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Mountain West Region

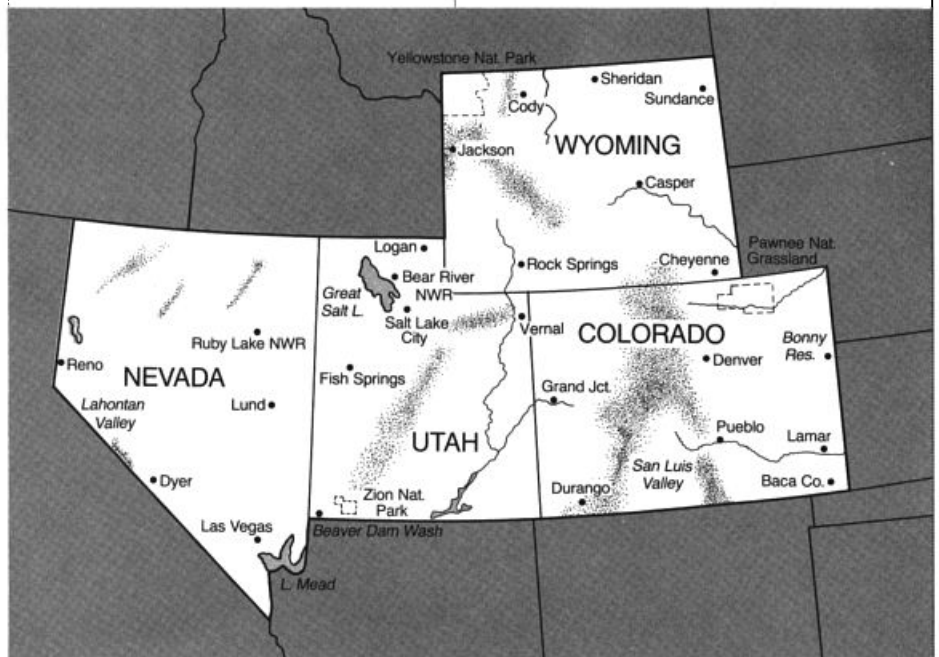
VAN A. TRUAN AND BRANDON K. PERCIVAL

The summer was dry in most areas of the Region. In eastern Colorado, southern moisture entered, producing thunderstorms in late June. This dryness from spring into midsummer may have caused displacement of several species. Lark Bunting were scarce and Northern Mockingbirds were everywhere in eastern Colorado. It is assumed that birds, like most wildlife, will either adapt to changes, migrate or disperse, or die. As field naturalists, birders (both professional and amateur), or casual backyard bird enthusiast, our readers should keep track of changes in abundances (increases and/or decreases) of populations, weather—such as drought or late frosts, urban growth impacts, and many other easily monitored changes. As editors, we can look at Regional or national impacts and report these back to you for local confirmation or study. Trends are as important as the rarity.

Abbreviations: D.M.N.H. (*Denver Museum of Natural History*), R.M.N.P. (*Rocky Mountain N.P., CO*), S.L.V. (*San Luis Valley, CO*).

