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Colorado & Wyoming



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Continuing an often-reported trend, the Region experienced warmer-than-average temperatures throughout the season. Using NOAA's climatic monitoring terms, Colorado experienced temperature conditions rated above normal to much above normal in June and July. Denver set a new record for the earliest 100° F + temperature

on 14 June, some 10 days earlier than the previous mark. Wyoming had mostly much above-normal temperatures in June, and about half of the state saw record-high temperatures in July. The Region's precipitation levels were mostly below normal in June, with most of Colorado relieved by above-normal precipitation in July. Wyoming's July precipitation was patchy, with some drainages climbing above normal while others remained near, below, or even much below normal.

Wyoming contributed the Region's first tubenose, an astounding specimen record of a species rarely seen anywhere in North America and almost unprecedented in the interior—Streaked Shearwater (see article in *North American Birds* 60: 324-326). A few rarities rewarded patient chasers, including Magnificent Hummingbird, Phainopepla, and Hooded Oriole. Cassin's Sparrow and Dickcissel seem closely linked in irruption years, and this season was no exception, as unusually high numbers of both were recorded outside of their core ranges. Several species appear to be continuing their breeding range expansion in the Region, including Hooded Merganser, Mississippi Kite, Sandhill Crane, White-winged Dove, Short-eared Owl, and Eastern

Bluebird. Four immature Purple Martins of the eastern (nominata) subspecies loitered for nearly a month at a martin house in southeastern Colorado, not breeding this year but perhaps the vanguard for future colonization of this subspecies in the state. Several Merlin sightings in Colorado this summer also fueled speculation that the species may be colonizing the area. The theme of breeding status will be more actively explored next year as Colorado's second *Breeding Bird Atlas* begins field work.

Abbreviations: Barr (Barr Lake S.P., Adams), Crow Valley (Crow Valley Campground, Pawnee National Grassland, Weld); "West Slope" denotes locations w. of the Rockies. 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.

WATERFOWL THROUGH SHOREBIRDS

Summer reports of large, white waterfowl included single Snow Geese in each of two e Colorado counties and a Trumpeter Swan at the unlikely high-elevation location of Crest-

ed Butte, *Gunnison* 27 Jun (FL). A Canvasback brood was of note near Jackson Res., *Morgan* 9 Jul (NK, CW), and seven summer reports of Hooded Merganser were well more than typical for the region. The oddest duck report of the season, however, was of a female-plumaged Red-breasted Merganser lingering at Pueblo Res., *Pueblo* 5 Jul (BKP). The waterbird highlight of the summer (or of the year, or century?) was a Streaked Shearwater carcass recovered from a playa ne. of Laramie, *Albany*, WY in mid-Jun (*vide* D. McDonald)—the Region's first procellariid record. A first-cycle Brown Pelican was noted at Fossil Creek Res., *Larimer* 16 Jul (CW, NK) sporadically into Sep. A Brown Pelican at not-too-distant Loveland 31 Jul (J. LaFleur) was probably the same bird, but the age was unreported.

Pending submission and acceptance, a report of a calling Least Bittern below Jumbo Res., *Logan* 8 Jul (CW, NK) would provide a very rare ne. Colorado record. Single Great Egrets were out of place in the mts. 24 Jun at L. DeWeese, *Custer* (BKP, MP) and to the ne. 21 Jul at Prewitt Res., *Washington* (LS). An imm. Tricolored Heron visited Verhoeff Res., *Bent* 25 Jul+ (DN) for a rare summer report. All Green Heron reports originated from e. Colorado, most in typical Front Range edge riparian locales. An ad. White Ibis photographed at Pueblo Res. 22-23 Jul (BKP) would provide only Colorado's 7th, all but one since 1999.

Kites provided some summer news. An undocumented Swallow-tailed Kite over Longmont, *Boulder* 7 Jul (P. Piombino) was of great interest, while a "few" Mississippi Kites summering in Ft. Morgan, *Morgan* (P. Walker, J. Rigli), and another in *Arapahoe* 27 Jun (L. Crowley) provided data on expanding populations in ne. Colorado; apparently the species has consolidated its hold on recently colonized Sterling, *Logan*, with numerous sightings there throughout the summer (m.ob.). Are Merlins colonizing Colorado from the opposite direction? The recent trend of summer observations took a swing upward, with single birds found at Big Johnson Res., *El Paso* 16 Jul (MP) and in *Boulder* 25 Jul (M. Freiburg).

