Vol. 43 No. 1 January 2009

Colorado Birds

The Colorado Field Ornithologists' Quarterly

Lamar's Snow Goose Festival

Gunnison Sage-Grouse, Past and Present

A Fifteen-Year Bird Census at Chatfield State Park

Colorado Field Ornithologists
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Pygmy Nuthatch, Castle Rock, Douglas County, 8 March 2008. *Photo by Glenn Walbek*

The Laws of Birding

Jim Beatty

Do you ever feel tempted to bend the rules of good birding? Suppose a bird is on private land and the distance is too great to make a positive ID. What would it take for you to cross the line? Is there a certain level of rarity that would do it? What if it's a first state record? What if you need a good photograph to cinch the ID for the records committee? Would you play that tape one more time to bring the bird close enough for a really great photo?

We love to bird. Seeing new and unusual birds—or birds doing unique things—is what birding is all about for many of us. That's what we get a thrill from witnessing. And that can be a problem. Sometimes we may be tempted to make marginal decisions when we are birding. And some of our decisions may not be merely morally or ethically questionable; they may even be illegal.

A willful and flagrant violation of the Endangered Species Act may result in a fine of up to $50,000 and one year in prison. A violation may include acts that might "harass, harm, pursue, hunt, shoot, wound, kill, trap, capture, or attempt to engage in any such conduct" (Sheppard et al. 1998). In the eyes of the Forest Service, "harass" and "harm" are broad terms which include playing a taped call of any protected bird and/or otherwise "pursuing" a protected bird for any unauthorized purpose.

Venturing onto private property without permission in order to see an uncommon species, risking an encounter with an unhappy landowner, is another behavior that we should avoid. While it can be inconvenient or even difficult to contact the landowner, it's better not to risk damaging community relations by doing something thoughtless in the heat of the moment.

Plains Sharp-tailed Grouse	state endangered
Lesser Prairie-Chicken	state threatened
Bald Eagle	state threatened
Whooping Crane	federal and state endangered
Piping Plover	federal and state threatened
Least Tern	federal and state endangered
Burrowing Owl	state threatened
Mexican Spotted Owl	federal and state threatened
Southwestern Willow Flycatcher	federal and state endangered

Table 1. Threatened and Endangered bird species in Colorado (CDOW 2007).

The American Birding Association has done a masterful job of defining ethical and legal birding in its Code of Birding Ethics and Principles of

Birding Ethics. The Principles state, "Everyone who enjoys birding must always respect wildlife, its environment, and the rights of others. In any conflict of interests between birds and birders, the welfare of birds and their environment comes first" (ABA 2005). While the principles are straightforward, their application is explained in more detail in the ABA Code itself. We would like all CFO members to be familiar with this code, which can be found in its entirety on the internet at http://www.americanbirding.org/abaethics.htm. The major topics covered in the code are

In the eyes of the Forest Service, "harass" and "harm" are broad terms which include playing a taped call of any protected bird.

- the welfare of birds and their environment;
- respect for the law and the rights of others;
- safety of feeders, nest structures, and other artificial bird environments;
- special care during group birding, whether organized or impromptu.

"Group birding" refers, among other things, to field trips like those organized by CFO. The ABA Code provides guidelines for both group members and group leaders. Group members should respect the rights of others, share their knowledge and experience, and help beginning birders. They should also, when practical and prudent, try to stop inappropriate behavior by others. Leaders have the added responsibilities of being role models for others in both words and actions, minimizing group impacts, ensuring that everyone knows good birding ethics, and knowing the special rules and practices of the places visited—e.g., staying on the path or refraining from using audio playback if local regulations prohibit it.

CFO has done much to improve field birding for the enjoyment of Colorado birders: COBirds, *Colorado Birds*, annual conventions around the state, County Birding Website descriptions of good locations, Colorado Rare Birds Records Committee review of new and unusual sightings with approved state and county checklists, and organized field trips to "hot spots." For the organization's sake, and for the birds', we ask that all of you be familiar with and practice safe, ethical, and legal birding.

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Jim Beatty, 165 Twelve Point Buck Trail, Durango, CO 81301, jdbeatty@bresnan.net

CFO BOARD MINUTES

8 November 2008
Inn at the Rio Grande
Alamosa, Colorado

Allison Hilf, CFO Secretary

The regular quarterly meeting was held at 11:00 a.m.. Board members present were President, Bill Schmoker; Secretary, Allison Hilf; Treasurer, Maggie Boswell; and directors Bill Kaempfer, Connie Kogler, Larry Modesitt, Mark Peterson, and Brad Steger. Vice President Jim Beatty and directors Rachel Hopper, Nathan Pieplow, and Larry Semo sent their regrets.

President's Report

Bill S. presented Connie K. with her Landowner Appreciation plaque. However, it is being returned to the engraver because of a typographical error.

Vice-President Jim B. sent Bill S. and Nathan P. a draft of the Endangered Species Act/birding ethics article for Colorado Birds. Allison is working on the field trip leader guidelines.

Secretary's Report

The minutes of the 13 September 2008 meeting were approved with one modification regarding the Youth Scholarship application deadline, which should have been recorded as 31 March.

A discussion was held regarding several proposed changes to the bylaws. Bill K. suggested, and the Board agreed, that sections of the bylaws be presented for discussion via email.

A discussion was held regarding the status of CFO's contractual obligations. Board members should send

copies of all contracts to the Secretary.

A discussion was held regarding agenda preparation. Board members were encouraged to get all agenda items to Allison prior to each meeting.

Treasurer's Report

CFO's 3rd Quarter Financial Statements were sent to Board members via e-mail on 3 October 2008.

An update was given regarding CFO's insurance options. Maggie B. will advise the Board via e-mail when she receives final quotes from the agents, but it looks like insurance costs will increase significantly. Allison distributed a summary of the Colorado Volunteer Immunity Act to attendees.

A discussion was held regarding the need to use one P.O. Box for all IRS correspondence. Connie K. will coordinate with Davis to close the Lyons P.O. Box.

The Mr. Bill Photo Quiz prize was discussed. A motion was passed to change the prize award as of 1 January 2009 such that the winner receives an annual membership, or the equivalent in CFO merchandise.

A discussion was held regarding the 2009 budget. Board members were encouraged to submit any special requests to Maggie B. The 2009 budget proposal will be distributed and discussed via e-mail.

Committee Reports

A. CBRC—Chair Larry Semo was not present. The website is running well.

B. Awards—Brad Steger. A discussion was held regarding possible future award recipients. Allison will go through the Secretary's files and try to create a list of previous award recipients. The list will also be added to the CFO website.

C. Nominating Committee—Larry Modesitt. Continued discussion was held about possible candidates. Three positions will need to be filled. Allison will go through the Secretary's files and distribute a list of people who have served on the Board previously.

D. Field Trips—Chair Jim Beatty was not present.

E. Project Fund/Youth Scholarship—Bill Kaempfer. The Project Fund application deadline is 1 December. The Youth Scholarship deadline is 31 March. The 2009 budget request for the Project Fund/Youth Scholarship was discussed.

F. Membership—Connie Kogler. A discussion was held regarding increasing membership, including through publicity. The specific role of the Membership chair was discussed and it was agreed that Connie would work more closely with Davis so that she could keep records of the membership database and implement more of her ideas, including communicating with new members.

G. COBirds—Mark Peterson. COBirds is running very smoothly but for some technical difficulties the past few days. A discussion was held regarding political advocacy. The Board thought that Mark handled the particular situation well and that for the time being no further action

was necessary. The move from Lyris to Google should happen before the end of the year.

H. CFO Website—Rachel Hopper was not present.

I. Colorado Birds—Nathan Pieplow was not present. Bill S. reported that Nathan is looking into the possibility of having the printer take care of the mailing.

J. 2009 Convention—22-24 May in Alamosa:

- The convention fee for non-members will be raised to $80; members ($60) and late fees ($10) will remain the same as last year.
- Ted Floyd has agreed to be the keynote speaker.
- Bill S. has contracts from the Inn at the Rio Grande; a block of 50 rooms is reserved for the conference.
- Mark P. will coordinate field trips.
- Allison H. will coordinate bag lunches.
- Bill S. spoke with Nathan re: convention logo. Nathan is speaking with Scott Rashid. Bill S. has a backup plan if details with Scott do not work out.
- An advertisement will be placed in Winging It and we will look into posting the convention on several bordering states' birding listservs.
- Allison will contact possible vendors and seek silent auction items.
- Brad will coordinate a pre-Convention Big Day contest.
- Bill S. is working with the hotel re: breakfast; the possibility of having a vendor sell breakfast burritos outside of the hotel was also discussed.
- The Colorado Welcome Center at Alamosa is willing to provide info packets to distribute to attendees. Connie K. will follow up with them.

New Business

The next meeting was set for 11 a.m. on either 31 January or 7 February, depending on the availability of Bill K.'s meeting location in Boulder.

The meeting was adjourned at 3:40 p.m.

ACROSS THE BOARD

Mark Peterson, Conventions Chair

Bill Schmoker

Even though Mark was born in Wyoming, he considers himself a native Coloradan because his family moved to Colorado Springs when he was just 6 months old. After living in Colorado Springs for approximately two years they moved again, landing in the San Luis Valley southwest of Alamosa, in the community of Waverly.

Mark Peterson on Loveland Pass with an obliging White-tailed Ptarmigan

Lots of great birds in the SLV could get a birder started, especially the cranes. Mark & family went to the Crane Festival every year while living there, but although the cranes are an inspiration to all who experience them, the bird that will always be top of Mark's list of must-sees is the Yellow-headed Blackbird. Mark doesn't give the blackbird all of the credit, though. His parents and grandparents both have fed and been very interested in birds as long as he can remember and their influence rubbed off on Mark.

Mark moved again after only a few years in the San Luis Valley. After a very brief stint in La Junta he made it to Florence. Most of his "bird watching" was in the backyard and on walks with his grandmother. Then, when Mark was 11, he was introduced to Rosie Watts. It was not long thereafter that Mark was out birding with both Rosie and her husband Jim. He credits the two for really getting him into birding.

After graduating from high school Mark moved to Arizona to go to college, then to the San Francisco Bay Area of California. Work kept him very busy and he did not bird much for the first two years living on the West Coast. Fortunately, Jim and Rosie came to his rescue. They came out to do a pelagic trip out of Monterey with Peter and Lisa Gaede. Mark's girlfriend (and future wife) was also out visiting, so she got to join in on the fun. The birds were great, the highlight being a Wedge-tailed Shearwater. Mark enjoyed the trip so much that he went out again that same month; he became a regular on pelagic trips and enjoyed all of them, even when he was at the back of the boat "helping" the chummers.

In 2002 Mark moved back to Colorado, and within a year was asked to join the CFO board. He remarks that he has thoroughly enjoyed his time as Director

of Conventions. Mark has led field trips for CFO and currently runs COBirds. He has also helped with both the Colorado Bird Records Committee and the Colorado County Birding websites over the years, donating countless hours of his time and programming expertise to improve them. Mark plans to continue to help CFO when and where he can beyond his service on the board.

Being a part of CFO has enabled Mark to meet many of you at the conventions and out in the field. He cannot say enough good things about the birding community here in Colorado, and he says it has been great to be back in Colorado and back among such a great group of people.

By the same token, birders in the state have benefited enormously from Mark's expertise with finding and identifying birds. For everything Mark has done "up front" (e.g., moderating COBirds, coordinating conventions, running field trips) and for all he does behind the scenes, I hope you will join me in thanking him for his service and contributions to CFO. Make plans to attend the annual convention in Alamosa 22-25 May and you'll have the chance to thank him in person!

Bill Schmoker, 3381 Larkspur Drive, Longmont, CO, bill.schmoker@gmail.com

CFO FIELD TRIPS

Fall 2008: Fox Ranch and Kit Carson County Ranches

Jim Beatty

On 4 and 5 October 2008, Ted Floyd and Nathan Pieplow led two very successful consecutive one-day field trips to ranches in eastern Colorado. Most of the target species were seen well, but some gave only fleeting glimpses, and not everyone saw every bird. Highlights included at least 16 species of *Emberizidae*, including three, possibly four, *Ammodramus* sparrows. We recorded over eighty species for the two days.

The first stop was the Nature Conservancy's Fox Ranch along the Arikaree River in Yuma County (open only with advance written permission), where many participants arrived Friday evening to

camp on the ranch grounds. Ted Floyd and the group checked out the nighttime migrants, but a south wind resulted in just a few calls—Savannah Sparrow, Orange-crowned Warbler, and Baird's Sandpiper—although the resident Eastern Screech-Owls were present. Dawn brought Wild Turkeys literally dropping from their roosts in the tall cottonwoods, and a few Wood Ducks flew by as the campers packed away their gear. Our gracious hosts were William Burnidge, TNC's Northeast Colorado Project Director, and Nathan Andrews, the Fox Ranch resident manager. Our primary target birds were *Ammodramus* sparrows, Sprague's Pipit, and Sedge Wren.

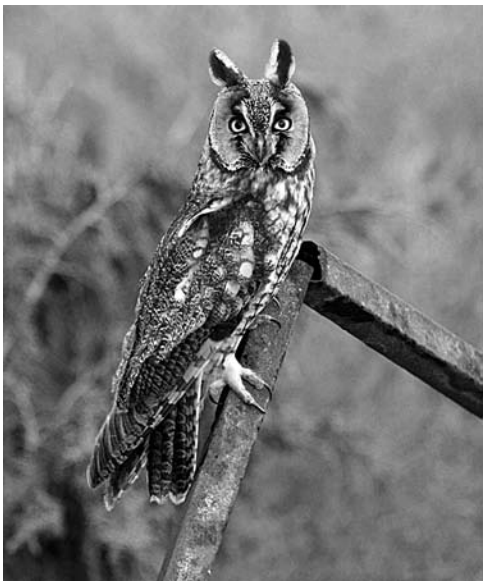
Klassen Ranch field trip participants, Kit Carson County, 5 October 2008. Photo by Jim Beatty

The group spread out through the tall grass near the river and worked hard to identify the quickly fleeing sparrows as they flushed, flew low, and dropped back into the waist-high vegetation. One looked quite good for a LeConte's Sparrow, but it couldn't be coaxed back into view for everyone to see. A second possible LeConte's was better seen, but only by a few. Later, a Sedge Wren was seen well, but briefly, by several participants in a swampy strip with many cattails (and many Marsh Wrens). A few participants had brief looks at a possible Baird's Sparrow as it flew away showing its rounded tail with pale outer rectrices, but it couldn't be found again. We did find Lincoln's, Chipping, Grasshopper, and Clay-colored Sparrows. Warblers included Orange-crowned, Wilson's, Yellow-rumped of both varieties, and Common Yellowthroat. Nice finds were Eastern Phoebe, Eastern Bluebird, and a very late *Empidonax* flycatcher that looked too yellow to be a Cordilleran—maybe a Yellow-bellied or Pacific-slope at this late date? We couldn't be sure.

As we moved to higher ground, a possible Eastern Meadowlark

looked good but wouldn't sing, and its call notes were not definitive. Several Sprague's Pipits flushed with their distinctive "squeet" call, attenuated body shape, and flight pattern as they flew high and a hundred yards or so away before dropping back to earth. After lunch, an impromptu briefing by William, who detailed the TNC's mission for this eight-mile stretch along the Arikaree, ended the "official" Fox Ranch trip, but several stayed and were rewarded with White-throated and Harris's Sparrows.

The rest of the group joined Andrew Spencer and Cole Wild for an afternoon at nearby Bonny Reservoir searching the marshes on the western end for more *Ammodramus* sparrows. Andrew and Cole had spent the previous day there and wanted to return to look for a Henslow's Sparrow they had seen. Some of us were rewarded beyond our wildest dreams when the Henslow's appeared briefly for two participants to see well and then spent the next few hours foraging furtively at the edge of the cattails in heavy vegetation, where every half hour or so another person would catch a quick but identifiable look at this unexpected prize. The reservoir produced a good variety of shorebirds, waders, and ducks, including Sandhill Cranes and both American Golden-Plovers and Black-bellied Plovers for a nice comparison of size, structure, and basic plumage differences.

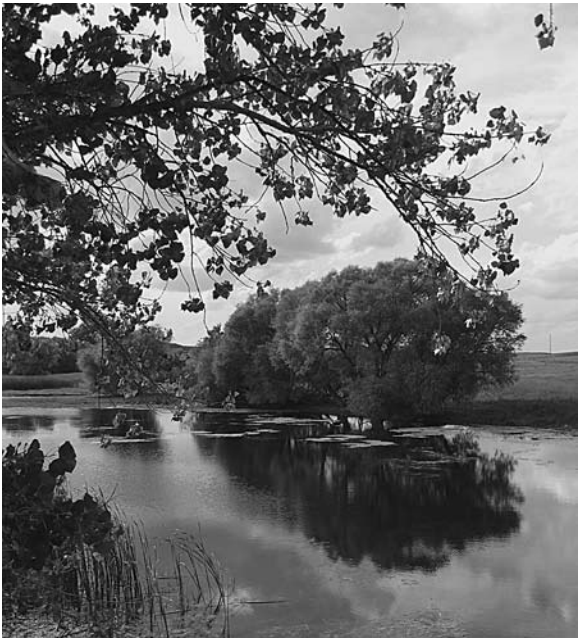


Long-eared Owl, Klassen Ranch, Kit Carson County, 5 October 2008. Photo by Jim Beatty

Sunday kicked off the second field trip, led by Nathan Pieplow, to two ranches in the northern and western parts of Kit Carson County. At the Klassen Ranch we were off to a good start with a Long-eared Owl lurking in an evergreen windbreak. While we were unable to locate Burrowing Owls that had occupied a nearby field during the summer, we did hear possible Sprague's Pipits calling overhead, and an obliging flock of Chestnut-collared Longspurs landed nearby. Raptors included Sharp-shinned Hawk, Northern Harrier, and Prairie Falcon. We visited several woodlots on the ranch and totaled 33 species, but a strong morning wind and overcast

weather made birding difficult and slower than expected.

We then moved west to another Playa Birding Trail ranch—the Crystal Springs Ranch, owned by the Lingers, which is located immediately north of the Flagler SWA. The weather improved and we had a great afternoon birding this wonderful property with nice woodlots, two small-to-medium sized ponds edged with large cottonwoods, and a medium-sized cattail marsh, plus grasslands that we didn't have time to explore. Ducks included Wood Duck and Blue-winged and Green-winged Teal. The marshes yielded Sora and Virginia Rail. The woodlot near the Lingers' house produced Field Sparrow, Blue Jay, Brown Thrasher, and Great Horned Owl, but we missed the Barn Owls that the rancher sometimes sees there. A leisurely walk around the main pond was a delight. First an Eastern Phoebe appeared, followed by an unexpected and errant Gray Flycatcher, and then a late Gray Catbird popped into view. Swarming Painted Lady butterflies on yellow flowering shrubs were an added bonus. In our too-short visit late in this fall passerine migration period we tallied 35 species. The Crystal Springs Ranch could be a very productive spring migrant trap. We made a mental note to schedule a field trip here next spring—any volunteers to lead it?



