

Vol. 43 No. 4 October 2009

# Colorado Birds

The Colorado Field Ornithologists' Quarterly

*Upland Sandpiper Migration*  
*Ovenbirds in the Front Range*  
*Birding Hotspots of the San Luis Valley*



Colorado Field Ornithologists  
PO Box 643, Boulder, Colorado 80306  
[www.cfo-link.org](http://www.cfo-link.org)

*Colorado Birds* (USPS 0446-190) (ISSN 1094-0030) is published quarterly by the Colorado Field Ornithologists, P.O. Box 643, Boulder, CO 80306. Subscriptions are obtained through annual membership dues. Nonprofit postage paid at Louisville, CO. POSTMASTER: Send address changes to *Colorado Birds*, P.O. Box 643, Boulder, CO 80306.

**Officers and Directors of Colorado Field Ornithologists:** Dates indicate end of current term. An asterisk indicates eligibility for re-election. Terms expire 5/31.

**Officers:** **President:** Jim Beatty, Durango, 2011\*; [president@cfo-link.org](mailto:president@cfo-link.org); **Vice President:** Bill Kaempfer, Boulder, 2011\*; [vp@cfo-link.org](mailto:vp@cfo-link.org); **Immediate Past President:** Bill Schmoker, Longmont, 2010; **Secretary:** Larry Modesitt, Greenwood Village, 2011\*; [secretary@cfo-link.org](mailto:secretary@cfo-link.org); **Treasurer:** Maggie Boswell, Boulder, 2011\*; [treasurer@cfo-link.org](mailto:treasurer@cfo-link.org)

**Directors:** Ted Floyd, Lafayette, 2012\*; Mark Peterson, Colorado Springs, 2010\*; Bob Righter, Denver, 2012\*; Joe Roller, Denver, 2012\*; Debra Sparn, Boulder, 2011\*; Brad Steger, Manitou Springs, 2010\*.

**Colorado Bird Records Committee:** Dates indicate end of current term. An asterisk indicates eligibility to serve another term. Terms expire 12/31.

**Chair:** Larry Semo, Westminster, 2010; [cbrcc@cfo-link.org](mailto:cbrcc@cfo-link.org)

**Secretary:** Doug Faulkner, Arvada, 2010;

**Committee Members:** Peter Gent, Boulder, 2009\*; Rachel Hopper, Ft. Collins, 2009\*; Joey Kellner, Littleton, 2010; Bill Maynard, Colorado Springs, 2010\*; David Silverman, Rye, 2011\*.

### Colorado Birds Quarterly:

**Editor:** Nathan Pieplow, [editor@cfo-link.org](mailto:editor@cfo-link.org)

**Staff:** Glenn Walbek (Photo Editor), [gwalbek@comcast.net](mailto:gwalbek@comcast.net); Hugh Kingery (Field Notes Editor), [ouzels8@aol.com](mailto:ouzels8@aol.com); Tony Leukering (In the Scope Editor), [GreatGrayOwl@aol.com](mailto:GreatGrayOwl@aol.com); Jim Beatty (Across the Board Editor), [jdbeatty@bresnan.net](mailto:jdbeatty@bresnan.net); Bill Maynard (News from the Field Editor), [antejos@juno.com](mailto:antejos@juno.com); Rachel Hopper (Production Assistant), [webmaster@cfo-link.org](mailto:webmaster@cfo-link.org)

**Annual Membership Dues (renewable quarterly):** General \$25; Youth (under 18) \$12; Institution \$30. Membership dues entitle members to a subscription to *Colorado Birds*, which is published quarterly. Back issues/extra copies may be ordered for \$6.00. Send requests for extra copies/back issues, change of address, and membership renewals to CFO, P.O. Box 643, Boulder, CO 80306; make checks out to Colorado Field Ornithologists. Contributions are tax deductible to the extent allowed by law.

**COPYRIGHT © 2009** by Colorado Field Ornithologists. Reproduction of articles is permitted only under consent from the publisher. Works by U.S. and Canadian governments are not copyrighted.

# Colorado Birds

The Colorado Field Ornithologists' Quarterly Vol. 43 No. 4 October 2009

**PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE..... 236**

Jim Beatty

**CFO BOARD MINUTES..... 238**

Larry Modesitt

**ACROSS THE BOARD: MAGGIE BOSWELL..... 240**

Jim Beatty

**LIFETIME ACHIEVEMENT AWARD RECIPIENT:  
WARREN FINCH ..... 242**

Joe Roller

**CFO YOUTH SCHOLARSHIP: CAMP CASCADES ..... 245**

Marcel Such

**FIELD TRIP REPORTS: SPRING 2009 ..... 248**

Jim Beatty and Bill Kaempfer

**BOOK REVIEW: BIRDING HOTSPOTS  
OF SOUTH-CENTRAL COLORADO..... 251**

Jason Beason

**OVENBIRDS OF WILLOW SPRINGS  
OPEN SPACE, JEFFERSON COUNTY..... 253**

Mike Henwood

**UPLAND SANDPIPER: A REGULAR FALL  
MIGRANT IN THE FRONT RANGE REGION? ..... 261**

Ted Floyd

**THE 52<sup>ND</sup> REPORT OF THE CBRC..... 269**

Lawrence S. Semo and Doug W. Faulkner

**THE HUNGRY BIRDER: ESTES PARK ..... 282**

Nathan Pieplow

**NEWS FROM THE FIELD: SPRING 2009 ..... 285**

Bill Maynard

**IN THE SCOPE: HORNED AND EARED GREBS ..... 306**

Story and Photos (on back cover) by Tony Leukering



Eastern  
Screech-Owl,  
Ft. Collins,  
Larimer  
County, 6 Jan  
2009. Photo  
by Nick Komar

## CFO's Organization and Near-Term Objectives

Jim Beatty

The CFO Board met in late August with several important agenda items to discuss. Among the more interesting topics were how to organize the board for better continuity; how to stay current with the rapid advances in electronic information exchange; and how to offer more variety in our conventions and field trips.

**Organization** – While there are many positives for term-limiting our officers and directors, as we have codified in our by-laws, there are also disadvantages. Can you imagine what *Colorado Birds* might look like if we changed the editor and support staff with each issue or even every year? Most of the assignments for our board members benefit from some level of continuity, and it is equally important to “fit” directors’ assignments to their interests, skills, and available time—as many already have full-time jobs.

At our August meeting, we did just that, seeking the best “fit” between our directors and their positions. It is obviously valuable to allow directors to serve for more than one year in the same assignment, which we believe will increase our effectiveness by eliminating or reducing the “learning curve.” We believe that it will also sharpen our focus on both short- and long-term objectives.

In addition, our growing need for expertise as well as continuity speaks for the establishment of positions that don’t “roll over” automatically. We have done this in the past and we continue to do it for positions that require special skills, like computer software expertise.

**Electronic Information Exchange** – We have been a leader among state birding organizations in this field, and we recognize that to better serve our members and customers we must stay ahead of the “curve.” Our COBirds subscriber e-mails about Colorado birds and birding, our CFO website, our on-line Colorado Bird Records Committee information, and our County Birding Website are all first-class efforts, yet we recognized that maintaining them is not easy, simple, or free. We have made continuous improvements to all of these and more are needed.

In addition, we are looking at further online undertakings:

- developing the Birds of Colorado Online project, which we envision as an online version of the excellent reference work *Colorado Birds* by Bob Andrews & Bob Righter (which is a very big task!);
- improving maps on the County Birding Website;

- keeping the County Birding descriptions current (another sizeable task!);
- and, perhaps most importantly, assessing how electronic messaging needs to change to keep up with rapid messaging and texting in evolving forums like Twitter, Facebook, and others. Perhaps we need a “chief information officer?”

**Conventions and Field Trips** – Our annual convention continues to be strong, with good attendance as we move around the state, great field trips, interesting paper sessions, the always-popular “Stump the Chumps,” special awards, and entertaining and informative banquet speakers. We want to maintain this performance and perhaps make it even better, if we can. While we will not make any major changes to the format in 2010 for the Fort Collins event, we are considering changing the timing to a fall convention periodically—maybe as early as 2011—and adding mini-events or maxi-field trips in the spring. Comments from the membership would be most welcome.

Field trips are an area where we need to find our niche. Competing with professional tour companies and other Colorado birding organizations yields mixed results at best. Yet, some out-of-state trips (like our trip to the Texas Gulf Coast) and special access trips (like trips to TNC’s Fox Ranch) have been winners. We will be giving this area more thought.

We are in the formative stages of all of these efforts and they will be the ongoing subjects of future board meetings. We do encourage you, our members and subscribers, to offer your thoughts and opinions as we develop our plans. Please contact me or any board member with your comments.

*Jim Beatty, 165 Twelve Point Buck Trail, Durango, CO, [jdbeatty@bresnan.net](mailto:jdbeatty@bresnan.net)*

Can you imagine what *Colorado Birds* might look like if we changed the editor and support staff with each issue or even every year?

22 August 2009  
DOW Bunkhouse  
Bonny Reservoir State Park  
Larry Modesitt, CFO Secretary

*The regular quarterly meeting was called to order at 11:01 a.m. Board members present were Jim Beatty, Maggie Boswell, Ted Floyd, Bill Kaempfer, Larry Modesitt, Mark Peterson, Nathan Pieplow, Bob Righter, Joe Roller, Bill Schmoker, Larry Semo, Debra Sparn, and Brad Steger. CFO member Tim Smart also attended.*

### **President's Report**

The meeting was called to order at 11:01 a.m. by President Jim Beatty. Jim welcomed new members Ted Floyd, Bob Righter, and Debra Sparn. He thanked Bob Righter for his donation and both Bill Schmoker and Ted Floyd for donating speaker fees. He also pointed out that communication is essential for the smooth functioning of groups that meet infrequently, suggesting that email writers make clear what is expected of Board members when messages are sent. If a vote is wanted, for example, clarify that in the subject line.

### **Secretary's Report**

Minutes were approved for the 11 April 2009 Board Meeting and the 24 May 2009 Annual Meeting at the convention in Alamosa. It was noted that the "pass the hat" donation totals should be added to the Annual Meeting minutes in the future.

### **Treasurer's Report**

Maggie Boswell reported that the 2009 income and expenses are on target and that CFO should finish the year on budget. Total assets as of 30 June 2009 are \$37,267.07. She also noted that the Alamosa convention netted income of \$3,967.36 plus "pass

the hat" donations of \$536.50. The financial reports had been e-mailed to the Board in advance, and Maggie would appreciate prompt reviews by Board members and acknowledgment that some inspection has been made.

### **Committee Reports**

A. Colorado Bird Records Committee—Larry Semo. It was noted that the CBRC is holding to its promise of issuing a records report with each issue of *Colorado Birds*, and has caught up to the point that it is now reviewing 2009 records (although some older records still are being considered, especially paper reports with hard-copy photos, which are very labor-intensive). Ted Floyd noted that few, if any, other states report on a quarterly basis. This makes the entire process more open and inviting to all to submit reports. Mark Peterson has mechanized the entire process, so all reports are filed digitally. Special appeals to the membership will be made to submit all reports electronically. Hard copies must be converted to PDF files and photographs to JPG files, then appended. In addition to the extra work by committee members, quality, legibility, timeliness and usefulness are diminished. It is still better, however, to have hard-copy

reports than none. Modern CBRC reports are now on the website along with Tony Leukering's article on how to submit proper documentation.

B. Awards—Brad Steger. All three recipients of the recent awards sent letters of appreciation which may be published in *Colorado Birds*.

C. Field Trips—Jim Beatty. It is difficult to obtain leaders, and there often are conflicts with other later-organized events that limit attendance to our trips. Jim noted it is important to identify our niche. Out-of-state, overnight and limited-access trips seem to be the best opportunities for best results.

D. Project Fund/Youth Scholarship—Bill Kaempfer. We would like to publicize to other state birding organizations that funds are available. Debra Sparn will investigate and make recommendations for promotion.

E. Membership—Debra Sparn. Membership, after remaining at around 420 for many years, is approaching 500. CFO will begin using postings on COBirds and other avenues for promoting membership.

F. COBirds—Mark Peterson. The new software occasionally has glitches caused by competing spam filters, but it is working far better than the old software. COBirds, possibly the first of the birding listservs, and its 637 members are approaching a fifteenth anniversary.

G. Website—Mark Peterson. It now is possible to go to the County Website and click on sites such as Bonny, for example, and be directed to the Bonny Lake SP home page. By-

laws have been uploaded to the CFO website and numerous other improvements have been made by Mark and Rachel Hopper.

H. Colorado Birds—Nathan Pieplow. News from the Field will now be authored by Bill Maynard. Nathan will investigate having back issues scanned and available on SORA.

I. Birds of Colorado Online—Larry Semo. A steering committee is being formed by Larry Semo. They will make recommendations to the Board regarding objectives, customers, scope, timing, and financial aspects. The database structure has been mapped. Tony Leukering sent his template on the species summaries required. Completing a few key examples could be helpful for obtaining grants or other funding.

### **New Committee Jobs**

Jim Beatty noted that it is important to have continuity in most board member assignments. He passed out information to new board members. Committee responsibilities are as follows: CBRC—Larry Semo; *Colorado Birds*—Nathan Pieplow; Project Fund/Scholarships—Bill Kaempfer; Membership—Debra Sparn; Publicity—Ted Floyd; BOC Online—Larry Semo, assisted by Bob Righter; Awards/Nominating—Joe Roller, assisted by Brad Steger and Larry Modesitt; COBirds/Website—Mark Peterson, assisted by Brad Steger, Rachel Hopper, and others; Convention—Mark Peterson, assisted by Bill Kaempfer; and Field Trips—Brad Steger.

We spoke in depth of the importance and difficulty of the Conven-

tion director position requirements, and people took on some portions of the job. Brad Steger will be responsible for field trips, while Jim Beatty, Joe Roller, and Bob Righter volunteered for more assignments. Mark Peterson will develop and publish the timeline for required tasks.

### **2010 Convention Plan**

The convention will take place 21-24 May 2010 in Ft. Collins. The banquet will occur on Saturday, 23 May.

### **2011 Convention Plan**

Jim Beatty will make a presenta-

tion on possible changes and potential steps at the next board meeting. Options could include a fall convention on the West Slope and spring field trips with smaller groups.

### **County Birding Website**

Updating the text is difficult to do on a timely basis. Discussing this project indicated the difficulty, and opportunity, of communicating in 2009.

The next meeting was scheduled for 14 November 2009. This meeting was adjourned at 2:30 p.m..

## **ACROSS THE BOARD**

# **Maggie Boswell, Treasurer and Director**

*Jim Beatty*

I first met Maggie as I stood on the edge of G Road looking at the first state record Hooded Oriole in western Montezuma County. She was with a group of Front Fange birders that had just arrived and, of course, their first question was "Have you seen IT?" I had, and we soon had it in sight again.

Maggie is CFO's treasurer, and we are very fortunate to have her serve in this important position. She provides complete financial statements that are easy to read and understand, with all unusual entries carefully footnoted. She steers our financial ship nimbly and, it seems, effortlessly.

Maggie's connection to Colorado began before she was born. Even though her family lived just outside of Chicago in Whiting, Indiana, her mother purchased an old miner's cabin near the small town of Ward in the shadow of Niwot Mountain in western Boulder County. Every August her mother administered Dramamine to Maggie, her

brother, and the family dog in preparation for the long drive from Indiana to Colorado. Maggie probably didn't spot the avocets and other shorebirds in the ponds along the highway as they drove out and back before the interstate highways were completed. She stayed in Indiana until she graduated from high school and then the family relocated to Boulder after her father retired. And she hasn't strayed far since.

Living in Colorado provided the opportunity for Maggie to meet her husband, Dan. Together they immersed themselves in hiking and backpacking in Colorado and Utah.

That led to ten years of cross-country ski racing on the "citizen circuit," which was followed in turn by white-water kayaking. When they discovered that they could kayak down a river with rafters who would transport their gear for them, backpacking became a distant memory.

These nearly constant outdoor adventures resulted in increasingly frequent encounters with birds. Inquisitive and hungry Dusky Grouse ventured in to browse near their camp along the main branch of the Salmon River. The Hell's Canyon section of Idaho's Snake River was inhabited by several Chukar families, and while floating the calm sections, Maggie would watch the Lewis's Woodpeckers sally forth from the cottonwoods to hawk flying insects over the river.

Always interested in the outdoors, Maggie had a shelf feeder at her kitchen window and was finally lured full-time into the world of birding by the Evening Grosbeaks that visited for several winters. In 1993, she joined the Boulder Bird Club field trips and started keeping "casual" lists of what birds she had seen—although, given Maggie's acumen for accuracy and detail, I suspect that they were more than "casual." She took the hawk and owl classes offered by Steve Jones and participated in several bird-related projects sponsored by the Boulder County Nature Association. She audited Alex Cruz's ornithology class at the University of Colorado in Boulder. She also volunteered as a "raptor janitor" at the Birds of Prey Rehabilitation



*Maggie Boswell*

Foundation, which, fortunately, was a day job. She still does raptor surveys for BCNA.

Maggie does not spend all of her time birding. Several years ago, she retired from the profession of sign language interpreter at a local community college. In the late winter—when it doesn't interfere with birding too much—she volunteers for the AARP to help others prepare their income tax returns.

Maggie joined the CFO Board in 2005 and helped Raymond Davis with membership responsibilities, although Davis had everything running like a clock. When David Waltman's term as treasurer and director was completed, Maggie became the new financial maestra for the organization. She introduced CFO to new financial software and soon was submitting the necessary 501c3 forms to the Internal Revenue Service to maintain CFO's tax-exempt status. Every quarter she produces the necessary balance sheets, profit and loss statements, and budget comparisons that allow the board to easily and accurately track CFO's financial health. She has instituted e-mail financial reviews that allow all board members to review the statements at their leisure and save time at our quarterly board meetings. As the annual convention nears, she prepares a proposed spending plan based on previous years' results and tracks progress from the time when the brochures are mailed until all the bills are paid.

Maggie is a mainstay of our annual conventions. She is quite busy processing registration fees, sorting the funds into various categories, and performing many of the behind-the-scenes tasks that make these events flow seamlessly. She always is at the registration or sales tables saying hello to old friends and putting faces with new ones. Be sure to say hello to her at our 2010 Convention in Ft. Collins!

*Jim Beatty, 165 Twelve Point Buck Trail, Durango, CO, [jdbbeatty@bresnan.net](mailto:jdbbeatty@bresnan.net)*

## **CFO AWARDS**

### **Lifetime Achievement Award Recipient: Warren Finch**

*Joe Roller*

During the banquet of the May 2009 convention of the Colorado

Field Ornithologists, Warren I. Finch was presented with the third annual Lifetime Achievement Award. This honor is given to a person of fine character who has earned the esteem of birders during a long period of service to the Colorado birding community. Warren joins previous awardees Joe Himmel and Bob Spencer in being so recognized.

Born in 1924, Warren survived the Great Depression as a child in South Dakota and served in the Second World War as a member of "The Greatest Generation." During a sixty-year career, Warren Finch scampered over rock and rill as a uranium geologist for the U. S. Geological Survey. In that role he was known by his peers as one of the world experts on nuclear materials and resources, and wrote over eighty publications and traveled to sixty countries on seven continents. In 1994 the Department of Interior honored him with its highest accolade, the Distinguished Service Award.

Warren's first birding memory was as a twelve-year-old boy marveling at Long-billed Curlews as they soared over his Uncle Ward's farm. Bitten by the "birding bug" in the 1960's, he kept meticulous lists and began to lead countless field trips. He has participated in forty consecutive Christmas Bird Counts, usually with the DFO, hiking up steep terrain on Lone Peak in an annual quest for the Blue (Dusky) Grouse.

I personally remember Warren as the leader of my first field trip in Colorado, in July, 1974, a hike up from Guanella Pass to see birds of the willow carr and alpine communities. Our target bird was the White-tailed Ptarmigan, but when the route to the ptarmigan was blocked by a rockslide, Warren consoled us by saying, "At least you got good looks at a Finch!"

Dick Schottler, Warren's boon companion, recalls the 1986 trip he made with Warren to California, the self-styled "Three Days of the Condor." By then California Condors were on the brink of extinction, so Warren and Dick were delighted to see two of the last



*Warren Finch*

three free-flying birds soaring over the hills. Golden Eagles which had been feeding on a carcass suddenly looked small when the condors flew down to muscle their way into the carrion feast. After seeing the condors, they enjoyed some other local birding. Have you ever motored 270 miles just to see a magpie? On their California trip, Dick and Warren did just that—but of course, the bird was that special California endemic, the Yellow-billed Magpie.

Warren, a long-time CFO member, has published in the CFO Journal and served on its board of directors and on its nominations committee, as well as serving as president of the Denver Field Ornithologists, where he continues as the DFO historian. He has received the prestigious DFO Ptarmigan Award.

