

Great Basin



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According to a recent U.S. Geological Survey fact sheet, the western drought is now considered one of the most severe in the past 500 years, if not the most severe. The report said the drought has produced the lowest flow in the Colorado River on record. It was noted that droughts seldom last for more than 10 years, but there are indications that this drought could persist for as long as 30 years and that we are only half-way through a normal ten-year drought. What this all means for birds is hard to predict. In southern Utah and Nevada, it is evident that many of trees in the Pinyon Pine-Juniper community are feeling the stress of lack of water; one sees many brown and dying trees. Along riparian areas coming off the Colorado Plateau, many of the cottonwoods are dying back, with

dead crowns and greenery only on the lower branches.

This spring's migration was not notable for vagrants. A Brown Pelican in Utah in April preceded a large summer invasion of this species into the Southwest. The numbers of eastern vagrant warblers were not impressive, but a Utah Golden-winged Warbler and a Nevada Mourning Warbler were noteworthy.

Abbreviations: A.I.C. (Antelope Island S.P., Causeway, Davis UT); Ash Meadows (N.W.R., Nye NV); Bear River (Migratory Bird Refuge, Box Elder, UT); Circle L. (Ranch, Dyer, Esmeralda, NV); Corn Cr. (Desert N.W.R., Clark, NV); Deseret (Ranch, Rich, UT); Dyer (Esmeralda, NV); Farmington Bay (W.M.A., Davis UT); Fish Springs (N.W.R., Juab, UT); H.B.V.P. (Henderson Bird Viewing Preserve, Clark, NV); Indian Springs (Clark, NV); Lemmon Valley (Marsh, Washoe, NV); Lytle Ranch (Preserve, Washington, UT); Miller's R.A. (Miller's Rest Area, Esmeralda, NV); Pahrangat (N.W.R., Lincoln, NV); Red Hills (G.C., St. George, Washington, UT); Ouray (N.W.R., Uintah, UT); Overton (W.M.A., Clark, NV); P.L. (Pyramid L., Washoe, NV); Quail Cr. (S.P., Washington, UT); Sand Hollow (S.P., Washington, UT); Stillwater (N.W.R., Churchill, NV); Zion (N.P., Washington, UT).

LOONS THROUGH HAWKS

Pacific Loons were noted, as is becoming usual, at Quail Cr. 11 Mar & 4 Apr (RF, KC). One at Fish Springs though 24 May (CN) was in a location where they are more unusual. A breeding-plumaged Horned Grebe at Deseret

30 May was a late migrant (DW). An exciting find was a grounded imm. Brown Pelican picked up 19 Apr along the I-15 n. interchange in Beaver, Beaver, UT (BFa). It was rehabilitated (although it was said to be in good shape) by Utah Division of Wildlife Resources personnel and released 140 km to the sw. at Quail Cr. On 4 May, an imm. Brown Pelican was found at Newcastle Res., Iron, UT (MO), 55 km to the nw. of Quail Cr. This bird was observed and photographed by many observers until last seen 19 May (ph. RF, KCo). The consensus is that the Newcastle bird and the Beaver bird were the same. There are only about six previous reports of this species in Utah, the most recent being in 1984.

A Least Bittern was at Ash Meadows 4 Apr (JCo). A Green Heron 18 Apr in Reno, Washoe, NV was in the n. part of the Region, where seldom found. A first for Utah was a Bewick's Swan at Farmington 4-15 Mar (BFe, PD, ph. RF). A Trumpeter Swan that was tagged and released near Preston, ID in late Nov 2003 was seen at Pineview Res., Weber, UT 20-29 Mar (KP, LG). Another Trumpeter was photographed at Lower Sand Cove Res., Washington, UT 2 May (CS, ph. CP). This species is quite rare in s. Utah. Very few Greater White-fronted Geese were reported. The only reports came from Washoe, NV, where one was seen at Virginia L. in Reno 8 Mar (FP) and at Lemmon Valley, where up to 6 were present 14 Mar-24 Apr (FP, DSe). Two pairs of Greater Scaup were at Panguitch L., Garfield, UT 14 Mar, a county from which there are few previous records (SS).

