

# idaho-western montana region



## DAVID TROCHLELL

The winter season was mild until late December when a brief Arctic front brought cold temperatures and significant snow to the Region. Late winter brought high precipitation to the mountains and mild temperatures consistent with “La Niña” type years. Like last year, several semi-hardy species lingered or wintered, and wintering finches were scarce or absent.

**Abbreviations:** A.F.R. (*American Falls Res., by American Falls, Idaho*); D.F.N.W.R. (*Deer Flat N.W.R., Canyon Co., ID*); Latilong (*area encompassed by one degree latitude and one degree longitude, used in mapping bird distribution in both Idaho and Montana*); L.M.N.W.R. (*Lee Metcalf N.W.R., Ravalli Co., MT*).

## LOONS THROUGH SANDPIPERS

A lingering Pacific Loon at Barton Res., Washington, ID, Dec. 5 (JG) provided a winter first for Latilong 11. Up to ten Great Egrets wintered near Hagerman, Gooding, ID (KF), doubling last year’s count there. Many seasonally rare geese stayed in Idaho into January, including two Greater White-fronted Geese, up to 20 Snow Geese, and seven Ross’s Geese. Idaho birders reported single Oldsquaws at Mann L., Nez Perce, Dec. 3 (DB); L. Pend Oreille, Bonner, Dec. 31 (MCr); and Lewiston Jan. 3 & 4 (CS,

m.ob.). A Surf Scoter was a rare find at Lucky Peak Res., Ada, ID, Dec. 3–5 (HK). Blue-winged and Cinnamon teal usually leave the Region in fall, but this winter single Blue-wingeds were reported at Missoula, MT, Dec. 19 (HA) and near Hagerman, ID, Dec. 19 (DM), and single Cinnamons were at L.M.N.W.R. Dec. 28 (WT) and Ennis L., Madison, MT, Jan. 1 (JR). An apparent Mallard/N. Pintail hybrid was at L.M.N.W.R. Feb. 15–28 (DLo, WT). Wintering **Eurasian Wigeons** in Idaho were up slightly from last winter with singles at Boise, Lewiston, Marsing, near Bruneau, and near Hagerman.

Several very late Turkey Vultures migrated over n.w. Montana in mid-December (LH). A surprisingly early Osprey at Fort Boise W.M.A., Payette, ID, Feb. 13 (DL) provided a winter first for Latilong 17. Raptors invaded the Region, drawn by high vole populations and open hunting conditions. An incredible 114 N. Harriers were tallied on the American Falls, ID, CBC Dec. 26. Rare anytime in w. Montana, Ferruginous Hawks staged a small “invasion” there: three overwintered in the Mission Valley, Lake (CO), one was seen during the Kalispell CBC Jan. 3 (DC), and at least two wintered in the Bitterroot Valley, Ravalli (JO). It was also a good year to see Rough-legged Hawks: Olson tallied a record 326 Rough-leggeds near Ronan, Lake, MT, Dec. 23. For the 5th consecutive year, the Gannett, ID, Gyrfalcon overwintered. Another Idaho Gyr was seen in Butte Dec. 20 (JOr). In Montana, at least three Gyrs overwintered in the Mission Valley (CO), and one was near Kalispell Feb. 28 (DC). One–two Sandhill Cranes at Marsing, Owyhee, ID, Dec. 6–19 (JG) were very late. For the 2nd consecutive year, a Sandhill was tallied on the Stevensville, MT, CBC Jan. 2 (MG). Even a few hardy shorebirds lingered: five Dunlins and a Least Sandpiper were at Dry L., Canyon, ID, Dec. 14 (RLR), and another Least was near Grandview, Elmore, ID, Dec. 23 (GB, RLR, DT).

## GULLS THROUGH JAYS

Rare gulls made news in both states. A very late **Franklin’s Gull** in Boise Dec. 15 (+GB)

provided Idaho’s first winter record. Up to seven Mew Gulls were reported in Idaho, including three that overwintered in Boise. Montana birders discovered one–two Mews at Somers, Flathead, Jan. 22–Feb. 17 (DC), a new location for this species. Idaho’s Thayer’s Gull reports included one–two near D.F.N.W.R. Dec. 18 & 19 (JG); one at Ted Trueblood W.M.A., Elmore, Feb. 15 (JG); and one in Lewiston Feb. 19 (CV).

A well-documented first-basic “**Kumlien’s**” Iceland Gull at A.F.R. Feb. 27 & 28 (ph. MCr, †CT, m.ob.) provided Idaho’s 9th record. Glaucous-winged Gull reports were up in Idaho with one near D.F.N.W.R. Dec. 18 (MCr); two at L. Pend Oreille Dec. 31 (MCr); one near Buhl, Gooding, Feb. 3–5 (KF); one at Lewiston Feb. 14 (KD); and one overwintering in Boise (DT). Single Glaucous Gulls were near Coeur d’Alene, ID, Dec. 5 (CS) & 30 (MCr), and another was at Polson, MT, Feb. 6 (JB). The **Black-legged Kittiwake** that flew over Hells Canyon Res., Adams, Dec. 12 (AU) provided Idaho’s 5th record.

