

August ushered in another season of superlatives. This autumn had mega-rarities in the form of Whooper Swan and Kelp Gull and a fairly strong showing of waterbirds and shorebirds. Labor Day weekend was the best on record for migrants, thanks to a major cold front that passed through the Region. Chico Basin Ranch was particularly productive that weekend, with twenty-one species of warblers (a new two-day record). Mountain jays, parids, and finches stayed in the mountains. Even Red-breasted Nuthatches and Pine Siskins were scarce away from their breeding locales. Black-capped Chickadees and House Wrens were found in very low numbers, leading many to speculate that West Nile Virus affected their populations in the Region.

While we almost always get reports of very rare species, we do not receive as many reports of uncommon species (e.g., Northern Waterthrush or American Redstart). This makes it challenging for us to put migration of uncommon birds into perspective. We have seen some improvement in reporting of early and late dates. Unfortunately, few observers count numbers of individuals, so many of the highest counts for the Region never make it into print. While we acknowledge that we do not have the space to print all observations, we do use them and maintain a database of such records. So, please do send in high counts, early dates, late dates, and observations of uncommon species.

We are very excited with the substantial increase in reports from Wyoming, thanks to the addition of several subregional compilers who have volunteered to solicit records and organize data from their regions in Wyoming: Gloria Lawrence, Jim Lawrence, Terry McEaney, Chris Michelson, Susan Patla, and Bert Raynes. Doug Faulkner will continue to coordinate all records from Wyoming.

**Abbreviations:** Barr (Barr Lake S.P., Adams); Chico (Chico Basin Ranch, El Paso/Pueblo, CO); E.K.W. (Edness Kimball Wilkins S.P., Natrona, WY); Eleven Mile (Eleven Mile Res., Park, CO); Jumbo (Jumbo Res., Logan and Sedgwick, CO); W.H.R. (Wyoming Hereford Ranch, Laramie, WY); Yellowstone (Yellowstone N.P., Park and Teton, WY). Due to reporting biases, all locations can be assumed to be in Colorado, except that each Wyoming location is noted as such the first time it appears in the text.

### LOONS THROUGH IBIS

A Red-throated Loon photographed at Elkhead Res. 1 Nov (FL, DH), provided a first for Moffat and a 2nd for Routt and furnished one of very few records for Colorado's West Slope. The only other Red-throated in the Region was at Standley L., Jefferson 30

# Mountain West



Nov-6 Dec (LS). A juv. Pacific Loon at Neenoshe Res., Kiowa on the early date of 1 Oct (BG, DN) was the first of 35 Pacific Loons to be found in Colorado—the most ever reported in a single season. A distinct highlight among these was an alternate-plumaged bird at Eleven Mile 18 Oct (NP, AS). Wyoming got into the action, with 2 at Woodruff Narrows Res., Uinta in the first week of Nov (TG). A total of 168 Common Loons was likely the highest total for any season in Colorado. This included a new high count for Colorado of 34 Common Loons at Pueblo Res., Pueblo 13 Nov (BKP). A nice count for any single location in the Region, 4 Red-necked Grebes were found at Healey Res., Johnson, WY 25 Oct (CM, AH, J&GL); Colorado had at least 3 Red-necked Grebes from Pueblo Res. 7-30 Nov (BKP).

Wandering young herons usually show up in late summer and early fall, as exemplified this year by a juv. Tricolored Heron found in Bent 3-9 Aug (DN). A Tricolored Heron reported from Lathrop S.P., Huerfano on the late date of 2 Nov (SA) raises eyebrows for its tardiness, although the latest Colorado record was of a bird collected in Yuma 20 Nov 1987 (\*DMNH #39487). There was a late pulse of Cattle Egrets through the Region in early Nov that

