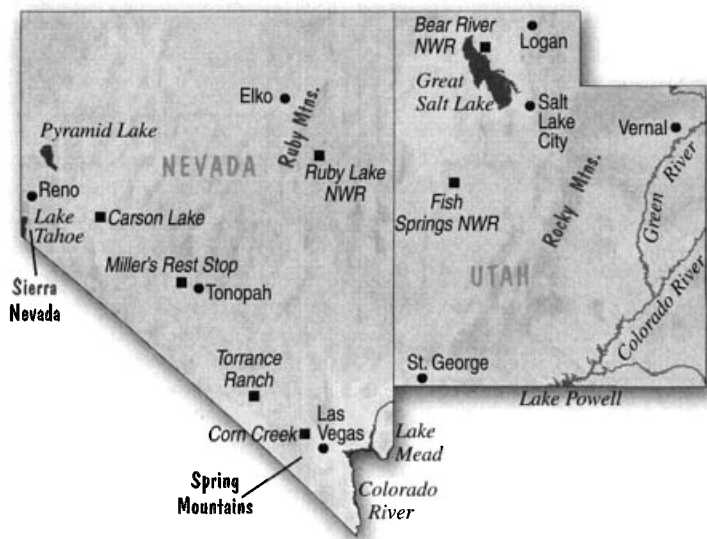


Great Basin



Rick Fridell

3505 West 290 North
Hurricane, UT 84737
(rfridell@redrock.net)

After several consecutive years of drought, an above-average winter snowfall in 2004–2005, the wet spring resulted in an exceptional season in the Great Basin. Depleted water levels in lakes, rivers, and springs received a much-needed boost, and plant growth was abundant throughout the Region. Such resources typically translate into increased nesting success for breeding birds of semi-arid habitats. For example, unprecedented numbers of nesting Long-eared Owls were documented in southern Nevada, perhaps in response to increases in rodent populations. The Great Basin also received its typical share of outstanding vagrants, led by reports of White-eyed Vireo and Prothonotary Warbler in Nevada and White-tailed Kite, Magnolia Warbler, and Scarlet Tanager in Utah. Unfortunately the Great Basin Region lost another valued contributor this season; Dennis Trousdale was a long-time Nevada birder, and his contributions and friendship cannot be replaced. He is much missed by fellow birders.

Abbreviations: Antelope I. (Antelope Island S.P. and Causeway, Davis, UT); Bear River (Bear River Migratory Bird Refuge, Box Elder, UT); Corn Cr. (Corn Creek Unit, Desert N.W.R., Clark, NV); H.B.V.P. (Henderson Bird Viewing Preserve, Clark, NV); L. Mead (Lake

Mead N.R.A., Clark, NV); Lytle (Lytle Ranch Preserve, Washington, UT); Miller's R.A. (Miller's Rest Area, Esmeralda, NV); Ouray (Ouray N.W.R., Uintah, UT); Hills (Red Hills Golf Course, St. George, Washington, UT); Zion (Zion N.P., Washington, UT).

CONDORS THROUGH WATERFOWL

California Condor sightings are becoming regular in the Lava Pt. area of Zion due to the remarkable success of the re-introduction program. To date, most Utah condor observations have been from high-elevation areas; thus an ad. perched in the Washington Fields, Washington, UT 11 Mar (*fide* LR) was noteworthy. A Bewick's Swan photographed 8 Mar (TS) at Salk Creek W.M.A., Box Elder provided a very rare Utah record of this Tundra Swan subspecies. The only Eurasian Wigeon reported in the Region was a male at Bear River 4 Apr (BO). The wintering pair of Long-tailed Ducks at Antelope I. lingered through 3 May (DO, DRi); a female observed at the Hurricane (SR-9) Sewage Ponds, Washington, UT 4 Apr–May 31+ (RF, KC et al.) was truly unusual.