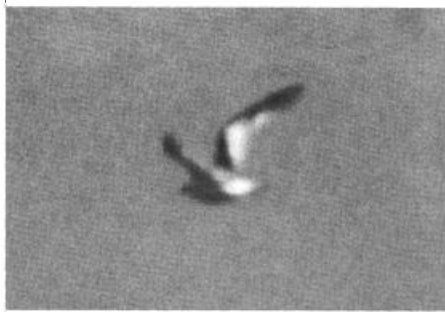
Loons to Waterfowl

More Com. Loons were reported summering than usual: two at Big Johnson Res., *El Paso*, CO June 17–July 31 (BG), singles at *Sweetwater*, WY June 9 (PL), Neponset Res., UT June 21 (PL), Riverside Res., *Weld*, CO (LRO), North L., *Las Animas*, CO July 9 (LD), and two at Park Res., near Big Horn, WY July 28 (JW). The three **Neotropical Cormorants** observed at Ireland Res., *Weld*, CO were reported into mid-July (m.ob.). A single **Least Bittern** was at Ouray N.W.R., UT June 16 (PL, SF). Up to five **Great Egrets** were reported flying into a egret/ibis colony at Ouray N.W.R. in June; if confirmed this could provide Utah's first state nesting record for the species (PL). Singles were at Monte Vista, *Rio Grande*, CO late May–June 3 (TL), Rawhide Power Plant, *Larimer*, CO June 9 (PL), and Holbrook Res., *Otero*, CO July 12 (BKP, JT). **Cattle Egrets** nested for the first time in Wyoming. Up to six adults summered and two juveniles were observed at Hutton Lake N.W.R., July 28 (JD, RD). In Colorado, the highest count was 32 at Lower Latham Res., *Weld*, July 21 (TL, DC). Rare in w. Colorado, a **Green Heron** was reported from Grand Valley, *Mesa*, July 22 (CD). Probably a late migrant, an imm. **Yellow-crowned Night-Heron** was at L. Henry, *Crowley*, CO June 1 (BKP, MJ). Unusual in the Region in summer, a ♂ **Eur. Wigeon** was reported at Hamilton Res., *Larimer*, CO June 9 (RAR). A mother and brood of four **Barrow's Goldeneye** were at Walt L., *Flattops Wilderness Area, Garfield*, CO July 24 (KP).



Osprey to Terns

The Osprey at Pueblo Res., *Pueblo*, CO produced a record-high four young. But due to high winds, the young dispersed too early and had to be taken to a local raptor rehabilitation center for later release. A possible first S.L.V. record Mississippi Kite was near Ft. Garland, *Costilla*, CO June 30 (DAL). Accipiter sightings in summer on the plains are fairly unusual. A Sharp-shinned was in Pueblo July 19 (PSS, CS), as was a Cooper's July 18 (BD). A Harris' Hawk was recorded 12 mi s. of Saguache, *Saguache*, CO July 15-16 for the first S.L.V. record (DB *et al.*) Two single sightings of Peregrine Falcons were reported, one at Adobe Creek Res., *Bent*, CO July 20 (DB) and one at Grand L., *Grand*, CO July 21 (TL, DC). Black Rails continue to be summer residents in *Otero*, CO, with up to four heard calling from wetlands June 11-July 13. A bird sounding like a King Rail called from Bent's Fort N.M., June 22 (BKP, VAT). From BBSs and other summer reports, numbers of Mt. Plover appear to be normal and were recorded at their usual haunts. Two Whimbrel were at Fish Springs N.W.R., July 25. Uncommon in June, a Marbled Godwit at Chatfield S.P., *Jefferson*, CO June 22. (JK). White-rumped Sandpiper sightings were of higher numbers until June 12 in Colorado: There were up to nine at Hamilton Res., June 6-9 (PL, RAR), 40 at Beebe Draw, *Weld*, June 7 (WPL, CM), 18 on Lower Latham Res., June 11 (PL), and 49 at Upper Queens Res., *Kiowa*, June 12 (DAL). Also, the S.L.V.'s 2nd and 3rd records were seven at Alamosa, *Alamosa*, June 6 (LR) and nine at San Luis Lakes, *Alamosa*, June 9 (JJR, LR). A rare summer Pectoral Sandpiper was in *Weld*, CO June 19. (LRo). An ad. Short-billed Dowitcher showed up at Nee Noshe Res., *Kiowa*, CO July 20-28 (BKP, DJ). A high 50 Wilson's Phalaropes were at Ouray, UT June 16; they appeared to all be females and possibly early migrants (PL). A first-summer Little Gull was at Walden Res., *Jackson*, CO June 14 (PL, SF *et al.*, ph. submitted to editor). Late observations of Bonaparte's Gull included two at Walden Res., June 14 (PL) and one at Ouray, UT June 16 (PL). Caspian Terns were reported from Ft. Collins and Cherry Creek Res., *Arapahoe*, CO. In Colorado, Com. Tern were reported at Holbrook Res., with an adult June 1 and immature June 15, and one was at Hart's Basin, *Delta*, CO (RL). At Bridger Ponds, *Sweetwater*, WY, were two ad. Com. Terns June 9 (PL) and an additional five adults July 27 (RS, JS). Utah's 2nd record of Least Tern was an adult at



Little Gull in first-summer plumage at Walden Reservoir, Colorado, June 14, 1996. Photograph/L. Barber.

