

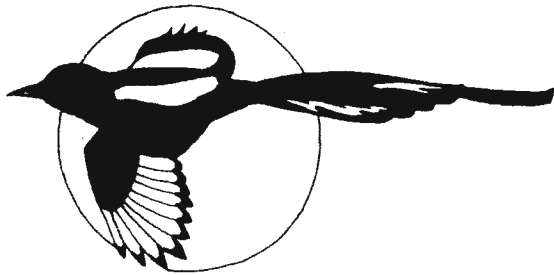


**COLORADO  
FIELD  
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JOURNAL**

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## TABLE OF CONTENTS

C.F.O./K.O.S. JOINT MEETING AND FIELD TRIP May 8, 9, and 10, 1992 .....	47
C.F.O. FIELD TRIP SCHEDULE .....	48
COMMENTS ON MESSR'S ANDREWS, RIGHTER, AND CARTER REGARDING A FORMAT FOR LOCAL BIRD CHECKLISTS, By Hugh E. Kingery .....	49
NEWS FROM THE FIELD: FALL 1991 (August through November), By Coen Dexter .....	51
BLACK RAIL SAGA, By Dan Bridges .....	58
A NEW STATE RECORD SPECIMEN OF SPRAGUE'S PIPIT AT THE DENVER MUSEUM OF NATURAL HISTORY, By Elizabeth A. Webb and Allan R. Phillips .....	61
BREEDING BIRD UPDATE, By Hugh E. Kingery .....	63
CORRECTIONS .....	64
C.F.O FIELDTRIP: PUEBLO AND THE LOWER ARKANSAS RIVER VALLEY FEBRUARY 15, 1992, By Mark Janos .....	65
FIRST COLORADO NEST FOR CAROLINA WREN, By Hugh E. Kingery .....	68
FOOD ITEMS OF COLORADO BIRDS (VIII), By David A. Leatherman .....	71
A SCISSOR-TAILED FLYCATCHER IN A MONTANE MEADOW, By Steven M. Bourcius .....	76

**Cover Photograph:** *Sabine's Gull at Clifton oxidation ponds, Lat. #8,  
Mesa County, CO. September 22, 1991.  
Photo by Coen Dexter.*

**C.F.O./K.O.S. JOINT MEETING AND FIELD TRIP  
May 8, 9, and 10, 1992**

Meet Friday, May 8, beginning at 7:00 p.m. CDT in St. Francis, Kansas, at the roadside rest on the south side of Highway 36 or at the Dusty Farmer restaurant, open until 10:00 p.m. CDT. (Look for signs.) Information and sign-up sheets will be available for field trips leaving Saturday morning. If you don't want to drive to St. Francis, K.O.S. members will be at the North Cove Group Camp at Bonny S.R.A. Friday from about 6:00 p.m. MDT.

**Three field trips are planned:**

- (1) Leave St. Francis at 7:00 a.m. CDT from the Empire Motel and explore the Republican and Arikaree River areas west to the Colorado line.
- (2) Leave St. Francis at 7:00 a.m. from the Empire Motel and explore the area south of town looking for migrant water birds on the potholes.
- (3) Leave Bonny Reservoir group campground and explore the reservoir and the Republican River riparian areas east to the Kansas line. This trip will be lead by Bill Prather.

If enough people are interested, we may participate in the first annual North American Spring Migration Count.

Accommodations in St. Francis consist of the Empire Motel (913) 332-2231 with 34 units. Rates are \$22.00 for single and \$32.00 for double occupancy. Other accommodation is available in the towns of Idalia and Burlington, Colorado. If you wish to camp, K.O.S. has reserved the North Cove Group Camping Area at Bonny Reservoir which has a maximum occupancy of 30 persons. Rates will be based on the number of persons attending. To reserve a campsite in this group area, call Scott Seltman by April 26, 1992. If and when this area is full, you may make your own reservations at any of the other campsites at Bonny by calling the Colorado Parks Reservations System at (800) 678-2267. Rates are \$6-7.00/night. There is also a \$3.00/car/day fee for entering Bonny State Recreation Area; persons wishing to enter for the Saturday evening meal only may carpool from the entrance.

We will all meet back at the North Cove Group Camping Area at Bonny Saturday evening at approximately 8:00 p.m. CDT for a meal together at the large shelterhouse. We will have a fire in the large grill, so bring your provisions for cooking out. Come and enjoy an evening of socializing and getting acquainted the Kansas and Colorado birders.

Field trips will be planned again for Sunday, followed by the list compilation at 1:00 p.m. CDT at the Dusty Farmer restaurant in St. Francis. For those wishing to stay longer, Scott Seltman will lead a trip Monday, May 11, to look for Sharp-tailed Grouse in Kansas. For more information on this weekend call Scott or Diane Seltman at (913) 329-4411 or (913) 372-5411 after May 1.

## C.F.O. FIELD TRIP SCHEDULE 1992

### Greeley Area

Meet in Fort Collins, 8:00 a.m., April 18 in Holiday Inn parking lot just west of Junction of I-25 and CSH 14. Trip may include Jackson & Riverside Reservoirs, wherever best ducks and shore birds are. One day trip; bring lunch.

*Leaders: Joe Himmel & Dave Leatherman*

### Lake Isabel Area (Pueblo & Custer Counties)

Meet at Lake Isabel, 9:00 a.m., June 27 at USFS parking lot across CSH 165 from southeast corner of the lake. Lake Isabel is located about 20 miles northwest of Junction of I-25 and CSH 165. Search will be made for Flammulated Owls and Three-toed Woodpeckers. Possible side trip to Rye area for nesting Redstarts and Ovenbirds. One day trip; bring lunch.

*Leader: Brandon Percival*

### Fountain Creek Regional Park South of Colorado Springs

Meet at 8:00 a.m. Saturday October 10, 1992, at the north parking area of the park [see map in *C.F.O. Journal* 26(1)]. Directions: From I-25 take exit 132 to CSH 16 south of Colorado Springs. Go east of CSH 16 across Fountain Creek to USH 85. Go south to Willow Springs Road. Go west on this road into park and to north parking area.

*Leaders: Toni Brevillier (719) 540-5653 and  
George Maentz, Park Supervisor (719) 520-6387*

COMMENTS ON MESSR'S ANDREWS, RIGHTER, AND CARTER  
REGARDING A FORMAT FOR LOCAL BIRD CHECKLISTS

Hugh E. Kingery  
869 Milwaukee Street  
Denver CO 80206

Bob Righter, Bob Andrews, and Mike Carter (1992) presented a case for standardizing checklists which purport to provide credible information on the status of birds from localities in Colorado. I like the idea of consistency, and I think C.F.O. could facilitate useful guidelines. Their article starts a useful dialogue; I'm offering these additional thoughts to the C.F.O. readership in order to stimulate a discussion.

My comments address three things: distinguishing between two kinds of checklists; clarification of and modification to the proposed abundance categories; and adoption of habitat codes which conform to those used by the Colorado Breeding Bird Atlas.

*Checklist Concept*

Checklists serve two disparate purposes. One is to provide authoritative distributional data: the purpose for which Righter and Andrews sought out and used the local checklists. The second purpose is to provide information to the general public. The detailed format suggested by their article really does not serve this second purpose well.

I happened to visit a state wildlife area shortly after this article came out and listened to the manager describe the dilemma of how to format a "checklist." This manager felt that the detail proposed in the article would not serve the general public well: that group needs a concise list as a general guide, not a relatively detailed (and relatively expensive) one conforming to the proposed standards.

I also confess to having co-authored a checklist for the Chatfield-Waterton area which epitomizes the type of checklist which the authors found impossible to use. It has two components: a primary list of frequently-observed birds and a secondary list of accidentals and vagrants. I did not design the format, but I like it for use in the field. (Typically I scribble my notes on the card in the field and then transfer them to more permanent records when I get home.)

