

# Colorado Birds

The Colorado Field Ornithologists' Quarterly

---



---

Vol. 40, No. 2

April 2006

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

President's Message.....	66
<i>Norm Lewis</i>	
CFO Board Minutes.....	67
<i>Lisa Edwards</i>	
Mountain Plover in the San Luis Valley.....	69
<i>Terri Hicks-Anderson and T. L. VerCauteren</i>	
Western Screech-Owls of the Grand Valley: running up the score.....	81
<i>Rich Levad and Nic Korte</i>	
Imperfect albinism in a Pine Siskin.....	87
<i>Kim M. Potter</i>	
First breeding record for Sandhill Crane in Weld County.....	88
<i>Cole Wild, Nick Komar, Steve Messick, and Joe Himmel</i>	
Hepatic Tanager nesting log.....	90
<i>Joyce Wolff</i>	
The Ranch County Club white robin.....	96
<i>James Frazier, Jr.</i>	
Notes on a white robin nesting.....	97
<i>Jaci and David Cran</i>	
News from the Field: the Fall 2005 report (August - November).....	101
<i>Peter R. Gent</i>	

**Front Cover:** Westminster's leucistic Red-tailed Hawk. Photo by Bill Micheli.

**Corrigenda:**

My apologies to Glenn Giroir for mis-spelling his last name in the photo credits on pages 1 and 3 of the January 2006 issue. – Ed.

Also, while few would doubt Elise's identification skills, her prescient article title bypassed several reviewers for the January 2006 issue. Elise wrote about her summer 2005 young birder's camp experience, not of one in 2006.

## PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

Norm Lewis, CFO President

It is, they tell me, early spring in Colorado. Winter, however, does not appear entirely convinced, as evidenced by the lingering patches of snow on north slopes and the steady, if subdued, drumbeat of gull reports. If you are not a larophile, you have been getting by on a sparse diet of Barrow's Goldeneyes and Winter Wrens, with a dash of Long-billed Thrasher thrown in for a little exotic flavoring.

They are out there, though, gathering, waiting, restless.....the building pressure from the south is almost palpable, like a far off heartbeat, not so much heard as felt. It is the calm before the avian storm. The advance guard is arriving - a Say's Phoebe here, a Mountain Bluebird there - but the bulk of the great winged horde is biding its time in the Caribbean, or gathering on the Yucatan, or lingering along the Gulf Coast, waiting for the unheard and unseen sign from the biological alarm clock that will signal its release. In four or five weeks, maybe six, they will be coming, driven by ancient forces that we do not entirely comprehend, driven to spread out across a continent in search of food, shelter, territories and mates, to do the dances and soaring flights that they have done for millennia, to sing the marvelous songs that will enchant both the prospective mates and the Watchers.

Ah, the Watchers! As the tidal wave of tanagers, orioles, flycatchers, vireos, sparrows and warblers builds to a crescendo, the Watchers will be waiting. We'll be waiting as the wave breaks across the plains, mountains, mesas and canyons of Colorado, witnesses to the awesome riot of sound and color that is the prelude to the annual grand celebration of life that is the nesting season across North America.

A few of us will be privileged to witness this spectacle on the eastern plains of Colorado. I hope you will be joining me in Sterling in late May as we tour the grasslands, lakes and rivers of the plains, seeking out the larking longspurs, dancing grebes and soaring raptors, and learning about the songs that set it all in motion. The show is about to begin! I'll be seeing you somewhere out there on the prairie!



## **CFO BOARD MINUTES**

Lisa Edwards, Secretary

The regular quarterly meeting was held February 4, 2006, at 11:00 A.M. Board members present were: President Norm Lewis, Vice President Bill Schmoker, Secretary Lisa Edwards, Treasurer David Waltman, and Directors Maggie Boswell, Cheryl Day, Doug Faulkner, Tom McConnell, Mark Peterson, Larry Semo, and Glenn Walbek. Director Rachel Hopper sent her regrets for not being able to attend. The minutes of the December meeting were approved.

### PRESIDENT'S REPORT

Norm Lewis shared his thoughts on how to sustain CFO and continue to move the organization forward.

### TREASURER'S REPORT

CFO's current liquid assets are \$38,835.60. The retail value of the merchandise inventory is \$6,329.50. The Treasurer's report was approved.

### CFO WEBSITE

Regarding the Colorado Birding Trail, Norm Lewis will be attending the private land owner meetings during February in Lamar and during March in Flagler. The CDOW has some questions that Norm will be providing answers to.

### COBIRDS

Current membership stands at 723. Mark Peterson will take over from Rachel Hopper as manager of COBirds. Cheryl Day, Lisa Edwards, and Glenn Walbek will provide backup support when Mark is traveling.

### COLORADO BIRDS

The discussion centered around providing more assistance to the editor in areas of soliciting articles for publication, article review, and getting each issue ready for the printer.

### CBRC

Peter Gent has joined the CBRC and will complete John Vanderpoel's term. Coen Dexter started his second term in January.

### FIELD TRIPS

Bill Schmoker presented the list of potential trips for 2006 - Gull workshop and field trip, hawkwatch at Dinosaur Ridge, Bohart Ranch in May, SE Colorado in May; butterfly identification in the summer, Gray Partridge trip to Wyoming in

the fall, pelagic trip to the west coast in the fall.

### PROJECT FUND

Cheryl Day presented the recommendations of the project fund committee. After some discussion the Board agreed to fund one proposal in full and partially fund three other proposals. CFO received a total of six proposals.

### MEMBERSHIP

Maggie Boswell reported that there are 417 active members. This compares to 401 at the same time in 2005.

### 2006 CONVENTION

It was decided to sell surplus *Colorado Birds* journals at the convention in Sterling. The convention brochure is on schedule to be mailed out at the end of February.

### NEW BUSINESS

Discussion on 2007 convention location - Lisa will forward a list of previous locations to the entire Board to review.

The next meeting will be held April 8, 2006 at the home of Tom McConnell in No Name at 11:00 A.M. In the event of a spring storm the meeting will be held at the SWCA office in Broomfield on the same date.

The board meeting was adjourned at 3:20 P.M.

## CFO Project Fund

Help support avian research in Colorado. Support the CFO Project Fund with your tax-deductible donation. Make checks payable to Colorado Field Ornithologists, clearly marked "Project Fund". Send to: David Waltman, CFO Treasurer, PO Box 19131, Boulder, CO 80308.

Remember that CFO is a 501 (c) (3) non-profit corporation and members can designate the CFO Project Fund in estate planning or wills.

## MOUNTAIN PLOVER IN THE SAN LUIS VALLEY

Terri Hicks-Anderson and T. L. VerCauteren  
Rocky Mountain Bird Observatory  
14500 Lark Bunting Lane  
Brighton, CO 80603  
303-659-4348  
[www.rmbo.org](http://www.rmbo.org)

**Abstract**—Mountain Plovers (*Charadrius montanus*) have been observed in five counties in the San Luis Valley through cursory surveys and incidental sightings. A review of scientific literature pertaining to Mountain Plovers indicated no intensive surveys have ever been conducted throughout the region. In 2005, Rocky Mountain Bird Observatory biologists conducted a driving survey in Costilla, Conejos, Rio Grande, Saguache, and Alamosa counties. The goal of the survey was to identify the occurrence, distribution, and habitat use of Mountain Plovers and share information with land managers to aid in the conservation of the species and associated habitat. A total of 1,075 miles of roads and 4-wheel drive trails were driven. Thirty-four independent sightings of one or more Mountain Plovers were recorded for a total of 62 adults. Sixty-one Mountain Plovers were observed in Costilla County on private land and one bird was observed in Conejos County on land managed by the Bureau of Land Management. Mountain Plovers were not observed in Rio Grande, Saguache, or Alamosa counties. Based on our results, we provide management recommendations to promote Mountain Plover conservation in the San Luis Valley.

### Introduction

Historically, Mountain Plovers (*Charadrius montanus*; also hereafter, referred to as plovers) have been observed in the San Luis Valley (hereafter, SLV) with records indicating that the species occurred commonly and nested around the periphery of the SLV in the late 1800s and early 1900s (Henshaw 1875, Warren 1910, Sclater 1912). A recent review of Bureau of Land Management (BLM) unpublished reports provided records of Mountain Plovers in Conejos, Costilla, and Rio Grande counties (Scott 2000). Breeding has been confirmed in southwest Costilla County and southeast Conejos County with probable breeding in Saguache County (Kuenning and Kingery 1998).

Cursory surveys in Conejos County in 2000 and 2002 and incidental sightings found adult and juvenile Mountain Plovers on BLM and state lands (Scott 2000, L. Brummer, pers. comm., Rawinski and Nehring 2002). In addition,

incidental sightings were reported in 2000, 2001, and 2004 in Costilla, Conejos, Rio Grande, and Saguache counties by BLM and Colorado Division of Wildlife (CDOW) biologists. No sightings have been reported in Alamosa County since 1910 (see Warren 1910).

In 2004, biologists from Rocky Mountain Bird Observatory (RMBO) conducted a cursory survey for Mountain Plovers in areas of suitable habitat within Costilla, Conejos, Rio Grande, Saguache, and Alamosa counties covering 650 miles of road and 4-wheel drive trails. A total of 12 adults and two juveniles was observed: 11 adults and two juveniles in Costilla County west of the town of Mesita and one adult in Conejos County southwest of the town of Capulin, where this species had been documented previously. These results led us to initiate a more intensive survey within the SLV in 2005. The goal of this survey was to document the occurrence, distribution, and habitat use of Mountain Plovers in the SLV and share information with land managers to aid in the conservation of the species and associated habitat (Hicks-Anderson and VerCauteren 2005).

### Study Area

The SLV is located in the Rio Grande Basin of south-central Colorado. It is approximately 122 miles long and 74 miles wide and spans approximately 8,000 square miles. The SLV is generally considered to comprise six counties: Alamosa, Conejos, Costilla, Mineral, Rio Grande, and Saguache. For the purposes of this study, Mineral County was excluded based on lack of suitable habitat (Figure 1).

Mountain Plover habitat in the SLV is predominantly rabbitbrush (*Chrysothamnus* spp.)/grass mix and rabbitbrush/sagebrush (*Artemisia* spp.)/grass mix with at least 20% bare ground. Gunnison Prairie Dog (*Cynomys gunnisoni*) colonies also have been identified as suitable habitat. Costilla County contains plover habitat along the western boundary extending from north of the town of Blanca south to the town of Jaroso and from the western border east to the town of San Luis. Conejos, Rio Grande, and Saguache counties contain areas of rabbitbrush/grass mix habitat. In Conejos County, the habitat is located from the northcentral to southcentral boundaries and along the eastern boundary of the county. Rio Grande County contains habitat from the town of Del Norte near the northcentral boundary to the southeast boundary. Saguache County contains habitat in the northeast that extends in a narrow strip near the eastern boundary. Alamosa County contains very little suitable habitat for Mountain Plovers. The majority of the county has dense stands of greasewood (*Sarcobatus vermiculatus*) and areas of irrigated agriculture. Small areas of rabbitbrush/grass mix are found in the county.

