

Idaho & Western Montana



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The summer of 2005 began with slightly cooler and wetter weather than usual. Missoula, Montana had twice its normal June rainfall, but Kalispell, Montana experienced a record rainfall total of 14.4 cm—more than 2.5 times their typical average. July, on the other hand, was warmer than usual and very dry; in fact, it was the sixth driest July ever recorded in both states. Several contributors observed that the breeding season was very successful for most birds. Please note that the belated Winter 2004–2005 and Spring 2005 seasonal reports follow this one; to conserve space, the list of Contributors at the end of this report contains all observers for the three reports, and the Abbreviations list below likewise pertains to all three reports.

Abbreviations: A.F.R. (American Falls Reservoir, Bingham and Power, ID); Camas (Camas N.W.R., Jefferson, ID); L.M. (Lee Metcalf N.W.R., Ravalli, MT); L.P. (Idaho Bird Observatory's banding station at Lucky Peak near Boise; Latilong (area encompassed by one degree latitude and one degree longitude).

PELICANS THROUGH ORIOLES

American White Pelicans are increasingly reported in n. Idaho, but a flock of 40 in Kootenai 27–28 Jun (SS) was surprisingly large. Providing a first verified record for Idaho was a **Least Bittern** at Camas 17–19 Jun (RL, ph. DL). If accepted by the Idaho B.R.C., a **Glossy Ibis** at Camas 11 Jun (ph. DCI) will also represent a first record. Almost unprecedented in summer was the Broad-winged Hawk photographed in Bonneville, ID 6 Jun (DCI). A **Yellow Rail** that vocalized at Market Lake W.M.A., Jefferson 21–24 Jul (DCI, MD) represented Idaho's 3rd record. An unusually early Mew Gull in Fremont, ID 11 Jul (CW) brought in a first for Latilong 16. Eurasian Collared-Doves summered at new locations in Idaho, including one near Lewiston 14 Jun (BJ) and a nesting pair in Rupert 7 Jul (KC). Four nesting pairs of Northern Hawk Owls were discovered in Glacier N.P., and ads. with fledglings were observed throughout the period (SG). A wayward Barred Owl entertained birders in Ketchum, ID 2 Jun (BS). Six active Black Swift nests, the highest count in nine years, were noted at Idaho's only known nesting location in Shoshone 3 Jul (KD). Especially rare in summer, an Anna's Hummingbird was present in Gem, ID 11–31 Jul (FZ).

Several Gray Flycatchers photographed in Beaverhead, MT in mid-Jun (BM) provided evidence of a possible nesting population. A breeding record for Cordilleran Flycatcher in Latilong 11 was established when a pair with 3 nestlings were observed in Gem, ID 24 Jul

(FZ). Montana scored an 11th record for Scissor-tailed Flycatcher with a sighting in Beaverhead 16 Jun (KS, NS). The **Yellow-throated Vireo** found at Camas 29 May was last reported 4 Jun (CW). A Plumbeous Vireo was an interesting find in Owyhee 4 Jun (SP); the species is seldom reported outside of se. Idaho. Two Northern Mockingbirds frequented Fremont, ID 13–27 Jun (DCI, CW), where they are rare but nearly annual. A Brown Thrasher stopped at Camas 22 Jun–27 Jul (JC, CF), where there are about five previous records. Providing a local first was a rare Tennessee Warbler near Bigfork, MT 16 Jun (BR). The showcase birds of the season at Camas included a Chestnut-sided Warbler that remained until 1 Jun (CW), a Black-and-white Warbler 1 Jun (JS), and a Magnolia Warbler 3 Jun (DCI). The warbler of the season was the ad. male **Blackburnian Warbler** spotted in Jefferson 3 Jun (SG, RW, ph. CW) that provided Idaho's 4th record. Another Idaho rarity was the **Summer Tanager** at Camas 10 Jun (*vide* CW). An unprecedented high count of 96 staging Western Tanagers was made at L.P. 4 Jun (ES). A nesting pair of Great-tailed Grackles that fledged 6 young 8 Jul near Rupert (RW) established one of only a few Idaho breeding records. Unusual sightings of Common Grackles included one in Nampa, ID 1 Jun (DL) and 2 in Flathead, MT in Jun (DC). An ad. male **Baltimore Oriole** that graced Oneida 8–17 Jun (ph. LB, m. ob.) represented Idaho's 4th record.

