

C.F.O. Journal

The Colorado Field Ornithologists' Quarterly



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CFO JOURNAL

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CFO JOURNAL is a quarterly publication devoted to the field study of birds in Colorado. Articles and notes of scientific or general interest, and reports of unusual observations, are solicited. Send manuscripts, with photos and drawings to: Barry Knapp, 4695 Osage Dr., Boulder, CO 80303. Send rare bird reports to: CFO Official Records Committee, c/o Zoological Collections, Denver Museum of Natural History, City Park, Denver, CO 80205.

ANNUAL MEMBERSHIP DUES (renewable at the beginning of each year), including a subscription to CFO JOURNAL: Sustaining, \$100; Supporting, \$25; Contributing, \$10; Regular, \$5. Dues and contributions are tax-deductible to the extent allowed by law. Membership inquiries and renewals should be addressed to Judd Sundine, Treasurer, 5325 Garland, Arvada, CO 80002. Send change of address to Camille Cummings, PO Box 109, Berthoud, CO 80513.

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COVER ILLUSTRATION: *Dipper*, by Narca Moore. Narca has many ties to Colorado and especially to the Boulder area, where she spent many of her formative years observing our wildlife and native vegetation. She was very active here in Front Range birding and wildlife groups. She left Colorado brimming with her own special observations on nature and with the drive to express these impressions through her artwork. Her drawings reflect the spirit of the living and nature's relationships, as well as a detailed image of her subject. She has illustrated for major publishers, and currently directs an illustrating firm in California. -DBB

FROM THE EDITORS

With this issue of CFC JOURNAL the editorship changes hands. A big debt of thanks is owed to Hugh Kingery for his tireless work in keeping the JOURNAL in the forefront of Colorado field ornithology, and for continually coming up with interesting, informative, and pertinent articles. The new editors hope that they are able to maintain these high standards.

Readers will note several changes, especially a clean new typography which should be easier to read than the photo-reduced typescript which has been used in the past. For the most part, these changes are intended simply to make the JOURNAL more accessible and readable, and hopefully to attract new readers (and members). Our stated editorial policy has not changed: we remain a birdwatchers' journal, "devoted to the field study of birds in Colorado." We wish to emphasize that anyone who has some knowledge about some aspect of Colorado birdwatching—history, field identification problems, range expansions, a favorite birding spot, unusual observations, whatever—is *encouraged* to write it up and send it in! We would especially like to have site guides, and notes about birding in the many local areas around the state. It isn't necessary to do anything elaborate or "professional," the idea is simply to share your knowledge with others.

Turning to another matter, you will find the 1979 renewal notice on the *back* of the outside wrapper. Because it is already quite late in the year, THIS WILL BE THE ONLY RENEWAL NOTICE! It is imperative that your membership be renewed promptly in order to continue receiving the JOURNAL. A new feature has been added to the renewal notice: three optional membership categories for those who feel they would like to contribute more than the regular \$5.00 annual membership. Also, if you have a relative or friend in another state who would enjoy keeping abreast of Colorado birding, why not enter a \$5.00 gift membership? Space is provided for this on the renewal notice. (Don't forget that the Colorado Field Ornithologists is a non-profit organization, and membership dues are tax-deductible.) It is not necessary to use the provided form for your renewal, but if you do use it, remove it carefully so the staples don't tear it, and be sure to staple or tape the sides before you mail it with your remittance.

THE CONTRIBUTION OF THE "AMATEUR" TO ORNITHOLOGY

by Allan R. Phillips

Taxonomic Consultant

Denver Museum of Natural History

There is often a quite unwarranted diffidence among amateur birdwatchers regarding their contributions to ornithology. The only real requirement, if one wishes to contribute to the science, is a sincere interest in the birds. Science is a search for truth and understanding, which frequently implies abandoning our *own* preconceived ideas (as well as others') as we learn better. Theoretically, training in ornithology in a university should give one an advantage; but this is not mandatory, for the great and lesser classics that fill our libraries were practically entirely written by men untrained in zoology. If they had any training at all, it was as doctor (Coues, A. K. Fisher, Mearns, Roberts, and many others), dentist (Vaurie), or artist (Peterson). Some perhaps qualified as "professionals" by holding jobs as ornithologists, like the great Ridgway and Oberholser; but most worked for the love of science, just like Wilson and Audubon. The greatest life-history study was done by a housewife, Mrs. Margaret Morse Nice (who also wrote the first "Birds of Oklahoma"). So just who is an amateur?

In Colorado, the case is similar. No one had to teach ornithology to Bob Niedrach! Nor were the other great names of Colorado bird-study "trained" men: Aiken, Bailey, Lowe, Rockwell, or Horace G. Smith, to mention just a few. Dr. Bergtold was a doctor of medicine.

This is not to say that we have no trained professional ornithologists today, or to deny their competence. But they are few and scattered. More often than not, too, the professional is burdened with administrative duties, classes, and perhaps public relations—a slave to the telephone. If he is to keep abreast of the situation, particularly regarding bird distributions and populations, and to give sound advice when called upon, the "amateur" must be his eyes and ears.

Some, but not all, of the problems we now face are obvious. All of us are well aware of urban sprawl, "developers" and bulldozers, obsessed dam-builders, tree-cutters, concrete-layers, etc., and the various chemical and physical poison advocates (the end always justifies the means). How can we preserve the brushy habitat needed by Bell's and other vireos? What is their present status? Do they raise enough vireos to maintain themselves, or only cowbirds? Professionals in wildlife conservation may monitor waterfowl, but woodpeckers, orioles, and Yellow Warblers should also concern us.

All this depends, then, on the amateur and his degree of organization. He alone has the time and interest to watch and count common

birds. His lists of species and numbers will increase in value with the passage of time, especially if checked at the time by organizations like Colorado Field Ornithologists. They should be stored at a central repository like the Denver Museum of Natural History. Financing of the extra space and cabinets needed should be regarded as an investment in the future. The personal pleasures of birding are fine, but why not systematize record-keeping and thus help monitor our environment? In the long run, it is good, level-headed factual data that will help conserve our heritage.

Amateurs are also the eyes and ears of the professional in finding and turning in dead and dying birds on highways, at picture windows, etc. Kills at TV towers and cellometers pose a special problem: they are common in the east, but who knows whether they occur as far west as Colorado? Not to mention which species and subspecies are involved. (With the increase of laws "protecting" dead birds, you should have a salvage permit.) Your local museum or the Denver Museum can use these in one way or another.

BIRD TAXONOMY CLINIC FOR C.F.O. MEMBERS

Dr. Allan R. Phillips will be in Denver during the months of May and early June as a taxonomic consultant for the bird collection of 40,000 specimens at the Denver Museum of Natural History. Betsy Webb, Curator of Zoological Collections at DMNH, has agreed to set up a clinic on Saturday, June 2nd, from 10:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. with Dr. Phillips presiding. There will be a fee of \$8.00 for each participant to help defray the costs incurred by the museum. The museum will then donate half of the proceeds to C.F.O. Those interested in attending must make reservations with Curator Webb at the museum, telephone number 575-3911. Registration will be at 9:45 a.m. immediately prior to the clinic.

Dr. Phillips is an internationally recognized Ornithologist who received his Ph.D. in 1946 from Cornell University. He lives in Nuevo Leon, Mexico and travels extensively throughout the United States each year conducting his research. He is currently Guest Research Associate with National Autonomous University of Nuevo Leon and is Research Associate at the Delaware Museum of Natural History and the Denver Museum of Natural History. He is senior author of *The Birds of Arizona* and has also written many other scientific publications in major journals. He is currently working on a revised list of species and subspecies of Colorado birds, and will be publishing findings in his taxonomic review of the Denver Museum's collection.

Dr. Phillips has requested that if there are any questions of a highly technical nature, that they be submitted to Curator Webb at least one week in advance of the clinic.

ANNUAL MEETING

The seventeenth annual meeting of the Colorado Field Ornithologists will be held May 26-27 in Colorado Springs and will be a joint meeting with the Colorado Audubon Council.

CALL FOR PAPERS--Dr. Ronald Ryder will chair the Saturday afternoon papers session scheduled for 1:30 to 4:30. Persons wishing to give a short presentation (25 minutes maximum) on some aspect of Colorado ornithology should send an abstract to Dr. Ryder by May 12. Indicate whether any special equipment will be needed. A Kodak Carousel slide projector will be available.

Send abstract to:

Dr. Ronald Ryder
Dept. of Fishery and Wildlife Biology
Colorado State University
Fort Collins, Colorado 80523

FIELD TRIPS--There will be a short field trip the morning of May 26 in the Monument Valley Park area. The May 27th morning field trips will be to the south slope of Cheyenne Mountain, the Hanna Ranch south of Colorado Springs, and one to various areas in and near Colorado Springs. For those who don't like to quit, there will be an afternoon trip to a location in the Florissant area where *Flammulated Owls* have been seen nesting the past two years.

