# C.F.O. Journal

The Colorado Field Ornithologists' Quarterly





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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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Cover Illustration: Head study of a Canvasback in pen and ink by Joseph C. Rigli.

The CFO Records Committee Report for 1985

Peter Gent 55 S. 35th Street Boulder, CO 80303

This report discusses the records received by the committee in 1985 and clarifies the status of Mottled Duck. In this report three species are added to, and one deleted from, the CFO State list which now stands at 440 species, five of which are introduced. The six committee members who reviewed the 1985 records are William Brockner (Evergreen), Charles Chase (Denver), Mark Janos (Delta), Ron Lambeth (Grand Junction), William Maynard (Colorado Springs) and Richard Stransky (Durango). The committee desires documentation of all species unrecorded in Colorado and those species designated as rare (R) on the CFO checklist of Colorado Birds, which is available from all records committee members and CFO officers.

# Part 1. Species Added to the CFO State List

MAGNIFICENT FRIGATEBIRD (Fregata magnificens). N-85-35. adult female was first seen in Littleton, Jefferson County, on 9/14/85 (Hans-Joachin Feddern) and was killed two days later at Green Mountain Reservoir near Kremmling, Summit County. It is now in the Denver Museum of Natural History (DMNH 39020), see the article by Betsy Webb (1985). This species was to be expected in Colorado because it wanders widely and there are records from all states surrounding Colorado except Utah and Wyoming.

WHITE IBIS (Eudocimus albus). 7-85-15. One immature seen at Nee Noshe Reservoir, Kiowa County, on 7/20/85 and stayed through August (Dan Bridges and Peter Gent). The bird was present with White-faced Ibises (<u>Plegadis chihi</u>), see the article by Dan Bridges (1985). Again, this species was to be expected because the immatures disperse widely in fall and there are records from all states surrounding Colorado except Utah.

HENSLOW'S SPARROW (Ammodramus henslowii). 56-85-55. One adult briefly but well seen at Jackson Reservoir, Morgan County on 9/10/85 (Larry Halsey and Wade Leitner). This bird was alone on a barbed wire fence by an intake canal. The species breeds as far west as eastern Kansas.

# Part 2. Species Deleted from the CFO State List

MOTTLED DUCK (Anas fulvigula). In the Records Committee report for 1982, Gent (1984), I mistakenly readded this species to the state list. In fact, the two specimens for Colorado were examined by John R. Hubbard of the New Mexico Department of Game and Fish and determined not be valid examples of this species. This was first reported when Robert Andrews was chairman of the committee in his report for 1976 and 1977 (Andrews 1978). This species should be deleted from the CFO Checklist of Colorado Birds.

# Part 3. Species Not Added to the CFO State List

GLOSSY IBIS (<u>Plegadis fabcinellus</u>). 6-85-23. One in summer plumage seen at Lower Latham Reservoir, Weld County, on 5/6/85. The committee members thought that this report did not adequately eliminate a subadult Whitefaced Ibis (<u>P. chihi</u>), which can show almost no white in the face. Also leg and eye color can be very hard to determine on these species.

RUDDY SHELDUCK (<u>Tadorna ferruginea</u>). 8-85-37. A female was seen on the Colorado River at Grand Junction, Mesa County, on 11/12 and 21/84, but was determined to be a locally escaped bird.

BLACK-SHOULDERED KITE (Elanus caeruleus). 10-85-5. One adult seen on 4/2/85 at Alamosa Wildlife Refuge, Alamosa County. A majority of the committee members gave this report an A rating, but details were somewhat brief and a single observer sight record is not sufficient to add a species to the CFO State list. This species is expanding to range in the southwest United States and may be expected to occur soon in Colorado.

SPOTTED REDSHANK (Tringa erythropus). 19-85-14. One juvenile seen at Cherry Creek Reservoir, Arapahoe County, on 7/19/85. Committee members though that the description was too brief to eliminate other Tringa species and possibly Stilt Sandpiper (Calidris himantopus).

COMMON GROUND DOVE (Columbina passerina). 25-81-64. One female seen near Deckers, Douglas County, on 11/8/81. This is an old record that was given an A rating when it was circulated round the committee a few years ago. No further reports have been obtained to supplement the single observer sight record. Thus the species cannot be added to the CFO State List, but is added to the list of hypothetical species for Colorado.

MONK PARAKEET (Myiopsitta monachus). 25A-85-49. One seen in east Denver between June 1983 and May 1985, see the article by the Kingerys (1986). This was clearly an escaped cage bird.

Part 4. Category A Records (submitted documentation supports the stated identification)

OLIVACEOUS CORMORANT (Phalacrocorax olivaceus). 4-85-52. One immature at Sweitzer Lake, Delta, Delta County, on 31/10 to 2/11/85 (Mark Janos). Fifth state record and the first for the west slope.

LITTLE BLUE HERON (Egretta caerulea). 5-85-6. One immature seen at Lake Henry, Crowley County on 9/17/84 (William Maynard, photo

on file).

TRICOLORED HERON (Egretta tricolor). 5-85-46. One immature seen at Lower Latham Reservoir, Weld County, on 9/8/85 (Jerry Cairo). NORTHERN PINTAIL (Anas acuta). 8-85-10. One albinistic adult at C.F.&I. Ponds, Pueblo County, on 3/3/85 (David Blue, photo on file). See also the article by William Maynard (1985).

EURASIAN WIGEON (Anas penelope). 8-85-21. One male in summer plumage at Behrews Lake, near La Salle, Weld County on 4/18/85 (Jerry Cairo).

WHITE-WINGED SCOTER (Melanitta fusca). 8-85-38. Three immatures seen on Big Blue Creek, 11 miles west of Sapinero, Gunnison County, on 10/25/84 (Dick Guadagno).

AMERICAN SWALLOW-TAILED KITE (Elanoides forficatus) 10-85-16. One adult seen at Bonny Reservoir, Yuma County, on 5/13/84 (Victor Zerbi). Eighth state record.

KING RAIL (Rallus elegans). 17-85-12. One adult seen at Lower Latham Reservoir, Weld County on 5/23 and 31/85 (Jerry Cairo and Peter Gent). Second state record, see the article by Jerry Cairo (1985).

WHOOPING CRANE (Grus americana) 16-85-20. One adult seen at Gunnison, Gunnison County, on 4/9/84 (Ronald French).

LEAST SANDPIPER (Calidris minutilla). 19-85-39. One in winter plumage at Cherry Creek Reservoir, Arapahoe County, on 12/28/84 (Peter Bruce). This is a very late date for this species.

BUFF-BREASTED SANDPIPER (Tryngites subruficollis). 19-85-32. One juvenile seen at C.F.&I. Ponds, Pueblo County, on 9/2 and 8/85 (David Blue and William Maynard, photo on file).

SHORT-BILLED DOWITCHER (Limnodromus griseus). 19-85-31. juvenile seen at C.F.& I Ponds, Pueblo County on 8/24 and 9/2/85 (David Blue and William Maynard, photo on file).

PARASITIC JAEGER (Stercorarius parasiticus). 22-85-43. One seen at Chatfield State Recreation Area, Jefferson County, on 9/7 and 8/85 (Hugh Kingery).

PARASITIC JAEGER (Stercorarius parasiticus). 22-85-48. One adult at Blue Mesa Reservoir, Gunnison County, on 9/25/85 (Ronald Mever).

MEW GULL (Larus canus). 23-85-1. One in first winter plumage at Cherry Creek Reservoir, Arapahoe County on 1/29/85 (Judy Ward).

Fourth state record.

BLACK-LEGGED KITTIWAKE (Riosa tridactyla). 23-85-3. One immature at Cherry Creek Reservoir, Arapahoe County, 11/10 and 11/84 (David Blue and William Maynard, photo on file).

CASPIAN TERN (Sterna caspia). 23-85-2. One adult in summer plumage seen at C.F.&I. Ponds, Pueblo County on 9/15 and 16/84 (David Blue, William Maynard and Rosie Watts, photo on file).

CASPIAN TERN (Sterna caspia). 23-85-26. One in summer plumage seen at Cheraw Reservoir, Otero County on 8/3/85 (Elinor Wills). LEAST TERN (Sterna antillarum). 23-85-13. Four in alternate plumage seen at Blue Lake, Bent County on 6/17/85 (William

Maynard, photo on file).

BOREAL OWL (Aegolius funereus). 28-85-4. One heard at Island Lake Resort on Grand Mesa, Mesa County, on 2/24/85 (Timothy Armstrona).

BOREAL OWL (Aegolius funereus). 28-85-8. One heard on Wolf Creek Pass. Mineral County, on 3/17/85 (John Rawinski). Southernmost state location.

