

# Colorado Birds

The Colorado Field Ornithologists' Quarterly

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### Front Cover

Rich Levad evaluating a waterfall for potential as a Black Swift nesting site.  
Photo by Glenn Girior.

### Back Cover

Top: Set of four photos showing the gradual replacement of a Steller's Jay's normal feathers with completely white ones during its pre-basic molt. Photos by Fred and Georgie Kupilik.

Bottom: Same Steller's Jay as in the top set after completing its molt. Photo by Bill Schmoker taken on 19 September 2004.

**RICH LEVAD RECEIVES  
RONALD A. RYDER AWARD FOR DISTINGUISHED SERVICE**

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The Colorado Field Ornithologists (CFO), at its annual meeting in La Junta in May 2005, presented the Ronald A. Ryder Award for Distinguished Service to Rich Levad. The award recognized his impact on Colorado ornithology over the past 30 years as a long-standing member of CFO and Grand Valley Audubon, a leader of field trips for both, and an author, atlaser, and researcher.

An active member of CFO for nearly 30 years, he has served as a board member, a member of the records committee, and has led numerous field trips. On a tour with Rich to anywhere within 100 miles of Grand Junction he will overwhelm you with his encyclopedic knowledge of the place and its bird life. His narration of what bird species breed, migrate, or winter in each location leaves his fellow birders in awe of his broad familiarity with the region.

During fieldwork for the *Colorado Breeding Bird Atlas* (Kingery 1998), Rich worked 86 atlas blocks over the eight-year span. He identifies two favorite blocks: Snyder Flats in Unaweep Canyon and Smith Reservoir in the San Luis Valley. He then wrote 20 species accounts for the Atlas publication. With his background as an English teacher, he wrote these Atlas accounts with lively language, as well as perceptive analysis of Atlas data, meticulous research into sources, and scientific accuracy. In 2004, he, along with three co-authors, published *Birds of Western Colorado Plateau and Mesa Country* (Richter et al. 2004). This important contribution to Colorado ornithology broke new ground with its user-friendly format and detailed information about 374 species recorded in the western third of the state.

Rich has worked for the Rocky Mountain Bird Observatory (RMBO) since 1998 when the west slope office took root in Grand Junction. As Special Monitoring Projects Coordinator he developed a volunteer-based program

called Colony Watch that specializes in species-specific surveys, such as those for Barrow's Goldeneye, Black Swift, and Purple Martin. This highly successful program has become a model for other states.

The Barrow's Goldeneye survey in December counts over 200 individuals annually and also constitutes a statewide census for all waterfowl. Through his research and organization, fieldwork on another high interest species, Purple Martin, has yielded over 100 new nest holes in just the past five years.



Rich Levad and Northern Saw-whet Owl. Photo by Glenn Girior.

Rich also supervises RMBO's pioneering effort to locate and monitor Black Swift colonies. This involved creating a database of waterfalls and sending observers to check them at dusk for swifts. By 2003, the survey logged over 1000 miles hiking and 100 miles of elevation gain, of which Rich did his share. Building on the 1950s pioneering work of Owen Knorr, he directed Black Swift surveys that have found an astounding 88 nest sites, 53 more than Knorr's 35 sites - more than any other state, and, in fact, more than all other states combined. He estimates 100-125 total colonies in Colorado. These surveys, along with field studies that Rich encouraged, make the Black Swifts of Colorado better known than those in any other nesting area.

Rich's specialty, however, are owls. He began the "Owl Prowl" field trip in Grand Junction in the early 1990s as a one-day field trip where Long-eared, Great Horned, Barn, Western Screech, and Burrowing owls became standard finds with an evening trip during fair weather that usually produced encounters with Northern Saw-whet and Boreal owls. The "Owl Prowl" has since grown into a two-day event.

Prior to 1987, the known population of western Colorado Barn Owls consisted of one pair, which resided in a barn near Fruita. Over the next three years volunteer tips led Rich to two pairs of Barn Owls nesting in arroyo banks. A breakthrough followed when Rich found and shared a paper describing Barn Owls excavating holes in arroyo banks in eastern Colorado (Millsap and Millsap 1987). After sharing this article with several other birders, about 25 or 30 active burrows were discovered, supporting a substantial resident population in the Grand Valley.

Western Screech-Owls have captivated him for years. His cohorts and he discovered a breeding population in the Grand Valley, virtually unknown before he began his dusk and dawn forays, of 75-100 pairs. Since this discovery, the Grand Junction Christmas Bird Count now averages 30 of the little owls, several times tallying the highest Western Screech-Owl numbers in the country, while continuing to hold the highest total number counted over the years since 1983.

After confirming breeding of Flammulated Owls in an Atlas block on the Uncompahgre Plateau 18 years ago, Rich followed up and found a large breeding population on the Plateau. In 2005, on a 20-stop, 10-mile roadside count, he registered "flams" at 10 stops; because of his dedicated fieldwork, we now know that the Uncompahgre hosts an impressive population of these small owls.

In 2002, Rich initiated a search for a migration corridor for montane owls and established the Debeque Sunnyside Banding Station where his volunteers and he have banded 22 migrating Northern Saw-whet Owls, one Long-eared Owl, and one Western Screech-Owl, over a four-year period. He is still searching for an autumn migration corridor for Flammulated Owls.

Rich taught American and English literature, composition, and literary analysis in the Grand Junction public schools for 30 years. Whenever he could, he inserted units on Thoreau and other nature writers. In 1998, Central High School named him Teacher of the Year. He served in the Air Force in the early 1960s and received both a BA and MA in English from the University of

Northern Colorado. Rich and his wife, Karen, came to Grand Junction because one of her classmates had started a kindergarten program. He says, "They didn't get what they bargained for. She lasted one semester and I stayed 30 years." Married for 39 years, Rich and Karen have four children and three grandchildren.

It is not possible to separate the teacher from the student in Rich since both are so closely intertwined. As a natural born teacher Rich's classroom extends beyond the walls of any institution. He clearly enjoys sharing his knowledge of birds and enthusiastically addresses any question directed to him. This usually includes tossing into the discussion the things we do not yet know or understand about the species. Has anyone ever been to "Mac-and-Back" or on an "Owl Prowl" without learning something new?

Rich's ceaseless desire for learning new things about the natural world around us is one of his best features. In an effort to collect more information through the Colony Watch program, Rich has developed an army of volunteers drawn from former students, Audubon organizations, RMBO biologists, college students, past Breeding Bird Atlas workers, and various birding clubs to name a few. His passion certainly fuels this army but his ability to make each and everyone of us believe that we have something important to contribute is what maintains this collective. The sheer bulk of this effort combined with Rich's ability to recognize and glean significant information makes the volunteer effort so important. Rich has successfully incorporated the volunteer effort into a network with academics, land managers, birders, field technicians, and scientists throughout the western United States and Canada. This has contributed greatly to our collective body of ornithological knowledge.

Rich is by far the best-known and most respected ornithologist from western Colorado. CFO is honored to have benefitted from Rich's sagacity, leadership, research, and writing.

### **Acknowledgments**

Rich speaks of many individuals who have influenced his work, many more than we could possibly mention here. Dr. Richard Biedleman's Field Ornithology class offered at the Aspen Center for Environmental Studies in 1981 fostered Rich's course in ornithology and intensified his interest in birds. Hugh Kingery's initiation of the Colorado Breeding Bird Atlas Project in 1987 gave Rich a whole new perspective on birding. In preparing for fieldwork Rich and fellow Atlasers would quiz each other on which birds would be encountered in a given habitat type. Later he began asking what features in certain habitats caused the absence of expected species or the presence of

unexpected species. He especially enjoyed the analysis, writing, and editing process, a perfect way to cement new knowledge into one's mind. Rich simply enjoys writing, the analysis process kept revealing new information, and the editing process was as much good spirited sparing with Hugh as it was work. The Rocky Mountain Bird Observatory's Mike Carter and Tony Leukering found the perfect fit for Rich after he retired from the education field allowing Rich to take on the role as Special Species Coordinator and run with it. Rich expressed much kudos to the talented staff he works with at RMBO. Rich concedes that he and fellow West Slope birders, Coen Dexter and Kim Potter, after years in the field and many long conversations, have more hypotheses and theories than there will ever be time to explore. However, these long-time friends continue to discuss and discover.

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### CFO SUPPORTS ETHICS CODES

The Colorado Field Ornithologists is dedicated to the conservation of avian species and to increasing the public awareness of human impact on birds. As one step toward achieving these goals, the CFO Board has endorsed the American Birding Association's (ABA) *Birding Code of Ethics* and the Ornithological Council (OC) of North American Ornithological Societies' *Code of Ethics*.



## ACQUIRED ALBINISM IN A STELLER'S JAY (*CYANOCITTA STELLERI*)

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In mid-September of 2004 Scott Roederer of Estes Park told me about an unusual Steller's Jay visiting feeders in the nearby hamlet of Raymond, Boulder County. Through Scott, I was able to contact the hosts, Fred and Georgie Kupilik, who described the white bird and invited me to come see it for myself. On the morning of September 19, 2004, I drove to their cabin in the Front Range foothills along Middle St. Vrain Creek at an elevation of about 7500'. Upon arrival I found several active feeders. Steller's Jays were busily taking whole peanuts off into the woods to eat or cache, and soon the white Steller's Jay flew in to take its turn at a tray. Other than its unusual lack of color, the bird seemed normal. It was nimble, alert, vocal, and took peanuts off to points unknown just like the other Steller's Jays. Its plumage looked entirely white, its bare parts (legs, feet, and bill, which are normally black) were pink, but its eyes were dark (see back cover, bottom photo).

After seeing the bird and obtaining numerous photos, I visited with the Kupiliks, discussing the bird. Since the eyes were pigmented, I didn't think it accurate to call the bird a true albino, even though I couldn't detect any trace of color in the feathers or bare parts. To further complicate (or perhaps elucidate) matters, the Kupiliks produced a series of digital pictures of the bird starting in early July.

The earliest photos of the series (see back cover, top photo set) show the bird as having mostly normal Steller's Jay coloration with just a few white feathers but already pink bare parts. (These few white feathers were what first drew the attention of the Kupiliks.) Over the following months the photos document a complete replacement of colored feathers with pure white feathers. This progressive albinism resulted from the bird's annual pre-basic molt, which adult Steller's Jays complete from June through August (hatch-year birds undergo a partial molt, which would have left some pigmented feathers; Pyle 1997).

Preliminary investigation uncovered no well-known explanation for such pathology. It appeared as though Whitey (the Kupiliks' name for the bird) exhibited a very unusual and potentially unprecedented condition.



In an attempt to understand Whitey's situation, I researched the mechanisms that yield the black, blue, and white coloration of normal Steller's Jays. Black is created by the pigment melanin. Melanin in feathers can produce earthy yellows, browns, grays, and black. It also strengthens and protects feathers from UV deterioration (Clark 2004), and recent research summarized by Hess (2005) shows that melanin also inhibits feather-eating bacteria. Thus, feathers in high-wear areas like wingtips are often pigmented with melanin, and bird subspecies that live in humid, bacteria-friendly environments are often darker than their counterparts in drier habitats.

The blue found in Steller's Jays and other birds is an example of structural coloration because it doesn't result from pigment. Instead, microscopic structures in feathers yield the color by the selective coherent scattering of short (blue through ultraviolet) wavelengths and absorption of incoherently scattered white light (Prum et al. 1998). Fourier analysis demonstrates that the nanometer-scale bubbles in feather barb cores (called the "spongy layer") produce the constructive interference through their precise spacing (Prum et al. 1998). The spongy layer alone isn't sufficient, however, as melanin plays a role in blue coloration as well. Melanin granules, found inside the spongy layer in blue feather barbs, absorb back-scattered white light, enhancing the purity of the blue constructive interference (Shawkey & Hill, in press). Interestingly, these melanin granules cause blue feathers to appear brown or gray in transmitted (vs. reflected) light. Figure 1 is a cross section of a normal blue Steller's Jay feather barb, showing an outer keratin sheath, an inner spongy layer, and a basal layer containing dark melanin granules.

Adult Steller's Jays of the interior west race (*macrolopha*) normally show small white lines on the face (e.g., Sibley 2000). While not technically a color, white in bird feathers is also produced by feather structures. White feathers are basically clear (lacking pigment), but scatter light across visible wavelengths incoherently (Clark 2004). The effect is analogous to that of snowflakes, which are each clear but look white in aggregate due to incoherent scattering of visible light wavelengths.

The above information, with the photo sequence on the back cover, suggest that Whitey's new feathers lacked melanin. Further insight into the mystery came after Whitey had an apparent brush with a predator, leaving some white tail feathers in the yard. The Kupiliks attentively gathered the feathers, one of which I forwarded to Matthew D. Shawkey at Auburn University for analysis (full-spectrum spectrometry, transmission electron microscopy, and Fourier analysis). As seen in Figure 2, Whitey's feather barb cross section shows a lack of melanin granules and possibly a degraded spongy layer.

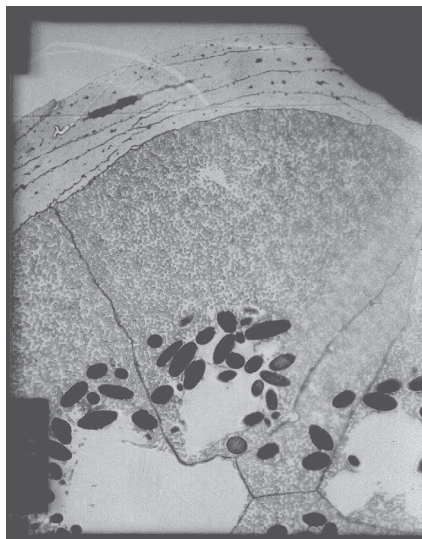


Figure 1: Blue feather barb cross-section from a normally colored Steller's Jay. (Note: melanin granules are ~800 nm wide.)

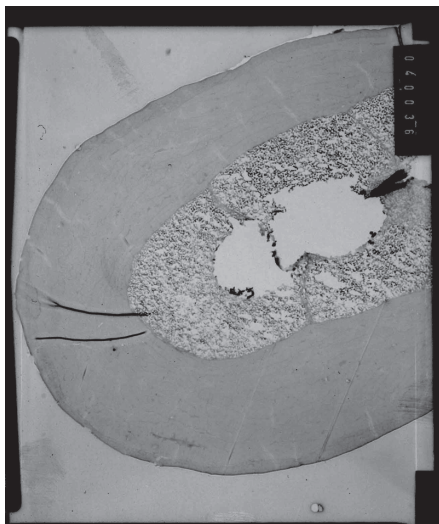


Figure 3: Feather barb cross-section from the white Steller's Jay described in this report. Electron micrographs courtesy of Matthew D. Shawkey, Auburn University.

Without melanin, Whitey's new feathers were not pigmented black where they should be (such as the head). In the normally blue feather tracts, a lack of melanin in the feather barbs' basal layer allows a flood of back-scattered incoherent white light to overwhelm any remaining coherent blue radiation. Spectrographic analysis of the white feather shows a broad reflectance curve across the visible spectrum, gently peaking in blue/green wavelengths. In contrast, a blue control feather from a normal Steller's Jay had a bell-shaped reflectance curve, peaking strongly in UV/violet wavelengths (Shawkey & Hill, in press).