Also, I like it because the main section is uncluttered with rarities I probably won't see. This feature makes it better for informing the general public about the area's birds. It still lists the rarities, but they don't intrude on the section which guides the general public.

Different people use checklists in the field differently, too. Unlike me, many observers keep the checklists as a permanent record of their field trips instead of my (somewhat cumbersome) system of transferring them to another format later. They prefer a complete list, in A.O.U. order.

My first proposal is one regarding nomenclature. Let's call something like the Chatfield checklist simply a "Field Checklist." The kind proposed by the authors we should term an "Annotated Checklist."

The rest of these comments address the formats of Annotated Checklists.

### *Abundance*

I like the concept of standard abundance categories; I think, however, various systems need discussion before C.F.O. decides whether or not to recommend one. My thoughts on this are too muddled to write up at this point. I'd suggest that C.F.O. appoint a committee to look at various systems and to offer a recommendation for the membership or the C.F.O. board to issue as a guideline.

### *Habitats*

For the Breeding Bird Atlas we adopted habitat codes derived by a group including birdwatchers and botanists from the Atlas, Nature Conservancy, and the Division of Wildlife. These codes are used in the database of the Division of Wildlife and by The Nature Conservancy. I think consistency in habitat codes--as in abundance categories--is also important. I propose adoption of these codes for Annotated Checklists.

### *Conclusion*

I suggest that C.F.O. appoint a learned committee to address the proposal of the authors for standardization and that the committee have the authority to deliver to the C.F.O. Board of Directors a recommendation for formats for Annotated Checklists.

As part of its deliberations, the Committee would have the advantage of studying the proposed abundance system in operation in the forthcoming "Birds of Colorado," as well as those in use in other publications, and thereby to present an informed recommendation.

### *Literature Cited*

Andrews, Bob, Bob Righter, and Mike Carter. 1992. A proposed format for local bird checklists. C.F.O. Journal 26(1): 12.

NEWS FROM THE FIELD: FALL 1991 (August through November)

Coen Dexter  
3227 D Road  
Clifton, Colorado 81520

The fall migration has proven to be quite interesting except for warblers which were down in numbers as well as species. Other species, however, made up for the dearth of warblers especially in the Pueblo area and in Western Colorado.

A total of 325 species were reported in the state for the fall period. East of the Continental Divide, 304 species were found while on the west side 249 were reported. 74 species were found in the east but not in the west; 21 species were found west of the divide but not east of it.

A few of our resident species did not get reported. Game birds which are hunted during the fall should receive mention for some source. White-tailed Ptarmigan, Sage Grouse, Greater and Lesser Prairie Chicken and Sharp-tailed Grouse were not reported. Other breeding species not reported were Gray Vireo and Scott's Oriole. Maybe in the future these species should be targeted so they can also make the list.

Observers again have reported great birds without any documentation. I am not a one-man records committee so I will include all reports in this account. The C.F.O. Records Committee can sort out the reports later.

I would like to apologize if I overlooked any records I should have reported. The information I used were the reports sent to Hugh Kingery for *American Birds*. I did include August because much of that month had not been reported when Peter Gent did the summer report in the *C.F.O. Journal* 26(1). I did not duplicate Peter's information, however. This overlap will continue to be a problem with the summer and fall reports as long as *American Birds* and the *C.F.O. Journal* cover different time periods. (*Editor's Note: In the future, seasonal reports in the Journal will coincide with those in American Birds. Thank you, Coen, for pointing out this inconsistency.*)

Loons through Ibises

Twenty-one species of this group were reported. All four loon species were found. A Red-throated Loon, first ever in Western Colorado, was found at Vega Reservoir in Mesa County on October 20 and stayed over one week. Many birders saw it and Coen Dexter photographed it. A second Red-throated Loon was found at Union Reservoir on November 10 by Bill and John Prather and Joe Harrison. The day before, November 9, the Prathers saw a Yellow-billed Loon at Union Reservoir. The only Pacific Loon reports came from the Pueblo Reservoir.



A Little Blue Heron immature was reported by Mike Britten in the Castle Rock area on September 17. The other heron rarity was a sub-adult Tricolored Heron found at Hidden Lake and reported by Mark Janos. Alan Versaw saw three Green-backed Herons on August 18 just west of Grand Junction on the Colorado River.

Other observations of interest include 105 Snowy Egrets on October 6 at Union Reservoir by Mary Griest. On September 14, Ann Means reported 77 Cattle Egrets at Lower Latham Reservoir.

### Waterfowl

In the west, northern duck migration came early and in good numbers. Both east and west of the divide birders reported nearly every expected species, with a total of 29.

Tundra Swans were reported in small numbers throughout the state. The only species not reported from the Western Slope that was found in the East was the White-fronted Goose, which made a very early appearance, September 22, at Pueblo. The Watts found White-fronted Geese at Valco Ponds near Canon City for a new Latilong #26 record on November 8.

Many sea ducks were recorded in the Pueblo and Grand Junction areas. The Western Slope had 7 Greater Scaup, 3 Surf Scoters, 2 White-winged Scoters, 1 Barrow's Goldeneye, and 1 Oldsquaw all found in Mesa County except for the 2 Greater Scaup found by Vic Zerbi at Rifle Gap Reservoir. East of the divide a Surf Scoter found by Dave Silverman at Colorado City on October 31 was a new Latilong #26 record.

Several reporters mentioned the increase in Hooded Merganser numbers. A Latilong first in #10 was found by Jack Merchant on November 1.

### Raptors through Cranes

Thirty-one species in this group were reported. Big misses were the game birds discussed earlier.

Bob and Sandy Righter reported that at Heart Lake on the Flat Tops two Osprey were attempting nest building at the very late date of August 11. Mississippi Kites were reported around Pueblo area until September 28 by Silverman and Percival. A Broad-winged Hawk was seen at Lyons by D. W. King on September 19. The Red-backed Hawk was last seen October 11 near Gunnison. Will this bird return again next spring?

The Ruffed Grouse found by the C.F.O. trip is the only exciting game bird worth reporting. For details of the Ruffed Grouse read the article by Duane Nelson in the *C.F.O. Journal* Vol. 26(1).

A Whooping Crane was reported in Rio Blanco County by David Hawkworth on October 15. The Whooping Crane was flying south with 55

Sandhill Cranes. The crane is probably one of 13 from the Grays Lake population.

### Shorebirds

Thirty-two different species of shorebirds were reported. All seven plover species were found. Black-bellied plovers were found in small numbers several places east, west and in the San Luis Valley. Jack Merchant on October 29 found a Black-bellied Plover near Gypsum for a Latilong #10 first. Three Lesser Golden Plovers were located: August 25 at Cobb Lake by David Leatherman, October 21 at Union Reservoir by the Prathers, and (perhaps the best one) November 12 near Clifton by Rich Levad. This bird which has been well documented and photographed has the field marks of a *fulva* rather than the *dominica*. The *fulva* is the Asian subspecies and may be soon split from the *dominica*. This bird could conceivably become a first state record. Snowy plovers were reported many places east of the divide with a high number of 21 at Timber Lake August 25, reported by Mark Janos. Two Piping Plovers were found at Cheraw on August 13, by Dickson and Bridges. Mountain Plovers were found in good numbers of up to 100 birds at Two Buttes on September 27, reported by Janeal Thompson.

Other sandpipers were widespread. Janos counted 230 American Avocets at Timber Lake on August 25. An Upland Sandpiper was seen at the Rocky Mt. Arsenal by Larry Malone on September 9. The only Ruddy Turnstone reported was a single bird at Clifton oxidation ponds found by Dexter on September 4. Nearly a dozen reporters found Sanderlings. Semipalmated Sandpipers were everywhere. Janos found numbers in the hundreds at Timber Lake on August 8. In Mesa and Delta Counties, Levad and Dexter found eight Semipalmateds. The only Dunlin report came from Barr Lake where, on September 2, W. W. Brockner found a single bird. Amazingly large numbers of Stilt Sandpipers were reported by Janos; on August 4, he estimated 2,000 at Timber Lake. Short-billed Dowitchers were reported only from the Pueblo area where three birds were found at three locations at different times, reported by Janos and Johnson. Two Red Phalaropes were found. The Prathers found one on September 14 at Jackson Reservoir; Larry Malone found the other one September 28 at Cherry Creek Reservoir.

