

The known range of E. Meadowlark was again expanded n. and w. with the discovery of individuals and pairs in 3 different Atlas blocks 10–25 mi w. of Valle, *Coconino*, May 30–31 (C. Weiss, L. Averill-Murray, TC); individuals were first detected here during last year's surveys by the Breeding Bird Atlas crews. The male Orchard Oriole that wintered in w. Tucson was last seen Mar. 13 (MS et al.). For the 2nd consecutive year, a pair of Hooded Orioles was present in Page; this species is a very rare nester anywhere in n. Arizona. A male Baltimore Oriole, still considered casual, was reported from the Bullpen Recreation Area near Sedona Apr. 29 (TL), and another was found at Kino Springs May 26–27 (G&K Williamson et al.).

**Contributors (area compilers in boldface):** Charlie Babbitt, Jack Bartley (JB), Hank Brodtkin, Nikolle Brown, Jim Burns, Josh Burns, Cliff Cathers, **John Coons** (Flagstaff), Troy Corman, Rich Ditch, Aaron Flesch, Craig Fischer, Peter Friederici, Steve Ganley (SGa), **Jay Hand** (Tucson), Stuart Healy, Rich Hoyer, **Dave Jasper** (Portal), Jill Jones, Roy Jones, Kenn Kaufman, Melody Kehl, **Dave Krueper** (Sierra Vista), Chuck LaRue, Tom Linda, Wendy McCrady, Norma Miller, Gale Monson, Narca Moore-Craig, Richard Palmer, Tim Price, **Roger Radd** (Cottonwood), Will Russell, John Spence, **John Spencer** (JSp - Globe), Dave Stejskal, Mark Stevenson, **Carl S. Tomoff** (Prescott), Christie Van Cleve, Cindy West (CWe), George West, **Jack Whetstone** (Sierra Vista), Sheri Williamson, Jay Withgott (JyWi), **Janet Witzeman** (Phoenix), Robert Witzeman, Tom Wood.

**Chris D. Benesh**, 4308 E. Poe St., Tucson, AZ 85711; **Gary H. Rosenberg**, P.O. Box 91856, Tucson, AZ 85752-1856



Place names that are frequently mentioned, but very long, may be abbreviated in a form such as "C.B.B.T." or "W.P.B.O." Such local abbreviations will be explained in a key at the beginning of the particular regional report in which they are used. Standard abbreviations that are used throughout *Field Notes* are keyed on page 295.

# new mexico region



## SARTOR O. WILLIAMS III

The moist winter gave way to increasingly dry and windy conditions as spring progressed, with April and May ranking among the driest months on record. Birding was, nevertheless, rewarding and brought documentation of several rarities, plus (pending review by the Bird Records Committee) another species new to the state.

**Abbreviations:** B.L.N.W.R. (*Bitter Lake N.W.R.*); Bosque N.W.R. (*Bosque del Apache N.W.R.*); E.B.L. (*Elephant Butte Lake*); L.V.N.W.R. (*Las Vegas N.W.R.*); N.R.T. (*north Roosevelt Co. migrant trap near Melrose*); R.S. (*Rattlesnake Springs including adjacent Washington Ranch, Eddy Co.*); R.G.V. (*Rio Grande Valley*); Zuni (*Zuni Indian Reservation*).

## LOONS TO DUCKS

Lingering from February was a **Red-throated Loon** at E.B.L. last seen Apr. 11 (JEP, JO); another was at Brantley L. May 1 (JEP, DE, BN). Single Pacific Loons were at Stubblefield L. Mar. 8 (DE, BN) and E.B.L. Mar. 3 (PS); late was a Common at Sumner L. May 8 (JEP). High count for Horned Grebes was 39 at Santa Rosa L. Mar. 1 (CR). Late were 50 Am. White Pelicans at E.B.L. May 28 (WH). Brown Pelicans included an immature, captured at Escondida Apr. 5 and