BANQUET and annual meeting will be held the evening of May 26.

NOMINATING COMMITTEE--Persons wishing to make recommendations or have input to the nominating committee should contact Dave Alles, 700 Atwood Street, Longmont, Colorado 80501. Nominations for Vice-President and two Directors are needed.

More detailed information concerning lodging, schedule of events, etc., will be sent with registration forms to Colorado members in a special mailing in April. Out-of-state members and others needing more information should contact Elinor Wills, 540 Asbury Place, Colorado Springs, Colorado 80906.

THE WINTER SEASON 1977-78

by Peter Moulton
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Colorado observers reported about 186 species of birds during the winter season of 1977-78; as usual, the great majority of these, some 170 in all, appeared on the various Christmas Bird Count (hereafter CBC) lists. The CBC's represent the most comprehensive data base available for the winter, involving as they do nearly all of the state's active birders in two weeks of intensive fieldwork. It is mainly for this reason that I have drawn heavily on CBC information; however, I do not intend this report to be a compendium of the CBC's, as Dave Hutchinson has already performed this task admirably (in press).

Certain problems are inherent in this bias. Foremost is an undue weighting of emphasis toward the first third of the season; this regrettable situation is unavoidable because non-CBC reports were very few and not at all complete. Secondly, the circumstances which surround the CBC's can render the data suspect; the spirit of competition that is usually present during these counts easily leads to the rare bird syndrome. Last, non-CBC reports tend to exaggerate the populations of feeder-dependent species and the Falconiformes, to the detriment of other groups. Therefore, the study of long-term seasonal effects on bird populations, the relative abundance of various species and the accuracy of identification all suffer. Readers should bear these flaws in mind and remember that they are logical consequences of the available data.

I have exercised some restraints on the data in order to correct these faults as much as possible. Unfortunately, these restraints apply only to the problem of identification and documentation of unusual species; there were too few reports from January and February to permit adjustment of the season-long informational imbalance. Where non-CBC reports of rare species lacked details, I deleted or qualified them as noted in the text; where CBC reports listed rare, but undocumented observations, I trusted the judgment of the compilers and regional CBC editor, Paul Julian. So much for the nature and treatment of the data.

The mild fall weather continued through the first CBC week, and the early counts recorded several half-hardy species. A hard frost struck most of the state during the Christmas weekend, effectively closing the lakes and causing an immediate and drastic decline among

waterbird populations; ice-out did not really begin until March and so waterbirds were largely out of the picture for the duration of the season. With good weed seed crops and minimal snowfall on the plains and in the mountain parks, ground-feeding species enjoyed a good winter. A generally poor cone crop throughout the mountain forests resulted in a serious reduction of the cone-dependent finch population.

Some species fared quite well. Northern Shrikes invaded nearly the entire state in higher than usual numbers through the season. Common Redpolls did not really invade Colorado, but good numbers were present in the northeastern quarter of the state in late January and early February; rosy finches of all species were impressively numerous in and near the mountains. The most notable seasonal event involved unbelievable numbers of Snow Buntings on the Pawnee National Grassland in late January and early February (one daily count up to 10,000) and, to a lesser degree, in Moffat County. This invasion was unprecedented, both in extent and in sheer volume of birds, in the history of Colorado field ornithology. Observers on the Pawnee Grassland actually found themselves faced with the enviable task of combing the flocks of Snow Buntings to find the odd lark or longspur! Certainly, for Colorado, this phenomenon must rank as one of the major ornithological events of the decade, if not the century.

Besides the usual wintering species and the aforementioned invaders, observers found some exceptional rarities. A Red-throated Loon was at Denver until Christmas Day; perhaps it was the same individual that was present during the fall, though the location was different. No fewer than nine Trumpeter Swans wintered at Grand Lake (2 adults) and Westcliffe (7 adults), an amazing number for a species which had only definitely occurred in Colorado on two previous occasions. Two observers studied a live Boreal Owl a ski pole's length away in the Grand Lake area, and Estes Park and Evergreen birders picked up single road-killed Boreals in those areas. A Rose-breasted Grosbeak seen on the Denver CBC was notable for extreme tardiness, and was one of only twelve seen on all the CBC's north of Mexico.

LOONS AND GREBES: *Common Loon*—about 9 were reported, the latest of which were 3 at Narraguinnep on 12/26 (RWS) . . . *Artic Loon*—1 was at Chatfield on 12/3 (HK) . . . *Red-throated Loon*—1 was at McClellan Res. 12/17-25, counted on the Denver CBC on 12/17 and seen by many observers . . . *Horned Grebe*—about 16 individuals were noted, all on the east slope; 1 wintered at Lake Estes (WKR, m.ob.), and 2 wintered at Valmont Res. (BAS, m.ob.) . . . *Eared Grebe*—the last of the fall migrants were 2 on the Denver CBC and

1 on the Pueblo Res. CBC on 12/17 . . . *Western Grebe*—approximately 70 individuals were recorded, with a high count of 37 on the Boulder CBC 12/18; up to 5 wintered at Valmont (BAS, m.ob).

CORMORANTS AND HERONS: *Double-crested Cormorant*—1 immature wintered at Valmont, where it was duly noted on the Boulder CBC 12/18 and frequently observed through the remainder of the season; 1 was at Chatfield 12/3-17 (counted on the Denver CBC 12/17), and 1 was at Chatfield 1/20-21 (JJC, FJ, JJ) . . . *Black-crowned Night Heron*—the only report was 1 on the Ft. Collins CBC 12/17.

SWANS AND GEESE: *Whistling Swan*—about 36 individuals were noted 12/1-1/31; notable were a flock of 24 at Lake Maria from November until 1/15 (GB, CG, DG) and a wintering bird at Watson Lake 1/17-3/1 (FCAS) . . . *Trumpeter Swan*—a remarkable invasion of this species produced reports of 9 individuals: 7 adults were discovered at Deweese Res. on 12/12 by Van Truan, listed on the Westcliffe CBC 12/26 and seen by many observers until 2/11 (calls heard, photographs secured, copious details forward to ORC); 2 were at the Grand Lake channel 1/16-3/9, photographed and frequently observed by David Jasper (details not received by ORC as yet) . . . *White-fronted Goose*—1 was at Turk's Pond on 12/1 (SB), 1 was at Chatfield 12/10-17 (counted on the Denver CBC 12/17), 1 was listed on the Ft. Collins CBC on 12/17 and 1 was at Ft. Collins on 2/26 (WG) . . . *Snow Goose*—40 at Durango on 2/11 (ME) was the seasonal high count . . . *Snow Goose* (blue form)—1 was noted on the Ft. Collins CBC on 12/17, 1 was seen on the Grand Junction CBC 12/18 and 1 was at Ft. Collins on 1/14 (BB) . . . *Ross' Goose*—3 were at Denver 12/15-17, listed on the Denver CBC on 12/17.

DUCKS: *Gadwall*—about 150 were at MVNWR on 2/28 (MTN), representing the first wave of spring migrants . . . *Pintail*—wintered statewide in small numbers; first spring migrants were about 600 at MVNWR on 2/13 (MTN) . . . *Blue-winged Teal*—2 were listed on the Denver CBC 12/17 (males in alternate plumage?); the report of 22 on the Greeley CBC 12/18 is quite likely an error, as that count listed no Green-wings . . . *Cinnamon Teal*—3 males in alternate plumage were at Durango on 2/12 (RWS), for the only report . . . *Blue-winged/Cinnamon Teal*—40 at MVNWR on 2/28 (MTN) represented the first real spring influx. . . *Wood Duck*—the 6 reports comprised about 23 individuals; high count was 12 on the Denver CBC on 12/17 . . . *Ring-necked Duck*—wintered in good numbers in Adams and Boulder Counties on the east slope; last on the west slope were 1 on the Gunnison CBC 12/26 and 10 at Totton on the same day (RWS) . . . *Canvasback*—

small numbers wintered in Adams, Boulder and Pueblo Counties, about 54 individuals altogether . . . *Greater Scaup*--1 male was seen at McCall Lake on 12/14 (RB) and 6 were counted on the Denver CBC 12/17, for the only reports. . . *Barrow's Goldeneye*--2 were noted on the Longmont CBC 12/17, 1 was reported on the RMNP CBC 12/24, 1 male was at Lake Estes on 1/13 (RB) and 1 was at the Brown's Park NWR in late February, where it was a new addition to the refuge list (GLD). . . *Bufflehead*--about 33 individuals were reported through the season; wintered in Pueblo and, probably, Boulder Counties. An interesting midwinter sighting was 2 females at Durango on 1/16 (RWS). . . *Oldsquaw*--1 was at Chatfield on 12/3 (HK), 1 was at Union on 12/4 (PM), 1 was at Pueblo 12/2-15 (m.ob.), 2 were listed on the Longmont CBC 12/17 and 1 was noted on the Pueblo CBC 12/18 (presumably the same as above) . . . *White-winged Scoter*--2 were photographed at Lake Estes on 12/14 (LM) for the only report. . . *Surf Scoter*--the female or immature at Clover Basin (listed in the fall report) was last seen on 12/4 (PM) . . . *Ruddy Duck*--the Denver, Longmont, and Pueblo CBC's listed a total of 14 individuals, all on 12/17; last in the state were 15 at Totton on 12/26 (RWS) . . . *Hooded Merganser*--Boulder County remains the place to find this species; some 43 of the 69 individuals reported for the season were in that area; all other observations were made in the Denver area . . . *Red-breasted Merganser*--observers reported about 71 of this species, 62 of them from Boulder County; elsewhere, 7 were seen on the Hotchkiss CBC and 2 were noted on the Pueblo CBC, both reports on 12/17.

