

new mexico region



This first-winter Thayer's Gull at Farmington Lake 7 March 1999 is one of few ever so well documented in New Mexico. Note the all black bill, rather pale outer primaries (especially the inner webs), and unmarked tail. Photograph/Tim Reeves



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New Mexico experienced an extremely dry and windy spring, and although April and May precipitation improved conditions in the north and east, the south remained extremely dry. Migration of Neotropicals was impressive, especially in the southwest, while several warm country species continued to advance northward. Increased field work in Chihuahua continued to further our understanding of the avifauna of New Mexico's southern neighbor, and several significant records from there are included.

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 Lake*); N.R.T. (*north Roosevelt Co. migrant trap near Melrose*); P.O. Canyon (*Post Office Canyon, Peloncillo Mts.*); R.S. (*Rattlesnake Springs including adjacent Washington Ranch, Eddy Co.*); R.G.V. (*Rio Grande Valley*); Zuni (*Zuni Indian Reservation*).

LOONS THROUGH RAPTORS

Lingering from winter at Conchas L. 6 Mar were a **Yellow-billed Loon** (JEP, ph. JRO) and a Pacific Loon (JEP, JRO); late were two Pacifics at Maxwell N.W.R. 21 May (DE, BN, CR). North were four Neotropic Cormorants at Isleta 7 Mar and 31 May (BV) and one-two at B.L.N.W.R. 24 Apr–28 May (GW et al.). Bittern reports were confined to the east, with one-two Americans at B.L.N.W.R. 1–9 Apr (SW, GW) and singles near R.S. 8 May (SW) and Mattox L., *Lea*, 27 Mar (SW); five Least were at Tucumcari 21 May (JRO). A Tricolored Heron strayed N to Santa Rosa 2–15 May (v.o., ph. JRO). An ad. **White Ibis** was a surprise at Maxwell N.W.R. 16–23 May (v.o., ph. J. Hirth, JRO).

Among the numerous White-faced Ibises streaming through the state were three apparent **Glossy Ibises**, one each at Bosque N.W.R. 18–24 Apr (BN, DE, CR, GE, ph. JRO), B.L.N.W.R. 24 Apr (ph. JRO), and Santa Rosa 9 May (JEP, ph. JRO). Wood Ducks were conspicuous in the R.G.V. from Española south (v.o.); noteworthy were 2 pairs on the Rio Casas Grandes, n. Chihuahua, 28 Apr (BO). A Long-tailed Duck at Cochiti L. lingered until 20 Mar (JEP, JRO). Late was a Com. Goldeneye at Ute L. 21 Apr (WW).

Discovery of yet another active Osprey territory at Heron L. 31 May (DS) increased the number of known n. New Mexico nests to 6; high counts for migrants were seven at Sumner L. (R. Hoppe), four at Grindstone L. (DS) 24 Apr, and 10 at L. Avalon 9 Apr (SW). A White-tailed Kite was at Percha 18 Apr (BN, DE). Mississippi Kites in the R.G.V. were one at Los Lunas 16 May (BV) and two at Socorro 14 May (PB). The 3 known Bald Eagle nests in *Colfax* each had young 19 Apr (SOW), but the *Sierra* nest was not active (SOW, S. Dobrott); unusual was an adult over P.O. Canyon 17 May (JDM). In e. New Mexico the recently established Com. Black-Hawk population in the R. Hondo drainage continued to thrive, with 3 occupied territories at Glencoe, San Patricio, and Tinnie 23–24 Apr (DS), including active nests at the last 2 sites; in the middle R.G.V., where rare, was one at Bosque N.W.R. 16 Apr (ph. R. Kruidenier). Two Harris's Hawk nests near Deming failed from undetermined causes (LM). Very far east was a Zone-tailed Hawk at N.R.T. 10 May (LG). Late were single Rough-legged Hawks at Farmington 6 Apr (DS), Questa 20 Mar (JEP, JRO), and Arch 29 Mar (LS). The raptor of the season was a

sub-ad. **Crested Caracara** near San Antonio 18 Apr (R. Gracey, ph. J. Rini), the first for the R.G.V. in several decades.

