

## NOTES ON BIRDS OF THE YUMA REGION

By GALE MONSON

From July 1, 1942, to June 30, 1943, the writer was present in the lower Colorado River valley and contiguous areas in Arizona and California. Headquarters were at Yuma, Arizona, and at Imperial Dam on the Colorado River about fifteen miles above Yuma. A number of interesting observations were made in the course of the year, the more important of which are presented herewith. Grateful acknowledgment is made of supplementary data supplied by Alden H. Miller and Allan R. Phillips.

*Pelecanus erythrorhynchos*. White Pelican. Three were seen on July 7 and one on July 14 just below Laguna Dam on the California side of the Colorado River in Imperial County. As far as known, these constitute the first summer records for the lower Colorado River valley.

*Pelecanus occidentalis californicus*. California Brown Pelican. A mounted specimen was seen in the W. C. Stone general merchandise store, three miles west of Somerton, Yuma County, Arizona, on December 4. The bird was electrocuted when blown by a high wind into a power transmission line in the spring of 1941.

*Plegadis guarauna*. White-faced Glossy Ibis. Three were seen at Mittry Lake, an overflow area of the Colorado River in Yuma County on the Arizona side between Imperial and Laguna dams, on December 3. Three were seen in the same place on December 20. These are the first winter records for Arizona.

*Ajaia ajaja*. Roseate Spoonbill. This species may now be added to the Arizona state list on the basis of the following records. Mr. and Mrs. Harry L. Crockett, of Phoenix, have informed me (letter, May 11, 1943) that on July 6, 1940, they saw a Roseate Spoonbill near the east end of the Gila River bridge at Gillespie Dam in Maricopa County. The bird was feeding at the edge of the water, and since the Crocketts watched it at close range for more than ten minutes, they are certain of their identification.

In July or August, 1942 (exact date unknown), a Roseate Spoonbill was killed by a resident of Peoria, Maricopa County, near Beardsley, in the same county, about twenty miles northwest of Phoenix. The bird was mounted by a Peoria taxidermist, but the specimen was unknown to ornithology until November 8, 1942, when Mr. and Mrs. Crockett, accompanied by Warren Pulich, saw the specimen in Peoria. The Crocketts took some photographs, one of which is reproduced herewith. I am indebted to the Crocketts for these data and photographs. This is the first Spoonbill taken in Arizona.

A flock of ten Roseate Spoonbills was seen on September 30 at Mittry Lake. They were feeding in shallow water with a flock of thirty Wood Ibis (*Mycteria americana*), and were so tame that they permitted the observer to approach within seventy-five feet. Eight of the flock were adults, two were immatures.

The only previously known Arizona record is questionable; one was supposed to have been killed "about November, 1916," at the mouth of the Salt River in Maricopa County, but the bird was not preserved (Allan R. Phillips MS, *vide* Harold Moore of Phoenix, letter, February 27, 1939). However, it has been found on the California side of the Colorado River at Palo Verde, Imperial County, in July and August (Grinnell, Bryant, and Storer, *Game Birds Calif.*, 1918:263).

*Anser albifrons*. White-fronted Goose. Although there are no published records of the occurrence of this goose on the lower Colorado River since Coues found it "abundant" in September, 1865 (*Proc. Acad. Nat. Sci. Phila.*, 1866:96), it is undoubtedly of regular occurrence. Four flocks, numbering 194 individuals in all, were seen migrating south over the Imperial National Wildlife Refuge (on the Colorado River above Imperial Dam) on October 1. A single bird was seen at Imperial Dam on September 30, four at Mittry Lake on October 20, and two over the Imperial Refuge on October 25. A flock of 56 was seen at Furgeson Lake on the California side of the Imperial Wildlife Refuge, in Imperial County, on January 24. None was seen in the late winter or spring. Furgeson Lake is an overflow area of the Colorado River, as is its counterpart, Martinez Lake, on the Arizona side of the Imperial Wildlife Refuge, in Yuma County.

*Mareca americana*. Baldpate. A male was observed on July 3, at a small lagoon about one-half mile south of Imperial Dam on the California side of the Colorado River, in Imperial County. It was in company with eleven Redheads (*Nyroca americana*) and about twenty Ruddy Ducks (*Erismatura jamaicensis*). I am aware of no other summer records of this duck from the lower Colorado River valley. The bird was not crippled.