BOREAL OWL (Aegolius funereus). 28-85-45. One seen at Slumgullian Pass, Hinsdale County, on 9/9/84 (John Rawinski. photo on file).

BOREAL OWL (Aegolius funereus). 28-85-47. Two adults seen at county line on Grand Mesa, Mesa/Delta Counties, on 10/1/85 (Mark Janos). Westernmost state location.

BLACK-CHINNED HUMMINGBIRD (Archilochus alexandri). 31-85-40. One male at Waterton Canyon, Jefferson County, on 5/12/85 (Ron Carter, David Dominick and Hugh Kingery).

ANNA'S HUMMINGBIRD (Calypte anna). 31-85-36. One male seen at Great Sand Dunes National Monument, Alamosa County, on 7/28/84 (Wade Leitner, photo on file). Fifth state record.

BLACK PHOEBE (Sayornis nigricans). 34-85-25. One adult at Ridgway, Ouray County, on 5/20/85 (Dick Guadagno and Mark Janos). Sixth state record.

VARIED THRUSH (Ixoreus naevius). 44-85-53. Two, a male and a female, at Boulder, Boulder County, on 12/27/84 (Larry Halsey, photos on file).

BENDIRE'S THRASHER (Toxostoma bendirei). 43-85-17. Three adult birds seen a few miles northwest of Del Norte. Rio Grande County. on 6/19/84 (Victor Zerbi). There is apparently a small population of Bendire's Thrashers breeding in this location, the only such location known in the state.

GOLDEN-WINGED WARBLER (Vermivora chrysoptera). 52-85-24. female in breeding plumage at Bonny Reservoir, Yuma County, 5/12/85 (John Merchant).

GOLDEN-WINGED WARBLER (Vermivora chrysoptera). 52-85-44. 0ne female in Englewood, Arapahoe County, on 6/6/85 (Hugh Kingery).

YELLOW-THROATED WARBLER (Dendroica dominica). 52-85-22. male in Boulder, Boulder County on 4/22/85 (Barry Jones).

PINE WARBLER (Dendroica pinus). 52-85-34 One male at Barr Lake. Adams County on 8/31/85 (David Martin and Duane Nelson).

PINE WARBLER (Dendroica pinus). 52-85-51. One male at Barr Lake, Adams County on 10/20/85 (Dan Bridges). These records are very unlikely to be the same individual.

PROTHONOTARY WARBLER (Protonotaria citrea). 52-85-33. One male at the Wheat Ridge Greenbelt, Jefferson County, on 8/20 and 21/85 (Duane Nelson).

KENTUCKY WARBLER (Oporornis formosus). 52-85-11. One male in Colorado Springs, El Paso County, on 5/27 and 28/85 (David Romero, photo on file).

KENTUCKY WARBLER (Oporornis formosus). 52-85-54. One male in Aspen, Pitkin County, on 6/6/83 (Tom Cardamone, photo on file). HEPATÍC TANAGER (Piranga flava). 55-85-18. Three adults, two

males and one female, seen near Kim, Las Animas County, on 7/4 and 5/85 (Victor Zerbi).

HEPATIC TANAGER (Piranga flava). 55-85-28. Two adults, one male and one female, seen in Tobe Canyon, Tobe, Las Ánimas

County, on 5/11/85 (Dan Bridges). HEPATIC TANAGER (Piranga flava). 55-85-29. One adult male seen in Tobe Canyon, Tobe, Las Animas County, on 5/27/85 (Dan Bridges). These three reports confirm that there is a small, but stable, breeding population of Hepatic Tanagers on Mesa de Maya, the only such location known in the state.

DICKCISSEL (Spiza americana). 567-85-27. One male seen in Mesa County daily from late May Clifton. until 7/24/85 (Charlotte Campbell, photos on file). This is an unusual west slope record for this species.

BREWER'S SPARROW (Spizella breweri). 56-85-7. Two adults seen at Escalante Wildlife Refuge, Delta, Delta County, on 1/9 and 27 and 2/2/85 (Mark Janos). This is a very unusual winter record for this species in Colorado.

GREAT-TAILED GRACKLE (Quiscalus mexicanus). 54-85-50. Four adults, two males and two females, seen in Delta, Delta County, on 11/19/85 (Mark Janos). This species is now being seen quite frequently on the west slope.

PURPLE FINCH (Carpodacus purpureus). 56-85-9. One adult female seen in Lakewood, Jefferson County on 1/11/85 (Joyce and John Cooper).

Part 5. Category B and C records (submitted documentation probably indicates a misidentification or is too brief or incomplete to support the stated identification).

MAGNIFICENT HUMMINGBIRD (Eugenes fulgens). 31-85-41. One female seen in Durango, La Plata County, on 5/23/85. The committee was equally divided on this record, but some members thought that female Blue-throated Hummingbird (Lampornis demenciae) was not adequately eliminated. These two females are similar in size and plumage.

DUSKY-CAPPED FLYCATCHER (Myiarchus tuberculifer). 34-85-42. Three adults seen by the Mancos River, Montezuma County, on 5/4/85. These birds were seen across the river, and most commembers though that Ash-throated Flycatcher (M. cinerascens) was not adequatly eliminated. The best way to distinguish these two species is by call and no vocalizations were heard in this observation.

YELLOW-THROATED VIREO (Vireo flavifrons). 51-85-30. One male seen in Boulder, Boulder County, on 6/15/85. The committee members noted that the description of a distinct white eye-ring does not fit this species which has yellow spectacles. Also, the bill was not well seen and thus some warbler species were not adequately eliminated.

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# DO SOMETHING WILD!

## FALL 1985 SEASONAL REPORT

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The fall of 1985 proved to be one of the most exciting seasons in several years for field observers. In addition to the two newly split species added to Colorado's state list by the American Ornithologist Union (CFO Journal, Vol. 19 No. 3), two other vagrant species were added. An adult Magnificent Frigate-bird was sighted by a birdwatcher near Chatfield Reservoir, southwest of Denver and was killed at Green Mountain Reservoir two days later (CFO Journal, Vol. 19, No. 4). Secondly, an adult Henslow's Sparrow was studied near Jackson Reservoir.

As for the more typical Colorado birds favored in the four months fall period, both shorebirds and warblers made fair showings. Generally there were no massive movements of shorebirds but most species were reported. Two interesting notes: this observer along with most shorebird chasers found Lesser Golden-Plovers earlier and in greater numbers than in previous years. Secondly, Mark Janos continues to find excellent shorebirds, in both numbers and species, near Delta on the west slope. Warbler migration started early and exciting. Duane Nelson found a Prothonotary Warbler at the Wheatridge Greenbelt in August. Thereafter, things settled down, many good species but no large movements. The species which caused the most excitement this season were the jaegers, gulls, a few good shorebirds, and a few good warblers.

The excitement of this fall was probably spawned by the varied weather. The first three months were rather mild, but then came November. In Denver, the month of November was the coldest in 105 years.

On to the seasonal report. Conclusions drawn here were derived from either indications reported indirectly (mentioned in words) or numbers for previous year(s) provided for direct comparisons. Species marked with \* indicate species for which details should be submitted to the Records Committee.

# LOONS THROUGH FRIGATEBIRDS

In general, reports of loons were mixed. The west slope reported a good year while the eastern plains appeared to have a

marked decrease over last year. There was one report of a Redthroated Loon(\*) October 12 at Jackson Reservoir (LRH. PWL. JR. DJW. JC). Reports of Pacific (formerly Arctic) Loons spanned from October 14 to November 30 on the west slope while the east slope reports were concentrated in the first week of November: an approximate number of ten individuals were reported. The reports received showed a general increase in the numbers of Horned Grebes passing through the state this season. An interesting report was a Western Grebe sitting in a snow-covered field with Canada Geese near Boulder November 10 (JW). Reports of the newly-recognized Clark's Grebe included two sites. Union Reservoir and Switzer Lake: hopefulv there will be more reports in the future. The Olivaceous Cormorant(\*) found in July was still present at Jumbo Reservoir at least through September 6 (MJ). Additionally MJ found an Olivaceous Cormorant(\*) at Switzer Lake on the west slope October 1; this bird remained through November 2 and was a new latilong and west slope record. There were three reports of Little Blue Heron August 7 through September 7, all on the eastern plains. A Green-backed Heron was found at the Escalante Wildlife Area August 3. this is an unusual west slope record (MJ). An immature Tricolored Heron(\*) was well described by JC from Lower Latham Reservoir September 8. Yellow-crowned Night Herons(\*) were reported from Nee Grande Reservoir August 31 (one adult and one immature) and Cherry Creek Reservoir September Colorado's first Magnificent Frigatebird(\*) was sighted by Hans Feddern on September 14 near Chatfield Reservoir. Later the same day the bird was sighted at Green Mountain Reservoir. September 16, the bird was killed by windsurfers. It is likely that this bird appeared in Colorado because of Hurricane Elena in the Gulf of Mexico.

