

Vol. 45 No. 4 October 2011

Colorado Birds

The Col

Quarterly



*Remembering
Larry Semo*



Colorado Field Ornithologists
PO Box 643, Boulder, Colorado 80306
www.cfobirds.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.

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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*.

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

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Colorado Birds

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Larry Semo at
Lake Superior,
WI, 10 August
2011. Photo
by Rachel
Hopper

After Larry Semo

Jim Beatty

The premature death of Larry Semo, chair of the Colorado Bird Records Committee and member of the CFO Board of Directors, was a major loss to the Colorado birding community. He was not only fun to be with, but also a highly capable leader of the CBRC. Just one year ago I wrote in this journal, "the CBRC under Larry's leadership has steadily improved the timeliness of its reports and now is reviewing records for the current year. This substantial improvement has been due to the diligence of the committee, the installation of an electronic review system that allows records to be transmitted and voted on by email, and Larry's vision and fine leadership." How quickly events occur.

Before he died, Larry penned one final article for the CBRC, an in-depth examination of a single report, that of an Emperor Goose shot by a hunter in Weld County. We publish it in this issue, starting on page 277. It is the last time his byline will appear in this journal. Larry will be missed.

To fill the void left by Larry's passing, the board has elected Doug Faulkner to serve as the new CBRC Chair. Doug previously served as a member of the CBRC for six years and has been the committee's non-voting secretary since January 2011. The author of *Birds of Wyoming*, he is also associate editor for *Western Birds*, a past editor of this journal, and an expert on the effects of wind turbines on birds and bats. He is a biologist with SWCA, the national environmental consulting firm where Larry also worked.

The CFO Board is pleased that Doug has accepted the position of chair. He is well qualified and meets the CBRC bylaws' requirement that the chair be a current or former member of the CBRC. The board has identified four priorities for the new chairman:

1. manage the records review process conservatively, yet aggressively, to regain lost momentum;
2. attend CFO Board meetings, or send a replacement or a written status report;
3. submit CBRC reports to *Colorado Birds* for each issue; and
4. work through the backlog of submitted records by early 2013 or sooner, if possible.

CFO and CBRC website news

Brenda Linfield has updated the CFO website. She unveiled her well-developed proposal to the CFO Board at our August meeting

and it was very well received; the new site debuted to the public in late September. The website format is now modernized, including some navigation improvements, and, very importantly, the home page includes links to popular and pertinent Colorado birding blogs and Twitter feeds. Christian Nunes and Ted Floyd have volunteered to help with this aspect of the revitalization, which allows visitors to our website to gain additional current birding information with a click or two. In addition, we have the capability to incorporate field trip schedules for other Colorado birding organizations and clubs into the website without frequent manual editing and updating. These changes should increase the usefulness and visibility of our website.

The CBRC electronic review process, which has served us well for many years, is in need of improvements. In addition, the board has long expressed a desire to make rare bird records, both past and pending, easily available online to the birding public. This project will require contracted assistance because of its large scope and the level of expertise required. The board now believes that CFO's financial condition, thanks in part to a generous gift along with income from our conventions, may be sufficient to undertake these system improvements. Our next steps are to identify the scope of the work and our out-of-pocket cost.

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

CFO MEETING MINUTES

Minutes of 2011 CFO Annual Meeting
22 May 2011
Doubletree Hotel
Grand Junction, Colorado

President Jim Beatty called the annual meeting to order at the convention banquet. After welcoming members and guests, he recognized Coen Dexter, who organized most of the field trips, and the Grand Valley Audubon Society, which provided many trip leaders.

Beatty explained that "passing the hat" is a voluntary fundraiser for CFO's project fund and its very important youth scholarship program. He recognized Joel Such as a 2011 scholarship recipient and noted that Joel is a co-author of "News from the Field," a regu-

lar feature in *Colorado Birds*. The hat was passed and filled with donations.

Beatty asked everyone to complete the convention questionnaires and he thanked the Doubletree staff for their support of the convention with early breakfasts and a great banquet dinner.

Beatty introduced the board of directors; thanked the paper session speakers, the exhibitors, and the book authors; and praised the very successful birding Team ID Challenge organized and emceed by Nathan Pieplow, which has replaced "Stump the Chumps."

Beatty reported on the state of affairs at CFO, noting that membership was strong and the treasury had over \$50,000 as of 31 March. (This is after receiving convention income but before paying con-

Project Fund Application Deadline: 1 December 2011

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

Grant Schedule

- All applications must be postmarked no later than 1 December 2011.
- Successful applicants will be notified after the March 2012 CFO board meeting.
- Following completion of the project, the applicant must submit a final report in writing by February of the next calendar year. This report should include a full description of the project activities and an accounting of the money spent.

Please see the following page on the CFO website for all Project Fund guidelines: <http://cfobirds.org/business/funding.htm>.

vention expenses). He reported that all four officers—Beatty, President; Kaempfer, Vice President; Boswell, Treasurer; and Modesitt, Secretary—had agreed to serve another two-year term and asked for a motion from the floor. Their re-election was moved, seconded, and approved by voice vote.

CFO awards were then presented. Ted Floyd presented David Madonna and Xcel Energy Corporation with a special Landowner Appreciation Award. Bill Kaempfer presented Suzi Plooster in absentia with a Lifetime Achievement Award. Jim Beatty presented Larry Semo with the Ron Ryder Award, and Doug Faulkner received the award for Larry.

Ted Floyd introduced keynote speaker Jeff Gordon, president of the American Birding Association, and Jeff gave an excellent illustrated talk titled “Ten Birds that Changed Birding.”

Respectfully submitted,
Jim Beatty, CFO President

CFO board meeting minutes

21 August 2011

University of Colorado Mountain Research Station

Nederland, Colorado

The regular quarterly meeting was called to order at 11:11 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, Brenda Linfield, Christian Nunes, Bob Righter, and Joe Roller were present. Directors Lisa Edwards and Nathan Pieplow sent their regrets.

Board Changes

President Beatty opened the meeting with a moment of silence in honor of board member Larry Semo, who passed away on 20 August. Larry was a valued contributor to Colorado Field Ornithologists. He loved his job as Chairman of the Colorado Bird Records Committee (CBRC). Larry had made such advances that the CBRC Bylaws were changed last year for him to continue beyond the prior term limits. He was responsible for taking the CBRC records review

process to a level not reached before and widely emulated throughout the country. Larry was a worthy recipient of CFO's Ron Ryder Award, a great member of this committee, and a helpful teacher. Relaxed and friendly, he was extremely competent in all he did. It will be impossible to replace Larry, and a challenge to succeed him.

President Beatty welcomed Christian Nunes to his first board meeting after his election at the annual meeting.

Secretary's Report

Minutes of the 9 April board meeting were approved as written.

Treasurer's Report

Attendance for the Grand Junction 2011 convention was 192, a new record that even surpassed the total of the highly successful 2010 Fort Collins convention. Maggie noted that convention income was \$3,624 for the 2011 convention in Grand Junction, down from 2010 income of \$6,624. We had many more hotel expenses than in 2010, much less field trip income, and an advertisement in *Birding*.

Convention Feedback

We reviewed Maggie's convention feedback summary for improvements in 2012. Most of the comments were overwhelmingly positive. The biggest improvement, according to feedback, was the change from Stump the Chumps to the Friday night Team ID Challenge contest. The board greatly appreciated Coen Dexter's efforts in planning field trips. Thursday registration was more concentrated than before, and it showed the need for two people to be there. It would be helpful if notification of people's trip choices were included in packets. Also, a laptop printer would be useful at registration, as trip registration was all on the computer. Communication during field trips again could be improved. Plastic name tags usable throughout the convention would help participants to converse more easily and meet new people. Communications could be issued regarding

responsibilities for both leaders and participants. Two-way radios are essential to keep trips from splintering. In addition, leaders should have a cell phone.

The board debated the philosophy of convention locations. Bigger and more centrally-located cities have better facilities, and are usually more costly, but have 25% more attendance. On the other hand, we are an organization representing all of Colorado. We feel that visiting the outlying regions also is worthwhile, bringing in new birders from those regions, and bringing birders to those regions. Attendance is not the only measure of success.

We discussed the paper presentations. They traditionally are more ornithological (science-oriented) than field ornithological (identification-oriented). We discussed the possibility of convening a short session focusing only on paper presentations. Ted noted that many states have two conventions a year, one primarily involving field trips, and the other indoors in late fall with scientific sessions. Another possibility would be a fall session involving only field trips. Ted noted that the Lamar Snow Goose festival in the last week of February would like CFO participation there. This would mean furnishing trip leaders and having a booth.

2012 Convention Planning

As announced at the convention, the board was leaning toward a 2012 convention in Trinidad. Jim contacted the Trinidad Chamber of Commerce, and Brenda visited po-

tential convention facilities. People go to conventions for different reasons: target birds, social meetings with friends, availability of private ranch visitations, and birding in seldom-visited new counties and areas. Many private ranches on the Colorado Birding Trail are available. The location would be beautiful. The biggest hotel, however, has limited convention space. Moreover, it does not serve dinner, breakfast, or liquor, so these items would need to be catered. A remodeled convention center is under construction, and will be available in later years. Based upon these considerations, the board decided to investigate Colorado Springs as an alternate location for 2012. Not used since 1986, Colorado Springs has potential ties with the American Birding Association that could be beneficial. Jim will investigate feasibility. Jim noted that wherever we go, we need to get publicity out earlier.

CFO Website

Brenda showed printouts of her revisions to the website, and it is now available for the board to review and make recommendations. Brenda outlined the main functions of CFO on the home page: mission, convention, county birding, COBirds, awards and grants, journal, bird quiz, and blogs & tweets. We discussed that the homepage could include a feed of eBird rarities. Christian will begin a Twitter page with Ted's help. Christian also believes a Facebook page is essential, as it would get many more people who aren't reading COBirds. Facebook's multiplier effect would be very

good for publicity, especially regarding the convention. We believe that listing birding field trips organized by other Colorado birding organizations would increase traffic on the CFO site. We would need disclaimers, but an online forum would limit the amount of work Brenda would need to do. Inter-links are good for search engines, which would also increase hits on the site.

CBRC Site

While the CBRC site is advanced and a major improvement over old paper records, Mark Peterson had noted difficulties in entering information online, and a programmer is needed for corrections. Moreover, Larry Semo's illness caused delays in processing. Also, we would like to make the CBRC records more accessible to all. We will need to get additional resources before we begin with improvements. Brenda will communicate with Mark to decide what must be done and the cost to do this. She will make a presentation at the next board meeting.

Membership Database Transition

Brenda noted that this will be tested on the new website.

CBRC Status

The status of reviews of new reports was discussed and thought to be many months behind. The board agreed that Jim and Bill will speak with the CBRC members about selecting a new chair and determining how to restart committee activity and report back to the board as soon

as possible. Larry Modesitt noted that the CBRC Bylaws require the chair to be chosen from current or former members of the CBRC.

Field Trips

Bill is leading a CFO trip soon, and he will make a proposal for future trips at the next meeting. We need to look for volunteers for keeping the county birding website up to date.

Rare Bird Sightings Process

This discussion was postponed. Larry Semo had reported that the Such brothers have followed up on sighting documentation well, and the problem of inadequate documentation may not be not as severe as previously thought. This will be revisited when the CBRC chair issue is resolved.

Donation from Connie Kogler

Bill motioned that Connie's gift and a match from CFO be used to upgrade and possibly expand the CBRC website. Ted seconded the motion. After discussion, we agreed we needed a better description of the scope and cost for this proposal. The CBRC also should be consulted about its needs. For these reasons, discussion on the motion was tabled. Brenda's

CBRC presentation at the next board meeting will allow this discussion to continue then with more information.

Committee Reports

A. Publicity—Ted Floyd will submit a summary of the recent issue of *Colorado Birds*. Christian will be profiled in the next issue. The new website will be profiled in the President's message.

B. Membership—no report.

C. Project and Youth Funds—Bill Kaempfer. No report is due until the next meeting.

D. Field trips—Bill Kaempfer will be reviewing the possibility of leading trips in conjunction with the Snow Goose Festival.

E. Nominations—Joe Roller. No activity to report.

New Business

There was no new business.

Our next meeting will be 15 October 2011. The location will be announced later.

President Beatty adjourned the meeting at 2:54 P.M.

Respectfully submitted,
Larry Modesitt, Secretary

Christian Nunes

Edited by Jim Beatty

Christian is the newest member of the CFO Board and certainly the youngest. My first introduction to him was reading his frequent COBirds posts about birding in and around Boulder. It was obvious that he is an accomplished and fully trained naturalist who seems to bird 24/7. It wasn't until the CFO convention in Grand Junction that I had the chance to meet and bird with him.

Christian's fascination with birds didn't begin with any galvanizing revelation about a particular bird, but rather with a finely woven cup of plant strips and milkweed fluff, which he discovered when only a few years old, wandering the gardens of a family friend—the discarded nest of a Yellow Warbler. This marvel became a wagon adornment and a prized show-and-tell totem, the focal item in a growing collection of dilapidated robin, oriole, and catbird nests gleaned from the naked bushes and trees in his Rhode Island neighborhood.

As children and young adults, Christian, his twin brother Tim, and his elder sister Charlotte were immersed in nature. Their father, Peter, began taking them on backpacking trips in Vermont as soon as they were old enough to manage without being carried. The woods, streams, and ponds in their neighborhood in Peace Dale, Rhode Island, were an enchanting playground. The Great Swamp Wildlife Management Area, Narragansett Bay, and the southern Rhode Island coastline were all within a few miles' bike ride, and all the more important in the absence of video games and cable television.



The newest addition to the CFO Board, Christian Nunes, atop Mt. Belford. Photo by Elon O'Malia

When Christian was twelve, a bird shop, "Birdwatchers Nature View," opened in nearby Wakefield. Every week, a new quiz bird was put up at the counter with a reward of a pencil or magnet for a correct answer. As an avid bookworm, Christian studied the Peterson Guide with vigor and answered the quiz often. Once, the quiz photo was of an Atlantic Puffin, a Common Murre, and a Razorbill, birds rarely seen anywhere in Rhode Island except on a frigid wintertime pelagic trip. The proprietress, Marcelle, offered the kid with an unusual knowledge of alcids an opportunity to perform menial labor in exchange for the chance to thumb through the store's library of birding books.

With his first paycheck, Christian bought a pair of Bushnell 8×35 Powerview binoculars. This was an pivotal purchase, propelling his avid interest in bird nests into the realization that there were living, breathing birds out there, and that he could figure out what they were. Christian's mother, Mary, found herself driving her son to Trustom Pond National Wildlife Refuge instead of taking him to the soccer field. At the store, Christian met Dan Finizia, a long-time birder in Rhode Island who became his birding mentor. With Dan, Christian did sea watches at Point Judith during "nor'easters," watched migrants pour off the ocean during fallouts on Block Island, and beat the bushes around the south coast in the winter looking for skulking gems like chats and Orange-crowned Warblers. For two years in a row, Christian and Dan did a monthly Big Day, breaking ten of the twelve records. Sponsored by Birdwatchers, their team won the Rhode Island Audubon Bird-a-thon.

When he was 15, Christian participated in the World Series of Birding for the first time as a member of the ABA/Leica Tropicbirds. The Tropicbirds gave teenage birders from around the ABA area an opportunity to participate in marathon bird competitions. The fact that other young people were interested in birds was a revelation to Christian. Maybe birding wasn't as quirky as he once thought. Events like the World Series, along with the online network that connected young birders in the '90s, TeenBirdChat, further quelled the worries that birding wasn't cool. It was a fun-loving community of adventurers and explorers.

By the end of his senior year in high school, Christian's grades and attendance rate at school began to deteriorate. The problem wasn't alcohol, drugs, or a disillusionment with authority, but his ability to persuade his parents that spending two weeks in Texas to compete in the Great Texas Birding Classic, and then to go do the World Series of Birding just a week later, were better educational opportunities than attending class. Although his school work suffered, Christian

doesn't regret that he chose to be a part of the winning team of the Great Texas Birding Classic, observing 325 species over the course of three days on the Texas coast.

Soon, however, it was time to get serious. Christian attended Northern Arizona University in Flagstaff, Arizona, studying Environmental Science. For three years he worked at the Avian Cognition Laboratory. There he studied local population genetics of Pinyon Jays and performed behavioral research on jays and nutcrackers. In the summers he did field work with Western Bluebirds. His choice of NAU was influenced by the school's proximity to major birding destinations like southeastern Arizona, Mexico, California, and the Rocky Mountains. It was no problem to find willing birding partners, including the likes of the late John Prather, to go on trips to explore these regions.

During and shortly after college, Christian began to do more international birding, spending time in Mexico, Costa Rica, Venezuela, Peru, Ecuador, and Chile. After graduating in 2006, he worked as a migratory raptor counter at the Goshutes Mountain Hawkwatch in Nevada. The following spring, Christian landed in Colorado, spending the summer working for the Forest Service near Nederland. For the last four years, he has been working as a Natural Resource Specialist for the City of Boulder Open Space and Mountain Parks Department. He monitors the effects of various recreational activities on wildlife, helps organize a large team of raptor volunteers, and generally gets to spend a lot of time poking around the richly diverse ecosystems around Boulder.

Christian recently took over as the Photo Editor for *Colorado Birds*, and has joined the CFO board to help stimulate the organization's expansion into cyberspace with "tweets" and "blogs." His easy style and multiple skills make him a perfect addition to the board. When not out birding, Christian can be found climbing Colorado's fourteeners, rock climbing, or skiing.

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

Lifetime Achievement Award

Recipient: Suzi Plooster

Bill Kaempfer

If you know Suzi Plooster, you will agree that she is a real dynamo—and a dynamo is just what the Boulder Bird Club needed to revive its fortunes in 1992. Founded in 1947, the BBC in 1992 had only 35 members, only a small handful of whom could be described as active, when Suzi took over as president. Within ten years the group had rebounded to a membership of almost 300 and was sponsoring almost 100 events per year.

According to Suzi, the underlying reasons for her success with the Boulder Bird Club was her insight that “the focus needs to be primarily *on people* who are interested in birds.”

She mastered a few simple tricks in promoting the organization. You can't have a bird club without field trips, and Suzi sought out innovative ways to get birders into the field. The BBC began First Sunday Birding in the 1990s, and it has been going on for 17 years since. The simple trick was to schedule a regular field trip always starting at the same place, time, and day of the month, each and every month. First Sunday Birding starts at 9:00 A.M. sharp on the first Sunday of each month at the Cottonwood Marsh parking lot of Walden Ponds in Boulder. Since First Sunday Birding began, over 4,000 birders have participated.

Another innovation of Suzi's was Wednesday Morning Roadrunners. These trips also start at the same time and place every week—the South Boulder Recreation Center parking lot at 7:00 A.M. sharp every Wednesday from April through September. They have a set leader for each month, but no established destination. Each Wednesday the Roadrunners gather and decide on their route, trying to cover a variety of habitats while keeping an eye out for recently reported rarities.

On all outings, Suzi insisted that participants, especially those new to birding, got coached not only on identification tips, but on basic techniques. Suzi would make sure that new birders knew how to focus their binoculars, how to use the clock-face technique for describing locations of birds, and how *and when* to use a field guide.

Finally, Suzi could match up against any telemarketer on getting the message out. At the start of every trip, everyone would sign in on a participants' list. Little did those new to the experience know that within days they would be contacted by the BBC and invited to join



Chuck Lowrie presents the Lifetime Achievement Award to Suzie Plooster at the Boulder Bird Club's Summer Picnic. Photo by Gary Baxley

the club. By focusing on people, Suzi led the BBC to nearly tenfold growth in only a decade.

