Vol. 45 No. 1 January 2011

Colorado Birds

The Colorado Field Ornithologists' Quarterly

eBird and Sight Records

Loggerhead Shrike Dispersal

Lesser Nighthawks in Colorado

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

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

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

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Sabine's Gull, Cherry Creek Reservoir, Arapahoe County, 8 Oct 2010. ***Photo by Bill Maynard***

Convention News and Fellowship Funding

Jim Beatty

2011 Convention: Grand Junction, 20-22 May

In 2011, we'll head west to Grand Junction for our annual May birdfest. The rugged beauty of the Colorado River valley as it spills out of the Rockies into the Great Basin of western Colorado and Utah will offer us the best of birding. Our preparations are proceeding on schedule. We have contracted with the Grand Junction Doubletree Hotel to be the center of our activities. Coen Dexter and Brad Steger are busy planning our field trips, which will range from the top of the Grand Mesa (which will just be opening up from the winter snow) to the spectacular vistas of Colorado National Monument, the canyons of the Uncompahgre Plateau, and perhaps even the high desert of eastern Utah.

The dates of 20-22 May should be perfect for the peak of the western migration. Gray Vireos and Gray Flycatchers will be on territory, along with Scott's Orioles and Black-throated Sparrows. Chukars and Gambel's Quail will be present, and with searching we may be able to locate Gunnison Sage-Grouse. Several owl species will be present along with Three-toed Woodpeckers, both crossbills (I hope), and Purple Martins. The Grand Mesa may yield a calling Boreal Owl, if we're lucky—and if we're even luckier, we'll see one! Black Phoebes are increasingly common in the western river canyons and migration should bring a variety of uncommon waterbirds and some warblers, vireos, and thrushes passing through. We'll also search for uncommon breeders like Yellow-billed Cuckoos, if they're back by then, and even Lucy's Warbler. Grand Valley Audubon Society will be providing local expertise to help us navigate unfamiliar territory and find those "difficult-to-spot" local species. We'll also offer the usual complement of arrival and departure trips, as there are many good birding locations on the way to and from Grand Junction.

Our indoor program will offer all the usual features, including a revamped "Stump the Chumps," an excellent paper session, exhibitors, and author book-signings. At the annual banquet our keynote speaker will be Jeff Gordon, President of the American Birding Association, and we hope that Jeff will also be leading some of our field trips. Jeff's specialty is youth birding development; his keynote address will be titled "Ten Birds that Changed Birding."

Denver Museum of Nature & Science Ornithology Fellowship

In November, CFO donated $1,500 to the Denver Museum of Nature and Science (DMN&S) toward the establishment of an Ornithology Fellowship. The board was unanimous in its approval and support for this new program, which also has a matching gift component thanks to generous support from Jack Ferguson. DMN&S has over 52,000 items in its ornithology collection, some of which date back to the 1870s, and the museum archives the records of the Colorado Bird Records Committee, an important part of CFO. We are very pleased that our finances are sufficiently strong to make this contribution.

We invite all CFO members to make an individual donation, no matter how large or small, to this matching grant program to sustain the fellowship that maintains Colorado's avian historical records for our enjoyment and posterity. Jack Ferguson will match up to $10,000 in private donations with $10,000 of his own money to support this fellowship. With the CFO donation in November, the museum had raised $7,840 towards the match, leaving only $2,160 to go. This is a unique opportunity to support a leading local ornithological resource.

Also, if you visit the Museum on a Wednesday or Thursday, please stop and say hello to Andrew Doll, who is this year's Ornithology Fellow.

Jim Beatty, 165 Twelve Point Buck Trail, Durango, CO, jdbeatty@bresnan.net

Supporting the DMNS Ornithology Fellowship

Donations can be made to the Department of Zoology in support of the Ornithology Fellow. Checks can be mailed to:

Denver Museum of Nature & Science
Attn.: Development Office
2001 Colorado Blvd.
Denver, CO 80205

Alternatively, you can donate by credit card over the phone at (303) 370-6450.

6 November 2010
Center for Innovation and Creativity
Boulder, Colorado

This quarterly meeting of the Board of Directors (hereafter, "board") of the Colorado Field Ornithologists (hereafter, "CFO") was convened at 11:00 A.M. by President Jim Beatty. Also present were Secretary *pro tem* Ted Floyd, Treasurer Maggie Boswell, Vice President Bill Kaempfer, and directors Brenda Linfield, Nathan Pieplow, Bob Righter, Joltin' Joe Roller, Debra Sparn, and Brad Steger. Secretary Larry Modesitt and CBRC Chair Larry Semo sent their regrets.

Secretary's Report

The minutes of the 21 October 2010 meeting were approved.

Treasurer's Report

The treasurer's report was approved. Boswell reported a third quarter balance sheet of $38,516 with a gain of $4,500 excluding any extraordinary disbursements. The Board authorized payment of $500 to the Colorado Breeding Bird Atlas II Project. Boswell reported that the 2011 convention had income of ~$17,000 and expenses of ~$10,000.

Planning for 2011 Convention

a. In a discussion of Beatty's compilation of the "2010 Convention Improvements Summary," Floyd questioned whether the convention's high profit margin—resulting from the record-breaking high attendance—should be returned in some form to the membership. Various persons contributed suggestions for "added value" for convention attendees in 2011. Suggestions also were made to enhance "financial incentives" for field trip leaders.

b. Beatty has signed a contract with the Doubletree hotel in Grand Junction. Arrangements with regard to the hotel are on or ahead of schedule. The meeting room arrangement is contiguous, which should be better than last year.

c. Steger agreed to serve as Field Trip Coordinator, and West Slope birder Coen Dexter will provide local detailed logistical assistance. Steger emphasized his intention for CFO to continue to offer "novel" and "specialty" convention field trips.

d. West Slope artist Chris Vest has been contracted to produce the official convention artwork. Righter is coordinating all arrangements.

e. Production of the convention brochure is a matter that remains to be determined. Beatty is in contact with designer Debbie Marshall, a contractor, and determining her availability to finalize production. Floyd will assist with content for the brochure.

f. Both paper/mail registration and electronic registration will be available in 2011. For the purpose of encouraging electronic registration, electronic registration will open before paper/mail registration. Offering

a $10 discount for electronic registration was discussed, and generally approved of, to encourage online registration.

g. The format of the popular "Stump the Chumps" panel may be revised. Pieplow proposed a "pub night" format, which would promote broader audience participation. Visual and audio IDs will be used with difficulty ranging from easy to hard.

h. Floyd reported that Jeff Gordon, ABA President, has agreed to be the keynote speaker for the 2011 convention. The board unanimously approved a motion to offer Gordon $800 + expenses as an honorarium for the keynote address which includes participation in workshops and field trips.

i. Pieplow agreed to chair the paper session and noted that speakers may not be finalized by the brochure printing deadline.

j. Nobody volunteered to handle the convention lunches, although Beatty will determine pricing for the brochure.

k. Sparn agreed to handle the T-shirts.

l. Modesitt has agreed to handle the exhibitors.

m. Roller agreed to handle book sales.

n. Floyd agreed to handle public relations and promotion.

o. Beatty agreed to handle all matters relating to the scheduling of tasks and responsibilities with regard to convention planning for the brochure.

Growth Metrics—Brad Steger

Steger reported that a project to track organizational health is in progress, with data for several metrics reported.

Proposed CBRC Bylaws Change

A change to the Colorado Bird Records Committee (hereafter, "CBRC") Bylaws, regarding term limits for the CBRC chairman, will be put forth for comment from all CFO members by way of Beatty's "President's Message" in the October 2010 issue of *Colorado Birds*. Following a period of public comment, the CBRC will vote on the bylaw change.

"Mr. Bill" Photo Quiz

Linfield led a discussion about the future of the "Mr. Bill Quiz." With active participation (in the form of people submitting answers) in the quiz declining, there is concern that the format of the quiz ought to be changed. The conversation was highlighted by Kaempfer's emphatic reminder that he absolutely detests and thoroughly abhors the current name for the quiz. The board felt strongly that the quiz should be continued. Beatty will follow up with quizmaster Tony Leukering to explore options.

DMNS Ornithology Fellowship Funding

Kaempfer updated the board on a two-for-one challenge grant regarding an Ornithology Fellow for the Denver Museum of Nature and Science (hereafter, "DMNS"). The board unanimously approved a $1,500 donation for this fellowship, and the board will encourage CFO members to make additional private

donations to this fellowship on behalf of CFO. It was agreed that it will be essential for CFO to generate visibility for CFO's support of this fellowship. Floyd and Kaempfer will take the lead with publicity.

Task Shuffling

Beatty led a discussion of the reassignment of various tasks previously carried out by Rachel Hopper. These include: CFO webmaster, which recently has been transitioned to Linfield; COBirds moderator, which recently has been transitioned to Todd Deininger; *Colorado Birds* production assistant, which is currently unstaffed but which may come to be handled by contractor Debbie Marshall; upkeep of the online Colorado County Birding website, the responsibility for which remains undetermined at the present time; upkeep of the online photo quiz, addressed earlier in these minutes, and currently unresolved; and an electronic archiving of past issues of *Colorado Birds*, also currently unresolved.

Committee Reports

a. CBRC. Beatty reported on behalf of CBRC chairman Larry Semo that the CBRC is reviewing electronically-submitted records into October 2010, and the CBRC is catching up with older paper submissions of records.

b. Website. Linfield reported that the CFO website has been updated and navigation improved per recent requests from CFO members who contribute to the website. Linfield also reported that progress toward the creation of an online membership database is progressing.

c. *Colorado Birds*. Pieplow reviewed with the board the new four-page color photo section in the October 2010 issue of *Colorado Birds*. He reported that new postal regulations have delayed mailing of the October 2010 issue by requiring the journal to be enclosed in a mailing envelope, which resulted in a one-week delay.

d. Publicity. Floyd reported that CFO will promote via COBirds and other media the following: *Colorado Birds* abstracts; CFO's support of the DMNS fellowship; a January 2011 CFO field trip to Valmont Reservoir, Boulder County; and the 2011 Convention. Floyd also exhorted the board to get more active in the electronic "social networking" scene and consider adding Twitter and Facebook updates to the CFO website.

e. Project Fund and Youth Scholarship. Kaempfer reported on a request for funding of seed purchases for feeders at ski areas. In addition, Nathan, Bill, and Brenda agreed to try to get statements from recent scholarship awardees posted on the website.

f. Membership. Sparn reported membership is currently at 501. She shared with the Board a bar graph showing membership since 2008.

g. Field trips. Steger reported on the annual Valmont Reservoir trip scheduled for January 2011 and discussed other possibilities.

h. Awards. Roller led a brief discussion of possible awards in 2011. He will follow up on suggestions.

i. County Birding website. Steger requested a more detailed description

of what is involved in this task. Beatty will provide that information.

j. Nominations of officers and directors. Beatty noted that all directors with terms expiring in 2011 are eligible for re-election.

There was no new business.

The Board agreed to the next meeting dates of 29 Jan 2011 in Grand Junction, if weather permits, and 9 April at a location to be determined.

Respectfully submitted,
Ted Floyd and Jim Beatty

ACROSS THE BOARD

Ted Floyd

Edited by Jim Beatty

It's three in the morning. *Do you know where your children are?*

Three-year-old Andrew Floyd is wandering around a parking lot at a motel in La Junta. It's early August, and winds are out of the northeast. Upland Sandpipers are on the move this night. The birds aren't visible, but they are easily heard in the quiet overnight hours: *Quiddy-quit!* Then another: *Quiddy-quit!*

Andrew is scooped up by his father, strapped into a car seat, and driven to Setchfield State Wildlife Area. The two of them arrive at dawn and get underway with a long day of birding in the backcountry of Bent and Otero counties.

It's two in the morning. *Do you know where your children are?*

Five-year-old Hannah Floyd, bundled in down and fleece, is standing at the observation deck at Greenlee Preserve. It's a cold, clear night in November, great conditions for viewing the Leonid meteor shower. A meteor flashes across the sky, and a Gadwall calls from the marsh: *kvunk!*

"Time to get back to work," her companion decrees. Hannah and her companion—who happens to be her father—trod home. Hannah gets tucked back in, and her father gets back to work on the January issue of *Birding* magazine.

Ted Floyd's approach to birding—to all of life, really—is one of "casual intensity." Go whole hog. Bird all day. Definitely, bird all night. But relax! Take it easy. Bring the kids along. Stop and smell the flowers. Stop and linger at the playground—at each and every playground. Probably nobody in the history of birding has

Hannah Floyd, Andrew Floyd, and Ted Floyd

visited more playgrounds than Ted Floyd and his kids Hannah and Andrew.

Ted is semi-seriously thinking of proposing a weekend workshop on birding the playgrounds of Colorado. And why not? Some of the birds he and his kids have found at Boulder County playgrounds include Brown Pelican, Yellow-throated Vireo, and Mourning Warbler. Besides, he specializes in offbeat workshops and outings for CFO members and friends: recognizing junco subspecies, understanding molt, and identifying nocturnal migrants by their flight calls.

Best of all, as far as Ted is concerned, is the response by the Colorado birding community to such offerings. "The greatest thing about CFO," says Ted, "is its membership. Everybody is so fired up about learning and sharing. Everybody wants to see new things, visit new places, and engage new ways of thinking."

Ted was elected to the Board of Directors of CFO at the May 2009 convention in Alamosa, and he immediately assumed his current role as "Publicity and Outreach Guy." It's a nebulously defined role, and that suits Ted just fine. His zeal for birding is, well, evangelistic. He cannot curb his enthusiasm. He is a prolific contributor to CO-Birds, a regular contributor to *Colorado Birds*, and a frequent speaker at birding festivals, bird club meetings, and so forth. Most of all, he is out in the field, sharing and learning with other birders.

Ted has led field trips from Cortez to Sterling, from Hayden to

Two Buttes, and beyond. "I've been blessed with a fun job and an understanding family," Ted lets on, "and I'm able to get out and do a fair bit of birding." He denies being an insomniac. "I just don't like sleeping," says Ted. "That's especially so," he continues, "because of all the intriguing things birds do at night. I don't want to miss any of the excitement."

What *is* it about Ted Floyd's well-known fascination with nocturnal birding? Here's how he explains it: "Every time we go birding at night, there's the potential to discover something new. When we go out at night, our minds are open to new ideas, new possibilities, new ways of thinking. Part of the appeal is the intellectual challenge of learning nocturnal flight calls. But another part—a large part—of the appeal is romantic and emotional. It's simply awesome—in the original sense of that word—to hear those little voices in the night sky."

Ted's conviction appears to be contagious. His nocturnal workshops fill up fast. "I think a lot of folks come out as curiosity seekers," he ventures, "but they're soon hooked. You hear Swainson's Thrushes migrating overhead, or the prairie alive with night-singing Cassin's Sparrows, or the ghoulish utterance of a Barn Owl—and you've had an encounter with something deep and stirring and beautiful."

There's something else. "Nocturnal birding can be appreciated by anybody," Ted notes. "The playing field is equal. Nobody's really an expert. We're all new to this. There's something wonderfully democratic about the experience of birding at night, and that's gratifying."

Ted notes with some satisfaction that his co-leader for a recent nocturnal migration workshop was his five-year-old daughter Hannah. "But she wasn't our youngest participant. Not at all. A little boy—he wasn't even three months old—was there with his mother." Ted pauses for a moment and puts it this way: "Think about it. You had a bunch of folks out there in the middle of the night pondering one of the cutting-edge frontiers of field identification. Including a tiny baby. What was *he* thinking about, the whole time? Who knows! But his mind was wide open, receptive to every new possibility, alert to any new idea. That's the way I'd like to be, when I grow up."

I first met Ted about five years ago when he was the keynote speaker at the Cortez birding festival and I was surprised that he was "so young," as I knew that he had already been the editor of *Birding*, ABA's flagship publication, for several years.

Ted was born and raised in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania. He graduated from Princeton in 1990, *cum laude*, with a B.A. in biology. Then he received his Ph.D. in ecology from Penn State University in 1995.

He spent the next few years in teaching and advisory roles at Williams College and the University of Pennsylvania before be-

coming Project Coordinator at the Great Basin Bird Observatory in Nevada.

Ted's interest in birding developed early, and by age 13 he was fully "hooked" and—as you might imagine—quite proficient. He has served on bird records committees in Nevada and Pennsylvania and as a regional editor for *North American Birds*. He has also served on the Board of Directors of Western Field Ornithologists.

Ted is a prolific author, with more than 100 publications to his credit, including his *Smithsonian Field Guide to the Birds of North America*, which was published in 2008. You may still be able to get an autographed copy, if you didn't already at the CFO conventions in Alamosa and Fort Collins.

If you follow Ted's posts on COBirds, you quickly realize that he has an extraordinary ability to remember and identify birds by sound including song, chips, and flight calls—at night, of course.

I'll be very surprised if Andrew and Hannah Floyd don't soon join our ranks. Ted's enthusiasm goes far beyond "contagious." It's pandemic.

Jim Beatty, 165 Twelve Point Buck Trail, Durango, CO, jdbeatty@bresnan.net

YOUTH SCHOLARSHIP REPORT

ABA's Camp Colorado

Kyle Huffstater and Marcel Such

On the 26th of June, seventeen avid young birders from across the country gathered in the shadow of Pikes Peak at the Catamount Institute's mountain campus. Among these teens were excellent photographers and talented artists as well as butterfly and dragonfly aficionados. The American Birding Association (ABA) assembled an excellent team of leaders for this youth birding camp, including the intrepid Chip Clouse of the ABA, ABA young birder and education coordinator Elizabeth Wylie, and birding legends Michael O'Brien and Louise Zemaitis of Cape May, New Jersey.

For eight days we toured the southern half of Colorado, from Chico Basin Ranch with Bill Maynard to the San Luis Valley with Ted Floyd. At the end of our journeys, we had traveled from the plains to the top of 14,000-foot Pikes Peak. Our days were filled with early mornings and late nights, as we experienced Colorado birding along

Camp Colorado participants birding along Highway 67 and Painted Rocks Road, Teller County, 27 Jun 2010. Photo by Marcel Such

the open road, with a few hikes scattered into a packed itinerary. We weren't just birding; there was also a "birding by ear" indoor class with Michael O'Brien, a day of breeding bird atlas work, a wilderness navigation course, and a Native American culture workshop with the Catamount Institute staff.

