# Mountain West Region

# VAN A. TRUAN AND BRANDON K. PERCIVAL

The drought continued in the southern portions of the Region and from April into May it appeared to engulf the whole territory. Temperatures were slightly above normal throughout.

Abbreviations: C.V.C.G. (Crow Valley Campground, Pawnee National Grasslands, CO); L.C.R.S. (Last Chance Rest Stop, Washington Co., CO); R.M.N.P. (Rocky Mountain N.P.); R.E. (Regional Editors); S.L.V. (San Luis Valley, CO); and † (written description on file with R.E. or the state's record committee, and subject to approval of, state records committee).

## **Loons to Ibises**

A single Red-necked Grebe stayed at L. Cheraw, Otero, CO May 18–27 (TL, RB, SH, †MJ et al.). A Neotropic Cormorant was with Double-cresteds at Ireland Res., Weld, CO May 5–31 (NE et al.). At Chatfield Res., Jefferson, CO an unknown disaster caused the total failure of the 28-nest Double-crested Cormorant rookery (HEK). A Least Bittern was in Boulder, CO May 18 (PP). The Great Blue Heron rookery at Chatfield Res. also failed (HEK). The

rookery counts at Lahontan Valley, NV May 21 included nests of 180 Great Blue Heron, 148 Great Egret, 405 Snowy Egret, 50 Cattle Egret, and 331 Black-crowned Night-Heron (LN). A Great Egret was at Rock Springs, WY May 4 (SSo) and another at Monte Vista, Rio Grande, CO May 25 (TL, BSt). Three Little Blue Herons were observed in e. Colorado: at L. Holbrook, Otero, May 3 (in calico plumage) (BKP), Adams May 12 (D.F.O.), and Rocky Ford S.W.A., Otero, May 22 (CW, JK). An imm. Yellow-crowned Night-Heron visited Bonny Res., Yuma, CO May 19 (BKP, †BR et al.). There were 4 reports of single Glossy Ibis in e. Colorado: in Adams May 3 (JTb), Pueblo May 4 (†MJ), at Nee Noshee Res., Kiowa, May 20 (†MJ, BKP), and Illiff, Logan, May 27 (†DAL, JMa). Increases in observations of this species may be due to more observers examining flocks of Whitefaced Ibis at close range. In May, Nevada nest counts of White-face Ibis included 1000 at Humbolt Sink and 4790 at Lahontan Valley (LN).

#### Waterfowl

A Brant was at Ash Meadows N.W.R., NV April 7 (JC, MC, ph.) and 17 at Walker L., NV May 24 (NS). A & and & Am. Black Duck were at Hamilton Res., Larimer, CO Apr. 16 (RAR); the origin of this species is always debatable. Colorado's 3rd Garganey was a male at Boulder (same site as the 2nd record) Apr. 23–May 12 (BS, m.ob.). Same individual? Two & Eur. Wigeons were recorded at Sheridian, WY Apr. 10 (†HD, JW et al.), another two at Casper, WY Mar. 13 (J&VH), one in Iron, UT Mar. 31 (SDS), and one in Weld,

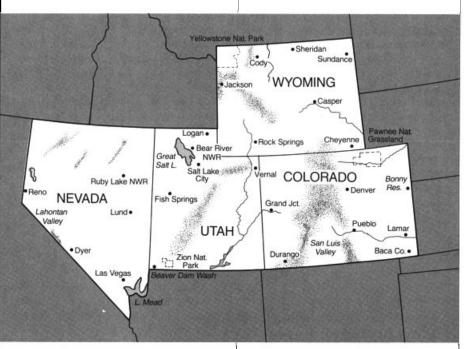


Brant at Ash Meadows National Wildlife Refuge, Nevada, April 7, 1996. Photograph, Marian Cressman.

CO Mar. 21 (JH). Two Black Scoters in Grand Junction, CO Apr. 26 (RL) were very rare in w. Colorado, and two females at Henderson, NV May 18 (†RSa) were also rare in Nevada. A ? White-winged Scoter in Rock Springs, WY Apr. 5 (RS) was quite unusual in spring for the Region. Colorado had a surprising four Surf Scoters in May, also rare in spring. An Oldsquaw was recorded at Ash Meadows N.W.R., NV Mar. 25 (GC) and two in Alamosa, CO May 14 (LR, †[[R); the latter represents the first S.L.V. record of this species. Five Red-breasted Mergansers Apr 14-29 at Dotero, Eagle, CO represented the first for this county (†JM).