released at Bosque N.W.R., where seen Apr. 11 (JEP, JO, JH) & 19 (JO); and an adult at Caballo L. Apr. 11 (JEP, JO) and a sub-adult at Brantley L. May 13 (JEP, ph. JO). An unaged individual was at E.B.L. May 20 (C. Painter) & 23 (D. Russell). Noteworthy were 14 Double-crested Cormorants at Bear Canyon L., *Grant*, Apr. 22 (D&MZ); an aerial survey counted 98 nests at E.B.L. and 108 nests at Caballo L. May 28 (WH). Neotropical Cormorants pushed n. in both the Rio Grande and Pecos valleys; 30 Neotropical nests were in upper E.B.L. May 28 (WH).

Unusual was a Least Bittern at R.S. May 15 (JEP). Great Blue Herons increased as breeders in the R.G.V., including 26 nests at E.B.L. May 28 and smaller numbers at Caballo L. and Las Animas Cr. (WH). Peripheral Great Egrets were singles at Morgan L. May 7 (SW), Nutria L. May 9 (DC) & 16 (CR), and Jal L. May 31 (SW); high count was nine at B.L.N.W.R. Apr. 17 (GW). Some 350 Cattle Egrets were at La Union Apr. 26 (JO), where 100 nests were reported May 28 (GE). Far from water was a Green Heron in a prairie grove near Milnesand Apr. 25 (DS). Early was a White-faced Ibis in the Mimbres Valley Mar. 1 (RF).

Five Greater White-fronted Geese at Farmington Mar. 13–22 (ph. TR) provided a high count for the northwest. Noteworthy Wood Ducks included one–two at Bluewa-

ter L. Apr. 12 (JO, BP); Rice Park, Zuni Mts., May 13–18 (BP); Tyrone Mar. 25 (RF); Deming Apr. 6 (LM); and R.S. May 2 (SW). In the west, six Greater Scaup were at Farmington L. Mar. 27 (ph. TR) and two were at Nutria L. Mar. 28 (ph. DC). Two Barrow's Goldeneyes below Navajo Dam Mar. 14 (TR) were the last reported.

#### RAPTORS TO RAILS

A record 3245 Turkey Vultures passed the Sandia Mts. hawk watch (H.W.I.). Continued good news for Ospreys, with 2 new nests, one each at Cochiti Dam and Heron L., making 5 active nests in n. New Mexico this year (DS). Single White-tailed Kites were at Bosque N.W.R. Apr. 11 (JEP, ph. JO) and near Otis Apr. 25 (SW). Away from the e. plains, two Mississippi Kites were at Los Lunas May 19 (CR). A pair of Com. Black-Hawks on Las Animas Cr., *Sierra*, May 29 (SOW) furnished a 3rd territory for the Ladder Ranch (*fide* S. Dobrott). An imm. Harris's Hawk continued to frequent Farmington through Mar. 15 (ph. TR); in the southwest, Harris's were in the San Simon Valley (JEP, JO), near Cotton City (v.o.), near Gage (SOW), and near Deming (LM). Early was a Broad-winged Hawk at Santa Fe Apr. 10 & 17 (B. Long). Surveys for Ferruginous Hawks in the Estancia Valley Apr. 21–22 located at least 23 active nests (GG). The 897 Golden Eagles counted at the Sandia Mts. lookout was double the previous high and triple the long-term average (H.W.I.). Three Golden successfully dispatched two young Persian ibex (exotics) in the Florida Mts. in May (*fide* ER). The 497 Am. Kestrels that passed the Sandia Mts. lookout easily outdistanced the previous record of 308 (H.W.I.). An active Am. Kestrel nest in the thatch of a tall yucca in treeless desert near Gage May 27 (SOW) was perhaps unique. An ad. **Aplomado Falcon** was reported n.e. of Las Cruces at Jornada Apr. 17 (G. Bell); interestingly, an ad. Aplomado was independently reported the following day (Apr. 18) s. of Las Cruces near Santa Teresa (I. Pupilidy, *fide* WH). An active Aplomado nest was discovered in a new area in n.w. Chihuahua in early March (K. Young), only about 100 mi from New Mexico.