On the Kupiliks' observations and photographs, Shawkey's sophisticated feather analysis, some deduction, and a bit of inference, I've come up with a likely chronology that led to Whitey's unusual visage. Prior to the summer of 2003, I suspect that Whitey looked completely normal. Because the bird had the ability to produce melanin during its 2003 pre-basic molt, I assume that the legs, feet, and bill were also normally colored at the completion of this molt in early fall 2003. Sometime thereafter, Whitey apparently lost the ability to produce melanin. The legs, feet, and bill gradually turned pink as these tissues replenished themselves without new melanin. The eyes remained dark, seemingly because eye pigment either doesn't get replaced, or is replaced on a longer timeline than other bare parts. When Whitey molted in the summer of 2004, the new melanin-free feathers were white.

The question remains as to why this Steller's Jay lost the ability to produce melanin as an adult. Animals metabolize melanin through a sequence involving hormones, the amino acid tyrosine, and the enzyme tyrosinase (Columbia Electronic Encyclopedia 2003). Any disruption of a link in this chain would result in the interruption of melanin production. Perhaps Whitey's condition was a result of disease, trauma, parasite, or toxin(s) affecting a key mechanism involved in the melanin pathway at the organism-wide level. Perhaps a mutation left Whitey vulnerable to an unknown trigger that switched off melanin production as an adult. Whatever the reason, the lack of melanin eliminated both the pigmented and structural coloration of everything but Whitey's eyes.

According to Shawkey and Hill (in press), Whitey apparently provides the first opportunity to study the effects of the loss of melanin in the structural production of blue feather coloration. I have found no description of Whitey's plumage aberration in the literature, and thus no term for it. For discussion purposes I have here called the pathology "Acquired Albinism". The Kupiliks last saw Whitey September 23, 2004. Whatever his or her fate, Whitey has given us fascinating insights into melanin's role in structural coloration.

### Acknowledgments

I wish to thank Georgie and Fred Kupilik for hosting Whitey (and me), Paul Hess (News and Notes editor for *Birding*) for his comments on albinism, reference suggestions, and contact tips, Dr. Geoffrey Hill and Matthew D. Shawkey (Auburn University) for assistance with understanding structural coloration and feather analysis, and Dr. Richard Prum (Yale University) for his insights into structural coloration. This manuscript benefitted from the editorial suggestions of Dr. James W. Schmoker, United States Geological Survey (retired).

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### CFO WEBSITE

We invite you to browse the Colorado Field Ornithologists' website. If you don't own a computer, check your local library. Visit the site regularly because new items and changes appear often. The Internet address is:

<http://www.cfo-link.org>

## SUMMER 2005: ST. PAUL ISLAND, ALASKA

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### Introduction

I had the chance to work this past summer in the Pribilof Islands on St. Paul Island, Alaska. I was one of three guides showing tourists the wildlife, including birds and seals, as well as interesting sites on the island for over two months. Since I enjoy showing folks birds, this was the perfect job for me.

How did this opportunity come about? On Thursday, April 7, 2005, Chris Wood and Gavin Bieber were leading a professional birding tour in Colorado, and brought their tour to Pueblo where I helped them find some birds in the area. During dinner, Gavin, who has worked for St. Paul Island Tours for a few years, asked me if I would be interested in going to the Pribilof Islands that summer to be a guide for St. Paul Island Tours [which is owned by Tanadguisix Corporation (TDX)]. I thought, wow, that would be a great opportunity and also be fun. So, that afternoon, Gavin called Jolene Lekanof who hires the guides. Gavin said that he had found someone to take his place on the island in June. Well, things worked out. During the CFO Convention in La Junta in May, quite a few people came up to me and wished me well, and some of them gave me useful advice since they had been there before. All this information was very helpful and I thank all of them. I arrived in Anchorage on June 19<sup>th</sup>, and then flew to St. Paul Island on June 20<sup>th</sup>.

### St. Paul Island

St. Paul Island is an interesting place; about 500 Aleut people live on the island. There are no trees, except for some very small spruce trees that the Coast Guard planted 16 years ago. This might be the only place where it is hard to see the forest through the grasses, since the grass was often taller than the trees. The landscape of the island is tundra, and volcanic in origin with lava tubes. The weather isn't great, unless you like cloudy or overcast sky most of the time. The temperature during the summer was usually from 48 to 58F. There are a few good unpaved roads on the island—one to North East point, one to South East point, one toward North Point, and one toward Reef Point. The birds on the island are very cool, with all the breeding seabirds, and the chances of vagrants from Asia are very good in May/June, as well as in September/October.

### **Getting to St. Paul Island**

On June 18<sup>th</sup>, I flew from Boston, MA, back to Colorado Springs. I was co-leading a Penfeathers Tour with David Bradford in New England from June 4-18. I had about 24 hours to get re-packed and be back at the Colorado Springs Airport for my early afternoon flight to Anchorage, via Dallas. Also, when I got back home on June 18<sup>th</sup>, I had a large packet of information from Jolene waiting for me, so I could study up on the island before I arrived. I looked over the packet on the planes to Anchorage. I made it safely to Anchorage and then to the hotel around 10:00 PM local time. Since it gets dark very late there that time of year, I was able to see my first Alaska birds before I went to bed. On the morning of June 19<sup>th</sup>, Lindsay Vesecky from TDX picked me up at the hotel and we went to the Anchorage Airport, where I signed all the paperwork for the job. I left Anchorage for the three-hour flight to St. Paul Island on PENAIR. I arrived on the unpaved runway at St. Paul in the mid-afternoon. Wow!

### **St. Paul Island, June 20- 30**

When I got off the airplane, I met Jolene who happened to be on the island, and a guide, Rick Knight, from Tennessee. They welcomed me to St. Paul, and on that same plane were a bunch of British birders, and a few other tourists coming to see the island for the first time, just like me. After we unloaded the tourists' luggage, we bused them to the King Eider Motel, about 3.5 miles away. Rick took me to my temporary new home, a duplex down the street from the hotel. All of the guides stayed there. The third guide was Dylan Radin from Arizona. The duplex was nice - it had high-speed Internet, dish network, and everything else that a guy could need. I got settled in, and was ready to go look for my first lifer. After dinner, at the airport restaurant, we went out. Right off the bat I was treated to a Gray-streaked Flycatcher, Dark-sided Flycatcher, and Arctic Warbler (all very rare birds on the island), and my first Red-legged Kittiwake, Rock Sandpiper, Thick-billed Murre, and Least Auklet. Wow, what an amazing start! Rick and Dylan said this wasn't typical; I felt like I had just won the lottery. On the second day (June 21), I saw a few more new birds which included: Red-faced Cormorant, Crested Auklet, Horned Puffin, Hoary Redpoll, and McKay's Bunting. In the first few days, I learned about the island, and where to go to see everything. On my first outing by myself, the morning of June 25<sup>th</sup>, I took out a young couple from New Jersey, who were birders. We found a female Steller's Eider, another lifer for me, as well as them. Some of the other highlights of June were: Red-necked Grebe, Northern Fulmar, Short-tailed Shearwater, Pelagic Cormorant, King Eider, Harlequin Duck, Common Murre, Pigeon Guillemot, Ancient Murrelet, Rhinoceros Auklet, and Tufted Puffin. So I had 14 lifers so far, still really excited.

### **St. Paul Island, July 1-31**

July was a bit slow for new birds, but the beautiful wildflowers on the island made up for it. A lot of the visitors come to see other things besides birds, so I learned some of the wildflowers. Also, on the island were Northern Fur Seals, Arctic Foxes, and introduced Reindeer, which we were able to see as part of the wildlife viewing. On July 25<sup>th</sup>, along with Dylan, Sadie Wright, Anne Mary Myers, and Sampath Seneviratne, I saw the Pribilof Island Shrew, the only other mammal on the island. Highlights for July were my first Fork-tailed Storm-Petrel on July 8<sup>th</sup>, Gray-tailed Tattler on July 11<sup>th</sup>, and Red-necked Stint on July 31<sup>st</sup>. Other birds in July included: Eurasian Wigeon, Red Phalarope, Pacific Golden-Plover, Slaty-backed Gull, Black-headed Gull, and Parasitic and Long-tailed jaegers.

### **St. Paul Island, August 1-31**

August was very exciting because of shorebirds migrating south and the potential for rare passerines as well. Life birds this month included: Long-toed Stint (Aug 13), Bar-tailed Godwit (Aug 15), Wood Sandpiper (Aug 26), and Lesser Sand-Plover (Aug 26). August 19<sup>th</sup>, was quite an exciting day. The only other birder on the island, Sadie Wright, who works for the Fish & Wildlife Service, found an Eastern Yellow Wagtail, which I was able to see. Later that day she found a Northern Wheatear, Rick and I looked for it, but didn't find it. After dinner, I went back toward North East Point to look for the wheatear. On a hunch, I felt like checking out Palovina Cut, where I was greeted with a normal backyard bird in Colorado, a Say's Phoebe. It was a first for the Pribilof Islands. I called Rick on the radio; he and Sadie came to look at the bird. I was also able to get photos of it. I sure didn't expect to see any phoebe on St. Paul Island. After that excitement was over, I continued looking for the Northern Wheatear, and was able to see two of them, another new bird for me. Other highlights in August included: Whimbrel, Red Knot, Dunlin, Buff-breasted Sandpiper, Ruff, Yellow-billed Loon, Pomarine Jaeger, and Fox Sparrow.

### **Summary**

This was an amazing opportunity for me, and I'm so glad I was able to go and would love to return. I flew off the newly paved runway at St. Paul to Anchorage on August 31<sup>st</sup>, and was back in Colorado on September 3<sup>rd</sup>. I ended up seeing 23 life birds, and 86 total bird species on the island. The list is included in Table 1. I will never forget the 500 Rock Sandpipers and 500 Ruddy Turnstones on the Salt Flats daily in August. If you ever have the chance to spend a few days there, you should; you'll never forget the island. Check out [www.alaskabirding.com](http://www.alaskabirding.com) to find out more about the island.



Table 1. Bird list (breeding species and/or regularly occurring species in bold):

Common Loon	Pacific Golden-Plover
Yellow-billed Loon	<b>Semipalmated Plover</b>
Red-necked Grebe	Lesser Sand-Plover
<b>Northern Fulmar</b>	<b>Glaucous-winged Gull</b>
Short-tailed Shearwater	Glaucous Gull
Fork-tailed Storm-Petrel	Herring Gull
<b>Red-faced Cormorant</b>	Slaty-backed Gull
<b>Pelagic Cormorant</b>	Black-headed Gull
Eurasian Wigeon	<b>Black-legged Kittiwake</b>
Gadwall	<b>Red-legged Kittiwake</b>
<b>Green-winged Teal</b>	Pomarine Jaeger
<b>Northern Pintail</b>	Parasitic Jaeger
Greater Scaup	Long-tailed Jaeger
King Eider	<b>Common Murre</b>
Steller's Eider	<b>Thick-billed Murre</b>
<b>Harlequin Duck</b>	Pigeon Guillemot
<b>Long-tailed Duck</b>	Ancient Murrelet
White-winged Scoter	<b>Parakeet Auklet</b>
Red-breasted Merganser	<b>Crested Auklet</b>
Bald Eagle	<b>Least Auklet</b>
Wilson's Snipe	Rhinoceros Auklet
Bar-tailed Godwit	<b>Horned Puffin</b>
Whimbrel	<b>Tufted Puffin</b>
Wood Sandpiper	Say's Phoebe
Gray-tailed Tattler	Common Raven
Wandering Tattler	Bank Swallow
Ruddy Turnstone	Barn Swallow
Long-billed Dowitcher	<b>Winter Wren</b>
Red Knot	Arctic Warbler
Sanderling	Gray-streaked Flycatcher
Western Sandpiper	Dark-sided Flycatcher
Red-necked Stint	Northern Wheatear
Long-toed Stint	Eastern Yellow Wagtail
<b>Least Sandpiper</b>	American Pipit
Baird's Sandpiper	Wilson's Warbler
Pectoral Sandpiper	Fox Sparrow
Sharp-tailed Sandpiper	Savannah Sparrow
<b>Rock Sandpiper</b>	<b>Lapland Longspur</b>
Dunlin	<b>Snow Bunting</b>
Buff-breasted Sandpiper	<b>McKay's Bunting</b>
Ruff	<b>Gray-crowned Rosy-Finch</b>
<b>Red-necked Phalarope</b>	<b>Common Redpoll</b>
Red Phalarope	Hoary Redpoll

### Acknowledgments

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## RUFFED GROUSE IN COLORADO

Andrew Spencer  
Littleton, CO

### Introduction

Of all the resident bird species in Colorado, Ruffed Grouse (*Bonasa umbellus*) is among the hardest species to add to one's list. It is probably also the one that requires the most physical effort to find. In the 17 years it has been known to occur in the state, it has been reported only three times by birdwatchers, and twice by wildlife officials.

### History of Ruffed Grouse in Colorado

The status of Ruffed Grouse in Colorado, and on the Colorado State Bird List, has an interesting and complex history. Before 1976, there were nine reported sightings in Colorado. The Colorado Bird Records Committee (CBRC) accepted two of these reports at that time: a 1947 report from Hermosa Peak in La Plata County, and a 1971 report from near Hayden in Routt County. In 1978, Dr. Clait E. Braun, formerly of the Colorado Division of Wildlife (CDOW), called into question all reports of Ruffed Grouse in Colorado up to that point (Hoffman and Braun 1978). Following Dr. Braun's recommendation, the CBRC removed Ruffed Grouse from the state list in 1978.

Ten years later, Bob Hernbrode of the CDOW was hunting Blue Grouse (*Dendragapus obscurus*) on the eastern flank of Hoy Mountain in far northwestern Colorado when he shot a smaller bird with a black terminal tail band. Dr. Braun inspected the specimen and confirmed that it was Colorado's first definite Ruffed Grouse. In April of 1989, David Martin led a CFO field trip to the area in an attempt to become the first birders in Colorado to see this elusive species. Adverse weather conditions and a lack of familiarity with Ruffed Grouse habitats contributed to the failure of that trip (Cold 1989).

In September of 1989, Rick Hoffman and Tom Remington of the CDOW were sent to Hoy Mountain by Dr. Braun to confirm that the 1988 specimen was not a fluke. They succeeded in acquiring two more specimens, including a juvenile male. This record indicated probable, but not definite, breeding in the state (Kingery 1998).

The next attempt by birders to see Ruffed Grouse in Colorado occurred in late September of 1991, when nine Colorado birders made the pilgrimage to Hoy Mountain. They first searched the riparian corridor where the first specimens

were obtained, and only succeeded in flushing a number of Blue Grouse, and one possible Ruffed Grouse that got away before a positive identification could be made. They proceeded to a previously unexplored drainage to the north, where they came upon a good-sized grove of aspens, and, eventually, success—they were able to observe a single Ruffed Grouse for almost an hour.

