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Idaho-Western Montana Region

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Spring 1996 was unusually cool, wet and soggy region-wide. It's perhaps not surprising then, that migration was reported as weak, with reduced numbers of both species and individuals. How much of this phenomenon was real vs. perceived is hard to determine. From observer comments, it's clear that the seemingly constant, cold, drizzle discouraged field exploration. An example of some birding opportunities that may have been passed up however, was the miniature "fallout" which occurred in Grangeville, Idaho May 16; when a rainstorm grounded 17 migrant species in one tiny suburban lot. Among the surprises were Marsh Wren, Townsend's Warbler and Yellow-breasted Chat. The only reason these birds were noticed at all was that the observers were standing at the kitchen window - lamenting the miserable weather!

Abbreviations: A.F.R. (*American Falls Reservoir, by American Falls, ID*).

Loons to Ducks

Common Loons nested at Kickinghorse Res., Lake, MT (PW) this spring. Although the species regularly breeds in nearby pristine mountain lakes, use of this low-elevation, agricultural reservoir was unusual.

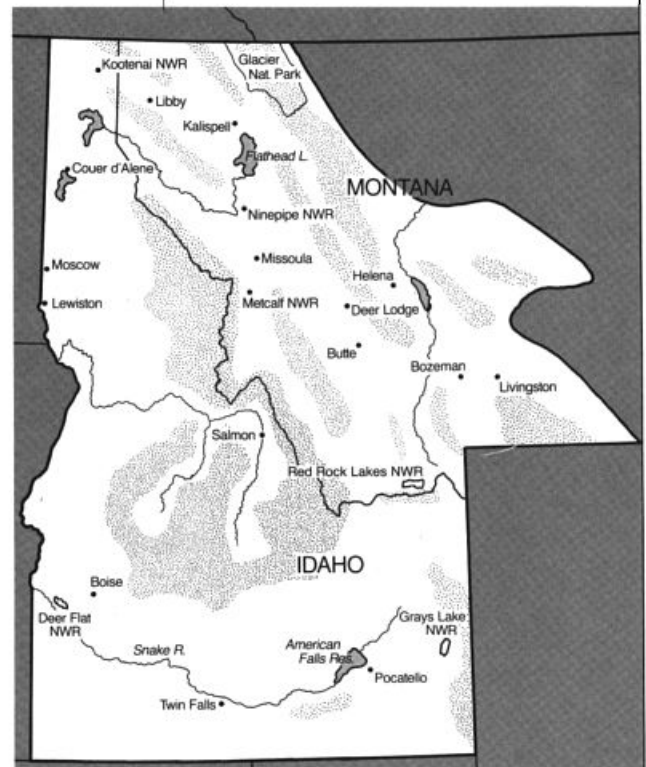
American White Pelicans are unusual and local throughout the

region's northern half. Five such Pelicans were on Pend O'reille L., *Bonner*, ID Apr. 1 (EC), and up to 6 were on Coeur d'Alene L., *Kootenai*, ID in mid-May (m.ob.). A single Am. White Pelican was on the Bitterroot R. near Missoula, MT in late May (CB, VV), and may have been the same bird seen there in December. A single Double-crested Cormorant was near Sandpoint, ID Apr. 11 and May 23 (m.ob.). Other singles were near Riggins, ID May 26 (m.ob.), and on Thompson L., *Kootenai*, ID May 31 (JWN).

An Am. Bittern May 6 10 mi n. of Salmon, ID (HR), provided a first for Latilong 10. A Great Egret pair was found nesting on A.F.R., Apr. 21 (CT), a new location for this slowly increasing species. Wandering Great Egrets included singles near Priest River, ID Apr. 26 (DCa), and Kamiah, ID Apr. 29 (KD). Idaho's first **Tricolored Heron** was at Market Lake W.M.A., May 11 (R&RD, †CT). Over 50 birders participating in the annual "Birdathon" were able to enjoy the bird, which was not subsequently seen.

Up to five Greater White-fronted Geese were on Chatcolet L., *Benewah*, Mar. 14-18 (m.ob.). Although Ross' Geese are now regular in Idaho, the single which sat down in a small, suburban Moscow, ID pond Apr. 17 (PW) was still very unusual.

