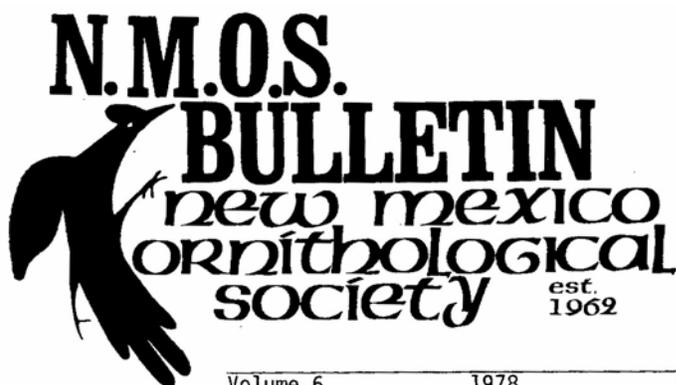


Disclaimer: This file has been scanned with an optical character recognition program, often an erroneous process. Every effort has been made to correct any material errors due to the scanning process. Some portions of the publication have been reformatted for better web presentation. Announcements and add copy have usually been omitted in the web presentation. We would appreciate that any errors other than formatting be reported to the NMOS at this web site. Any critical use of dates or numbers from individual records should be checked against the original publication before use as these are very difficult to catch in editing.



**NOTICE OF ANNUAL MEETING AND CALL FOR PAPERS**

The 1978 annual meeting of the N.M.O.S. will be held in Portales at the Biology Department and Natural History Museum at Eastern New Mexico University. The dates will be April 7-9, with the regular session on Saturday, April 8th. An "open house" will be held at the Museum from 6 to 9 pm on Friday, and field trips will be available on Sunday. The latter will include trips to the booming grounds of Lesser Prairie Chickens, as well as to the Prairie Reserve, Oasis State Park, and Boone's Draw. Anyone interested in giving a paper should contact John Hubbard or Bruce Hayward. Members are also invited to bring a small assortment of bird slides, which will be shown at a time to be selected during the meeting. We urge you all to attend the meeting in Portales and to get to know the prairie chickens and other grassland species.

**NEW PUBLICATION OF THE N.M.O.S.**

Just issued is Charles A. Hundertmark's, "Breeding Birds of Elephant Butte Marsh", N.M.O.S. Publication No. 5, 18 pages. Chuck describes this most important breeding area of cormorants and herons. In total some 64 breeders are discussed, along with 32 other species of birds recorded in summer. Costs are as follows (includes postage--order from the Secretary)

\$ 0.85 -- 1st copy to members (through December 1978)  
1.00 -- per copy, wholesale (dealers only)  
1.35 -- per copy, retail

Please support the Society by purchasing this fine publication--it will be sold also at the annual meeting in Portales.

### REPORT OF THE NOMINATING COMMITTEE

At the 7 January 1978 meeting of the Board, Bruce Hayward appointed Ralph Raitt as chairman of the nominating committee. Serving with Ralph are Charles Davis and Bill Principe, and the charge is to submit a slate of directors-at-large to be voted on at the next annual meeting (Portales, 8 April, 1978). The committee has renominated the present directors for another term, i.e., Bill Baltosser, John Hubbard, and Jim Travis. If anyone else would like to nominate candidates for directors, they may do so by contacting Ralph Raitt. Please do so well in advance of the annual meeting, and be sure that the nominees are willing to serve.

