

SECOND RECORD FOR THE PHAINOPEPLA IN COLORADO

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Prior to 1973, the Phainopepla (*Phainopepla nitens*) had been reported in Colorado only once (Bailey and Niedrach, *Birds of Colorado*, Denver Museum of Natural History, 1965:846). However, on 15 December 1973 we discovered a Phainopepla while participating in the annual Christmas Bird Count in Boulder, Boulder County, Colorado. The bird was observed at length and photographed by us for three days, during which time it was seen by approximately 25 others.

The first sighting of this species in Colorado occurred on 29-30 August 1965 at Platteville in Weld County, approximately 44 km northeast of Boulder. That individual was an immature male and was already showing some glossy black feathers mixed in with its overall gray color. The bird we saw was gray with no traces of black, suggesting that it was a female. The bird was observed at close range and in excellent light, and all of the distinctive field marks—long crest, reddish-brown eye, white wing patch, and faint double wing bar—were clearly visible. The soft, low whistle of the species was heard frequently and further corroborated the identification. The most convincing of several 35 mm transparencies obtained is on deposit with the Official Records Committee of the Colorado Field Ornithologists.

During its stay, the Phainopepla was consistently associated with riparian habitat along Boulder Creek, immediately east (downstream) of the mouth of Boulder Canyon. The area, a city park west of downtown Boulder, lies at an elevation of 1810 m. The habitat of the park, like much of that along Boulder Creek, is a mixture of deciduous trees and dense deciduous brush; the brush was especially favored by the Phainopepla.

The Phainopepla spent much of its time sunning, preening, and foraging in the leaf litter or feeding among the shrubs on wild grapes (*Vitis riparia*) which had not yet dropped from vines. Flying insects were occasionally active above the stream, as they often are in this area on warm days during a mild autumn, and some bouts of flycatching by the Phainopepla were observed. This individual was frequently seen in the company of a Townsend's Solitaire (*Myadestes townsendi*). Often the solitaire would appear first, utter a few call notes in the distance, then arrive at streamside and give its typical warbling song. Shortly thereafter, the Phainopepla would appear and begin foraging near the solitaire; both birds occasionally flew to the water's edge to drink. The reason for this association is speculative at best; perhaps their somewhat similar appearance prompted the fraternization, or the Phainopepla may have been attracted by the solitaire's whistled call notes. On a few occasions, the two seemed to exchange calls. Coincidentally, recent biochemical evidence presented by Sibley (Auk 90:394-410, 1973) suggests a much closer relationship between the Phainopepla and the solitaire than had previously been supposed.

The typical range of this rather sedentary species brings it no closer to north-central Colorado than southern Utah (AOU Check-list 1957). If the Phainopepla occurs more frequently in Colorado, it is probably in the southwestern part of the state, closer to the edge of its range and in more familiar habitat. However, that area is sparsely populated, and a rare straggler could easily be overlooked.