Mild weather allowed large numbers of Mourning Doves to winter in w. Montana. Incredible CBC totals included 97 in Bigfork, 135 in Kalispell, and 144 in Stevensville. A Barn Owl wintered near Charlo, Lake, MT (CO); there are less than 20 records for this species in Montana. An unprecedented 38 Barn Owls were counted on the Moscow, ID, CBC Dec. 19. A N. Hawk Owl discovered near Whitefish, MT, Dec. 21 (JMm) was not unprecedented but still exciting. In Montana’s Mission Valley, winter roosts contained over 70 Long-eared Owls (DH) and more than 80 Short-eared Owls (BW). Boise hosted two Anna’s Hummingbirds: a male overwintered (TS), and a female was present Dec. 3–22 (BA). Single Lewis’s Woodpeckers overwintered in Boise (RLR) and near Hamilton, MT (CP). Another fall holdover, Red-naped Sapsucker, lingered in Boise until late December (JH). Reports of seasonally rare Say’s Phoebe’s were up in Idaho, but the **Say’s Phoebe** that overwintered near Creston, Flathead, MT (LB), provided a state winter first. Two Barn Swallows that lingered at L.M.N.W.R. Dec. 3–11 (WT)

were very late. A total of 18 Blue Jays was reported in Idaho, representing *half* of last winter's count. In Montana, scattered sightings of Blue Jays originated from the Bozeman, Bitterroot, and Missoula valleys (JP, JM).

**CREEPER  
THROUGH GOLDFINCHES**

Brown Creepers were unusually numerous and widespread this season. Bewick's Wrens continue to expand their range in Idaho: n. Idaho CBCs posted record counts, and at least three Bewick's overwintered in a new location in *Payette* (JG). One Mt. Bluebird overwintered near A.F.R. dam (MCr, CT), and three others at Kila, *Flathead*, MT, Feb. 10 (RM) were 3 weeks early. Hermit and Varied thrushes occasionally winter in s. Idaho, but this season an unprecedented 18 Hermits and at least seven Varieds were reported. A surprising **Gray Catbird** found near Driggs, *Teton*, ID, Jan. 2 (SP) furnished a state winter first.

A total of 12 Orange-crowned Warblers was reported in s.w. Idaho, a significant increase from last winter. Undoubtedly the bird of the season, an imm. **Prairie Warbler** near Ninepipes N.W.R., *Lake*, Dec. 3-6 (DH, JM, \*U.M.M) was collected and provided Montana's 2nd record. A **Wilson's**

**Warbler** at D.F.N.W.R. Dec. 6 and Jan. 1 (JG, HK, DL) furnished a winter first for Idaho.

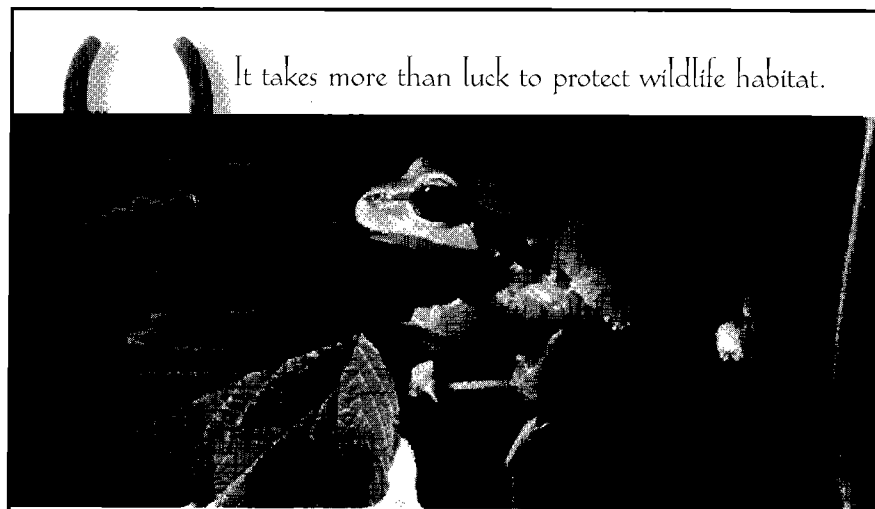
Four Savannah Sparrows near D.F.N.W.R. Jan. 2 (GB, RLR) were unusual. A "Slate-colored" Fox Sparrow in Boise Dec. 4 (RLR, DT) was seasonally rare, but even more interesting was the "Red" Fox Sparrow at Twin Falls, ID, Dec. 26 (KF). Another Fox Sparrow overwintered near Corvallis, *Ravalli*, MT (KW) where one has been present the last 4 years. Lincoln's Sparrows are rarely reported in winter in Idaho, so a total of seven from s.w. Idaho in January was unusual (D&EE, JG). With less than 20 Swamp Sparrow records in Idaho, one near Kamiah, *Idaho*, Jan. 18 (CS) and two near Lewiston Jan. 24-30 (DG, HW) were significant. Reports that a Spotted Towhee and single White-throated and White-crowned sparrows survived the winter in the Bozeman, MT, area (PE, MG) were surprising. Numbers of White-throated and Harris's sparrows were up in Idaho, with seven White-throateds and 16 Harris's reported. Especially rare in winter, a Golden-crowned Sparrow was at Lewiston, ID, Jan. 2 (WH).

A dozen regionally rare Rusty Blackbirds were at Creston, MT, Dec. 16 (DC), and another was seen on the Bozeman CBC

Jan. 3 (JP). The Marsing, ID, Great-tailed Grackle flock was up to 22 birds Dec 6 (RE), the largest count to date. Another Great-tailed was below A.F.R. dam Feb 21 (CT). Four Com. Grackles wintered in Bozeman, MT (RW). At least four Lesser Goldfinches were present in Boise, representing Idaho's 2nd winter record.

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