

NMOS BULLETIN



New Mexico
Ornithological
Society

Vol. 42, No. 1

CONTENTS

2014

Articles

A HIGH ELEVATION NEST OF PEREGRINE FALCON IN NEW MEXICO

Bernard N. Foy.....3

Announcements and Information

NOTE FROM THE OUTGOING PRESIDENT.....1

NOTE FROM THE INCOMING PRESIDENT2

NMOS RESEARCH GRANTS RECIPIENTS.....5

RECAP OF CHIAPAS MX FUNDRAISING TRIP.....7

2013 NMOS FINANCIAL STATEMENT.....9

MEMBERSHIP DUES REMINDER 10

THE NEW MEXICO ORNITHOLOGICAL SOCIETY, INC.

Post Office Box 3068, Albuquerque, New Mexico 87190-3068
www.nmbirds.org

OFFICERS FOR 2014 – 2016

President:

Chuck Hayes, New Mexico Department of Game and Fish, One Wildlife Way, Santa Fe, NM 87507; chuck.hayes@state.nm.us

Vice-President:

Jonathan Batkin, 129 West Zia Road, Santa Fe, NM 87505
cottonwoodnm@comcast.net

Secretary:

Ashli Gorbet, c/o NMOS, P.O. Box 3068, Albuquerque, NM 87190
antelope916@hotmail.com

Treasurer:

Jerry Oldenettel, 499 Farm-to-Market Road, Socorro, NM 87801
borealowl@aol.com

Director:

Martha Desmond, New Mexico State University, P. O. Box 30003,
MSC 4901, Las Cruces, NM 88003-8003; mdesmond@nmsu.edu

Director:

Kathy Granillo, Sevilleta National Wildlife Refuge, P.O. Box 1248
Socorro, NM 87801; kathy_granillo@fws.gov

Director:

Matt Baumann, c/o NMOS, P.O. Box 3068, Albuquerque, NM 87190
mb687@yahoo.com

Editors, NMOS Field Notes:

Editor:

Sartor O. Williams III, 1819 Meadowview Drive NW,
Albuquerque, NM 87104; sunbittern@earthlink.net

Assistant Editor:

William H. Howe, P. O. Box 461, Albuquerque, NM 87103
whhowe@centurylink.net

Editor, NMOS Bulletin:

Janet Bair, c/o NMOS, P.O. Box 3068, Albuquerque, NM 87190
jbair7@gmail.com

A NOTE FROM THE OUTGOING PRESIDENT

Spring, with its daily arrival of new migrants, the ever-present south winds, and the 52nd annual NMOS Meeting is nearly in the past. And with the change in seasons, there has been a change in leadership within NMOS. I have decided to step down as President effective 26 April 2014. I have had the distinct pleasure (and I really do mean that) to have served the Society for eight years as Vice-President and then for the last four years as President.

When I first moved here in 2001, I was excited about the opportunity to learn about my new home state, to visit all of its corners, and to conduct some serious birding to gain knowledge of the status and distribution of the avifauna. That desire has not changed, but in the process, I also found out a great deal more about the state than expected. Now, granted I came to New Mexico from Arizona. I lived and birded for 15 years along the San Pedro River and throughout Cochise Country. A Birders Paradise, right? How could that be topped? The short answer – EASILY. The sheer diversity of habitats, the abundance of resident and migrant bird species, and the low human population density combined to steer my thinking firmly into the camp of “New Mexico is #1.” I have enjoyed traveling the state, meeting with its many birders, and communicating with the membership of NMOS. I will continue to do so.

NMOS has come a long way in the last half-century. At times the organization seemed to be on its last legs, but now it appears that NMOS is vibrant and dynamic, with a wide variety of exciting programs and projects being worked on. Our recent three fund-raising trips designed to generate money for the 4th edition of the New Mexico Bird Finding Guide were very successful in terms of client satisfaction, monies generated and total species seen (e.g., see Chiapas article in this issue). The Guide itself is moving forward albeit slowly (but surely this reminder will generate some momentum), and the NMOS Bulletin and the NMOS Field Notes continue to produce informative and interesting articles about New Mexico’s avifauna. The Ryan Beaulieu Research Grant and the NMOS Research Grant Program continue funding important studies throughout the state, assisting students with resources to continue important fieldwork. The NM Bird Records Committee continues to maintain its high quality review process on the status and distribution of the birds of New Mexico. The glue that makes these many programs work is the Officers, Board Members and NMOS members who donate time, energy and their expertise to making this all continue forward. I have had a great group of people to work with, and I thank all of them for the many great memories and the interesting challenges we faced together. I look forward to continuing my participation with NMOS, and will most certainly be seeing you either in the field or at upcoming meetings.