Warren has always put family life first and is respected as a husband, father, and grandfather. He served as a Scoutmaster, inspiring his son and four grandsons to become Eagle Scouts. By his example and kindness, Warren has helped and inspired many birders as well. He is described by his friends as a gentle, peaceful person with a keen interest and delight in birds, as evidenced by his words to live by: “Always behave like a duck. Keep calm and unruffled on the surface, but paddle like hell underneath!”

Wishing that his life experiences could be shared with his friends, colleagues and descendants, he published his memoirs in 2007, “Alone – My Guardian Angel – Gunga Din.” He is now a Scientist Emeritus with the USGS, and as was said at the banquet, he also has won Emeritus status in our hearts! It is high praise to describe his life as “authentic.”

Warren attended the banquet with his devoted wife and soul-mate Mary. We in the audience were proud to be there to honor him also. In an acceptance speech given from the point of view of a historian, he described how the CFO came through some lean times decades ago, with barely enough attendees at one convention to fill a single table. As he gestured to the scores of birders at our 2009 banquet, he observed, “The CFO is thriving!”

Well said, Warren Finch, recipient of the Colorado Field Ornithologists Lifetime Achievement Award—and thank you. CFO thrives, in part, because of you and all you have done.

*Joe Roller, 965 S. Garfield St., Denver, CO 80209; pergrn@aol.com*

## Camp Cascades

*Marcel Such*

This summer I had the privilege of attending my first young birders' camp, Victor Emanuel Nature Tours' Camp Cascades in Washington State. There were twelve other teens on the trip, collected from all across the Lower 48. It was a great group of kids, ranging from serious photographers and talented artists to those who enjoy birds purely for what they are. Our excellent trip leaders, Victor Emanuel, Barry Lyon, and Louise Zemaitis, undauntedly led us around for thirteen days of non-stop birding fun.

Because of its incredible biodiversity, the state of Washington is a great place to host a bird camp. In one day, you can drive from

## CFO Project Fund Application Deadline: 1 December 2009

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

### Grant Schedule

- All applications must be postmarked no later than 1 December 2009.
- Successful applicants will be notified after the March CFO Board Meeting.
- Following completion of the project, the applicant must submit a final report in writing by February of the next calendar year. This report should include a full description of the project activities and an accounting of money spent.

Please see the following page on the CFO website for all Project Fund guidelines: [http://cfo-link.org/about\\_CFO/project\\_fund.php](http://cfo-link.org/about_CFO/project_fund.php).

the ocean straight up to the tundra above timberline, and then back down into sagebrush steppe. And if you take a couple of weeks to navigate the myriad habitats, the number of birds you can see is astonishing, from alcids to ptarmigan to Sage Sparrows.

Our journey began with four days at sea level, using Whidbey Island in the Puget Sound for our base and presenting me with a completely different suite of birds than that found in Colorado. The classic old-growth forests of the Pacific Northwest dominate the island with its towering western hemlocks, western red cedars, and grand firs. Walking these forests revealed such species as Pacific-slope Flycatchers, Winter Wrens, and the plentiful Chestnut-backed Chickadees and Bewick's Wrens found at every turn. When not birding the forests, we were scouring the coast, a rare treat for this typically landlocked birder. A ferry ride to Port Townsend on the Olympic Peninsula was especially memorable with the spectacle of tens of thousands of gulls and alcids swirling about in the waters around us.

On day five we gained altitude as we left the thick air behind for six days of camping in the Cascade Mountains. Our days were filled with hiking, as we searched for birds and studied other aspects of the natural world. We spent time at different elevations and habitats making for a rich and varied experience and creating lots of vivid memories. One day we hiked a few miles back into a glacial valley in the immense Pasayten Wilderness to search for Sooty Grouse and other local goodies. We stopped to eat lunch, but before most of us had even begun eating, chaos erupted. If there had been any non-birders to witness

this phenomenon, I wonder what they would have thought. Imagine thirteen binocular-toting teenagers sprinting as fast as possible down the trail, not hesitating to ford a fast mountain creek, then charging off-trail, straight through thick underbrush and fallen logs. If you're wondering what happened, Barry had spotted a couple of Boreal Chickadees a quarter-mile up the



*California Gull, Island County, WA. Photo by Marcel Such*

trail, setting us off on a rampage.

For the last short leg of our journey, we descended into the rolling sagebrush-covered desert in eastern Washington called the



*Sun Lakes, Grant County, WA.* Photo by Marcel Such

Great Basin,

where we hoped for such birds as Sage Thrasher and Sage Sparrow. Though we only had a couple of days in this region, much of which was travel time, we packed in as much birding as possible as we drove back to Seattle via the Columbia River Gorge, bringing two unforgettable weeks to a close.

I would like to thank the Colorado Field Ornithologists for their financial support in helping to make this trip possible. It was a very rewarding experience for me. I not only learned more about birds, but also the other flora and fauna of Washington, particularly flowers, mammals, butterflies, and dragonflies. I returned home with 36 lifers and some new friends, united by our mutual love of birds.

Marcel P. Such, 1186 Rowell Drive, Lyons, CO 80540, mpsuch@gmail.com

## Spring 2009: Lamar and Crystal Springs Ranches

*Jim Beatty and Bill Kaempfer*

### **Lamar area ranches, 1-3 May 2009**

The first CFO field trip of the spring was to the Lamar ranches. We started at the Lamar Community College woods, where Judi Ogle, our organizer and local guide from “near Granada” (as her e-mails announce), met the tour participants and me. The woods produced a nice array of early migrants, including Broad-winged Hawk, Red-bellied Woodpecker, Northern Cardinal, Prairie Falcon, Lincoln’s Sparrow, and several nice warblers including Nashville, Black-and-white, MacGillivray’s, Hooded, and Yellow-breasted Chat. Unfortunately the Hooded and the chat were quite shy, and not everyone had good looks.

Then we moved on to the Rocking 7K Ranch, which would be our home for the next three days and two nights. We were met by Kathryn and Lars Grahn, owners of the Rocking 7K; Barb and Carl Taylor, owners of the Taylor Ranch; and other family members and friends. We enjoyed a wonderful home-cookin’, family-style dinner, and no one went hungry.

Before breakfast on Saturday morning, we watched from the win-

dows as the resident Wild Turkeys walked past the house, and then we combed the numerous windbreaks and added three species of thrushes: Hermit, Swainson’s, and Gray-cheeked. A probable Long-eared Owl flushed from the other side of a dense windbreak and no one had a good look before it ducked out of sight. After breakfast, just outside the dining room door, we had a very nice mini-



*CFO field trip to Taylor Ranch, Prowers County, 2 May 2009. Photo by Jim Beatty*

fallout of warblers. In just a few minutes we saw Orange-crowned, Yellow-rumped (both Myrtle and Audubon's), Wilson's, Black-and-white, Tennessee, and Worm-eating Warblers, plus Northern Parula and Common Yellowthroat. They disappeared as quickly as they came. Then we ventured to the nearby stream and were rewarded by very good looks at a Blue-headed Vireo and then a Solitary Sandpiper trying to hide behind low weeds next to the steep stream banks.

After a hearty barbeque lunch at the Taylors', Carl led us on a ranch tour that included a visit to the infamous "hanging rock" where, purportedly, Colorado's first vigilante hanging occurred for an unlucky cattle rustler. We saw the massive and occupied Golden Eagle nest, but kept a very safe distance so as not to disturb these majestic birds; surprised a roosting Barn Owl in an abandoned building; and scoped some Burrowing Owls across the pasture near the Taylor home.

Later in the day we visited Turks Pond State Wildlife Area and added a nice assortment of ducks and shorebirds to our list, including Willets, Marbled Godwits, Wilson's and Red-necked Phalaropes, several peeps, both yellowlegs, and Long-billed Dowitcher. Nearby a male Lazuli Bunting sang and everyone had great looks at this handsome crowd-pleaser.

On Sunday we searched long and hard for the resident Long-billed Curlews and finally one sharp-eyed member of our group spotted one, then both members of the pair ambling among the shrubs of a distant pasture. We moved closer and had some great photo-ops of the birds.

After breakfast we said goodbye to the Grahns and Taylors and some participants departed for home. At Two Buttes we added Clark's Grebe, Pectoral Sandpiper, White-faced Ibis, and Least Flycatcher, while a large flock of American Avocets had moved into Turks Pond overnight.

Many thanks to Judi Ogle for her meticulous attention to detail in arranging this delightful trip to always-birdy southeastern Colorado, and to our hosts the Grahns and Taylors for opening their homes and ranches, for their wonderful hospitality, and especially for the delicious meals—and over 120 species of birds in a relaxed setting.

*Jim Beatty, 165 Twelve Point Buck Trail, Durango, CO, [jdbbeatty@bresnan.net](mailto:jdbbeatty@bresnan.net)*

### **Crystal Springs Ranch, 15-16 May 2009**

Mark Peterson and Bill Kaempfer led this trip to view Eastern Plains migrants. About a dozen participants gathered in Flagler, Colorado in order to move on to the nearby Crystal Springs Ranch (fee required). A damp, cloudy day provided an excellent opportunity for



*Long-billed Curlew, Taylor Ranch, Prowers County, 2 May 2009. Photo by Jim Beatty*

birding at the ranch and the other nearby areas that were visited. Crystal Springs Ranch is the private ranch lying to the north of Flagler State Wildlife Area. It has two large ponds with extensive marshy areas; these provided great opportunities to listen for species like rails. In addition, the ranch has numerous shelterbelts, thickets, and grassy areas. Highlights here included a Tennessee

Warbler and no fewer than four Northern Waterthrushes.

Following the visit to Crystal Springs Ranch, the group continued to neighboring Flagler SWA, where we saw Ovenbird, Blackpoll Warbler, and Townsend's Warbler, and then to a private ranch in northwest Cheyenne County, which gave us Magnolia and Blackpoll Warblers, more waterthrushes, an American Redstart, a Rose-breasted Grosbeak, and a Common Poorwill.

About half of the participants stayed overnight in Burlington and then continued on to Bonny Reservoir State Park for another half-day of birding. Highlights at Bonny included Red-bellied Woodpecker, American Redstart, and Field Sparrow. All told we saw about 120 species, including 15 warbler species.

*Bill Kaempfer, William.Kaempfer@colorado.edu*

# Birding Hotspots of South-central Colorado

Jason Beason

In the spring of 2001 I was hired by the Rocky Mountain Bird Observatory (RMBO) to do bird surveys throughout Colorado. My first assignment was surveying aspen forests in the mountains on the west side of the San Luis Valley. After a morning of surveys I would head to the valley floor, and I remember finding it difficult to find easily accessible places to go birding. I certainly wish that I'd had a copy of *Birding Hotspots of South-central Colorado* with me then. Even though I have returned many times to the San Luis Valley for work and play and I feel I have gotten to know the valley fairly well, I still learned a lot by reading this book.

*Birding Hotspots of South-central Colorado* is laid out in a very easy-to-understand and organized fashion. Fifteen hotspots are identified in the book, many of them comprised of several sites. The maps and directions to the sites mentioned are clear and concise, and when used alongside any of the Colorado atlases, should help anyone travel from place to place easily. One of the features in the book that I appreciate is the charts that tell whether or not a high-clearance vehicle is needed to access each hotspot.

Appendix B in the back of the book lists all the species that one can expect to find in the valley and up to three good places to look for each one. This list, when used in conjunc-

## *Birding Hotspots of South-central Colorado*



By John J. Rawinski

Including the Great Sand Dunes National Park and Preserve and the Olancho and Monte Vista National Wildlife Refuges

## *Birding Hotspots of South-central Colorado*

John J. Rawinski

EarthBird Services, 2009

102 pages, 5.5×8.5, wirebound

tion with the book's species abundance and occurrence charts (Appendix A), will increase your chances of finding target species.

To me, the most interesting birding hotspot described in this book is the Natural Arch Loop, where there are four accepted records for Bendire's Thrasher. I knew this species had been reported in the San Luis Valley, but had no idea there were so many records from this single location. With the second Colorado Breeding Bird Atlas being conducted, now seems a good time to organize surveys to determine if they could be breeding here, or somewhere else in this extensive valley.

Another birding location discussed in this book, the San Luis Hills, would be a great place for adventurous birders who like to hike and explore new areas. I learned in *Birding Hotspots of South-central Colorado* that Sage and Black-throated Sparrows probably breed here, but also Cassin's Sparrows as well. That is quite an unusual combination for one area in our state. Furthermore, I used to fantasize about finding Black-chinned Sparrows in Colorado, and this is the location where both Tony Leukering and Rich Levad suggested searching. I know a few other birders in the state who have looked for them here too. You may be laughing, but they breed near Colorado in northern New Mexico, and there are some places in the San Luis Hills where the habitat looks pretty darn good for this species.

This book also discusses one of my favorite birding locations in Colorado: the Pikes Stockade area. Having explored a lot of riparian areas and wetlands while working for RMBO the past few years, I can honestly say that this is the most im-

pressive of any that I have seen in Colorado, if not the entire western United States. This remarkable area may represent what many Colorado riparian areas and wetlands may have looked like before dredging and other alterations done by man. If you don't believe me, go there for yourself and see. But, as Mr. Rawinski warns, do not forget your mosquito repellent if you visit!

The avifauna of the San Luis Valley is amazingly diverse, and the scenery alone is enough to merit a trip. Bill Schmoker called this unique part of our state "Colorado's Third Slope," and this is an excellent way to describe it. If you won't have much time to explore the valley and the mountains that surround it, you can probably get by with one of the other Colorado birding guides available. However, if you are a serious county lister or if you want to take your time and really get to know this underbirded part of the state, you will want to have *Birding Hotspots of South-central Colorado* by your side when you visit the San Luis Valley.

Jason Beason, 39405 Lund Road, Paonia, CO 81428; [aeronautes.saxatalis@gmail.com](mailto:aeronautes.saxatalis@gmail.com)

To order a copy of *Birding Hotspots of South-central Colorado*, email John Rawinski at [cougar@gojade.org](mailto:cougar@gojade.org). The book is also available at many bird supply stores and bookstores in Colorado.

# Ovenbirds of Willow Springs Open Space, Jefferson County

Mike Henwood

## Introduction

After moving to the Willow Springs area in Jefferson County in 2005, I started birding the Willow Springs Open Space (WSOS) at the base of the foothills. WSOS is privately owned and encompasses approximately 815 acres with a variety of habitats including grassland, foothill shrublands dominated by Gambel Oak (*Quercus gambelii*), ponderosa pine (*Pinus ponderosa*) woodlands on the south slopes, and Douglas-fir (*Pseudotsuga menziesii*) forests on the north-facing slopes. Small pockets of aspen (*Populus tremuloides*) are scattered throughout the forested areas.

While exploring the area on 3 June 2005, I was surprised to hear singing Ovenbirds (*Seiurus aurocapillus*) in the Weaver Gulch area of WSOS. Interested in the presence of this species within WSOS, I conducted a literature search for information on Ovenbirds in Colorado. Andrews and Righter (1992) indicated that Ovenbirds were a rare to uncommon local summer resident in the eastern foothills and lower mountains along Colorado's Front Range. Kingery (1998) noted that the small Colorado population of Ovenbirds occupies disjunct patches along a narrow strip of the Front Range from Larimer County in the north to the New Mexico border to the south. Kingery also noted that breeding bird atlasers had found Ovenbirds in the same pockets reported by Bailey and Niedrach (1965) and Andrews and Righter (1992), in addition to several new breeding locations. Suitable habitat in Jefferson and Douglas Counties seemed to host the largest numbers. Dunn and Gar-



Ovenbird, Cheyenne Canyon, El Paso County, 18 May 2007. Photo by Bill Maynard



*Mike Henwood.* Photo by Rob Raker

rett (1997) indicated that birds at the southwestern edge of the breeding range (*S. a. cinereus*), including the Colorado breeding population (AOU 1957), often breed in the deciduous growth of canyons and gulches and in mixed deciduous-conifer woods on lower mountain slopes.

As I spent more time birding WSOS, it seemed there were more than just a few Ovenbirds. In the summer of 2007, after doing some Colorado Breeding Bird Atlas II work in the area, I estimated there might be as many as 25 singing Ovenbirds. As I discussed this with local experts—including my late friend Rich Levad, Jason Beason, and Glenn Giroir from the Rocky Mountain Bird Observatory (RMBO);

Bob Andrews and Bob Righter, who both accompanied me on separate trips to WSOS; and Tony Leukering and Nathan Pieplow—the consensus was that if my hunch were correct, the population density of Ovenbirds in WSOS would be one of the highest known in Colorado. As a result, I decided to do a more accurate count of the WSOS Ovenbird population in the summer of 2008. In this article, I report on my methods and results as well as present some questions generated by the project.

### **Study Site**

Willow Springs Open Space is located in southern Jefferson County. It is bounded on the north by U.S. Highway 285; on the east by the Willow Springs development, which lies within the Dakota Hogback; on the south by the Ken Caryl urban development and open space; and on the west by Jefferson County open space in the South Turkey Creek Road and Tiny Town area. The elevation in WSOS ranges from about 6400 to 7855 feet above mean sea level (AMSL).

Historically, the area was used by ranchers for cattle and sheep grazing. The original developer of Willow Springs, Stan Harwood, who purchased the Willow Springs Ranch in 1948, reports that the last grazing in what is now known as WSOS was probably in the

mid- to late 1960's (pers. comm.). Most of the grazing was by cattle, but there were a couple of years in the late 1960's when sheep grazed the area. Today WSOS is used by Willow Springs residents mainly for hiking and mountain biking. Folks generally stay on the trails, and overall use is much less than in public open space areas nearby.

## Methods

Originally my plan was to pick a central point, called Oven X, and then have four survey routes emanating like spokes of a wheel from this central point. Listening points were to be 200 meters apart with a total of about nine or ten points on each route to provide adequate coverage of WSOS, with the expectation that many points would not have singing Ovenbirds.

On 31 May and 1 June 2008, I spent the mornings setting up the routes, recording some general habitat information, and listening to singing Ovenbirds. As I was walking the routes during the two days, I decided to change my procedures. Since I was interested in counting all singing Ovenbirds I detected in the field, it made more sense to stop, listen, and count at locations where the Ovenbirds were singing rather than at predetermined points along a survey route. This meant changing the protocol from a systematic point count methodology to a point-transect methodology. This method allowed for a more accurate estimate of the true number of Ovenbirds in the area, but did not use randomized survey techniques.

The route I followed in the Left Hand Canyon drainage turned out like an oval (including the points I called Oven 21-26) with a tangent (Pipeline 60-63). The routes in Weaver Gulch remained straight lines like the spokes of a wheel and were named Oven 11-14, Oven 31-33, and Oven 41-42. The routes in both drainages are mapped in Figure 1.

On 2 and 3 June



*Dark Canyon Trail, Willow Springs Open Space, Jefferson County. Photo by Rob Raker*

2008, I walked the adjusted routes, counting only singing Ovenbirds and noting other birds seen or heard. I started each morning at 6:00 a.m. and finished somewhere between 10:00 and 11:00 a.m.. I stopped and listened for five minutes at each point, but I also counted Ovenbirds singing midway between points. On 28 May 2009 I surveyed the area using the same protocol as in 2008. Table 1 shows the results of these surveys.

I used a structural scale ranging from grass-forb stage, shrub-seedling stage, sapling-pole stage, mature, and old-growth to rate the forest overstory.

## Results

In 2008 I detected high counts of four and sixteen Ovenbirds in the Weaver Gulch and Left Hand Canyon drainages, respectively (Table 1). In 2009 my high count in Weaver Gulch was slightly higher.

*Table 1. Ovenbird Detections by Drainage within the WSOS*

	<b>2 June 2008</b>	<b>3 June 2008</b>	<b>28 May 2009</b>
<b>Weaver Gulch Drainage</b>	4	4	6
<b>Left Hand Canyon Drainage</b>	15	16	15
<b>Total</b>	<b>19</b>	<b>20</b>	<b>21</b>

It is worth noting that in late May and on several days in June 2009, I detected an Ovenbird in WSOS outside Weaver Gulch and Left Hand Canyon. The bird was heard and/or seen by numerous observers. This was the first time I had detected an Ovenbird in this drainage, named the Tiny Town drainage.

## Habitat

The Ovenbirds occurred in areas ranging from 6800 to 7400 feet AMSL and were found on wooded hillsides incised by small ravines. The Ovenbirds seemed to occupy north- and northeast-facing slopes vegetated by mature Douglas-fir forests with a scattering of large mature ponderosa pines along the edges of the forest. The opposite south-facing slopes were dominated by ponderosa pine woodlands with thick Gambel oak undergrowth.

In places, both species of trees are very tall and what I considered old growth, while most of the forest was considered mature.

