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Colorado Birds

The Colorado Field Ornithologists' Quarterly



Scoter Migration in South Park

The Most Wonderful Man: Alfred M. Bailey

44th Report of the Colorado Bird Records Committee



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nia, 17 Sep-
tember 2006.
Photo by Bill
Schmoker

Things to Look Forward To

Bill Schmoker

Hello, CFO members and those who've had this journal passed on to them. I hope this note finds you well and enjoying whatever birds are in your bins these days. I write at the end of August, as hummingbird migration is winding down, shorebirds are on the move, and warblers are beginning to arrive from points north.

As birds have a yearly cycle, so does the work of the CFO board. After a brief respite on the heels of the successful Craig convention, we turn our efforts to getting all of the details in place for the Cañon City convention next May. One such critical detail is lining up our

Richard Crossley, co-author of the groundbreaking *Shorebird Guide*, will speak at our convention banquet next year.

keynote speaker. I'm pleased to announce that Richard Crossley, co-author of the groundbreaking *Shorebird Guide*, will speak at our convention banquet next year. Richard is a lifelong birder from Yorkshire, England by way of

Cape May, and has established himself on the cutting edge of identifying passerine birds in flight and using evidence like the size, structure, and behavior of birds as identification cues—a major theme of the *Shorebird Guide*. Richard's work on the book got him deeply into bird photography, and his style of capturing birds in action and in the context of their environment reflects his commitment to examine birds as part of "the big picture," not just feather-by-feather. I was fortunate to see Richard speak at the ABA's annual convention in Louisiana this past April, and I know we will benefit from his engaging personality and expert knowledge of bird identification.

Just after my submission deadline passed for the last *Colorado Birds* issue, we were able to recruit an outstanding person to fill our final vacant board seat. Kim Potter, a biologist for the US Forest Service based in Rifle, will serve as the awards chair. Kim is a long-time CFO member, and this is her second stint on the board. We will benefit from her extensive avian knowledge, her experience as a birding professional, her West Slope perspective, and her passion for Colorado's birds. I hope you will join me in thanking Kim for her commitment to serving CFO.

As my turn as President gets underway, I feel fortunate to have a fantastic board to work with. As always, let me or any board member know if you have ideas, concerns, or questions about CFO.

What to do with an old CB

If you don't intend to keep your copy of this journal, perhaps you could pass it along to someone who would benefit from it instead of recycling it. Who knows—you might turn someone on to CFO, gaining us another member!

Enjoy!

Bill Schmoker, 3381 Larkspur Drive, Longmont, CO, bill.schmoker@gmail.com

CFO BOARD MINUTES

Minutes of the 2007 Annual Meeting of the Colorado Field Ornithologists

10 June 2007

Holiday Inn Hotel & Suites

Craig, Colorado

Lisa Edwards, CFO Secretary

The meeting was called to order at 7:30 p.m. by outgoing President Norm Lewis.

Tony Leukering presented the first CFO Lifetime Achievement Award to Joe Himmel, thanking him for his nearly 50 years of contributions to Colorado birding.

Norm presented the new slate of officers to be elected for a term of two years: President, Bill Schmoker; Vice President, Jim Beatty; Secretary, Lisa Edwards; Treasurer, Maggie Boswell; one director to be elected for a term of three years, Mark Peterson; and new directors Bill Kaempfer and Connie Kogler to finish out unexpired terms. There were no nominations from the floor and the Officers and Directors were elected by voice vote. The other directors not up for election were Rachel Hopper and Glenn Walbek. Also attending was the CBRC chair, Larry Semo.

The hat was passed around the banquet room for donations to the Landowner Appreciation Plaque fund.

Norm announced that the 2008 convention will be held in Cañon City from 16 to 18 May.

The business meeting was adjourned at 7:51 p.m. Norm Lewis introduced the keynote speaker, Victor Emanuel. He presented a talk entitled "My Top Ten Birding Places."

Recipient of the First Colorado Field Ornithologists' Lifetime Achievement Award: Joe Himmel

Tony Leukering

In 1995, the Colorado Field Ornithologists established the Ronald A. Ryder Award for Distinguished Service to Colorado Field Ornithology. The first recipient of that award was the very award's namesake. The Ryder Award is presented, specifically, for:

- Distinguished service to the Colorado Field Ornithologists' organization and its goals;
- Scholarly contributions to the Colorado Field Ornithologists and to Colorado field ornithology;
- Sharing knowledge of Colorado field ornithology with the people of the state of Colorado.

The awards have been presented in large part on the basis of the second criterion and the technical (read "published") aspect of the third criterion. These criteria have been interpreted primarily to mean the scientific literature; at least, the recipients are all individuals who have either published extensively in the scientific literature or written books concerning Colorado bird distribution in that in-between world of semi-popular scientific literature.



Joe Himmel (right) with Joe Roller at the CFO convention banquet, 8 June 2007. Photo by Dick Maxfield

In the very early years of this millennium, when I was on the CFO Board of Directors, I proposed that the organization recognize service to field ornithology in the state that was provided in a less formal setting than that required by the more rigorous criteria of the Ryder Award. I felt that this was particularly important because very few of Colorado's birders have the interest, time,

and/or ability to add to the published literature on Colorado birds in the ways that the recipients of the Ryder Award have. I did not want to dilute the importance of that award, but since much of the knowledge presented in the various publications authored by Ryder Award recipients was actually gathered by Colorado's long-term birders, I felt that recognition of that fact by CFO would be appropriate.

In that vein, I considered the many worthy candidates I knew who might serve as the "holotype," as it were, for such an award. My mind quickly raced to a single individual as a paragon of such virtues: Joe Himmel. In 2007, the CFO Board acted on my suggestion and agreed with me concerning the award's first recipient.

I first became acquainted with Joe in 1994, in my first fall in Colorado, as he visited Barr Lake when I was running the long-term bird-banding station there. I was impressed by his interest in expanding his own already expansive knowledge set and his seemingly inexhaustible gentleness. Having run into him quite a few times in the field since then, and having also talked to many other Colorado birders on the subject of Joe, I find that my impression of him has not changed one iota since that first meeting.

Joe arrived in Colorado in 1960 and spent the rest of his working career as a music professor at the University of Northern Colorado, retiring in 1986. However, the important bit of his life, at least concerning the award's topic, is that Joe is most likely the birder who has spent the most time at the world-renowned Pawnee National Grassland in Weld County, and particularly at its spectacular migrant trap, the Crow Valley Campground. Yes, Joe regularly birds other areas in and around his home town of Greeley, but his efforts are among those that actually put the CVCG, as it is affectionately known, on the world's birding map. He visits the campground with amazing regularity and has found such a large number of rare birds there over the years as to preclude delineation in this venue. Thanks to his finding and reporting of such birds, many a Colorado birder has added more than one species to her/his Colorado or Weld County or life list. Joe has been a long-time contributor of information to the News From the Field column of this journal (in all its nomenclatural iterations) and to similar columns in the journal *North American Birds* (and all of its previous incarnations).

Joe, in the experience of many to whom I've spoken, seems always to have the time to chat with others in the field, passing on his knowledge and expertise about his stomping grounds and suggestions about and directions to nearby birding sites, something he did with a birder known as Pete Dunne when that august personage was in the process of falling in love with the Pawnee (as detailed in his book

Feather Quest). He has also taken more than a few birders under his wing in at least an informal mentoring process, with one of the most recent being Dick Maxfield.

I was most honored to be able to present this well-deserved award to Joe at the 2007 convention of the organization held in Craig. Joe, may you always enjoy your sojourns into the field after Colorado's delightful birds, and when the time comes, may your friends and family be able to fulfill your wish of scattering your ashes under the famous three junipers at Crow Valley Campground!

Tony Leukering, P.O. Box 660, Brighton, CO, greatgrayowl@aol.com

CFO Lifetime Achievement Award

This new award has been created to recognize birders who:

- are long-time contributors of distributional (seasonal and geographic) data on the avifauna of Colorado;
- have spent a considerable amount of time in the field, locally and/or statewide;
- have mentored or assisted others in the Colorado birding community.

Email nominations to awards@cfo-link.org. Awards will be presented at the annual convention.

ACROSS THE BOARD

Lisa Edwards, CFO Secretary

Bill Schmoker

Lisa Edwards cites her parents as the biggest influence in developing her interest in birds. They fed birds from Virginia to California, and Lisa still remembers her Mom pointing out a beautiful male Rose-breasted Grosbeak in their Fairfax, Virginia backyard. Although Lisa has lived in several places throughout the US and overseas and has traveled to several different continents, it was not until her move to southwest Kansas that she was drawn into looking for birds beyond her own backyard feeders.

Southwest Kansas was a great place to study raptors. Mississippi Kites were

a regular yard bird. Being involved in animal agriculture allowed Lisa to admire Swainson's Hawks in the summers, while Rough-legged and Red-tailed Hawks, Prairie Falcons, and the occasional Golden or Bald Eagle held her attention in the winter months. Spring and summer allowed for studying shorebirds and watching American Avocets and Black-necked Stilts build nests. Summer rains were challenging for those birds, as their nests were often flooded out by the heavy May and June rains.

However, it was the Internet that really opened up the world of birding for Lisa. Through it she was able to meet many other birders from across Kansas and get to know them during the legendary annual fall birding rendezvous in Morton County. At this stage, Lisa got hooked on the county busting bug. In fact, she keeps the county listing numbers for Kansas birders to this day. County birding has been a great way for her to explore the state and learn about bird distribution. I'm sure we can all relate to her assertion that there are many gorgeous areas she probably never would have found if she wasn't out looking for birds in various obscure places for her county lists.

Along with her husband Gary, Lisa made a lifestyle/career change in 2000 and landed in Colorado. The other option was Tennessee. Fortunately for the Colorado birding community, Lisa hasn't looked back since!

Gary has discovered that Lisa will never run out of birds to see, and that therefore almost all of their trips will involve some birding. One of his favorite stories for many years was that he had Whooping Crane on his life list for 10 years before she finally had the pleasure of seeing a family group one fall at Cheyenne Bottoms in Kansas. When they travel to see their two children Amy and Michael in Kansas City and St. Louis, the family knows that Lisa will be out birding for at least a few hours every morning.

As the secretary for Colorado Field Ornithologists, Lisa is primar-



Lisa Edwards on Guanella Pass after a successful hunt for White-tailed Ptarmigan.

ily responsible for setting board meeting agendas, recording minutes, and maintaining our various non-financial records. She also enjoys helping to organize the annual convention and its associated field trips. Lisa aims to make sure that CFO is able to provide each field trip participant with a great birding experience at each convention. She appreciates the fact that the field trips allow many birders the opportunity to get out and bird parts of Colorado that they may not otherwise see, with birders they may not otherwise get to meet. Another aspect of CFO that she is very proud of is its Youth Scholarship Program, which sponsors young Colorado birders wishing to attend birding camps, meetings, or conventions throughout the country.

If you get the chance, please join me in thanking Lisa for her hard work behind the scenes at CFO. She is a key member of our board of directors, and we all benefit from her great organizational and planning skills. Thanks, Lisa!

Bill Schmoker, 3381 Larkspur Drive, Longmont, CO, bill.schmoker@gmail.com

CFO Project Fund Application Deadline: 1 December 2007

The CFO Project Fund has a limited amount of money for grants to qualifying individuals or organizations for projects that will have a lasting benefit to Colorado birds and the habitats upon which they rely. Grants typically range from \$600 to \$1500, although we will consider partially funding grants. Often CFO Project Fund grants are considered as matching funds for other larger grants. The Project Fund Committee requires that the recipients of funding publish a short year-end summary of funded work in Colorado Birds and/or present some of their findings at the CFO convention in the next calendar year.

Grant Schedule

- All applications must be postmarked no later than December 1st.
- Successful applicants will be notified after the March CFO Board Meeting.
- Following completion of the project, the applicant must submit a final report in writing by February of the next calendar year. This report should include a full description of the project activities and an accounting of money spent.

Please see the following page on the CFO website for all Project Fund guidelines: http://cfo-link.org/about_CFO/project_fund.php.

South Park and the Mysteries of Scoter Migration

Nathan Pieplow and Andrew Spencer

Introduction: Kellner's Hypothesis

It was in late September of 2001 that Joey Kellner formulated his hypothesis about scoters in Colorado. He had noted that Big Johnson Reservoir in El Paso County seemed to get more than its fair share of scoters in fall migration—but only late in the season, usually in November. Joey's hunch was that the birds were moving downslope when mountain reservoirs froze, and he wondered what birders might find if they visited, say, the South Park reservoirs—Eleven Mile, Spinney Mountain, and Antero—in October, before the ice appeared.

A few weeks later, putting Kellner's Hypothesis to the test, the authors of this article found themselves on the dam at Spinney Mountain Reservoir, looking at the largest flock of scoters ever reported in the state up until then: 18 total scoters, 11 Surf and 7 White-winged. Subsequent visits by many birders have enjoyed comparable success, and now South Park has a reputation for being the scoter capital of Colorado; it might even lay claim to being the single best site at which to observe scoter migration in the entire Interior West.

This article, six years in the making, is a result of our research into the many questions raised by our experiences with South Park scoters. Is South Park's scoter advantage real or imagined? If it is real, is the phenomenon recent or just recently discovered? Where are these scoters coming from and where are they going? And what is it about South Park that attracts them in such numbers? Answers to many of these questions remain elusive, but here we hope to shed some light—if not on the answers, then at least on the paths thereto.

The scoter records on which our analyses are based were compiled by Andrew Spencer from *Colorado Bird Notes*, the newsletter of the Colorado Bird Club (1955-1967); *Colorado Birds* in all its incarnations (1967-2006); and online reports to COBirds and the West Slope Birding Network (2001-2006). Outside of South Park, records were assumed to indicate separate birds when reported from different locations or separated by a week or more. Cases where the observer felt the reports pertained to separate individuals were also treated as separate records. A combination of factors was used to determine whether records from South Park involved different birds: age and sex of the birds were considered first, but also taken into account were the amount of turnover in other birds on the lakes, number of

birds present in the scoter flock, and time between reports. The complete data set is available for download as a PDF file from the CFO website: <http://www.cfo-link.org>; it is referenced in the text as “web supplement.”

Historical Trends: Increases of Scoter Records in Colorado

Scoter numbers have increased dramatically over the past few decades in Colorado. Bailey & Niedrach (1965) considered all three species of scoter rare, with Black the least regular and White-winged somewhat more “common” than Surf. Records maintained by the Colorado Bird Club for the period from 1955 through 1967 recorded, on average, two to four scoters per year (web supplement). While patchy, records maintained in this journal from 1968 through 2000 noted an average of six scoters per year. Since 2001, however, Colorado has averaged nearly *seventy* scoters per year (Table 1), a stunning increase. In the worst year of the present century, 2004, only 39 were seen—still more than *six times* the average of the prior three decades.

Table 1: Total scoters in Colorado and South Park, 2001-2006.

Total Scoters in Colorado by Year			
Year	Surf	White-winged	Black
2001	30	16	8
2002	49	17	5
2003	35	17	5
2004	20	10	9
2005	45	16	12
2006	79	24	19
Average	43.00	16.67	9.67

Total Scoters in South Park by Year			
Year	Surf	White-winged	Black
2001	17	10	0
2002	28	5	1
2003	22	1	1
2004	4	1	2
2005	15	2	2
2006	47	14	4
Average	22.17	5.50	1.67
% of State Avg	51.55%	33.00%	17.24%

Interestingly, the increase in scoter numbers in Colorado seems to be bucking the continental trend. Although reliable population data are few, all three North American scoter species appear to have been in slow but steady decline rangewide for many decades (Bordage & Savard 1995, Brown & Fredrickson 1997, Savard et al. 1998). This deepens the mystery as to why scoter records have increased so astonishingly in Colorado.



Black Scoter, Chatfield SP, Douglas/Jefferson Counties, 4 December 2005. Photo by Glenn Walbek

Among the many possible explanations, one of the most discussed is an increase in observer coverage, which doubtless accounts for a great portion of the rise in scoter numbers. In particular, it is the major factor in all of the South Park records since 2001; before then birders almost never visited Park County. This alone explains half the increase, since South Park produced nearly 43% of all scoter records in Colorado from 2001-2006 (Table 1).

While the increase in observer coverage undoubtedly can explain some of the increase in scoter numbers, analysis of records of scoters from locations covered thoroughly for decades indicates that it cannot be the only cause. For example, Chatfield Reservoir, regularly visited since its inception in 1975 by Hugh Kingery, Frank Justice, and (more recently) Joey Kellner, has seen a marked increase in scoter numbers in the last 10 years despite fairly even coverage effort (Joey Kellner, pers. comm.). Barr Lake, while never one of the better scoter lakes, has also seen a noticeably larger number of scoters in the last ten years than in the previous 40, according to reports in *Colorado Birds*.

A hypothesis put forward by Sharpe et al. (2001) and reiterated by Mlodinow (2007) might explain the phenomenon. It proposes that the increase in reservoir acreage in the Great Plains states and Rocky Mountain region has turned what used to be vagrancy into what now might be incipient range expansion. According to

this theory, the increase in reservoirs has increased survival rates among midcontinental migrants and possible winterers, who therefore return to the breeding grounds in greater numbers to produce descendents with genes for midcontinental migration. Should this hypothesis be correct, then scoter numbers should continue to increase during the next few decades. The theory would also predict that Colorado's scoters would demonstrate a high ratio of returning adults to immatures. If true, it might also apply to other waterbird species that breed in central and arctic Canada and winter on salt-water, potentially explaining apparent increases in Colorado during the last 15 years of species such as Pacific Loon and Red Phalarope (Mlodinow 2007, pers. obs.).

Species Ratios and Geography

An important part of the scoter puzzle is the apparent shift in species ratios during the last few decades. While White-winged Scoter was the species most likely to be encountered from the 1950s through the 1980s, any birder in the state could tell you that Surf has been the most common in recent years. Analysis of the historical records indicate a 2.5:1 ratio of White-winged to Surf Scoters from 1956 to 1996, almost the reverse of the 2.6:1 ratio of Surf to White-winged Scoters seen from 2001 to 2006 (Table 1). This reversal of ratios occurred gradually; Surf Scoter did not become the more common bird on any regular basis until 1999, and in 2000 the ratio was 1:1 (web supplement).

The other striking change in scoter numbers in the past few decades has occurred in Black Scoter. Formerly a CBRC review species, with fewer than 20 accepted records prior to 2000, in recent years it has been seen in ever-increasing numbers, with a maximum of 19 in 2006 (Table 1). Anecdotal evidence indicates that this increase is not limited to Colorado; observers have noted it in Nebraska and Iowa as well (R. Silcock, S. Dinsmore pers. comm.).

A perusal of the records of scoter species in neighboring states shows that, historically, Surf Scoter has decreased in abundance the farther east onto the plains one goes, but increased in abundance relative to the other two species farther west. In Kansas, both White-winged and Surf Scoters are listed as "rare fall transients," but Surf accumulated only 17 records of 23 individuals prior to 1980, compared to 29 reports of 35 individuals for White-winged during the same period (Thompson & Ely 1989). As expected, this situation is mirrored in Nebraska, with a total of "30-35" fall reports for Surf Scoter and 55 for White-winged during the last century (Sharpe et al. 2001). North-central Texas has shown a similar ratio, albeit with much smaller numbers (Pulich 1988); however, in the Texas Pan-

handle, the ratio of Surf to White-winged Scoters was surprisingly high, about 2:1 (Seyffert 2001).

To the west of Colorado the scoter ratios change substantially. In Utah, Surf Scoter outnumbers White-winged approximately three to one, and Black is about as common as White-winged (T. Avery, pers. comm.). The overall numbers of scoter reports in Utah have also increased over the past few decades, but nowhere near to the same extent as in Colorado. The increase in Utah may be attributable to increased observer effort rather than a true increase in the number of birds; given our present knowledge, evidence for significant changes in species ratios there is scant.

