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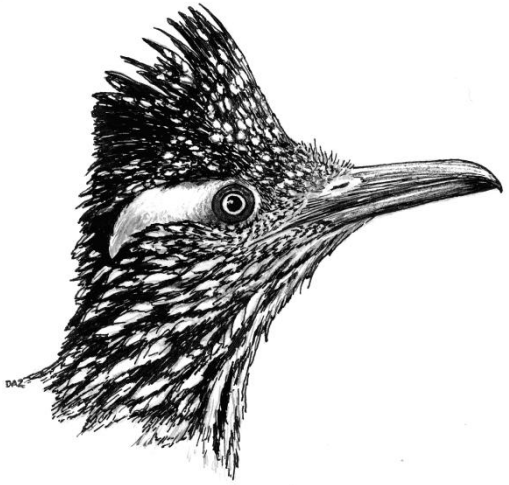

New Mexico Ornithological Society

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FIRST NEW MEXICO RECORD OF BLACK TURNSTONE (*ARENARIA MELANOCEPHALA*)

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Abstract.— We discuss the first New Mexico record of Black Turnstone (*Arenaria melanocephala*), a bird present at Elephant Butte Lake, Sierra County 11-15 May 2010.

While birding at Elephant Butte Lake on 11 May 2010 at ca. 0630, Cleary discovered a Black Turnstone (*Arenaria melanocephala*) feeding along the sandy shore of the lake approximately half way between Rock Canyon Marina and Hot Springs Landing. This location is at 33° 13.15' N and 107° 12.18' W, at an altitude of 1,340 m. The bird was alone and was spotted by Cleary when he approached the lakeshore to attempt to photograph an adult Brown Pelican (*Pelecanus occidentalis*) roosting on an offshore rock. Realizing that the Black Turnstone represented a first New Mexico record, he obtained 27 photographs, many of which are diagnostic, while taking care not to flush the bird. He left the area at ca. 0700 and proceeded to spread word of the discovery. Other birders began to arrive at approximately 1100 and 10 or more searched the lake for much of the afternoon without relocating the bird. During this whole period, gale force winds hampered the search, sand blasting vehicles and making it extremely uncomfortable to remain outdoors for even a few minutes. The turnstone was finally relocated approximately 1.5 km east of Rock Canyon Marina at Long Point at 1840 by Parmeter, and it was also seen there later that evening by Benjamin Parmeter and Jerry Oldenettel, with Oldenettel obtaining additional photographs. At this time the turnstone occasionally associated with 2-3 Baird's Sandpipers (*Calidris bairdii*). The bird was relocated easily on the morning

of 12 May, when several observers saw it at Long Point before it flew to the tire breakwater just off of Rock Canyon Marina. It continued to be seen at this breakwater through 15 May. The bird was not seen on 16 May or later despite extensive searching.

The Black Turnstone (Fig. 1) was an adult in breeding plumage. It was a plump shorebird, obviously larger than a Baird's Sandpiper. The black bill was fairly stout, not as long as the width of the head, and very slightly upturned. The legs were reddish-brown. The bird was generally black overall with a clean white belly and undertail coverts, with a ragged edge, including some black spotting, separating the black breast and white belly. It showed a narrow white supercillium and a fairly large oval white patch in the loral area, as well as fine white spotting on the sides of the neck. The upperparts were washed with brown, perhaps suggesting that the bird was a female (Paulson 1998), with a few narrow white fringes on some back and wing feathers. In flight the bird showed immaculate white underwings, a white tail with a broad black subterminal band, a white wingstripe, a narrow white stripe along the border between the body and the wing, and a broader white stripe on the rump and lower back. It frequently called in flight, giving the characteristic high-pitched, penetrating rattle that is reminiscent of a distant Belted Kingfisher (*Ceryle alcyon*).

