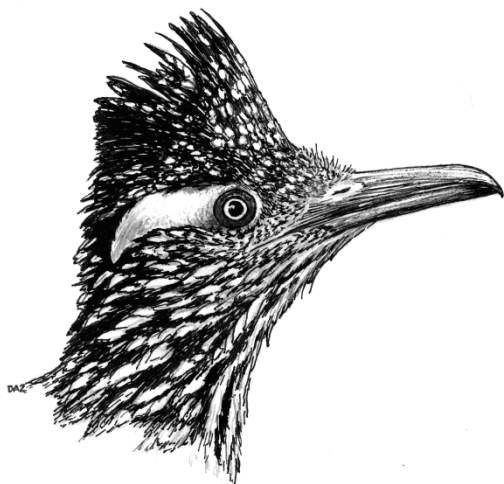


# NMOS BULLETIN



New Mexico  
Ornithological  
Society

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# THE NEW MEXICO ORNITHOLOGICAL SOCIETY, INC.

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## THE CAPE MAY WARBLER IN NEW MEXICO

SARTOR O. WILLIAMS III

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The Cape May Warbler (*Setophaga tigrina*) breeds in boreal forests of Canada and the northern United States, from Yukon east to Newfoundland and south to the northern Great Lakes states and New England; it migrates largely east of the Great Plains, and winters primarily in the West Indies and adjacent Caribbean regions of Central and South America (AOU 1998). In New Mexico, the Cape May is an occasional spring and fall transient, with but 14 well-documented records (supported by specimen, photograph, and/or written details) through 2013, making it one of the rarest of the “eastern vagrants” recorded in the state.

Within New Mexico, the species has occurred in eight counties, including west of the Rio Grande in San Juan (1 record), western Socorro (1), and Grant (4), and from the Rio Grande eastward in Taos (1), Santa Fe (1), central Socorro (1), De Baca (1), Chaves (1), and Eddy (3) (Fig.1).

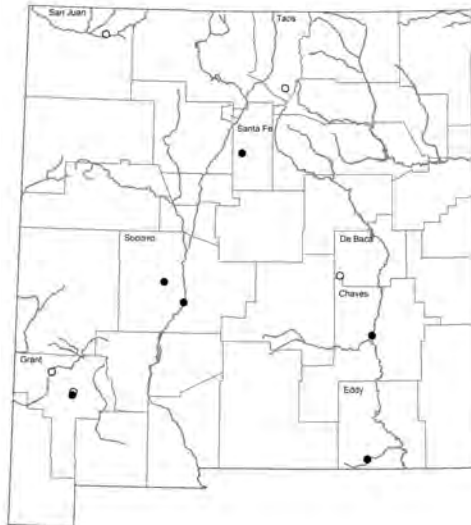


Figure 1. Map of New Mexico showing counties and locations of Cape May Warbler records through 2013. Solid circles indicate photograph or specimen; open circles indicate detailed sight records. Some localities represent more than one record.

Of the 14 records, seven occurred in spring during the period 1-21 May and two, which may have been late spring stragglers, were found 8 & 28 June, while the remaining five occurred in late autumn during the period 22 September-20 November (Figs. 2 and 3). Of the spring and early summer records, seven (78%) were from the Rio Grande eastward, while of the autumn records, four (80%) were from the west; the prevalence of autumn records from farther west in New Mexico conforms generally to the pattern found west to California, where the species occurs more frequently in autumn migration than in spring (Dunn and Garrett 1997).

All New Mexico records have been of single males, usually foraging in deciduous trees in riparian situations or in planted trees and shrubs in prairie grove, suburban yard, or orchard settings; one was feeding on insects at sap wells, one was struck by a vehicle on a tree- and shrub-lined street, and one was rescued, apparently unharmed, from a housecat. Of the 14 records, 11 were apparently present for only one day, but one was present at a site for two days, another for three days, and another for five days. Singing individuals were noted at Rattlesnake Springs 8-12 May 1994 and Sipapu Lodge 9 June 2006. Elevations of occurrence have ranged from 3500 ft (1065 m) up to 8200 ft (2500 m), but all except two were within the 3500-6100 ft (1065-1860 m) range.

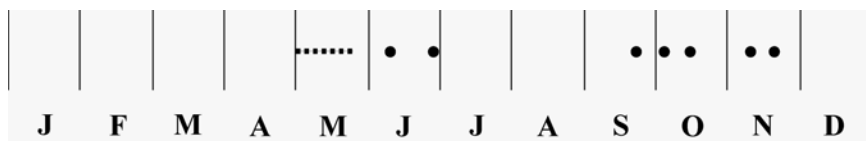


Figure 2. Bar graph indicating seasonal distribution of Cape May Warbler records in New Mexico through 2013. Broken line indicates irregular occurrence; dots represent isolated occurrences.