### **Kites to Terns**

On May 12 in Pueblo, 13 Mississippi Kites kettled for several hours before moving on, representing a high number in spring this far west (VAT). Up to three Com. Black Hawks were recorded from Beaver Dam Wash, UT Apr. 20-May 25 (VAS, SDS, PRS et al.). Eighteen Broad-winged Hawks were recorded from Colorado at 9 locations, and one was at Big Horn, WY May 11 (PW). Black Rails again returned (for the 6th year) to marshes e. of La Junta, Otero, CO in May. Shorebird counts from w. Nevada (Stillwater and Carson L.) totaled 54,374 individuals of 23 species. High counts included >28,700 Long-billed Dowitchers, >9300 Least/Western sandpipers, and >9100 Am. Avocets. This was approximately 3 times 1995's counts. In e. Colorado, shorebird numbers were down due to high water levels on irrigation reservoirs. The eight golden-plovers at Humbolt Sink, NV May 1 (LN) could not be identified to species. An unusual spring Am. Golden-Plover was in Mesa, CO May 28-29 (SH). An ad. Pacific Golden-Plover at Big Soda L., NV May 17 (JWa, ph. DM) represented one of few Nevada records. Any golden-plover w. of the Rockies should be studied to determine species and migratory status. A Piping Plover at





Golden-plover at Big Soda Lake, Nevada, May 17, 1996. Showing white along the sides under the wing, this bird was thought by the observers to be a Pacific Golden-Plover, not just an American Golden-Plover in molt; the status of the two golden-plovers in the interior of the west is still poorly understood. Photograph/Dave McNinch.

Cherry Creek Res., Arapahoe, CO May 28-29 (BB) was rare away from its normal range in the state. A single Mt. Plover was at Overton W.M.A., NV Apr. 6 (JC, MC, ph.). Whimbrels invaded Colorado; flocks of <70 individuals were recorded at 11 locations. Two Hudsonian Godwits were recorded in e. Colorado: at Fort Collins May 2 (DCE) and Upper Queens Res., Kiowa, May 16 (JK, SS, PL). A rare Ruddy Turnstone was observed at Casper, WY May 15 (J&VH). The only Red Knot reported was at Upper Queens Res., May 16 (JK, SS, PL). A Dunlin at Fish Springs N.W.R., UT Apr. 25 (†EG) was well documented, and another visited Upper Queens Res., May 19 (BG). A Laughing Gull was at Union Res., Weld, CO May 7 (JPr) and at Casper, WY May 30 (†J&VH). In Wayne, UT, ≤ten Franklin's Gull were observed Apr. 11-22 (AS). A very late Glaucous Gull was at Antero Res., Park, CO May 24 (DP). A Least Tern was at Henderson Sewage Ponds, NV May 11 (†JE et al.), rare in Nevada, and another was in Grand Junction, CO May 30 (CD, RL et al.), very rare in w. Colorado.

#### **Doves to Woodpeckers**

The drought in the southwest may have helped the small invasion of White-winged Doves in Colorado this spring. All sightings were at feeders, beginning with one in Pueblo West May 16–17 (FD,

†BKP, †MJ), a 2nd in Pueblo May 22-27 (MHu, MY), two in Cañon City, Fremont, May 25-31 (BA, DP, J&RW), and one in Monte Vista May 26 (†LC). Will this species nest here in the near future? Two Black-billed Cuckoos were recorded in Colorado, one at Adobe Creek Res., Bent, May 20 (DN) and another found dead in Ft. Collins in late May (\*C.S.U., JCp). A Yellow-billed Cuckoo May 26 at Sunset Park, NV (JWa) was the only report away from the e. portion of the Region. Two very early Flammulated Owls were recorded in S.L.V., Apr. 12 (JJR, LR, JP). The same group of birders had a W. Screech-Owl the same night, which provided the 6th S.L.V. record. In March and April, ≤12 Boreal Owls were recorded from Cameron Pass, with three near Silverthorne, one near Gould, and one in R.M.N.P. Two Lesser Nighthawks were at Beaver Wash Dam, Washington, UT May 24 (SDS). Common Poorwills were recorded in migration on the e. plains of Colorado: two in Bent and three in Crowley. Six or more Chimney Swifts were observed and heard over Palisade, Mesa, CO (CD). This species is very rare on the w. slope of Colorado and may be nesting. Five Vaux's Swifts were at Desert N.W.R., NV May 4 (RSa) and one was at Lida, NV May 18 (MM). Unusual near the Kansas line, up to four Black-chinned Hummingbirds were at Walsh Apr. 18-26 (JTh et al.) and one male at Lamar May 4 (BKP, MH). A & Calliope Hummingbird was at Pyramid Lake, NV Apr.23 (GC). The Durango, La Plata, Acorn Woodpecker stayed to Mar. 29 and a female showed up in Estes Park, Larimer, (D&SA); this may be the same bird seen at Loveland last fall, which represented Colorado's 4th record. Unusual on the e. plains of Colorado, a Red-naped Sapsucker was at Bonny Res., May 19 (D.F.O.).