Contributors: (winter through summer seasons; subregional editors in boldface): **IDAHO:** Jack Alban, Dick Anderson, Larry Barnes, Steve Bouffard, Steve Butterworth (SBu), **Kathleen Cameron**, Jay Carlisle, Keith Carlson (KCI), Darren Clark (DCI), Mark Delwiche, **Kas Dumroese**, Dave & Elise Faike, Craig Fosdick, Terry Gray, Steve Gross, Don Grubb, Bill Gundlach, Lisa Hardy, Dave Holick, Denise Hughes, Cheryl Huizinga, Bryan Jamison, Harry Krueger, Rob Larranaga, Dave Lawrence, Darrell Marks, Stacy Peterson, **Hadley Roberts**, Jean Seymour, Gina Sheridan, Emily Stoddard, Brian Sturges, **Shirley Sturts**, Charles Swift, **Chuck Trost**, Ron Weeks, Cliff Weisse, **Poo Wright-Pulliam**, Fred Zeilemaker. **MON-TANA:** Ken Brett, **Dan Casey**, Dorothy Chamberlin (DCh), Dennis Flath, Steve Gniadek, Brett Gullett, Stan Heath, Judy Hoy, Dick Hutto (DHu), Radd Icenoggle, Barbara Jaquith, Will Kerling, Deb Lewis, Bob Martinka, **John Parker**, Wendy Ridenour, Jim Roscoe, Bob Rost, Jeff Safford, Kate Shick, **Don Skaar**, Nate Stone, **Terry Toppins**, Wayne Tree, Larry Weeks, Lewis Young.



Larry Barnes spotted this Baltimore Oriole at Stone Reservoir in southeastern Idaho on 8 June 2005; it was last reported there on 17 June, a fourth record for the Gem State. Photograph by Larry Barnes.

THE WINTER SEASON 2004-2005

The season averaged slightly warmer and considerably drier than usual. In fact, Montana's precipitation in February averaged only 0.3 cm, making it the driest February in history. The mild weather encouraged waterfowl and a surprising variety of other half-hardy birds to linger in unusually high numbers, and this was reflected in a bevy of record Christmas Bird Count totals. Winter ended with poor mountain snowpack conditions, presaging a continuation of drought in the region's driest valleys.

LOONS THROUGH DOVES

Especially rare in winter were a lingering Pacific Loon in *Kootenai*, ID 18 Dec (LH) and 2 in Glacier N.P., MT 29 Dec (SG). With only one previous American White Pelican winter record in w. Montana, reports of 6 near Helena 18 Dec and one at Three Forks 26 Dec (DC) were surprising. A record count of 18 Double-crested Cormorants was made in Coeur d'Alene, ID 18 Dec (SS), likely a result of mild weather conditions and a rapidly expanding population. Idaho's tally of Cackling Geese included up to 6 in Boise 1 Dec–24 Jan (HK) and singles in *Canyon* 18 Dec (HK), *Kootenai* 24 Dec–5 Feb (BG, GS), A.F.R. 28 Dec (CT), and *Custer* 5 Feb (D&EF). In Montana, Cackling Geese reports included 4 in *Lake* 19 Dec (DC), 3 at L.M. (WT) throughout the period, and 2 in *Gallatin* 5 Feb (RI). Eurasian Wigeons were unusually scarce, with only two reported. A Harlequin Duck in Salmon 18 Dec (HR) provided a first winter record for Latilong 10. Eight Long-tailed Ducks was about double the usual winter total. A Turkey Vulture near Boise, ID 5 Feb (HK) was very early, and another near Three Forks 9 Feb (DF) brought in Montana's 2nd winter record. A Red-shouldered Hawk showed up 23–24 Dec in *Owyhee*, ID (CW), where the species has wintered before. An excellent total of 9 Gyrfalcons was reported. A few Greater Yellowlegs sometimes linger into winter, but 8 tallied in American Falls,

