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# Idaho-Western Montana Region

## DAN SVINGEN

The effects of a late spring were noticeable through Summer 1996, even though June and July were generally mild and dry. Delayed snowmelt in the mountains meant high river levels through June, snow-covered alpine areas into July, and a lack of mudflats at irrigation reservoirs. Many observers commented on delayed phenology, affecting species' abundance, migration, nesting, and post-breeding dispersal.

Abbreviations: A.F.R. (*American Falls Res., by American Falls, ID*).

## Loons to Ducks

A surprising number of summering Idaho Com. Loons were reported, including an adult and immature at Mud Lake W.M.A., *Jefferson*, June 27 (PHS), one–two immatures on Coeur d'Alene L., *Kootenai*, July 2 & 20–21 (C.A.S., CC, CLC, GC), and an ad. pair and an immature on Pend O'reille L., *Bonner* (PC). A Clark's Grebe on Pend O'reille L., June 2 (KD, C&SW) was far north of its normal Idaho range. Benefiting from more stable water levels, Red-necked Grebe successfully nested at Kootenai N.W.R., *Bonner*, ID, for the first time in several years (JRe). High water may also have been responsible for the species successfully nesting near Helena, MT (MV, *fide* DSk) for the first time.

— An Am. White Pelican was at Coeur d'Alene W.M.A., *Kootenai*, ID July 20 (JWN, CC), near where six were seen last

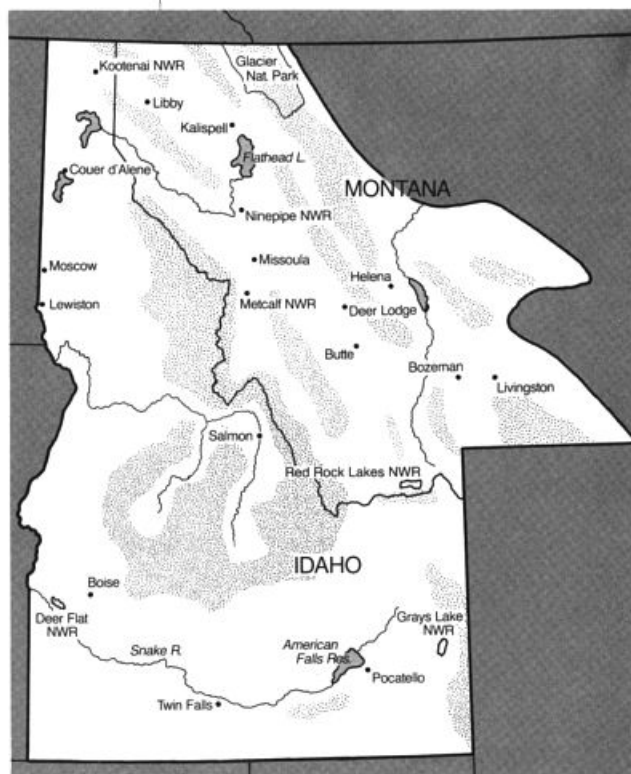
season. The number and range of Double-crested Cormorants continues to increase Regionwide. Unusual sightings this season included two on Pend O'reille L., June 9 and July 17 (C.A.S., PC), one–two on Coeur d'Alene L. throughout June and July (J&HS, *fide* SHS), and *eight* on Chatcolet L., *Benevoh*, ID June 12 (*fide* SHS).

— An Am. Bittern was at Minidoka N.W.R., *Cassia*, ID June 23 (JH, MH), where rarely reported. Two–three Great Egrets were at Mud Lake W.M.A. June 19–27 (DNS, IS, m.ob.), where the species failed to nest last year. A Cattle Egret by Helena, MT June 2 (MV) provided a 2nd record for Latilong 28.

— A late Snow Goose was at Market Lake W.M.A., *Jefferson*, ID June 16 (EH, SS, CT). Locally rare anytime, a ♂ Harlequin Duck near Salmon, ID July 27 (LA) was also unseasonal, as the species is rarely detected during "fall" migration.

