

## NOTES

### BIRD RECORDS OF INTEREST FROM SOUTHWESTERN NEW MEXICO

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Several of our recent New Mexican observations seem worthy of more detailed treatment than the brief mention generally possible in various seasonal record publications. Some of these are presented here, supplemented by related observations of others. All records are from Grant County unless otherwise stated. These accounts are based on sight identifications; however, both of us have enjoyed extensive prior field experience with all of the species discussed. For information contributing to this note we are grateful to Dr. and Mrs. Kenneth Able, William Baltosser, Donna Cole, Ralph Fisher, Mr. and Mrs. Norman Jette, Myra McCormick, Capt. and Mrs. George Moseley, May and Stuart O'Byrne, Margaret Oliphant, William Principe, Lowell Sumner, Paul Wilmeth and Allan Zimmerman. The authors' names are abbreviated D.A.Z. and M.A.Z. throughout the following accounts.

Sharp-shinned Hawk, *Accipiter striatus*. On 4 July 1974 we discovered a nest containing an undetermined number of small young 14 km northeast of Silver City in a narrow canyon north of Pinos Altos in the Pinos Altos Mountains. This is the first reported breeding from these mountains although we have recorded Sharp-shinned Hawks there at intervals during late spring and summer for several years. The nest was 5 m above ground in a thinly leaved Gambel's Oak (*Quercus gambelli*) among a dense stand of Ponderosa Pines (*Pinus ponderosa*) and Gray Oaks (*Quercus grisea*). The male bird swooped at us, loudly protesting, while we were still 40 m or more from the site. As we neared the nest tree his efforts intensified and several times he came very near our heads. His mate was vocal but far less aggressive. Both birds eventually perched in full view only a few paces away. Their size, square-cut tails and very slender tarsi were obvious. Additionally, their *kik-kik-kik-kik* calls were distinct from the corresponding cackling notes of Cooper's Hawks (*Accipiter cooperii*). When we were near the nest tree the female uttered some unique cries, high-pitched and piercing—presumably the same mentioned by Brown (*in* Bent 1937:107) with reference to nesting Sharp-shins after the young have hatched. This call is dissimilar to any we have ever heard from nesting Cooper's Hawks.

Ralph Fisher has informed us of a nest from which he flushed a small *Accipiter*, believed to have been a Sharp-shin, in another canyon of the Pinos Altos Mountains on 13 June 1971. The site was but three or four km from that mentioned above. Elevation at both localities is 2100 m. The nest found by Fisher was in a dense stand of Limber Pine (*Pinus flexilis*), Ponderosa Pine, Douglas-fir (*Pseudotsuga menziesii*) and Gambel's Oak. Twice during May 1971 he had observed a Sharp-shinned Hawk there, and he believed the individual associated with the nest to have been the same. In view of our record from nearby, and the apparent absence of breeding Cooper's Hawks in this habitat, Fisher's identification doubtless was correct. Allan Zimmerman saw a Sharp-shin near this site on 13 August 1975.

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All three New Mexican *Accipiter* species now are known to breed in the Pinos Altos range, although the Goshawk (*A. gentilis*) does so only rarely. Here, Cooper's Hawk largely confines its breeding activities to riparian sites or broader, more "open" canyons, usually at elevations lower than those occupied by the other two species.

Long-eared Owl, *Asio otus*. This species has long been known as a local winter resident in southwestern New Mexico. However, Bailey (1928), Ligon (1961), and Hubbard (1970) mention no records of breeding or summering birds from any southern county. During May 1973 Jeff Turner found a Long-eared Owl's nest with young near Cliff in the Gila River Valley, but no further observations were made. The species summered elsewhere in the region that year as evidenced by an adult found injured at Central on 29 July and photographed by us.

Near Fort Bayard on 14 April 1975 we discovered a Long-eared Owl brooding three small young in a nest 9 m above ground in an Alligator Juniper (*Juniperus deppeana*). Donna Cole and Paul Wilmeth, who also observed this nest, found another containing five newly-hatched young a few kilometers northeast of Red-rock on 19 April. This nest, like that observed by Turner, was in a thickly foliated Emory's Oak (*Quercus emoryi*).

