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ANNUAL MEETING TO BE HELD IN ALBUQUERQUE

By John P. Hubbard

The 1981 annual meeting of the New Mexico Ornithological Society will be held in Albuquerque at the University of New Mexico, Department of Biology, on 11-12 April 1981. A complete schedule will be published early in 1981, but we expect to have the business and paper session on Saturday morning and an identification workshop in the afternoon. There will also be a program that evening, and on Sunday morning a field trip will be scheduled.

This notice will serve as a call for papers or other formal participation in the annual meeting. We will entertain requests for time from anyone, with the emphasis on New Mexico ornithology. Contact Jim Travis, who is the program chairman, or me (Co-chairman).

A nominating committee has been appointed, consisting of Bill Baltosser, Greg Schmitt, and Rex Wahl. Nominees are needed for all officers and for one board member at large. Volunteers for any of these jobs should contact one of the nominating committee members. Their addresses and telephone numbers are:

Bill Baltosser, c/o New Mexico Department of Game and Fish, 1480 N. Main, Las Cruces, New Mexico, 88001 (505-524-7491).

Greg Schmitt, c/o New Mexico Department of Game and Fish, Villagra Building, Santa Fe, New Mexico, 87503 (505-827-2438).

Rex Wahl, c/o Heritage Program, Department of Natural Resources, Villagra Building, Santa Fe, New Mexico, 87503 (505-827-5531).

## SAY PHOEBE NESTS IN AN ACTIVE URANIUM MINE

By Toren Olson

On 13 June 1978, I located a Say Phoebe (*Sayornis saya*) nest, 31 feet inside the portal of a decline drift in a small, active uranium mine near Grants, New Mexico. The nest was about 8.5 feet above the ground level. The birds were not bothered by the continuous traffic underneath, unless a light was shined directly on the nest. When this happened, the adult would fly to the portal and call to divert attention from the nest.

Young were heard on 5 July 1978, after returning from the 4th of July weekend. On 11 July 1978, a bullsnake (*Pituophis melanoleucus*) ate all but one young bird. The parents still attended this one, until it disappeared on 13 July 1978. The adults were not seen after this date.

### ON CORRECT IDENTIFICATION

By George N. Sutton

It sometimes seems to me that the only person fully qualified to comment on that which gives sight records full validity is the confirmed collector of specimens who has had the experience of identifying a living bird in the field to his complete satisfaction, then of collecting that very bird only to find it not to be of the species he had been sure it was.

Three times I have had that experience—first at Churchill, Manitoba, along the west coast of Hudson Bay in the summer of 1931, when I crawled across a mudflat on a very foggy day stalking what I felt sure was a Hudsonian Godwit (*Limosa haemastica*) only to find, after I'd collected the bird, that it was a Stilt Sandpiper (*Micropalama himantopus*) in full breeding feather. In heavy fog the bird had appeared to be three times its actual size. That's how fog can affect visibility.

Again, in the northern panhandle of West Virginia, I collected what I felt sure was an adult male Blue Grosbeak (*Guiraca caerulea*), a species that had never been reported from that area, and picked up a Gray Catbird (*Dumetella carolinensis*), a common species there. The sky was clear and very blue that day. The feathers of the catbird's back had reflected that blue and the bird died because I, convinced that the blueness was that of a Blue Grosbeak, and mindful that I had many times failed to obtain an important specimen as a result of too much deliberation, did not check one very important point--the looks of the bird's bill. Many a reader will say: What nonsense: Nobody'd ever mistake a catbird for a grosbeak! To which I reply: That's exactly what I did. I wanted very much to obtain a Blue Grosbeak. And the reflected blueness tipped the scales in favor of my calling the catbird a grosbeak. It was as simple as that; and the point of this particular discussion is that what happened to me, a veteran.

Again, in central Oklahoma, this time on 13 September 1954, along the east edge of Norman, I collected what I'd identified as a Philadelphia Vireo (*Vireo philadelphicus*), at that time a species that had never been taken in Oklahoma. I had noted the strongly yellowish tone of the flanks and the rather warm tone on the chest and was confident that the bird was a Philadelphia, this despite the fact that I'd heard a Warbling Vireo (*V. gilvus*) singing more than once that morning in that very area. When I picked the specimen up I saw at once that it was a Warbling Vireo. Its chest was pale buffy, not yellow. For a moment I toyed with the idea that I'd seen one

bird and shot another; then I knew that I'd simply misidentified the bird while it was alive.