A Common Black-Hawk at Corn Cr. 2-5 Apr provided s. Nevada birders with a rare look at that species in their area (ph. RSa, BG). Southwestern Utah Common Black-Hawks were at their regular nesting location at Lytle Ranch through the season. They were also reported in Zion during May for the 3rd year in a row now; nesting is very likely (BS, J&KB). A first-winter Harris's Hawk first found 25 Jan at Overton was last reported 6 Mar (DSe, GS). A Red-shouldered Hawk was in the Washington Fields, Washington, UT 2 Apr (RF, MMo). A Zone-tailed Hawk, quite rare for Nevada, made an appearance at Corn Cr. 25 Apr (JBo, RSa).

CRANES THROUGH TERNS

Sandhill Cranes are rarely seen in the s. part of our Region, so one flying over H.B.V.P. 24 Apr (*vide* JBr) was noteworthy. Two American Golden-Plovers photographed in the Washington Fields 3 May provided Washington with a rare spring record (RF). Two and 5 Snowy Plovers were observed 17 Mar and 30 Apr-5 May at Sand Hollow (CS, RF, KW, LT). This new reservoir has become a somewhat regular location for this once-rare species in Washington, UT. Whimbrels made a good showing in Nevada, with singles at Fallon, Churchill 7 Apr (JW), Carson L., Churchill 17

Apr (JW), and Soda L., *Churchill* 23 Apr (DT, JW). Five were at Lemmon Valley 10 May (TF, JE), while Utah's only report was of a single 14 Apr at A.I.C. (DSH). A well-described Red Knot was found 28 Apr at A.I.C. (KP, GB). Sanderlings are regular through the Great Salt Lake area of n. Utah but quite uncommon s. of there; up to 4 at Sand Hollow 23 Apr–4 May (RF, KCo, KW, LT) and one at H.B.V.P. 24 Apr (*vide* JBr) were noteworthy. Not too many years ago, Semipalmated Sandpipers were considered quite rare in the West, but refinements in identification literature and birding skills means that they are now annually reported. Singles were found at H.B.V.P. 16–25 Apr (JBr), A.I.C. 24 Apr (LG, DSH), and Hela Seegmiller Park, Washington Fields 30 Apr (RF, KW, LT). A rare spring Baird's Sandpiper was seen 24 Apr at A.I.C. (LG, DSH). Pectoral Sandpipers, equally rare in spring, were seen at H.B.V.P. 18 Apr (JBr) and the Washington Fields 26 Apr (RF, KW, LT). Three Silt Sandpipers 31 May at Pelican L., *Uintah*, UT were a nice find (DW).

A rare ad. Heermann's Gull seen only 14 Apr at Virginia L., Reno, NV (FP, ph. JT) was typical of Regional reports of this species, which rarely lingers. A second-winter Mew Gull was noted 4–7 Mar at the Provo Airport Dike, *Utah*, UT (KCC, J&KB). A Glaucous-winged Gull that wintered at P.L. was last reported 15 Mar (JW), and another was seen there 2 May (JT, NB, BHa). A somewhat late Glaucous Gull was at A.I.C. 11 Apr (J&KB). A rare spring Sabine's Gull was nicely photographed at H.B.V.P. 26–29 May (DA, ph. MMe et al.). H.B.V.P. also produced a spring Common Tern, nicely photographed 29 May (ph. MMe, GS). Following last spring's lead, Least Terns made another impressive showing in Utah this year, with 3 singles: at Sand Hollow 17 Apr (RF, KCo), Lee Kay Ponds, *Salt Lake* 20 Apr (BR et al.), and Fish Springs 24 May (ph. CN).

