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COVER PHOTO: Sabine's Gull, 9 September 1972, at Ordway, Crowley County, Colorado. Photographed by Dominic A. Bartol, Jr.

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Gilded Flicker in Colorado? -- Another Rejoinder

BOQ, USAFA, CO. 80840

August 25, 1972

Colorado Field Ornithologist
Editor: David W. Lupton
Serials Section
Colorado State University Libraries
Fort Collins, Colorado 80521

Dear David,

The Aiken Audubon Society wishes to express its concern over the "Gilded Flicker controversy". Contrary to Mr. Bartol's statement, several of our field observers, Mrs. Helen B. Thurlow and Mr. Mahlon Speers, did attempt to verify this sighting. Unfortunately, the bird in question was absent during both their visits.

This seems to be an unfortunate incident that is difficult to clear up. Perhaps the best thing we can do is learn from it and develop procedures to preclude future dilemmas. In this regard, Aiken Audubon has taken several steps in months past. We've designed and distributed our own rare bird reporting form. Future revisions will add good points suggested in the form published in the June Colorado Field Ornithologist.

We are also publishing seasonal checklists in our newsletter. Birds not on the checklist that are reported during the period, plus those starred on the checklist, must be reported with a rare bird reporting form to be considered for authentication.

We have formed an authentication committee for verifying all rare sightings. All members of this body are seasoned field observers as well as CFO members.

The Aiken Audubon Society is serious about the study of field ornithology. We are running four field trips every month including a series for beginners and a population analysis of the Monument Nursery to assist the Pike National Forest in their development of an environmental education center there.

We feel that the reporting of unverified sightings of rare birds is not an acceptable practice and, as indicated by the steps we have taken, all reports submitted by Aiken Audubon will be of the highest possible quality in the future.

Kenneth Turner Blackshaw
President, Aiken Audubon

Some More Challenges in Field Identification!

706 Hover Road
Longmont, Colorado
November 14, 1972

Mr. David Lupton, Editor
Colorado Field Ornithologist
Colorado State University Libraries
Fort Collins, Colorado 80521

Dear Mr. Lupton:

May I comment on Van Remsen's excellent article on "Some Challenges in Field Identification for Colorado Birders" (Colorado Field Ornithologist, No. 13, September 1972)? I find his notes interesting and helpful, but wish to disagree on two points: the reporting of Yellow-shafted Flickers, and the implied abundance of Tennessee Warblers.

In his paragraph on flickers, Van states that "most of our 'yellow-winged' flickers are probably hybrids". This may also be true of our 'red-winged' flickers. Van further states that no one should report a Yellow-shafted Flicker unless all the head pattern characters are also seen clearly. If we follow his reasoning, no one should report a Red-shafted Flicker unless all the head pattern characters are also seen clearly. He emphasizes that traces of hybridization are difficult to see in the field, which is undoubtedly true.

It appears that we are left with these alternatives. We can report what we actually see (for instance, in flight), either Yellow-shafted or Red-shafted Flickers. Or we can report simply "flicker species", as is done in NEBRASKA BIRD REVIEW, and perhaps in other publications. Only birds seen at very close range, or examined in the hand (as in banding) can be positively identified as one species or the other, or as hybrids.*

Regarding Tennessee and Orange-crowned Warblers, there is little possibility of error in identification (or confusion) when the birds are seen at fairly close range, or, better yet, examined in the hand. The Tennessee Warbler is not a common migrant, in either spring or fall, anywhere in the eleven contiguous states comprising the Western Bird Banding territory. Alaska, also in WBB area, is a different story. Records show that less than 70 Tennessee Warblers have been reported as banded in those eleven

*Editor's Note: See the article by Paul R. Julian, p. 16 in this issue of the CFO, for further discussion of the hybrid flicker problem.

states during the past 17 years - or an average of about four birds per year. Of these, surprisingly few have been banded in Colorado. In many years of banding, I have netted only four. So I feel sure that their designations as rare is correct (STATUS AND MIGRATION DATA OF BIRDS OF THE DENVER AREA, 1969, Holt). Some will of course be overlooked, but many in a single year or season should not be expected. Orange-crowned Warblers are of course common, with two or more races occurring here. As Van suggests, it is well to look carefully at each one, especially during fall migration.

Sincerely,
Allegra Collister

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MEMORIAL UNIVERSITY OF NEWFOUNDLAND
Department of Biology
St. John's, Newfoundland, Canada

September 30, 1972

Dear Dave,

Thanks for your note of September 19 and copies of the CFO #13 and Ptarmigan 3 (7-9). We all enjoyed reading them. I differ on one point with Van Remsen (CFO 13:14); all Ring-billed Gulls (adults) I've handled or collected had yellow not dark eyes like adult Californias. Otherwise, I thought his article most interesting and useful.

Sincerely,
Ronald A. Ryder

RECENT RECORD OF A POSSIBLE ICELAND GULL
OR THAYER'S GULL IN COLORADO

Jack Reddall
4450 South Alton Street
Englewood, Colorado 80110

On February 5, 1972, while scanning an area of open water at Cherry Creek Reservoir in Arapahoe County, I came upon a very pale, immature gull swimming alone at the edge of the ice roughly 200 feet distant. As I continued to watch it, the bird spread its wings and hopped up onto the ice. In doing so, it displayed a flash of silver or white in the under-wing primaries. A few moments later it flew off away from me out over the ice, again showing the light colored under-wing primaries and even colored, light buffy upper-wing primaries. At no time could I discern any contrasts in the upper wings. Since the bird never joined any of the other gulls that were present, a relative size comparison could not be made. Due to its rather light buffy over all color and complete lack of any darker or contrasting color in the upper primaries, I dismissed the bird as a first winter immature Glaucous Gull (Larus hyperboreus).

