

2012 Zuni CBC Details- Write-up birds (species or numbers unusual for the Zuni CBC)

Lapland longspur- one seen only in silhouette but heard well on 16 December. Chris Conard joined me the day after the CBC to try to refind the chestnut-collared longspurs in the so-called longspur field south of Tekapo. We failed to find the target birds but flushed this less expectable one instead. It was quickly into the sun and looked rather like a sparrow in its undistinguished silhouette. But it called repeatedly, giving a musical "cheedle" and "cheedle-oh" notes that are distinctive to me. Chris, who was not familiar with these notes, surprised me by trotting out an I-Pod loaded with bird calls and quickly played the recorded notes for Lapland longspur, which matched what we'd just heard. I was impressed, and I may yet be dragged into the 21st Century. But don't bet anything you value on that! Heard at distances of 30- 150 feet.

white-winged junco- one apparent male seen in Mullen Canyon on 13 December. In the company of a several gray-headed and a couple of pink-sided juncoes in the pine-oak zone of the canyon, this bird was a hulk by comparison. It was both longer and especially fatter-bodied, with a disproportionately large light blue-gray bill. The overall body color (head, back, folded wings, sides and flanks) was a pure medium gray, excepting the lores which were dark gray, the white tipping to the greater and median secondary coverts, the whitish edging to the tertials, and the belly and undertail which were white. The tail appeared white underneath on the sitting bird, and in flight there was much more white in the outer tail feathers than on adjacent gray-headed birds. The iris was dark and the legs were a dusky flesh-colored. The call notes seemed very similar to the other juncoes. Seen off and on (mostly on) for about 10 minutes with 8x binoculars in side-lit conditions at distances between roughly 50 and 15 feet. This bird was one of five white-winged juncoes I found in the Zuni Mountains region this visit, the others being northwest and northeast of Mt. Sedgwick. Off the top of my head, I think in previous years when I've found them, there's been only one.

brown-headed cowbird- two in a mixed blackbird flock on the margins of a cattail marsh below Blackrock Dam on 12 December. Both were in adult male plumage, and slightly but distinctly smaller than the nearby male red-winged blackbirds. The glossy black body, folded wings and upper tail surface contrasted with the flat, medium-to-dark brown head feathering. The iris was dark brown, the long conical bill blackish, the legs and feet blackish, too. The bill was stubbier in comparison than the red-winged blackbirds. I did not hear any calls that I attributed to these birds. Seen with 8x binoculars in good light at 60-65 feet distance.