

Albuquerque CBC Bird Write-ups and Photographs
December 16, 2012

American Woodcock: Found by Jim Findley on the afternoon of 12 Dec 2012. Count week.



Blue Jay & Fox Sparrow: These birds were found and photographed by Raymond VanBuskirk on 16 Dec 2012 at the Botanical Garden. The Blue Jay had been around for a few weeks prior to the CBC and continued to hang around until early spring. The Fox Sparrow, of the “red” Eastern Subspecies, showed up about a week before the CBC and stayed around for a few weeks after the count.



Black-chinned Hummingbird: This male was one of two BCHUs (the other being a female or 1st year) in the Albuquerque area during the CBC. This adult male was found coming in to a feeder at the home of Lydia Lennihan (near the University). It showed up a few days before the CBC and hung around for a few weeks. It was seen and photographed multiple times on the day of the Albuquerque CBC by Lydia Lennihan (and family). Photos are below.



This photo shows a purple spot at the bottom of the gorget.



This photo shows the broad tipped primaries indicative of BCHP.

Golden-crowned Sparrow: This bird was discovered by Michael Hilchey in the NE foothills of Albuquerque on the day of the CBC. Below is his written description:

This bird was found in a large flock of White-crowned (and one White-throated) Sparrows in a foothill canyon near the Northeastern limit of the count circle in the Sandia Mountains. I saw the bird at close range for a minute or two with binoculars as it made its way through a large vine tangle at the bottom of the draw. This was an adult Golden-crowned Sparrow still in breeding plumage. Similar to White-crowned Sparrow but with pale flesh colored bill (darker on culmen), broad black supercilium extending up to sides of crown, and bright yellow crown with small amount of white at rear.

Pine Warbler: Two Pine Warblers were seen on count day. One presumed adult male was found by Cole Wolf and also by Steve Drilling on count day (no details submitted). Another bird, a 1st year male or adult female, was seen at the Journal Center in Albuquerque by Ashli and Larry Gorbet. Their detailed description is below:

On 9 December 2012, Larry Gorbet and I found a Pine Warbler at the Journal Center on Jefferson (north of Ellison, South of Paseo del Norte). The bird was likely a first winter male or adult female based on the moderate amount of yellow on the head, throat, and upper breast with dusky cheeks and a white belly. The bird had an unstreaked back and showed two white wing bars. It was in with a large group of Yellow-rumped Warblers which Larry and I estimated at ~100 birds; made up of 55% Audubon's and 45% Myrtle. I first sighted the bird at around 1130 or so and after much searching was able to relocate it shortly before noon. Larry got on the bird and was able to study it while I was attempting pictures. The flock was frantically moving through the pines on both sides of Jefferson, south of Journal Center Blvd. With the large number of birds to sort through, we only managed these two brief observations.

We caught up with presumably the same flock of YRWA on December 15 and again on CBC count day, December 16. By December 16, the number of Myrtle Warblers in the group had declined substantially and the overall group size was much smaller. Presumably, the Myrtles had left the area, while the Audubon's stuck around. Both days we found what appeared to be the same Pine Warbler observed on 9 December in with the group.

Yellow-shafted Flicker: Below is the description and photo submitted by Ashli Gorbet.

When I first observed the bird through binoculars at approximately 75m away, I noticed the very buffy face of the female – buffier than a typical Red-shafted Flicker. I closed the distance to around 50m and was able to clearly see pure yellow shafts (not orange-tinged or salmon-colored) in the wing and tail of the bird, along with the red patch on the nape (color in wing and nape are clearly visible in the attached picture). I had a small point-and-shoot camera and approached the bird for photos. After getting close enough for the image attached to this message, the bird flew to a bare tree where more photos were attained. The bird was backlit, so images from this location were not as diagnostic as the image included. In flight, the bird showed bright yellow flashes on the underside of the wings. Based on my extensive experience with Yellow-shafted (having grown up in the eastern U.S.), Red-shafted (many hundreds of individuals observed including close in-hand studies), and intergrades (at least several observed each year in NM), this bird was clearly a female Yellow-shafted Flicker.



