

Arizona



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This winter could be characterized by both lack of rain and very mild temperatures, at least in the early months. Greater-than-usual numbers of certain birds, such as some normally rarer sparrows (e.g., Swamp and White-throated) and several warbler species (Northern Parula and Wilson's Warbler) were indicative of this mild winter, as were lingering waders and flycatchers. Yet the seed crop was extremely poor, which meant low numbers of normally common grassland species, such as sparrows and longspurs, with Chestnut-collared Longspur virtually absent from the state. Wintering raptors seemed above average in numbers, especially Ferruginous and Rough-legged Hawks. As usual, a number of rarities were found, the best of which was Arizona's fourth Yellow-billed Loon.

We would like to take this opportunity to thank Roy Jones for his work with *North American Birds*. Work-related constraints have forced Roy to give up co-editorship of this column, but hopefully they won't keep him from birding! Mark Stevenson has graciously consented to replace Roy, and will write the Non-Passerine portion of this report.

Abbreviations: Arizona Bird Committee (A.B.C.), Avra Valley Waste Water Treatment Plant (A.V.S.T.P.), Boyce—Thompson Arboretum (B.T.A.), Hassayampa River Preserve (H.R.P.), Lower Colorado River Valley (L.C.R.V.), Pinal Air Park (P.A.P.), Sewage Treatment Plant (S.T.P.), Whitewater Draw Wildlife Area (W.W.D.).

LOONS THROUGH MERGANSERS

The only Pacific Loon reported was from Topock Marsh 29 Dec (*vide* NM). More gratifying was the first-winter **Yellow-billed Loon** at L. Havasu City 1 Feb+ (ph., †MMS, m. ob.; ph. S. Davies), only the 4th for Arizona. Single Horned Grebes, rare in winter away from the L.C.R.V., were at Lyman L. 13 Dec (JC) and Becker L. 16 Dec (DR, GC). A Red-necked Grebe on a farm pond near Palo Verde 29 Dec (†PM, CD) was quite unexpected. There are fewer than 10 accepted records for Arizona. American White Pelicans, also rare away from the L.C.R.V. in winter, included 12 at Roosevelt L. 26 Jan (KK), 7 on the Tres Rios C.B.C. 19 Dec, and 27 on the Gila River w. of Buckeye 26 Dec (BG). Neotropical Cormorants continue to spread and increase, with up to 8 at A.V.S.T.P. 26 Jan (RH, m. ob.), up to 10 at Arizona City 19 Feb (NM, m. ob.), and singles in Green Valley 29 Dec (Green Valley C.B.C.) and ne. Tucson 24 Jan (BN). Casual in winter, 2 Snowy Egrets were in nw. Tucson 28 Dec (MMS). The imm. Little Blue Heron found along the Salt R. w. of Phoenix in fall continued through 30 Dec (E. Latturmer, SG). The species is essentially

unrecorded in the state at this season. A flock of up to 300 White-faced Ibis w. of Buckeye 10 Dec (B&JW) was remarkably large for winter.

High concentrations of Snow Geese were 60 at W.W.D. 6 Dec (SH), and 40 at Apache Station Wildlife Area 26 Jan (SB). Ross's Geese were less plentiful than in last winter's bumper crop but still above average. Thirty-two were reported from 14 locations, including maximum counts of 4 at Page 12 Dec (C Goetze) and 7 at Estrella Mountain Ranch 16 Dec (TC). The male Eurasian Wigeon that graces Scottsdale each winter returned by 12 Dec+ (JS, m. ob.), while a male Eurasian X American hybrid spent a fourth winter in Willcox (RT, m. ob.). Casual in Arizona away from the Colorado R., Greater Scaup were present at Patagonia L., with a female there 8 Dec—22 Feb (ph. GHR, m. ob.) and at Tempe, with 2-4 males present 1 Jan—23 Feb (DC, TC). A lone Long-tailed Duck, casual in the state, was at Parker Dam 10 Jan+ (B. & B. Clark, m. ob.) Barrow's Goldeneyes away from the Colorado R. included 2 at Lyman L. 13 Dec providing only a 2nd *Apache* record (JC). Good numbers of Hooded Mergansers were reported, 51 statewide. More unusual were 6 in n. Arizona, one at Becker L. 12 Dec (DR), and 5 at Flagstaff 24 Jan (B Marshall).