The dense sub-canopy consisted of a variety of trees and shrubs, most of which were tall and mature. Aspen trees were the lone ex-

ception, with most of the trees being more in pole or sapling growth stages rather than mature. The most common trees/shrubs within the understory included aspen, chokecherry (*Prunus virginiana*), Gambel oak, mountain alder (*Alnus tenuifolia*), Rocky Mountain maple (*Acer glabrum*), ironwood (*Ostrya virginiana*), and a few scattered Rocky Mountain junipers (*Juniperus scopulorum*). In addition, there was a rich shrub layer and ground cover with very little bare ground. The forests where the Ovenbirds occurred reminded me of eastern U.S. forests with their rich sub-canopy and lush shrub component. At every point where singing Ovenbirds were detected, there were dense oak thickets nearby.

The Pipeline Section was unique in that it consisted of an old bulldozed, grass-covered road that extended parallel to an old fenceline running straight up the hillside (similar to a ski slope when viewed from a distance). One side of the old road supported a Douglas-fir forest, with a small stand of young aspen providing much of the understory. The other side of the road supported a ponderosa pine forest with a dense Gambel oak understory. Both hillsides were incised by small ravines. The Ovenbirds seemed to cross the road and use both habitats.

### **Relative Abundance**

My breeding bird atlas work in WSOS allows me to compare the abundance of Ovenbirds to that of other breeding species in the immediate area. Since there were 19 or 20 singing males, the breeding bird atlas abundance code for the Ovenbird is A3 (11-100 breeding pairs). Of the more than forty species breeding in the area, only five other birds were estimated to be so common: Mountain Chickadee (*Poecile gambeli*), House Wren (*Troglodytes aedon*), Spotted Towhee (*Pipilo maculatus*), Dark-eyed Junco (*Junco hyemalis*), and Western Tanager (*Piranga ludoviciana*). Thus the Ovenbird, surprisingly, ranks within the top six most common breeding birds in this area.

Note that the abundance code listed is my estimate of the number of breeding pairs only in the area occupied by the Ovenbirds. The abundance code for many of these birds is much higher when the entire atlas block is taken into account—while the Ovenbird's abundance remains the same.

### **Other Colorado Ovenbird Observations**

During June 2008, while doing atlas field work, I noted a few Ovenbirds (2-5) singing on several occasions at two different locations in Deer Creek Canyon Park, approximately two miles south of

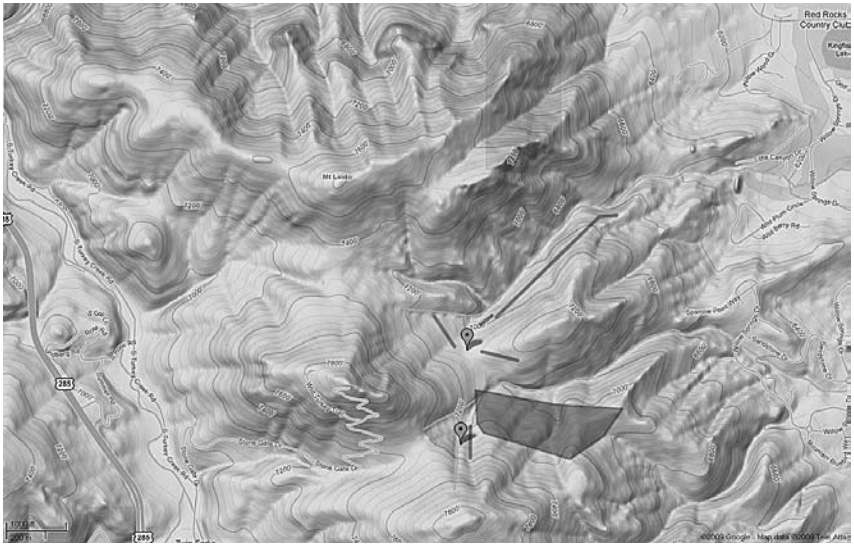


Fig. 1. The survey area within WSOS. The northern placemark balloon marks the head of Weaver Gulch, with the three survey routes extending from it as lines. The southern placemark balloon indicates the Left Hand Canyon drainage, with the main Ovenbird survey area marked as a polygon and the Pipeline transect marked as a line. Figure by Mike Henwood, generated with Google Maps (maps.google.com).

WSOS. A singing Ovenbird was also detected at a Denver Mountain Park site approximately 1.5 miles west of WSOS. In all three locations, the habitat appeared similar to the Ovenbird habitat in WSOS, though not as extensive. In June of 2000, while doing point transects for RMBO, I detected a singing Ovenbird on the Uncompahgre Plateau in Mesa County, in ponderosa pine forest with an oak understory.

David Elwonger (pers. comm.) noted that he has heard up to 47 singing Ovenbirds in the Limekin Valley area of Cheyenne Mountain State Park in El Paso County, roughly 36 miles south of WSOS. The Limekin Valley forest consists of ponderosa pine with a rather dense understory of Gambel oak and shrubs, with ground cover consisting of grass or pine needle/leaf litter. Elwonger emphasized that the area contained ponderosa pine forest and not woodlands.

Chip Clouse (pers. comm.) reported 11 singing Ovenbirds on private land in El Paso County, while David Leatherman (pers. comm.) reported Ovenbirds at Rist Canyon Picnic Area in Larimer County. Clouse and Leatherman describe the habitats as being similar to the habitat in WSOS, with some variation in the tree composition.

Leatherman postulated that the key habitat component for Ovenbirds may be the rich understory, rather than the specific composition of the trees forming the overstory; based on my limited observations of Ovenbirds in Colorado, I agree with this supposition.

## **Discussion and Questions**

The Ovenbird population in WSOS has gone largely unreported until now. Is this because birders haven't spent enough time in appropriate habitat to find them, or because the habitat has improved in recent years as a result of the lack of grazing and light use of WSOS after the development of Willow Springs subdivision?

Anecdotal evidence from the early 1990s provides some support for a recent increase in numbers. Ronda Woodward, Stan Harwood's daughter, remembers going out with Bob and Sandy Righter on 28 May 1990 and finding an Ovenbird nest by crawling around in the brush in the Left Hand Canyon portion of WSOS (pers. comm.). Ronda also has records of Ovenbird sightings on 22 May and 22 June 1991. However, she and Stan both recall that seeing an Ovenbird in WSOS was special, and that the birds were not common. This might suggest that Ovenbirds have increased, but several possible pitfalls with such a comparison exist, including the difference in observer effort: I conducted a formal survey over several days in known Ovenbird habitat, whereas Ronda did not. Ronda moved out of Willow Springs and did not bird the area after the early 1990's.

According to David Elwonger (pers. comm.), Ovenbirds are not rare along the Front Range foothills, just overlooked. David Leatherman (pers. comm.) states that Ovenbirds are not all that uncommon along the southern Front Range (from Colorado Springs south through the Wet Mountains), but they are fairly rare north towards the Wyoming border. However, Kingery (1998) noted that breeding bird atlas block selection precluded investigating all appropriate habitats along the foothills and believed an intensive survey would elicit more Ovenbirds in areas of potentially suitable habitat. Atlas work encourages observers to get off the beaten path. It may be worth noting that the sites in Jefferson County where I encountered Ovenbirds (WSOS, Deer Creek Canyon Park, and the Denver Mountain Park west of Tiny Town) all required a hike of more than a mile to reach the area.

Could there be other locations along the Front Range north of Colorado Springs where Ovenbirds exist in double digit numbers? I would welcome information on possible locations. It seems that the reports on COBirds of Ovenbird sightings (at least in 2008 and 2009) were of a single bird or two.

## ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

I would like to dedicate this article to the late Rich Levad, my friend and mentor, who first encouraged me to study the Ovenbirds in Willow Springs. Rich was a man of ideas, and he taught me something new with every conversation. Rich passed away on 27 February 2008.

I owe sincere thanks to former WSOS owner Stan Harwood, his daughter Ronda Woodward, and my neighbor Bill DeWolfe for providing historical information regarding the Willow Springs Ranch area. Jason Beason and Glenn Giroir of RMBO, along with Tony Leukering, were most helpful in providing technical information and making suggestions regarding protocol and procedures for doing my count. Both Bob Andrews and Bob Righter were more than generous in sharing their knowledge and taking time to accompany me to WSOS. Thanks to David Leatherman, David Elwonger, and Chip Clouse for their correspondence regarding Ovenbirds, their habitat, and density at their local level. Thanks also to my birding companion Rob Raker for the photos taken in WSOS. Larry Semo's technical review is much appreciated, and, finally, a big thank you to Nathan Pieplow for his continual interest and encouragement this past year, as well as his technical expertise.

## LITERATURE CITED

- American Ornithologists' Union. 1957. Check-list of North American birds, 5<sup>th</sup> ed. American Ornithologists' Union, Baltimore, Maryland.
- Andrews, R. and Righter, R. 1992. Colorado Birds: a Reference to their Distribution and Habitat. Denver Museum of Natural History, Denver.
- Bailey, A.M. and R.J. Niedrach. 1965. The Birds of Colorado. Denver Museum of Natural History, Denver, CO.
- Dunn, J.L. and Garrett, K.L. 1997. A Field Guide to Warblers of North America. Houghton Mifflin Company, Boston.
- Kingery, H.E. 1998. Ovenbird. In Colorado Breeding Bird Atlas, H. E. Kingery (Ed.), Colorado Bird Atlas Partnership, Denver, CO.

*Mike Henwood, Hawkhen@aol.com*

## Upland Sandpiper: A Regular Fall Migrant in the Front Range Region?

*Ted Floyd*

We humans are creatures of habit, it is often said. And so it is with birders. Here in Colorado, we birders tend to observe the same habits, year in and year out. In spring we look for migrants on the Eastern Plains; in summer we do breeding bird surveys in the foothills. Come autumn, we sojourn to the high country for deepwater bird species; by early winter, we are in CBC mode.

Indeed, we know exactly when and where to look for certain avian specialties. In Boulder County, where I live, local birders know to look for Sabine's Gulls on reservoirs in September, for Black Rosy-Finches at Allenspark in January and February, for Bobolinks in hayfields in May, for Calliope Hummingbirds at feeders in the lowlands in July and August. Strange to say, Boulder County birders even know when and where to expect the *unexpected*: Gregory Canyon in early summer, Valmont Reservoir following hard freezes, Boulder Creek during upslope systems in spring, and so forth.



*Upland Sandpiper, Logan County, 20 Jun 2004. Photo by Tony Leukering*

Why, after just a few years in Boulder County, or wherever, you can practically go birding in your sleep. Just follow the script. Abide by the formula. Check the hotline daily, and always have your cell phone—excuse me, your iPhone—turned on. In no time at all, you'll be one of Colorado's top listers.

That's great. Seriously. I mean it. I think it's wonderful that so many of us have a solid grasp of avian status and distribution here in Colorado. Especially in this information age, all of us have unlimited access, it would seem, to every blessed kilobyte of ornithological data ever compiled, to every nugget of birding wisdom

ever disclosed. Spend a few hours online, and you'll know more than Alfred M. Bailey and Robert J. Niedrach (*Birds of Colorado*, 1965) ever knew. Obtain one of those pocket gizmos, and you'll have vastly more data than Robert Righter and Robert Andrews (*Colorado Birds*, 1992) ever amassed.

Now think about that for a moment.

We all know the same stuff. We all have access to the same information. It's all been figured out for us. It's all so easy. There's nothing left to learn.

Fortunately, not all Colorado birders see it that way. I think of the efforts of Tony Leukering and Joey Kellner and others who, not all that long ago, demonstrated extensive use of mountain reservoirs by scoters, loons, and other seabirds on fall migration. Or Nathan Pieplow's ongoing investigations into the status and distribution of Red Crossbill types in Colorado. Or Dave Leatherman's peregrinations in eastern Colorado and Andrew Spencer's recent explorations of Lord-knows-where on the West Slope. Those folks—and others, to be sure—aren't content just to follow the script, to abide by the formula. They inspire me to keep an open mind about the ornithological possibilities in Colorado. By their example, they exhort me to be wary of "received wisdom" about avian status and distribution.

Case in point: the Upland Sandpiper.

Back in May of this year, I enjoyed an entirely typical encounter with the species. With seven participants on a birding excursion with The Nature Conservancy, I went looking for the species in a pasture way out in eastern Colorado, in Yuma County. The Upland Sandpiper is an expected breeder in Yuma County; in fact, I'd seen the species in the very same pasture a year earlier. In no time at all, the eight of us had found a pair of Uppies—breeders, presumably—doing all the things they're supposed to do: strutting along the ground, flying up to fenceposts, and looking decidedly bug-eyed. *Tick*. We checked the species off and proceeded to other fare: Eastern Phoebes under the bridge, migrant warblers up by the ranch house, and so forth. I'd gotten Upland Sandpiper for my Colorado year list, and I wouldn't think about Colorado Uppies for another two months.

Then, on 30 July, I was up in the middle of the night—at 3:32 a.m., to be precise—and I heard the unmistakable *quiddyquit* of an Upland Sandpiper just to the north of my house in Lafayette. An Upland Sandpiper over Boulder County? Even though the flight call is unmistakable, I wondered if I could, in fact, have made a mistake. A second or two later, I heard it again, straight above the house. The call was crystal clear. It was unambiguously an Uppie. Then I heard

it a third time, a little ways off to the south now. And a fourth time. And a fifth—far off to the south now, but still audible.

That Upland Sandpiper—I assume it was just the one individual—wasn't the only bird up there. In the next half hour, I heard 28 flight calls from Chipping Sparrows, two from Lark Sparrows, and even one from a Lark Bunting. By late July, if conditions are right, the night sky of the Front Range region rings out with the flight calls of sparrows on nocturnal migration. In retrospect, the conditions that night were ideal. Winds were out of the northeast, the cloud ceiling was low, and there was a bit of fog. Presumably, the Upland Sandpiper had gotten blown off course a little in the unsettled weather.

Cool—a bird for my Boulder County list that had thus far eluded living legends Peter Gent and Bill Kaempfer. Surely, it would be a decade or more before another Upland Sandpiper would stray to Boulder County.

It didn't take nearly as long.

**O**n 20 August, I heard another Upland Sandpiper over Lafayette. Although the skies were mostly clear at the time (around 4:45 a.m.), it had been cloudy earlier in the night. And although the winds were basically calm, they had been northerly a few hours earlier. In any event, migrants were on the move: I heard passerines calling at a rate of 80+ flight calls per hour that night.

It happened again on 25 August. I stepped outside the house, heard the *psiff* of a Wilson's Warbler on nocturnal migration, the *rising seen?* of an invisible Chipping Sparrow, and then the wonderful *quiddyquit* of an Upland Sandpiper. Winds were light and northeasterly, and there was a fairly low cloud ceiling.

It's not just Boulder County. In the wee hours of the morning on 9 August, my son Andrew and I heard multiple Upland Sandpipers migrating over La Junta, Otero County. Winds were—you guessed it—northeasterly, and it was overcast. The next morning, with winds out of the east-northeast, we heard an Uppie flying past the dam at John Martin Reservoir, Bent County. And less than two weeks later, on 22 August, I heard several flying over the Fox Ranch, Yuma County, in the hour before sunrise.

Upland Sandpipers are everywhere, it would seem, in eastern Colorado. Even as far west as Boulder County, wedged up against the mountains. How come I'd never noticed?

Well, one possibility is that there was something peculiar about the year 2009. In this scenario, the Upland Sandpiper passage in 2009

had a peculiarly westerly component, for whatever reason. Things like that happen. Think of the once-in-a-lifetime incursion of Clay-colored Sparrows into the Front Range region 9-11 May of this year.

But there is another possibility.

**T**he other possibility is that I'd never noticed because, well, I'd never noticed. We birders, as I noted at the outset, are creatures of habit. We're set in our ways. We know what's out there. And that knowledge can blind us to the truth. Until the late 20th century, birders "knew" about the one spectacular *Aechmophorus* grebe in western North America. True, Clark's and Western Grebes had been previously described (as subspecies), but it was not until the late 1980s, thanks to several high-profile publications by Kenn Kaufman and others, that birders started to notice *two* species of *Aechmophorus* grebes. There is also the case of the two bird species formerly known as the Sage Grouse. Since we "knew" there was just the one species, we somehow looked past the dramatic differences in plumage, structure, and vocalizations that distinguish the Greater from the Gunnison (Young et al. 2000). And then there is the well-known case of the gazillions of Semipalmated Sandpipers wintering along the Gulf and south Atlantic coasts in the mid-1970s—until ornithologist Allan R. Phillips (1975) showed that they were all Westerns. Oops.

In just the past few years, we Coloradans have discovered the wonders and glories of nocturnal landbird migration. Now until quite recently, the conventional wisdom was that nocturnal migration is essentially an "East Coast" affair. It happens in the Appalachians, in the Great Lakes region, and, of course, up and down the Atlantic Seaboard. It also happens right here in Colorado. But here's the key point: the phenomenon of nocturnal migration in Colorado is decidedly non-Eastern. Back East, folks listen for *Catharus* thrushes in mid-September. Try that in Colorado, and you'll hear virtually nothing. But go out in July—July, for crying out loud!—and you'll hear Chipping Sparrows on nocturnal passage to their molt-migration grounds out on the Eastern Plains. Who knew? Answer: Nobody. Nobody knew of one of the most intriguing ornithological phenomena in Colorado because, paradoxically, everybody "knew" there was nothing out there.

Could it be the same with Upland Sandpipers over the Front Range region? I don't know. We need more data. We need to listen in 2010 and beyond. Let's do this: Let's all listen on the morning of 12 August 2010. The thrilling Perseid meteor shower will be at peak

intensity that morning. Felicitously, there will be no moon. It promises to be a great show. For millennia, humans have looked forward to the lovely spectacle of the Perseids.

And for the past few years now, we Coloradans have been paying attention to something else on hot August nights. We've been noticing Lark Sparrows and Lark Buntings on nocturnal migration—species that are not “supposed” to give flight calls at night. We've been listening to Chipping Sparrows en route to their molt-migration grounds—nobody's published that yet. And the latest: Upland Sandpipers, regular migrants perhaps through Front Range airspace, saying *quiddyquit*, winging their way to the pampas of Argentina.

I'm not sure how this will pan out. As I said, it could be that the Upland Sandpiper flight of 2009 was a one-off event. But I rather think not. Give it a few more years, I suspect, and we'll all know that Uppies are regular late-summer migrants over Boulder County and elsewhere in the Front Range region.

Meanwhile, someone, somewhere, will be thinking outside the box again.

*Quiddyquit.*

### **Tips for Hearing Upland Sandpipers**

Needless to say, you need to know what they sound like. Upland Sandpipers produce a remarkable array of vocalizations, and their courtship song is considered to be among the most stirring in all Creation. Edward H. Forbush and John B. May, quoted in Daniel E. Bowen and C. Stuart Houston's *Birds of North America* account of the Upland Sandpiper (2001), say this: “Except for the wail of the wind, there is nothing else like it in nature. It is an ethereal sound.” Harry C. Oberholser, also quoted by Bowen and Houston, calls the sound “enchantingly weird.” And Bowen and Houston themselves state that, “For those who have heard it,” the courtship song of the Upland Sandpiper is “as memorable as the cries of wolves or loons.”

But that's not the sound I'm talking about. Rather, I'm thinking of the bubbly flight call, described by Oberholser as “rich fluttering notes, usually in triplicate, sounded during migration.” I like David Sibley's characterization of the flight call as “a low, strong *qui-di-di-du*; last note lower and weaker; distinctively loud and clear” (2000). Pete Dunne, in his *Essential Field Guide Companion* (2006), says that the Upland Sandpiper's flight call is “brusque, low, and liquid,” and he comments that it “is not a harsh or loud sound, but it carries incredibly far.”

The Upland Sandpiper's flight call is not nearly as esteemed, it would appear, as its courtship song. But “for those who have heard

it,” with apologies to Bowen and Houston, it is as memorable as the melancholy flight call of the Swainson’s Thrush or the piercing flight call of the Chipping Sparrow.

By all means, listen to an actual sound-recording of the species, which you can do at <http://macaulaylibrary.org/audio/50267>. That clip, #50267, of an Upland Sandpiper in North Dakota in June, is the best I’ve found at the Macaulay Library website. But it’s not the only one, and it’s a good idea to listen to the others to become aware of possible variants on the standard *quiddyquit* flight call. For example, try listening to recordings 11536 and 126945, from Suriname in November and Bolivia in September, respectively.

When to listen in real life? The southbound migration of the Upland Sandpiper extends from June till October, but the peak in Colorado is probably from late July to late August, maybe to early September. The species is a nocturnal migrant, so you need to go out at night. I hypothesize that northeasterly winds drive the birds west into the Front Range region, and I believe that a low cloud ceiling pushes the birds closer to the ground and induces them to call more.