--Dave Krueper

A NOTE FROM THE INCOMING NMOS PRESIDENT

If you run in circles of New Mexicans whose interests and conversations tend to fall within the realms of biology or conservation, I'm going to say something you might not have heard for a while: I'm optimistic about how this year will turn out. The 2014 monsoon forecast is the best we've had in several years. The torrential rains of September 2013 allowed us to start the year with a little more water saved up in our reservoirs, and a bit more vegetation providing overwinter ground cover, compared to the last couple years. The Curve-billed Thrashers nesting in our front yard have escaped their annual fate of complete, roadrunner-induced nest failure (which is not a statement against our state bird, mind you). And the New Mexico Ornithological Society is in great shape.

The current health of NMOS is in no small part due to work of a couple of our outgoing board members. President Dave Krueper is riding off to a well-earned emeritus status after 12 years of service as an officer to NMOS. Those were very active years, which included Dave being the impetus behind the NMOS fundraising birding trips to Cuba and Chiapas, Mexico, among many other things he did for the society. Janet Ruth is also an outgoing board member (Director) who has served as an invaluable resource of institutional memory and hands-on assistance for a tremendous breadth of NMOS activities, including website management and research grant proposal review processes. But the cupboard has not been left bare. The collective talents of the other returning NMOS officers and board members are quite impressive, covering areas not only within ornithology but also matters of finances, logistics, habitat management, and other topics. The folks who assist NMOS as publications editors, New Mexico Bird Records Committee members, and authors and editors who are revising the New Mexico Bird Finding Guide perform equally vital roles in helping NMOS make information regarding the birds of New Mexico available to all of its members.

Finally, I'd just like to relay a comment that one of our new board members made to me about STP. For those of us of a certain generation, STP is suggestive of something to boost car engine performance (and for those who immediately thought of Stone Temple Pilots, we're glad to have your generation among the membership, also). But in this case STP refers to the Same Ten People syndrome. It's a common affliction for many organizations that are made up entirely of volunteers, where a small subset of the membership repeatedly serves in various organizational roles that are intended to represent the membership as a whole. Continuous circulation of information within the STP is not an effective model for an organization whose mission is to serve as a statewide clearinghouse for bird-related information among amateur and professional ornithologists of all levels of experience and skill. So I'd encourage each NMOS member to find something that NMOS does which strikes a personal interest—whether it be field expeditions, documenting bird observations from around the state,

or promoting interest in New Mexico's avifauna—and step up to take a larger role in spreading the word about what NMOS can do for all of us.

-- Chuck Hayes, President

* * *

A HIGH-ELEVATION NEST OF PEREGRINE FALCON IN NEW MEXICO

BERNARD R. FOY
214 Spruce St., Santa Fe, NM, 87501

I am reporting a previously unknown nest of Peregrine Falcons (*Falco peregrinus*) in the Sangre de Cristo Mountains of northern New Mexico at an exceptionally high elevation of 3430 m (11,260 ft). Surveys demonstrated that this site was occupied in 2011, 2012, and 2013. Two young fledged in 2012 and three in 2013. This successful nest site is potentially the highest documented in the Rocky Mountains, and therefore one of the highest in the United States and Canada.

Fig. 1 shows a juvenile from the nest in flight, identifiable by dark streaking on the body and a light-colored terminal tail band (Wheeler 2003). Adults and young on the nest ledge were also observed through a spotting scope. Distinctive "wailing" calls, rising in pitch (see Macaulay Library recording 86548), were heard on all visits and were given by both adults and young. The precise location is withheld to limit disturbance, but the site is typical of peregrines in being a horizontal ledge on a cliff with near-vertical faces above and below (Wheeler 2003). The cliff is mid-way up a steep mountain slope facing generally northeast; dense spruce-fir (*Picea* sp. – *Abies* sp.) forest ascends above the cliff. Nestlings were observed on exactly the same rock ledge in 2012 and 2013; the single post-breeding observation in 2011 yielded no information on precise nest location or breeding success. Some protection from snow and rain is afforded by overhanging rock above the ledge. The ledge appeared to face in a northerly direction, but inaccessibility prevented a more certain determination. Observations in June and July showed that the ledge was partially illuminated by the sun from early morning to afternoon, although the overhang provided partial mid-day shade from the sun. The nestlings were observed using both shaded and sunlit portions of the ledge. I observed snow and ice in the vicinity of the ledge during egg laying and incubation; it is conceivable that morning sunlight was a factor in site selection.