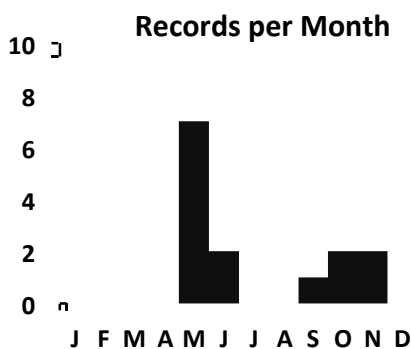


Figure 3. Histogram showing monthly occurrence of Cape May Warbler records in New Mexico through 2013 (n = 14).

The Cape May Warbler is considered a “spruce budworm specialist,” and continental Cape May populations fluctuate in response to spruce budworm (*Choristoneura fumiferana*) outbreaks on the breeding grounds (Baltz and Latta 1998), and this well-documented correlation is reflected in New Mexico records. First reported only in 1966 (*Audubon Field Notes* 21:65, Hubbard 1970, Zimmerman 1976), there were five New Mexico records during the five-year period 1973-1977, but only eight more in the 35 years since. This is counter to the popular notion that as birders and birding activity increase over time, records of vagrants likewise increase. However, the 1970s influx into New Mexico corresponded to a massive, well-documented budworm outbreak that occurred across the breeding range in the 1970s that resulted in significant Cape May Warbler population increases, followed by budworm, and hence warbler, decreases in the 1980s and later years (Morse 1978, 1989, Baltz and Latta 1998). Inspection of New Mexico records for full decades (1960-69 to 2000-09) reveals that 42% of New Mexico’s 12 records through 2009 occurred in the decade 1970-79 (Fig. 4). The Bay-breasted Warbler (*S. castanea*), another spruce budworm specialist, shows a strikingly similar pattern, with 44% of New Mexico’s 32 records through 2009 coming in the decade 1970-79 (S. O. Williams, unpub. data). In more recent decades, spraying to control budworms has reduced its boom-and-bust cycles, resulting in more stabilized Cape May Warbler populations (Baltz and Latta 1998) and correspondingly fewer New Mexico records.

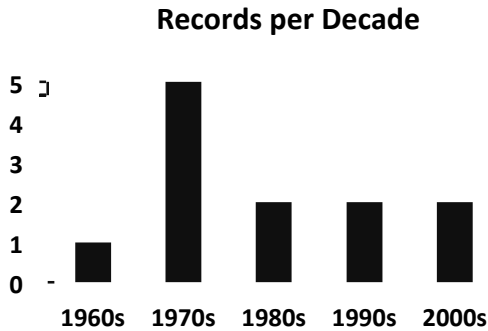


Figure 4. Histogram showing occurrence, by full decade, of Cape May Warbler records in New Mexico through 2009 (n = 12).

RECORDS [Counties, in *italics*, are listed alphabetically. Abbreviations for *Audubon Field Notes* and its successors (1947 to present) are *AFN* (*Audubon Field Notes*), *AB* (*American Birds*), *FN* (*Field Notes*), *NAB* (*North American Birds*). Other abbreviations are ph (photograph) and spec (specimen)]: *Chaves*: Bitter Lake NWR 1-2 May 1984 (*AB* 38:946; ph); *De Baca*: US 285 in southwest *De Baca* 22 September 1996 (*FN* 51:100); *Eddy*: Rattlesnake Springs 6 May 1973 (Zimmerman 1976), 21 May 1977 (*AB* 31:1034), 8-12 May 1994 (*FN* 48:329; ph); *Grant*: Cliff 5 mi north 4 May 1974 (*AB* 28:837, Zimmerman 1976), Silver City central 4 October 1974 (*AB* 28:837, Zimmerman 1976; spec Museum of Southwestern Biology), Silver City northwest 20 November 1966 (*AFN* 21:65, Zimmerman 1976), 14 October 1975 (*AB* 30:109, Zimmerman 1976); *San Juan*: Bloomfield “spring” [early May] 1981 (*AB* 35:851); *Santa Fe*: Cerrillos 3 mi northeast 28 June 2012 (*NAB* 66:711-712; ph); *Socorro*: Water Canyon 8-10 November 2007 (*NAB* 62:119; ph), Bosque del Apache NWR 8 May 2010 (G. K. Froehlich; ph); *Taos*: Sipapu Lodge 9 June 2006 (*NAB* 60:560).

### ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Patricia Mehlhop created the map, bar graph, and histograms. The manuscript benefitted from reviews by William H. Howe, David J. Krueper, and Janet Bair. Observers providing written details and/or photographs of Cape May Warblers to NMOS were Jon L. Dunn, Ralph A. Fisher Jr., Gary K. Froehlich, Greg W. Lasley, John E. Parmeter, John and Jan Rees, Mara E. Weisenberger, Steve West, Marjorie Williams, Carol Wolf, Kathy Wood, Dale A. Zimmerman, and Marian A. Zimmerman.

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Cape May Warbler near Cerrillos, Santa Fe County, 28 June 2012.  
Photo by Mara E. Weisenberger.

\* \* \*

**NEW MEXICO ORNITHOLOGICAL SOCIETY  
52nd ANNUAL MEETING  
APRIL 26, 2014**

The New Mexico Ornithological Society will hold its 52<sup>nd</sup> Annual Meeting on Saturday April 26, 2014 at the Best Western Rio Grande Inn, Albuquerque, New Mexico. This meeting will include an NMOS business meeting, an NMOS general science session, and an evening banquet. The keynote banquet speaker will be announced soon. Further details on the meeting will be posted on the NMOS website ([www.nmbirds.org](http://www.nmbirds.org)) as they become available.

**NMOS 52nd ANNUAL MEETING  
CALL FOR PAPERS  
NMOS GENERAL SCIENCE SESSION**

Oral presentations for the NMOS General Science Session will be allotted 15 minutes, with an additional five-minute period for questions. Papers may range from technical reports of original research to more general presentations addressing science-related questions. Poster presentations are also encouraged; size should be no larger than 36" H X 48" W.

Please submit abstracts for the General Science Session containing the following:

TITLE (in all capital letters) of no more than 20 words  
Names and addresses of author(s) in the following form:

- TITLE (in all capital letters) of no more than 20 words.
- Names and addresses of author(s) in the following form:

Bear, V. L. and C. Finch  
Dept. of Ornithology  
University of Central New Mexico  
Birdsville, NM 88666

- Body of abstract as one single-spaced paragraph, not to exceed 250 words.
- Include E-mail address and/or phone number of presenting author.

Please email your abstract, including the entire abstract in the body of the email, NOT as an attachment. This will prevent any problems with incompatible word processing formats. Please email your abstract to Martha Desmond at [mdesmond@nmsu.edu](mailto:mdesmond@nmsu.edu) AND Chuck Hayes [Chuck.Hayes@state.nm.us](mailto:Chuck.Hayes@state.nm.us) by March 1, 2014. All abstract submissions will be acknowledged within a week of receipt. If no acknowledgement is received, it is the submitter's responsibility to follow up with the Session Chair to ensure consideration.

The abstracts for the NMOS General Science Session will be distributed at the meeting and will be published in the *NMOS Bulletin*.

SESSION Chair: Martha Desmond 575-646-1217  
BACKUP: Chuck Hayes 505-944-5477

\* \* \*



## NMOS RESEARCH GRANTS

The New Mexico Ornithological Society offers two research grants each year to help support research on New Mexico birds. The *Ryan Beaulieu Research Grant* for \$1000, is presented in memory of Ryan Beaulieu. Following the wishes of Ryan's family, this grant will support research projects that do not involve the collection of birds.

The *NMOS Research Grant* is also available for \$1000.

The criteria for both grants are:

- The grant money must be spent while conducting research on birds in New Mexico;
- The recipient must either present a paper based on the research at an annual NMOS meeting or submit an article based on the research to the NMOS Bulletin; and
- Preference will be given to student applicants.

A short research proposal (2 pages maximum) must be submitted describing the nature of the project and how the allocated funds are to be spent (e.g., on gas, tape recording, specific equipment, etc.). Each proposal should state clearly whether the project does or does not involve collection of birds. Each proposal should include two letters of reference, one of which should be from a graduate advisor if the applicant is a graduate student. References should comment on the applicant's commitment to New Mexico ornithology and ability to design and carry out creative, independent research. All proposals will be evaluated together and up to two proposals will be awarded grants. The *Ryan Beaulieu Research Grant* will fund a project that does not involve the collection of birds; the *NMOS Research Grant* is open to all projects that meet the criteria above.

Please submit your electronic proposal, "NMOS Grant" in the subject line, to:

Dr. Janet Ruth  
USGS Arid Lands Field Station  
Albuquerque, NM (janet\_ruth@usgs.gov)

**The deadline for 2014 Research Grant proposals is 1 March 2014.** All applications will be acknowledged within a week of proposal receipt. If no acknowledgement is received, it is the applicant's responsibility to follow up with their submission to ensure consideration. Grant awards are announced at the NMOS Annual Meeting.