By the end, the camp participants, once strangers, had bonded to become friends and allies who hope to see each other in the years to

Youth Scholarship Application 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**, fill it out, and send it to Bill Kaempfer at the address listed on the form no later than **31 March 2011**.

American Dipper, Salida, Chaffee County, 29 Jun 2010. Photo by Kyle Huffstater

come. We returned home with fond memories created by good times with treasured people.

Here are some individual recollections from us regarding our eventful final day.

Kyle writes:

On the second of July, we went up to the top of Pikes Peak. It was a long, curvy, and fairly boring ride to the top, where we hoped to see the Brown-capped Rosy-Finch and White-tailed Ptarmigan. We were successful in seeing the rosy-finch as well as yellow-bellied marmots and a few American pikas. Due to the clear sunny day, the views from the summit were absolutely spectacular. The group walked around the train tracks for a while, looking at the rosy-finch while scanning for ptarmigan. We spent as much time as we could up there, but most of the group was unprepared for the 40-degree weather and lack of oxygen. To most everyone's disappointment, we were incapable of finding a ptarmigan.

On our way down the mountainside, we saw one enormous group of Rocky Mountain bighorn sheep along with several smaller groups. Along the winding road, we decided to stop at a scenic overlook, where we also saw two other rosy-finches. As we came back into the trees, we saw a red fox sitting on the side of the road. Michael made

a dramatic stop and pulled over so everyone in the van had a chance to view the beautiful fox. Some of us got amazing pictures because the fox was no more than ten feet from the side of the van.

Once we reached the bottom, we headed back to base camp to relax. After a rejuvenating rest, we filled our pre-dinner free time with an epic pinecone battle. But the day was not over; after dinner, we were back out again . . .

Marcel writes:

"Sssshhhh!"

"Can you move over a bit?"

"Be *quiet*!"

I stand just inside an opening in the surrounding riparian brush, surrounded by a flock of excited teenage birders. We all stare intently into a secluded quaking aspen grove in the Manitou Springs Experimental Forest, west of Colorado Springs.

A team of biology students from Colorado College and their professor, Dr. Linkhart, edge into the clearing from the side. One student moves stealthily forward and quietly sweeps her humongous telescoping butterfly-like net over the jagged opening of a cavity fifteen feet up in an aspen. Behind the near transparent netting, we see a small, chunky bird, colored like the bark of the Ponderosa Pines adorning the ridges surrounding us—dark brown, with rich auburn, flame-colored highlights on the wings—a Flammulated Owl. The bombardment of a dozen snapping camera shutters breaks the forest's silence.

With the net securely set over the cavity's opening, the placid owl is trapped. Dr. Linkhart leans a ladder up against the tree and climbs up, attempting to coax the owl from its sanctuary. Seeming to finally realize its danger, the owl jumps from the hole straight into the net. Surprisingly, the owl remains calm as it is placed into a dark yet semi-transparent bag, weighed, and released. It flies into a neighboring Douglas-fir, where it continues to watch the proceedings.

Flammulated Owl, Teller County, 2 Jul 2010. Photo by Kyle Huffstater

A peeper—a video camera and monitor mounted

on a telescoping pole—is positioned at the hole, giving us a rare look into a Flammulated Owl nest. On the monitor, we see a fluffy white mass in the bottom of the cavity. One of the students climbs up to the nest and pulls out one...two...three balls of feathery fluff: Flamm Owl chicks. Like their mother, each is weighed, and then, after being color-coded with markers, carefully placed back into the nest. Along with the research team, we quietly retreat from the grove, allowing the female to return to her duties of attending young.

Back in the vans, everybody is chatting excitedly about this last evening at Camp Colorado. Flammulated Owl had been on everybody's list of "most wanted" birds, even us Coloradans. What an excellent way to end our time together.

This camp was truly a great experience, and we would like to thank the Colorado Field Ornithologists for providing scholarships towards our attendance. We would also like to thank the proprietors of Chico Basin Ranch for letting us tour and explore their beautiful property; the city of Colorado Springs for reducing the tolls so our group could view Colorado from the top of Pikes Peak; the Raptor Rehabilitation section of the Nature and Raptor Center of Pueblo; and Doctor Linkhart and his associates at Colorado College for giving us the rare opportunity to see Flammulated Owl "up close and personal." Last, but not least, we would also like to thank all of our tour guides and the ABA for making this extraordinary trip possible.

Kyle Huffstater, huffstater.kyle@live.com

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

Call for Papers: CFO Convention 2011

The annual convention of the Colorado Field Ornithologists will be held 20-22 May 2011 in Grand Junction, Colorado. We invite proposals for presentations to be given during the scientific paper session. Speakers are expected to have between 30 and 45 minutes to present and answer questions. Topics of interest include ongoing research into Colorado birds or their habitats, advances in field identification of Colorado birds, and new information regarding their status or distribution. Submit abstracts electronically to Nathan Pieplow (npieplow@gmail.com) prior to 15 March 2011.

eBird, Red-eyed Vireos, Thoughts on Status & Distribution, and a Plea for Caution with Sight Records

Ted Floyd

Like many Colorado birders, I'm an "S&D" junkie. And what is "S&D?" you ask. Why, it's short for "**S**tatus **a**nd **D**istribution," that is to say, the ways in which bird populations are distributed across a landscape in space and time. Thus, we say that Black-throated Gray Warblers are uncommon breeders in lower-elevation conifer woodlands on the West Slope; we say that Wilson's Warblers are fairly common migrants through the Front Range metro area in May and abundant there from late August to mid-September; and we say that Blackpoll Warblers are rare migrants on the Eastern Plains, less frequently detected in fall than in spring. Such knowledge of S&D is of immense importance in finding and correctly identifying birds.

How do you obtain knowledge of S&D?

Well, the most important thing is to get out into the field and go birding. The more the merrier. Try to get out at all times of the year. Visit as much of the state as you can. (And be green. Carpool, ride your bike, take the bus, and so forth.) Keep at it for several years, and you're well on your way to mastery of S&D.

There's no substitute for time spent in the field, but that doesn't mean you should *only* go birding. It's a good idea to do your homework. Here are two suggestions.

First, get to know the traditional print literature. For Colorado birders, this means you should try to obtain access to Robert Righter and Robert Andrews' *Birds of Colorado* (1992) and Alfred M. Bailey and Robert J. Niedrach's two-volume *Colorado Birds* (1965). Both are out of print. The former, affectionately known as *Bob & Bob*, is relatively easy to obtain. The latter is increasingly difficult to obtain, but many libraries have it. These works are essential introductions to the S&D of Colorado's birdlife, but they have understandably become outdated. (An excellent recent resource with more limited coverage is *Birds of Western Colorado Plateau and Mesa Country* by Robert Righter and coauthors, published in 2004.)

You need to stay current, and an excellent way to do that is to subscribe to two print journals: *North American Birds* and *Colorado Birds*. Both are quarterly, and both contain summaries and analyses of

bird population trends and rarities in Colorado. *North American Birds* will provide you with valuable regional and continental perspective, whereas *Colorado Birds* will go into more detail with particular relevance to Colorado.

Fifteen years ago, that was all there was to it. Enter the internet. "The internet has changed everything," it is said, and so it is with S&D. Which brings me to my second suggestion.

Make good use of the internet. Note that I say *good* use. For sure, one can make *poor* use of the internet—and I don't mean squandering all your time playing games and downloading Maureen Dowd editorials. (I should get a commission for all the hits she's gonna get.) You can make decidedly poor use of the internet when it comes to birding. Paul Lehman has a fine commentary on this matter. It appeared in the January/February 2008 issue of *Birding*, and a PDF is available for free on the website of the American Birding Association: tinyurl.com/2ud8m9a.

What are some valuable e-resources for Colorado birders?

One of them is COBirds, an e-mail distribution list, or "listserv," sponsored by Colorado Field Ornithologists. COBirds is an amazing tool, one that has revolutionized birding for many birders in Colorado. It is also, in my opinion, in danger of diminishing value. I'll say more about that a bit later.

Another valuable resource is eBird. To illustrate the value of eBird, I'll provide a specific example.

The Red-eyed Vireo is rare to uncommon as a spring migrant in Colorado east of the Rockies, and it is a rare breeder in the Front Range foothills. Translated into actual birding prospects, that means an active birder might see three or four Red-eyed Vireos during May on the Eastern Plains and maybe one or two in early summer in the foothills. If you're paying attention to COBirds—as I know many of us do—you might expect 15–20 reports of migrant Red-eyed Vireos in May and then 5–10 reports of summering or maybe even breeding birds in June.

In 2010, things seemed different. There were no COBirds reports, as far as I know, until the beginning of June. Even at the CFO convention in Fort Collins in late May, Red-eyed Vireo went unreported by the 200-some birders in attendance. (Meanwhile, there were numerous convention reports of American Redstarts, Rose-breasted Grosbeaks, and Indigo Buntings—eastern species with springtime S&D in Colorado not unlike that of the Red-eyed Vireo.) Then, starting at the end of the first week of June, there were multiple reports from the Front Range foothills. I myself saw and heard at least

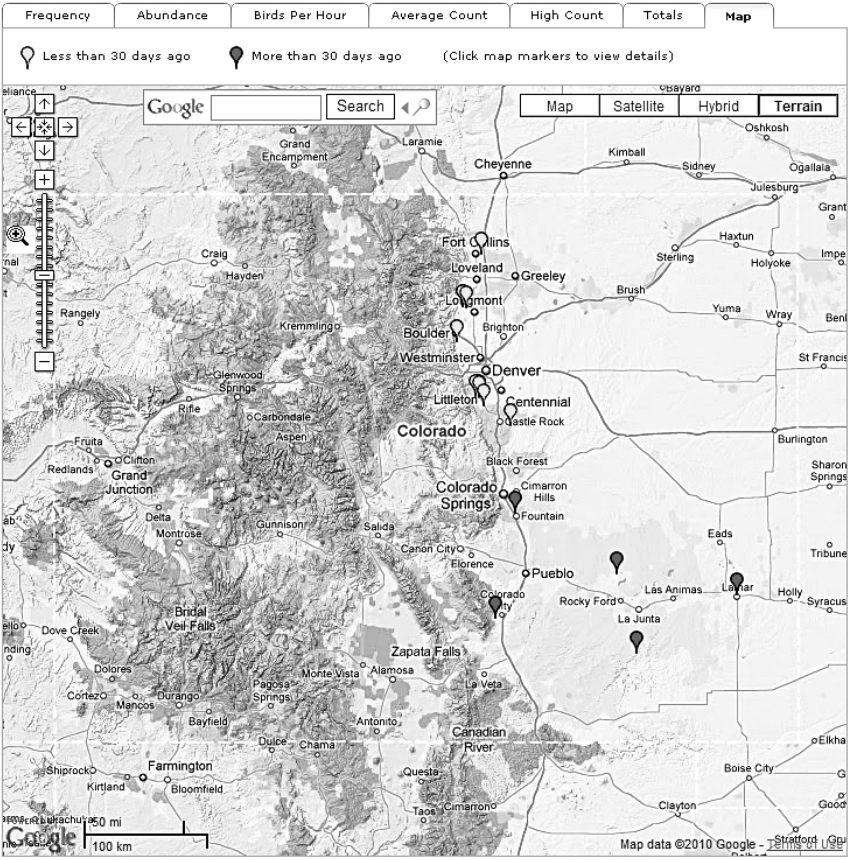

Fig. 1. Colorado Red-eyed Vireo reports on eBird, January to June 2010. Dark-colored stickpins indicate sightings before 1 June, while light-colored stickpins indicate sightings from 1 June and later.

four Red-eyed Vireos at three locations along streams in the Boulder County foothills in June. And I sensed from COBirds postings that others were having similar experiences.

But that's all anecdote. Was there any basis in fact for my impression that a poor spring for Red-eyed Vireos was followed by a good showing in June in the Front Range foothills? To find out, I went onto eBird, and with the click of a mouse—well, five or six clicks—I got the map shown in Fig. 1.

The map confirmed my impression. The five dark-colored stickpins show eBird reports of Red-eyed Vireos from 1 January 2010 to 31 May 2010. The eight light-colored stickpins (there are nine, actually,

but one is hidden by others) show eBird reports of Red-eyed Vireos from 1 June 2010 to 30 June 2010.

On the one hand, the map provides compelling support for my hunch about Red-eyed Vireos in Colorado in the spring and summer of 2010. There were fewer reports than usual in May. All were from east of the Continental Divide, and all were from south of the Palmer Divide—validating my suspicion that there were few if any reports from the popular migration hotspots in the Platte River drainage. Then the reports started to pile up in June, with all observations from the Front Range metro region north of the Palmer Divide.

On the other hand, the map has its limitations. It does not show effort. Even if it did, there is still the problem of bias: for example, maybe birders looked harder for Red-eyed Vireos in the Front Range foothills in June than at migrant traps on the Eastern Plains in May. Besides, the map shows just one season's worth of data: What happened in 2009? In 1999? And what's it going to look like in 2011? And in 2021?

Well, that's the beauty of eBird. In theory, anyhow. In theory, eBird will soon be able to generate fantastically precise range maps—animated, even, to show distributional changes through time—for most widespread and common bird species in North America. Even better, scientists will be able to use eBird data to test hypotheses and make predictions—for example, about the effects of climate change on bird distributions. eBird has the potential to revolutionize field ornithology. In theory.

As you can tell, my enthusiasm for eBird is a tad qualified. Yes, eBird is a marvelous—not to mention free!—tool for managing one's own bird records. And there's no problem with the volume of data: last I heard, more than one *million* records were being uploaded monthly—and I'm sure that number is growing month by month. The problem, then, is one of data *quality*.

Here's how I see the situation.

On the one hand, birders understandably consider their lists to be "personal." Fine with me. If somebody sees a Warbling Vireo at Last Chance, but thinks it's a Red-eyed Vireo, and then enters Red-eyed Vireo on his or her Washington County list, *that's fine*. It's personal, it's somebody *else's* list, and it's frankly none of my business. If that person is using AviSys, let's say, the erroneous record goes into that person's private AviSys database, it stays there, and that, as they say, is that. No harm done.

On the other hand, *eBird is not personal*! Your eBird records *do* go

into a larger database. Your erroneous Red-eyed Vireo, as in the hypothetical example in the preceding paragraph, becomes part of the permanent record. Although Red-eyed Vireo is a nice bird at Last Chance, it's not a mega-rarity; thus, eBird's auto-filters do not flag Washington County Red-eyed Vireos seen during normal migration windows in May and September. Your misidentification becomes part of the permanent record, and there's practically nothing anybody else can do about it.

But *you* can do something about it. In a nutshell, be careful. Try to get a second look. If your glimpse was too brief, just let it go. Better yet, enter the record as an unidentified bird, a "spuh." I do that all the time. Case in point: A few days ago, my son and I saw a Yuma County first. It was either a Black-chinned Hummingbird or a Ruby-throated Hummingbird. Neither species is on the Yuma County list. My impression was Ruby-throated, but I just wasn't sure. So I called it *Archilochus*, sp. (whence "spuh"). It's still a fine bird for Yuma County. That's a relatively exciting example, but I note that I have occasion all the time to enter relatively mundane "spuhs": loons and ravens, *Sterna* terns and "large falcons," and many others.

I understand and sympathize with the desire to want to put a name on each and every bird. "Ruby-throated Hummingbird" would have been more satisfying for that Yuma County hummingbird. And "Pacific Loon," "Chihuahuan Raven," "Common Tern," and "Peregrine Falcon" sound nicer than "loon," "raven," "*Sterna*," and "large falcon." If you're merely keeping a personal list—and truly keeping it *personal*—it doesn't really matter, I suppose: you can call those birds anything you want to.

But is it really personal? I don't think so—not anymore, not in this digital, wired, interconnected, brave new world of ours. I'd like to wrap up now with a few thoughts about that.

COBirds, I noted earlier, is an indispensable tool for birders in Colorado. I think of COBirds as an ornithological "first responder" for active birders in the field in Colorado. Increasingly, these days, reports of rarities are lighting up COBirds just moments after a rarity has been discovered, and quite often while said rarity is under initial observation.

There's a "heat of the moment" aspect to a lot of what's reported on COBirds—and that's a problem. Increasingly, it seems, decidedly "good" birds are reported with few if any supporting details. I'm thinking of species like Glossy Ibis, Short-billed Dowitcher, Eastern Wood-Pewee, Blue-headed Vireo, and Gray-cheeked Thrush. Compared to most Colorado birders, I have a ton of experience with those

Red-eyed Vireo, Last Chance, Washington County, 17 Sep 2009. Photo by Glenn Walbek

species, and it's my opinion that they're often surprisingly difficult in the field. I claim each on my Colorado list, but I've also had to let go multiple possible sightings of each. Simply put, those birds are hard!

Even for someone with substantial experience with such species, many—perhaps most—encounters in the field in Colorado wind up becoming "spuhs." Which brings up a question. *Where are all the "spuhs" on COBirds?* For every Eastern Wood-Pewee that's reported to COBirds, there ought to be a half-dozen wood-pewee "spuhs." Unquestionably, for every Glossy Ibis reported, there ought to be at least a dozen *Plegadis* "spuhs"—especially in light of the recent discovery of possible widespread hybridization between Glossy and White-faced.

I wonder if some folks are disinclined to report "spuhs" for fear of looking bad. It's an admission of human imperfection, in that view, if you can't make a definitive call on every presumptive Gray-cheeked Thrush lurking in the shadows at Crow Valley Campground. And there's a powerful converse to the preceding: it's a self-declaration of perfection, or at least ornithological worthiness, if you *do* "pull the trigger" and state with complete certainty that the briefly glimpsed, flying-away thrush was indeed a Gray-cheeked.

Wrong.