Neponset June 21 (PL). Colorado's Least were recorded from normal haunts in *Bent*; due to high reservoir levels, they may have only nested at John Martin Res.

Doves to Flycatchers

In Rocky Ford, *Otero*, up to six Eurasian Collared-Doves provided Colorado its first record June 26+ (TL, M.ob.). If determined not to be escapes, the westerly invasion of this species continues. Uncommon on the w. slope, two Yellow-billed Cuckoos were at Clifton Marsh, *Mesa*, CO July 29 (CD). Summer records of Black-billed Cuckoo occurred, with two at Upper Cat Rd., *Sheridan*, WY June 16 (JW), one at Tamarack Ranch State Wildlife Area, *Logan*, CO, (JA, TM, BM), and one at Upper Queens Res., July 16-28 (PSS, CS, DJ). In short-grass prairie, a Greater Roadrunner June 22 was calling 20 mi n. of Olney Springs, *Crowley*, CO (VAT, BKP). On June 25, nine Flammulated Owls were in Line Cr. drainage, near Morgan, UT (VAS, WS). A juv. E. Screech-Owl was seen in a thicker

of willow and alder along Sybille Cr., WY July 25 (JD). On July 27, a Spotted Owl was heard calling in the Wet Mts., w. of Beulah, *Pueblo*, CO (VAT, BKP). Of four nest boxes occupied, researchers banded 14 juv. Boreal Owls on the Grand Mesa, *Mesa*, CO (*vide* RL). Up to five Black Swift appeared at Green Mt. Falls, *Teller*, CO June 7-29 (RB), and two adults were at Chatfield S.P., July 12 (JK). Chimney Swifts lingered to July 15 at Palisade, *Mesa*, CO (CD, BGu.) and there was a late report of a May bird found dead s. of Durango, *La Plata*, CO (A&PR, * to D.M.N.H.). Colorado had two reports of Blue-throated Hummingbird, a female at Cottonwood Canyon, *Las Animas*, June 15 (DB) and a male at Colorado Springs, *El Paso*, June 16 (MH). Two Magnificent Hummingbirds were observed 40 mi n. of Kemmorrer, *Lincoln*, WY by Linda and Ted Walker; they were described as being 2x larger than a Rufous and one had a green throat. At Linwood Canyon, *Sweetwater*, WY June 5-July 31, two ♂, one ♀, and two imm. Black-chinned Hummingbirds were reported (RS). In Colorado, two Red-headed Woodpeckers were at sites w. of the plains: one at Endovalley, R.M.N.P., *Larimer*, July 12 (PL), and S.L.V.'s 2nd record 5 mi w. of La Jara, *Conejos*, July 26 (VAT). A singing Alder Flycatcher was at Waterton, *Jefferson*, CO June 25 (DS, JK), providing a rare summer record for this species. In Colorado, Willow Flycatchers were recorded in several locations in S.L.V. A research team was able to capture several individual birds near Alamosa. It is hoped that genetic determinations of blood samples will provide information as to whether these birds



Short-eared Owl on the Pawnee Grassland, Colorado, June 22, 1996. Photograph/Larry Rosche.

are of the "southwestern" sub-species. Rarely recorded in w. Colorado, a Least Flycatcher was near Eagle, *Eagle*, CO June 19–July 9 (JM, VZ). This species also nested at Dayton, WY, with an adult and two juveniles July 17 (JW). A nesting pair of Ash-throated Flycatchers were at Little Firehole Canyon, *Sweetwater*, s.w. of Rock Springs, WY June 11 (RS). In Colorado, Black Phoebes nested again at Uravan, *Montrose* (TL), and were observed e. of Antonito, *Conejos/Costilla*, July 19 for a first S.L.V. record (H&UK); there was also one 6 mi s. of Durango July 28 (BSu). A pair of Vermilion Flycatchers was at Blue Diamond Park, NV, all summer (J&MC).

