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## *A glance at the birds of southwestern New Mexico*

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*This is one of many related papers that were included in the 1965 NMGS Fall Field Conference Guidebook.*

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# A GLANCE AT THE BIRDS OF SOUTHWESTERN NEW MEXICO

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Because he is an outdoor breed, the geological subspecies of the human race *Homo sapiens geologicus* is commonly an avid bird watcher. As a matter of fact, one hears a frequent complaint that *H. sapiens geologicus* and *H. sapiens ornithologicus* are difficult to distinguish in the field. This follows from two facts. Their habitats overlap. The first is more likely to be found on rocky ledges, the second in somewhat greater cover—trees, shrubs, and other vegetation. But, since these two environments may occur together, the species may be found in the same area. The first is somewhat noisier, emitting constantly repeated sounds as of rocks splitting; this is accompanied by a well-pronounced metallic ring. The second species is quieter, more skulking, with only an occasional twig-snapping sound or perhaps a faint squeak, made by drawing air between closed lips, though occasionally, especially when other species of *Homo sapiens* are around, he emits a harsh shhhhhhhh! These distinctions are not always helpful, however, because of the second and more consequential fact. The two species tend to interbreed, and they produce a hardy offspring. This leads to a greater intermingling of habits and characteristic calls. A notable result is that the neck affliction caused by constantly looking earthward (*H. sapiens geologicus*) is admirably compensated by a corresponding affliction resulting from constantly looking upward (*H. sapiens ornithologicus*), and the new hybrid (*H. sapiens geolornithologicus*) can look straight ahead, as well as up or down, and all this with no apparent discomfort.

Be this as it may, for those geologists who may be interested in the living avifauna, a list of birds observed within a single 24-hour period in the Silver City area is given below. This list was compiled from the observations of about 40 individuals made during the interval between 12:00 noon of May 8 and 12:00 noon of May 9, this year (1965). The 40 individuals were divided into five groups, and these groups searched the following areas: 1) Tyrone through the Burro Mountains to Redrock and along the Gila River, 2) the Gila River near the towns of Cliff and Gila, 3) the Pinos Altos Mountains to Cherry Creek, McMillan Camp, Signal Peak, and north to Gila Hot Springs, 4) along the Mimbres River, Bear Canyon, and Roberts Lake, and 5) Fort Bayard and the grasslands south and east of Silver City.

This outing resulted in the detection of 170 species, listed on page 237.

The area about Silver City is a fine field for bird watchers and it deserves some exposition, but the list more or less speaks for itself.

The third day's trip of the 16th Field Conference leads into one of the most rewarding bird-watching regions of southwestern United States, if not of the whole North American continent. Nowhere in the United States can one find a greater variety of hummingbirds, with such convenience, than at the Southwestern Research Station of the American Museum of Natural History, about 3 miles upcreek from the Sunny Flats picnic area (site of the lunch stop on the third day). Two feeding jars, a few feet apart, draw hundred and thousands of hummingbirds. One needs but to sit casually on the grass, or on a rock, or a chaise longue, and watch. Dozens of birds are always within view, and as many as eight species may be seen (Black-chinned Blue-throated, Broad-tailed, Calliope, Costa's, Rivoli, Rufus, and Violet-crowned). The best time to see all the species is early summer or late summer. In midsummer some species move up to higher feeding grounds. Most species migrate southward in winter.

The vertical range of life zones in the Chiricahua Mountains accommodates a remarkable spread of bird types, from those of the desert grassland to those of subalpine summit. In the higher parts of the mountains, at Rustler Park, one may find a number of species observable in only a few places within the United States, including the Olive Warbler, the Red-faced Warbler, and the Mexican Junco. At the lunch stop at Sunny Flats, if you listen and look, you may be able to catch a glimpse of the Coppery-tailed Trogon, one of the most exotic birds to be found outside the tropics or the warm coastal zones. The canyon floor about where you will be eating your lunch is one of the very few places the bird occurs within the United States. A few pair have nested in the vicinity for the past several years.

Apart from this bird, lovers of bright colors may well see Hooded, Scott's or Bullock's Orioles, Western, Hepatic, or Summer Tanagers, Cardinals, Painted Redstarts, or Vermilion Flycatchers in the Chiricahua Mountains. Many species of flycatchers are to be found in this area: Kingbirds, Phoebes, Pewees, Empidonaxes. If you see a Sulfur-bellied Flycatcher along

Cave Creek, and you may very well do so for it is rather common in this area, you will have seen a bird that inhabits no other state of the union.

