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AZ Field Ornithologists Launched

BY TROY CORMAN

Interim President,

Arizona Field Ornithologists

Welcome to the Arizona Field Ornithologists' (AZFO) web page and our inaugural quarterly periodical, *Arizona Birds Online*. I am thrilled to finally announce the initiation of this fledgling organization and to encourage many of you to become active members and help mold it into a progressive and valuable forum for birders, biologists, and researchers. Many other states have similar organizations and a handful of dedicated individuals decided that Arizona was well overdue. Although there are many routes that

AZFO can eventually branch into as more individuals get involved, the primary focus will be in obtaining, compiling, and disseminating recently acquired information on the birds of Arizona. In fact, the organization's mission statement is as follows:

The Arizona Field Ornithologists is an organization of birders and ornithologists dedicated to increasing the knowledge in the identification, status, and distribution of Arizona's birdlife.

Please keep in mind however, that this broad statement may change slightly as the organization

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- *Join the North American Migration Count on May 14. See article on p. 7*

LeConte's Sparrow: Arizona's Second Record

BY KEITH KAMPER

Tucson

This paper documents the second Arizona record of LeConte's Sparrow (*Ammodramus leconteii*), a single bird photographed in Marana, Pima County,

Arizona, December 19, 2004, to February 10, 2005. It provides comments on context, distribution, and field identification of this *Ammodramus* sparrow.

On December 19, 2004, Peter Salo-

mon and the author observed an *Ammodramus* sparrow along the Santa Cruz River in Marana. GPS coordinates of the initial sighting: UTM 12 S 0492449 3577444, or N

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Keith Kamper

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Mission Statement

The Arizona Field Ornithologists is an organization of birders and ornithologists dedicated to increasing knowledge of the identification, status, and distribution of Arizona's birdlife.

We want to hear from you!

How do you like our new online publication? How can we improve it? We are eager to hear from our readers. Please send us letters with your comments, and we'll have a letters' column in our next issue.

Note from editor

We also want articles about noteworthy bird observations, unusual birding sites, interesting activities, research that you've been involved in, or book reviews related to birds and birding in Arizona. We hope to make "Little known and seldom visited birding sites" (see p. 8) a regular feature so if you have an experience along this line please write it up and send it in.

In the next issue we hope to have reports on Arizona's first record of a Ruby-throated Hum-

mingbird (*Archilochus colubris*), which has been in Tucson, Pima County, through this past winter and spring, and a possible first record Tufted Flycatcher (*Mitrephanes paeocercus*) at White Rock Canyon on Lake Mohave, Mohave County.

When sending us materials include your name and address and the literature cited. Sources should include the titles of the articles; author(s) name(s); and name, date, and place of the publication. Also include the volume and issue number of periodicals. If you need more details about submitting articles email Doug Jenness at: D_JENNESS@hotmail.com or write to me at: 4375 E. Rollins Rd., Catalina, AZ 85739.

Notes on Rosy-Finch Taxonomy, Distribution, and Identification

By Rick Wright

Tucson

The genus *Leucosticte* is currently understood as comprising 27 species and subspecies of Rosy-Finches and Mountain-Finches. Most of these taxa occur in northern Asia, but eight (or, according to some authorities, nine) are found in North America, and four—two monotypic species and two well-marked subspecies of a third—could conceivably be expected in Arizona.

Species: Black Rosy-Finch *Leucosticte atrata*

Subspecies: none recognized

Species: Brown-capped Rosy-Finch *Leucosticte australis*

Subspecies: none recognized

Species: Gray-crowned Rosy-Finch *Leucosticte tephrocotis*

Subspecies: brown-cheeked *tephrocotis* (“Gray-crowned Rosy-Finch”)

Subspecies: gray-cheeked *littoralis* (“Hepburn’s Rosy-Finch,” “Gray-headed Rosy-Finch”)

The Black Rosy-Finch *L. atrata* and the Brown-capped Rosy-Finch *L. australis* are relatively southern in their breeding distributions, summering in the Great Basin and in Colorado and New Mexico, respectively. The two races of Gray-crowned Rosy-Finch *L. tephrocotis* that could be expected in winter in Arizona breed farther north and west; *tephrocotis*, a “brown-cheeked” race (traditionally known simply as the Gray-crowned Rosy-Finch) summers from Montana to the Yukon, while the “gray-cheeked” *littoralis* (Hepburn’s Rosy-Finch, or Gray-headed Rosy-Finch) breeds closer to the coast, from northern California to west-central Alaska.

