



Capulin Volcano National Monument

Landbirds

The National Park Service's mission is to manage park resources "unimpaired for future generations." Protecting and managing some of our nation's most significant natural resources requires basic knowledge of the condition of ecosystems and the species that occur in national parks. Landbirds are a conspicuous component of many ecosystems and changes in their populations may be indicators of changes in the biotic or abiotic components of the environment upon which they depend. Relative to other vertebrates, landbirds are also highly detectable and can be efficiently surveyed with the use of numerous standardized methods.

Status and Trends

In 2009, the Rocky Mountain Bird Observatory (RMBO) began systematic surveys of birds at Capulin Volcano NM as part of the Southern Plains Inventory and Monitoring program. In total, there have been 147 bird species reported at the monument on previous checklists, however, 86 of those species have not been observed during the 2009-2011 RMBO surveys. This is not surprising since the RMBO surveys are conducted during the breeding season, whereas the checklists include all seasons. Further, the monument is not within (or close to) the primary breeding range of 34 of those species and lacks breeding habitat for an additional 33 species. Thus, only 19 species were not observed on recent RMBO surveys that are within (or close to) their primary breeding range with some reasonable breeding habitat found within the monument. Of the 19 species not observed by RMBO, there were only two species (Bushtit and Black-throated Gray Warbler) to have what we considered good breeding habitat conditions at the monument, and both of those species are on the edge of their breeding ranges and both have always been considered uncommon or rare at the monument based on previous checklists.

There are no bird species listed by the U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service as endangered or threatened (in New Mexico) that occur at Capulin Volcano NM. In addition, there are no bird species that occur at the monument that are listed as endangered by the state of New Mexico; however, there are three species (Bald Eagle, Peregrine Falcon, and Gray Vireo) that are listed as threatened. Of these, only the Gray Vireo has



ROBERT SHANTZ

Green-tailed Towhee at Capulin Volcano National Monument.

sufficient habitat to warrant attention, but the monument is generally considered outside of its breeding range.

Discussion

Currently, the assessment of landbirds at Capulin Volcano NM is based on limited data (three years), however, nothing to date warrants any concern for birds at the monument. We found 11 species that we believe have relatively high conservation potential, and most of these have been observed numerous times at the monument during recent years. Overall, we consider the condition of birds at the monument to be good. To date we do not have sufficient data to justify a trend in that condition, although ongoing monitoring should provide such an estimate for future assessments.