Crystal Springs Ranch, Kit Carson County, 5 October 2008. Photo by Alison Kondler

Our special thanks to Ted and Nathan for organizing and leading these trips.

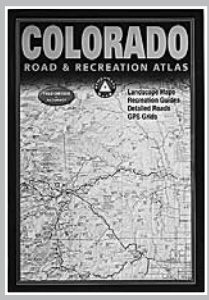
Jim Beatty, 165 Twelve Point Buck Trail, Durango, CO 81301, jdbeatty@bresnan.net

Three Colorado Road Atlases

Roger Linfield

Birders travel to many out-of-the way places, and a good map or atlas is often essential to finding a desired destination. I know of three atlases that cover the entire state of Colorado: Delorme's *Colorado Atlas & Gazetteer* (2009), Benchmark Maps' *Colorado Road & Recreation Atlas* (2007), and Mapsco's *The Roads of Colorado* (2007), which replaces a 1996 edition that was published by Shearer. The features of these four atlases (counting the two very different editions of *The Roads of Colorado*) are summarized in Table 1.

All three atlases have a convenient index: a map of the entire state on the back cover, with the areas covered by each page clearly labeled. But map scale varies from atlas to atlas. *The Roads of Colorado* has 1:160,000 maps for the entire state, providing the most detailed coverage of the three. The Delorme atlas has 1:160,000 maps for the Front Range and farther west, but only 1:320,000 maps (showing much less detail) for the eastern plains. This is a significant drawback for many birders. The Benchmark atlas has 1:200,000 maps for the entire state, a somewhat less favorable scale than that of *The Roads of Colorado*. On the Benchmark atlas and the Delorme atlas, the scale is shown on every page. In *The Roads of Colorado* (2007 edition), the scale is shown only on the inside front cover, which is inconvenient. The old 1996 edition had the scale on every page.



Colorado Road & Recreation Atlas

Benchmark Maps, 2007
(First Edition)
144 pages, 15×10.5, paperback
ISBN: 978-0929591940

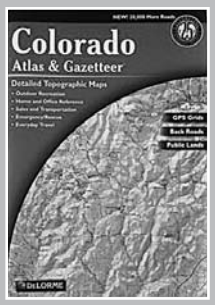
The Delorme atlas and *The Roads of Colorado* have elevation contours on each map. However, the contours on the Delorme atlas are faint and difficult to distinguish. The Benchmark atlas does not have contours, but the maps feature shading and a color palette that give a qualitative indication of the topography. A hiker might prefer the greater precision of a topo map, but the visual presentation of the Benchmark atlas seems more useful for most birders.

A key concern for birders is the accuracy of an atlas. I have used the Benchmark atlas extensively in most counties of the state, and have never found a significant error. The makers of this atlas clearly took pride in their work and spent extensive time

in the field. I have much less experience with the Delorme atlas, but after looking up a number of familiar locations in the atlas, I was unable to find any errors. That brings us to *The Roads of Colorado*. An employee at a map store told me that Mapsco purchased the rights to the name *The Roads of Colorado* from Shearer, publisher of the original (1996) edition (now out of print). The new edition is designed to look very much like the old one, but with the words "Updated & Improved" displayed prominently on the cover. Unfortunately, the new edition is greatly inferior to the old one. I used the 1996 edition as my sole atlas during several years of birding across the state, and found it to be invaluable. In contrast, I would never trust the new edition.

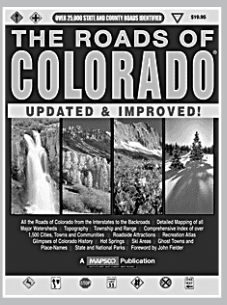
The most blatant error that I have found in the Mapsco version occurs in rural Crowley County. Here, east-west roads are designated on road signs with letters (e.g., BB Rd for the access road to Box Springs Lake). This is shown correctly in the 1996 Shearer edition. The 2007 edition uses numbers for east-west roads (e.g. 52.00 Rd for the access to Box Springs Lake). Apparently, they never bothered to drive through the county to check before rushing into print.

Another component to the accuracy of an atlas is its indication of road quality. Birders often want to know whether a dirt road is suitable for our vehicle. None of these atlases does a great job on this score, but the Benchmark atlas is the best of the three. It uses easily-distinguished markings (solid lines of different form and thickness) for major and minor paved roads, and uses dashed lines for dirt roads. Some very rugged four-wheel drive roads are labeled "4WD," but others too rugged for my Subaru Forester are not. *The Roads of Colorado* (2007 edition) makes an effort to use solid lines for paved roads, but has a confusing mix of dashed line



Colorado Atlas & Gazetteer

Delorme, 2009 (Ninth Edition)
104 pages, 15.5×11, paperback
ISBN: 978-0899332888



The Roads of Colorado

Mapsco, 2007
176 pages, 15×11, paperback
ISBN: 978-1569663592

styles for dirt roads, and many good dirt roads are simply omitted from the maps. The 1996 edition did a very good job of illustrating quality of almost all roads. The Delorme atlas generally labels paved roads well, but uses a symbol that they characterize as "major connector" for some paved and some dirt roads. The "major connector" dirt roads can be confusing: most can be done with a standard 2WD, but some, like the road over Weston Pass, certainly require high clearance.

When it comes to ease of reading, the Benchmark atlas uses relatively large fonts, with font colors that contrast well with the background. Thus the text is easy to read, with minimal clutter. Earlier versions of the Delorme atlas used tiny font that was quite difficult to read, but the latest version is much better, reducing clutter even more than the Benchmark atlas, albeit at the expense of useful information. It's easier to get basic information about manmade features from the Delorme atlas, but its labeling of natural features is relatively weak, with small, low-contrast text. *The Roads of Colorado*, meanwhile, uses a small font size that often takes significant effort to read; the font color is gray, not black, weakening the contrast, and the labeling of roads is cluttered. Instead of "JJ Rd" and "55 Rd," they use "JJ 00 Rd" and "55 00 Rd." (Those examples were taken from Kit Carson County, but the atlas uses that crazy "00" extension all over the state.)

Particularly in rural areas, it can be a challenge for birders to know the boundaries of public lands. The new Delorme atlas is much better on this score than older editions, and indicates the borders of state parks, national forests, state wildlife areas, etc. very clearly. On any page of the atlas, your eye is immediately drawn to the public lands. The Benchmark atlas indicates the borders of many of the largest public tracts with color shading, but with thinner and lower contrast markings that are much less obvious. For smaller tracts of public land, only the name is shown, and the borders are not indicated at all. For example, in the lower Gunnison region, the Benchmark atlas shows the border for the Curecanti National Recreation Area (Blue Mesa Reservoir) and for Uncompahgre National Forest, but not for Ridgway State Park, Billy Creek State Wildlife Area, or Cimarron State Wildlife area. The Delorme atlas clearly shows the borders of all these tracts of public land, even for the very fractured Billy Creek SWA. *The Roads of Colorado* shows the borders of all these pieces of public land, but the colors and shadings are so washed out that a careful look under bright light is frequently needed to sort things out.

On the eastern plains of Colorado, where almost everything is private land, the Benchmark atlas also labels many private ranches, a special convenience for Colorado Birding Trail patrons. Neither of the other atlases does this.

I have been using the Benchmark atlas as my primary reference during rural birding trips. *The Roads of Colorado* is hard to use and contains

	Benchmark Maps	Delorme	*The Roads of Colorado* (Mapsco)	*The Roads of Colorado* (Shearer) OUT OF PRINT
Publication Date	2007	2009	2007	1996
Index to individual maps	On back cover; easy to use	On back cover; easy to use	On back cover; easy to use	On back cover; easy to use
Map scale	1:200,000	1:160,000 for central and western Colorado; 1:320,000 on eastern plains	1:160,000	1:160,000
Topo maps?	No; topography indicated by shading	Yes, but contours are difficult to see	Yes	Yes
Accuracy	Excellent	Excellent	Poor	Good
Legibility	Very good (excellent for natural features)	Very good (excellent for roads)	Poor	Very good
Indication of road quality	Fairly good	Fair	Poor	Fairly good
Indication of land ownership	Fair	Excellent	Fairly good	Excellent

Table 1. Features of four Colorado atlases.

far too many errors to trust. The older editions of the Delorme atlas were hard to use and were missing important information, but the new Delorme rivals the Benchmark atlas in value; better in some ways, not as good in others. If you don't plan to visit the eastern plains, the Delorme might be a better choice. If you travel throughout the state and want one atlas, get the one from Benchmark. Carrying both the Benchmark and Delorme atlases would give you the best of both worlds.

Roger Linfield, Boulder, rlinfiel@ball.com

Notes on the Second Gunnison Sage-Grouse Summit

14-15 May 2008

Maureen Briggs

Introduction

These are some general notes that I took while attending the second Gunnison Sage-Grouse Summit in Montrose, Colorado, 14-15 May 2008. Like the first such summit, in 2003, this event was designed to be a setting for information sharing between various land management agencies and organizations involved in the protection and management of the Gunnison Sage-Grouse. Information in these notes was presented orally at the conference, unless otherwise indicated.

The Colorado Division of Wildlife, the Utah State University Extension, and the Nature Conservancy sponsored the conference with in-kind support from the San Miguel Basin Gunnison Sage-Grouse Working Group, Western State College, and the Gunnison Basin Working Group. Approximately 50 people attended the first day of the conference, including a representative from Senator Ken Salazar's office. I was unable to attend the second day's proceedings. A list of all the presentations from both days appears in Table 1.

The Gunnison Sage-Grouse is a bird of concern due to its low population. Population estimates range from 2,000 to 6,000 during the spring breeding season with only one population, that in the Gunnison Basin, estimated at more than 500 breeding birds, according to the Western Environmental Law Center. The Colorado Division of Wildlife's Gunnison Sage-Grouse Rangewide Conservation Plan states that the population declined between 42% and 90% in the last 50 years. Population counts were performed while birds were on their respective leks. Populations per lek ranged from 2-3 birds up to 50 birds.

The Gunnison Sage-Grouse Working Groups

A report was presented by each of the seven Gunnison Sage-Grouse working groups. The seven groups are Cerro Summit-Cimarron-Sims Mesa, San Miguel Basin, Poncha Pass, Pinyon Mesa, Gunnison, Dove Creek-Monticello (Utah), and Crawford. Each group represents a separate population of the Gunnison Sage-Grouse (GSG) named for its geographic location. In general, each working group

was comprised of representatives from the land management agencies administering the land where each grouse population exists. In some cases the group represented a collaboration between several agencies and private citizens.

Gunnison Sage-Grouse, Gunnison County, July 2007. Photo by Andrew Spencer

Most working group reports described a variety of attempts and projects to improve the habitat near each population. These improvements ranged from spraying sagebrush with herbicides in xeric (dry) areas to prescribed burning in mesic (semi-dry) areas. These areas were subsequently seeded with forbs, a primary food source of the grouse. The grouse will also eat beetles and ants.

The Endangered Species Act

Al Pfister represented the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS), which manages the federal Endangered Species program. He spoke about the specific factors that must be studied prior to re-listing the Gunnison Sage-Grouse as a candidate for the Endangered Species List.

The Gunnison Sage-Grouse was originally named as a candidate for listing under the Endangered Species Act in 2000. Candidate species are afforded no protection under the Act, but the Act does actually require government agencies to monitor the status of certain candidate species "to prevent their extinction while awaiting listing" (Christman and Albrecht 1999). Candidates can wait up to 19 years on the candidate list prior to being listed (Adler 2008).

Due to "serious backlogs," the USFWS has proposed guidelines for prioritizing listing decisions, dividing them into three "tiers," with Tier 1 reserved for species facing "significant and imminent risk to their well-being" (Christman and Albrecht 1999). The GSG was moved up to Tier 2 in 2003, an indication that the USFWS perceived that threats to the bird had increased.

Nonetheless, on 12 April 2006, the USFWS announced that

the GSG would not be listed as an endangered species. Furthermore, the agency would be removing the bird from the candidate list. This decision to de-list the bird was purported to be based on data indicating no decline in GSG populations. Furthermore, the USFWS in November 2005 performed a trend analysis and found that populations of the GSG had been stable for the previous ten years. Based on a peer-reviewed study, the Service concluded that threats to the grouse and its habitat were not at the level originally believed.

Due to the removal of the GSG from the candidate list, a lawsuit was filed in U.S. District Court of the District of Columbia on 14 November 2006 by the Western Environmental Law Center on behalf of several environmental groups as well as San Miguel County, stating that the USFWS should re-list the bird as a candidate species. The lawsuit argued that the decision to de-list the Gunnison Sage-Grouse by the USFWS was not based on the best available scientific information but was instead the result of political pressure, and that removal of the GSG from the Candidate Species List may in fact harm the few remaining birds. Since the original filing of that lawsuit, several other groups have also filed petitions, including at least one lawsuit to keep the grouse off the list.

Currently the USFWS and the Colorado Division of Wildlife continue to work cooperatively to further the conservation interests of the GSG. There are also 72 private landowners with 102,000 total acres of GSG habitat who have voluntarily expressed interest in conservation efforts. Voluntary agreements under the Endangered Species Act would actually allow landowners to use their lands while engaging in conservation measures to benefit the grouse. These Candidate Conservation Agreements with Assurances or CCAA's can be practiced anywhere a rare or listed species exists under the Endangered Species Act.

According to Pfister, if the GSG were to be re-listed, a buffer extending approximately 4-5 miles around each lek would be needed to protect the bird populations. This could prevent large numbers of Colorado ranchers from accessing public lands to graze their livestock as they have for decades. This would obviously have a huge impact on the ranching industry. The drilling for oil and gas might be affected as well. However, Pfister said, listing a species usually stops only one tenth of one percent of all human-caused activities in the species' habitat.

Mr. Pfister could not say with any certainty whether the Utah population near Monticello would be included if the GSG is re-listed under the Endangered Species Act.

Table 1. Presentations at the 2008 Gunnison Sage-Grouse Summit.

Wednesday, 14 May 2008

GSG Genetics – Sara Oyler-McCance (research geneticist, Ft. Collins Science Center, U.S. Geological Survey)

Ecology of the Utah GSG Population – Terry Messmer (Professor & Extension Wildlife Specialist, Dept. of Wildland Resources, USU); Phoebe Prather (doctoral student, College of Natural Resources, USU)

Challenges and Opportunities of Listing – Al Pfister (USFWS); Gary Skiba (CDOW); Megan Corrigan (staff biologist, Center for Native Ecosystems, Denver); Greg Peterson (rancher)

Relating Post-Treatment Vegetation Responses to Habitat Requirements of the GSG – Joe Brummer (Ph.D., U.S. Bureau of Reclamation)

Mapping Sagebrush Habitats across the Gunnison Basin – Cam Aldridge (Ph.D. student in Biological Sciences, University of Alberta, Canada)

GSG Habitat Selection in the Gunnison Basin – Theresa Childers (Department of Biological Sciences, University of Northern Colorado)

Learning from Success and Failures – (speaker not listed)

Thinking Big: The Importance of Scale in Conservation Planning for GSG – Brett Walker (avian researcher, CDOW)

GSG: Research and Conservation – Mike Phillips (wildlife researcher, CDOW, Ft. Collins)

Grazing and Wildlife Management – Rick Danvir (Deseret Land and Livestock Company)

Thursday, 15 May 2008

Candidate Conservation Agreements with Assurances (The Good, The Bad, and the Ugly) – Nathan Seward (Vice-chair of GSG Group, CDOW); Steve Boyle (senior biologist, BIO-Logic, Inc., San Miguel Working Group); Al Pfister (USFWS)

Polygyny and Female Breeding Failure Reduce Effective Population Size in the Lekking of GSG – Julie Stiver (graduate student, University of Nebraska-Lincoln)

Restoring Sagebrush for GSG – Bill Baker (San Miguel Working Group); Jim Garner (CDOW, San Miguel Working Group)

Sage-Grouse Habitat Improvement Projects – Russ Japuntich (wildlife biologist, Bureau of Land Management, Gunnison)

Fundraising Panel – Peter Mueller (The Nature Conservancy); Randy See (Sen. Ken Salazar's office); Ken Morgan (private lands specialist, CDOW); Paul Van Ryzin (coordinator, Montrose Research Conservation & Development; fundraiser, Painted Sky)

Private Landowner Relations/Development Codes – Jim Cochran (wildlife biologist, Bureau of Land Management, Gunnison); Tom Dill (Deputy County Attorney, Gunnison County); Eric Ferchau (at-large/development community, Gunnison Basin GSG Strategic Committee)

Energy by Design – Dave Gann (The Nature Conservancy)

Resources for Landowners – Jim Boyd (Natural Resource Conservation Service); John Scott (Natural Resource Conservation Service, member of Gunnison Basin GSG Strategic Committee)

Next Steps – Clait Braun (Retired CDOW, noted GSG expert, Gunnison Basin GSG Working Group)

Lek Disturbance

The Monticello (Utah) group presented a report on hazards to grouse presented by tall, man-made vertical structures close to leks,

e.g., power poles and windmills. Structures of this nature are used by perching raptors to prey on nearby grouse. The Monticello working group had attempted to install various devices on such structures hoping to deter raptors from perching. The group reported that all had proven unsuccessful.

The Monticello group also found that cattle grazing near a lek could cause the birds to relocate. The state of Utah does have a "crop reduction program" that pays ranchers and farmers not to grow crops in areas of existing leks.

The Crawford group reported that their population of GSG exists on a combination of lands, including Bureau of Land Management (BLM) lands, National Park Service lands, and private lands. In 2008, 24 males were counted in the population. Some forb seeding had been done in the area. This population was experiencing human impact within their territory in the form of home development and recreational use. Several acres surrounding a number of leks were closed to human entry by the BLM because their locations were so close to a busy public road (Colorado Highway 92) with increasing human disturbance.

New Research

Cam Aldridge presented as a potential management tool a very elaborate mapping system that utilizes LANDSAT photos overlaid with a new software program he developed called Quickbird. The resulting maps can pinpoint grouse habitat. It was still in development, awaiting completion and marketing before it would be available for widespread use.

Julie Stiver explained that a viable population size is equal to the minimum number of birds needed to maintain genetic diversity. Populations of fewer than 100 birds will cause inbreeding. Populations exceeding 100 birds will be diverse enough to prevent inbreeding. The GSG practices polygyny when mating; females all select the same male to breed with. This trait can affect the viability of a population by reducing genetic diversity. Egg hatching failure can reach 28% within inbred flocks. The current "fix" for small, inbred populations has been to relocate birds from the larger, healthy Gunnison population.