### Jaegers through Terns

Pueblo and Grand Junction had the good birds in this category. In total, only 16 species were reported. Jaegers started showing up around Pueblo Reservoir October 26 and stayed until November 24. Three or four birds may have been present. The action started when Brandon Percival and Van Truan reported a Parasitic Jaeger on October 26 at the reservoir. No

Parasitic was seen on subsequent visits; however, Bob Dickson found a Pomarine Jaeger on October 30, and, as other birders came for a look, a second Pomarine was located and then a third. The only other jaeger to be reported was a Parasitic on November 11 at Union Reservoir by Mark Nikas.

A few good gulls showed up this past fall. Percival reported a Lesser Black-backed Gull on Pueblo Reservoir October 26. A Western Colorado first was found by Dexter at the Clifton oxidation ponds where a first winter Glaucous Gull made its appearance on the morning of November 2. Three Black-legged Kittiwakes were reported. An immature was at Estes Park on October 25, found by Warner Reese. A second immature bird was found in Grand Junction on the Colorado River by Dexter, on November 16 and was photographed. The third bird was at Horseshoe Reservoir near Loveland, found by Bill Prather on November 30.

Sabine's Gulls were plentiful last fall. At least ten reports were sent in, including two from Clifton which were both photographed. The Sabine's Gulls signaled a gull invasion in the Grand Valley. For the next two months several hundred gulls representing eight species could be found.

Caspian Terns were reported from the Pueblo and Clifton areas. The last date was October 13. Common Terns were found at several locations. Mark Janos found six immatures on Lake Henry on September 22. The only Least Tern reported was a single bird on August 13 at Cheraw by Dickson.

### *Doves through Woodpeckers*

Three reports of Yellow-billed Cuckoos were received. On August 4, Dave Johnson found one at Rocky Ford. The second was found by David Leatherman and Joe Mammoser at Muir Springs on August 10. Dick Roth found the third bird September 20 at Pueblo.

Janeal Thompson reported the only Greater Roadrunners. The birds were in the greater Walsh area and were observed from August 13 to November 30.

Owls were found rarely except for Eastern Screech, Great Horned and Burrowing Owls. All expected owls did receive a report except for the Northern Pygmy-Owl. Flammulated Owl reports came from Fort Collins where an injured bird was found in mid-September. The other Flammulated Owl report was from Brandon Percival of a bird in the San Isabels August 16. Grand Junction had the only Western Screech-Owl report. One Boreal Owl was heard by Mary and Roy Griest October 22 at Lyons.

Of the 38 species reported in this group, Prathers found the best bird. On September 21, while at Jackson Reservoir, they found a Whip-poor-will.

The female Blue-throated Hummingbird at Kip Stransky's home in Durango stayed into September. Dexter still had Black-chinned Hummingbirds at his house until October 12 and a male Rufous stayed until October 23.

Several Yellow-bellied Sapsuckers were reported. Red-bellied Woodpeckers are still spreading north and west. Two Ladder-backed Woodpeckers were spotted in the Pueblo area. Three-toed reports were too numerous to mention.

### Flycatchers through Shrikes

Of this very large group 70 species were reported. All expected birds were found and in fair numbers.

A Least Flycatcher was reported near Longmont on September 16 by Sally Seitz. A Black Phoebe was reported by Anne Dyni November 15 at Boulder. The bird was described as eating sunflower seeds, not an easy feat for a flycatcher. A Great Crested Flycatcher was reported by Kathy Hawkins October 13 near Jefferson. Three Scissor-tailed Flycatchers were found by Mel Bird October 9 at Avondale.

Brenda Wright found the only Purple Martins of the fall season. On August 23, five birds were flying near Crested Butte.

The only Chihuahuan Raven report was of a single bird near Canon City. This report came from Percival.

The only Winter Wren reports came from John Prather. The first bird, seen September 19, was on the C.U. campus. The second was in Sunshine Canyon near Boulder on November 8.

Bob Dickson found a Sedge Wren in Colorado City. Silverman and Janos also got to see the bird as it stayed October 16 and 17.

The Black-tailed Gnatcatchers stayed until at least the first of September in Coal Canyon near Cameo.

Eastern Bluebirds were reported from many southeastern locations. Of the three reports of Brown Thrashers, the best was the bird seen on the C.F.O. fieldtrip in the northwest corner of the state in late September.

Rich Levad found two Gray Catbirds near Fruita in Mesa County on October 26 for a very late date. Mark Janos made a trip to the very northeastern corner of the state and was rewarded with very good looks at a Sprague's Pipit.

### Vireos and Warblers

The only vireo species that merits mention is the Red-eyed Vireo. There were four reports with the bird seen at Durango during the C.F.O. convention receiving the most attention. The bird was seen August 31. This vireo is rarely seen in the west.

A total of 28 vireos and warblers were reported. Warblers were not abundant but the variation in species made up some of the difference. A Golden-winged female was found at Fountain Creek by Janos on September 8. Tennessee and Nashville Warblers were reported from many areas of the state.

Northern Parulas were found on September 20 at Canon City by Sylvia Wheelock and a Colorado West first by Levad near Whitewater in Mesa County on September 1. The only Magnolia Warbler found was in the Wheatridge Greenbelt by Phil Hayes on October 26. A Cape May Warbler was found at Fountain Creek by George Maentz on November 25. Two Black-throated Blue Warblers were reported: Larry Malone had an adult male at Prewitt Reservoir on August 31 and Mark Janos found an adult male at Olive Marsh October 5. Grace's Warblers had good coverage from the West; however, a surprise report came from the Westcliffe area where one was found on August 24. Possibly the best warbler showed up at the edge of Clifton Marsh where Dexter watched a small group of warblers chasing about. Orange-crowns, Common Yellow-throats and, yes, a Prairie Warbler put on a show for 15 minutes or so on September 25. Two Palm Warblers were reported: Dave Silverman saw a bird in Pueblo on September 14 and Phil Hayes found the second bird at Cherry Creek Reservoir on October 19. The only Blackpoll Warbler was reported by Leatherman on September 5 at Dixon Reservoir. The only Black-and-white Warbler reported was seen on October 13 by Pearl Smith at Beulah. American Redstarts were reported from both sides of the divide. The only Ovenbird report was from Janos near Pueblo on September 6. Northern Waterthrush reports were from the Arkansas Valley and the Grand Valley where two birds stayed from August 18 to September 4 on the Colorado River west of Grand Junction.

### Tanagers to Finches

Of the 77 species reported under this heading, the Summer Tanager found by Jack Merchant was one of the more interesting. The immature female was found at Jack's house in Eagle on October 14. Two Scarlet Tanagers were seen: Mark Yaeger reported a male in Pueblo on August 18 and Silverman found the second bird in Rye on August 25.

One Rose-breasted Grosbeak was reported. It was seen by Wanda Griest in Lyons on September 20.

Indigo Buntings had three reports, all from the Front Range. One Dickcissel was reported on August 4 at Cheraw by Janos and Johnson.

Sparrows had a great fall. Clay-colored, Field Sparrows, Swamp Sparrows, White-throats and Harris' Sparrows all have more sightings than we have room here to write about. A White-throated Sparrow worth mentioning, however, is the one found by John Rawinski near Monte Vista which was a new record for Latilong #24. The only Cassin's Sparrow was seen August 17 at Cheraw by Silverman. Baird's Sparrow had two reports: One bird was found by Dexter in a weedy field near Clifton on September 14 after an all-night rain storm, and the second bird was found by Ruby Ebright near Salida, also in September. The only Grasshopper Sparrow reported was seen on October 6 at Minnick Marsh by Thompson. Two reports of Le

Conte's Sparrows were received. The first was October 13 when two birds were found by Janos; the second report was by Vic Zerbi from a marsh at Fort Lyons on November 24. The only Golden-crowned Sparrow was reported by Toni Brevillier near Colorado Springs. The bird was found on November 16 and was a Latilong first for #19.

