

arizona region



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After what was one of the wettest “El Niño” winters in recent memory, most accounts suggested that the vegetation around Arizona this summer was the lush-est anyone could remember. Bird populations appeared to be up, and some species, such as Cassin’s Sparrows, were much more abundant than usual, and found north of their normal range in the state. Breeding Bird Atlas crews continued to find new and interesting range expansions for several species. New surveys of Yellow-billed Cuckoos found healthy populations along the San Pedro River, perhaps its greatest stronghold in the Southwest, and surveys in northern Arizona found that Ospreys are flourishing once again. Similarly, more and more Ferruginous Pygmy-Owls are being found in southern Arizona now that a more concerted effort is being made to locate them. It was not a great summer for Mexican strays, although a pair of Berylline Hummingbirds probably attempted nesting again in Ramsey Canyon, and Arizona’s seventh Reddish Egret did make a brief appearance outside of Tucson.

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.S.V. (*Sulphur Springs Valley*).

GREBES THROUGH DUCKS

Eared Grebe has only recently been found nesting in s. Arizona, therefore mid-summer records are of interest. One was at Green Valley June 15 (RP), another was at the Avra Valley S.T.P. June 16 (MS), and two were at Willcox June 27 (MS), but no breeding activity was observed at any of these localities. A W. Grebe was at Patagonia Lake S.P. June 11 (RP); there are very few mid-summer records from s.e. Arizona. A pair was found nesting at Kinnikinnik L. s.e. of Flagstaff

Aug. 20 (E. Morrall), establishing a new nesting area for that part of the state. A flock of about 40 White Pelicans grounded at the Sierra Vista S.T.P. May 23 (ph. R. Anderson) was an unusually high count for that region. Seven Neotropical Cormorants were reported from P.R.D. July 4 (RW, S. Burge), where this species has become regular in recent years. Two Magnificent Frigatebirds were reported flying over Green Valley July 6 (GW); although this species is reported nearly annually, it is still considered a review species by the A.B.C. because of the possible occurrence of Great Frigatebird.

It appears that Least Bittern has become regular along the Salt/Gila R. drainage in s.w. Phoenix during summer; it was found at 3 locations there June 6 (RW et al.). A new heron and egret rookery was discovered at an agricultural runoff pond near Paloma, s.w. of Gila Bend, with nests of Great and Snowy egrets, Green Herons, and Black-crowned Night-Herons, all June 18. More significant were 6–8 nests of Cattle Egrets providing the first documentation of nesting by this species in *Maricopa* (TC). The first nest of Great Blue Heron along the Colorado R. below L. Powell since the construction of Glen Canyon Dam was located at Lee’s Ferry, and by Aug. 5 it contained two adults and four young (JS). Single Great Egrets were at G.F.P. June 12 (MS), and at Nogales July 14 (MS); this species is casual in s.e. Arizona during the summer. A Tricolored Heron, still considered casual in the state, was at Picacho Res. July 26 (SGa, RJ). More unusual was an imm. **Reddish Egret** found and photographed at Avra

Valley S.T.P. July 17 (ph. †MS); this represents only a 7th record for the Region. Also casual in the s. portion of the state during summer, single White-faced Ibis were reported at G.F.P. June 12 (MS) and at Green Valley June 15 (RP); and two were along the Gila R. in s.w. Phoenix June 16 (T Hildebrandt et al.).

There were quite a few summering ducks this season. A single Am. Wigeon was at Reid Park in Tucson July 1 (MS), two were at Gilbert July 5 (D. Clark), and another single was at Avra Valley S.T.P. July 17 (MS). Four Blue-winged Teal were present throughout the period at the new Sweetwater Wetlands in Tucson (MS). Four N Shovelers were at Willcox June 24 (RP), with one still there June 27 (MS), three were at Gilbert July 2 (RW), and one was at Avra Valley S.T.P. July 17 (MS).