# Flycatchers to Waxwings

Nevada had 2 reports of Yellow-bellied Flycatchers, one May 18-27 at Desert N.W.R. (JC, †MC, JWa, †RSa) and another (with no details) at Tonopah May 25-26 (JBr, DT). If these reports are accepted by the Nevada Records Committee, they may represent the state's 2nd and 3rd records. Two Alder Flycatchers were banded at Bonny Res., May 10-11 (TL, RB, SH et al.), and may prove migrating birds to be more common in e. Colorado than once thought. Two Least Flycatchers were recorded in Nevada, one each at Tonopah May 12 (JBr) and Desert N.W.R., May 27 (JC, †MC). This species is being reported more frequently, but caution should be taken in all migratory Empidonax identifications, especially out of normal ranges. Other Leasts were at Cheyenne, WY May 18 (JLD) and Devil's Tower May 25 (G&MS). Two Black Phoebes may be resident at Uravan, Montrose, CO, where they were noted Mar. 28-May 26 (DB et al.). Another individual was at Carson R., Lyon, NV May 3 (LN, GC, RF). Great Crested Flycatchers appear to be increasing in e. Colorado; single reports came from Lamar, Baca, Bonny Res., and ≤four at Ft. Lyon, Bent, all in May. Sighting of Brown-crested Flycatchers continue to increase in Nevada, with one at Desert N.W.R., May 11-31 (JC, MC), two at Beaver Dam Wash May 12-25 (SDS, PRS et al.), and one at Blue Diamond May 26 (JWa). A Purple Martin was at Mesquite, NV May 9 (MC) and a female at Jumbo Res., Sedgwick, CO May 27 (†DAL, JMa), a rarity in e. Colorado. Three Blue Jays were reported in S.L.V., May 11 (JJR, LR et al.) and one in Eagle, Eagle, CO May 17-29 (JM). The wintering W. Scrub-Jays remained in Walsh until Apr. 21 (JTh). A Bewick's Wren, rare n. of Monument Divide, was at Lyons, Boulder, CO May 17 (†DWK). Three Goldencrowned Kinglets were at Pyramid L., NV Mar. 2 (GC). Veeries were reported at 2 locations in Wyoming, three at Cheyenne May 16-31 (AK) and one in Cody May 29 (IS). Seven single Gray-cheeked Thrushes were reported from Apr. 27-May 27 in e. Colorado and, also, one at Ayres Natural Bridge, WY May 17 (PS). An unusual Swainson's Thrush was at Fallon, NV May 3 (GC, LN, RF). A Wood Thrush, rare in Colorado, was at Grover, Weld, May 11 (RAR). A Gray Catbird showed up at Corn Cr., Clark, NV May

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26 (†RSa). On April 18–19 in *Wayne*, UT, Schmeirer reported "thousands" of Sage Thrashers on the ground and in fields.

#### **Vireos to Warblers**

Colorado birders reported three Whiteeyed Vireos, one each at Lamar May 1 (DN), Fountain, El Paso, May 10-11 (†BM, DSm), and one banded in R.M.N.P., May 29 (RC). Bell's Vireos were at L. Henry, Crowley, CO May 22 (CW, JK), Lyons, CO May 24 (†DWK), and Cheraw, Otero, CO May 27 (BKP). A Gray Vireo was reported from Las Animas, CO May 28 (BM); this species is rare in s.e. Colorado. Three Yellow-throated Vireos visited Colorado, one each at Ft. Lyon May 3 (†BKP), Bonny Res., May 17 (WPL, JFB), and Fountain May 24 (BM). A singing Philadelphia Vireo was at Upper Queens Res., CO May 18 (DSm). Nevada had a Red-eyed Vireo at Desert N.W.R., May 31 (DT).

