

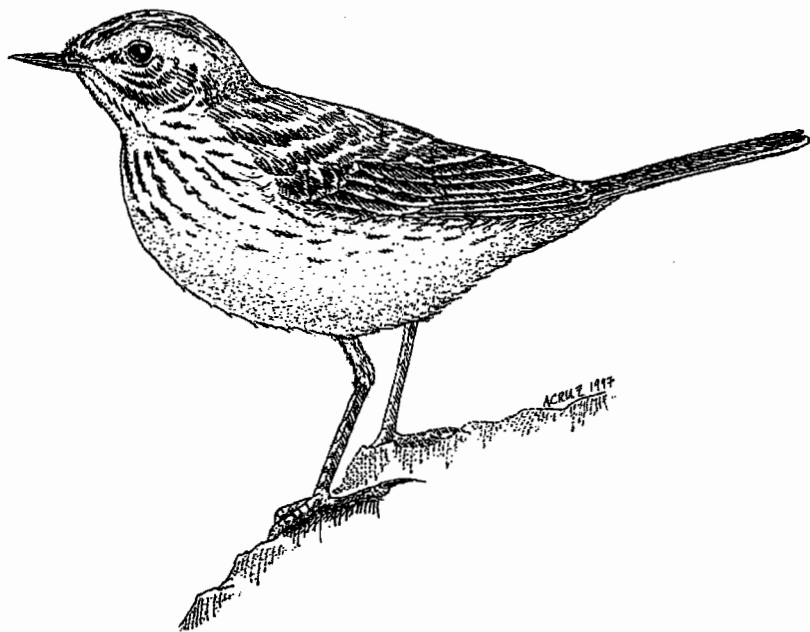
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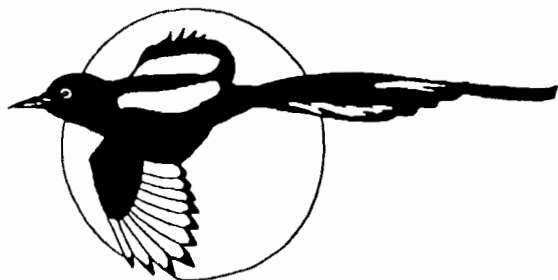
*Journal of the*

# *Colorado Field Ornithologists*

The Colorado Field Ornithologists' Quarterly

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## DESCRIPTION OF PHOTOGRAPHS AND ARTWORK

**AMERICAN PIPIT:** The talent of Alexander Cruz, Jr. brought this American Pipit (*Anthus spinoletta*) to life. He used pen and ink to create the drawing on October 8, 1997, especially for the paper on American Pipits (see page 217) by Andrew Hunter, Alex Cruz, and Jameson Chace.

Alexander Cruz.....Front Cover

**SAPSUCKER INJURY TO A SCOT PINE:** This Scot Pine is riddled with sap wells made by an unknown species of sapsucker. The tree is located outside the Colorado State Forest Service District Office in Cañon City, Colorado. The photograph was taken on June 5, 1991.

David Leatherman.....177

**VAN REMSEN:** Van Remsen at Patty Echelmeyer's house in Denver, July 2, 1996, during an interview with Patty Echelmeyer, Lynn Willcockson, and David Pantle (see article page 207). Van was in Colorado to visit family and conduct his Mt. Evans BBS route.

David Pantle.....207

**LONG-BILLED CURLEW:** On a winter trip to the Monterey Bay area of California, David Leatherman discovered this Long-billed Curlew standing on top of its own reflection. The bird was at Moss Landing, January 12, 1996.

David Leatherman.....226

\*\*\*\*\*

## CBC RESULTS REQUEST

Once again this year, Alan Versaw will be collecting as much Colorado Christmas Bird Count (CBC) data as possible with the idea of publishing results in the *Journal of the Colorado Field Ornithologists*. To this end, he asks that someone from each Colorado CBC send him a summary of the results from that CBC. Along with the species and numbers for the count, he also needs: count date, high and low temps, number of participants, party hours, party miles by foot and by car, and elevational range. Note high numbers for any species and species new to the count. Alan also may include a one-paragraph summary for each count if compilers send him workable summaries. Please send count results to: Alan Versaw, 403 Maplewood Drive, Colorado Springs, Colorado 80907-4515; or send them as e-mail attachments to: [aversaw@MCIONE.com](mailto:aversaw@MCIONE.com) (this e-mail address can receive attachments). Questions? Feel free to contact Alan at the mailing address above or by e-mail at: [aversaw@juno.com](mailto:aversaw@juno.com) (this e-mail address cannot receive attachments).

## GULL ID WORKSHOP & FIELD TRIP

\*\*\*\*\*

**When:** November 21st, 1997; 6-9:00 p.m. (workshop)

**Where:** Denver Museum of Natural History, Classroom #1

**Who / What:** Tony Leukering will lead the evening workshop and the field trip the next morning. For the field trip on November 22nd, meet at 8:00 a.m. at the boat ramp at Cherry Creek Reservoir. NOTE: there could be last minute changes in field trip plans; people planning to go on the field trip but not the workshop should call Tony to confirm field trip plans. Tony's phone # is: 303/659-4348.



## COLORADO FIELD ORNITHOLOGISTS' 1998 CONVENTION

\*\*\*\*\*

**When:** May 9-11, 1998 (MARK YOUR CALENDARS NOW!!!!)

**Where:** Lamar, Colorado

**Who / What:** John Dunn, whose book on Warblers will be in bookstores soon, is expected to be the Banquet Speaker.

In addition to the birding field trips, there will be special non-birding trips for non-birding spouses!

**VOLUNTEERS ARE NEEDED** to help with t-shirt sales and "Round-Up" for field trips (i.e., people management). Call Pearle Sandstrom-Smith for details: 719/543-6427.

### ERRATA in Vol. 31, No. 3:



Archaeopteryx lithographica

1. In the Table of Contents, change "News from the Field: The Winter 1996-97 Report (August-November)" to "News from the Field: The Winter 1996-97 Report (December-February)."

2. On page 121, change Columbia to Colombia in Dr. Ronald A. Ryder's abstract.

## NOTE FROM THE EDITOR

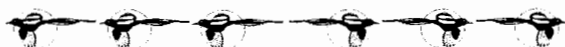
Zow! "Editing" the *Journal* has become an even bigger job than I had anticipated. There are several reasons for this, one being my attempt to bring our journal's layout process in line with what most printers now require: layout in electronic form. This also means using desktop publishing computer software (PageMaker in this case), the learning curve of which is steep! A more important reason for the hugeness of this job, however, is getting the *Journal* back on schedule so that we are legal! If the *Journal* is mailed beyond its supposed month of publication, the post office can revoke our second class mailing permit. By some rare case of institutional flexibility, we have snuck by... but this cannot continue. Also, it's important to me and the Board of the Colorado Field Ornithologists (CFO) that the *Journal* get to you on time. We are slowly getting there... thanks to the help and cooperation I have had from many individuals. I want everyone to understand, however, what it takes to make this happen.

First, I must have materials **no later** than the deadlines stipulated in the "Instructions to Contributors" section (see back cover; e.g., the deadline for submitting materials to me for the January 1998 issue is December 1st, 1997). I do not plan to change the deadlines, but keep in mind that they provide inadequate "breathing room" to edit materials, run them by the author(s) for proofing, format all materials, and put the *Journal* together in PageMaker. Pieces that need more editing and/or formatting further prolong the process. If a paper needs to go out for review, it could take up to several months! If you submit materials to someone who must then prepare something from those materials before submitting a final product to me, realize that *your* deadline needs to be adjusted accordingly. I need *at least* 60+ hours per issue (I also work full time--eating/sleeping help, too), the printer needs two weeks, CFO volunteers (many of whom also work, need sleep etc.) need at least a week to prepare it for mailing, and it takes at least a week for second class mail to "coax" it your way. Do the math! One thing that would help us get around this mathematical problem would be a file full of "future articles." Such a buffer would allow me to get ahead and trim this math problem. So, if you have that article-waiting-to-be-written, write it now and send it to me!

Ok, enough brow-beating. Now a plea... As you all know, the Library at Colorado State University (CSU) sustained unfathomable damage during the flood this summer. Estimates of the number of damaged books and journals range up to 800,000, 20% of which were completely destroyed. The remainder are being freeze-dried in hopes that they may be salvageable. If they are deemed salvageable after drying, pages must be separated, cleaned, and possibly rebound. This will be incredibly expensive, and it will be far better to simply replace both damaged and destroyed items. Therefore, CSU is accepting donations of books, full runs of journals, monographs, etc. This is where my plea to you comes in. Anything in ornithology (except the Birds of North America series) that was not checked out at the time of the flood is gone. In fact, the entire natural science collection, the collections of about eight other fields, and all

journals except those from the last 2-3 years are gone. CSU is accepting donations of books, full runs of journals, monographs, etc. to replace what they can: **call 970/491-1838 and ask for Joel Rutstein**. If you have access to the Internet, check the library flood web page to see what was lost, priorities for replacement, and instructions for making donations. The website address is: **<http://www.coalliance.org/csuflood/csuflood.shtml#story>**. For information on the tax-deductibility of your donation, consult your accountant. And thank you... if you can imagine a world without birds, you will know the impact of this loss.

Ornithologically yours,  
Cynthia Melcher



**A REVIEW OF SOME CHANGES CONTAINED  
IN THE 41ST SUPPLEMENT TO THE  
AMERICAN ORNITHOLOGISTS' UNION CHECK-LIST  
OF NORTH AMERICAN BIRDS**

Mark Janos, Chair  
Colorado Bird Records Committee  
10 Sedum Court  
Pueblo, Colorado 81001

The purpose of this article is to inform Colorado birders of some of the changes contained in the 41st Supplement (hereafter the "41st Supplement") to the American Ornithologists' Union (AOU) Check-list of North American Birds (1983). I focus on those changes that directly affect species or groups for which one or more members occur in Colorado. Sometimes I include a brief summary of the reasons for any taxonomic changes given by the AOU, but, for a more complete account, refer to the 41st Supplement itself. Literature citations in the 41st Supplement will direct the reader to the original studies.

First of all, the 41st Supplement is intended to be an outline of the changes that will be incorporated into the 7th edition of the Check-list. Of particular note to Colorado birders is the split of Solitary Vireo into three species. The state list for Colorado contains 458 species after the addition of two vireo species resulting from this split. The AOU also made changes to various scientific and common names. More far-reaching effects of the 41st Supplement are many changes in the ordinal sequences of genera and species, as well as changes in families. Such re-assignment of traditional taxonomy is based primarily on recent DNA-DNA hybridization analyses. Also, patronymic English names

that end in "s" were changed to the possessive form ("s's", as in Ross's Goose, Harris's Hawk, Lewis's Woodpecker, and Harris's Sparrow).

Other changes to the Check-list detailed in the 41st Supplement may be of interest to Colorado birders, but they are outside the scope of this article. For example, seven species were added to the AOU list as a result of new distributional information, and 10 species were added as a result of splits. A great many changes affect Neotropical species. Interested readers should read the original supplement, which appears in the July 1997 issue of the Auk.

The 41st Supplement will be the last one published before publication of the 7th edition of the Check-list (likely to be published in 1998). Although all changes became effective with publication of the 41st Supplement, they will show up gradually in new publications, reports, check-lists, etc., including reports of the Colorado Bird Records Committee. Changes in the 41st Supplement, as they relate to Colorado birds, are described here in taxonomic order. I include a few changes that should be of interest to U.S. birders but which don't affect the Colorado species list. Such changes are included, un-numbered and in order as they occur in the 41st Supplement, in brackets [like this].

1. The family of New World vultures, Cathartidae (including Turkey Vulture), was removed from the order Falconiformes (birds of prey) and placed as a family following storks in the order Ciconiiformes. This follows recent treatment by Sibley and Ahlquist (1990) and others. Based on anatomic and genetic studies, our vultures more closely resemble storks than hawks.

2. The sequence of species in Anseriformes (whistling-ducks, geese, swans, ducks, scoters, mergansers, etc.) was changed. Refer to the 7th edition of the Check-list, when it is published, for details.

[The English name of Falcated Teal was changed to Falcated Duck.]

[Masked Duck was removed from the genus *Oxyura* and placed in a monotypic genus as *Nomonyx dominicus*, which precedes *Oxyura*.]

[The scientific name of Gray Hawk was changed to *Asturina nitida*.]

3. The New World quail (Northern Bobwhite, Scaled Quail, etc.) were raised to the family Odontophoridae. This change was based on skeletal and DNA-DNA hybridization studies. Odontophoridae follow the Old World Phasianidae (Ring-necked Pheasant and Chukar).

4. The specific (scientific) name of American Golden-Plover was corrected from *Pluvialis dominicus* to *Pluvialis dominica*. This species is a regular fall migrant in Colorado.



5. Marbled Murrelet was split into two species. The old world form (previously the Asiatic sub-species) was named Long-billed Murrelet (*Brachyramphus perdix*); this is the species reported from several inland North American localities (including Colorado, where it is accidental). The northwestern U.S. species, *B. marmoratus*, retains the English name, Marbled Murrelet.

[The genus *Cyclorhynchus* is was merged with the genus *Aethia*. Thus, Parakeet Auklet became *Aethia psittacula* and is placed first in the genus.]

[Yellow-chevroned Parakeet (*Brotogeris chiriri*) was split from Canary-winged Parakeet (*B. versicolurus*). Which species has become established in which states/areas is a question that will be determined by state records committees and the A.B.A. checklist committee in the future. For a discussion of the legitimacy, establishment, occurrence, and range of these two species in North America see Smith et al. (1995).]

6. The genus for Burrowing Owl was changed from *Speotyto* to *Athene*; the specific name, *cunicularia*, remains unchanged.

7. The scientific name of Olive-sided Flycatcher was changed from *Contopus borealis* to *C. cooperi*, thus assigning the priority authority to this species.

8. The *Petrochelidon* genus was separated from and follows the *Hirundo* genus; thus Cliff Swallow became *Petrochelidon pyrrhonota* and Cave Swallow became *P. fulva*. This change means that Barn Swallow will be followed by Cliff and then Cave Swallow on the Colorado list.

[The English name of Mexican Crow was changed to Tamaulipas Crow.]

9. The genus *Parus* (chickadees and titmice) was divided into six genera to reflect a greater range of behavioral and vocal differences within this group than was recognized previously. Chickadees became *Poecile* and titmice became *Baeolophus*. Thus, Black-capped Chickadee is *Poecile atricapillus* and Mountain Chickadee is *Poecile gambeli*. (Titmice are discussed below).

