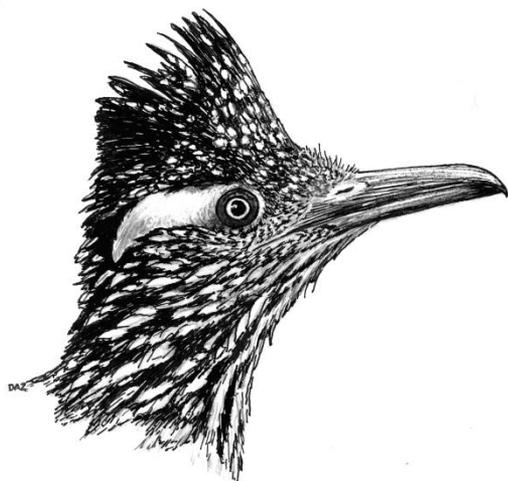


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UNDERWEIGHT AMERICAN WOODCOCK SPECIMENS FROM NEW MEXICO

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Abstract – There are currently 16 American Woodcock records for New Mexico. Three of these records are documented with specimens. Two of the specimens were salvaged from Socorro County near the town of Magdalena, and both are deposited at the Museum of Southwestern Biology at the University of New Mexico. Both of these specimens were males and were underweight compared to the species average from the core of the woodcock wintering range in the southeastern United States. The salvaged Magdalena specimens apparently were unable to find sufficient food to maintain body weight in drier Chihuahuan Desert habitat outside of mesic riparian areas.

The American Woodcock (*Scolopax minor*) is a migratory woodland shorebird (Scolopacidae) of eastern North America. It inhabits upland thickets, shrubland, wet and open forest, and brushy swampland on breeding and wintering grounds. Woodcocks breed from eastern Saskatchewan to Nova Scotia and south to the panhandle of Florida and across southern states to eastern Texas. The wintering distribution of the American Woodcock extends from the Lower Rio Grande Valley of Texas to the Everglades of Florida and north along the Atlantic coast to southern Maine. Inland, the northern limit of wintering woodcocks is roughly 40 degrees north latitude. As a migrant, woodcocks tend to remain in the forested eastern half of North America, rarely venturing west into the Great Plains (McAuley et al. 2013). In this note, we provide a synopsis of American Woodcock records for New Mexico and report on the body masses of the two salvaged specimens.

Sixteen American Woodcocks have been documented in New Mexico; three with specimens, four with photographs, and nine with adequately written details (S.O. Williams III *in litt.* 2013). Five woodcock records are from the Pecos drainage with one from the “Melrose Migrant Trap” on the eastern plains in Roosevelt County (Parmeter 2007) and four from the lower Pecos River Valley in Eddy County. Seven woodcock records are from the middle and lower Rio Grande Valley in Sandoval, Bernalillo, Socorro, and Doña Ana Counties. The remaining four records are from west of the Rio Grande corridor. Three of these are from western Socorro County and one is from west of the continental divide in Catron County.

Fifteen of these 16 records were from late autumn or early spring migration periods for the species (McAuley et al. 2013), with eight records during 11 October - 12 December and seven records during 25 January - 29 March. The remaining record was a mid-summer observation on 9 July 1982 (NMOS Field Notes database online).

The first American Woodcock record for New Mexico was a specimen collected by F. Turner on 25 January 1964 along the Del Rio Canal, two miles north of Mesilla Dam in Doña Ana County (Harris 1965). This bird flushed from a stand of salt cedar (*Tamarix* spp). The specimen is deposited at the Vertebrate Museum, Biology Department, New Mexico State University (No. 2767). It was sexed as a female, but no information was reported on body mass, fat deposition, or stomach contents (Peter Houde *in litt.* 2012).

