

BIRDS OF THE PIÑON ASSOCIATION OF THE KAWICH MOUNTAINS, NEVADA

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The Kawich Mountains of the central Great Basin, Nye County, Nevada have received attention from only four ornithologists as listed by Linsdale (Pac. Coast Avif. No. 23, 1935:17). Since none of these workers were there during the summer months, the breeding avifauna of the range remained unstudied until 1953, when a party from the University of Nevada collected there from June 10 to 18. In view of the fact that the area is contained within the vast Las Vegas-Tonopah Air Force Bombing Range and is therefore generally inaccessible for further study due to military restrictions, the information gathered during the June 1953 visit on the birds resident in the piñon (*Pinus monophylla*) zone is presented here. Species collected are marked by an asterisk. These specimens are preserved in the University of Nevada Museum of Biology. The reader is referred to a paper by Miller (Ecology, 27(1), 1946:54-60) discussing the birds of the piñon association of the Grapevine Mountains, also in Nye County, 80 miles south-southwest of the Kawich region.

Kawich Peak at 9500 feet elevation is the highest point in central Nye County for 55 miles in any direction. Between 6000 and 7000 feet the sagebrush growth of the alluvial fans surrounding the mountains is replaced by piñon and sparse juniper cover. On the best soils, especially at east-facing slopes near Breen Canyon on the west side of the range, the piñon woodland becomes quite dense. There the trees grow to thirty feet in height and to two feet in diameter at the ground. In such places the branches interlock to form an overhead canopy, allowing sparse undergrowth. In the vicinity of Eden Canyon, on the more moist east side of the mountains, the same situation as regards plant belts exists except that the piñon tracts are generally more dense, especially on the south-facing slopes. Above 8000 feet mountain mahogany (*Cercocarpus ledifolius*) forms groves which continue to the crest of the range.

The *Scrub Jay (*Aphelocoma coerulescens nevadae*), Piñon Jay (*Cyanocephalus cyanocephalus*), *Bush-tit (*Psaltiriparus minimus*), Blue-gray Gnatcatcher (*Polioptila caerulea*), *Black-headed Grosbeak (*Pheucticus melanocephalus*), *Gray Flycatcher (*Empidonax griseus*), and *Black-throated Gray Warbler (*Dendroica nigrescens*), all species expected to be resident in the piñon zone, were subsequently found there. In addition several other species present deserve special comment. Small numbers of the Hairy Woodpecker (*Dendrocopos villosus*) and the *White-breasted Nuthatch (*Sitta carolinensis*) inhabited the best stand of climax piñon in Eden Canyon. Two juvenile nuthatches with soft bills were obtained. Apparently these species were attracted by the unusual dominance of the piñon, a situation paralleling that found by Miller in the Grapevine

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Johnson, Ned K. 1956. "BIRDS OF THE PIÑON ASSOCIATION OF THE KAWICH MOUNTAINS, NEVADA." *The Great Basin naturalist* 16, 32–33.

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