VULTURES THROUGH FALCONS: *Turkey Vulture*--rare winter sightings were 1 on the Colorado Springs CBC 12/17 and 1 at Rocky Flats on 2/14 (AC) . . . *Sharp-shinned Hawk*--a strong winter showing was indicated by reports of some 62 individuals . . . *Cooper's Hawk*--about 25 were noted, rather evenly distributed throughout the state . . . *Red-tailed (Harlan's) Hawk*--a good showing by this form produced reports of about 19 individuals 12/17-1/28, mostly from wooded areas on the plains; an interesting report was 1 on the MVNWR CBC 12/21 . . . *Swainson's Hawk*--observers reported 5 Swainsons, but none with convincing details. One was listed on the Colorado Springs CBC 12/17 (description incomplete--*fide* PJ) and 1 was counted on the Durango raptor census 2/18 (GE, RE; studied at close range for 15 minutes, details solicited but not yet received--*fide* RWS). One other report of 3 birds was deleted owing to complete lack of details . . . *Ferruginous Hawk*--good numbers wintered on the plains and the seasonal high count of 7 on the Boulder CBC 12/18 tied two Texas CBC's for this year's North American CBC high . . . *Golden Eagle*--numbers were below average at MVNWR (MTN), but high in the

rest of the state; the 38 reports totaled about 152 individuals . . . *Bald Eagle*—wintered statewide except in the southeastern quarter and about 253 were reported; high counts were 28 (6a, 22i) in the Ft. Morgan area of the Platte Valley on 1/14 (JR) and 32 on the Durango raptor census on 2/18 . . . *Osprey*—1 spent the month of January at Lindenmeir Lake, in the Ft. Collins area (LL); 1 was at Durango on 2/24, where it spent most of the day cruising up and down the Animas River (EF). One other report of 1 was deleted for lack of substantiating details . . . *Prairie Falcon*—population was subnormal at Durango (RWS) but about average through the rest of the state; high count was 7 on the PNG on 12/29 (TG) . . . *Peregrine Falcon*—the bird that was reported on the Colorado Springs CBC on 12/17 was still in the Garden of the Gods on 12/20 (CC); single birds were noted on three occasions in the Dinosaur National Monument area, but the dates of observation were not reported (CL, GR—*fide* JFA) . . . *Merlin*—about 26 individuals were noted, 25 on the east slope and 1 seen three times at Durango (counted on the Durango CBC 12/31)(RWS); high count was 6 on the PNG on 12/29 (TG).

GALLINACEOUS BIRDS: *Blue Grouse*—the 6 reports totaled about 21 individuals, 20 on the east slope and 1 on the Ridgway CBC 12/17; high count was 9 on the Boulder CBC 12/18 . . . *White-tailed Ptarmigan*—the RMNP CBC listed 2 on 12/24 to lead all North American CBC's . . . *Sage Grouse*—the only report was 72 seen on the North Park CBC 12/29 . . . *Bobwhite*—this species continues to be poorly reported and the only observation was 9 at Muir Springs on 1/21 (HH, JR) . . . *Scaled Quail*—4 reports comprised about 150 individuals, all in the southeastern quarter of the state; 50 on the Colorado Springs CBC 12/17 was the one-day high count . . . *Gambel's Quail*—the single report was 186 on the Grand Junction CBC on 12/18 . . . *Ring-necked Pheasant*—population continues low on the plains; seasonal high was 44 on the Hotchkiss CBC 12/17 . . . *Chukar*—3 were listed on the Hotchkiss CBC 12/17 and 9 on the Grand Junction CBC 12/18.

CRANES AND RAILS: *Whooping Crane*—the first spring migrant reached MVNWR on 2/27; this bird, or another individual, was present there the next day (identity indeterminate)(MTN) . . . *Sandhill Crane*—2 were seen on the Pueblo Res. CBC 12/17; the first spring arrivals were 275 on the MVNWR 2/23 and 7000 were on the refuge on 2/28, indicating the onset of the main spring flight (MTN) . . . *Virginia Rail*—9 reports listed about 22 individuals, 19 along the Front Range and 3 on the Weldona-Ft. Morgan CBC 12/23; none reported during the dead of winter 12/24-2/11.

SHOREBIRDS AND GULLS: *Common Snipe*—large numbers lingered into the early winter and 17 CBC's listed 154; the population dwindled after the CBC season and only about 22 were noted 1/15-2/28. High count was 61 on the Ft. Collins CBC 12/17 . . . *Greater Yellowlegs*—a rare winter observation of the species was 1 on the Boulder CBC 12/18 . . . *Glaucous Gull*—somewhat fewer this winter than last, 17 individuals compared to about 23 seen during the winter of 1976-77. Arrival was 1 adult at Valmont on 12/11 (PM) and the high count was 3 at Sloan's Lake on 1/28 (JJC). Most of the reports came from plains reservoirs near the Front Range, but 1 immature was at Muir Springs on 1/14 (JR). The observation of a Glaucous on the Pueblo Res. CBC 12/17 for the second consecutive year is most interesting . . . *Thayer's Gull*—1 was listed on the Denver CBC 12/17; 1 in first-winter plumage was at Valmont 12/26 (PM), 1 adult was at CCRA on 1/12 (DK) and 1 was at Valmont on 1/21 (PG, BW) . . . *California Gull*—6 were noted on the Denver CBC 12/17 for the only report . . . *Bonaparte's Gull*—5 adults at Valmont on 12/5 (PM) were quite late.

DOVES AND OWLS: *Mourning Dove*—good numbers persisted into the early winter and 10 CBC's listed a total of about 485 individuals; 338 of these were noted on the Grand Junction CBC 12/18. The three reports from after the first of the year were: 16 in Jefferson County on 1/14 (DFO), 2 at Lindenmeir Lake on 2/4 (SW) and 1 at Bonny Res. on 2/18 (CFO) . . . *Roadrunner*—1 was at Two Buttes Res. on 12/6 (LKM) for the single report . . . *Screech Owl*—eight reports of 14 was an improvement over the rather dismal fall showing (only 5 individuals noted). The increase derived entirely from intensified field-work during the CBC season, as shown by the listing of 8 birds on three CBC's; seasonal high was 5 on the Denver CBC 12/17 . . . *Great Horned Owl*—the population seems to be strong and the 31 reports totalled about 171 individuals for the season; high was 41 on the Bonny Res. CBC 1/1 . . . *Snowy Owl*—1 was at Eldora on 2/23 (LE) and the species was listed during the CBC week at North Park (no other information available); a probable Snowy was at Eagle on 2/23, seen by two non-birders, but fairly well described (*vide* JM) . . . *Northern Pygmy Owl*—fairly numerous at the usual sites in the mountains and foothill canyons, a total of about 26 individuals; the largest concentration seems to have been in the Durango area, where Stransky observed 7 birds 12/31-1/29 . . . *Burrowing Owl*—1 at Golden on 1/3 (WWB) was an unusual winter report . . . *Boreal Owl*—a live bird was studied at close range at Grand Lake on 12/2 (DAJ, DeS). Single birds were found road-killed at Evergreen on 2/2 (WWB, skin to DMNH) and Estes Park on 2/6 (WKR; ID confirmed by Dr. Ryder and specimen

turned over to CSU collection) . . . *Saw-whet Owl*-1 was at Severance on 2/12 (BM) and 1 was at Beulah through January and February (DS); a road-kill was found at Wetmore on 1/15, but the carcass was too badly damaged to merit preservation (PG, PM, BW).