DOVES THROUGH WOODPECKERS

Eurasian Collared-Doves are now becoming almost routine around the Region. This spring, there were over 20 reports involving nearly 50 individuals in Nevada (*Clark*, *Esmeralda*, *Pershing*, and *Washoe*) and Utah (*Cache*, *Duchesne*, *Iron*, *Salt Lake*, *Sanpete*, and *Washington*). As usual, the majority of records are from small towns and rural areas, where this species seems to prefer setting up territory. The Broad-billed Hummingbird at Boulder Beach, L. Mead, *Clark*, NV first found 1 Feb was last seen 21 Mar (*vide* JBr). Anna's Hummingbirds were reported from their usual locales in s. Nevada and sw. Utah, but a female in the Mogul area of Reno, *Washoe*, NV 5 May was of note (JA). Acorn Woodpeckers continue to make their presence known in the Region, with singles at Bridge St., *Verdi*, *Washoe*, NV 12 May (RB),

Lida, *Esmeralda*, NV 15–16 May (GS, DT, JbK), and Circle L 30 May (JW). In Utah, they were at their usual locations, the only somewhat regular areas in the state for them, at Devil's Canyon Campground, *San Juan* 21 Mar (J&KB) and along Hwy. 12 near Boulder, *Garfield* 29 May (DSH). A first-year female Yellow-bellied Sapsucker was reported from Devil's Canyon Campground 15 Mar, for one of very few Utah records (p.a. MSt). Only slightly less rare for Utah was a one-day Red-breasted Sapsucker at Snow Canyon S.P., *Washington*, UT 18 Mar (p.a. KCo, ph. RF).

FLYCATCHERS THROUGH WARBLERS

An Alder Flycatcher reported at Miller's R.A. 25 May (JW) was said to be giving the pip call-note that helps to separate this species from Willow Flycatcher. The back was also reported as being greener than Willow. If submitted and accepted, this would be the first record for the Region. A Least Flycatcher was seen 29 May along the Riverdale Parkway, *Weber*, UT (J&KB). A male Vermilion Flycatcher photographed at Lund, *Iron*, UT 2 Apr supplied one of very few records for that county (CP). Corn Cr. was graced with a Scissor-tailed Flycatcher 22 May (DB, DT), always an exciting find in the Region. A singing Red-eyed Vireo at Riverdale Parkway, *Weber*, UT was enjoyed by several Utah birders during its prolonged stay 27 May–22 June (KP et al.); another was seen at Kaufman Ranch, *Millard*, UT 29 May (DG). Away from the few breeding areas in n. Utah, Purple Martins are always a treat to find in the Region; singles were at Miller's R.A. 22 May (GS, BD) and the Milford Fields, *Beaver*, UT 30 May (LT). A pair of Winter Wrens first seen 7 Apr were seen through 21 May in Battle Creek Canyon, *Utah*, UT (EH, ph. JBi). During that period, one was seen carrying nesting material—a possible nesting attempt in Utah. The Varied Thrush that wintered in Logan, *Cache*, UT was last seen 2 Mar (R&JW). The only vagrant Gray Catbird reported was one at Circle L 29–30 May (MMe, GS, JW). A Phainopepla 16 May in Moab, *Grand*, UT provided a probable first for that area (*vide* EH).

Observers in the Region anxiously await the spring migration for the chance to find vagrant warblers from the East. This season saw rather few e. species, but there were several very nice finds, among them a female Golden-winged Warbler at *Deseret* 19 May (p.a., MSt et al.) and a male Tennessee Warbler at *Callao*, *Juab*, UT 30 May (LT). Northern Parulas were numerous, with six reports: an early male 5 Apr struck a window and died in Las Vegas (ph. J&JS, *vide* LD), a male was at Circle L 15–30 May (GS, DT, JBr), a female was mist-netted and photographed 18 May at Fish Springs (RH, JBa, RSi), a first-year male graced Corn Cr. 18–29 May (MSM, DT), a singing male was at Kaufman Ranch 22 May