DISTRIBUTION AND PREVIOUS INLAND RECORDS OF BLACK TURNSTONE

The Black Turnstone is essentially restricted to the west coast of North America, breeding in coastal Alaska and wintering from southern Alaska to northwest Mexico (AOU 1998). In Mexico it is a fairly common to common transient and winter visitor on the Pacific coast of Baja California Norte, and uncommon to rare in Baja California Sur, the Gulf of California, and south to Nayarit (Howell and Webb 1995). In the interior of the United States this coastal species occurs with some regularity only at the Salton Sea in southern California, where it is a rare spring transient from late March to early June and a casual fall transient from early July to early September, with two winter records and one

summer record through 1997 (Patten et al. 1997). Most spring records at the Salton Sea occur from mid-April to mid-May when the species is nearly annual, often in association with Ruddy Turnstones (*Arenaria interpes*). The preponderance of spring records at the Salton Sea no doubt results from birds continuing overland as they migrate north through the Gulf of California.

FIGURE 1: Black Turnstone (*Arenaria melanocephala*) at Elephant Butte Lake, Sierra County, New Mexico on 11 May 2010 (Photograph by Jerry Oldenettel.)

Away from the Salton Sea, the Black Turnstone is casual in the interior of coastal states and provinces. Garrett and Dunn (1981) list only a single record for the interior of southern California away from the Salton Sea, a bird present along the Colorado River at Havasu Landing, San Bernardino County on 21 May 1948. There are now at least two additional inland records from southern California (K. Garrett, pers. comm.) and ca. 18 for northern California (M. Rogers, pers. comm.). These interior California records include at least five spring records with dates from 24 April to 21 May, and 12 or more fall records from 13 July to 15 September. The northern California records come primarily from

the Central Valley, especially Kings County. Two records from east of the Sierra Nevada are of particular note: one bird at Mono Lake, Mono County on 29 July 1999 and one at Owens Lake, Inyo County 30 August to 1 September 2007. There are 13 inland records for Oregon (Combs 2003; D. Irons, pers. comm.), including six in spring (25 April to 14 May, not all dates known) and seven in fall (24 July to 19 December). Only a single Oregon record comes from east of the Cascades, that of two birds present at Ochoco Reservoir, Crook County 8 September 1985. There appears to be only a single inland record for Washington, one at the Yakima River Delta, Benton County 15 and 16 May 2001 (Wahl et al. 2005). In Canada, there are three photo-documented records and two additional sight reports for the southern Yukon, all from August (Sinclair et al. 2003), and the species is casual inland in British Columbia (AOU 1998) There is a report for the Northwest Territories (Sirois and McRae 1996), but this does not appear to be universally accepted. The species is also casual inland in central Alaska (AOU 1998). As pointed out to us by David Irons (pers. comm.), a regional editor of *North American Birds* for the Oregon & Washington Region, it appears that most inland records involve birds straying inland a short distance from the coast rather than birds migrating north or south through the interior of the continent. This is suggested by the relatively large number of inland records from Pacific coast states west of the Cascades and Sierras compared to the small number of records east of those mountain ranges.

In landlocked states and provinces Black Turnstone is a true accidental. There are single well documented records for Arizona, Nevada, Montana, Alberta, and Wisconsin as follows: Arizona - One at the Willcox Playa, Cochise County 2-5 June 2005 (*N. Am. Birds* 59:638; M. Stevenson, pers. comm.); Nevada - One at Carson Lake, Churchill County 23 April 1998 (*Field Notes* 52:363, R. Fridell, pers. comm..); Montana - One at Lake McDonald, Flathead County 28 August 1957 (Paulson 1998); Alberta - One at Langdon Reservoir near Calgary 16-19 October 1998 (*N. Am. Birds* 53:66; P. Taylor, pers. comm.); Wisconsin - One at Oshkosh near the shore of Lake Winnebago, Winnebago County 22-25 May 1971 (Robbins 1991). The New Mexico record thus appears

to be the sixth fully documented record of this species from a landlocked state or province. Among these, only the Wisconsin record was farther east. The New Mexico record falls well within the date range (23 April to 5 June) of the three previous spring records from inland states. While most Black Turnstones have departed southern California by the end of April (Garrett and Dunn 1981), the dates of the New Mexico record are earlier than the latest spring dates for the Salton Sea (7 June, Patten et al. 1997) and Sonora (19 May, Russell and Monson 1998).