Surveys for Lesser Prairie-Chickens in the northeast found none, but numbers were up slightly in the Milnesand and Caprock areas (v.o.). Noteworthy was a vocal Virginia Rail in the Animas Valley May 10 (AC). Single Com. Moorhens wandered N to Santa Rosa May 16 (JEP, ph. JO) and Portales May 2 (ph. JO) & 9 (JEP, JO).



Definite Laughing Gull records are less than annual in New Mexico, so the occurrence of three this spring was a major surprise. This adult was at Brantley Lake, Eddy County, May 14, 1998. Photograph/ Jerry R. Oldenettel

#### PLOVERS TO TERNS

Single Black-bellied Plovers were at Bosque N.W.R. Apr. 18, 19, & 25 (DE, JO, CR) and B.L.N.W.R. Apr. 24–25 and May 3 (JEP, DE, JO). Single **American Golden-Plovers** were at Bosque N.W.R. Apr. 25–28 (CR, ph. JO) and B.L.N.W.R. May 9–10 (JEP, JO, GW). Wandering Snowy Plovers were two near Clovis May 15 (JEP, JO) and singles at Portales May 12 (JEP, JO) and Deming May 13 (LM); earliest Snowies were two at Holloman L. Mar. 6 (GE) and six at B.L.N.W.R. Mar. 7 (GW). Very few Mt. Plovers were reported. The 190 Black-necked Stilts at Holloman L. May 20 (GE) represented a large count there. Noteworthy was an Am. Avocet nest near Shiprock May 20 (DS). Single Solitary Sandpipers were at Bosque N.W.R. Apr. 11 (JEP, JO) & 19 (JO), L.V.N.W.R. Apr. 19 (JT), and B.L.N.W.R. May 22–23 (GW).

Willets made an impressive showing Apr. 19–May 31; highs included 36 at Zuni May 16 (DC), five at Rice Park May 12 (BP), 13 at Summer L. Apr. 30 (DE, BN), 33 at B.L.N.W.R. May 1 (GW), 27 at E.B.L., 14 at Caballo L. Apr. 26 (JO), and 36 s. of Red-rock May 31 (BZ). A **Whimbrel** was at Bosque N.W.R. May 9 (DE, BN). **Hudsonian Godwits** are rare in New Mexico, so impressive were one at L.V.N.W.R. Apr. 22 (S. Alliez) and one–two at B.L.N.W.R. Apr. 28–May 27 (GW, ph. & v.t. JO), increasing to five May 30 (DE). Unusual Marbled Godwit reports included 26 at Bluewater L. Apr. 18 (BP), 15 at Cochiti L. Apr. 19 (WH), and two at Williams Playa, *Curry*, May 22 (DE, BN). Westerly Semipalmated Sandpipers were singles at E.B.L. May 6 (ph. JO) and Morgan L. May 7 (SW). White-rumped Sandpipers peaked with 12 at Williams



Providing only a fourth record for New Mexico was this Arctic Tern at Brantley Lake, Eddy County, May 15, 1998. Photograph/ Steve West

Playa near Clovis May 22 (DE, BN) and 11 at B.L.N.W.R. May 22–23 (GW). A high of five Pectoral Sandpipers was near Las Cruces Apr. 27 (GE), and a remarkable 121 Stilt Sandpipers were at Williams Playa May 22 (DE, BN). The only Dunlins were singles at B.L.N.W.R. Mar. 22 (JEP, JO) and Bosque N.W.R. May 3 (DE, BN). Common Snipe were winnowing at Zuni May 16 (CR). The only Red-necked Phalaropes were two each at Bosque N.W.R. May 31 (JO) and Laguna Grande May 9 (SW).

