

Vol. 44 No. 1 January 2010

# Colorado Birds

The Colorado Field Ornithologists Quarterly



*A Colorado Harlan's Hawk in Alaska*

*Remembering Sigrid Ueblacker*

*Pinyon-eating Crossbills*



Colorado Field Ornithologists  
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[www.cfo-link.org](http://www.cfo-link.org)

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# Colorado Birds

The Colorado Field Ornithologists' Quarterly Vol. 44 No. 1 January 2010



Adult light-morph Harlan's Hawk (*Buteo jamaicensis harlani*) photo composite. Top: Photographed by Jerry Liguori, Gunsight Mountain, Alaska, 13 April 2009. Bottom: Photographed by Bill Schmoker, near Hygiene, Colorado, 21 February 2009. Feather-by-feather analysis shows this to be the same bird (see article p. 16).

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## Conventions – 2010 and Beyond

*Jim Beatty*

### **2010 Convention**

As you already know, our 2010 Convention and Annual Meeting will be held in Fort Collins in “birdy” Larimer County, 21-24 May. Our planning is well underway and details should be announced in late February or early March. It has been eleven years since CFO convened in Fort Collins in May 1999, and our only other recent “north-eastern” convention was at Sterling in 2006. The 2009 Convention in Alamosa will be a challenge to beat with its official list of 199 species, including several San Luis Valley firsts and rarities, but Fort Collins may equal or exceed that total. While spring migration will be nearing its end that weekend, this area of Colorado offers a wide variety of habitats to visit for breeding birds. The Pawnee National Grassland and popular hotspots like Crow Valley will offer shortgrass prairie birding nearby to the east—yet not too far to the west, we will be able to easily access the Poudre River Valley, Rocky Mountain National Park, and perhaps even North Park, where moose occasionally can be seen—always a treat. Of course there is a wide variety of lakes and other local birding spots in the area. Feathered stragglers including shorebirds may still be stopping at Beebe Draw as well. The Fort Collins location probably offers some of our best chances for rare eastern warblers, and finding these little gems will be *the* challenge for both our leaders and participants. So put your order in now for a late migrating Connecticut, Cape May, or Cerulean Warbler—or better yet, all three!

Our Saturday night banquet speaker will be Craig Benkman from the University of Wyoming, who is doing significant and pioneering research into crossbills and how they are ecologically adapted (and still adapting) to their evergreen habitats—and even more surprisingly, how their habitats are adapting to them. It has long been rumored that the AOU will split Red Crossbills into several species, and Dr. Benkman will give us some insight into why and how this might happen. His presentation will be both entertaining and informative. We also hope that he will be able to participate in some of our field trips.

### **Future Conventions**

The CFO board has been exploring the possibility of modifying our future schedule for conventions and field trips, and we would greatly value your thoughts and opinions on this. We have been thinking

of offering a “smaller” convention in the spring, based around some targeted field trips, and then a larger, more traditional convention in the fall. As many of you may know, CFO has offered fall conventions in the past, including one in Denver in 1992 and one in Durango in 1991. However, the overwhelming majority of our events have been in the spring for the 46 years that we have offered an annual convention.

A fall convention could be scheduled to concentrate on shorebirds during their much more leisurely post-breeding migration, thereby offering some opportunity to study their plumages and those of hatch-year birds. Spring trips could focus on our grouse and chicken populations and other migrants or residents in various parts of the state. Field trips might be limited in attendance to ensure the best possible experience for all participants. As always, we would keep costs—if any—as low as possible. We would, however, probably need to underwrite the expenses of our leaders.

These thoughts are in the initial stage of development, and your ideas, opinions, and reactions are important to us. We hope to do some more comprehensive survey work in the coming months. Meanwhile, if you have any comments, thoughts, or ideas for CFO, please contact me or any director. I hope to see you in the field.

The CFO board has been exploring the possibility of modifying our future schedule for conventions and field trips, and we would greatly value your thoughts and opinions on this.

*Jim Beatty, 165 Twelve Point Buck Trail, Durango, CO, 81301, [jdbeatty@bresnan.net](mailto:jdbeatty@bresnan.net)*

## Youth Scholarship Fund Deadline

The CFO Youth Scholarship Fund provides financial help to young birders to attend summer camps, workshops, and training programs that introduce them to science and nature through the study of birds. If you or someone you know is qualified to apply for this scholarship, please download the application form from [http://cfo-link.org/about\\_CFO/youth\\_scholarship.php](http://cfo-link.org/about_CFO/youth_scholarship.php), fill it out, and send it to the address listed on the form no later than **31 March 2010**.

14 November 2009  
St. Anthony Central Hospital  
Denver, Colorado

*Larry Modesitt, CFO Secretary*

The regular quarterly meeting was held at 11:00 A.M. Board members present were President Jim Beatty, Secretary Larry Modesitt, and directors Ted Floyd, Mark Peterson, Nathan Pieplow, Bob Righter, Joe Roller, Bill Schmoker, Larry Semo, Debra Sparn, and Brad Steger. Absent were Treasurer Maggie Boswell and Vice President Bill Kaempfer.

### **President's Report**

The meeting was called to order by President Jim Beatty, who thanked the board for making sure that all ongoing activities continued successfully.

### **Secretary's Report**

Minutes were approved for the 22 August 2009 board meeting at the Bonny Bunkhouse. Larry Modesitt, as secretary, offered to be the storehouse of CFO records and history, excluding the journal. Items should be sent to Larry.

### **Treasurer's Report**

The Treasurer's Report through 30 September was reviewed. Maggie Boswell's financial report indicated we are on budget. We wish to have excess funds invested conservatively. They currently are in one of the Vanguard funds. The board wishes to have more specifics on the return generated by the funds. Jim expressed interest in reviewing the longer-term trend of our financial condition.

### **Committee Reports**

A. Colorado Bird Records Committee — Larry Semo. We are up to

date on all digital submissions through October 2009. This is an impressive achievement that took many years and much work to accomplish. We are unaware of any other state records committees that are this current. We continue to have a backlog of paper submissions that are being manually entered. Terms expired for two committee members, Rachel Hopper and Peter Gent. Peter is willing to serve for another term, but Rachel would like to step down. Tony Leukering previously had said that only two CFO Board members can serve on the CBRC. This restriction does not appear, however, in the Bylaws of either the CBRC or CFO. While there was some concern many years ago that there was too much overlap in members of both boards, the concern does not exist today. Larry Semo will explore this and make recommendations.

B. Colorado Birds — Nathan Pieplow. Jim complimented Nathan on the recently published issue of Colorado Birds. Articles for the January issue are relatively set. He also has many articles that will be included in future issues.

C. Membership — Debra Sparn.

Membership is approximately 420. Maggie Boswell did an overhaul of the database prior to giving the membership file to Debra. The group expressed interest in knowing trends for such items as renewals, new members, and lost members. We wondered why Wisconsin's and Minnesota's organizations have much higher membership of 2,500 and 2,000, respectively. One difference has been the activity of their publicity committees, a committee which CFO just added this year.

D. Publicity — Ted Floyd. Ted will be communicating regularly (at least 8-12 times yearly) with newsworthy messages to COBirds. He suggests that field trips that members lead with other organizations might be co-sponsored by CFO. An example of items worth publicizing is that Colorado's list of 489 birds accepted by the Colorado Bird Records Committee is the highest total for any non-coast, non-border state. Nathan recommended determining what publicity other states are providing, and emulating the good parts. Nathan and Debra have issues of *Colorado Birds* for distribution when it would be useful. Larry Modesitt recommended formalizing the effort to grow membership through publicity. Wisconsin's organization has grown rapidly with the efforts of one man. Bill Maynard is committed to prepare "News from the Field" for one year. It is a key part of the journal, and quality has varied widely in past years. Our journal focuses more on rarities, while the South Dakota journal, in contrast, features early and late dates for species, which gets more people

involved in making submissions. Maintaining this database would involve much more work for somebody, but there would be value. Larry Semo mentioned that some groups have seasonal editors, who just do winter, for example. Jim will work with some board members to survey interest and develop an action plan. Mark recommended handing out CFO literature during Christmas Bird Counts to attempt to recruit new members.

E. Birds of Colorado (BOC) On-line — Larry Semo. Tony Leukering will be here for a week in December and the committee will attempt to meet then. This project is stalled partially because of lack of funding. There are two ways to get started. Bob Righter suggested developing examples of data maps (with historical data) with cost estimates to show what the information would look like. The example would be used to raise funds for making the range and quantity data on line and nearly real time. We would favor requiring an editor's approval to modify a species account, unlike Wikipedia. The approach that had been begun by Andrew Spencer and Tony Leukering was to select volunteers to do species accounts. Many volunteers said they would write species accounts, but they are awaiting a format. Larry Semo will develop a plan for board consideration.

F. Awards — Brad Steger. The board discussed various potential award winners. Ron Ryder award winners, generally individuals who have published literature, are ineligible for the Lifetime Achievement Award. We do not yet have a his-

torian for CFO, but we see value in researching and maintaining the history. Joe will ask Warren Finch, who has served ably as the DFO historian, if he would like to be the CFO historian. Nathan has back journals and will assist in adding historical information. Larry Modesitt, as secretary, will maintain the information.

G. COBirds — Mark Peterson. COBirds is still going strong, and Rachel continues as moderator.

H. Nominating — Joe Roller. Mark Peterson's second term concludes in May, so new potential board members were discussed. In descending order of priority, we are interested in: the skill the board requires at the time, gender diversity, and geographical diversity.

I. CFO Website — Mark Peterson. We discussed improvements to be made, particularly to the home page.

J. Field Trips — Brad Steger. Brad recommended that CFO lead out-of-state field trips, and the board is interested. Limited access locations also are good. Getting a leader is the difficult job.

## **2010 Convention Plan**

The convention will take place 21-24 May 2010 in Ft. Collins. The banquet will occur on Saturday, 23 May. Jim will speak with keynote speaker Craig Benkman about his audiovisual needs. We are interested in

promoting book signings, as we have several members who have written books. The board approved the sale of T-shirts, and the artwork for both the brochure and T-shirts. Nathan Pieplow will present an auditory component to Stump the Chumps.

Convention field trips: limited access locations have strong attendance, and people accept fees to go there. Mark and Brad have started organizing potential field trips.

Organizing exhibits: 2009 had RMBO, ABA, and conservation organizations. Mark will supply a list of particular vendors who have contributed in the past.

Unless something unexpected develops, there will not be paper sessions in this convention.

## **Editing the County Bird Website**

Everything sent to Rachel Hopper has been updated. Joe Roller will be the board member responsible for organizing an update.

## **Donation to the Colorado Breeding Bird Atlas II**

Bill Schmoker moved and Joe Roller seconded the motion to make a donation of \$500 (approximately \$1 per member) for the 2009 studies.

The next meeting was scheduled for 30 January 2010 at the convention hotel chosen in Ft. Collins. This meeting was adjourned at 2:44 P.M.



## Brad Steger, Director

*Jim Beatty*

I was prowling around some Denver lakes several years ago looking for an immature Little Blue Heron that had been reported in the area when I first met Brad. He, too, was looking for it, but we came away empty that day. Since that first meeting, I've chanced upon Brad in many corners of the state and, of course, we were both always birding.

Growing up with a birding and bird-banding father, Brad was very excited when, as a three-year-old, he got his first pair of binoculars. He immediately ran into the woods behind his home in Maryland hoping to find a Carolina Chickadee, a Northern Cardinal, or a Tufted Titmouse. However, he didn't see any of those birds, because he tripped over a tree root and broke his brand new binoculars. That momentary setback didn't stop his interest in birds, though.

Through the years, as he was growing up both in Maryland and on the other side of the world, in Australia, he was always around birds. Some of his early bird-related memories include helping his mom and dad band in their backyard. He also recalls Purple Martin banding and the Canada Goose roundup with Patuxent Wildlife Research Center Bird Banding Laboratory and many weekend trips with his parents and two brothers to Maryland's eastern shore every fall, to see the huge flocks of geese and swans as they flew in long lines or rested in large rafts on the water. His more exotic experiences included feeding bowerbirds in Australia and watching the Fairy Penguins return to their burrows at night after foraging.



*Brad Steger with Regent Bowerbird. Photo by Bruce Steger*

After high school Brad moved to Illinois for college, and upon graduation he relocated to Wisconsin, where he started working in his first full-time job. After a couple of years he was offered the opportunity to work in the United Kingdom for a temporary assignment of just a few months. Those “few months” turned into two-and-a-half years. Brad was somewhat disappointed to leave the UK with a list of fewer than 100 new species, as “twitching” in the UK and Europe can be difficult even for a skilled and dedicated birder. However, his return to the US landed him in Texas, where his avocation as a birder began in earnest. His trips to the Texas Coast to see the wintering Whooping Cranes, to the lower Rio Grande Valley, and to Big Bend National Park quickly expanded his life list.

Brad returned to Wisconsin after just eight months in Texas. He traveled frequently in his job, and whenever possible he would stay for the weekend to bird, looking for new species but also happy to see just locally uncommon birds.

He finally made it to Colorado in 2000. He now lives in the mountains above Manitou Springs with his wife Sophie and their two sons: Alexander, who is two years old, and Sebastian, who is just five months. Brad loves it when Alexander opens up one of his field guides from around the world and wants to look at the owls. Even better was when Alexander found the Painted Bunting illustration in the Sibley guide that matched the one pictured on the ABA calendar for that month. Does Brad have another birder in the making?

Brad met some of the “southern Colorado” birders—Mark Peterson, Lisa Edwards, Brandon Percival, and Bill Maynard—in the winter of 2005 when he had a flock of rosy-finches coming to his feeders. “Rosies” are always a magical bird and they definitely attract birders.

After he came to Colorado, it took almost a full year for the county listing bug to bite Brad. He states that the best thing about county listing is that he has seen more of the great state of Colorado than he could have ever imagined when he first arrived. According to Brad, “if you haven’t looked for Chukars in the western canyons, or Greater Sage-Grouse in North Park, or even Northern Flickers in all 64 counties, consider making plans do so, as you won’t be disappointed even if you don’t see the birds you went to see. The scenery can’t be beat, and maybe you’ll discover a ghost town to explore if the birding is slow, or possibly a little country café for lunch with an opportunity to talk with the locals about birds.”

Brad joined the CFO Board in 2008 and first served as the awards committee chair. This year he took over responsibility for field trips, so look for updates from him on that subject in the near future. He can always use new ideas for CFO outings and, even better, volunteer

leaders. If there's a place you want to go, just give Brad a call or send him an e-mail.