So nowadays when someone tells me that what he saw was surely a raven (*Corvus corax*) because it was "so much larger" than a crow (*C. brachyrhynchos*), or a Great-tailed Grackle (*Quiscalus mexicanus*) because it was "a whole lot bigger" than a Common Grackle (*Q. quiscula*), the first question I ask is this "Was the day foggy?" Or, if the moot bird was supposedly a Philadelphia Vireo, I insist on ascertaining that the color of the underparts was the right sort of light, clear yellow and that this color extended throughout the whole of the throat and breast, before I feel sure that the bird was not a Warbling Vireo.

Most bird students are honest; but I have reason to suspect that many of those who dedicate their efforts primarily to building up a "life list" tend to be content with identifications that are not entirely satisfactory. Especially is this true when the "life lister" knows that the locality and season are right for the species he is determined to see. After all, he may have travelled across a continent just to see that particular species.

Here in Cleveland County, Oklahoma, those of us who have worked, really worked, with the birds of the area know that Smith's Longspur (*Calcarius pictus*) is a fairly regular winter resident. We know about when it arrives and about when it departs. We know from specimens carefully collected and examined that the molt into handsome breeding feather does not start while the species is here. We know about where to look for the birds, for they seem to be attracted winter after winter to certain largely treeless fields.

How many of us know just what to look for in identifying Smith's Longspur--the boldly black-and-white lesser and middle wing coverts in adult males (a feature that can be seen clearly on a bright day as the birds fly past), the strongly buffy tone of the underparts in both sexes, the diagnostic tail pattern? Showing visitors from afar some flying longspurs and announcing that "they could be Smith's Longspurs" is not enough. Falling back on the well documented statement that all four longspurs are known to occur here in winter is not enough. The truly scientific "life lister" will have in mind just what characters to look for and also exactly what the analogous characters are in similar species before he calls his sight record completely valid.

(Editor's note: This article is reprinted from the Bulletin of The Oklahoma Ornithological Society, 10(4):28-29, 1977. I thank that Society for permission to use the article here, and having had the same experiences as Doc. Sutton, I agree in full with his thesis).

#### **SUMMER BIRDS OF THE "BALDY COUNTRY," COLFAX COUNTY, NEW MEXICO**

By R. A. Rowlett

The following species of birds were observed in the summers of 1966 and 1967 in the "Baldy Country" of Colfax County, New Mexico. The "Baldy Country" is that reach of the Sangre de Cristo Mountains between Eagle Nest and Cimarron, from French Henry Camp (9600 ft.) to Baldy Peak (12,441 ft.)--including Baldy Town, Aztec Ridge, Copper Park, French Henry Ridge, and the ridges to Touch-me-Not Peak.

Turkey Vulture (*Cathartes aura*): Uncommon, all life zones.  
Goshawk (*Accipiter gentilis*): Occasional, all forested areas.

