

28 Feb (*vide* CB, ph.). Several Altamira Orioles frequented San Ygnacio, *Zapata* during the season (m. ob.). A lingering Baltimore Oriole was at Buescher, *Bastrop* 5 Dec (BF). Providing a rare winter records was a male Baltimore in *Mason* 13 Dec (DF, BoF) and 2 birds 13 km s. of Alpine, *Brewster* 14 Jan (DWh) was equally rare. Even more astounding was a male Scott's Oriole in nw. *Collingsworth* 1 Dec († EK et al.) provided only the 5th Panhandle record and the first for winter. Purple Finches showed up in the Panhandle this season, with 2 at Happy, *Swisher* 31 Dec (I&WJ) and L. Tanglewood 2 Feb (TLJ). Cassin's Finches were generally absent this winter, but 3 were in the Davis Mts. 28 Feb (M&ME). **White-winged Crossbills** made an unprecedented appearance in the Panhandle this season, with 4 individuals noted. A female was at L. Tangelwood 24-28 Dec (TLJ, †BP, m. ob.), an ad. male was in Amarillo, *Randall* 30 Dec—29 Jan (†B&PN, m. ob.), another male was across town 23 Jan (†GH), and an imm. male was at the same location as the previously mentioned female 27 Jan—6 Feb (TLJ, †RSc, m. ob.). A Lesser Goldfinch was photographed at Hitchcock, *Galveston* 10 Feb (TO). The only Evening Grosbeak reported this season was one in Nacogdoches in late Jan (CM).

Undocumented reports

There were reports without details of Red-necked Grebe in *Travis*, Northern Goshawk in *Lubbock* and *Smith*, and Golden-crowned Sparrow in *El Paso*.

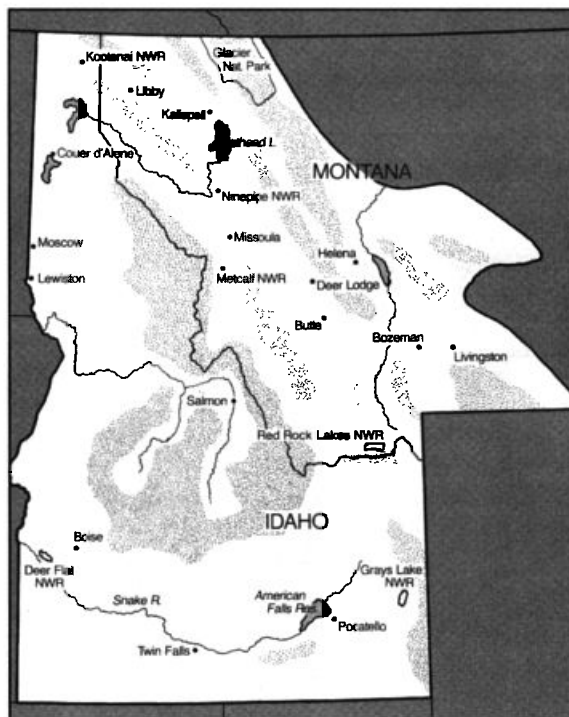
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Idaho-Western Montana



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The winter of 2001 was mild to average, without dramatic weather events or Arctic cold fronts. Even the coldest locations experienced few subzero days, and these periods were of short duration. Precipitation was unevenly

distributed across the Region, with northern areas receiving adequate amounts but parts of southern Idaho left drier than usual. Several of the large northern lakes remained ice-free the entire season, enticing good numbers of waterfowl to remain.

It now seems to be almost a cliché to report increasing numbers of half-hardy birds in the Region each winter. But numbers of these birds were certainly up again this winter, as evidenced by several record December counts made for doves, thrushes, waxwings, and towhees. Perhaps what was most unique and thought-provoking about this winter was that a few Neotropical migrants, including a Northern Rough-winged Swallow, a Western Tanager, and a Bullock's Oriole, stayed into December. These holdover surprises—plus spectacular rarities such as Yellow-billed Loon, Black Scoter, Yellow-bellied Sapsucker, Le Conte's Sparrow, and Brambling—made for a thoroughly enjoyable season.

