

# new mexico region



## SARTOR O. WILLIAMS III

New Mexico's birds and birders experienced one of the warmest and driest winters on record. The mild conditions allowed many waterbirds, raptors, thrushes, mimids, and other groups to linger late, overwinter in numbers, or return early, with only sparrows and finches exhibiting generally low numbers.

**Abbreviations:** B.L.N.W.R. (*Bitter Lake N.W.R.*); Bosque N.W.R. (*Bosque del Apache N.W.R.*); E.B.L. (*Elephant Butte L.*); R.G.N.C. (*Rio Grande Nature Center, Albuquerque*); R.G.V. (*Rio Grande Valley*); Zuni (*Zuni Indian Reservation*).

## LOONS THROUGH DUCKS

Lingering from autumn was a **Red-throated Loon** at Sumner L. Dec. 28–29 (JO, JEP). A good season for Pacific Loons found singles at Sumner L. Dec. 28–Jan. 10 (JEP, JO, J&M Hirth) and Conchas L. Jan. 10–23 (JO, JEP), and two at Brantley L. Dec. 26–Jan. 11 (DE, CR, SW). New Mexico's 8th and 9th **Yellow-billed Loons** were singles at Ute L. Dec. 27–Jan. 10 (JEP, ph. JO) and Conchas L. Jan. 10–Feb. 14 (v.o., ph. JO). A **Red-necked Grebe** at Farmington L. Jan. 4–11 (JEP, ph. TR, JO) furnished only the 2nd confirmed New Mexico record. Small numbers of Am. White Pelicans overwintered in the Caballo, Roswell, and Carlsbad areas (v.o.); early for the north were six at Tucumcari L. Feb. 13 (JO) and nine at Bluewater L. Feb. 14 (BP). The last of autumn's Brown Pelicans were three at E.B.L. Dec. 4 (JEP) and one at Brantley L. Dec. 8 (SW). North were 13 Neotropical Cormorants at La Joya Feb. 7 (BV); noteworthy for the Pecos Valley were singles near Carlsbad Dec. 6 (JO) and Feb. 5–27 (SW). Notoriously difficult to find in winter, a

cooperative Am. Bittern entertained many at Bosque N.W.R. Jan. 11–Feb. 2 (v.o., ph. BZ, JO). Taking advantage of mild conditions, several Great and Snowy egrets overwintered in the Rio Grande and Pecos valleys. Lingering Green Herons included one n. to Española Dec. 20 (JT, BF) and two at Albuquerque Dec. 20 (HS). Unusual for mid-winter were five White-faced Ibises at Bosque N.W.R. Jan. 10–11 (ph. BZ).

New Mexico continued to do its part to promote the continental overpopulation of Snow Geese with some 21,000 at Bosque N.W.R. (SC) and 6600 at B.L.N.W.R. (GW) in December; not far behind were 6127 Ross's Geese at B.L.N.W.R. Dec. 4 (GW). With only 3 previous New Mexico records, the discovery of a "Black" **Brant** among some 10,000 Canada Geese at Clayton L. Dec. 28–29 (DE, D. Svingen, JEP, ph. JO) precipitated additional scrutiny of goose flocks in *Union*, with resulting reports of a probable "White-bellied" Brant at Clayton L. Jan. 10 (L. Gorbet) & 18 (SW) and e. of Clayton Jan. 24 (JO) and Feb. 6 (BN, DE). At least one Mute Swan continued to haunt the Caballo L. area Dec. 4 and Jan. 31 (JO). A fair season for Tundra Swans found two near Farmington Dec. 25 (TR); two near Dilia, *Guadalupe*, Jan. 15 (G. Olsen); one–two at Conchas L. Jan. 1–16 (v.o.); and seven at Ute L. Dec. 27 (JO). Wood Ducks continued to increase in numbers and range, including peripheral areas such as Texico, which hosted 21 Woodies Dec. 27 (CR). Another good Eur. Wigeon season produced singles at R.G.N.C. Dec. 31 (DE, JEP), Roswell Dec. 19 (SB), and near Carlsbad Dec. 1 (SW); an albino Am. Wigeon was at Clovis Dec. 28 (ph. JO). Far north was a well-described "Mexican" Duck at Bluewater L. Dec. 20 (CR). The mild conditions allowed Cinnamon Teal to persist at several sites, including six at B.L.N.W.R. Jan. 8 (GW), two near Carlsbad Jan. 10 (SW), and one at E.B.L. Jan. 18 (D. Ely, S. Dinsmore). Greater Scaup were at 8 sites, but *maxima* were only three each at Clayton L. Dec. 28 (LH) and Conchas L. Jan. 16 (WH, DE, BN).