Black Rosy-Finch has been the most frequently reported in Arizona; there are records, too, of both Gray-crowned and Hepburn’s Rosy Finch, though there are as yet no acceptable reports of Brown-capped Rosy-Finch in the state.

The composition of mixed flocks just to the east, in New Mexico and southern Colorado, ap-



Jim Burns

Black Rosy-Finch

somewhat less common; Hepburn’s Rosy-Finch is the scarcest in most of the interior west, although, interestingly, this is the rosy-finch most likely to wander and the one responsible for most vagrant records in the Midwest (and as far east as Maine).

Well-marked individuals (typically adult males) of all four Rosy-Finches should, given reasonable views, be easy to identify on gross plumage characters. Brown-capped Rosy-Finch is the palest species and the most extensively pink beneath; almost all males apparently lack the obvious gray “scarf” shown by the other species. Black Rosy-Finch is the darkest, with extensive pink on the belly and rump and a silvery hindcrown. Gray-crowned Rosy-Finch shares the silvery crown pattern but has on average less pink beneath than Black Rosy-Finch, and the ground color of the body plumage is rich brown. Hepburn’s Rosy-Finch resembles Gray-crowned but is silver not only on the crown but on the sides of the head as well, creating a hooded appearance that distinctly sets off the black chin and throat.

The other age- and sex-classes appear to be more challenging. Females and first-winter birds are traditionally distinguished by the general color of the body plumage (brownish in Brown-capped, Gray-crowned, and Hepburn’s, dusky in Black); the presence or absence of gray on the nape (present on Gray-crowned, Hepburn’s, and Black, but usually absent on Brown-capped) and on the supercilium (most distinct on Gray-crowned

appears to be quite variable. In general, banding results show Black and Brown-capped Rosy-Finches to be most frequent; these are the species that breed nearest to Arizona. Gray-crowned (*L. t. tephrocotis*) Rosy-Finches seem to be

(Continued on page 4)

	Body plumage	Nape	Supercilium	Pink on belly
Black	dusky	gray	indistinct or absent	none to some, dull
Gray-crowned	brownish	gray	indistinct to distinct	little to moderate, dull
Brown-capped	brownish	brownish	usually absent	moderate to extensive, bright
Hepburn's	brownish	gray	indistinct to distinct	little to moderate, dull

ever, that might prove useful, particularly in mixed flocks. Black and Brown-capped Rosy-Finches are slightly longer and heavier than Gray-crowned Rosy-Finches of the races *tephrocotis* and *littoralis*. At the same time, however, Gray-crowned (in the strict sense)

(Continued from page 3)

and Hepburn's, and least distinct on Brown-capped); and the extent of pink on the underparts, particularly the belly (most pink on Brown-capped, and least pink on Black). Note that while most of these characteristics are merely relative, in combination they should permit the correct identification of most individuals:

Unfortunately, as a review of published photographs and the identification literature reveals, there are individuals—probably mostly birds in their first winter—that present a confusing mixture of plumage characters. A Gray-crowned Rosy-Finch, for example, with a dull head pattern but moderate amounts of pink beneath might be misidentified as a Brown-capped, while the reverse might be true of a Brown-capped Rosy-Finch showing a brighter supercilium than normal. In poor light, the “cold” dusky ground color of a Black Rosy-Finch could be difficult to distinguish from the warm, deep brown of Gray-crowned, which in turn could be confused with the paler, brighter golden coloration of a Brown-capped. The existence of hybrids between Black and Gray-crowned Rosy-Finches, and of introgressants between Gray-crowned and Hepburn's, further complicates the field situation.

There seem to be some structural clues, how-

ever, that might prove useful, particularly in mixed flocks. Black and Brown-capped Rosy-Finches are slightly longer and heavier than Gray-crowned Rosy-Finches of the races *tephrocotis* and *littoralis*. At the same time, however, Gray-crowned (in the strict sense) has in absolute measurements the longest and thickest bill of any of Arizona's possible four Rosy-Finches; coupled with the bird's smaller overall size, this should make most Gray-crowned Rosy-Finches appear distinctly front-heavy. The bill of Hepburn's Rosy-Finch is shorter, but still stouter and longer than that of Black or, especially, of Brown-capped, which is obviously the smallest-billed taxon found in the interior west.

