

Colorado & Wyoming

It was another relatively dry and mild winter for most of the Region, with a wide variety of lingering birds from Band-tailed Pigeons to Lesser Goldfinches. There were no major invasions of mountain/winter finches, waxwings, or any other group of winter irruptives, although the handful of Common Redpolls and Snow Buntings appeared in just enough places to keep us longing for more.

After eight years at the editors' desk, Brandon Percival and Van Truan have retired from writing the reports from the Mountain West Region, now rechristened the Colorado & Wyoming Region. We join our fellow subscribers in thanking them for the thousands of hours they spent compiling records and writing reports for this Region, and we are thrilled that Brandon will continue to compile reports from southeastern Colorado and to help in many other ways with record-keeping for the Region.

Abbreviations: Barr (Barr L. S.P., *Adams*); Chico (Chico Basin Ranch, *El Paso/Pueblo*); E.K.W. (Edness Kimball Wilkins S.P., *Natrona, WY*); Eleven Mile (Eleven Mile Res., *Park*); Jumbo (Jumbo Res., *Logan & Sedgwick*); W.H.R. (Wyoming Hereford Ranch, *Laramie, WY*); Yellowstone (Yellowstone N.P., *Park & 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 DUCKS

Last fall's ad. Red-throated Loon at Standley L., *Jefferson* remained until 8 Dec (LS). The Regional total of southbound Pacific Loons for 2003 climbed to 42, including 8 during the first 10 days of Dec. A Pacific Loon at Grey Reef, *Natrona, WY* 4 Dec–3 Jan (Betty Rickman, m. ob.) was very tardy. Given the rarity of mid-winter Pacifics in the Region, it is reasonable to speculate that the ad. Pacific Loon at Valmont Res., *Boulder* (Tim Lenz, TF) 4 Jan was the same individual. Grebe numbers were lower than in recent years. Highlights included at least one Red-necked Grebe that remained at Pueblo Res. until 4 Dec (BKP, m. ob.), an Eared Grebe at L. Beckwith, *Pueblo* 3 Jan (DS), and a Western Grebe at Big Johnson Res., *El Paso* (MP, m. ob.). We know of only one Clark's Grebe that wintered, that being at Pueblo Res. (BKP, m. ob.).

American White Pelicans lingered at Pueblo Res. until 10 Jan (BKP, m. ob.), and an injured bird in *Kiowa* apparently wintered successfully (v. o.). In addition to the regularly wintering population along the S. Platte in Denver, single Black-crowned Night-Herons were found in Ft. Collins 12 Jan (DAL), Grand Junction 16 Feb (B. Moston), and at gravel ponds near Arvada (4 birds; LS).

Greater White-fronted Geese were widely noted in ne. Colorado and suburban areas along the I-25 corridor, with reports from at least 14 counties. A juv. Black Brant was seen at Greeley 12–16 Dec (BG, m.ob.), and what was probably the same bird was at Lower Latham Res., *Weld* 29 Dec (NK) and Broomfield 5 Jan–16 Feb (E. Zorawowicz, m. ob.). After their best fall showing ever, Trumpeter Swans continued to be seen all winter. The 2 at L. Maria, *Huerfano* remained until 19 Dec (DS, m. ob.). Two ads. were at Walker Gravel Pit, *Douglas* 6 Dec (GW). Three n. of Boulder and 5 s. of Ft. Collins (v. o.) wintered. Surveys at Seedskaadee N.W.R., *Sweetwater, WY* revealed 66 Trumpeters 19 Feb (SP), and weekly surveys at Yellowstone counted between 549 and 43 (TM). Wyoming's beloved Whooper Swan at Yellowstone remained all winter (†TM, m. ob.). Tundra Swans were also widely noted in the Region, with reports of 14 total from *Larimer, Boulder, Pueblo, Huerfano, and Bent*. Three others wintered at Confluence Park in Delta (LA, m. ob.).

A male Eurasian Wigeon was seen at Barr L. 1–3 Dec (DF, GG, TL). Very rare in winter, 2 Blue-winged Teal were found: one at Pueblo Res. 20 Dec (LS ph., TL) and one at Rocky Ford 19 Jan–23 Feb (DL, JT, DE).