Sandhill Crane continued its slow expansion as a breeder on Colorado's West Slope this summer, as single pairs nested in two sites in *Montrose* and near Unaweep, *Mesa* (CD, B. Wright). Two Piping Plovers graced Jumbo Res., *Logan* 8 Jul (NK, CW); whether these were undetected local breeders (2 were seen at nearby Red Lion S.W.A. in May) or migrants from elsewhere is unknown. The first fall migrant shorebirds, singles of Greater



Confirming the first record of breeding for Pueblo County, Colorado, this Eastern Meadowlark sang through the season (here 8 July 2006) at Colorado City. Photograph by Brandon Percival.

Yellowlegs and Semipalmated Sandpiper at Pueblo Res., were detected on schedule 22 Jun (BKP), as fall for the Region's birders starts right around the summer solstice! However, a Willet at Big Johnson Res. 2 Jun (BM) was either a late spring migrant or a very early fall migrant. Upland Sandpipers were noted widely in migration through the e. plains throughout Jul, with the high count of 15 occurring in s. *Prowers* 15 Jul (J. Stulp). Long-billed Curlews were locally rare at L. DeWeese 1 (RM) & 30 Jun (BKP, MP) and at Barr, *Adams* 28 Jul (TL; 5 birds). An ad. female Red-necked Phalarope 15-30 Jul at Dove Cr. (AS et al.) was a bit early and a nice find in water-poor *Dolores*.

GULLS THROUGH FLYCATCHERS

Odd summer gulls included a subad. Herring Gull at Pueblo Res. 22 Jun (BKP) and Lesser Black-backed Gulls at Big Johnson Res. 25 May-2 Jun (TL; up to 2 first-cycle birds) and an ad. at Jackson Res. 21 Jul (LS), the last being, presumably, the same bird that has been kicking around the area in summer for the past few years, and which was first found as a second-cycle bird. However, the oddest gull report was of a basic-plumaged Sabine's Gull that spent 23 May-2 Jun at Big Johnson (ph. MP)—the first one ever found in this plumage in Colorado. The single Caspian Terns at Pueblo Res. 18 Jun (BKP) and Big Johnson Res. 16 Jul (MP) were almost regular, but the one at L. Estes, *Larimer* 9 Jul (S. Roederer) was in the mts., where anything but. The 4 Arctic Terns (3 ads., one imm.) at John Martin Res., *Bent* 20-22 Jun (DN) were nearly unprecedented as such late spring migrants and decidedly unprecedented in number,

doubling the previous high count. Least Terns put on a good extralimital showing this summer, with 2 at Big Johnson Res. 1-2 Jun (J. Webster), a single first-cycle bird at L. DeWeese 9 Jun (RM), and one in e. *Logan* 4 Jul (H. Armknecht).

The 12 reports of White-winged Dove were topped by the 4 or 5 near Colorado Springs, *El Paso* 6 Jul (C. Lee); the invasion continues unabated. Conversely, Inca Doves were reported only from "traditional" locales along the lower Arkansas R. (m.ob.). A Black-billed Cuckoo was a nearly unprecedented surprise at Chatfield Res., *Jefferson* 18-25 Jun (C. Lawrence). A Flammulated Owl singing about 200 m n. of the New Mexico border in Lake Dorothy S.W.A., *Las Animas* 31 May (TL) extends the known range of that species about as far e. in the Region as habitat allows; a nest was found later (C. Hundertmark). Eastern Screech-Owls bred this summer at well-birded Crow Valley (ph. DAL et al.) for a first local breeding record. A Snowy Owl was reported from near Buffalo, *Johnson*, WY 11 Jun (*vide* DF) for a very rare summer report. As the West Slope population of Burrowing Owls has declined precipitously, encouraging were reports of breeding owls in *Moffat* (FL) and *Dolores* (AS). After last summer's good showing, Short-eared Owls continued in high numbers and expanded range, with reports from *Montezuma* (S. Allerton), *Moffat* (two sites; D. DiTomasso, D. Hilkey), *Jefferson* (P. Plage), and, in the mts., *Chaffee* (K. Nelson, J. Scheig). The species was also found in numerous locations in se. Colorado (S. Moss, J. Drummond).