WOODPECKERS: *Common (Yellow-shafted) Flicker*-the 4 reports include: 1 on the Denver CBC 12/17, 1 on the Greeley CBC 12/18, 1 at Boulder on 1/14 (FH) and 1 at Waterton on 1/29 (FJ, JJ) . . . *Common (Yellow-shafted X Red-shafted) Flicker*-1 intergrade was at Sawhill Ponds on 2/26 (MH) for the only report . . . *Red-bellied Woodpecker*-2 were noted on the Bonny Res. CBC on 1/1 and 1 was at Bonny on 2/18 (CFO) . . . *Red-headed Woodpecker*-1 immature was at Wetmore on 1/7 (DG, m.ob.) for a rare winter observation . . . *Yellow-bellied Sapsucker*-the two observations were made on 12/17: 1 on the Longmont CBC and 1 on the Roaring Fork River Valley CBC. . . *Hairy Woodpecker*-remains scarce on the plains but continues to be abundant around beetle-kill areas in the foothills; high counts were 42 on the Evergreen-Idaho Springs CBC 12/18 and 51 on the Boulder CBC the same day. . . *Ladder-backed Woodpecker*-the only report was 1 seen on the Pueblo CBC on 12/18 . . . *Northern Three-toed Woodpecker*-5 reports comprised 9 individuals at Boulder, Colorado Springs, Ft. Collins and Lory State Park.

FLYCATCHER THROUGH WRENS: *Say's Phoebe*-2 birds were reported: 1 on the Hotchkiss CBC 12/17 and 1 on the Grand Junction CBC the next day . . . *Blue Jay*-this species continues to increase on the eastern slope, as evidenced by the total of about 144 individuals on 15 reports . . . *Black-billed Magpie*-Colorado continues to be the place to find this species in winter; reported on all 25 of the state's CBC's, a total of about 5,498 individuals, and the 1,278 on the Denver CBC 12/17 led all North American CBC's . . . *Common Raven*-well-reported in and near the mountains, but no report from the plains; a high count was 370 seen feeding on spent salmon in the Shadow Mountain Res. channel on 2/16 (DAJ). At Gunnison the usual ratio of two ravens to every crow was reversed to three crows per raven (KC), but whether this reflects a decline among ravens, an increase among crows, or both of the above, was not specifically mentioned . . . *Pinyon Jay*-the flock which has haunted western Colorado Springs for the last few years seems to have moved on (MS); elsewhere, the species was typically erratic, though the population is evidently holding up well. A high count was 125 in McCoy on 12/1 (CE, MKE) . . . *Clark's Nutcracker*-population apparently normal in most of this species' range; at Evergreen the numbers were above average (WWB), and the total of 108 reported on the Evergreen-Idaho Springs CBC

12/18 was the North American CBC high . . . *Mountain Chickadee*—average numbers in most areas, but low at Colorado Springs (CC) and Grand Junction (HA); Boulder again led all North American CBC's with 709 counted on 12/18 . . . *Plain Titmouse*—numbers remain low in the Durango area (RWS), but seem to be holding up in other areas; the 6 reports totalled 18 individuals, all in the pinyon-juniper country of southern and western Colorado . . . *Bushtit*—observers evidently caught up with this notorious wanderer this winter and 10 reports tallied about 237 individuals, 125 along the Front Range (8 reports) and 112 total in the Durango and Grand Junction areas (2 reports); the high count was 77 on the Durango CBC 12/31. The observation of 14 on the Longmont CBC 12/17 is interesting, as that count circle contains only a small amount of suitable habitat . . . *White-breasted Nuthatch*—numbers were low in Colorado Springs (CC) and Grand Junction (HA), but near normal elsewhere; the high count was 195 on the Boulder CBC 12/18. Unusual plains reports were 2 on the Bonny Res. CBC 1/1, 1 at Chatfield on 1/28 (HK) and 1 at Bonny on 2/18 (CFO) . . . *Red-breasted Nuthatch*—19 reports listed about 98 individuals, rather evenly distributed in and near the mountains; numbers were the highest ever at Gunnison (KC) . . . *Brown Creeper*—numbers were low at Durango (RWS) and Grand Junction (HA), but the species was well-reported elsewhere and about 122 were noted for the season; all reports were in and near the mountains, excepting only a single CBC count week bird at Bonny Res. . . . *Dipper*—fair numbers were reported in this species' usual haunts, about 194 in all; an especially good population at Gunnison led to the observation of 60 individuals on the CBC 12/26, a total which was high for all North American CBC's . . . *Winter Wren*—fewer than in previous winters and only 3 were noted: 1 each on the Denver and Ft. Collins CBC's on 12/17 and 1 at Waterton on 1/8 (PE) . . . *Bewick's Wren*—7 reports totalled about 24 individuals, all in the southern and western portions of the state; high count was 15 on the Grand Junction CBC on 12/18 . . . *Long-billed Marsh Wren*—13 reports of 21 individuals, rather evenly distributed around the state; high count was 6 on the Bonny Res. CBC 1/1 . . . *Short-billed Marsh Wren*—a rare Short-billed was reported at Pueblo on 1/2 (DG, CK); some details accompanied the report, and a more thorough description will presumably find its way to the ORC . . . *Canyon Wren*—a good population along the Front Range produced reports of about 53 individuals (11 reports); away from the Front Range the only report was 1 on the Grand Junction CBC 12/18 . . . *Rock Wren*—apparently did not winter in the state this year, but about 12 late migrants were noted on 5 reports; high count was 5 on the Ft. Collins CBC 12/17, and the last sighting was 2 at McElmo Canyon (Cortez area) on 1/7 (RWS).

THRASHERS THROUGH THRUSHES: *Northern Mockingbird*—the winter produced 4 reports: 1 on the Denver CBC 12/17, 1 each on the Boulder and Evergreen-Idaho Springs CBC's 12/18, and a very interesting observation of 1 on the Gunnison CBC 12/26 . . . *Brown Thrasher*—1 was at Pueblo 12/3-26 (CK, JL, JY) and 1 was noted on the Bonny Res. CBC 1/1 . . . *Curve-billed Thrasher*—in the Pueblo area, 1 each wintered at Avondale and Belmont (PJ) and 3 were counted on the Pueblo CBC 12/18 . . . *Sage Thrasher*—4 observations of single birds at Pueblo Res. 12/17-2/4 (including the CBC 12/17) likely refer to a single wintering bird, but it would be difficult to say for sure. . . *American Robin*—fairly good numbers wintered this year; some high counts were 1,080 on the Lake Isabel CBC 12/31 and 800+ along Burnt Mill Road (Pueblo area) on 1/7 (JR) . . . *Varied Thrush*—the only report for this rare bird was 2 on the Pike's Peak CBC on 12/31; this is the second consecutive year that this CBC has listed the species . . . *Hermit Thrush*—1 was listed on the Colorado Springs CBC 12/17, but no details were submitted . . . *Eastern Bluebird*—4 eastern slope reports totalled about 15 individuals at Bonny Res., Colorado Springs and Prewitt Res.; high count was 8 at Prewitt Res. on 1/7 (TS). The report of 1 on the Hotchkiss CBC 12/17 is nearly incredible, but the bird was directly compared to Westerns and the details are thorough (*vide* PJ) . . . *Western Bluebird*—good numbers wintered in the southern part of the state, especially at Durango where the population was the largest ever all season (RWS); seasonal high was 40 in Custer County on 1/9 (RO) . . . *Mountain Bluebird*—wintered in much of southern Colorado, with major concentrations in the Pueblo area; high count was 740 along Burnt Mill Road on 1/7 (JR). Arrival of spring migrants on the east slope was on 2/5 at Boulder; west slope arrivals were 2/23 at Durango (RWS) and 2/24 at Dinosaur National Monument (JFA) . . . *Townsend's Solitaire*—population normal to above average in all areas; seasonal high count was 451 on the Boulder CBC 12/18, establishing a new all-time North American CBC high.