Indeed, it's quite the other way around. Truly great birders—the ones with sterling reputations—are cautious almost to the point of fussiness. Great birders deal in such currency as "probable," "likely," and just "maybe." Great birders are willing to go out on a limb: "*Could that be an Eastern Wood-Pewee?*" But they're also the first ones to pull back on provisional identifications: "*Scratch that wood-pewee. It's not vocalizing, and I'm bothered by the amount of feather wear. Let's leave it unidentified.*"

I am absolutely fine with rendering provisional judgments in the field and indeed on COBirds. I have no problems with a "possible Glossy Ibis," a "probable Short-billed Dowitcher," and a "likely Blue-

headed Vireo." But then something weird happens: such sightings strangely morph into definite, airtight, 100%, put-it-on-your-list-and-move-on sightings. What starts out as an "imperfect" judgment in the field is transmogrified into a "perfect" determination of a bird's identity.

That's an act of self-deception, and the truly great birders know it.

If your *only* goal in birding is to amass a huge personal list, then go for it! Call that Warbling Vireo at Last Chance a Red-eyed. Lose sight of the bird, then see it again, and then call it a Philadelphia. Call it a Yellow-green Vireo, while you're at it. It's your personal list, and nobody else cares.

But don't you have other goals? To get really good at bird identification perhaps? To cement your reputation as a credible birder? To make important contributions to our knowledge of avian S&D in Colorado? Or, most simply and most powerfully, to obtain knowledge—to strive for the truth—about the endlessly fascinating creatures that populate the natural world?

Those are fine goals—noble goals, even. And the wonderful thing about birding is that anybody can aspire to those goals. And anybody can achieve those goals! All you have to do is be honest with yourself. Absolutely, go out on a limb—but do so cautiously and provisionally. Don't get carried away. Learn how to say, "I don't know." Know when to admit, "I was wrong." Accept that some birds will remain forever unidentified. Do those things, and you're well on your way to becoming a fantastic birder.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

I thank Kimball Garrett, Marshall Iliff, Paul Lehman, Larry Semo, and Chris Wood for their helpful comments on an earlier draft of this article.

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Early Dispersal of Loggerhead Shrikes on the High Plains of El Paso County, Colorado

Susan H. Craig

Introduction

Traditional accounts indicate that Loggerhead Shrike (*Lanius ludovicianus*) families linger at their nest sites for weeks after the young fledge. However, observations of shrikes breeding on the high plains of El Paso County, Colorado show that they leave nest sites within two weeks after the young fledge. If weather conditions permit egg-laying on schedule (in mid-May), then shrikes with successful nests disperse shortly after the young have fledged, possibly to begin southward migration. Traditional accounts also indicate that shrikes migrate singly, but it appears that locally breeding shrikes often remain in family units for an unknown period of time after leaving the breeding grounds. In this article, using data from 13 years of observation on the plains of eastern El Paso County, I document early departure of locally breeding families.

Loggerhead Shrike Status and Distribution

The Loggerhead Shrike has experienced the sixth largest population decline of any Neotropical migrant bird (NABCI 2010). The National Breeding Bird Survey notes an annual rate of decline for this species of 3.8% per year (Sauer et al. 2008), while Christmas Bird Count data indicate a decline of 1.7% per year (Sauer et al. 1996). The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) has declared the Loggerhead Shrike a Species of Conservation Concern in 26 states (Sauer et al. 2008). Although declining in most other parts of the United States, this species nests in significant numbers in eastern El Paso County, Colorado, where I have banded shrikes for over 20 years, mapping most nest sites accessible from public roadsides (Craig 2007).

At 5500 to 7000 feet of elevation, the harsh dry habitat of the high plains of eastern El Paso County helps to create and preserve a perfect habitat for shrikes. Their primary prey is insects (Pruitt 2000, Yosef 1996), especially grasshoppers, which thrive in these drier grasslands. While a few shrikes may spend the winter in southeastern Colorado, most of Colorado's shrikes migrate south after breeding (Andrews and Righter 1995) to spend the winter in Oklahoma, New Mexico, Texas, and Mexico (Yosef 1996, Sibley 2003, Floyd 2008).

A few hardier birds dare to winter in Colorado, and are the first to appear in eastern El Paso County in January or February. The greatest numbers of shrikes are found from early March, the beginning of spring migration, through mid-October, when northern breeders are moving south.

Study Objectives

Initially, the focus of my study was to investigate site fidelity, survival rates (estimated by ageing birds through recapture), recruitment into the breeding population (estimated by the presence of second-year birds as spring nesters), nesting success, nesting density, and preferred habitat. Time spent in the field revealed other aspects of physiology and behavior, leading to the observation of early departure from nesting sites. This study used consistent data from notes and banding records to verify time of post-breeding dispersal.

Methods

As a volunteer with the United States Geological Survey (USGS) and USFWS, I have spent over 200 hours each year observing and banding shrikes in the field since 1997. Banding efforts have been moderately consistent depending on funding and available time. Some years I was able to afford more time in the field than others.

I observed the nesting and migrational behaviors of Loggerhead Shrikes while touring dusty back roads, or while waiting for a bird to respond to a deployed trap. Birds are captured using a round, walk-in trap of my own design baited with a small pet-store domestic mouse (*Mus musculus*). When I spot a shrike, I put the trap through the open window of the car onto the roadside, and then move the car a short distance away and observe till the shrike is caught or shows no further interest.

Shrikes prefer to forage from higher vantage points such as dead trees and utility wires, which make them easy to detect. In migration, shrikes tend to follow north-south oriented back roads where they can take advantage of roadkill and insects stunned by passing cars (Yosef 1996, pers. obs.). Finding nests involves watching for shrikes in areas with isolated small trees (ten to thirty feet tall), a preferred breeding location. Nests are large, bulky affairs, and are usually easy to spot.

Data collected from each bird includes age and sex. The only time shrikes carry visible fat is when they are migrating or when the hen is laying eggs, so I check fat scores as indicators of breeding or migrational status. To estimate fledging date, I recorded the dates on which I first banded fledged juveniles (hatch-year or HY birds) in each ter-

	April		May		June				
	% of Avg Precip	Avg Monthly High (F)	% of Avg Precip	Avg Monthly High (F)	% of Avg Precip	Avg Monthly High (F)	First HY Banded	Dispersal	Total Banded
1997	32%	51.6	203%	66	69%	77	10-Jul	Mid-July	103
1998	115%	55	33%	59	56%	79	27-Jun	Mid-Aug	68
1999	630%	53	166%	66.5	60%	76	30-Jun	Mid-Aug	89
2000	52%	64	59%	75	77%	78.4	20-Jul	3rd wk July	75
2001	82%	63	150%	68	95%	81	21-Jul	3rd wk July	97
2002	2%	66	52%	72	52%	86	9-Jul	Early July	66
2003	60%	63	38%	70.5	217%	74	22-Jun	Mid-July	70
2004	165%	57.6	26%	74	257%	75	2-Jul	Mid-July	65
2005	67%	60	31%	70	90%	80.6	26-Jun	Mid-July	89
2006	6%	67	34%	73	35%	85	22-Jun	Mid-July	129
2007	114%	58	98%	68	40%	80	16-Jun	Mid-July	98
2008	24%	60.5	14%	70	22%	81	12-Jul	1st wk July	107
2009	94%	58.5	100%	70	124%	76	24-Jun	1st wk July	124
2010	77%	61	34%	69	15%	85	24-Jun	1st wk July	135

Table 1. Time of dispersal of Loggerhead Shrikes in the study area, 1997-2010, correlated with aggregate weather data from the Colorado Climate Center.

ritory. To estimate date of departure from breeding areas, I recorded the first date after fledging in each territory on which I did not see shrikes. In addition, at each visit I noted the presence or absence of shrikes in known territories from previous years, and the phenological stage of each breeding unit.

The weather data shown in Table 1 were collected from the website of the Colorado Climate Center at Colorado State University (http://climate.colostate.edu/).

Results

Yosef's *Birds of North America* (1996) species account for Loggerhead Shrikes indicates that fledgling shrikes often spend a month or more with the adults in their natal territory before migrating, a fact confirmed by other authors (Porter et al. 1975, Chabot 1992, Pruitt 2000). Based on my years of observation and recapture results, it appears that many Colorado shrike families on the High Plains of eastern El Paso County leave the breeding grounds soon after the chicks fledge.

This early movement can be confirmed by the vacancy rate of

many traditional nesting sites that in June held squealing chicks and feeding parents, but are deserted by 4 July. After I began more closely monitoring departure dates in 2002, I found that a majority of breeding shrikes (over 60%) departed the natal area in early July, within a week or two of the chicks' fledging. Of 24 nest sites observed on a regular basis during the 2010 breeding season, for example, 16 were vacant on 4 July. To further illustrate the absence of local breeders, recapture of locally caught adults after mid-July is rare.

At the same time that nesting sites become vacant, family groups can be found on the adjacent plains in areas that had no nesting activity earlier in the season. Usually only one of the parent birds is present, occasionally feeding the chicks. Capture for banding reveals that the chicks' bills are still soft, and skull muscles have not yet developed the strength required to kill larger prey. Many of these young shrikes have not completed growth of the tail, which indicates their age at less than 40 days (Lefranc). The young age of the shrikes in post-breeding dispersal suggests that they have to learn their survival skills "on the road."

Early departure of El Paso County's Loggerhead Shrikes appears to be influenced primarily by timing of the nesting cycle (Table 1). If precipitation is high and violent weather occurs in April and May, nesting is either delayed or nests are destroyed, forcing renesting. This seems to be the only consistent factor accounting for late departure (that is, departure delayed until August). Otherwise, local nesters and their offspring leave in early July, shortly after the chicks fledge.

Conclusion

Although there are numerous studies of Loggerhead Shrike behavior (feeding, nesting), there are relatively few studies of migrational behavior. It is generally believed that shrikes migrate singly (Yosef 1996, Chabot 1994, Miller 1931). Aggregations of pre-migratory Northern Shrikes (*Lanius excubitor*) are known from central Europe, but it is uncertain whether these are family groups (Yosef, pers. comm). My observations indicate that groups of shrikes in post-breeding dispersal are often family groups, or perhaps siblings traveling together.

Despite widespread decline, there is good news for El Paso County's shrikes: Loggerhead Shrikes of the High Plains appear to represent a healthy population (see Craig 2007). My banding studies indicate a high rate of return for birds hatched the previous year (40-45%), which shows a healthy winter survival rate. Looking ahead, the prospects for the continued reproductive success and survival of our shrikes is—happily—very good.

Loggerhead Shrike, Montezuma County, Apr 2008. Painted Photo Montage by Chris Vest, http://www.originalbirdart.com/vest.php

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

Years of summer field work have been made possible thanks to grants from Aiken Audubon Society, National Audubon Society, USFWS Region 6, and the Colorado Field Ornithologists. I also thank Reuven Yosef, Amy Chabot, and Nathan Pieplow for their comments and advice.

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The 57th Report of the Colorado Bird Records Committee

Lawrence S. Semo
Chair, Colorado Bird Records Committee
Doug Faulkner
Secretary, Colorado Bird Records Committee

Introduction

This 57th report presents the results of deliberations of the Colorado Bird Records Committee (hereafter CBRC or Committee) on partial results of circulations held in 2010. This article provides results of the circulation of 67 reports submitted by 44 observers documenting 54 occurrences of 43 species from the period 1896 through 2010. Of those, eight occurrences involving eight different species were not accepted because of insufficient documentation or because descriptions were inconsistent with known identification criteria. Per CBRC bylaws, all accepted records received final 7-0 or 6-1 votes to accept. Each report that was not accepted received fewer than four votes to accept in the final vote. Those records with four or five "accept" votes have transcended to a second round of deliberations, and results of those records will be published at a later date.

Highlights of this report include the 9th record for Common Black-Hawk, the 10th record for Ruby-throated Hummingbird, the 8th record for Swainson's Warbler, the 10th record for Connecticut Warbler, and historical first state records for Red-shouldered Hawk and Eastern Towhee.

Committee members voting on these reports were Doug Faulkner, Peter Gent, Joey Kellner, Bill Maynard, Larry Semo, David Silverman, and Glenn Walbek.

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 (DMNS), 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).

Committee News

The second consecutive terms of Doug Faulkner and Joey Kellner expired at the end of 2010. The CBRC and the CFO Board of Directors have selected John Drummond and Bill Schmoker as new CBRC members for three-year terms ending in December 2013. As new members, both John and Bill are eligible to complete a second three-year term beginning in 2014. The CBRC wishes to thank both Doug and Joey for their extensive expertise and diligence in fulfilling their obligations to the Committee. Doug also served as the Secretary of the Committee, in which capacity he greatly assisted the Chair in preparing the various CBRC reports. With Doug's departure, there will be no Secretary at this time, although one may be appointed if the need arises.

The first term of Bill Maynard also expired in 2010; he has agreed to serve a second term, which will end in 2013.

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 51st Supplement (Chesser et al. 2010). 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, itali-

cized "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 CR (County Road), CVCG (Crow Valley Campground), Chico Basin Ranch (CBR), Reservoir (Res.), State Park (SP), and State Wildlife Area (SWA).

Error of Omission

Although he was indicated by his initials in the Pacific Wren account in the past report (Semo and Faulkner 2010), the authors failed to include Tony Leukering's name in the "Reporters and Cited Observers" section of the report. For that we offer our apologies.

RECORDS ACCEPTED

Neotropic Cormorant – *Phalacrocorax brasilianus* (7/18). Establishing the first record for *El Paso*, a juvenile was at Big Johnson Res. on 22 Oct 2009 (JD †, BM †; 2009-100; 7-0).

Least Bittern – *Ixobrychus exilis* (10/24). The Committee recently accepted two additional records for the state. One that was audio-recorded from Little Jumbo Res. on 9 Jul 2006 (CW *s*; 2010-63; 6-1) provides the first accepted record for *Logan*. In 2010, one was photographed at Sawhill Ponds on 24 May (MA †; 2010-40; 7-0), providing the fifth record for *Boulder*.

Tricolored Heron – *Egretta tricolor* (7/24). The Committee accepted two new records obtained in 2010. One near La Salle, *Weld*, on 5 May (LG †; 2010-78; 7-0) was the fourth for that

Black-legged Kittiwake, Colorado Springs, El Paso County, 8 Nov 2009. Photo by Bill Kosar

Prairie Warbler, Crow Valley Campground, Weld County, 8 Jun 2010. Photo by Nick Komar

Ruby-throated Hummingbird, Lamar residence, Prowers County, 14 May 2009. Photo by Dave Leatherman

Red-shouldered Hawk, Weld County, 8 Jan 2010. Photo by Rachel Hopper

county. Another, the first for *Fremont*, was at Hocim Marsh near Portland Crossing, 18-19 May 2010 (BM †, BKP †, JD; 2010-33; 7-0). The bird may have remained at that location for a few days after the 19th, although the CBRC received no details on any subsequent sightings of this bird.

Common Black-Hawk – *Buteogallus anthracinus* (7/9). Exciting was the discovery of *El Paso's* first Common Black-Hawk, an adult at Fountain Creek Regional Park on 16 May 2010 (LE †, BM †, BKP †, KL; 2010-28; 7-0).

Red-shouldered Hawk – *Buteo lineatus* (2/19). Pieplow located a specimen of Red-shouldered Hawk in the collection of the University of Colorado, Boulder, in 2008. The specimen, a juvenile male, was collected in Denver, *Denver*, by William Harry Bergtold on 20 Jan 1896 (NP †, WB; 2010-10; 7-0). Born in 1865, William Bergtold, a physician, had moved to Denver from Buffalo, New York in 1896 to improve his tuberculosis-influenced health by moving to an arid climate (Fisher 1937). Bergtold was an avid collector and published numerous articles in the *Auk* on new species discoveries in Colorado. Prior to his death in 1936, Bergtold donated his bird collection to the University of Colorado (Fisher 1937). Neither Cooke (1909) nor Bailey and Niedrach (1965) mentioned any specimen of Red-shouldered Hawk taken by Bergtold. Both references listed only anecdotal sightings of the species in Colorado; the original first accepted record according to the CBRC was of a bird present in Boulder in Nov 1974. The Bergtold specimen now becomes the first accepted record for Colorado.

Tricolored Heron, Lower Latham, Weld County, 11 Jun 2010. Photo by Larry Griffin

Much more contemporary, a first-year bird at the Kodak SWA near Windsor, *Weld*, was reported on CO-Birds from the period 6 Jan to 1 Feb 2010. Unfortunately, documentation submitted to the CBRC was only for 11-20 Jan 2010 and that will become the recognized period of the birds' stay in Colorado (NP, BS †, LS †, CW †, DE; 2010-07; 7-0).

Piping Plover – *Charadrius melodus*. The Committee received and accepted a belated submission of an alternate-plumaged male Piping Plover photographed at Red Lion SWA, *Logan*, on 5 May 2006 (TL †; 2010-66; 7-0).

Red Phalarope – *Phalaropus fulicarius* (22/42). A basic-plumaged adult, furnishing the fourth accepted record of the species for *Larimer*, was at Timnath Res. on 19 Sep 2009 (RH; 2009-85; 7-0). The first Colorado record of Red Phalarope was from *Larimer*, where it was collected at Loveland on 25 Jul 1895.

Black-legged Kittiwake – *Rissa tridactyla* (14/36). A second-cycle bird discovered at a small city retention pond in Colorado Springs, *El Paso*, on 8 Nov 2009 appeared dazed and lethargic to the finder and was found dead the following day (BKo †, BM †; 2009-95; 7-0). The specimen now resides in the collection at Colorado College in Colorado Springs. This is the second record for *El Paso*; the first occurred at Fountain Creek in 1991. Later in 2009, a first-cycle kittiwake was photographed at Lagerman Res., *Boulder*, on 15 Nov (LH †; 2010-54; 7-0), furnishing the second record for that county.

Laughing Gull – *Leucophaeus atricilla* (17/40). A basic-plumaged adult was at Timnath Res. on 24 Aug 2009 (RH; 2009-82; 6-1), furnishing the fourth record for *Larimer*.