All three longspurs showed up in the Pueblo area. Snow Buntings were reported near Berthoud in early November by Marilyn Meador and Bobbie Christensen.

A totally albino Red-winged Blackbird was photographed by Dexter at Clifton on November 16. A Rusty Blackbird made a rare appearance on the Western Slope at the Clifton oxidation ponds on October 31 when Dexter and Levad both studied the bird.

The only Common Redpoll was reported by Barbara Hyde on November 4 at Longmont. The only Purple Finch was reported by Thompson; a female was seen at Walsh November 20 to 25.



**Black Rail at Ft. Lyons Marsh, May 1991.  
Photo by Dan Bridges.**

## BLACK RAIL SAGA

Dan Bridges  
1925 South Vaughn Way, #207  
Aurora, Colorado 80014

There have been fewer than ten Black Rail (*Laterallus jamaicensis*) sightings in Colorado. Prior to 1991, the most recent sighting was on April 30, 1982, at Flatiron Open Space in Fort Collins by Dave Palmer.

At 5:00 p.m. on May 7, 1991, while looking for a Sedge Wren on the edge of Bent's Old Fort marsh, I heard what I thought was a Black Rail give its kick-a-doo call twice. I listened for another five minutes but heard only Red-winged Blackbirds. Was I imagining things? I returned at 9:30 p.m. intending to play my tape and expecting no response. To my surprise and delight, the Black Rail had moved 100 yards farther south into the shallower part of the marsh and was calling continuously, apparently searching for a mate. I got as close as I could and turned on my halogen light. The matted marsh grass and reeds were too thick to find the rail.

Bent's Old Fort is on the plains in southeastern Colorado on the north side of the Arkansas River between La Junta and Las Animas in Otero County. The marsh is small, covering only 40 acres. Cattails dominate the wetter part of the marsh, and marsh grass covers the shallower end. The edges are a mix of cattails and marsh grass. The elevation is about 4,000 feet. Virginia Rails, Soras, Marsh Wrens, Common Yellowthroats, and Red-winged Blackbirds regularly nest in the marsh. Black Rails are abundant at Quivira National Waterfowl Refuge in Kansas and have nested at Garden City, Kansas, according to Scott Seltman. So this Black Rail probably migrated up the Arkansas River from Kansas.

At 8:00 p.m. on May 8th, Bob Dickson, Van Truan, Brandon Percival, and Dave Silverman came from Pueblo to help me find the Black Rail which had moved 200 yards north to the edge of the deeper part of the marsh where it remained through May and June. We heard at least 2 birds and possibly 3 birds which we tried unsuccessfully to surround.

Bob Dickson made a continuous kick-a-doo tape which we planned to put on the ground in hopes that the rail would come to the tape. At 9:00 p.m. on May 11th about 15 birders gathered. We heard 1 Black Rail answer the tape but still did not see the rail.

I phoned Scott Seltman in Kansas who has had much more experience with Black Rails than I have. He explained that Kansas birders take Peterson's eastern tape with the Black Rail aggressive territorial call on it and re-record it interspersed with kick-a-doo calls and play it in the morning or afternoon. Dickson made 2 (one for himself, and one for me) 60-second continuous tape

recordings each with 2 kick-a-doo calls and 1 aggressive territorial (growl) call at 20-second intervals.

At 9:20 a.m. on May 18th, Bob Dickson placed his tape recorder with the aggressive territorial tape on the ground and covered it with reeds in a small opening at the edge of the marsh. We planned to stand about 40 feet away. Before Dickson could get back to where Van Truan, Brandon Percival, and I were standing, I saw the rail run across the opening. During the next 3 to 4 minutes a Black Rail raced across this 3-foot opening 4 or 5 times and answered the tape with both angry aggressive territorial calls and kick-a-doo calls. I thought I heard 2 different Black Rails call. We came away from Bent's Old Fort convinced that we had at least one nesting pair of Black Rails.

To minimize disturbance to nesting and to maximize the possibility of a successful Black Rail clutch, we decided to try to encourage those who wanted to see the Black Rail to come as groups. This was done on May 22 and 27. On both of these days one Black Rail gave aggressive territorial and kick-a-doo calls in response to the tape and raced across the opening. I photographed the bird with a telescopic lens on May 27th. Interestingly, 2 people showed up late on May 27 and I reluctantly played the tape again about 30 minutes later. The rail refused to answer or come into the opening. I think our voices after the first playing had scared it.

The possibility of a Black Rail invasion occurred to me. Through the month of May I played my kick-a-doo tape at 6 or 7 of the larger marshes in eastern Colorado without any response.

At noon on June 9th and 16th, I stood for an hour near the opening at the edge of the marsh where we had played our tapes and the Black Rail(s) had set up territory, hoping to see a chick come into the opening. On June 9th I could hear one Black Rail calling softly about 20 feet to the left which is where the bird usually came from and went to, so I guessed that this was the nest site. Between the 9th and 16th there were some heavy rains and the water level in the marsh rose four inches. On the 16th I thought I could hear two different Black Rails calling softly to the right which was higher ground. Since there seemed to be no chicks, I guessed that the nest and eggs might have been destroyed by the high water. I did see one Black Rail briefly on June 16th.

On June 22, Dickson played the aggressive territorial tape for some people who were unable to come in May. With considerable effort, he got only one kick-a-doo answer. The rail was not seen, so no further visits were made until August. On August 13th the cattails had grown so tall and dense, I could not find the opening where we had played the tapes. At dusk on August 25th, I walked along the edge of the marsh and played a kick-a-doo tape, but got no response.

After a mid-summer discussion with Bruce Peterman who was visiting from Maryland, Hugh Kingery (1991) concluded that: "The Black Rail which Dan Bridges found between La Junta and Las Animas had set up a territory in an Atlas block; apparently no one found a mate for this bird (or birds), and its

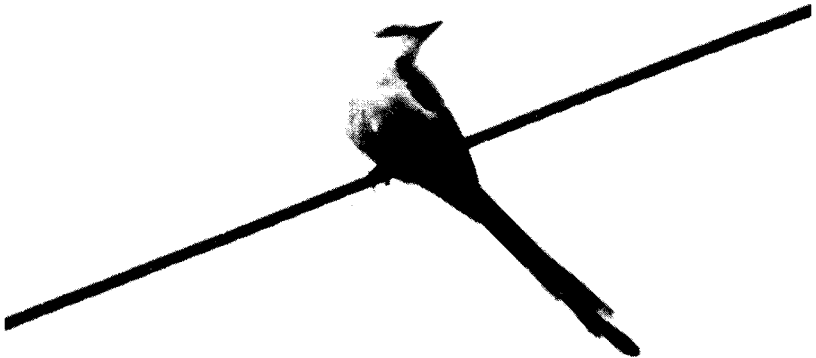


behavior corresponded purportedly to that of unmated males in the East." Bill Howe (U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Laurel, Maryland) tends to agree.

Certainly no one found a nest or saw or heard any chicks. As so often happens, whether there was a pair or pairs of Black Rails or only unmated individuals remains unknown. Some optimists think that we discovered a nesting colony which has been there for years. I don't share that view. In May 1992, we should be able to test our ideas from 1991.

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Scissor-tailed Flycatcher  
Overland Road, Boulder County, CO, June 6, 1991.  
Photo by Steve Bouricius.  
See Article on Page 76.

A NEW STATE RECORD SPECIMEN OF SPRAGUE'S PIPIT  
AT THE DENVER MUSEUM OF NATURAL HISTORY

Elizabeth A. Webb, Curator of Zoology  
and  
Allan R. Phillips, Research Associate  
Department of Zoology  
Denver Museum of Natural History  
City Park, Denver, Colorado 80205

This paper is a continuation of the series on new state record specimens in the bird collection at the Denver Museum of Natural History (Webb 1985, Webb 1989).

