

Vol. 45 No. 2 April 2011

Colorado Birds

The Colorado Field Ornithologists' Quarterly



Ross's Gull at Cherry Creek
Hybridization in Juncos
Observations of Nesting Owls



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.

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

Officers: **President:** Jim Beatty, Durango, 2011*; president@cfo-link.org; **Vice President:** Bill Kaempfer, Boulder, 2011*; vp@cfo-link.org; **Secretary:** Larry Modesitt, Greenwood Village, 2011*; secretary@cfo-link.org; **Treasurer:** Maggie Boswell, Boulder, 2011*; treasurer@cfo-link.org

Directors: Lisa Edwards, Falcon, 2011*; Ted Floyd, Lafayette, 2011*; Brenda Linfield, Boulder, 2013*; Bob Righter, Denver, 2012*; Joe Roller, Denver, 2012*.

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

Chair: Larry Semo, Westminster; cbrc@cfo-link.org

Secretary: Doug Faulkner, Arvada (non-voting)

Committee Members: John Drummond, Monument, 2013*; Peter Gent, Boulder, 2012; Bill Maynard, Colorado Springs, 2013; Bill Schmoker, Longmont, 2013*; David Silverman, Rye, 2011*; Glenn Walbek, Castle Rock, 2012*.

Colorado Birds Quarterly:

Editor: Nathan Pieplow, editor@cfo-link.org

Staff: Glenn Walbek (Photo Editor), gwalbek@comcast.net; Hugh Kingery (Field Notes Editor), ouzels8@aol.com; Tony Leukering (In the Scope Editor), GreatGrayOwl@aol.com; Jim Beatty (Across the Board Editor), jdbeatty@bresnan.net; Joel Such and Marcel Such (News from the Field Editors), jbsuch@gmail.com, mpsuch@gmail.com; Molly Malone (Copy Editing), mkmmalone@gmail.com; Rachel Hopper (Production Assistant), r-hopper@comcast.net

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

COPYRIGHT © 2011 by Colorado Field Ornithologists. Reproduction of articles is permitted only under consent from the publisher. Works by U.S. and Canadian governments are not copyrighted.

Colorado Birds

The Colorado Field Ornithologists' Quarterly Vol. 45 No. 2 April 2011

PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE.....84

Jim Beatty

CFO BOARD MEETING MINUTES85

Ted Floyd and Jim Beatty

ACROSS THE BOARD: BOB RIGHTER.....89

Edited by Jim Beatty

THE 58TH REPORT OF THE CBRC.....92

Doug Faulkner and Lawrence S. Semo

**AN APPARENT HYBRID WHITE-WINGED
× PINK-SIDED JUNCO 102**

Christian Nunes

BOOK REVIEW: WILD BIRDING COLORADO 107

Bill Maynard

**ROSS'S GULL AT CHERRY CREEK
RESERVOIR, NOVEMBER 2010 108**

Joe Roller

**OBSERVATIONS OF NESTING NORTHERN
SAW-WHET OWLS AND NORTHERN PYGMY-OWLS.. 114**

Scott Rashid

THE HUNGRY BIRD: DORYTOMUS WEEVILS 124

Dave Leatherman

THE HUNGRY BIRDER: GRAND JUNCTION 128

Karen Levad

NEWS FROM THE FIELD: FALL 2010..... 130

Joel Such and Marcel Such

IN THE SCOPE: MOLT VS. WEAR 154

Tony Leukering



Long-eared
Owls, Bright-
ton, Adams
County, 31
Dec 2006.
*Photo by Tony
Leukering*

Colorado Breeding Bird Atlas II, Breeding Bird Surveys, and the 2011 Convention in Grand Junction

Jim Beatty

As you read this, spring migration is already well underway, but it is not too late to sign up for a Colorado Breeding Bird Atlas II block or two. This is the final year of this five-year project, and while much has already been accomplished, there are still areas of the state that need concerted effort to complete. Parts of the Eastern Plains and interior mountain regions still need volunteers. Surveying blocks in new areas is a wonderful way to escape the hustle and bustle of everyday life and experience new locales, as well as to find new and interesting birds. Keep in mind that the breeding bird atlas calendar extends much later in the high elevation areas of central Colorado and the Western Slope and also provides wonderful scenery and cooler weather.

If you're not already involved with COBBA II, now is your chance to own a priority block, or just help with one or more, by going to www.cobbreedingbirdatlasii.org. There, you can read about the objectives of the project, view maps of block assignments, download project materials (Field Manual, Data Forms, Data Entry Manual), and obtain contact information for Project Manager Lynn Wickersham and the Regional Coordinators. Interested birders should contact the appropriate Regional Coordinator to get more information and sign up for atlas blocks.

Another equally important and longer term project that always needs extra help, as routes become available, is the Breeding Bird Survey. This is a national project in which volunteers survey the same route once annually to gather important data on long term trends in the health of our breeding bird populations. Hugh Kingery manages the program in Colorado, and you can read the most recent BBS newsletter at <http://www.pwrc.usgs.gov/bbs/Whatsnew/>. For those who like to see what changes might be occurring in bird populations over time, this is an excellent project. The minimum commitment is three years for a route (just one survey annually), allowing volunteers to compare results from year to year and get a personal feel for whether the changes are "normal ups and downs" or indicative of larger trends.

These kinds of citizen science are interesting and fun, and I have found that participating makes me really feel that I am involved, that

I am making a positive contribution. Consider making it part of your 2011 resolutions to help with one or both of these projects.

Last, but certainly not least, we are finalizing the details for our 2011 Convention and Annual Meeting in Grand Junction. Early registration at press time is strong, but there is still room for more. The Doubletree Hotel in Grand Junction will be an excellent base for our convention and its many field trips into beautiful western Colorado and even the Moab area of eastern Utah. Coen Dexter, who lives in Nucla, has meticulously planned most of the field trips, and the Grand Valley Audubon Society is providing many local leaders to guide us to the best birding "hot spots." Our indoors activities include a "Birding ID Challenge" on Friday night (a revamped "Stump the Chumps" event with greater audience participation); a paper session on Saturday afternoon; and, of course, our banquet Saturday evening with keynote speaker and ABA President Jeff Gordon, whose presentation is titled "Ten Birds that Changed Birding." If you don't know the story of the Newburyport Ross's Gull, be sure to come to hear it. Visit our website at www.cfo-link.org for details and to register.

As always, if you have any comments, thoughts, or ideas for CFO, please contact me or any director. I hope to see you in the field.

Jim Beatty, 165 Twelve Point Buck Trail, Durango, CO, 81301, jdbeatty@bresnan.net

CFO BOARD MEETING MINUTES

29 January 2011
DoubleTree Inn,
Grand Junction, Colorado

The regular quarterly meeting was called to order at 11:58 A.M. by President Jim Beatty. Officers and Directors present were President Jim Beatty, Vice President Bill Kaempfer, Secretary Larry Modesitt, and Treasurer Maggie Boswell. Directors Ted Floyd, Nathan Pieplow, Bob Righter, Joe Roller, and Brad Steger were present. Brenda Linfield and Larry Semo sent their regrets.

Secretary's Report

Minutes of the 6 November 2010 board meeting were approved.

Treasurer's Report

Maggie Boswell presented a budget proposal for 2011. Maggie excitedly

announced that our tax return for 2010 was simplified, as the gross receipts maximum for the simpler form was raised to \$50,000. The 990N has already been filed and accepted by the IRS. We discussed, in the absence of Nathan Pieplow, raising the stipend for the editor of *Colorado Birds*. The motion by Ted Floyd passed, and the new rate will be \$800 per year. Maggie also noted a concern that many members have not renewed their memberships.

Key Indicators

The financial results for 2010 and some trends over the years will be reported at the annual meeting. In addition, we will note the progress of the Colorado Bird Records Committee, CBRC, in becoming nearly current on electronic reporting, along with major progress on past paper submissions.

CBRC Bylaw Change

The proposed changes to the CBRC Bylaws had been summarized in the President's Letter in *Colorado Birds* to allow member and public comment, as well as discussed at length in previous board meetings. Changes were enumerated briefly by Secretary Larry Modesitt. The major change was to remove the term limits for the Chairman of the CBRC. Most of the other changes were to update the bylaws to reflect the electronic aspect of submission, review, and approval of field sightings. This updating of the bylaws was approved unanimously.

Convention Review

The person finalizing our convention brochure, Debbie Marshall, had a computer problem, and Jim will resend the brochure information. Consequently, we have a second chance to make changes, if done immediately. We expect to go to press on 4 February. The expenses for Debbie and for the advertisement in *Birding* are new expenses. To facilitate high attendance, Jim is cracking the whip for an early brochure release. Timing for release of the online and mailed brochures will be established soon. We have two incentives for registering electronically. First, the online registration will be available 7 to 10 days earlier. Second, online registration is \$10 less. People not wanting to use PayPal may register online and pay by check within 7 days. Brenda Linfield must be available after release, so that she can close field trips when they are full.

We inspected rooms reserved for the convention and reviewed details. Hotel arrangements appear to be excellent. Room, food, and beverage minima are reasonable, as are lunch costs. To ensure that lunches are located by purchasers, we need a nearby location in the parking lot, notification in the convention packet to look in the parking lot, and signage.

Paper presentations were better attended last year, and we are hopeful of increasing attendance again in 2011. Nathan Pieplow will issue a call for papers through COBirds and other sources including universities. He will issue guidelines for submission and then select the paper

presenters. All project winners are expected to present papers—short presentations—outlining progress on their projects.

There will be two photo workshops by Bill Schmoker and a recording workshop by Nathan. Fees will be charged.

We discussed the value of departure trips. People sign up, but a large percentage of people have already left, or leave the group quickly. Departure trips will be offered, but stay tuned.

The speaker for the convention will be Jeff Gordon, the new president of the American Birding Association.

Ted Floyd proposed promotional text for the convention that can be submitted to COBirds and other venues.

We discussed changes to “Stump the Chumps” including a new name, the Team ID Challenge, and a “pub night” format. Nathan is in charge of the event, including the possibility, approved by the board, of securing a sponsor for prizes to winners. Larry Modesitt will ask exhibitors if they want to donate something for a silent auction, as the brochure artwork will not be sold this year except on T-shirts.

Joe Roller is encouraging any Colorado authors to be present for book signings and sales. Authors may, at no charge, have a book table to offer books, with proceeds to be retained by the authors. There are several Colorado authors who might be able to enjoy this benefit.

Joe Roller discussed potential awards to be given at the convention. Certain awards were approved,

and will be kept confidential until the convention.

Resignation

Debra Sparn resigned from the board, and the board regretfully accepted her resignation. Certain membership tasks must be re-assigned. Ted continues to do publicity to interest new members. Currently, Maggie enters financial information when new or returning member funds are received. Brenda is developing an on-line membership database. We hope that emails can be generated automatically to alert expiring members to renew. After completion of the database, it might be possible for the additional data—such as addresses and expiration dates—to be entered by the Treasurer. Other membership duties—such as welcoming new members and calling those whose memberships are expiring—are unassigned at present. Bob Righter will assume the responsibility to procure a manufacturer of T-shirts. The artwork is on Brenda’s computer. To receive a leader T-shirt, a commitment must be made to lead a field trip by April 15. Larry agreed to publish an updated contact list for directors.

“Mr. Bill” Quiz

The new title is CFO Photo Quiz. It continues as is, but Tony Leukering has accepted some suggestions for improvement. We now feature the photo and link on the CFO website.

Committee Reports

- a. CBRC. Larry Semo. No report.
- b. *Colorado Birds*. Nathan Pieplow.

Calls and emails support our addition of four pages of color photographs. Mailing has gone smoothly. Joe Roller, after discovering a Ross's Gull at Cherry Creek Reservoir, claimed to be unaffected by his sudden fame, and therefore declined to be profiled again.

c. Publicity. Ted Floyd. A count of 227 people attended the Valmont outing, and Ted provided all attendees with a flyer touting CFO and the upcoming convention. Nathan and Ted also represented CFO at the Denver Museum of Nature and Science (DMNS) celebration of its ornithology department. Ted provided information to the ornithological societies of both Oklahoma and Kansas to increase regional awareness of CFO. Ted and Brenda are preparing the first-ever advertisement of a CFO convention in American Birding Association's flagship publication, *Birding*. COBirds will also receive blasts of information. The Snow Goose Festival and the International Migratory Bird Day festival in Steamboat are other locations for Ted to publicize CFO. Both Bill Kaempfer and Ted will follow up on our \$1,500 contribution for the DMNS fellow. Ted will work with Larry Semo to promote the CBRC. Ted has been pushing involvement in Facebook for a while, and he expects to make progress in involving CFO with this established communication medium.

d. Project and Youth Funds. Bill Kaempfer reviewed options for allocating Project Funds, as applications were due in December. Only two were received, and they were distrib-

uted to a panel of three distinguished evaluators. Discussion followed.

e. Membership. Maggie Boswell. We mailed the January issue of *Colorado Birds* to 500 addresses: 455 households, 383 current members, 69 members who expired 12/31/2010, and 17 institutional members. A total of 107 had not renewed. We sent postcards to expired members in December. Larry and Brad Steger noted that it was cheap to send brochures to people who had not renewed in the past two years, with the hope that some of them would attend the convention as well as become members. The board voted to mail brochures to them.

f. Field Trips. Brad Steger. This year's Valmont trip was the best ever, with 227 people participating in the January cold, with the opportunity to see mainly Ring-billed Gulls, although the fine slate of leaders found some unusual birds as well. Ted proposed a 1 July nocturnal field trip to view (we mean *hear*) fall migration. Without moonlight, it will be almost totally dark.

g. Nominations. Joe Roller. Jim stated his belief that we require even more expertise in electronic media, as every technological issue now is referred to Brenda. In addition, it would be helpful to have more geographic and gender diversity. We brainstormed a list of names for a replacement for Debra. Assignments were made to solicit interest in various CFO jobs.

New Business

The Wisconsin Society of Orni-

thology sent a questionnaire to Jim asking for a comparison of various state organizations. Brad will answer it.

Our next meeting will be on 9

April 2011 at a location to be announced. President Beatty adjourned the meeting at 4:12 P.M.

Respectfully submitted,
Larry Modesitt, Secretary

ACROSS THE BOARD

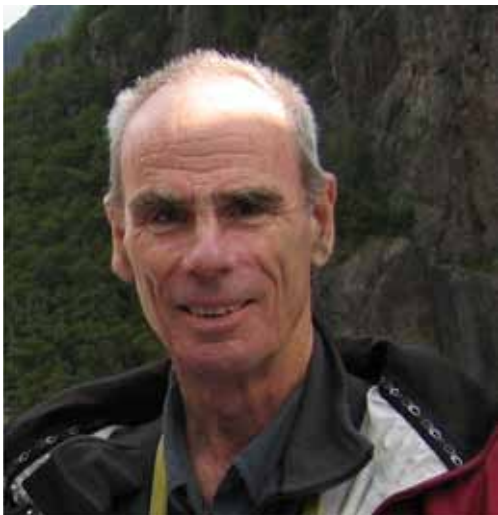
Bob Righter

Edited by Jim Beatty

My first exposure to Bob Righter was a vicarious one several years ago, when my copy of the book *Colorado Birds* by Bob Andrews and Bob Righter arrived in the mail. I marveled at the field time and organizational expertise that had gone into producing such a comprehensive volume detailing Colorado's varied birdlife. I spent many hours paging through the book and used it often as a valuable reference, since I had just recently moved to Durango.

One would think that the coauthor of "Bob and Bob," as it is affectionately known, would have a scholarly, scientific background that started early in life, but that is not the case. If anyone had asked Bob when he was in his early thirties if he would ever be interested in "birdwatching," the resounding answer would have been, "are you kidding me?" At that time Bob was a clothing manufacturer's representative, responsible for selling as many of those multicolored leisure suits to as many department stores as possible in the greater Rocky Mountain region. He detested what he was doing, and was developing a debilitating back problem, which mercifully mandated that he give up his dreaded sales job. He had no idea at the time that his back problems were related to the stress of his job—it couldn't have been disco dancing?

At that point, his career options seemed limited and he had no clear goals. Bob's parents, who were living in New York, realized he needed a change and suggested that they all go on a bird trip to Mexico. Since his day's activities at that time consisted of peering out the window wondering what he was going to do with himself, a bird trip to Mexico suddenly sounded fantastic. There in the jungle, he experienced his epiphany—yes, a "big bang" that cried out "birds,



Robert Righter

birds, birds!" He was hooked. When he returned from Mexico, he immediately joined the Denver Field Ornithologists and began going on many bird trips with wonderful folks and—you guessed it—not long thereafter, his back began feeling better. He was becoming very serious about birding.

As a youngster, Bob had what is now known as a form of dyslexia, and consequently traditional education was a challenge. But Bob had never heard of dyslexia until many years after school, when he first met his wonderful wife

Sandy on an Audubon Christmas count. She was, of all things, an expert in dyslexia at Denver Academy. As you might imagine, it was love at first sight.

When Bob had first moved to Colorado from New York in the late 1960s, he had been prudent enough to become involved in the conceptual stages of the development of Copper Mountain Resort. As it became more developed in the early 1980s, it was sold, and, to his surprise, he made some money. The fruition of this business venture allowed him to make birds and birding his full time avocation. He wasn't looking out windows any more wondering what to do—he just went birding!

In the latter part of the 1980s, he and his friend, Bob Andrews, realized that Bailey and Niedrach's magnificent *Birds of Colorado* was seriously out of date, so they brashly decided that a new book about Colorado's avian status and distribution was warranted. They took on the challenge and six years later, in 1992, *Colorado Birds* was published by the Denver Museum of Natural History (now known as the Denver Museum of Nature and Science).

Bob was also interested in bird vocalizations. But at that time, twenty years ago, locating a bird call on a Peterson audio guide took real patience and endurance—juggling those cassettes, inserting cassette 1, spinning to bird song A and then back to cassette 3 to find what bird song B sounded like, forgetting in the meantime what bird song A sounded like. It was not an easy way of learning bird songs. He

approached the Cornell Laboratory of Ornithology and suggested doing an audio field guide for the Rocky Mountain states. They teamed Bob with Geoff Keller and, four years later, after many happy hours in the field with his recording gear, Bob saw *Bird Songs of the Rocky Mountain States and Provinces*, a three CD set, released in 1999.

The West Slope of Colorado has always held a fascination for Bob, and he knew that limited information had been published about the status and distribution of species from the western part of Colorado. That area was the home to three remarkable field ornithologists, Rich Levad, Coen Dexter, and Kim Potter, who for years had been collecting meticulous notes on the birds of the region, and the information they had gathered was just begging to be published. Don Radovich, known for his exquisite bird paintings, was living at the time in the Gunnison area. They all joined forces to produce a book highlighting this unique area of Colorado. Grand Valley Audubon in Grand Junction, with visionary leadership and an entrepreneurial approach to raising funds, aggressively raised money through grants and private contributions for the publication of *Birds of Western Colorado Plateau and Mesa Country*. It was published in 2004 with the sales proceeds going back into their coffers for local Audubon projects. This landmark regional bird book was printed in vivid color with maps, graphs, and illustrations, and remains a remarkable achievement. Bob considers this project one of his most rewarding ventures.

For about eighteen years, Bob has led bird trips for the Denver Field Ornithologists to all the wonderful “hot spots” in the United States, as well as some in Canada. The groups were kept small in order to enhance everyone’s experience. He has thoroughly enjoyed leading the trips, as it was rewarding to take enthusiastic birders to these special places. One of the most popular locations was the Maritime Provinces surrounding the Bay of Fundy. Seeing birds like puffins, razorbills, and gannets, as well as observing the enormous tides of the bay, enjoying the local seafood cuisine, birding from ferries, and sighting whales and dolphins, were all exciting and exotic experiences for everyone.

These days, Bob is relaxing and just enjoying birding—marveling at the beauty of the birds, listening to their sounds, thinking about why they are here and what are they doing, and pondering their life cycles, as well as getting on with his own. Which includes, of course, the occasional CFO board meeting!