I've enjoyed many years of being out in the field birding with Suzi and her husband, Myron. I remember one trip in particular—one of those long late spring days—when the BBC started up on the Pawnee Grasslands and continued through Murphy's Pasture, Crow Valley, Lower Latham, and Beebe Draw. Finally we dragged ourselves up to Ireland Reservoir outside of Hudson at our last stop of the day, when Myron called out "Neotropic Cormorant!" and got us all charged up again.

Sadly, Myron, Suzi's husband and birding partner for 56 years, passed away this spring after a long illness. In fact, the day of the annual awards presentation at the CFO banquet during our convention in Grand Junction was the day of Myron's funeral across the state in Boulder. Suzi hasn't been able to be at the CFO convention for the past few years due to Myron's health, but I look forward to having her back with us next year and for many years to come.

For her general advocacy of birds, birding, and birders, including leading the Boulder Bird Club back to its current status as one of the premier birding clubs in Colorado, the board of the Colorado Field Ornithologists is proud to present Suzi Plooster with the CFO Lifetime Achievement Award for 2011.

Bill Kaempfer, kaempfer@colorado.edu

Remembering Larry Semo

It is appropriate that the members and friends of the Colorado birding community offer a tribute of special thanks and fond remembrance to Lawrence S. Semo, who recently passed away after a short battle with kidney cancer. Chairman of the Colorado Bird Records Committee, Larry did not seek the limelight, and in fact avoided it. Yet he tirelessly pursued his passion for Colorado birding and made immense contributions to Colorado field ornithology, despite his premature death in August at just forty-four years of age.

At the CFO Annual Convention this year in Grand Junction, CFO presented Larry with the Ron Ryder Award. As a winner of CFO's most prestigious award, Larry was profiled in the July 2011 issue of *Colorado Birds*. That profile was largely biographical, focusing on Larry's resume and his many accomplishments. Here we remember Larry as a friend and colleague, with a set of more personal individual remembrances.

I first met Larry at the 2000 CFO Convention in Grand Junction. I was in the parking lot leaving on a field trip and offered him a ride. He was new to Colorado—quiet, reserved, and, as I soon discovered,

remarkable. That day we saw Scott's Orioles, Sage Sparrows, and Gambel's Quail. That was the day, just being with him, that I learned to pay more attention to everything around me. Especially to listen. That was the day I started to become a better birder. That was the day a true and lasting friendship was born.



Larry and Belden fishing in Wisconsin. Photo by Rachel Hopper

Over the last eleven years Larry and I birded, traveled, and worked on many projects together. We shared dreams, hopes, frustrations, pain, and joy. We had amazing conversations. We argued, laughed, and, most importantly, could be quiet together.

He was supremely intelligent. He was the person I could always count on to answer my questions. Questions about birds, mammals, plants, water, fish, trees. The world. It seemed he knew everything. He never made me feel small for not knowing.

For all his love of nature, Larry was a guy's guy. He loved football, baseball, women, bars, and brandy. He loved good food. He watched Gunsmoke reruns and was hooked on the Sopranos. He was Midwest stoic, complicated, and unique.

I spent the last two weeks of his life with him in Wisconsin. We rode around in his dad's fishing boat, saw a Kirtland's Warbler, walked the shores of Lake Superior, walked his dog Belden. We stayed out late under the dark Wisconsin sky to listen for Barred Owl. Played tapes to pull a Mourning Warbler out of a deep thicket for a good picture. We went to the bookstore. We photographed dragonflies. And when he got too sick to go outside, we sat together in his parent's house and listened to birds in the yard. He knew them all.

There really are no adequate words when your best friend dies. My world is a poorer place to have lost him. My world is a better place that he was here. He will forever remain in my heart. And I will miss him.

Rachel Hopper

My memories of birding with Larry are of a very friendly personality and a quiet aura of high competence in bird identification and behavior.

I think his CBRC reports in *Colorado Birds* reflected this personality, and are some of the best reports ever. They reflected his competence in bird identification and behavior, while treating the reporters as people.

Peter Gent

Probably my best memory of Larry is of a night I stayed up far, far too late in the bunkhouse at Bonny State Park talking about birds with him and Tony Leukering on the eve of a Christmas Count. As I recall, the subject was Common Nighthawk subspecies distribution—a rarified topic indeed. Larry and Tony were overflowing with information. They were probably the two best birders in Colorado at that time, and to be able to listen to them both firing on all cylinders was a rare treat.

Larry was a true scientist. He was my unofficial quality control

reviewer for *Colorado Birds*, always ready to read a manuscript on short notice. If it wasn't up to snuff, *zing!* He'd let me know. I never met anyone with higher scientific standards.

Nathan Pieplow

When Larry learned that my CFO Convention room was not going to be available, he said to stay in his room. I knew of Larry's lofty reputation, and, having none of his credentials, I felt intimidated. I thought it would be like a college freshman trying to converse on a level with a renowned professor. It took all of two minutes for Larry to let me know we had plenty to talk about. That was the first of many enjoyable conversations with Larry that grew even more meaningful when he joined the RMBO board. Larry made all of us feel better while we reveled in his knowledge.

Larry Modesitt



John Carlson and Larry Semo

My memories of Larry are forever intertwined with the best stretch of birding I have had in my life. Larry and I worked together in Texas and I was able to bird with him every day for three months through the spring: High Island (twice), the Rio Grande, the Gulf

Coast, and our usual daily birding around Austin. The birding was great, but it was even better because I was with Larry and two other great guys. Larry certainly made it fun.

After my stint in Texas, I headed to Antarctica. Larry was the last person I called before I left the US and for the next few years it became a sort of ritual to call Larry to visit about life and birds just before leaving the States. We could always pick right up whenever we were able to talk, no matter how long it had been between visits, and I always left those conversations feeling good. Larry was a good friend.

The photo shows me and Larry with my life Blue-footed Booby in Texas, circa 1994. Perhaps the only photo I have of me, a life bird, and a great friend all in the same photo.

John Carlson

The 60th Report of the Colorado Bird Records Committee: A Report of Emperor Goose in Colorado

Lawrence S. Semo

Chair, Colorado Bird Records Committee

[Editor's note: Written by Larry Semo before he died, this report follows the precedent established for the Kelp Gull in the 43rd report (Semo 2007), discussing in depth a single exceptional bird record, and thus breaks from the standard format of a records committee report.]

Introduction

On 4 October 2008, Tom Hall reported to the COBirds listserv that he had observed an Emperor Goose (*Chen canagica*) flying over Foster Reservoir, just east of Union Reservoir, in Weld County. No subsequent mention of the bird was reported to COBirds, but on 30 January 2009, Chris Haas, a coworker biologist at SWCA Environmental Consultants, told me that an acquaintance of his fiancée had shot an Emperor Goose in Prospect Valley near Hudson, Weld County, in late January. I asked Haas to provide some names to follow up on. Ironically, within a few days, I received an email from Mindy Hetrick of the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service also notifying me about an Emperor Goose being shot near Hudson and wondering whether the Colorado Bird Records Committee (CBRC) would be interested in the record. Obviously, the committee was interested.

Doug Faulkner contacted Hetrick, who informed him that the goose was at a taxidermist's shop east of Barr Lake, Adams County. Faulkner contacted the taxidermist, Tim Wagner, who was more than happy to have us inspect the specimen. Faulkner and I met with Wagner on 5 February 2009 to inspect and take photographs of the bird (Figs. 1-2) in order to document this potential first state record and submit it to the full CBRC for review.

Besides identifying the species correctly, our main concern was establishing the origin of the bird, as a formerly captive bird would not be eligible for the official state list. We took numerous photographs of the specimen, which was already mounted but still drying, and inspected it for signs of captive origin. With the taxidermist's permission, we took the further step of plucking two undercover feathers for stable isotope analysis, in an attempt to determine the geographic region in which the bird grew those feathers the previous summer.

In evaluating this report, the committee sought answers to four questions:

1. Is the bird an Emperor Goose?
2. Does the bird outwardly express any characteristics of captive origin?
3. How commonly are captive Emperor Geese kept in Colorado and elsewhere?
4. Where was the bird during the summer of 2008, when it molted its new flight feathers?

Status and distribution of Emperor Goose

Emperor Geese breed along the coasts of eastern Siberia and western Alaska and winter in the Aleutian Islands, the Alaska Peninsula, and on Kodiak and Afognak islands (Petersen et al. 1994). The species is a rare winter visitor along the Pacific Coast south of Alaska, and casual a short distance inland. It has been recorded multiple times in Hawaii, is accidental in Greenland, and has been found as a vagrant in Japan and on Midway Island (AOU 1998).

As of 2007, California had 83 accepted records of the species, mostly from coastal areas, but with up to seven records occurring inland within the Klamath Basin in the northeastern part of the state. Of the 83 records, the vast majority are from the winter period. A total of six records have been from October, with the earliest fall record being from 29 September (Hamilton et al. 2007).

Idaho is the only non-Pacific coast state or province that has accepted an Emperor Goose record as pertaining to a wild vagrant. That bird was shot by a hunter on 10 November 2000 (IBRC 2011).

Identification of the specimen

The bird was clearly an Emperor Goose, with no evidence of gene introgression from any other species. Figs. 1-2 show its distinctive features, including the short pinkish bill, immaculate white head and hindneck, silver-gray upperparts plumage barred with black, and white tail contrasting with dark uppertail coverts, all of which combine to eliminate similar species such as dark-morph Snow or Ross's Geese.

Signs of captive origin

To lawfully keep Emperor Geese in captivity, one must possess a Federal Migratory Bird Waterfowl Sale and Disposal Permit. Per the requirements of that permit, all live migratory waterfowl (including progeny) must be physically marked using one of the following methods:

- Removal of the hind toe (hallux) from the right foot;

- Pinioning of a wing by removing the metacarpal bones of one wing;
- Banding of one metatarsus with a seamless metal band; or
- Tattooing a readily discernible number or letter on the web of one foot.

We carefully inspected the mounted specimen for these permanent marks as well as other indicators such as abnormal feather wear or calloused feet as a result of walking often on concrete. Save for a moderate degree of wear on the tertial feathers, we found no obvious signs of those traits, and the bird appeared to have no other characteristics indicative of captive origin, at least in the recent past.

Emperor Geese in captivity

Rachel Hopper conducted research for the committee on the status of captive Emperor Geese in the country and found them to be quite common in captivity. She spoke to various zoological institutions that keep Emperor Geese, including the Denver Zoo, which has five Emperor Geese, all of which are banded, have a hallux removed, and are accounted for.

Hopper also contacted Scott Drieschman of Applied Conservation in Oregon, who manages many private aviaries. Drieschman suggested that Hopper contact Dr. Pepper Trail, the Senior Forensic Scientist at the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service's Forensic Laboratory in Ashland, Oregon, for an opinion on whether the photographs to him looked to be of a wild bird. Dr. Trail indicated that he saw no indications of captive origin.

Stable isotope analysis

The use of intrinsic markers such as the stable isotope signature of feathers can provide useful information about the geographic origins of individual birds. Stable isotope analysis of feathers can reveal where those feathers were grown, and is especially useful for individuals dispersing or migrating long distances.

Stable isotope analysis makes use of the fact that chemical elements can exist in multiple forms of different atomic weights, called isotopes. These isotopes can be stable or unstable (radioactive). Naturally occurring stable isotope signatures—that is, the relative proportions of the different isotopes—vary geographically due to regional patterns in geology, the water cycle, the nitrogen cycle, and human activities. As individual birds grow new tissues using food from the environment around them, they incorporate the local isotopic signatures into those tissues. In the case of feathers, which are a form of inert tissue, no new isotopic assimilation occurs after the feather is grown. Thus, a feather forever



Fig. 1. Emperor Goose mounted at Tim Wagner Taxidermy, Brighton, Adams County, 5 February 2009.



Fig. 2. Head detail of the Emperor Goose mounted at Tim Wagner Taxidermy, Brighton, Adams County, 5 February 2009.

retains the isotopic signature of the geographic region in which it was produced.

To be able to tell whether the Emperor Goose had spent the summer in its native breeding range along the coast of the Bering Sea, we needed a set of isotopic signatures of Emperor Geese from that region to compare with the signature of the Colorado specimen. Hopper contacted Joel Schmutz, a Research Wildlife Biologist for the United States Geological Survey (USGS) in Anchorage, Alaska, an avian flu researcher who had taken feather samples from Emperor Geese across their range and analyzed the carbon, nitrogen, oxygen, and hydrogen isotopes within the feathers. Indicating that he saw nothing in the photographs that would suggest captive origin, Schmutz offered the results of his isotope analysis of birds from their native range as a standard against which to compare the isotopes of the Colorado bird.

Schmutz suggested that Hopper contact Craig Stricker of USGS in Lakewood, Colorado, to perform the analysis. Stricker agreed, and indicated that he would use Schmutz's results for comparison. Stricker said that he talked to Schmutz regarding the testing specifics so he could duplicate the procedure as closely as possible.

On 2 March 2009, Hopper and I met with Stricker at the Federal Center in Lakewood to pass the feathers off to him. Stricker noted that he would not be able to run the tests for three weeks as all hydrogen isotope test specimens must calibrate with ambient hydrogen levels within the lab.

Stricker analyzed only the hydrogen isotopes, as hydrogen is tied to the global water cycle. Water isotopes are a good biological tracer for the origin, condensation, and evaporation history of an air parcel, since lighter isotopes preferentially evaporate and heavier isotopes preferentially condense. In general, if the isotopic hydrogen signature of the Colorado bird compared well with the isotopic hydrogen signatures of the Alaska birds, it would quite easily indicate that the Colorado bird had spent the summer in the Northern Pacific region, and thus was of wild origin. If the isotopic signatures differed, it would only tell us that the goose was not in the Northern Pacific, where it should have been, during the molt period.

Between March and May 2009, Stricker analyzed three sections from the two different feathers. The hydrogen isotope values, measured as deuterium ratios, were -121, -125, and -120 per milliliter, with an average of -122 per milliliter. Schmutz's data from Yukon-Kuskokwim Emperors ranged from about -185 to -200 per milliliter. This indicates that the Colorado Emperor Goose stable isotopes fell well outside the range of birds from Alaska. According to Stricker, the average value of -122 suggests that the feathers were grown at a lower latitude, probably a latitude similar to that of Colorado, indicating that the bird had not

migrated from Alaska during at least the year prior to its collection in Colorado.

Why was the bird not on its breeding grounds during the summer when it molted its flight feathers in? If it was a natural vagrant to Colorado, it must have wandered here at some point prior to the summer of 2008 and then decided to stay for the entire year, which, as it was an uninjured free-flying bird, seems unlikely.

Results of CBRC deliberations

The CBRC voted conservatively to not accept this report as the first record of Emperor Goose for Colorado (2009-115; 1-6), largely due to the results of the isotope analysis. The specific identity of the bird was not questioned. Dissenting members were most concerned that the bird's flight feathers were grown at a lower latitude than Alaska, suggesting at least the possibility that the bird was not of wild origin.

The CBRC member in favor of the report noted that the isotope analysis was the only problematic evidence, and that everything else favored a wild, free-flying bird. Summer stays in Colorado have occurred for individuals of other Arctic-breeding species, such as Snow Goose (*Chen caerulescens*), and the Emperor Goose showed no evidence of captivity.

Even when an unusual species record is well documented, as is the case with this goose, legitimate questions often remain about its wild origin. Appropriately, conservative attitudes usually demand that wild status be demonstrated before a record is accepted. A conservative approach, however, while it serves to reduce error, may nevertheless misrepresent the actual status of this rarity.

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Kaufman Field Guide to Advanced Birding by Kenn Kaufman

Robert Righter

Traditional field guides, by their nature, offer a pattern of field marks to look for when identifying a bird. The more sophisticated field guides also show distinctive age-related plumages and geographic variations, allowing for more precise identification. Kaufman's new *Field Guide to Advanced Birding* is less of a traditional field guide and more of a text that raises our awareness of all the environmental and psychological components that come into play when we are looking at a bird.



*Kaufman Field Guide
to Advanced Birding*

Kenn Kaufman
Houghton Mifflin Harcourt, 2011
448 pages, 7.5×4.9 inches,
vinyl bound
ISBN: 978-0547248325

The title of the book is misleading, as it suggests this guide is aimed at advanced birders. But those likely to gain the most from this book are beginners and intermediates (although advanced birders will definitely learn to be more cautious). A *Field Guide to Becoming an Advanced Birder* would better describe the book's intent. Average birders need not worry that the book is too complicated. While some sophisticated concepts are put forth, they are explained in an easy-to-comprehend style. It is always a challenge to make the complicated easily understood, but this guide succeeds.

Kaufman teaches us to observe a bird by incorporating habitat, light conditions, season, age, and degree of molt, among other factors. One theme of the book is how birding, to some extent, is all about identification by degrees, using a variety of factors to make a partial or definitive identification, depending on how much value we place on the components within our realm of awareness.

Sized like the older Peterson field guides, this book will easily slip into the pocket of a field jacket. Digital photos are used to illustrate identification points in the text. For the most part the photos are effective, but there are times when another drawing or two would

clarify a complicated concept being explained. For example, it would have been helpful to see a drawing that compared various ducks in flight.

The first few chapters address the foundations of birdwatching, while the remainder of the chapters focus on identification challenges in particular groups of birds, such as waterfowl and warblers. In Chapter 1, "An Integrated Approach to Field Identification," Kaufman leads us through the psychology that traps all of us into making those disastrous "snap calls" which lead to a misidentification. He relates how the sting of making those hideous calls can actually lead us to become more careful and more curious birders, birders who have the confidence to say, "I'm not sure what that was."

The second chapter, "Principles and Pitfalls of Field Identification," enumerates thirteen principles and fourteen pitfalls. The principles encourage us to use multiple field characteristics when arriving at an identification and to learn the differences between absolute field marks and subjective ones. Principle 5, for instance, teaches us to "Expect to see variation" and states that no bird seen in the field ever looks exactly like the picture in the guide. Other principles deal with, for example, when to consider behavior as a reliable field mark, or when to leave some birds unidentified.

When it comes to pitfalls, Kaufman argues that when we are primed to find a rare bird, we usually do find one, although it might not be the one we had hoped to see. For example, when looking for a Northern Goshawk, Kaufman points out, it is amazing how those large female Cooper's Hawks can suddenly appear like goshawks.

Upon learning that Chapter 4 covers plumages and molt, some birders might ask themselves, why should I learn this? What's in it for me? What's "in it" for any birder is a whole lot of potential satisfaction. Imagine zeroing in on a flock of Cliff Swallows overhead during fall migration and noting that one swallow shows a pattern of dark and light flight feathers. To those who have paid a little attention to the chapter on molt, the uneven-colored flight feathers would signal that those feathers were actively molting, the darker flight feathers being newer and the lighter feathers being older. Knowing that Cliff Swallows molt their flight feathers on the wintering grounds in South America and that Cave Swallows begin molt on the breeding grounds, you would be able to surmise that the bird in molt could very well be the rare Cave Swallow. Wouldn't that be a high level of birding satisfaction? This is just one of the many gems in this chapter that would come in handy during migration.

The chapters that discuss particular groups of birds are the meat of the book, sprinkled with photographs showing some of the features

being discussed. Perhaps the best way of absorbing this knowledge is to keep at hand your favorite field guide so that you can visualize the information in *Advanced Birding* by seeing how your field guide portrays it. Some chapters are more thorough than others, and a few chapters could have been expanded; for example, the chapters dealing with swallows and warblers could have offered more in-depth information.

