

COLORADO FIELD ORNITHOLOGISTS NEWSLETTER

No. 2, January 1, 1971

Sight Records of New Species for Colorado

The problem of verification and acceptance of an extraordinary observation has been with us for a long time. While some consider the only acceptable evidence for an unusual record is a collected specimen or a good photograph, most records will have to be based on sight observations. In "Birds of Colorado," Bailey and Niedrach put it: "Consequently, instead of arbitrarily demanding a specimen as proof of an occurrence, we have adopted the policy of accepting sight records, made by competent observers, of well marked and easily recognized species, even though the birds may be far from the normal ranges . . ."

The Directors of the Colorado Field Ornithologists discussed this problem at the 1970 Annual Meeting. Without coming to a decision, they considered using an adaptation of the form used in Arkansas called "Verifying Documentation of an Extraordinary Sight Record." A person reporting an unusual sight record would be expected to furnish details.

A sample of the adapted form is attached for your review and opinion. When reports of sightings of two species new to Colorado were received, the form was sent to the observers on a trial basis. Both returned the form, and their records are summarized below.

BOAT-TAILED GRACKLE. First noted by Professor A. S. Hyde of Gunnison and confirmed by Don Radovich and Dr. R. E. Marquardt. The bird appeared in Gunnison on May 16, 1970 and stayed until about the middle of August. It was a male, identified by its "enormous tail and raucous scraping notes uttered as the big bird swelled up." It was seen with and compared to Common Grackles and Brewer's Blackbirds at close range.

OLIVE WARBLER. Noted by Mrs. Kenneth Ewing of Colorado Springs and her son Clark, near their ranch at McCoy on May 23, 1970. The bird was in the cottonwoods and willows along a mountain valley stream. They observed it for 15 minutes, as close as 30 feet, using binoculars. "The unusual buffy-orange head and wide white wing bars were the first distinctive markings noted. As it moved about in just one narrowleaf cottonwood tree, in a busy but unhurried manner, the dark gray back, white belly and ear patch could be seen. The little bird apparently was finding insects on the loosely hanging catkins. Had the bird been a female, identification would have been difficult." 815 Colorado Blk.

Color Banding of Sandhill Cranes

To see a flock of Sandhill Cranes in their regular migration season was interesting, though hardly news. But when we saw that one had a large red band on its right leg above the tibio-tarsal joint, Thea Colborn, Steve Larson and I were curious. A request to Ron Ryder for help brought forth the information that the bird we saw near Hotchkiss on October 11 was probably banded at Gray's Lake, Idaho. (See "wanted poster" attached.)

Unusual Records and Reports

I. Printed in the Denver Field Ornithologists' "Monthly Report of Field Observations," and repeated for those who do not receive that publication.

Boreal Owl Reported by Harold Holt (M.R.F.O. 6, No. 1, October 1970). Seen in a clearing in the coniferous forest at an altitude of about 9,200 feet, on the west side of Kebler Pass, which is west of Crested Butte in Gunnison County, on September 6, 1970, at about 5 p.m. The owl was being harassed by a Sharp-shinned Hawk.

Bendire's Thrasher Reported by Robert F. Buttery (M.R.F.O. 5, No. 11, August 1970). Seen, and its nest and eggs in a juniper photographed, on the Comanche National Grassland about 14 miles southwest of Timpas, Otero County, on June 9, 1970. This is the second record and first nesting report for Colorado.

Veery Reported by John R. Cooper (M.R.F.O. 5, No. 11, August 1970). Nest found at the Chaseville Campground, Santa Maria, Park County, in a tangle of brush, elevation 8,600 feet. The nest contained three fairly large young on July 17, 1970. Though the Veery is not rare in Colorado, no nests have been reported for many years.

Buff-bellied Hummingbird Reported by George Shier (M.R.F.O. 5, No. 12, September 1970). The bird was seen in Golden on August 7, 1970. This is a first for Colorado.

II. New Reports.

Virginia Rail Reported by Mrs. Lucy Ela of Grand Junction. Seen in a cat-tail swamp along Plateau Creek near Molina, Mesa County, October 30, 1970. This is the first record from western Colorado in many years and probably represents a migrating bird.

Red-shouldered Hawk Seen by Sam Gadd of Colorado Springs and Lois Schultz on November 15, 1970, about 2 miles southeast of Johnson Reservoir, El Paso County. Identified by tail and wing pattern, underparts, and comparison with nearby Rough-legged Hawks.

Common Grackle Professor Sidney Hyde of Gunnison reports there was a pair in Gunnison in the summer of 1970.

Sharp-tailed Sparrow Professor Sidney Hyde of Gunnison reports one seen in a swampy meadow near Gunnison November 24, 1970. This is apparently the second record for the state. Professor Hyde collected the first specimen in the same region October 23, 1952. The 1970 bird was probably a Nelson's Sharp-tail, as was the collected specimen. This race nests west of Colorado but east of the Rockies in British Columbia. Admitting that Professor Hyde is an expert on sparrows (he wrote his doctoral thesis on Henslow's Sparrow), one wonders if the rest of us haven't been missing some wanderers if he can find two in one place, west of the Rockies.