In Colorado, 37 species of warblers were reported. This included: 12 Tennessees May 2-24; 13 Nashvilles Apr. 28-May 22; five Virginia's (on the extreme e. plains); seven N. Parulas May 4-24; 13 Chestnut-sideds May 5-30; 11 Magnolias May 12-22; five Black-throated Blues May 10-18; seven Black-throated Grays (on the e. plains) Apr. 29-May 28; five Townsend's May 4-20; two separate Black-throated Greens at Two Buttes Res., May 6 and Bonny Res., May 18; seven Palms Apr. 27-May 11 (†JJR, LR), including one at Monte Vista providing S.L.V.'s 2nd record; 13 Blackpolls Apr. 27-May 31; 26 Black-and-whites May

2-27; 22 Am. Redstarts May 3-30; 13 Ovenbirds May 3-26; and 34 N. Waterthrush May 3-25 (including one at Eagle May 11 and one at Monte Vista May 25).

The other 3 states reported the following uncommon warblers: Tennessees at Casper May 22-23 (W&AH), and two at Sheridan May 26 (JW); a Virginia's at Fire Hole, WY May 25 (J&GL); Black-throated Grays at Casper, WY May 16 (J&VH) and at Fire Hole May 25 ([&GL); a Townsend's at Fish Springs May 9 (JB, EG); Blackpolls at Chevenne May 18 (JLD), at Fish Springs May 22 (JB, EG, BHd), and two at Sheridan May 26 (JW); Black-and-whites at Cheyenne May 18 (JLD), Casper May 22 (J &VH), and Lida, NV May 25 (DT); Am. Redstarts in Nevada at Desert N.W.R., Tonopah, and Sierra Vista; Ovenbirds at Casper May 17 (J&VH), Cheyenne May 18 (JLD), Desert N.W.R., NV May 19 (JC, MC), and Tonopah, NV May 28-31 (DT); and a N. Waterthrush at Fish Springs May 9 & 22 (JB, EG), at Sierra Vista May 12 (JBr), four at Casper May 17-22 (W&AH, J&VH), and one in Cheyenne May 18 (JLD) & 19 (J&GL).

The rarer warblers in the Region included: Blue-wingeds at Cottonwood Canyon, *Baca*, CO May 4 (†JJR, LR, JP), Bonny Res., May 10 (JTb, JMg), and Estes Park, CO May 19–21 (DBr *et al.*); Goldenwingeds at C.V.C.G., May 11–17 (DBe, DAL *et al.*) and Barr L., CO May 18 (TM, JA); a ♀ N. Parula at Desert N.W.R., NV May 31 (DT); a ♂ Cape May at Lamar May 7 (DN); Colorado's 9th Hermit Warbler, a

first-year male, at Ft. Lyon May 17 (†BKP, BD, DN); and Blackburnians at L. Henry, CO May 4–6 (†MJ, BKP, DN *et al.*), Sand Creek, WY May 7 (J&VH), and Two Buttes Res., *Baca*, CO May 22 (CW, JK).

Excellent descriptions were provided for Wyoming's first Prairie Warbler, a male, at Cheyenne May 18 (†JLD, RD, FL, †RS et al.). Palms visited Casper May 4 (W&AH) & 30 (J&VH) and Sheridan May 8 (JW). A & Bay-breasted Warbler was photographed from Dixon Res., Larimer, CO May 19-20 (WPL, DAL). Single ♂ Prothonotarys were at Pueblo May 6-7 (PSS, CS, †BKP et al.), and one provided S.L.V.'s first record at Monte Vista May 25 (BSt, TL). A Worm-eating Warbler visited Casper May 20-22 (W&AH, J&VH) for possibly the 6th Wyoming record. Amazing numbers of Worm-eating Warblers were in Colorado, all singles: at Lamar May 4-5 (PG, †BKP, VZ et al.), Cottonwood Canyon May 4 (†LR, JJR, JP), Nee Noshee Res., May 6 (DSm, KS, IPr), Lamar May 10 (†BKP), Bonny Res., May 17 (WPL, JFB), and L.C.R.S., May 17 (WPL, JFB). Colorado's 6th Louisiana Waterthrush appeared at Prewitt Res., Washington, CO May 17 (†DAL). A 3 Kentucky Warbler was reported from Kit Carson, CO May 8 (BSt). A & Connecticut Warbler was near Crook, Logan, CO May 27 (†DAL, JMa) for Colorado's 5th record. Prior to this year, Colorado had 8 records of Mourning Warbler; this spring five more were reported. This included a male at Nee Noshee Res., May 10 (JK, NE, NL), a female at Bonny Res., May 13 (JK, GH, JRe), a male at Ft. Lyon May 15 (DN), a male at L.C.R.S., May 16-19 (JRo, †BKP, BD et al.), and a female at L.C.R.S., May 27 (CW). A Hooded Warbler was at Lida, NV May 12 (JC, MC). For the 2nd consecutive spring, Hooded Warblers were reported in higherthan-normal numbers in Colorado, with a male at Lamar May 2 (VZ), a female at Two Buttes Res., May 3 (BKP, MJ, PG, VZ), a male at Two Buttes Res., May 4-6 (BKP et al.), a male at Walsh (ITh), a male at Ft. Lyon May 13 (MJ), and a female at C.V.C.G., May 21 (DAL, WPL). A Canada Warbler was reported from Bonny Res., May 10 (JTb, JMg).

