Colorado Birds

The Colorado Field Ornithologists' Quarterly

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Table of Contents

Field Trips

Birding the Montrose Area

Connie Kogler
April 16, 2005

The Colorado Field Ornithologists in conjunction with the Black Canyon Audubon Society will host a trip in the Montrose area. We will be visiting the Pope Ranch just south of Montrose that is being developed for wildlife. We hope to uncover some Western Slope surprises! We will also visit area hotspots and time permitting take an in-depth look at the birds of Ridgway State Park. This trip is limited to 20 participants, so please sign up early. We will meet at the City Market South parking lot at the NW corner near the Java Express at 8:00 A.M. To get there, from the intersection of Hwy 50 and 550S, also known as Main and Townsend in Montrose, take 550 south about two miles to the City Market on the left. We will then carpool to the ranch and beyond. Please RSVP by phone or email to reserve your spot by contacting Connie Kogler at 970-252-0210 or ckogler@montrose.net.

Exploring TNC's Bohart Ranch

Chris Pague and Ted Floyd
May 28, 2005

Join Chris Pague, Senior Ecologist with The Nature Conservancy of Colorado, and Ted Floyd, Editor of Birding, for a day of birding at the Bohart Ranch, El Paso County. The ranch is essentially unknown to the birding community at the present time, and this trip will represent a "debut" for what is sure to be recognized as a major birding hotspot in the years to come. Just a stone's throw from metropolitan Colorado Springs, the Bohart Ranch offers excellent opportunities for viewing most of the birds that can be found at the fabled Pawnee National Grasslands. In fact, we will have even better chances at a variety of species - everything from Cassin's Sparrow to Scaled Quail. Also, the Bohart Ranch contains numerous "oases" of trees and other woody vegetation which should prove attractive to migrants and vagrants. As the basics of birding the Bohart have yet to be determined, this trip will involve a fair amount of discovery and "playing it by ear". Expect to be surprised, have a great time, and perhaps contribute to an important birding legacy for Colorado in the 21st Century! Contact Ted Floyd (email only, please - tedfloyd@aba.org) for information about this trip.

Workshop

Feather Tracts

Tony Leukering
March 4, 2005

Join Tony Leukering of the Rocky Mountain Bird Observatory for a classroom session on a subject which many birders find highly confusing - the tracts of feathers that give birds their shapes and varying plumages. Tony, who is widely known for his knowledge of avian feather patterns and molts, will explain the "feather geography" of birds, and how the various tracts of feathers create plumage configurations through the changing seasons.

This session will be held in the classroom on the third floor of the Denver Museum of Nature and Science. Please join Tony for what is sure to be a very informative evening and bring your questions!

CFO Supports Ethics Codes

The Colorado Field Ornithologists is dedicated to the conservation of avian species and to increasing the public awareness of human impact on birds. As one step toward achieving these goals, the CFO Board has endorsed the American Birding Association's (ABA) *Birding Code of Ethics* and the Ornithological Council (OC) of North American Ornithological Societies' *Code of Ethics*.

CFO Board Minutes

Lisa Edwards, Secretary

The regular quarterly meeting was held December 4, 2004 at 11:13 A.M. Board members present were President Peter Gent; Vice President Norm Lewis; Secretary Lisa Edwards; Treasurer David Waltman, and Directors Doug Faulkner, Rachel Hopper, Tony Leukering, Tom McConnell, Bill Schmoker, and Mark Peterson. Cheryl Day and Sharon Dooley sent their regrets. Also attending the meeting was Larry Semo. The minutes of the August 2004 meeting were approved.

PRESIDENT'S REPORT

Peter Gent feels that the organization is running smoothly. The new website is great. Colorado Birds is also running smoothly.

TREASURER'S REPORT

CFO's current assets are $32,001.91. The treasurer's report was approved.

COBIRDS AND WEBSITE

Rachel Hopper reported the following:

1. COBirds is running fine with approximately with 670 members.

2. CFO Website -The addition of Pay Pal to purchase items and pay for memberships is working well. CFO will look into online registration for the 2005 Convention. The new website is up and running. The photo uploads still need to be completed. The Board agreed to offer for sale note cards from four different Colorado artists. All sizes of CFO polo and long-sleeve shirts will be stocked and offered on the website.

COLORADO BIRDS

There is already a sufficient number of articles to fill the January and April issues. The Board also decided to run an ad in each issue offering CFO merchandise.

CBRC

The online submission and review system for rare bird documentation will be ready by the end of the year. The circulation of 2003 records has started. Larry Semo will become the CBRC Chair effective January 1, 2005. Joey Kellner has agreed to serve a three-year term on the CBRC.

FIELD TRIPS

Norm Lewis updated the board on the great field trips to be offered by CFO over the next 12 months - Feather Tracts workshop with Tony Leukering on March 4th; Bohart Ranch field trip in May with Ted Floyd; and Sprague's Pipits field trip in the fall with Nathan Pipelow.

PROJECT FUND

Cheryl Day reported that the committee would be meeting in late winter to review proposals for 2005. Two applications had been received to date.

2005 CONVENTION

The convention will run Friday, May 13th to Sunday, May 15th. Registration and exhibits will be at the Holiday Inn Express and the paper session and banquet will be at Otero Junior College. Brian Wheeler, author of numerous books on North American raptors will be the speaker.

A motion was made and passed to thank Tony Leukering for his years of service to CFO serving on the CBRC for six years and as its chair for the last four years.

The next CFO Board meeting will be held on Saturday, February 19th, 2005 at the RMBO headquarters in Brighton at 11:00 A.M.

The board meeting was adjourned at 3:00 P.M.

CFO WEBSITE

We invite you to browse the Colorado Field Ornithologists' website. If you don't own a computer, check your local library. Visit the site regularly because new items and changes appear often. The Internet address is:

http://www.cfo-link.org

Letter from Project Fund Grant Recipient

Dear CFO Committee:

With support from the Colorado Field Ornithologists' Project Fund, I was able to continue and expand my research on American Three-toed Woodpecker (Picoides dorsalis) response to spatial patterns of burn severity at the Hayman burn. The funding I received was primarily used to support an additional field technician during June of the 2004 field season. Also, a small portion of the funds was allocated to transportation costs between study sites. Three-toed Woodpeckers are a rare and cryptic species which makes them difficult to find and monitor. Thus, the assistance of an additional field technician during the 2004 field season contributed significantly to the success of the study. I thank the CFO for their generous support of my project.

Research objectives and results: The Three-toed Woodpecker's close association with early post-fire forests has been well documented (Hutto 1995, Murphy and Lehnhausen 1998). Post-fire forests, however, are highly heterogeneous because fires burn at different intensities, resulting in a mosaic of burn severities across the landscape. The Three-toed Woodpecker's response to the mosaic of severities is not well understood (Leonard 2001). My objective was to determine if, at a large spatial scale (~ 400 ha.), Three-toed Woodpeckers select for a specific burn severity (low, mixed, or high) based on the locations of nests and foraging activity (landscape-scale response). Then, at a finer spatial scale, I examined the trees Three-toed Woodpeckers selected for foraging and compared them to nearby trees that were not selected (tree-level response). In 2003, we found six nests and collected foraging observations on 38 birds. With additional help in 2004, we found nine nests and observed 58 birds.

Landscape-level response. Three-toed Woodpeckers demonstrated significant selection for areas of mixed-severity and systematically avoided large, contiguous swaths of either low- or high-severity. Thus, the mosaic of the mixed-severity area, which includes both low- and high-severity patches, should be considered optimal habitat for Three-toed Woodpeckers.

Tree-level response. At the tree level, Three-toed Woodpeckers selected trees based on size and beetle occupancy, but not burn severity. Thus, foraging trees were larger and more likely to have beetle larva than a nearby, unselected tree. At this level burn severity was not a cue for selection of trees for foraging.

Management Implications. The pattern of settlement by Three-toed Woodpeckers into mixed-severity burns highlights the need for fire management programs that can accommodate high levels of heterogeneity. Current fire management initiatives aim to diminish the risk of severe fire through prescribed fire treatments. Prescribed fire is usually limited to a low-intensity burn that does not mimic the mosaic of severities generated by wildfire. To incorporate Three-toed Woodpeckers and other fire-adapted species, fire management programs should provide for a wide range of fire behaviors.

I reiterate my thanks to the CFO for their support of this project. Financial support from the CFO contributed significantly to the success of the study. With improved understanding of Three-toed Woodpecker habitat requirements, we can incorporate this species into future fire management programs.

Elizabeth Reynolds
Colorado State University

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Colorado Field Ornithologists

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Shop Online at www.cfo-link.org!
(All prices include shipping & handling)

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Original designs by Scott Rashid
To view all of the cards, visit the CFO website
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2004/476 species
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I'd rather be fishing?
NO! Let everyone know you are a birder!
"I'd rather be pishing..."
Bumper Sticker/10x3
($2.50)

Lapel/Hat Pin
Custom Design by Radeaux!
Size: 3/4" x 1"
($9.00)

Marsh Papers Donated to Museum Archives

Hugh Kingery

Thompson Marsh, a founder of CFO, kept meticulous daily records of the birds he observed from the time he was 16 years old until he died in 1992 at the age of 89. At the time of his death, his wife Susan could not find the records in their house. Years ago, Denver Field Ornithologist Historian Warren Finch said that when Professor Marsh was asked at a DFO meeting what would eventually happen to his records, he replied that they would be in his coffin with him when he was buried. Susan no doubt thought they had disappeared forever.