10. *Parus inornatus*, Plain Titmouse, was divided into two species, Oak Titmouse (*Baeolophus inornatus*) and Juniper Titmouse (*B. ridgwayi*). This follows Carla Cicero's monograph on the Plain Titmouse, which shows that interior (Juniper Titmouse) and coastal (Oak Titmouse) populations differ genetically, morphologically, behaviorally, and vocally to a degree consistent with treating them as full species (Cicero 1996). Colorado's titmouse became Juniper Titmouse.

11. The kinglets, genus *Regulus*, were returned to the family level (Regulidae) and were removed from the family Muscicapidae.

12. Recent research shows that the Solitary Vireo complex should be treated as three separate species: Blue-headed Vireo (*Vireo solitarius*), Cassin's Vireo (*V. cassinii*) and Plumbeous Vireo (*V. plumbeus*). All three species occur in Colorado. Most Colorado birders are familiar with the Plumbeous Vireo (Rocky Mountains and Great Basin), which is a fairly common summer resident in foothills, lower mountains, and the western slope of Colorado. It is also an uncommon spring and fall migrant through the mountains and on the eastern plains. With respect to status and distribution in Colorado, Blue-headed (eastern North America) and Cassin's (Pacific coastal region) vireos are not as well understood. Blue-headed Vireo probably will prove to be an accidental to rare migrant in the eastern half of the state. Cassin's Vireo likely is somewhat more common, being a casual fall and rare spring migrant in the eastern half of the state and perhaps more common in the fall on the western slope. Because these two previously considered sub-species were elevated to species status, we may now learn their true distribution and status in Colorado. For a discussion presented in (almost) layman's terms, see DeBenedictis (1997), and, for a discussion on the field identification of these species, the reader is referred to Heindel (1996).

[The Olive Warbler, long a mystery "warbler" to systematists, was removed from its traditional place within the warbler family, Parulidae, and placed in its own unique family, Peucedramus. It is listed in front of the warblers. This was based on interesting behavioral evidence as well as morphological and DNA-DNA hybridization studies.]

13. The sequence of tanagers was changed. Refer to the 7th edition of the Check-list, when it is published, for details, as none were provided in the 41st Supplement.

[Five-striped Sparrow (*Amphispiza quinquestriata*) was placed last in the *Aimophila* genus, where it was listed prior to the 6th edition of the Check-List.]

14. The sequence of *Zonotrichia* sparrows was changed to: White-throated, Harris's, White-crowned, and Golden-crowned sparrows.

15. The sequence of *Quiscalus* (grackles) was changed. The Great-tailed Grackle now follows the Common Grackle on the Colorado list.

Birders interested in these changes and related topics should read the recurring articles -- "Gleanings From the Technical Literature" -- by Paul A. DeBenedictis and the annual "ABA Checklist Committee Reports," both of which appear in *Birding*.

In summary, Colorado birders will see two species added to the Colorado state list -- Blue-headed and Cassin's vireos -- as well as name changes and significant re-ordering of species.

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#### COLORADO FIELD ORNITHOLOGISTS' MISSION STATEMENT

C.F.O. exists to:

- ♦ promote the field study, conservation, and enjoyment of Colorado Birds;
- ♦ review sightings of rare birds through the Colorado Bird Records Committee and maintain the authoritative list of Colorado birds;
- ♦ publish the *Journal of the Colorado Field Ornithologists*;
- ♦ and conduct field trips and workshops, and hold annual conventions.

**SELECTION CRITERIA AND GUIDELINES  
FOR THE  
RONALD A. RYDER AWARD  
FOR DISTINGUISHED SERVICE TO  
COLORADO FIELD ORNITHOLOGY**

**SELECTION CRITERIA**

1. For distinguished service to the Colorado Field Ornithologists organization and its goals.
2. For scholarly contributions to the Colorado Field Ornithologists and to Colorado field ornithology.
3. For sharing knowledge of Colorado field ornithology with the people of the state of Colorado.

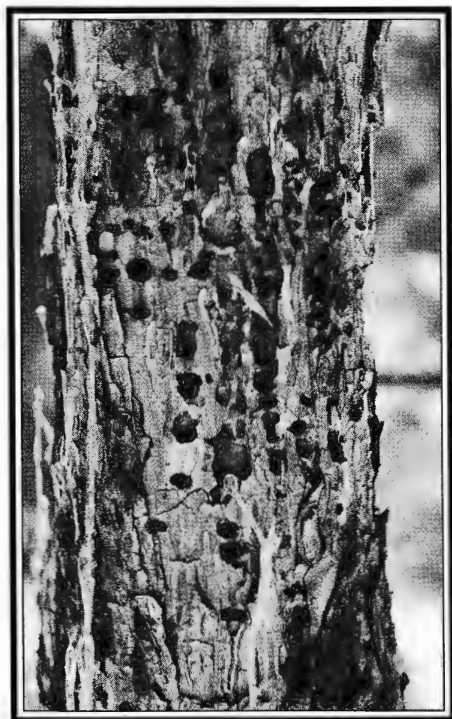
**NOMINATION & SELECTION PROCESS**

1. The Award will be given every other year, at most.
2. Only living persons may be nominated.
3. Nominations may be made by the membership at large.
4. The Board selects and approves an awardee for announcement at the Annual Colorado Field Ornithologists' Convention during the year a recipient is chosen.
5. The Award will be a plaque designed to match the original plaque given to Dr. Ryder.
6. Nominations should be submitted in writing to the Award Committee Chairperson on or before February 1 of even-numbered years to be considered by the Field Ornithologists' Board of Directors.

Submit nominations to Award Committee Chairperson:

Warren Finch  
455 Dover Street  
Lakewood, Colorado 80226-1147  
E-mail: purpfinch@aol.com

Injury Caused to a Scot Pine by an Unknown Species of Sapsucker,  
Colorado State Forest Service District Office, Cañon City, June 5, 1991  
by D. Leatherman



## **HOW TO FIND A WINTER SAPSUCKER**

David Leatherman  
612 Stover Street, #7  
Fort Collins, Colorado 80524  
970/416-0193

Three species of sapsuckers -- Williamson's's, Red-naped, and Yellow-bellied -- have been found in Colorado in winter. By far the most expected is the latter. However, few records have been documented. All sapsuckers found in Colorado between the months of November and March are worthy of a write-up, if only to clarify their status and force critical identification.

Sapsuckers, at least certain individuals, can be very wary and difficult to observe. A wintering sapsucker, however, is likely to be present in a local area

for several weeks to five months. The nature of their sustenance can provide the diligent bird-sleuth enough evidence to find them.

Try the following techniques.

1] **FIND THE RIGHT HABITAT.** In Colorado, the great majority of winter sapsuckers seem to prefer conifers. Pines are favored, particularly Scot, Austrian, and ponderosa pines. Occasionally, a wintering sapsucker in Colorado will use junipers (including Eastern redcedar) or deciduous trees. Among the deciduous species I have observed them using are American linden, Siberian elm, cottonwood, green ash, honeylocust, and walnut. Note that the trees used by breeding sapsuckers often are an entirely different mix of species (alder, aspen, willow, etc.).

Just as maple syrup producers tap many trees, so do sapsuckers -- they seem to require a large number of trees. A sapsucker may spend the majority of its time in a single "headquarters" tree, but this tree is almost always in close proximity to dozens of similar trees that it visits as well. Sapsuckers seem to require fairly mature trees. The chosen trees are usually in tidy groves or dense clumps, often with the crowns touching. Look in city parks, cemeteries, older residential neighborhoods, and windbreak plantings. Thus, the proper search image is clusters of old, long-needled pines (totaling 10-100 trees), mostly devoid of lower limbs, scattered over an area the size of a football field.

2] **LOOK FOR SIGNS OF SAPSUCKER ACTIVITY.** Sapsuckers "suck" sap. More correctly, they lap it with their tongues. To do so, they chisel holes in the bark in a characteristic pattern of rows (see photo above). These so-called "sap wells" are unlike holes made by any other animals, be they birds, mammals, or insects. Other woodpeckers extract insect prey from under the bark, but the resultant holes are widely spaced, ragged, and not arranged in rows. Gnawing by mammals involves incisors, which create long scrapes. When insects create holes in the bark to lay eggs or exit from within the bark, often the holes are perfect little circles, ovals, or half-moons. Upon close inspection, they are obviously the work of small, delicate jaws. Only rarely are they arranged in any kind of pattern.

Sap moistens the interior of, or flows from, fresh sapsucker holes. Other woodpecker holes are usually dry. Insect holes may or may not be moist. Note that a small, newly formed sapsucker well that has stopped flowing often will be reworked along its top edge, occasionally several times. A large, reworked well has a unique squarish shape (see photo).

Thus, sapsucker hunters should look in the right habitat for trees with patchy rows of holes marking the trunk. Often the sap wells are concentrated on

certain trees, and only on certain sections of those trees. Look first at mid-trunk. There seems to be no preferred directional orientation, although sapsuckers like to work and rest on the side away from disturbance. Walk under suspect trees and check each trunk with binoculars. Look from eye level up to where the trunk narrows to 4-5 inches, or where it disappears amid the foliage and upper branches. In late winter, much hole-making may be conducted in the upper trunk and be quite difficult to observe. Change your position and look at the trunk from two or three angles. If you see a few patches of holes arranged in rows, and see more than five or six trees like this within a particular grove, you are likely in a place where a sapsucker is spending or did spend a winter.

**3] DETERMINE WHETHER THE SAPSUCKER ACTIVITY IS OLD OR NEW.** Old sap wells are black or gray, and they are characterized by hardened pitch or no pitch at all. Fresh wells are brown or tan. Freshly excavated bark is reddish-brown and forms the edge of the well. Newly exposed inner bark or wood is pale brown. The sap on a newly worked well pools in the hole, flows down like clear syrup, and glistens. With a little practice, checking sap wells will enable a detective to “sense” when the maker is in the area. Remember that other woodpeckers and small birds, such as chickadees, will peck at the sapsucker wells. Researchers even speculate that the timing of migration for certain species, such as hummingbirds, may be influenced by the availability of sapsucker-induced sap flows. Fox squirrels and other mammals also nibble at the sap and edges of the wells. Even if these “moochers” are the ones making certain wells look fresh, their interest indicates that a sapsucker is probably near.

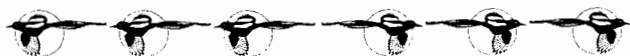
**4] LISTEN FOR SAPSUCKER NOISE.** Sapsuckers make three common sounds in winter.

The pecking noise made during sap-well excavation (or the reworking of old wells) consists of fairly loud, unevenly spaced taps. Each peck is usually distinct from the others and not part of the “machine gun” sound of territorial drumming, as may be heard in the late winter from flickers and downy woodpeckers.

As a sapsucker inches its way around the trunk, its claws make a squirrel-like scratching sound. If you are standing in a grove of trees that you strongly suspect harbors a sapsucker, this may be the only sound you hear. If you are close, the sapsucker likely will move around to the side of the trunk away from you. This sound pushes the limits of human hearing.

Lastly, the call of the sapsuckers is a "mew," somewhat reminiscent of a cat or catbird. In winter, however, they rarely call, and certain individuals seem to pass the winter silently. Freshly arrived birds in late fall and birds about to migrate in early spring may be more vocal.

**SUMMARY.** Look in the right kinds of trees for patches of ordered holes that indicate recent activity. Listen for characteristic sounds. Check out any bird you see "slipping out the back door" and flying off from suspect trees. (Look first at the wings -- sapsuckers have big, white wing patches.) Be persistent. If your search begins in November, remember you have weeks, probably months, to check an area. If you have not found one by early March, start thinking about warblers. If you are successful, congratulations! Remember to document and submit your find on a sight record form for rare birds (see the centerfold, this issue). If you want a real challenge, try getting good pictures of the bird's facial pattern, back, and nape to help document the species. Good luck.



**MINUTES OF MEETING OF BOARD OF DIRECTORS  
COLORADO FIELD ORNITHOLOGISTS  
SEPTEMBER 20, 1997**

Mona Hill, Secretary  
3410 Heidelberg Drive  
Boulder, Colorado 80303

The Board of Directors of the Colorado Field Ornithologists met on September 20, 1997 from 10:30 a.m. to 2:00 p.m. at the People's Clinic, 3305 N. Broadway, Boulder, Colorado. Present were Leon Bright, Raymond Davis, Warren Finch, Bill Fink, Mona Hill, Cynthia Melcher, Suzi Plooster, Pearle Sandstrom-Smith, Alan Versaw, and Linda Vidal. Bob Spencer, Brandon Percival, Mark Janos, and Steve Bouricius were absent.

1. Until the final board member arrived, there was not a quorum present and it was feared that this meeting, like the May meeting, would not be official. Upon arrival of the necessary number of Board members to form a quorum, it was moved, seconded and approved to change the Bylaws (II. Board of Directors 4. Quorum) to read: At any meeting of the Board, a quorum shall consist of at least five members of the Board.



2. Linda Vidal will write to Board members who do not regularly attend board meetings.
3. Minutes from the March 8, 1997 meeting were approved.
4. Although Bob Spencer was not present, he had sent the Treasurer's report: savings account total \$10,986.68 and checking account \$5516.37, as of September 18, 1997. It was moved, seconded and approved that the Board supported Bob's suggestion of opening a certificate of deposit for \$10,000 at the bank of his choice, for a period not to exceed 91 days. Bob requested help with writing a proposed budget for next year; Raymond Davis and Leon Bright agreed to help.
5. The secretary, Mona Hill, reported that the *Journal's* ISSN number has been changed to 1094-0030 by the Library of Congress.
6. Committee Reports
  - a. Bird Records Committee. No report given.
  - b. Checklist Committee. Suzi Plooster reported on continuing negotiations with ABA for reprinting the checklist once the 7th edition of the AOU checklist is published and taxonomic changes are known. Currently, the understanding is that ABA would print and distribute the checklist, paying CFO a royalty, but control of the contents will remain with CFO. ABA further proposed adding a fourth, tear-off panel to the checklist giving information about CFO. The consensus of the Board was that Suzi should continue working with ABA to have the checklist republished. The checklist committee will write the information to be included on the tear-off panel.

Suzi will check again with Bob about printing labels to cover outdated information on the current brochures.
  - c. The *Journal of the Colorado Field Ornithologists* Committee reported that follow up is still needed with Colorado Bird Observatory to confirm that abstracting is occurring. Linda has written to members of academia in Colorado requesting articles.