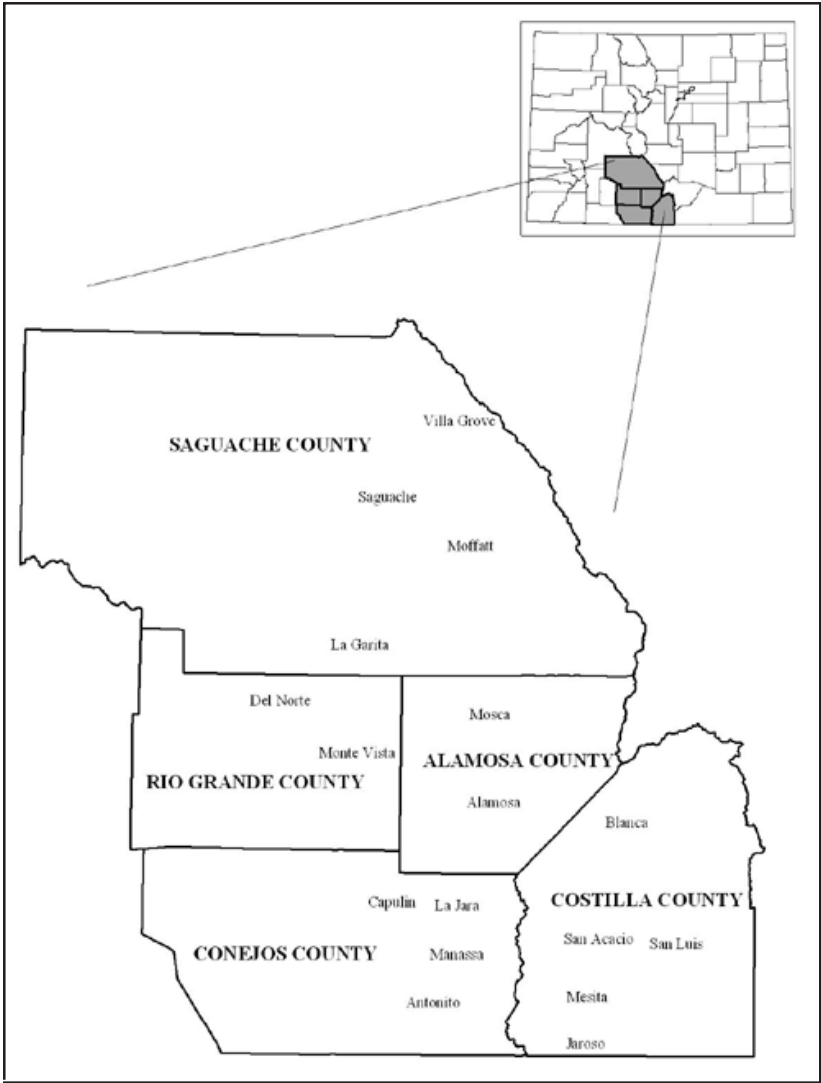


Figure 1. Five counties surveyed for Mountain Plover in the San Luis Valley.



Land ownership in the SLV consists of federal lands (BLM, National Park Service, U.S. Forest Service, and U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service), state land, county-owned land, and private lands. Land ownership in Costilla is private, county, and state.

## **Methods**

### Mapping

We created maps of Mountain Plover habitat for the five SLV counties surveyed in this study based on the Basin-wide Vegetation Classification maps developed by BLM and CDOW. Past Mountain Plover sightings were mapped to help identify areas where surveys should be concentrated. Prairie dog towns also have been identified as habitat; thus, locations of Gunnison Prairie Dog colonies were included. Land ownership was mapped to provide study results to appropriate land managers.

### Driving Surveys

Three RMBO biologists conducted driving surveys on roads and 4-wheel drive trails from 5 May through 16 June. Prairie dog towns and other areas identified by federal and state personnel as Mountain Plover habitat were also surveyed. All surveys of private lands were conducted from public roads. Start and end points of the survey routes were recorded with a Global Positioning System (GPS) unit and marked in a Colorado Atlas and Gazetteer (DeLORME). Total miles driven for each survey route was recorded.

Biologists conducted the survey in the morning from sunrise until temperatures reached 80°F if sunny or 90°F if cloudy and in the evening from approximately 1800hrs until sundown. The horizontal light in the morning and evening allows surveyors to better see the white on the breast of birds. Surveys were not conducted during precipitation, fog or haze, or if wind exceeded 3 on the Beaufort scale (i.e. approximately 24 mph).

Biologists conducted the survey at driving speeds under 20 mph with the windows down to view and listen for plovers. The routes were driven in both directions so one side of the road or trail could be viewed at a time. At every 2/10 of a mile the biologists stopped, watched, and listened for plover. Biologists first scanned an area for one to two minutes without the use of binoculars or spotting scopes to detect movement. If no Mountain Plovers were observed, biologists scanned the area an additional one to two minutes using binoculars and spotting scopes. After this scan, they played a recorded Mountain Plover call using a FoxPro Game Call System (hereafter referred to as the call play-back system) for one minute while the biologist watched for plovers without using binoculars or a spotting scope and listened for response calls. Using this

system has been shown to increase the ability to detect Mountain Plovers (Hicks-Anderson and VerCauteren 2003, 2004a) during the breeding season. Birds may respond to the call play-back system by moving toward it, conducting aerial displays, and vocalizing. The biologists continued to look for birds with binoculars and spotting scopes for a minimum of three minutes. The maximum observation time was left to the discretion of the biologist.

When Mountain Plovers were detected, the location was recorded with a GPS unit. The date, time, sky and wind conditions, habitat type, land ownership, and percent bare ground were recorded. Biologists conducted visual estimates for percent bare ground from each survey point. When possible, photos of the birds and habitat were taken. The number of plovers and their behaviors were recorded before and after using the call play-back system (Hicks-Anderson and VerCauteren 2005).

## **Results and Discussion**

### Mountain Plover Observations

Biologists surveyed 1,075 miles of roads and 4-wheel drive trails, including prairie dog towns (325 miles in Costilla, 300 miles in Conejos, 125 miles in Rio Grande, 300 miles in Saguache, and 25 miles in Alamosa). They recorded a total of 34 independent sightings of one or more Mountain Plovers with 33 (97%) sightings on private land and one (3%) sighting on BLM land for a total of 62 birds. Sixty-one adult plovers were observed in Costilla County on private land and one adult plover was observed in Conejos County on BLM land. Mountain Plovers were not observed in Rio Grande, Saguache, or Alamosa counties and no additional sightings were reported from federal or state agencies or individuals during 2005.

Thirty (91%) Mountain Plover sightings occurred in two distinct areas in western Costilla County; 13 (39%) of these occurred in an area south of the town of Blanca and north of the town of San Acacio, and three (9%) additional sightings occurred directly west of the town of San Acacio (Figure 1). Mountain Plovers had not been documented in this area previously. Seventeen (52%) sightings occurred west of the town of Mesita where Mountain Plovers were observed in 2004 (Hicks-Anderson and VerCauteren 2004b, D. Klute, pers. comm., and J. Rawinski, pers. comm.).

Most birds (85%) in Costilla County were observed from 5 to 18 May. Twenty-five sightings (74%) totaling 50 plovers (81%) occurred between 0700 and 1000hrs and nine sightings (26%) totaling 12 plovers (19%) occurred between 1630 and 1810hrs. The temperature ranged from 40° to 64°F in the morning and from 57° to 79°F in the evening. Sky conditions were clear to mostly cloudy



Mountain Plover in Costilla County, May 2005. Photo by Megan McLachlan, RMBO.

with wind-speed at the time of observations ranging from no detectable wind up to speeds between 19 and 24 mph. Morning wind-speeds were generally slower than those in the evening. The distance from the biologists to the observed birds ranged from 3 to 394 ft.

In Conejos County, one adult Mountain Plover was observed feeding in the evening on 16 May on BLM land (southwest unit) southwest of the town of Capulin. A total of 45 adult Mountain Plovers and three juveniles have been documented through cursory surveys and incidental sightings in this area since 2000 (Scott 2000, L. Brummer, pers. comm., Rawinski and Nehring 2002, Martinez 2003, Hicks-Anderson and VerCauteren 2004b).

No juveniles were observed during the 2005 survey even though juveniles had been observed during previous surveys in 2000, 2002, and 2004. Previous sightings of juveniles occurred on or after 17 June. The 2005 survey concluded on 16 June with the majority of Mountain Plover sightings (88%) and number of birds seen (85%) occurring from 5 to 18 May. The survey yielded high

numbers of adult birds but it was probably too early to detect juveniles.

### Habitat Characteristics

Mountain Plovers were observed in rabbitbrush/sagebrush/grass mix and rabbitbrush/grass mix habitats with each habitat containing a minimum bare ground component of 20-25%. Birds also were observed on prairie dog towns with bare ground of 70-90%.

Of the 33 locations where Mountain Plovers were observed in Costilla County, the predominant habitat was rabbitbrush/sagebrush/grass at 21 (64%) locations, while seven (21%) locations were dominated by rabbitbrush/grass mix habitat, three (9%) were associated with prairie dog towns, one (3%) with agricultural land (alfalfa stubble field) and one (3%) was dominated by a grass mix habitat. The rabbitbrush/sagebrush/grass mix habitat had between 20% and 60% bare ground and rabbitbrush/grass mix had between 25% and 40% bare ground. The percent bare ground for two of the three prairie dog towns ranged from 70% to 90%. The Mountain Plovers observed in Conejos County was in rabbitbrush/sagebrush/grass mix with 50% bare ground. The percent bare ground was not estimated for the grass mix habitat site.

Private individuals and the county own the areas where Mountain Plovers were observed in Costilla County. Once Mountain Plovers were observed on private land in Costilla County, an RMBO biologist went to the Costilla County Assessors Office to obtain information on land ownership. One section of land (1 mile x 1 mile) showed up to 50 landowners including the county. Many of the landowners are out-of-state residents, thus obtaining permission to survey the interior of these lands was not feasible.

The private and county lands were cleared several years ago for housing development but the development has not occurred. The decrease in vegetative cover from development efforts may have enhanced the suitability of these areas as plover habitat. Extensive surveys for plovers had not occurred in Costilla County until the 2004 RMBO survey, so it is not known if plovers were historically in western Costilla County or if they have recently selected these areas based on vegetative changes.

Understanding the importance of bare ground for Mountain Plover nesting and brood-rearing is necessary to gain an understanding of the species' potential for breeding in the SLV. Historically, Mountain Plovers have been associated with the shortgrass prairie ecosystem dominated by blue grama (*Bouteloua gracilis*) and buffalo grass (*Buchloe dactyloides*) heavily grazed by bison (*Bison bison*), prairie dogs (*Cynomys* spp.), and pronghorn antelope

(*Antilocapra americana*; Knopf 1996). Intensive grazing by these species and the natural fire regime created a patchy landscape with heavily grazed areas that included bare ground. Research on the Pawnee National Grassland in Weld County showed Mountain Plovers select both nest and brood-rearing sites that have more bare ground than surrounding areas (Knopf and Rupert 1999). Knopf and Miller (1994) found that 32% of the area surrounding nests was not vegetated. They suggest that 30% bare ground may be the minimum habitat requirement for Mountain Plovers. Olson and Edge (1985) found that plover nests in prairie dog towns in Montana were associated with 27% bare ground.

