

ADDITIONS TO THE BIRDS OF THE NEVADA TEST SITE

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Since the establishment of the Nevada Test Site (112 km NW of Las Vegas) in 1950, there has been only one comprehensive study of the birds in its 3,500 km². Hayward et al. (1963) published the first report, which resulted primarily from the collection of 900 specimens. More recently, the birds in a *Larrea-Ambrosia* community of southwestern NTS have been well documented by Herbert O. Hill (1971, 1972, 1973) under the International Biological Program/Desert Biome studies. The nature of work carried on here by the Energy Research and Development Administration (ERDA) makes it impossible to allow unrestricted access to ornithologists.

A note by Banks and Hensen (1970) on some unusual birds at the Corn Creek Field Station of the Desert National Wildlife Range (77 km SE of NTS) states that the Las Vegas Valley may provide a natural flyway for migrating birds. If so, then NTS is a likely stopover for many of them. Indeed, the construction of sewage holding ponds and wells on NTS appears to have attracted many species and densities which would otherwise not be expected in the area. Goldfish (*Carassius auratus* and *Notemigonus crysoleucas*) occur in many of the ponds and wells. Great Blue Herons (*Ardea herodias*) have been observed feeding on these fish. Certain other birds must also take advantage of these stocked waters. We have seen as many as 191 waterfowl at one time on the 2.9 ha Mercury sewage ponds, located at the southern tip of NTS.

The following additions represent several years of casual observation at NTS. In future years more new species will undoubtedly be seen. Our records indicate that approximately 30 of the previously recorded 190 birds of NTS require revision as to seasonal and/or breeding status. More field work should be done, particularly in the northern portions of the Test Site.

Double-crested Cormorant (*Phalacrocorax auritus*). Mercury sewage ponds (MSP), one, March 1976 and one, March 1977.

Cattle Egret (*Bubulcus ibis*). One, MSP, 10-19 Aug 1977 (Lawson 1977: Figure 4).

Roseate Spoonbill (*Ajaia ajaja*). One immature, MSP, 5-6 June 1977; first Nevada record. Castetter approached bird to within 10 m and obtained several clear color photographs (photos on file at Museum of Biology, University of Nevada, Reno; Figure 1). Bird had a slight pinkish wash over wings and showed darker, more extensive pink on under wing coverts. On 6 June Susan Cochrane saw the spoonbill flying NE over Mercury Ridge, 4 km from the sewage ponds.

Whistling Swan (*Olor columbianus*). Rare winter visitor; two records for MSP: one adult and one immature, 15 Nov 1972 and one immature, 5-7 Dec 1976.

Snow Goose (*Chen caerulescens*). MSP, One, 12-22 Nov 1974 and two, 4 Apr 1977.

Gadwall (*Anas strepera*). Uncommon winter visitor; we have kept records for only two occurrences, both at MSP: 15 Nov 1975 (3 males, 9 females) and 29 Nov 1975 (1 male, 1 female).

Wood Duck (*Aix sponsa*). One pair, 4-8 Oct 1975.

Canvasback (*Aythya valisineria*). Common winter resident; records at MSP from October through May.

Ring-necked Duck (*A. collaris*). Common winter resident; records at MSP from September through April.

Common Merganser (*Mergus merganser*). Two males, 11 Aug 1975; one female, 7 Apr 1975; one female, 18-20 Mar 1977; all at MSP.

NOTES

Goshawk (*Accipiter gentilis*). One immature, Shoshone Mountain, September 1976; status on NTS is unknown.

Bald Eagle (*Haliaeetus leucocephalus*). An adult spotted several times in Rock Valley on 16 Feb 1977 was twice seen eating road kill Black-tailed Jackrabbits (*Lepus californicus*).

Peregrine Falcon (*Falco peregrinus*). O'Farrell and Emery (1976:60) report a few sightings at Yucca Flat. No dates are given. We consider this report doubtful.