An ad. male **White-winged Scoter** graced Farmington L. Jan. 16–Feb. 6 (ph. TR, JO), where there was also an Oldsquaw Jan. 5–11 (JEP, JO, ph. TR). Other Oldsquaws were singles at Cochiti L. Feb. 28

(WH), Brantley L. Dec. 26 (DE, CR), and L. Avalon Dec. 30 (JO). Although regular in winter on the San Juan R. below Navajo Dam, Barrow's Goldeneyes are extremely rare away from there, so notable were a male at Conchas L. Jan. 16–23 (WH, JEP, JO) and a male and female at B.L.N.W.R. Dec. 19 (GW, J. Wells); one at Farmington L. Dec. 19–Jan. 26 (TR) provided a local first. The three mergansers were widespread and relatively numerous, topped by an estimated 10,000 Commons churning the waters of Caballo L. Jan. 2 (BN, DE) & 9 (BZ).

## RAPTORS THROUGH GULLS

Rare in winter, an Osprey in the Caballo–Percha area Dec. 4 (JEP) & 18 (DE) was still there Jan. 9 (BZ); another was at E.B.L. Dec. 4–5 (JEP, JO) and Jan. 29–30 (JEP). A White-tailed Kite was in the s. Animas Valley Dec. 27 (M. Patten). North in the R.G.V. were up to four Harris's Hawks near Williamsburg Jan. 21 and Feb. 27 (S. Dobrott). One–three Rough-legged Hawks were s. to the Animas Valley (AC, NMC), Deming (LM), Las Cruces (S. Sermay), and Carlsbad (SW). Merlins were conspicuous all season with one–four at 33 locales statewide. The only January Peregrine Falcon was at Sunland Park Jan. 2 (JNP).

Montezuma Quail are easily overlooked; this season produced five in the Peloncillo Mts. Jan. 3 (AC), six in the Animas Mts. Dec. 24 (AC, NMC), and 15 in the Sacramento Mts. Dec. 2 (*vide* AP). Far north was a Com. Moorhen at Santa Rosa Jan. 12 (WW). A record 350 Sandhill Cranes were in the Cliff–Gila Valley Dec. 5 (RF). The experimental Whooping Crane population that winters in New Mexico was down to three birds (plus one hybrid) this season (J. Taylor). Late were 17 Snowy Plovers at Laguna Grande, *Eddy*, Dec. 6 (SW). As usual, Mt. Plovers were absent from New Mexico, but 18 wintered just to the south near Janos, Chihuahua, Mexico, January 3 (CM). A Black-necked Stilt spent the season at B.L.N.W.R. (GW et al.). Early were five Am. Avocets at Lordsburg Playa Feb. 13 (SW). Several Greater Yellowlegs overwintered in the south; notably n. were singles at Bluewater L. Jan. 16 (ph. DC) and Puerto de Luna Feb. 7 (JO). Early were two Long-

billed Curlews near Carlsbad Feb. 24 (SW); a remarkable 213 curlews were in n. Chihuahua near Janos Jan. 3 (CM).

