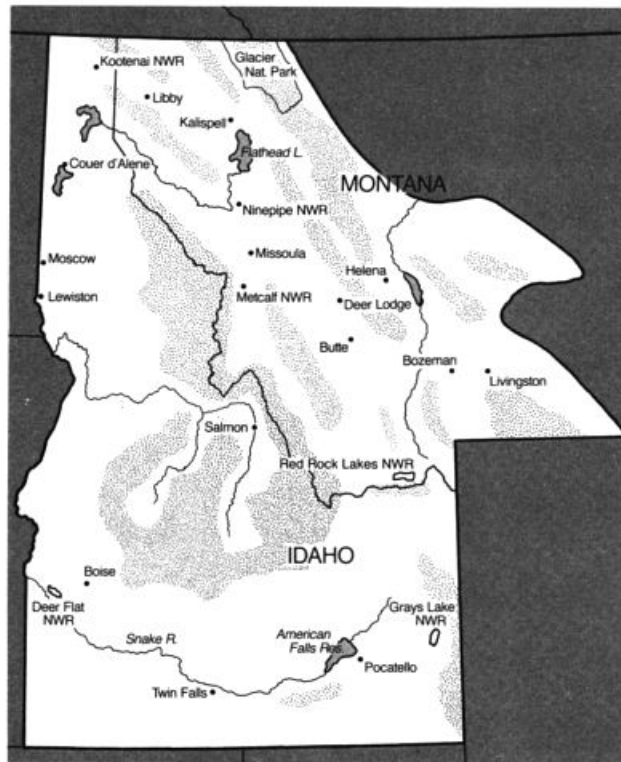


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idaho-western montana region



DAVE TROCHLELL and DAN SVINGEN

The Region's mild fall weather continued through winter. Snowfall was relatively light, and temperatures were above normal. There were numerous surprising finds of semi-hardy species. Unseasonably warm weather, abundant food, and open water encouraged waterfowl, American Robins, and Varied Thrushes to linger in record numbers throughout the Region. Winter finches were scarce, with the notable exception of Common Redpolls and crossbills.

Spring arrived two to four weeks early. By early February, winter feeding flocks began to break up, spring migrants began to arrive, and early nesters began courtship.

Abbreviations: A.F.R. (American Falls Res., Bingham Co., ID); D.F.N.W.R. (Deer Flat Nat'l Wildlife Ref., Canyon Co., ID); F.B.W.M.A. (Fort Boise Wildlife Management Area, Canyon Co.,

ID); H.W.M.A.. (Hagerman Wildlife Management Area, Gooding Co., ID); Latilong (area encompassed by one degree latitude and one degree longitude, used in mapping bird distribution in both Idaho and Montana).

LOONS TO DUCKS

A Pacific Loon at C.J. Strike Res., Owyhee, ID, on the Bruneau CBC Dec. 21 was rare, but not unprecedented (DHa, RLR). Approximately 20 Com. Loons were reported throughout Idaho during the season (m.ob.), higher than normal. Nine lingering W. Grebes at Cascade Res., Valley, ID, Dec. 10 provided a winter first for Latilong 11 (RM). Two late **Clark's Grebes** spotted on the Bruneau, ID, CBC Dec. 21 represented a first seasonal record for Latilong 24, and only the 2nd winter sighting in Idaho (DHa, RLR). Seasonally rare Am. White Pelicans in Idaho included three on the Bruneau CBC Dec. 21 (JD), two at A.F.R. Dec. 21 (CT), and three that wintered near Buhl (m.ob.).

Overwintering Great Egrets in s. Idaho are rare, but several stayed this year, including one near Bruneau Dec. 21 (DHa, RLR), five at H.W.M.A. Feb. 5 (MCR), and one-two near Letha, *Gem*, ID, Feb. 9 & 19 (RM, CFZ, MZ). Black-crowned Night-Herons are uncommon and local migrants in n. Idaho, and are especially rare in winter. Two Black-crowneds were in Lewiston, ID, Feb. 8 (CM), with at least one persisting to Feb. 12 (CS).