Cynthia and Mona were authorized to work with Colorado State University to replace *Journals* lost in the July flood.
  - d. The Ron Ryder Award Committee Chair, Warren Finch, will ask Karleen Schofield to replace Margaret Elliot, who is moving out of state. Nominations for the Ron Ryder Award should be sent to Warren at 455 Dover Street, Lakewood, CO 80226.

e. The Membership Committee reported that nonrenewing members have been deleted from the mailing list.

f. The Field Trip Committee discussed the need for liability insurance to cover field trip participants. Leon and Linda will look into policies available. Problems of sparse attendance and of publicizing the field trips in a timely manner were discussed. Topics included the need for a newsletter, inclusion in local birding organizations' publications, posting trips on COBIRDS, and encouraging members to mark their own calendars for trips published in advance in the *Journal*. It was agreed that no trips after the Gull ID workshop and field trip in November would be scheduled until the insurance issue is settled.

g. The Convention Committee reported on the details for the convention in May, 1998. The location will be in Lamar, with plans to invite the Kansas, Oklahoma, and New Mexico societies. Pearle is looking into having a t-shirt designed especially for this convention and having activities planned for nonbirding attendees. Publicizing the convention with a mailing separate from the *Journal* is being considered.

h. The Nominating Committee chair, Warren Finch, will ask Karleen Schofield to join this committee as well.

## 8. Old Business

a. It was moved, seconded and approved to elect Alan Versaw as vice president.

b. Follow up on Uncover, an on-line service, was postponed.

c. Linda presented further information on Kansas Ornithological Society's business manager position. It was felt by the Board that all duties of their business manager are being conducted by current board members, with the exception of legal advice. As no current board members are lawyers, creation of a Board position requiring legal skills was not felt to be warranted at this time.

## 9. New Business

a. Creation of a Web page was discussed. Suzi presented information about an Internet directory page that gives information about birding organizations in Colorado. She will look into adding CFO to that page.

Cynthia Melcher will check with Rachel Kolokoff about creating a CFO web page and will present the information once ongoing costs can be estimated.

- b. Environmental Updates: The need to help fund an environmental lobbyist to the state legislature was introduced and discussed. No consensus was reached.
10. The next Board of Directors meeting is scheduled for Saturday, November 22, 1997, at the People's Clinic in Boulder, from 10:00 to 2:00.

Respectfully submitted,  
Mona Hill



**A REVIEW OF THE SECOND EDITION OF  
*A GUIDE TO THE NESTS, EGGS, AND NESTLINGS OF NORTH  
AMERICAN BIRDS*  
by Paul J. Baicich and Colin J. O. Harrison**

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While hiking in Rocky Mountain National Park (RMNP) this summer, I found a nesting flycatcher. I wasn't sure which species it was, but while it was off feeding, I took some time to study it's nest. I began wondering whether nests could help identify individual flycatchers, and, after I got home, I dug in to do some research. Soon, I was disappointed to find that no book on my shelf provided any great detail about the nests of birds. After searching the web for some reference to this topic, I finally found *A Guide to the Nests, Eggs, and Nestlings of North American Birds*, second edition, by Paul J. Baicich and Colin J. O. Harrison. Academic Press was about to release it in paperback, so I ordered it.

In the meantime, I e-mailed Tony Leukering. He and his staff had been mist-netting birds in RMNP near the site of the mystery flycatcher, so I gave a general description of the nest location, hoping that he would find it and make an identification for me! I got my answer from Tony long before the book arrived in the mail!

When it did arrive, I found the second edition of *A Guide To The Nests, Eggs, and Nestlings of North American Birds* chock full of information. It provides a guide to the breeding biology of 669 species covering a vast area from the Arctic to the southern boundary of the United States.

The first edition of this book, written by Colin Harrison, was published in 1978. The new edition is expanded and more detailed. There are more line drawings and the color plates are all located in the same section, making it easier to locate a particular illustration. It follows the 1983 American Ornithologists' Union Checklist and subsequent taxonomic modifications published in the supplements up to the time of publication.

The text begins with a much-needed warning about the vulnerability of nesting birds. This caution, which all birders should take to heart, is a plea to "...disturb as little as possible: preferably examine nests only when the owners are absent; be as quick as possible; and at all times exercise the greatest care and caution, remembering that a little carelessness can bring about the accidental destruction of nest and brood."

The introduction contains information worth reading prior to beginning the quest of nest identification. It gives descriptive, generalized information for: nest habitat, site and breeding system; nest and nest building; breeding season; clutch size; egg shape and size; eggshell color (normal and abnormal); incubation; hatching; the nestling; nestling period; nest-finding techniques and field behavior; and nest recording and monitoring schemes.

Following the introduction, there are three identification keys: nests; eggs; and young nestlings and chicks. These keys are not meant to guarantee certain identification, but they should help narrow down the possibilities. The keys can be confusing, however, and it may be necessary to spend time studying them in order to grasp the complexities of their use. Once understood, the keys should at least help to steer the observer in the right direction.

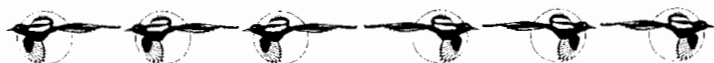
I found the main text of the book concise and easy to follow. If you find a nest and think you know which species it belongs to, this is the place to start. It is organized systematically, and families or allied species are grouped into sections. Each section begins with information common to all the species in that section. Then there is an account for each species with information on: breeding; type and typical location of the nest, including material that may be used in nest building; breeding season; eggs; incubation; nestling; and nestling period.

There are many well-done illustrations, and all nests are represented by line drawings. However, the book does not include drawings of nests for every

species. The authors state that the nests shown "...have been chosen to show typical nests of the various groups of birds." I would like to have seen more nests depicted, as this is usually the most obvious and common item to be identified. The color plates are very well done; they show young birds from the side, as well as examples of eggs for almost every species included in the book.

This is a beautifully done book and well worth adding to your birding library, but would it have helped me identify my mystery flycatcher? Probably not! However, after reading through this book, I now know more about what to look for and perhaps I will be able to make the next identification myself.

And by the way, it was a dusky. Thanks Tony!



## **LOGGERHEAD SHRIKES IN EASTERN EL PASO COUNTY 1992 - 1997**

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### **Introduction**

In the spring of 1992, I began a banding / observation study of Loggerhead Shrikes (*Lanius ludovicianus*) in eastern El Paso County, Colorado. The study area is approximately 200 square miles, bounded by Highway 94 on the north, Squirrel Creek Road on the east, Myers Road on the south, and Peyton Highway on the west. Mountain Plovers, Burrowing Owls, Prairie Falcons, Golden Eagles, Swainson's Hawks, countless Lark Buntings and, infrequently, Long-billed Curlews also inhabit the area.

### **Methods**

On average, I visited the area for observation approximately eight times per year, concentrating my banding activity in spring and late summer during migration, when shrikes are caught most easily. During the breeding season, they become very secretive and wary. I captured shrikes by using a modified Potter trap baited with a small mouse. Upon finding a shrike perched alongside the road, I would place the trap on the roadside by reaching through the car

window, then drive the car away for a reasonable distance and observe the results.

### **Results and Discussion**

A few Loggerhead Shrikes usually overwinter in eastern El Paso County, but the number of birds start increasing in late March with the arrival of spring migrants. Nest-building progresses quickly, and egg-laying peaks during the third week of April, at about the same time that Mountain Plovers begin incubation. Clutch sizes ranged from 5-7 eggs, and I found reproductive success to be comparable with that described previously by other Colorado researchers (Porter et al. 1975), with 2-4 young fledging from successful nests.

Early in the study, it became apparent that one particular part of the study area--the southeast corner of the intersection of Dearing and Myers Roads (herein referred to as the Dearing section)--was a magnet for shrikes. The density of shrikes in that square mile almost gives the impression that it is a colony. What makes this little plot so special is the presence of isolated trees, primarily Siberian elms (*Ulmus pumila*) and cottonwoods, and short, cropped grass alongside the dirt roads and barbed wire fences. The elms in this particular area grow as small, compact, shrub-like individuals, some of which stand alone. These short, isolated trees seem to be the habitat of choice for most breeding shrikes. (Although a row of elms stands on the south side of Myers Road between Squirrel Creek and Dearing Roads, it seldom attracts any breeding shrikes.)

In 1992, 1993, and 1994, I consistently found at least two active nests in the Dearing section. I was usually able to find the nests of one known pair near the intersection of Dearing and Squirrel Creek Roads. In 1995, this pair lost their first nest in April to cold, wet weather. I found the nest nearly intact, but with the eggs half buried in sagging nest material. The pair renested, but on May 20 I found that the second nest had been destroyed during the previous week's cold, hard rain and hail. The new nest had apparently filled with water, buckled outward and spilled the eggs onto the ground. During subsequent visits in May and early June, I found no signs of further nesting activity by this pair. To my great surprise, however, I found them feeding two fledglings in late July! I had missed that third nest, but it was the one that worked!

In the spring of 1996, I found only three shrikes in the Dearing section. In fact, shrike numbers were down across the entire study area, and young birds were hard to find. Throughout the duration of my study, overall shrike numbers hit their lowest point in 1996.

In the spring of 1997, however, I found **six** active shrike nests in the Dearing

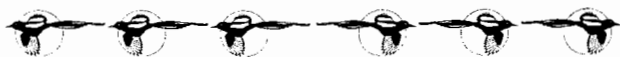
section, and I visited that area as often as I could to record nesting success. By late May, all six nests had produced young, without a single nest lost to weather or predators. Two nests produced two young, three produced three young, and one pair brought off four youngsters. Even more remarkable was the attempt of at least two pairs to renest and produce a second brood. In late June, I captured two adult females in the Dearing section; both birds were *in the company of their fledglings*, and *in breeding condition* (brood patches edematous, indicating incubation activity). While I had read about this in the historical literature, it was the first time in six years that I had been able to document birds attending fledglings *and* incubating eggs simultaneously.

### Conclusion

From 1992 through 1997, Loggerhead Shrikes in eastern El Paso County have exhibited wide population fluctuations and breeding success. I plan to continue studying the Dearing section shrikes. It will be interesting to see how the great breeding success of 1997 affects the population in of this little square-mile area during 1998.

### LITERATURE CITED

Porter, D. K., M. A. Strong, J. B. Giezentanner, and R. A. Ryder. 1975. Nest ecology, productivity, and growth of the Loggerhead Shrike on the shortgrass prairie. *The Southwestern Naturalist* 19:429-436.



## BLACK SWIFT (*CYPSELOIDES NIGER*) COLONY AT RIFLE FALLS

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On the evening of July 29, 1997, Raymond Potter, Emily Wortman-Wunder, and I visited Rifle Falls, where we observed Black Swifts roosting and entering potential nest sites. The falls are located on East Rifle Creek at Rifle Falls State Recreation Area in Garfield County (T4S, R92W, NE1/4 Section 27). The elevation of the falls is approximately 6,800 feet. Previously recorded nesting sites used by Black Swifts in Colorado had ranged from 7,200 -11,500 feet in elevation (Knorr 1961). Also, until our trip to the falls, only three Black Swift colony sites had been documented on the surrounding White River National Forest Districts.

We positioned ourselves as close to the falls as possible while maintaining a maximum view of the sky, the waterfalls and associated spray zones, and the immediate flyway before the falls. The sky was partly cloudy and the sun set at approximately 2030 hours (8:30 p.m.). At 2020 hours, a swift circled the area in front of the falls several times, then flew directly into the upper 1/3 of the middle segment of the falls. A few minutes later, a pair flew in and circled the falls several times, flying in and out of the falls area in close formation at high speeds. Marin (1997) described these aerial maneuvers as "pair chases." The pair eventually roosted on the limestone wall east of the falls along the outside edge of the spray zone. At 2100 hours (9:00 p.m.), Black Swifts were still flying in and out from a mossy shelf under the west segment of the falls, but darkness prevented further observation of swift activities. We had observed up to five individuals flying at one time, and we estimate that the size of the Rifle Falls colony is 3-5 pairs.

The Black Swift, designated as a sensitive species by the US Forest Service and a species of management concern by the US Fish and Wildlife Service's Office of Migratory Bird Management, has very specialized nesting requirements. Rifle Falls provides all five habitat characteristics that they require: water, high relief, inaccessibility, unobstructed flyways, and darkness (Knorr 1961, 1993). The perennial flow of East Rifle Creek, which is trisected by limestone channels, leaps over the vertical canyon wall in three cascades and plunges 60-70 feet. The travertine formation provides many ledges, overhangs, and crevices for nesting sites. Within the extensive spray zone, multicolored moss species afford abundant nesting material and give the area a tropical feel. From the walkway above the falls, a clear flight path to and from the falls is visible over the riparian canopy, which conceals East Rifle Creek within narrowleaf cottonwoods, box-elders, hawthorns, and chokecherries. The roost sites we observed were covered by overhanging rock, concealing them from the overhead view. The northern aspect and curvature of the canyon walls keep the falls well shaded.

Although the vertical, slippery rock made it impossible to examine the roosting sites more closely to confirm the presence of nests, the fact that Black Swifts were roosting there is excellent evidence of probable nesting. It is typical for pairs to roost together at night, with one adult roosting on the nest while the other adult roosts next to the nest (Owen Knorr, pers. comm.). Marin (1997) noted adults roosting on the nest for the first half of the nestling period.

To reach the falls, exit I-70 at Rifle (exit #90). Take US Hwy. 13 north out of Rifle toward Meeker. About three miles north of Rifle, turn right on Hwy. 325. Drive 9.8 miles to Rifle Falls on Hwy. 325. Rifle Falls is five miles beyond Rifle Gap State Park. The falls are within 200 yards of the parking



area and are wheelchair accessible. Nesting chronology for Black Swifts in Colorado (Knorr 1961; Sue Hirshman, unpubl. data) suggests that the birds will be present at nesting sites from July through mid September. Swift activity is concentrated during the hour before nightfall and after first light.

The Rifle Falls Recreation Area has 11 drive-in and seven walk-in camping sites. The drive-in sites will accommodate tents, trailers, motorhomes, and pickup campers. Campsites may be reserved in advance. Visitors to Rifle Falls are required to display a current Colorado State Parks Pass on the vehicle windshield.

### Literature Cited

- Knorr, O.A. 1961. The geographical and ecological distribution of the Black Swift in Colorado. *Wilson Bulletin* 73:155-170.
- Knorr, O.A. 1993. Black Swift (*Cypseloides niger*) nesting site characteristics: Some new insights. *Avocetta* 17:139-140.
- Marin, M. 1997. On the behavior of the Black Swift. *Condor* 99:514-519.



### The Patient Pelican

The gift of extended warm  
into the snow season  
adds weeks to a white life,  
I, an innocent pelican,  
left by chance  
in a lake growing more cold.  
And the fish withdraw beyond reach  
as my energy slips  
through November.  
And now, mid December, the freeze  
and I sit on a beaver lodge,  
hungry, weak  
waiting for the fish to come back  
from below their glassy lid.  
and I wait,  
I wait,  
wait,  
...

