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idaho-western montana



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Spring 2000 was decidedly mild, featuring warm and dry weather in March and April, and average conditions through May. Most low-elevation areas were already snow-free because of the warm winter, and runoff from last winter's average to high mountain snowpack peaked early. The main theme of the season was the early arrival of waterfowl and other early spring migrants, some by as much as three or four

weeks. Like last year, Camas National Wildlife Refuge produced a tantalizing list of vagrant warblers and other birds.

Abbreviations: A.F.R. (American Falls Res., by American Falls, ID); C.N.W.R. (Camas N.W.R., Jefferson, ID); L.M.N.W.R. (Lee Metcalf N.W.R., Ravalli, MT).

LOONS THROUGH RAPTORS

Especially rare in spring, a Yellow-billed Loon was in *Fremont*, ID, 21 May (KDu, KH). Sightings of American White Pelicans continue to increase in the Region's far north, with ≤ 18 tallied in *Kootenai*, ID, 19–29 Apr (LH, RY) and one in *Salmon*, ID,

28–29 May (HR). Reports of extralimital egrets included single Greats at L.M.N.W.R. 14–21 Apr and 18 May (WT) and *Sanders*, MT, 3 May (WL), and a Snowy in *Salmon*, ID, 13 May (HR). Cattle Egrets also wandered in Idaho, with 3 each in *Gooding* 18 Apr (KF) and *Camas* 27 May (PWP). The Green Heron that stopped at C.N.W.R. 20 May (RM) was a good find; they are less than annual in the Region. White-faced Ibises are rare but increasing in the Region's far north, so 1–6 at L.M.N.W.R. 11 Apr–18 May (WT), two in *Nez Perce*, ID, 4 May (DBe), and 19 in *Broadwater*, MT, 27 May (DS) were particularly noteworthy.

Tundra Swans visited Idaho in unusually high numbers, with 1571 in *Kootenai* 18 Mar (LH) and 500 in *Blaine* 18 Mar (DR). A Mute Swan in *Jefferson* 18–20 Mar (BD, D&EF) followed a recent trend of sightings in e. Idaho. Snow Geese staged in impressive numbers again this year, with an estimated 50,000 in *Jefferson*, ID, 3–18 March (m.ob.). Ross's Geese, usually reported in small numbers, migrated through in force, with flocks of 125 in *Payette*, ID, 8 Apr (CB, RLR), at least 69 in *Fremont*, ID, 9 Apr (CW), and 30 in *Flathead*, MT, 2 May (DC).

Reports of Eurasian Wigeons almost tripled those of last year, with totals of 16 in Idaho and 10 in Montana. A Common Teal at L.M.N.W.R. 28 Mar–20 Apr and a Cinnamon x Blue-winged Teal there 15–20 Apr (WT) were rare finds. Larger than usual concentrations of ducks also staged at several locations, including 811 Northern Pintails in *Kootenai*, ID, 18 Mar (LH), 140 Canvasbacks in *Blaine*, ID, 7 Mar (MCR), >100 Canvasbacks in *Park*, MT, 4 Apr (JP), and >400 Ruddy Ducks in *Ada*, ID, 21 Apr (RLR, DT). A pair of Greater Scaup at

L.M.N.W.R. 15–16 May (WT) and a Harlequin Duck in Missoula, MT, 14 May (MH) were locally rare. Long-tailed Ducks are not typically reported in spring, so singles in *Lake*, MT, 21 Mar (RF), *Power*, ID, 16–25 Mar (MCR), *Shoshone*, ID, 25 Mar–29 Apr (LH), and pairs below A.F.R. dam 2 Apr (MCR) and in *Lewis and Clark*, MT, 20–21 May (GH, ST) were interesting.

A **Red-shouldered Hawk** in *Valley* 8 Apr (CS) was Idaho's 8th and Latilong 12's first.

SHOREBIRDS THROUGH FLYCATCHERS

Three seasonally rare American Golden-Plovers stopped in *Park*, MT, 13 May (JP, MS). Black-necked Stilts are rare but increasing in the Region's n. half, and this year ≤13 stopped at Mann L., *Nez Perce*, ID, 11 Apr–7 May (m.ob.); singles were reported in *Lake*, MT, 11 Apr (CP), at L.M.N.W.R. 15–17 Apr (WT), and in *Lemhi*, ID, 5 May (CK). Large numbers of shorebirds staged at Indian Creek Res., *Ada*, ID, including 150+ American Avocets 21 Apr, 108 Marbled Godwits 22 Apr, and 100+ Long-billed Dowitchers 5–8 May (RLR, DT). One–four Long-billed Dowitchers in *Blaine*, ID, 7–16 Mar and another in *Power*, ID, 16 Mar (MCR) were several weeks early. An incredible flock of 8 **Hudsonian Godwits** at A.F.R. 7 May (†DB) provided Idaho's 5th record. The Dunlin that wintered near Belgrade, MT, was last seen 4 Mar (JP). Always rare, Short-billed Dowitchers visited Idaho in *Ada* 5 May (RLR), *Nez Perce*, 5 May (BJ), and *Gooding* 14 May (KF). A **Red Phalarope** in *Bear Lake* 22 Apr (†TK) furnished Idaho's 9th record.