The remaining two American Woodcock specimens are from west of the Rio Grande Valley near Magdalena, Socorro County, where they were salvaged 42 years apart; both were males and both were found in poor body condition and extremely under weight. These two specimens were prepared as study skins and deposited at the Museum of Southwestern Biology (MSB) at the University of New Mexico. The first (MSB 3507) was found dead on 29 March 1969, 10 miles west of Magdalena. It was prepared by J. D. Ligon and described as 'thin and dehydrated,' weighed 97.6 g, and had adult and larval beetles in its stomach. The second male (MSB 39139) was found alive on 2 December 2011 in Magdalena after a major windstorm. It was brought to a rehabilitator where it died shortly after. We received the bird from Wildlife Rescue, Inc. of New Mexico. This bird, prepared by SGD, weighed 72.2 g, and its sternal keel was noted as protruding when the bird was prepared. It had survived in captivity briefly and its stomach contents would not have reflected its natural diet, thus were not examined. The body masses of MSB 3507 and MSB 39139 were approximately 35% and 50% less, respectively, than the average mass of wintering males from Louisiana and Mississippi at 155 +/- 1 g (Owen and Krohn 1973).

The American Woodcock diet consists of up to 79% earthworms by volume (McAuley et al. 2013). Woodcocks, however, exhibit notable geographic variation in their consumption of other invertebrate prey items (McAuley et al. 2013). These geographic differences are likely associated with shifts in local invertebrate abundances, suggesting that the American Woodcock is an opportunistic invertebrate feeder (Miller and Causey 1985, McAuley et al. 2013). The Chihuahuan Desert of central and southern New Mexico is depauperate of earthworms and other suitable invertebrate prey items (Gates 1967, Whitford et al. 1995).

Given its preference for mesic habitat (McAuley et al. 2013), suitable woodcock habitat is quite limited in New Mexico. Not surprisingly, 13 of the 16 records are from wet, muddy, shady areas in or near riparian habitat where earthworms and other invertebrate prey are likely common. The three woodcocks documented away from riparian habitat consist of the Melrose Migrant Trap observation and the two Magdalena specimens. The Melrose Migrant Trap is a grove of large cottonwoods and poplars (*Populus* spp.) with a sapling understory, deep shade, and leaf litter in a shallow drainage at a capped spring (Parmeter 2007; S.O. Williams *in litt.* 2013).

The two Magdalena specimens were found away from mesic, riparian habitat and were unable to maintain sufficient weight, despite MSB 3507 having beetle prey items in its stomach. Captive woodcocks can require a daily food intake of over twice their body mass to maintain weight (McAuley et al. 2013). Migrating woodcocks would thus require an abundance of invertebrate prey items to maintain sufficient body mass to

fuel migration. The southwestern United States is generally sub-optimal for the American Woodcock, but the limited riparian habitats within the region may provide sufficient sustenance for continued migration should a bird be fortunate enough to find these areas.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

We thank the dedicated wildlife rehabilitators in New Mexico for their continued support in assisting us to build the collection at the MSB. Peter Houde provided information on the specimen archived at The Vertebrate Museum, Biology Department, New Mexico State University. Sandy Williams provided extensive information on the American Woodcock records that he has compiled and maintained for the New Mexico Bird Records Committee, as well as a description of the Melrose Migrant Trap. Sandy Brantley provided information on arthropod diversity and abundance in the Southwest. Christopher Witt, Sandy Williams, and three anonymous reviewers provided helpful comments on earlier versions of the manuscript.

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**NEW MEXICO ORNITHOLOGICAL SOCIETY
53RD ANNUAL MEETING
11 APRIL 2015**

The New Mexico Ornithological Society (NMOS) will hold its 53rd Annual Meeting on Saturday, 11 April 2015, at the Holiday Inn in Roswell. This meeting will include an NMOS business meeting, an NMOS general science session, and an evening banquet and keynote speaker centered around the meeting theme: shorebirds of New Mexico. Registration is required for all events. Meeting participants are encouraged to stay on site at the Holiday Inn, which has established a special discounted room rate for NMOS meeting attendees.

