

Updates to the New Mexico Bird Finding Guide, 3rd ed.

Updates current as of March 6, 2011

Chaves County

BLM is no longer restricting access to the Prairie-Chicken lek near Waldrop Park, as they have finished their surveying, but they do like to know who/how many people are planning to go out to the site. The Roswell BLM phone number in the *New Mexico Bird Finding Guide* is “extinct,” however. The correct general number is 505-627-0272.

Cibola County

To reach Acomita Lake, from I-40 take the San Fidel Exit (Exit 100). Travel south. From the southern exit/entrance roads go .68 mile. On the right you will see Acomita Lake. This is on Acoma Pueblo land and one must pay a fee to get in, if it is open at all. However, the entire lake can be seen with a scope if one pulls off the road here. While there is little shoulder, there is not much traffic on this road and stopping for a half hour or more rarely has more than five cars passing. Numerous waterbirds can be seen from fall through spring when the lake isn't frozen. While this lake is not checked often enough to have produced rarities for the state it has produced a number of county records and is easily checked when making a trip through Cibola County on I-40.

Colfax County

There is now a convenience store and gas station in the town of Maxwell.

Doña Ana County

The area around Isaack's Lake has changed dramatically since the *New Mexico Bird Finding Guide* was written. Current directions are: Take U.S. 70 toward Alamogordo from Las Cruces. Exit at Mesa Grande and do a U-turn under the freeway. Go back on the north frontage road to Jornada Road. There is a brandless gas station and convenience store on the corner. Head north on Jornada Road according to the directions in the Bird Finding Guide.

The site formerly known to birders as "The Old Bosque" opened as the Mesilla Valley Bosque State Park in 2008. The site features a great diversity of habitats, as detailed in the *New Mexico Bird Finding Guide*, but the site is undergoing ecological restoration and habitat enhancement, including the construction of new ponds and wetlands. Official and social trails lead throughout the area. The new ponds are excellent places for Swamp Sparrow and other marsh birds including wintering Common Yellowthroats. To reach the park, exit I-10 at Avenida de Mesilla and travel south to Calle del Norte. Turn right/west on Calle del Norte and proceed 1.9 miles to a bridge over the Rio Grande. Immediately after crossing the river turn left/south onto the entrance road and the park entrance.

Grant County

Both gas and food services are available in the towns of Hurley and Bayard.

Harding County

Be sure to fill up with gas at Wagon Mound, Springer or Logan before entering the county as gas is not always available, even in Roy.

To reach Mills Canyon, from the town of Roy travel 10 miles north to the very small community of Mills. Turn west or left onto Mills Canyon Road. After about 6 miles of traveling through grassland the habitat will start to change with more juniper on the landscape. In another half a mile you will begin to descend into this spectacular canyon. This canyon is part of the Kiowa National Grassland and is managed by the US Forest Service. One can stop anywhere on the small winding road into the canyon and bird the small amount of ponderosa pine forest that lines the canyon walls. There is approximately a one and a half mile drive down the canyon sides to the bottom. Continuing to the south at the bottom of the canyon, at 9.23 miles from Mills you will find a turnoff to a small camping area on the left that is beside the river. This provides easy access to some of the riparian vegetation along the Canadian River, which created the canyon. The entire area, both north and south from the canyon bottom is open for exploration, within the well-marked forest service boundaries. However, be careful, cell phones do not work here and having a problem with your vehicle will present a long walk back to Mills. Williamson's Sapsucker, Black-billed Magpie and Pygmy Nuthatch have all been found in or near the ponderosa pine forests lining the sides. The occasional Zone-tailed Hawk may be found gliding overhead and during migration unusual birds such as Orchard Orioles can be found in the riparian areas in the canyon bottom.

Hidalgo County

The highway south of Animas is no longer 338 as in the *New Mexico Bird Finding Guide* and the mile markers have been changed. It is now County Highway 1. The BOTTERI'S SPARROW site is now at mile marker 15. Several singing males have been observed between mile posts 13 and 15 in late summer.

County Highway 1 south of Animas crosses the Diamond A (Gray) Ranch. Because of events with thoughtless birders, one must not go off the road. Aside from a portion of Coronado National Forest, all of Hidalgo County comprises private land. Other than as explained in the *New Mexico Bird Finding Guide*, do not cross any fences or stray from the road in unfenced areas. Illegal immigration and smuggling may be encountered in Hidalgo County, and one is fairly likely to be stopped and questioned by U. S. Border Patrol agents while driving or hiking. Birding in groups is always advised.

Luna County

Katfish Kove is no longer open to birders.

Pecan Park Ponds are a short distance east of Deming. From within town, start at the intersection of Pine and Gold Streets (main intersection) and go east on Pine Street approximately 2.6 miles to Hwy 549. Alternatively from Exit 85 on Interstate 25, go south a short distance past the La Quinta Inn (on the east side of the road) and make a left turn onto Hwy. 549. Continue east on Hwy. 549 to its junction with Hwy. 377, approximately 1.9 miles. Turn left on Hwy. 377 and follow it for 0.7 miles to Pecan Drive. Turn left on Pecan Drive and go approximately 0.1 mile to the ponds where the road ends at a T intersection. One block east of Pecan Drive is Lewis Lane which ends at the Ponds.

Please remember that Pecan Park is a residential area and is on private land. The ponds are also on private land and belong to a farm/ranch operation. Signs prohibiting entry are clearly posted. One can walk or drive the road between Pecan Drive and Lewis Lane and look into the ponds.

Otero County

At Holloman Lake/Stinky Playa near Alamogordo the entire shore is open to birding; “no access” signs are for hunters only. The lake is located on US Highway 70 at mile marker 202.9. Look for the cattle guard and a small brown sign with a roadrunner on it that says “New Mexico Birding Trail” on the north side of the highway. Follow the dirt road past the cattle guard and continue to the parking area. Current access does not allow birders to drive out on the levee to the west of the parking area. A gate will prevent vehicles from going out on the levee. You can scope the lake from the SW corner of the parking lot to see birds at the southern end of the lake. To get better looks at the lake continue on the dirt road north, towards a duck hunting station, that will take you to another overlook for better views of the southern half of the lake. To view the northern half of the lake get back on the dirt road and follow it NE to the Lagoon G gate, which is currently locked and off limits to the public. Continue over the inflow canal to the northern end of the lake. Birders are permitted to get out of their car and scope along the bluffs along the eastern half of the lake. You can follow the dirt road to the northern most part of the lake until another locked gate will be found. The western half of the lake, which was open to birding in the past, is now off limits but scoping from the eastern side of the lake should provide good views of the entire lake.

Roosevelt County

Access to the Melrose Trap (AKA North Roosevelt Trap, or NRT) has changed since publication of the *New Mexico Bird Finding Guide*. Rather than parking across the road from the trap, one can drive in. Please keep in mind that access to this site is a privilege, and a rancher leases the land from state government. Be sure to chain and latch the gate while entering and leaving. After going through the gate, one can drive to the stand of trees and park in the open area on the west side of the trees. Do not drive through the stand of trees.

San Miguel County

The Clabber Hill Ranch near Conchas Lake is now closed to birding. There is a new lessee there.

Torrance County

The Green Chaparral Turf Farm in Moriarty was for sale when the *New Mexico Bird Finding Guide* was in press. The farm has now sold, and the new owners do **NOT** permit birders access.