Single N. Pintails were at Sam Lena Park in Tucson July 9 (MS), and at Avra Valley S.T.P. July 17 (MS). A Green-winged Teal was at Willcox June 27 (MS), while two were at Gilbert July 2 (RW). All are considered casual summer visitors anywhere in s. Arizona. One species that has been known to breed occasionally in the southeast is Redhead, and four were at Willcox June 24 (RP); no nesting behavior was detected. Similarly, 2 different pairs of Ring-necked Ducks lingered into the summer, one pair at Reid Park in Tucson June 16, with at least one individual lingering through the period, and another pair all summer at Agua Caliente Park in e. Tucson; again, no nesting was detected for either pair (MS). Extremely out-of-place was a Com Merganser found along the Gila R. in s.w. Phoenix July 19 (TC).

OSPREY THROUGH TERNS

As recently as 1987, there were only 2 known nests of Osprey on both the North Kaibab and Coconino National Forests. This summer surveys found no fewer than 23 Ospreys on the North Kaibab, and an additional 12 on the Coconino Forest, certainly suggesting a huge rebound for this species in Arizona (E. Morrall). White-tailed Kites continue to be reported sporadically around s. Arizona, with one s. of St David June 25 (JWh), one near San Simon in late June (GHR, CDB, MS), and one near

Sonoita July 23 (J. Bock). The pair reported nesting at Robbins Butte along the Gila R. was seen again June 21, and was reported as having two young about ready to fledge (TC). A pair of Sharp-shinned Hawks was seen feeding young near Long Park in the Chiricahua Mts. June 2 (DJa); this is a very rare nesting species in the s.e. portion of the state. A nest of Com. Black-Hawk was located along Beaver Dam Wash near its confluence with the Virgin R. June 3 (B. Marette); there have been numerous sight records of this species from here over the years, but this is the first confirmed evidence of local nesting. A pair of Peregrine Falcons was present all summer in upper Carr Canyon (HB, DK), suggesting local nesting; there are very few, if any, breeding records from the Huachuca Mts.

For at least the 2nd consecutive year, a pair of Com. Moorhens nested successfully at a pond on the upper S.P.R. June 22 (DK). Very early migrant records for Greater Yellowlegs included one near M.F.L. June 15 (LA-M, PF), one near P.R.D. June 18 (TC), and one at Willcox June 24 (RP). Similarly, early Long-billed Curlews included a single at Sierra Vista S.T.P. June 15 (SH), and five at Willcox June 24 (RP). An ad. Stilt Sandpiper was at the Avra Valley S.T.P. July 18 (RP). It is always surprising to see how early migrant Wilson's Phalaropes appear on their way to their wintering ground along the w. coast of South America; this summer six females were at Green Valley June 15, and additional 43 females were at Willcox June 24 (RP).

Seemingly lost, but not unprecedented, was a first-summer Bonaparte's Gull at Willcox June 24–27 (RP, MS). Adding to the growing number of Least Tern records from May and June in s. Arizona, two were reported from the Sierra Vista S.T.P. June 10 (J. Pike).

DOVES THROUGH WOODPECKERS

A male Ruddy Ground-Dove at Picacho Res. July 26 (SGa, RJ) provided one of few summer reports from Arizona. Surveys for Yellow-billed Cuckoo along the upper S.P.R. found an estimated 200–250 individuals, which, based on some estimates, would represent 10–20% of the total population of the western subspecies occidentalis. There is an ongoing study to determine whether this race should be listed as an endangered species. Another species that has generated great concern in the Southwest is the Ferruginous Pygmy-Owl; this season at least 31 individuals were located at a variety of locations between Tucson

and Organ Pipe Cactus N.M. Two pairs of Burrowing Owls with young were discovered near Wahweap on L. Powell (NB), representing the first local breeding records since 1988. Breeding Bird Atlas crews found Long-eared Owls in 7 different atlas blocks in n. Arizona, including 2 different nests with young present. The status of this species in the Region, particularly during the breeding season, is poorly understood; it is probably more common than previously thought.

At least 35 Lesser Nighthawks were flying around lights in Page July 25 (JS), suggesting again that this species most likely breeds locally. A Whip-poor-will heard calling in the forest above Slate Cr. Divide in the Mazatzal Mts. June 13 (RJ, SGa) provided the first record from this locality in 22 years.