On the following day while accompanying a trip of the Denver Field Ornithologists led by John Cooper at the Cherry Creek Reservoir, I again sighted the gull, this time sitting alone on the ice about 500 feet from shore. Both John Cooper and I observed the bird for about fifteen minutes through telescopes ranging between 20X and 50X. The light was extremely good and even at a distance of 500 feet, the bird showed up very clearly. Occasionally it would rise, ruffle and raise its wings, disclosing quite prominently the silver or whitish under primaries. The bill, about Herring Gull size, was black for about two-thirds of its length from the tip. The basal portion of the bill appeared light by contrast and was probably due in part to some feathering. The almost black bill raised a question in my mind since all immature Glaucous Gulls I had ever seen showed a black tip only to the bill. Finally the bird took flight and in doing so again showed the extremely pale upper wings completely devoid of any marking in the primaries. John Cooper and I were able to follow its flight until it eventually settled down on the ice this time next to an adult Herring Gull and adult Ring-billed Gull. I suddenly realized that the gull in question was the same size as the Herring Gull. I then mentioned to John Cooper that I suspected an immature Iceland Gull. We were able to observe the three gulls together for approximately another fifteen minutes as they stood on the ice. During this time, we noticed that when at rest, the wings of the suspected Iceland Gull extended well beyond the tail which was not so readily apparent in nearby Herring Gulls (although some Herring Gulls did appear to have wings that extended beyond their tails).

With the approach of some people paddling a canoe, the gulls began to scatter in all directions. While attempting to pick up the bird in flight

with my binoculars, I came upon a second winter immature Glaucous Gull circling with a group of Herring and Ring-billed Gulls. As I continued to follow the flight of the Glaucous Gull, John Cooper was able to relocate and track what we thought to be the Iceland Gull. The Glaucous Gull eventually came to rest on the ice next to two Herring Gulls. Its larger overall size, considerably longer and heavier bill and larger head with the extremely all white coloration clearly marked it. Meanwhile, John Cooper had followed our "Iceland Gull" to an area of open water amidst a stand of dead cottonwood at the south end of the reservoir where it landed and began feeding ostensibly on small fish. At this point, we had one telescope on the Glaucous Gull and the second scope focused on the feeding "Iceland Gull". Several Herring and Ring-billed Gulls were in the general vicinity of our suspect bird again providing excellent size comparisons. We continued our dual observations of these two species for about ten minutes during which time other members of the field trip were provided with an opportunity to view both birds. At last the Glaucous Gull again took to the air and following a brief flight, joined the "Iceland Gull" at the open water hole. For a short time then, we were able to watch the Glaucous, "Iceland", Herring and Ring-billed Gulls all together in the same field of our telescopes. The Glaucous Gull appeared large and white while the "Iceland Gull" appeared quite buffy by contrast, yet considerably paler than first and second winter Herring Gulls.

Later in the day, while discussing the probabilities of an Iceland Gull occurring in Colorado (Dr. Alfred M. Bailey obtaining the only specimen at Barr Lake on April 20, 1938), John Cooper raised the interesting point of the bird we had seen earlier possibly being a Thayer's Gull (Larus thayeri) which for a time was considered a small race of the Herring Gull. It has now been accepted as a distinct species having the primaries gray instead of black in the adult. Iceland Gulls, on the other hand, are currently separated into two supposedly recognizable races: Larus glaucoides glaucoides, the nominate Iceland Gull and, Larus glaucoides kumlieni, the Kumlien's Gull (the latter once regarded as a hybrid between Herring and Iceland Gulls). The paleness of "kumlieni" supposedly approaches that of "glaucoides", but has gray markings toward the tips in the wings in the adult (not black with white "mirrors" as in Herring Gulls). The subtle differences, therefore, in plumages between "thayeri" and "kumlieni" pose a tremendous problem in field identification. A summary of these differences is attached to this report based on research available to me both in literature and in museum specimens.

On Monday, February 7, Harold Holt visited Cherry Creek Reservoir at midday and succeeded in locating the bird. Harold, by walking out on the ice, reported he was able to approach to within several hundred feet on several occasions as the bird flew here and there about the open water. His observations substantiated in every detail my observations of February 5-6.

Late Tuesday evening, February 8, just before sunset, I again visited Cherry Creek Reservoir but failed to locate the gull in the diminishing sunlight. However, I did succeed in observing two immature Herring Gulls and a

"sub-sized" Glaucous Gull standing together at the edge of the ice. The Glaucous Gull, a second winter white bird, was so nearly the size of the Herring Gulls that no perceptible difference could be determined. I called John Cooper that evening and mentioned the Glaucous Gull sighting, asking him to verify it the next day just to make certain it was not a second winter Iceland Gull. John did verify the observation reporting its size equal to that of a Herring Gull, but that the large, black-tipped bill and big head ruled out its being an Iceland Gull. Harold Holt and I also were at Cherry Creek Reservoir on Wednesday, February 9, for about an hour and a half and saw the same bird, calling it a "sub-sized" Glaucous Gull. We also found the "Iceland Gull" asleep at a great distance out on the ice. Other than noting its general overall light buffy color, we were unable to resolve anything conclusive in terms of its identity.

Finally, on Sunday, February 13, I again visited Cherry Creek Reservoir and quickly found the "Iceland Gull" swimming with immature and adult Herring Gulls and a number of Common Goldeneyes about 500 feet from shore. I watched the bird in good light and still air for nearly an hour. It was very active this day and on one occasion took off and flew around for two or three minutes. As previously reported, the under-wing primaries were silvery (but so too are those of young Herring Gulls). The upper-wing surface was very light buff with no obvious contrasts between the primaries, secondaries and coverts. The nearly all black bill and small head were clearly recognizable. After about an hour of intense study, a second pale gull suddenly dropped into view. By comparison, this second bird was not quite as buffy as the suspect "Iceland Gull", but was still paler than young Herring Gulls. Otherwise, it had all of the ear-marks of the first bird. Shortly thereafter, the darker, second bird flew off showing silvery under-wing primaries. Fortunately, I managed an excellent look at the upper-wing as the bird flew away from me. The very tips were whitish with a distinct dark tan in the primaries near the tips. The remainder of the upper-wing surface was a uniform light buffy color as in the first bird. I was able to watch both birds for another thirty minutes both flying and at rest noting again all field marks previously described. Later in the day Harold Holt came by to say that he too, had observed both birds which in his opinion were both Iceland Gulls.

