

Vol. 43 No. 2 April 2009

Colorado Birds

The Colorado Field Ornithologists' Quarterly



Remembering Bill Brockner

Kleptoparasitism in Wigeons

Colorado's First Record of Sooty Tern



Colorado Field Ornithologists
PO Box 643, Boulder, Colorado 80306
www.cfo-link.org

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Townsend's
Solitaire,
Montezuma
County, 23
July 2007.
Photo by Dave
Leatherman

Farewell

Bill Schmoker

Hello, CFO birders! I hope this note finds you all enjoying the beginnings of spring migration. You also should have all of your information by now for our annual convention in Alamosa, 22-25 May. I hope to cross paths with many of you there, enjoying the great birding places, birds, speakers, and opportunities to meet and catch up with people from around the state and beyond.

This will be the last President's Message I author. At the end of my term at the Alamosa convention, I hope you'll join me in electing current Vice President Jim Beatty as our next president. The experience of serving as board member, vice president, and president of this organization has been incredibly rewarding, and I am grateful for the opportunity to have served in these capacities for the last six years. CFO was an amazing organization when I was asked to join the Board of Directors in 2003, and I'd like to think we've continued to improve since then.

Mind you, I'm not taking credit for the bulk of our growth. Rather, the combined efforts of board members, officers, members, volunteers, and contractors throughout this time have produced some substantial improvements in the state birding community. We have sponsored the daily dissemination of information on COBirds, which was recently upgraded to our latest system on Google Groups. Our website, good when I joined, now features more information on the main page, and our web presence has grown to include the amazing County Birding Website and the online Colorado Bird Records Committee website. We have continued our successful Youth Scholarship and Project Funds as one way to give back to the birding community, and for me, seeing how these grants have benefited young birders and bird researchers throughout my term has been extremely gratifying. The journal that you now hold continues to define excellence, balancing information, common interests, and scientific research. Each and every CFO convention I've participated in has been a great experience. I'm proud of the recognition that we've given to our award recipients for their contributions to Colorado birding. And, selfishly, in my years on the board of directors, it has been inspiring and just plain fun for me personally to work and bird alongside such great people.

We've come a long way as an organization and are doing great things, but we continue to plan for the future instead of sitting on our laurels. I'm handing off the reins to a board committed to further improvements and growth, including seeking new funding sources

and partnerships. We have tried to seek ways to make tasks more streamlined and jobs more sustainable, but there is always a lot of work behind the scenes of a leading organization like CFO.

Although they are too numerous to mention individually, I'd like to sincerely thank everyone who has contributed to CFO throughout my tenure. Looking ahead, I'd like to invite you to consider ways to support it with your time, expertise, and/or financial resources. I know that even though I'm leaving the board, I'll continue to be involved with CFO, and I'm proud to belong to one of the best state birding organizations in the country. Stay tuned for great things to come, but for now I'll say, "over and out."

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

CFO BOARD MINUTES

31 January 2009
1777 Exposition Drive
Boulder, Colorado

Allison Hilf, CFO Secretary

The regular quarterly meeting was held at 11:00 a.m.. Board members present were President, Bill Schmoker; Vice President, Jim Beatty; Secretary, Allison Hilf; and directors Rachel Hopper, Bill Kaempfer, Connie Kogler, Larry Modesitt, Mark Peterson, Nathan Pieplow, Larry Semo, and Brad Steger. Treasurer Maggie Boswell sent her regrets.

President's Report

Bill Schmoker shared a request from a CFO member that the ethics article recently published in Colorado Birds be included on the CFO website. Rachel will try to include the article in the Colorado Birds online highlights and will make sure the website includes a link to the ABA Code of Ethics.

Bill S. also thanked several board members for their recent efforts: Ra-

chel H. for transitioning the Mr. Bill's Photo Quiz to its new web venue; Mark P. for moving COBirds to its new Google Groups venue; Connie K. for recent membership updates; Maggie B. for finding CFO liability insurance; Allison H. for the bylaw revisions; and Jim B. for the ethics article.

The field trip leader guidelines will need to be prepared before the conference.

Secretary's Report

The minutes of the 8 November 2009 meeting were approved.

The bylaw revisions for Articles I-VII were discussed. The board agreed to keep the quarterly board meeting requirement; to impose the same 6-year term limits for officers and directors; and to require a 2/3 vote to waive term limits. The committee system will stay in place, with each board member chairing a committee except for the President, Secretary, and Treasurer. The Board agreed that the Vice President should still chair a committee—but it does not have to be the field trip committee.

A link to the bylaws will be included on CFO's website.

Treasurer's Report

Maggie B. was not present. The 2008 Year End Report and Notes were distributed and discussed. A motion was made, seconded, and approved that the annual prize for the Mr. Bill Photo Quiz will be the waiver of registration fees for the next annual convention. Allison clarified that the motion passed at the 8 November board meeting provided for the quarterly prize winner to receive an annual CFO membership, or the equivalent in CFO merchandise.

A motion was made, seconded, and approved to adopt the 2008 budget as the 2009 CFO working budget.

Committee Reports

A. CBRC—Larry Semo. Various administrative and user upgrades would greatly improve the CBRC website. Rachel H. submitted a draft

of a grant proposal to a private family foundation to fund such enhancements. A motion was made, seconded, and approved authorizing Rachel to revise the application and to submit it on CFO's behalf.

David Silverman has agreed to fill the CBRC position being vacated by Coen Dexter.

B. Awards—Brad Steger. A discussion was held regarding possible future award recipients. A list was distributed with some of the previous award recipients. Nathan will go through his records and try to fill in some of the missing years.

C. Nominating Committee—Larry Modesitt. Continued discussion was held about possible candidates. Larry suggested making sure the officers' and directors' terms are staggered so that only 2-3 expire each year. Currently all of the officer positions are up for renewal at the same time. Allison and Larry will make sure the bylaw revisions correctly stagger terms.

Larry will post the board vacancies and a request for nominations on COBirds and WSBN.

Currently two or three positions will need to be filled. Bill S. announced that Jim B. has agreed to replace him as President next term; Bill K. has agreed to fill the Vice President position currently held by Jim.

D. Field Trips—Jim Beatty. Ideas for new field trips were discussed. Jim is also looking into some possible workshop/field trip combinations.

E. Project Fund/Youth Scholarship—Bill Kaempfer. The Project Fund application deadline was 1 De-

ember 2008. Bill K. distributed summaries of the requests with comments/ratings from his committee members. A motion was made, seconded, and approved to fund one of the projects. Bill K. will notify the applicants.

The website will be updated to include a history of past Project Fund recipients.

The Youth Scholarship deadline is 31 March.

F. Membership—Connie Kogler. There are currently 485 CFO members (including 77 members whose membership expired in December 2008). New CFO members now receive a personal note thanking them for their membership and introducing them to CFO and Colorado Birds. Connie will contact local Colorado birding groups and try to reciprocate memberships between the local groups and CFO.

Several options for mailing Colorado Birds to members were discussed. Connie reviewed several bids she received from different printers; she still needs to check whether there are any non-profit permit mailing costs with some of the printers. She and Nathan will then determine the most efficient distribution method.

Connie also discussed problems with the current membership database and various methods that could be used to streamline CFO's membership records. Connie also expressed her desire to switch from Membership Chair to Convention Chair.

G. COBirds—Mark Peterson. Mark explained some of the difficulties switching COBirds over to

Google Groups; the switch is a significant cost savings for CFO and he is confident that the new host will work fine. Approximately 400 people have already subscribed to COBirds on Google Groups.

Bill S. again thanked Mark for the invaluable time and service he has committed to COBirds and to the CFO website.

H. CFO Website—Rachel Hopper. The website is running well but needs updates to make it more sustainable and user-friendly.

The Mr. Bill quiz is now being handled solely by Tony Leukering. Although the CFO homepage has a link to the Mr. Bill Quiz, it is on a separate website and can be accessed without going through the CFO site. The board expressed its gratitude to Rachel and Tony for finding an affordable way to continue the Mr. Bill Quiz.

The County Birding Website should soon have a functional mapping program. Mark P. is working on coordinating the website with Google Earth.

I. Colorado Birds—Nathan Pieplow. The contents of the next issue were discussed.

The full collection of Colorado Birds has been put in PDF files by Andrew Spencer, and Nathan would like to have them put on the website and/or on SORA.

Nathan will decide whether there is room to publish a summary of the bylaw revisions in the next issue.

J. 2009 Convention—22-24 May in Alamosa

- Connie is working on the con-

vention brochure and will send out a draft ASAP.

- Bill S. has contracts from the Inn at the Rio Grande; a block of 50 rooms is reserved for the conference at a group rate of \$95.00.

- The banquet will be on Sunday.
- Mark P. is coordinating field trips.

- The hotel has agreed to provide breakfast burritos and bagged lunches.

- An advertisement will be placed in *Winging It* and we will look into posting the convention on several bordering states' birding lists.

- Allison will send out letters to potential vendors.

- The Colorado Welcome Center at Alamosa is willing to provide info packets to distribute to attendees. Connie K. will follow up with them.

New Business

A discussion was held regarding CFO's long-term goals. Jim suggested CFO begin working on a long-term strategic plan. A motion was made, seconded, and approved to have each board member and committee chair submit an updated job description before April's meeting.

The Birds of Colorado Online project was discussed and a motion was made, seconded, and approved to form a BOC Online Steering Committee, with Rachel H. as chair. Larry S. will serve as board liaison when Rachel's term expires.

The next meeting was set for 11 a.m. on 4 April, at a location to be determined.

The meeting was adjourned at 3:40 p.m.

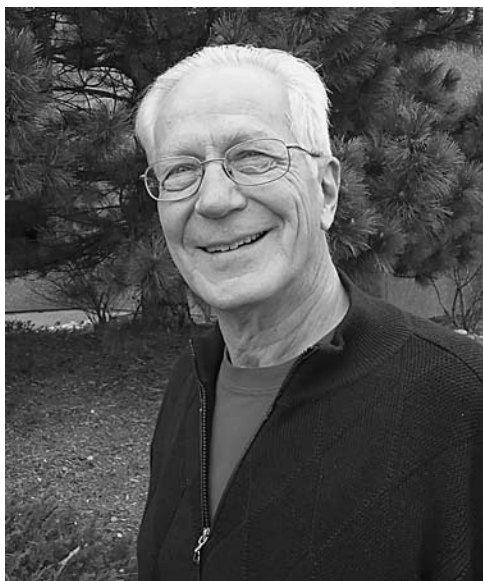
ACROSS THE BOARD

Jim Beatty, CFO Vice President and Field Trip Director

Bill Schmoker

It was a cold and foggy April morning in southeastern Pennsylvania as Jim stood with his two older brothers on the roadway overlooking Springfield Reservoir in suburban Philadelphia. He was seven years old and grateful that they had let him join them in their "big brother" adventure. Out of the mist, maybe a hundred feet away, a drake Hooded Merganser materialized with its crest fully extended as it drifted across the water in front of them. Jim had never seen anything like it. Spellbound by its elegant beauty, he was hooked on birding.

The optics available to Jim in the early days were primitive by today's standards and he didn't have a lot of money to spend on equipment. Jim was armed with six-power binoculars (featuring individual eyepiece focusing) and a collapsing telescope (boasting about a one-degree field of view) along with an early edition of Peterson's Field Guide to the Birds with the color plates all bound together in the center. Warblers in treetops were almost impossible to identify. As he marked his sightings in the back of the Peterson guide, Jim thought it seemed impossible to see 200 species in southeast Pennsylvania.



CFO Vice President Jim Beatty

Birding was an off-and-on adventure as Jim grew up. He still remembers finding American Redstarts—by himself and without binoculars—as he walked through the woods to junior high school. Birding was still on his mind when Jim applied to Cornell University, although engineering was his chosen field rather than natural science. He didn't have much time to bird at Cornell, but remembers being almost completely baffled at Sapsucker Woods by immature Cedar Waxwings until he finally figured out what they were.

Graduation, marriage, an Air Force ROTC commitment, and twins limited Jim's birding to nearly zero for many years. Jim spent four years at Warren Air Force Base in Cheyenne, Wyoming as a deputy combat crew commander in a Strategic Air Command intercontinental ballistic missile squadron during the height of the Cold War. Even in those times, the Bohemian Waxwings at his front door and the American Bittern at a small pond on the base caught his attention.

Jim had a regular commission just like Air Force Academy graduates but decided that the Air Force was not his preferred career, so he decided to return to an engineering management position in Cincinnati that Procter & Gamble had offered him after graduation. Once again, birding—or bird-watching, as it was called then—took a backseat to career and family for many years. In the late 1970's, with

the urging of a friend, Jim joined his local bird club and embarked on weekly hikes. Soon Jim and his friend were planning more exotic trips—to Niagara Falls in winter to look for gulls, to the Texas Coast and lower Rio Grande Valley, and to southeastern Arizona. He even found Whip-poor-will and Connecticut Warbler in his own Cincinnati yard.

Procter & Gamble helped his avocation by appointing him Manager of Energy Government Relations to keep tabs on energy legislation in Washington during the first and second Arab oil embargos. He attended energy meetings all over the country, which gave him a chance to bird many places in North America. Jim's ABA list grew rapidly, surpassing 600 species by the time he retired in 1997.

In 2000 Jim joined one of the last trips to Attu with Larry Balch and recorded many good birds there, although he fell just short of his goal of 700 ABA-area birds. Soon Jim and his wife Willa moved to Durango for skiing and outdoor living. He joined the Durango Bird Club and CFO.

In 2003 Jim and Peter Derven ventured to southeastern Arizona to clean up on some hard-to-find birds and, hopefully, find Jim's 700th ABA species. Rufous-capped Warbler and Flame-colored Tanager were exactly where they were reported to be, but number 700 required more adventure. In spite of warnings about the high level of drug trafficking in the area, Jim and Peter drove to California Gulch on the Mexico border in search of a reported Buff-collared Nightjar. Timing their arrival for late afternoon, they debated whether they should stay the night in the middle of nowhere.

As they approached they saw a figure standing by the roadside who in profile looked like "Crocodile Dundee," with a flat-brimmed black leather hat. It turned out to be a young woman stranded by car trouble, a Ph.D. candidate researching the role of hummingbirds in flower pollination. Just as Jim and Peter stopped to help her, a Black Hawk helicopter lifted off from behind a roadside hill. Moments later, two Border Patrol SUVs roared up to the scene and helped to fix the leaking coolant hose on the young lady's Jeep. The agents told the birders that they had just recovered several hundred pounds of pot.

With adrenaline at record levels, Jim and Peter continued on toward California Gulch. There they were greeted by a local landowner asking about their intentions, even though they were on public land. When they asked him whether drug runners were a problem in the area, he said "no" as he pulled out a 9-millimeter semi-automatic pistol with a 30-round clip. Assured that they were well guarded, Jim and Peter decided to stay the night. At 2:00 a.m. the nightjar called repeatedly and number 700 was in the bag!

Jim was very pleased to be invited to join CFO as a director in 2006. He had been compiling southwestern Colorado bird sightings for North American Birds and News From the Field for several years. Jim had long been impressed by the accomplishments of this volunteer state birding organization and had attended all of the annual conventions since 2003. Jim considers the COBirds listserv, Colorado Bird Records Committee, CFO annual convention, field trips, the County Birding Website, and especially Colorado Birds to be extraordinary resources made possible by a very talented group of people who love what they are doing.

As director (and incoming CFO President), it is Jim's goal to continue this fine effort. Specifically, he hopes that CFO can expand its internet databases to link together records committee data and county birding information—perhaps with links to interactive maps, current bird sightings, and maybe even an online status and distribution guide like *Colorado Birds* by Bob Righter and Bob Andrews. Jim is one of many reasons that CFO is now and will continue to be a premier state birding organization. Please share my gratitude with Jim for his efforts, and join us in our work to continue offering world-class birding resources in the state of Colorado.

