

arizona region



**GARY H. ROSENBERG
and CHRIS D. BENESH**

This spring was notable for a number of reasons. Other than a freak snowstorm in early April, it was perhaps the driest spring anyone could remember (no rain since November!). In addition, it was also one of our windiest springs, making the birding difficult at times. On the other hand, it was perhaps the best spring most observers could remember for common migrants. Certain species, in particular Swainson's Thrushes, Wilson's Warblers, and Hammond's and Dusky flycatchers, were simply abundant everywhere. A number of species that are typically difficult in May, such as Green-tailed Towhee and White-crowned Sparrow (*oriantha* subspecies) were present in much larger-than-usual numbers, and lingered much later into mid-May. Add to all of this a first state record of Yellow-footed Gull, and it was certainly a spring to remember.

Abbreviations: A.B.C. (*Arizona Bird Committee*); B.A.N.W.R. (*Buenos Aires N.W.R.*); L.C.R.V. (*Lower Colorado R. Valley*); G.F.P. (*Gila Farms Pond*); M.F.L. (*Many Farms Lake*); N.I.R. (*Navajo Indian Reservation*); P.A.P. (*Pinal Air Park*); P.R.D. (*Painted Rock Dam*); S.P.R. (*San Pedro R.*); S.T.P. (*Sewage Treatment Plant*); S.S.V. (*Sulphur Springs Valley*); W.S.F. (*Western Sod Farm*).

LOONS THROUGH RAPTORS

A Com. Loon at Willcox 12 Apr (T. Godfrey) was late for s. Arizona. Late W. Grebes were seen at P.A.P. pecan grove 7 May (ph. MS), at Nogales 9 May (RH), below P.R.D. 9 May (RJ), and near San Xavier Mission 17 May (J. Gilligan, MS). Single Clark's Grebes

were found at Cow Springs L. 23 Apr. (CSL), L. Patagonia 12–18 May (GHR, MS), and e. Tucson 21 May (D. West et al.); this species continues to be casual in s.e. Arizona during spring. Normally considered rare in s.e. Arizona during spring, a large concentration of 50 Am. White Pelicans were found at Picacho Res. 8 Apr, and another 160 were there 12 May (MS). Five were also at the bottom of the Grand Canyon (RM 209) 12 Apr (B. Dierker), where there have been few previous reports. The only report of Brown Pelican was of a bird at multiple locations in and around Tucson 14 May (P. Kearney). Reports of Neotropic Cormorants continue to increase; this spring two were at Marana 4 Mar–15 May (MS), three were at Picacho Res. 2 May (R. Bradley) with five there 12 May (MS), one was at P.R.D. 9 May (RJ), one was near San Xavier Mission 11 May (J. Gilligan), and one was in Nogales 18 May (MS).

A Great Egret at the bottom of the Grand Canyon (RM 68.5) was unusual for n. Arizona (CTL). No fewer than 17 different Cattle Egrets were found 24 Mar–24 May (CTL et al.) at a variety of locations in n. Arizona (Page, Tuba City, Lee's Ferry, Cameron), where the number of reports has increased greatly in recent years. A Greater Scaup at Fountain Hills 25 Apr (RW, CBA) was late for s. Arizona. After last winter's invasion of Com. Goldeneyes in s. Arizona, late lingering birds (or north-bound migrants) were two females at Avra Valley S.T.P. 3 Apr (MS), two males there 16–21 Apr (MS), and another female at G.F.P. 11 Apr (MS). At least 41 Barrow's Goldeneyes were still present below Glen Canyon Dam 2 Mar, with two remaining through the period (CTL). Casual in s.e. Arizona during spring was a female Red-breasted Merganser in Avra Valley 16 Apr (MS). Also unusual were singles at Peck's L. 30 Mar (G. Martinez) and at the bottom of the Grand Canyon (RM 64 and RM 221) 5 & 13 Apr (CTL).