In 2004, however, his daughters, Alice, Lucy, and Mary, discovered the records, and Chris Blakeslee suggested that they donate the materials to the Denver Museum of Nature and Science. On July 13, Alice and Mary brought the box of records to the museum. Archivist Kris Haglund, Librarian Kathie Gulley, and Zoology Collections Manager Bill Alther accepted the records as an important contribution to the Museum archives.

Kris thanked the Marshes profusely and then watched, bemused, as the donors (and Chris and I) inspected the materials and chattered about what each meant. Thompson recorded birds by Latin names. On big sheets, Thompson had species listed across the top (using their Latin names, not English ones) and dates down the side. He put an "X" for each species he saw on each date. Alice said these daily spread sheets looked like hand-written precursors to Excel computer files.

In addition, a dozen ledger books, each page devoted to one species, seemed to cover several years, but we could not quite decipher their meaning. A shoebox neatly filled with 30 small notebooks recorded his daily observations, and included notes about observations that he deemed worthy of further data.

Thompson led the efforts to found the CFO and articles about his bird watching career appeared in the C.F.O. Journal in 1981 (v. 15 p. 37) and 1993 (v. 27, pp. 1-8 and 158-159).

The Museum archives contain personal bird records from several prominent ornithologists, including Alfred M. Bailey and Jack Reddall. It contains all of the original field cards and other data from the Colorado Breeding Bird Atlas and about 25 years of contributions to the Mountain West Region of American Birds.

authorities agree on the diverse locations Cordilleran Flycatchers choose for nest sites, but some do not mention cavities. The Audubon Society's Encyclopedia of North American Birds, echoing Bendire and Bent, says the Cordilleran Flycatcher chooses a wide variety of nesting sites, including tree cavities (Terres 1987), a view two other general authorities endorse (Ehrlich 1988, Alsop 2001). On the other hand, other authorities agree on the diversity of nest sites, but they refrain from mentioning any kind of cavity (Harrison 1979, Kaufmann 1996, Righter et al. 2004).

The Sibley Guide to Bird Life and Behavior does not mention the Cordilleran Flycatcher as a cavity nester (Elphick et al. 2001), but the species account for The Birds of North America: Life Histories for the 21st Century (BNA; Lowther 2000) definitely does so. This particular contradiction can be resolved, because the BNA account was not yet available when the Sibley Guide went to press (www.sibleyart.com).

Lowther's monograph showed that Cordilleran Flycatchers do nest in cavities, but that conclusion rests on other studies of such widely varying geographical locations that no clear pattern emerges. In southeastern Washington, for example, there is no evidence of cavity nesting (Frakes and Johnson 1982); in central Arizona, there is definite evidence of cavity nesting, including in trees (Martin and Li 1992); on the eastern side of the Wet Mountains in Colorado, no evidence for cavities (Beaver and Baldwin 1975); in northern Monterey County, California, no clear decision (Davis et al. 1963). The cavity nesters in California could have been either E. difficilis or E. occidentalis. At the time of Davis's study the two species had not been split, and today both species exist in the area of that study (Lowther 2000).

Let's look more closely at the situation in Colorado. After all, if there is widespread acceptance of diverse nesting sites, sometimes including cavities, we might reasonably expect to find Cordilleran Flycatchers nesting in cavities in Colorado. Instead, we find agreement about diversity of nesting sites, but no mention of cavities, suggesting that cavity nesting is the exception in Colorado. The earliest authorities identify numerous nest sites, but not tree cavities, though they do mention dirt banks as nesting sites, without clarifying whether those nests were on or in the dirt banks (Bailey and Niedrach 1965). The updated version of Bailey and Niedrach does not mention any kind of cavity (Andrews and Righter 1992). Neither does the Colorado Breeding Bird Atlas (Kingery 1998). Summarizing nest cards for the Atlas, James Sedgwick ambiguously reports that two Cordilleran Flycatchers nested in trees. Inspection of the cards showed that neither was in a cavity (Foster pers. obs.).

A Newly Identified Tree Cavity Nester in Colorado: the Cordilleran Flycatcher

Mike Foster
m1foster@carbon.cudenver.edu

Robert Righter
rorighter@earthlink.net

Bill Eden
billdenco@aol.com

Overview

Does the Cordilleran Flycatcher (Empidonax occidentalis) nest in tree cavities? We found evidence that it does in Colorado. A review of the literature suggests this behavior may be unusual. Cordilleran Flycatchers nest in a variety of places: in wood piles, on stumps, in cliffs or stream banks, in branches or crotches of trees, in man-made structures, and in cavities. Cavities seem to be a secondary preference, and it is uncertain whether this species prefers genuine cavities (whether natural or man-made) to partially concealed structures of some kind, for example, the space beneath an overhang, or among exposed roots of trees, or in shrubs. Whether local populations prefer particular nesting substrates, or whether they are opportunistic is also not yet known. The cavity we found is natural, probably created by a broken branch, though it could have been improved by excavators, like woodpeckers or nuthatches, before the flycatchers occupied it.

Previously lumped as Western Flycatcher, authors did not distinguish between the Pacific-slope Flycatcher (Empidonax difficilis) and the Cordilleran Flycatcher until 1989 when those forms were elevated to full species status (American Ornithologists' Union 1989).

Literature Review

Major Charles Bendire was the first to document the great diversity of nest sites used by the Western Flycatcher, including tree cavities (Bendire 1895). Arthur Cleveland Bent's magisterial survey confirms Bendire, even stealing several of his examples (Bent 1942). Interestingly, neither of the two studies of the Western Flycatcher that appeared between Bendire and Bent mentions cavities of any kind (Myers 1911, Williams 1942).

Reviewing the subsequent literature, we soon discerned a distinct trend:

Studies mentioned in the BNA compilation (Lowther 2000) have established that Cordilleran Flycatchers do nest in tree cavities, but there is still uncertainty about how widely and how often they do so. And the nature of the cavities they choose needs more careful study: How often are tree nests in concealed structures of some kind, and how often in natural cavities?

We would not be surprised if this article stimulated letters to the editor, claiming earlier observations of a tree-cavity nesting Cordilleran Flycatcher in Colorado. However, we know of no published report and none of the authorities cited above mention it specifically for Colorado.

Observation

At 1015hrs on 3 July 2004, the authors observed a Cordilleran Flycatcher entering a cavity in a snag. It emerged soon thereafter and flew out of sight. Intrigued by this occurrence, we decided to watch the snag in case the bird returned. During the next 25 minutes (which was as long as we stayed in the vicinity), the bird returned six more times, disappearing into the cavity completely for 10 to 15 seconds each time before emerging and flying away again.

On three of the seven visits total, all of us agreed that the bird was carrying nesting material or food. On one other visit (the second overall), one of us believes he saw something in the beak. The bird did not appear to be carrying anything during the other three visits, but we monitored it from such a distance that carried material might not have been observable.

The cavity was probably the result of a branch breaking away from the trunk. It was south-facing, about 45 to 50 feet above ground level, and measured about six inches high by four inches wide. It appeared to be at least three to five inches deep, because the bird completely vanished from sight upon entering. The snag was about 25 feet from the Enchanted Forest Trail, 2.6 miles from the trailhead, in Jefferson County's Apex Park at an elevation of about 7,400 feet. The habitat was a closed canopy of mixed conifers, with a small stream running through the area.

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Sandhill Crane Nesting in Larimer County

Nicholas Komar
1507 Wildwood Court
Fort Collins, CO
quetzal65@comcast.net

On 4 July 2001, while touring through a high mountain valley in western Larimer County, my wife Elena Maribel exclaimed to me, "what are those strange birds?" Across the valley in a moist pasture were two Sandhill Cranes (Grus canadensis) grazing along with two smaller chicks. I returned to the same pasture near Glendevey on 28 June 2002, but found no cranes. However, the valley is quite extensive, so I explored a bit before heading back home to Fort Collins. A pair of Sandhill Cranes with one small chick were about two miles further north adjacent to a moist pasture. When they saw me about a half mile away they leisurely walked to the edge of the meadow where they were camouflaged in an aspen glade. The same or another pair of cranes (without chicks) was present on 12 July 2003 in a wet meadow in the Laramie River valley of Larimer County, about five miles southeast of Glendevey. Cranes were still breeding in the area on 5 July 2004, when a pair plus one chick were present in the same location as in 2001.

These Greater Sandhill Cranes (G. c. tabida), mostly cinnamon brown in color, were seen at an elevation of 8,000 ft (2,800 meters) in the northwest Front Range of Colorado along McIntyre Creek, a few miles north of Glendevey. Presumably, they are part of the crane population breeding in northwestern Colorado, principally centered in Routt County to the west of Steamboat Springs, the Park Range, and North Park. However, during the Breeding Bird Atlas project (1987-1995), breeding Sandhill Cranes were documented in Jackson and Grand counties on Larimer County's western border (Barrett 1995). Some of the cranes in Jackson County were observed within 20 miles of the Larimer County location, separated by the Colorado State Forest.