A Blue-winged x Cinnamon Teal hybrid was near Moscow Mar. 24 (JH, MH). Idaho Eur. Wigeon sightings were numerous and included two at Lane Marsh,



Kootenai, ID Mar. 16 (SHS, GC), two on Coeur d'Alene L., Mar. 16 (SHS), one at Mud Lake W.M.A., *Jefferson*, Mar. 31 (CT), one on Coeur d'Alene L., Apr. 2 (SHS), two on Mann L., *Nez Perce*, Apr. 5 (KD, DNS), two in Boise Mar. 1–Apr. 30 (MC, FK, DT, m.ob.), and “several” at Kootenai N.W.R., *Boundary* (JRe). In w. Montana, the species was not reported outside of its usual Flathead Valley stronghold.

A Harlequin Duck pair was near Deer Lodge, MT May 8 (WHa, DSK); a pair at Warm Springs, MT (DSt) provided a first for Latilong 27. A ♂ Oldsquaw was along the Snake R. in w. *Power*, ID Mar. 10 (DB), and another was on Pend O'aille L. in April (JW). A ♀ White-winged Scoter was on the Snake R. near Hagerman, ID Apr. 20 (CT), where a male was present in February. Sightings of Oldsquaw and White-winged Scoter are rare Regionwide, and are usually limited to late fall and early winter.

Hawks to Thrushes

A “Harlan’s” Red-tailed Hawk was near Coeur d'Alene L., Mar. 6 (SHS), in the same general area where most of Idaho’s sightings have originated. The 7-year-old hawk watch near Rogers Pass, *Lewis and Clark*, MT found a record 1653 Golden Eagles, Mar. 1–Apr. 2 (F&CT). A late Gyrfalcon was on the Rathdrum Prairie, *Kootenai*, ID Apr. 20 (PD). A flock of 45 Sandhill Cranes flew over Moscow, ID Mar. 10 (KD), providing an unusual n. Idaho record.

Five Black-bellied Plover were at Mann L., May 5 (JH, MH), while 8 were at Helena L., *Lewis and Clark*, MT May 11 (GH). Two Dunlin were at Mann L., Mar. 3 (JH, MH), and were likely members of the small flock which wintered there. A seemingly out-of-place Dunlin was in a winter wheat field near Grangeville, ID Mar. 23 (DNS, IS), providing a first for Latilong 7. A Short-billed Dowitcher, rare anywhere in the Region, was near Market Lake W.M.A., *Jefferson*, ID May 11 (CT, m.ob.), while another was near Cataldo, ID May 12 (SW, JW).

An unidentified jaeger was at Deer Flat N.W.R., *Canyon*, ID Mar. 20 (DL). A flock of 17 Franklin’s Gull was near Kuna, ID May 27 (MC, FK, DT). Three locally-rare Bonaparte’s Gulls were at Blacks Creek Res., *Ada*, ID May 26 (MC, FK). A 2nd-year Thayer’s Gull was on A.F.R., Apr. 29 (CT). Single imm. Glaucous Gulls were near Coeur d'Alene, ID Mar. 23 (SHS) and American Falls, ID Apr. 28 (DB). Up to six Arctic Terns fed below A.F.R., Apr. 27 & 28 (DB, CT), providing Idaho’s 10th record.

A Great Gray Owl was at Farragut State Park, *Kootenai*, ID Apr. 17 (m.ob.), and was likely the same bird seen there last winter. An enigmatic adult ♂ humming-

bird coming to a feeder along Coeur d'Alene L., May 7–30 intrigued dozens of birders. Even though excellent views were obtained, there was little consensus on the bird’s identification. After much debate, expert review of the evidence determined that the mystery hummer was an Anna’s x Costa’s hybrid (SHS, SW ph., †DG, †DNS, m.ob.). Idaho has about 25 Anna’s records, but no Costa’s. Lewis’ Woodpecker are rare in n.c. Idaho, making two birds 8 mi n. of Moscow May 11 (JH, MH), and the single residing just w. of Troy throughout May (KD, m.ob.), of interest. A Blue Jay was present in Pocatello, ID all spring (*fide* CT, m.ob.), while another was in Moscow Mar 1–8 (*fide* KD).

After being notably late last year, Swainson’s Thrush arrived in most portions of the Region on time. In Helena, MT the species passed through in record numbers (GH).