With only about 6 credible reports over the past decade, **Laughing Gull** is truly rare in New Mexico; this season produced 3 reports from 3 counties, all adults: Brantley L. May 14–15 (JEP, SW, ph. JO), the Main Post, White Sands Missile Range, *Doña Ana*, May 20 (D. Holderman), and upper E.B.L., *Sierra*, May 21 (D. Burkett). Whether these represented an influx or one well-traveled individual was open to debate. Late Franklin's Gulls were five at Deming May 30 (LM) and 30 at Holloman L. May 20 (GE). A first-winter **Mew Gull** was with Ring-billed in Albuquerque's S. Valley Mar. 7

(DE, BN). One–two Thayer's Gulls lingered at E.B.L. Mar. 1 (JO) & 3 (PS); the last report was Mar. 25 (JEP). An ad. **Arctic Tern** was at Brantley L. May 15 (SW); it could furnish New Mexico's 4th record. A migrant Least Tern was at L. Avalon May 1 (JEP, DE, BN); 12 were at B.L.N.W.R. May 22–23 (GW). Very few Black Terns were reported.

#### PIGEONS TO HUMMINGBIRDS

Single Band-tailed Pigeons strayed E to Sumner L. May 1 (JEP), Pep May 14 (JEP, JO), Waldrop Park, e. *Chaves*, May 14 (JEP, JO), and Whites City May 15 (SW). White-winged Doves began consolidating northward advances, with singing birds at Tesuque May 6 (BF) and Santa Fe May 20 (ER); new outposts were established with singles near Estancia May 23 (SOW), Ft. Sumner May 11 (JEP, JO), Timberon in May (ME), and Otero Mesa May 23 (SW). Inca Doves were widely reported in the south; notable were two at Portales Mar. 14 (SW), a nest at Roswell May 2 (JEP), and a nest at Silver City in March (*fide* MZ). The Inca that overwintered near Aztec was last seen Mar. 6 (ph. TR). Encouraging were four–five Com. Ground-Doves near Riverside Mar. 28 (B&DF); in *Hidalgo*, two vocal birds were at Double Adobe May 23 (AC, NMC) and another was on nearby Animas Cr. May 25 (JO). More evidence that **Eurasian Collared-Doves** have colonized Ft. Sumner was provided by one or more there May 1 (DE, BN), May 11 (JEP, JO), and May 16 (LG). The Roswell population was observed on numerous dates March–May (v.o.). One at White Sands N.M. Apr. 5 (J. Mangimeli) provided a new locale.

Three Yellow-billed Cuckoos on Otero Mesa May 10 (R. Benoit) likely were grounded migrants. Helping to clarify the breeding status of Barn Owls in n. New Mexico was the discovery of single nests at Farmington in March (ph. TR) and Bloomfield May 30 (ph. TR), the latter with five young. An apparent migrant Flammulated Owl was heard s. of Clines Corners Apr. 4 (SW). One–five presumably migrant Chimney Swifts were at Texico, Portales, Elida, Roswell, and Carlsbad May 2–27 (v.o.); west was one at Albuquerque May 6 (JEP). North of usual was a male Broad-billed Hummingbird in the c. Peloncillo Mts. May 24 (JO) & 28 (SOW), where there was also a male Anna's Apr. 28 (GG), May 24 (JO), and May 27–28 (SOW), and a male Lucifer May 28 (SOW). Farther north, five male Lucifers were banded at P.O. Canyon May 9 (J. Day-Martin). Noteworthy was a female Blue-throated Hummingbird at

Mangas May 23–24 (RF); a Magnificent was at Sapillo Crossing, *Grant*, Apr. 14 (G. West). A male Costa's near Virden May 2 (RW) provided the only report. Rufous Hummingbird is extremely rare in spring in New Mexico; a male was at Mangas Mar. 30 (RF).