Breeding habitat for cranes typically involves wetlands or open water. No ponds were evident in this valley although a willow carr ran through it and may have provided the necessary nesting environment.

Greater Sandhill Cranes are considered threatened by the Colorado Division of Wildlife and are listed as a sensitive species by the U.S.D.A. Forest Service, principally due to population declines (Barrett 1995). Nonetheless, breeding distribution of these threatened birds may be increasing (Renner et al. 1991). Earlier in the 20th century, breeding occurred in a wider distribution

throughout western Colorado (Bailey and Niedrach 1965). However, I am not aware of previous records of breeding Sandhill Cranes in Larimer County (Bailey and Niedrach 1965, Kingery 1988, Andrews and Righter 1992, Barrett 1995).Whether this nesting in Larimer County represents a return to historic breeding sites, or a recent range expansion, or even an insignificant anomaly, is unknown. Nonetheless, these elegant birds of mountain meadows are a welcome addition to the breeding avifauna of Larimer County!

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Sandhill Crane pair with chick, Larimer County, 2004. Photo by Cole Wild.

Small Owls of Rocky Mountain National Park

Scott Rashid
Box 3351
Estes Park, CO 80517
pygmyowl@frii.com

In an attempt to get some insight into the numbers of small owls found throughout the area, Jeff Maugins and I took it upon ourselves to survey the areas in and around Rocky Mountain National Park in 2004. From surveys that I had completed in past years, I was aware that Boreal Owls (Aegolius funereous) resided in the Hidden Valley area of the Rocky Mountain National Park in late winter, Northern Saw-whet Owls (Aegolius acadicus) from early April through October in a number of areas, and Northern Pygmy-Owls (Glaucidium gnoma) throughout the year in a number of riparian areas. Flammulated Owls (Otus flammeolus) have been heard, but nesting had not been documented since 1903 (Gregg 1938).

I read a lot about small owls during the survey period trying to find some information that could assist me in my research. I came across an article by Holt and Leroux (1996) stating that at least in west-central Montana, Northern Saw-whet Owls and Northern Pygmy-Owls "occur sympatrically from mixed deciduous and coniferous forest bottoms (975 m) to higher elevation (1,584 m) coniferous forests". This information turned out to be quite enlightening after I found Great Horned Owls (Bubo virginianus), a Northern Saw-whet Owl, Northern Pygmy-Owls, and Flammulated Owls all in the same general vicinity.

Since 1998, I have been studying the Northern Pygmy-Owl, and I knew from past experience that I should start searching for them in mid-February, when the males start soliciting females. My study area for Northern Pygmy-Owls is along Cow Creek, within Rocky Mountain National Park. On the evening of 3 March 2004, Jeff Maugins and I were searching the area for pygmy-owls and, to our surprise, at 6:50 P.M. we heard a Northern Saw-whet Owl calling from the vicinity of where a pair of Northern Pygmy-Owls had nested in 1999 and 2000. As we approached the calling owl, to our surprise again, we found that it was only 25 meters from the tree that the pygmy-owls had used a few years earlier - my first thought was "wouldn't it be neat if the Saw-whets used the same nest tree that the pygmies used?" But the Saw-whet ended up not using the nest.

Throughout the spring of 2004, we were able to locate a number of Northern

Saw-whet Owls calling inside Rocky Mountain National Park at the Cub Lake Trail, the entrance to Hidden Valley, Long Lake trailhead, and Horseshoe Park. In the Estes Valley, Saw-whets were heard calling from the base of Eagle Rock, at Giant Track Road, and a subdivision called Rockwood Estates. Unfortunately, I did not have time to search out nests.

Knowing that Flammulated Owls had been documented in the park (Gregg 1938) and having received two injured "flams" that needed rehabilitation, I knew that this species must nest in and around Rocky Mountain National Park, but I could not locate anyone that had ever seen one here.

Flammulated Owls are one of the most migratory of all North American owls, but little is known about their migration (Phillips 1942). Therefore, my biggest problem was determining what month to start searching for them–do they arrive in the Estes Park area in May, June, or July? Nevertheless, I was determined to locate Flammulateds in 2004. Fortunately, I belong to an internet listserve called COBirds, and through that listserve, I received an e-mail from Carol Sullivan saying she had a Flammulated Owl nesting in a Quaking Aspen (Populus tremuloides) on her property. I contacted her to see if I could come and view the area of the nest hoping to gain some insight into what type of habitat to search for these elusive birds. The owl on Carol's property was nesting in a cavity excavated by a Northern Flicker (Colaptes auratus), roughly six meters from the ground and about 12 meters from a pasture.

After seeing Carol's owl, I started thinking of some areas in Rocky Mountain National Park that might be suitable for Flammulated Owls. The first place that came to mind was an area–and specifically a tree–that a pair of Northern Pygmy-Owls had used in 1999 and 2000. I knew that tree had several cavities and that the pygmy-owls had not nested there this year. I tapped on the east side of the tree and seeing nothing looking out, I moved to the west side and, to my amazement, a Flammulated Owl was looking at me. I can't begin to explain how excited I was to find a nesting Flammulated Owl in the same nest cavity that a Northern Pygmy-Owl had previously used. Rashid (1999) provides a detailed description of this nest.

Raptors such as Great Horned Owls have been documented using old Red-tailed Hawk (Buteo jamaicensis) nests (Bent 1938), but I had not read of two different species of owls using the same nest cavity (in different years, of course) before. The closest parallel I found was an instance when Denver Holt found a Northern Saw-whet Owl and a Northern Pygmy-Owl nesting in the same tree at the same time (Norton and Holt 1982).

As soon as I saw the "flam" looking out of the cavity, I left without bothering the owl, because it is not a good idea to bother nesting birds. The area of Cow Creek where these owls were nesting was also an area of recent Mountain Lion (Felis concolor) activity, and it is never a good idea to be alone in Mountain Lion country at night. So from that point on, I made sure I had someone with me and I did not have too much trouble finding someone to assist me.

I returned that first evening at 7:30 with Jeff Maugins to start monitoring the nesting Flammulated Owls. When the Northern Pygmy-Owls used that nest I was able to sit quietly from about eight meters away. So when we started to study the Flammulateds, I decided to sit in the same place. At 8:15, the female peered from the cavity looking around, at 8:51 the male started calling west of the nest tree about 20 meters away. He continued calling until 8:56 when he flew toward the nest and landed on a dead spruce (Picea sp.). After he landed, the female exited the nest and flew to the male, perching by his side. A few minutes after the female exited the nest that first evening, we left so as to not disturb her. At this point I had no idea what the "personality" of a nesting Flammulated was like, nor did I know how far along the nesting process was.

The next evening we arrived at the nest tree and sat quietly just to the right and below the nest, the best viewpoint to monitor activity. We arrived around 8:30 because, from the previous evening's observation, I knew that the owls became active around 9:00. We sat quietly and stayed as immobile as possible so that we could witness the normal activity of these owls. The female would most often stay inside the cavity until the male called to her, at which time she would look out of the cavity, look at us, wait a few moments, then exit for up to 15 minutes (most evenings it was much shorter), then re-enter the nest. It was a relief to me when she would re-enter the cavity each evening, because I have heard horror stories about birds abandoning nests because researches had upset them.

Interaction with other species

Even though the Flammulated Owl is a nocturnal bird of prey (Marshall 1957), it will be active long before it is completely dark. When we would arrive early in the evening, I was able to locate the adult owls roosting. Sometimes they would roost in the tree directly adjacent to the nest and more often than not would be roughly four meters or less from the ground. One late afternoon, I found the female perched 1.5 meters from the ground roosting next to the trunk of the tree. Each time I was able to locate the roosting adult, the bird

was perched against the trunk of a live spruce.

On several occasions we witnessed interaction between these owls and other birds in the area. On another occasion, we had arrived at the nest area and to our surprise, a Great Horned Owl was perched approximately 60 meters from the Flammulated nest, but flew off as we approached the nest tree. A few minutes after the larger owl flew off both male and female Flammulated started calling just west of the nest. My guess is that the Flammulateds were well aware of the Great Horned Owl and were not about to let the larger owl know they were so close to each other. Great Horned Owls have been documented feeding on smaller owls (Bent 1938).

Another interaction happened one evening when we arrived at the nest well before dark. As the male owl started hooting it was instantly harassed by a House Wren (Troglodytes aedon) whose persecution lasted until dark when the wren moved to a safe place to spend the night.

One other interesting event occurred early one evening when we heard a Northern Pygmy-Owl calling southwest of the Flammulated Owl nest. As we approached the calling pygmy-owl, it flew just a few meters southwest of the Flammulated nest and continued calling. At that point both the pygmy-owl and the Flammulated were calling at the same time, but we witnessed no direct interaction between the two species.