Conclusion

It was obvious from the various presentations that many professionals working with the Gunnison Sage-Grouse consider Endangered Species listing to be one of the bird's best chances at survival. Listing a species automatically requires a recovery plan to be put in

place. This plan often includes habitat improvement and raising animals in captivity with the intent of releasing the young back into suitable habitat, as was done with the Whooping Crane, the Peregrine Falcon, the Black-footed Ferret, and the California Condor.

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Maureen Briggs, skelligmichael@montrose.net

COLORADO'S ORNITHOLOGICAL HISTORY

Gunnison Sage-Grouse: Missing Specimens, Missed Opportunity

Richard G. Beidleman

It was Sunday, 4 September 1853, another "day of rest" guaranteed by Captain John Williams Gunnison. The Pacific Railroad Survey (38th Parallel) had two days earlier crossed westward over Colorado's continental divide at North Cochetopa Pass in present-day Saguache County, and within a mile made camp at a place they called "Summit Station" on West Pass Creek, "where the waters flow to the Pacific Ocean." Next morning the party continued down Pass Creek, observing, far to the south, the mountain panorama of the San Juans, which gave the survey's young German naturalist, Frederick Creutzfeldt, "not very agreeable reminiscences." This was understandable, since five years earlier he had nearly frozen to death there as the botanist with Fremont's ill-fated expedition. Gunnison's company, leaving the main stream (today's Cochetopa Creek), which twisted north down a narrow canyon, proceeded northeast across a sagebrush plateau to another creek (now Razor Creek) and camped over the weekend.

It was here, the next morning, while other men were busy catching trout in the stream, that Creutzfeldt, maintaining "holy the Sab-

bath day," took his gun and went birding. In his field book he jotted (in German), "I killed here 'ein Paar so-genannte Sage hens'" ("a pair of so-called Sage hens"). After lunch Creutzfeldt settled down to prepare skins of the birds collected since the previous Sunday at Fort Massachusett, including, from the vicinity of Cochetopa Pass, a Swainson's Hawk, an American Kestrel, an "Alpine Bluebird" (Mountain Bluebird), and a Long-eared Owl. But most significant among the specimens were the two sage-grouse. Their excellent meat, naturally, was claimed for the expedition's evening meal, to be "thoroughly enjoyed by all."

On Monday, the Gunnison expedition continued down Razor Creek into the valley and west along what was named Cochetopa Creek on Lieutenant Beckwith's eventual map but today is Tomichi Creek, camping for the night about ten miles east of today's town of Gunnison. During this day more small "sage hens" were encountered, "some of which we kill" and all of which were eaten. But no more specimens were prepared by Creutzfeldt, it not being a "day of rest."

Coincidentally, earlier in the summer, on 19 June 1853, the expedition of Gwin Heap and Edward Beale had also crossed west over the continental divide at Cochetopa. And the next day Beale "shot a species of grouse, larger than a prairie hen, and caught one of her young" (Hafen & Hafen 1957, p. 140). Could this also have been a sage-grouse? Regrettably, Heap was not accompanied by a naturalist collecting specimens.

When Spencer Baird wrote up for the Smithsonian Institution the birds collected by Creutzfeldt during the Gunnison expedition, a single female *Centrocercus urophasianus* ("Sage Cock" or "Cock of the Plains") was included (Baird 1857, Baird et al. 1858), with two catalog numbers: Creutzfeldt's original collection number 21 and U.S. National Museum Catalog number 10023. There was no color plate, and, alas, no measurements were published. Sadly, at the National Museum's Division of Birds today, there exists neither Creutzfeldt's specimen 21 (USNM 10023) nor indeed any record of such a specimen or of the "Paar" collected by Creutzfeldt in 1853.

The historic grouse observations above were of little consequence for almost a century and a half, until the publication of Young et al. (2000), "A new species of sage-grouse...from southwestern Colorado." In retrospect, it turns out that in 1853 Frederick Creutzfeldt had actually collected and prepared a skin of at least one sage-grouse which would eventually constitute a new species, *Centrocercus minimus*, the Gunnison Sage-Grouse, today restricted primarily to southwestern Colorado. The designated holotype for this new species, at the Denver Museum of Natural History, is a male collected on 10 May 1993

by Jessica Young and Clait Braun at a type locality on BLM land 23 kilometers southeast of Gunnison, only a few kilometers northwest of where Creutzfeldt felled his pair 140 years earlier. Had Creutzfeldt's specimen been more carefully examined and preserved, the Gunnison Sage-Grouse might not have eluded the attention of science for so long.

As a sad footnote, Creutzfeldt himself, Captain Gunnison, the topographer and artist Richard Kern, and five others were felled by Pahvant Ute Indians at breakfast on 26 October 1853, at a bend of the Sevier River near Sevier Lake in Utah. Creutzfeldt had been employed officially as the Gunnison Expedition's botanist; thus, his avian pursuits were, in reality, primarily avocational.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

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Richard G. Beidleman, 766 Bayview Avenue, Pacific Grove, CA 93950, (831) 375-1922

A Fifteen-Year Breeding Bird Census of a Cottonwood Grove and Heronry Before, During, and After Flooding by a Reservoir

Hugh Kingery

Introduction

Cottonwood riparian areas compose one of the richest breeding bird habitats in Colorado (Bottorff, 1974). This paper reports on a fifteen-year study (1971 to 1986, inclusive, excluding 1981) of a cottonwood river bottom located at Chatfield State Park, Jefferson County, near Denver, Colorado.

The study received its impetus from the existence of a historic heronry of Great Blue Herons (*Ardea herodias*) that stood within the (projected) permanent pool level of Chatfield Reservoir, on which construction began in the late 1960s. As part of the construction, the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (Corps) cleared trees from the reservoir's permanent pool in 1970, but left the colony of nesting Great Blue Herons intact so that it could form a natural attraction for the public after completion of the dam. The Corps encouraged me to census the heron colony, and as part of that project, I decided to census all the breeding birds within the site. Several people assisted by going on census trips, analyzing data, and preparing reports.

Through access to the plot permitted by the Corps before flooding began, the census became a unique opportunity to compare alterations in bird populations in a cottonwood woodland before, during, and after flooding. This paper reports the results of the fifteen-year census, and includes comments on nesting behavior of the species observed. Also, because of a continuing focus on herons, the paper appends data on heron populations to the end of the study.

Study Area

Overview and Early History

The Chatfield reservoir site overlies the junction of the South Platte River and Plum Creek, about three miles downstream from where the South Platte exits the foothills of the Front Range of the Rocky Mountains and about ten miles southwest of downtown Denver.

This site supported a heronry starting at least in the early 1900s.

According to Dr. Robert J. Niedrach, the late Assistant Director of the Denver Museum of Nature and Science (pers. comm.), the heronry "probably" was there when he first came to Denver in 1908. William Howarth, whose family owned the land until 1950, stated, "I remember it as always having been there. I was born in 1912" (pers. comm.).

Dr. Niedrach stated, "At first only Great Blue Herons used the heronry. Then Black-crowned Night-Herons (*Nycticorax nycticorax*) moved in for a while, and then Turkey Vultures (*Cathartes aura*). The vultures fed on the young that toppled out of the nest; they may even have aided the topplers. At least a couple of pairs nested for a couple of years, around 1938. Then the colony petered out for a while. A Great Horned Owl (*Bubo virginianus*) always nested there."

He estimated that the colony generally had from 14 to 20 heron nests, with 12 to 18 occupied each year[1]; however, he provided this as a fuzzy estimate after I informed him about the results of our first year of field work in 1971.

The 1964 Flood: Chatfield Dam

In 1964, a devastating flood struck Denver; it originated from severe thunderstorms in the South Platte drainage upstream from the heronry. The storms hit particularly hard on Plum Creek, which flowed into the South Platte about a mile downstream from the heronry. As a result, Congress authorized the Corps to construct a flood control dam in order to protect Denver from future floods. During the planning process, the Corps of Engineers Committee on Environmental Planning (CECEP) worked on ways to complete the dam and reservoir in the least environmentally damaging way.

The CECEP plans affected the grove in two ways. First, the Corps authorized sand and gravel mining in the area that the permanent pool of the reservoir would inundate, including one mining area immediately west of the study plot. Second, on learning about the heronry, the Corps decided to deviate from its usual policy of cutting all trees within the permanent pool. It directed its contractor to leave intact the grove that subsequently became the study area discussed in this paper.

1 The Denver Museum has an exhibit, prepared in 1940, modeled after this heronry. Dr. Niedrach commented, "I built the ladder [up a large cottonwood in the grove] so as to climb the tree and get the impression of sitting in a nest. I wanted, in preparing the exhibit at the museum, to present the illusion of sitting in the nest looking down on the river. So I built the ladder, sat in a nest, and made sketches and notes. I wanted to make a hole in the floor of the museum in order to give the illusion of depth." The tree with remnants of the ladder remained through the first six years of the study—a sentimental reminder of Dr. Niedrach's study of the heronry.

Aerial view of the cottonwood grove looking southeast, shortly before flooding, May 1979. The parking lot of the Heron Overlook is visible at upper left. The present-day reservoir shoreline follows the channel that runs from center left to upper right. Photo by Jan Justice-Waddington

The Study Plot

From the point where the river flows out of the mountains, a mature forest of plains cottonwood (*Populus deltoides*) lines the banks, sometimes as wide as a quarter-mile. Interspersed with the cottonwoods grow thickets of native plants including box-elder (*Acer negundo*), willow (*Salix* spp.), wild plum (*Prunus* spp.), hawthorn (*Crataegus* spp.), and three-leaf sumac (*Rhus trilobata*), as well as exotics such as Russian-olive (*Eleagnus angustifolia*). Historically, downstream from the heronry there grew more cottonwood forests and several cattail marshes, hydrologically fed by both the river and seeping groundwater.

As part of reservoir construction, the Corps felled all trees adjacent to the north, east, and south sides of the study plot. Consequently, during the study, the trees in the plot did not form part of a continuous forested river bottom, but rather had been isolated from other cottonwood groves by reservoir construction activities. Grasses and weeds bounded most of the study plot; a hay meadow, harvested each summer, bounded the plot on the west; and the South Platte River bounded it on the north and on the northern third of the east side.

The study plot contained 24 acres, of which 14 consisted of mature stands of plains cottonwood and 10 of open grassland. The plot had a 4,200-foot perimeter, but within it the 14 acres of cottonwoods had an 8,000-foot perimeter. Most cottonwoods were 60-100 feet high, and stand density measured 89 trees per acre. Cottonwood Diameter at Breast Height (DBH) ranged from 3-40 inches, with an average of 14 inches. All stands consisted of mature trees except one 0.5 acre area that contained 144 trees with an average DBH of 9 inches. The study plot also contained a few (less than 1%) narrowleaf cottonwoods (*Populus angustifolia*), two box-elder trees, and a few willows.

The understory in the wooded areas of the study plot included some dense patches of poison-hemlock (*Conium maculata*), which grew eight feet high in certain parts of the cottonwood groves. Other prominent plant species in the understory included Canada thistle (*Cirsium arvense)*, slender wheat-grass (*Agropyron trachycaulum*), western snowberry (*Symphoricarpos occidentalis*), golden currant (*Ribes aureum*), Virginia creeper (*Parthenocissus inserta*), and wild grape (*Vitis riparia*). Slender wheat-grass dominated open grassland areas, although Canada thistle and smaller amounts of smooth brome (*Bromus inermis*) grew in a few patches. At the beginning of the study, the southeast edge contained a draw vegetated by small willows, broad-leaved cattails (*Typha latifolia*), bulrushes (*Scirpus* spp.), and sedges (*Carex* spp.).

Changes during the study

A series of changes occurred in and around the study plot during the study. Chronologically, they include:

1970: Contractors cut all the trees around the grove.

1971: Small cottonwoods began to sprout around the perimeter of the plot (mainly the south and east sides) and created a shrub-like habitat.

1973: Gravel mining began in the hay meadow, 200-300 feet west of the study plot. The mine operated from dawn to dusk, and pumps ran 24 hours a day to drain water from the mining pit.

1974: As spring came and the trees began to leaf out, it became apparent that the gravel mining to the west had killed many trees in the grove. The water table within the study area had dropped from five feet to 35 feet due to seepage into the excavated mines. In order to save those trees still alive, the Corps, in June of that year, instructed the gravel contractor to install hoses and, later, sprinklers. The irrigation system operated 24 hours a day from mid-July into August.

1975: 60-75% of the trees had died. On 15 June, the reservoir began to fill; within a week, the water table rose to within one foot of the forest floor in the study plot. At the north end of the plot, close to the rising waters, the ground became damp and soggy. However, the reservoir did not flood the study plot.

1977: 25% of the trees remained alive. In the southern third of the plot, strong winds in December 1976 had blown down a substantial number of dead cottonwoods, creating a sort of fallen log grassland with only a few dead stubs.

1979: The reservoir finally filled to the level of its permanent pool and flooded the study plot completely. Storage began about 7 May, with half the plot flooded by 14 May; water totally covered it by 19

Hugh Kingery (left) and Frank Justice setting out for the heronry in the foldboat, June 1979. Photo by Jan Justice-Waddington

May. The lake reached permanent pool level in mid-June, with 7-10 vertical feet of water covering the entire study plot. The Colorado State Parks Department, which had jurisdiction over the recreational facilities connected with the reservoir, opened the reservoir to boating. Although off-limits, the grove nevertheless received constant daytime boat traffic, the occupants either fishing or sightseeing.

1980: The Parks Department succeeded in keeping out boat traffic. Of the standing trees, 15-20% remained alive. An unusually rapid spring runoff raised the water level to 16.5 feet above normal reservoir level. This caused closure of the lake to boating and of much of the shoreline to public access until about 4 July.

1983: The Colorado Division of Wildlife and the Parks Department, which cooperated in the study throughout its duration, decided to restrict access to the study plot to two trips per month. This did not hamper the count of the herons or cormorants but did preclude a satisfactory census of the other species in the grove.

Methods

The study followed the techniques (International Bird Census Committee 1970) and reporting format (Van Venzen 1972) specified for Breeding Bird Censuses, which, for many years, National Audubon Society sponsored through its publication, *American Birds*. Prior to starting the project, Rich Bottorff mapped the area and outlined the location of the cottonwood stands. Project participants visited

the site throughout the breeding season. Most census trips occurred from March through July. Earlier first trips occurred in 1978-80 (24 and 25 February and 19 January, respectively), and in five of the first ten years we made the final trip in early to mid-August.

On each trip we mapped the location and activities of all birds seen and heard. We recorded singing males, simultaneously singing males of the same species, feeding activities, nest locations, nest building, other breeding evidence, and mere presence. Following the instructions in the census protocol (International Bird Census Committee 1970), we mapped the data for each species. From these maps we estimated the number of breeding pairs for each species by analyzing clusters of species registrations (International Bird Census Committee 1970:726). After 1979, when the Corps closed the gates of the reservoir and the rising waters flooded the plot, we made our census trips in a foldboat or, occasionally, a park motorboat. We made most boat trips shortly after sunrise because bird study and counting require calm waters, which are more likely in early morning.

In the later years of the study, Double-crested Cormorants (*Phalacrocorax auritus*) colonized the plot, and the populations of both the cormorants and the Great Blue Herons began exponential increases. Subsequently, as the many nests of both species became intermixed, we found it difficult to keep an accurate count of the number of nests. In the winter of 1982, Kathi Green, a wildlife conservation officer with the Colorado Division of Wildlife, and Sandy Westin, a Colorado State Parks ranger, marked the trees so that the census-takers could make more accurate counts during the nesting season.

Results

Time Periods

Table 1 summarizes the census results, compiled from the original census publications in *American Birds* (Hurley et al. 1971, Kingery & Bottorff 1972, Bottorff et al. 1973, Bottorff et al. 1974, Hurley et al. 1975, Hurley et al. 1977, Justice et al. 1978, Justice et al. 1979, Justice et al. 1980, Justice et al. 1981, Kingery 1983, Kingery 1984, Kingery 1985)[2].

It divides the years of the census into three time periods:

- **1971-1974**: Riparian Baseline Period. The first four years serve as a reasonably stable census of breeding birds of a healthy cottonwood river bottom.
- **1975-1979**: Transition Period. During these years the water table dropped and the trees began to die.

2 Censuses for 1984-1986 stored at Cornell Laboratory of Ornithology.

Table 1. Breeding Bird Census results, 1971-1986. No censuses were taken in 1981. Numbers represent breeding territories within the study plot. A non-integer ("0.5") represents a territory that extended partially outside the study plot. A "+" indicates a territory less than half within the plot. See text for discussion and source citations.