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**SA** The movement of swans in the Region this autumn was unprecedented. As early as 21 Oct, Tundra Swans were noted at McNitch Res., *Sublette*, WY 21 Oct (B. Scurlock). One was seen as far s. as Miramonte Res., *San Miguel* on the early date of 25 Oct (CD, BW et al.). By late Oct, the first large flocks of both Trumpeter and Tundra Swans were building along the Snake R. in Wyoming (T. Mangelson). Woodruff Narrows Res. in sw. Wyoming hosted 82 Tundra Swans on 8 Nov (TG). Another was at Holiday Park, Laramie 8–16 Nov (T. Payton). Trumpeter Swans peaked in Yellowstone on 19 Nov with 570 birds (the Yellowstone resident population stands at 20 [*vide* TM]). While it is exceedingly challenging to obtain an accurate count, it seems that there were some 27 individual Trumpeter Swans in Colorado from 15 Nov through the end of the month, perhaps more. Now, consider that through the end of 2000 there were only 19 documented sightings of Trumpeter Swan in Colorado. Tundra Swan, recently added to the Colorado's review list, put on the best show in the state in well over a decade, with roughly 40 individuals reported, including sightings that stretched along the Front Range from *Larimer* to *Huerfano* and West Slope birds in *Routt*, *Moffat*, *Rio Blanco*, and *La Plata*.

Terry McEaney found the prize of the season: a second-year **Whooper Swan** in Yellowstone's Hayden Valley—the first for the Region. In the context of proliferation of migrant swans in the Region, this bird may well be a legitimate vagrant: the arrival of this bird coincided with that of another far-flung Asian vagrant, Montana's Siberian Accentor.

included birds in mountain valleys, sw. Wyoming, and Colorado's West Slope. American Bitterns are rare in w. Colorado, so one at a ranch pond in the Paradox Valley 11 Sep (JB) was exciting. Indeed, migrant American Bitterns are rarely noted anywhere in the Region, and one at Hale Ponds, *Yuma* 14 Nov (BKP, PAG, MP) was one of the latest migrants ever found. Green Herons appeared in normal numbers, with the northwesternmost individual showing up in *Natrona*, WY 27 Sep (B. & D. Walgren). Continuing their summer incursion, juv. Yellow-crowned Night-Herons wandered to Valco Ponds in Pueblo 18 Sep–6 Oct (RM, m. ob.) and Belmar Historic Park, *Jefferson* 19 Sep–11 Oct (K. Schofield, m. ob.). A flock of White-faced Ibis at Ridgway Res. 8 Sep (CLW, TL) included a Glossy Ibis, the first reported in *Ourray* and the first fall report for the Region.

### WATERFOWL THROUGH FALCONS

Greater White-fronted Geese occurred in average numbers in Colorado, with at least 50 individuals seen mostly scattered along the Front Range and plains. Noteworthy sightings included West Slope singles in *Moffat* 21–24 Oct (FL), *La Plata* 21 Nov (JB), and *Mesa* 23 Nov (Larry Arnold), with mountain-park sightings of 3 in *Jackson* (AS, NP) and one in *Park* 1 Nov (MP). The only one reported from Wyoming was at Lion's Park 16 Nov (DAL). A major passage of Snow Geese moved through Colorado's mountains and West Slope 31 Oct–2 Nov, including record counts of 120 at Elkhead Res. (FL, DH), 400 at Spinney Mountain Res., *Park* (v. o.), 200 in Nucla (CD), and some 500 in *San Miguel* (CD, BD et al.). As expected, small numbers of Ross's Geese were noted in all of these flocks.

Numbers of Canvasback are increasing in the Region, with a high count of 500 at L. Maria, *Huerfano* 27 Oct (DS). The Surf Scoter show was almost as good as last year's, with 26 in Colorado and 8 in Wyoming, including 6 at Woodruff Narrows

Res. (TG). Wyoming's only White-winged Scoter was found early in Buffalo, *Johnson* 25 Sep–10 Nov (B. South, BR, CM); Colorado had an impressive 17 White-wingeds. There were 6 Black Scoters in Colorado this season, including a first for *Otero* 18–23 Nov (SO). Mississippi Kites lingered into Aug in Sterling and Greeley (where they now breed), and at least one was in Ft. Collins 1–9 Sep (J. Beason, B. Wheeler). Quite late were 2 in Pueblo 20 Sep (MY). Very few Broad-winged Hawks were noted this fall, with the only Wyoming report coming late in the season from E.K.W. 10 Oct (SB). A Black Merlin was reported at *Uravan* 9 Oct (CD, BW). While there are several reports of the attractive race of *suckleyi*, there is still no documented record or specimen in the Mountain West. At least some proportion of nominate-race birds can be quite blackish, thus our caution in reporting this individual.