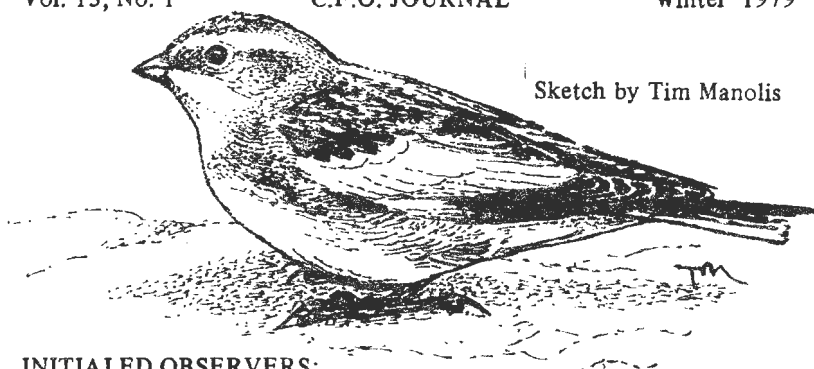
KINGLETS THROUGH WARBLERS: *Golden-crowned Kinglet*—all reports came from the Front Range and the Colorado River Valley; numbers were not very high in any case: about 47 individuals on 6 reports. The species was most numerous in Boulder County, where 34 of the 47 were found, 29 on the Boulder CBC 12/18 . . . *Ruby-crowned Kinglet*—7 reports totalled about 15 individuals 12/17-18; high count was 5 on the Grand Junction CBC 12/18. The only report after this weekend was 1 at Elmo Canyon on 1/7 (RWS) . . . *Bohemian Waxwing*—the only report was 260 total in the Red Feather Lakes-Rustic area 12/11 and 12/18 (JS, NS) . . . *Northern Shrike*—numerous and widespread this winter and the 37 reports listed about

112 individuals, 74 of them on 20 of Colorado's 25 CBC's; high count was 8 on the Denver CBC 12/17. The occurrence of relatively large numbers at Durango (up to 4 on the CBC 12/31) is interesting in view of the fact that shrikes wintering in that area in past years have usually been Loggerheads (RWS) . . . *Loggerhead Shrike*—about 20 were noted during the first half of the season, none after the first week of January; high counts were 4 each on the Hotchkiss CBC 12/17 and the Grand Junction CBC the next day, and the last in the state was 1 at Florence on 1/7 (WWB, DiK). Reports of single birds at Greeley and in Middle Park in December were not detailed and may refer to *L. excubitor* . . . *Yellow-rumped Warbler*—6 reports totalled 38 individuals (24 Audubon's and 14 unspecified); noted wintering in the Pueblo area (CG, DG, CK), but the latest in northern Colorado was 1 at Longmont on 1/3 (MP). High counts were 12 Audubon's on the Pueblo Res. CBC 12/17 and 14 in unspecified plumage on the Grand Junction CBC the next day. . . *Common Yellowthroat*—1 was at Lake Minnequa 12/3-18, remaining in the area just long enough to be listed on the Pueblo CBC 12/18.

BLACKBIRDS: *Yellow-headed Blackbird*—1 was seen on the Denver CBC 12/17 and 1 on the MVNWR CBC 12/21; late winter reports were 1 at a feeder in Bow-Mar South 1/28-29 (RF) and 1 at Ridgway on 2/26 (JRG) . . . *Red-winged Blackbird*—large numbers wintered statewide in lowlands; major concentration was at Pueblo where 9289 were counted on the CBC 12/18. Early spring influxes at higher elevations were 600 at Pagosa Junction on 2/18 and 500 at McElmo Canyon on 2/28 (both RWS), and 20 at Minturn on 2/20 (JM) . . . *Rusty Blackbird*—the Pueblo CBC listed 30 Rusty Blackbirds on 12/18; such high counts are not unknown in that area, e.g., 25 noted on the 1975 CBC. Elsewhere, 12 were at 112th and Chambers Road (Rocky Mountain Arsenal) on 1/29 (RO) and 1 male was at CCRA the same day (JR) . . . *Brewer's Blackbird*—widely, but thinly scattered over the east slope; more local on the west slope, and the 2 reports were 7 on the Hotchkiss CBC 12/17 and 113 on the Grand Junction CBC 12/18. Wintered in Boulder and Morgan Counties and in southern Colorado. Seasonal high count was 2000 on the Greeley CBC 12/18 . . . *Common Grackle*—4 CBC's listed 10 individuals, though the 7 on the Greeley CBC were not documented. Two noted in the Pueblo-Buelah area 12/3-1/5 (CG, DG, CK) . . . *Brown-headed Cowbird*—4 were noted on the Pueblo CBC 12/18; single birds were reported without details on the Greeley CBC 12/18 and the San Luis Valley CBC 1/2.

FINCHES THROUGH SNOW BUNTING: *Evening Grosbeak*—notable for its virtual absence in nearly all areas . . . *Rose-breasted Grosbeak*—1 seen on the Denver CBC 12/17 was a truly remarkable find; it was 1 of only 12 listed on all North American CBC's, and tied 11 other counts for the high CBC count . . . *Purple Finch*—1 was at Ft. Collins on 12/3 (RR), and a probable Purple was at Bonny on 2/18 (CFO) . . . *Cassin's Finch*—numbers were above average at Westcreek (RW), but were decidedly subnormal in nearly all other areas . . . *Gray-crowned Rosy Finch*—good numbers were in the mountains, about 2250 altogether, and the seasonal high count was 347 on the Gunnison CBC 12/26. A plains report was 1 on the Nunn CBC 12/21 . . . *Black Rosy Finch*—the 18 reports totalled about 186, with a high count of 40 at Red Rocks Park on 1/21 (LKM) . . . *Brown-capped Rosy Finch*—996 counted on the Gunnison CBC 12/26 set an all-time North American CBC high count . . . *Leucosticte sp.*—1,500 rosy finches of unspecified species breakdown were noted on the Pike's Peak CBC 12/31 . . . *Common Redpoll*—although this species staged no major invasion, good numbers visited the PNG and about 225 were noted there 12/21-2/18 (high count 80 on 2/4); small numbers were present over the remainder of the northern plains south to about Boulder and Bonny Res. In the mountains, 32 were seen 20 miles north of Gunnison on 2/11 (KC); the only report from far-western Colorado was 1 at a feeder through January (MF) . . . *American Goldfinch*—the seasonal high count was 273 on the Bonny Res. CBC 1/1; wintered in the Denver-Boulder area, but apparently not elsewhere . . . *Lesser Goldfinch*—a rather unusual winter report was 8 on the Ft. Collins CBC 12/17 . . . *Red Crossbill*—about 326 were reported, which seems like a small number for this species; high count was 106 on the Evergreen-Idaho Springs CBC 12/18 . . . *Green-tailed Towhee*—I wintered at Ridgway, where it was seen on 45 of 57 days of observation (JRG) and counted on the CBC 12/17; 2 each were counted on the Hotchkiss and Longmont CBC's, both 12/17 . . . *Rufous-sided Towhee*—wintered in Boulder and Pueblo Counties; good numbers lingered into early winter and 12 CBC's listed 208 individuals; single-day high count was 117 on the Colorado Springs CBC 12/17 . . . *Brown Towhee*—5 reports comprised about 36 birds, 34 in the Pueblo area and 2 on the Colorado Springs CBC 12/17; high count was 21 on the Pueblo Res. CBC 12/17 . . . *Lark Sparrow*—2 were counted on the Colorado Springs CBC 12/17 and an excellent description submitted (fide PJ) . . . *Dark-eyed Junco*—"Oregon" juncos represented about 73% of the 9000+ Dark-eyed reported; "Slate-colored" and "White-winged" forms ran about 19% and 6% respectively, while about 2% were in unspecified plumages. Major concentrations of "White-winged"

birds were at Boulder, Evergreen and Colorado Springs, but reports were received from areas as far east as Bonny Res. and as far south as Pueblo . . . *Tree Sparrow*—1330 on the Denver CBC 12/17 was the seasonal maximum; numbers were low at Ft. Morgan (JCR), but seemed about average elsewhere . . . *Chipping Sparrow*—8 were listed on the Colorado Springs CBC 12/17 (details adequate for 1 bird—*fide* PJ), 1 was seen on the Grand Junction CBC 12/18 and 2 were reported on the Gunnison CBC 12/26 (no details) . . . *Harris' Sparrow*—numbers were quite low this winter and only about 92 were noted; high count was 23 on the Bonny Res. CBC 1/1. On the west slope, 4 were listed on the Grand Junction CBC 12/18 and 1 was at Durango on 1/25 (EF) . . . *White-crowned Sparrow*—population was much reduced in the Colorado Springs area (MS), but seemed close to normal in other areas . . . *White-throated Sparrow*—the 7 reports totalled about 22 individuals, 20 on the east slope and 2 on the Grand Junction CBC 12/18; high count was 14 on the Denver CBC 12/17 . . . *Fox Sparrow*—the Denver, Ft. Collins, and Longmont CBC's each listed 2 on 2/17 for the only reports . . . *Lincoln's Sparrow*—the Denver CBC listed 2 on 12/17 and 5+ were at Pueblo 1/15-17 (CG, DG, TS) . . . *Swamp Sparrow*—the 5 reports comprised 16 individuals 12/1-1/28, all on the east slope and nearly all in the Denver area; high counts were 5 on the Denver CBC 12/17 and 6 at Chatfield on 1/28 (HK) . . . *Lapland Longspur*—the 9 reports listed about 461 individuals, nearly all from the northeastern quarter of the state; the only exceptions were 6 at Deweese Res. on 1/4 (DG). First was 1 on the Denver CBC 12/17 and the approximate maximum was about 281 on the PNG 2/5-6 (m.ob.) . . . *Snow Bunting*—1 at Longmont on 12/5 (RB) presaged the most massive invasion of Snow Buntings into Colorado during the 150+ years of Colorado field ornithology. Some 10,000 were in the vicinity of Grover (on the PNG) on 1/21 (PG, SL, BW), and large numbers (on the order of 5000) persisted there until about mid-February; latest report from that area involved an unspecified number on 2/26. A smaller, though still huge, influx occurred in northwestern Colorado (primarily in Moffatt County) and 2000-2500 were present there in January, with daily counts of 500-1000 typical (GLD). Away from these two centers, the birds were much less numerous, but were widespread in nearly all suitable areas north of I-70. South of I-70, the birds were local: 6 were at Gunnison on 2/18 (KC), and an unreported number at Eads on the same day (no other information available); the most southerly observation was 1 near Saguache on 1/18 (AYC). CBC's at Denver (2 on 12/17), Boulder (1 on 12/18) and North Park (35 on 12/29) listed the species for the first time in their histories. For a more detailed analysis of the 30+ reports and a possible explanation for this amazing phenomenon, I refer the reader to Peter Gent's excellent note in *CFO Journal*, No. 33 (Spring, 1978).