In view of this overall picture, the differential species ratios of scoters within Colorado become easier to explain. Outside of South Park, almost every scoter seen in the state is along the Front Range, and the ratio of these scoter records since 2001 has been 2.6:1 Surf to White-winged, and 4.5:1 Surf to Black (Table 1). In South Park, though, the ratio changes to 4.0:1 Surf to White-winged, and 13.3:1 Surf to Black (Table 1), in keeping with the trend of increasing abundance of Surf Scoter as one heads west.

Age and Sex Ratios

As mentioned above, if scoters are increasingly following a regular migratory pathway along the Rocky Mountains, one could assume we should see adult birds accounting for a high percentage of records. This is particularly true since all three species are long-lived, with relatively low recruitment rates (Bordage & Savard 1995, Brown & Fredrickson 1997, Savard et al. 1998). However, the ratio of age and sex classes of migrant scoters in Colorado presents something of a puzzle.

Female-plumaged birds make up nearly all the reports of scoters in the state, both historically and currently. Most of these have been reported simply as "female/immature," since plumages of young birds and adult females are difficult to distinguish (Sibley 2000). In all species, adult males comprise a tiny minority of all reports; since they are much easier to age and sex, we can be fairly confident that they are not underrepresented in the ratios. Historical specimen records, all collected in the fall, favor adults. Of the nine White-winged Scoter skins in the collections of the Denver Museum of Nature and Science, five are adults (four females and a male) and four are immatures (one female and three males). The nine skins of Surf Scoter are even more strikingly skewed toward adults: four adult males and three adult females, with only two immatures, both males (Bailey & Niedrach 1965).

Table 2: Age and sex of Colorado scoters, 2001-2006.

	Surf	White-winged	Black
Adult Male	6	7	3
Adult Female	5	7	2
Immatures	27	7	3
Female/Imm.	156	41	35
Unreported	64	38	15
Total	258	100	58

Since 2001, the majority of Surf Scoters that have been sexed and aged by observers have proven to be first-cycle birds; the other two species show a slight advantage for adults, but their sample sizes are small (Table 2). If the age/sex identifications are correct, and if the ratio among identified birds is representative of the ratio among the larger number left unidentified in the “female/immature” class, then first-year Surf Scoters are arriving in Colorado in much larger numbers than their parents, since it has been estimated that in this species at least, only 0.9 to 2.1 chicks per pair survive to fledge annually (Savard et al. 1998). This may seem surprising, but it should be noted that juveniles of many passerine species are believed to migrate via different routes in their first years than in subsequent years (T. Leukering, pers. comm.). It could be that scoters who migrate through Colorado as juveniles but not as adults are surviving their first southward migrations in greater numbers and thus passing on their genes to more offspring who will follow the same path. However, since the vast majority of the scoters that have shown up recently in Colorado have only been identified as female/immature, it is quite possible that many of them are indeed adult females. In order to unravel this mystery, we will need more data on the sex and age of scoters seen in Colorado.

Scoter Migration Routes: What We Know

In order to understand where Colorado’s scoters are coming from and where they are going, we must look at the bigger picture of scoter migration on this continent. The migration routes of the three North American species of scoter have, until recently, been poorly understood. Thanks to a large number of satellite telemetry studies in recent years funded by the Sea Duck Joint Venture, however, the pile of data on scoter migration is steadily growing. On the whole, it may be fair to say that scoters make some of the most complicated seasonal movements of any North American bird.

Many North American birders tend to think of seasonal bird

movements in a tripartite fashion, dividing a bird's year up into "breeding," "wintering," and "migration" phases, the first two occurring in small areas in which a bird spends many months, the third taking place along more-or-less straight-line routes between these areas. Scoter movements explode this simplistic model. For one thing, most scoters demonstrate a well-defined "molt migration": following breeding, they move to a location far from either breeding or wintering grounds in which to spend several weeks or months molting their wing feathers, during which time they become temporarily flightless. The situation is further complicated by the very different migration routes of the sexes: male scoters spend very little time on the "breeding grounds"—basically no more time than it takes to fertilize their mates—before setting off for their molt migration, frequently to an entirely different location than the females, who will molt somewhere else with their young much later in the year. It would be perfectly normal, for example, for a male Surf Scoter to winter in San Francisco Bay, pair with a female there, follow her to a breeding location near Yellowknife in the Yukon, then molt on the Bering Sea before returning to San Francisco. The female he mated with in Yellowknife, meanwhile, might molt near Juneau, Alaska, or on the Great Slave Lake; it is possible that her place of molt may depend on the success of her brood (T. Leukering, pers. comm.). Given the vast differences between the sexes and between spring and fall movements in individual scoters, it is not surprising that Colorado sees so few adult males in fall, and so few scoters of any type in the spring.

In addition to the segregated molt migration, many scoters show complicated patterns of movement at all times of year. They frequently stage for long periods during spring migration at locations such as the Restigouche and St. Lawrence River mouths in eastern Canada (Perry et al. 2004), sometimes spending more than a month in these places halfway between "winter" and "summer" territories. Furthermore, at least one cohort of radio-tracked Surf Scoters on the East Coast showed an odd tendency to spend the first half of the winter in the greater Cape Cod/Long Island Sound area, then suddenly move, in a matter of two to four days, to the coast of the Carolinas or even Florida, there apparently to spend the rest of the winter (Perry et al. 2004). Even the assumption that individual scoters follow the same migratory paths year after year may not hold true; at least one male White-winged Scoter captured in Puget Sound that carried an active transmitter for two years made substantially different movements in those years, molting and wintering in the same places but possibly breeding in different areas (due to following different mates?), and



Fig. 1. Map of postbreeding movements of female Surf Scoters. Solid squares and arrows depict nest sites and flight paths of birds wintering on the Pacific Coast; outlined squares and arrows depict nest sites and flight paths of birds wintering on the Atlantic. Compiled by N. Pieplow from data in Rosenberg & Petrula 1998, Perry et al. 2004, Nysewander et al. 2005, Ward et al. 2005, WERC 2005, SDJV 2007

certainly following post-breeding migratory routes that differed by hundreds of miles (Nysewander et al. 2005).

Scoter Migration in Colorado: Mysteries and Conjectures

To date, no radio-tracked scoter has ever come through Colorado, or indeed anywhere close to it, and the variety of travel paths that the hundred-odd tracked birds have taken is dizzyingly diverse. Nonetheless, we make the following generalizations, based on telemetry studies and a number of published reports (e.g., Savard et al. 1998, Perry et al. 2004). Scoters tend to move short distances (less than 100 miles) quite frequently when on seacoasts or very large lakes,

a tendency that sometimes results in protracted coastal migrations and rather wide “ranges” for individual birds in staging, wintering, or molting areas. Overland, by comparison, although they sometimes make stops on large lakes, scoters tend to cover long distances in short periods of time. For example, it is typical of the scoters that molt in the James Bay region to linger there in fall for weeks before moving almost overnight to the mid-Atlantic coast, sometimes reaching the Chesapeake Bay area in a mere 48 hours, perhaps not even stopping at the Great Lakes (Perry et al. 2004).

The migration of scoters in their first year remains poorly known, so our attempts to discover where Colorado’s scoters spend the rest of their year will concentrate on the movements of adult females. Fig. 1 shows some of the more common routes taken by female Surf Scoters in moving from nest sites to wintering grounds. The molt migration in females is less well-defined than in males; some females molt on the breeding grounds, while others move to areas where some males also molt, such as Hudson and James Bays, the St. Lawrence Seaway, and the coast of British Columbia (e.g., Brown & Fredrickson 1997); many of these routes do not appear on the map. The breeding ranges of the Atlantic and Pacific wintering populations meet in north-central Canada, along a line stretching from northwest to southeast, running just north and east of the Great Bear and Great Slave Lakes into extreme northwest Manitoba. In the area along this line, birds wintering on different coasts breed next to each other and perhaps with each other. The breeding White-winged Scoters at Redberry Lake in Saskatchewan, for instance, are about evenly split between Atlantic and Pacific winterers (Brown & Fredrickson 1997).

Although the data used to generate the figure were gathered from Surf Scoters, telemetry data indicate that female scoters of the other two species exhibit comparable patterns. Thus the movements of scoters appear to vary much more between the sexes in all three species than they do between the species in either sex.

As Fig. 1 indicates, most scoters that breed in inland Canada reach the sea via the most direct routes possible, almost always arriving at saltwater while still north of the 49th Parallel. Colorado’s scoters, obviously, are taking a much more southerly and central route, and it therefore seems logical that they nest in the more southerly and central parts of the breeding range, though no hard data exist to support this conclusion. Such an assumption would place their nest sites in the general area of the four-corner junction of Saskatchewan, Manitoba, Nunavut, and the Northwest Territories.

Where do Colorado’s scoters spend the winter? Only a tiny fraction of them winter in Colorado. If headed for saltwater, they could

be on their way to the Gulf Coast of Texas or to the Pacific Coast of California, including the northern end of the Gulf of California. They could also be spending the season on large freshwater reservoirs to the south of Colorado. While scoters have been observed in winter in all these locations, the Pacific Coast of Baja California and California seem most likely. For one thing, scoters are rare in winter in all the other locations mentioned (e.g., Savard et al. 1998). For another, the species ratio of scoters in Colorado allies it strongly with the ratios of states to the south and west, not to the east. Arizona seems to have a species ratio similar to Colorado's, and birds are more commonly seen there in November and December than later in the winter, suggesting that they move on to other wintering grounds (Rosenberg & Witzeman 1999). They may be moving to the Gulf of California, but scoters there tend to stay far from land, making them hard to count (Russell & Monson 1998). Russell and Monson consider Surf Scoter the "most common sea duck" in Sonora, while White-winged is called "rare." CBC data concur: between 1989 and 2004, the Puerto Peñasco Christmas Bird Count recorded a yearly average of 15 Surf Scoters, but only a single White-winged Scoter and zero Black Scoters were observed on the count during that period (National Audubon Society 2005).

Interestingly, the only publicly available telemetry studies to date of scoters wintering off Baja California indicate that of three Surf Scoters tracked north, one migrated only as far as the area of Juneau, Alaska, while the other two apparently bred in an area in the extreme northwestern Northwest Territories, far from the postulated area of provenance in the south-central portion of the species' breeding range (Ward et al. 2005). However, since scoters migrating through Colorado clearly make up a tiny fraction of the breeding population, the 0/3 score should not be surprising, and a south-central breeding origin for Colorado's scoters remains plausible (J. Takekawa, pers. comm.).

The South Park Advantage: Real or Imagined?

There can be little doubt that the South Park scoter advantage is real. Birders reported 176 individual scoters from its three lakes in just the first six years of this century, which accounts for nearly half of all the scoters reported statewide during that period (Table 1). It seems unlikely that such a large effect could be produced simply by preferential observer effort.

The question of how recent this phenomenon actually is remains obscure. In theory, scoters may have been using these reservoirs since their construction: Antero in 1909, Eleven Mile in 1932, and

Spinney Mountain in 1981. But coverage of these lakes was very spotty prior to 2001, so it is impossible to accurately compare historical data to current observations. Likely, however, the numbers of scoters in South Park have increased during the past few decades just as they have along the Front Range.

Explaining the reasons for the South Park advantage proves extremely difficult.

Part of Kellner's original prediction that scoters would appear in South Park was based on the assumption that some migrating waterfowl follow the main Rocky Mountain chain through the state. If so, they would need large reservoirs to break their migration. But many mountain reservoirs seem to attract very few waterfowl at any season, such as Dillon Reservoir, Williams Fork Reservoir, Green Mountain Reservoir, and Twin Lakes, while others, especially Lake John and Walden Reservoir in North Park, Shadow Mountain and Windy Gap Reservoirs in Middle Park, and San Luis Lake in the San Luis Valley, can get enormous numbers of ducks but very few scoters compared to South Park. What makes scoters choose the South Park reservoirs?

One hypothesis credits the very large area of open, flat land to their north, postulating that southbound scoters and other ducks can see them from a far greater distance than most other mountain lakes. This definitely sets the South Park lakes apart from many other large mountain lakes, especially those in Middle Park (e.g., Lake Granby, Shadow Mountain Reservoir, and Wolford Mountain Reservoir), which are closely surrounded on at least one side by mountains and extensive forests, and might therefore be less visible at a distance. Why the lakes in North Park and the San Luis Valley don't enjoy the same results is a mystery, however. They lie at the south end of even larger expanses of treeless flats, and the mountains surrounding North Park, in particular, should "funnel" migrants just as efficiently as South Park. It is possible that the larger number of smaller lakes



Surf Scoters, Spinney Mountain Reservoir, Park County, October 2002. Photo by Andrew Spencer



*White-winged Scoter, Cherry Creek State Park
Arapahoe County, 24 November 2006. Photo by
Glenn Walbek*

scattered throughout North Park might dilute migrants, but even so, North Park's scoter numbers are so miniscule compared to South Park's that this could barely account for a fraction of the difference.

It seems likely that the South Park reservoirs may offer a food resource that other lakes do not. On saltwater, all three species of scoters subsist almost entirely on mollusks, especially clams and mussels; on freshwater, they eat primar-

ily invertebrates, particularly amphipods and insect larvae (Bordage & Savard 1995, Brown & Fredrickson 1997, Savard et al. 1998). Our research has not been able to clarify exactly how the South Park reservoirs may differ from other mountain lakes in substrate and food resources, but it is worth noting that both Spinney Mountain and Eleven Mile reservoirs are renowned as extraordinarily productive fisheries thanks to their high concentrations of zooplankton, aquatic insects, crayfish, and amphipods (Gerlich 2001). A high concentration of mollusks or another preferred food of scoters might explain why they congregate on these lakes. It might also lengthen the average stay of each scoter, making it more likely to be observed (and possibly even double-counted via our data-collection methods). Longer average stopover periods might help explain why the size of scoter flocks in South Park regularly surpasses that of flocks elsewhere in the state (web supplement), if birds arriving in ones and twos regularly stay long enough to be joined by other scoters.

Conclusion

The number of scoters that has appeared at Spinney Mountain, Eleven Mile, and Antero Reservoirs in the past six years has been phenomenal. It will be interesting to see just exactly how this phenomenon continues as observers check these lakes over the next few years and decades. These observers, however, should be aware of how much remains unexplained about scoter migration. By documenting observations—and especially by making a serious and informed effort to age and sex all scoters in migration—Colorado birders could help

solve some heretofore intractable mysteries about these fascinating birds, which are still some of the least understood of all our waterfowl.

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PROFILE IN ORNITHOLOGY

The Most Wonderful Man: Alfred M. Bailey

Saraiya Ruano

As I stood behind the table in Patricia Witherspoon's dining room, I looked at a large painting crowded with seabirds. It depicted mainly albatrosses and frigatebirds as they soared in a stark blue sky and nested on a sandy beach surrounded by an expanse of ocean. Nearby hung a smaller painting of two cherry-red Laysan Honeyeaters among foliage. "That's one of the places we'll be talking about," Ms. Witherspoon said before briefly leaving me to put on some lipstick.

We walked outside and sat at a wooden picnic table. I set up my camera and flipped open my notebook, ready to hear about her father, the legendary naturalist, Alfred Bailey. After telling me how much she loves talking about her father, she looked me in the eyes and said with enthusiasm, "He's the person I have loved more than anybody in this whole world. He is the most wonderful man." Her eyes sparkling with childhood memory, she recalled how he would share his adventures with her, sometimes taking her along. Her father, and therefore nature, was a part of her from the very beginning.

Bailey is perhaps most famous for his co-authoring the book *Birds of Colorado*, published in 1965, which covers the life histories of 439 spe-

cies of Colorado birds. The result of over forty years of collaborative effort between Bailey and Robert Niedrach, the book is still considered a major scientific accomplishment today. Bailey is also remembered for his directorship at the Denver Museum of Natural History, where he added greatly to the wildlife halls and exhibits. His name adorns the covers of numerous scientific publications, accounts of his adventures, and museum pictorials. Nevertheless, few know the great scope of Bailey's accomplishments. Few know the extent of his travels, the profound

impact of his field work on numerous museums, and the far-reaching effects of his lifetime of commitment to wildlife and science.

Born in 1884 in Iowa City, Alfred Bailey lost his mother at a young age; his father remarried. He spent his formative years outdoors, developing interests in geology, botany, zoology, and entomology. Throughout high school Bailey enjoyed roaming the hills and hunting along the Iowa River. Neither parent was a naturalist or nature enthusiast; these were pastimes Bailey picked up alone.

Bailey's first opportunity as a field naturalist arose when he was a sophomore in college. He was offered a chance to accompany the Biological Survey, the predecessor to the Fish and Wildlife Service, as a cook on a three-month expedition from 1912-1913 to Laysan Island, 800 miles northwest of Honolulu. He had dreamed of visiting the island since the age of 10, after viewing a slide lecture in 1902. The idea of vast numbers of tame albatross, "man o' wars," and terns captivated his imagination. Lord Rothschild had described Laysan as "the most beautiful bird island in the whole world."



A.M. Bailey and Jerry at Demarcation Point, 15 August 1921. Courtesy of Denver Museum of Nature and Science



Masked Boobies. Leeward Chain, Hawaii. Photograph by Alfred M. Bailey December, 1912. Courtesy of Denver Museum of Nature and Science

Part of Bailey's assignment involved eradicating rabbits introduced in 1903. The rabbits, introduced by one of the men working on the phosphate deposits so that shipwrecked mariners would have something to hunt, had destroyed the island's vegetation. Bailey writes: "Unfortunately, we were poorly equipped to destroy the rabbits, for the thousands of burrows of nesting birds gave the animals so many hiding places that only poison bait could have eliminated them in the short time at our disposal. We killed more than five thousand with rifles, but only slowed up the destruction of vegetation." (Bailey 1956, p. 7). As a result of the rabbits, three endemic bird species would go extinct: Laysan Honeyeater, Laysan Rail, and Laysan Millerbird. Luckily, not all birds fared poorly on Laysan; Bailey was able to make observations on bird life including the numerous albatrosses. Black-footed and Laysan Albatrosses occupied the beach in large concentrations, performing unique dancing ceremonies during nesting periods.

After college, Bailey held his first position at the Louisiana State Museum in New Orleans as curator of birds and mammals in 1916. Here the museum began its first real use of motion picture to document fieldwork. Bailey would continue employing motion picture as a form of documentation in the years to come, becoming a great pioneer in nature cinematography. Bailey married Muriel Eggenburg on 16 June 1917, proceeding a few years later with his new wife to Juneau, Alaska on another offer from the Biological Survey. He would return to Alaska twice more. Along with field companion and friend

Russell Hendee, he collected and prepared many specimens, photographing natives as well as wildlife, and thus documenting their history.

In Alaska Bailey acquired the Airedale Jerry, a stray dog begging from various hotels and restaurants. Jerry had been abandoned by a diver who had come north to work on a shipwrecked Canadian vessel. The dog followed Bailey home and his wife took immediately to it. During grocery trips, the heavy-coated Airedale served as a guard to their infant daughter Beth.

Jerry also served as a diligent retriever of specimens in the field. In one instance, Bailey was provided with a chance to collect Ivory Gulls. The men shot four gulls and Jerry faithfully brought them in one at a time. The cold air hit the Airedale's coat, turning it solid with ice. The men did not realize that the thermometer at the time read 18 below zero, or they would have kept Jerry from his unrelenting fidelity.

Bailey's expeditions were not completely lacking in humor or uniqueness. While paddling in a canoe with Muriel, Bailey shot a male White-winged Scoter flying overhead. The bird hit the water but dived under. A nearby Bald Eagle circled overhead just where the scoter had disappeared. Folding its wings, the eagle dove and came back up with the scoter clenched in its talons. Bailey fired in the general direction of the eagle, startling the raptor and causing it to drop the prey on the sands below. Bailey reported, "I venture that we are the only hunters who ever had a bald eagle as a retriever" (Bailey 1971, p. 31).

