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NEWSLETTER



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NMOS WINTER MEETING

March 9 was the date of the N.M.O.S. Winter Meeting. About 140 members gathered at the Biology Building on the University of New Mexico campus for a full day of activities. John Durrie led off the morning session with an excellent talk on New Mexico birds, illustrated with John's very fine slides. Dr. J. David Ligon moderated a panel discussion on bird identification next. Panelists included John Hubbard who discussed hummingbirds, Jim Travis talked about blackbirds, and Ro Wauer discussed sparrows.

The afternoon session included talks by five graduate students: Gene Brenowitz and Bob Secatore from U.N.M.; Lorenzo Cuesta and Stuart Pimm from N.M.S.U.; and Stuart Bryan from the University of Albuquerque. Following a showing of the film, "The Kirtland Warbler," representatives from various clubs throughout the state told about their club's activities.

The evening talk by Dr. Wayne Hanson, Head of the Ecological Study Group at Los Alamos Scientific

Laboratory, was on studies of birds of mammals in northern Alaska. This was an excellent program; Dr. Hansen's beautiful slides and thorough knowledge of the topic made it one of the finest programs most of us have seen for many moons. RoW

The following morning, the NMOS field trip to Bosque del Apache National Wildlife Refuge departed Albuquerque at 6 a.m. in a blizzard. Snow diminished as daylight came—around La Joya. From Socorro south it was dry, overcast and very cold. East of the access road to the refuge, 27 Sandhill Cranes were spotted in a field, some of the birds performing a mating dance. Within the next half-mile, five species of blackbirds were sighted. Everyone was now in great spirits! A total of 74 species were identified by the party, led by Ro Wauer. Early Tree and Rough-winged Swallows, a Krider's Redtail Hawk, a yellow shafted Flicker, Lazuli Bunting, Ladder-backed Woodpecker, Vermilion Flycatcher, Common Snipe and Least Sandpiper made up a great list of unusual sightings. The day was made complete, though, by watching and photographing a mature White Ibis as it sunned and dozed in the mid-afternoon in a grassy marsh with snow-covered hills in the background. BoWest

ENDANGERED SPECIES PROTECTION
by Henry Zeller

A result of the recent session of the New Mexico Legislature was the passage of the Wildlife Conservation Act. Credit for initiating and following through on the legislation goes to Senator Fred Gross of Albuquerque, who has been working on the idea since before the 1973 legislative session.

An event which helped toward final passage of the state law was passage by Congress of PL 93-205, the Endangered Species Act of 1973. The Act authorizes Federal-state cooperative agreements, and provides for Federal financial assistance to states that have satisfactory programs for the conservation of endangered and threatened faunal species. The definition of "endangered" species in the New Mexico law is broad enough to include both endangered and threatened species in the Federal sense. The main difference between the Federal and New Mexico versions of law is that the Federal Act covers plants as well as all animals, except that insect species declared to be pests are not to be included on the national list of endangered species. The New Mexico law covers non-domestic mammals, birds, reptiles, amphibians, fish, molluscs, and crustaceans. It

specifically excludes wild horses and burros. The Federal Act does not require state programs to cover plants, but only that they deal with resident fauna.

The execution of the New Mexico Wildlife Conservation Act is the responsibility of the State Game Commission, using the facilities of the Department of Game and Fish. Within one year after enactment of the law, the Commission is required to publish a list of indigenous wildlife species which are determined to be endangered, and the list must be reviewed biennially. Subsequent to initial publication of the list, a state program for the conservation of endangered species must be developed.

An interesting feature of these laws is the strong requirement for public participation in their implementation. Both require public participation in preparing the endangered species lists at both national and state levels, and our law requires public participation, including hearings, in the preparation of the state conservation program.

The New Mexico law provides an appropriation from general funds for its implementation, so that no drain is imposed on the income from hunting and fishing licenses which finances the customary operations of the Game Commission and the Department of Game and Fish.

