

SPECIES OF THE MONTH

PLAIN-CAPPED STARThROAT

JUNE 2024

The Plain-capped Starthroat (*Heliomaster constantii*) is a casual to rare late spring and summer visitor to Arizona. It breeds from northwestern Costa Rica northward through Central America and the Sierra Occidental Mountains to northwestern Sonora, Mexico. It is resident in most of its range except for northern Sonora where it appears only in the summer.

Arizona is the only state where the Plain-capped Starthroat has been confirmed in the United States. Most years at least one shows up in a canyon in the southeastern part of the state, and a few times as many as 5 or 6 individuals. The first Arizona record was at Nogales 20 to 30 September 1969, and the only confirmed report away from southeastern Arizona was at a Phoenix yard 17 October to 28 November 1978. This is the latest Arizona record and the most northern for the species. Most reports are from May through October. There are no known nesting attempts.

Males and females are similar, and each have a white stripe below and behind the eye, gray throat, pinkish-red gorget, short tail, bronze upperparts, and white stripe on the rump. Particularly noticeable is this bird's exceptionally long bill.



Plain-capped Starthroat (adult), Ash Canyon, Cochise County, 19 August 2023. Photo by Bill Scott