While visiting in Nome in 1921, Bailey met the notorious Norwegian explorer Roald Amundsen, who had completed a three-year journey in 1906 over the top of North America, becoming the first to navigate the ice-filled Northwest Passage. Amundsen had been credited with discovering the South Pole in 1911. Amundsen's ship had become caught in the ice near the Siberian coast in the winter of 1920-21 and he was visiting Nome to get help in freeing his vessel. Here Bailey talked with the explorer on several occasions, picking up reports from earlier in the month on the numbers of rare Ross's Gulls off Siberia.

Bailey's field work in Alaska was rife with wildlife encounters and he made many advancements for the Denver Museum of Natural History, the evidence of which can be seen today in many of its exhibits. His fieldwork in the north resulted in the collecting of four groups of

large mammals and three exhibits on birds. He also obtained breeding records for four Asiatic birds and took the first specimens of eight North American species in Alaska, some of which were far north of their normal range. In one encounter, Bailey was thrilled at the chance to collect a true prize: "Collecting in the very late fall was not too productive, but we were successful in securing specimens of the rare and little known Ross's gulls which few naturalists have been privileged to see in the field" (Bailey 1971, p.111). Numerous publications still of scientific interest came about from his work up north, including *Notes on the Mammals of Northwestern Alaska* (1926), *Birds of Southeastern Alaska* (1927), *Birds of Cape Prince of Wales* (1943), and *Birds of Arctic Alaska* (1948).

During the four years between 1922 and 1926, Bailey made visits to Colorado, Labrador, and the Bahamas. While in the Bahamas to secure specimens of coral and fish for the Colorado Museum of Natural History, he discovered a species of iguana new to science. He had traveled to an island named "Bitter Guana" thinking "guana" meant the presence of guano and therefore seabirds. Instead, he found the island vacant of birds but teeming with iguana that the natives claimed ate their crops, making it impossible to farm. The new species was named *Cyclura figginsii*, in honor of the Director of the Museum, Jesse Figgins.

On August 3, 1925, Bailey's second daughter, Pat, was born. Although absent in his earliest adventures, Pat would now be a part of many of Bailey's future jaunts, some of which she has shared for the purpose of this essay. The birth of another child did not keep him from his fieldwork, as he would soon travel to Abyssinia, present day Ethiopia, in 1926 for the Chicago Natural History Museum. His team of five were the first Americans to travel in the remote places, and Bailey became the first American to collect an Abyssinian Ibex. He traveled two thousand miles by mule through the highlands, accompanied by the great bird artist Louis Fuertes and noted zoologist Wilfred Osgood. Bailey also met the Abyssinian ruler Ras Tafari, later to be known as the Emperor Haile Selassie, King of Kings.

His encounter with a leopard is considered one of his more dangerous adventures. The native tent boy and victim of many unfortunate events, Waldo, had come hurrying to Bailey with news of a leopard that had been cornered by the natives. Bailey joined the crowd of natives, but Waldo had other plans. The boy entered the thicket with intentions of chasing the cat into the open so Bailey could shoot it. Bailey, knowing leopards are not so compliant, pursued the boy. Bailey heard the leopard giving guttural growls up ahead but could not find Waldo or the cat. The leopard, disturbed by Waldo's pursuit,



Detail from Denver Museum of Natural History Bering Strait diorama, 1940. This exhibit is one of seven that resulted from the 1921-1922 Alaska field work that Alfred Bailey and Russell Hendee undertook for the museum. Courtesy of Denver Museum of Nature and Science

became so frighteningly vocal that finally Waldo stopped his chase and Bailey was able to catch up. The two were in the middle of cover, the leopard out of sight. While they tried to find their way back, the leopard leaped upon Waldo and struck the boy across the forehead. The cat then jumped for Bailey, who shot him once in the breast and again through the heart. The leopard managed to run thirty feet before dropping dead. Waldo was not critically injured, only enraged enough to chase after the already dead leopard with a revolver.

Bailey also acquired another field companion in Africa. The natives held a raw meat festival in honor of the team of naturalists, preparing large amounts of uncooked flesh. Here Bailey acquired a tapeworm, something almost everyone in Ethiopia was afflicted with. Failing to purge himself of the parasite, he named it Tidlik, Amharic for "huge." Bailey made an effort once each year to rid himself of the parasite; he would end up carrying it around for 14 years, his only symptom being a massive appetite.

The Chicago Academy of Sciences began seeking a new director in 1927. Bailey was still in Africa when the Academy contacted Muriel to ask if Bailey might be interested. Wanting her husband to have a job that might tie him closer to his home and family, Muriel told them to keep the position open for Bailey. Bailey resigned from

the Chicago Field Museum and became director of the Academy on 1 July 1927.

During this time in Bailey's life he would meet many noted and famed scientists, including ornithologist Dr. Wilmer Stone and the president of the National Geographic Society, Dr. Gilbert Grosvenor; travel to give lectures; and spend ample time in the field photographing and filming nesting birds. When Dr. Frank Psota gave the Academy a hand-cranked motion picture camera, Bailey began employing motion picture more frequently than ever before, shooting thousands of feet of film for more than three decades. Bailey sometimes traveled halfway across the continent to present his films in lectures. He spoke at numerous universities and leading museums, the president of the National Geographic Society even inviting him to speak in Constitution Hall in Washington, D.C.

In the month of June 1930, Bailey and his family took a "vacation" to the Denver area. Here Bailey would begin taking photographs later to be used in *Birds of Colorado*, the landmark two-volume book he co-authored with Robert Niedrach. In Beth's family memoir of her father, she relates an adventure searching for ptarmigan on Mt. Evans at an altitude of 12,000 feet. Sick to her stomach, the ten-year-old Beth decided to lie down for a rest on one of the nearby big boulders while her father and Dr. Niedrach went off to find the secretive ptarmigans. After she fell asleep, the noise of a family of ptarmigan at her feet awoke her. "Suddenly I felt wonderful and with amazement watched the ptarmigan family as the old one and her babies moved over the moss-grown area" (Clark 128). Bailey and Niedrach returned to find Beth and the downy ptarmigan chicks after their own fruitless search.

Traveling next to Durango, Mexico, Bailey would discover a new species of bird. Near his camp in a place called Cienega Tableterro, Bailey had collected a few birds to be identified later, among them a little sparrow found among tall grass. The shot bird was badly damaged, and Bailey had even considered throwing it out. Much to the luck of science, he prepared the specimen anyway. The skin was sent to Dr. Outram Bangs, who described the new species and genus as *Xenospiza baileyi*, the Sierra Madre Sparrow (Phillips 1981). To this day, few naturalists have seen the sparrow in its natural habitat.

Bailey had several other creatures new to science named after him, including the smallest of all North American larks, from San Benito Island, Mexico, *Eremophila alpestris baileyi* (van Rossem 1943) and a rat discovered near the Great Salt Lake, *Dipodomys microps alfredi*. Bailey questioned having a rat named after him, but was comforted by the fact that the previous director of the Denver Museum had

had a skunk named after him. The unusual name of the latter species is accredited to the fact that there were too many Baileys in the fieldwork business; it was more unique to use this Bailey's first name (Clark 132).

In May of 1936, Bailey took directorship of the Denver Museum of Natural History and the family settled in Colorado for good. His travels continued as he visited Baja California, Bonaventure Island off the coast of Quebec, Australia, sub-Antarctic Campbell Island, the Galapagos Islands, Botswana, and again Midway Island in Hawaii. While working on Isabella Island in the Galapagos to secure a seabird habitat group for a museum exhibit, Bailey collected a specimen of the endemic race of Rock Wren. A volcanic explosion would later wipe out this race. This wren can still be seen in its diorama at the museum in Colorado.

Bailey's two girls were excited to accompany their father on some of these jaunts. Pat learned to use a camera at a very young age. She recalls hours in the darkroom with her father, learning to print and develop her own pictures, and later accompanying her father to Bonaventure Island and photographing gannets, not as a child but as a young adult. She remembers the thousands of

Few know the extent of Bailey's travels, the profound impact of his field work, and the far-reaching effects of his lifetime of commitment to wildlife and science.

white birds clustered on the precipitous cliff edges. In one of Bailey's well-documented Museum Pictorials he narrates: "The great-winged birds would ride the air currents close along the wall, and Pat would photograph them as they sailed overhead..." (Bailey 1951, pp. 29-31).

Alongside all this, Alfred Bailey was continuously at work in Colorado compiling information for *Birds of Colorado*, which would come off the presses December 24, 1965. The book had actually been in the making since 1922, and was the result of thousands of hours of studying and learning, endless walking, patient waiting, and photography. The result, complete with 124 color plates, addresses the records and life histories of many of Colorado's birds. Pat recalls walking into his office and seeing him busy at work with his many pictures, never still a minute. Dr. Niedrach, or "Uncle Bob," as Pat knew him, made nests available for Bailey to photograph. With Niedrach's keen hearing, he was expert at locating birds by ear. During these Colorado adventures, Pat was taught to sit in a blind for hours, patiently waiting for a bird to appear. The fruits of their labor were numerous invaluable photographs of birds, many on the nest, by both Pat and her father.

Alfred Bailey's trip to Botswana in 1969 brought him to a somber realization. Bailey related, "As I crawled out of my sleeping bag the last morning of the trip on the edge of the Kalahari Desert I realized it would be the last time I would ever do extensive field work" (Clancy & Haglund, 2003). He died on 25 February 1978 at the age of 94.

Bailey's work was world-encompassing; he visited every continent save Antarctica, and even then he came close with his trip to sub-Antarctic Campbell Island. The Denver Museum of Natural History has him to thank for many of its wildlife exhibits and improvements; as a result of his contributions, the museum gained worldwide recognition and became one of the largest and best-attended museums in the country.

Reflecting on his daughter's words, I can say that Alfred Bailey truly was a wonderful man. Did he ever imagine, as a youth of 18 beginning his life's journey on Laysan Island, that his travels would take him around the globe, bringing him close to some of the planet's most unique wildlife? His journeys are enough to captivate the minds of fellow naturalists and wildlife enthusiasts, and his dedication to wildlife has resulted in scores of documents, among them his many museum pictorials. Bailey left footprints in the hearts of his family and friends, as well as in the history of natural science.

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The 44th Report of the Colorado Bird Records Committee

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Chair, Colorado Bird Records Committee

Introduction

This 44th report presents the results of first-half 2007 deliberations of the Colorado Bird Records Committee (hereafter CBRC or Committee) on submissions to the CBRC for documentation and archival purposes. This article provides results of the circulation of 106 reports submitted by 37 observers documenting 69 occurrences of 45 species. Per the 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. Those records with 4 or 5 accept votes have transcended to a second round of deliberations, and results of those records will be published at a later date.

The documents reviewed include the report of one species previously unconfirmed from the state, Smith's Longspur (*Calcarius pictus*), bringing the state total to **482**. Four potentially new species to the state list are still pending within the CBRC: Yellow-bellied Flycatcher (*Empidonax flaviventris*), though this species is already included provisionally on the state list on the strength of one accepted single-observer report; Black-chinned Sparrow (*Spizella atrogularis*); Hooded Oriole (*Icterus cucullatus*); and, recently, Lawrence's Goldfinch (*Carduelis lawrencei*).

Committee members voting on these reports were Coen Dexter, Doug Faulkner, Peter Gent, Rachel Hopper, Joey Kellner, Ric Olson, 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 of birds, 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. Thus, the primary pieces of information that the Committee requires are a written description of the bird(s) and a discussion of how similar species were ruled out.

Current photographic technology has greatly increased the number of photographs (particularly digital photographs) 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 also. Some observers are now simply submitting photographs with date and location, without a 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, photos are merely 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, origin, or behavior of a given rarity, something that may be considered important in the future.

Committee News

The second consecutive term of Brandon Percival expired at the end of 2006. John Vanderpoel's second consecutive term also expired at the end of 2006. John resigned from the CBRC at the end of 2005 due to other commitments and Peter Gent graciously stepped in to complete the final year of John's term. At the beginning of 2007, Peter agreed to begin a new term and Rachel Hopper was selected as a new Committee member.

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 of reports in Colorado 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. Those lists can be found at <http://www.cfo-link.org/birding/lists.php>. While documentary materials can still be submitted in hard copy to Larry Semo (9054 Dover Street, Westminster, CO 80021), the CBRC greatly appreciates 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 those 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 refer to unseasonable or locally rare occurrences, or a noteworthy hybrid. Those species preceded by the pound, or number, sign (#) were removed from the statewide Main Review List, but *only* from the Main Review List, as of 2002 (Semo et al. 2002); thus the reports here are from an earlier period when those species were still on the Main Review List (Semo and Leukering 2004).

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 ten-year period preceding the submission. The latter number is of importance, as it is one of the criteria for a species' continuance on or removal from the statewide Main Review List (Semo et al. 2002). Note that the number of accepted records may 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 (e.g., Great Black-backed Gull, *Larus marinus*).

The records in this report are arranged taxonomically following the American Ornithologists' Union (AOU) Checklist of North American Birds (AOU 1998) through the 48th Supplement (Banks et al. 2007). 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; initials of those that submitted video footage are indicated by a lower-case, italicized "v" (v); and those who submitted sonograms or audio recordings are indicated by a lower-case, italicized "s" (s). Thus, the parenthetical expression "(JD v, RA†, TL, JV, CW; 2001-36; 4-3, 5-2, 6-1)" 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 “accept” votes and three “do not accept” 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 by a vote of 6-1. 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. The CBRC encourages observers to document the final date on which a rare species was seen, as that provides historical evidence of the true extent of its stay.

The CBRC wishes to thank Tony Leukering for reviewing a previous draft of this report.

Abbreviations used in this report: CG=Campground; CR=County Road; Res=Reservoir; SP=State Park; SWA=State Wildlife Area

April 2005 (TL †, BKP †, DF, JG †; 2005-14; 7-0). This represents the

RECORDS ACCEPTED

BRANT – *Branta bernicla* (14/6). A “Black” Brant (*B. b. nigricans*), the Pacific coast form of the species, grazed at the Inverness Business Park and a nearby golf course in Englewood, in both *Douglas* and *Arapahoe*, between 25 February and 3



Brant, Englewood, Arapahoe County, 4 March 2005.
Photo by Doug Faulkner



Eurasian Wigeon, Pueblo City Park, Pueblo County, 26 February 2005. Photo by Tony Leukering

first record of this species for Douglas. Another “Black” Brant spent time in Fort Collins and nearby Long Pond, Larimer, where present between 16 November and 18 December 2005 (NK, AS †, CW †, DF; 2005-121; 7-0). These two individuals represent the 10th and 11th records of that subspecies for Colorado. More unusual was the presence of an “Atlantic” Brant (*B. b. hrota*) at Fossil Creek Res., Larimer, on 20 November 2005 (NK †, CW †; 2005-127; 7-0). There are only two previous records of that taxon from Colorado.

EURASIAN WIGEON – *Anas penelope* (29/11). Three additional male Eurasian Wigeon records were accepted during this circulation. One was at Fountain Creek Regional Park, El Paso, on 17 April 2004 (BM †, ME †; 2004-107; 7-0). Two additional birds were found in 2005, one at Pueblo City Park, Pueblo, which, although present for some time, was only documented between 19 and

26 February (BKP †, TL †). Another male was at Wellington SWA, Weld, where documented on 30 April, although it was apparently present at that location for some weeks prior (DF †, GL; 2005-34; 7-0).

BROWN PELICAN – *Pelecanus occidentalis* (15/7). A third-cycle bird was seen at, ironically, Pelican Lake (or Rock Bridge Lake) in Windsor, Weld, on 10 June 2005 and was observed at that location, as well as nearby Fossil Creek Res., Larimer, until at least 19 June (NK †, RH †, CW, BS †, TL †; 2005-65; 7-0). Komar was notified by a local resident of the presence of the bird prior to his seeing it, although the CBRC does not know what prior date that was.

GLOSSY IBIS – *Plegadis falcinellus* (39/32). Continuing the documentation of its western expansion, the Committee accepted four additional Glossy Ibis records from 2005 during this circulation. One was at Beebe Draw, Weld, on 23 April (TL †, BS †,

SMe; 2005-29; 7-0), although the bird was reported to have been at that location since at least 16 April. On 30 April, Boyce observed two birds near Las Animas, Bent (AB; 2005-33; 7-0). Another was at Box Springs, Crowley, on 13 May (LS †, DF; 2005-45; 7-0). Lastly, one up in the mountains at Franz Lake, Chaffee, on 18 May (NP; 2005-55; 7-0) provided the first record for that county.

Observers should be aware that pairings of Glossy Ibis × White-faced Ibis (*Plegadis chihi*) are increasing in frequency, and reports of Glossy Ibis without photographic evidence that do not provide a rationale for why the bird best fit Glossy rather than a hybrid may not be accepted for the historical record.

*GLOSSY IBIS × WHITE-FACED IBIS – *Plegadis* spp. With the expansion of Glossy Ibis into the western Great Plains, evidence of hybridization between it and White-faced Ibis is increasing and should be documented so as to develop a clear picture of the species' range expansion and its impacts upon White-faced Ibis. The CBRC encourages observers to provide details on possible hybrid ibis. One such hybrid was found near Beebe Draw, Weld, on 23 April 2005 (TL †, BS †; 2005-28; 7-0). Although the full variability



Brown Pelican, Windsor, Weld County, 14 June 2005.
Photo by Tony Leukering

of hybrid *Plegadis* characteristics is not yet known (especially with post F1 generation birds), consistent field marks of the cross include red eyes not as bright as in White-faced, a pinkish-violet narrow facial border that doesn't wrap around the posterior of the eye (or is very thin if it does), and legs with perceptible color contrast between the tibia-tarsus joint and the tibia and tarsus.

COMMON BLACK-HAWK – *Buteogallus anthracinus* (5/3). An adult was a one-day wonder downstream of the dam at Two Buttes Res., Baca, on 19 April 2005 (MI †; 2005-23; 7-0). This represents the second record of this species for Baca, and the first photographed in the state.

*BLACK RAIL – *Laterallus jamaicensis*. As birders nocturnally explore the Lower Arkansas valley of Colorado, detections of Black Rail have increased both east and west of the

species' stronghold near John Martin Res. in Bent. Pieplow heard one in a marsh on the southeast corner of the intersection of CRs 19 and LL near Bristol in Prowers on 11 June 2005 (NP; 2005-96; 7-0).

HUDSONIAN GODWIT – *Limosa haemastica* (26/7). Two alternate-plumaged birds waded in Lake Henry, Crowley, on 30 April and 1 May 2004 (MP †, LK, NP; JK, NE, PD; 2004-20; 7-0).

*BAIRD'S SANDPIPER – *Calidris bairdii*. The Committee has accepted a very rare record of a Baird's Sandpiper from the early winter of 2005. This bird, apparently present in late November at Pueblo Res., Pueblo, was photographed just downstream along the Arkansas River near Valco Ponds on 2 December (BKP †; 2005-131; 7-0).

BUFF-BREASTED SANDPIPER – *Tryngites subruficollis* (28/8). Six

were present at Prewitt Res., Washington, on 5 September 2005 (TL †, RLi, BS †; 2005-88; 7-0). Although the birds were reported present prior to and after the documented date, the CBRC only received documentation for the 5th.

AMERICAN WOODCOCK – *Scolopax minor* (7/3). First found during the Denver Urban Christmas Bird Count on 31 December 2004, an American Woodcock lingered for a while at the Star K Ranch in Aurora, Adams, where it was documented on 2 January 2005 (JK, RL; 2005-1; 7-0). This represents the second record of this species for Adams, the first being from 1945.