Your suggestions as to NMOS participation in the implementation of the Wildlife Conservation Act are solicited. What bird species and subspecies should appear on the state list of breeding endangered species? (The state definition of "endangered" is broad, meaning any species or subspecies whose prospects are in jeopardy or likely to become so.) Please send your suggestions to Henry Zeller, 152 East San Mateo Road, Santa Fe, New Mexico 87501.

BIRDING GLOSSARY

Birder. The acceptable term used to describe the person who pursues the hobby or sport of birding. May be professional or amateur,

Birding. A sport and/or hobby in which individuals enjoy the challenge of bird study, listing, or other general activities involving bird life.

BIRD NEWS FROM AROUND NEW MEXICO

NORTHWESTERN NEW MEXICO by Alan Nelson, Farmington

Birding this past winter was not especially exciting. Recent wind and cool temperatures have been discouraging to birders. The countryside is rapidly drying out after a fairly wet winter. However, shorebirds, swallows, and a few other species are beginning to arrive, while wintering species linger, such as Cassin's Finch, Evening Grosbeak, White-crowned Sparrow, and Cedar Waxwing. Most waterfowl have departed, but a pair of Snow Geese were still at Bolack's Ranch on April 11.

The annual spring count will be May 11. This count is done exactly as the Christmas Count. Previous record for the Farmington Circle is 105 species.

The Four Corners Bird Club meets the second Tuesday of each month for an informative meeting and again on a Saturday morning for a field trip.

Land use planning is getting much attention here - by the Bureau of Land Management, as well as county officials. The bird club continues to speak out on land use policies which affects bird life. Most significant decisions are those which determine use of riparian and marshland habitats, since about one-third of the local species of birds breed in these two habitats.

NORTHEAST NEW MEXICO by Lorraine Hartshorne, Los Alamos

In less than one year's time, the Education Committee of Sangre de Cristo Audubon Society has been invited to present their illustrated programs on birds to elementary schools, Boy Scout troops, garden clubs, Rotary Clubs, Retired People's groups, hiking clubs, and the Sheriff's Posse organization, totaling about 1500 people.

Society field trips locations have included Cochiti Pueblo, Espanola, Santa Clara Canyon and Las Vegas National Wildlife Refuge. Species of special interest were the Virginia Rail and Tree Sparrow at Espanola, on April 13, and the Black-crowned Night Heron and Common Grackle there on April 20. The Las Vegas visitors observed many Wilson's Phalaropes, Ferruginous Hawk, Willet and Forster's Terns. But the area of major interest was the heronry. More than 20 active nests were seen perched high in cottonwood trees.

SOUTHWESTERN NEW MEXICO by Marjorie Williams, Roswell

This is Prairie Chicken season, and our own Audubon members and guests have been enjoying our "spot" 40 miles from Roswell. Dr. John Schwartz, of the Bureau of Land Management, spoke at our April meeting on the Lesser Prairie Chickens. In March, our group took a trip to Mescalero Sands as one part in our participation of wilderness preservation. Dr. and Mrs. Harold Hefley represented us at the Wilderness Workshop in Albuquerque April 19-21.

The Southeastern New Mexico Audubon Society will have a spring bird count at Bitter Lake Wildlife Refuge on May 11, followed by a supper. A trip to Rattlesnake Springs is scheduled for May 18. A nesting bird count is scheduled for June 8.

Some interesting bird sightings of late include Cedar waxwings at the cemetery all winter; three Blue Jays seen in town for January 19 and in the same trees from March 18 through April. Summer birds were a little earlier at Bitter Lake this year--American Avocet, Black-necked Stilt and Snowy Plover. A number of Forster's and Least Terns were seen at Bitter Lake on April 14. Hummingbirds were first seen on April 7, and a Western Kingbird on April 16. Of special interest was a Harris' Sparrow on April 6 at South Springs Ranch.

MOVIE IS AVAILABLE FOR LOAN

The 16mm sound movie, "THE KIRTLAND WARBLER--BIRD OF FIRE," is now available for loan to bird clubs and other conservation organizations. This is a 10-minute film showing the habitat of this endangered species, its migration pattern and methods being pursued for its protection and propagation.