Jim Beatty, 165 Twelve Point Buck Trail, Durango, CO 81301, jdbbeatty@bresnan.net

The 58th Report of the Colorado Bird Records Committee

Doug Faulkner

Secretary, Colorado Bird Records Committee

Lawrence S. Semo

Chair, Colorado Bird Records Committee

Introduction

This 58th report presents the results of deliberations of the Colorado Bird Records Committee (hereafter CBRC or Committee) on partial results of circulations held in 2010 and prior. This article provides results of the circulation of 49 reports submitted by 26 observers documenting 37 occurrences of 20 species (or recognizable forms) from the period 2003 through 2010. Of those, 11 occurrences involving nine different species were not accepted as state records because of insufficient documentation, because supporting evidence was inconsistent with known identification criteria, or because wild provenance was not established. Per CBRC bylaws, all accepted records received a final 7-0 or 6-1 vote to accept. Each report that was not accepted received five or fewer votes to accept in the final vote.

Highlights of this report include the third state record for Black Vulture (*Coragyps atratus*), seven records of Iceland Gull (*Larus glaucoides*) from 2006-2010 taking the total for the state to 11, first county records for Red-throated Loon (*Gavia stellata*) in *Fremont* and Blue-headed Vireo (*Vireo solitarius*) in *Bent*, and the third record of American Woodcock (*Scolopax minor*) for *Adams*.

Committee members voting on these reports were Coen Dexter, John Drummond, Doug Faulkner, Peter Gent, Rachel Hopper, Joey Kellner, Bill Maynard, Ric Olson, Brandon Percival, Bill Schmoker, Larry Semo, David Silverman, and Glenn Walbek.

Committee Functions

All reports received by the CBRC (written documentation, photographs, videos, and/or sound recordings) are archived at the Denver Museum of Nature and Science (DMNS), 2001 Colorado Boulevard, Denver, Colorado, 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 record 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

Doug Faulkner has agreed to continue serving in the role of Secretary as a non-voting member. This position supports the Chair with various organizational tasks, including compilation of reports for publication in *Colorado Birds* and maintenance of physical, electronic, and online databases.

Erratum

In the previous issue of *Colorado Birds*, the CBRC incorrectly acknowledged Larry Griffin as the photographer of an accepted Tricolored Heron from Weld County on 5 May 2010 (2010-78). Tom France provided photographic evidence of the bird, and we apologize for not correctly acknowledging his contribution to the CBRC.

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 during the most recent 10-year time period (2001-2010) including the most recent circulation year (2010). 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, the second and third rounds (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 (or people) contributed documentation; additional contributors' initials follow in alphabetical order by last name. If the finder(s) is (are) known with certainty, but did not submit documentation, those initials are underlined and presented last. Observers submitting a photograph or video capture have a dagger (†) following their initials; initials of those who sub-

mitted video are indicated by a lower-case, italicized “v” (*v*); and those who submitted audio spectrograms or recordings are indicated by a lower-case, italicized “s” (*s*). Thus, the parenthetical expression “(JD *v*, RA †, TL, JV, CW; 2001-36; 4-3, 6-1)” means: JD found the bird(s) and submitted documentation (including video) and, as the finder, is first in the list of those who submitted details, with initials underlined; RA, though alphabetically first of the five submitting observers, was not the finder, so is listed 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” 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.

In this report, abbreviations are used for Chico Basin Ranch (CBR), Crow Valley Campground (CVCG), Reservoir (Res.), State Park (SP), and State Wildlife Area (SWA).

RECORDS ACCEPTED

Red-throated Loon – *Gavia stellata* (40/12). The Committee considered the occurrence of this species at two separate locations in fall 2009 as pertaining to the same individual (NP, BKP †, BM; 2009-102; 7-0). A juvenile loon originally found at Union Res., *Weld*, on 30 October 2009 by Pieplow is considered the same as one observed a few days later at Pueblo Res., *Pueblo*, on 4 November by Percival. The loon continued at that location until at least 14 November 2009. Two Committee members recommended that these reports

be considered independent sightings of two different individuals. One of the dilemmas faced by the Committee is how to deal with multiple sightings of a rare species that are close either spatially or temporally. If additional information becomes available, especially documentation for dates between 30 October and 4 November at either site that contradicts the opinion that these sightings are of the same individual, then these records may be revised.

An adult Red-throated Loon still in basic plumage was observed at Brush Hollow Res., *Fremont*, on 19



*Blue-headed Vireo,
Pueblo City Park,
Pueblo County, 21
Oct 2010. Photo by
Brandon Percival*



*Summer Tanager,
Livermore, Larimer
County, 11 Nov
2009. Photo by
Donald Beaver*



*Iceland Gull,
Larimer County,
1 Mar 2008.
Photo by An-
drew Spencer*



Black Vulture, *Cheyenne County*, 31 Jul 2010. Photo by Gregg Goodrich

May 2009 (BKP †, RM; 2009-41; 7-0) for that county's first record. This record also represents the sixth occurrence of this species during spring. Perhaps more noteworthy than the actual occurrence is the fact that photographers were able to get close-up photos of a juvenile at Pueblo Res., *Pueblo*, on 11 November 2010 (BKP †, BM †; 2010-149; 7-0).

Black Vulture – *Coragyps atratus* (3/3). Yet another reason to participate in Colorado's second Breeding Bird Atlas is the possibility of finding a rarity. Gregg Goodrich did so when he found a Black Vulture in his atlas block near Wildhorse, *Cheyenne*, on 31 July 2010 (GG †, 2010-118; 7-0).

American Woodcock – *Scolopax minor* (8/3). The third record for *Adams* was discovered actively foraging in the Espelands' backyard near Brighton during the afternoon of 15 November 2010 (RE †, 2010-146; 7-0). No other county has more than one record.

Black-legged Kittiwake – *Rissa tridactyla* (37/13). The Committee unanimously accepted documentation in support of a juvenile-plumaged kit-

tiwake at Lagerman Res., *Boulder*, on 28 November 2004 (BS, SR; 2004-141; 7-0). The Committee had previously reviewed and accepted a record from nearby Lon Hager Res., *Boulder*, on 16 November 2004 (2004-65); however, due to the lack of reports during the nearly two-week pe-

riod between sightings, the Lagerman Res. kittiwake was considered a different individual. This record continues to support the notion that if you want to find a kittiwake in Colorado, you should visit your local waterbody in November. Of the state's 37 records, 25 have occurred in November, and an outstanding 32 (86%) between 27 October and 15 December.

Iceland Gull – *Larus glaucoideus* (11/9). The number of reports and documentations for this species has increased considerably over the past several years. This publication brings Colorado's total to 11 records, nine of which are from the period 2001-2010. The Committee has received documentation of several other Iceland Gulls from recent years that it will be reviewing in the near future, so this tally will likely increase. First county records established below include those for *Boulder*, *Larimer*, *Logan*, and *Weld*. One clear pattern has arisen from these records: virtually all of the Iceland Gulls documented thus far are immature birds in either first- or second-cycle plumage. The lone

exception is an adult at Lake Loveland, *Larimer*, on 1 March 2008 (NK †, AS †; 2008-20; 7-0). Iceland Gulls accepted recently include a first-cycle bird at Lake Loveland, *Larimer*, on 14 December 2006 (NK †; 2006-168; 6-1); a first-cycle bird at Pueblo Res., *Pueblo*, from 14 January 2007 through 18 February 2007 (BKP †, BM †; 2007-3; 7-0); a first-cycle bird at Valmont Res., *Boulder*, on 2 February 2008 (BKP †, BS †; 2008-11; 6-1); a first-cycle bird at Jumbo Res., *Logan*, on 29 March 2009 (CLW †; 2009-13; 7-0); a second-cycle gull at Valmont Res., *Boulder*, 8-9 January 2010 (BS †; 2010-3; 7-0); and a first-cycle bird at Windsor Lake, *Weld*, on 27 March 2010 (NK †; 2010-13; 6-1). A first-cycle bird at Pueblo Res., *Pueblo*, was documented for the period 18 December 2008 to 11 January 2009 (TL †, PH †, BS †, CW †; 2008-144; 7-0). This bird was reported through at least 29 January 2009, but the Committee did not receive documentation for those dates.

Arctic Tern – *Sterna paradisaea* (14/5). The Committee accepted the report of an adult at Pueblo Res., *Pueblo*, on 28 November 2003 (RL; 2003-112; 5-2, 6-1) as the latest documented occurrence of this species in Colorado and the only

one for November. Six of the previous 13 records are from September, while the latest dates prior to this record were from 5-8 October. It also marks 2003 as the best year for the species, with three accepted records.

Eurasian Collared-Dove – *Streptopelia decaocto*. Documentation establishing this species in *La Plata* and *Jackson* was provided to the Committee. Six were observed in Durango, *La Plata*, on 28 December 2004 (JB; 2004-140; 6-1) and four in Walden, *Jackson*, on 10 April 2004 (AS †; 2006-189; 7-0).

Blue-headed Vireo – *Vireo solitarius* (31/22). Brandon Percival had a banner year with Blue-headed Vireos in 2010, with three records of single birds: one at Rock Canyon, *Pueblo*, on 12 September 2010 (BKP †; 2010-122; 7-0); a first county record in Tempel Grove, *Bent*, on 8 October 2010 (BKP †; 2010-126; 7-0); and the third at Pueblo City Park, *Pueblo*, on 21 Octo-



American Woodcock, Henderson, Adams County, 15 Nov 2010. Photo by Lois Espeland

ber 2010 (BKP †; 2010-132; 7-0). One in first-basic plumage banded at CBR, *El Paso*, on 16 September 2009 (BG †; 2009-116; 5-2, 7-0) provided the sixth record of the species for 2009 and the third for CBR that year.

Northern Parula – *Parula americana*. A surprising find was a Northern Parula in the Neldner backyard near La Veta, *Huerfano*, on 8 November 2010 (PN †; 2010-42; 7-0). What may be even more surprising is that there are two other November records for this species in recent history—one in Paonia, *Delta*, on 26 November 2005 (2005-129) and one in Lakewood, *Jefferson*, on 23 November 2008 (2008-153)—and there is even one from 15 January 2006 in Boulder, *Boulder* (2006-7).

Prothonotary Warbler – *Protonotaria citrea*. A first-year female was beautifully photographed at Tempel Grove, *Bent*, on 14 May 2005 (BS †; 2005-48; 7-0).

“Red” Fox Sparrow – *Passerella iliaca iliaca/aboria* (13/12). One came to a bird feeder at the US Forest Service office in Paonia, *Delta*, on 9 December 2009 (DG †; 2009-96; 7-0), establishing that county’s first record and the second for the West Slope (the first occurred in *Owray* in 2000 [2000-156]). Another was found along Fountain Creek, *El Paso*, on 14 December 2009 (TF; 2009-97; 7-0).

Summer Tanager – *Piranga rubra*. Establishing a very rare late fall occurrence of this species in the state was an adult male observed at Livermore, *Larimer*, on 11 November 2009 (DB †; 2009-103; 7-0). Not quite as late was a female-plumaged tanager banded at

Barr Lake SP, *Adams*, on 16 October 2006 (SN †; 2010-70; 7-0).

RECORDS NOT ACCEPTED

Tundra Swan – *Cygnus columbianus*. An immature bird was reported at Navajo Res., *Archuleta*, on 13 February 2006. The report of a Trumpeter Swan (*C. buccinator*) at the same location a few days prior to this report prompted some Committee members to question whether an identity could be established from a written description alone (2006-16; 4-3, 1-6). Although the write-up was suggestive, ultimately, most Committee members commented that a photo or other physical evidence would be needed given the differing opinion on identification of this swan by other observers.

Trumpeter Swan – *Cygnus buccinator*. Two Committee members consistently dissented through three rounds of voting on the documentation provided for two adult swans and one immature bird observed at Lake Hasty, *Bent*, on 7 January 2006 (2006-3; 5-2, 5-2, 5-2). In these members’ opinions, the single photo submitted of one adult did not conclusively establish the swan’s identity. Furthermore, very little written description was given for the sighting and how similar species, especially Tundra Swan, were ruled out. One dissenting member commented that mixed-species swan groups have been observed in Colorado and, without a description of the immature swan, the documentation could not be accepted as a record. At least five other members disagreed.

The Committee did not accept as a state record the documentation

provided for two adult swans at Bud Mielke Res., *Larimer*, on 28 November 2006 (2006-166; 4-3, 0-7). The quality of the single photo of one adult was insufficient to establish that bird's identity in the opinion of most Committee members. Furthermore, most members commented that the written description did not provide enough details to conclusively rule out Tundra Swan.

Smew – *Mergellus albellus*. Documentation for a pair at the Denver Zoo did not pass the Committee based on the captive nature of these birds (2010-145; 0-7). One photo shows the male possessing a band on its right leg, suggesting that it was not a wild bird, but rather one of many exotic waterfowl species found in the zoo. The documentation did not provide rationale for these Smew being wild, free-flying birds.

Arctic Loon – *Gavia adamsii*. The Committee reviewed documentation of two separate sightings that were considered to pertain to the same individual (2009-93; 2-5). The first report came from Union Reservoir, *Weld*, on 25 October 2009, while the second was from Marston Reservoir, *Denver*, on 19 November 2009. Both observers noted a white flank patch that they considered a key feature in identifying the loon. Some Committee members were concerned about the description of the loon sitting high on the water, as any loon in that position will show extensive white sides and flanks. Although other features were consistent with Arctic Loon—such as the lack of a chin strap, and a head and bill structure similar to that of Common Loon

(*G. immer*) but with a slightly smaller body size—most Committee members felt there was not enough definitive evidence to accept this as the state's third record.

Arctic Tern – *Sterna paradisaea*. Documentation for one reported as being in worn juvenile plumage at Cherry Creek Res., *Arapahoe*, on 14 October 2009, took the Committee two rounds to reach a decision (2009-90; 4-3, 1-6). The documentation included four photos of the tern standing on a sandy beach. The Committee addressed these photos extensively during its review and most members considered the individual to more closely resemble Common Tern (*S. hirundo*) than Arctic Tern. In particular, the tern's leg length (long) and bill size/coloration (long and orange-based) were consistent with Common Tern and outside the usual range of variation in Arctic Tern.

Long-billed Thrasher – *Toxostoma longirostre*. The observer of a thrasher originally identified as a Brown Thrasher (*T. rufum*) at CVCG, *Weld*, on 16 May 2006, submitted documentation for the thrasher as a Long-billed upon review of photographs. This was at nearly the same time when Colorado's third and fourth state records of Long-billed Thrasher were present in January/February 2006. The Committee needed two rounds of voting to reach a decision (2010-64; 4-3, 1-6). Most Committee members considered this experienced observer's original identification correct. In particular, some Committee members commented that the thrasher showed a higher degree of rusty coloration and

a longer primary projection than typical for Long-billed. The photo quality did not provide for sufficient detail for some Committee members to discern other features, such as the extent of gray on the face and streaking on the undertail coverts.

Eastern Towhee – *Pipilo erythrophthalmus*. The same observer provided documentation for two separate male towhees: one at Bonny Res., Yuma, on 16 May 2005 (2005-52; 4-3, 4-3), and the other at Tamarack Ranch SWA, Logan, on 17 May 2005 (2005-57; 4-3, 4-3). The Committee noted that descriptions for both birds were identical and the documentations were submitted six months after the observations. Identical descriptions used for different individuals observed under different circumstances are always a concern for the Committee, as they imply that the observer may not have accurately reported the details of one or both observations. Moreover, neither documentation discussed how a hybrid Spotted (*P. maculatus*) × Eastern Towhee was ruled out. Eastern Colorado is on the western edge of a well-established hybrid zone between

these species, and documentation for any suspected Eastern Towhee should include the rationale for elimination of a hybrid.

European Goldfinch – *Carduelis carduelis*. Photos of a male coming to a feeder in Bailey, Park, on 31 May 2010 clearly established the bird's identity (2010-104; 0-7). As with other reports of non-native species discussed in this article, the Committee had no evidence of wild provenance, and it seemed unlikely given that this species is commonly sold in the pet trade, there is no pattern of vagrancy to North America, and there is no established population of released birds.

Zebra Finch – *Taeniopygia guttata*. The identification of a male in Fort Collins, Larimer, on 7 September 2006, was well established with several photos (2006-185; 0-7). However, because this Indian and Australasian species is common to the pet trade and there is no naturalized population established in North America, the Committee did not accept this documentation as a state record based on provenance concerns.

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: JB: Jim Beatty; DB: Donald Beaver; Cindi Bosworth; Rick Bosworth; RE: Robert Espeland; TF: Ted Floyd; BG: Brian Gibbons; DG: Dennis Garrison; GG: Gregg Goodrich; PH: Paul Hurtado; Tina Jones; NK: Nick Komar; Marie Lee; TL: Tony Leukering; RL: Roger Linfield; BM: Bill Maynard; RM: Rich Miller; PN: Polly Neldner; SN: Starr Nicely; BKP: Brandon Percival; NP: Nathan Pieplow; SR: Scott Roederer; Robert Righter; Julie Rouse; BS: Bill Schmoker; AS: Andrew Spencer; Walter Szeliga; CW: Cole Wild.

LITERATURE CITED

American Ornithologists' Union (AOU). 1998. Check-list of North American Birds. Lawrence, KS: Allen Press.

Chesser, T.R., Banks, R.C., Barker, F.K., Cicero, C., Dunn, J.L., Kratter, A.W., Lovette, I.J., Rasmussen, P.C., Remsen, Jr., J.V., Rising, J.D., Stotz, D.F., and K. Winker. 2010. Fifty-first Supplement to the American Ornithologists' Union Check-list of North American Birds. *Auk* 127(3): 726-744.

Leukering, T., and L.S. Semo. 2003. Report of the Colorado Bird Records Committee: 2001 records, part I. *Colorado Birds* 37: 138-155.

Semo, L.S., Leukering, T., and J.E. Stewart. 2002. Amendments to the state review list. *Journal of the Colorado Field Ornithologists* 36: 180-183.

Doug Faulkner, SWCA Inc., 6035 Parfet St., Arvada, CO 80004, dwfaulkner@swca.com

Lawrence S. Semo, SWCA Inc., 9054 Dover St., Westminster, CO 80021, lsemo@swca.com

An Apparent Hybrid White-winged × Pink-sided Junco from Colorado

Christian Nunes

On 1 and 2 November 2010, I observed a Dark-eyed Junco (*Junco hyemalis*) with characteristics of both the White-winged (*J. h. aikeni*) and Pink-sided (*J. h. mearnsi*) subspecies in a Ponderosa Pine (*Pinus ponderosa*) forest in the Eldorado Mountain Open Space in Boulder County, Colorado (Fig. 1). The coordinates of the location were N -105.265836, W 39.921467, and the elevation was 6,120 feet. The bird was associating with a single after-hatch-year White-winged Junco on both dates. On 8 November, I saw it in a flock of 15 White-winged Juncos of various ages, including two hatch-year birds with some suffusion of brown on the backs and flanks.

The bird in question had several White-winged Junco characteristics, including thick white tips on the median and greater wing coverts that produced two wingbars. The tertials had crisp gray edges, a feature associated with adult White-winged, Slate-colored, and Gray-headed Juncos. Members of the Oregon and Pink-sided groups have brown edges to the tertials. The bill was large with a noticeably tumid lower mandible, another characteristic of White-winged Junco. The flanks were cinnamon brown, as in the Pink-sided and Oregon Juncos. The back was also brown with some faint dark streaks. The hue of brown was not as rich as on the flanks; it was a color that is seen in some Pink-sided Juncos, but also occasionally on hatch-year White-winged Juncos.

The Eldorado Mountain junco had a light gray hood that formed a convex border with the white lower breast, a characteristic of the Pink-sided and Oregon Juncos. The brown upper flanks and back contrasted sharply with the gray head, accentuating the hooded appearance. On Miller's (1941) scale of hood darkness (1-11, darkest-lightest), the Eldorado Mountain junco fell into the 9-10 category, which is a shade of gray that is seen in both White-winged and Pink-sided Juncos. The lores were black, contrasting with the light gray hood, a characteristic shared by White-winged, Pink-sided, and Gray-headed Juncos. The wing pattern and bill proportions suggested White-winged Junco parentage, while the rich cinnamon flanks, brown back, and light gray hood with a convex lower border were suggestive of Pink-sided Junco. Overall, the appearance of the bird suggests that this individual may be a hybrid White-winged × Pink-sided Junco.



Fig. 1. Adult female White-winged \times Pink-sided Junco. Eldorado Mountain Open Space, 2 Nov 2010. Photo by the author



Figure 2. Adult male White-winged Junco (top), Dille's hybrid White-winged \times Pink-sided Junco (middle), adult male Pink-sided Junco (bottom). CU Vertebrates collection



Figure 3. From left to right: Pink-sided Junco, Dille's hybrid White-winged \times Pink-sided Junco, dark adult male White-winged Junco, light adult male White-winged Junco.