A White-tailed Kite photographed in the Washington Fields, Washington, UT 9 Apr (ph. †RF) furnished the 7th confirmed record for the state and the first since 1992. A White-tailed Kite was reported without documentation 20 Apr near Lahontan Res., Churchill, NV (JLy). An ad. Gray Hawk reported along the Santa Clara R., Washington, UT 1 May (p.a.,

LT) was not photographed or relocated; there are very few extralimital reports of this species anywhere. Nevada supplied the only spring Red-shouldered Hawk reports, with an imm. observed at the Oxbow Nature Center, Reno, Washoe 19–21 Mar (FP) and an ad. at Minden, Douglas 21 Mar (GS). An ad. Broad-winged Hawk was photographed at Lytle 23 Apr (KW, PL, LT, ph., †RF). Although this was only the 14th confirmed Utah record, these hawks are likely more regular migrants through the state than the number of accepted records indicates.

It was a fine spring for shorebirding in the Great Basin, with many exceptional sightings. An American Golden-Plover, a rare transient through the Region, was reported from an unusually high elevation site (2300 m) along Jones Hole Rd., Uintah, UT 14 May (LG). Another, observed at Bear River 30 May (CD), was at more typical wetland location. Whimbrels made an excellent showing this spring in the Region, with more than 10 observed. Utah observations included 3 at Sand Hollow S.P., Washington, UT 18 Apr (ND, CD, KC, ph. RF), several at Antelope I. 19 Apr (JHa), and at least 2 at Bear River 18–22 May (RWo, J&KB). The only Whimbrel reported in Nevada was a single individual 24 Apr at Lemmon Valley, Washoe (FP). A well-documented Hudsonian Godwit at Antelope I. 24 Apr (†DS) furnished only the 11th confirmed Utah record of this species. Three Ruddy Turnstones 8 May at Carson L., Churchill, NV were a nice find (GS). Equally impressive were 3 Red Knots at Antelope I. 27 Apr (J&KB) and another there 10 May (MS et al.). The only Semipalmated Sandpiper of the season was observed at Carson L., Churchill, NV 16 Apr (RS, DG). Least Tern observations have been on the rise in recent years, and this spring was no exception: one was at Utah Lake S.P., Utah, UT 12 May (†RSto, ph., †MM) and another was seen 20

May at Bishop Springs, Millard, UT (ph., †LI, LG).

OWLS THROUGH WOODPECKERS

Several contributors remarked on the virtual explosion of breeding Long-eared Owls in s. Nevada this spring. Long-eared Owls are rare and sporadic breeders in the s. portion of the Region, so reports of at least five nests fledging 15 or more young

were unprecedented. Long-eared Owl nests were observed at multiple Clark locations including Corn Cr., Red Rock Canyon National Conservation Area, and Spring Mt. Ranch S.P. (CT, RS, M&JC et al.). There were fewer reports of Vaux's Swifts than normal; only a few individuals were reported in Washoe and Clark, NV (FP et al.). The only report from Utah was a single bird at Gunlock S.P., Washington 30 May (LT). Anna's Hummingbirds are



This White-tailed Kite, photographed 9 April 2005 in the Washington Fields, Washington County, Utah furnished the seventh documented record for the state and first in since 1992. Photograph by Rick Fridell.

now established and regularly observed in s. Nevada and sw. Utah; however, it remains to be seen whether they will continue their expansion northward into the Region. This spring, they were observed n. of typical areas at three Nevada locations including Reno, *Washoe* 11 Mar (JA), Alum Canyon, *Washoe* 21 May (RB), and Lida Pond, *Esmeralda* 28 May (GS). A Broad-tailed Hummingbird 1 Mar at Leeds, *Washington*, UT (CSh) was an early har-binger of spring.

Gilded Flickers are rare breeders in extreme s. Nevada, so individuals reported from Las Vegas, *Clark* 13 Mar (C&PG) and Laughlin, *Clark* 14 Mar (CT, JBr) were of note. A Pileated Woodpecker was observed along the Chimney Beach Trail, L. Tahoe, *Washoe*, NV 1 May (JA); the range of this species just barely extends into Nevada along the California border, and they are seldom reported in this Region.

