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SAVANNAH SPARROW BREEDING IN RIO ARRIBA COUNTY:  
SECOND VERIFIED NEW MEXICO NEST

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The Savannah Sparrow (*Passerculus sandwichensis*) is widespread in North America, breeding in wet grasslands and meadows from Alaska to Newfoundland and south, locally, into Mexico and Guatemala (American Ornithologists' Union 1983). The species is known to breed in east-central Arizona (Phillips et al. 1964) and widely in Colorado (Bailey and Niedrach 1965), but not in Texas (Oberholser 1974, American Ornithologists' Union 1983). The Savannah Sparrow is reported as local during the summer at middle elevations in northern New Mexico (Hubbard 1978); however, documentation of nesting in the state was not obtained until 1980, when a nest with eggs was found near Bluewater Lake, McKinley County (McCallum 1982). Herein we provide details of a second New Mexico nesting locality for this species, located on the Jicarilla Apache Reservation at Stinking (Burford) Lake (elev. ca. 2,300 m) in Rio Arriba County, 30 km south of Dulce.

On 12 June 1987, we found a male Savannah Sparrow in a saltgrass (*Distichlis stricta*) flat on the southern shore of Stinking Lake. We were able to induce the bird to sing by using a tape recorded territorial song. After approximately ten minutes, the male sang again, this time unsolicited. A female, which had at times perched with the male, was then observed carrying food. We watched the female for an additional 15 minutes, until she went to the ground. We walked immediately to the spot where she had disappeared, and soon found a nest containing one nearly grown young. The nest was a well-concealed grass cup situated at the base of a clump of vegetation. We obtained a photograph of this nest, the photograph since being deposited in the NMOS Archives.

Four Savannah Sparrows were seen south of the nest site on 21 June 1987, and three more were seen in the

same area on 18 July 1987. The latter group included an adult feeding a fledgling, suggesting a successful July nesting in the same vicinity.

Wetmore (1920) found small numbers of these sparrows, including a singing male, along the northern and southern shores of Stinking Lake during the period 28 May to 6 June 1918; he suspected they were breeding but he was unable to find a nest. Huey and Travis (1961), however, did not record Savannah Sparrows during their survey of the same region in the period 6-12 June 1960. We reviewed published NMOS Field Notes (Vol. 1, 1962-Vol. 25, 1986) as well as seasonal reports published in *American Birds* for 1968-1988, seeking additional Savannah Sparrow records from the Stinking Lake area. Five birds were seen there on 15 July 1975 (*Am. Birds* 29:1018, 1975) but, in spite of fairly extensive observations by several observers of other species there in various years (e.g., in 1968, 1970, 1972, and 1976), no other Savannah Sparrows were noted.

Whether breeding Savannah Sparrows are present annually at Stinking Lake is not clear. We suspect, however, that the species may be present there each summer but, because it is so localized, it is not readily encountered.

#### ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Our observations were made during surveys of the breeding birds of Stinking Lake, a project funded by the Office of Program Development of the Jicarilla Apache Tribe. We thank Elmo Sandoval, Director of that program, for acquiring funds and providing logistical support. We also thank Karen Copeland, Burt Lewis, and Pat Snyder for their assistance at Stinking Lake during the summer of 1987, and C. G. Schmitt and S. O. Williams III for comments on the manuscript.

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## 1988 NMOS ANNUAL MEETING HIGHLIGHTS

The 1988 Annual Meeting of the New Mexico Ornithological Society was held 5-6 March 1988 at the Department of Biology, University of New Mexico, Albuquerque, NM. The Saturday morning business meeting was presided over by President Steve West. The morning/afternoon papers session was organized and chaired by Dr. J. David Ligon. An open house in the Bird Range of the Museum of Southwestern Biology followed the papers session. The Saturday evening banquet was held in the Garden Court of the UNM Student Union Building. Following the banquet, Dr. Terry Root of the University of Michigan gave a fine presentation on "Where the birds are at Christmas time: patterns from Christmas Bird Count Data." Throughout the day, the bird art of Pat Basham, wildlife artist, was on display. On Sunday morning, field trips were conducted to the Rio Grande Nature Center and to the Shady Lakes area. The Society sincerely thanks Elizabeth Broemel and Mary Alice Root for their tremendous efforts in organizing this successful meeting.

