Significance of Quichapa Lake for Migratory Birds
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Abstract:
Quichapa Lake is an ephemeral body of water that is also the most biodiverse area for birds in iron county. Many bird species stop at the lake during critical times of migration. We have monitored the lake in order to better assess this diversity during peak periods of migration and also compared our results with the more extensive eBird database. Several species have been shown to rely on Quichapa during these periods.

The American Avocet (Recurvirostra americana) is a fairly large wading bird of Western Northern America that spends much of the spring, summer and fall months in lakes of the western United States. Spring migration begins in mid-March and proceeds through May. Fall migration tends to run from July all the way through to November.

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Quichapa Lake is unusual in that it is also habitat for pelicans during much of the year. This has been somewhat unexpected because, as an intermittent lake, there are no fishes present and during the driest months of the year no habitat exists at all. Nonetheless, when water comes from summer monsoon rains, populations come to the lake within one or two days of filling with water. Historic birding data from Cornell University’s eBird show that, despite these ephemeral conditions, Quichapa Lake is important for pelicans.

The American White Pelican (Pelecanus erythrorhynchos) is a large white aquatic bird of the central and western regions of North America. It feeds primarily on fishes and large invertebrates and, in the Great Basin, it relies heavily on inland waters to reproduce. The Great Salt Lake with its bays and isolated shorelines are important for breeding.

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