The 128 Tundra Swans at Dry L., *Canyon*, ID, Feb. 20 were notable for their early arrival (MC, FK). A Trumpeter Swan on the Warm Springs, MT, CBC Dec. 20 was a winter first for Latilong 27 (KS). Seasonally rare Idaho waterfowl included a Greater White-fronted Goose at Medicine L., *Kootenai*, Feb. 12 (G&PC, SS), a Snow Goose in Marsing Jan. 5–15 (RE), two Snows on the Bruneau CBC Dec. 21 (TH, MMc), another Snow Goose that wintered at D.F.N.W.R. (JG), and single Ross's Geese at H.W.M.A. Jan. 5 (CT) and near Orofino Jan. 24 (CS). The 22 Snow Geese in Meridian, ID, Feb. 7 were very early (*vide* DT). Idaho's 8th **Brant** lingered in Boise until Jan. 24, providing a state winter first (DT, m.ob.).

An Am. Black Duck shot at Dixon, MT, Jan. 7 was a winter first for Latilong 14 (BJ, JM). Eurasian Wigeon in Idaho included two–three overwintering males in Marsing (JG, DM, DT) and one in Boise (m.ob.). Two–three Oldsquaws below A.F.R. dam Dec. 7–Jan. 21 were unusual fall holdovers (CT et al.). Idaho's 3rd **Black Scoter** lingered below A.F.R. dam until Dec. 8 (CT). Other late ducks included two White-winged Scoters at A.F.R. Dec. 6 and one at Register Rock S.P., *Power*, ID, Jan. 10 (CT). Nineteen Red-breasted Mergansers on the Bruneau CBC Dec. 21 provided a new high count for s.w. Idaho (DM).

HAWKS TO GULLS

Red-shouldered Hawks were again in the spotlight. Montana's 4th Red-shouldered Hawk lingered w. of Ronan until Dec. 12 (CO). Originally sighted at D.F.N.W.R. Oct. 25, Idaho's 3rd Red-shouldered Hawk was refound Feb. 14–28 (JG, DL). Another Red-shouldered was at F.B.W.M.A. Feb. 16–28 (MCR, JG). Amazingly, three of Idaho's four Red-shouldered Hawks have been reported just since last fall!

Red-tailed Hawks at D.F.N.W.R. were observed nest-building on the very early date of Jan. 30 (JG). Locally rare Ferruginous Hawks provided latilong winter firsts near Ronan, MT, Dec. 1–Feb. 6 (CO, JM),

near Rexburg, ID, Dec. 27 (RG), and Bozeman, MT, Feb. 21 (MM). Two Ferruginous Hawks were at Whitefish, MT, Jan. 11 (FC). Rough-legged Hawk numbers were again good in n.w. Montana's Mission Valley, and the season was characterized as a "banner year" for the species in nearby Flathead Valley (DC). The communal roost near Ronan, *Lake*, MT, peaked at an impressive 204 birds Dec. 29 (CO).

A Golden Eagle spotted near Prichard, *Shoshone*, ID, Dec. 25 furnished a winter first for Latilong 3 (CL). Gyrfalcon sightings included singles near Pablo, MT, Dec. 18 (CO); on the Bozeman CBC Jan. 3 (EA, KA, MA); in the Birch Cr. Valley, *Clark*, ID, Jan. 5 (CT); near Ronan, MT, Feb. 8 (CO); and near Ennis L., *Madison*, MT, Feb. 12 (JCa, SE). The Gyr that has wintered near Gannett, ID, since 1994 was again present this year, Dec. 1–Feb. 28 (m.ob.).

Two Sandhill Cranes on the Stevensville CBC Dec. 27 furnished Montana's 4th winter sighting (WT). A pair of Sandhills near Marsing, ID, Jan. 31 were considered very early migrants (JG). A Greater Yellowlegs below A.F.R. dam Feb. 1 provided a very rare seasonal sighting (MCR). Three–four Dunlins at Dry L., *Canyon*, ID, Dec. 27–Feb. 28 were unusual, although this is one of 2 Idaho locations where wintering Dunlins might be expected (JG, DM, RLR).