An attempt to repeat their successful trip in the fall of 1992 failed, with only a large number of Blue Grouse and one possible Ruffed Grouse seen.

To my knowledge, that was the last time birders attempted to observe Ruffed Grouse in Colorado until July 2003, when Nathan Pieplow and I tried to hike in to the area from the north. By approaching on foot from Browns Park, we hoped to avoid the private lands that one must cross if coming from Vernal, Utah. We only made it about 75 percent of the way there when we ran into an impenetrable wall of Mountain Mahogany (*Cercocarpus* sp.) and had to turn around. We had also hoped to find some Ruffed Grouse habitat on the slopes north of Hoy Mountain, but found on our long hike that the area had little to no suitable habitat.

### **The First 2005 Attempt**

On 24 September 2005, Andy Boyce, Nathan Pieplow, Joyce Takamine, and I met in Vernal and drove over to Hoy Mountain (Fig. 1) to attempt to become the first birders in Colorado to see Ruffed Grouse in the state in 14 years. I had obtained permission to drive through private property to the BLM land where the grouse occurred. In addition, I had contacted the landowner of a parcel on the north side of Wild Mountain (the next mountain south of Hoy Mountain), and he told me that he sees Ruffed Grouse regularly in an aspen stand south of his cabin on the state line. One of the goals of this trip was to attempt to confirm this claim.



Fig. 1. View of Hoy Mountain from the east. The 1991 grove is in the lower bowl on the right, and the 2005 grove is at the low point of the ridge on the left. Photo by the author.

Through research of available literature on Ruffed Grouse in Colorado, and on the preferred habitat of Ruffed Grouse in Utah, we knew we had to find good-sized aspen groves, preferably with trees of at least a decent size, and ideally in a drainage or associated with a spring (Behle 1981, Nelson 1992, Braun 2003). The literature also indicated that the best habitat was likely to be in woodland that had a mix of conifers and Quaking Aspen (*Populus tremuloides*), with thick undergrowth of shrubs such as Serviceberry (*Amelanchier alnifolia*) and Snowberry (*Symphoricarops* sp.) that the grouse use as a food source.

The drive from Vernal to the state line took about an hour. As we drove along the north side of Wild Mountain we looked for suitable habitat, all of which we saw in Utah. Further along the road we observed an aspen grove just to the south. A quick check here produced not a single grouse.

After a quick check of duck-filled Offield Reservoir we decided to leave Wild Mountain and go to Hoy Mountain. We quickly found the grove from the successful 1991 trip (hereafter '91 grove) and spread out through the aspen bench, and thoroughly covered it over the next few hours. We succeeded in flushing one grouse, which we never saw, but given the loudness of wings in flight, and the long duration of the flight, was probably a Blue Grouse.

After failing in the '91 grove, we traversed south along the east face of the valley to the next drainage. Here there was a small grove of Narrow-leaved Cottonwood (*Populus angustifolia*), and further up the drainage some small aspen stands in Douglas-fir (*Pseudotsuga menziesii*). This is where Hernbrode collected the first bird (hereafter '88 grove). We spread out and flushed only one grouse, a female Blue we easily observed perching in a tree.

Where were the large numbers of Blue Grouse that were supposed to be here? Feeling discouraged, we headed back to the car. At this point we wasted more time trying to find good habitat on Wild Mountain, without success. As the day drew to a close we limped back to Vernal, and made plans for the next day.

Sunday morning Joyce Takamine decided to drive back to Denver, and Andy, Nathan, and I headed back to Hoy Mountain. We decided at that point to abandon the search on Wild Mountain and concentrate on Hoy. As we were driving in we stopped to look at the mountain from the east, and we spotted a large aspen grove that we had missed the day before. It was above the '88 grove, and hidden from there by a band of rim rock. It looked to be a difficult location to access, but it also looked large, so we resolved to go there if we missed the bird in the '91 grove.

We arrived at the '91 grove, and again spread out. It quickly became apparent that our luck was better. In the first 100 yards we walked we flushed an amazing 40+ Blue Grouse. It was absolutely mind-boggling. It was also absolutely devoid of Ruffed Grouse. We again covered every inch of the grove, and worked our way uphill.

After a look at the quad map we decided to head to the saddle on the ridge above the '91 grove (which was in Utah), and then down into the drainage on the other side. Although this would mean we would be in Utah for quite a while, it should be a fairly easy walk down the drainage, over the state line, and into the aspen grove we had spied earlier. Easier, we hoped, than braving the rim rock below that grove.

Boy, were we wrong! The hillside on the way to the saddle was absolute murder. No bird could be worth this much trouble, I thought! We finally crested the ridge, and looked down into the drainage in Utah. We were greeted by an awesome sight—a truly enormous old-growth aspen grove. This enormous grove was at least 50 times the size of all the habitat on the Colorado part of the mountain, put together. This is where the great majority of the Ruffed Grouse on Hoy Mountain must live.

However, this grove was in Utah, and we were Colorado listers. So, we headed down the drainage, and back into Colorado, where we were greeted by the upper end of the aspen grove we saw earlier. The habitat here appeared similar to the '91 grove, though in my opinion a bit better, with thicker underbrush.

Yet again we spread out through the likely habitat, and worked our way down the drainage. About 700 feet down the drainage from the state line we intersected with another drainage going straight west for about 500 feet to Utah. We walked up this drainage, which had more great habitat, and seeing nothing, headed back to the first drainage.

At the intersection of the two drainages Andy flushed a grouse that quickly landed about 30 feet in front of us. Nathan got on it first and quickly called "Ruffed Grouse!" All three of us got good looks at the head and neck of the bird, and Andy and I got brief but decent looks at the tail. After 30 seconds it flushed again, and could not be found again. This location was in Colorado by about 420 feet, and was made up of about 50% large, but not old-growth, aspen and 50% Douglas-fir. The understory was very thick, and predominately Snowberry, with some Common Juniper (*Juniperus communis*), Wild Rose (*Rosa* sp.), and Serviceberry. There were also numerous deadfalls throughout the grove. The location was N 40° 42.617', W 109° 02.814' (Fig. 2).

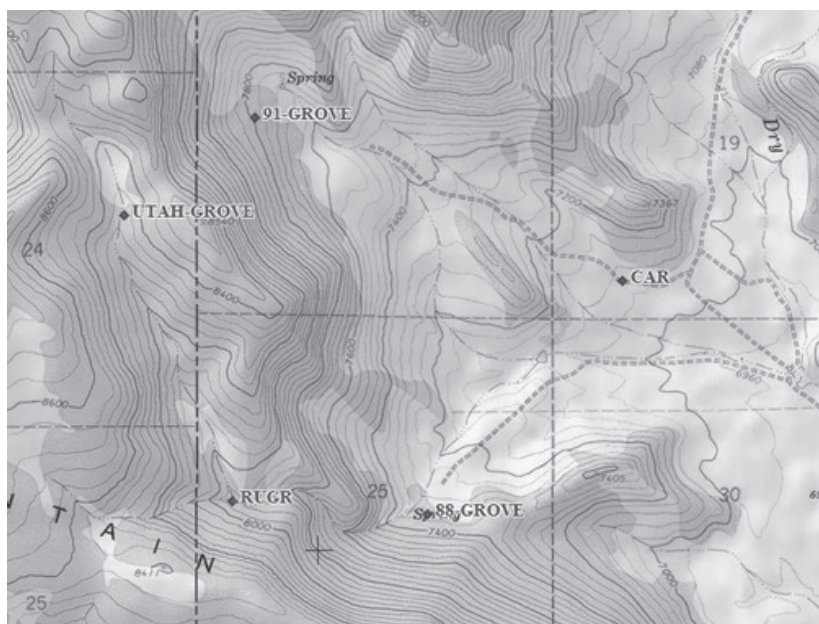


Fig. 2. Topo map showing locations of 1988, 1991, 2005 (labeled RUGR), and Utah groves.

As we headed down the drainage towards our car we saw no more Ruffed Grouse, and only a couple more Blue Grouse. The walk down was almost as bad as we feared, and I dreaded having to go up that way. We eventually made it back to the car, tired but triumphant.

### **The Second Attempt**

Since most of the serious listers in Colorado were not able make it on my first attempt in 2005, I decided I would organize another trip to Hoy Mountain so more of Colorado's birders could see the state's rarest resident. Since I now knew more about Hoy Mountain and where to find the grouse, I found that many people were much more interested in coming along, and on the morning of 22 October 2005, eight other birders and myself met in Vernal to see if we could repeat the successful September trip. Participants were Joey Kellner, Ira Sanders, Cole Wild, Mark Peterson, Lisa Edwards, Brandon Percival, and Joe and Steve Mammoser.

After the hour and half drive from Vernal to Hoy Mountain, we spread out through the '91 grove. As we headed upslope we flushed a few Blue Grouse, but little else. Then, as some of us had turned around and started heading back



down the slope, a grouse flew by me that was smaller than the Blue Grouse we had been seeing, and looked to be a different color brown. It also flew nearly silently, unlike the Blue Grouse we had been flushing earlier. I watched it fly into the trees about 75 feet down the slope from my position, but no amount of searching could relocate this bird. I firmly believe that this was a Ruffed Grouse.

Somewhat frustrated, we decided to head to the better habitat in the '05 grove (Fig. 3). I was truly dreading trying to brave the east slope of Hoy Mountain to get to that grove, even more so because unlike September, when all three participants had experience on this type of terrain, some of the participants on this trip did not. By traversing on the eastern slope of the mountain, we were able, with some care, to avoid the numerous bands of rimrock, and we finally made it to the top of the ridge above the '05 grove. After a short breather we headed down into the drainage and to the head of the grove.

We then spread into a line and worked our way down the '05 grove. As we neared the spot where the September bird was found some of us heard what sounded like a grouse flying away, and Mark Peterson called "that's a Ruffed Grouse drumming!" And indeed it was; though, only three of us heard it well



Fig. 3. Looking down into the 2005 grove. Photo by the author.

enough at that point to count. So, the three of us that did hear it circled around to the back of the bird, in the hopes of either spotting it on the ground, or at least flushing it towards the rest of the group. As we approached I suddenly spotted the bird on a large log, about 40 feet away, and called everyone over. Before anyone else could arrive, I got to see the bird drumming once, but this particular individual never did so again during our observation.

Soon everyone had great looks at the bird as it posed on the log. While we still had the first bird in sight, some of us heard a second Ruffed Grouse drumming. A couple of minutes after the original observation, the bird hopped onto the ground behind the log, and when we approached the bird flushed up the secondary drainage towards Utah.

Mark soon found another Ruffed Grouse, a third individual, and this one was amazingly cooperative. It never flushed, and allowed approach within 15 feet as it picked berries off small shrubs, and walked through the leaf litter. When approached too closely, it would perch on a log and sit still, or run to denser cover. Some of us managed to get decent pictures of this individual, while the first only allowed for poor shots (Fig. 4).

We finally tore ourselves away from the grouse, and attempted to make our way down the mountain with the least amount of pain. We eventually reached the cars and a very satisfied but tired group of birders drove back to Vernal.

### **Conjectures about Ruffed Grouse in Colorado**

Ruffed Grouse are obviously very rare birds in Colorado. They have never been seen more than two-thirds of a mile from the Utah border, and all the confirmed sightings are within a mile and a half of each other. The area where they do occur is fairly isolated from other habitat in NW Colorado, by both the Green River and Canyon of Lodore, and by large expanses of Pinyon-Juniper woodland and sagebrush (*Artemisia* sp.).

While other mountains in the small amount of land west of the Green River in Colorado, specifically Offield and Diamond Mountains, have some pockets of aspen on them, these pockets are all of young aspen. In comparison to the habitat on the Utah part of Hoy Mountain, all the areas of habitat on these other mountains are significantly smaller. I believe it unlikely that Ruffed Grouse occur on these mountains, at least with any regularity. Just east of the Canyon of Lodore, on Limestone Ridge, there is a larger pocket of aspen, but this is more isolated, and it seems unlikely that birds ever find their way over there.

There are also a few other isolated areas that have suitable habitat in extreme NW Colorado. Perhaps the most promising is about 15-20 miles north of Hoy Mountain, on Cold Spring and Middle Mountains, Diamond Peak, and the O-wi-yu-kuts Mountains in the far NW corner. However, this area is isolated by a fair distance from any occupied habitat in Wyoming, Utah, or Colorado. The DOW conducted extensive surveys in this area from the '70s through the '90s, with wing collection bins and check stations, and found no evidence of Ruffed Grouse presence (C. Braun, pers. comm.). Also, Dr. Braun conducted surveys for drumming Ruffed Grouse on Cold Spring Mountain during the spring, without any success (C. Braun, pers. comm.).

To the south and east of Hoy Mountain there is suitable habitat on Blue Mountain south of Echo Park, and Douglas Mountain east of the Canyon of Lodore. On Blue Mountain the DOW conducted similar surveys to those on Cold Spring Mountain, with a similar lack of positive results (C. Braun, pers. comm.). On Douglas Mountain, hunters have never reported any Ruffed Grouse, and the Breeding Bird Atlas project failed to find any.



Fig. 4. Ruffed Grouse on Hoy Mountain, Moffat County, Colorado. Photo taken on 22 October 2005 by the author.

On Hoy Mountain itself, Blue Grouse hugely outnumber Ruffed Grouse. It takes a lot of effort and an enormous dose of luck to find any. In my opinion, there is a good chance that Ruffed Grouse only wander into the state from the huge grove in Utah, though it is possible they do breed in Colorado. They are even uncommon in Utah, where they are estimated to have a population less than 10 percent that of the Blue Grouse population (Behle 1981). In an email I received in October 2005, Dr. Braun says, "In fact, I suspect there are a few birds along the state line for ~1 mile south and ~1 mile north of Hoy Mountain. However, the habitat is very narrow and successful reproduction is most likely very rare. Ruffed Grouse can only be considered a marginal species in Colorado and may be completely absent at the low of any presumed cycle."

Given all the above, I believe it is a safe bet that Hoy Mountain is the only location where Ruffed Grouse could be looked for with any reasonable hope for success. Even here, though, don't count on seeing one!

Because of landowner concerns, the best way to look for Ruffed Grouse in Colorado would be on future CFO trips.

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## THE 41<sup>ST</sup> REPORT OF THE COLORADO BIRD RECORDS COMMITTEE

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### Introduction

This is the 41<sup>st</sup> report of the deliberations of the Colorado Bird Records Committee (hereafter, CBRC or Committee) on submissions to the CBRC for documentation and archival purposes. In this article, we provide the results of the circulation of 79 reports submitted by 52 observers documenting 57 occurrences of 48 species. This article deals primarily with 2004 occurrences, but reports date back to 1991 (those in bold). Per CBRC bylaws, all accepted records received final 7-0 or 6-1 votes to accept. Each report that was not accepted received fewer than four votes to accept in the final vote.