Published measurements suggest that there may also be slight differences in the “tail extension” shown by the four Rosy-Finches. Black and Hepburn's Rosy-Finches (especially females) have the shortest tails, whereas the wing-lengths of each sex are essentially identical to those of Brown-capped and Gray-crowned; this makes it seem likely that the folded wing on at least some Black and Hepburn's Rosy-Finches will reach

	Wing chord	Tail length	Tail as percent of wing chord
Hepburn's ♀	96-106 mm	56-66 mm	58-62 %
Hepburn's ♂	100-110 mm	59-69 mm	59-63 %
Black ♀	96-106 mm	57-65 mm	59-61 %
Black ♂	100-111 mm	62-70 mm	62-63 %
Brown-capped ♀	97-108 mm	61-70 mm	63-65 %
Brown-capped ♂	100-112 mm	62-71 mm	62-63 %
Gray-crowned ♀	97-106 mm	62-71 mm	64-67 %
Gray-crowned ♂	102-111 mm	64-74 mm	63-67 %

closer to the tip of the tail. The specimens available at the University of Arizona do not bear this out, possibly as a result of differing preparation techniques; see, however, the photographs in

(Continued from page 4)

Kaufman (2004), which do appear to show the predicted proportions at least for Black (short tail-extension) and Gray-crowned (long tail-extension) Rosy-Finches.

There is little information available about any vocal differences among the rosy-finches. All four taxa one can hope for in Arizona appear to share a chattering that recalls the chirping of House Sparrows; it has been suggested (T. Floyd, *pers. comm.*) that Brown-capped may have a distinctively squeaky contact note reminiscent of the chip of a Canada Warbler.

Careful observation should allow us to test many of these field characters, and to make real progress in understanding the identification of these birds whenever they occur in Arizona.

These notes are based principally on

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Internet images of variable quality are found at <http://images.google.com/images?q=rosy+finch&ie=ISO-8859-1&hl=en&btnG=Google+Search>



Richard Ditch

Black Rosy-Finches "invaded" northern part of state in 1997. This photo shows finches a few miles south of Page in Coconino County, Jan. 25, 1997.

LeConte's Sparrow: Arizona's Second Record

(Continued from p. 1)

32 deg 20min 01.9 sec W 111 deg 04 min 48.9 sec. This observation occurred at about 1220 MST while the observers were participating in the Tucson Valley Christmas Bird Count. Salomon discovered the sparrow when it flushed directly in front of him. It traveled a very short distance (ca. 15 feet) before dropping to ground level. The small size and relatively short tail immediately drew the observer's interest. The sparrow was briefly visible near the ground, but partially obscured.

Description and Identification

In addition to the small size and short tail—particularly when compared to the numerous Lincoln's Sparrows (*Melospiza lincolnii*) present—several characteristics confirmed that this was an *Ammodramus*, more specifically either LeConte's Sparrow or one of the sharp-tailed sparrows (Saltmarsh or Nelson's—*A. caudacutus* or *A. nelsonii*, respectively). Among the characteristics: a broad orange or ochre supercilium; lores and submustacial stripe of same color as supercilium; dark eye-stripe that was thicker behind the eye; grayish ear coverts, and a white throat. Breast and flanks were ochre, with fine dark streaking. Other similar *Ammodramus* sparrows were eliminated as candidate species for the following reasons: Henslow's (*A. henslowii*) has a larger bill, flatter head, and reddish wings; Grasshopper (*A. savannarum*) has a larger bill, less contrasting head pattern, and unstreaked or lightly streaked flanks; Baird's (*A. bairdii*) has marked moustacial and malar stripes (Beadle and Rising 2002). The nape, median crown stripe, and back were not seen well upon the initial observation, precluding identification to species level. The sparrow was lost as it entered the surrounding Bermuda Grass. Local observers were notified, two of which (G. Bieber and R. Hoyer), were able to join the initial observers at the site. The assembled observers were able to flush what was likely the same spar-

row, but views precluded positive identification.