The film is owned by the Audubon Wildlife Film Series of Albuquerque and is available to any interested group for the cost of the transportation both ways. It is in the custody of the Secretary, Mrs. Daniel T. Washburn, 504 Princeton Drive SE, Albuquerque, N.M. 87106. If interested, write and give date when needed. The film will be sent to you if the date is open, or word will be sent otherwise. Allow sufficient mailing time.

HENRY ZELLER IS NEW NMOS CONSERVATION CHAIRMAN

Henry Zeller of Santa Fe was recently appointed Conservation Chairman of N.M.O.S. Henry has been active in conservation problems of the Southwest for several

years. He will develop a conservation program for the Society, with priorities on the protection of threatened bird species and their habitats. Direction from the N.M.O.S. Board of Directors will orient the program toward the welfare of New Mexican birds. Both the program and the implementing actions should be kept objective and rational, and at the scientific level to the extent possible.

The program under preparation is flexible, and your ideas are requested. Please send suggestions to Henry Zeller, 152 East San Mateo Road, Santa Fe, N.M. 87501. In addition to suggestions for the program, if you are willing to serve as an area conservation correspondent, Henry would like to know.

YOUNG ORNITHOLOGIST IN NEW MEXICO

Lorenzo Cuesta came to New Mexico State in 1972 from Texas via the U. S. Army. He expects to obtain his M. S. in biology in 1974 and hopes to pursue his ornithological education to the Ph.D. level at another institution.

Lorenzo's thesis research is a comparative nesting study of Western Kingbirds on the yucca grasslands of the Jornada del Muerto and in the Mesilla Valley proper. It has involved a great deal of field work, including peering into nests by way of a small mirror on a long pole and from atop a shaky ladder--thus far without bodily harm more serious than sharp stabs from yucca leaves.

In addition to his thesis research, Lorenzo has participated in other field projects. Last summer he worked on various phases of a large ecological project that is a part of the International Biological Program, and in January 1973 he was a member of an expedition to Campeche, Mexico, to study Yucutan Jays. R. Raitt

BIRDING TOURS

The Birding Tour business seems to be booming and, energy crisis or not, a birder wishing to travel can do so, usually with local experts, to practically anywhere in the world. A canvass of the many bird touring organizations revealed two major ones.

Bird Bonanzas, Inc. 6630 Biscayne Blvd., Miami, Florida, 33138. Twenty- three tours are being offered during 1974.

Trips are scheduled to places such as Costa Rica, Burma, India, Guatemala, Jamaica, Japan, Australia, and Mexico, to name a few places. Costs? An Argentina tour scheduled for October 13 through November 3 costs \$1,695. The June 1 to 16 Alaska tour is \$1,725. The November 16 to 30 Northwestern Mexico tour, from Mazatlan to Mexico City, is \$995.

Roadrunner Nature Tours. Box 945, Gainesville, Texas, 76240. This organization has an impressive list of places they plan to bird in 1974. A few of the locations include Oaxaca and Yucatan, Mexico, June 3 to 23; Hawaii from June 30 to July 14; and the Olympic Peninsula from July 30 to August 5. Of special interest to New Mexicans is the July 5 to 14 New Mexico Tour, starting at Silver City and including San Simon Marsh, Bosque del Apache and Bitter Lake National Wildlife Refuges, the Sangre de Cristo Range, and Capulin Mountain and Raton areas in northeastern New Mexico. Prices are comparable with Bird Bonanzas. RoW

WESTERN BIRDS - a new journal for New Mexico!

For those of you interested in reading about western birds, you might consider joining the California Field Ornithologists. This society has changed their range from the west coast to the entire western United States, west Texas west. Their journal appears quarterly, and includes some very nicely done, semi-technical articles and notes. Regular membership dues are \$5.00 annually, and may be submitted to Clifford R. Lyons, Treasurer, P. O. Box 369, Del Mar, California, 92014. RoW

HOW MANY BIRD SPECIES HAVE YOU SEEN IN NEW MEXICO?