After accumulating better than four hours of viewing the first gull over a period of a week, I had arrived at the conclusion that it was a first winter Iceland Gull, more than likely belonging to the "kumlieni" race. The second bird, seen but once on February 13, I considered as probably a first winter "thayeri". Because of the extreme subtle differences in the field separation of these two races, I felt that collecting would be the only sure way to establish true identities. However, on March 12, Van Remsen and I were able to study approximately thirty skins of Herring and Iceland Gulls at the Department of Zoology of the University of California at Berkeley. Included in our examination were specimens of the "thayeri", "glaucoides" and "kumlieni" races. To my dismay, we found much overlapping existed in the

immature first winter plumages of all three races. Even in the hand separation appeared quite impossible without a great amount of detailed study and experience with the genus *Larus*. To attempt a field identification of any of these races in the first winter plumage would be out of the question. Thus the two birds observed at Cherry Creek Reservoir should best be left unidentified.

As a matter of interest, some of the field guides are quick to point out that the wings of Iceland Gulls extend beyond the tail. This would lead one to believe that this is a distinguishing characteristic for separating Iceland Gulls from all others in the field. However, this is not the case. Herring Gull wings also extend beyond the tail. What is intended I believe is to cite one difference between Glaucous and Iceland Gulls (there are also others). Glaucous Gull wings do not extend beyond the tail and in fact in some specimens we examined at Berkeley, we found the wings to be considerably shorter than the tail.

Of additional interest in this matter, is that Van Remsen discovered an "Iceland Gull" at Stow Lake in Golden Gate Park, San Francisco in early February of this year. An Iceland Gull has never been observed or taken in California. Many excellent field ornithologists saw this bird with some calling it a very pale Thayer's Gull and others an Iceland Gull. Van was able to show me the bird on March 11 and it appeared considerably paler than either of the two gulls I had seen at Cherry Creek Reservoir, all of which only adds to the confusion.

As stated earlier, I have attached some very sketchy research data describing some of the alleged differences occurring between the Kumlien's Gull and Thayer's Gull. These descriptive comparisons are provided not as a basis for identification, but only to highlight the difficulty involved in attempting to distinguish between these two races, species or whatever.

POST SCRIPT

The paler, first gull remained at Cherry Creek Reservoir until at least March 4, the last time I observed it at this location. By this date the ice had completely disappeared from the reservoir and I found the bird at the mouth of Cherry Creek where it enters the reservoir. It was at rest on a mud flat with a group of Herring and Ring-billed Gulls. I was able to approach within 150 feet and viewed the bird for thirty minutes at 40X through my telescope.

Surprisingly, I saw what possibly was the very same bird again on April 1, 1972, this time at Prospect Reservoir in southern Weld County. There were numerous gulls at this reservoir on this date and I had no trouble picking the bird up immediately. It was definitely a "white-winged" gull. At rest its primaries showed up much lighter than the wing coverts or secondaries. Contrastingly, the immature Herring Gulls that were present displayed primaries that were darker than the back and the wing coverts and secondaries. When it flew, I noticed the pale upper tail (same general color as the back and wing coverts), a detail I had noted in examining the immature first winter Thayer's and Iceland Gull skins at Berkeley.

KUMLIEN'S GULL

(Larus kumlieni)Larus glaucoides kumlieni

Regarded as a hybrid, intermediate between the Herring and Iceland Gulls. The adult is similar to the Herring Gull, but with gray marking toward the tips of wings instead of black as in that species. The paleness of the bird approaches that of the Iceland Gull. First-year birds resemble first-year Herring Gulls, but are paler, especially on the primaries, or long wing feathers, which in the Herring are usually very dark. Second-year birds are pale and buffy, resembling first-year Iceland Gulls, but the primaries instead of being frosty or whitish, are distinctly grayish - two or three shades darker than the rest of the bird. (1)

Once regarded as a hybrid between Herring and Iceland Gulls, it is now believed to be a race of the latter. Immature gulls that are paler than Herring Gulls of the same stage, but with darker primaries than Iceland Gulls are supposed to be immature "kumlieni". It is possible that many immature Kumlien's would be passed by as Iceland's. Much is still to be learned about the plumages of these gulls. (2)

Paler than the Herring Gull, and has gray wing tips instead of black. It is paler and browner than L.a.thayeri in comparative plumage. (Regarding the specimen collected at Barr Lake on April 20, 1938: "No. 18886 is an example of "kumlieni" which can be matched in all particulars. . . in size it shows the expected intermediate dimensions between "thayeri" and "argentatus". Needless to say, field identification of immatures of this species as well as many others, would be impossible". (3)

THAYER'S GULL

(Larus argentatus thayeri)Larus thayeri

Like Herring Gull but black in primaries replaced by gray. May be told from Kumlien's by white spots or 'mirrors' in the gray wing-tips as in Herring Gull. Wing-tips darker and bill longer than in Kumlien's Gull. (1)

Usually looks like Herring Gull, but black in primaries sometimes replaced by gray darker than that of "kumlieni". "Thayeri" presumably can be told from Kumlien's Gull by white spots or 'mirrors' in the dark wing-tips as in Herring Gull, but as some individuals come so close to "kumlieni", it is a question exactly what they are. Thayer's Gull is probably not safe to identify without collecting. (2)

A small race of the Herring Gull, the primaries being gray instead of black; wing tips darker than "kumlieni" and like "argentatus", have white spots on primaries. . . field identifications are unsatisfactory. (3)

KUMLIEN'S GULL

The "gray-winged" race "kumlieni". . . Gull taxonomy is notoriously complex and that of Larus glaucoides is no exception. The larger species of the genus Larus have always been an exceedingly difficult group taxonomically, and authorities disagree on their exact relationship, even today. As to the "glaucoides"-"kumlieni"-"thayeri" complex, the interested reader is referred to the works of Dwight (1925), Taverner (1933), Rand (1942), Griscom (1944), Salomonsen (1950a) and Macpherson (1961). . . The form "kumlieni" has been variously treated as: (a) a full species; (b) an eastern representative (subspecies) of the Pacific Larus glaucescens, the Glaucous-winged Gull; (c) a hybrid of Larus glaucoides and Larus argentatus; (d) conspecific with Larus glaucoides (A.O.U. CHECK-LIST-1957:218); and (e) by Salomonsen (1950a) and Macpherson (1961) as an intermediate (morphologically, not geographically) but distinct subspecies between "glaucoides" and "thayeri", the latter form regarded by them as not conspecific with Larus argentatus. . . Sight reports of immatures allocated to "glaucoides" or "kumlieni" are nothing more than unreliable guesses, and even specimens in hand present difficulties. (4)

