

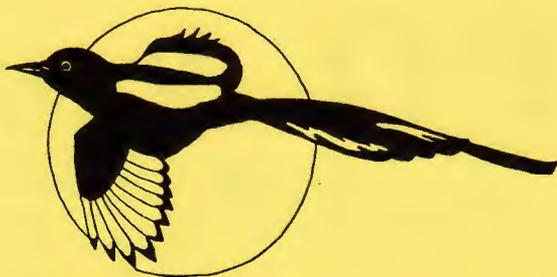
# *C.F.O. Journal*

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CFO JOURNAL is devoted to the field study of birds in Colorado. Articles and notes of scientific or general interest, and reports of unusual observations are solicited. Send manuscripts with photos and drawings to: Ann Hodgson, 6060 Broadway, Denver. Send rare bird report to: CFO Records Committee, c/o Zoological Collections, Denver Museum of Natural Resources History, City Park, Denver, Colorado 80205.

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University of Southern Colorado Campus,  
Pueblo, Colorado, by Bart Bartol.

First Recorded Sighting of Henslow's Sparrow  
in Colorado

Wade Leitner  
14079 E. Stanford Circle  
Aurora, CO 80015

Laurens R. Halsey  
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Bedford, TX 76022

On 10 September, 1985, Jack Reddall spotted an unusual sparrow sitting on a barbed wire fence which separated a grassy field of the Pelican Refuge from the intake canal at Jackson Reservoir.

Leitner identified the bird as Henslow's Sparrow (Ammodramus henslowii). The sparrow was observed for approximately ninety seconds, facing the observers, at a distance of 15 to 20 meters with a scope at 45 power magnification, until it flew into the thick grass cover in the field, allowing a brief observation of its back.

The bird appeared flat-headed, large-billed, with a thickly-set neck, and a short tapered tail, rendering a compact appearance, and suggesting that the sparrow belonged to the genus Ammodramus. We noted a striking olive face and nape, two dark whisker marks, a dark ear spot, and an olive median crown-stripe bordered by brownish lateral crown-stripes on the head. On the body, fine dark streaks extended across the light buffy upper breast and down onto the sides, the belly and vent faded to a clear, pale buffy coloration, the dark feathers of the upper back showed white tips and the rest of the upperparts and tail were reddish brown.

We considered all morphologically similar sparrow species in the genus Ammodramus. Within this genus, only Henslow's Sparrow shows an olive nape and face, two whisker marks and a dark ear spot. These characters effectively eliminate all similar species.

To our best knowledge, this is the first reported sighting of Henslow's Sparrow in Colorado. The sighting was accepted by the 1985 CFO Records Committee. The nearest known nesting population of Henslow's Sparrow is found on the Konza Prairie at Manhattan, Kansas. There the birds nest in mixed grass prairie that covers most of the reserve. The bird that the authors observed was in a habitat that is superficially similar to the birds that Leitner observed previously at the Konza.

We thank C. Chase III for his critical review of the manuscript, and J. Reddall for locating and assistance in verification of this sighting.

## Twenty-Fourth Annual CFO Convention

Over 60 enthusiastic birders attended the Annual CFO Convention held 16-18 May 1986 at the campus of the Colorado School for the Deaf and Blind, in Colorado Springs. The Convention weekend opened with a meeting of the Board of Directors Friday evening, followed by field trips to the Hanna Ranch and Hanover Road, and Big Johnson Reservoir at the crack of dawn on the cold Saturday morning. Vibrant summaries of those field trips, written by Bill Prather and Rosie Watts, appear in this Journal.

The paper session Saturday afternoon included Ron Ryder's summary of the first eighteen years of the North American Breeding Bird Survey in Colorado, a discussion of the importance of a breeding bird atlas for Colorado by Hugh Kingery, Charlie Chases's discussion of the nesting distribution of Iceland and Thayer's Gulls in nearctic North America, and quiz show master Peter Gent leading the audience in another round of Birders' Mystery Theater as he presented an Identification Clinic from slides submitted to the Records Committee in the last three years. (Rosie Watts sent Peter a card saying she "thoroughly" enjoyed it!) Following the Business Meeting the group reconvened at the Holiday Inn Central for a buffet dinner and photographic tour of the Sandhill Cranes and San Luis Valley by Robert Rozinski.

- Ann Hodgson

THE NORTH AMERICAN BREEDING BIRD SURVEY:  
THE FIRST EIGHTEEN YEARS IN COLORADO

Ronald A. Ryder  
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Fort Collins, CO 80523

The past eighteen years (1968-85), from 110 to 160 species of birds have been counted annually on from 9 to 23 fifty-stop Breeding Bird Survey Routes. Farmland, grassland and other dry, open habitats have been better sampled than coniferous forests, shrub or wetlands. Mourning Doves and Western Meadowlarks have been the two most widely distributed, while meadowlarks, Horned Larks, and (most years) Lark Buntings are the most abundant species counted. Like most predominantly dryland species counted, these showed considerable variation in numbers counted per route on which observed. For example, Mourning Doves averaged 31.8 to 88.0; meadowlarks 82.1 to 162.9. Lark Buntings showed even greater population fluctuations (23.8 to 146.6) and seemed to be a "boom or bust" species, very dependent upon above-normal precipitation and consequent better vegetation growth. Horned Larks also showed rather severe fluctuations in total numbers (71.8 to 179.3). Cassin's Sparrows steadily increased in numbers and stops at which observed from 1968-74, but declined in 1975. House Sparrows and Starlings were rather widely distributed, but at least House Sparrows have steadily declined in numbers. Another so-called "nuisance species", the Red-winged Blackbird, has increased significantly since 1968. The mean number of species observed per route has been lowest (24) near Great Divide in Moffat County and highest near Delores (59). In general, more individual birds but fewer species are seen on plains routes than on mountain routes. The assistance and cooperation of over 50 observers is gratefully acknowledged.

