

new mexico region



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The dry spring gave way to abundant summer rains that by July had spread virtually statewide, transforming the New Mexico landscape to one of verdant lushness. The luxuriant surroundings elicited such comments as “looks like Ireland” and “reminiscent of the Venezuelan llanos in the rainy season.” Meanwhile, New Mexico edged closer to the State 500 Club when number 499 was photo-documented in July.

Abbreviations: B.L.N.W.R. (*Bitter Lake N.W.R.*); E.B.L. (*Elephant Butte Lake*); R.G.V. (*Rio Grande Valley*); Zuni (*Zuni Indian Reservation*).

LOONS THROUGH TERNS

Common Loons are unusual in summer, but this season singles were found at Zuni 12 Jun–2 Jul (JT, DC) and E.B.L. 24–30 Jul (JP, JO). Dry conditions at Stinking L. resulted in no grebe nests; elsewhere in *Rio Arriba*, three Eared Grebe pairs nested at Stone L. 3 Jul (DS), and Enbom, Mundo, and Stone lakes each had one–four W. Grebe nests 13 Jun–12 Jul (DS). An aerial survey located a record 59 Great Blue Heron nests at 5 sites in *Sierra* and s. *Socorro* 10 Jun (SOW, LW). A Tricolored Heron was as far north as B.L.N.W.R. 18 Jun–23 Jul (GW). Ring-necked Ducks are not known to nest in New Mexico, but this season there were more lingerers than usual, including one–two at 3 Zuni sites June–July (JT, DC). Unusual for the season was a Hooded Merganser at *Pescado* L. 9 Jul (DC).

Three of the 6 known Osprey nests in *Rio Arriba* and *Sandoval* were successful, fledging eight young in July, but the other 3 nests failed (DS); noteworthy were two

Ospreys each at *Nutria* L. Jun 23 (DC) and *Sumner* L. in June (R. Hoppe). Single Mississippi Kites were W to Albuquerque in late June (DE) and *Belen* 7 Jul (T. Mitcheson). Wet conditions in the Pecos Valley accounted for three N. Harriers (including a pair exchanging food) at B.L.N.W.R. 10 Jun (WH) and one carrying food near *Artesia* 6 Jun (JO). A Com. Black-Hawk was far north at *Shadybrook* near *Taos* 5 Jun (J. McMahon); in the east, one was on the *Rio Peñasco* near *Mayhill* 18 Jul (R. Kostecke). North of their usual *Jemez* Mts. haunts were two Zone-tailed Hawks at *Ghost Ranch* 23 Jun (DS). There are no Ferruginous Hawk breeding records for *San Miguel*, so an adult on *Rowe Mesa* 13 Jun (CR) was noteworthy. Reports of a Merlin in July at *Isaac L.*, *Doña Ana*, were traced to a falconer’s bird; the species does not summer in New Mexico. A White-tailed Ptarmigan was on *Pecos Baldy* 8 Jul (E. Rominger), where this southernmost population must compete for limited alpine habitat with at least 1000 ungulates (elk, bighorn, cattle). Wild Turkeys produced numerous young in n.e. *Union* canyons (LF); a turkey on *Twin Butte Cr.*, w. *Chaves*, 2 Jun (SOW) was unusual. A Virginia Rail pair with four chicks at *Acomita L.* 17 Jul (JO) furnished a rare *Cibola* breeding record. North in the R.G.V. was a pair of Com. Moorhens with two chicks at *Isleta* 24 & 26 Jul (CR, JO), only the 4th *Bernalillo* breeding record; one W to *Zuni* 5 Jun (JT) was noteworthy.

Snowy Plovers peaked with 304 at B.L.N.W.R. 18 Jun (GW); highs elsewhere included 42 at *Laguna Grande* 16 Jul (SW) and 23 at *Holloman L.* 30 Jul (GE). Presumably early were three Mt. Plovers at the *Moriarty* turf farm 15 Jul (DC). Lesser Yellowlegs greatly outnumbered Greater in the Pecos Valley in July; the high for Lessers was 278 at B.L.N.W.R. 23 Jul (GW). A Solitary Sandpiper was at *Bernardo* 25 Jul (BV). One–two returning Willets were at 7 sites from the R.G.V. eastward 4–25 Jul (v.o.). Favorable conditions produced many Long-billed Curlew reports from the northeast; in the west was a brood at *White Lakes*, *Santa Fe*, 12 Jun (CR). A Marbled Godwit at B.L.N.W.R. 9 Jul (GW) was very early; the high count there was eight on 20 Jul (WW). Four White-rumped Sandpipers at B.L.N.W.R. 11–12 Jun (GW, JO) were the