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

## CFO AWARDS

# Dedicated Service Award Recipient: Raymond Davis

*Brad Steger*

Raymond Davis, simply "Davis" to everyone who knows him, was born and raised in Colorado. Unlike many birders who start at an early age, he didn't start birding until a male Bullock's Oriole showed up in his yard in 1983—definitely a good bird to "set the hook." Even though he often made fun of his friends' birding hobby before he took it up himself, they welcomed him with open arms. It didn't take Davis long to become a well-known and respected member of the Colorado birding community.

Davis joined the CFO Board of Directors in 1992 and, being an accountant working for non-profit charities, he was immediately asked to be the treasurer. He served on the board for the next eight years. After leaving the board he continued to be involved in almost all of the membership duties, including maintaining the membership database, mailing *Colorado Birds*, corresponding with new members, and reminding people of their expiring memberships. This is definitely not a trivial task, as CFO has over 400 members.

When Davis is not working for charities, he enjoys playing poker, basketball, softball, and bridge, as well as reading science fiction and singing. When it comes to birding, one of Davis's favorite activities is to lead field trips. Davis has led trips for CFO, DFO, the Boulder Bird Club, ABA, and Boulder Audubon. He has led trips across Colorado and to Texas. One of his favorite field trip destinations is his own property in Lyons, where he has a list of 130 species, including somewhat reliable Pinyon Jays, which are uncommon on the northern Front Range.

Davis really enjoys working with beginning and young birders, which is terrific, since one of the most important roles for CFO (and



According to Joel and Marcel Such, "Most people recognize Davis by two distinct field marks: first, mismatched Converse All Star High Top sneakers (true blue paired with hot pink one day, zebra-striped paired with lemon yellow the next). Second, a birding hat on which every square inch is covered in High Island patches."

any other nature organization) is to create a legacy through our children. Two young birders Davis has taken under his wing are Marcel and Joel Such. Marcel and Joel were both recognized last year by ABA in the Young Birder of the Year competition, which I suspect might not have happened without Davis's mentoring in their early birding days. I asked the two of them to reflect on some of their experiences with Davis in the field, and here is what they said:

*We met Davis when we were both under the age of six and had no concept of this thing called "birding." Though one of us (Joel) was already a bird nut, the other (Marcel) was inspired by both Davis and Joel and decided to join in on the fun. It was Davis who bravely stepped up to become our first*

*birding mentor, happily inviting us on his local field trips and outings in the neighborhood. His easy-going yet insightful approach to birding is non-threatening to beginning bird watchers. Thanks to his wry sense of humor, his outings are always light-hearted, fun, and, at times, unpredictable.*

*You can always count on Davis to break down the intensity of a wild chase. On a very long and hot search for a Bachman's Sparrow in the Piney Woods of Texas, we found Davis taking a nap in the middle of a fire ant-infested road. He simply said, "If you see the bird, wake me up."*

*Another time, at High Island's Smith Oaks, a wild rumor broke out about a Cerulean Warbler near the rookery. We all took off in a mad dash, but Davis calmly continued to recline on his bench in the woods, enjoying the birds that were near. Ironically, while we struggled to catch a glimpse of the elusive bird, Davis got his own Cerulean Warbler back at the bench where we'd all started. Birding with Davis is always enjoyable and memorable!*

Please join me in thanking Davis for all his work for CFO over the

years. He is definitely well deserving of CFO's Dedicated Service Award thanks to all the work he has done for each and every member of CFO over the last 20 years.

Brad Steger, 6750 Eagle Mountain Road, Manitou Springs, CO 80829, at0907@yahoo.com

### Davis's Response to the Board

Thanks for the cool plaque and the \$100 gift certificate. As you might imagine, I've already spent the certificate on bird seed; I had the stupidity to make a long 16-perch thistle feeder, and then realize how much it costs to fill it! Depending on the season, I have 50 Pine Siskins or Lesser Goldfinches to fill it up. Weirdly, I've also had Red Crossbills and juncos perch on it and pull out thistle. I have the plaque up in my office at work, so they'll be sure to remember that I'm not just an accountant (as if that works).

- Raymond Davis

## IN MEMORIAM

### Sigrid Noll Ueblacker

*Brenda Leap*

Thousands of raptors are injured every year, but for the past 27 years, if a raptor was injured within the range of Sigrid Noll Ueblacker and her Birds of Prey Foundation, it had the very best chance of recovery and return to the wild. Sigrid's unexpected passing on 28 October at age 68 was a devastating loss, but her life's work and philosophy of compassionate care in a stress-free environment will continue at her Boulder County rehabilitation facility. To Sigrid, every bird was important, and as she often described it, her favorite bird was the one that arrived on her doorstep today. We can all be proud that it was here in Colorado that she created one of the most admired raptor rehabilitation centers in the United States.

Sigrid began rehabilitating birds in her backyard in Lakewood, Colorado in 1981 when her daughter, Elke, brought home two injured poorwills. Those two poorwills quickly turned into vultures, owls, and hawks, and Sigrid could tell you colorful stories about each one. Elton, an unreleasable Great Horned Owl, occupied a large cage built



*Sigrid Ueblacker with Adam, a rehabilitated Bald Eagle*

onto the side of Sigrid's house, and his favorite perch allowed him to look into her bedroom window. During mating season, Elton hooted at her through the night—

hence his name. Sigrid's humor permeated her work, helping people to relate to the birds she cared for.

Sigrid founded the Birds of Prey Foundation in 1984 to treat injured and orphaned wildlife—primarily raptors, such as eagles, hawks, falcons, and owls—and return healthy members of the breeding population to their natural habitat. The Birds of Prey Foundation fosters compassion for wildlife in distress and teaches it to new generations through mentorships, internships, lectures, and volunteer programs. Sigrid's legacy as director of the Foundation includes the admission of over 10,800 birds. Her quarter-century of often intensive, round-the-clock work gave an enormous boost to America's raptor population through the many thousands of successful releases. Fresh, nutritionally sound raptor food, most of it raised by the Foundation, was also of key importance in Sigrid's philosophy. As Sigrid often instructed new volunteers, "Every animal here is treated with care, dignity, and respect, regardless of whether it is a mouse or an eagle."

Wendy Shattil and Bob Rozinski, wildlife photographers and longtime friends of Sigrid, recall the following story: "The proof of Sigrid's success was dramatically brought to our attention when we photographed a wild Peregrine Falcon nest in Dinosaur National Monument under the auspices of the staff naturalist. Peregrines were listed as endangered at the time, and every individual was critical to the population. The female peregrine that successfully raised this brood of chicks in the wild was a bird that Sigrid had released two years prior and 100 miles away. The federal leg band confirmed that this was 'The Blue Lady,' Sigrid's name for the beautiful peregrine with a badly injured wing. It is very rare to know the fate of a released bird, but this was living proof of Sigrid's remarkable success.

Her skill equally benefited common kestrels and endangered peregrines.”

One of Sigrid’s outstanding qualities was to see each bird as an individual, determining its needs, recognizing its personality and providing its treatment in the most effective way.

The result is an astounding 62% average release rate for the Birds of Prey Foundation. This is remarkable because most birds are admitted due to encounters with humans, such as being hit by vehicles, shot, poisoned, injured by power lines, or poorly cared for in captivity by well-meaning people.

As passionate as Sigrid was in caring for her patients, she was equally dedicated to sharing her knowledge with others. Sigrid was honored in 2004 for her lifetime commitment to wildlife and educational efforts by the National Wildlife Rehabilitators Association with a Lifetime Achievement Award. This was one of many well deserved recognitions, including the Boulder Audubon Environmental Activism Award, the Colorado Wildlife Federation’s Conservationist of the Year Award, the Cherokee Ranch Stewardship Award, and the Boulder County Parks & Open Space Environmental Stewardship Award, plus commendations from the Humane Society of Boulder Valley, Jefferson County Public Schools, Celestial Seasonings, and 7 News, with its feature “People Who Make A Difference.” In 2009, Sigrid was chosen to be one of ten finalists for Animal Planet’s “Hero of the Year” award.

Sigrid conducted training seminars in bird rehabilitation, spoke at many national conferences, and was a tireless fundraiser of the monies needed to maintain the Foundation’s high standard of care. School children and community groups all over the area were captivated and enriched by her educational programs, which featured unreleasable birds who were longtime friends and companions of Sigrid’s.

The Birds of Prey Foundation continues to take in birds daily, with 50 active volunteers and a staff of three, all providing the same ex-



*Sigrid with a rehabilitated Long-eared Owl*

cellent care for which Sigrid was known. That's no surprise, since she trained them all personally. One of Sigrid's favorite quotes by Donald Trump says: "If you don't love whatever you do, you will never, ever be successful." And Sigrid liked to add: "We love our work! And most of all, we love our birds!" With everyone's continued support, Sigrid's legacy will live on and the birds we love will soar on mended wings.

Brenda Leap, [brenda@birds-of-prey.org](mailto:brenda@birds-of-prey.org)

A celebration of Sigrid's life, open to all, will be held in May of 2010, and will be announced through the Birds of Prey Foundation website at [www.birds-of-prey.org](http://www.birds-of-prey.org). In lieu of gifts or flowers, memorial donations can be made to the Birds of Prey Foundation, 2290 S. 104th St., Broomfield CO, 80020, or online through the website.

## COVER PHOTO

# Photo-recovery of a Harlan's Red-tailed Hawk in Colorado and Alaska

*Bill Schmoker and Jerry Liguori*

## Introduction

What are the chances of two birders photographing the same individual bird three months apart and 3700 km away...and recognizing it? In December 2008 and February 2009, Bill Schmoker photographed an adult light-morph Harlan's Red-tailed Hawk (*Buteo jamaicensis harlani*) outside of Hygiene, Colorado, on the same territory it had occupied for at least one previous winter. After leaving its wintering grounds, where it was last photographed on 21 February 2009, this same individual was photographed by Jerry Liguori near Gunsight Mountain, Alaska, about 190 km northeast of Anchorage, on 13 April 2009.

## Photographic Evidence

Even though many Red-tailed Hawks are similar in appearance to one another, each one has unique characters that distinguish it from



all others (Liguori 2005), just as humans have unique fingerprints. The two images of our bird (front cover) both expose details of the wing, body, and tail feathers, making a feather-by-feather comparison possible. Since this individual shows no flight feather molt and possibly only minor body molt in the photos, we are confident we are comparing the same feathers.



*Harlan's Red-tailed Hawk, near Hygiene, Colorado, 21 February 2009. Photo by Bill Schmoker*

At first glance the overall plumage of each bird appears similar, but the pose is different in each photo and some features are difficult to match up. However, the outer primaries are easy to compare. The waviness to the second-outermost and outermost primaries (P9 and P10) and the more straight-line banding on the next three primaries (P6 to P8) appear identical in both photos. The solid black wing tips on the outer primaries are of equal width in both photos as well.

However, it should be noted that many Red-tailed Hawks have primary patterns that are extremely similar to those of this bird (Liguori, unpubl.). More important in establishing the identity of this individual are features such as the mottling on the underwing coverts and the markings on the sides of the breast, bellyband, patagial bars, and head; all of these features match in each photograph. The dark "chin strap" below the white throat is shown on each photograph as well. In addition, the tail appears identical, being mottled grayish and reddish throughout, and showing significant reddish along the outer rectrices, with a sub-terminal band that fades along the outermost rectrices. The markings on the wrists and patagium match in both images, along with the darker area midway along the second primary underwing covert of the right wing. Also, a small constellation of dark spots in an otherwise white area along the leading edge of the right wing just outside the patagium is apparent on both photos.

### **Long-distance bird recoveries**

Long-distance tracking of bird movements is typically possible only

when birds are captured and distinctly marked. One method is to affix numeric leg bands to birds with the hope that the bird is later recaptured, reported by hunters, or found dead. Auxiliary markers, such as colored leg bands, neck collars, nasal markers, dyes, patagial markers, and tail streamers, can be noted without recapture. Newer technology helps track birds via satellite transmitters that relay a bird's daily or even hourly position to plot a bird's yearly movements.

Photographic analysis can reveal band numbers and/or alphanumeric codes on auxiliary markers that may be unreadable by visual examination. For example, Schmoker photographically documented a neck-collared Cackling Goose in Colorado that was initially captured in Alaska. He did the same with a returning Golden-crowned Sparrow on its wintering territory in Palo Alto, California by photographing its leg band.

Documented examples of bird redetection by photographic analysis of morphological characteristics have so far involved vagrant rarities and/or birds with distinctive plumage aberrations or deformities. In most cases birds have been sighted later in the same area where they were first found, or have returned to the same breeding and wintering grounds year after year. For example, a Zone-tailed Hawk with one misaligned primary feather returned to Goleta, California every winter from 1993 to 2007 (J. Morlan, pers. comm.).

Occasionally a rarity is tracked photographically over a considerable distance. A juvenile Ivory Gull identifiable by its pattern of dark spotting spent much of February 2009 in Arcachon, France, then turned up in Cork County, Ireland in early March (Gantlett 2009). Between mid-August and October 2002, a juvenile Brown Pelican with a distinctive hole in the inner web of its left foot was tracked from Michigan through Quebec and Ontario and finally to New York (Wormington 2002). A leucistic Herring Gull found in July 1996 at Partridge Creek in central Yukon was spotted on 23 June 1997 at Whitehorse, southern Yukon, 645 km away. In addition to being leucistic, it had a pattern of flecking on its iris that allowed photographs to confirm its identity (Sinclair et al. 2003).

Non-avian species have also been tracked photographically, most notably whales that exhibit unique pigmented markings, scars, callosities (white, rough, raised skin), and/or barnacle encrustation (Smith et al. 1999). Whale Sharks are being monitored individually since each has a unique pattern of white spots and streaks on its flanks (Holmberg et al. 2008). Asian Elephants, which have unique ear patterns and tusk shapes (Goswami et al. 2007), and Jaguars, which have unique spot patterns (Silver et al. 2004), are also monitored via sightings and photographs.

## Conclusion

Birds are not usually suited for tracking by photos alone due to the similar plumages shown by individuals of most species, as well as the difficulty of obtaining detailed photos. However, the photographs of this Harlan's Hawk demonstrate that, at least among species with much individual plumage variation (such as buteos and gulls), long-distance photographic tracking is possible. The ever-growing use of digital photography and online photo sharing make this type of detection and monitoring more likely in the future.

## Post-script

During the final edits of this article, the light Harlan's Hawk again returned to its winter haunts south of Hygiene, Colorado, where it was first spotted this season on 8 November 2009 by Christian Nunes.

## ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

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## Partial Results, 2007–2009

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As the third year of the Colorado Breeding Bird Atlas II Project (COBBAIL) comes to a close, I am pleased to report on the project's tremendous progress since its inception in 2007. Currently, COBBAIL boasts over 400 volunteers and field assistants covering 930 (51%) of 1,824 priority blocks statewide (Fig. 1, Table 1). Approximately 300 priority blocks (15%) have been completed, with numerous additional priority blocks close to completion (Table 1). In this issue of *Colorado Birds*, I provide a summary of COBBAIL's partial results based on the first three years of effort (2007–2009). Although a significant amount of data has been collected, these results are only preliminary. Thus, changes in the dataset will likely occur as the project approaches completion and more data are submitted. At this time, the project is scheduled to be completed in 2011; however, if fieldwork is not complete at that time, the project may continue until all priority blocks have been surveyed.

Partial results were extracted from COBBAIL's electronic data entry website (<http://birdatlas.org/Atlas/CO/>), developed by the Cornell Lab of Ornithology, in December 2009. The majority of observations in the database occurred within the 1,824 priority blocks, each representing 1/6 of a USGS 7.5-minute quadrangle map. Additional data from non-priority blocks have also been submitted; thus, presence



*American Dipper feeding fledglings, Lair of the Bear Park, Jefferson County, 7 Jun 2009. Photo by Gregg Goodrich*

of some species may be overestimated at this time. After fieldwork is completed, species distribution and breeding status will be pooled and presented on a per quadrangle map basis.



Fig. 1. Distribution of COBBAIL blocks that have been assigned to volunteers.

To date, COBBAIL volunteers have reported 278 species statewide, with 244 confirmed as breeders (Table 1). The most frequently reported species by far is the American Robin (*Turdus migratorius*), reported in almost 800 blocks (Table 2). Following American Robin are Mourning Dove (*Zenaidura macroura*), Northern Flicker (*Colaptes auratus*), and Red-tailed Hawk (*Buteo jamaicensis*), each reported in more than 600 blocks (Table 2). Western Meadowlark (*Sturnella neglecta*), Brown-headed Cowbird (*Molothrus ater*), and House Wren (*Troglodytes aedon*) each were reported in over 500 blocks, while the remaining top 25 species were reported in fewer than 500 but more than 391 blocks (Table 2). Of the top 25 species, 15 have been documented in all of the 26 COBBAIL

Table 1. Summary of COBBAIL volunteer effort, 2007–2009. Summary data obtained from <http://bird.atlasinc.org/Atlas/CO/> on 6 December 2009.

Summary Statistic	Value
Priority Blocks Assigned	~930
Priority Blocks Complete	~300
Block Effort-Hours	17,828
Auto Miles Driven	217,333
Observations Submitted	85,859
Species Reported	278
Species Confirmed	244



Field Sparrow, Tamarack Ranch, Logan County, 14 Jul 2009. Photo by Loch Kilpatrick

regions (Table 2). Four additional species have also been reported within all 26 atlas regions: Say's Phoebe (*Sayornis saya*), Northern Rough-winged Swallow (*Stelgidopteryx serripennis*), Common Grackle (*Quiscalus quiscula*), and House Sparrow (*Passer domesticus*).

The COBBAIL dataset includes nine new "Probable" or "Confirmed" species that were not documented as potential

breeders during the first Colorado Breeding Bird Atlas (COBBAI; Table 3). Five of these species were documented in only one atlas block: Common Goldeneye (*Bucephala clangula*), Lucy's Warbler (*Vermivora luciae*), Prairie Warbler (*Dendroica discolor*), Kentucky Warbler (*Oporornis formosus*), and Scarlet Tanager (*Piranga olivacea*). Hooded Merganser (*Lophodytes cucullatus*), Franklin's Gull (*Leucophaeus pipixcan*), and White-winged Dove (*Zenaida asiatica*) were reported in six, five, and eight blocks, respectively; each was "Confirmed" in at least one block. Eurasian Collared-Dove (*Streptopelia decaocto*) has been observed in almost 200 blocks and "Confirmed" in 64.

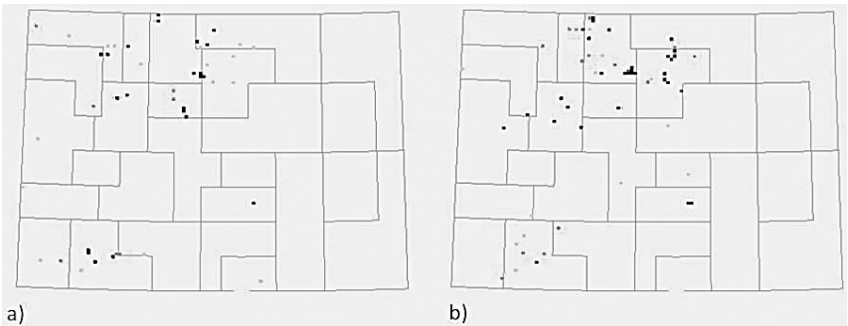


Fig. 2. Distribution of Osprey (*Pandion haliaetus*) reports during a) COBBAI (1987–1995) and b) COBBAIL (2007–2009).

Table 2. COBBAIL top 25 species reported as “Possible,” “Probable,” or “Confirmed” breeders, 2007-2009.

Species	Blocks Reported <sup>a</sup>
1) American Robin ( <i>Turdus migratorius</i> ) <sup>b</sup>	788
2) Mourning Dove ( <i>Zenaida macroura</i> ) <sup>b</sup>	684
3) Northern Flicker ( <i>Colaptes auratus</i> ) <sup>b</sup>	637
4) Red-tailed Hawk ( <i>Buteo jamaicensis</i> ) <sup>b</sup>	630
5) Western Meadowlark ( <i>Sturnella neglecta</i> )	539
6) Brown-headed Cowbird ( <i>Molothrus ater</i> ) <sup>b</sup>	526
7) House Wren ( <i>Troglodytes aedon</i> ) <sup>b</sup>	507
8) Red-winged Blackbird ( <i>Agelaius phoeniceus</i> ) <sup>b</sup>	484
9) Western Wood-Pewee ( <i>Contopus sordidulus</i> ) <sup>b</sup>	482
10) Common Raven ( <i>Corvus corax</i> )	478
11) Chipping Sparrow ( <i>Spizella passerina</i> )	478
12) Broad-tailed Hummingbird ( <i>Selasphorus platycercus</i> )	473
13) Violet-green Swallow ( <i>Tachycineta thalassina</i> )	456
14) Western Kingbird ( <i>Tyrannus verticalis</i> )	451
15) Mountain Bluebird ( <i>Sialia currucoides</i> )	433
16) Mallard ( <i>Anas platyrhynchos</i> ) <sup>b</sup>	423
17) Barn Swallow ( <i>Hirundo rustica</i> ) <sup>b</sup>	418
18) American Kestrel ( <i>Falco sparverius</i> ) <sup>b</sup>	416
19) Cliff Swallow ( <i>Petrochelidon pyrrhonata</i> ) <sup>b</sup>	414
20) Yellow Warbler ( <i>Dendroica petechia</i> ) <sup>b</sup>	408
21) European Starling ( <i>Sturnus vulgaris</i> ) <sup>b</sup>	403
22) Mountain Chickadee ( <i>Poecile gambeli</i> )	402
23) Horned Lark ( <i>Eremophila alpestris</i> ) <sup>b</sup>	398
24) Warbling Vireo ( <i>Vireo gilvus</i> )	394
25) Lark Sparrow ( <i>Chondestes grammacus</i> )	392

<sup>a</sup> Data include some non-priority blocks.

<sup>b</sup> Species reported in all 26 COBBAIL regions.

In addition to these new breeders, COBBAIL data suggests an apparent increase in the number of blocks in which several species have been reported compared with COBBAI data (Table 4, Figs. 2–4). Among these are two diurnal raptors which were previously on the

federal Threatened and Endangered Species List, Bald Eagle (*Haliaeetus leucocephalus*) and Peregrine Falcon (*Falco peregrinus*). Both were listed by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service during COBBAI; however, the Peregrine Falcon was delisted in 1999 and the Bald Eagle in 2007 (USFWS 1999, USFWS 2007).



Dickcissel, Chico Basin Ranch, Pueblo County, 6 Jun 2009. Photo by Bill Maynard

Their apparent expansions are to be expected as a result of their recovery. The remaining species in Table 4 were uncommon or rare during COBBAI; therefore, their apparent increase may indicate expansion of their range in Colorado. One species of concern, however, is Great-tailed Grackle (*Quiscalus mexicanus*), which has largely been unreported on the West Slope despite its apparent increase in eastern Colorado (Fig. 4). This could be due in part to gaps in block coverage on the West Slope (Fig. 1), although some areas where Great-tailed Grackle was reported during COBBAI appear to be well covered.

Overall, however, without a complete dataset, it is too soon to make conclusions regarding changes in distribution or



Fig. 3. Distribution of Least Flycatcher (*Empidonax minimus*) reports during a) COBBAI (1987–1995) and b) COBBAI (2007–2009).



possible range expansion. These species will be monitored closely as more atlas data are collected and submitted.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

Special thanks to Breanna Powers for compiling COBBAIL data for use in Table 2. I extend a sincere thanks to all COBBAIL volunteers, Regional Coordinators, and Technical Committee members for their time and effort. The Atlas would not be successful without you, and we hope you will continue your efforts with the project until field work has been completed.

The editors thank Larry Semo for his technical review of this manuscript.

Table 3. “Probable” and “Confirmed” species reported during COBBAIL (2007–2009) that were not documented as potential or confirmed breeders during COBBAIL (1987–1995).

Species	Blocks Reported	Status	Highest Breeding Evidence
Common Goldeneye ( <i>Bucephala clangula</i> )	1	Probable	Pair
Hooded Merganser ( <i>Lophodytes cucullatus</i> )	6	Confirmed	Fledged Young
Franklin’s Gull ( <i>Leucophaeus pipixcan</i> )	5	Confirmed	Nest with Young
Eurasian Collared-dove ( <i>Streptopelia decaocto</i> )	196	Confirmed	Nest with Young
White-winged Dove ( <i>Zenaida asiatica</i> )	8	Confirmed	Occupied Nest
Lucy’s Warbler ( <i>Vermivora luciae</i> )	1	Probable	Pair
Prairie Warbler ( <i>Dendroica discolor</i> )	1	Confirmed	Nest Building
Kentucky Warbler ( <i>Oporornis formosus</i> )	1	Probable	Territorial
Scarlet Tanager ( <i>Piranga olivacea</i> )	1	Probable	Territorial



Fig. 4. Distribution of Great-tailed Grackle (*Quiscalus mexicanus*) reports during a) COBBAIL (1987-1995) and b) COBBAIL (2007-2009 ).

Table 4. Apparent increase in the number of blocks reporting selected species from COBBAI (1987–1995) to COBBAI (2007–2009).

Species	Blocks Reported COBBAI	Blocks Reported COBBAI
Osprey ( <i>Pandion haliaetus</i> )	29	47
Bald Eagle ( <i>Haliaeetus leucocephalus</i> )	14	34
Peregrine Falcon ( <i>Falco peregrinus</i> )	17	35
Least Flycatcher ( <i>Empidonax minimus</i> )	3	12
Black Phoebe ( <i>Sayornis nigricans</i> )	5	14
Lazuli × Indigo Bunting hybrid ( <i>Passerina amoena</i> × <i>P. cyanea</i> )	6	13
Great-tailed Grackle ( <i>Quiscalus mexicanus</i> )	38	50

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## Red Crossbills Eating Pinyon Pine Seeds

David Leatherman

The Red Crossbill (*Loxia curvirostra*) is well known for its diet, which consists largely of coniferous tree seeds. While the Red Crossbill also eats many other items, this bird's nomadic distribution from year to year is explained in large part by the sporadic nature of bumper cone crops. This species moves around spatially and temporally to take advantage of locally abundant food sources.

While returning from the Colorado Field Ornithologists' Convention in Alamosa on 25 May 2009, I decided to take a driving break in a quaint little cemetery a short distance above and west of US 285 near its junction with US 50 at the southern edge of Poncha Springs. This old cemetery was established amid a native "forest" of pinyon pine (*Pinus edulis*) and Rocky Mountain juniper (*Juniperus occidentalis*).

Soon after arriving, I heard the quiet contact notes of Red Crossbills within the crowns of pinyon pines. These were the first Red Crossbills I had seen or heard in 2009 and I was interested in observing their activities.

About 30 individual crossbills of mixed sexes and ages, including recently fledged juveniles, were busy feasting on the seeds of pinyon



Red Crossbill, Poncha Springs, Chaffee County, 25 May 2009. Photo by David Leatherman



Red Crossbill, Poncha Springs, Chaffee County,  
25 May 2009. Photo by David Leatherman

pine. The trees held a heavy crop of cones, the scales of which were beginning to dry and expose the “nuts” lodged between them. These nuts would have been first available in late summer or autumn of 2008, and it is possible that utilization of this food resource began at that time and continued through the winter of 2008-09. On the day of my visit, the birds were visually inspecting the cones for their degree of drying and then, provided a cone was in the desired condition, removing individual seeds with little difficulty.

As anyone knows who has tried to extract the pale “meat” of a pinyon seed from the dark, hard seed coat, the next step is the crucial one in a consumer’s quest for nutrition. The crossbills had no problem with it.

Removing a hard seed from its cone, a bird held it between the bases of the upper and lower mandibles. With a seemingly effortless compression of the mandibles, sometimes accompanied by a sideways movement (or lateral abduction), it cracked the shell, discarded the shell with deft movements of the tongue, and retained the meat for quick swallowing (see accompanying photos).

Juveniles begged for food and were fed pinyon nut meats. They also obtained this food item on their own. It seems that this episode included an element of successful, mandibles-on training.

Only twice have Red Crossbills been reported feeding on the seeds of “pinyon” pine. Benkman (pers. comm.) observed crossbills feeding on *P. edulis*, the widespread southwestern species which occurs extensively in southern and western Colorado, at Bandelier National Monument near Santa Fe, New Mexico, 21-22 August 1993. Payne (1972) reported crossbills utilizing fallen and within-cone seeds of singleleaf pinyon pine (*P. monophylla*), a species found mostly in Utah, Nevada, and southern California, in the Panamint Mountains of Death Valley, California, on 25 March 1970.

Why are Red Crossbills so infrequently reported feeding on pinyon pine seeds? The seeds are highly nutritious, the tree commonly occurs within the range of the bird, and the bird is highly skilled in overcoming any obstacles presented by the cones and hard-shelled seeds. I can only guess the answer to be a combination of opportunity and need that is relatively rare in nature. That is to say, crossbills are only likely to feed on pinyon seeds when there is a general lack of their normal fare (ponderosa pine and Engelmann and Colorado blue spruce seed crops) coincident with the occurrence of a good cone crop in pinyon pine.