A female Magnificent Hummingbird gladdened hearts at the Durango Mountain Resort, *La Plata* 20 Jul+ (S. Beck-Brown, ph. AS), as many Colorado birders finally caught up with the species. Also providing some excitement, a male Ruby-throated Hummingbird graced a Lamar, *Prowers* feeder 2-9 Jul (J. Thompson); Colorado still has fewer than 10 accepted records. An Eastern Wood-Pewee first found 2 Jun sang through the period at Boulder, *Boulder* (S. Severs); another at Soapstone Ranch, *Larimer* 1 Jun (CW, S. Nicely) was a one-day wonder. Black Phoebe's nested for the 2nd consecutive year at Salida (S. York), which at 2111 m is currently the highest elevation from which the species has been recorded in its recent and rapid breeding expansion into the state. A Scissor-tailed Flycatcher was a bit n. and w. of normal at Las Animas, *Bent* 5 Jun (DN).

WRENS THROUGH THRUSHES

Three reports of 4 birds suggest that, yes, Carolina Wrens are getting to be ho-hum in e. Colorado. As Marsh Wren breeding distri-

SA The Purple Martins breeding in the Region, virtually restricted to west of 106° W longitude, are referable to the w. subspecies *arboricola*. This taxon is not known to use martin houses for nesting, at least in this region, but rather is restricted to natural sites (i.e., tree cavities). However, because the species is increasing as a spring and fall migrant on the e. plains of Colorado and because Purple Martins of the nominate subspecies breed as close as Garden City, Kansas, the state's birders have started looking to the possibility that e. birds may soon begin breeding in Colorado.

On 20 May 2006, Leatherman found 4 imm. Purple Martins in a Lamar neighborhood that were eventually found to be attending a martin house there. These birds, all of the nominate subspecies, were present through at least 11 Jun but were not seen later in the month, despite searches by a few birders. Though the martins did not breed locally, they certainly provided evidence that e. Colorado breeding is probably not very far into the future. To round out the summer Purple Martin story, single females of the nominate subspecies were found e. of Stonington, *Baca* 17 Jun (SL) and at Chatfield, *Douglas* 25 Jun (W. Szeliga).

bution on the e. Colorado plains is inexplicably more patchy than the presence of suitable habitat would suggest, a report of 3 singing birds below Jumbo Res., *Logan* 22 Jul (LS) fills a gap in available data. Despite the fact that Eastern Bluebirds have recently become much more widespread in e. Colorado than past references suggest, nesting by the species in Colorado City, *Pueblo* this summer (D. Silverman) was unprecedented. The county listing craze is quickly making all Colorado range maps obsolete. New Veery locations found this summer include Golden Gate Canyon, *Jefferson* (P. Hansley), Pass Creek Rd., *Chaffee* (V. Truan), Fox Creek, *Conejos* (BKP, MP), and Lime Cr. at US 550, *San Juan* (JB). A Wood Thrush at Crow Valley 2-3 Jun (DAL) was only a few days later than the only other spring record of the species.

MIMIDS THROUGH FINCHES

Single Curve-billed Thrashers were far n. of normal in *Larimer* 2 Jun (G. Luger) and *Boulder* 28 Jun (J. Fischer, C. Lowrie). The occurrence of a female *Phainopepla* near Beulah, *Pueblo* 10-15 Jun (M. Ackley) provided the best passerine find of the season. Truly out-of-place parulids included a male Northern Parula summering in the mts. at Salida 30 Jun+ (RM), a wandering Black-throated Blue Warbler singing at Boulder 11 Jun (D. Sparr), a single Grace's Warbler out on the plains at Last Chance, *Washington* 2 Jun (JK et al.), a montane singing Prairie Warbler above Wetmore, *Custer* 1 Jun (DN), and Hooded Warblers in two locations: a female at Burchfield S.W.A., *Baca* 17 Jun (SL) and, incredibly, a pair at Cañon City that produced fledglings by 13 Jul (RM). That last provides nesting confirmation for a 2nd Colorado county (first found nesting in *Boulder* in the late 1990s). Not quite as interesting, 2 Grace's Warblers in *Custer* 18 Jun (K. Lewantowicz, BM) were part of the very-low-density population in the se. Colorado mountains.