#### TROGONS TO FLYCATCHERS

At least one pair of Elegant Trogons was in the Peloncillo Mts. May 27–28 (SOW), where the species has summered for 8 years. Late was a Lewis's Woodpecker at Percha Mar. 28 (JEP); noteworthy was another in the R.G.V. at Belen May 31 (JO). Westerly was an ad. Red-headed Woodpecker at Socorro May 27 (PB). Gila Woodpeckers continued to thrive in s. *Hidalgo*. In the Jemez Mts., the Dome burn area continued to be dependable for Three-toed Woodpeckers in May (PRS, JEP, JO). A banded Willow Flycatcher at Zuni May 23 had been displaced from its traditional territory by a dredging operation (DC). Three territorial pairs of Dusky Flycatchers at Capilla Peak May 23 (WH) provided the first evidence of breeding for the Manzano Mts. Easterly Gray Flycatchers were singles at B.L.N.W.R. Apr. 25 (WH) and Maljamar May 2 (JO). Early for the north was a Black Phoebe at Española Mar. 8 (JT). Two E. Phoebes at Santa Rosa Apr. 18 and May 11 (JEP, JO) were suggestive of local breeding; an apparent winter holdover was west near Riverside Mar. 15 (JNP) and Apr. 1 (MP). Vermilion Flycatchers pushing the n.e. envelope were a pair at Sumner Dam Apr. 18 (JEP, JO); one near Mesa, n. *Chaves*, Apr. 24 (WH); a pair at B.L.N.W.R. into May (GW); and singles near Waldrop Park and Maljamar May 2 (JO).

A mysterious kingbird on the Gila R. near Riverside Feb. 24 (LM) was relocated Mar. 7 (JEP, ph. & v.t. JO), Mar. 8–9 (DZ et al., ph. & tape), and later, including Mar. 14 (LG et al., tape), and was last reported Apr. 10 (*fide* DZ). Analysis of taped vocalizations identified it as **Couch's Kingbird**, the 2nd verified in New Mexico (where Tropical has yet to be verified). Noteworthy were two Thick-billed Kingbirds at Double Adobe May 23 (AC, NMC). An E. Kingbird strayed to Silver City May 25 (D&MZ).

#### SWALLOWS TO SHRIKES

The Calabacillas Arroyo Bank Swallow colony near Albuquerque was thriving, with up to 400 birds late April–May (HS). A 3rd Cave Swallow "colony" was found May 1 not far from the established bridge-nesters at La Union, *Doña Ana* (JNP). Westerly Blue Jays were one at Mineral Hill, *San Miguel*, May 9 (CR) and two at Percha Apr. 11 (JO). A Black-billed Magpie was in s. Albuquerque May 18 (J. Drummond), where the species may now be established. Verdins in unlikely locales were singles at Mangas Apr. 30–May 2 (RF) and Blackhawk Canyon, Burro Mts., Apr. 3 (D&MZ). **Carolina Wrens** may be finding the middle R.G.V. to their liking—one was at Isleta Pueblo, *Valencia*, May 19 (CR) and another at Socorro on various dates Mar. 1–May 31 (JO, MP, PS). A Winter Wren was at Glorieta Mar. 25 (B&DF).

Three vocal Golden-crowned Kinglets were at Capilla Peak May 23 (WH). Black-



Two views of the White Wagtail present briefly at Bosque del Apache National Wildlife Refuge, New Mexico, April 8, 1998. A very rare vagrant anywhere on this continent away from Alaska, this bird provided a first state record. Photographs/ Phil Norton

tailed Gnatcatchers in the southwest included one at Redrock Mar. 26 (JEP) and two there Apr. 17 (D&MZ), plus one near Redrock May 26 (SOW) and another in the Lower Gila Box Apr. 17 (RW *vide* DZ). A pair of E. Bluebirds accepted a nest box at the Santa Fe Botanical Gardens and produced at least two fledglings by May 3 (B&DF). A **Wood Thrush** at N.R.T. May 12 (JEP, ph. JO) & 17 (DE, BN) provided a first for *Roosevelt*. Brown Thrashers in likely breeding areas included two in n.e. *Union* through May 31 (LF) and at least four at Bosque Redondo May 2 (JO), where the lonely Long-billed Thrasher was still singing May 11 (JEP, v.t. JO). A Crissal Thrasher was in the Guadalupe Mts. Apr. 10 (SW), where rare.