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

CFO-FUNDED RESEARCH

Ten Years of Project Funding by CFO

William H. Kaempfer

Least Tern, Long-eared Owl, Lark Bunting, and Loggerhead Shrike not only alliterate, they are also among the species that have been studied under Project Fund grants made by Colorado Field Ornithologists. The CFO Project Fund is set up for projects that will have a lasting benefit to Colorado birds and the habitats upon which they rely. Since the first project was funded more than ten years ago, CFO has allocated over \$21,000 to 25 projects, including three two-year grants.

Along with the “L” birds noted above, projects have been funded to study Mountain and Piping Plovers, Boreal and Flammulated Owls, Three-toed Woodpecker, Gunnison Sage-Grouse, and Black Swift.

Table 1. Grants made by the CFO Project Fund, 1998 – present, including a partial list of presentations and publications that have been funded in part by the grants.

Year	Recipient	Agency	Focus	Amount	Publication or Presentation
1998	Duane Nelson	CDOW	Least Tern and Piping Plover	\$1,500	see below
2000	Duane Nelson		Least Tern and Piping Plover	\$950	CFO convention (2001)
2000	William Merkle	CU	American Robin and Yellow Warbler	\$950	
2001	William Merkle	CU	American Robin and Yellow Warbler	\$500	
2001	Susan Craig		Loggerhead Shrike	\$500	Colorado Birds (Jan 2002); CFO convention (2002)
2001	Heather Swanson	CU	Ponderosa pine (habitat)	\$500	see below
2002	Heather Swanson	CU	Ponderosa pine (habitat)	\$840	Wilson Journal of Ornithology (Sep 2004)
2003	Amy Adams	CSU	Lark Bunting	\$585	Condor (Aug 2004)
2003	Gretchen Jehle	CSU	Prescribed fire (habitat)	\$1,000	Colorado Birds (Apr 2004); Condor (Aug 2006)
2003		RMBO	Treetop peeper for nest monitoring	\$593	
2003	Chris Metterbrink	CNHP	Mountain Plover	\$808	
2004	Elizabeth Reynolds	CSU	Three-toed Woodpecker	\$1,600	Colorado Birds (Apr 2004)
2004	Steve Bourcius		Hummingbirds	\$560	Colorado Birds (Jan 2005)
2005	Carolyn Gunn		Black Swift	\$1,000	Wilson Journal of Ornithology (Dec 2007)
2005	Kim Potter		Flammulated Owl	\$600	
2005		RMBO	Winter raptors	\$865	
2006	Clinton Francis	CSU	Nests and noise (habitat)	\$1,200	
2006	Duane Nelson	CDOW	Salt cedar removal (habitat)	\$1,200	Colorado Birds (in prep.)
2006	Tony Leukering	RMBO	Aspen cavities (habitat)	\$700	
2006	Susan Craig		Loggerhead Shrike	\$300	Colorado Birds (April 2007)
2007	Kim Potter	Vail Mountain	Rosy-finches	\$400	
2007	Tyler Hicks	Western State	Boreal Owl	\$1,400	Colorado Birds (July 2008)
2008	Tyler Hicks	Western State	Gunnison Sage-Grouse	\$500	
2008	Todd Patrick		Long-eared Owl	\$550	
2008		Boulder County	Golden Eagle	\$1,000	(funds rolled over into 2009)
2008	Brandon Doyle	Denver East HS	Feeders (habitat)	\$150	CFO convention (2009)
2009	Carolyn Gunn		Black Swift	\$835	
				\$21,586	

But projects cover more than just these Colorado “showcase” species: American Robin and Yellow Warbler research has been funded, as well as winter raptor and hummingbird studies. And over \$6,000 has been granted to seven projects with a focus on a habitat rather than a single species.

All applications to the CFO Project Fund go through a review process. Currently, three individuals read all of the proposals and submit evaluations. The evaluators are all Ph.D.s or doctoral students themselves and have experience in evaluating projects. The evaluations are summarized and presented to the CFO Board of Directors for a final funding decision. Whether they are successful in the funding process or not, applicants receive feedback generated through the review process. In the past two years, five projects have received some funding out of a total of nine applications.

Projects have been undertaken by individuals, organizations, and individuals on behalf of organizations. One odd fact about our projects is that while at the beginning many of the projects were grants to graduate students at the University of Colorado and Colorado State University, we have not had any applications from these institutions recently.

One requirement made of Project Fund investigators is that they report back on their findings, as CFO wants to allow its members the opportunity to read about or hear about the outcomes of the work that they have funded. Table 1 provides a partial list of the results of these studies that have been published or presented to date.

The goal of the CFO Project Fund is a lasting benefit to Colorado birds and habitats, and members’ support of the Project Fund has added to our understanding of birds in Colorado in meaningful ways. The Board would like to extend its thanks to members and donors for their valuable contributions.

William H. Kaempfer, William.Kaempfer@colorado.edu

Support the CFO Project Fund

You can make a targeted, tax-deductible donation directly to CFO’s Project Fund via PayPal. For more information, visit the website: <http://www.cfo-link.org/members/join.php>.

Winston William “Bill” Brockner

Kevin J. Cook

“White-winged Juncos.”

Those were the first bird words he spoke to me. Bird words became the vocabulary by which we engaged the world together for almost 30 years.

I found Winston William Brockner standing alone on a brittle-cold February day. We were attending a Colorado Audubon Council meeting, he representing Evergreen, I representing Fort Collins. The meeting was in Pueblo; the field trip was to see firsthand the landscape into which the Department of Defense wanted to expand Army training exercises.

“The juncos come down from the Black Hills and winter here,” he explained. “I’ve seen about a dozen already.”

He wore an old-fashioned woolen overcoat, a fedora-style hat, well-worn dress shoes, and leather dress gloves—not the accoutrements of an outdoors person. He stood looking northward into an arm of the Arkansas River drainage.

“White-wings would’ve been here when Pike came through,” he mused, his voice vacillating between wistful and instructional. “But Pike wasn’t much of a birdman.”

I introduced myself, asked if I could join him; he told me to call him “Bill,” that “Mr. Brockner” was his father. While watching White-winged Juncos together as he knitted the past and the present together through birds, we became friends. And through his friendship, my passion for birds matured into a realm previously unimagined, because with Bill, any bird conversation was possible.

I presented my idea of “birddom” to him. We discussed the conceptual differences between a checklist and a catalog, and we explored the academic justification for abandoning life zone concepts and accepting the innovations of ecoregions. We chatted about birding tours, tour guides, and tour companies. When I spent a fruitless year exploring the idea of establishing a bird observatory in Colorado, I lamented to Bill a list of conclusions that I summarized by shrugging and sighing that I had plowed the ground but the next guy would harvest the crop.

Bill leaned forward from his easy chair, raised his arm in a signature gesture he had, and exclaimed, “You’re exactly right!”

He had two ways of saying that. One was with a toothy grin and eyes so squinty you couldn't see their gleam; the other was with solemnity that emphasized intellectual concurrence.

Bill connected with birds in an era before field guides, when anyone interested in birds joined both the American Ornithologists' Union and the National Association of Audubon Societies. Bill went to the conferences, attended meetings, sat on boards, cast votes that helped shape policy and determine how funds were spent. He also participated in the great schism.

"Ornithology became so scientific—as it should have—that it left a lot of bird enthusiasts behind," he reflected. "The recreational gamesmanship of life-listing ultimately proved incompatible with the modern demands of ornithological science. There was no hostility, you understand, it was just inevitable there would be a parting of ways."

His memories taking flight, he told of the events leading up to the formation of the American Birding Association.

"There was a bunch of us that always showed up to see the same rare bird," he recalled. "We always asked who had seen which birds and where. One fella said we should form a club, and another fella said that if we would all send our life-lists to him then he would compile them and send out copies to everyone."

He periodically rummaged files to produce original or carbon-copy letters that confirmed his recollections. He also exacted of me a promise not to repeat certain portions of what he explained.

"If this story gets out, I'll know where it came from," he said bluntly but with a patented Brockner smile. "And I'll deny everything! We'll have to have a drink so I can tell you how disappointed I am, then I'll never talk to you again!"

He saw no point in dredging up sorrows spawned by scoundrels, but he was wise enough to understand the need to learn from them.

Bill had birded and shared cocktails with the great ornithologists



Bill Brockner



Bill's first sighting of a Yellow-billed Loon, #700 on his life list, 3 June 1984

and birders of the early and middle decades of the twentieth century. Once bird enthusiasts separated into birders and ornithologists, Bill drifted off with the birders. He knew his heart. His life-listing was a natural extension of his career as an accountant and the professional demands for orderly tabulation. He was early known as the second person to tally 700 life birds in North America. He was also known as a tireless supporter of conservation causes, especially those that involved birds.

In recent years Bill probably did his best work as a cheerleader.

His passion for birds was so huge, he could make a withdrawal from it and present it as a gift to someone else. It was the gift of enthusiasm, the gift of encouragement, the gift of confidence that the time and effort would be well spent on behalf of the birds.

By sharing his passion, Bill accomplished far more through others than he could ever have accomplished on his own. This was particularly evident at his memorial service in December 2008 when well more than 200 people from within and beyond Colorado attended. Many more were there in spirit.

With Chris Blakeslee, a longtime Brockner family friend, I visited Bill on a mountain-cold Monday. Though confined to bed or wheelchair, and tethered to heart monitor and oxygen tube, Bill still talked birds.

Last life bird? "Cackling Goose right here in town!"

Favorite life bird? "Steller's Sea-Eagle! We saw it where it wasn't supposed to be! It was a surprise to everybody!"

Ever see a Bachman's Warbler? "Missed one by 30 seconds! Never did get another chance."

How about Eskimo Curlew? "Lots of trips to Galveston, but never did see one."

Bird you missed but really wanted? “Ivory-billed Woodpecker!”

Though his body was failing, his mind and heart still brimmed with the passion of his life.

Favorite bird ever? “Whatever bird I’m looking at!”

Two days later, Bill’s aged and ailing body surrendered.

The day we all said our goodbyes to Winston William “Bill” Brockner was brisk but not particularly cold. Not like the day I stood watching White-winged Juncos with him.

That day, we birded by simply standing in place, just one of many things I learned from Bill. When a falcon flew by in the distance, we scrutinized it—Peregrine or Prairie?—then discussed the plight of Peregrine Falcons and issues about pesticides and pollution. Bird by passing bird, we discussed techniques of observation, protocols for identification, strengths and weaknesses of various field guides, and the biographies of the people behind those guides. But always, the attention was on birds.

We stood there nearly an hour, he in his top coat and fedora, I in my down coat and knit cap; he radiating warmth borne from his passion for birds, I shivering to the point of scaring all the juncos away.

“We should probably go before it gets cold,” he quipped with a wink.

And so began a friendship that made me a better birder and a richer person. Though the man is gone, the passion lives on in a legion of people who can make the same claim.

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FOOD STEALING

Kleptoparasitism of American Coots (*Fulica americana*) by American Wigeons (*Anas americana*)

Lisa Carmody (née Cooper) and Alexander Cruz

Abstract

Kleptoparasitism, or food stealing, is prevalent in many avian taxa, including some ducks. This behavior presumably represents a means of reducing the costs of foraging for the kleptoparasite at the expense of the host. Among waterfowl, American Wigeons (*Anas americana*)



American Wigeon, Utah Park, Arapahoe County, Feb 2006. Photo by Bill Eden

are regularly kleptoparasitic on American Coots (*Fulica americana*). We recorded activity budgets of coots and wigeons in March and April 2001 in Boulder County, Colorado. Wigeons were observed kleptoparasitizing coots in areas where the two species co-occurred. We found that kleptoparasitic wigeons spent significantly less time feeding on their own than non-kleptoparasitic wigeons, yet

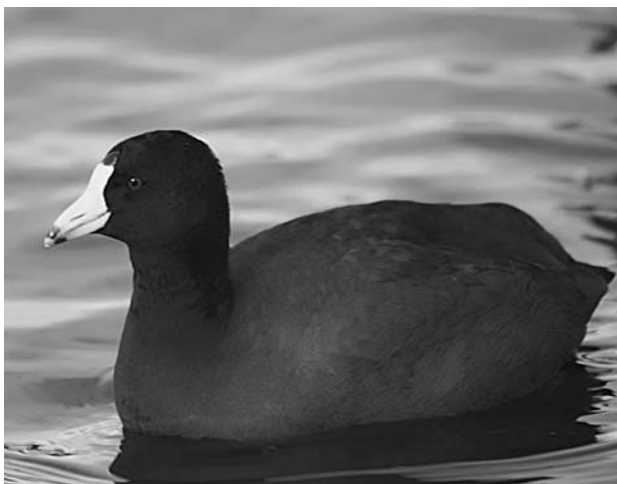
there was no difference in time spent swimming or performing other behaviors. Female wigeons kleptoparasitized at significantly higher rates than males, but pair status did not have a significant effect on kleptoparasitism rates. Finally, we found that coot density had a significant positive effect on kleptoparasitism rate, while wigeon density had a significant negative effect on kleptoparasitism rate. We concluded that kleptoparasitism might represent a supplementary feeding opportunity for wigeons, whereby they can obtain food resources otherwise unavailable to them. In this study, we found no evidence that kleptoparasitism is a necessary behavior for subdominant individuals in order to meet energy requirements, as has been suggested previously.

Introduction

Kleptoparasitism, or food piracy, occurs when an individual of one species takes food resources already procured by an individual of another species (Brockmann and Barnard 1979). Kleptoparasitism is widespread among vertebrate groups, having been recorded in insects, fish, birds, mammals, and reptiles (Thompson 1986). Among birds, members of many orders are kleptoparasites, although it is disproportionately common in the Falconiformes and Charadriiformes (Brockmann and Barnard 1979). Among the Anseriformes, many species have been reported to be kleptoparasites (Brockmann and Barnard 1979). However, the American Wigeon (*Anas americana*) is the only

species of waterfowl for which this behavior has been described as regularly occurring (Brockmann and Barnard 1979).

Kleptoparasitism may have negative consequences for the host, especially during the breeding season, when hosts are supplying food for growing young. Rhinoceros Auklet (*Cerorhinca monocerata*)



American Coot, Utah Park, Arapahoe County, Feb 2006.
Photo by Bill Eden

chicks were shown to grow faster in areas free of kleptoparasitic Glaucous-winged Gulls (*Larus glaucescens*) than in areas where gulls were present (Wilson 1993). However, other studies have shown little or no impact on hosts. A study of Atlantic Puffins (*Fratercula arctica*), which are kleptoparasitized by Herring Gulls (*Larus argentatus*), found no differences in puffin chick growth or survival in gull-free and gull-occupied habitats (Finney et al. 2001).

Many factors influence whether kleptoparasitism occurs in a population. Certain interspecific associations may lead to kleptoparasitism. Kleptoparasitism is common in mixed-species flocks, as well as in aggregates of species where associations are based on predation, mobbing, or scavenging (Brockmann and Barnard 1979). Mixed-species flocks in which hosts outnumber parasites are ideal for minimizing competition between parasites (Brockmann and Barnard 1979). In addition, kleptoparasitism may occur frequently in seabird colonies, where individuals are crowded together on small islands (Brockmann and Barnard 1979). Ecological conditions are also important. When food resources are rare or of low quality, it may be advantageous for individuals to parasitize hosts that have access to resources unavailable to the parasite (Brockmann and Barnard 1979). Finally, social factors may influence kleptoparasitism rates. Subordinate individuals may be excluded from higher-quality food resources, and may therefore resort to interspecific kleptoparasitism to obtain desirable food (LeSchack and Hepp 1995).

Pair status is an important determinant of dominance rank in waterfowl (McKnight 1998). Paired individuals are dominant to unpaired individuals, and unpaired females are subordinate to all other social classes (McKnight 1998). Dominance hierarchies play an important role in foraging behavior because subordinate individuals may be excluded from higher-quality feeding areas (Hepp and Hair 1984; LeSchack and Hepp 1995).

Overview of study

The goals of this study were to determine how sex, pair status, and social status affect the frequency of kleptoparasitism of American Coots (*Fulica americana*) by American Wigeons. We also aimed to establish how the demographic makeup of the species flock affects the incidence of kleptoparasitism. Finally, we wanted to find out how activity budgets of individuals occurring with coots differed from those individuals not occurring with coots.

