A TWENTY-YEAR INVESTIGATION OF THE EFFECTS OF FIRE ON A COASTAL SAGE SCRUB BIRD COMMUNITY

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ABSTRACT: From 1983 to 2003 I examined the effects of fire on the bird community of two 1.25-ha tracts of coastal sage scrub, Box Canyon and F Canyon, 0.4 km apart in a 31-ha reserve in Los Angeles County, California. Wildfire burned Box Canyon in 1981 and both sites in 1989. I observed 90 species in F Canyon, 80 in Box Canyon, of which 73 were seen in both. The same species were common throughout the 20-year period. F Canyon had more species per count than Box Canyon in both summer and winter. Immediately after the 1989 wildfire, observations of some species of open habitat increased, and observations of some species confined to shrubs decreased. Effects of the 1989 fire on the sites were of short duration. Differences between the sites in number of species attributed to the 1981 fire in earlier studies are confounded by differences between the sites.

2011 NEVADA BIRD RECORDS COMMITTEE REPORT

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ABSTRACT: This report covers the 115 records reviewed by the Nevada Bird Records Committee in 2011, of which 110 were endorsed. These 115 records cover sightings from 24 October 1971 through 26 November 2011, 37 in 2011, 20 antedating the formation of the committee in 1994. Three species are added to the Nevada list (and to the committee’s review list): the Iceland Gull (Larus glaucoides), Winter Wren (Troglodytes hiemalis), and Sedge Wren (Cistothorus platensis). The Northern Beardless-Tyrannulet (Camptostoma imberbe) is removed from the Nevada list (and review list) because evidence to substantiate the record is insufficient. Ten species are removed from the review list because of the number of records or regularity of occurrence. The Nevada state list now stands at 488 species, of which 167 are on the review list.
NESTING ECOLOGY AND NEST SUCCESS 
OF THE BLUE GROSBEAK ALONG 
TWO RIVERS IN NEW MEXICO 

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ABSTRACT: From 1997 through 2008, we studied the nesting habits and nest success of the Blue Grosbeak (Passerina caerulea) along the middle Gila River (1997–2001) and the middle Rio Grande (2000–2008) in New Mexico. A riparian forest of cottonwoods grows along both rivers, but the forest along the Rio Grande is a much more intensively managed ecosystem, with an understory dominated by saltcedar (Tamarix spp.) and other non-native invasive plants, frequent wildfires, and large-scale attempts at remediation of the vegetation. Along the Gila River 100 (95%) of 105 nests were in native shrubs or trees, and the mean height of all nests was 3.4 m. Of 85 nests found along the Rio Grande, 54 (64%) were in saltcedar and 16 (19%) were in other non-native shrubs or trees. Mean nest height was 2.2 m, significantly lower than along the Gila River. Nests were typically found along edges along both rivers but were placed significantly farther from water along the Gila River. In spite of these differences in nest placement, the observed proportion of successful nests along the two rivers did not differ significantly: 28 (47%) of 60 nests along the Rio Grande, 36 (54%) of 67 nests along the Gila River. Overall, differences between the two sites in floristic composition and vegetation structure appeared to affect the placement of Blue Grosbeak nests more than they did nest success.
ABSTRACT: There are now numerous records of the Crested Caracara (*Caracara cheriway*) from California and elsewhere well north of its breeding range, but whether or not they represent wild birds or escapees from zoos or falconers has been debated. Through 2011, the California Bird Records Committee (CBRC) had accepted 49 records that they considered to represent naturally occurring vagrants, but decisions concerning the number of individuals involved in these records were haphazard. Therefore, we assessed the date, location, age, molt status, and appearance of caracaras representing 60 observations specific to date and location in California and propose that these records involve only 11 individuals, recorded between 1 and 34 times throughout the state; a twelfth individual was recorded from December 2011 to April 2012. Our 11-bird scenario was proposed and accepted by the CBRC in January 2012. This synthesis clarifies the species’ pattern of occurrence in California: ten of the 11 individuals were first detected in fall or winter, eight individuals were first detected in their first or second years, four of these eight were later detected at appropriate ages elsewhere in California, and six individuals moved north within the state. These patterns are consistent with birds moving north as wild vagrants and so support the CBRC’s decision to accept the Crested Caracara as a naturally occurring species. We hope that our analysis will help other records committees evaluate the status of this species in other regions, perhaps revealing a similar pattern of natural vagrancy throughout North America.
CONSPECIFIC NEST AGGRESSION OF THE PACIFIC WREN ON VANCOUVER ISLAND, BRITISH COLUMBIA

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ABSTRACT: Five of the ten wren species in North America are known to destroy nests of conspecifics. These include the Cactus Wren (Campylorhynchus brunneicapillus), Bewick’s Wren (Thryomanes bewickii), Sedge Wren (Cistothorus platensis), Marsh Wren (Cistothorus palustris), and House Wren (Troglodytes aedon). However, none of the Winter Wren complex, recently split as the Winter Wren (Troglodytes hiemalis), Pacific Wren (T. pacificus), and Eurasian Wren (T. troglodytes), have been documented to do so in experiments or by observation of natural behavior. Here we present a detailed chronology of a nesting of the Pacific Wren—the first report of conspecific nest aggression in the Winter Wren complex. On 15 May 2011, in Victoria, British Columbia, Canada, a Pacific Wren approached another’s nest under video surveillance and removed two 9-day-old chicks. The nonparental adult returned to the nest, apparently attempting to kill and/or and remove the remaining two chicks, several times over 4.75 hours but was not successful. Although our findings are limited to a single event, they are consistent with those of other wrens.

NOTES

FIRST RECORD OF A SURFBIRD IN THE HAWAIIAN ISLANDS

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COMMON NESTING HABITATS AND WEIGHTS AT FLEDGING OF WEDGE-TAILED SHEARWATERS ON TERN ISLAND, HAWAII

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AN APPARENT LONG-DISTANCE FLIGHT
BY A DUSKY GROUSE IN MONTANA

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MELANISTIC ADULT MALE NORTHERN HARRIER
WINTERING IN IDAHO

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IN MEMORIAM
GALE MONSON, 1912–2012

BOOK REVIEW


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FEATURED PHOTO
CAROTENISM IN THE HAIRY WOODPECKER

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