There will be a minimal registration fee (\$10 - \$20 for pre-registration; \$15 - \$25 for on-site registration) for the Annual Meeting to cover meeting expenses (meeting facility, program/abstract booklet and refreshments at the breaks). The abstracts for presentations at the NMOS General Science Session will be distributed at the meeting and will be published in the *NMOS Bulletin*.

The NMOS evening banquet will also be held at the Roswell Holiday Inn. The banquet will be a buffet dinner with a choice of entrees, including options for vegans, and those who are gluten- or dairy-free. Other dietary restrictions should be noted on the registration form. The price is \$25 (note that this includes tax and gratuity) and banquet reservations are available with pre-registration only. Payment for meeting registration and the banquet are to be made through NMOS using the registration form and process below.

NMOS is coordinating with the United Field Ornithologists of Roswell (UFO-R) to host an organized, guided field trip (no charge) on Sunday morning following the meeting. This field trip will provide meeting participants with an opportunity to see and learn about migrant and wintering birds of the Pecos River valley.

Please go to the NMOS web site, (www.nm.birds.org) click on the Annual Meeting tab, save a copy of the Word version of the registration form to your computer, and fill out the form. Email the form to Ashli Gorbet at antelope916@hotmail.com AND print a hard copy and mail with payment according to instructions below. If you do not have access to a computer, please complete the form below and mail to Ashli at the address provided on the form.

**NMOS ANNUAL MEETING
REGISTRATION FORM**

REGISTRATION and FEES (payable to NMOS) ARE DUE BY MARCH 27!

Pre-registration fee levels and banquet reservations are only available if registration and payment are received by due date

of Meeting Pre-Registrations @ \$20 _____; # of Student Meeting Pre-Registrations @ \$10 _____

of Reservations for Saturday Banquet @ \$25 _____

To assist in planning, please specify any dietary limitations:

TOTAL AMOUNT ENCLOSED _____

Please indicate your interest in the field trip on Sunday # _____

NAME(S): _____

ADDRESS: _____

E-mail: _____

PLEASE provide your email address. It will enable us to contact you to confirm registration or with last-minute information (e.g., emergency meeting cancellation, information about field trips, etc.). All registrations will be acknowledged by email within a week of receipt. If no acknowledgement is received, it is your responsibility to follow up with Ashli to ensure registration.

Email your Registration Form to: antelope916@hotmail.com

ALSO Mail Payment & Registration Form to:

Ashli Gorbet
7204 Oralee St. NE
Albuquerque, NM 87109

Checks should be made out to "NMOS".

**NMOS 53rd 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:

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. The deadline for the submission of abstracts will be 1 March 2015. Please email your abstract to Martha Desmond at mdesmond@nmsu.edu AND Kathy Granillo at kathy_granillo@fws.gov.

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**.

* * *

NMOS RESEARCH GRANTS

NMOS 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. For more information about Ryan Beaulieu and his bird research interests, see the *Audubon* magazine article, *Band of Brothers* about Ryan and his friends Raymond VanBuskirk and Michael Hilchey and their Rosy-Finch project. 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 with "NMOS Grant" in the subject line to: Matt Baumann mb687@yahoo.com.

The deadline for 2015 Research Grant proposals is 1 March 2015. 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 will be announced at the NMOS Annual Meeting (11 April 2015, Roswell).

* * *

REVIEWERS FOR VOLUME 42

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 42 of the *Bulletin*:

David J. Krueper, Brian A. Millsap, Janet M. Ruth, Dale W. Stahlecker, Sartor O. Williams III.

* * *

MEMBERSHIP DUES REMINDER

Please take the opportunity now to pay your 2015 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!

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* * *

NOTE FROM THE EDITOR

With publication of this edition of the *Bulletin*, I am stepping down and Erin Greenlee will assume editorship of the *NMOS Bulletin*. A New Mexico native and avian ecologist, Erin received her Ph.D. from Ohio State University. Her current area of expertise is Gray Jay behavior and natural history. Please submit manuscripts to Erin at the following email address: eringreenlee@gmail.com.

* * *

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.

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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.

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