Chapter 8, "Learning to Identify Waterfowl," starts by giving us a useful overview of each waterfowl group, such as swans, geese, dabbling ducks, diving ducks, and so on. Then, under the subheading "What to look for in identifying ducks," Kaufman discusses habitat, behavior, head shape, plumage patterns of dull-appearing ducks, patterns of flock formations at a distance, floating ducks, and ducks in flight. For most of us this would be plenty of information to absorb and apply, but for those who want more, there is "Further considerations in duck identification," where we can learn about molt patterns in ducks, adding yet another arrow to our quiver of identification tools. And for those who still haven't had enough enlightenment, there are also sections about hybrids, potential escapees, and domesticated and feral ducks.

The chapter on *Empidonax* flycatchers alone is worth the price of admission. Just when you thought you were getting a grip on these perplexing little flycatchers, this chapter suggests that we should reconsider everything we previously learned about the genus: there is often more variation within an *Empidonax* species than there is between species. One page shows all the average bill shapes for each species, and then within each species account we are shown pictures of the variation in bill sizes.

It is not all hopeless, as Kaufman carefully takes us through each species account, showing us what to look for and what is irrelevant. This is another great example of birding by degrees, where no one field mark is the clincher; instead, it is the evaluation of several characteristics that leads to an identification. Good thing this guide has a firm spine, as I expect this section will be well worked-over.

Obviously, I am really enthusiastic about this new guide by Kenn Kaufman. It will be a great addition to your current field guides and a much-used reference.

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Flash Fuels

Dave Leatherman

By the time this hits your mailbox, they will be mostly gone, except in a few isolated, late-developing locales. Birds, including many species we think of mostly as “seed-eaters” and “insectivores,” consume them during both the anticipation and the act of major fall movements (Baird 1980, Levey and Stiles 1992, Stoate and Moreby 1995, Parrish 1997). With them, arduous flights over long distances are more successful. They are sweet, juicy, round packages of energy, the kindling of autumn migrational fires—what I call “flash fuels.” What do Hermit Thrushes, Red-eyed Vireos, and Great Crested Flycatchers eat, as much or more than insects, during their post-breeding flights south?

The answer: a lot of fruit.

The importance of frugivory, or fruit consumption, in migratory passerines is only beginning to be understood and appreciated (Levey and Karasov 1989, Parrish 1997). Early studies in Europe and controlled laboratory trials elsewhere led ornithologists for many years to underestimate the extent of the facultative change from insectivory to frugivory during autumn migration in a wide variety of North American migratory songbirds (Berthold 1976). Some of this research also undervalued the ecological importance of the insects-to-fruit dietary shift (see Parrish 1997 for review). Some studies even suggested that not enough gain could possibly come from fruit, compared to insects, to make frugivory worth the effort (Moermond and Denslow 1985, Bairlein and Gwinner 1994). Newer studies, however, are showing that these assumptions and generalities have been too strongly stated, and in many cases are simply in error (Jordano 1988, Parrish 1997).

There are three main hypotheses on why fall frugivory evolved: “resource availability,” “phylogenetic inertia,” and “net energy assimilation” (see Bairlein and Gwinner 1994 for review). The “resource availability” hypothesis asserts that birds switch to fruit in fall primarily because insects, their preferred food, are not sufficiently available. The “phylogenetic inertia” hypothesis proposes that our Neotropical migrant birds may have arisen from Neotropical non-migratory species capable of eating both insect and plant foods, and that eating fruit during migration is akin to falling back on an old habit, rather than an innovation for adaptive purposes (Levey and Stiles 1992). The third hypothesis, “net energy assimilation,” which seems increasingly supported by careful studies (Stoate and Moreby 1995,

Parrish 1997), states that fruit is preferred during autumn migration because there are physiological, and therefore survival, benefits to eating it. These benefits are borne out in weight-gain comparisons of North American species that switch to fruit versus those that maintain a heavy component of insects in their diet.

Many plants produce fruits. Whether birds eat them in autumn depends on a number of factors, including their abundance, their color, the timing of their ripening, the structure of the plant on which they occur, their sugar content, their lipid content, their secondary compound content, and the coincident abundance of accessible insect populations as an alternate food resource.

Availability: The fruits of most fruit-bearing plants in the Northern Hemisphere reach maximum size and ripen in late summer and fall. This phenomenon coincides with the senescence of most plants and the accompanying death or reduced availability of herbivorous insect populations. The reduction in herbivorous insects leads in turn to a reduction in parasitic and predaceous insects. So the traveling feathered investor finds fruit stocks are up, six-legged commodities are down. It is no accident that evolutionary forces have encouraged birds to profit from the change.

Color: As if sheer numbers of fruit were not enough to ensure attention from birds, most fruiting plants instill their progeny with bright colors. Fruits that would benefit from having their seeds dispersed by southbound migrants are often red, orange, purple, or blue; lustrous; and borne in clusters. They often occur at the ends of branches, daring feathered passers-by not to notice.

Interestingly, a maturing garden in my hometown of Fort Collins, The Gardens at Spring Creek, has a big planting of various gooseberries. One of the staff gardeners pointed out to me that the dark-fruited varieties were all picked clean by summering and early-migrant birds, but that fruits on the horticulturally “invented” golden cultivar had been virtually untouched. Was this a color thing? Will the birds eventually figure it out?

Timing: Mulberries and cherries, for the most part, ripen too early to be useful to birds in “prime time” (mid-August through mid-October). Some fruits come on too late or are still green (and often chemically unpalatable) during the bulk of bird passage. Little is wasted in nature and the wintering species get the benefit of these late bloomers.

Although most fruits normally ripen near the peak of bird mi-

gration, as any Coloradan knows, the vagaries of weather can make “normal” a memory, taking certain items off the shelf completely, moving them to a different aisle, hiding them in limited quantity in a new corner of the store never to be found, or (on the contrary) assailing a shopper’s eyes as a massive sale item just inside the entry.

Location: Some fruits are there for the taking but largely ignored due to plant architecture—for example, the berries of false Solomon’s seal, which hang just above the ground in the dark shadows of the understory. If the fruits are attached somewhere other than the branch tip, are hidden from view by foliage, or cling to a twig so thin it cannot support a bird’s weight, they may be overlooked or passed over.

Sugars: Juicy, succulent plants high in sugar offer easily-convertible energy for the exertion required by flight. Low-sugar fruits like juniper berries (*Juniperus* spp.) and Russian-olive (*Eleagnus angustifolia*) are likely to be passed over at this season for the sweeter fruits like grapes, plums, and chokecherries.

Lipids: Lipids are the building blocks of fat¹. Fat is carry-on, storable fuel for those long, difficult flights over open prairie, mountain passes, and water bodies. When birds linger for days at stopovers like Crow Valley or Chico Basin or downtown Ouray (making them, in birding terms, “gettable”), their tanks were likely on “empty” upon arrival. Many of these individuals consume large quantities of lipids from fruits, convert them to fat, gain significant mass, and once again are able to continue their glorious journeys.

As it does in our kitchens, fat in nature easily spoils, and fruits that last through autumn into winter or spring are generally those that are low in lipids, such as crabapples, juniper berries, and Russian-olives. Because they are low-energy, fruits like these are not utilized much by migrants, compared to their massive consumption by wintering species. Indeed, the low-energy nature of these lingering fruits requires that birds eat them in large amounts to survive winter conditions.

Secondary Compounds: Secondary compounds are difficult to define and have many functions. In the context of this discussion, many are those compounds which give longevity to the fruit (i.e.,

¹I was forced to shortchange organic chemistry lab in deference to a basketball scholarship predicated on showing up for practice. The mere existence of things like ions and double bonds, let alone their essential nature to the conduct of the living world, was a mystery to me then and still is. End of chemistry discussion.

“preservatives”). Some are mildly toxic, and although edible in small quantities, limit intake over the long run (See Iliff and Lovitch 2007 for review).

“Flash fuels” is not an easy category of food items to define, either botanically or ornithologically, and the somewhat artificial union of plants from various families proposed here will probably only last to the end of this article. But in general, the fruits I am calling “flash fuels” are those that are juicy, short-lived, usually brightly-colored, often abundant, spherical, and sugar-laden or lipid-rich, with a late summer/early fall ripening season. They are the show-stoppers on the periphery of plants that gaudily advertise for attention and get it in spades from birds with somewhere to be.

In Colorado, some of the more important plants in this category include

- Virginia creeper (*Parthenocissus quinquefolia*, non-native) and its native relative *P. inserta*;
- Currants and gooseberries (*Ribes* spp.);
- Elderberries (*Sambucus* spp., one non-native; Fig. 1);
- Honeysuckles (*Lonicera* spp., mostly non-native);
- Chokecherry (*Prunus virginiana*, Fig. 2);
- Wild grape (*Vitis riparia*);
- Wild plum (*Prunus americana*, Figs. 3-4);
- Buckthorns (*Rhamnus cathartica*, non-native, and possibly others);
- Serviceberries (mostly *Amelanchier utahensis* and *A. alnifolia*);
- Viburnums (*Viburnum* spp., some non-native).

There are probably many other plants that fit this category, at least in a particular year for a particular bird.

However awkwardly-defined, flash fruits benefit many bird species we do not normally think of as fruit-eaters, including flycatchers, most of the vireos, thrushes, mockingbirds and thrashers, woodpeckers, blackbirds (especially orioles), corvids, chickadees, Ruby-crowned Kinglet, Bushtit, some swallows, some warblers, some sparrows, some finches, and even Brown Creeper. In fact, almost all small migrant species at some time or another utilize this food source. In a large study of the fecal contents of 69 migrant species visiting Block Island, Rhode Island, a major East Coast migratory stopover location, the only species showing no fruit consumption was Winter Wren.

I encourage readers to check the references provided for more information on the subject of fruit utilization by fall migrants. In



Fig. 1. Elderberries, Fort Collins, late August.



Fig. 2. Chokecherry, Mancos, late August.

Photos by Dave Leatherman



Fig. 3. Plum, partially pecked and eaten by birds, Fort Collins, late August.



Fig. 4. Plums, Fort Collins, late August.

particular, since many birders are interested in landscaping yards to attract and presumably benefit birds, I strongly recommend reading the wonderful “Changing Seasons” segment in the Spring 2007 issue of *American Birds*, titled “Food For Thought,” by Marshall Iliff and Derek Lovitch (2007), from which I have borrowed in writing this column. To use their words, in this piece they “think out loud” about the impact of non-native, invasive plants on birds and birding. The things we plant often spread to non-native habitats. Are they merely good for us birders in helping us find birds? Or do they truly benefit the birds?

Iliff and Lovitch provide a lot of meat to chew on, but perhaps their bottom line is the value of native plants. I join them in encouraging readers to have a plan before grabbing the shovel, and to “go native” whenever possible. Beyond the garden, efforts devoted to bird conservation should recognize and promote plants that provide “flash fuels,” particularly those known to be native. Otherwise, fewer of our migrant birds will reach their destinations.

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Kit Carson County

Bill Kaempfer

Colorado has three primary auto routes heading east. Two of them, Interstate 76 and US Highway 50, follow the state's major Mississippi tributaries, the South Platte and the Arkansas. Because they follow rivers, each of those highways passes close by many top birding spots, including large reservoirs and migrant traps.

The third route east, Interstate 70, seems to follow an arrow path through corn and wheat fields once it passes Limon. Most birders heading east on I-70 will turn off at Byers to visit Last Chance, or else exit at Limon to head south toward Ordway or southeast toward Lamar. But some great birding can be had if one stays on track and follows I-70 all the way to Kit Carson County. In this edition of "The Hungry Birder," I try to assist with some restaurant suggestions if you make it that far.

Actually, it's not really that far. Kit Carson County's top birding spot is Flagler State Wildlife Area, right off I-70 just after you enter the county from the west. The town of Flagler is less than two hours from Denver, and thus one of the closest high plains birding spots for those from the Front Range.

To get to the state wildlife area, exit I-70 at Flagler, go north into town, and make the first right, which takes you directly there after about four miles. But before you go that far, how about some breakfast?

It's hard to miss the **I-70 Diner** in Flagler, perched as it is right at the interstate exit. The classic Starlite design was trucked into Flagler piece by piece in 2007. Since then it's been serving breakfast, lunch, and dinner to passing travelers and birders. The fare is pretty standard, the portions ample, and the prices reasonable, with almost every breakfast and lunch item coming in at \$7 or \$8 and most of the dinners at \$9. The biggest drawback for me is that its 8:00 A.M. to 7:00 P.M. hours mean that you can't grab breakfast before an early start in the field. However, at the end of a BBS route that started at 5:00 A.M., I'm really happy to head in for breakfast and lots of coffee before the ride home.

Currently the diner is campaigning to get on "Diners, Drive-ins and Dives," the Food Network show. Frankly, while the I-70 Diner serves up a most welcome meal to a hungry birder with no other options in Flagler, I don't see it as possessing a culinary field mark that would cause Guy Fieri of DDD to want to tick it off his list.

Continuing east on I-70, the traveler encounters what's left of a



I-70 Diner, Flagler, Kit Carson County. Photo by Todd Deininger

little town every seven or eight miles, every place there were water stops used by steam engines on the old rail line that parallels the road. Most of these offer little in the way of birds or food, but in one, Stratton, there are at least some eatery options. The town has a Best Western with an attached full service restaurant called the **Golden Prairie Inn**, but neither service nor food is much to write about. Across the street is the **Dairy Treat**, a spot that can come in very handy for a sandwich and a shake or ice cream during the slow hours of your birding day.

Much more intriguing is something called the **Claremont Inn**, back on the Best Western side of the street. Frankly, I have to send you to the web site on this one, <http://www.claremontinn.com>, because you won't believe me telling you that you can get a room for two with dinner and breakfast in Stratton, Colorado for \$349! Well, that's the "Romantic Weekend" package—it's \$549 for two nights. Sounds like just the place to relax after a hard day of winter birding, touring the local feedlots looking for Great-tailed Grackles and Lapland Longspurs.

On to Burlington, gateway to Bonny Reservoir. Bonny isn't exactly in Kit Carson County—it's in Yuma County just to the north—but Burlington is the right exit to get you there.

The town is one of those oddities where Main Street is actually 14th Street, so don't get lost. On 14th there is a nice coffee shop, **The Main Cup**, and a pretty good Mexican restaurant, **Panaderia #2**, which offers patio dining. My favorite place in town, however, is **The Route Steakhouse** which is on South Lincoln, the street with most of Burlington's motels. The Route has a full menu for both lunch and dinner served in both a dining area and the bar. The staff is very friendly and helpful—pointing out, for instance, that the seafood entrees are made from frozen portions. (But then what would you expect in a high plains spot like Burlington?) The Route reminds me of places like **Gallagher's River City Grill** in Sterling and **Boss Hogg's** in La Junta—places where you can have an enjoyable, filling meal with many options and feel that as a hungry birder you are seeing a part of the state that most Coloradans drive right by.

Bill Kaempfer, William.Kaempfer@colorado.edu

Spring 2011 (March–May)

Bill Maynard

On 9 April, hiking among the scenic splendors in Colorado National Monument, Ontario's Lev Frid heard the distinctive bouncing-ball song of a Black-chinned Sparrow, and later saw one perched along the Devil's Kitchen Trail. The often cooperative bird remained throughout the period, reportedly joined by a second individual and engaging in nest-building, and becoming a highlight for the nearly two hundred birders who attended the Colorado Field Ornithologists Convention in nearby Grand Junction in May.

But this sparrow wasn't the only exciting bird seen during Colorado's most anticipated birding season. On 8 May two out-of-state birders, Andrew and Tim Davis, found and photographed a bird species not currently among the nearly 900 species listed on the American Birding Association's bird checklist, a Rufous-collared Sparrow (*Zonotrichia capensis*), in Georgetown. This much-discussed individual remained throughout the period, to the delight of hundreds who photographed, took videos of, talked to neighbors about, and produced sound recordings of this often cooperative bird.

For many birders, March marks the season to put away winter skis, snowshoes, and skates in exchange for binoculars, spotting scopes, and cameras. It is the time to watch the spectacle of migration, often sparked by the first Cinnamon Teal of the season and the exodus of swans from the state, followed by a sighting of spring's first shorebird arrivals. At least 311 birders submitted sightings in one form or another during this busy season. The eye-openers included 174 Whimbrels at NeeNoshe Reservoir on 29 April and the equally impressive 98 birds at Loloff Reservoir on 5 May. Even more impressive were the multiple reports of Hudsonian Godwits, as many as six birds from NeeNoshe and NeeGronda reservoirs in mid-April, including a bird that had been banded on Chile's Chiloe Island.

There is almost always a good raptor to excite birders, and this spring had not one, but two Red-shouldered Hawks reported. Three Arctic Terns found their way to Colorado in May. Spring also usually produces a rare heron or two, and this year was no exception, with a Tricolored.

And then there are warblers! As a result of the 52nd supplement to the American Ornithologists' Union Check-list (Chesser et al. 2012), three Colorado warbler genera (*Parula*, *Dendroica*, and *Wilsonia*) were deleted by being lumped into existing genera *Setophaga* and *Cardellina*. In addition, a new linear sequence was adopted for the entire warbler family. No longer are the "winged warblers" first in

line; get used to seeing Ovenbird at the top of the list. But whatever their scientific names and taxonomic order, the Parulidae, for most birders, still rank first as spring favorites.

Very rare in Colorado, a fairly cooperative Louisiana Waterthrush was at the Tempel Grove migrant trap and seen by many in late April. Another southeastern warbler, Prothonotary, was recorded from multiple locations. After much back-slapping over the good fortune of multiple spring Blackburnian Warblers, five Bay-breasteds became state and/or county ticks for the lucky. Often reclusive in nature, Mourning Warblers were seen in four southeastern counties, a pair of Lucy's Warblers returned to Yellowjacket Creek, and both "winged warblers" put in appearances in eastern Colorado.

In southeastern Colorado, the drought index predicted severe to extreme drought conditions, and it appeared to this observer that birds lingered longer than usual at migrant traps (some banded birds at Chico Basin Ranch, including a Philadelphia Vireo, remained there for over a week), perhaps a result of the severe conditions in extreme drought-stricken states over which migrants had to pass on their journey north. Although not quantified here, it appeared that migration, for passerines at least, was 1-2 weeks later than has been the norm in recent years.

Although finding rarities has always been a focus for many birders, the wonders of seeing even a common species at a feeder or at a local patch, many in "cherried-out" spring plumage, provided observers at all interest levels and abilities incomparable joy during this season. Often behaviorally active, migrants often become an inspiration for keen observers to show to children, neighbors, and many current non-birders. "You should have seen the turquoise bird with the black..."

Note 1 – "News from the Field" contains summarized news and reports of birds sighted in Colorado. Summaries are obtained from online discussion groups, eBird reports, and rare bird alerts (RBAs), with valuable contributions from a large network of statewide informants, experts and beginners alike. The reports contained herein are unchecked, and the report editors do not necessarily vouch for their authenticity. Many **reports** may become **records** after they are carefully scrutinized by the Colorado Bird Records Committee and become a part of Colorado's ornithological history after they are published in this journal.

Please continue to submit sightings to COBirds (cobirds@googlegroups.com), West Slope Birding News (wsbn@yahoogroups.com), eBird (<https://ebird.org/ebird>), and to your regional compiler. Rare birds should be documented by visiting the Colorado Field Orni-

thologists website (<http://cfobirds.org/CBRC>), where your records, including photographs and videos, may be submitted for review. A rare bird document hard copy may also be submitted by using the form found on the inside of this journal's mailing wrapper.