(ph. LT), and a final bird was at Miller's R.A. 25 May (JW). Black-throated Blue Warblers are thought of as mostly fall vagrants and are quite rare in spring, so one at Foote Res., *Bishop Springs*, *Millard*, UT 29 May was unusual (ph. LT). Four single Black-and-white Warblers were reported at four locations: Corn Cr. 29 Apr (CT, RG), Porter Springs, *Pershing*, NV 18–21 May (JW), Kaufman Ranch, *Millard*, UT 22 May (LT), and Circle L the same day (GS). Seven American Redstarts were found, 5 in Nevada (*Esmeralda* and *Pershing*) and 2 in Utah (*Juab* and *Wasatch*), all 15–27 May. Also "regular" vagrants, 7 Northern Waterthrushes, were found: 3 in Nevada (*Clark* and *Esmeralda*) and 4 in Utah (*Beaver*, *Box Elder*, *Davis*, and *Wasatch*). The find of the season among warblers was a male Mourning Warbler at Dyer Pond, *Esmeralda*, NV 29–30 May (GS, ph. MMe, JW et al.). A few identifiable photographs were taken of the bird on 30 May for a very rare Nevada record. A male Hooded Warbler at *Lida*, *Esmeralda*, NV 8 May was a bit ahead of the normal vagrancy window for the species (GS). A Painted Redstart was found 9 Apr–22 May in *Zion*, where they have been seen regularly during the spring for the last four years (DG, RF, SW, DL et al.). Hopefully, they will continue to be a regular feature in *Zion*.

SPARROWS THROUGH FINCHES

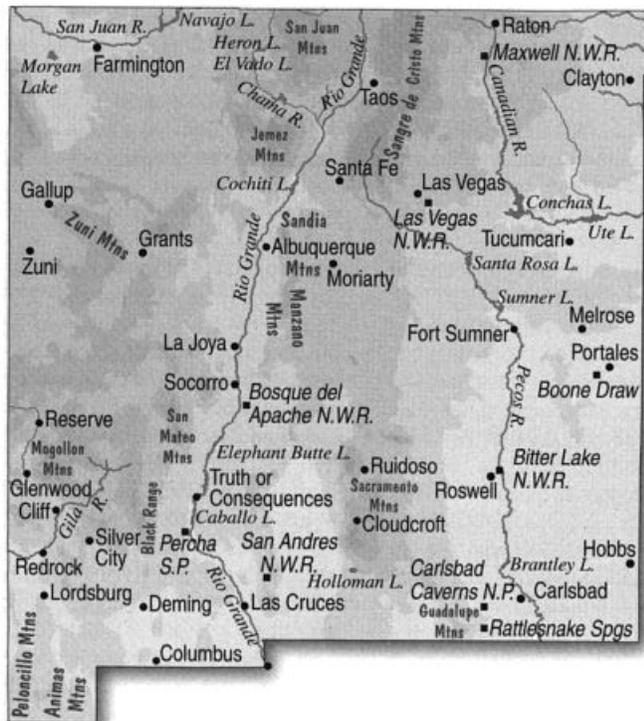
Perhaps a prelude to an irruption of Lark Buntings in n. Utah during the early summer season were one at Clear Lake W.M.A., *Millard* 3 May (KW, AR, MSc) and 3 between *Randolf* and *Woodruff*, *Rich* 30 May (DG). A late Swamp Sparrow was found 15 May at Circle L (GS, DT, JbK). Three White-throated Sparrows in *Washington*, UT were at *Tonaquint Park* 2 Apr (CD, ND et al.), *Red Cliffs R.A.* 18 Apr (KW et al.), and *Red Hills* 7–8 May (LT, RF); this is above the norm (usually only one) found annually between fall and spring in that county. The only other report was of one at *Fallon*, *Churchill*, NV 14 May (CA). The only Harris's Sparrow report came from *Provo*, *Utah*, UT, where one visited a feeder 25 Apr (TR). A Golden-crowned Sparrow at Devil's Canyon Campground, *San Juan*, UT 15 Mar was in an area of the state where seldom reported (MSt). Eight individual Rose-breasted Grosbeaks were found 15–29 May, with 4 in Nevada (*Clark* and *Esmeralda*) and 4 in Utah (*Millard* and *Wayne*).

