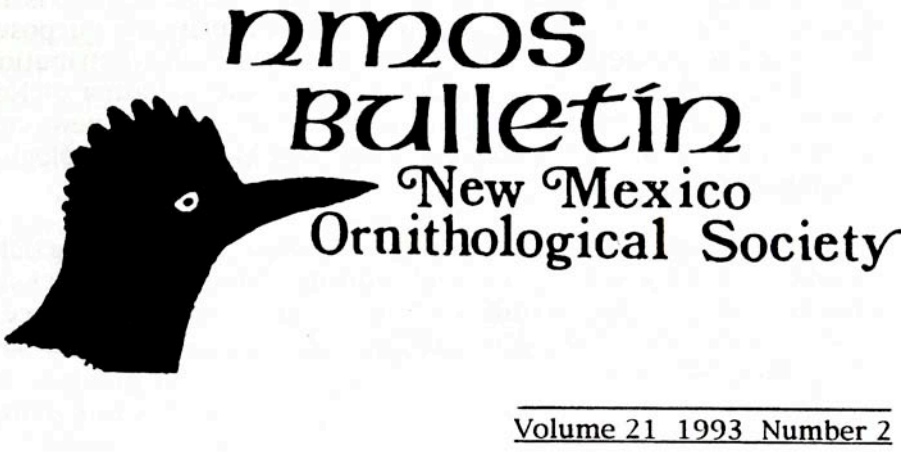


Volume 21 1993 Number 2

Memorial to Marjory Swain

Marjory Swain died on January 26, 1993 of a stroke. She will be missed by all of her birding friends. She loved her birds; and we loved visiting her home at La Cueva, near Jemez Springs. There were feeders all around the yard among the Ponderosa pines. Especially exciting were the hummingbird feeders. We could sit on the porch and enjoy the activity around these feeders.

She spent the last few winters in Albuquerque, but her true love was the home that she and her husband, Robert, had built. He preceded her in death by a few years, a loss she never quite got over.

She was born in Michigan as Marjory Bowen in 1905, and had lived in New York and Florida before coming to New Mexico in 1953.

She and Bob had two children, one of whom, George, lives In Los Alamos and is a member of the New Mexico Ornithological Society.

She kept copious notes on her observations. I remember her calling with great excitement every time a new or unusual bird appeared in her yard. Also, she wrote articles for the Jemez Springs paper.

One of my fondest memories is of eating lunch with her and Bob with my two children. The youngsters were very excited over an Abert's squirrel that came in her kitchen window to eat nuts out of their hands.

Donations can be sent in her name to Kathleen Ramsey's Bird Rehabilitation Center, P.O. Box 246, Espanola, New Mexico 87522.

Pat Snider
Los Alamos, NM

1993 ANNUAL MEETING REPORT

The 31st annual meeting of the New Mexico Ornithological Society was held 2-4 April 1993 at the Roswell Inn in Roswell, New Mexico with 65 people attending.

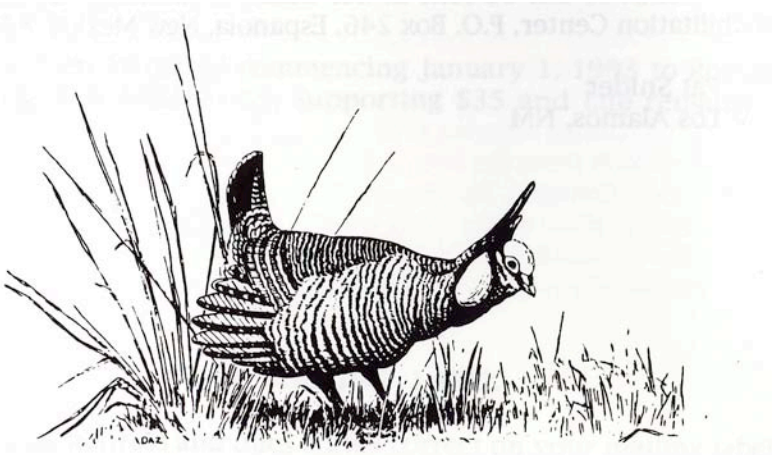
The business meeting was held from 11:00 a.m.-12:00 noon Saturday morning with president Sandy Williams presiding.

