

Idaho-Western Montana



David Trochlell
1931 Tallwood Lane
Boise, Idaho 83706
(dtrochle@cyberhighway.net)

Autumn 2000 was a season of weather extremes. August was unusually hot and dry, with smoke-filled skies from wildfires. September's rainfall brought relief to the parched Region, followed by unusually high rainfall in October. Unlike the past three mild Novembers, this one was colder than usual, and early snowfalls created expectations of a more "normal" winter.

Major trends were absent, although some observers noted early arrivals of migrants and wintering birds. Early fall saw unusually large numbers of waders, waterfowl, and shorebirds attracted to drying reservoirs with expanding mudflats and shallow water. Oddly enough, despite the unusually cold November, many migrants lingered. Perhaps what best defined

the season was the excellent number of rarities reported, as evidenced by an amazing 15 reports that warranted boldface type.

Abbreviations: A.F.R. (American Falls Res., by American Falls, ID); Camas (Camas N.W.R., Jefferson, ID); D.F. (Deer Flat N.W.R., Canyon, ID); I.B.O. (Idaho Bird Observatory at Lucky Peak, near Boise, ID); Latilong (area encompassed by one degree latitude and one degree longitude, used in mapping bird distribution in both ID and MT); L.M. (Lee Metcalf N.W.R., Ravalli, MT).

Loons Through Ducks

Like last fall, the Region's only Red-throated Loon was at Coeur d'Alene L., Kootenai, ID, 7 Oct (JD). Just 7 Pacific Loons were reported in Idaho, the lowest total in years. The best *Gavia* reported was a Yellow-billed Loon in Fremont, ID, 1-10 Nov (CW). A tally of 93 Pied-billed Grebes at L.M. 2 Oct (WT) was exceptional.

Also impressive were 300 American White Pelicans at D.F. 25 Aug (DL) and 388 at Cascade Res., Valley, ID, 3 Sep (JG). Extralimital waders included a Great Egret at Smith L., Flathead, MT, 10-21 Aug (DC), 1-4 Cattle Egrets near D.F. 14 Oct-3 Nov (JG), a Cattle Egret in Boise, ID, 28 Nov (MC, FK), and a Green Heron in Owyhee, ID, 21-23 Oct (RLR, DT). An amazing concentration of 20,000 White-faced Ibises staged at A.F.R. 1-27 Aug (MCr).

Greater White-fronted Geese seldom visit w. Montana, so 5 in Helena 24 Sep (JS), 1-7 in Missoula 1 & 8 Oct (CP, SF), and ≤ 34 at L.M. 7-8 Oct (WT) were noteworthy. Two **Black Brants** in Owyhee 24 Sep-13 Oct (LG, m.ob.) provided Idaho's 9th record and a first for Latilong 24. An **American Black Duck** at Mann L., Nez Perce, ID, 19-30 Nov (JL) was Idaho's 6th. The only reported Eurasian Wigeons were Idaho singles in Lewiston 15 Oct (JL) and Boise 17-30 Nov (DT). Concentrations of >300 Canvasbacks at Mann L., ID, 11 Oct (BJ) and >10,000 Redheads at Ennis L., Madison, MT, 3 Nov (JP) were impressive. Both rare and late was a Harlequin Duck in Lewiston, ID, 23 Nov (JL). Other rare sea ducks reported were 1-3 Long-tailed Ducks at L.M. 26-27 Oct & 9 Nov (WT), a Surf Scoter at Mann L., ID, 4 Oct (BJ), and 2 White-winged Scoters in Bonner, ID, 25 Oct (PC). Two **Black Scoters** near Missoula 28 Oct (CP, et al.) furnished Montana's 7th record. The Common Teal at L.M. 1-10 Nov (WT) was likely the same one present in Mar and Apr.

Raptors Through Terns

Exceptionally late were an Osprey in Boise, ID, 30 Nov (DT) and a Swainson's Hawk in Broadwater, MT, 24 Oct (EA). A fall survey at Coeur d'Alene L., ID, reported the highest Bald Eagle counts in 20+ years (CC). A **Red-shouldered Hawk** in Valley 1 Sep (CS) and 1-2 at A.F.R. 6 Sep-3 Oct (MCr, m.ob.) provided Idaho's 9th and 10th records. Numbers of Broad-winged Hawks in Idaho were up slightly from last year, with a total of 17 at I.B.O. 30 Aug-26 Sep, and singles at Boise 28-31 Aug and 1 Oct (MW, DT) and in Bingham 16 Sep (DB).