ID 19 Dec (CT) was likely a record count. A Spotted Sandpiper near Twin Falls, ID 18 Dec was rare but not unprecedented, but another near Rupert, ID the same day represented a winter first for Latilong 26 (*vide* CS). Dunlins were reported in *Canyon* and *Nez Perce*, ID, where they are now almost expected in winter. Five Bonaparte's Gulls detected in *Kootenai*, ID 2 Jan (SS) were significant, because only a few previous winter records exist. The rare-but-regular gull tally was about average, with 2 Mew Gulls, 4 Thayer's Gulls, 4 Glaucous-winged Gulls, and a Glaucous Gull. Far less expected were Lesser Black-backed Gulls that visited *Canyon* 21–29 Dec (HK, CW) and *Kootenai* 2 Jan (LH), providing Idaho's 8th and 9th records. The larid of the season was an imm. Western Gull that stayed in *Canyon* 16 Dec–23 Jan (ph. CW), providing Idaho's 6th record. Eurasian Collared-Doves appear to be prospering in both states; at least 54 were

tallied at new colonies in Idaho and 15 in Montana.

OWLS THROUGH FINCHES

It was an average season for Snowy Owls, with one reported in Idaho and 2 in Montana. A Northern Hawk Owl in Glacier N.P. 6 Feb (SG) was especially noteworthy, because the species has recently nested in the vicinity. Barred Owls are increasingly reported in Idaho, but singles near A.F.R. throughout Dec (CT) and in *Camas* 14–28 Dec (DG) were far out of range. Also wayward were Idaho Great Gray Owls near Salmon 18 Dec (HR) and Boise 22 Dec–29 Jan (m. ob.). Lingered Anna's Hummingbirds in Idaho's *Ada* 15 Nov–8 Dec and *Boundary* 1 Dec–5 Jan (TG) were interesting, given the record numbers that came through the Gem State in autumn. The Costa's Hummingbird present in Meridian, ID since 14 Oct persisted through 26 Jan (SP). A Williamson's Sap-



On 1 December 2004, Janet Gale and Rand Herzberg discovered an Eastern Towhee at their home, just south of Red Lodge, Montana. The bird was last observed 8 April (here 17 February) 2005—Montana's first record. Photograph by Bob Martinka.

sucker found in Caldwell 21–30 Jan (JA) made only the 2nd winter record in Idaho. An *Empidonax* flycatcher photographed in Stevensville 12 Dec (JH) was an unprecedented winter event in Montana, but identification remains uncertain; the report is under review.

Record numbers of Blue Jays wintered in both states, following an autumn irruption of epic proportions. Especially unusual in winter was a Northern Mockingbird found in Caldwell, ID 3 Jan (DH). An American Pipit at L.M. 31 Dec–27 Jan (WT) garnered w. Montana's 2nd winter record. A Black-and-white Warbler discovered in Coeur d'Alene 18–24 Dec (SS) brought in a surprising first winter record for Idaho. Another winter first for w. Montana was the Common Yellowthroat found at L.M. 2 Jan (WT). The bird of the season was an Eastern Towhee that wintered near Red Lodge, MT 1 Dec–28 Feb+ (BJ, ph. BM), representing Montana's first record. Another winter first for Idaho was a Vesper Sparrow photographed in Blaine 18 Dec (BS). A lingering Sage Sparrow in Custer, ID 18 Dec (*vide* CS) provided a first winter record for Latilong 14. Also unprecedented was the Yellow-headed Blackbird in Washington, ID 24 Jan–3 Feb (ph. FZ) that brought in a winter first for Latilong 11. Two rare Rusty Blackbirds wintered in Moscow, ID 18 Dec–28 Feb+ (CS). The only Great-tailed Grackles reported were 2 in American Falls, ID 13 Feb (CT). A Purple Finch stopped in Somers, MT 15 Jan (DC); they are rare but increasingly reported in nw. Montana. Reports of 4 Hoary Redpolls in Red Lodge, MT 4 Jan (BJ) and 3 in Eureka, MT 23–25 Feb (LY) were well above average. A tally of 71 Lesser Goldfinches in Lewiston was surprising (TG) because they were very rare in n. Idaho until recently.

THE SPRING MIGRATION 2005

This season averaged unusually warm and wet. Late snows and rainfall greatly eased concerns about an anticipated fire-prone summer and drought in light of the Region's deficient winter snowpack. These same frequent cool and wet periods no doubt caused arriving insectivores to suffer, but in general,

habitat conditions and wild food resources were considered to be very good.