last of the spring migrants. A respectable 175 Stilt Sandpipers were at B.L.N.W.R. 20 Jul (WW). Late was a Red-necked Phalarope at *Deming* 4 Jun (LM). An ad. Laughing Gull at E.B.L. 24 Jul (JP, vt. JO) extended the remarkable streak of this rare species’ recent occurrences. Two Franklin’s Gulls at B.L.N.W.R. 2 Jul (GW) were out-of-season. Noteworthy California Gull records were singles at *Heron L.* 19 Jun (JO) and *Lordsburg* 12 Jun (JP, JO) and four at E.B.L. 13 Jun (JP, JO); neither this nor any other gull species is known to nest in New Mexico. Seven pairs of Least Terns returned to B.L.N.W.R. June–July, but only one fledgling was produced (WR).

DOVES THROUGH WOODPECKERS

Doves on the march included an apparent Eur. Collared-Dove in *Albuquerque* 17 Jul and later (BV, ph. P. Pierce). The northward advance of White-winged Doves included one at *Zuni* 1 Jun (DC), two at *Bluewater* 17 Jul (JO), and five at *Grants* 17 Jul (JO). The only Com. Ground-Dove reported was near *Cliff* 7 Jul (SS, R. Shook). Yellow-billed Cuckoos seemed to be thriving in the *Gila*, *Rio Grande*, and *Pecos* valleys; reports included several birds from *San Acacia* to E.B.L. (LW) and others from *Sumner Dam* and *Bosque Redondo* (WH) to B.L.N.W.R. (GW) and the *Delaware R.* (SW); there were 8 nests near *Cliff* (DH). Cuckoos present where they are rarely reported included one N to *Peña Blanca* 13 Jul (WW), singles at *Conchas Dam* and in saltcedar on the *Canadian R.* near *Tucumcari* 12 Jun (CR), two–three at *Tucumcari* 12 Jun and 10 Jul (CR), two near *Floyd* 27 Jun (SS), two in walnut trees on the *Rio Felix*, *Chaves*, 2 Jun (SOW), and one at *Lake Valley* 24 Jun (H.A.).

In the *Peloncillo* Mts., Whiskered Screech-Owls occupied 9 territories in 2 canyons 29–30 Jul (SOW, PM) and outnumbered Westerns there by a 2:1 ratio. Two ad. Elf Owls with a juvenile in *Last Chance Canyon* 24 Jul (SW) further documented this owl’s recent expansion into the *Guadalupe* Mts. A young Spotted Owl was found dead on the *Grant* side of *Emory Pass* 28 Jul, apparently hit by a car (C. Torrez, *MSB). Closely “packed” were three pairs of Long-eared Owls (one with fledglings 1 Jul)

within a 2 km stretch of the Zuni Mts. (P. Stacey). A Lesser Nighthawk at B.L.N.W.R. 9 Jun (WH) was near the n. edge of its Pecos Valley distribution. Also north were three vocal Whip-poor-wills in the Zuni Mts 8 Jun (JT). Single wandering Black Swifts were at Puye Cliff Dwellings near Los Alamos 21 Jun (D. Pellegrini) and L. Roberts 20 Jul (BN, DE, JP, JO). Although this season found seven Chimney Swifts at Clayton 28 Jun (W. Cook) and four at Tucumcari 10 Jul (CR), the species yet remains unconfirmed as a New Mexico breeding bird.

On the hummingbird front, a Violet-crowned wandered E to Double Adobes in the Animas Valley 29 Jul (AC), and a Blue-throated was N to L. Roberts 30–31 Jul (BN, DE, JP, ph. JO); two Blue-throateds were at Post Office Canyon 8–9 Jul (R. Scholes). Reports of Magnificent Hummingbirds were restricted to the Pinos Altos and Peloncillo mts. (v.o.). Rufous Hummingbirds do not nest in New Mexico or adjacent states, but this tends to come as a surprise to many feeder-watchers; this season's earliest "fall" migrants were single males at Tijeras 27 Jun (J. Day-Martin), Zuni 28 Jun (DC), and Canjilon L. 29 Jun (WW). The earliest returning Calliope Hummingbird was a male at Ft. Wingate 16 Jul (JO). Unusual for madrean oak habitat were two Gila Woodpeckers in Clanton Canyon 31 Jul (SOW, PM). Near their n. limit were 12 Acorn Woodpeckers in the Chuska Mts. near Crystal, *San Juan*, 25 Jul (CR). South in the R.G.V. was a Downy Woodpecker feeding a fledgling at Lemitar 17 Jun (CR).