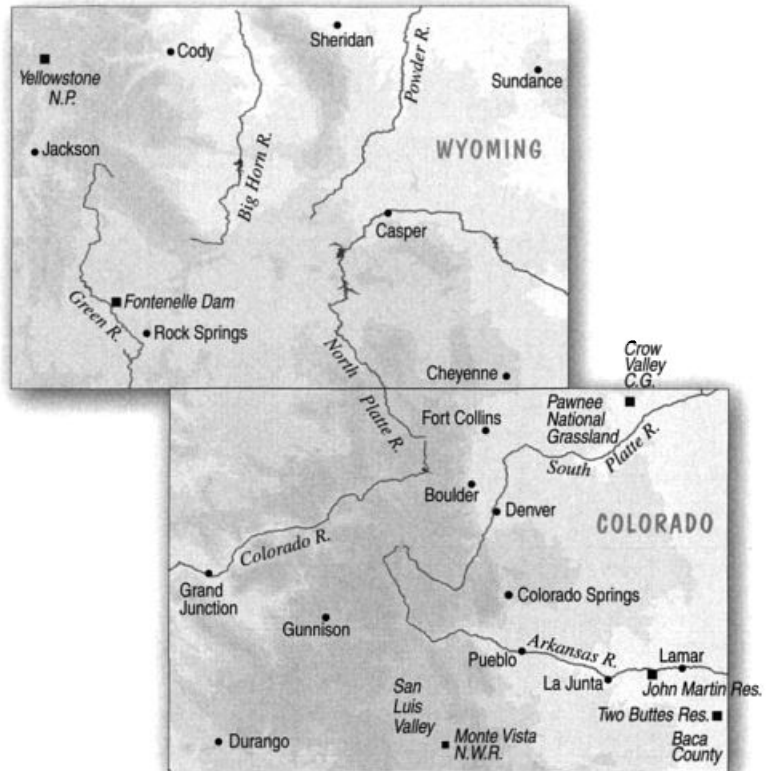
Christopher L. Wood

8050 Niwot Road #4
Longmont, Colorado 80503
(zeledonia@cfo-link.org)

Doug Faulkner

Rocky Mountain Bird Observatory
14500 Lark Bunting Lane
Brighton, Colorado 80603
(zebrilus@aol.com)

Roughly 45 Greater Scaup were reported in Colorado, an average winter showing. The only Surf Scoter was at Horsetooth Res., *Larimer* 1 Dec (JB). White-winged Scoters were found near Florence, *Fremont* 14 Dec (TL, m.ob.), Ft. Collins 1 Dec (JB), Aurora Res. 12 Dec (GW, AS), and Soda Butte, *WY* (TM). Perhaps the rarest of the wintering scoters, a Black Scoter was at Long Pond 3–4 Dec (RH, DAL). Long-tailed Ducks were



more numerous than usual, with at least 17 in Colorado and 3 in Wyoming. A Hooded Merganser along the Madison R., *Teton*, WY 9 Jan (TM) was unexpected. Barrow's Goldeneyes were recorded from their usual winter locations, with a high count of 64 at Carbondale 1 Jan (T&KM).

HAWKS THROUGH WOODPECKERS

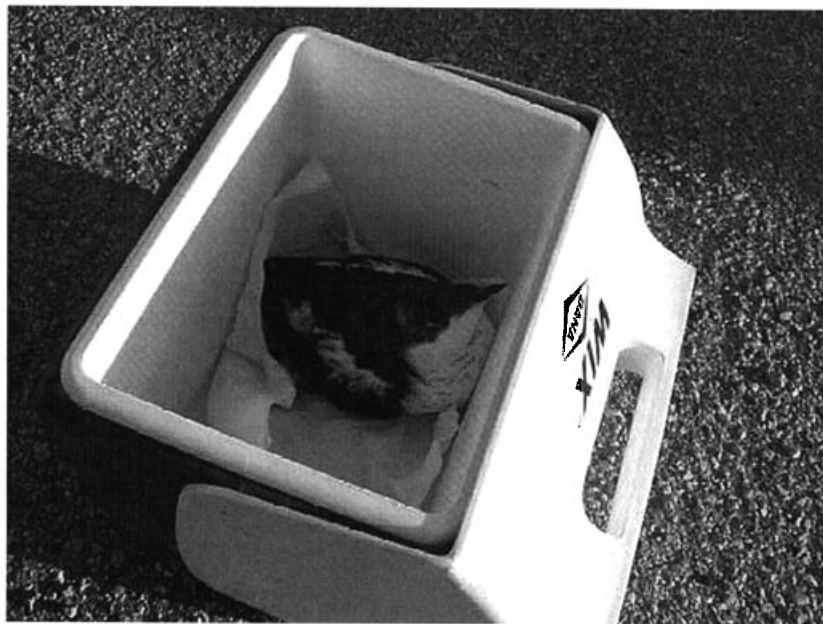
Many observers felt that numbers of Rough-legged and Ferruginous Hawks were low, particularly in the San Luis Valley. By contrast, Harlan's Hawks put on a strong showing, including 10 on the Boulder C.B.C. 14 Dec; one at Silt, *Garfield* 31 Jan-8 Feb (TM) provided one of very few West Slope reports. Up to 8 Soras were found in the Ft. Lyon area (DN, m. ob.), perhaps the only location where this species regularly winters in the Region.