	Riparian Baseline				***Transition***					***Lake***					
Year	*1971*	*1972*	*1973*	*1974*	*1975*	*1976*	*1977*	*1978*	*1979*	*1980*	*1982*	*1983*	*1984*	*1985*	*1986*
HOLE NESTERS	**46**	**49**	**42**	**49**	**45**	**47**	**51**	**42**	**61**	**20**	**22**	**11**	**15**	**16**	**23**
Group A															
Tree Swallow							1	1	8	7	13	6	9	10	10
European Starling	4	10	10	6	5	11	12	8	15	9	9	5	6	6	13
Group B															
American Kestrel		1	1	2	1	2	2	2	2						
Downy Woodpecker	8	3	4	5	3		2	3	4	1					
N. (Red-shafted) Flicker	4	6	1	1	1	5	6	3	2						
Black-capped Chickadee	4	1		1	1	1	2								
House Wren	26	28	26	34	35	28	26	25	30	3					
CANOPY NESTERS	**101**	**75**	**68**	**69**	**49**	**38.5**	**46**	**47.5**	**55**	**26**	**7**	**9**	**6**	**7**	**6**
Group A															
Great Horned Owl	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1		1		1
Eastern Kingbird	2	2	2	3	4	3	3	2	2	4	1	1	1	1	1
Common Grackle							12	10	20	15	5	8	4	6	4
Group B															
Mourning Dove	8	6	1	11	7	4.5	7	5	2						
Western Kingbird							1								

Warbling Vireo	4	3	3	6	5	2	2		1	
Black-billed Magpie		1	1	2	1	1	2	6	4	2
American Robin	13	13	13	12	8	6	6	9	7	
Yellow Warbler	23	19	16	19	10	11	7	9	8	2
Bullock's Oriole	7	4	6	6	9	7	4	4.5	7	2
American Goldfinch	4	3	5	3	4	3	1	1	1	
Group C										
Red-tailed Hawk	1									
Yellow-billed Cuckoo			1							
Broad-tailed Hummingbird	1		2	1						
Western Wood-Pewee	20	13	9							
Red-eyed Vireo	8	6	6	5						
American Redstart	6									
Lesser Goldfinch	3	4	2							

UNDERSTORY	**8**	**9**	**11**	**13**	**20**	**22**	**33.5**	**23**	**9.5**	
Group B										
Common Yellowthroat	4	1	3	4	12	8	12	7		
Yellow-breasted Chat	2	2		1	1	1	2	1		
Spotted Towhee	1	1	1	2	2	1.5	1			
Song Sparrow		2	1			2	6	7.5	2	
Lazuli Bunting		2	5	4	2	3.5	5	2		
Indigo Bunting		1	1	1	1.5	0.5				
hybrid buntings				0.5	0.5					

	Riparian Baseline				Transition					Lake					
Year	*1971*	*1972*	*1973*	*1974*	*1975*	*1976*	*1977*	*1978*	*1979*	*1980*	*1982*	*1983*	*1984*	*1985*	*1986*
Group D															
Canada Goose									1						
Mallard	1					1			1						
Belted Kingfisher							+	+							
Rough-winged Swallow					0.5										
Gray Catbird				1		1	2	1							
Blue Grosbeak					0.5										
Red-winged Blackbird						0.5	1.5	2.5	3.5						
Western Meadowlark						3	4	2	2						
Brown-headed Cowbird							+	+	+	+					
COLONIAL BIRDS	**9**	**12**	**16**	**21**	**24**	**32**	**42**	**67**	**76**	**118**	**177**	**244**	**291**	**294**	**349**
Great Blue Heron	9	12	16	21	24	32	42	67	71	92	111	128	143	148	171
Double-crested Cormorant									5	26	66	116	148	146	178
TOTALS															
Without herons	**155**	**133**	**121**	**131**	**114**	**108**	**131**	**113**	**126**	**46**	**29**	**20**	**21**	**23**	**29**
With herons	**164**	**145**	**137**	**152**	**138**	**140**	**173**	**180**	**202**	**164**	**206**	**264**	**312**	**317**	**378**
Number of species	**24**	**25**	**25**	**24**	**23**	**25**	**29**	**25**	**24**	**13**	**7**	**6**	**7**	**6**	**7**
Per 100 acres															
Without herons	646	554	504	546	475	448	544	469	523	192	121	83	87.5	96	121
With herons	683	604	571	633	575	581	719	748	840	683	858	1100	1300	1321	1575

Per hectare															
Without herons	1596	1369	1245	1349	1174	1107	1344	1159	1292	474	299	205	216	237	299
With herons	1688	1492	1411	1564	1421	1436	1777	1848	2076	1688	2120	2718	3212	3264	3892

STUDY HOURS	93	49	45	46	29	23	37	39	39	20	16	10	12	10	17
Study trips															
On foot	26	14	14	26	17	12	16	16	18	12					
By boat											6	7	3	4	5
From Heron Overlook											several		2	4	7

Table 2. Number of heron and cormorant nests counted after the end of the study.

	Study Plot			***Second Site***					***Third Site***		
	1987	*1989*	*1991*	*1992*	*1993*	*1994*	*1995*	*1996*	*1998*	*1999*	*2000*
Great Blue Heron	157	80	27	82	97	96	74	56	32	24	57	43
Double-crested Cormorant	190	179	105	7	147	166	132	166	12			

• **1980-1986**: Lake Period. During these years the reservoir inundated the study plot.

Species Categories

The chart separates the birds into four categories: Hole Nesters, Canopy Nesters, Understory Nesters, and Colonial Nesters. The majority nested in the canopy; a substantial number used holes, from ground level to midway up in the cottonwoods. Understory birds nested primarily on the ground, with a few nesting in the few bushes present. The chart separates the birds according to this stratification; it also separates the colonial nesters (herons and cormorants) into a fourth category, inasmuch as they do not compose a part of normal riparian breeders.

Within these categories, the chart shows four groups:

• Group A: Species that nested throughout the study.

• Group B: Species that stopped nesting at the end of the Transition Period.

• Group C: Species that nested only during the Riparian Baseline Period.

• Group D: Species that nested only or mainly during the Transition Period.

Discussion: Change Over Time

The composition of the birdlife changed substantially over the period of the study. The changes mirror the three Time Periods presented in Table 1.

Riparian Baseline Period

In 1971, the first year of the study, we had twice as many field hours as any other year. The intensive coverage that year may have revealed territories that otherwise we might have missed. This bias appears most applicable to the data for Yellow Warbler (*Dendroica petechia*; Table 1).

Nesting populations of Group C birds changed the most during the Baseline Period. They declined from 37 pairs in 1971 to 6 pairs in 1974. I have no explanation for this, although the study plot lies at the edge of the breeding ranges of four species of canopy nesters, all of which declined during the Baseline Period. It marks the western breeding limit for Red-eyed Vireo (*Vireo olivaceus*) and American Redstart (*Setophaga ruticilla*) and the eastern limit for Broad-tailed Hummingbird (*Selasphorus platycercus*) and Lesser Goldfinch (*Carduelis psaltria*). Possibly populations of species at the edge of their ranges typically vary from year to year, perhaps because of marginal habitat.

At the time of the study, the plot also marked the eastern edge, in Colorado, of the nesting range of Tree Swallow (*Tachycineta bicolor*), which subsequently colonized river bottoms along the South Platte in eastern Colorado.

Transition Period

Understory birds increased during the Transition Period, probably as a result of habitat changes. First, small cottonwoods continued to sprout around the periphery. This particularly attracted the buntings. Second, the dropping water table killed some plants such as Poison Hemlock and thistles, and may have opened up additional feeding territories for understory species.

Subsequently the forest floor became wetter, and this attracted wetland species such as Mallard (*Anas platyrhynchos*), Canada Goose (*Branta canadensis*), and Red-winged Blackbird (*Agelaius phoeniceus*).

Lake Period

When the lake covered the grove, only seven species returned to nest. Inasmuch as lake waters covered the formerly open grasslands, the available nesting area dropped from 24 acres to 14 acres (the area with trees). Actually it included less than 14 acres due to the loss of many trees on the south side. However, the remarkable increase in herons and cormorants provided an unexpected climax to the study.

Of the nesting species remaining at the end of the Lake Period, none fed within the study plot except Eastern Kingbird (*Tyrannus tyrannus*) and Tree Swallow.

Post-study Lake Period

All seven species continued to nest until the trees toppled. In 1986 a Common Merganser (*Mergus merganser*) explored a hole; Wood Ducks (*Aix sponsa*) also nested along the river but apparently did not breed in the study plot.

Discussion: Nesting Species

Red-tailed Hawk

A pair of Red-tailed Hawks (*Buteo jamaicensis*) successfully fledged two young in 1971, but did not return to nest after that year. Although we did not observe any conflicts between Great Horned Owls and the herons, we did see one instance in which a Red-tailed Hawk flew at a heron coming into the grove.

Great Horned Owl

Owls nested annually in the grove during the early years of the

American Redstart, Chatfield SP, Jefferson County, 31 May 2005. Photo by Glenn Walbek

study, and consistently fledged two or three young. As they started nesting in winter, they used old heron nests. By the time the herons returned, the owls had progressed fairly far in their nesting cycle. Usually young had fledged and begun flying around the grove during May (we discovered a hummingbird nest 45 feet up in a cottonwood because the female rose to hector a young owl that came too near).

During three of the last five years of the study, owls occupied nests, but we did not see any young owls in the grove, either in the nest or fledged. Chatfield State Park at that time had 8-10 pairs nesting (F. and J. Justice, pers. comm.). Before the Corps closed the dam gates, the grove provided a desirable nesting, resting, and feeding territory. At the end, the water-logged grove of dead trees seemed less attractive as a nesting site. Possibly the birds using the grove at the end of the study were young birds with little likelihood of successful nesting, or perhaps once the young fledged the adults quickly took them to a forest with a less hazardous ground surface.

Western Wood-Pewee

Numbers of Western Wood-Pewees (*Contopus sordidulus*) dropped steadily throughout the study. Wood-Pewees continued to nest in the adjacent cottonwood riparian zone, but we have no information on population levels in those adjacent zones.

Eastern Kingbird

That Eastern Kingbirds continued to nest after the cottonwoods died seems surprising. They located their nest on exposed stubs, open to the heat of the sun.

Red-eyed Vireo

The vireo is the only member of Group C that maintained steady numbers during the Riparian Baseline Period. It probably quit nesting in the study plot because of the lack of canopy when the trees leafed out in 1975.

Tree Swallow

When Tree Swallows arrived in the study grove in 1977, they nested at only one other site on the Colorado plains (Barr Lake, Adams County, northeast of Denver). They do nest in the mountains to the west, and sometimes on cloudy cool days travel 20-30 miles from the high country to feed on the plains, especially over reservoirs such as Chatfield (Robertson et al. 1992, R. Cohen, pers. comm.) The swallows may have started nesting after discovering the bonanza of dead trees with nest holes on one of these excursions; alternatively, they could have found them when they passed through Chatfield during spring migration, which they do in considerable numbers.

Common Yellowthroat

The big influx of Common Yellowthroats (*Geothlypis trichas*) in 1975 coincided with the flooding of an extensive cattail marsh closer to the dam. They established at least seven of the 1975 territories after the flooding began. We attributed the increase to displaced birds that renested. The only other noticeable displacement in 1975 involved several pairs of Mallards, which used the grove for resting for about two weeks.

American Redstart

American Redstarts did not return to the study plot after 1971. This warbler nests sparingly along the edge of the foothills; the mountains form a barrier to its continuous breeding range (but see Kingery 1998). The South Platte above the reservoir continues to support 10-20 breeding units.

Passerina buntings

Both Lazuli (*Passerina amoena*) and Indigo Buntings (*P. cyanea*) established territories in the grove. The cottonwoods sprouting from the roots of trees cut down for the reservoir site attracted them. Table 1 shows the number of singing males per year.

Lesser Goldfinch

At the east edge of its nesting range, this species continued to nest in the adjacent riparian zone.

Common Grackle

At the beginning of the study, Common Grackles (*Quiscalus quiscula*) did not nest along the South Platte River bottom in the vicinity of the study plot. In 1977, they arrived on the study plot *en masse*: 12 pairs nested that year. The following year they returned

and utilized a technique that demonstrates the adaptability of this species.

In the urban Denver area, most grackles nest in conifer trees, especially Colorado blue spruce (*Picea pungens*) planted as ornamental trees. The first year that the grackles nested in the study plot they built typical stick nests in tree crotches, similar to American Robin (*Turdus migratorius*) nests.

In 1978, some grackles inaugurated another nesting technique: they built nests underneath heron nests, and attached them to the platform of the larger structures; a few built their nests 6-12 inches below the superstructure. In that position, they avoided interaction with the herons. The grackles always approached their nests cautiously, and from below. We did not see any instances of a heron attacking a grackle. By locating their nests under heron nests, the opportunistic grackles gained not only a nest site, but also shelter from sun, rain, and hail in this forest of dead trees.

In addition to using heron nests and building typical cup nests, a pair in 1980 nested in a hole in a tree stub about five feet above the ground. Rising water flooded the nest very close to the time that the young grackles were ready to fledge; we did not determine whether the young fledged successfully.

The grackles appeared to practice communal feeding. Often groups of three to five birds congregated around nests. It appeared to me that all participated in rearing the young.

Great Blue Heron and Double-crested Cormorant

The history of the grove as reported by Niedrach and Howarth (pers. comm.) suggests that the herons had reached a low, stable population at the beginning of the present study. We understand that for many years, cattle grazed the property of which the grove was a part. It seems unlikely that the cattle would have affected the herons nesting in the canopy, since grazing was a historic use of the property, and herons and cows coexisted for many years. However, it probably affected the understory, as the study plot lacked the shrubby undergrowth characteristic of the river farther upstream.

We lack information on the status of the plot immediately prior to the start of the study in 1971. Obviously, one factor would be the human activity during the preceding year that involved cutting down all the trees within the permanent pool. Although this disturbance did not occur in the grove itself, it may have occurred during the nesting season. The intermittent nature of tree-cutting activities adjacent to the grove may have affected birds.

During the first years of the study, 1971-1977, the heron popu-

lation increased by about 30% each year. Subsequently, the increase varied from 60% in 1978 to 3% in 1985. One factor that may have caused the increase was the availability of higher-quality feeding areas nearby. The Corps kept the entire reservoir area closed to the public during construction, but most of the construction activity occurred at the dam site, over a mile away. During that period, the herons had undisturbed stretches of river and dozens of acres of cattail marshes and associated ponds in which to feed.

Great Blue Herons in nest, Chatfield State Park, June 1977. Photo by Hugh Kingery

After the park opened, the lakeshore attracted heavy daily use by fishermen and the lake itself started to attract constant high-speed boat use starting in mid-May. The Parks Department posted "No admittance" signs 150 yards from the perimeter of the trees. After a rocky first year, the signage worked and violations occurred rarely.

Because of the heavy use by humans, the herons, except early in the morning, could not find undisturbed feeding zones at Chatfield, and therefore traveled to other bodies of water. Observers saw them flying in most directions from the reservoir, although no one documented where or how far they went. Great Blue Herons will travel 20-25 miles to feed (W. Graul, pers. comm.) or up to 104 km (Butler 1992:8). Human activity at Chatfield did not affect cormorant feeding as severely, because the cormorants fed in the lake—even in the grove—but also in reservoirs away from Chatfield. The area has a number of reservoirs as well as the South Platte River, Plum Creek, and other streams within their feeding range.

One would expect the gravel mining to disturb the nesting herons, but it did not seem to do so. The mining operation involved large machinery, including steam shovels and drag lines. During much of most summers the mining ran 24 hours a day. That may actually have lessened the disturbance to the herons; incessant noise and activity

could become normal background—the herons did not have to react to intermittent disturbances. In any event, the number of nesting herons increased steadily during the mining operation.

We observed two forms of human disturbance: occasional foot traffic, particularly during the Transition Period, and boat traffic during the Lake Period. Depending on the caution with which people approached the nesting area, and the time in the nesting chronology, the herons either remained on their nests or flushed from them. In general, herons flushed more readily during nest building and incubation than after the young hatched, at which point it made less difference, because the adults could return later with food if the disturbance did not continue.

In order to keep disturbance to a minimum during the Baseline and Transition periods, we did not venture into the section of the grove where the herons nested. In 1971, the herons nested in only one small section. As the heronry expanded into other sections, it became necessary to enter their nesting areas in order to count nests. This did not seem to disturb the herons unduly. When we went into the grove by non-motorized foldboat, moving quietly and slowly, the herons and cormorants usually did not flush (cormorants flushed more readily than herons).

Flooding by the reservoir waters changed the nature of the disturbances. In 1980 a number of boats cruised into the grove and flushed many herons. These usually were motorboats that made intermittent noises, some loud, some subdued. The intermittent but repetitive boat traffic did bother the herons and cormorants. A pair of kayakers once raced from the shore into the grove, stopped briefly, then raced back; this caused cormorants, nesting where the kayakers paused, to flush.

The cormorants first attempted to nest in the study plot during 1979. Nestings failed, we surmise, for two reasons: disturbance by boat traffic and a very late start of nesting (late July).

The herons started nesting a week or two earlier than the cormorants. Both species continued to build nests for one to two months after birds occupied the first nests, and some abandonment and exchange between the two species occurred.

I conclude that the herons and, to a lesser extent, the cormorants, do not suffer from occasional low-profile intrusions into the nest area (see Vos et al. 1985, Butler 1992). Comparing the gravel mining with the motor boat incursions suggests that intermittent disturbances cause more harm than the steady drone of a continuous noise (at least when the continuous noise does not occur in the immediate vicinity of the nest).

Epilogue

After our study concluded, periodic counts tracked the heronry. Table 2 (Page 35) lists the subsequent counts. The 1986-1988 counts were done by the author from the Heron Overlook. Counts from the Heron Overlook may have underestimated the actual number of nests because of the difficulty of seeing the entire colony from that point. By 1989, because so many nest trees had fallen, it was easier to observe the entire heronry. However, the 1989 count was made from the Heron Overlook by Jan Justice on 4 May and may have underestimated nests by 10-20%, as the birds had not completed nest building at that date.

In the winter of 1991-1992, the combination of freezing and thawing of ice in the heronry toppled all the trees, leaving only a few stumps. Two years before, expecting this to happen, the Colorado Division of Wildlife had put up some decoys in a patch of cottonwoods about a half-mile upstream. The herons and cormorants ignored this enticement until so many trees fell in their primary site that they sought out the new area.

The Colorado Division of Wildlife commissioned a four-year study (1992-1995; Skagen et al. 2001) of the second site in connection with a Wildlife Viewing Area that Parks and Wildlife built for the 1994 breeding season. Cormorant nests continued to outnumber heron nests during that period. During this study 14 of 31 nest trees at the second site fell down.

Subsequently most of the trees fell, and both species abandoned that nest site, as the author observed on his counts 1996-2000. The cormorants abandoned the park completely, but some herons moved upstream another 1.5 miles, where they nested for three years. Probably due to frequent foot and horse traffic, they abandoned this site as well and stopped nesting anywhere within Chatfield State Park. Thus ended a century of heron nesting, now memorialized by two heron-less "Heron Overlooks" in the park and a striking exhibit at the Denver Museum of Nature and Science.

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BIRDING FESTIVALS

Lamar's High Plains Snow Goose Festival

Judi Ogle

Birders' passion for birds really revs up toward the end of winter when some of the first waves of birds start returning to Colorado. Tired of sparrows and starlings, birders long to see something different and spectacular.

Among the first birds to arrive are Snow Geese, which spend their summers in the upper reaches of Canada and Alaska above the Arctic Circle, but fly south when winter invades the north. Some go as far as New Mexico or Texas, but many of them only go as far as they have to go to find open water. In fact, in a mild winter, the big white birds never get much farther south than Lamar, Colorado. In most years, that means large flocks take up residence in southeast Colorado near John Martin Reservoir and the Great Plains Reservoir complex on the Queens State Wildlife Area.

Passing by fallow fields, one may see what looks like patches of white rags waving in the breeze. But when those "rags" sweep up into the air, one realizes they are Snow Geese. It is a magnificent sight to behold when thousands of geese, with their white bodies and black wingtips, take off together in the early morning or descend as one onto a pond to rest for the evening. It is an experience no one would want to miss. This is why the High Plains Snow Goose Festival in Lamar began.

History

The idea to hold a Snow Goose festival came from John Koshak of the Colorado Division of Wildlife (CDOW). He approached Education Specialist Linda Groat and Prowers County District Wildife Manager Bryant Will for their ideas and support. Together with the Lamar Chamber of Commerce, they organized the first festival in 2003.