With this column we say goodbye to subregional editor Merlene Koliner, who retires with over 15 years of dedicated service to the birds and birders of this journal. Her unerringly accurate, complete, and punctual hand-typed reports were always a pleasure to read, and they will be missed. Thank you, Merlene, for a job well done! This column is dedicated to you.

Abbreviations: A.F.R. (American Falls Res., by American Falls, Idaho); L.M. (Lee Metcalf NWR, Ravalli, MT).

LOONS THROUGH CRANES

Among the rarest winter visitors were up to 2 Yellow-billed Loons at L. Pend Oreille, Bonner, ID 1 Dec—8 Jan (EC). Two unusually late Pacific Loons in Kootenai 1-11 Dec (LH, SL) were noteworthy; only about three previous winter records exist for Idaho. Both states found unseasonal grebes; Idaho reported 2 Eareds and a Clark's in Dec, and Montana recorded an Eared that overwintered at L.M. Although uncommon and local in s. Idaho, a pair of Trumpeter Swans in n. Idaho's Kootenai 16-27 Dec (LH, SL) was unexpected. The season's tally of lingering white geese was fairly typical, with 8 Greater White-fronteds, 8 Snows, and 2 Ross's Geese reported. Other fall holdovers included 2 Cinnamon Teal in Canyon (FH), which provided a first overwintering record for Idaho. The Gem State reported 9 Eurasian Wigeon, a very good winter total. Among the wintering duck flocks were interesting hybrids including a Eurasian x American Wigeon and a Common Goldeneye x Hooded Merganser in Gooding, ID 1-2 Jan (KF) Seven Harlequin Ducks in Kootenai 15

Dec (AB) and another that overwintered in Flathead (SG) represented Montana's 2nd and 3rd winter records. Especially rare in winter was a Long-tailed Duck in Flathead, MT 16 Dec (SG) and 3 in Lewiston, ID 1-27 Jan (RW, m. ob.). Idaho's 6th **Black Scoter** at Idaho Falls persisted until 1 Dec, providing the Region's first winter-period record. Another Regional first was furnished by a Surf Scoter that overwintered in Kootenai, ID (m. ob.). Completing the scoter trio was a late White-winged Scoter that persisted in Kootenai, ID until 15 Dec (SL). It appears that Idaho's Ospreys are staying later each year; singles were reported in Canyon 10 Dec (BC), Boise 15-16 Dec (JC, DT), and in Lemhi 26 Dec (D&EF). Ferruginous Hawks are very unusual anywhere away from s. Idaho in winter, making one in Lake, MT 31 Jan—28 Feb+ (LW) a good find. It was a very good winter for Gyrfalcons, with singles found in Blaine, ID 29 Dec (KF), Nez Perce, ID 1-16 Jan (ph. †KC, m. ob.), Caribou, ID 27 Jan (C&JO), Flathead, MT 8-10 Feb (DC, BR), and Butte, ID 10 Feb (C&JO). Both states reported tardy Sandhill Cranes, with singles in Ravalli, MT 1-31 Dec (WT), Twin Falls, ID 15 Dec (DR), and near Livingston, MT 29 Dec (*vide* JP).

SHOREBIRDS THROUGH WRENS

An exceptionally late Spotted Sandpiper in Owyhee 22 Dec (HW) represented Idaho's 6th winter record. Two Dunlins in Nez Perce, ID 5 Jan—2 Feb (m. ob.) were also a great find; they are less than annual in winter. A few Idaho Least Sandpipers also attempted to winter, with up to 5 in Minidoka 3-22 Dec (SB, JC) and 2 in Gem 14 Feb (RM).

A **Little Gull** that persisted at A.F.R. until 10 Dec (CT) provided a first winter record for Idaho. Surprising were up to 4 Bonaparte's Gulls in Kootenai, ID 11 Dec—2 Jan (LH, SS) and one in Lake, MT 29 Jan (BR). The season's tally of rare-but-expected gulls was similar to last year, and included 6 Mews, 9 Thayer's, one Glaucous, and an "Olympic Gull," a Glaucous-winged x Western hybrid.