We would like to thank the many regular contributors for sharing their sightings, as well as the regional compilers for adding their insight to county and regional rarities and breeding species. Note that this summary may not always credit the original finders for species they first reported to the COBirds listserv in Spring 2011 because of unavoidable disruptions in this season's reporting process.

Note 2 – The name of the county is listed in italics.

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

Greater White-fronted Goose:

The latest spring migrant was a single spotted at Garland Park, *Denver*, on 23 Apr (ED).

Greater White-fronted Goose × Canada Goose: One hybrid individual was reported twice from Kountze Lake, Belmar Historic Park, *Jefferson*, on 20 and 24 May (RMz).

Snow Goose: The latest Snow Goose of the season was one in the vicinity of Foothills Res and McCaslin Lake, *Boulder*, on 27 May (BSc). Impressive were the 3,700 from *Lincoln* on 14 Mar (RMn).

Ross's Goose: At least 45 were at Thurston Res, *Prowers*, on 31 Mar (JSt). The season's last report came from Spring Park Reservoir, *Eagle*, on 24 Apr (DE, LV).

Cackling Goose: Rare east of the Rockies and extremely difficult

to identify in the field, two of the "Taverner's" race, 5.5 pounders with a long neck and flat crown, were reported from the Weld County Road 7 Ponds, *Weld*, on 10 Apr (SM, no doc.). The more common *parvipes* was last reported this spring at Rocky Mountain Arsenal NWR, *Adams*, on 30 Apr (DBe). The high count was of 400 birds at Fossil Creek Res, *Larimer*, on 5 May (SM).

Trumpeter Swan: Four subadults were at Sweitzer SP, *Delta*, 12-14 Mar (AR), while three birds were at Sands Lake, *Chaffee*, 14-15 Mar (SY). Ten, nine adults and a juvenile, were at Browns Park NWR, *Moffat*, on 18 Mar (TLi, m.ob.).

Tundra Swan: The singleton swan at Walden/Sawhill Ponds, *Boulder*, was reported 33 times by 22 different observers, 2-29 Mar. Two other adults

were in Craig, *Moffat*, on 1 Apr (FL).

“Mexican Duck” (Mallard): One “Mexican Duck” was reported at Russell Lakes SWA, Saguache, on 28 Mar (TF, doc.), and two more were reported on 12 May, both adult males, from Boulder Res, *Boulder* (SM, TF, doc.) and Firestone Gravel Pits, *Weld* (SM).

A proposal to elevate “Mexican Duck” to its former status as a full species was rejected by the AOU Check-list Committee on a vote of 5 to 5 (AOU 2011); proposals need a 2/3 majority to pass. One “yes” voter stated, “the biology looks good, though it should become a priority for new research to make it better.” One of the dissenting voters said: “I do not see how Hubbard’s work can be discounted. He showed widespread introgression with Mallards in the northern half of the Mexican Duck range. Even if the Mallard is not its closest relative, there seems to be less reproductive isolation between them than between Mallard/American Black Duck and Mallard/Mottled Duck (at least historically).... Whether we should lump Mottled and American Black Duck with Mallard is another question.” (Uh oh! -Ed.)

Gadwall × Mallard: Determining the parentage of hybrids usually necessitates careful detective work. This fairly common hybrid was at Weld



Tundra Swan, Walden Ponds, Boulder County, 23 March 2011. Photo by Mark Chavez

County Road 7 Ponds, *Weld*, on 10 Apr (SM).

Blue-winged Teal × Cinnamon Teal: Hybrids between these two closely related duck species were reported from Prospect Park, Wheat Ridge Greenbelt, *Jefferson*, on 19 Apr (PR), from Cherry Creek SP Marina, *Arapahoe*, on 23 Apr (RN), from Boulder Res, *Boulder*, on 12 May (TF, CN, SM), and from the area of Lower Latham Res, *Weld*, on 30 May (SM).

“Common” Green-winged Teal: One male of this Eurasian form, sometimes considered a separate species from our American Green-winged Teal, was photographed at Pueblo Res, *Pueblo*, on 7 Apr (BKP). This is a first state record for Colorado, pending acceptance.

Green-winged Teal × American Wigeon: A bird likely of this hybrid combination continued at Walden Ponds, *Boulder*, from the winter period through at least 29 Mar (CS, m.ob.).

Eurasian Wigeon: A male was

reported on 17 Mar from the Casey Concrete Gravel Pond in Rifle, *Garfield* (ADl, VZ). It was a one-day wonder.

White-winged Scoter: The only report of this species was from Wolford Mountain Res, *Grand*, on 13 May (TF).

Surf Scoter: There was a singleton adult male at Pueblo Res, *Pueblo*, on 27 Apr (BKP).

Black Scoter: The adult male photographed at Highline SP, *Mesa*, on 19 May (LT) provided only the second spring record for the WS.

Long-tailed Duck: Two reports of probably the same individual came from Washington Park, *Denver*, on 6 Mar (PPi) and then again on 11 Mar (ED).

Barrow's Goldeneye: The high count was the total of 115 individuals reported from Spring Park Res, *Eagle*, on 26 Apr (CW, KS). The last report came from Firestone Gravel Pits, *Weld*, with a single there on 12 May (SM).

Common Goldeneye × Hooded Merganser: A representative of this attractive hybrid pairing was discovered on 14 Mar at Cattail Pond, *Larimer* (CW).

Northern Bobwhite: The Colorado Historical Society outing scored a bit of avian history on 9 Apr with a singleton at Riverside Park, *Morgan* (NL).

Lesser Prairie-Chicken: This species has been on the decline for many years, especially in Colorado. This spring, ten birds, mostly males, were seen at one lek and two more were spotted on a satellite lek at the Win-

ship Ranch, *Cheyenne* (CPa). Since 1995, threats to the Lesser Prairie-Chicken have led the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service to consider it for listing under the Endangered Species Act. During 2010, the priority status for listing increased from a category 8 to a 2. Category 1 species have the highest evaluation priority.

Red-throated Loon: There were two reports, one from Cherry Creek SP, *Arapahoe*, 19-20 Apr (CT, DBr, LK) and one of a bird in flight leaving Sands Lake, *Chaffee*, on 27 May (CW, KS).

Neotropic Cormorant: Although there were 32 separate reports of this species, they all came from the same location, Cherry Creek SP, *Arapahoe*, 8-20 Apr (BA, m.ob.), illustrating both the beauty of eBird and the frustration of sorting through multiple records for a compiler looking for patterns in migration.

Western Grebe: A high count for this common Colorado species was the 2000 reported from Cherry Creek Res, *Arapahoe*, on 24 Apr (JC).

Western Grebe × Clark's Grebe: This hybrid combination, mostly overlooked or underreported by grebe watchers, was reported 13 times between 17 Apr and 8 May, all by the same observer (SM), but at different locations including McIntosh Res, *Boulder*, Windsor Lake, *Weld*, Lake Holbrook, *Otero*, and Drake Lake, *Weld*.

Horned Grebe: The 145 at Fossil Creek Res, *Larimer*, on 19 Mar (NK, SM) was an impressive number, as was the 156 reported from the same location on 21 Apr (SM). Two at Smith

Res SWA, *Costilla*, on 28 Mar (TF) were notable for the San Luis Valley.

Red-necked Grebe: Rare but regular in Colorado, one was at Cherry Creek SP, *Arapahoe*, 17-20 Apr (m.ob.).

American Bittern: The larger of the two bittern species was reported from *Boulder*, *Alamosa*, *Weld*, and Fruitgrowers Res, *Delta*. They may breed at the latter location.

Great Egret: Twenty-eight individuals were reported from Weld County Road 7 Ponds, *Weld*, on 14 May (SM).

Snowy Egret: The high count of 42 was also from *Weld* at Glenmere Park in Greeley on 13 May (CW, NK).

Little Blue Heron: Perhaps a sign reader, one was at Sprat-Platte Fishing Facility, *Adams*, 27-28 Apr (JC). Another was spotted at Barr Lake SP, *Adams*, on 13 May (JP). Two were found at Huerfano Res, *Pueblo*, during the 19th Pueblo County Spring Count on 14 May (DS). Another was at Lake Beckwith in Colorado City, *Pueblo*, on 18 May (DS). One that slipped past the attention of county listers in *El Paso* was an immature bird that hunted at Kettle Ponds at the U.S. Air Force Academy, 24-28 May (BMi, MG).

Tricolored Heron: The only report of this attractive heron came from the Plum Creek Delta of Chatfield SP, *Douglas*, 3-7 May (RLe, DBr, CT).

Reddish Egret: The only report of the season was of a white-morph bird first found on the Pueblo County Spring Count, performing its classic "dance" while feeding at the private Huerfano Res, *Pueblo*, 14-20 May (DS, m.ob.).

Cattle Egret: Not all sightings were from expected locations. Reports came from *Adams*, *Mesa*, *Otero*, *La Plata*, *Weld*, *Kiowa*, *Fremont*, *El Paso*, and *Custer*, with a high count of three at Loloff Res, *Weld*, on 5 May (LK).

Green Heron: This species was fairly widespread this spring, with reports from Holcim Wetlands, *Fremont*; Walden and Sawhill Ponds, *Boulder*; Two Buttes SWA, *Baca*; Pueblo City Park and CBR, *Pueblo*; FCRP, *El Paso*; Sands Lake, *Chaffee*; Grand Junction, *Mesa*; and Chatfield State Park, *Jefferson*.

Black-crowned Night-Heron: The total of 200 reported from Denver City Park, *Denver*, was impressive (DA). The first individual reported for the season was at Cherry Creek SP, *Arapahoe*, on 16 Mar (KR).

Glossy Ibis: Still a review bird in Colorado because of its similarity with its congener and hybrids, this species was first reported at Cherry Creek SP, *Arapahoe*, 11-15 Apr (m.ob.). Others were reported from *Chaffee*, *Fremont*, *Elbert*, *Pueblo*, *Boulder*, *Otero*, and *Weld*. Casual on the WS, one was reported at Fruitgrowers Res, *Delta*, on 15 Apr (TP, no doc.), and another was in Craig, *Moffat*, on 20 May (FL).

Glossy Ibis × White-faced Ibis: Two individuals of this increasingly observed hybrid were in agricultural fields east of Cañon City, *Fremont*, on 30 Apr (MP, SM), and one was reported from Beebe Draw, *Weld*, on 26 May (SM).

Osprey: Providing a record early date for the WS, one was at Highline SP, *Mesa*, on 19 Mar (LA).

Mississippi Kite: Lots of sight-

ings came from locations in the usual southeastern stronghold, but the single at Union Res, *Weld*, on 2 May was north of its historic range (SSe). Only a few miles away, a female was reported at Golden Ponds, Longmont, *Boulder*, on 28 May (BG).

Common Black-Hawk: The season's only report was from the Ela Sanctuary, Connected Lakes and Redlands Loop Trail, *Mesa*, 26-27 May (RLa, m.ob.). There are currently six WS records.

Red-shouldered Hawk: Two reports of this rarity (which is especially rare in spring) were both of eastern juveniles. The first was from Tamarack Ranch SWA, *Logan*, on 22 May (DM, JM, no doc.). The second was from the Poudre River Trail, *Larimer*, on 28 May (DL, no doc.).

Broad-winged Hawk: The first of the season was on 8 Apr at Stone House, *Jefferson* (LFa). On 30 Apr five were over the Denver home of FNH, *Denver*, and six were tallied over the Dinosaur Ridge Hawkwatch, *Jefferson*, on 18 Apr (LFa). The last report of the season came on 30 May from Louviers, *Douglas* (KH). In addition, other Broad-wings were reported from widely scattered locations in *El Paso*, *Boulder*, *Summit*, *Arapahoe*, *Fremont*, *Larimer*, *Delta*, *Lincoln*, *Cheyenne*, *Prowers*, *Pueblo*, *Baca*, *Logan*, *Weld*, *Montrose*, and *Mesa*, showing that this species migrates over Colorado along a broad front. The WS birds (4) are casual in that region.

Swainson's Hawk: The first of the season, and a record early arrival for the WS, was a bird on the North Fork, *Delta*, on 19 Mar (JBn).

Rough-legged Hawk: The last reported migrant of the season was one found near Walden, *Jackson*, by the Massachusetts Audubon "Peaks & Prairies" trip on 18 Apr.

"Kriders" Red-tailed Hawk: This eastern form that breeds primarily in the Dakotas, eastern Montana, Manitoba, and Saskatchewan can be virtually unmarked underneath. "Kriders" are unique in often having whitish heads and tails and extensive white mottling on the upperwings (Liguori 2011). Only one was reported for the season, a bird at Union Res, *Weld*, on 28 Mar (SM).

"Harlan's" Red-tailed Hawk: Harlan's, formerly a distinct species, occurs in a continuum of light and dark plumages (Liguori 2011). Compared to the one "Kriders Hawk" report, there were 26 reports of "Harlan's Hawk" from 1-26 Mar; the absence of reports from Apr and May points to its migratory nature. Counties where Harlan's were reported include *Arapahoe*, *Jefferson*, *Larimer*, *Weld*, *Boulder*, and *Delta*.

Sandhill Crane: The staging grounds for Greater Sandhill Crane, Monte Vista NWR, *Rio Grande*, played host to an estimated 2000 birds on 21 Mar, 5000 birds on 22 Mar, 6000 birds on 12 Mar, and 15,000 birds on 27 Mar (BH, SBL, BSp, SY, TF, m.ob.). On the WS, many thousands passed through, as is the norm.

Black-bellied Plover: Only a few reports of this uncommon spring migrant came in, probably because water levels were at near record heights, leaving little shoreline. Noteworthy was one at Sweitzer SP, *Delta*, on 12

Apr (LS), representing an early WS date for this species. A single was at NeeNoshe Res, *Kiowa*, on 6 May (CW, KS); two were at Loloff Res, *Weld*, on 8 May (CT, BSc); two were at San Luis Lakes SWA, *Alamosa*, on 13 May (JL); and one was reported from *Prowers* on 17 May (JSt, DR).

Snowy Plover: The AOU Checklist Committee split the New World Snowy Plover from the Old World species called Kentish Plover (AOU 2011a). Our population retained the common name "Snowy Plover," but the scientific name was changed to *Charadrius nivosus*. On the WS, individuals were reported from Highline, Sweitzer, and Fruitgrowers reservoirs, *Mesa/Delta*, 5-23 May (m.ob.). Noticeably underreported, prairie birds were in *Otero* and *Kiowa* with 18 at NeeNoshe Res, *Kiowa*, on 19 Apr (CW, KS), 15 reported from Lake Holbrook, *Otero*, on 30 Apr (SM), and 3 at Cheraw, *Otero*, on 1 May (TF, BPa).

Piping Plover: Few reports were received for this threatened state and federal population away from breeding locations. Two were at Lake Holbrook, *Otero*, on 14 May (DBr, CT); two were at Lake Henry, *Crowley*, on 15 May (BKP, KC, m.ob.); and two more were at Lake Cheraw, *Otero*, on 23 May (MG).

Mountain Plover: Numbers of reports and individuals of this sometimes difficult-to-survey species were generally dismal. Ten were seen at Ship Wreck Ranch, *Baca*, on 10 Apr (MO). Ten more were at one of the species' strongholds, *Pawnee NG*, *Weld*, on 7 Apr (LFr). Late for the location, the

first sighting on CBR, *Pueblo*, was of a single on 30 Mar (BMa).

Willet: A number that stands out among the many reports for this species is the 150 tallied at Lake Holbrook, *Otero*, on 30 Apr (SM). The first report was of two birds at Cherry Creek SP, *Arapahoe*, on 5 Apr (DBe), and the latest report came from Jackson Res, *Jackson*, on 18 May (JW). As expected, none of the reports were of the eastern subspecies (species?).

Lesser Yellowlegs: A bird photographed on 13 Mar (AR) at Sweitzer SP, *Mesa*, represented a record early date for the WS, while one on 24 May in *Craig* was very late (FL).

Upland Sandpiper: The few migration reports of this northeast Colorado breeder included singles or doubles (8 birds total) from *Weld*, *Phillips*, *Sedgwick*, and *Boulder*.

Whimbrel: Outstanding were the 174 birds counted on NeeNoshe Res, *Kiowa*, on 29 Apr (GW, RO, JK, m.ob.) and the 98 birds tallied from Loloff Res., *Weld*, on 5 May (LK, GW, KMD, m.ob.). Compare these numbers with the high counts of twelve in 2009 and nine in 2010 (Maynard 2009, Such and Such 2010). The first report came from Boulder Res, *Boulder*, on 24 Apr and the latest sighting came from Loloff Res on 21 May. One in *Craig*, *Moffat*, on 4 May was rare for the WS (FL). Other counties where this species was recorded include *Otero*, *Arapahoe*, *Lincoln*, and *Huerfano*.

Long-billed Curlew: The first report came from *Otero* on 1 Apr (BKP). The high count of 87 was from *Holly*, *Prowers*, on 10 Apr (NPu).

Hudsonian Godwit: What a great

year for this species in Colorado! On 18 Apr, two males and a female were at NeeNoshe Res, *Kiowa* (DN), and two days later three males were at the neighboring NeeGronda Res, *Kiowa* (DN). On this same day, 20 Apr, four birds were reported from Lake Holbrook, *Otero* (SMo), followed by a single from Boulder Res, *Boulder*, on 23 Apr (ABe). Two were reported from Lake Holbrook, *Otero*, on 6 May (CWe, KS), and another single was reported from NeeGronda Res on 28 May (IS).

Marbled Godwit: The high count of 35 came from Highline SP, *Mesa*, on 2 May (SSc).

Ruddy Turnstone: The only report was of a single at San Luis Lakes SWA, *Alamosa*, on 13 May (JL).

Sanderling: Although the nine birds at Lake Holbrook, *Otero*, on 30 Apr were impressive (SM), the high count of 37 at NeeNoshe Res, *Kiowa* on 6 May was even more so (CW, KS). Notable was the single on the WS at Sweitzer Lake, *Delta*, on 30 Apr (LA).

White-rumped Sandpiper: This migrant has an elliptical migration pattern that brings it to Colorado only during late spring. Early was one reported from Lake Holbrook, *Otero*, on 6 May (CW, KS). Others, fitting its established migration pattern, were reported 15-27 May from *Prowers*, *El Paso*, *Pueblo*, *Washington*, and *Weld*.

Pectoral Sandpiper: Scattered reports of this uncommon spring migrant included a notable bird at San Luis Lakes SWA, *Alamosa*, on 27 Mar (TF). One was at Cherry Creek SP, *Arapahoe*, on 25 Apr (LK); one was at Riverfront Trail, *Mesa*, on 27

Apr (CW, KS); and two were at the Road 59 Pond, *Weld*, on 21 May (NL, m.ob.).

Dunlin: Three sightings of five birds made for an impressive spring total. Two were at Cherry Creek SP, *Arapahoe*, on 15 Apr (FNH). One in alternate plumage was at Spring Park Res, *Eagle*, 25-27 Apr (DF, VZ, m.ob.), and two more in alternate plumage were seen by many at Loloff Res, *Weld*, on 21 May (NL, m.ob.).

Stilt Sandpiper: This species started to arrive on the plains on 2 May with one at Cherry Creek SP, *Arapahoe* (KR). An impressive total for spring was the 37 seen on 29 May at Weld CR 59, *Weld* (SM).

Short-billed Dowitcher: Reports of this species were spread out over time and distance, the first one coming from Pastorius SWA, *La Plata*, on 19 Apr (JBy, PD). The four birds at Twin Lakes, *Lake*, on 30 Apr were notable (TK). Other Short-billeds were reported from *Kiowa*, *Otero*, *Larimer*, *Arapahoe*, *Pueblo*, *Alamosa*, and *Weld*.