New to New Mexico was a **White Wag-tail** that put in a well-documented but all-too-brief appearance at Bosque N.W.R. Apr. 8 (J&A Kamm, D. Perry, ph. P. Norton). Four Sprague's Pipits were in the s. Animas Valley Mar. 27 (JEP). Late Cedar Waxwings included 19 at Waterflow, *San Juan*, May 28 (TR) and others at San Juan Pueblo and Los Alamos May 31 (JT). Easterly Phainopeplas were two near La Luz Mar. 6 (SW) and one on Otero Mesa May 23 (SW); notable were eight in the Florida Mts. Mar. 31 (LM). At least three N. Shrikes were between Aztec and Blanco Mar. 8 (TR, ph. of adult Mar. 4).

#### VIROOS TO WARBLERS

A White-eyed Vireo was 15 mi s. of Vaughn May 3 (JO). Early were two Bell's Vireos at Redrock Mar. 26 (JEP), while n. was one at Bosque N.W.R. May 23–31 (DE, JEP, JO). New locales had singles singing in the Little Hatchet Mts., s. *Grant*, May 24 (SOW) and the Cornudas Mts., *Otero*, May 24 (SW). A Gray Vireo on the Ute Mt. Ute Reservation May 31 (TR) established a new *San Juan* locality. Somewhat early was a Cassin's Vireo at Percha Apr. 19 (JO). At least two Hutton's Vireos were e. to Aguirre Springs, Organ Mts., May 24 (BZ, JNP). Single Red-eyed Vireos were at Boone's Draw May 9 (JEP, JO), R.S. May 9 (SW) & 15 (JEP, JO), Percha May 30 (BZ), and Columbus May 31 (LM).

Nashville Warblers were more numerous than usual in the east, with one–four at 7 sites Apr. 17–May 16 (v.o.). Single Lucy's were n. to Socorro May 9 (DE, BN) and e. to R.S. May 2–9 (v.o.). In the rare but regular category were single male N. Parulas at N.R.T. Apr. 25 (LG), Percha Apr. 18 (DE), and R.S. Apr. 10 (ph. M. Stowe); single Chestnut-sideds at Española May 16 (BF, R.

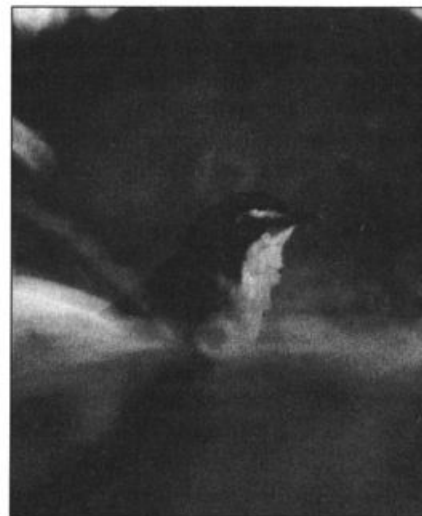
Duffy), Moriarty May 10–11 (v.o, ph. JO), and Boone's Draw May 9 (JEP, JO); and single Black-and-whites at 6 sites May 1–22. Exciting warbler finds included a **Black-throated Green Warbler** at Ramon, *Lincoln*, May 10 (JEP, JO); a **Palm Warbler** at Albuquerque Apr. 23 (J. Haskell); four **Blackpoll Warblers** May 3–12, including singles at N.R.T. (DE, BN) and Boone's Draw (JEP, ph. JO), and two at R.S. (JEP, JNP, R. Gracey, phs. JO); single **Worm-eating Warblers** at Boone's Draw May 9 (JEP, ph. JO) and B.L.N.W.R. May 15 (JEP, JO); a **Kentucky Warbler** at Moriarty May 10 (CR, DE, BN, JEP, ph. JO); and a possible Mourning at N.R.T. May 16 (LG).

