

Idaho/ Western Montana Region

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Fall 1994 was mild but not quiet. High temperatures and low precipitation sparked the Region's most explosive fire season in decades. An estimated 850,000 acres burned, creating favored habitat for Lewis', Hairy, Three-toed, and Black-backed woodpeckers. It is hoped that the fires will stimulate these species' lagging regional populations.

Abbreviations: A.F.R. (*American Falls Reservoir, by American Falls, Idaho*), D.F.R. (*Deer Flat National Wildlife Refuge, Canyon, ID*).

Loons to Rails

Rare Red-throated Loons were at Payette L., *Valley*, ID Oct. 29 (DTr) and A.F.R., Nov. 6–7 (CT, BH, m.ob.). One–three Pacific Loons were at A.F.R., Oct. 31–Nov. 7 (CT, BH), while two were at nearby Massacre Rocks S.P. (CT). Incredibly, ≤ 30 Pacifics dotted Cascade Res., *Valley*, ID Oct. 24–30 (DTr, MC, FK) with an additional 15 on nearby Payette L., Oct. 29 (DTr), doubling the number of Idaho sightings. A Com. Loon at Salmon Nov. 10 (HR), provided e.c. Idaho's first fall record since 1890.

Pied-billed Grebes are rare migrants in e.c. Idaho where very limited habitat is available. The bird by N. Fork Nov. 14 (HR) was by 3 months the latest ever recorded there. An Eared Grebe was on Chatcolet L., *Benewah*, ID Nov. 7, where rare and irregular (DNS).

An Am. White Pelican, rare in N. Idaho, was in Lewiston Aug. 25 (WL). Single Double-crested Cormorants were at Salmon Sept. 3 (HR), and Chatcolet L., Sept. 29–Oct. 9 (DNS). The species is still rare but becoming regular in both localities.

Montana has fewer than 20 Great Egret records, so one at Frenchtown Sept. 22 was of interest (DH). Two Cattle Egrets by Rathdrum, ID Oct. 22, were a latilong first (JA), while another lingered by Lapwai, ID Nov. 21 (HH). Grandview, ID hosted a rare Green Heron Sept. 23 (MC, FK).

Single Idaho Eur. Wigeons were reported

on Thompson L., *Kootenai*, Oct. 10 (DNS), Chatcolet L., Nov. 18 (KD), and near Buhl Nov. 23 (BH). As expected, there were scattered reports of rare sea ducks. A ♂ Oldsquaw was at St. Maries, ID, Nov. 18 (DNS), and a female was near Buhl Nov. 23 (BH). Scoters were more widespread than usual. One–two Surf Scoters were at Frenchtown, MT Oct. 9 (DH), in Helena, MT Oct. 30 (GH, JR, CJ), at A.F.R., Nov. 3 (CT), and near Hagerman, ID Nov. 13 (CT). The two Surfs on Stanley L., *Custer*, ID Oct. 30, provided a latilong 2nd (†AD). One–four White-winged Scoters were by Troy, ID Oct. 30 (CM, DBE, JHo), near Idaho Falls, ID Nov. 13 & 23 (KS, DM, BH), at A.F.R., Nov. 27 (CT), at Kootenai N.W.R., *Boundary*, ID Nov. 8 (JRe), and at Ninepipe N.W.R., *Lake*, MT Nov. 9 (DH). Hooded Mergansers peaked at 50 during October in the Helena area, more than 10 times the normal high (GH).

Four **Broad-winged Hawks** seen in late September from the new hawk watch on Boise Ridge, *Boise* (GK), were Idaho's 6th–9th.

Although not currently on the Idaho bird list, there have been several recent reports of **Yellow Rails**. The latest was a bird seen Aug. 18 in the Silver Creek Preserve, *Blaine*, ID (†DMo, LB).