Another option to consider is that this was a very brown female White-winged Junco. Hatch-year White-winged Juncos can have some brown suffusion on the back and flanks. However, birds of this age also have a variable number of brown-edged tertials (Pyle 1997), and the frosty gray edges on the tertials identify the Eldorado Mountain bird as an adult. Adult female White-winged Juncos never have such extensively rich cinnamon flanks, a warm brown back, nor a convex border on the bottom of the hood (Miller, 1941).

Other Documented Hybrids

Only four examples of hybrid White-winged \times Pink-sided Juncos have been documented. The first was collected by Dille on 2 February 1906 at Altona, Boulder County, Colorado. The specimen, which resides in the University of Colorado's Vertebrates Collection, was identified as a hybrid by Miller (1941). Dille's bird had a brown back, flanks of bright pinkish cinnamon mixed with light gray, no wing-bars, frosty-gray tertial edges, a bill size typical of Pink-sided Junco, a concave hood line below as in White-winged Junco, wing and tail length that was intermediate between the two forms, and a tail pattern and hood color that are also seen in both races. Overall the specimen is similar to a Pink-sided Junco, except for the concave hood shape, gray tertial edges, and some areas of gray on the flanks (Figs. 2–3).

These characteristics were enough for Miller to conclude that the specimen was a hybrid. He postulated that such a form could originate in a breeding location where the two forms come close to contacting each other. He sent a party from the Museum of Vertebrate Zoology to the Tongue River Breaks region of western Powder River County, Montana, to search for a hybrid population. Miller's party found three more hybrids among 30 specimens that were collected four miles west of the Fort Howes Ranger Station.

All three specimens were in breeding condition; two were males and the third a female. The first male was described as being predominantly Pink-sided in phenotype, except that the bill was large and the back feathers were mixed brown and slaty gray. Miller (1941) argues that Pink-sided never has anything but brown back feathers. The second male was described as being predominantly White-winged in phenotype, except that it had a convex hood as in Pink-sided. This individual also lacked wing-bars, but wingbars are lacking in some male White-winged Juncos. The third presumed hybrid, a female, is described as having mixed light slate and bright pinkish brown flanks and a convex hood line as in Pink-sided, but in all other measures it fits White-winged. The Eldorado Mountain junco fits Miller's description of this presumed hybrid female White-winged \times Pink-sided Junco.

Evolutionary Isolation of White-winged Junco

Introgression is very common between the various populations of Dark-eyed Junco. The occurrence of White-winged \times Pink-sided Juncos is exceptional in its rarity. Miller (1941) suggests that the low numbers reported from wintering flocks, collections, and breeding grounds are testaments to the true scarcity of this combination. Subsequent searches in the pine forests of western Powder River County, Montana, in 1985 failed to locate any hybrids (Nolan et al. 2002). The occasional example of Pink-sided genes entering the White-winged population in the Tongue River Breaks (and possibly vice versa in adjacent Pink-sided populations) is an example of secondary intergradation via allopatric hybridization (Short 1969). Most other cases of *Junco* hybridization involve variably-sized zones of primary intergradation (Miller 1941).

A recent survey of a newly discovered breeding population of juncos in the Big Burro Mountains of New Mexico produced 21 Yellow-eyed Juncos (*J. phaeonotus palliatus*), two Red-backed Dark-eyed Juncos (*J. h. dorsalis*), one Gray-headed Dark-eyed Junco (*J. h. caniceps*), and five presumed hybrid Yellow-eyed \times Dark-eyed Juncos (Griffin 2009). Thus, the amount of presumed hybridization between these two species appears to be greater than that between the White-winged and Pink-sided Juncos.

Milá et al. (2007) investigated the diversification of the genus *Junco* by examining mitochondrial DNA and amplified fragment length polymorphism loci. Their findings support the hypothesis that the White-winged Junco has evolved in relative isolation. They found that White-winged Juncos have three nearly diagnostic loci that likely became fixed in this isolated population after a founder event. Some Pink-sided Juncos from the nearby Bighorn Mountains and even some Oregon Juncos cluster with White-winged, suggesting that these rare alleles may have appeared or become fixed in the White-winged population and then spread west through gene flow across a hybrid zone.

Milá et al. (2007) conclude that the entire Dark-eyed Junco species has undergone a rapid post-Pleistocene radiation from the south, diversifying in the last 10,000 years into the various forms we see today. Johnson (1975) presents a detailed description of the paleobotany of the western Great Plains over the last 20,000 years. As the Wisconsin glacier began to retreat (12,600-11,000 years ago), the Black Hills were connected to the Bighorn Mountains by a moist *Pinus-Juniper* savannah. Ten thousand years ago, an extensive *Pinus* climax forest covered a large area from the Niobrara River Escarpments and Pine Ridge in northwest Nebraska north through the Black Hills to

western North Dakota and the Long Pine Hills of southeast Montana. From 1,700-200 years ago, the conifer forests continued to retreat as the region became more arid, leaving isolated areas of conifer forests only on elevated escarpments like the Black Hills and the Pine Ridge, where the White-winged Junco breeds today.

If the ancestors of the White-winged Junco arrived in the region 10,000 years ago, they would have encountered a much more extensive and contiguous area of breeding habitat than exists there today. The closest modern breeding population of Pink-sided Juncos is in the Bighorn Mountains, only 50 miles from where Miller found hybrids in a predominantly White-winged population, but 10,000 years ago, the Bighorn Mountains could have been connected to the Black Hills by an area of pine-juniper woodlands.

The genetic isolation of White-winged Juncos suggests that their ancestors arrived in the region at a time when any connecting forests were not conducive for breeding. The apparent rarity of introgression between White-winged and Pink-sided Juncos is truly phenomenal given their close proximity, the propensity for hybridization between other junco forms, and the relatively short time of their isolation from one another.

LITERATURE CITED

- Griffin, D.J. 2009. Surveys for Yellow-eyed Juncos in the Big Burro Mountains, Grant County, New Mexico, 2009. New Mexico Department of Game and Fish, Santa Fe, New Mexico.
- Johnson, K. 1975. Post-Pleistocene environments and montane butterfly relicts on the western Great Plains. *Journal of Research on the Lepidoptera* 14: 216-232.
- Milá, B., McCormack, J.E., Castañeda, G., Wayne, R.K., and T.B. Smith. 2007. Recent postglacial range expansion drives the rapid diversification of a songbird lineage in the genus *Junco*. *Proceedings of the Royal Society B* 274: 2653-2660.
- Miller, A.H. 1941. Speciation in the Avian Genus *Junco*. University of California Publications in Zoology. Berkeley and Los Angeles. Volume 44, No. 3.
- Nolan, V., Ketterson, E.D., Cristol, D.A., Rogers, C.M., Clotfelter, E.D., Titus, R.C., Schoech, S.J., and Snajdr, E. 2002. Dark-eyed Junco. *In* The Birds of North America No. 716. (A. Poole and F. Gill, eds.). The Birds of North America, Inc., Philadelphia, PA.
- Pyle, P. 1997. Identification Guide to North American Birds, Part I. Slate Creek Press, Bolinas, CA.
- Short, L.L. 1969. Taxonomic aspects of avian hybridization. *Auk* 86: 84-105.

Christian Nunes, 4751 W. Moorhead Circle, Boulder, CO 80305

Wild Birding Colorado

Bill Maynard

There are lots of great birding stories, but many of the best are about Big Years—the attempt to see as many species in one year as possible. In 1953, Roger Tory Peterson and James Fisher traveled 30,000 miles tallying 572 species, eventually telling their story in a book and documentary film, *Wild America*. There are more recent Big Year stories—as a 19-year-old, birding legend Ted Parker cut many classes at the University of Arizona to go birding, ending the year seeing 626 species. And, then,

of course, there's Kenn Kaufman's *Kingbird Highway: The Story of a Natural Obsession That Got a Little Out of Hand*. Sandy Komito tallied 745 species in the ABA Area in 1998 and published a book about his adventures called *I Came, I Saw, I Counted*; and Mark Obmascik's *The Big Year: A Tale of Man, Nature, and Fowl Obsession* has been made into a movie starring Jack Black, Steve Martin, and Owen Wilson, which is scheduled for release in 2011.

In *Wild Birding Colorado* you will learn about the events that got twenty-something Cole Wild hooked on birding, starting with his inquisitiveness about Colorado's Kelp Gull. Eventually, this curiosity turned into a passion and then into an obsession. Cole's quest was to see as many species in Colorado in 2010 as possible—hopefully, more species in the state in one year than anyone had seen previously. My favorite section is perhaps the January chapter, in which we learn about Cole's five New Year's resolutions, and how failing miserably at resolutions 1-3 led to spectacular success in resolution number four.

Unlike the Komito book, which was more about how a wealthy individual bought his way into birding notoriety, Cole's accomplishments, spurred by his highly competitive drive, were more about



Wild Birding Colorado: The Big Year of 2010

By Cole Wild (in collaboration
with Nick Komar)
Outskirts Press, Inc.,
Parker, Colorado
146 pages, softcover, \$19.95

finding his way in life through birding. Nick Komar puts Cole's exceedingly open thoughts into a fun narrative, and many readers in Colorado will be reminded of birds, people, and places they too may have encountered alongside Cole in 2010. You will laugh out loud in some passages, you will discover how Cole found a way to earn money to put fuel in his gas tank after he resigned from his routine job, and you might even see your name in print.

Even casual birders will enjoy the narrative. In the end you will know Cole Wild, the person, and perhaps you will see your younger self in both Cole's thoughts and in his birding adventures. Was Cole successful in topping the previous one-year high of 391 species for Colorado? What special species did he find? Purchase the book to find out.

Bill Maynard, antejos@juno.com

SIGNIFICANT SIGHTINGS

Ross's Gull at Cherry Creek Reservoir, November 2010

Joe Roller, Glenn Walbek, and Cole Wild

Discovery

On the morning of 19 November 2010, Glenn Walbek and Joe Roller met at Cherry Creek Reservoir, Arapahoe County, Colorado, to search for uncommon fall migrants. The reservoir is a bird magnet; over the previous few days Glenn and others had seen a Tundra Swan (*Cygnus columbianus*), Red-throated Loon (*Gavia stellata*), Pacific Loon (*Gavia pacifica*), and Lesser Black-backed Gull (*Larus fuscus*), so who knew what interesting birds might show up next?

Soon after they arrived they scanned the lake, finding most of the birds listed above, but nothing new of interest. They bumped into John Rozinski, who showed them a photo of a Snow Bunting (*Plectrophenax nivalis*) he had taken that morning. That prompted an excited but futile search of nearby beaches, paths, and fields over the next two hours. When prospects for finding the Snow Bunting dimmed, they went back to their original plan. From separate vantage points on the large reservoir's west side, they scanned the many

gulls (mostly Ring-billed Gulls, *Larus delawarensis*) flying over the deep water near the dam. The sky was overcast and the wind blustered.

At 10:30 A.M. Joe was surprised and excited to spot and track a small gull flying among a flock of gulls about 600-800 meters away. It was noticeably smaller than the Ring-billed Gulls, with whitish upperparts and dark gray under the wings. The gull lacked any black markings near the wingtips, so it was obviously a rarity. Glenn came over and together they began to study the bird in detail, which was challenging due to the distance and the gray conditions. Joe's initial thought was that this was an adult basic-plumaged Little Gull (*Hydrocoloeus minutus*), but he was puzzled that it did not seem small enough for that species and the underwings did not seem dark enough. Glenn immediately noticed that the wings were pointed, not rounded, and the primaries lacked a Little Gull's broadly white-tipped flight feathers. If not a Little Gull, what was it? Could it be a Black-headed Gull (*Chroicocephalus ridibundus*)? They consulted a field guide. The upperwing color was uniformly white, not gray with white outer primaries as on a Black-headed Gull, and this gull was also smaller.

Earlier they had phoned Cole Wild about the Snow Bunting, and he arrived to study and discuss the small gull. Cole and Glenn noticed a dark spot behind its eye, but no black on the crown like a Little Gull should have. It was not obvious at first, but when the gull banked, the spread tail was wedge-shaped. At times when the light was just right, there was a faint pink wash on the breast. "Have we ruled out Ross's Gull?" Cole asked. When he whipped out his iPhone and consulted the *Sibley Guide to Birds* app, all of the puzzle pieces fell into place. This bird had all of the field marks of an adult, basic-plumaged Ross's Gull (*Rhodostethia rosea*), a rare visitor from the icy Arctic!

Although there are two accepted records of Ross's Gulls in Colorado, most active birders had never seen one in the state (or anywhere for that matter). A life bird! We frantically phoned friends with the news, and the sighting was posted on the COBirds website. From Denver, Boulder, Fort Collins, and Pueblo "the troops" began to arrive and congregate on the shore.

Glenn and others took hundreds of photos from a distance, but everyone wanted to get closer. When the Ross's Gull landed on the shore near the east side of the dam, birders jumped into cars and took off to get a better look. We then marched out on the path along the dam face toward the afternoon sun, but the gull had taken flight, and the views in that light were even worse. Itching to get closer



Ross's Gull, Cherry Creek Reservoir, Arapahoe County. Fig. 1 (above), 19 Nov 2010, and Fig. 2 (below), 24 Nov 2010. Photos by Glenn Walbek



looks, Joe hailed two men in a nearby fishing boat. Could their craft be chartered to ferry us out on the lake? Yes!

The three authors stepped into knee-deep icy water and clambered aboard. We quickly motored out toward the gull, and it cooperated by flying right over our heads. Glenn took some striking photos as it plucked a gizzard shad (*Dorosoma cepedianum*) from the surface, carried it in its bill, then swallowed the piscine meal whole. Soon we were back on the shore, with cold feet but warm grins. What an experience!

When the news of Colorado's Ross's Gull spread that day, larophiles from Wisconsin and Chicago piled into a car, drove through the night, and, bleary-eyed, saw it the next morning. The giant bags of stale bread they had packed to lure it closer were not needed.

Description of the Bird

This was a small gull, resembling Bonaparte's Gull (*Chroicocephalus philadelphia*) in size, shape, and behavior. When viewed from a

distance, it appeared to have dark underwings and was uniform pale gray above, giving the impression of a Little Gull. However, on a Little Gull, the rounded wingtips, accentuated by the beautifully formed white edge to the wing, are evident even from a distance, giving that diminutive species a unique look. This Ross's Gull, in contrast, showed pale gray on the upperwings all the way out to and including the primaries.

As the sky cleared and the gull flew closer, several more field marks became apparent. The bird had an overall pink cast below. The wing had a white trailing edge that was wider near the primary/secondary junction, giving the wing a narrow white triangle at the trailing edge (Fig. 1). There was no black visible on the long, pointed wing except for a narrow black edge to the outermost primary that was visible only at close range. The lack of black on the upperwings indicated that this was an adult bird.

The dark eye was accentuated by dark smudging around it. The head was dove-like, small, and round, with a subtle dark ear-spot and tiny black bill (Fig. 2). There was a subtle gray collar separating the white head from the pink/gray body. The long, wedge-shaped tail was observed many times as the flying bird slowed to pick food from the surface of the lake (Fig. 3). The legs appeared dark in poor viewing conditions, but their true deep orange color could be clearly seen in good light.

Behavior

During its week-long sojourn at Cherry Creek, the Ross's Gull was often seen flying gracefully over the water, slowing and dipping to the surface while patrolling back and forth over deep water near the dam. Less often it flew around the whole reservoir. It also walked up and down a narrow sand spit near the dam, staying well away from loafing gulls and the pod of American White Pelicans (*Pelecanus erythrorhynchos*). When swimming, it favored calmer parts of the lake, usually near shore.

During the week we observed several feeding styles, each of which has been observed on the breeding grounds (Howell and Dunn 2007):

1. Dipping down from flight, hovering or briefly landing on the water and picking food from the surface.
2. Plunge-diving from flight head-first into the water deep enough that only its tail and primaries remained visible (Fig. 4).
3. "Dabbling" into the water while swimming by partly submerging itself head-first, with wings aflutter.
4. Daintily picking from the surface of the water while swimming, like a phalarope (*Phalaropus*).
5. Picking while strolling like a dove (*Streptopelia*) on the sand spit, which was littered with what appeared to be pelican scat and the empty shells (exoskeletons) of crayfish, bits of which could have nourished the gull.



Fig. 3. Ross's Gull, 23 Nov 2010. Photo by Mark Chavez

Previous Colorado Records

Inez and Bill Prather spotted Colorado's first Ross's Gull in late April of 1983 at Jumbo Reservoir in Sedgwick and Logan counties in far north-east Colorado (Anonymous 1983), causing quite a stir at the time (pers. comm.). Bill Schmoker found the second accepted record in Boulder County in October 2007 (Semo and Faulkner 2009), but it was a "twenty-minute wonder" which he alone saw (pers. comm.). Brandon Percival identified a distant Ross's Gull at John Martin Reservoir in Bent County two weeks before Schmoker's Boulder sighting, but because of the great distance at which the bird was observed, that report went into the "not confirmed" file at the Colorado Bird Records Committee (Semo and Faulkner 2009).

Discovery and Distribution

James Clark Ross, the polar explorer, first described the species from Hudson Bay in 1823, having shot a bird while a member of William Perry's second expedition to find the Northwest Passage. The gull achieved mythical status as more than eighty years passed with only a few other sightings. The main nesting range along the Arctic coast of eastern Siberia was finally discovered in 1905 (Ver-

scheuren 2010). Ross's Gulls also breed locally in northern Canada and at other sites around the globe at high latitudes. Post-breeding dispersal starts in late July (Olsen and Larsson 2003). Ross's Gulls are best known in the fall from the vicinity of Point Barrow, Alaska; an estimated 20,000-40,000 birds may occur in Alaskan waters at that season (Howell and Dunn 2007). The winter distribution seems linked to the extent of the pack ice, showing marked variation from year to year but centering on the northern Pacific basin from the Bering Sea south to waters north of Japan; stragglers to the lower 48 in winter are exceedingly rare (Howell and Dunn 2007).



Fig. 4. Ross's Gull *plunge-diving*, 23 Nov 2010. Composite photo by Bill Maynard

Conclusion

The Ross's Gull was seen daily at Cherry Creek Reservoir for a full week, then could no longer be found. We were left to speculate where it went. Did it fly back north to the pack ice?

We estimated that about 300 people came to see the Ross's Gull, mostly from Colorado, but some from as far away as Wisconsin, Ohio, and Washington, DC. During the few weeks after the Ross's Gull was seen in Colorado, adult Ross's Gulls were reported on birding listservs from Nebraska, South Dakota, and Michigan, making the winter of 2010-2011 a banner year for this "rosy gull" from the Arctic.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

We would like to thank Bill Maynard and Robert Righter for reviewing drafts of this article and for making numerous helpful suggestions.

LITERATURE CITED

Anonymous. 1983. Immature Ross's Gull in Colorado. C.F.O. Journal 17:16-17.

- Howell, S.N.G., and J. Dunn. 2007. Peterson Reference Guide: Gulls of the Americas. Houghton Mifflin Harcourt.
- Olsen, K.M., and H. Larssen. 2003. Gulls of North America, Europe, and Asia. Princeton University Press, Princeton, NJ.
- Semo, L.S., and D.W. Faulkner. 2009. The 52nd Report of the Colorado Bird Records Committee. *Colorado Birds* 43(4): 268-281.
- Verschueren, Y. 2010. In the pink. *Birdwatch* 222: 36-39.

Joe Roller, 965 South Garfield St, Denver, CO, 80209, (303) 204-0828, jroller9@gmail.com

Glenn Walbek, 2908 Cliff View Court, Castle Rock, CO 80104, (720) 560-3671, gwalbek@comcast.net

Cole Wild, 6246 Timber Run, Loveland, CO 80537, (970) 232-5368, birdingwild@yahoo.com

BREEDING AND BEHAVIOR

Observations of Nesting Northern Saw-whet and Northern Pygmy-Owls

Scott Rashid

Introduction

Every February I begin searching areas in and around Rocky Mountain National Park (RMNP) for small owls, including Northern Saw-whet Owls (*Aegolius acadicus*) and Northern Pygmy-Owls (*Glaucidium gnoma*). When I locate a nest site, I monitor it, spending as much time in the area as possible so as to document all activity, including incubation dates, hatching dates, food preferences, fledging dates, and post-fledging activity. I also trap and band the adults and young owls in an attempt to gain some insight into their movements, their longevity, and whether they return to the same nesting areas in subsequent years. Here I present observations of nesting behavior of these two species based on my observations in 2010.