## Vultures to Terns

A Turkey Vulture nest near Headquarters, ID July 20 furnished a first for Latilong 5 (MP). The species has been increasing in n. Idaho in recent years. This season 16 birds were reported in *Kootenai*, including four at Wolf Lodge Cr., June 2 (PAC, GC, SHS), four at Coeur d'Alene Lake's Mica Bay June 20 (C.A.S.), and up to four at Farragut S.P. throughout June and July (*fide* SHS). A Prairie Falcon on the Rathdrum Prairie, *Kootenai*, ID July 12 (RJ), provided a locally-rare summer record.



The only shorebird concentration reported was of >1000 birds at Blacks Creek Res. *Ada*, ID June 26 (MC, FK). Birds present included 100 Black-necked Stilt, 200 Am. Avocet, 50 Greater Yellowlegs, 200 Lesser Yellowlegs, and 480 Wilson's Phalarope. A Solitary Sandpiper was at Mann L., *Nez Perce*, ID July 27 (DNS), one of the few places in the state that annually attracts the species.

A **Pomarine Jaeger** on Clark Canyon Res., *Beaverhead*, MT July 23 (R&NG, †*fide* PW) will provide Montana's 5th record, if accepted. A Franklin's Gull was at Mann L., July 28 (JH, MH); most of n. Idaho's 13 records are from June. Six late Bonaparte's Gulls were at St. Maries, ID June 3 (KD, C&SW). Two first-summer birds were at A.F.R., July 27 (CT), where seasonally rare.

Until recently, Caspian Tern sightings were rare in n. Idaho. Sightings this summer included up to four on Coeur d'Alene L. in July (BG, DNJ, WM, SHS), two at Mann L., July 6 (DNS, KD), six on the Clearwater R., *Nez Perce*, ID July 13 (DNS, IS), one on Chatcolet L., July 20 (SHS, JC), and one at Mann L., July 28 (JH, MH).

#### Pigeons to Woodpeckers

A well-described Band-tailed Pigeon visited a Soda Springs, ID feeder June 26 (JA, †*fide* CT), providing Latilong 28's first record. Rare and very local in Idaho, Yellow-billed Cuckoos were relatively widespread this summer, and included a pair along Battle Cr. in central *Owyhee* June 23 (JD), two at Camas N.W.R. *Jefferson*, July 7 & 14 (SB, JG, CT), and a single at Mud Lake W.M.A., July 7 (JG).

Northern Idaho Barn Owl populations appear to expand and contract depending on the winter, making two seen at Hells Gate S.P., *Nez Perce*, ID July 28 (MK, EG, KM) of interest. The Lewiston Valley may act as a source population for n. Idaho Barn Owls, as its low elevation, open water and sheltered topography provides some of the mildest winter weather in the state. Systematic surveys are revealing that Flammulated Owls are much more widespread in Idaho than previously thought, paralleling earlier research in w. Montana. This year, "new" Flammulated Owl reports included two on Blackwell Hill, *Kootenai*, July 5 (GH), and one along Coral Cr., w. *Bannock*, July 7 (CT). Boise-area sightings of Burrowing and Short-eared owls were up this year; the birds apparently benefiting from locally-high vole populations (MC, FK). The sighting of two fledgling Barred Owls on Slide Cr., *Clearwater*, ID June 25 (SR) confirmed

breeding in Latilong 5 for the first time. At least one Boreal Owl responded to a tape June 20 in n.w. *Fremont*, ID (JHa, m.ob.).

Montana's 6th **Anna's Hummingbird** was in Columbia Falls June 2 (PRs, †*fide* DC). A Williamson Sapsucker nest by Fish Cr. Campground, s. of Grangeville, ID, confirmed breeding in Latilong 7 (DNS). Three N. "Yellow-shafted" Flickers in Helena this July (SC) were unusual, although the form is relatively regular there compared to the rest of the Region.

