

ARIZONA'S FIRST AND SECOND WHITE-TIPPED DOVE RECORDS

STEVEN TRACEY, 8393 S. DEAD BEAR DRAW, HEREFORD, AZ 85615. STRACEY53@YAHOO.COM

On 29 April 2022, Mark Otnes recorded and photographed a dove that he could not initially identify at the confluence of Garden and Scheelite canyons in the Huachuca Mountains, Cochise County (Otnes 2022). Later that same day Rick Bowers recorded a singing dove in the same location (Bowers 2022). When Otnes revisited his recordings and photographs, he and Bowers both concluded that they had detected Arizona's first White-tipped Dove (*Leptotila verreauxi*). Almost one year later on 22 April 2023, Ron Beck and Janet Cunningham found and recorded a White-tipped Dove in Huachuca Canyon, also in the Huachuca Mountains (Beck 2023), 6.35 km to the northwest of the 2022 sightings, representing Arizona's second record. While there is no way to verify from the available data, this second record may represent a second finding of the original bird or perhaps evidence of expansion of the historical range by multiple birds.

The White-tipped Dove found in 2022 in Garden Canyon was observed from 29 April 2022 to 8 June 2022. There were 113 reports (eBird 2022). Reported locations ranged from the initial sighting at the confluence with Scheelite Canyon to approximately 0.1 km down and 2.1 km up Garden Canyon, and 0.2 km up Scheelite Canyon. Observations were predominately initiated by the sound of a bird singing. Those that did see the dove observed it foraging on the ground, drinking from puddles, and perched in trees. Many observers produced recordings and photos confirming the dove's identification (Figure 1). A few photos showed the dove sitting on what appears to be a nest structure (Aikens et al. 2022, Goldwasser 2022). However, this observation was not followed up to confirm attempted nesting activity.

The White-tipped Dove found in 2023 in Huachuca Canyon was supported by 56 eBird reports from 22 April 2023 to 11 July 2023 (eBird 2023). Both the first and final eBird reports were made by Beck who described the bird well and recorded its song on the initial sighting. As was the case for the 2022 Garden Canyon bird, subsequent observers corroborated its identification with numerous photos (Figures 2 and 3) and audio recordings. Sightings of the 2023 Huachuca Canyon bird were in a smaller area than those of the 2022 bird, with reports mainly within 0.1 km up and down Huachuca Canyon from the site known as "1.7-mile picnic area", with the exception of the final sighting, which was 2.67 km down the canyon.



Figure 1. The Garden Canyon White-tipped Dove found singing from a perch at the confluence of Garden and Scheelite canyons, 30 April 2022. Photo by Steven Tracey



Figure 2. The Huachuca Canyon White-tipped Dove, 11 May 2023. Photo by Rod Schmidt



Figure 3. The Huachuca Canyon White-tipped Dove, 12 May 2023. Photo by Rick Taylor

The Arizona Bird Committee has accepted the 2022 White-tipped Dove report as the first for Arizona and is currently reviewing the 2023 report (Gary Rosenberg, pers. comm.). This species was long expected to reach Arizona, and it is likely that these first 2 White-tipped Dove records represent birds that came from Sonora, Mexico, adjacent to Arizona's southern border. Russell and Monson (1998) reported a robust breeding population within the tropical thornscrub and tropical deciduous forest of central and southern Sonora, with probable breeding as far north as the Rio Sonora. In recent years, what appears to be a resident population has been reported throughout the year in riparian habitat near Arizpe north of the Rio Sonora, about 120 km south of the Huachuca Mountains. Even farther north, White-tipped Doves have been reported the past 3 years along the Rio Cocospera and Rio Babasac, tributaries of the Rio Sonora near Imuris, about 80 km southwest of where the 2 were reported in Arizona. These most recent reports are from April through July (eBird 2023).

Northeast Sonora is mountainous Madrean forest surrounded by desertscrub and grasslands. This is similar to the Huachuca Mountains and the area surrounding them in Arizona. Both Arizona sites are within the Madrean Pine-oak Woodland biotic community with Interior Riparian Deciduous Woodland and Forest in the canyon bottoms (Brown 1994).