#### SWANS THROUGH DUCKS

Only four Tundra Swans were reported for the season, one at Valmont Reservoir November 17, one at Canon City November 20, and two at the Alamosa NWR in mid-November. This fall seemed to be a good season for Greater White-fronted Geese; numerous reports of individuals or small groups were reported including one possibly of the Greenland race near Boulder November 13 (DJW). A large flock of mixed white and blue forms of Snow Geese were reported from Bonny Reservoir November 16. A Ross' Goose was found October 12 in Loveland (FAC). Wood Ducks appeared more

common on the plains this fall, additionally, two were found in the San Luis Valley in early October and they are still reported from the Grand Junction area on the west slope. Most puddle duck species, except Mallards, showed an increase in numbers this fall. A male American Black Duck(\*) was found November 29 near Jackson Reservoir (LRH, WL). A flock of nineteen Greater Scaup were present on the Delta Sewer Ponds October 19-23 (MJ), also one immature male was reported October 12 at Jackson Reservoir. A female Oldsquaw was found on Cherry Creek Reservoir November 28. Two Surf Scoters were reported near Loveland and Fort Collins in late November. Single White-winged Scoters were found on Switzer Lake September 20, the Delta Sewer Ponds October 19-20 and near Jackson Reservoir November 25.

# RAPTORS THROUGH SHOREBIRDS

Broadwinged Hawks were reported only from Bonny Reservoir and the Fairmont Cemetery September 21 and 22. An early Merlin was found at Bonny Reservoir September 21. Two immature Whooping Cranes found themselves slightly off their normal migration route this fall. From September 23 to October 29 one Whooper stayed near Severance and from September 11 to October 24 another immature was observed near Hudson. These two birds were part of the Gray's Lake cross-fostered population; the total for the Gray's Lake population now stands at 39 individuals. Fourteen thousand Sandhill Cranes passed through the San Luis Valley this fall. The concensus on the shorebird migration was good numbers but no massive movements. Many of the shorebirds suffered from a poor breeding season and migrated through our state during the summer months. Lesser Golden Plovers staged a very strong migration through Colorado, one was found as early as August 26 at Lower Latham Reservoir (JC) and as late as November 3 at the Delta Sewer Ponds (MJ). An early flock of Lesser Goldens numbered 10 at Jackson Reservoir September 7. MJ reported an early Semipalmated Plover August 10 at Hart's Basin on the west slope. Snowy Plovers were reported at Adobe Creek Reservoir (Blue Lake) and Nee So Pah Reservoir through August. A count of 86 Killdeers were found at Jackson Reservoir September 7. Many observers reported the relatively low numbers of Marbled Godwits passing through the state. One Ruddy Turnstone(\*) was reported at Lower Latham Reservoir October 1 (JC). A late Upland Sandpiper was found near Nee So Pah Reservoir August 31 (DJW). An early Buffbreasted Sandpiper(\*) was found August 19 at Adobe Creek Reservoir (DJW). MJ reported a total of 10 Dunlin from Hart's Basin and the Delta Sewer Ponds October 19 through November 30, an impressive showing for the west slope. Two immature Short-billed Dowitchers(\*) were studied and photographed at Nee So Pah Reservoir August 18 (LRH, PQL). Unusual for the San Luis Valley was a flock of 40 Red-necked Phalaropes in September.

#### JAEGERS THROUGH SWIFTS

Jaegers made a very impressive showing throughout the state from September through November. The highlights were two Pomarine Jaegers(\*): an adult reported from Jackson Reservoir October 5 (LRH, DJW) and a subadult November 23-28 at Cherry Creek Reservoir (WL, CFO gull clinic), and a Parasitic Jaeger(\*) at Blue Mesa Reservoir on the west slope September 25 (fide MJ). Observers commented on the poor numbers of Franklin's and Bonaparte's gulls this fall. Thayer's Gulls(\*) reports spanned from October 20 at Jackson Reservoir (LRH, WL) through the end of the season. At least seven different individual Sabine's Gulls visited Union Reservoir September 22 through October 12 (DJW, LRH). elsewhere a late juvenile was reported at Cherry Creek Reservoir November 3. A Caspian Tern(\*) was found at Cheraw Reservoir August 3 (EW); the reservoirs along the Arkansas River seem to produce these terns every fall. Two Least Terns were found north of their normal range within our state at Union Reservoir August 17-21 (FAC, DJW). A White-winged Dove(\*) was reported south of Cortez September 6 (fide HJF of New Mexico). MJ found 4 Boreal Owls(\*) responding to the taped calls October 1 on the Grand Mesa. A late Common Nighthawk was found near Durango October 12 (DBC). Also late was a Black Swift September 26 near Durango (DBC).

# HUMMINGBIRDS THROUGH THRASHERS

A Magnificent Hummingbird(\*) was reported from Littleton September 14 for a very unusual record out of the mountains or foothills (HJF). A male Yellow-bellied Sapsucker (S. varius) was found on the C.U. Campus October 15 drilling a small cavity in a fallen snag (LRH). Very unusual for the plains was a Williamson's Sapsucker at Crow Valley Campground on the Pawnee National Grasslands September 19 (DJW). Eastern Wood-pewees(\*) were heard and seen on the dry Cimarron River valley near the

Kansas border August 18 (LRH, PWL). Somewhat north of its usual range was an Ash-throated Flycatcher at Fort Morgan August 18 (JRi). Post-breeding Cassin's Kingbirds were also found north of their usual range at Jackson and Bonny Reservoirs in September. Two family groups of Scissor-tailed Flycatchers totaling 8 birds was found along the Cimarron River August 18. A Purple Martin(\*) strayed to Fort Morgan September 11 (JRi). A very late Violetgreen Swallow was observed at Muir Springs October 12. Pinyon Jays staged a push on to the plains this fall, being seen as far east as Fort Morgan. A Winter Wren was reported from Longmont September 24, somewhat early (FAC). An adult Curve-billed Thrasher was found north of their usual range at Jackson Reservoir October 5 (LRH, DJW).

# VIREOS THROUGH REDPOLLS

A Solitary Vireo of the plumbeous race was found at Ne So Pah Reservoir August 31 (DJW). Two Philadelphia Vireos(\*) were found this fall, one at the C.U. Campus October 10 (LRH) and one at Muir Springs October 19 (JC). Observers noted that Red-eyed Vireos appeared more common this fall. As for warblers, the reports generally lacked large numbers of the more common species but the variety of species was good. Nashville Warblers appeared in good numbers this fall with the earliest reported August 20 at the Wheatridge Greenbelt (LRH, JW). A female Northern Parula Warbler was found at Bonny Reservoir September 19 (LRH, DJW). Two Chestnut-sided Warblers were reported this fall, one each at Cherry Creek Reservoir and C.U. Campus October 11 and 14 respectively. DJW found a mixed flock of warblers at Nee So Pah Reservoir August 31 including Yellow Warbler, American Redstart, Townsend's Warbler, Blackpoll, Wilson's Warbler, Kentucky Warbler(\*). Northern Waterthrush and two vireos. A female Cape May Warbler(\*) was found at Muir Springs October 12. Magnolia Warblers were present on the C..U. Campus October 2 and 11 through 14 (LRH, DJW). Three female Black-throated Blue Warblers were also found on the C.U. Campus September 2, October 2 and October 10 (LRH). The only Black-throated Gray Warblers were individuals reported from the east slope at C.U. Campus (LRH) and Golden (DW) October 5 and 12. Black-throated Green Warblers were reported from Muir Springs October 5 and C.U. Campus October 27 (DJW. LRH). DJW reported a Pine Warbler from Barr Lake November 2. DN found a Prothonotary Warbler on the Wheatridge Greenbelt August 20, the bird was seen by many observers through at least

August 21. Two Bay-breasted Warblers were on the C.U. Campus October 9-14 (LRH, DJW). A Hooded Warbler was found at the Wheatridge Greenbelt September 17 and was seen for two weeks. A Northern Cardinal was found at Canon City and seen through the end of the period. Field Sparrows were found at Bonny Reservoir as late as November 16 (MJ). A very late Vesper Sparrow was seen at the Tamarack Ranch November 29 (LRH, WL). A Henslow's Sparrow(\*) was carefuly studied near Jackson Reservoir September 10 (WL, LRH, JR). A White-throated Sparrow was somewhat out of range in Durango October 4 and 24 (DBC). West slope Harris' Sparrows wre found at Delta October 6 (MJ) and Grand Junction November 28 and 30 (BT). Two early Snow Bunting were found in eastern Boulder County November 16 (DJW, LRH). A Rusty Blackbird was found at the Narrow along the South Platte River November 13 (MJ). Four Great-tailed Grackles in Delta November 19 provided that latilong with a new record (MJ). Common Redpolls began to appear on the eastern plains in late November.