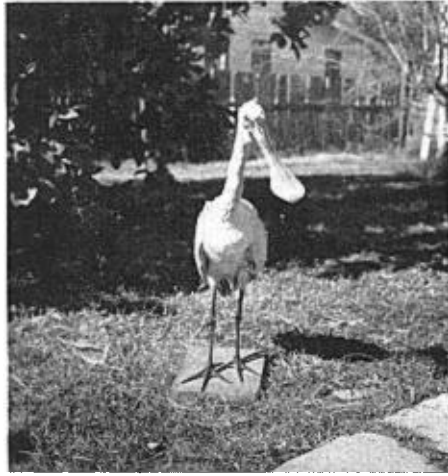


Fig. 5. Roseate Spoonbill taken in summer of 1942 near Beardsley, Maricopa County, Arizona. Photograph by Harry L. Crockett and Ruth Crockett.

*Nyroca americana*. Redhead. The presence during July, August, and September of small numbers of this duck in the vicinity of Imperial Dam, California side, led me to suspect that they nested in the locality, despite the distance from other known nesting grounds and the low, hot character of the country. This suspicion was not confirmed until June 7, when I saw two broods of young Redheads in the California Swamp between Imperial and Laguna dams (again on the California side of the Colorado River). One brood, numbering five, appeared to be about twenty days old; the other, numbering twelve, was about half that age. Each brood was with its female parent. On the same day, in the same place, a female Mallard (*Anas platyrhynchos*) was seen with a brood of eight young.

On June 20 in the California Swamp, when accompanied by Alan Forbes of Winterhaven, California, I saw another brood of young Redheads, eight in number, about three weeks old, and accompanied by an adult female.

On June 23 at Mitty Lake, I found Redheads to be common. I counted a total of sixty-two fully grown Redheads in addition to three broods of young numbering eight, nine, and nine, respectively. The young ranged from about two weeks old to one-third grown.

*Buteo swainsoni*. Swainson Hawk. The rarity of this bird in southwestern Arizona prompts me to record the following observations: one seen on August 5 about two miles east of Yuma, Yuma County; one seen on April 28 about eight miles west of Gila Bend, Maricopa County; and one seen on April 28 about one mile west of Dateland, Yuma County.

*Buteo albonotatus*. Zone-tailed Hawk. A mounted specimen was seen in the Stone store near Somerton on December 4. It was obtained near Somerton some time in 1940 or 1941.

*Aquila chrysaetos*. Golden Eagle. Since there are no previously published records of the Golden Eagle from the lower Colorado River valley, the following observations are of interest: one seen just above Laguna Dam, on the California side, on November 15. Two (a pair?) were seen soaring over land adjacent to the river south of Cibola, Yuma County, Arizona, on January 23. I also have a number of records from the Castle Dome and Kofa mountains on the Kofa Game Range in Yuma County, Arizona, and from the various mountain ranges in the Cabeza Prieta Game Range in Yuma and Pima counties, Arizona.

*Circus hudsonius*. Marsh Hawk. A female was seen on May 17, about three miles north of Fort Yuma, Imperial County, California; this is an unusually late spring record.

*Falco peregrinus*. Duck Hawk. This hawk was seen in small numbers along the Colorado River, from Yuma to about forty-five miles north of Yuma, in every month save March, April, and June. However, evidence that it breeds there is lacking.

*Charadrius nivosus*. Snowy Plover. Three were seen at Mitty Lake on September 30, and four were seen at the same place on November 11; these constitute the first records of this species for

Arizona. Photographs were taken of those seen on November 11, but the images are too small for suitable reproduction. Two Snowy Plovers were noted on November 4 at Regan's Slough on the California side of the Imperial Wildlife Refuge a few miles above Picacho, Imperial County.

*Numenius americanus*. Long-billed Curlew. Two seen on June 17 at Martinez Lake, Imperial Wildlife Refuge, were present at an unusual date for the species.

*Pisobia melanotos*. Pectoral Sandpiper. One was seen at Mittry Lake on September 30 in company with numerous Least Sandpipers (*Pisobia minutilla*) and Western Sandpipers (*Ereunetes mauri*). This is the fourth record for Arizona, and the first published record for the lower Colorado valley.

*Pelidna alpina*. Red-backed Sandpiper. Five were seen at Mittry Lake on October 20 in company with about 350 Dowitchers (*Limnodromus griseus*). The only previous records for the species in Arizona are those of Scott, who "saw flocks" and "took specimens during the latter part of April, 1883, near Tucson" (Auk, 3, 1886:386).

*Recurvirostra americana*. Avocet. One was seen on June 23 at Mittry Lake in company with Black-necked Stilts.

*Himantopus mexicanus*. Black-necked Stilt. Although no evidence of breeding was found, these birds were present in the Imperial Dam area during June: one seen in the California Swamp on June 7; two seen at Furgeson Lake, Imperial Wildlife Refuge, on June 17; and nine seen at Mittry Lake on June 23.

*Larus philadelphia*. Bonaparte Gull. Two were seen on the California side of the Imperial Wildlife Refuge, between Furgeson Lake and Imperial Dam, on April 19.