Williamson's Sapsucker, *Sphyrapicus thyroideus*. A pair nesting on Signal Peak in the Pinos Altos Mountains during June 1974 provided a slight extension of this species' known breeding range in New Mexico. Dr. and Mrs. Kenneth Able discovered the birds entering a cavity in a Quaking Aspen (*Populus tremuloides*) at an elevation of 2400 m on 11 June. (In the same tree a Flammulated Owl, *Otus flammeolus*, occupied another cavity about 2 m below that used by the sapsuckers. This appeared to be a roosting site rather than a nesting cavity, and we did not regularly find the owl present.) We watched the parent sapsuckers feeding young in their nest on 16 June, on which date we saw a second male Williamson's Sapsucker 4.5 km from this site and higher on the mountain. The first summer records of the species in the Pinos Altos Range were made by Barbara McKnight during 1973 (Hubbard et al. 1973b:36). Williamson's Sapsucker was also present in these mountains during early June 1975 (William Baltosser pers. comm.).

Anna's Hummingbird, *Calypte anna*. Until recently there were but two reports of *Calypte anna* in New Mexico (Zimmerman 1973). Now, two years later, there are acceptable records of at least 11 birds in the southern part of the state. These include: an adult male seen near Silver City 22 September 1973 (M. and S. O'Byrne, M.A.Z.); im. male photographed at Glenwood, Catron County, and observed 30 September-11 October 1973 (L. Sumner); a singing male, possibly without full red gorget but with red crown, in Fillmore Canyon of the Organ Mountains, Doña Ana County, 13 September 1974 (W. Principe); an im. male singing at Silver City on 7 October (M.A.Z.) and 8 October (D.A.Z.) 1974 but not frequenting our feeder; a female, a singing im. male and an adult male 5 km north of Silver City 3-19 October 1974 (G. and M. Moseley, D.A.Z.); an im. male, frequently heard singing, at a Silver City feeder 12 October-26 November 1974 (M. Oliphant, D.A.Z.), possibly the same individual observed at our residence one km distant on 7-8 October; an adult male at our residence in Silver City on 4 November 1975 (M.A.Z., D.A.Z.).

Rivoli's Hummingbird, *Eugenes fulgens*. No longer a stranger to Silver City area feeders, this species now appears at intervals between 23 April (1975) and 19 October (1966). Most observations have been after mid-July. During 1974, for example, M. Moseley saw an adult male on 24 and 25 July; Allan Zimmerman observed an immature male on the same dates. The Moseleys had a female at their feeder on 3 August of that year, but none of these birds remained for more than a day or two. In the nearby Pinos Altos Mountains where they doubtless breed, Rivoli's Hummers may be seen regularly from May to October, although they are rare.

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Blue-throated Hummingbird, *Lampornis clemenciae*. Apart from the specimens apparently collected by Mearns in the San Luis Mountains on the Mexican boundary in 1892 (see Bailey 1928), and a female seen in the southern Peloncillo Mountains near the Arizona line on 9 May 1973 (Hubbard et al. 1973a:11), there are no unquestioned reports of this species from southern New Mexico. On 29 June 1974 an adult male Blue-throated Hummingbird visited feeders at the George Moseley residence about 5 km north of Silver City. There we watched the bird at varying distances, mostly under 5 m, with close focusing 8x40 binoculars and with the unaided eye for nearly one hour. Other observers (all possessing prior field experience with the species) included the Moseleys, M. McCormick and A. Zimmerman. Circumstances permitted detailed examination of the bird from all angles. At times it perched less than an arm's length from us. Its blue gorget, large white rectrix spots and postocular mark were conspicuous. It dwarfed the *Selasphorus* hummers which fed close by. Distinctive, too, were its manner of flight and its high pitched squeaking notes so familiar to us from long acquaintance with the species in Arizona.