Among the numerous lingering sandpipers were a Sanderling near Loving Dec. 6 (SW), a Stilt Sandpiper at Brantley L. Dec. 8 (SW), and 27 Long-billed Dowitchers at B.L.N.W.R. Jan. 8 (SB, *fide* GW). Dunlins found the Pecos Valley to their liking with eight at B.L.N.W.R. Dec. 6 (JO) increasing to 10–11 there Dec. 30 and Jan. 29 (GW); another eight were near Loving Dec. 6 (SW).

Late were single Franklin's Gulls at Sunland Park Dec. 5 & 8 (JNP). Bonaparte's Gulls were unusually prevalent in the Rio Grande and Pecos valleys in December (v.o.); 50 near Carlsbad Jan. 22 (SW) were the last of the season. Well-documented was an ad. **Mew Gull** at Conchas L. Jan. 16 (WH) & 23 (JEP, ph. JO); other Mews were a 2nd-winter at upper E.B.L. Dec. 30 (WW) and a first-winter at Caballo L. Jan. 3 (JNP, BZ). Noteworthy California Gulls were four at Farmington L. Jan. 6 (TR) and six at Cochiti L. Dec. 6 (WH); among several southerly Californians were up to three at Sunland Park on various dates Dec. 5–Feb. 20 (JNP). A first-winter **Thayer's Gull** at Farmington L. Jan. 4–Feb. 27 (WH, JEP, ph. TR, JO) furnished a *San Juan* first.

## PIGEONS THROUGH WOODPECKERS

Getting an early start was a Band-tailed Pigeon incubating an egg in the Animas Mts. Feb. 24 (AC, NMC). Eurasian Collared-Doves continued to make their presence known, including one at Texico Dec. 27 (JO) and several at and near Roswell all season (v.o.). However, feral Ringed Turtle-Doves continued to complicate the picture with singles documented at Albuquerque Jan. 10 (ph. JO) and Bosque N.W.R. Feb. 28 (ph. D. Ultang), as well as an undetermined number at Roswell. Both White-winged and Inca doves continued to thrive in the south and to increase in n. strongholds at Albuquerque and Roswell; noteworthy were a White-winged at Ruidoso Dec. 19 (AP) and nine Incas at Rodeo Jan. 2 (R. Scholes). A small dove at Bosque N.W.R. Feb. 7 (G. Parker) proved to be New Mexico's 7<sup>th</sup> **Ruddy Ground-Dove** (v.o., ph. JO); it was last seen Feb. 20.

Now quite scarce in New Mexico, six Short-eared Owls were discovered at B.L.N.W.R. Dec. 9 (GW), with one–two still there Dec. 18 and Jan. 16 (JEP, JO); one at Albuquerque Jan. 13 (DE) provided the only additional report. Enjoying the mild

early winter were 356 White-throated Swifts at Las Cruces Dec. 19 (GE). Several hummingbirds lingered late and at least one overwintered. A male Broad-billed visited a Las Cruces feeder Dec. 20–Feb. 6 (GE). A male Black-chinned was at Las Cruces Dec. 19 (D. Lawton), as were two Anna's Dec. 21–22, with one remaining until Jan. 8 (GE). Farther north, a female Broad-tailed persisted at Albuquerque through Dec. 8 (HS, banded JDM), as did a female Rufous there Dec. 12–30 (HS, banded JDM) and a male Rufous at Placitas Dec. 6–26 (HS, banded JDM). Undetailed was a Rufous at Las Cruces Dec. 22 (GE). Up to six Lewis's Woodpeckers spent January in the Manzanita Mts. (HS, BV) where wintering is unusual. West was a Red-headed Woodpecker at Albuquerque all season (B. Lindsey et al.). Six Gila Woodpeckers were near Cliff Jan. 2 (RS), where now scarce; a record 10 Gilas were in the Animas Valley Jan. 3 (AC). Well-described Yellow-bellied Sapsuckers were w. to Cochiti Jan. 11 (JO), Percha Jan. 3–Feb. 25 (JNP et al.), and Las Cruces Dec. 19 (J. Mulhauser); other "Yellow-bellied" reports were equivocal. Two hybrid sapsuckers showing some characters of Red-breasteds were near Bill Evans L. Jan. 2 (DZ, *fide* RS). Far south was a probable Downy Woodpecker at Las Cruces Dec. 19 (W. Whitford). Flickers with yellow shafts are not uncommon in New Mexico, with some being pure Yellow-shafted and others intergrades with Red-shafted; this season found one–four such flickers at 7 locales from Clayton w. to Mangas (v.o.). **Gilded Flickers**, however, have gone unreported—and unexpected—in New Mexico, yet this season produced intriguing—but indefinite—reports of singles at Zuni Dec. 17 (JAT), Animas Cr. Jan. 3 (D. Danforth), and Santa Fe Feb. 24 (B. Long).