TURKEYS THROUGH TERNS

The Animas and Peloncillo mts. of s.w. New Mexico contain the only naturally occurring Gould's Wild Turkeys n. of Mexico; encouraging were spring reports from 2 Animas and 3 Peloncillo canyons (AC, NMC, LM, SOW). In the Pecos Valley were single N. Bobwhites n. to Sumner Dam 14 May (JEP) and Santa Rosa 31 May (JRO); one at Los Alamos 29 Mar (C. Jervis) was likely an escape. Sonograms may eventually identify a large rail, believed by many to be a **King Rail**, seen, taped, and partially photographed at Willow L., *Eddy*, 7 Mar–18 Apr (SW, v.o., v.t. JRO); there are prior reports of King/Clapper Rails from B.L.N.W.R. (last in 1970), but neither is verified for the state.

An **American Golden-Plover** was near Mesquite, *Doña Ana*, 7 May (ph. JNP). Noteworthy Snowy Plovers were 17 (including one chick) at Holloman L. 29 May (GE); w. were singles at Gila 12 May (DZ) and Lordsburg Playa 13 May (LM). Mountain Plovers were notably scarce; one at Franciscan L., *McKinley*, 28 May (ph. TR) provided a new locality while one on Otero Mesa 5–6 Apr (RM) was in an area with few recent records. Willets made a good showing statewide, including an early two at Mangas 22 Mar (RF); highs were 13 at Zuni 24 Apr (DC), 36 near Pep 29 Apr (LS), and 30 at Cliff 15 May (*vide* DZ). Upland Sandpipers are scarce in spring; this season produced one at Boone's Draw 6 May (JEP, JRO). One-two Whimbrels were at Bosque N.W.R. 22 Apr–7 May (JO, JEP, DE, v.t. JRO); late were two at B.L.N.W.R. 28 May

(JEP, v.t. JRO). Early were 55 Long-billed Curlews in the Uvas Valley, *Doña Ana*, 2 Mar (WH); impressive were an estimated 600 migrant curlews near Arch 29 Mar (LS). Extremely rare was a **Hudsonian Godwit** near Mesquite 7–8 May (RR). Marbled Godwits were present 16 Apr–8 May (v.o.); highs were 275 at Morgan L. 22 Apr (TR et al.), 175 at E.B.L. 27 Apr (WW), and 252 at B.L.N.W.R. 16 Apr (GW). The earliest White-rumped Sandpiper was at Portales 14 May (JEP, JRO); the high count was 40 at B.L.N.W.R. 29 May (JEP, JRO). Wetlands at Sunshine Valley, *Taos*, hosted three Com. Snipe pairs and seven Wilson's Phalarope pairs 20 May (CR), and local breeding was suspected.

Laughing Gulls again made news, with a first-winter bird at Stubblefield L. 20–21 May (CR, BN, ph. JRO) and a near-adult at Brantley L. 6 May (JEP, ph. JRO). Late for the south were two sub-ad. California Gulls at E.B.L. 27 May (WH). Lingering from winter was a first-winter Thayer's Gull at Farmington L., last seen 10 Mar (ph. TR). A Caspian Tern at B.L.N.W.R. 14 May (DE, BN, GW) provided the only report. Probable Com. Terns were one at Farmington L. 22 Apr (TR) and two adults near Hatch 14 May (RR). Notably early were single Least Terns at Bosque N.W.R. 23 Apr (JEP) and Brantley L. 24 Apr (JRO); eight were at B.L.N.W.R. by 28 May (GW). Impressive (for this day and age) were 96 migrant Black Terns at E.B.L. 27 May (WH).

DOVES THROUGH FLYCATCHERS

Eurasian Collared-Doves continued in evidence in the east, including singles at Ft. Sumner (ph. JRO), Portales (JEP, ph. JRO), and B.L.N.W.R. (GW), plus up to 15 at Roswell (SW, JEP) and three at Carlsbad (JEP, ph. JRO), and one w. to Albuquerque (JEP). However, single apparent Ringed Turtle-Doves in Roswell (K. Graves), Artesia (H. Creswell), and Albuquerque (R. Isler) complicated the picture. White-winged Doves were n. to Zuni 17 May (ph. DC), Santa Fe (v.o.), Eldorado (BF), and Ft. Sumner (v.o.). Northerly Inca Doves were at 2 Albuquerque sites (JRO, HS), and fledglings were at Roswell 21 May (PM); farther north was one at N.R.T. 11 May (WW). Well-detailed was a female Com. Ground-Dove at Rodeo 19 May (AC). Early was a vocal Yellow-billed Cuckoo at R.S. 25 Apr (JEP, JRO). Near the Texas line were two W. Screech-Owls at Pep 30 Apr (LS). A Long-eared Owl nest with young near Cabezon Peak, *Sandoval*, 18 May (CR) furnished a new breeding locale. Often over-