GREBES THROUGH OWLS

An astounding flock of more than 25,000 Eared Grebes staged at Ennis L., Madison, MT 3 May (JP). Both record-early and unusual was a Black-crowned Night-Heron in Gallatin, MT 5 Mar (JS). Cackling Geese reports included a pair in Fremont, ID 19 Mar (CW) and 2 in Latah, ID 14 Apr (TG). It was an average season for Eurasian Wigeon, with 8 reported in Idaho and 9 in Montana. A pair of locally rare Harlequin Ducks returned to Missoula, MT 1 May (WR), where they have nested for the past three years. A sighting of 4 Long-tailed Ducks at Mann L., Nez Perce, ID 12 Mar (TG) was noteworthy, as they are not annual in spring. Providing a 2nd record for Montana was a White-tailed Kite discovered in Lake 1 Mar (BG). Three Gyrfalcons were recorded in Montana, a good spring season tally. Although Broad-winged Hawks are especially rare in spring, singles were reported in Idaho's Fremont 18 May (DCL) and Camas 21 May (CW). A Ferruginous Hawk was a good find near Missoula, MT 10 Apr (WT), where the species is not annual.

Two rare Snowy Plovers stopped at Dry L., Canyon, ID 9–12 May (CF), and the same or 2 others were there 27 May (DM). Although Black-necked Stilts are increasingly reported in Montana, 4 in Glacier N.P. 30 Apr (SG) represented a first record for the park. A Willet at L.M. 27 Apr–16 May (WT) was of interest; the species is not annual in w. Montana. Two Upland Sandpipers were spotted in Valley 15 May (CH) at the last known breeding location in Idaho. A Marbled Godwit was near Kalispell, MT 23 Apr (BR), where they are unexpected. The bird of the season was a dazzling ad. Ross's Gull that stopped w. of Missoula 3–4 May (DCh, ph. TT), providing a first record for Montana. A Thayer's Gull spotted at Ennis L. 30 Apr (RI) represented a first for Latilong 38 and sw. Montana. A Glaucous Gull in Lewiston, ID 22 Mar (KCI) was a good find. The only reported Yellow-billed Cuckoo was a migrant in Minidoka, ID 25 May (SB). Incredible news was the discovery in May of breeding

Northern Hawk Owls in Glacier N.P. (DHu). A wayward Barred Owl in Ketchum, ID 5–30 May (BS) was unusual there.

DOVES THROUGH REDPOLLS

New Eurasian Collared-Dove colonies were reported in five e. Idaho counties and near Livingston, MT. The discovery of singing male Gray Flycatchers at several locations in Beaverhead 23 May (JR) was amazing; Montana had only two previously accepted records. Blue Jays were unusually numerous throughout the period. Northern Mockingbirds are casual in w. Montana, making one in Missoula 16 May (WK) and another s. of Red Lodge 24–27 May (SH) newsworthy. Extralimital Sage Thrashers appeared in Montana's Flathead 13 May (BR) and Missoula 23 May (LW). The only reported Brown Thrasher was at A.F.R. 8 May (DA). Splendid rarities at Camas included a Mag-nolia Warbler 21 May, an Ovenbird 24 May, a Blackpoll Warbler 25 May, and a Chestnut-sided Warbler 29–31 May+ (CW). For the 5th consecutive year, a territorial Ovenbird held forth e. of Bozeman, MT (JP).

A record-early Western Tanager was in Latah, ID 3 Mar (DH). Rare Rose-breasted Grosbeaks came through Missoula, MT 16 May (KB), Camas 20 May (SBu), and Deer Lodge, MT 26 May (DL). A Green-tailed Towhee that wandered to Missoula, MT 2 May (WK) provided a local first. The Eastern Towhee present near Red Lodge, MT since 1 Dec remained through 8 Apr. Two Rusty Blackbirds that wintered near Moscow, ID were last reported 4 Mar. Great-tailed Grackles showed up at new locations in Idaho, including one in Fremont 9 May (CW), another w. of Arco 9 May (SBu), and a nesting pair near Rupert 15 May (KC). Common Grackles stopped in seven s. Idaho counties, where they are not annual. A Scott's Oriole in Hailey, ID 19–21 May (BS) was especially surprising, because no accepted state records exist outside se. Idaho. A Purple Finch was in Flathead, MT 8–14 May (BR), where they are rare but increasingly reported. A Hoary Redpoll in Red Lodge, MT 12 Mar (BJ) furnished only the 2nd spring report in the past 10 years. 📍

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