Long-billed Dowitcher: The individual photographed at Highline SP, *Mesa*, on 5 Mar establishes a record early date for the WS (DH).

Red-necked Phalarope: Rednecks (of the avian kind) were widespread, with the first individual, a female, photographed at Redlands Parkway South Pond, *Mesa*, 8-14 Mar (BB, m.ob.). This was likely the same bird seen in Grand Junction on the ridiculously early date of 28 Feb. Other counties where reports originated included *Lincoln*, *Delta*, *Rio Blanco*, *Weld*, *El Paso*, *Pueblo*, *Summit*, *La Plata*, *Lake*, *Phillips*, *Bent*, *Boulder*, and *Arapahoe* (m.ob.).



Black-legged Kittiwake, Windsor Lake, Weld County, 25 May 2011. Photo by Dave Leatherman

Reports from *Summit* (multiple locations, m.ob.) were firsts for the county.

Black-legged Kittiwake: Windsor Lake, *Weld*, was the spot to observe this species, with up to two individuals reported there 4 Apr to 26 May (m. ob.).

Bonaparte's Gull: The first migrant was reported from Walden and Sawhill ponds, *Boulder* (CW, KS), but the peak must have been reached on 5 May at Timnath Res, *Larimer*, with a total of 90 reported (SM). The latest report came from a CFO group birding at Fruitgrowers Res, *Delta*, on 21 May (BSp).

Laughing Gull: This rarity was reported from Pueblo Res, *Pueblo*, on 9 May (BKP). Another was reported from Jumbo Res, *Logan/Sedgwick*, on 18 May (CW, KS). An adult was at John Martin Res, *Bent*, on 29 May (DN).

Franklin's Gull: The first of the season was a single at Cherry Creek Res, *Arapahoe*, on 7 Mar (DBe). Spectacular must have been the 1100 at North Weld County Landfill, *Weld*, on 23 Apr (SM).

Mew Gull: An adult was at Cherry Creek Res, *Arapahoe*, on 1 Apr (GW) and again on 10 Apr (CW, KS). The only other report of this species came from Black Hollow Res, *Weld*, on 7 Apr (CW, KS).

Glaucous-winged Gull × Herring Gull: These two species interbreed in southern Alaska, producing hybrids that can resemble either parent species in any aspect of plumage or structure and can also strongly resemble a Thayer's Gull (Howell and Dunn 2007). A bird thought to be of this hybrid combination was at Black Hollow Res, *Weld*, 7-14 Apr (CW, KS, SM), and possibly the same individual was at Drake Lake, *Weld*, on 14 Apr (SM).

Thayer's Gull: This species was reported from various reservoirs in *Arapahoe*, *Weld*, and *Larimer*. It is not particularly surprising that all the reports were from the northern Front Range, as many gulls leave the southern Front Range reservoirs before the beginning of the spring season. The last report came from the North Weld County Landfill, *Weld*, on 23 Apr (SM). The daily high count of 9 individuals was tallied on 14 Apr at the private Black Hollow Res, *Weld* (SM).

Lesser Black-backed Gull: Colorado is the western state with the most reports of this species in winter and in migration. Five birds were reported from Black Hollow Res, *Weld*, on 14 Apr (SM). Other counties reporting "Less Backs" were again the expected ones: *Larimer*, *Arapahoe*, *Denver*, and *Weld*.

Glaucous Gull: The season's last remaining bird was seen at Black Hollow Res, *Weld*, on 16 Apr; two indi-

viduals had been there two days earlier (SM).

Least Tern: One was flying about at Confluence Park and Sweitzer Res, *Delta*, on 4 May (AR, m.ob.). Another was at the pond adjacent to Hasty SP Campground, *Bent*, on 17 May (WP).

Caspian Tern: One of these large terns was first spotted on 13 Apr at Lake Hasty, *Bent* (MF), while others put in appearances in *Arapahoe*, *Mesa*, *Douglas*, *El Paso*, *Otero*, *Boulder*, and *Delta*.

Black Tern: The first was at Spring Park Res, *Eagle*, on 29 Apr (DF). An impressive 100 birds were reported from NeeGronda Res on 15 May (CT, DBr), with 22 in *Phillips* on 15 May (JRo) and 24 at Sedgwick CR 28, *Sedgwick*, on 18 May (CW, KS).

Common Tern: The season's first were two at Stalker Ponds, *Yuma*, on 27 Apr (DM), while others were detected at Lake Henry, *Crowley*; St. Vrain SP, *Weld*; Weld County Road 7 Ponds, *Weld*; Timnath Res, *Larimer*; Cherry Creek SP, *Arapahoe*; and Windsor Lake, *Weld* (m.ob.).

Arctic Tern: There were four reports of this long-distance offshore migrant that spends the boreal winter (austral summer) in Antarctic waters. First was a bird photographed by two observers along CO 66, *Boulder* (AI, MD, no doc.) on 18 May. The second was a well-studied, photographed bird at the large pond at CBR headquarters, *Pueblo*, 24-25 May (BMa, m.ob., doc.) followed by one a day later at Windsor Lake, *Weld* (SM). The last was a bird reported at John Martin Res, *Bent*, on 28 May (IS).

White-winged Dove: Widespread

reports came from across the state throughout the season, many from reporters' yards, in *El Paso*, *Pueblo*, *Montezuma*, *Arapahoe*, *Douglas*, *Morgan*, *Weld*, *La Plata*, *Otero*, *Mesa*, *Boulder*, *Logan*, *Broomfield*, *Prowers*, and *Baca*. It would be interesting to compare counties where spring reports occur with counties where summer records of this species are documented.

Yellow-billed Cuckoo: This late migrant put in an appearance at the Stulp Farm, *Prowers*, on 16 May. Another was seen by members of a DFO trip that stopped at the Sterling Rest Stop/Overland Trail, *Logan*, on 28 May. An extremely photogenic individual at CBR, *El Paso*, posed numerous times at close range from 28-31 May (m.ob.).

Greater Roadrunner: A bit unexpected was one at Lake Holbrook, *Otero*, on 5 Apr (GK). All other reports came from expected locations in the southeastern counties.

Eastern Screech-Owl: On 26 May, one was heard singing below the dam at Two Buttes Reservoir, *Baca*, where the species is not regular (CD, BW).

Burrowing Owl: The earliest report was of one on 17 Mar from Hickok, *Prowers* (JSt). Exciting was a report of nesting at the Trapper Mine, *Moffat*, from 3 May through the end of the period (FL).

"Mexican" Spotted Owl: Returning after years of absence to a historic spot for this species, one was heard calling west of Beulah, *Pueblo*, on 30 Apr (BKP) and on 20 May (CW, KS).

Boreal Owl: Always a memorable prize, one was heard at the Vail Pass Rest Area, *Summit*, on 13 Apr (CW,

KS). The “Boreal Owl site” produced another on Grand Mesa, Mesa, on 22 May (m.ob.) as part of a CFO Convention owling field trip.

Black Swift: The only two reports of this normally very late migrant were of one from Valco Ponds SWA, Pueblo, on 18 May (BKP), and of another a day later at the unexpected location of Dinosaur NM, Moffat (JW).

Ruby-throated Hummingbird: A photographed bird at the Neldners’ feeder in La Veta, Huerfano, was reported 12-13 May (PPN, BKP). Another male was at Last Chance, Washington, on 28 May (DM, MP, m.ob.).

Yellow-bellied Sapsucker: For those who missed them in *Fremont* during the winter season, one was at Grandview Cemetery in Ft. Collins, Larimer, on 12 Mar (DL); one was at the Mineral Palace Park on 16 Mar (VT); three were at Pueblo City Park, Pueblo, on 19 Mar (BKP); and one was at LCC, Prowers, on 9 Apr (AG).

Olive-sided Flycatcher: Fairly late was one at Burchfield SWA, Baca, on 31 May (TLe).

Eastern Wood-Pewee: One was very cooperative, singing and perching close for photographs, at FCRP, El Paso, 15-16 May (BMa, m.ob., doc.).

Alder Flycatcher: Many birds of this species are now being identified by call notes and song types, but silent birds are labeled “Traill’s” Flycatcher, meaning “Willow or Alder,” which is entirely appropriate for this exceedingly difficult-to-identify species pair. This late migrant was first recorded on 25 May from Prewitt Res., Wash-

ington (LK, no doc.), and continued to be reported through the period from Gunnison, El Paso, Boulder, and Baca counties.

Hammond’s Flycatcher: The earliest report came from CBR, Pueblo, on 8 May (BPa).

Gray Flycatcher: Seen by most on the CFO Grand Junction Convention field trips, this tail-dipping pinyon-juniper specialist and early Empid migrant was reported far from pinyon-juniper this spring, in *Boulder*, *Bent*, *El Paso*, *Prowers*, *Broomfield*, *Larimer*, *Arapahoe*, and *Lincoln*. The first reports came from three locations in Mesa on 14 Apr: *Cameo*, *Coal Canyon*, and *Wild Horse Canyon* (NPu, AG).

Black Phoebe: Based on the number of seasonal reports, this species is increasing in Colorado’s southern counties. Reports came from *La Plata*, *Fremont*, *Pueblo*, *Chaffee*, *Prowers*, *Archuleta*, *Montrose*, *Delta*, *Mesa*, *Las Animas*, and *El Paso*, from 31 Mar to the end of the period (m.ob.).

Eastern Phoebe: Birds from the Wetmore area, *Custer*; Plum Creek Delta, *Douglas*; Kettle Ponds on USAFA, *El Paso*; Cherry Creek SP, *Arapahoe*; the Rocky Mountain Arsenal NWR, *Adams*; Boulder, *Boulder*; Big Thompson Bike Trail, *Larimer*; Franktown, *Douglas*; and Louviers, *Douglas*, were all noteworthy.

Black × Eastern Phoebe: This hybrid combination was reported from near Cañon City, *Fremont*, 27 Mar to 10 Apr (SMo); at Twin Lakes, *Boulder*, *Boulder*, on 24 Apr (NP); and in Coaldale, *Fremont*, on 8 May (SMo).

Vermilion Flycatcher: A male was

photographed at the Paulsen farm north of Lamar, *Prowers*, 25-18 Mar (LP, m.ob.) A female just west of Nuclea, *Montrose*, on 23 Apr provided only the fifth WS record and the first for *Montrose* (CD, no doc.). On 23 May a male was discovered at the Thompson Ranch, *Lincoln* (MP), where it remained through 8 June (DM).

Great Crested Flycatcher: Away from counties where they breed, one was at private ranch near Trinidad, *Las Animas*, on 6 May (MF). On 22 May, one was at Mitchek Ranch, *Cheyenne* (GR).

Scissor-tailed Flycatcher: A spring report described one adult male seen nicely from 13-16 May at the Marston Res Complex, *Denver/Jefferson* (MH, LK, no doc.). An adult female was photographed at Bonny Res SP, *Yuma*, on 13 May (DM), and another bird was in the northern part of *Boulder* on 19 May (KBB, no doc.).

Bell's Vireo: The only reports for the season came at the end of the reporting period—one from a DFO field trip on 28 May at the Sterling Rest Stop/Overland Trail, *Logan*, and the other a day later at Cope Memorial Park, *Washington* (TF).

Gray Vireo: Probably every participant at the CFO convention in Grand Junction saw at least one, and the majority of reports submitted came from field trips in the northwest during the convention. Reports from earlier in the period were all from the WS counties *Mesa*, *Montrose*, *Delta*, *Moffat*, *Montezuma*, and *Garfield*.

White-eyed Vireo: The only two reports of this species were of one on 17 May near Eldorado Springs, *Boul-*

der (NPi), and of one at Bonny Res SP, *Yuma*, on 21 May (DM).

Yellow-throated Vireo: An early migrant, and in some years rare, this species was first reported from Confluence Ponds, *Boulder*, on 21 Apr (ABr). A fair number of other individuals were reported through 21 May from *Boulder*, *Fremont*, *Bent*, and *Pueblo* counties.

Cassin's Vireo: Reports were of single birds on 1 May in *Cheyenne* and *Prowers*, a bird in *Douglas* on 14 May, one in *La Plata* on 15 May, and one at CBR, *El Paso*, on 28 May.

Blue-headed Vireo: The only submitted report was of a single at the Loveland Recreation Trail, *Larimer*, on 5 May (EC, no doc.).

"Eastern" Warbling Vireo: Of the two Warbling Vireo groups, the less common in Colorado is the eastern group, which averages larger with a longer, thicker bill and with a grayish back and crown (in the western group, a dull crown contrasts with an olive back). The two forms are perhaps best separated by song, with eastern birds singing a slightly faster and more musical song with fewer accented high notes. The western birds sing a slower, more herky-jerky song full of accented high notes.

The three reports of eastern individuals came from CVCG, *Weld*, on 26 May (SM), St. Vrain SP, *Weld*, on 12 May (SM), and Prewitt Res, *Washington*, on 29 May, where a whopping 13 individuals were reported (SM).

Philadelphia Vireo: One was captured in a mist net at the RMBO/CBR banding station, *El Paso*, where it was carefully measured, scrutinized, and

photographed on 12 May (NG, SC, BMa, doc.). It remained in the area through 26 May (JD, BKP). Another was at LCC, *Prowers*, on 15 May (JSt, BKP, doc.), and a third was at Overland Park Recreation Area, *Logan*, on 25 May (SSe, no doc.). The last report of the season was of a bird at Stulp Farms, *Prowers*, on 27 May (JSt, no doc.).

Chihuahuan Raven: For me, the hardest identification problem in southeastern Colorado is separating our two raven species. A molecular study by Omland et al. (2000) concluded that in parts of California, Common Ravens are more genetically similar to Chihuahuan Ravens than they are to Common Ravens from the Holarctic region. Could this also be true in parts of Colorado? When asked to comment on full frame photographs of nesting ravens from southern Pueblo, *Pueblo*, Peter Pyle, author of the *Identification Guide to North American Birds*, said he could not identify the raven. He replied that nasal bristle length is not a measurement he uses to separate the two species.

Difficult ID or no, reports of out-of-range Chihuahuan Ravens came from Prince Lake #2, *Boulder*, on 3 Mar (TF), from Longmont Cemetery, *Boulder*, and from the high elevation Twin Lakes, *Lake*, on 21 May (TK); but no reports came from southeastern Colorado where both ravens have historically nested, presumably segregated there by microhabitat requirements.

Purple Martin: In Texas, some martins begin to appear in late January. In Colorado, the first report, of 30-40 birds, came from 24 April in



Philadelphia Vireo, *Chico Basin Ranch*, *El Paso County*, 12 May 2011. Photo by Bill Maynard

Grand Junction, *Mesa* (KM). Noteworthy were East Slope reports of a female from Windsor Lake, *Weld*, on 13 May (DL); a pair at Prewitt Res, *Washington*, on 24 May (MP); a female at Timnath Res, *Larimer*, on 25 May (DL); and a male/female pair near the Poudre River Trail, *Kodak SWA*, *Weld*, on 26 May (SM).

Mountain Chickadee: Totally unaware of the descriptive part of their names, six remained on the plains at Drake Lake, *Weld*, on 8 Apr (SM).

Bushtit: North and east of the species' historic range, one was at Barr Lake SP, *Adams*, on 23 Apr (RMz), and 13 were there on 6 Apr (ED).

Carolina Wren: One was singing in Colorado City, *Pueblo*, 19-31 Mar (DS), and another sang along the Cañon City Riverwalk, *Fremont*, on 27

Mar (SMo). One was reported from Broadway and Dartmouth, Boulder, *Boulder*, on 6 May (PPI), and one was singing at Lake Henry, *Crowley*, on 15 May (KC, BKP, m.ob.).

House Wren: Very early for the WS was one at Silt, *Eagle*, on 9 Apr (TM, KP).

Winter Wren: Following the rush to tick a Pacific Wren for the state during the winter season, birders only reported Winter Wrens during the spring, in *Larimer*, *El Paso*, *Boulder*, and *Fremont* counties.

Sedge Wren: The visiting Massachusetts Audubon group reported one at Lower Latham Res, *Weld*, on 17 Apr (no doc.). Another bird was reported from Boulder Res, *Boulder*, 21-23 Apr (CN, DW, no doc.).

Veery: A good year for this species generated 34 reports from *Pueblo*, *Washington*, *Bent*, *Boulder*, *Larimer*, *Phillips*, *Prowers*, *Routt*, *El Paso*, *Lincoln*, *Logan*, and *Weld* counties, many from frequently visited migrant traps.

Gray-cheeked Thrush: The first report came from Holyoke, *Phillips*, on 18 May (CW, KS). Another was in the vicinity of the RMBO banding station at CBR, *El Paso*, 25-26 May (JD, m.ob.). One was seen well below the dam at Two Buttes Reservoir, *Baca*, on 26 May and heard singing the following morning (CD, BW). A single was at The Nature Conservancy's Fox Ranch, *Yuma*, on 29 May (TF, doc.), and the latest report of the period was of one west of Midway, *Baca*, on 31 May (TLe, doc.).

Swainson's Thrush: This species was ridiculously common at migrant traps on the Eastern Plains; 225 birds

were banded at CBR, *El Paso*, during the first three weeks of May (NG), and 271 were heard in 35 minutes of nocturnal migration over Longmont, *Boulder*, on 28 May (BG). A member of the "russet-backed" group, rarely reported in Colorado, was described from Lake Estes, *Larimer*, on 19 May (SM).

Wood Thrush: Scarce this spring, the species was only reported twice. One was at the migrant trap at Thompson Ranch, *Lincoln*, 19-21 May (KMD, JK, no doc.). The other was a singing bird at Meadowcreek, *Pueblo*, on 24 May (DS, no doc.).

Curve-billed Thrasher: Only the third from western Colorado and the first for *Pitkin* was a single bird at Redstone continuing from the winter through 1 Apr (MPP). All out-of-range Curve-bills should be carefully examined to determine if they are the expected subspecies, *oberholseri*, with a light breast accentuating the breast spotting and with prominent wing-bars, rather than *palmeri*, the Arizona subspecies with less distinct breast spotting and little to no white in the wingbars or the tail (Stokes 2010). The member of the *oberholseri* group wintering at Red Rocks Trading Post, *Jefferson*, remained through 16 May (MH).

Bohemian Waxwing: Up to 350 remained in Steamboat Springs, *Routt*, from winter through 7 Apr (LW, TLi, m.ob.).

McCown's Longspur: The report with photos from near the Utah state line on 2 Road, *Mesa*, on 27 Apr would be a first WS record if accepted (AS, CW).

Ovenbird: The earliest report was of one found on a DFO field trip to CBR, *El Paso*, on 26 Apr. There were no WS reports this season.

Worm-eating Warbler: One was at the justly famous migrant trap at Tempel Grove, *Bent*, on 7 May (MP, BKP, m.ob.) and another was there on 15 May (DN). The one found during the CFO Convention was only the third for the WS, a bird seen by a lucky few on a trip to Palisade, *Mesa*, on 21 May (DL). One was seen at Frantz Lake in Salida, *Chaffee*, on 31 May (RMi).

Northern Waterthrush: The first of the season was a bird at Holcim Wetlands, *Fremont*, on 4 May (RMi). Other reports came in from across the East Slope, as well as from *Delta*, *Mesa*, and *Routt* on the WS. Two males in *Routt* were counter-singing and exhibiting aggressive behavior toward one another on 15 May, suggesting possible breeding (TF).