looked, a N. Saw-whet Owl was in the Pinos Altos Mts. 6 May (JNP, BZ). Very early were Com. Nighthawks in *Union* 22 Apr (LF) and at Pep 27 Apr (LS). Causing considerable consternation among local birders was a probable **Buff-collared Nightjar** heard (by herpetologists!) at Redrock during the night of 30 May (T. Hibbitts); follow-ups in June were unsuccessful (v.o.). A Whippoorwill at Boone's Draw 9 May (JEP, JRO) furnished a rare e. plains record.

Westerly Chimney Swifts were singles at Redrock 1 May (D&MZ), Cliff 15 May (DZ), and Percha 6 May (JNP, BZ), while far east was a White-throated Swift near Pep 3 Apr (LS). Consolidating their n. expansion into the c. Peloncillo Mts. were four Broad-billed Hummingbirds 25 May (SOW). Banding studies at P.O. Canyon netted nine ad. Lucifers 16–23 May, plus two additional adults in early June (JDM), and a remarkable 22 hatch-year Anna's 16–29 May (JDM). An ad. male Costa's Hummingbird was at Silver City 22 Apr–12 May (ph. DZ) and another was banded at P.O. Canyon 20 May (JDM). A male **Red-bellied Woodpecker** put in a brief appearance at N.R.T. 28 May (JEP, ph. JRO). Far east was a Downy Woodpecker at Boone's Draw 17 Apr (JEP, JRO).

Noteworthy were one–two singing Least Flycatchers at Boone's Draw 28–31 May (CR, JEP, JRO). Early was a Dusky Flycatcher at Corrales 11 Apr (WH); noteworthy was one singing in the San Mateo Mts. 13 May (HS). Further evidence that **Buff-breasted Flycatcher** may be staging a comeback was furnished by one singing in the Animas Mts. 8 May (NMC). Two Black Phoebes were n. to Aztec 19–20 May (ph. TR); other northerly Blacks were in the upper R.G.V. from Lyden southward (v.o.). Vermilion Flycatchers in the northeast included a pair at Conchas L. 21 Apr (WW). Far west was a **Great Crested Flycatcher** near Hatch 14 May (RR); one s. of the border near Janos 28 Apr (BO) may be a first for Chihuahua. Also far west were single Scissor-tailed Flycatchers at Cliff 8 May (RS) and near Wall L. 19 May (*fide* DZ).

VIREOS THROUGH PHAINOPEPLA

Single **White-eyed Vireos** were singing at Santa Fe 17 May (WW) and Socorro 1 May (CR). Perhaps responding to locally improving riparian conditions was a singing Bell's Vireo on Berranda Cr., *Sierra*, 28 Apr (CR). Cassin's Vireos, typically scarce in spring, were reported e. to the Texas line (v.o.) Probable **Blue-headed Vireos** were

at N.R.T. 1 May (ph. JRO) and Boone's Draw 1–6 May (JEP, ph. JRO). Rare in New Mexico was a silent **Philadelphia Vireo** at N.R.T. 1 May (ph. JRO). South was a Clark's Nutcracker in the n. Black Range, *Sierra*, 23 Apr (SOW). Crashing the neighborhood was a pair of Black-billed Magpies nesting in the base of an active Bald Eagle nest in *Colfax* 19 Apr (SOW).