Sketch by Tim Manolis

INITIALED OBSERVERS:

Helen Allen (HA), Joseph F. Alston (JFA), Robby Bacon (RB), Gene Benine (GB), Winston W. Brockner (WWB), Bob Bunderman (BB), Sam Butkovich (SB), Charles Campbell (CC), Kevin Cook (KC) John and Joyce Cooper (JJC), A. Y. Cooperider (AYC), Allen Crockett (AC), Gerald L. Deutscher (GLD), Patty Echelmeyer (PE), Gene Elliott (GE), Robby Elliott (RE), Maribel Ellis (ME), Lee Evans (LE), Clark Ewing (CE), Mrs. Kenneth Ewing (MKE), Mary Fischer (MF), Elva Fox (EF), Richard Franz (RF), Tom Gatz (TG), Peter Gent (PG), Warner Gorenzel (WG), Carolyn Griffiths (CG), Dave Griffiths (DG), J. R. Guadagno (JRG), Freeman Hall (FH), Mark Holmgren (MH), Harold Holt (HH), David A. Jasper (DAJ), Delbert Johnston (DJ), Paul Julian (PJ), Frank Justice (FJ), Jan Justice (JJ), Dieter Kamm (DiK), Doug Kibbe (DK), Hugh Kingery (HK), Chris Knight (CK), Steve Larson (SL), Cecil Lewis (CL), Lon Lewis (LL), Jerry Ligon (JL), Larry K. Malone (LKM), Lois Matthews (LM), John Merchant (JM), Brian Millsap (BM), Peter Moulton (PM), Melvin T. Nail (MTN), Ray Olson (RO), Merle Phielen (MP), Jack Redall (JR), Warner K. Reeser (WKR), J. C. Rigli (JCR), Glade Ross (GR), Ron Ryder (RR), Jim Sedswick (JS), Nancy Sedswick (NS), Tom Shane (TS), Dave Silverman (DS), Mahlon Speers (MS), Dennis Stafford (DeS), Richard W. Stransky (RWS), Van A. Truan (VAT), Bruce Webb (BW), Sandy Williams (SW), Roberta Winn (RW), John Yeager (JY).

ORGANIZATIONS:

Boulder Audubon Society (BAS), Colorado Field Ornithology (CFO), Denver Field Ornithologists (DFO), Ft. Collins Audubon Society (FCAS), Colorado Field Ornithologists Official Records Committee (ORC).

LOCATIONS:

Cherry Creek Recreation Area (CCRA), Colorado State University (CSU), Denver Museum of Natural History (DMNH), Monte Vista National Wildlife Refuge (MVNWR), Pawnee National Grassland (PNG), Rocky Mountain National Park (RMNP).

CUCKOOS IN EASTERN COLORADO

by Charles A. Chase III

825 E. Laurel

Fort Collins, CO 80524

Both the Yellow-billed and Black-billed cuckoos are birds of eastern Colorado that are often sought by birders who, after a day's birding, feel as if they have been chasing ghosts all day. These elusive, secretive birds can be difficult to find, but they can be found. Over the past few years I have recorded several sightings of both species.

The Yellow-billed Cuckoo is by far the more common of the two birds. During the summers of 1976-78, I found several pair in Fort Collins. In 1977, two pair were seen in Colorado Springs and one pair was found east of Boulder. There are numerous other sightings in the Denver-Boulder area.

The farther east you travel, the more common the bird becomes. On 18 June 1977, I found a nest in Yuma, Colorado, while on a trip to Bonny Dam. At Bonny Dam, I located three nests and heard two other birds. During the same year, Mike Moulton found a dead cuckoo on 13 June. In 1978, he located a nest with two young and one egg. The nest was located 20 feet out in a forked limb of a cottonwood tree. The nest was approximately 15 feet up. This is fairly typical of the nests I've located although they are usually somewhat higher. Four others were heard and one was found dead on a road by Mike Moulton. During the summer of 1978, I located a nest at the Division of Wildlife Rocky Ford bird farm and another nest at the John Martin-Lake Hasty campground.

The Black-billed cuckoo is considered rare in Colorado. In 1976 I located two in Fort Collins and one in 1977. In 1978, I located a pair and a nest at the John Martin-Lake Hasty campground. The nest was on a forked branch 10 feet from the trunk, 18 feet up. Young were heard calling and the parents were seen feeding them in July.

The most typical way of finding these birds is by their very characteristic calls. Anyone hoping to find these birds should listen to a bird recording. The call is an unforgettable sound that can be heard at fairly long distances and is given quite frequently in the mid-morning and evening. Quite often the birds aren't to be found in the early morning and yet returning to the same area at mid-morning, after it has warmed up, several pair may be found.

Cuckoos are also easier to find later in the summer than most nesting birds in Colorado. Dr. R. A. Ryder has also found this to be true during his studies at the St. Vrain Nuclear Site (pers. comm.). The fact that the cuckoos are not easily found during the time of day and season when most birders are out has led to the belief that they are

much less common than they really are. My studies have shown that the Yellow-billed Cuckoo can be found in most eastern riparian areas with just a little persistent searching and that the Black-billed can be found at least a couple of times a summer. Armed with knowledge of Cuckoo behavior and calls, it shouldn't be too difficult for most people to find them both in eastern Colorado.

RARE WARBLERS IN ROCKY MOUNTAIN NATIONAL PARK

by Warner Reeser

The later part of the 1978 migrational period and the breeding season produced some unusual warbler sightings in Rocky Mountain National Park and immediate adjacent areas.

It has been said, and is perhaps true, if observers are diligent enough, that eventually all eastern warblers will be recorded here in Colorado. Some of our sightings in recent years would tend to verify this.

The 1978 sightings in chronological order are:

Hooded Warbler (Male) -- observed and photographed May 28 at the Lawn Lake trailhead by David Alles.

Black-throated Blue Warbler (Male and Female) -- reported by Chuck Mills, vacationer from Illinois. Excellent report regarding field marks and habitat details. Mr. Mills was familiar with this species, having observed it on birding trips in the Adirondack Mountains.

The above two species were not found after the day of observation, indicating that they were probably in migration.

Chestnut-sided Warbler (Male) -- Cub Lake trailhead, observed regularly by many persons from July 1st until around July 14th. Photographed by Ted and Lois Matthews. Apparently a male on territory, since it sang continuously the first two weeks in July.

Bay-breasted Warbler (Male and Female) -- Eastern edge of the YMCA conference grounds. First observed by David Bray July 2. Again a singing male on territory. Male observed regularly the first 18 days of July with the female being occasionally seen.

Tennessee Warbler (Two Males) -- observed on separate territories about 100 yards apart. First observed July 13th, continued singing until at least July 25th. The habitat locale was a small marshy open park area at about 10,000 feet elevation on the Fall River road just past scenic signpost number 17.

BAY-BREASTED WARBLERS SUMMER IN COLORADO

by Roberta Winn

Turkey Rock Ranch Est.

Route 2, Box 296, Sedalia, CO 80135

On a field trip of the Aiken Audubon Society on 24 June 1978, a pair of Bay-breasted Warblers (*Dendroica fusca*) were seen along Shrewsbury Gulch near Westcreek. Westcreek is in central Colorado, southwest of Denver, and northwest of Colorado Springs at about 7800 feet elevation. A rare-bird report was submitted to the ORC by Charles Campbell, president of the Aiken Audubon Society. The birds were working among the high branches of several small aspen trees and a nearby large blue spruce. At one time, the female was seen with what appeared to be grass for nest building in her mouth, flying into the spruce, some thirty feet from the ground. The dense foliage of the spruce made it impossible to discern the activity of the bird within this tree. The birds seemed completely oblivious to the group of persons watching from twenty-five to thirty-five feet away, and gave us all good opportunity to observe their appearance and actions for some fifteen minutes.