KITES THROUGH WOODPECKERS

White-tailed Kites were at scattered locations across s. Arizona: up to 6 in the Arlington—Buckeye area 7 Dec+ (R Widner, TC, PM, m. ob.), with singles at Hereford 1 Jan (SW), San Rafael Valley 1 Jan (Joe Gottlieb), ne. of Bowie



This Yellow-billed Loon, Arizona's fourth and enjoyed by many, resided at Lake Havasu City from the first of February through period's end. Photograph by Stephen J. Davies.

10 Jan (J Gacey), s. of Gilbert 1 Feb (JS), and Picacho Reservoir 20 Feb (DP, BM). Still casual in the state, the only Red-shouldered Hawks reported were the resident pair at H.R.P. (m. ob.) Simply stunning was the intermediate-morph **Swainson's Hawk** photographed near Eloy 18 Jan (ph. R Mellon). Though they winter in small numbers in the Central Valley of California, this is a first in recent times for Arizona. Zone-tailed Hawks were present in the Tucson area again this winter; the number involved is uncertain, with reports of singles from multiple areas between Reid Park and Sabino Canyon 9 Dec—22 Feb (RT, V McKinnon, DS, PS, RH), perhaps all involving the same wandering individual. Two were farther n. at Chandler 5 Jan (RD), where also casual in winter. A Harlan's Red-tailed Hawk, casual in se. Arizona, was found at Patagonia 14 Dec (RT, m. ob.), while another continued at W.W.D. 26 Jan (SB, m. ob.). Up to 3 Rough-legged Hawks were in the Sulphur Springs Valley Dec—Jan (ph. GHR, Elfrida C.B.C.), while singles were at Palo Verde 29 Dec—5 Jan (PM, m. ob.), and at Canoa 10 Feb (BM, DP). Once again, Crested Caracaras wintered in the Santa Cruz Flats area w. of Picacho, with up to 2 there 29 Dec—31 Jan (NB, RH). Few winter away from the Tohono O'odham Reservation.

Reflecting the mild early winter, Virginia Rails were present in n. Arizona, with 4 in Pasture Canyon 14 Dec (CTL) and one at Double Springs 16 Dec (Mormon L. C.B.C.). Pasture Canyon also hosted a Sora 1 Feb (CTL) Mountain Plovers were reported in small numbers in s. Arizona, with reported maxima in usual wintering areas of 25 near Elfrida 5 Jan+ and 12 at the Western Sod Farms of Arizona City 20 Jan (m. ob.). Two were near the P.A.P 15 Feb (D. Hyatt), where they are seen only irregularly. Rarer, and only casual in Arizona in winter, was a Lesser Yellowlegs in sw Phoenix 19 Dec (M. Rupp, M. Foley). Up to 16 Western Sandpipers were found in s. Arizona into Dec, with fewer truly wintering: 5 at A.V.S.T.P. 26 Jan (RH, m. ob.) and 2 at Gillespie Dam 27 Feb (SH). Three Long-billed Dowitchers at the Page S.T.P. 11 Dec (C. Goetze) provided the first winter record for ne Arizona. A Wilson's Phalarope on a stock tank in the Sulphur Springs Valley 17 Jan was only the 3rd winter record for the se. (BM, DP).