Jays to Tanagers

A Blue Jay was in Eagle, CO June 6–25 (JM). A singing Carolina Wren was at Lakewood, *Jefferson*, CO July 7–9 (VR, CR, ER). This was the year of the N. Mockingbird, from Colorado n. to the Cheyenne area (Dorn of Cheyenne reported seeing them everywhere). Observers in most areas reported record numbers and numerous new locations. This may be due to the drought in the southwest and Texas. A Philadelphia Vireo was at Ft. Collins June 2 (DAL, WPL). There was a rare mountain report of a Tennessee Warbler in mid-June at the A.M. Bailey Bird Nesting Area, *Summitt*, CO (BSt), and one was found near Casper, WY June 30 (FO). Nevada had three migrating N. Parulas: one at Tonopah June 1 (DT), a singing male at Wheeler Camp Spring June 11 (MC), and a female at Desert N.W.R., June 14 (MC). At Crow Valley Campground June 9, a late singing ♂ Magnolia Warbler was found (DB). A ♀ Cape May Warbler was at Tonopah, NV June 8 (JB). A ♀ Blackpoll Warbler was at Lida, NV June 2 (DT). A singing ♂ Kentucky Warbler was in R.M.N.P., CO June 11–13 (CM, DAL, WPL, JFB), a very rare bird in the mountains. A Mourning Warbler was at Crow Valley Campground, *Weld*, CO June 3 (JH *et al.*). It appears that the expansion N of Hepatic Tanagers continues, with reports of 2 pairs at Wild Mt. on Ft. Carson, *Fremont*, CO June 6–7 (RB).

Cardinal to Crossbills

Rare in s.w. Colorado, a ♂ N. Cardinal was observed at Lone Domb State Wildlife Area, *Dolores/Montezuma*, June 7 (BSu). A ♂ *Pyrrhuloxia* was 3 mi w. of Grant, *Park*, early July–September, providing Colorado its 2nd record (J&H, *vide M.Ob.*). Rare in w. Colorado, a ♂ Rose-breasted Grosbeak was observed with food and two–three fledged young near Hanging L., *Garfield*, July 26 (KP). Indigo Buntings showed up

at 2 w. slope locations in Colorado: one at Dotsero, *Eagle*, June 9–July 13 (JM), and a male at Clifton, *Mesa*, July 29 (CD). For the 3rd year, a ♂ Painted Bunting visited Cottonwood Canyon, CO June 8–15 (DAL, JMa, DB *et al.*). Lark Bunting sightings in e. Colorado were down considerably. Some BBS routes in prime habitat had few or no birds. There was very little moisture from July 1995–June 1996 in s.e. Colorado, and this may have caused birds to bypass normal breeding areas. It appears that Lark Buntings were more common in Wyoming. On July 7 near Wheatland, this species was very abundant—in the hundreds (JD, RD). Other short-grass prairie species (such as Horned Lark, Grasshopper and Cassin's sparrow, and Meadowlark) appeared to be normal. Also possibly due to the s.w. drought, Wyoming had its 2nd and 3rd state records of **Black-throated Sparrow**: one 11 mi s.w. of Bitter Cr., *Sweetwater*, June 16 (RS) and five–six e. of Bitter Cr., June 29–July 4 (RS). A singing Baird's Sparrow at Newcastle, *Weston*, June 2 was within the Thunder Basin National Grasslands, WY, and four were singing at Bill, *Converse*, June 3 (JBr, JHe). A singing E. Meadowlark returned to Bellvue, *Larimer*, CO late-May into July (PL *et al.*). After hearing this bird do some crazy W. Meadowlark dialect, this editor is not convinced it wasn't a hybrid (VAT). A ♂ Great-tailed Grackle was at Stewart L. near Jensen, UT June 21 (PL). On June 24, a ♂ Com. Grackle was at Little Yellowstone R., *Park*, WY (PS) and a male was at Heber City, UT June 8 (VAS). A rarity in Nevada, a ♀ **Baltimore Oriole** was at Desert N.W.R., NV June 4 (CT). Two pairs of Scott's Oriole were s.e. of Green River, WY June 9 (PL). Rare on the plains of Colorado in summer, up to four Red Crossbill were in Pueblo June 30+ (VAT), and one was in Denver July 13–14 (BR). This species were seen in high numbers in the foothills and mountains this year.

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