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US Geological Survey, Biological Resources Division  
4512 McMurry Avenue  
Fort Collins, Colorado 80525

## NEWS FROM THE FIELD: THE SPRING 1997 REPORT (MARCH - MAY)

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This was an outstanding spring period. The highlight is without question the state's first Tufted Duck, which was found in March by Myron Plooster at Sawhill-Walden Ponds in Boulder. Then, amazingly enough, a second bird was located in Denver in April. Many other great birds were found. Two Cerulean Warblers and a Connecticut Warbler were among the best. By the time June rolled around, **36(!)** species of warblers had been seen within our borders. Southeastern Colorado enjoyed most of the warbler good fortune, with Lake Henry being especially productive. Birders farther north had to work pretty hard to turn up good birds. Blue-winged Warblers, Yellow-throated Vireos, and Northern Parulas were seen in relatively huge numbers. Dunlins, Whimbrels, Broad-winged Hawks, and Lesser Nighthawks were numerous, as well. A few species, such as Ovenbird, Hermit Thrush, and the *Spizella* sparrows were more scarce than usual, it seemed.

The information in this report was either forwarded to me by the Audubon Society Field Notes regional editors (Brandon Percival and Van Truan), or sent directly to me by the observer. Please note my new e-mail address and feel free to send your sightings to me that way. Thank you all for your submissions.

Note: The Colorado Field Ornithologist's Records Committee would like to see documentation provided for those species which I have underlined in this report. I will note documentation that I am aware of by putting an asterisk (\*) next to the documenting observers initials. If I am not aware of documentation, then I will denote this by putting an **<ND>** (meaning no documentation) symbol following the observation.

Abbreviations used: Co.=county, CG=campground, CVCG=Crow Valley Campground, f.w.p.=first winter plumage, FLWE=Fort Lyons Wildlife Easement, imm.=immature, LCCW=Lamar Community College Woods, Res.=reservoir, RFSWA=Rocky Ford State Wildlife Area, SP=State Park, SWA=State Wildlife Area, VPSWA=Valco Ponds State Wildlife Area (in Pueblo), vs.=versus

**Red-throated Loon:** One was found on 5/10 at the fish hatchery ponds just south of the South Platte River near Snyder (DAL, JM) <ND>. Another was seen at John Martin Res. on 5/10 (SD\*, RB).

**Common Loon:** A high count of 16(!) was registered at Highline Res. in Mesa Co. on 4/5 (RL).

**Western Grebe:** Jack Merchant reported that there were more of this species in the Eagle area this year than in any other since 1985. Supporting evidence came from elsewhere in the west when 200+ cruised Blue Mesa Res. on 4/17 (KP).

**Clark's Grebe:** On 5/25, this species outnumbered westerns (50+ vs. 10) at the Russell Lakes in the San Luis Valley on 5/25 (RAR).

**Neotropic Cormorant:** One was reported flying over Dinosaur Ridge during the hawkwatch on 4/23 (BSt) <ND>.

**American Bittern:** Thirteen individuals were reported this spring, with the highest count being three heard by Joe Himmel between Beebe Draw and Milton Res. on 5/14.

**Least Bittern:** One was reported by the Boulder County Audubon Society in May, but I have no further details.

**Great Egret:** One was seen west of Masters on 5/4 (DCE, WPL) and another was near there at Riverside Res. on 5/20 (DAL, DCE). On 5/8, one was west of La Junta (SD). In the west, singles were found near Craig on 5/7 (FL) and west of Loma in Mesa Co. on 5/18 (PLa). One was at Alamosa on 5/21 (TL). The species has bred near Boulder and two birds were reported near there, one at Boulder Valley Farms on 5/8 (JFB) and one near Niwot on 5/22 (JLF).

**Snowy Egret:** There were a smattering of reports in the east as usual. The best record of the spring was of a bird at Dotsero on 5/3 and 5/8 (JMe).

**Cattle Egret:** The first reported were eight at Lower Latham Res. on 4/19 (JH). Lone wanderers turned up at Lake Estes from 5/5-7 (SR, JR, JFB) and at Harvey Gap in Garfield Co. on 5/10 (KP), where they are rare. Twelve were seen from 5/6-24 in the west-central region (RL).

**Green Heron:** There were an encouraging six reports of the species from 5/8-25.

**Glossy Ibis:** One was carefully identified about 5 miles west of Las Animas on 4/26 (MJ\*, BKP).

**White-faced Ibis:** A very healthy count of 400-500 individuals was made on 4/1 at Highline Res. in Mesa Co. (RL). Twenty-eight at Lake Estes on 5/1 (SRa) was locally impressive. A lone bird at Sawhill-Walden Ponds in Boulder on 5/28 (BTw) seemed late.

**Trumpeter Swan:** Reported during the winter period, one persisted at Boulder Valley Farms until 3/7 (WHK\*, mob).

**Mute Swan:** Yet another for the records committee, one was at Connected Lakes SP on 5/25 (RL) <ND>.

**Greater White-fronted Goose:** Three were seen at Jumbo Res. on 3/2 (DAL, JM, JH, WPL). Seven were near Mack in Mesa Co. on 3/9 (RL). A CFO trip spotted three in northeastern Colorado on 3/16. One was at Highline Res. in Mesa Co. on 4/13 (CD) while one was in Canon City on the same date (PSS, CS).

**Snow Goose:** Five birds, reluctant to move north, were still at Nee Noshe Res. on 5/31 (BKP, MJ, BD).

**Ross' Goose:** Three at Salida on 3/7 (VT) were unusual, as were 11 at Mack from 3/25-4/5 (RL). Singles were also seen in Mesa Co. on 4/7 (RL) and at Rio Blanco SWA from 5/14-15 (KP). A CFO field trip to northeastern Colorado recorded 200 on 3/16, which was a high count.

**Wood Duck:** Moving west were a pair of "woodies" at Parlin in Gunnison Co. from 5/2-4 (KP) and a male near 9,000 feet at Lake San Cristobal in Hinsdale Co. on 5/4 (PMa).

**Eurasian Wigeon:** The Fort Collins bird wintered until at least 4/10 (mob) <ND>.

**Tufted Duck:** Myron Plooster gets the honor for finding the first of this species in the state. An adult male stayed at Walden Ponds in Boulder Co. from 3/21-23 (MPI\*, mob). Congratulations, Myron, on a splendid discovery as well as prompt and excellent documentation. Incredibly, a second (or maybe the same) male tufted duck was found from 4/22-26 in a pond at 224 and I-76 near the South Platte River (BH, DQ\*).

**Greater Scaup:** A male was seen at Lake Cheraw on 3/5 (VT). One was at Big Johnson Res. on 3/14 (JDi). One was in Boulder Co. on 3/21 (MPI). Up to 17 were at Sawhill-Walden Ponds from 3/22-23 (mob). Two were seen at the unlikely location of Lake Estes from 4/7-9 (WR, SW, SRa). A male and a female were seen at Jumbo Res. on 4/16 (SD). Two were seen at Lower Latham Res. on 4/20 (TL, LN). One female was at Nee Noshe Res. on 4/24 (SD).

**Oldsquaw:** Two were seen at Lake Cheraw on 3/5 (VT). Two wintered on the South Platte River near the 88th Avenue Bridge until at least 3/9 (DQ). One was seen near Bellvue on 3/15 (RK), while other loners were seen at Craig on 4/22 (FL) and at Big Johnson Res. from 5/8-20 (RB, mob).

**White-winged Scoter:** The only spring report was of a male at Lake Cheraw on 4/16 (DA).

**Barrow's Goldeneye:** A female hung around Big Johnson Res. from 3/7-4/20 (BG, RB), while a male wintered near the 88th Avenue Bridge in Denver until at least 3/9 (PL). A male was seen at Lake Cheraw on 3/14 (VT).

**Red-breasted Merganser:** Up to 40 were at Big Johnson Res. through the middle of May (AV). This is a high count.

**Ruddy Duck:** Eighteen hundred was a high count, made at Jumbo Res. on 4/16 (SD).

**Northern Goshawk:** A imm. had wandered east to the FLWE on 5/5 (DAL).

**Red-shouldered Hawk:** An adult was seen at Lake Henry on 4/19 (DJ) <ND> while two imm. were at Fossil Creek Marsh southeast of Fort Collins on 5/20 (RK) <ND>.

**Broad-winged Hawk:** This species was widely and often reported this spring. The year's first was seen on 4/3 during the Dinosaur Ridge Hawkwatch (BSt). The hawkwatch reported a peak of 55(!) on 5/1 (BSt). Leading up to that date, 21 were seen there on 4/28 (BSt) and 24 on 4/30 (BSt). On 5/3, 19 went by and 25 followed on 5/4 (TL). About 15 were reported elsewhere along the Front Range and on the eastern plains from 4/19-5/27.

**Merlin:** A late bird was at Nee Noshe Res. on 4/29 (SD).

**Peregrine Falcon:** There were 12 reports of 22 birds in the east from 4/3-5/30. Six were seen during the Dinosaur Ridge Hawkwatch on 5/1 while four were reported elsewhere in the state on 5/2.

**Sage Grouse:** In the Gunnison basin, 645 males were counted in April and May (KP).

**Sharp-tailed Grouse:** Very scarce on the eastern plains, six were located four miles south of Tamarack Ranch on 4/13 (DBr).

**Black Rail:** The species had returned to its isolated Colorado breeding grounds by 5/4; two were heard and seen fleetingly west of Fort Lyons (DCE, WPL, JFB, JH) <ND>. Later that day, the same observers saw and heard 4-5 very well at close range at Bent's Old Fort <ND>. Up to three were heard west of

Fort Lyons on 5/9 (BKP, MH) <ND>, one at Roads HH and 16 in Bent Co. on 5/10 (BKP, DQ) <ND>, and four at the FLWE on 5/12 (FL) <ND>.

**American Golden-Plover:** Quite a rare find in the spring, one was seen at Nee Noshe Res. on 5/17 (DBr).

**Snowy Plover:** The species was reported per usual in the southeast. On the west side, one was seen at Clifton on 5/1 (RL).

**Semipalmated Plover:** Gobs were reported with the most unusual being one seen from 5/1-2 at Clifton (CD, RL).

**Piping Plover:** Reports, and numbers, of this species in Colorado seem to be decreasing. This spring three were seen at John Martin Res., one on 4/29 (SD) and two on 5/3 (CFO). Up to two were at Nee Noshe Res. from 5/16-31 (BKP, BD).

**Mountain Plover:** A nomad at Blue Mesa Res. on 4/12 (LBu, KP\*) represented the first Gunnison Co. record.

**Solitary Sandpiper:** One was at Clifton on 5/1 (RL), where the species is uncommon at best.

**Spotted Sandpiper:** A considerable "fall-out" of this species was emblazoned by the 164 counted at Big Johnson Res. on 5/12 (SD).

**Upland Sandpiper:** One in Boulder Co. on 4/16 (BPr) was unusual, as was one in southeastern Baca Co. on 5/14 (SD).

**Whimbrel:** After one first appeared in the state in Mesa Co. on 4/26 (RL), there were copious reports of this rare spring migrant. Of the 16 other reports, the highest count was of 22 at Pueblo Res. on 5/14 (BKP). The last report was of a single at Adobe Creek Res. on 5/27 (BKP, BD).

**Long-billed Curlew:** A tally of 92 south of Jackson Res. on 4/13 was impressive (DAL, JM, JFB, JH).

**Marbled Godwit:** A group of 75(!) on 4/17 at Rio Blanco SWA was a noteworthy census.

**Hudsonian Godwit:** One in breeding plumage was seen at Nee Noshe Res. on 5/10 (RB, SD\*).

**Ruddy Turnstone:** Two adults were seen at John Martin Res. on 5/30 (TB\*, CL).

**Red Knot:** Accidental in the west, six seen at Highline Res. on 4/26 (CD) <ND> was stellar. One seen on 5/26 at Nee Noshe Res. (SSe) <ND> also was a rare find, albeit at a more expected locale.

**Pectoral Sandpiper:** Very early were four at Hamilton Res. on 3/16 (RAR).

**Dunlin:** One was earlier and more westward than normal in Mesa Co. on 3/15 (RL). An individual in breeding plumage showed up at Duck Lake southeast of Fort Collins from 5/2-3 (WPL, JFB, DCE, JM, DAL), while up to two were at Nee Noshe Res. from 5/9-10 (BKP, MH, mob).

**Short-billed Dowitcher:** There were many reports this spring. The first was on 4/23 at Lake Cheraw (DBr). Another was at the Clifton Marsh on 4/24 (BGU\*). On 5/17, three were at Gaynor Lake south of Longmont (WHK) and one was at Lower Latham Res. (DQ\*). Six were seen and heard calling east of Fort Lyon on 5/19 (BKP, MJ).

**Red-necked Phalarope:** The high spring count was of a throng of 200+ at Duck Lake south of Fort Collins (DCE).

**Laughing Gull:** A bird in breeding plumage was discovered at Adobe Creek Res. on 5/26 (SSe) <ND>.

**Little Gull:** A first spring bird was found at Cherry Creek Res. on 5/28 (LB, BB) <ND>.

**Mew Gull:** An adult vacationed at Union Res. from 3/8-4/14 (PL\*, TL).

**Thayer's Gull:** An f.w.p. bird persisted at Cherry Creek Res. until at least 3/9 (SCh), and another was seen at Jackson Res. on 4/20 (TL, LN).

**Lesser Black-backed Gull:** An adult resided at Cherry Creek Res. from 3/18-4/1 (BB) <ND>.

**Glaucous Gull:** A tardy bird in f.w.p was reported from Cherry Creek Res. on 5/16 (SCh).

**Great Black-backed Gull:** An adult was at Cherry Creek Res. on 3/10 (SCh) <ND>. Nee Noshe Res. hosted a first year bird from 4/24-5/31 (SD\*, mob).

**Caspian Tern:** Two were seen on the western slope, one each on 4/22 and 5/21, where the species is very rare. A very early bird was seen at Walden Ponds in Boulder on 4/19 (PP, BT). One was in Fort Collins, where the species has been annual for the past 5-7 years, on 5/3 (DAL). Another fished Cherry Creek Res. from 5/19-28 (BB, LB).

**Common Tern:** Up to three appeared at Lake Henry from 5/20-22 (MJ). Lake George in Park Co. had one on 5/22 (VT). In the west, one was seen in

Mesa Co. on 5/23 (RL), two were at Sweitzer Lake on 5/24 (RL), and two near Mack on 5/27 (RL).