Dr. Bruce Thompson of the Department of Fishery and Wildlife Sciences, New Mexico State University, chaired the paper session Saturday afternoon. Fifteen papers were given.

The banquet took place at 7:00 p.m., and at 8:15 p.m. Kathleen Milne of the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service spoke on "Neotropical Migrants: The North-South Connection."

Field trips to Lesser Prairie-Chicken leks were held both Saturday and Sunday mornings. Dan Baggao of the Bureau of Land Management handled the arrangements for the trips.

The meeting committee included, in addition to Thompson and Baggao, Jackie McConachie and Mary Alice Root.



NEW MEXICO ORNITHOLOGICAL SOCIETY
1993 Annual Meeting - Roswell, NM Abstracts of Oral Presentations
(listed in the order presented on the program)

NEW MEXICO BIRDING HIGHLIGHTS OF 1992

Parmeter, John E., Albuquerque, NM

Slide presentation will show the more unusual birds that were recorded in New Mexico during 1992. In addition to this presentation, a commentary on the significance of these records will be provided.

THE INFLUENCE OF LIVESTOCK GRAZING ON BREEDING BIRD COMMUNITIES OF PINYON WOODLANDS IN NORTHEASTERN NEW MEXICO

Christopher B. Goguen, Texas Cooperative Fish and Wildlife Research Unit, Texas Tech University, Lubbock, TX.

Nancy E. Mathews, Texas Cooperative Fish and Wildlife Research Unit, Texas Tech University, Lubbock, TX.

ABSTRACT: Abundance, diversity, and nesting success of breeding birds in pinyon pine (*Pinus edulis*) woodland habitats were examined on eight, 35-ha plots from May through August 1992 in northeastern New Mexico. Four plots were located on an active, cattle ranch, and 4 on a site that has excluded livestock grazing for 20 years. Point count surveys and nest observations were used to evaluate species richness, abundance, composition, and nest survival. A total of 54 species were observed among the ungrazed and grazed plots. A significantly higher number of

rufous-sided towhees (*Pipilo erythrophthalmus*)(P < 0. 1) were observed on the ungrazed sites. A total of 189 nests of 30 species were located on the 8 plots (25 species among plots in each treatment). Daily nest survival rates on grazed and ungrazed plots were similar, with predation and bad weather accounting for most nest failures. Cowbird parasitism was observed in 2 nests on ungrazed sites, and 11 nests on grazed. Solitary vireo (*Vireo solitarius*), bluegray gnatcatcher (*Polioptila caerulea*), and western tanager (*Piranga ludovician*a) were the most heavily parasitized species, with over 50% of nests parasitized on grazed plots. Research on these sites will continue through 1996.

MOVEMENTS, HABITAT SELECTION, AND BEHAVIOR OF MALE GOULD'S WILD TURKEYS (*MELEAGRIS GALLOPAVO MEXICANA*), PELONCILLO MOUNTAINS, NEW MEXICO.

Zornes, M.L., Dept. Fishery and Wildlife Sciences, New Mexico State University, Las Cruces, New Mexico.

Schemnitz, S.D., Dept. Fishery and Wildlife Sciences, New Mexico State University, Las Cruces, New Mexico.