FLYCATCHERS THROUGH PHAINOPEPLA

Another banner season for Gray Flycatchers produced reports from 17 locales, including 15 each at Zuni 6–11 Jun (JT) and Rowe Mesa 13 Jun (CR). Others were S to the San Mateo Mts. (DC), Black Range (P. Boucher), and Pinos Altos Mts. (BZ), as well as in the s. Sacramento (WH) and Guadalupe mts. (SW). A Gray Flycatcher nest at Quarai, *Torrance*, 18 Jul (HS) was a local first. For the 2nd consecutive year, Dusky Flycatchers nested S to the Manzano Mts near Capilla Peak, where there were 4 occupied territories and fledglings present 25 Jul (WH); a Dusky nest at Zuni's Blackrock 12 Jun (JT) was unusual for the habitat and low elevation. Vermilion Flycatchers occupied 2 territories NE to Conchas Dam 12 Jun (CR). Unusually far north and a Pinos Altos Mts. first, a vocal Dusky-capped Flycatcher was at Cherry Cr.

7 Jun (ph. & tape BZ). An unusual kingbird at B.L.N.W.R. 10–11 Jun (GW, WR) may have been a Tropical, a species yet to be verified for New Mexico, but available details could only confirm Tropical/Couch's; there are 2 previous confirmed records of Couch's in the state. A vocal Thick-billed Kingbird was E to Double Adobes 29 Jul (AC, N. Moore-Craig). Scissor-tailed Flycatchers were judged more numerous than usual in the southeast (v.o.); one at Mangas 5–17 Jul (ph. RF) was far west.

A Bell's Vireo singing at Sumner Dam 9 Jun (WH) was north of its normal haunts; 3 of 4 Bell's nests near San Marcial June–July were successful, including 2 placed in Russian olive trees (LW). Two Gray Vireos in the Ladronne Mts. 10–11 Jun (N. & S. Cox) provided a local first. A singing Red-eyed Vireo wandered W to Zuni 12 Jun (JT). Maintaining the species' southern outpost was a Black-billed Magpie near Isleta 20 Jun (M. Howe). The discovery of seven pairs of Purple Martins nesting in cottonwoods along the Canadian R. w. of Raton June–July (J. Ray, R. Yaksich) established the first certain breeding for the Sangre de Cristo Mts. and the northeasternmost yet for New Mexico. Bridled Titmice are now well-established N and E to the Magdalenas and San Mateos; one–three were at Water Canyon 24 Jul (CR), Springtime 9–16 Jun (DC), and Vick's Peak 29 Jun (GS). North in the R.G.V. was a Verdin at Contreras, *Socorro*, 25 Jul (BV). Seven Cactus Wrens in s. *Harding* 5 Jun (SOW) established a new high for this n.e. population; a pair tending two young at McDonald's in Tucumcari 10 Jul (CR) furnished a local breeding first. A Canyon Wren pair fledged five young from a ceramic flower pot on a porch at Abo 8 Jun (ph. HS). A **Carolina Wren** was singing at Socorro 2 & 10 Jun (JO), where the species has been suspiciously present for over a year. For the 3rd consecutive year a **Winter Wren** was singing below Jemez Falls 18 Jun (JP) and 1 Jul (WW). A few Marsh Wrens bred at Stone and Enbom lakes, where there were nests with eggs 13–14 Jun (DS). Most unusual was an Am. Dipper at the Monticello Box, *Socorro*, 23 Jun (CR).

Three Golden-crowned Kinglets on San Mateo Peak 9–16 Jun (DC) likely were local breeders; a respectable 33 Golden-crowned were near Cloudcroft 21 Jun (WH). An ad. E. Bluebird was feeding a juvenile at Socorro 23 Jun (JO). Three Veerys sang at Chama 2 Jul (JP) and another was on the Rio Pueblo, *Taos*, 23 Jun (WW). Up to five pairs of Gray Catbirds in the lower R.G.V. near Radium