Mr. Koshak's desire to see the festival come about was threefold. First, he knew that seeing 30,000 geese is an impressive experience and wanted to share it. Second, he had a great concern for the viability of Snow Goose populations. Third, he saw this event as an opportunity to bring people to the area at a time when most are not likely to visit otherwise.

As the festival has grown, venues have had to change. In the beginning the Cow Palace was the host. This was changed to Lamar High School and then to Lamar Community College due to the popularity of some sessions, making larger rooms available and providing a more comfortable experience.

One constant throughout the years has been the keynote speaker, who leads sessions and presents at a dinner on Saturday night. Peter Dunne of the Cape May Conservatory in New Jersey and Mary Taylor Young, a nature writer from Colorado, have been guests in previous years.

Due to the festival's popularity and the prominence of Lamar in the southeast region, the decision was made to launch the Colorado Birding Trail at the Snow Goose Festival in 2007. At the same time, those interested in the historical significance of the area launched a "history trail." Both of these trails were presented at a special luncheon with local and state dignitaries.

Education

The plight of the Snow Goose is unusual: the trouble isn't that the birds are declining; it's that they are thriving. With mild weather, the birds are traveling shorter distances south, so migration fatalities are minimized. In addition, hunting has declined in popularity over the last several years, so the geese are not being thinned out on migration. On the northern end of their flight, the flocks are becoming too large to be sustained by their feeding grounds, and they are damaging their summer home. Larger flocks can lead to disease, lack of food and nesting sites, and large die-offs. One aim of the Snow Goose Festival is to alert others to this potential danger.

In order to help people to experience these birds and learn more about their dilemma, the organizers of the event set up a tour

each year early on Sunday morning to capture the flight of the geese. Spotters are sent to scout out where the birds have roosted for the night to make sure participants are able to enjoy this event. Sometimes hunters and birders meet as they both watch the birds in the early morning. It gives all an opportunity to understand the necessity for management as well as preservation of the species. A clinic for hunters (and non-hunters) is offered as well, to highlight the value of hunting in keeping the population healthy. Techniques for hunting geese are also presented. To show just how great a concern there is in managing this population, in the past six years the limit on how many geese can be taken per hunter has been eliminated.

Snow and Ross's Geese, Prowers County, 2 December 2005. Photo by Mike Seraphin

Though the Snow Goose Festival began as a way to enlighten people about the Snow Goose, it isn't just about the geese. The festival has evolved over the years to give visitors a taste of all that this area of the state has to offer. Southeast Colorado hosts well over 400 out of the close to 500 species of birds that have been found in Colorado. This corner of the state also plays host to eleven birds that are currently endangered, threatened, or of special concern, including the Least Tern, Bald Eagle, Piping Plover, and Lesser Prairie-Chicken, to name a few. Festival sessions have discussed several of these species and the particular concerns of each.

A good opportunity for educating locals and visitors alike occurs on tours. For example, local farmers and ranchers have been able to learn about helping the Mountain Plover during nesting by flagging their nests to avoid destroying them while plowing. These occasions will help to keep birds off the endangered species list and help people understand how they can assist the birds.

The educational mission of the festival extends beyond birds to include prehistoric, American, Native American, and natural his-

tory, from rock formations, dinosaur tracks, and Native American petroglyphs to early settler days, the Sand Creek Massacre, and World War II Japanese-American internment camps. The developers of the Snow Goose Festival include some of these topics each year to round out the visitor's experience. Local experts, along with National Park personnel, lead participants in understanding the richness of the history of the area.

The Community and the Future

The Lamar community has taken ownership of this festival, and locals are heavily involved in putting the event together.

Since the inception of the festival, the leaders have been very open to changes and new ideas. Each year the event is evaluated and suggestions are seriously considered. For example, the Pueblo Raptor Center has attended each year; because this has been a popular session, staff will have the birds on display all day for the first time in 2009. Additionally, in response to the concern that too much goes on at once, the festival has begun scheduling fewer concurrent sessions.

It has been difficult to maintain a balance between advertising what the area has to offer (with the desire to add revenue to the community) and offering what participants want in a festival. Some of those involved represent the birding community and others are interested in economic gain. Nonetheless, helping each to understand the perspective of the other is a win-win situation. This is an ongoing process and something that needs to be continually revisited through self-critique and possibly participant surveys.

Goose watchers, Queens SWA, Kiowa County, 26 February 2005. Photo by Linda Groat

The purpose of this festival is to encourage the public to enjoy the nature around them, protecting it and managing it. Those who live in southeast Colorado are becoming more and more eager to share what they have, considering this to be a great area to live in. They desire to protect it and share it with others so that future generations will be able to enjoy all that it has to offer.

Lamar Snow Goose Festival: 19-22 February 2009

For more information about the Snow Goose Festival and to register for it, visit the website at www.highplainssnowgoose.com or call 719-336-6608. Most weekend festival events are free. There is a $10 pre-registration fee due by 6 February to attend most of the programs. The registration fee will increase after that date. Children attend for free. There are additional fees for the bus tours and for the Saturday night dinner.

Selected 2009 Snow Goose Festival Events

Keynote Speaker

- John Acorn, writer and host of the television series "Acorn, The Nature Nut."

Historical Presentations

- "Giant Reptiles on the Plains," Bruce Schumacher, USFS paleontologist
- "Medical Practices on the Santa Fe Trail," Don Headlee, living history interpreter

Field Trips

- Picture Canyon and surrounding area
- Sunrise tour to Queens Lakes
- John Martin Reservoir

Children's Programs

- "The Kids' Zone," featuring hands-on experiences, crafts, and other activities on all types of wildlife
- Raptor Center of Pueblo presentation, with live birds to view and learn from

Arts & Crafts/Informational Booths

- Local artisans
- Local natural and historical bookstores

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

I would like to thank Linda Groat, John Koshak, and Michael Seraphin for detailed discussions on the history, purpose, and future of the Snow Goose Festival. Linda and Michael reviewed earlier drafts of this article.

Judi Ogle, wypafl@centurytel.net

The 49th Report of the Colorado Bird Records Committee

Lawrence S. Semo
Chair, Colorado Bird Records Committee

Douglas W. Faulkner
Secretary, Colorado Bird Records Committee

Introduction

This 49th report presents the results of deliberations of the Colorado Bird Records Committee (hereafter CBRC or Committee) on partial results of circulations held during the summer and fall of 2008. This article provides results of the circulation of 109 reports submitted by 36 observers documenting 63 occurrences of 39 species from the period 2001 through 2008, although most records treated here pertain to 2007. Nine records involving nine individual birds were not accepted because of insufficient documentation or because descriptions were inconsistent with known identification criteria. Per CBRC Bylaws, all accepted records received final 7-0 or 6-1 votes to accept. Each report that was not accepted received fewer than four votes to accept in the final vote. Those records with 4 or 5 accept votes have transcended to a second round of deliberations, and results of those records will be published at a later date.

Highlights of this report include the fifth state record of Common Black-Hawk (*Buteogallus anthracinus*), the fourth record of Harris's Hawk (*Parabuteo unicinctus*), the fifth accepted observations of both Louisiana Waterthrush (*Seiurus motacilla*) and Painted Redstart (*Myioborus pictus*), and the third record for Nelson's Sharp-tailed Sparrow (*Ammodramus nelsoni*), which constitutes the first documented occurrence of that species in Colorado in 34 years. Three potentially new species to the state list are still pending within the CBRC: Vaux's Swift (*Chaetura vauxi*), Pacific-slope Flycatcher (*Empidonax difficilis*), and Yellow-bellied Flycatcher (*E. flaviventris*).

Committee members voting on these reports were Coen Dexter, Doug Faulkner, Peter Gent, Rachel Hopper, Joey Kellner, Bill Maynard, Ric Olson, and Larry Semo.

Changes to the Main Review List

Each year the Committee examines species on the review list to determine whether they meet the Committee's general criteria for review under its bylaws (an average of fewer than three records per year

over the most recent ten years) and, if not, whether Committee evaluation is still warranted. For some species, as the Committee accumulates data, patterns and trends of occurrence defining the predictable status and distribution of the species emerge. For such species, if identification is straightforward, the Committee may decide not to review further records. On these criteria, two species, Trumpeter Swan (*Cygnus buccinator*) and Tundra Swan (*C. columbianus*) have both been removed from the main review list, and a third species, Lucy's Warbler (*Vermivora luciae*), has been moved to a conditional review list. For both swans and for Lucy's Warblers in Yellowjacket Canyon, no documentation needs to be submitted to the CBRC for occurrences after 30 August 2008.

Trumpeter Swan has been on the main review list since the CBRC's inception in 1972. The first record for Colorado was of a bird procured as a specimen from Fort Collins, *Larimer*, on 25 November 1915. By 1980, there were only two additional records, the birds occurring during the period December-February. Four records were gathered during the 1980s during the period November-June. In the 1990s, the increase of records gained momentum, with 12 records falling between November and March. During the first decade of this century, there have been an additional 14 records accepted, with many more still in circulation or not yet circulated. This increase in the number of records coincided with reintroductions or introductions of the species across the northern tier of states. The species is now considered regular in small family groups during the late fall period, with some remaining to winter when open water is available, the last reports usually being from March.

Prior to the 1990s, Tundra Swans were known to be a rare to uncommon regular migrant through Colorado, especially in the northwestern portion of the state. However, based upon obvious misidentifications of Tundra and Trumpeter Swans in the late 1990s and a perception that the number of Tundra Swans occurring in the state was decreasing, the Committee placed the species on the statewide main review list in 2002 (Semo et al. 2002). Since the species was placed on the list, the Committee has accepted 17 records, and reports from COBirds and other sources seem to indicate that the current status of the species is rare to uncommon but regular in fall migration, birds arriving usually in early November and departing the state once lakes freeze over in late December. Spring records are rarer, but a few birds usually migrate through Colorado during March. In contrast to Trumpeter Swans, which usually stay within their annual family group, Tundra Swans form larger flocks, with as many as 15 birds documented within the same flock in Colorado.

Since the discovery of nesting Lucy's Warblers in Yellowjacket Canyon in western *Montezuma* in 2004, a small number of breeding pairs has nested within the same stretch of the drainage every year. As the species appears to be regular at that location, the Committee will no longer solicit details on the occurrence of the species at that site. However, as the abundance and distribution of the species elsewhere in *Montezuma* is unknown, the CBRC will still request documentation of birds from other drainages within the county as well as areas up- or downstream from the known breeding location. As the CBRC has determined for Black Rail (*Laterallus jamaicensis*), Acorn Woodpecker (*Melanerpes formicivorus*), Inca Dove (*Columbina inca*), and others, observations of Lucy's Warblers from elsewhere in the state require documentation to be accepted by the CBRC.

Committee Functions

All reports received by the CBRC (written documentation, photographs, videotapes, and/or sound recordings) are archived at the Denver Museum of Nature and Science, 2001 Colorado Boulevard, Denver, CO 80205, where they remain available for public review. The Committee solicits documentation of reports in Colorado for all species published in its review list, including both the main and supplementary lists (Semo et al. 2002), and for reports of species with no prior accepted records in Colorado. Those lists can be found at http://www.cfo-link.org/birding/lists.php. Documentary materials should be submitted online at the CBRC website (http://www.cfo-link.org/CBRC/login.php).

Committee News

Coen Dexter's second consecutive term has ended at the end of December 2008. David Silverman has accepted the vacant CBRC position. David's first term will end in December 2011. The Committee expresses its gratitude for Coen's service and contributions to the Committee and wishes him success in whatever endeavor he may choose to conduct next. Thanks, Coen!

Report Format

The organization and style of this report follow those of Leukering and Semo (2003), with some alterations. If present, the numbers in parentheses following a species' name represent the total number of accepted records for Colorado, followed by the number of accepted records in the ten-year period preceding the submission. The latter number is of importance, as it is one of the criteria for a species' continuance on or removal from the statewide Main Review List (Semo et al. 2002).

The records in this report are arranged taxonomically following the American Ornithologists' Union (AOU) Checklist of North American Birds (AOU 1998) through the 49th Supplement (AOU 2008). Each record presents as much of the following information as we have available: number of birds, age, sex, locality, county, and date or date span. In parentheses, we present the initials of the contributing observer(s), the official record number, and the vote tally in the first round and, if relevant, second round (with the number of "accept" votes on the left side of the dash).

The initials of the finder(s) of the bird(s) are underlined, if known, and are presented first if that person (those people) contributed documentation; additional contributors' initials follow in alphabetical order by name. If the finder(s) is (are) known with certainty, but did not submit documentation, those initials are presented last. Observers submitting a photograph or video capture have a dagger (†) following their initials; initials of those who submitted videotape are indicated by a lower-case, italicized "v" (*v*); and those who submitted sonograms or recordings are indicated by a lower-case, italicized "s" (*s*). Thus, the parenthetical expression "(JD *v*, RA†, TL, JV, CW; 2001-36; 4-3, 6-1)" means: JD found the bird(s) and submitted documentation (including video) and, as the finder, is first in the list of those that submitted details with initials underlined; RA, though alphabetically first of the five submitting observers, was not the finder, so comes second; RA submitted, at least, photographic documentation; the record number assigned to the occurrence was 2001-36; and in the two rounds of voting, the first-round vote was four "accept" votes and three "do not accept" votes, and the second-round vote was 6-1 in favor of accepting the report. The decision on most reports is completed in the first round.

In this report, county names are italicized in keeping with the style established for the *News from the Field* column in this journal. We have attempted to provide the full date span for individual records, with the seasonal reports in *North American Birds* and this journal being the primary sources of those dates. The Committee has not dealt with the question of full date spans as compared to submitted date spans when documentations do not provide such. The CBRC encourages observers to document the final date on which a rare species was seen, as that provides historical evidence of the true extent of its stay.

For this report, the following abbreviations are used : CG: Campground; CBR: Chico Basin Ranch; CR: County Road; Res.: Reservoir; SP: State Park.

RECORDS ACCEPTED

Eurasian Wigeon – *Anas penelope* (34/15). A male at Pastorius Res., *La Plata*, on 6 Apr 2007 was the first for the county and only the fifth for the West Slope (HM †; 2007-17; 7-0). Another male discovered at a playa near CRs 100 and 23 near Sedgwick, *Sedgwick*, on 9 Jun 2007 was the first for that county (AS †, HA; 2007-87; 7-0). The June date marks the latest spring date for the species in Colorado, the previous being 30 Apr.

Long-tailed Duck – *Clangula hyemalis*. A basic-plumaged female-type bird at Coryell Ranch ponds near Carbondale, *Garfield*, on 10 Feb 2007 represents a rare record for that location (TM, LW; 2007-8; 7-0). Representing a very rare plumage type in Colorado, an alternate-plumaged male was at Fossil Creek Res., *Larimer*, on 28 Apr 2007 (LS †; 2007-79; 7-0).

Red-throated Loon – *Gavia stellata* (34/11). A basic-plumaged adult was at Pueblo Res., *Pueblo*, on 10 Nov 2007 (BKP †; 2007-93; 6-1). This is the sixth record for *Pueblo* and the fifth for Pueblo Res.

Yellow-billed Loon – *Gavia adamsii* (19/7). Three additional Yellow-billed Loon records were recently accepted. A basic-plumaged bird was at Spinney Mountain Res. on 22 Oct 2006 (AS, JK, NKsr; 2006-182; 6-1), establishing the first record for *Park*. A juvenile met its demise at Erie Res. in *Boulder*, where present between at least 22 and 24 Nov 2006 (WS †, PGe, BM †, BSc†, 2006-162; 7-0); this establishes the first record of the species for that county. Discussions on COBirds indicated that the bird succumbed during an attempt by wildlife officers to rescue it when the lake froze over. *Jackson* received its first record of Yellow-billed Loon in the form of a basic-plumaged bird at MacFarlane Res. on 3 Nov 2007 (AS; 2007-90; 7-0). The species has now been confirmed from ten Colorado counties, with the newly accepted records from *Park* and *Jackson* representing the westernmost locations.

Common Black-Hawk – *Buteogallus anthracinus* (7/5). Establishing only the seventh record for the state and the first for *Mesa*, an adult was

Yellow-billed Loon, Erie Reservoir, Boulder County, 22 November 2006. Photo by Bill Schmoker

seen at Connected Lakes SP on 25 May 2007 (RLi; 2007-113; 7-0). The bird may have been present prior to the acceptance date; however, the Committee received no details of any earlier sighting.

Harris's Hawk – *Parabuteo unicinctus* (4/1). A second-cycle Harris's Hawk spent a brief period in a subdivision in Pueblo West, *Pueblo*, between 30 Jun and 1 Jul 2007 (BKP †, DF, BM †, LS †, AS †; 2007-44; 6-1). Although there was no question as to the specific identity of the bird, the Committee deliberated on its origin, as Harris's Hawks are a common bird in falconry, and the possibility of an escape or release needed to be investigated. The feather and bill/talon condition of the *Pueblo* bird did not suggest that the bird had been held in captivity, but the Committee could not rely on that information alone in its deliberations. Falconers take excellent care of their birds, and the plumage and morphology of falconers' birds are often not readily separable from those of wild individuals, except in a few cases where evidence of intense feather wear or lengthened mandibles or talons indicate that a bird has been confined or has been unable to wear its talons or bill naturally.

Harris's Hawk, Pueblo West, Pueblo County, 1 Jul 2007. Photo by Larry Semo

Per § 24-4-103 of the Colorado Revised Statutes (CRS), wild-caught Harris's Hawks used for falconry in Colorado must be affixed by Colorado Division of Wildlife (CDOW) staff with a black, non-reusable cable band on the tarsus. Photographic and observer examination of the bird clearly indicated that no black cable band was present on either of the bird's tarsi. Furthermore, no evidence of remnants of a jess was present on the subject bird.

In the event that a falconer's bird escapes, the owner of the hawk must contact the CDOW within five days of losing the bird. Investigations with CDOW and the Colorado Falconry Organization indicated that no falconer had reported a missing Harris's Hawk and that all were accounted for. Even if a bird had somehow managed to remove the cable band marker after escaping, there still should have been a confirmed report of an escape from a falconer, as the birds are of high value to those hobbyists, and their birds and facilities are periodically inspected by law enforcement. Failure to report a missing bird could result in termination of a falconer's permit and/or financial penalties; thus, the Commit-

tee deemed it likely that the Pueblo West bird was of wild origin.

Red Knot – *Calidris canutus* (25/10). Two were recently accepted. A juvenile, the third for *Bent*, was near the outlet of Adobe Creek Res. on 2 Sep 2007 (BM †; 2007-54; 7-0). Providing the first record for *Huerfano*, an adult was at Orlando Res., where present between 9 and 12 Sep 2007 (DS, BKP †; 2007-55; 7-0).