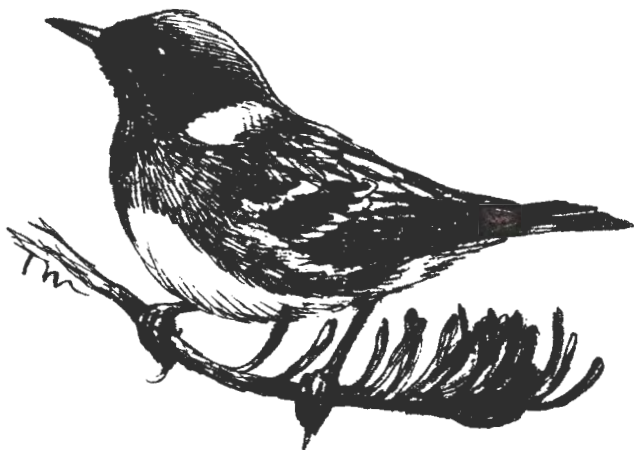
The area chosen by the warblers was at the edge of the drainage. There were several large blue spruce trees and small aspens in the immediate vicinity. Ponderosa pine forest, with some Douglas fir intermixed, was slightly above the creek drainage—to the south, west, and across the gulch and road to the north. The gulch area contained only a very small running stream, but a wide area of riparian vegetation consisting of willows, wild rose and raspberry thickets and some aspen. A small meadow to the west was ringed by large aspens where I have followed the breeding cycle of sapsuckers for the last ten years. This habitat is similar to that in Maine described by Mendall ("Nesting of the Bay-breasted Warbler," Auk 54:429-439, 1937). "The nesting tree . . . is in a dense tract of second-growth woods consisting chiefly of spruce and fir On the north side of the road, there exists swampy pasture land and a cut-over tract that is growing rather thickly to spruce, fir, larch, birch and maple."

Other birds in the area included House Wrens, Warbling Vireo, MacGillivray's Warbler, Robins with a nest only a few feet away from the Bay-breasted territory, Yellow-bellied Sapsuckers, and others. Chickarees had made several nests in the blue spruce into which these warblers flew, though we did not observe any of the squirrels while bird-watching.

My husband, Vincent, and I made several return trips between 24 June and 12 July to the specific area as well as checking the general area from the nearby road whenever we passed. We were not successful in again seeing the birds or in finding a nest. We realized, though, that the dense foliage of the spruce would make the chance of seeing a nest extremely small.

I was again able to visit the nest area on 24 July, about 7:30 a.m. An hour's watch did not reveal any activity near the possible nest tree. As I climbed back through an old fence, ready to give up, I straightened up to see the male Bay-breasted Warbler on a small aspen not ten feet in front of me. As I froze in position, the bird gathered small insects from the aspen branches and even came to a tree a little closer. Then, with his beak full, he flew off to the north-east, not to the supposed nesting tree to the east. It appeared to me that he was feeding young out of the nest. I tried to make my way through the rose bushes in the direction he had flown, but immediately lost track of him. Then he returned, gathered more insects, and flew directly north. I immediately made my way across the gulch and scanned all trees for activity of the warblers. I stood where I had last seen the male in flight, hoping for another glimpse. As I did not see the Bay-breasted Warbler, I decided to try to identify the two small yellowish birds in the top of an aspen quite near me. I had good light—being east of them with sunshine from behind—and a good view with little foliage to hide them, except that I was seeing mostly the undersides. Very visible were tail spots, white wing bars, yellowish wash, and the back seemed to be darker and streaked. There was no eye ring, though an eye streak, I think (my memory is fuzzy about that last detail). There was no yellow rump (which would have been visible on Audubon's Warbler) and no darker or lighter color on the throat. I had left my field guides in the car. After watching these two birds for about half an hour, and failing to find the male Bay-breasted Warbler again, I vacated my post, searched elsewhere in vain for that elusive male, and decided to return home. At the car, I opened the Robbins-Zim field guide to page 277. There, the first bird on the page—the immature warblers. I was almost sure it was the two yellowish birds I had been watching. And I was dumbfounded to discover that the picture belonged to immature Bay-breasted Warblers.

I was unable to contact anyone on the phone that day, but a note to Denver brought two experienced persons a few days later to look for the nest (if there had been one)—Bob Andrews and Betsy Webb. Betsy climbed the tree, which we had supposed was the nesting tree, but was unable to find a nest, for certain, among the squirrel nests. No sightings of either the adult Bay-breasted Warblers nor the young could be obtained either.



Sketch by Tim Manolis

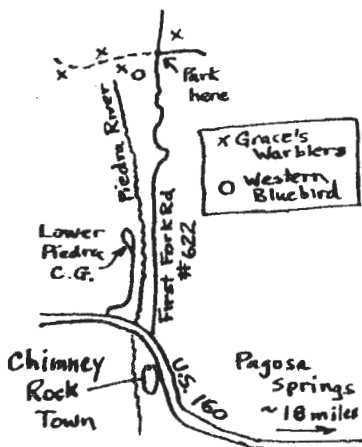
No, I did not have the proof needed to be sure that the Bay-breasted Warblers had, indeed, nested for the first time in Colorado. I did not see a nest, and I did not see an adult bird feeding young. However, the AAS group did see the pair of adults with apparent nest-building material in a typical, though out-of-range, habitat for this species, and a month later I did see an adult gathering insects in the same place and flying off with them in his beak, and I did see two birds which matched the description and pictures of immature Bay-breasted Warblers near the spot where the male was last seen.

I had always wanted to explore that particular riparian thicket more thoroughly, which explains why I took the AAS group through it, so I will watch for a possible return of these warblers to the same nesting area another year.

SITE GUIDE TO GRACE'S WARBLER AND DUSKY FLYCATCHER

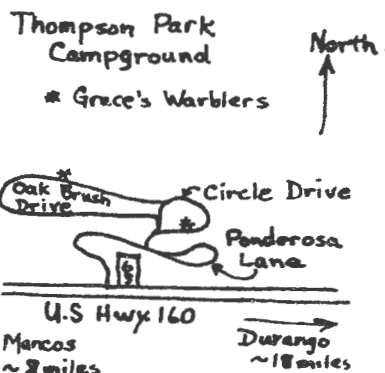
by Jeanne A. Conry
3 Chautauqua
Boulder, CO 80302

Persons traveling on U.S. Highway 160 between Pagosa Springs and Mesa Verde in southern Colorado pass through excellent birding areas. The maps and directions given here are to two excellent birding stops.



CHIMNEY ROCK. Between Pagosa Springs and Bayfield, at Chimney Rock, just 0.2 miles East of Lower Piedra Creek Access is the Forest Service access road, First Fork Road. Take this dirt road approximately 6 miles through spectacular canyon country to the first cross road. At this junction, on 28 June, Bruce Webb and I saw many singing territorial birds. From the list provided, one can see that they are typically Ponderosa Pine Forest species.

2 Red-shafted Flicker	2 Western Bluebird (nest)
2 <i>Empidonax</i> sp.	4 Solitary Vireo
4 Western Wood Pewee	1 Warbling Vireo
8 Violet-green Swallow	4 Audubon's Warbler
5 Steller's Jay	6 Grace's Warbler
2 Mountain Chickadee	1 Brown-headed Cowbird
4 White-breasted Nuthatch	2 Western Tanager
4 American Robin	2 Pine Siskin
2 Hermit Thrush	2 Chipping Sparrow



THOMPSON PARK CAMPGROUND: Again along Highway 160, approximately 18 miles west of Durango near mile marker 63, turn off into the Forest Service Campground. The area is Ponderosa Pine-Gambel Oak Woodland. Here we identified Dusky Flycatchers and more Grace's Warblers. The ease of stopping at this spot should encourage any traveler to stop for a few minutes to check breeding status of these species.

2 Dusky Flycatcher	6 Grace's Warbler (3 males,
1 Western Wood Pewee	3 females)
4 American Robin	6 Brown-headed Cowbird
6 Audubon's Warbler	1 Western Tanager
(nest contained 1 cow-	2 Green-tailed Towhee
bird and 2 dead	3 Chipping Sparrow
warbler nestlings)	(1 carrying food)

In addition, at various spots between Pagosa Springs and Durango, we observed several White-throated Swifts, Lewis' Woodpeckers and Say's Phoebe.



Sketch by Tim Manolis

A YEAR'S BIRDWATCHING IN COLORADO

An Englishman, I arrived in Colorado on the first of September, 1976, knowing no one in, and very little about, the state except that I had the birds of a different continent to see. This article contains some of the highlights of my birdwatching during the first year I spent in Colorado. It all started on the first morning I stepped out of my temporary home in Boulder's Chautauqua to be greeted by a Steller's Jay, then seeing another 273 species in the state, and ending with seeing Gray Vireo's in the Devil's Kitchen at the Colorado National Monument late in August, 1977. My temporary home proved most fortuitous in that I quickly met some of the best birdwatchers of the area. After being here only a month, and on my first trip to Bonny Reservoir, I became one of only a very few people who have seen a Groove-billed Ani in Colorado; how lucky can one be? I think the identification would have caused me a little trouble if I had been alone; the field guide would have been of little use with only two lines of description and one-tenth of a picture!