Eurasian Collared-Doves overwintered at three Idaho locations; 3 were in Burley (RL), one was in Cassia (RL), and a flock of at least 11 was near American Falls (CT). Snowy Owls made a good showing in Idaho, with singles reported in Adams 8 Dec (AA), Kootenai 1 Jan (SL), and Bonneville 6 Feb (PB). A **Burrowing Owl** that was monitored the entire season in Elmore (RB) provided an interesting winter first for Idaho. Two Anna's Hummingbirds persisted in Missoula, MT 1-30 Dec, and one survived until 24 Feb, when it was captured for rehabilitation (S&GS). For the 4th consecutive

year, hardy single Lewis's Woodpeckers wintered in Boise, ID (RLR, DT) and Ravalli, MT (CP). One highlight was a **Yellow-bellied Sapsucker** in Gooding, ID 7 Feb (KF) that represented Idaho's 2nd winter record. Unusually late were 2 Red-naped Sapsuckers near Bigfork, MT 13 Dec (BR) and a Williamson's Sapsucker in Gem, ID 12-18 Dec (F&MZ). Only 3 Blue Jays were reported in Idaho, the lowest winter total in six years. Other wandering jays included a Western Scrub-Jay in Gooding, ID 1 Dec—16 Jan (KF) and a Pinyon Jay in Ravalli, MT 9 Jan (WT). An exceptionally late **Northern Rough-winged Swallow** in Gooding, ID 22 Dec (SH) and 2 early **Violet-green Swallows** in Lewiston, ID 23 Feb (CS) provided interesting Regional winter firsts. Extralimital Bewick's Wrens turned up near Boise 15 Dec—10 Feb (RLR, DT) and in Canyon 17 Feb (CSy). A tardy House Wren spotted in Lake, MT 17 Dec (DC) was exceptional; only a handful of winter records exist in the Region.

THRUSHES THROUGH FINCHES

Mountain Bluebirds made a very good showing, but far more unusual were 6 Western Bluebirds that overwintered in Kootenai, ID (CL) and another Western near Boise 13-15 Dec (RLR, DT). Like last year, American Robins were unusually numerous throughout the Region; record-high counts were made on nw. Montana C.B.C.s in Dec (DC). Especially rare in winter were single Northern Mockingbirds in Canyon, ID 26 Dec—28 Feb (FH), Twin Falls, ID 13 Jan (KF), and Flathead, MT 21 Feb (DC, BR). Bohemian Waxwings stormed through nw. Montana in huge numbers; the 11,059 tallied on the Kalispell C B C 30 Dec (DC) was likely a new Regional record. Southwest Idaho's Orange-crowned Warbler numbers were on par with last year, with a total of 8 reported. Both amazing and unprecedented was the male **Western Tanager** that lingered in Kootenai, ID 1-2 Jan (LH, MMo, SS). Exceptional numbers of Spotted Towhees were reported in both states. Seasonally rare sparrows included a Chipping Sparrow in Gem, ID 8 Feb (F&MZ), a Vesper Sparrow in Ravalli, MT 7-18 Dec (†, ph. WT), a Savannah Sparrow in Flathead, MT 8 Feb (DC), and a Swamp Sparrow in Benewah, ID 29 Dec—1 Jan (SL). Even better was the **LeConte's Sparrow** discovered at L.M. 29 Dec (WT), a sensational winter first for the Region. A rare Rusty Blackbird was found near L.M. 1-14 Dec (CP), and up to 3 wintered in Flathead, MT (DC, BR). Overwintering Idaho Great-tailed Grackles were down from last year; they consisted of 6 in Marsing (RLR, DT), up to 2 in American

Falls (CT), and 3 in *Owyhee* (SP). Like last year, 3 rare Common Grackles lingered into Dec in w Montana. Another incredible winter Regional first was a male **Bullock's Oriole** photographed in Hamilton, MT 24-25 Dec (MD, MN, CP). A Purple Finch was a good find in Blackfoot 15 Dec—24 Feb (BCa); they are less than annual in Idaho. Another of the season's highlights featured Montana's 6th **Brambling** in Lake 21 Jan—28 Feb+ (MM). It was a banner year for Common Redpolls; thousands visited northerly locations and a few even made it to s. Idaho locations that had not seen them in over 20 years. Unprecedented

numbers of Hoary Redpolls came with them, with reports of at least 15 in Idaho and 60 in Montana. More Lesser Goldfinches appear to be staying in the Gem State after late fall; at least 12 overwintered near Boise (RLR, DT), and 2 were found near Lewiston 17 Feb (RD).