As many as 5 Hepatic Tanagers were pres-

ent at Bader's Ranch, *Las Animas* this summer, first found there 3 Jun (MP); a nest was photographed there 18 Jul (AS). Though this species is probably of regular occurrence as a breeder in the county, nearly all appropriate habitat is in private hands, hampering efforts to document the population. A laggard imm. male Summer Tanager brightened Temple Canyon, *Fremont* 9 Jun (J. Webster).

This summer saw a great influx of Cassin's Sparrows, with the species being found in much larger numbers to the n. and w. than is typical. The flight sent individuals to the San Luis Valley, where quite rare and where recorded in three counties: *Alamosa* and *Costilla* (MP, BKP) and *Conejos* (J. Rawinski). Additionally, the species was found in some numbers (8-10) on North Table Mt., *Jefferson* during a bird inventory of that locale (DH); the species is certainly not a regular component of the local breeding avifauna. A Black-throated Sparrow in *Boulder* 1 Jun (E. Zorawicz) was certainly a surprise, as the species usually breeds in e. Colorado no farther n. than s. *Otero*, and spring overshoots usually occur much earlier in the year. Along with the Cassin's Sparrows, field workers

found territorial Grasshopper Sparrows on North Table Mt. this summer (N. Gobris, DH).

Northern Cardinals were well w. of normal on the Front Range edge in *Larimer* 3 Jul (*fide* A. Cringan), in *Jefferson* 4 Jul (R. Woodward, B. Harwood), and in *Douglas* 29 Jul (JK). Though visited infrequently, Cottonwood Canyon, *Baca/Las Animas* continues to support what is probably the very n limit of Painted Bunting breeding range, as at least 2 males and a female were present this summer (JK, MP). As usually happens during "good" Cassin's Sparrows years, Dickcissels were more widespread and numerous on the e. plains this year than is typical. The most surprising occurrence was of a singing male on the West Slope at Paonia, *Delta* 23-24 Jun (ph. J. Beason). Bobolinks at unusual locales were singles along the S Platte R. in easternmost *Weld* 9 Jul (NK, CW) and near La Veta, *Huerfano* 29 Jul (BKP). Baltimore Orioles were found w. of usual a bit more often this summer than is typical, with single males in *Jefferson* 20 Jun (B. Arnold) and at Cherry Creek S.P., *Arapahoe* 26 Jun (M. A. Bonnell) and single females visiting *Barr* 23 Jun (TL) and at Prewitt Res., *Washington* 8 Jul (NK, CW). And, to round out the oriole story, a Scott's Oriole was found singing at Grape Canyon, *Las Animas* (a site previously unknown to host the species) on 3 Jun (LS). Lesser Goldfinch is not a known breeder in *Prowers*, so birds present at three or four locations in and near Lamar this summer are of more-than-passing interest.

Corrigendum: In the Winter 2005-2006 report, the third report of Purple Finch had its location (Lamar) omitted.

SA Lucy's Warblers were present in Yellowjacket Canyon, *Montezuma* again this summer (3rd year in a row). Though their breeding presence is notable in itself (fledged young seen 23 Jun [BKP, MP]), the ancillary sightings by Lucy's chasers in the area made for even bigger headlines. It all started with a pair of **Summer Tanagers** in the canyon, with the singing male first found 7 May (L. Arnold); the birds were present at least into early Jul and may well have nested, but no certain evidence was obtained. We await proof of nesting by the species in the state.

Then, other observers on the way back e. from the canyon on 18 Jun stopped to look for hummers at a large Trumpet Creeper hedge along McElmo Cr. and what should they find but an ad. male **Hooded Oriole** (N. Erthal, J. Roller). Unlike the spring bird in *Mesa* (the bird providing the first Colorado record), this bird was apparently referable to the southwestern race, *nelsoni*, as it was much more yellow than orange. It was seen by numerous Colorado birders.