### THE BREEDING AND SEASONAL STATUS OF THE MOUNTAIN PLOVER IN NEW MEXICO

By John P. Hubbard

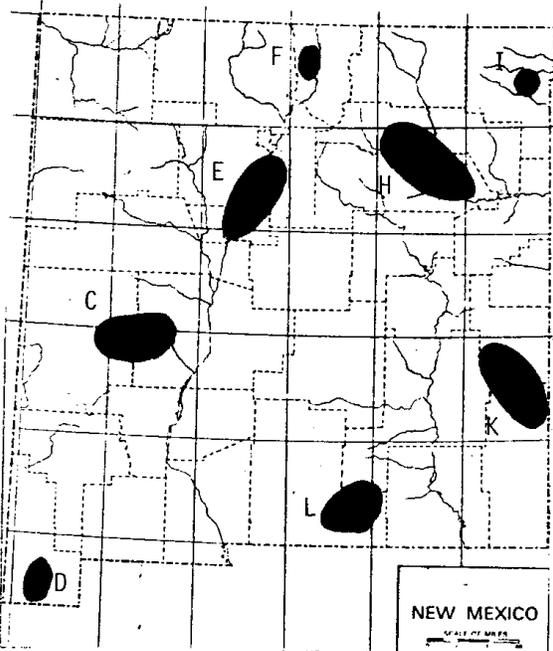
Recently, Graul and Webster (1976) have outlined what they consider the present breeding range of the Mountain Plover (*Charadrius montanus*) in North America and estimated the total population as on the order of two to three hundred thousand adults. They contend that the present major breeding area is from eastern Montana to the extreme northwestern Panhandle of Texas. The range was formerly more extensive, but few or no recent breeding records exist from the Dakotas, Nebraska, and Kansas. The range also has apparently declined in the states where breeding still occurs, including New Mexico.

At the outset, it should be pointed out that no systematic survey of breeding Mountain Plovers has ever been carried out in New Mexico. Perhaps the closest thing to this were the broader surveys of the state's fauna carried out by the indefatigable J. Stokley Ligon in the early part of this century. For example, in 1913, 1920, and 1924 he especially concentrated on birdlife in areas occupied by these plovers, and he also observed them at intervals throughout the period 1905-1928 (Bailey, 1928) and later Ligon (1961). Based on Ligon's early work and that of others, we may reconstruct what may be a reasonably accurate outline of the breeding range of the Mountain Plover in New Mexico in what might be termed the "early" period (1800's through 1940).

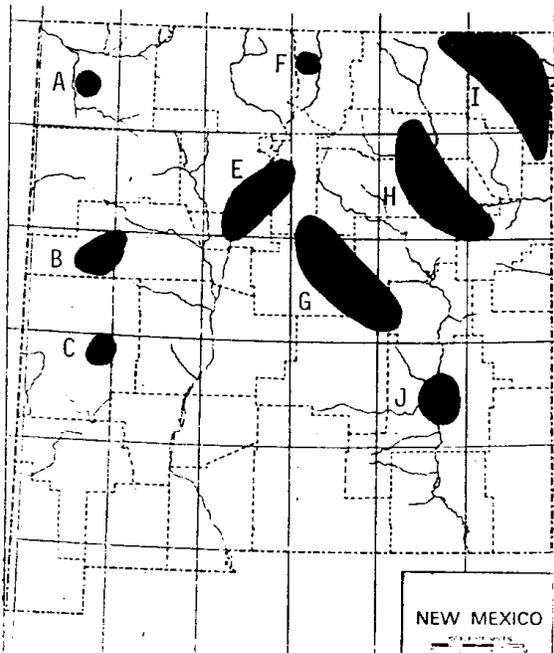
The earliest record of the Mountain Plover seems to have been in eastern San Miguel County, where a Mr. Henry is said to have found them "common" in 1855 (Bailey, 1928:249). By 1928 (Bailey, op. cit.) the species was known as a breeding bird "sparingly but practically all over New Mexico," and the data that I have assembled from the literature and specimens largely bear this out. Breeding populations were known from the eastern plains, the Rio Grande Basin, San Agustin Plains, Animas Valley, and the Tularosa Basin (Table 1; map 1). Oddly enough, there was only one firm record in the extreme northeast--now considered by Graul and Webster (1976) as the major breeding area in New Mexico. No breeding populations were identified in the extreme northwest, North Plains, and in the central-eastern part of the state.