We tested the following ideas, stated here as null hypotheses:

H₀ 1: There is no difference in kleptoparasitism rate between male and female wigeons.

H₀ 2: There is no difference in kleptoparasitism rate between paired and unpaired wigeons.

H₀ 3: There is no difference in kleptoparasitism rate between groups in which wigeons are more abundant and groups in which hosts are more abundant.

H₀ 4: The activity budgets of wigeons do not differ between sites with coots and sites without coots.

Methods

Study species

American Wigeons and American Coots were observed. Both species are common and breed in Colorado. Wigeons are generally found on shallow ponds and marshes and sometimes graze in open fields (Sibley 2000). Coots are generalist herbivores that typically occupy habitats similar to those of wigeons (McKnight and Hepp 1998).

Study sites

Observations were made on nine days at four study sites in Boulder County during March and April 2001. Observations were made between 9:00 a.m. and 6:00 p.m.. On two occasions, observations were made at two separate locations within a site on the same day. At two of these sites, Walden Ponds (WP) and Sawhill Ponds (SP), only wigeons were present during all observations. At the other two sites,

Golden Ponds (GP) and Boulder Reservoir (BR), wigeons and coots were present during each observation.

Field procedures

Before each observation, the approximate densities of wigeons and coots were recorded. When bird densities were high, multiple counts were made to provide the most accurate count possible. Focal animal sampling was used to record activity budgets of wigeons. Focal individuals were chosen by pointing binoculars randomly toward a group of wigeons and choosing the individual closest to the center of the field of view. The sex and pair status of each focal animal were recorded. Sex was determined using plumage characteristics; male wigeons were identified by the conspicuous white crown stripe. Pair status was determined by observing associations between males and females. When the focal animal was observed associating with a conspecific of the opposite sex for the majority of the observation, the individual was considered to be paired (Paulus 1983). Social status was recorded when evident. Aggressive interactions between individuals were assumed to be signs of social dominance, with the pursuing individual recorded as dominant and the pursued animal recorded as sub-dominant.

Focal individuals were observed for 10-minute trials, or until they disappeared from view for more than 30 seconds. Behaviors were sampled every 30 seconds. Behaviors recorded include:

- (a) *feeding*: skimming, dabbling, or tip-up feeding, either in the water or on the shore;
- (b) *swimming*: making directed movements in the water, without feeding;
- (c) *resting*: sitting on shore or in the water, with little movement;
- (d) *comfort movements*: preening or stretching out wings;
- (e) *alert*: holding an attentive posture, with neck extended, without performing other behaviors;
- (f) *courtship*: directing ritualistic behaviors at a mate or potential mate;
- (g) *aggression*: making bill threats or chasing or biting another individual (Paulus 1983).

When coots were present, all instances of successful kleptoparasitism were recorded. We defined kleptoparasitism as the taking of food by one individual from another individual, which had procured it. Food transfer between the bills of individuals could be observed and was indicative of successful kleptoparasitism.

Data analysis

The number of times each behavior was performed was tallied for each focal animal. These numbers were adjusted for the length of the observation period to control for different trial lengths. The proportion of time each focal animal spent performing each behavior was computed by dividing the behavior frequency by the maximum frequency possible ($n=20$). Proportions were arcsin-transformed in order to meet the assumptions of parametric analyses (Zar 1999). Student's *t*-tests were used to compare differences in activity patterns between kleptoparasitizing and non-kleptoparasitizing wigeons. Student's *t*-tests were also used to analyze the effects of sex and pair status on kleptoparasitism rate. Nonparametric Spearman's rank correlation analysis was used to compare coot density and wigeon density to the rate of kleptoparasitism. Data were analyzed using JMP statistical software (SAS 1995).

Results

Wigeons were observed during 48 10-minute focal animal observations. Density of wigeons ranged from 2 to 17, and density of coots ranged from 0 to 10. Wigeons fed by skimming the surface of the water with their bills or by tipping up and lowering their heads in the water. Coots fed by diving, completely submerging themselves underwater. Kleptoparasitism occurred during 33% of observations ($n=16$). Kleptoparasitism was only observed at the Golden Ponds site. On average, wigeons performed 3.3 successful kleptoparasitic events per 10-minute observation. Wigeons stole food from coots by waiting near diving coots and then taking the food brought to the surface. No aggressive responses by coots toward kleptoparasitic wigeons were observed.

Other species common at the study sites included Ring-necked Duck (*Aythya collaris*), Redhead (*Aythya americana*), Canada Goose (*Branta canadensis*), Common Goldeneye (*Bucephala clangula*), Mallard (*Anas platyrhynchos*), and Gadwall (*Anas strepera*). Other than

Table 1. Average proportion of time wigeons spent performing each behavior at four sites. Average density of wigeons and coots per observation is also shown.

SP = Sawhill Ponds; GP = Golden Ponds; WP = Walden Ponds; BR = Boulder Reservoir.

Site	Wigeons	Coots	Feeding	Swimming	Resting	Comfort	Alert	Court	Aggression
SP	10.2	0	.484	.472	.021	.007	.013	0	0
GP	3.3	8.3	.242	.604	.015	0	0	.003	0
WP	5.0	0	.675	.308	0	.017	0	0	0
BR	7.3	3.7	.557	.398	.033	.011	0	0	0

wigeons, no species were observed kleptoparasitizing, and no species other than coots were observed being kleptoparasitized.

Wigeons spent the greatest proportion of their time feeding and swimming at all study sites (Table 1). Individuals that did not occur with coots spent a significantly greater proportion of time feeding than individuals that occurred with coots (Table 2; $t=2.290$; $df=46$; $p=0.027$). There was no significant difference in the proportion of time individuals spent swimming at sites with and without coots (Table 2; $t=1.801$; $df=46$; $p=0.078$). There was a positive relationship between coot density and rate of kleptoparasitism ($r_s=0.519$; $df=25$; $p=0.006$). There was a negative relationship between wigeon density and rate of kleptoparasitism ($r_s=-0.548$; $df=25$; $p=0.003$).

Because wigeons at Golden Ponds were the only individuals observed kleptoparasitizing coots, observations of these individuals only ($n=18$) were included in the analyses of the relationship of sex and pair status on kleptoparasitism rates. For these analyses only, the other three study sites were excluded. At Golden Ponds, female wigeons showed a significantly higher rate of kleptoparasitism than male wigeons (Table 3; $t=2.709$; $df=16$; $p=0.015$). There was no difference in kleptoparasitism rates between paired and unpaired wigeons (Table 3; $t=0.471$; $df=16$; $p=0.644$).

Discussion

Activity budget

The presence of coots depressed feeding rate in wigeons. These results agree with those of LeSchack and Hepp (1995), who found that kleptoparasitic Gadwalls spent less time feeding on their own than non-kleptoparasitic Gadwalls. Kleptoparasitism presumably represents a feeding opportunity for which the cost of obtaining food by stealing is lower than the cost of foraging on one's own. In addition, because coots feed by diving, they may be able to obtain food resources that are unavailable to wigeons, which feed by dabbling or tipping up, but do not dive. These food resources may be of higher

Table 2. Mean time that wigeons spent performing behaviors with and without coots.

Group	N*	Feeding (mean \pm SD)**	Swimming (mean \pm SD)**
With Coots	27	0.387 \pm 0.334†	0.581 \pm 0.238
Without Coots	21	0.597 \pm 0.290†	0.454 \pm 0.246

* = number of wigeons observed for 10-minute periods.

** = proportion of time spent performing behavior.

† = significant difference between groups, $p < 0.05$

quality, and so wigeons spend less time foraging because they can obtain more valuable resources with less energy expenditure.

Sex, pair status, and kleptoparasitism

Females kleptoparasitized at higher rates than males. These results agree with those of other studies, which found that in kleptoparasitic Gadwalls, females kleptoparasitize at significantly higher rates than males (Amat and Soriguer 1984; LeSchack and Hepp 1985). However, we found no evidence that pair status affected kleptoparasitism rates. This result is surprising based on the results of LeSchack and Hepp (1995). They found that unpaired Gadwalls kleptoparasitized at higher rates than paired Gadwalls. Unpaired Gadwalls are subordinate to paired Gadwalls (Paulus 1983), and kleptoparasitism represents an alternate foraging strategy for subordinate individuals excluded from high-quality resources by dominant individuals. However, LeSchack and Hepp (1995) also noted that this alternative foraging strategy was beneficial for subordinate individuals because food was limited on their study sites. Wigeons may kleptoparasitize because of food unavailability, as has been shown in these other studies. Subordinate individuals might have to kleptoparasitize in order to meet daily energy requirements. However, measures of food availability were not a component of our study, so the influence of access to food resources on kleptoparasitism rates observed here is unknown.

We found no differences between kleptoparasitizing and non-kleptoparasitizing wigeons in the amount of time spent swimming, which suggests that parasitizing individuals did not spend more time in search of food. This suggests that kleptoparasitism may also be

Table 3. Mean rates of kleptoparasitism by American Wigeons by sex and pair status at Golden Ponds.

Group	N*	Rate of kleptoparasitism (mean \pm SD)**
Sex		
Male	11	2.27 \pm 1.95†
Female	7	4.71 \pm 1.70†
Pair status		
Unpaired	3	2.67 \pm 2.08
Paired	15	3.33 \pm 2.26

* = number of wigeons observed for 10-minute periods.

** = number of kleptoparasitic events per 10-minute observation period.

† = significant difference between groups, $p < 0.05$

a means of energy conservation, and not necessarily a requirement based on scarcity of food.

Because this study was performed late in the spring, the pressure to parasitize as a means of obtaining necessary resources might have been less strong than in winter, when resources would presumably be less abundant. A study by McKnight and Hepp (1998) found that rates of kleptoparasitism of coots by Gadwalls peaked in early February, when resources were most limited.

Host/parasite densities and kleptoparasitism

Rates of kleptoparasitism increased as coot density increased. This seems logical, as increased numbers of coots would increase the likelihood of coot-wigeon encounters and increase chances of kleptoparasitism. As wigeon densities increased, rates of kleptoparasitism decreased. This may be because when too many wigeons are present, competition for access to hosts increases and it becomes less efficient for wigeons to kleptoparasitize (Brockmann and Barnard 1979). However, no kleptoparasitic events were observed at Boulder Reservoir, even though coots were present. Numbers of coots at this site were lower than at the Golden Ponds site, and numbers of wigeons were higher. It seems likely that the differences in the ratios of wigeons to coots could account for the lack of observed kleptoparasitism for the reasons described above. Also, although no quantitative data were collected, coots at Boulder Reservoir tended to stay in closer proximity to one another than coots at Golden Ponds. In addition, the group of coots tended to feed away from the group of wigeons. This may represent avoidance of kleptoparasitism by the coots. A study by Ryan (1981) found that while coots did not use aggression as a defense against kleptoparasitism, they did perform evasive maneuvers as a means of avoiding kleptoparasites.

Alternatively, the resources available at the two sites (GP and BR) may be different. Vegetation on the bottom of Boulder Reservoir may have been less desirable to wigeons. In addition, the vegetation structure at the two sites may have been different. In a study of wigeons in Manitoba, Canada, Knapton and Knudsen (1978) found that at sites where the vegetation was mainly on the bottom, kleptoparasitism of coots by wigeons occurred frequently. However, at sites where filamentous algae were present near the surface, kleptoparasitism of coots by wigeons was not observed. A similar situation may be occurring in this study, where food resources of suitable quality are accessible by wigeons at Boulder Reservoir. Kleptoparasitism would therefore be less frequent, if one function of kleptoparasitism is indeed for parasites to obtain inaccessible or high-quality resources from hosts.

Vegetative analysis of the sites would be beneficial in order to determine whether food availability, resource quality, and vegetation structure may influence rates of kleptoparasitism. In addition, it would be useful to compare kleptoparasitism rates over a longer period, possibly from fall through spring, to determine how rates of wigeon kleptoparasitism change throughout the year. Finally, comparing behaviors of more wigeons from many different sites with a range of coot and wigeon densities would be beneficial to gain a better understanding of how social and demographic dynamics affect kleptoparasitism.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

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FIRST STATE RECORD

Colorado's First Record of Sooty Tern

Brandon K. Percival

The Colorado Bird Records Committee (CBRC) recently accepted the occurrence of Colorado's first Sooty Tern (*Onychoprion fuscatus*) on 12 and 13 September 2008 from Lake Holbrook, Otero County, and Lake Meredith, Crowley County, in southeastern Colorado (see p. 128). Following are the details of the bird's occurrence.

Field encounters

On Friday, 12 September 2008, Mark Peterson, Brad Steger, Brian Steger, and I were conducting a September monthly Big Day. Our Big Day started early in the mountains southwest of Pueblo and continued east to Lake Holbrook, Otero County, where we arrived at the southwest boat ramp just before 1:00 p.m.. It was 64° Fahrenheit and overcast, with 80% humidity and winds from the southeast at 8 miles per hour, according to Weather Underground (2009).

When I got out of the vehicle, I scanned the lake briefly with binoculars and noticed an odd-looking bird flying over the pelicans in the extreme eastern part of the lake. I told the others that there might be a jaeger out there. I thought "jaeger" because of the dark upperparts and whitish underparts, but it was so far away that I really couldn't tell much. I really didn't know what it was going to be, except that I was pretty sure it was something "good," so I hurried to get my scope out, as did the others.

We were all trying to refind the bird with our scopes when Mark said, "It's a tern, like a Bridled or a Sooty Tern." After we all got on it for ourselves, we agreed with Mark that it was indeed a large "tropical" tern. We observed the bird as it was flying around the lake, sometimes near the much smaller Black Terns. After watching and studying it for a few minutes, we determined that it was an adult alternate-plumaged Sooty Tern. We then began notifying others about our find,



Colorado's first Sooty Tern, Lake Meredith, Crowley County, 12 Sep 2008. Photos by Glenn Walbek



hoping for other observers and photos.

For the next several minutes, I tried to take video of the bird through my spotting scope, using my digital camera. I had never taken video of a flying bird before, so I wasn't sure if this video would be good enough to identify the bird. Duane Nelson arrived from Las Animas at 1:30 p.m., and he was able to see the bird fly around the lake a couple of times. We then all watched it leave the lake heading toward the northwest. We wondered if the bird would ever be seen again, and if not, whether the CBRC would believe it, since none of us were able to get

photos, and I didn't think the video I took was very good. Later, Mark Peterson was able to edit my video, and it can now be seen at <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ekp5ykPxMqk>, where you can judge its quality for yourself.

We knew of several birders coming to see the tern, and we called them to let them know that the bird had left Lake Holbrook and seemed to be heading northwest, perhaps to the Crowley County lakes. At around 4:40 p.m., Steve Stachowiak refound the Sooty Tern at Lake Meredith, Crowley County. It was seen at Lake Meredith until dark by Steve, Jim Beatty, Joey Kellner, Bill Maynard, Larry Modesitt, Nathan Pieplow, Joe Roller, Andrew Spencer, and Glenn Walbek. Glenn was our hero, since he was able to get some amazing photos of the bird.

A few birders arrived at Lake Meredith the next morning, when it was quite foggy. Some of them (Bill Schmoker, Lisa Edwards, Maggie Boswell, Cole Wild, and Scott Shaum) managed to see the Sooty Tern between 8:40 a.m. and 9:30 a.m.. However, other birders searched Lake Meredith and nearby lakes the rest of the day, and the following day, without success.

Appearance and behavior

The bird was definitely a tern. It had pointed wings, a long tail that was forked and mostly black, and a jet black back and wings, with dark undersides to the primaries and white underwing coverts. The bird had a black cap, with a white forehead demarcated by a black line going from the black cap over the eyes to the bill, and the bill was all black, thin, and pointed. The face was white, as were the underparts. The bird was quite a bit larger than the Black Terns near it. These field marks eliminated Bridled Tern (*Onychoprion anaethetus*), the only other ABA-area species that Sooty Tern is likely to be confused with. I had seen thousands of Sooty Terns at the Dry Tortugas in Florida a few years back, so I was pretty sure that the bird was this species and not a Bridled Tern, which I haven't seen.