RED PHALAROPE – *Phalaropus fulicarius* (30/12). An adult in basic plumage was at Eleven Mile Res., Park, on 18 October 2003 (NP, AS †; 2004-87; 7-0). The bird was reported to remain at that location following

18 October, but the CBRC did not receive any details on such occurrence. It is not, however, too late to add documentation for additional dates.

MEW GULL – *Larus canus* (27/16). Although no written details were provided to the Committee, diagnostic photographs supported the occurrence of a definitive basic-plumaged bird at Jim Hamm Park near Longmont, Boulder, on 24 November



Hudsonian Godwit, Lake Henry, Crowley County, 1 May 2004. Photo by Mark Peterson



Glaucous-winged Gull, Cherry Creek SP, Arapahoe County, 14 March 2005. Photo by Glenn Walbek

2004 (GW †; 2004-109; 6-1). This distinctive individual, which has a limp, has been found in this area for numerous winters, but it has only rarely been documented for the CBRC.

ICELAND GULL – *Larus glaucooides* (2/2). Providing only the second accepted record for the state, a second-cycle bird was discovered by Walbek at Cherry Creek Res., Arapahoe, on 11 February 2005 and remained until at least 12 February, based on supporting details (GW †, BKP †, TL †; 2005-9; 7-0). There are seven additional reports of Iceland Gulls that the Committee has yet to review, most from prior to the date of this accepted record.

GLAUCOUS-WINGED GULL – *Larus glaucescens* (12/6). A second-cycle bird was well photographed at Cherry Creek Res. on 14 March 2005 (GW †; 2005-15; 7-0). Phenotypical-

ly, the bird showed no evidence of hybridization with either Herring Gull (*L. argentatus*) or Western Gull (*L. occidentalis*). It is noteworthy that seven (58%) of the 12 records of Glaucous-winged Gull from Colorado have come from Cherry Creek Res., and all of those in spring.

GREAT BLACK-BACKED GULL – *Larus marinus* (28/15). The CBRC accepted an amazing six additional records of Great Black-backed

Gull during this past circulation. A definitive basic bird nick-named “Murray,” who has wintered annually at Pueblo Res. since 1993, returned again to that location to be photographed on 17 January 2004 (DF †; 2004-112; 7-0). On 20 January 2006, Kaempfer documented a first-cycle bird at Thomas Res., Boulder (BK; 2005-3; 7-0). A second-cycle bird was at Pueblo Res. on 28 January 2005 (BKP †; 2005-5; 7-0) and another second-cycle bird was photographed at Cherry Creek Res. on 12 February 2005 (DF †, TL †; 2005-10; 7-0). “Murray” returned to Pueblo Res. again in 2005 in its twelfth year of life, where documented on 18 February 2005 (BKP †; 2005-11; 7-0). Finally, a third-cycle bird was at Pueblo Res. on 16 December 2005 (BKP †; 2005-139; 7-0). As it is apparent that Colorado receives annually returning



Black-billed Cuckoo, Crow Valley Campground, Weld County, 22 May 2005. Photo by Nancy Bell

wintering Great Black-backed Gulls, the CBRC has been in a dilemma regarding how many actual individual birds have occurred in the state, especially considering that neighboring states have nowhere near the number of accepted records of this maritime species as does Colorado. In the near future, the Committee will deliberate on the number of actual records versus the number of birds and attempt to determine the number of different individual Great Black-backed Gulls that have occurred in the state.

*EURASIAN COLLARED-DOVE – *Streptopelia decaocto*. The widespread expansion of Eurasian Collared-Dove has been well documented, and the CBRC is appreciative of submitted records that illustrate the species' spread across the state. Although it is no longer on the main statewide review list, the CBRC still requests first-time occurrence

documentation from those counties for which the species has yet to be discovered. Per that request, the Committee reviewed two reports of occurrences of the species from two counties for which no previous records were known. One was in Gunnison, Gunnison, on 30 July 2005 (CW; 2005-78; 7-0) and another was at Walden, Jackson, on 16 December 2005 (CW †; 2005-140; 7-0). There are

only four remaining Colorado counties without accepted records: *Clear Creek*, *Gilpin*, *Hinsdale*, and *San Juan*.

INCA DOVE – *Columbina inca* (17/12). The Committee has accepted the occurrence of seven Inca Doves present at a feeder in Lamar, *Prowers*, between 29 September and 31 December 2002 (JT †; 2002-162; 7-0).

BLACK-BILLED CUCKOO – *Coccyzus erythrophthalmus* (29/7). Prior to 1990, there were 12 accepted records of Black-billed Cuckoo from the state. However, there was a dearth of records in the 1990s (only one), and many birders believed that Black-billed Cuckoo was soon to become only an extremely rare vagrant. Records during the current decade have been much more encouraging, though, with seven records total. Two of those were recently accepted by the CBRC. One was present at Crow



Broad-billed Hummingbird, Lamar, Prowers County, 18 April 2005. Photo by Jane Stulp

Valley CG, Weld, on 22 May 2005 (CB, NB †, RH †; 2005-59; 7-0). Another was on territory west of Foster Grove CG, Bonny Res., Yuma, where present and audio recorded between the period 6 June and 9 July 2005 (NP s, LS; 2005-64; 7-0). Hopefully this cuckoo expansion trend continues.

SNOWY OWL – *Bubo scandiacus* (15/6). During specimen investigations at the Denver Museum of Nature and Science in 2003, Semo unearthed two specimens of Snowy Owl which were not accounted for in Bailey & Niedrach (1965), Andrews & Righter (1992), or in CBRC files or databases. Both specimens have now been accepted by the CBRC. The first is of a very old specimen procured by an unknown collector 16 miles

northeast of Akron, Washington, in 1920 (2003-113; 6-1). Unfortunately, no exact collection date is available with the specimen. The second is of more recent occurrence, having been salvaged north of Gilcrest, Weld, on 3 March 1998 (WGA; 2003-150; 6-1). Although the CBRC could not obtain information to indicate whether there was an incursion of Snowy Owls to the western Great Plains in 1920, the 1998 record does correspond to another accepted observation that spring of a Snowy Owl from Wiley, Prowers.

***CHIMNEY SWIFT** – *Chaetura pelagica*. Establishing a first county record for Huerfano, a single Chimney Swift

twittered over Lathrop SP on 8 May 2005 (BS; 2005-40; 7-0).

BROAD-BILLED HUMMINGBIRD – *Cynanthus latirostris* (2/2). One of the most surprising finds was of an adult male Broad-billed Hummingbird wonderfully photographed at a private feeder south of Lamar on 18 April (JS †; 2005-21; 7-0), establishing only the second record for the state. A third record of Broad-billed Hummingbird from El Paso in 2006 has not yet been circulated within the Committee.

RUBY-THROATED HUMMINGBIRD – *Archilochus colubris* (6/5). An immature male Ruby-throated Hummingbird with diagnostic small red gorget patches graced the feeder of Dexter and Wright in the odd (for the species) location of

Nucla, Montrose, on 28 September 2003 (CD/BW †; 2003-76; 6-1) . This represents the second record of this species for the West Slope, the previous bird having been banded in Gunnison in 1998.

EASTERN WOOD-PEWEE – *Contopus virens* (19/6). Two additional Eastern Wood-Pewee records were accepted in this circulation, both from 2005. One was in the Flatirons in Boulder on 31 July (RLi, 2005-79; 6-1), while the other was at Barr Lake, Adams, 2-4 September 2005 (RS, GW †; 2005-83; 7-0). This is the first accepted record for heavily-birded Adams.

ALDER FLYCATCHER – *Empidonax alnorum* (15/7). A juvenile, a first for the county, was present at Box Springs, Crowley, on 25 August 2002 (TL, LS †; 2002-62; 6-1).

*BLACK PHOEBE – *Sayornis nigricans*. Although Black Phoebe has been removed from the main state-wide review list (Semo et al. 2002), the CBRC continues to request details on birds observed away from traditional breeding locales or birds discovered out-of-season. Providing the first winter record for Colorado, an adult attempted to winter along the Arkansas River near Valco Ponds in Pueblo, where documented on 11 December 2005 (BKP †; 2005-137; 7-0). The bird was reported to remain at that location into at least January, although the Committee received no details on such.

*GREAT CRESTED FLYCATCHER – *Myiarchus crinitus*. Great Crested Flycatchers are regular inhabitants of the far northeast cor-

ner of the state and along the lower Arkansas River in southern Colorado. Records farther west than that are few, and as such, the CBRC requests documentation on those occurrences (Semo et al. 2002). During the past circulation, the Committee accepted a westerly record of a Great Crested Flycatcher discovered in Fort Collins on 26 June 2005 (CB, NB; 2005-73; 7-0).

BLUE-HEADED VIREO – *Vireo solitarius* (14/13). An adult (seemingly female) was photographed by Walbek in his yard in Castle Rock, Douglas, on 24 September 2005 (GW †; 2005-98; 7-0). Besides the supporting narrative description, the photographs clearly showed those key characteristics that indicate Blue-headed Vireo: crisp demarcation between bluish-gray head and greenish mantle; trenchant separation between bluish-gray head and white throat; and bright yellow flanks. Since the “Solitary Vireo” was split in 1997 (AOU 1997), there has been an average of 1.3 accepted records of this species in the state per year as of 2005.

*CLARK’S NUTCRACKER – *Nucifraga columbiana*. Clark’s Nutcracker very rarely emigrates out of the mountains and onto the plains of eastern Colorado. To track those infrequent occurrences, the CBRC requests details on such observations (Semo et al. 2002). Establishing a first record for Broomfield, one was present in the Interlocken business area on 20 January 2005 (LS; 2005-4; 7-0).

GRAY-CHEEKED THRUSH – *Catharus minimus* (38/16). One was

well photographed at Crow Valley CG on 27 May 2005 (RH †; 2005-50; 7-0). This constitutes the 8th record of this species for Weld up through 2005.

VARIED THRUSH – *Ixoreus naevius* (23/13). Establishing the first record for Douglas, a basic-plumaged male graced a residential feeder in Roxborough between 28 January and at least 7 February 2004 (TO †; DF †; BS †; LS †; 2004-5; 7-0).

BENDIRE'S THRASHER – *Toxostoma bendirei* (8/1). The occurrence of Bendire's Thrasher in Colorado is firmly supported by a specimen collected in Colorado Springs on 8 May 1882. On 9 June 1970, a presumed nest of the species was discovered near Timpas, Otero. Analysis of the photographed eggs by Semo suggests Bendire's. In 1984, a Bendire's was found in the San Luis Valley in Saguache and additional highly debated records of the species have come from the Valley irregularly ever since, debated mainly because the occurrences were brief and lacked photographic evidence and because descriptions were somewhat contradictory for an identification of Bendire's Thrasher. In 2003, however, Rawinski captured photographs of a bird present at the junction of roads 3E and 7S within the Monte Vista NWR,

Rio Grande, on 11 May (JR †; 2003-87; 6-1).

BLACKBURNIAN WARBLER – *Dendroica fusca* (39/18). An immature male was photographed at Cherry Creek Res. on 3 September 2005 (GW †; 2005-84; 7-0).

CERULEAN WARBLER – *Dendroica cerulea* (4/2). A great find was an alternate-plumaged male Cerulean Warbler at Long Pond, Larimer, on 16 May 2005 (RH; 2005-51; 7-0), establishing only the fourth confirmed record for the state. The three previous records were from Douglas in 1936, Baca in 1989, and Rio Grande in 1997. Another Baca report (in 1999) was apparently never submitted to the CBRC.

CONNECTICUT WARBLER – *Oporornis agilis* (9/4). Constituting only the 9th record for Colorado, and the first for Larimer, Olson observed an alternate-plumaged male at Dixon



Varied Thrush, Roxborough SP, Douglas County, 7 February 2004. Photo by Bill Schmoker



Hepatic Tanager, Pryor Flats, Huerfano County, June 2003. Photo by BB Hahn

Res., Larimer, on 28 May 2004 (RO; 2004-105; 7-0).

HEPATIC TANAGER – *Piranga flava* (19/4). Recent greater scrutiny of ponderosa pine (*Pinus ponderosa*) woodlands in southeastern Colorado has encouraged the belief that Hepatic Tanagers are regular breeders in that portion of the state. In support of that premise, the Committee has accepted two additional records of Hepatic Tanager, both from *Huerfano*. A pair was present for a good part of the summer in 2003 near Pryor, where present, at least, from 7 to 22 June (RO, RH, GW †, RLi, BBH †, TL; 2003-49; 7-0). In 2005, an adult male was present at the same location, where present 22 May to 25 June (BKP †, NP, MP; 2005-60; 7-0).

EASTERN TOWHEE – *Pipilo erythrophthalmus* (12/9). Review of Eastern Towhee records from Colo-

rado has been problematic for the CBRC, as hybridization is frequent between Eastern Towhee and Spotted Towhee (*Pipilo maculatus arcticus*), and observers should be aware of how the Committee processes such records. It is known that classic Spotted Towhees display white spots on scapulars, interscapulars, and wing coverts, while Eastern Towhees are unspotted and have a white patch at the base of the primaries. Female Spotted Towhees of most subspecies

are dark gray overall, while female Easterns are rich reddish brown on the head and back. The two species' voices are distinctive, but bridged by intermediate songs and calls in the Great Plains populations. Hybrid phenotypes can vary significantly, showing patterns including the following: 1) only a trace of upperparts spotting, with a white primary base patch; 2) extensive upperparts spotting and a white primary base roughly half that of a "pure" Eastern; and 3) only slightly less upperparts spotting than typical Spotted, yet with a trace of a white primary base patch. Some female hybrids can display slightly muddied-brown upperparts (not the rich reddish brown of "pure" birds) and others can be brownish gray. Female plumage color is also confounded by the fact that the prairie-breeding race of Spotted (*arcticus*)



Eastern Towhee, Bonny SP, Yuma County, 23 December 2005. Photo by Bill Schmoker

has females with a marginal to strong brown cast to at least some of the upperparts.

In 1959, the late Charles Sibley published results of a study presenting secondary intergradation between the two races of "Rufous-sided" Towhee [as the Spotted and Eastern Towhees were considered until 1995 (AOU 1995)] across the Great Plains (Sibley and West 1959). He used an index of shared plumage characteristics to map the breeding distribution of the two forms along the Platte River and rivers north of it. Results of Sibley and West's work indicated that, in fact, most of Nebraska's population along the Platte River showed genetic dilution between the two "species," with birds in easternmost Nebraska being phenotypically purer than western birds (although still not "pure") and birds on the eastern edge of Spotted Towhee's range (eastern

Colorado/western Nebraska) being characteristically more "tainted." Subsequent observations of summering towhees in Colorado have generally indicated that birds subtly display characteristics of such genetic dilution. The majority of accepted records of Eastern Towhee in Colorado have come from fall, winter, or early spring occurrences, when it is easier to argue that birds in Colorado are

true vagrants from more northern and eastern populations. Given the problems of genetic dilution and hybrids that look mostly pure, the Committee will continue to be conservative in its deliberations and will closely analyze all documentation, looking for discussion of exactly why reported Eastern Towhees showed absolutely no phenotypic traits of Spotted Towhee. Voice descriptions should also provide clear information on purity.

Despite the committee's high standards for documentation, two wintering birds were accepted by the CBRC during this past circulation. Photographic evidence provided no suggestion of gene introgression and both records conform to the theory that true Eastern Towhees usually are present in Colorado only during the non-breeding season. A female scratched at a feeder along Big Thompson Road near Loveland, *Larimer*, where pres-

ent between at least 22 and 31 January 2004 (BA †, RH†, BS †; 2004-7; 7-0). In 2005, a female hid among the tangles along the south shore of Bonny Res., where seen on 22 and 23 December (AS †, CW †, BS †, MP; 2005-145; 7-0).

*FIELD SPARROW – *Spizella pusilla*. Field Sparrows are regular summer inhabitants of the eastern edge of Colorado. Records from farther west than that are few, and therefore the CBRC requests documentation on those occurrences (Semo et al. 2002). During the past circulation, the Committee accepted a westerly record of a Field Sparrow discovered at Doudy Draw, *Boulder*, on 13 September 2005 (MB; 2005-90; 7-0).

“RED” FOX SPARROW – *Passerella iliaca iliaca*. Although “Slate-colored” Fox Sparrow (*P. i. schistacea*) is a regular breeder in the mountains of Colorado, there are few records of the nominate taiga breeding race for the state and the Committee requests documentation on those occurrences (Semo et al. 2002). One was present along the south side of Bonny Res. during the Bonny Christmas Bird Count on 23 December 2005 (AS, MP; 2005-146; 7-0). Another bird of that same race was reported from east of the Bonny dam at that time as well and that report is pending in the Committee.

GOLDEN-CROWNED SPARROW – *Zonotrichia atricapilla* (18/11). A surprising find was an adult in alternate plumage at Lathrop SP on 7 May 2005 (BS †; 2005-39; 7-0). This occurrence provides the first accepted record for *Huerfano* and the latest spring date for the species in the state.

SMITH’S LONGSPUR – *Calcarius pictus* (1/1). Establishing a first for Colorado, a Smith’s Longspur was photographed at NeeNoshe Res., *Kiowa*, where present between 11 and 12 October 2003 (BS; SMa, JM, GW †; 2003-82; 6-1). A previous report (from *Adams*) is still in circulation.

EASTERN MEADOWLARK – *Sturnella magna* (8/3). Two Eastern Meadowlark records were accepted during this past circulation. The first, a presumed southwestern race “*Lilian’s*” (*S. m. lilianae*), was found again near the Campo Lesser Prairie-Chick-



Golden-crowned Sparrow, Lathrop SP, Huerfano County, 7 May 2005. Photo by Bill Schmoker

en (*Tympanuchus pallidicinctus*) lek near Campo, *Baca*, where documented in the period 18 to 22 April 2005 (BKP †; MI†; 2005-22; 7-0). A nominate race (*S. m. magna*) bird set up territory in a field near Bellvue, *Larimer*, where present between 22 June and 1 July 2005 (RH †, NP, BS †; 2005-72; 7-0).

*GREAT-TAILED GRACKLE – *Quiscalus mexicanus*. First recorded in the state in 1970, Great-tailed Grackles have slowly expanded to eastern and western portions of the state, but unsurprisingly they have not been recorded in most montane counties. Establishing a first confirmed record for *Park*, an adult male was photographed at Lake George on 23 November 2005 (NK †; 2005-128; 7-0).

*BALTIMORE ORIOLE – *Icterus galbula*. Baltimore Orioles are regular summer inhabitants of the northeast corner of the state as well as being regular migrants through the eastern edge of Colorado. Records from farther west than that are few, and therefore the CBRC requests documentation on those occurrences (Semo et al. 2002). During the past circulation, the Committee accepted a belated, extremely westerly report of an alternate-plumaged adult male Baltimore Oriole photographed in Gunnison, where present 26 to 27 May 1998 (LB†; 2004-102; 7-0).

PURPLE FINCH – *Carpodacus purpureus* (33/9). Three birds, two brown-plumaged birds and an adult male, were photographed at a residential feeder in Lamar, *Prowers*, on 30 November 2004 (JT †; 2004-73; 7-0).

*COMMON REDPOLL – *Carduelis flammea*. In 2002, the CBRC classified Common Redpoll as a Code F species, meaning that documentation is now requested for all counties in the state outside *Sedgwick*, *Phillips*, *Yuma*, *Logan*, *Washington*, *Morgan*, *Weld*, *Larimer*, and *Boulder* (Semo et al. 2002). Gould banded a single redpoll in *Teller* on 1 February 2004 (PG †; 2004-10; 7-0).

