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idaho-western montana



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The Region experienced mild fall weather for the third consecutive year. It was unusually warm and dry most of the season, with record high temperatures in November. The extended open water season allowed waterfowl and shorebirds to linger to record late dates. Few concentrations of migrating passerines were mentioned, directly attributed to a lack of fall storms. Even so, birders found good numbers of Eastern warblers and rare gulls, making the season enjoyable and memorable.

Abbreviations: A.F.R. (*American Falls Res., by American Falls, Idaho*); B.R. (*Bridger Ridge Hawk Watch, Gallatin Co., MT*); C.J.S.R. (*C.J. Strike Res., Owyhee Co., ID*); C.N.W.R. (*Camas N.W.R., Jefferson Co., ID*); D.F.N.W.R. (*Deer Flat N.W.R., Canyon Co., ID*); I.B.O. (*Idaho Bird Observatory at Lucky Peak, near Boise, Idaho*); L.M.N.W.R. (*Lee Metcalf N.W.R., Ravalli Co., MT*); M.L.W.M.A. (*Market Lake Wildlife Management Area, Jefferson Co., ID*).

LOONS THROUGH CRANES

A rare Red-throated Loon visited C.J.S.R. 13 Nov (JG). Record numbers of Pacific Loons were reported in Idaho, with high counts of *eight* at Cascade Res., *Valley*, 4 Oct (MC, FK), *seven* at A.F.R. 31 Oct (CT), and *12* at

C.J.S.R. 13 Nov (JG). Two Montana Pacifics in *Lake* 17 Oct (DC) were noteworthy. Com. Loons also staged impressively in Idaho, with over *100* at Cascade Res. 4 Oct (MC, FK) and *35–60+* at Coeur d'Alene L., *Kootenai*, 9 Oct–13 Nov (m.ob.). Rare in sw. Idaho, two Red-necked Grebes stopped near Boise 20–25 Oct (MC, FK). Am. White Pelicans lingered in Idaho, with two in *Blaine*, 21 Nov (DR) and three in *Lemhi* in late Nov (HR). As usual, there were several reports of wandering egrets in Idaho, but the Great Egret at Ninepipes N.W.R., *Lake*, MT, 17 Aug and 12 Sep (JB, DHo) was newsworthy. Cattle Egrets also strayed to Idaho: four were in Twin Falls 3 Aug (KF), one–four were near Boise 18–20 Aug (MC, FK), and three to 16 were in Owyhee 5–6 Nov (JD, DH). Both unusual and early were two Gr. White-fronted Geese and a Snow Goose in *Broadwater*, MT, 5 Sep (C&RF). Another White-fronted strayed to L.M.N.W.R. 26–30 Sep (WT). A Cinnamon Teal at L.M.N.W.R. 20 Nov (WT) was late. For Idaho, three Eur. Wigeon sightings were about average for fall, but a total of five Long-tailed Ducks was unusually high. Idaho's *fifth Black Scoter* was near A.F.R. dam 5–11 Nov (m.ob.), the *fifth* consecutive year this species has occurred there. Good numbers of Surf and White-winged Scoters were reported this season. High counts included three Surf Scoters at Minidoka N.W.R., *Blaine*, ID, 10 Nov (SB) and an unprecedented *eight* White-winged Scoters at A.F.R. 6 Nov (MCR). Mergansers staged in impressive numbers. Estimates were *200* Hooded Mergansers at Harrison WMA, *Kootenai*, ID, 27 Nov (LA), *400* Com. Mergansers at Black L., *Kootenai*, ID, 25 Nov (LH), *500* Com. Mergansers at Helena Valley Res., *Lewis and Clark*, MT, 25–27 Nov (DS), and *500* Red-breasted Mergansers at A.F.R. 27 Oct (MCR).