Early winter continued to be productive for lingering shorebirds. Two Greater Yellowlegs were found at John Martin Res. 3 Dec (DN), and another was along Boulder Cr. 14 Dec (CLW). A Spotted Sandpiper was in Grand Junction 14 Dec (CD, LA), and even more remarkably one was at Wilson, *Teton*, WY 26 Dec (R. Smith). At least one Least Sandpiper remained until 11 Dec at John Martin Res. (DN), which also hosted 5 Long-billed Dowitchers through 4 Dec (DN). Rare at any season, 2 Dunlins were at Pueblo through at least 14 Feb (SO, BKP, m. ob.).

Mew Gulls put on another good showing: 2 in Boulder 13 Dec-26 Jan, one in Pueblo 19 Dec-11 Jan, and one at Big Johnson Res. 9 Jan (MP). Near-normal numbers of Lesser Black-backed (ca. 22), Thayer's (ca. 18) and Glaucous Gulls (ca. 10) were recorded in the Region, all in Colorado. Two Iceland Gulls led the larid list with a first-winter at Pueblo Res. 5 Jan (BKP) and an ad. at John Martin Res. 29 Jan (DN). Glaucous-winged Gulls (and gulls with apparent Glaucous-winged genes) continue to present identification challenges in the Region. At least 3 were reported, but none appeared to be pure birds. A second-winter bird in *Boulder* 13 Jan-30 Jan (CLW, TF, m. ob.) was thought have at least some Herring Gull genes. One at Confluence Park in *Delta* 13-23 Feb (m. ob.) was thought to be a hybrid Glaucous-winged x Western (m. ob.), while photo-

graphs of another looked more like a Thayer's Gull. The only Great Black-backed Gulls were the ad. present for yet another winter at Pueblo Res. and one at John Martin Res. 15 Dec (DN). The ad. Arctic Tern at Pueblo Res. remained until 3 Dec (BKP, ph. MP et al.), the latest ever recorded in the Region.

Band-tailed Pigeons may occasionally be found in Colorado in winter, but this season was superb, with some 200 birds reported along the Front Range, with one as far n. as *Boulder* 14 Dec (S. Dooley, R. Davis). White-



Providing a third record for Wyoming, this Long-billed Murrelet was found on a forest road above Blacktail Creek in the Bear Lodge Mountains in Crook County on 18 November 2003 (here), treated, and released at McNenny Hatchery in South Dakota. Photograph by Jerry Hagen.

winged Doves continue their range consolidation and expansion, with birds found in Pueblo, Colorado City, Rocky Ford, and Springfield—an astonishingly high count of up to 15 was noted in Rocky Ford 9 Dec-14 Feb (SO). Up to 7 Inca Doves were in Rocky Ford 10 Jan (SO), with others seen in Pueblo and Lamar. The female Anna's Hummingbird remained in Bow Mar, *Jefferson* until 5 Jan (TJ, m. ob.), establishing a first Colorado C.B.C. record. It was a sensational sapsucker season, perhaps the best ever, with 7 Williamson's Sapsuckers (*Fremont*, *Pueblo*, and *Teller*) and 16 Yellow-bellied Sapsuckers. The only Red-naped Sapsucker was reported from Grand Junction 12 Dec (LA).