## Tanagers to Finches

A ♀ Hepatic Tanager was seen at Apishapa S.W.A., Las Animas, CO May 21 (MCa). Seven Summer Tanagers were recorded in Colorado and a very rare one near Cody, WY Apr. 27 (ED). This species seems to be expanding its range and nesting may occur soon. Two Scarlet Tanagers were in e. Colorado, at Bonny Res., May



Male Bay-breasted Warbler at Dixon Reservoir, Colorado, May 20, 1996. Photograph/David Leatherman.

17 (WPL, JFB) and in *Boulder* May 20 (BMi). Rose-breasted Grosbeaks showed up w. of their normal range, with one at Cody May 1 (BY) and two in Eagle, CO May 9–12 (JM). A "green"-plumaged Painted Bunting visited Ft. Lyon May 12 (†MJ, BKP).

With the new additions to **A**the A.O.U. list, bird listers are having to look a bit closer at what were once sub-species. For example, the E. Towhee was considered rare in Colorado until birders wanting to add this new species to their state/life lists pursued Spotted Towhees in e. counties. This season there were 6 \reports from 6 e. Colorado counties. With many sub-species that can be identified in the field—such as Solitary Vireo, juncos, White-crowned Sparrow, Red Crossbill—the editors cannot understand why field birders will not keep track of sub-species, especially when genetic data suggests that many more sub-species are really full species. If we would do as our ancestor birders, like Bent and Chapman, we would name subspecies and include them in our field bird identification.

A Canyon Towhee at Cody Mar. 1-May 31 (MD), if accepted by the Wyoming Records Committee, would provide the first state record. An out-of-place Rufouscrowned Sparrow was in Boulder, CO May 20-22 (DWK, M&SP). Black-throated Sparrows provided excitement in Estes Park, Larimer, CO May 20 (SR, S&JR, WPL, IFB), and furnished S.L.V.'s 3rd record at Monte Vista Mar. 30 (JJR, LR). Sage Sparrows showed up in 4 locations n.e. of their normal range in Colorado, possibly due to drought conditions. Single birds were at Huerfano Res., Pueblo, Mar. 25 (MJ), in Jefferson Apr. 4 (BS et al.), at Wellington, Larimer, Apr. 11 (S&KM), and in Douglas Apr. 28 (BB). On Apr. 20, Bridges' reported an amazing six Baird's Sparrows at Upper Queens Res.; if true, this could be the largest number reported in Colorado in years. A late and unusual Swamp Sparrow was at Goshow May 18 (†RS, JS, BW). Golden-crowned Sparrows were at Fallon, NV May 3 (GC, LN, RF) and Estes Park May 5-6 (MT). A Harris' Sparrow was reported from Las Vegas, NV Mar.1-May 5 (MC) and five were in Cody Mar. 1-May 15 (ED, JCi). Bobolinks were reported, with a single male at Jaroso, Costilla, CO May 15 (†LR) providing S.L.V.'s 3rd record, ≤four at Tonopah, NV May 19-25 (DT, JBr), and



Female-plumaged Purple Finch in Baca County, Colorado, March 24, 1996. Photograph/Bob Machover.

a single male in Gunnison May 27 (KP). The Centerville, *Douglas*, **Tricolored Blackbird** colony (100–150 birds) provided Nevada's first nesting records this season (JE, DT, LN, GC *et al.*). A ♂ Greattailed Grackle in Goshow May 18–25 (BW, DW, †RS) furnished Wyoming's 3rd record. A young birder, Joshua Kreiter, found Utah's 2nd-record Bronzed Cowbird at Washington May 1–16 (JKr, SDS, PRS). A Scott's Oriole was reported from Piñon Canyon, *Las Animas*, CO May 25 (BM). A ♀ or imm. ♂ Purple Finch was in Cottonwood Canyon, CO Mar. 24 (BMa, SSa).

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