Louisiana Waterthrush: A great find of this true Colorado rarity was the bird at Tempel Grove, *Bent*, 20-21 Apr (DN, m.ob., no doc.).

Blue-winged Warbler: A male was banded on 4 May at the RMBO CBR banding station, *El Paso*, where it continued to be seen and photographed through 7 May (NG, m.ob.). Another was late at Welchester Tree Park, *Jefferson*, on 20 May (PPI).

Golden-winged Warbler: The first seasonal report of this attractive species came from Mitchek Ranch, *Cheyenne*, on 7 May (CN, JK, m.ob.). A male was discovered at LCC, *Prowers*, on 11 May (BK).

Black-and-white Warbler: At least 30 individuals were reported this sea-

son, many from the well-visited migrant traps on the Eastern Plains. A WS bird was in Paonia, *Delta*, on 14 May (JBn), and another was in the town of Meeker, *Rio Blanco*, on 22 May (NK, CW).

Prothonotary Warbler: A male was found on 17 Apr at the Holly rest area, *Prowers*, by a Massachusetts Audubon birding group. One, a first Ranch record, was banded at CBR, *El Paso*, on 18 May and remained there through the 28th, often coming to a specific area in the vicinity of the banders' table where it was photographed by many (NG, m.ob.). A male was at the Hatch home in Denver, *Denver*, on 28 May (FNH).

Tennessee Warbler: One in Escalante Canyon, *Delta*, on 20 May was noteworthy for the WS (SM).



Golden-winged Warbler, private ranch, Cheyenne County, 8 May 2011. Photo by Michael McNaghten



Blackburnian Warbler, Boulder Creek Path, Boulder County, 25 May 2011. Photo by David Waltman



Hooded Warbler, Tempel Grove, Bent County, 29 April 2011. Photo by Dave Leatherman



Magnolia Warbler, Stulp Farms, Prowers County, 5 May 2011. Photo by Jane Stulp



Neotropic Cormorant, Cherry Creek State Park, Arapahoe County, 13 April 2011. Photo by Mark Chavez



Eastern Wood-Pewee, Hanson Nature Area Ponds, El Paso County, 15 May 2011. Photo by Bill Maynard



Summer Tanager, Holyoke, Phillips County, 15 May 2011. Photo by Joe Roller

Though the species usually stays high in the trees, one was banded at CBR, *El Paso*, on 14 May (NG) and another was photographed there on 19 May. Others were reported from Sale Lake and Golden Ponds, *Boulder*; LCC, *Prowers*; FCRP, *El Paso*; Lower White Ranch Open Space Park, *Jefferson*; Holyoke, *Phillips*; Prewitt Res, *Washington*; Overland Park, *Logan*; and Sands Lake, *Chaffee*.

Orange-crowned Warbler: Indicating the abundance of this common, underreported migrant, 25 were caught and banded over a four-week period at the RMBO CBR banding station, *El Paso* (NG).

Lucy's Warbler: The first report from the only reliable location in Colorado, Yellowjacket Canyon, *Montezuma*, came on 22 Apr (BKP). On seeing a pair here on 31 May, LA commented that this species "appeared less conspicuous than they were last year."

Nashville Warbler: Only nine individuals were reported this spring. A bird described as being from the eastern group was at Two Buttes SWA, *Baca*, on 6 May (CW, KS), whereas a bird described as belonging to the western group was at CBR, *El Paso*, on 26 May (JD). Western birds, which average brighter, with a brighter rump, and bob their tails regularly, were once thought to be a separate species called "Calaveras Warbler" (Dunn and Garrett 1997).

Mourning Warbler: This skulker was well represented during this season. A fairly cooperative bird was at the Cañon City Riverwalk, *Fremont*, 21-22 May (KC, BKP, m.ob.). A male was at Wray City Park, *Yuma*, on 19

May (DM); another male was at Tempel Grove, *Bent*, 21-22 May (SMo); a male was at Lee Martinez Park, *Larimer*, 26 May (AP, GL); and a male was at the Stulp Farm, *Prowers*, on 31 May (JSt).

Kentucky Warbler: One was at the Carrizo Work Center, near Pritchett, *Baca*, on the late date of 31 May (TLe) for the only report of the season.

Hooded Warbler: On the WS, where there are fewer than ten records, one bird was reported from Mesa on 22 May (AI). Elsewhere, Hoodeds were first seen at Walsh Nursing Home, *Baca*, on 10 Apr and continued to be reported from scattered locations through the period from *Bent*, *Cheyenne*, *Pueblo*, *Kit Carson*, *Boulder*, *Arapahoe*, *Larimer*, *Custer*, *Prowers*, and *Otero*.

American Redstart: This nervous tail-fanner was well represented this spring, with five individuals at the Paulsen farm, *Prowers*, on 18 May (JSt, LP), and four from CVCG, *Weld*, on 29 May (NL, m.ob.). Other counties with often multiple reports of this flashy species included *Huerfano*, *Bent*, *Washington*, *Phillips*, *Prowers*, *El Paso*, *Pueblo*, *Fremont*, *Chaffee*, *Lincoln*, *Jefferson*, *Arapahoe*, *Larimer*, and *Boulder*.

Northern Parula: The first this season was at Sands Lake, *Chaffee*, on 17 Apr (SY). Perhaps indicating a late and/or prolonged migration, birds were still being reported on 29 May from Golden Ponds and St. Vrain Greenway, *Boulder*, and from CVCC, *Weld*. The one on 9 May at Hotchkiss, *Delta*, was a rarity on the WS (AR). Other counties with reports included *Bent*, *Prowers*, *El Paso*, *Pueblo*,

Washington, and even high-elevation Custer.

Magnolia Warbler: One of the “eye candy” warblers, Magnolias were widespread, with at least 25 birds being spotted in Prowers, Bent, Larimer, El Paso, Pueblo, Phillips, Custer, Yuma, Sedgwick, and Washington, 11-29 May.

Bay-breasted Warbler: A singing male was at Meadowcreek in Colorado City, Pueblo, on 27 May (DS, m.ob.). On 28 May a female was found at Plum Creek Picnic Area, Chatfield SP, Douglas (JK, m.ob., no doc.). A male, singing on occasion, was at CBR, Pueblo, 28-29 May (BMA, m.ob., doc.), and another male was at the RMBO CBR banding station, El Paso, on 28 May (LE, BMA). The last report of the season was from Lake Estes, Larimer, on 31 May (SR, no doc.).



Bay-breasted Warbler, Chico Basin Ranch, El Paso County, 28 May 2011. Photo by Bill Maynard

Blackburnian Warbler: Extremely early was a bird reported from the East Campus of the University of Colorado, Boulder, on 24 Apr (KS, CW, no doc.). Another early arrival was a male at Two Buttes, Baca, on 7 May (JK, SSt, m.ob.). More closely fitting its normal migration dates, but rare on the WS, was the one on 22 May at Dinosaur NM, Moffat (SSc, no doc.). One was along Boulder Creek at Arapahoe, Boulder, on 25 May (MB, doc.), and a female was at Prewitt Res, Washington, on the same day (LK, GW, no doc.). A female was at Hopper Ponds, Bonny Res SP, Yuma, on 26 May (DM, no doc.).

Chestnut-sided Warbler: The earliest report was of a bird at Tempel Grove, Bent, on 8 May (BKP, m.ob.); late was one at Golden Ponds, Boulder, on 29 May (KA). A singing male at Loudy-Simpson Park in Craig, Moffat, from 18-24 May was a first county record (FL, CD, DH, m.ob.). Others were reported from El Paso, Jefferson, Prowers, and Washington.

Blackpoll Warbler: This species' song may be key to sales of the SongFinder, the device that lowers extremely high-pitched sounds into the audible range for those with high-frequency hearing loss. Nevertheless, observers were able to hear and see birds 7-30 May in Lincoln, Baca, Bent, Boulder, Douglas, Weld, Prowers, El Paso, Pueblo, Washington, Morgan, Moffat, and Larimer counties.

Black-throated Blue Warbler: The first of the year was one 6-7 May at Tempel Grove, Bent (GW, JK, KMD, m.ob.); another was seen on 14 May at CBR, Pueblo (KC, m.ob.); one

occurred 14-17 May at FCRP, *El Paso* (m.ob.); a male was at Wray, *Yuma*, 13-19 May; and a female was at Wray City Park on 19 May (DM).

Palm Warbler: Multiple sightings included representatives of the distinctive western subspecies only. The earliest report was from Greenlee Preserve, *Boulder*, on 21 Apr (TF), and the last from Washington County Golf Course on 25 May (LK). The bird viewed during an RMBO training session at Highline SP, *Mesa*, on 3 May represents one of only nine WS records (CI, m.ob.). Locations of other sightings included *Fremont*, *Larimer*, *Mesa*, *Lincoln*, *Prowers*, *Yuma*, and *El Paso* counties.

Pine Warbler: Two birds reported from Fort Collins, *Larimer*, on 19 and 22 Mar (SBo) were probably hold-overs from the winter season.

Yellow-rumped Warbler: The written proposal to the AOU Check-list Committee to split this species into two, three, or four distinct species was rejected on a vote of 7 to 4. One committee member who voted “yes” said, “My gut feeling is that all four [taxa] could be different species, but we don’t have the supporting data. We now have more than 40 years of data on the contact zone in Alberta and it seems to be stable, with no indication of serious introgression. However, we really do need deeper sampling: there are a lot of gaps where we really do not



Yellow-throated Warbler, Boulder Creek Path, Boulder County, 27 April 2011. Photo by Mark Chavez

know anything about what is there.” One of the “no” voters stated, “Given the information presented in this proposal, my vote will ultimately go to option 4: treating *coronata*, *auduboni*/*nigrifrons*, and *goldmani* as three species. But I think we need to stick with our rules and wait for formal publication of all relevant genetic data before making this change, as without those particular analyses it is much less clear where to draw the lines.”

In Colorado this spring, 110 yellow-rumps were banded at the CBR RMBO banding station, *El Paso*. Of these, 68 were “Audubon’s Warblers,” 39 were “Myrtle Warblers,” and four were hybrids (NG). Myrtle, Audubon’s, and hybrid forms should continue to be reported, as the species will likely be split in the future.

Yellow-throated Warbler: A mostly cooperative bird near the University of Colorado’s East Campus, *Boulder*, remained 22-26 Apr (CN, m.ob., doc.).



Black-chinned Sparrow, Colorado National Monument, Mesa County, 22 April 2011. Photo by Larry Semo

Black-throated Gray Warbler:

Not surprisingly, 35 were recorded in a single day from the pinyon/juniper habitats at Dinosaur NM, *Moffat*, on 22 May (SSc) and others were at expected WS locations. East of the Divide, birds were at Sondermann Park and FCRP, *El Paso*; Crestview Estates, Eldorado Open Space, and Gregory Canyon, *Boulder*; Fairmount and Lamar cemeteries, *Prowers*; Bobcat Ridge Natural Area, *Larimer*; and Tempel Grove, *Bent* (m.ob.).

Townsend's Warbler: A few were reported from *Weld*, *Boulder*, *Larimer*, *Chaffee*, and *Lincoln*, 14-25 May.

Black-throated Green Warbler:

The few reports included birds from 11-29 May from *Weld*, *El Paso*, *Bent*, *Larimer*, and *Denver* counties.

Canada Warbler: A female was re-

ported from Last Chance, *Washington*, on 27 May (SSt). Another bird was reported at Tempel Grove, *Bent*, on 29 May (DN, IS, no doc.).

Wilson's Warbler: A bird banded on 23 May 2009 in Lowell, Oregon, was recaptured at the RMBO CBR banding station, *El Paso*, on 14 May (NG).

Eastern Towhee: This season's report came from Plaster Res, *Broomfield*, on 19 Apr (EZ).

Rufous-crowned Sparrow: Very rare in the county, one was reported from the Clausen Ranch, *El Paso*, on 19 May (JH, JRa). Another out-of-range bird was found in a shelterbelt near V Rd and 34 Rd, *Kiowa*, on 30 May (CD, BW).

Black-chinned Sparrow: On 9 Apr, Lev Frid became an instant friend to most Colorado birders when he found a cooperative and singing Black-chinned Sparrow in Colorado NM, *Mesa*, that was photographed and documented by many throughout the period. A second bird was reported by a few, and a nesting attempt was reported by others.

Grasshopper Sparrow: Very rare on the WS with fewer than 10 records, one was reported from the Grand Junction area, *Mesa*, on 21 Apr (GT).

Baird's Sparrow: Two, including a male that sang once, were reported from a private ranch, *Yuma*, on 21 Apr (DM, no doc.). Another was reported from Cherry Creek SP, *Arapahoe*, on 12 May (KSt, no doc.). There are only about 11 currently accepted Colorado records for this rare migrant.

Le Conte's Sparrow: A well described individual was at a private

ranch, Yuma, on 21 Apr (DM, no doc.).

“Red” Fox Sparrow: One was at Stalker Ponds, Yuma, on 27 Apr (DM) for the only spring report of this distinctive subspecies (species?).

Swamp Sparrow: The latest report of this migrant was on 16 May at Greenlee Preserve, Boulder (TF).

Lincoln’s Sparrow: Showing how common this migrant and Colorado mountain breeder can be, 126 birds were banded at the RMBO CBR banding station, El Paso, over a four-week period (NG).

White-throated Sparrow: Of note were singles at Nucla, Montrose, on 3 May (CD), and Fruita, Mesa, 16-20 Mar (BWa, LA), while others were more expected from Jefferson, Bent, Otero, Yuma, and Adams.

Harris’s Sparrow: Remaining from October, one was last seen at an Arvada residence, Jefferson, on 4 May (DMu). The wintering bird at Red Rocks Trading Post, Jefferson, was last reported on 7 May (MH, m.ob.). A bird was at Hygiene, Boulder, on 13 Mar (RN), and another was at the RMBO headquarters at Barr Lake SP, Adams, on 22 Mar (JBn, RB).

Golden-crowned Sparrow: A carryover from the winter season, one remained at Red Rocks Trading Post, Jefferson, through 6 May (MH, m.ob.). One remained at North Teller Lake Trailhead, Boulder, through 2 Apr (CN, m.ob.).

Rufous-collared Sparrow (*Zonotrichia capensis*): Not mentioned in any field guide from north of Mexico, this species was found by two out-of-state birders, Andrew and Tim Davis,

in Georgetown, Clear Creek, on 8 May. To the delight of hundreds, this cooperative bird was ogled from close and afar. The bird remained, often singing, throughout the period.

Hepatic Tanager: Three males and one female were seen in Reed Canyon, Las Animas, 29 May through the end of the period (JD).

Summer Tanager: A good year for this species saw reports from La Plata, Yuma, Prowers, Archuleta, Baca, Fremont, Chaffee, Adams, Bent, Jefferson, Boulder, Douglas, Pueblo, El Paso, Phillips, Eagle (3 reports!), Weld, Larimer, Otero, and Clear Creek counties. The earliest report was of an adult male, 9-14 Apr, in Dallabetta Park, Durango, La Plata (HRM), and the last was of an immature male at Stulp Farm, Prowers, on 31 May (JSt).

Scarlet Tanager: A male was reported at the Wheat Ridge Greenbelt, Jefferson, on 10 May (fide Rare Bird Alert). On 26 May a female was photographed at Rose Pond, CBR, Pueblo (KC, BKP, BMa, doc.). Another female, possibly of this species, was seen in north Boulder, Boulder, on the same date (ABe).

Rose-breasted Grosbeak: At the same feeder where she photographed a Summer Tanager, Cynthia Peterson photographed this species on 18 May at her Evergreen West home, Clear Creek, at 8300 feet. Of note were WS reports from Gypsum, Eagle, on 13 May (LD); Grand Junction, Mesa, 15-17 May (SSh); Glenwood Springs, Garfield, on 29 May (KHe); and Ridgway SP, Ouray (SH). Others were reported from more traditional locations in Bent, Denver, Baca, Pueblo, Elbert,

Douglas, Prowers, Boulder, Washington, Weld, Fremont, Lincoln, Jefferson, and Huerfano counties.

Indigo Bunting: A good showing on the WS included at least five different birds in *Garfield, Routt, and Moffat* counties (DF, BH, FL, TM).

Lazuli Bunting × Indigo Bunting: One was found 10 May at the Stulp Farm, *Prowers*, on 10 May (JSt), and another was at Frantz Lake SWA, *Chaffee*, on 22 May (BT). A new study that examined genes instead of morphological features suggests some hybrid buntings may actually be second-calendar-year male Indigo Buntings (*Birding* 43(5): 24).

Bobolink: One was seen on CFO field trips north of Mack Rd 6, *Mesa*, 21-22 May. In addition to the *Mesa* bird, noteworthy were birds from *Prowers, Grand, Eagle, and Moffat* counties. Expected were the birds reported from *Routt, Douglas, Weld, Boulder, and Rio Blanco* counties.

“Lilian’s” Eastern Meadowlark: A female was reported from County Road B, *Prowers*, on 20 Apr (CW, m.ob., no doc.).

Orchard Oriole: Establishing a first county record was a first-year male at a feeder in *Hayden, Routt*, from 30 May into the summer period (NM, FL, m.ob.).

Baltimore Oriole: An adult male was seen in *Lyons, Boulder*, on 27 May (TF, MS).

Bullock’s Oriole: A male banded on 20 May 2008 at the RMBO CBR banding station was recaptured three years later at the same location on 15 May (NG).

Bullock’s Oriole × Baltimore

Oriole: Reports of this recognizable hybrid included one from *Two Buttes Res, Baca*, on 8 May (BKP); a male at a feeder in *Glenwood Springs, Garfield*, on 18 May (RH, TM); one at CR 28, *Sedgwick*, on 20 May (RN); one at *Huerfano Res, Pueblo*, on 20 May (CW, KS); one at *Prewitt Res, Washington*, on 29 May (SM); and one in *Lyons, Boulder*, on 30 May (SM).

Scott’s Oriole: Reports indicate that fewer birds are seen in each successive year in Colorado. Many participants at the CFO Convention were able to see at least one in the vicinity of *Baxter Pass, Garfield*, during the convention field trips. One was at the Colorado/Utah border, *Mesa*, on 6 May (m.ob.). Another was reported from *Soda Canyon, Mesa Verde NP, Montezuma*, on 23 Apr (GR, BKP) and one was reported on 16 May from the East Slope at a north *Boulder* residence, *Boulder*, where it was photographed (DKW). Finally, one was at *Colorado NM, Mesa*, on 22 May (TF).

Gray-crowned Rosy-Finch: Late in Colorado’s mountains were 10 at *Dillon, Summit*, on 20 May (JH, JRa).

Black Rosy-Finch: Eight were at *Elk Thistle Drive, Silverthorne, Summit*, on 19 May, to the delight of two out-of-state teens heading to the CFO Grand Junction Convention (MD, AI, MS, JSu). Only one bird was found in *Dillon, Summit*, on 20 May (JRa, JH).

White-winged Crossbill: Not frequently encountered in the state, eleven birds were seen on *Elk Thistle Drive, Summit*, on 21 May (NK, CW).

Pine Siskin: Many remained late on the plains, and a few may have

remained there to breed. On 1 May the 50 at Fairmount and Riverside cemeteries, *Prowers*, were noteworthy (SM). Others were reported in mid-May from *Weld*, *Logan*, *Washington*, *Phillips*, *Prowers*, *Sedgwick*, *Pueblo*, and *Lincoln*; the last of the spring season were two at the private Witcher Ranch, *Baca*, on 30 May (TLe).