A COLORADO BREEDING BIRD ATLAS:  
SHALL WE WORK ON ONE?

Hugh E. Kingery  
869 Milwaukee Street  
Denver, CO 80206

Colorado completed the Latilong report in 1978, and revised it in 1982. It assesses the status of Colorado birds by dividing the state into 28 blocks ("Latilongs") outlined by each degree of latitude and longitude in the state. The Latilong study provides information on the breeding, migratory, and winter status of each species which occurred in the state during the preceding 15-20 years.

A number of eastern states have started a more specific system of collecting data on breeding birds. In these states a corps of volunteer bird watchers collects data on the breeding birds in blocks 3 miles on a side. The project covers the entire state during the specific five-year period. Each state will publish the results in an "Atlas" of breeding birds. (Vermont published the first one, last year.)

I propose that Colorado undertake such an atlas. It would have a number of scientific and utilitarian purposes. Generally, an atlas would determine and map the distribution and abundance of each bird species which now breeds in Colorado, and would identify the habitats necessary to the maintenance and survival of these bird species.

The information would detail Colorado's birdlife on an incredibly specific scale -- with more accuracy than the relatively generalized latilong data. It would provide a broadly-based management tool for land use planning by many different sectors of the resource economy (governmental and private), develop data for management of sensitive species, and identify unique and fragile habitats. It will provide a baseline for comparison in future years. It would mobilize Colorado's diverse community of bird watchers into a common, constructive, and particularly, an enjoyable and challenging, field work project.

The field work becomes a fascinating exercise for the volunteers, and provides a new and intriguing format for summer (and spring) bird watching. It also leads to discovery of new sites, new breeding birds, new field techniques, and new knowledge about birds and bird behavior by us bird watchers.

Because of the size of Colorado, we would not plan to survey the entire state. Rather, we plan to survey one 3-mile square block in each 7 1/2 minute quadrangle in the state -- 1800 of them -- by dividing the quads into sixths; we would census the same block in each quad (e.g., the southwest or east central one) throughout the state. We would plan to complete the field work in five to six years. We propose this format in order to obtain data compatible with the rest of the country and with other countries. The Colorado Division of Wildlife would process the data in its existing computerized Wildata Program, which already uses the latilong data.

The C.F.O. Board has endorsed the atlas. We have only started the planning, though: I invite anyone interested in helping to plan the Atlas to contact me to participate in this intriguing and exciting project.

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Field Trip Report  
Reservoirs East of Pueblo  
CFO Convention 19 May 1986

Bill Prather  
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Longmont, CO 80501

The goal of this field trip is to find shorebirds. When we get to Nee-so-pah Reservoir, there are thousands feeding in the shallow water or just resting. We pull out telescopes and take a look. It's wonderful but can we go closer for a better look? We are almost standing on a rattlesnake! We decide to move again--out of the grass. Now we can see hundreds of shorebirds clearly. There are Stilt Sandpipers, Long-billed Dowitchers, yellowlegs, and peeps. Two bright Dunlins are spotted. What's flying over? Two curlews, no wait! One is smaller and has a much shorter and straighter bill--a Whimbrel! What's that perched above everything on the point? It's a Peregrine Falcon looking over the breakfast menu. We walk along the shore, stopping to look as we get close to new groups but we are still looking at only a small fraction of the birds. Red-Necked Phalaropes are spotted among the masses of Wilson's.

We finally tear ourselves away and walk back to the cars. We drive to Adobe Creek Reservoir. Two Long-Billed Curlews, standing calmly in a field, greet us. There are not so many shorebirds here but we find another snake-in-the-toilet. Some peeps are spotted and approached carefully. They are identified as Least Sandpipers. Some birders approach very close--can you see the toes? A Grasshopper Sparrow jumps up on a weed and sings for us. Later Baird's Sandpipers are spotted and Spotted Sandpipers are bared--our leader, Vic Zerbi, strikes again! Finally we drive to Lake Meredith. We see Snowy Egrets, Black-Crowned Night Herons and more Ibises. As we head back to Colorado Springs we total up the shorebirds --16 or 17-- a good day!