Dr. Robert W. Dickerman, Assistant Curator of Birds at the Museum of Southwestern Biology and Research Associate at the American Museum of Natural History, donated a state record specimen of Sprague's Pipit (*Anthus spragueii*) to the DMNH Zoology Department in October 1990. Following are the associated data:

Sprague's Pipit    *Anthus Spragueii*    Imm.?    DMNH#39897

First State Record Specimen [found dead in late summer or early fall 1982] COLORADO: [Park Co.], Lake George, (Sportsman's Paradise). Salv. Dianne Kinney (from a catkill) Accession#1990-238.

This specimen, coupled with the many historic unsubstantiated sight records and a growing number of recent well-documented sightings of this species near Julesburg, Sedgwick County, (see Bridges and Leatherman 1991; Hayes, ed. 1991), points up the need to clarify proper identification of this difficult-to-identify species with the similar Horned Lark (*Eremophila alpestris*), for which the pipit is most often mistaken. There is a lot of superficial similarity between these species and we discuss their useful and not-so-useful comparative field characteristics in this paper.

Observers often mistake Horned Larks for Sprague's Pipits. At first glance and at a distance, their general color, size, and foraging and ground-dwelling behavior are similar. Where their ranges overlap, they are commonly seen in the same general habitat. However, Horned Larks tend to be found more in flocks, while Sprague's Pipits tend to be solitary.

There is a particularly striking similarity between the adult Sprague's Pipit and juvenal Horned Lark. Observers often see only the topside of both species in the field. If the "horn" of the adult Horned Lark is not visible, the backs of adults of both species look almost identical. Both adults have pale streaks on the back and crown, but only the Horned Lark has a pinkish wash

across the nape. While both adults are streaked dorsally, the juvenal Horned Lark has a distinctly spotted back and crown. Although we have not examined juvenal Sprague's Pipits for comparison, we would not expect them in juvenal plumage in Colorado, anyway. Observers should not rely solely on color because there is individual variation and as the summer progresses, browns may fade differentially.

Usually, field observers see the upper surface of the tail with a white flash when the bird is flushing or landing. There is a basic difference in the pattern of white between the two species. The two outer rectrices of the Sprague's Pipit are largely white, and the third rectrix has white on the outer web. The outer web of the outer rectrix of the Horned Lark is white and the inner web pale. Therefore, as a general rule of thumb for distinguishing between these species, if the bird shows a large amount of white when the tail is spread, it is a Sprague's Pipit. As a cautionary note, if the bird is in molt, during late April to late May, and has dropped its outer rectrices, this characteristic may not be used. Luckily, this is not a problem during fall migration.

The contrast of the main part of the tail (dark) with the rump (pale) is similar in both species. Also, the legs of both the adult Sprague's Pipit and juvenal Horned Lark (dark in adult) are pale, so this characteristic is not helpful either. Finally, it is difficult to discriminate their bill shapes in the field, even though the bill of the Horned Lark is much shorter and deeper than that of the Sprague's Pipit.

#### ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The authors wish to thank Bob Dickerman for donating the specimen to the Denver Museum of Natural History and Bob Andrews for providing information on recent Colorado sightings of Sprague's Pipit.

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**BREEDING BIRD ATLAS UPDATE**

**Hugh E. Kingery  
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Denver CO 80206**

The Atlas has big goals for 1992. While the block coverage map looks pretty good, we still have a lot to do. To finish the project, we need to start 250 new blocks in each of the next three years, and to complete 420 in each year.

For 1992, we will try to complete one block in each quarter section of every latilong. For 1993, we will try to complete one block in each 1/16 section of every latilong.

Dan Bridges has already made his first Atlas field trip for 1992--looking for owls in South Park, of all places. He reports, "I worked on Elkhorn on Feb. 1st. Perfect night for owls, but I never heard or saw a Great Horned. So I was a bit concerned that they leave South Park for the winter. I got a Saw-whet to answer tape between Elkhorn and Milligan Lakes. On Feb. 9th, I worked on Milligan Lakes. Perfect night for owling. Saw one Great Horned in the block at 9560 feet hunting a white snowshoe rabbit.

"A pair of Great Horned were calling outside and east of the block in the evening, so Great Horned need to be counted at least to 10,000 feet. No luck with saw-whet on Feb. 9th."

We have excellent coverage in the Front Range and Grand Junction areas, but not so good in a lot of the rest of the state. The San Luis Valley has more available blocks than anywhere else. Moffat County has the least number of completed blocks--join us on the Maybell Rendezvous to find Sage Grouse, Sage Sparrows, Sage Thrashers, Bewick's Wrens, and other sagebrush specialties. Contact Hugh Kingery, at home (333-0161 or at the address above).

We always welcome new volunteers from C.F.O., and we urge already-committed Atlas field workers to do two things:

- (1) Complete the blocks which you have started--THIS YEAR and
- (2) Start at least one new block--preferably away from the Front Range or Grand Junction.

We have two new Regional Coordinators: Connie Knapp for the San Luis Valley (724 Murphy Drive, Alamosa 81101; 719-589-5075); and Dick Roth for the Arkansas River and environs from Florence to Buena Vista [1920 Valley Drive, Pueblo 81008; 719-545-8737 (work) and 545-6454 (home)].

**Vol. 26, No. 2 C.F.O. Journal April 1992**

The Atlas has scheduled the following Rendezvous weekends and we invite C.F.O. members to join us. You come, we'll furnish the food, and in some cases, a place to stay (if we're not camping). Contact the leader listed below or Hugh Kingery for details.

June 5-7: Maybell, Moffat County

John Toolen: 248-7175 (work), 245-2027 (home).

711 Independen Ave., Grand Junction 81505;

June 12-14: Disappointment Val., San Miguel Co.

Alan Versaw (565-7989); 619 Colfax, Cortez 81321; and

Ron Lambeth (243-6561, work; 245-4082 home)

624 Yucca Drive, Grand Junction 81503.

June 12-14 or 19-21: Baca County

Beth Dillon (484-2836, work; 590-2610 home)

1225 West Myrtle, Fort Collins 80521.

June 19-21 or July 17-19: Steamboat Springs area

Kent Simon (674-3017); 4440 Independence Trail, Evergreen 80439.

June 26-28: Sleepy Cat Peak, Flattops Wilderness.

Mary Cunningham (878-4039 work; 878-5417 home)

White River Nat'l Forest, 317 East Market, Meeker 81641.

July 10-12: Devils Causeway, Flattops Wilderness.

Mary Cunningham (above).

## **CORRECTIONS**

Volume 26(1) p. 29 Second Paragraph. The last two sentences should have read: My conclusion that there probably were no Boreal Owls in this high LaValley Breeding Bird block (9870 to 12,780 foot) also did not live up to popular expectations.

Volume 26(1) p. 34 Jim Karo's name was misspelled.

**C.F.O. FIELDTRIP: PUEBLO AND THE  
LOWER ARKANSAS RIVER VALLEY  
FEBRUARY 15, 1992**

**Mark Janos  
10 Sedum Ct.  
Pueblo, CO 81001**

Saturday, February 15, 1992 dawned clear, cool and promising for a late-winter fieldtrip. Eighteen birders from Denver, Boulder and Pueblo assembled at 7:30 a.m. at Highway 50 and I-25 in Pueblo. After sharing birding stories, socializing and finishing breakfast on the go, we prepared to leave for a full day afield. We set out in seven vehicles and drove east on Highway 50 towards Rocky Ford State Wildlife Area. We spotted many Red-tailed Hawks, one Ferruginous Hawk and one Rough-legged Hawk along the way.