### SHOREBIRDS THROUGH ALCID

Shorebird habitat was particularly good at that fabulous trio of ne. Colorado reservoirs: Jumbo, Prewitt, and Jackson. A count of 46 Solitary Sandpipers at Johnson L., *Sedgwick* 28 Aug (CLW) probably represented a new high count for any one location in the Region. A juv. Piping Plover at Barr 8–10 Aug supplied the 5th record for *Adams* and first since 1986 (BS, m. ob.); another was at Barr 23 Aug (R. Siebert). Very rare in fall, 2 Hudsonian Godwits were reported from Yellowstone 24 Aug (A. Brown, E. Hendrickson, TM). The only Ruddy Turnstones were seen on 29 Aug, one at Goldeneye Res., *Natrona*, WY (BRI, SB) and one at Barr (BB, LAB, DF). Always noteworthy, Red Knots this season were at Jackson Res. 18 Sep (2; one until 21 Sep) and at Pueblo Res. 24 Sep–2 Oct (one; BKP, SM, m. ob.), the latter the first for *Pueblo* since the 1980s. A Semipalmated Sandpiper at Green Mountain Res., *Summit* 5 Sep (FL) provided one of few mountain records of this species and possibly a county first. Pec-

toral Sandpipers were noted on the West Slope from *La Plata* and *Montrose*, where rare. Dunlin made a fine showing, with 23 individuals in Colorado, including 11 at John Martin 6 Nov (DN). A Curlew Sandpiper was reported from Jackson Res. 23 Sep (JB). Eleven Buff-breasted Sandpipers were reported from e. Colorado this season. Roughly 19 Short-billed Dowitchers were reported in Colorado; the only Wyoming report was from Goldeneye Res. 20 Aug (CM). Four Red Phalaropes, all from Colorado, was on par with what we would expect. One at Trinidad L. 8 Nov was probably the first for *Las Animas* (BKP, MP). An American Woodcock was found at Fort Morgan 8 Nov (P. Walker); Colorado has fewer than 10 documented records of this species.

Among this fall's many lingering waders were 4 Snowy Plovers at Neenoshe Res. 11 Oct (DN et al.). Greater and Lesser Yellowlegs were both found into mid-Nov. American Avocets were widely reported in Colorado during Nov, with an astonishing "nearly 200" reported from Ridgway Res. 8 Nov (CD). The latest was at L. Holbrook, *Otero* 18 Nov (SO). A Long-billed Curlew at Nucla 2 Oct (CD, BW) was one of the latest ever reported in the Region. Typically clearing out by mid-October, 8 Sanderlings were seen during the first four days of Nov, with birds in *Bent*, *Jefferson/Douglas*, *Pueblo*, *Boulder*, and *Kiowa* (v. o.). Least Sandpipers lingered well into Nov, including 40 seen at John Martin 1 Nov (DN), 10 at Ordway Res. 6 Nov (BKP), and one at Pueblo Res. 30 Nov (BKP, BM). Typically gone by Nov, over 50 Long-billed Dowitchers were seen that month, including the latest at the most unexpected locale of Brown's Park N.W.R., *Moffat* 26 Nov (FL).

A juv. Long-tailed Jaeger graced Barr 31 Aug (TL, BG), the 2nd for *Adams*. A subad. Pomarine Jaeger provided excitement at Chatfield 5–14 Nov (JK, m. ob.). Another jaeger, at JTL Ponds, *Natrona*, WY 7 Nov (CM), was thought to be a Parasitic Jaeger. Such late jaegers are typically Pomarine. Some 10,000 Franklin's Gulls at Jumbo Res. 24 Aug (BG, BS) provided the highest count of any gull species this fall. Seven Mew Gulls were found in Colorado, including what would be the first for *Morgan* at Jackson Res. 7 Oct (HK). A juv. *Thayer's Gull* was at JTL Ponds 8 Nov (DF, CM, m. ob.). While reported several times in Wyoming, apparently none of these has been adequately documented; the species is very uncommon in Colorado. The Lesser Black-backed Gull season was ushered in early this year with the first of at least 15 found in Colorado arriving at Pueblo Res. 24 Sep. The gull of the season certainly belonged to that dark-mantled ad. four-year gull first

found at Jackson Res. and thought to be a Lesser Black-backed Gull 17 Sep (S. Mes-sick, HK). Photographs were sent over the Internet, piquing the interest of several birders who arrived the next day and were able to study the bird for several hours. They came to the conclusion that the bird was apparently a fourth-cycle Kelp Gull (CLW, TL, m. ob.) now on a northern-hemi-sphere molt cycle and still growing its outer primaries. The bird remained at Jackson Res. through 27 Sep and was refound in Larimer 19 Oct (NK, m. ob.), where it wandered around until at least 2 Nov (CW, BG).

