

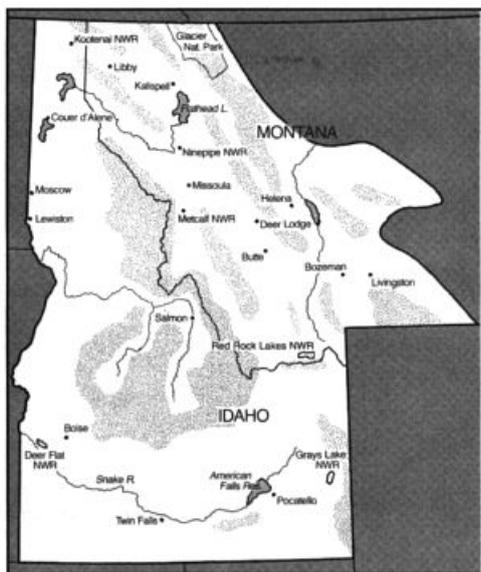
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# Idaho-Western Montana



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**E**arly spring was unusually frigid; in fact, it was the fifth coolest March ever recorded in Montana. Wintry weather may have delayed waterfowl and early passerine migration for up to two weeks in some locations. April and May temperatures were fairly seasonal in most of Idaho but remained cooler than normal in Montana and north Idaho. Like last year, late spring precipitation was unsatisfactory in most of the Region. A series of snow and rain showers

in May added some relief but did not make up for the prevailing moisture deficit set in motion by the “La Niña” winter weather pattern.

The weather and avian event of the season was a severe storm in late May that was centered over the Great Plains and accompanied by strong easterly winds. The storm forced unprecedented numbers of rare Tennessee and Blackpoll Warblers as far west as west-central Montana, where they were grounded by heavy snow and rain. In addition to this dramatic event, the season will likely be best remembered for the many exciting rarities found, including the Region’s first Slaty-backed Gull.

**Abbreviations:** Camas (Camas N.W.R., *Jefferson*, ID); L.M. (Lee Metcalf N.W.R., *Ravalli*, MT).

## PELICANS THROUGH OWLS

An impressive and record-early flock of about 100 American White Pelicans was in *Gallatin*, MT 6 Apr (JR). Four others visited Missoula, MT 4 Apr (JH), and one was in Ennis, MT 14 Apr (RI), where they are unusual. Single Great Egrets were out of range in Moscow, ID 27 Apr—6 May (ASn) and Lolo, MT 30 May (AH). Cattle Egrets also strayed n. in Idaho, with singles in Challis 23 May (D&EF) and Moscow 28 May (JW). The wader of the season was a Green Heron near Hamilton, MT 23-31+ May (SR); they are less than annual. Single White-faced Ibis wandered to *Missoula*, MT 3 May (CP, TT), L.M. 18 May (WT), and *Lake*, MT 22 May (RW). A rare occurrence in the Region’s n. reaches were 3 Trumpeter Swans in Somers, MT 7 Mar—19 May (DC, BR) and one in *Kootenai*, ID 24 Mar (LH). An outstanding count of >5000 Northern Pintails was made near Frenchtown, MT 23 Mar (JM). A tally of 12 Eurasian Wigeons in Idaho and 18 in Montana was unusually high—and identical to last year’s count. Long-tailed Ducks are especially rare in spring, so singles in *Kootenai*, ID 20 Apr (LH) and *Lake*, MT 23 Apr (CE) were noteworthy.

Now annual in Idaho, a Red-shouldered Hawk was found in *Payette* 23 Apr (AS). Incredible finds were single Broad-winged Hawks at Camas 11 May (DM, KS) and near Livingston, MT 27 May (RW). The wintering Ferruginous Hawk in *Lake*, MT was last reported 10 Mar (WT). The spring Golden Eagle migration count at Rogers Pass, MT posted declining totals for the 5th consecutive year; mild winters may have precluded eagle migration, resulting in reduced counts (FT). Gyrfalcons made a good showing, with



The most exciting bird of the spring season was this third-winter Slaty-backed Gull (right) found in Sandpoint, Idaho. Originally found by Lisa Hardy and four other birders, the gull's identity remained a mystery until digital photos were circulated throughout the Pacific Northwest (photographed here 27 March 2002). It provided a first record for Idaho and the Region and was one of several of the species far out of range in winter/spring 2001-2002. Photograph by Mark Collie.

singles reported near Polson, MT 3 Mar (BR), in Blaine, ID 23 Mar (BS), and in Jefferson, ID 21-24 Mar (RD, MD).