**Least Tern:** Five seen in southeastern Colorado were at expected locations. One was at Lake Holbrook on 4/30 (BKP, BD), another at Lake Meredith on 5/9 (BB, LB), one at Lake Cheraw on 5/11 (BKP, MJ), one at Nee Noshe Res. from 5/25-31 (MH, mob), and up to two at Adobe Creek Res. from 5/27-31 (BKP, BD, mob). Unexpected were seven on the west slope, four in Mesa Co. from 5/21-25 (RL) and three at Confluence Park in Delta Co. on 5/24 (KP, RL), which may indicate that breeding is occurring in the west-central region.

**Eurasian Collared-Dove:** Up to 10 were still residing in Rocky Ford throughout the period (mob\*). On 4/22, a Victor Emmanuel Nature Tour discovered two birds in Campo (Baca Co.) <ND>. Campo residents claim the birds have been in the area for over a year. Yet another was seen in Lamar on 5/30 (DN) <ND>.

**White-winged Dove:** One was seen in Pueblo on 5/15 (BD, JD) <ND>.

**Greater Roadrunner:** There were the usual reports of birds from south of Pueblo, eastward along the Arkansas River, Two Buttes Res., and Baca Co. The oddball award goes to the bird seen in downtown Pueblo on 4/5 (MY).

**Eastern Screech-Owl:** One was heard in Cottonwood Canyon on 4/30 (SD, BD, BKP), where western screech-owls are more expected.

**Northern Pygmy-Owl:** All reports came from the Estes Park area where three were reported during the period.

**Long-eared Owl:** One was at Lake Holbrook on 4/13 (BKP, MJ). Lamar hosted one on 4/29 (SD). A pair was observed on a nest at Upper Queens Res. from 4/26-5/3 (BKP, MJ). One was in Cottonwood Canyon from 4/30-5/10 (BKP, SD, mob). In the north, 4-6 were near Wellington through March (SMa, Kma) and another was there from 5/29-31. Estes Park had one on 3/18 (SRa). One was at CVCG on 3/30 (JH). Once again there were many reports from the west, including several females seen on nests in April (KP, RL).

**Short-eared Owl:** There were two reports. One was of a bird in a marshy area east of Fort Collins on 4/28 (JLF) and another was seen just north of Clay Creek in Prowers Co. on 5/2 & 5/4 (BKP, mob).

**Boreal Owl:** Seventeen were counted on 3/21 on Cameron Pass in Larimer Co. (RAR, DAL, JFB, WPL). Another was reported near here on 4/18 (DQ, RO\*) and two more on 5/10 (RAR).



**Northern Saw-Whet Owl:** Six were seen or heard in the west from 3/20-5/27 (RL, KP). One was heard near Cameron Pass on 3/21 (DAL, RAR). Two wanderers were found on the eastern plains this spring. One was discovered at CVCG on 3/2 (DAL) and a juvenile was seen at the FLWE from 5/2-9 (BKP, Sch, MH, mob).

**Lesser Nighthawk:** Five were found this spring, giving some support to a theory that this species may be more overlooked in Colorado than rare. A male and a female were at the LCCW from 5/8-10 (VZ, DAL\*, JM, mob). A male was at Lake Holbrook on 5/12 (MJ\*, BKP, JRo), a female in Fort Collins from 5/28-29 (DAL) <ND>, and another female was at CVCG on 5/30 (DAL) <ND>.

**Chimney Swift:** One apparently caught an updraft to Estes Park, where it was seen on 5/22 (SW).

**Broad-tailed Hummingbird:** A bird at the LCCW on 5/9 (DAL) and another heard at Bonney Res. on 5/17 (DAL, DCE) were well east of normal and nearing the Central Time Zone.

**Lewis' Woodpecker:** Particularly in the northern part of its range, this species has been exploring eastward. One was about three miles west of CVCG on 5/14 (JH) and another was at Riverside Res. on 5/20 (DAL, DCE, WPL).

**Red-headed Woodpecker:** A sub-adult at Lyons on 3/8 (DWK, mob) was rare in terms of both date and location. One in Fort Collins on 5/21 was a locally rare find (WPL). One wandered up to Eagle on 5/24 (JMe).

**Acorn Woodpecker:** On 3/31, one was found in Durango, where this species seems to be somewhat regular (DBr). <ND>.

**Red-bellied Woodpecker:** A bird at RFSWA on 5/4 (NL) was very unexpected.

**Yellow-bellied Sapsucker:** An imm. female was seen in Fort Collins on 3/6 (DAL) and a male was seen at the Hasty CG on 4/6 (BKP, MJ).

**Red-naped Sapsucker:** One was found at the unlikely locale of the FLWE on 5/4 (DCE, WPL).

**Ladder-backed Woodpecker:** One was caught sneaking north of its Colorado range at Lake Henry on 5/9 (DAL, mob).

**Eastern Wood-Pewee:** A singing bird was found at Chatfield SP on 5/31 (BB) <ND>.

**Least Flycatcher:** Again this year, I have deduced from the reports that this was the most commonly identified *Empidonax* sp. in eastern Colorado.

**Black Phoebe:** Two or three were located from 3/21-22 at Uravan in Montrose Co. (DBr, CD) <ND>. Another was in southern Gunnison Co. from 5/24-26 (RL\*, KP\*). The latter represents a first county record.

**Vermilion Flycatcher:** A female was located near the Dry Cimarron River in Baca Co. on 4/29 (DBr) <ND>.

**Ash-throated Flycatcher:** Two were located at the northerly location of Holly in Prowers Co. on 5/6 (DAL).

**Great Crested Flycatcher:** There were numerous reports this spring. The first was seen at the FLWE from 5/5-11 (BG, BKP, mob). Up to three were present at the LCCW from 5/6-31 (DAL). Another was heard at the Julesburg Rest Area from 5/16-17 (DAL, WPL). One was at Bonney Res. on 5/17 (BS) and one in Ovid Woods on 5/30 (DQ).

**Cassin's Kingbird:** Northerly reports came from Weld Co., where two were seen on 5/14 (JH), and in Fort Collins one was present on 5/26 (DAL).

**Scissor-tailed Flycatcher:** One was spotted at Road G and Road 13 in Baca Co. on 5/24 (DQ\*).

**Cliff Swallow:** Three traditional colonies near Hamilton Res. were not in use by the end of May (RAR). Has anyone else noticed similar trends?

**Purple Martin:** A female was seen in Lamar on 5/11 (FL, BB). Eighteen were seen at Palisade on 5/24 (CD)--this seems like a high count even where the species occurs more normally.

**Steller's Jay:** One was still inhabiting east Fort Collins on 5/1 (JC, ATC). The species is seldom observed away from the foothills, especially at such a late date.

**Blue Jay:** One wandered into Montrose and stayed from 5/11-14 (JRd, ARd\*).

**Mountain Chickadee:** One was still in Ovid on 3/2 (DAL), and birds in Wellington on 5/4 (SMA, KMa) and CVCG on 5/16 (WPL, JH) were either putting off their elevational migration or they were lost.

**Red-breasted Nuthatch:** Like the former species, this one also remained stray in the east well into the period. There was one at the FLWE on 5/5 (DAL), Lake Henry on 5/9 (DAL), Dixon Res. on 5/15 (DAL), and possibly one was nesting in Grandview Cemetery in Fort Collins as of 5/31 (DAL). Two also were found nesting in Pueblo City Park in May (MY).

**Golden-crowned Kinglet:** The only eastern plains report was of a bird at Lake Henry on 4/27 (MJ).

**Marsh Wren:** Lake Estes had a solo bird from 4/19-27 (EPBC).

**Eastern Bluebird:** A male at VPSWA in Pueblo on 5/8 (BKP) and three birds at CVCG on 5/13 (DAL) were west of the norm.

**Townsend's Solitaire:** One lingered at the LCCW from 5/3-5/4 (DCE, DAL).

**Veery:** At least one was at the FLWE beginning 5/9-5/22 (DQ, BKP, mob). One was at Lake Henry on 5/11 (BKP, mob). Another was at Fountain Creek Regional Park on 5/12 (RB, BM). One was in Brighton from 5/13-15 (BS). There were reports of three birds at Barr Lake SP from 5/13-24 (DQ, KS, BB, LB). One was at Dixon Res. near Fort Collins on 5/15 (WPL). Three were seen at CVCG on 5/16 (DCE, DAL, WPL), one at Bonney Res. on 5/17 (DCE, DAL, WPL), and three at the Julesburg Rest Area on 5/17 (DCE, DAL, WPL). One was at Lake Estes on 5/17 (SRa). Up to two were at Lake Henry from 5/19-24 (BKP, MJ, mob). The last one was seen at CVCG on 5/25 (BB).

**Gray-cheeked Thrush:** Two were reported this spring. One was seen at Lake Henry from 5/8-9 (BD, MJ\*) and another was seen there from 5/12-13 (BKP, MJ, JRo) <ND>.

**Wood Thrush:** Fountain Creek Regional Park hosted one of these rare migrants from 5/26-28 (JDi, BG) <ND>.

**Varied Thrush:** One was at a residence near Burlington from 5/16-19 (JHt, SHt) <ND>. The species is casual so far east of the Front Range.

**Curve-billed Thrasher:** Two birds wandered well out of normal range this spring. One was seen in Aurora on 3/2 (ASe) and another east of Boulder on 5/10 (WHK).

**Bohemian Waxwing:** The last holdouts from a winter invasion were seen on 4/1 in Fort Collins (WPL, PDL, DAL).

**White-eyed Vireo:** A singing bird stayed at Lake Henry from 5/8-10 (BD, FL, MJ\*, mob).

**Bell's Vireo:** A singing bird was at the FLWE on 5/9 (BKP, MJ). Other single birds were spotted at Apishapa SWA on 5/26 (BSt) and at Fountain Creek Regional Park on 5/29 (RB). The usual spots around Bonney Res. and Tamarack Ranch SWA held birds from 5/16-17 (DAL, WPL, DCE).

**Gray Vireo:** One seen in southwest Teller county on 5/29 (DA) was well away from known breeding areas.

**Blue-headed Vireo:** Recently elevated to full-species status, reports of this previous subspecies are now of extreme interest. One was seen on 5/5 at the LCCW (ME).

**Cassin's Vireo:** Also raised to species status, one or two appeared in Fort Collins on 5/29 (DAL).

**Yellow-throated Vireo:** It would be a gross understatement to say that this species had a good spring showing in the state. There were an astounding 8(!) reports. One sang from 4/29-5/3 at the LCCW (DBr, MJ\*, mob) while another caroled at Two Buttes Res. from 5/2-4 (MJ\*, VZ, JRo). Others were at Nee Noshe Res. on 5/10 (SD\*, RB), at Canon City on 5/11 (JWt, RWt) <ND>, at Rocky Ford SWA on 5/12 (BKP, MJ\*, JRo), at Johnson Park in Jefferson Co. on 5/14 (LB, BB) <ND>, at the FLWE from 5/19-21 (BKP, MJ\*, BD, JRo), and at Fountain Creek Regional Park on 5/31 (BHn) <ND>.

**Red-eyed Vireo:** This species is becoming more commonly reported. Thirteen were noted this spring from 5/9-28. Nine of the birds were seen on or after 5/25.

**Blue-winged Warbler:** A male was at the LCCW from 5/1-8 (BKP, MJ\*, mob). Others were seen at Cottonwood Canyon on 5/3 (JRw, LRw, JPo) <ND>, Two Buttes Res. from 5/7-10 (DBr, VZ, FL) <ND>, at the FLWE on 5/9 (MJ\*, JM, DAL, mob), and at Bonney Res. on 5/14 (DBr) <ND>.

**Golden-winged Warbler:** Three separate individuals were seen at Lake Henry, a young male on 5/10 (BKP, PSS, CS) <ND>, and an adult male and female from 5/11-13 (MJ\*, BKP, mob). The other lone report came from Fort Collins, where one was seen on 5/28 along the Poudre River Trail (JM) <ND>.

**Tennessee Warbler:** What a fantastic spring for this species! Three were seen in the Longmont area on unspecified dates at unspecified locales by unspecified observers. I'm not sure how I even know about them. More specific information from 10 other reports follows: an adult male at the LCCW from 5/2-5 (BKP, mob), an imm. at the LCCW on 5/3 (DCE, JFB), a male at the FLWE on 5/3 (CFO), a male at Two Buttes Res. on 5/4 (BKP, mob) as well as a female (MJ), a male at Lake Henry on 5/8 (BD) and from 5/11-12 (BKP, MJ, mob), a male and a female at the LCCW from 5/9-10 (DAL), two at the Julesburg Rest Area on 5/17 (DCE, DAL), and lastly, a male at the LCCW on 5/22 (BKP, DSrn).

**Nashville Warbler:** One was in the Longmont area (FAC). One was at Cottonwood Canyon from 4/30-5/1 (BKP, BD), at the FLWE on 5/4 (JK, MJ), at Rocky Ford SWA on 5/9 (MJ), up to two at Two Buttes Res. from 5/9-10

(NE, SSt, JK), one at Nee Noshe Res. on 5/10 (FL), two at the LCCW on 5/12 (BB), one at the FLWE on 5/19 (MJ) and one east of Fort Lyons on 5/19 (MJ).

**Virginia's Warbler:** Nine were reported from the southeast this spring from 5/2-19.

**Northern Parula:** This is another warbler species that was encountered more this spring than usual. The first report was of a male in Pueblo on 4/28 (MJ). A male was seen at Two Buttes Res. on 5/1 (SD) and a female was there on 5/3 (BKP, MH, BD, SCh). A male was seen in Denver on 5/7 (PH), a female at Lake Henry on 5/8 (BD, FL), and another at Lake Holbrook on 5/8 (SD). Four males made Lake Henry sound like the Ozarks from 5/9-12 (BKP, mob). Singing males were also found at Chatfield SP on 5/21 (KS, BSp) and Lathrop SP west of Walsenburg on 5/23 (KS, mob). Fountain Creek Regional Park hosted one on 5/10 (VM, JMy, BM), Rocky Ford SWA had one from 5/11-12 (BKP, MJ), and the LCCW had two females from 5/16-19 (BKP, BD). Another female was seen in Fort Collins on 5/30 (DAL, JM).

**Chestnut-sided Warbler:** A male was at Lake Henry from 5/8-10 (BD, FL). One was at Bellview Park in Arapahoe Co. on 5/9 (Jtk), and one was near Fort Morgan on 5/15 (Jri). Single males were found at Fountain Creek Regional Park on 5/17 (BG) and 5/21 (Dla), CVCG from 5/19-20 (JH, mob), Lake Henry on 5/25 (BKP, BD) and on 5/27 (BKP, BD). Home Lake near Monte Vista hosted one on 5/25 (PSS), as did Fort Carson on 5/27 (RB). On 5/27, a singing male was at Prospect Park in the Wheatridge Greenbelt in Jefferson Co. (KS), where the species has nested in the past.