Eurasian Collared-Doves persisted in locales where reported previously: 7 in Thatcher 12 Dec (JW), up to 6 in Palo Verde 7 Dec+, 4 at Roper L. S. P. 10 Jan (MMS, J. Dunn, RH), and 2 in Cameron 8 Feb+ (CTL). As expected, more towns were added to the doves' list, with one in Ash Fork 15 Jan (TG), and 2 on the Chino Valley C.B.C. 1 Jan (E Moore). More

welcome, 9 Ruddy Ground-Doves were reported: 2 at Sweetwater Wetlands, Tucson 1 Dec+ (BS, GHR, m. ob.), 2 at El Mirage 7 Dec (R. Widner, m. ob.), 2-3 in Patagonia 8 Dec+ (J. Higgins, m. ob.), one at Central Arizona College e. of Casa Grande (NB), and one in Dudleyville 5 Jan (RH).

Long-eared Owls put in a good showing, with 19 in s. Arizona. Single Northern Saw-whet Owls, always considered casual in the lowlands of Arizona in winter, were found, near the Agua Fria—Gila R. confluence 19 Dec (BG), on the Bill Williams N.W.R. in Jan (*vide* B. & B. Clark), and at the B.T.A. 16 Jan (TG).

Another sign of a mild winter were the many interesting hummingbirds at feeders in s. Arizona. Wintering Violet-crowned Hummingbirds continue to increase in number, with up to 12 at feeders from Portal to Tucson (m. ob.). Only the 3rd winter record for all of Arizona, a female Calliope Hummingbird was in Tucson 16 Dec (†RH, P. Sheppard), following last year's Tucson female. Broad-tailed Hummingbirds included a female in Tucson 20 Dec (DS) and an imm. male in lower Carr Canyon 3 Jan (H Brodtkin). A Rufous Hummingbird was on the Ramsey Canyon C.B.C. 29 Dec (*vide* M. Pretti). Reports of *Selasphorous* species came from Bisbee 26 Dec (SW), the Ramsey Canyon C.B.C. 29 Dec, and Tucson 15 Jan (BN), all considered very late for Arizona.

Two Yellow-bellied Sapsuckers, casual in winter, were observed, with one 2 Dec at Marana (RH, PS) and another 19 Jan+ at Continental (RT, m. ob.). Apparent hybrid Red-naped x Red-breasted Sapsuckers continue to vex the unwary, with 2 different birds in Madera Canyon 6 Dec and 1 Jan (S. Mahoney, BM, L. Norris, m. ob.). No reports of pure Red-breasted were substantiated. Photos of all suspected Red-breasted or hybrid sapsuckers would be appreciated by the A.B.C. Casual in Arizona, one Northern (Yellow-shafted) Flicker was at Pasture Canyon 1 Feb (CTL).

FLYCATCHERS THROUGH THRASHERS

A Northern Beardless-Tyrannulet was e. of normal winter range in the w. foothills of the Dragoon Mts. 14 Dec (JW). Rarer yet, a "Western" Flycatcher was at Cook's L. near Dudleyville 5 Jan; all previous winter reports of this species complex are of Pacific-slopes, and there remains no confirmed winter record for Cordilleran. Eastern Phoebe put in a good showing, with reports of singles at Patagonia L. 1 Dec—2 Feb (JB, B. Pollock), in sw. Phoenix 16 Dec (TC), near Cave Cr., *Maricopa* 31 Dec (H. Beatty), and along Sonoita Cr. near Patagonia 24 Jan (K. Nelson). There are very

few Vermilion Flycatcher reports from n. Arizona at any season; therefore, an imm. male at Show Low 10 Dec (J. Videle) and another at Page Springs 23 Dec (CTL et al.) were exceptional. Outstanding was a Dusky-capped Flycatcher that wintered at Patagonia L. 1 Dec—2 Feb (JB, WR et al.), providing a first winter record from se. Arizona. We received a report of a Nutting's Flycatcher from Patagonia L. 29 Dec (†RT). This bird was looked for extensively by numerous observers throughout the winter, but never confirmed, the A.B.C. will review the details of this sighting, but without physical documentation (tape recordings in particular), any report of this species in Arizona will likely remain tentative. A Cassin's Kingbird, very rare in winter, was near Patagonia 7 Jan (JLD).