Comparing the appearance of the nestlings on multiple days to a set of unpublished photographs from another nest (Canadian Peregrine Foundation 2014), I estimate the 2012-2013 hatching dates to have been in the range of May 28 to June 5. This is perhaps slightly later than average for New Mexico, but within the range of variation (T.H. Johnson, pers. comm.; Stahlecker 2010). I measured the nest elevation by hiking

to a point with equivalent height several hundred meters away, where several readings on a Global Positioning System unit yielded an estimate of 3430 ± 15 m. In New Mexico, the vast majority of nest sites are below 3050 m elevation, and the previous record high was 3170 m (T.H. Johnson, pers. comm.). Data from nearby states include the following: Colorado, highest nest is 3292 m (Craig 2004); Wyoming, 3115 m (T. McEneaney, pers. comm.); Montana, 2835 m (J. Sumner, *in litt.* 2013); California, 2590 m (Gaines 1992). The Birds of North America account states that peregrines “may breed to 3600 m in Rocky Mtns.”, but no elevations are specified (White *et al.* 2014). I was unable to find a systematic tabulation of nest elevations in the US, but it seems likely that this new nest is the highest in the Rocky Mountain region, and probably in the US and Canada.

The discovery of this site reveals that peregrines may be capable of using higher nest locations than previously realized. It is clear that the species can tolerate cold weather, since arctic nesting is well documented. In the southwestern US, further search near the highest peaks could lead to additional discoveries.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

Dawn Foy assisted in field observations. Terrell H. Johnson contributed information on nesting preferences in New Mexico and the western US, and on fledging and other behaviors. Terry McEneaney, Jay Sumner, and Michael Rogers provided information on nest sites outside of New Mexico.

LITERATURE CITED

- Craig, G.R. and J.H. Enderson. 2004. "Peregrine Falcon Biology and Management in Colorado," Tech. Pub. 43, Colorado Division of Wildlife, Denver, Colorado.
- Gaines, D. and K. Hansen. 1992. Birds of Yosemite and the East Slope, Artemisia Press, Lee Vining, California.
- Stahlecker, D.W. 2010. "Peregrine Falcon," in Raptors of New Mexico (J.L.E. Cartron, ed.). University of New Mexico Press, Albuquerque.
- The Canadian Peregrine Foundation. 2014. Unpublished photographs: see <http://www.peregrine-foundation.ca/info/ageguide.html>.
- Wheeler, B.K. 2003. Raptors of Western North America. Princeton Univ. Press, Princeton, New Jersey.

White, C.M., N.J. Clum, T.J. Cade and W.G. Hunt. 2002. Peregrine Falcon (*Falco peregrinus*), The Birds of North America Online (A. Poole, Ed.). Ithaca: Cornell Lab of Ornithology. Retrieved from <http://bna.birds.cornell.edu/bna/species/660>.



Fig. 1. Juvenile Peregrine Falcon flying near the subject nest site in the Sangre de Cristo Mountains on 17 August 2013. Photograph by B.R. Foy.

* * *

NMOS 2014 RESEARCH GRANTS AWARDS

The New Mexico Ornithological Society is pleased to announce the recipients of the 2014 NMOS Research Grant and the 2014 Ryan Beaulieu Research Grant. Each will receive \$1000 to support their research on New Mexico birds.

NMOS RESEARCH GRANT

Cody Strong, New Mexico State University - Investigating Lesser Prairie-Chicken (*Tympanuchus pallidicinctus*) seasonal habitat use, reproduction, and survival to understand patterns of declining lek attendance.