But don't get too absorbed! The caravan may leave

without you. The birds and the rocks both deserve more consideration than they can receive during a hasty field excursion. Come back at your leisure and examine the rocks and—all you hybrids—the birds.

Eared Grebe	Long-eared Owl	Bridled Titmouse	Wilson's Warbler
Great Blue Heron	Whip-poor-will	Verdin	Painted Redstart
Green Heron	Poor-will	Common Bush-tit	House Sparrow
White-faced Ibis	White-throated Swift	White-breasted Nuthatch	Eastern Meadowlark
Mallard	Black-chinned Hummingbird	Pygmy Nuthatch	Western Meadowlark
Mexican Duck	Broad-tailed Hummingbird	Brown Creeper	Yellow-headed Blackbird
Green-winged Teal	Belted Kingfisher	Dipper	Red-winged Blackbird
Cinnamon Teal	Red-shafted Flicker	House Wren	Hooded Oriole
American Widgeon	Gila Woodpecker	Bewick's Wren	Scott's Oriole
Ring-necked Duck	Acorn Woodpecker	Cactus Wren	Bullock's Oriole
Lesser Scaup	Yellow-bellied Sapsucker	Cañon Wren	Brewer's Blackbird
Ruddy Duck	Hairy Woodpecker	Rock Wren	Brown-headed Cowbird
Common Merganser	Downy Woodpecker	Mockingbird	Western Tanager
Turkey Vulture	Ladder-backed Woodpecker	Curve-billed Thrasher	Hepatic Tanager
Goshawk	Western Kingbird	Crissal Thrasher	Summer Tanager
Cooper's Hawk	Cassin's Kingbird	Sage Thrasher	Cardinal
Red-tailed Hawk	Ash-throated Flycatcher	Robin	Black-headed Grosbeak
Swainson's Hawk	Wied's Crested Flycatcher	Hermit Thrush	Blue Grosbeak
Black Hawk	Say's Phoebe	Swainson's Thrush	Lazuli Bunting
Golden Eagle	Black Phoebe	Western Bluebird	Indigo Bunting
Sparrow Hawk	Empidonax sp.	Mountain Bluebird	House Finch
Scaled Quail	Traill's Flycatcher	Blue-Gray Gnatcatcher	Pine Siskin
Gambel's Quail	Gray Flycatcher	Ruby-crowned Kinglet	American Goldfinch
Harlequin Quail	Western Wood Pewee	Water Pipit	Lesser Goldfinch
Afghan Pheasant	Olive-sided Flycatcher	Loggerhead Shrike	Green-tailed Towhee
Turkey	Vermilion Flycatcher	Starling	Rufous-sided Towhee
Black Francolin	Horned Lark	Hutton's Vireo	Brown Towhee
Virginia Rail	Violet-green Swallow	Solitary Vireo	Abert's Towhee
American Coot	Tree Swallow	Warbling Vireo	Lark Bunting
Killdeer	Bank Swallow	Orange-crowned Warbler	Savannah Sparrow
Spotted Sandpiper	Rough-winged Swallow	Virginia's Warbler	Vesper Sparrow
Lesser Yellowlegs	Barn Swallow	Lucy's Warbler	Lark Sparrow
Least Sandpiper	Cliff Swallow	Olive Warbler	Rufous-crowned Sparrow
Western Sandpiper	Purple Martin	Yellow Warbler	Black-throated Sparrow
Wilson's Phalarope	Steller's Jay	Audubon's Warbler	Sage Sparrow
Ring-billed Gull	Mexican Jay	Black-Throated Gray Warbler	Oregon Junco
Band-tailed Pigeon	Scrub Jay	Grace's Warbler	Gray-headed Junco
White-winged Dove	Common Raven	Northern Waterthrush	Chipping Sparrow
Mourning Dove	White-necked Raven	MacGillivray's Warbler	Brewer's Sparrow
Roadrunner	Piñon Jay	Yellowthroat	Black-chinned Sparrow
Barn Owl	Mountain Chickadee	Yellow-breasted Chat	White-crowned Sparrow
Great Horned Owl	Plain Titmouse	Red-faced Warbler	Lincoln's Sparrow
Elf Owl			Song Sparrow