At least 10 Plumbeous Vireos were found in s. Arizona, whereas Cassin's Vireo was decidedly rarer, with reports from along the Santa Cruz R. in Tucson 16 Dec—3 Jan (MMS et al.), at Sweetwater Wetlands in Tucson 18 Dec (D West), and on the Gila River C.B.C. 26 Dec. Virtually unheard of during the winter season, a Warbling Vireo was in sw. Phoenix 18 Dec (TC) providing only a 4th December record for the state. Tree and Northern Rough-winged Swallows, both casual in winter, were noted at a variety of s. Arizona locations. Mild weather also produced several Barn Swallow reports, with up to 2 at Sahuarita L. 12-15 Dec (MMS), another 4 at Amado 12 Dec (MMS), one along the Santa Cruz R. in Tucson 14 Dec (CDB), one in the Avra Valley 28—30 Dec (MMS), and one at Casa Grande 8 Jan (NB).

An American Dipper in Ramsey Canyon late Nov—1 Jan (M. Pretti) was the only report from the southeast. Another dipper in Aravaipa Canyon 21 Feb (T. Todd) was away from usual wintering areas. It was apparently an excellent winter for Varied Thrush movements in s. California (probably bad for the thrushes themselves!), which translated into a couple of Arizona reports, with one at Bellota Ranch Pond 3 Dec (MMS) and another bird at Peña Blanca L. 12 Dec+ (K. Graves, RH). Two Gray Catbirds, casual in winter, were reported from Bill Williams N.W.R. in Jan (*vide* B. & B. Clark). Four different Brown Thrashers, a larger number than usual, were reported, with one at Page Springs 8 Dec (RR, CTL), one all period at Agua Caliente Park in Tucson (SB, m. ob.), 2 at the B.T.A. 1 Jan+ (C. Babbitt), and one along Sonoita Cr. near Patagonia 11 Jan (RH).

PEUCEDRAMIDS THROUGH GOLDFINCHES

An Olive Warbler along the Blue R. near Jackson Box 7 Dec (DR, GC) was perhaps the

first winter season report for N. Arizona. A Lucy's Warbler at Sahuarita 17 Feb (C. Cathers), and 3 in the Verde Valley 26 Feb (CTL) were early migrants. An above-average number of Northern Parulas were found, with one in sw. Phoenix 14 Dec (D. Yellan), one at St David 14 Dec (T. Wood, RH), one along the Gila River w. of Buckeye 24 Dec (TC et al.), one at Sweetwater Wetlands 24 Dec (D. West), and one at Tres Rios along the Salt R. 11 Feb (J. Burns). A Yellow Warbler along the Santa Cruz R. n. of Tucson 2 Dec (PS, RH), and another in sw. Phoenix also 2 Dec+ (TC) were of note, as this species is casual at best during this season anywhere in the state. Several Chestnut-sided Warblers made their now-usual Dec showing in s. Arizona, with one at the Phoenix Zoo 2-9 Dec (RJ), one in sw. Phoenix 8-19 Dec (TC), one at the Sweetwater Wetlands 16 Dec—5 Jan (RT et al.), and 1-2 along the Santa Cruz R. in Tucson 23 Dec—5 Jan+ (BS, RT et al.); it is still surprising that there is such an influx of this species into the Southwest in Dec. A Magnolia Warbler was reported from the Bill Williams R. in Feb (B. Clark, *fide* DS); there are only a few winter reports from the state, one of which was also from the Bill Williams R. in Jan 1978. The warbler of the season was another "winter" **Prairie Warbler**, this one found at Roper L. S P. 5-13 Jan (ph. B. Metheny, ph. JW; ph MMS et al.); there are fewer than 10 total Arizona records. A Palm Warbler, casual at best in the state during the winter, was a one-day wonder at Sweetwater Wetlands 25 Dec (JB). Individual Black-and-white Warblers were reported at Ramsey Canyon 5 Dec (M. Hirth), at Bell Trail, Camp Verde C.B.C. 27 Dec (*fide*, RR), in Sycamore Canyon 8 Jan (S. Johnsen), and at Page Springs 19 Feb (T. Fry). The only American Redstart was one along the S. Dike at Topock Marsh 2 Feb (MMS); this species has become much scarcer in Arizona as both a migrant and wintering bird in recent years.