The bird was observed flying over the water, sometimes chasing gulls or being chased by them. We never saw it standing or sitting on the shore, nor plunge-diving to feed. In the video I took of the bird, it flaps frequently, though with slower wingbeats than the smaller Black Terns.

Other extralimital records of Sooty Tern

Sooty Tern certainly might be one of the oddest bird species to ever show up in Colorado. Before fall 2008, there were no accepted records of Sooty Tern from any of the states that border Colorado. The closest records were from Missouri and California, according to Sibley (2000). Leukering and Semo (2008) ranked it the 66th most likely bird to be added to the Colorado state list, just ahead of Kirtland's Warbler.

However, on 3 September 2008, Sooty Tern was reported in Oklahoma for the first time, with eight adults and two immature birds at Otter Lake at Red Slough Wildlife Management Area (Arbour 2008) and another four at Broken Bow Lake (B. Heck, pers. comm.), two of which were still there on 4 September 2008 (M. Droege, pers. comm.). It is assumed that these terns came to Oklahoma via the eye of Hurricane Gustav, which passed directly over southeastern Oklahoma on 3 September 2008. Other coastal or pelagic birds reported at Red Slough that day included a Cory's Shearwater, a Magnificent Frigatebird, and a Royal Tern (Arbour 2008).

I assume Colorado's Sooty Tern came inland due to Hurricane Gustav also. I think this is at least Colorado's second hurricane-related vagrant bird. The other was the Magnificent Frigatebird seen 14 September 1985 near Chatfield Reservoir and 16 September 1985 at Green Mountain Reservoir in Summit County. According to Andrews and Righter (1992), the bird probably came to Colorado because of Hurricane Elena.

On 14 September 2008, three more Sooty Terns were found at Broken Bow Lake in Oklahoma (B. Heck and T. Mitchell, pers. comm.), though these birds were likely from Hurricane Ike and not from Hurricane Gustav.

Conclusion

Finding a first state record is an exciting experience that doesn't happen very often. Timing seems to be key in finding unusual birds, and we happened to be at Lake Holbrook at the right time to see this bird. Even though a Sooty Tern in Colorado seemed totally unexpected, I was aware of the Sooty Terns and other Gulf Coast pelagic species that had been seen earlier in the month in southeastern Oklahoma, since I monitor nearby state bird listservs regularly. After hearing about the Oklahoma Sooty Terns, I actually went to Pueblo Reservoir, thinking, "wouldn't it be cool to see one in Colorado?" But I still didn't think that wish would come true just a few days later. I guess this Sooty Tern proves that any bird within "reason" might show up in Colorado!

I'm very happy some other birders were able to see the Colorado Sooty Tern and photograph it, though I wish more people could have seen it, instead of just the lucky 19.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

It was great to be birding with Mark Peterson, Brad Steger, and Brian Steger that wonderful day; thanks to them for inviting me to come along on their Big Day. Thanks also to Glenn Walbek and his excellent photos, as they helped confirm this sighting as the first state record. Also, thanks to David Arbour, Melinda Droege, Berlin Heck, and Terry Mitchell for giving me information about the 2008 Fall Oklahoma Sooty Tern sightings. And, finally, I thank Van Truan for looking over earlier drafts of this article and making helpful corrections.

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EDUCATIONAL OPPORTUNITIES

Denver Audubon's Master Birder Program

Karen von Saltza

In 2005, several members of the Audubon Society of Greater Denver (ASGD) decided to channel the enthusiasm and energy of mid-



Horned Lark by Joe Rigli

Audubon Master Birder Program Requirements

- 1) Identify and list at least 200 bird species in Colorado, including species, date, location, and habitat. This list can include birds identified prior to entering the AMB program.
- 2) Categorize your life list into year-round residents and those characteristic of summer, winter, and migration.
- 3) Note which species on your life list are on the Audubon/American Bird Conservancy Watch List.
- 4) During field tests administered by mentors throughout the year,
 - a. Identify 100 species by sight;
 - b. Identify 40 species by sound.
- 5) Participate in at least 75% of the AMB classroom sessions and at least 75% of the organized field trips.
- 6) Participate in an average of two organized bird field trips per month.
- 7) Lead a field trip for ASGD or another organization; or
- 8) Plan and lead an AMB field trip.
- 9) Participate in an annual bird count (Spring Count, Fall Count, or Christmas Count).
- 10) Keep a backyard bird list at least twice a month for a year.
- 11) Record the breeding of five species using a Breeding Bird Atlas form.
- 12) Complete a CBRC rare bird report form.
- 13) List birds that are characteristic of 13 habitats found in Colorado.
- 14) List the key plants characteristic of each Colorado habitat.
- 15) Participate in at least five field activities during the year (e.g., the CFO Convention, the Karval Mountain Plover Festival, the Big Sit!, the Breeding Bird Survey, etc.)
- 16) Write a 2-5 page research paper on a bird-related topic and make a presentation on your topic to the class.
- 17) Bird ten different sites along the Front Range.
- 18) Volunteer at least 10 hours for ASGD during the training year.

level birders into a program that would improve their skills and groom them for leadership roles in the Colorado birding community. This was the genesis of the Audubon Master Birder (AMB) program, which recently graduated its second class.

Program requirements

In order to qualify as a Master Birder, candidates must complete 18 requirements (see facing page) that are maintained in a notebook and submitted for final approval at the end of the program. These requirements include a list of 200 Colorado birds the candidate has identified, with appropriate dates, locations, and habitat notes. Also required are species lists for various habitats and seasons, and lists of common plants associated with each habitat. Candidates must visit birding “hot spots” in the state and participate in a number of activities: volunteering at a banding station or rehabilitation center, organizing and leading a field trip, attending birding conventions and festivals, assisting or leading surveys such as the Colorado State Park raptor survey, or taking part in annual bird counts. Finally, each candidate is asked to write a short research paper and present it to the class.

The time required to fulfill the notebook projects cannot be underestimated. Requirements 13 and 14 alone (see facing page) may take many hours of concentrated effort to sort out all the material from field notes. A project such as the Backyard Bird Count obviously requires a full twelve months to complete. Other activities must be repeated: even if the candidate has led the Christmas Bird Count at Bear Creek for the past 10 years, to fulfill an AMB requirement, the candidate must lead that Christmas Count during the training period. The only requirement that allows one to gather material from past years is the first: identify and list at least 200 bird species in Colorado.

The program requires a commitment of one year: evening classes twice a month for 12 months and field trips at least twice a month,



Scaled Quail, Pueblo County, 29 Sep 2008.
Photo by Bill Eden



Denver Audubon's Master Birders field trip to Loveland Pass, 28 June 2008. Photo by Urling Kingery

although from late April until the end of August a field trip is scheduled almost every Saturday. For individuals who have regular jobs and family commitments, even for retirees, the AMB program is a big undertaking. For those, however, who give careful consideration to the time and energy commitment, and who are willing to spend a year of their life focused on the birds of Colorado,

the rewards are significant: much improved birding skills, greater confidence, and the tools to take on one or more of the many opportunities available for skilled birders with natural leadership abilities.

Application to the program is a competitive process. Applicants are asked to take a simple identification quiz, not designed to discourage or embarrass, but rather to ascertain that the candidate has sufficient bird identification skills to benefit from the program. Those who do not have solid enough bird identification skills are advised to continue to develop and, perhaps, take other classes in preparation for reapplying at a later date. Those who do demonstrate the required skills are interviewed by the mentors and, in most cases, accepted into the program. Eighteen people applied to the 2008 class and eleven were accepted. All of them completed the program in February 2009.

Classroom and field instruction

The Committee of Mentors, the AMB instructors, carefully select knowledgeable speakers for the evening classroom presentations. Candidates have the opportunity to learn from and interact with some of the best birders in the state. Everyone benefits.

The 2008 AMB candidates had the opportunity to watch a well-organized slide show on Bird Topography by Larry Semo. Then, Tony Leukering and Bill Schmoker gave outstanding talks on the subjects of bird dispersal and fall migration. Brad Andres spoke on shorebirds;

Kevin Cook took his turn with prairie birds. Doug Kibbe, a co-editor of the Vermont Breeding Bird Atlas who recently relocated to Denver, gave a remarkable overview of the atlas program in general and the Colorado Breeding Bird Atlas II in particular. When it came time to lecture on sparrows, Dave Leatherman was in top form. Nathan Pieplow offered his expertise on bird sounds.

Other well-respected birders from Colorado Field Ornithologists, Denver Field Ornithologists, and ASGD assumed the challenge of leading AMB field trips to different habitats. Brad Andres led the group to Lower Latham in April to view migrating shorebirds in breeding plumage. Bill Kaempfer took his turn in June, to Wild Basin in Rocky Mountain National Park. Ed Butterfield, who ran the Grasslands Institute for thirteen years, led the class to the Pawnee National Grassland in July and found all the target birds except the elusive Mountain Plover. Bill Schmoker escorted the class to Jackson and Lower Latham Reservoirs in late August to observe shorebirds in non-breeding plumage.

The AMB field trips are considered study sessions and are not open to the public. Each candidate keeps a species list and an individual count. In the course of the field trips, each AMB candidate is required to take at least four field identification tests during the year. In these tests, they must identify 100 birds by sight and 40 birds by sound; only birds correctly identified on test days may be counted for this requirement. Imagine being at the end of the line as the group goes around a bend, then hearing Hugh Kingery call out, "that was sound number seven. Use the same bird for sight number twelve." If you are in the wrong place at the wrong time, the bird will not go on your list that day to be signed off. With field tests on shorebirds and sparrows in non-breeding plumage, AMB candidates clearly are not wimps!

Rewards for the birder and the birding community

Once certified, Master Birders donate 48 hours of volunteer time a year back to ASGD. Most meet this requirement easily. Indeed, it is probably one of the reasons why they were attracted to the program

Join the Class

More information about the Master Birder program can be downloaded from the Audubon website: www.denveraudubon.org/master-birder.htm. A new year-long class will begin in August 2009.

in the first place. Several Master Birder candidates have instructed school groups or made presentations to community organizations, church groups, or retirement homes. Some have stepped up to man the Audubon Hotline (“There is this little brown bird in my backyard...”). Others assist with or assume ownership of Breeding Bird Atlas blocks. Still others have found themselves in demand as field trip leaders. There are many vacancies to fill as we develop a cadre of fine birders who wish to give back volunteer hours and assume their place in the active community of Colorado birders.

What the program achieves, however, beyond developing a skill threshold for an elite group of volunteers, is a standard of excellence recognized and trusted by the birding community at large. Other Audubon chapters have training programs, but no other chapter in this country requires a year of intensive study and field work to qualify. When Colorado birding organizations find themselves in search of a new trip leader or hard-working board member, they can look at the graduates of the Audubon Master Birder Program as both qualified and motivated, a resource of talent and training that is growing year by year.

At a simple ceremony held for the graduating members of the first AMB class, each of the seven graduates was presented with a badge: his or her name along with the title MASTER BIRDER. A small thing, perhaps—but I can say, as a graduate of that first class and a mentor to the second, that I wear my badge with extraordinary pride.

Karen von Saltza, 9400 E. Iliff Ave. Apt. 256, Denver, CO 80231-5737

FIELD NOTE

An Apparent Second Brood of Juniper Titmouse

Tina Mitchell

Since the split of the Plain Titmouse complex into Juniper Titmouse (*Baeolophus ridgwayi*) and Oak Titmouse (*Baeolophus inornatus*) in 1998 (AOU 1998), little research has focused specifically on

the Juniper Titmouse's breeding behavior. Cicero (2000) reported, "Usually 1 brood/yr in both species. However, some evidence that pairs may raise 2 broods on occasion." Most of this evidence for a second brood has relied on observations of the adult birds' behavior—for instance, the feeding of young in late July in Colorado (Levad 1998). During the summer of 2008, Zell Lundberg and I observed and documented a likely second brood of a Juniper Titmouse pair in our nest boxes near Coaldale in Fremont County, Colorado (altitude about 7000 feet).

We monitored 118 nest boxes on approximately 39 acres in pinyon/juniper habitat, checking each box every 5-8 days beginning in mid-March. On 3 May 2008, I noted six eggs in a box with a nest whose construction had begun around 12 April; an adult Juniper Titmouse flushed off the nest when I opened the box. On 16 May, the box held three nestlings approximately 1-2 days old. Checks on 23 and 30 May found three nestlings thriving; the nestlings on 30 May appeared fully feathered and likely to fledge soon. On 7 June, the box was empty and the nest appeared undisturbed.

Roughly 45 feet from the original box, as of 30 May, a nest box contained what looked like an incomplete nest of a Mountain Bluebird. On 13 June, five eggs had been laid in this nest, to which a thin layer of animal hair had been added. The following day, we photographed an adult Juniper Titmouse incubating these eggs; it did not flush from the nest. On 27 June, we witnessed the hatching of three young; the adult again remained in the box. Photos were taken two days later. Checks on 5 July, 6 July, 10 July, and 12 July each revealed three nestlings. On 18 July, the three nestlings appeared to be fully feathered. At that time, I observed an adult with a large insect in its beak chattering frequently around the box, although it did not enter in my presence; a second Juniper Titmouse was chattering in the surrounding trees, suggesting to me that the nestlings should be fledging



Territorial male Juniper Titmouse, Garden of the Gods, El Paso County, 10 February 2008.
Photo by Bill Maynard



Juniper Titmouse, 15-day-old fledglings of 2nd brood, Fremont County, 12 Jul 2008. Photo by Zell Lundberg

soon. A return check on 20 July found an empty and again undisturbed nest.

Assuming that one egg was laid each day, and estimating the age of the nestlings at first visit after hatching, we can approximate the dates of the nesting events (Table 1). Published research about Juniper Titmice offers few direct observations of specific nesting “milestones.” Colorado Breeding Bird Atlas workers

found an adult feeding young on 31 July, providing indirect support for a possible second brood (Levad 1998). Data from Nevada, New Mexico, and Utah showed 30 May as the latest egg date (Panik 1976; Cicero 2000); field workers for the Colorado Breeding Bird Atlas found no nests with eggs (Levad 1998). Among nests in Colorado, Nevada, and Wyoming, the latest report of a nest with young occurred on 24 June (Panik 1976; Fitton & Scott 1984; Levad 1998).

While our observations strongly suggest a second brood, this conclusion should be considered tentative. Because we could not identify individual birds, either through banding or appearance, we cannot guarantee that the same pair generated these two nests. However, the timing and proximity of the second brood makes this a good possibility. In addition, we cannot verify that the nestlings indeed fledged, since we did not witness the young actually leaving the boxes.

Finally, we documented this behavior in a rather “unnatural”

Table 1. Approximate dates of Juniper Titmouse nesting events.

	Nest 1	Nest 2
First egg laid	4/27	6/7
First egg hatched	5/14	6/27*
Fledge date	6/3 (6/1 - 6/7)	7/19

*observed rather than estimated

circumstance—an environment that provided a surplus of available and unoccupied artificial cavities. The likelihood of its occurrence in other environments remains unknown. But it seems likely that a pair of Juniper Titmice successfully fledged three young from a second brood following the fledging of a first brood of three.

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CBRC REPORT

The 50th Report of the Colorado Bird Records Committee

Lawrence S. Semo

Chair, Colorado Bird Records Committee

Introduction

This 50th report presents the results of deliberations of the Colorado Bird Records Committee (hereafter CBRC or Committee) on partial results of circulations held during late 2008 and early 2009. This article provides results of the circulation of 63 reports submitted by 11 observers documenting 43 occurrences of 39 species from the period 2001 through 2008, although most records treated here pertain to 2008 records. Nine records involving nine individuals were not accepted because of insufficient documentation or because descriptions were inconsistent with known identification criteria. Per

CBRC bylaws, all accepted records received final 7-0 or 6-1 votes to accept. Each report that was not accepted received fewer than four votes to accept in the final vote. Those records with four or five “accept” votes have transcended to a second round of deliberations, and results of those records will be published at a later date.