ABSTRACT: Male Gould's wild turkeys were studied to gain insight into their movements, habitat selection, and behavior. As with other wild turkey subspecies, most research conducted previously has been focused on female Gould's. Adult male Gould's (n=4) were captured on 28 February 1992, and were fitted with Telonics transmitters. Movements were monitored until 1 January 1993. Detailed vegetation analysis was conducted at turkey locations and paired random sites. Turkeys were intensely monitored for behavioral information. Turkeys remained close to the capture site until 5 April. Dispersal occurred at this time, with 2 gobblers going to Mexico (27km, straight line distance), and 2 moving north of the study area (24km SLD). All gobblers returned to the vicinity of the capture site by 29 May, where they remained until monitoring was completed. Gobblers, unlike hens, tended to select remote areas, far from human disturbance. Loafing habitats typically had a high percentage of grass canopy cover (x=60% ±20%*), a high percentage overstory canopy (x=71% ± 14%*), low shrub component (x=9% ±7%*), and a high horizontal visibility (x=28m±5m*). Feeding habitats had less overstory canopy (x=8% ±8%*), had a high grass component (x=33% ±25%*), high shrub component (x=28% ±20%), and moderate horizontal visibility (x=17m±9m). Gobblers used perennial roosts on the study area, but tended to select large snags as roosts, if present. No hens were observed exhibiting this behavior. Roosting position seemed to be a matter of dominance, with adult

birds selecting the upper roost positions. Gobblers used the upper 1/2 of roost trees, with hens using only the upper 1/4. Subadult males (jakes) joined adult gobbler flocks by mid-June, and were subordinate to adults regarding feeding, loafing, and roost positions. Findings indicate that Gould's gobblers display long spring movements to areas of greater hen concentration. Little variation exists between males and females regarding macro-habitat selection, with more variability existing in the selection of micro-habitat sites.

* ±1 standard deviation

ROOST SITE CHARACTERISTICS OF MEXICAN SPOTTED OWLS IN LINCOLN NATIONAL FOREST

Phillip J. Zwank, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, New Mexico Cooperative Fish and Wildlife Research Unit, New Mexico State University, Las Cruces 88003.

Dawn M. Levin, New Mexico Agricultural Experiment Station, New Mexico State University, Las Cruces, 88003.

G. Morris Southward, New Mexico Agricultural Experiment Station, New Mexico State University, Las Cruces, 88003.

Abstract: We monitored 9 radio-tagged Mexican spotted owls (*Strix occidentali lucida*) (4 pairs, 1 mated female) from 101-301 days to determine roost characteristics. Home ranges were dominated by mixed-conifer forest in one drainage, but were mixed-conifer, ponderosa pine (*Pinus ponderosa*) and pinyon pine (*P. edulis*/alligator juniper (*Juniperus deppeana*) in the other drainage. Roost trees differed in height, canopy closure, and density between drainages. Roost tree height was correlated to male and female owl roost heights during winter and the breeding season in both drainages. Canopy closure, density and slope were correlated to roost height of owls during the winter. No differences were noted between the heights of roosts of males and females, or between heights of roosts during breeding and non breeding seasons.

OBSERVATION OF WINTERING WESTERN BURROWING OWLS (*ATHENE CUNICULARIA*) ON THE CAMPUS OF NEW MEXICO STATE UNIVERSITY

Botelho, E.S., Dept. of Biology, P.O. Box 30001/Dept. 3AF, New Mexico State University, Las Cruces, NM 88003

Arrowood, P.A., Dept. of Biology, P.O. Box 30001/Dept. 3AF, New Mexico State University, Las Cruces, NM 88003

ABSTRACT: A study of the behavior and ecology of Burrowing Owls was initiated in October 1992. Individual owls have been live trapped using a cage and one-way door at burrow entrances. Fifty owls have been banded so far with both reflective plastic and numbered U.S. FWS aluminum leg bands. Upon capture, owls are weighed and body measurements are taken. Winter observations have revealed that some owls are permanent winter residents while others migrate into the area in late February/early March. Among the winter residents there is multiple burrow use by some owls. There has been apparent rapid pair formation (within one to two days) in some owls unpaired throughout the winter but, in other cases, mates have remained together throughout the winter. Male primary song occurs throughout the winter. Presently, sex determination is being attempted in owl pairs through observation of copulations and male response to playback of the primary song (apparently performed only by males). We are examining the efficacy of behavioral measures as well as weight and body measures in revealing the sexes of banded owl pairs. Sex determination by these measures will be corroborated by observations of female incubation and male provisioning of the female and the young.