#### OBSERVERS:

Jerry Cairo (JC) Jean Christensen (JeC) W. Marvin Davis (WMD) Denver Audubon Society (DAS) Durango Bird Club (DBC) Hans-Joachim Feddern (New Mexico) (HJF) Mark Janos (MJ) Pat and Wade Leitner (PWL) Jack Reddall (JR) Joe Rigli (JRi) Roberta Salazar (RS) Mildred Snyder (MS) Bert Tignor (BT) Doug and Judy Ward (DJW) Jim and Rosie Watts (JRW) Peter Yaukey (PY) Betsy Webb (BW) and Elinor Wills (EW).

SEASONAL REPORT - SPRING 1986 March 1 - May 31

William R. Maynard 372 Blue Windsor Lane Colorado Springs, CO 80906

While many reasons are given for birding, for many the reason is the chance of finding the rare and the unusual. This season had its share of rarities including a feeder-appearing Whitewinged Dove in Denver, a male Painted Bunting at a feeder in Lyons, a partially albinistic Pine Siskin in Florence, an adult Mew Gull at Cherry Creek reservoir, and 2 Vermilion Flycatchers. In addition, rare bird reports have been filed for such Colorado goodies as an eastern and western slope Hudsonian Godwit, a Louisiana Waterthrush, an Oporornis warbler with a bold white eyering, and a singing Swainson's Warbler in Colorado Springs.

An interesting comparison may be made with three of the above mentioned species with overshoots in other states this spring, a Vermilion Flycatcher in Chicago (4th state record), a Whitewinged Dove in Michigan (1st state record), and Painted Buntings in Minnesota (4th state record) and Ontario (1st provincial record).

#### LOONS THROUGH GREBES

Where were the Common Loons this spring? Most reports came from the western slope, a high count of 12, at Grand Junction, May 7 (BT) but very few were reported along the foothills or on the eastern plains. Pied-billed, Eared, and Horned Grebes arrived on schedule and in average numbers. Few reports were received for Clark's Grebe except for areas of the southeast, especially at Lake Meredith where Clark's outnumbered Western's 10 to 1 (BM). Red-necked Grebes went unreported.

# CORMORANTS THROUGH IBISES

With continued fall reports of Olivaceous Cormorants it would be interesting to see documentation for one migrating north with the large numbers of Double-cresteds that were recorted as increasing and moving into new territories. The obligate Yellow-crowned Night Heron returned to City Park, Denver, May 1 and one that was unexpected visited Turks Pond, Two Buttes May 31 (BD, lst Lat.). Green-backed Herons were widely reported and an adult Little Blue Heron was interesting from Two Buttes (BD, CFO) staying May 22-24. Great Egrets were reported from both slopes. White-faced Ibis reports were statewide with numbers being highest at Monte Vista NWR. Most interesting was the Glossy Ibis report from near Delta (MJ). Sure to be discussed, Glossies are uncommon even in E. Texas which is close to the birds' western breeding limit (Jon Dunn, pers. comm.). Further, the winter adult portrayed in the <u>Audubon Master Guide to Birding</u> is actually a White-faced Ibis (Larry Balch review in Birding). On the other side there are a few sight reports listed in Birds of Colorado and one specimen record verified by Oberholser.

# GEESE AND DUCKS

Seventeen Ross's Geese appeared on the Colorado River April 7 (CD, BH) and was the high count. With a large winter population now using New Mexico refuges Ross's Geese are to be expected. Two Gr. White-fronted Geese stopped at Woods Lake, Weld County April 2nd (JC). The only reports of Tundra Swans were a pair on the west slope "flying with geese" April 6 (CD, BT). A female Gr. Scaup (DFO) was reported from northeast Colorado. A male Eurasian Wigeon was at Greeley in March (JC) and late Oldsquaw were reported from Pueblo April 7 (BM) and from Grand Junction April 21 (DL). Wood Duck numbers seem to be up, perhaps due to the imprinting and transplanting of the ducks into man-made nest boxes.

# RAPTORS THROUGH CRANES

Unusual was a Red-shouldered Hawk seen on a D.F.O. field trip to northeastern Colorado May 18. Broad-winged Hawks visited Bonny Reservoir May 20 (LH) and one was also reported from over Sawhill Ponds on May 29 (LH). The lower Arkansas River appears to be the stronghold for Mississippi Kites with Lamar boasting 55 on May 17 (DM) and with 2 in Pueblo May 18 (JR). A report of Common Moorhen from Monte Vista NWR by Evan and Ives Hanray was unusual although a brood reported from a northeast Nevada refuge

makes it less so. Twenty-eight to thirty foster child Whooping Cranes peaked at Alamosa-Monte Vista NWR towards the end of March (EM), an indication of the viability of the Gray's Lake Sandhill foster parent program.

#### SHOREBIRDS

Perhaps the hit of the season in both species numbers and in diversity, shorebirds were raved about from locations statewide. The first west slope record of Upland Sandpiper was photographed (CD, MJ). Dunlins stopped early in Pueblo April 10 (BM) and the San Luis Valley had a high count of 12 on April 20 (JJR). Whimbrels, not reported every spring, appeared at 5 locations and from both slopes. Hudsonian Godwits also found east and west slope stopping places with one in Grand Junction May 29 (CD ph, MJ) and one at Loveland May 24-25 (BP et al.). Arctic coastal nesting Ruddy Turnstones made refueling stops at Grand Junction (CD ph), at Rocky Ford (DM) and at Bonny Reservoir (DBr) before continuing north. Twenty-eight alternate plumage Red Knots landed in Longmont May 16 and were tallied to the record-breaking Big Day count (JC, B&JP) and 12 more stopped in Grand Junction. May 15, (CD, BH, BW). Short-billed Dowitchers were in both Longmont April 27 (DS) and in Denver May 17 (D.F.O.) where they were separated from the more common Long-billed's. The more common Calidrids were reported in average numbers. Red-necked Phalaropes were seen frequently and in large flocks with an incredible 1100 in Delta May 19 (MJ), 360 in Weld County May 9 (PO) and 220 at Carbondale May 17 (JM).

#### **GULLS THROUGH TERNS**

The perennial gull watching hot spot, Cherry Creek Reservoir, repeated as the place to study the common and to look for the unusual. A basic plumage adult Mew Gull again was found with and compared to the large flock of Ring-billed Gulls March 6-15 (WL, JR). The numerous Thayer's and Glaucous Gulls from winter thinned out to a few by March. A late Glaucous Gull was at Chatfield Reservoir April 8 (WWB). Two west slope Caspian Terns were that region's 2nd and 3rd, appearing at Grand Junction May 11 (CD ph) and at Delta May 16-22 (MJ, 1st Lat.). The Blue-listed Least Tern made only its 2nd reported west slope stop finding Delta April 29 (MJ).

# DOVES THROUGH WOODPECKERS

Competing for the feeder bird of the season was a White-winged Dove in Denver (MJS). Cuckoos of the avian variety went largely unreported with no Black-billed's and very few Yellow-billed's in view. The attempts to locate Boreal Owls in the high passes turned up none. Other small owls were widespread. E. Screech Owls continue to be reported north of the Palmer Divide and Westerns in the dryer south. It was along this narrow zone of overlap where Marshall studied these screech owls and because of a lack of interbreeding and a difference in primary calls he determined them to be separate species. Since Red-naped Sapsuckers have been split from Yellow-bellied Sapsuckers, careful observations should be kept for later winter-early spring reports from the state. Both Red-naped and Williamson's sapsuckers returned early and in large numbers.

# FLYCATCHERS THROUGH VIREOS

Scissor-tailed Flycatchers were busily nest building in extreme southeastern Baca County May 24-25 (CFO). The Greatcrested Flycatchers stooped at Hale Ponds at the Kansas line May 11-12 (JC). Least Flycatchers were well reported this spring. with eleven birds from 7 locations, all from the north or eastern parts of the state. Its distinctive che-bec song is apparently sung in migration. Although there are no breeding reports for Colorado it should be looked for as it has bred successfully in Cheyenne, Wyoming. A male Vermilion Flycatcher was seen near Chatfield State Park April 5-6 (SHa, HK) and a female was found dead by Greg Hughes in Ft. Collins. Two reports of Pygmy Nuthatches away from their normal ponderosa pine habitat were noted, one at Pawnee Grasslands and one in riparian woodland at Colorado Springs Wildlife Area (CFO). Ruby-crowned Kinglets put in a good showing on the Indian Peaks Spring Count with 174 individuals. Wintering Mountain and Western Bluebirds were replaced or joined by Easterns in Florence May 10 (NP). Four Gray-cheeked Thrushes were reported along with normal numbers of more common Catharus thrushes. Bohemian Waxwings made their usual March forays out of the mountains into Ft. Collins and Colorado Springs. The best vireo of the season, a Yellow-throated, was described from Bonny Reservoir May 20 (LH). Vireo watchers should be on the lookout for the distinctive western subspecies of Solitary Vireo, Cassin's Vireo, which may prove to be a good species ( $\underline{6th}$   $\underline{ed}$ .  $\underline{of}$  the A.O.U. checklist).