Late was an Ovenbird near Cliff May 28 (*vide* DZ). A N. Waterthrush in the Little Hatchet Mts. May 24 (SOW) provided a local first. Very early was a male Hooded Warbler at N.R.T. Apr. 10 (DE); other Hoodeds were singles there May 9 (JEP, JO) and at Boone's Draw May 2 (JO) and May 16 (JEP, ph. JO) and Caprock May 9 (JEP, ph. JO). Peripheral were two Olive Warblers near Springtime, San Mateo Mts., May 24 (B&DF).

#### TANAGERS TO FINCHES

Summer Tanagers included singles at Moriarty May 8 (JO) and Quarai May 9 (HS). Single male **Scarlet Tanagers** were at N.R.T. May 25 (GG) and Pep May 9 (JEP, ph. JO). Large number of W. Tanagers took advantage of a "miller moth" outbreak at Timberon; 24 were counted at one residence May 3 and more were in the adjacent forest (ME). Far north was a N. Cardinal at Clayton L. May 14 (W. Cook, *vide* LF); others in new locales were one in the Burro Mts. Apr. 15 (RW *vide* DZ) and two in the Little Hatchet Mts. May 24 (SOW). Pyrrhuloxias were conspicuous in the southwest, including two at Old Hachita May 24 (SOW), 12 near Hatchet Gap May 25 (SOW), three near Gage May 27 (SOW), and eight at Deming May 4 (LW); wandering individuals were at Tres Pistolas Canyon near Albuquerque Apr. 4–19 (P. Cody), in Socorro e. of Bosque N.W.R. May 20 (CR), and at Timberon in May (ME). Rose-breasted Grosbeaks made a good showing from the R.G.V. eastward May 1–15 (v.o.).

Single Lazuli × Indigo hybrids were in the middle R.G.V. at Albuquerque May 31 (BN) and Los Lunas May 19 (CR). Northerly were single male Painted Buntings May 7 at Clayton (*vide* LF) and Socorro (PB). Notable were two Green-tailed Towhees singing at Capilla Peak, Manzano Mts., May 23 (WH). A remarkable 21 Abert's Towhees



One of the more notable eastern vagrants for the season in eastern New Mexico was this Kentucky Warbler at Moriarty May 10, 1998. Photograph/ Jerry R. Oldenettel



New Mexico recorded four Blackpoll Warblers during early May this season, including this male at Rattlesnake Springs, Eddy County, May 10, 1998. Photograph/ Jerry R. Oldenettel

were reported at Redrock Mar. 28 (LM). A Botteri's Sparrow had returned to the Animas Valley May 25 (JO). Easterly was a Rufous-crowned Sparrow at Waldrop Park Mar. 22 (JEP, JO). A singing Vesper Sparrow near Torreon, *Torrance*, May 23 (WH) was suggestive of local breeding.

The only **Baird's Sparrow** was on Otero Mesa Apr. 23 (G. Levandoski). Single Golden-crowned Sparrows were at Quarai Apr. 25 and May 9 (HS) and Redrock Mar. 26 (JEP). An imm. Harris's Sparrow was at Blanco Mar. 2 & 8 (ph. TR); the ad. Harris's

at Eldorado since December was singing Apr. 9 and last seen May 9 (SOW). West and late were two **Rusty Blackbirds** at Mangas Mar. 15 (ph. JNP). Common Grackles continued their westward push, including three at Aztec May 5 (TR), two at Waterflow May 28 (TR), three at Zuni Apr. 25 (DC), and a male at San Luis Pass, *Hidalgo*, May 25 (SOW).

