

RECORDS OF THE BOHEMIAN WAXWING IN NEW MEXICO, 1887-2005

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The Bohemian Waxwing (*Bombycilla garrulus*) is the only circumboreal species in the small avian family Bombycillidae--with its North American subspecies *B. g. pallidiceps* breeding from western and northern Alaska eastward to extreme central Quebec, and southward to northern Washington, northern Idaho, northwestern Montana, southwestern Alberta, Saskatchewan, Manitoba, and Ontario; and wintering from central Alaska east to Newfoundland, and south at least sporadically to southern California, northern Arizona, New Mexico (casually southward), and Texas, northwestern Arkansas, southern Illinois, West Virginia, and New Jersey (casual in Maryland and the District of Columbia) (A.O.U. 1957:460; 1998,530). The Bohemian Waxwing was first reported in New Mexico by Florence Merriam Bailey (with W.W. Cooke, 1928:590-591), based on J. Stokley Ligon's record of November 19, 1926, when he is said to have found three flocks totaling 23 birds on the "steep northeast slope of Gold Hill in Taos County, at about 11,500 feet." Ligon collected a single male specimen (JSL 1178) to confirm this occurrence--which individual he prepared as a study skin that is now housed in the University of New Mexico Museum of Southwestern Biology (MSB 1365), and on which his label gives the collecting locality of Gold Hill as being five miles southwest of Red River and at an elevation of 12,000 feet above sea level.

Over the course of his extended studies New Mexico birds, Dr. John P. Hubbard (1970:70, 1978:67) discovered two 19th-century specimen records of the Bohemian Waxwing that have been attributed to this state. The earlier one is of an unsexed study skin taken in March 1857 by a collector named Bowman (perhaps Captain J.S. Bowman) at Fort Massachusetts, New Mexico (Smithsonian Institution National Museum of Natural History, USNM 11470), which locality is now in Colorado near Fort Garland in Costilla Co. The second of these two early records of this species consists of the catalog entries for the mounted skins of two males and two females that were obtained at Las Vegas, San Miguel Co, New Mexico in January 1887 (University of Kansas Museum of Natural History, KU 6729, 6740-6742) by an unspecified collector, among whom Dr. Hubbard suspects that the most likely possibilities would have been N.S. Goss, L.L. Dyche, and/or A. Harvey. Efforts by Hubbard and the above museum staff have so far been unsuccessful in terms of discovering the present location or disposition of this material, which may have been placed on public display at sometime in the past and then subsequently discarded after it was no longer needed for this purpose.

After a hiatus of some 32 years following Ligon's report of 1926 (Bailey with Cooke, 1928:590-591), Hubbard (1970:70 and 1978:67) reported that the Bohemian Waxwing

was next recorded in New Mexico in 1958-59, and then again in 1960-61, 1961-62, 1963-64, 1966-67, 1968-69, 1972-73, and 1975-76. Given that many of those mid-20th century and subsequent occurrences of this species in the state had not previously been detailed in the literature, I will do so below both for them and others through 2013. The records will be listed chronologically and indicate the locality, date, number of birds, observer(s), and other relevant comments as follows. (Note that unless otherwise specified, most of this information was initially published in *Audubon Field Notes* and its successors and/or the *New Mexico Ornithological Field Notes*—most of which references I will not specifically cite in my paper.)

December 1958-April 1959. New Mexico's first major incursion of Bohemian Waxwings was reported during this period, beginning with 26 from the Española Christmas Bird Count (CBC) on December 28, 1958; all but one of these were birds observed by Marjory Cromer along the Rio Grande on the south side of town, with the one exception being a single individual that James and Marylou Travis found dead north of the bridge over this river. Marj also had 'several' at her home in Los Alamos, Los Alamos Co. on January 11, 1959, and she and Marilyn Bjorklund reported them in that city until March 22—with a peak of 30 counted there on February 22. On March 27, Dexter Dunlap of the New Mexico Department of Game and Fish saw one in Cimarron Canyon in Colfax Co, west of Cimarron (Ligon 1961:239). Between April 5 and May 5, Jens Jensen estimated that 5,000 to 10,000 Bohemian Waxwings were present in Santa Fe—with the last three recorded there by him on May 12 (Ligon 1961:239). This was Mr. Jensen's first report of this species in New Mexico, where he had lived in the Santa Fe area since 1918 (W.W. Cooke *in* Bailey 1928:36). William S. Huey obtained seven specimens and doubtlessly also observed many of these waxwings in Tesuque, Santa Fe Co. during the spring of 1959, with this presumably-salvaged material having been preserved as a series study skins collected by him on 27-28 April (MSB 1363, 1364, 2109, 4016, 4026) and one or more unspecified dates (MSB 1788 and 1789).