Good cone crops of native Colorado coniferous trees occur on average at the following intervals (Bonner & Karrfelt 2008):

Pinyon pine: 2-5 years  
Ponderosa pine: 2-5 years  
Limber pine: 2-4 years  
Lodgepole pine: seed normally only released  
upon exposure to a crown fire  
Douglas-fir: 3-10 years  
White fir: 3-9 years  
Engelmann spruce: 2-6 years  
Colorado blue spruce: 1-3 years

Dean Swift, a commercial pinyon nut collector based in Colorado's San Luis Valley, reports no good ponderosa pine crop in south-central Colorado this decade (pers. comm.). He also reports generally poor crops for the other major conifers (spruce, Douglas-fir, and true firs) for "the last few years, with a few local areas of decent seed production in Colorado blue spruce and white fir in 2009." Furthermore, the mature, cone-bearing component of lodgepole pine, limber pine, and bristlecone pine stands statewide is being extensively depleted by the current mega-epidemic of Mountain Pine Beetle (*Dendroctonus ponderosae*). However, *Pinon Nuts.org* (2009), a website which promotes the collecting and marketing of pinyon nuts for human consumption, reports that the pinyon nut crop in 2008-09 was very good in many parts of the Intermountain West, including Utah and Colorado.

Thus, the long-standing local lack of ponderosa pine seeds, in combination with an abundant, long-lasting pinyon pine nut crop, may have caused the episode reported here. The spring of 2009 apparently saw a rather unusual combination of botanical events that the crossbills exploited out of necessity with admirable skill.

As many readers are aware, what we now call the "Red Crossbill"

may actually be a complex of several species, currently treated as “call types” (e.g., Benkman 2007). Apparently, the driving force of their evolution into distinct taxa is the need to overcome the varied seed packaging represented by the various cones of conifers within their range. This has led primarily to differences in bill configuration.

Benkman (2007) and Spencer (2007, 2008) have reported recently on the Red Crossbill types known to occur in Colorado. Clearly, Types 2, 4, and 5 are the most likely in Colorado. This account likely refers to Type 2 birds, the so-called “Ponderosa Pine Crossbill,” but the type of the birds remains uncertain.

## ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

The author greatly appreciates the assistance of Dr. Craig Benkman in researching historical records of pinyon nut feeding by crossbills, and the conversation with Dean Swift concerning recent conifer seed crops in southern Colorado.

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# The 53<sup>rd</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 53<sup>rd</sup> report presents the results of deliberations of the Colorado Bird Records Committee (hereafter CBRC or Committee) on partial results of circulations held during autumn 2009. This article provides results of the circulation of 66 reports submitted by 42 observers documenting 52 occurrences of 39 species from the period 2005 through 2009. Fifteen reports involving 11 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 second state records for Black Vulture (*Coragyps atratus*) and "Brewster's" Warbler (*Vermivora pinus* × *V. chrysoptera*).

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 audio spectrograms 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**

**Brant** – *Branta bernicla* (18/8). A “Black” Brant (*B. b. nigricans*) was observed grazing at Expo Park in Aurora, *Arapahoe*, on 1 Jan 2006 (EJ, MJB; 2006-186, 7-0). This represents the fourth record for *Arapahoe*.

**Eurasian Wigeon** – *Anas penelope* (36/15). An adult male, the sixth for *Larimer*, was found at Swede Lake south of Fort Collins on 4 Mar 2009 (CWi †; 2009-10; 7-0).

**Brown Pelican** – *Pelecanus occidentalis* (17/8). A juvenile was photographed at Prewitt Res., *Washington*, on 11 Aug 2008 by Griffin and subsequently rediscovered at Valmont Power Plant in Boulder, *Boulder*, on 5 Sep by Gent (LG †, PG; 2008-95; 7-0).

**Neotropic Cormorant** – *Phalacrocorax brasilianus* (16/5). One was documented from John Martin Res. between the period of 18 and 25 Jul 2009 (BKP †, BM †; 2009-56; 7-0), providing the third record for *Bent*.

**Least Bittern** – *Ixobrychus exilis* (20/6). The CBRC recently accepted two additional records of the species. One was at Cottonwood Hollow Natural Area in Fort Collins on 19 Aug 2008 (DAL; 2008-51; 7-0), providing the third record for *Larimer*, while another, furnishing the third record for *Bent*, was at the Fort Lyon marshes

on 25 Jul 2009 (BM, LS †, RH, BKP; 2009-69; 7-0).

**Little Blue Heron** – *Egretta caerulea*. A “calico-plumaged” (second-cycle) bird was photographed near Berthoud, *Weld*, on 12 May 2009 (RH †, EC; 2009-36; 7-0).

**Glossy Ibis** – *Plegadis falcinellus* (50/30). Providing the third record for *El Paso*, one was excellently described from Ramah SWA on 26 Apr 2009 (BM †, DM; 2009-23; 7-0). Representing the second record for *Alamosa* as well as for the San Luis Valley as a whole, one was near *Alamosa* on 23 May 2009 (NP; 2009-45; 7-0).

**Black Vulture** – *Coragyps atratus* (2/2). An adult, only the second accepted for Colorado, was documented at Castlewood Canyon SP in *Douglas* between 5 and 12 Jul 2009 (PG; BM; RO †; NP, KM; 2009-55, 7-0). Unlike the previously accepted Black Vulture, this one was quite cooperative when leaving its roost in the morning and was enjoyed by many birders during its stay.

**“Krider’s” Red-tailed Hawk** – *Buteo jaimaicensis*. “Krider’s” Red-tailed Hawk is a whitish-morph Red-tailed Hawk generally restricted to the eastern Great Plains. It is not considered a distinct subspecies. Colorado records of this morph are scanty and some are



Krider's Red-tailed Hawk, Weld County, 19 Jan 2009. Photo by Joel Such

dubious. Andrews and Richter (1992) suggest that many reports of Krider's across eastern Colorado are questionable based on degree of pigmentation,



Black-legged Kittiwake, Jumbo Reservoir, Sedgwick/Logan Counties, 23 Mar 2009. Photo by Cole Wild

and that some very light-plumaged "Western" Red-tails (*B. j. calurus*) may be misidentified as Krider's. Photographs of a juvenile near Platteville, Weld, from 19 Jan 2009 (JS †; 2009-5, 7-0), however, matched precisely the plumage attributes of a Krider's.

**Common Black-Hawk** – *Buteogallus anthracinus* (8/6). An adult soared over Hotchkiss on 12 Jun 2009 (JBn; 2009-50; 6-1), furnishing a first record for Delta. Of the eight state records, four have come from the West Slope and four from east of the Continental Divide.

**Black-legged Kittiwake** – *Rissa tridactyla* (34/12). A first-cycle bird was at Jumbo Res., Sedgwick, between 21 and 23 Mar 2009 (MM, CWi † 2009-11; 7-0). This is the third record for Sedgwick. All three records are from Jumbo

Res., which is not surprising considering the lack of other water bodies in the county.

**Laughing Gull** – *Leucophaeus atricilla* (39/16). Four additional Laughing Gulls were recently accepted. A first-cycle bird was at John Martin Res., Bent, on 8 Sep 2008 (BK; 2008-152; 6-1). An adult was at



*Blue-headed Vireo*, Chico Basin Ranch, El Paso County, 7 May 2009. Photo by Steve Brown

Barr Lake in Adams on 18 Oct 2008 (AS; 2008-122; 6-1), providing the second record for that county. Another adult was at Adobe Creek Res. (Blue Lake) on 25 Jul 2009 (BM, BKP; 2009-57; 7-0), furnishing the fourth record for Bent. Lastly, a first-cycle bird was discovered at Prewitt Res., Washington, on 27 Sep 2009 (DF, JR; 2009-65; 7-0), representing a county first.

**Magnificent Hummingbird** – *Eugenes fulgens* (15/8). A female was excellently documented from the town of Crystal in Gunnison, where it favored a feeder between 17 Jun and 4 Aug 2007 (TC †; 2007-61; 7-0). This is a first county record.

**Ladder-backed Woodpecker** – *Picoides scalaris*. North of usual, one visited a feeder near Elbert, El Paso, on 23 Mar 2006 (KP †; 2006-26; 7-0).

**Alder Flycatcher** – *Empidonax alnorum* (27/17). An adult, the fourth

for *Pueblo*, was at Colorado City on 13 Sep 2009 (DSi; 2009-64; 7-0).

**Blue-headed Vireo** – *Vireo solitarius* (25/20). The Committee accepted an additional four Blue-headed Vireos from 2009, which represents the most accepted occurrences in any single year in Colorado. One was banded at CBR, El Paso, on 7 May (NG †; 2009-28, 7-0), furnishing the second record for that

county. The second for Yuma was the one at Fox Ranch on 16 May (TF; 2009-40; 7-0). Another Blue-headed Vireo was at CBR, but this time on the *Pueblo* side of the Ranch, where it was documented on 11 Sep (ID; 2009-62; 7-0). On 14 Oct, Percival photographed one at Valco Ponds below Pueblo Res., *Pueblo* (BKP †; 2009-68; 7-0), which establishes the third record for that county.

**Gray-cheeked Thrush** – *Catharus minimus* (50/18). One, the fourth accepted for Boulder, was at Greenlee Preserve on 11 May 2009 (TF; 2009-30; 7-0). Although seen low in the underbrush, the bird gave a flight call and the observer clearly described the diagnostic flight call of a Gray-cheeked Thrush.

**“Brewster’s” Warbler** – *Vermivora pinus* × *V. chrysoptera* (2/1). A very rare find, and only the second for the state, was the adult male “Brewster’s”

Warbler, the hybrid offspring of a Blue-winged (*V. pinus*) and Golden-winged Warbler (*V. chrysoptera*), found on 13 May 2009 at Sondermann Park in Colorado Springs (MCL; 2009-37, 6-1). A photograph of the bird was published in Maynard (2009).

**Blackburnian Warbler** – *Dendroica fusca* (45/14). Establishing the seventh record for Pueblo and the second for CBR, an alternate-plumaged male was photographed on 23 May 2009 (BM †, BGi †; 2009-44, 7-0).

**Yellow-throated Warbler** – *Dendroica dominica* (36/13). Establishing the first record for the San Luis Valley, one was seen at a private ranch south of San Luis, *Costilla*, on 10 Sep 2009 (EE; 2009-61; 7-0).

**Bay-breasted Warbler** – *Dendroica castanea* (41/11) Establishing the seventh record for Pueblo, and the fourth this decade, an adult male was at Lake Beckwith in Colorado City on 22 May 2009 (DSI; 2009-43, 7-0).

**Ovenbird** – *Seiurus aurocapilla*. Two new county records for southwestern Colorado, where the species is very rare, were accepted by the Committee. A singing bird was in Mancos, Montezuma, on 18 Jun 2006 (RB; 2006-101; 7-0). Another was at Pastorius SWA, La Plata, on 30 May 2009 (HM; 2009-47; 6-1).



Kentucky Warbler, Gregory Canyon, Boulder County, 25 Jun 2009. Photo by Bill Schmoker

**Kentucky Warbler** – *Oporornis formosus* (36/14). The CBRC recently accepted two additional records of this species. Establishing a first for Custer, a male hit a window and died at a residence in Westcliffe on 5 May 2005 (JC †; 2005-149; 7-0). During this past summer, a male set up territory in Gregory Canyon in Boulder, where it was documented between 5 Jun and 10 Jul 2009 (LAG, TF, BK, NP s, BSc †; 2009-48; 7-0). This represents the sixth record of the species from Boulder and the second from Gregory Canyon.

**Canada Warbler** – *Wilsonia canadensis* (31/9). An adult female was at DeWeese Res., Custer, on 24 Sep 2006 (RM †; 2006-184; 7-0), establishing the first record for the county.

**Eastern Towhee** – *Pipilo erythrophthalmus* (16/8). A female was at the “Wood Thrush Grove,” a birder nickname for a small woodlot at the

corner of CR 16 and CR 33 near Fort Lyon, *Bent*, on 26 Feb 2009 (CW†, VAT; 2009-7; 7-0), furnishing the second record for the county.

**Field Sparrow** – *Spizella pusilla*. Farther west than usual was the Field Sparrow present at the Briggsdale Cemetery in northern *Weld* on 12 May 2009 (RH†, GC, CL; 2009-35; 7-0). The bird was apparently first discovered the day prior, but the CBRC did not receive any details on the original discovery.

**Northern Cardinal** – *Cardinalis cardinalis*. Quite far west of normal was the male that came to a feeder in Aurora, *Arapahoe*, between 15 Jan and 30 Mar 2006 (LG†; 2006-187; 7-0).

**Dickcissel** – *Spiza americana*. Extremely rare for western Colorado, and a first for *La Plata*, a male Dickcissel established a territory twelve miles south of Durango, where it was photographed on 28 Jun 2009 (RD†; 2009-54; 7-0).

**Black Rosy-Finch** – *Leucosticte atrata*. Providing a very rare record away from the mountains, an adult was in Colorado Springs, *El Paso*, on 13 Jan 2009 (DE†; 2009-3, 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 the documentation did not provide enough evidence to support the identification of the species reported in the opinion of at least three of the seven Committee members. Many non-accepted reports do not adequately describe the bird(s) observed or adequately rule out similarly looking species. 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*. Two separate documentations of positively identified Mute Swans—a single swan near Firestone, 3 Jan – 7 Feb 2009 (2009-2; 1-6) and a pair near LaSalle, 30 Apr 2009 (2009-24; 1-6), both *Weld*—did not receive support as state records because provenance could not be determined and a pattern of vagrancy has not been established in Colorado or the surrounding region. One member noted that the date for the LaSalle pair was unusual, as a wild pair should have been nesting at this time of year. Furthermore, Semo observed a pair near this location during summer 2009. Assuming

these were the same birds as documented in April, their presence suggests that they were not from a distant, wild population, as wild birds should have returned to where they came from for the nesting season. Readers may find it interesting that the LaSalle swan observer is a Committee member who voted against the documentation over concerns of provenance. The Committee urges observers to continue documenting Mute Swans to help establish a pattern of occurrence in Colorado, whether of escaped or vagrant birds.

**Glossy Ibis.** One described as being in probable first-alternate plumage by an experienced observer near Erie, *Boulder*, on 1 May 2009 received some Committee support but did not pass through the first round of voting (2009-25; 3-4). Dissenting members commented that the report did not sufficiently separate this bird from White-faced Ibis (*P. chihi*) in similar plumage. One Committee member was specifically concerned about the leg color description as “almost devoid of reddish hues,” which suggested that the legs did show a trace of red, but precisely where was not described.

The documentation of a *Plegadis* ibis from Thornton, *Adams*, on 17 Apr 2009 received no support from the Committee (2009-19; 0-7). The 14-word description and distant photos left many Committee members with too little information to accept this as a Glossy Ibis record. The documentation did not separate the similarly looking White-faced Ibis, nor did it mention any of the salient

features (e.g., reddish ankles, dark blue facial skin, light blue facial skin border) necessary for the Committee to reach a more positive conclusion.