RECORDS NOT ACCEPTED

The Committee recognizes that its decisions may upset some observers. We heartily acknowledge that those who made the effort to submit documentation certainly care whether or not their reports are accepted. However, non-accepted records do not necessarily suggest that the birder misidentified or did not see the species. A non-accepted record only indicates that the documentation was not complete or convincing enough to catalogue 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. We summarize below why the following reports were not accepted.

GLOSSY IBIS – Although suggestive, the report of a Glossy Ibis from *Pastorius Res.*, *La Plata*, on 12 April 2005 presented no information on why a hybrid Glossy Ibis × White-faced Ibis should be eliminated from contention (2005-18; 1-6). Since hybrid ibis are increasing in frequency

in Colorado, the Committee remains conservative with regard to acceptance of records that do not discuss how hybrids were eliminated from consideration.

EASTERN WOOD-PEWEE – The report of a singing Eastern Wood-Pewee near Crook, *Logan*, on 11 June 2005 (2005-66; 1-6) was not accepted by the Committee because virtually no description of what the bird actually looked like was submitted to the CBRC other than that the bird was shaped like a flycatcher, had wing-bars, had no eye-ring, and had a gray-buffy breast. The minimal description could refer to many species.

BLUE-HEADED VIREO – A photographed bird at Ramah SWA, *El Paso*, on 9 October 2005 was not accepted, as the Committee believed that the photographs best fit a bright Cassin's Vireo (*Vireo cassinii*) (2004-52; 1-6). Although the late date of observation is more indicative of Blue-headed Vireo, the Committee felt that the contrast between the blue-gray head and white throat was too weak for Blue-headed and that the green on the mantle intruded too much into the hind crown and was not sharply demarcated enough. As well, the color contrast between the throat and auriculars seemed too blurry, not sharp enough for Blue-headed.

HEPATICTANAGER – Although it probably referred to a Hepatic Tanager, a report of a female-plumaged bird at Chico Basin Ranch, *El Paso*, on 11 May 2005 was extremely brief and lacked a definitive description of the bird (2005-43; 2-5).

Reporters and Cited Observers

The CBRC graciously thanks the following individuals for submitting the records of rare species in Colorado reviewed during this circulation: WGA: W.G. Alther; BA: Barb Anderson; CB: Charles Bell; NB: Nancy Bell; MB: Maggie Boswell; AB: Andy Boyce; LB: Lori Brummer; CD: Coen Dexter; PD: Paul Differding; ME: Mel Emeigh; NE: Norm Erthal; DF: Doug Faulkner; JG: Jay Gilliam; PGo: Pat Gould; BBH: B.B. Hahn; RH: Rachel Hopper; MI: Marshall Iliff; BK: Bill Kaempfer; JK: Joey Kellner; LK: Loch Kilpatrick; NK: Nick Komar; GL: Gary Lefko; RLe: Randy Lentz; TL: Tony Leukering; RLi: Roger Linfield; JM: Joe Mammoser; SMA: Steve Mammoser; BM: Bill Maynard; SMe: Steve Messick; TO: Tom Olkowski; RO: Ric Olson; MP: Mark Peterson; NP: Nathan Pieplow; BKP: Brandon K. Percival; JR: John Rawinski; BS: Bill Schmoker; LS: Larry Semo; RS: Randy Siebert; AS: Andrew Spencer; JS: Jane Stulp; JT: Janeal Thompson; GW: Glenn Walbek; CW: Cole Wild; BW: Brenda Wright.

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FIELD NOTE

An Observation of Apparent “Fishing” by Turkey Vultures

Alexander T. Cringan
Ed. Hugh Kingery

There is a spring-summer-fall communal roost of the most migratory North American race of the Turkey Vulture (*Cathartes aura meridionalis*) at the intersection of West Mountain and Washington Avenues in northwestern Fort Collins. Following roost departure in the morning, the birds using this roost sometimes resort by means of powered flight to a post-roost in a hayfield situated about 1.5 km northwest of the overnight roost. There is a small irrigation pond in the hayfield. This note describes an observation of attempted “fishing” by vultures at the post-roost, in which some birds behaved as if hoping to capture live prey.

At 5:57 a.m. MDT on 5 June 2007, I watched two vultures assume positions at an inlet to the irrigation pond at the post-roost. At 6:02 they were joined by a third bird (Fig. 1) when all three lined up within a meter along the edge of the inlet and stared down at the incoming



Fig. 1. Three Turkey Vultures in “fishing” posture at inlet to irrigation pond in postroost, 6:02 a.m., 5 June 2007. Photo by Alex Cringan

water, seemingly looking for live prey such as small fish or crayfish. These vultures moved around considerably within the next 10 minutes, staying close to the inlet. At 6:12 a.m., a Great Blue Heron landed on the concrete rubble at the inlet about two meters from the nearest vulture, then moved to the top of the culvert, at that time about three meters from two vultures. By 6:14 a.m., these two vultures had resumed “fishing” positions on either side of the heron (Fig. 2), one about one



Fig. 2. Two Turkey Vultures and Great Blue Heron “fishing” at inlet to irrigation pond, 6:14 a.m., 5 June 2007. Photo by Alex Cringan

meter away, the other about two meters away. It appeared to me as if the vultures, like the heron, were “fishing” even though I did not see any vulture actually attempt to capture prey.

Turkey Vultures are known to feed on dead fish made available to them by a variety of means. Kirk and Mossman (1998) include fish on a short list of live prey occasionally taken by Turkey Vultures in “unnatural

situations” on the basis of two reports. They cite Bendire’s 1892 report of one bird gorged with minnows that might have been taken alive, and Sheila Gaby’s observation of a Turkey Vulture in Florida capturing and consuming a 10-cm-long fish (Jackson et al. 1978). She watched the bird capture the fish with its beak after wading into a creek up to its belly.

It is highly unlikely that the behavior noted on 5 June and termed apparent “fishing” would ever produce sufficient nourishment for even a few vultures, let alone the 60-80 birds that use the roost and post-roost described. This behavior appears to be rare, but might better be described as occurring in “unusual” rather than “unnatural” situations. Turkey Vultures are intelligent birds, and may well be able to learn how to catch fish by watching other birds do so. They regularly have opportunities to watch and to smell grebes, cormorants, herons, mergansers, Ospreys, and kingfishers fishing and consuming fish, either within or close to the post-roosting area. It is perhaps not surprising that vultures should “fish” in the general manner of herons, then eat in the manner of Ospreys.

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THE HUNGRY BIRDER

Durango: The Best Dining in Southwest Colorado

Jim Beatty

It is timely that the Hungry Birder visits Durango. Even though most Colorado birders live east of the Rockies, more and more are heading west for a variety of reasons. Perhaps it is to chase a new state

record like White-eared Hummingbird or rarely seen birds like nesting Lucy's Warblers and Hooded Oriole, or to search for even rarer vagrants from Arizona, New Mexico, and even Mexico that might wander into the arid southwestern corner of the state. (Though not yet countable, California Condor has been reported soaring over Mesa Verde National Park.) Other birders are adding ticks to their county lists. Whatever the reason, it is always rewarding to enjoy a leisurely meal in Durango.

Durango was founded in the mid-1800's to support the mining industry that developed in the nearby mountains, and it still has a picturesque downtown with a distinctly Western flavor. In the 1950's, Fort Lewis College, originally an Indian school, moved into town onto the mesa to the northeast overlooking the historic district. Mining activity closed its doors when uranium production was no longer profitable after World War II. The narrow gauge railroad was converted to sightseeing service with its spectacularly scenic ride as it winds its way along the Animas River from downtown Durango to sleepy Silverton, nestled high in the San Juans at nearly 9,300 feet. In 1965, the Purgatory ski area opened about 25 miles north of town with trails named "Styx," "Hades," and "Pandemonium," and Durango began its transition to a year-round vacation destination. With Mesa Verde just 35 miles west, other interesting archaeological sites scattered throughout the Four Corners region, and the unique geology of the rugged San Juan and La Plata Mountains, it quickly became a very desirable destination for travelers. Recently, more and more people are discovering Durango as a retirement location, and it frequently makes the top ten lists of desirable places to live.

As a result of all this activity and growth, Durango has a wide variety of restaurants and something for just about every taste and wallet. While birding in downtown is not too good (if you forget about Harlequin Duck, Varied Thrush, and Blackburnian Warbler—all of which have been seen from the river walk, which can be quite good during migration), there are many restaurants that serve meals ranging from gourmet fare to simple and quick basic food. Some offer patios for a delightful lunch or an evening repast during warmer weather. Ski season and summer are the busiest times, and reservations will spare you a long wait at the more popular places. Spring and fall can offer savings opportunities, as some restaurants advertise discounts in the *Durango Herald*. Online discount coupons may also be available. These discounts take many forms, including straight discounts on food, second meal at half price, early bird specials, and limited selections at a reduced price.

While Durango has too many restaurants to cover in this article,



Chez Grandmere, Durango, La Plata County. Photo by Jim Beatty

I will mention representative establishments ranging from expensive to modest, including some that are off the beaten track or just hard to find for non-locals. Most are downtown, so some planning is necessary if Durango is not your overnight destination. After you leave Durango you won't find equal quality or variety for many, many miles in any direction, so make the most of your long

drive to get here at mealtime. When trying to find your way around town, note that Durango has numbered "avenues" running north-south, with Main Avenue being the center, while the east-west running streets are called "streets" and numbered from south to north.

The best of the best for epicurean dining is the **Chez Grandmere**—the only one offering truly French cuisine—and it is also the most expensive, despite being named "Grandmother's House." One can order *a la carte* from the menu or enjoy many unique fixed-price six-course dinners. Selections range from *foie gras* to red deer, and all are expertly prepared by owner/chef Michele Pomay, who trained in Europe and had a restaurant in Snowmass before coming to Durango. The wine list is excellent; be sure to leave room for dessert. If you're celebrating a special event or a new lifer, you will not be disappointed, but be prepared to spend some time to enjoy your meal, as a leisurely dinner is the evening's entertainment. This restaurant is located in the 'alley' behind the Polo-Ralph Lauren Store and the Gaslight Theater near the Durango & Silverton Narrow Gauge train station at the extreme south end of Main Avenue.

Next is a sampling of very good downtown restaurants where you can have a very fine meal. These offer entrees in the price range from the high teens to the high \$20's, with excellent quality and service. They are in order from the south end of Main Avenue to the north. First is the **Palace**, located next to the train station at the south end of Main. It is very popular, has a large patio, offers specials and is also

quite good for lunch. At 636 Main is **Ken & Sue's**, owned and operated by Ken and Sue Fusco. It has a very nice patio and offers entrees ranging from Aunt Lydia's meatloaf to dishes with an Asian flavor. One of their specialties is pistachio-encrusted grouper served with sweet potato smash—and the molten chocolate cake is a chocophile's delight. Another block north is the **Seasons**, which



Cyprus Café, Durango, La Plata County. Photo by Jim Beatty

specializes in American cuisine prepared over a wood-fired grill. If you wish to enjoy the ambiance of the “Old West,” try the **Mahogany Grille** in the historic Strater Hotel at the corner of Main and 7th, which serves a complementary aperitif and has live music on the piano. One block to the east at 725 East 2nd Avenue is the **Cyprus Café**, which offers entrees with a Mediterranean flavor. Their lamb dishes are excellent and they usually have some curried entrees served with polenta or couscous. Just a little farther north on East 9th Street is the **Red Snapper**. They specialize in seafood, although they have a full selection of entrees, and they boast the best and largest salad bar in Durango. The decor is pleasing, with several saltwater



The Mahogany Grille, Durango, La Plata County. Photo by Jim Beatty

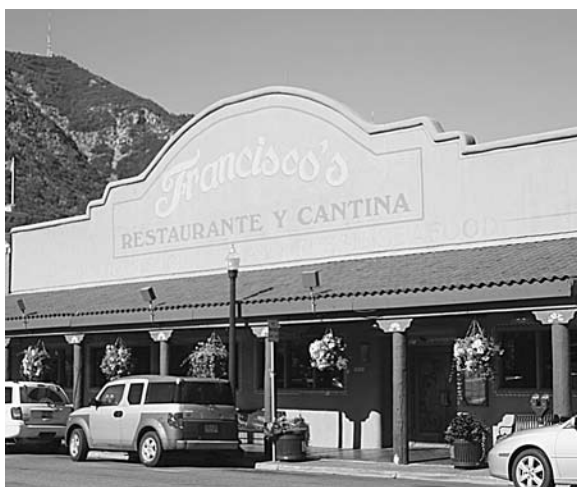
aquariums with tropical fish separating the dining tables into small groupings.

If you're heading west, the **Kennebec Café & Bakery**, which is about twelve miles west of Durango at the intersection of US 160 and County Road 124, is very good for any meal, although they are closed on Mondays. Dinners and breakfasts are excellent and their desserts are sinfully decadent. In winter you can drive northwest on CR 124 and possibly see rosy-finches at the feeders behind the fence of the brown house about one mile up the road toward Mayday, but the birds are very nomadic and there can be either more than a hundred—of all three species—or none. Also west of Durango but closer to downtown is **Christina's**, where you can enjoy a moderately priced meal.

For birders heading north on US 550 there is a moderately priced Italian "ristorante" named **Mama's Boy** at 27th and Main Avenue. They have a reasonably complete menu and serve ample portions for the big appetite. A more upscale northern Italian restaurant is downtown at 150 East College Drive (also 6th Street) just east of Main Avenue: **Ariano's**. For those who find themselves north of town and near the Durango Mountain Resort Ski area—known to the locals as Purgatory—the **Sow's Ear** offers full service with several wild game entrees.

There are also many moderately priced restaurants. A popular Mexican restaurant is **Francisco's** at 619 Main Avenue. Their menu

is very complete and their margaritas are tasty. At 8th and East 2nd Avenue is the **Steamworks**, which is an operating microbrewery that offers a wide variety of dishes ranging from eclectic pizzas to "Cajun broil"—for the latter, bring a big appetite and wear casual clothes as they spread a bowl full of steaming hot shrimp, crab, corn-on-the-cob, and potatoes on butcher's paper in front of you.



Francisco's, Durango, La Plata County. Photo by Jim Beatty

This place is very popular with the younger crowd and can be quite busy, but you can enjoy a variety of award-winning beers and ales while you wait. Another popular place with locals for a no-frills meal is the **Olde Tymer's Café** at Main Avenue and 10th Street. The meals are reasonably priced and there are nightly specials. They have a patio and their Cobb salad for lunch is a tasty bargain. But



Olde Tymer's Café, Durango, La Plata County. Photo by Jim Beatty

beware: the waitstaff wears T-shirts proclaiming “*We cheat tourists and drunks,*” although they really don’t. Farther north at 31st and Main is **Zia’s Taqueria**, which specializes in cafeteria-style Mexican food like quesadillas and fish tacos with your choice of sides—and, of course, a cold Mexican *cerveza* with a slice of lime. If sushi and a more complete Asian menu is your choice at a reasonable price, then try **East by Southwest** at the corner of College Drive and East 2nd Street. They have a raw and sushi bar and several spicier dishes along with entrees of Kobe beef.

If you’re ready for a hearty breakfast after a late night of owling in the San Juan National Forest up CR 204, which is the western extension of 25th Street, where Flammulateds are common in spring and Northern Pygmies and Saw-whets are likely, try **Carver’s** at 1022 Main Avenue. They have many specialty Mexican-inspired omelets and pancakes that will make your plate look small—order a short stack unless you haven’t eaten for several days, and be warned that they’ll offer you coffee until you float out the door.

Enjoy your meals in Durango, and good birding!

Jim Beatty, jdbeatty@bresnan.net

Spring 2007 (March – May)

Andrew Spencer

How do you know it's spring in Colorado? Likely it's not the weather—in much of the state it goes from cold and miserable to hot and miserable with very little in between, often switching back and forth from one to the other in rapid succession. In recent years it probably hasn't been the April showers, though the May flowers may offer a better hint. If you're a birder, you know it's spring in Colorado when reports of Iceland Gulls are followed within a few days by reports of Mourning Warblers, when Long-tailed Ducks are seen on the same day as Black Rails. Spring is the best time in Colorado to truly appreciate what a remarkably diverse state we live in, and this year was no exception.

Unfortunately for the hordes of birders participating in the annual altitudinal migration down from the Front Range to the eastern plains, the migrant story for the most part was lackluster. Don't get me wrong, the few fallouts were great, enjoyed by all lucky enough to bask in their glory, but numbers just weren't what they were a few years ago. And if it's shorebird numbers we're talking, then the story was truly grim.

Despite this, birders managed to find 34 species of warblers in the state this spring, with a couple of doozies thrown in. Most of the uncommon to rare eastern vagrants made at least one showing. Even most of the rare shorebird species were found, eventually, by someone. But where were all the Wilson's Warblers? Where were the large flocks of shorebirds? The mudflats were there, but the shorebirds for the most part weren't.

As with every spring, some truly outstanding vagrants showed up to dazzle everyone with their brilliance. This year first place undoubtedly goes to the Lawrence's Goldfinch that showed up at Larry Arnold's feeders in Grand Junction. Other top prizes go to such goodies as Painted Redstart, Common Black-Hawk, King Rail, and Snowy Owl. And the season was not without its share of controversy—mostly in the form of Charadriid identification.

Perhaps the most encouraging trend this season was not a surfeit of any bird species, but an increasing interest by birders in private ranches on the eastern plains. More than in any prior year, birders checked and re-checked many of these properties and found good birds there. Hopefully this trend will continue, especially on those ranches that are part of the newly launched Colorado Birding Trail (www.coloradobirdingtrail.com).

Climatically the story this spring is basically a repeat of the past few years. Rainfall was well below average, and temperatures varied,

but were generally above average. The snow pack from this past winter remained above average in the South Platte and Arkansas River basins, and about average elsewhere in the state, attesting to the large storms this past winter. However, this spring was unusual in that there were no really large spring snow events, at least on the Front Range. How all this affected bird migration is hard to say, other than that without large snow/rain events there were fewer large fallouts of migrants. Good for said migrants, bad for those birders who thrive at their misfortune.

The unusually large snow pack in southeastern Colorado had perhaps the most noticeable effect on birds of any climatic event this past winter/spring. Ground-dwelling species such as Scaled Quail, Lesser Prairie-Chicken, and Greater Roadrunner were present in depressingly small numbers, likely due to mass starvation of many of these birds due to deep snow packs.

A huge thanks go out to all the reporting observers (106 of them!) this season. Compilation of the records for any season would not be possible if observers didn't report their sightings to COBirds or the regional News from the Field/North American Birds editors. Keep up the good work!

Note 1: The reports contained herein are largely unchecked, and the report editor does not necessarily vouch for their authenticity. Underlined species are those for which the Colorado Bird Records Committee requests documentation. Reports followed by "no doc." are those that have not yet been documented. The Colorado Field Ornithologists' website (<http://www.cfo-link.org>) has a link to the Records Committee website, where rare bird records can be submitted electronically. The rare bird sight record reporting form is also printed on the inside cover of this journal's mailer.

Note 2: The name of the county is listed in *italics* only the first time each location is mentioned in the report. County names are usually not mentioned in subsequent records except to specify the placement of birds within sites that lie within multiple counties.

Abbreviations: CBR: Chico Basin Ranch, *El Paso/Pueblo*; CVCG: Crow Valley Campground, *Weld*; FLWE: Fort Lyon Wildlife Easement, *Bent*; LCCW: Lamar Community College Woods, *Prowers*; m.ob.: multiple observers

Greater White-fronted Goose: Only six reports were received this spring, mostly from the Front Range (though doubtless it occurred in its usual modest numbers in northeastern

Colorado). The high count was a paltry five, though given that the location was Pastorius Reservoir, *La Plata*, from 17 March through 1 April (JBy, m.ob.), perhaps paltry is the wrong word.