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Mountain West



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This season was mild and exceedingly dry, especially in southern Wyoming and most of Colorado. There were numbers of birds that lingered into December and spring migrants arrived early.

Abbreviations: F.C.R.P. (Fountain Creek Regional Park, *El Paso*, CO); J.M.R. (John Martin Reservoir, *Bent*, CO).

LOONS THROUGH RAPTORS

A late Horned Grebe was at Glendo Res., Platte, WY 15 Dec (SJD, JBF). Single Red-necked Grebes were found at Barr L., *Adams* 1 Dec (JBn, TL, JBF); Standley L., *Jefferson* 9-23 Dec (NE, LS); and Pueblo Res., *Pueblo* 14-20 Dec (BKP, m. ob.), with 2 there 11 Feb (BKP, CLW). Late Western Grebes in Wyoming included 16 at Glendo Res. 15 Dec (SJD, JBF) and 18 at Greyrocks Res., *Platte* 15 Dec (SJD,

JBF) and a Clark's Grebe was at Glendo Res., WY 15 Dec (JBF, SJD). Rarely observed in winter, a **Great Egret** was in Grand Jct., *Mesa* 2 Dec—22 Feb (LA, m. ob.). A **Green Heron** was seen at J.M.R. 1 Jan (BKP, MJ, DN). An imm Ross's Goose frequented Blue L., *Eagle* 15 Dec and 15 Jan (JMe). An ad. **Black Brant** was at Woods L., *Weld* 30 Nov—6 Dec (DF, m. ob.), and perhaps the same bird visited Long Pond in Ft. Collins, *Larimer* 19-22 Dec (RH).

It was a good swan season in Colorado Trumpeter Swans were reported from *Rio Blanco*, *Fremont*, *Northglenn*, *Grand*, and *Prowers*; and in e. Wyoming, one was at Grey Reef Res., *Natrona* 2-28 Feb (CEM, J&GL). Tundra Swans were reported from *Larimer*, *Weld*, *Pueblo* and *Prowers*. Scoter reports included single Surfs at L. Henry, *Crowley* 9 Dec (MJ, BKP) and J.M.R. 27 Dec (MJ, TL, m. ob.) and 10 Jan (DN); single White-winged at Pueblo Res., *Pueblo* 1 Dec (BKP, JBy), Big Johnson Res., *El Paso* 15-16 Dec (DE, m. ob.), and Marston Res. 23-27 Dec (TJ, m. ob.); and single Blacks at Marston Res., *Denver* 29 Nov—28 Dec (TJ, LS, DAL, DCE), at Horseshoe L. in Loveland, *Larimer* 8-10 Dec (NK, LS, RH, m. ob.), and at J.M.R. 27 Dec (MJ, TL). An Oldsquaw was at Grey Reef Res., *Natrona*, WY 31 Dec (CEM, BS). In Wyoming, a Red-breasted Merganser was at Glendo Res. 15 Dec (SJD, JBF) and up to 9 Hooded Mergansers were at Greyrocks Res. 15 Dec—12 Jan (SJD, JBF, DF).

A juv. Northern Goshawk was s. of Rocky Ford, *Otero* 6 Feb (SO). An ad. Red-shouldered Hawk was reported in *Bent* 17 Jan (DN). An unexpected juv. **Broad-winged Hawk** was at Boulder 24 Dec (BSc). An ad. gray-morph **Gyr Falcon** was observed in North Park, *Jackson* 20-25 Feb (RH) and a white-morph **Gyr Falcon** was near Casper, *Natrona*, WY 26 Feb (GL).