Although Mountain Plovers were not observed in Rio Grande and Saguache counties, rabbitbrush/sagebrush/grass mix habitat is available. Alamosa County contains very little suitable habitat with the majority of the county having dense stands of greasewood and areas of irrigated agriculture.

#### Call Play-back System

Fifty-nine (95%) birds were observed before using the call play-back system. Three (5%) additional birds were recorded after using the system. Results from previous studies in eastern Colorado (Hicks-Anderson and VerCauteren 2003, 2004a) yielded higher numbers of birds observed following use of the call play-back system. In 2003, 69% of Mountain Plover observations occurred after using the call play-back system and in 2004, 23% of observations occurred after using the system.

Behaviors were recorded before using the call play-back system for 59 (95%) Mountain Plovers observed. Seven different behaviors were recorded before use of the system: feeding (60%), flying (17%), parallel running (7%; when two territorial birds come together at a territory border and run parallel to each other), sitting on the ground (7%), calling (3%), tail display/bowing (3%), and alert posture (3%).

Biologists recorded behavior for 47 (77%) Mountain Plovers after using the call play-back system. Eight different behaviors were recorded: no change in behavior/no response (58%), flying away (16%), flying closer to observer (7%), flying closer to the observer and calling (7%), flying closer to observer, calling, tail display/bowing (3%), horizontal threat display (3%), alert posture (3%), and flushing (walking) from cover (3%). Behaviors such as flight displays, tail display/bowing, horizontal threat display, parallel running, and calling are indications of territorial and courtship behavior (Graul 1973). Results indicate that some birds may have been pairing up to breed.

## Recommendations

### **1. Local land managers and partners should review the feasibility of obtaining permission to survey for nesting Mountain Plovers on private land in Costilla County.**

Mountain Plovers were located on private and county land in western Costilla County. In eastern Colorado, RMBO and CDOW biologists have had success (>92%) in obtaining permission to survey on private land. Based on responses of landowners in eastern Colorado, it is highly probable that landowners in Costilla County would allow surveys if researchers were able to contact them.

### **2. Habitat assessment should be conducted where Mountain Plovers have been observed in the San Luis Valley and management practices implemented accordingly.**

Prior development in Costilla County has increased the bare ground component, reduced the stature of the rabbitbrush/sagebrush/grass community, and likely made this area attractive to Mountain Plovers. Vegetation characteristics in this area should be compared to nearby habitats to identify other potential breeding areas. Habitat comparisons may also help better quantify habitat features Mountain Plovers are selecting in the SLV. This information could be used to manage public land for the benefit of the species. It is likely the developed area the birds are using will become less attractive as the vegetative component becomes dense and plant heights increase unless habitat manipulation takes place to encourage bare ground and short vegetation. Partners may want to work with private and county landowners to establish an easement and/or management plan that includes maintaining and possibly improving habitat to increase the probability that plovers will continue using the area.

Adult and juvenile Mountain Plovers have been observed on BLM land and on a section of state land in Conejos County for several years. Habitat management in these areas should be assessed and possibly managed to increase habitat availability. Suitable habitat also is available on federal and state land in Rio Grande and Saguache counties. Proactive management of these areas may help increase the number of breeding plovers on public land.

### **3. A Mountain Plover distribution database should be created and continually updated.**

The database should contain sightings and nests found, suitable habitat confirmed, and verification of active and inactive prairie dog towns. The database should be housed at CDOW or other local land management agency in the SLV and should be available to all federal and state land managers. Updates to the database will help track distribution and population trends.

**4. Federal and state field personnel should be trained in Mountain Plover biology and behavior in order to document Mountain Plover sightings.**

The BLM and State of Colorado manage areas within Conejos, Rio Grande, Saguache, and Alamosa counties that have suitable Mountain Plover habitat. Field personnel should document Mountain Plover sightings and that information should be added to the Mountain Plover distribution database.

**5. Surveys should be conducted throughout the Mountain Plover breeding season.**

Surveying from early May to early July will allow opportunity to document juveniles and population recruitment. Juveniles have been observed in 2000, 2002, and 2004. Productivity surveys can be compared between Mountain Plover populations within the SLV and the Great Plains. Information gathered will help determine the viability of the Mountain Plover population in SLV.

**6. Long-term goals should be established for Mountain Plover management in the San Luis Valley.**

Local land managers and partners should strategize about the long-term goals of Mountain Plover conservation in the SLV, including population objectives and management strategies for achieving them. With continued pressure from development in South Park (an important Mountain Plover breeding site), Mountain Plovers may increase their use of the SLV. Coordinated surveys will help monitor trends, productivity, and habitat use, and help guide future management and conservation efforts. Mountain Plovers in the SLV should be considered when state management guidelines are created for this species.

**Acknowledgments**

RMBO thanks the Lois Webster Fund of the Audubon Society of Greater Denver and CDOW for providing funding for this project. We thank the field biologists who conducted the survey: Elaine Davinroy, Megan McLachlan, and Rachel Rilling. We thank the following agency representatives for their support of the project by providing valuable insight, information on Mountain Plover habitat and previous Mountain Plover sightings, and by sharing their knowledge and expertise: Melissa Garcia, Loree Harvey, and Doug Clark, Bureau of Land Management; Chanda Pettie, Colorado Watershed Network/Natural Resources Conservation Service/Colorado Division of Wildlife; Rick Basagoitia, David Klute, Kirk Navo, and Chuck Wagner, Colorado Division of Wildlife; Kelly Stone, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service/Alamosa and Monte Vista National Wildlife Refuge; Ron Brink, Colorado Farm Bureau; Scott Miller, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Partners for Fish and Wildlife; Ray Hinton, Colorado State Forest Service; and Laurel Kagan-Wiley and John Rawinski, U.S. Forest Service.



### References

- Andrews, R. and R. Righter. 1992. *Colorado birds: a reference to their distribution and habitat*. Denver Mus. Nat. Hist., Denver.
- Graul, W.D. 1973. Adaptive Aspects of the Mountain Plover Social System. *Living Bird* 12:69-94.
- Henshaw, H.W. 1875. Report on Ornithological Collections Made in Portions of Nevada, Utah, California, Colorado, New Mexico, and Arizona, During the Years 1871, 1872, 1873, 1874, in Report Upon Geographical and Geological Explorations and Surveys West of the one hundredth Meridian. (First Lieut. George M. Wheeler, Corps of Engineers, in charge, 6 vols., GPO, Washington, D.C.). Vol. 5 Zoology, Chap. 3, pp. 133-507. In Andrews, R. and R. Righter. 1992. *Colorado birds: a reference to their distribution and habitat*. Denver Mus. Nat. Hist., Denver.
- Hicks-Anderson, T. and T. VerCauteren. 2003. Mountain Plover Nest Conservation in Cultivated Fields. Unpublished report submitted to Colorado Division of Wildlife. Rocky Mountain Bird Observatory, Brighton, CO.
- Hicks-Anderson, T. and T. VerCauteren. 2004a. Mountain Plover Patch Survey. Unpublished report submitted to Colorado Division of Wildlife. Rocky Mountain Bird Observatory, Brighton, CO.
- Hicks-Anderson, T. and T. VerCauteren. 2004b. Mountain Plover Survey in the San Luis Valley. Unpublished report submitted to Colorado Division of Wildlife. Rocky Mountain Bird Observatory, Brighton, CO.
- Hicks-Anderson, T. and T. VerCauteren. 2005. Mountain Plover Survey in the San Luis Valley. Unpublished report submitted to the Lois Webster Fund of the Audubon Society of Greater Denver and Colorado Division of Wildlife. Rocky Mountain Bird Observatory, Brighton, CO.
- Knopf, F.L. 1996. Mountain Plover (*Charadrius montanus*). *The Birds of North America*, No. 211. (A. Poole and F. Gill, eds.). Academy of Natural Sciences, Philadelphia, and American Ornithologists' Union, Washington, DC.
- Knopf, F.L. and B.J. Miller. 1994. *Charadrius montanus* - Montane, Grassland, or Bare-ground Plover? *Auk* 111:504-506.
- Knopf, F. L. and J. R. Rupert. 1999. Use of Cultivated Fields by Breeding Mountain Plovers in Colorado. *Studies in Avian Biology* 19:81-86.
- Kuenning, R.R. and H.E. Kingery. 1998. Mountain Plover. *Colorado Breeding Bird Atlas* (H.E. Kingery, ed.). Colorado Bird Atlas Partnership and Colorado Division of Wildlife, Denver.
- Martinez, J. 2003. Survey and Conservation Concerns of Mountain Plover Populations on San Luis Valley Bureau of Land Management



- Territory. Unpublished report. Bureau of Land Management.
- Olson, S.L. and D. Edge. 1985. Nest Site Selection by Mountain Plovers in Northcentral Montana. *J. Range Mgmt.* 38:280-282.
- Rawinski, L. and J. Nehring. 2002. Mountain Plover Surveys (summer 2002) on BLM Lands. Unpublished report Bureau of Land Management, Saguache Field Office, Saguache, CO.
- Sclater, W.H. 1912. A History of the Birds of Colorado. Witherby and Co., London. In Andrews, R. and R. Righter. 1992. *Colorado birds: a reference to their distribution and habitat.* Denver Mus. Nat. Hist., Denver.
- Scott, M. 2000. Mountain Plovers in the San Luis Valley. Unpublished report. Bureau of Land Management, Saguache Field Office, Saguache, CO.
- Warren, E. R. 1910. Some Central Colorado Bird Notes. *Condor* 12:23-39.



### CFO SUPPORTS ETHICS CODES

The Colorado Field Ornithologists is dedicated to the conservation of avian species and to increasing the public awareness of human impact on birds. As one step toward achieving these goals, the CFO Board has endorsed the American Birding Association's (ABA) *Birding Code of Ethics* and the Ornithological Council (OC) of North American Ornithological Societies' *Code of Ethics*.

## WESTERN SCREECH-OWLS OF THE GRAND VALLEY: RUNNING UP THE SCORE

Rich Levad  
480 Casey Way  
Grand Junction, CO 81504

Nic Korte  
1946 Clover Court  
Grand Junction, CO 81506

On 18 Dec 2005, the Grand Junction Christmas Bird Count (CBC) tallied 47 Western Screech-Owls, a total that contended for the lead among all CBCs and reinforced the position of this species as a signature bird for the Grand Valley. The Count has not always ranked among the leaders. In its first 30 renditions, conducted 1923-1978—with sizeable gaps in the early years—the Grand Junction CBC reported a total of three Screech Owls. (They were not officially Western Screech-Owls until 1983 when Screech Owl was split; AOU 1983.)

Bailey and Niedrach discussed the Colorado distribution of Screech Owl at length in *Birds of Colorado* (1965), but their only West Slope record was “a family with three young...collected in La Plata Co, in June 1887.” In 1969, W. M. Davis’ *Birds of Western Colorado* (1969) described Screech Owl as an “uncommon resident” and indicated no winter records. Actually, a Grand Junction CBC in 1924 had recorded one, but the three counts conducted in the 1920s disappeared in the archives until recently, and Davis did not have access to them. After the current series of Christmas Counts began in 1946, no Screech Owls were recorded until 1970, the year after Davis’ publication.