Two Ospreys at Peña Blanca L. 2 Mar (M. Eccles et al.) were likely early migrants. Single White-tailed Kites were at Willcox 16 Mar (M. Fitzgerald), Avra Valley S.T.P. 5 Apr (L. Liese), the P.A.P. pecan grove 7 May (MS), and Arivaca 14 May; this species continues to be found sporadically throughout s.e. Arizona. Late N. Harriers were located

at Paloma 9 May (RJ), Robbins Butte 16 May (J. Bartley), and Red Rock 27 May (MS). A Red-shouldered Hawk along the Hassayampa R. near Wickenburg 22 Apr (N. London) remained through the period (MS, RJ, N. Miller et al.). Another was reported from the Gila Mts., Yuma, 15 Apr (†M. Brown); of the ±30 reports from Arizona, fewer than 10 have been submitted to, and accepted by, the A.B.C. A greater-than-usual number of reports of Com. Black-Hawks were received from s.e. Arizona, with a pair nesting along Sonoita Cr. below Patagonia L. 30 Mar (L. Liese, M. Brown), and singles at Peña Blanca L. 8 Apr–14 May (S. Johnson, NC), along Sonoita Cr. near Patagonia in mid-May (CDB, JC), and at Kingfisher Pond along the upper S.P.R. 19 May (DK). A pair of Gray Hawks along Pinal Cr. near its confluence with the Salt R. 26 May (B. Burges, T. Hildebrand) was a first for *Gila*.

Reports of Broad-winged Hawks were received for Patagonia L. 6 Apr (J. Saba) and Camp Verde 17 Apr (RR); this species is considered casual at best during spring and is an A.B.C. review species. Intriguing was another *Short-tailed Hawk* report from s.e. Arizona: a light-morph individual near Rustler Park, Chiricahua Mts., 29 Mar (†M. Lanzone) made the 4th credible sight report for the state, and it is our opinion that it is just a matter of time until one is physically documented. Our understanding of the breeding distribution of Zone-tailed Hawk in n.w. Arizona increased with three sightings of adults n. of Kingman, one in the Hualapai Valley 16 Apr, one near Peach Springs 25 May, and another in the Music Mts. 29 May (all PF). Two active nests of Ferruginous Hawks found near Seligman (w. of Flagstaff) 14–15 May (PE, K. Newlon) confirmed the species as a rare summer resident in that portion of Arizona.

CRANES THROUGH WOODPECKERS

A Sandhill Crane was present at Mesquite, in the extreme n.w. corner of Arizona, 20 Mar (S. Summers), where it is a casual migrant. Another individual, apparently sick or injured, remained on its wintering grounds at Whitewater Draw through the period (m.ob.). The only Am. Golden-Plover report was of an early bird at C.S.L. 16

Apr (CTL), providing only the 5th spring report for the N.I.R. A Black-necked Stilt at Avra Valley S.T.P. 28 Mar (MS) was early. Several were reported from n. Arizona, where it is casual in spring, including two at Page 23 Apr (CTL, MS, GHR), four at Tuba City 23 Apr (CTL), two at C.S.L. 23 Apr (CTL), and another at Tuba City 7 May (CTL). A Whimbrel at Wahweep S.T.P. 8 May (CTL) was exceptional, as this species is accidental in n. Arizona. Numbers of Marbled Godwits migrated past L. Powell, with a high count of 188 present 23 Apr (CTL, J. Spence et al.). Sanderling is considered casual in s.e. Arizona during spring, so one at Avra Valley S.T.P. 3 Apr (MS), two at Gilbert 12 Apr (A. Spencer, SGa), and one at Nogales 11 May (GHR) were of interest. Also rare in spring was a Baird's Sandpiper at Green Valley S.T.P. 18 Apr (MS). Dunlins that wintered along the Santa Cruz R. in Tucson remained until at least 1 Apr (MS). A Wilson's Phalarope along the Santa Cruz R. in Tucson 17 Mar (MS) was a bit early for their normal passage in s. Arizona. Extremely early, by nearly 2 months, was a Red-necked Phalarope at Avra Valley S.T.P. 12-13 Mar (R. Shrader, ph. MS).