**Magnolia Warbler:** A male was seen at Two Buttes Res. on 5/4 (VZ) and at the LCCW from 5/5-6 (BKP). The FLWE had one on 5/12 (FL), a male on 5/16 (BKP, BD), and a male on 5/22 (BKP, DSm). Lake Henry had a male from 5/9-12 (BKP), a male on 5/23 (MJ), and a male and a female from 5/16-27 (BKP, BD). A male was east of Hasty on 5/19 (BKP, MJ, BD). A female was at the Last Chance Rest Area on 5/25 (DAL). One or two were present at CVCG from 5/23-30 (GCu, KS, mob).

**Black-throated Blue Warbler:** A male and a female were at the FLWE on 5/7 (NE) and a male was there from 5/9-10 (JM, DAL, VZ, DQ). Males were seen at Two Buttes Res. on 5/9 (NE, SSt, JK) and at Dixon Res. near Fort Collins on 5/12 (WPL). A female was at Lake Henry from 5/18-20 (DQ), a male at Bonney Res. from 5/19-20 (DBr), a male at the FLWE on 5/19 (BKP, MJ, BD, JRo), and a male at Chatfield SP on 5/23 (BB, LB).

**Black-throated Gray Warbler:** As usual, a few were found in the east during migration. Lone males were at the LCCW from 5/1-3 (BKP, mob), at the

FLWE on 5/2 (MJ), in Cottonwood Canyon on 5/10 (RB, SD), and at LaPorte in Larimer Co. on 5/15 (DCE, DAL).

**Townsend's Warbler:** This species is much more uncommon in the spring than fall. Four reports were received. The FLWE had a female from 5/2-4 (BKP, mob), and a male was there on 5/5 (DAL). Others were seen at Two Buttes Res. on 5/10 (FL) and at Lake Henry on 5/18 (DQ).

**Black-throated Green Warbler:** The first of many this spring was a male at the FLWE from 4/30-5/3 (BKP, BD, mob). A male was seen at the LCCW on 5/3 (VZ) and another along the Poudre River in Fort Collins on 5/9 (WPL). One was at Two Buttes Res. on 5/10 (FL), in Waterton Canyon on 5/10 (DFO), at the FLWE on 5/12 (FL), at Bonney Res. on 5/15 (DBr), and in Morgan Co. on 5/31 (JRI).

**Blackburnian Warbler:** A female showed up at the FLWE on 5/2 (MJ\*) and males were seen at Milton Res. in Weld Co. on 5/16 (DQ, RO\*) and at the Hasty CG on 5/17 (BKP, MJ\*, BD). A good push of this species apparently occurred on 5/28, when three were seen. One female was at CVCG (JH) <ND>, while Dan Bridges had a female at Ovid <ND> and a male at Julesburg <ND>.

**Yellow-throated Warbler:** Two reports constitutes an outstanding spring for this species in Colorado. A male was seen at Lake Henry on 5/22 (BKP, DSm)<ND> and one was seen at Bonney Res. on 5/24 (DBr) <ND>.

**Grace's Warbler:** Six were seen and heard in southern Gunnison Co. from 5/24-26 (KP\*, RL). This is a first county record and in all likelihood the species is breeding there.

**Palm Warbler:** The first was seen at Lindenmeier Lake north of Fort Collins on 5/2 (ATC, JC). One was seen at the LCCW from 5/5-6 (BG), one at Lake Henry on 5/9 (MH, BKP, MJ, BD), one in Boulder on 5/9 (PP), one at Lake Estes from 5/10-15 (EPBC), one in Boulder on 5/14 (SSv), one at CVCG on 5/15 (JH), and one at Dixon Res. on 5/18 (DCE).

**Bay-breasted Warbler:** This species was abundantly reported this spring compared with most years. Females were seen at Lake Henry on 5/16 (BKP, BD) <ND> and at the LCCW from 5/22-24 (DSm, BKP, mob)<ND>. Males showed up later, with one south of Monte Vista on 5/24 (BG, JV)<ND>, one at Bonney Res. on 5/25 (MH)<ND>, and one at CVCG on 5/29 (NER)<ND>.

**Blackpoll Warbler:** The first was seen on 4/30 at the LCCW (JT) and the last was reported from CVCG on 5/25 (DAL). In between these dates, 44 others were reported.

**Cerulean Warbler:** The number of state records for this species doubled this spring, pending acceptance by our records committee. The third state record was of a young male at Bonney Res. on 5/14 (KC, DBr) <ND>. A female at Home Lake in Monte Vista from 5/25-26 (DSm\*, CS, PSS, MJ\*, mob) should provide the 4th record.

**Black-and-White Warbler:** There were 20 reported this spring, spanning the dates 5/2-21. All were along the Front Range and on the eastern plains.

**American Redstart:** Sightings occurred from 5/9 through the end of the period. There were about 35 reports, all in the east and along the Front Range.

**Prothonotary Warbler:** A male was seen at the LCCW from 5/4-5 (BKP, MJ\*, VZ) and another male was at Gregory Canyon west of Boulder from 5/19-20 (PP\*, mob).

**Worm-eating Warbler:** Single birds were seen at Hannah Ranch SWA on 5/2 (DA), at Lake Henry from 5/8-12 (BD, FL, MJ\*, mob), and at the LCCW from 5/9-10 (JM, DAL, mob) <ND>.

**Ovenbird:** Fourteen were reported from 5/4-28.

**Northern Waterthrush:** There were 42 reports of the species this spring. They occurred from 5/1-23. Up to three were seen at several locales: the LCCW, Barr Lake SP, and Dixon Res. near Fort Collins.

**Kentucky Warbler:** A male was seen at Two Buttes Res. on 5/3 (DCE\*, WPL, JFB, JH). Two other males showed up much later. One was at Fountain Creek Regional Park on 5/28 (BG) <ND> and another at CVCG on 5/30 (JH, mob) <ND>.

**Connecticut Warbler:** This was certainly the best bird-named-after-a-state to be seen in Colorado this spring. Brandon Percival found one at the LCCW on 5/16 <ND> on one of his few days afield this spring.

**Mourning Warbler:** Hale Ponds along the Republican River below Bonney Res. hosted one of these skulkers on 5/14 (DBr, JBH) <ND>. Fountain Creek Regional Park was home to another from 5/23-25 (BM) <ND>.

**Hooded Warbler:** Lake Henry had a female on 5/7 (DBr) and again from 5/16-17 (BKP, BD). Bonney Res. also had a female on 5/16 (DAL, DCE, WPL). On 5/18, a male was at Fountain Creek Regional Park (BG).

**Summer Tanager:** Six made appearances in Colorado this spring. The first was a male at the LCCW on 5/4 (DBr) <ND>. A female wandered to the same locale a day later (DBr) <ND>. Both a male and a female were seen at Lake

Henry from 5/8-10 (BD, FL, mob) <ND>. Two were seen along Lower Bear Creek in Jefferson Co. on 5/10 (DFO) <ND>.

**Scarlet Tanager:** A scintillant male was seen at Nee Noshe Res. from 5/9-10 (BKP, MH, mob) <ND>.

**Northern Cardinal:** Two showed up at unexpected locales, a male from 5/9-10 at the RFSWA (BKP, MH) and a male at Johnson Park in Jefferson Co. on 5/14 (BB, LB).

**Rose-breasted Grosbeak:** Twenty-one were reported this spring. The earliest was seen on 5/1 in Cottonwood Canyon (BKP, MH). The most unusual was one reported at Connected Lakes in Mesa Co. on 5/24 (RHa).

**Painted Bunting:** Two were seen this spring. A female was at Bonney Res. south of Foster Grove CG from 5/16-17 (RB, WPL\*). Another female was at the Hasty CG on 5/17 (BKP, MJ, BD) <ND>.

**Eastern Towhee:** One was seen at Tamarack Ranch SWA from 5/15-23 (DBr, mob).

**Sage Sparrow:** One was reported at Lake Estes on 4/28 (SR) and another on the Pawnee National Grasslands on 4/8 and 4/15.

**Swamp Sparrow:** Two late birds were seen on 5/9. One was at Two Buttes Res. (NE, SSt, JK) and another at Big Johnson Res. (RB). Even later was a pair in Weld Co. on 5/14 (JH).

**White-throated Sparrow:** Seven were reported this spring, all from the eastern plains. The first was seen on 5/3 at the LCCW (DCE, WPL, JFB). The last was reported from the Julesburg Rest Area on 5/17 (WPL).

**Golden-crowned Sparrow:** The wintering bird at Red Rocks stayed until at least 3/8 (mob\*).

**White-crowned Sparrow:** This species was very common this spring in most areas.

**Harris' Sparrow:** A wintering bird was seen at Ovid on 3/2 (DAL). Seven were reported during the spring migration. The first was on 5/3 at Cañon City (DFO). The last was seen at Bonney Res. from 5/14-15 (DBr). Two birds were seen in the west, one in Mesa Co. on 5/8 (RL) one in Gunnison Co. on 5/12 (LBu).

**Snow Bunting:** A lone bird persisted in northern Weld Co. to the later-than-average date of 4/6 (SD).



**Bobolink:** Reports of this species are on the increase. One was at Lake Estes on 5/6 (SW) for the third year in a row. Two males returned to an annual spot near Wellington, one on 5/13 and the other on 5/22 (SMA, Kma). A singing male was at Bonney Res. on 5/15 (DBr). The first record of the species in 12 years of counts occurred at Hamilton Res. on 5/17 (RAR) when a male appeared. Seven males and a female were seen near Meeker on 5/21 (KP). A male was observed near Hygiene on 5/21 (JLF). For the third year in a row, the species returned to a field near Bellvue where there were four males and a female (DAL).

**Eastern Meadowlark:** One bird was reported from the northwest corner of Union Res. on 5/19 (PP) <ND>.

**Great-tailed Grackle:** Lamar had 130 on 3/11 (DAL), a high count. West of the divide, 21 at Skipper's Island was a very good tally (RL).

**Orchard Oriole:** Quite a rare bird in Fort Collins, three were seen along the Poudre River Trail on 5/30 (DAL).

**Baltimore Oriole:** A male was seen at Lake Henry from 5/10-31 (BKP, mob). The species was common at Bonney Res. on 5/16-17 (DCE, DAL, WPL).

**Cassin's Finch:** The species was observed last in Fort Collins around 5/2 (JC, ATC) after being common throughout the winter and early spring periods. Up to two at Two Buttes Res. from 4/29-5/1 were even more unusual for the date and locale (SD).

**Red Crossbill:** This species was still plentiful in northern Colorado through the end of May. Elsewhere, up to five were seen at the LCCW from 5/3-23 (MJ, mob) and a singleton was found at Springfield on 5/10 (SD).

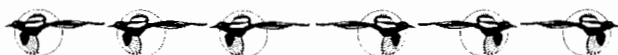
**White-winged Crossbill:** This species' token appearance was at Estes Park on 4/21 where a single bird came to a feeder (REs, LEs).

**Common Redpoll:** It wasn't a big winter for the species, consequently few were seen into the spring period. One was seen in Fort Collins on 3/1 (RAR), four were in Lyons Park on 3/6, and one was at the workstation north of CVCG until 3/7 (PL).

**Evening Grosbeak:** After a big winter irruption, several were still lingering wayward on the eastern plains in May. One was at the LCCW on 5/3 (MJ), one at Lake Henry on 5/10 (BKP), and three in Cottonwood Canyon on 5/10 (SD).

**CITED OBSERVERS**

Doug Allen (DA), John Barber (JFB), Boulder County Audubon Society, Toni Brevillier (TB), Dan Bridges (DBr), Bob Brown (BB), Lea Ann Brown (LB), Lori Brummer (LBu), Richard Bunn (RB), Sherry Chapman (SCH), Colorado Field Ornithologists (CFO), Kevin Cook (KC), Alex Cringan (ATC), June Cringan (JC), Gretchen Cutts (GCu), Denver Field Ornithologists (DFO), Coen Dexter (CD), Bob Dickson (BD), Johnie Dickson (JD), Jordan Dimick (JDi), Stephen Dinsmore (SD), Margie Elliot (ME), David Ely (DCE), Estes Park Bird Club (EPBC), Norma Erickson (NEr), Norm Erthal (NE), Laurae Essman (LEs), Roger Essman (REs), Foothills Audubon Club (FAC), Bob Goycoolea (BG), Bob Gustafson (BGU), B.B. Hahn (BHn), Paula Hansley (PH), Red Hansen (RHa), Jody Hartman (JHt), Susan Hartman (SHt), J.B. Hayes (JBH), Joe Himmel (JH), Mark Hullinger (MH), Bill Huntley (BH), Mark Janos (MJ), Dave Johnson (DJ), Bill Kaempfer (WHK), Joey Kellner (JK), D.W. King (DWK), Rachel Kolokoff (RK), Joe LaFleur (JLF), Paul Laase (PLa), David Leatherman (DAL), Paul Lehman (PL), Tony Leukering (TL), Rich Levad (RL), Cindy Lippincott (CL), Bill Lisowsky (WPL), Paula Lisowsky (PDL), Forrest Luke (FL), Joe Mammoser (JM), many observers (mob), Kathy Martin (KMa), Steve Martin (SMa), Phil Mason (PMa), Bill Maynard (BM), John Maynard (JMy), Virginia Maynard (VM), Jack Merchant (JMe), Duane Nelson (DN), Larry Norris (LN), Ric Olsen (RO), Brandon Percival (BKP), Pam Piombino (PP), Myron Plooster (MPI), Jerry Poe (JPo), Kim Potter (KP), Bill Prather (BPr), David Quesenberry (DQ), Scott Rashid (SRa), John Rawinski (JRw), Lisa Rawinski (LRw), Alan Reed (ARd), Jon Reed (JRd), Warner Reeser (WR), Joe Rigli (JRI), Julie Roederer (JR), Scott Roederer (SR), Joe Roller (JRo), Ron Ryder (RAR), Pearle Sandstrom-Smith (PSS), Karleen Schofield (KS), Aaron Sell (ASe), Scott Seltman (SSe), Scott Severs (SSv), Clif Smith (CS), Drew Smith (DSm), Bob Spencer (BSp), Steve Stachowiak (SSt), Bonnie Stout (BSt), Brian Sullivan (BS), Joyce Takamine (JTk), Van Truan (VT), Bob Turner (BT), Bill Tweit (BTw), John Vanderpoele (JV), Alan Versaw (AV), Victor Emmanuel Nature Tours, Susan Ward (SW), Jim Watts (JWt), Rosie Watts (RWt), Mark Yaeger (MY), Vic Zerbi (VZ). 109 cited observers (including "mob").