Field Trip Report  
Saturday AM Field Trip  
CFO Convention 19 May 1986

Bill Prather  
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Longmont, CO 80501

The morning at Hannah Ranch is cool and damp, with fresh snow clearly visible on the nearby mountains, but the hot birding quickly warms up the participants. The leaders, Richard Bunn and David Blue, expertly guide the groups to the best areas and exciting birds begin popping up. A female tanager sets off a lively debate and sends birders looking at field guides to refresh memories on field marks. Is it yellow or more orange? What color is the bill? Does it have a "tooth"? Most finally agree it is a Summer Tanager. Now a "fall-out" of warblers is happening! There's a Blackpoll! There's a Townsend's! Is that a Tennessee? A Northern Waterthrush plays hard-to-see for a while but then comes right out in the open to pose and sing. An Ovenbird plays hard-to-see and just gives quick looks. A chat, beautiful in the sun, comes out. In all 14 species of warblers are reported and many are seen by all. In between warblers there are orioles, grosbeaks, and Western Tanagers to see. A Great Horned Owl guards a nest.

When the second group arrives they see a Bob-O-Link in the field! Now the first group heads toward Hanover Road while the second group works the woods. A thrasher is glimpsed, will he respond to a taped call of a Curve-Billed? No, but Brown Towhees and Redheaded and Lewis Woodpeckers are seen while we are waiting. Fountain Creek marsh is reached. Bill Maynard does his Virginia Rail imitation and a Virginia Rail answers! He tries his Sora imitation and he gets an answer! It's a peacock at the farm across the road. At Big Johnson Reservoir everyone gets out the scopes. Hundreds of phalaropes take off, turn, and land again in unison. Among the Wilson's are many Red-Necked. A Clark's Grebe is focused on and everyone can see the head pattern

and bill that distinguishes it from a Western Grebe. And there are gulls and beautiful breeding-plumaged Black-Bellied Plovers and other shorebirds. Soon it is time to think about lunch and getting to the afternoon session but everyone is happy with the morning's birding.

Field Trip Report  
Eastern Fremont County  
CFO Convention 19 May 1986

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Penrose, CO 81240

The morning began with a change of plans to include a stop at Bear Creek Nature Center in Colorado Springs to search for a Swainson's Warbler resighted on Saturday (in vain, I might add). Turnout was higher than expected with 13 cars leaving the Deaf and Blind School in the morning and still an entourage of 5 vehicles for the hardcore who stayed till the end of the day.

Highlights included: A Great Egret at Brush Hollow Reservoir, a Green-backed Heron at the Arkansas River, one Red-necked Phalarope at B.H. Reservoir, Black-chinned Hummingbirds, Gray Flycatchers, one Ash-throated Flycatcher, a pair of nesting Cassin's Kingbirds, and Blackthroated Gray Warblers.

We met several new birders and had a great time -- it's always good to meet nice people with a common interest who know how to have fun, too.

Winter Seasonal Report  
December 1, 1985 to February 28, 1986

Bill Prather  
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The weather took a roller-coaster ride in Colorado last winter. In the Denver area, the coldest November on record left most waters frozen and the land covered with snow. December was a transition month with the snow slowly melting in the sunny days until it was quite mild by Christmas-count time. The weather stayed mild almost entirely through January and February, these two months being the warmest in history. What did this do to the birds? By the time the mild weather got here there were few to be seen. Most of the state's Christmas counts were below normal in species and individuals. Toward the end of February, however, the thaw arrived early and many observers reported species returning early.

#### Loons Through Grebes

Single Common Loons were reported 12/1 and 12/2 at two locations near Delta (MJ), 12/2-7 at Highline Lake, Mesa County (CD) and 1/9 at McClellan Reservoir, Arapahoe County (AH). Pied-Billed Grebes lingered until 12/28 at Switzer Lake, Delta County (MJ), wintered south off Durango (EF), at Carbondale (JM), around Denver (DF0), and at Highline Lake (CD), and were seen 1/22 in Fort Collins (DL), and 2/4 in Salida (RE). A Horned Grebe was seen 12-22 on Boulder's Christmas count and early returnees included 7 at Pueblo Reservoir 1/13 (BM), 2 in Denver 2/7 & 8 (PE), 8 at Barr Lake 2/25 (WB), and 4 at Longmont 2/26 (MG). Eared Grebes stayed at Switzer Lake until 12/9 (MJ), and 1 was seen 1/1 in Larimer County (PO). Western Grebes were reported by many observers statewide and all period and Clark's Grebes were reported at Pueblo Reservoir 1/13 (BM) and 1/11 and 19 in Boulder County (GAB).

## Cormorants through Herons:

Five Double-Crested Cormorants remained near Grand Junction until 12/12 (BT, CD) and three were counted 12/21 on Denver's Christmas Count. Black-Crowned Night-Herons were seen throughout the period in the Denver area, 12/3 in Fort Collins (KM), and on Boulder's Christmas Count 12/22. A Green-Backed Heron was seen 2/24 at the Hotchkiss fish hatchery (MJ).

