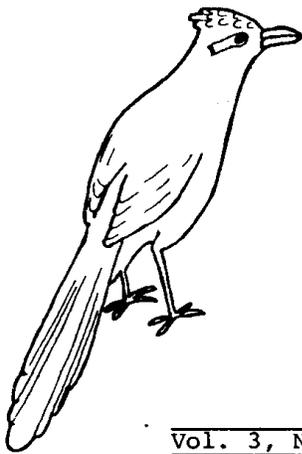


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# N. M. O. S. BULLETIN

*incorporating the Newsletter of the  
New Mexico Ornithological Society*

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Vol. 3, No. 3

Summer 1975

Las Cruces

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## WHOOPING CRANES IN NEW MEXICO?

BY JAMES L. SANDS

Because of a study by Dr. Roderick C. Drewien of the Idaho Cooperative Wildlife Research Unit entitled "Ecology of Rocky Mountain Greater Sandhill Cranes," New Mexico birders may be able to see Whooping Cranes in the Rio Grande Valley during the fall and winter of 1975-76

Greater Sandhill Cranes nest at Grays Lake National Wildlife Refuge, Idaho, where an estimated 250 pairs breed annually. Each fall, these cranes traditionally migrate southward to their wintering grounds in the Rio Grande Valley of New Mexico, with a temporary stopover at the Monte Vista NWR in southern Colorado. In New Mexico, they are most common at the Bernardo State Waterfowl Refuge and the Bosque del Apache NWR.

Dr. Drewien's study has shown that individual pairs of cranes exhibit a strong tendency not only to nest on the same territory each year, but to winter in the same local area. These data, coupled with the fact that one young from each brood of two is often lost before flight age, led to the development of the current Whooping Crane experiment.

This spring, 14 eggs were removed from Whooping Crane nests in Canada, leaving one egg in each nest. These pirated eggs were then placed in nests of

Greater Sandhill Crane foster parents at Grays Lake, after the Sandhill eggs were removed. Each pair of foster parents were carefully chosen for their strong propensity for wintering at the Bosque del Apache NWR. This information was obtained by Dr. Drewien through color-marking studies conducted over the period 1969-71.

The experimenters hoped that the Sandhill foster parents would incubate the Whooper eggs, raise the chicks to flight age, and escort the young to the Bosque del Apache NWR in winter. As of September 10, six chicks are still alive at Grays Lake. Two are flying short distances, and three others are nearly capable of flight. One late-hatched chick has not reached flight age. Five of the original 14 eggs did not hatch, and it is thought that they were infertile. Three of the nine chicks that hatched didn't live.

If all goes well with the remaining six chicks, birders will be able to see Whooping Cranes in New Mexico this fall. It is anticipated by Dr. Drewien that the first young Whoopers will leave Grays Lake about September 20, with the last leaving about Oct. 12.

Traditionally, Greater Sandhill Cranes migrate from Grays Lake and fly to the Monte Vista NWR, where they spend several weeks to a month before continuing their journey to New Mexico. Sandhills usually begin arriving at the Bernardo and Bosque del Apache refuges in late September and early October. It is therefore possible that the first Whoopers will arrive between October 1 and 15.

Obviously, many pitfalls exist that must be overcome before the experiment can be a success. A new Whooping Crane population can be established only if this and subsequent years chicks survive and migrate to the wintering grounds and back to Grays Lake. Pairing and nesting probably will not occur until the age of four or five, at which time the Whoopers will have to mate with their own kind. If they attempt to hybridize with Sandhills, of course, the experiment cannot be called a success.

We should all recognize that this is just an experiment, and not necessarily the last word in endangered species management. The Whoopers must find conditions suitable to their needs. This includes not only food and habitat, but all the conditions that may be present along their migration route, including legitimate hunting of migratory birds. Elaborate plans have already been formulated by the New Mexico Department of Game and Fish and the U. S. Fish and Wildlife Service to ensure the maximum protection reasonably possible while the Whoopers are in New Mexico. While legitimate hunting of migratory birds will not be curtailed when they are present, there may be periodic interruptions due to unpredictable crane movements. It should be recognized that the Whoopers must adjust to existing conditions to be a successful species.

At any rate, it is a noble experiment, and will surely add to our knowledge of cranes. And who among you will be the first to add a Whooping Crane to his New Mexico list?

