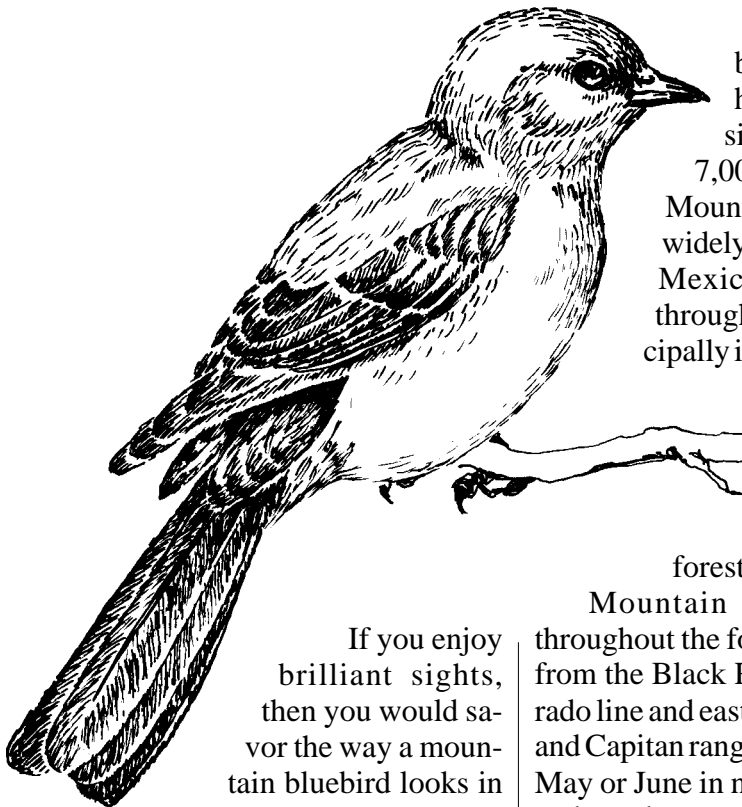




WILDLIFE NOTES

Mountain bluebird

Cuiraca caerulea



If you enjoy brilliant sights, then you would savor the way a mountain bluebird looks in the sunlight. The male is particularly colorful, with an azure blue covering from the top of his head to the tip of his tail, and a turquoise-blue underside. Females are fuller gray in color and have blue highlights; they have a white throat and a dusky breast.

As the name indicates, mountain bluebirds prefer higher elevations. But in the late fall and winter they wander into open country, even onto the high plains. They live more in the open than other bluebirds of similar size (about seven inches long) such as the blue grosbeak. This summer, look for these

birds when you're hiking or sightseeing at about 7,000 feet and above. Mountain bluebirds are widely distributed in New Mexico. They winter throughout the state, principally in the southern half.

In general they like open country with scattered trees, not extremely dense forest cover.

Mountain bluebirds nest throughout the forested mountains, from the Black Range to the Colorado line and east to the Sacramento and Capitan ranges. Eggs are laid in May or June in nests made of grass and weed stems, lined with bark and feathers. Mountain bluebirds may nest in flicker holes, in rock crevices, in buildings, or in bird houses. The clutch contains four to six pale, greenish-blue eggs.

You may see one of these birds hovering over an insect before it drops to catch its prey. Or you may, with luck, see a mountain bluebird catch an insect in flight.

Mountain bluebirds breed from Alaska and western Canada down to the Black Hills of South Dakota and Wyoming, western Oklahoma, and the mountains of the Southwest. They winter primarily in the

southern part of their range.

Other members of the subfamily Turdinae include robins, thrushes, other bluebirds and solitaires.

Wildlife Notes is published by
the Department of Game and Fish.
If you are interested in obtaining
additional copies, please send
your request to:
Conservation Education Section
Department of Game and Fish
PO Box 25112
Santa Fe, NM 87504
(505) 476-8119
