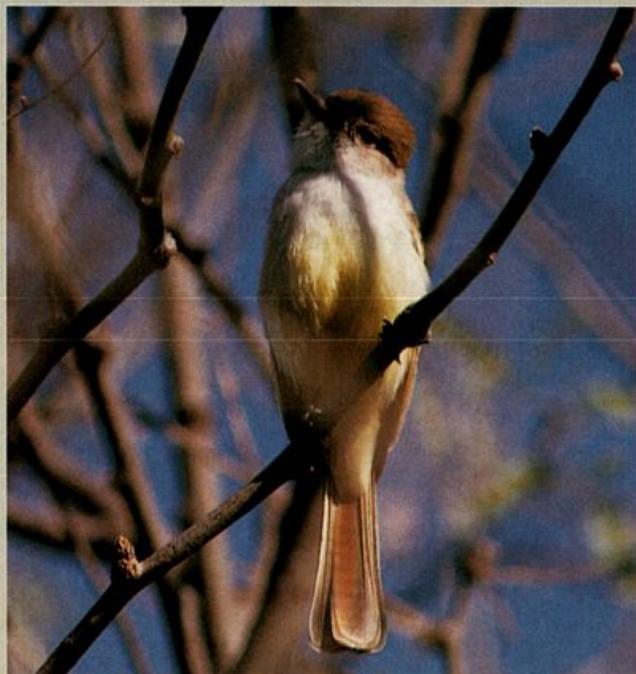


OUTSTANDING RARITIES OF WINTER 1997–1998

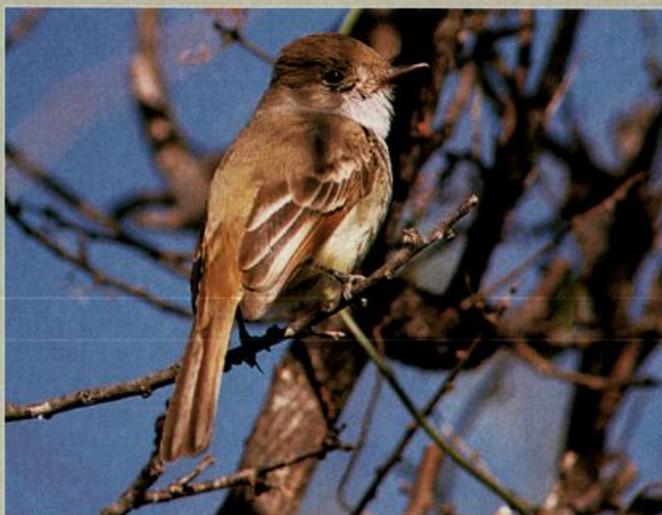
At Lake Patagonia, Arizona, this Nutting's Flycatcher (*Myiarchus nuttingi*) was present from December 14, 1997, into March 1998. Biologist and birder P. A. Buckley visited the site in late January 1998, and his photographs illustrate a variety of identification marks for the species.



Superficially the bird was very similar to Ash-throated Flycatcher, but with a subtly shorter bill and rounder head. Tail pattern represents a more concrete mark, but many observers noted that this pattern was often hard to see; apparently it shows less contrast on Nutting's than on Ash-throated Flycatcher. In this view we can just discern that the darker brown area on the outer edge of the outer tail feather broadens somewhat toward the tip but does not curve around to occupy the entire tip of the feather as on Ash-throated.



With a slight change in posture, the bird looks much paler on the throat. The lower mandible was pale at the base, but this feature could be difficult to see, even from directly underneath.



The Nutting's Flycatcher looked distinctly warmer brown (less gray) on the face, crown, and forehead than the typical Ash-throated Flycatcher, creating more of a contrast against the pale gray throat. Its uppertail coverts showed a slight rusty or bronzy tone in good light, contrasting against the more olive tone of the lower back. The bird's rounded head shape is apparent here.