#### Flycatchers to Warblers

The Region's first, and Montana's 3rd, **Eastern Wood-Pewee** was at L. Koochanusa, *Lincoln*, June 17 (PR, †*fide* DC), but could not be relocated. Idaho **Least Flycatcher** sightings were numerous this summer and included a pair returning to Rose L., *Kootenai*, June 9 (DNS, IS), a single at Camas N.W.R., June 16–28 (EH, †DNS, SS, CT, m.ob.), and >3 at Challis, June 28–July 30 (†DNS, IS, m.ob.). These represent Idaho's 6th–8th records. Western Kingbirds continue to increase in the Helena, MT area, where 2 nests were found (DSk). A pair of Pygmy Nuthatch built a nest in the wall of a rural Moscow, ID home (*fide* KD, ph.), providing the first confirmed breeding for Latilong 4.

Western Bluebird successfully nested near Clancy, MT, this summer (GW), a first for Latilong 28. Several observers commented on the relative lack of Hermit Thrushes in c. and n. Idaho mountains (JH, MH, SR, DNS). Whether this was due to population shifts or was merely a reflection of late snowmelt in preferred Hermit Thrush habitats is unknown. A N. Mockingbird near Golden, ID June 8 (DG) represented a first for Latilong 8, while one near Helena, MT June 20 (BM) was only slightly more expected. A N. Mockingbird pair fledged young near Mayfield, ID (CS, *fide* MC); the species has nested in Idaho <10 times. An Am. Pipit nest photographed on Sawtell Peak, *Fremont*, ID June 25 (SB, DNS, IS, PHS), confirmed breeding for Latilong 16.

A locally-rare Solitary Vireo was in n. *Custer*, ID June 28 (DNS). A singing Red-eyed Vireo at the same location provided a first for Latilong 13 (DNS). Other Idaho Red-eyes were in Boise and in w. *Boise* in June (MC, FK, DT).

A locally-rare Tennessee Warbler was by Dupuyer, MT June 8 (DC). A Yellow-rumped Warbler nest at Farragut S.P., *Kootenai*, ID was parasitized by Brown-headed Cowbird (*fide* SHS), a relatively rare event for an "Audubon's". A ♂ Black-and-white Warbler in Boise June 4–5

(MC, FK) furnished a first for Latilong 17. A singing ♂ Am. Redstart was at Tincup Campground, *Caribou*, ID June 23 (SB, DNS, IS, PHS). The species is uncommon and local throughout the state. In Idaho, N. Waterthrush are only known to nest in the Panhandle. This summer, however, territorial birds were found in several s.e. locations, including Henrys L. outlet, *Fremont*, June 16–26 (CT, m.ob.), Kilgore June 24 (CT), and Challis June 28 (DNS, IS, m.ob.).

#### Sparrows to Finches

A Lazuli x Indigo Bunting hybrid was found in Grizzly Gulch by Helena, MT in June (CL), in the same area an ad. Indigo was seen 2 years ago. The Lark Bunting invasion reported last season continued into summer, with sightings from Carey, ID June 10 (CT), near Dubois, ID June 26 (CT), and at Sand Creek W.M.A., *Fremont*, ID June 26 (SB, DNS, IS, PHS). **Lark Buntings** were confirmed breeding in Idaho for the first time, when adults were observed feeding young at Minidoka N.W.R., July 19 (SB, CT). Grasshopper Sparrows were singing at Coyote Gulch, *Nez Perce*, ID June 20 (SR), at Oxford Slough, *Franklin*, ID June 21 (SB, PHS), at Minidoka N.W.R., June 23 (MH, JH), and at Libby, MT, airport July 11 (DC).