Although the Grand Junction CBC has not missed this bird since 1979, the explosion in numbers began, albeit modestly, in 1988. Prior to that year’s count, a colony of honey bees displaced the most reliable Western Screech-Owl in the count circle, one that for several years had inhabited a natural cavity at Ed Muhr’s farm near Fruita. While working on a Breeding Bird Atlas block earlier that summer, Tom Moran, Coen Dexter, and Rich Levad had experimented with calling Western Screech-Owls using a tape recording of their song at a farmstead in the west end of the valley and had elicited a strong territorial response. This location was well out of the count circle, but the circle contained so many similar sites that attempting to elicit winter responses seemed a worthwhile experiment. To avoid traffic, they conducted explorations early in the morning rather than in the evening.

At 5:30 on Sunday morning, 11 December 1988, Rich met Tom at his house on the Redlands west of downtown Grand Junction, and set out to test the hypothesis at locations selected in Tom's neighborhood. The results were amazing. Owls responded at three of the first four places tried. The following Sunday, the new knowledge was used to establish a new high for the count - five Western Screech-Owls - breaking the previous record by one.

Buoyed by the breakthrough, Tom and Rich followed up the Christmas Count by spending most weekend mornings for the next two months looking for more screech-owl territories. By the end of February, they had elicited responses at 70 locations (Levad 1989). In retrospect, some of the stops were spaced too closely, and a portion of the responses were from owls that had responded also at the previous stop; despite that inflation, the experience clearly demonstrated that this little owl was much more abundant than previously thought.

The following December, three more early-morning owlers joined the effort and conducted routes of 10-12 stops each; they helped to demolish the count record by tallying 22 screech-owls. Beginning with that count in 1989, the Grand Junction CBC has averaged more than 32 Western Screech-Owls per count, leading the nation in five of those years, exceeding 40 on four occasions, falling below 20 only on two blustery days, and amassing the highest all-time total among all Christmas counts (Table 1).

Table 1. Box score: Top ten Christmas Counts for Western Screech-Owls.

Count	State	Total	Counts	Ave.	High	Yrs w/high count <sup>1</sup>
Grand Junction	CO	550	24	22.9	47	5
Santa Cruz Co.	CA	525	24	21.9	61	5
Springville	CA	378	20	18.9	48	2
Orange Co. (NE)	CA	368	24	15.3	54	3
Palo Alto	CA	343	24	14.3	58	3
Roseburg - (Sutherlin)	OR	296	24	12.3	55	4
Morro Bay	CA	267	24	11.1	31	0
Marin County	CA	221	23	9.6	37	0
Malibu	CA	205	21	9.8	35	0
Eugene	OR	203	24	8.5	17	0

<sup>1</sup>Three counts not in the top ten had the highest counts 1983-1985

Although early morning tape playbacks have accounted for the most owls each year, some additional techniques and developments have also contributed. In response to the note written for *JCFO* in 1989 (Levad 1989), a photographer called asking for directions to a roosting site where he might get good photos. Unfortunately, all of our contacts consisted of birds coming in to tape recordings, and honey bees had appropriated the only known roost hole. His call, though, suggested the notion that locating a number of roost holes and checking them during daylight hours could increase the counts. So searches for roost holes began. By the end of the decade, the growing contingent of owl enthusiasts had recorded more than 100 cavities, mostly in mature cottonwood trees. Since the early 90s, daylight checking of roost holes has added several owls to the count each winter.

Several techniques have proven useful in locating roost holes. When an owl responds to a tape at daybreak, one can easily watch it for a few minutes and see where it goes when it becomes uncomfortable with the increasing daylight. Also, playing a tape at a likely cavity in broad daylight occasionally prompts an occupant to look out the hole for the apparent intruder. Seeing a number of occupied roost holes builds a search-image, and some observers developed the habit of looking closely at suitable trees and consequently began seeing owls. When an owl sits in the mouth of a cavity, its plumage blends perfectly with the surrounding bark, but an experienced observer can sometimes spot a protuberance that suggests an owl. And on more than one occasion, the “disappearance” of a likely cavity when an owl filled the opening has caused a rapid stop, a u-turn, and a closer look.

The search for nest holes soon revealed that suitable cavities were quickly disappearing from the valley. Removal and trimming of old trees have eliminated more than 1/3 of all the occupied cavities that Grand Valley observers have found. Grand Valley Audubon Society responded to this alarming loss of suitable cavities by initiating a nest box project. In the winter of 1994, the wood shop class at Central High School built its first batch of boxes, and GVAS has now placed more than 250 around the Grand Valley and elsewhere, with more than 100 in the Christmas Count circle.

In checking boxes and roost holes during daylight hours, we soon discovered that the owls inconsistently showed themselves. On one day, an owl might sit in the opening all afternoon and on the next not show itself at all. On one day an owl might pop up instantly at the first note of a tape recording and on the next day ignore the tape entirely. Unfortunately, that second day was often the day of the count. Even owls with consistent behavior present problems: one

usually-occupied box has an owl that puts in an appearance only slightly before dusk and virtually never spends time sitting in the hole. Other owls more reliably sit in the hole on any sunny day.

On the 2004 count we initiated our latest technique to address the behavioral inconsistencies - a "peeper" (Fig. 1). This device (which was funded by a CFO Project Fund grant) consists of a miniature TV camera mounted into a short piece of 1 ½-inch PVC pipe, which is attached to the end of a 25-foot telescoping pole. When the camera is hoisted to the box opening and inserted, it broadcasts a clear picture of the box contents to a receiver below. On the 2005 count, the peeper accounted for 10 of our 47 screech-owls.



Fig. 1. With a camera mounted on the end of PVC pipe, a "peeper" is used to investigate a nest box for occupancy. Photo by Nic Korte.

Our experience at Tiara Rado golf course exemplifies the efficacy of both the box program and the peeper. The golf course maintenance staff carefully trims trees to ensure that falling, dead limbs do not endanger golfers; thus, without the box program (ably assisted by the Tiara Rado staff), Western Screech-Owls would find few or no suitable cavities at the course. Observers checked the nine boxes at the course on the warm Saturday afternoon the day before

the count. Two owls were sunning themselves. On Sunday, the count day, the boxes were checked late in the morning using the peeper. No owls were up, but five were found in the boxes - demonstrating how easy it is to miss owls during count day.

Tiara Rado golf course regularly hosts nesting owls as well, with young observed in each of two boxes during the spring of 2004 and 2005. Indeed, the box program has led to a number of observations:

- A large percentage of the boxes, perhaps 50% or more, have hosted owls at one time or another. One of the authors' boxes (NK) hung in a pine tree in a well-settled neighborhood unused for ten years until an owl roosted in it for two weeks in December 2005. Others have reported owls using their boxes five or ten years ago, and not since. Regularly, count day will find one or more owls in locations seemingly unsuitable except for the presence of a box.
- Box usage seems peak in November or early December, although verifying this impression requires more data. Apparently, during this period, owls roam widely, searching for mates and suitable nesting locations. We suggest the box program has assisted in maintaining and possibly expanding the owl distribution during non-nesting periods.
- Extensive checking of boxes during the past two nesting seasons revealed only 5 to 10 occupied boxes in the entire valley. Owls typically have not abandoned natural cavities when nest boxes were placed nearby. (Nesting kestrels typically use more boxes than owls, but the number of starlings greatly exceeds both. One or two boxes usually harbor flickers, and when near water, wood ducks will use them.)

Knowledge of Western Screech Owls in the Grand Valley has expanded dramatically in the past twenty years. The box program and use of the peeper have permitted Grand Valley birders to maintain and increase the CBC count and have demonstrated some positive effects of healthy competition in birding. The box program has also expanded the number of Grand Valley citizens who are knowledgeable of and interested in owls, an outcome that could promote the species' conservation. Unfortunately, we cannot be certain whether the Grand Valley Western Screech-Owl population is stable, nor can we answer how or whether the box program has affected the population. Only several years of more rigorous data collection can answer these critical questions.

Over the past 17 years, dozens of people have aided in expanding our understanding of Western Screech-Owl in the Grand Valley and have contributed hundreds of hours looking for owls on Christmas Bird Counts, building and placing nest boxes, and monitoring boxes during the nesting



season. We especially want to recognize Tom Moran, Mike Henwood, John Toolen, Glenn Giroir, Larry Allison, Ronda Woodward, and Aileen Roberts for the many days and nights they have devoted to this effort. And we thank Kim Potter for reviewing a draft and making valuable suggestions.

### References

- American Ornithologists' Union [AOU]. 1983. *Check-list of North American birds*, 6th ed. Allen Press, Lawrence, KS.
- Bailey, A. M. and R. J. Niedrach. 1965. *Birds of Colorado*, Vol. I. Denver Mus. Nat. Hist., Denver.
- Davis, W. A. 1969. *Birds in Western Colorado*. Colo. Field Ornith., Denver.
- Levad, R. 1989. Western Screech-Owls in the Grand Valley. *J. Colo. Field Ornith.* 23:174-175.



This Western Screech-Owl blends in well with its background while filling the entrance of a cavity. Photo by Bill Schmoker.

## IMPERFECT ALBINISM IN A PINE SISKIN (*CARDUELIS PINUS*)

Kim M. Potter  
809 Cedar Drive  
Rifle, CO 81650

While mist-netting birds visiting my back yard feeders on January 29, 2006, I banded an unusually pale Pine Siskin along with some typically colored siskins. Fortunately, a photographer was on hand with film and a camera.

The atypical siskin showed a dark eye, slightly paler feet and legs, and a very pale bill. The brown and black pigments, or melanins, in all the birds' feathers were greatly reduced or washed out. The yellow pigments in the wing and tail seemed unchanged. (See photos on back cover courtesy Linda Bessette.)

Terres (1980) summarized four albinism classifications derived from the work of several geneticists, which I have listed below. A fifth classification suggested by Schmoker (2006) has been added to the list.

- 1) Total Albinism: The bird has a complete absence of melanin from the eyes, skin, and feathers - the rarest form.
- 2) Incomplete Albinism: Pigment formation is partially absent from eyes, skin, or feathers but not all three.
- 3) Imperfect Albinism: Pigment formation is partially inhibited (reduced) in eyes, skin, or feathers but pigment is not totally inhibited in any.
- 4) Partial Albinism: The commonest form; complete or partial albinism within local body parts which may involve certain feathers only; it is often symmetrical; each side may show white feathers in the same pattern.
- 5) Acquired Albinism: Normal feathers are replaced by pure white feathers following annual molt (Schmoker 2006).

Because this atypical Pine Siskin did not have any pure white feathers and still had pigmentation in its eye, it best fits the Imperfect Albinism classification. Whether the siskin has always expressed this type of albinism or whether it has been acquired is not known at this time; perhaps it will return next winter.

### References

- Terres, J. R., ed. 1980. The Audubon Society encyclopedia of North American birds. Knopf, New York.
- Schmoker, B. 2006. Acquired Albinism in a Steller's Jay (*Cyanocitta stelleri*). *Colorado Birds* 40:7-11.