Many observers commented on the huge numbers of swallows that passed through the state. Encouraging was news that the large Bank Swallow colony at Albuquerque's Calabacillas Arroyo was again active (WH). South in the R.G.V. was a Black-capped Chickadee at Bosque N.W.R. 14 Mar (DE, BN), likely a local first. Previously considered rare in middle R.G.V. bosques, 3 pairs of Bushtits were nesting at Corrales 11 Apr (WH). **Carolina Wrens** continued to haunt the R.G.V., with one–two (a pair?) at Socorro through May (v.o., ph. JRO); farther north was one singing at Albuquerque 20 Mar and later (L. Leckman, JEP, JRO), and another was heard at Pilar 20 May (CR). In the Gila Valley two Winter Wrens persisted into April, with the last seen 13 May (RS). At Sunshine Valley, *Taos*, 47 Marsh Wrens were singing in seemingly suitable breeding habitat 20 May (CR). One–two E. Bluebirds at Socorro 14 Apr–26 May (JRO, DE) were suggestive of local breeding. A pair of Mt. Bluebirds was using a burrow in a cutbank in Spur Lake Basin, *Catron*, 10 May (SOW). A **Wood Thrush** was near Pep 26 Apr (ph. LS). Unusual were two N. Mockingbirds at 7500 ft. on Bluewater Cr. 28 May (HS). Westerly Brown Thrashers were at Cerro, *Taos*, 27 May (RW), Socorro 27 May (PB), and Cliff 24 Apr (*fide* DZ); elsewhere, one–three were at 5 sites from the Pecos Valley eastward (v.o.) Now well into its 3rd year, Bosque Redondo's **Long-billed Thrasher** was still singing in April (v.o.). A Bendire's Thrasher singing near Casas Grandes 30 May (WH) may represent a Chihuahua first.

A Sprague's Pipit in the Animas Valley 2 Mar (DZ) provided the only report. Cedar Waxwings were widespread and relatively numerous in May (v.o.); latest were five at Zuni 31 May (DC) and 12 at Sumner Dam (CR), one at Boone's Draw (CR), and six at R.S. (JEP) 29 May. A Phainopepla strayed NE to the Mesa rest stop, n. *Chaves*, 29 May (JEP, ph. JRO).

WARBLERS THROUGH TANAGERS

Two Olive Warblers were n. to Springtime, San Mateo Mts., 13 May (HS), for the 2nd consecutive year. Likely a first for Chihua-



Rare in the West, this Kentucky Warbler was near Pep, New Mexico, 23 May 1999. Photograph/Larry Sager

hua was a well-detailed **Golden-winged Warbler** near Janos 28 May (WH). Northern Parulas made a notable showing, with one-two at Corrales (JRO, CR, PRS), Quarai (HS), Sumner Dam (JEP, JRO), N.R.T. (v.o.), Boone's Draw (WW), Bill Evans L. (RF), and Pep (LS) 11 Apr–24 May. Among the rare but increasingly regular eastern strays were single Chestnut-sided at Bandelier 15 May (S. Greetham) and R.S. 12 May (RR), a Magnolia at Boone's Draw 14 May (JEP), a Black-throated Blue at Pep 16 May (LS), and a Black-throated Green at R.S. 7 May (JEP, ph. JRO).

A nifty male Myrtle × Audubon's hybrid was at Corrales 11 Apr (WH). Townsend's Warblers, a typically rare spring (but common fall) migrant, were conspicuous from the R.G.V. westward (v.o.), and especially so in the Silver City area (DZ). Also typically rare in spring, a small "wave" of Hermit Warblers pushed through s.w. New Mexico 8 May, with singles in *Grant* (*fide* R. Wilcox) and Guadalupe Canyon (AC) and 25 in the Animas Mts. (NMC). Single Palm Warblers were at Carlsbad Caverns 24 Apr (JEP) and Pep 3 May (LS). Approaching overkill were one-two Black-and-whites at 8 sites from the R.G.V. eastward 18 Apr–22 May (v.o.); west was one at Glenwood 3 May (B. McKnight). American Redstarts were rarely reported included singles at Cerrillos 3 May (A. Fenney), Quarai 3–10 May (HS), and Pep 15 May (LS). Increasingly regular, Prothonotaries were at R.S. 25 Apr (JEP, ph. JRO) and 29 Apr (*fide* WH), and Eunice 7 May (JEP, ph. JRO). Worm-eating Warblers were in w. *Guadalupe* 2 May (D. Andrews), Percha 27 Apr (WW), R.S. 25 Apr (JEP),

and Jal 7 May (JEP, JRO); two were at Cliff 20 May (*fide* DZ).