Rocky Ford S.W.A. is about 2 miles northeast of Rocky Ford along Highway 266. The area consists of scattered trees, ponds and cultivated fields. There are groves of Russian olives and fruit trees, as well as the more typical riparian cottonwood woodland along the Arkansas River. This wildlife area is good for migrating landbirds in spring and fall. In the winter, sparrows and robins predominate. This mid-winter Saturday was no different, and in an hour we found several small flocks of sparrows. Among Rufous-sided Towhees, American Tree Sparrows, Song Sparrows, Dark-eyed Juncos and American Goldfinches, we found a Swamp Sparrow, two White-throated Sparrows and six Harris' Sparrows.

The next stops were at Holbrook Reservoir (3 miles east) and at Cheraw Lake (about 8 miles north of La Junta) where the winter ice had melted. There was a scattering of waterfowl at both lakes. These included Canada Goose, Green-winged Teal, Mallard, Northern Pintail, Gadwall, American Wigeon, Canvasback, Redhead, Common Goldeneye and Hooded Merganser. A few Ring-billed and Herring Gulls used Holbrook Reservoir. A Sharp-shinned Hawk circled high overhead near a farmhouse between the two reservoirs.

We headed to Lake Meredith next with the goal of finding Snow Geese. The ice was also gone at this large reservoir which is about 9 miles north of Rocky Ford. We quickly spotted a large raft of white geese in the center of the reservoir. Many hundreds of Snow Geese, perhaps 800 birds, milled around. We spent some time scoping this main group and picked out about a half dozen "Blue" Geese. Most of us searched unsuccessfully through the Snow Geese for any Ross' Geese. We located 6 Bald Eagles perched in scattered cottonwoods around the perimeter of the lake.

We proceeded four miles north to Lake Henry. The day had become quite warm but a stiff southerly breeze had set in. We found few birds here, either on the lake or in the grove at the north shore. However, we enjoyed a picnic lunch and a short break from birding.

Our group decided to return to Pueblo and to check Pueblo Reservoir for waterfowl and gulls. On the way back to Pueblo, we stopped just north of Highway 96 at Highway 167 (about two miles north of Fowler). A brief search here yielded two Curve-billed Thrashers and about 30 Scaled Quail in the scrubby cholla brushland.

We arrived at Pueblo Reservoir about 2:30 p.m. and headed for the south shore Marina. Our objective was the collection of gulls that use the sheltered bay as a rest area. We scoped the gulls that were lounging on the tire breakwater of the marina harbor and located a suspiciously dark-backed gull. This gull turned out to be a beautiful second-winter Lesser Black-backed Gull. Pueblo birders found this, or a similar bird, at the reservoir on January 11, 1992. It was reported sporadically in the Pueblo area since. Over the next hour and a half our group studied this gull in flight and on the surface of the water. It actively foraged in the open lake just north of the south shore Marina. Although this plumage was unfamiliar to most of us, it was quite striking and distinctive. This exciting gull afforded us excellent and varied views.

While we watched the gull, Brandon Percival spotted two distant Oldsquaws. This displaced pair of ocean ducks gradually swam closer to our vantage point. They finally flew quite close and a third Oldsquaw joined them. They afforded us excellent sunny views through our scopes. They actively fed in the deep water along the dam. Two of the birds were winter-plumaged males with dramatic elongated tail feathers.

By now it was late afternoon. What remained of our group stopped briefly at the Valco gravel ponds just east of the Pueblo Reservoir dam along the Arkansas River. We located and observed the male and female Barrow's Goldeneyes that Dave Silverman had found there about an hour before.

The day was a success. We had beautiful weather, warm companionship and a few very good birds to spice up the day. This was more than we could ask for on what could have been a barren mid-February day in southern Colorado. I thank all those who accompanied us and shared in an excellent day afield.

*SPECIES SEEN:*

Horned Grebe	Mallard	Ring-necked Duck
Clark's Grebe	Northern Pintail	Lesser Scaup
Great Blue Heron	Gadwall	<b>Oldsquaw</b>
Snow Goose	American Wigeon	Common Goldeneye
Canada Goose	Canvasback	<b>Barrow's Goldeneye</b>
Green-winged Teal	Redhead	Bufflehead

Hooded Merganser	Bald Eagle	Sharp-shinned Hawk
Common Merganser	Northern Harrier	Red-tailed Hawk
Ferruginous Hawk	Northern Flicker	Rufous-sided Towhee
Rough-legged Hawk	Horned Lark	Canyon Towhee
American Kestrel	Blue Jay	American Tree Sparrow
Ring-necked Pheasant	Black-billed Magpie	Song Sparrow
Scaled Quail	American Crow	Swamp Sparrow
American Coot	Common Raven	White-throated Sparrow
Ring-billed Gull	Black-capped Chickadee	White-crowned Sparrow
California Gull	Brown Creeper	Harris's Sparrow
Herring Gull	Ruby-crowned Kinglet	Dark-eyed Junco
<b>Lesser Black-backed</b>	American Robin	Red-winged Blackbird
<b>Gull</b>	Curve-billed Thrasher	Western Meadowlark
Rock Dove	Shrike species	American Goldfinch
Lewis's Woodpecker	European Starling	House Sparrow



Carolina Wren at Nest, Englewood, Colorado May 22, 1989.  
Photo by Hugh Kingery.



## FIRST COLORADO NEST FOR CAROLINA WREN

Hugh E. Kingery  
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Denver CO 80206

For their first known Colorado nest, a pair of Carolina Wrens (*Thrythorus ludovicianus*) picked an unkempt playhouse in a suburban Englewood backyard.

About a week before Christmas, 1988, Marten (Marty) A. Poole observed a Carolina Wren in her backyard at 3260 South Vine Street in Englewood. The bird returned 4 Jan. 1989, and Urling Kingery and I visited the yard from 0900-1000 that morning. At 0955 it came into the yard, on the ground under a feeder. It moved into a bush and then perched on the fence, subsequently hopping into the next yard, out of sight.

The bird had a rusty-brown back, strong eye stripe, buffy breast, and long tail. Its undertail had barring with black lines on white. Although the size of a junco, it had different proportions.

Other observers who came to view the bird in January saw two birds (David Martin, G. R. Schottler, pers. comm.).

The wrens stayed through the spring; in April and May, Marty Poole heard singing every morning for several weeks. She and I theorized that the birds were nesting. I prepared a flyer which described the bird for her to distribute in her neighborhood; she took it to four neighbors to alert them to the presence of these birds.

On 21 May 1989 she found the nest. Tracy Utt, who lived in the house immediately south of Marty's, saw one of the wrens, with food in its beak, go into an abandoned playhouse in her yard.

The nest was built on a shelf about three feet above the floor of the playhouse (which is about eight feet square). The shelf had two sliding doors, one of which was opened against the other. A can of paint stood at one end of the open section, leaving an opening about six inches long. The wrens had built their nest in the back of the cave formed by the doors.

The nest had one dead nestling at the front of the opening and two live ones in back, perhaps a week old. We removed the dead one (Specimen to Denver Museum of Natural History, \*). The adults, undisturbed by removal of the dead nestling, came and went freely while we sat in the back yard talking. The male occasionally sang the "teakettle" call. I took a series of photographs of the birds and the nest site.

By 30 May 1989, the birds had left the nest. On 1 June 1989, I heard the wrens singing and was allowed by Polly Lee to look in her backyard, across Vine Street from the yard with the nest. One wren perched in an apple tree and sang the "cheery cheery" song. Two adult wrens were present, and

they scolded with agitation until a Siamese cat exited from the bushes. A small peep came from an apple tree in the next yard, and I saw two adult Carolina Wrens and one fledgling; I also heard a second fledgling.

The young bird I saw had a shorter tail, a bit ragged, and a yellow lower mandible, strong eyeline, orange-rust back, clear pale buff breast. It fed on a mature cottonwood which had brown fungus-type material dribbling down from a fork; later an adult fed there.

I retrieved the nest and deposited it with the Denver Museum (\*) also.