Idaho's fourth **Red-shouldered Hawk** was captured at I.B.O. 11 Sep (GK). A total of 17 Broad-winged Hawks were observed over I.B.O. 14 Sep–4 Oct (GK) and 13 were tallied at B.R. (GL, MN). A near-record count of 1,860 Golden Eagles and record counts of 77 Rough-legged Hawks, 18 Peregrine Falcons, and 20 Prairie Falcons



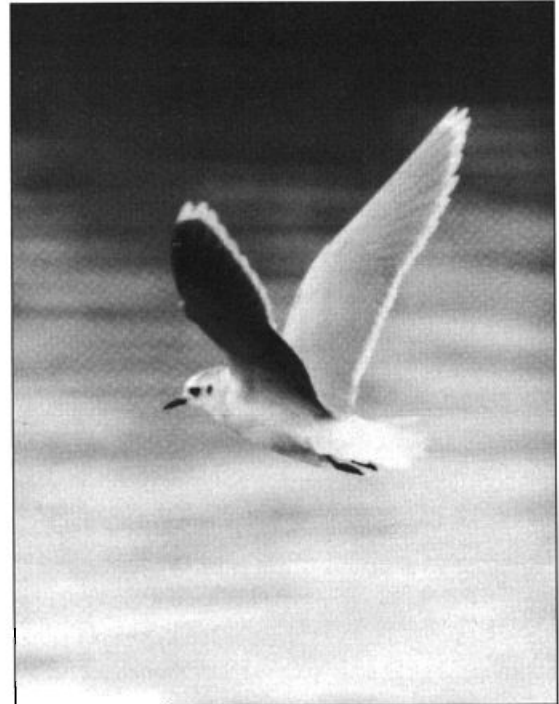
were made at B.R. (GL, MN). Both states reported Gyrfalcons: one flew over B.R. 3 Oct (GL, MN), a white-morph was in the Helena Valley, MT, 6 Nov (CC, GH, GT), and one was near Gannett, *Blaine*, ID, 27 Nov (SSw, DY). Mild weather allowed a phenomenal 20,000 Am. Coots to stage on Ennis L., *Madison*, MT between mid-Oct and mid-Nov (JP). A late Sandhill Crane flew over *Gallatin*, MT, 27 Oct (EA).

SHOREBIRDS THROUGH VIREOS

Shorebirds lingered in both states. Late were 18 Am. Avocets at Harrison Res., *Madison*, MT, 5 Nov (MD, JP), a Snowy Plover at Dry L., *Canyon*, ID, 6 Nov (DL), a Gr. Yellowlegs at Mann L., ID, 30 Nov (BJ), five Least Sandpipers at Dry L. 28 Nov (JG), a Pectoral Sandpiper at Dry L. 17 Nov (JG), two Pectorals at L.M.N.W.R. 21 Nov (WT), five Dunlins at Dry L. 27 Nov (JG), a Long-billed Dowitcher at L.M.N.W.R. 20 Nov (WT), and three Long-billed Dowitchers at Dry L. 26 Nov (JG). Idaho birders reported five Am. Golden-Plovers and five Stilt Sandpipers, the lowest numbers in years. Wayward Idaho shorebirds included a Ruddy Turnstone at Mann L. 1 Sep (KC, †SSt) and a Red Knot w. of A.F.R. 12 Sep (MCR). Usually rare and not annual, Short-

billed Dowitchers were relatively numerous, with seven reported. A **Red Phalarope** at A.F.R. 31 Oct (MCR, †CT) was Idaho's eighth; one at L.M.N.W.R. 21–26 Oct was a first for Latilong 25 (WT, m.ob.).