Small gulls and terns were fairly widespread in the Region. Bonaparte's Gulls were more numerous than usual. Colorado had 40 Sabine's Gulls, Wyoming just 2. "Several hundred" Black Terns were at Jumbo 24 Aug (BS, BG). The biggest story, however, was the unprecedented flight of over 150 Common Terns on 13 Sep: more than 5 at any one location is noteworthy, so counts of 86 at Boulder Res. (CLW, BS) and about 50 at Chatfield (JS) were completely unexpected. At least one ad. Arctic Tern was involved in this flight, seen at Union Res., Weld (CLW, BS), and another, possibly the same bird, was seen later that day at Boulder Res. (ph. CLW, BS). Another Arctic Tern was at Pueblo Res. 23-30 Nov (BKP, ph. MR, m. ob.), almost a month after the latest Regional record.

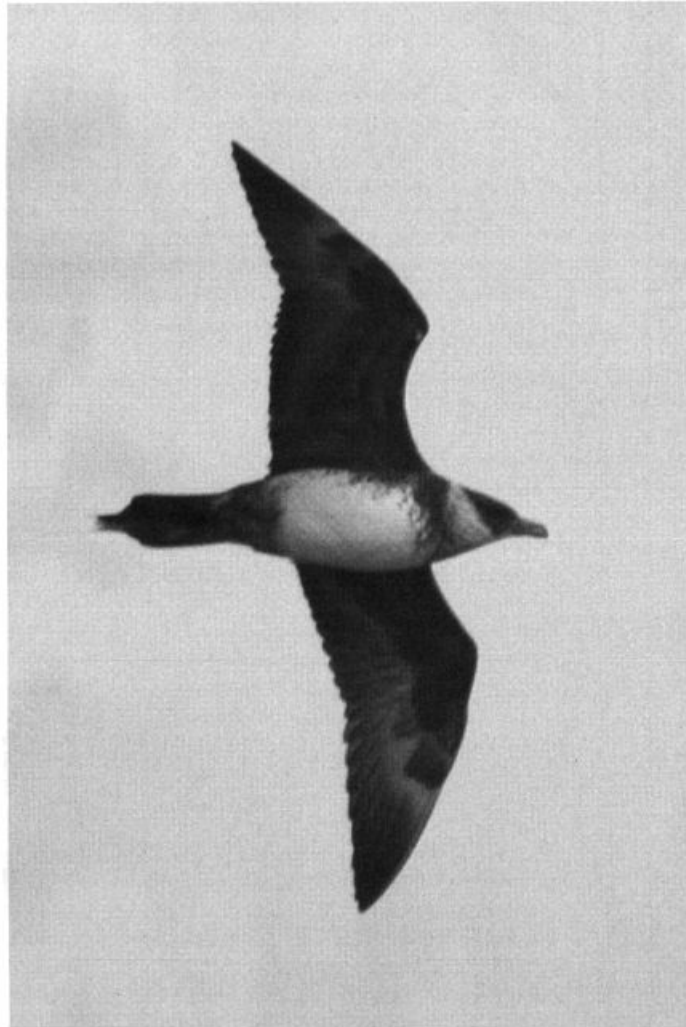
An Ancient Murrelet, Wyoming's 3rd, was found by high school students in an Afton High School parking lot, Lincoln 30 Oct (D. Constans, SP). It was flown to California but died of aspergillosis. Establishing another 3rd state record for Wyoming, a Long-billed Murrelet was found on a Forest Service Road above Blacktail Cr. in the Bear Lodge Mts., Crook, WY 18 Nov (J. Hagen). It was released at McNenny Hatchery in South Dakota but was not seen on the following day.