## Geese and Ducks:

In many areas the cold and snow of November froze all the water and ducks and geese were much less common than usual until the water started opening up in January or February. The north-east region waterfowl counts done by the Colorado Division of Wildlife were typical of this pattern, showing ducks and geese 12% and 33% of normal on 12/12 and 12/19 and then increasing dramatically to near or above normal on the 1/8 count. Observers that had open water areas reported normal or above-normal counts or regularly-occurring species and quite a few rarities. Two tundra swans were seen 12/27 to 1/23 south of Durango (EF), one through the winter at Highline Lake (BT), and one at Fossil Creek Reservoir southeast of Fort Collins, mid-December (PO). MJ saw two Greater White-Fronted Geese at Switzer Lake on 2/10 and single birds were seen 1/19 at Highline Lake (CD,RL), at Pueblo Reservoir. On 1/4-19 (DS), at Valmont Reservoir, east of Boulder, 12/20 (DW), different individuals in Fort Collins 1/6 and 1/10 (DL), and 2/22 at Nee-So-Pah Reservoir (DB). On 1/23, four to five thousand Snow Geese including thirty blue form were seen at Lake Meredith (DJ). Ross' Geese reported were three at Highline Lake 12/13 (MJ), one same location 2/19-21 (BT), one in Englewood 12/1-9 (TJ), and one at Switzer Lake 2/16-23 (MJ). A "blue-winged" teal species was late near Barr Lake and Cinnamon Teals were early at Highline from 1/1 on (BT) and at several other locations from middle February on. Denver reported 58 Wood Ducks on the Christmas Count and 3 or 4 were seen several times from 1/20 on in the Grand Junction area (BT). A Eurasian Wigeon was seen 1/26-2/1 at Barr Lake (MJ, AH, WL, DJW). Four Buffle-heads at Dotsero 12/16 and 20-30 Ring-Necked Ducks near Glenwood

Springs were unusual winter reports (JM). A Greater Scaup was again seen this winter at Wheatridge Greenbelt. Single Oldsquaws were reported 12/1-7 at Cherry Creek (DFO), mid December at Fossil Creek (PO), 1/13-4/2 at Pueblo Reservoir 1/13-22 (BM, DS). Barrow's Goldeneyes were reported in normal numbers at Glen-wood Springs and one was seen 12/21 on the Denver Christmas Count and a pair from 2/23 on at Henry Lake, Jefferson County. Two Ruddy Ducks were late at Lyons 12/1 (MG) and 15 were early on Hamilton Reservoir 2/1 (PO).

#### Vultures through Shorebirds:

The Bald Eagle mid-winter count had a total of 463 which is only 86% of the 6 year average for the count. Possible counting procedure changes and dispersal because of warm weather may have lowered the count (GC) as many observers reported normal or above normal sightings. Several observers noted a lack of American Kestrels and Northern Harriers possibly due to snow cover hiding small prey in the first part of the period. Merlins were abundant in December (6-8/day) but scarce afterwards (CC). A large flock (55) of Wild Turkeys was reported in the foothills north of Boulder. A Virginia Rail was found in Grand Junction from 1/27 on (RLe, CD, CR). Sandhill and Whooping Cranes were several weeks early returning to Monte Vista Refuge (EM, JRa, CC). Delta had late shorebirds: One American Avocet until 12/7 when it died, up to 5 Least Sandpipers until 12/22 and up to 5 Dunlins until 2/2 (MJ). The Greater Yellowlegs was present again at Wheatridge.

#### Gulls through Woodpeckers:

A first state record Iceland (Kumlien's) Gull was found at Cherry Creek Reservoir 1/22 (WL) and seen by observers into February. Another amazing gull was a Laughing Gull present 2/2-15 (WL). Others among the many Ring-Billed and Herring Gulls at Cherry Creek were up to 20 Thayers, 3 Glaucous, and up to 7 California. Boulder's Christmas Count 12/22 had 2 Franklin's, 3 Thayers, 2 Glaucous, and 2 California. Pueblo Reservoir was

another hot spot with up to 13 Bonaparte's Gulls 1/16-18 and one Black-Legged Kittiwake 1/13-22 (BM). Mourning Doves wintered in Fort Collins, north of Greeley and Denver. Short-Eared Owls were scarce: In January on Monte Vista Refuge (JRa), one north of Pueblo 2/5 (DJ), and one west of Fleming 12/16 (DJW) were the only reports. Northern Saw-Whet and Northern Pygmy Owls were reported from around the state including many by observers around the front range cities. A Boreal Owl was seen near a feeder in Palisade as well as a Northern Saw-Whet Owl (SD). Lewis' Woodpeckers seemed low in numbers in Fort Collins and Delta but normal elsewhere. Single Red-Bellied Woodpeckers were seen in Boulder 12/18 (RC) and Tamarack Ranch 12/16 (DJW). A Williamson's Sapsucker was seen 2/10 and 2/18 in Florence (JRW).

#### Flycatchers through Wrens:

A Say's Phoebe was seen once each month around Clifton (RLe), two were seen 12/20 on Orchard Mesa (CD), and one was seen 12/28 on the Arkansas River between Florence and Penrose (JRW). Gray Jays have declined in number in the Indian Peaks area of Boulder County (DB, DH). Chickadees and nuthatches were very scarce all over the state and most were seen at feeders--there seemed to be little wild food. Mountain Chickadees were present in the lowest numbers in 5 years in the Indian Peaks (DB, DH), while feeders at lower elevations had more than average--sometimes rivaling Blacked-Capped Chickadees in numbers (JJC, RR). Very low numbers of Red-Breasted Nuthatches were reported and Pygmy Nuthatches were absent from some normal wintering areas (RW). Marsh Wrens wintered around Grand Junction (BT) and CFI Ponds (BM). A Winter Wren was seen 12/29 in Cottonwood Canyon, Baca County (DB).

