

Idaho—Western Montana



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The first two months of autumn 2001 were unusually warm and dry; in fact, this August was Idaho's warmest and Montana's 4th warmest ever recorded. October's cooler temperatures and rains brought welcome relief, but November was warmer than usual and somewhat dry, until a series of snowstorms ushered in an early winter at the end of the month.

As was the case last year, reservoir drawdowns in early fall attracted large numbers of waders and shorebirds, and migrants took advantage of the habitat and lingered in the mild weather of November. It was another spectacular season for vagrants; no fewer than three state "firsts" were recorded, and many other rarities were found as well.

Abbreviations: A.F.R. (American Falls Res., by American Falls, ID); Camas (Camas N.W.R., Jefferson, ID); I. B. O. (Idaho Bird Observatory at Lucky Peak, near Boise, ID); Market L. (Market Lake W.M.A., Jefferson, ID).

LOONS THROUGH SHOREBIRDS

Rarest of loons were Idaho's Red-throated Loon in Canyon 2 Nov (MC) and a Yellow-billed Loon in Bonner 15-30 Nov+ (EC). It was an excellent fall

for Pacific Loons, with 13 recorded. American White Pelicans were unusually plentiful, with peak counts of about 245 in Valley 8 Aug (RM) and 600 in Canyon 25 Aug (BC). Notable American White Pelicans were in Nez Perce, ID 12-20 Oct (BJ) and Madison, MT 16 Nov (JP). Unprecedented numbers of egrets wandered to the Region's north. A total of 8 Great Egrets and 6 Cattle Egrets visited Idaho's panhandle, and one Great Egret and 7 Cattle Egrets were reported in Lake, MT. Other extralimital waders included single Black-crowned Night-Herons near Helena, MT 11 Aug & 1 Sep (MV) and Missoula, MT 21 Aug (CP) and a Green Heron in Twin Falls, ID 15 Sep (L&J).

As last year, an estimated 20,000 White-faced Ibis staged at A.F.R. in Aug (Mcr). Single Mute Swans visited Idaho's Fremont 16 Aug (CW) and Canyon 19 Sep & 2 Oct (JH); they are increasingly reported in the Gem State. Also notable were 2 locally rare Greater White-fronted Geese in Flathead, MT 7 Oct (DC). A Snow Goose at A. F. R. 8 Aug (Mcr) was surprisingly early. Five Eurasian Wigeon were reported, up from last year. At least 3 Long-tailed Ducks visited both states, about average for fall. Scoters were unusually numerous. Reports included Idaho's 6th Black Scoter in Idaho Falls, 22-30 Nov+ (RM, m. ob.), as well as 13 Surfs and 15 White-wingeds.

Rare Red-shouldered Hawks visited Idaho at I. B. O. 5 Oct (JC), Boise 26 Oct (MC), and Valley 3 Nov (CS). It was a spectacular fall for Broad-winged Hawks, with totals of 30 at I. B. O., one in

Jefferson, ID 19 Sep (CW), and a record 36 at Montana's Bridger Ridge Hawk Watch. The only Gyrfalcon reported was in Lemhi, ID 17 Nov (GK). Overall numbers of American Golden-Plovers were down from last year, but these included a record flock of 13 in Valley, ID 13 Sep (BC). Rare Stilt Sandpipers made an excellent showing in Idaho; especially noteworthy was a record count of 23 at A.F.R. 7 Sep (CT). Five Short-billed Dowitchers were reported in Idaho, more than usual.

JAEGERS THROUGH THRASHERS

Two Parasitic Jaegers were at A.F.R. 30 Aug-24 Oct (CT), and one visited Kootenai, ID 15-16 Oct (LS). An ad. Little Gull that staged at A. F. R. 13-30 Nov+ (CT) provided Idaho's 5th record. The tally of rare-but-annual gulls was impressive: reports included 4 Mew, 12 Thayer's, several Glaucous-winged x Westerns, and 2 Glaucous-winged Gulls. A new record count of 15 Sabine's Gulls was tallied in Idaho 13 Sep-20 Oct. As expected, Arctic Terns stopped near A.F.R. dam; one was present 2 Sep (D&EF), while another there 29 Oct (MC) was late.

A surprising total of 6 Band-tailed Pigeons strayed to Idaho 12 Aug-23 Sep. Eurasian Collared-Doves continued to explore Idaho. At least one remained in Power 20 Oct (CT), while another 3 were discovered in Cassia 20 Oct-30 Nov+, and one was found in Cassia 17-30 Nov+ (RL). Especially rare in autumn was a Yellow-billed Cuckoo in Canyon 11 Sep (MJ). Owl captures at I. B. O. turned up 17 Flammulated, 2 Northern Pygmy-, one Long-eared, and 159 Northern Saw-whet Owls 29 Aug-28 Oct, significantly more than last year. Also noted at I. B. O. were 3 migrating



This female Costa's Hummingbird was first identified at Donna Hosko's home near Corvallis, Ravalli, Montana on 25 October 2001 and was last seen there on 20 November. This bird furnished a first record for Montana and the Region. *Photograph by Wayne Tree*



A good capture at the Idaho Bird Observatory was this first-fall female Bay-breasted Warbler, which provided Idaho's fourth record. It was banded by Jay Carlisle on 13 September 2001. Photograph by Ryan Brady.