Vocalizations

The calling male makes a series of soft hollow hoots in a cadence of "hoot,hoot.....hoot" with a two-syllable hoot sometimes given as well. These calls seemingly do not carry much more than about 18 meters. The female Flammulated Owl's call is similar to the male's but distinctly higher pitched. Each evening, the male would appear near the nest, sometimes as early as 8:30, and gave a series of soft hoots, at which time the female would peer out of the nest for a moment before exiting. As she exited, she would often give a series of soft hoots for a few moments, and most evenings we could hear both birds calling back and forth.

When the female was upset she would utter a distress call that sounded similar to the territorial call of the Eastern Screech-Owl (Otus asio). The male on the other hand gave a "whoooa" call that sounded somewhat like that of a Barred Owl (Strix varia).

Incubation and Eggs

From the frequency of the male's feeding of the female at the nest, I estimated

the hatching date to be June 15. As the eggs are laid, the male's frequency of feeding the female averages one prey item per minute, for 3-4 nights. After the fourth night until the hatching date, the feeding is reduced to one item every few minutes. The feeding of the female increases in frequency to one prey item per minute after the eggs hatch. (Linkhart, pers. comm.). Beginning June15, we witnessed the male feeding the female one prey item every sixty seconds or so, which I thought was quite remarkable when you consider that the owl had to exit the nest, locate and catch a prey item, then return to the nest.

As the male would come near the nest early each evening, he would call "hoot,hoot....hoot,hoot.....hoot", then the female would look out of the nest for a few moments before exiting, usually calling with a single hoot, higher-pitched than the male's. The female would stay out of the nest cavity for up to 15 minutes before re-entering the nest. After the female re-entered the nest, we did not see her exit again.

Flammulated Owls lay 2-4 white, faintly creamy-tinted eggs that average 29.1-25.5 millimeters (Bent 1938). The incubation period is 22-24 days and apparently begins after the second egg is laid. The female does the incubation as the male provides food for himself and his mate (Johnsgard 2002).

Prey and Hunting

Identifying the prey of large owls can be quite easy if you can locate the pellets (compact masses of regurgitated indigestible material, such as fur bones and feathers; Terres 1982). It was a bit difficult identifying exactly what these birds were feeding on because I could not locate any pellets, nor could I see many of the items the adults brought to the nest. However, as I watched the nest I was able to identify a few prey items: moths, caterpillars, beetles, and possibly a millipede. Prey items identified by other researchers include spiders, scorpions, crickets, and grasshoppers; one nest contained a vole (Clethrionomys sp.), and another the feathers of a Dark-eyed Junco (Junco hyemalis; Goggans 1986, Johnsgard 2002).

Young

From the beginning of this study (June 12) until the first week in July, the male was seen entering the nest with prey, he would enter the nest head first, transfer the prey item to the female, turn around inside the nest cavity, then exit head first. By the first week in July, both male and female were seen entering the nest with food to feed the young. Starting on July 10, the female would stay out of the nest during the day, only entering the nest in the evening to feed the young; on that same date we could hear the young

food begging from inside the nest cavity. The young Flammulated's food begging call is a thick, low-pitched "pssssshp". On July 14, the female started harassing us while we were sitting near the nest, so we figured the fledgling date was close. The male, on the other hand, never bothered us at all. On July 17, the young began perching at the entrance of their cavity looking out, and on several occasions we could see two young at the nest entrance. On July 19 at 8:41, the first owlet fledged; however, it appeared to have been pushed out of the nest by its sibling. The fledgling was subsequently seen for at least four evenings before the second nestling took the plunge. Three nights after the first owlet had fledged, the remaining nestling was food begging remarkably loud. In fact the calls were so loud that we could hear them over 50 meters from the nest but never saw the adults bring food to the nestling, nor did we hear the adults make a sound. After both young were out of the nest, the adults would feed them one insect at a time and the food transfers were always mouth-to-mouth.

At fledging, young Flammulated Owls are light gray with darker gray horizontal barring on their head, back, breast, and belly. Their wing feathers are as the adult's; however, they are just a bit shorter. After the fledgling has been out of the nest for roughly two weeks, the venation of a few breast and belly feathers become dark, eventually forming dark vertical streaks. About the third week, ear tufts become more evident, the forehead feathers start to become vermiculated, and the vein of the contour feathers on the breast and belly becoming elongated and darker. By the fourth week, fledglings look adult-like.

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Field Notes

One-legged Downy Woodpecker Survives Three Years

A male Downy Woodpecker (Picoides pubescens) with only one leg has been coming to my yard for three years now. He is missing his left leg. He has visited the yard regularly during the winters of 2001-02, 2002-03, and 2003-04. Some days he visits the feeder three or four times. He eats mostly at the wire baskets, although I have seen him at other suet feeders. The pictures do not show the bird as well as they might; it is hard to catch him in the sunlight.

This year I have also noticed a female that is crippled. She has two legs, but does not use her left leg to hold herself on a feeder, just uses it for balance. One time she was just hanging by her right leg. She comes to the feeders less often than the male.

When either of them hangs from the basket, which I have almost upside down in order to discourage the starlings, both can do something like a pull-up with the one leg to get to the suet. I put just a small layer of suet in the bottom of the green plastic container, again to make it harder for the starlings. Then the woodpeckers do a pull-up to get to the suet because the plastic container's bottom is at the top of the upside-down basket.

Both Downys have been here all summer in 2004. They even brought two young to the feeders. I live in Jefferson County about two miles north of Chatfield State Park.

Ruth Schoening
6137 W. Ken Caryl Place
Littleton, CO 80128-9007

One-legged Downy Woodpecker feeding at an inverted suet feeder. Photos by Ruth Schoening.

News from the Field: the Summer 2004 report (June - July)

Lawrence S. Semo
9054 Dover Street
Westminster, CO 80021
lsemo@swca.com

Brandon K. Percival
835 Harmony Road
Pueblo West, CO 81007
flammowl@juno.com

Introduction

For those of you that did not care for the heat of some recent summers, the summer of 2004 was certainly welcome relief to large portions of Colorado, except portions of the southeast. Generally, the entire period was cool and moderately wet. Both June and July were below normal in average temperature and above normal in precipitation, a seemingly rare commodity from past years. The average temperature in June in Denver was 4 degrees below the average, while July was 2.5 degrees below normal. Only three days in June topped the 90 degree mark and 11 days in July reached that temperature. As compared to 2002, the worst of the past few years in terms of temperature and precipitation, the average June temperature was 3.5 degrees above normal and there were 17 days of 90 degrees or above. July of that year was 3 degrees above normal with 22 of those days reaching 90 degrees or above. Precipitation was also a blessing during the summer of 2004. June was three-quarters of an inch above average and July was 0.36 inches above the norm. All weather data was obtained through NOAA (2004).

Vagrancy, Nomadism, Vagabondism, Hoboism, and Wanderlust

While analyzing the reports from the summer season, one common theme became apparent; there were a lot of rare birds seen during the period. Vagrants provide excitement for the seasoned birder whose interest is in what one might think of as "birding at the margins", the pursuit of rarities and extralimital records. But besides the enjoyment of seeing a rare bird, vagrancy or range expansions serve as natural experiments for examining community assemblages and the nature and importance of dispersal in establishing the distribution of organisms.

During the summer period, no fewer than 18 species of birds on the Colorado

Bird Records Committee list of review species were reported in the state during the two month season, including returning Least Bitterns, Little Blue Herons, Glossy Ibis, a potential first state record Bar-tailed Godwit, Short-billed Dowitcher, the state's second state record Royal Tern, Arctic Tern, Inca Dove, Acorn Woodpecker, Yellow-bellied Sapsucker, a potential first record of Brown-crested Flycatcher, the second state record Thick-billed Kingbird, Scissor-tailed Flycatchers, Hepatic Tanagers, Scarlet Tanager, and Painted Bunting. Of special interest was that at least 24 species of warbler were noted during the period, many quite rare for the state. Besides our normal smattering of typical breeding warblers, others reported included Blue-winged, Nashville, Northern Parula, Chestnut-sided, Magnolia, Black-throated Blue, Pine, Kentucky, and Hooded. Many of these extralimital birds were of singing, territorial males, well outside their normal summering range. Hooded Warbler actually successfully bred in the state this past summer, in one of the most inexplicable locales, Archuleta county! Other territorial nomads included Carolina Wren and Yellow-throated Vireo.

The number and diversity of vagrants begs the question of why, in a season when most birds (shorebirds and some others aside) should be sedentary within the geographical range most suited for the species. Last season, the authors provided a brief overview of whether or not spring migrants in Colorado were arriving earlier overall than in the past. During that discussion, we casually provided some basic tenets regarding bird migration in regards to whether the earlier arrival hypothesis was cogent. But in trying to discern why so many vagrants may have showed up in Colorado this past summer, which cannot be fully answered, we should remember some other aspects of avian migration that cause birds to orientate in the wrong direction. Though the list of extralimital species in the state during this past summer stems from many geographic areas (arctic, southwestern, southern, and eastern), we will focus on the pattern of dispersal from east to west.

First off, the simple explanation is that birds have wings and have the power to travel extensive distances with relative ease compared to other taxa. For those mammalogists or ichthyologists in the crowd, the odds of a Fog Shrew (Sorex sonomae) from the Pacific Coast or an Eastern Tonguetied Minnow (Parexoglossum laurae) from the Lake Ontario drainage basin occurring in Colorado without human assistance would be virtually impossible. No doubt the shrew would starve to death within 500 yards of its departure from home.