## FIRST BREEDING RECORD FOR SANDHILL CRANE IN WELD COUNTY

Cole Wild, Nick Komar,  
Steve Messick, and Joe Himmel

Sandhill Crane (*Grus canadensis*) traditionally nests in northwest Colorado, principally in Routt and Moffat counties, but as far east as Larimer County (Bailey and Niedrach 1965, Andrews and Righter 1992, Barret 1998, Komar 2005). They breed in meadows from between 6000 to 8000 feet elevation. While Sandhill Cranes are known to nest in the mountains of Colorado there are no documented breeding records on the state's eastern plains.

We observed a pair of Sandhill Cranes with a chick at the south end of Lower Latham Reservoir in Weld County (Fig. 1) in 2005, confirming the first breeding record for the county. The adult cranes were first observed flying into the cattails on March 21 (JH) and the chick was first observed on May 10 (SM). This crane family was monitored by many observers through at least June 19.

The breeding of Sandhill Cranes away from their nidus in Routt and Moffat counties may be due to population growth, or habitat destruction forcing cranes to seek new breeding sites, such as this one in Weld County. Recent expansion of this population into Delta and Montrose counties in western Colorado was attributed to population growth (Semo and Pieplow 2006).

This breeding record in Weld County, and additional observations of Sandhill Crane pairs during the 2005 breeding season in the Laramie River Valley (NK, CW) and Cherokee Park (Rick Knight, pers. comm.), both in Larimer County, indicate that extralimital Sandhill Crane records are increasing along the Front Range of northern Colorado.

### References

- Andrews, R. and R. Righter. 1992. *Colorado birds: a reference to their distribution and habitat*. Denver Mus. Nat. Hist., Denver.
- Bailey, A. M. and R. J. Niedrach. 1965. *Birds of Colorado*, Vol. I. Denver Mus. Nat. Hist., Denver.
- Barret, N. M. 1995. Sandhill Crane. *Colorado Breeding Bird Atlas* (H.E. Kingery, ed.). Colorado Bird Atlas Partnership and Colorado Division of Wildlife, Denver.
- Komar, N. 2005. Sandhill Crane nesting in Larimer County. *Colorado Birds* 39:15-16.

Semo, L. S. and N. Pieplow. 2006. News from the Field: the Summer 2005 report (June-July). *Colorado Birds* 40:45-61.



Fig. 1. Adult Sandhill Crane with fledgling at Lower Latham Reservoir, Weld County, on 28 May 2005. Photo by Steve Messick.

## HEPATIC TANAGER NESTING LOG

Joyce Wolff  
7558 Overlook Drive  
Trinidad, CO

The following is a log of observations of a pair of nesting Hepatic Tanagers in our yard south of Trinidad, CO.

Location: South of Trinidad, Las Animas County, Colorado, on Santa Fe Trail Ranch development, 7558 Overlook Drive.

Elevation: 6950 feet

Latitude: 37° 5.461' N   Longitude: 104° 32.036' W

Habitat: Pinyon/juniper and scattered Ponderosa Pine on the hilltops and in the drainages. There is plentiful scrub oak, and assorted forbs and grasses. There is a 1000-gallon fish pond within 100 feet of the nest tree and numerous, heavily used feeders scattered within a few feet of the nest tree and around the cabin. There was constant feeding activity within a few yards of the nest tree. This tree is within 30 feet of the cabin where there is frequently human activity (e.g., people walking, cars parking). There are at least three other bird species nesting within 100 yards of the tanager nest.

The nest was in a mature ponderosa, about 25-30 feet from the ground, and perhaps five feet from the trunk on a swaying limb. It was lodged in place by several small limbs. The nest withstood heavy rain, hail, and windstorms during the incubation process. It was impossible for me to see what the nest might be made of during these observations.

Identification: The male was brick red, not as bright a red as the field guides show the Summer Tanager. He had brownish wings and a dark beak (diagnostic), not light as the Summer. The female was not as bright a yellow as the Summer Tanager. She had faint dark lores. Circumstantially, according to the guides, the Hepatic Tanager is more likely to be here than the Summer.

### 2005 Log

#### 20 May

6:00 A.M. - The male was singing for several minutes in the top of a nearby ponderosa for several minutes. The ponderosa is about 25 feet from the front

of the house. The nest turned out to be behind the house about the same distance from the building.

22 May

The female was foraging in a tree overhanging the deck. I didn't recognize her as a tanager - I thought it was an odd oriole - so I didn't think they were a breeding pair.

31 May

The pair appeared together.

1-13 June

The male was observed three times during this timespan.

16 June

Found the nest. Since according to 18 June note (female sitting on the nest midday), I assumed she was incubating when I found the nest. I never saw fledglings, so it would be impossible to count backwards from the parents leaving the nest (June 29) to the date that I discovered the nest to indicate what stage they were in.



Fig. 1. Female Hepatic Tanager attending to the nest. Photo by Joyce Wolff.

18 June

Female sitting on nest midday. There has been plenty of time for the eggs to have hatched since I first saw/heard him in May.

21 June

Male singing in a ponderosa.

24 June

7:30 A.M. - Neither bird near the nest that I could see. An Ash-throated Flycatcher landed in a nearby tree and the male immediately drove it away.

7:50 - Male appeared at the nest and fed (her or nestlings?). It has now been 36 days since I first saw the female. Much more time than needed to hatch. They could easily be feeding young.

7:55 - A cowbird appeared in a nearby tree and I shoed him away. I think the male was scolding the cowbird.

8:00 - Confirmed they are feeding. Can see one or two open beaks. Female fed.

8:07 - Female dive-bombed Pine Siskin that landed in a lower limb.

8:09 - Male fed. Pair foraged in the nest tree and nearby.

6:15 P.M. - Pair fed. I heard nestlings. (Observed 20 species on the property today.)

25 June

9:35 A.M. - Pair fed.

9:50 - Female fed. She foraged in nearby tree. Heard soft chip call notes.

10:02 - Female fed male at the nest as well. They flew in from different directions then left together.

10:07 - Female fed - soft chip notes.

10:16 - Male fed, giving soft chip notes, forages in nest tree.

1:15 P.M. - Rain. Male fed, foraged nearby.

1:44 - Showers. She's on nest. He visits nest - she lifts up and allows him to feed young.

4:17 - Female fed after heavy thunderstorm.

4:30 - Flew in together and both fed. In the late afternoon sun his protective coloration is perfect; he blends into the new red tipped cone starts on the tips of the tree.

6:20 - Pair fed.

6:35 - Female fed.

26 June

9:51 A.M. - Pair fed in wind. Limb swaying. Gentle chipping calls.

10:20 - Pair fed - left together.

11:12 - Male fed - can hear nestling/s.

1:55 P.M. - Pair fed. They flew to a nearby tree.

3:10 - Lashing wind/rain. She's covering nest.

4:40 - Male fed. A bit of a song.

5:20 - Low chips usually announce their arrival in the nest tree. No sun all afternoon.

### 27 June

2:25 P.M. - Female fed. Nestlings are lifting up above the nest edge.

2:30 - Male fed. Foraged in the nest tree. They seemed to be aware of me - I had changed positions. Flew off together. Male gives soft chipping calls. Feces is building up at edge of nest(?). They both give soft chipping calls.

### 28 June

When I say "pair arrived" it meant that they were out of my field of view from my observation site - on my back porch within 25 feet of the nest tree - and flew into my sight. There were also foraging trips that all occurred in the ponderosas within my eyeshot (i.e., sometimes they flew out of my sight, sometimes they remained nearby). When they disappeared they usually flew away in the same direction. That's usually the direction they flew in from as well. So their flight pattern seemed the same.

They both fed in the same pattern: landed on the limb a few feet from the nest and hopped to the nest, then hopped back down the limb and flew away. They usually fed within a minute or so of one another. The foraging pattern on 28 June was no different from other days.

When they foraged in the ponderosa boughs within my eyeshot they were frequently in the same tree 20 or so feet from one another. They seemed in constant communication with soft chipping call notes.

9:02 - Pair arrive - soft chips. Foraged in a nearby tree. Male plucked a green worm from a cluster of new green cones in the top of a ponderosa. Pair fed.

9:25 - I changed viewing location and the chipping calls seemed louder. Nervous about the move? Pair fed.

9:31 - More louder chips. She is not visible.

9:36 - Male in nearby tree carrying food.

9:37 - Both forage - neither fed. He chips softly when she appears. Flew from the same branch together. Both forage and calling.

9:45 - Female appears, forages nearby, chipping. The pair remain within a few feet of one another.

10:12 - Flapping wings indicate male drove off an intruder. Both in nest tree - both chipping.

(In retrospect, I wonder if they were feeding well-concealed fledglings, since the pair was foraging but not returning to the nest this day.)

29 June

9:38 A.M. - Male in tree alone - she appears. Fly off together. In mid-afternoon there was no sign of either bird.

This was the last sighting of either bird.

I never saw the pair on the ground or at the water. They seemed to be caring parents and stayed together much of the time in their foraging activities. They usually left and arrived at the nest tree together, feeding within seconds of one another while constantly issuing their soft little chipping calls. They were not particularly secretive and tolerated my watching. They might look my way but continue on their search.

We have donated the nest and the entire branch on which it was built to the Denver Museum of Nature and Science. (A tree-trimmer was kind enough to saw it off for science.)

Next year it will be interesting to see if they return. Gosh, I hope so. They were so much fun to watch.



## FIELD NOTES

This Field Notes section contains two articles about leucistic robins that have persisted in Westminster for six years and attracted a lot of attention from non-birders. Not far from there, an almost totally white hawk has been found in Westminster around 104th and Sheridan for about the same number of years, delighting many CFO members who have seen this striking bird (see front cover).

Reports of leucistic birds of many different species abound - Sandhill Crane, hummingbirds, Steller's Jay, and Common Grackle among them. Because of the prevalence of this trait, Colorado Birds does not contemplate publishing additional articles on the subject, despite the fascination many have with this phenomenon. New twists might affect this editorial policy (e.g., if leucism or melanism impacts a difficult identification or confusion with other species). But as a general policy, the editors do not favor more notes on this subject. – Hugh Kingery

### CFO WEBSITE

We invite you to browse the Colorado Field Ornithologists' website. If you don't own a computer, check your local library. Visit the site regularly because new items and changes appear often. The Internet address is:

<http://www.cfo-link.org>



## THE RANCH COUNTRY CLUB WHITE ROBIN

The White Robin returned to the Ranch Country Club for the seventh year (2005). I believe, it is the seventh, I may have lost count and it might be only the sixth year. She is quite a celebrity among our members. The first to see it each spring will announce it to others with great pride. When she is in range of our golf balls, I have heard members say things like, "Don't you dare hit the white robin."

She looks just like a normal robin, except all the feathers that are generally gray or black are white. Her breast is the standard orange. She acts just like a normal robin and fraternizes with other robins. While flying with her back turned to you she looks like a white gull, but much smaller. She dramatically stands out from the other robins that are very inconspicuous on the golf course.

The Ranch Country Club is located at 11887 Tejon Street in Westminster. It is south of 120th Street and about two miles west of Interstate 25. The clubhouse is on the top of a very large hill. South and west of the club house is the golf course, a park, and a few houses. I always see her in these areas within about 200 yards of the clubhouse. According to Gale Nelson, she has a nest at one of the houses west of the club house. The homeowner saw her lay the eggs so we know the bird is a female. I play golf about five days a week and see her a couple of times a month on average. When I haven't seen her for a while, I often ask members if they have seen her, and I almost always get an affirmative report of a recent sighting.