### DOVES THROUGH WAXWINGS

White-winged Doves are becoming entrenched in the Region, with 14 reported this fall, including one seen most of Nov in Riverton, Fremont, WY (T. Axthelm) and one on Colorado's West Slope at Norwood 6-8 Sep (TL et al.). As is often the case, the

latter bird was seen with Eurasian Collared-Doves. Inca Doves were found at Rocky Ford, Lamar, and Pueblo (v. o.). Very rare in fall, a Black-billed Cuckoo was at Chico 30 Aug (vt. CLW, BS). Walden Ponds hosted an exceptionally tardy Yellow-billed Cuckoo 3-10 Oct (TF).

It was a superb fall for rare humming-birds. Leading the fray was a Green Violet-ear found at a feeder in Evergreen, Jefferson 3-4 Oct (ph. R. Pyon, *vide* K. Niyo). This furnishes the 2nd record for Colorado and the Region. A Magnificent Hummingbird



This subadult Pomarine Jaeger at Chatfield Reservoir, Jefferson County, Colorado 5 (here 8) through 14 November 2003 was part of an almost-annually-detected movement of this species through the Mountain West at this time of year. Photograph by Bill Schmoker.

was at Rye, Pueblo 17 Sep (DS). An imm. male Ruby-throated Hummingbird was photographed in Nucla 27-28 Sep (CD, BW)—the 2nd found in the Region w. of the Continental Divide. A female Anna's Hummingbird was found in Bow Mar 3 Oct (TJ), where it remained into the winter. And most amazing of all, an imm. male Costa's Hummingbird was banded in Pingree Park, Larimer (TJ, C. English, L. Miller, B. Wiard).

Yellow-bellied Sapsuckers appeared in larger-than-expected numbers, with at least 8 in Colorado (v. o.).

Labor Day weekend saw an impressive fallout of flycatchers, including at least 80 Western Wood-Pewees and 7 Great Crested Flycatchers at Chico (v. o.). A female Vermilion Flycatcher was in Canon City 12-14 Sep (SM). Several Eastern Kingbirds were noted in w. portions of the Region, including one 16 Sep at Jackson, Teton, WY. A Scissor-tailed Flycatcher wandered to Slough Cr. in Yellowstone 30 Aug (T.

Kenefick). The only Gray Vireo reported was in Durango 13 Sep (JB, SA). One of several rarities found at E.K.W. was a Yellow-throated Vireo 2 Sep (CM). Cassin's Vireos are proving to be uncommon migrants in the Region, with an impressive high count of 13 at Chico 30-31 Aug (v. o.). Six Blue-headed Vireos were reported this fall, including one far w. at E.K.W. 3 Sep (CM, AH). The 5 Philadelphia Vireos reported in Colorado were average for a fall season. Corvids were decidedly sedentary this year, and several observers commented that numbers were down. The only unusual corvid sighting was a Blue Jay in Craig 29 Sep (FL).

Purple Martins were found at Ramah S.W.A., El Paso 21 Aug (MP) and Lamar 17 Sep (BG, BKP, R. Siebert). The species is rare away from its West Slope nesting locales. The latest Tree Swallow was seen in Franktown, Douglas 7 Nov (HK, UK), and the latest Barn was at Chatfield 3 Nov (JK). Another Cave Swallow was found in Colorado n. of Colorado Springs 9 Aug (LS). This is at least the 3rd single-observer sight record in two years—it seems only a matter of time before one is finally photographed or videotaped in the Region. Bushtits wandered to se. Colorado in Nov, with reports from Bent and Prowers (v. o.). A Carolina Wren was in Pueblo 2

Sep (DS). There were at least 9 Winter Wrens, with Wyoming's single report coming from Grand Teton N.P., WY 19 Oct (SP). A not-so-sneaky Sedge Wren dazzled birders at Fountain Creek Regional Park, El Paso 17-22 Oct (MP, BKP, m. ob.). Eastern Bluebirds put on a strong showing, with many scattered across Colorado and 3 at W.H.R. in Sep (v. o.). Very scarce in fall, Veery was noted at Chico 30 Aug (CLW et

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## MOUNTAIN WEST

al.), Loudy-Simpson Park, Moffat 30 Aug (FL), and Barr 7 Sep (BG). The only Wood Thrush was found at W.H.R. 12 Oct (DAL). A Bendire's Thrasher was reported w. of La Garita, Saguache 6 Aug (JB, PD), near the location where many reports have come from in the past (but few of them documented). Still considered very rare in Colorado, a Sprague's Pipit was found in Sedgwick 18 Oct (BG, BS, CLW). Early and far to the s. was a Bohemian Waxwing in Lamar 28 Oct (BG, JT, D. Russell).