New Bobolink colonies were found s. of Oakley, ID June 6 (SR), and by Driggs, ID June 25 (DNS, IS). Common Grackle continue to slowly expand in Idaho. Ten were in Driggs June 25 (DNS, IS), where present for several summers. Two ♂ Com. Grackles at Mud Lake W.M.A., June 27 (PHS) were more unexpected. Idaho's 2nd **Baltimore Oriole**, was at Camas N.W.R., June 16–28 (EH, †DNS, SS, CT, m.ob.). A Scott's Oriole pair, present in s.w. *Oneida*, ID from at least June 28, successfully fledged 3 young (SB, PHS, DB, m.ob.). The species is extremely local in the Region.

A ♀ and imm. Pine Grosbeak were in e. *Fremont*, ID June 27 (SB, PHS), where breeding has yet to be confirmed. A White-winged Crossbill was heard on Sawtell Peak, *Fremont*, ID June 25 (PHS) for a rare summer record. Lesser Goldfinches were again present at their traditional breeding spot on Mink Cr. in n.w. *Bannock*, ID (CT, m.ob.). As noted last season, the species was also present in Boise (MC, FK, m.ob.), and at Swan Falls Dam, *Ada*, ID (DT, m.ob.).

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# Mountain West Region

## VAN A. TRUAN AND BRANDON K. PERCIVAL

The summer was dry in most areas of the Region. In eastern Colorado, southern moisture entered, producing thunderstorms in late June. This dryness from spring into midsummer may have caused displacement of several species. Lark Bunting were scarce and Northern Mockingbirds were everywhere in eastern Colorado. It is assumed that birds, like most wildlife, will either adapt to changes, migrate or disperse, or die. As field naturalists, birders (both professional and amateur), or casual backyard bird enthusiast, our readers should keep track of changes in abundances (increases and/or decreases) of populations, weather—such as drought or late frosts, urban growth impacts, and many other easily monitored changes. As editors, we can look at Regional or national impacts and report these back to you for local confirmation or study. Trends are as important as the rarity.

Abbreviations: D.M.N.H. (*Denver Museum of Natural History*), R.M.N.P. (*Rocky Mountain N.P., CO*), S.L.V. (*San Luis Valley, CO*).

## Loons to Waterfowl

More Com. Loons were reported summering than usual: two at Big Johnson Res., *El Paso*, CO June 17–July 31 (BG), singles at *Sweetwater*, WY June 9 (PL), Neponset Res., UT June 21 (PL), Riverside Res., *Weld*, CO (LRo), North L., *Las Animas*, CO July 9 (LD), and two at Park Res., near Big Horn, WY July 28 (JW). The three **Neotropical Cormorants** observed at Ireland Res., *Weld*, CO were reported into mid-July (m.ob.). A single **Least Bittern** was at Ouray N.W.R., UT June 16 (PL, SF). Up to five **Great Egrets** were reported flying into a egret/ibis colony at Ouray N.W.R. in June; if confirmed this could provide Utah's first state nesting record for the species (PL). Singles were at Monte Vista, *Rio Grande*, CO late May–June 3 (TL), Rawhide Power Plant, *Larimer*, CO June 9 (PL), and Holbrook Res., *Otero*, CO July 12 (BKP, JT). **Cattle Egrets** nested for the first time in Wyoming. Up to six adults summered and two juveniles were observed at Hutton Lake N.W.R., July 28 (JD, RD). In Colorado, the highest count was 32 at Lower Latham Res., *Weld*, July 21 (TL, DC). Rare in w. Colorado, a **Green Heron** was reported from Grand Valley, *Mesa*, July 22 (CD). Probably a late migrant, an imm. **Yellow-crowned Night-Heron** was at L. Henry, *Crowley*, CO June 1 (BKP, MJ). Unusual in the Region in summer, a ♂ **Eur. Wigeon** was reported at Hamilton Res., *Larimer*, CO June 9 (RAR). A mother and brood of four **Barrow's Goldeneye** were at Walt L., *Flattops Wilderness Area, Garfield*, CO July 24 (KP).