Plovers to Woodpeckers

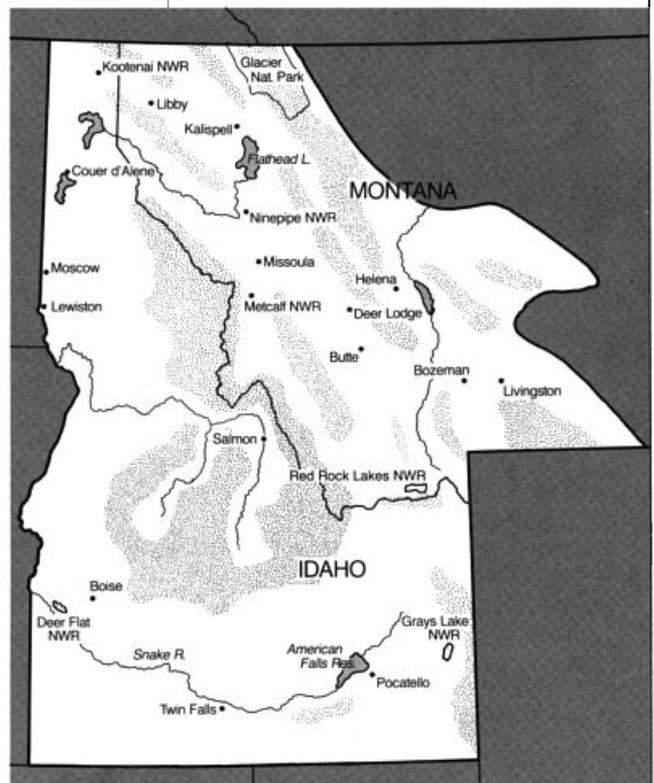
Two Am. Golden-Plovers were at Frenchtown, MT Oct. 9 (DH). Four more were at Mann L., *Nez Perce*, ID Sept. 23 (KD; DHk), where rare but expected; the immature on the more northerly Thompson L., Nov. 6 was surprising (DNS). Two Snowy Plovers were at A.F.R., Aug. 29 (DB), for Idaho's 15th record. A Lesser Yellowlegs at Salmon Aug. 6 provided the latilong's 2nd (HR). One–three Solitary Sandpipers were reported at 5 Idaho locations, more widespread than usual (m.ob.). An Upland Sandpiper was at Blanchard L., *Bonner*, ID in early August (A&JR) and another was at Mann L., Aug. 28 (DS). The Long-billed Curlew at Mann L. in early August (DNS, m.ob.) was unusual. Two imm. **Hudsonian Godwits** were photographed at A.F.R., Aug. 26–28 for Idaho's 2nd or 3rd record

(BB, †SP, †CT, m.ob.). Idaho's 9th **Red Knot** was on A.F.R., Sept. 11 (CT, BH, m.ob.). A small flock of W. Sandpipers was at Salmon Aug. 23, where rare (HR). An imm. Dunlin was by Harrison, ID Oct. 10 (DNS), while two were at Mann L., Nov. 6–7 (JH, MH, KD). This species is not reported from N. Idaho in most falls. A late Dunlin was at Frenchtown, MT Nov. 27 (DH). Stilt Sandpipers were relatively numerous at both Mann L. and A.F.R., peaking at 14 and 18 birds respectively in late August (KD, BH, DNS).

An unidentified jaeger chased gulls at A.F.R., Aug. 25 (DP, †SP), while a Parasitic did likewise at D.F.R., Sept. 3–11 (†JG, EH, DL, m.ob.). Bonaparte's Gulls typically pass through N. Idaho in flocks of 10–30, so the 150 at Kootenai N.W.R., Oct. 26 (JRe), and 170 at St. Maries Nov. 6–13 (DNS), were surprising. Single imm. **Sabine's Gulls**, Idaho's 6th and 7th, were seen at A.F.R., Oct. 13 (CT, SP) and D.F.R., Oct. 14 (†JG, m.ob.). Idaho's 9th **Arctic Tern** was on A.F.R., Aug. 7–Sept. 11 (BH). The species may yet prove to be regular along Idaho's Snake R. corridor.

A rare Barn Owl in *Lake*, MT Aug. 2 (DH) may have been the same bird seen nearby Nov. 8 (DH). Two Flammulated Owls on Boise Ridge in late September (MC, FK, JD) provided some insight into the species' fall movements. A dispersing imm. Boreal Owl was in Nampa, ID during November (JG, *N.N.C.).

Aberdeen produced Idaho's 7th **Anna's**





Spectacular numbers of Blue Jays invaded Idaho during late fall 1994. This one appeared at the Deer Flat National Wildlife Refuge. Photograph/Mark R. Collie.

Hummingbird Oct. 14–15 (DB). An imm. Yellow-bellied Sapsucker was at D.F.R., Oct. 8 (†JG, EH), for the state's 2nd record since the sapsuckers were split.

Flycatchers to Finches

Say's Phoebe, once common by Salmon, are now very rare, making the one seen Aug. 13 (HR) of interest. Tardy Cliff Swallows fledged young Sept. 20 in Helena (MV).

The n.w. expansion of Blue Jays got a boost this season. The average number seen in Idaho during recent falls has been three scattered birds. This year, no less than 61 were reported! Idaho sightings included ≤ 12 in Moscow and surrounding countryside Sept. 25+ (m.ob.), and one–four in 25 other localities October+ (m.ob.). As might be expected, the species expansion into W. Montana is more advanced. For example, in Helena, Blue Jays were first noted in 1969 and seen sporadically until 1986, when they became annual (GH). The species is now so numerous and regular there and elsewhere in W. Montana that many observers no longer report it (PW).

A Winter Wren Sept. 25 by Lima, MT provided a latilong 2nd (LM). One–two N. Mockingbirds were in Idaho Falls Oct. 12+ (ADe, BH, CT). A Sprague's Pipit Sept. 12 by Gardiner, MT established a latilong first (TM).