### WARBLERS THROUGH FINCHES

Colorado had a superb fall for such uncommon warblers as American Redstart (50), Black-and-white Warbler (46), and Ovenbird (42), largely because of the Labor Day weekend cold front that forced down numbers of these and other early migrants. Yet with "only" 31 species of warbler, some observers felt the warbler flight disappointing. Noteworthy warblers in the Region included a very late Yellow-throated Warbler in Canon City, Fremont 29 Nov (MP, LE); single Pine Warblers at Pueblo 4-8 Sep (BKP, MY), E.K.W. 14 Sep (CM), and L. Hasty, Bent 21 Nov (DN); a Bay-breasted Warbler at E.K.W. 2 Sep (CM); a Worm-eating at Barr 6 Sep (GR); 5 Mourning Warblers in e. Colorado 28-31 Aug; and 3 Canada Warblers, with a female at Chico 30 Aug (CLW et al.) and 2 at Barr 31 Aug (DF, GR). Other parulid highlights in w. Colorado and Wyoming included single Magnolias in Montezuma 9 Sep (JB), Moffat 18 Oct (FL), and W.H.R. 21 Sep (TF, NP); 4 Black-throated Blue Warblers in Wyoming (3 in Natrona, one in Laramie—none in Colorado); and single Hooded Warblers in La Plata 2 Sep (JB) and Ouray 5 Sep (CLW, TL).

Late warblers not already mentioned included a Tennessee at Denver 23 Oct (J. Schieving); 4 Nashvilles in Nov, the latest at Boulder 15 Nov (PG); a Northern Parula 12 Oct at Ft. Lyon (BKP et al.); single Townsend's 30 Oct in Boulder (CLW, BS) and Pueblo (BKP); Palms on 2 Nov in Estes Park (S. Rashid) and Highlands Ranch (BB); a Blackpoll at Fountain Creek 26 Oct (TF m. ob.); and an American Redstart in Westcliffe, Custer 18 Oct (MP, LE, BKP). Single Summer Tanagers were in La Plata 28 Aug (JB), Douglas 18 Sep (A. Crockett), and El Paso 22-26 Nov (KP et al.). A Scarlet Tanager was reported from El Paso 7 Sep (KP) and another in Jefferson 25 Oct (HK). A late Western Tanager was in Rye 3 Nov (DS).

November Chipping Sparrow reports were of singles in Prowers 14 Nov (DAL, JT) and Pueblo 17 Nov (B.B. Hahn). Also late, a Clay-colored Sparrow was in Prowers 1 Nov (DAL). An average number of 6 Field Sparrows was reported from e. Colorado. Single extralimital Grasshopper Sparrows were

seen in Custer 16 Aug (BKP) and Montezuma 19 Sep (JB). Two migrant Le Conte's Sparrows were in Bent 12 Oct (BKP, RH, DS, SO). Single Red Fox Sparrows occurred at W.H.R. 12 Oct (DAL), in Colorado City, Pueblo 26-28 Oct (DS), Bonny Res., Yuma 14 Nov (BKP, MP, PAG), and Nucla 26-30 Nov (CD, BW). Many Lincoln's Sparrows lingered through the end of the season. Also noteworthy were over 60 Swamp Sparrows found this fall in Colorado, perhaps the highest total ever. Several observers at Neenoshe Res. reported a Smith's Longspur 11 Oct (DN, BS, RH, DS, J. Mammoser et al.), and another was near Julesburg, Sedgwick 18 Oct (CLW, BS). These sightings and another sighting from Adams in the fall of 2002 await review by the Colorado Birds Records Committee; there are no accepted records as yet for the state. A few Snow Buntings were found in late Oct and Nov in Wyoming and Colorado. Three Orchard Orioles found in Colorado City 31 Aug (DS) were an unusual find for the Greenhorn Valley. A male Purple Finch was at Pueblo City Park, Pueblo 9 Nov (M. Ackley), and 2 were in Colorado Springs, El Paso 9 Nov (MP, M.G. Peterson). White-winged Crossbills were reported from Gunnison, Hinsdale, Mesa, and Saguache in Colorado. Seventeen Common Redpolls were reported from Wyoming and one from Colorado.

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