Winter 1960-1961. Bohemian Waxwings were stated to have occurred in New Mexico during this period by Dr. Hubbard (1970:70, 1978:67); however, he now believes that this report is most likely incorrect, and that it instead pertains to the occurrences of 1961-1962 (Hubbard pers. comm.).

November 1961-April 1962. Another major flight of Bohemian Waxwings reached New Mexico during this period, and in fact it is the most massive and widespread incursion of the taxon ever recorded in the state. The species was first detected there by William Huey on November 26, 1961, when a bird killed itself by colliding with a window of his home in Tesuque—with the specimen now preserved as a museum skin in the Delaware Museum of Natural History (Del 9807). By the end of 1961, these waxwings were being widely reported from central-northern and northeastern New Mexico, and southward to the central and east-central sections of the state—including on the following CBC's: 7300 (or more) around Española on December 30 by W. Burton Lewis et al.; 22 at Clayton, Union Co. on December 25 by Wesley Cook and Paul Snoeberger; 1910 in the Santa Fe area (of which about 95% were in Tesuque) on January 1, 1962

by Michael Hamilton et al.; 34 in the Albuquerque vicinity on December 23 by James S. Findley et al.; 14 in the nearby Sandia Mountains on 30 December by Dr. Findley et al.; and one with "all field marks" noted in the Roswell area, Chaves Co. on December 21 by Vester Montgomery et al.

Additional records of Bohemian Waxwings in north-central New Mexico during this 1961-1962 mid-winter period included about 1500 that Marj Cromer and I counted near the Otowi Bridge on San Ildefonso Pueblo and 300 more near Pojoaque in northern Santa Fe Co., plus another 200 on the south side of Española on December 30. In addition, Burt Lewis reported 75 of the birds in Los Alamos on December 26, 1961. In that same city, Dr. Dale A. Zimmerman salvaged a road-killed bird (preserved as a museum skin numbered DAZ 174, now MSB 8255) on 7 January, the label of which indicates that it was "one of approximately 1000 seen." A flock of 500 was noted by me as it flew over the Cordova Road Shopping Center in Santa Fe on January 17. And on a trip from Santa Fe to Taos on January 21, I saw 2000--including 25 in Pojoaque, 50 in Española, 30 in Embudo, and over 1000 in Velarde. Finally, Bill Huey and Dr. James R. Travis (unpublished notes) banded 70 of these birds at Tesuque from 17 January through 11 March (along with just two Cedar Waxwings on 13 January). Mr. Huey reported that the numbers of Bohemian Waxwings declined in that area to a low five on February 18, 1962, later followed by the appearance of up to 150 there from March 4 to 23.

Farther south in New Mexico, David Niles collected a Bohemian Waxwing in Albuquerque on January 28, 1962 (MSB 200), along with four more that he and Jim Findley obtained there on the University of New Mexico campus on February 9 (MSB 2178, 2204-2206). John Durrie and others reported that hundreds of the birds were present in this metropolitan area until late January or early February in 1962. Bruce Harris saw one with 30 Cedar Waxwings (*Bombycilla cedrorum*) in Carlsbad near the Game Farm on February 10, and two on March 16 near the North River bridge with about 15 Cedars. Dale Zimmerman advised a birder from Florida, Polly Sherman, that we had Bohemian Waxwings in New Mexico in the winter of 1961-1962, had her contact me. On March 19, I took her to an orchard in Tesuque that still had old apples on the trees. One may have been drunk on their hard cider, as it did not fly until she lightly tapped it with a stick. Bohemian Waxwings were present at my Santa Fe home and also in Tesuque through into March, with the last individual seen in this overall area on March 30. One was eating the catkins of a French pussy willow there on March 22, which structures are larger than those of the local wild species of these plants. Finally in Española on April 8, I had 25 of these birds and found a wing of another for my latest record of the species in the spring of 1962.