Evening Grosbeak: This notorious wanderer appeared in many counties, including *Summit*, *Delta*, *Custer*, *Lake*, *Routt*, *Las Animas*, *El Paso*, *Clear Creek*, *Teller*, *Fremont*, *Baca*, *Montrose*, *Mesa*, *Rio Blanco*, *Garfield*, *Archuleta*, *Elbert*, *Montezuma*, *Pueblo*, *Boulder*, *Chaffee*, *Eagle*, and *La Plata* between 2 Mar and 30 May.

REGIONAL COMPILERS

Without the compilation of sightings from these volunteer regional compilers, "News from the Field" could not be written. Continued appreciation goes to Jim Beatty, Coen Dexter, Forrest Luke, Brandon Percival, Mark Peterson, Glenn Walbek, Bill Schmoker, and Tony Leukering (eBird summaries). Many thanks to all of you who share your sightings with the Colorado birding community.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

Many thanks to those who helped troubleshoot this immense report: Larry Arnold, Coen Dexter, Ted Floyd, Tony Leukering, Forrest Luke, Brandon Percival, Bill Schmoker, and Glenn Walbek.

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Potter, NPu: Nick Pulcinella, SR: Scott Rashid, JRa: Jon Ranson, KR: Kay Rasmussen, PR: Peggy Roberts, AR: Andrea Robinson, JRo: Joe Roller, DR: Dorothy Russell, GR: Gene Rutherford, IS: Ira Sanders, BSc: Bill Schmoker, SSc: Scott Schuette, SSe: Scott Severs, SSh: S. Shelton, DS: Dave Silverman, AS: Andrew Spencer, BSp: Bob Spencer, SSSt: Steve Stachowiak, KSt: Karl Stecher, LS: Leon Stigen, CS: Cara Stiles, KS: Katrina Stowasser, JSt: Jane Stulp, JSu: Joel Such, MS: Marcel Such, CT: Cheryl Teuton, LT: Leon Thurmon, GT: Geoff Tischbein, VT: Van Truan, BT: Bill Tweit, LV: Linda Vidal, GW: Glenn Walbek, BWa: Brett Walker, DW: David Waltman, DKW: Dennis and Kathy Wellman, LW: Lisa Williams, JW: Jimmy Woodward, CW: Cole Wild, BW: Brenda Wright, SY: Sherrie York, VZ: Vic Zerbi, EZ: Eric Zorawowicz.

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Observations of a Family of Say's Phoebes (*Sayornis saya*)

Kayleen A. Niyo

Introduction

Say's Phoebe (*Sayornis saya*) is an uncommon inhabitant of the short to mid-grass native prairie from the Great Plains to the west in North America. Much research has been conducted on the Eastern Phoebe (*S. phoebe*) and to a lesser extent on the Black Phoebe (*S. nigricans*), but relatively little information is available on Say's Phoebe. Bent (1942) provided early accounts of *S. saya* life history, and Smith (1969, 1970a, b) recorded and studied the songs and behavior of all three *Sayornis* sp., though he spent the least time on *S. saya*. Ohlendorf (1976) studied the comparative breeding ecology of all three species in Trans-Pecos Texas. Ackerman (1988) studied nesting patterns of *S. saya* in southern Nevada. Schukman and Wolf (1998) provided an extensive summary of *S. saya* research in *The Birds of North America*.

I was lucky to have a Say's Phoebe pair claim my front porch nest box as their home during the spring and summer of 2011. I spent many fascinating hours per day when home observing the phoebe pair because all activity at the nest box was visible and easily photographed two meters from my living room window. A sequence of photographs of the nesting process is on my website (http://www.kayniyo.com/birds_flycatcher.htm). All dates and data from my Say's Phoebe observations were taken from entries in my Avisys database, photograph dates and time, and personal computer journal.

After moving from 2,500 meters (8,200 ft) in Evergreen, Colorado to 1,798 meters (5,900 ft) altitude north of Golden, Colorado in May 2008, I was pleased to be living near Say's Phoebe for the first time. My home is one block north of the large, expanding Jefferson County North Table Mountain Park prairie dog colony containing native short- to mid-grass prairie. I regularly observe one to several Say's Phoebe along the barbed wire fence line of the prairie dog colony on my daily walks from early April into May each year. During the nesting season, I see only one or two phoebes and assume others have spread into other nesting territories. The earliest arrival of a phoebe at this location from May 2008 to date was 2 April 2011, and the latest seen was 19 September 2011. Rockwell and Wetmore (1914) and Lincoln (1920) observed Say's Phoebe in this area near North Table Mountain in the early 1900s.



Fig. 1. Say's Phoebe female hollowing nest center by scratching the nest floor to increase nest depth and compact sides on Day 4 of nest construction, 10 May 2011. Photos by Kay Niyo

Fig. 2. Both Say's Phoebe parents "attacked" the nestlings on Day 15. The female grabbed head feathers on a nestling as she seemed to try to force it out of the nest onto the nest ledge, 27 June 2011.



Fig. 3. Four Say's Phoebe nestlings moved out onto nest ledge on Day 16. One fledged that afternoon and the remaining three fledged on Day 17. 28 June 2011.

Food and susceptibility to weather

The Say's Phoebe is an early spring migrant, and its insectivorous diet makes it susceptible to prolonged spring and early summer cold snaps that reduce prey availability. Say's Phoebes, arriving in Colorado very early in the spring, forage close to the warming short to mid-grass prairie for terrestrial insects by perching on barbed wire fences or short weed stalks or by hovering to spot prey (Bent 1942, Schukman 1993). On 18 April 2009, I saw a phoebe looking for insects in the prairie dog colony after a 10-inch snowfall. On the morning of 8 June 2009, however, I found a dead phoebe huddled facing into the corner of my patio step and garage wall as if looking for shelter. The temperature low on the previous night (7 June 2009) was 50° Fahrenheit (F) with a 13 mph northwest wind, gusts of 25 mph, and 0.03 in. precipitation. On 8 June 2009, the high and low were 59° F and 45° F, respectively, and 11–15 mph wind gusts from the WNW (Weather Underground 2009). I froze the specimen and gave it to Jeff Stephenson, mammalogy and ornithology collections manager, for the Denver Museum of Nature and Science collection. I surmised that the phoebe starved from lack of insects during inclement weather, but cause of death was unconfirmed.

In early spring, the phoebes perch in my hawthorn trees (*Crataegus laevigata*) on the south side of the house about 1.5 meters above the surrounding rock garden and pounce on plentiful prey including spiders (Arachnida), crickets (Orthoptera), sowbugs (Isopoda), and, later on, grasshoppers (Orthoptera). Ohlendorf (1976) found that arthropods comprised 98.1% of Say's Phoebes' diet. On 29 July 2011, I saw an adult phoebe capture a large dragonfly (Odonata) in flight over the prairie dog colony, land on a roof, and after several attempts with raised bill, swallow the odonate head first and whole.

Nest construction

In early April 2011, a Say's Phoebe (presumably a male) began looking at two nesting boxes that I had installed in May 2010. Soon a phoebe pair was interested in the small box on my front porch that faces west, and the presumed female crouched and turned around in the box testing its suitability as also noted by Ackerman (1988). The dimensions of the interior nest box floor are 20 centimeters (cm) deep by 13 cm wide; opening is 15 cm tall. It is shaded by the porch ceiling 0.6 meters above, but that also increased the heat load by several degrees on very hot, still days as indicated by my digital indoor/outdoor thermometer at the same level as the nest and 2.1 meters from it. The nest box is 2.4 meters above the porch floor and 3.4 meters from the ground. The nest, when built, filled the back

inside floor of the box and was 13 cm in diameter; the sides were 6.4 cm tall.

The presumed female Say's Phoebe began nest construction on 7 May 2011. She used dried plant stems and grasses as the base. For the cup, she used grasses, wool yarn and wool fibers that I laid on the lawn for her, and other soft natural materials (Bent 1942, Ackerman 1988). I first placed 10-cm lengths of cotton string on the grass, but when I began placing 70% angora/30% wool yarn pieces on the grass, she quit using string and snatched up the soft yarn. She used no mud (Schukman 1993). Richardson (1942) reported small rocks were used by *S. saya* on a sloped horizontal cliff shelf nest near Reno, Nevada to prevent the nest lined with wool from slipping.

The presumed male Say's Phoebe was often in attendance during nest building and would bring appropriate materials to the box for the female to use; however, I never observed him actually constructing the nest. As the nest base and cup sides were built up, she frequently assumed an incubating posture, stuck her tail in the air, turned in the box in a circular manner, and scratched the bottom of the nest to increase the depth of the center hole, which probably also served to compact the sides of the nest (Fig. 1). Within a day or two of beginning nest construction, the presumed female became easy to distinguish from the male due to the considerable wear on her tail and breast feathers from these activities. The male also had darker crest feathers, which he would raise ("crown ruffling") if alarmed. I never observed copulation by the pair. Smith (1969) noted that copulation by Eastern Phoebes in the eastern United States usually occurred at dawn.

Egg laying and incubation

On 23 May 2011, the female phoebe laid the first egg by 9 A.M. She left soon afterward and returned several times during the day, but did not incubate. She laid a second egg by 9 A.M. on 24 May. Early on 25 May, I left for a week, returning the evening of 1 June 2011. When I returned home, the female was incubating with very few short periods off the nest. The male brought food to her occasionally. I did not disturb her to count the eggs but determined later that she laid four. Ohlendorf (1976) found the mean clutch size to be 3.8 in 45 *S. saya* clutches in Trans-Pecos Texas desert scrub. Average clutch size found by Ackerman (1988) in southern Nevada was 3.8 in six nests. Schukman (1993) reported mean clutch size of 4.5 for 24 *S. saya* nests in the grasslands of Ellis Co. in western Kansas.

If the last two eggs were laid on 25 and 26 May (while I was gone), the female incubated them for 16–17 days, because hatching oc-

curred on 12 June. Ackerman (1988) found that incubation for six nests ranged from 12–16 days (mean, 13.3 d) in southern Nevada.

As also reported by Johnsgard (1979), the male phoebe was frequently in attendance and perched quietly on a “lookout perch” in nearby trees (maple, *Acer* sp., and oak, *Quercus macrocarpus*), the neighbor’s roof, or the ledge of the nest box. Smith (1970b) in Arizona reported that “the pair bond appears to be variable and often weak in *S. saya*.” He also noted, “On the whole, very little interaction between mates of this species was observed, and very little song was recorded.” The pair bond of the phoebes on my property seemed strong. I never observed any aggressive behavior between the pair.

Interspecific aggression

A bird water bath is about 1.5 meters from the nest box, but I never saw either phoebe parent or the fledglings drink from it; the phoebes’ insectivorous diet reportedly provides necessary water (Schukman and Wolf 1998). However, the phoebes chased other species away from the water bath. Rock Pigeons were the exception; they came to the water rarely, but when they did, the phoebes seemed unconcerned about them.

I also had a thistle feeder hanging about one meter from the nest box. I removed it when the female began incubating because the male was chasing the many Lesser and a few American Goldfinches off the feeder and I feared they would hit the living room window or interfere with the nesting progress. During a chase, I photographed the male as he zoomed in to the porch and grabbed a small yellow feather from the breast of a Lesser Goldfinch.

I also have a bottle hummingbird feeder about one meter from and slightly below the box, but neither phoebe ever seemed bothered by the many Broad-tailed and a few Black-chinned Hummingbirds that frequent it; I never saw them chase a hummingbird.

Care of nestlings

During the first 4–5 days after hatching on 12 June, the female brooded the nestlings through the night and early morning when it was 50–70° F (Table 1). She left occasionally to bring insects, and the male frequently brought insects (Ackerman 1988). In the afternoons and early evenings, both parents brought food about every 5–10 minutes. I always saw the feeding parent wait for the fecal sac to be expelled and carry it away.

By 16 June, the fourth day after hatching, the female spent less time brooding, and I saw the parents feeding the nestlings large crickets and grasshoppers, wasps, and spiders about every 10 minutes.

Sometimes one parent would have to “wait in line” for the other parent to be finished feeding the nestlings. Ohlendorf (1976) stated, “Most interesting was the large size of grasshoppers [up to 0.9 ml displacement] given to nestlings weighing as little as 14 grams.” I found the size of the prey striking as well.

At least one nestling’s eye was slightly open on Day 4 in one of my photographs. That day, the female was standing on the edge of the nest waiting for the fecal sac to be expelled and to carry it away after feeding one of the nestlings, and the male arrived with a fritil-

Table 1. Say’s Phoebe pair’s successful nesting activities, dates, temperatures (degrees Fahrenheit), and precipitation (inches), Golden, CO (Weather Underground 2011)

Date	Activity	Temperature (°F)			Precip (in.)
		High	Low	Ave	
4/2/11	First of year Say’s Phoebe in yard	79	49	64	---
4/7/11	Say’s Phoebe’s checking two boxes	58	36	46	---
4/23/11	Fog, snow	47	31	39	0.01
5/7/11	Began building nest in front box	82	51	61	---
5/14/11	Rain, snow	52	36	40	0.41
5/15/11	Rain, cold	43	34	39	0.09
5/19/11	Snow	42	39	40	0.42
5/20/11	Snow	59	36	46	0.02
5/23/11	First egg laid	66	50	58	0.03
5/24/11	Second egg laid	54	46	50	0.15
5/25/11	I left for one week	62	43	53	---
6/1/11	Returned home. Fem incubating	76	52	65	---
6/12/11	Four chicks hatch	81	50	68	---
6/16/11	Day 4 after hatching	84	60	72	0.03
6/21/11	D9	76	51	65	0.03
6/23/11	D11	87	61	73	---
6/24/11	D12	87	60	74	---
6/25/11	D13	86	56	72	---
6/26/11	D14	90	63	78	---
6/27/11	D15 Adults harass chicks	76	57	66	---
6/28/11	D16 One chick fledged	92	59	75	---
6/29/11	D17 Three chicks fledged	90	72	80	---
6/30/11	D18 One chick on back roof, rain	85	61	72	0.20

lary butterfly in the genus *Speyeria*. The female took it from the male and was trying to maneuver it for feeding. The male, perched on the box ledge, grabbed one wing and tore it off. He finally left and let the female figure out the logistics of feeding it to one of the nestlings. She bashed it against the box ledge and knocked the other wing off and I watched her eat the body instead of feeding it to a nestling. I photographed this process.

As June progressed, the days gradually warmed (Table 1) and the female was on the nest only at night after it cooled. If it was very warm, she would sometimes perch on the edge of the nest. Amazingly, the nestlings remained in the nest or on its edge even when it was very warm. The nest box, only 0.6 meters from the porch ceiling, became very hot in late afternoons and early evenings on 23-26 June (Days 11-14), according to my indoor/outdoor digital thermometer, which gave readings above 100° F on multiple days. The nestlings exhibited heat stress by spreading their wings and stretching their heads and necks over the nest edge with bills open. The parents did not come to the nest very often during these hot late afternoons.

Parental aggression against nestlings

The parents brought less food on 27 June (Day 15). At about 4:50 P.M. in the afternoon, both parents arrived at the box together and took turns “attacking” the nestlings for several minutes, long enough for me to grab my camera and shoot a series of photos (http://www.kayniyo.com/birds_flycatcher.htm). The parents entered the nest, stepping on the nestlings’ backs, stabbing at them, and flapping their wings. In one instance, the female grabbed the head feathers of a nestling as she seemed to try to force it out of the nest onto the box ledge (Fig. 2). Some nestlings cowered; others continued to beg. The parents ended up with bills full of tiny feathers. They abruptly ceased the attacks and flew from the box. The forecast was 95° F for the next day, so I wondered if they were attempting to encourage the nestlings to leave the nest. In my literature search, I found no other references to this aggressive behavior toward nestlings. Smith (1970a, b) reported the female Say’s Phoebe avoiding or occasionally attacking fledglings when performing nest-site-showing displays to the male for the second nest.

Fledging

Early in the morning of 28 June (the sixteenth day after hatching), the nestlings moved out onto the nest box ledge (Fig. 3) and the parents rarely brought food. I saw the parents perched on the

neighbor's roof or the nearby maple tree, occasionally giving very soft calls. Finally, at 12:45 P.M., the first nestling flew down to the porch railing. It then spent the rest of the afternoon quite expertly flying back and forth from the railings to the ground and 3.7 meters nearly straight up to the nest box. The other three remained on the nest box ledge all day, rarely being fed by the parents. I seldom saw the nestlings exercising their wings like other species do, but they were excellent flyers when they left the box. That evening I saw the first fledged phoebe with a yellow gape perched on a newly planted linden tree (*Tilia* sp.) about 180 meters from my yard and being fed by parents. As it became dark, I watched the last three nestlings climb together from the box ledge back into the nest for the night. I never observed any aggression among the nestlings in the nest.

About 11 A.M. on 29 June (Day 17), the remaining three nestlings fledged from the nest box, flying about eight meters into the neighbor's yard, where I photographed them. Ackerman (1988) reported a mean fledging time of 17 days for three Say's Phoebe nests in southern Nevada. I watched the fledglings being fed all day by the parents. The next morning I photographed one of the fledglings on my back porch roof, where it was calling to a parent for food.

Because these Say's Phoebes were the only pair in the immediate neighborhood of 111 new patio homes, I was aware that they were the only "house nesters" nearby. Therefore, on 11 July, when I saw two Say's Phoebes with yellow gapes perched two meters apart on a fence line about a block from my house, I was quite sure they were two of the fledglings from my property. Likewise, on 20 July, I saw one fledgling with a yellow gape catching grasshoppers on the sidewalk along that same fence line. The fledglings never returned to the nest after fledging.

Post-nesting pair behavior

Both parents came back to the box multiple times per day for about three weeks after the chicks fledged. On the afternoon of 25 July, when the temperature reached 95° F, the female preened for about 20 minutes on the nest box ledge. That afternoon she also crouched down on the porch railing and "sunbathed" with wings and tail spread for about five minutes. On her return trips to the nest box, she was accompanied by the male about two-thirds of the time. They preened, cleaned up the nest area, which was not very soiled, and the female remodeled the existing nest and added new material. She never laid any more eggs, although *S. saya* often reuses nests for a second nesting (Ohlendorf 1976). Gates (1980) reported that a nest platform in Chadron, Nebraska was used by Say's Phoebes in 20 of

21 consecutive years. The site produced double broods in 17 of those years, and approximately 144 young in total.

I inspected the nest several times and did not find any dermanyssid mites (Ohlendorf 1976), ants, or other ectoparasites, which I have found in Eastern and Mountain Bluebird nests in Iowa and Colorado, respectively.

The pair also continued to chase Lesser Goldfinches from the water and porch area during July. The female spent a lot of time at the nest box until late July, so I deemed it unlikely that she was incubating a second clutch elsewhere. The male ceased coming with her after about three weeks following the fledging of the young. There were 18 straight days of temperatures exceeding 90° F reported for Denver in the latter part of July, and it is possible that the heat deterred the pair from initiating a second brood.

I did not see any Say's Phoebes at my home or on the fence line at the prairie dog colony during most of August, and I assumed they had gone elsewhere to molt (Bent 1942, Schukman and Wolf 1998). However, on 26 August, two Say's Phoebes in fresh plumage spent about 10 minutes on my roof above the nest box and in the nearby maple tree, swooping down to the grass to catch insects. They flew across the street to hunt in the neighbor's yard. They chased each other a little, but stayed together and flew toward the prairie dog colony. I did not see them land on the nest box. On 30 and 31 August 2011, a Say's Phoebe landed on the porch railing right below the nest and remained there for about 10 minutes, but did not fly to the nest box. On 10 September 2011, a phoebe with fresh plumage landed on the nest box and poked around the nest for a couple minutes, got into the nest for a minute, and then flew off.