## FLYCATCHERS THROUGH WARBLERS

Several empids availed themselves of the mild winter; among the better detailed were a probable Hammond's at E.B.L. Jan. 29–31 (JEP, JO), a probable Gray in the Peloncillo Mts. Jan. 3 (D. Jasper, *fide* AC), and an extensively documented Dusky near Riverside, *Grant*, Jan. 2–4 (D&MZ). Late Black Phoebes included singles n. to Española Dec. 20 (JT, BF) and Santa Rosa Dec. 22 (WW). Four E. Phoebes at Rattlesnake Springs Dec. 19 (SW) provided a high count. North was a Vermilion Flycatcher at Caballo Jan. 3 (BZ). Single N. Shrikes were at 10 n.w. sites Dec. 13–Feb. 23 (v.o.), including one s. to Madrid Jan. 15 (L. Sager).

Late was a Bell's Vireo at Elephant Butte Dam Dec. 4 (JEP); a Bell's near Sunland Park Jan. 2 (ph. JNP) & 6 (J. Zabriskie) provided the first verified winter record. Lingering Plumbeous Vireos were at Deming Dec. 8 (LM) and Dripping Springs Dec. 19 (GE). Late were four Tree Swallows at E.B.L. Dec. 5 (JEP, JO); earliest Tree was one in the Animas Valley Feb. 15 (SW). Unusual was a N. Rough-winged at Caballo Jan. 3 (J. Sproul). Four–six Mexican Chickadees were at three Animas Mts. sites during the period (AC, NMC); s. was a Juniper Titmouse there Feb. 24 (AC, NMC). North were six Verdins at Sevilleta N.W.R. Dec. 23 (SC). A Red-breasted Nuthatch wandered E to Capulin N.M. Dec. 25 (JO).

Pioneering Cactus Wrens continued their presence in the Albuquerque area with one–two at 2 Sandia Mts. foothills sites Dec. 20–Feb. 20 (HS et al.); other Cactus Wrens n. in the R.G.V. were singles at 2 Sevilleta N.W.R. sites Dec. 18–23 (SC). North for the season were single House Wrens at Sevilleta N.W.R. Dec. 23 (SC) and Bosque N.W.R. Dec. 19 and Jan. 25 (DE). At least five Winter Wrens were at 2 Zuni sites Dec. 21 (JAT); elsewhere, singles were at Ruidoso Dec. 31 and Feb. 26 (AP) and Cliff Jan. 2 (RS). An Am. Dipper staked out a Pescado R. irrigation structure Dec. 5–Feb. 20 (ph. DC). Golden-crowned Kinglets staged a minor lowland invasion, including two e to *Harding* Feb. 6 (DE, BN) and two in the Caballo-Percha area Jan. 2–3 (DE, BN, BZ), plus singles at B.L.N.W.R. Dec. 19 (JEP) and Carlsbad Dec. 21 (SW); two at Quarar, *Torrance*, Jan. 17 (HS) provided a local first.