**White Ibis** – *Eudocimus albus*. Written documentation and photographs of 70 White Ibis near Penrose, *Fremont*, 13 May 2009, clearly indicated that they were White-faced Ibis (2009-38; 0-7). Whether the observer chose the wrong species name in the online system or otherwise meant to report White-faced Ibis is not known. Regardless, as the submitted documentation said “White Ibis,” the Committee was obligated to vote against its validity as a state record. The Committee urges those submitting documentation to make sure that the correct species name is chosen in the online system. Please feel free to contact any of the Committee members (listed above, and on the inside front cover of this journal) for assistance.

**Harris’s Hawk** – *Parabuteo unicinctus*. One described at Pueblo, *Pueblo*, on 30 Mar 2009 received no Committee support (2009-14; 0-7). The bird was observed in flight only and several members mentioned that similar species, particularly dark-morph Ferruginous Hawk (*Buteo regalis*), were not eliminated from consideration. The observer did not describe the tail color pattern or other features (e.g., body size and shape, flight style) to eliminate other large hawk species from consideration.

**Great Black-backed Gull** – *Larus marinus*. One possible adult in non-breeding plumage at Carter Lake Reservoir near Loveland, *Larimer*,

on 1 Jan 2009 received some support from the Committee (2009-1; 3-4). All dissenting Committee members noted the lack of detail in describing the bird and in separating it from other likely dark-backed gull contenders. The Committee appreciates the efforts that observers put into describing rare birds, but asks readers to note that rationale for why a reported bird is not another (even superficially similar-looking) species is a key part of any documentation.

**Slaty-backed Gull** – *Larus schistisagus*. A large first-cycle gull thought to be a Slaty-backed in Boulder, Boulder, 27-28 Nov 2008, was documented by only one of its numerous observers (2008-135; 106). Although they were not included in the submitted documentation, discussions on COBirds and opinions from outside experts in Japan and the U.S. leaned heavily towards the possibility of this individual's being of mixed parentage, probably Glaucous-winged  $\times$  Herring. The reporting observer noted that this hybrid pairing was the most problematic in the separation from Slaty-backed Gull, and that the "white tips to the inner greater coverts, contrasting with the plainer outer greater coverts, and the blackish lower scapulars visible only in flight" were the primary plumage markers used to reject Glaucous-winged  $\times$  Herring as a possibility. Prefacing this statement, however, the observer said that these features "seem to rule out this hybrid combination" (emphasis added). In the end, many Committee members commented that the possibility of a hybrid was not ruled out sufficiently

to accept this bird as Colorado's second Slaty-backed Gull record.

**Vaux's Swift** – *Chaetura vauxi*. One Committee member applauded the "honesty and credibility" of the observer providing documentation of a possible Vaux's Swift near Erie, Boulder, on 1 May 2009 since the report was submitted even with the expectation it would not be accepted as the state's first record, which it was not (2009-27; 0-7). The observer, who has considerable experience with both Chimney (*C. pelagica*) and Vaux's swifts, adequately described a *Chaetura* swift uttering "sharp, shrill, staccato notes, in an even pulsing series; not run together quickly," a vocalization that is consistent with Vaux's Swift. The observer also noted plumage features consistent with Vaux's, such as a paler throat and upper breast than the rest of the underparts and a paler rump than the upperparts, but noted that the angle of observation of the upperparts and the fact that they were observed for only about one second were problematic for definitive evaluation. The Committee supports the documentation of potential Vaux's Swifts, even though the standards for acceptance as a state record are very high due to the difficulty in separating Vaux's from Chimney Swift and the often challenging circumstances in which these fast-flying birds are observed.

**Gilded Flicker** – *Colaptes chrysoides*. The documentation of one near Limon, Lincoln, on 30 Sep 2009 garnered no support from the Committee (2009-66; 0-7), as the observer did not eliminate the more likely

Northern Flicker (*C. auratus*). Although one Committee member considered Gilded Flicker a possibility for Colorado, acceptance of a first state record would require a very detailed description of the bird and an equally detailed elimination of the common Northern Flicker.

**Sprague's Pipit** – *Anthus spragueii*.

Photos in support of a report of Sprague's Pipit at Big Johnson Reservoir, *El Paso*, 19 Jun 2009, were of a juvenile Horned Lark (*Eremophila alpestris*) (2009-53; 0-7). Observers are cautioned that juvenile birds are occasionally confused with adults of other species; for example, juvenile American Robins are sometimes mistaken for Fieldfares. This is especially true of juvenile Horned Larks, which resemble Sprague's Pipits. The occurrence of a Sprague's Pipit in Colorado in June would be unprecedented; the presence of juvenile Horned Larks is not. Observers should carefully examine any suspected summer Sprague's Pipit, noting especially the projection of the primaries beyond the tertials and the pattern of coloration of the wings. Leukering (2009) provided detailed discussion and photographs of primary projection in these two species for the "In the Scope" column of this journal. Sibley (2003) nicely illustrates wing coloration of Horned Lark (p. 363) and Sprague's Pipit (p. 420)—note Horned Lark's tertial pattern of wide white outer edging, black subterminal band, and gray centers, as compared to the solid brown tones on the Sprague's Pipit's tertials.

Documentation of two probable Sprague's Pipits on the *Kit Carson*

and *Washington* border, 13 Oct 2006, that mostly relied upon the description of flight call notes had enough votes to force a second round of voting, but ultimately did not pass the Committee (2006-146; 4-3, 2-5). The Committee has recently been consistent in its unfavorable view of reports that rely too heavily on vocal descriptions. While competent observers can and do identify birds based on flight call notes alone, providing a written description of those calls that would allow a reader to positively, and absolutely, identify them as the reported species is a very difficult task. Also, as with other accounts in this section, the observer did not rule out other species that might sound similar or, more precisely, be described similarly.

**Red-faced Warbler** – *Cardellina rubrifrons*. The documentation provided for a Red-faced Warbler at Chasm Falls, Rocky Mountain National Park, *Larimer*, on 18 Jun 2005 lacked any description of the bird (2005-160; 0-7). This type of "trust me" documentation is painful to the Committee, especially given the distinct plumage of this species and the fact that there is only one record for the state (3 May 1993 at the Wheat Ridge Greenbelt, *Jefferson*). Observers are reminded that documentations do not live only for the short time during which the Committee reviews them. They are archived at the Denver Museum of Nature and Science for posterity. Future Committees, as well as the general public, will have the opportunity to review all documentations provided to the



Committee. Therefore, observers are encouraged to describe the reported bird(s) as well as possible so that not only this Committee but others will have the best possible chance of coming to a reasonable conclusion regarding the acceptance of the sighting as a state record.

**Purple Finch** – *Carpodacus purpureus*. The winter of 2007-08 saw a heavy influx of Purple Finches into the state, with several documented and accepted as state records (Semo 2009). In the spate of reports for Colorado were those of several males and females at Bear Creek Nature Center, Colorado Springs, *El Paso*. Two documented reports from this location were not accepted. In the first case, many Committee members decided that the written description of a female-plumaged *Carpodacus* finch from 10 Feb 2008 did not effectively eliminate Cassin's Finch (2008-15; 2-5). The observer noted a bolder facial pattern and stubbier bill than Cassin's Finch and a lack of undertail streaking. These characteristics are subjective, and Commit-

tee members noted that other more useful characteristics for separating Purple and Cassin's finches, like primary projection, presence/absence of an eyering, and culmen shape, were not mentioned.

A male *Carpodacus* finch reported as a Purple Finch at Bear Creek Nature Center, Colorado Springs, *El Paso*, was found deceased on 16 Feb 2008. Documentation provided for this individual received very little support from the Committee due to the report's brevity and the lack of details separating this bird from similar species, despite the ability of the reporting observer and others to examine the bird closely (2008-16; 1-6). Photos were taken of this individual and one Committee member remarked on having seen the photos (although none was provided with the documentation for the entire Committee's review) and determined that the bird was a Cassin's Finch. The specimen has reportedly been deposited at the museum of the University of Colorado in Boulder for future reference.

## REPORTERS AND CITED OBSERVERS

The CBRC graciously thanks the following individuals for submitting records of or discovering rare species in Colorado that prompted this circulation: LAG: Linda Andes-Georges; JBr: Jason Beason; MJB: Mary Jane Black; RB: Robert Bradley; GC: Gayle Campbell; JC: Janny Candelaria; TC: Tom Coles; Todd Deininger; Daniel Disner; RD: Richard Donley; JD: John Drummond; DE: David Elwonger; EE: Erik Enbody; DF: Doug Faulkner; TF: Ted Floyd; PG: Peter Gent; BG: Brian Gibbons; LG: Lori Giesecke; NG: Nancy Gobris; Matt Heyden; RH: Rachel Hopper; EJ: Ellie Jones; BK: Bill Kaempfer; Bill Kosar; DAL: David A. Leatherman; Marie Cecile Lee; CL: Chuck Lowery; BM: Bill Maynard; DM: Dan Maynard; KM: Karen Metz; MM: Mark Miller; RM: Rich Miller; HM: Heather Morris; Jessica Nash; RO: Ric Olson; BKP: Brandon K. Percival; Allison Plute; Peg Rooney; BSc: Bill Schmoker; NP: Nathan Pieplow; KP: Kerry Pilot; JR: Joe Roller; LS: Larry Semo; DSi: David Silverman; AS: Andrew Spencer; JS: Joel Such; Becky Thompson; VAT: Van A. Truan; CWi: Cole Wild.

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## THE HUNGRY BIRDER

# The Roaring Fork Valley

*Linda Vidal and Tom McConnell*

The Roaring Fork Valley is known for Barrow's Goldeneyes in winter, Purple Martins in summer, and great scenery all year round. But whether you are enjoying the birds or the scenery, as Linda Vidal has always said, "it's all about lunch." She is right. Here are a few suggestions for lunch and dinner around Glenwood Springs and the Roaring Fork Valley. All are moderately priced and would welcome a casually-dressed birder after a day in the field.

### Glenwood Springs

Zheng's Asian Bistro describes their food as "Pan Asian." The

best appetizers are crab rangoon and Thai shrimp ceviche. They make a spicy “pad thai Zheng style” that is by far my favorite on the menu. The red curry shrimp is also spicy



*The Village Smithy, Carbondale. Photo by Linda Vidal*

and delicious. Zheng’s has two locations: one in Glenwood Springs at 35 Market St. in the Glenwood Meadows Shopping Center on Midland Avenue (near Target), and another location in El Jebel at 400 E. Valley Road.

In downtown Glenwood is the **Glenwood Canyon Brewpub**. The Brewpub is known for great burgers, sandwiches, huge stacks of onion rings, and, of course, good beer. They serve six very good local microbrews, my favorite being the Hanging Lake Honey Ale. This restaurant can be loud, rowdy, and fun on any weekend. The Brewpub is in the Hotel Denver at 402 7<sup>th</sup> St., right across the street from the Amtrak train station.

Also downtown is **The Bayou**, a local hangout for seafood and Cajun dishes. Try the mussel appetizer, the po’ boys, the crab legs, the shrimp etoufee, or the “New Orleans pasta extreme”...mmmmm, yummy! The food is terrific and the atmosphere is fun, with sassy waitresses and a noisy crowd. If it’s your birthday, don’t tell, or you might get a pie in the face! The Bayou is at 919 Grand Ave. (Hwy 82) next to the Springs Theater between 9<sup>th</sup> and 10<sup>th</sup> Streets.

For Mexican food, try **Tequila’s** (132 W. 6<sup>th</sup> St.) or **Fiesta Guadalupe** (503 Pine St.). Both serve a very good Mexican style meal (no “Tex-Mex”) with waitstaff that are more comfortable speaking Spanish than English.

For barbeque in Glenwood, try **Rib City Grill**. This is the place for smoked pork or beef on a sandwich or by the plateful with great sauces. I have heard that the Three Cheese Fries are fantastic, but my doctor says I should stay away. Rib City’s street address is 701 Grand Ave., but it is actually on 7<sup>th</sup> Street under the Grand Avenue Bridge.

Between Glenwood and Carbondale is **Narayan's Nepal Restaurant** (6824 Hwy 82). They have a really fun menu with spicy curries and kabobs of chicken, lamb, and veggies, plus a delicious flatbread called naan. The servings are smallish but the food is very good. Narayan's has been voted the best vegetarian food in the valley for several years. The restaurant is at Mile 7 on Hwy 82 (on the southeast corner of the intersection at the Colorado Mountain College stoplight).

### **Carbondale**

The **Village Smithy Restaurant** (26 S. 3<sup>rd</sup> St.) is open for breakfast and lunch and is a regular on the local birders' agenda. We always meet there for lunch on Christmas count day to warm up and to check for reports of rarities. They have a varied menu, including Mexican dishes as well as the regular breakfast eggs, hearty omelets, waffles, and pancakes. There is a well-rounded selection of sandwiches, burgers, and salads. The meals are moderately priced.

### **Basalt/El Jebel**

I've eaten at most of the Mexican restaurants in the Roaring Fork Valley, and the best by far is **El Korita** in Basalt. The staff are all Mexican and very willing to help you with their varied menu. Although gringos flock to the restaurant, it is also a favorite of the local Mexicans, which says a lot for its popularity. I've truly never had a bad meal there, and the local birding group eats there on a regular basis. You may order all the "regular" Mexican meals (including great chile rellenos), but the owners are from Nayarit on the Pacific coast, so there are many seafood items on the menu. The ceviche is wonderful; the shrimp cocktail is one of my favorites. You can generally always get a table at lunch but you are likely to have a wait at dinner unless you go early. The prices are moderate.

To get to El Korita (251 Harris St.), head east toward Aspen on Highway 82 just beyond the traffic light at its intersection with El Jebel Road. In about half a mile, turn right and proceed south on Willits Road. You will see the restaurant on your left in about half a block.

Right next door to El Korita is a restaurant called **Smoke** (241 Harris St.) that bills itself as modern barbeque. It has a varied menu and the expected barbeque selection but also has steak and seafood, salads, sandwiches, and burgers. You can get the expected BBQ sides; one of the best is sweet potato fries, my favorite. They are open for lunch and dinner, with slightly higher prices, but still a good bang for the buck.



*Pine Creek Cookhouse, Roaring Fork Valley. Photo by Linda Vidal*

### **Aspen/Ashcroft**

For those of you who are county listers visiting Pitkin County, the **Pine Creek Cookhouse** is a great place for lunch or dinner. The restaurant is at the end of Castle Creek Road, which is one of the best places to bird in Pitkin County. If you're birding in the area, plan on stopping at Pine Creek even if it's just for a drink. The menu is not super-extensive, but everything is well done and the presentation is wonderful. The view everywhere in the valley is great but it's exceptional from the restaurant. They are closed in the "off season." The restaurant is a bit pricy but well worth it. To get there, from the Highway 82 roundabout outside Aspen, proceed to the Castle Creek exit (on the south side of the roundabout) and follow the road to the cookhouse. This is a local favorite.