Long-billed Marsh Wren Mrs. Thea Colborn, Steve Larson, and W. A. Davis saw one in a cat-tail marsh at Adobe Lake, west of Hotchkiss, Delta County, on October 11, 1970. Though the marsh appears to be typical habitat for this species, none were seen on numerous summer visits, so the bird is presumed to be a migrant or winter visitor. This is the first record of a Marsh Wren in western Colorado in a long time.

Purple Martin Mr. and Mrs. Bert Shaughency of Chatham, New Jersey, saw a migrating flock of about 15 on August 18, 1970, at McClure Pass, Pitkin County.

Rare Species Banded near Longmont

by Allegra Collister

Fall bird banding operations in 1970 at Lykin's Gulch, 8 miles west of Longmont, provided records of several species unusual in this part of Colorado. Banding of birds permits careful identification in the hand, a distinct advantage over sight records. The assistance of Inez Baker in identifying the Black-throated Green Warbler is gratefully acknowledged. Status indicated is taken from "Status and Migration Data of Birds of the Denver Area" by Harold R. Holt.

Ash-throated Flycatcher - Very rare migrant, Upper Sonoran and Transition Zones. One (age and sex unknown) September 29.

Black-throated Blue Warbler - Very rare migrant, Upper Sonoroan and Transition Zones. One (probably immature female) September 28.

Black-throated Green Warbler - Accidental, Upper Sonoran Zone. One (probably immature male) October 6.

Chestnut-sided Warbler - Very rare migrant, Upper Sonoran Zone. One (probably immature) September 28.

Northern Waterthrush - Rare migrant, Upper Sonoran and Transition Zones. Two August 28, one September 5 (age and sex unknown).

White-throated Sparrow - Rare winter visitor, Upper Sonoran and Transition Zones. One (adult) September 30.

Additions to "Birds in Western Colorado"

The following species were seen by Mrs. Thea Colborn, Steve Larson, and W. A. Davis in Delta County on October 11, 1970. All are unusual in fall in western Colorado: Black-bellied Plover, 4; Long-billed Dowitcher, 8; American Avocet, 8; Forster's Tern, 1; MacGillivray's Warbler, 1; Chipping Sparrow, 1.

Additions to Membership List

Dr. A. T. Cringan, 1200 Stover Street, Ft. Collins, Colo. 80521

Mrs. Nancy Greenleaf, 2510 Parkview Blvd., Colorado Springs, Colo. 80906

Mr. Warren H. Hill, Box 173, Grand Canyon, Arizona 86023

Nina B. Stultz, 348 9th Ave., Longmont, Colorado 80501

Dr. Gustav Swanson, 620 Mathews St., Apt. 115, Ft. Collins, Colo. 80521

Mr. Van Truan, 2510 Elizabeth St., Pueblo, Colorado 81003

Dr. Howard Winkler, 835 Second Ave., West Bldg., Box 1549, Durango, Colo. 81301

Corrections to Membership List

Mrs. Gale T. Cummings, P. O. Box 109

Miss Oppie Reames

Mr. Victor H. Smith, 500 Manhattan Dr., Apt. G-1, Boulder, Colo. 80303

Mr. Donald Thatcher - Zip code is 80212

Annual Meeting, May 22-23, 1971

Headquarters - Manitou Experimental Forest, Rocky Mountain Forest and Range Experiment Station, 7 miles north of Woodland Park.

Accommodations - There is a campground nearby, motels in Woodland Park, and ladies can be accommodated in the Lodge.

The Forest is in a ponderosa pine-grass ecosystem, there are two trout lakes nearby, and two years ago in May a Scissor-tailed Flycatcher was seen here.

Dues for 1971

Dues for 1971 are payable now. Send your \$3.00 to Miss Sadie Morrison, 1283 Elizabeth St., Denver, Colorado 80206. Remember they are delinquent after the annual meeting.

Christmas Counts

Please send Christmas Counts promptly to W. A. Davis, 308 Country Club Park, Grand Junction, Colorado 81501, so they can be in the next Newsletter.

COLORADO FIELD ORNITHOLOGISTS

Report of Unusual Sight Record

Species: Date: Hour:

Location:

Habitat:

Who first noted the bird?

Others who confirmed identification?

Did you know it was unusual when you observed it?

Did you have a good opportunity for observation (time, light, view, binoculars or spotting-scope)?

What experience have you had with this species previously?

How did you identify the bird? Describe in detail what you saw and heard in the field.

What similar species might it have been? How were these eliminated?