Methods

I identify and locate owls as they are vocalizing and then search for their nests in the vicinity. In February and March, Northern Pygmy-Owls can, at times, be vocalizing several hundred yards from

their nest sites, sometimes as far away as a quarter mile (Rashid 1999). Northern Saw-whet Owls, on the other hand, during the same time frame, often vocalize within a few hundred yards or less of their intended nest site (Rashid 2009). Females can be identified by their slightly higher-pitched calls.

Every February, I check a series of nest boxes that I have erected for Northern Saw-whet Owls. The dimensions of these boxes are 12 inches wide by 16 inches deep. Four of the boxes were placed on ponderosa pine (*Pinus ponderosa*) trees on the property of the Eagle Rock School (ERS) in habitat of mixed ponderosa pine, quaking aspen (*Populus tremuloides*) and Douglas-fir (*Pseudotsuga menziesii*). All the boxes are between 15 and 25 feet from the ground.

When the owls nest in nest boxes, I check the box after the eggs hatch to band the young before they fledge, as well as the adult female if she is present. I capture the adult female inside the nest box by using an extension pole to place a plug in the entrance of the box and then climbing up to it with a ladder.

When the owls use a natural cavity, I trap and band the adults and young outside the nest. To trap the adults, I set up a mist net in a "V" and place a small cage in the center of the "V" with a live mouse inside. As the mouse moves inside the cage, its movements attract the attention of the owl. As the owl flies in to catch the mouse, the owl flies into the net and is captured. I band the young after they fledge, most often by catching them by hand. All birds are banded using US Fish and Wildlife Service leg bands, weighed, and measured (Fig. 1).

Observations of Nest #1 (Northern Pygmy-Owl)

At 8:30 A.M. on 28 March, a male Northern Pygmy-Owl was found



Fig. 1. A Northern Pygmy-Owlet weighing in at 58.1 grams. Photo by the author

vocalizing on ERS property, approximately 300 yards from where the owls eventually nested. I located the owl because Cassin's Finches (*Carpodacus cassinii*), Mountain Chickadees (*Poecile gambeli*), Pygmy Nuthatches (*Sitta pygmaea*), White-breasted Nuthatches (*Sitta carolinensis*), and American Robins (*Turdus migratorius*) were voicing their displeasure at the owl.

Prior to the beginning of incubation, I was able to locate the female pygmy-owl most late afternoons as she would be perched within the area that would eventually become her nest tree. On 19 April I noticed her perched approximately seven feet up on a dead limb of a spruce tree. I knew this bird was the female because the trailing edge of her tail was abraded due to her time in what would eventually be her nest cavity; cavity walls are often so close that the female's tail rubs against the inside.

On 20 April at 7:30 P.M., the male pygmy-owl delivered a montane vole (*Microtus montanus*) to the female just prior to copulation. A few minutes after she began eating the vole, he returned to the area and gave four soft toots. I couldn't tell where he was and apparently neither could the female. She flew toward his call carrying the vole. She landed on a branch of a Douglas-fir and carefully laid the vole over the branch. A moment later the male was seen perched on a ponderosa pine branch with a Colorado chipmunk (*Neotamias quadrivittatus*). The female flew to him, took the chipmunk in her mouth, then grabbed it with her foot and perched for a few moments, apparently looking around for a safe place to store it. A few moments later, she flew a few yards to another ponderosa and meticulously placed the animal parallel on a branch approximately two feet from the trunk.

I witnessed the female either storing or retrieving prey items on five different occasions during the nesting season. This activity has been well documented by other researchers including Bent (1938) and Holt and Peterson (2000). Late on the evening of 25 June, I witnessed the female store a chipmunk on a ponderosa pine branch; I also witnessed her retrieving it early the following morning.

The female Northern Pygmy-Owl began incubating on 26 April in a cavity that I presumed, due to its size, had been constructed by a Hairy Woodpecker (*Picoides villosus*). The nest was 28 feet 2 inches from the ground in a tree over 50 feet high with a diameter at breast height (DBH) of 42 inches. Unlike Northern Saw-whet Owls, Northern Pygmy-Owls have not been documented using nest boxes.

The eggs hatched on 25 May. I knew this because it was the first day that the female spent any time perched at the nest entrance looking out at her surroundings. It was also the first day she entered the

nest with prey; prior to that, she would eat outside the nest. This is perfectly consistent with the published report that incubation lasts about 28 days (Holt and Norton 1986).

After the owlets hatched, the female pygmy-owl assisted the male with hunting for the family. I was able to witness a number of prey items the female captured. When a vole or chipmunk showed itself she would instantly move in for the kill—usually successfully. Every time that I witnessed this, her prey was either a Colorado or Least Chipmunk, or a vole of some species. The similar-looking Uinta Chipmunk (*Neotamias umbrinus*) was considered unlikely to factor in this pair's diet because it typically inhabits lodgepole pine forests at higher elevations (David Armstrong, pers. comm.).

Because the owlets can only eat a certain amount of food per day, the female pygmy-owl would store anything that the owlets couldn't readily consume. Presumably this ensured that there would be little, if any, rotting food inside the nest to attract excess flies and other carnivorous insects. There were, however, a few flies most days.

On 2 June I arrived at the nesting area at 7:00 A.M. and found no activity. At 8:00 A.M. the female exited the nest and perched in a ponderosa for almost 30 minutes. She then flew to another ponderosa and sat for almost 40 minutes. Thereafter she flew to, and landed in, the shallow creek a few yards east of her nest. After a short bath, she flew to a ponderosa branch, preened, and then sat sunning herself. At about 10:00 A.M., the male arrived with a chipmunk. He tooted a few times, presumably to locate the female. She flew to him, grasped the chipmunk, and stored it in the crotch of a ponderosa.

I witnessed something quite interesting on 3 June. At 7:30 P.M., the female was perched on a dead aspen near her nest, seemingly relaxed, looking like a ball of feathers. At times it appeared that she



Fig. 2. Adult female Northern Pygmy-Owl at rest (left) and in alert posture watching a Cooper's Hawk fly by (center, right), 3 June 2010. Photos by the author

was even trying to catch a nap. Instantly, she became completely erect, pulling all of her feathers tightly to her body and raising her ear tufts (Fig. 2). She was looking straight ahead, then followed something as it moved through the woods. I moved in the direction she was looking and caught a glimpse of an adult Cooper's Hawk (*Accipiter cooperii*). Soon after the hawk passed, the owl went back to its resting posture.

A few days later, on 6 June, I heard the female give a distress call, which is a sound reminiscent of fingers scratching on a chalkboard (Rashid 2009). There was a commotion in a ponderosa a few yards away. I walked toward the uproar and found a Cooper's Hawk that had caught a pine squirrel (*Tamiasciurus hudsonicus*) about 25 yards south of the owls' nest. As I approached the hawk, it flew off carrying the squirrel.

On 16 June I set up the net and caught the female pygmy-owl. She was quite plump, weighing 84.3 grams, and she had a wing length of 98 millimeters and tail length of 70 millimeters.

In Colorado, Northern Pygmy-Owls normally fledge two to three young. If the pair has two young, both owlets will leave the nest on the same day, usually in the morning, one after the other. If the adults have three young, one usually fledges on one day and the other two the next day, again in the morning (Rashid 2009). Other researchers have documented as many as seven eggs and young (Holt and Norton 1986).

In 2010, the first owlet fledged on the morning of 22 June. I found it perched on a dead aspen about five feet from the ground. The bird was 72.5 feet southwest of its nest tree. I was able to catch the bird by hand, band it, weigh it, and measure it, then place it back on the tree I took it from. The owlet weighed 52.3 grams and had a wing length of 85.5 millimeters. The following morning I arrived at 6:30 A.M. and noticed one owlet still inside the nest. I searched until almost 8:00 A.M. before I found the second owlet. It was 126 feet southeast of the nest tree, perched on a dead branch about 6 feet from the ground. As with the other owlet, I banded, measured, and weighed that owl as well. The owl weighed 58.2 grams and had a wing length of 83 millimeters. At 8:53 A.M., while standing near the nest tree, I heard the third owlet fledge. It flew 76.5 feet northwest of the nest and landed on the ground, but quickly crawled into a juniper (*Juniperus scopulorum*) for cover. That bird was the heaviest of the three, weighing 66.7 grams, with a wing length of 88 millimeters. Fledgling pygmy-owlets are always smaller and often weigh less than the adults. Their tails are always just a few millimeters long. It takes about three weeks for the owlets' tails to grow to their full length of about three inches (Rashid 1999).



Fig. 3. Five Northern Saw-whet Owlets inside the nest box. Photo by the author

Two days after the second and third owlets left their nest, I returned with another photographer friend, Bill Schmoker, to photograph the owls. We located the three owlets and the adult female over 200 yards south of the nest in an area that was mostly Douglas-fir trees. All three owlets were perched within 30 yards of each other, trying to conceal themselves as we came close. That was the last time I was able to locate the owls.

Observations of Nest #2 (Northern Saw-whet Owl)

On 16 February 2010, a pair of Northern Saw-whet Owls was heard vocalizing within approximately 200 yards of a nest box on ERS property. By late February, those owls had stopped vocalizing. Hoping that the owls had chosen to nest, I checked the box on 31 March 2010. Lo and behold, I found a beautiful adult Northern Saw-whet Owl looking back at me. According to Cannings (1987), incubation lasts 27–29 days in this species. Not knowing when incubation had begun, I decided to return in two weeks. I didn't want to climb the nest tree and open the box until I was sure that the eggs had hatched, because if incubating birds are bothered before the eggs hatch, there is a chance that the birds could abandon their nest.

On 15 April, after plugging the nest box entrance, I opened the side door of the nest box and found the adult female saw-whet owl along with two owlets, three eggs, and four deer mice (*Peromyscus maniculatus*), one of which was half eaten. Knowing that saw-whet owls lay one egg every other day but begin incubating as soon as the first egg is laid (Cannings 1993), I concluded that the first egg had hatched on 13 April and the second had hatched that morning.

On 7 May, I went back to the nest box to band the owlets. I walked to the nest tree with ladder in hand. The female was at the entrance of the nest box watching me. I tried to plug the hole, but she was having nothing to do with that, and flew to a nearby ponderosa branch. I climbed the ladder and opened the box to find five owlets inside (Fig. 3). I placed all five owlets in a canvas bag and lowered them to the ground. All owlets were weighed, measured, banded, and then returned to the box. Two of the owlets weighed 99 grams; the others weighed 96, 95, and 66 grams, respectively.

I checked the box again on 18 May to find all the owlets still in the box along with a partially eaten deer mouse.

On 21 May, I arrived within view of the nest tree at 10:00 A.M. and found the first fledgling perched approximately 15 feet from the nest box on a limb of an adjacent ponderosa. Two more owlets were found on 2 June perched next to the trunk of another ponderosa approximately 50 feet from the ground. Two fledgling Clark's Nutcrackers (*Nucifraga columbiana*) were begging for food and chasing one of their parents in and around the trees adjacent to the ponderosa that the owlets were perched in. The owlets did not move and were not detected. Unfortunately, I did not see the other two owlets fledge.

Observations of Nest #3 (Northern Saw-whet Owl)

At 9:15 A.M. on 15 March, I was out with a professional photographer friend, Steve Morello, in hopes that he would be able to photograph the Northern Pygmy-Owl. As I was searching the woods for the owl, Steve bumped against a dead aspen tree and a Northern Saw-whet Owl popped her head from a south-facing abandoned Northern Flicker cavity approximately 27 feet from the ground. The tree itself was only about 35 feet high with a DBH of 37.25 inches.

As it turned out, the tree with the saw-whet owl nest was only 47 feet 8 inches from the tree containing the pygmy-owl nest. In and around RMNP, it is common to find Northern Saw-whet Owls and Northern Pygmy-Owls in the same habitat (Rashid 2009). Bailey and Neidrach (1965), Norton and Holt (1982), and I (in 2004) had previously found pygmy-owls and saw-whet owls nesting in very close proximity at the same time, even in the same tree.

On several occasions prior to the owlets' fledging, the female saw-whet owl was seen peering from her nest during the day. The first time I saw the saw-whet owlets looking out of the natural cavity was 17 June. The size of the cavity was such that only a single owlet could look out of the opening at a time, so I had no idea how many owlets were inside. When Northern Saw-whet Owls nest in an abandoned Northern Flicker cavity, they most often have a maximum of three young (Rashid 1999). I believe this is because there is no room in the cavity for more than the three young and the female. However, if a nest box is made large enough, the pair can often raise five or more owlets in a season.

On 16 June, an owlet was peering from the nest cavity in the aspen tree. On 19 June, after several minutes of searching, I found the first fledgling very well-concealed in a Douglas-fir approximately 6 feet from its nest. On 21 June, the two remaining owlets were located perched in a Douglas-fir 47 feet 7 inches from their nest, and only 8 feet 9 inches from the Northern Pygmy-Owl nest tree. One owlet was perched 6 feet 5 inches from the ground against the trunk while the other was 12 feet from the ground perched about three feet from the trunk. I was able to reach up and grasp the lower owlet to band, measure, and weigh it before returning it to its original perch. The third owlet, on the other hand, was too high to reach. The following day, after a long search, an owlet was located 129 feet from its nest, perched against the trunk of an 8 foot high Douglas-fir. That was the last time I was able to locate any of those fledgling Northern Saw-whet Owls.

Species Nesting Nearby

During the nesting season there were several species nesting within a few yards of the owls, including Northern Flicker (*Colaptes auratus*), which nested in an aspen tree that was 13 feet 9 inches from the pygmy-owl nest (Nest #1). Pygmy Nuthatches (*Sitta pygmaea*), Hairy Woodpeckers, Plumbeous Vireos (*Vireo plumbeus*), Red-naped Sapsuckers (*Sphyrapicus nuchalis*), Cedar Waxwings (*Bombycilla cedrorum*), and House Wrens (*Troglodytes aedon*) were also found nesting in the area. Even though these other birds were in close proximity to the owls, I did not witness any interaction between them and the owls.

Prey Items of the Two Species

The prey of Northern Saw-whet Owls consists primarily of small mammals (Catling 1972, Cannings 1987, Holt et al. 1990). Personally, I have never found Northern Saw-whet Owls preying upon

Table 1. Prey items of Northern Pygmy-Owls identified from Colorado, 1998–2010.

<u>Mammals:</u>	<u>Birds:</u>
Montane Vole (<i>Microtus montanus</i>)	Downy Woodpecker (<i>Picoides pubescens</i>)
Meadow Vole (<i>Microtus pennsylvanicus</i>)	Red-breasted Nuthatch (<i>Sitta canadensis</i>)
Red-backed Vole (<i>Myodes californicus</i>)	Mountain Chickadee (<i>Poecile gambeli</i>)
Northern Pocket Gopher (<i>Thomomys talpoides</i>)	House Wren (<i>Troglodytes aedon</i>)
House Mouse (<i>Mus musculus</i>)	Townsend's Solitaire (<i>Myadestes townsendi</i>)
Colorado Chipmunk (<i>Neotamias quadrivittatus</i>)	Broad-tailed Hummingbird (<i>Selasphorus platycercus</i>)
Least Chipmunk (<i>Eutamias minimus</i>)	"Gray-headed" Dark-eyed Junco (<i>Junco hyemalis</i>)
	Brown-capped Rosy-Finch (<i>Leucosticte australis</i>)
	Pine Siskin (<i>Spinus pinus</i>)
	House Sparrow (<i>Passer domesticus</i>)

anything other than deer mice. In the two saw-whet owl nests I monitored in 2010, every prey item I identified was a deer mouse. I identified prey items from bones in pellets, carcasses inside nest boxes, and photographs of the prey that the male delivered to the female at night. Other researchers have documented Northern Saw-whet Owls consuming other species of mice, voles, shrews, insects, and occasionally squirrels and chipmunks (Cannings 1993).

The Northern Pygmy-Owl has a much more diverse diet (Holman 1926, Bent 1938, Holt and Peterson 2000). From 1998-2010, I identified a number of prey items that Northern Pygmy-Owls have fed upon (Table 1). Each prey item in the table was identified either from photographs that I had taken, or from prey remains that were vacuumed from a nest in 1998. In 2010, the Northern Pygmy-Owls that I monitored fed solely upon chipmunks and voles, as far as I could tell.

The prey items that the male delivers to the female are often more assorted than what the female catches herself (at least near her nest). While the male is out and about within the pair's territory, he will often attack a variety of prey items, including nestling birds (Rashid 1999, Holt and Peterson 2000). The female, on the other hand, will not attack birds near her nest. I believe this is because she does not want to draw attention to her nest and young. When she attacks solely mammals, birds in the area often show little interest in her.

LITERATURE CITED

- Bailey, A.M. and R.J. Niedrach. 1965. Pictorial Checklist of Colorado Birds. Denver Museum of Natural History, Denver.
- Bent, A.C. 1938. Life Histories of North American Birds of Prey Part 2. United States National Museum Bulletin #170.

- Catling, P.M. 1972. Food and pellet analysis studies of Saw-whet Owl (*Aegolius acadicus*). Ontario Field Biologist 26: 1-15.
- Holman, F.C. 1926. Nesting of the California Pygmy Owl in Yosemite. Condor 28: 92-93.
- Holt, D.W., and J.L. Petersen. 2000. Northern Pygmy-Owl (*Glaucidium gnoma*). In The Birds of North America Online (A. Poole, Ed.). Ithaca: Cornell Lab of Ornithology; Retrieved from the Birds of North America Online: <http://bna.birds.cornell.edu/bna/species/494>
- Holt, D.W., and W.D. Norton. 1986. Observations of nesting Northern Pygmy-Owls. Journal of Raptor Research 20: 39-41.
- Norton, W.D., and D.W. Holt. 1982. Simultaneous nesting of Northern Pygmy-Owls and Northern Saw-whets in the same snag. Murrelet 63: 94.
- Rashid, S. 1999. Northern Pygmy-Owls in Rocky Mountain National Park. C.F.O. Journal. 33: 94-101
- Rashid, S. 2009. Small Mountain Owls. Schiffer Books.
- Scott Rashid, P.O. Box 3351, Estes Park, CO 80517

Dorytomus Weevil Larvae in Cottonwood Catkins

Dave Leatherman

Many years ago at Crow Valley Campground near Briggsdale in Weld County, I first wondered why so many migrating passerines, mostly Orange-crowned Warblers in late April, were frequenting the flowers of plains cottonwoods (*Populus deltoides*, Fig. 1). My initial assumption was that they were primarily feeding either on the flowers themselves, as Cedar Waxwings and House Finches sometimes feed on the petals of crabapples, or on the bees, wasps, and flies that pollinate the flowers.

Some years later, after noticing that the cottonwood catkins along the Poudre River in Fort Collins were attracting many birds, I collected several dangling flowers. To my surprise the catkins contained the same insect, over and over. It was a whitish beetle larva, very similar to the pine bark beetle larvae found under the bark of dying pines, but

smaller. I placed a few infested catkins in a jar in my "lab" (a.k.a. my kitchen) and waited. What emerged weeks later were gray, long-snouted weevils in the genus *Dorytomus* (Fig. 2). Since then, my investigations of the known "birdy" cottonwood sites in Colorado, including the Lamar Community College Woods and Bonny Reservoir, have consistently produced the same result: *Dorytomus* larvae in the cottonwood catkins.

I propose that the catkin-infesting larvae of *Dorytomus* weevils are an underappreciated source of food for many bird species in spring migration, wherever cottonwoods grow in Colorado. It is quite possible that birds also feast on *Dorytomus* larvae in the catkins of aspen trees, although I have no personal experience to support this.

A catkin three to four inches long typically contains multiple weevil larvae. Each larva resembles a small grain



Fig. 1. Male plains cottonwood catkins, Lamar, Prowers County, 22 April 2010. Photo by the author

of cooked rice. I have observed warblers (Fig. 3), vireos, kinglets, orioles, Red-winged Blackbirds, House Finches, grosbeaks, and tanagers all vigorously seeking them, but the complete list of weevil seekers is probably much longer. In east-central England, Morris (1998) strongly suspected several bird species (Blue, Marsh, Willow, Long-tailed, and Coal Tits) of preying on *Dorytomus* larvae in aspen catkins.