Of course there are many world-class restaurants in Aspen and Snowmass Village, but let's leave those for the likes of *Gourmet* magazine, not *Colorado Birds*!

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## Summer 2009 (June–July)

*Bill Maynard*

If you adhere to the advice of summer season naysayers, you may have spent your summer at the waterslide, in front of a television, or updating your Facebook or Flickr photographic files—or maybe you kept your intellect “tarp as a shack” by playing Sudoku. However, if you decided instead to explore beyond your traditional birding haunts—perhaps atlas a new block, researching your personal field guide companion, or studying bird behavior—you might have found the summer season to be quite interesting and predictably unpredictable.

For example, this summer Acorn Woodpeckers were discovered at a new West Slope location; the tenth state record of Reddish Egret was found at a totally unexpected elevation; a Black Vulture, the second documented from Colorado, was observed flying with “TVs” daily at a predictable time and location; a Kentucky Warbler spent the season in Boulder’s Gregory Canyon; and insomniacs listening to the early morning night skies (read: Ted Floyd) heard migrating Upland Sandpipers along Colorado’s Front Range at the end of July (Floyd 2009). Surprisingly, Yellow-throated Vireos sang “on territory” from three different locations in June.

The summer season predictably records periods of hot dry June temperatures, depending upon the region of the state, followed by tropical monsoon moisture drifting north into the state from Mexico during July. The typical “hot and dry” was anything but in some parts of Colorado, and local weathermen reported that some of the region’s June precipitation was indeed of the monsoon variety. In June, overall temperatures across much of the region were cooler than normal. Del Norte recorded its coolest June on record with an average temperature of 54.0° F, breaking the old record of 55.6° F from June 1969. June rainfall in parts of Wyoming, Colorado, and Nebraska reached 200% of normal precipitation. Chico Basin Ranch, for example, was the greenest I have ever seen it, although June’s cooler than normal temperatures slowed the growth of the prairie grasses there. While abundant rainfall was the big news in the eastern part of the state, southeast Colorado’s abnormally dry conditions remained unchanged, with that part of the state receiving precipitation that was 50% of normal (HPRCC 2009).

In July, states bordering Colorado’s easternmost counties recorded the coolest average temperatures on record. Small pockets of above-normal July precipitation were recorded in central Colorado. Normal

climate outlook conditions were predicted to be replaced by El Niño Southern Oscillation (ENSO)-neutral ones in June (NWSCPC 2009). By July, the El Niño conditions developed and they were predicted to intensify and continue thorough the winter season. The ENSO forecast predicted above-normal temperatures for extreme southern Colorado while above-normal precipitation was predicted for the eastern half of the state. By July's end, almost all of Colorado was described as drought-free. The effect that local weather conditions had on breeding populations is neither quantified nor hypothesized here.

The first week of the summer season always produces late north-bound migrants, while the last few weeks always record early south-bound migrants; this year was no exception. Ten or more Swainson's Thrushes were still at Crow Valley Campground on 1 June. Two birds identified as Alder Flycatchers, a boreal forest breeder, were reported from 23 June through the end of the period. As expected, White-rumped Sandpipers were still moving north in early June, while returning yellowlegs and scattered peeps passed through on their south-bound return in July. Carolina Wren, unreported in Colorado during the spring 2009 season, was reported from Baca County on the last day of the period. Two different male Northern Parulas were reported singing in July. This report will show White-winged Doves appearing on the West Slope. It will not provide answers to the question of their provenance: did they originate from the southwestern White-winged population or did they emigrate from Mexico, New Mexico, or Texas?

"News from the Field" contains news, reports, and rumors of bird sightings from Colorado. The news is compiled from online discussion groups and rare bird alerts (RBAs), with valuable contributions from a large network of statewide informants. *Rarity reports* may become *records* after vetting and scrutiny by the Colorado Bird Records Committee members. Again, I want to thank the many regular contributors whose sightings form the foundation of this report. As always, regional compilers added insight on county and regional rarities and breeding species. All sightings, whether of rarities or "regulars," arranged local puzzle pieces in order, fashioning a broad state seasonal picture. You are encouraged to send your reports to COBirds, <http://www.cfo-link.org>; eBird, <https://ebird.org/ebird/>; and/or the West Slope Birding Network, [wsbn@yahoogroups.com](mailto:wsbn@yahoogroups.com). In all three cases, your sightings funnel through regional compilers to the "News from the Field" compiler.

**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 rarity records. However, if you need a hard copy form, use the one on the inside of this journal's mailing cover. Mailed documentation of rarities 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; **SP** – State Park; **SLV** – San Luis Valley; **SWA** – State Wildlife Area, **WS** – West Slope.

**Snow Goose:** Rare in summer, one was at Brush Prairie Ponds SWA, *Morgan*, on 20 June (TS).

**Lesser Scaup:** Rare for the date and location, a male was seen at Pueblo Reservoir, *Pueblo*, on 2 June (BKP).

**Bufflehead:** Late was a single bird at Cheney Reservoir, *Mesa*, on 17 June (JBe).

**Hooded Merganser:** A female and three flightless young of this species, a rare breeder on the Eastern Plains, were discovered at Ward Road Ponds Recreation Area, *Jefferson*, on 22 June (DF). Unusual was one at Fort Carson Military Reservation, *El Paso*, on 10 July (KL, RC), as was one found on 2 June along the Arkansas River below Pueblo, *Pueblo* (BKP).

**Red-throated Loon:** Not one, but two reports came from the state during the period. One at Brush Hollow

Reservoir, *Fremont*, which remained 1-15 June (RMi, doc.), was a first summer record for the area, and one (the same bird?) was at Marston Reservoir, *Denver*, 11-31 July (TJ, no doc.).

**Common Loon:** This summer, birds staying well south of their breeding ranges included a bird that apparently visited three different reservoirs in three separate WS counties (*Delta*, *Mesa*, and *Ouray*) from 10 June to 24 July (JBe, CD, BW); a bird in alternate plumage on 11 July that was joined by three in basic plumage at Marston Reservoir, *Denver* (TJ); and five birds, all in basic plumage, from Jumbo Reservoir, *Logan*, where they were photographed on 12 July (KJD).

**Western Grebe:** Unusual at this location were multiple birds observed nesting on Steamboat Lake, *Routt*, on 14 July (TLi, YVBC).

**Neotropical Cormorant:** A single





*Least Bittern*, Ft. Lyon SWA, Bent County, 25 July 2009. Photo by Rachel Hopper

bird roosting with larger Double-crested on the west end of John Martin Reservoir, *Bent*, was observed from a considerable distance 18-26 July (BKP, m.ob. doc.), and another, an immature, was at Adobe Creek Reservoir, *Bent*, on 1 June (DN, no doc.).

**American Bittern:** The “thunder pumper” was reported at various locations, including Fruitgrowers Reservoir, *Delta* (m.ob.), where up to three birds were seen from 1 June to 31 July. Elsewhere in the state, single birds included a calling one reported on 6 June from CF&I Lakes, *Pueblo* (BKP); one from CR 2 in *Morgan* (TS) on 20 June; and another at Turtle Lake, *La Plata*, on 29 June (JiB), which was unusual in the county.

**Least Bittern:** Up to three, including a male and female, were reported from Cottonwood Hollow Pond, *Larimer* (NK, doc.), between 20 July and the end of the period. Meanwhile, Fort Lyon SWA, *Bent*, was home to another very cooperative bird 25-31

Ponds in Craig, *Moffat*, where it is locally rare. Other reports from June were all of birds in *Fremont*, while the only July sighting was of two birds at John Martin Reservoir, *Bent*, on 25 July (BKP, m.ob.).

**Snowy Egret:** Rare in *Montrose* was one bird in *Nucla* on 2 July (CD, BW).

**Little Blue Heron:** The season's only report was of a subadult seen 1-2 July at *Boulder's* White Rocks Open Space (BZ).

**Reddish Egret:** A cooperative dark-morph immature was present 17-19 July at the totally unexpected elevation and location of Lake DeWeese, *Custer* (RMi, m.ob., doc.), providing a first summer record for the greater Pueblo area, in addition to only the tenth state record for this species.

**Cattle Egret:** This summer's only report came from Red Lion SWA, *Logan*, where three individuals were observed on 12 July (KJD). Is this an example of under-reporting of this

July (RH, m.ob., doc.).

**G r e a t  
Egret:** Five reports representing seven individuals came from various parts of the state; the most interesting was perhaps the one on 2 June from WPMC

species, or is the number normal? Only one report of Cattle Egret was submitted in each of the summers of 2007 and 2008.

**Green Heron:** There were only four reports representing six birds this summer season, all from the eastern part of the state. Two singles were reported from *Pueblo*, one on 8 June and one on 1 July; at least one was at Fountain Creek Regional Park throughout the period (BM); and three were at Fort Lyon SWA, *Bent*, on 26 July (LS, RH). No reports of this species came from the WS, where it had been documented as breeding in 2008.

**Yellow-crowned Night-Heron:** An adult of this scarce Colorado heron was reported on the last day of the season from John Martin Reservoir, *Bent* (MP, BS, no doc.).

**Glossy Ibis:** The sole report of this species was of a likely late migrant, an adult in Florence, *Freemont*, on 2 June (MP, no doc.).

**Black Vulture:** Perhaps *the* bird of the summer was a mostly-cooperative Black Vulture flying with Turkey Vultures above and below the cliffs of Castlewood Canyon State Park, *Douglas*, 2-17 July (KM, GW, m.ob., doc.). Since the species is capable of far-ranging flights in search of a meal, one reported on 6 July (BA, no doc.) from

Littleton's Raccoon Creek, *Douglas*, was likely the same bird.

**Broad-winged Hawk:** This species is of particular interest during this season, as the closest mapped breeding localities are in southeastern Oklahoma and northeastern Kansas; however, the species' range may be expanding westward (Goodrich et al. 1996). Broad-wings have an elliptical migration pattern, moving farther west in spring and farther east in the fall, and they are now regular in Colorado in the spring. Two birds, including one juvenile 30-31 July, were at Greenhorn Meadows Park, *Pueblo* (DSi).

**Peregrine Falcon:** Away from known nesting cliffs were single birds on 2 June at Pueblo's Valco Ponds, *Pueblo* (BKP), and on 18 July at John Martin Reservoir, *Bent* (BKP, m.ob.).

**Black Rail:** No summer reports of



Reddish Egret, Lake DeWeese, Custer County, 17 Jul 2009. Photo by Brandon Percival

this Arkansas Valley breeder came from the traditional locations of Nepesta Marsh, *Pueblo*, Bent's Old Fort, *Otero*, or the Fort Lyon marshes, *Bent*, but one was actively calling on 10 June in a small marsh at CBR, *Pueblo* (BM), where it had been noticeably missing throughout May.

**Sandhill Crane:** Rare in the state during the period, two birds were reported from CR 39 south of Mancos, *Montezuma*, on 26 and 27 July (SM, JiB), although they were not documented as breeding.

**Mountain Plover:** After fledging, Mountain Plovers often go unrecorded for a few months before arriving on their winter territories. Of note were 44 birds in a tight group loafing in a black-tailed prairie-dog town near Adobe Creek Reservoir (Blue Lake), *Bent*, on 25 July (LS, m.ob.).

**American Avocet:** Away from traditional breeding areas and uncommon for the WS were three at Denny Lake, *Montezuma*, on 6 June (DG); singles were spotted at Lake DeWeese, *Custer*, on 17 June (RMi) and at Brush Hollow Reservoir, *Fremont*, on 22 June (RMi).

**Solitary Sandpiper:** The first southbound member of this boreal and arboreal breeding species was spotted at Brush Hollow Reservoir, *Fremont*, on 22 July. This is one of the species whose western and eastern populations look slightly different. The newest edition of the Clements



*Black Vulture, Castlewood Canyon SP, Douglas County, 3 Jul 2009. Photo by Glenn Walbek*

Checklist, downloadable for free at <http://www.birds.cornell.edu/clementschecklist>, includes a new unofficial hierarchical level called “group” which is intermediate between species and subspecies (CLO 2008). As the website puts it: “The purpose of this new level is to ‘flag’ distinctive subspecies or groups of subspecies. These are the ‘field identifiable’ groups that many of you already are keeping track of in your notes, either because they are the residue of past lumps (e.g. ‘Myrtle’ and ‘Audubon’s’ Yellow-rumped Warblers), because they represent potential future splits (e.g. the various groups of Fox Sparrows), or just because you enjoy the extra challenge of identifying birds to the lowest resolution possible” (Schulenberg et al. 2008).

Both “groups” of Solitary Sandpipers are recorded from Colorado, and the “group” of birds seen here should be reported when possible. *The Shorebird Guide* by O’Brien et. al. (2006)

provides instructions for (cautiously) separating the two groups.

**Greater Yellowlegs:** The first southbound migrants of this species were two at 18 Island Reservoir, *Jackson*, on 13 July (CHu).

**Lesser Yellowlegs:** Southbound with the two Greaters, 17 Lessers were also at 18 Island Reservoir on 13 July (CHu).

**Upland Sandpiper:** One of the “cool” shorebird species, with a flight song from another world, this species was seen at CR 25 south of Dolores on 16 June, furnishing the first county record for *Montezuma* (SM, photo). A southbound migrant along the eastern side of the Front Range was heard in the early morning of 30 July at Greenlee Reserve, *Boulder* (TF), giving its loud *qui-di-di-do* flight call (see Floyd 2009).

**Willet:** Also from *Jackson*, this time from McFarland Reservoir, came a report of 37 “Western” Willets tallied on 13 July (CHu).

**Long-billed Curlew:** Two reports from the WS were of note. Three birds at Sunbeam, *Moffat*, were possible breeders there on 10 July (FL), while a juvenile at Miramonte SWA, *San Miguel*, on the same date was thought to be an early migrant (DP).

**Marbled Godwit:** One of the few endemic birds of the Great Plains (can you name the others?), this early southbound migrant was first reported on 24 June at Hugo, *Lincoln* (HEK).

**Semipalmated Sandpiper:** The first returning migrant, early for the location, was a single at Fruitgrowers Reservoir, *Delta*, 23-28 July (DFi, m.ob).

**Western Sandpiper:** Also at Fruitgrowers Reservoir on 23 July was a solo one-day wonder (DFi, m.ob.), while an unusually long-billed adult was at CBR on 5 July (BM).

**Least Sandpiper:** The first southbound Least report was of a flock of eight birds at Steamboat Lake, *Routt*, on 14 July (TLi, YVBC).

