

# **WINTER NEW MEXICO**

**JANUARY 5 – 11, 2006**

**LEADERS:**

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January 5 - 11, 2006

Leaders: Barry Zimmer & Brennan Mulrooney

## Itinerary:

January 6 - Keystone Marsh, Sunland Park blackbird roost (28 species)

January 7 - Border Hwy McNary Reservoir, Hwy 20, Tornillo Reservoir, Wilderness Park Museum, my yard, Keystone Park, Crossroads Pond, Sunland Park Racetrack (87 species; 91 total)

January 8 - Jornada Grassland, Aguirre Springs Recreation Area, Mesilla Park, Burn Lake, river areas near Old Mesilla (77 species; 119 total)

January 9 - Swan Pond, Hwy 152, Percha State Park, Caballo Lake, Animas Creek, Elephant Butte State Park (99 species; 144 total)

January 10 - Elephant Butte State Park, Water Canyon, Bosque del Apache NWR (81 species; 151 total)

January 11 - Bosque del Apache NWR, Sandia Crest, Rio Grande Nature Center (88 species; 164 total)

## Key:

E = all areas in and around El Paso, including the valley to the southeast from McNary back into town

L = Las Cruces, Organ Mountains, Jornada, Swan Pond, Mesilla Park

P = Percha & Caballo State Parks, Animas Creek, Elephant Butte

B = Bosque del Apache NWR

W = Water Canyon

A = Albuquerque, Sandia Crest

**bold-faced species** indicate birds of rare, casual, or accidental occurrence

underlined species indicate birds of very uncommon occurrence or species which occur regularly but in such low densities as to be easily missed

## Birds:

Pied-billed Grebe E,L,B,A

**Least Grebe** E---one at the Crossroads Pond represented only the second county record ever for El Paso and obviously a first for this tour

Eared Grebe E

**Red-necked Grebe** P---we discovered this bird at Elephant Butte; one of only a handful of NM records and a tour first!; tied for third favorite bird of the tour

Western Grebe E,P---over a thousand at Elephant Butte

Clark's Grebe E,P--- good comparative views with Westerns

American White Pelican E,P

Double-crested Cormorant E,P

Neotropic Cormorant E,P,B

Great Blue Heron E,L,P,B  
Great Egret E,L  
Snowy Egret E  
Cattle Egret B---rare this far north in winter  
Green Heron E---one spotted by Karen at Keystone; very uncommon in winter  
Black-crowned Night-Heron E,L,B  
Snow Goose E,B---an estimated 34,000 at the refuge including several blue morphs  
Ross's Goose E,B---a few thousand overall; great comparative views with Snows including two blue morph birds that may or may not have been partially hybridized with Snows  
Canada Goose L,B,A  
Cackling Goose A--flock of six at the nature center was somewhat unexpected  
Wood Duck E,A---58 in view at once!  
Gadwall almost daily  
American Wigeon almost daily  
Mallard daily, including some of the "Mexican Duck" subspecies  
**Cinnamon Teal** E---one gorgeous male thanks to Brennan; rare this early  
Northern Shoveler almost daily  
Northern Pintail almost daily  
Green-winged Teal almost daily  
Canvasback E,B,A  
Redhead P---one male near Percha spotted by Barbara  
Ring-necked Duck E,P,B,A---especially well at the nature center  
Lesser Scaup EP,A  
Bufflehead E,B  
Common Goldeneye E---one distant female at McNary  
Hooded Merganser L,B  
Red-breasted Merganser E---one female at McNary; very uncommon  
Common Merganser L,B---flock of about 2000 at Caballo  
Ruddy Duck E,P,B  
Bald Eagle P,B---several great views  
**Osprey** P---one at Elephant Butte was only the second ever for the tour  
Northern Harrier E,L,P,B  
Sharp-shinned Hawk L,P,B  
Cooper's Hawk E,L,P,B  
Harris's Hawk E---nice scope study near Tornillo  
Red-tailed Hawk seen daily including several dark morphs, many of the Fuertes race, and one dark morph "Harlan's" Hawk  
Ferruginous Hawk E,P---a total of seven seen including one dark morph; tied for third favorite bird of the tour!  
Golden Eagle L---one over Aguirre Springs  
American Kestrel seen daily  
Merlin E---one at Keystone and another over my yard  
Prairie Falcon B---seen only by Brennan's van; uncommon  
Peregrine Falcon L---great study of adult eating a White-winged Dove near Mesilla  
Ring-necked Pheasant B---the "White-winged" race  
Scaled Quail L---great views of about 30 in Organ  
Gambel's Quail E,L,P,B  
Common Moorhen E  
American Coot almost daily  
Sandhill Crane P,B---an estimated 13,000 at the refuge; spectacularly close views!  
Killdeer L,P,B  
Greater Yellowlegs P,B---uncommon in winter  
Spotted Sandpiper E,P,B  
**Long-billed Curlew** P---a nice bonus in winter!  
Least Sandpiper E,L,P  
Long-billed Dowitcher P,B  
Wilson's Snipe E,L,B---recently split from the Old World Common Snipe; excellent studies  
Ring-billed Gull E,L,P