A final thought. Does it “count” if you just hear it? Puh-leeze. Would you rather see a bug-eyed pinhead of a misshapen bird squatting on a fence post? Or would you rather glory in the experience of what Aldo Leopold relates in *A Sand County Almanac* (1949)? “On cool August nights,” writes Leopold, “you can hear their whistled signals as they set wing for the pampas, to prove again the age-old unity of the Americas.”

## ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

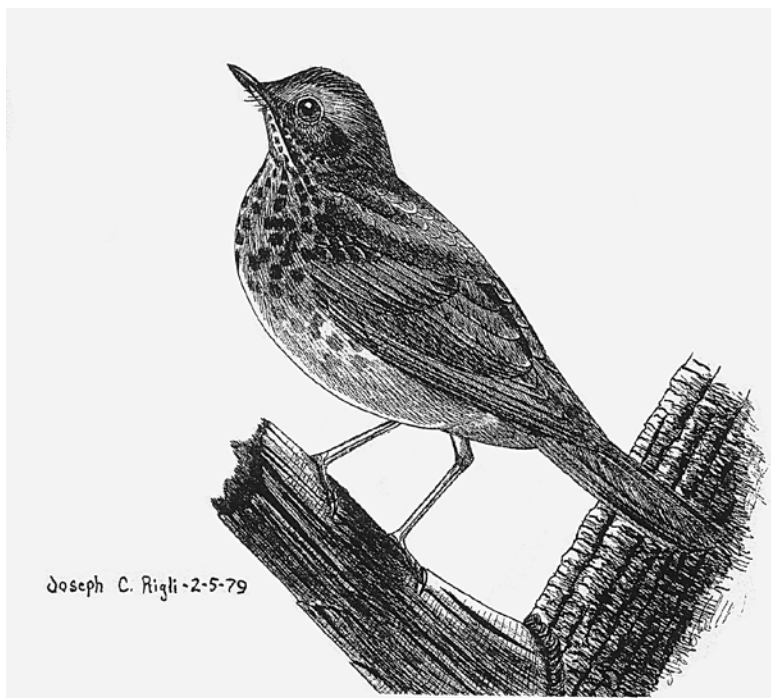
I thank Allan Burns, Paul Hess, and Rick Wright for their comments on an earlier draft of this article.

## LITERATURE CITED

- Andrews, R., and R. Righter. 1992. *Colorado Birds: A Reference to Their Distribution and Habitat*. Denver Museum of Natural History, Denver, CO.
- Bailey, A.M., and R.J. Niedrach. 1965. *Birds of Colorado*. Denver Museum of Natural History, Denver, CO.
- Dunne, P. 2006. *Pete Dunne’s Essential Field Guide Companion: A Comprehensive Resource for Identifying North American Birds*. Houghton Mifflin, New York.
- Houston, C.S., and D.E. Bowen, Jr. 2001. Upland Sandpiper (*Bartramia longicauda*). In *The Birds of North America Online* (A. Poole, Ed.), Ithaca: Cornell Lab of Ornithology. Retrieved from the Birds of North America Online: <http://bna.birds.cornell.edu/bna/species/580>
- Leopold, A. 1949. *A Sand County Almanac*. Oxford University Press, New York.
- Phillips, A.R. 1975. Semipalmated Sandpiper: identification, migrations, summer and winter ranges. *American Birds* 29:799-806.
- Sibley, D.A. 2000. *The Sibley Guide to Birds*. Alfred A. Knopf, New York.

Young, J. R., Braun, C. E., Oyler-McCance, S. J., Hupp, J. W. and T. W. Quinn. 2000. A new species of sage-grouse from southwestern Colorado. *Wilson Bulletin* 112(4):445-453.

*Ted Floyd*, 2009 South Fork Drive, Lafayette, CO 80026, [tfloyd@aba.org](mailto:tfloyd@aba.org)



*Hermit Thrush by Joe Rigli*

# The 52<sup>nd</sup> Report of the Colorado Bird Records Committee

Lawrence S. Semo

Chair, Colorado Bird Records Committee

Doug W. Faulkner

Secretary, Colorado Bird Records Committee

## Introduction

This 52<sup>nd</sup> report presents the results of deliberations of the Colorado Bird Records Committee (hereafter CBRC or Committee) on partial results of circulations held during mid-2009. This article provides results of the circulation of 55 reports submitted by 33 observers documenting 41 occurrences of 34 species from the period 2005 through 2009. Seventeen reports involving 16 species were not accepted because of insufficient documentation or because descriptions were inconsistent with known identification criteria. Per CBRC by-laws, 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.

Highlights of this report include the long overdue first state record of Acadian Flycatcher (*Empidonax virescens*), which brings the state list to **489** species; the second record of Ross's Gull (*Rhodostethia rosea*); and the fourth record of Ruff (*Philomachus pugnax*).

Committee members voting on these reports were 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>).

## 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 50<sup>th</sup> Supplement (Chesser et al. 2009). 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 who 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 who 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 Chico Basin Ranch (CBR), Reservoir (Res.), and State Park (SP).

## **RECORDS ACCEPTED**

**Brown Pelican** – *Pelecanus occidentalis* (17/5). Representing the second record for Crowley, an immature bird was at Lake Meredith on 25 Apr 2009 (BM †; 2009-22; 7-0).

**Tricolored Heron** – *Egretta tricolor* (22/7). Members of the Ardeidae are known to wander outside their normal range following their breeding season. The late summer of 2008 was no exception in Colorado, as three juvenile Tricolored Herons were detected. The first was at Thurston Res., Prowers, on 28 July (BKP †, DAL; 2008-93; 7-0), furnishing the first record for that county. Two juveniles were on the Sedgwick portion of Jumbo Res. on 8 Aug (CWi †, BS; 2008-94; 7-0), together providing the first documented occurrence of the species for that county as well.

**Ruff** – *Philomachus pugnax* (4/3). On 1 May 2008, Floyd discovered a Ruff at Boulder Res., Boulder (DF †, PG; RH †, BK, NK †, NP, BS †, DW †, TW †, TE; 2008-42; 7-0) which was observed by many others during the day. The bird first appeared to be a female based on its dull plumage; however, certain plumage and size aspects of the bird seemed a bit odd. Of note were the bird's larger size compared to nearby Lesser Yellowlegs (*Tringa flavipes*) and its overall structure, which

differed from that of a female Ruff. If a male, it was a male with a complete absence of supplementary alternate male plumage (i.e., ruffs, ear tufts, ornate patterning). Compared to females, males are less delicate, with a rather angular shape and a proportionally smaller head and bill (Richard Chandler, pers. comm.).

Expert opinion from U.S. shorebird experts Richard Chandler and Kevin Karlson as well as from Jos Hooijmeijer from the Netherlands (pers. comm.) suggested that the bird was a "faeder" male, a recently recognized rare plumage type in male Ruffs (Jukema & Piersma 2006). Faeder males, which constitute only about 1% of the male population, are permanent female mimics. Faeders molt into a prenuptial male plumage, but do not develop the ornamental feathers of normal males. Although they sport a mostly female-type plumage, faeder males, as did the Colorado bird, have a more upright head posture than females and show erections of neck/nape feathers.

The faeder breeding system is intriguing: faeders obtain access to mating territories together with females and steal matings when females crouch to solicit copulation (Jukema and Piersma 2006). Females often seem to prefer copulations with faed-



*Red Phalarope, DeWeese Lake, Custer County, 22 Sep 2008. Photo by Rich Miller*

ers to copulations with normal males, and normal males also copulate with faeders (and vice versa) more often than with females. The homosexual copulations may attract females to the lek, like the presence of satellite males (Hooijmeijer, 2009). Jukema and Piersma (2006) opine that faeder birds may display the original male breeding plumage from before other male types evolved.

With only four records of the species in Colorado, the presence of a bird in the state with a plumage type that is only displayed in 1% of the total population would be quite amazing. However, Ruff expert David Lank from British Columbia (*vide* Paul Hess) does not believe the Colorado bird is a faeder: "From the size relative to the yellowlegs, I think it is simply a male, lacking [display] plumage. Some fraction of first-spring males are quite slow to develop plumage, or,

in captivity anyway, do not grow display plumage at all until their second year. By May 1, indeed, most males are up and running, but some, primarily younger birds, lag behind. They nonetheless do molt into 'breeding body plumage,' like the one here. Grossly, such males look like large females as far as I am concerned. The odds of its being a faeder are small."

#### **Red Phalarope –**

*Phalaropus fulicaria* (41/22). The Committee recently deliberated on and accepted two Red Phalarope records from 2008. A juvenile at DeWeese Res., Custer, on 22 Sep was the first for the county (RM †; 2008-109; 7-0), while a basic-plumaged adult at Cottonwood Marsh on 5 Oct (NK †, AS †, KW; 2008-117; 7-0) was the second for Boulder.

**Ross's Gull** - *Rhodostethia rosea* (2/1). Establishing the second record for Colorado of this rare Arctic species, an adult in basic plumage was well described from Lagerman Res., Boulder, on 28 Oct 2007 (BS; 2007-75; 7-0).

**Pomarine Jaeger** – *Stercorarius pomarinus* (23/13). A juvenile intermediate morph was at Jackson Res., Morgan, between 4 and 5 Oct 2008 (CN † BK, AS; 2008-116; 7-0). Another juvenile, a light morph bird, entertained birders attending the



annual Rocky Mountain Bird Observatory picnic at Barr Lake, Adams, on 18 Oct 2008 (AS; 2008-123; 7-0).

**Long-tailed Jaeger** - *Stercorarius longicaudus* (14/7). An adult, the second for Larimer, was at Claymore Lake on 28 Aug 2007 (KE †; 2007-33; 7-0). This is the second accepted record of the species in August for Colorado.

**Acadian Flycatcher** – *Empidonax virescens* (1/1). On the morning of 12 May 2008, Percival detected an *Empidonax* at Van's Grove, a small grove of Siberian Elm (*Ulmus crassifolia*) located on the north side of John Martin Res., Bent, named after Van Truan. The bird had a greenish back with a thin, complete yellowish eye-ring, a very bright white throat, a long and wide bill with a completely orange lower mandible, blackish wings with two whitish wing bars, whitish underparts, and a long primary projection. Based on these traits, the bird could only have been one of three species of *Empidonax* flycatcher: Willow (*E. traillii*), Alder (*E. alnorum*), or Acadian. Excitement must have run through Percival's veins as he noticed that the bill on the bird was very wide and long, wider and longer than on Willow or Alder Flycatchers. The identification of the bird as Colorado's first Acadian Flycatcher was also based on the

Acadian Flycatcher, Van's Grove, Bent County, 18 May 2009. Photo by Joey Kellner



Acadian Flycatcher, Van's Grove, Bent County, 18 May 2009. Photo by Brandon Percival

presence of a discernible eye-ring and greenish upperparts, which eliminated Willow Flycatcher, and the longer wings and bill, which did not fit Alder. The peaked crown of the subject bird fit quite well for Acadian. CBRC review of the narrative descriptions and of photographs taken of the bird drew a unanimous deliberation that the bird was indeed an Acadian Flycatcher (BKP †, JK †, BM †; 2009-32; 7-0), a rather overdue species to be detected in the state, considering the relative proximity of its breeding range to Colorado.

Acadian Flycatchers breed in eastern North America west to extreme southeastern Nebraska, eastern Kansas and Oklahoma, and central Texas (Sibley 2003). According to Sharpe et al. (2001), up to four Acadian Flycatchers were netted in 1996 in Keith County, Nebraska, which abuts the northeastern tip of Sedgwick County, Colorado. The species has also been detected in New Mexico (Williams 2007) and there is at least one record of the species from California (California Bird Records Committee 2009).

**Black Phoebe** – *Sayornis nigricans*. Establishing a first record for *Boulder*, one was at Cottonwood Marsh on the early date of 8 Apr 2009 (MB; 2009-16; 7-0).

**Purple Martin** – *Progne subis*. A female-type Purple Martin, presumably of the eastern population (*P. s. subis*), was discovered at Lamar Community College, *Prowers*, on 6 May 2008 (BG; 2008-52; 7-0). Lamar hosted two second-year male martins in 2006. One wonders when the first

documented breeding colony of eastern Purple Martins will become established in southeastern Colorado.

**Sedge Wren** – *Cistothorus platensis* (19/4). One was at CBR on 21 Oct 2008 (BM; 2008-124; 7-0), providing the second record of the species for *El Paso*. Another, the first for *Bent*, was at Bent's Old Fort near La Junta on 2 Nov 2008 (JD; 2008-130; 6-1).

**Wood Thrush** – *Hylocichla ustulata* (30/18). A territorial singing male was at Dixon Res., *Larimer*, on 11 Jun 2008 (AS †s, ED; 2008-88; 7-0). Based on discussions on COBirds, the state birding listserv, the bird may have been present at that location for a lengthier period of time; however, no details on latter dates of occurrence were submitted to the CBRC.

**Sprague's Pipit** – *Anthus spragueii* (11/7). Birders walking short grasslands in northeastern Colorado during late September and early October have found Sprague's Pipits to be fairly regular in that area during fall migration. An additional two birds were seen at the Fox Ranch near Idalia, *Yuma*, on 4 Oct 2008 (NP, AS; 2008-115; 7-0).

**Lucy's Warbler** – *Vermivora luciae* (9/7). Pieplow documented the returning breeding Lucy's Warblers at Yellowjacket Canyon, *Montezuma*, where he saw a pair on 8 May 2008 (NP; 2008-55; 7-0). The CBRC removed the requirement of documenting Lucy's Warblers from this specific location in August 2008 (Semo 2009). Observations of Lucy's Warblers from all other locations in Colorado are still requested, however.

**Northern Parula** – *Parula ameri-*

*cana*. Very late was one present at a residence in Lakewood, Jefferson, on 23 Nov 2008 (CB †; 2008-153; 7-0). Other previous late records of Northern Parula in Colorado include one in Paonia, Delta, on 26 Nov 2005 and another found dead in Boulder on the extremely late date of 15 Jan 2006.



#### **Yellow-throated**

**Warbler** – *Dendroica dominica* (35/12). The second for Yuma, and the first since 1977, an alternate-plumaged male was at Bonny Res. on 11 May 2009 (CWo †; 2009-31; 7-0).

**Grace's Warbler** – *Dendroica graciae*. Quite far north was an adult male at Estes Park, Larimer, on 7 May 2009 (RH †, BC; 2009-29; 7-0).

**Palm Warbler** – *Dendroica palmarum*. Rare for the mountains, a western race (*C. p. palmarum*) Palm Warbler was at the Blue River Water Treatment pond in Silverthorne, Summit, on 29 October 2006 (AS †, JK; 2006-148; 7-0).

#### **Kentucky War-**

*Northern Parula*, Lakewood, Jefferson County, 23 Nov 2008. Photo by Carla Blair

**bler** – *Oporornis formosus* (35/9). A male, the first for CBR, was present on the *Pueblo* side of the ranch on 1 May 2009 (BM †; BP †; 2009-26; 7-0), establishing the seventh record for the county.



*Kentucky Warbler*, Chico Basin Ranch, Pueblo County, 1 May 2009. Photo by Bryan Patrick

**Scarlet Tanager** – *Piranga olivacea* (33/14). The male that established a territory in Gregory Canyon, Boulder, during the summer of 2007 returned in 2008, where it was documented on 11 Jun (AS †s, MM; 2008-87; 7-0). The bird was reported off and on during the summer season, but unfortunately the Committee only received details of its presence for the one date.

**Sage Sparrow** – *Amphispiza belli*. East of normal, an adult was at Estes Park on 2 May 2008 (RH †, GM; 2008-44; 7-0).

### RECORDS NOT ACCEPTED

The Committee recognizes that its “not accepted” decisions may upset those individuals whose documentations did not receive endorsement as state records. We heartily acknowledge that those who make the effort to submit documentation certainly care whether or not their reports are accepted. However, non-accepted reports do not necessarily suggest that the observer misidentified or did not see the species. A non-accepted report only indicates that, in the opinion of at least three of the seven Committee members, the documentation did not provide enough evidence to support the identification of the species reported. Many non-accepted reports do not adequately describe the bird(s) observed or adequately rule out similarly looking species. For more information on what it looks for, the Committee recommends that observers refer to the article written by Tony Leukering on documenting rare birds (Leukering 2004), which is available

online through the CBRC website ([http://www.cfo-link.org/records\\_committee/CBRC\\_articles.php](http://www.cfo-link.org/records_committee/CBRC_articles.php)).

All non-accepted reports 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.

**Mute Swan** – *Cygnus olor*. The description and photographs of a first-winter Mute Swan at Cherry Creek Res., Arapahoe, on 9 Feb 2008 were conclusive in substantiating its identification; however, many Committee members felt that provenance of the bird could not be reasonably established and, therefore, decided not to accept this report as the state’s first record (2008-14; 2-5). One consenting member noted that the species is migratory in its European range and that populations in the northeastern U.S. move in response to the freezing of water bodies during winter. If a pattern for dispersal develops within western North America, not just in Colorado, then this report may be reconsidered in light of that new evidence. The Committee urges observers to continue to submit documentation of Mute Swans that may be of wild origin to help establish a pattern of occurrence in the state.

**Red-throated Loon** – *Gavia stellata*. One reported from Union Reservoir, Weld, 5 Nov 2006, took the divided Committee two rounds of voting (2006-154; 4-3, 3-4). The observer described the bird as a small, pale grayish loon with a prominent

white cheek and small, slightly upturned bill – all features consistent with Red-throated Loon. The observer, however, mentioned that Pacific Loon was eliminated with caution, and some Committee members wondered whether the observer was convinced of the identification. The observer noted taking photos; unfortunately, none were submitted with the documentation.

**Yellow-crowned Night-Heron** – *Nyctanassa violacea*. The report of an adult along the Arkansas River near Howard, Fremont, on 12 Feb 2008 went through two rounds of voting (2008-17; 4-3, 3-4). Committee members were in disagreement over whether the description of the head plumage was strong enough to support the identification. The description of “creamy/white crown, black mask, white cheek and black chin” could also have been used for a poorly seen Great Blue Heron in the opinion of some members, while others voting in favor of the report considered the “black chin” a substantive characteristic in support of Yellow-crowned Night-Heron. Ultimately, the majority of Committee members voting not to accept did so because of the observer’s description of the bird being similar in size to a Great Blue Heron and also because of the winter date of the observation, a time period in which no records of the species have been documented in Colorado.

**Ross’s Gull** – *Rhodostethia rosea*. Documentation of a small larid at John Martin Reservoir on 14 Oct 2007, thought to be a basic-plumaged adult Ross’s Gull, did not receive

CBRC endorsement as a state record (2007-72; 2-5). The CBRC originally reviewed this document as a different individual from the accepted *Boulder Ross’s Gull* (2007-75) due to the time between sightings (approximately two weeks).

The Committee struggled with this documentation, as each member knew the two observers—only one of whom submitted documentation—and respected their birding expertise. However, as with all documentations, it was essential to refrain from taking the identity of the observer into account in order to come to an unbiased decision on the report. With that in mind, all of the dissenting members mentioned that the distance of observation (500 yards) on a very windy day was their main concern, since the observer admittedly could provide very few definitive details regarding size and plumage. Two members supported the documentation, and had the second observer also submitted a report with corroborating details, or the bird been closer or the day less windy, the fate of this report may very well have been more positive.

**Vaux’s Swift** – *Chaetura vauxi*. A single calling bird near Paonia, Delta, on 2 May 2007 would have represented the first state record if accepted (2007-81; 0-7). Description of the bird sufficiently identified it as a *Chaetura* swift, and the described call of “single high-pitched notes spaced approximately one second apart” may suggest Vaux’s. The observer noted that the bird sounded similar to the Vaux’s Swift recordings on Cornell’s *Bird Songs of the Rocky Mountain States*

and Provinces, which he listened to 5-10 minutes after the observation. The current makeup of the Committee, however, is reluctant to accept a first state record based solely on a written vocalization description.

**Sedge Wren** – *Cistothorus platensis*. Lack of comparison with Marsh Wren ultimately undid the documentation of one near Hygiene, Boulder, 12 April 2008 (2008-27; 2-5). Dissenting members mentioned that several features were not adequately compared to those of Marsh Wren (*C. palustris*), specifically the crown pattern, bill length, and vocalizations. The bird was observed in an area of cattails (*Typha* spp.) with multiple Marsh Wrens, and many Committee members would have liked to have more analysis of separation of this bird from that species.