Black Swifts 10 Sep (FV), where they are now nearly annual.

Hummingbirds made news in both states. A Black-chinned Hummingbird in Salmon, ID 16 Oct (HU) was unusually late. Anna's Hummingbirds seemed almost common, with a record 6 reported. Best of all was a female **Costa's Hummingbird** discovered in *Ravalli* 25 Oct-20 Nov (DH, ph. WT, m. ob.), which provided a first record for Montana and the Region. Idaho's 5th **Yellow-bellied Sapsucker** was netted at I. B. O. 29 Sep (JC). Captures at I. B. O. also included locally rare Gray Flycatchers 8 & 28 Aug and several Pacific-slope Flycatchers 11-14 Aug (JC). Another Gray in *Washington*, ID 13 Sep (F&MZ) provided a local first. Idaho's 8th **Scissor-tailed Flycatcher** was in *Gooding* 3 Sep (DK).

Only 4 Blue Jays were reported in Idaho, apparently the weakest flight in six years. Montana's scattered sightings included a downy juv. Blue Jay near Helena 18 Aug (ND) that indicated rare, local breeding. At least 6 Western Scrub-Jays wandered to *Gooding* and *Twin Falls*, ID 15 Oct-30 Nov+ (KF), and pairs of Pinyon Jays visited I. B. O. throughout Sep (FV) and *Ravalli*, MT 10-14 Oct (JMn). Record late was a Tree Swallow near Dillon, MT 22 Nov (JR). Extralimital single Idaho Bewick's Wrens turned up in Boise 20 Aug (MC), *Lemhi* 28 Sep (HU), and A. F. R. 5 Oct (CT). Montana birders discovered Northern Mockingbirds in *Madison* 20 Aug (DC) and near West Yellowstone 16 Sep (KD, PM). Brown Thrashers were found at Camas 29 Sep (MCR) and in Challis, ID 17 Nov (*fide* D&EF).

WARBLERS THROUGH FINCHES

It was an outstanding season for rare warblers. Both states reported 2 Tennessee Warblers 21 Aug-20 Sep. Even better was Idaho's 5th and first fall-

period **Northern Parula** at Camas 7 Sep (MCR). Chestnut-sided Warblers had their best year ever, with 7 reported 30 Aug-4 Oct. Another spectacular find was a **Cape May Warbler** in *Clark* 15 Sep (BD, GR) that provided Idaho's 2nd record. Idaho's 11th Black-throated Blue Warbler was found at Camas 7 Sep (MCR). The best capture of the fall at I. B. O. was Idaho's first **Blackburnian Warbler** 2 Sep (ph. RB, JC). Another good one at I. B. O. was Idaho's 4th **Bay-breasted Warbler** 13 Sep (ph. RB, JC). The only Black-and-white Warbler reported was at Camas 15-18 Aug (DCI). Boise hosted the only Palm Warbler 15 Sep (MC). A good total of 4 Blackpoll Warblers was seen in Idaho 28 Aug-23 Sep, where they are now expected in fall.

A male **Scarlet Tanager** discovered at Market L. 21-22 Aug (†DCI, MCR) furnished Idaho's first record. Amazingly, another one was discovered near Hailey, ID 2-5 Oct (ph. PWP, m. ob.). Especially rare in fall were single Rose-breasted Grosbeaks in Idaho's *Gem* 3-5 Sep (F&MZ), Pocatello 28 Sep-4 Oct (MCR), and *Blaine* 5-9 Oct (PWP, m. ob.). The Gem State's lineup of best sparrows included a "Timberline" Brewer's Sparrow captured at I. B. O. 8 Sep (ph. JC), Grasshopper Sparrows in *Kootenai* 16 Sep (SL), and single Red Fox Sparrows in Boise 20-21 Oct (RLR, †DT) and *Gem* 5-6 Nov (†F&MZ). About 25 White-throated Sparrows, 6 Golden-crowned Sparrows, and 10 Harris's Sparrows were reported, fairly typical numbers. Rare anywhere in the Region were Rusty

Blackbirds in Montana's *Flathead* 21 Nov (BR) and *Ravalli* 25-30 Nov+ (CP). Idaho Great-tailed Grackles explored new territory. A pair was found in *Bingham* 21 Oct (D&EF), and 4 were in *Owyhee* 4 Nov (SP). A record flock of up to 50 Common Grackles staged in Challis, ID 2-21 Sep (D&EF), and at least 3 were in *Flathead*, MT 21 Nov (BR). Common Redpolls were widespread and increasingly reported by late Nov, presaging a major irruption. A wayward Lesser Goldfinch in *Blaine*, ID 24 Nov (BS) furnished a local first.

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Temperatures in the Region were above average this fall, and much of the Region continued to remain drier than normal. Strong cold fronts, which typically push migrants into the southern part of the Region, were scarce this fall and affected mostly the northern parts