Worldwide, the genus *Dorytomus* contains about 78 species, all of them in the Palearctic and Nearctic except for two species in South Africa. The fossil record of this genus comes from locations as widely separate as the Baltic Region (in amber), France, and Florissant, Colorado, all dating from the Lower Oligocene (28-34 million years ago). O'Brien's (1970) revision of North American *Dorytomus* lists 22 species, 14 of which probably occur in Colorado. The Gillette Arthropod Museum at Colorado State University contains specimens of seven species collected in Colorado, including all four species in the state that are known to feed on cottonwood flowers.

Life Cycle

Information on the biology of the various North American *Dorytomus* weevils is sparse at best. So far as is known, all the North American species infest plants in the genus *Populus* (cottonwood and aspen) or *Salix* (willow). Available information (Morris 1969, 1998; O'Brien 1970) indicates that the poplar-loving species feed on both male and female flowers (catkins) during the larval stage, and to a lesser extent on vegetative buds and new leaves as adults. The willow species have been found in catkins, in galls made by sawflies in the genus *Euura*, and in galls made by certain midges. Each species seems to be specific in the timing and exact nature of its feeding, as would be expected when a single host plant might potentially be shared by more than one species of weevil. In cottonwoods, both male and female catkins are apparently utilized. However, when the life histories of the various species of *Dorytomus* are worked out, it may be found that different species may prefer male or female flowers, either temporarily or continually.

For the species I have observed on the eastern plains of Colo-



Fig. 2. Adult *Dorytomus weevil* on a cottonwood flower bud at Crow Valley Campground, Weld County, 15 April 2010. Photo by the author



Fig. 3. Palm Warbler foraging among cottonwood catkins below Two Buttes Dam, Baca County, 22 April 2007. Photo by the author

rado (probably *D. inaequalis* and/or *D. mucidus*), the life cycle appears to go as follows. The larvae hatch in spring from eggs in the flower buds. The eggs are either laid the previous autumn, or earlier in the spring by overwintering adults. These larvae, enriched by pollen, ovaries, or other structural flower parts, are what the birds search for in cottonwood catkins. The immature weevils pass through several instars (that is, stages between molts) and mature very quickly, taking only 7-10 days to go from the egg to maximum size (6-7 mm; O'Brien 1970). They feed inside individual flowers or within the catkin stalks to which the many flowers are attached. This feeding, particularly if it occurs early in the

life of a catkin, causes the catkin tip to shrivel and then the entire catkin to arch. Presumably, these are the clues, perhaps subtle to us but conspicuous to passerines, used to facilitate sorting and productive foraging in a huge cottonwood crown filled with tens of thousands of catkins.

Late-instar larvae are whitish, plump, segmented, legless grubs with brown head capsules. When they finish feeding, they drop to the ground (presumably within the dead, dry catkins they fed on) and burrow into the leaf litter and upper soil to pupate. I speculate that adults emerge in late spring or early summer, at which time they probably engage in "maturation feeding" on young leaves and aestivate in the litter or other protected locations during the hot months of summer. The adults likely become active in fall and mate. Some eggs are laid in autumn, the adults overwinter in the litter or protected locations (including sometimes invading human abodes), re-emerge in spring, finish laying eggs, and then die (O'Brien 1970).

In apparent contrast to the general life history suggested by the scant literature, the adult pictured in this article was seen inserting its long snout deep into cottonwood buds at Crow Valley on 15 April 2010. Other adults were seen mating on this date. Spring in 2010 was generally "late," which complicates interpretation of the events. Frankly, I do not know what was going on in the photo. Most likely

it is an overwintering adult male engaged in maturation feeding on a flower bud, prior to mating with a female weevil that will then lay eggs on, or into, similar flower buds or newly emerged catkins. We just do not know much about these creatures. Regardless, the action depicted will indirectly or directly result in flower-fed weevil larvae and thus potential food for birds.

Conclusion

This spring, watch those migrants working a flowering cottonwood (from mid-April in southern Colorado to mid-May in northern Colorado and at higher elevations). The birds are worthy of more than an ID and, if you are lucky, maybe a phone call to tell others you've found a rarity. They are worthy of true scrutiny. The birds are not just pecking here and there at random; the catkins are their focus. At first human glance the catkins all look similar, but avian hunters purposefully pass over certain flowers in favor of others. Prove to yourself that they are not eating flowers *per se*, but something that is contained inside only certain flowers. Collect catkins within arm's reach on lower branches, or freshly fallen ones, and search for pale larvae inside. Certainly, other insects can and do occur in such situations, such as tiny moth caterpillars. But the overwhelming majority of food items embedded within the catkins, and the primary one worth all the concerted excavation performed by birds, seems to be weevil larvae in the genus *Dorytomus*.

As always, I welcome your observations.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

Thanks are due to two colleagues at Colorado State University. Dr. Boris Kondratieff checked and summarized the Gillette Museum Collection, helped search the literature, and facilitated my obtaining key papers. Shiloh McCollum also assisted my obtaining literature.

LITERATURE CITED

- Morris, M.G. 1969. Notes on the life history of *Dorytomus hirtipennis*. The Entomologist's Monthly Magazine 105: 207-209.
- Morris, M.G. 1998. Comparative aspects of the biology of three species of *Dorytomus* (Col., Curculionidae) associated with aspen, *Populus tremulae*. The Entomologist's Monthly Magazine 134: 197-213.
- O'Brien, Charles William. 1970. A taxonomic revision of the weevil genus *Dorytomus* in North America (Coleoptera: Curculionidae). University of California Publications in Entomology 60.
- Robbins, John. 1997. *Dorytomus taeniatus* in the catkins of *Salix*. Cecidology 12: 42-43.

Dave Leatherman, 612 Stover Street #7, Fort Collins, CO 80524, daleatherman@msn.com, (970) 416-0193

Grand Junction

Karen Levad

Birders of the Grand Valley take eating almost as seriously as their quest for birds. Almost. At a recent Grand Valley Audubon Society meeting, members enthusiastically recommended their favorite eating establishments. Underlying all of our recommendations was the desire to avoid chains; we wanted to send you to locations that were unique to this area and that had all been taste-tested. Here's where we would go.

Mexican

I'm not sure that you can go wrong stopping at any Mexican restaurant in Grand Junction; I haven't had a bad meal yet. But **WW Peppers**, located at 753 Horizon Court (about a block away from the Double-Tree Hotel), is a local favorite. Its tag line is "a generous portion of good things," and that's accurate; it's a great place to get good southwestern food.

Aztecas Family Mexican Restaurant, located at 603 US Highway 50 on Orchard Mesa, was mentioned, as was **Dos Hombres**, a longtime establishment with two locations: 421 Brach Drive (off of Broadway; you pass it on your way to the Grand Valley Audubon Nature Center) and 3245 I-70 Business Loop in Clifton.

I've had great margaritas at **Conchita's** located at 625 24½ Road; they've got some not-so-typical menu items that add a bit of flair to the dining adventure. I also want people to head towards Main Street; many of the local folks are making an extra effort to shop and eat downtown while construction is happening there. With that in mind, if you're wanting Mexican, then you could try **La Bamba** located upstairs at 546 Main Street. It's authentic and good.

Downtown

There are lots of options on Main Street. My favorite Italian restaurant is **Il Bistrot**, located on the corner of 4th and Main. It's a finer dining experience and reservations are required, but my, it's good. You can make reservations online at <http://www.ilbistrotitaliano.com>.

Another ethnic option is the **Nepal Restaurant** located in the 300 block of Main Street and specializing in Indian cuisine. A great buffet is available at lunchtime and a full menu at dinner. It's a break from the ordinary. In that same block is **Pablo's Pizza**, the 2005 Best of the West "Best Pizzeria" winner. I've enjoyed the "Extra Veggie Extravaganza" and a beer there with Brenda and Coen. Pretty fine! **The Dream Café** is also in the 300 block; they have good breakfasts and lunches.

Also recommended in the downtown area are **Naggy McGee's Irish Pub** at 4th and Colorado and the **Rockslide** at 4th and Main, a brew pub. Near Mesa State College there are two more breweries: the **Ale House Brew Pub** at 12th and Patterson and the **Kannah Creek Brewing Company** at 1960 North 12th near Orchard.

Asian

Four Asian establishments were recommended. The first was **EC's Asian Station**, a new restaurant in town located in the shopping center on the corner of 1st and Grand. It was described as having "classy tasting Asian food and good prices." The **Zen Garden** at 2886 North Avenue has great sushi and enthusiastic service. Also mentioned were **No Coast Sushi** located at 1st and North and **Chin Chin** at 32 Road and the I-70 Business Loop in Clifton.

Palisade

I love all of these eateries: the **Red Rose Café**, the **Palisade Café**, and **Inari's**, all located on or near Main Street in downtown Palisade. I've also enjoyed the **Palisade Distillery** (which is not exactly an eating establishment, but a great sipping location!) and the **Palisade Brewery**. And then, of course, there are the wineries.....

Miscellaneous

We shouldn't forget coffee! **Main Street Bagels** provides coffee, great bagel sandwiches, and amazing pastries at 6th and Main downtown and at 10th and North in the south campus area of Mesa State. **Traders Coffee** at 7th and Patterson across from St Mary's Hospital has great coffee and pastries too; they have another location on East Main in Montrose.

Fruita's **Hot Tomato Café** at 124 North Mulberry is another location to get great pizza and beer. It's a favorite meeting spot for cyclists who've had a hard day of biking the Kokopelli Trail; I bet birders would like it too.

Farther outside the Grand Junction area, we recommend **Daveto's Italian Restaurant** in Delta, which has wonderful spaghetti; **Zack's BBQ** in Hotchkiss (described to us as "the best"), and another of my favorites: the **Camp Robber Café** in Montrose. That's bird-related, isn't it?

Grand Valley Audubon welcomes you to western Colorado. May you have a great experience here that includes all the things that make this a great place to live and to visit!

Karen Levad, (970) 314-9071, levadgj@bresnan.net

Fall 2010 (August–November)

Joel Such and Marcel Such

Fall, like spring, is one of those seasons that is chock-full of new, different, and beautiful birds due to a peculiar force in nature called migration. But autumn is unique in its own right. We have birds that we never see except during this special time of year, such as Sabine's Gulls, jaegers, and Townsend's Warblers. And starting in late July, the number of common hummingbird species doubles within weeks. In addition to our breeders—Broad-tailed Hummingbirds in the mountains and Black-chinneds in the south and west—the feisty Rufous and dainty Calliope are added to the hummer ranks.

Among the many highlights this season, standouts include Colorado's potential second state record of Crested Caracara, found and well photographed in Chaffee County, and the potential thirteenth state record of Connecticut Warbler, found in Weld County. But the true highlight was an adult Ross's Gull found at Cherry Creek State Park in Arapahoe County, where it was seen by many, including plenty of out-of-state "twitchers," over the course of its week-long stay. This bird will become Colorado's third state record, pending CBRC acceptance. It was also a good season for first county records: Montrose had its first Greater Scaup, Lake had its first Brown Thrasher, Boulder had its first Sprague's Pipit, Dolores had its first Blackburnian Warbler, and La Plata had its first McCown's Longspur.

The weather this fall (NWSFO, 2011) was overall very warm and dry, resulting in some very late reports for many species. August nearly made the list of top ten warmest Augusts in Denver, with an average temperature of 73.8 degrees (F), 2.1 degrees above normal and missing that tenth spot on the list by 0.3 degrees. As for the precipitation that month, a grand total of 1.05 inches was collected, which was 0.77 inches below normal. September followed with an average temperature of 67 degrees, tied for the seventh warmest September on record, 4.6 degrees above the norm. This month also had a near-trace amount of precipitation, recording 0.06 inches, 1.08 inches below the norm, tying for the fifth driest September on record.

October continued the warm and dry trend with an average temperature of 55.3 degrees, 4.3 degrees above the norm, and precipitation of 0.54 inches, 0.45 inches below normal. November cooled down to an average temperature of 38.3 degrees, only 0.8 degrees above normal, but it was still dry, with only 0.49 inches of precipitation, exactly half the normal amount. In the department of fronts and storms, August was pretty tumultuous, with 10 thunderstorms

reported from Denver International Airport, but after that, exciting weather rolled in much less frequently. September only had a single storm, October had a total of three, and November had zero storms reported.

“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 to 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 Bird Records Committee, who then sends them in taxonomic order, along with comments, to the “News from the Field” editor (*editors*, in our case) 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 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 names of counties are *italicized*.

Abbreviations: **CBR** – Chico Basin Ranch, *El Paso/Pueblo*; **CBRC** – Colorado Bird Records Committee; **CG** – campground; **doc.** – documentation submitted to CBRC; **no doc.** – no documentation submitted to CBRC; **FCRP** – Fountain Creek Regional Park, *El Paso*; **LCCW** – Lamar Community College Woods, *Prowers*; **m.ob.** – many observers; **Res.** – reservoir; **SP** – State Park; **SWA** – State Wildlife Area; **WS** – West Slope.

Greater White-fronted Goose: The twelve reports with a total of 18 individuals came from the counties *Boulder* (2 reports), *Douglas*, *El Paso*, *Huerfano*, *Larimer*, *Montrose*, *Pueblo* (2), *Sedgwick*, and *Weld* (2). The first report of the sea-

son came from Nucla, *Montrose*, on 25 Oct (CDe), and the last of the season was reported at Lagerman Res., *Boulder*, on 28 Nov (BK). The high count of a measly four was observed at Pueblo Res., *Pueblo*, on 29 Oct (BP, BM).

Snow Goose: There were two reports this season from the WS, where the species is rare. The first of these was of a white-phase adult on Lake Catamount, *Routt*, on 20 Nov (TL), and the second was of a juvenile reported from Craig, *Moffat*, on 23 Nov (FL).

Brant: Two individuals of this rare goose species were reported this fall, both of them juveniles. The first was found at Lakecrest at Gateway Apartments in *Denver* on 28 Nov (TP, no doc). The second one was seen at Jumbo Res., *Sedgwick*, also on 28 Nov (CW, doc).

Trumpeter Swan: Six reports comprising fourteen individuals came from *Huerfano*, *Jackson*, *Lake*, and *Weld*. The first report was of three individuals at Twin Lakes, *Lake*, on 6 Nov (TK). The high count and last report of the season was of four individuals seen at Arrowhead Lake, *Weld*, on 27 Oct (GL).

Tundra Swan: There were an incredible 19 reports and 55 individuals of this swan species reported this season from the counties *Arapahoe*, *Boulder*, *Delta*, *El Paso*, *Huerfano*, *Jackson*, *Jefferson*, *Mesa*, *Moffat*, *Park*, and *Routt*. The first report of the season was of two on Antero Res., *Park*, on Oct 28 (JD, MEO, JM), and the last was of an immature on Ish Res., *Boulder*, on 26 Nov (PG).

Swan sp.: A flyover swan of unknown species was reported over east Boulder, *Boulder*, on Nov 24 (CC).

Wood Duck: There were four reports this season from four different unusual locations. The first report was of up to eight individuals at the CMS

Pond, Craig, *Moffat*, from 1 Aug to 12 Sep (FL). The second of these reports was of an individual in Holyoke, *Phillips*, on 10 Oct (CW). The third was found at Sarvis Canyon, *Routt*, on 11 Oct (CDo), and the last was a female found on North Lake, *Las Animas*, on 13 Nov (MP).

Eurasian Wigeon: There were two reports of this uncommon dabbler, both of males. The first was found at Fossil Creek Res., *Larimer*, 5-7 Nov (JBr, CW, m.ob., doc.). The second report was from Lake Catamount, *Routt*, on 12 Nov (TL, no doc.).

Cinnamon Teal: A fairly late alternate-plumaged male was found at Fossil Creek Res., *Larimer*, on 22 Nov (NK).

Greater Scaup: *Montrose* had a first county record in the form of a first-year bird in Nucla on 28 Nov (CDe, BW).

Surf Scoter: A good number were reported this season, with 20 reports totalling 33 individuals. The counties with reports were *Alamosa*, *Boulder*, *El Paso*, *Gunnison*, *Huerfano* (6 reports), *Jackson*, *Larimer* (2), *Las Animas*, *Mesa*, *Ouray*, *Park* (2), and *Pueblo* (2).

White-winged Scoter: Becoming ever more prevalent in the state, this species generated four reports outside of Front Range reservoirs. The first was of an adult male and an immature at Antero Res., *Park*, on 31 Oct (JK); the second was of a bird found at Cheney Res., *Mesa*, on 11 Nov (GT); the third came from Trinidad Lake SP, *Las Animas*, on 20 Nov (MP, DM); and the last was found on Spinney Mountain Res., *Park*, on 21 Nov (JK).

Black Scoter: The least common

of the scoters generated eleven reports of seventeen birds from nine counties: *Arapahoe*, *Boulder* (2 reports, including a female at Baseline Res. that continued into the winter), *Douglas/Jefferson*, *El Paso*, *Gunnison* (where a female on Blue Mesa Res. on 19 Oct set a record for earliest date for the WS by three days), *Larimer* (2 reports), *Las Animas*, and *Pueblo*.

Long-tailed Duck: Five reports with a total of six individuals came in this fall, with one WS report. The first bird was found on 30 Oct at Lathrop SP, *Huerfano* (PPN). The second was an adult male on Horseshoe Lake, *Larimer*, on 22 Nov (NK). The third was found on Pueblo Res., *Pueblo*, 23-28 Nov (RMi). The fourth was a juvenile on Union Res., *Weld*, on 26 Nov (PG, EK). The last report was of a juvenile and a female at Rifle Gap Res., *Garfield*, on 28 Nov (TM, FL, VZ), continuing through the end of the season.

Barrow's Goldeneye: Of the fifteen reports of 136 individuals, the high count of 56 came from the Carbondale area, *Garfield/Eagle*, on 28 Nov (TM, KMc, LV). The first report of the season was of a male from the Mount Elbert Forebay, *Lake*, on 23 Oct (TK).

Red-breasted Merganser: Rare WS finds were ten seen 4-20 Nov on Highline Res., *Mesa* (LA, BBr). Establishing a new elevation record for this species in Colorado, one was seen at over 10,000 feet on Overland Res., *Delta*, on 8 Nov (DG). A female-type



Red-throated Loon, *Cherry Creek SP*, 16 Nov 2010. Photo by Glenn Walbek

was found on Ridgway Res., *Ouray*, on 13 Nov (CDe); and the last report of the period was of a female at the Craig Station Inlet Pond, *Moffat*, on 27 Nov (FL).

Red-throated Loon: The season total of five reports of six individuals of this bird, one of the more common Colorado review species, was right around average. The first was of an adult in basic plumage from Boyd Lake, *Larimer*, on 5 Nov (CW, doc.); the second was of two birds, a basic adult and a juvenile, on Chatfield Res., *Douglas/Jefferson*, 10-28 Nov (JK, GW, m.ob., doc.); the third came from Marston Res., *Denver*, on 14 Nov (DK, MG, no doc.); a basic-plumaged bird was found at Pueblo Res., *Pueblo*, 15-17 Nov (BP, doc.); and the final report of the season was of a juvenile from Cherry Creek Res., *Arapahoe*, 16-20 Nov (GW, JR, CW, m.ob., doc.).

Pacific Loon: With 24 reports of 27 birds from a total of eleven counties, this was a superb season for this species. The first report was of a hold-over from the summer season, a molt-

ing bird on McIntosh Res., *Boulder*, that stayed until 28 Sep (m.ob.). The first “regular” bird, however, was not found until 15 Oct, on Boulder Res., *Boulder* (SS). The last report of the season came from Lagerman Res., *Boulder*, on 18 Nov (BK).



Red-necked Grebe:

It was good season for this species; twelve reports of thirteen birds was a bit above average. The first report came from Cherry Creek Res., *Arapahoe*, where two birds—a juvenile and an adult—were found on 5 Oct (GW, KMD, m.ob.).

Western Grebe: A high count of 1,416 birds was observed at Standley Lake, *Jefferson*, on 12 Oct (LS).

American White Pelican: A rather late report was of a single bird found at Jumbo Res., *Sedgwick*, on 17 Nov (LS). According to Andrews and Righter (1992), there have been several reports of wintering birds on the far Eastern Plains, all of which have been injured birds that were unable to fly. No information was provided as to this particular bird’s physical health.

Double-crested Cormorant: A late record from a somewhat high elevation was of a single bird found in the Mamm Creek Ponds in Rifle, *Garfield*, on 13 Nov (TM).