Glaucous-winged Gull – *Larus glaucescens* (8/15). A first-cycle bird phenotypically consistent with Glaucous-winged Gull was at Valmont Res., *Boulder*, on 25 Dec 2009 (TF; 2009-113; 6-1). Glaucous-winged Gulls notoriously hybridize with other large gull species to the point where backcrosses with the parent species can be difficult, if not impossible, to separate with the human eye. However, without genetic evidence to indicate hybridism, the CBRC must use the information available to it, and if the bird appears to be a Glaucous-winged Gull with no hints of interspecific traits, the Committee must accept the bird as being of pure heritage until, at some point in the future, new information regarding the specific status and identification of Glaucous-winged Gulls is brought forth.

Least Tern – *Sterna antillarum*. Very far north and a first for *Jackson* was the Least Tern photographed at Meadow Creek Res. near Gould on 7 Jun 2007 (ED †; 2010-48; 7-0).

Greater Roadrunner – *Geococcyx californianus*. In Dec 2008, Spencer located a specimen of Greater Roadrunner collected very far north by Kenny Maehler on 17 Oct 1934 in Denver, *Denver* (KM, AS †; 2010-47; 7-0). The specimen, a female, reposes in the collection of Colorado State University in Fort Collins.

Lesser Nighthawk – *Chordeiles acutipennis* (10/24). Providing the

first record for *Cheyenne*, a female was photographed (see p. 60) on the Mitchek Ranch near Flagler on 6 May 2010 (GW †; 2010-79; 7-0). Silverman found a road-killed female in Colorado City on 15 May 2010 (DS; 2010-27; 7-0), the third for *Pueblo*. Establishing a first for *Boulder*, a male was described from Walden Ponds on 29 May 2010 (AG; 2010-42; 6-1).

Ruby-throated Hummingbird - *Archilochus colubris* (8/10). Establishing the seventh record for *Prowers*, an adult male was photographed in Lamar on 13 May 2009 (DAL †, JT; 2009-106; 7-0).

Least Flycatcher – *Empidonax minimus*. A first for *Dolores* was one singing near Stoner on 27 May 2001 (NP, AS; 2002-200; 7-0).

Vermilion Flycatcher – *Pyrocephalus rubinus* (23/39). In a belated submission to the CBRC, an adult female Vermilion Flycatcher was described from along Boulder Creek in *Boulder* on the very late date of 12 Dec 1987 (BKa; 2010-53; 7-0).

Scissor-tailed Flycatcher – *Tyrannus forficatus* (20/36). An adult female was photographed near Last Chance on 29 Apr 2010 (GW †; 2010-76; 7-0), providing the first accepted record for *Washington*. The bird was apparently observed by others on subsequent days, though the Committee received no details on any other dates of observation. Therefore, the historical record will indicate that the bird was present at this location on 29 Apr only.

Yellow-throated Vireo – *Vireo flavifrons*. Forming the first record for *Fremont*, a singing male was seen in Cañon City on 3 May 2010 (BKP †, RMi; 2010-20; 7-0). The bird was reported to have been discovered the previous day, although the Committee received no information for that date.

Philadelphia Vireo – *Vireo philadelphicus* (13/37). The second for *Larimer* was one described from Fort Collins on 19 May 2010 (RS; 2010-32; 6-1).

Northern Mockingbird – *Mimus polyglottos*. Establishing a rare winter record for northern Colorado, one was seen in Fort Morgan, *Morgan*, on 2 Dec 2004 (NL; 2010-49; 6-1).

Sprague's Pipit – *Anthus spragueii* (4/12). One was seen on CR 59 between CR 28 and CR 30 near Julesburg, *Sedgwick*, on 8 Oct 2005 (SL; 2010-69; 6-1).

Golden-winged Warbler – *Vermivora chrysoptera*. The first for *La Plata* was an alternate-plumaged female photographed on the south side of Durango on 20 May 2010 (RMo †, SA; 2010-34; 7-0).

Virginia's Warbler – *Oreothlypis virginiae*. Establishing perhaps the latest date for Colorado, an adult female was photographed at a bird bath in Montrose, *Montrose*, on 20 Nov 2004 (CK †; 2004-119; 7-0).

Cape May Warbler – *Dendroica tigrina* (7/27). Forming a first accepted record for *Prowers*, an alternate-plumaged male was well photographed at the Stulp Farm south of Lamar, 26-27 Apr 2010 (JS †, BKP †; 2010-58; 7-0). This record also represents the earliest spring date for the species in Colorado; the previous earliest record was on 2 May 1973 in *Boulder*. An alternate-plumaged female was also observed in

spring 2010 at the Thompson Ranch northeast of Limon, *Lincoln*, on 16 May (GW †; 2010-81; 7-0), where it also was a county first.

Black-throated Blue Warbler – *Dendroica caerulescens*. Establishing a very rare West Slope record, an adult male was at Connected Lakes SP in Grand Junction, *Mesa*, on 8 Oct 2005 (RW; 2010-60; 7-0).

Cape May Warbler, Lincoln County, 16 May 2010. Photo by Glenn Walbek

Blackburnian Warbler – *Dendroica fusca* (20/47). Representing a unique record for the West Slope and a first for *Montrose*, a basic-plumaged bird was in the Nucla yard of Coen Dexter and Brenda Wright on 9 Sep 2006 (TL; 2010-61; 7-0). The only other West Slope record was of one in *La Plata* in May 2002.

Yellow-throated Warbler – *Dendroica dominica* (14/37). An alternate-plumaged male was photographed at CVCG on the early date of 8 Apr 2010 (JR †; 2010-71; 7-0) and is the first for *Weld*.

Pine Warbler – *Dendroica pinus* (19/37). Two additional records were recently accepted. A first-year female was at Pueblo City Park, 18-25 Jan 2010 (BKP †, BM †; 2010-08; 7-0); it furnishes the fourth record for *Pueblo*. More surprising was a juvenile male photographed at Ovid, *Sedgwick*, on the very early date of 4 Jul 2010 (NKr †; 2010-86; 7-0). This is the first record for the county. Considering that the species' nearest known breeding locations are in northeastern Minnesota and eastern Oklahoma, one wonders where it fledged.

Prairie Warbler – *Dendroica discolor* (11/30). A singing male was at CVCG on 8 Jun 2010 (NKr †; 2010-84; 7-0). This is the third record for the county and the second from CVCG.

Swainson's Warbler – *Limnothlypis swainsoni* (1/8). An exciting find was the Swainson's Warbler found by Larson on a private ranch north of Wild Horse, *Cheyenne*, on 7 May 2010 (BM †, NP, SL; 2010-22; 7-0), providing a first record for the county.

Kentucky Warbler – *Oporornis formosus* (12/39). The Committee recently accepted two additional records of Kentucky Warbler for Colorado. A male was photographed at Lamar Community College in Lamar on 24 Oct 2009 (BKP †, MP; 2009-98; 7-0) and a second-year male was photographed south of Lamar on 22 Apr 2010 (JS †; 2010-74; 7-0). These represent the third and fourth records for *Prowers*, respectively.

Connecticut Warbler – *Oporornis agilis* (3/10). *El Paso's* first Connecticut Warbler record was obtained with the capture and banding of an alternate-plumaged male at CBR on 17 May 2010 (BG †, PG, BM †, BKP †, SB; 2010-29; 7-0).

Eastern Towhee – *Pipilo erythrophthalmus* (8/18). In Dec 2008, Spencer located a specimen of an Eastern Towhee collected by Kenny Maehler on 14 May 1936 in Fort Collins (AS †; KM, 2010-44; 7-0). The specimen, a male, reposes in the collection of Colorado State University in Fort Collins. The previously established first state record was of a bird collected in Boulder in 1944. The Fort Collins bird now officially constitutes the first accepted record for Colorado.

More recently, a report was belatedly submitted of a male that was at a residence in Boulder on 8 Dec 1999 (BKa, MW; 2010-45; 7-0). The Committee encourages observers to submit records of rare birds, even if quite dated.

Northern Cardinal – *Cardinalis cardinalis*. Far west was the male Northern Cardinal photographed in Pueblo, *Pueblo*, on 31 Jan 2010 (BKP †; 2010-11; 7-0). The bird was apparently first discovered in early Dec 2009, although no details on any earlier sighting were submitted to the CBRC.

Rose-breasted Grosbeak – *Pheucticus ludovicianus*. Very late was the first-year male photographed in Grand Junction on 17 Nov 2009 (NKe †; 2009-104; 7-0).

Indigo Bunting – *Passerina cyanea*. Forming a very rare record for winter, a male was described from Picket Wire Canyon, *Otero*, on 1 Jan 2010 (SO; 2010-04; 7-0).

RECORDS NOT ACCEPTED

The Committee recognizes that its "not accepted" decisions may upset those individuals whose documentations did not receive endorsement as state records. We heartily acknowledge that those who make the effort to submit documentation certainly care whether or not their reports are accepted. However, non-accepted reports do not necessarily suggest that the observer misidentified or did not see the species. A non-accepted report only indicates that, in the opinion of at least three of the seven Committee members, the documentation did not provide enough evidence to support the identification of the species reported. Many non-accepted reports do not adequately describe the bird(s) observed or adequately rule out similarly looking species. For more information on what it looks for, the Committee recommends that observers consult Leukering (2004), which is available online through the CBRC website http://www.cfo-link.org/records_committee/CBRC_articles.php, when writing documentation of a rare bird.

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, supplemental documentation). We summarize below why the following reports were not accepted.

Anhinga – *Anhinga anhinga*. The description of an adult male at Chat-

field Reservoir, *Jefferson/Douglas*, on 2 May 2003, did not match the reported age and sex combination (2003-28; 3-4). Several dissenting Committee members took the description "neck was long and yellow, straight and pointed" as a literal description of the neck, while other Committee members (notably those voting for the report's acceptance) recognized the possibility that the observer meant bill instead of neck. The necks of immature Anhingas and Double-crested Cormorants (*Phalacrocorax auritus*) can reasonably be described as yellow, but both species in that plumage lack a notable crest which this bird is described as having. Several other noted features were consistent with Anhinga, including the fan-shaped tail and white markings on tail, back, and wings, but the discrepancy in age/sex reported and the neck/bill confusion raised enough doubt for a majority of Committee members to decline to accept this report as the state's second record.

Connecticut Warbler, Chico Basin Ranch, El Paso County, 17 May 2010. Photo by Brian Gibbons

Gyrfalcon – *Falco rusticolus*. The description provided in the report of a gray-morph adult near Fairplay, *Park*, on 29 Jan 2010 did not provide enough supporting details for most Committee members (2010-09; 1-6). Several Committee members commented on the subjective term "large" to describe the bird without giving some basis for comparison. The observer did not report using optics, and the distance of only 40 feet was considered incredibly close to approach a wild Gyrfalcon, raising additional concern among some Committee members that the evidence conclusively supported the reported species.

Arctic Tern – *Sterna paradisaea*. Documentation of one in juvenal plumage at Fossil Creek Res., *Larimer*, on 21 Sep 2006 took the Committee three rounds of voting (2006-130; 5-2, 5-2, 5-2). Had voting continued, it is unlikely that the decision would have changed, as no Committee member changed his/her vote through the three rounds. The two dissenting members considered identification challenges presented by juvenile Common (*S. hirundo*) and Arctic Terns too overwhelming for this report without physical evidence.

Snowy Owl – *Bubo scandiacus*. One reported perched in a conifer in an Arvada, *Jefferson*, backyard on 23 Sep 1970 did not sufficiently rule out

other species, particularly Barn Owl (*Tyto alba*) or a pale Great Horned Owl (*Bubo virginianus*), in the opinion of most Committee members (2010-56; 1-6). The circumstances of the observation also raised concern among Committee members, since Colorado's Snowy Owls are nearly exclusively found in open habitats and perched on anything other than a tree.

Blue-throated Hummingbird – *Lampornis clemenciae*. A female-plumaged hummingbird reported as this species near South Fork, *Rio Grande*, 5-7 Jul 2010, received no support from the Committee (2010-87; 0-7). The observer provided no description of the bird's size or striking plumage features, such as the white post-ocular and malar stripes. The observer mentioned the presence of "white on the inside of the tail corners" as the distinguishing feature from local hummingbirds. Given that Blue-throated Hummingbird is much larger than Broad-tailed Hummingbird (*Selasphorus platycercus*), which the observer considered most similar to this individual, the emphasis on tail plumage raised concern from Committee members.

Cave Swallow – *Petrochelidon fulva*. The report of an adult flying below Pueblo Reservoir, *Pueblo*, on 25 Sep 2009 was not conclusive enough for a majority of Committee members to accept as a first state record (2009-87; 3-4). The written description and single photo of the bird in flight were suggestive of Cave Swallow, but two Committee members and two outside experts independently noted the variation that juvenile Cliff Swallows (*P. pyrrhonota*) can show in fall, with some showing a very pale throat similar to adult Cave Swallows.

Pine Warbler – *Dendroica pinus*. The documentation provided for one of unknown age and sex near Frederick, *Weld*, on 13 May 2010 received no endorsement from the Committee (2010-80; 0-7). Although the warbler sang repeatedly, the documentation did not include a description of the song other than that it was a rapid trill. Several other warbler species also produce trills. As the bird was only briefly seen, giving a "brief glimpse of yellow on the bird," there was not enough evidence for Committee members to conclude that the bird was of the reported species.

Eastern Meadowlark – *Sturnella magna*. One reported singing near Ovid, *Sedgwick*, on 1 Jun 2005 was identified solely by song (2005-161; 2-5). Meadowlarks learn songs during their first fall and readily incorporate songs from other species (Lanyon 1995); thus, song alone is not enough to confirm the identity of a suspected out-of-range meadowlark. Since there was no description of the plumage and the observer readily admitted to not knowing the plumage differences between Eastern and Western Meadowlarks (*Sturnella neglecta*), the Committee felt there was little supporting evidence of the species claimed.

REPORTERS AND CITED OBSERVERS

The CBRC graciously thanks the following individuals for submitting records of or discovering rare species in Colorado that prompted this circulation: SA: Susan Allerton;

MA: Margaret Arp; WB: William Bergtold; SB: Steve Brown; ED: Eric Defonso; Todd Deininger; JD: John Drummond; LE: Lisa Edwards; DE: David Elens; TF: Ted Floyd; PG: Peter Gent; BG: Brian Gibbons; LG: Larry Griffin; AG: Al Guarente; LH: Lauren Halsey; Betty Harwood; RH: Rachel Hopper; BKa: Bill Kaempfer; CK: Connie Kogler; NKr: Nick Komar; NKe: Nick Korte; BKo: Bill Kosar; Ken Kranik; Erin Landeck; SL: Steve Larson; KL: Kara Lewantowicz; TL: Tony Leukering; NL: Norm Lewis; KM: Kenny Maehler, BM: Bill Maynard; RMi: Rich Miller; RMo: Riley Morris; SO: Steve Olson; BKP: Brandon K. Percival; MP: Mark Peterson; NP: Nathan Pieplow; Karen Reill; JR: Joe Roller; BS: Bill Schmoker; LS: Larry Semo; DS: David Silverman; RS: Rob Sparks; AS: Andrew Spencer; JS: Jane Stulp; CW: Cole Wild, MW: Margie Winter; RH: Rhonda Woodward.

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Russian-olive

Dave Leatherman

Ecologists, environmentalists, and birders have long had a love-hate relationship with a beautiful (some say ugly) tree in the Oleaster Family called Russian-olive (*Eleagnus angustifolia*). This fruit-laden woody plant cannot be unconditionally embraced for many reasons—one being its formidable thorns. Other reasons include its exotic origin (it is native to central Asia); its aggressive ability, once introduced, to outcompete native trees; its reported lack of insects to feed foraging and nesting birds; its allergy-riling pollen; its lack of fall color; its tendency to grow in impenetrable thickets...the list of complaints we could come up with on a bad day is long.

But then there are those other days. Like the day when I first really noticed the lovely gray-green of the upperside of the leaves and the shining silver of the undersides. Or the day I found a flock of Bohemian Waxwings working a Russian-olive like big mice in handsome disguise. Nowadays my sense of smell is as extinct as the Bachman's Warbler, but I still remember a day in April with the intoxicating scent of those star-shaped, yellow flowers. And a November day when, in the dense crown of a big Poudre River olive east of Fort Collins, I found a Northern Pygmy-Owl lying in wait like one of those giant-mouthed, predatory, camouflaged fish that lurk motionless in a coral reef (Fig. 1).

Fig. 1. Northern Pygmy-Owl in Russian-olive, Fort Collins, Larimer County, 29 Nov 2005. Photo by Dave Leatherman

On an October day it's possible to discover a transient sapsucker eating olives or drilling wells, a "good" warbler snatching aphids from the leaves, or a Northern Goshawk or Great Horned Owl nabbing an olive-gorging Fox Squirrel. In some parts of Colorado, you might see a Ring-necked Pheasant, a prairie-chicken, or even

a Sharp-tailed Grouse up in an olive crown on a frosty morning as you begin working your sector of the Christmas Bird Count.

Fig. 2. Russian-olive fruits, Crow Valley Campground, Weld County. Photo by Dave Leatherman

Russian-olive as bird food

The normal focal point of bird interest in Russian-olive is the fruit, which botanists classify as an achene (Fig. 2). The pulpy coating that surrounds the hard, striped seed is mildly sweet (try it—it tastes not unlike a weak watermelon). Birds like flickers are strictly after the coating when they feed on these fruits, but they also ingest the seeds and then excrete them; in fact, nest boxes used by flickers often contain several inches of excreted Russian-olive pits.

Colorado bird species that rely heavily on Russian-olive pulp include Northern Flicker, American Robin, Cedar Waxwing, European Starling, and Yellow-rumped Warbler. Other Colorado species that I have personally observed eating Russian-olive fruits, presumably for the pulp, include Wood Duck, Eastern and Western Kingbirds (during fall migration), Black-billed Magpie, jays, Townsend's Solitaire, Mountain Bluebird, Hermit Thrush, Swainson's Thrush, Bohemian Waxwing, Curve-billed Thrasher, Brown Thrasher, Sage Thrasher, Northern Mockingbird, Gray Catbird, Black-headed Grosbeak, towhees, *Zonotrichia* sparrows, Song Sparrow, and Evening Grosbeak. Even Ring-billed Gulls have been reported feasting in numbers on Russian-olive fruits (Komar 2002).