But we need to also look at how migrational routes and breeding/wintering ranges developed in birds, especially Neotropical migrants. The major influence behind general Neotropical bird distribution was those giant chunks of

ice called glaciers. Cycles of Quaternary glaciation during the last 1.6 million years or so influenced the development of present routes of Neotropical avian migration. These migrants were most clearly affected because most of their breeding grounds were covered by various ice caps and because the ecology of North America has undergone several major changes during the period of deglaciation. Of the various biomes in North America, the modern prairie and eastern deciduous forest are the most aged, dating at roughly 10 thousand and 12 thousand years old, respectively. Both of these biomes actually existed during the last glacial formation. Eastern North American bird populations, and migration of those populations, was in a flux of track changes of habitat based on climatic variations and vegetation alterations from those climate changes. Therefore, breeding habitat of North American Neotropical migrants was influenced significantly by major shifts in both location and composition of plant communities relative to present conditions. This in turn affects the size of populations, their degree of isolation, and the residency times during which they may undergo differentiation. Long-term stability of geographic ranges is likely to be an important factor favoring differentiation among populations simply by allowing time for its development through genetic drift or local adaptation. As such, the modification of geographic ranges may create opportunities for gene flow or colonization. With increased habitat fragmentation, urbanization, and conversion of native habitats to other, more standardized, non-plastic habitat communities, some avian species may be forced to usurp the natal affinities they were hatched in.

This consigns us to that wonderful field of genetics, and this will be brief. Evolution and natural selection obviously play a major role in the population of a given species. Birds, as with all other organisms become adapted to their environment, because random, heritable mutations occur by chance, and some of these heritable variations allow some individuals and their offspring to survive and reproduce more successfully than others. So, by chance, if a pair of Hooded Warblers, per se, who have the genetic aspirations of colonizing a new area, an area by which they "believe" will allow their ever-pressured urge to propel their DNA onwards, happen to actually be successful in reproducing in a new area, they pass on that adaptability gene and the future of the species becomes much more stabile. With vagrant populations, however, the odds of successfully nesting in a biome non-standard from that which they were hatched, is generally quite low, despite the fact that individuals will continue to attempt such endeavors.

So as we try to unravel the potential incursions of vagrant species in the state and their pattern of occurrence during the breeding season, which

may or may not actually be happening to a significant level, we know that the original origin and rationale behind a given geographical range of an avian species and the genetic individualism within the species plays a major role in attempts to colonize new areas. We also know that continual changes in habitats across North America because of climate and adaptation have influenced the breeding ranges of species. But how do species expand to areas that they are seemingly geographically and genetically predestined not to utilize?

It has virtually been dogmatic that birds return to their general natal areas to breed. However, because of various weather influences or habitat alterations, some birds are incapable of returning to the area they were hatched to pass on their genetic code, despite the fact that direction and some clue for the cessation of migration (distance, time, latitude, or habitat) appear to be genetically encoded. As most vagrant warblers in Colorado have a spring migrational trajectory of southeast to north or northwest, it is believed that the occurrence of these birds in Colorado is a result of an overshoot of their breeding range, which, therefore, presages range expansion. Spring migration, in contrast to autumnal migration, generally moves along a broader front in order for birds to disperse into a wide geographic region, further increasing the potential for breeding colonization. Some have also surmised that a link between increased reproduction and vagrancy exists; that being that an increased number of extralimital records positively correlates with increasing source populations. Though this certainly seems to be the case with some species (i.e., Eurasian Collared-Dove, Glossy Ibis, etc.), we are unaware of any evidence that eastern warbler populations are increasing dramatically. Another hypothesis of why vagrants may show up distant from the expected migration route is that there may be unsuspected wintering or breeding grounds, though the genetically encoded migrational trajectory remains constant (i.e., maybe some warblers are actually wintering further west than we currently are aware of). Vagrants could also indicate climatic and environmental changes, such as periods of drought or extensive deforestation in their usual ranges, or in the case of the Great Plains, which historically was a formidable barrier of westward dispersal, the vesicles linking Rocky Mountains and eastern deciduous forest are increasing due to urbanizational plantings, which forms a conduit of increased passage of eastern birds westward. Some birds may simply have a genetic abnormality in their migrational inheritance. However, no-one knows why a proportion of the population of a species is apparently hatched with this 'defect' causing them to migrate in the 'wrong' direction. It has been suggested that this may have survival value to the species by establishing new nesting areas, but this would of course rely on sufficient numbers of individuals surviving to return to their

breeding grounds where they could pass on their genes to the next generation.

But some summer vagrants, namely passerines, may not actually attempt to breed or establish territories. A rationale for this may be that many passerines must coordinate their fall migration with a complete pre-basic molt, which competes energetically with migration. Thus, for extralimital birds that wind up in Colorado during the summer season, it may actually be beneficial at times to stay put through the molt period.

Obviously, even though amateur and professional ornithologists have been observing avian vagrants for a long time, our knowledge of why vagrancy occurs and how is still quite poor and it is important to continue to document records that can be used reliably for scientific studies of bird distribution and patterns of avian vagrancy.

Thanks to all the summer season reporters who made it possible to document avian distribution and migration in 2004!

Note 1: The reports contained herein are largely unchecked, and the authors do not vouch for their authenticity. Underlined species are those for which the Colorado Bird Records Committee requests documentation. The Colorado Field Ornithologists' web site (http://www.cfo-link.org) has a link to the rare bird Sight Record reporting form that can be submitted electronically; the same form is also printed on the inside cover of this journal's mailer.

Note 2: Commonly known locations are annotated as to county the first time each appears; county names are NOT included with subsequent records, except for locations that are situated within multiple counties where a described sighting for that location may require information on which county the observation occurred and those sites not well-known to the general birding community.

Abbreviations: A&R= Andrews and Righter, 1992 (see References); BBA= Kingery 1998 (see References); CBRC=Colorado Bird Records Committee; CG= Campground; et al.=and others (restricted to use for the finding group of a bird that was not seen subsequently); m.ob.=many observers (used for birds that were refound, either the same day or on subsequent days, by others); NG=National Grassland; NWR=National Wildlife Refuge; Res.=Reservoir; SP=State Park; SWA=State Wildlife Area.

Greater White-fronted Goose: An individual that appears to now be a permanent resident was present at Denver City Park, Denver, where seen on

4 June (NL).

Snow Goose: An injured bird was present throughout the summer at Pueblo City Park, Pueblo (m.ob.).

Common Goldeneye: Common Goldeneye are not known to nest in Colorado, thus the observations of two at Canon City, Fremont, on 26 June (SMs) and a male at Carbondale, Garfield, on 26 July (TMc) are very unusual.

Hooded Merganser: Non-breeding summer birds were reported from three locales during the season. Two were at Big Johnson Res., El Paso, between 16 June through the remainder of the period (m.ob.), two females were present at Grover, Weld, on 4 July (RD, MHu), and a female-plumaged bird was seen at Lake DeWeese near Westcliffe, Custer, on 9 July (MPe, BKP).

Common Merganser: Away from montane breeding grounds in the state, unusual was the female seen at Denver City Park on 4 June (NL).

Pacific Loon: Very rare in summer, one was reported from Jumbo Res., Sedgwick/Logan, on 17 June (HA).

Common Loon: Unusual non-breeding summer reports of Common Loon included a basic-plumaged bird present during the spring that lingered at Brush Hollow Res., Fremont, between 1 June and 15 July (RM), an alternate-plumaged bird at Lake Beckwith, Pueblo, on 16 June (DSi), a bird present at Big Johnson Res., between 30 June and 5 July (m.ob.), a bird in basic plumage at the same location between 1 and 31 July (m.ob.)., and a bird found at Jumbo Res. on 23 July (HA).

Horned Grebe: Unusual in summer, one was seen at Big Johnson Res. on 1 July (TL, MPe).

Eared Grebe: Interesting was the count of approximately 100 Eared Grebes at Big Johnson Res. present throughout the month of July (m.ob.). This species is not known to nest at that location and no evidence of breeding was observed.

Western Grebe: Western Grebes also staged at Big Johnson Res. during the summer where roughly 300 were present during the month of July (m.ob.).

Clark's Grebe: Observations of Clark's Grebes from non-nesting locales included singles at Parker Regional Park, Douglas, on 22 June (GW) and at

Trinidad Lake, Las Animas, on 24 June (JBy). A staging group of approximately 75 were counted at Big Johnson Res. during the month of July (m.ob.).

American White Pelican: A&R note that pelicans are abundant summer residents on the eastern plains of Colorado, though are rare in western valleys and mountain parks. Thus, the report of roughly 30 pelicans at Fruitgrowers Res., Delta, during the summer season seems noteworthy (m.ob.).

American Bittern: In summer 2003, two bitterns were observed throughout the period in the cattail marsh on the north side of Fruitgrowers Res. (m.ob.), suggesting that American Bitterns may actually be regular and breeding at that locale. The only other report for the species came from Beebe Draw, Weld, a more typical location, where one was sighted on 1 June (RH).