In recent years, data have continued to accumulate on the Mountain Plover in New Mexico, particularly since the founding of the New Mexico Ornithological Society in 1962. Based on information for the last 20 years one finds that breeding populations of plover still persist in the eastern plains and the upper Rio Grande Basin (Table 1, Map 2). However, populations previously identified in the southern half of the state have either not been confirmed or now appear to have declined. No recent reports of summering plovers are available from the Animas Valley (a record near Rodeo of one 12 May 1974 appears to be a late migrant), Tularosa Basin, and southeastern plains,

BREEDING AREAS OF MOUNTAIN PLOVERS  
IN NEW MEXICO



MAP 1: Pre-1940



MAP 2: Post-1950

Areas are as follows:

- |                       |                     |
|-----------------------|---------------------|
| A--Northwest          | G--Central Plains   |
| B--North Plains       | H--Las Vegas Plains |
| C--San Agustin Plains | I--Northeast        |
| D--Animas Valley      | J--Roswell Plains   |
| E--Rio Grande         | K--Southeast        |
| F--Taos Plains        | L--Tularosa Basin   |

and the only record from the San Agustin Plains is of one bird about 25 miles SSW of Datil on 26 May 1972. However, breeding has been confirmed for the first time on the Navajo Reservation (Tolle, 1976) and in the North Plains. In addition, many more records have been obtained--and the existence of a breeding population has been confirmed--in the northeast.

Numbers of birds are difficult to compare in any before-and-after manner, as few figures exist from the early period. While such terms as "common," "rather common," and "quite a number" are used (Bailey, 1928), the specific numbers are seldom more than a dozen or so birds. The major exception is Ligon's (1961) report of 150 birds in one place near Tatum on 3 July 1937. Ligon's statement that this was a very large number echoes his earlier observation that "in all my travels throughout its New Mexico range, as well as northward in other states, I have never found it to be common" (Ligon, 1928).

In recent years observations have generally been limited to chance encounters, so that numbers of plovers seen seldom reflect more than a count of birds at one or two points at a time. Again, numbers are generally on the order of a dozen or fewer birds per date. However, groups of 20 to 100 have been reported in the eastern plains and vicinity on seven occasions in the period 1964 to 1975. In addition, there are several breeding bird routes that traverse areas known to harbor plovers (Table 2), with two routes--Grenville and Wagon Mound--consistently recording the species and two others--Roswell and Fence Lake--recording them only infrequently. The figures have been variable on the first two counts, ranging from 0 to 24 (mean 9.8 birds) and 9 to 11 (mean 4.4 birds), respectively.

Besides the lack of mere solid census data, there may also be a more general bias in counting birds now (versus in the past), in that the less productive means of the motor

vehicle (on roads) rather than horseback or walking is the main mode of travel through plover habitat. Thus, for various reasons, it seems impossible to say whether numbers of plovers have declined between the early and the recent period in New Mexico. On the other hand, it would seem that the overall range in the state has declined, in that several known breeding areas now appear to have been abandoned. The "gains" in the far west and northeast could be more apparent than real, and it is likely that the northeast--and perhaps also the North Plains--were occupied in the early period as well.

TABLE 1. OCCURRENCE OF MOUNTAIN PLOVERS IN BREEDING SEASON<sup>1</sup>

AREAS <sup>2</sup> , YEARS, AND STATUS OF OCCURRENCES											
A	B	C	D	E	F	G	H	I	J	K	L
<u>EARLY PERIOD</u>											
0	0	*1915	*1926	1864	1916	0	*1940	1933	0	*1924	1917
		*1940	1928	*1874						*1926	1926
		*1933	1916						1937		
			1918								
<u>RECENT PERIOD</u>											
*1974	*1968	1972	1974 <sup>3</sup>	1963	1976	1955	1969	*1966	*1955	0	0
	1972			*1966		1962	1970	*1967	*1966		
	1975			*1967		1965	1972	1971	*1967		
				1973		1970	1973	1972	*1968		
				1974		1972	1974	1973	1975		
				*1975		1976	1974	*1977			
				*1976		1977	1975				
								*1977			

<sup>1</sup> Breeding season 15 April-15 July; asterisk (\*) indicates breeding.