PRELIMINARY PROGRESS REPORT: ECOLOGY OF BALD EAGLES WINTERING ON CABALLO RESERVOIR, NEW MEXICO

Nicholopoulos, J. E., New Mexico Cooperative Fish & Wildlife Research Unit, New Mexico State University, Las Cruces, NM

Zwank, P. J., New Mexico Cooperative Fish & Wildlife Research Unit, New Mexico State University, Las Cruces, NM

ABSTRACT: The bald eagle (*Haliaeetus leucocephalus*) was listed as an endangered species in 1978 in 43 of the 48 contiguous states. There have been recent indications that bald eagle numbers are increasing in the United States. Bald eagles wintering in New Mexico also seem to be increasing in total number. Bald eagles wintering on Caballo Reservoir, NM were censused from January 1993 through March 1993. The wintering population utilizing Caballo Reservoir fluctuated greatly, rising and failing in total number eight times. Totals varied from a low of 2 immature bald eagles to a high of 22 (13 mature and 9 immature) bald eagles. Eagles were censused from observation points near the shore or from boat piloted around the perimeter of the reservoir 3 times per week. Aerial censuses were flown along the Rio Grande from Las Cruces to Bosque Del Apache National Wildlife Refuge. Bald eagle behavior was observed for 12 hours weekly while the wintering population was

present on Caballo Reservoir. Eagles were most frequently observed "loafing," or remaining perched in dead cottonwood snags for extended periods with little or no activity. Inter- and intraspecific competition were recorded in low frequency. Communal feeding and roosting also were noted. Bald eagles were observed threatening flocks of feeding common mergansers and white pelicans; eagles flew low over the rafting birds with their talons extended, but were never documented physically attacking live birds. Common mergansers were observed to drop their catch when threatened. Bald eagles were observed capturing gizzard shad, a very large walleye, and a spiny softshell turtle. Foraging experiments were conducted on several occasions. Continued census surveys, behavioral observations, and foraging experiments are planned to better understand the ecological dynamics of the wintering population of bald eagles utilizing Caballo Reservoir.

ECOLOGY OF THE COMMON MERGANSER WINTERING ON CABALLO RESERVOIR

McCaw, J.H., New Mexico Cooperative Fish and Wildlife Research Unit Department of Fisheries and Wildlife Sciences, New Mexico State University, Las Cruces, NM

Zwank, P.J., New Mexico Cooperative Fish and Wildlife Research Unit Department of Fisheries and Wildlife Sciences, New Mexico State University, Las Cruces, NM

ABSTRACT: The common merganser (*Mergus merganser*) has historically wintered on many New Mexico reservoirs and waterways, including Caballo Reservoir, which is located in the middle Rio Grande Valley. Numbers of common mergansers and other piscivorous birds wintering on the reservoir are highly variable from year to year. Caballo Reservoir also is critical winter habitat for a population of endangered bald eagles (*Haliaeetus leucocephalus*). Studies have shown that negative impacts on fish populations can occur when large numbers of mergansers are present over an extended period of time, so there is concern that mergansers may be competing with bald eagles for a potentially limited resource. A preliminary scientific study has been conducted over the winter of 1992-93, and further study is planned for the winter of 1993-94 to assess the effects of competition between common mergansers and wintering bald eagles. The study will provide data on numbers, sex ratios, and prey species of common mergansers wintering on Caballo Reservoir. A food habits analysis will determine size and species of fish taken by mergansers, and a comparison will be made with the prey chosen by bald eagles. In addition, the diurnal time budget of

the common merganser will be determined from quantified behavioral observations made at the reservoir.