A Blue-gray Gnatcatcher overwintered at Petroglyph N.M., where seen on several dates Jan. 20 and later (HS). A good season for E. Bluebirds found moderate numbers at 18 sites from the R.G.V. eastward. Large numbers of Mt. Bluebirds were widespread in the west, including a record 640 in the Peloncillo Mts. Jan. 3 (AC). Unusual for the season was a Gray Catbird at Lake Valley, *Sierra*, Feb. 25 (G. Garber). Several N. Mockingbirds persisted in the north, including singles at Clayton Dec. 25 and Jan. 24 (JO) and Zuni Dec. 17–Jan. 9 (JAT, ph. DC). Sage Thrashers were unusually abundant in the Albuquerque area (HS), and others wintered n. of usual locales, including at Santa Fe all season (SOW) and Zuni where there were 10 Jan. 18 (DC). One–two Brown Thrashers were at seven sites in the Gila, Rio Grande, and Pecos valleys (v.o.). The "resident" Long-billed Thrasher at Bosque Redondo welcomed its 3rd year there with song Feb. 7 (ph. JO).

Early was a probable Sprague's Pipit at L. Avalon Feb. 27 (SW). Moderate to large numbers of Cedar Waxwings virtually blanketed the state during the period, and record highs were established on several CBCs, including 243 at Albuquerque Dec. 20 (HS). Presumably early was an Olive Warbler at Emory Pass Feb. 27 (JO). A few Orange-crowned Warblers overwintered in the lower Rio Grande and Pecos valleys; high count was 12 at Mesilla Jan. 1 (JO). Very late was a Yellow Warbler at Percha Dec. 4 (JEP) as was a Black-throated Gray at Red Bluff L., *Eddy*, Dec. 31 (JO). The warbler of the season was a male **Pine Warbler** on Las Animas Cr., *Sierra*, Dec. 4-Jan. 2 (JEP, JO, DE, BN). During Dec. 4-Jan. 3, Percha hosted both a Black-and-white Warbler (JEP et al., ph. BZ) and an Am. Redstart (JEP, JNP, ph. BZ). Certainly unusual for the season were an Ovenbird at Clovis Dec. 28 (ph. JO) and a N. Waterthrush at Bosque N.W.R. Jan. 11 (BZ). A Painted Redstart at Las Cruces Feb. 19 (W. Glenn, K. Stinnett) reportedly had been present several weeks.

**SPARROWS THROUGH FINCHES**

Sparrow numbers were notably reduced in many areas, including migrants such as Chipping Sparrows and Lark Buntings, as well as residents such as Black-throated Sparrows. Notable for Zuni were single Am. Tree Sparrows at Nutria and Pescado Jan. 30-Feb. 20 (ph. DC). Very late was a Clay-colored Sparrow at Brantley L. Dec. 26 (DE, CR). One-three Field Sparrows were at Clayton L. (DE, SW), in *Harding* (DE, BN), near Tucumcari (JO, JEP), and at Sumner L. (JO) Dec. 27-Feb. 6. Single probable Baird's Sparrows in the s. Animas Valley Dec. 29 (AC, NMC) and Jan. 3 (LM) may have wintered; an undetailed Baird's there Feb. 15 (SW) may have been a migrant. Topping the season's sparrow news was the discovery of a small population of **Le Conte's Sparrows** wintering in a wind-swept reed bed at Conchas L.; discovered Dec. 9 (WW), two-six or more were well-documented on numerous dates through Feb. 14 (v.o., ph. JO). Grayish Fox Sparrows were at Zuni Dec. 19 (JT) and Carnuel Dec. 11-Jan. 2 (DE, JEP, JO); reddish singles were at B.L.N.W.R. Dec. 26 and Jan. 4 (GW) and Rattlesnake Springs Dec. 19 (SW).