The fall's Ovenbird at Agua Caliente Park remained until at least 7 Dec (D. West, m. ob.). The only confirmed Northern Waterthrush of the season was one along the San Pedro R. e. of Sierra Vista 7 Jan (C. Tomoff). Likely the same individual returning for a 2nd winter, a Louisiana Waterthrush wintered along Sonoita Cr. above Patagonia L. 1 Dec+ (JB, B. Pollock). Another located in Ramsey Canyon in mid-Dec remained to at least 1 Jan (M. Pretti). Common Yellowthroats are unheard of in n. Arizona during the winter, so one along the Verde R. near Interstate 17 27 Dec (CTL, RR) and another below Glen Canyon Dam 3 Jan (C. Goetze) were noteworthy. Likewise, Wilson's Warblers put in an above-average winter showing, with one along the Santa Cruz

R. n. of Tucson 2 Dec (P. Salomon, RH), one at the Roger Road S.T.P. 14 Dec (DS), one on the Gila R. C.B.C. 26 Dec (A. Peyton et al.), and one at Patagonia L. 22 Jan (K. Nelson). Quite remarkable was the report of a Red-faced Warbler in a desert neighborhood n. of Tucson (Saddlebrook) 16 Dec (R. Genung); there were no previous winter records for se. Arizona.

Summer Tanagers, casual in winter, were reported from Roger Road W.W.T.P. 10 Dec+ (D. Wright, m. ob.), and from sw. Phoenix 19 Dec (TC). The only Clay-colored Sparrow, casual in winter, was a "well-marked" individual at the A.V.S.T.P. 30 Dec (JB, MMS, L. Schibley). It was an above-average winter for Fox Sparrows in the state, and the number of reports shed some light into which forms are expected in the state in winter. Reports of the Slate-colored form totaled at least 9 individuals statewide. Fewer Red Fox Sparrows were found, with one at Patagonia L. 21-26 Jan (JLD et al.) and another at the B.T.A. 18 Jan (RH); care is still advised in the separation of the various forms of this complex. No fewer than 20 individual Swamp Sparrows were reported, a much higher number than usual. Likewise, numbers of White-throated Sparrows were reported from areas away from normal wintering grounds (such as Sonoita Cr.). Harris's Sparrows, always a nice find, were at Black Mesa 25 Jan (CTL) and in Flagstaff 15 Feb (B. Marshall). The only reports of Golden-crowned Sparrow were of one along the Gila R. near Robbins Butte 24 Dec (TC), and another on the Dudleyville C.B.C. 5 Jan (RH). For the 2nd year in a row, McCown's Longspurs wintered at a sod farm in Scottsdale, with up to 9 seen there 9 Dec+ (SG et al.). Still an excellent find, a Lapland Longspur was in with a large flock of McCown's at Zuck Farms n. of Elfrida 16 Jan (JLD et al.); there are still fewer than 15 records for the state.

Single Rose-breasted Grosbeaks, casual in winter, were at Patagonia 14 Dec (RT), at sw. Phoenix 16 Dec (TC), and at Ahwatuckee 6-9 Feb (D. Cocanour). Perhaps rarer during winter, a male Indigo Bunting was coming to a Portal feeder 26 Feb (ph. N. Moore-Craig). An imm male Orchard Oriole was reported from Gilbert 25 Dec—26 Jan (D. Pearson et al.); there are only a handful of accepted winter records for the state. A male Bullock's Oriole returned to a Continental yard for the 2nd winter 26 Dec+ (D. Bruckner), while another Bullock's (female) was reported from St. David 12 Feb (J. Hays); this species is also a casual winter visitor in s. Arizona. Lawrence's Goldfinches were extremely sparse this winter, with only a couple of reports received.

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