Documents reviewed include one of a species previously unconfirmed from the state, Black Vulture, bringing the state total to 477. Committee members voting on these reports were: Coen Dexter, Doug Faulkner, Peter Gent, Joey Kellner, Ric Olson, Brandon Percival, and Larry Semo.

### Documenting and reviewing rarities

The primary purpose of the CBRC is to archive reports of occurrences of species that are considered rare in the state. Secondly, the Committee's purpose is to provide a scientific context for accepting records, primarily sight records, to the official state list of species that have occurred in the state. To complete the second task, the CBRC requests that the birding public submit documentation on such occurrences to be reviewed by the Committee. The review is primarily to ascertain whether the submitted documentation supports, in the consideration of seven state experts, the identification presented. Thus, the primary pieces of information that the Committee requires is a written description of the bird(s) and how similar species were ruled out.

Current photographic technology has greatly increased the number of photographs (particularly, digital) that the CBRC has received and these photos greatly assist the Committee in determining whether the documentation provided supports the identifications. However, this technological benefit has a disadvantage. Some observers are now simply

submitting photographs with date and location with no written description. While the photographs certainly prove the identification, the lack of a written description leaves at least some of the CBRC members feeling uneasy. Without written descriptions, many pieces of information are lost forever. While pictures are great and you will not hear a single CBRC member complain about too many photographs, those photos are single images of a bird or flock of birds; they may not convey everything that a thorough, well-written description could provide. Remember, the CBRC is primarily an archive and with only a single picture as documentation for an individual rarity occurrence, future researchers may not be able to determine the age, sex, or origin of a given rarity; something that may be considered important in the future.

### **Committee News**

The term of one CBRC member, Coen Dexter, expired at the end of 2005 and Coen has agreed to fulfill a second term. John Vanderpoel, whose second term was to expire at the end of 2006, resigned from the Committee in November 2005 due to other increased duties. CFO and the CBRC offer our sincere thanks to John for his valuable service to the CBRC. The Committee will miss John's critical identification skills. However, Peter Gent has agreed to fill John's remaining one-year term and we welcome Peter's seasoned expertise. All CBRC members' term-expiration dates are printed on this journal's masthead. Tony Leukering, former CBRC member and Chair, has provided considerable insight and assistance in the transition of the Chair position and I thank Tony for his commitment to the CBRC and for reviewing this report.

### **Committee Functions**

All reports received (written documentation, photographs, videotapes, and/or sound recordings) by the CBRC are archived at the Denver Museum of Nature and Science, 2001 Colorado Boulevard, Denver, CO 80205, where they remain available for public review. The Committee solicits documentation for all species published in its review list, both the main and supplementary lists (Semo et al. 2002, Semo and Leukering 2004), and for reports of species with no prior accepted records in Colorado. While documentary materials can be submitted in hard copy to Larry Semo (9054 Dover Street, Westminster, CO 80021), the CBRC would greatly appreciate submission via the on-line CBRC website (<http://www.cfo-link.org/CBRC/login.php>).

### **Report format**

The organization and style of this report follow that of Leukering and Semo (2003), with some alterations. An asterisk preceding a species' name indicates that the species is not currently on any CBRC review list (Semo et al. 2002), but that reviewed reports are of unseasonable or locally rare occurrences. As of 1



January 2002, the CBRC removed from the main review list, but **only** from the main review list, those species preceded by the pound, or number, sign (#) (Semo et al. 2002), thus the reports here are from a period when those species were on the main review list. Those species' names preceded by an asterisk (\*) are species rare in certain parts of the state and for which the CBRC requests documentation from those areas (Semo et al. 2002, Semo and Leukering 2004). Finally, the filled circle (•) indicates those species not on any review list and not particularly out-of-season but for which the CBRC circulated for review a record of some interest, due to location, date, plumage, etc., but for which documentation would not be required.

If present, the numbers in parentheses following a species' name represent the total number of accepted records for Colorado followed by the number of accepted records in the past ten years (1995-2004). The latter number is of importance, as it is one of the criteria for a species' placement on the main CBRC review list (Semo et al. 2002). However, note that the number of accepted records will decline for some species as the CBRC continues to tackle the backlog of determinations as to how many of the accepted records are simply recurrences in subsequent years of a known individual.

The records in this report are arranged taxonomically following the AOU Checklist of North American Birds (AOU 1998) through the 45<sup>th</sup> Supplement (Banks et al. 2004). Within each species account, records are listed chronologically by first date of occurrence. Each record presents as much of the following information as we have available: number of birds, age, sex, locality, county, and date or date span. In parentheses, we present the initials of the contributing observer(s), the official record number, and the vote tally in the first round and, if relevant, second round (with the number of "accept" votes on the left side of the dash).

The initials of the finder(s) of the bird(s) are underlined, if known, and are presented first if that person (those people) contributed documentation; additional contributors' initials follow in alphabetical order by name. If the finder(s) is (are) known with certainty, but did not submit documentation, those initials are presented last. Observers submitting a photograph or video capture have a dagger (†) following their initials and initials of those that submitted videotape are indicated by a lower-case, italicized "v" (v). Thus, the parenthetical expression "(JD v, RA†, TL, JV, CW; 2001-36; 4-3, 5-2)" means: JD found the bird(s) and submitted documentation (including video) and as the finder, is first in the list of those that submitted details with initials underlined; RA, though alphabetically first of the five submitting observers, was not the finder, so comes second; RA submitted, at least, photographic



documentation; the record number assigned to the occurrence was 2001-36; and in the three rounds of voting, the first-round vote was four “accepted” votes and three “not accepted” votes, the second-round vote was 5-2 in favor of accepting the report, and since this report was listed in Part I, the report was accepted at a CBRC meeting. The decision on most reports is completed in the first round.

In this report, county names are italicized, in keeping with the style established for the *News from the Field* column in this journal (e.g., Semo and Wood 2003). We have attempted to provide the full date span for individual records, with the seasonal reports in *North American Birds* and this journal being the primary sources of those dates. The Committee has not dealt with the question of full date spans as compared to submitted date spans when documentations do not provide such.

Abbreviations used in this report are: Res.= reservoir; SP = State Park; SWA = State Wildlife Area

### **RECORDS ACCEPTED**

TRUMPETER SWAN - *Cygnus buccinator* (24/13). Three adults and one juvenile/immature were nicely photographed at Fentress Lake in *Boulder* between 11 December 2003 and 5 January 2004 (BS †; 2004-1; 7-0). Another adult was apparently found at Cattail Pond near Loveland, *Larimer*, on 9 November, 2004, but it was not until 14 November when the bird was documented (BS †, CW; 2004-64; 7-0).

TUNDRA SWAN - *Cygnus columbianus* (6/6). Two juveniles were present at Strauss Cabin Lake, *Larimer*, between 11 and 14 March 2004 (RH †, BS †, NK; 2004-16; 7-0).

EURASIAN WIGEON - *Anas penelope* (25/7). An alternate-plumaged male graced Wellington SWA, *Larimer*, on 24 March 2004, when photographed (RH †, GL; 2004-17; 7-0).

RED-THROATED LOON - *Gavia stellata* (30/11). A juvenal-plumaged bird was present at Chatfield Res., *Jefferson & Douglas*, between 31 October and 7 November 2004 (GW †, BS †, JK; 2004-63; 7-0).

\* PACIFIC LOON - *Gavia pacifica*. Unusual for the West Slope, a juvenile was nicely documented at Sweitzer Lake, *Delta*, on 10 November **2001** (TL; 2004-2; 7-0).

REDDISH EGRET - *Egretta rufescens* (8/4). A white-plumaged sub-adult bird graced Lake Beckwith, *Pueblo*, on 29 April 2004 (DS; 2004-79; 7-0).

GLOSSY IBIS - *Plegadis falcinellus* (34/30). An alternate-plumaged adult was described from Wolford Mountain Res. on 17 April 2004 (NK; 2004-19; 7-0) and provided the first *Grand* record. Though the observer was not able to discern leg color, the description of the facial color and pattern indicated Glossy Ibis.

BLACK VULTURE - *Coragyps atratus* (1/1). Representing the first confirmed record for Colorado, an adult roosted at the dam of John Martin Res., *Bent*, on 13 and 14 August 2002 (DN†, CLW†; 2004-83; 7-0; Fig. 1). Though this species was predicted to occur in the state and other documentations have been reviewed in the past by the CBRC without approval, congratulations still go to Duane Nelson, the inveterate discoverer of first Colorado records who again dug up a great find.

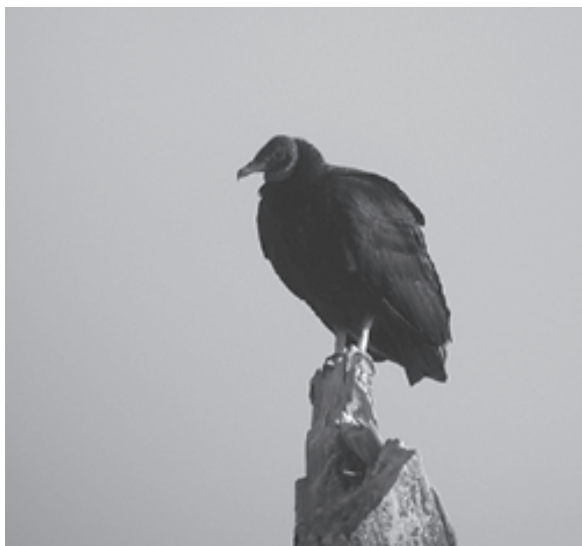


Fig. 1. Establishing the first record for Colorado, this Black Vulture at John Martin Reservoir (here 14 August 2002) stayed for only two days (CBRC# 2004-83). Photo by Christopher L. Wood.

WHOOPIING CRANE - *Grus americana* (4/2). An unbanded juvenile associated with a Sandhill Crane (*Grus canadensis*) at a small playa west of Anton, *Washington*, on 3 and 4 November 2004 (PW†, BB, MW; 2004-60; 6-1). This photographed record represents the fourth record for the state of the

naturally-occurring population breeding in and near Wood Buffalo National Park in Alberta.

**SHORT-BILLED DOWITCHER** - *Limnodromus griseus* (25/10). A worn adult of the *hendersoni* race was photographed at Prewitt Res., *Washington*, on 25 July 2004 (BS†; 2004-80; 7-0).

**RED PHALAROPE** - *Phalaropus fulicaria* (28/11). A juvenile molting from juvenal to first-basic plumage was photographed at Jackson Res., *Morgan*, between 17 and 27 September 2004 (BG†, RHa†; 2004-49; 7-0; Fig. 2) and provided the fourth accepted record from the site since 1999! Unfortunately, three previous CBRC reports (Leukering and Semo 2004a, 2004b, 2005) perpetuated a mistake in the number of accepted records for the species occasioned by a glitch in the official electronic data set. With the acceptance of 2004-49, the state has 28 accepted records.



Fig. 2. This juvenile Red Phalarope lingered at Jackson Reservoir (here 17 Sept 2004) for at least 11 days (CBRC# 2004-49). Photo by Brian Gibbons.

**PARASITIC JAEGER** - *Stercorarius parasiticus* (8/4). A third-cycle subadult made lives miserable for the gulls and terns at Union Res., *Weld*, where found and photographed on 5 September 2005 (DF, TL†, NP, BS†, SS; 2004-45; 7-0).

**GREAT BLACK-BACKED GULL** - *Larus marinus* (22/13). A 2<sup>nd</sup>-cycle bird was first found at Terry Lake, *Larimer*, on 6 November 2004. On 12 November, it

relocated to nearby Long Pond, where it was photographed and remained until 14 November (RHo†, DF†, BS†; 2004-62; 7-0).

BLACK-LEGGED KITTIWAKE - *Rissa tridactyla* (27/11). A photographed juvenile spent time loafing at Lon Hagler Res., *Larimer*, where present between 13 and 16 November 2004 (NK, TL†, RL, BS†; 2004-65; 7-0).

BLACK SKIMMER - *Rhynchops niger* (2/2). On the heels of the first state record in southeastern Colorado (2001), an adult was found in far southwestern Colorado at Pastorius Res., *La Plata*, on 29 April 2004 (SA, JB†, JW; 2004-30; 7-0). Unfortunately this bird was a one-day wonder and attempts to refind it the following day failed.

ANCIENT MURRELET - *Synthliboramphus antiquus* (5/3). For only the fifth state record, a juvenile was photographed at Bear Creek Reservoir at Bear Creek Lake Regional Park, *Jefferson*, on 8 November 2004 (MHe, DF†, PG, RHo†, TL†, RO, BS†; 2004-67; 7-0; Fig. 3). Though seen by many during the afternoon, it, like all other murrelet finds in Colorado, remained for only the day. All records of this species in the state are from October through December.



Fig. 3. Unlikely companions anywhere, the state's fifth Ancient Murrelet was photographed with Gadwall at Bear Creek Lake Regional Park, 8 November 2004 (CBRC# 2004-67). Photo by Bill Schmoker.

\* EURASIAN COLLARED-DOVE - *Streptopelia decaocto*. Two first county records have been recently accepted by the CBRC. Four birds were sufficiently described from Rifle, *Garfield*, on 31 January 2004 (TM; 2004-6; 6-1) and two were seen at Antonito in *Conejos* on 13 February 2004 (VS, 2004-9; 6-1).

BLACK-BILLED CUCKOO - *Coccyzus erythrophthalmus* (18/4). One was at Lake Hasty Campground, *Bent*, on 7 May 2004 (GW, RO; 2004-42; 7-0).

RUBY-THROATED HUMMINGBIRD - *Archilochus colubris* (7/6). Two were added to the state roster of accepted records, both of males in juvenal/basic I plumage. One was banded and photographed at Moraine Park in Rocky Mountain NP, *Larimer*, on 7 September 2004 (FE; 2004-46; 7-0). Because of the excellent photographs, in-hand measurements, and outside expert opinion, all CBRC members agreed with the identification as Ruby-throated Hummingbird. This bird portrayed classic Ruby-throated Hummingbird traits such as bright emerald-green upperparts, throat stippling consistent with a young male Ruby-throated, and the narrow shape of P10. Another immature male was seen near Colorado City, *Pueblo*, on 18 September 2004 (DS; 2004-58; 7-0). Observed indicators included bright green upperparts, a shorter and straighter bill than nearby Black-chinned Hummingbirds (*Archilochus alexandri*), a narrow-tipped P10, and a reddish-rose dusky stippling to the gorget. With recent increased identification knowledge of the separation of female and immature *Archilochus*, it is anticipated that increased numbers of records of Ruby-throated Hummingbird will be found in Colorado.

ACORN WOODPECKER - *Melanerpes formicivorus*. An adult came to a feeder and was photographed in Aguilar, *Las Animas*, between 16 and 18 May 2004 (SG†; 2004-35; 7-0).

VERMILION FLYCATCHER - *Pyrocephalus rubinus* (23/10). A female foraged along the South Picnic Area at Pueblo Res. SP, *Pueblo*, on 1 April 2004 (DQ; 2004-15; 6-1). This bird was noted as sallying and displayed an upright posture, a peachy wash across the lower belly and flanks, a darkish cheek patch, a white supercilium, and a dark crown, upperparts, and wings.