Bobolinks were more numerous than usual as migrants in the Region: one was at Miller's R.A. 15 May (GS, DT, JbK), 2 were at *Tonopah*, *Nye*, NV 15 May (GS, DT, JbK), one was at *Red Hills* 20 May (LT, DW), 2 were at Corn Cr. 25 May (M&JC), and another was at Miller's R.A. 29 May (DSe, GS). The prospering Tricolored Blackbird colony in *Carson Valley*, *Douglas*, NV had 52 males and 20 pairs on 12 May (MMe), with first arrival 9 Apr (JW). A well-

described **Rusty Blackbird** was seen at Corn Cr. 23 Mar (†M&JC) for a rare Regional record. Common Grackles are somewhat regular in n. Utah, but one at Cedar City 10 May was in the s. part of the state, where rare (SS). A female **Bronzed Cowbird** made its 3rd consecutive spring appearance at Red Hills G.C. 7–14 May (LT, RF, J&KB). Orchard Orioles are very rare in the Great Basin, so a female at Miller's R.A. 22–25 May was an exciting find (ph. GS, BD). Northerly **Hooded Orioles** were at Miller's R.A. 15 May (GS, DT, JBK) and along the Truckee R., Reno 30 May (JA); a slightly northerly **Hooded** was in Cedar City, Iron, UT 18–24 Apr (CC). **Baltimore Orioles** are one of the scarcer regular vagrants in the Region, so 3 this spring, all females and all in Nevada, were quite nice: at Tonopah Cemetery, Nye 15 May (GS, DT, JBK), at Warm Springs, Lincoln 16 May (JW), and Corn Cr. 22–23 May (DT, RSa). **Scott's Oriole** may be somewhat regular but is seldom found in n. Nevada; one at Lakeview in Carson City, NV 15 May was noteworthy (PF). Last but not least, **Lawrence's Goldfinch** made two appearances: one at Corn Cr. 28 Apr (MSM) and a mist-netted male along the Santa Clara R. below Gunlock Res., Washington, UT 7 May (KD, ph. CP, ph. PL). The Santa Clara R. bird furnishes Utah's 2nd documented record.

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New Mexico



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Unusual weather patterns in March and April brought scattered, sometimes heavy precipitation to New Mexico, but pervasive drought conditions returned in May. Meanwhile, like Rick's Café in the film *Casablanca*, everybody comes to the "Melrose Trap," and this season that included two first state records, numerous other rarities, and many happy birders. Statewide, three species—Barred Owl, Black-capped Vireo, and Golden-crowned Warbler—were added to the list in spring 2004.

Abbreviations: B.L.N.W.R. (Bitter Lake N.W.R.); Bosque (Bosque del Apache N.W.R.); E.B.L. (Elephant Butte Lake); K.K. (Katfish Kove, private ponds and trees adjacent to Mimbres R., nw. Luna); Maxwell (Maxwell N.W.R. and vicinity); N.R.T. (n. Roosevelt migrant trap near Melrose); R.G.N.C. (Rio Grande Nature Center, Albuquerque); R.G.V.

(Rio Grande Valley); R.S. (Rattlesnake Springs area, Eddy).

LOONS THROUGH FALCONS

Showing admirable staying power, 2 **Red-throated Loons** from the winter season remained at Ute L. into Mar (JEP, JO) and were last seen 22 Mar (DC); a Pacific remained there until 30 Mar (DC). A sad sight was a Common Loon with a fishing swivel hanging from its bill at E.B.L. 7 Mar (MS, JZ); notably late Commons were singles at Sunland Park 12 May (JNP), Clayton L. 19 May (PL, SM) and Ute L. 24 May (DC). **American White Pelicans** were relatively widespread, with 1000 at E.B.L. 8 Apr (WW) the high count; 4 found dead at L. Avalon 28 Mar had been shot (SW) Neotropical Cormorants continued to decline in the R.G.V., where no nesting was reported, unexpected was one in the Pecos Valley at L. Avalon 8 Mar (ph. SD). A **Double-crested Cormorant** wandered w. to Lordsburg 26 Mar (JEP, JO). **New Great Blue Heron** breeding locales included four nests at Morgan L. 30 Apr (AN) and three nests at Quemado L. 23 Apr (DS); 20 nests were active at Watrous in Apr (DS). **Great Egrets** continued to increase in numbers and localities, including singles n. to El Vado L. 8 May (DS) and w. to Tyrone 23 May (EL) and 2 in the Sacramento Mts. at Capitan 17 Apr (JO); high count was 30 at Bosque 24 Apr (SW). **Black-crowned Night-**