Snow Goose: The tardiest lagards this spring were four on 12 May at Jumbo Reservoir, *Logan/Sedgwick* (SL), and a singleton on 13 May at CBR, *El Paso* (BH, JD, m.ob.).

Ross's Goose: This dimensionally challenged white goose was last reported from the state this spring on 23 May at Big Johnson Reservoir, *El Paso* (BM). Unusual were three that lingered at Confluence Park, *Delta* until 23 April (m.ob.) and an adult on 2 May at Sullenberger Reservoir, *Archuleta* (PD).

Cackling Goose: The 650 reported on 27 March from Clark Lake, *Larimer* by DL proved to be the spring high count. The last report for the season came from CBR on 21-22 April, when two were seen (TL, m.ob.).

Canada × Greater White-fronted Goose: This unusual combination was seen at Belmar Historic Park, *Jefferson*, on 25 March (BSH).

Trumpeter Swan: A total of four reports is about average by recent standards; this species has been increasing in the past decade to the point where it has become just as expected as Tundra Swan. One was at Lake Minnequa, *Pueblo* from 4-12 March (RLi, m.ob.); three were along CR 163 near Salida, *Chaffee* on 7 March (RMi, no doc.); an adult was at McCaslin Reservoir, *Boulder* on 17 March (BK, TW); and, finally, a single bird was at Elliot SWA, *Morgan* from 3-6 April (KKr, CW).

Tundra Swan: The three reports this spring included a total of 10 birds; as is typical in Colorado, this species occurred in larger flocks than the previous one. Five adults were

seen from 17 March through 3 April at Perch Pond, *Moffat* (FL, m.ob., no doc.); four were at Big Johnson Reservoir, *El Paso* 19-20 March (BSt, MP, BM, m.ob.); and a singleton was at Boulder Reservoir, *Boulder* on 8 April (RT, no doc.).

Eurasian Wigeon: There were three reports this spring, with two of them near Durango likely pertaining to the same individual: an adult male was at Pastorius SWA, *La Plata* from 6-27 April (RMo, m.ob.) and at Zink's Pond, *La Plata* on 20 May (JoR, JaR, no doc.). The non-Durangoite was an adult male at Blue Mesa Reservoir, *Gunnison* on 30 April (TH, no doc.).

Mallard × Green-winged Teal: On the same day and in the same place as the aforementioned goose hybrid, BSh reported an individual of this unusual combination.

Blue-winged Teal: The first report of the spring was from CBR, *Pueblo* on 23 March, which is about the expected arrival date (BM).

Cinnamon Teal: 10 March seemed to herald the arrival of this species, with reports on that day from various locations by multiple observers.

Canvasback: By late May this species has typically migrated to the north or to its breeding areas in the mountains, so two birds at CBR, in *Pueblo* on 4 May and *El Paso* on 5 May (BM, m.ob.), were later than normal.

Greater Scaup: There were nine reports of the greater of the two scaups this spring, fewer than normal. The following counties were graced with this species: *Bent*, *Crowley*, *Pueblo*, *Freemont*, *Denver*, *Montezuma*, and *Mesa*.

Surf Scoter: This species is exceptionally rare in Colorado during the spring, so an immature at North Poudre Reservoir No. 3, *Larimer* from 1-9 April was quite a treat (RH, m.ob.).

Long-tailed Duck: Perhaps the most significant anatid sighting this spring was of an *alternate*-plumaged male of this species, perhaps the first time this form has been seen in the state. Those lucky enough to see this bird were at Fossil Creek Reservoir, *Larimer* on 28 April (LSe, RH, m.ob.).

Scaled Quail: Two individuals of the rare southwestern Colorado population were reported near Cortez, *Montezuma* on 11 May (CD, JBy, BW). Nearly the entire population in the area is restricted to the Ute Mountain Ute Indian Reservation, and therefore nearly impossible to see.

Red-throated Loon: As has been typical in recent years, Pueblo Reservoir nearly monopolized the sightings of this species: a basic-plumaged bird was seen from 10 April through 8 May and again on 23 May (RMi, BKP, m.ob.), and an *alternate*-plumaged bird was seen from 17 April through 7 May (BKP, m.ob.). Not wanting to give Pueblo Reservoir all the glory, Marston Reservoir, *Denver* produced a bird transitioning into *alternate* on 19 April (TJ, no doc.).

Pacific Loon: The only record of this normally fall-time migrant was of one at Lake DeWeese, *Custer* on 16 May (BKP, MP).

Common Loon: There were fourteen reports, with a total of nineteen individuals this spring. The only ones

with multiple birds were of five *alternate*-plumaged individuals at Naraguinnep Reservoir, *Montezuma* on 14 April (NP, AS), and two *alternate* birds at Miramonte Reservoir, *San Miguel* on 14 April (AS, NP).

Red-necked Grebe: The only report this spring was of an *alternate*-plumaged bird at Pueblo Reservoir from 25-28 April (BKP, m.ob.).

Least Bittern: The only report of this diminutive and rare heron from Colorado this spring was of one heard in the Fort Lyon Marshes, *Bent* on 21 May (DN, no doc.).

Great Egret: The first of the spring was on 28 March at Lake Beckwith, *Pueblo* (DS).

Snowy Egret: DS also found the first individual of this species this spring, at Colorado City, *Pueblo* on 15 March.

Cattle Egret: Not only was the one at Connected Lakes State Park, *Mesa* from 5-11 April the first of the spring, it also provided a rare West Slope record (m.ob.). Also on the West Slope were eight in Rifle, *Garfield* on 12 May (CL). Higher than normal were two at Lake Estes, *Larimer* from 23-25 April (SRo, m.ob.).

Green Heron: There were fifteen reports this spring; the only one from the West Slope was from Connected Lakes State Park on 5 May (LA). Other counties with reports include *Prowers*, *Otero*, *Pueblo*, *Fremont*, *Huerfano*, *Arapahoe*, *Adams*, *Boulder*, and *Larimer*.

Glossy Ibis: The total of eight reports this spring was slightly less than normal for recent years. One was at Loloff Reservoir, *Weld* on 1 March

(GW, NE, AH, no doc.), up to two at CBR, *Pueblo* from 12 to 23 April (BM), one at Pastorius Reservoir, *La Plata* on 27 April (JBy, no doc.), another at Two Buttes Reservoir on 28 April (MP, BKP, no doc.), three at Florence, *Fremont* on 5 May (MP, no doc.), one at Timnath Reservoir, *Larimer* on 9 May (NK, no doc.), one on 10 May at Squirrel Creek Road Pond, *El Paso* (JD, no doc.), and finally one on 12 May at Huerfano Reservoir, *Pueblo* (DS, no doc.).

Glossy × White-faced Ibis: Two of these increasingly-reported hybrids were seen at Stearns Lake, *Boulder* on 25 and 26 April (LK, no doc.).

Turkey Vulture: The first report for the spring came on 21 March from Orlando Reservoir, *Pueblo* (DS).

Osprey: One on 2 March from Pueblo Reservoir was the first reported (JY).

Mississippi Kite: Two reports on 22 April represented the first of the season: one at Granada, *Prowers*, and one in Lamar (JK, m.ob.).

Northern Goshawk: This is by far the rarest of Colorado's accipiters, especially on the plains, so sub-adults at CBR, *Pueblo* on 19 April (BM) and on 27 April at the LCCW (MA) are significant.

Common Black-Hawk: Continuing the slew of records of this rare southwestern hawk in Colorado the past few years was one seen sporadically around Grand Junction, *Mesa* from 2-25 May, initially and most often thereafter at Connected Lakes State Park (RLa, RLi, no doc.), but also nearby (RLe, no doc.).

Broad-winged Hawk: Thirteen

reports pertaining to eighteen individuals made for a dismal spring; however, given that the Dinosaur Ridge Hawkwatch was not staffed this season, the total might be expected. Reports of multiples include three adult light morphs from the Cañon City Riverwalk, *Fremont* from 17-26 April (RMi, m.ob.), three from near Beebe Draw, *Weld* on 21 April (WF), and two from Chatfield State Park, *Douglas* on 1 May (GW). The only report of a dark-morph bird was of an immature from Cherry Creek State Park, *Arapahoe* on 22 April (JBy).

Rough-legged Hawk: Normally, the last report for the spring for this arctic-breeding hawk comes sometime in late March or, maybe, early April. This year no fewer than four reports came from the second half of April: one in southwestern *San Miguel* on 15 April (AS, NP); one on 19 April near Anton, *Washington* (DE), one the same day near Lamar, *Prowers* (DL), and two at the Arapaho NWR, *Jackson* on 23 April (AS).

Black Rail: As in the past couple of years, the first report of the season came from late April, this year on the night of 27 April when up to twenty were heard calling from the Fort Lyon Marsh, *Bent* (MP, BKP, m.ob.). A pair at CBR, *Pueblo* from 15 to 27 May provided both a first ranch record and a second county record (BKP, BM, m.ob.), while two heard calling at the Nepesta Marsh, *Pueblo* on 20 May provided the third county record (AS). The species doubtless breeds regularly in *Pueblo*, so the lack of records is likely due to lack of looking.

King Rail: The rallid event of

the season came in the form of this oversized rail “kekking” and grunting at the Fort Lyon Marsh on the night of 28 April (MP, BKP, m.ob.). Unfortunately, it didn’t perform so well for the flotilla of state listers who braved the mosquitoes the following night.

Sandhill Crane: Quite late away from their breeding areas in northwestern Colorado were 75 seen on 28 April at Bonny Reservoir, Yuma (MP, m.ob.).

Black-bellied Plover: The first report of the season came on 14 April from Cheney Reservoir, Mesa (LA); the high count was a paltry three on 8 May near Wellington, Larimer (JBg).

American Golden-Plover: Though far rarer during spring than fall in Colorado, two (or three; see the next account) is about normal for the state. A basic bird was at Pastorius SWA from 21 to 25 April, providing an extremely rare West Slope record and a first county record (RMO, JBr). Another basic bird was seen at John Martin Reservoir on 29 April (DN).

***Pluvialis* species plover:** What’s spring without a dose of bird identification controversy? This year the honor went to a *Pluvialis* plover found near Lower Latham Reservoir, Weld on 6 May by LG (and independently by NK) and seen and studied by many through 8 May. This bird, which was molting into alternate, was initially identified as an American Golden-Plover, subsequently as a Pacific Golden-Plover (which does not appear on the state list), and then again as a confirmed “I-don’t-know.” Experts disagreed on the ID, pictures were inconclusive, and even the field

guides proved less than helpful. Luckily for all involved, a feather that the bird plucked while preening was recovered for DNA analysis by NK. When the results are in, many expect that they may reveal a hybrid ancestry for our mystery bird. Stay tuned!

Snowy Plover: Six at Lake Cheraw, Otero on 8 April (CW, SRi) were the first of the season, while one on 15 April at Lake John, Jackson (SRi) and one on 30 April at Blue Mesa Reservoir, Gunnison (TH) were out of range.

Piping Plover: As usual, DN reported the first for the season from John Martin Reservoir, this year on 4 April.

Wilson’s Plover: An intriguing, if yet undocumented, report of this species came in from Blue Mesa Reservoir on 29 April (JiB, no doc.). There are no accepted records from Colorado, though this is a species that many believe is due to grace the state list.

Mountain Plover: CBR scored the first report for the species this spring, on 23 March from Pueblo (BM).

Black-necked Stilt: Two at Pastorius Reservoir on 24 March (JBy) were both the first for the season and a good find for *La Plata*. Other West Slope reports came from Mesa, Delta, and Moffat.

Greater Yellowlegs: The first of the season came from Metro Lake in Colorado City, Pueblo on 5 March (DS). One in Dolores on 14 April (NP, AS) provided a county first according to the CFO County Birding site.

Lesser Yellowlegs: Five at Pastorius Reservoir on 17 March provided

the season's first (m.ob.), while one in *Dolores* on 14 April provided an overdue county first (AS, NP).

Solitary Sandpiper: One on 22 April from CBR, *Pueblo* proved to be the first this spring (BKP, MA).

Upland Sandpiper: Earlier than normal and away from their northeastern breeding strongholds were two along US 385 at CR VV, *Baca* on 29 April (AS, CW). Migrants were also reported near Two Buttes Reservoir in *Prowers* on 5 May (MeA, m.ob.) and on 6 May from CBR, *Pueblo* (MP).

Whimbrel: Fourteen reports pertaining to twenty-nine individuals made for quite a good spring for this scarce migrant. The first were three on 13 April from a playa near Lake Meredith, *Crowley* (SM). Significant reports include one from Stearns Lake, *Boulder* on 25 April (LK, EZ, m.ob.), one at Pueblo Reservoir from

7-8 May (BKP, m.ob.), and one from Cherry Creek Reservoir on 8 May (AH, GW).

Long-billed Curlew: An unreported number of individuals on 5 April in *Baca* (MA) provided the first of the season. Four on 5 May at Pastorius Reservoir (m.ob.) provided a rare record for *La Plata*, and two along CR 2 in *Dolores* on 15 May (AS, NP) were a first county record.

Marbled Godwit: The first report of the season came from 3 April, though the location of the sighting was not reported to this writer. A high count of 80 came from 27 April at Prewitt Reservoir (GW, NE, JK, AH).

Ruddy Turnstone: There were three reports of this gaudy shorebird this spring: up to four at Big Johnson Reservoir from 7-8 May (JD, m.ob.), two at Lake Henry, *Crowley* 12-13 May (TE, AB), and one on 12 May from Lake Cheraw (SO, m.ob.).

Red Knot: Significant in both number and location were nine in basic plumage at Blue Mesa Reservoir from 29-30 April (TH, m.ob., no doc.).

Sanderling: One on 2 May from Nee-Noshe Reservoir, *Kiowa* provided the season's first (BKP). Eighty-five on 15 May from Jumbo Reservoir was an excellent total, and the high count for the spring (HA).



Whimbrel, *Pueblo Reservoir*, *Pueblo County*, 8 May 2007. Photo by Brandon Percival



White-rumped Sandpiper, Pueblo Reservoir, Pueblo County, 7 May 2007. Photo by Bill Maynard

Semipalmated Sandpiper: “Several” on 23 April at Neeskah Reservoir, *Kiowa* were the first reported this spring (DL).

Western Sandpiper: First for the season and uncommon in *La Plata* were five at Pastorius Reservoir on 19 April (JBy, SA).

White-rumped Sandpiper: One on 12 May from NeeNoshe Reservoir (DN) was the first for the spring, representing a typical arrival date. One at Fruitgrowers Reservoir, *Delta* provided a very rare West Slope record when it was found on 13 May (AS, m.ob.), and individuals at Pueblo Reservoir on 21 May (BKP) and 23–24 May (BKP, m.ob.) were farther west than normal.

Pectoral Sandpiper: Even though this species is far less common in the spring than in the fall, two reports is a dismal total. Two were at Duck Lake, *Larimer* on 28 April (LSe, RH), and a

total of three at various locations in *Phillips* on 23 May (AS).

Dunlin: The total of two reports for the spring was low by recent standards, though a flock of five in alternate plumage at San Luis Lakes, *Alamosa* on 25 April (JBy) was unusual both in terms of number and location. The other report was also of an alternate bird, this one at Lake Cheraw on 22 April (JR, m.ob.).

Short-billed Dowitcher: There was a total of seven reports this spring; the only one involving multiple individuals was on 14 April from Beebe Draw, *Weld* (BSc, JSc, no doc.). Also significant was one on 5 May from Pastorius Reservoir (JBy, no doc.), providing one of very few West Slope records.

Red-necked Phalarope: The first report for the season was of an unspecified number of birds at an unspecified location, and, in keeping with the trend, by an unspecified observer on 26 April. The high count was of 175 on 15 May from Jumbo Reservoir (HA).

Mew Gull: The only sighting was of an adult in basic plumage at Black Hollow Reservoir, *Weld* on 22 March (CW, no doc.).

Thayer’s Gull: There were lower numbers of this gull than normal this spring, especially given the “abun-



Short-billed Dowitcher (foreground) with Long-billed Dowitcher, Chico Basin Ranch, El Paso County, 7 May 2007. Photo by Bill Maynard

dance” of the next species. All reports were from expected Front Range locations.

Iceland Gull: The spring of 2007



Iceland Gull, Ault Landfill, Weld County, 1 April 2007. Photo by Larry Semo

saw an unprecedented influx of this rare *Larus*. The flood started when two first-cycle birds were found at the Ault Landfill on 1 April (PL, TL, m.ob.) and seen later on the same day at Black Hollow Reservoir. One first-cycle bird was then

seen at Robert Benson Lake, *Larimer* on 8 April (NK, m.ob.), and up to three first-cycle birds graced the Larimer County Landfill, *Larimer* from 9 to 29 April (NK, CW, m.ob.). While the exact number of birds can never be known with complete certainty, there were probably at least three around this past April, an amazing total for the state.

Lesser Black-backed Gull: Only a paltry six were reported to this author for the spring, though doubtless a number of sightings went unreported.

Glaucous Gull:

Also paltry were the five reports of this species for the spring, all of first- or second-cycle birds and all from expected Front Range locations.

Great Black-backed Gull:

Unlike most seasons, this spring Pueblo lost its monopoly on this species. There were two reports: one of unspecified age from Boedecker Reservoir, *Larimer* on 24 March (CK, LG, no doc.), and **three** (two adults and a third-cycle bird) from Bear Creek Lake, *Jefferson* on 10 April (MH, RR, no doc.).

Black-legged Kittiwake: Though this species is always a rarity in Colo-



Iceland Gull, Larimer County Landfill, 16 April 2007.
Photo by Larry Griffin

rado, spring records are far harder to come by; this year there was an immature at Pueblo Reservoir from 3 to 8 May (RMi, m.ob.).

Caspian Tern: There were four reports this spring: one on 6 May at Ice Lake, *Chaffee* (SM); one, also on 6 May, at Walden Ponds, *Boulder* (PP, m.ob.); two at Pueblo Reservoir from 7-8 May (BKP, m.ob.); and, most significantly, four at Fruita State Park, *Mesa* on 27 April (LA).

Common Tern:

Its name notwithstanding, this species is always quite uncommon during the spring; nevertheless, the total of three was



Caspian Tern, Pueblo Reservoir, Pueblo County, 8 May 2007. Photo by Brandon Percival



White-winged Dove, Larimer County, 3 May 2007.
Photo by Rachel Hopper

low. One was at Pueblo Reservoir on 8 May (JW, m.ob.), one at Prince Lake #2, Boulder on 13 May (JH), and one at Pueblo Reservoir on 23 May (BKP, MP).

Forster's Tern: The first of the season came on 22 April at Lake Hasty, Bent (AS, m.ob.).

Least Tern: There were two reports of this spatially-challenged tern away from the Arkansas River Valley this spring: one on 15 May from Big Johnson Reservoir (MP, CW, m.ob.), and one on 18 May from Cheney Reservoir, Mesa (LA). The latter provided one of the very few West Slope records for the species.

Black Tern: Five birds on 12 May at Neeskah Reservoir were the first reported this season, a bit later than normal (DL).

White-winged Dove: Reports of this invading species have practically become mundane during the past few

years, so a total of 21 reports of 31 birds was not a huge surprise. The high count was six birds from 9 March to 27 April from Sunset Park, Pueblo (JW, m.ob.). Other counties with reports include *Prowers*, *Bent*, *Otero*, *El Paso*, *Custer*, *Lincoln*, *Phillips*, *Jefferson*, *Larimer*, *Montrose*, *Montezuma*, and *La Plata*.

Inca Dove: The only reports of this diminutive columbid for the season came

from the usual locations of Lamar and Rocky Ford, though no reports of multiple birds were received.

Yellow-billed Cuckoo: One at Two Buttes Reservoir on 6 May (AS, m.ob.) was very early for this species in Colorado, and provided the first of the season.