### *Other Records*

Carolina Wrens expand and contract their range periodically. Winter weather seems like the most prominent factor in their distribution. A review of historical records in Colorado and neighboring states shows that they were in an expansion phase when the pair nested in Englewood.

Colorado: One Carolina Wren spent September to December, 1988, in Holly, Prowers County (Scott Seltman et al.), the same fall in which the wrens first appeared in Marty Poole's yard. During that winter other Denver observers noted them in three locations. One persistent bird visited Marge Armitage's yard for several months before and after this pair nested. (Martin 1988, 1989-1, 1989-2; Kingery, 1989-1, 1989-2).

The C.F.O. Records Committee shows 26 reports for the state through 1975; the data sheet does not extend beyond that date. No reports were submitted to *American Birds* from 1975 until the 1988 observations at Holly. In Spring 1989 reports came from Barr Lake and Two Buttes Reservoir (records submitted to author for *American Birds*).

Kansas: Scott Seltman (pers. comm.) reports that severely cold Midwestern winters, accompanied by heavy snowfall 1978-80, caused severe mortality to Carolina Wrens in Kansas. Only a few survived, mostly in southeastern Kansas. Beginning in December, 1985, numbers began to climb. By 1988 breeding birds had become common from Kansas City west to Manhattan and Junction City. Vagrants wandered west to Garden City and north to Hays. By June, 1989, numbers were the highest in at least thirteen years.

New Mexico: John Hubbard (pers. comm.) advises that the Carolina Wren is a rare vagrant in New Mexico, with one accepted record in 1958 and one in Carlsbad Caverns National Park from October 1987-March 1988.

Oklahoma: Joseph A. Grzybowski wrote: "Carolina Wrens are clearly common across much of Oklahoma west to at least Caddo and Comanche Counties [southwest of Oklahoma City, 98th longitude]. Their numbers dwindle further west, but likely occur regularly to the 100th meridian in southwestern Oklahoma north to about Roger Mills County [east of Amarillo, TX]. There are several records from the 1950's for Texas County in the Oklahoma panhandle.

"Because it is so common over much of the state, few Oklahoma birders pay much attention to reporting them, particularly along the western margins of their range."

\* \* \*

Marty Poole moved from her Englewood home in the fall of 1989, and no one, to my knowledge, has monitored that area to see if the wrens remained or nested again. Denver abounds with possible nest sites for Carolina Wrens (and for other rare species) which are beyond the capabilities of bird watchers to track. This single nesting pair of birds seems like an isolated instance but, in a metropolis the size of Denver, others could easily go undetected.

To Professor Ronald A. Ryder I express appreciation for thoughtful advice on improving this note over the first draft.

\* Accession and collection numbers at the Denver Museum of Natural History are not presently available.

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FOOD ITEMS OF COLORADO BIRDS (VIII)

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A general description of the format, purpose and reporting procedures for this column can be found in the introduction section of previous columns.

This edition contains mostly records for November 1991 through February 1992. Observations are mine unless followed by initials. I thank those who submitted observations.

The association between Boulder's Cape May Warbler, Silver Maple and the Yellow-bellied Sapsucker is too interesting to describe in tabular form only. I plan to write this up in a separate article for the next issue of CFO Journal.

*KEY TO ABBREVIATIONS USED:*

**Places:**

Co.	County
CSU	Colorado State University campus, Fort Collins
CVCG	Crow Valley Campground near Briggsdale, Pawnee National Grassland
FC	Fort Collins
GC	Grandview Cemetery, Fort Collins
HR	Hamilton Reservoir, Rawhide Power Plant, Larimer County
NCELC	Northern CO Environmental Learning Center, Fort Collins
RMNP	Rocky Mountain National Park

**People:**

CB	Clait Braun
AC	Alexander Cruz
MDC	M. D. Clements
JG	Jay Graham
DH	Dave Hawksworth
MH	Mona Hill
JM	Joe Mammoser
RR	Ron Ryder
JS	Jim Sedgwick
JT	Janeal Thompson
VZ	Victor Zerbi

BIRD	FOOD ITEM	LOCATION	DATE
Western Grebe	Diving for small fish (see Ring-billed Gull)	Kenney Res., Larimer Co.	4 Nov (DH)
Common Goldeneye	Crayfish sp.	Watson Lake, Larimer Co.	9 Jan
Bald Eagle (2 birds)	Mallard drake (scavenging?)	Boxelder Res#1, Larimer Co.	24 Nov (DH)
Northern Harrier	Cottontail sp. (roadkill)	HR	8 Dec
Northern Harrier	Dead Canada goose (on ice)	Wood Lake, Weld Co.	10 Jan
Northern Harrier	Skunk sp. (roadkill)	Vilas, Baca Co.	11 Feb (JT)
Sharp-shinned Hawk	American Robin	FC	20 Feb (JM)
	Joe reports watching the hawk soaring at a height of 500-600 feet, when it went into a steep dive and hit the robin as it perched in the upper branches of a cottonwood. The struggling robin brought the hawk to the ground, where the hawk's meal was promptly stolen and presumably eaten by an opportunistic Siamese cat!		
Merlin	Chasing Horned Larks	e. of Fowler, Otero Co.	26 Jan
Ring-billed Gull	Stealing fish from W. Grebe	Kenney Res., Larimer Co.	4 Nov (DH)
	Dave says the gulls were actually landing on the backs of the grebe as it surfaced from a dive and stealing its fish. This interesting episode is a case of kleptoparasitism (one organism stealing food from another). Gulls are one of the groups for which this habit is commonly reported. There are some amazing accounts in the literature of them stealing from sharks and other unlikely victims.		
Ring-billed Gull	Dead carp	Nee Noshe Res., Kiowa Co.	26 Dec (JT)
Herring Gull	Dead carp	Nee Noshe Res., Kiowa Co.	26 Dec (JT)
Glaucous Gull	Dead carp	Nee Noshe Res., Kiowa Co.	26 Dec (JT)
Eastern Screech-Owl	House finch	FC	12 Dec (CB)
Broad-t. Hummingbird	Red geranium nectar	FC	22 Aug '91 (DH)
Yellow-b. Sapsucker	Narrowleaf cottonwood sap	Poudre Park, Larimer Co.	12 Jan
Yellow-b. Sapsucker (adult)	Pinyon pine sap	Pueblo County	27 Jan

Bird utilizing the southbound Rest Area south of Pueblo on I-25.

Yellow-b. Sapsucker Scots,	Austrian & ponderosa pine sap	Boulder	Jan Feb (AC)
Two immatures, one and one were observed in the area (see Cape May Warbler)			
Yellow-b. Sapsucker	Scots and Austrian pine sap	GC	all winter '91-'92
Downy Woodpecker	Boxelder shoot borers	NCELC	8 Jan
Apparently 4th-instar (immatures between their 3rd and 4th molt) larvae of this moth borer (Proteoteras sp.) were being extracted from branch brooms (areas of abnormally dense branching) caused by the borers.			
Downy Woodpecker	Boxelder bark midges	NCELC	26 Feb
Scrub Jay	Spilled corn on highway	SR 287 n. of FC	9 Jan
Black-billed Magpie	Dead Canada Goose	Lindenmeier Lake, FC	12 Jan
Black-billed Magpie	Raccoon (roadkill)	22 m. n. of Craig	21 June '91 (DH)
Black-billed Magpie	Fish ("chub" on road)	8m w of Steambt Sprgs	21 June '91 (DH)
Fish was too large for magpie to carry so presumably it was a fisherman discard.			
Black-billed Magpie	Cottontails (roadkills)	Rio Blanco Co.	June-Nov '91 (DH)
American Crow	Dead Canada Goose (on ice)	Sheldon Lake, FC	2 Feb
This bird was very cautious in its approach to the carcass, as if it was both afraid the goose might be alive and that its theft of food might be noticed by Herring and Ring-billed Gulls nearby. It quickly pecked at the goose for a few seconds, retreated 3 feet, returned, and so on. After four or five brief sessions, it flew away.			
American Crow	Garter snake sp.	FC	6 June '91 (DH)
Black-capped Chickadee	European buckthorn fruits	GC	8 Jan
Mountain Chickadee	Breakfast sweetroll	RMNP	9 Dec
American Robin	Mountain-ash fruits	CSU	15 Jan
American Robin	Mountain-ash fruits	Glenwood Springs	all winter '91-'92
(VZ)			
American Robin	Green lacewing	FC	14 June '91 (DH)
American Robin	Lg. dragonfly (darner sp.?)	Rio Blanco Co.	10 July (JG)
Northern Mockingbird	Russian olives	Boulder	28 Dec (MH)
Northern Mockingbird	Russian olives	LaPorte, Larimer Co.	12 Jan