\* GREAT CRESTED FLYCATCHER - *Myiarchus crinitus*. Though not on the main review list, this species was added to the supplemental review list in 2002 for all locations west of *Logan*, *Morgan*, *Washington*, *Kit Carson*, *Cheyenne*, *Kiowa*, *Bent*, and *Baca*. One was photographed at Jackson Res. SP, *Morgan*, on 1 October 2004 (BG; 2004-69; 6-1). Though little narrative description was provided, the photograph seemed reasonable to the majority of committee members and this record represents one of the furthest west records of this species in the state.

THICK-BILLED KINGBIRD - *Tyrannus crassirostris* (2/1). Amazingly, a juvenile foraged along a pasture near Parker in northwestern *Elbert* on 3 July

2004 (PJM†; 2004-33; 7-0; Fig. 4). This acceptance provides only the second record for Colorado, the first substantiated by photographic evidence, of this essentially Mexican species. In the U.S., the species is regularly found only in southern Arizona and is occasional in southern New Mexico, with vagrants observed also in California and Texas.



Fig. 4. Providing a second state record, this Thick-billed Kingbird (CBRC# 2004-33) was approximately 30 miles east of the location of the first state record in Waterton Canyon, *Jefferson*, in 1992. Photo by P. Mestas.

SCISSOR-TAILED FLYCATCHER - *Tyrannus forficatus* (21/15). A male was photographed at the corner of Black Forest and Vollmer Roads near Black Forest, *El Paso*, where present between 28 June and 1 July 2004 (KP†; 2004-34; 7-0). This site has been occupied by Scissor-tailed Flycatchers since 1999 and it is believed that this bird represents a returning male. The CBRC also received a documentation of a Scissor-tailed Flycatcher from 1991, of a male found in quite a bizarre location: 2.5 miles northwest of Creede, *Mineral*, on 16 May 1991 (JSa†; 2004-12; 7-0). This occurrence becomes the sixth accepted Colorado record. The CBRC thanks John Rawinski, who unearthed the documentation that was submitted to the Rio Grande National Forest. This also provides a wonderful reminder to all birders that it is never too late to submit documentations of rare finds!

\* YELLOW-THROATED VIREO - *Vireo flavifrons*. This species was removed from the main state review list in 2002; however, the CBRC still requests documentation for all sightings west of the Colorado Front Range. Establishing a first county record for *Montezuma*, a singing adult male was



seen at Yellowjacket Canyon on 26 May 2004 by two birders searching for the Lucy's Warblers (*Vermivora luciae*) at that location (PD, SA; 2004-25; 7-0).

BLUE-HEADED VIREO - *Vireo solitarius* (13/12). One was found at Barr Lake, Adams, on 6 September 2004 (BG, 2004-70; 7-0). The observer noted a bright white throat sharply demarcated by the dark, slaty-blue head, olive back and wings that contrasted strongly with the dark head, bright lemony-yellow flanks, and a yellowish wash at the base of the legs and vent, all strong indicators of Blue-headed Vireo. An adult was wonderfully photographed south of Lamar, Prowers, where present on 19 and 20 October 2004 (JSt; 2004-56; 7-0). One was also seen at Greenhorn Creek in Colorado City, Pueblo, on 25 October 2004 (DS; 2004-66; 7-0). This bird also displayed the classic Blue-headed Vireo traits such as olive-green upperparts strongly contrasting with a dark gray-blue head, a bright white throat sharply demarcated by the gray-blue head, and bright yellow wash to the flanks.

• CURVE-BILLED THRASHER - *Toxostoma curvirostre*. Establishing a very rare record for Larimer, one was spotted at the Environmental Learning Center in Fort Collins on 6 April 2004 (JMr; 2004-23; 7-0).

SPRAGUE'S PIPIT - *Anthus spragueii* (7/3). Three were found, one wonderfully photographed, at a becoming-traditional spot near Hale, Yuma, on 10 October 2004 (NP, BS†, GW†; 2004-55; 7-0; Fig. 5). There are no specimens for the state and photographs obtained of this record establish the first photographic evidence of the occurrence of this species in Colorado.



Fig. 5. One of three Sprague's Pipits near Hale, Yuma, on 10 October 2004 (CBRC#2004-55). Photo by Glenn Walbek.



LUCY'S WARBLER - *Vermivora luciae* (5/3). A nesting pair was discovered at Yellow Jacket Canyon in far western *Montezuma* on 16 May 2004. Additional documentation was received during the month, with the last recognized sightings (based on CBRC submissions) on 27 May (JP, PD, RHo, TL†, DH, MHi, BP, IP; 2004-21; 7-0). On that latter date, the nest hole was found, in a small Fremont Cottonwood (*Populus fremontii*), perhaps 12 feet above the ground and the pair was observed entering the hole with food, suggesting that young had hatched. There is anecdotal information that suggests the birds may have been sighted past 27 May, though no documentation was submitted to the CBRC. This find represents the second known nesting of the species in Colorado, with the previous documented nesting occurring in 1913, also in *Montezuma*.

• CHESTNUT-SIDED WARBLER - *Dendroica pensylvanica*. An alternate-plumaged male bathed at a small residential pond at Hooper, *Alamosa*, on 18 May 2004 (JMg; 2004-27; 7-0), establishing a first record for that county and only the second accepted record for the San Luis Valley. The noted bright yellow crown, black lores, eyestripe, and malar, white auriculars, throat and belly, chestnut-colored flanks and sides, and white wingbars on dark wings soundly confirmed the identification.

PINE WARBLER - *Dendroica pinus* (20/6). A male foraged within a brushpile at Rye, *Pueblo*, on 22 May 2004 (DS; 2004-22; 7-0). This occurrence establishes the third county record with the previous records consisting of a bird at Olive Marsh in 1990 and a wintering bird at Valco Ponds in 1997-1998.

\* HOODED WARBLER - *Wilsonia citrina*. An adult female, amazingly, was discovered feeding a recently fledged juvenile at Lower Piedra Campground in *Archuleta* on 27 July 2004 (RA; 2004-43; 7-0). This is the first confirmed nesting of this species in the southwestern portion of the state (of which there are few records even).

SCARLET TANAGER - *Piranga olivacea* (25/13). Representing the fourth record for *Boulder*, an alternate-plumaged male was banded west of Longmont on 27 May 2004 (JHn†; 2004-36; 7-0).

“SLATE-COLORED” FOX SPARROW - *Passerella iliaca schistacea*. Though “Slate-colored” Fox Sparrow is a regular summer breeder in upper montane willow carrs and streamsides, their presence during winter is extremely unusual as most winter in Arizona and New Mexico. An adult wintered at Glenwood Springs, *Garfield*, where present between 27 November 2003 and 2 April 2004 (TM; 2004-14; 7-0).

PAINTED BUNTING - *Passerina ciris* (27/17). A green individual (an immature or an adult female) was carefully described from Colorado City as occurring on 26 September 2004 (DS; 2004-51; 7-0), providing the second accepted *Pueblo* record. The first came from the City of Pueblo in May 1972.

\* BALTIMORE ORIOLE - *Icterus galbula*. Exceedingly far west was an alternate-plumaged male photographed at a feeder system (eating oranges) in Pueblo, *Pueblo*, on 6 May 2004 (BBH; 2004-38; 7-0). Based on the narrative discussion and excellent photographs, no indication of Bullock's Oriole (*Icterus bullockii*) genes could be detected.

\* PINE GROSBEAK - *Pinicola enucleator*. One of few records of Pine Grosbeak on the eastern plains of Colorado, an adult female or immature was at Rocky Ford, *Otero*, on 5 November 2004 (SO; 2004-74; 7-0; Fig. 6).



Fig. 6. Pine Grosbeak at Rocky Ford, *Otero*, on 5 November 2004. Photo by Stan Oswald.

PURPLE FINCH - *Carpodacus purpureus* (32/8). A brown-plumaged bird (immature or adult female) was found foraging on Siberian Elm (*Ulmus crassifolia*) seeds at Chico Basin Ranch, *El Paso*, on 5 May 2002 (TL; 2004-3; 7-0). The observer dutifully separated the bird from Cassin's Finch (*Carpodacus cassinii*) by describing the extent and shape of chest streaking, the lack of streaking on the undertail coverts, the slightly curved culmen shape compared to the more arrow-shaped bill of Cassin's Finch, the extent and shape of the bright white supercilium and malar, and the lack of eye ring. The occurrence represents only the third record for *El Paso*.

**RECORDS NOT ACCEPTED**

The CBRC recognizes that its decisions, as one of its important duties, may have undesired results to various observers. It is heartily acknowledged that those who took effort to submit documentations certainly care whether or not their reports are accepted. However, a non-accepted record only indicates that the documentation was not complete or convincing enough to catalogue it on the list of confirmed bird records for the state. Non-accepted reports may provide evidence that may not mention certain requisite field marks or may indicate that the conditions of the observation did not permit the proper study of all necessary traits. Non-accepted records do not necessarily suggest that the birder misidentified or did not see the species. Summaries of why the following records were not accepted are included within each species discussion.

**LITTLE BLUE HERON - *Egretta caerulea*.** Two juveniles were reported by two observers from Timnath Res., *Larimer*, between 25 and 29 July 2004 (2004-39), but received only one favorable vote (1-6). The birds were described as having white plumage, possessing a thick, gray bill, gray lores, dull green legs and feet, and a head shape different from that of Snowy Egret (*Egretta thula*), though no discussion was provided of actually how the head shape differed. They also remarked that the posture and behavior differed from Snowy Egret, but again, provided no details. One observer did comment that the bare-part coloration between the two species was similar. Neither observer noted the black primary tips diagnostic for Little Blue Heron, though the birds were observed in flight. Overall, voting members decided that the information provided was insufficient to establish the identity of the birds.

**GLOSSY IBIS - *Plegadis falcinellus*.** An ibis described from near Hayden, *Routt*, on 18 April 2004 (2004-83), failed to receive full endorsement (2-5). The bird was noted as having mostly gray legs and dark gray face and a small amount of bluish coloration was perceived from "near the face". Apparently no white border bordering the bare facial skin was discerned, which is indicative of a bird in sub-adult plumage, a notoriously difficult plumage to identify *Plegadis*. Though the traits discussed are suggestive of Glossy Ibis, no information was provided to soundly eliminate a Glossy Ibis x White-faced Ibis hybrid, which are becoming increasingly common (see Faulkner 2005).

\* **MISSISSIPPI KITE - *Ictinia mississippiensis*.** The description of one reported from south of Buena Vista, *Chaffee*, on the extremely early date (even for southeastern Colorado) of 21 April 2004 (2004-28; 3-4) lacked detail sufficient to substantiate a first county record and the earliest record ever for Colorado. The bird was observed at a reported distance of 300 feet with

binoculars, yet the observer, who had no prior experience with the species, maintained that eye color could be ascertained, which seemed perplexing. Perched atop a Pinyon Pine (*Pinus edulis*), the bird was described as the size of a Cooper's Hawk (*Accipiter cooperi*) and having a gray head, back, and breast, a black mask through the eye, and a pale-based bill, which would be difficult to determine with binoculars at a distance of the length of a football field. Despite the considerable distance, the eyes were described as reddish, but not the deep red of an adult bird. Confusing was that the wings were described as brownish, which Mississippi Kites do not display even in juvenile plumage. The tail was also noted as being barred. All these traits are not consistent with Mississippi Kite. Though the CBRC was not in agreement over what exactly the species may have been, it was believed that the description was too inconsistent and that other species more expected at that location and date were not completely eliminated.

**BAR-TAILED GODWIT - *Limosa lapponica*.** A potential first state record (provisionally since it was a single-observer report with no photographic or specimen confirmation) was described and illustrated from Lake Henry, Crowley, on 16 July 2004 (2004-32). Though the observer had no prior experience with this species, the information was suggestive but inconclusive, and did receive some CBRC support (2-5). The subject bird was described as being between dowitchers (*Limnodromus* spp.) and Marbled Godwit (*Limosa fedoa*) in size and being red on the head and breast, having an all-dark, upturned long bill, possessing black legs (which is not a Bar-tailed Godwit-only trait), and having barred flanks extending posteriorly to the tail. When in flight, the barring was noted as continuing dorsally across the mantle and uppertail, as well as on the underwings. Previous occurrences of Far Eastern and barely Alaskan species in Colorado, such as Arctic Loon and Slaty-backed Gull, suggest the potential for occurrence of Bar-tailed Godwit in the state, despite the fact that this almost entirely coastal species has a proclivity for estuarine marshes and tidal mudflats. The timing of the report seems acceptable, though West Coast states have few records from that period, with the vast majority of autumn records falling after mid-August (Mlodinow and O'Brien 1996). Issues CBRC members had were: 1) the lack of discussion on the extent of supercilium, especially whether the supercilium did not extend forward through the loreal region as would be expected for Bar-tailed Godwit; 2) the noted all-black bill (Bar-tailed Godwits have a pale base to the maxilla in alternate plumage); 3) the lack of detail on relative leg length compared to nearby Marbled Godwits (Bar-taileds are comparatively short-tarsied); 4) the presence of barring on the flanks, which is not a Bar-tailed Godwit trait, despite the over-exaggeration of that field mark in *The Sibley Guide to Birds*, one of the references used in the observer's decision; and 5) the perception of the

patterning of barring on the tail, uppertail coverts, and mantle - *L. l. baueri*, the expected Asian/Alaskan race of Bar-tailed Godwit in the western U.S., displays the greatest amount of dark barring on the tail, uppertail coverts, and mantle and that barring oftentimes looks simply as gray and the tail does not look quite so noticeably barred.

ARCTIC TERN - *Sterna paradisaea*. A juvenile/first-winter *Sterna* reported from North Poudre Res. #3 in Larimer on 22 September 2004 (2004-50) received no Committee support (0-7) because of the brevity of the report. The bird was observed at a great distance and the observer seemed a bit cautious about the sighting. The only traits confirmed by the observer were that it had a white forehead, black crown and nape, white and translucent primaries and secondaries with no dark trailing edge, and gray upperparts. The legs were not noted. The head and nape description do not eliminate Common Tern (*Sterna hirundo*) and the lack of a dark trailing edge to the secondaries is also indicative of both species. No dark trailing edge to the outermost primaries was noted, a trait juvenile/first-winter Arctic Terns should exhibit.

RUBY-THROATED HUMMINGBIRD - *Archilochus colubris*. An adult female or immature *Archilochus* coming to a feeder in Brush, Morgan, between 23 and 28 September 2004 (2004-61), failed to gain acceptance (2-5). Though photographs were obtained and submitted, they were inconclusive to clearly identify the species as Ruby-throated. The spatiotemporal location of the bird and the noted (and photographically conclusive) traits of green upperparts, clean underparts, and a straight culmen are suggestive of Ruby-throated compared to Black-chinned. Unfortunately, the two key field marks necessary to confirm the identity (shape of P10 and R4-5) were not able to be seen.