**White-rumped Sandpiper:** Difficult to interpret was the report of seven birds from 14 July at Red Lion SWA, *Logan* (WF). This species is a long-winged, long-distance migrant that generally completes its elliptical migration in the fall with an overwater flight lasting as long as 60 hours, beginning in eastern Canada and often continuing non-stop to northern South America before concluding with short-distance hops down the coast to Argentina. Historically, they migrate south later than the three “true” peeps, generally leaving their arctic breeding grounds in early August.

**Baird’s Sandpiper:** This species and White-rumped Sandpiper are sometimes referred to as the “long-winged peeps.” The first report of this very common Colorado fall migrant was of a single at North Delaney Reservoir, *Jackson*, on 13 July (CHu).

**Bonaparte’s Gull:** Casual in early summer, a late bird was at Fruitgrowers Reservoir on 11 June (JBe).

**Laughing Gull:** An adult was observed standing with Franklin’s Gulls and a Least Tern at Adobe Creek Reservoir on 25 July (BKP, LS, RH, BM, doc.).

**Herring Gull:** The putrescent, almost visible odors of a super-saturated

gaseous mixture wafting from Lake Meredith's fetid feedlots in *Crowley* did not prevent LS from spotting a rare summer record there, a bird in definitive basic plumage on 26 July.

**Least Tern:** North of known breeding areas was one observed at Cooley Lake, South Platte Park, *Arapahoe*, on 12 June (SL).

**Black Tern:** Early on the WS was one at Fruitgrowers Reservoir on 19 July (EH), which provided the only summer report in the state.

**Common Tern:** Described as casual non-breeders on the Eastern Plains (Andrews and Righter 1992), two "terns with black shoulder bars" fitting the description of this species were found on 14 July at Red Lion SWA, *Logan* (WF), for a rare summer Colorado report.

**Caspian Tern:** Only three scattered reports of this monster tern were received; three were at Fruitgrowers Reservoir on 8 June (EH) and singles were at Quincy Reservoir in Aurora, *Douglas* (RW), and at the darkly juicy Lake Meredith feedlot pond (BKP, m.ob) on 18 July.

**White-winged Dove:** In a strong showing, this species was reported from six counties—*Boulder*, *Broomfield*, *El Paso*, *Montezuma*, *Montrose*, and *Otero*—representing seven locations. Most interesting was the small population of this northward-emigrating species in Cortez, *Montezuma* (JG), on 18 July.

**Mourning Dove:** Thousands of this dove species were seen 11 June to 28 July during southern Lincoln County Breeding Bird Atlas block surveys (HEK).

**Yellow-billed Cuckoo:** This declining species was only reported from *Pueblo*, *Delta*, and *Montrose* during the season (AR, JBe, BKP, RMi).

**Flammulated Owl:** A long-term Flam study on Pike National Forest, *Teller*, includes four study sites of 500-600 hectares each. This past summer, a total of 26 breeding pairs had a mean clutch size of 2.8, a mean brood size of 1.7 owlets, and a mean number of fledglings/brood of 1.2 (range 0-3). Forty percent of nests were lost to predation during the incubation period, most of them apparently to red squirrels (*Tamiasciurus hudsonicus*) (B. Linkhart, pers. comm.).

**Long-eared Owl:** The only report of this species came from Juniper Springs, *Moffat*, on 6 June (FL).

**Short-eared Owl:** On 10 June, JD saw two birds on CR 8 in *Lincoln*.

**Northern Saw-whet Owl:** A fledgling was seen near Limon, *Lincoln*, on 11 June, well away from its usual forest home (HEK).

**Lesser Nighthawk:** Nucla Sewage Ponds, *Montrose*, is the place to look for this rare Colorado species. Two males and a female were reported there 1-19 June (CD, no doc.), whereas the day before, all of the birds, 25, were Common Nighthawks (VZ, JiB). A male was at Zink's Pond, *La Plata*, on 10 June (JiB, no doc.).

**Black Swift:** Rare in *La Plata*, 15 were reported over Zink's Pond on 9 June (VZ). Elsewhere in the state, one was on Mt. Cameron in *Park* on 17 June (WS) and another flew over Carbondale, *Garfield*, on 1 July (DFi).

**Ruby-throated Hummingbird:** An

apparent female Ruby-throat came to a Lafayette residence, *Boulder*, from 8 June to 9 July (TF, no doc.), for the only summer report of this species. A detailed analysis of molt in this species along with large photographs helpful to hummingbird feeder watchers can be found online at <http://www.aba.org/birding/v41n5p35w1.pdf>.

**Calliope Hummingbird:** The first southbound Calliopes were reported from Bayfield, *La Plata*, on 2 July, right on schedule (BH), while a male was out of range at Stulp's Farm south of Lamar, *Prowers*, where it was photographed on 31 July (JS).

**Rufous Hummingbird:** The season's first Rufous report came on 24 June from Ouray, *Ouray* (SH). On 2 July, thirty visited Falls Creek Ranch, *La Plata* (BMAB).

**Acorn Woodpecker:** Very rare away from the justly famous Rafter J colony in *La Plata*, the species was discovered in another location in the same county on 20 June, near the intersection of US 550 and CR 250 (JBr, m.ob, no doc.).

**Red-headed Woodpecker:** This smokin' hot woodpecker was reported from *Weld*, *Grand*, *Fremont*, *Boulder*, and *Routt* counties. In Hayden, an adult bird provided a rare Yampa Valley sighting on 19 June (NM, LW, TLi).

**Red-bellied Woodpecker:** A male in Rock Canyon, downstream from Pueblo Lake State Park, *Pueblo*, was a good find there on 6 June (RMi).

**Olive-sided Flycatcher:** A late migrant of this species, a.k.a. the "all-excited flycatcher," was at Pueblo's Valco Ponds, *Pueblo*, on 9 June (BKP).

**Yellow-bellied Flycatcher:** This

species is still not included on the Colorado Field Ornithologists Checklist of the Birds of Colorado, but a heard-only bird emitting a "slurred soft whistle reminiscent of a Semipalmated Plover call" at City Park in Fort Collins, *Larimer*, on 15 June was thought to be this species (NK, no doc.).

**Alder Flycatcher:** Stunning were multiple reports of this species singing between 23 June and 31 July along US 50 at mile marker 172.9, *Gunnison* (MO, DFi, FL, TM, VZ, no doc.). A professional birding guide was involved in the identification. The closest to Colorado this species typically breeds is in southern Manitoba (Lowther 1999), although Lowther says that "Traill's" Flycatchers in northwestern Montana "deserve study."

**Willow Flycatcher:** On 27 February 1995 the "Southwestern" Willow Flycatcher subspecies, *Empidonax traillii extimus*, the "mosquito king," was designated as endangered in its entire historic range, including much of southwestern Colorado. This season, only two reports of Willow Flycatcher were submitted, one of a singing bird 26-28 June in *Boulder* (TF), by range not an *extimus*, and one on 26 June from FR 611 west of Dunton, *Dolores* (JiB), which could be an *extimus*.

**Least Flycatcher:** It wasn't all that long ago when summer records of Least Flycatcher only came from east of the Rocky Mountains, and mostly along the Wyoming/Colorado border. Now this species has been documented breeding at scattered lo-

cations on the WS. A few were in the Craig area throughout the period and bred there for the first time (FL). A bird recorded at McCabe's Wetlands, Gunnison, on 26 June was thought to have nested there (JBe). In Pueblo, where they are rare in summer, three singing birds were reported, one along Graneros Creek, 7 June to 2 July (DS), one in Scroggs Canyon on 13 June (DS), and one in Rock Canyon on 14 June (BKP). At least two males sang through June at Pike's Stockade, Conejos (JR). At Boulder's White Rocks Trail, another one loudly *che-BEKed* from 28 June to 2 July (TF), completing the picture.

**Black Phoebe:** This species has recently become ensconced within Arkansas River riparian habitats in Fremont and Pueblo during summer, with some wintering. A juvenile was reported from Pueblo's Valco Ponds on 9 June (BKP); the bigger news was of a bird in Chaffee, farther upstream along the Arkansas in Salida, 8-10 June (FL).

**Eastern Phoebe:** Away from known traditional southeastern breeding locations were two birds (again) along the Cañon City Riverwalk, Fremont, on 10 June (FL), and one downstream along the Arkansas River at Portland, Fremont, on 12 June (BKP).

**Scissor-tailed Flycatcher:** Not difficult to watch were two photographed along CR 53, 0.3 miles north of CR C, Kiowa, on 10 June (BS) for the only summer report of this beautiful bird.

**White-eyed Vireo:** Not the vireo of the season, but nonetheless of interest, was a late one at the Cañon City Riverwalk on 2 June (RMi).

**Yellow-throated Vireo:** Three

singing birds in three different counties on three different dates were remarkable. In Douglas, HEK reported a territorial bird from Franktown 5-29 June. AB photographed a singing bird at the Black Canyon of the Gunnison, Gunnison, on 9 June, and the first summer record of this species for the Pueblo area was of a singing bird photographed on 16 June in Pueblo West, Pueblo (BKP).

**Red-eyed Vireo:** Just about everyone (m.ob.) who went to look for Castlewood Canyon State Park's Black Vulture heard multiple vireos singing their monotonous "*Here I am... where are you, do you see me, I see you*" vocalization throughout June and early July. At less predictable spots for this species, NE had a singing bird in her yard near Greeley, Weld, on 5 July and another sang 1-22 June in Greenhorn Meadows Park, Pueblo (DSi).

**Purple Martin:** Two WS nesting colonies were reported: one, a good find for Moffat, at Freeman Reservoir on 31 July (CD, BW), and the other, of 15 birds, at Ski Sunlight, Garfield, on 11 July (TKM).

**Violet-green Swallow:** A big migrant flock with 800 birds was late over Pueblo's Valco Ponds on 2 June (BKP).

**Carolina Wren:** The only report during the season of a species that seems to ebb and flow in and out of the state was of one bird in Baca on 31 July at Two Buttes Reservoir (TB).

**Marsh Wren:** The only report of this species, most likely representing birds of the Interior West group, was of one from Fruitgrowers Reservoir throughout the report period (m.ob.).

**Eastern Bluebird:** Near the location of last year's nest, a singing male was at Eldorado Mountain Open Space, *Boulder*, on 6 July (CN), and another male was present 6-10 July at Genesee Park, *Jefferson* (MH).

**Mountain Bluebird:** A late migrant, a single bird was reported from "Norma's Grove," *Weld*, on 1 June (DL).

**Veery:** The only summer report of this species sinking from sight came from Nevversink Trail, *Gunnison*, on 15 June (BB).

**Swainson's Thrush:** Late migrants were found in early June. One was in Rock Canyon, *Pueblo*, on 2 June (BKP), and ten lingered at CVCG, *Weld*, on 1 June (DL).

**Northern Mockingbird:** Two birds were reported on 13 June from Prairie Canyon, *Garfield*, where they are rare (VZ).

**Brown Thrasher:** Rare in southwestern Colorado was one spotted on 16 June in *Montezuma* along CR U west of US 491 (DMH).

**Northern Parula:** Singing males were recorded during the summer at three separate locations where their songs were probably enjoyed only by humans, as no pairs or nests were reported. One was near Marshall, *Boulder*, on 10 June (CN), one was heard in Gregory Canyon, *Boulder*, on 11 July (MP, LE), and another was singing at Cherry Creek Reservoir, *Arapahoe*, on the late date of 28 July (KS).



*Chestnut-sided Warbler, Boulder County, 7 Jun 2009. Photo by David Waltman*

**Chestnut-sided Warbler:** Birders looking this summer for this species were mostly skunked, except by a male singing in Skunk Canyon, *Boulder*, on 7 June (DW).

**Black-throated Gray Warbler:** The only report away from the WS was of one in Coaldale, *Fremont*, on 21 July (RMi).

**Grace's Warbler:** Away from the WS, the hotspot for this species this summer was Mason Gulch near Wetmore, *Custer*, which hosted a singing male on 17 June (BKP), an adult with a juvenile on 3 July (BKP, LE), and a single on 5 July (RMi).

**Black-and-white Warbler:** A late migrant was at Last Chance, *Washington*, on 5 June for the only summer report (GW, JK).

**American Redstart:** Not at all



hard to look at, a singing male was at a residence in Louisville, *Boulder*, on 25 June (PH); slightly duller was another male on 25 June in Sunshine Canyon, *Boulder* (CN); and a female was a late migrant, stopping at the justly famous migrant trap in Last Chance on 5 June (GW, JK).

**Ovenbird:** If you bird in the narrow elevational band of ponderosa pines with a dense understory of oaks and other shrubby species along Colorado's Front Range in June, you are likely to hear this loud songster. Thirty-five birds were reported, including 18 singing males on the annual Ovenbird survey near Morrison, *Jefferson* (MH). Other counties reporting birds were *Douglas*, *Larimer*, *Boulder*, *El Paso*, *Fremont*, and *Pueblo*.

**Northern Waterthrush:** Probably a late spring migrant, a singing male was at Greenlee Preserve, *Boulder*, on 1 June (TF).

**Kentucky Warbler:** First heard singing on 5 June, a male spent the season in Gregory Canyon, *Boulder*, occasionally showing itself to the thousands of recreationists using this popular canyon's trails (LAG, NP, doc.).

**Hooded Warbler:** Probably a return of last year's singing male, one graced Eldorado Mountain Open Space from 22 June to the end of the reporting period, and was thought to be nesting there (CN).

**Eastern Towhee:** A female, presumed to be a late migrant, was spotted (not Spotted) at CVCG on 5 June (GW, JR, no doc.).

**Cassin's Sparrow:** A small irruption of this species away from its nor-

mal Eastern Plains grasslands stronghold gave *Boulder* county listers a reason to visit the Left Hand Valley and Rabbit Mountain Trailhead areas in early July. This is another of the very few bird species endemic to the Great Plains.

**Black-throated Sparrow:** North of their expected range, two singing birds were on Fort Carson Military Reservation, *Pueblo*, from late spring through 11 June. On an unspecified date, young were seen being fed by the adults (RC).

**Grasshopper Sparrow:** Most likely positively affected by abundant moisture which created lush grassland habitats on the Eastern Plains this summer, this species was likely underreported based on the hundreds detected on *Lincoln* atlas blocks 11-27 June (HEK).

**Hepatic Tanager:** Fort Carson Military Reservation has had a pair of breeding Hepatics in the past, but those were in *Fremont* (pers. obs.). There was a singing male on the Mountain Post, *Pueblo*, on 13 May (CCa, BD, no doc.), which may have been a migrant or a breeder; the bird was observed in the spring season but was not reported until after the spring reporting period had ended (*fide* BKP). Note that some ornithologists refer to our migratory subspecies as Northern Hepatic Tanager.