Springs 23 Jun–31 Jul (R. Meyer) marked the southernmost breeding locality yet for this expanding species; 2 territories had nests with eggs and a 3rd had nestlings. With nearly 2100 counted, N. Mockingbird was the most abundant breeding species detected on New Mexico BBS routes in June; one at Zuni had a remarkable Mexican repertoire, including Buff-collared Nightjar, Gila Woodpecker, and Thick-billed Kingbird (JT). There are few documented Brown Thrasher nests for New Mexico, so a pair that nested in n.e. *Union* (but whose nestlings fell victim to a cat) was noteworthy (LF); a pair in n. *Roosevelt* 18 Jun (WH) may have nested locally, while one singing near Wagon Mound 19 Jun (CR) was a surprise. In rapidly growing n.w. Albuquerque, Curve-billed Thrashers appeared to have replaced Crissals (WH); at Eldorado, a Curve-billed nested successfully in a kestrel box (DS). A Cedar Waxwing at Sumner Dam 9 Jun (WH) was late; possibly summering were two each at Chama 2 Jul (JP) and Orilla Verde 7 Jul (CR). Up to 12 Phainopeplas, including grown juveniles, were in the middle R.G.V. at Escondida 27 Jun (HS). East were up to four at Quarai 30 Jun (HS) and 4 Jul and later (BV); one was near Piñon 11 Jun (WH) and one–two were at 2 sites in the w. Guadalupe Mts. 5 & 9 Jul (SW).

WARBLERS THROUGH FINCHES

Pushing N were four Olive Warblers in the Magdalena Mts. 22 Jun (ph. JO) and three in the adjacent San Mateo Mts. near Springtime 11–16 Jun (DC). Consolidating their expansion into w. *Sierra* were up to four Lucy's Warblers on Macho Cr. 10–25 Jun (CR, H.A.) and at Lake Valley 8–24 Jun (GS, H.A.). Several eastern warblers found the Gila Valley near Cliff to their liking, including a singing N. Parula 21 Jun (DH), a singing Chestnut-sided 2 & 20 Jul (A. Favis, SS), and a Black-and-white banded 3 Jul and recaptured 24 Jul (M. Means); another Black-and-white was in n. *Roosevelt* 18 Jun and 23 Jul (WH). An Audubon's Warbler nesting in piñon at 7500 ft in the Manzanita Mts. 4 Jun (HS) was unusual in its choice of habitat and elevation. A pair of Grace's Warblers fed a fledgling cowbird at Bandelier 11 Jul (BN, DE). Single imm. male Am. Redstarts sang at Socorro 9 Jun (JO), 12 Jun (JS), and 18 Jul (BN, DE) and in the Manzanita Mts. 4 Jul (HS). Single Prothonotaries were at Peña Blanca 13 Jul (WW) and Socorro 9 Jun (JS). **Swainson's Warbler** was finally added to the New Mexico list when one was

found and photographed at Socorro 30 Jul (JP, ph. JO); there had been about 5 previous undocumented sightings dating back to 1983. Yet another southerner pushing N was a Red-faced Warbler in the Zuni Mts. 11 Jun (JT), a first for that area; also in the Zunis were one–two vocal Painted Red-starts 11 Jun (JT).

Hepatic Tanagers continued their presence in the northeast, including one near Gallinas, *San Miguel*, 6 Jun (CR), four on Rowe Mesa 13 Jun (CR), and one near Sabinoso 19 Jun (CR). Northerly Summer Tanagers included singles on the Canadian R. near Sabinoso 19 Jun (CR) and n. of Tucumcari 12 Jun (CR); unusual were singles in the Pinos Altos Mts. 7 Jun (BZ) and at Deming 25 Jun (LM). With over 2000 reported, Cassin's Sparrow was a close 2nd to N. Mockingbird for the most abundant species detected on New Mexico BBS routes. Cassin's was plentiful in the verdant east, with fewer W to the R.G.V. and in the northwest; it went unreported from the dry southwest until the onset of July rains, when it was found singing commonly near Nutt, Hachita, Antelope Wells, and in the Animas Valley 28–29 Jul (SOW, PM). The 5th year of intensive Botteri's Sparrow surveys found the species well-established in the middle Animas Valley, with 25 occupied territories 28–29 Jul (SOW, PM). One–four Rufous-crowned Sparrows were N to the Rio Grande Gorge and Orilla Verde 7–8 Jul (CR, H.A.). Also N were three Black-chinned Sparrows at Orilla Verde 30 Jun (H.A.). Good grassland conditions in the northeast provided for a good Lark Bunting season, especially in *Colfax*, *Union*, *Harding*, and *San Miguel*; one–four Lark Buntings were S to *Torrance* (SOW), *Lincoln* (J. Kelly), and *Roosevelt* (SS), while far W were two at *De-Na-Zin*, *San Juan*, 9 Jun (H.A.). A Savannah Sparrow was singing from uncut alfalfa at Ramah 12 Jun (JT). Four N. Cardinals were N to Tucumcari 10 Jul (CR), where they are now established; two–three were on Macho Cr., s. *Sierra*, 25 Jun (H.A.) and 24 Jul (JO). North for the season were single male Pyrrhuloxias near White Oaks 4 Jun (SOW) and B.L.N.W.R. 10 Jun (WH). A Rose-breasted Grosbeak was at Zuni 10 Jun (JT). South were one–three Lazuli Buntings singing near Tijeras 5 Jun and later (HS, BV). Although the species summers widely, few Indigo Bunting nests are reported for New Mexico; one with eggs in sweet-clover near Escondida 17 Jun fledged three by 7 Jul (LW). A Painted Bunting was N to Tucumcari 10 Jul (CR). Two Dickcissels were W to Ruby Ranch, *San Miguel*, 4 Jul (WW).