EASTERN WOOD-PEWEE - *Contopus virens*. A heard-only bird by a very respected birder at Barr Lake, Adams, on 6 September 2004 (2004-72), received very little CBRC support. The noted humanistic song translation of "Peeweeeeup" was not sufficient to the vast majority of Committee members to accept, even though *Contopus* flycatchers were observed within the vicinity. The song of Eastern Wood-Pewee is readily mimicked by various other species, namely European Starling (*Sturnus vulgaris*). Without any discussion on the quality, cadence, pitch and accenting of the song, the Committee was conservative and voted not to accept this record by a vote of 2-5.

\* CHIHUAHUA RAVEN - *Corvus cryptoleucus*. Chihuahuan Ravens apparently were quite common throughout the eastern plains of Colorado prior to 1900 (Andrews and Righter 1992). Records of this species in northeastern

Colorado since then are very few, however. Andrews and Righter (1992) note the furthest north modern records as those from *El Paso*. The recent occurrence of Chihuahuan Ravens north or west of southeastern Colorado remains unconfirmed as the species is now apparently restricted in the state to arid grasslands and semideserts. Additionally, identification of ravens is one of the most challenging identification quandaries in North America.

Two were reported from Boulder, *Boulder*, on 20 February 2004 (2004-8), but failed to receive CBRC acceptance (3-4). Though winter might be the expected period of northward vagrancy in this species, the habitat the subject birds were found in (residential neighborhood) is inconsistent with Chihuahuan Raven habits in Colorado (the species can occupy urban settings in areas south of Colorado, however). The birds were described as ravens by a shaggy throat and stout bill, which could eliminate American Crow (*Corvus brachyrhynchos*) and their croaking voice was described as higher pitched and not as hoarse as Common Raven (*Corvus corax*). When in flight, the basal neck feathers appeared white, which is suggestive of Chihuahuan Raven, though Common Ravens, the expected species to occur at that location, can show light basal neck feathers when hit by the proper sunlight. This lightness to the basal neck feathers is generally a light sheen, however, and not actually truly white feathers.

The shape of the tail was, unfortunately, not noted, as that would have assisted in eliminating American Crow from contention. No discussion on flight style or shape in flight was provided, a feature that would have aided in separating the birds from Common Ravens. Though the birds were not studied at close length and no information was provided on the trait, the extent of nasal bristles can be a very valuable addition in separating the two ravens. Since no recent pattern of northward vagrancy by Chihuahuan Raven along the northern Front Range has been elucidated, the Committee will continue to remain conservative in its deliberations on this species until a clearer pattern develops, which may require photographic or specimen evidence, or tape-recorded calls.

**TUFTED TITMOUSE** - *Baeolophus bicolor*. A report of a potential first state record at Glade Park, *Mesa*, on 2 September 2004 (2004-47) received no Committee support (0-7) due to the extreme brevity of the report, the fact that congeners were not adequately eliminated, and the very strange location of the sighting. The only description of the bird provided was of a 6.5-inch-long gray, crested bird with rusty flanks and dark eyes. No other field characters of Tufted Titmouse were mentioned, such as the presence of a black forehead, the pale face, and the whitish/light gray color of the underparts contrasting

with the darker upperparts. This would have truly eliminated Juniper Titmouse (*Baeolophus ridgwayi*), the most likely species to be considered for the site, which can show some degrees of buffiness to the flanks at times.

**WINTER WREN** - *Troglodytes troglodytes*. The description of 12 or more Winter Wrens near Silver Jack Res., Gunnison, 20-21 July 2004 (2004-40) would have been unprecedented if accepted, though received little support from the Committee (2-5). There is little doubt that the observer did observe wrens, probably House Wrens (*Troglodytes aedon*), a common species in that area. The 12 birds (adults and fledglings) inhabited a shrubby area with open grass, a habitat associated more with House Wren than for Winter Wren, which has not been documented as breeding in the state. The birds were simply described as small, dark brown birds with a short, upright tail and barred on the rear half. Some birds were noted as having short, slightly down-curved bills. The description actually can refer to either species, as House Wrens are barred extensively on the wings, tail, and undertail coverts. No information was provided on where on the rear end of the birds the barring actually was.

**BLACK-TAILED GNATCATCHER** - *Polioptila californica*. A report of a pair of Black-tailed Gnatcatchers, a sedentary species, at Garden of the Gods in Colorado Springs, El Paso, on 6 May, 2004 (2004-44) consisted only of a brief, second-hand description. The CBRC generally opposes accepting second-hand reports, and this one lacked sufficient detail to indicate that a pair of Black-tailed Gnatcatchers was seen (0-7). The habitat at Garden of the Gods (mixed mountain-shrub/pinyon-juniper) is quite different from known habitat affinities within the species' range (low desert shrubland). The description of the birds were of gnatcatchers (though that was never substantiated by narrative) with dark caps, white eye rings, and black undertails. The black undertails were not mentioned as having white terminal tips, an indication of Black-taileds. Blue-gray Gnatcatchers (*P. caerulea*) can appear dark beneath the tails depending upon light conditions and the extent of white on the dark rectrices must be noted. Even the observer had wondered if the sighting was "wishful thinking," implying that they may not have been totally convinced themselves.

**SCARLET TANAGER** - *Piranga olivacea*. An alternate-plumaged male was reported from Mount Falcon Park near Morrison, Jefferson, on 4 June 2004 (2004-29). The only description was of a brief look at a red bird with black wings that perched upright like a solitaire. That description can indicate Vermilion Flycatcher as well (*Pyrocephalus rubinus*). The very little information provided caused the majority of Committee members consternation and ultimately the record was not accepted by a 3-4 margin.



INDIGO BUNTING - *Passerina cyanea*. A description of an electric-blue bird the size of a House Finch (*Carpodacus mexicanus*) with black seed-eating bill came from a Fort Collins, *Larimer*, residence on the odd date of 23 February 2004; the bird stayed an additional 6-7 days. Though reported as an Indigo Bunting, which would be very unusual in Colorado at that time of year, the documentation submitted was extremely brief. The term "electric-blue" may have different connotations to some, but for most, may not suggest Indigo Bunting. Male Indigo Buntings in basic plumage are usually mottled grayish-brown/blue. Though there is evidence that vagrant birds can abort or postpone their prebasic molt when conditions are difficult, the potential for occurrence of a completely blue-colored Indigo Bunting in winter in Colorado would be very odd. As well, no discussion of the darker flight feathers and tail of an Indigo Bunting in alternate plumage (which is the plumage seemingly described) was provided. With such little information to analyze, the CBRC voted 1-6.

### Reporters and Cited Observers

Susan Allerton, Robert Andrews, James Beatty, Bruce Bosley, Peter Derven, Fred Englemann, Jr., Doug Faulkner, Nancie Flenard, Peter Gent, Brian Gibbons, Susan Gifford, John Haas, BB Hahn (BBH), Roy Halpin (RHa), Joe Harrison (JHn), R. Burnell Held, Mike Henwood (MHe), Joan Hicks, Dean Hill, Mona Hill (MHi), Rachel Hopper (RHo), Kevin Keirn, Joey Kellner, Nick Komar, Gary Lefko, Tony Leukering, Roger Linfield, Josiah Malueg (JMG), Joe Mammoser (JMr), Tom McConnell, PJ Mestas (PJM), Duane Nelson, Ric Olson, Stan Oswald, Nathan Pieplow, Kerry Pilot, Bill Prather, Inez Prather, John Prather, David Quady, Jay Sarason (JSa), Bill Schmoker, Scott Severs, David Silverman, Virginia Simmons, Pearle Sandstrom-Smith, Jane Stulp (JSt), Joyce Takamine, Matt Wagner, Glenn Walbek, Peter Walker, Cole Wild, Jenny Winegardner, Christopher L. Wood (CLW).

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## NEWS FROM THE FIELD: THE SUMMER 2005 REPORT (JUNE-JULY)

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The summer of 2005 was remarkable for its combination of vagrants from the south (including two astonishing first state records of Mexican species) and, oddly, for its sizeable complement of lingering winter waterbirds that should have spent the summer farther north. The latter phenomenon encompassed summer records of both Greater and Lesser scaup, several summering Common Goldeneyes, several Common Loons, and even a lazy Pacific Loon that spent all summer at Chatfield.

On the other hand, the bigger news this season was of wanderers from the south. Top billing, obviously, goes to the Tropical Parula in Fort Collins (some 800 miles farther north than the northernmost previous record!) and the two White-eared Hummingbirds that simultaneously graced feeders in La Plata County for much of July and early August, part of an explosive exodus of this species out of west Mexico this summer. Leatherman, among others, has speculated that the latter phenomenon may have been due to poor habitat conditions in the Sierra Madre Occidental, which was at least potentially the source of the Tropical Parula as well. However, the larger phenomenon, which includes the Least Bittern in Boulder, Mississippi Kite in Fort Collins, and appearances of Brown Pelican, Neotropic Cormorant, and Black Vulture in the state, may point towards some more widespread climatic cause.

Data from the Colorado Climate Center at Colorado State University show that the summer of 2005 was unusually hot, particularly thanks to the unprecedented heat wave that hit the Front Range in the latter part of July. The Climate Center attributes this heat wave, and others across the western U.S.

during this period, to an “unusually late onset of the summer monsoon” throughout the region. Their analysis suggests that the heat wave may not have been as anomalous as temperatures made it seem, since it was exacerbated by locally dry conditions (Pielke et al. 2005).

The dry conditions in many parts of the state, however, were primarily atmospheric, since snowpack levels were much better than they had been in the five previous years. Forest Service roads into the high Elkheads and the West Elk Mountains, at least, were snowed in well past the Fourth of July, and rivers that have barely run in some recent years (e.g., the Apishapa) gushed to near flood stage in the early part of the season. The Conejos River in the southern San Luis Valley went crazy in late May and early June, frantically trying to drain the southern San Juans. A couple of abnormal downslope sightings of Brown-capped Rosy-Finches in June are further testament to the high snowpack in the mountains this summer. The combination of good snowpack and lack of precipitation explains why “trees and prairie plants looked good early in the period and dried considerably by the end of the period” (D. Leatherman, pers. comm.).

While the climatic data suggest that global warming continues its slow and steady march, they do not entirely explain the appearance of Mexican “megs” this summer. Even as those far-flung vagrants were making Cobirds sizzle, colonizers from the south continued to spread (Black Phoebe) or at least hang on in their outpost colonies (Acorn Woodpecker, Hepatic Tanager, “Lilian’s” Eastern Meadowlark, White-winged and Inca doves). While the possibility of breeding Merlin, Hooded Merganser, and even Greater Scaup (!) in the state this summer suggests that not all bird range shifts may be to the north, the preponderance of the evidence seems to point northward. The Merlins, at least, may simply be reclaiming traditional breeding territory.

In all, this was a remarkably exciting summer for Colorado birds. Without the efforts of our many intrepid field ornithologists, however, it would never have become an exciting summer for Colorado birders. We extend our gratitude to all those who contributed sightings to this report, whether by reporting observations to Cobirds or via other channels, and we particularly thank those who documented rare species for the CBRC. All of you have helped make Summer 2005 the season to beat in future years.

**Note 1:** The reports contained herein are largely unchecked, and the authors do not vouch for their authenticity. Underlined species are those for which the Colorado Bird Records Committee requests documentation. The Colorado Field Ornithologists’ website (<http://www.cfo-link.org>) has a link to the rare

bird Sight Record reporting form that can be submitted electronically; the same form is also printed on the inside cover of this journal's mailer.

**Note 2:** All locations are annotated as to county the **first** time each appears, except for locations that are situated within multiple counties where a sighting for that location may require information on which county the observation occurred and for locations that are either not widely known or not readily found in the DeLorme gazetteer.

**Abbreviations:** **CBRC**=Colorado Bird Records Committee; **CG**=Campground; **et al.**=and others (restricted to use for the finding group of a bird that was not seen subsequently); **m.ob.**=many observers (used for birds that were re-found, either the same day or on subsequent days, by others); **NG**=National Grassland; **Res.**=Reservoir; **SP**=State Park; **SWA**=State Wildlife Area.

### Species Accounts

**Snow Goose:** Three were present at Jumbo Res., *Sedgwick*, on 13 July (LS). Though the observer could not detect the health of these birds, one wonders if they were intentional summer lingerers or injured holdovers from the past waterfowl hunting season.

**Trumpeter Swan:** One was seen along the Roaring Fork River near El Jebel, *Garfield*, on 29 July (MHa, LV). The bird was reported as "tagged", which usually consists of a colored neck collar along with a U.S. Fish and Wildlife leg band. The provenance (based on the tag number) was not reported. Neck-collared Trumpeter Swans have created a dilemma for many state Bird Records Committees. In the past, all neck-collared swans were a result of introduced birds to the northern tier of states. Currently, some states still neck-collar some Trumpeters and it is unknown if those birds are continued re-introduction efforts (non-"countable") or are of established ("countable") populations.

**Ring-necked Duck:** Ring-necked Ducks regularly nest across montane areas of the state but are rare in lower elevations during the summer season. A very tardy male was spotted at Fossil Creek Res., *Larimer*, on 19 June (NKr).

**Greater Scaup:** Even more unusual than Ring-necked Duck in summer on the eastern plains, a pair of Greater Scaup were found at Long Lake, *Boulder*, on 26 June (GW). This species nests in far northern boreal and subarctic regions with the closest breeding population to Colorado being the Northwest Territories. Despite concerted effort, Walbek was unable to rule out any breeding behavior or evidence, which would be even more bizarre.

**Lesser Scaup:** Lesser Scaup are also rare on the eastern plains in summer. Thus, the male present at Fossil Creek Res. on 19 June (the same date as the Ring-necked Duck observation) is noteworthy (NKr). This species breeds sporadically across montane areas of the state, though higher nesting concentrations occur at North Park and within the Flattops Wilderness Area.

**Common Goldeneye:** Four laggard birds were reported during the season. One sub-adult bird was noted for virtually the entire period (1 June through 27 July) at Sands Lake in *Chaffee* (SY). A male was spotted at Fossil Creek Res. on 19 June (NKr; what was going on with all the late *Aythya* at that location on that date?). Another sub-adult was at Confluence Park, *Delta*, on 14 July (JV), while another male was at Big Johnson Res., *El Paso*, where present between 22 and 31 July (MPe, m.ob.). This species regularly nests no closer to Colorado than Montana, though conjecture lies whether it has also rarely nested in northwestern Wyoming.

**Hooded Merganser:** Evidence of nesting was provided when fledglings were found at the Chatfield SP wetland ponds, *Jefferson*, on 3 June (HK, UK). There is only one other known nesting record for the state, that being from Englewood, *Arapahoe*, in 1996. However, each summer a few non-breeding summering birds are seen. A late female was present this past summer on 4 June at Sands Lake (SY).

**Common Merganser:** A female was seen at Lower Latham Res., *Weld*, on 12 June (LS), a late date for that eastern plains location.

**Pacific Loon:** There are few records of Pacific Loon during summer in Colorado. This past spring, a basic-plumaged bird spent the period loafing on a gravel pit pond between Chatfield Res. and Waterton Canyon, *Douglas* (JKr, m.ob.), where present between 18 June and 31 July.