*Scardafella inca*. Inca Dove. I was surprised on July 5 to see three Inca Doves in Yuma. Subsequent observations revealed that they are present and almost certainly breeding in the northwestern section of the town. This is evidence that the Inca Dove is extending its range, and it should only be a matter of time before it will be found across the Colorado River in California. Previous published records had extended the bird's range west to Gila Bend in Arizona (Monson and Phillips, Condor, 43, 1941:108-109).

*Asio flammeus*. Short-eared Owl. One was observed on November 27 about twelve miles south of U. S. Highway 80, in the valley between the Mohawk and Copper mountains, Yuma County, Arizona.

*Archilochus alexandri*. Black-chinned Hummingbird. A male seen on February 24 at the mouth of Castle Dome Wash on the Imperial Wildlife Refuge in Yuma County, Arizona, is the earliest record for the state by several days.

*Selasphorus rufus*. Rufous Hummingbird. A number of these birds was seen in the Agua Dulce Mountains, Pima County, and at Heart Tank in the Sierra Pinta, Yuma County, both on the Cabeza Prieta Game Range, Arizona, on March 7, 8, and 9. This would indicate an early and rather heavy spring migration through the deserts of southwestern Arizona, as has been suggested by Monson and Phillips (Condor, 43, 1941:109). These are the earliest spring records for Arizona by seventeen days. The Rufous Hummingbirds were always seen with even larger numbers of Costa Hummingbirds (*Calypte costae*).

*Iridoprocne bicolor*. Tree Swallow. I was rather surprised to find these swallows wintering commonly in the Yuma-Imperial Dam-Imperial Wildlife Refuge area. They appeared on July 22, when six were seen flying over the Colorado River on the Imperial Refuge, and they remained as late as May 6, on which date three were seen just below Imperial Dam, on the California side. It would be difficult to estimate their wintering numbers, but about one thousand were seen at Mittry Lake on November 11, and about the same number in the vicinity of Imperial Dam on December 26.

*Progne subis*. Martin. A male was seen on May 17 about three-fourths of a mile north of Fort Yuma. This is the first record for the lower Colorado River valley.

*Telmatodytes palustris*. Marsh Wren. This species breeds commonly in the California Swamp, at Mittry Lake, and in the newly-formed cattail areas in the lower portion of the Imperial Refuge. Young just out of the nest were observed on May 2 in the California Swamp.

*Salpinctes obsoletus*. Rock Wren. One was seen on the California side on the Imperial Wildlife Refuge about one mile above Imperial Dam on June 17. This would seem to be an unusual record, for so far as I know the species breeds nowhere in the immediate lower Colorado valley. However, I did note the species in the Castle Dome Mountains in Arizona on July 9, and in the neighboring Kofa Mountains on July 16.

*Toxostoma curvirostre*. Curve-billed Thrasher. A westward extension of this bird's known range in Arizona is found in the following records: several noted in the Castle Dome Mountains on the Kofa Game Range on July 8, 9, and 10; five noted near Cabeza Prieta Tanks on the Cabeza Prieta Game Range, Yuma County, on September 16 and 17; also noted at Heart Tank in the Sierra Pinta on the Cabeza Prieta Game Range in February and March.

*Dendroica palmarum*. Palm Warbler. One was seen in brush along the shore of Furgeson Lake on the Imperial Wildlife Refuge on September 22. Apparently an adult, it first attracted my attention by its tail-wagging. This characteristic, plus the white of the outer tail feathers, the prominent head markings, and the yellowish-green tail coverts, leaves no doubt in my mind as to the bird's identity. This is the second record for California, the other being its occurrence at Pacific Grove, Monterey County, October 9, 1896 (Emerson, Osprey, 2, 1898:92).

*Setophaga ruticilla*. American Redstart. An immature male was seen along the shore of Martinez Lake on the Imperial Wildlife Refuge on September 22.

*Xanthocephalus xanthocephalus*. Yellow-headed Blackbird. This species breeds commonly in the California Swamp, where a nest with eggs was found on May 2, and many young out of the nest were observed on June 7. Also nests near Imperial Dam, and in large cattail areas on the Imperial Wildlife Refuge. Not hitherto known as a nesting species in the lower Colorado River valley.

*Pipilo fuscus*. Brown Towhee. Extension of this bird's known range in southwestern Arizona is found in the following records: six seen in the Kofa Mountains on the Kofa Game Range on July 16; one seen about four miles southeast of Papago Well, Pima County, on the Cabeza Prieta Game Range on March 7.

*Calcarius ornatus*. Chestnut-collared Longspur. One was seen at Mittry Lake on October 20, the first record for the lower Colorado River valley, and many miles west of all known previous records in Arizona.

*United States Fish and Wildlife Service, Havasu Lake National Wildlife Refuge, Needles, California, September 20, 1943.*