There were more reports of jaegers in s. Idaho than usual. Idaho's sixth **Pomarine Jaeger** was at A.F.R. 26 Sep–17 Oct (MCR, RLR). A Parasitic Jaeger stopped at C.J.S.R. 6 Sep (RLR, DT), and one–three persisted at A.F.R. 11 Sep–12 Nov (m.ob.). Rare gulls made news in both states. Exciting state firsts were Montana's ad. **Little Gull** in Polson, *Lake* 7–14 Nov (†DC, CP, TT, m.ob.) and Idaho's ad. **Lesser Black-backed Gull** near D.F.N.W.R. 11–30 Nov (ph. JG, †CT, m.ob.). The Franklin's Gull in Boise 19 Nov (DT) was both out-of-place and late. Formerly rare, Mew Gulls are now almost expected. One was at A.F.R. 27 Oct–6 Nov (MCR, m.ob.), one–two were in Polson 8–30 Nov (m.ob.),



Although increasingly encountered throughout North America, this adult Little Gull at Polson, Montana, 7–14 Nov 1999 provided a state first. This image was taken 12 Nov 1999. Photograph/Tom Bauer



Like the Little Gull, the Lesser Black-backed Gull is being found in larger numbers and spreading westward. Nonetheless, this adult at a landfill near Deer Flat National Wildlife Refuge, Idaho, 11–30 Nov 1999 (where this photo was taken 30 Nov) provided a state and Regional first. Photograph/John F. Gatchet

and one was in Boise 19 Nov (DT). Now annual, single Glaucous-winged Gulls appeared at A.F.R. 6–7 Nov (MCR, m.ob.) and Minidoka N.W.R. 11 Nov (MCR, DT). Only Montana hosted Sabine's Gulls in *Lincoln* 26 Aug (EC) and *Beaverhead* 1 Oct (DC). A very late **Arctic Tern** that landed in Missoula, MT, 15 Nov (JM) provided Montana's fifth record.

Always rare, a Band-tailed Pigeon at M.L.W.M.A. 29 Sep (MCR) was a good find. In a continuing trend, two Barn Owls near Stevensville, MT, 19 Oct–30 Nov (TM, m.ob.) and one in Salmon, ID, in November (HR) were in unusual locales. Owl captures at I.B.O. set records with 51 Flammulateds, one N. Pygmy, two Boreals, and 848 N. Saw-whets 5 Aug–26 Oct (SH). Another Flammulated Owl at D.F.N.W.R. 5 Oct was a refuge first (JA, JG, m.ob.). A Barred Owl captured in Moscow, ID, 16 Oct (KD) and one in Boise

5–30 Nov (MC, FK, m.ob.) were unusual. Another *Strix* owl wandered: a Great Gray Owl was near Missoula Oct–Nov (m.ob.). Anna's Hummingbirds increasingly stray to both states. Reports included females in Boise 9 Aug (MC, FK), *Ravalli*, MT, 12 Oct (WT), and Lewiston, ID, 13–23 Oct (BJ) and a male in *Ravalli* 28 Oct–9 Nov (MD, WT).

A **Red-headed Woodpecker** in *Lemhi* 5 Sep (LK) was Idaho's ninth. A probable hybrid Red-breasted ~ Red-naped Sapsucker at D.F.N.W.R. 5 Oct (JA, †ph. JG) was unprecedented in Idaho. Least Flycatchers are still rare, though increasingly reported in n. Idaho. One was reported in *Boundary* 11 Aug (EC) and two were in *Kootenai* 19 Sep (*vide* SS). Three Gray Flycatchers banded at I.B.O. 18 Aug–1 Sep (JC) were local firsts. There is still much uncertainty in the field identification and ranges of the "Western-type" Flycatchers, but four captured at I.B.O. 25 Aug–17 Sep were identified as Idaho's first **Pacific-slope Flycatchers** using careful in-hand measurements [how sexed?—ed.] (JC). Single Ash-throated Flycatchers wandered to D.F.N.W.R. 28 Aug (JG) and C.N.W.R. 18 Sep (MCR, GR). A Cassin's Vireo near Boise 3 Nov was late (MC, FK).