**Pacific-slope Flycatcher** – *Empidonax difficilis*. The CBRC reviewed two reports of Pacific-slope Flycatchers captured at bird banding stations in Lyons, Boulder, 20 Sep 2007 (2007-67; 2-5) and Barr Lake SP on 1 Sep 2008 (2008-97; 2-5). Both birds were photographed and readily identifiable as belonging to the “Western” Flycatcher complex. Identification of both birds rested on in-hand measurements taken during the normal banding process for *Empidonax* flycatchers, which includes several measurements additional to those normally taken for other species. The banders relied exclusively on the formula provided in the *Identification Guide to North American Birds* (Pyle 1997) to separate Cordilleran (*E. occidentalis*) and Pacific-slope Flycatchers.

The Committee solicited comment from Peter Pyle, the developer of the formula the banders used, on the efficacy of that formula to convincingly separate the two “Western” Flycatcher species. Mr. Pyle’s response (pers. comm.) urged caution when relying solely on the formula provided in the *Identification Guide*, especially when tested against the standards of proof normally in place for first state records. Mr. Pyle stated, “there are three problems that I think should prevent these records from being accepted as Pacific-slope Flycatchers, although both (and particularly 2007-67) could well have been these. The first problem is that the formulae on wing morphology presented in the *Identification Guide* were originally based on specimens. Since publication of that work in the Allan Phillips Festschrift [Dickerman 1997] we have learned that measures from specimens do not equate exactly to measures in live birds, especially regarding the longest-primary-to-longest-secondary measure. The formulae presented in that paper to separate the two wood-pewees, while generally indicative, have since been proven to be less reliable for separating live birds, and I suspect the same may be the case for separating Pacific-slope from Cordilleran Flycatcher. The second problem is that it can be difficult to obtain consistent measures of primary spacing between observers. One or two values being slightly off can greatly affect the overall value for the longer formulae. The third problem is that the original paper splitting these two species (Johnson 1980) did not

address what happens with the complex across southern Canada, where they may form a cline in vocalizations, appearance, and morphology. If this is the case it may be impossible to eliminate either 'species' if it came from southern British Columbia or Alberta, which I would guess may be the origin for Colorado birds that look and measure out more like Pacific-slope Flycatchers. My personal opinion is that these two taxa probably should not have been split. For these reasons, I never identified a Cordilleran Flycatcher during 24 falls on the Farallones, despite getting some interesting looking birds late in the season that measured into the COFL range. We had to call all to be simply 'Western' Flycatchers."

Echoing Pyle's sentiments, one Committee member noted that there is some discussion in the scientific and birding communities as to whether "Western" Flycatcher should ever have been split, and whether re-lumping Cordilleran and Pacific-slope back into a single species may be prudent.

**Swainson's Thrush** – *Catharus ustulatus*. The documentation of one at CBR, *El Paso*, on 23 May 2005 noted the bird as belonging to the western russet-backed subspecies group, which is known from Colorado (Bailey and Niedrach 1965). The report met little support from the Committee (2005-61; 2-5) since the experienced observer's description of "a Swainson's Thrush with brighter buffy face pattern and a rich russet back" was not enough for most Committee members to accept the report as a state record.

The observer noted taking photos; unfortunately, none were submitted with the documentation. As with all non-accepted reports, the Committee will reconsider the documentation if photos or further evidence is provided.

**Pine Warbler** – *Dendroica pinus*. The minimal description of a fall-plumaged male at Overland Pond Park, *Denver*, 8 Dec 2008, provided too few characteristics to distinguish this species from similar-looking warblers, such as Blackpoll (*D. striata*) and Bay-breasted (*D. castanea*) [2008-139; 1-6]. Many of the features noted by the observer, including bright yellow throat and breast, white underparts, and olive back, are consistent with Pine Warbler. Those features are also consistent with other species, including Yellow-throated Vireo (*Vireo flavifrons*), but the report did not rule out those other species.

**Swainson's Warbler** – *Limnolophus swainsonii*. Although the record garnered some support, the Committee did not endorse the documentation of one near Sale Lake, *Boulder*, on 14 May 2008 as Boulder's second and the state's eighth record (2008-62; 2-5). Several dissenting members specifically mentioned that the description of the crown as being "solid dark brown" did not fit Swainson's Warbler, which has a reddish-brown crown, and that the overall description did not sufficiently rule out other species.

**Le Conte's Sparrow** – *Ammodramus leconteii*. The highly detailed description of two birds at Hopper Ponds SWA, *Yuma*, 3 Oct 2008, observed only in flight and for four seconds to-

tal, gave several Committee members pause (2008-113; 3-4). The precision with which the observer noted details such as the bird's size ("15-28 percent" smaller than nearby White-crowned Sparrows) and plumage details of the rump, back, tail, chest, and head, but not the coloration of the wings, which was "hard to quantify," did not fit with the experience of several Committee members who have observed small passerines under similar conditions. The observer noted seeing the birds on 4 and 5 Oct as well, but did not provide details of those observations. The Committee urges observers to carefully consider whether their documentation objectively reports on the field conditions and actual observation for the date(s) provided. It is conceivable that the observer was biased in the description by multiple days of observation or misreported the duration of observation; however, the Committee had to consider only the information provided on the report form, which in this case was of multiple flight views on a single day, none of which could have lasted longer than a single second, since the report noted total observation time as four seconds.

**Nelson's Sparrow** – *Ammodramus nelsoni*. Documentation of one at Hopper Ponds SWA on 4 Oct 2008 included a suggestive description and field sketch (2008-114; 1-6). Committee members were mostly in agreement that the three-second observation of a flying bird was too brief to convincingly eliminate other contenders such as Le Conte's Sparrow, a species reported from this location

the previous day (see species account immediately above).

Note that with publication of the Fiftieth Supplement to the American Ornithologists' Union's *Checklist of North American Birds* (Chesser et al. 2009), the name of this species, formerly "Nelson's Sharp-tailed Sparrow," has been changed to simply Nelson's Sparrow.

**Snow Bunting** – *Plectrophenax nivalis*. Twelve buntings were reported feeding with Horned Larks (*Eremophila alpestris*) along State Highway 50 between Delta, Delta, and Grand Junction, Mesa, on 22 Jan 2008. As with many other non-accepted documentations in this CBRC report, the subject birds were inadequately described in the opinion of most Committee members (2008-7; 1-6). The one-sentence description only mentioned that the birds were "in typical winter plumage" and "white with light brown markings." While the observer does have considerable experience with the species in the upper midwestern U.S., some Committee members expressed concern that similar species also likely to occur, such as Lapland Longspur (*Calcarius lapponicus*) and rosy-finches (*Leucosticte* spp.), were not considered and expressly ruled out in the report.

**Scarlet Tanager** – *Piranga olivacea*. A basic-plumaged male coming to a feeder in Fort Collins, Larimer, 2 Dec 2007, initially met with considerable Committee endorsement (2007-101; 5-2, 3-4). Dissenting members in the first round, however, noted the unusual behavior for a tanager of the bird "breaking open seeds in [its] bill"

while feeding on the ground with finches and juncos. After considering these first-round comments, several Committee members openly questioned whether Red Crossbill (*Loxia curvirostra*) had been sufficiently ruled out, as the description and behavior were also suggestive of that species. A female/immature Red Crossbill was noted at the location shortly after the date of this report. However, a couple of Committee members who voted to accept in both rounds noted that a Scarlet Tanager overwintering in Boulder approximately 20 years ago fed on seed.

**Painted Bunting** – *Passerina ciris*. The report of a female-plumaged Painted Bunting at CBR, *Pueblo*, 13 May 2008, initially received favorable support from the Committee, as the observer is very experienced with this species and the bird was seen by

many other observers, including a Committee member, although none submitted documentation (2005-44; 4-3, 1-6). However, the two-sentence description of a “wholly green bunting” with “paler yellowish-green on the throat and breast” left many Committee members wondering whether it was sufficient for the Committee to accept this report of a distinctive species and plumage. Ultimately, the Committee decided that it was not, as members were left to make their decisions based on the observer’s skills and not the actual description. While that is easy for Committee members who know the observer, the report would not stand on its own if the observer had not been known. The bird was reportedly photographed, and the Committee would reconsider the report if photos are provided or if other observers submit documentation.

## REPORTERS AND CITED OBSERVERS

The CBRC graciously thanks the following individuals for submitting records of or discovering the rare species in Colorado that prompted this circulation: Patricia Backes; Jason Beason; CB: Carla Blair; MB: Maggie Boswell; BC: Bob Chase; ED: Eric Defonso; KE: Ken Ecton; DF: Doug Faulkner; TF: Ted Floyd; PG: Peter Gent; BG: Brian Gibbons; RH: Rachel Hopper; BK: Bill Kaempfer; JK: Joey Kellner; CK: Connie Kogler; NK: Nick Komar; Cheyenne Laczek-Johnson; Mike Henwood; DAL: David A. Leatherman; BM: Bill Maynard; MM: Mark Miller; RM: Rich Miller; Brook Nelson; BP: Bryan Patrick; BKP: Brandon K. Percival; BS: Bill Schmoker; NP: Nathan Pieplow; AS: Andrew Spencer; Walter Szeliga; KW: Knut Waagan; DW: David Waltman; TW: Tom Wilberding; CWi: Cole Wild; CWo: Christopher Wood.

## LITERATURE CITED

- Chesser, T.R., R.C. Banks, F.K. Barker, C. Cicero, J.L. Dunn, A.W. Kratter, I.J. Lovette, P.C. Rasmussen, J.V. Remsen, Jr., J.D. Rising, D.F. Stotz, and K. Winker. 2009. Fiftieth Supplement to the American Ornithologists’ Union Check-list of North American Birds. *Auk* 126(3): 705-714.
- Bailey, A.M., and R.J. Niedrach. 1965. Birds of Colorado, Vol. II. Denver Museum of Natural History, Denver, CO.
- California Bird Records Committee. 2009. Rare Birds of California. [californiabirds.org](http://www.californiabirds.org). Retrieved from <http://www.californiabirds.org/cbrcdb.html>.

- Dickerman, R.W. (Ed.). 1997. The Era of Allan R. Phillips: A Festschrift. Horizon Communications, Albuquerque, NM.
- Hooijmeijer, J. (Ed.). 2009. Faeders are Supermen. Newsletter Ruff Research 2009: 13-14.
- Johnson, N.K. 1980. Character variation and evolution of sibling species in the *Empidonax difficilis-flavescens* complex (Aves: Tyrannidae). University of California Publications in Zoology 112: 1-151.
- Jukema, J., and T. Piersma. 2006. Permanent female mimics in a lekking shorebird. Biology Letters 2: 161-164.
- Leukering, T. 2004. Writing bird descriptions: ruling out other species. Colorado Birds 38(3): 120-127.
- Leukering, T., and L.S. Semo. 2003. Report of the Colorado Bird Records Committee: 2001 records, part I. Colorado Birds 37: 138-155.
- Pyle, P. 1997. Identification Guide to North American Birds, Part I. Slate Creek Press, Bolinas, CA.
- Semo, L.S., and D.W. Faulkner. 2009. The 49th Report of the Colorado Bird Records Committee. Colorado Birds 43(1):50-64.
- Semo, L.S., T. Leukering, and J.E. Stewart. 2002. Amendments to the state review list. Journal of the Colorado Field Ornithologists 36: 180-183.
- Sharpe, R.S., W.R. Silcock, and J.G. Jorgensen. 2001. Birds of Nebraska. University of Nebraska Press, Lincoln, NE.
- Sibley, D.A. 2003. The Sibley Field Guide to Birds of Eastern North America. Chanticleer Press, New York, NY.
- Williams, S.O. III. 2007. New Mexico Bird Records Committee Review List. New Mexico Ornithological Society website. Retrieved from [http://www.nmbirds.org/?page\\_id=11](http://www.nmbirds.org/?page_id=11).

Lawrence S. Semo, 9054 Dover Street, Westminster, CO 80021, lsemo@swca.com  
 Doug W. Faulkner, 6035 Parfet Street, Arvada, CO 80004, dwfaulkner@swca.com

## Estes Park

*Nathan Pieplow*

Even in Colorado, which certainly has no shortage of scenic mountain towns, Estes Park ranks high. Everybody knows it as the gateway to Rocky Mountain National Park, and birders also know it as a place to look for rare warblers or waterbirds at Lake Estes, for Northern Goshawk or Band-tailed Pigeon at the YMCA of the Rockies, or for flocks of rosy-finches at feeders in the winter. And the wildlife watching isn't limited to birds: there are so many elk in town that some locals consider them a nuisance.

Rocky Mountain National Park receives about three million recreational visits each year, and most of that traffic comes through Estes—so this town knows how to cater to visitors. It may have only 6,000 permanent residents, but it's got far too many restaurants for me to cover here. In fact, even though I've lived in Estes for many summers and eaten out at least once or twice a week, I haven't even visited half the restaurants in town. Therefore, in this article I'm sticking to the cream of the crop—the very best places I've been to—and there are some good ones.

We'll start at the beginning of the day—or actually before the beginning of most people's days, in the wee hours of the morning, when you might be passing through Estes on your way to see the ptarmigan dawn displays along Trail Ridge Road. If you haven't packed your own breakfast, you could be off to a rough start, because basically the first establishments to open in town are the Starbucks and the McDonald's, both of which start serving food at 6:00 a.m.. Starting at 6:30 a.m. you can visit **Kind Coffee** at 470 E. Elkhorn Ave, half a block west of the Highway 34/36 intersection, which is a local business with a strong emphasis on environmental sustainability. Kind has good coffee (so I'm told—I don't drink the stuff myself) and the usual assortment of coffeeshop pastries.

If you're coming through with more time for breakfast before your birding (or want to catch that meal on your way back from ptarmigation), I recommend the **Mountaineer Restaurant**, which recently moved from its location of many years to a new spot just down the street at 361 S. Saint Vrain. This is a reliable country-style breakfast place; not fancy, but satisfying. Personally, I'm a big fan of the corned beef hash.

If you're on your way up from Loveland with a little extra time at this hour, consider taking the scenic detour north from the town of Drake along Devils Gulch Road, through the tiny hamlet of Glen

Haven, Colorado. Your purpose: a stop at the **Glen Haven General Store** for one of their legendary fresh-baked cinnamon rolls. I wouldn't exactly call the service friendly, and there's no place to eat your roll indoors, but if you find a better cinnamon roll in Colorado, you'd better let me know. They also advertise 25-cent coffee, the quality of which I can't comment on. After your stop in Glen Haven, you can continue west on Devils Gulch Road to Estes Park, through the tightest switchbacks I know of in Colorado, and, at the top of the gulch, my very favorite view from a road.

Come lunchtime in Estes, your options multiply, but one place reigns supreme. If you like sandwiches at all, even a little bit, then **DeLeo's Park Theater Café & Deli**, at 132 Moraine Ave. next to the old movie theater, is an absolute must-eat destination. It's worth the whole drive from Denver, even worth braving the horrible movie puns in the menu (a sandwich called "The Gobblefather?" Oh brother...). Proprietor Tom DeLeo is a character right out of a comic book, a bold, bald, bearded barker who will make you the best pastrami sandwich you have ever tasted. His reuben sandwiches have been featured on the Food Network, and believe me, they're not over-hyped. The wait can be long at DeLeo's, but you'll never eat a sandwich here that wasn't worth your patience.

One of Estes Park's finer dining options for lunch and dinner is **Marys Lake Lodge** south of town at 2625 Marys Lake Road. Technically there are two restaurants here, the "Chalet" and the "Tavern," but for all practical purposes they are one. The service here isn't fast, and the bills are steep, but there is a great "hangout" atmosphere in the Tavern's bar-slash-dining-area, and the food is excellent: baked brie, stuffed quail, fresh sea bass, oysters Rockefeller...you get the idea.

Estes is blessed with a number of good Italian restaurants. **Mama Rose's**, a fairly pricey joint on the riverwalk at 338 W Elkhorn Ave.,



*DeLeo's Deli, Estes Park. Photo by Molly Malone*



Marys Lake Lodge, Estes Park. Photo by Nathan Pieplow

stands out for the quality of its pasta. **Sweet Basilico**, located at 430 Prospect Village Dr., takes the prize in most other categories, especially for dishes like chicken marsala and veal sorrento.

If it's pizza you fancy, you've again got many good options, but my top recommendation goes to **Village Pizza** at 543 Big Thompson, where a busy crowd often testifies to the quality of the pie. Honorable

mentions go to **Bob & Tony's** at 124 W. Elkhorn, which has tasty food in a college-town atmosphere (minus the college town), and to **Poppy's** at 342 E. Elkhorn, where the pizza is good and the service very friendly, although most of the rest of the Italian/American menu items are merely decent.

Some of my favorite restaurants in town serve the cuisine of other nations. The crown jewel in this category is probably **Thai Kitchen** at 401 S. Saint Vrain. The food is reasonably priced, and many dishes are excellent: a friend recommends their tofu as the "best ever." I'm not a huge fan of their pad thai, but you can't go wrong with the pad kee mow (also known as "drunken noodles"), and if you've got room for dessert during mango season, don't miss the mango and sticky rice.

Another good choice is **Pura Vida** at 160 1<sup>st</sup> Street, named after the quintessential Costa Rican slang term meaning "life is good," and run by an authentic Tico proprietor who will serve you better Costa Rican food than you are likely to get in Costa Rica, albeit at a cost that is high even by American standards. The gallo pinto is reasonably priced, however, and savory—don't forget to douse it with the native Tico elixir, Salsa Lizano, a bottle of which sits on every table.

**Nepal's Cafe** at 184 E. Elkhorn deserves mention as a place for great Nepali food. If you're looking for Mexican, of your several options, I strongly recommend **Casa Grande** at 210 E. Elkhorn, which definitely has the tastiest and most authentic *cocina mexicana* in town.

I like the food at **Ed's Cantina** too (390 E. Elkhorn), although that's more of a trendy American establishment with a vaguely Mexican flavor.

One final note concerns where to eat after you've already eaten. Like many tourist towns, Estes Park has no shortage of places to buy ice cream, cookies, fudge, chocolate confections, and other sweet treats. In this category, one place deserves special mention. If you're walking along Elkhorn just across from the library, you'll see it from a block away: huge yellow letters on a glass door spelling out "YOU NEED PIE." If you feel that you do need pie, step through the door into the **Estes Park Pie Company** at 370 E. Elkhorn and bring yourself home some dessert for a delicious, though short-lived, souvenir of your trip.

Nathan Pieplow, 4745-B White Rock Circle, Boulder, CO 80301, npieplow@indra.com

## NEWS FROM THE FIELD

### Spring 2009 (March–May)

*Bill Maynard*

Following the doldrums of February, generally Colorado's slowest birding month, March's unpredictable weather pushed in early migrants, ushering in most birders' favorite birding season, spring. Bob Dylan's "Subterranean Homesick Blues" reminds us that "you don't need to be a weatherman to know which way the wind blows." However, birds are affected by weather systems including wind speeds and direction aloft, local precipitation, and frontal boundaries. Regardless of seasonal weather patterns, migrants, hormones raging, must press northward in spring, and in 2009 some postponed this movement (e.g., Greater White-fronted Geese in May), while others moved early (e.g., a Cliff Swallow in mid-March).

If April showers do bring May flowers, it was the winds of March that produced the birding highlights at this season's start. April's weather showered in Vermilion Flycatchers in the east and Lucy's Warblers in the far west. Migrants in May, the warbler month, followed, producing dazzling highlights including the "B" warblers: Blue-winged, Black-throated Blue, Black-throated Gray, Black-

throated Green, Blackburnian, Bay-breasted, Blackpoll, and Black-and-whites, all of which combined to produce a kaleidoscope of colors that could have freaked out even the overmedicated.

During the season, the Palmer Z Short-Term drought index changed from “moderate” to normal, and then to “moderately moist” in various regions of the state (National Climatic Data Center 2009). Even parched soils in southeasternmost Colorado received enough moisture to reduce the severity of its long-lasting drought.

Overdue, the seasonal highlight in terms of rarities was a calling Acadian Flycatcher. It was high-fiving spectacular to the few lucky birders/chasers who traveled to the tiny, but justly famous “Van’s Grove” in Colorado’s migrant-rich southeast to witness the large-billed, green-backed, long-winged Empid, and it elevated once again the reputation of its finder, Brandon Percival. Recently accepted by the CBRC (see page 272 of this journal), this Acadian Flycatcher is the latest addition, number 489, to the Colorado Field Ornithologists Checklist of the Birds of Colorado.

Your favorite bird might have been a new feeder bird or something you found while carefully combing your favorite local patch. Regardless, few would disagree about the wonders of spring migration, dragging out-of-doors even the most reclusive hermits and the most casual of observers, all participants bearing witness to this annual phenomenon. Please continue sending your seasonal records to COBirds (<http://www.cfo-link.org/birding/COBirds.php>), or let your regional compilers know the what, where, and when of your bird sightings, and please document any birds underlined below with a detailed formal description to the Colorado Bird Records Committee. This documentation will ensure that your sighting, whether accepted or not, becomes part of Colorado’s ornithological record.

