

# Status of the Black-billed Cuckoo and Cape May Warbler in southern New Mexico

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On October 4, 1974, I salvaged a dead Cape May Warbler (*Dendroica tigrina*) from a Silver City street. Nearby was another traffic victim, a Chipping Sparrow (*Spizella passerina*), and the adjacent shrubbery and trees held numerous migrant birds. The warbler, an adult male, represents the fourth record and first specimen of the species from New Mexico. The initial record, also from Silver City, was of an individual I saw on November 20, 1966, and earlier reported in detail (1966, New Mexico Ornithol. Soc. Field Notes 4.40). The State's second Cape May Warbler record, not heretofore reported, was of "an adult male in brilliant breeding plumage" seen on May 6, 1973, at Rattlesnake Springs near Carlsbad, Eddy County, by Mr. and Mrs. James Karo. The same observers, with Mrs. Carolyn Cove and Mr. Ralph Fisher, saw another male Cape May Warbler approximately five miles north of Cliff in the Gila River Valley northwest of Silver City on May 4, 1974. After corresponding with Mr. Karo, and discussing the Gila Valley bird in detail with Mr. Fisher, I am wholly satisfied that both sight records are valid. On October 14, 1975, Marian Zimmerman and I watched an adult Cape May Warbler at close range in our yard at Silver City. This bird fed and bathed but left the vicinity after a few minutes and we did not see it again. It was not accompanied by other migrants. The single Arizona specimen of this species, "taken before 1876" and now in the Paris Museum (Bent 1953, U S Natl. Mus. Bull. 203:224), is stated by Phillips *et al.* (1964, The birds of Arizona, Tucson, Univ. Arizona Press) to be "probably from Tucson" and in fall plumage. There appear to have been no subsequent records of the Cape May Warbler from that State — surprising in view of four known occurrences in southwestern New Mexico.

The Silver City specimens of the warbler and cuckoo are housed at Western New Mexico University. I am grateful to G. McCaskie, G. Monson, A. Small and Janet Witzeman for information relating to the records cited above; also C S Robbins for knowledge of the Albuquerque cuckoo record and for his comments on the manuscript.

Shortly before noon on September 13, 1974, a Black-billed Cuckoo (*Coccyzus erythrophthalmus*) forcibly struck a glass door at the residence of George and Mary Moseley about three miles north of Silver City, Grant County. The bird was badly injured but not killed outright. Mrs. Moseley notified me immediately and I prepared the bird as a study skin shortly after its death. Although breeding west to eastern Colorado, and even to Idaho and Wyoming, the species is remarkably rare in the Southwest. John Hubbard (1970, Check-list of the birds of New Mexico, N.M. Ornithol. Soc. Publ. 3) does not mention it as occurring in New Mexico. However, I have learned from Chandler S. Robbins of a record in the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service bird distribution files of a Black-billed Cuckoo seen in Albuquerque on September 12, 1951, by Thomas A. Imhof. The observer had written "I was aware at the time bird is probably new state record. Had good comparison with a nearby Yellow-bill [*C. americanus*]" The two sight records of Black-billed Cuckoos in Arizona are both from Santa Cruz County: Robert Sutherland saw one at Peña Blanca Lake on October 11, 1966 (Gale Monson, pers. comm.); and an adult seen by M. Robbins near Patagonia on August 26, 1972, was reported by S. Speich and T.A. Parker III (1973, *Western Birds*, 4:54). Mention of this bird also appeared in *Am. Birds* 1973, 27:98. Arnold Small (1974, *The Birds of California*, New York, Winchester Press) and Guy McCaskie (pers. comm.) consider that there is but one acceptable California occurrence of the species — an individual banded and photographed at Point Reyes, Marin Co., on September 22, 1965. This bird was reported along with a Black-billed Cuckoo specimen from Fresno, Calif., by Van Velzen (1967, *Condor* 69:318). The specimen, now in the University of Washington collection, constitutes a questionable record in the opinion of both McCaskie and Small. Apparently part of a small collection purchased in Fresno, it bears minimal data and was allegedly collected in March — an unlikely month for this species to occur anywhere in the United States.

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