#### Dippers Through Starlings:

Golden-crowned Kinglets were scarce--only 3 reports. Ruby-crowned Kinglets reported only from Grand Junction area and Wheatridge. Robins were scarce in most areas until they started increasing late in the period. Six Mountain Bluebirds were reported 12/16 in the Fruita area (BT). BS saw 11 Eastern and 32

Mountain Bluebirds on Burnt Mill Road west of Pueblo 1/11 and Mountains were reported in 5 areas of the state 2/26-28. Western Bluebirds also returned early with 3/17 in Durango (EF), four on 1/27 in Grand Junction area (HT, LG, RL) and two in Boulder County 2/28 (PP). A Varied Thrush was seen 12/2 in Lyons (JG). Thrashers visiting feeders included a Gray Catbird in Denver 12/10-16 (HK). Brown Thrashers in Golden (AB, DM) and Hygiene (VD) all period, and a Curve-Billed Thrasher in Pueblo all period (JW). Water Pipits were seen 12/15 at Barr Lake (DJW), 12/21 in Denver (DFO), 12/23-2/23 near Florence (JRW), and all period at Pueblo Reservoir (BM). Bohemian Waxwings were not seen in many areas, they were numerous last year, but a few flocks (of up to 500) were seen scattered around the state. Shrikes were scarce except in the south and far west where there was less snow cover. Starlings were all too common: "seem to be increasing (RE)", some days it's " Oh, my gosh-sized flocks" (B), "they are everywhere (EF)", "Too many (JRW)", "with us all winter...once I counted 50 which isn't too impressive for starlings (JM)".

#### Warblers through Sparrows:

A Cape May Warbler visited a feeder in Lakewood from 12/12 through February (JA). Yellow-Rumped Warblers were reported 12/16, 1/26, and 2/10, 2/23, 2/27 in Grand Junction area (many observers), 12/30 in Lamar (PL), 2/23 near Pueblo (BM), and 2/7 in Durango (EF). A Common Yellowthroat was seen 1/18 in Wheatridge (DFO). Two or three Northern Cardinals visited feeders in Canon City 12/3-2/20 (JRW). Sparrows were much less common than usual all over the state. A Field Sparrow was seen south of Loveland 1/7 to 2/12 (MH). Single Lincoln's Sparrows were seen 12/1 and 12/21 in Denver area (DFO) and 1/30 in Durango (EF). Swamp Sparrows were seen 12/22 on Boulder's Christmas Count, 1/20, 2/11 and 2/16 in Grand Junction (BT), and in the Wheatridge greenbelt. A White-Throated Sparrow frequented a feeder in Denver 2/21-1/26 (HK). Lapland Longspurs were hard to find for some observers, "but 2080 were seen east of Barr Lake 1/12 (DJW) and four on every trip to the Pawnee Grassland, from 8

to 150 birds, 12/15 to 2/26 (JC)". Four Snow Bunting were also seen south of Westcliffe 12/22 (DS), three were seen near Fort Morgan 12/2 (JRI), and one was seen in the mountains at Nederland 12/28 (MF).

#### Blackbirds through House Sparrows:

Four Yellow-Headed Blackbirds visited a feeder in Florence all period (NP) and one was found 12/5 and 12/21 in the Denver area (DFO). Two Rusty Blackbirds were seen at Jumbo Reservoir, Logan County, 12/16 (DJW) and 9 were found on Denver's Christmas Count. Flocks of Brewer's Blackbirds stayed around Grand Junction (BT), Hygiene (MG), Loveland (RH), and Florence (JRW). Great-Tailed Grackles were seen as early as 1/14 in Del Norte (JRa) and 2/12 to 2/25 in Florence (JRW). A Common Grackle wintered in Fort Collins (RR) and one was seen 2/17 in Hygiene (VD). Rosy Finches were present in good numbers such as 250 in McCoy 12/1 (ME) and 300 on 2/8 in Salida (RE). Up to five Purple Finches were present all period in Lamar (PL). Pine Siskins were present in reduced numbers in most areas but still the most common finch as other species had very low numbers with the possible exception of American Goldfinch.

#### Cited Reporters:

Jane Axtell, Adrey Borell, Dan Bridges, Winston William Brockner, Diane Brown, Gillian and Alex Brown (compilers for the Boulder County Wildlife Inventory) Jerry Cairo, Charles Chase III, Gerald R. Craig, John & Joyce Cooper, Rosalie Culver, Denver Field Ornithologists field trips reported in "The Lark Bunting", Coen Dexter, Virginia Diogini, Sue Dismant, Ruby Ebright, Patty Echelmeyer, Margaret C. Ewing, Mike Figgs, Elva Fox, John Gierach, Mary Griest, Loma Gustafson, Dave Hallock, Ron Harden, Alan Hay, Mary Hill, Mark Janos, Dave Johnson, Tina Jones, Hugh Kingery (compiler for the Denver Audubon Society), Ron Lambeth, Dave Leatherman, Wade Leitner, Rich Lerad, Peggy Locke, Karen

Manci, David Martin, Bill Maynard, Jack Merchant, Edward S. Merritt, P.A. Opler, Norma Peterson, John J. Rawinski, Claudia Rector, Ron Ryder, Dave Silverman, Bob Spencer, Bert Tignor, Helen Traylor, Jim & Rosie Watts, Doug & Judy Ward, Joe Williams.

