

FEATURED PHOTO

A JANUARY SCARLET TANAGER SPECIMEN FROM NEW MEXICO

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PAGE DRAPER, 600 Lakeview Circle, Rio Rancho, New Mexico 87124

On 4 January 2002, a female-plumaged tanager (*Piranga* sp.) appeared in the yard of the Draper family in Rio Rancho, Sandoval Co., New Mexico. The bird was seen frequently in the Drapers' yard, which is heavily planted to be attractive for birds, for five days. It was observed feeding on the berries of *Photinia* cf. *fraseri*, and on a suet mixture containing mixed bird seed, peanut butter, and Crisco. It regularly used a bird bath and sunflower-seed feeder in a neighbor's yard. Draper tentatively identified it as a Scarlet Tanager (*Piranga olivacea*), but an experienced birdwatcher considered it to be a Summer Tanager (*P. rubra*). Photographs were taken and shown to an ornithologist who agreed that it was probably a Summer Tanager.

On 9 January the bird flew into a window at the Draper residence. It was immediately recovered and frozen. When it reached the Museum of Southwestern Biology, Dickerman immediately recognized it as a Scarlet Tanager. He prepared it as a study skin (MSB 32102), with one wing spread to show the white underwing coverts. It was a female with the ovary measuring 3 × 5 mm and the skull fully ossified. It weighed 27.1 grams, with heavy fat, and it was not in molt. The photos featured on this issue's back cover show the January specimen with two other Scarlet Tanagers in fresh fall plumage.

When compared with three other specimens in similar plumage, the Rio Rancho bird is distinctly paler above, the dorsum being near Grayish Olive (color 43) as opposed to Olive-Green (auxiliary) (color 48) of Smithe (1974, 1975, 1981). The bird is also paler ventrally, with the belly nearer Straw Yellow (color 56) than the Sulphur Yellow (color 55) of the other birds. In addition, it lacks the somewhat richer and deeper coloration of the breast. This generally paler coloration makes the specimen even more distinct from fall- and winter-plumaged female Summer Tanagers, especially from the eastern subspecies *P. r. rubra*, the only form yet collected during winter in New Mexico.

McNair and Escobar (1993) reviewed U. S. late fall and winter (22 November to 8 March) records of the Scarlet Tanager, finding 16 from seven states in the Southeast. Only two of these were reported with supporting evidence such as photographs. Those authors strongly suspected that some of the other records they listed represented misidentified female Summer Tanagers. Ironically, the Rio Rancho bird would have been misidentified as that species had it not flown into the window. This specimen is the fourth from New Mexico, where the Scarlet Tanager is otherwise known as a rare spring and fall migrant (Hubbard 1978). As far as we are aware, this is the first January specimen of the Scarlet Tanager from the U.S.

LITERATURE CITED

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**Western Field Ornithologists
and
New Mexico Ornithological Society
Joint Meeting**

July 24–27, 2003

**Western New Mexico University
Silver City, New Mexico**

CONFERENCE INFORMATION

The 28th annual meeting of the Western Field Ornithologists and the 41st annual meeting of the New Mexico Ornithological Society will be held jointly at the campus of Western New Mexico University in Silver City, New Mexico, July 24–27, 2003. The theme of the meeting will be the birds of the Mexican Borderlands, and it will promote exchange of biological information with professional and amateur ornithologists from both sides of the international border. Situated in the Madrean oak woodland habitats of the Southwestern Borderland region, Silver City, New Mexico, affords unique birding and ornithological research opportunities for the casual birder as well as the professional biologist. Late July is prime time for hummingbird viewing in this region, and up to 10+ species can be found within two hours' driving distance from the site of the meetings. Furthermore, this area affords great opportunities for viewing many southwestern specialty species such as the Common Black-Hawk, Zone-tailed Hawk, Montezuma Quail, Yellow-billed Cuckoo, Flammulated and Spotted Owls, Greater Pewee, Brown-crested Flycatcher, Mexican Jay, Juniper Titmouse, Crissal Thrasher, Olive and Red-faced Warblers, Painted Redstart, and Abert's Towhee.

Activities: Several organized half-day field trips are available, including a representative sampling of birds and habitats of southwestern New Mexico and northwestern Chihuahua. Participants can explore the region's diverse habitats on their own as well, using the just published third edition of the *New Mexico Bird Finding Guide* (available for \$20, postage included, from New Mexico Ornithological Society, P. O. Box 3068, Albuquerque, NM 87190-3068). A field trip to the Sierra Madre Occidental in Chihuahua, Mexico, follows the meeting. As at previous WFO meetings, afternoon professional paper sessions and identification slide panels are planned. Social activities include a welcoming reception, a Friday evening social event, and the concluding banquet and evening program on Saturday. For those diverse individuals who are slightly less interested in the birding opportunities, there are also many other cultural and historical sites to visit in the immediate vicinity, such as Gila Cliff Dwelling National Monument.

Speakers: The featured speaker after the Saturday evening banquet is Dr. Noel Snyder from Portal, Arizona. Dr. Snyder is the co-author of *The California Condor: A Saga of Natural History and Conservation* and *Birds of Prey: Natural History and Conservation of North American Raptors*. His presentation is entitled "Conservation and Reintroduction of Thick-billed Parrots: Future Prospects."

On Friday night 25 July Dr. Dale Zimmerman from Silver City, New Mexico, will be making a presentation on the birds of the borderlands region. Dr. Zimmerman is a long-time resident of Silver City and a pioneer in many ornithological investigations within this bird-rich region.

Lodging: A block of 30 rooms has been reserved at the Silver City Holiday Inn Express (505-538-2525) for this meeting. Prices are set at \$60/night and are reserved under "WFO Meetings" with a confirmation number 68518772. These rooms are available on a first-come first-served basis until 15 June 2003. A wide variety of hotels, bed-and-breakfasts, and guest inns is also available in the greater Silver City area. This is a popular destination for summer visitors, so make reservations early. Please visit www.silvercity.org on the World Wide Web to view alternate accommodations, prices, and telephone numbers, as well as recreational activities for the area.

For additional information contact dave_krueper@fws.gov and watch WFO's website, www.wfo-cbrc.org, for updates.



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The California Bird Records Committee of Western Field Ornithologists revised its 10-column Field List of California Birds in February 2002. The last list covered 613 accepted species; the new list covers 619 species. Please send orders to WFO, c/o Robbie Fischer, Treasurer, 1359 Solano Drive, Pacifica, CA 94044. California addresses please add 8.25% sales tax.

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