Gale Nelson saw another white robin that she says is bigger and hangs out about half a mile south of the clubhouse. I have not been able to find other witnesses to corroborate this sighting.

These members, among others, have also witnessed the white robin often since her arrival at the Ranch Country Club: Terry Bunge, Ron Heffner, George Herbst, Gale Nelson, Charles Sullivan, Ralph Thomas, and Frank Yaklich.

James (Jay) Frazier, Jr.  
2361 Ranch Drive  
Westminster, CO 80234  
[fraziergolf@aol.com](mailto:fraziergolf@aol.com)

## NOTES ON A WHITE ROBIN NESTING

Five years ago I saw my first white robin. I asked around in my neighborhood and many had also seen it on the golf course. Winter came and then in early spring a white robin began coming to our bird bath with a flock of winter robins.

We did not see a white robin again until this spring (2005) when a very large white male came to our bird bath a few times. I hear he is living in the south part of the golf course that we live on.

In June, 2005, to our surprise, a lovely white female (named her Crystal; Fig 1) began to build a nest five feet up in a floppy, unstable bush next to our driveway. She was not a white robin. Her head, back, tail, wings, legs and feet were white. Her breast was orange (it seemed brighter orange than other robins) and she had black eyes and a yellow beak. She looked exactly like the robin I saw five years ago.



Fig. 1. Crystal. Photo by David Cran.

After finishing the nest, she disappeared for a few days and we were sure that she had gotten smart and found a sturdier tree. Then she appeared in our yard with a normal male singing his heart out to her. We watched them mate a couple of times and then fly off together. A few days later she returned to her nest with the male close by in the tree.

I always checked on her whenever I walked by. I looked in one day to find the male straddling the nest with an evil eye on me, very much like the look you see

on an angry Viking's face. Hence we named him Viking. This nest, being only five feet off the ground, meant he had to defend it often. We did our share by scaring off cats and grackles. We even parked our van beside the bush to shelter her from a terrible wind and rain storm.

I was very curious about what color the eggs were. I thought maybe they would be different since Crystal was unusual. Hugh Kingery said they would be blue. While Crystal was gone, my son took a picture of the inside of the nest and Hugh was right; there were 3 blue eggs in the nest.

### June 15

Two chicks had hatched and one egg remained in the nest.



Fig. 2. Crystal attending her nest. Photo by David Cran.

### June 17

Crystal has been feeding the chicks. She spent the P.M. with her wings spread over the nest to keep the sun off the chicks.

### June 18

Bad news. Viking had not been seen for three days. I did not know until I read on the Internet that night that the male plays a major role in raising the brood.

June 19

Crystal was very calm and did not get agitated when we viewed the nest closely. I have never heard her make any robin sound so maybe she is mute.

Today by using a mirror we saw one unhatched egg and one living chick. I don't know if she can raise one chick on her own so decided I would help her if I could. I bought some meal worms and was so surprised at her response when I kind of shook the opened container near the nest. She flew to a tree and looked down at me. I poured some of the container on the driveway in front of her nest bush. As I walked to the front door I saw her fly down and start picking up the worms. Later in the day I suddenly heard her chirp for the first time so I guess she is normal in that way. It made it a good day for me.

To date, two live chicks hatched but one died within 1-2 days. Since Viking never returned, she has raised the lone chick by herself.

June 20

We were a little worried that other birds would come along and eat Crystal's worms which we dumped in a scoop of dirt on the driveway. We soon discovered not to worry when a streak of white came out of the bush flying toward an intruder who was headed for her food.

We had a very heavy wind and rain storm. We watched the branches of the bush whipping every which way and were glad when we saw they survived.

June 21

All of our neighbors think Crystal is the most beautiful bird. They love it when she comes into their yards to look for food. Everyone has taken photos.

They made it through another heavy rain and wind storm. We were so glad that we have had no hail.

June 22

Just by chance we went outside and found Crystal on the neighbors roof looking down on her nest where a grackle was nearby. There were also two grackles behind her on the roof. We discovered that grackles are not even afraid of people as we tried to be as obnoxious as possible but they finally gave in and left. Times like this is when she needs the Viking.

June 23

Crystal has developed a few spots of orange/brown on her back & her head is not as pure color white as it used to be. The chick is now standing in the nest

and flapping its wings. From what little I can tell, I think it is going to be a garden variety robin.

#### June 24

Crystal is spending more time away from the nest. The chick is getting so big so fast. but Mom still runs off other birds that come near the nest bush.

#### June 25

The communication between bird and human is interesting. My son was in the garage with the door open. Crystal was in the driveway standing by the small dirt pile where I put her worms. She would look at my son and then look at the dirt pile. She did this four or five times before it dawned on my son that she wanted him to get some worms because they were all gone in the pile. He put some out in the dirt and she went right over and started eating.

#### June 26

Next week at this time the nest will be empty.

#### July 27

On Monday, June 27, I found the chick sitting on the edge of the nest. As the day went on it gradually worked its way down a large stem towards the ground, which was covered with a foot-high, low-growing groundcover. For three days Crystal continued to fly into the ground cover with a beak full of food, after listening carefully for the sound of her chick. Then they were gone but Crystal would often come to our back yard for a drink and a bath. I always figured Crystal would take the chick to the golf course where nightly watering and large areas of grass filled with worms were a perfect haven for them.

The chick was colored like a regular robin. Black head, back, tail, wings, and legs. His breast was orange speckled with black and there was white under its tail.

Watching the robins' behavior a number of times a day was a wonderful experience for our whole family. Now we are watching an ordinary robin who has nested in our back yard pine tree. She comes down to the first terrace and stands in a bowl until we bring her some raisins. It has been interesting to see the complex relationships between the robins themselves, as well as with humans.

Jaci and David Cran  
2214 W. 118th Ave.  
Westminster, CO 80234

**NEWS FROM THE FIELD:  
THE FALL 2005 REPORT (AUGUST-NOVEMBER)**

Peter R. Gent  
55 South 35th Street  
Boulder, Colorado 80305  
[gent@ucar.edu](mailto:gent@ucar.edu)

Colorado had above average temperatures in the fall of 2005. The Denver region was near normal in August and October. However, the September average was 67.2°F, which is 4.8°F above normal, and the November average was 42.5°F, which is 5°F above normal. Maximum temperatures of 88°F on both October 2 and 3 were record highs for those days. There were also four record low maximum temperatures at Denver International Airport during the fall: 61°F on August 4, 63°F on August 13, 66°F on September 10, and a chilly 34°F on October 10. The precipitation in Denver during the fall was 4.05in, which is 0.88in below average. September was very dry, with only 0.07in of precipitation, but the October precipitation of 2.16in was almost double the average, with daily records set on both October 9 and 10. There was also much more snow than usual in Colorado's mountains by late November.

A number of very rare species were seen in Colorado this fall. Top of the list must be the two White-eared Hummingbirds seen in August. One had been seen at feeders at the home of Susan Allerton northeast of Durango since the summer. However, very surprising was a second seen coming to another feeder about 30 miles away at the Durango Mountain Ski Resort north of Durango. These are the first sightings of the species in Colorado, and there were a number of other sightings in the US well north of its usual range. There were two reports of Yellow-bellied Flycatcher, one each at Box Springs in north Crowley County in August and at Barr Lake in September, and a report of a Smith's Longspur in Sedgwick County on October 8. These species are not presently on the Colorado state list, although reports of both species are currently under review by the CFO Records Committee.

Second in rarity was the second state record of Curlew Sandpiper, which was found by Joey Kellner on September 18 at Prewitt Reservoir. This was a juvenile bird, as opposed to the adult seen on June 30 and 1 July 1998 at Upper Queens Reservoir in the Arkansas River Valley. This year's bird dallied for a few days and was seen by many interested observers. There was also a report of an Arctic Loon at Chatfield Reservoir on September 28, which is also a possible second state record. The first was in Franktown in November 2002.

Very exciting for Fred Fisher was the adult Painted Redstart, which was seen for three days in his yard near New Castle, Garfield County, in mid-November. Unfortunately, the bird did not reappear for the many people who looked for it on that Saturday, the day after it was last seen. This bird provides the fifth documented record for Colorado, but the first for nearly 20 years. Interestingly, three of the birds have been seen in November. Three Ruffed Grouse were found on two trips in September and October to Hoy Mountain, which is west of Dinosaur National Monument and right at the Utah state line. This is the only location in Colorado where this species has been acceptably documented.

Other rare species seen during the fall included two Brant (one *hrota* and one *nigricans*), both in Fort Collins, three individual Red-throated Loons in Pueblo, Fort Collins, and at Trinidad Lake, a Yellow-billed Loon near Denver, a Neotropic Cormorant at John Martin Reservoir, a Least Bittern in Boulder, another Black Vulture at John Martin Reservoir, an amazing ten reports of Red Phalaropes from all over the state, an Ancient Murrelet in Fort Collins, two Ruby-throated Hummingbirds near Colorado Springs and Lamar, four Philadelphia Vireos at Big Johnson Reservoir, Bonny Reservoir, Fort Lyon, and Denver, two Sedge Wrens at Ramah and Kinney Lake State Wildlife Areas, a Wood Thrush at Fountain Creek Regional Park, Sprague's Pipits at Bonny Reservoir and in Sedgwick County in October, and finally three Purple Finches, two in Lamar and one in Franktown.

Thanks to everyone who sent in their sightings, and to all the people who collected the postings off COBirds and elsewhere. The reader of this report should be aware that many of the sightings used in this report were taken from postings to the COBirds listserv. Not all of the rare and unusual species have been supported by documentation sent to the Colorado Bird Records Committee. Underlined species are those for which the committee desires documentation. You should now submit your sightings through the Colorado Field Ornithologists' website at <http://www.cfo-link.org/CBRC/login.php>. This is the preferred method of submitting records. However, if you need a form, use the one on the inside of this journal's mailer. Documentation should be sent to the chairperson, Larry Semo (address on form).

All locations are annotated as to the county the **first** time each appears, except for locations that are situated within multiple counties where a sighting for that location may require information on which county the observation occurred, as well as for locations that are either not widely known or not readily found in the DeLorme gazetteer.

**Abbreviations:** CRs=County Roads; m.ob.=many observers; Res.=Reservoir; SWA=State Wildlife Area.

### Species Accounts

**Greater White-fronted Goose:** Twenty-five birds were reported from the Eastern Plains, with a high count of five at Big Johnson Res., *El Paso*, between 19 and 29 Nov (ABu, TE, m.ob.).

**Ross's Goose:** Seven reports from the Eastern Plains, plus an adult in Craig, *Moffat*, on 17 Nov (DD).

**Cackling Goose:** Very large numbers were seen very late in the fall, especially in *Larimer* and *Boulder*. There were more than 6000 at Fossil Creek Res., *Larimer*, on 20 Nov (NK).

**Brant:** A black-bellied individual was seen in Fort Collins, *Larimer*, on 16 Nov (NK, m.ob.), and a juvenile of the white-bellied race was at Fossil Creek Res. on 20 Nov (CW ph., NK).