Least Bittern: The single report this fall came from the Fort Lyon marshes, *Bent*, on 29 Sep (MP, BSt, no doc.).

Red-necked Grebe, Cherry Creek SP, *Arapahoe County*, 7 Oct 2010. Photo by Kyle Huffstater

Reddish Egret: A white-morph bird was seen on John Martin Res., *Bent*, from 18 Aug to 8 Oct (DN, doc.).

Cattle Egret: A rather high count of 170 came from Lower Latham Res., *Weld*, on 19 Sep (TS, m.ob.). Also, in an odd WS sighting, two birds were found in Fruita, *Mesa*, 28-30 Oct (BW).

Green Heron: There were four reports of this species away from its usual breeding haunts on the northern Front Range. The first was of an immature bird at Lathrop SP, *Huerfano*, on 9 Aug (RMi); the second came from Grand Junction, *Mesa*, on 5 Sep (KN); the third from Fruitgrowers Res., *Delta*, on 3 Oct (m.ob.); and the last, an adult, from Bent’s Bird Sanctuary, *Las Animas*, *Bent*, on 7 Oct (RMi).

Osprey: A rather late report of two birds came from Valco Ponds, *Pueblo*, on 10 Nov (BP).

Mississippi Kite: A mixed-age

flock of ten birds was seen in Holyoke, *Phillips*, on 14 Aug (LS); two were also seen in downtown Colorado Springs, *El Paso*, 26-27 Aug (JD); and the final report of the season came from Prewitt Res., *Washington*, where a juvenile was seen 9-12 Sep (NE, JR, GW).

Northern Goshawk: At the rather low elevation of about 5000 feet, a bird was found at Escalante SWA, *Delta*, on 31 Oct (JBe).

Broad-winged Hawk: It was a good season for this species, with nine reports of single individuals from the counties *Boulder* (2 reports), *Fremont*, *Larimer* (2), *Mesa*, *Prowers*, and *Pueblo* (2). The first report came from the Cañon City Riverwalk, *Fremont*, on 15 Sep (RMi), and the last came from the Stulp Farm south of Lamar, *Prowers*, on 7 Oct (DL).

Crested Caracara: A highlight of the season, one of these large tropical falcons was found and well documented at the Chalk Bluff Fish Hatchery, *Chaffee*, 4-7 Oct (ST, RHa, doc.). If accepted by the CBRC, this will be the second state record, and the first uninjured caracara in the state. The first state record was of an injured bird found on 29 Sep 1997 in Trinidad, *Las Animas*. After its discovery, the 1997 caracara was taken to a rehabilitation center, successfully rehabilitated, and released.

Merlin: A rather early sighting of this

small falcon came from Crow Valley CG, *Weld*, on 21 Aug (JBr).

Gyr Falcon: An excellent find was a gray juvenile found near Como, *Park*, on 28 Nov (JK, doc).

Whooping Crane: An intriguing sighting came in of a single bird at Elliot SWA, *Morgan*, 1-14 Oct, found by Colorado Division of Wildlife staff and apparently photographed (no doc.).

Black-bellied Plover: This species usually comes in ones and twos; the excellent high count this season was of four at Walden Res., *Jackson*, on 1 Oct (LS).

American Golden-Plover: The four reports of four birds this season were a bit below the average count. The first rather early individual was a juvenile at Boulder Res., *Boulder*, 11-13 Sep (TF); the second was at Timnath Res., *Larimer*, on 6 Oct (CW); the third was at John Martin Res., *Bent*, on 8 Oct (MP); and the last was at Prewitt Res., *Washington*, on 9 Oct (TJ).



Gyr Falcon, Como, Park County, 28 Nov 2010. Photo by Joey Kellner

Semipalmated Plover: There were two reports from the WS, where this species is rare. The first came from Stagecoach Res., *Routt*, on 19 Aug (LA), and the second came from the WPMC Ponds, *Craig, Moffat*, on 29 Aug (FL).

Mountain Plover: A rather late report of two came from northeast of Kit Carson, *Cheyenne*, on 8 Oct (MP).

American Avocet: In a rare WS report, an incredible twenty individuals were seen on the WPMC Ponds, *Craig, Moffat*, 11 Sep to 22 Oct (FL). There were also two late reports; the first was of two birds at Lake Maria, *Huerfano*, on 4 Nov (DS, BP), and the second was of a single bird standing on an ice-covered McIntosh Lake, *Boulder*, on the extremely late date of 25 Nov (BZ).

Black-necked Stilt: In a rather late report, a single bird was found on John Martin Res., *Bent*, on 9 Oct (MM).

Solitary Sandpiper: There were three reports this season of this rare

migrant on the WS. The first two were on the same date of 19 Aug at Freeman Res., *Moffat* (FL), and at Stagecoach Res., *Routt* (LA). The last report came from the CMS Ponds, *Craig, Moffat*, from 24 Aug to 12 Sep (CDo, FL).

Greater Yellowlegs: There were two records this fall from the WS, where the species is uncommon. The first came from Piceance Creek Road, *Rio Blanco*, on 14 Aug (TM), and the second was of six birds from CMS Pond, *Craig, Moffat*, 17 Aug to 18 Sep (FL, YVBC). There were also three late reports from the East Slope: from Highland Lake, *Weld*, on 2 Nov (DL); from Walden Ponds, *Boulder*, on 10 Nov (SS); and from Pueblo Res., *Pueblo*, on 12 Nov (BP).

Willet: Casual on the WS after mid-August, two birds were found at Ridgway Res., *Ouray*, on 31 Oct (CDe, BW).

Upland Sandpiper: Nocturnal migrants were heard over Lamar, *Prowers*, on 4 Aug (DL) and over Lafayette, *Boulder*, on 14, 24, and 31 Aug (TF). A single bird was west of Grover, *Weld*, on 19 Aug (IS).

Long-billed Curlew:

An excellent mountain reservoir find was of a single bird at Lake DeWeese, *Custer*, on 31 Aug (RMi).

Marbled Godwit: Another good higher elevation find was of a single bird at Lake DeWeese, *Custer*, on 13 Sep (RMi).

Ruddy Turnstone: There was only a single



Dunlin, Chatfield SP, Douglas County, 3 Nov 2010.
Photo by Mark Chavez

report of this stout little eastern beach-comber this season, from Jumbo Res., Sedgwick, on 27 Aug, where a single juvenile was found (NE, JK, GW).

Sanderling: It was a very poor showing for this species, with only three reports of eleven birds during the period. The first of these reports came from Prewitt Res., Washington, on 3 Sep (CW); the second from Luna Res., Weld, on 19 Sep (CW); and the last from Walden Res., Jackson, on 1 Oct (LS).

Semipalmated Sandpiper: Though a common migrant on the East Slope, this species is a rare find on the WS. However, one or two birds were found at the CMS Pond in Craig, Moffat, 21-29 Aug (FL, YVBC, CDo).

Western Sandpiper: Like the above species, this is another uncommon WS find. A single bird was found on the Piceance Creek Road, Rio Blanco, on 14 Aug (TM), and another seven birds were found at the CMS Pond, Moffat, on 29 Aug (FL).

Pectoral Sandpiper: Rare WS finds were up to ten at the CMS Pond, Moffat, from 14 Aug to 11 Sep (FL, YVBC), and two more at the same locale 15-22 Oct (FL).

Dunlin: It was a good season for this species, with a total of seven reports of ten birds. Highlights were two found in Mesa on 6 Nov, the first at Highline Res. (RW) and the other in Grand Junction (LA). The other counties with reports are *Arapahoe*, *Douglas* (2 reports), *Larimer*, and *Weld*.

Stilt Sandpiper: A rare find for Moffat, two juveniles were seen at the CMS Pond on 24 Aug (CDo). Also a good find was a single bird on Lake DeWeese, Custer, on 25 Aug (RMi).

Buff-breasted Sandpiper: With two records from the period, this season's count was slightly below average. The first report came from McIntosh Lake, Boulder, on 2 Aug (CW, doc.), and the second from a pond off of I-76 near Brush, Morgan, on 18 Aug (DF, doc.).

Short-billed Dowitcher: It was a poor season for this species, with only two reports, the first of six birds at Prewitt Res., Washington, on 1 Aug (CW), and the other of a lone juvenile at CBR, Pueblo, 13-15 Sep (BG).

Long-billed Dowitcher: Late reports came in of 22 birds at Smith Res., Costilla, on 30 Oct (MP, BSt); one bird at Cherry Creek Res., Arapahoe, on 14 Nov (BSc, JSc); and one even later at CMS Pond, Moffat, on 19 Nov (FL).

American Woodcock: In an interesting record, one of these odd snipeish-looking birds was photographed by a perplexed Adams resident on 15 Nov (LH fide NGa, doc.). This record has been accepted by the CBRC (see pages 96-97 of this journal).

Red-necked Phalarope: A regular migrant on the plains and Front Range, this species was reported twice from other more western locations this period. The first of these reports came from Walden Res., Jackson, on 3 Aug (KMD), where a female was found; the only WS report of the season came on 8 Sep when four birds were found in Nucla, Montrose (CDe). Three singletons were found at the rather high elevation of Lake DeWeese, Custer, on the dates 25 Aug, 13 Sep, and 24 Sep (RMi).

Red Phalarope: It was a good fall



Black-throated Blue Warbler, Lake Estes, Larimer County, 23 Oct 2010. Photo by Dave Leatherman



Great Crested Flycatcher, Grandview Cemetery, Larimer County, 12 Sep 2010. Photo by Dave Leatherman



Harris's Sparrow, Allenspark, Larimer County, 26 Nov 2010. Photo by David Waltman

for this rarest of Colorado phalaropes; the four records from this season were a bit above average. The first report was of two adults at Huerfano Lake, *Pueblo*, on 18 Sep (DS, DEm, doc.); the second from Luna Res., *Weld*, on 19 Sep (CW, doc.); the third from Grand Junction, *Mesa*, 3-6 Oct (BBr, m.ob., doc.); and the last from Baseline Res., *Boulder*, 10 Oct to 1 Nov (TF, doc.).

Black-legged Kittiwake: It was a good season for this species, with four reports. The first was of a particularly early adult in basic plumage at Lathrop SP, *Huerfano*, on 3 Oct (RMi, no doc.); the second was of a first-cycle bird from Cherry Creek Res., *Arapahoe*, on 10 Nov (GW, CW, doc.); the third was of an adult from Pueblo Res., *Pueblo*, 15-21 Nov (BP, m.ob., doc.); and the last was of an immature from Lathrop SP, *Huerfano*, on 28 Nov (PPN, doc.).

Sabine's Gull: An excellent season for this species saw 22 reports of 42 individuals from the counties *Arapahoe*, *Boulder* (3 reports), *Broomfield*, *Denver*, *Douglas/Jefferson*, *El Paso* (3), *Huerfano* (3), *Jefferson*, *Larimer* (2), *Mesa*, *Moffat*, *Otero*, *Pueblo*, and *Weld* (2). A record early date (by 11 days) for the WS was established by an adult found at Vega Res., *Mesa*, on 28 Aug (m.ob.). There was also a record latest sighting for the WS, with a bird at Perch Pond, *Moffat*, on 6 Nov (TM).

Bonaparte's Gull: Accidental on the WS, four were seen on CMS Pond, Craig, *Moffat*, from 22 Oct to 1 Nov (FL). The high count of 120 was observed at Pueblo Res., *Pueblo*, on the rather late date of 28 Nov (MP).

Little Gull: There were two reports of this diminutive gull from the northeast. The first was of a juvenile found at Chatfield Res., *Douglas/Jefferson*, from 7-10 Sep (GW, JK, m.ob., doc.). The other report came from Horsetooth Res., *Larimer*, on 9 Sep (CKa, no doc.).

Ross's Gull: The highlight of the season was an adult in basic plumage seen at Cherry Creek Res., *Arapahoe*, from 19-26 Nov (JR, m.ob., doc.). It was seen by many over its week-long stay, and, if accepted by the CBRC, will become Colorado's third state record.

Laughing Gull: A molting bird (predominately in alternate plumage) was found on Prewitt Res., *Washington*, on 1 Aug (CW, no doc.).

Mew Gull: With only two reports of single birds, this season was very slow compared to recent history. The first report was of an adult from Timnath Res., *Larimer*, on 6 Nov (CW, CO, no doc), and the other from Cherry Creek Res., *Arapahoe*, 11-28 Nov (GW, LK, m.ob., doc.).

Herring Gull: Rare in western Colorado, a first-cycle bird was found at Ridgway Res., *Ouray*, on 22 Nov (CDe, BW).

Thayer's Gull: Five reports of five birds, below average, came from the regular Front Range locations in the counties *Douglas*, *El Paso*, *Larimer* (2 reports), and *Weld*.

Lesser Black-backed Gull: Continuing the trend, the 24 reports of 34 individuals was, as expected, far above last fall's numbers. The counties with reports are *Arapahoe* (3 reports), *Boulder* (3), *Denver*, *El Paso* (2), *Jefferson*,

Jefferson/Douglas, Larimer (5), *Pueblo* (3), *Sedgwick*, and *Weld* (4).

Great Black-backed Gull: There were two reports of this nearly eagle-sized gull, both of adults. The first report came from Cherry Creek Res., *Arapahoe*, on 18 Nov (GW, no doc.), and the second came from Pueblo Res., *Pueblo*, from 23-28 Nov (RMi, no doc.).

Arctic Tern: A juvenile of this rare species was seen at Black Hollow Res., *Weld*, on 22 Sep (CW, no doc.).

Caspian Tern: There were only three reports this season, consisting of six individuals. The first report was of two from Big Johnson Res., *El Paso*, on 11 Sep (JD); the second, of a single bird, came from Boulder Res. on 25 Sep (PG); and the final report was of three birds on Sixmile Res., *Boulder*, on 26 Sep (CN). This last report may include the bird from the second report, as the two reservoirs are directly adjacent to each other.

Parasitic Jaeger: The rarest of Colorado's jaegers was seen at Big Johnson Res., *El Paso*, on 11 Sep (JD, m.ob., doc.).

Long-tailed Jaeger: There were two reports of this species, the most commonly seen Colorado jaeger. A dark-plumaged juvenile was found at John Martin Res., *Bent*, on 29 Aug (MP, BSt, no doc.), and an intermediate-plumaged juvenile was seen on Cherry Creek Res., *Arapahoe*, from 6-11 Sep (GW, LK, m.ob., doc.).

Jaeger spp.: A "dark" juvenile jaeger, possibly the same bird as the Cherry Creek Long-tailed Jaeger (see above), was seen at Cherry Creek Res., *Arapahoe*, on 10 Sep (RA, no

doc.). Another jaeger in unspecified plumage was seen on Boulder Res., *Boulder*, on 26 Sep (BK, PG, no doc.).

Band-tailed Pigeon: A single bird was seen on the rather late date of 23 Oct in Glenwood Springs, *Garfield* (TM).

White-winged Dove: Like most southwestern doves, this species is continuing its expansion northward. An unknown number are now resident in Grand Junction, *Mesa*, where they were observed throughout the season (LA, m.ob.). Other counties in which they were observed include *Boulder*, *Huerfano* (2 reports), *Las Animas*, and *Pueblo* (2).

Inca Dove: Constituting a first WS record, a single bird was observed in Nucla, *Montrose*, on 28 Oct (CDe, BW, doc.).

Burrowing Owl: An interesting sighting away from their known *Boulder* breeding colonies was of a single bird observed in the Black-tailed Prairie Dog town just north of McIntosh Res., *Boulder*, on 20 Oct (ONU).

Northern Saw-whet Owl: As part of an owl banding project in Estes Park, *Larimer*, a total of 45 were banded, 18 adults and 27 hatch-years, throughout the season (SR). A Flammulated Owl was also banded in early Sep in this same project.

Lesser Nighthawk: Continuing from the summer season, 2+ were seen from the beginning of the period through 16 Aug in Nucla, *Montrose* (CDe, m.ob., no doc.). The only other report of this species came from the McClain Pit, *Douglas*, on 10 Sep (UK, HK, no doc.), where a single bird was seen.

Common Poorwill: Rather late and out of place was a single bird found at Bonny Res., *Yuma*, on 2 Oct (CW).

Chimney Swift: A single late bird was seen flying over Greeley, *Weld*, on 22 Sep (DL), and an even later bird was seen over Holyoke, *Phillips*, on 5 Oct (CW, RL, JR).

***Chaetura* swift sp.:** A probable Chimney Swift, though possibly a Vaux's, was seen over the Grandview Cemetery, Ft. Collins, *Larimer*, on 12 Sep (DL).

Magnificent Hummingbird: A great find was an adult female seen at the Tunnel CG, *Larimer*, on 6 Aug (CKo, doc.).

Ruby-throated Hummingbird: Another great find was an immature male in Longmont, *Boulder*, on 22 Sep (BSc, CW, NK, doc.).

Black-chinned Hummingbird: There were two reports of this southwestern hummingbird on the Front Range, both rather late and out of range. The first came from the Wheat Ridge Greenbelt, *Jefferson*, on 6 Sep (LS). A report of a female-type bird came two days later from Dixon Res., *Larimer*, on 8 Sep (NK).

***Archilochus* hummingbird sp.:** Either a Ruby-throated or Black-chinned Hummingbird (either of which would be a great find) was seen at the Fox Ranch, *Yuma*, on 5 Sep (TF, m.ob.).

Broad-tailed Hummingbird: A single male was seen at Prewitt Res., *Logan*, on 3 Sep (CW), extremely far east for this mountain hummingbird. Also, almost a month late, one was found in Franktown, *Douglas*, on 12 Oct (KMe).

Rufous Hummingbird: From the same date and location as the last report of Broad-tailed Hummingbird (see above) was an equally late Rufous Hummingbird (KMe).

Lewis's Woodpecker: Once common, but getting continuously harder to see in Colorado, this species was reported only twice away from its strongholds on the WS. The first report came from near Leadville, *Lake*, on 9 Aug (TK), and the second came from near Ward, *Boulder*, on 18 Sep (TW, GM).

Red-headed Woodpecker: There were only five reports of this species away from its far eastern Colorado haunts, from the counties *Boulder*, *El Paso*, *Pueblo* (2), and *Weld*.

Red-bellied Woodpecker: The only report away from their usual northeastern stronghold came from Haxtun, *Phillips*, on 2 Oct (CW).

Williamson's Sapsucker: A good find out of the mountains was a juvenile at Grandview Cemetery, Ft. Collins, *Larimer*, on 14 Sep (DL). Also, an extremely late bird was seen at the Durango Fish Hatchery, *La Plata*, on 25 Nov (RMo).

Yellow-bellied Sapsucker: A good season for this typically eastern species included 10 reports consisting of 13 individuals. Counties with reports were *Baca*, *Jefferson*, *Larimer* (2 reports), *Prowers*, and *Pueblo* (5).

Yellow-bellied × Red-naped Sapsucker: This fairly common hybrid was found at Grandview Cemetery, *Larimer*, on 28 Sep (DL).

Red-naped Sapsucker: The only five reports this season from outside the mountains came from the coun-

ties *Bent*, *El Paso*, *Fremont*, *Kit Carson*, and *Weld*.

Eastern Wood-Pewee: The only report from this fall was of a single bird at Dixon Res., *Larimer*, on 8 Sep (NK, no doc.).

Willow Flycatcher: A rare plains find was a bird at the Carrizo Creek Picnic Area, *Baca*, on 8 Aug (DL).

Least Flycatcher: There were two reports of this diminutive flycatcher this season. The first came from Haxtun, *Phillips*, on 1 Aug (CW), and the second came from Last Chance, *Washington*, on 5 Sep (TF, m.ob.).

Hammond's Flycatcher: Another rare plains find was a single bird at the Fox Ranch, *Yuma*, on 6 Sep (TF, m.ob.).

Gray Flycatcher: This typically southern and western flycatcher was reported three times this season from northeastern Colorado. The first report came from Grandview Cemetery, *Larimer*, on 10 Aug (DL); the second came from Last Chance, *Washington*, on 5 Sep (TF, m.ob.); and the last came from Fox Ranch, *Yuma*, on 6 Sep (TF, m.ob.).

"Western" Flycatcher: A silent bird, either a Cordilleran or Pacific-slope Flycatcher, was seen at Hasty CG, *Bent*, on 29 Aug (MP). It came in to a recording of Pacific-slope Flycatcher, but remained silent, so a definitive identification could not be drawn.