Thayer's first year and Kumlien's first year are virtually indistinguishable . . . they both have pale brown wing tips, paler than first year Herring, but not white like Iceland. . . First year Thayer's is slightly browner on back, wings and breast than first year Iceland, but not strikingly so. (5)

THAYER'S GULL

The high Arctic form "thayeri" (considered a race of Larus argentatus in the A.O.U. CHECK-LIST-1957), but variously treated as conspecific with Larus glaucoides (Iceland Gull) by some authorities and as a separate species by others . . . (4)

Literature Cited

- (1) A FIELD GUIDE TO THE BIRDS. Roger Tory Peterson. Literary Classics, Inc., New York, 1939. Pages 70 and 71.
- (2) A FIELD GUIDE TO THE BIRDS. Roger Tory Peterson. The Riverside Press. Cambridge, Massachusetts, 1959. Pages 262 and 263.
- (3) BIRDS OF COLORADO. Volume 1. Alfred M. Bailey and Robert J. Niedrach. Denver Museum of Natural History, 1965. Pages 377 and 379.
- (4) BIRDS OF THE NEW YORK AREA. John Bull. Harper and Row, Publishers, 1964. Pages 227, 228, 229 and 234.
- (5) Personal note from Van Remsen (2-6-1972) based on study of skins at University of California (Berkeley).

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BIRDS IN WESTERN COLORADO

by
William A. Davis

Annotated field list and travel guides for finding
the best birding spots. \$1.75.

Historical Museum and Institute of Western Colorado
4th and Ute, Grand Junction, Colorado 81501.

SABINE'S GULL; WITH A REVIEW OF COLORADO RECORDS

Helen B. Thurlow
1113 Wood Ave.
Colorado Springs, Colorado 80903

A Sabine's Gull (Xema sabini sabini) was observed on a Colorado Field Ornithologists field trip to Pueblo on 9 September 1972. It was first spotted and identified at Ordway, Crowley County, by David Laliberte and David Silverman, and also seen by Dominic and Ellen Bartol and Helen Thurlow. Mr. Bartol photographed the gull (see cover photo).

The Sabine's Gull was sitting on the ground just inside a barbed-wire fence at the edge of a plowed field and was in the company of, but stayed apart from, Franklin's Gulls (Larus pipixcan). It was first noticed to be different because of its black head, as it was in summer plumage whereas the Franklin's Gulls were in partial winter plumage. It made no sound. When a Franklin's Gull flew, several others always joined it and sometimes the whole flock did so. This was not the case with the Sabine's Gull. When it flew, it flew alone, circled and came back to the same general spot.

We spent at least thirty minutes observing the Sabine's Gull with binoculars and a 20-30 power telescope from a distance of fifteen yards. Vision was clear and excellent. Its dark eye blended into the dark head; there was no eye ring. The black bill had a definite yellow tip. It was a white gull with a gray mantle and was further identified by the black triangle in the primaries and the white triangle in the secondaries. Its white tail was forked and its legs and feet were black. It differs from Bonaparte's Gull by having the black outer primaries, the white triangle in the secondaries, and the black legs and forked tail.

The Sabine's Gull, a small gull, was named for its discoverer, Captain Edward Sabine. He saw it at its breeding grounds on low rocky islands off the west coast of Greenland, where it was seen with a number of Arctic Terns. Since then, it has been found breeding at widely scattered points in the Arctic in both hemispheres, from Wales and Alaska to the Southampton Islands, and from Spitzbergen and the New Siberian Islands south to the Taimyr Peninsula and the Lena Delta. The main migration route is well offshore along the Pacific Coast from Alaska and California to Peru, and from Iceland south along the coasts of Europe. There are numerous records throughout the interior of the United States but only casual records along the Atlantic coast. In Colorado it is listed chiefly as a rare fall migrant. According to Bent (1921) the only place where Sabine's Gull had been found in winter was on the coast of Peru from Tumbes to Callao Bay.

During nesting, Sabine's Gulls prefer small islands which afford some protection from predators. Often a dozen pairs may nest in close proximity. The nests are slight depressions sparsely lined with only a few blades of

grass and stems. Usually two eggs are laid, sometimes three. The period of incubation apparently is not known, but both birds incubate and are devoted parents.

The young are less active than most young gulls; at the approach of danger they either sit perfectly still with half-closed eyes or march slowly away in the dignified manner of adult gulls. They have a call-note like the adults, but it is not so sharp and is lacking in strength. While in the downy stage they hide in the grass, but when two weeks old and nearly fledged they begin to frequent small ponds where they swim about; if danger threatens they swim ashore and hide. Even at this age the adult birds watch them constantly and any Glaucous or Short-billed Gull that comes near is promptly driven away, several Sabine's Gulls uniting in the pursuit to protect the helpless young.

On their breeding grounds Sabine's Gulls feed in small ponds and pools on the tundra where they find small fishes, aquatic worms, insects, and small crustaceans. They pick their food "daintily" from the surface and appear never to dive for it. They also feed along the shores when the tide is out. Except on their breeding grounds they are anti-social and generally silent, rarely uttering their grating cry. They colonize only in small groups and on land are usually solitary. When half a dozen birds are resting on the water, they are usually 30 to 100 yards from their nearest neighbor and not close together.

Bailey and Niedrach (1965) state "The AOU Check-List mentions two races, the nominate form with a wide breeding range, and a sub-species (Xema sabini woznesenskii) of very limited distribution, breeding in western Alaska from Norton Sound to St. Lawrence Island to Hooper's Bay and probably in north-eastern Siberia. The latter is supposed to be much darker than X.s.sabini, with the white tips of the primaries smaller. There are numerous specimens in the Denver Museum collection from St. Michael and from Arctic Alaska, and we question that the supposed differences are sufficient to merit describing the southern bird."