**Common Loon:** Six non-breeders opted to pass the summertime in Colorado instead of traveling further north. One persisted throughout the season at Big Johnson Res. (MPe). Up to four loafed at Jumbo Res., *Sedgwick/Logan*, where present between at least 11 June and 13 July (HA, LS). One was also at Blue Mesa Res., *Gunnison*, where seen on 21 July (CDr, BW).

**Eared Grebe:** This species nests in only a few places across the eastern plains, but sometimes relatively large numbers can remain on various waterbodies. Up to 38 spent the summer at Big Johnson Res. (MPe), where they may have also bred. On 28 June, up to 75 were noted from Lake Holbrook, *Otero* (HK, UK).

**Brown Pelican:** One, a possible third-year bird first found by Cruze at Pelican Lake in Windsor, *Weld*, on 10 June, spent a good time there, as well as at Fossil Creek Res., where seen on 19 July (CW, NKr), which frustrated some Larimer birders who just weren't fortunate enough to see it in their fair county. Documentation has been submitted to the CBRC.

**Neotropic Cormorant:** One was found at John Martin Res., *Bent*, on 5 July (DN, IS, TS). No documentation has been submitted to the CBRC. There are 13 previously accepted records of this southerly species for Colorado with a few more pending circulation within the CBRC.

**American Bittern:** Though it is assumed that birds again were present at Lower Latham Res., none were reported during the season. One spent the summer at Fruitgrowers Res., *Delta*, (m.ob.), where now regular on the West Slope. An adult and two young were spotted at Walden Ponds, *Boulder*, on 28 July (JTa, m.ob.).

**Least Bittern:** Kellner was fortunate to find one singing along the Cottonwood Marsh boardwalk at Walden Ponds on 5 June, where it was present until at least 12 June (m.ob.). Many other birders gathered to hear this consistently close-singing, but secretive, little heron and a small group actually were able to see it and produce quite nice photographs. Based on subsequent information, it seems that this bird may have spent the summer at this location.

**Great Egret:** One (possibly two) was seen at Grand Junction, *Mesa*, on 3 June and 19 July (LA). This species is casual at best for the West Slope and this bird(s) may represent the only July record for that local area. Also of interest, one was at Clear Creek Res., *Chaffee*, on 4 June (SY, TL, RHa). Not quite so noteworthy, but still a record away from normal haunts in the northern Front Range, one was at Metro Lake in Colorado City, *Pueblo*, on 11 June (DSi).

**Snowy Egret:** Rare in summer, up to four were observed on the West Slope during the season. One danced around Fruitgrowers Res. during the entire season (m.ob.), one was at Kenney Res., *Rio Blanco*, on 5 June (VZ), and two were at Grand Junction on 14 June (LA). Also of interest because of its' montane appearance, one was seen at Clear Creek Res., *Chaffee*, on 4 June (SY, TL, RHa).

**Little Blue Heron:** An adult was at Walden Ponds between at least 1 and 5 June (EZ, m.ob.).



**Cattle Egret:** Of local interest, one was in Boulder on 12 June (LS) and two were seen by the Hansen's in Arvada, *Jefferson*, on 30 June.

**Green Heron:** Eight were reported during the season. Arnold found an adult that eventually fledged two young at Connected Lakes in Grand Junction. One was at the Carrizo Canyon Picnic Area, *Baca*, on 3 June (DAL). One was at the Cottonwood Hollow Natural Area in *Larimer* on 19 June (DSm). Up to three (two adults, one juvenile) were present at Walden Ponds between 28 and 31 July (JTa, m.ob.).

**Yellow-crowned Night-Heron:** An immature was reported without details from Banner Lakes SWA, *Adams*, on 18 July (SL).

**Glossy Ibis:** One was seen along Weld County Road 46 on 22 July (SMe).

**Black Vulture:** The names Black Vulture and Duane Nelson seem to be synonymous in Colorado as it was Duane who found the first photographically documented record for the state at John Martin dam in 2002 (see p. 30). To prove that was no fluke, however, Duane again was fortunate to find another at that same location this past summer, where he photographed an adult on 7 July. Despite numerous attempts by other birders to refind this vomitorial, but still exciting bird, all failed during the summer season, though a Black Vulture was found at this location again in August.

**Mississippi Kite:** Wayward northerly reports included one at Ovid, *Sedgwick*, on 16 June (HA), one at Fort Collins, *Larimer*, on 17 June (DAL), and one at Fountain Creek Regional Park, *El Paso*, on 7 July (DEr). One wonders when and where the next northerly location to be colonized will be?

**Merlin:** There are only two nesting records of Merlin in Colorado, both from the 19<sup>th</sup> century and both from the West Slope. This species does breed regularly in Wyoming, however, and the Wyoming population seems to be moving southward. Summer records in Colorado are quite rare thus the reports of two during the season, both from the eastern plains, is of interest. One, a female, was at Bonny Res., *Yuma*, on 9 July (LS). This bird was extremely agitated and vocalized consistently. Despite concerted efforts by the observer to find evidence of breeding, none could be found. Another female (or immature) was seen in *Phillips* on 30 July (JRr). The editors encourage birders to search potentially suitable nesting habitat (grasslands/plains with occasional trees for nesting) across the northern tier of counties (especially the northwestern corner) to find the first potential nesting of this species in Colorado in over 118 years.

**Sandhill Crane:** The recent colonization of this species in *Montrose* and *Mesa* expanded during the 2005 nesting season. Eight adults raised five young and were present during the entire season at Nucla, Paradox, Unaweep, and Buzzard Creek (CDr, BW, LA). This species historically nested sporadically on the West Slope south to *La Plata* until at least 1905 and it is encouraging to see their return to some of these more southerly locations. The species has been increasing within their northwestern Colorado nesting stronghold in *Routt*, *Moffat*, and *Rio Blanco* counties over the years. Also of great interest, the pair that nested at Lower Latham Res. fledged one young within a cattle pasture and was last recorded on 12 June (m.ob.). This should represent the first nesting record of this species for *Weld* and the second nesting location known for the East Slope (the other has been within the foothills of *Larimer*; Komar 2005).

**Snowy Plover:** The highest count within the southeast region was of 10 seen at Lake Cheraw, *Otero*, on 5 June (DAL).

**Semipalmated Plover:** A late northbound migrant was seen along County Road 3 in *Weld* on 14 June (DSm).

**Mountain Plover:** Mountain Plovers depart breeding grounds very early in fall, and oftentimes can be seen in quite impressive numbers when staging at various drawn-down reservoirs across eastern Colorado. Incredible, however, was a tally of approximately 800 seen and photographed south of Adobe Creek Res. (Blue Lake) in *Bent* on 25 July (DN, BSc, JS).

**Black-necked Stilt:** Out-of-range was the pair that showed up and attempted nesting (but failed) at Big Johnson Res., where present between at least 12 June and 20 July (MPe, m.ob.).

**Greater Yellowlegs:** The first southbound migrant was reported from an unnamed pond in *Kiowa* on 28 June (HK, UK).

**Solitary Sandpiper:** Semo found a southbound bird at Bonny Res. on 9 July.

**Willet:** Willets are rare, sporadic breeders in far western Colorado. Nesting may have occurred at Elk Springs, *Moffat*, where a territorial bird was seen and heard on 10 June (FL).

**Upland Sandpiper:** Unusually west were the two presumed southbound migrant birds seen near Colorado Springs, *El Paso*, on 29 July (MPe, JPe).

**Long-billed Curlew:** Long-billed Curlews are casual summer residents on the West Slope and breeding in that region is considered sparse at best. A number were present during the past summer, including several along the Colorado/Utah state line in *Mesa* between the beginning of the period until at least 8 July (LA). Apparently one youngster was noted among this group as well. A high tally of 11 was noted from Hunter Mesa, *Garfield*, on 7 June (LWs, VZ) and curlews most likely nested here for the second consecutive season. On the eastern plains, a very respectable total of 60 staging southbound migrants were noted at Adobe Creek Res., *Bent/Kiowa*, on 25 July (DN, BSc, JS).

**White-rumped Sandpiper:** This species is considered the latest spring migrant shorebird species in Colorado and much of North America with first reports in Colorado generally arriving around the 15<sup>th</sup> of May. As such, reports from early June are not that unusual and some still were found heading north during the early summer season this past year. A maximum of eight were present at Ramah SWA, *El Paso*, between 1 and 4 June (BM, m.ob.). Up to 10 were at Beebe Draw, *Weld*, on 3 June (GW, JKr). The last report was of eight birds seen at Lake Cheraw, *Otero*, on 5 June (DAL).

**Dunlin:** Dunlin are rare migrants in Colorado. There were two reports during the summer season, one northbound migrant at Ramah SWA on 4 June (MPe, GW, m.ob.) and one basic-plumaged bird heading south on 25 July, where seen at Adobe Creek Res., *Kiowa* (DN).

**Stilt Sandpiper:** Record early for fall on the West Slope, one (still in alternate plumage) was seen at Fruitgrowers Res. on 15 July (FL).

**Short-billed Dowitcher:** An adult of the *hendersoni* race was reported without details from Adobe Creek Res., *Kiowa*, on 26 July (BSc, JS). The CBRC reminds birders that adults still should be documented for potential acceptance to the official state list of records. Juveniles do not need to be documented.

**Wilson's Phalarope:** Up to eight were noted as breeding at Ramah SWA, where present during the entire season (BM, m.ob.). The Breeding Bird Atlas did not conclusively determine that species as breeding in *El Paso*.

**Laughing Gull:** A second-cycle (1<sup>st</sup>-summer) bird was seen and nicely documented from Metro Lake in Colorado City on 11 July (DSi).

**Caspian Tern:** This species is quite rare in summer in Colorado. Though Caspian Terns nest in Wyoming, there has been no clear breeding evidence in

Colorado. Breeding behavior was noted with a pair present in Fort Collins in 1992, though there was no confirmed nesting. In Wyoming, this species nests close to Colorado and the North Park area has always been predicted to offer the first nesting of this species in the state. Two adults and two juveniles were seen at Lake John, *Jackson*, on 4 July (TJ), but no discussion was noted regarding whether the young were free-flying or incapable of flight. This may be the first nesting record for North Park and the state. Other summering birds that showed no suggestion of breeding included one at Rio Blanco Res., *Rio Blanco*, on 5 June (VZ), two at Windsor, *Weld*, on 28 June (DAL), one on Larimer County Open Space east of Fort Collins on 3 July (Harris), and two (possibly three) in *Yuma*, where Semo saw two at Hale Ponds (where unusual) on 9 July and one at nearby Bonny Res. the following day.

**Common Tern:** Late spring migrants included one at Verhoff Res., *Bent*, on 4 June (DAL) and one at Big Johnson Res. on the same day (VAT, BKP).

**Least Tern:** Away from the breeding range in southeastern Colorado, singles were observed at Grand Junction on 3 Jun (LA) and one (2<sup>nd</sup>-cycle) at Beebe Draw on the same date (GW, JKr).

**Black Tern:** Approximately 100, an extremely high number for the time of year, were present at Jumbo Res., *Sedgwick/Logan*, on 3 June (JKr, GW). Despite somewhat adequate conditions for nesting (shallow water with emergent hydrophytic vegetation), nesting did not take place at this location.

**Band-tailed Pigeon:** Unusual for *Moffat*, one was at Black Mountain between at least 16 and 19 July (VZ).

**White-winged Dove:** Either this species calmed its march into Colorado during the past summer or observers are just getting tired of reporting them. Only two reports were received, that being one in Broomfield, *Broomfield*, on 17 June (SAr, EZ) and one in Fort Collins on 18 June (BD, NKr). We suspect that birds still remained at their hotspots in Lamar, *Prowers*, and Rocky Ford, *Otero*, and we encourage birders in those areas (and elsewhere) to continue providing updates on populations of this species in Colorado.

**Inca Dove:** Surprisingly, only one was reported, that being from Lamar on 28 June (DAL). Lamar and Rocky Ford have been the premiere spots to find this species and it is surprising such few reports were received. There has been no documentation of this species from those two locations for a few years and the CBRC will be wrestling with the notion of eliminating future documentation from those areas. That is, unless, the species withdraws from the state, which

the numbers reported during the summer season could possibly suggest.

**Black-billed Cuckoo:** 2005 was an encouraging year for the reappearance of Black-billed Cuckoo in the state. This species historically nested in northeastern Colorado, though records during the past 15 years or so are few. Two were reported during this past summer. One was reported without documentation at Julesburg SWA, *Sedgwick*, on 5 June (SL) and another was stationed (and documented) at Bonny Res., where present between at least 6 June (NP) and 9 July (LS).

**Yellow-billed Cuckoo:** Eight were reported across the eastern half of the state from the following counties: *Baca*, *Boulder*, *Larimer* and *Prowers*.

**Flammulated Owl:** Nocturnal birders tallied at least nine birds along Old Stage Road in *El Paso* between 14 and 19 June (MPe, SSh, ABs, m.ob.). Rare for *Moffat*, one was heard at Black Mountain on 19 July (FL).

**Long-eared Owl:** Breeding was confirmed from *La Plata*, where three pairs fledged seven young (JBy) and in *Routt*, where a pair raised at three young (VZ, TLi). Other reports were of single birds at Tamarack Ranch SWA, *Logan* (HA) and near Ward, *Boulder* (BK).

**Boreal Owl:** Owls were banded at a nesting box on Lone Cone in mid-July (m.ob.). This should represent the first record of this species for *San Miguel*.

**Lesser Nighthawk:** One was reported, but not documented, from Fort Collins on 14 June (JD). If documented and accepted by the CBRC, this would be the fourth record for *Larimer*.

**Black Swift:** Very out-of-range were the reports from east of the Front Range. A maximum of eight were present at Metro Lake in Colorado City between 27 and 31 July (DSi). A single bird was also at Big Johnson Res. on 31 July (MPe). One suspects that nasty weather was occurring in montane areas to drive these birds to such lower elevations during the breeding season.

**White-eared Hummingbird:** The hummingbird news of the season was the occurrence of not one, but TWO White-eared Hummingbirds, which established the first and second state records. The first, a female, stunned Allerton when it arrived at her feeder in Durango, *La Plata*, on 19 June. Though there was a bit of a hiatus in sightings when the bird temporarily moved to a neighbor's feeder, most Colorado birders who opted to see the bird were well rewarded as the bird ultimately remained until 7 August. But just as

surprising, Allerton received a call regarding a possible second female White-eared Hummingbird coming to a feeder in northern *La Plata* at the Durango Mountain Ski Resort. First found by the homeowner Bell on 20 July, the bird was seen by Allerton in subsequent days and documented and photographed by Semo and Faulkner on 30 July. This second bird remained at that location until at least 21 August. Colorado was not the only state to experience this northerly wave of White-eareds. There were at least 15 birds reported from West Texas, with one as far north as Lubbock (fide Mark Lockwood) and one even showed up in Michigan in August! One could speculate that birds were pushing north as potentially colonizing breeders (not necessarily Colorado but perhaps Texas, New Mexico, and Arizona). But the large numbers of vagrants across the American Southwest suggests a larger movement out of Mexico potentially due to unfavorable foraging conditions in that region.