Blue-gray Gnatcatcher: On the day of the count this bird was found by Raymond VanBuskirk, along the east riverside drain/bike path in Albuquerque, just north of the aquarium and botanical gardens. It was originally found by Andy Bankert during the CBC scouting effort the week before. The bird was either an adult female or a non-breeding male, with no dark above the eye or in the lores. It was first detected by voice, giving a single nasally “jeeew” call; higher and much thinner than the calls of the other New Mexico gnatcatchers. It gave this call repeatedly for the entire time we watched it (about 5 mins). Its tiny size, long tail, which was always held cocked or flicked from side to side, relatively long bill and overall pale gray color distinguished this bird as a gnatcatcher. The bird was pale grayish overall with a slightly darker back, and wings, and a somewhat obvious white eye ring. The bold nature of this little bird allowed really nice looks at the tail from only a short distance, which usually looked all blackish from above and all white below. When the bird would fly from tree to tree I was able to see the full tail spread which appeared as dark inner rectrices and distinctly white outer rectrices (probably at least the outer 2-3, so more than you would expect for a Black-tailed in any case). The bird’s rectrices were all about the same length (this was obvious in flight) and clearly not graduated enough to even consider something like a Black-capped Gnatcatcher (the bill wasn’t long enough for a BCGN either). Bushtit is always a possibility, I suppose, but the call, the patterning of white and black on the tail, and long bill eliminate Bushtit pretty quickly.

Orange-crowned Warbler: This bird was found by Raymond VanBuskirk at the Rio Grande Zoo in Albuquerque. Like many others, it was found during the scouting effort about a week before the count. This small mostly drab yellowish warbler was found first by its call. It was heard giving its typical high clear chip note, a common call throughout New Mexico for most of the year and a call I’m very familiar with. The bird itself was quite small and mostly drab yellowish overall with a slightly more olive tinge to the upperparts and dull streaky chest and flanks. The undertail coverts were obviously yellow (clearly not a Tennessee Warbler). The bird showed a thin, indistinct, dark eye-line, offsetting the brighter yellowish supercillium. The bill was sharp thin and completely dark distinguishing it from many of the other drab yellowish winter warblers that have thicker, less pointed bills.

Scaled X Gambel’s Quail: I can’t give you any more information on this sighting. I can tell you that over the years I have heard of many occurrences of this hybrid in the Albuquerque area; especially in the heights and in Corrales where the two species meet quite regularly.

Eastern X Spotted Towhee: This is a very confusing sighting and was not entered in the tally because the program wouldn’t allow this hybrid pair (which seems strange since we know they hybridize and that many of these hybrid records occur in the winter). Anyways, it was found and first ID’d as an Eastern Towhee on the ABQ CBC. This bird hung around for quite some time after the count and many people saw it and, like myself, questioned the initial identification. It did look very much like a pure female Eastern Towhee however it regularly gave a call that sounded exactly like a Spotted Towhee (had I **only** heard it in the woods I would’ve passed right by). In fact, I only heard it give the call of the Eastern Towhee once. Besides the apparent problem with the call notes it also had a few whitish spots on the scapulars and tertials, suggesting that there could be some SPTO genes in there. Myself, I believe this bird was probably a hybrid, at best, and I’m not convinced we should even make that assumption given that we just don’t know enough about them here in NM. I have heard mixed feelings about whether or not Eastern Towhees give Spotted Towhee-like calls and therefore I’m just not sure. I have attached the original write-up by Dave Mehlman but I urge you to consider the possibility of a hybrid which he does not address in his description. It might be best to see how the NMBRC dealt with this record so that we can maintain the same position. My suspicions are that they voted possible hybrid, if they have even voted on it yet.

Blue-winged Teal: I never received a description of this bird from the observer. I believe it was a female bird and the observer was Phred Benham, a good birder from LSU that definitely knows his birds, but because of the lack of details for such a hard-to-ID species I think we need to dis-count this record for the CBC.