Van Remsen at Patty Echelmeyer's House in Denver, July 2, 1997  
by David Pantle

## **VAN REMSEN: LOVING BIRDS FROM BARR LAKE TO BOLIVIA**

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### **Introduction**

On July 2, 1997, Van Remsen, Jr., now a world figure in Neotropical ornithology, met with us at Patty Echelmeyer's home for a lively and pleasant interview. He was on a trip to visit his parents and sister in his childhood home of Lakewood, Colorado, and we took advantage of his visit to interview him about his life and work. Although David Pantle had not yet met him, Patty and Lynn Willcockson had known Van as a school boy obsessed with finding birds--and they looked forward to seeing him for the first time in nearly 30 years! During our interview, we were delighted by Van's personable, pleasant, modest and unassuming personality. He is extremely articulate, enthusiastic, and disciplined in the use of his time. He also demonstrated a phenomenal memory for dates, names, and other details. During our interview, Van covered a number of topics important to the future of birds and bird study, including foreign field work, conservation, museum collections, and record keeping by birdwatchers. He also shared with us anecdotes from his friendship with the legendary Ted Parker, and he discussed his current and future book projects.

### **Early Years**

Van was born September 21, 1949, and began watching birds at age five. It all started when he went to New Jersey for a family wedding and watched his uncle feed Tufted Titmice, Black-capped Chickadees, and Cardinals from the hand. When he returned home, Van set up a feeder in the yard and then yearned for books about birds. When he was 10 or 11, he learned that neighbors, John and Joyce Cooper, knew about birds.

Van: "They tolerated me and drove me to see birds, they carted me all over Denver."

He finally received his first pair of binoculars on his 11th birthday, and he went birdwatching with the Coopers as often as they would take him. When he was 15, his horizons expanded greatly when he learned about Christmas Bird Counts (CBCs). In December 1964, he telephoned Don Thatcher of the Denver Field Ornithologists (DFO) and asked if he could go on a CBC. Van ended up with Thatcher, Patty Echelmeyer, and Dick Palmer on a CBC at Red Rocks. Patty and Don opened up a whole new world to him by telling him about DFO and the field trips that they sponsored every weekend. Van joined DFO and coaxed his parents or the Coopers into driving him to field trip meeting places.

Van: "Harold Holt was very generous in carting me around." "I couldn't wait to get my Lark Bunting [DFO's newsletter] to see what the trips would be."

Van also discovered the Denver Museum of Natural History. The wonderful dioramas were a wonderful influence on him and a source of fantasy. He emphasized that these dioramas are still among the best in the world.

Van: This was the closest place to heaven."

He would sit and stare at the Arctic cliffs in pink light, and imagine that he was there. He would also look at the displays of mounted birds, but he was much too shy to ask whether he could meet the famous Alfred Bailey.

For years, Van was the only young birder in DFO. As a consequence, he found it difficult to be taken seriously. He recalled a trip to Barr lake, during which he wandered off and found a Yellow-crowned Night-Heron. He had trouble getting people to credit his find until the bird was located again the next week. Overall, however, adult birdwatchers encouraged his birding activities, and now Van goes out of his way to cultivate young birders.

Van: "Bird feeders are a good way to interest young kids who aren't ready yet for binoculars. Bird magazines may interest kids who are 14-15."

Van also played lacrosse for Denver Country Day School, which occasionally caused conflicts. He recalled when the team had a big game scheduled for May 8, 1965, the same day as a DFO trip to Barr Lake—a special opportunity

that, for various reasons, was hard to come by. He called the lacrosse coach and said he was sick with the flu, then went on the trip. That morning it was snowing hard, and he and Harold Holt, the trip leader, were the only ones who showed up.

Van: "I thought God was punishing me, and said, 'God forgive me'." It turned out that the unusual spring snowstorm precipitated the best fallout of migrating birds that Van ever saw in Colorado. In the woods at Barr Lake, there were hundreds of birds. Van found a Yellow-throated Vireo, the second state record, and spotted a male Hooded Warbler on the ground in the snow. What a day! The warbler was a first state bird for Harold, and Van's team still won the state championship. However, Van did not tell his school friends about his interest in birds, and, when he went to prep school at Andover, he even kept his hobby from his roommate.

Van: "There was a bird club at Andover, and I kept my membership a secret. I didn't want to be outed."

Meanwhile, Van's father urged him on: "Be the best you can at whatever you decide to do."

When Van went to college at Stanford, he had planned to major in marine biology, which was a "pretty cool, socially accepted" field. He knew by his junior year, however, that he really wanted to study ornithology. Although Stanford had no ornithologists on the faculty, Dave DeSante, a graduate student studying birds, did teach a bird biology course. Van took the course and became a field trip leader for the class. For two years, he also served as northern California's editor for *American Birds*. In four years, Van completed the requirements for both his B. A. and M. A., which he received in June, 1971. He then went on to earn his Ph.D. at the University of California at Berkeley, where his research focused on kingfishers in a part of the Amazon River basin of Colombia. As he finished his dissertation, he presented a paper on this work at the annual American Ornithologists' Union (AOU) meeting, where he received the award for Best Student Paper.

### Professional Years

Today, as Dr. J. V. Remsen, Jr., Van is a Professor in Biological Sciences and Curator of Birds for the Museum of Natural Science at Louisiana State University (LSU), the world's foremost institution for the study of Neotropical birds. His position at LSU began in 1978, when he became Assistant Curator of Birds and Assistant Professor. It was his first job after completing his Ph.D.

Van: "I realized it was something I couldn't pass up. I filed my dissertation, and three days later I was in Baton Rouge preparing my first lectures."

Van has remained at LSU ever since. He spends 50% of his time on research, 25% on teaching and advising graduate students (many of whom have become prominent ornithologists), and 25% on curatorial work. His research has

included extensive projects in a number of countries (particularly Bolivia), and his teaching endeavors have included ornithology and zoology for (primarily) undergraduates and a number of graduate courses and seminars. Students rate him as a world-class teacher, and, in 1996, Dr. Remsen received the LSU Alumni Association's Distinguished Faculty Award. In 1994, Van's research and his role as an excellent advisor were honored by two of his former students, who named a new species of Andean cotinga--the Chestnut-bellied Cotinga (*Doliornis remseni*) after him. In their paper (Robbins et al. 1994), the students wrote:

"Etymology--We take great pleasure in naming this new cotinga after our friend and colleague, J. Van Remsen, Jr., in recognition of his many contributions to Neotropical ornithology and his special interest in Andean birds. Robbins and Rosenberg express special gratitude to him for his pivotal influence on their careers while at Louisiana State University."

As Curator of Birds, Van oversees a large collection of bird specimens, with about 4,000 more being added each year. Specimens require identification, cataloguing, and accessioning. He personally catalogs 95% of the new specimens so that he will be familiar with each one; handling the specimens also gives him research ideas. He likes the work and sometimes asks himself, "They pay me to do this?" During the 19 that years Van has been at LSU, the bird collection has grown from 87,000 to 165,000 specimens; it is now the fourth largest university-based bird collection in the world. Seventy-five percent of the collection is comprised of Neotropical birds from Mexico to Bolivia. The research value of this bird collection, however, comes not from the number of specimens, but from the 10-15 data points taken from each specimen, including age, sex, body weight, fat condition, molt, gonad measurements, soft part colors, and stomach contents.

Specimen collecting. -- Van is concerned about the controversy aroused by collecting specimens. Van defends collecting actively by stepping into this controversy.

Van: "I love birds more than anyone. You can kill birds and love them too. I know this is tough for most people to understand."

As a boy, Van was opposed to hunting and objected to killing any bird, until he learned what specimens could do to help living birds. In the summer of 1972, when he went to the Arctic with Dr. Frank Pitelka, his major professor at Berkeley, he shot his first bird and learned to prepare bird skins. Now Van trains his students in the morality of collecting.

Van: "If one is going to kill a bird, one must know why, and make its life as useful as possible to people and to birds... one must take all the data from the bird that can be obtained."

LSU now has the only stomach contents collection in the world, and it has the largest collection of bird tissues in the world. Tissue samples have become extremely important in genetic analyses to establish taxonomic relationships.

Van wrote a short article for *Birding* (Remsen 1993), in which he pointed out that only a tiny fraction of birds is collected, infinitesimally small compared to the number killed by collisions with windows and vehicles. Specimens of vagrants provide information as to their subspecies--their geographic races--and they usually suffer anyway from various abnormalities. The great threat to birds is from destruction of habitat, not from collecting. He urged birders and museum ornithologists to work together to save habitat.

Van: "We're increasingly failing to train people to think analytically. Let's focus our emotions on things that really count."

Foreign Field Work. -- For his Ph.D. research (1973-1976), Van made five trips to and spent a total of 10 months in the Colombian Amazon and Bolivia. After school, he returned repeatedly to conduct more field work in Bolivia because it is still one of the most pristine countries, with a lower human population density than many others. To conduct field research in pristine habitat, however, you must be a long way from civilization.

Van: "This means that you are in a remote place, living in tents, eating whatever you can carry with you that keeps for months in a tropical climate, and that's not much. For those who have spent a good part of their lives in tents in muddy camps, the glamor of field work has long vanished. If there was a nearby Holiday Inn, every researcher would stay there."

Van tries to be very cautious in the field, yet there are constant hazards and he has had some close calls. In *A Parrot Without A Name-The Search for the Last Unknown Birds on Earth* by Don Stap (1990), in which the author describes the hardships and perils of studying tropical birds, there is a story about Van's close encounter with a huge anaconda while he was sitting in a small canoe on the Amazon River. The book goes on to tell about Van's encounter with rebel campesinos, who wanted to take him and his graduate students hostage. The rebels finally agreed that the researchers were not going anywhere because the road back to civilization had been dynamited. Later, the Bolivian army came up the mountain road to quell the revolution, and, when a soldier swerved and aimed a machine gun at Van, he thought it was all over. Long afterwards, Van learned that the soldiers had killed the rebels who spared his party. Undaunted, Van continued his research. It wasn't until 1993, when Van lost his best friend, Ted Parker, in a tragic plane crash, that the impact of field hazards finally caught up with him. Ted had been conducting a rapid assessment survey for Conservation International to determine which habitats most needed protection when his plane went down in Ecuador. Van had known Ted since Ted's visit to

Berkeley when Van was a graduate student there. Van felt humbled in Ted's presence.

Van: "After five minutes I realized, 'Van, you've got a long ways to go'." Over the years, Van and Ted had become good friends. They spent a lot of time in the field together (in fact, Ted was on Van's first LSU trip to Bolivia), co-authored a number of papers, and shared a love for LSU basketball. Ted was the best field ornithologist ever to work on Neotropical birds and had an incredible gift for identifying birds by their calls and songs.

As a lead institution in conservation biology, LSU has had the longest ongoing, tropical avian research program of any university in the world. From the 1950s to the present, LSU's research and graduate student training programs have expanded from Mexico through South America to Malaysia and the Philippines. American field researchers, however, encounter numerous obstacles, especially in Latin America, where governments often will not cooperate.

Van: "The best that we can hope for is that they will just leave us alone." It is hard to obtain the necessary permits because xenophobia is widespread and local officials suspect bird researchers of prospecting for gold or spying for the CIA. Furthermore, local wildlife officials have little power to do what birds need most--save habitat-- therefore they deny collection permits so they can puff themselves up and claim to have done something to benefit wildlife. One government agency permits Asian lumber companies to clearcut miles of forest habitat, while another agency in the same office building refuses permits to collect an insignificant number of birds. In order to defuse some of this resistance, Van and other LSU researchers are building partnerships with the local biologists.

The problem of funding for foreign field work also presents serious obstacles. For many years, LSU received financial support for tropical bird research from John S. McIlhenny, of the Tabasco Sauce family, but John died in March, 1997. Contributions from birdwatchers or bird clubs would greatly enhance the research needed to help preserve birds. For \$30,000-\$40,000, Van could send a research team to Bolivia for three months, which would yield much information and train local biologists. Since 1993, the combined difficulties of foreign research and a lack of funding, as well as the importance of his personal life, have kept Van closer to home.

Conservation Work. -- Van has been a strong leader in professional ornithological societies and he has authored or co-authored more than 90 papers and two books about birds. In addition, he has served as Chairman of the Conservation Committee for the AOU. He sums up his conservation experience this way:



Van: "What is important is to save habitat. If it has trees on it [in Latin America], it is an endangered habitat."

Asian timber companies are cutting more and more of the forest, and few slopes are too steep to keep loggers out. North American birds are resilient, adapted for migrating, survivors of various routine perils. In the tropics, however, where the climate is more stable, birds are more sedentary. When their local habitats are changed or destroyed, they are not as good at dispersing elsewhere. Will habitats in South America be saved?

Van: "We couldn't do it in the United States, so why can we expect to do it in Latin America? Habitats in the Great Plains, the California Central Valley, the Colorado River, Denver, the southeastern pines, the eastern deciduous forest, have largely been destroyed."

Van believes that the short-term solution is to buy habitat, as groups like The Nature Conservancy are doing, and the only long-term solution is education and human population control. Van chided birdwatchers and bird clubs for not pulling their weight to help buy habitat. We tend to wait for someone else to do it. He gave an example of this shortcoming in Louisiana. The "cheniers" along the Gulf Coast are small groves of trees in which migrating birds seek refuge when they fly in, exhausted, from the Gulf. Some of these groves have been preserved because hunters pay landowners up to \$1500 in lease fees for hunting privileges in the cheniers. Birdwatchers, on the other hand, don't pay anything to lease or buy these limited, precious groves. Van reminded us that Denver area birders could help preserve more habitat and suggested that local conservation groups focus on raising funds to buy or lease habitats.

Book Projects. -- Van's dissertation became the basis for his book, *Community Ecology of Neotropical Kingfishers* (Remsen 1990) and his work in Bolivia led to publication of *An Annotated List of the Birds of Bolivia* (Remsen 1989). Recently, Van has devoted immense amounts of time to two unanticipated book projects, forcing him to delay work on two of his own books. When Burt Monroe, chairman of the AOU Check-list Committee, died in 1993, he had been doing most of the work on the 7th edition of the AOU Check-list. As a 10-year member of the AOU Check-list Committee, Van accepted the monumental task of completing the book. The other book project is a commemorative volume for the late Theodore A. Parker III, for which Van serves as editor.

Van: "It contains papers on subjects near and dear to Ted's heart, including the description of six new species. This is an unusual memorial, as the authors of the 51 papers range from household names in ornithology to persons publishing their first scientific paper. That is the way Ted was; he talked to everyone from a 14-year old kid to the most famous ornithologist."

Van has solicited and edited many papers for the book. In addition, the book will contain several of Van's own papers and 10 papers that were completed for Ted Parker after his death.