"In migration Xema s.w. occurs on the Pribilof Islands, St. Mathew Island, Nushagak, Ugashik River on the Alaska Peninsula, and San Quintin, Baja California."

Colorado records are chiefly in September and October. There is one sighting in November and one in December, one in May, and one in midsummer, July 22. A review of known sightings in Colorado follows:

From Bailey and Niedrach (1965): An uncommon fall migrant from the eastern plains and rarely to the Alpine Zone. A female collected by Edwin Carter at Alpine Lake (altitude 10,000 feet), above Breckenridge, September 26, 1886, is the first Colorado record; a male was killed at Loveland, October 12, 1889; one secured by Aiken near Manitou Springs, El Paso County, October 10, 1897; an immature in U.C. Museum was shot from a flock of six

northeast of Boulder, September 15, 1907; one secured September 3, two on October 3, and a male, October 31, 1908 at Barr Lake; an immature was collected November 17, 1902 near Denver, one on the White River four miles from Meeker, Rio Blanco County., prior to 1907, and two were taken near Salida, September 26, 1908, one being in C.C. Museum. An immature female in the Denver Museum was collected near Fraser, Grand County, October 21, 1932, and an immature male was collected at Barr Lake, October 10, 1928. An immature was caught at Carbondale, Garfield County, September 27, 1954 by R. A. Ryder, and one noted in Moffat County, near Blue Mountain on October 5, 1954 by R. M. Denny; an adult in Weld County, July 22, 1963 by Allegra Collister, Mrs. Wallace De Long, and Mr. and Mrs. Ted Chandik, and an immature at Cherry Creek Reservoir, October 6, reported by Harold Holt was last seen by Alfred M. Bailey, October 18, 1963.

One additional record from Bailey and Niedrach (1967) is a sighting near Longmont, December 11-28, 1965.

Two records in Colorado Springs from Sam Gadd (pers. comm.): an immature on 11 May 1941 at Johnson Reservoir; and an immature on Johnson Reservoir from September 23 to October 16, 1967.

Denver Field Ornithologists, Monthly Report. Vol. 4, no. 1, October 1968: two seen on September 3, 1968 at Cherry Creek Reservoir.

Denver Field Ornithologists, Monthly Report. Vol. 6, no. 2, November 1970: one seen on October 4, 1970; two on October 10, 1970; and one on October 14, 1970 -- all were seen at Cherry Creek Reservoir. American Birds, Vol. 25, no. 1, February 1971, p. 76, also lists this record but in less detail and omits the October 4 sighting.

Denver Field Ornithologists, Monthly Report. Vol. 7, no. 1, October 1971: 1 seen at Jackson Reservoir, September 19 and 25, 1971. Also cited in American Birds, Vol. 26, no. 1, February 1972, p. 82.

Denver Field Ornithologists, Monthly Report. Vol. 7, no. 2, November 1971: 1 seen at Prospect Reservoir, October 3, 1971. Also cited in American Birds, Vol. 26, no. 1, February 1972, p. 82.

Colorado Field Ornithologist. No. 10, November 1971, p. 26: 1 seen at Lake Maria near Walsenburg, September 1971, in non-breeding plumage by Dave Griffiths (first Pueblo record). (Also cited in American Birds, Vol. 26, no. 1, February 1972, p. 82.)

Linnet Lines. Vol. 4, no. 11, November 1971: 1 seen at C.F.&I. Lakes, September 29-30, 1971 in non-breeding plumage, by David Silverman (second Pueblo record). Also cited in American Birds, Vol. 26, no. 1, February 1972, p. 82.

Linnet Lines. Vol. 5, no. 10, October 1972: 1 on September 9 & 10, 1972, at Ordway, and 2 on September 25, 1972 at C.F.&I. Lakes near Pueblo.

Linnet Lines. Vol. 5, no. 9, September 1972: lists the Sabine's Gull in the Pueblo area as "casual fall migrant".

Knorr (1959) lists Sabine's Gull in El Paso County as follows: "Casual. One specimen is in the Collection and I have several spring records for Fountain. The specimen in the Collection is a fall bird, collected near Colorado Springs on September 23, 1914."

Holt (1969) lists Sabine's Gull in the Denver area as a "rare fall migrant".

Davis (1969) lists Sabine's Gull as "accidental" in western Colorado.

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A PROPOSAL FOR REPORTING FLICKERS IN COLORADO

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The recent occurrence of a purported Gilded Flicker in the Colorado Springs area and the ensuing discussion in the Colorado Field Ornithologist prompts me to contribute the following discussion. For some time I have been bothered by the manner in which eastern slope birders have been reporting flickers as either a Red-shafted Flicker (Colaptes cafer) or Yellow-shafted Flicker (Colaptes auratus)--only rarely is a flicker reported to be a hybrid.

There is convincing evidence presented in a monograph by Short¹ that nearly all the flickers in eastern Colorado are hybrids; that is, they show plumage characteristics of both the red- and yellow-shafted 'species'. I will summarize the evidence presented by Short and include the suggestion that field observers commence using the scoring system outlined below in order that we might gather evidence on hybridization in our flickers (and coincidentally begin teaching ourselves to look for hybrid characteristics).

Short collected flicker specimens along the Platte River from a point in eastern Nebraska (Schuyler) through various points to Greeley, Colorado. To ascertain, quantitatively, hybrid characteristics he constructed a scoring system based on the following easily observed plumage features: crown, ear covert, and throat color; shaft color; presence or absence of nuchal patch; and, for males, the malar strip color. The scoring table shown here is somewhat simplified from that of Short's, but will adequately serve our purpose.

The score for an individual can range from zero for a pure Yellow-shafted Flicker to a 10 (female) or 12 (male) for a pure Red-shafted Flicker. Note particularly that five or six plumage characteristics are involved. The color or status of any single one does not classify the individual as either red- or yellow-shafted. Also note that these are 'field-guide' characteristics which can be observed, provided the observer has sufficient time, in the field.