Solitary Vireo subspecies distribution is still unclear, so the migrating *plumbeous* near

Helena Sept. 3 (GH) was interesting. Idaho's 6th Chestnut-sided Warbler migrated by Aberdeen Sept. 18 (†DB). Western Montana's 2nd Black-throated Blue Warbler patronized a Missoula feeder Nov. 4–12 (PH, m.ob.). A rare Ovenbird briefly used a Pocatello, ID birdbath, Oct. 12 (CT). A Connecticut Warbler was banded Sept. 30 near Hamilton, MT (CB); there are less than 10 state records.

The Brewer's Sparrow near Bonners Ferry, ID Oct 12 provided a latilong first (WH, MS). The Regional status of Swamp Sparrows is becoming clearer. Before 1990, it was considered casual in Idaho and Montana. Since then, eight Idaho and nine Montana Swamp Sparrows have been reported. Sightings this fall included one seen and taped at Thompson L., Nov. 5–12 (†DNS, m.ob.) and two in Heyburn State Park, *Benewah*, ID Nov. 11+ (†KD, DNS), where one wintered in 1992. It is probable that the species is actually a rare, irregular fall migrant and winterer throughout the Region. Single White-throated Sparrows, rare and irregular throughout Idaho, were in 5 scattered locations Oct. 8–14 (m.ob.). One near Challis, ID Nov. 13 established a latilong 2nd (AD).

At least 10 Great-tailed Grackles were still in Burley, ID during the period, where they were suspected of nesting last summer (JL). A White-winged Crossbill visited a Missoula, M, feeder Nov. 22–23 (SSt), where very unusual.

Observers cited (Subregional editors in boldface): IDAHO: Jim Acton, Laurie Barrera, Brad Blackweller, Deb Buetler (DBe), Dave Burrup (DB), Mark Collie, Art Dahl (AD), Annie Dewell (ADE), John Doremus, Kas Dumroese, John Gatchet, Evelyn Hailey, Brad Hammond, Hank Hepburn, Winnie Hepburn, John Hirth (JH), Marty Hirth, David Hollick (DHk), James Holloway (JHo), **Dean Jones**, Greg Kattenacker, **Merlene Koliner**, Florence Knoll, Wendy La Voie, Dave Lawrence, Jason Lynch, Cindy McCormack, Terry McEaney, Dale Miller (DM), Don Morgan (DMo), Northwest Nazarene College (N.N.C.), Debra Patla, Susan Parla, Jimmie Reynolds (JRe), Amy and John Roberson (A&JR), **Hadley Roberts**, Dan Simpkins (DS), Marilyn Smith, Kit Struthers, Shirley Sturts (SS), Dan Svingen (DNS), Dave Trochlell (DTr), **Charles Trost**. MONTANA: Clif Barry, Paul Hendrick, Denver Holt (DH), George Holton, Cedron Jones, Lawrence McEvoy, Jim Reichel (JR), Susan Stickney (SSt), Mike Vashro, Philip Wright.

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Mountain West Region

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Mild weather shifted the migration pattern: higher numbers of waterfowl, kinglets, and hummingbirds; the usual coastal species like loons, oldsquaws, scoters, sandpipers, phalaropes, and gulls (but fewer of them); and fewer common migrants like Yellow-rumped and Wilson's warblers.

Observers also reported high numbers of documented rare birds (and an unfortunate collection of undocumented ones). They included four so far out of range that I lumped them at the end of this column; state records committees must evaluate them.

Denver Field Ornithologists' fall trips recorded 182 species. There have been 266 observed over 11 years of tabulations, 110 seen all 11 years (PH). Their fall count Sept. 10–13 recorded 13,186 individuals of 151 species—20% fewer individuals and 4 fewer species than 1992.

The Indian Peaks fall count found an above-average 90 species but an average 25 birds per hour; most numerous were 494 Mountain Chickadees, 403 Dark-eyed Juncos, 339 Chipping Sparrows, 334 American Robins, and 243 Pine Siskins. At Yellowstone Lake, colonial nesting water birds had mixed success; the nesting census at Molly Island appears in Table 1.

At Yellowstone Lake, National Park biologists discovered a population of lake trout, introduced at an unknown time by unknown people. Lake trout voraciously devour native fish, so voraciously that they may threaten populations of fish-eating birds—Ospreys, Bald Eagles, pelicans, cormorants, and terns by devastating the food chain.

Western ranchers often receive criticism for their treatment of land and wildlife; this fall Regional observers reported four instances of

Table 1 Nesting census on Molly Island Yellowstone Lake

Species	Nest Attempts of Fledglings	Number
Am. White Pelican	839	210
Double-crested		
Cormorant	125	270
California Gull	151	240
Caspian Tern	15	22