Rare gulls were again numerous. Late Bonaparte's Gulls included 150 at A.F.R. Dec. 3 (MCR) and one at D.F.N.W.R. Dec. 13 (DM). Mew Gulls were widespread in Idaho with single immatures in Coeur d'Alene Dec. 18 (DF, EF), Lewiston Jan. 31 (KD), near Buhl Jan. 17–Feb. 5 (m.ob.), and at C.J. Strike Res. Feb. 6 & 8 (MCR). Single ad. Mews were noted in Coeur d'Alene Dec. 21–Jan. 12 (KD, JW) and at A.F.R. Jan. 26 and Feb. 1 (MCR). Single Idaho Thayer's Gulls were in Coeur d'Alene Dec. 21 (JW), Boise Jan. 4 (DT), and Lewiston Jan. 16–17 (MK, CV). Idaho Glaucous-winged Gulls included an adult in Boise Jan. 9 (MC, FK), a first-winter near Buhl Jan. 17–Feb. 5 (MCR, m.ob.), and a first-winter that overwintered in Boise, a first for Latilong 17 (DT). Immature Glaucous Gull singles were at H.W.M.A. Dec. 14 (CT); Helena, MT, Dec. 20 (CJ); and Coeur d'Alene Dec. 21 (JW). Single ad. Glaucous Gulls were in Coeur d'Alene Dec. 21 and Jan. 12 (KD, JW) and Polson, MT, Feb. 14 (DH, JM). A **Ross's Gull**, a first for Idaho and the Region, was at A.F.R. Jan. 21–27, and was enjoyed by many birders (MCR, ph. DM, m.ob.).

OWLS TO WARBLERS

A Barn Owl near Springfield, ID, Jan. 31 provided the first winter record for Latilong 21 (CT). The W. Screech-Owl near Kalispell, MT, Jan. 22 was a rare find (DC), although the species is likely more regular and widespread in that area than is currently known. Only three–five Great Gray Owls were seen near Tetonia, ID, this winter, compared to a single-day count of 16 last winter (*vide* SP). Long-eared Owls near Polson were already on eggs Feb. 12 (JM).

Three Anna's Hummingbirds were in Boise Dec. 1–Jan. 15 (DT). There are less than 10 winter records for Idaho. One–two Lewis's Woodpeckers overwintered in Boise, a first for Latilong 17 (LB, DHa, DM). Single Red-naped Sapsuckers spotted on the Sandpoint, ID, CBC Dec. 19 (EC) and in Bonners Ferry, ID, Dec. 20 (DF) were winter firsts for Latilong 1. Two seasonally rare Horned Larks were near Rathdrum, ID, Feb. 6 (CC).

About 35 Blue Jays overwintered in Idaho (m.ob.), a five-fold increase over last winter. The eight Blue Jays tallied on the Hamilton, MT, CBC Dec. 20 doubled the previous high count (JO).

Six to eight locally-rare Bewick's Wrens survived the mild winter in n. Idaho (KD). A **House Wren** spotted on the Bigfork, MT, CBC Dec. 20 was a state winter first (DC). Seasonally rare bluebird sightings included two Westerns in Pocatello, ID, Jan. 18 (MD), and a Mountain in the Helena Valley, *Lewis and Clark*, MT, in late February (DB). A Hermit Thrush tarried below A.F.R. dam Dec. 7 (CT, DT). A N. Mockingbird overwintered near Florence, MT, a first for Latilong 25 (WT, m.ob.).

Overwintering Orange-crowned Warblers are rare in Idaho, so six at F.B.W.M.A. Jan. 24–Feb. 14 (MCR, DL) and one–three at D.F.N.W.R. Dec. 27–Feb. 28 (DM, DT) were noteworthy. The Yellow-rumped Warbler that overwintered in Kalispell, MT, provided a seasonal first for Latilong 2 (LL).

SPARROWS TO GOLDFINCHES

Three White-throated Sparrows overwintered below A.F.R. dam (MCR, CT). Three–four Harris's Sparrows along Indian Cr., *Elmore*, ID, Dec. 20 & 25 furnished a winter first for Latilong 18 (DM, CSy).