FLYCATCHERS THROUGH WARBLERS

A stunning male Vermilion Flycatcher at Lemmon Valley, *Washoe*, NV 11 May (FP) was n. of expected range. A Scissor-tailed Flycatcher, always an exceptional sight, was found at Miller's R.A. 13–14 May (F&GP, DT et al.). Remarkably, a 2nd Scissor-tailed was documented in the Region this spring, along the road between Notum and Bullfrog, *Wayne*, UT 22 May (†C&GO). Certainly one of the highlights of the season was a White-eyed Vireo photographed along Sagehen Rd., *Dyer, Esmeralda*, NV 30 May (GS). A Red-eyed Vireo photographed at Corn Cr. 30 May (JHo) was the only report this period. A singing Varied Thrush first documented 28 Mar at Red Canyon Park, Provo, *Utah*, UT (NH et al.) thrilled observers through 16 Apr (EL). The remarkable numbers of Bohemian Waxwings observed in n. Utah this winter lingered into the spring; waxwings were regularly observed in *Cache* and *Weber*, UT through 12 Apr, with a high count of 340 in *Cache Valley* (DRo).

As usual, the spring migration brought many reports of vagrant e. warblers across the Region. Tennessee Warblers were reported from Idlewild Park, Reno, *Washoe*, NV 18 May (EK, *vide* DMc) and Miller's R.A. 28 May (ph. GS, DT et al.). A male Chestnut-sided Warbler found at Miller's R.A. 28–29 May (DT, GS et al.) was the only one reported in the Region. *Magnolia* Warblers are very rare in the Region, particularly in spring, so 2 well-documented observations were notable: 7 May at Cold Creek Res., *White Pine*, NV (†J&AK) and 14 May Salt Lake City, Salt

Lake, UT (†JLi). A female Black-throated Blue Warbler was reported from Garr Ranch, Antelope I. on the remarkable date of 13 Apr (p.a., †KE, JR, CSo et al.). This would be by far the earliest record for this species in Utah. The only Hermit Warbler reported this spring was at Spring Mt. Ranch S.P., *Clark*, NV 8 May (ph. SPa). Black-and-white Warblers were found at Antelope I. 7 May (CP) and two *Esmeralda*, NV locations: Indian Cr., *Dyer* 7 May (GS, RStr, DG) and Circle L Ranch, *Dyer* 14–15 May (GS et al.). An American Redstart, captured and banded in 1999 at the Jordanelle Wetlands, *Wasatch*, UT, returned for the 7th consecutive summer 22 May+ (LG et al.).



White-eyed Vireos are seldom encountered in the Great Basin and are particularly rare in spring. This one photographed 30 May 2005 along Sagehen Road in *Dyer, Esmeralda County, Nevada* was at one of the many little-visited (but often exceptionally productive) vagrant traps in the western reaches of that state.

Photograph by Greg Scyphers.

American Redstarts were also at Porter Springs, *Pershing*, NV 22 May (male; DS) and at Circle L Ranch, *Dyer, Esmeralda*, NV 28 May (female; D&RS). Another surprise at the Circle L Ranch was a Prothonotary Warbler 30 May (DT, ph. GS). A Worm-eating Warbler photographed at Spring Mt. Ranch S.P., *Clark* 8 May (p.a., SPa) made a rare spring record for Nevada. Two Ovenbirds were found in *Esmeralda*, NV this season: at Miller's R.A. 28 May (DT et al.) and Circle L Ranch, *Dyer* 30 May (GS). Northern Waterthrushes

were observed in the Region 1–28 May in four Utah (*Davis, Utah, Wasatch, and Washington*) and one Nevada county (*Esmeralda*). Painted Redstarts were observed again this spring along the n. fork of the Virgin R. in Zion Canyon, Zion 3 Apr–15 May (RWO, C&GO). Although a pair was observed on 9 Apr (KW, PL, RG), nesting and successful breeding have not yet been documented.