Graded with the scoring rules given in the table, Short's Platte River specimens would have the following average scores:

<u>Location</u>	<u>Male</u>	<u>Female</u>
Elm Creek, Nebr.	1	1
Crook, Colo.	4	5
Fort Morgan, Colo.	8	7
Greeley, Colo.	10	7
Western Slope (Colo.)	11	9

Remembering that 0 indicates pure yellow- and 12 (male) or 10 (female) pure red-shafted features, we see that eastern Colorado is a region in which a gradual transition from the yellow- to the red-shafted species occurs. At Crook, moreover, the widest range in individual scores was noted; from 1 to 10 for the males and 1 to 8 for females.

I would like to suggest that birders spend a few moments longer at their flickers, and try their hand at scoring a few. Don't just look for shaft color.

Now concerning the Gilded Flicker report. I certainly do not deny that it is possible for a bird from the southern Arizona population of Colaptes chrysoides to wander as far as Colorado. However, because it is known (as I have just briefly shown) that a great many hybrids indistinguishable from the Gilded Flicker occur in eastern Colorado, it seems much more likely that any bird with yellow-shafts and a red-shafted head is a hybrid rather than a Gilded Flicker. Indeed, a few year ago (1964-65) an individual with the field-guide features of a Gilded Flicker resided in the band shell in Municipal Park in Boulder. It was mated, I believe, to what appeared to be a full red-shafted female. A few Boulder birders will remember the bird. Exercise for the reader--what would a male Gilded Flicker score from the table?

Colaptes sp.



Figure 1.

¹Short, Lester L., Jr. 1965. Hybridization in the Flickers (Colaptes) of North America. Bulletin of the American Museum of Natural History, Vol. 129, article 4. 428 p.

Scoring Table for Flickers

		Score
1- Crown Color	gray	0
	mixed	1
	brown	2
2- Ear Coverts	vinaceous tan	0
	intermediate	1
	gray	2
3- Throat Color	vinaceous tan	0
	intermediate	1
	gray	2
4- Nuchal Patch	present, broad	0
	trace, broken	1
	absent	2
5- Shaft Color	yellow	0
	orange to red,	
	barbs yellow-orange	1
	salmon pink	2
6- Malar Color (<u>males</u>)	black	0
	intermediate	1
	red	2
Summary	pure yellow	0
	pure red	10 (females)
		12 (males)

A THIRD SIGHTING AND FIRST ATTEMPTED "NESTING" OF
THE BEWICK'S WREN IN EL PASO COUNTY, COLORADO

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Whereas the Bewick's Wren (Thryomanes bewickii eremophilus) is not an uncommon bird in Colorado, the records indicate that it is a rare one in El Paso County. Knorr (The Birds of El Paso County, Colorado. Univ. Colo. Stud. Ser. Biol. 5, 1959) notes that Aiken collected one in Colorado Springs in 1879, and Knorr reported two birds south of Colorado Springs in 1950.

The writer observed a solitary male for four days (18-21 June, 1972 inclusive) at his ranch on the north edge of Colorado Springs. It was not shy and close study revealed the light eye stripe characteristic of the species. The wren sang frequently while "in residence", the song, too, being typical of the Bewick's Wren with buzzing notes appearing frequently in the repertoire. This bird represents only the third record for the species in El Paso County.

The Bewick's Wren has nested frequently in northwestern Colorado (Moffat County: in Bailey and Niedrach. Birds of Colorado. Denver Mus. Nat. Hist. 1965). East of the mountains, however, nesting has been reported only from Baca, Huerfano, and Fremont counties, all south of El Paso County. The present wren actually made an attempt at nesting. Spending much time in a row of boxelder trees (Acer negundo interius), the wren was seen placing short twigs in a rotted out hollow seven feet high on the side of one of the boxelders. At first there was a flurry of "nest building" which tapered off until the bird disappeared on the fifth day. The "nest" was eventually removed and was found to consist of 70 twigs, many of them branched. This is the most northern nesting attempt of the Bewick's Wren in Colorado east of the Rockies.

Many thanks are due birder Sam W. Gadd who was kind enough to confirm the identification.

MOVEMENTS OF REDWINGS COLOR-MARKED IN
NORTH-CENTRAL COLORADO IN 1971

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Since 1961, biologists from the Denver Wildlife Research Center have been gathering data on the local movements and migration patterns of Red-winged Blackbirds (Agelaius phoeniceus) that winter or summer in the South Platte River Valley. Winter surveys of blackbird roosts and recoveries of banded birds have provided much information. More information has been obtained by attaching plastic leg streamers to the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service aluminum bands. Guarino (1968) reported a 200 percent increase in the band recovery rate for redwings marked in this way. This paper contains the information on redwing movements obtained by color-marking 2,825 redwings in early 1971 and following up this work with newspaper publicity and an extensive survey of breeding populations the next spring.

METHODS

We captured, banded, and marked 1,966 male redwings with 1 x 3-inch plastic leg streamers and 859 females with 1 x 2.5-inch streamers. From January 6 through February 6, 1971, a total of 2,119 redwings were marked with white streamers at three locations (Figure 1): 1,685 at Mile High Duck Club Marsh, a roosting site 3 miles northeast of Barr Lake, Adams County; 381 at Samor Feedlot, 10 miles southwest of Barr Lake; and 53 at Natco Feedlot, 1 mile north of Brighton, Weld County. From February 8 through March 2, 706 redwings at Mile High Duck Club were marked with red streamers. The color was changed to differentiate the late winter population, which probably included migrants arriving from farther south that might have a different summer range.

On May 24-27, 1971, we checked roadside breeding colonies of redwings for marked birds in southeastern, central, and north-central Wyoming, mainly in Platte, Fremont, Hot Springs, Washakie, and Big Horn counties. On June 3, we searched the South Platte and St. Vrain Valleys within Adams, Weld, Larimer, and Boulder counties, Colorado. Both routes covered areas where redwings that we have banded in the past 10 years have been recovered.

On June 13, 1971, an article about this study (Anonymous, 1971) appeared in Empire, the Denver Post Sunday magazine supplement. Readers were asked to report any sightings of marked redwings to the Denver Wildlife Research Center.