A male Broad-billed Hummingbird at the Hassayampa R. near Wickenburg June 28 (M. Baker) provided the first June record for *Maricopa*. At least two White-eared Hummingbirds were present at feeders in Miller Canyon during the season. A male was reported June 6 at the S.W.R.S. in Cave Cr. Canyon, representing one of few recent records from the Chiricahua Mts. (DJ). The two Berylline Hummingbirds reported previously from Ramsey Canyon were seen sporadically throughout the period (RH et al.). A Violet-crowned Hummingbird appeared at the feeders in Miller Canyon July 28 through the end of the period (RH), but a reported six–ten individuals at feeders in the Portal area through most of the summer (DJ) was of interest, as this species rarely nests in the Chiricahuas. A male Blue-throated Hummingbird along Ash Cr. in the Pinaleno Mts. July 5 (TC) was n. of this species normal distribution in the state.

The annual Elegant Trogon survey in the Chiricahua Mts. found at least 14 nests in the Cave Cr. Canyon drainage (fide DJa). A pair of Gilded Flickers reported at the Reef Townsite in upper Carr Canyon June 24–26 (J. Chase, HB) was at a very high elevation (7200 ft.), and an unusual habitat for the species.

FLYCATCHERS THROUGH THRASHERS

An Olive-sided Flycatcher discovered at Slate Cr. Divide June 14 was very late for a migrant (RJ, SGa). A Greater Pewee found there the same day provided the first summer record for *Gila*. More notable was a singing Greater Pewee in the Hualapai Mts. June 26–30 (tape †NM). A singing **Eastern Wood-Pewee** was discovered in Madera

Canyon June 23 and remained through the period (ph. †MS, †GHR, tape †RJ); there are 6 or fewer records for the state, only one of which had been documented by physical evidence. Gray Flycatchers were confirmed as nesting in the s. Chiricahua Mts. (AM) A slightly tardy Cordilleran Flycatcher was at Slate Cr. Divide June 1 (SGa, RJ), this species is not known to breed in *Maricopa*. Somewhat out-of-range was a male Vermilion Flycatcher photographed at Walter's Ranch, 7 mi s.w. of Ashurst L., May 23 (ph. CBa). Atlasers uncovered a potential new nesting locality for Dusky-capped Flycatchers in Black Jack Canyon, Big Lue Mts. e. of Clifton, where a pair was present July 7 (AF, LA-M). A Tropical Kingbird was discovered at Paloma Ranch July 5 (RJ, SGa); there are 3 previous *Maricopa* records. Single Thick-billed Kingbirds were found away from traditional breeding sites with one at Hereford June 27 (S. Proctor, R. Estelle), and one in Garden Canyon Wash July 21 (HB).

A Red-eyed Vireo was found along the upper S.P.R. near the Hereford Bridge June 6 (AM), only the 2nd local record. Much rarer in Arizona, a closely related **Yellow-green Vireo** present in Guadalupe Canyon July 11–12 (AM, †NM-C, D. Danforth, tape CDB, ph. MS) proved elusive despite subsequent searches; this represents only the 4th state record. Three Purple Martins observed in saguaro cactus desert near Spur Cross in Cave Cr., *Maricopa*, June 19 (RW, JW), were perhaps nesting locally; this species is otherwise known to nest in *Maricopa* only in the Sand Tank Mts. s.e. of Gila Bend, and near Wickenburg. Nesting Tree Swallows continue to be discovered. Sites this year include 3 mi n.e. of Parks. Historically it has been found nesting in the Chuska Mts., on the Kaibab Plateau, and along the Mogollon Rim to the White Mts.

Two low-elevation nests of Mexican Chickadee were discovered in sycamores along Cave Cr., Chiricahua Mts. (DJa), four young were fledged. Breeding of Bridled Titmouse was confirmed for the first time along the upper S.P.R. near the Hwy 90 bridge June 26 (DK). American Dipper was confirmed nesting at Canyon de Chelly N.M. on Defiance Plateau June 11–12 (TC). A Crissal Thrasher was found w. of Hwy 160 and Hwy 89 on the N.I.R. June 28 (LA-M); there are still very few N.I.R. records

WARBLERS THROUGH FINCHES

One to three Orange-crowned Warblers were singing on territory n. of Pt. Imperial, North Kaibab, at ca.8800 ft. (TC), this

species has yet to be confirmed nesting on the North Kaibab. A N. Parula was reported from s.w. Phoenix June 6, and another was at the Arizona Sonoran Desert Museum July 6 (B. Bickel). A Prothonotary Warbler was present briefly in Tucson July 6 (ph. †MS). Quite out-of-place was a Worm-eating Warbler described along the upper S.P.R. July 13 (†S. Proctor, R. Estelle). A window-killed Ovenbird was discovered in Tucson July 1 (ph. S. Cornelius; * to University of Arizona). A female MacGillivray's Warbler was banded along the upper S.P.R. on the unseasonal date of June 22 (M. San Miguel).