The season's tally of 29 American Golden-Plovers was an unusually good showing. Record shorebird counts at or near A.F.R. included >1000 American Avocets 8-10 Sep, >800 Lesser Yellowlegs 28 Aug, 48 Sanderlings 15 Sep, >500 Long-billed Dowitchers 8 Sep, and >3000 Red-necked Phalaropes 11-15 Sep (MCr). Shorebird rarities at A.F.R. included a Snowy Plover 3-9 Sep (DB, m.ob.), 1-3 Whimbrels 13 Aug and 3 Sep (DB, †DTa), 1-2

Stilt Sandpipers 26 Aug–11 Sep 9 (m.ob.), and Idaho's 2nd **Buff-breasted Sandpiper** 25–27 Aug (MCR, m.ob.). Unusual shorebirds near Missoula, MT, included a Marbled Godwit 11 Aug, a Ruddy Turnstone 19 Aug, 2 Sanderlings 27 Aug and 3 Sep, 1–3 Dunlins 24 Sep and 29 Oct, and 2 Stilt Sandpipers 20 & 31 Aug (CP, TT, BW). The highlight of the season was a **Sharp-tailed Sandpiper** in Canyon 29 Sep–2 Oct (ph.DL, RLR, †DT, m.ob.), a first for Idaho and the Region. Late were American Avocets in Owyhee, ID, 21 Oct (JG) and at A.F.R. 22 Oct (DB), and 2 Greater Yellowlegs at D.F. 23 Nov (JG). Always rare, Short-billed Dowitchers were noted in Gooding, ID, 22 Aug (KF), Ada, ID, 2 Sep (JC), and at A.F.R. 6 & 17 Sep (DB, MCR).

It was a good season for rare *Laridae*. **Pomarine Jaegers** at Sandpoint, Bonner, ID, 11 Sep (†EC), and Polson, MT, 15–16 Nov (DC, CP) provided 6th records for both states. Even more surprising were **Long-tailed Jaegers** at D.F. 1–9 Sep (JG, ph. DL, m.ob.) and Priest L., Bonner 1 Sep (RB), representing Idaho's 3rd and 4th records. A tally of the Region's rare-but-annual gulls included 4 Mews, 3 Thayer's, 3 Glaucous-wingeds, and one Glaucous. Idaho reported a total of 13 Sabine's Gulls 3 Sep–7 Oct, likely a record high. Usually less than annual, Arctic Terns also made a fair showing with one in Jefferson, ID, 22 Sep (MCR, GR) and 1–2 at A.F.R. 24–27 Sep (DB, D&EF).

Cuckoos Through Mockingbirds

Especially interesting was a wayward Yellow-billed Cuckoo in Boise 3 Aug (MJ); there is no confirmed breeding for this species in sw. Idaho. Two Black Swifts in Boise, ID, 5 Sep (MC, FK) were also unusual, and another in Elmore, ID, 13 Oct (MJ, DT) was both rare and record-late. Interesting was a Barred Owl that returned for the 2nd consecutive fall to Boise, ID, 31 Oct+ (MC, FK). Owl captures at I.B.O. included 7 Flammulateds, 2 Boreals, and 140 Northern Saw-whets 25 Aug–27 Oct (SH), down from last year's record numbers. Anna's Hummingbirds visited Valley, ID, 5 Aug (CS) and Florence, MT, 5–28 Oct (MD). Unusually late was a Dusky Flycatcher in Twin Falls, ID, 5 Nov (KF). Extralimitals captured at I.B.O. included 2 Gray Flycatchers 8 Aug and 7 Sep, and 3 **Pacific-slope Flycatchers** 4 & 25 Aug (JC). Ash-throated Flycatchers also wandered out of range to Ada 5 Aug (DH), Owyhee 26 Sep (RLR), and Jefferson 3 Oct (GR).