**Summer Tanager:** A second-year male—most likely of the eastern, shorter-billed and shorter-tailed subspecies *P. r. rubra*, the one wintering as far south as northern Bolivia—was at CVCG on 6 June (TF). All the *Piranga* tanagers are now placed in the

family likely to be called Cardinals and Allies, where they will retain their current common name.

**Scarlet Tanager:** Back for the third consecutive summer and showing off its finery, a dazzling male continued from the spring in Gregory Canyon through 20 July (NP, WS, m.ob., doc.).

**Northern Cardinal:** Farther west in the state than usual, a singing male was in Rock Canyon downstream from Pueblo Reservoir on 13 June (BKP).

**Rose-breasted Grosbeak:** Seven birds reported from six locations, including three high-elevation spots, were not all assumed to be late spring migrants; two reports came from July, one of a fledgling being fed by a female on Marshall Mesa, *Boulder*, on 21 July (JTa), raising the question, "Who's your daddy?". The other individual was reported 17 July in Scroggs Canyon, Colorado City (DSi). Four June reports were likely of late migrants: from Estes Park YMCA, *Larimer*, on 10 June (SR); from Big Bluestem Trail, *Boulder*, 10-14 June (CKu); from Aspenglen Campground in RMNP on 19 June (TLe); and from Steel Fork Ranch, *Lincoln*, on 10 June (JD).

**Indigo Bunting:** This species was reported from *Pueblo*, *Jefferson*, *Boulder*, and *Douglas*, but much

more unusual were one singing along the Colorado River near Utah in Mesa on 9 June (JBe) and two males and a female in Chase Draw near Rangely, *Rio Blanco*, 1-3 June (DH, FL).

**Hybrid bunting:** In Colorado's zone of contact between Indigo and Lazuli Buntings it isn't unusual to find hybrids. A female Indigo was seen paired with a hybrid male between 21 June and 3 July at Bear Creek Lake Park, *Jefferson* (MH). In this case we might ask the question, "What's your daddy?"

**Dickcissel:** A regular eastern Colorado species seen during wet years, this bird had a good summer in the state. Singles were reported from *Custer* (RMi) and *Douglas* (KH), while a first for *La Plata* was a single on 28 June (RDo). Dozens were recorded farther east during atlasing in *Lincoln* (HEK), and three were in *Boulder* 13-16 July (TF) with "a



Scarlet Tanager, Gregory Canyon, Boulder County, 3 Jul 2009. Photo by Mark Chavez

few" in the county (LF) on the 29<sup>th</sup>. Two singing males were in a partially mowed alfalfa field at CBR, *Pueblo*, on 6 June (BM), where they are very rarely reported, but the birds were absent after the mowing operation had been completed the following day.

**Bobolink:** At a traditional location south of Castlewood Canyon State Park were five birds on 17 July (KL, BKP), while one in Wetmore, *Custer*, on 4 June was more unexpected (RMi).

**Eastern Meadowlark:** The only bird reported during the period, from southwestern Loveland, *Larimer*, on 2 June, was presumably of the eastern subspecies, not the *liliana* subspecies (NK, no doc.).

**Orchard Oriole:** Uncommon in summer in the Pueblo area was one at Pueblo's Valco Ponds on 6 June (RMi).

**Baltimore Oriole:** A late migrant was at Chatfield State Park, *Douglas*, on 1 June (DS).

**Scott's Oriole:** Representing a first record for *San Miguel*, a male and a female seen on 8 June possibly nested in Little Gypsum Valley (GS, CD).

**Brown-capped Rosy-Finch:** At

an Estes Park residence on 10 June, twelve birds were still coming to feeders in inclement weather (SR).

**Pine Grosbeak:** Rare in this area in summer, one male was on Highway 78, *Custer*, on 2 July (BKP).

**Red Crossbill (Type 4):** Type 4 Red Crossbills have been described as having the most easily identified flight call of the nine or more identified Red Crossbill types. Their flight call is upslurred, an almost musical *whit-whit-whit*, similar in some ways to the *whit* calls of Least or Dusky Flycatchers. A spectrogram of the flight calls is needed to positively separate crossbill types. This season, Type 4 crossbills were identified in Colorado 4-12 June from Rist Canyon, *Larimer* (NP, NK, CW), south *Boulder* (CN), and near Estes Park (NP).

**White-winged Crossbill:** Two fledglings were reported from Dillon, *Summit*, on 26 June (MJB), indicating that a good cone crop remained from the preceding year.

**Evening Grosbeak:** Unusual at these locations during the summer season were one at Chatfield State Park, *Jefferson*, on 11 July (DV) and four at a residence in Estes Park on 23 July.

## 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); and many thanks to all of you who share your sightings with the birding community.

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## IN THE SCOPE

# Eastern and Western Marsh Wrens

*Tony Leukering and Nathan Pieplow*

To many birders, particularly those who spend most of their lives birding in just the East or just the West, Marsh Wren is a species of no particular note—just a somewhat local, sometimes-difficult daily tick for their lists. Typically, it is a denizen of extensive cattail marshes or bulrushes, at least in the breeding season. At other times, it can be found in almost any bit of marshy habitat and even in non-marshy locations, particularly during migration.

As a breeder in Colorado, the species is very local. On the plains of eastern Colorado, it is only truly reliable in the South Platte drainage. Even there, it is usually restricted to the largest marshes, particularly those on the south sides of Lower Latham Reservoir in Weld County and Jumbo Reservoir in Logan County. Marsh Wren breeds at other Eastern Plains locations, but very few of these support more than a few individuals. The species is surprisingly scarce in summer in the largest marsh system in eastern Colorado, the extensive wetlands along the Arkansas River centered in Bent County. On the West Slope, where large marshes are rare, the species is correspondingly even more local. Nevertheless, for whatever reason, Marsh Wrens are abundant and widespread as breeders in the San Luis Valley, with males proclaiming territories in even the most marginal of cattail stringers.

In winter, the situation is quite different. In the colder months, Marsh Wrens can be found widely at the state's lower elevations, even in those tiny patches of cattails that were snubbed by breed-

ing individuals. They may be difficult to slap binoculars on, but their distinctive call notes readily reveal their presence to trained ears.

### **Taxonomy**

The hint by Kroodsma and Verner (1987) that the Marsh Wren might be comprised of two cryptic species became a strong suggestion two years later (Kroodsma 1989). The strongest evidence for such was provided by the vocal characters described in detail in Kroodsma and Verner (1987). Kroodsma (1989) showed that the differing songs and singing behaviors of Eastern and Western Marsh Wrens acted as an effective isolating mechanism of these “two independent evolutionary units.” Together, the vocal distinctions and plumage differences make for a strong argument in favor of species status for both groups.

Thus, it behooves Colorado’s birders to become more aware of the two relatively distinct groups of Marsh Wrens, to learn their vocal and plumage differences, and to attempt to determine the occurrence patterns of both in the state.

### *Rangewide*

Kroodsma and Verner (1997) and Pyle (1997) both recognize 14 subspecies\* of Marsh Wren, with one (*tolucensis*) being restricted to central Mexico. Pyle (1997) separates the 13 represented in the ABA area into three groups: Coastal Pacific (two subspecies); Interior Western (six subspecies, including *iliacus*, *laingi*, and *plesius*); and Eastern (five subspecies, including *dissaepetus*). Kroodsma and Verner (1997) consider only two groups, Western and Eastern. Importantly, they differ from Pyle in classifying *iliacus* in the Eastern group. They consider *laingi* and *iliacus*, respectively, to be the Western and Eastern subspecies that come into contact in the northern Great Plains of south-central Canada and the north-central United States.

### *Colorado*

Bailey and Niedrach (1965) report that the Western subspecies *plesius* is “the only one represented in the [Denver Museum of Nature and Science] collection from Colorado,” and this form of the Western Marsh Wren is undoubtedly our regular breeding form. However,

\* Kroodsma and Verner (1997), unlike Pyle (1997), consider *deserticola* to be a synonym of *aestuarinus* and add *clarkae*, a form that is resident locally from Los Angeles south to San Diego.

Table 1. Useful identification characters for four subspecies of Marsh Wren occurring or possibly occurring in Colorado, as presented in Pyle (1997).

	Western Marsh Wren		Eastern Marsh Wren	
	<i>plesius</i>	<i>laingi</i>	<i>iliacus</i>	<i>dissaeptus</i>
Colorado occurrence	breeds and winters widely in the state	occurs in winter (Pyle 1997)	may occur in migration and/or winter	may occur in migration and/or winter
crown color	dark brownish	dark brownish	blackish	blackish
lower back	moderately pale, dull brown, rufous tinge	pale brownish-cinnamon	medium reddish-brown	dull, moderately dark brown, rufous wash
rump	moderately pale, dull brown, rufous tinge	cinnamon	medium reddish-brown	dull, moderately dark brown, rufous wash
barring on upper tail coverts	distinct, dusky	lacking	lacking or indistinct, dusky	lacking
flanks	medium brownish	brightish pale cinnamon	rufous	buffy-cinnamon

the more recent reference, Pyle (1997), lists another Western subspecies, *laingi*, as wintering to southern Colorado.

What of the Eastern Marsh Wren in Colorado? It remains unconfirmed in the state, but Bailey and Niedrach (1965) stated that “it seems likely [that] the northern form *iliacus* and the eastern *dissaeptus* should occur in eastern counties in winter or during migration.” M. Peterson (pers. comm.) and others noted the presence of what was probably an Eastern Marsh Wren at Hale Ponds, Yuma County, in October 2007.

### Plumage differences

The following is intended to be used in concert with the two photographs on the back cover of this issue, of Eastern Marsh Wren (above) and Western Marsh Wren (below).

Overall, Eastern Marsh Wrens are brighter, and in particular more rufescent, than are Western Marsh Wrens. They sport brighter rufous on the rump, sides, flanks, and wing coverts. They also exhibit blacker crowns and, generally, darker tails, the latter due primarily to the tails’ wider and blacker banding. See Table 1 for specific features to note on suspect Marsh Wrens.

## Vocal differences

Three types of vocalizations are commonly heard from Marsh Wrens: “chek” calls, primary song, and subsong.

### *Calls*

The “chek” calls are apparently similar in both forms: noisy, nearly toneless notes given alone or in series. Across the country, the length of the individual call notes and the speed of the series can vary tremendously depending on the bird’s level of agitation. If there is a way to tell the forms apart by “chek” call, we don’t yet know it.

### *Primary Songs*

The primary songs of Eastern and Western Marsh Wrens are not too difficult to distinguish from one another with experience, but they can sound very similar at first. The typical song pattern is the same in both forms: a couple of short introductory notes followed by a loud monotone trill. Males of both forms have a repertoire of multiple song types, and they almost never sing the same song type twice in a row, preferring instead to cycle through almost their entire repertoire before repeating. According to Kroodsma & Verner (1997), Western males sing far more song types (100-200) than do Eastern males (40-60), but don’t bother trying to count them; instead, listen to the quality and complexity of the introductory notes and the trill.

The introductory notes of Western Marsh Wrens almost always consist of two quick, low, unmusical “tuk” sounds. The second “tuk” usually runs right up against the start of the trill: “tuk tukRRRRRRRRRRR.” Eastern Marsh Wrens, by contrast, very often start with a single nasal and/or buzzy note, which might be transliterated as “beer” or “bzt.” In addition, Eastern birds

Western birds often sound like a typewriter or a stock ticker. Eastern birds can sound like someone rapidly shaking a fistful of coins.

can sing more varied introductions, giving 2-4 different *kinds* of introductory notes before the trill. Some of them—particularly in the far eastern part of their range, and especially coastal birds—can include so many different kinds of introductory notes that the overall impression is of a half-second warble preceding the final trill.

The complexity of the trills in the primary song can also provide an identification clue. Listen for whether the trills are “simple” or “complex.” Simple trills consist of single-syllabled notes repeated in series, so that they could be transliterated “RRRRRR.” In complex trills, the repeated elements may include two or three sounds



apiece; these trills might be transliterated “TIKaTIKaTIKaTIKa” or “EEchEEchEEchEEch.” Although both forms sing complex trills, Western Marsh Wren throws in simple trills more often than Eastern—sometimes even more simple trills than complex ones—while the vast majority of Eastern trills are complex.

The tone quality of trills provides perhaps the most important distinction. Western birds sing mostly noisy, unmusical notes, almost all of which sound like they could have been made by a typewriter or a stock ticker. The trills of an Eastern bird, meanwhile, tend to be more musical, although it’s a stretch to apply the word “musical” even to an Eastern Marsh Wren, since, at their loveliest, their trills tend to sound like someone rapidly shaking a fistful of coins. Nevertheless, listen closely to an Eastern trill for semi-musical “clinking” sounds or “piping” notes mixed in with other kinds of sounds.

Sometimes, especially in excited countersinging bouts, male Marsh Wrens of both forms sing longer versions of the primary song, with more than one trill appended to the introductory notes. Western birds may do this far more often than Eastern birds (D. Kroodsma, pers. comm.). In songs like this, the distinctions described above remain the same. Note also that the “beer/bzt” and “tuk” introductory notes of the song are sometimes given outside the context of song by males during nest building; and in these cases the two forms are readily distinguished.

Observers familiar with Sedge Wrens may notice that Western Marsh Wren songs can be quite similar to songs of Sedge Wren, while Eastern Marsh Wren songs are less similar. However, Sedge Wrens can often be distinguished by their tendency to repeat one song type over and over again before switching to another. Unlike Marsh Wrens, they only cycle through their repertoires when excited, “during the dawn hour or during intense countersinging” (Herkert et al. 2001).

### *Subsong*

Subsong is “practice” song given by young birds between fall and late spring. Pieplow has heard it from Marsh Wrens as early as October and as late as the end of April, including on the breeding grounds. It sounds like a mixed-up, run-on version of the primary song, with no clear distinction between introductory notes and trills. In fact, trills may be absent, or unrecognizable as trills, because the birds are not yet able to repeat song elements accurately. With recordings and spectrograms, Marsh Wren subsong can be readily assigned to Eastern or Western forms based on the types of notes it includes. Identifying the forms in the field by subsong is more difficult, but the basic distinctions in tone quality described in the previous section still hold,

and experienced observers may, with care, be able to make an identification. Unfortunately, any Eastern Marsh Wren found in Colorado in fall or winter is likely to sing subsong, if it sings at all, rather than primary song.

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# Colorado Birds

The Colorado Field Ornithologists' Quarterly

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



Eastern Marsh Wren, West Cape May, Cape May County, NJ, 30 September 2009. *Photo by Mike Crewe*



Western Marsh Wren, near Kersey, Weld County, CO, 19 May 2004. *Photo by Tony Leukering*