There is an earlier published sight report of Black Turnstone in New Mexico (*NMOS Field Notes* 26:47, 1987). However that report, of 40-50 birds at Holloman Lake, Otero County on 21 November 1987 is highly questionable. The number of individuals involved and the late date seem quite improbable, the birds could not be located the next day, and this report was questioned at the time by the editor of the *New Mexico Ornithological Society Field Notes*. This report was not published in *American Birds*, nor has it been reviewed by the New Mexico Bird Records Committee.

DISCUSSION

While considering the reasons for the Black Turnstone's appearance necessarily involves speculation, it is of interest that New Mexico experienced strong west and southwest winds through much of the spring of 2010. This weather pattern could have driven birds inland from the Gulf of California or even the Pacific coast. During the spring of 2010, New Mexico received several other vagrants that may have come from these areas, including the state's third Elegant Tern (*Sterna elegans*), two Ruffs (*Philomachus pugnax*), and a Ruddy Turnstone, all present at Bosque del Apache National Wildlife Refuge, Socorro County, on the weekend of 1-2 May (S.O. Williams, *N. Am. Birds* in press). While the Ruffs and Ruddy Turnstone could in principle also have come from the east, the fact that these birds arrived within 24 hours of an Elegant Tern during a period of strong west winds suggests that westerly origin is more probable. Another Elegant Tern was

photographed at Morgan Lake in San Juan County on 2 June. While the Elegant Tern records may be due in part to the apparent failure of a large breeding colony in the Gulf of California (M. Baumann, pers. comm.), it is tempting to hypothesize that the wind patterns did indeed play a role in bringing some of these birds to New Mexico, likely including the Black Turnstone.

There are at least 33 credible records of Ruddy Turnstone for New Mexico (S. O. Williams, pers. comm.). Though statistical comparison is imprecise with only a single Black Turnstone record, this suggests that Black Turnstone is at least an order of magnitude rarer in the state than Ruddy Turnstone, but probably not two orders of magnitude rarer.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

We are indebted to the following individuals who provided information on Black Turnstone records (or lack of such records) in various states, provinces, and territories: Cameron D. Eckert (Yukon), Rick Fridell (Nevada and Utah), Kimball L. Garrett (southern California), Joseph A. Gryzbowski (Nebraska, Kansas, and Oklahoma), David Irons (Oregon), Tony Leukering (Colorado and Wyoming), Mark Lockwood (Texas), Craig Machtans (Northwest Territories), Jim Richards (Northwest Territories), Mark Stevenson (Arizona), Peter H. Svingen (Wisconsin), Peter Taylor (Alberta, Saskatchewan, and Manitoba), David Trochlell (Idaho and Montana), Brad Waggoner (Washington and Montana), and Sartor O. Williams III (New Mexico). Several people provided information on northern California records including Mike Rogers, John Sterling, Steve Glover, and Jeff Seay. We thank Patricia R. Snider for keeping New Mexico birders informed of the presence of the Black Turnstone throughout its stay through her operation of the New Mexico Rare Bird Alert.

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Wahl, T.R., W. Tweit, and S.G. Mlodinow. 2005. Birds of Washington: status and distribution. Oregon State University Press, Corvallis, Oregon.

* * *

RECENT AOU CHECK-LIST CHANGES AFFECTING THE NEW MEXICO BIRD LIST: THE 51ST SUPPLEMENT

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The recently-published 51st Supplement to the American Ornithologists' Union's (AOU) *Check-list of North American Birds* (*Auk* 127(3):726-744, 2010) is the 10th supplement to appear since the publication of the seventh edition of the AOU Check-list in 1998; it summarizes decisions made through March 2010. The purpose of the present article is to summarize those changes as they relate to the New Mexico bird list. The manuscript benefited from comments by David Krueper, John Parmeter, and Christopher Witt.