This report accepts the first state record of Sooty Tern (*Onychoprion fuscatus*), bringing the Colorado state list to **488**. Other highlights of this report include the third record of King Rail (*Rallus elegans*), the seventh record of Ancient Murrelet (*Synthliboramphus antiquus*), the second record of Smith’s Longspur (*Calcarius pictus*), and the first record of a Type 3 Red Crossbill (*Loxia curvirostra*).

Committee members voting on these reports were Coen Dexter, Doug Faulkner, Peter Gent, Rachel Hopper, Joey Kellner, Bill Maynard, Larry Semo, and David Silverman.

Committee Functions

All reports received by the CBRC (written documentation, photographs, videotapes, and/or sound recordings) 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, including both the main and supplementary lists (Semo et al. 2002), 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>. Documentary materials should be submitted online at the CBRC website (<http://www.cfo-link.org/CBRC/login.php>).

Error of Omission

In Semo and Faulkner (2008), we reported on the CBRC’s acceptance of a record of Nelson’s Sharp-tailed Sparrow (*Ammodramus nelsoni*) from Fox Ranch, Yuma, seen on 6 Oct 2007. We noted that Bill Schmoker was the sole observer to document the bird. However, Ted Floyd also documented the bird and his documentation has now been added to the official record of that sighting. I apologize to Ted for misplacing his submitted documentation.

Report Format

The organization and style of this report follow those of Leukering and Semo (2003), with some alterations. 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).

The records in this report are arranged taxonomically following the American Ornithologists' Union (AOU) Checklist of North American Birds (AOU 1998) through the 49th Supplement (Banks et al. 2008). 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 videotape are indicated by a lower-case, italicized "v" (*v*), and those who submitted sonograms or recordings are indicated by a lower-case, italicized "s" (*s*). Thus, the parenthetical expression "(JD *v*, RA†, TL, JV, CW; 2001-36; 4-3, 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 two rounds of voting, the first-round vote was four "accept" votes and three "do not accept" votes, while the second-round vote was 6-1 in favor of accepting the report. 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. 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.

For this report, the CBRC abbreviations are used for campground

(CG), Chico Basin Ranch (CBR), County Road (CR), Reservoir (Res.), and State Park (SP).

RECORDS ACCEPTED

Red-throated Loon – *Gavia stellata* (36/13). A juvenile was at Pueblo Res. on 10 Nov 2005 (BKP †; 2005-116; 5-2, 6-1) and an adult was at the same location between 3 Jan and 26 Feb 2008 (BKP †, TLe; 2008-4; 7-0). There are now eight records of Red-throated Loon for *Pueblo*.

Yellow-billed Loon – *Gavia adamsii* (7/20). A juvenile, the seventh for *Pueblo*, was at Pueblo Res. between 1 and 8 Jan 2008 (TL, BM †, BKP †, BSc †, JK; 2008-2; 7-0).

Glossy Ibis – *Plegadis falcinellus* (46/30). Although Glossy Ibis records have exceeded the standard threshold for removal from the main review list (three records/year over the past ten-year period), the CBRC still solicits details on observations of the species as it continues to track the incredible expansion of the species in the West



Red-throated Loon, Pueblo Reservoir, Pueblo County, Jan 2008. Photo by Brandon Percival



Yellow-billed Loon, Pueblo Reservoir, Pueblo County, 2 Jan 2008. Photo by Bill Schmoker

and the increasing frequency of its hybridization with White-faced Ibis (*P. chihi*). The Committee recently accepted three additional records of Glossy Ibis. One was at Pastorius



Taiga race Merlin, Colorado Springs, El Paso County, 25 March 2007. Photo by Bill Maynard

Res., *La Plata*, on 27 Apr 2007 (JBy, SA; 2007-78; 7-0) and another was at the same location on 19 Apr 2008 (JBy; 2008-32; 6-1), establishing the second and third accepted records of the species for *La Plata*. Headquarters Pond at CBR, *Pueblo*, hosted one between 30 Apr and 11 May 2008 (BM†, BG †; 2008-36; 7-0).

Merlin – *Falco columbarius columbarius*. Rare in Colorado, a member of the nominate “taiga” race of Merlin was photographed near the Garden of the Gods in Colorado Springs, *El Paso*, on 25 Mar 2007 (BM †; 2007-14; 7-0).

King Rail – *Rallus elegans* (3/1). Only the third for Colorado, and the first for *Bent*, one called from the Fort Lyon marshes on the evening of 22 May 2001 (TLe, TS; 2001-171; 5-2, 6-1). Separation between calls of King and Virginia Rails (*R. limicola*) can be difficult, and the Committee

was indecisive in its first round of deliberations. Additional research by some members on the variability of call types between the two species ultimately resulted in acceptance. The observer’s description of the call being of a long series of low-pitched, hollow “kek-kek-kek” notes with similar internote intervals throughout (i.e., monotonous in pitch and tempo) is consistent with King

and not Virginia Rail, as the call of Virginia’s consists of doubled “kid-dick” notes in shorter series.

Hudsonian Godwit – *Limosa haemastica* (28/6). An alternate-plumaged bird graced the edges of Union Res., *Weld*, between 16 and 18 Apr 2008 (DF, BK, BKP †, NP, AS †, BPr; 2008-30, 7-0). *Weld*, with eight of the 28 records (28%), has been the premier area for Hudsonian Godwit sightings in the state.

Least Sandpiper – *Calidris minutilla*. Very rare in winter, a basic-plumaged Least Sandpiper was near the Environmental Learning Center in Fort Collins, *Larimer*, on 6 Jan 2008 (NK †; 2008-5; 7-0).

Buff-breasted Sandpiper – *Tryngites subruficollis* (30/10). A juvenile at Adobe Creek Res. on 13 Sep 2007 (BM; 2007-65; 7-0) is the third for *Bent*. Based on narrative provided by the submitter, the bird may have



Ancient Murrelet, Pueblo Reservoir, Pueblo County, 16 Nov 2008. Photo by Rick Clawges

were unsuccessful. Specific details of the record are presented in Brandon Percival's article within this issue of the journal (see p. 111).

Ancient Murrelet – *Synthliboramphus antiquus* (7/3). A first-cycle Ancient Murrelet was photographed by a boater at Pueblo Res. on 16 Nov 2008 (RC †; 2008-134, 7-0), providing the first record for *Pueblo*. This species has a well-documented pattern

been present a few days following the original sighting, though the Committee received no additional details from other observers of a possible later date.

Thayer's Gull – *Larus thayerii*. Very rare for the West Slope, and potentially a first county record, a first-cycle bird was at Confluence Park in Delta, *Delta*, on 3 Mar 2008 (TLe†; 2008-22; 7-0). The bird had been detected earlier than that date, though no details of such observations were submitted to the CBRC.

Sooty Tern – *Onychoprion fuscatus* (1/1). An adult, the first for Colorado, was discovered on 12 Sep 2008 at Lake Holbrook, *Otero*, and then later that same day at Lake Meredith, *Crowley* (BKP †, JK, BM †, NP, BSc, AS †, GW †; 2008-107; 7-0). The bird was still present on the morning of 13 Sep, but attempts to locate it later in the day and on subsequent days

of long-distance vagrancy within the interior of North America and the date range of occurrences in Colorado is fairly narrow; all seven have been recorded between 14 Oct and 5 Dec, with 57% of those occurrences falling between 4 and 16 Nov.

Inca Dove – *Columbina inca*. One heard calling in Pueblo West on 17 Oct 2007 (BKP; 2007-73; 6-1) is the fourth for *Pueblo*.

Snowy Owl – *Bubo scandiaca* (16/7). Providing the second record for Adobe Creek Res., a Snowy Owl, seemingly a juvenile male, was on both the *Bent* and *Kiowa* sides of the lake on 7 Apr 2007 (BM †, BKP †, SO; 2007-20; 7-0). The bird was apparently first discovered the day prior, though no details were submitted to the CBRC for that date. This is the latest spring date for the species in Colorado; the previous late date was 17 Mar.

Northern Saw-whet Owl – *Aegolius acadicus*. Late for the Eastern Plains, one was spotted roosting at CBR, *El Paso*, on 12 May 2007 (BKP †, LJ; 2007-35; 7-0).

Anna's Hummingbird – *Calypte anna* (9/2). An immature male fed at David Steingraeber's feeder near Horsetooth Res., *Larimer*, where it was wonderfully photographed on 5 Nov 2008 (AS †; 2008-132; 7-0). This is the first record of the species for *Larimer*.

Red-bellied Woodpecker – *Melanerpes carolinus*. Rare along the Front Range, a female Red-bellied was at Sylvan Dale Guest Ranch near Masonville, *Larimer*, where it was discovered on the Longmont CBC on 1 Jan 2008 (NK †, SR; 2008-1; 7-0).

Eastern Wood-Pewee – *Contopus*

virens (21/6). A singing bird at Lamar Community College on 1 May 2008 (AS; 2008-38, 6-1) gained Committee support. This represents the first record for *Prowers* and ties the earliest spring record in Colorado.

Black Phoebe – *Sayornis nigricans*. Becoming virtually annual now in winter at this location, an adult was documented along the Arkansas River below Pueblo Res. on 4 Feb 2008 (BKP †; 2008-13; 7-0). The bird had apparently first been detected at that location on 15 Dec 2007.

Vermilion Flycatcher – *Pyrocephalus rubinus* (34/20). The spring of 2008 was excellent for adult male Vermilion Flycatcher discoveries in Colorado, with three being accepted, all representing first county records. One sang at Highline SP, *Mesa*, on 1 Apr 2008 (JBn s; 2008-26; 7-0) and represents only the second record for the West Slope, the first being of a bird at Pastorius Res. in 1975. One was along the Cañon City Riverwalk in *Fremont* on 13 Apr (BKP, RM; 2008-28; 7-0), while a third was at Grenada, *Prowers*, on 28 Apr (BKP †; JO; 2008-34; 7-0).

Great Crested Flycatcher – *Myiarchus crinitus*. Rare west of the far eastern counties of Colorado, a Great Crested Flycatcher was encountered near Colorado City, *Pueblo*, on 18 Sep 2007 (DS; 2007-59; 7-0).

Scissor-tailed Flycatcher – *Tyrannus forficatus* (29/19). An adult female highlighted the



Anna's Hummingbird, *Larimer County*, 16 Oct 2008. Photo by Andrew Spencer

AT&T towers ten miles south of Lamar along US Highway 287 in *Prowers* on 29 Apr 2007 (AS †, CWi; 2007-80; 7-0). The species has bred at this location in recent years.

Varied Thrush – *Ixoreus naevius* (35/23). *Roult* obtained its first record with the adult female documented at Steamboat Springs on 3 Feb 2008 (TLi †, NM; 2008-12; 7-0), although the bird had been reported prior to that date. Another adult female, the fourth for *Weld*, was documented at the residence of Bill and Inez Prather near Longmont on 19 Mar 2008 (NK †; 2008-24; 7-0). This bird was present for some time prior to the documentation date as well, though the Committee received no details on the true date span of its presence.

Lucy's Warbler – *Vermivora ludiae* (8/6). The continued presence of breeding Lucy's Warblers at Yellowjacket Canyon, *Montezuma*, was confirmed when Spencer found seven birds at that location on 27 May 2007 (AS †; 2007-85; 7-0). As the species appears regular there, the CBRC has determined that no further documentation of birds from that specific location is required. However, the Committee would appreciate details on birds discovered in nearby canyons or drainages of *Montezuma* in order to document the current distribution of the species. If the population at Yellowjacket Canyon proves not to be regular in the future, based on reports from COBirds or News from the Field, the Committee may again request documentation from that site.

Cape May Warbler – *Dendroica tigrina* (23/5). A male at Bonny Res.

on 21 May 2007 (AS; 2007-118, 7-0) is a first for *Yuma* and only the fourth to be recorded this century in Colorado.

Pine Warbler – *Dendroica pinus* (34/17). One at Fairmount Cemetery in Lamar on 14 Oct 2007 (BKP; 2007-71; 6-1) provided the third record for *Prowers*. A first-cycle female foraged among Austrian Pine (*Pinus nigra*) trees at the Denver West Business Park in *Jefferson* on 31 Dec 2007 (BM; 2007-109; 7-0). This is the second time the species has been found at that location (and in the county as a whole); a previous bird was present there during the late winter of 2005. Lastly, an alternate-plumaged male was at Sydney LeNeve's feeder in Fort Collins on 16 Mar 2008 (NK †; 2008-23; 7-0).

Summer Tanager – *Piranga rubra*. Quite out-of-season was the female found feeding upon apples (*Malus* sp.) in a residential yard in Florence, *Fremont*, on 16 Dec 2007 (BKP†, BM, MP; 2007-112; 7-0).

Golden-crowned Sparrow – *Zonotrichia atricapilla* (22/12). An immature bird was in northwest Colorado Springs on 23 Feb 2008 (MW †, BM †; 2008-18; 7-0) and establishes the first accepted record for well-birded *El Paso*.

Smith's Longspur – *Calcarius pictus* (2/2). On the heels of the first accepted record of Smith's Longspur in 2003, the record of one near the intersection of CRs 12 and 57 in *Sedgwick* on 8 Oct 2005 withstood close CBRC scrutiny (SL; 2005-103; 5-2, 6-1). The observer's description of the overall color pattern, primary extension, call, and rectrix pattern

was consistent with Smith's Longspur. The previous record was from *Kiowa*, where the bird was present 11 and 12 Oct 2003.

Northern Cardinal – *Cardinalis cardinalis*. Farther west than usual was the male documented in Colorado Springs,

El Paso, between 13 and 17 Mar 2007 (TLe †, BM†, CP; 2007-12, 7-0). The bird was apparently first found at the homeowners' feeder in Nov 2006, though the Committee received no details on that extended length of stay.

Painted Bunting – *Passerina ciris* (30/16). An adult male brightened the feeders of a residence in *La Veta, Huerfano*, where it was documented on 16 May 2007 (BKP †, PN; 2007-36, 7-0). The bird, the second for *Huerfano*, was apparently first detected by the homeowner on 14 May, though no details on the earlier observation were submitted to the CBRC.

Purple Finch – *Carpodacus purpureus* (37/9). Purple Finches staged an unprecedented incursion into Colorado during the winter of 2007-08. Although the Committee deliberated on details of at least 37 birds, others were reported but not documented; thus the full magnitude of the irruption will most likely not be recorded.



Purple Finch, Cañon City, Fremont County, 16 Dec 2007.
Photo by Chris Wood

The first observation was of a female-plumaged bird at Rouse Park in Cañon City on 16 Dec 2007 (CWo †, BKP †; 2007-105; 7-0), the first for *Fremont*. Seven birds (five female-type, two male) were at Sterling, *Logan*, on 21 Dec 2007 (BK; 2007-107; 7-0), furnishing the second established record for that county. Up to 14 birds were documented between 27 Jan and 1 Mar 2008 below the dam of Bonny Res. (TLe †, NP, LS †, BSc; 2008-8; 7-0); the group was apparently first detected at that location during the Bonny Res. CBC on 21 Dec 2007, but no details of the original observation were submitted to the Committee. Another group of Purple Finches was also reported from the north side of the same reservoir during the CBC, but details of that group (15 birds) were only submitted for 2 Feb 2008 (GG †, GW; 2008-9; 7-0).

Red Crossbill – *Loxia curvirostra*. Spencer recorded the sonogram of a Type 3 Red Crossbill, a previously un-

recorded type from Colorado, on 4 Jul 2007 near Slumgullion Pass, *Hinsdale* (AS s; 2007-46; 7-0). The Committee sought an expert opinion of the sonogram from Dr. Craig Benkman of the University of Wyoming, the world's premier authority on Red Crossbill types. Dr. Benkman's response was that the evidence was good for establishing that the bird was of Type 3.