A Heerman's Gull was at the Ajo S.T.P. 24 Mar (S. Fried); although abundant a short way to the south at Puerto Peñasco, Mexico, it is casual in the state during nearly any month. The gull of the year (so far) was a 2nd-summer **Yellow-footed Gull** found at Wahweep, L. Powell, 21-23 Apr (CTL, J. Spence, L. Dickson, J. Holmes, ph. GHR, †MS), providing a first record for Arizona (and for Utah). This species is also quite common just s. of the border at Puerto Peñasco (and at the Salton Sea during the summer), and was certainly overdue to occur in Arizona.

A Caspian Tern at the bottom of the Grand Canyon (RM 171) 1 Apr (L. Dickson et al.) was likely the first ever seen along the Colorado R. within the canyon, and is casual anywhere in n. Arizona. Casual as a spring migrant in s.e. Arizona, single Forster's Terns were at Picacho Res. and Arizona City, both May 12 (MS). Single Least Terns, now considered a rare but regular migrant in s. Arizona, were at Ft. Lowell Park, Tucson, 23 Apr (L. Bryan), Willcox 11 May (RH), Patagonia L. 12 May (GHR), and Somerton, s. of Yuma, 3 Jun (B. Henry).

An odd report of a Flammulated Owl from Mesa 5 May (*vide* L. Bustarde) would represent a first lowland spring record for *Maricopa*. Spring overshoot White-winged Doves were at Page 28 Apr and at Lee's Ferry 8 May (C. Goetze); there are few n.

Arizona reports of this species. A male Magnificent Hummingbird was at a particularly low elevation at Sabino Canyon Dam 30 Apr (MS). Although Costa's Hummingbird is known from the bottom of the Grand Canyon, they appeared in larger-than-usual numbers this spring, with at least 60 males counted on a transect from Lee's Ferry through the canyon 26-27 Apr (L. Dickson, J. Holmes).

A Downy Woodpecker was reported from an unusually low elevation near Cameron 22 Mar (CTL); their movements within the state away from known breeding areas are poorly known. A Hairy Woodpecker was at low elevation at Portal 8 May (DJa). A Strickland's Woodpecker in the n. Galiuro Mts. 1 May (C. Wise) may have represented the northernmost report of this species in appropriate habitat. A Red-naped Sapsucker at Cameron 30 Apr (CTL) was late.

FLYCATCHERS THROUGH THRASHERS

A N. Beardless-Tyrannulet was at an odd locality along the upper S.P.R. beginning 30 Apr (DK, CDB). Perhaps a result of drought conditions in the highlands, single Greater Pewees were at unusual locations in the lowlands along the upper S.P.R. at Charleston 2 May (DK) and near the Hwy 90 bridge 20 May (DK). A W. Wood-Pewee at the bottom of the Grand Canyon (RM 6) 1 May (CTL) was nearly 2 weeks earlier than the earliest previous N.I.R. spring record. A "Western" Flycatcher, likely a Pacific-slope, at Arivaca 1 Mar (MS) was extremely early. A Buff-breasted Flycatcher was along S. Fork of Cave Cr. 24 May (MS), where casual at best. An extraordinary number of E. Phoebes was reported this spring, including singles at Hereford 5-17 Mar (DK), Lee's Ferry 1 Apr (CTL, K. McMillen), the Grand Canyon (RM 155) 8 Apr (CTL), Hooker Springs Canyon 11 Apr (H. Messing, M. Jakle), and Patagonia 19 May (D. Touret); although a rare but regular winter visitor, there have been relatively few spring migrant records, and no physically documented ones in the Southwest after mid-April. Dusky-capped Flycatchers were reported n. and w. of where they occur regularly in the state, with one at Sedona 27 Apr (J. Morgansen) and another at Walnut Cr., n. of Prescott, 28-30 May (B. Pranter). Outstanding was a report of a Sulphur-bellied Flycatcher from Sedona 31 May (†B. Williams); this species had previously wandered as far north as the Sierra Ancha Mts. The only report of E. Kingbird, a casual

migrant statewide, was from Cameron 24 May (CTL). Also casual during spring, a Scissor-tailed Flycatcher was present at Willow Tank 28 Apr (AC, NMC).