## CONSERVATION COLUMN

BY HENRY ZELLER

### THE NEW MEXICO NATURAL AREAS PROGRAM

For several years, I have been interested in participating in an inventory of the natural features of New Mexico. By this, I mean an effort to search out the natural values of the state in relation to the land. Values to be sought are ecological, floristic and faunistic, and geological. I have done some work along these lines and have accumulated some information. In so doing, I have found that, although there are many lands in New Mexico where natural conditions continue to prevail, there are also others that, while altered somewhat, still serve some preservation function, such as waterfowl habitat. In addition, successional communities which follow disturbances such as fire or over-grazing are of interest. Thus, the natural values of the state as expressed on the land constitute a spectrum which must be studied to ensure that its component variety is recognized and represented in the inventory.

Dr. William Dick-Peddie of New Mexico State University has maintained a long-term interest in studying the natural features of the state and in the subsequent establishment of a State Natural Areas System. Some time ago, he began conversations with The Nature Conservancy concerning the possibility of its sponsorship of such a project under its State Heritage Program. About a year ago, several of us who are interested, including John Hubbard, got together the New Mexico Natural Areas Committee under the sponsorship of the State Planning Office. Various Federal, state, and private entities are represented. Jon Samuelson, State Planning Office, is Chairman.

Since formation of the Committee, Dr. Dick-Peddie's approach to The Nature Conservancy has paid off, and negotiations between the state and the Conservancy have established an agreement for proceeding with the project. The basis for state participation was created by Governor Apodaca's approval of the project not long after he assumed office.

The function of the Natural Areas Committee is to manage the accomplishment of the inventory, which will grow over time into a formal New Mexico Natural Features Registry. The Registry will record all significant features, regardless of the need or possibility for preservation, and will furnish the raw material for the Natural Areas System. The latter will consist of a number of systematically selected specific areas in assorted ownerships, to cover the entire spectrum and to be protected in various ways. The purposes of the system will be scientific and educational, and the uses of the areas will range from pure research to education of the general public. State legislation will be required for setting up the System.

At its April 19 meeting, the NMOS Board of Directors appointed me as the representative of the NMOS to support and to participate in the New Mexico Natural Areas Program.

### LAND ACQUISITION BY THE NATURE CONSERVANCY

Enough work has been done in the identification of natural features of the state to make it obvious that the values of certain lands now in private hands can be adequately protected only by outright acquisition by environmental concerns. Herein lies a valuable function of The Nature Conservancy, for its main objective is the acquisition of natural areas to protect them. The Conservancy then has the options of either retaining and

managing the lands, or turning them over to some other entity, public or private, always with a reversion agreement in case of poor management.

An obvious first priority in New Mexico is Centerfire Bog in Catron County, some nine miles northeast of Luna. This property, about 1,000 acres in size, is now up for sale. It is excellent waterfowl habitat, and harbors the southernmost breeding colony of Yellow-headed Blackbirds. Not long ago, John Hubbard saw a Mexican Duck with four young there. Total wetlands amount to some 40 acres of pond, and perhaps 120 acres of bog. The pond is a watering spot for elk, antelope, and other mammals.

Some time ago, the NMOS Board of Directors authorized me to explore for ways to protect Centerfire Bog, and to work with the Conservancy for the preservation of natural areas.

Fortunately, the Conservancy has recently opened a field office in Denver, and the Director, Gordon Buchmann, appears anxious to open up Conservancy activity in New Mexico. He, John Hubbard, and I visited Centerfire Bog on August 20 and looked it over thoroughly from the air and the ground. As a result, Gordon appears to be quite interested in doing something about the property. He is now attempting to obtain it through either purchase or donation. If purchase is the alternative, there will probably be jobs for interested volunteers to help raise funds to assist in the purchase. If successful, this would be the first real Conservancy project in New Mexico. Others, although large in area or value, have been more in the nature of windfalls.

#### NEW MEXICO BIRD-FINDING GUIDE

BY BRUCE J, HAYWARD

At the quarterly meeting of the NMOS Board of Directors held in Santa Fe on July 19, one of the principal items discussed was a desire to have bird-finding guides for all areas of the state. Many of the more knowledgeable birders in the state spend hours answering letters regarding where to find certain species. In the past, the Society has tried to interest individuals in writing a bird-finding guide for their specific area. But this is a lot of work, and many people do not want to spend the time. Only the Roswell people have shown enthusiasm for this sort of project. Most of our printed bird-finding guides (for Roswell and Silver City) are out-of-print. The Board felt that if we could get NMOS members to make out directions for one or two of their favorite birding spots, we could come up with a really good compilation of the more choice areas. When we get a sufficient number of these, we could publish them collectively. Later, we could cross-index these areas to species, so that someone could look in the guide for the best place to see Mountain Plover or Olive Warbler, or even Ground Dove. If everyone filled out one or two of these forms, we could have a really great state bird-finding guide.