RECORDS NOT ACCEPTED

The Committee recognizes that its decisions may upset some observers. We heartily acknowledge that those who make 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 which does not mention certain requisite field marks or which indicates that the conditions of the observation did not permit the proper study of all necessary traits. All non-accepted records are archived at the Denver Museum of Nature & Science and may be reconsidered by the Committee if new information is provided (e.g., photos, documentation from other observers). We summarize below why the following reports were not accepted.

Brant – *Branta bernicla*. The description of an adult individual at Boulder Res., *Boulder*, on 14 Nov 2007 was most likely that of a Brant

but unfortunately the information provided was ultimately too sketchy to truly establish the identity of the bird (2007-96; 4-3, 2-5). The bird was described as being an all-black goose with a "white band around the neck," white undertail coverts, and a small bill, seen at a distance of roughly 0.4 miles. Some Committee members were confused by the characterization of the white band around the neck. That could suggest Canada (*Branta canadensis*) or Cackling Goose (*B. richardsoni*), both of which are species that truly can have a white band completely encircling the neck, whereas the white patches along the sides of the neck in Brants can meet on the anterior portion of the neck, but never the posterior. The observer specifically noted that the undertail coverts were white, a trait common to all goose species in Colorado, yet did not mention whether the bird had white flank patches, a trait more indicative of Brant. No discussion of the breast/belly coloration was provided.

Eurasian Wigeon – *Anas penelope*. Photographs, coupled with a very brief narrative discussing observed field traits, were submitted to the Committee of a female-plumaged wigeon seen on 14 Nov 2007 at Pueblo Res. (2007-96; 5-2, 1-6). Separation of female Eurasian and American Wigeons (*A. americana*) is extremely difficult. Female Eurasian Wigeons are quite variable, but generally have a more rufous head and neck (usually gray in American) and show less contrast between the head, neck, and upperparts. The proximal underwing median coverts on Eurasian Wigeon are grayish,

rather than white. Also, the lesser and median coverts have less white, and the chin and throat have little or no spotting compared to American. Submitted photographs did show a somewhat rufous-colored head and neck with little contrast. However, some American Wigeons can show that characteristic. The observer noted that the underwings appeared grayish, a good indicator for Eurasian. However, there is another field mark that is pretty consistent between the two species. On American Wigeon, there is a noticeable black edge to the gape of the bill that is usually absent from Eurasian. Although the observer did not note that trait, the photographs clearly show a definite black gape, which would be indicative of an American Wigeon. Hybridization between the two species is well-documented and perhaps the mixing of interspecific traits present on the bird was the result of a mixed pairing.

Glossy Ibis – *Plegadis falcinellus*. Documentation of one bird in a flock of 40 White-faced Ibis at Pastorius Res. on 12 Apr 2005 suggested Glossy Ibis (2005-18; 1-6); however, most members commented that hybridization was not addressed and the length of time between observation and submittal (seven months, with a report written from memory) provided reason to be conservative in their vote not to accept. The bird's features were described as "very similar to the accompanying" White-faced Ibis. Specific characteristics described included "grayish-blue facial skin edged faintly with light gray or off-white above and below, but not extending

to or behind the eye"; "fairly dark" legs that "did not show any distinctive coloration"; and a bill similar to that of White-faced, but "slightly tanner or buffier." This description suggests that the ibis was not in fully-developed alternate plumage, further complicating its identification.

Harris's Hawk – *Parabuteo unicinctus*. An interesting report of a hawk seen near Aguilar, *Las Animas*, on 15 Oct 2007 that had "rufous shoulders and rufous underwing coverts, as well as a distinct white band on the base of the tail" did not include enough information to confirm the bird as a Harris's Hawk (2007-119; 0-7). The bird may have been a Harris's, but with no description of the remaining tail pattern, all CBRC members felt that Ferruginous Hawk (*Buteo regalis*) and Northern Harrier (*Circus cyaneus*) were not ruled out.

Laughing Gull – *Leucophaeus atricilla*. Scant details of a possible second-cycle Laughing Gull seen at Jumbo Res., *Logan*, on 15 Aug 2007 were submitted to the Committee (2007-49; 4-3, 2-5). The majority of Committee members maintained that the description lacked comparison with Franklin's Gull (*Leucophaeus pipixcan*), that it did not describe the length of the bill, and that the noted "white eye crescents" are also a Franklin's Gull trait.

Black Swift – *Cypseloides niger*. A very intriguing report of three swifts associating with White-throated Swifts (*Aeronautes saxatalis*) near Coaldale, *Fremont*, on the unprecedented early date of 15 Apr 2008 was not accepted (2008-29; 4-3, 3-4) mainly because

of the brevity of the report, which only noted that the birds were large all-dark swifts, larger than the nearby White-throats. The observer presented no indication of why the birds in question were even members of the family Apodidae. No information on flight style, shape, or width of wing was given, and judging size of swifts at a distance is difficult due to the erratic and fast movements of the group.

Eastern Wood-Pewee – *Contopus virens*. A wood-pewee near Crook, Logan, on 11 Jun 2005 may have been this species but received only a single vote of support (2005-66; 1-6). Most committee members in dissent commented that the observer's limited observation (consisting of a single call and very brief visual sighting) and consequently short documentary evidence were not enough to support the acceptance of this individual among the state's confirmed bird records. The bird's song, heard once and described as "pee-a-wee," is suggestive of Eastern Wood-Pewee, but there was no plumage description, and the length of time between observation and documentation submittal (over eight months, with a report written from memory) provided few reasons for committee members to support the documentation.

Gray-cheeked Thrush – *Catharus minimus*. The reports of one at CBR,

Pueblo, on 15 May 2006 (2006-61, 5-2, 3-4), one at Soapstone Ranch, Larimer, on 16 May 2006 (2006-67; 4-3, 2-5), and another at the same location on 17 May 2006 (2006-69; 4-3, 3-4) met with mixed Committee support. Although descriptions of each were suggestive of Gray-cheeked Thrush (including discussions of mandible color, overall grayness of the head and body, and thin eye-ring), most voters maintained that the descriptions were simply too vague, and that there was not enough information provided as to why the birds were even *Catharus* thrushes, as the observers did not discuss size and structure. As such, the CBRC could not accept descriptions of the three birds.

Hepatic Tanager – *Piranga flava*. The full description of an adult female at Chico Basin Ranch, El Paso, on 11 May 2005 as "a solid orange-brown *Piranga* tanager [with] dark gray bill and dark auricular patch" was considered insufficient for acceptance by the majority of committee members despite their belief that the experienced observer saw a Hepatic Tanager (2005-43; 2-5). The current Committee is conservative and consistent in its decisions not to accept minimally described birds, even those described by experienced observers familiar to the Committee, into the state's rare bird archives.

REPORTERS AND CITED OBSERVERS

The CBRC graciously thanks the following individuals for submitting records of or discovering rare species in Colorado that prompted this circulation: SA: Susan Allerton; JBn: Jason Beason; JBy: Jim Beatty; RC: Rick Clawges; DF: Doug Faulkner; BG: Brian Gibbons; Susan Gifford; GG: Gregg Goodrich; LJ: Lacreia Johnson; BK: Bill Kaempfer; JK: Joey Kellner; NK: Nick Komar; SL: Steve Larson; TL: Tony Leukering; TLI: Thomas Litteral; Karl Lukens; BM: Bill Maynard; NM: Nancy Merrill; RM: Rich Miller;

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THE HUNGRY BIRDER

Alamosa "Thyme"

John J. Rawinski

There is nothing like rolling in from a rigorous outing of birding only to face the pleasant task of deciding where you might catch a bite. In Alamosa, despite its relatively small size, you will have some fine choices.

When you visit Alamosa, you might expect there to be a wide variety of Mexican restaurants, and you will not be disappointed. There are about a half dozen from which to choose. My family's favorites include **Calvillo's Mexican Restaurant** at 400 Main Street and **Nino's** at 617 6th Street. Both of these places offer a wide variety of Mexican specialties, and the portions are very adequate. The Calvillo's buffet is extraordinary. Nino's hot green chile will make most eyes water, so keep a cold beverage handy when you sample your dinner. Some other good Mexican places include **El Charro Cafe** at 421 6th Street and **Oscar's Restaurant** at 520 Main.



Hunan's Chinese Restaurant. Photos by Anna Montoya



Calvillo's Mexican Restaurant

Believe it or not, there are other dining choices as well in Alamosa. For a good steak, salad, and baked potato, we have always enjoyed **True Grits Steakhouse** at 100 Santa Fe Avenue. Here you can dine in a John Wayne motif, enjoying your dinner in a cozy atmosphere.

If a burger and fries are your choice, then a visit to **Wise Apples**, 506 State Street, is a must. For a modest price, you will get a heaping plate of burger and fries. The last time I ate there, most of our group carried away doggie bags, there was so much food. The **San Luis Valley Brewing Company** at 631 Main also has good burgers and a variety of beers and ales.

Both **Hunan's** and **May-Wa Chinese** restaurants can be good.

I especially enjoy the noon buffet at Hunan's, where you can get ample portions of Chinese cuisine at a reasonable price. And the ice-cream dessert that comes with the meal can cool off the taste buds after the spices of Szechuan selections.

A local favorite for lunch sandwiches is a place called the **Back in Thyme Eatery**, at 420 Main. It has a wide variety of sandwiches from which to choose.

Coffee shops are about as important to me as sunshine, and my day

can hardly start without a great cup of joe to go. However, at birder's hours, you will be hard-pressed to find anything open for a decent cup of coffee. As such, I usually take my chances at the local quick-stops or brew my own and take a thermos. But as shops open in the morning, you can find flavorful coffee. If you like Starbucks, head to the **East-West Grill** at 408 4th Street or the **Safeway** supermarket on US Highway 160 west of town. **Milagro's Coffeehouse** is also excellent for stout coffee and a delectable sweet roll.

As far as breakfast is concerned, I am writing about this last because I am not sure what places might be open at birder's hours. But if you have some time, the **Campus Cafe** at 435 Poncha is supposed to be very good. **Milagro's** will also have breakfast foods. You may want to grab some muffins or sweet rolls ahead of time at the local **Safeway** or **City Market** store (west of Alamosa on Highway 160).

In any event, eat well, stay healthy, enjoy your visit to Alamosa (especially during the 2009 CFO Convention), and come back and visit again.

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NEWS FROM THE FIELD

Fall 2008 (August-November)

Andrew Spencer

Fall in Colorado ranks right up there with spring as the most exciting season in the state. Migration pretty much always produces something exciting, and even discounting rarities, getting to witness the mass movement of shorebirds, ducks, and passerines makes for an interesting couple of months. And the tail end of the breeding season and the beginning of the wintering one add some spice as well.

The fall of 2008 was a mixed bag when it came to birds. Almost across the board, migration was lackluster; warbler flocks and fallouts were few and far between, the shorebirding was poor at best, and even the normally spectacular duck migration in the mountains was slower than normal.

A few high points accentuated the season, though. First and foremost surely must be Colorado's first Sooty Tern, an unexpected gift

from Hurricane Gustav. And while the ducks in South Park weren't up to snuff, the other goodies appearing there more than made up for it, including two Yellow-billed Loons, a Glaucous-winged Gull, and a pair of cooperative Snow Buntings. Finally, gulls, normally more of a spring phenomenon in Colorado, showed reasonably well.

Climatically, the fall of 2008 was varied and difficult to decipher (WRCC 2009). The first three months of the season were below average in temperature in both Boulder and Lamar, but above average in Grand Junction. November temperatures, however, were far above average at all three locations. Precipitation was below average almost across the board, though August in Boulder was a bit above average, as were September in Lamar and October in Grand Junction. According to the US Drought Monitor (Lawrimore & Love-Brotak 2009), most of eastern Colorado was abnormally dry, with small sections in a moderate drought and the far southeast in a severe drought. The western part of the state fared better, with only the northwest corner abnormally dry.

As always, I would like to thank the many observers who submitted reports this season. This News From the Field would not be possible without all your effort. I would like to encourage anyone who finds something noteworthy to submit a report to the regional compilers at field_news@cfo-link.org, especially if you don't also report to COBirds or WSBN. Many reports never make it into this article simply because we never hear about them.

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. You should now submit your sightings through the CFO website at <http://www.cfo-link.org/CBRC/login.php5>. This is the preferred method of submitting records. However, if you need a form, use the one on the inside of this journal's mailer. Documentation should be sent to the chairperson, Larry Semo (address on form).

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*; doc: documentation submitted to the CBRC; no doc: no documentation submitted to the CBRC; m.ob.: multiple observers; NG: National Grassland; Res.: Reservoir.

Greater White-fronted Goose: Four at Lake Holbrook, *Otero*, on

13 Oct (SO) were the first fall arrivals; the high count was of a measly twelve on 15 Oct in Cañon City, *Fremont* (SeM, RM).

Trumpeter Swan: Four reports is a bit fewer than expected for this increasing species. Two were at Jumbo Res., *Logan/Sedgwick*, on 1 Nov (BK, TD); an adult was in Carbondale, *Garfield*, on 7 Nov (DFi), though there has been some question about the origin of this bird; two were found just north of Fort Collins, *Larimer*, also on 7 Nov (JBg); and finally two adults and an immature were found at Lake Maria, *Huerfano*, on 26 Nov (AS, CW, m.ob.).

Tundra Swan: The fall of 2008 was one of the best seasons for this uncommon species in Colorado in many years, both in terms of reports and numbers. The total of 20 reports representing 105 birds was remarkable. An adult found near Craig, *Moffat*, on 22 Oct (FL, m.ob.) was the first of the season; the high count of 28 came from Browns Park NWR, *Moffat*, on 8 Nov (FL).

Eurasian Wigeon: Ranking among the most unexpected finds of the season (in terms of location) was a molting male of this species found on the tiny Offield Res. in far northwest *Moffat* on 25 Oct (AS, GW, m.ob., doc.).

Greater Scaup: The total of four reports received by this author was unbelievably low, though how many went unreported is unknown. The season's first came on 7 Nov from both Whitewater, *Mesa* (LA, AR) and from Stagecoach Res., *Routt* (CD, VZ).

Surf Scoter: Thirteen reports of 22 individuals was well below normal; the high count was of five at Spinney Mountain Res., *Park*, on 31 Oct (AS, CW, m.ob.).

White-winged Scoter: The five reports of six individuals made this the poorest-performing scoter, at a mere third of its ten-year average. The high count was of two at Antero Res., *Park*, on 28 Oct (AS, CW, m.ob.).

Black Scoter: Eight reports of fifteen individuals was above average; the high count was of six female/immature birds at Eleven Mile Res., *Park*, on 2 Nov (JK, m.ob.).

Barrow's Goldeneye: Twenty-two reports totaling 150 birds was a decent number for the fall season. A female found on the very early date of 30 September in Glenwood Canyon, *Garfield* (TM), was the first of the season, and the high count was of 52 birds in the Grand Lake area, *Grand*, on 23 Nov (TJ).

Red-breasted Merganser: One at Standley Lake, *Jefferson*, on 19 Oct (LS) was the fall's first.

Ruffed Grouse: Colorado's rarest resident performed well for the covey of listers who chased it on 25 Oct when a single bird was found, seen well, and photographed on Hoy Mountain, *Moffat* (AS, m.ob., no doc.).

Red-throated Loon: Six reports for the fall totaled slightly above average. An immature was at North Delaney Lake, *Jackson*, on 24 Oct (AS, m.ob., no doc.); an adult was at Sweitzer Res., *Delta*, from 26 Oct to 7 Nov (JBn, m.ob., no doc.); an

immature was at Spinney Mountain Res., *Park*, on 30 Oct (GW, LK, m.ob., no doc.); another immature was seen at Pueblo Res., *Pueblo*, from 8-15 Nov (AVAS field trip, m.ob., no doc.); one was at Ridgway State Park, *Ouray*, from 24-26 Nov (CD, m.ob., no doc.); and finally an immature was at Chatfield State Park, *Jefferson/Douglas*, from 27-28 Nov (TLe, GW, AS, m.ob., no doc.).

Pacific Loon: Though usually far less common than Common Loon, this species had an especially grim fall in Colorado; this author received only twelve reports, and only two of those were of multiple birds. The first of the season was found at Cheney Res., *Mesa*, on 22 Oct (AR, m.ob.), while the high count was of four at Marston Res., *Denver*, on 15 Nov (DCa).