Winter Wren, *Troglodytes troglodytes*. Among downed timber in a riparian Box-elder (*Acer negundo*) and cottonwood (*Populus*) grove near Cliff, William Baltosser discovered a Winter Wren on 10 March 1975. Although unfamiliar with this species he studied the bird at distances of under 2 m for several minutes and made detailed notes on its plumage and vocalizations. He saw the wren again on 29 March and 5 April, but he and D.A.Z. failed to find it between those dates. However, on 20 April the authors and Allan Zimmerman saw it clearly at the site of Baltosser's initial observation. This wren appeared to represent the race *pacificus*, being considerably brighter and more uniformly colored both above and below, than the eastern subspecies. Its lower back and rump seemed almost chestnut in color when the bird entered patches of sunlight. Its barring (especially that on the flanks) was less pronounced than in *biemalis* and the anterior underparts more reddish in tone. The light superciliary line was particularly prominent.

The first author saw another similarly plumaged Winter Wren in a cottonwood bosque along the Mimbres River east of Silver City on 2 May 1975. In late December that year, Baltosser (pers. comm.) again found a Winter Wren in the Gila Valley near Cliff, at the precise location occupied by the bird mentioned in detail above.

*T. t. pacificus* was ascribed to Cooney (Catron Co.), New Mexico by the AOU Check-list (1957:411) although Hubbard (1970:63) mentions but one state specimen (from near Albuquerque, November 1969). Certainly the species is very rare in New Mexico, and it is almost unknown in the southern counties. The 1975 records cited and another undocumented report from the Gila Valley in December 1974 followed a season marked by a notable migration of Winter Wrens into unusual localities in the West, including Colorado (Zimmerman 1975:27).

Sage Thrasher, *Oreoscoptes montanus*. On 5 June 1975, with Thase Daniel, John Minot and others, we discovered Sage Thrashers breeding on the San Augustin Plains astride the Socorro County-Catron County line east of Datil. The birds inhabited a moderately extensive stand of low shrubs dominated by Fourwing Saltbush (*Atriplex canescens*) adjacent to U.S. Highway 60. Of the three pairs of Sage Thrashers seen, one was feeding at least three short-tailed, recently fledged young. A second pair had a nest containing two eggs which apparently were being incubated. During the hour we spent in the area we twice flushed an adult from the nest and it returned again thereto prior to our departure. If complete, the small clutch size is remarkable; sets of *Oreoscoptes* normally consist of at least four eggs. The nest itself was well concealed, approximately 2.5 dm above ground in a dense low shrub, possibly a species of *Baccharis*, surrounded by tall saltbushes. The specific site of this nest was 150 m east of the county line

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in Socorro County. We noted two Sage Thrashers (one a heavily molting adult) there as late as 11 August. Until 1975 the southern limits for the breeding of this species in New Mexico have remained as outlined by Bailey (1928:560)—Gallup, Santa Fe and the Grants-Mt. Taylor area. These points lie 75 to 100 miles north of the present site. The last locality is atypical in that it is not representative of the habitat normally occupied by *Oreoscoptes*. They in fact share it in this locality with Bendire's Thrasher (*Toxostoma bendirei*). Perhaps continued destruction of sagebrush in northern New Mexico's traditional Sage Thrasher range has resulted in southern displacement of some birds. On the other hand, this may be a long-established population heretofore overlooked. Present at this site with the thrashers both in June and August were several pairs of Brewer's Sparrows (*Spizella breweri*), another bird characteristic of sagebrush. Some years ago Raymond Fleetwood (Monson 1953:322) found this sparrow breeding at nearby Socorro, so the species' occurrence here is not unprecedented. However, I am unaware of other summer records so far south in the state.

Prothonotary Warbler, *Protonotaria citrea*. At Silver City on 4 October 1973, the second author observed a male of this species from a distance of 3 m. She noted its large bill as well as plumage details including the completely yellow head, olive back and unmarked slate-gray wings. The five previous state records are from localities east of the Rio Grande.