Red-winged Blackbirds wintered in mountain valleys in record numbers and commenced breeding activity 2 weeks early (DC, PM). Two seasonally rare Yellow-headed Blackbirds were near Springfield, ID, Jan. 31 (CT). Four of the Great-tailed Grackles reported last fall from Marsing,

ID, stayed the winter (JG). Pocatello hosted a pair of Great-tailed Grackles Jan. 18 (MCR) and three Com. Grackles Dec. 28 (JC), both seasonal firsts for Latilong 27.

Rosy-finches were absent from some traditional wintering areas, so a mixed flock of up to 1000 Blacks and Gray-crowns near Challis Feb. 22 was significant (DF, EF). A Regionally rare Purple Finch was in Somers, MT, Jan. 4 (DC). Reports indicated a significant, though sporadic, invasion of Red and White-winged crossbills across the Region (EC, SG, CS).

A major invasion of Com. Redpolls occurred in n. mountain valleys, with the largest numbers found in Glacier N.P., Kalispell, and Sandpoint areas (DC, EC, SG). A **Lesser Goldfinch** spotted near Mayfield, Ada, Dec. 20 & 25 represented the first seasonal sighting ever in Idaho (DT).

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Place names that are frequently mentioned, but very long, may be abbreviated in a form such as "C.B.B.T." or "W.P.B.O." Such local abbreviations will be explained in a key at the beginning of the particular regional report in which they are used. Standard abbreviations that are used throughout *Field Notes* are keyed on page 160.

mountain west region



VAN A. TRUAN and BRANDON K. PERCIVAL

El Niño was not a terror, as predicted, in most of the Region. As a whole, winter temperatures were fairly mild. Many lakes didn't freeze this winter and a number of species wintered north of their normal ranges. The Las Vegas area had the wettest February on record, but Wyoming and most of Colorado were below normal in moisture. Colorado's snow pack was below average, and the Nevada Sierras were well above. The mild winter allowed fall migrants to stay well into the winter, and there were some early spring migrants.

Reports received from throughout the Region reported low to non-existent wintering finches. This could have been due to warm weather, lack of snow, or the wet summer and fall of 1997, which may have provided plenty of natural food for them.

Abbreviations: C.B.R.C. (*Colorado Bird Records Committee*); D.M.N.H. (*Denver Museum of Natural History*); G.S.L. (*Great Salt Lake, UT*); S.W.A. (*State Wildlife Area*).

LOONS THROUGH IBISES

Up to two Pacific Loons were reported from Chatfield Res., *Jefferson*, CO, Dec. 1–20 (JK, BB, m.ob.); one–three were at Quail Creek Res., *Washington*, UT, Dec. 1–Feb. 15 (MS, DW, SDS, PRS); an adult was at L. Powell, UT, Dec. 29 (JSp); and up to two were at Pueblo Res., *Pueblo*, CO, Jan. 11–19 (BKP, TL, JK, CLW). An imm. Yellow-billed Loon stayed to Dec. 22 at Chatfield Res., CO (v.o.). Reports of wintering Horned Grebes were higher than usual from the Sierras e. into the Great Basin. There were up to six at L. Powell, UT, Dec. 2–29 (JSp); one at Reno, NV, Dec. 9–20 (MM); two at Sandberg Pond/Quail Creek Res., UT, Jan. 2 (SDS, JKr); one at Quail Creek Res., UT, Jan. 24 (SDS, PRS, JKr); a high count of 23 at L. Powell, UT, Jan. 28–30 (JSp); and five at Pyramid L., *Washoe*, NV, Feb. 20 (MM). A first-year Red-necked Grebe was at Green R., *Sweetwater*, WY, Dec. 20 (RSt). A high count of 3000+ Western/Clark's Grebes came from L. Mead, *Clark*, NV, Jan. 10 (JCr, MC). Reports of wintering Clark's appeared higher than average. In Colorado, there was one at Pueblo Res. Dec. 1–Feb. 8 (BKP, m.ob.); three at Chatfield Res. Dec. 3 (TL); one at L. Cheraw, *Otero*, Dec. 17–22 (VAT,