NATURE: AN AUDIOVISUAL CELEBRATION OF NEW MEXICO

Brock, Larry P., Eastern New Mexico University, Portales, NM

ABSTRACT: This program not only shows the beauty of nature through slides and music, but also, shows the importance of recording nature on film. There are approximately 500 slides put to music, in addition a sound track will contain live recording of birds. This program will be predominantly on birds, but will also include a few slides of mammals, reptiles and insects. This presentation will last 20 minutes.

THE OLDEST KNOWN ANSERIFORM: AN EARLY EOCENE "SCREAMER" FROM WYOMING (ANHIMIDAE)

Houde, P., Dept. of Biology, New Mexico State University, Las Cruces, NM 88003

ABSTRACT: An articulated, three-dimensional, nearly complete skeleton of a medium-sized early Eocene bird is identified to order on the basis of tympanic and adjacent cranial characters, which are uniquely derived in Anseriformes. Like extant screamers (Anhimidae), the bill is chicken-like, but the postcranial elements are not extensively pneumatized nor are there spurs on the carpometacarpus, as in modern screamers. Assignment of the new fossil to family hinges on whether the chicken-like bill of screamers is primitive or derived within Anseriformes. Its postcranial skeleton resembles the early Eocene Presbyornis, which combines a duck-like bill with a stilt-like appendicular anatomy (Charadriiformes: Recurvirostridae). This confirms that the postcranial morphology of Presbyornis is characteristic rather than aberrant among early Anseriformes at the time of divergence of the two bill morphologies.

NEW MEXICO'S EARLY BIRDS: (*Diatryma gigantea*) AND OTHER FOSSIL SPECIES

Root, M. A., New Mexico Museum of Natural History and Science, Albuquerque, New Mexico

ABSTRACT: Although the fossil record for birds is renowned for its scantiness, New Mexico is represented by an interesting assortment of species. The largest and best-known bird is *Diatryma gigantea*, the seven-foot-high flightless predator of

the Eocene Epoch (37-54 million years ago). Discovered and described by E.D. Cope in 1876, I present what is known about it. Also I will describe and discuss other fossil bird species recorded from New Mexico, including New Mexico's oldest fossil bird, Ichthyornis sp., known from a humerus (about 90 million years old) found in marine sedimentary rocks of the Late Cretaceous Period, and a variety of mainly raptorial birds dating from the late Cenozoic (10 million years-Present).

SONG OF THE WILLOW FLYCATCHER IN NORTH-CENTRAL NEW MEXICO

Travis, J.R., 9420 Avenida De La Luna, Albuquerque, NM 87111

ABSTRACT: The principal distinguishing characteristic of the Willow Flycatcher for field identification is its song. The dawn song consists of a variable series of three syllables, phoneticized as 'fitz-bew', 'fizz-bew', and 'creet'. The song of its close relative, the Alder Flycatcher is a repetition of a single syllable, different from any of the Willow Flycatcher's--phonetecized as 'we-bee-o'. There are subtle differences between the songs of Willow Flycatchers from different parts of its range. It may be that these differences are associated with different subspecies. I know of no evidence to answer this question. There is some uncertainty about which subspecies breed in New Mexico. I observed a small population of Willow Flycatchers in the upper Rio Grande region between Espanola and Velarde from the early years was estimated to be from 10 to 20 pairs. There have been few, if any, records of breeding Willow Flycatchers in this area since the mid-1980's. This site as well as others in north-central New Mexico will be explored as part of the coordinated Willow Flycatcher survey planned for the summer of 1993. In my talk I shall describe the Willow Flycatcher song with the aid of sonograms and tapes, and compare the north-central song type with those from other geographical region, and also compare it with the songs of other Empidonaxes.