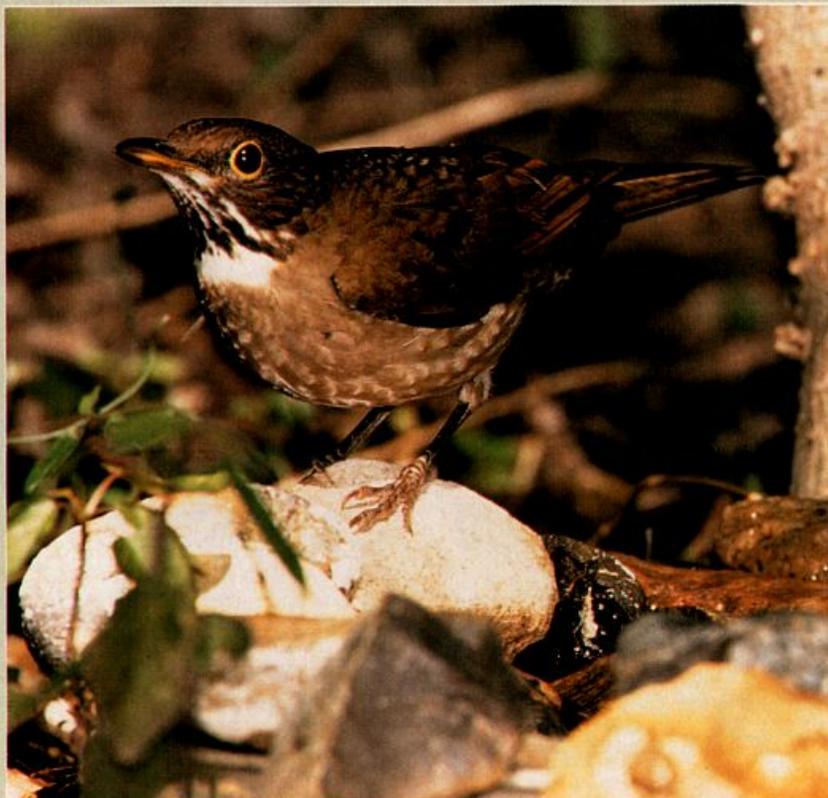
Light conditions had a major effect on the subtle colors of the Nutting's Flycatcher. Here the darker gray of the chest is apparent, but it is hard to see the brighter yellow on the belly that also helped distinguish the bird from Ash-throated Flycatcher. Notice also the edgings of the flight feathers on the wing: rufous on the primaries, changing to pale orange-buff on the secondaries (where the Ash-throat is whitish instead).



An outstanding rarity on a global scale is the Po'ouli (*Melamprosops phaeosoma*), discovered and described to science only in 1974 and confined to a small area of wet forest on Maui, Hawaii. The first good photos of a live Po'ouli were obtained in January 1997, when this bird was captured, banded, and released by the Maui Forest Bird Recovery Project, of the Hawaii Forestry and Wildlife Division. Project staff search for and monitor endangered species, and they strive to protect and enhance the ecosystem (by fencing and predator control, and control of alien plants and animals). Despite their efforts, by early 1998 there were only three known individual Po'ouli left alive; see the details in the Hawaii Region report. Photograph/Paul Baker, courtesy of the Maui Forest Bird Recovery Project



Some of us still remember vividly how a single Ross's Gull (*Rhodostethia rosea*), on the coast of Massachusetts in 1975, was hailed as "the bird of the century." The century is not over yet, but this former Siberian specialty has since been found nesting in Canada, and recently Ross's Gulls have shown up south of their usual Arctic haunts practically every winter. Such strays appear inland as well as along the coast. Iowa had two this winter, but the adult in this portrait was a first for Idaho, at American Falls Reservoir on January 24, 1998. Photograph/Don Morgan



At Bentsen-Rio Grande Valley State Park, Texas, two White-throated Robins (*Turdus assimilis*) entertained numerous visitors from early February into March 1998. During March, two more appeared at the nearby Santa Ana National Wildlife Refuge. The one prior definite record north of the border (February 1990) and one compelling sight record (March 1984) both occurred during exceptionally cold weather, which might have driven the robins down out of the mountains in northeastern Mexico. However, the winter just past was exceptionally mild, so some other factor must have been involved this time. This bird was photographed February 20, 1998, at Bentsen. Photograph/Jim Culbertson