JAYS THROUGH GOLDFINCHES

Only 16 Idaho Blue Jays were reported during the period, the lowest tally in years. A surprising 28,000 Bank Swallows staged at D.F.N.W.R. 21 Aug (JG, DL). Late single Barn Swallows were spotted below A.F.R. dam 14 Nov (MCR) and in *Canyon*, ID, 20 Nov (JG). A Bewick's Wren was near Boise 13–19 Sep (MC, FK); another at D.F.N.W.R. 3 Oct (JG, DL) was a refuge first. Two rare E. Bluebirds, plus fledglings, were reported in *Jefferson*, MT, in late Sep (GW). Always rare, single N. Mockingbirds were in Hamilton, MT, 22 Aug (DB), near Florence, MT, 26 Aug (WT), and in *Boundary*, ID, 18 Oct (RD).

There was a veritable invasion of rare Eastern warblers in s. Idaho. Single Tennessee Warblers stopped near Boise 12 Sep and 7 Oct (MC, FK), Pocatello 27 Sep–6 Oct (MCR, CT), *Twin Falls* 2 Oct (KF), and D.F.N.W.R. 6 Oct (JA, DT). A Chestnut-sided Warbler was at M.L.W.M.A. 19 Sep (GR). Magnolia Warblers were at D.F.N.W.R. 3 Oct (BC) and at M.L.W.M.A. 4–6 Oct (GR, m.ob.). Idaho's eighth and ninth **Black-throated Blue Warblers** were at A.F.R. 19 Sep (MCR, CT) and near Boise 1 Oct (JA, DT). A Palm Warbler was in Pocatello 27 Sep (MCR). **Blackpoll Warblers** at M.L.W.M.A. 16–19 Sep and 2 Oct (GR) and I.B.O. 23 Sep (JC) provided Idaho's sixth, seventh, and eighth records. A Black-and-White Warbler stopped in Pocatello 2–4 Oct (MCR, CT). The N. Waterthrush captured at I.B.O. 10 Aug (JC) and one in Boise 19 Sep (DT) were rare, but six netted at C.N.W.R. 14 Aug–4 Sep (CT) were less unusual. A few warblers were very late, such as the Yellow-rumped in Missoula, MT, 27–30 Nov (TT) and the Townsend's near Boise 3 Nov (MC, FK). A fem. **Summer Tanager** at D.F.N.W.R. 2 Sep (†JG, DL) furnished Idaho's third record.

Also late were two Chipping Sparrows near Boise 13–17 Oct and a Vesper Sparrow there 2 Nov (MC, FK). Reports of rare and local sparrows included two Brewer's in *Latah*, ID, 8 Aug (KD), a Swamp in Missoula 13 Sep (RN), and six pairs of nesting Lark Buntings in *Jefferson*, ID, 2 Aug (CT). Fewer rare *Zonotrichia* sparrows were reported this season. Only 11 White-throateds were tallied in Idaho and Idaho's Golden-crowneds were down by half from last year. Single Golden-crowneds were reported at I.B.O. 23 Sep (JC), in *Gem* 5–10 Oct (FZ), at D.F.N.W.R. 6 Oct (JG, DT), near Moscow 6 Oct (KD), and near Boise 7–17 Oct (MC, FK). Only one Harris's Sparrow was sighted in Idaho and three were reported in Montana.

Rare in both states, a Rusty Blackbird at C.N.W.R. 28 Nov (MCR) was Idaho's 11th. A record count of 41 sw. Idaho Great-tailed Grackles 28 Aug provided evidence of increasing numbers (JG). Others reported were one–three near A.F.R. throughout the period (MCR, CT) and one at M.L.W.M.A. 10 Oct (GR). Approximately 50 Com. Grackles staged in *Lemhi* 14 Sep (HR), probably the highest Idaho count ever. Both White-winged Crossbills and Com. Redpolls irrupted and were widely reported at locations as far s. as central and se. Idaho. A rare Hoary Redpoll accompanied Com. Redpolls in *Gallatin*, MT, 23 Nov (EA). Two Lesser Goldfinches attending fledglings in *Boise* 20 Aug confirmed breeding in Latilong 18 (MC, FK), a first for sw. Idaho.