1993 WILLOW FLYCATCHER SURVEYS

Williams, S.O. III, New Mexico Department of Game and Fish, P.O. Box 25112, Santa Fe, NM 87504

Mehlhop, P., New Mexico Natural Heritage Program, 2500 Yale Blvd. SE, Suite 100, Albuquerque, NM 87131

ABSTRACT: The Southwestern Willow Flycatcher (*Empidonax traillii extimus*) a riparian obligate species nesting in cottonwood-willow and similar communities occurs primarily from New Mexico west to southern California, and has declined throughout its

range in recent years. Causes of declines are interrelated and include loss and fragmentation of riparian habitat, invasion of habitat by exotic saltcedar (*Tamarix sp.*), parasitism by Brown-headed Cowbirds (*Molothrus ater*), detrimental effects of livestock grazing, and predation. The taxon is listed as Endangered by the states of New Mexico, Arizona, and California, and is currently under consideration for federal listing by the USFWS. Because of this taxon's precarious status, surveys are needed to identify remaining nesting areas. In 1993, a coordinated survey effort will be made in New Mexico to survey historic and potential willow flycatcher habitat. A survey protocol designed to use tape-broadcast calls is being developed, and a survey protocol training session is planned for early May in Albuquerque for interested parties. In New Mexico, the targeted time period for surveys is the second two weeks of June (after 10 June), with follow-up visits through mid-July. All interested individuals are invited to participate.

THE NEW MEXICO BIRD RECORDS COMMITTEE

Williams, S.O. III, 65 Verano Loop, Santa Fe, NM 87505

Parmeter, J.E., 209 Columbia SE #32, Albuquerque, NM 87106

ABSTRACT: We announce the formation of the New Mexico Bird Records Committee (NMBRC) of the New Mexico Ornithological Society. The purposes of the NMBRC will include: validate records of birds from New Mexico; solicit and maintain documentation of records; publish data on decisions; provide means by which sight records can gain acceptance as valuable scientific data by establishing standards of observation and reporting; increase knowledge of the birds of New Mexico; and keep or cause to keep the official New Mexico State List. The NMBRC will consist of a Secretary and at least five Members, with governing bylaws to be developed by the NMBRC. We define bird records and discuss the development of a "Review List" of species to be considered by the NMBRC, the submission of records, the procedure for evaluating records, the ultimate disposition of records, and other matters pertaining to the functioning of the NMBRC.

CURRENT STATUS OF WINTERING SANDIIILL CRANES (*GRUS CANADENSIS*) IN CHAVES COUNTY, NEW MEXICO

Montgomery, J.B. Jr., Dept. of Biology, New Mexico Military Institute, Roswell, New Mexico 88201

ABSTRACT: The current status and the roosting and foraging patterns of Sandhill Cranes (*Grus canadensis*) wintering in the Pecos River Valley near Roswell, NM, are being determined by weekly roost counts and observation of flock movements and field use to provide baseline information for future management. Peak numbers of cranes were 5,635 in the 1989-90 wintering season, 7,288 in 1990-91, 8,026 in 1991-92, and 7,337 in the 1992-93 season. The cranes roost on shallow lakes on the Bitter Lake National Wildlife Refuge and near Bottomless Lakes State Park and, to a lesser extent, in the Pecos River channel near Dexter, NM. the off-refuge roosts are subject to human disturbance and may be abandoned during hunting season. Cranes in Chaves County forage in 36,000 ha of mostly irrigated farmland extending from north of Roswell south to Hagerman, NM. Fields of sorghum (240 ha) stubble are the most important foraging resource. Alfalfa fields (approximately 20,500 ha) are also extensively used, not only for foraging, but also as initial landing and resting areas following flights from the roost and prior to returning to the roost. On any given day, cranes are not distributed uniformly throughout the farmland but are concentrated within a few areas. The amounts of foraging activity in the area north of Roswell, in the vicinity of Roswell, and south of Roswell in the Dexter area did not remain the same from one winter to the next but differed markedly, presumably as a result in changes in food availability or amount of disturbance.