Least Bittern: One was heard calling at the Fort Lyon SWA marshes, Bent, on 29 June (MPe). This is the same location where two were present the summer before. Hopefully documentation will be submitted to the CBRC for the 2004 observation.

Great Egret: Unusual locations this species were detected in during the summer of 2004 included one in Teller on 8 June (PGo) and one at Hayden, Routt, on 19 June (FL). Other locations Great Egrets were reported from during the season included Cottonwood Hollow Natural Area, Larimer (DSm) and Canon City (SMs).

Snowy Egret: The high count for the season was the report of 40 at Timnath Res., Larimer, on 25 July (RHa).

Little Blue Heron: Two juvenile Little Blue Herons were reported from Timnath Res. between 25 and 29 July (RHa).

Cattle Egret: Cattle Egrets are rare in summer in the western valleys and eastern plains away from breeding areas. Interesting were the reports of one at Grand Junction, Mesa, on 1 June (LA) and singles at Canon City on 18 June and at Florence on 15 July (MPe, RM).

Green Heron: Continuing the trend of relatively high numbers in 2004, nine Green Herons were reported during the summer season. Four were reported throughout the season at Connected Lakes, Mesa (LA). Other reports were of single birds at Cottonwood Hollow Natural Area on 13 June 2(DSm), along the Poudre River in Fort Collins, Larimer, on 17 June (DAL), at Littleton, Douglas, between 21 and 28 June (DC), along the Arkansas River

east of Lamar, Prowers, between 30 June and 26 July (DAL), and at Cherry Creek SP, Arapahoe, between 20 and 29 July (BBr).

Black-crowned Night-Heron: A subadult was at Roaring Judy, Gunnison, throughout the period (RR); this species is not known to have nested in that county since 1978 (A&R).

Glossy Ibis: One was reported during the season, that of a bird present at Metro Lake in Colorado City, Pueblo, between 24 and 25 July (DSi, DJ).

White-faced Ibis: Two birds present in Pitkin on 3 July (TP) should represent the first record for that montane county.

Osprey: The Pueblo Res. population continues to try to grow, as evidenced by the pair that attempted to nest at Rock Canyon (MY).

Mississippi Kite: Out-of-range observations for this species included one at Norwood, San Miguel, where present between 19 June and 3 July (GS, KG, CDr, BW), one at Big Johnson Res. between 20 and 21 June (m.ob.), and one at Barr Lake SP, Adams, on 25 July (JS, KSr).

Bald Eagle: Odd for the time of year, an adult was seen at Jumbo Res., Logan/Sedgwick, on 23 July (HA). This species is not known to nest this far northeast along the South Platte drainage.

Swainson's Hawk: Schmidt and Plage observed a unique incident in Broomfield, where they reported an estimated 120-140 Swainson's Hawks foraging in a field on 9 June. This behavior is actually quite common at times with this species, especially with non-breeding migratory birds. During migration, these non-breeding Swainson's Hawks forage more heavily on insects than other members of the genus (e.g., Red-tailed Hawk). These migrating groups, when locating a recently plowed or mowed field, can gather in substantial numbers, as evidenced here, to forage on insects, especially grasshoppers. Still, it is always a spectacle to observe that magnitude of hawks standing in a single field at one time.

Peregrine Falcon: Early was the report of an adult at Marston Res., Denver, on 31 July (TJ).

Northern Bobwhite: Western observations of Bobwhite in the state are of interest. As an example, one was seen by Crisler in early July in Las Animas, near the New Mexico line at 7,300 feet in elevation and others were at Delta

and Grand Junction during the period (CDr, BW, LA). The CBRC considers these birds as game farm releases and not part of the wild and sustainable population in the state. The currently accepted range of the species in the state is along the lower Arkansas River westward into eastern Pueblo and along the South Platte River west to Morgan.

Sandhill Crane: Cranes are considered rare west of the Uncompahgre Plateau. Dexter and Wright reported birds near Nucla during the spring season. A pair of these birds remained through the summer season but apparently failed in their nesting attempt.

American Golden Plover: A bird in alternate plumage was present at Thurston Res., Prowers, between 29 and 31 July (DN). This observation is one of the earliest recorded in the state of a southbound bird.

Snowy Plover: Snowy Plovers are very rarely observed in northeastern Colorado. An astonishing four were present (and may have bred?) at Prewitt Res., Washington, from at least 10 July through the remainder of the period (NK, BSc, TF).
Semipalmated Plover: The first report of a southbound bird was from Prewitt Res., Washington, where one was seen on 10 July (NK).

Piping Plover: Encouraging for this rare species, Piping Plovers nested at the location of Colorado's first recorded nesting in 1949, that being Prewitt Res. The drawdown of that reservoir during the period apparently created optimal nesting substrates. An adult with one chick was seen at that locale between at least 10 and 25 July (NK, TL, CLW, m.ob.). Nelson reports a record 25 adults in the SE Colorado population; however, nine pairs produced only ten young due to several adverse environmental factors.

Black-necked Stilt: Post-breeding shorebirds began moving early during the period. Leukering reported two Black-necked Stilts at Bonny Res., Yuma, on 21 June, a location they do not breed. Eight were seen at Big Johnson Res., on 5 July (MPe, BM, AB), a location where the species also does not breed.

American Avocet: Early fall migrants were the 19 present at Bonny Res., on 21 July (TL).

Greater Yellowlegs: The first southbound bird was one seen at Beebe Draw, on 19 June (BR).

Lesser Yellowlegs: Late northbound migrants were the two seen at Fruit-

growers Res., on 2 June (CDr).

Solitary Sandpiper: The first fall migrant was one at Lower Latham, Weld, on 19 June (BR).

Willet: A pair exhibiting breeding behavior was observed at Juniper Hot Springs, Moffat, on 12 June (FL). Willets are sporadic breeders in northwestern Colorado.

Upland Sandpiper: The farthest west report was of one at the traditional Mountain Plover spot at the intersection of Weld County Road 51 and State Highway 14, where one was spotted on 2 July (BR).

Long-billed Curlew: Mall reported 21 near Rifle, Garfield, between 22 and 23 June and apparently breeding behavior was observed as well. According to the BBA, A&R, and Righter et al. (2004) no breeding records exist for this species in Garfield. The highest count of post-breeders was 30 seen at Prewitt Res. on 10 July (CLW, TL, et.al).

Bar-tailed Godwit: One was reported from Lake Henry, Crowley, on 16 July (PSS, CSm). If accepted by the CBRC, this would represent the first record of this species in Colorado.

Marbled Godwit: The last spring migrant was a bird at Beebe Draw on 8 June (RH). Early returning autumn birds were the 13 seen at Bonny Res. on 21 June (TL). The high count of fall migrants was 25 at Prewitt Res. on 25 July (TF, BSc).

Sanderling: The first autumnal migrant was seen near Severance, Weld, on 30 July (NK).

Semipalmated Sandpiper: Early for a returning fall bird, one was at Big Johnson Res., between 17 and 19 June (m.ob.). The high count for the period, which may be the highest ever for Colorado, was an estimated 200 at Prewitt Res. on 25 July (BSc, TF). A&R list the previous high count as 130.

White-rumped Sandpiper: The last spring migrant was a bird seen at Beebe Draw on 8 June (RH).

Baird's Sandpiper: Schmoker and Floyd estimated roughly 5000 Baird's Sandpipers at Prewitt Res. on 25 July.

Pectoral Sandpiper: The first fall migrants showed up at Thurston Res., on

21 July (DAL) and at Lake Meredith, Crowley, on the same date (MPe, BKP).

Stilt Sandpiper: A bird at Fruitgrowers Res., on 2 June, should represent the second ever June record for that species in western Colorado (CDr). The high count for the period was 80 observed at Prewitt Res. on 25 July (BSc, TF).

Short-billed Dowitcher: An alternate-plumaged bird was observed at Prewitt Res. on 25 July (BSc, TF).

Thayer's Gull: Very unusual was the report of a second-cycle bird at Cherry Creek SP on 3 June (JO). Thayer's Gull are virtually unheard of in summer even on the West Coast, the main wintering area for the species. If documented and accepted, this would represent the first summer observation of this arctic nesting species in the state.

Lesser Black-backed Gull: Lesser Black-backed Gulls are annual in fall, winter, and spring in Colorado. Summer records are much fewer, however. Unusual this past summer was a second-cycle bird seen at Prewitt Res. on 10 July (CLW, TL, m.ob.).

Caspian Tern: The good showing of Caspian Terns in spring 2004 carried into summer as well with no fewer than 10 birds reported across the state. Four birds were reported from Fruitgrowers Res. and Grand Junction, Mesa, during the first part of June, lingering until at least 23 June (LA, DWr). Two were at Cottonwood Hollow Natural Area, Larimer, on 6 June (RH). Two birds, which may have been the same seen at Cottonwood Hollow a month earlier, were at Long Pond, Larimer, between 18 and 21 July (RH). One was at Cherry Creek SP on 20 July (BBr). The last bird was at Timnath Res., Larimer, on 25 July (RHa).