The following papers were presented at the meeting:

- Kris Johnson (University of New Mexico) "What qualities do Pinyon Jays look for in a mate?"
- Pat Kennedy (Utah State University) "Mate desertion by female Cooper's Hawks during the fledgling dependency period."
- Jim Daly (University of New Mexico) and Steve Hoffman (Western Foundation for Raptor Conservation) "Seasonal migration patterns of six raptor species in the Sandia Mountains, Spring 1984—1986."
- Greg Farley (University of New Mexico) "Comparative habitat selection of Bell's Vireo and Bewick's Wren."
- Jim Travis (Los Alamos, NM) "The Los Alamos Breeding Bird Atlas."
- Dale Stahlecker (Eagle Ecological Services) "Stinking (Burford) Lake revisited: A third extensive survey." Ellen Espinoza (Pajarito Village, NM) "The lasting importance of field notes"
- Dale Stahlecker (Eagle Ecological Services) "Crane migration in northern New Mexico."
- David Ligon (University of New Mexico) "The evolution of cooperation in birds."
- Arch McCallum (University of New Mexico) "Why do Mountain Chickadees not breed cooperatively?"
- Jim Karo (Albuquerque, NM) "Portraits of birds of New Mexico."
- Bill Baltosser (New Mexico State University and University of New Mexico) "Age, species, and sex determination of four North American hummingbirds."

-Sartor O. Williams III

## 1988 NMOS ANNUAL MEETING HIGHLIGHTS

### SEEN ANY ESKIMO CURLEWS LATELY?

Owing to the paucity of recent reports of the Eskimo Curlew (*Numenius borealis*), the species has been thought by many to be extinct. However, recent observations of the species on migration in the United States and Canada have shown that it still exists. A group of shorebird specialists are currently working to help recover the species, and a key part of this plan may be increasing public awareness that the species is not extinct.

Although there is no record of the Eskimo Curlew for New Mexico, E. A. Mearns collected one on 8 April 1898 just south of Columbus at Lake Palomas, on the New Mexico-Chihuahua border, that “would undoubtedly have crossed [into New Mexico] within the next few days” (Cooke in F. M. Bailey, 1928, *Birds of New Mexico*).

-Sartor O. Williams III

### SEEN ANY ARIZONA BALD EAGLES LATELY?

Twenty nestling Bald Eagles have been banded with standard U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service bands on the right leg and blue Visual Identification Bands (VIB) on the left leg by BioSystems Analysis, Inc., as part of a study of the ecology of Bald Eagles in Arizona. The VIB is engraved with a single symbol in four locations on its circumference, which can be read at a considerable distance with a good scope. Different color VIBs will be used during each of the next two years of the study, allowing identification of cohorts by color. Information on sightings of such birds would be appreciated. Contact: W. Grainger Hunt, BioSystems Analysis, Inc., P.O. Box 430, Tempe, AZ 85281 (601—964—6548).

-Ornithological Newsletter

### CHRISTMAS BIRD COUNTS

The 89th Christmas Bird Count (CBC) will be held during the period Friday, 16 December 1988 through Tuesday, 3 January 1989. Specific dates for individual New Mexico CBCs are needed now for our announcement of them in the next issue of the NMOS Bulletin. Please send information concerning New Mexico CBCs, including the name, address, and phone number of the count coordinator, to the Editor as soon as possible. Help increase participation and improve your counts by publicizing them in the Bulletin! Send information to: S. O. Williams III, Rt. 9, Box 89—DR, Santa Fe, NM 87505; phone 988—7096.

## SEEN ANY ESKIMO CURLEWS LATELY?

### A REQUEST TO FIELD OBSERVERS

Members of the NMOS Field Notes editorial board have the following simple request of field observers: when you report your sightings, please add interpretive comments wherever they are appropriate. A simple list of species seen provides no guidance to the Field Notes editors, who must then grub into past published records in an effort to find the significance of your report. Nearly all observers have birded a particular area (or areas) --usually close to home --for many years, and a good many of these observers have kept long—term records of their sightings. Hence, they probably know that area, and the significance of their sightings, better than anyone else. Some observers already provide such information; the Field Notes editors wish everyone would do so. Remember:

reporting periods are Spring (March - May), Summer (June, July), Autumn (August - November), and Winter (December - February). Please report as soon as possible (and definitely within four weeks) after the end of each season.

—Roland Goodman

### EDITOR'S NOTE

The NMOS Bulletin is published four times a year; subscription is by membership in the 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. The Bulletin invites contribution of articles and announcements. Submitted articles are subject to editing and will be refereed by the Editor and at least one other reviewer. Published articles are noted in major abstracting services (e.g., the AOU's "Recent Ornithological Literature" section of The Auk). Articles and announcements for the NMOS Bulletin should be submitted to the Editor, Dr. Sartor O. Williams III, Rt. 9, Box 89-DR, Santa Fe, NM 87505.

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