Always a treat, single Harris's Sparrows were at Corrales Dec. 20 (R. Gracey) and Santa Rosa Dec. 22-Feb. 14 (WW, JEP, ph. JO). An ad. Golden-crowned Sparrow entertained many at Bosque N.W.R. from Jan. 30 through February (v.o.); undetailed

were single Golden-crowneds at Albuquerque Dec. 20 (*fide* HS) and Gila Jan. 2 (*fide* RS). High for "Slate-colored" Juncos was 17 at Clayton Dec. 28 (LH); a "White-winged" was at Santa Fe Jan. 2-17 (SOW). Visits to the Animas Mts. found single Yellow-eyed Juncos at Cistern Saddle Dec. 24 and Indian Cr. Jan. 16 (AC, NMC). One-two Lapland Longspurs were noted at 5 n.e. sites (v.o.), including at Maxwell N.W.R. where there were 12 Laplands (many well into summer plumage) Feb. 24 (WW). Northern Cardinals pushing n. were singles at Bosque Redondo Jan. 16 (JEP, JO), Conchas L. Dec. 9 (WW), Tucumcari L. Dec. 12 (JEP, JO), and near San Jon Dec. 27 (CR).

Northerly Pyrrhuloxias were 10 at Sevilleta N.W.R. Dec. 23 (SC) and singles at Quarai Jan. 17 (HS) and Santa Rosa Dec. 22 (WW). Providing a winter first for Zuni was a female **Rose-breasted Grosbeak** Dec. 19-Jan. 2 (JAT, ph. DC). An impressive season for **Rusty Blackbirds** found singles near Archuleta, *San Juan*, Feb. 19-20 (BN, DE, JEP, ph. JO); Peña Blanca, *Sandoval*, Jan. 26 (WW); and B.L.N.W.R. Dec. 25 (CR, DE). Undetailed were two at Clayton Dec. 28 (CR). North for the season were single Com. Grackles at Farmington Dec. 19 (A. Nelson) and Taos Feb. 6 (JEP, JO). Six Bronzed Cowbirds at Las Cruces Jan. 1 (JO) provided the only report, but Brown-headeds were more widely reported than usual; far north were two near Clayton Jan. 18 (SW) and one at Las Vegas Jan. 2 (JT).

The few Cassin's Finches reported were primarily found in and near montane areas. Red Crossbills likewise were scarce; highs amounted to only eight at Los Alamos Dec. 6 (JT), 12 at Alto Jan. 14 (*fide* AP), and five at Ruidoso Feb. 5 (*fide* AP). Pine Siskins

wandered E to *Union*, including 238 at Clayton Dec. 28 (LH), and remained conspicuous there through February (L. Fry, W. Cook). A few Lesser Goldfinches lingered n. in the Gila Valley and in the R.G.V. to Albuquerque (v.o.), but all had departed by early January. Generally small numbers of Evening Grosbeaks were in the north (v.o.), at Zuni (DC), and in the Sacramento Mts. (AP); high count was 100 at Tesuque Feb. 6 (JO).

**Initialed observers:** Sherry Bixler, David Cleary, Steven Cox, Alan Craig, Nanca Moore Craig, Joan Day Martin, Douglas Emkalns, Gordon Ewing, Ralph Fisher, Bernard Foy, Lois Herrmann, William Howe, Larry Malone, Cynthia Melcher, Bruce Neville, Jerry Oldenettel, Bruce Pataky, John E. Parmeter, James N. Paton, Anita Powell, Tim Reeves, Christopher Rustay, Hart Schwarz, Roland Shook, Joyce Takamine, John A. Trochet, Brad Vaughn, Gordon Warrick, Steve West, William West, S.O. Williams, Barry Zimmer, Dale & Marian Zimmerman.

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Place names that are frequently mentioned, but very long, may be abbreviated in a form such as "C.B.B.T." or "W.P.B.O." Such local abbreviations will be explained in a key at the beginning of the particular regional report in which they are used. Standard abbreviations that are used throughout *North American Birds* are keyed on page 138.

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