**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; CBRC – Colorado

Bird Records Committee; **CG** – campground; **CR** – county road; **CVCG** – Crow Valley Campground; **FCRP** – Fountain Creek Regional Park; **LCCW** – Lamar Community College Woods; **m.ob.** – many observers; **doc.** – documentation was submitted to the CBRC; **no doc.** – no documentation was submitted to the CBRC; **NWR** – national wildlife refuge; **Res** – reservoir; **RMNP** – Rocky Mountain National Park; **SP** – state park; **SLV** – San Luis Valley; **SWA** – state wildlife area, **WS** – western slope.

**Greater White-fronted Goose:** A flock of 500 at Jumbo Res, *Sedgwick/Logan*, on 13 Mar (BIP) was noteworthy, and a lingering bird from CBR, *Pueblo*, 3–9 May (BKP) was presumably the one present during the winter season, a first Ranch record.

**Snow Goose:** Lingered birds were found at three separate locations; six birds (m.ob.) were present 1–26 Mar in Delta, *Delta*; as many as three birds were reported from Craig, *Moffat*, 5–16 Mar (FL); and two birds graced Narraguinnep Res, *Montezuma*, on 28 Mar (DMH, JiB).

**Ross's Goose:** As many as eight were in Delta, 1–12 Mar (m.ob.); rare in *Fremont* was one on 11 Apr in Cañon City's Valco Pond (RMi).

**Cackling Goose:** On the West Slope, three birds moved between Nucla, *Montrose*, and Delta from 1 Mar to 1 Apr (m.ob.).

**Mute Swan:** Not yet on the state checklist, this species should continue to be documented in Colorado even though it is commonly purchased legally and raised in captivity. Three birds were reported from the 35<sup>th</sup> Avenue Gravel Ponds in Greeley, *Weld*, on 28 Mar (observer unknown, no doc.) and two visited Lower Latham, *Weld*, on 30 April (RH, doc.).

**Trumpeter Swan:** "One wild and

one domesticated" were words used to describe two in the Carbondale area, *Garfield*, between 1 Mar and 31 May (TM). Carryovers from the winter season, three were present on Lake Maria, *Huerfano*, on 8 Mar (DSi). Browns Park NWR, *Moffat*, had ten on 18 Mar (TLi, m.ob.).

**Tundra Swan:** Although the CBRC no longer requests documentation of either wild swan species in Colorado, their identification still warrants careful study, especially that of young birds. Carryovers from the winter season were six birds reported 3–7 Mar from Baxter Lake, *Weld* (TD, CW, m.ob.). One was reported from Delta on 3 Mar (JBe) and two, including an immature, were at Carbondale's Cerise Ranch Pond on 18 Mar (TM). One immature frequented Pastorius SWA, *La Plata*, 28–29 Mar (SA, m.ob.), while an adult was at Craig's WFMC Ponds, *Moffat*, 19–21 Mar (FL).

**Wood Duck:** A species of interest on the West Slope, two males were reported 3 Apr to 10 May at Pastorius SWA (m.ob.).

**Eurasian Wigeon:** There was only one report of this species during the period: a male was present at Swede Lake, *Larimer*, from 4–7 Mar (CW, AS, doc.).

**“Mexican Duck”:** A bird described as this Mallard form was reported from Lower Latham on 15 Apr (DL, doc.).

**Blue-winged × Cinnamon Teal:** Back for perhaps the eighth consecutive spring, a hybrid male was at Walden Ponds, *Boulder*, on 11 Mar (IS).

**Greater Scaup:** Reports of only nine birds from five locations included birds from *Huerfano*, *Moffat*, *Adams*, and *Montezuma*.

**White-winged Scoter:** The only scoters identified to species this season were three birds 11–18 Apr on Baseline Res, *Boulder* (CN, m.ob.), thought to be the same three individuals reported from Valmont Res, *Boulder*, during the winter season.

**Scoter sp.:** A scoter described as “not a Black Scoter” was reported from Fossil Creek Res, *Larimer*, on 3 Mar (JBr).

**Common Goldeneye:** A late female was at Barr Lake, *Adams*, on 9 May (RA, CC).

**Barrow’s Goldeneye:** As expected, most reports came from the WS. The exceptions were a single male 16 Mar on Jumbo Res, *Sedgwick/Logan* (IS), and two reports from *Chaffee*: one at Salida’s Frantz Lake on 1 Mar and one on Buena Vista’s Ice Pond on 7 Apr. The season’s high count of ten came from the Yampa River in Craig 1–13 Mar (FL), followed by six birds 16 Mar to 13 Apr on Lake Catamount, *Routt* (TLi, CDo). Also in *Routt* were two on Stagecoach Reservoir on 13 Apr (CDo). A male and a female were reported from Dolores Ponds, *Montezuma*, on 28 Mar (JiB),

while a single was at Delta 8–12 Mar (JBe).

**Red-breasted Merganser:** Locally uncommon were five birds 18–30 Mar at Elkhead Res, *Moffat/Routt* (TLi, FL), while an additional five individuals were at McPhee Res, *Montezuma*, 14–25 Apr (JiB).

**Red-throated Loon:** A first county record for *Fremont* was a bird in basic plumage 19–31 May at Brush Hollow Res (RMi, m.ob., no doc.).

**Common Loon:** Harvey Gap Res, *Garfield*, had an impressive 20 birds on 11 Apr (AD). Between 17–24 Apr, as many as ten birds visited Elkhead Res (TLi, FL, NM, LW).

**Brown Pelican:** Two one-day wonders, one adult and one immature, appeared on 25 Apr, the adult at Totten Res, *Montezuma* (JDG, JiB, doc.), the immature at Lake Meredith, *Crowley* (BM, doc.).

**Neotropic Cormorant:** A single bird was reported from Lower Latham Res on 19 May (BK, m.ob., no doc.).

**Least Bittern:** The one sighting this spring came from 2 May at Watterton Canyon, *Jefferson* (HK, m.ob., no doc.).

**Great Egret:** Although widespread in migration in Colorado, the Lake Catamount bird on 25 Apr was rare for the Yampa Valley (CDo).

**Snowy Egret:** Another widespread migrant, a bird at Dotsero, *Eagle*, 20–21 Mar (JC, m.ob.) was rare for the county.

**Little Blue Heron:** Five individuals from five different counties was a good showing. An adult on 23 Apr was at Thurston Res, *Prowers* (BKP); an adult on 5 May was at Chatfield

SP, *Douglas* (LK, GW); a single was at Ft. Collins, *Larimer*, on 11 May (GS); a single was at Founders Parkway in Castle Rock, *Douglas*, on 12 May (UK); and a molting immature was near Berthoud in *Weld* on 12 May (RH, NK, CW).

**Tricolored Heron:** This season's only report was from the west side of CR 95 across from "Little Jumbo" Res, *Logan*, on 15 May (JK, GW, LK, no doc.).

**Cattle Egret:** Nine birds were reported from various locations in *Adams*, *Pueblo*, *Delta*, *Weld* (2), *La Plata*, *Custer* (2), and *Boulder*.

**Green Heron:** The only West Slope report came from Grand Valley, *Mesa* (BWi), on 10 May, while they were widespread in the southeast (BKP). One in Lyons, *Boulder* (JS, m.ob.), was unusual.

**Glossy Ibis:** This species is increasingly regular on the East Slope, interspersed with flocks of White-faced Ibis; counties with reports include *Bent*, *Adams*, *Douglas*, *Boulder*, *Arapahoe*, *El Paso*, *Weld*, and *Alamosa*. Only one report came from the WS, of a single bird at Pastorius Res 28 Apr to 14 May (JiB, SA). Fewer than half of the reports were documented, which is important given the possibility that they may have been hybrids with White-faced.

**Glossy Ibis × White-faced Ibis:** Intermediate in plumage, three were reported from Prince Lake #2, *Boulder* (JoC, JH, TF, doc.), 23 Apr to 2 May.

**Swallow-tailed Kite:** Very rare in Colorado with only four previous records, one was reported from Frank-

town, *Douglas*, on 31 May (LBr, no doc.).

**Mississippi Kite:** Early was one in Lamar, *Prowers*, on 27 Apr (CW, m.ob.).

**Harris's Hawk:** This is another raptor with only four accepted state records. A single-observer report of a bird from Pueblo Res, *Pueblo*, on 30 Mar (PR, doc.) was the first spring report for this species in Colorado.

**Broad-winged Hawk:** Twenty-one reports representing 25 birds, none from the WS, were submitted this season, including only one dark-morph bird. The first report was on 15 Apr from Lamar (SO, BKP) and the last report came on 23 May from Colorado City, *Pueblo* (DC, BKP).

**Rough-legged Hawk:** Providing the latest spring record of this species in Colorado, the final spring Rough-leg of the season was seen in *Jackson* on 30 Apr (MP). Note that according to Leukering (2008), "there are no acceptable Colorado records of this species between [about 20 April] and early October."

**Black Rail:** The first report was right on time, from the Ft. Lyon marshes in *Bent* on 23 Apr (BKP). Thirteen birds were reported there on 10 May (SSh).

**Sandhill Crane:** A common migrant during the period, an individual was grounded in a snowstorm at Harvard Gulch Park in *Denver* on 17 April (RA). Andrews reported, "in 40+ years of birding in *Denver*, this is the first time I have ever seen one on the ground" (pers. comm.).

**Black-bellied Plover:** The earliest

and largest number, 30, arrived on 13 May at Walden Ponds (PHe).

**American Golden-Plover:** The rarer cousin to the above species was reported once, as a single at Cherry Creek SP, *Arapahoe*, on 17 Apr (LK).

**Snowy Plover:** The high count came on 18 Apr at Lake Cheraw, *Otero* (MP, BKP). A county first was the lone bird at McPhee Res., *Montezuma*, 25-27 Apr (HM, RiM), which may have been the same individual seen later at Pastorius SWA, *La Plata*, on 9 May (JiB, SA).

**Piping Plover:** Away from its traditional breeding areas, a single was at Jackson Res, *Morgan*, on 2 May (TD, BK, JV), and another single was at Chatfield Marina, *Douglas*, on 22 May (PD, SSt).

**Black-necked Stilt:** Birds reported away from their stronghold in the southeast were two singles from Craig on 17 and 21 Apr (FL), and singles 21 Apr to 15 May at Pastorius SWA, *La Plata*, and Totten Res., *Montezuma* (m.ob.), where the species is uncommon. The other noteworthy bird was one at Rio Blanco Lake, *Rio Blanco*, on 7 May (DH).

**Solitary Sandpiper:** Uncommon at Pastorius SWA were three birds (m.ob.) 27-28 Apr.

**Upland Sandpiper:** A single bird was observed away from the north-eastern counties, north of Granada, *Prowers*, on 7 May (BKP).

**Whimbrel:** The high count for spring was of 12 birds at Lower Latham on 4 May (CCo). A bird at Craig's WPMC Ponds was a first county record for *Moffat* on 9 May (FL). Other

sightings came from *Boulder*, *Arapahoe*, and *Pueblo*.

**Long-billed Curlew:** The earliest report also provided the high number for the season and a high number for the WS: 25 birds near Pastorius SWA on 10 Apr (AD).

**Hudsonian Godwit:** Only one report of this rare beauty, came in, of a single bird at Lower Latham on 3 May (WF, no doc.).

**Ruddy Turnstone:** The place to see this species was Adobe Creek Res (Blue Lake) in *Bent*, with four birds reported over three days on 7, 10, and 11 May (DN, SSh, m.ob.).

**Sanderling:** The only report was of two birds at San Luis Lakes, *Alamosa* (JiB), on 4 May. This is an unusual species in the San Luis Valley.

**Least Sandpiper:** Very early was a single on 7 Mar in *Rye*, *Pueblo* (DSi).

**White-rumped Sandpiper:** This species has a classic elliptical migration which brings them through Colorado in the spring but far to the east in fall. This season the high count was of six birds 22-23 May at Chatfield Res, *Douglas*, where they represented the earliest reports of the season (PD, SSt). The species was absent this spring from the WS, but seen several times in the San Luis Valley during the CFO convention.

**Baird's Sandpiper:** Early were three birds at Haxtun Sewage Ponds, *Phillips*, on 33 Mar (CW).

**Pectoral Sandpiper:** This species was down in numbers of reports even from the "measly three" of the spring of 2008. On 9 May a single bird was at Blanca Wetlands, *Alamosa* (LR), where it is rare in spring.



*Least Tern, Chatfield SP, Douglas County, 21 May 2009.*  
Photo by Glenn Walbek

**Dunlin:** The only report of the season was of one in alternate plumage 24 Apr to 6 May from Lower Latham (JK, m.ob.). Birds in alternate plumage have subtly distinctive plumage variations between subspecies. It might be useful to obtain photos of birds during spring migration to determine whether subspecies separation is possible.

**Stilt Sandpiper:** One of this species, not currently on the county checklist, was at La Jara Res, Conejos, on 22 May (JiB).

**Short-billed Dowitcher:** A poor showing saw only three birds reported. The first was a calling bird on 17 Apr west of Las Animas, Bent (MP, BKP); one was at Schafer Res, Lincoln, on 25 Apr (JRo); and one was at Cherry Creek SP on 5 May (GLA).

**Red-necked Phalarope:** Nothing compared to last year's thousands, but still respectable, was a flock of 125 birds in the earliest report this season,

on 24 April, from Steamboat Springs, Routt (NM). Other reports came from Rio Blanco, Moffat, and Montezuma. The high count came from Arapahoe NWR, Jackson, with a flock of 400 (LS, ML, PSu).

#### **Laughing Gull:**

The only report of the season was of a single at Chatfield, Douglas, 21–23 May (LK, m.ob., no doc.).

#### **Black-headed**

**Gull:** An adult was photographed on Blue Mesa Res, Gunnison, on 5 Apr (DCa, doc.).

**Mew Gull:** Persisting from the winter season were two adults in Boulder, one at Jim Hamm Park seen at least through 1 Mar (TF), and another at Walden Ponds last reported on 18 Apr (BK, m.ob.), which is quite late for this species.

**Thayer's Gull:** Only two locations provided reports. Three birds were at Lake Loveland, Larimer, from 3 Mar to 7 Apr (NK, ED), including an adult and two first-cycle birds. The other report came on 15 Mar from Prince Lake #2, Boulder (SL).

**Iceland Gull:** After a banner winter for this species, a first-cycle bird at Jumbo Res, Logan, on 29 Mar was almost expected somewhere in the state (CLW, JB, m.ob., doc.).

**Lesser Black-backed Gull:** Reports of seven individuals came from four counties: Logan, Larimer, Denver,

and *Arapahoe*. The three at Marston Res, *Denver*, 10-11 Apr (DK) provided the high count for the season.

**Glaucous-winged Gull:** A report of a bird on 20 May from Highline SP was a seasonal highlight; there are no accepted records from western Colorado (BS, photo, no doc).

**Glaucous Gull:** Only three reports came in including seven birds, all from early to mid-Mar. Representing a new county record was a first-year bird at Kenney Res, *Rio Blanco*, on 1 Mar (AS); this species is always extremely rare on the West Slope.

**Black-legged Kittiwake:** A great find was a bird 21-23 Mar at Jumbo Res, *Sedgwick* (MM, CW, doc.).

**Least Tern:** Five migrant singles were reported in a narrow time period, 21-29 May, from *Douglas*, *Costilla*, and *Arapahoe*.

**Caspian Tern:** A first county record was a bird on 25 Apr at McPhee, *Montezuma* (TD, JiB, m.ob.). Other sightings came from *Larimer* (2), *Mesa*, *Boulder* (2), and *Moffat* (FL) on 31 May, where it is rarely reported.

**Black Tern:** The few reports included no large flocks this spring, but noteworthy were seven birds on 24 May at Stagecoach Res, *Routt* (JN, VZ).

**Common Tern:** A late bird was at Blue Mesa Res, *Gunnison*, on 28 May (CD, BW). The earliest report of the season came from *Costilla* on 24 May (SSH, m.ob.), and other scattered reports came from *Saguache* (TF) and from *El Paso* (JD).

**Band-tailed Pigeon:** Rare in the city of Pueblo was a single on 11 May (BKP).

**White-winged Dove:** This spe-

cies, seemingly undergoing a northward expansion, was reported by one regional compiler as being "all over southeast Colorado" during the season (BKP). Other counties reported birds as early as 1 Mar and as late as 14 May, including mostly sightings of individual birds from *Mesa*, *Delta*, *Pueblo*, *Larimer*, *Baca*, *Boulder*, and *Douglas*. It would be of interest to know whether West Slope and East Slope birds emigrated from the same or from different geographic regions (Arizona/New Mexico vs. Texas).

**Inca Dove:** Rocky Ford, *Otero*, was the only location with a report, with only a few birds seen in the former stronghold of the species.

**Yellow-billed Cuckoo:** The East Slope saw reports of one on 10 May along Boulder Creek in *Boulder* (SL); one at Prewitt Res on 14 May (FH, NH); and a single on 16 May from Bent's Old Fort, *Otero* (JD). *Paonia* and *Hotchkiss*, *Delta*, provided the only West Slope reports (JBe, AR).

**Flammulated Owl:** This small owl, returning to Colorado after wintering in Mexico, put on a good showing of 13 birds above Beulah, *Pueblo*, on 9 May (VT, BKP).

**Northern Pygmy-Owl:** A pair of this early breeding species was seen copulating on 6 Mar in Mt. Falcon Park, *Jefferson* (MH); later, on 3 May, one of the pair was observed in a nest hole.

**Lesser Nighthawk:** The only birds reported this spring, one male and two females, were seen on 31 May at a WS location, Nucla Sewage Ponds in *Montrose*, where the species is now almost annual (CD, no doc.)

**Black Swift:** Known as one of the latest migrants in the state, this species put in a good showing of ten birds at Zapata Falls, *Alamosa*, on 19 May (JR, JSt). On 27 May, six individuals were observed at Box Canyon Falls in *Ouray* on the record early date for the location (by one day); they remained throughout the period (SH).

**Vaux's Swift:** An intriguing report of a *Chaetura* swift, thought to be this species, came from a single observer (TF, doc.) at Prince Lake #2, *Boulder*. It was heard before being seen, which alerted the observer, familiar with its call notes, to the possibility of its being a Vaux's. This species is documented from states as distant as Florida and is a casual vagrant to the Gulf Coast, but remains unconfirmed on the Colorado state list.

**Ruby-throated Hummingbird:** A male brightened the Willow Valley Subdivision in Lamar, *Prowers*, 13–15 May (JTh, DLe) for the only report of the season.

**Lewis's Woodpecker:** A pair of this species, thought to be mostly extirpated from *Boulder*, was at Eldorado Park Open Space on 11 May (CN).

**Red-headed Woodpecker:** The earliest report was from 15 May from Crow Valley Campground, *Weld* (JT, m.ob.), one of only four reports for the season.

**Red-naped Sapsucker:** Two reports from the Eastern Plains included a male at CBR, *El Paso*, on 9 Apr (RA, m.ob.) and a female on 27 Apr at Cheraw, *Otero*, where it is rare in the spring (BS, MP, m.ob.).

**Hairy Woodpecker:** A female of the mountain race (*P. v. monticola*), a

subspecies separable from both northern and eastern subspecies (Andrews & Righter 1992), was at Barr Lake, *Adams*, on 5 May (RA).

**Olive-sided Flycatcher:** Quite early were two birds, one on 17 Apr in Rocky Ford, *Otero* (MP, BKP), and one on 25 Apr at the Cañon City Riverwalk, *Fremont* (RMi).

**Eastern Wood-Pewee:** A photographed bird was at a Pueblo residence, *Pueblo*, for the only report of the season on 27 May (VT, no doc.).

**Acadian Flycatcher:** The bird of the season was a calling, well-photographed and well-documented bird on 12 May from "Van's Grove" east of Fort Lyon, *Bent* (BKP, m.ob.), for our newest state record (#489) as accepted by the CBRC.

**Alder Flycatcher:** Two reports came in of single birds, one banded on 23 May at CBR, *El Paso* (BG, m.ob., no doc.), and one at CVCG on 26 May (DLe, no doc.).

**Least Flycatcher:** The earliest local arrival was a singing bird from 11 May through the end of the period at Loudy-Simpson Park in Craig (FL). Rare in their respective counties were one singing at Cañon City Riverwalk on 23 May (SeM) and up to two singing at Pikes Stockade, *Conejos*, from 23 May through the end of the season (m.ob.).

**Gray Flycatcher:** As is typical, this early migrant began arriving on the southeastern plains of Colorado in April, while reports of four other birds away from their breeding grounds came from *Arapahoe*, *Jefferson*, and *Weld*.