ADDENDUM

A belated report featured a **Clay-colored Sparrow**, Idaho's ninth, in *Boundary* 15 Jun 1999 (RD).

Observers cited (subregional editors in boldface): IDAHO: Jack Alban, Laurinda Anglin, Steve Bouffard, Jay Carlisle, Keith Carlson, Earl Chapin, Marty Collar (MCR), Mark Collie (MC), Brian Cooper, Rich Del Carlo, John Doremus, **Kas Dumroese**, Kent Fothergill, **John Gatchet**, Sarah Hamilton, Lisa Hardy, Dave Hazelton, Bryan Jamison, Greg Kaltenecker, Lee Kellogg, Florence Knoll, Marlene Koliner, Dave Lawrence, Steve Lindsay, Duane Reynolds, Greg Rice, Hadley Roberts, R.L. Rowland, Susan Steele (SSt), Shirley Sturts (SS), Stephanie Swift (SSw), David Trochlell, Chuck Trost, **Poo Wright-Pulliam**, Doug Young, Fred Zeillemaker. MONTANA: Eric Atkinson, Diedre Boggs, Jim Brown, Chris Carson, **Dan Casey**, Marty Dubois, Cheryl and Ron Farmer, Denver Holt (DHo), George Holton, Greg Lenandoski, **Jeff Marks**, Tracy Montague, Mike Neal, Robert Norton, **John Parker**, Caleb Putnam, **Don Skaar**, George Thompson, Terry Toppins, Wayne Tree, Gary Wunderwald.



mountain west

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This fall was unusually warm and dry in most areas of the Region. Most areas of the Rockies had little or no snow. *La Niña* appears to cause dry and warm falls throughout the Region. Many birds that normally leave by late September remained well into the fall; northern species also arrived late.

Abbreviations: C.C. (*community college*); C.V.C.G. (*Crow Valley Campground, Weld County, CO*); E.K.W. (*Echness Kimbal Wilkens S.P., WY*); F.C.R.P. (*Fountain Creek Regional Park, El Paso County, CO*); H.B.V.P. (*Henderson Bird Viewing Preserve, Clark County, NV*); S.T.P. (*sewage treatment plant*); S.W.A. (*State Wildlife Area*); W.R.G.B. (*Wheat Ridge Greenbelt, Jefferson County, CO*).

LOONS THROUGH WATERFOWL

The summering Red-throated Loon at Wolford Mt. Rec. Area, *Grand*, CO, stayed to 12 Sep (v.o.) and one was at Jumbo Res., *Logan*, CO, 27 Nov (PS). There were reports of 25 Pacific Loons from nine counties in e.



Colorado, and a rare west slope individual at Highline Res., *Mesa*, CO, 1 Nov (DWr). In Nevada, three were at Walker L., *Mineral*, 23 Nov (PL, JLD), with one at L. Mead, *Clark*, 25 Nov (PL); also, birds were at L. DeSmet, *Buffalo*, WY, 2 Nov (DF) and one at Willard Bay, UT 23 Nov (MS). Approximately 300 Com. Loon were at Walker L. 23 Nov (PL, JLD). Red-necked Grebes were reported at Pyramid L., *Washoe*, NV, 30 Sep (TF et al.), Jumbo Res. 10 Oct (RK, BKP), Boulder Res., *Boulder*, CO, 30–31 Oct (SF, SSe, TL, m.ob.) and 7 Nov (DW), and at Pueblo Res., *Pueblo*, CO, 7–28 Nov (MJ, m.ob.). An early Horned Grebe was at Pyramid L. 6 Sep (GC, MM, TF), with a high count of eight there 30 Sep (TF et al.). Four flightless young W. Grebes, with adults, were at Pyramid L. 6 Sep (GC, MM, TF) and a high count of 4,943 was there 30