I and others have observed a number of vagrant bird species eating Russian-olives in Colorado: a Brown-crested Flycatcher at Crow Valley Campground, Weld County, on 29 October 2007; Varied Thrushes at Crow Valley on numerous occasions in late fall and early winter; a Long-billed Thrasher at Chico Basin Ranch, El Paso County, from 14 January 2006 through 19 April 2006; a Phainopepla in Penrose, Fremont County, 8-11 September 1989; an Eastern Towhee at Chico Basin Ranch during the winter of 2005-2006; a Red Fox Sparrow at Lamar Community College, Prowers County, on 9 November 2010; and a female Pine Grosbeak far from the mountains, at the Lamar High School

Fig. 3. Alate (winged) form of the most common Russian-olive aphid in Colorado (Capitophorus elaeagni), Moses Lake, WA, 26 Oct 2010. Photo courtesy of Andrew Jensen

windbreak, on 10 November 2008. One of Colorado's few Common Ground-Doves was found by Duane Nelson in a Russian-olive. Even more tantalizing, Duane Nelson and Brian Gibbons observed a Piratic Flycatcher eating olives in nearby New Mexico.

While I have no hard data to prove it, the increase in Wood Ducks in many areas of Colorado since the mid-1900's may be due in part to the proliferation of Russian-olives around the edges of wetlands. A few specific incidents perhaps typify this association. On 26 October 1997, the day after a major snowstorm, a flock of 24 Wood Ducks fed in and under a bank of fruit-laden olives overhanging a pond near the Poudre River in Fort Collins. Michael and Karen Anton reported similar activity by six Wood Ducks during the fall, winter, and spring of 1998-1999 near their home west of Grand Junction. For a more detailed discussion, see Leatherman (1999).

If any birds eat Russian-olive fruits primarily for the nutritional value of the seeds (i.e., "pits"), the author is unaware of it. Perhaps the pits are ground up in the crops of Wood Ducks, thus providing some food value. However, it seems clear that the great majority of ingested pits pass through the digestive tract intact; being ingested may even enhance their germinability. Dispersal by birds is one of the common ways in which Russian-olive spreads. It has been said that planting Russian-olives in terrestrial sites far from water is ecologically safer than planting them directly into riparian sites. However, if this plant is determined to be detrimental, on balance, for Colorado habitats, then bird dispersal would seem to be a valid reason to discourage planting anywhere.

Russian-olive and insects

One of the standard arguments against Russian-olive is that it supports few insects for birds to feed on. However, aphids found on the leaves can be highly attractive to foraging passerines. At least four species of aphids, all in the genus *Capitophorus*, have been recorded from Russian-olive in Colorado: *C. braggii*, *C. shepherdiae*, *C. hip-*

pophaes, and, perhaps most importantly, *C. eleagnus* (Fig. 3). During November 2010 at the Lamar Community College woods, I was particularly impressed with the value of aphids in Russian-olives to migrating passerines. Species seen concentrating on this tree and its aphids included Warbling Vireo, Ruby-crowned Kinglet, Golden-crowned Kinglet, Nashville Warbler, Yellow-rumped Warbler, Yellow Warbler, White-crowned Sparrow, and White-throated Sparrow. Throughout the entire length of the woods, Russian-olive and its aphids were clearly the focus of avian activity. Other species that I have seen eating Russian-olive aphids in the past are Black-capped Chickadee and Wilson's Warbler. The total list of passerines that opportunistically feed in this manner on occasion is probably quite extensive. I would like to point out that the lists of olive-eating birds above are by no means exhaustive. The "take home message" from these lists should be that many species of common and rare species use this plant, and thus Russian-olive warrants scrutiny from birders in the field.

Other insects found in Russian-olive include wood boring beetles, notably the red-headed ash borer (*Neoclytus acuminatus*), but also other species. On 15 November 1997, I investigated the activity of a Downy Woodpecker busily excavating a Russian-olive branch in the woods north of the Prewitt Reservoir dam in Washington County. The target of the bird's interest, rudely taken away by the entomologist, proved to be the second state record of *Analaphus parallelus*, a cerambycid wood boring beetle.

In addition to the aphids and beetles, certain grasshopper species defoliate Russian-olive leaves, and olives near streams and rivers often serve as resting places for chironomid midges, those mosquito-like swarming flies with fuzzy antennae that in spring attract huge mixed

Fig. 4. Calliphorid flies attracted to sap wells drilled by a migrant Red-naped Sapsucker in a Russian-olive below the dam at Two Buttes Reservoir, Baca County. Photo by Dave Leatherman

flocks of swallows to water bodies and elicit wild arm-waving from human trail walkers.

Other benefits of Russian-olive

Russian-olive sap is apparently attractive to sapsuckers, making Russian-olive one of the favored species for this unique group of woodpeckers on the Eastern Plains and, probably, statewide. After sapsuckers visit, insects become attracted to the sapwells (Fig. 4). Any of them within reach of a drinking sapsucker, caught in the sap, or developing in it (as fly maggots do) are likely to be eaten.

Bill Maynard and others have commented that Long-eared Owl roosts are often in Russian-olive thickets. My impression is that the owls like these thickets mostly for their dense structure, which affords secure roosting spots, but perhaps the olives attract rodents that provide a food source for the owls as well.

Russian-olive management

As Russian-olive provides food in the form of fruits, aphids, and sap for many species of birds in Colorado, it is certainly a tree species that warrants premeditated survey by birders in all seasons. Many land management agencies are currently conducting Russian-olive reduction or eradication efforts on open-space lands throughout Colorado. Without debating the ecological merits of such projects, I argue that they should include a component to monitor bird diversity before and after Russian-olive removal. Only then will we know the true influence that such efforts have on bird populations in both the short and the long term.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

Thanks to Bill Maynard, Duane Nelson, and Brandon Percival for their comments on birds seen eating Russian-olive fruits.

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Summer 2010 (June–July)

Joel Such and Marcel Such

Summer. Migrants have generally come and gone by this time, and the local breeding birds have settled into their nests. Though summer doesn't really have the same massive numbers of rarities or chances for extreme oddities as do the spring and fall migration months, rare species do turn up occasionally. Examples of this from the current period include a Common Black-Hawk found in Delta County, an Acorn Woodpecker in El Paso County, and a Blue-throated Hummingbird in Garfield County. Another great thing about summer is the chance to find rare breeders, such as the Black-chinned Sparrows suspected of breeding in La Plata County.

Overall, however, this summer was fairly ho-hum, with no completely outrageous rarities being found, and relatively few rare breeders. White-winged Doves and Black Phoebes continue to increase in numbers in southern Colorado. There was a sizable irruption of Evening Grosbeaks in the mountains, though not many more reports than normal in the lower elevations.

In addition to finding the odd rarity, many birders, ourselves included, participate in breeding bird censuses, such as the Breeding Bird Survey and/or the Colorado Breeding Bird Atlas II. Both of these gift the birding community with vast amounts of invaluable data on the local breeding populations and trends in Colorado. Summer is the time to confirm breeding! Searching for and finding adults building nests, birds singing on and defending territories, active nests, and recently fledged juveniles enhances personal knowledge of birds far beyond what you might otherwise learn, no matter how many birds you chase or how many books you read.

Switching gears to the weather: June in Denver started out fairly cool and moist for the first half of the month before heating up and drying out for the last half. June had an average temperature of 68.9°F, 1.3° above normal. In the precipitation department, June had a total of 1.6 inches, a mere 0.04 inches above average. July, on the other hand, nearly made the top ten wettest Julys in Denver history, recording 3.7 inches of precipitation, 1.54 inches over the July average. July was also slightly warmer than normal, reporting an average temperature of 74.4°F, which was 1° above average. July also had some good fronts, with fourteen thunderstorms reported from Denver International Airport. With all of this extra moisture, the grasses stayed green for a good couple of months longer than usual.

Pacific Loon, McIntosh Reservoir, Boulder County, 28 Jul 2010. Photo by David Waltman

Black-billed Cuckoo, Norma's Grove, Weld County, 13 Jun 2010. Photo by Mark Chavez

Black-chinned Hummingbird, Chico Basin Ranch, El Paso County, 1 Jul 2010. Photo by Bill Maynard

"News from the Field" contains news and reports of birds sighted in Colorado. The news is compiled from online discussion groups and rare bird alerts (RBAs), with valuable contributions from a large network of statewide informants.

We would like to thank the many contributors for sharing their sightings, as well as the regional compilers for adding their insight on county and regional rarities and breeding species. No matter what your level of expertise, you are encouraged to send your bird reports to COBirds (cobirds@googlegroups.com), eBird (https://ebird.org/ebird/), and/or West Slope Birding News (wsbn@yahoogroups.com), where all sightings are compiled and tabulated by your regional compilers and the Chair of the Colorado Birds Records Committee, who then send them in taxonomic order, along with comments, to the "News from the Field" editors for summary.

Note 1 – The reports contained herein are largely unchecked, and the report editors do not necessarily vouch for their authenticity. Underlined species are those for which the Colorado Bird Records Committee requests documentation. You should 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 are technologically impaired and require 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.

Abbreviations: CBRC – Colorado Bird Records Committee; **CVCG** – Crow Valley Campground, *Weld*; **m.ob.** – many observers; **Mtn.** – Mountain; **doc.** – documentation submitted to the CBRC; **no doc.** – no documentation submitted to the CBRC; **NWR** – National Wildlife Refuge; **Res.** – Reservoir; **SP** – State Park; **SWA** – State Wildlife Area; **WS** – West Slope.

Wood Duck: Providing a rare county record, a single eclipse-plumaged male of this species was found at Williams Creek Res., *Hinsdale*, on 21 Jun (JiB).

Barrow's Goldeneye: Either very early or very late was a single immature male found on the Arkansas River east of Cañon City, *Fremont*, on 24 Jul (SMo).

Red-breasted Merganser: An interesting summer sighting of a single female came from Blue Mesa Res., *Gunnison*, on 20 Jun (CW).

Pacific Loon: An interesting find was a single immature found at McIntosh Res., *Boulder*, on 10 Jul, that remained through the end of the period (MMB, m.ob.). This bird was apparently "marooned" on the reservoir

while it was undergoing its normal prebasic molt, in which it loses all of its flight feathers at once, rendering the bird flightless.

Common Loon: This is typically a rare bird during the summer months, but there was a good number this year, with five reports of nine individuals coming from the counties *Delta*, *Grand*, *Gunnison*, *Huerfano*, and *Logan/Sedgwick*. The high count of four in basic plumage came from Jumbo Res., *Logan/Sedgwick*, 19 Jun to 26 Jul (TLe, LS, SMl, m.ob.).

Red-necked Grebe: A single bird in alternate plumage was seen at Walden Res., *Jackson*, 15-28 Jun (BKP, CS).

Brown Pelican: A holdover from the spring season, a single bird was at Highline SP, *Mesa*, from the beginning of the period to 9 Jun (m.ob., no doc.). Another bird was found at Williams Creek Res., *Hinsdale*, on 15 Jul (*fide* BG, m.ob., doc.).

American Bittern: Furnishing a rare *Delta* record, two were seen throughout the season at Fruitgrowers Res. (m.ob.).

Least Bittern: A single female was found at Running Deer Natural Area, *Larimer*, on 7 Jun (CW, no doc.) and again on 13 Jun (*fide* BKP, no doc.). This is the same location where the species was found last summer. Another bird was found at Thurston Res., *Prowers*, on 21 Jun (DL, no doc.).

Great Egret: Casual after mid-June in western Colorado was a single bird found in Grand Junction, *Mesa*, on 26 Jun (LA).

Green Heron: Summering birds were found in *Adams*, *Arapahoe*, *Boulder* (at Walden Ponds, a known breeding site), *Fremont*, and *Pueblo*. There were no reports from the WS this summer.

Mississippi Kite: There were two reports of this species from outside its normal haunts, both from Colorado Springs, *El Paso*. The first was on 8 Jul (TB) and the second was on 31 Jul (KC).

Northern Goshawk: A rare find in pinyon-juniper habitat was a single adult on County Road 15 near Florence, *Fremont*, on 17 Jun (RM).

Common Black-Hawk: A rare visitor from the southwest, a single bird was found in Hotchkiss, *Delta*, on 15 Jun (JaB, no doc.). The observer had previously reported one in *Delta* in 2009.

Broad-winged Hawk: Four reports of this hawk totaling five individuals came this summer from two counties, *Boulder* and *Jefferson*. The first bird was an adult found at Eldorado Mtn. Open Space, *Boulder*, on 4 Jun (CN); another was reported from near the Denver Audubon Nature Center, Chatfield SP, *Jefferson*, on 6 Jun (HK); two were found near the Brainard Lake Pay Station, *Boulder*, on 19 Jun (CN); and the last one was found at Bear Creek in Boulder, *Boulder*, on 18 Jul (TF).

Swainson's Hawk: A locally rare possible breeder was reported northeast of Cortez, *Montezuma*, 24-28 Jun (HRM, BBy).

Peregrine Falcon: A breeding pair was observed nesting on the cliffs above Glenwood Springs, *Garfield*, throughout the summer period (VZ, m.ob.). Another was found in Craig,

Moffat, on 23 Jul (FL), and a juvenile was seen at Orlando Res., *Huerfano*, on 28 Jul (DSi).

Black-necked Stilt: A rare find for the WS was a single individual found at Fruitgrowers Res., *Delta*, on 9 Jun (EH).

Greater Yellowlegs: Casual during the month of June in western Colorado, a single bird was found at Nucla, *Montrose*, on 15 Jun (CD).

Willet: A Willet was seen displaying at Cheney Res., *Mesa*, a previously recorded WS nesting location, on 27 Jul (LA).

Upland Sandpiper: Only one bird was reported on the ground this season away from the usual breeding grounds in northeast Colorado, along CR 45, *Yuma*, on 6 Jun (CH). Early nocturnal migrants were heard over Golden, *Jefferson*, on 13 Jul (IS) and Lafayette, *Boulder*, on 31 Jul (TF).

Long-billed Curlew: Possible early fall migrants were four seen on US 6 near the *Morgan* line, *Washington*, on 19 Jun (LS, TLe, SMl). Three were also seen on Brewster Ridge near the Utah border, *Mesa*, on 29 Jun (HT, KM, RF). This last location is a previously known nesting location for this species.

Marbled Godwit: This species is casual after the end of May in western Colorado; a single bird was found at Highline SP, *Mesa*, on 22 Jul (HT, KM, RF).

Least Sandpiper: A single individual was found at Redvale, *Montrose*, on 10 Jul (CD, BW); this is a casual species in the area until mid-July, when it becomes rare.

Short-billed Dowitcher: A group of six was found at Prewitt Res., *Washington*, on 31 Jul (CW).

Laughing Gull: An adult in alternate plumage was found at Prewitt Res., *Washington*, on 31 Jul (CW, no doc.).

Black Tern: A rare *Routt* find was a single bird at Lake Catamount on 27 Jun (TLi).

Arctic Tern: An adult in alternate plumage was found at Jim Hamm Pond, *Boulder*, on 13 Jun (BKP, doc.).

Caspian Tern: Casual after May, a single bird was found at Confluence Park in Delta, *Delta*, on 12 Jun (DG).

White-winged Dove: Continuing a trend of northward range expansion from the south, this season we had nine reports of sixteen birds coming from seven counties: *Arapahoe*, *Boulder* (2), *El Paso*, *Fremont*, *La Plata*, *Mesa*, and *Pueblo* (2).

Inca Dove: This species, like the White-winged Dove, colonized Colorado from the south, although it seems to have been retreating from the state again in recent years (Larry Semo, pers. comm.), with few birds now reported from their former outposts in Rocky Ford and Lamar. This summer, a singing bird was found in Haxtun, *Phillips*, on 31 Jul (CW, no doc.).

Yellow-billed Cuckoo: A single bird was found at Colorado City, *Pueblo*, on 1 Jun (DSi). Continuing the tradition of "Western" Yellow-billed Cuckoos on the WS, some were found on the Colorado River in *Mesa* and in Hotchkiss, *Delta*, from 8 Jun to the end of the period (JaB, AR).

Black-billed Cuckoo: It was an above-average summer for this species, with three reports of single birds

this season. The first came from Tamarack SWA, *Logan*, on 7 Jun (DM, no doc.); the second came from Norma's Grove, *Weld*, 8-16 Jun (CW, m.ob., doc.); and the last came again from Tamarack SWA, *Logan*, on 4 Jul (NKr, no doc.).

Flammulated Owl: A heard-only bird was found off of Hwy 67 near Deckers, *Douglas*, on 3 Jun (GW, MP, JK), and another was heard along the Mesa Trail, *Boulder*, on 6 Jun (TF, m.ob.).

Short-eared Owl: An interesting find was a single bird seen at Maybell, *Moffat* (DH). The exact date was unspecified.

Lesser Nighthawk: There was only a single report from this period, of two or more birds found in Nucla, *Montrose*, 2-15 Jun (CD, no doc.).

Chimney Swift: A good find away from a known breeding colony, four birds were found in Castle Rock, *Douglas*, on 5 Jun (GW).

Blue-throated Hummingbird: A single female was found in the town of No Name, *Garfield*, on 30 Jun (TM, no doc.). Another female was also reported at the Alder Creek Guard Station, *Rio Grande*, in early July (doc.). The latter report was not accepted by the CBRC (see p. 40 of this journal).

Black-chinned Hummingbird: There were three reports of this species in northern Colorado, where they are rare. The first was of a female from a residence near Highway 52 and County Line Road, *Weld*, on 26 Jun (BiS). The homeowner reported the bird coming for about two weeks prior. The second report was of a male near Livermore, *Larimer*, on 1 Jul (TH). The last report of the period came from Steamboat Springs, *Routt*, on 25 Jul (TLi).