Exceptional were single **Blue-headed Vireos** at I.B.O. 23 Sep (JC) and in Boise, ID, 24 Sep (MC, FK). Other notable vireos

included a late Cassin's in Boise, ID, 20 Oct (DT) and a few wayward Plumbeous at D.F. 17 Sep (JA) and Boise 23–24 Sep (DT). Several scattered reports of Blue Jays came from Montana, but Idaho's total of 7 was the lowest in five years. Even more interesting were 2 apparent Blue x Steller's Jays in Coeur d'Alene, ID, 8 Oct+ (BG, †SS). Flocks of Pinyon Jays that wandered to Missoula and Ravalli, MT, 23 Sep–30 Nov (WL, JW) were unusual though not unprecedented. Other notable strays included a White-breasted Nuthatch at A.F.R. 20 Sep (MCR, MJ), and both a Chestnut-backed Chickadee 25 Sep (JC) and a Bushtit 6 Aug (JC) at I.B.O. Montana enjoyed its first confirmed **Bewick's Wren** in Missoula 26–29 Oct (CP, m.ob.). Northern Mockingbirds made a good showing, with 1–3 in Bingham, ID, 1 Aug–5 Sep (DB), one at A.F.R. 8 Sep (MCR, DT), and one near Missoula, MT, 29 Oct (CP, TT).

Warblers Through Orioles

Rare "eastern" warblers were fewer than in the past two years but included several exceptional finds. Tennessee Warblers were noted at I.B.O. 1 Aug (JC), Camas 16 Sep (MCR, GR), and A.F.R. 24 Sep (DB). Two Yellow Warblers in Elmore, ID, 13 Oct (MJ, DT) were about three weeks late. A dead **Cape May Warbler** found in Missoula, MT, 14 Oct (MA) represented w. Montana's first record and the Region's 2nd. A **Bay-breasted Warbler** in Elmore 20 Oct (JA, †JG) provided Idaho's 3rd record. Idaho's 9th and 10th **Blackpoll Warblers** were at Camas 16 Sep (MCR, GR) and in Boise 23 Sep (MC, FK). Rare but now expected were Black-and-white Warblers in Boise, ID, 9 Sep (MC, FK), I.B.O. 12 Sep (JC), and Bozeman, MT, 15 Oct (JP), and an Ovenbird in Boise 12 Sep (MC, FK).

Rare grosbeaks included single Rose-breasted in Valley, ID, 6 & 12 Aug (CS) and Madison, MT, 23 Aug (MB), and a Blue in Twin Falls, ID, 3 Aug (KF). Montana's news-worthy sparrows included an unusually late Chipping near Bozeman 7 Nov (JCn) and a rare Swamp at L.M. 14 Oct (DG). Reports of unusual *Zonotrichia* sparrows were few; Idaho's totals of 7 White-throateds, 3 Golden-crowned, and one Harris's were the lowest in years. It was a good year for Snow Buntings, with an impressive flock of 500 in Polson, MT, 15 Nov (DC). It was also a banner year for Rusty Blackbirds, with 6 in Bonner, ID, 9 Sep (EC), a flock of 40 near Bozeman, MT, 13 Oct (EA), 4 at L.M. 13 Oct (WT), and 3 in Polson, MT, 16–21 Nov (CP, WT). A pair of Great-tailed Grackles with nestlings at A.F.R. 5 Aug (MCR) confirmed breeding in Latilong 27,

and 4 adults with a juvenile at D.F. 12 Aug (JG) also indicated local nesting. Common Grackles were down from last year's record numbers; the only one reported was in Caldwell, ID, 18 Sep (JG). The **Hooded Oriole** in Meridian, ID, stayed to 1 Aug (RG)

Contributors (subregional editors in boldface):

IDAHO: Jack Alban, Robert Bond, Dave Burrup, Corrine Cameron, Jay Carlisle, Earl Chapin, Pat Cole, Marty Collar (MCR), Mark Collie, Judy Dearborn, **Kas Dumroese**, Dave and Elise Faike, Kent Fothergill, **John Gatchet**, Laurie Goodrich, Bill Gundlach, Ruthann Greene, Sarah Hamilton, Dave Hazelton, Bryan Jamison, Marlin Jones, Florence Knoll, **Merlene Koliner**, Dave Lawrence, Joe Lipar, Greg Rice, **Hadley Roberts**, R.L. Rowland, **Shirley Sturts**, Colleen Sweeney, Dan Taylor (DTa), David Trochlell, **Chuck Trost**, Cliff Weisse, Michael Wiegand, **Poo Wright-Pulliam**
MONTANA: Masanori Abe, Eric Atkinson, Mike Becker, John Carlson (JCn), **Dan Casey**, Marty Dubois, Sharon Fuller, Deb Goslin, Walter Lane, **Jeff Marks**, **John Parker**, Caleb Putnam, John Shipley, **Don Skaar**, Terry Toppins, Wayne Tree, Brett Walker, Jean Williams.



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