A well-documented **Louisiana Water-thrush** at Socorro 27 Mar–3 Apr (PB, BN, DE, JEP, ph. JRO) furnished New Mexico's 10th overall. Single **Kentucky Warblers** were at N.R.T. 6 May (JEP, ph. JRO), near Pep 23 May (LS), and R.S. 25 Apr (JEP, JRO). Yet another good season for Hoodeds found singles at Galisteo (BF), Socorro (DE, ph. JRO), Quarai (HS), N.R.T. (LG, JEP), Boone's Draw (JEP, JRO) and Pep (LS) 3–30 May. Wilson's Warblers inundated the state by late April, including a respectable 1159 on the Gila count 1 May (RS). A Painted Redstart wandered e. to Percha 15 Apr (PB, GE). Intriguing—but inconclusive—were single possible **Slate-throated Redstarts** described from Bandelier 27 May (J. Hulen) and the Pinos Altos Mts. 2 May (M. Tokuda); well-detailed was another in atypical habitat near Janos, n. Chihuahua, 31 May (WH). Easterly Hepatic Tanagers included five at Mills Canyon 20 May (JRO) and one at Boone's Draw 11 May (WW). Summer Tanagers continued to push n., with two at Orilla Verde, *Taos*, 19 May (CR) and singles at Galisteo 22 May (JO) and Conchas L. 9 May (CR).

TOWHEES THROUGH FINCHES

Lingering s. of known breeding areas were single Green-tailed Towhees at Tajique Canyon 21 May (HS), Deming 24 May (LM), and the Peloncillo Mts. 25 May (SOW). Out of habitat and a local first was a singing Canyon Towhee at 7500 ft. at Bluewater Cr. 28 May (HS). A high 31 Abert's Towhees were tallied on the Gila count 1 May (RS). Noteworthy Rufous-crowned Sparrows were singles near Taos 23 May (RW) and Moriarty 21 May (JRO), and four on Berrenda Cr. 28 Apr (CR). Late were single Field Sparrows near Tucumcari 21 Apr (WW) and R.S. 24 Apr (JEP). North were singing Black-chinned Sparrows at Orilla Verde 19 May (CR) and *Los Alamos* 30 May (C. Keller). Surveys for migrant Baird's Sparrows produced only four on Otero Mesa 19–28 Apr (RM). A winter holdover, the last of the Conchas L. **Le Conte's Sparrows** was seen 21 Apr (WW). A Golden-crowned Sparrow was at La Plata 28 Mar (ph. TR); the wintering bird at Bosque N.W.R. remained until 13 Mar (JEP). Consolidating their n. range expansion were six N. Cardinals in s.e. *San Miguel* near Tucumcari 21 Apr (WW); three on Macho Cr. near Nutt 29 Apr (CR) furnished a new s.c. locale.

Additional evidence of Pyrrhuloxias

breeding in s.w. deserts was provided by one at Columbus 25 May, 10 near Hatchet Gap 26 May, and four near Gage 28 May (SOW). One-three Rose-breasted Grosbeaks were at 8 sites from the R.G.V. eastward 24 Apr–14 May (v.o.); west were singles at Mangas 13–18 May (RF) and Silver City 21 May (*fide* DZ). Well north of expected were male Painted Buntings near Aztec 28 Apr–2 May (ph. TR), Zuni 22–26 May (ph. DC), Belen 22–26 Apr (ph. HS), and White Signal 16–17 May (*fide* DZ). Interesting—but ominous—was a displaying Bronzed Cowbird n. to B.L.N.W.R. 8 & 20 May (GW, PM). North in the R.G.V. to Socorro were an Orchard Oriole 13 May (PB) and a Hooded Oriole 14 May (PB). Of uncertain status in New Mexico, single **Baltimore Orioles** were in n.e. *Union* 24 May (LF) and near Hatch 14 May (RR). Far north was a Scott's Oriole at Pilar 21 May (RW).

Some 100 rosy-finches, including Brown-capped, Gray-crowned, and Blacks, were at the Taos Ski Basin 7 Mar (JRO) and 14 Mar (J. Takamine). Cassin's Finches continued to be scarce and were largely restricted to n. areas. Red Crossbills were likewise scarce but more widely distributed; notable were 11 in the Sierra Blanca area 28 Mar (JRO) and up to 12 in the Burro Mts. 9 Mar–15 May (v.o.). Pine Siskins were widely scattered in the lowlands; late were 42 in *Union* 8 May (LF), two at Las Cruces 12 May (GE), and three at Deming 29 May (LM). Late Am. Goldfinches were three near Aztec 20 May (TR), eight at Zuni 31 May (DC), and one at N.R.T. 29 May (SOW). The few Evening Grosbeaks were restricted to the Sangre de Cristo and Jemez mts.; the high count was 50 at Taos 17–20 May (RW).

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