### C.F.O. RAPTOR IDENTIFICATION CLINIC

- By: Charles Chase III, Research Associate and former Curator of Ornithology, Denver Museum of Natural History
- When: Saturday, February 7, 1987, 9:00 A.M. to 4:00 P.M.  
Field trip all day on Sunday, February 8, 1987
- Where: Denver Museum of Natural History, City Park, Denver
- Cost: \$12 for CFO members, \$15 for non-members
- Limit: 45 people
- To sign up or for additional information please contact:

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C.F.O. FIELD TRIP  
MEMORIAL DAY WEEKEND  
S.E. Colorado - 24-26 May 1986

Mark Janos  
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A very pleasant Memorial Day weekend was spent by Vic, Sandra and Merida Zerbi; Mark, Vicky, Nathan, Abby and Ben Janos; Hugh, Urling, Anne and Kate Kingery; Gary, Carol and Amanda Arthur; Rosie and Jim Watts; John and Judy Ward; Tony Brevillier and Bill Morefield; Bob Spencer; Jack Merchant; and Thompson and Susan Marsh. The trip was very well arranged and led by Vic.

Our group assembled below the dam at Two Buttes Reservoir before noon on May 24. Although a female Northern Cardinal had been seen by Tony the evening before it was not rediscovered until after the group had left. Highlights of our brief stay here were a Barn Owl seen on the cliffs and an elusive Yellow-billed Cuckoo.

We spent the rest of the day driving to the Cimarron River and birding along the way, with a brief stop at Turk's Pond State Wildlife Area. Here we were treated to good views of a breeding-plumaged Little Blue Heron and a variety of other waterfowl and shorebirds. Later, as we drove through the Comanche Grasslands we heard and saw many Cassin's Sparrows.

We arrived along the Kansas border on the Cimarron River late in the day and camped. A short walk that evening produced several Mississippi Kites and what seemed like hundreds of Orchard and Bullock's Orioles. The real highlight of this spot was a pair of Scissor-tailed Flycatchers seen at dusk about a hundred yards from the Kansas border!

There was a summer camp atmosphere here, as we camped spread out in the gentle grassy pasture beneath huge Plains Cottonwoods. The children were responsible for the festive and casual air. Feathers, rocks, bones and other "treasures" were collected and good time was had by all--both kids and birders.

A bird walk on Sunday morning was quite productive and we had more views of Scissor-tailed Flycatchers as two beautiful and acrobatic pairs were nest-building around our views of a Grasshopper Sparrow delivering an insect to an expertly hidden cupful of nestlings. The nest was on the ground, a tightly woven cup partly covered and domed by grasses. We arrived at Carrizo and Cottonwood Canyons later in the morning.

We lunched there at the picnic area where we found Eastern Phoebes and Bewick's Wrens singing along the creek.

Bob Spencer directed us to the top of the cliff to look at some Indian petroglyphs of animals pecked into the desert varnish. We set up camp along Carrizo Creek that evening and then took a drive along the creek before dinner. A stop near a cattle corral produced terrific views of Curve-billed Thrasher, Brown Towhee, Cassin's Kingbird and Rufous-crowned Sparrow. We also found and studied more Indian petroglyphs etched into tumbled rimrock along the road. Perhaps the finest identification of the trip was made here by a six year old, Nathan Janos, who breathlessly announced his discovery of a scorpion in the nearby creek bed. The adults were as excited as the children to view this seldom-seen insect.

An after-dinner walk up the creek along camp brought the discovery of a family of Long-eared Owls. The adults perched and "barked" in the tips of trees while the juveniles hid in the heavier foliage along the creek and squeaked. We soon added great views of Western Screech Owls as they called from the trees in camp. Those of us who still had energy stayed up and toasted a few marshmallows and enjoyed a gorgeous starlit sky.

After a brief bird walk, Memorial Day morning was spent in travel to the canyons southwest of Kim where we were to search for Hepatic Tanagers. A short wait on the canyon rim was rewarded with perfect views of a pair of these birds as they foraged in big Ponderosa Pines at eye-level. We congratulated each other on our good luck and said goodbye to new friends and old acquaintances.