On the morning of the 20th, seven observers (G. Bieber, C. Benesh, R. Hoyer, B. Massey, G. Rosenberg, D. Stejskal, M. Stevenson) were able to relocate, positively identify, and photograph Arizona's second LeConte's Sparrow. A white median crown stripe (rather than gray median crown stripe), a streaked nape (rather than a solid gray nape) and white tertial edges were among the definitive characteristics observed and photographed—marks that eluded the initial observers. The sparrow was observed with regularity by many observers until February 10, 2005. Upon flushing, it would often perch in small willows, tangles, and palo verdes for extended periods.

Distribution and Status

The known winter range of LeConte's Sparrow includes: "s. Illinois, central and s. Missouri, se. Kansas, w. central Oklahoma, and w.-central Texas south to the Gulf Coast and east to w. Tennessee and the panhandle area of w. Florida. Also reported to winter in the lower Pecos River valley of se. New Mexico" (Lowther 2005). Arizona's first record occurred in the northwest section of the state near the town of Topock on November 30, 1981 (Rosenberg 1991).

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North American Migration Count

Counting Spring Migrants in Arizona



Jim Burns

Clark's Grebe

Have you ever wondered how many species of birds can be found in Arizona during migration when the numbers reach their peak?

One way you can help find out is to participate in the 14th annual North American Migration Count (NAMC), which will be held on Saturday, May 14. This also happens to be International Migratory Bird Day.

NAMC's have been conducted in many states and provinces throughout North America since 1992 and are very similar to Christmas Bird Counts, except you get to count many species that winter in Mexico and further south. "Count circles," moreover, are not confined to a 15-mile diameter but are entire counties, and there is no \$5 charge to participate. Each county has a coordinator who organizes birders and birding teams to go out in the field to tally all the bird species and individuals they see or hear on the count day. Birders often select their favorite county birding spots to survey or simply list the birds in their backyard or local park. All migrant and resident birds count, except of course clearly domestic birds, including caged birds and domestic waterfowl in neighborhood ponds. Like Christmas Bird Counts, you keep track of time, mileage, and basic weather information.

Some birders will go out well before dawn and well after dusk to get in as many hours as possible and to find owls and nightjars. Others may just spend an hour or so in front of feeders. It can be an opportunity to wander over many miles of county roads or simply sit in one spot watching the species that come near.

One great thing about this one-day count is that it encourages birders to get out in the field and survey sites that otherwise would not be birded during this exciting period. This can lead to discovering new bird records. In 2002 and 2003, for example, Maricopa County participants found a White Ibis, Hooded Warbler, late county and first county May records for several species, the first spring record of Grasshopper Sparrow for the county, nearly 200 species each year, and the list goes on and on. And who would have guessed that the two most numerous species for Pinal County's first count since the 1990s would be Western Grebe (281) and Clark's Grebe (209)! From these annual counts we are beginning to assemble a cumulative record that gives us a better understanding of May migration in Arizona and how migration varies by county and year. We had surveys conducted in only four of the 15 counties last year. However, to get a more accurate state perspective, we need to have more counties represented.

If you are interested in participating in one of the five counties currently with coordinators, please contact the coordinators directly. They are:

Apache County—Jim Videle—moonrise@wmonline.com

Maricopa County—Troy Corman—aplomado@cox.net

Pima County—Melody Kehl—outdoor1@cox.net

Pinal County—Doug Jenness—d_jenness@hotmail.com

Yuma County—Henry Detwiler—henrydetwiler@earthlink.net

If you are interested in becoming a county coordinator for one of the other counties, please contact Troy Corman to get data forms that you will need to modify for your county.

Birding the Pinal Mountains

BY RICHARD C. HOYER

Tucson

On an Arizona state map showing county lines, you may notice that Gila County's southern tip is a sharp wedge, penetrating into northeastern Pinal County. In the middle of this wedge is the 7,848-foot Pinal Peak, the highest

chunk of land between the Salt and Gila Rivers. Although its upper slopes are draped in dense pine, fir, and aspen, it's too far north to be considered part of the typical southeastern sky islands; but the Salt River Canyon to the north also isolates it from the coniferous forests of the Mogollon Rim. This gives this mountain a

unique character as central Arizona's own sky island, and it shares birds from both regions.

I first became curious about the Pinal Mountains when I read in Monson and Phillips' *Annotated Checklist of the Birds of Arizona* (1991) that an Orange-billed Nightingale-Thrush had been reported here mid-April 1974, a bird that was watched for over a half hour. Considering that this species has been predicted to occur in Arizona, that the isolation of the forest makes these mountains a vagrant trap, and that the species when seen well is very distinctive, I figure that it's probably a good record. I decided that these little-known mountains deserved some more birding attention.