**California Gull** E---one spotted by Brennan at Sunland Park  
 Herring Gull E,P  
 Rock Pigeon seen daily  
 Eurasian Collared-Dove E,L,P,B---a rapidly expanding species  
 White-winged Dove seen daily in numbers (2500 in one day!)  
 Mourning Dove seen daily  
 Inca Dove E,L  
 Greater Roadrunner seen daily with a total of nine  
 Great Horned Owl P,B---roosting pair at Riverside Park was a treat!  
 Burrowing Owl E---fantastic study at the high school  
Long-eared Owl B---seen at dusk by some in Brennan's van; unexpected  
 Belted Kingfisher E,L,P,B  
 Acorn Woodpecker P,W  
**Yellow-bellied Sapsucker** P---an adult male at Percha was a good rarity  
 Red-naped Sapsucker L---nice study in the Organ Mts  
 Ladder-backed Woodpecker E,L,P,B  
 Downy Woodpecker P,A---rare at Percha  
 Northern Flicker L,P,B; the "Red-shafted" variety  
 Black Phoebe E,L,P,B  
 Say's Phoebe daily  
**Vermilion Flycatcher** P---a gorgeous male near Percha  
 Horned Lark P,B---great views  
**Tree Swallow** E---five at McNary were unexpected in mid-winter  
 Loggerhead Shrike E,L,P  
**Hutton's Vireo** L,P---nice views of two birds; rare winter visitor  
**Plumbeous Vireo** L---a good find by Brennan in Mesilla Park  
 Steller's Jay A---subspecies *macrolopha*  
 Western Scrub-Jay L,W,A---subspecies *woodhouseii*  
 American Crow B,A  
 Chihuahuan Raven E,L,P,B  
 Common Raven W,B,A  
 Black-capped Chickadee A  
 Mountain Chickadee A  
 Bridled Titmouse P---nice views of this striking species in Animas Creek  
 Juniper Titmouse L,W---a very responsive bird at Aguirre Springs  
 Verdin E,L,P,B  
 Bushtit L,P  
 Red-breasted Nuthatch A  
 White-breasted Nuthatch A  
 Brown Creeper P---sporadic  
 Cactus Wren E,L,P  
 Rock Wren L,P  
 Canyon Wren L---great view of singing bird at Aguirre Springs; voted the favorite bird of the tour!  
 Bewick's Wren E,L,P  
House Wren P---uncommon in winter  
 Marsh Wren E,B---excellent study  
 Ruby-crowned Kinglet seen daily including birds with raised crests!  
Black-tailed Gnatcatcher L--- on the Jornada; uncommon  
Eastern Bluebird P---flock of about 8 at Percha  
 Western Bluebird L,P,W,A  
Mountain Bluebird P---25 near Elephant Butte were quite unexpected in this non-invasion year  
 Hermit Thrush E,L,A  
 American Robin E,L,P,A---somewhat scarce this year  
 Northern Mockingbird E,L,P,B  
Sage Thrasher L,P,B---an amazing year for this species with 49 total birds seen; sometimes missed entirely on this trip;  
 tied for third favorite bird of the tour  
 Curve-billed Thrasher E,L,P,B---several superb views, especially in my yard

Crissal Thrasher E,L,P---a rather amazing total of 9 seen!  
 European Starling seen daily  
 American Pipit seen daily  
 Phainopepla L,P---twenty in one day!  
 Orange-crowned Warbler L---one in Mesilla Park; uncommon in winter  
 Yellow-rumped Warbler E,L,P,B---the Audubon's subspecies  
Common Yellowthroat E---very uncommon in winter  
 Green-tailed Towhee E,LB---nice views; uncommon  
 Spotted Towhee seen daily  
 Canyon Towhee L  
 Rufous-crowned Sparrow L  
 Chipping Sparrow L,P,B  
**Clay-colored Sparrow** L---one near Burn Lake seen by some; rare  
 Brewer's Sparrow E,L,P,B---unprecedented numbers this winter (we had up to 250 in a day)  
 Black-chinned Sparrow L---fantastic studies of this localized species  
 Black-throated Sparrow E,L---the handsomest sparrow?  
 Sage Sparrow L--- good views of the interior race *nevadensis*  
 Lark Bunting E---two flocks near Tornillo and a lone bird at the Wilderness Park Museum  
 Savannah Sparrow L,B  
 Song Sparrow P,B  
 Lincoln's Sparrow E,P,B---seen best in my yard  
 Swamp Sparrow B---not seen by most  
 White-crowned Sparrow seen daily  
White-throated Sparrow P,A---very uncommon  
**Harris's Sparrow** B---one wintering at Bosque was only seen by Rey  
 Dark-eyed Junco seen daily, including Gray-headed, Oregon, Pink-sided, and even one Slate-colored type  
**McCown's Longspur** P---one in with Horned Lark flock was only seen by a few  
**Chestnut-collared Longspur** W---very unexpected was a large flock near the Water Canyon entrance coming in to drink at a stock tank  
 Pyrrhuloxia E,L,P---many good views  
 Red-winged Blackbird E,L,P,B,A  
 Western Meadowlark E,L,P,B  
 Yellow-headed Blackbird E---incredible sight of 4,000+ going into roost in west El Paso  
 Brewer's Blackbird seen daily  
 Great-tailed Grackle seen daily  
 Brown-headed Cowbird E,L  
**Bronzed Cowbird** L---six males at NMSU were a tour first!  
 House Finch seen daily  
**Black Rosy-Finch** about 35 seen very close at Sandia Crest feeders; should not be expected on future tours; voted the second favorite bird of the tour  
**Brown-capped Rosy-Finch** about 3 seen at Sandia Crest; not to be expected on future tours  
**Gray-crowned Rosy-Finch** about 8 seen on Sandia Crest, including one of the Hepburn's race; not to be expected on future tours  
 Pine Siskin L,P,B  
 Lesser Goldfinch E,L,B  
 American Goldfinch P,B  
 House Sparrow seen daily