Flammulated Owl: Per usual, this was the last owl species reported for the spring, with one from Glade Park, Mesa on 1 May being the first (LA).

Snowy Owl: Certainly among the most unusual reports of the spring was the individual of this species that appeared at Blue Lake, Bent/Kiowa on 7 April (SO, m.ob.). Alas, it could not be found the next day. Presumably it decided to migrate to colder climes.

Burrowing Owl: Three at the Stulp Farm, *Prowers* on 22 March (JSt) were the first of the season.

Spotted Owl: Perhaps no other species that breeds in Colorado is as

elusive as this one, so four reports for the spring by birders is an excellent total. One was heard at Mesa Verde National Park, Montezuma on 25 April (JBy, SA); one was in Fremont, also on 25 April (AS); another was also in Fremont on 30 April (JJ); and one was heard in Pueblo on 12 May (JW).



Common Night-hawk: The first of the spring this year was on 4 May at the Lamar Cemetery, Prowers (GW, JR, m.ob.), which is an average arrival date.

Common Poorwill: The first report for the spring came on 22 April from the Hatchet Ranch, El Paso (BBH). Reports from the plains came from Prowers, Lincoln, and El Paso.

Black Swift: Three in Pueblo, Pueblo on 22 May (BKP) were not only the first of the spring, but also quite a surprise for the location. At Box Canyon Falls, Ouray, the first birds reported were six on 29 May (m.ob.).

Vaux's Swift: No, it's not on the state list. Yes, it doubtless occurs in western Colorado at least every now and then. And yes, there are a number of reports of *Chaetura* swifts from the West Slope that may or may not pertain to this species. But the best evidence yet came in the form of a *Chaetura* swift both seen and, more importantly, heard in Paonia, Delta

Snowy Owl, Adobe Creek Reservoir, Kiowa/Bent Counties, 7 April 2007. Photo by Brandon Percival

on 2 May (JBe). The description of both the physical and vocal aspects of the bird matched this species and not Chimney Swift.

Acorn Woodpecker: As usual, the only reports of this species came from the colony at Rafter J, La Plata, with reports spanning the whole season (m.ob.).

Lewis's Woodpecker: So when was the last time you saw a Lewis's Woodpecker in southeastern Colorado? As recently as five years ago this species was common at Cottonwood Canyon and reasonably regular along the Arkansas River. More recently it has been rare or entirely absent. So the presence of at least three birds, with nesting confirmed, at the Bader Ranch, Las Animas on 27 May (AS) was heartening. The only other report from the SE came from CBR, Pueblo on 23 May (BM).

Red-headed Woodpecker: One

on 6 May from a private ranch in *Lincoln* (JK, m.ob.) was the first of the season. Another east of Aurora Reservoir, *Arapahoe* on 15-16 May (LSt) provided a rare county record.

Williamson's Sapsucker: One along the Old Lake Isabel Road, *Pueblo* on 13 March (DS) proved to be the first of the season.

Red-naped Sapsucker: A pair at the Fairmount Cemetery in Lamar, *Prowers* on 12 March (DL) provided the first report this spring, though it seems likely that the birds wintered at that location.

Olive-sided Flycatcher: Usually one of the later migrants of the spring, this species appeared on 10 May at Valco Ponds in *Pueblo* (BKP) on a fairly typical arrival date.

Eastern Wood-Pewee: There were two reports of the rarer pewee species this spring: one on 28 April from the LCCW (MP, LE, BSt, BKP, no doc.) and one from 15-16 May at the Fairmount Cemetery in Lamar (DL, no doc.).

Alder Flycatcher: Yes, it's one of the least impressive-looking vagrants to the state, but even so it is always exciting to see. There were two this spring: one at CBR, *Pueblo* on 16 May (BM, no doc.), and the other from CVCG on 22 May (CW, no doc.).

Willow Flycatcher: One on 11 May from Zink's Pond (JBy) was the first of the spring.

Least Flycatcher: The first of the season was seen on 5 May at CBR, *Pueblo* (BKP, BM, m.ob.). With thoughtless disregard to its name, this species made big news on the West Slope this spring and summer,

with up to **four** seen and heard at Loudy-Simpson Park, *Moffat* from 23 May through the end of the season (FL, m.ob.), with breeding likely but never confirmed, and another heard and seen at Connected Lakes State Park from 25 May through the end of the season (MP, BKP, m.ob.). Finally, while not really on the West Slope, one at Sands Lake in Salida, *Chaffee* on 11 May (VT) was out of range.

Hammond's Flycatcher: The first of the spring was a somewhat early bird at Valco Ponds in *Pueblo* on 23 April (BKP).

Gray Flycatcher: One on 14 April near Hovenweep Canyon, *Montezuma* (NP, AS) was the first of the season. Records from the plains, where this species is rare, especially in the spring, include one on 24 April from Pueblo City Park, *Pueblo* (BKP) and one on 28 April from Sunset Park in *Pueblo*, *Pueblo* (JW).

Black Phoebe: There were fourteen reports of this increasingly regular flycatcher this spring. Most significant by far was a pair of phoebes along the Big Thompson River Trail in Loveland, *Larimer* from 21 April through 6 May (EC, m.ob.). At least one of the birds was an undoubted Black Phoebe, but the other appeared both vocally and visually to be a good candidate for a hybrid Black × Eastern Phoebe. Alas, even though they seemed to be nesting, the pair disappeared before they could be captured and a DNA sample obtained. Other counties with Black Phoebe reports include *La Plata*, *Fremont*, *Pueblo*, *Chaffee*, *Baca*, and *Montrose*. The CBRC would like to remind everyone



White-eyed Vireo, Chico Basin Ranch, Pueblo County, 29 April 2007. Photo by Glenn Walbek

that this species is one it would like documentation for from all counties other than *Montrose* and *Pueblo*.

Eastern Phoebe: This species is uncommon to rare away from Cottonwood Canyon in *Baca* and the South Platte River in northeastern Colorado. There were thirteen reports away from these areas, all from southeastern Colorado.

Vermilion Flycatcher: Unfortunately, this fire-colored gem made only two appearances this spring, and only a lucky few got to bask in its glory. One, a female, was at CBR, *El Paso* on 28 March (JD, no doc.), and the other, a male this time, showed up on the same day 10 miles south of La Junta, *Otero* (BL, no doc.).

Great Crested Flycatcher: The only report received for the spring was of a pair seen at the FLWE, *Bent* on 5 May (AS, m.ob.).

Cassin's Kingbird: One on 23

April from Rock Canyon, *Pueblo* (BKP) was the first of the season. Birds seen at CVCG and elsewhere in *Weld* this spring (DL, AS) were rare for the north-eastern plains at that season; the species is not known to breed in the area, though it breeds rarely to the north in other states.

Scissor-tailed Flycatcher: Only three reports of this gorgeous flycatcher came in for the spring: a male was seen east of Walsh, *Baca* on 20 April (DL), a female was seen at the AT&T Tower south of Lamar, *Prowers* on 29 April (CW, AS, no doc.), and a male was seen on 2 May along CR 2, *Cheyenne* (DN, no doc.).

Northern Shrike: An adult seen at Browns Park NWR, *Moffat* on 31 March (AS, NP) was the last reported this spring.

White-eyed Vireo: Four reports this spring made for a fairly decent total: one was at the Riverside Cemetery in Lamar from 23-24 April (DL), one was at CBR, *Pueblo* from 28-29 April (BK, m.ob.), one was at the Fairmount Cemetery in Lamar on 4 May (PG, m.ob.), and a singing bird was at Fountain Creek Regional Park, *El Paso* from 6-8 May (KL, m.ob.).

Gray Vireo: The first of the spring

was reported on 27 April in Montrose (CD, BW). A member of the extremely local and hard-to-find southeast Colorado population was seen and heard at the Badger Ranch, Las Animas on 20 May (AS).

Yellow-throated

Vireo: The three reports this spring demonstrate why this is one of the hardest non-review species to see in Colorado: they all showed up at times when few birders were present to see them, and they didn't stick around for long. One was seen at Two Buttes Reservoir on 23 April (JBy); one spent 24-25 April at the Riverside Cemetery in Lamar (DL); and one was singing at CBR, El Paso from 27-28 April (BKP, BM, m.ob.).

Cassin's Vireo: A total of six reports was an excellent total for this typically hard-to-find species in the spring. One was at the Fairmount Cemetery in Lamar on 26 April (DL); one was singing at CBR, El Paso on 30 April (BG, m.ob.); another was at CBR, Pueblo on 5 May (JW, BKP, m.ob.); one was at McKay Lake, Adams on 13 May (EZ); one was along CR 204 in La Plata on 13 May (JBy); and one was at CBR, El Paso on 19 May (BKP, m.ob.).

Blue-headed Vireo: The rarest vireo in Colorado appeared only once this spring, with a female band-



Yellow-throated Vireo, Riverside Cemetery, Lamar, Prowers County, 24 April 2007. Photo by Dave Leatherman

ed at CBR, El Paso on 19 May (BG, m.ob.).

Warbling Vireo: One of the great unanswered taxonomic questions in Colorado is which (sub-)species of Warbling Vireo occurs where in eastern Colorado. Observers this spring found nominate *gilvus* on territory as far west as Otero (JD) and Morgan (AS), while the western *swainsonii* was found as far as east as Weld and Otero (AS). Oh, by the way, the first of the spring was on 23 April in Fremont (AS).

Philadelphia Vireo: The second-rarest vireo in Colorado performed slightly better than the rarest, with two reports. One was seen on 16 May at CBR, El Paso (BM, no doc.), and one was seen at the Haxtun City Park, Phillips on 25 May (JBy, no doc.).

Blue Jay: This predominantly eastern species maintained its pres-

ence at its most reliable West Slope locality in Craig, Moffat, with a report on 24 March (MP, BSt).

Western Scrub-Jay: There were two reports of this species from the plains this spring, where it is quite rare: two were seen in Withers Canyon, Otero on 1 April (DN), and one was seen on 12 May at CBR, *Pueblo* (BM, BKP, LE).

Purple Martin: The first report of the spring came on 11 May, with reports on that date from both Mesa and Delta (m.ob.). There were no reports from the eastern plains this spring.

Chihuahuan Raven: One was seen at Lower Latham Reservoir on 17 April (CW), likely a holdout from the winter invasion. Unlike most of the winter reports, this one was documented.

Carolina Wren: The Arkansas River Valley had the monopoly on Carolina Wrens this season, with two males singing at the Cañon City Riverwalk from 9 March through 28 May (RMi, m.ob.), one singing at the LCCW from 22 April through the end of the season (TL, m.ob.), and one singing on 17 May at Frantz Lake, Chaffee (RMi, SY).

Golden-crowned Kinglet: This species is quite hard to come by on the plains, especially during the spring. One was seen at CBR, *El Paso* on 19 April (BM) and another a month later on 19 May (BG, m.ob.), and one was at CVCG on 29 May (RH).

Eastern Bluebird: There was a total of eight reports from areas away from Yuma and northeastern Colorado where they are regular, representing the following counties: *Baca*,

Las Animas, *Pueblo*, *Fremont*, *El Paso*, and *Boulder*.

Western Bluebird: This is easily the least-expected bluebird species on the plains, so one at CBR, *El Paso* on 18 March (RO) was significant.

Veery: A total of 14 reports made for an excellent showing. Only one was reported as belonging to the rare eastern subspecies, a bird banded at CBR, *El Paso* on 11 May (BG). Other counties with reports include *Prowers*, *Pueblo*, and *Weld*.

Winter Wren: One at the Lamar High School grove on 5 May (DL, m.ob.) was later than normal. Observers felt that it pertained to the eastern subspecies.

Gray-cheeked Thrush: For anyone who was around last spring, the numbers of this species this year were truly dreadful. To everyone else, it seemed like a normal year. There were three reports, with one banded on 3 May at CBR, *El Paso* (BG), one seen 12 May at Tamarack Ranch SWA, *Logan* (SL, no doc.), and one found 15 May at CBR, *El Paso* (BM, BKP, m.ob., no doc.).

Varied Thrush: The only report was of the continuing bird at the DOW Fish Hatchery in *La Plata*, which was seen through 23 March (m.ob., no doc.).

Brown Thrasher: One at Burchfield SWA, *Baca* on 20 April (DL) was the first report of the season, while another from 28-29 May along CO 141 at the New Mexico border in *La Plata* (JBr, JBy) provided a very rare West Slope record.

Bohemian Waxwing: An invasion year this was not—the evidence

was plain to see, with only one report of ten birds seen on the east side of Cameron Pass, *Larimer* on 6 March (DL).

Blue-winged Warbler: Among the rarest of the non-review species of warbler in Colorado, the species was reported only once this spring, from Picture Canyon, *Baca* on 21 April by visiting celebrity Pete Dunne. This report, in addition to a couple of other eastern strays from this location, demonstrates the potential of the place. Bird it, people!

Tennessee Warbler: It was quite unusual for this species that four of the five spring reports came from April, as it is typically reported in May. Reports include one at Two Buttes Reservoir from 23-24 April (JBy), a female on 24 April from Riverside Cemetery in Lamar, *Prowers* (DL), a male on 28 April, also from Riverside Cemetery (KH), a male at Cottonwood Canyon, *Baca/Las Animas* on 29 April (AS, CW), and a male at Sawhill Ponds, *Boulder* on 10 May (EZ).

Orange-crowned Warbler: Two reports vied for the honor of being the first of the spring: one at the Cañon City Riverwalk, *Fremont* (BKP, CW) and another at Two Buttes (DL) on 20 April.

Nashville Warbler: Far better than last year's single report

were the six reported this spring. One was at the Cañon City Riverwalk on 25 April (RMi), another at Willow Creek Park, *Prowers* on 28 April (BKP, m.ob.), one on 3 May at the LCCW (DR), a female on 5-6 May at Two Buttes (SL, AS, m.ob.), both a male and female at the LCCW on 6 May (PG, m.ob.), singletons at CBR, *El Paso* on 6 May (RO, DQ) and 11-12 May in *Pueblo* (BM, m.ob.), and a banded bird at the LCCW from 14-17 May (DL, m.ob.).

Virginia's Warbler: The first reported was at the Cañon City Riverwalk on 20 April (BKP, CW).

Lucy's Warbler: Continuing their drab and gray but nonetheless exciting presence in Colorado were the few pairs along Yellow Jacket Creek, *Montezuma*, first reported on 28 April (NE, JR, m.ob., no doc.). On 27 May up to seven birds constituting at least three pairs were reported from the public



Northern Parula, Chico Basin Ranch, Pueblo County, 2 May 2007. Photo by Glenn Walbek

stretch of that same famous creek; one nest was found and the female of another pair was seen carrying food (AS, no doc.). Also reported on that day was a pair from another public stretch of Yellow Jacket Creek, this one near the Ismay Trading Post (AS, no doc.). If this location proves reliable it would provide a far simpler option for seeing this bird in Colorado.

Northern Parula:

The spring total of 22 was excellent by recent standards. The only report of multiple birds was of two from CBR on 2 May (GW, m.ob.). Reports came from *Prowers*, *Bent*, *Pueblo*, *Fremont*, *El Paso*, *Lincoln*, *Weld*, and *Jefferson*.

Yellow Warbler: The first report was from 20 May on the Stulp Farm, *Prowers* (JSt).

Chestnut-sided Warbler: A total of 17 reports constitutes an excellent spring showing for this species. At least three reports pertain to multiple individuals: a male and female on 20 May from the Stulp Farm (JSt), two males on 28 May from TJ's yard in *Jefferson* (TJ), and two singing males from 27 May through the end of the season near *Louviers*, *Douglas* (TH, m.ob.). Other reports came from *Baca*, *Pueblo*, *El Paso*, *Larimer*, *Boulder*, *Weld*, and *Adams*.

Magnolia Warbler: A total of eight



Chestnut-sided Warbler, Lamar Community College, *Prowers* County, 15 May 2007. Photo by Dave Leatherman

were reported this spring, a decent number: a male on 13 May at CBR, *Pueblo* (RLi, BKP, m.ob.), a male on 15-16 May at the LCCW (MG), another on the same day at CVCG (EZ, RS), a male at CBR, *El Paso* on 17 May (JD), a singing male at Florence Mountain Park, *Fremont* on 23 May (MP), two males at CVCG on 23 May (RH, m.ob.), and finally a female at Duck Creek SWA, *Logan* on 24 May (AS).

Black-throated Blue Warbler: CVCG monopolized the species this spring, with all three reports coming from that hallowed location: a male from 21-23 May (DL, m.ob.), a female on 27 May (MC, DO), and a male on 29 May (NAK, NK, CW).

Cape May Warbler: As this is among the rarest of eastern warblers to occur in Colorado, the two reports this spring represent an excellent total. The

first was on 21 May at Bonny State Park, Yuma (AS, no doc.), and the other was heard only at CVCG on 29 May (NE, no doc.). Observers are cautioned that identifying this species only by sound can be tricky, as Golden-crowned Kinglet can sound nearly identical.

Yellow-rumped Warbler: The first report for the spring came on 17 March, later than is typical for this early spring migrant.

Black-throated Gray Warbler: The first report came from 23 April, of a male near Florence, *Fremont* (PGO). A rare migrant on the plains, the species accumulated the following reports there this spring: one on 24 April at Van's Grove, *Bent* (DN), a female on 25 April at the LCCW (DL), one on 5 May from CBR, *Pueblo* (TL, BG), and one on 11 May, also from CBR, *El Paso* (BG).

Black-throated Green Warbler: The five reports of this species for the spring seems a little low, though better than last spring. A female was at CBR, *Pueblo* on 5 May (BKP, m.ob.), a male was at Fountain Creek Regional Park on 8 May (GW, AH, m.ob.), a male was at Van's Grove on 9 May (DN), one was at Boulder Creek at CU on 15 May (PR), and a female was at CBR, *El Paso* on 16 May (BG).



Magnolia Warbler, Chico Basin Ranch, El Paso County, 17 May 2007. Photo by Glenn Walbek

Townsend's Warbler: Though they are typically fall migrants in Colorado, a few straggle through every spring. Eight reports from this spring all came from either Lamar or CBR, and a maximum of two was reported twice at CBR.

Blackburnian Warbler: The season's total of two was downright dismal compared to last spring, but far more normal for Colorado. A male was found at a private ranch in *Lincoln* on 5 May (JK, m.ob., no doc.), and a male was reported from CVCG on 15 May (EZ, no doc.).

Yellow-throated Warbler: It was a banner spring for this southeastern swamp-dweller, with three to four reports, depending on your counting: a singing male graced Fairmount Cemetery in Lamar, *Prowers* from 3-8 May, adding many birders to its county and state lists (DL, m.ob.); one was at CBR, *Pueblo* on 5 May (BM, m.ob.);



Palm Warbler, Two Buttes, Baca County, 22 April 2007.
Photo by Dave Leatherman

another male (or the same bird as earlier in the month?) sang at Fairmount Cemetery from 16-18 May (DL, m.ob., no doc.); and one was reported from a Fort Collins residence, *Larimer* on 24 May (FK, no doc.).

Grace's Warbler: A report from the Uncompahgre Plateau on 27 April (CD, BW) ties the record early date. The only East Slope report was of a singing male at Florence Mountain Park, *Fremont* on 23 May (MP).

Palm Warbler: Depending on your reckoning, there were anywhere from three to five reports this spring. A male of the

western race graced Two Buttes Reservoir on 21-22 April (JK, RO, m.ob.), from 28-29 April (AS, CW), and on 5 May (JK, CW). Whether this represents one, two, or three individuals is anyone's guess. The other two reports include another western male from a private ranch in *Cheyenne* on 4 May (GW, AS, m.ob.) and one from CBR, *El Paso* from 5-6 May (BM, m.ob.).