Calliope Hummingbird: The first reports of the season, both of males, came from Castle Rock, *Douglas*, on 9 Jul (GW) and from Glenwood Springs, *Garfield*, on 14 Jul (VZ).

Broad-tailed Hummingbird: As an interesting aside, a female of this species was caught in a bird-banding operation in Estes Park, *Larimer*, on 8 Jun (SR). It was originally banded in 2001, and had hatched in 2000 or even earlier, making it ten or more years old, incredible for such a small bird (but not, apparently, a longevity record).

Rufous Hummingbird: The first report of the season came from Hotchkiss, *Delta*, on 23 Jun (AR, m.ob.).

Acorn Woodpecker: A great find away from their regular *La Plata* breeding location was a single female in Colorado Springs, *El Paso*, 20-22 Jul (BaS, m.ob., doc.).

American Three-toed Woodpecker: An interesting low-elevation find was a single bird on CR 15 near Florence, *Fremont*, on 17 Jun (RM).

Eastern Wood-Pewee: Continuing from spring, a singing male was seen at Grandview Cemetery, *Larimer*, 6-13 Jun (ED, doc.).

Willow Flycatcher: A rather late or very early migrant, a single bird of the eastern race was found at CVCG, *Weld*, on 15 Jun (CW, NKr, SMi).

Least Flycatcher: A singing bird was found at Rye, *Pueblo*, from the beginning of the period to 5 Jul (DSi). Also, a single bird was found at Haxtun, *Phillips*, on 31 Jul (CW), possibly an extremely early fall migrant.

Acorn Woodpecker, Colorado Springs, El Paso County, 20 Jul 2010. Photo by Bill Maynard

Wood Thrush, Norma's Grove, Weld County, 13 Jun 2010. Photo by Mark Chavez

One of 5 Black-chinned Sparrows discovered in La Plata County by atlasers. Photo by Jim Beatty, 28 Jun 2010

Black Phoebe: This species continues to increase its breeding population in Colorado, as evidenced by the 25 new nesting sites found in *Delta* and *Mesa* this season along the Gunnison River between the towns of Delta and Whitewater (CD, BW, MH, m.ob.). Two birds were found, likely breeding, on the Dolores River below McPhee Res., *Montezuma*, from the beginning of the season to 11 Jul (DG). A bird was found at La Veta, *Huerfano*, 11-12 Jul (BJ, PN). Farthest east was an adult at the Box Ranch, *Las Animas*, on 28 June (TF, BPa).

Eastern Phoebe: It was an excellent summer for this species, with many reports farther west and north than normal. The first came from McCabe Meadows Trail, *Douglas*, on 10 Jun (KMi); the second came from Tamarack SWA, *Logan*, from 19 Jun to 10 Jul (LS, SMl, MP, TS); and the last came from Ovid, *Sedgwick*, on 10 Jul (CW, NKr, LS, MP, TS). At least 9 were at the Box Ranch, *Las Animas*, on 28 June (TF, BPa), and another was along Trinchera Creek on 28 Jun (TF, BPa).

Black Phoebe × Eastern Phoebe: A bird believed to be of this parentage—based on both plumage and vocalizations—was at the Box Ranch, *Las Animas*, on 28 Jun (TF, BPa). The two parental species co-occur along waterways in central *Las Animas*.

Ash-throated Flycatcher: A northerly sighting of a single bird came from Eldorado Mtn. Open Space, *Boulder*, on 5 Jun (CK).

Cassin's Kingbird: Another abnormally northerly sighting was of a bird found at CVCG, *Weld*, on 4 Jun (DL).

Eastern Kingbird: Rare for the location were two birds found in McCoy, *Eagle*, on 20 Jun (TM, KM).

Scissor-tailed Flycatcher: An excellent find, a single juvenile was at CR 43 & CR U, 10 miles west of the *Cheyenne* county line in *Lincoln*, on 27 Jun (DK, no doc.).

Gray Vireo: There were several reports of this species from the southeast, where it is a rare breeder. A single bird was singing on territory south of Higbee, *Las Animas*, on 16 Jun (DL), and seven birds were found in Long Canyon, along CR 197.6, *Las Animas*, on 22 Jun (DN, SO), representing a new breeding colony for southeast Colorado. Another new site was the previously unexplored Box Ranch, *Las Animas*, where at least five were present on 28 Jun (TF, BPa).

Yellow-throated Vireo: With three reports, this season was a bit above average. The first report came from CVCG, *Weld*, on 1 Jun (RS); the second came from near the Chatfield Banding Station, *Jefferson*, on 4 Jun (DC); and the last was of a singing adult male at the Beaver Creek Fishing Access area, *Gunnison*, on 25 Jul (CD, BW). This last report was the fifth record for western Colorado.

Philadelphia Vireo: A singing male was reported from an East Boulder residence, *Boulder*, on 1 Jul (DSp, no doc.).

Red-eyed Vireo: Increasingly common in summer, especially on the Front Range, this species generated twelve reports representing 13 individuals, mostly singing males on territory. The counties with sightings were *Boulder* (three reports of four singing

males total), *Douglas*, *Larimer* (5), *Pueblo*, and *Weld* (2).

Blue Jay: A first *Routt* record was furnished by a single bird found in Hayden on 2 Jun (DSw, NMe, TLi).

Pinyon Jay: An astounding 500+ were reported at McCoy, *Eagle*, on 20 Jun (TM, KMc).

Purple Martin: Two reports of twelve individuals came from two counties, *Arapahoe* and *Garfield*. Five pairs were reported at Four-Mile Park, *Garfield*, on 26 Jun (TM), and two males were found near Centennial Airport, *Arapahoe*, on 8 Jul (SL).

Carolina Wren: Continuing from spring, a singing male was seen on Centennial Trail, Boulder, *Boulder*, 1-4 Jun (BiS, SF). On the last date of observation, two birds were seen. Another singing male was also found in Ovid, *Sedgwick*, on 4 Jul (NKr).

Veery: A good find for the plains was a single "western" bird at Norma's Grove, *Weld*, on 8 Jun (CW).

Wood Thrush: There were three reports. The first was found singing in Colorado City, *Pueblo*, 1-6 Jun (DSi, no doc.). The second was at Norma's Grove, *Weld*, 8-15 Jun (CW, m.ob., no doc.). The last was at Tamarack SWA, *Logan*, on 4 Jul (NKr, no doc.).

Bendire's Thrasher: A single bird was reported from the auto tour loop of Monte Vista NWR, *Rio Grande*, on 12 Jul (PN, PW, no doc.).

Phainopepla: An extremely rare find was a single bird at the Cottonwood Hot Springs, *Chaffee*, on 8 Jul (MS fide TF, no doc.).

Golden-winged Warbler: A rare summer sighting of a singing male came from CVCG, *Weld*, on 8 Jun (CW).

Tennessee Warbler: Also rare in summer (but often late to migrate), this species was reported singing on the Colorado River near the Utah border, *Mesa*, on 8 Jun (JaB).

Lucy's Warbler: Continuing their nesting tradition at Yellowjacket Canyon, *Montezuma*, an unknown number were seen from the beginning of the season through at least 10 Jul (m.ob.). Since this is, of course, a known and reliable breeding location, documentation isn't needed for this locale.

Northern Parula: There were two reports of two males during this period, both from *Boulder*. The first came from near 16th & Hawthorn in Boulder, 9-13 Jun (RT); the second came from Doudy Draw on 12 Jun (JT, DZ).

Grace's Warbler: A good find away from southwest Colorado was a single bird on Ideal Canyon Road, *Huerfano*, on 12 Jun (TS, AH).

Pine Warbler: There were two reports of this rare warbler. The first was of a first-year female from Ovid, *Sedgwick*, on 4 Jul (NKr, no doc.); and the second was of an adult male from Colorado Springs, *El Paso*, on 30 Jul (MP, no doc.).

Prairie Warbler: One was reported from CVCG, *Weld*, 7-8 Jun (GL, CW, NK, doc.).

Blackpoll Warbler: A late spring migrant, a single male was reported from CVCG, *Weld*, on 4 Jun (DL).

American Redstart: There were three reports of six individuals this summer. The first came from Carbondale, *Garfield*, on 2 Jun (JLo); the sec-

ond was of a first-year male at a Gunbarrel residence in *Boulder* on 7 Jun (NP); and the last was of four birds (two pairs) at Chatfield Res., on the northwest side of "Kingfisher Bridge," *Jefferson*, on 29 Jun (MC).

Ovenbird: There were six reports of eight individuals of this uncommon breeder. Most reports, as usual, were from Front Range counties: *Boulder* (2), *Fremont* (2), and *Larimer*. The report of a singing male on private property in *Archuleta* from 1-30 Jun (SA, BBy, doc.) will be a first county record if accepted.

Northern Waterthrush: A rare summer sighting of a single bird—doubtless a late migrant—came from CVCG, *Weld*, on 8 Jun (CW).

Green-tailed Towhee: Late for the plains was a bird found at Norma's Grove, *Weld*, on 12 Jun (MM).

Cassin's Sparrow: Two singing at White Rocks, *Boulder*, on 19 Jun (TF) were west of normal.

Brewer's Sparrow: Two were observed singing at White Rocks, *Boulder*, on 19 Jun (TF); the species is normally absent from *Boulder* during the breeding season.

Black-chinned Sparrow: In an excellent sighting, at least three singing males and one female were found on private property in *La Plata* from 28 Jun to 10 Jul (doc.). There may have been up to five birds in total. Breeding was not confirmed.

White-crowned Sparrow: A dark-lored adult carrying apparent nesting material at White Rocks, *Boulder*, on 19 Jun (TF) was unprecedented. It was thought that the bird might have been of the nominate, black-lored *leucophrys* subspecies, as the high-elevation *oriantha* subspecies would be entirely out of place in the eastern Boulder lowlands.

Dark-eyed Junco: In a very late report, an individual of the "Pink-sided" race was found at Norma's Grove, *Weld*, on 12 Jun (MM). Later still, a probable "Oregon" race individual was found in Colorado Springs, *El Paso*, on 30 Jul (JN).

Hepatic Tanager: A single bird was found on Ideal Canyon Road, *Huerfano*, on 12 Jun (TS, AH, no doc.).

Summer Tanager: A singing male was reported from Colorado City, *Pueblo*, on 1 Jun (DSi).

Northern Cardinal: There were two reports of this stereotypical eastern bird. The first was of two males from Tamarack SWA, *Logan*, on 19 Jun (LS, TLe, SMl); and the second was of a single male from Ovid, *Sedgwick*, on 10 Jul (CW, NKr, LS, MP, TS).

Rose-breasted Grosbeak: There were two WS reports this season. The first was of an adult male in Nucla, *Montrose*, 2-4 Jun (CD, BW, m.ob.); another of the same age and sex was reported from Grand Junction, *Mesa*, on 5 Jun (RW).

Indigo Bunting: The WS had a good number of sightings this year, with four reports of six birds from the counties *Delta*, *Gunnison*, and *Mesa* (2), 8-18 Jun. There were also two reports of single males from *Fremont*, 14-18 Jul.

Dickcissel: There were two reports away from their Eastern Plains strongholds. The first came from Wetmore, *Fremont*, on 21 Jun (RM); and the sec-

ond came from Cañon City, *Fremont*, on 20 Jul (RM).

Bobolink: This year there were four reports away from known breeding areas. A single male was seen at Yampa River SWA, *Routt*, on 4 Jun (FL); two or more birds were found at CR 311 & CR 343, *Garfield*, on 19 Jun (KP, TM, VZ); a single bird was found near Cañon City, *Fremont*, on 20 Jun (RM); and the last report was from Carpenter Ranch, Hayden, *Routt*, on 9 Jul (NKe).

Baltimore Oriole: The only report of the period was of a single male from Fort Morgan, *Morgan*, on 19 Jun (LS).

Scott's Oriole: A number of likely breeders were found in at least four locations near the Utah border in *Mesa* throughout the season (BB, m.ob.). Another report was a rare *Moffat* sighting of a single female in Sandwash Basin on 11 Jun (DH).

Brown-capped Rosy-Finch: In a rare summer record downslope from their secluded alpine cliff nest areas, 40 were found in Leadville, *Lake*, on 13 Jun (TK).

White-winged Crossbill: Continuing from fall, winter, and spring, the female of the local nesting pair was seen at Grandview Cemetery, Fort Collins, *Larimer*, 3-26 Jun (DL et al.).

Evening Grosbeak: In addition to a significant irruption in the mountains this period, there were two reports of this species on the Eastern Plains. The first was of a juvenile seen in Franktown, *Douglas*, on 27 Jul (HK); and the other was of a male in Colorado Springs, *El Paso*, on the same date (JLa).

REGIONAL COMPILERS

Without the compilation of sightings from these volunteer regional compilers, "Notes from the Field" could not be written. Continued appreciation goes to Jim Beatty (southwest), Coen Dexter (west central), Forrest Luke (northwest), Brandon Percival (southeast and San Luis Valley), 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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Status of Lesser Nighthawk in Colorado

Coen Dexter

Introduction

The last attempt to evaluate the status of Lesser Nighthawk (*Chordeiles acutipennis*) in Colorado was 21 years ago (Janos and Prather 1989), when there were only three accepted records for the state. At present, there are 58 reported sightings of Lesser Nighthawks in Colorado, of which 24 reports have been accepted by the Colorado Bird Records Committee (CBRC), one has been rejected, and 33 have never been documented. Over the last two decades, the reports of Lesser Nighthawks are just about split even, with 27 reports from 1991 to 2000 and 25 reports from 2001 to the present. Eastern Colorado has recorded 71% of all the sightings and western Colorado has 29%; when it comes to records accepted by the CBRC, eastern Colorado has 67% and western Colorado has 33% (Table 1).

Natural History of Lesser Nighthawk

Of the seven subspecies of Lesser Nighthawk, only *Chordeiles acutipennis texensis* can be found north of Mexico. *C. a. texensis* is a fairly short-distance migrant, nesting from the southwest U.S. to central Mexico and wintering from central Mexico south as far as Colombia (Hoyo et al. 1999), although there are records of wintering Lesser Nighthawks in Southern California and southwest Arizona (Holt 1990, Hoyo et al. 1999). Common Nighthawks (*Chordeiles minor*) are long-range migrants and winter completely in South America (Hoyo et al. 1999).

Lesser Nighthawks prefer low-elevation open deserts, below 1200 meters (4000 feet). Their usual range north of Mexico includes southeastern California, California's Central Valley, southern Nevada, southwestern Utah, Arizona south of the Colorado Plateau, southern New Mexico, and southwest Texas including the lower Rio Grande Valley (Latta and Baltz 1997, Sibley 2000). Lesser Nighthawks breed in a very hot and dry climate but are able to cope with the heat by gular fluttering, which is facilitated by a large gape (Latta and Baltz 1997). Their diet includes winged ants, mayflies, dragonflies, moths, termites, mosquitoes, and flies, which nighthawks capture on the wing (Latta and Baltz 1997, Hoyo et al. 1999).

Breeding in the U.S. occurs from late April to August. One or two eggs are laid on bare ground, sand, or gravel, often next to vegetation

and near a water source. Incubation is usually by the female and eggs hatch after 18-19 days; hatchlings can fly after another 21 days (Latta and Baltz 1997, Hoyo et al. 1999).

Lesser Nighthawks do not perform the well-known "booming" courtship displays of Common Nighthawks. Instead, courtship typically consists of the male delivering an evenly spaced trill from the ground at twilight (Latta and Baltz 1997). Flight displays occur close to the ground and are punctuated by a bleating *bao-b-bao-bao* but are not often observed (Alderfer 2006). The lack of visual courtship behavior contributes to the difficulty of detecting breeding for this species.

Identification

A description of Lesser Nighthawk is found in most American field guides. Assuming most birders are quite familiar with Common Nighthawks, the following discussion will focus on the subtle differences between the two cryptically patterned species.

Throat Color: This mark is similar in both species, but helps sex the birds. In both species, the throat patch tends to be white in males and brown or buff in females (Sibley 2000), but this is not always easy to see when birds are in flight.

Fig. 1. Above: Common Nighthawk Pawnee Grasslands, Weld Co. Below: Lesser Nighthawk Cheyenne Co. Note the distance from primary wingbar to tertial tip in each species. Photos by Glenn Walbek

Size: Size only comes into play in identifying nighthawks when both species are present and a direct comparison can be made. In Colorado, both species of nighthawks can sometimes be seen feeding together, so size can be useful. The female Lesser is noticeably smaller than the male Common Nighthawk when both are present (Pyle 1997, Sibley 2000). Table 2 gives average measurements and weights for both nighthawk species.

If a nighthawk is found on a day perch, tail and wing length can be very useful identification tools (Fig. 1). Due to its short wings and long tail, Lesser Nighthawk has a tail that usually extends to or beyond the wingtips; the opposite is true for Common Nighthawk (Hoyo et al. 1999).

Table 1. Reports and records of Lesser Nighthawks in Colorado. Data compiled from CFO Journals, 1990 through the present, and from the records of the CBRC (Larry Semo, pers. comm.).