January-March 1964. A minor flight of Bohemian Waxwings occurred in New Mexico during this period, including Burt Lewis' report of a flock of 100 to 200 that arrived in Los Alamos during mid-January; the last one was seen there on February 18. I saw small numbers ranging from one to 30 birds in various parts of Santa Fe from January 15 to March 29. I noted small flocks of one to 30 birds in various parts of Santa Fe from

January 15 to March 29, 1964. Harold Marsh reported 'large' flocks in that city on January 31. In addition, W.I. Knickerbocker had a flock of 90 to 120 at his home in Tesuque "for two months." John Durrie reported about 50 in southeastern Albuquerque on February 16-21, while 28 were seen by Barbara and Daniel McKnight at Cedar Crest in Bernalillo Co. on March 15-16. The last report was by Jim Travis, who had 20 of these waxwings in Española on March 8.

February 1966. William C. Turner observed 9 Bohemian Waxwings in Los Alamos on February 6, for the only report of the species in New Mexico in 1966.

February-April 1967. Another flight of Bohemian Waxwings was recorded in New Mexico during this period, beginning when Geraldine McCall observed a flock in Los Alamos on February 26 that numbered 300 birds over the first two weeks of March. Burton Lewis and Jim Travis had 75 there on March 5, where they and Bill Turner saw the last ones on April 3. I had them in Santa Fe from March 10 until the end of April, with a peak of 200 on March 15-16. Jim Travis saw a flock in Española of 250 on April 16.

November 1968-April 1969. The next flight of Bohemian Waxwings in New Mexico was initially detected by Marilyn Bjorklund, who discovered over 100 eating Hopa crab apples in Los Alamos on November 20 (Thanksgiving Day), 1968. On November 28 up to 1000 were seen there by Jim Travis and me, and with others noted on November 30 by Marj Cromer. Burt Lewis and I had a maximum of 200 in that area from December 2 until March 31, 1969. J. Dan Scurlock had one at Chaco Canyon National Monument in November and more than 50 on December 24. Alan P. Nelson found over 70 in Farmington from November 30 through December 10, and then up to 400 until March 31. One was obtained there by F.B. Nordstrom for the UNM collection on March 7 (MSB 3711). Walton Hawk had 100 at his home in San Cristobal, north of Taos, in December. Jim Travis had 50 in Española on December 29, where I saw about 30 on April 10.

November 1972-February 1973. The first Bohemian Waxwings during this incursion of the species into New Mexico were the 19 that Alan Nelson found at Farmington on November 27-28, followed by a maximum of 46 seen there by him from December through mid-February 1973. My only sighting of that flight in Los Alamos was of 200 of the birds on December 2, during which month Leslie Hawkins also recorded 30 of them there. Burt Lewis reported 2 at Española on December 30, and I noted a flock in that area on January 30, 1973. Dixie Gillette observed 15 at Taos on March 25, and Roland Wauer and others counted 76 in the Santa Fe area on December 28. Farther south around Albuquerque, Dorothea DeLollis, Rita Niklas, Ethyl Ringer, and Pat Turner observed up to 150 of these birds between February 18 and March 31, while the McKnights reported up to 50 of them at Cedar Crest from January 22 through February 1.

January-March 1974. The only records of these waxwings in New Mexico in 1974 were of single birds reported at Farmington by Alan Nelson on January 29 and March 10.

November 1975. The only reported occurrence of the Bohemian Waxwing in New Mexico in 1975 on November 16-19, when Judity Sollenberger reported one or two in Cedar Crest.

December 1976-April 1977. The next flight of Bohemian Waxwings into New Mexico was in 1976-1977--beginning when Bill Isaacs observed 29 of them in Santa Fe on December 9, and 600 at his home in Tesuque from January 10 to February 15. Mickey Lang also reported up to 150 in Santa Fe on April 19. In addition, Lorraine Hartshorne had large flocks of the birds in Los Alamos from January 22 to April 16. I saw flocks of 15 to 100 there from February 22 till April 17, and up to 500 birds "all over" Española on April 6.