**Trumpeter Swan:** Three were seen at Cattail Pond in Loveland, *Larimer*, on 15 Nov (NK), two were in Fort Collins on 16 Nov (CW, BD, NK), two adults visited Lake Catamount, *Routt*, between 21 and 28 Nov (TLi), and another two adults were seen with a juvenile at John Martin Res., *Bent*, on 30 Nov (DN).

**Tundra Swan:** A banner fall for this species, with 12 reports of 36 birds, mostly from the Eastern Plains. However, the high count was of six at Eleven Mile Res., *Park*, on 18 Nov (JK, AS, GW). There were also four seen in the northwest corner of Colorado: an adult at the intersection of CRs 4 and 7, *Moffat*, on 1 Nov (DD), another adult in Craig, *Moffat*, between 10 and 16 Nov (FL, DD), and two adults at Lake Catamount between 19 and 28 Nov (TLi ph.).

**Surf Scoter:** Also a banner year for this species with 27 birds reported. Individuals at unusual locations included a female type at Rainbow Lake, west of Buena Vista, *Chaffee*, 12-21 Oct (RHa ph.), one at Lake DeWeese, a first for *Custer*, on 24 Oct (RM), and one seen at Vallecito Res., *La Plata*, on 15 Nov (PD, SA).

**White-winged Scoter:** A good year for this species, with 12 birds reported. The most unusual location Lake Avery, *Rio Blanco*, where a male and female visited 19 Nov (DH, FL).

**Black Scoter:** Two female types were seen at Baseline Res., *Boulder*, 23-24



Oct (BS), one was at Big Johnson Res. on 1 Nov (MP, GW), two were at Standley Lake, *Jefferson*, also on 1 Nov (LS), and a female type was at the intersection of CRs 4 and 7, *Moffat*, on 14 Nov (DD).

**Long-tailed Duck:** A poor season for this species, with only three reports. An immature was seen at Aurora Res., *Arapahoe*, 6-11 Nov (GW, LK), a male was at Pueblo Res., *Pueblo*, on 9 Nov (RM), and one was on Jerry Creek Res., *Mesa*, 21-25 Nov (RL, LA).

**Barrow's Goldeneye:** Unusual on the far Eastern Plains was a first-year male at Red Lion SWA, *Logan*, on 20 Nov (SL) and a female at John Martin Res. on 22 Nov (DN).

**Red-throated Loon:** A juvenile was seen at Pueblo Res. 10-19 Nov (BKP), one was at Fossil Creek Res. on 16 Nov (CW), and another juvenile was at Trinidad Lake, *Las Animas*, on 18 and 19 Nov (MP, AS).

**Arctic Loon:** One was photographed at Chatfield Res., *Douglas/Jefferson*, on 28 Sep (AS, GW), but could not be found later in the day. There is only one previous record of this species for Colorado.

**Yellow-billed Loon:** A juvenile was seen at Standley Lake on 4 and 5 Nov (LS, m.ob.), and almost certainly the same bird was at Chatfield Res. 6-20 Nov (AB, TB, m.ob.).

**Red-necked Grebe:** There were five reports this fall, which is above average. An adult was at Boulder Res., *Boulder*, 30 Oct to 13 Nov (SSe, PG, m.ob.), one was reported from Union Res., *Weld*, on 2 Nov (DSm), a juvenile was seen at Standley Lake on 5 and 6 Nov (JK, SSt, GW), an adult was at Cherry Creek Res., *Arapahoe*, 10-13 Nov (GW, m.ob.), and another was seen at Marston Res., *Denver*, on 17 Nov (AS).

**Neotropic Cormorant:** An adult in basic plumage was seen at John Martin Res. on 30 Oct and 1 Nov (AS, DN, MP, GW).

**Least Bittern:** The bird that had been heard and seen early in the summer at Cottonwood Marsh, *Boulder*, was seen again on 23 Aug (PH), and so probably summered there.

**Little Blue Heron:** A juvenile was photographed at Pueblo Res. on the late date of 9 Oct (BKP).

**Green Heron:** Up to six were seen at Cottonwood Marsh on 27 Aug (PH, TFl); breeding probably occurred at this location.

**Yellow-crowned Night-Heron:** A juvenile was seen on the Canyon City Riverwalk, *Fremont*, 17 Aug through 18 Sep (SMo, RM), and another juvenile was at Carp Lake, *El Paso*, 24-27 Aug (JJ, GW).

**Black Vulture:** An immature bird was seen at John Martin Res. on 22 and 23 Aug (DN), accounting for the third Colorado record from this location, all in the past three years.

**Red-shouldered Hawk:** An adult was seen at Bonny Res., *Yuma*, on 4 Sep (LS).

**Black-bellied Plover:** A very high count was of 50 seen at Prewitt Res. on 2 Oct (CW).

**American Golden-Plover:** Seven reports of eight birds, all from the Eastern Plains.

**Piping Plover:** A color-banded bird was seen at Prewitt Res. on 17 Sep (JR).

**Red Knot:** One was photographed at Lake Meredith, *Crowley*, on 17 Sep (AS), a juvenile was at Prewitt Res. also on 17 Sep (BS), and one was seen at Neenoshe Res., *Kiowa*, on 25 Sep (JK, MP, GW).

**Curlew Sandpiper:** A juvenile was photographed at Prewitt Res. 18 Sep (JK, m.ob.) and stayed around until 22 Sep for many birders to enjoy seeing, while tramping in thick, deep mud. This occurrence is only the second of this species in Colorado; the first was in summer of 1998.

**Buff-breasted Sandpiper:** One was seen at Lake Meredith on 31 Aug (BR), and several birds put on a show at Prewitt Res. between 3 and 15 Sep, with a maximum of six seen (JK, BS, m.ob.).

**Red Phalarope:** There were 10 reports this fall from Colorado, which is unprecedented as there are usually only one or two reports per year. One was seen at Barr Lake, *Adams*, on 27 Aug (TLe, NG, BS, JS), a juvenile was at Prewitt Res. 2-5 Sept (BM, m.ob.), an adult was photographed at Lake Meredith on 3 Sep (LS), another juvenile was photographed at Lake Estes, *Larimer*, on 9 Sep (JW). Forrest Luke found and photographed the third West Slope record of this species at Elkhead Res., *Moffat/Routt*, on 9 and 10 Sep, an adult was at Luna Res., *Weld*, on 13 Sep (TLe), and a juvenile was seen at Big Johnson Res.

on 28 Sep (KL, BM). An adult was at Chatfield Res. on 9 Oct (JK, SSt), a juvenile was at Boulder Res. 12-14 Oct (BS), and, finally, another juvenile was at Fruitgrowers Res., *Delta*, on 14 Oct (NP), providing a first record for that county.

**Pomarine Jaeger**: A juvenile was seen at Cherry Creek Res. from 14 Sep to 19 Nov (GW, m.ob.), and was joined by a second immature bird from 25 Sep on (DSc, PG, m.ob). These birds were probably the longest-staying jaegers in Colorado ever and were easily seen by many birders.

**Parasitic Jaeger**: An adult was seen at Prewitt Res. on 24 Sep (BS).

**Long-tailed Jaeger**: A dark juvenile was seen at Prewitt Res. 5-21 Sep (JR, m.ob.), another juvenile was at Lake Beckwith, *Pueblo*, on 13 Sep (DSi), and a light juvenile was also seen at Prewitt Res. 19-21 Sep (MP, m.ob.).

**Laughing Gull**: There was an amazing seven reports of this species this fall. First-cycle birds were seen at Fossil Creek Res. on 22 Aug (CW, SMi), at Chatfield Res. on 9 Oct (JK, GW), at Bonny Res. on 15 Oct (TLe), and at Jumbo Res., *Logan/Sedgwick*, on 29 Oct (ABo, CWi). Second-cycle birds were seen at Lake Meredith on 13 and 14 Aug (LS, TLe), at Prewitt Res. 5-9 Sep (TLe, m.ob.), and also at Jumbo Res. on 7 Oct (SL).

**Little Gull**: First-cycle birds were seen at Pueblo Res. on 13 Sep (BKP), and at Standley Lake on 4 Oct (LS).

**Mew Gull**: Also a very good fall for this species with six reports. Adults were in Fort Collins on 11 Nov (NK), at Pueblo Res. on 13 Nov (BKP), and at Terry Lake, *Boulder*, on 14 Nov (BK). A second-cycle bird was at Brush Hollow Res., *Fremont*, on 16 Nov (SMo), one was seen at Big Johnson Res. on 17 Nov (MP), and finally 'Old Gimpy' was seen at Union Res. from 22 to 27 Nov (JP, BP). This is the seventh year that this lame bird has been seen here or at nearby Jim Hamm Pond.

**Lesser Black-backed Gull**: There were 17 reports this fall, all from the Eastern Plains. Thank goodness the species was taken off the Colorado Bird Records Committee review list!

**Great Black-backed Gull**: A first-cycle bird was at Cherry Creek Res. on 5 and 6 Aug (DB, GW), and the adult returning yet again to Pueblo Res. was first seen this fall on 23 Nov (BS, RM).

**Sabine's Gull:** About 50 birds were reported this fall, which is above average. Reports from the mountains were of two juveniles at Lake DeWeese on 22 Sep (RM) and another juvenile at Elevenmile Res. on 31 Oct (AS, TLe).

**Caspian Tern:** There were reports of 13 birds seen this fall, with two reports from the West Slope: one at Highline Res., *Mesa*, from 9 Aug to 3 Sep (LA, m.ob.) and one at Fruitgrowers Res. on 16 and 17 Aug (BS, CLW).

**Ancient Murrelet:** One was picked up alive on a street in Fort Collins on 13 Nov (SSi), but subsequently died while it was being rehabilitated.

**Inca Dove:** They bred again in Lamar, *Prowers*, near the house of Janeal Thompson, where they were seen regularly (DAL). Elsewhere, one was seen near Flagler Res., *Kit Carson*, on 6 Sep (LE, MP), and one visited Fort Collins 7-9 Oct (TFR, NK).

**Eastern Screech-Owl:** One seen at Neenoshe Res. on 8 Oct (BKP, LE, CW) provided a first record for the county.

**Black Swift:** What must have been an impressive sight was a flock of 400 seen at Confluence Park, *Delta*, on 9 Oct (AR).

**White-eared Hummingbird:** The female seen during the summer at the home of Susan Allerton northeast of Durango, *La Plata*, stayed until 7 Aug, and the second female at the Durango Mountain Ski Resort, *La Plata*, stayed until 21 Aug. These account for the first two records of this species in Colorado.

**Ruby-throated Hummingbird:** One was seen at the home of Mark Peterson in Colorado Springs, *El Paso*, on 2 Aug, and an immature male was photographed at the Stulp farm south of Lamar 3-10 Oct (J&JS).

**Yellow-bellied Sapsucker:** One was seen on the Canyon City Riverwalk, *Fremont*, on 29 Oct (RM), and an adult male was at the Grandview Cemetery in Fort Collins on 22 Nov (DAL).

**Eastern Wood-Pewee:** The bird seen on the Shanahan Ridge Trail in south Boulder during the summer was last reported on 2 Aug (PG) and another was seen and heard at Barr Lake 2-4 Sep (RS).