New Mexico gained one additional species (Pacific Wren, *Troglodytes pacificus*) while another species split resulted in new English and scientific names for a familiar species (Mexican Whip-poor-will, *Caprimulgus arizonae*). In addition, there are many higher level classification changes (orders and families), numerous scientific name changes, and several species sequence changes, these based largely on new genetic data and/or other new findings reflecting relationships. Readers seeking to learn more about the reasoning behind these changes are encouraged to read the entire 19 page supplement and seek out the over 100 literature citations given therein.

The North American form of the Black Scoter is split from the Eurasian form, and becomes *Melanitta americana* but retains the name Black Scoter.

Beginning with the removal of the stork family Ciconiidae from its position before the American vulture family Cathartidae to a new position following the storm-petrel family Hydrobatidae, the sequence of families following the storm-petrels is significantly rearranged. On the New Mexico list, the sequence of these families becomes Ciconiidae

(storks), Fregatidae (frigatebirds), Sulidae (boobies), Phalacrocoracidae (cormorants), Anhingidae (darters), Pelicanidae (pelicans), Ardeidae (bitterns and herons), and Threskiornithidae (ibises and spoonbills). Thankfully, the sequence of species within these rearranged families remains the same.

The Osprey is removed from the large family Accipitridae and given its own family Pandionidae, and placed between the American vultures and the Accipitridae.

The Whip-poor-will (*Caprimulgus vociferus*) is split into two full species, Mexican Whip-poor-will (*C. arizonae*) and Eastern Whip-poor-will (*C. vociferus*). The Mexican Whip-poor-will is the species that summers in New Mexico, where now found north to the Zuni, Jemez, and Sangre de Cristo mountains. There is no verified record of Eastern Whip-poor-will for New Mexico, although whips that occasionally show up on New Mexico's eastern plains (and perhaps elsewhere) may represent that species; a November specimen from Arizona demonstrates that the eastern species should be expected to stray to New Mexico at least casually. However, Mexican Whip-poor-will, which has undergone a seemingly relentless northward range expansion in New Mexico over the past several decades, might also be expected to occur in the east, especially as overshooting spring migrants. The two species are best distinguished in the field by song, the lower, slower, rougher (or burrier) song of the Mexican is readily distinguishable from the clear, sweet, more melodious song of the Eastern; in addition, Eastern males usually have more extensive white in the tail, but this feature may be difficult to determine in the field, and even more difficult to photograph adequately. Not all singing whips in northern New Mexico's mountains have been distinguished as Mexican or Eastern, but those that have been so distinguished (by song) by careful observers have all been Mexican. On the eastern plains, all whips detected have been non-singing birds; to date, there have been at least eight records of varying detail in the east, seven in the spring during 17 April-12 May at three Roosevelt County locales ("Melrose" Trap, Boone's Draw, and Lingo) and one fall record, 2 October 2005 at Amistad, Union County. The fact that the first of these, photographed 11 May 1995, was originally reported as a Chuck-

will's-widow (*C. carolinensis*), hints at the difficulty of identifying these cryptic species in the field.

Within the family Corvidae, the Pinyon Jay is moved up to a position between the Gray Jay and the Steller's Jay.