I was soon informed that a telescope is essential to birdwatching in Colorado by someone who conveniently had a second-hand one to sell. He is correct, of course, but then I had no excuse for not going out to look over ice-covered lakes in freezing winter temperatures. In November, however, I saw two females of all three Scoter species at the same time on Clover Basin Lake north of Boulder. In the following month, a Lesser Black-backed Gull somehow made its way to West Denver just to try and make me feel at home. It was quickly followed by the arrival of a Snowy Owl in the same area. I didn't see the owl for some time, however, as it took six trips before I finally caught up with this really spectacular bird that I had wanted to see for a long time.

I suppose some confusion over the common names of birds was inevitable. Why those birds at the front of the guide which continually dive are called Loons, I shall never know. That rare duck in Colorado with a gorgeous long tail looks nothing like an aged Indian lady to me! The reverse applies with your much more aptly named White-winged Scoter, but what is there to choose between Jaeger and Skua? Lastly, why not call that beautiful bird a Starling, and not a Speckled Feed Lot Gleaner?

Spring eventually arrived (does it always take that long?), which meant a trip to delightful Two Buttes and Baca County. Being wakened by the booming Lesser Prairie Chickens was a never-to-be-forgotten experience, and in Cottonwood Canyon, we saw Turkeys and Road-runners; not just a cartoon character after all, and one of my favorite state birds. The day of the Bonny Reservoir Spring Count started

miserably. As I was sheltering from the rain in my car, however, a Red-headed Woodpecker flew onto a tree trunk about five yards away, and the day brightened up from that moment. One of my frequent misidentifications caused more havoc than usual that day, as, after a brief glance at a first year male Orchard Oriole, I pronounced it a Lawrence's Warbler; I was soon put right. However, the day did produce an unusual warbler, and we had excellent looks at a Louisiana Waterthrush. We also saw a male Scarlet Tanager, and even I was unable to mistake that bird.

I also tried that American speciality, "pishing," after seeing birds expertly brought out into the open. Their response to me seemed somewhat different, however, and, as far as I could tell, always consisted of remaining in deep cover thinking, "I will never be fooled by that accent!" On a trip to Julesburg, I fell off a barbed wire fence, and cut my chin on my binoculars. The damage required a lengthy explanation, and three stitches, in Sterling Hospital. Recovered, I spent the next weekend on the west Slope, and camped on the Uncompaghre Plateau near Grand Junction. On the way up, we watched Common Nighthawks and Poorwills in the car headlights as they used the road as a base for their insect catching excursions. Next morning we found the nests of a Pygmy Owl and Williamson's Sapsuckers, as well as seeing a male Goshawk perched fifty yards away and Western Bluebirds. A great weekend of birdwatching.

One very pleasant aspect of the year has been the chance to study some of the commoner Colorado birds that either do not occur, or are very rare, in England. These include the fascinating Broad-tailed Hummingbird, the large yet very graceful Sandhill Crane and White Pelican, the beautiful Avocet and Wilson's and Northern Phalarope (do they ever get dizzy?) and the brightly colored Western Tanager and Mountain Bluebird.

My second year in Colorado has also started well with two Knots, two Sabine's Gulls, a Red Phalarope and a Ruddy Turnstone at Union Reservoir, and a female Wood Duck at Sawhill Ponds near Boulder in September. So why am I wasting precious time writing when I could be out in the field? Finally, I must thank the following for their patience, guidance and identifications; Bob Andrews, Cathy and Bruce Bosley, Tom Gatz, Paul Julian, Steve Larson, Mike and Peter Moulton, Joe Roller, Terry Root, and last but not least, Jeannie Conry and Bruce Webb.

by Peter Gent

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ODE TO THE PINE BARK BEETLE

by Liz Caile

I would like to contribute a dissenting opinion to the popular judgment that the pine beetle infestation is a catastrophe.

If one is able to detach one's vision from what it has been told to like, one can see beauty in the orange forests as well as in the green. Imagine on a rainy day a bright orange dead ponderosa standing alone against a backdrop of green pines. It is a striking picture—like elementary, electric art in which colors are assigned to shapes independent of popular prejudice (a purple apple, chartreuse people, an orange pine tree).

To walk through the forest and come upon a swath of standing dead trees is not necessarily an encounter with ugliness. On the contrary, the dead pines have a fragile quality; like rusted ironwork of exquisitely wrought detail they form a screen, a magic enclosure, for the youthful Douglas fir and limber pine that are flourishing there in the face of death.

Where the beetle has struck along the top of a ridge in past years, so that the trees once there are just a memory, just stumps sheared close to the ground and gradually sinking piles of brush, new vistas are opened to the viewer. The nearest hills and the distant peaks and plains, are made visible to him, and his spirit can soar more freely. Here grasses have grown thick and deep where before was a mostly barren forest floor. Flowers—deep stands of white yarrow, aromatic green sage, dark blue larkspur, yellow wallflower, orange blanket flower and delicate blue harebell, and countless others—are incredibly beautiful in these spots.

Juniper shrubs and currants grow thick in older clearings where beetles have killed the forest and woodmen felled the trees. Birds and chipmunks chatter and enliven these open places. There is a sense of abundance to them.

Death is natural, insects are a natural part of the process of life and death. Populations of plants and animals rise and fall in a complicated rhythm with each other. The dying trees drop their needles; a burgeoning woodpecker population knocks off their bark in discreet orange chips that look like pieces of a jigsaw puzzle and cover the ground like mulch.

In the autumn the noise of chainsaws is inescapable in the orange and green hills. Wood for heat is abundant. Many people find work outdoors cutting wood—physically demanding, gruelling, work, that is satisfying for the same reasons. A forest that has grown up since the last beetle epidemic is ready to be harvested again.

Let us praise nature for the intricacy of her puzzle and not damn the separate pieces which we have not the patience to fit.

CALENDAR OF FIELD TRIPS & EVENTS

- April 14 *White-tailed Ptarmigan*, Clait Braun, leader, from the
Saturday Colorado Division of Wildlife. Meet at the Guanella
morning or Pass Summit parking area at 7:30 a.m. Guanella Pass
full day is approximately 12 miles west of Georgetown on the
option, route to Geneva Basin. The road is maintained open
all year. Elevation at the pass is about 10,500 feet.
Clait will probably capture and band Ptarmigan. Bring
warm clothes and lunches. On the trip home in the
afternoon we will stop for Gray Jays, Clark's Nutcrack-
ers, Cassin's Finches, and other mountain birds (possibly
rosy finches).
- April 21 Boulder Hawk Watch, Freeman Hall, leader (444-1453).
Saturday Meet at the Boulder Public Library, 10th & Canyon at
morning or 8:00 a.m. Carpool from there to Dakota Ridge where
full day since 1977 Freeman and others have seen upwards of
option, 20 *hawks per hour*. On one occasion in 1977 *eleven*
Golden Eagles passed over Dakota Ridge in one flock.
Bring spotting scopes.
- May 26-27 CFO Annual Meeting, Colorado Springs. See announce-
Sat.-Sun. ment elsewhere in this issue.
- June 2 Bird Taxonomy Clinic with Dr. Allan Phillips, Denver
Saturday Museum of Natural History. See announcement else-
where in this issue.
- June 1-3 Explore Latilong 13, Walt Graul, leader. Meet Friday
Friday evening, June 1, at the Midwest Motel at Limon for a
evening- weekend of exploring one of the least understood Lati-
Sunday longs, despite the fact that it is just east of metropolitan
morning, Denver. *Mississippi Kite* seen here previously.

June 17 Mount Evans, Bill Brockner, leader. Meet at 7:00 a.m.
¾ to full in Bergen Park at Jct. of Colo. Highways 74 & 103.
day. (From Interstate 70 take Evergreen exit, Hwy. 74 to
 Bergen Park.) *Brown-capped Rosy Finch*, Water Pipit,
 possibly Northern Three-toed Woodpecker, plus other
 mountain species.

July 7 Deadman Lookout, Larimer County, Bruce Webb, lead-
full day er. We will look for *Boreal Owls* in a place where one
& evening. adult was seen in July 1978. Tentatively meet at Red
 Feather Lakes, NW of Fort Collins Saturday morning (or
 Friday evening for those who can make it and would like
 to camp out). Contact Bruce Webb at the address below
 or leave message at the Biology Dept., 492-8981.

RESULTS of the field trips will be published as they are received.
Suggestions for future field trips or volunteers to lead them are soli-
cited by Bruce E. Webb, CFO Field Trips Chairman, Dept. E.P.O.
Biology, University of Colorado, Boulder, CO 80309.