Willet (*Catoptrophorus semipalmatus*). Singles, 21 May 1976, 22 Apr and 11 Aug 1977.

Franklin's Gull (*Larus pipixcan*). One immature collected, MSP, 4 Aug 1977 (Nevada State Museum 1671). This is the third specimen for Nevada (Lawson 1977:85).

Forster's Tern (*Sterna forsteri*). Singles, 7 and 25 June 1975 and 18 Aug 1977.

Caspian Tern (*S. caspia*). One, MSP, 23 Jun 1975.

Black Tern (*Chlidonias niger*). Two, 11 Aug 1975; five observations of single birds, between 9 and 29 May 1977; six, 10 Aug 1977; all at MSP.

Scissor-tailed Flycatcher (*Muscivora forficata*). One, MSP, 26 Jun 1975. Banks and Hensen (1970) reported it at the Corn Creek Field Station nearly every year from 1960 to 1968.

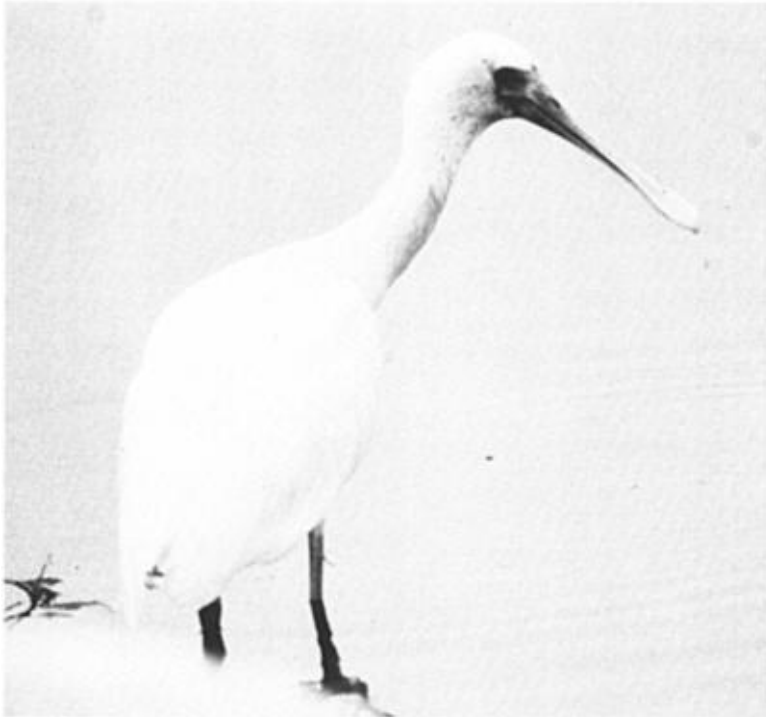


Figure 1. Roseate Spoonbill (*Ajaia ajaja*), Mercury sewage ponds, Mercury, Nye Co., Nevada, 6 June 1977.

Photo by Richard C. Castetter

NOTES

Red-breasted Nuthatch (*Sitta canadensis*). Fairly common on the mesas in September, October and December; possibly an autumn and winter resident.

Canyon Wren (*Catherpes mexicanus*). Fairly common in the higher elevations of NTS; most likely a summer resident, although we have records only for March-May.

Brown Thrasher (*Toxostoma rufum*). One, Mercury, 28 Sep 1975; color photograph on file (Museum of Biology, Univ. Nevada, Reno). In recent years there have been a number of sightings of this species in southern Nevada (Banks and Hensen 1970).

Black-tailed Gnatcatcher (*Polioptila melanura*). One male and two females, Rock Valley, 17 May 1971.

American Redstart (*Setophaga ruticilla*). One male, Cane Springs, 21 May 1977.

Red Crossbill (*Loxia curvirostra*). One, Ranier Mesa, 7 May 1977; status at NTS unknown.

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