RESULTS

Sighting locations of marked birds are shown in Figure 1. Denver Wildlife Research Center biologists saw marked birds incidental to other studies at two Colorado locations - Loveland Cemetery and the Federal Center, Lakewood (southwest metropolitan Denver). Five white markers were seen at Loveland on February 4, and four white and two red markers were seen there on March 3. The marked birds were among roosting populations estimated at 2,400 to 12,500 on various dates during this period. No marked birds were seen during the spring roadside surveys, although 2,510 birds (60 percent males) were checked in Wyoming and 1,027 birds (79 percent males) in Colorado. We believe the principal reason we failed to see marked birds on the two road surveys was the small numbers of marked birds in relation to total population and total summer range.

Sightings were reported by eight persons before the Empire publicity and by seven observers who read the article. Reports from Cheyenne, Wyoming and Estes Park, Colorado were among those resulting from the latter. Five observers in the Denver metropolitan area and near Lafayette, Colorado saw one or more marked birds feeding in their yards, in most cases in company with 15 to 500 other redwings. As many as three white and two red markers were seen by Mrs. W. L. Baker in her yard at Wheat Ridge (west metropolitan Denver) on April 19. She reported white markers intermittently from January 31 through October 16 and red markers in March and April. All reports by other observers were from February through June, 1971.

All observers together reported color-marked redwings at 17 locations from Littleton and Cherry Hills Village (southeast metropolitan Denver), north to Cheyenne, Wyoming, a distance of 107 miles. All sightings were well within the spring-summer pattern of past band recoveries. However, it is somewhat surprising that there were no reports east of a line from Brighton, Colorado to Cheyenne; 26 percent of all our past recoveries have been reported east of this line, mainly in the La Salle-Greeley area of Colorado but extending as far east as Lindon, Washington County, Colorado.

Through February, only white markers were reported; these were sighted from southeast Denver to Loveland, Colorado. In March and April, the peak spring migration period for redwings, at least 13 markers (eight white, five red) were still seen in the Denver-Loveland region, and a red marker was first reported in Cheyenne in late April. In May and June, when most birds should have reached their breeding range, reports of at least 18 markers (7 white, 11 red) were widely dispersed from Littleton and Lakewood, Colorado north to Cheyenne, Wyoming and northwest to Estes Park and the Red Feather Lakes, Colorado.

DISCUSSION

Sighting records of marked birds from March through June 1971 did not reflect the 3:1 ratio of white streamers to red streamers used. Red markers were seen at 12 locations, white at only 7. In March and April, the percentage of red-marked birds sighted (5 of 706, or 0.71%) was nearly double that of white-marked birds (8 of 2,119, or 0.37%). In May and June, the percentage of red-marked birds sighted (11 of 706, or 1.55%) was nearly five times that of white-marked birds (7 of 2,119, or 0.33%). The disproportionately low number of white marker sightings, especially in May and June, could possibly indicate that a large segment of the white-marked wintering population migrated to a more remote breeding range, but this is contradictory to our band recovery data. The latter show that most of the winter resident population in the Denver-Greeley area remains in this area to breed, whereas many of those banded here in March apparently are passing through from the Arkansas Valley enroute to Wyoming, Montana, and western Canada. The lower proportion of white-marked redwings reported is more probably due to other factors. Perhaps there is a lower retention rate for white than red markers, or red markers are more noticeable than white. With such small numbers of birds, chance cannot be entirely ruled out.

Our color-marking studies are continuing in 1972, and readers are asked to be alert for tagged redwings in the plains, foothills, or even in higher mountain valleys in Colorado or farther north.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

We appreciate the help of those who reported seeing color-marked redwings. These include Mrs. W. G. Ainsley, Mrs. W. L. Baker, Mrs. Carr, R. C. Culver, J. E. Dalton, E. J. Dornagall, John Flavin, Mrs. G. H. Gere, H. L. George, M. Hill, Mrs. A. R. Larsen, Mrs. R. A. Ryder, and Mrs. Rose Wilcox. Mrs. Bert Morissette and Gustav A. Swanson were helpful in relaying the Red Feather Lakes reports to us, and Dr. Swanson and David W. Lupton publicized this study in the June 1971 issue of Ptarmigan, newsletter of the Fort Collins Bird Club. Denver Wildlife Research Center biologists who reported marked birds were O. E. Bray, J. W. De Grazio, D. F. Mott, and C. P. Stone.