Vocalizations

Smith (1969, 1970a, b), who studied and recorded vocalizations in all three *Sayornis* species, said much more is known about songs and displays in Eastern Phoebe than in Say's or Black Phoebes. Smith (1970b) reports that *S. saya* is relatively quiet. My phoebes were extremely quiet compared to some other avian species. Smith (1970b) found that the most common vocalization by *S. saya* is the Initially Peaked Vocalization (IPV) *phoe-eur* call, and that is what I heard in my yard most of the time, especially early in the nesting process. After the female began incubating, both birds were quiet, and the nestlings were very quiet also, with few begging calls.

On 6 June and 22 June 2010 and 4 July 2010, a presumed male Say's Phoebe spent long periods each day in this same then-unoccupied nest box singing and "trilling" nonstop and chasing goldfinches

from the thistle feeder. At that time an ornithologist friend said it likely was an unmated male. Had I known I would be writing this article, I would have recorded vocalizations, because it would be very easy to do through the open window without disturbing the birds.

Summary

I was fortunate to be able to observe and photograph Say's Phoebe behavior so closely and for as many hours as I could invest from April to July. Certain behaviors of the phoebes nesting in my box surprised me. The most unusual behavior was on 27 June 2011 (Day 15) when the male and female arrived at the nest and took turns attacking the nestlings for several minutes, although most of the attacks were by the female. I did not find any such behavior in the literature.

There were notable differences between some behaviors of the pair nesting on my property and their young and those described in the literature. The male was very attentive and almost always near the nest site with the female. He brought numerous offerings of nest building material. He perched as "lookout" while she was incubating and brought her occasional insects. I saw no aggression between the pair as has been described especially as female aggression toward the male. The male helped daily to feed the nestlings and also the fledglings for the two days they were nearby.

Research often raises more questions than answers. Was the aggressive behavior by the parents an attempt to encourage the nestlings to fledge out of the hot nest box? They certainly were excellent flyers immediately after fledging. Is heat the reason that no second brood was attempted? I must decide whether to leave the box and nest as it is for next spring, or lower it slightly to decrease heat load, or put a larger box in its place and move the old nest into the new box. I hope that the phoebes return and that I can observe more Say's Phoebe nesting behavior next spring. I encourage others who are fortunate to have this species nesting nearby to collect data.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

I thank Ray Davis for sending photos of the Say's Phoebe nesting at his home in Lyons and starting this fun project. Thank you to Dave Leatherman for encouragement and identification of the *Speyeria fritillaria* butterfly. I thank Stephen J. Dinsmore, James J. Dinsmore, and W. Ross Silcock for critical review of this manuscript and for many helpful comments. And I thank Nathan Pieplow for suggesting publication of this project, for excellent editorial comments, and for help in obtaining a thesis and three research papers for my review.

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Downy and Hairy Woodpeckers in Colorado

Tony Leukering

Downy and Hairy Woodpeckers are widespread residents of woodland and forest in Colorado, being both sympatric (sharing aspects of their geographical range) and syntopic (sharing habitat within that shared range). Both woodpeckers also share most details of plumage, making them tricky to identify, particularly for newer birders. But standard field guides deal with these two species quite well, and the focus of this essay is not on identification at the species level. Instead, it treats the field identification of these two birds to *subspecies*.

One of the most striking aspects of avian biogeography in Colorado is the abrupt juxtaposition of radically different biomes at the lower edges of the southern Rocky Mountains, particularly along the eastern foothill edge. This biome border has existed for thousands of years, but just in the past 150 years, man-caused changes in the flow of many eastern plains river systems have created extensive gallery forest dominated by Plains Cottonwood (*Populus deltoides*), allowing woodland-dependent birds to colonize Colorado from the east (Knopf 1986), including species such as Red-bellied Woodpecker and Great Crested Flycatcher (Andrews and Righter 1992) and Blue Jay (Henderson 1905, Smith 1978). In addition to species, this colonization has included many eastern subspecies, such as those of the Warbling Vireo (subspecies *gilvus*, possibly a full species), White-breasted Nuthatch (subspecies *carolinensis*, also possibly a full species), and, of course, Downy Woodpecker (subspecies *medianus*) and Hairy Woodpecker (subspecies *villosus*).

The invading eastern forms of both woodpecker species have extensive white spotting on most or all wing coverts, while the montane forms of both species have that spotting reduced or lacking altogether. Presumably, this excellent example of convergent evolution is due to the very different natures of montane habitats versus those of the lowlands.

The identification of these subspecies was tackled thirty years ago in this journal by Blake (1981). Following the classification scheme of Bailey and Niedrach (1965) for Hairy and Downy Woodpeckers, he discussed three subspecies of each: a montane breeding form, an eastern breeding form, and a more northerly migrant form spending the winter. However, Pyle (1997) disagreed with this treatment, lumping the eastern and northern forms of each species together. I

follow an intermediate course, lumping the eastern and northern forms of the Downy Woodpecker, but not of the Hairy.

The following discussion is intended to be read with reference to the four pictures on the back cover, with Downy Woodpeckers in the top row, Hairy Woodpeckers in the bottom row, montane forms in the left column, and eastern forms in the right column.

Downy Woodpecker

Eastern Downy Woodpecker (*medianus*): I here follow Pyle (1997) in subsuming *nelsoni* into *medianus*. Bailey and Niedrach (1965) list this form as an “uncommon resident in eastern Colorado,” with the first specimen not taken until 1915. This form is medium in size, with large white spots on most or all wing coverts, gray-washed underparts, and light black barring on the outer tail feathers (Pyle 1997); see upper right picture on back cover.

Of the two subject species of this essay, Downy Woodpecker is much more widespread in eastern Colorado, accepting a wider variety of woodland structures and utilizing earlier successional stages of woodland and forest. This may have allowed the eastern form to more quickly and thoroughly colonize various wooded habitats avail-

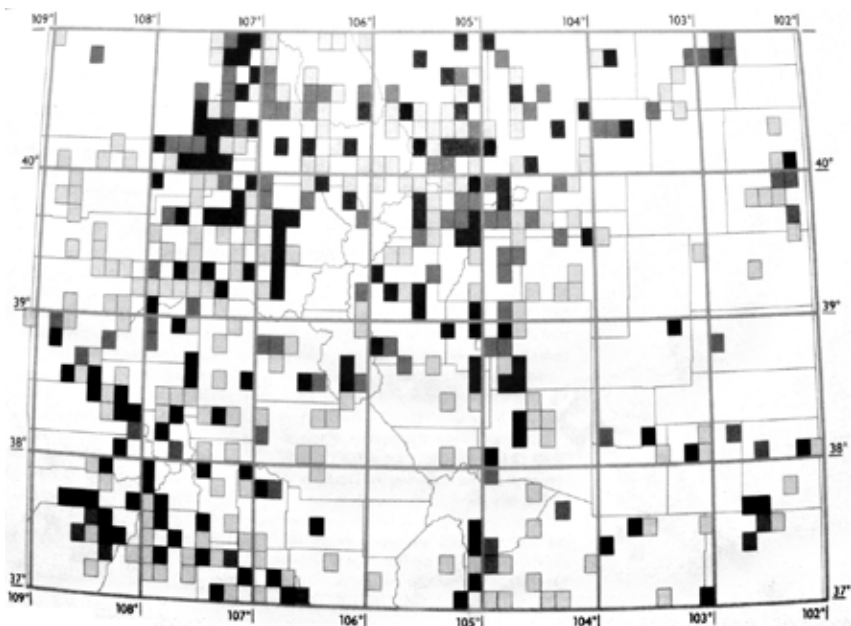


Fig. 1. Distribution of Downy Woodpecker during the first Colorado Breeding Bird Atlas, 1987-1995 (Kingery 1998). Map reprinted with permission.

able on the eastern plains, including small and somewhat isolated towns (Fig. 1). In my experience, only *medianus* Downy Woodpeckers breed in Colorado east of the Rocky Mountains and north of the foothill country that is so typical of, e.g., eastern Las Animas County. I am uncertain precisely how far west *medianus* breeds, though all breeders west to Barr Lake, Adams County, are certainly of the eastern form.

Mountain Downy Woodpecker (*leucurus*): Bailey and Niedrach (1965) note this form as a “fairly common summer resident in mountains, and on the plains in winter.” This wording suggests that the form is not resident in the mountains, contra my personal experience and that of many other Colorado birders (e.g., Larry Semo pers. comm.). In fact, Bailey and Niedrach suggest that the majority of summering individuals depart the state for the winter, their places being taken by migrants from farther north, but the authors present no particular evidence of that phenomenon.

The subspecies *leucurus* is large; its wing coverts lack white spots, or sport only a few small ones, but its tertials show large white spots. It has white underparts and a variable amount of black barring in the outer tail feathers (Pyle 1997); see upper left picture on back cover.

In this form's montane haunts, it is particular to deciduous woodlands of cottonwood and aspen, but it accepts a considerable mix of conifers. Though widespread in the mountains of Colorado as a breeder, it is considerably less common and more local than is Hairy Woodpecker, probably due to its seeming preference for deciduous canopy cover. Downy Woodpeckers referable to *leucurus* can be found on Colorado's eastern plains outside the breeding season (Fig. 2). Bailey and Niedrach (1965) note 34 specimens from six counties entirely or mostly on the plains (Adams, Arapahoe, Bent, Denver, Prowers, and Weld), but at least portions of all those counties are within 40 miles of foothill breeding habitat of the form. As noted by Steve Mlodinow, “It is pretty clear that breeding Eastern Downy



Fig. 2. Apparent female Mountain Downy Woodpecker, Barr Lake State Park, Adams County, 12 February 2005. Photo by Tony Leukering

Woodpeckers approach the mountains and that breeding Mountain Downy Woodpeckers approach the lowlands, though what happens where the two meet, and precisely where they meet, is not clear.”

Hairy Woodpecker

Eastern Hairy Woodpecker (*villosus*): Bailey and Niedrach (1965) record this form as “resident in eastern Colorado,” though they provide few details other than a note of a breeding pair in Yuma County in 1906. This form is of medium size, with large white spots on all wing coverts (Pyle 1997) and tertials; see lower right picture on back cover.

Eastern Hairy Woodpeckers are of limited distribution in Colorado, being reasonably common only in the northeast in the Republican River drainage and along the eastern half or so of the plains length of the South Platte River (Fig. 3). This pattern of distribution is probably related to its seeming preference for extensive mature woodlands, a habitat that is decidedly rare in eastern Colorado. The form has been found breeding at scattered locations on the plains, though few summer reports of Hairy Woodpecker note the subspecies involved.

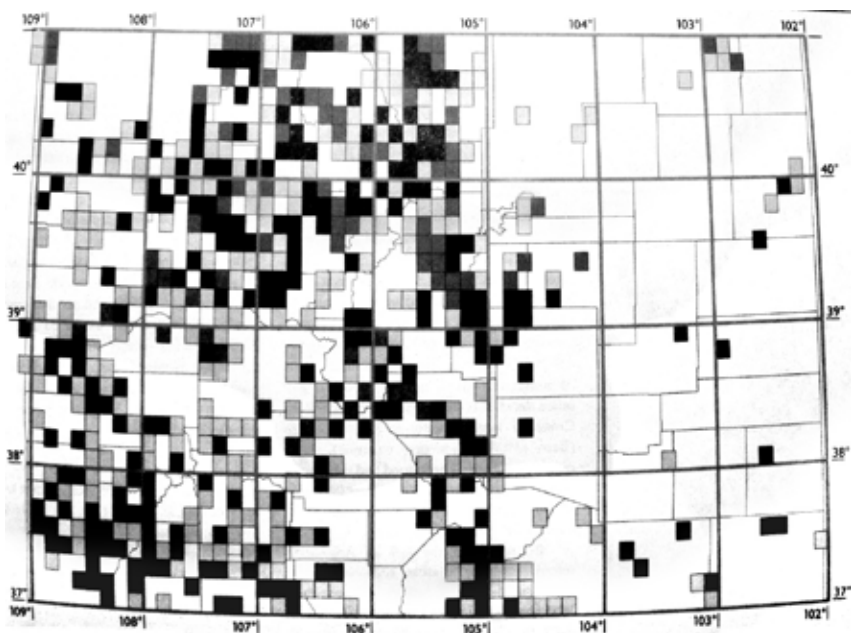


Fig. 3. Distribution of Hairy Woodpecker during the first Colorado Breeding Bird Atlas, 1987-1995 (Kingery 1998). Map reprinted with permission.

Mountain Hairy Woodpecker (*monticola*): Contra Pyle (1997), I here follow Bailey and Niedrach (1965) and Blake (1981) in maintaining *monticola* separate from *septentrionalis*, which has extensive white spotting on wing coverts. Though Pyle (1997) states that individual plumage variation swamps any differences between the two described taxa, in my experience, virtually all breeding Hairy Woodpeckers in Colorado in the mountains and on the West Slope have wing-covert spotting that is greatly reduced or lacking, and few have spotting on the tertials. Without studying Colorado-collected specimens of Hairy Woodpecker, I am unable to confirm the contention by Bailey and Niedrach (1965) and Blake (1981) that northern *septentrionalis* occurs in winter, and I do not discuss it further in this paper.

Bailey and Niedrach (1965), again echoed by Blake (1981), note that *monticola* is “resident, breeding in mountains throughout the state and wintering at lower elevations.” This form is widespread in montane Colorado and across the West Slope, with no apparent strong preference for either coniferous or deciduous forest types. Unlike the eastern form, *monticola* seems to be quite plastic in its selection of forest structure, occurring fairly commonly even in short-statured pinyon-juniper woodland, although it is typically found only in older stands of such with trees of sufficient bole diameter to support their cavities.

Though small numbers of this form can be found on the eastern plains outside the breeding season, it is less common there than one might infer from Bailey and Niedrach. In fact, in my experience with a small number of adults banded in summer as high as 9400 feet of elevation in Summit and Larimer counties, most were present on site throughout the year. The source of plains-wintering *monticola* is unknown, though they could be dispersing immature birds.

Unlike the situation in Downy Woodpeckers, there is a substantial gap between the known breeding ranges of eastern and montane Hairy Woodpeckers in Colorado. However, there are scattered summer records within this gap that might represent wandering individuals of either race, or perhaps small colonies of either subspecies outside their usual habitats.

Data gaps

There are many things we do not know about the subspecies of these two woodpeckers, and I here summarize some of the unanswered questions that field observers could help answer by learning to identify these two birds to subspecies.

Distribution of subspecies on the plains adjacent to the foothills:



Fig. 4. Apparent male Eastern Downy Woodpecker, Castle Rock, Douglas County, 22 April 2005. Photo by Glenn Walbek



Fig. 5. Apparent male Mountain Downy Woodpecker, Chico Basin Ranch, El Paso County, 9 May 2007. Photo by Bill Maynard

Are the two subspecies of Downy Woodpecker meeting and mixing here? How variable in space and time is their occurrence? The few data appear fairly muddled, as exemplified by Figs. 4 and 5, pictures of birds on just about the same longitude line and in neighboring counties on dates only 17 days apart (though in differing years). Are the few breeding Hairy Woodpeckers on the plains adjacent to the foothills all referable to *monticola*? The subspecies distribution of both species is particularly mysterious in the canyon country of southeastern Colorado and on the eastern edge of the Palmer Divide. North of the Palmer Divide, Eastern Hairy Woodpeckers seem to be restricted to east of the I-25 corridor, and there seem to be few breeding Hairy Woodpeckers between the interstate and the foothill edge. Whether this reflects a dearth of suitable breeding habitat for either form or some other reason is unknown.

Overlap between subspecies during the breeding season: On 11 June 2011, Steve Mlodinow found an apparent Mountain Downy Woodpecker (Fig. 6) seemingly paired with an Eastern Downy Woodpecker in Greeley, Weld County. There are at least two records of Eastern Downy Woodpeckers in montane Larimer County in the breeding sea-

son, a male (Fig. 7) in Rocky Mountain National Park on 24 July 2003 (Tony Leukering, Nancy Gobris) and a female (Fig. 8) at Lake Estes on 15 May 2011 (Steve Mlodinow).

Variability of the subspecies: Are the Downy Woodpeckers depicted in Fig. 2 and Figs. 4–8 truly identifiable to the subspecies noted, meaning they are individuals outside of typical breeding range? Or are these just extremes in the variation of the local subspecies? How much, if any, does hybridization between subspecies factor into the variability of plumage? Are all Colorado-breeding Mountain Hairy Woodpeckers as lightly spotted as those depicted here and in the pool



Fig. 6. Apparent male Mountain Downy Woodpecker, Greeley, Weld County, 11 June 2011. Photo by Steve Mlodinow



Fig. 7. Apparent male Eastern Downy Woodpecker, Horseshoe Park, Rocky Mountain National Park, Larimer County, 24 July 2003. Photo by Nancy Gobris



Fig. 8. Apparent female Eastern Downy Woodpecker, Lake Estes, Larimer County, 15 May 2011. Photo by Steve Mlodinow



Fig. 9. Apparent male Mountain Hairy Woodpecker, Allenspark, Boulder County, 11 January 2009. Photo by Bill Schmoker

of pictures to which I have access? Or was the availability of photos and my personal experience biased in some fashion? Fig. 9 depicts the Mountain Hairy Woodpecker with the most wing-covert spotting out of any of the photos available to me at press time.

With the great increase in the use of eBird (www.ebird.org) by the state's birders, we now have the ability to easily map in time and space the distributions of avian taxa in the state. I strongly urge Colorado's birders to contribute to this online repository of occurrence information.

Some of the data gaps noted above can be quickly filled by reporting at the subspecies level when filling out eBird checklists. However, I also urge caution in assigning individual birds to particular subspecies or subspecies groups, because inherent individual variation makes subspecific identification fraught with peril. Okay, perhaps not peril, but it is better to be conservative in this vein than to fill the data set with questionable reports.

Note that eBird has only recently enabled birders to report "Eastern Hairy Woodpecker," although it has accepted reports of "Mountain Hairy Woodpecker" for some time. If you have in the past reported Eastern Hairy Woodpeckers to eBird as simply "Hairy Woodpeckers," I encourage you to edit those checklists to reflect the new availability of the subspecies form.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

Thanks to Steve Mlodinow for providing comments improving this manuscript. I also thank Christopher L. Wood for pointing me toward Blake's previous treatment of this subject and Joey Kellner for providing access to that paper.

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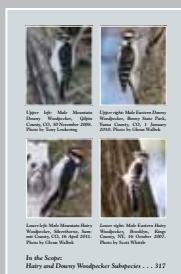
Back Cover Photo Key

Upper left: Male Mountain Downy Woodpecker, Gilpin County, CO, 30 November 2008. Photo by Tony Leukering

Upper right: Male Eastern Downy Woodpecker, Bonny State Park, Yuma County, CO, 1 January 2010. Photo by Glenn Walbek

Lower left: Male Mountain Hairy Woodpecker, Silverthorne, Summit County, CO, 16 April 2011. Photo by Glenn Walbek

Lower right: Male Eastern Hairy Woodpecker, Brooklyn, Kings County, NY, 16 October 2007. Photo by Scott Whittle



Colorado Birds

The Colorado Field Ornithologists' Quarterly

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Upper left: Male Mountain Downy Woodpecker, Gilpin County, CO, 30 November 2008. Photo by Tony Leukering



Upper right: Male Eastern Downy Woodpecker, Bonny State Park, Yuma County, CO, 1 January 2010. Photo by Glenn Walbek



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