PERSPECTIVE ON NEOTROPICAL MIGRANT BIRD COMMUNITY COMPOSITION AND HABITAT IMPORTANCE IN THE MIDDLE RIO GRANDE SYSTEM OF NEW MEXICO

David A. Leal, Raymond Meyer, New Mexico Cooperative Fish & Wildlife Sciences Department, New Mexico State University, P.O. Box 30003, Dept. 4901, Las Cruces, NM 88003

Bruce Thompson, U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service, New Mexico Cooperative Fish and Wildlife Research Unit, New Mexico State University, P.O. Box 30003, Department 4901, Las Cruces, NNI 88003

Abstract: Recent concerns about population declines in many neotropical migrant (NTM) bird species have heightened the interest in conservation, monitoring, and research concerning these species and their habitat needs. This project assesses NTM bird use of different vegetation community/structure types along the middle Rio Grande of New Mexico from Las Cruces to Velarde. Variable distance transects were established within 71 randomly selected habitat tracts of 47 different vegetation community/structure types. These transects are scheduled for

bird species surveys during three seasonal periods: (1) spring migration, (2) breeding season, and (3) fall migration in 1992 and 1993. Field work in 1992 detected 218 bird species of which 131 species were on transects in study tracts. For all species detected in the corridor, 120 were NTM species as defined by the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation Partners in Flight program. Habitat types or tracts ultimately will be ranked as to NTM bird use to assist with future management decisions.

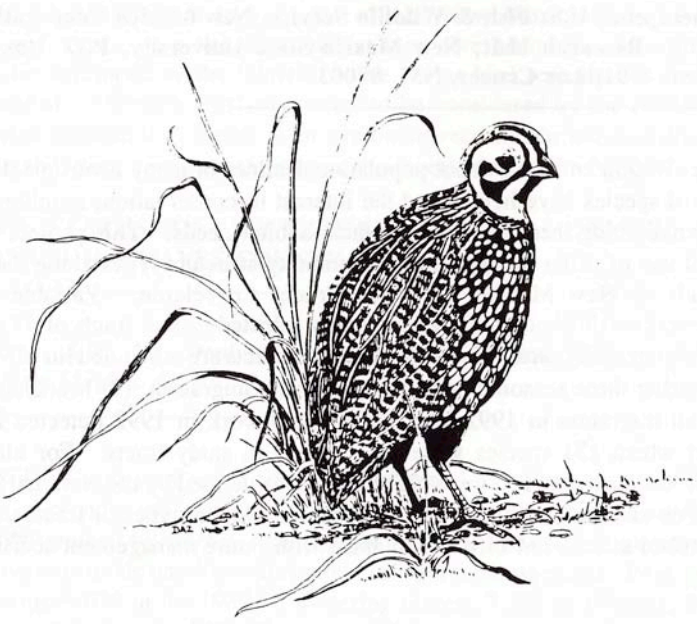
ACCESS CHANGES: GUADALUPE CANYON, ARIZONA

Guadalupe Canyon in extreme Southwestern New Mexico and Southeastern Arizona has long held special appeal for birders. The owners have for many years graciously allowed birders access to the canyon. Actions by a few unthoughtful individuals, particularly tour groups, have placed this policy in jeopardy.

Tour groups will no longer be given access, and whether small groups (i.e., 1-4 birders) will be tolerated in the canyon in the future remains to be seen. It probably depends on our behavior. Here are a few suggestions:

If No Trespassing signs are up, honor them. If such signs are not up and you decide to walk into the canyon, park outside the entrance gate where you will have the least impact on the vegetation. Do not drive up the canyon unless you have specific permission, and make sure your vehicle does not block the gate or road.

(excerpted from Winging It, Volume 5, Number 4 April 1993, by Narca Moore-Craig and Alan M. Craig)



Montezuma Quail