The North American forms of the Winter Wren (*Troglodytes troglodytes*), numbering some nine or more subspecies, are split from the Old World forms, which are renamed Eurasian Wren but retain the scientific name *T. troglodytes*. Within North America, the several "western" forms become Pacific Wren, *T. pacificus*, while the other, more "eastern" forms (one of which breeds west to British Columbia) retain the name Winter Wren but with the scientific name *T. hiemalis*. Representatives of both of these newly-split species groups have been verified by specimen in New Mexico, giving the state a net gain of one additional species (although both species are "new"). The western *pacificus* group and the eastern *hiemalis* group can be distinguished by call, *pacificus* giving a Wilson's Warbler-like "tenk" or "tenk-tenk" (variously rendered as "tick-tick," "timp-timp," etc.) and *hiemalis* a lower, rougher Song Sparrow-like "chup-chup" (also rendered as "kelp-kelp," etc.). Silent *hiemalis* and *pacificus* may not always be identifiable under field conditions, but *hiemalis* averages paler below than *pacificus*, especially on the throat, which is off-white rather than dark buff or ruddy. Reports of "Winter Wrens" have increased greatly in New Mexico in recent years, averaging some 13 individuals per winter season over the past decade, and with a high of 37 birds during the winter of 2005-06. It is doubtful this increase can be entirely attributed to better coverage alone, but whether it results from population increases and/or range changes in *pacificus* or *hiemalis*, or both, is not known. Judging from reports—not all of which can be considered accurate—representatives of western *pacificus* and eastern *hiemalis* are about equally numerous in New Mexico in winter, and can be found at the same localities. In the four winter seasons 2006-07 to 2009-10, about 35% of "Winter Wrens" were identified as "easterns," 30% as "westerns," and 35% were not differentiated. Wintering birds of both species groups occur in the Rio Grande Valley and adjacent areas; *pacificus* tends to be more frequent west of the Rio Grande Valley, and *hiemalis* tends to be more frequent

east of there, but representatives of both have been reported far to the east and west. Adding to the challenges in making sense of these new species is uncertainty as to which species group the birds occasionally found singing in summer in New Mexico's Jemez Mountains (as well as in Colorado and Arizona mountains) belong; these are presumed to be the western *pacificus*, but confirmation is required; to date, there is no proof of actual nesting in New Mexico. Finally, retention of the name "Winter Wren" for the new eastern species *hiemalis* is certain to lead to confusion in reporting these wrens in the future; observers are encouraged to be painstakingly precise and detailed when reporting these two species.

The gnatcatchers are removed from the family Sylviidae and placed in their own family Polioptilidae, and this new family is inserted between the wrens and the dippers.

A new family Calcariidae, containing the longspurs and snow buntings, is removed from the sparrow family Emberizidae and placed between the Olive Warbler family and the wood-warbler family. Within this new family, McCown's Longspur is removed from the genus *Calcarius* and returned to the monotypic genus *Rhychophanes*, which follows the *Calcarius* longspurs and precedes Snow Bunting.

Because of nomenclatural problems with the previous scientific name, the species name of the Blue-winged Warbler is changed from *Vermivora pinus to V. cyanoptera*. Furthermore, the Blue-winged and Golden-winged warblers are left as the only two New Mexico members of the once-broader genus *Vermivora*. The Tennessee, Orange-crowned, Nashville, Virginia's, and Lucy's warblers are removed from *Vermivora* and placed in the restored genus *Oreothlypis*, which follows the *Vermivora* species.

The Northern and Louisiana waterthrushes are removed from the genus *Seiurus* (leaving Ovenbird the sole member of that genus) and placed in a new genus *Parkesia*, which follows the Ovenbird.

Within the sparrow family Emberizidae, the Rufous-crowned Sparrow (*Aimophila ruficeps*) is moved up to a position following the Eastern Towhee, and it becomes the only representative of the now-restricted genus *Aimophila* in New Mexico. It is followed by the Canyon

and Abert's towhees, which are removed from the genus *Pipilo* and transferred to the genus *Melozone*. These are then followed in sequence by Botteri's and Cassin's sparrows, which are removed from the genus *Aimophila* and placed in the resurrected genus *Peucaea*.

An updated list of all 2,070 species known from the AOU Check-list area (basically, North American south through Panama) is available at www.aou.org (clicking on "Checklist, North America"). An updated list of New Mexico bird species, incorporating changes resulting from the 51st Supplement and including species recently accepted to the list by the New Mexico Bird Records Committee, will be available at www.nmbirds.org in the near future. The updated list contains 532 species verified by specimen, photograph, or audio-recording in New Mexico.