A Winter Wren remained in Garden Canyon until the late date of 12 May (V. Lucas). Two Black-capped Gnatcatchers were reported from along Sonoita Cr. below Patagonia L. 30 Mar (S. Johnson, L. Liese, M. Brown). Elsewhere, the apparent hybrid male Black-capped × Black-tailed Gnatcatcher was present throughout the period in Chino Canyon, where a female Black-capped was also seen (vt. GHR). There was rumor of Black-cappeds continuing in

SA There is no question that during May s.e. Arizona saw perhaps its best ever migration of Swainson's Thrushes. Numerous observers confirmed that they were everywhere, with largest numbers during the first 2 weeks of May. Along with the unprecedented numbers of Swainson's Thrushes, several (6-12) Veerys were reported, although the A.B.C. has only received details on sightings of two different birds (or the same bird 2.5 mi apart) in Madera Canyon 8 May (†R. Taylor, †R. Palmer, †B. Massey). One report refers to a bird along the upper S.P.R. 1 May that was netted, measured, and banded, and initially identified as a Veery. It should be emphasized that the observer reidentified the 1 May bird as a Swainson's after viewing in-hand photos (the buffy eyering was not seen in-hand, but was clearly visible in the photos!). Historically the A.B.C. has accepted only one late May sight report (there was no physical documentation) from s.e. Arizona, and is admittedly conservative with regard to Veery, as there is only one other confirmed spring record from elsewhere in the Southwest (from s.e. California). One extreme view would be to adopt the philosophy of the late Allan R. Phillips, who wrote in his *Known Birds of North and Middle America* that "Surely genera like *Catharus* are not for ornithologists less competent than Ridgway and Hellmayr, for over-eager listers, or for the shrill opponents of accuracy." Members of the A.B.C. and the writers of this column have a much more moderate view, and will fairly evaluate any submitted sighting.

Brown Canyon, but the A.B.C. has not yet received details. The Rufous-backed Robin found during winter at Peña Blanca L. remained until at least 16 May (m.ob.).

Normally a casual visitor to s.e. Arizona, Gray Catbirds were seen at a number of localities, including Brown Canyon 15–22 Mar (J. Follette, K. McBride), Muleshoe Ranch 10–11 Apr (H. Messing), Whitetail Canyon 24 Apr (R. Taylor), Stewart Campground, Cave Cr. Canyon, 1–10 May (*fide* DJa), and Madera Canyon most of the period until 12 May (ph. MS). The Brown Thrasher found at Proctor Rd. below Madera Canyon during winter was last reported 3 Apr (*fide* MS).