Sharp-shinned Hawk (*Accipiter striatus*): Occasional, all forested areas.  
Red-tailed Hawk (*Buteo jamaicensis*): Uncommon, all forested areas.  
Golden Eagle (*Aquila chrysaetos*): Occasional, all life zones; visitor at Copper Park, 25 August 1967.  
Marsh Hawk (*Circus cyaneus*): Seen in alpine tundra meadow, 27 and 29 July 1967  
Peregrine Falcon (*Falco peregrinus*): One over alpine tundra, 25 July 1967.  
American Kestrel (*Falco sparverius*): Uncommon, all life zones, becoming fairly common during August around timberline.  
Blue Grouse (*Dendragapus obscurus*): Common, all forested areas; all stages of young observed at Baldy Town, Aztec Ridge, French Henry Mine, and at timberline.  
Turkey (*Meleagris gallopavo*): Uncommon, around Baldy Town and Aztec Ridge.  
Great Horned Owl (*Bubo virginianus*): Uncommon, all forested areas.  
Poor-will (*Phalaenoptilus nuttallii*): Occasional, Baldy Town and French Henry; also east of false peak of Baldy Peak (11,200 ft.) 12 August 1967.  
Common Nighthawk (*Chordeiles minor*): Common below 10,000 ft.; abundant all life zones during migration, estimated 600 Observed over Baldy Town, 5:10 p.m., 6 August 1966.  
Broad-tailed Hummingbird (*Selasphorus platycercus*): Common, all life zones; nest containing 2 young, 5 ft. above ground in spruce (*Picea* sp.) at French Henry, 14 August 1967.  
Rufous Hummingbird (*Selasphorus rufus*): Common in migration, 7-26 July 1967; observed as many as 20 every morning between French Henry and Copper Park.  
Calliope Hummingbird (*Stellula calliope*): Uncommon in migration, 12 July to 25 August 1967; observed most frequently between Copper Park and French Henry, 12 July to 25 July. Observed occasionally in all life zones until the end of August, but most frequent above timberline.  
Common Flicker (*Colaptes auratus*): Common, all forested areas.  
Yellow-bellied Sapsucker (*Sphyrapicus varius*): Occasional, all forested areas below 10,000 ft.  
Williamson Sapsucker (*Sphyrapicus thyroideus*): Occasional, all forested areas. This bird seemed to be quite abundant in the southern part of the Ranch, i.e. Clear Creek, Apache Springs.  
Hairy Woodpecker (*Picoides villosus*): Fairly common, all forested areas.  
Northern Three-toed Woodpecker (*Picoides tridactylus*): Uncommon, all forested areas; young being fed by adult July-August 1967.  
Western Flycatcher (*Empidonax difficilis*): Common, all forested areas; nests found at Baldy Town, French Henry, and Ponil Number 2 Mine.  
Violet-green Swallow (*Tachycineta thalassina*): Uncommon, French Henry and Baldy Town; occasional above timberline (12,400 ft.).  
Cliff Swallow (*Petrochelidon pyrrhonota*): Occasional at Baldy Town.  
Gray Jay (*Perisoreus canadensis*): Common, especially above 10,000 ft. (to timberline).  
Steller Jay (*Cyanocitta stelleri*): Common, all forested areas below 11,000 ft.  
Common Raven (*Corvus corax*): Common, all life zones.  
Clark Nutcracker (*Nucifraga columbiana*): Common, all life zones  
Black-capped Chickadee (*Parus atricapillus*): Occasional, all forested areas, usually below 10,000 ft.; also between French Henry and Copper Park, 27 June 1967.  
Mountain Chickadee (*Parus gambeli*): Abundant, all forested areas.  
White-breasted Nuthatch (*Sitta carolinensis*): Uncommon, all forested areas.  
Red-breasted Nuthatch (*Sitta caniadensis*): Found nesting at Copper Park, June..July 1967; fairly common in mid-August in all forest areas.  
Brown Creeper (*Certhia familiaris*): Fairly common, all forested  
House Wren (*Troglodytes aedon*): Uncommon, all forested areas (generally below 10,000 ft.), becoming fairly common to timberline during

August; nesting in chimney of old hotel, Baldy Town, 1966.

Robin (*Turdus migratorius*): Abundant, all forest areas.

Hermit Thrush (*Catharus guttatus*): Common, all forested areas.

Mountain Bluebird (*Sialia currucoides*): Uncommon, all forested areas.

Townsend Solitaire (*Myadestes townsendi*): Fairly common, all forested areas.

Golden-crowned Kinglet (*Regulus satrapa*): Uncommon, all forested areas; common in August.

Ruby-crowned Kinglet (*Regulus calendula*): Fairly common, all forested areas.

Water Pipit (*Anthus spinoletta*): Uncommon, alpine tundra; observed adults feeding young, early August 1967 (12,000 ft.).

Loggerhead Shrike (*Lanius ludovicianus*): One seen in a fir (*Abies lasiocarpa*) in a meadow at Copper Park, 23 August 1966.

Warbling Vireo (*Vireo gilvus*): Common, all forested areas, especially in fairly large aspen (*Populus tremuloides*) groves; nest with 2 young at French Henry Camp.

Audubon Warbler (*Dendroica coronata*): Common, all forested areas.

Townsend Warbler (*Dendroica townsendi*): Uncommon, all forested areas in mid-August.

Wilson Warbler (*Wilsonia pusilla*): Seen in Copper Park, 26 August 1967.

Western Tanager (*Piranga ludoviciana*): Uncommon, all forested areas; nest in white fir (*Abies concolor*), adults feeding young, French Henry, 1967.

Black-headed Grosbeak (*Pheucticus melanocephala*): Seen in the vicinity of Baldy Town, 14 July 1967, in oak (*Quercus* sp.) and white fir on south slope of Aztec Ridge.

Pine Grosbeak (*Pinicola enucleator*): Uncommon, all forested areas.

Pine Siskin (*Carduelis spinus*): Common, all forested areas; frequently seen above timberline.

Red Crossbill (*Loxia curvirostra*): Occasional, all forested areas.

Green-tailed Towhee (*Pipilo chlorura*): Uncommon, all forested areas (usually below 10,200 ft.), young observed at Baldy Town and French Henry.

Rufous-sided Towhee (*Pipilo erythrophthalmus*): Two seen in the vicinity of Baldy Town, 15 July 1967, in oak and Douglas fir (*Pseudotsuga menziesii*) on south slope of Aztec Ridge (10,050 ft.).