Birding, the bi-monthly journal of the American Birding Association, publishes a list each year of the number of birds seen by birders for each state. They list everyone's records that have tallied over 50 percent of a state's bird species. For New Mexico, that means that one must have seen at least 215 species. The November-December 1973 issue of Birding included only six birders. In order of the number of birds reported seen, Steve West leads New Mexican observers with 321 species. Pat Snider is second (318), then Beatrix Strauss (259), Frances Williams (256), Ro Wauer (246), and L. G. Hawkins (216).

I have no doubt that many of you have a larger list of species seen in New Mexico than most of those reported above. So, how about sending me your totals before the

next issue, and we will find out who really has the largest New Mexico bird list! RoW

BIRD IDENTIFICATION

Forster/Common Terns: These two species can be extremely difficult to distinguish if you don't know one of them inside-out! Adults in breeding plumage are virtually identical to all but experts if not together for good comparison. In winter and immature plumages, Forster's include those birds with black ears; conversely, all of those with dark on the nape as well are not Common Terns. My recent examination of Smithsonian specimens reveal that Forster's may have dark napes at any time of the year, but especially in late summer and autumn. Thus, one cannot call dark-naped terns Commons, just Sterna sp. (and probably Forster in New Mexico). J. Hubbard

NEWSLETTER. ANY IDEAS?

I am very much interested in the kind of articles you want in your Newsletter. How about a short note about things you do or do not like about the material being used in the NMOS Newsletter. Do you like notes on bird identification? Activities outside of New Mexico? News from around the state? Conservation notes? Quizzes? Book reviews? Any other ideas? If you don't like something, I'll never know it unless you say so. RoW

WHAT DO YOU KNOW THAT WE DON'T KNOW ABOUT?

MOUNTAIN PLOVER: Eupoda Montana. Summers locally in the eastern plains and westward to the vicinity of the Rio Grande Valley, the San Augustin Plains, and Animas; rare to fairly common, breeding in grasslands. Most regular east of Roy and Pecos Valley and south of Sacramento Mts., casual to occasional (or irregular) elsewhere, including west of the Rio Grande at Tres Piedras, May, 1916; east of Fence Lake, June 1968; west of Magdalena, April 1915, June, 1940, and near Animas summer, 1926. No specific winter records, although said to occur in December and January, which is rather doubtful.

The above information was taken from "Check-list of the Birds of New Mexico," by John P. Hubbard, 1970. As you can see, this species is uncommon to rare in New Mexico. If you find this bird in New Mexico this year, please make a special effort to report it to your Newsletter editor or John P. Hubbard! RoW

A "BIRDING WIDOW" SPEAKS

There certainly must be some special status for the patient wife who marries into the "world of birding." She might be aesthetically tuned to the world of birds but is still a bit dumfounded by it all. She's the one who didn't know that there was more than one kind of sparrow (and that she called just plain sparrow) until she met the gut she married. Then she discovered there really was a Blue-footed Booby. She has found that vacations don't mean going from place to place but from bird to bird ("But, honey, we have to swing 200 miles east to pick up the Golden-cheeked Warbler"); and has read a total of six novels and knitted two sweaters while parked along highways in the middle of the deserts, on top of mountains, and along beaches waiting for her pursuing husband to return. She has adapted to cold or burnt dinners ("But, sweetheart, wait until you hear what I picked up today.") She is accustomed to her dinner music consisting of A Field Guide to Western Bird Songs. Her child's first word was "bird" and the second "lifer." She's the one that has learned to smile and murmur knowledgeably "How splendid for you" when one of her husband's birding friends mentions that he has added the Oldsquaw to his life list (She's pretty sure that's some sort of duck but can't quite place it.) She's the one who gave her loved one binoculars for Christmas, a desk blotter with a Painted Bunting on it for his birthday, and a genuine, "guaranteed to work or money back" bird call for their anniversary. Now really, sir don't you think that this breed of woman deserves a special status rating!

- Patti Easterla (from Birding)