Black Phoebe: In two rather late sightings, a single bird was seen at Valco Ponds, *Pueblo*, *Pueblo*, on 1 Nov and again on 10 Nov (BP).

Eastern Phoebe: A good season for

this species saw five reports ranging as far north as *Logan*, where a single bird was seen at Prewitt Res. on 2 Oct (CW).

Say's Phoebe: Late sightings included three reports of this species from *Pueblo* from the dates 1-10 Nov (BP) and an even later sighting from Cañon City, *Fremont*, on 28 Nov (MP).

Great Crested Flycatcher: A total of six reports this season came from outside their typical summer strongholds in the extreme northeast corner of the state, with reports from *Bent*, *Larimer*, *Pueblo* (2 reports), *Washington*, and *Weld*.

Cassin's Kingbird: Rare finds away from their usual south-central haunts were a single bird found at Dry Creek Basin, *San Miguel*, on 25 Aug (CDe, BW) and two others seen on Open Space property south of Boulder, *Boulder*, on 13 Sep (CN).

Eastern Kingbird: A rare *Dolores* find was a single bird north of Glade Lake, *Dolores*, on 28 Aug (RMO, HM, PD). Also, a late bird was seen at a private ranch in *Lincoln* on 3 Oct (CW).

Loggerhead Shrike: A rather late adult was seen north of Kit Carson, *Cheyenne*, on 10 Nov (DL).

Northern Shrike: Two somewhat early reports were of a single bird seen at Dry Creek Basin, *San Miguel*, on 3 Nov (CDe, BW) and another near Kremmling, *Grand*, on 8 Nov (LS).

White-eyed Vireo: A good find was a single bird at Dixon Res., *Larimer*, seen from 24 Aug to 4 Sep (BBi).

Bell's Vireo: Difficult to find away from its breeding outposts on the far eastern margins of the state, this spe-

cies showed up at Barr Lake, *Adams*, on 26 Aug (MMB, doc.) and at Last Chance, *Washington*, on 29 Aug (GW, JK, LK).

Cassin's Vireo: There were only eight reports of this western migrant this season, far less than average. The counties with reports were *Bent*, *El Paso* (2 reports), *Moffat*, *Pueblo* (3), and *Routt*.

Blue-headed Vireo: An excellent fall for this eastern vireo included ten reports representing up to twelve birds. The first report was of a bird photographed in Rock Canyon, *Pueblo*, on 12 Sep (BP, doc.). Another bird was seen at Two Buttes Res., *Baca*, on 8 Oct (NK, no doc.); an incredible three were photographed at Tempel Grove, *Bent*, on 8 Oct (NE, GW, JK, MP, doc.); another was found in Cope, *Washington*, on 9 Oct (GW, JK, no doc.); a single bird was found at the LCCW, *Prowers*, on 9 Oct (DL, no doc.); another bird was found at Bonny Res., *Yuma*, on 9 Oct (MP, no doc.), and likely the same bird was seen again on 10 Oct (CW, no doc.). One was found in Holyoke, *Phillips*, on 10 Oct (CW, no doc.); another bird was found at LCCW, *Prowers*, on 15 Oct (DR, no doc.); and the final bird of the season was photographed at the Pueblo Zoo (outside cages, of course) on 21 Oct (BP, doc.).

Warbling Vireo: A very late single bird was found at LCCW, *Prowers*, on 10 Nov (DL).

Philadelphia Vireo: With three reports this season, it was also a good season for this yellow counterpart of our native Warbling Vireo. The first report came from Norma's Grove, *Weld*, on

26 Aug (CW, no doc.) and the second from Prewitt Res., *Washington*, on 3 Sep (CW, no doc.). The last bird of the season was banded at Barr Lake, *Adams*, on 24 Sep (CW, no doc.).

Red-eyed Vireo: A rare southwest Colorado find was a single bird at Naranguinnep Res., *Montezuma*, on 12 Oct (JB). Other counties with reports this season were *El Paso*, *Moffat*, *Prowers*, and *Pueblo*.

Steller's Jay: A rare low-elevation find was a single bird at the Grandview Cemetery, *Larimer*, on 22 Sep (DL).

Pinyon Jay: Outside of their typical pinyon-juniper breeding habitat, four birds were seen at the Grandview Cemetery, *Larimer*, on 23 Sep (DL), a first for that location.

Clark's Nutcracker: It was a major invasion year for this typically high-elevation species; many birds were seen up and down the foothills of the northern Front Range throughout the period. This elevational invasion is likely due to a seed crop failure higher in the mountains, causing them to move downslope in search of the foothills' Ponderosa Pine seeds.

Chihuahuan Raven: A good northerly find was a single bird found at Timnath Res., *Larimer*, on 27 Oct (CW).

Violet-green Swallow: Rare in *Bent* was a single bird observed at John Martin Res. on 29 Aug (MP, BSt).

Barn Swallow: A single rather late bird was seen at Lake Maria, *Huerfano*, on 13 Nov (MP).

Mountain Chickadee: Rare on the eastern plains, two birds were found on the same date of 3 Sep at Moreno, *Logan* (CW) and Akron, *Washington*

(CW). Another was found at Haxtun, *Phillips*, on 2 Oct (CW).

Red-breasted Nuthatch: A single bird was found at Prewitt Res., *Washington*, on 3 Sep (CW) and another was found at Last Chance, *Washington*, on 5 Sep (TF).

Pygmy Nuthatch: An extremely rare find out of the mountains was a bird at Prewitt Res., *Washington*, on 3 Sep (CW). Up to twelve were seen at Pueblo City Park, *Pueblo*, from 19 Sep to 28 Nov (MY).

Carolina Wren: There was only one report this season, of a singing bird at Colorado City, *Pueblo*, on 21 Oct (DS).

Pacific Wren: A new review species by virtue of its recent splitting by the American Ornithologists' Union, there were three reports of this western "winter" wren. The first report came from Last Chance, *Washington*, on 9 Oct (TD, doc.); the second came from the Wheat Ridge Greenbelt, *Jefferson*, on 8 Nov (MH, RA, MK, no doc.); and the last was of a bird at Prospect Ponds Natural Area, *Larimer*, from 15-17 Nov (AP, DL, doc.).

Winter Wren: The more common eastern "winter" wren generated 17 reports this fall, making for a great season. The first report of the period came from Norma's Grove, *Weld*, on 22 Sep (JR, m.ob.), and the last came from the Prospect Ponds Natural Area, *Larimer*, 18-19 Nov (NK). The counties with reports were *Adams* (3 reports), *Boulder* (2), *Huerfano*, *Jefferson* (2), *Larimer* (4), *Prowers*, *Pueblo*, *Washington*, and *Weld* (2).

Sedge Wren: There were two reports of this secretive grass dweller,

one from Jumbo Res., *Logan*, on 2 Oct (CW, no doc.), and one from Flagler SWA, *Kit Carson*, on 3 Oct (CW, no doc.).

Golden-crowned Kinglet: Rare on the eastern plains, a female was seen at the Holly Rest Stop, *Prowers*, on 22 Oct (RMI), and another female was seen at the LCCW, *Prowers*, on 7 Nov (DL).

Blue-gray Gnatcatcher: Rather late was a single male seen in south Boulder near the Bobolink Trail, *Boulder*, on 10 Nov (CN).

Eastern Bluebird: An excellent high-elevation sighting was of two birds near Georgetown, *Clear Creek*, on 23 Oct (TD). Other counties with reports outside of this species' northeast Colorado strongholds were *Boulder*, *Custer*, *Huerfano* (4), and *Jefferson*.

Western Bluebird: A great Eastern Plains sighting was a single bird found at a private ranch in *Lincoln* on 3 Oct (CW).

Mountain Bluebird: A rare winter find for the plains was one in Holyoke, *Phillips*, on 10 Oct (CW).

Hermit Thrush: A late single bird was found on 11 Oct in Sarvis Canyon, *Routt* (CDo). Also late were one seen at Valco Ponds, *Pueblo*, on 10 Nov (BP) and another on the Arkansas River east of Reservoir Drive, *Pueblo*, on 20 Nov (BP, JM, KS).

Wood Thrush: An excellent find was one at a Louisville, *Boulder*, residence from 15-16 Nov (PH, doc.).

Varied Thrush: This rare but annual winter visitor from the Pacific Northwest generated two reports this fall. The first came from an eastern

Douglas location from 20-27 Oct (SL, no doc.), and the second was of a male found in Colorado City, *Pueblo*, on 3 Nov (DS, doc.).

Gray Catbird: In an unusual WS report, as many as 10 were seen from the beginning of the season through 18 Sep at Loudy-Simpson Park, Craig, *Moffat* (FL). Also, late reports came from Rye, *Pueblo*, on 30 Oct (BP) and Colorado City, *Pueblo*, 3-4 Nov (BP, m.ob.).

Northern Mockingbird: Returning for another winter, a single bird was seen at the Northern Plains CG at Pueblo Res., *Pueblo*, starting on 21 Oct and continuing at least through 16 Nov (BP).

Sage Thrasher: A rather late report was of two birds found at Brush Hollow Res., *Fremont*, on 26 Nov (SM).

Brown Thrasher: Furnishing a first county record for *Lake*, a single bird was seen at the Mount Elbert Forebay on 23 Oct (TK). Also a great find was a single bird observed at

Spinney Mountain Res., *Park*, on 31 Oct (JK).

Curve-billed Thrasher: Extremely rare outside of its breeding range in south-central Colorado, this species was found at Red Rocks Elementary, *Jefferson*, on 21 Oct (PL). Likely this same bird, relocating to the source of a better food supply, was found at the Red Rocks Trading Post feeders, *Jefferson*, from 27 Oct through the end of the period (MC et al.).

Sprague's Pipit: An excellent fall for this Eastern Plains species ended with a total of twelve reports consisting of thirty individuals! Three were found east of Sterling, *Logan*, on 23 Sep (SS, no doc.); a single bird was observed east of Otis, *Washington*, on 25 Sep (MS, no doc.); a potential first county record was furnished by a single bird seen on Marshall Mesa, *Boulder*, from 29 Sep to 2 Oct (CN, no doc.); a single bird was found at Pre-witt Res., *Washington*, on 2 Oct (CW, no doc.); another was found on CR

64 west of CR 93, *Logan*, on 2 Oct (CW, no doc.); eight were found south of Fleming, *Logan*, on 7 Oct (SS, no doc.); one was seen at Two Buttes Res., *Baca*, on 8 Oct (NK, no doc.); another bird was photographed at Bonny Res., *Yuma*, on 10 Oct (BP, MP, doc.); one was reported from Holyoke, *Phillips*, on 10 Oct (CW, no doc.); one was seen at Bonny Res., *Yuma*, on 13 Oct (EE, no doc.); three were found north of Bon-



Sprague's Pipit, Bonny SP, *Yuma County*, 10 Oct 2010. Photo by Brandon Percival



White-tailed Ptarmigan, Flattop Mountain, Larimer County, 11 Oct 2010. Photo by Kathy Mihm-Dunning



Ruddy Turnstone, Jumbo Reservoir, Sedgwick County, 27 Aug 2010. Photo by Joey Kellner



Winter Wren, Grand-view Cemetery, Larimer County, 5 Oct 2010. Photo by Rachel Hopper

ny Res., *Yuma*, on 15 Oct (NE et al., no doc.); and, finally, eight were found southeast of Bonny Res., *Yuma*, on 15 Oct (NE et al., no doc.).

Tennessee Warbler: This species is rare on the WS, but this fall four reports came from the counties *Mesa*, *Moffat*, and *Ourray*. Also, a rather late report came from Bonny Res., *Yuma*, on 10 Oct (MP).

Orange-crowned Warbler: Interesting were ten to forty birds seen throughout the period from 14 Aug to 5 Oct at Loudy-Simpson Park, *Craig*, *Moffat* (FL), where it is an unusual find. Late were a bird at Pueblo City Park, *Pueblo*, on 6 Nov (BP, DCh), and a bird at the LCCW, *Prowers*, on 9 Nov (DL). There was also a wintering bird at a south Boulder residence in *Boulder* from 28 Nov through the winter season (AB).

Nashville Warbler: Up to nineteen comprised this season's excellent total, with reports from *Adams*, *Bent*, *Broomfield*, *El Paso* (3 reports), *Larimer*, *Moffat*, *Montrose*, *Prowers* (7), and *Pueblo* (3). The two WS reports came from Loudy-Simpson Park, *Moffat*, 3-6 Sep (FL), and from Nucla, *Montrose*, on 27 Sep (CDe).

Northern Parula: An excellent eight birds were reported this fall, from the counties *Denver*, *Fremont* (2 reports), *Huerfano*, *Larimer*, *Phillips*, and *Pueblo* (2).

Yellow Warbler: A late female was found at the LCCW, *Prowers*, on 9 Oct (DL).

Chestnut-sided Warbler: A good find was a single bird in Rock Canyon, *Pueblo*, on 3 Sep (BP).

Magnolia Warbler: Of the five

reports this season, the earliest was a first-fall female seen in the Sanitas Greenbelt, *Boulder*, on 11 Sep (MB); three were seen at CBR, *Pueblo* and *El Paso*, on 15 Sep (JD), 22-25 Sep (BG), and 2 Oct (NGo); and the last report came from Bonny Res., *Yuma*, 9-10 Oct (MP, CW).

Cape May Warbler: An excellent find was a first-year male at CBR, *El Paso*, on 13 Sep (BG, doc.).

Black-throated Blue Warbler: There were four reports of this warbler this season, from various locations. The first of these came from CBR, *El Paso*, where one was banded on 4 Oct (NG); the second was of an adult male in Broomfield, *Broomfield*, on 7 Oct (LS); the third was of a female at Tempel Grove, *Bent*, on 8 Oct (NE); and the final report was of a female at the odd mountain location of Lake Estes, *Larimer*, on 23 Oct (DL).

Black-throated Green Warbler: It was a good season for this species, with six birds reported. The first was an immature at Prewitt Res., *Washington*, on 3 Sep (CW); the second was an adult male at Prewitt Res., *Washington*, on 2 Oct (JK et al.); the third was also an adult male, from Bonny Res., *Yuma*, on 3 Oct (CW); the fourth was found at Holyoke, *Phillips*, on 5 Oct (CW, RL, JR); the fifth was found at Riverside Cemetery, *Lamar*, *Prowers*, on 8 Oct (DL); and the final report was of an adult male found at Bonny Res., *Yuma*, on 8 Oct (JK, GW, m.ob.).

Blackburnian Warbler: There were five reports this fall, making for a good season. A potential first county record was furnished by an adult male found near Glade Lake, *Dolores*, on

27 Aug (CDe, BW, no doc.); another adult male was found at Prewitt Res., *Washington*, on 17 Sep (JK, GW, NE, no doc.); a female was found at Lee Martinez Park, Ft. Collins, *Larimer*, on 17 Sep (RS, no doc.); a female-type was found in Arriba, *Kit Carson*, on 25 Sep (MS, no doc.); and the final report was of a late first-year female at Last Chance, *Washington*, on 5 Nov (DL).

Pine Warbler: There were two reports this season. The first came from Dixon Res., *Larimer*, on 28 Aug (JBr, no doc.); and the second was of a first-year bird found in Broomfield, *Broomfield*, on 7 Sep (LS).

Palm Warbler: There was a total of eight reports this season. The first report was from Cherry Creek Res., *Arapahoe*, on 17 Sep (BBn); the second came from Walden Ponds, *Boulder*, on 22 Sep (TF, MG); the third came from Greenlee Preserve, *Boulder*, on 22 Sep (TF); another report came from Crow Valley CG, *Weld*, on 22 Sep (DK); another bird was found at Prewitt Res., *Washington*, on 2 Oct (CW); and still another was found in Haxtun, *Phillips*, on 2 Oct (CW). A member of the browner western subspecies *palmarum* was seen on the Poudre River, Ft. Collins, *Larimer*, on 4 Oct (DL). The final report of the season was of another *palmarum* from Wetmore, *Custer*, on 6 Nov (RMi).

Blackpoll Warbler: Another rather slow season for this species saw only four reported during the period. The first of these reports came from Lake Hasty CG, *Bent*, on 29 Aug (MP, BSt); the second came from Crow Valley CG, *Weld*, on 25 Sep (DK); the third report came from Colorado City,

Pueblo, on 27 Sep (DS); and the final report came from Holyoke, *Phillips*, on 5 Oct (CW, RL, JR).

Black-and-white Warbler: A near average season for this species generated a total of eight reports. A good WS find was a female at Loudy-Simpson Park, *Moffat*, on 8 Sep (CDo, FL). Other counties with reports were *Bent* (5 reports), *Broomfield*, and *Washington*.

American Redstart: Another down season for this species saw only 10 reports of 11 birds. Counties with reports this season were *Chaffee*, *El Paso* (4 reports), *Fremont*, *Pueblo* (2), and *Washington* (2).

Prothonotary Warbler: There was only a single report this fall, from Tellur Lake, *Boulder*, on 8 Sep (fide LF).

Worm-eating Warbler: The only report of the season came from Rye, *Pueblo*, 11-13 Aug (DS), which furnished a first fall record for the Pueblo area.

Ovenbird: There were only four reports this fall. The first was from Last Chance, *Washington*, on 30 Aug (JR); the second from Prewitt Res., *Washington*, on 3 Sep (CW); and the third and fourth from CBR, *El Paso*, on 16 Sep (BG) and 2 Oct (NGo).

Northern Waterthrush: There were only eleven reports this fall, making for a really slow season for this species. The counties with reports were *Adams*, *Bent*, *Boulder*, *Broomfield*, *Custer*, *La Plata*, *Larimer*, *Moffat*, *Pueblo* (two reports), and *Weld*.

Connecticut Warbler: Following a great spring for this species, a single bird was found at Crow Valley CG, *Weld*, on 26 Aug (RHo, m.ob., no

doc.). If documented and accepted by the CBRC, it would furnish the thirteenth state record.

Mourning Warbler:

A great find was an immature of this species at Prewitt Res., *Washington*, on 3 Sep (CW, no doc.).

Hooded Warbler:

In an odd sighting, two males were found at Highland Lake, *Weld*, on the late date of 29 Oct (PS). Later, a male was photographed at a north Boulder residence, *Boulder*, where it stayed from 7-21 Nov (RT).

Canada Warbler: A great find was a bird at Prewitt Res., *Washington*, on 3 Sep (CW, no doc.).

Eastern Towhee: A good season for this species saw two females reported. The first was hosted in a yard near La Veta, *Huerfano*, from 6-10 Nov (PPN, doc.), and the other was found in Russellville, *Douglas*, on 19 Nov, and stayed through the end of the period (UK, HK, doc.).

Rufous-crowned Sparrow: Two were found at their traditional location at Cañon City's Tunnel Drive, *Fremont*, on 28 Nov (MP).

Clay-colored Sparrow: One found along the Animas River on 8 Sep was rare for *La Plata* (JBy). A rare mountain find was a single bird at the Ridgway Banding Station, *Ouray*, on 16 Sep (SC).

Field Sparrow: Fourteen reports of twenty-five individuals were recorded



Eastern Towhee, Neldner residence, Huerfano County, 6 Nov 2010. Photo by Polly Neldner

this season in eight counties: *Cheyenne*, *El Paso*, *Kit Carson* (2 reports), *Lincoln*, *Otero*, *Prowers* (6), *Weld*, and *Yuma*. The first report was from Norma's Grove, *Weld*, on 26 Aug (CW). The high count of eight individuals came from Willow Creek Park, *Lamar*, *Prowers*, on 8 Oct (RMi). The last report came from the LCCW, *Prowers*, on 22 Oct (RMi).

Vesper Sparrow: Very late was a single bird found at Pueblo Res., *Pueblo*, on 28 Nov (MP).

Lark Sparrow: Uncommon in *San Juan* were two seen at Silverton Ponds, *San Juan*, from 1 Aug to 6 Sep (JBy).

Lark Bunting: A rare WS find was a single bird at Blue Mesa Res., *Gunnison*, on 1 Sep (CDe, BW).

Savannah Sparrow: Two late birds were seen at Fossil Creek Res., *Larimer*, on 22 Nov (NK).

Baird's Sparrow: The block-headed grass sparrow of the upper Midwest was reported twice in the state this season, once from Two Buttes Res.,

Baca, on 8 Oct (NK, no doc.) and the other time from Bonny Res., *Yuma*, 9-10 Oct (MP, no doc.).