Name:

Date:

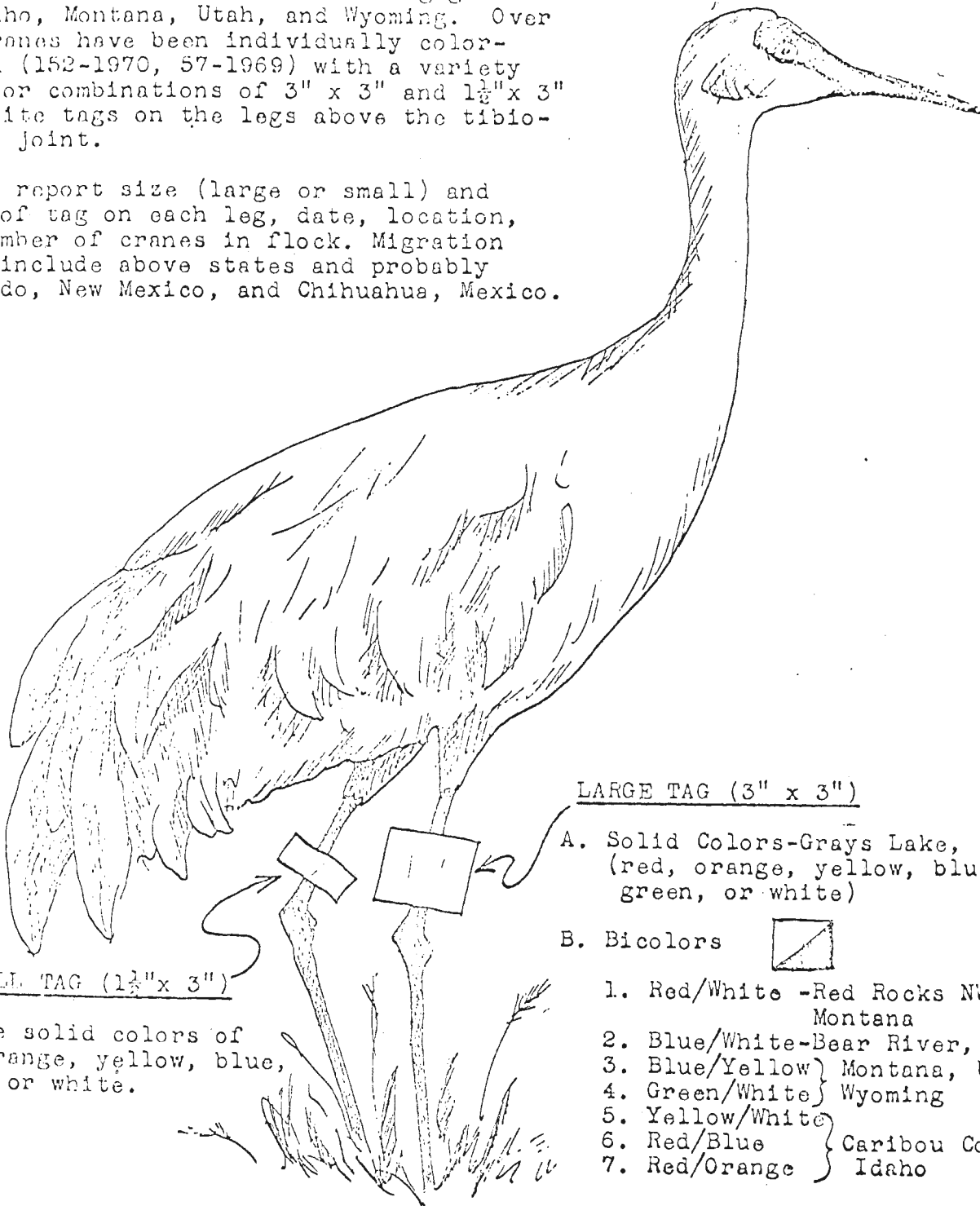
Address:

(Use other side or additional pages if needed.)

WANTED

Observations of GREATER SANDHILL CRANES banded and color-marked on breeding grounds in Idaho, Montana, Utah, and Wyoming. Over 200 cranes have been individually color-marked (152-1970, 57-1969) with a variety of color combinations of 3" x 3" and 1½" x 3" Herculite tags on the legs above the tibio-tarsal joint.

Please report size (large or small) and color of tag on each leg, date, location, and number of cranes in flock. Migration areas include above states and probably Colorado, New Mexico, and Chihuahua, Mexico.



SMALL TAG (1½" x 3")

LARGE TAG (3" x 3")

A. Solid Colors-Grays Lake, Idaho
(red, orange, yellow, blue, green, or white)

B. Bicolors



1. Red/White -Red Rocks NWR, Montana
2. Blue/White-Bear River, Wyoming
3. Blue/Yellow } Montana, Utah,
4. Green/White } Wyoming
5. Yellow/White }
6. Red/Blue } Caribou Co.,
7. Red/Orange } Idaho

All are solid colors of red, orange, yellow, blue, green, or white.

PLEASE REPORT OBSERVATIONS TO;

Red Brown or Elwood Bizeau OR
Idaho Cooperative Wildlife Research Unit
University of Idaho
Moscow, Idaho 83843

Russell Hoffman
Refuge Manager
Grays Lake National Wildlife
Refuge
Soda Springs, Idaho 83276