Most of the 2022 sightings were at the confluence of Garden and Scheelite canyons, where the canyon bottoms are at 1,700 m elevation. The canyon bottom biotic community is dominated by Arizona sycamore (*Platanus wrightii*), Fremont cottonwood (*Populus fremontii*), velvet ash (*Fraxinus velutina*), and bigtooth maple (*Acer grandidentatum*) and in the more open areas with hairy mountain mahogany (*Cercocarpus breviflorus*) and evergreen sumac (*Rhus virens*). One observation was made 2.1 km up Garden Canyon at 1,900 m in elevation where the slope flora is dominated by Apache (*Pinus engelmannii*) and Chihuahuan pine (*P. leiophylla*).

The "1.7-mile picnic area", the site of most of the 2023 observations, is in the canyon bottom at 1,700 m elevation. The canyon bottom is relatively broad at this location with slope seepage creating a notable small wetland of Cochise sedge (*Carex ultra*) and horsetail (*Equisetum* sp.). The remainder of the canyon bottom at this site is typical riparian deciduous woodland dominated by Arizona sycamore, Fremont cottonwood, and Goodding's willow (*Salix gooddingii*). The final down-canyon observation was at 1,600 m elevation. This location is dominated on the slopes by a savanna of Emory oak (*Quercus emoryi*) and alligator juniper (*Juniperus deppeana*), and in the relatively dry canyon bottom by Arizona sycamore and alligator juniper.

The mountainous riparian habitat where White-tipped Doves are most often reported in northern Sonora is similar to where they showed up in Arizona. Farther east in Mexico, a population extends along the east slope of the Sierra Madre Oriental as far as San Antonio, Texas. There, they are typically found at lower elevations in a variety of woodland habitats, including riparian areas along the Rio Grande River, second-growth woodlands, disturbed borders, and citrus groves (Giese et al. 2020). It is less likely that the doves reported in Arizona in 2022 and 2023 came from there. If there is indeed a range extension in northern Sonora, more reports are likely for Arizona.

I want to thank D. Peter Siminski and Ron Beck for providing site botanical and geological details as well as their review of and resulting notes on this article. I welcome the useful comments of Gary Rosenberg and Rick Wright who reviewed the final draft. I also appreciate the use of photographs from Rod Schmidt and Rick Taylor.

LITERATURE CITED

- Aikens, K., V. Aikens, J. Sunshine 2022. eBird Checklist: <https://ebird.org/checklist/S112228005>. eBird: An online database of bird distribution and abundance [web application]. eBird, Ithaca, NY. Available: <http://www.ebird.org>. (Accessed: 10 October 2023).
- Beck, R. 2023. eBird Checklist: <https://ebird.org/checklist/S134650701>. eBird: An online database of bird distribution and abundance [web application]. eBird, Ithaca, NY. Available: <http://www.ebird.org>. (Accessed: 11 October 2023).

- Bowers, R. 2022. eBird Checklist: <https://ebird.org/checklist/S108419652>. eBird: An online database of bird distribution and abundance [web application]. eBird, Ithaca, NY. Available: <http://www.ebird.org>. (Accessed: 11 October 2023).
- Brown, D. E., editor. 1994. Biotic communities: southwestern United States and northwestern Mexico. Univ. of Utah Press, Salt Lake City, UT.
- eBird. 2022. eBird: An online database of bird distribution and abundance [web application]. eBird, Cornell Lab of Ornithology, Ithaca, NY. Available: <http://www.ebird.org>. (Accessed: 10 October 2023).
- eBird. 2023. eBird: An online database of bird distribution and abundance [web application]. eBird, Cornell Lab of Ornithology, Ithaca, NY. Available: <http://www.ebird.org>. (Accessed: 10 October 2023).
- Giese, J. C., K. M. Hogan, and H. A. Mathewson (2020). White-tipped Dove (*Leptotila verreauxi*), version 1.0. In: P. G. Rodewald, editor. Birds of the World. Cornell Lab of Ornithology, Ithaca, NY. Available: <https://doi.org/10.2173/bow.whtdov.01> (Accessed: 10 October 2023).
- Goldwasser, S. 2022. eBird Checklist: <https://ebird.org/checklist/S112333244>. eBird: An online database of bird distribution and abundance [web application]. eBird, Ithaca, NY. Available: <http://www.ebird.org>. (Accessed: 10 October 2023).
- Otnes, M. 2022. eBird Checklist: <https://ebird.org/checklist/S108401551>. eBird: An online database of bird distribution and abundance [web application]. eBird, Ithaca, NY. Available: <http://www.ebird.org>. (Accessed: 11 October 2023).
- Russell, S. M. and G. Monson. 1998. The birds of Sonora. Univ. of Arizona Press, Tucson, AZ.