Bound in this issue of the Bulletin is a sample form. Fill it out with a local speciality. Remember that birds that may be common for you might be a rarity for others; and don't take the attitude that others will do the commoner birds, because then no one will. Send the completed form (or forms - make copies if you have more than one idea) to the Secretary, NMOS. Perhaps some of the better ones will be published in future issues of the Bulletin.

The Board meets again in late September in Pleasanton. If you have any item you would like to bring up, please contact one of the Board members before

then.

BIRD-BANDING IN OASES IN NEW MEXICO IN SPRING, 1975

BY JOHN P. HUBBARD

In the spring of 1967, I was part of a team from the Smithsonian Institution that carried out a spring-long study of bird migration in a semi-desert oasis near the Mediterranean coast southwest of Alexandria, Egypt. I was associated with similar surveys during subsequent seasons in the Middle East, and I became impressed at how neatly oases function to attract, concentrate, and hold migrants in arid areas. I also became convinced that the approach was an excellent way to gather data on migration and on birds in general, and beginning in 1971, my wife Claudia and I began to employ the "oasis" method in New Mexico.

Many of you will recall the frequent appearance in the 1971 and later Field Notes of the localities Hermanas and Clayton (actually Perico Creek just south of town), as interesting bird records began to amass through these surveys. Many of us now visit these and other such sites to gather data, and in the process such species as White-eyed and Yellow-throated Vireo, Veery, and Gray-cheeked Thrush have come our way.

In early spring, 1975, in an effort to gather a great deal of needed data as rapidly as possible, I set aside blocks of time in April and May for members of the Game Department's Endangered Species Program to carry out netting surveys in various oases, in conjunction with other survey work in these areas. I selected five sites, all in scrub desert or grassland, and all supporting trees or other attractants especially for woodland birds in areas otherwise largely unsuitable for them. Each site also had to be in or near the range of one or more of our state-listed endangered species or candidates for the list, a requirement easily met when one considers that we already list 91 species, and have many more to consider.

The sites selected were as follows (altitudes approximate):

Perico creek, elev. 5050 feet, a perennial stream with cottonwoods and good undergrowth in prairie some three miles south of Clayton, Union co. Dates: May 10-11.

Boone's Draw, elev. 4000 feet, a large cottonwood grove (largest on the Llano Estacado?) on prairie, some 15 miles west-southwest of Portales, Roosevelt co. Dates: May 22-June 2.

Bell Lake, also known as Steven's Tank, elev. 3500 feet, a series of earthen tanks with cottonwoods and willows in mesquite-grassland, some 30 miles west-northwest of Jal, Lea Co. Dates: May 5-7 & 17-21.

Rattlesnake Springs, Carlsbad Caverns National Park, elev. 3100 feet, a perennial spring with cottonwoods, willows, and other growth in desert scrub, some five miles southwest of White's City. Eddy Co. Dates: May 1-4.

Carrizalillo Spring, also known as Hermanas and three miles southwest of Hermanas, elev. 4000 feet, a small grove of cottonwoods and large mesquites in scrub desert, some 23 miles west of Columbus, Luna Co. Dates: April 19-21.