DATE	LOCATION	COUNTY	SEX and NUMBER	REPORTER	CBRC	ACCEPT
Jun 11 1908	Hoehne	Las Animas	one	DMNH 26006	doc	accept
Jun 12 1962	Genesee Mt.	Jefferson	one	?		
Jul 15 1980	Ridgway	Ouray	fifteen	Dick Guadagno	doc	reject
Jun 20 1987	Montrose	Montrose	female	DMNH 39386	doc	accept
May 27 1988	Two Buttes	Baca	wing only	DMNH 40000	doc	accept
May 20-Jun 5, 1990	Two Buttes	Baca	three males	Mark Janos, m.obs.	doc	accept
May 7-Jun 2, 1991	Clifton	Mesa	five both sexes	Coen Dexter, m.obs.	doc	accept
Jul 6-7 1992	Highline Res.	Mesa	one	Jack & Dorothy Reddall	doc	accept
Jun 10 1993	Carrizo Mt.	Las Animas	one	Dan Bridges		
Jun 15 1994	Two Buttes	Baca	one female	Coen Dexter, Brenda Wright		
May 19 1995	Two Buttes Res.	Baca	one female	Joe Mammoser, Dave Ely, Dave Leatherman	doc	accept
Jun 2 1995	Fort Collins	Larimer	one	Joe Mammoser	doc	accept
Jul 14 1995	Carrizo Mt.	Las Animas	one	Dan Bridges		
Jul 25 1995	Two Buttes Res.	Baca	one	Jack Reddall		
Jul 26 1995	B.5, E of US 287	Prowers	one	Jack Reddall		
Sep 10 1995	Fort Collins	Larimer	adult male	David Leatherman, David Ely	doc	accept
May 8-10, 1997	Lamar	Prowers	adult male & female	David Leatherman, m.obs.	photo	accept
May 12 1997	Lake Holbrook	Otero	one male	Mark Janos, m.obs.	sketch	accept
May 28 1997	Fort Collins	Larimer	one female	David Leatherman	doc	accept
May 30 1997	Crow Valley	Weld	one female	David Leatherman		
Jul 9 1997	Pinyon Canyon	Las Animas	one	Richard Bunn		
Aug 21 1997	Cottonwood Canyon	Baca	one male	Chris Wood, Joey Kellner, Steve Stackowiak		
May 7 1998	NeeNoshe Res.	Kiowa	both sexes	Brandon Percival, Bob Dickson, Dave Silverman		
May 9 1998	Lamar	Prowers	three females	Ric Olsen		
May 15-16, 1998	Lake Henry	Crowley	one female	Brandon Percival, m.obs.		
May 30 1998	Two Buttes	Baca	one male	John Prather		
Jun 3-13, 1998	Clifton	Mesa	four, both sexes	Coen Dexter, m.obs.	doc	accept
Jul 17 1998	Two Buttes	Baca	one	John Prather		
May 5 1999	Lamar	Prowers	three	Mark Janos	doc	accept

DATE	LOCATION	COUNTY	SEX and NUMBER	REPORTER	CBRC	ACCEPT
May 9 1999	Lamar	Prowers	three females	Ric Olsen, m.obs.		
May 15-16, 1999	Lake Henry	Crowley	one female	Brandon Percival, m.obs.		
May 30 1999	Two Buttes	Baca	one female	John Prather		
May 6 2000	Lamar	Crowley	one male	Brandon Percival		
Apr 16 2001	Vineland	Pueblo	one	Randy Vernon, Nick Komar	doc	accept
Jul 23 2001	Billy Creek	Ouray	one	Doug Faulkner, Chris Wood		
May 3 2003	NeeNoshe Res.	Kiowa	one	Rachel Hooper, Ric Olsen, Brandon Percival	doc	accept
Oct 9 2004	Durango	La Plata	one	Larry Semo		
Sep 6 2004	Springfield	Baca	one	Nick Komar		
Jun 14 2005	Fort Collins	Larimer	one	Justin Dee		
Mar 31 2006	Colorado City	Pueblo	one	Bob Hahn		
July 14 2006	Dove Creek	Dolores	two males	Nick Komar, Andrew Spencer, Cole Wild	doc	accept
Aug 1-Sep 24, 2006	Nucla	Montrose	four plus	Coen Dexter, Andrew Spencer, m.obs.	doc	accept
Aug 16 2006	Dolores	Montezuma	one female	Jim Beatty	doc	accept
Sep 11 2006	Gateway	Mesa	road kill	Forrest Luke		
May 20 2008	Two Buttes	Prowers	one male	Andrew Spencer		
May 24-Jun 13, 2008	Nucla	Montrose	four, both sexes	Coen Dexter, Andrew Spencer, m.obs.	photo	accept
May 25-28, 2008	Chico Basin	Pueblo	one female	Brian Gibbons, m.obs.	photo	accept
May 27 2008	Burchfield	Baca	one male	Andrew Spencer		
Jun 11 2008	Zink's Pond	La Plata	three	Jim Beatty		
Jun 18 2008	Grand Junction	Mesa	one	Larry Arnold		
May 31-Aug 16, 2009	Nucla	Montrose	three both sexes	Coen Dexter		
Jun 10 2009	Zink's Pond	La Plata	one male	Jim Beatty		
May 6 2010	Mitchek Ranch	Cheyenne	female	Glenn Walbek, Joe Roller, Lock Kilpatrick	photo	accept
May 11 2010	Two Buttes Res.	Baca	singing male	Dan Maynard		
May 15 2010	Colorado City	Pueblo	female, roadkill	David Silverman	doc	accept
May 17 2010	Pueblo	Pueblo	one	Van Traun		
May 29 2010	Walden Ponds	Boulder	two	Al Guarente	doc	accept
May 30-Jun 15, 2010	Nucla	Montrose	three, both sexes	Coen Dexter		

Overall plumage color: The overall tone differences of the two nighthawk species are quite noticeable in flight, at least in good light. The Lesser Nighthawk is lighter, with brown, buff, cinnamon, and tawny colors dominating. The Common Nighthawk is darker, mostly brown and gray with limited buff. Coloration in Common Nighthawk varies regionally (Sibley 2000) and within Colorado—with large, dark forms migrating through in spring and fall, paler birds on the northeastern plains, and relatively dark and rufous birds elsewhere in the state (Pyle 1997). This variation is most pronounced in juveniles, and juvenile Commons of some races can match Lesser Nighthawks in overall coloration (Sibley 2000).

Wing band color, shape, and placement: Common Nighthawks show strong contrast between their white wing bands and their dark brownish-gray wings, while the white wing bands on male Lesser Nighthawks contrast less strongly with their brown, buff, cinnamon, and tawny wings. (Latta and Baltz 1997). In female Lesser Nighthawks, the wing band and throat patch are cinnamon-buff and may not even be visible at a distance or in poor light, making females fairly easy to identify. A nighthawk in flight without a noticeable wing band is very likely to be a female or juvenile Lesser Nighthawk (Latta and Baltz 1997).

Another important field mark is the placement of the wing band on the wing. The Lesser Nighthawk has its reduced band closer to the tip of the wing; this may actually be easier to see on perched birds (see Fig. 1). The band tapers to the rear of the wing in Lesser Nighthawks but widens to the rear of the wing in Common Nighthawks (Latta and Baltz 1997); see Fig. 2. The wing of the Lesser Nighthawk is wide at the wrist, wider than Common Nighthawk's, but this is noticeable only in flight (Sibley 2000).

Wingtip shape: In Lesser Nighthawks, wingtips have a more rounded shape than they do in adult Commons, and at close range each individual primary feather can be distinguished. The outermost (leading) primary wing feather is a little shorter than the second feather, which appears to be the longest wing feather in Lesser

Table 2. Comparison of average size and weight of nighthawks, from Sibley (2000). Lesser Nighthawks average 12% smaller, but differences are usually too subtle to see in the field.

	Weight	Length	Wingspan
Lesser Nighthawk	1.8 oz.	9 in.	22 in.
Common Nighthawk	2.2 oz.	9.5 in.	24 in.

Nighthawks (Pyle 1997). At close range this field mark is quite easy to see in flight. The wings of adult Common Nighthawks are more pointed and appear more aerodynamic; their individual primary feather tips are more difficult to see in flight. However, many juvenile Commons show wingtip shapes like those of Lesser Nighthawk (see below).

Flight style: In general, Lesser Nighthawks feed lower to the ground and often close to the vegetation. Their foraging flight is more erratic, with shallower wingbeats than those of Common Nighthawks. At times, Lesser Nighthawks will hover very close to the leaves of trees or shrubs to dislodge insects (Latta and Baltz 1997). Often, when nighthawks are first observed in the evening, they fly in and drink on the wing by making several passes over water; observers stationed near the water hole may get good, close views.

Molt: Lesser Nighthawks molt on the breeding grounds, from June to September. Common Nighthawks molt on the wintering grounds, from November through March. Therefore, a nighthawk in molt during the summer is likely to be an adult Lesser (Pyle 1997, Sibley 2000).

Beware juvenile Common Nighthawks: After mid-July, fledged young Common Nighthawks, according to the Colorado Breeding Bird Atlas (Kingery 1998), can be found feeding on the wing with adults in Colorado. Fledged young Common Nighthawks have a wingtip shape very similar to that of Lesser Nighthawk, and they can fly with a clumsy, fluttering flight style also. Since their primary wing feathers are still growing, the position of the wing-bar can appear closer to the wrist than it does in adults. If other field marks are not looked at carefully, identifying nighthawks in late summer by wingtip shape, position of the wing bar, and flight style could lead to errors (Pyle 1997).

Starting in July, when Common Nighthawks are fledging, road-killed nighthawks suspected of being Lessers should be photographed, and the photographs sent to the CBRC for certain identification. Photographs should include the spread wing if possible. A specimen found on 25 August 1922 in El Paso County classified as a Lesser Nighthawk was reclassified in 1989 as a Common Nighthawk (Andrews and Righter 1992). Twenty-two percent of the reported Lesser Nighthawk sightings in Colorado come after mid-July, when hatch-year Common Nighthawks could possibly have led to identification confusion.

Status of Lesser Nighthawks in Colorado

Confounding factors: The status and distribution of Lesser Night-

hawks in Colorado have never been well understood, and learning about Lesser Nighthawks in Colorado represents a challenging problem. Not only is the species nocturnal, but Lessers are quite difficult to separate from Common Nighthawks without experience, which few of us have.

It is also quite possible that Lesser Nighthawk population and range is changing in North America. According to Breeding Bird Survey data from 1961 through 1991, the population may be increasing by 3.1% to 8.0% (Latta and Baltz 1997, Hoyo et al. 1999). There are several other southwestern species—including White-winged Dove (*Zenaida asiatica*), Inca Dove (*Columbina inca*), and Black Phoebe (*Sayornis nigricans*), and possibly also Lucy's Warbler (*Oreothlypis luciae*) and Summer Tanager (*Piranga rubra*)—that are well documented to be increasing in Colorado as their range expands north (Andrews and Righter 1992, Righter et al. 2004, "News from the Field" and CBRC reports in *Colorado Birds*).

A third factor is that much of the habitat that Lesser Nighthawks may find suitable is remote, located where there are few birders to

Fig. 2. Wings of male Common Nighthawk (top) and male Lesser Nighthawk (bottom). Note differences in wing length, wingtip shape, placement and shape of white wing band, and extent of buffy markings. Photo by Will Cook, 6 Sep 2001, North Carolina Museum of Natural Sciences

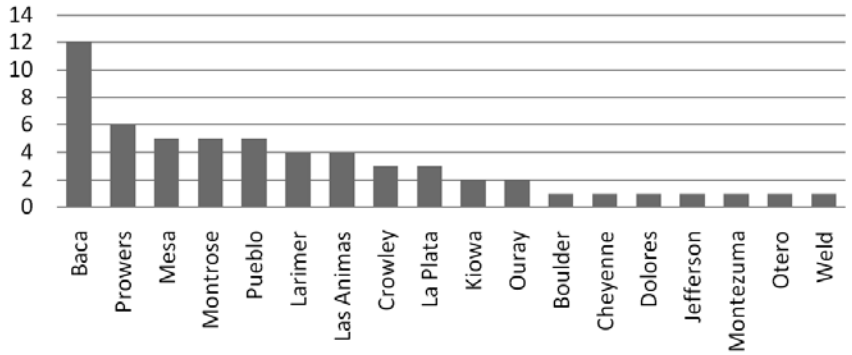

Fig. 3. Lesser Nighthawk sightings per county. Compiled from the data in Table 1.

observe and study them. There are very few records from the parts of other states that adjoin Colorado: eastern Utah, northeast Arizona, northern New Mexico, the Oklahoma and Texas panhandles, and western Kansas (Holt 1990, Taylor 1995, Sibley 2000, Parmenter et al. 2002, Blake 2004). However, there are very few active birders in these areas, so the lack of reports of Lesser Nighthawks does not eliminate the possibility that they could be present.

Distribution of records: Most reports of Lesser Nighthawks are from southeastern Colorado and, of late, from southwestern Colorado. Several sightings have been reported along the Front Range from Pueblo north to Fort Collins. Nearly all reports are from below 6000 feet. Fig. 3 breaks down the records by county.

In spring, many Colorado Lesser Nighthawks are found in favorite feeding areas where lots of swallows and Common Nighthawks are present, often over sewage treatment plants, small lakes, creeks, and wetlands. A large concentration of insectivorous birds greatly increases the chance that a Lesser Nighthawk may be in the mix. Many of the sightings are reported at the same location year after year. At migrant traps in the southeast, Lesser Nighthawks are also often found and identified while they are roosting on a day perch.

The possibility of breeding: A key question remains to be answered: do Lesser Nighthawks nest in Colorado or are they simply overshoots in migration? According to Latta and Balz (1997), the species breeds in the southwestern U.S. from late April to mid-July. Most Colorado reports are from May through mid-June, with an earliest date of 31 March and a latest date of 9 October. Fig. 4 shows the breakdown of reports by month. Females are reported more often than males, as might be expected due to an easier identification; they made up 55% of cases in which sex was determined and reported.

The Colorado Breeding Bird Atlas I (Kingery 1998) makes no mention of Lesser Nighthawk as a possible breeding species in Colorado. During the period of the atlas, 1987-1994, there were seven Lesser Nighthawk reports during the nesting season. In the four-year period since the start of Colorado Breeding Bird Atlas II, 2007 to the present, there have been 14 Lesser Nighthawk reports, again mostly during the nesting season. With one summer remaining for Colorado Breeding Bird Atlas II, please report any Lesser Nighthawk sightings since 2007 to the atlas database, regardless of whether the record occurred in a priority block or not, and submit details to the Colorado Bird Records Committee, so that we can get a clearer picture of Lesser Nighthawk as a possible breeding species in Colorado.

We do know that at least some Lesser Nighthawks on the West Slope visit Colorado every spring in May and remain until summer. Seven reports of Lesser Nighthawks have involved both males and females, so it is possible that mated pairs may be present. One female at Nucla had an aberrant central tail feather and was thus easy to identify; for several evenings, from 31 May 2009 until at least 16 June of that year, she and a male would come in to feed and sip drinks together.

There were very few vagrant records for Lesser Nighthawks anywhere outside their normal range before 1990 (Latta and Baltz 1997). Thus, the large number of recent records from locations outside their known breeding range may suggest that the species is expanding north. It could be argued, however, that birders are becoming more

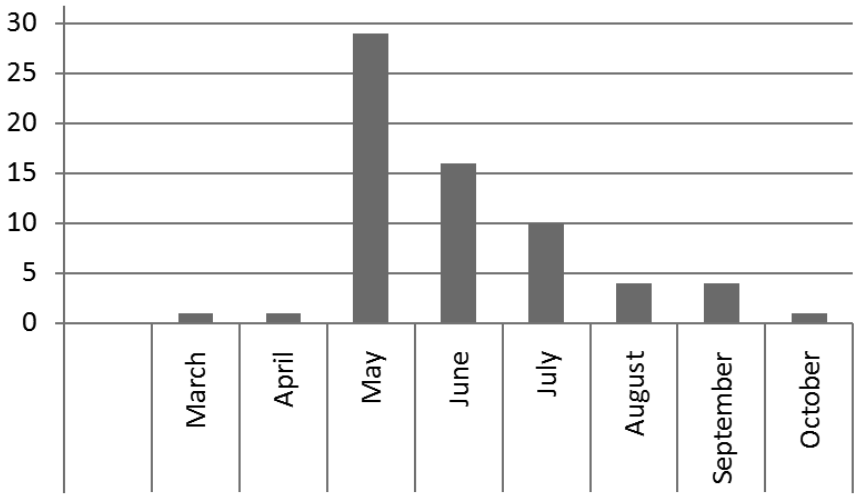

Fig. 4. Lesser Nighthawk sightings per month. Compiled from the data in Table 1.

familiar with field marks that distinguish the two nighthawk species, and are therefore reporting Lessers with ever greater frequency.

Possible declines in Common Nighthawks: The current Colorado Breeding Bird Atlas II (Wickersham 2010) has generated fewer reports of Common Nighthawks in southeastern and southwestern Colorado than Breeding Bird Atlas I did twenty years ago (Kingery 1998). At least in Region 7 in the southwest, which is mostly at low elevation, this difference holds even when observer effort is controlled for: of 32 priority blocks in the region that were completed in both atlas projects, Atlas II reported Common Nighthawk in only 18 blocks, while Atlas I found it in 28 blocks (Kingery 1998, Wickersham 2010)—a 35.7% decrease in the number of completed blocks with observations.

At the conclusion of Colorado Breeding Bird Atlas II, it will be interesting to see whether the data demonstrates that Common Nighthawks are less abundant at the lowest elevations in Colorado than they were 20 years ago. If climate change is making these areas warmer and therefore more attractive to Lesser Nighthawks, a corresponding decline in Common Nighthawks might not be unexpected. However, it may also be possible that this trend is more widespread; Breeding Bird Survey data suggest that that Common Nighthawk populations in Canada and the United States declined between 1966 and 1991 (Hoyo et al. 1999).

Dependable Locations for Lesser Nighthawk

Two Buttes and Lamar: Since 1988 Lesser Nighthawks have been reported nearly annually from southeast Colorado, with the bulk of the reports coming from Two Buttes Reservoir in Baca County and Lamar in Prowers County (Holt 1997). Lamar Community College, where birders congregate, also has several reports. The elevation at Two Buttes Reservoir is 4230 feet, and Lamar's elevation is 3622 feet; both locations have very hot summer temperatures quite suitable to Lesser Nighthawks. Two Buttes Reservoir is located on Two Buttes Creek, and below the reservoir there are ponds with a permanent water supply and lots of trees. On 11 May 2010, Dan Maynard reported a singing male at this location (Such and Such 2010).