In April 2014 the Lesser Prairie-Chicken was listed as Threatened under the U.S. Endangered Species Act. The Lesser Prairie-Chicken was once native to shortgrass and

mixed-grass prairies throughout Texas, Oklahoma, Kansas, Colorado, and New Mexico. However, across its range it has declined by 90% from historical levels. The goal of this study is to provide guidance to resource managers to better manage lands to benefit the species. The project will study Lesser Prairie-Chickens on the Sand Ranch Area of Critical Environmental Concern (ACEC) in eastern New Mexico that has been identified as a “stronghold” for the species by the Lesser Prairie-Chicken Interstate Working Group. In spite of this designation, there has been an alarming pattern of lek abandonment and population declines in the area. They will capture and track adult birds, find and monitor nests, measure vegetative structure, invertebrate abundance, humidity and temperature at nests, etc. With these data they will characterize the breeding biology, demographics, movement patterns, and habitat use of this population of Lesser Prairie-Chickens, identify limiting factors to their population, and provide control data for other studies in areas affected by energy development and other management practices. NMOS funds will be used to purchase equipment (e.g., materials for funnel traps) and fuel for fieldwork.

RYAN BEAULIEU RESEARCH GRANT

DeeAnne Meliopoulos, New Mexico State University - Impacts of Solar Energy Development on Breeding Birds of the Nutt Grasslands, NM.

Renewable energy development is showing unprecedented growth in the West and concerns about impacts on wildlife have been gaining attention. Although studies of the direct and indirect impacts of wind energy on wildlife and ecosystems have been increasing and producing results, the environmental impacts of solar energy development are largely unexplored. Desert grasslands in southern New Mexico, and the grassland birds that rely on them, are of conservation concern. This is a region with high solar energy potential, and in 2013 the Macho Springs photovoltaic solar power project was initiated in the grasslands between Hatch and Nutt in southwestern New Mexico. This project will survey breeding birds (with a focus on Horned Larks and meadowlark species), find and monitor nests, and record vocalizations, all on plots at varying distances from the solar facility. They will also measure vegetation, invertebrate abundance, and background noise. Results will be used to model bird abundance, diversity, nest survival, nest predation rates, and song characteristics in relation to distance from the solar installation, vegetation characteristics, insect abundance, and background noise levels. NMOS funds will be used to purchase equipment (e.g., sound level meters to record background noise levels).

* * *

RECAP OF NMOS CHIAPAS, MEXICO FUND-RAISING TRIP

From March 20 – 2 April 2014, eleven NMOS members toured Chiapas, MX on our fundraising field trip to this wonderful southernmost state of Mexico. The participants were treated to the superb guiding services of David MacKay of Alamos, Sonora, and the group also enjoyed the services of local guides at several localities. Designed to hit as many of the accessible habitats within a short drive of the capitol city of Tuxtla Gutierrez (TG), we spent the first three days of the tour in the high elevations, along the Atlantic Slope, and then in the interior valleys toward the Pacific Slope.

Making for a long first day, we headed to the mountains east of San Cristobal de las Casas where we had crippling views of Pink-headed Warbler, Rusty Sparrow and Blue-and-white Mockingbird before ending the day at the Reserva Huitepec attempting to see Unspotted Saw-whet Owl. On the second day we birded the tropical evergreen forests near El Ocote on the Atlantic Slope to the north and west of TG, recording such specialty species as Nava's Wren (singing and seen well, which is very unusual), Long-billed Gnatwren, Blue-crowned Motmot, and Keel-billed Toucan. We ended the day at a large reservoir where we observed up to eight Sinaloa Martins as they flew overhead. On the third day we visited Cañon del Sumidero where we saw Slender Sheartail, Belted Flycatcher and incredible views of the canyon below us before driving south and east to Jaltanango for the night before our hike into El Triunfo Biosphere Reserve.