Now annual but still unusual in n. Idaho, Franklin's Gulls were reported at Mann L. 21 & 27 May (BJ). The lineup of rare gull visitors to the Region included a Mew in Boise 1 Apr (RLR, DT), a Glaucous-winged in *Owyhee*, ID, 15–16 Apr (CW), and three Glaucous in w. Montana 2 Mar–4 Apr (DC). A count of 56 Herring Gulls in Pocatello, ID, 2 Mar (MCR) was likely a record high for s. Idaho. Rare outside of se. Idaho, single Common Terns visited Mann L. 21 May (BJ) and Indian Creek Res. 21 May (JG). Band-tailed Pigeons were more numerous than usual, with singles in *Gem*, ID 8–26 Apr (DD), *Clark*, ID 7 May (GR), *Ada*, ID 16 May (JC), and East Glacier, MT, 31 May (LB).

Chuck Trost estimated that over 200 Barn Owls were killed this spring along a 45-mi section of Interstate 84 in s. Idaho.

Owls that strayed included a Barn in *Ravalli*, MT, 3 May (TM) and a Barred in *Twin Falls*, ID, 11 Mar (MT). A Western Kingbird reported in *Ada*, ID, 25 Mar (RM) was a month early. Like last year, a Least Flycatcher came home to C.N.W.R. 19–31 May (MCR). One of the best birds of the season, a **Scissor-tailed Flycatcher** in *Bonneville*, ID, 16 May (MF), was Idaho's 7th.

JAYS THROUGH GOLDFINCHES

A Blue Jay nest with dependent young in Kalispell, MT, 30 May (DC) represented only the 3rd breeding record in the Region. In Idaho, there is no confirmed Blue Jay breeding record, so a report of a pair that visited a residence in *Bonner* (RD) all season was interesting. Swallows were three-four weeks early this year, with 25 Tree Swallows in *Blaine*, ID, 8 Mar (SB), a Cliff Swallow at L.M.N.W.R. 6 Apr (WT), and a Barn Swallow in *Blaine*, ID, 25 Mar (D&EF). Reports of Northern Mockingbird were down in Idaho, with only singles observed in *Butte* 27 Apr (BD) and *Oneida* 18 May (JS).

Rare warblers reported at C.N.W.R. this spring included a Virginia's Warbler 14 May (MCR), Idaho's 2nd **Northern Parula** 27–28 May (MCR, GR, m.ob.), a Chestnut-sided Warbler 29 May (GS), a Magnolia Warbler 30 May (GR), and Black-throated Gray Warblers 6 & 14 May (MCR, GR). In sw. Idaho, another Black-throated Gray strayed to *Elmore*, ID, 14 May (CS), and a rare Black-and-white Warbler stopped in Boise 14 May (DH). Northern Idaho's **Pine Warbler** successfully overwintered in Moscow and was last seen 4 Apr (RH).

Sparrows that overshot their ranges in s. Idaho included 2 Green-tailed Towhees in Boise 1–5 May (DH, RLR, DT) and 2 Black-throated Sparrows near Boise 13 & 24 May (JC, RLR). A major irruption of Lark Buntings in e. Idaho this spring consisted of small flocks scattered throughout at least six counties. Often unreported in spring, Golden-crowned Sparrows made a surprising showing, with a total of 8 reported throughout Idaho. Rare grosbeak sightings in Idaho included 2 Rose-breasteds in *Custer* 23 May (*vide* CT) and a Blue in *Ada* 29 May (FV). Especially rare in spring was a pair of Rusty Blackbirds in *Butte* 7 Apr (D&EF). Outside of their usual locations in *Canyon*, single Idaho Great-tailed Grackles showed up in *Jefferson* 14–20 Apr (m.ob.) and *Gooding* 14–25 May (KF). Reports of Common Grackles were up from last year, with many sightings from seven e. Idaho counties and at least two locations in w.

Montana. Away from their local Idaho range in Boise and Pocatello, Lesser Goldfinches were seen below A.F.R. dam 1 Mar–15 Apr (MCR, CT) and in *Blaine* 24 & 28 May (*vide* PWP).

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