CHECK LIST OF BIRDS  
CFO FIELDTRIP, S.E. COLORADO  
24-25 MAY 1986

|                      |                           |
|----------------------|---------------------------|
| Great Blue Heron     | Common Nighthawk          |
| Little Blue Heron    | Common Poorwill           |
| Canada Goose         | White-throated Swift      |
| Mallard              | Belted Kingfisher         |
| Northern Pintail     | Lewis' Woodpecker         |
| Gadwall              | Red-headed Woodpecker     |
| Turkey Vulture       | Ladder-backed Woodpecker  |
| Mississippi Kite     | Downy Woodpecker          |
| Northern Harrier     | Hairy Woodpecker          |
| Sharp-shinned Hawk   | Northern Flicker          |
| Cooper's Hawk        | Western Wood-Pewee        |
| Swainson's Hawk      | Willow Flycatcher         |
| Red-tailed Hawk      | Eastern Phoebe            |
| Ferruginous Hawk     | Say's Phoebe              |
| Golden Eagle         | Ash-throated Flycatcher   |
| American Kestrel     | Cassin's Kingbird         |
| Wild Turkey          | Western Kingbird          |
| Northern Bobwhite    | Eastern Kingbird          |
| Scaled Quail         | Scissor-tailed Flycatcher |
| American Coot        | Horned Lark               |
| Killdeer             | N. Rough-winged Swallow   |
| Lesser Yellowlegs    | Cliff Swallow             |
| Spotted Sandpiper    | Barn Swallow              |
| Long-billed Curlew   | Stellar's Jay             |
| Wilson's Phalarope   | Scrub Jay                 |
| Black Tern           | Black-billed Magpie       |
| Long-billed Curlew   | American Crow             |
| Wilson's Phalarope   | Chihuahuan Raven          |
| Mourning Dove        | Common Raven              |
| Yellow-billed Cuckoo | Black-capped Chickadee    |
| Greater Roadrunner   | Plain Titmouse            |
| Common Barn Owl      | Bushtit                   |
| Western Screech Owl  | Rock Wren                 |
| Burrowing Owl        | Canyon Wren               |
| Long-eared Owl       | Bewick's Wren             |

House Wren  
Blue-gray Gnatcatcher  
Mountain Bluebird  
Swainson's Thrush  
American Robin  
Gray Catbird  
Northern Mockingbird  
Brown Thrasher  
Curve-billed Thrasher  
Loggerhead Shrike  
Warbling Vireo  
Red-eyed Vireo  
Tennessee Warbler  
Yellow Warbler  
American Redstart  
Hepatic Tanager  
Western Tanager  
Northern Cardinal  
Black-headed Grosbeak  
Blue Grosbeak  
Lazuli Bunting  
Indigo Bunting

Rufous-sided Towhee  
Brown Towhee  
Cassin's Sparrow  
Rufous-crowned Sparrow  
Vesper Sparrow  
Lark Sparrow  
Lark Bunting  
Grasshopper Sparrow  
Lincoln's Sparrow  
Red-winged Blackbird  
Western Meadowlark  
Yellow-headed Blackbird  
Brewer's Blackbird  
Common Grackle  
Brown-headed Cowbird  
Orchard Oriole  
Northern Oriole  
American Goldfinch  
Ring-necked Pheasant  
Rock Dove  
European Starling  
House Sparrow

A TECHNIQUE FOR LOCATING BOREAL OWLS  
IN THE FALL IN THE ROCKY MOUNTAINS

David A. Palmer

John J. Rawinski  
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Boreal Owls (Aegolius funereus), once thought to be an accidental straggler in the Colorado mountains, are proving to be much more numerous than previously believed. Recent nesting records in Larimer and Jackson counties and numerous breeding season records throughout the state have established the fact that Boreal Owls are a fairly common breeder in the high elevation spruce-fir forests throughout the state (Baldwin and Koplin 1966, Palmer and Ryder 1984, pers. obs.). Although the number of Boreal Owl reports from their traditional strongholds was low in 1985, western Colorado birders located several owls in locations where there were no previous records. Despite the increase in the number of locations where Boreal Owls are known to occur, several areas in the state and region, where suitable habitat is found, have no record of Boreal Owls. One of the primary reasons for this is that snowfall, in combination with rough terrain and no paved roads, makes access into some of the best Boreal Owl habitat in the region all but impossible in the spring, when the owls are most vociferous. Cross country skiing or snowshoeing by moonlight, although enjoyable ways to spend an evening, are both difficult and dangerous and not very efficient methods for finding owls. A method for finding owls in the fall has been utilized for the past two years and has proven to be successful in the southern and western mountains of Colorado.

Boreal Owls, like most species of owls, can be located using taped calls and eliciting a response. Unlike most owls, however, the Boreal Owl's primary vocalization, often compared to the winnowing of a common snipe (Gallinago gallinago), functions primarily as a mate attraction call and is rarely given in territorial encounters (Bondrup-Neilsen 1984). This song is only rendered in the spring before breeding occurs and ceases upon pair formation. When playback of calls is used in the spring an owl

will occasionally sing in response but will more likely investigate without uttering a sound, thereby making it difficult to locate the owl. The use of the taped call in the spring also possibly disrupts the courtship behavior of the owls.

In the fall, however, it is possible to attract owls using the taped call without disrupting courtship. As stated previously, the primary song, commonly available on commercial tapes, is heard primarily in the spring and only rarely in the fall and winter. In the fall Boreal Owls will respond to a playback of the primary song by uttering what Bondrup-Nielsen (1984) refers as the "skiew" call, a short loud call which is given in aggressive or warning situations. This behavior can be used to the advantage of someone looking for Boreal Owls in the fall.