**Black Phoebe:** A first *Boulder* re-



*White-eyed Vireo*, Sondermann Park, El Paso County, 14 May 2009. Photo by Glenn Walbek

cord of this species came from Walden Ponds on 8 Apr (MB, doc.). Rare in Baca was an adult at Two Buttes Res on 18 Apr (MP, BKP).

**Eastern Phoebe:** Overshoots were in Adams, Weld, Larimer, Denver, and



*Vermilion Flycatcher*, Crow Valley Campground, 15 Apr 2009. Photo by Rachel Hopper

Boulder from 11 Apr through 16 May.

**Vermilion Flycatcher:** Five spring reports were above average. The earliest, on 25 Mar, was of a spanking male at Barr Lake Nature Center, Adams (JSc, KSc, BSc, doc.). An adult female was at CVCG on 18 Apr (CK, LB, doc.); another female was seen 18-19 Apr at Walden Ponds (WS, NP, m.ob., doc.); an adult male was in Florence, Fremont, on

19 Apr (MP, CW, m.ob., doc.); and a first-year male was at Valco Ponds in Pueblo on the same date (MY, no doc.).

**Cassin's Kingbird:** Unusual for the location was one on 10 May in the Laramie River Valley, Larimer (LS, ML, PSu).

**Scissor-tailed Flycatcher:** Two were reported: an early one on 26 Apr at Cougar Canyon Golf Course in Trinidad, Las Animas (DO, no doc.), and another at Pawnee Buttes, Weld, 2-5 May (ES, doc.).

**Northern Shrike:** Very late was a bird reported from La Plata on 2 May (RM, HM, m.ob.).

**White-eyed Vireo:** Surprising were at least 13 birds from various locations, mostly from the Eastern Plains, visiting *Pueblo*, *Bent*, *Prowers*, *El Paso*, *Douglas*, *Jefferson*, *Weld*, *Huerfano*, *Logan*, *Conejos*, and *Cheyenne*; the earliest were seen 30 Apr at Scroggs Canyon, Colorado City, *Pueblo* (DSi) and Tempel Grove, *Bent* (DN, m.ob.) on the same date. The last was one reported on 29 May from Lathrop State Park, *Huerfano* (RMi).

**Bell's Vireo:** Only one was reported this season, a photographed bird at Little Jumbo Res, *Logan*, on 15 May (JK, GW, LK).

**Yellow-throated Vireo:** There were seven total reports of this sometimes scarce Colorado bird. The season's first was on a private ranch in *Cheyenne* on 1 May (AS, CN, m.ob.); one was at Two Buttes, *Baca*, on 23 May (LK, GW, m.ob.); two birds, one singing, were at LCCG, *Prowers*, on 2 May (GW, LK) and 7 May (BKP); one was near Fort Lyon, *Bent*, on 15 May (JD, JoT); and a singing bird was at FCRP, *El Paso*, on 15 May (SaR, KL, m.ob.). The season's finale was a bird seen on multiple CFO Convention field trips near Blanca, *Costilla* (TM, m.ob.), 23–24 May.

**Cassin's Vireo:** A high spring count included 12 birds scattered about the state, with sightings from

*Boulder*, *Prowers*, *El Paso*, *Bent*, *Douglas*, *Larimer*, and *La Plata*. The earliest was on 18 April from Boulder Creek and Walden Ponds (BK, m.ob.), and the latest was of a bird banded at CBR, *El Paso*, on 15 May (BG).

**Cassin's/Blue-headed Vireo:** A bird displaying characteristics of both species was at LCCG from 30 April–1 May (m.ob.), and probably a different bird was at the same location on 5 May (m.ob.).

**Blue-headed Vireo:** Four birds were reported this spring from four counties. The earliest was a bird on 6 May at CVCG (GW, LK, no doc.). One was banded at CBR, *El Paso*, on 7 May (NG, doc.); a bird was found on a CFO field trip to Rocking 7K Ranch, *Prowers*, on 9 May (JO, m.ob., no doc.); and one was at Fox Ranch, *Yuma*, from 16–17 May (TE, m.ob., doc.).

**Philadelphia Vireo:** Only one was



*Yellow-throated Vireo*, Two Buttes, Baca County, 8 May 2009. Photo by Joey Kellner

reported this spring, a bird at Cherry Creek SP on 16 May (LK, no doc.).

**Pinyon Jay:** Far to the southeast of its normal range, one was at LCCW, *Prowers*, on 22 Apr (DR).

**Purple Martin:**

Always of interest are martins on the Eastern Plains; the question is which subspecies group do they represent, eastern or western? A female was at Fairmont Cemetery in Lamar, *Prowers*, on 16 May (DLe, no doc.) and another female was at CBR, *Pueblo*, on 21 May (BG, doc.).

**Cliff Swallow:** Of interest because of the early date was one at Pueblo's Valco Ponds on 14 Mar (DC).

**Carolina Wren:** This species was noticeably absent this spring; no sightings were reported.

**Winter Wren:** Dazzling were reports of eight individuals, two specified as being from the western population: the first on 20 Mar in Rye Mountain Park, *Pueblo* (DSi), the second 8-16 Apr along Greenhorn Trail in Rye (DSi). The remaining reports were not identified to subspecies; they included a bird at Pueblo's Valco Ponds, *Pueblo*, on 28 Mar (DC, BKP); one at FCRP, *El Paso*, on 16 Apr (BM); one at CBR, *El Paso*, on 2 May (DC, GR, BKP); a bird at a residence in Greeley, *Weld*, on 10 May (NE); a bird at a residence near downtown Boulder



*Brewster's Warbler, Sondermann Park, El Paso County, 13 May 2009. Photo by Robb Hinds*

on 11 May (LF); and a late bird on 13 May at the Hewlett Packard Campus in Colorado Springs, *El Paso* (JJ).

**Veery:** Reports of migrants this spring came between 8 and 25 May from *Boulder, El Paso, Jefferson, Larimer, Pueblo, Teller, Washington, and Weld*.

**Gray-cheeked Thrush:** Variable in numbers from spring to spring, this species was only reported twice. One was at Greenlee Preserve, *Boulder*, on 11 May (TF, doc), and one was at Broomfield Nature Area, *Broomfield*, on 17 May (TS, no doc.).

**Hermit Thrush:** A carryover from winter, one at Greenlee Preserve, *Boulder*, on 8 Mar (TF) was different in appearance from the subspecies that migrate later in the spring.

**Wood Thrush:** The only report of this eastern species was of one from Tempel Grove, *Bent*, on 1 May (JK, m.ob., no doc.).

**Varied Thrush:** Only one bird, a male, was reported this spring, at an Aurora residence in *Arapahoe* on 13 May (MCR, no doc., *fide* HK).

**Curve-billed Thrasher:** Somewhat north of its expected range, a single was at Thompson Ranch, *Lincoln*, on 15 May (GW, JRo, NEr, m.ob.).

**Bohemian Waxwing:** In a sparse waxwing year, the total of 150 from Lake Catamount, *Routt*, on 15 Mar was notable (TLi, CDo).

**Blue-winged Warbler:** The only report of the season was of a first *Delta* record and only a third spring record from the WS: one in Hotchkiss on 16 May (AR).

**Golden-winged Warbler:** The only report of this dazzler during the season was 6–7 May at the migrant trap, LCCW in *Prowers* (BSH, m.ob.).

**“Brewster’s” Warbler:** A beautiful bird, cooperative and well-photographed, was singing an interesting song at Sondermann Park, *El Paso*, on 13 May (MCL, doc.). This is only the second documented report for Colorado of this hybrid “winged-warbler”; it may have pertained to a “Brewster’s” backcross adult male. The only other documented report of this named hybrid came from *Denver* on 11 May 1997.

**Tennessee War-**

**bler:** This was the second good year in a row for this species, with 15 reports. CBR, *El Paso/Pueblo*, was a hotspot, with eight separate sightings 9–17 May (m.ob.). Other counties contributing reports were *Prowers*, *Boulder*, *Washington*, *Larimer*, and *Yuma*.

**Nashville Warbler:** There were a total of nine reports for the spring season. A first county record was a photographed bird in *Broomfield*, *Broomfield*, on 30 Apr (DE, LS). As expected, southeastern counties (*Prowers* and *Bent*) provided the most records, but *Boulder*, *El Paso*, and *Pueblo* had sightings 1–17 May.

**Lucy’s Warbler:** A third for *Mesa* was a bird in Rabbit Valley on 8 May (JC, no doc.). Now expected and annual, birds were present in Yellowjacket Creek, *Montezuma*, by 25 April (m.ob.).



*Magnolia Warbler*, Sale Lake, Boulder County, 16 May 2009. Photo by David Waltman

### **Northern Parula:**

Twenty-seven reports this spring was an excellent total, all from east of the Rockies. Reports came from 14 different counties as this species migrated across a broad front.

### **Chestnut-sided**

### **Warbler:**

Only nine sightings were reported, CBR *El Paso/Pueblo* leading the way with three birds reported 11-17 May (m.ob.). The most noteworthy report was of one at Lake

DeWeese, Custer, on 7 May (RMi); the species is rarely reported from the mountains. Other reports came from *Prowers, Phillips, Boulder, and Jefferson*.

**Magnolia Warbler:** This beautiful warbler put in a good showing with 12 reports; the most notable was from Cattail Golf Course, Alamosa, on 15 May (JR), providing only the second record for the SLV. A sighting at Sands Lake, Salida, *Chaffee*, on 27 May represents a rare report for the mountains. All other sightings came 8-26 May from *Pueblo, El Paso, Lincoln, Logan, Boulder, Broomfield, and Weld*.

### **Black-throated Blue Warbler:**

Always of interest in spring, since this species winters primarily in the West Indies, the four reports were excellent for the season. Two males of distinctively different ages were at CBR, *Pueblo*, 8-11 May (BM, m.ob.).



*Black-throated Gray Warbler, Lafayette, Boulder County, 26 Apr 2009. Photo by David Waltman*

A single was at Hasty Campground, Bent, on 8 May; one was spotted along the Cañon City Riverwalk on 15 May (RMi, m.ob.); and one was at CVCG on 20 May (BB).

### **Black-throated Gray Warbler:**

A total of eleven birds were reported east of the Rockies away from known breeding areas between 19 Apr and 16 May, from *Boulder, Pueblo, El Paso, Larimer, Washington, and Weld*.

### **Black-throated Green Warbler:**

Only one was reported this season, a bird found on 10 May at Twin Lakes, *Boulder* (WS, m.ob.).

### **Townsend's Warbler:**

Always a treat in the spring, this species generated only four reports this year. Two came from CBR, *El Paso/Pueblo*, on 10 and 13 May; one was at Barr Lake on 5 May (RA); and one was at CVCG (TF) on 14 May.

**Blackburnian Warbler:** A blazing orange songster was at CBR, *Pueblo*,

on 23 May (BM, m.ob., doc.), while another was reported from Apex Gulch, *Jefferson*, on 27 May by the two Bobs, authors of *Colorado Birds*, the book (RA, RRi, no doc.).

**Yellow-throated Warbler:** Only a single bird was reported, on 11 Apr at Bonny Res SP, *Yuma* (MSm, CLW, KHa, doc.).

**Grace's Warbler:** Well away from its known breeding areas was one bird seen 5-7 May at Reeser Wildlife Sanctuary, Estes Park, *Larimer* (BCh, GM, RH, doc.). Two at Mogote Campground, *Conejos*, on 24 May (SSh, MP) were at a new location for this species and may have represented a first for the county.

**Pine Warbler:** Two birds were reported from 30 Apr to 5 May at Fairmount Cemetery in Lamar, *Prowers* (BKP, m.ob., no doc), and one bird was reported from Boulder Creek, *Boulder*, on 26 May (WS, no doc.).

**Palm Warbler:** Six or seven reports made for an average season for this species in Colorado. All were of the pale western subspecies (*D. p. palmarum*). The first report was of a banded bird at CBR, *El Paso*, on 6 May (NG). Two were at Lake Estes, *Larimer*, 11-12 May (GM); one was at CBR, *Pueblo*, on 13 May (BG); a single was spotted at Bear Creek Lake Park, *Jefferson*, on 14 May (MH); one spent 16

May at Cherry Creek SP (DSK); and on 17 May, one was at Last Chance, *Washington* (TF, WB).

**Bay-breasted Warbler:** The only report of this rarity, a specialist on moth and butterfly larvae (spruce budworms), came from Lake Beckwith, *Pueblo*, on 22 May (DSi, doc.).

**Blackpoll Warbler:** Last spring this species was everywhere, with 168 individuals reported. This year 30 reports representing 37 individuals, although totaling 4.5 times fewer birds, is still a good showing of this high-frequency songster.

**Black-and-white Warbler:** One of our early migrant warblers, the one looking like a referee, this species was first spotted on 23 Apr and last detected on 16 May. Of the 24 individuals detected, the most interesting reports came from the SLV, where the species is rare: a male was at Alamosa Cemetery, *Alamosa*, on 8 May (JR),



*Blackpoll Warbler, Boulder Creek, Boulder County, 11 May 2009. Photo by David Waltman*

and another bird was in Saguache, *Saguache*, on 9 May (PS). Also of note was a male on 14 May at Loudy-Simpson Park, *Moffat* (FL), where it was singing, which is a rare behavior at this location. Finally, a rare mountain sighting was one along Trout Creek, *Teller*, of a female on 16 May (KL, KP).



**American Redstart:** Twenty redstarts were reported, with the first, a fe-

*Black-and-White Warbler, Two Buttes, Baca County, 23 Apr 2009. Photo by Loch Kilpatrick*

male, seen 8-29 May at CVCG, *Weld* (KMD). The most unusual location was Navajo Res, *Archuleta*, on 10 May (JiB). Other counties with American Redstart reports were *El Paso*, *Larimer*, *Prowers*, *Pueblo*, *Boulder*, *Weld*, *Custer*, *Fremont*, *Arapahoe*, *Kiowa*, *Otero*, and *Teller*, all expected locations for this rather abundant eastern migrant.

**Prothonotary Warbler:** Named for papal notaries who wear a robe with a yellow hood, this species sent a male to grace Thompson Ranch, *Lincoln*, on 1 May (KMD, GW, JK, m.ob.). Another was in Belmar Park, *Jefferson*, on 7 May (MC).

**Worm-eating Warbler:** Nine reports is an excellent total for this species. The first was seen 30 Apr to 1 May at Tempel Grove, *Bent* (DM, GW, CN, m.ob.), and the latest was seen during the CFO Convention in Blanca, *Costilla*, from 23-24 May

(TM, m.ob.). The others were spotted in *Cheyenne*, *Boulder*, *Prowers*, *Larimer*, and *Bent*.

**Ovenbird:** The first of many reports came from Hasty Campground, *Bent* (DN), and the highest one-day total, of 18, came from the Tiny Town to Willow Springs survey route in *Jefferson* (MH, m.ob.). The most noteworthy report was of a single from Pastorius SWA, 30-31 May (HM, m.ob., doc.), for a first county record.

**Northern Waterthrush:** Showing how common this eastern species can be in spring migration, 51 individuals were tallied in 15 different Colorado counties, with a high tally of eight birds in one day at Rocky Mountain Arsenal, *Adams* (HK, UK, m.ob.). The one in the least likely location was at Craig's Loudy-Simpson Park, where it is a rare spring migrant, on 15 May (FL, JTo).

**Kentucky Warbler:** The first of two spring reports came from Lake DeWeese, *Custer* (RMi, m.ob., no doc.), 27–28 May. A cooperative male was photographed at CBR, *Pueblo*, on 1 May (BM, BP, doc.) for a first Ranch record.

**Mourning Warbler:** The only report for the season was of a male, 14–15 May, from Big Thompson Bike Trail in Loveland, *Larimer* (CW, no doc.).

**Hooded Warbler:** A significant passage of this handsome species through the state was marked by reports of 23 individuals. The first was at Tempel Grove, *Bent*, 30 Apr to 1 May (DN, m.ob.), and the last of the season was at CBR, *Pueblo*, on 28 May (JD).

**Wilson's Warbler:** Of note was an early bird on 15 Apr at Lake Beckwith, *Pueblo* (DSi).

**Eastern Towhee:** A carryover from the winter season, a female was at Fort Lyon, *Bent*, on 8 Mar (MM, doc.).

**Clay-colored Sparrow:** Large numbers of this species were noted at some Front Range locations, with an unusually high count of more than 85 at Greenlee Preserve, *Boulder*, on 11 May (TF). Rare in southwest CO, an adult was at Navajo Wildlife Area, *Archuleta*, 4–5 May (SA, m.ob.).

**Field Sparrow:**

Ten individuals were reported of this easternmost Colorado breeder. Notable were a bird in Douidy Draw, *Boulder*, on 3 May (PG) and three birds from *Weld*: singles at CVCG on 4 May (RA, MH, RR) and 9 May (ED), and one at Briggsdale Cemetery 11–12 May (DL, CL, GC, m.ob.).

**Black-throated Sparrow:** Farther north than usual, a bird was photographed at Chatfield SP, *Douglas*, on 17 Apr (GW, LK).

**Sage Sparrow:** Rare in the mountains and quite early was one at Frantz Lake, *Salida*, *Chaffee*, on 1 Mar (RMi). One was at Walden Ponds on 8 Apr (WS) and another was in Endovalley, RMNP, *Larimer*, on 22 Apr (GM, ScR, m.ob.).

**Baird's Sparrow:** This rarely-seen spring migrant with only eleven accepted state records was reported from Two Buttes, *Bent*, on 2 May (KH, GW, JK, m.ob., no doc.).



Hooded Warbler, *Bent County*, 1 May 2009. Photo by Glenn Walbek



*Black-throated Sparrow, Chatfield SP, Douglas County, 17 Apr 2009. Photo by Glenn Walbek*

**“Red” Fox Sparrow:** One of the red races of Fox Sparrow was at Sweitzer SP, *Delta*, on 26 Apr (AR, no doc.). According to Jon Dunn (pers. comm.), “Red” Fox Sparrow is likely a “good” species.

**Swamp Sparrow:** Only five reports were submitted this spring, of birds from Mesa, Pueblo, Prowers, Baca, and Washington.

**White-throated Sparrow:** Only five reports came in representing 8-11 birds, the earliest from 1 May, the latest from 15 May. Three to five individuals were present at CVCG 11-15 May (DLe, m.ob.).

**Harris’s Sparrow:** Only five reports of this handsome large Emberizid were received, most of rather late birds scattered between 1-9 May. Rare was an adult female at Carpenter Ranch, *Routt*, on 9 May (TE, m.ob.).

**Golden-crowned Sparrow:** The

wintering bird from Tunnel Drive in Cañon City, *Fremont* (RMi, ED, no doc.), was present 31 Mar to 2 Apr.

**Lapland Longspur:** A first for *Delta*, *Delta*, was a heard-only bird on 8 Mar which represents the first Mar record for western Colorado. (CW, no doc.). One photographed in alternate plumage in Breckenridge, *Summit*, on 16 Apr (DT) was unusual for the

location and the habitat (a driveway on the edge of coniferous forest at 10,500 feet).

**Chestnut-collared Longspur:** Unusual at this location was one on 17 Apr at Cherry Creek SP (LK).

*Please note the new placement of the Piranga tanagers. They have been moved to the Cardinalidae, where they keep the common name “tanager,” but now reside in their proper taxonomic position according to the 50<sup>th</sup> Supplement to the AOU Checklist (Chesser et al. 2009).*

**Hepatic Tanager:** A bird was near I-25 at Exit 42, *Huerfano*, 22-25 May (GW, LK, SSh), in an area where there are accepted breeding-season records from 2003 and 2005.

**Summer Tanager:** Nineteen reports included a third record for Mesa (JC) on 24 April and a returning bird in Yellowjacket Canyon 25 Apr – 17 May (JiB, TD, m.ob.). A ques-

tion still left to be answered is whether West Slope birds represent the western population, *P. r. cooperi*, which averages 15 percent longer-billed and is longer-tailed and paler-rumped than eastern *P. r. rubra*.

**Scarlet Tanager:** Returning to Gregory Canyon, *Boulder*, for presumably the third consecutive year was one seen 28 May to the end of the reporting period (KMD, m.ob., no doc.).

**Northern Cardinal:** Rare in Pueblo was one on 31 Mar (CH).

**Rose-breasted Grosbeak:** Of interest were males on 6 and 23 May in Gateway, Mesa, and Paonia, *Delta* (AR, LA), and also a first county record



*Indigo Bunting, Stulp Ranch, Prowers County, 25 Apr 2009. Photo by Jane Stulp*



*Summer Tanager, Stulp Ranch, Prowers County, 5 May 2009. Photo by Jane Stulp*

from Westcliffe, *Custer*, on 16 May (SLi, doc.).

**Indigo Bunting:** Rare in the southwestern part of the state, one was present 17 May to the end of the period in the Dolores River Valley, *Montezuma* (DG, JiB).