Eastern Meadowlarks continued to be found n. of their expected range, especially in *Union* and *Harding*; three were at Sedan 3 Jun (K. Granillo), 16 at Rosebud 8 Jun (D. Svingen), and one was near Gallegos 5 Jun (SOW). Eleven Easterns at Zuni 11 Jun (JT) and one on Rowe Mesa 13 Jun (CR) were noteworthy. Common Grackles continued to push W, including an adult and fledgling at Bluewater 17 Jul (JO), two at Grants 17 Jul (JO), and one at Lake Valley 24 Jun (CR). Far north was an Orchard Oriole near Cuba 21 Jun (CR); another sang at Socorro 3 Jun (JO). The only Cassin's Finches reported were singles in the Zuni Mts. (where breeding is unconfirmed) 9 & 11 Jun (JT). Moderate numbers of Red Crossbills were widespread in most montane areas, including the Zuni Mts. where "Type-2" birds favored ponderosa and "Type-5s" favored Douglas fir (JT). A pair of Pine Siskins feeding young at 6200 ft at

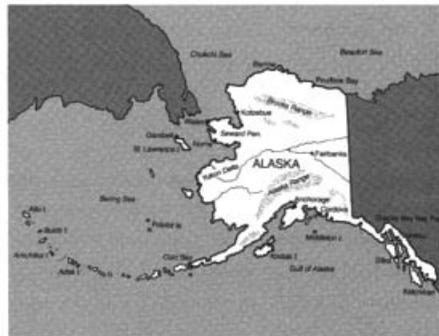
Zuni 2 Jul (DC) was noteworthy. Lingered Am. Goldfinches included one at Zuni 12 Jun (JT) and two at Orilla Verde 7 Jul (H.A.).

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THEDE TOBISH

Summer 1999 was characterized by opposite weather extremes. At the beginning of the season, the cold, heavy precipitation of the spring continued well into June throughout the Region. While those conditions debilitated early breeders and protracted the insectivore migration, summer made an abrupt entrance by mid-June and unseasonably dry and warm elements dominated through the period. Except for Alder Flycatchers, most swallows, warblers, flycatchers, and Alaska-bound Palearctic migrants were a few days to two weeks late in arriving. By the end of July most stations registered below-average precipitation, a situation that apparently mitigated the nesting failures anticipated

from the poor spring. Unlike many years, this summer's highlights focused entirely on late arrivals and interesting wanderers rather than significant breeding records. With the continuing trend on funding for passerine research, the previous focus on pelagic and nearshore bird information has unfortunately faded since the late 1980s. Disappointingly, there were few pelagic reports this summer.

Abbreviations: ABO (*Alaska Bird Observatory*); North Gulf (*North Gulf of Alaska*); SE (*Southeast Alaska*); SC (*Southcoastal Alaska*); SW (*Southwest Alaska*); UCI (*Upper Cook Inlet*); Y-K Delta (*Yukon-Kuskokwim River Deltas*). Referenced details (†), specimens (*), photographs (ph.), and videotape (v.t.) are on file at University of Alaska Museum. *Italicized placenames* denote especially unusual locations for the species in question.

LOONS THROUGH RAILS

The only Arctic Loon reported was a single over Kotzebue 9 Jul (†DWS). Yellow-billed Loons were widely reported, although a June bird out Chena Hot Springs Rd. n. of *Fairbanks* (*fide* ND) was the only extralimital sighting and one of few Interior reports. Two others in alternate plumage in the Ketchikan area 11 & 20 Jun (TH, PH, SCH)