Yellow-billed Loon: If you wanted to see a Yellow-billed Loon in Colorado during the fall of 2008, then you

had to make a visit to Antero Res., *Park*. Two juveniles were found there on 18 Oct (AS, CW, m.ob., doc.), and one of them remained through at least 15 Nov, when it was seen trapped in a very small patch of open water; it likely died within a few days. The second bird has not yet been documented.

Red-necked Grebe: The fall total of six reports was about normal; what was not normal was the multiple individuals in half of those reports. Up to three at Cherry Creek Res., *Arapahoe*, from 27 September to 30 Nov (TLe, GW, AS, m.ob.) provided the season's high.

Brown Pelican: There were three sightings of a juvenile bird this fall, but they most likely represent the same individual wandering around various Front Range and Eastern Plains lakes. First found on 11 Aug at Prewitt Res. (LG, doc.), it was then seen at and near Baseline Res., *Boulder*, from 5 Sep to 4 Oct (ABr, m.ob., doc.), and finally at Fossil Creek Res., *Larimer*, on 29 Oct (AS, no doc.).

American Bittern: Reports of this species in Colorado after the beginning of October are few and far between; in 2008 one was at Bonny Res., *Yuma*, on 20 Oct (AS, NK, MP) and one was at Sweitzer Lake on 27 Oct (LSt).



Yellow-billed Loon, Antero Reservoir, Park County, 1 Nov 2008. Photo by Bill Maynard

Little Blue Heron: The four reports for the fall were perhaps just above average for this scarce species. An adult was at McLellan Res., *Douglas/Arapahoe*, on 8 Aug (SSt, m.ob.); an immature was reported from Cherry Creek Res. on 14 Sep (KH); an adult was near Avondale, *Pueblo*, on 18 Sep (SO); and finally a juvenile was reported from Union Res., *Weld*, on 24 Sep (JTa, no doc.).

Tricolored Heron: The fall of 2008 shall hereafter be known as the fall of the Tricolored Heron. Combined with the report from the summer season, the two fall sightings made for the best year ever for this rare heron in the state. One was at Bonny Res. on 5 Aug (IS, no doc.) and **two** juveniles were seen at Jumbo Res. on 8 Aug (BSc, JSc, m.ob., doc.).

Cattle Egret: Continuing a trend of decreasing numbers in the state, there were only five sightings of this species this past fall. The last came on 22 Nov from Nucla, *Montrose* (CD, BW), a new late date for the West Slope.

Green Heron: The four reports received by this author seemed a bit fewer than normal; sightings came from *Boulder*, *El Paso*, *Mesa*, and *Otero* counties.

Glossy × White-faced Ibis: With the incursion of Glossy Ibis into the range of White-faced Ibis over the past decade or two, this hybrid combination has been reported with increasing frequency. One was seen on



Tricolored Herons, Jumbo Reservoir, Logan County, 8 Aug 2008. Photo by Bill Schmoker

2 Aug at Jumbo Res. (TLe, LS, TS, no doc.).

Mississippi Kite: One at CBR, *Pueblo*, on 13 Sep (BG) represented a second ranch record.

Red-shouldered Hawk: As it is among the rarest raptors on the Colorado state list, there hasn't been a chaseable Red-shouldered Hawk in Colorado in many years. The one report from this fall wasn't an exception, as it was seen flying over Broomfield, *Broomfield*, on 9 Oct (TS, doc.).

Broad-winged Hawk: The four reports this past fall were about average; this species is far rarer during the fall than during the spring. The only West Slope sighting was of one at Lake Catamount, *Routt*, on 23 Sep (LW). For some reason the vast majority of West Slope sightings of



Mew Gull, Cherry Creek SP, Arapahoe County, 29 Nov 2008. Photo by Andrew Spencer

this species have come from that county.

Rough-legged Hawk: The first report of the season came on the near-average arrival date of 24 Oct, from CVCG (DL).

Merlin: One of unreported race at an unreported location on 30 Aug (TD) was exceptionally early.

Gyr Falcon: An adult gray-morph bird was reported at Antero Res. on 10 Nov (NK, AS, SSH, doc.); this is by far the rarest species of falcon for Colorado.

Black-bellied Plover: Timnath Res. pulled in the last sighting of the fall on 19 Oct, when two were seen (AS).

American Golden-Plover: The fall of 2008 was perhaps the best fall for this scarce species in the state during

the past decade. Eleven reports totaling 38 birds were received; the high count was of nine near Akron, *Washington*, on 3 Oct (AS, CW), and the last of the season came from Timnath Res. on 21 Oct (NK, AS).

Snowy Plover: Three at Jumbo Res. on 5 Sep (JK, m.ob.) were farther north than normal.

Upland Sandpiper: This species is normally a bird you see one or two of in far north-eastern Colorado. On a good day, you might be able to pull in double digits. When the daily total enters triple digit territory you might begin to wonder if you are really still in Colorado, but that's just what happened on 2 Aug, when up

to 113 were reported in *Yuma* (TLe, LS, TS). On the same day, nine were seen at Prewitt Res.. While still representing a very high count, the 23 that showed themselves on 8 Aug at and near Prewitt Res. (JK, m.ob.) did not match the previous week's plethora.

Long-billed Curlew: One was reported from Cheney Res. from 4-7 Sep (LA, m.ob.); this species is considered casual in western Colorado during the fall.

Ruddy Turnstone: While this is normally one of the less common shorebirds in the state, the mere single report was fewer than normal. It was seen at Jumbo Res., *Logan*, on 1 Sep (CW, NK).

Pectoral Sandpiper: One at High-line Lake, *Mesa*, on 13 Nov (LA) was the last reported of the season, and

a record late date for western Colorado.

Dunlin: The fall total of four sightings was a bit lower than average; counties included *Boulder*, *Larimer*, and *Morgan*.

Buff-breasted Sandpiper: To most of us out there it seemed like a truly dismal fall for this species in Colorado. However, the three reports were about average. The first was found on 29 Aug on the Pawnee NG, *Weld* (JK, m.ob., no doc.); one was seen flying at Prewitt Res. on 1 Sep (NK, CW, no doc.); and one was seen near Akron on 3 Oct (AS, CW, no doc.).

Short-billed Dowitcher: In keeping with the fairly dismal shorebirding season, there were only seven sightings of the smaller-schnozzed dowitcher, representing a total of ten individuals. Counties with reports include *Bent*, *El Paso*, *Logan*, *Sedgwick*, *Washington*, *Weld*, and *Yuma*.

Red Phalarope: The rarest of Colorado's phalaropes has been reported with increasing regularity over the past decade, and the four reports from this past fall were about average. A molting bird of unreported age was found at DeWeese Res., *Custer*, on 22 Sep (RM, doc.); an adult was at Lake Holbrook, *Otero*, on 5 Oct (MP, BSt, no doc.); another adult was at Walden Ponds, *Boulder*, from 5-7 Oct (KW, m.ob., doc.);

and another adult was at Lagerman Res., *Boulder*, on 13 Oct (DW, m.ob., no doc.).

Laughing Gull: The three reports for the season were better than average: a first-cycle bird was at John Martin Res., *Bent*, on 14 Sep (BK, no doc.); another was just south of Ordway, *Crowley*, on 5 Oct (MP, BSt, no doc.); and an adult and juvenile were reported from Barr Lake on 18 Oct (AS, m.ob., doc.).

Mew Gull: Most birders in Colorado have been aware of a gradual increase in reports of this species over the past decade, but nonetheless a fall total of six reports is unprecedented. During the course of the season Cherry Creek Res. played host to an astounding **four** (GW, m.ob., doc.). Other reports include those of two adults at Timnath Res. from 19-22 Oct (AS, m.ob., no doc.), an adult at Baseline Res. on 14 Nov (TFI, no doc.), and an adult at McIntosh Res. on 30 Nov (TD, no doc.).



Red Phalarope, Lagerman Reservoir, Boulder County, 13 Oct 2008. Photo by David Waltman



Long-tailed Jaeger, Cherry Creek SP, Arapahoe County, 23 Sep 2008. Photo by Glenn Walbek

Thayer's Gull: A juvenile at Antero Res. on 28 Oct (AS, CW, m.ob.) was the first of the season, and a rare mountain parks record. Other counties with reports include *Arapahoe, Boulder, El Paso, Huerfano, Larimer, Logan, and Sedgwick.*

Lesser Black-backed Gull: A total of 16 reports representing 28 birds was received this fall, a bit more than average but in keeping with recent trends. The first of the fall came from the county landfill in *Weld* on 14 Sep (NK, AS). Seven at Windsor Res. on 4 Oct (NK) was the high count, and even for this increasing species a spectacular total.

Slaty-backed Gull: No other bird came close to creating as much controversy as did the first-cycle gull found at Sixmile Res., *Boulder*, on 27 Nov. First spotted by CN, it was initially identified as a Slaty-backed Gull, but that possibility was called into question by many who saw pho-

tos of the bird. The identification still hasn't been satisfactorily resolved, and may never be. It was seen at Sixmile and nearby at McIntosh Res. through the end of the season.

Glaucous-winged

Gull: Adding to the remarkable run of rarities at Antero Res. was a juvenile of this species first found on 30 Oct and seen through 15 Nov (GW, LK, m.ob., doc.). Ob-

servers felt that this bird showed no signs of hybridization, always a concern with this species.

Great Black-backed Gull: An adult was found at Pueblo Res. on 26 Oct and remained through the end of the season (TM, m.ob., no doc.); whether or not this was the long-returning "Murray," well-known to Colorado birders, is unknown.

Sabine's Gull: A rather measly total of eleven reports was received for the fall, representing 34 individuals. While the total was well below average, the high count of **thirteen** at Chatfield Res. on 13 Sep (JK) was remarkable, and likely represents a new state high count. The first report of the season came on 6 Sep at Big Johnson Res. (JM) and the last on 20 Oct at Jackson Res. (AS, NK).

Sooty Tern: Fall 2008's *pièce de résistance* was surely Colorado's second "hurricane bird," an adult Sooty Tern found on 12 Sep at Lake Holbrook,

Otero (MP, BKP, BSt, BriS, m.ob., doc.). It was observed there for a little over an hour before it flew toward the northwest. Luckily for a bevy of birders zooming down from the Front Range, it was refound on Lake Meredith, Crowley (SSt, m.ob., doc.), and also seen there by a lucky few the next morning. The CBRC has accepted this as the first occurrence of Sooty Tern in Colorado (see p. 128).

Least Tern: Two at Ish Res., Boulder, on 12 Aug (TFl) provided a rare northern Front Range record.

Caspian Tern: The total of four reports was a bit below average; in this author's mind, this species has become harder to find in the state in recent years. One was at Lake DeWeese on 5 Aug (DS, m.ob.); two were at Walden Ponds on 13 Sep (WS, m.ob.); three were found at nearby Sixmile Res. on the same day (DK); and two showed up on the late date of 12 Oct at Fruitgrowers Res. (AR, LSt).

Common Tern: Though the species is decidedly uncommon in Colorado, the fall total of five reports was still fewer than normal. One at Union Res. on 17 Aug (TFl) was both early and the first of the season, while one at Fruitgrowers Res. on 14 Oct (AR) was the last.

Pomarine Jaeger: Unexpectedly, this was only the second most common jaeger species in Colorado during the fall of 2008. A light-morph juvenile was found at Jackson Res. on 5 Oct (CN, BK, m.ob., doc.); a light-morph subadult briefly showed itself at the Big Sit at Chatfield Res. on 12 Oct (JK, no doc.); and another light-morph juvenile chased the gulls at

Barr Lake, Adams, during the RMBO Picnic on 18 Oct (JBn, m.ob., doc.).

Long-tailed Jaeger: In 2008 this species took two distinctions usually belonging to Pomarine: it was both the most common jaeger species in Colorado and the longest-staying. An intermediate juvenile appeared at McIntosh Res. on 7 Sep (SSv, m.ob., doc.) and showed itself at amazingly close distances to its adoring fans. Another intermediate juvenile was at Cherry Creek Res. 11-25 Sep (GW, m.ob., doc.); an adult flew by a lucky few observers at Jackson Res. on 5 Oct (CN, BK, TW, no doc.); and a dark-morph juvenile was found at Chatfield Res. on 11 Oct (AS, JK, doc.) but subsequently flew to the south.

Jaeger sp.: A dark-morph juvenile jaeger at Lake Holbrook on 11 Oct (RSe, no doc.) was thought to be possibly a Parasitic, while a jaeger at Boyd Lake, Larimer, on 11 Nov (WR, no doc.) was thought to be a Pomarine, which is most likely given the late date.

Ancient Murrelet: This species is a weird mix of unpredictable and predictable in Colorado: you can't predict when you'll see it, but you can predict that it will always show up during a certain time of year, it will always leave the same day it was found, and it will rarely be seen by very many birders. This year an Ancient Murrelet was at Pueblo Res. on 16 Nov (TI, RC, doc.).

Inca Dove: The only report this fall came from Lamar, Prowers, on 7 Nov (DL), one of the two regular locations for this species in the state.

There were no reports received from Rocky Ford, Otero.

Yellow-billed Cuckoo: This species is a rare (or at least rarely observed) fall migrant. One was at Rocky Ford SWA, Otero, on 12 Sep (MP, BSt, BriS); another was at Cherry Creek Res. on 17 Sep (*fide* GW); and one was at Rocky Ford SWA on 29 Sep (SO).

Whip-poor-will: CBR got its second record of Colorado's rarest nightjar, and *Pueblo* its first, when BG found one of the eastern race on 5 Sep (m.ob., doc.). For those lucky enough to make it there before sunset, the bird performed beautifully. For those who tried but didn't make it there until dark, the bird was a heartbreaker.

Black Swift: A single bird over Union Res. on 17 Aug (TFL) was a very rare *Weld* sighting. As usual when Black Swifts appear outside the mountains, it was "very stormy" out.

Ruby-throated Hummingbird: The fall total of three reports was a bit above average, though this species is being detected with increasing frequency as more people check feeders on the Eastern Plains. An adult male was in Loveland, *Larimer*, on 19 Aug (CW, no doc.); another was in Lamar on the same date (JT, no doc.); the last was in Bow Mar, *Jefferson*, from 26 Sep to 4 Oct (TJ, doc.).

Anna's Hummingbird: Very few are the people who could boast an Anna's Hummingbird at their feeder in Colorado. Those who can boast two are few indeed. But surely no other than David Steingraeber has

had three over the years. This fall he found an immature male on 5 Nov, and it remained for a few days to be ogled by its many admirers (m.ob, doc.). The date of the last sighting was not reported to this author.

Broad-tailed Hummingbird: Late indeed was an adult male that remained in Estes Park, *Larimer*, through 1 Nov (SW).

Rufous Hummingbird: An immature near Boulder, *Boulder*, remained through 10 Oct (DWa) and was the last of the season.

Yellow-bellied Sapsucker: Six reports were received this fall, an above-average total. Counties include *El Paso*, *Fremont*, *Jefferson*, *Prowers*, and *Pueblo*.

Eastern Wood-Pewee: This species is detected far less during the fall than the spring, mostly due to the difficulty of identifying non-vocalizing birds. There were two reports this fall, possibly of the same bird—it was first found on 8 Aug at Prewitt Res. (JK, m.ob., no doc.) and was heard singing. It or another was seen there on 1 Sep (NK, CW, no doc.).

Alder Flycatcher: This species is also usually reported less during the fall than the spring, again probably due to the difficulty of identifying silent birds. There were two reports this past fall: one banded at CBR, *El Paso*, on 3 Sep (BG, doc.), and one from Valco Ponds on 6 Sep (BM, no doc.).

Gray Flycatcher: As per usual, a small number of reports of this typically western empid came from the Eastern Plains this fall, from *Boulder*, *Jefferson*, *Kit Carson*, and *Pueblo*.