After these two writing projects are finished, Van wants to write an "incredibly detailed" book on the birds of Louisiana. He hopes that his Louisiana book will be a model for how amateur ornithologists can contribute to the science of ornithology. The book will cover Louisiana's three major regions, with data describing early dates, high counts, etc. of birds in each region. Currently, Van is collecting data on seasonal abundance, and he has already published some of his data on vireos. He also hopes to get back to Bolivia and write another book on the birds of Bolivia.

Involvement with the Colorado Field Ornithologists. -- In 1971, Van sent an important letter to the editor of *The Colorado Field Ornithologist*. In that letter (Remsen 1971*b*), he urged the formation of an official Colorado bird records committee. (Van believes that California was the only state with such a committee at that time.) In the letter, Van further proposed that the Colorado Field Ornithologists (CFO) should develop an official state list and keep details of all unusual observations and slides on file. He also sent to Jack Reddall a draft standard form for sight observations. Subsequently, the CFO's official Records Committee was established (May 20, 1972), and Jack Reddall served as the first committee chairman.

Van also published a number of articles in *The Colorado Field Ornithologist* (later named the *C.F.O. Journal*), including one on the first fall record of a Hudsonian Godwit in Colorado (Remsen 1971*a*), one on identification of Purple and Cassin's finches (Remsen 1975), and a letter on the Gilded Flicker "controversy" (Remsen 1972*a*). The most substantial article that Van authored for CFO (Remsen 1972*b*) focused on field identification challenges for Colorado birders. Van was concerned that once birders learn how to identify and where to expect the more common species, they tend to overlook similar, rare species. He urged that birders should "... be alert for these possibilities," and he asked that birders "...relay field marks noted by myself, and others, not published in the commonly used field guides."

DFO and Record Keeping. -- While Van was a graduate student at Berkeley, he published an article on taking field notes for *American Birds* (Remsen 1977). He urged that birdwatchers who spend a significant percentage of time on finding birds "... record their observations in a meaningful or useful way." He suggested that permanent field notes should be based on the two-part system devised by Joseph Grinnell: 1) species accounts with dates, locations, numbers, and other observations; and 2) a journal listing of what species--and how many of each--are seen at a given locality on a given day. Van argued that such notes

could be invaluable in the future, and he practices what he preaches. Each morning during the first half hour after official dawn he records all birds he observes at his home, which is three miles from the Mississippi River and four miles from a large swamp. On weekends, he also conducts an 80-minute census of birds on his property. He enters all his data into a database, expecting eventually to publish graphs on the seasonal status of all birds in the Baton Rouge area.

Van kept daily species lists even before he knew there were other birdwatchers. By the time he met Jack Reddall in 1966, he was already an "obsessive record keeper." When he began to receive DFO's publication, *Colorado Bird Notes*, he noted that it included numbers as well as species, so he also began to record numbers. Now that he has seen how other organizations work, he believes that DFO is the most organized data-gathering bird club in North America, and he would like to see DFO computerize the data contained within its publication, *Lark Bunting*.

Other Birding Activities. -- Van is still an active birder in Colorado, where he returns at least once a year to visit family. He has remained true to his birding roots by continuing his DFO membership. He also resurrected the Barr Lake CBC and compiled it until 1988, and last year he started the Mt. Evans Breeding Bird Survey (BBS) route (he conducted that BBS the day after our interview). He continues to report unusual species he finds in Colorado, including the wintering Golden-crowned Sparrow at the Red Rocks Trading Post, a Carolina Wren in his parents yard (last summer), a Fox Sparrow at Echo Lake, and three Pine Grosbeaks and 48 Red Crossbills on his Mt. Evans BBS route.

In Louisiana, he served as co-founder and member of the Editorial Board for *Journal of Louisiana Ornithology*, was a member of the Louisiana Bird Records Committee from 1983-1989, and was a member of the Louisiana Ornithological Society's Board of Directors. He started the electronic bulletin board for Louisiana birders and initiated a nest record program for Louisiana. He also conducts three Louisiana BBS routes, compiles the Baton Rouge and Crowley CBCs, conducted the field work for several blocks of the Louisiana Breeding Bird Atlas (now in press), and both he and his students speak to bird clubs. As if that were not enough, Van served on the Editorial Board of *American Birds*, was a member of the Editorial Board for *Western Birds*, and he served for nine and 13 years on the check-list committees for the American Birding Association and the AOU, respectively.

Future Goals. -- Van's future goals include writing his books on the birds of Louisiana and Bolivia, and discovering as much as he can about Neotropical birds. He also cares that his research be fun.

Van: "If you're not having a good time, it's probably not worth doing."

He wants graduate students who are motivated and work hard, but he also recognizes that they need to have balanced lifestyles. In fact, Van's non-academic goal is to "Make sure I'm a good daddy." During recent years, Van married Catherine L. Cummins--a professor at LSU in Science Education, built a house, had a son, Will, and fought two bouts of cancer. At this point, he cannot bear to leave his 3-year old son for long.

As a final thought, Van urged us to let people how important Colorado birders were in helping him get started.

Van: "I was helped immensely by the Coopers. DFO let me go on a Christmas count. Lynn and Patty made a teenager feel welcomed. DFO set a particularly good example for systematically keeping records. Jack Reddall was instrumental in showing me the importance of high standards. People encouraged me."

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## **PREFERENCES AMONG AMERICAN PIPITS FOR DIFFERENT ALPINE PLANT COMMUNITIES ON NIWOT RIDGE, COLORADO**

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### **Abstract**

Do American Pipits (*Anthus rubescens*) choose their territories on the basis of snowfields being present? As snowfields melt during the breeding season, pipit territories would be more hydric, thus supporting taller vegetation and greater densities of food resources (arthropods) compared to snow-free areas. To test this hypothesis, we censused pipits in four different alpine plant communities (wet meadow, moist meadow, dry meadow, and fellfield), and found that pipit abundance was highest at sites with greater percentages of wet/moist meadow communities. Sites with smaller percentages of wet/moist meadow communities surrounded by dry meadow and/or rocky communities had the lowest abundance of pipits. We suggest that insect availability may be higher in moist/wet communities than in dry, rocky communities, thereby increasing foraging opportunities for and explaining the abundance patterns of American Pipits in different alpine plant communities.

### **Introduction**

In early summer, snowfields and snow-free areas form mosaics of nesting and foraging sites for breeding birds in the Colorado Rocky Mountains. In fact, alpine birds may select their territories on the basis of whether or not snowfields are present. Verbeek (1970) emphasized the importance of snowfield communities to pipits by suggesting that snowfields improve the foraging efficiency of birds feeding in alpine zones (the snowfield hypothesis). Frequent observations of wind-blown arthropods (chilled and dead) littering snowfields gave credence to this hypothesis (Edwards 1972). Hendricks (1987), however, found that adult American Pipits visited snow-free sites more often than expected and snowfields less often than expected. Norvell and Creighton (1990) found that food resources for American Pipits were relatively low in snowfields when compared to snow-free areas. Thus, the snowfield hypothesis has not been supported.

Why, then, would pipit territories consistently include some snow, as observed by Verbeek (1970)? We predicted that this pattern would be explained not by snow, per se, but by moisture. Sites with melting snow would provide more moisture, thus vegetation would be taller and more lush, and densities of

arthropods would be greater in comparison to snow-free areas. To test our prediction, we censused American Pipits in four alpine plant communities: wet meadow, moist meadow, dry meadow, and fellfield. The latter habitat supports mostly cushion plants and a few scattered forbs and grasses.

### **Methods**

**Study area.** -- We conducted a pilot study on Niwot Ridge in the Front Range of the Colorado Rocky Mountains. Niwot Ridge is approximately six km long and decreases in elevation from 3700 m on the west end to 3400 m on the east end. We selected four study sites, each approximately 25 ha, along the ridge and numbered them 1 through 4 from west to east, respectively. Each site contained a different composition (percentages) of wet meadow, moist meadow, dry meadow, and fellfield. We used a dot-grid overlay (grid analysis) on a topographic map of Niwot Ridge to determine the relative percentages of wet and moist meadow communities within each site (map produced by the Plant Ecology Laboratory, Institute of Arctic Research, University of Colorado). The remaining percentages consisted of primarily dry meadow, fellfield, and bare rock communities. To improve the accuracy of our results, the four sites were located in areas with no snow, and sites were separated by more than 300 m to minimize the possibility of censusing the same bird in more than one site.

**Field methods** -- Between mid July and early August, 1996, we conducted 15-minute point counts of American Pipits in each of the four plant communities at all four sites. Points were located at the center of each of the four plant community types, and all pipits observed perched in or flying through a 30-m radius of the point were recorded. Each site was surveyed four times over one day. The four census periods were: early morning (0700-1000), late morning (1000-1300), early afternoon (1300-1600), and late afternoon (1600-1900). Care was taken not to count the same bird twice within counts. During the point counts, we also noted pipits engaged in foraging.

We used vegetation height as an indicator of vegetation lushness in each of the four plant communities. Vegetation height was measured in 10 different areas within each plant community at each site.

**Data analysis.** -- A chi-square test was used to determine whether there was a statistically significant difference ( $P < 0.05$ ) in the abundance of pipits at each of the four sites (site effect) and among the four plant communities (community effect). The abundance of pipits observed foraging were analyzed in the same manner. A 2-way ANOVA was used to determine whether mean vegetation heights differed among sites and communities ( $P < 0.05$ ), and Tukey's HSD was used to determine the effects of site, community type, and site by community type interactions ( $P < 0.05$ ).

## Results

**Presence of pipits.** -- The numbers of American Pipits we observed using each of the four alpine plant communities are summarized in Table 1. The total number of pipits observed differed significantly among sites ( $\chi^2 = 40.55$ ,  $df = 4$ ,  $P < 0.05$ ), while pipit abundance among the four plant communities did not differ significantly ( $\chi^2 = 4.64$ ,  $df = 4$ ,  $P > 0.05$ ).

**Table 1.** Number of American Pipits observed in each of four types of alpine plant communities.

	Wet Meadow	Moist Meadow	Dry Meadow	Fellfield	Totals
Site 1	16	10	19	7	52
Site 2	4	10	9	8	31
Site 3	5	8	5	1	19
Site 4	3	2	0	2	7
Totals	28	30	33	18	109

**Foraging pipits.** -- Similar to the pipit abundance pattern, there was a significant difference in the total number of pipits foraging among sites ( $\chi^2 = 95.22$ ,  $df = 4$ ,  $P < 0.05$ ), while there was no significant difference in the abundance of foraging pipits among the different plant communities ( $\chi^2 = 2.28$ ,  $df = 4$ ,  $P > 0.05$ ). Also similar to the abundance pattern, more pipits were recorded foraging at Site 1 ( $n = 37$ ) than at any other site; from there the number of pipits observed foraging decreased from west sites to east sites:  $n = 11$  at Site 2;  $n = 8$  at Site 3;  $n = 2$  at Site 4.

**Vegetation height.** -- There was a significant difference in vegetation height among the four sites and four plant community types (2-way ANOVA,  $F = 119.78$ ,  $df = 15$ ,  $P < 0.0001$ ). As expected, vegetation was tallest in the wet meadows ( $14.8 \pm 0.33$  cm,  $n = 40$ ) and shortest in the fellfields ( $1.7 \pm 0.16$  cm,  $n = 40$ ). There was an unexpected significant interaction between site and community effects on vegetation height ( $F = 61.96$ ,  $df = 9$ ,  $P < 0.005$ ), in which Sites 1 and Site 4 had significantly taller vegetation in all communities than Site 2 (Tukey HSD,  $df = 144$ ,  $P < 0.05$ ).

**Grid analysis** -- Of the four 25-ha sites, Site 1 had the highest percentage (70%) of wet/moist meadow communities. The percentage of wet/moist meadow communities decreased from west to east along the ridge: Site 2 (48%), Site 3 (13%), Site 4 (8%).

## Discussion

Drury (1961), Verbeek (1970), and Norvell and Creighton (1990) all observed more American Pipits using wetter, more lush sites than drier, less vegetated

sites. This study suggests that pipits select their territories on Niwot Ridge on the basis of overall vegetative composition. We found no clear preference among pipits for any particular type of plant community, however they did show a preference for particular sites. Pipits seemed to prefer Site 1, which had the greatest coverage of wet/moist communities and the tallest vegetation among the four sites. Few pipits used wet communities surrounded by dry rocky communities, even at Site 4 where the vegetation was relatively tall. Also, pipits did not seem to associate strongly with taller vegetation, as shown by the relatively high number using Site 2, where the vegetation was relatively short. It appears that the total coverage of wet/moist communities within a site best explained pipit abundance; additional field data are needed to test this hypothesis further.

Pipits at Niwot Ridge were more abundant at wetter sites, possibly because wet/moist meadow communities support higher densities of arthropods. Conry (1978) found a greater abundance of above-ground arthropods in wetter sites at Guanella Pass. Further investigation is needed to determine the relationship between prey availability and the composition/structure of plant communities. Because birds often forage where they can maximize their feeding rates (Goss-Custard 1981), comparison of foraging behavior and prey availability relative to community type and composition may help explain why American Pipits show a preference for sites containing higher percentages of wet/moist communities.

### Acknowledgments

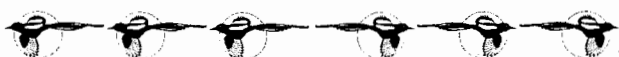
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Long-billed Curlew near Moss Landing, Monterey Bay area, California, January 12, 1996  
by David Leatherman

## INSTRUCTIONS TO CONTRIBUTORS OF THE *JOURNAL OF THE COLORADO FIELD ORNITHOLOGISTS*

The *Journal of the Colorado Field Ornithologists* is devoted to the field study of birds in Colorado. Articles and notes of scientific or general interest and reports of unusual observations are solicited. Articles are informal and are not restricted to any particular style, but authors are asked to consult recent issues for the general format. Also, **please do not use "tabs" in electronic versions of your manuscript**, except to indicate new paragraphs (e.g., do not use them to create hanging indents). The Editor will send a more detailed set of instructions upon request.

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**Deadlines for submissions are: December 1 for January issue, March 1 for April issue, June 1 for July issue, and September 1 for October issue.**

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Standard reporting forms are now the centerfold of each issue of the *Journal of the Colorado Field Ornithologists*; or use an *Audubon Field Notes* Mountain West form, available from Van A. Truan (1901 Court St., Pueblo, CO 81003; phone: 719/543-4744). Standard forms are preferred because completion of all sections ensures that most pertinent information is included. If photographs are submitted, please send two copies, as the records are duplicated before being sent to committee members.

Send records of rare birds to the Colorado Bird Records Committee, c/o Zoological Collections, Denver Museum of Natural History, City Park, Denver, CO 80205; or send them to Mark Janos, Records Committee Chair, 10 Sedum Ct., Pueblo, CO 81001.