Located in the Tonto National Forest, the region is designated as the Pinal Recreation Area. As you ascend the mountain, the first habitat is chaparral, with scattered oaks and junipers until the pine forest begins. Birds here are what one would expect for much of central Arizona: year-round it's chock full of Spotted Towhees, along with

resident Hutton's Vireo, Western Scrub-Jay, and Juniper Titmouse. In the summer Black-chinned Sparrow, Black-throated Gray Warbler, and Gray Vireo can be found. In the upper elevations, one first enters pine forest and then near the peak a much cooler fir and aspen forest. More typical of northern Arizona forests are breeding Orange-crowned Warbler and Mountain Chickadee found here,

and MacGillivray's Warbler may also breed. But several species typical of southeastern Arizona also occur here, including Bridled Titmouse; Zone-tailed Hawk; Olive, Red-faced, and Grace's Warblers; and this place is perhaps best known as the northernmost range of Yellow-eyed Junco.

To get to the Pinal Recreation Area, one must first get to Globe, along US 60/70 in Gila County east of Phoenix. Just



Richard C. Hoyer

Lower slopes of Pinal Mountains in Gila County

west of the old downtown the highway is heading to the south-southeast (SSE) and bends sharply to east-northeast to cross over Pinal Creek; turn right (SSE) at Hill St. immediately on the east side of the bridge. If coming from the east, this will be a left turn just before crossing the bridge. At the stop sign in 0.2 mile turn right, then almost immediately left again to cross over the railroad tracks and to the south side of Pinal Creek; there should be signs directing you to the recreation area. In another 0.9 mile turn right on Sixshooter Road, just past a small bridge. In another 1.8 miles, turn right at a stop sign to head up Kellner Canyon. Once on Tonto National Forest, you can pull over at any wide spot and begin birding almost anywhere. One productive spot is the former Kellner Campground, which one must now walk to, beyond a locked gate. In 2001 there was a large grove of cottonwoods here, and on June 8, while birding with Gene Loring, Peter Salomon, and Bob Proniewych, I found a singing male



Richard C. Hoyer

Hybrid between Dark-eyed and Yellow-eyed Junco in Pinal Mountains

Hooded Warbler. In the fall of 2004 it looked as if drought had taken a toll on these cottonwoods.

Past the turnoff to Kellner Campground the road comes to a small divide with a cattle guard and the junction with Forest Route 651. To the right is another access route from US 60/70, which I have not taken, while turning left leads to the higher elevations. One passes through an area of open chaparral (Spotted Towhee, Black-chinned Sparrow, and Crissal Thrasher) before coming to the oak-juniper belt for which Gray Vireo is known. One stretch of road that has been most productive for this species is near the coordinates 33° 19.944', W 110°50.698. It was in this area on September 30, 2004, that I found a junco that appeared to be a hybrid Yellow-eyed x Dark-eyed Junco. Its plumage was most like that of Yellow-eyed Junco but the eye was a dark brown, and the call note was somewhat intermediate. At the same place and time Mark Stevenson found a "Slate-colored" Fox Sparrow, probably a rare winter visitor as elsewhere in Arizona.

Shortly above this area one reaches the first pine forest. On July 30, 2001, I arrived with Tim Rodenkirk on a morning with heavy clouds and a giant, decaying monsoonal storm. When the rain finally halted in the late morning, our first stop at the Sulfide del Rey Campground seemed quiet at first. But almost immediately after I began pishing we were surrounded by the largest flock of warblers I have ever seen in Arizona. It contained at least 75 birds, mostly Grace's Warbler, with several Olive, Yellow-rumped, Hermit, Townsend's, Red-faced, Nashville, and Painted Redstart among them.