Owing to the generous summer rains, Cassin's Sparrows were reported from a variety of locations, including several singing at Petrified Forest N.M. July 7–10 (T. Persons, R. Bangert). A singing Rose-breasted Grosbeak was 10 mi w. of Flagstaff June 9–15 (S. Rosenstock). A female Lazuli Bunting was along the upper S.P.R. June 24 (DK); this species rarely breeds there. An ad. male Painted Bunting was along the upper S.P.R. July 28 (S. Housden); this species is a casual to rare visitor to the state. A male Bobolink was reported from Tavasci Marsh June 11 (RR). A pair of Hooded Orioles bred successfully in Page for the 2nd consecutive year (JS). A pair of Streak-backed Orioles were observed feeding young near Dudleyville July 16 (T. McCarthey). The male Baltimore Oriole found in s.w. Phoenix May 30 was last seen June 11 (RJ). A male Am. Goldfinch was completely out of season along the upper S.P.R. July 17–22 (R. Estelle, S. Proctor, RH).

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new mexico region



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Summer 1998 was a season of contrast, with the dry and windy conditions of spring continuing through June. But then the spell was broken abruptly by rains almost statewide throughout July.

Abbreviations: B.L.N.W.R. (*Bitter Lake N.W.R.*); Bosque N.W.R. (*Bosque del Apache N.W.R.*); L.V.N.W.R. (*Las Vegas N.W.R.*); N.R.T. (*North Roosevelt County migrant trap near Melrose*); R.G.V. (*Rio Grande Valley*); Zuni (*Zuni Indian Reservation*).

GREBES TO DUCKS

In some years, over 1000 pairs of Eared Grebes may nest at Stinking L., but low water this year resulted in no breeding (DS); only small numbers of Eareds nested elsewhere. A sub-ad. Brown Pelican took up residence at B.L.N.W.R. June 17–July 24 (GW *et al.*, ph. WH, v.t. JO); elsewhere, an ad. Brown at Mescalero L. June 13 (*fide* AP) may have been the same one sighted at Ruidoso May 13 (AP). Neotropic Cormorants continued in the Pecos Valley, with one–three at B.L.N.W.R. June 19–July 24 (GW *et al.*); northerly in the R.G.V. was a Neotropic at Isleta July 11 (CR). Double-crested Cormorants are not known to breed in *Chaves*, so their presence at B.L.N.W.R. June–July, including 24 on July 17 (GW), was interesting. Noteworthy was a vocal

Least Bittern at Española June 23 (WW); three were at Tucumcari L. July 7 (WW). An ad. Little Blue Heron at Bosque N.W.R. June 7 (JO) was the only R.G.V. report. Bitter Lake N.W.R. hosted several rare herons, including a calico Little Blue from July 8 into August (WH *et al.*), two Tricoloreds from July 24 into August (GW *et al.*), and a remarkable two **Reddish Egrets** July 17–24 (v.o., v.t. JO), with at least one present by July 14 (JM, GW) and one persisting into August.

An unbanded ad. **Black-bellied Whistling-Duck** made a brief appearance at White Sands Missile Range headquarters, *Dona Aña*, July 15 (ph. D. Holdermann). Three immature-plumaged Hooded Mergansers at Bosque N.W.R. July 5 (JEP, JO) may have been raised locally. Rio Rancho, home to Intel, has also become home to Ruddy Ducks, with a bright male at the sewage ponds July 5 (WH) and a female with four chicks at the golf course July 26 (*fide* HS).

RAPTORS TO QUAIL

Four of the 5 known Osprey nests in n. New Mexico were successful, fledging nine young by late July (DS). Single White-tailed Kites were near San Antonio June 17 (N&SC) and s. of Virden July 5 (DE, BN). Three pairs of Mississippi Kites—including one constructing a nest—were on the Rio Casas Grandes, n. Chihuahua, June 2