Blackpoll Warbler:

The season's total of four was downright shameful, as this is normally one of the more common "eastern" warblers during spring migration. This year's reports include



Yellow-throated Warbler, Chico Basin Ranch, Pueblo County, 7 May 2007. Photo by Bill Maynard

a singing male from a private ranch in *Lincoln* on 4 May (JK, m.ob.), another singing male from CBR, *El Paso* on 10 May (BG, BM), a female from CBR, *El Paso* on 12 May (KL, BKP, m.ob.), and a female from Frantz Lake, *Chaffee* on 17 May (RMi).

Black-and-white Warbler: 21 reports came in for the spring, about average, representing birds in the following counties: *Baca*, *Prowers*, *Bent*, *Pueblo*, *El Paso*, *Chaffee*, *Lincoln*, *Jefferson*, and *Weld*.

American Redstart: This species was far less common on the plains this spring than normal; usually it is among the most regular of the "eastern" warblers. A total of eleven reports came from *Prowers*, *Pueblo*, *El Paso*, *Fremont*, *Lincoln*, *Washington*, and *Weld*.

Worm-eating Warbler: Three reports constitutes a slightly lower than average spring showing for this species. One was higher and slightly earlier than normal at Lake Estes, *Larimer* from 25-26 April (SRo, m.ob.), one was singing at CVCG on 21 May (DL), and one was singing along Boulder Creek at CU on 27 May (PG, SL).

Ovenbird: There were sixteen reports totaling seventeen birds on the plains this spring, a bit lower than average. Counties involved include *Prowers*, *Pueblo*, *El Paso*, *Cheyenne*, *Lincoln*, *Larimer*, *Boulder*, *Logan*, and *Weld*. A report of up to four birds at Rye, *Pueblo* on 8 May (DS) and one at Castlewood Canyon State Park, *Douglas* on 13 May (GW) may pertain to birds of the small Colorado breeding population.

Northern Waterthrush: A total of 22 reports pertaining to 24 individuals came in from the plains and Front Range this spring, from *Baca*, *Prowers*, *Bent*, *Pueblo*, *El Paso*, *Fremont*, *Chaffee*, *Cheyenne*, *Larimer*, and *Weld*. One from Pastorius SWA, *La Plata* on 15 May (JBy) was significantly out of range.

Kentucky Warbler: This lovely *Oporornis* appeared twice this spring: a male was at the LCCW on 6 May (DN, m.ob., no doc.), and a singing bird was heard, but not seen, at Rocky Ford SWA, *Otero* on 12 May (CW, m.ob., no doc.).

Mourning Warbler: Two reports from the spring (and another that barely missed the spring season) represent an average showing. One was found on a private ranch in *Lincoln* on 4 May (CW, m.ob., no doc.), quite early for this species in Colorado, and another was seen at the Last Chance Rest Stop on 10 May (TJ, KKo, no doc.).

MacGillivray's Warbler: 28 April heralded the arrival of the mob, at least for this species, with reports from numerous locations on that date (m.ob.).

Common Yellowthroat: The first spring date this year was a later-than-normal 24 April, with dual reports from *Bent* by DN and *Prowers* by DL.

Hooded Warbler: A total of five this spring seemed a bit lower than normal: a male was at CBR, *El Paso* on 20 April (BM, TL, NG), a female was at the Cañon City Riverwalk from 25 April to 5 May (BKP, m.ob.), a male was singing at Cottonwood Canyon, *Baca/Las Animas* on 29 April (AS,

CW), another male was singing at CBR, El Paso on 10 May (BG), and a female was at the Stulp Farm on 16 May (JSt).

Wilson's Warbler:

The first report was of two at the Stulp Farm on 19 April (JSt). This species seemed noticeably absent in many flocks this spring, and occurred in worryingly low numbers throughout.

Painted Redstart:

Ask anyone what the warbler highlight of the spring was, and they will point to the occurrence of this bird at the Cañon City Riverwalk on 25 April (RMi, m.ob.). Representing a potential 5th state record, this beauty was a crowd pleaser for anyone lucky enough to make it that day. What it was to those who couldn't make it until the next day probably can't be printed in this journal.

Yellow-breasted Chat: The first report this spring was of four at Valco Ponds, Pueblo on 30 April (BKP).

Hepatic Tanager: Multiple birds were again found at the Bader Ranch, Las Animas this spring, with two males and a female reported on 13 May (TL). On 20 May a pair was observed and a partially completed nest found, confirming breeding for the second year in a row (AS), again proving that this magnificent ranch is the best place in the state to see this liver-colored species.



Painted Redstart, Cañon City, Fremont County, 25 April 2007. Photo by Rachel Hopper

Summer Tanager: Fourteen reports pertained to sixteen individuals this spring. Especially exciting were at least one singing male in Yellow-jacket Canyon again this year, first reported on 28 April (RLi, m.ob.), and a pair in Picketwire Canyon, Las Animas on 19 May (RLi, m.ob.), with the female seen carrying nesting material. This species has not yet been documented breeding in the state, though at least the Picketwire occurrence would seem to support that conclusion. Other reports came from Prowers, Pueblo, El Paso, Washington, and Boulder.

Western Tanager: The first report for the spring came on 28 April from El Jebel, Eagle (JBi).

Scarlet Tanager: While this species is the rarest of the tanagers to occur in Colorado, the single report from this spring represents a poorer showing than normal. A female was

seen at Duck Creek SWA on 24 May (AS, no doc.).

Green-tailed Towhee: CW saw the first individual of this species in Colorado this spring at Cottonwood Canyon on 21 April.

Eastern Towhee: As with most springs, a few members of this spot-deprived towhee appeared on the eastern plains. A female was at CBR, *Pueblo* on 27 April (BM, m.ob.), one of unreported sex was at the LCCW on 7 May (DR, no doc.), a female was reported from Tamarack Ranch SWA, *Logan* on 12 May (SL, no doc.), and a pair were heard and seen there on 23 May (AS, no doc.). A survey of the towhees in the SWA to the west of the Crook Road revealed seven singing males and five females of obvious hybrid origin, three singing males and three females of apparently pure Spotted Towhee origin, the aforementioned pair of apparent Easterns, and heard-only birds which could not be positively identified (AS). What a mess!

Cassin's Sparrow: This yucca-loving species appeared earlier than normal this spring, or at least was noticed earlier than normal. While it had not previously been documented in March, many singing birds were seen and photographed at CBR in both *El Paso* and *Pueblo* starting 18 March (BM, m.ob.), and another was found on the Campo Lek, *Baca* on 24 March (CW, NE, IS).

Chipping Sparrow: The earliest report of this species this spring was of one near Florence, *Fremont* on 6 April (PGO).

Clay-colored Sparrow: DL found

the first bird of the spring at the Riverside Cemetery in Lamar, *Prowers* on 23 April. In general, this species was present in excellent numbers on the plains this year.

Brewer's Sparrow: CBR hosted the earliest member of this species, a single bird on 9 April from the *Pueblo* part of the ranch (JD).

Field Sparrow: Migrating birds were reported on 28 April from Turk's Pond SWA (BKP, m.ob.) and from a private ranch in *Cheyenne* on 4 May (AS). Birds were also seen in north-eastern Colorado in *Yuma*, *Phillips*, *Sedgwick*, and *Logan*.

Black-throated Sparrow: Reports for this spring came from as early as 21 March at various West Slope locations (m.ob.). On the East Slope, where far rarer, birds were seen at Picketwire Canyon, with up to 8 birds from 1 April through 19 May (DN, m.ob.), and from near Florence, *Fremont* from 9-26 April (BM, m.ob.).

Baird's Sparrow: Two different birds seen on a dedicated Baird's Sparrow search in *Baca* on 21 April (AS, CW, no doc.) were almost certainly this species, though actually getting a look at them was more than frustrating.

Fox Sparrow: Members of either subspecies that occurs in Colorado are quite rare on the plains, so one of the "slate-colored" group at CBR, *El Paso* on 12 April (BM) was a decent record.

Swamp Sparrow: This was a truly dismal spring for this eastern sparrow, with only one report: a singing bird on 27 March from Valco Ponds in *Pueblo* (BKP).

White-throated Sparrow: In contrast to the above species, this one had an excellent showing this spring, with at least 13 reports from *Baca*, *Cheyenne*, *Pueblo*, *Fremont*, *El Paso*, *Lincoln*, *Kit Carson*, and *Weld*.

Harris's Sparrow: Ten reports this spring is a bit lower than average. Most significant were two reports (without details) from *Paonia*, *Delta* and *Montrose*, *Montrose* on the West Slope. Other counties represented include *Prowers*, *Bent*, *Pueblo*, *El Paso*, *Adams*, and *Boulder*.

Golden-crowned Sparrow: The immature bird first found during the winter season by RMi at Tunnel Drive in Cañon City remained through 14 April (m.ob.). Another, this one an adult in alternate plumage, was found at Last Chance on 6 May (RLz, AS, m.ob.) and photographed, but not, as of yet, documented with the CBRC.

Northern Cardinal: The total of five reports mostly came from expected locations in the eastern tier of counties, though a male first found this winter that remained through 17 March in Colorado Springs, *El Paso* (CP) was farther west than normal. A count of **fourteen** at Tamarack Ranch SWA on 12 May (SL) was an amazing high count, and possibly the most ever seen on one day in Colorado.

Rose-breasted Grosbeak: There were 28 reports this spring, an excellent total. Significant reports include the high count of five in the Willow Creek Subdivision in Lamar, *Prowers* on 12 May (JT, DL) and the two West Slope reports: one in Rifle, *Garfield* on 12 May (CL) and one in Collbran, *Mesa* on 30 May (LA).

Painted Bunting: Three reports of this gaudy bird brightened the spring: a male from 14-16 May in *La Veta*, *Huerfano* (PN, m.ob.), a female-plumaged bird at CBR, *El Paso* on 19 May (BKP, JD), and a male at the Bader Ranch on 20 May (AS, no doc.).

Eastern Meadowlark: Seeming to forget that Colorado is actually the West, a few of these birds appeared along the Front Range this spring. The first was a singer heard at the Cañon City Riverwalk on 12 May (MP, BSt, CW, SRu, no doc.), and the other report was of two males, often countersinging, near Cattail Pond, *Larimer* from 22 May through the end of the season (CW, m.ob.).

Rusty Blackbird: The trend for the past few years has been fewer and fewer Rusty Blackbirds, and this spring was no exception. The only report was of a male at a private ranch in *Lincoln* on 27 April (JK, GW, AH).

Great-tailed Grackle: A male at Lake Deweese on 16 May (BKP, MP) was a first for *Custer*.

Baltimore Oriole: An immature at Lake Meredith, *Crowley* on 12 May (MP, m.ob.) was a good Arkansas River Valley record, and a second-year male at CVCG on 21 May (DL, CW) was farther west than normal.

Scott's Oriole: Probably the least expected vagrant in Lamar this spring was the adult male of this species that spent 17 April at the Fairmount Cemetery (BG). Singing males were also seen near Ninaview in both *Las Animas* and *Baca* on 20 May (AS); this species is a rare and extremely local breeder in SE Colorado.

Common Redpoll: The only report this spring was of one on 6 March in Sterling, Logan (KKr).

Lesser Goldfinch: Reports from the eastern plains, where this species is quite rare, include one on 15 May at the Fairmount Cemetery in Lamar (DL) and one on 31 May at the CVCG (DL).

Lawrence's Goldfinch: We here at the CFO News From the Field department like to save the best for last, and this species was undeniably the best. While many predicted that this species would one day grace the state list, it is doubtful anyone predicted it would show up on 23 May! That is the day LA first spotted the male that deigned to join its Lesser cousins at his feeders. Though it proved to be somewhat erratic during its stay during the spring season,



Lawrence's Goldfinch, Grand Junction, Mesa County, 26 May 2007. Photo by Gregg Goadrich

many a birder got to add it to his or her state list, and it remained well into the summer.

Contributing Observers

MA: Mymm Ackley; SA: Susan Allerton; MeA: Meredith Anderson; HA: Henry Armknecht; LA: Larry Arnold; JiB: Jim Barry; JBe: Jason Beason; JBy: Jim Beatty; JBi: James Bielbl; JBr: John Bregar; JBg: Josh Bruening; AB: Allan Burns; MC: Mark Chavez; EC: Elaine Coley; PD: Peter Derven; CD: Coen Dexter; JD: John Drummond; LE: Lisa Edwards; DE: David Ely; NE: Norm Erthal; TE: Theresa Estebo; WF: Warren Finch; PG: Peter Gent; BG: Brian Gibbons; NG: Nancy Gobris; PGo: Pat Gould; MG: Matt Gracey; LG: Larry Griffin; BBH: BB Hahn; TH: Tom Halverstadt; JH: Jack Harlan; BH: Bob Harnish; MH: Mike Henwood; TH: Tyler Hicks; AH: Allison Hilf; RH: Rachel Hopper; KH: Kurt Huffstater; TJ: Tina Jones; JJ: Jeff Jones; BK: Bill Kaempfer; JK: Joey Kellner; LK: Loch Kilpatrick; FK: Fritz Knopf; KKo: Kris Koff; CK: Connie Kogler; NK: Nick Komar; NAK: Nick A. Komar; KKr: Ken Kranik; RLa: Ron Lambeth; SL: Steve Larson; CL: Chris Lazo; DL: David Leatherman; PL: Paul Lehman; BL: Barb Leininger; RLz: Randy Lentz; TL: Tony Leukering; RLe: Rich Levad; KL: Kara Lewantowicz; RLi: Roger Linfield; FL: Forrest Luke; BM: Bill Maynard; RMi: Rich Miller; RMo: Riley Morris; SM: SeEtta Moss; PN: Polly Nelder; DN: Duane Nelson; DO: Daren Obrien; RO: Ric Olson; SO: Stan Oswald; CP: Christie Pals; BKP: Brandon Percival; MP: Mark Peterson; NP: Nathan Pieplow; PP: Pete Plage; DQ: Dave Quesenberry; RR: Rob Raker;

JoR: John Rees; JaR: Jan Rees; SRi: Sue Riffe; SRO: Scott Roederer; JR: Joe Roller; SRu: Saraiya Ruano; PR: Peter Ruprecht; DR: Dotti Russell; IS: Ira Sanders; BSc: Bill Schmoker; JSc: Jim Schmoker; LSe: Larry Semo; BSh: Bob Shade; DS: Dave Silverman; RS: Rob Sparks; AS: Andrew Spencer; BSt: Brad Steger; LSt: L. Jean Strand; JSt: Jane Stulp; JT: Janeal Thompson; RT: Richard Trinkner; VT: Van Truan; GW: Glenn Walbek; TW: Tom Wiberding; CW: Cole Wild; JW: Jeff Witters; BW: Brenda Wright; JY: John Yaeger; SY: Sherrie York; EZ: Eric Zorawowicz

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Snowy Egret by Joe Rigli.

Sapsucker Identification: The problem of female Red-naped Sapsuckers with red throats

Tony Leukering

Prior to the official split of Yellow-bellied Sapsucker (*Sphyrapicus varius*, sensu lato) (American Ornithologists' Union 1983, 1985), there was little published effort aimed at delineating the identification parameters of the group comprised of Yellow-bellied (*S. varius*, sensu stricto), Red-naped (*S. nuchalis*), and Red-breasted (*S. ruber*) sapsuckers. With the increase in interest in species-level identification challenges caused by the split, the problem has received some attention in the birding/ornithological literature of late. While hybridization among the various species still causes headaches in the identification of individual birds (Mlodinow et al. 2006), in general, the problems have, for the most part, been worked out rather well.

Outside of hybrids, the primary difficulty in this group involves separation of Yellow-bellied Sapsucker from Red-naped Sapsucker. As described in Kaufman (1990), Pyle (1997), Sibley (2000), Alderfer (2005), Robbins et al. (2005), and Mlodinow et al. (2006), typical basic-plumaged individuals of each provide for fairly straightforward identification. However, most of these sources of good identification information (Mlodinow et al. 2006 being an exception) have ignored or glossed over one confounding factor: some female Red-naped Sapsuckers have nearly entirely red throats. Such individuals more closely match the field characters of male Yellow-bellied Sapsuckers and thus might cause confusion and misidentification.

In about ten years of research in Rocky Mountain National Park, Larimer County, Colorado, running constant-effort mist-netting stations (1995-1997) and surveying use of Quaking Aspen (*Populus tremuloides*) by cavity-nesting birds (1997-1998, 2001-2006), I have encountered at least seven female Red-naped Sapsuckers with more extensive red on the throat than described in the general and specific identification literature (cited above). Four of these birds still had enough white on the chin and upper throat that only the lower three fourths of the area between the bill base and black chest band was red (compared to the typical one half). These birds would, given reasonable looks, not have provided much in the way of an identification challenge. However, three of the seven sported so much red that ex-

cept in the hand or at very close range in the field, no white would have been noticeable.

On 9 June 2005, while surveying aspens in the Upper Beaver Meadows area of the park, I encountered an active Red-naped Sapsucker nest at which both adults were feeding nestlings later in the month (N. Gobris pers. comm.). I quickly noted that both birds appeared entirely red-throated and so endeavored to photograph both individuals to have “proof” of the plumage characters of the female (a chance for which I had hoped for a decade); photos of these individuals occupy pride of place on the back cover of this issue. On the picture of the female, note that only the area immediately under the base of the bill is white; all of the rest of the throat is red. Also note that the sides of the black “throat frame” are strongly in evidence (a feature of female Red-naped Sapsucker). The lower corners of the frame on the female are deceptively hidden in this picture by the flaring of the corners of the red throat patch; the frame was not actually divided on this bird, though there was some red intrusion in the corners of the frame (as is typical of female Red-naped). Note on the picture of the male that the lateral throat stripes are intruded upon or occluded by red extending into that area and that the frame is not obviously complete. Other features of the two birds were consistent with my experience and understanding of the differences in plumage pattern between the sexes of Red-naped Sapsucker—to wit, the male exhibited a much more extensive red nape than did the female (which sex can exhibit so little red as not to be detectable in field conditions, with such situations probably most common in worn midsummer birds) and also sported a couple of extra red feathers in the head plumage (one of which is obvious in the picture). A thorough treatment of sapsucker identification is not within the purview of this column; however, red-throated female Red-naped Sapsuckers can be separated from male Yellow-bellied Sapsuckers by the typical back pattern of the species, among other features. For a thorough treatment of the problems inherent in sapsucker identification, I strongly recommend reading Mlodinow et al. (2006).

Generally, Yellow-bellied and Red-naped Sapsuckers occur in the state at different times of year, with April and October being the most likely months of overlap in their temporal distribution in Colorado. Recent focus on finding wintering sapsuckers, particularly in Larimer and Prowers counties by Dave Leatherman, Fremont County by SeEtta Moss and Mark Peterson, and Pueblo County by Brandon Percival, has shown that Yellow-bellied is regular in small numbers (4-10 per year), Williamson’s Sapsucker is nearly annual in even smaller numbers (1-3 per year), and Red-naped is rare, not be-

ing found annually, and when present, typically represented by only one individual.

Because the number of wintering sapsuckers in Colorado is extremely low, relative abundance of the various species can and does change from year to year. This fact suggests that even one misidentification could greatly change the apparent ratio of occurrence and our understanding of the phenomenon. Thus, it behooves us, even more than for more common species, to endeavor to correctly identify all such individuals. While upperparts pattern remains probably the single best feature to allow separation of Yellow-bellied and Red-naped Sapsuckers, we should also be cognizant of the possibility of abnormally-plumaged individuals and of hybrids and to note in the field as many characters as possible.

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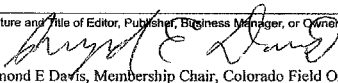
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Red-naped Sapsuckers, Upper Beaver Meadows, Larimer County,
9 June 2005. Female above, male below. *Photos by Tony Leukering*