Bronzed Cowbirds continued to thrive, with reports from *Socorro*, *Hidalgo*, *Luna*, *Doña Ana*, *Eddy*, and *Lea* (v.o.); far north was one at Boone's Draw May 14 (JEP, ph. JO). Single Orchard Orioles were n. to Clayton May 16 (*fide* LF), Madrid May 13 (LS), and Sumner Dam Apr. 24 (JEP). A good season for **Baltimore Orioles** found a male at N.R.T. May 2 (ph. JO), and a male and female there May 2 (v.o.). Up to 82 rosy-finches, including all 3 species, were at the Taos Ski Valley Mar. 29–Apr. 12 (JO, JEP, DE, JH). Cassin's Finches were practically non-existent, with singles near Taos Mar. 22 (JT) and Apr. 10 (DE) and Emory Pass Mar. 14 (JEP). Only small numbers of Red Crossbills were seen. The few Evening Grosbeaks reports were confined to the San Juan, Sangre de Cristo, and Jemez mountains (v.o.).

**Initialed observers:** Pat Basham, David Cleary, Alan Craig, Narca Moore Craig, Marilyn Ellison, Doug Emkalns, Gordon Ewing, Ralph Fisher, Bernard & Dawn Foy, Lavina Fry, Gail Garber, Larry Gorbet, HawkWatch International, John Hirth, William Howe, Larry Malone, Bruce Neville, Jerry Oldenettel, John E. Parmeter, Bruce Pataky, James N. Paton, Michael Patten, Tim Reeves, Eric Rominger, Christopher Rustay, Hart Schwarz, Patricia Snider, Dale Stahlecker, Joyce Takamine, Gordon Warrick, Steve West, Robert Wilcox, S. O. Williams, Barry Zimmer, Dale and Marian Zimmerman.

**Sartor O. Williams III**, 65 Verano Loop, Santa Fe, NM 87505



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# alaska region



## T. G TOBISH JR.

The working assumption I had expressed in the past that El Niño Southern Oscillation (ENSO) years dominated Alaska's weather in a way that made it *seemingly* simple to predict an inconsequential and plain dull spring passage was shattered in spring 1998. All of the signs were in place early in the season, including a dissipated Aleutian Low with few North Gulf anticyclones, near-record sea surface temperatures, low snowpack, and early warm trends that typically generate poor conditions for grounding and holding migrants and concentrations. In less than a two week period, beginning in the first few days of May, prevailing winds and a reactivated Aleutian Low combined in spectacular fashion to produce a set of conditions responsible for what has to be considered one of Alaska's most incredible spring seasons ever. While Bering Sea birders, especially the Western Aleutian contingent, had a lifetime of fantasies fulfilled in about five days, extralimitals and rarities punctuated all of the Region's outposts and well-covered areas except the North Slope. (See S.A.)

Warm early-season conditions in late March and early April created a window for the typical sprinkling of early migrants, e.g. Upper Cook Inlet produced another three to five record arrivals. But things quickly shut down with nearly a month of cool, wet conditions, where regular migrants straggled in late with few notable concentra-

tions. The above mentioned early May weather conditions modified the timing and content of migration throughout the Region from the Bering Strait to Southeast, where excellent in-shore waterfowl and shorebird counts were noted. Once this dominating weather system finally began to weaken, by the third week of May, migration resumed uneventfully and late through the period. Documentation of rarities was exceptional, highlighted by substantiation of one new species for North America and another first for Alaska.

**Abbreviations:** North Gulf (*North Gulf of Alaska*); SE (*Southeast Alaska*); SC (*Southcoastal Alaska*); SW (*Southwest Alaska*); UCI (*Upper Cook Inlet*).

## LOONS TO RAPTORS

At Gambell's sea watch, the Region's best Arctic Loon spring outpost, passage was light with only four per day noted into June (WINGS). A single in alternate plumage hung around Attu's e. bays May 30–June 6 (ATTOUR). Very rare, a single Pied-billed Grebe, which had probably wintered in SE, was noted at Sitka's Swan L. May 10–14 (MT, MLW). The Region's first **Eared Grebe**, documented on a remote *Fairbanks* area pond May 21 (†DCW, ph. SL, JB, PDM), was not where this form is expected. This alternate-plumaged individual associated with a Horned Grebe pair before disappearing May 26.

Westbound outmigration of Aleutian