		Hermanas	Rattlesnake Springs	Perico Creek	Bell Lake		Boone's Draw
		April 10-21	May 1-4	May 10-11	May 5-7	17-21	May 22-June 2
Bobwhite	1						1
Gambel's Quail	1	1					
Spotted Sandpiper	1				1		
Solitary Sandpiper	1				1		
Mourning Dove	5	1				2	2
Roadrunner	1						1
Flammulated Owl	3				3		
Poor-will	1					1	
Common Nighthawk	1						1
Belted Kingfisher	1				1		
Ladder-backed Woodpecker	11				3	6	2
Western Kingbird	14				4	2	8
Scissor-tailed Flycatcher	4				2	2	
Ash-throated Flycatcher	12	1	2		2	4	3
Willow Flycatcher	61					4	57
Least Flycatcher	1					1	
Hammond's Flycatcher	8				5	2	1
Dusky Flycatcher	32	4	2		1	3	22
Gray Flycatcher	4	4					
Empidonax sp?	6						6
Western Wood Pewee	76		4		8	15	49
Olive-sided Flycatcher	28				4	5	19
House Wren	6				1	3	2
Bewick's Wren	1		1				
Cactus Wren	5	1			2	2	
Mockingbird	29		2		4	4	19
Gray Catbird	2					2	
Brown Thrasher	2		2				
Crissal Thrasher	1	1					
Sage Thrasher	1	1					
Robin	2			2			
Hermit Thrush	133		3		68	20	42
Swainson's Thrush	51				4	3	44
Veery	1						1
Eastern Bluebird	2		2				
Townsend's Solitaire	2	1	1				
Ruby-crowned Kinglet	8	6			2		
Loggerhead Shrike	1					1	
White-eyed Vireo	1				1		
Solitary Vireo							
cassini	6	3			3		
plumbeus	1				1		
Red-eyed Vireo	1					1	
Warbling Vireo	5				1	1	
Black-and-white Warbler	1					1	3
Orange-crowned Warbler	21	10			4		
Nashville Warbler	2		7		1		
Virginia's Warbler	7		1		6		
Yellow Warbler	30		9	2	11	8	
Magnolia Warbler	2					1	1
Yellow-rumped Warbler							
Myrtle	1		1				
Audubon's	105	11	14	4	45	4	27
Myrtle X Audubon's	1		1				
Chestnut-sided Warbler	1					1	
Bay-breasted Warbler	1						1
Ovenbird	11			1		1	9
Northern Waterthrush	11		1	1	2	6	1
Northern Yellowthroat	12	1	5	1	3	2	
MacGillivray's Warbler	95	14	1		19	12	49
Yellow-breasted Chat	6		1		2	1	2
Wooded Warbler	2						2
Wilson's Warbler	255	160	21	1	32	5	36
American Redstart	7					4	3
Red-winged Blackbird	5		2	1	1	1	
Bullock's Oriole	75	1	4	2	32	19	21
Orchard Oriole	1						3
Western Tanager	22				9	3	10
Summer Tanager	4		4				
Hepatic Tanager	1				1		
Pyrrhuloxia	21				2	19	
Rose-breasted Grosbeak	6				2	3	1
Black-headed Grosbeak	4				2		2
Blue Grosbeak	25		3		3	10	9
Indigo Bunting	3				2		1
Lazuli Bunting	7	1	1		3	1	1
Painted Bunting	2		2				
House Finch	4	2					
Pine Siskin	2				1	1	
American Goldfinch	36		55			1	
Lesser Goldfinch	4		4				
Brown Towhee	2	2					
Green-tailed Towhee	9	6	1		1		1
Black-throated Sparrow	2					2	
Cassin's Sparrow	3						3
Gray-headed Junco	2	2					
Chipping Sparrow	41		38		3		
Clay-colored Sparrow	2						
Brewer's Sparrow	4	3	1				
White-crowned Sparrow	82	34	34		11	2	1
Lincoln's Sparrow	26		15	1	2	1	7
Swamp Sparrow	4		4				
Song Sparrow	2		2				
Total individuals	1534	271	258	16	322	193	474
species	87	24	36	10	46	45	40

The first three sites are on private land, and entry could only be made with permission. Rattlesnake Springs is a well-known and excellent locality, and Carrizalillo Spring is on Southern Pacific Railroad land and is open to the public. All of the sites except Perico Creek were sampled rather extensively, and even at that one we found visiting worthwhile (fair numbers of migrants, plus several of the endangered Red-headed Woodpeckers on territory). Besides migrants, Rattlesnake Springs yielded the first New Mexico nest of Eastern Bluebird, a candidate for the state endangered list, among its highlights.

In total, we banded 1536 individual birds of 87 species, plus three additional races. Specimens and photographs were obtained as well, and among the more interesting species were three that were verified in the state for the first time, Philadelphia Vireo and Canada and Mourning Warblers. (Details will appear in the Field Notes.) Among the more interesting results was the recovery, at Boone's Draw, of a Hermit Thrush banded at Bell Lake a few days before.

In the accompanying table, species are listed in taxonomic order. The data for Bell Lake are subdivided into the two time periods that operations were carried out.

**SOUTHWESTERN HAWK COUNT**  
BY BRUCE J, HAYWARD

This fall, the Silver City birders are sponsoring a replay of their Hawk Count. It was so successful last year, and we had so much fun, that most people felt that they wanted to try it again. We hope to prevent the mix-ups and duplications of last year. The count will be on November 29, Thanksgiving weekend. Brush up on your hawk identification, sharpen your pencils, and come along! We'll have a social hour in Silver City Friday night for those who wish to gather. The count will start about 8 am on Saturday. The hours between 11 am and 2 pm are poor for hawk watching, but lets keep track of things just to prove this. We'll gather in Deming at the Ramada Inn at 5:30 pm to have dinner and compare notes. We hope to cover all of Grant, Hidalgo, and Luna counties, and parts of Doña Ana and Sierra counties. The boundary of the survey is the Rio Grande on the east, the Mexican border on the south, and the Arizona line on the west. The north boundary extends along NM 78 (Mule Creek Road) to US 180, to Silver City, and then NM 90 east to the Rio Grande.

If you are interested, please write to me (address on p. 16) for directions and data forms. Specify the area you would like and we'll try to accomodate you, if it can be done without overlap. If you do not plan to come Friday for the social hour, mention it and I will mail you the material.

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