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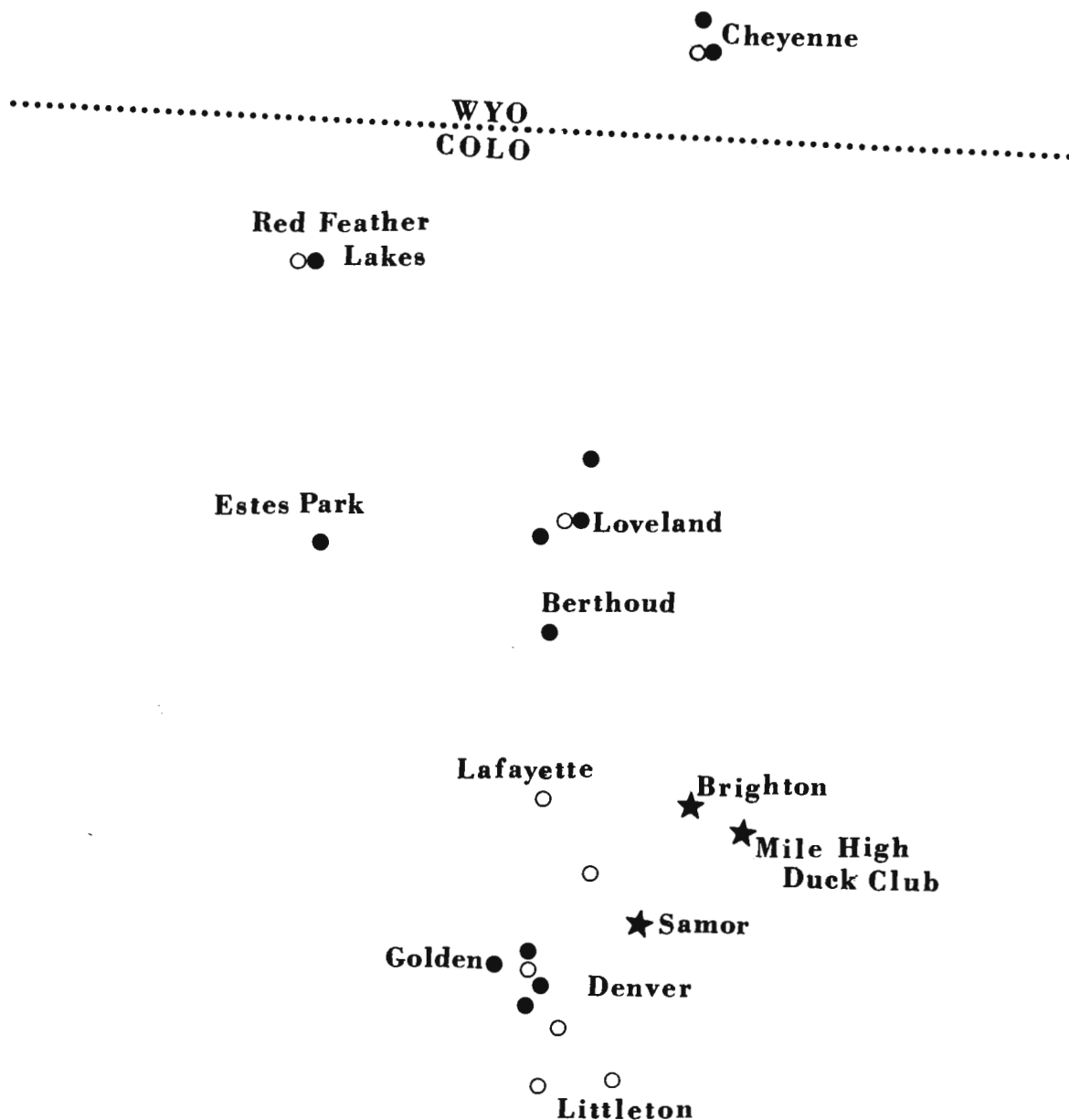


Figure 1. Locations of 1971 redwing bandings (stars) and color-marker sightings (open circles for white, filled circles for red). Each circle represents one or more tagged redwings seen on one or more dates at a single location.

UNUSUAL OBSERVATIONS

compiled by

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White Pelican -- Charles R. Bryant reports that a White Pelican, which is a rare visitor in the Monte Vista area, was present on Home Lake three miles east of Monte Vista, Colorado, from mid-September to 27 September 1972.

Cattle Egret -- Single bird observed at Mile High lakes on 9 September 1972 during the Denver Field Ornithologists Fall Count northeast of Denver. Identification confirmed by Thompson Marsh, John and Joyce Cooper, and John Colvin.

Scissor-tailed Flycatcher -- A sub-adult was observed flying in a grove of cottonwood trees on the Pawnee National Grasslands on 1 July 1972 by Richard Olendorff and Jack Stoddart. This is a new species for the Pawnee National Grasslands, located in northern Colorado.

Gray-cheeked Thrush -- Single bird observed north of the Mile High Duck Club on 9 September 1972 during the Denver Field Ornithologists Fall Count northeast of Denver. Sighting made by John and Joyce Cooper, Thompson Marsh and John Colvin.

Blackpoll Warbler -- An adult female was banded near Longmont on 4 October 1972 by Allegra Collister. Positive identification was confirmed by Dr. Alfred M. Bailey through comparison with museum skins. Descriptions in two field guides mention the "pale yellowish legs" and "buffy-yellowish legs and feet" of the Blackpoll Warbler. The banded bird (as well as all skins) had black or very dark legs, but also had the rather indistinctly streaked back characteristic of the Blackpoll. In a personal communication, Roger Tory Peterson states "Recent mist-netting over the last several years indicates that this leg-color of Blackpolls is a variable thing. Future revisions of the Field Guides will go into this point more thoroughly." The experienced birder will know that female and immature Blackpolls in fall have no visual resemblance to spring adults.

Pine Warbler -- An adult female of this species was banded just west of Longmont on 13 September 1972 by Allegra Collister. Identification was difficult, and hinged finally on the unstreaked back of this nondescript warbler. Contrary to information in the various field guides, leg color is not a useful characteristic in separating this from other similar confusing fall warblers (see note on Blackpoll Warbler). One specimen has been taken in Colorado, by Thorne at

Boulder on 11 December 1964 (BIRDS OF COLORADO. Vol. II, Bailey and Niedrach, 1965). One was banded at Lyons by the Whitneys (Western Bird Bander. Vol. 47, No. 2, 1972). There are two additional Colorado records, those of George and Marie Shier, a sight record on 5 September 1964 on Lookout Mountain, and a banding record in the same area 8 October 1965.

Boat-tailed Grackle -- An adult male of this species was observed on the west side of Pastoris Reservoir, south of Durango, on 24 June 1972 by Robbie Elliott and "Kip" Stransky. During earlier sightings by Oppie Reames, it had been reported carrying nesting material, although a female was not seen. Robbie Elliott reported it to be a rather shy bird, with an unmistakable call. Second record for Colorado -- see Colorado Field Ornithologist, No. 9, July 1971, p. 36 for first report.

Snow Bunting -- About noon on Friday, November 3, 1972, two days after an 18-inch snow, I was walking in about a foot of snow on the open, west side of the Denver Federal Center in Jefferson County when I heard a loud single, whistled note overhead. I looked up in time to see a lone, pure white, sparrow-sized bird pass about thirty feet overhead. As it flew away from me, I could see no coloration in the tail or wings. It repeated the single, loud, whistled note once or twice more. Although I saw the bird from below and behind for only a few seconds, the call, size, pure white appearance and weather conditions convinced me that it was a Snow Bunting. I am familiar with the species from sightings in northern Wyoming. To the best of my knowledge, the earliest recorded sighting of this species in Colorado was made December 24, 1926 by Thompson Marsh. Bailey and Neidrach in Birds of Colorado list the Snow Bunting as a rare winter visitor, but are of the opinion that it is probably more common than we think. The rarity is not so much the bird species as it is the person crazy enough to be out birding in the kind of weather when Snow Buntings can be seen!

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