Nucla: Every year since 2006, multiple Lesser Nighthawks have been found feeding along Calamity Draw just west of Nucla from late May until at least mid-summer. The best viewing location is on the north side of the Nucla sewage treatment lagoons, where birds can pass directly overhead when the breeze is from the south, bringing clouds of insects over the road. The best time to see the Lesser Nighthawks at Nucla is from late May through mid-June. By mid- to

late June, the birds come in later, when it is nearly dark. Common Nighthawks always outnumber Lesser Nighthawks by more than fifty to one. The exact number of Lesser Nighthawks visiting the Nucla site is difficult to estimate, but the total number is surely not more than eight to ten individuals.

Nucla, in western Montrose County, sits north of and above San Miguel Canyon at 5862 feet of elevation. Its shallow, irrigated valley comprises mostly hay meadows and ranches. Water is supplied from the San Miguel River via a 110-year-old earthen canal which diverts water from some 13 miles upstream. The canal is very leaky and has created many wetlands, springs, and riparian forests along its course. Calamity Draw, which has a good flow of water year-round due to the canal leaks, drains back into the San Miguel River about five miles west of Nucla. Most of the ranches have several stock ponds which remain filled for livestock. Very little insecticide is used in the area because there is only a small amount of row crop farming. In many ways, Nucla is like an oasis in a desert, as the surrounding countryside is sagebrush and pinyon-juniper woodlands. This may be an important factor as to why the Lesser Nighthawks are here, joined by many common species that feed on the numerous winged insects.

To get to the Nucla sewer pond location, drive west of the Nucla Co-op, near the south edge of town, on CC Road for 1.5 miles. Turn north (right) on 27 Road. Drive for half a mile and look for a narrow lane to the east (right) near the top of a hill. Drive down the lane about one quarter of a mile to the sewage lagoons on the right. When returning to Nucla, it is now possible to continue on straight east to town via West 5th Avenue.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

This article would not have been possible without the extensive use of the CFO Journals, including "News from the Field" seasonal reports and Colorado Bird Records Committee reports. There are too many individuals who have contributed information on Lesser Nighthawks to list every name. Special thanks go to Nathan Pieplow, Larry Semo, and Tony Leukering for their suggestions, which greatly improved the article. Also a special thanks to Dean Hill for allowing me to go through his complete collection of CFO Journals.

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Walsenburg

Beverly Jensen

With about 4000 residents, Walsenburg is the largest town and county seat of Huerfano (pronounced: "WHERE-fun-oh") County, in south-central Colorado. The history of Walsenburg goes back about 150 years. In 1876, Fred Walsen, for whom the town was named, opened the area's first coal mine, which operated for nearly 100 years before the closure of all mines in the area. The home and saloon of Robert Fort, who shot and killed outlaw Jesse James, still stands at 320 West 7th Street.

Birding in town can be good. Be sure to check the Masonic Cemetery in the spring and fall for migrant landbirds. Also check along the Cucharas ("coo-CHAIR-us") River, mostly private, which can be accessed along the half-mile dirt road that runs along the south side of the river. From West 7th Street (a.k.a. Highway 160), go west to City Park, turn left onto South Ysidro, and left again onto the dirt road, which looks more like a driveway but is a public road. Pay attention to posted property and please do not trespass.

Just a couple miles west of town on Highway 160 is Lathrop State Park, "the best place in Huerfano County to find the widest variety of birds." It holds two good-sized lakes where swans, scoters, and loons have been seen, and it also boasts both riparian and dryland habitat where Greater Roadrunners, Pinyon Jays, and Ladder-backed Woodpeckers can be found. White-winged Doves also breed in the Walsenburg area.

When you've had enough birding, you might want to stop to eat. Walsenburg may be small and somewhat rural, but it does have several fast-food joints for those who can't live without them: everything from pizza, tacos, and fried chicken to submarine sandwiches and burgers. Most of them are up by the highway, some right on Main Street.

George's Drive Inn

Not far from exit 52 on I-25 (and well before you get

Johnny's Place

into downtown Walsenburg) is **George's Drive Inn** (719-738-3030), which has been owned and operated by the same family for some 30 years. It's a local favorite and offers the fastest food in town. George's is open from 6:00 A.M. to 3:00 P.M., Tuesday through Saturday. In addition to breakfast, they offer chili burgers to die for; a rib-eye steak sandwich with grilled onions, chili strips and Swiss cheese on a hoagie bun; and both a chicken-strip platter and a chicken dinner.

As you come over the hill and into town you'll see the brand new bakery, **Johnny's Place** (719-738-0300). They offer breakfast, pastries like none other, deli meats and cheeses by the pound, and about any sandwich combination you can imagine, both hot and cold. Homemade soups are served with homemade focaccia bread, with or without one of their delicious salads. Pie and cake are baked on the premises and can be ordered whole or by the slice…and then there are oodles of donuts, fritters, cannoli, muffins, and cookies. Sweet!

Coming further into town, still on Main Street, are a few more fast-food joints, but also an old standby, **The Aspen Rose** (719-738-1157). It's been there forever and still draws crowds for an old-time, diner-style breakfast of eggs-as-you-like-them, omelets, steak & eggs, pork chops, hotcakes, huevos rancheros, or a breakfast burrito. The lunch menu includes made-to-order hamburgers, real (fresh) fries, homemade soup, many sandwiches, menudo, green chili, and enchiladas. Dinner offers roast beef, mashed potatoes and gravy, breaded or grilled pork chops, fried chicken, hamburger steaks with grilled onions, and chicken fried steak. They're open 7:00 A.M. to 8:00 P.M., seven days a week; a beer and a wine are offered. Yup, one each.

One of my personal favorite spots is the higher-end **La Plaza Inn**, next to the "elegant and affordable little hotel" of the same name (719-738-5700). Dining hours are 11:00 A.M. to 4:00 P.M. for lunch and 4:00 P.M. to 8:00 P.M. for dinner. While their menu changes from time to time, lunches generally include fresh sandwiches, wraps, salads, and soups, as well as half-pound burgers on a special brioche bun.

Dinner offers several appetizers, several soup and salad combinations, several steaks, pasta dishes, chicken, and lamb chops. But the very best part is their outside patio—a sweet little garden area shaded by a huge, lovely tree. One can eat and watch birds at the same time! This place has a full bar and offers a daily "Blue Plate Special" which you can bet *is* special.

There is one Mexican cantina right on Main—**Rosa's Cantina**, which is more of a biker bar—and two Mexican restaurants: **Corine's**, further down Main (719-738-1231), and the **Huerfano Café** on 7th Street (719-738-2882), which is on the way out of town as it becomes Highway 160 west. Both places offer good Mexican food and both have their followers. I know from personal experience that the Huerfano Café will make you the meal you ask for; Mexican Hamburgers are my favorite—a hamburger inside a toasted tortilla, smothered with their delicious green chili (or red, if you prefer). Yummmmmmm.

Sadly, the nationally-famous Alys' Fireside Cafe has closed—but the good news is that Alys is cooking in La Veta, again! (More on that in a future issue of The Hungry Birder.)

Also along 7th Street (or Highway 160) is **Grandpa & Grandma's**. Hours there are about 11:00 A.M. to 5:00 P.M. in winter, and an hour earlier and later in summer. They're known for their homemade burritos and tamales. Their hand-dipped, real ice cream shakes and cones are not to be missed and are a perfect cooler in the middle of a hot day of birding. And they offer a gourmet "Healthy Coffee" you just have to ask Grandpa about. It's said to balance the body's pH level, oxygenate it, and increase the immune system, without causing jitters or a caffeine crash. It includes 100% Certified Organic Gandoderma. They even sell small "sachets" of instant coffee that is killer when sprinkled on ice-cream. G & G's place is near the corner, just before Safeway. Just like at their bigger place in La Veta, they also sell "This and That."

Grandpa & Grandma's This & That

Not far off Main Street, again on

Huerfano Café

7th Street just past Safeway, is **Mike's Coffee Barn** (719-738-3318). Mike offers delicious coffees, homemade soup, and lunch items, as well as pastries.

On the way out of Walsenburg to the west is one more restaurant: The **Iron Horse Restaurant and Lounge** (719-738-9966), on 7th Street just before the railroad tracks (hence the name). They have a full bar, offer something for just about everyone, and recently added more yummy dinner entrées, including a nice salmon. They are said to have the best steaks around: ribeyes, New York strips, and porterhouses. Both lunch and dinner are served.

Lastly, about three miles west of Walsenburg on Highway 160 and directly across from Lathrop State Park is the Spanish Peaks Regional Health Center. This campus includes one of our country's top three state veterans' nursing homes, a critical access hospital with 25 acute care beds, a 24-hour level IV trauma emergency care center, the Spanish Peaks Family Clinic…and a sweet little cafeteria. The **Rosewood Café** offers hot breakfasts of everything from grits and oatmeal to eggs, sausage, biscuits and gravy—and of course breakfast burritos with or without their wonderful green chili—all at cafeteria prices. Lunch includes hamburgers, sandwiches made to order or pre-packaged for a quick grab & go, and one of the best little salad bars I've seen. There's always something special like roast beef with mashed potatoes and gravy, lasagna, or orange chicken on rice. In addition, they have vegetables, homemade soups, and of course many desserts. All of this is available to eat at the café, or to take across to the beautiful park to eat by the lakes. The café is open to the public from 7:00 A.M. to 2:00 P.M. (719-738-5100).

Beverly Jensen, La Veta, CO, www.RuralChatter.blogspot.com

Greater and Lesser Scaup: Beyond Crown Shape

Tony Leukering

Despite the fact that separation of Greater and Lesser Scaup has bedeviled generations of birders, the problem has not been particularly well treated in the primary birding literature. The recent treatment of the subject in Barry et al. (2006) does a better job than most, but nearly lacks illustrations. As part of a larger effort by me and others to provide a more thorough treatment of the problem, this essay summarizes some of the key aspects of head shape that make scaup identification in the field much more efficient and accurate than relying solely on the shape of the crown in profile.

The primary problem with using crown shape to identify scaup is that crown shape is malleable, varying according to the whim and activity of the individual bird in question. Birds at rest are much more likely to exhibit the stereotypical crown shape than are active birds. In fact, if birders only looked at actively-foraging scaup (that is, individual birds that spend less time at the water's surface than beneath it) and only used crown shape to determine identification, we would believe that Lesser Scaup is quite rare. That is because actively-foraging scaup tend to hold their head feathers more depressed, presenting

Back Cover Photo Key

Upper left photo: Female (left) and first-year male (right) Greater Scaup, Palo Alto, Santa Clara Co., CA; 2 March 2009; photograph by Tony Leukering

Upper right photo: Adult male Lesser Scaup, Sands Lake, Chaffee Co., CO; 2 January 2007; photograph by Tony Leukering

Center left photo: Adult male Greater Scaup, Palo Alto, Santa Clara Co., CA; 2 March 2009; photograph by Tony Leukering

Center right photo: Adult male Lesser Scaup, Palo Alto, Santa Clara Co., CA; 2 March 2009; photograph by Tony Leukering

Bottom left photo: Adult male Greater Scaup, Palo Alto, Santa Clara Co., CA; 2 March 2009; photograph by Tony Leukering

Bottom right photo: Adult male Lesser Scaup, Belmar Park, Jefferson Co., CO; December 2009; photograph by Bill Schmoker

a more rounded profile to the crown. I cannot count the number of times that I thought I was observing an actively-foraging Greater Scaup, only to realize once it ceased foraging that it was a Lesser Scaup. This phenomenon can be seen in the top right picture on the back cover. Note that the white in the bird's wing stripe is limited to the secondaries (it does not extend into the primaries, which are gray), which proves that it is a Lesser Scaup. Then, note how round the crown profile is, and how different from that of the Lesser Scaup in the picture below.

One-character identifications are fraught with uncertainty and inaccuracy; it is considerably better to base an identification on multiple points. Fortunately, there is a suite of characters that inform scaup identification. The characters discussed below are intended to be considered with the photos on the back cover. They combine to form an overall appearance that differs between the two species, often greatly, such that experienced observers can quickly and accurately identify most swimming scaup seen reasonably well. Be aware, though, that there are still individuals outside the norm for either species, with first-year birds often presenting the biggest problem. In my experience, the toughest scaup to identify are one-year-old females in the summer, when their head feathers are very worn, changing their head shape.

Ageing Scaup

Learning to age scaup can greatly assist with identification. If one is looking at an adult, one can confidently ascribe meaning to the field marks described in the next section, whereas these features may appear intermediate or "odd" on first-year birds. Adult female scaup exhibit darker body coloration than do first-year birds, so searching individual birds for paler juvenal feathers is a good means of determining the bird's age. Eye color, which changes from brown to yellow or amber in a bird's first year, can also play a part in age determination, but since the rate of eye-color change is variable, this can be a tricky feature to use. Some youngsters acquire yellow eyes much sooner in that first year than do others, making eye color less useful later in winter. Additionally, a small percentage of adult females retain brownish eyes.

Young males differ from adults of both sexes in that they may have a brown head like a female, but lack a female's white in front of the eyes and exhibit a male bill pattern.

Profile View

Crown profile: This aspect has typically been treated cursorily in

field guides, with only reasonably decent treatment in recent texts, often mentioning only that the head is rounded in Greater and peaked in Lesser. Greater Scaup does have a rounded crown profile, but it is not actually circular; its highest point is generally at or in front of the eye. The peak of Lesser's crown is typically more pronounced and positioned well behind the eye (see middle row of photos on back cover; head peaks indicated by arrows). As noted above, beware of individuals that are actively foraging; their crown profiles may very well be unreliable in identification.

Overall head shape: Greater Scaup has a large head that is roughly the same dimensions from top to bottom as from front to back. The head of Lesser Scaup is noticeably taller (top to bottom) than it is deep (front to back). Note: In all references herein to head height (distance from top to bottom), I consider the lower edge of the head to be defined by the lower edge of the bill.

Eye placement: Though subtle, with experience, eye placement can provide a strong clue as to an individual scaup's identity. This feature is indicated by the lines on the middle row of pictures. In Lesser Scaup, the eye is lower than the mid-point of the head from top to bottom, while the eye of Greater Scaup is above the mid-point. Thus, Lesser Scaup shows proportionately more head above the eyes than does Greater Scaup. However, beware of actively-foraging Lesser Scaup (see text above and upper right picture on back cover).

Head-on View

Head thickness and jowls: In my opinion, this is one of the most useful characters, as it is mostly dependent upon bone structure rather than how the plumage is held. It is also relatively easily discerned with reasonable views. By "jowl," I mean that portion of the head that, in a head-on view, extends outward below the eyes to form a bulge. Greater Scaup has a wide head (side to side) while Lesser Scaup sports a narrow head. This difference is accentuated by the strong jowls exhibited by Greater Scaup, with Lesser's jowls being much less noticeable.

Even taking into account Lesser Scaup's narrower bill, that species' bill at its widest is usually wider than is *either* jowl (the extension of the cheek outward from the side of the bill). Greater's jowls are *each* about equal in width to the bill at its widest. Put another way, even though the bill of Lesser Scaup is narrower, the bill is still usually half or more the width of the head at its widest point, while the bill of Greater Scaup (even though it is wider) is less than half the width of the head at its widest point.

As these comparisons can be a bit tricky on an active bird, it is

often easier to simply assess the angle of the jowls (indicated by the white lines on the left side of each picture). The jowls do not protrude as much on Lesser; thus, the angle created by the top edge of the jowls is greater (and the dimple shallower) than that created by Greater's jowls. Note that in the bottom set of pictures on the back cover, the Lesser Scaup's head is turned slightly to our left, accentuating the bird's left jowl (the one on our right).

Bill Shape and Coloration

From above or below: The bill of Lesser Scaup is usually parallel-sided (the same width at base and tip) or just slightly wider at the tip than at the base. Greater Scaup bills are usually obviously wider at the tip than at the base.

Head on: While I lack good photos to illustrate this point, the shape of the underside of the bill is different in the two species, with Lesser typically exhibiting a very shallow concavity—a very shallow upside-down "U"—while Greater shows a deeper concavity. This difference in shape might suggest the difference between an upside-down saucer and an upside-down bowl.

Bill-tip black (on males): Though some authors have championed this character as an identification criterion, it is only useful in some cases. The black on the bill tip of Lesser Scaup is restricted to the nail, which is entirely black with parallel sides. Thus there is a rectangle of black at the bill tip, with the long side of that rectangle parallel to the sides of the bill. On some Greater Scaup, the black extends off the nail onto the main part of the bill. In these cases, the black forms a triangle with its base at the bill's tip (bottom row of pictures). However, many male Greater Scaup have the black restricted to the nail, with the black forming a rectangle (upper left picture) as in Lesser Scaup. Thus, birds with an extensive triangle of black on the bill can be identified as Greaters, but birds with a smaller rectangle of black probably cannot be safely identified by this character.

Note that female scaup have a very different bill pattern from that of males, and their bills are identical (or virtually so) in the two species.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

I would like to thank Jessie Barry for reviewing a previous draft of this manuscript.

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Colorado Birds
The Colorado Field Ornithologists' Quarterly

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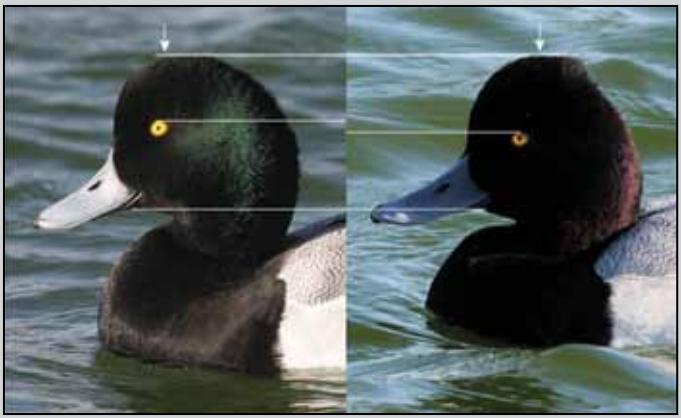
Greater Scaup (left, all rows) and Lesser Scaup (right, all rows). ***Photos by Tony Leukering, except bottom right photo by Bill Schmoker.*** **Photo dates and locations on p. 75.**



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