# WARBLERS

Widely scattered, about 33 warbler species were recorded in the state. Most rare were reports of a Connecticut (DBr), a Louisiana Waterthrush at Bonny Reservoir (LH), and of a singing Swainson's Warbler in Colorado Springs, the latter observed May 17 (VM) while a horde of C.F.O. conventioneers were being taught the distinguishing characteristics of difficult to identify species only 3 miles away. If these 3 reports survive the careful scrutiny of the C.F.O. Official Records Committee, the Connecticut would become the state's second record, the Louisiana Waterthrush the state's second, and the Swainson's the state's third. Not too far distant in distinction were 5 Chestnutsided's, a photographed Blue-winged and Golden-winged Warbler at Ft. Collins May 10 (DL), 2 Magnolia Warblers, one at Bonny Reservoir May 14-17 (DBr) and one at Denver May 17 (D.F.O.). Denver's winter feeder bird of the year may have attained Spring's same distinction had it not been seen by so many for so long. The male Cape May Warbler molted into alternate plumage and made a farewell visit to its ever so gracious hostess' home April 16. Jane Axtell, the hostess, may have initiated a new feeding strategy by serving her avian guests grapes along with the more traditional fare. A female Blackburnian Warbler gave excitement to the C.F.O. conventioneers May 18 at Colorado Springs Wildlife Area. Western subspecies Palm Warblers were in Denver May 4 and at Ft. Collins May 8 (DL), a Bay-breasted Warbler found Boulder May 28 (TJ), and a Kentucky Warbler stayed in the tangles of the Colorado Springs Wildlife Area May 11 (J, V&BM). Hooded Warblers made stops in Boulder May 9-17 and at Bonny Reservoir May 12 (JC). Not so rare were the widespread reports of Northern Waterthrushes including 5 at Fountain May 9 (BM).

# TANAGERS THROUGH FINCHES

Three Summer Tanagers were reported, one each from Salida, Fountain and Boulder. Colorado had 4 Scarlet Tanagers, all from the north and east. Western Tanagers seemed to move into their breeding territories making few stops on the plains (m. ob.). Northern Cardinals were in Crook May 31 (BA), in Two Buttes May

24-25 (CFO) and at Holly May 15 (DBr). No reports were received of Indigo x Lazuli Buntings. Mary Griest was hostess to a male Painted Bunting which stayed to be tallied by the Foothills Audubon Spring Count, May 10. Great-tailed Grackles have become so widespread that new latilong reports are to be anticipated as this bird continues its expansion into new territories. This year's new ones were Two Buttes and finally Denver. Low numbers of Lark Buntings were reported from Pawnee Grasslands (JR) while on a brighter note Chestnut-collared Longspurs "were well represented" there (KC). Other finches, especially House Finch, seemed to be doing well or to even "explode" near Evergreen (WWB). Schistacea Fox Sparrows, the willow carr nesting race, were reported from Boulder and one was in Beaver Creek, Jefferson County April 20 (DS).

My apologies to those whose names and sightings were inadvertently omitted from this report. A special thanks goes to Hugh Kingery for loan of the season's voluminous sight reports.

#### **OBSERVERS**

Bob Andrews (BA) Dan Bridges (DBr) William Winston Brockner (WWB) Charles Darling (CD) Jerry Cairo (JC) Colorado Field Ornithologists (C.F.O.) Kevin Cook (KC) Denver Field Ornithologists (D.F.O.) Coen Dexter (CD) Beth Dillon (BD) Ruby Ebright (RE) Mary Griest (MG) Laurens Halsey (LH) Steve Hayes (SHa) Mark Janos (MJ) Hugh Kingery (HK), R. Kirby (RK) Wade Leitner (WL) Dave Leatherman (DL) David Martin (DM) John & Virginia Maynard (J & VaM) Bill Maynard (BM) Ed Merritt (EM) John Merchant (JM) Duane Nelson (DN) Norma Peterson (NP) Bill & John Prather (B&JP) John J. Rawinski (JJR) Jack Reddal (JR) Dick Schottler (DS) Bob Spencer (BS) Mary Jane Schock (MJS) Bert Tignor (BT).

# THE STATUS OF THE GRASSHOPPER SPARROW IN BOULDER COUNTY

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#### INTRODUCTION

Records of Grasshopper Sparrows (Ammodramus savannarum) for Boulder County are few. Until 1909, the only record was a bird collected near Haystack Butte in 1903 in the nesting season (Henderson 1909). Betts (1913) listed the species as an infrequent summer resident on the plains, reporting several seen in June-August 1910 and 1911. He reported an adult feeding nonflying young on 12 June (year?). Alexander (1937) said that Grasshopper Sparrows were rare or infrequent summer residents on the plains, but gave no further details. Bailey and Niedrach (1965) state that the species is an irregularly common local resident on the eastern plains of Colorado. In addition to the records cited above, they list one bird seen in Boulder County on 13 May 1959.

Chase et al. (1982) indicate that the Grasshopper Sparrow is a migrant or unrecorded from the latilong blocks covering Boulder County. Molitza and Krieg (1981) list the species as rare in Boulder County. The Boulder Audubon Society Wildlife Inventory records list 1 bird seen July 1978, 3 on 7 August 1978, 26 in July 1983, and 4 in July 1985.

During a study of birds breeding on City of Boulder Open Space in 1984, we (Thompson and Strauch 1985) found Grasshopper Sparrows present on agricultural and grassland habitats and estimated a total population on City of Boulder Open Space of about

40 birds. The species became evident only toward the end of the census period for breeding birds and appeared to be most common on areas not covered by our regular census plots.

In 1985, we censused Grasshopper Sparrows near the peak of their singing period on areas on which we thought they might occur.

## **METHODS**

We used the variable-line transect method (Eberhardt 1978) without replication on 15 and 16 July 1985. Observers walked at a constant rate along a predetermined linear transect line and recorded the right-angle distances from the transect line of the initial location of each sparrow observed. We conducted censuses during fair weather between 0.5 hours after sunrise and 0930 hours to minimize variation in sparrow conspicuousness (Conner and Dickson 1980). We analyzed data by the Kelker (1945) estimator.

The sparrows appeared to be in late incubation or early in the nestling period at the time of the censuses. A quick, rough estimate of the occurrence and numbers of sparrows on Open Space was thus obtained, but did not allow a rigorous statistical estimate of population size. The parcels surveyed were: Erni/ Proper/Erni/Moore, Mann, Boulder Valley Ranch, VanVleet Ranch, Church, East Rudd, Greenbelt Plateau, Tracy Collins, Flatirons Vista, West Rudd, Dunn 2, and THP (Fig. 1; names assigned by the City of Boulder Office of Real Estate Services/Open Space).

# RESULTS

We observed 111 Grasshopper Sparrows along 28,004 m of transect lines (Table 1), an average of 3.97 birds/1000 m. A histogram of the number of birds seen at right-angle distances from the transect line indicated that all sparrows within 40 m of the transect line were detected. We used this distance as the falloff distance to calculate the Kelker estimator:

mean distance = 
$$\frac{n}{2LW}$$
,

where n= the total number of birds seen within the fall-off distance, L= the total transect length, and W= the fall-off distance.

We obtained an estimate of 0.312 sparrows/ha. The total area of grassland and nonirrigated agricultural grassland on parcels surveyed on City of Boulder Open Space is 1726 ha and we detected Grasshopper Sparrows on about half of this area (Thompson and Strauch 1985); thus, we estimate that the Grasshopper Sparrow population on Open Space in 1985 was about 270 birds.

#### DISCUSSION

The distribution of the western race (<u>perpallidus</u>) of the Grasshopper Sparrow is spotty (Smith 1968). The species tends to breed in small colonies, and local populations fluctuate considerably from year to year in spite of the apparent availability of suitable habitat (Wiens 1969).