Pacific-slope Flycatcher: A bird

banded at Barr Lake on 1 Sep (SN, doc.) was identified to this species by measurements, but recently some questions have been raised about the validity of the current measuring system in separating Pacific-slope from Cordilleran Flycatchers. Pacific-Slope is still not on the Colorado state list.

Great Crested Flycatcher: This uncommon migrant was reported five times, from *Baca*, *Bent*, *El Paso*, *Prowers*, and *Pueblo*.

Scissor-tailed Flycatcher: While this is normally a rather rare species in the fall, the single report was still fewer than average. It came from near Rocky Ford on 28 Sep (DN, no doc.).

Northern Shrike: A bird at Bonny Res. on 21 Oct (DL) was right on schedule as the first fall arrival.

White-eyed Vireo: There were two sightings of this species this fall; the first was of a juvenile at Prewitt Res. on the fairly expected date of 23 Aug (CN, BK); the other was found on the much less likely date of 16 Nov in Holyoke, *Phillips* (AS, NK).

Bell's Vireo: On the list of places one would expect to see a Bell's Vireo in Colorado, Lake DeWeese in *Custer* is nowhere near the top. Yet that's where one was found on 28 Sep (MP), much to the surprise of just about everyone. One south of Lamar, *Prowers*, on 4 Sep (JSt) was also out of range, albeit in a more expected locale.

Blue-headed Vireo: Even though this is the rarest species of vireo in the state, a mere single report was unusually few for the season. It was at Cherry Creek Res. on 4 Sep (GW, doc.).

Philadelphia Vireo: The vireo of

brotherly love showed itself twice during the fall—the first was in Westminster, *Jefferson*, on 14 Sep (LS, doc.) and the second was at “Norma's Grove” from 19-21 Sep (JK, m.ob., doc.).

Pygmy Nuthatch: Quite a ways from the nearest ponderosa forest were three or four at CVCG on 16 Aug (BK, GM, TW).

Carolina Wren: Four reports were received this fall: one was at the Cañon City Riverwalk, *Fremont*, from 4 Aug through 7 Sep (RM); another was at the Clear Springs Ranch SWA, *El Paso*, from 31 Aug to 3 Sep (DE, SC, m.ob.); Prewitt Res. played host to one on 1 Sep (NK, CW); and a singing bird was at Rock Canyon, *Pueblo*, on 7 Sep (LL).

Winter Wren: The fall's total of seven reports was excellent. Unfortunately, very few were identified to subspecies. As this species has two distinctive forms that may well be split into full species someday, I urge birders to try to sort them out. The first report of the season came on the very early date of 22 Aug from near Lamar (LP). Other counties with sightings were *Boulder*, *Huerfano*, and *Pueblo*.

Sedge Wren: Though this is easily the rarest wren to grace Colorado, the three reports this season made for one of its best showings in recent history. One was at Fox Ranch, *Yuma*, on 4 Oct (TFL, m.ob., no doc.); CBR got its first record when one appeared on the *El Paso* side on 21 Oct (BM, doc.); and the final report came from Bent's Old Fort, *Bent*, on 2 Nov (JD, doc.).

Blue-gray Gnatcatcher: One at Chatfield Res. on 9 Nov (JK, GW) was exceptionally late for the Front Range.

Veery: CBR pulled in the only two reports of this uncommon thrush this season; one was there on 2 Sep and the other on 12 Sep (BG), both in *El Paso*.

Varied Thrush: The sole sighting of the season was from CVCG, where a young male was seen from 1-4 Oct (MFb, m.ob., doc.).

Sprague's Pipit: Fox Ranch yet again proved that it is the premier spot for this species in Colorado; on the annual trip to that location on 4 Oct, five birds were found (TFL, m.ob., doc.).

Blue-winged Warbler: Even though it is rarer in Colorado during the fall than the spring, the one report of this species was still fewer than average. It was at Valco Ponds, *Pueblo*, on 8 Sep (MY).

Golden-winged Warbler: Ranking among the most bizarre sightings of the season was the report of the male of this species found at Crystal Lakes, *Lake*, on 1 Sep (TK).

Tennessee Warbler: In keeping with the theme of a poor warbler fall, there were only three of this species seen, in *Jefferson*, *Pueblo*, and *Washington*.

Nashville Warbler: Twelve sightings were reported this season; most remarkable were the **six** at Loudy-Simpson Park, *Moffat*, on 29 Aug (FL). If not

an all-time Colorado high count, it certainly must be a western Colorado high count. Other counties with sightings include *Arapahoe*, *Boulder*, *Delta*, *El Paso*, *Fremont*, *Logan*, *Mesa*, *Morgan*, *Pueblo*, and *Washington*.

Northern Parula: The most significant of the fall's three reports surely must be the bird that attempted to winter in Carbondale, *Garfield*, from 30 Nov to 13 December (DC, m.ob.).

Chestnut-sided Warbler: There were seven sightings of this species, which is typically one of the more "common" eastern warblers in Colorado. Counties include *Arapahoe*, *El Paso*, *Pueblo*, *Weld*, and *Washington*.

Magnolia Warbler: The total of four reports was about average; one



Chestnut-sided Warbler, Crow Valley Campground, *Weld* County, 4 Oct 2008. Photo by Loch Kilpatrick

was at Cherry Creek on 7 Sep (LK, GW); one was at CBR, *El Paso*, on 15 Sep (BG); another was at Cherry Creek on 18 Sep (GW); and one was near Akron on 19 Sep (AH, m.ob.).

Black-throated Blue Warbler: To drive home what must have been the worst year in a long time for this bird in the state, there were a mere two sightings this fall. A female was at Lathrop State Park, *Huerfano*, on 29 Sep (RM) and a male was in Longmont, *Boulder*, from 18-20 Oct (BSc).

Black-throated Green Warbler: A pathetic two reports came in this fall—one was found at “Norma’s Grove” on 14 Sep (AS, m.ob.), and the other at the much less expected location of Silt, *Garfield*, on 26 Sep (CD, BW).

Blackburnian Warbler: In contrast to two years ago, 2008 was among the worst years ever for this species in Colorado. A single report was received for the fall, of an immature female on 6 Sep at CBR, *Pueblo* (BG, doc.).

Pine Warbler: Belmar Park, *Jefferson*, produced the only fall sighting, on 11 Sep (IS, no doc.).

Prairie Warbler: Continuing to pull in the P warblers, Belmar Park played host to a female Prairie Warbler on 9 Sep (KS, m.ob., no doc.).

Bay-breasted Warbler: In the 1970s this species was among the more regular of the rare eastern warblers, but in recent years it has become a true “stop-press” bird. This fall the only sighting was of an adult male at CVCG on 1 Oct (AS, doc.).

Blackpoll Warbler: Three reports

comprised a rather dismal seasonal haul; counties were *Arapahoe*, *Pueblo*, and *Washington*.

Black-and-white Warbler: Slightly less dismal were the eight reports of this species, but that still represents a below-average total. Counties include *Douglas*, *El Paso*, *Larimer*, *Pueblo*, and *Washington*.

Prothonotary Warbler: The sole fall report came from Lake Cheraw on 12 Sep (BSt, BriS, MP).

Mourning Warbler: Three reports represent a good fall. An immature female was at Cherry Creek on 5 Sep (SSt, doc.); an adult male was at Valco Ponds, *Pueblo*, from 5-7 Sep (DC, m.ob., no doc.); and a first-fall bird was along Boulder Creek, *Boulder*, on 11 Sep (WS, doc.).

Western Tanager: A male at the Roaring Fork Ranch, *Garfield*, on 16 Nov (TM) and a female in Ft. Collins, *Larimer*, on 30 Nov (JBi) were both exceptionally late.

Cassin’s Sparrow: One at Franktown, *Douglas*, on 4 Sep (HK) was both temporally and geographically unusual.

Henslow’s Sparrow: The sparrow sighting of the season came in the form of a typically shy individual of this species found at Hopper Ponds, *Yuma*, on 3 Oct and refound the following day (AS, CW, m.ob., doc.). Pending acceptance, this would be the first record for Colorado since 1985, and only the third ever.

Le Conte’s Sparrow: Continuing the *Ammodramus bonanza* in *Yuma* this fall were two sightings of this species: at least two and probably more at Hopper Ponds from 3-4 Oct (AS,

CW, m.ob., doc.), and a singleton at Fox Ranch on 4 Oct (TFL, m.ob., no doc.).

Nelson's Sharp-tailed Sparrow:



Red Fox Sparrow, Colorado Sprngs, El Paso County, 3 Nov 2008. Photo by Bill Maynard



Snow Bunting, Antero Reservoir, Park County, 31 Oct 2009. Photo by Andrew Spencer

Rounding out the aforementioned *Ammodramus* fun in Yuma, a single individual was seen at Hopper Ponds on 4 Oct (CW, doc.).

"Red" Fox Spar-

row: The rarer (and redder) Fox Sparrow subspecies was reported twice this past fall, from near Castle Rock, Douglas, on 22 Oct (RO, doc.) and from Colorado Springs, El Paso, from 29 Oct to 3 Nov (TB, m.ob., doc.).

Swamp Sparrow:

Ten sightings came in for the fall, a few more than average. Counties include Boulder, El Paso, Huerfano, Pueblo, and Yuma.

White-throated Sparrow: The fall's take of 22 reports was nothing short of remarkable, representing one of the best seasons for this uncommon species in this author's memory.

Harris's Sparrow: Deciding not to cave to *Zonotrichia* peer pressure, this species showed

up in below-normal numbers for the fall, with five reports total from *Boulder*, *Logan*, *Otero*, *Prowers*, and *Pueblo*.

Golden-crowned Sparrow:

Gracing *Jefferson* with its golden presence was a young bird of this species, seen from 11-13 Oct (NL, doc.).

Snow Bunting: Brightening (or at least whitening) Antero Res. this fall was a long-staying and atypically chaseable Snow Bunting. First found on 24 Oct (LK, m.ob.), it remained through mid-November and was seen by many. By 9 Nov, it had acquired a conspecific pal at the same location (BSc). Two other reports came in, one at *Walden Res.*, *Jackson*, on 26 Oct (AS, TD) and another at *Jumbo Res.*, *Sedgwick*, on 16 Nov (AS, NK).

Indigo Bunting: Remarkably late was a female near *Colorado City*, *Pueblo*, on 18 Nov (DS).

Painted Bunting: *Pueblo* pulled in both of the Painted Bunting sightings this fall, with a female on 20 Aug at *Rye Mountain Park* (DS, doc.) and another female at *Valco Ponds* on 7 Sep (LBr, no doc.).

Rusty Blackbird: The ever-declining Rusty Blackbird was reported twice this fall: three birds in western *Morgan* on 26 Oct (JK, CW) and a singleton on 11 Nov at *Riverbend Ponds*, *Larimer* (NK).



Pine Grosbeak, *Lamar*, *Prowers County*, 11 Nov 2008. Photo by Dave Leatherman

Pine Grosbeak: Far away from its normal range in Colorado was a female in *Lamar* on 8 Oct (DL).

White-winged Crossbill: Normally this species is among Colorado's most difficult breeding species to find, but the fall of 2008 was nothing short of excellent for it. Seven reports, including three of family groups, were received from *Clear Creek*, *Delta*, *Eagle*, *Gunnison*, *Routt*, and *Summit*.

Common Redpoll: Three were found at *Jumbo Res.*, *Sedgwick*, on 26 Oct (JK, CW), and one visited a feeder in *Leadville*, *Lake*, on 16 Nov (TK).

REGIONAL COMPILERS

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IN THE SCOPE

Juvenile Horned Lark

Tony Leukering

Birders visiting the Colorado plains in June and July are rarely confused by juvenal-plumaged Horned Larks, as the species is abundant there and juveniles are to be expected in summer. But a surpris-

ing number of birders are taken aback by the same plumage in April—and the confusion can (and does) lead to misidentifications. Sprague's Pipit is the chief species for which these juvenile larks are mistaken, but it is not the only species.

Horned Lark breeding season

In Colorado's lowlands, Horned Lark is the first passerine species to initiate breeding in the year, lagging behind only Rock Pigeon, Eurasian Collared-Dove, Great Horned Owl, Bald Eagle, and sometimes Red-tailed Hawk for overall first-breeder honors.

In early, warm springs, the species initiates courtship and pairing as early as February, a time at which Colorado still hosts untold thousands of wintering Horned Larks originating from farther north. Because of the species' very abundance, most observers pay scant attention to Horned Larks where they are so common, so they may not notice this change in behavior when the calendar says that it is still winter. Though Bailey and Niedrach (1965) state that the species nests "upon the prairies from mid-April into early July" and the first Colorado Breeding Bird Atlas (Kingery 1998) lists nest-building dates of 21 April to 12 June, that same Atlas also lists the span of dates for fledged young as 7 April to 22 August. This discrepancy in Atlas data is due to a methodological error for recording dates for breeding behaviors in that project.¹

While the Atlas fledged-young date span is probably close to accurate, I would guess that at low elevations, the earliest nests just might produce fledglings before April, though the absolute number of such nests is probably extremely low. Thus one could run across juvenal-plumaged Horned Larks in Colorado at any time from late March into September, with the earliest birds being found at low elevations and, probably, the latest ones at high elevations.

Spring and summer Sprague's Pipit reports from Colorado

During my 13 years in Colorado, no fewer than five spring seasons saw reports of Sprague's Pipit from near the foothill edge in April or early May. At least two of those reports were shown to be referable to juvenile Horned Larks. In addition, the Colorado Bird Records Committee also reviewed at least one August report of Sprague's Pipit from the alpine zone (Leukering & Semo 2003), and that report, too, was probably referable to juvenile Horned Lark, as Sprague's Pipit is not a tundra breeder.

While Sprague's Pipit may, indeed, be a regular migrant through the Colorado

¹ Instead of retaining all information on date and behavior, the Atlas retained only the "highest" breeding code in any given block, along with the date that the indicated behavior was noted. Thus, if a Horned Lark (or other species) was found building a nest in late March and then fledged young were noted in early April in the same block, only the fledged young would have been entered in the Atlas database, because they represented a "higher" breeding code than nest-building. The current Colorado Breeding Bird Atlas will retain all data to avoid this type of error.

plains in spring (as it is in fall), I would suggest that it would be quite rare as far west as the Front Range counties—thus, while the species is of possible occurrence there, any report should be considered with caution.

Identification

On the back cover, the top two pictures are of juvenile Horned Larks, and the bottom picture is of a Sprague's Pipit. The lark in the left photo is slightly younger than the lark in the right photo, as the left bird apparently has not started its pre-formative molt, while the right one has already attained a strong suggestion of an adult's black malar mark. While the left one (from California) is of a subspecies that does not breed in Colorado, it still shows the scaly upperparts and plain face typical of juvenile Horned Larks, but also considered such important field characters in identifying Sprague's Pipit.

One of the best characters separating larks from all North American pipits is primary projection (pp, the distance that the longest primary projects beyond the tip of the longest tertial on the folded wing); note that all three back-cover pictures have this character highlighted. Larks, in general, and Horned Larks in particular, have a long primary projection. In Horned Lark, this distance is about equal to half the length of the longest tertial. Pipits have very short primary projections, and Sprague's Pipit's longest primary barely projects past the longest tertial, with the distance being less than even an eighth of the length of the longest tertial. In fact, at least some individuals show no projection at all.

Apart from their longer primary projection, juvenal-plumaged Horned Larks also sport obvious white spots on the scapular tips, thicker-based and darker bills than pipits, and generally darker legs (but these can also be pink). Sprague's Pipits have pink legs, paler and thinner bills, and blackish tertials.

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Colorado Birds

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Submissions of photos or graphics not accompanied by articles are welcomed. Send these to Glenn Walbek, gwalbek@comcast.net.



Juvenile Horned Lark, Sierra Valley, Plumas County, CA, 10 July 2005. *Photo by Martin Meyers*



Juvenile Horned Lark, Pawnee National Grassland, Weld County, CO, early July 2002. *Photo by Kevin Karlson*



Sprague's Pipit, near Salton Sea, Imperial County, CA, 17 January 2009. *Photo by Graham Etherington*

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