Henslow's Sparrow: One of these odd greenish-headed sparrows was found at John Martin Res., *Bent*, on 7 Oct (DN, no doc.).

Le Conte's Sparrow: Two were found this season, one at Prewitt Res., *Washington*, on 2 Oct (CW, no doc.), and the other at Frenchman Creek SWA, *Phillips*, also on 2 Oct (CW, no doc.).

Nelson's Sparrow: Formerly known as Nelson's Sharp-tailed Sparrow, this species was reported from Frenchman Creek SWA, *Phillips*, on 5 Oct (CW, JR, no doc.). Another was found at John Martin Res., *Bent*, on 7 Oct (DN, no doc.).

"Red" Fox Sparrow: Rare in Colorado, this eastern subspecies was recorded a total of seven times this period. The first report was of a photographed bird northeast of Kit Carson, *Cheyenne*, on 8 Oct (BP, MP, doc.); the second came from Fox Ranch, *Yuma*, on 9 Oct (MP, m.ob., doc.); another came from CBR, *El Paso*, on 12 Oct (BM, no doc.); and another came from LCCW, *Prowers*, on 9 Nov (DL, no doc.). Returning for its second winter was one found at the Purgatoire River Railroad crossing in *Bent* on 18 Nov (DN, no doc.); a single bird was found

at the Stulp Farm, *Prowers*, on 20 Nov (JSt, doc.); and, finally, the last report of the season came from the Neldner yard near La Veta, *Huerfano*, on 30 Nov (PPN, doc.).

Lincoln's Sparrow: Rather late were two birds seen at Valco Ponds, *Pueblo*, on 1 Nov (BP).

Swamp Sparrow: The 15 reports of 17 birds made for a great season. The counties with reports were *Adams*, *Baca*, *Bent* (3 reports), *Boulder* (2), *El Paso*, *Kit Carson*, *Larimer*, *Montezuma*, *Pueblo* (2), *Washington*, and *Yuma*. The *Montezuma* report was early for the state, on 10 Sep, and from a rare location as well, the Cortez Airport (GJAS).

White-throated Sparrow: Last fall's "phenomenal" total of 17 doesn't even come close to this season's total of 33 reports of 42 birds! The high count of four came from Valco Ponds, *Pueblo*, on 14 Oct (BP).

Harris's Sparrow: This fall's total was equal to last fall's total of thir-



"Red" Fox Sparrow, *Cheyenne County*, 8 Oct 2010.
Photo by Brandon Percival

teen reports. These came from *Bent*, *Boulder* (3 reports), *El Paso*, *Jefferson*, *Kit Carson*, *Las Animas*, *Lincoln*, *Prowers* (2), *Pueblo*, and *Washington*. The first report of the season came from *Thurston Res.*, *Prowers*, on 8 Oct (DL).

Golden-crowned Sparrow:

A good season for this Pacific sparrow ended with three reports. The first was of a first-year bird found at *Crow Valley CG*, *Weld*, on 15 Oct (DL, no doc.). The second bird was hosted at the *Red Rocks Trading Post* feeders, *Jefferson*, from 16 Oct through the winter (DCA, no doc.). Another first-year bird was seen at the *Teller Farms Trailhead*, *Boulder*, from 16 Nov through the end of the period (SS, no doc.).

McCown's Longspur: Rather early migrants, four were found at *Big Johnson Res.*, *El Paso*, on 16 Sep (MP). A first county record was furnished by one found at *Vallecito Res.*, *La Plata*, on 25 Sep (SA, PD, doc.). Another early migrant was found at *CBR*, *Pueblo*, on 12 Oct (BM).

Lapland Longspur: A single rather early bird was found at *Big Johnson Res.*, *El Paso*, on 19 Oct (BM), and another at *Pueblo Res.*, *Pueblo*, on the same date (BP). Rather odd in a mountain park was a single bird found at *Antero Res.*, *Park*, on 28 Oct (JK).

Smith's Longspur: A single bird was found at *Prewitt Res.*, *Washington*, on 2 Oct (CW, no doc.), and another was seen at *John Martin Res.*, *Bent*, on 7 Oct (DN, no doc.).



Golden-crowned Sparrow, Crow Valley Campground, Weld County, 16 Oct 2010. Photo by Rachel Hopper

Chestnut-collared Longspur: Three very early migrants were seen at *Big Johnson Res.*, *El Paso*, on 16 Sep (MP). Rare *Boulder* finds included one bird heard calling over *Boulder Res.* on 26 Sep (MM) and two others found with the *Sprague's Pipit* at *Marshall Mesa* on 30 Sep (CN). Two other reports of early migrants came from *CBR*, *Pueblo*, on 12 Oct (BM) and *Big Johnson Res.*, *El Paso* on 19 Oct (BM).

Snow Bunting: Two odd sightings of this northern snowbird came from north of *Wetmore*, *Custer/Fremont*, on 6 Nov (RMi), and *Cherry Creek Res.*, *Arapahoe*, 19-21 Nov (BR).

Summer Tanager: A good find was a single bird in *Pueblo City Park*, *Pueblo*, on 13 Oct (BP).

Northern Cardinal: Away from their localized breeding grounds in the extreme northeast corner of the

state, a single bird was found at Flagler SWA, *Kit Carson*, on 3 Oct (CW); another singleton was found at Bonny Res., *Yuma*, on 10 Oct (MP); and birds were seen at LCCW, *Prowers*, on 9 Oct (DL), 15 Oct (DR), 9 Nov (DL), and 10 Nov (DL).

Rose-breasted Grosbeak: There were two reports of this grosbeak species. The first came from Tempel Grove, *Bent*, on 29 Aug (MP, BSt), and the other was found at CBR, *El Paso*, on 28 Sep (NGo).

Lazuli Bunting: There was a rather late report on 23 Oct from Clear Springs Ranch, *El Paso* (DEI).

Indigo Bunting: Rare so far west (except on the Colorado River in Grand Junction) was a singing male on Abbey Road, Colorado City, *Pueblo*, on 3 Aug (DS).

Dickcissel: One at Hatchet Ranch east of Colorado City, *Pueblo*, on 20 Sep, was in an unusual location (BBH).

Eastern Meadowlark: Suspected to be of the southwestern "Lilian's" race were two individuals reported in Colorado City, *Pueblo*, on 17 Oct (DS, doc.).

Great-tailed Grackle: An individual found in Silverton, *San Juan*, on 6 Sep, was rare for the area (JBy).

Orchard Oriole: A good find was a late individual reported from Fox Ranch, *Yuma*, on 9 Oct (BM, m.ob).

Baltimore Oriole: A female was reported from Last Chance, *Washington*, on 30 Aug (JR), and another was reported from Crow Valley CG, *Weld*, on 3 Sep (CW).

Pine Grosbeak: Lower in eleva-

tion than generally expected, a female of this species was found south of the town of Glen Haven, *Larimer*, on 26 Oct (DL).

Purple Finch: A rare find was a female type found in Colorado City, *Pueblo*, on 3 Nov (DS, doc.).

Red Crossbill: Six "Type 5" birds were found at Grandview Cemetery, Fort Collins, *Larimer*, on 31 Oct (DL).

White-winged Crossbill: The only report was of a single male at the Trapper Mine Office in Craig, *Moffat*, on 16 Nov (FL).

Common Redpoll: A great find was a single bird photographed at a feeder near Trinidad, *Las Animas*, on 13 Nov (TC).

Pine Siskin: The high count of 100+ came from the McConnell yard in No Name (near Glenwood Springs), *Garfield*, on 25 Oct (TM).

Lesser Goldfinch: A rare find on the eastern plains was a single bird at the LCCW, *Prowers*, on 6 Aug (DL); another was found at Bonny Res., *Yuma*, on 3 Oct (CW); and the final such report came from Crow Valley CG, *Weld*, on 15 Oct (DL). Extremely late were five birds found at Cañon City's Tunnel Drive, *Fremont*, on 28 Nov (MP).

Evening Grosbeak: Following a great summer for this species, there were two unusual low-elevation reports this fall. The first of these came from downtown Pueblo, *Pueblo*, on 1 Aug (KC), where two birds were found. At least one was seen in Mead, *Weld*, on 2 Nov (DL).

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 SLV), Bill Schmoker (Front Range), Larry Semo (east central and north-east), and Glenn Walbek (north central); and many thanks to all of you who share your sightings with the birding community.

CONTRIBUTING OBSERVERS

SA: Susan Allerton; RA: Robert Andrews; LA: Larry Arnold; JBe: Jason Beason; JBy: Jim Beatty; BBi: Brad Biggerstaff; BZ: Bob Zilly; BBr: Bob Bradley; AB: Alex Brown; BBn: Bob Brown; JBr: Josh Bruening; DCa: Dave Cameron; KC: Kara Carragher; DCh: David Chartier; MC: Mark Chavez; SC: Stephanie Coates; TC: Tim Crisler; CC: Carol Cushman; TD: Todd Deininger; PD: Peter Derven; CDe: Coen Dexter; CDo: Craig Dodson; JD: John Drummond; DEL: David Elwonger; DEm: Donna Emmons; EE: Eric Enbody; NE: Norm Erthal; DF: Doug Faulkner; TF: Ted Floyd; LF: Lonny Frye; MGA: Marcel Gahbauer; NGa: Nelda Gambel; DG: Dennis Garrison; PG: Peter Gent; BG: Brian Gibbons; NGO: Nancy Gobris; MGo: Mackenzie Goldthwaite; GJAS: Grand Junction Audubon Society; BBH: BB Hahn; RHa: Randy Hancock; LH: Lois Henderson; MH: Mike Henwood; RHo: Rachel Hopper; TJ: Tina Jones; BK: Bill Kaempfer; CKa: Charlie Kahr; TK: Tim Kalbach; JK: Joey Kellner; DK: Doug Kibbe; MK: Michael Kiessig; LK: Loch Kilpatrick; HK: Hugh Kingery; UK: Urling Kingery; EK: Elena Klaver; CKo: Connie Kogler; NK: Nick Komar; DL: Dave Leatherman; GL: Gary Lefko; RL: Roger Linfield; TL: Tom Litteral; SL: S. Logan; FL: Forrest Luke; PL: Phil Lyon; GM: Gary Matthews; BM: Bill Maynard; DM: Dan Maynard; MMB: Meredith McBurney; KMc: Kay McConnell; TM: Tom McConnell; KMe: Karen Metz; MM: Mark Miller; RMi: Rich Miller; KMD: Kathy Mihm-Dunning; JM: Jeannie Mitchell; HM: Heather Morris; RMo: Riley Morris; SM: SeEtta Moss; PPN: Polly & Paul Neldner; DN: Duane Nelson; KN: Kent Nelson; CN: Christian Nunes; MEO: Mary Ellen Olsen; CO: Cheri Orwig; AP: Arvind Panjabi; BP: Brandon Percival; MP: Mark Peterson; TP: Tom Pollock; SR: Scott Rashid; JR: Joe Roller; BR: Bob Rozinski; DR: Dotti Russell; IS: Ira Sanders; BSc: Bill Schmoker; JSc: Jim Schmoker; LS: Larry Semo; SS: Scott Severs; KS: Kelly Shipe; DS: David Silverman; TS: Tim Smart; MS: Margaret Smith; PS: Pauli Smith; RS: Rob Sparks; BSt: Brad Steger; JSt: Jane Stulp; ST: Stephanie Thompson; GT: Geoff Tischbin; RT: Richard Trinkner; LV: Linda Vidal; GW: Glenn Walbek; CW: Cole Wild; TW: Tom Wilberding; RW: Rhonda Woodward; BW: Brenda Wright; MY: Mark Yaeger; YVBC: Yampa Valley Bird Club; VZ: Vic Zerbi

ONU: Observer name unknown

LITERATURE CITED

Andrews, R., and R. Righter. 1992. *Colorado Birds: A Reference to Their Distribution and Habitat*. Denver, CO: Denver Museum of Natural History
NWSFO (National Weather Service Forecast Office). 2011. Denver-Boulder, CO. Observed Weather Reports. Retrieved on 28 Feb 2011 from <http://www.weather.gov/climate/index.php?wfo=bou>

Joel Such, 1186 Rowell Dr., Lyons, CO 80540, jbsuch@gmail.com

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

Spring Plumage Change in Passerines: Prealternate Molt vs. Wear

Tony Leukering

Adults of all North American passerine bird species conduct a complete prebasic molt after the breeding season, meaning that they replace every single feather on their bodies¹. Different species molt in different locations—on the breeding grounds, on the wintering grounds, somewhere else—but they all do it.

However, not all passerines complete a prealternate molt, which is conducted prior to the breeding season; it varies in different species from absent to complete. The location of the prebasic molt and the extent of the prealternate molt in passerines are generally the same in most species of a given family, subfamily, or genus, but this is not at all a hard-and-fast rule. In fact, even different subspecies of the same species can use different molt strategies (see Pyle 1997).

In many passerine species, prealternate molts brighten the appearance (hereafter termed “plumage aspect” or “aspect” after Pyle 2008) and, in some species, refine or create species “badges.” For example, like other sparrows in the genus *Zonotrichia*, adult White-crowned Sparrows brighten their badges (the black-and-white striped head pattern) by replacing the worn black-and-white stripes of their basic plumage. By the same process, immature White-crowned Sparrows replace their formative-plumage head pattern of tan and brown with the black-and-white head pattern.

Most Colorado passerine species include at least some individuals that do not undertake a prealternate molt, and many species lack that molt entirely. However, some species without a prealternate molt nonetheless exhibit fairly dramatic changes in aspect between their prebasic molt (in fall) and the arrival of spring. Included among these are some of Colorado’s most common, widespread, and/or appreciated bird species, with some of these illustrated on the back cover.

Plumage-aspect Change via Wear

A small suite of Colorado passerine species exhibit fairly extensive plumage-aspect change, in one or both sexes, primarily or solely due

¹ Molt and plumage terminology and definitions follow Howell (2010) and Pyle (1997, 2008). For additional detail about molts and plumage, please refer to Howell (2010) or Pyle (2008)—both of which I have cribbed from extensively—or to the “In The Scope” column that presented a molt-and-plumage primer in a previous issue of this journal (Leukering 2010).

to wear, rather than via a molt. The species in this category are European Starling; McCown's, Lapland, and Chestnut-collared Longspurs; Snow Bunting; Red-winged Blackbird; Eastern and Western Meadowlarks; and House Sparrow. In all of these species, plumage-aspect change is accomplished by the wearing-away of pale feather tips or fringes on what are otherwise dark feathers. (Since black or blackish coloration in feathers is produced by melanins, which make for stronger feathers, the white parts of these feathers are much weaker and thus wear more readily, creating a system ready-made to be co-opted by birds to effect changes in plumage aspect.)

The three sets of two pictures on the back cover illustrate this phenomenon. In each set, the photo on the left is of an individual in fresh basic plumage (reasonably soon after completion of the fall's prebasic molt) and on the right is an individual in worn basic plumage (typically in spring).

European Starling (no prealternate molt): In late summer and early fall, adults conduct their prebasic molt, obtaining the distinctive white-spotted blackish plumage that we all know so well (**left picture, top row**). There is no prealternate molt. On this species, many of the underparts feathers are quite pointed, which is atypical

Back Cover Photo Key

Top left photo: European Starling in fresh basic plumage, 17 Jan 2006, Jefferson Co., CO; photograph by Bill Schmoker



Top right photo: Male European Starling in worn basic plumage, 15 Sept 2005, Morgan Co., CO; photograph by Bill Schmoker

Center left photo: Male Chestnut-collared Longspur in fresh basic plumage, 23 November 2006, Santa Barbara Co., CA; photograph by Oscar Johnson

Center right photo: Male Chestnut-collared Longspur in worn basic plumage, 17 April 2005, Weld Co., CO; photograph by Bill Schmoker

Bottom left photo: Immature male Red-winged Blackbird in fresh formative plumage, 11 January 2010, Cape May Co., NJ; photograph by Don Freiday. While immature males are more heavily marked than are adults in fresh plumage, adult males can be nearly this heavily-marked.

Bottom right photo: Adult male Red-winged Blackbird in worn basic plumage, 24 April 2004, Adams Co., CO; photograph by Tony Leukering

for birds. In fresh basic plumage, the tips of these pointed feathers are white, and those white tips are just long enough that the last vestige of white wears away in early spring, producing a glossy black plumage (**right picture, top row**).

Longspurs (very limited or no prealternate molt): Smith's Longspur is excluded from consideration here due to its apparently more-extensive and better-documented prealternate molt. The other three longspurs may conduct limited prealternate molts, but most of the obvious change in their plumage aspect is due to wear. Fresh basic plumage in males of these species is primarily pale on the underparts, due to pale fringes on black-based feathers, which is quite noticeable in the **left picture of the middle row**. This Chestnut-collared Longspur has noticeable pale buff fringes to what are obviously black feathers and the wearing-away of those fringes will produce the plumage aspect of the bird in the **right picture of the middle row**.

This process also explains all those late-summer male McCown's Longspurs with entirely black underparts, some of which are misidentified as Chestnut-collared Longspurs, as no field guide shows such a plumage aspect. However, just as the feathers in the black chest band start out with pale fringes in the fall, so do all the other underparts feathers—they simply have longer pale fringes. These longer fringes take longer to wear off, but wear off they do, creating an all-black belly on these birds much later in the plumage cycle than is true for Chestnut-collared Longspur.

Snow Bunting (no prealternate molt): Though Colorado birders get to see plenty of McCown's and Chestnut-collared Longspurs with the black bits not covered by pale fringes, the same is not true for Snow Bunting. The species rarely occurs in Colorado late enough for us to see the warm-buffy fringes to the upperparts wear off, creating the spectacular black-and-white breeding aspect of the species' basic plumage.

Red-winged Blackbird (limited or no prealternate molt): Every fall, knowledgeable birders are asked to help identify a black bird with lots of brown barring that looks somewhat like a Red-winged Blackbird. I have certainly heard the question quite a few times. Worse, I have heard leaders of field trips state that it is a young male Red-winged Blackbird when, in fact, it is an adult male Red-winged Blackbird.

This aspect of basic plumage in male Red-winged Blackbirds, depicted in the **left picture of the bottom row on the back cover**, seems to stymie quite a few of us. However, we have no problems with the aspect of basic plumage that we see in spring after most or all of those brown fringes have worn off, and which is depicted in the **right**

picture of the bottom row on the back cover. Immature male Red-winged Blackbirds, at least in most subspecies, more closely resemble females than do adult males. Still, despite a limited prealternate molt, at least in eastern birds, much of the plumage-aspect change from fall to spring is due to the wearing-away of brown fringes, not the replacement of feathers.

Meadowlarks (no prealternate molt): Many birders are unaware that, for a time, meadowlarks lack their badge—that big black “V” on the chest—at least, it is not particularly visible. When I was starting out birding, I ascribed the first such bird that I studied to “some kind of immature plumage.” Actually, all meadowlarks go through this stage every year, as the feathers forming that big black “V” start out with buffy fringes. Unlike most of the rest of the species discussed above, the wearing process is fairly short, and by midwinter most meadowlarks look like they’re “supposed to look.”

House Sparrow (no prealternate molt): This species is similar to the meadowlarks in the placement of its badge, the lack of a prealternate molt, and the rapidity with which the pale tips wear off the black-based feathers of the throat and chest.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

I greatly appreciate Steve Howell’s review of a previous draft of this manuscript.

LITERATURE CITED

- Howell, S.N.G. 2010. Molt in North American Birds. Houghton Mifflin, New York.
- Leukering, T. 2010. In the scope: molt and plumage. *Colorado Birds* 44: 135-142.
- Pyle, P. 1997. Identification Guide to North American Birds, part I. Slate Creek Press, Bolinas, CA.
- Pyle, P. 2008. Identification Guide to North American Birds, part II. Slate Creek Press, Bolinas, CA.

Tony Leukering, 102 Delaware Avenue, Villas, NJ 08251, greatgrayowl@aol.com

Colorado Birds

The Colorado Field Ornithologists' Quarterly

Instructions for Contributors to *Colorado Birds*

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

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

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

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

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

Send journal contributions to:

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

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



European Starlings in fresh basic plumage (left) and worn basic plumage (right). (*For detailed photo captions, see p. 155*).



Chestnut-collared Longspurs in fresh basic plumage (left) and worn basic plumage (right).



Red-winged Blackbirds in fresh formative plumage (left) and worn basic plumage (right).