Our censuses indicate that in 1985 the species bred in good numbers in Boulder County. Our estimate of about 270 birds is probably low, since we assumed that both sexes were represented equally in our observations. In most small passerines only the male sings, and the number of singing birds is often taken to indicate the numbers of pairs present. Because both male and female Grasshopper Sparrows sing, singing alone is not an indicator of sex. Of the three song types of the Grasshopper Sparrow (the grasshopper song, the sustained song, and the trill), however, the female sings only the trill (Smith 1968); song thus can be used to some extent to sex individuals. Unfortunately, we were unaware of this difference during the censuses and did not record song type, but recall that most songs were the grasshopper song. Singing birds represented at least 77% of the birds observed; most of these we believe to be males. Only females incubate and brood the young and are reported to sit close on the nest (Smith 1968). Thus, it is likely that males would be more conspicuous during surveys.

We did not search for or find nests during this study. The strongest evidence we have for breeding are several sightings of birds carrying prey (presumably to feed young) and the observation of one bird fluttering away on the ground, behavior typical of females disturbed from the nest (Smith 1968).

The contrasts of our findings with previous records of Grasshopper Sparrows in Boulder County may be due to a recent increase of the species in the Boulder area, but we think that this is unlikely. More likely, fluctuations in population size and the unattractiveness (to birdwatchers) of the breeding habitat have contributed to the paucity of observations. The species probably is a regular breeding member of the Boulder County avifauna, although we have no evidence to indicate the range of local population fluctuations or whether the 1985 population was unusually high or low.

#### **ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS**

We thank Nan Lederer and Mike Figgs for sharing their observations of Grasshopper Sparrows, Dave Hallock and Peter Stacey for comments on the manuscript, and the Office of Real Estate Services/Open Space, City of Boulder, for contract support.

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Fig. 1. Locations of City of Boulder Open Space parcels surveyed for Grasshopper Sparrows. Parcel names given in Table 1.

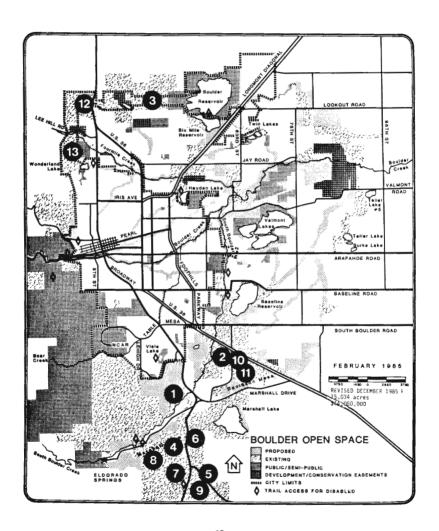


Table 1. Numbers of Grasshopper Sparrows detected from line transects on City of Boulder Open Space parcels 15-15 July 1985.

No.	Parcel	Legal Description	Transect Length (m)	Sparrows Observed	Sparrows/1000m of Transect
1	THP	T1S,R70W,S17,20	1,336	11	8.24
2	VanVleet Ranch	T1S,R70W,S10,15	2,462	20	8.13
3	Boulder Valley Ranch	T1N,R70W,S5	1,320	10	7.58
4	West Rudd	T1S,R70W,S28,29	4,326	31	7.17
5	Greenbelt Plateau	T1S,R70W,S33	469	3	6.40
6	East Rudd	T1S,R70W,S21,28	3,733	12	3.22
7	Flatirons Vista	T1S,R70W,S32,33	2,912	9	3.10
8	Dunn 2	T1S,R70W,S29	1,725	5	2.90
9	Tracy Collins	T1S,R70W,S33	2,599	5	1.93
10	Church (lower)	T1S,R70W,S15	1,592	2	1.26
11	Church (upper)	T1S,R70W,S14,15	1,158	1	0.87
12	Mann	T1N,R71W,S1,12	2,848	2	0.71
13	Erni et al.	T1N,R71W,S12,13	1,524	0	0.00
	Total		28,004	111	-
	Mean		-	-	3.97

# 1986 C.F.O. PRAIRIE CHICKEN FIELD TRIP

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The C.F.O. Prairie Chicken Field Trip was held this year on the weekend of April 25-27. The 10 participants met in Wray on Friday evening and enjoyed an excellent Colorado Division of Wildlife slide program on the status and behavior of the Greater Prairie Chicken in northeast Colorado. Early Saturday morning, the group went to the Conrad Nature Conservancy Preserve northwest of Wray where 14 male Greater Prairie Chickens attempted to get the attention of the one present female hen by actively performing their "booming" mating dance on the lek. The trip provided an outstanding opportunity to observe this unique behavior.

After breakfast in Wray, the group started the long trip south to Springfield with a short stop at Bonny Reservoir State Park to look for early migrating birds. Several Yellow-Rumped Warblers, four Hermit Thrushes, and an Orange-Crowned Warbler were the best birds seen until the group reapproached their parked cars where a brightly-plumaged male Hooded Warbler suddenly performed in the lower branches of the trees near the cars.

With the adrenalin still flowing from the Hooded Warbler sighting, the participants continued the trip south. At the town of Lake Sheridan, it was discovered that the shallow lake (for which the town was named) had been drained and plowed by the private land owner. This is unfortunate because this small lake with its muddy shoreline has often been a good location for observing spring shorebirds.

The next stop was Nee So Pah Reservoir, where the lake contained a large collection of ducks and the extensive mudflats contained a variety of shorebirds. The highlights of this stop included 75 flying Marbled Godwits, a Black-Necked Stilt, several White-faced Ibis, and a wind which made holding a scope and tripod steady almost impossible.

The final stop on Saturday was Two Buttes Wildlife Area, where the group was greeted by an Osprey on a fence post. A search of the rocky canyon below the dam led to the discovery of

a flying Barn Owl. As the observers watched the Barn Owl disappear behind a set of trees with their binoculars, they discovered an unexpected Rose-Breasted Grosbeak in the same trees. It was a oleasant surprise.

The next surprise occurred Saturday night when Colorado's unpredictable weather struck again. Arising at 3:30 a.m., the group discovered that Baca County, which had not had precipitation in three months, was receiving a much-needed steady rain. It was decided to try for the Lesser Prairie Chicken on the leks southeast of Campo despite the rain.

Although the group did not expect to see mating behavior in the rain. it was hoped that some Lesser Prairie Chickens would be present on the lek. The determination of the group was not re-warded by success. As the field trip left the lek after a 90-minute wait, a heavy windy snow hit the muddy back roads of Baca County.

After breakfast, the group headed home through the Arkansas Valley. When the bad weather broke, a stop was made at Blue Reservoir where the field trip had the opportunity for close-up views of both a Peregrine Falcon and a Ross' Goose.

Ninety other species were seen on this trip, and the complete annotated list may be obtained from the author.

# SOME NOTES ON THE CFO STATE LIST FOR COLORADO

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A) The following two species are the only species on the CFO hypothetical list for Colorado. This means that records were accepted by the Records Committee but were sight records by single observers, and thus the species are not eligible to be added to the state list.

BLACK VULTURE (Coragyps atratus). One adult (9-78-54) seen on 6/6/78 northeast of Nunn on the Pawnee National Grasslands. Weld County by Thomas E. Olson.

COMMON GROUND DOVE (Columbina passerina). One female (25-81-64) seen on 11/8/81 near Deckers, Douglas County by Dennis Morales.

COMMON GROUND DOVE (Columbina passerina). One (25-81-63) seen on 12/17/81 at Tamarack Ranch, Logan Colorado by Galen Burnell.

B) The following species now have ten or more accepted records for Colorado. Thus they do not qualify for the rare status R on the CFO checklist, which means less than ten accepted records. The species and the number of accepted records are:

TRICOLORED HERON (Egretta tricolor) 11 EURASIAN WIGEON (Anas penelope) 11 POMARINE JAEGER (Stercorarius pomarinus) 10 CASPIAN TERN (Sterna caspia) 11 ALDER FLYCATCHER (Empidonax alnorum) 17 YELLOW-THROATED VIREO (Vireo flavifrons) 12 YELLOW-THROATED WARBLER (Dendroica dominica) 15 GOLDEN-CROWNED SPARROW (Zonotrichia atricapilla) 14

All seventeen Alder Flycatchers are old specimens taken in Colorado that are now in the Denver Museum of National History. They have all been identified by Dr. Empidonax himself, Dr Allan R. Phillips.