FLYCATCHERS THROUGH WAXWINGS

Casual in winter, an Eastern Phoebe in *Garfield* 13 Dec may have also been a first county record for this w. county (KP, HK, TM). Several Say's Phoebes remained in *Pueblo* and *Fremont* into early Jan. Four were on the Grand Junction C.B.C., *Mesa* 14 Dec, where somewhat more regular in early winter. Contributing to the anecdotal evidence

of West Nile virus decimating bird populations, particularly corvids, the Bonny C.B.C., *Yuma* 18 Dec had a record-low 17 Black-billed Magpies (mean 67) (*vide* CLW). In Jackson, WY, American Crow is rare in winter, so the 11 found there 29 Jan were noteworthy (Roger Watson). An impressive number so close to the mts., 2500 Horned Larks swarmed around Big Johnson Res. 30 Dec (MP). The Bonny C.B.C. also recorded the lowest number of Black-capped Chickadees in its history, with only 26 birds found (mean 107) (*vide* CLW). Bushtits staged another winter excursion away from their usual haunts, with flocks found in *Bent*, *Otero*, and *Weld*, the latter furnishing perhaps the 2nd county record. The isolated population of Bushtits on Coal Mt., *Natrona*, WY had at least 28 birds 14 Feb (JL). We received reports of at least 17 Winter Wrens between 2 Nov and 28 Feb. Two Marsh Wrens were found at Mammoth Hot Springs, *Yellowstone N. P.*, *Park*, WY 5 Feb (TM). Blue-gray Gnatcatcher continued to be found in early winter in w.-cen. Colorado, with one bird in *Montrose*, *Montrose* 1 Dec (TW) and another in *Grand Junction*, *Mesa* 14 Dec (CD, LA).

Known to nest only in ne. Colorado and near Grand Junction, Eastern Bluebirds were found along the Front Range this winter, with approximately 109 birds reported 2 Dec-29 Feb. One in *Hotchkiss*, *Delta* 17 Jan was the most out-of-range (LA, m. ob.). Several Hermit Thrushes lingered into mid-Dec, and one found in *Fremont* on 21 Feb may have wintered in the area (RM). Two ad. male Varied Thrushes, one 28 Jan-7 Feb at a private residence in *Douglas* (TO, DF et al.), the other in *Grand Junction*, *Mesa* 7-10 Feb (B. Moston, RW, D. Steele), elated birders. Another lingered near *Glenrock*, *Converse*, WY 7-14 Jan (Bruce & Donna Walgren). Uncommon in winter, Northern Mockingbirds numbered 11 this season, the northernmost coming from the 2-Bar Ranch near *Casper*, *Natrona* 1 Jan (Joe Scott). A Sage Thrasher was found on the *Grand Junction C.B.C.* 14 Dec (CD, LA), and the report of one in *Glenwood Springs*, *Garfield*, would provide a first winter record for that montane county. Bohemian Waxwings were scarce this winter, with the only reports coming from *Rio Blanco* 7 Feb (DH) and *Prowers* 17 Jan (DL).

WARBLERS THROUGH FINCHES

Last fall's Yellow-throated Warbler remained at the Holy Cross Abbey, Fremont until 2 Jan, providing one of only a handful of winter records (MP, TL, m. ob.). Patience rewarded birders looking for the Pine Warbler in Greeley, Weld 19 Dec-24 Jan (SM, m. ob.). A Palm Warbler in Highlands Ranch, Douglas 19 Jan was unexpected (BB, LB). Winter Common Yellowthroats are very rare, but the one found on the Grand Junction C.B.C. 14 Dec was even more exceptional that far w. (CD, LA). The Wilson's Warbler in Boulder 3 Dec was late (BS). An ad. male Scarlet Tanager in Fort Collins, Larimer 6-21 Dec delighted birders (D. Swartz, RH) and provided, amazingly, the 2nd winter Colorado record. A Green-tailed Towhee (of apparently 2 in the county) successfully overwintered at a feeder in Montrose, Montrose 25 Dec-29 Feb (CK). Eastern Towhees have been recently found in the state during winter, with this season producing an imm. female at a private residence in Big Thompson Canyon, Larimer 22 Dec-29 Feb (BA et al.).