Above Sulfide del Rey, one comes to a main junction and the pass; the only area I have explored is the road to the left which leads to Pinal Peak and the campgrounds. This first stretch stays on the south-facing slopes where chaparral reaches a higher elevation. I have had Gray Vireo in this area on a couple occasions. Where the road crosses back over to the north-facing slopes, the forest is again dense, and one finds the likes of Red-breasted Nuthatch and Brown Creeper, and at least in early fall this is a good area for Yellow-eyed Junco. There are many private cabins from here on up to the top. Once near the top you reach a fork, the right taking you to the peak and radio towers with a more open Gambel's oak and moist chaparral. The left fork stays on the protected forested slope and ends at the Upper Pinal Campground. On my first visit May 23, 2000, I saw a Dusky-capped Flycatcher near the peak, which seems to be rare here, and a MacGillivray's Warbler, possibly a breeding bird. It is in this area where one can find Golden-crowned Kinglet, Orange-crowned Warbler, and presumably where the Orange-billed Nighthawk-Thrush was seen.

A lot remains to be discovered in the Pinal Mountains, both in terms of its regularly occurring avifauna as well as rare visitors. Northern Pygmy-Owl, though not mentioned specifically in either the *Annotated Checklist* or by Phillips, et. al. (1964), may occur here, and if so, it would be interesting to note which subspecies it is. Confirmation of breeding Dusky-capped Flycatchers would certainly be of interest, and one might be able to find mixed pairs of Yellow-eyed and Dark-eyed Juncos in the breeding season. Breeding confirmation of MacGillivray's Warbler would also be news. There is a fair amount of forest on the northern slopes, certainly too much to cover thoroughly, but it is still much less than on any of the other sky islands of southern Arizona. This means that any vagrants should be easier to find here than in other areas.

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Eurasian Collared-Doves in Arizona

The following article appeared in the September 2004 issue of the Vermilion Flycatcher, monthly publication of the Tucson Audubon Society, and is reprinted with permission. It focuses on establishing the rapidity with which Eurasian Collared-Doves have advanced across the state of Arizona and when they reached each county. Every indication is that since this article was written the doves are being seen in more places and in larger numbers. Arizona Birds Online plans to do a follow-up article that shows the increased number of localities where this new species is being observed and the size of the flocks that are being reported. In order to do this we need your help in reporting new locations on the special form for this purpose located on the Arizona Field Ornithologists website.

BY DOUG JENNESS

Catalina, AZ

Perhaps the most dramatic colonization of a bird species in recent Arizona history has been the rapid dispersal of the Eurasian Collared-Dove (*Streptopelia decaocto*). The first documented record of its appearance in the state was March 6, 2000 in Eager, located in Apache County near the New Mexican border. A pair was observed attempting to nest in a piñon pine in a private yard. They were likely in this and other areas before March 2000, but had either gone unnoticed or unreported. By the end of that year, the doves had been reported in six counties. Less than a year later they had spread to nine counties and by November 2002 the tally was 14 of the state's 15 counties. Only La Paz County has no reports, which is more likely due to little birding there than to a boycott by the invading doves.

This extraordinary dispersal is also revealed in the annual Audubon Christmas Bird Counts. Four were reported in two Arizona circles during the 2001-02 count; 61 in four circles in 2002-03; and 158 in five circles in 2003-04.

Not only have the doves expanded into more locations, flock sizes are growing, with increasing reports of more than 20. Although documented reports of breeding in the state are scarce, the doves have become year-round residents in

many areas and are surely breeding there. Most reports are from rural areas or small towns in agricultural districts. Sightings in urban settings require careful scrutiny, because Eurasian Collared-Doves can easily be confused with ringed turtle-doves, a domesticated form of the African Collared-Dove (*S. roseogrisea*) and a fairly common escapee in big cities and suburbs. These two similar species are also known to hybridize, increasing the challenge of identification. Fortunately, the most recent field guides have descriptions of the differences between them.

The Eurasian Collared-Dove's spread across Arizona follows its 20-year colonization of the United States. It was first reported in southern Florida in the early 1980s; the exact year of its arrival isn't certain. Most likely it came from the Bahamas or some other nearby Caribbean island. It was introduced to the Bahamas from Europe in the early 1970s by a local breeder. After some difficulties with his breeding operation, he released about 50 doves at the end of 1974. They spread rapidly throughout the West Indies and into southern Florida, and by 1999, the doves had

First county reports

Apache, March 2000

Navajo, July 2000

Graham, July 2000

Cochise, September, 2000

Pima, September 2000

Maricopa, October 2000

Pinal, March 2001

Coconino, June 2001

Yavapai, August 2001

Yuma, March, 2002

Gila, April 2002

Greenlee, April 2002

Santa Cruz, July 2002

Mojave, November 2002

migrated as far west and north as North Dakota, Minnesota, Montana, Washington, and Oregon. This species appears to follow a pattern described