Using the technique we have been able to find several Boreal Owls in the previous two years (1984-85). The technique was also successful for Mark Janos on the western slope (pers. comm.). Spruce-fir (Picea engelmannii - Abies lasiocarpa) forest is best for locating owls but they have also found in lodgepole pine (Pinus contorta), Douglas fir (Pseudotsuga menziesii) and aspen (Populus tremuloides) forests. The best time for using this technique is during a full, or close to full, moon in September or October. The moon is not a necessity but it aids in observations. On a clear, quiet night when the moon is bright, stand well into the trees away from the road. Play the taped primary song starting very loud, then slowly decrease the volume. It helps immensely to have a second observer with you who can look the opposite direction. If an owl is nearby it will usually respond with a "skiew" call, sometimes mixed with other vocalizations. Turn the volume of the tape down until it is barely audible and look for any movement, the owls often come within a few meters but rarely make much noise. Also watch the snow for shadows of birds flying in and listen for wings slapping on the branches. Once the owl's approximate location has been identified, use a flashlight to verify the species. Saw-whet owls (Aegolius acadicus) give a call much like the Boreal Owl in response to the Boreal Owl tape so you must get a visual confirmation of the species. We have occasionally had as many as three individual Boreal Owls at a single stop, and, in other instances, both Boreal and Saw-whet Owls have responded to the tape playing at the same location.

A minimum of five minutes, preferably longer, should be spent at each stop. Be patient, sometimes the owls do not respond until after you stop the tape. Survey points one mile apart in suitable habitat should be adequate to cover an area. The owls seem to grow accustomed to the tape and may only respond on the first or second visit to a particular location.

This technique has several advantages over locating owls in the spring in that it can be used on high mountain passes or backcountry dirt roads that are closed in winter; the weather is generally more tolerable than cold, spring nights; and it does not disturb the courtship of the owls. By locating owls in the fall one can identify areas that are more likely to have breeding owls singing in the spring. It can also be used to determine how widely the owls are distributed in the region by surveying isolated mountain ranges such as the Sangre de Cristo range, the mountains in northern New Mexico and Arizona and in eastern Utah. There are still no Boreal Owl records for Arizona, New Mexico or Utah, although plenty of suitable habitat exists.

#### Acknowledgements

We would like to thank the Fort Collins Audubon Society and the Colorado Audubon Council for providing funds for the continuation of a Boreal Owl investigation. Ron Lambeth, Mark Janos, Jo Richards and Mark Masteller provided information on the owls' locations in 1985 and Dr. Ronald Ryder reviewed this manuscript.

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Boreal Owl attracted using tape playback in the fall near Spring Creek Pass, Hinsdale County, Colorado, September, 1984. Photo by John Rawinski.

## BOOK REVIEW

Birding Guide to the Denver/Boulder Region  
by Robert Folzenlogen  
164 pp. Pruett Press, 1986.

This paperback guide shows local, beginning, birders where to go, when to go, and what birds to look for in the Denver/ Boulder region. The author divides it into three sections. The first describes twelve places near Denver and Boulder to explore for birds, ranging from Barr Lake to Mt. Evans and Guanella Pass. The second section lists the commonly seen birds of our area by family. The last suggests the best times of the year to take field trips to the twelve sites, and mentions the likely birds during each season.

In assessing a book like this, I naturally turn to the standard: The Jim Lane/Harold Holt Birder's Guide to Eastern Colorado. Folzenlogen's new book excels in its layout -- it has attractive pictures and a good design. The Lane/Holt book excels in everything else. Lane/Holt covers more territory-- all of eastern Colorado plus. It lists all birds which occur in eastern Colorado, gives accurate dates of occurrence and accurate information on their relative abundance. And it also tells where to find half of them.

Lane/Holt surpasses the Folzenlogen book in accuracy. This Folzenlogen guide has vegetative description errors -- particularly pinyon pines growing in Red Rocks Park and Waterton Canyon. It has bird occurrence errors and omissions, e.g., Merlins and Franklin's Gulls breeding in Colorado (neither does) but not Forster's terns (which do); e.g., a direction to look for Cliff Swallows at Red Rocks, but not the more abundant Violet-green Swallows; e.g., Savannah Sparrows (denizens of hayfields and lakeshores) occurring on the foothills Mesa Trail; and e.g., McCown's and Chestnut-collared Longspurs here in winter. For a beginner, these mistakes may make little difference, but they could lead to misidentification. David Blue points out one reason for these mistakes: omitted from the references cited are any of the available publications on the distribution of Colorado birds, such as the latilong reports.

The book has attractive maps for each location, easily read. I note two errors with the maps -- they have no scale and north appears at the top of a map only twice; seven maps have west at the top, and one has no compass.

He writes good descriptions of the places, and like me, has an inclination to walk or hike when he goes bird watching. Our family may follow his advice on a couple of nice foothills hikes (he recommends three around Boulder which we have not explored) -- but while we will follow his directions, we won't rely on his accounts of the birds we would expect to see.

--Hugh E. Kingery

#### CORRECTION & UPDATE

##### Western Slope Great-tailed Grackle

The report by Dick Guadagno of two male Great-tailed Grackles at a pond southeast of the hamlet of Paradox on May 17, 1983 is apparently the westernmost record for this species in Colorado. The map coordinates are 38 degrees 20 minutes 30 seconds North and 108 degrees 53 minutes 50 seconds West. This improves a claim made in the C.F.O. Journal (vol. 19, no. 4, pp. 97-99).

Richard Levad found one male near the Colorado River at Clifton (March 31) and ten males and "warm-colored" females at the large marsh on the northeast side of Moab, Utah (April 20).

Ron Lambeth  
24 April 1986

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