December 1978-February 1979. Alan Nelson saw unspecified but ""increasing" numbers of Bohemian Waxwings in Farmington from December 18, 1978 through February, 1979, plus others there on March 3 and May 9. Attributed to Dale Zimmerman was a report of a single bird at Silver City in Grant Co. on January 31, 1979, which Dr. Zimmerman (personal communication) has since told me is not correct

December 1981-March 1982. John and Jan Rees had one or two of these waxwings at Aztec in San Juan Co. on December 18-19, 1981. Alan Nelson and others reported 200 of them in Farmington from February 20 to a peak of 650 by February 25, with some remaining at least into March 1982.

December 1984. Arch McCallum reported one bird that was "probably this species" as it "flew overhead" on the Bluewater Lake CBC in Cibola Co. on December 17, 1984.

November 1986. Christopher Rustay identified two Bohemian Waxwings at the Randall Davey Audubon Center in Santa Fe on November 11, 1986.

February 1988. John and Jan Rees reported a 'small flock' of these waxwings in Aztec on February 6, 1988.

January-February 1990. Dale Stahlecker reported seeing a single Bohemian Waxwing in El Rito, Rio Arriba Co, on January 19 to February 22, 1990.

February 2001. John Parmeter and Jerry Oldenettel had a lone bird of this species in a yard in Raton in Colfax Co. on February 17, 2001, which was photographed.

December 2004-March 2004. The most recent invasion of Bohemian Waxwings into New Mexico was detected when Charles Black found a solitary bird among some 400 Cedar Waxwings in Farmington on December 7, 2004, followed by another seen there in such a flock by John and Mike Parmeter and Bill Wittman on December 10. In

addition, John Trochet had one near Zuni Pueblo in McKinley Co. on December 18. The next record was of about 25 birds on January 10 near the rest stop on I-25 near Bernal in San Miguel Co., which occurrence Mark Peterson received as a second-hand report. On February 8, 2005, Bill West and Jim Nelson-Moore reported 2 with Cedar Waxwings along the Chama River at Abiquiu in Rio Arriba Co.--where Sam Brayshaw saw an unspecified number on the 9th of that month. In March, the number of sightings of Bohemian Waxwings increased, including a flock of unknown size observed on the 8th by Mary Ristow at the Randall Davey Audubon Center in Santa Fe on March 8--where it was said to have been noted since the 4th. A flock was also intermittently recorded there by many observers, with the last sighting on April 7 by Richard Ellenberg. Jonathan Batkin discovered a flock in Pecos Canyon in San Miguel Co. on March 12; the birds were also seen by several birders the next day until a snowstorm struck, while Bruce Neville and Douglas Emkalns last reported them there on March 27. Jerry Oldenettel found up to three in Union Co. at the Capulin Peak National Monument on March 12, while David Cleary saw one in Cimarron, Colfax Co., on March 26. Raymond Van Buskirk reported a flock flying south over his Albuquerque home on March 28. Celestyn Brozek noted several with Cedars at Sandia Park on the east side of the Sandia Mountains on March 31, where they were seen by others through April 4 by Eleanor Wootten. Finally, Chris Rustay and Bruce Neville had 2 on April 3 in Harding Co. east of the Canadian River Canyon near Roy.

Acknowledgments

First of all, I would like to thank all of the many people who were responsible not only for initially gathering all of these records of the Bohemian Waxwing in New Mexico, but also for going to the extra effort of making them available to future generations that might be interested in them--whether they were professional ornithologists, scientific collectors, natural-history museum staffers, wildlife biologists, bird-banders, birdwatchers, and/or more ordinary folks who plain and simply care about nature and the wild creatures that inhabit planet Earth. In addition, I want to express my particular appreciation to certain organizations that have provided publication outlets for this sort of information--including the New Mexico Ornithological Society in its *Field Notes*, and the National Audubon Society and more recently the American Birding Association for their *Audubon Field Notes*, *American Birds*, and *North American Birds*. Finally, I want to personally thank Dr. John P. Hubbard for his several and varied efforts in helping me get the present article completed on the status of the Bohemian Waxwing in New Mexico and then posted on his blog.

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