**Acorn Woodpecker:** The only report was of six birds at their traditional spot at Wildcat Canyon, *La Plata*, on 30 July (LS, DFa).

**Williamson's Sapsucker:** This species is difficult to find in *Moffat*, thus two birds at Black Mountain between 16 and 19 July (VZ, FL) were of interest.

**Eastern Wood-Pewee:** What was going on with Eastern Wood-Pewee this past summer? There are only 17 accepted records of this species for the state, but at least FOUR were reported during the summer of 2005! Two of the reports actually came from the West Slope, which is even more crazy. One was on territory at The Nature Conservancy's Yampa River Preserve in *Routt* between 1 and 21 June (NKe, FL). One was also noted from the Grand Mesa, *Delta*, on 26 June (AR). The other two were from eastern locations, including one at Tamarack Ranch SWA on 11 June (JRr, RS) and along the North Shanahan Trail in *Boulder* on 31 July (RLi). Only one of the four were documented (the Boulder bird - nice job Roger!) and, unfortunately, the occurrence of the other three birds may just fade away from the chronicles of Colorado avifauna.

**Alder Flycatcher:** With increased knowledge of migration patterns, timing, and identification, Colorado birders are becoming more confident on the morphological and plumage identification of Alder Flycatcher. For those that grew up in the East, it is known that Alder Flycatcher is a very late migrant, oftentimes not showing up on their boreal breeding grounds until late May at the earliest. That said, Colorado birders should search for Alder Flycatchers in late May and early June. A few gutsy souls managed to identify three at a private ranch in *Weld* on 3 June (JKr, GW) and another was seen (and photographed) at Dixon Res., *Larimer*, on 6 June (RHo). Documentation for none of the birds has yet to be submitted to the CBRC, however.

**Least Flycatcher:** Up to four spent the summer (nesting?) at Ramah SWA (BM, m.ob.). Others noted during the season were all singles and included one tardy bird at Lake Beckwith in Colorado City (DSi) on 1 June, one along the Poudre River in Fort Collins on 12 June (DAL), one along Plum Creek at Chatfield SP (a typical location), *Douglas*, on 17 June (PP), one at the Grandview Cemetery in Fort Collins on 22 June (LS), and a territorial bird at Bonny Res. on 9 July (LS).

**Dusky Flycatcher:** Late was the bird at Crow Valley CG on 5 June (NKr, NAK, CWi).

**Black Phoebe:** Up to 44 were detected during species-specific surveys for them along the San Miguel River in *Montrose* (CDr, RLe, BW, KP, JTo). At least one was again present in *Archuleta* at the Navajo SP wildlife viewing bridge on 30 July (LS, DFa), where first found in 2002. This species has also expanded its breeding range to include *Chaffee*, where a pair raised at least one youngster at Frantz Lake, where noted between 4 and 9 July (SY, TL). A nesting phoebe was found at Alkali Draw near Cahone, *Dolores*, on 18 June for a potential first county breeding record (NP). The CBRC wishes to remind folks that this species should still be documented from all locations outside of areas the species has been previously known to nest.

**Vermilion Flycatcher:** A male was reported by Lafreniere and Huskey (without documentation) from Fountain Creek Regional Park on 6 July.

**Ash-throated Flycatcher:** A wayward Ash-throat was north of its typical pinyon-juniper habitat and was instead on the eastern plains at Crow Valley CG on the late date of 13 June (BSc, TF).

**Great-crested Flycatcher:** One was along the Arkansas River in *Prowers* on 2 June (DAL). This species is irregular along the lower Arkansas in summer. Another was along the Big Sandy just south of Kit Carson, *Cheyenne*, on 11 June (NP). Other reports came from traditional breeding haunts of northeastern Colorado, including Tamarack SWA (JKr, GW) and Bonny Res. (LS).

**Cassin's Kingbird:** The most northerly report was from the Pawnee NG, *Weld*, on 13 June (BSc, TF). Cassin's Kingbirds nest irregularly within the Pawnee.

**Scissor-tailed Flycatcher:** One was reported, but not documented, from *Boulder* on 27 June (ABl).



**Red-eyed Vireo:** A pair was found at Lamar Community College, *Prowers*, on 1 June and were present until at least the 26<sup>th</sup> of that month (DAL). Based on behavior, Leatherman suspected nesting, a location with no previous nesting records. Castlewood Canyon SP in *Douglas* has held singing vireos for the past few years and two were found again there this past summer on 1 June (GW, m.ob.), though no evidence of breeding was found. A single tardy migrant was at Crow Valley CG on 4 and 5 June (NKr). Two were present along Valmont Road east of Boulder between 6 and 30 June (DW). Up to three were at Eldorado Springs, *Boulder*, between 20 and 27 June (PH, TF). Lastly, a territorial bird was at Colorado City on 26 June (DSi).

**Chihuahuan Raven:** Reports of Chihuahuan Raven continue to come in from the Boulder area, though no reports have been substantiated by recordings or photographs (identification based solely on photographs is problematic, however). Davis reported four birds believed to be this species from northwest of Lyons, *Boulder*, on 11 June, a location and habitat type dissimilar from that in which Chihuahuan's typically occur. Hopefully documentation will be submitted to the CBRC.

**Purple Martin:** A female was spotted at Julesburg, *Sedgwick*, on 17 June by Armknecht. Though there are no records of nesting Purple Martins from the eastern plains of Colorado (and overall records themselves are very few), this species has been expanding westward and nests in southwestern Nebraska within 50 miles of the Colorado border. The eastern population (*Progne subis subis*) is the subspecies that nests in artificial boxes, whereas those from the western part of Colorado (*S. p. arboricola*) continue to nest only in trees. Thus, for birders trying to find Purple Martins in eastern Colorado, it is suggested that they work the small towns in search of Purple Martin boxes.

**Cave Swallow:** One was reported from below John Martin dam by Seltman on 9 July. This is the fourth report of Cave Swallow from the state, though as yet this species is not on the official state list due to a lack of photographic or specimen evidence, or accepted sightings by multiple observers of the same bird. However, it is predicted that this species will soon grace the walls of species known to officially occur in Colorado and it is hoped that the observer will provide documentation to the CBRC, as once the species is formally accepted, earlier, single-observer sightings can be subsequently added to the list of official records.

**Bushtit:** An adult was observed taking food to a nest on the Colorado side of Road 129 in *Routt* for possibly a first county breeding record (DFa, m. ob.).

**Carolina Wren:** One was seen at Tamarack Ranch SWA between 5 June and 1 July (SL, HA). This bird probably remained into autumn as sightings of a Carolina Wren occurred at that location during that latter period.

**Bewick's Wren:** Two were unusually far north in *Boulder* during the period, both found by Floyd. One was at his residence in North Boulder on 3 June, while another (or the same bird?) was along South Boulder Road on 29 June.

**Veery:** Outside of reports from breeding locations in the north-central mountains of the state, one was out of habitat and range for the season along the South Mesa Trailhead in *Boulder* on 21 June (PH).

**Swainson's Thrush:** Late spring migrants were still noted at Crow Valley CG on 4 and 9 June (NKr) and at Gregory Canyon, *Boulder*, on 11 June (PH).

**Wood Thrush:** A surprising two were reported during the season. One was at Tamarack Ranch SWA on 23 June and a singing male was at Gregory Canyon on 10 and 11 June (TF, BSc, m.ob.). Unfortunately, documentation for neither bird has been submitted.

**Golden-winged Warbler:** A wonderful male graced Gregory Canyon, where seen on 2 June (PGe).

**Northern Parula:** Territorial lost males included one singing at Mineral Place Park in Pueblo on 1 June (BKP) and another singing bird at Lamar Community College on 2 June (DAL).

**Tropical Parula:** Though two White-eared Hummingbirds dazzled birders, the occurrence of a Tropical Parula in Colorado was without precedence and unpredicted, and takes first place in the most exciting rarity of 2005. Leatherman spotted the bird singing at Grandview Cemetery in Fort Collins on 18 June and Mammoser confirmed the identity two days later. Despite its occasional disappearance acts for many hours on end, most birders that tried for it were well rewarded, although it may have taken multiple visits to claim the prize. Unfortunately for the bird, but this time predicted, its incessant singing in hopes of attracting a mate met with failure and the bird was last seen on 4 July, by, you guessed it, the same person who found it, David Leatherman. Congratulations Dave on one of the best vagrant finds in Colorado ornithological history! Hopefully an article documenting the account of this species in the state will soon grace *Colorado Birds*.

**Chestnut-sided Warbler:** Three were found during the period. A pair was

present at Dixon Res., *Larimer*, on 4 June (RH), but subsequent visits to that location could not refind the birds. A single male was also at Lair O' the Bear in Morrison, *Jefferson*, on 12 June (JHs).

**Black-throated Blue Warbler:** Late was the female present at Crow Valley CG on 9 June (DAL).

**Yellow-rumped Warbler:** Very low in elevation and far east of its breeding area, a singing territorial male camped at Fairmount Cemetery in Lamar on 2 June (DAL).

**Black-and-White Warbler:** Interesting were the two birds present at Tamarack Ranch SWA on 23 June (HA). One wonders if they were just lost birds who were traveling together or represented a potential breeding attempt. Despite the presence of sporadic singing males during summer in Colorado, there are no breeding records for this species in the state.

**American Redstart:** A late migrant was at Dixon Res. on 4 June (fide RHo). A first-year male was at Craig, *Moffat*, on 7 June (FL), which is somewhat near those north-central riparian areas that the species has thought to have bred. More unusual was the presence of a male seen by Cooper at Grand Junction on 7 July.

**Ovenbird:** There were reports of seven birds, all from the northern Front Range, where they breed in small numbers. Two were at Lower Rist Canyon, *Larimer*, during the entire period (DAL). Two singing males were at Castlewood Canyon SP, *Douglas*, between at least 1 and 3 June (GW, m.ob.), a location that has held this species for a few years, though no evidence of nesting has yet been shown. Two were also seen by Tumasonis at Gregory Canyon between 1 and 24 June. Single birds were along Buckhorn Canyon Road, *Larimer*, on 19 June (AP) and another was at Franktown, *Douglas*, on 1 June (HK).

**Hepatic Tanager:** Five were noted, though no documentation for any bird was submitted, during the season. The pair present at Prior, *Huerfano*, in 2004, apparently returned in 2005 where they were seen between 17 and 25 June (SSt, NP). A male was also reported from U.S. Forest Service lands in *Routt*, which is exceptionally far north in the state, on 25 June (ABO). Photographic evidence was also submitted of a nesting pair seen at Trinidad, *Las Animas*, by Wolfe in June. The CBRC requests details on all of the Hepatic Tanager reports during the season.

**Western Tanager:** Late for the elevation, one was at Fort Collins on 21 June (DAL).

**Northern Cardinal:** Unusually far west, one (sex not submitted) was seen at Castlewood Canyon SP, *Douglas*, between 1 and 3 June (BSh, HK, UK). Even further west, a female was evidently at Salida, *Chaffee*, where seen by Vickery and Emmer on 20 June. The CBRC requests details for cardinals west of the immediate Front Range.

**Rose-breasted Grosbeak:** Five were reported during the summer season. A male was at McKay Lake in *Adams* on 1 June (EZ). Another male was at Ovid between 6 and 25 June (HA). Very far west, a female-type was at Durango on 21 June (JBy). A male was at Scroggs Canyon in Colorado City on 3 July (DSi). And another female-type was at the Environmental Learning Center in Fort Collins on 31 July (DAL).

**Dickcissel:** It was a bumper year for Dickcissel across the eastern plains, especially in the northeastern region as the species could be heard from many areas. The furthest west reports were of three at Winkler Ranch, *Douglas* (GW, MPe) and near Colorado Springs (MPe, JPe, SPe) during the period.

**Eastern Meadowlark:** Encouraging and exciting were the pair present and documented near Bellvue, *Larimer*, where present from 22 June through the remainder of the period (DAL, SSe, m.ob.).

**Baltimore Oriole:** Three were reported west of its breeding range, though none were documented. One was northeast of Boulder on 2 June (fide Plooster). One was at Watson Lake in *Larimer* on 4 June (SRo). Another was at Crow Valley CG on 5 June (NK, NAK, CWi).

**Brown-capped Rosy-Finch:** Up to 50 foraged at a bird feeder at the home of Nancy Gobris in Estes Park, *Larimer*, on 11 June (TL, LS). This area is within a Lodgepole Pine forest and well downslope of breeding habitat, providing evidence for the late spring snows that still continued in alpine areas of the state during early summer. A flyover was also seen at Clear Creek Res., *Chaffee*, on 4 June (TL).

**Lesser Goldfinch:** Northeast of usual, a pair were seen at Keenesburg, *Weld*, on 7 June by Hyde.

#### Contributing Observers

Susan Allerton, Henry Armknecht, Sandy Arneson (SAr), Larry Arnold, James

Beatty (JBy), Alan Bell (ABl), Richard Bell, Andy Boyce (ABo), Alan Burns (ABs), Jacob Cooper, Ray Davis, Justin Dee, Coen Dexter (CDr), Beth Dillon, David Elwonger (DEr), Mark Emmer, Doug Faulkner (DFa), Ted Floyd, Peter Gent (PGe), JoAnn Hackos (JHs), Randy Hancock (RHa), Tim & Melissa Hansen, Paula Hansley, Mary Harris (MHa), ? Harris (via RBA), Rachel Hopper (RHo), Ingrid Huskey, Lauren Hyde, Tina Jones, Bill Kaempfer, Joey Kellner (JKr), Hugh Kingery, Urling Kingery, Nick Komar (NKr), Nick A. Komar (NAK), Nic Korte (NKe), Kaye Lafreniere, Steve Larson, David Leatherman (DAL), Tony Leukering, Rich Levad (RLe), Roger Linfield (RLi), Tom Litteral (TLi), Forrest Luke, Bill Maynard, Steve Messick (SMe), Duane Nelson, Arvind Panjabi, Jeff Peterson (JPe), Mark Peterson (MPe), Brandon K. Percival (BKP), Jack Peterson (JPe), Shana Peterson (SPe), Nathan Pieplow, Peter Plage, Suzi Plooster, Kim Potter, Scott Roederer (SRo), Joe Roller (JRr), Ira Sanders, Tammy Sanders, Scott Schaum (SSc), Bill Schmoker (BSc), Jim Schmoker, Scott Seltman (SSe), Larry Semo, Scott Shaum (SSh), Randy Siebert, Dave Silverman (DSi), Dixie Smith (DSm), Joyce Takamine (JTa), John Toolen (JTo), John Tumasonis, Van A. Truan (VAT), John Vanderpoel, Nancy Vickery, Linda Vidal, Glenn Walbek, David Waltman, Cole Wild (CWl), Laurel Williams (LWs), Joyce Wolfe, Brenda Wright, Sherrie York, Vic Zerbi, Eric Zorawowicz.

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