**Bobolink:** One on 31 May from Hanna Lane, *Rio Grande*, was thought to be a possible nester. Other reports came from *Boulder*, *El Paso*, *Arapahoe*, *Pueblo*, *Larimer*, *Routt*, and *Jefferson*.

**Rusty Blackbird:** Four reports came in of this declining species: one from Hopper Ponds, *Yuma*, on 22 Mar (CW); one on 18 Apr at Chatfield SP, *Douglas* (AS, m.ob.); one on 18

Apr from Boulder Res, *Boulder* (AS, WS); and one from Last Chance on 24 Apr (JKr).

**Common Grackle:** Rare in *Mineral* were two at Creede from 20 April to the end of the period (JiB).

**Baltimore Oriole:** Of note were a male on 16 May at Bent's Old Fort, *Otero* (JD), and another male on the same date from La Veta, *Huerfano* (BJ).

**Scott's Oriole:** One was reported coming to a feeder in Delta on 13 May (*fide* AR), and one showed well on a CFO Convention field trip on 23 May in John James Canyon, *Conejos*, for a first SLV record (DLe, m.ob.).

**Gray-crowned Rosy-Finch:** The last report for the season was of two

birds at Silverthorne, *Summit*, on 16 Apr (TJ).

**Black Rosy-Finch:** A snowstorm grounded one bird at a residence in Golden, *Jefferson*, on 16 April (IS).

**Pine Grosbeak:** Farther east of the mountains than usual was a female on 8 Mar at Bonny Res SP, a real treat for those present (MP, m.ob.).

**White-winged Crossbill:** Continuing from the winter season were birds reported on the Grand Mesa, *Mesa/Delta*, on 8 Mar (CD, m.ob.). At Cumbres Pass, *Conejos*, on 1 Mar, six birds posed long enough to be photographed (SF). *Hinsdale's* Slumgullion Pass hosted a mixed-gender flock of five birds for participants on a CFO Convention field trip on 23 May (MP, m.ob.).

## REGIONAL COMPILERS

Without the compilation of sightings from these volunteer regional compilers, "Field Notes" could not be written. Continued appreciation goes to Jim Beatty (southwest), Coen Dexter (west central), Forrest Luke (northwest), Brandon Percival (southeast and SLV), Bill Schmoker (Front Range), Larry Semo (east central and northeast), and Glenn Walbek (north central).

Many thanks also to all of you who share your sightings with the birding community via COBirds, <http://www.cfo-link.org/birding/COBirds.php>, and/or through eBird, <http://ebird.org>. A whopping 200 observers contributed sightings during this report period, some of them out-of-state birders who traveled far and wide through snowstorms and high winds seeking Colorado's chicken-birds, but often finding much more.

## CONTRIBUTING OBSERVERS

GLA: Gary & Lynda Ackert, SA: Susan Allerton, RA: Robert Andrews, LA: Larry Arnold, JB: Jessie Barry, BB: Brad Biggerstaff, MB: Mike Blatchley, JBr: Jessica Brauch, JBe: Jason Beason, JiB: Jim Beatty, PB: Pamela Breitsch, MB: Maggie Boswell, LBr: Laura Brody, BB: Bob Brown, NB: Nancy Burek, LB: Lauren Burke, WB: William Burnidge, MCB: Mary Cay Burger, AB: Alan Burns, DCa: Dave Cameron, BC: Becky Campbell, GC: Gayle Campbell, DC: David Chartier, MC: Mark Chavez, BCh: Bob Chase, CC: Charlie Chase, JoC: John Cobb, BC: Bayard Cobb, JC: Jacob Cooper, CCo: Cindy Cornelius, MCr: Michael Crowe, AD: Art Dahl, RD: Raymond Davis, ED: Eric DeFonso, TD: Todd Deininger, CD: Coen Dexter, PD: Paul Differding, DD: Daniel Disner, AD: Amy Dobbins, CDo: Craig Dodson, SD: Steve Dornseif, KD: Kevin Doyle, JD: John Drummond, KMD: Kathy Mihm Dunning, BE: Bill Eden, LE: Lisa Edwards, DE: David Elwonger, NE: Norma Erickson, NEr: Norm Erthal, DF: Doug Faulkner, WF: Warren

Finch, TF: Ted Floyd, MF: Mike Frieberg, LF: Lonny Frye, SF: Sharon Fullingim, JDG: J. & Dennis Garrison, PG: Peter Gent, JG: Jody Georgeson, SG: Steve Getty, BG: Brian Gibbons, NG: Nancy Gobris, GG: Gregg Goodrich, LG: Larry Griffin, KH: Kadosa Halasi, TH: Tom Halverstadt, JH: Jack Harlan, PH: Paula Hansley, FH: Frank Hatch, NH: Nancy Hatch, PJH: Pat & Joel Hayward, PHe: Pat Heller, MH: Mike Henwood, CH: Carolyn Herzberger, AH: Alison Hilf, DMH: Dean and Mona Hill, DH: Dona Hilkey, SH: Sue Hirshman, RH: Rachel Hopper, KH: Kurt Huffstater, BH: Barbara Hughes, BJ: Beverly Jensen, TJ: Tina Jones, JJ: Jeff Jones, BK: Bill Kaempfer, JK: Joey Kellner, DSK: Deb & Steve Kennedy, DK: Doug Kibbe, LK: Loch Kilpatrick, HK: Hugh Kingery, UK: Urling Kingery, SK: Steve Kingswood, KWK: Linda & Walt Knudsen, CK: Connie Kogler, CTK: Charles Thornton-Kolbe, NK: Nick Komar, AK: Alison Kondler, JL: Joy Lake, RL: Ron Lambeth, DL: Dan Lane, SL: Steve Larson, DL: Dave Leatherman, MCL: Marie Cecile Lee, GL: Gary Lefko, KL: Kara Lewantowicz, SLi: Steve Linderer, TLi: Tom Litteral, ML: Mark Lockwood, CL: Chuck Lowery, DL: Diane Luck, FL: Forrest Luke, TM: Tom McConnell, GM: Gary Matthews, BM: Bill Maynard, DM: Dan Maynard, JM: John Maynard, NM: Nancy Merrill, MM: Mark Miller, RiM: Rich Miller, LM: Larry Modesitt, HM: Heather Morris, RiM: Riley Morris, RM: Rob Morris, SeM: SeEtta Moss, DN: Duane Nelson, JN: Jim Nowak, CN: Christian Nunes, DO: Debra Oberbeck, JO: Judi Ogle, RO: Ric Olson, SO: Stan Oswald, KP: Ken Pals, AP: Arvind Panjabi, BKP: Brandon Percival, MP: Mark Peterson, JSP: Jack & Shana Peterson, NP: Nathan Pieplow, PP: Peter Plage, BIP: Bill & Inez Prather, RR: Rob Raker, SR: Scott Rashid, LR: Lisa Rawinski, JR: John Rawinski, WRR: Warren & Ruth Reeser, RRI: Robert Righter, AR: Andrea Robinsong, ScR: Scott Roederer, JRo: Joe Roller, PR: Peg Rooney, SaR: Saraiya Ruano, DR: Dottie Russell, IS: Ira Sanders, BSc: Bill Schmoker, JSc: Jim Schmoker, KSc: Karen Schmoker, PS: Pam Self, LS: Larry Semo, BSh: Bob Shade, SSH: Scott Shaum, CS: Carol Simmons, DSi: Dave Silverman, TS: Tim Smart, MSm: Margaret Smith, GS: Greg Somermeyer, RS: Rob Sparks, AS: Andrew Spencer, ES: Emily Spencer, SS: Steve Stachowiak, KS: Karl Stecher, BS: Brad Steger, DS: Dave Steingraeber, JSt: John Stump, JS: Joel Such, MS: Marcel Such, PSu: Paul Sunby, WS: Walter Szeliga, JoT: Joyce Takamine, CT: Cheryl Teuton, JTh: Janeal Thompson, JTo: John Toolen, VT: Van Truan, JT: John Tumasonis, DT: Debbie Tyber, JV: John Vanderpoel, KW: Knut Waagan, GW: Glenn Walbek, DW: David Waltman, TW: Tom Wilberding, CW: Cole Wild, LW: Lisa Williams, BWi: Bob Wilson, MW: Marty Wolf, CLW: Chris Wood, BW: Brenda Wright, MY: Mark Yaeger, SY: Sherrie York, VZ: Vic Zerbi, BZ: Bob Zilly, KZ: Kevin Zimmer, EZ: Eric Zorawowicz.

## LITERATURE CITED

- Andrews, R., and R. Righter. 1992. *Colorado Birds: A Reference to Their Distribution and Habitat*. Denver Museum of Natural History, Denver, CO.
- Chesser, T.R., R.C. Banks, F.K. Barker, C. Cicero, J.L. Dunn, A.W. Kratter, I.J. Lovette, P.C. Rasmussen, J.V. Remsen, Jr., J.D. Rising, D.F. Stotz, and K. Winker. 2009. Fiftieth Supplement to the American Ornithologists' Union Check-list of North American Birds. *Auk* 126(3): 705-714.
- Leukering, T. 2008. Swainson's Hawk vs. Rough-legged Hawk: An overlooked identification pitfall. *Colorado Birds* 42(4): 302-305.
- National Climatic Data Center. 2009. U.S. Palmer Drought Indices. NOAA Satellite and Information Service website. Retrieved from <http://www.ncdc.noaa.gov/oa/climate/research/prelim/drought/palmer.html>.

## IN THE SCOPE

# Horned Grebe vs. Eared Grebe: Head shape and occurrence timing

*Tony Leukering*

### Introduction

Though separation of Horned and Eared Grebes is well-covered in the typical field guides, many birders still have difficulty with this pair. Obviously, typical alternate-plumaged individuals should pose little difficulty, but individuals molting between plumages cause fits, as do juveniles and immatures. I present here a different tack to take in identifying small black-and-white grebes, with particular emphasis on basic-plumaged individuals. I treat briefly some pitfalls of birds molting between basic and alternate (and vice-versa) and also discuss the timing of occurrence of these species in Colorado and how it is relevant to their identification.

### Occurrence

Eared Grebe breeds widely, but very locally, at suitable water bodies in Colorado, particularly in the mountain parks (Nelson 1998, Giroir and Leukering 1999). The species is mostly absent from the state in winter, though they are now annual in numbers at that season at Pueblo Reservoir, Pueblo County, with a high count of 690 on the Christmas Bird Count (CBC) there. They are of sporadic occurrence in tiny numbers elsewhere on the Eastern Plains in winter, particularly on John Martin Reservoir in Bent County. Spring migrants begin arriving in early to mid-March at low elevations, but the bulk of migrants do not appear until late April and into May, particularly as most Colorado breeding areas are not available to the species until May at the earliest. Fall migration is protracted, with increasing numbers detected starting in early September, a pronounced peak in late October and early November, and a quick tapering off just in

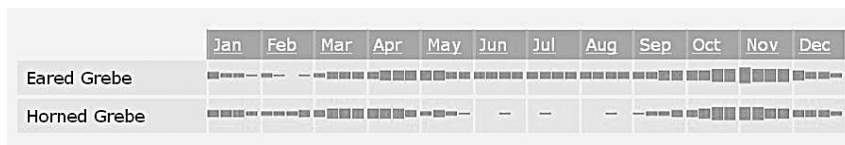


Fig. 1. Seasonal abundance of Eared and Horned Grebes in Colorado. Graph generated by eBird (<http://ebird.org>) using data submitted through 18 September 2009.

time for all to be gone by the time CBC season rolls around (except as mentioned above).

Horned Grebe does not breed in the state and is most common here as a spring and fall migrant. The occurrence of the species in winter is similar to that of Eared Grebe, though usually with smaller numbers (including a high of only 37 on the Pueblo Reservoir CBC) and a slightly higher rate of occurrence away from Pueblo Reservoir. Spring arrival is around the beginning of March, with a sharp peak in early April and numbers quickly dropping to early May. Thus, though the spring presence of the two species is quite similar, overall, Horned Grebe numbers have peaked and are declining sharply by the time Eared Grebe numbers are climbing to their peak. In fall, Horned Grebes do not arrive in any numbers until early October, with numbers peaking late that month and declining sharply, such that early-winter numbers are reached by mid-November.

The seasonal patterns of occurrence of these species are illustrated in the eBird abundance charts in Figure 1.

## Molt

The earliest spring migrants of both species arrive still in basic plumage. Birds present later in the season are obviously conducting their pre-alternate molts. Whether individuals stop here to conduct that molt has not been determined, but study of grebes found during the course of spring shows a strong increasing trend in amount of alternate plumage on birds present and a decreasing trend in percentage of birds still in basic plumage. In concert with Horned Grebes' earlier peak of migration, they also seem to obtain alternate plumage sooner than do Eared Grebes. Thus, a grebe in March or early April that has any significant percentage of alternate plumage is probably a Horned Grebe, and this difference probably holds true for some time into April.

The situation in fall is quite different. Though Pyle (2008) states that adult Horned Grebes conduct their pre-basic molt away from the breeding grounds, I do not recall ever seeing an alternate-plum-

aged individual in Colorado in fall (October - November) and other experienced observers report that they have seen very few, if any (Bill Schmoker, Christopher L. Wood, pers. comm.). Juvenile Horned Grebes initiate their pre-formative molt on the breeding grounds and complete it at stopover sites (Pyle 2008). The pre-formative molt is the molt out of juvenal plumage, which is well-illustrated in Sibley (2000). We do not see Horned Grebes in Colorado with any significant amounts of juvenal plumage, so this molt must be completed (or nearly so) before birds arrive in the state.

Thus, the vast majority of individual Horned Grebes found in Colorado in fall are in their black-and-white plumages: definitive basic plumage in adults and formative plumage in young-of-the-year. On the other hand, because Eared Grebes breed in the state, most adults, at least in early fall, are still partly or entirely in alternate plumage. Additionally, most of the adults' pre-basic molt is conducted at stopover sites, so even individuals arriving in Colorado in fall from elsewhere probably arrive in alternate plumage, or mostly so. Juvenile Eared Grebes are typically noted in Colorado on or near breeding lakes, but can be found virtually anywhere in the state. Individuals in this brownish plumage can, possibly, be more readily mistaken for Pied-billed Grebes than for Horned Grebes.

### **The Problem of Immatures**

Once these grebes' pre-formative molt is completed, they all obtain somewhat similar black-and-white plumages. This formative plumage is the plumage in which young-of-the-year spend their first winter, and it is where the most problems lie in separating these two species.

This plumage is duskier in both species than are the corresponding definitive basic (adult winter) plumages. Normally, adult Horned Grebes in winter are cleaner and whiter than adult winter Eared Grebes, which are duskier overall. Immature Eared Grebes are even duskier than adults and lack much white in the plumage at all, so they look quite unlike any Horned Grebes. On the other hand, immature Horned Grebes can more closely resemble adult Eared Grebes in plumage.

Several aspects of shape and coloration can help provide solutions to the problem of immatures.

**Shape:** Given all the confusion sown by molt timing, immature plumages, and odd individuals, head shape provides more and better clues for identifying these two species than any other part of the body. The pictures on the back cover of this issue illustrate the features that I discuss here about head shape, with Horned Grebes presented in

each of the two upper photos and Eared Grebes in the two lower photos. These shape differences are useful in all plumages.

Head-on view (left two photos): Comparing width of head to width of neck, Horned Grebe shows a relatively wider head than does Eared Grebe. Though the actual difference in millimeters can be quite small, it results in a wide-headed appearance in Horned Grebe, while in Eared Grebe the head appears barely wider than the neck. Eared Grebe usually exhibits a thinner, more “elegant” neck versus the shorter, thicker neck of Horned Grebe. In fact, if it weren’t for the Horned Grebe’s thick neck, the difference between neck width and head width on the species would be obvious, rather than subtle.

From the front, Horned Grebe also shows a flat crown, while Eared Grebe exhibits a peak in the center of the crown (side to side).

Profile view (right two photos): The head of Horned Grebe slopes gradually up from the forehead to the rear of the crown, with the highest point at the very rear. The peak of the crown on Eared Grebes is usually near the eyes (sometimes in front, sometimes behind). Regardless, the rear edge of the crown is lower than the head’s peak in this species. However, some juvenile Eared Grebes have flatter crowns that more closely resemble those of Horned Grebes.

In the profile view, perusal of the placement of the eyes can be very helpful also. The eyes of Horned Grebe are placed higher than the middle of the head—that is, closer to the crown than they are to the underside of the head or “chin”—whereas on Eared Grebe the eyes are lower than the middle of the head.

Horned Grebes also tend to show a flatter profile to the back, with Eared Grebe tending toward a more rounded and higher back profile that creates a more acute angle between the neck and back in the species.

**Coloration:** Horned Grebe has a pale tip to the bill, visible at close range, which Eared Grebe mostly lacks. The color of the fore-necks of the two species are generally different, with Horned sporting white feathers and Eared dusky feathers (but see above, under “The problem of immatures”). Horned Grebe usually exhibits a supraloral (or pre-ocular) patch of pale color. This patch is often white and sharply-defined but is nearly always present to some degree; it is somewhat discernible on the profile picture on the back cover. Eared Grebe usually lacks this patch. If the patch is present in the species, it is never sharply-defined nor obviously white.

The border of black and white on the face of Horned Grebe is typically, though not always, a straight line through the bottom of the eye. On Eared Grebe, this line passes under the eye, and then usually curves further downward, at least a little. Not only is this difference

in shape notable, but it also means that the eyes on Eared Grebe are enclosed by black, while the eyes of Horned Grebe are bordered on the bottom edge by white.

Finally, the single feature that I use first at long range is often the stark and sharp contrast between the black and the white on the face of Horned Grebe. Though most juveniles/immatures and some adults may have some dusky on the face, any small black-and-white grebe lacking such is a Horned Grebe.

#### **LITERATURE CITED**

- Giroir, G., and T. Leukering. 1999. Surveys of breeding Eared, Western, and Clark's Grebes in Colorado. *Journal of the Colorado Field Ornithologists* 33: 83-90.
- Nelson, D.L. 1998. Eared Grebe. In Kingery, H.E. (Ed.), *Colorado Breeding Bird Atlas*. Colorado Bird Atlas Partnership, Denver, CO.
- Pyle, P. 2008. *Identification Guide to North American Birds*, part II. Slate Creek Press, Bolinas, CA.

*Tony Leukering*, 102A Delaware Avenue, Villas, NJ 08251, [greatgrayowl@aol.com](mailto:greatgrayowl@aol.com)

# Colorado Birds

The Colorado Field Ornithologists' Quarterly

## Instructions for Contributors to *Colorado Birds*

*Colorado Birds* is devoted to the field study of birds in Colorado. Articles and short notes of general or scientific interest are welcomed; potential authors are encouraged to submit any materials that contribute to the enjoyment and understanding of birds in Colorado. The preferred submission format is electronic, via email attachment or on CD. However, typed or hand-written manuscripts are also accepted.

Photos or art: submit black & white or color material. Photos & graphics printed inside the journal will typically be printed in black & white; cover art is printed in color. Graphics can be submitted as prints, slides, or electronically. Electronic submissions can be sent in JPEG (\*.jpg), PDF (\*.pdf), PSD (\*.psd) or TIFF (\*.tif) format. Photos must be submitted in JPEG, PSD or TIFF; maps, tables and other non-photographic material may be submitted as PDF. Photos should be sent in their original format without editing, cropping or color correction. Cover art must be of the highest quality. Cover photos should be a minimum 5.75" wide by 8.75" tall at 300 dpi (1725 × 2625 pixels). Minimum size for interior photos is 3" by 2.5" (900 × 750 pixels or 750 × 900 pixels). For best reproduction, photos can be larger and higher resolution, but they cannot be smaller. Submit electronically via email or on CD. Include information about artist or photographer, subject, date, location and medium used.

Art and photos will be returned at your request; however, manuscripts and CDs will not, unless specifically requested. While your materials will receive the utmost care, the Colorado Field Ornithologists (CFO) or any representative thereof cannot be responsible for materials lost in the mail or due to other circumstances beyond our control.

Manuscripts reporting formal scientific research are sent out for peer review.

Contributors who are not members of CFO will, upon request, receive a complimentary copy of the issue of *Colorado Birds* in which their articles appear.

Send journal contributions to:

Nathan Pieplow  
4745-B White Rock Circle  
Boulder, CO 80301  
editor@cfo-link.org

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



Upper left: Horned Grebe, Bolinas Lagoon, Marin County, CA, 20 November 2007. Upper right: Horned Grebe, Westport, Grays Harbor County, WA, 7 February 2006. Lower left and lower right (same individual): Eared Grebe, Southeast Farallon Island, San Francisco County, CA, 28 November 2007.