Short-billed Dowitcher – *Limnodromus griseus*. An alternate-plumaged adult, a first for CBR, was at Headquarters Pond in *Pueblo* on 7 May 2007 (BM †; 2007-33; 7-0). Another alternate-plumaged bird was at Pastorius Res., *La Plata*, on 5 May 2007 (JBy; 007-82; 6-1)

Red Phalarope – *Phalaropus fulicaria* (39/19). Four additional records were recently accepted. An alternate-plumaged female headed the list with her appearance at a pond 0.5 miles south of the intersection of CR 122 and CR 45 in rural *Weld*, documented between the period 2 and 7 Jun 2007 (DF, GG, BM †, AS †, BK; 2007-40; 7-0). This represents the second record of the species for *Weld*. *Arapahoe* received its first record with a basic-plumaged bird present at Cherry Creek Res. on 11 Sep 2007 (GW †; 2007-58; 7-0). The bird apparently remained at that location for a few days longer, though the CBRC received no details on any later date. The first record for *Lake*, generally a county not conducive to harboring shorebirds, was achieved with a basic-plumaged bird observed at Twin Lakes on 20 Oct 2007 (TK; 2007-74; 7-0). Finally, the second record for *Arapahoe* occurred in the same year as the first, when a basic-plumaged individual was again at Cherry Creek Res. on 6 Nov 2007 (BM, GW; 2007-92; 7-0).

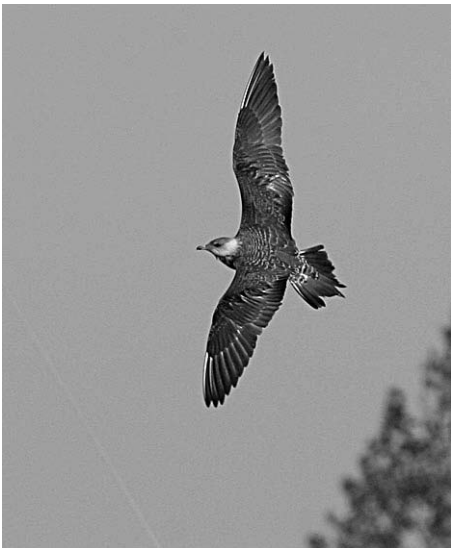
Black-legged Kittiwake – *Rissa tridactyla* (33/11). A bird molting from first- to second-cycle was documented from Pueblo Res. on the late date of 8 May 2007, although it was apparently first detected on 3 May (BKP †, RMi; 2007-34; 7-0). This is the fourth for *Pueblo* and furnishes the second latest spring record for the state, the latest being from Chatfield Res., *Douglas*, on 14 May 2001. The fourth for

Red Phalarope, Weld County, 3 June 2007. Photo by Bill Maynard

Chatfield, *Douglas* and *Jefferson*, a juvenile was present on 21 Nov 2007 (AS; 2007-112; 7-0).

Long-tailed Jaeger – *Stercorarius longicaudus* (13/6). Establishing the first for well-birded *Boulder*, a juvenile coursed Boulder Res. on 13 Sep 2007 (TH †, BSc; 2007-88; 7-0).

Lesser Nighthawk – *Chordeiles minor* (19/10). Providing the first record for *Dolores*, a pair of males was at the sewage ponds in Dove Creek on 14 Jul 2006 (AS, CWi, NK Sr., NK Jr; 2006-108; 6-1). A female was later discovered at this same site on 16 Aug 2007 (JBy; 2006-114; 7-0). Establishing the first record for *Montrose*, four birds (three juveniles, one female) were at the sewage ponds in Nucla, 2-4 Sep 2006 (AS †, NP, CDe; 2006-119; 7-0).



Long-tailed Jaeger, Boulder Reservoir, Boulder County, 13 September 2007. Photo by Thomas Heinrich

Ruby-throated Hummingbird – *Archilochus colubris* (10/9). An adult male, the first for *Boulder*, irregularly visited the feeders at John Vanderpoel's home in Niwot, where it was documented on 19 Aug 2007 (WS, BSc †, JV; 2007-51; 7-0).

Black-chinned Hummingbird – *Archilochus alexandri*. Quite far north was an adult male at Masonville, *Larimer*, on 18 Jul 2007 (RH †, SMi; 2007-47; 7-0).

Red-naped Sapsucker – *Sphyrapicus nuchalis*. Rare in winter, an adult female was at Holy Cross Abbey in Cañon City, *Fremont*, between at least 15 Jan and 18 Feb 2007 (BKP †, SMo; 2007-10; 7-0).

Eastern Wood-Pewee – *Contopus virens* (20/7). A singing bird, the third for *El Paso*, was photographed at CBR, where it was present between at least 13 and 16 Aug 2007 (BM †; 2007-48; 7-0).

Alder Flycatcher – *Empidonax alnorum* (23/13). As Colorado birders are becoming more knowledgeable about separating Alder and Willow (*E. traillii*) Flycatchers visually and by call, records of Alder Flycatcher have increased significantly, and it seems that the species is a rare but regular very late spring and early fall migrant across the Eastern Plains. The Committee recently accepted five additional records of the species. The second for *Larimer* was excellently described and photographed at Dixon Res., where present between 4 and 5 Jun 2005 (RH †; 2005-62; 5-2, 6-1). Two birds were at CBR, *Pueblo*, on 29

May 2006 (BM †; 2006-92; 5-2, 6-1). One at Crow Valley CG on 1 June 2007 (AS, RO, GW; 2007-86; 7-0) was the second for *Weld*. A juvenile was excellently documented from the *El Paso* side of CBR on 16 Aug 2007 (BM †; 2007-50; 7-0), and another juvenile was on the *Pueblo* side of the same ranch on 22 Aug 2007 (BM †; 2007-52; 7-0). There are now seven accepted records of Alder Flycatcher for CBR (five from *El Paso*, two from *Pueblo*).

Blue-headed Vireo – *Vireo solitarius* (19/17). *El Paso* received its second record with the female banded at CBR on 19 May 2007 (BG †; 2007-37; 6-1). *Baca* was provided its first record with one present below the dam of Two Buttes Res. on 2 Sep 2007 (PJ, KG; 2007-53; 7-0).

Philadelphia Vireo – *Vireo philadelphicus* (32/15). One, the fourth for *Prowers*, was five miles south of Lamar on 16 Sep 2007 (JS †; 2007-66; 7-0).

Tree Swallow – *Tachycineta bicolor*. Very late for the East Slope, one attempted to forage along frozen Barr Lake, *Adams*, on 16 Dec 2007 (GG †; 2007-106; 7-0). Winter records for the Grand Valley of western Colorado are a bit more frequent.

Sedge Wren – *Cistothorus platensis* (17/3). Providing the second record for *Boulder*, and the first there since 1974, a male established a territory in a wet meadow on a farm near Hygiene, where it was present between at least 6 and 12 Jun 2007 (SR, BSc †; 2007-41; 7-0).

Gray-cheeked Thrush – *Catharus minimus* (46/19). One was banded at CBR, *El Paso*, on 3 May 2007 (BG †; 2007-30; 7-0). This is the eighth Gray-cheeked Thrush to be banded at the Rocky Mountain Bird Observatory's banding station at CBR.

Varied Thrush – *Ixoreus naevius* (33/21). The CBRC recently accepted four additional Varied Thrush records. An adult male, the first for *Fremont*, was at Florence on 5 Jan 2007 (BKP †, SO; 2007-2; 7-0). Another male, *Larimer's* sixth, was in Fort Collins on 29 Jan 2007 (AC †; 2007-6; 7-0). A third male was in Durango, *La Plata*, on 30 Jan 2007 (HM †; 2007-7; 7-0). That bird, the third for *La Plata*, apparently remained at that location until at least 19 Feb, although no details were received for that later date. Finally, the first confirmed record for *Delta* was obtained with a female at Confluence Park in Delta on 24 Dec 2007 (MB; 2007-108; 7-0).

Brown Thrasher – *Toxostoma rufum*. Far west was the one at Horsethief SWA near Fruita, *Mesa*, seen between 19 and 20 Jan 2008 (CDo †, 2008-6; 7-0).

Sprague's Pipit – *Anthus spragueii* (10/6). Three birds were seen at a seemingly predictable fall location near Hale, *Yuma*, where they were documented on 13 Oct 2007 (LS †; 2007-70; 7-0).

Blackburnian Warbler – *Dendroica fusca* (43/17). The first record for *Lincoln* was established with the presence of an alternate-plumaged male at Thompson Ranch near Limon on 6 May 2007 (AS †, JK; 2007-83; 7-0). Percival established the sixth record for *Pueblo* with one he found at Rock Canyon below Pueblo Res. on 9 Sep 2007 (BKP; 2007-56; 7-0).

Yellow-throated Warbler – *Dendroica dominica* (33/14). *Pueblo's* fifth was documented from CBR on 5 May 2007 (BM †, BKP †; 2007-32; 7-0).

Louisiana Waterthrush – *Seiurus motacilla* (5/1). The warbler highlight of 2008 was the Louisiana Waterthrush discovered along Lefthand Creek in Longmont, *Boulder*, where it was seen by many on 25 and 26 Apr (MM, GG †, RH †, BK, TLr, BM †, BKP †, NP *s*, BSc †, AS †, WS; 2008-33; 7-0). It was the first Louisiana Waterthrush documented in Colorado since 1996.

Louisiana Waterthrush, Boulder County, 26 April 2008. Photo by Bill Schmoker

Kentucky Warbler – *Oporornis formosus* (33/9). A male was wonderfully photographed at the Rocking 7K Ranch near Granada, *Prowers*, on 16 Apr 2008 (NS †; 2008-31; 7-0), establishing the earliest spring record for the state and the second record of the species for *Prowers*.

Painted Redstart – *Myioborus pictus* (5/2). Coming on the heels of one in 2005, Colorado's second Painted Redstart record in a decade came in the form of a bird discovered in Cañon City on 25 Apr 2007 (DF, PGe, RH †, TLe †, BM †, BKP †, NP, AS †, RM; 2007-26; 7-0). Of the five Colorado records of Painted Redstart, three have been documented between the period 25 Apr and 26 May, while the other two have been between 16 and 18 Nov. No pattern of geographical distribution has been detected, as records have come from *Jefferson*, *Delta*, *Larimer*, *Garfield*, and *Fremont*.

Scarlet Tanager – *Piranga olivacea* (32/16). An alternate-plumaged male established a territory in Gregory Canyon, where it was documented between 30 June and 7 Jul 2007 (BM †, NP, LS †, KMD; 2007-45; 7-0). This is the fourth record of the species for *Boulder*.

Eastern Towhee – *Pipilo erythrophthalmus* (15/12). Providing the third record for *Pueblo*, a female was at CBR on 27 Apr 2007 (BM †; 2007-28; 7-0).

Nelson's Sharp-tailed Sparrow – *Ammodramus nelsoni* (3/1). Exciting was the discovery of a Nelson's Sharp-tailed Sparrow at Fox Ranch near Idalia, *Yuma*, on 6 Oct 2007 (BSc, 2007-60; 7-0), which establishes only the third record for the state and the first

Painted Redstart, Cañon City, Fremont County, 25 April 2007. Photo by Tony Leukering

since 1973. The observer's description of an *Ammodramus* displaying a combination of an orange breast with faint streaking, a sharply demarcated white belly contrasting with the orange breast, a characteristic facial pattern, and a gray nape satisfactorily ruled out other species of sparrow.

Fox Sparrow – *Passerella iliaca.* A "Red" Fox Sparrow (*P. i. iliaca/zaboria*) was below the dam of Bonny Res., *Yuma*, on 13 Oct 2007 (LS †, NE, TSm, 2007-69; 7-0). Unusual away from the mountains, two "Slate-colored" Fox Sparrows (*P. i. schistacea*) were recently accepted from the Eastern Plains. One was at CBR, *El Paso*, on 1 Apr 2007 (BM †; 2007-21; 7-0) and the other was below Standley Lake, *Jefferson*, on 6 Oct of that same year (LS †, TSm; 2007-68; 7-0).

Golden-crowned Sparrow – *Zonotrichia atricapilla* (21/13). A first-basic bird in active molt to alternate plumage, apparently first found on 2 Feb 2007 at Tunnel Drive in Cañon City, was documented as occurring at that site between 16 Feb and 16 Mar 2007 (DE †, TLe †, BM †, BKP †, RM; 2007-9; 7-0). This represents the first record of the species for *Fremont*. The first record for *Washington* was also recently gained with an alternate-plumaged bird present at Last Chance on 6 May 2007 (AS †, RLe; 2007-84; 7-0). This represents the latest spring date for the species in Colorado.

Snow Bunting – *Plectrophenax nivalis*. One cavorted with Horned Larks (*Eremophila alpestris*) near Wellington, *Weld*, on 15 Jan 2007 (RH; 2007-77; 7-0).

Eastern Meadowlark – *Sturnella magna* (10/5). One singing on territory at Cattail Pond near Loveland between at least 28 May and 3 Jun 2007 (GG †, AS †s, CWi; 2007-39; 7-0) was the second for *Larimer*.

Great-tailed Grackle – *Quiscalus mexicanus*. Establishing the first record for *Rio Blanco*, a male was at Rio Blanco SWA on 8 Jun 2007 (DF †, 2007-42; 7-0).

Scott's Oriole – *Icterus parisorum*. Out-of-range was the alternate-plumaged male at Fairmount Cemetery in Lamar, *Prowers*, photographed on 17 Apr 2007 (BG †; 2007-24; 7-0).

RECORDS NOT ACCEPTED

The Committee recognizes that its decisions may upset some observers. We heartily acknowledge that those who make the effort to submit documentation certainly care whether or not their reports are accepted. However, non-accepted records do not necessarily suggest that the birder misidentified or did not see the species. A non-accepted record only indicates that the documentation was not complete or convincing enough to catalogue on the list of confirmed bird records for the state. Non-accepted reports may provide evidence which does not mention certain requisite field marks or which indicates that the conditions of the observation did not permit the proper study of all necessary traits. All non-accepted records are archived at the Denver Museum of Nature & Science and may be reconsidered by the Committee if new information is provided (e.g., photos, documentation from other observers). We summarize below why the following reports were not accepted.

Glossy Ibis – *Plegadis falcinellus*. An adult *Plegadis* ibis at Stagecoach Reservoir, *Routt*, on 19 May 2002 needed two rounds of voting (2002-179; 4-3, 3-4). Members in dissent commented that the written description did not adequately rule out possible hybridization with White-faced Ibis, nor was a hybrid directly ruled out by the observer in the documentation. The bird was described as having "uniform steel gray" legs and a gray bill with a "reddish hint to the middle," features that some members suggested did not support its identification as a pure Glossy but may have suggested possible hybridization. Classic adult Glossy Ibis in alternate plumage would show gray legs with red "knees" and a brown bill. However, the Glossy-favorable description of "the facial skin [being] bluish-gray with pale bluish white lines between the bill and the eye that did not connect behind the eye" led other committee members to accept the documentation. Unfortunately, the observer did not report eye color and the submitted photos were not of sufficient quality for that detail, or other salient characteristics, to be clearly discerned.

Wood Stork – *Mycteria americana*. The report of one at a small farm pond near Windsor, *Weld*, on 9 Jun 2007 was intriguing but lacked some key details to be accepted as the state's third record and the first since 1934 (2007-43; 2-5). Of concern to most members were the bird's size (noted as similar to Great Egret, which is slightly smaller than Wood Stork) and the lack of any mention of black flight feathers. The observer's description of a "large, primarily white bird…head and neck were black and featherless" was, nonetheless, enough to garner some support. While this would not have constituted a first state record, the Committee does place more emphasis on the need for complete descriptions of species that don't occur even once a decade (or in this case in seven decades) in Colorado (see also Pyrrhuloxia, below).

Mew Gull – *Larus canus*. An adult in basic plumage at Union Reservoir,

Weld, on 27 Nov 2006 met with mixed Committee opinion (2006-165; 3-4). Committee members in favor of the identification did not provide reasons for their opinions; however, dissenting members considered the "dark" bill and lack of any mention of a tertial crescent in their decisions not to support this documentation. The bird was also vaguely described as having a dark head and neck, being smaller than a Ring-billed Gull, with shorter legs and a back that was "a little darker." While these marks are suggestive, some members thought that lighting issues may have played a part in the observer's description of the dark bill, head, neck, and mantle, and that without a clearer description of these body parts, the documentation left too much to the reader's interpretation.

Whip-poor-will – *Caprimulgus vociferus*. One report from the Soapstone Ranch, *Larimer*, on 22 May 2006 did not convincingly eliminate Common Poorwill in the opinion of the majority of Committee members (2006-80; 1-6). The bird was observed for a total of 30 seconds as it was incidentally flushed by the observer. Committee members were concerned about the subjective description of size—deceptive on a flying bird and without direct comparison to other species—and the vagueness of the description. The observer noted "rufous on the upper wings" and "a lot of white on the end of the tail," features that could also describe Common Poorwill. The amount and shape of white in the tail, extensive and triangular on Whip-poor-will (with the inner rectrices containing more white than the outer rectrices), was not mentioned. The habitat of grassy hillside with patches of yucca also favored Common Poorwill, since Whip-poor-will is a species of open woodland.

Lesser Nighthawk – *Chordeiles acutipennis*. Another caprimulgid documented at the Soapstone Ranch, *Larimer*, this one on 11 Jul 2006, received little Committee support (2006-107; 1-6). Weighing on the Committee's decision was the brief one-minute observation and lack of details regarding key features separating Lesser and Common Nighthawks. One member commented that potential identification pitfalls presented by juvenile Common Nighthawks need more attention by the birding community and should be considered whenever a possible Lesser Nighthawk presents itself.

Chihuahuan Raven – *Corvus cryptoleucus*. Chihuahuan Ravens have been reported with increasing frequency along the northern Front Range over the past several years. Documentation of one near LaSalle, *Weld*, on 17 Apr 2007 is one of few reports submitted to this Committee, however (2007-25; 2-5). Separation of Common and Chihuahuan Ravens can be very difficult even under ideal viewing conditions, and the short duration of observation (one minute) of this flying individual weighed heavily in some members' decisions not to accept. In addition, several members commented that the description of the bird's vocalization as a "high-pitched, crow-like croak" and of its overall size as "not much bigger than a crow" as it was harassed by Red-winged Black-

birds suggested that American Crow was not sufficiently ruled out.

Sprague's Pipit – *Anthus spragueii*. The report of a lone bird flushed from the edge of Ramah Reservoir, *El Paso*, on 20 Oct 2007 did not adequately eliminate similar species in the opinions of most Committee members (2007-114; 1-6). The observer's description of a small passerine with short streaks on a light buffy breast was suggestive, but most members felt that longspurs and Vesper Sparrow were viable contenders. Unfortunately, the only species specifically eliminated in the documentation was American Pipit. Without more justification for why this bird was not a longspur or similar-looking species, and since other species were not readily eliminated by the description or other evidence provided, the Committee overall could not support the documentation pertaining to the reported species.