Gray-headed Junco (*Junco caniceps*): Abundant, all forested areas; frequently seen above timberline.

Chipping Sparrow (*Spizella passerina*): Uncommon, all forested areas (usually below 10,000 ft.); frequently found around timberline during August.

White-crowned Sparrow (*Zonotrichia leucophrys*): Uncommon at timberline; adults feeding young on French Henry Ridge August 1967 and abandoned nest there in July 1967 (also, nest containing one egg on Wheeler Peak, 2 July 1967).

Lincoln Sparrow (*Melospiza lincolni*): Uncommon, all forested areas.

The following species were expected but unrecorded: Cooper Hawk (*Accipiter cooperii*), Mourning Dove (*Zenaidura macroura*), Flammulated Owl (*Otus flammeolus*), Spotted Owl (*Strix occidentalis*), Saw-whet Owl (*Aegolius acadicus*), White-throated Swift (*Aeronautes saxatalis*), Downy Woodpecker (*Picoides pubescens*), Western Wood Pewee (*Contopus sordidulus*), Olive-sided Flycatcher (*Nuttallornis borealis*), Horned Lark (*Eremophila alpestris*), Dipper (*Cinclus mexicanus*), Solitary Vireo (*Vireo solitarius*), Orange-crowned Warbler (*Vermivora celata*), Evening Grosbeak (*Hesperiphona vespertina*), Cassin Finch (*Carpodacus cassinii*), Brown-Capped Rosy Finch (*Lencosticte australis*), and Vesper Sparrow (*Poocetes gramineus*).

#### NOTES AND NEWS

Dave Lange, long a member of the Society, has moved to Harvard University (see address change below). We wish him all the best and congratulate him on

his new job. Good birding, Dave!

"A directory is being planned for ornithologists and birdwatchers who would like to temporarily exchange their homes or apartments for vacation or hospitality purposes. Interested persons are asked to send a self-addressed, stamped envelope to: Max Lazar, 55 Grande Ave., Rockville Antre, C.Y. 11570."

We note that one of our members, Dr. Lawrence Murphy of Alamogordo, has set up vocalization-oriented birding courses for the visually handicapped at the local community college. Larry credits his wife Bernadette with the idea, which may be the first organized effort at such a course.

The following should be added to the recent mailing list:

New Members:

El Paso Natural Gas Co. - c/o John Sproul, Environmental Affairs, P. O. Box 1492, El Paso, Texas, 79978

Charles Erwin - 1513B N, Missouri Ave., Roswell, 88201

Mr. and Mrs. Glen Flin, Box 63, Alamogordo, 88310

Robert Gustafson - 241 Fawn St., Golden, Colorado, 80401

Changes of address:

Miriam Axelrod - 620 E. Loma Vista, Tempe, Arizona, 85282

David Lange - Harvard Univ., Hoffman Lab, 20 Oxford St., Cambridge, Mass., 02138

Gift or Exchange Memberships:

American Birds, 950 Third Ave., New York, N. Y., 10022

Bird Banding Laboratory, U. S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Patuxent Wildlife Research Center, Laurel, Md., 20810

Colorado Field Naturalists, c/o Colorado St. Univ., Ft. Collins, Colorado, 80523

Smithsonian Institution, Bird Division Library, Natural History Museum, Washington, D. C., 20560

Christmas Count Dates

The following announcements have been received:

Albuquerque: 3 January (contact Jim Karo, 294-2777)

Bosque del Apache N.W.R.: 27 December (Chuck Hundertmark, 266-9402)

Glenwood: 27 December (John Hubbard, 988-5918)

Sandia Mts.: 20 December (Ross Teuber, 265-8962)

January Bald Eagle Counts

The Raptor Information Center will again coordinate counts of Bald Eagles in January. Cooperators should use the special forms that are provided. Please write to John Hubbard, if you wish to participate.

**New Mexico Ornithological Society, Inc.**

President:

\*John P. Hubbard

2016 Valle Rio  
Santa Fe 87501

Vice-President:

James R. Travis

9410 Avenida de la Luna, NE  
Albuquerque 87111

Secretary :

Mary Lou Arthur

728 Monroe, NE  
Albuquerque 87110

Treasurer:

Ross L. Teuber

1612 Kentucky, NE  
Albuquerque 87110

Directors-at-large:

Dustin Huntington

11 Calle Pueblo Pinado, NW  
Albuquerque 87120

Allan P. Nelson

106 W. 33rd St.  
Farmington 87401

William Stone

927 Los Lovatos Rd.  
Santa Fe 87501

\*Also editor of NMOS Bulletin