WARBLERS THROUGH FINCHES

Amazingly, after one was seen at the bottom of Sycamore Canyon during December, another **Blue-winged Warbler** was located along the Santa Cruz R. in Tucson 13–28 Mar (†R. Grohman, ph. RJ, MS); there have been ± 10 previous records for the state. Yet another Blue-winged reported from along the upper S.P.R. near Hereford 16 May (†H. Koons, A. Koons) will be evaluated by the A.B.C. A singing male Tennessee Warbler was at Portal 19 May (†BZ, KZ). Single N. Parulas were at Miller Canyon in early May (CDB, MS) and at Portal 7–10 May (*fide* DJa). Casual in the state in spring were male Black-throated Blue Warblers at Madera Canyon 1 Apr (J. Heindel) and Cave Cr. Canyon 23 May (*fide* DJa). A female Black-throated Green Warbler was seen in S. Fork of Cave Cr. Canyon in mid-May (DS, CDB), providing one of few spring reports. The only Palm Warbler was at G.F.P. 11 Apr (RJ, ph. MS). Ovenbirds seemed more numerous than usual with 4 sightings: S. Fork of Cave Cr. Canyon in mid-May (CDB et al.), Scheelite Canyon 15–16 May (A. Jaramillo et al.), near Hereford 19 May (DK), and near the Hwy 90 bridge along the upper S.P.R. 20–21 May (DK). A Hooded Warbler found at the Desert Museum w. of Tucson 1 Apr was found dead 2 Apr (M. Ericson, *Univ. Arizona). Unusual in the lowlands was a Red-faced Warbler along the upper S.P.R. near the Hwy 90 crossing 11 May (DK). Nearly 20 individual Painted Redstarts were reported from a variety of lowland locations between mid-March and late April. Most interesting was one seen at the bottom of the Grand Canyon (RM 31.5) 4 Apr (C. Nelson, C. Boyle, T. Dale).

Arizona atlas researchers found Hepatic Tanagers n. of know areas of occurrence in the Music Mts. 29 May (PF, C. Wise) and s. of Nelson 30 May (K. Newlon et al.).



Vagrant records of the Blue-winged Warbler for the West have increased substantially in the past two decades, probably relating to their increase and northward expansion in the East. Most records have involved spring (mid-May to early June) and fall (mid-September to early October) migrants, but this one at Tucson, Arizona, 15 March 1999 had probably wintered locally. Photograph/Roy Jones

Another was at a particularly low elevation at the Hassayampa R. Preserve near Wickenburg 30 May (RJ). A Grasshopper Sparrow at Clarkdale 2 May (RR) was well away from known breeding areas. Clay-colored Sparrows were reported from a variety of locations this spring, including singles at Mesquite 20 Mar (S. Summers), along the upper S.P.R. 23 Mar (S. Healy), at the Paton's in Patagonia 9 May (v.t. GHR), and at Peña Blanca L. 11 May (L. Wells); this species is still considered casual in the state, particularly during spring, and is still a review species of the A.B.C.

Extremely late, and seemingly out of place, was a male Chestnut-collared Longspur below Ramsey Canyon 16 May (BZ, KZ). North and west of their known breeding range were single E. Meadowlarks seen and heard near Nelson and near Peach Springs 25–27 May (PF et al.). One to three Purple Finches visited a feeder during a snow storm in Sedona 1–4 Apr (†D. Hook); this species is casual anywhere in the state.

Contributors (area compilers in boldface):

Charlie Babbitt, Hank Brodtkin, Mark Brown, Alan Craig, **John Coons** (Flagstaff), **Troy Corman** (Arizona Atlas Project), Nigel Crook, Lara Dickson, Rich Ditch, Rich Ferguson, Aaron Flesch, Peter Friedrici, Steve Ganley (SGa), Stuart Healy, George Hentz, Rich Hoyer, **Dave Jasper** (Portal), Roy Jones, **Dave Krueper** (Sierra

Vista), Chuck T. LaRue, Jim Levy, Seymour Levy, Norma Miller, Narca Moore-Craig, K. Newlon, Richard Palmer, Bonnie Pranter, **Roger Radd** (Cottonwood), Will Russell, John Saba, John Spence, **John Spencer** (Globe), Dave Stejskal, **Mark Stevenson** (Tucson), Steve Summers, Carl S. Tomoff (Prescott), **Jack Whetstone** (Sierra Vista), C. Wise, **Janet Witzeman** (Phoenix), Robert Witzeman, Barry Zimmer, Kevin Zimmer.

Chris D. Benesh, 4308 E. Poe St., Tucson, Arizona 85711, and **Gary H. Rosenberg**, P.O. Box 91856, Tucson, Arizona 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 *North American Birds* are keyed on page 251.