Pyrrhuloxia – *Cardinalis sinuatus*. Committee members were mixed in their decision on the report of an adult female in Broomfield, *Broomfield* (2007-102; 3-4). The bird was observed at close range coming to a residential feeder intermittently from 6-11 Dec 2007. The bird was described as light gray with orangish/yellowish underparts, a curved dull yellow bill, a pinkish wash under the chin, and slight red edging to the "lower wings", slightly smaller than a Northern Cardinal but shaped like one. Female Pyrrhuloxias show red on the crest, tail, and around the eye—features that should have been seen on a bird observed at close range—and the lack of these features was a cause of concern for some Committee members. While the general description, especially of the curved yellow bill, suggested this species, it was not enough to sway the majority of Committee members to accept this as the state's fourth record.

Purple Finch – *Carpodacus purpureus*. An adult female coming to a residential feeder was reported near Florence, *Fremont*, on 25 Dec 2007 (2007-116; 2-5). The bird associated with Cassin's Finches at the feeder and the observer noted that the bird differed from that species, but provided few specific details. Committee members specifically commented on the lack of information on bill shape or undertail covert pattern, both important characteristics to consider when identifying a suspected Purple Finch in Colorado.

REPORTERS AND CITED OBSERVERS

The CBRC graciously thanks the following individuals for submitting records of or discovering rare species in Colorado that prompted this circulation: HA: Henry Armknecht; JBy: Jim Beatty; MB: Maggie Boswell; AC: Alex Cringan; CDe: Coen Dexter; CDo: Craig Dodson; KMD: Kathy Mihm-Dunning; DE: David Elwonger; NE: Norm Erthal; DF: Doug Faulkner; PG: Peter Gent; BG: Brian Gibbons; GG: Gregg Goodrich; Pat Gould; KG: Kevin Groeneweg; TH: Thomas Heinrich; RH: Rachel Hopper; PJ: Peter Janzen; BK: Bill Kaempfer; TK: Tim Kalbach; JK: Joey Kellner; NKjr: Nick Komar, Jr.; NKsr: Nick Komar, Sr.; TLr: Thomas Lechleitner; Marie Cecile Lee; RLe: Randy Lentz; TLe: Tony Leukering; RLi: Roger Linfield; TM: Tom McConnell; BM: Bill Maynard; Rae

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

Douglas W. Faulkner, 6035 Parfet St., Arvada, CO 80004, pomjaeger@aol.com

Short-eared Owl by Joe Rigli

Lamar: Snow Goose Festival Headquarters

Judi Ogle

You're on your way down, down, down to Lamar, and wondering if this really is still Colorado, when your stomach rumbles. You begin to question what you might find to eat. Is there a stagecoach stop down here somewhere? Worry no more: there are plenty of places to eat in Lamar, including several of the usual chains. Beware, however, that there is not much between Limon and Lamar or between La Junta and Lamar, so if you are beginning to feel hunger pangs in those towns, you had better stop.

The first place you will come to in Lamar is **Ranchers Family Restaurant**, at the Truck Plaza on Highway 50 west of town. Though truck stops are usually last on my list, this one isn't too bad; they have a modest salad bar and a decent selection of sandwiches and full dinners. Friday night they feature prime rib, which is pretty good and not too exorbitant ($16). The place is nothing fancy, but prices are decent ($8-$20 range), and you won't go hungry. They are open 24 hours and offer breakfast anytime.

Coming on into town you will actually have a choice of two Asian restaurants. **The Thai Spicy Basil** is located in an old Carl's Jr. just before the railroad tracks on Main Street; it offers a good selection of Asian dishes. They have done a good job of converting the restaurant to look like something other than a fast food joint. Prices range from $10-$15. I like the Thai Spicy Basil for their atmosphere, but I prefer **Green Garden** on Olive Street for the flavor of their food. The Green Garden offers a lunch buffet with a good va-

Thai Spicy Basil restaurant, Lamar, Prowers County. Photo by Judy Ogle

riety of Chinese favorites for $7.95 plus beverage and tax. I have never actually ordered off their menu, as we always get the buffet, but in talking to other locals, I find they like the food served there.

There are a few Mexican restaurants in town, with my favorite being **Mission Villanueva**. They are located just north of the community college, close by if you are going to the Snow Goose Festival. They are in line pricewise, and the food is good, with a nice variety. One of my friends, however, felt their food was pretty spicy, so if you like mild Mexican food, try somewhere else (like the Taco John's across the road!).

There is a new restaurant, **Carami's**, which offers American, Mexican, and Italian cuisine. While not offering a huge selection of each, they have a nice array of dishes. The American food is comprised of steaks that run about $14-$21, while the Italian meals vary from about $9-$13. I had the chicken parmigiana, which was tasty and more than adequate to fill me up. Their Mexican dishes run about $5-$8, and from the descriptions on the menu, they sound good. Carami's caters to children, having kid's menus and crayons to keep them occupied. They have done a good job of decorating inside but you wouldn't know it from the outside, so don't discount it when you drive up. Located on Olive Street just west of Wal-Mart, it is closed from 2:00 to 4:00 p.m., so you will want to plan accordingly.

A local favorite for breakfast would be **Hickory House**. Located on Main Street (Highway 50), they open at 5:30 a.m., so even the early birder can get breakfast at a decent price before the sun comes up. They also offer lunch and supper, but are only open until 8:00 p.m.. They offer a typical diner-type menu. **The Perk** just reopened on Main Street down in the center of town. An appealing little shop, they offer sandwiches and cold beverages as well as coffee. If you need a good cup of coffee or some other specialty perk to get you going, check it out.

Best Western Cow Palace Inn has a full-service restaurant. It is sufficient as far as hotel restaurants go, but a bit pricey. I checked on just a couple of other motels and found that the **Days Inn** and **Super 8** both offer limited continental breakfasts if you happen to be staying there.

The best local burger joint is **BJ's.** They also offer some Mexican and other sandwich meals, along with shakes and ice cream. This is a drive-in, but you can also eat in their dining room. It's a typical burger joint, but the food is good (I like their taco salad) and reasonably priced: you can get a pretty full meal for under $10. Those with kids may want to check this out—it is a change from Burger King or McDonald's and has a lot more choices. We like to go here so that if one child just wants a sandwich, one a hot dog, and the other Mexican,

all are satisfied in one place. Plus, even in the winter, ice cream is still a treat.

If you want an all-around fine dining experience, there is only one place to go. This is **Chez W. DuVall's** located in Granada, a 15-minute drive east of Lamar on Highway 50. They have a nice atmosphere, good meals fixed in an appealing way, and prices that aren't bad (around $15-20). If you are tired after a full day and want to kick back with friends, this is the place to head for. They have a couple of smaller rooms that you can reserve if you want a quiet place to gather; if they aren't being used, you may just be able to ask for them when you arrive. Lunch is served from 11:00 a.m. to 2:00 p.m. and supper from 5:00 p.m. to 9:00 p.m.. Across the street is **Shorty's**. While it isn't my favorite place, a lot of locals won't go anywhere else for Mexican food. The prices are fairly reasonable, but it has a diner atmosphere.

Chez W. DuVall's restaurant, Lamar, Prowers County. Photo by Judy Ogle

If you happen to be coming in from Kansas or are headed that way, Holly has a few restaurants as well. All three are located on Highway 50, so you can't miss them. **Porky's Parlor** has a variety of burgers and Mexican food for under $10. The portions aren't huge, but they are sufficient. They also serve ice cream, sundaes, and blizzard-type desserts. Across the street is **JR's Country Store**. While it is just a convenience store, they do have good pizza. Just down the highway as you are leaving Holly going east is **The Tasty House**. Locals like the good homestyle meals. The Tasty House also serves burgers, fries, and such. Their prices are good, but beware that they are only open for breakfast and lunch.

As you can see, you shouldn't go hungry coming out on the prairie. Pack your canteen—I mean water bottle—and head for the southeast!

Judi Ogle, wypafl@centurytel.net

Summer 2008 (June-July)

Andrew Spencer

Summer in Colorado ranks as one of the more predictable seasons. The usual breeding species are in the midst of raising another year's young. The last dregs of spring migration and the first push of fall migration add some spice. A rare vagrant or two usually appear and gain a cult following.

This year, summer was a bit less predictable. On a trip to Park County in early June, Mark Peterson reported that barely any of the normal montane breeders were present. Forrest Luke, who lives in northwestern Colorado, reported abnormally high numbers of mountain breeders in Craig (below 6000 feet), also in early June. He and others speculated that many of the species normally setting up territories and building nests at high elevations were put off schedule by high snowpacks, a gift of the past winter. By the time July rolled around, though, observers report that breeding season was well underway in the mountains, so it seems to have been a temporary disruption.

The season also had the typical early summer spring migration and late summer fall migration. For the end of spring migration, there seemed to be fewer than normal reports of eastern warblers on the plains in early June, other than a spectacular day at Dixon Reservoir on the 9th. Lingering shorebirds were a bit closer to typical, and a few came through on record late dates. For the beginning of fall migration, shorebirds again seemed to come through in smaller than normal numbers. Like last year, this is probably due to a lack of good habitat early in the season, before the plains reservoirs were drawn down.

Weatherwise, the depressing trend of hot and dry continued for yet another summer (WRCC 2008). A bit of good news tainted all the doom and gloom, though—temperatures were not as far above normal as during the past few summers. In fact, in Grand Junction, the June average temperature was 0.03° *below* normal. The July average was 1.76° above normal, though, and the June and July temperatures in Ft. Collins were 1.38° and 3.86° above normal, respectively, while in Lamar for the same months the averages were 0.09° and 1.52° higher.

Precipitation totals, while below average almost across the board, were also less dire than in previous summers. In Ft. Collins, the total was actually 0.26" above normal for June, but 0.47" below normal for July. In Grand Junction the totals were 0.04" and 0.57" below average

for June and July, and in Lamar they were 1.02" and 0.23" short for the same months.

Corrigenda: In the Spring 2008 report (42:197), the photo caption for Louisiana Waterthrush should read "*Boulder*" rather than *Larimer*, and the text should say "25-26 April" rather than May.

Note 1: The reports contained herein are largely unchecked, and the report editor does not necessarily vouch for their authenticity. Underlined species are those for which the Colorado Bird Records Committee requests documentation. You should now submit your sightings through the CFO web site at http://www.cfo-link.org/CBRC/login.php5. This is the preferred method of submitting records. However, if you need a form, use the one on the inside of this journal's mailer. Documentation should be sent to the chairperson, Larry Semo (address on form).

Note 2: The name of the county is listed in italics only the **first** time each location is mentioned in the report. County names are usually not mentioned in subsequent records, except to specify the placement of birds within sites that lie within multiple counties.

Abbreviations: CBR: Chico Basin Ranch, *El Paso/Pueblo*; CVCG: Crow Valley Campground, *Weld*; doc: documentation submitted to the CBRC; no doc: no documentation submitted to the CBRC; m.ob..: multiple observers.

Snow Goose: In most years, a few of this typically winter species remain into the summer. This year it was a singleton at NeeNoshe Res., *Kiowa*, on 4 June (SRu, ABa). The prevailing theory is that the laggards are birds injured by hunters during the spring.

Trumpeter Swan: A bird first found in the Blue Lake area, *Eagle/Garfield*, this past fall was seen into the summer, last on 4 July (TM). This bird is now thought to be an escapee.

Ring-necked Duck: An individual at Nucla, *Montrose*, on 15 June (CD, BW) and one at Fruitgrowers Res., *Delta,* on 3 July (LS, TS) were at significantly lower elevations than normal for the summer months.

Greater Scaup: A pair in Craig, *Moffat*, from 1 to 7 June (FL) seemed to have forgotten that their species should not be in Colorado during the summer months.

Lesser Scaup: Continuing the trend of lingering ducks, there were three reports of this species in the lowlands this summer. One was at Monte Vista NWR, *Rio Grande*, on 7 June (TFl), two were at the Blanca Wetlands, *Alamosa*, on 9 June (TFl), and one was at Fruitgrowers Res. on 3 July (LS, TS).

Bufflehead: There were three reports of this species this spring away from their sole known breeding area in Colorado, the Park Range in *Jackson*.

Two were at the Blanca Wetlands on 9 June (TFl), one was at Fruitgrowers Res. on 15 June and 3 July (EH, LS, TS), and one was at Lake Dorothey SWA, *Las Animas*, on 29 June (DEm, m.ob.).

Hooded Merganser: Four were reported from the Ward Road Ponds, *Jefferson*, on 9 July, and breeding was confirmed (DF). This species has only rarely been confirmed as a breeder in the state.

Common Merganser: A female at Lake Meredith, *Crowley*, on 8 July (SeM) was decidedly unexpected at that atypically low summer elevation.

Gunnison Sage-Grouse: One seen on Poncha Pass, *Saguache*, on 8 June (TFl) was a heartening sign that the introduced population in the area still clings to existence.

Northern Bobwhite: A report of two from Rocky Ford SWA, *Otero*, on 8 June (SO) is mostly included here to highlight the fact that, in this author's experience (and the observer's), this species has become much harder to find in Colorado during the last five or so years.

Common Loon: One in alternate plumage rode the white water in Glenwood Canyon, *Garfield*, on 6 June (JCp, AR). The only other report from the summer was of one in basic plumage from Clear Creek Res., *Chaffee*, on 22 June (RHa). This species is rare during the summer, but typically one or two remain into the season, usually birds in basic plumage.

***Aechmophorus* sp. Grebe:** The large nesting colony of Clark's and Western Grebes at Lake Henry, *Crowley*, this summer produced a sighting of a male Western and female Clark's with chicks (VT). Hybrids between these closely related species are observed with some regularity (pers. obs.).

Least Bittern: One was heard on 28 July at Thurston Res., *Prowers* (MP, BKP, doc.).

Little Blue Heron: An adult along the Big Dry Creek near Standley Res., *Jefferson*, on 18 June (LS) was the only one reported this season.

Tricolored Heron: A juvenile at Thurston Res. from 27-28 July (DL, m.ob., doc.) was a nice find, and presaged the "invasion" to come later in the fall.

Cattle Egret: There were only two reports this summer, one from De-Weese Res., *Custer*, on 2 June (RM) and one from Lake Meredith on 4 June (SRu, ABa).

Green Heron: Birds present throughout the summer at Connected Lakes SP, *Mesa* (TD, m.ob.) represented the only West Slope reports for the season. Individuals were also seen in *El Paso, Huerfano, Otero,* and *Prowers*.

Black Vulture: Breaking with tradition, a member of this species was reported away from *Bent*, in Loveland, *Larimer*, from 4-7 June (DBr, no doc.). It kept with tradition, however, by being frustratingly hard to pin down.

Mississippi Kite: One in Fort Collins, *Larimer*, on 10 June (ED) was significantly farther north than normal. This species was reported as being present in lower than typical numbers in Pueblo this summer (m. obs.).

Black Rail: This species returned to its western outpost at the Nepesta Marsh, *Pueblo*, for the third summer in a row—one was reported there on 19 July (MP, LE, BSt).

Sandhill Crane: One reported from CO 52 and County Line Road, *Boulder*, on 28 June (AC) was either seriously lost or possibly breeding nearby.

Black-bellied Plover: Deciding to indulge in a somewhat tardy spring migration was one at NeeNoshe Res. on 4 June (SRu, ABa).

Snowy Plover: CBR got its second record when one showed up on the *Pueblo* side on 2 June (KPa). The only report of the San Luis Valley breeding population was of five on 9 June at the Blanca Wetlands (TFl).

Semipalmated Plover: The first migrant of the "fall" was found on 12 July at Bonny Res., *Yuma* (BPr, IPr).

Solitary Sandpiper: Very early even for this species in fall migration was one at Ramah SWA, *El Paso*, on 28 June (MP). One at Connected Lakes SP on 3 July (LS, TS) wasn't much later.

Greater Yellowlegs: Also rather early was one of this species at Ramah SWA on 28 June (MP).

Lesser Yellowlegs: The lesser of the two yellowlegs lagged not only in size, but arrival date as well. The first of the season was at Ramah SWA on 3 July (BM).

Long-billed Curlew: Four at Bonny Res. on 12 July (BPr, IPr) were the first reported for fall migration away from the breeding areas.

Upland Sandpiper: One reported south of Lamar, *Prowers*, on 30 July (JSt) was likely a fall migrant; this is a hard species to find away from its northeastern Colorado breeding locations.

Marbled Godwit: Barely a month separated the last spring migrant from the first fall migrant. One was at John Martin Res., *Bent,* on 2 June (SRu, ABa), while three were at Ramah SWA on 3 July (BM).

Sanderling: One in basic plumage at Duck Lake, *Larimer*, on 13 July (NK) was just bizarre; this species is normally a later fall migrant, and one would expect that an individual in July would still be in alternate.

Semipalmated Sandpiper: The first fall migrants appeared a bit early, in the form of two found at Big Johnson Res. on 20 June (TFl).

Western Sandpiper: Not only was a flock of 50 at Bonny Res. on 12 July the first report of the season (BPr, IPr), it was also a very good high count for Colorado.

Least Sandpiper: Ramah SWA keeps pulling in the first season reports, this time a report of this species on 3 July (BM).

White-rumped Sandpiper: Per usual, this was among Colorado's latest spring migrants. The high count of the season was 40+ at NeeNoshe Res. on 4 June (SRu, ABa). The last report for spring migration was the inexplicably late bird at Ramah SWA from 28 June to 3 July (MP, m.ob.); it shared the lake with a number of more timely shorebirds heading south.

Baird's Sandpiper: Thirty at Big Johnson Res. on 20 June (TFl) were the first of fall migration.

Pectoral Sandpiper: Three in

Crowley on 8 July (SeM) furnished the first fall report.

Stilt Sandpiper: Bonny Res. was the scene of the first Stilt Sandpipers of the fall, when three were reported on 12 July (BPr, IPr).

Red-necked Phalarope: One in alternate plumage at Lower Latham Res., *Weld*, from 28-30 June (JTa, m.ob.) was likely a late spring migrant, whereas one at Walden Ponds, *Boulder*, on 20 July (SP, KB) likely represented an exceptionally early fall migrant.

Yellow-billed Cuckoo near Hotchkiss, Delta County, July 2008. Photo by Jason Beason

Laughing Gull: An adult at Duck Lake on 3 June (NK, doc.) likely inspired more jubilation than laughter.

Least Tern: Representing a first county record was an adult at Rio Blanco Res., *Rio Blanco*, from 6-7 June (FL, m.ob.).

Caspian Tern: This species has become a bit harder to find in Colorado during the past few years, and a mere two reports for the summer season reflects this. Two were at Steamboat Res., *Routt*, on 9 July (NM, DBo), and one was at John Martin Res. on 28 July (MP, BSt, LE).