Royal Tern: The vagrant highlight of the season was undoubtedly the second state record found by Peterson at Big Johnson Res. on 16 June. Many birders were able to see the bird through at least 20 June, though for some, the bird remained enigmatic.

Common Tern: Common Terns are considered casual summer visitors in the state. Noteworthy this past summer were reports of two birds at Fruitgrowers Res. between 1 and 20 June (CDr), three birds at Big Johnson Res. between 17 and 20 June (m.ob.), one at Pueblo Res., Pueblo, on 23 July (BKP), and another one at Prewitt Res. on 25 July (TF, BSc).

Arctic Tern: A bird in alternate plumage was found at Big Johnson Res., on

25 June (MPe) and what was most likely the same bird wandered southeast to Lake Cheraw, Otero, where seen between 30 June and 1 July (MPe, TL).

Least Tern: Away from the breeding range in southeastern Colorado, one was at Grand Junction on 1 June (LA) and another was at Jumbo Res., Sedgwick, on 11 June (HA). Nelson reports the SE Colorado population did not fare well this past summer, with only 10 young fledging from 42 nests - the lowest fledging rate since 1997.

Black Tern: Black Terns are casual in summer on the Western Slope. Arnold reported four at Mack, Mesa, on 25 July.

White-winged Dove: A total of 18 White-winged Doves were reported from the summer period in the following counties: Boulder, El Paso, Jefferson, Mesa, Prowers, and Pueblo. Breeding was confirmed in Jefferson by the Lopushansky's and Sperger, where a pair fledged two young in urban Littleton.

Inca Dove: This species retained a foothold at its traditional haunts in Rocky Ford, Otero, and Lamar. Four were present in Rocky Ford during the period (MPe, TL) and one was at Lamar (DAL).

Yellow-billed Cuckoo: Western populations of the Yellow-billed Cuckoo (Coccyzus americanus occidentalis) are believed by some to be a distinct population that varies genetically from cuckoos found in the eastern U.S., although there is debate whether subspecific designation is warranted for that geographical group. Though adequate historical data are lacking, this species is believed to have been fairly common along riparian cottonwood (Populus spp.) corridors throughout much of the West, however, the species has declined in response to habitat reduction and degradation. As such, the birds reported on the West Slope by Arnold and Robinsong in Hotchkiss, Delta, and Grand Junction during the period are of interest. Birds on the eastern side of the state were found in Baca, Douglas, Fremont, Las Animas, Prowers, and Pueblo.

Long-eared Owl: Long-eared Owls are very local nesters in the state and many years, none are reported during the summer season. A number of owls were reported during the breeding season this past summer, however. One was at the state line in Mesa throughout the period (m.ob.), three were at Black Canyon NP, Montrose, throughout the period (CDr, BW), seven were seen in various places in Rio Blanco between 9 and 11 July (LS), and another was reported by Floyd and Sochi from Boulder on 26 July.

Short-eared Owl: Interesting reports were the birds seen by Schutsky along the northeastern edge of Denver International Airport, Denver/Adams, on

21 July and one along Old Isabel Road, Pueblo, on 31 July (DSi).

Boreal Owl: Nesting Boreal Owls were confirmed during the period from Larimer (RD, MHu) and Mineral (fide JRa).

Common Poorwill: Zerbi found two birds on 27 June in Pitkin, which should represent the first county record for that species.

Black Swift: Interesting was the report of one at the Sambrito wetlands, Archuleta, on 1 July (PD). This location is at least 50 miles away from the closest known nesting area of this species.

Chimney Swift: There is only one specimen and a few sight records of this species from the Western Slope. Six were reported on 23 July from Delta, Delta (DWr), the location where the specimen record came from. Hopefully documentation will be submitted to the CBRC.

Black-chinned Hummingbird: Northernmost reports were two males seen at Waterton Canyon, Jefferson/Douglas, on 5 June (BBr, LAB) and three birds (probable nesting) at Cherry Creek SP, observed between 11 June and 29 July (BBr, m.ob.). A male and female were present in Lamar during the period and were believed to be nesting (JTh). If so, this would represent a significant extension eastward of the known breeding range of this species in the state.

Rufous Hummingbird: Early for fall was the bird seen in La Plata on 25 June (JBe).

Red-headed Woodpecker: Linfield reported one from 9,200 feet elevation in Lake on 10 July. There are very few montane records of this species in the state and this should represent the first county record of that species.

Acorn Woodpecker: One was reported from west of Gulnare, Las Animas, between 29 and 30 June (TL, MPe). Hopefully documentation will be submitted to the CBRC.

Yellow-bellied Sapsucker: Very unusual was the report of a male at Coller SWA, Mineral, on 2 July (JBe). There are no previous summer records of this species in Colorado and the presence of a summer bird in a high montane area is extremely significant.

Ladder-backed Woodpecker: Out of range to the northeast was the male seen at Flagler SWA, Kit Carson, on 11 June (MPe).

Least Flycatcher: Two were reported during the period. One, a late spring migrant, was at Crow Valley CG, Weld, on 2 June (LS). More interesting was the bird seen along the Poudre River, Larimer, on 18 July (DAL).

Black Phoebe: Birds were reported from the following counties during the period: Archuleta, Fremont, Mesa, Montrose, Pueblo, and San Miguel.

Eastern Phoebe: Out-of-range Eastern Phoebe observations included one east of Kersey, Weld, between 10 and 15 June (TL, CLW), one at Trinidad Lake, Las Animas, on 24 June (JBe), and one seen by Schutsky at Upper Beaver Meadows in Rocky Mountain NP, Larimer, on 25 June.

Ash-throated Flycatcher: Birds outside the breeding range were found at Doudy Draw, Boulder, on 23 June (JTa) and at Walden Ponds, Boulder, on 29 July (EZ).

Brown-crested Flycatcher: Nelson, yet again, spotted another potential first state-record, when he found a Brown-crested Flycatcher in Kiowa on 26 July. Because this record is from a single-observer without photographic or specimen evidence, it may only be added to the state's presumptive list.

Thick-billed Kingbird: Exciting was the discovery of a Thick-billed Kingbird at a residence near Parker, Douglas, on 3 July. The bird was well-photographed, though could not be relocated soon after its discovery. This will represent the second record of this species in Colorado. The previous record was of a bird seen in late October 1992 in Waterton Canyon, Jefferson.

Scissor-tailed Flycatcher: Six were reported during the season. The pair at the AT&T tower south of Lamar returned for the third straight year (DAL). The birds were successful at raising young last year, though we were not provided any information of whether they were successful in 2004. Other reports of the species included the returning male to the Woodmen and Black Forest Roads area in El Paso, the fourth year in a row, where seen on 17 June (DAL), a male found between Timpas and Rocky Ford, Otero, on 5 July (SO), a male north of Las Animas, Bent, on 8 July (DN), and a first-cycle bird south of Alamosa, Alamosa, on 28 July (JSt).

White-eyed Vireo: Only one was reported, that of a singing male along the Canon City Riverwalk, between 11 and 20 July (RM).

Yellow-throated Vireo: Only one was reported , that of a singing male present below Two Buttes Res., Baca, between 10 and 11 June (MA).

Red-eyed Vireo: A total of 16 birds were reported from across the state during the period. Nesting was confirmed at Castlewood Canyon SP, Douglas, where a juvenile was seen being fed by an adult between 4 and 10 July (KM, GW, LMo, EZ). Also interesting was the male present at Grand Junction between 20 June and 10 August (LA). Other reports for the period came from the following counties: Baca, Boulder, Fremont, Jefferson, Las Animas, Lincoln, Pueblo, and Weld.

Blue Jay: Blue Jays are rare permanent residents on the West Slope. This past summer, reports of two came from that locale. One was seen by Dahl on 18 and 19 June in Glenwood Springs, Garfield, and another was present in Grand Junction on 19 July (LA).

Chihuahuan Raven: West of its normal range, one was seen on 29 June along Highway 67 in Custer, just south of the Fremont line (BKP).

Purple Martin: A potentially new nesting colony was found by Beatty in the Jersey Jim Flats area in Montezuma, where 12 were seen on 30 July.

Bushtit: North and east of usual, Bushtits nested in the Denver Tech Center, Arapahoe, where 10 were observed (with young juveniles) by Blakeslee on 19 July.

Red-breasted Nuthatch: Late for the plains, one was still present at Crow Valley CG on 13 June (TF). In what would become a large fall push eastward, birds began showing up on the plains in July where one was seen at Lake Henry on 21 July (BKP, MPE, PSS, CSm) and one was at Ovid, Sedgwick, on 28 July (HA).

Pygmy Nuthatch: Arnold reported one in Grand Junction throughout the period. This species typically is not found outside its native pine habitat during the summer period.

Carolina Wren: One was reported during the summer, that being of a singing wren present at Lake Beckwith in Colorado City, on 16 July (DSi, DJ).

Ruby-crowned Kinglet: Late for the plains was a singing male that frequented planted Blue Spruce in Broomfield, where observed on 5 June (LS).

Veery: On the extreme southern end of its breeding range in Colorado, one was found in a montane area at Huerfano SWA, Huerfano, on 26 June (MPe).

Swainson's Thrush: On the tail end of spring migration, Beason estimated 25 at Crow Valley CG on 2 June.