TANAGERS THROUGH FINCHES

Summer Tanagers were reported n. of their



Tennessee Warbler is an occasional visitor to the Great Basin. This one was discovered by Greg Scyphers and Dennis Trousdale 28 May 2005 at Miller's Rest Stop, near Tonopah, *Esmeralda County, Nevada*. Photograph by Greg Scyphers.

normal range at Black Rock, *Millard*, UT 20 May (LT, LG) and at Circle L Ranch, *Dyer, Esmeralda*, NV 28–30 May (D&RS et al.). Utah's 4th Scarlet Tanager was observed at Lytle 28

May (p.a., †LT). Rose-breasted Grosbeaks made a nice showing this spring, with two Nevada reports—males at Torrence Ranch, *Nye* 23 May (M&JC) and at Spring Mt. Ranch S.P., *Clark* 29 May (ph. GS)—and 2 in Utah: a male at Mapleton, *Utah* 6–9 May (BW, TR et al.) and one at Garr Ranch, Antelope I. 17 May (H&KR, DH). Surprisingly, there was only one Indigo Bunting reported this spring; a singing male at the Sand I. Campground, *San Juan*, UT 22 Apr (MS et al.).

Northbound Lark Buntings were observed at several unusual locations, including a flock of 8 near Hurricane, *Washington*, UT 29 Apr (LT, LG, RF), a flock of 10 in North Las Vegas, *Clark*, NV 30 Apr (DMa, *vide* HH), and a male at Garr Ranch, Antelope I. 15 May (JBi). Nevada supplied all the spring reports of White-throated Sparrows, with up to 3 at Ash Meadows N.W.R., *Nye* 4–5 May (M&JC) and an ad. at Miller's R.A. 14–15 May (GS). In Nevada, Harris's Sparrows were observed at Fallon, *Churchill* 30 Apr–12 May (CA) and at Jack's Valley, *Douglas* 7–9 May (LH); the only Utah report was from Sand I., *San Juan*, NV 7 May (C&SL). Two male Bobolinks near Elko, *Elko*, NV 16 May (RWol) were the only out-of-range reports of the season. Two Hooded Orioles at residences in Reno, *Washoe*, NV (23 Apr, AW; and 8 May, JA) were n. of their expected range. Evening Grosbeaks made rare appearances at Miller's R.A., with a single female observed 7–8 May (GS, RStr, DG) and 4 there 14 May (GS).

Contributors and cited observers: Carol Amos, John G. Anderson, Joel & Kathy Beyer, Jack Binch (JBi), Je Anne Branca (JBr), Richard Brune, Kristen Comella, Marian and James Cressman, Carol Davis, Nicky Davis, Keith Evans, Rick Fridell, Cynthia & Patrick Gaffey, Dennis Ghiglieri, Lu Giddings, Shawn Goodchild, Rachel Gubler, Hermi Hiatt, Dave Hanscom, Jolene Hatch (JHa), Ned Hill, Linda Hiller, Jim Holmes (JHo), Bob Huntington, John & Anne King, Ed Kurtz, Pam Larson, Chuck & Sara LaRue, Edson Leite, Jerry Liguori (JLi), Jim Lytle (JLy), Dan Malueg (DMa), Dan McIvor (DMc), Don Molde (DMo), Milton Moody, Deedee O'Brien, Bridget Olson, Clare & Greg Oskay, Scott Page (SPa), Fred Petersen, Gail Petersen, Cheryl Peterson, Stephen Peterson (SPe), Kristin Purdy, Laurie Rasmussen, Jack Rensel, Dave Rintoul (DRi), Hal and Kathy Robbins, Dominique Roche (DRo), Tuula Rose, Ron Ryel, Rita Schlageter (RSc), Doug Schonewald, Greg Scyphers, Dennis & Rebecca Serdehely, Charlie Sheard (CSh), Carolyn Somers (CSO), Mark Stackhouse, Ted Steinke, Reed Stone (RSto), Rose Strickland (RStr), Carolyn Titus, Larry Tripp, Dennis Trousdale, Alan Wallace, Bonnie Williams, Matthew Williams, Kevin Wheeler, Robin Wolcott (RWol), Richard Wood (RWO). ☉