This male Hooded Oriole west of Cortez, Montezuma County, Colorado 19 June 2006 furnished just the second state record; the first was found in May in Mesa County. Photograph by Brandon Percival.

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Idaho & Western Montana



David Trochlell

The Region's cool, wet spring gradually gave way to a very warm and dry summer. The last two weeks of the season were especially torrid, making it the second warmest July ever recorded. The wet spring may have played a role in speculations about delayed or even absent breeding birds, but for the most part observers witnessed a very successful nesting season.

Abbreviation: Camas (Camas N.W.R., Jefferson, ID); latilong (area encompassed by one degree latitude and one degree longitude used in mapping bird distribution in both Idaho and Montana).

CORMORANT THROUGH DICKCISSEL

Two pairs of Double-crested Cormorants with nestlings at Coeur d'Alene L., Kootenai 8 Jul (DJ) furnished n. Idaho's 3rd breeding record. A Great Egret wandered to Ravalli, MT 14 Jun (WT), where they are increasingly reported. Representing the first latilong record in a decade was a Snowy Egret in Lake, MT 5 Jun (JG). A flurry of spring Glossy Ibis reports in e. Idaho ended with singles in Jefferson 3 Jun

(CW) and Bingham 27 Jun (SK). Only one previous report of Glossy Ibis existed for Idaho before 2006. Well documented were 2 White-rumped Sandpipers in Fremont 1 Jun (JC, †ph. CW), Idaho's 4th record. Both geographically and seasonally unusual was a Stilt Sandpiper in Nez Perce, ID 4 Jun (CS). Apparently high water levels at four s. Idaho reservoirs created exceptional conditions for Caspian Tern breeding, with 85 nests tallied 25 Jun–5 Jul (CT).

A White-winged Dove was near Rexburg, ID 4 Jun (ph. DCI, †CW); there are about five previous reports for the state. Eurasian Collared-Doves at new Idaho locations included 2 in Nampa 4 Jun (JH), one in Kootenai 7 Jun (SJ), and 3 in Hailey 16 Jun (PWP). Montana's share included a pair in Manhattan 11–19 Jun and one at Gallatin Gateway 26 Jun (EH). A Black-billed Cuckoo near Harrison, MT 24 Jun (SB) furnished just the 3rd local record in 15 years. Exciting news anywhere in the lower 48 states was a tally of six nesting pairs of Northern Hawk Owl with young in Glacier N.P., MT 12 Jun (GM); they were first discovered breeding there just last year. The discovery of a Black Swift with a nestling in Glacier N.P. 27 Jul (DC) represented Montana's first confirmed nesting in 44 years. A wayward White-throated Swift near Post Falls Dam 17 Jun (MH) was only the 2nd county record. A Broad-tailed Hummingbird at Silver Gate, MT 15 Jun (EH) provided a new location for this species and was only the 2nd report in Latilong 40C.

Alder Flycatchers were noted in Glacier N.P. 10–13 Jun (GM) and w. of Kalispell 13 Jun (DC). With only about three previous Idaho reports, Eastern Phoebes in Bonner 28 May–2 Jun (RB, m.ob.) and Blaine 10 Jun (JC) were significant. Especially notable in summer was a Blue Jay in Manhattan, MT 16 Jun (EH). Single Idaho Northern Mockingbirds were noted in Fremont 8 Jun (CW), at Craters

of the Moon N.M. 9 Jun (MM), and in Blaine 13 Jun (KC). An Ovenbird was at Camas 3 Jun (JC, CW), the most consistent location for this rare-but-annual migrant. If accepted by the Idaho B.R.C., a Scarlet Tanager at Camas 3 Jun (JC, †CW) will likely provide a 3rd state record. The only reported Rose-breasted Grosbeak was in Dillon, MT 1 Jun (SSh). Black-throated Sparrows strayed n. of their traditional range in Idaho: singles were noted in Idaho 13 Jun (ph. LL) and Jefferson 25 Jun (SK). The only Great-tailed Grackle reports were from Idaho's Oneida 3 Jul and Twin Falls 10 Jul (BO). If accepted, a Dickcissel in Ashton 30 Jun–1 Jul (DE, ph., DCI, †CW) will furnish Idaho's first record.

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