C) The following species have less than ten accepted records for Colorado and thus do qualify for the rare status R on the CFO checklist. The species and number of accepted records are:

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RED-THROATED LOON (Gavia stellata) 8
YELLOW-BILLED LOON (Gavia adamsii) 2
BROWN PELICAN (Pelecanus occidentalis) 1
OLIVACEOUS CORMORANT (Phalacrocorax olivaceus) 5
ANHINGA (Anhinga anhinga) 2
MAGNIFICENT FRIGATEBIRD (Fregata magnificens) 1
REDDISH EGRET (Egretta rufescens) 1
WHITE IBIS (Eudocimus albus) 1
ROSEATE SPOONBILL (Ajaia ajaja) 3
WOOD STORK (Mycteria americana) 3
BLACK-BELLIED WHISTLING-DUCK (Dendrocygna autumnalis) 1
TRUMPETER SWAN (Cygnus buccinator) 6
BRANT (Branta bernicla) 7
HARLEQUIN DUCK (Histrionicus histrionicus) 6
AMERICAN SWALLOW-TAILED KITE (Elanoides forficatus) 8
COMMON BLACK-HAWK (Buteogallus anthracinus) 1
GYRFALCON (Falco rusticolus) 8
YELLOW RAIL (Coturnicops noveboracencis) 2
BLACK RAIL (Laterallus jamaicensis) 2
KING RAIL (Rallus elegans) 2
PURPLE GALLINULE (Porphyrula martinica) 1
COMMON MOORHEN (Gallinula chloropus) 7
ESKIMO CURLEW (Numenius borealis) 1
SHARP-TAILED SANDPIPER (Calidris acuminata) 1
RUFF (Philomachus pugnax) 1
SHORT-BILLED DOWITCHER (Limnodromus griseus) 8
LONG-TAILED JAEGER (Stercorarius longicaudus) 2
LITTLE GULL (Larus minutus) 3
MEW GULL (Larus canus) 4
LESSER BLACK-BACKED GULL (Larus fuscus) 1
GLAUCOUS-WINGED GULL (Larus glaucescens) 1
GREAT BLACK-BACKED GULL (Larus marinus) 1
ROSS' GULL (Rhodostethia rosea) 1
IVORY GULL (Pagophila eburnea) 1
ARTIC TERN (Sterna paradisaea) 2
MARBLED MURRELET (Brachyramphus marmoratus) 1
ANCIENT MURRELET (Synthliboramphus antiquus) 2
GROOVE-BILLED ANI (Crotophaga sulcirostrius) 5
BARRED OWL (Strix varia) 3
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LESSER NIGHTHAWK (Chordeiles acutipennis) 1
BLUE-THROATED HUMMINGBIRD (Lampornis clemenciae) 6
ANNA'S HUMMINGBIRD (Calypte anna) 5
BLACK PHOEBE (Sayornis nigricans) 6
DUSKY-CAPPED FLYCATCHER (Myiarchus tuberculifer) 1
LONG-BILLED THRASHER (Toxostoma longirostre) 1
BENDIRE'S THRASHER (Toxostoma bendirei) 4
PHAINOPEPLA (Phainopepla nitens) 5
WHITE-EYED VIREO (Vireo griseus) 6
LUCY'S WARBLER (Vermivora luciae) 2
HERMIT WARBLER (Dendroica occidentalis) 5
PRAIRIE WARBLER (Dendroica discolor) 5
CERULEAN WARBLER (Dendroica cerulea) 3
SWAINSON'S WARBLER (Limnothlypis swainsonii) 3
LOUISIANA WATERTHRUSH (Seiurus motacilla) 2
CONNECTICUT WARBLER (Oporornis agilio) 5
MOURNING WARBLER (Oporornis philadelphia) 5
PAINTED REDSTART (Myioborus pictus) 4
HEPATIC TANAGER (Piranga flava) 8
HENSLOW'S SPARROW (Ammodramus henslowii) 1
LE CONTE'S SPARROW (Ammodramus leconteii) 3
SHARP-TAILED SPARROW (Ammodramus caudacutus) 3
BRAMBLING (Fringilla montifringilla) 2
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### HALF-BLIND OWL HUNTS IN DAYTIME

Hugh E. Kingery Urling C. Kingery 869 Milwaukee Street Denver, CO 80206

Robert Righter 2358 S. Fillmore Street Denver. CO 80210

We witnessed an intriguing incident September 17, 1986, along the South Platte River, in Chatfield State Recreation Area at eleven in the morning. While walking along the river north of Kingfisher Bridge, Urling observed a slender Great Horned Owl perched in a large Plains Cottonwood, one of three isolated cottonwoods growing on the bank of the river which otherwise had grayish willow bushes growing along the edge.

Bob put his Questar on the owl and discovered that its left eye was cloudy, sort of a grayish green, with an apparently stationary pupil. We concluded it was blind in that eye. The other eye looked typical, with a yellow iris and black pupil. The owl had well-marked plumage--it had typical fine horizontal barring on its underparts, although a broad white stripe of white separation ran up the middle of its belly and chest. The head also had good markings, except for wispy "horns". These consisted of only a few thin feathers; at least one small feather stuck out with bare shaft showing.

The bird seemed to ignore our presence. We stood on the side with the blind eye; it did turn its head a few times as we tried to attract its attention with various bird watchers' noises. Most of the time, though, it held its head so that it looked across the river with its one good eye.

Suddenly, the owl swooped from the tree and plummeted in a straight line across the river and hit the ground on the opposite bank with a thud which we could hear clearly, 150 feet away. The bird acted as if it had caught something, because it fluffed up its feathers and kept its attention on the ground. After a minute it hopped a couple of feet to a more open space, and then it flew off to the branch of another cottonwood 100 yards away. It carried a writhing garter snake, perhaps three feet long.

The snake wrapped itself around the owl's leg, but eventually the owl subdued it and pecked at the snake while holding it in one foot. Shortly thereafter, the owl flew with its prey to a

more secluded section of cottonwood river bottom.

We discussed several ideas about the observation. None of us had seen a Great Horned Owl hunt for food in daylight; perhaps with only one eye the bird could not collect enough food during the nighttime hours to sustain it. (When we first saw the owl perched, we thought it looked slender for a Great Horned Owl. It did not look slender after it fell on the snake, or on its perch when it started to feed).

How long can a half-blind owl survive?

# SEVEN HALF-MILES FROM HOME Notes of a Wind River Naturalist

by Mary Back, Introduction by Margaret Murie Johnson Publishing Company Boulder, 1985

Mary Back has sent her bird observations to the Mountain West Regional Editor of American Birds for at least 20 years. Always literate, always observant, she has added pleasure to my perusal of regional reports. Now she explains in the journal how she made all those observations—in seven different half—mile walks from her home on the Wind River in Dubois.

About twenty years ago Mary's doctor said to her, "Take a walk every morning before breakfast," so she did. For each day of the week she found a different half-mile walk from her home in Dubois, Wyoming. She reports on these walks in an easy-to-read book called, "Seven Half-miles from Home." As Mardy Murie says in the introduction, the book "is a revelation of the contrast between the casual eye and the eye of an artist." Mary serves up a "treasury of information ... with humor, perception, and whimsicality..."

Her journal consists of vivid vignettes about birds, animals, and plants. In one, she describes walking through the cotton-woods along the river when she heard a nighthawk call. She discovered it roosting on the limb of a cottonwood--and found it roosting in the same place every day for the whole summer. Nighthawks nest away from the trees, among the sagebrush in the "desert," so that finding one roosting in the trees surprised her.

The voracious appetite of house wrens for small insects like midges, mosquitoes, and insect eggs makes them "the most efficient insecticides of our woods." She describes a juvenile flicker who yelled loudly for his parents to feed him as he perched on a chunk of suet at her feeder. Meadowlarks, she says, always pick bare fenceposts from which to sing—they avoid posts surrounded by bushes.

Her favorite feeder birds, a pair of White-breasted Nuthatches, her husband Joe named Picaroon and Picarette. A picaroon is a woodpile tool which, when driven into a log, makes a handle with which to move the log. The nuthatches drive their beaks into nutshells somewhat like a logger driving a picaroon into a log, hence the name.

Mary has graced the book with 20 sketches. Particularly good are her depictions of the nuthatches, baby Cedar Waxwings on a wild rose branch, and a Snowy Egret.

Mardy Murie says in the Introduction, "Mary Back is an artist: she sees her world with an artist's eye." You'll enjoy this journal of observation if you like airy descriptions by an observant and sensitive, modest and informed naturalist.

-- Hugh Kingery

# SHOREBIRDS An identification guide to the waders of the world

by Peter Hayman, John Marchant, and Tony Prater

Sponsored by the American Birding Association Houghton Mifflin Company Boston 1986

Shorebirds is the latest field guide that limits treatment to just one group of birds. Although narrower in scope than traditional field guides, the species are covered in much greater detail. If you already own  $\underbrace{\text{Seabirds}}_{\text{book as}}$  by Peter Harrison then you will be familiar with this  $\underline{\text{book as}}$  well. To favorably compare the two books is the highest possible compliment to Shorebirds. Although Shorebirds is smaller in dimensions, it is organized similarly, has as much if not more information, and the general appearance is the same (they are both published by Houghton Mifflin). It begins with a short introductory text followed by the color plates and ending with a section of text fully discussing each species. All of the world's 217 species of waders are treated in text and color plates in this stunning book.