Curve-billed Thrasher: Very unusual was the report from the Didier's of one at Grand Junction on 9 June. There are no previous West Slope records of this species and it is hoped that documentation of this observation will be submitted to the CBRC.

Blue-winged Warbler: One was present at Gregory Canyon, Boulder, between 5 and 20 June (JTa, m.ob.).

Nashville Warbler: Komar and Wild reported a male along County Road 103 in Larimer, where present between 5 and 9 June.

Northern Parula: A singing male was at Mineral Palace Park, Pueblo, between 10 and 23 June (VAT).

Chestnut-sided Warbler: Two were present during the period, both females. One was surprisingly at Lands End on the Grand Mesa, Mesa, on 15 June (DWr) and the other was along the South Mesa Trail in Boulder on 23 June (TF). The Mesa bird is of special interest considering its proximity to Utah. There are only seven accepted records of the species in that state. There are only three previous summer records from the West Slope of Colorado.

Magnolia Warbler: Late was the spring migrant male observed at Crow Valley CG on 2 June (JBn).

Black-throated Blue Warbler: A male was spotted at in Gregory Canyon on 14 June (JTa).

Grace's Warbler: Peterson found a singing male at Babcock Hole near Wetmore, Custer, on 27 June. Grace's Warblers are only sporadically seen on the lower Front Range, though the BBA did record a possible nesting of that species in Custer.

Pine Warbler: Quite unusual for the season was the male found at Fairmount Cemetery in Lamar on 24 July (DAL).

American Redstart: Besides the smattering of breeding birds along portions of the Front Range, the only other report was of a late spring migrant male noted from Crow Valley CG on 2 June (JBn, LS).

Ovenbird: A late migrant was seen at Crow Valley CG on 2 June (LS). More interesting was the bird seen by Rea on 3 June along East Rifle Creek in Garfield.

Kentucky Warbler: The male found on 25 May at Rock Canyon, Pueblo, lingered until at least 12 June (BKP, m.ob.).

Hooded Warbler: A pair was at Mesa Trail in Boulder, where present between at least 11 and 20 June (CLW, m.ob.). Further to the southwest, a female was at Hooper, Alamosa, between 17 and 18 June (JMa, KM). Extraordinary was the successful nesting of this species in the southwestern portion of the state where Andrews found a female feeding a juvenile at Lower Piedra Campground in Archuleta. Those birds continued to be seen until at least 3 August (m.ob.).

Hepatic Tanager: A male of the returning birds to Pryor, Huerfano, was seen at that location on 6 June (LE). One (sex not reported) was also seen at Chimney Rock in Archuleta on 25 June (VS). Hopefully documentation will be provided to the CBRC.

Scarlet Tanager: A surprising three were reported in Boulder during the period, all males, which makes one wonder if they were the same individual. The first report was in Louisville, on 2 June, when seen by Hansley. On 16 June, the Plooster's discovered one in their yard in Boulder. The last report was of a bird at Doudy Draw, where seen on 26 June (LK, EZ).

Cassin's Sparrow: Leukering spotted one at a field at 78th and Lookout in Boulder on 10 June. If documented and accepted by the CBRC, this would represent the first record of this species in Boulder.

Lark Bunting: Lark Buntings made a push westward this past summer, most noticeable by the observations of several in Mesa and Pitkin during the period (LA, KK). Not so far west, but west of its usual range in the state, a pair was in Florence, Fremont, where seen on 10 June (MPe) and two birds were at Boulder Res., Boulder, on 25 July (CLW).

Dark-eyed Junco: Very late was the "slate-colored" junco seen at Flagler SWA, Kit Carson, on 11 June (MPe, LE).

McCown's Longspur: South and west of its typical breeding range in the state, McCown's were found by Maynard, Bookman, and others breeding at Falcon, El Paso, where up to 20 were seen during the period. A couple of birds were also seen at nearby Big Johnson Res. during the period (BKP, et. al).

Rose-breasted Grosbeak: Summer reports of Rose-breasted Grosbeak in Colorado usually are of single males, which was evidenced again this year with reports of seven males from Boulder, Douglas, El Paso, Larimer, and Teller. There is an historic account of a pair nesting in Longmont in 1894 and in 1925, adults were noted bringing young to a feeder in Loveland. In 1996, an adult male was observed feeding fledglings in Glenwood Springs, though no adult female was observed. Obviously this species is a very rare nester in the state. This past summer, however, Pantle found adults with two recently fledged young between 12 and 14 July along the Canon City Riverwalk.

Lazuli Bunting: Rowe discovered a bird at 9,920 feet in elevation in Gunnison during the period, a location quite high for this species.

Painted Bunting: A singing male was noted at Cottonwood Canyon, Baca/Las Animas, between 8 and 9 June (MA). This location has almost annually produced sightings of this species the past few years.

Dickcissel: West of their typical Colorado breeding range, Dickcissels were observed during the period in Fremont (RM, m.ob.) and Custer (MPe, m.ob.).

Bobolink: Bobolinks were noted during the period from typical locales such as Carpenter Ranch in Routt and the Canon City area. Other locations this species was reported from include south of Westcliffe, where up to four were present on 3 June (VAT), north of Hillside, Fremont, near the Fremont/Custer line, where one was seen on the same date (VAT), and at LaVeta, Huerfano, where a male was seen on 29 June (TL).

Baltimore Oriole: Unusual western observations of this species included one near Ault, Weld, on 27 June (DAL) and a male at Lake Hasty CG, Bent, between 30 June and 4 July (DN, m.ob.).

White-winged Crossbill: Two were observed during the period in the San Juans of Mineral (CLW, BSc) and five to ten were noted from Rocky Mountain NP, Larimer, on 5 July (RD, MHu).

Lesser Goldfinch: The most unusual locations this species was noted were of the male seen along a rural road in northwestern Lincoln on 11 June (MPe, LE) and a pair at Fairmount Cemetery in Lamar, where seen on 30 June (DAL).

Cited Observers

Mymm Ackley (MA), Robert Andrews, Henry Armknecht (HA), Larry Arnold (LA), Jason Beason (JBn), James Beatty (JBy), Chris Blakeslee, Kramer Bookman, Bob Brown (BBr), Lea Ann Brown (LAB), Alan Burns (AB), Deb Carstensen (DC), Tim Crisler, Art Dahl, Peter Derven (PD), Coen Dexter (CDr), Paul and Fran Didier, Robert Dobbs (RD), Lisa Edwards (LE), Ted Floyd (TF), Patrick Gould (PGo), Kathy Graff (KG), Roy Halpin (RHa), Paula Hansley, Rachel Hopper (RH), Meribeth Huizinga (MHu), Dave Johnson (DJ), Tina Jones (TJ), Kathy Kemper (KK), Loch Kilpatrick (LK), Nick Komar (NK), David Leatherman (DAL), Tony Leukering (TL), Norm Lewis (NL), RogerLinfield, Dolores and Chuck Lopushansky, Forrest Luke (FL), Jake Mall, Josiah Maleug (JMa), Kalen Malueg (KM), Bill Maynard (BM), Tom McConnell (TMc), Karen Metz (KMe), Rich Miller (RM), Larry Modesitt (LMo), SeEtta Moss (SMs), Duane Nelson (DN), Jerry Oldenettel (JO), Steve Olson (SOl), Stan Oswald (SOs), David Pantle (DP), Todd Patrick (TP), Mark Peterson (MPe), Brandon K. Percival (BKP), Myron and Suzi Plooster, John Rawinski (JRa), Scott Rea, Robert Righter (RR), Bill Rowe (BR), Cliff Smith (CSm), Pearle Sandstrom-Smith (PSS), Larry Semo (LS), Bill Schmoker (BSc), Jim Schmoker (JS), Karen Schmoker (KSr), Bob Schutsky, Dave Silverman (DSi), Virginia Simmons (VS), Dixie Smith (DSm), Kei Sochi, Ray Sperger, George Steele (GS), John Stump (JSt),Joyce Takamine (JTa), Janeal Thompson (JTh), Van A. Truan (VAT), Glenn Walbek (GW), Cole Wild (CWi), Chris Wood (CLW), Brenda Wright (BW), Dave Wright (DWr), Mark Yaeger (MY), Vic Zerbi (VZ), Eric Zorawowicz (EZ).

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Corrigenda

A few of the sightings we provided in the Spring 2004 issue of NFTF were in error and we hereby correct those mistakes:

•The finder of the potential first record of American White Pelican for Montrose was Connie Kogler;
•The finders of the Caspian Terns at Fruitgrowers Res. were Walbek et al., not CLW and TL as reported;
•The Wood Thrush at Chico Basin Ranch on 19 May was found by Nancy Gobris, not Mark Peterson;
•The male Black-throated Blue Warbler seen at CVCG on 15 May was present until at least 17 May (TL);
•We inadvertently omitted the sighting of three Pine Warblers seen during the Spring 2004 season. Those birds included a male present at Pueblo City Park between 20 and 26 April (MA, m.ob.), two birds at Varsity Pond in Boulder between 15 and 16 May (Debbie & Steve Kennedy, David Waltman), and a male at Rye, Pueblo, on 22 May (DSi).