Mockingbird to Finches

A N. Mockingbird was in n. *Kootenai*, ID Apr. 20 (PD). A Brown Thrasher made a rare w. Montana appearance May 20 in Missoula. Apparently wanting to be noticed, the bird chose the yards of two of the state’s most prominent ornithologists. After singing in Dick Hutto’s yard, the thrasher obligingly ran across Wright’s porch next door! A late flock of 12–14 Bohemian Waxwings was in Lewiston Orchards, ID May 7 (BG).

An early Nashville Warbler was near Viola, ID Apr. 9 (JH, MH). At least two “Myrtle” Yellow-rumped Warblers were in Boise, ID May 5–14 (MC, FK). Large flocks of “Audubon’s” Yellow-rumped Warblers passed through Missoula in late May (PW), much later than usual. A ♂ Rose-breasted Grosbeak graced a Soda Springs, ID feeder May 31 (DN), while another was at Deer Lodge, MT in late May (J&CW), where slightly more expected.

A late Am. Tree Sparrow visited a Moscow area feeder May 10 (KD). Four locally-rare Vesper Sparrows were at Farragut S.P., *Kootenai*, ID May 18–19 (GC, PC, SHS). Montana’s 4th Black-throated Sparrow was at Swan L., *Lake*, May 11 (†EJ), in the atypical setting of a high-mountain meadow surrounded by dense coniferous forest. Southeast Idaho had an unprecedented Lark Bunting invasion in late May. Birds were seen at Minikoka N.W.R., *Cassia*, in 2 different areas near Pocatello (JB, LLe), near Challis (AD), and near Carey (CT). An early Fox Sparrow, thought to be of the “Sooty” subspecies, was in Viola, ID Mar. 1 (JH, MH). A White-throated Sparrow was in St. Maries, ID Mar. 1 (JM), and another was by Cataldo, ID May 7 (SW). A Golden-crowned Sparrow along Lolo Creek, *Mis-*

soula, May 6 (DH, JMa) provided Montana’s 9th record. Single Golden-crowned Sparrows visited feeders May 12 near Moscow (KD, ph.), and inside Moscow (*fide* KD). The species was again recorded in nearby Viola, ID, as well, when a single at the Hirth’s feeder May 12 was joined by another May 13 (JH, MH).

Having generated more than 10 records in just 2 years, Idaho’s Great-tailed Grackle invasion no longer qualifies for boldfacing, but is certainly worthy of continued monitoring and wonder. This season, four Great-tailed Grackle were at A.F.R., Mar. 10 (DB, TG, CT), while two were in Boise May 4 (MC, FK). Two C. Grackle were in St. Anthony, ID May 11 (CT, m.ob.), and again bred in Ashton, ID (CT). At least 8 “green-backed” Lesser Goldfinches were along the Boise R. in Boise May 20–31 (MC, FK, DT), a first for Latilong 17.

Observers cited (subregional editors in boldface): IDAHO: Joan Bergstrom, Steve Bouffard, Dave Burrup, Don Carr (DCa), Earl Chapin, Mark Collie, Gordon Comrie (GC), Pam Comrie, Art Dahl, Paul DeLuca, Ruth and Rod Drewien (R&RD), Kas Dumroese, Todd Garlie, Dale Goble, Betty Golla, John Hirth, Marty Hirth, Merlene Koliner, Florence Knoell, Dave Lawrence, Louise Lee, John Montgomery, Dan Newman, John Nigh (JWN), Jimmy Reynolds (JRe), Hadley Roberts, Shirley Sturts (SHS), Dan Svingen (DNS), Ila Svingen, Dave Trochell, Charles Trost, Judy Waring, Susan Weller, Phyllis Wicks (PW). MONTANA: Clif Barry, Wayne Hadley (WHa), Denver Holt (DH), George Holton, Richard Hutto, Elli Jones, Jeff Marks (JMa), Don Skaar (DSk), Don Stoecker (DSt), Fred and Cathy Tilly (F&CT), Philip Wright, Virginia Vincet, Jim and Chris Walrath (J&CW) — Dan Svingen, P.O. Box 132, Grangeville, ID 83530.



Male Lesser Goldfinch along the Boise River at Boise, Idaho, in late May 1996. This bird appears to be foraging at flower heads of Fiddle-neck, *Amsinckia*, a favorite source of seeds. Photograph/Mark Collie.