A wintering Chipping Sparrow in Lamar 18 Jan-29 Feb (in alternate plumage on the latter date) defied precedent (DL, JT, m. ob.). A Field Sparrow 5 & 12 Dec near Colorado City, Pueblo (with a Vesper Sparrow on the latter date) was also a rare winter find (DS). The Black-throated Sparrow found in Grand Junction 13 Dec provided one of few winter records for this species (B. Moston). A Lark Bunting at Higbee Canyon, Otero 20 Dec was quite late (SO). Continuing the theme of rare sparrows, Savannah Sparrow put in a good showing, with 8 reported, including the first for the Bonny C.B.C. (fide CLW). At least 4 Le Conte's Sparrows wintered at what is now considered their usual location at Fort Lyon, Bent (DN, m. ob.). A Red Fox Sparrow in Nucla, Montrose lingered from the fall through the winter season and was heard singing (CD, BW, GS, KG). We received reports of 22 Lincoln's Sparrows, normally a very rare winterer. Swamp Sparrows invaded the state, with reports totaling 121 birds, including an incredible 30 reported from Bent alone (DN). White-throated and Harris's Sparrows put on less dramatic shows, with only 35 and 27 reported, respectively. Two Golden-crowned Sparrows wintered at a private residence in Delta 28 Dec-29 Feb (DG).

Expected in winter only in Baca, the wintering flock of 30-50 McCown's Longspurs near Adobe Creek Res., Bent 7 Dec-25 Jan was a bit surprising. Lapland Longspurs appeared in good numbers, with the most southerly report, of 100 birds, coming from Pueblo 22 Feb (DS, D. Johnson). Five Chestnut-collared Longspurs on the John Martin C.B.C. was an unusually high count for the state (fide DN). Snow Bunting numbers were

low in Colorado, with a flock of 5 in Routt 1 Jan (fide DFi) being the high count. Wyoming fared a little better with a flock of 50 at Soda Butte 26 Jan (TM). The Northern Cardinal in Bent was a little w. of usual range (DN). Very rare in winter in Wyoming, a Western Meadowlark wintered in Jackson, Teton 1 Dec-29 Feb (Terry Amireen). Three Rusty Blackbirds at Valco Ponds 21 Nov-25 Feb provided the high count of this rare but expected winterer (BKP, m. ob.). Representing a first winter record for Routt, a male Brewer's Blackbird was photographed in Craig 30 Jan (DF).

Finches were generally scarce, and many observers commented particularly on the scarcity of Evening Grosbeak and Cassin's Finch. Even the usually ubiquitous Pine Siskin was relatively scarce. The mild winter and relatively dry winter accounted for the difficulty of finding rosy-finches. Unawee Canyon, Mesa 9-11 Feb was the hotspot for Black Rosy-Finches this season, with 50-100 present (RL, m. ob.). Three female-plumaged Purple Finches were found, one each at Rye, Pueblo 12 Dec-19 Jan (D. Silverman), Colorado City, Pueblo 3 Jan (S. Moss), and Las Animas, Bent 7 Jan (DN). Lesser Goldfinches, by contrast, were widespread this season, with the most unusual reports coming from Lamar 28 Feb (TF) and 5 at Bibber Cr., Jefferson 3-4 Feb (D. Mullineaux).

Cited observers (subregional editors in boldface): Susan Allerton, Jim Beatty (sw. Colorado), Bob Brown, Lea Ann Brown (LAB), Peter Derven, Coen Dexter (w.-cen. Colorado), Lisa Edwards, David Ely, Doug Faulkner, Dicky Filby (DFi), Ted Floyd, Peter A. Gaede, Peter Gent, Bryan Guarante, Gregg Goodrich, Tim Gorman, Donna Hilkey, Ann Hines, Rachel Hopper, Tina Jones, Joey Kellner, Hugh Kingery, Urling Kingery, Nick Komar, Jim and Gloria Lawrence (J&GL) (statewide R.B.A.-Wyoming), David A. Leatherman, Tony Leukering (R.M.B.O.- Colorado), Rich Levad, Forrest Luke (nw. Colorado), Bill Maynard, Tom & Kay McConnel, Terry McEaney (Yellowstone), Chris Michelson (Casper, WY), Rich Miller, SeEtta Moss, Duane Nelson, Stan Oswald, Ken Pals, Susan Patla (Jackson, WY), Brandon K. Percival (se. Colorado), Mark Peterson (cen. Colorado), Nathan Pieplow, Bert Raynes (Jackson, WY), Betty Rickman (BRi), Gene Rutherford, Bill Schmoker (Denver-Ft. Collins Metro), Larry Semo (ne. Colorado), Dave Silverman, Janeal Thompson, Andrew Spencer, Glenn Walbek (n.-cen. Colorado), Christopher L. Wood, Brenda Wright, Mark Yaeger. Many other individual observers contributed information to this report but could not be personally acknowledged here; all have our thanks and appreciation. 🐦

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