Shorebirds begins with 36 pages of text. These consist of a foreward, introduction, general information section and several figures of shorebird topology which are excellent. Plumage sequence and factors affecting pattern, color and feather appearance are all discussed. General size, shape, posture and behavior are treated. Although much of this information is available in other sources such as Guide to Identification and Ageing of Holarctic Waders by Prater el al, it is presented here in a succinct and very understandable way. This is followed by 6 pages of general notes on the families and groups of waders with each family briefly discussed in terms of general characteristics, range, habits, habitats and some notes on life history and behavior. Each is illustrated with a small silhouette of a representative of the family.

The most impressive part of the book follows with 88 color plates depicting all of the world's shorebirds. The birds are shown in approximate taxonomic order. A few species exceptions are made to bring similar-looking but unrelated species close together. For example the Asiatic Dowitcher, unlikely to be seen with our dowitchers, is shown instead with the Bar-tailed Godwit with which it is more likely to be confused. There are from one to four species shown per plate with most plates illustrating just two or three species. The facing page to each contains a range map and caption highlighting important features. The range map for each species is three-color: yellow = breeding; blue = non-breeding; green = resident. I find it hard to see yellow against a glossy white background and some of the maps are quite small, nevertheless, most ranges are quite clear and easy to discern. In my copy many of the colored areas are slightly offset from continental boundaries but I notice no range errors. Rare and extralimital occurences are not illustrated on the maps but are mentioned in the text.

The birds are painted against clear uniform light blue with a minimum of background details. You will be struck both with the excellent quality of the paintings and color reproduction as well as by the sheer numbers of birds illustrated. Several plumages of each are shown, typically adult breeding and non-breeding as well as juvenile plumages which constitute most vagrant and thus unfamiliar waders. This remedies one of the major shortcomings of the treatment of waders in present field guides.

The plates are uniformly excellent. The colors are bright and true and the detail is extremely fine, almost microscopic. Literally ever feather is first-class throughout. Body form, bill size and shape, and general impression of each bird, so important in identifying waders, is exceptionally true and all birds look lifelike. Obviously the attention given to field study as well as specimen measurements has paid off.

As an example see Plate 75 showing Western and Semipalmated Sandpipers, a typically knotty problem for Colorado birders. This single plate depicts eleven Semipalmated Sandpipers (ad. breeding, pre-breeding, non-breeding, juv. molting and juv.) and seven Western Sandpipers (ad. breeding, pre-breeding, non-breeding, and juv.) both standing and in flight. There are also three close-up paintings of bills, six of heads and bills in

profile, three Semipalm's in three-quarter face, three feet showing palmations and three single scapulars! In addition, Plate 79 shows these same calidrids in juvenile plumage and Plate 80 shows these same in breeding plumage allowing direct comparison of all. Other small calidrids are similarly treated. This is the closest you can come to examining specimens in hand.

There is a price to be paid for such detail. Some of the plates are almost too much of a good thing and are crowded with up to 30 figures per plate. Godwits, Plate 49, and phalaropes, Plate 63 are particularly busy. Different species are freely interspersed in order to juxtapose similar plumages so care must be taken to follow the numbering system. Some of the smaller figures are not numbered. While there are many small paintings, most figures are quite large with every species illustrated larger than the usual field guides. A bit of care and study will reveal a wealth of information.

A potential problem for Colorado birders is the use of British common names. Although most names used are familiar there are several differences. Most of the changes, such as dropping the modifier Common, are not confusing. The dominica and fulva races of Lesser Golden Plover are considered as two species, American and Pacific Golden Plovers respectively (this issue is currently being discussed by A.O.U.). Plover is call Grey Plover. (Grey Plover seems the better name as all the <u>Pluvialis</u> plovers are "black-bellied" in breeding plumages). Red phalarope is called Grey Phalarope. choice since all phalaropes are grey in non-breeding plumages.) Black-necked Stilt is treated as a race of the nearly cosmopolitan Black-winged Stilt. The addition of the modifier American to our Black Oystercatcher (recently dropped by the A.O.U.) makes sense when one considers that there are six species of "black" oystercatchers worldwide. Our Snowy Plover is treated as a race of the cosmopolitan Charadrius alexandrinus, but the choice of common name, "Kentish" Plover, is an unfortunate re-American as well as other alternative names are listed under the species headings in the text.

Each species is fully described in the following text. The accounts are packed with information on identification, voice, habits, movements, description, age/sex, races, measurements and references. Nine excellent tables follow which compare very

similar species side by side. Especially pertinent to Colorado birders are the golden plover, dowitcher and peep tables. The book ends with a seven page bibliography with hundreds of general and specific references.

Shorebirds continues a tradition begun with Peter Harrison's Seabirds. This is an excellent field guide and an important resource for Colorado birders. This astonishingly beautiful book challenges us to broaden our horizons—to look for and identify that stray Ruff or Sharp-tailed Sandpiper. It is packed with relevant shorebird information brought together into a single source. Shorebirds is an essential addition to the bookshelves of all Colorado bird watchers interested in the identification of this difficult group of birds.

-- Mark Janos

#### IN MEMORIAM: DONALD LEO MALICK

Winston William Brockner 5965 South Herzman Drive Evergreen, Colorado 80439

An early member of the Colorado Field Ornithologists and well known bird artist, Donald Leo Malick, passed away on August 16, 1986, at the age of 56. Don was very interested in the C.F.O. since its inception and a loyal supporter, albeit from a distance. Don always emphasized to me that he was not a "joiner". and he never joined the American Ornithologists Union.

Don willingly granted use of his sketches and drawings to the C.F.O. and local club committees for annual meetings. He also attended a few of these meetings and displayed his art. He had an especially good show at the first Colorado Springs meeting.

Malick painted 35 plates plus the dust jacket for Bailey and Niedrach's, "The Birds of Colorado". He also periodically painted covers and illustrations for "Colorado Outdoors" magazine.

From 1962 to 1973, Don worked at the Denver Museum of Natural History, painting diorama backgrounds. While working on African exhibits, he accompanied the Museum's expedition to Botswana and the Kalahari desert in Africa. He was delighted with this area and subsequently returned twice on his own to paint the birds of Botswana.

It was while painting for the National Geographic Society's "Field Guide to the Birds of North America", that Don came down with cancer. However, he bravely plugged on and completed 23 outstanding plates for this guide. Reviewers of this book most often were most satisfied with the Malick drawings.

His passing is a great loss to all of us. He will be missed.

#### **ANNOUNCEMENTS**

#### 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:

Bill Prather

13810 Weld Country Rd. 1 Longmont, CO 80501 776-2191 (Home) 427-9295 (Work)

## PROGRESS REPORT BREEDING BIRD ATLAS

Field work will begin this summer on the Colorado Breeding Bird Atlas. The meeting 31 January in Denver formally launched this massive undertaking.

The Breeding Bird Atlas involves field work in small blocks all over the state. The Atlas has designated one priority block, three miles on a side, in each topographic map in the state. (The designated block is the southeast corner of each topographic map; check your topos to pick your first block(s).) A standardized set of behavior codes will enable field workers to record their observations and transmit them to an Atlas computer.

The Atlas seeks volunteers in many segments of the project: field workers, regional coordinators, office work (typing, computer work, fundraising, atlas planning, and records review, to name a few).

To sign up for field work, contact Hugh Kingery at the Atlas Office, c/o Zoology Department, Denver Museum of Natural History, 2001 Colorado Blvd., Denver, CO 80205.

#### 1987 C.F.O. 25TH ANNUAL CONVENTION

## "Call for Papers and Artwork"

Mark your calendar for the weekend of 8-10 May 1987. This spring will be the twenty-fifth anniversary of the Colorado Field Ornithologists and the convention will take place in Boulder. Registration will be on Friday, 8 May during the evening. Early morning field trips will be held on Saturday, 9 May, followed by the technical session. A banquet will conclude the day and additional field trips will be conducted on 10 May.

interested in volunteering to help with organization of the convention should call Tina Jones, 2025 S. Monroe, Denver, CO 80210, 722-8514 (or check with directory assistance for pending new number). This is the first call for papers and artwork, which should also be sent to Tina. If presenting a paper please send your name and address, abstract of the paper, and organizational affiliation. Papers are a maximum of twenty minutes and should cover topics relating to birds in Colorado such as field identification problems, current research, or unique observations. C.F.O. especially welcomes students' and members' papers. Art work may be in the form of drawings, paintings, photographs or sculpture. The convention setting offers a great opportunity to display and highlight artistic works. Further information about the convention will be available in the next Journal. We encourage everyone to attend so please get the word out.

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