

Looking ahead to January:

First, a big thanks to John Bregar and Amanda White for their service to the club as Field Trip Coordinators over the last few years. I have been handed the baton for 2026 and will be the point person for coordinating field trips for the club this year. From my perspective, a big reason for having a bird club like ours is to share the experience of birds and birding with our friends and fellow birders. If you have an idea for a fun outing you would like to share with other people, please let me know! We are always in need of ideas and field trip leaders. In 2025 we had a series of field trips, and also some fun new developments like Lisa Wilk's Bird Walk Wednesday series and a Bike 'n Bird event in the fall. At the most recent board meeting of the DBC, we discussed a goal of at least one Field Trip and one less organized 'Meet Up' per month. Ideally we have a lot of different events (and kinds of events) going on throughout the year! Here is what I tentatively have scheduled for January:

January 10: Meet Up: at Rotary Park at 9:30 a.m. for a casual walk around the Fish Hatchery / Huck Finn pond area, and up the River Trail to Junction Creek and back. Option to stick around for an Irish Pastie at Animas Brewing afterwards.

January 24: Field Trip: Winter Birding in Farmington. Leader - Stephen Tarnowski. Exact time and details tbd. For me, the gull flock at Farmington Lake is a big highlight of our winter season. We were off to a slow start with the gulls at Farmington Lake through the Christmas Bird Count on Dec. 20 (only about 100 birds seen) but I am encouraged by larger numbers and increased diversity of gulls being reported in Albuquerque over the last few days with the recent (and long overdue) plunge in temps we are experiencing. There is also a wintering flock of snow geese in Farmington again which is a highlight as well.

December recap:

1. By the numbers: As of December 30, the month of December 2025 saw 69 eBirders active in La Plata County, who contributed 373 checklists and saw 104 species. Both totals are within the top 15 for the state this month. Ryan Votta and Lisa Wilk led the way with checklist totals in the mid-30s, and observed 66 and 58 species in the county, respectively.

2. Christmas Bird Counts. As always, December was highlighted by the Audubon Christmas Bird Count (this year in its 126th edition). A big thanks to Ryan Votta for being the compiler for the Christmas Bird Counts in both Durango and Cortez. Ryan already sent out a good summary of the preliminary results for both counts so I won't go into too much detail here. I will highlight that we had 55 participants in the Durango CBC this year! Perhaps the standout bird of the Durango CBC was a late [Northern Parula](#) found by the "Upper Animas River" group.

2. Other monthly notable rarities from La Plata County:

- [Long-tailed Duck](#) at Pastoerius Reservoir. Found on December 2 by Kristi Steiffert and Robert Winslow. This bird was seen by many birders at this location and was present through December 7. This was only the second record of this species for La Plata County on eBird!

3. Monthly notables from around the Four Corners: Montezuma County had an exciting conclusion to 2025.

- Mike Thompson found a [Red-Shouldered Hawk](#) down on Road G on December 11. This is the only western slope record for this species on eBird. With good photographs, this individual was identified as a juvenile of the subspecies *elegans*, the California subspecies that has a good chance to attain "full species status". If that were to occur, this bird would then potentially constitute a first state record for Colorado. The bird can be difficult to see along the narrow winding road that is mostly private property through this stretch but was seen as recently as December 29.
- John Cahill photographed a [Short-eared Owl](#) at Yucca House National Monument on December 19. This bird was not refound.
- Rudy Musclow posted photographs of a male [Black-throated Blue Warbler](#) at his home in Lewis to the Birding 4 Corners facebook group on Christmas Day. This is only the second record of this species on eBird for Montezuma County.

4. Favorite La Plata County media of the month. I really enjoyed [this photo](#) from Brenda Wright of a Ferruginous Hawk (*buteo regalis*) looking particularly regal.

Wishing everyone good birding in the new year! Hope to see you out there.

Cheers,

Stephen