Jim Burns

Eurasian Collared-Dove

by ornithologists as “jump” dispersal, where there is initially long-distance dispersal of individuals, and later, the larger populations gradually fill in the gaps. The doves followed the same scenario, when, beginning in the 1930s, they dispersed across Europe from the Balkans and Turkey, which they had settled several centuries before. In the United Kingdom, for example, five pairs were known in 1950, but as the larger population filled in, this number quickly grew to 100,000 pairs in the next 27 years. For thousands of years before they began moving westward (and to some extent eastward into China and other parts of Asia), their home range was India, Sri Lanka, and Myanmar.

Eurasian Collared-Doves appear to be very adaptable; they moved from relatively hot and dry areas in southwest Asia to the cooler, damper climate of northern Europe. Key to their settling down in new areas is a year-round food supply, usually stored or waste grain, and ample roosting areas. In all regions, they steer away from heavily forested areas. It’s not clear what particular characteristic or habit has made these doves such robust colonizers in the past several hundred years. The eminent ornithologist and evolutionary biologist Ernst Mayr (1965) suggested that possibly a behavioral adaptation that gave them greater incentive to populate new areas may even have evolved a genetic basis.

Their spread across North America has been so rapid that few studies have been made and much remains unknown about their adjustment to this new territory. How do they survive harsh winters and the cooler weather of higher

elevations (Eager is 7,100 feet)? What will be their effect on native birds, particularly other doves? Will they become transmitters of disease or agricultural pests? Descended from so few individuals released in the Bahamas, what longer-term effects could their narrow gene pool have? Does their dispersal here differ from that in Europe?

It seems likely that they are here to stay, and there’s not much we can do about it, even if we wanted to. We should heed Kenn Kaufman’s (1999) suggestion several years ago, even before they arrived in Arizona, “The doves are here, and they’re spreading. In a way we can’t really *do* anything. But we can—if I may be forgiven such heresy—try to enjoy them.” And part of enjoying them is learning about them—their habits, breeding and distribution patterns, and relationships to other birds.

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Arizona Field Ornithologists Launched

(Continued from page 1)

evolves and future endeavors are undertaken. At this time there are no membership dues and until they are established, we will continue to provide this information economically via printable online documents and frequently updated postings on the AZFO web page. In the near future, we plan to display statewide seasonal reports compiled from noteworthy observation you provide to us. We will also strive to eventually produce a peer-review publication that will include photographs, articles, papers, and survey results that are particularly relevant to our mission statement. This publication will simply, yet accurately be entitled *Arizona Birds*. As the organization grows, we will also sponsor an annual conference in the state that will include workshops, paper presentations, and local field trips.

For AZFO to develop into a very worthwhile organization, we need many active and dedicated members from throughout the state to take part in its evolution. This can be accomplished in so many ways such as submitting noteworthy field observations, writing articles, and participating in organized weekend bird surveys to remote or little known areas of the state to acquire data on the status and distribution of birds. We hope to soon begin compiling information about bird distribution, numbers, migratory patterns, and breeding records throughout the state from seasonal reports submitted by birders like you. An important result of this activity will be to help establish the following information for each of Arizona's 15 counties: complete list of documented species, a list of species that nest or have nested, early and late nesting records, and arrival and departure dates for migrant and irruptive species. Once we compile this

baseline information, we can then compare the significance of future local reports, document changes in the seasonal status of species, and have a much better understanding of statewide bird distribution.

Individuals may also help document and monitor the changing status of nonnative bird populations in Arizona such as Eurasian Collared-Doves, Peach-faced Lovebirds, and Monk Parakeets. We also encourage you to participate in the upcoming, countywide bird survey known as the North American Migration Count. There are more details on this event in the first issue of *Arizona Birds Online* and you can click on our web site to view the 2004 results of these counts.

The possibilities of how you can support and participate in AZFO are seemingly boundless. They are limited primarily only by the number of enthusiastic and active members we have. So come join us in our infinite quest in understanding the dynamic nature of Arizona's avian world and helping create an open forum to share these new revelations and discoveries.

I look forward to working with you, both in and out of the field.

Troy Corman

Interim President

Arizona Field Ornithologists