Tennessee Warbler, *Vermivora peregrina*. Almost certainly this bird occurs more frequently in New Mexico than the few records indicate, but observers either fail to recognize it or report it so inadequately as to produce uncertain and unacceptable records. Three of the four positive state occurrences are from Grant County, including one collected 5 October 1964 in Silver City (Zimmerman 1969). To these may be added a sight record of an immature at the same locality on 11 September 1973, by the second author. The *Vermivora*-type bill, single indistinct wing-bar, unstreaked yellowish breast and whitish crissum all were visible as she viewed the bird with 8x,40 binoculars from distances of about 5 m.

Olive Warbler, *Peucedramus taeniatus*. Although this species has long been known from its limited range in southwestern New Mexico, apparently no eggs or young have ever been reported there. During 1974 Olive Warblers were unusually numerous in the Pinos Altos Mountains, where we recorded them in five separate localities. On 11 June Dr. and Mrs. Kenneth Able saw a female feeding a full-sized juvenal bird capable of strong flight in Cherry Creek Canyon north of Pinos Altos. A few kilometers away, at an elevation of 2500 m on Signal Peak, we located three singing males that day and on 16 June we found a female feeding two fledged young, bob-tailed and regularly begging for food. We could not find the nest but it surely was close by. The birds remained in a very limited area for several hours and were incapable of sustained flight.

Black-throated Blue Warbler, *Dendroica caerulescens*. We failed to encounter this bird in 17 years of residence in southwestern New Mexico until 13 October 1974, when, with Allan Zimmerman, we observed a female at Mangas Springs, 24 km northwest of Silver City. The bird responded to oral "pishing" and squeaking sounds, flying from thick riparian willow brush to twigs and a fence wire within one meter of us. Displaying the "tameness" often characteristic of this species, it remained very near and permitted detailed study. The distinct wing spot was clearly and repeatedly seen. Later in the day we again lured it from cover and watched it at leisure. The following morning we observed an adult male Black-throated Blue Warbler 3 km north of Silver City. This individual also allowed prolonged viewing at very close range; we watched it for 20 minutes. Seven hours later we revisited the site with Allan Zimmerman, promptly located the bird and observed it for another quarter hour.

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Black-throated Green Warbler, *Dendroica virens*. To the comparatively few records of this parulid in New Mexico should be added that of a female or immature watched for several minutes by the second author in a small canyon 14 km northeast of Silver City on 14 October 1973. The bird was distinguished from a Hermit Warbler (*D. occidentalis*) by its unstreaked olive back and less sharply defined, less evenly yellow face (i.e. with darker auricular area); and from Townsend's Warbler (*D. townsendi*) by less distinct auricular patch and lack of yellow on the throat. The belly, however, was yellowish and not clear white as in the Golden-cheeked Warbler (*D. chrysoparia*). It associated with Ruby-crowned Kinglets (*Regulus calendula*), Red-breasted Nuthatches (*Sitta canadensis*) and other migrants about 10 m from the observer in a streamside alder thicket. Other state records of *D. virens* west of the Rio Grande include a female photographed by Barbara McKnight near Hermanas, Luna County, on 20 April 1973 (Hubbard et al. 1973a:18) and one killed against a window in San Juan County in October 1974 (Univ. of New Mex. collection).

Hooded Warbler, *Wilsonia citrina*. On 29 May 1974 Allan Zimmerman and the authors discovered a singing male Hooded Warbler near the entrance to Cherry Creek Canyon in the Pinos Altos Mountains northeast of Silver City. Despite the bird's reluctance to perch in exposed situations, each of us observed its bright yellow face, black hood and throat, and white rectrix spots. Effort expended over a 45-minute period several times revealed the bird as it sang from the depths of a thorny *Robinia neomexicana* thicket but it was at all times shy. It largely ignored our vocal attempts to lure it into the open. This is the seventh Hooded Warbler record for New Mexico, three of which have been from the southwestern corner of the state.

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