

2014 Migratory Bird Count Report

Twenty-seven SWNM Audubon members comprising 12 mobile groups spread out over Grant County in the early hours of Saturday, May 10th. As in the past, each group was assigned a pre-determined route selected to sample the diversity of habitats within the county, including agricultural settings, riparian associations, pinyon-juniper woodlands, montane forests, grasslands, and desert scrub.

The efforts of these mobile groups were augmented by those of 19 birders who participated by monitoring bird feeders on their properties. Two especially energetic individuals participated as members of both mobile groups and as feeder monitors. In all, 44 individual birders participated in this year's count.

By the end of the day, Audubon birders had tallied 174 species, slightly fewer than the 181 species recorded in the 2013 count, but slightly greater than the 169 species recorded in 2012. In terms of numbers of birds tallied, this year's count yielded 6,125 individuals, compared to 7,595 seen last year, and 4,862 in 2012.

Two events have had an especially serious impact on our local avifauna and must surely have affected this year's Migratory Bird Count results.

- 1) The Tyrone sewage ponds have, for many years, been a powerful attractant for birds, especially during migration. Gene Lewis monitored the ponds for 22 years and compiled a list of over 200 species, including many rarities. But the ponds are no more. The Tyrone sewage system has been integrated with that of Silver City, the ponds have dried up, and they are scheduled to be filled in.

- 2) At the time of this year's count, the dam at Lake Roberts was undergoing renovation, with the result that the lake's water level was dramatically reduced. Many of the lake's small inlets and marshy areas were completely dry. As a result, species of water birds were undoubtedly affected. For example, only a single species of scolopacid, the Spotted Sandpiper, was recorded in this year's count.