<sup>2</sup> See map (previous page) for explanation of letters used to designate areas.

<sup>3</sup> Record of probable late migrant near Rodeo 15 May 1974.

TABLE 2. MOUNTAIN PLOVERS COUNTED ON NEW MEXICO BREEDING BIRD ROUTES AREA

<u>AREA and ROUTE</u>	<u>YEARS and NUMBERS OF PLOVERS COUNTED<sup>1</sup></u>										
	68	69	70	71	72	73	74	75	76	77	
<u>NORTHEAST</u>											
Grenville		1	0	11	6	15	10	24	12	17	2
Wagon Mound		-	-	5	11	7	0	4	-	1	3
<u>EAST-CENTRAL</u>											
Roswell		1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	4
<u>NORTH PLAIN</u>											
Fence Lake		-	-	-	-	-	-	-	3	-	0

<sup>1</sup> Dash indicates that route was not run (all counts once in May or June, 50 3-minute stops in 25 miles from near dawn to mid-morning-run in years 1968-1977).

There is also the point to be made that New Mexico is a large state and still only superficially surveyed over much of its area. It is quite possible that plovers may still breed in former haunts in the south, especially in the large and inadequately covered San Agustin Plains and the Tularosa Basin. It is also possible that the range and numbers of plovers in the state have

varied since prehistoric times, which would mean that birds could return to areas even if absent now. Given that the present breeding range of the Mountain Plover now seems less extensive in New Mexico than in the past, the question arises as to why this may be so. Plovers favor areas of cropped or naturally short grass in New Mexico, and grazing seems likely to perpetuate this condition for the foreseeable future. Some areas that may not now be occupied have perhaps become unsuitable, such as those developed for agriculture or otherwise greatly disturbed. In the case of the Animas Valley, it is even conceivable that grazing is not heavy enough to keep the grasses acceptably cropped! However, this is not the usual situation in New Mexico and in general much of the rangeland in the state would appear suitable as plover habitat.

It is also possible that New Mexico's apparent decline in occupied plover breeding range is the result of extralimited factors. For example, the Mountain Plover is present in New Mexico mainly from March into October, wintering mainly in California, Mexico, and Texas. If significant habitat losses have occurred on the wintering grounds, it would follow that any resultant population reductions would be transmitted to subsequent breeding season. After sufficient losses one could expect significant decreases in the range and/or numbers of breeding birds. This might well be a factor affecting New Mexico, especially if birds from there winter in those sections of Texas or California that have suffered increasing losses of habitat.

The point is made above that the Mountain Plover does not winter in New Mexico, although Ligon (1961) states that there are December and even January records there. I am unaware that Ligon had any such records himself, and it is possible that his inferences were drawn from Bailey (1928). According to that source, these plovers were "noted occasionally in fall" in the Carlsbad area by G. Willett. However, Bailey (1928:36) states that Willett visited that area in the periods 30 December 1914-20 January 1915, 21 February-15 March 1916, and 11-23 December 1916. None of these periods is really the "fall," and Ligon may have assumed that December and January were intended. However, this assumption would not agree with the body of data on occurrence now at hand.

Based on records gathered over the last century and a quarter, it is clear that the Mountain Plover occurs regularly in New Mexico from March through late September and earliest October. In spring, the earliest records are as follows:

3 March--Deming (1975)  
8 March--Roswell (1976)  
16 March--Roswell (1962)  
20 March--Carlsbad (1965), Clayton (1966)  
21 March--Roswell (1965)  
26 March--Lake Arthur--Chaves Co. (1971)  
Fence Lake--Valencia Co. (1975)  
28 March--Datil Mts.--Catron Co. (1895)  
29 March--\*Santo Domingo--Sandoval Co. (1976)

\*not detected there 9-26 March 1976

Nesting commences in April and young begin to appear in May (10th--Animas Valley, 1933); egg laying continues into May (young at Roswell as early as 23 May; Albuquerque, 2 June; Clayton, 12 June) and even into June (Santo Domingo Pueblo, 22 June 1975 and south of Grants, 29 June 1968). Usually by late July or early August the young are full-grown, although the immature plumage

persists well into autumn.