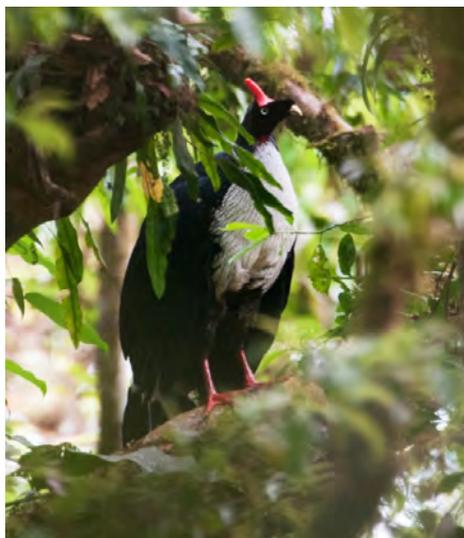
The next morning we loaded into trucks and drove to the trailhead where the caballeros loaded our gear onto mules and we hiked into one of the most remote locations in the Western Hemisphere. This huge Reserve is home to hundreds of species of birds, and we saw plenty of them on the 12 km hike to the facilities which were to be our home for the next four days and nights. Accommodations were rustic but totally adequate (beds and flush toilets!) and the meals simple yet substantial. We birded many of the trails based out of this central complex, and observed Resplendent Quetzals doing display flights, Yellow Grosbeaks, White-faced Quail-Dove, Spotted Nightingale-Thrush, Collared Trogon and the outrageous Horned Guan (photo) whose world population is estimated to be around 2500 individuals. We then hiked down the Pacific side of the Sierra Madre Occidental during a three-day journey, birding all day long while the mules carried our gear for us to our next camping location down the mountain (25 km total). After meeting our waiting bus, we drove north to Arriaga to our hotel for a hot shower and cold beer, and prepared for one last day of birding in the Pacific Lowlands.

On our last day we scoured the lowland tropical deciduous forest habitats of coastal Chiapas and found Rosita's and Orange-breasted buntings, Lesser Ground Cuckoo, Giant Wren (photo), Mangrove Cuckoo, and a suite of coastal waterbirds. We then drove back to TG for our last night in Chiapas together, and had a magnificent meal at the hotel while compiling our species totals. Not only did we generate needed monies for the NMOS publication fund, we tallied over 400 species for the trip, including 7

cracid species, 27 raptor species, 12 species of doves/pigeons, 30 hummingbird species, 5 trogon species, 5 of the 6 species of motmots recorded in the country, 9 species of parrot, and an amazing 31 species of warblers.



Above: Giant Wren Below: Horned Guan
Photos: Dave Krueper



**NMOS FINANCIAL STATEMENT
AS OF 31 DECEMBER, 2013**

| | |
|-------------------------|-------------|
| Balance as of 12/31/12: | |
| 2011 Account Balance | \$26,089.60 |
| Petty Cash | 32.29 |
| Total | \$26,121.89 |

| | |
|--|-----------|
| Net Transactions from 1/1/13 through 12/31/13: | |
| Dues | 2350.00 |
| Bird Finding Guide Sales | 968.00 |
| NM Field Checklist Sales | 25.25 |
| Annual meeting | 430.91 |
| Donations and deposits | 12,719.00 |
| Postage and shipping | -213.87 |
| Miscellaneous | -263.24 |
| Grants | -2000.00 |
| Printing | 106.00 |
| Database/Bird Finding Guide | 3360.00 |
| Storage Unit Rent | -1000.00 |
| Interest | 4.90 |
| Total Transactions | \$9766.95 |

| | |
|---|------------|
| Total 2013 beginning balance, plus transactions | \$35888.84 |
|---|------------|

| | |
|--------------------------|------------|
| Balance as of 12/31/13: | |
| Checking Account Balance | 12,273.77 |
| Savings Account Balance | 23,462.78 |
| Petty Cash Balance | 32.29 |
| Undeposited Checks | 120.00 |
| 12/31/13 balance | \$35888.84 |

Petty cash income and disbursements (\$0.00 and \$(0.00)) are included in the income and expense categories above.

Net deposits for El Truinfo trip: \$9,000.00

Zimmerman print sales: \$1025.00

Submitted by: Jerry R. Oldenettel, Treasurer, 5 March, 2014

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), 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
Albuquerque, NM 87190-3068

* * *

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

ISSN 2167-003X

The *Bulletin* is published quarterly; subscription is by membership in NMOS. The *Bulletin* serves two primary purposes: (1) to publish articles of scientific merit concerning the distribution, abundance, status, behavior, and ecology of the avifauna of New Mexico and its contiguous regions; and (2) to publish news and announcements deemed of interest to the New Mexico ornithological community.

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

This issue of the *NMOS Bulletin* published June 8, 2014
Printed on 100% recycled paper.

New Mexico Ornithological Society
P.O. Box 3068
Albuquerque, NM 87190-3068

NON-PROFIT
ORGANIZATION
U.S. POSTAGE

PAID

PERMIT NO. 623
ALBUQUERQUE, NM

ADDRESS SERVICE REQUESTED