Cedar Waxwing	Snow on spruce branches	CSU	21 Jan
Cedar Waxwing	Mountain-ash fruits	CSU	15 Jan
Cedar Waxwing (RR)	Silver maple sap	FC	late Jan-early Feb

Northern Shrike                      House Sparrow                      Larimer Co.                      late Dec (JS)

Jim, a researcher with the US Fish and Wildlife Service, was banding birds in his rural yard east of Fort Collins. Upon retrieving a house sparrow from his mist net, he discovered its head was missing. Later observations determined the culprit to be a northern shrike operating in the area. Jim was unable to precisely determine how the predator managed to avoid getting itself caught in the net. This behavior has been reported before for shrikes.

Shrike sp.                      Impaled grasshoppers and a mouse                      CVCG    10 Jan  
Presumably the shrike was a northern, but impaled caches have been known to remain intact for long periods of time. In this case, prey were being impaled upon honeylocust thorns. (See photograph).

Cape May Warbler	Silver maple sap	Boulder	9 Feb
Cape May Warbler	Scots & ponderosa pine sap	Boulder	Jan-Feb (AC)

This warbler was first discovered by Alex coming to sapsucker sap wells on a ponderosa pine in the yard south of his own. Later observers found this warbler directly associated with sapsucker-inflicted wounds in Scots pines in the neighborhood. To my knowledge, it has not been seen at the sap wells in Austrian pine, but no doubt has done fed here also. The warbler was also observed drinking silver maple sap dripping from branches, probing silver maple flower buds and foraging on the ground (presumably for insects and other arthropods).

Yellow-rumped Warbler	Russian olive (pulp around the seed)	FC	4 Feb (JS)
Yellow-rumped Warbler	Silver maple sap	FC	late Jan (RR)
American Tree Sparrow	Wild sunflower seeds	Walsh, Baca Co.	12 Feb (JT)
American Tree Sparrow	Rabbitbrush seeds	FC	28 Jan
White-crowned Sparrow	Horseweed seeds	Walsh, Baca Co.	fall '91 (JT)

This weed, (*Conyza canadensis*), is known locally as "marestail".

Dark-eyed Junco  
Brewer's Blackbird  
Brewer's Blackbird  
House Finch  
House Finch  
American Goldfinch

Skunkbush sumac seeds  
Spilled corn on road  
Ground squirrel sp. (roadkill)  
Mountain-ash fruits  
Silver maple sap  
Rabbitbrush seeds

Horsetooth Res., FC  
e of LaJunta  
6m s. of Walden  
CSU  
FC  
FC

18 Jan  
26 Jan  
21 June '91 (DH)  
16 Jan  
late Jan (RR)  
28 Jan



**Grasshopper impaled on honey locust thorn by shrike.  
Crow Valley Campground, Jan. 10, 1992.  
Photo by Dave Leatherman.**



## A SCISSOR-TAILED FLYCATCHER IN A MONTANE MEADOW

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On the morning of 5 June 1991 I was driving on Overland Road in mountainous western Boulder County, Colorado, about 1 km east of the Peak-to-Peak Highway (Colo. 72) when I observed an adult Scissor-tailed Flycatcher (*Tyrannus forficatus*) sally from a wire and capture a moth. Its conspicuously long, deeply forked tail and buff-pink sides made for immediate recognition. The bird allowed a close approach to about five meters so that with 8x36 binoculars I could see the buff-pink extend from the sides through the undertail coverts. Its belly, breast, and throat were white. The head and back were gray with a narrow wash of black extending from the black bill through the lower portion of the black eye and beyond. The black wing and tail feathers were edged in white. The white of the outer tail feathers stopped short of the end giving the tail a pendulous appearance. While the bird was perched, a small crimson spot could sometimes be seen forward of the shoulder (Peterson 1990).

After a brief trip home to obtain camera equipment, I returned to watch and photograph the Scissor-tailed Flycatcher for more than three hours as it worked a montane meadow in the foreground of Mount Audubon. The meadow edge is comprised of open ponderosa pine forest which links a series of mountain meadow parks along the South Saint Vrain Creek at an elevation of 2597 m (8520 feet) (Mutel 1976).

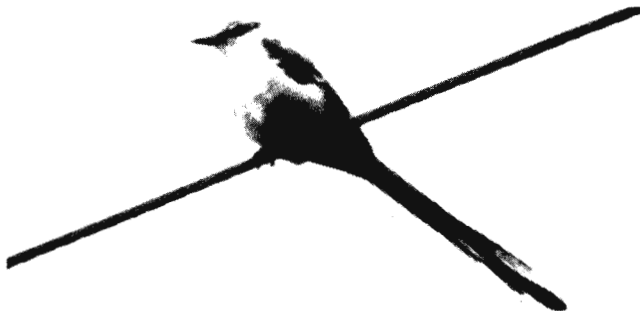
I contacted Jim Benedict, who lives nearby, and we watched the Scissor-tailed Flycatcher as it continued to forage for moths along with Mountain Bluebirds and Tree Swallows. The birds found easy prey because great numbers of army cutworm moths (*Euxoa auxiliaris*) had invaded the mountains (as Leatherman 1991, reports in his "Summary of 'Millermania'"). The flycatcher usually would sally from the treetops or a roadside powerline to capture aerial prey. Occasionally, moths were taken on the ground (Erich et al. 1988) and the bird would then fly to a low perch such as a fence, a willow, or a shrubby cinquefoil (Mutel 1976) to consume its catch. The Scissor-tailed Flycatcher was chased briefly by a male Broad-tailed Hummingbird, and in avoidance, the flycatcher performed a lateral u-turn, splaying its tail widely. The bird gave a short "kek-kek" call one time but otherwise remained silent. Jim and I followed the bird over a forested hill to another meadow where it became a new addition to the list of birds seen on the Benedicts' Sawtooth Springs Ranch.

The Scissor-tailed Flycatcher is listed as a fairly common breeder in latilong 28 where it nests along the Cimmaron River in the extreme southeastern corner of Colorado. Elsewhere, it is rare (Kingery 1988). Accidental occurrences of Scissor-tailed Flycatcher have been reported in riparian lowlands throughout much of Colorado (Bailey and Niedrach 1965; Kingery 1988), with a few records from the mountains. High altitude records are from Durango (1985 m), Eagle (2012 m), La Veta (2138 m), Monte Vista (2336 m), and Hahns Peak (2476 m), (Bob Andrews pers. comm.). At 2597 m (8520 feet), this sighting represents the highest elevation record for Scissor-tailed Flycatcher in Colorado. During the week prior to this sighting, the weather in eastern Colorado was characterized by strong south winds, severe thunderstorms, and tornados which might have influenced the movement of this bird.

I thank Peter Gent for his helpful comments on a draft of this note. I also thank Bob Andrews for his research of Scissor-tailed Flycatcher records in Colorado.

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Scissor-tailed Flycatcher  
Overland Road, Boulder County, CO, June 6, 1991.  
Photo by Steve Bouricius.



Scissor-tailed Flycatcher  
Overland Road, Boulder County, CO,  
with Mount Audubon in the background, June 6, 1991.  
Photo by Steve Bouricius.

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