* * *

IN MEMORIAM: BARBARA McKNIGHT, 1917-2010

It is with great sadness that we report the passing of Barbara C. McKnight, one of the founders of the New Mexico Ornithological Society (NMOS) and the recipient of the first NMOS Florence Merriam Bailey Lifetime Achievement Award. Barbara passed away on the evening of September 13, 2010 in Silver City in the company of her daughter and friends. Barbara was a resident of New Mexico for 75 years. She and her husband, Daniel, developed a strong interest in birds and in the natural world soon after moving to their new home in Cedar Crest in the early 1950s.

In 1962 Barbara and other founding members of NMOS formed the Society. In 1963 Barbara was appointed Secretary, a position that she held until her retirement in 1975. Barbara also began banding birds in 1963, and she banded hundreds of birds at her Cedar Crest home and then later in Glenwood where she and Daniel retired. Barbara documented a number of first state records for New Mexico (e.g., Winter Wren and Magnolia Warbler). In addition, Barbara's banding efforts at Cedar Crest produced the first documentation of Flammulated Owl in the Sandia Mountains, documentation that "black-eared" Bushtit was actually an age and color variation in the species, evidence of widespread nomadism in Evening Grosbeak, and a longevity record for Dark-eyed Junco in Cedar Crest. For additional special records that Barbara's extensive banding, along with Daniel's photography, documented at Cedar Crest from 1963-1975, see this recent paper:

McKnight, B. C., and J. D. Ligon, 2008. A half-century of bird records at a single site. NMOS Bulletin 36: 41-54.

In addition to the NMOS Florence Merriam Bailey Award presented in 1982, Barbara was the recipient of the Leopold Conservation Award from The Nature Conservancy in October 1981. Finally, it was Barbara's own view that her most important contribution to the field of ornithology was that she "kept the NMOS together" when it was young

and fragile. In fact Pat Snider, a founding member of NMOS, recently summed it up best when she said, "There would be no NMOS if not for Barbara in the early years."

--Dave Krueper, NMOS President

* * *

RECENT ORNITHOLOGICAL LITERATURE

The following is a list of publications pertaining to ornithology in New Mexico and adjacent areas that appeared in 2009. Efforts were made to provide a comprehensive listing, however it is likely that citations were omitted. To aid in the development of future annual literature compilations, please submit relevant citations to the editor.

Davis, D.M. 2009. Nesting ecology and reproductive success of Lesser Prairie-Chickens in shinnery oak-dominated rangelands. Wilson J of Ornithology 121: 322-327.

Goguen, C.B., D.R. Curson, and N.E. Mathews. 2009. Effects of parasitism by Brown-headed Cowbirds (*Molothrus ater*) on reproductive success of three frequent hosts in New Mexico. The Southwestern Naturalist 54(1): 58-67.

Smith, D.M., D.M. Finch, and D.L. Hawksworth. 2009. Black-chinned Hummingbird nest-site selection and nest survival in response to fuel reduction in a southwestern riparian forest. Condor 111: 641-652.

Smythe, L.A. and D.A. Haukos. 2009. Nesting success of grassland birds in shinnery oak communities treated with Tebuthiuron and grazing in eastern New Mexico. Southwestern Naturalist 54: 136-145.

St-Louis, V., A.M. Pidgeon, M.K. Clayton, B.A. Locke, D.W. Bash, and V.C. Radeloff. 2009. Satellite image texture and a vegetation index predict avian biodiversity in the Chihuahuan Desert of New Mexico. *Ecography, 32:468-480.*

Williams, S.O. III, S.A. King, S.M. Fettig, J.R. Oldenettel, and J.E. Parmeter. 2009. A Sungrebe (*Heliornis fulica*) in New Mexico: a first for the United States. North American Birds 63:4-9.

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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.

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NMOS BULLETIN

The *Bulletin* is published quarterly; subscription is by membership in NMOS. The *Bulletin* serves two primary purposes: (1) to publish articles of scientific merit concerning the distribution, abundance, status, behavior, and ecology of the avifauna of New Mexico and its contiguous regions; and (2) to publish news and announcements deemed of interest to the New Mexico ornithological community.

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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