#### BIBLIOGRAPHY

- Bailey, F. M. 1928. Birds of New Mexico. N. Mex. Deot. Game and Fish, Santa Fe.
- Graul, W. D. and L. E. Webster. 1976. Breeding status of the Mountain Plover. Condor 78:265-267.
- Ligon, J. S. 1928. Wildlife of New Mexico. N. Mex. Dept. Game and Fish, Santa Fe.
- Ligon, J. S. 1961. New Mexico birds and where to find them. Univ. New Mexico Press, Albuquerque.
- Tolle, D. 1976. A westward extension in the breeding range of the Mountain Plover. Wilson Bull. 88:358-359.

#### CORRECTION

The new bird group founded by Larry Murphy is the Otero County (not Alamogordo) Bird Club.

#### 1977 CHRISTMAS BIRD COUNT INFORMATION NEEDED

Data from Christmas counts are a major source of our knowledge on the winter season, and all compilers can help make this source even more useful by sending their lists and totals to John Hubbard for the winter period American Birds report (deadline about 10 March). So far information has been received only on the Bosque del Apache NWR, Glenwood, and Sandia Mts. counts. Please take some time to make this information available and to send it in now.

#### TURN IN YOUR NEST RECORD CARDS

So far 266 N.M.O.S. Nest Record Cards have been received for the 1977 breeding season, with about 80 species covered--not counting a report of a "Greg Schmitt" nesting 2 1/2 feet up in a mesquite in Luna Co.! Cards have been submitted by Dot DeLollis (3), Ralph Fisher (106), Bruce Hayward (41), John Hubbard (42), Mickey Lange (1), Greg Schmitt (21--or 22?), Marge Swain (32), and Marian Zimmerman (2).

#### NEEDED: DATA ON PEREGRINE FALCONS IN NEW MEXICO

The Endangered Species Program of the New Mexico Department of Game and Fish maps occurrences of all species listed as endangered in the state. One of these species is the Peregrine Falcon (*Falco peregrinus*), and data are especially needed concerning it. It is hoped that such data will reveal important migratory routes and wintering areas, as well as indicating possible breeding areas. Information submitted will be used to supplement the extensive reviews that have already been made of such sources as the N.M.O.S. Field Notes and American Birds. Particularly needed now are unpublished data, including numbers, ages, localities, dates, breeding information, and observers. Information will be held in confidence and released only on a need-to-know basis. Please send it to John Hubbard.

#### NEWS OF MEMBERS

We are saddened to report that Mary Orr Russell suffered a paralytic stroke and is in St. Joseph's Hospital in Albuquerque. We hope for the speedy and full recovery of this active and nature-loving friend from Reserve.  
-----Marjorie Williams has moved to Alabama, which is that state's birding

gain and our loss--we wish her well.

-----Ross Teuber is well-recovered (+ birding again) from open-heart surgery and is due to retire from the Forest Service in April

**NEW MEXICO BIRD BIBLIOGRAPHY BEING COMPILED**

Work is progressing on a bibliography of articles that have been published on or pertaining to the birds of New Mexico. Over 400 different citations have been carded at present, but surely there are many others still to be recorded. Reviews have been completed of most of the obvious sources (e.g. Auk, Condor, Wilson Bulletin, Western Birds, American Birds) but many more obscure ones remain. You can help by sending in any that you have, to include author, date, title, source (e.g., journal, volume, pages). Subjects can cover any aspect of the bird life of New Mexico. In addition, anyone wanting the bibliography should express written interest to Hubbard.