Black Tern: The breeding population of this species in Colorado has crashed in recent years, and I received no reports of this species from breeding locations this summer. One in Grand Junction, *Mesa*, on 6 June (LA) was probably a late spring migrant, and two adults at Ramah SWA on 3 July (BM) were likely early fall migrants.

Common Tern: The decidedly uncommon (in Colorado) tern was first reported for fall migration on 27 July, when two were at Thurston Res. (DL).

White-winged Dove: Gone are the days when White-winged Dove was a really rare bird, worth driving a couple of hours to see. This summer there were thirteen reports, from *Bent, Boulder, Custer, Denver, El Paso, Larimer, Mesa, Otero, Prowers,* and *Pueblo.*

Inca Dove: The only sightings this season were from the classic haunts of this diminutive dove, and in smaller numbers than usual (one each for Rocky Ford and Lamar).

Yellow-billed Cuckoo: Exciting was the news of the first confirmed

nest of this species in western Colorado, photographed near Hotchkiss, *Delta*, in July (JBn).

Lesser Nighthawk: The on-again, off-again invasion of this species into southwestern Colorado was most certainly on this spring. Up to four were seen at the Nucla Sewage Ponds, *Montrose*, from 1-13 June (CD, BW, m.ob., doc.), and three were seen at Zink's Pond, *La Plata*, on 11 June (JBy, no doc.).

Black Swift: Reports away from known breeding colonies this summer include a sighting of an unknown number of birds at Seven Falls, *El Paso*, on 14 June (JOw) and up to three at Lake Beckwith, *Pueblo*, from 23-29 July (DS).

Blue-throated Hummingbird: A "non adult male" was reported from Grand Junction on 30 July (DWr, CSh, no doc.); in the past couple of decades this species has been reported in the state very rarely, and many sightings have turned out to pertain to Magnificent Hummingbirds.

Magnificent Hummingbird: The summer of 2008 was certainly magnificent, with four reports of this species: a female was above Manitou Springs, *El Paso*, from 6-10 July (BSt, m.ob., doc.); another female was near Maysville, *Chaffee*, from 8-18 July (BG, DG, no doc.); a female/immature was in Colorado Springs, *El Paso*, from 26-27 July (JP, NP, no doc.); and one was near Dunton, *Dolores*, from 15-29 July (*fide* CD, no doc.).

Ruby-throated Hummingbird: Likely a late spring migrant (as well as a very rare sighting, period) was an adult male in Trinidad, *Las Animas*, on 1 June (PS, no doc.).

Black-chinned × Broad-tailed Hummingbird: A male hummingbird photographed in *Jefferson* on 15 July (MC) was thought to be of this hybrid combination.

Calliope Hummingbird: An adult male in *Boulder* on 2 July (DW) furnished the first report of the season. Another male south of Lamar from 23-24 July (LP) was quite a bit farther east than normal for this species in Colorado.

Rufous Hummingbird: This species is rare in the state before July; there were two reports this summer in June. One was in Estes Park, *Larimer*, on 22 June (TE, FE), and one was above Manitou Springs on 24 June (BSt).

Red-headed Woodpecker: While this handsome woodpecker is fairly common on the eastern plains, it is far rarer near the Front Range. A male was reported from Lon Hagler Res., *Larimer*, on 15 June (DBt) and a pair was reported from the Hayman Burn, *Jefferson*, from 15 June to 26 July (THv, m.ob.).

Acorn Woodpecker: There are precious few recent records of this species away from Rafter J, *La Plata*, so one near Lewis, *Montezuma*, on 18 June (*fide* CD, no doc.) was significant, and a first county record.

Willow Flycatcher: Breeding Willow Flycatchers were reported at multiple locations around Craig during Yellow-billed Cuckoo surveys. This area is lower than typical for breeding populations of this species in the state, and it would be interest-

ing to figure out exactly which subspecies was involved. Two reported from the Great Sand Dunes NP, *Alamosa*, on 9 June (TFl) were possibly of the endangered southwestern subspecies.

Least Flycatcher: The spread (or recent detection) of this species in western Colorado during the past couple of years has been nothing short of astounding. This year there were reports of pairs from six different locations, mostly in *Moffat* (FL) but also in *Routt* (AH) and *Delta* (JBn). There were no reports, negative or positive, this summer from *Gunnison*, where they were detected last year.

Gray Flycatcher: One at Dixon Res., *Larimer*, on 9 June (ED) was rather unseasonal for this typically early migrant, not to mention out of range.

"Western" Flycatcher: One south of Lamar on 14 June (JSt) was probably a very tardy migrant.

Black Phoebe: A mere six reports was far fewer than normal for the summer, though this is no doubt due to many on the West Slope not being reported. Most significant was the report of a single bird in central *Las Animas* on 20 July (TFl); this species has not been reported in the area since the first Breeding Bird Atlas.

Vermilion Flycatcher: A male south of La Junta, *Otero*, on 7 June (LK, no doc.) was significant. This species bred at the Higbee Cemetery for a few years, but has not been reported in the area recently.

Ash-throated Flycatcher: One at Russell Lakes SWA, *Saguache*, on 8 June (TFl) was out of habitat and out of range. Even more out of range was a pair at Horsetooth Res., *Larimer*, on 10 July (DSt, CS).

Scissor-tailed Flycatcher: The only report was from *Broomfield* on 7 June (SPl, doc.).

White-eyed Vireo: One near Antonito, *Conejos*, from 13-14 June (JSt) was not only late for spring migration, but also well out of range, providing a very rare San Luis Valley record.

Bell's Vireo: Also very out of range was a singing male of this typically far northeastern Colorado breeder at Gregory Canyon, *Boulder*, on 17 July (SJ).

Gray Vireo: The elusive southeastern Colorado breeding population of this species is very hard to pin down, so a report from 29 June near Florence, *Fremont* (PGo), was good to hear about.

Red-eyed Vireo: This species is a peripheral breeder at best in Colorado, though the mere six reports was still fewer than normal. Counties with sightings include *Baca, Boulder, Fremont, Jefferson,* and *Larimer.*

Chihuahuan Raven: Two reports were received of out-of-range Chihuahuan Ravens this summer. One was in Littleton, *Arapahoe*, on 5 June (GP) and another was in *Conejos* on 7 June (TFl). Observers are cautioned that identification of this species is far from straightforward, and more difficult than many field guides would have you believe.

Carolina Wren: Two reports was a bit fewer than normal. A singing male was below the Raton Mesa, *Las Animas*, on 1 June (AS) and one was

in Cañon City, *Fremont*, from 28 June to 27 July (RM).

Eastern Bluebird: Providing an unusual foothills breeding record was a pair that raised three young this summer at the Eldorado Mountain Open Space, *Boulder* (CN).

Veery: One at CVCG on 7 June (TJ) was likely a late spring migrant.

Swainson's Thrush: A report of five from south of Lamar on 1 June (JSt) represented the last report of spring migration.

Wood Thrush: Among the best of the migration finds of the summer season was a singing male of this species at Dixon Res., seen from 8-11 June (ED, m.ob., doc.).

Lucy's Warbler: Three to four were reported this summer from the only known breeding location in Colorado, Yellowjacket Canyon, *Montezuma* (LS, TS).

Northern Parula: As with most warbler species in Colorado, this species is far rarer on the West Slope than the east, so one found singing in Hotchkiss on 17 June (JBn) was unusual. However, one at 12,000 feet (!) on the slopes of San Luis Peak, *Saguache*, on 10 July (JBi) was even more unusual.

Chestnut-sided Warbler: A male at Dixon Res. on 9 June (ED) was likely a late spring migrant; another in Gregory Canyon on 12 June (WS) may also have been one, or it could have been a summering bird.

Prairie Warbler: The presence of a nest-building female of this species at Castlewood Canyon SP, *Douglas*, from 17-20 June (GC, m.ob., doc.) must certainly rate among the most unusual reports of the summer. This is the first record of any nesting activity by Prairie Warbler in Colorado.

Blackpoll Warbler: One at Dixon Res. on 9 June (ED) was the last gasp of the magnificent spring migration for this species in Colorado.

American Redstart: An immature male rounded out the excellent 9 June at Dixon Res. (ED).

Ovenbird: There were seven reports of this uncommon breeder this summer, from *Boulder, El Paso, Fremont, Huerfano, Jefferson, Larimer,* and *Pueblo*.

Hooded Warbler: Last year's successful breeding pair in Cañon City returned again this year, with reports from 28 June to 27 July (RM, m.ob.). A male that was singing at the Eldorado Mountain Open Space from 3-24 June (CN, m.ob.) was not so lucky in finding a mate.

Hepatic Tanager: Colorado's most reliable location for this rare breeding species, the Bader Ranch in *Las Animas*, pulled through again this year with a pair seen on 19 July (CW, NK, no doc.).

Scarlet Tanager: The bird found last summer in Gregory Canyon must have found Colorado more to its liking than Massachusetts, as it returned for another year in the Centennial State. This year it was reported from the beginning of the season through 18 July (MM, m.ob., doc.).

Cassin's Sparrow: Two singing males were present at Chatfield State Park, *Douglas*, on 13 June (JK), significantly farther west and north than usual.

McCown's Longspur: A family group found in *El Paso* on 24 June (JD) represents a new breeding location for this species, which is rare away from the Pawnee Grasslands.

Rose-breasted Grosbeak: There were six reports this summer of the eastern grosbeak, all in June. Two were from the West Slope: a male and female in Steamboat Springs, *Routt*, from 4-5 June (LW, m.ob.) and a male in Hayden, *Routt*, on 6 June (NM).

Painted Bunting: Colorado's only reliable location for this gaudy species proved to be so for another year. Sightings came from Cottonwood Canyon, *Baca/Las Animas*, on 3 June and 19 July (SRu, ABa, NK, CW, no doc.). The only other report was from Conifer, *Jefferson*, from 8-10 June (*fide* JTa, no doc.).

Bobolink: One was in Paonia, *Delta*, on 1 June (JBn); this species is very rare on the West Slope away from the breeding colonies in the northwestern counties and *Gunnison*.

Eastern Meadowlark: The only sighting of the season was of one of the Lillian's race on a private ranch in *Las Animas* on 2 June (AS, no doc.).

Baltimore Oriole: The West Slope's third report came from Eagle, *Eagle*, where a male visited feeders from 6 June to 5 July (JRi, m.ob.).

Scott's Oriole: A male was seen in southwestern *El Paso* on 8 June (PHu); this species is very rare in the county.

Black Rosy-Finch: Exceptionally late was one in Estes Park on 5 June (NG).

Brown-capped Rosy-Finch: Also late, away from their breeding areas, was a flock of 500 on 11 June in Estes Park (SRa).

White-winged Crossbill: There were only two reports of this erratic species this summer: of three on Old La Veta Pass, *Costilla/Huerfano*, on 6 June (AS), and of one singing male on Cameron Pass, *Larimer*, on 2 July (SRi).

Pine Siskin: Well east of normal for the summer months were two south of Lamar from 1-20 June (JSt) and four at the Fairmount Cemetery in Lamar on 25 July (DL).

Prairie Warbler with nesting material at Castlewood Canyon SP, Douglas County, 21 June 2008. Photo by Loch Kilpatrick

REGIONAL COMPILERS

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CONTRIBUTING OBSERVERS

ABa: Andy Bankert; AC: Ann Cooper; AH: Allison Hilf; AR: Andrea Robinsong; AS: Andrew Spencer; BG: Bob Germany; BKP: Brandon Percival; BM: Bill Maynard; BPr: Bill Prather; BSt: Brad Steger; BW: Brenda Wright; CD: Coen Dexter; CN: Christian Nunes; CS: Carol Simmons; CSh: Charlie Shannon; CW: Cole Wild; DBo: D. Bolton; DBr: David Bray; DBt: Denise Bretting; DEm: Donna Emmons; DF: Doug Faulkner; DG: Donna Germany; DL: Dave Leatherman; DS: Dave Silverman; DSt: David Steingraeber; DW: David Waltman; DWr: Dave Wright; ED: Eric Defonso; EH: Evelyn Horn; FE: Fred Engelman; FL: Forrest Luke; GC: Greg Cook; GP: Greg Pasquariello; IPr: Inez Prather; JBi: Jeff Birek; JBn: Jason Beason; JBy: Jim Beatty; JCp: Jacob Cooper; JD: John Drummond; JK: Joey Kellner; JOw: Judi Owens; JPe: Jack Peterson; JRi: Joann Riggle; JSp: John Stump; JSt: Jane Stulp; JTa: Joyce Takamine; KB: Kristin Brinkmann; KPa: Ken Pals; LA: Larry Arnold; LE: Lisa Edwards; LK: Loch Kilpatrick; LP: Linda Paulsen; LS: Larry Semo; LW: Lisa Williams; MC: Mark Chavez; MM: Mark Miller; MP: Mark Peterson; NG: Nancy Gobris; NK: Nick Komar; NM: Nancy Merrill; NPe: Norma Peterson; PGo: Pat Gould; PHu: Paul Hurtado; PS: Pat Snider; RHa: Randy Hancock; RM: Rich Miller; SeM: SeEtta Moss; SJ: Steve Jones; SO: Stan Oswald; SP: Scot Pipkin; SPl: Suzi Plooster; SRa: Scott Rashid; SRi: Sue Riffe; SRu: Saraiya Ruano; TD: Todd Deininger; TE: Tena Engelman; TFl: Ted Floyd; THv: Tom Halverstadt; TJ: Tina Jones; TM: Tom McConnell; TS: Tim Smart; VT: Van Truan; WS: Walter Szeliga

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Andrew Spencer, 3649 E. Phillips Ave., Centennial, CO 80122, gwwarbler@gmail.com

Brown-capped Rosy-Finch: Beware of Gray-crowned-like Males

Tony Leukering

Among New World rosy-finches, Brown-capped Rosy-Finch is fairly distinct, plumage-wise, from the other two species. It is more distinctly sexually dimorphic (that is, its male and female plumages are more different), it is more extensively pink, and it does not typically exhibit a distinct gray crown patch. Thus, the usual difficulty in identifying individual rosy-finches is not picking out Brown-cappeds, but separating immature female Black Rosy-Finches from immature Gray-crowned Rosy-Finches.

However, a small minority of male Brown-capped Rosy-Finches have a crown pattern approaching that of Gray-crowned Rosy-Finch of both sexes. To assist understanding, I'll quickly discuss field-useful age determination criteria and typical rosy-finch crown patterns. All that I discuss below is based on winter birds and may not be completely reliable on summer birds, which achieve a slightly different plumage solely by wear of the feathers, not by molting.

Ageing rosy-finches

All rosy-finch species are identical in this respect, so they are treated as one here. Adults can usually be discerned from immatures by the color of the fringes of the primaries and the greater coverts: bright rosy-pink in adults, whitish and/or very pale pink in immatures. There is a minority of 'tweeners (either intermediate fringe coloration or a mix of whitish and pink fringes) that I suspect are individuals in their first adult plumage (that is, about 1.5 years old), but most can be aged by these fringes. Some authorities consider this ageing system simplistic, but lacking solid published evidence to the contrary, I consider the above useful enough for the purposes of this paper.

Typical rosy-finch crown patterns

After the pre-formative molt (the molt conducted on the breeding grounds in the individual's first fall after leaving the nest), Gray-crowned and Black Rosy-finches of both sexes have virtually identical crown patterns: a black forehead contrasting sharply with medium gray extending from the top of the head back and down to the nape. All forms of Gray-crowned Rosy-Finch share this crown pattern, though they vary in the extent of gray on the sides of the

head, with the "coastal" (Sibley 2000) *littoralis* showing a mostly-gray head and "interior" (Sibley 2000) *tephrocotis* having the gray crown contrast strongly and sharply with a brown face.

Brown-capped Rosy-Finch varies in two different ways. The first is that females usually lack any gray on the crown, being an unremarkable grayish-brown throughout the head, though with at least some suggestion of darkening on the forehead. Typical male Brown-cappeds sport black foreheads, as do the other two species. However, from near the top of the forehead, without forming a sharp contrast, the edges of the crown feathers get more extensively gray and thus less-extensively dark-centered towards the back of the head, so that the feathers above the nape are nearly wholly gray. This difference creates an appearance of no distinct pattern, just a gradual lightening of the top of the head from the black forehead to the gray rear crown. (Note that as the gray edges wear off the crown feathers through the winter and into the summer, the entire crown may become darker.)

"Odd" Brown-capped Rosy-Finch crown pattern

The problem Brown-capped Rosy-Finches are, in my experience at least, all adult males. These individuals have a more abrupt transition from entirely black forehead feathers to entirely gray crown feathers, as illustrated by the bird in the top picture on the back cover (the bottom two pictures are of typical adult males of Brown-capped (middle) and Gray-crowned (bottom) Rosy-Finches for comparison).

When encountering such a rosy-finch, one does not have to resort to guessing the bird's identity, as even the most gray-crowned of Brown-capped Rosy-Finches don't have the sharp demarcation of black and gray on the crown typical of Gray-crowned Rosy-Finch. Though there are Gray-crowned Rosy-Finches with less distinct separation, even those can be correctly diagnosed, as there are other features that can assist us in species determination. The most important of these is the tone of brown on the body. Gray-crowned Rosy-Finch is strikingly warm brown (with a reddish cast) on the upper belly and chest, with this color extending onto the face and neck in the interior race, *tephrocotis*. Brown-capped Rosy-Finch exhibits a colder brown completely lacking any reddish tone and, particularly early in winter, sports pale fringes to these feathers that add to the cold aspect of the plumage. Additionally, despite illustrations to the contrary in many field guides, male Brown-capped Rosy-Finches usually (always?) display brown on the chin and upper throat (often warmer than that of the rest of the body) compared to the black or mix of brown and black typical of Gray-crowned Rosy-Finch. Finally, Brown-capped Rosy-Finch has more extensive and, usually, brighter

pink on the belly, with this color being more-or-less continuous from the vent to the chest; Gray-crowned Rosy-Finch's pink is usually more scattered and does not extend farther than mid-belly.

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Send journal contributions to:

Nathan Pieplow
4745-B White Rock Circle
Boulder, CO 80301
editor@cfo-link.org

Submissions of photos or graphics not accompanied by articles are welcomed. Send these to Glenn Walbek, gwalbek@comcast.net.

Adult male Brown-capped Rosy-Finch, Allenspark, Boulder County, 8 January 2005. *Photo by Bill Schmoker*

Adult male Brown-capped Rosy-Finch, Allenspark, Boulder County, 22 January 2005. *Photo by Tony Leukering*

Adult Gray-crowned Rosy-Finch, Allenspark, Boulder County, 10 February 2006. *Photo by Glenn Walbek*