## **NMOS OHIO FIELD TRIP RECAP**

The NMOS-sponsored fundraising trip, Spring Migration in Ohio: Warblers, Woodlands, and More, took place May 16 through 22, 2013. Seven trip participants were treated to the best of what the Eastern U.S. has to offer at the peak of migration. We spent several days working woodlands and hotspots, including the famed boardwalk at Magee Marsh, on the south shore of Lake Erie, in pursuit of passerine migrants, before meandering down to the hemlock forests in the hills of Amish Country to observe a number of songbirds on their breeding grounds. Along the way, we hit beaches, estuaries, and a top-notch restored grassland on private property, among other habitats and world-class birding locales.

Aside from the incredible scenery, the birds were stunning and cooperative. We observed 28 species of warblers, with the vast majority offering long studies of individuals of each age and sex class. We were treated to long views of birds foraging, singing, and even observed nesting behavior of Yellow and Prothonotary Warblers! We watched slack-jawed as flocks of diurnal-migrant Blue Jays streamed overhead; enjoyed extended studies of a Pileated Woodpecker foraging on a downed tree; were charmed by point-blank views of an American Woodcock incubating her eggs; observed a pair of Baltimore Orioles weaving their nest; and chuckled at the antics of a pair of Semipalmated Plovers dancing in unison as part of a bonding ritual. For many, the highlight of the trip was being granted permission to bird an outstanding private grassland area that has been painstakingly restored over many, many years. Here, we were thrilled by scope views of near side-by-side singing Henslow's and Grasshopper Sparrows as Bobolinks displayed overhead, bubbling over with joy that a new spring had arrived. All-in-all, we tallied 148 species of birds, ticked approximately 10 different habitat types, observed a myriad of plants, wildflowers, trees, bugs, and even got great looks at the gorgeous, range-restricted, and Ohio state-listed threatened Blanding's turtle!

Many thanks to our trip participants: Sylvia Fee, Larry Gorbet, Nancy Hetrick, Lou Prime, Donna Royer, and Beverly Silfer for making the trip a memorable experience for all and a resounding success for the society!

Ashli Gorbet, NMOS Secretary



Photos: A couple of the “treats” observed by NMOS Ohio field trip participants: Prothonotary Warbler (above) and Blackburnian Warbler (below).

\* \* \*

## **REVIEWERS FOR VOLUME 41**

The New Mexico Ornithological Society and the Editor of the *NMOS Bulletin* thank the following individuals who served as reviewers for manuscripts that appeared in Volume 41 of the *Bulletin*:

Matthew J. Baumann, William H. Howe, David J. Krueper, Brian A. Millsap, Terrell D. Rich, Sartor O. Williams III.

\* \* \*

## **MEMBERSHIP DUES REMINDER**

Please take the opportunity now to pay your 2014 NMOS membership dues. To pay for membership, please download the membership form from our website ([www.nmbirds.org](http://www.nmbirds.org)), fill out, and mail to the following address, providing a check made out to "NMOS". Thank you!

New Mexico Ornithological Society  
P.O. Box 3068  
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\* \* \*

# NEW MEXICO ORNITHOLOGICAL SOCIETY

— *Founded 1962* —

The New Mexico Ornithological Society was organized to gather and disseminate accurate information concerning the bird life of New Mexico; to promote interest in and appreciation of the value of birds, both aesthetic and economic, to further effective conservation of the state's avifauna; to facilitate opportunity for acquaintance and fellowship among those interested in birds and nature; and to issue publications as a means of furthering these ends.

Membership and Subscriptions: Membership in the New Mexico Ornithological Society is open to anyone with an interest in birds. Memberships are for a calendar year and annual dues are payable 1 January. Dues are: Regular Membership \$20; Family \$30; Student \$10; Supporting \$50; Life \$500. Address for the New Mexico Ornithological Society: Post Office Box 3068, Albuquerque, NM 87190-3068.

## *NMOS BULLETIN*

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NMOS members are encouraged to submit articles and news. Articles received are subject to review and editing. Published articles are noted in major abstracting services. Please submit articles in double-spaced electronic format, such as a Microsoft Word document, by e-mail to the Editor (see inside front cover). Refer to recent issues of the *Bulletin* for examples of style. News items may be submitted to the Editor by way of e-mail.

**[www.nmbirds.org](http://www.nmbirds.org)**

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