**Yellow-bellied Flycatcher:** One was photographed at Box Springs, *Crowley*, on 13 Aug (TLe, LS) and another was captured and banded at Barr Lake on 12 Sep (TLe). This species is currently not on the Colorado state list, although

there is an accepted single-observer sight record from Pueblo.

**Alder Flycatcher:** Quite amazingly, Alder Flycatchers were seen in the same places as the two Yellow-bellied Flycatchers described above. One was photographed at Box Springs on 13 Aug (LS, TLe), and a juvenile was banded at Barr Lake on 12 Sep (TLe).

**Black Phoebe:** One was seen on the Canyon City Riverwalk from 17 Aug to 24 Sep (SMo, RM, m.ob.), and one was at Valco Ponds in Pueblo 4-24 Sep (BKP, m.ob.).

**Eastern Phoebe:** Birds farther west than usual were one seen at Valco Ponds in Pueblo on 7 Sep and 9 Oct (BKP), one photographed at Crow Valley Campground, *Weld*, on 13 Sep (DAL), and two seen in Colorado City, *Pueblo*, 18-25 Sep (DSi).

**Vermilion Flycatcher:** An adult female was seen at Cherry Creek Res. on 16 Sep (MP), and a first-year male was at the Canyon City Riverwalk on 6 and 7 Oct (RM).

**Great Crested Flycatcher:** Well west of its normal range was one at Brandon Percival's house in Pueblo West on 7 Sep.

**White-eyed Vireo:** One was seen at the Clear Springs Ranch banding station, *El Paso*, on 22 Oct (DEl, m.ob.).

**Bell's Vireo:** A report well west of the species' usual range also originated from the Clear Springs Ranch banding station on 27 Aug (KL, DEl, SC, DB).

**Cassin's Vireo:** There were 14 reports of 19 birds this season from across the state.

**Blue-headed Vireo:** The four reported included one in Pueblo West on 12 Sep (BKP), one seen in Castle Rock, *Douglas*, on 24 Sep (GW ph.), one in Colorado City on 5 Oct (DSi), and one on the east side of Tamarack Ranch, *Logan*, on 16 Oct (HA).

**Philadelphia Vireo:** There were also four reports of this species: one at Big Johnson Res. on 3 Sep (MP), one photographed at Bonny Res. on 4 Sep (LS), another at Fort Lyon, *Bent*, on 8 Sep (DN), and a late bird at Welchester Tree Park, *Jefferson*, on 6 Oct (PP).

**Purple Martin:** A group of six hung out in Nucla, *Montrose*, from 1 to 23 Aug (CD, BW).

**Carolina Wren:** Six reports of nine birds was many more than usual. Two were around Janeal Thompson's house in Lamar between 12 Aug and 23 Nov (DAL, m.ob.), one was seen at Norm Lewis' house in Lakewood, *Jefferson*, on 16 Aug, and one was south of Burlington, *Kit Carson*, on 5 Sep (BK). One was seen at Tamarack Ranch on 8 Oct (SL), which may well have been there since May, two were in the Willow Creek area of Lamar on 16 Oct (DAL), and one was seen at Two Buttes, *Baca*, on 30 Oct (AS, GW, JK).

**Sedge Wren:** One was seen at Ramah SWA, *El Paso*, on 8 Oct (KL, BM). Unfortunately, it was also seen by a Sharp-shinned Hawk which caught it. Another was seen at Kinney Lake SWA, *Lincoln*, on 16 Oct (MP).

**Veery:** Rarely reported in fall migration on the Eastern Plains, an immature was banded at Barr Lake 31 Aug (SN).

**Wood Thrush:** One was seen at Fountain Creek Regional Park, El Paso, on 22 Oct (TF).

**Varied Thrush:** A male was seen at the Lamar Community College on 27 Oct (DR), another male was photographed in the Big Thompson Canyon, *Larimer*, on 6 Nov (LL), and one was in Lafayette, *Boulder*, 6-18 Nov (JTi).

**Sprague's Pipit:** Single birds were found near Bonny Res. on 2 Oct (JR, I&TS, CL, JK, GW) and 16 Oct (MP, TLe) and one was seen along CR 15 and along CR 59 in *Sedgwick* on 8 Oct (SL).

**Golden-winged Warbler:** A female was banded at Barr Lake on 14 Oct (SN, GB ph.).

**Northern Parula:** A very late bird was seen in Paonia, *Delta*, on 26 Nov (GH), and may well be the first recorded in the county.

**Cape May Warbler:** An adult was at Rock Canyon in Pueblo on 16 Sep (BKP).

**Black-throated Blue Warbler:** A poor season for the species in the state, a male was seen in Craig on 18 Sep (FL), another male was seen in Grand Junction, *Mesa*, on 8 Oct (RWo), and a female was briefly seen in Fort Collins on 30 Nov (CW).

**Black-throated Green Warbler:** A female was photographed at the Riverside Cemetery in Lamar on 17 Oct (DAL).

**Blackburnian Warbler:** A first-year male was seen at Cherry Creek Res. on 3 Sep (GW, TLe), a first-year female was at Jumbo Res. on 12 Sep (HA), a female graced Fort Collins on 14 Sep (RSp), and one of unreported sex was at Tamarack Ranch on 20 Sep (U&HK).

**Pine Warbler:** There was an unprecedented total of eight birds reported this fall. The first was a juvenile at Bonny Res. on 6 Aug (TLe, LS, CC), an immature male was at Prewitt Res. from 21 to 26 Aug (JK), and two were seen together just east of Flagler, *Kit Carson*, on 6 Sep (LE, MP). An immature was seen at Cherry Creek Res. on 15 Sep (JR, AS, GW), one was at Runyon Lake, *Pueblo*, also on 15 Sep (MY), one was in Burlington, *Kit Carson*, on 16 Oct (MP), and, finally, one was seen at the Denver West Office Park, *Jefferson*, on 25 Nov (MC, DO), which is exactly where a male spent most of the previous winter.

**Prairie Warbler:** A first-year male was seen at Fort Lyon on 29 Nov (DN).

**Palm Warbler:** Western race individuals were seen at Jumbo Res. on 10 Sep (RSi), and in the mountains at Lake DeWeese on 15 Oct (BKP, VAT) and an immature was banded at Barr Lake 16 Sep (SN).

**Bay-breasted Warbler:** One was seen at Valco Ponds in Pueblo on 7 Oct (BKP).

**Prothonotary Warbler:** A female was seen along the Poudre River in Fort Collins 8-11 Sep (DAL, JM), a male was near El Jebel, *Eagle*, on 11 Oct (JBi), and one was at the Florence River Park, *Fremont*, on 15 Oct (BKP, VAT).

**Painted Redstart:** The warbler of the season was seen in the yard of Fred Fisher near New Castle, *Garfield*, between 16 and 18 Nov.

**Scarlet Tanager:** One was seen at the Canyon City Riverwalk on 7 Sep (RM) and another visited Chico Basin Ranch, *El Paso/Pueblo*, on 17 Sep (MP).

**Field Sparrow:** One was seen at Janeal Thompson's house in Lamar on 13 Nov (DAL).

**Sage Sparrow:** Unusual on the Front Range in fall was one seen in Boulder on 6 Oct (MB, ABe).



**Fox Sparrow:** A bird of the red eastern race was banded at Barr Lake on 27 Oct (SN, AM ph.), and another was seen at Neenoshe Res. on 30 Oct (MP, BKP, JK, GW, AS).

**Swamp Sparrow:** Only 16 birds were reported this fall, which is low, and the only West Slope report was of one seen at Corn Lake, *Mesa*, on 28 Nov (LA).

**White-throated Sparrow:** There were reports of 26 birds this fall, with the only West Slope report being of one seen at Navajo Res., *Archeluta*, on 9 and 10 Nov (JBe, AS).

**Golden-crowned Sparrow:** One was seen near Fruitgrowers Res. on 2 Oct (DG, JBn), returning to the location for a third year, and one was at CRs 12 and 51, *Sedgwick*, on 8 Oct (SL).

**Smith's Longspur:** One was reported from CRs 12 and 57, *Sedgwick*, on 8 Oct (SL). This species is not yet on the Colorado state list, although previous reports are under review.

**Northern Cardinal:** Well west of the species' usual range was a male at Louviers, *Douglas*, from 21 Jul to 2 Aug (TH) and a female at Rockvale, *Fremont*, 7-9 Aug (fide RWa).

**Rusty Blackbird:** There were only two reports this fall, with a male photographed in Fort Collins on 16 Nov (DAL) and one seen at Tamarack Ranch on 30 Nov (SL).

**Baltimore Oriole:** Well west of the species' usual range was a male northwest of Windsor, *Weld*, on 18 Aug (MM).

**Purple Finch:** A female/immature male type was seen at Janeal Thompson's house in Lamar 5-13 Nov (DAL) and another visited Franktown, *Douglas*, on 27 and 28 Nov (U&HK).

### Contributing Observers

Susan Allerton, Henry Armknecht, Larry Arnold, Debbie Barnes, Jason Beason (JBn), Jim Beatty (JBe), Alan Bell (ABe), Don Beltz, James Biebl (JBi), Maggie Boswell, Andy Boyce (ABo), Glenda Brown, Allan Burns (ABu), Theresa Burns, Cameron Cox, Mark Chavez, Susan Craig, Peter Derven, Coen Dexter, Beth Dillon, Dean DiTommaso, Lisa Edwards, Dave Elwonger (DEL), Donna Emmons (DEm), Theresa Estebo, Doug Faulkner, Fred Fisher, Ted Floyd (TFl), Tom France (TFr), Dave Galinat, Peter Gent, Nancy Gobris,

Thomas Halverstadt, Randy Hancock (RHa), Greg Hanscom, Paula Hansley, Dona Hilkey, Rachel Hopper (RHo), Jeff Jones, Bill Kaempfer, Joey Kellner, Loch Kilpatrick, Urling and Hugh Kingery (U&HK), Nick Komar, Leslie Larson, Steve Larson, Charlie Lawrence, David A. Leatherman (DAL), Tony Leukering (TLe), Rich Levad, Kara Lewantowicz, Tom Litteral (TLi), Forrest Luke, Marcia Maeda, Joe Mammoser, Bill Maynard, Rich Miller, Sol Miller (SMi), Amanda Morrison, SeEtta Moss (SMo), Duane Nelson, Starr Nicely, Daren O'Brien, Stan Oswald, Brandon K. Percival (BKP), Mark Peterson, Nathan Pieplow, Pete Plage, Bill Prather, John Prather, Bob Richter, Andrea Robinsong, Joe Roller, Dottie Russell, Ira and Tammie Sanders (I&TS), Bill Schmoker, Jim Schmoker, Dick Schottler (DSc), Larry Semo, Scott Severs (SSe), Randy Siebert (RSi), Steve Silva (SSi), David Silverman (DSi), Dixie Smith (DSm), Rob Sparks (RSp), Andrew Spencer, Steve Stachowiak (SSt), Jane and John Stulp (J&JS), Janeal Thompson (JTh), Joan Timchak (JTi), Van A. Truan (VAT), Glenn Walbek, Rosie Watts (RWa), Cole Wild, Christopher L. Wood (CLW), Ronda Woodward (RWo), Brenda Wright, Judy Wright, Mark Yaeger.