total species - 164 (our second highest total ever!)

### Mammals:

Desert Cottontail  
 Black-tailed Jackrabbit  
 Rock Squirrel  
 Abert's (Tassel-eared) Squirrel

Texas Antelope Squirrel  
Valley Pocket Gopher---nice study  
Muskrat  
Mule Deer  
Coyote

total species - 9

**Butterflies:**

Checkered White  
Painted Lady

**Significant others:**

interesting Mesilla pinatas  
Brennan getting carded in T or C

TOUR REPORT  
WINTER NEW MEXICO  
January 5-11, 2006

By Barry Zimmer

Our 2006 Winter New Mexico tour was arguably our most successful ever! We had unbelievable weather the first four days, with temperatures nearing 70 degrees every day, and nighttime lows in the lower 40s to upper 30s. We saw virtually every specialty bird we searched for and, in addition, compiled an amazing list of rarities.

The El Paso area yielded a roosting flock of 4,000 Yellow-headed Blackbirds our first evening, great scope views of Crissal Thrasher (of which we tallied nine overall), stunning Ferruginous and Harris's hawks, a vagrant Least Grebe, four very close and cooperative Burrowing Owls, and several great views of Green-tailed Towhee.

The Las Cruces area was equally productive. Most memorable was our morning at scenic Aguirre Springs Recreation Area and nearby grasslands. A short walk there produced Canyon and Rock wrens almost at arm's length (among our six wren species), a lengthy study of a Sage Thrasher atop a juniper, a majestic Golden Eagle overhead, flock after flock of Western Bluebirds, an incredibly cooperative Juniper Titmouse, Hutton's Vireo (rare), Red-naped Sapsucker, and a plethora of sparrows (we had 21 species overall) with Black-chinned, Brewer's, Rufous-crowned, and Sage among the more noteworthy.

Moving upriver we encountered more treats. In the Percha Dam/ Caballo Lake area we had a rare Long-billed Curlew in an alfalfa field, a stunning male Vermilion Flycatcher, a flock of Eastern Bluebirds among the numerous Westerns, an amazing 45 Sage Thrashers in one area (something I have never seen before) along with 25 or so stunning Mountain Bluebirds (completing our bluebird sweep), good views of Bridled Titmouse, and six Ferruginous Hawks in one day. The most notable highlight was finding a Red-necked Grebe (one of only a handful of state records) at Elephant Butte Reservoir.

Water Canyon west of Socorro yielded a good supply of montane species, as well as an unexpected flock of 75 or so Chestnut-collared Longspurs coming in to drink at a stock tank. The centerpiece of this tour is always the visit to world-famous Bosque del Apache National Wildlife Refuge. As always, the refuge did not disappoint. Incredible spectacles of 34,000 Snow Geese (with a few thousand Ross's in the mix for great comparison) and 13,000 Sandhill Cranes certainly top the list. The sight and sound of these gatherings at dawn and dusk is an experience not soon forgotten. In addition to this, the refuge provided us with wonderful views of many waterfowl species (22 overall) and raptor species (16 overall).

A flock of rosy-finches visiting feeders at the top of Sandia Crest in the Sandia Mountains east of Albuquerque was an added bonus this year. We headed up there our last afternoon and had views of Black, Brown-capped, and Gray-crowned (including one Hepburn's race) rosy-finches from about ten feet! Also at the feeders were numerous Mountain Chickadees, Red-breasted and White-breasted nuthatches, and Steller's Jays. We have seen the rosy-finches on each of our last two tours, and plan on including a search for these birds on future tours to the area.

We concluded our tour at the Rio Grande Nature Center in west Albuquerque where we had an impressive 58 Wood Ducks in view at once, in addition to a small flock of Cackling Geese for close study. In all we totaled 164 species, enjoyed superb weather (but for one day of wind), and had fantastic rarities and great luck with numerous southwestern specialty birds. All in all, our tour was a great success!