An American Golden-Plover in Elmore, ID 20 Apr (MC) was an exceptional find in spring. A respectable tally of 21 Black-necked Stilts was reported in w. Montana 16 Apr—1 May; although formerly quite rare, they are now expected. Other rare shorebirds included 4 Whimbrel in Idaho 12-25 May (PC, MCr, CW), a Hudsonian Godwit near Somers, MT 17 May (BR), an impressive 17 Marbled Godwits near Bigfork, MT 24 Apr (BR), 6 Sanderlings in Flathead and Missoula, MT 22-23 May (BR, DC, LW), and a total of 6 Short-billed Dowitchers in both states. Idaho's tally of rare-but-regular gulls included 2 Mew Gulls, 2 Thayer's Gulls, and a Glaucous-winged x Western Gull. Even better were Idaho's 11th Iceland Gull and 3rd Lesser Black-backed Gull in Lewiston 20-28 Mar (KC, MH, SL). The bird of the season was the Region's first **Slaty-backed Gull** in Sandpoint, ID 10-30 Mar (LH, SL, m. ob.). An Arctic Tern at Camas 17 May (DCl, MCr, CW) provided a rare spring record.

In Idaho's **Eurasian Collared-Dove** news, one that wintered in Oakley stayed until 1 Apr (RL), 3 remained in Burley until 15 May (RL), and over 20 spent the entire season near American Falls (FB). A **White-winged Dove** that stopped in Idaho Falls 27-28 May (MD, m. ob.) provided Idaho's 3rd record. The only reported Yellow-billed Cuckoo was at Camas 20 May (DCl). Idaho Snowy Owls turned up in Washington 16 Mar (MC) and Latah 17 Mar (TG), a good showing for spring. Single Burrowing Owls, rare in w. Montana, were at Somers 10 Apr (BR) and in Ravalli 26-27 Apr (WT). Black Swifts that arrived near Bigfork, MT 8 May were two weeks early (BR), and Vaux's Swifts in Missoula, MT 12 Apr (TT) were about a week early.

## WOODPECKERS THROUGH GOLDFINCHES

Both states reported extralimital woodpeckers: a **Red-headed Woodpecker** was near Glacier N.P., MT 24-27 May (BRn), and Idaho's 2nd **Red-breasted Sapsucker** was in Valley 4 May (CSy). Always rare and local in w. Montana, Say's Phoebe were found in Missoula and Ravalli 23 Mar (DG, CP). Like last year, a Pinyon Jay visited Ravalli, MT 9 Mar—27 Apr (JMn, WT). A Cliff Swallow showed up at L.M. 15 Apr (JM, CP), about two weeks early. Many Varied Thrushes were reported in locations where they were unusual, but one in Yellowstone, MT 31 Mar—2 Apr (PM) provided a latilong first. The wintering Northern Mockingbird in Canyon, ID was last seen 14 Apr, and another stopped in Fremont, ID 23 May (CW). Two Brown Thrashers were an excellent find at Camas 23-30 May (DCl, MJ). A wayward Sprague's Pipit near Livingston, MT 27-30 May (RW) provided an interesting latilong first.

A record 24 Tennessee Warblers were reported in W. Montana 22-28 May, and one visited Camas 25 May (D&EF). Other rare warblers at Camas included 3+ Chestnut-sided Warblers (Mcr, DM), a Magnolia Warbler 26-29 May (Mcr, RLR), a Black-and-white Warbler 15-16 May (Mcr), and 2+ Ovenbirds 23-26 May (DCl, MCr). Another Black-and-white Warbler was in Jefferson, ID 19 May (LM). A Yellow-rumped Warbler near Stevensville, MT 11 Mar (JH) was at least a month early. The record-early Wilson's Warbler found in Hamilton, MT 13 Mar (PS) may have overwintered. Montana's 7th **Black-throated Green Warbler** was seen in Bozeman, MT 13 May (CNi). A **Blackburnian Warbler** in Helena 27 May (NT) provided Montana's 8th record. An unprecedented 9 Blackpoll Warblers were found near Helena and Livingston, MT 23-27 May (JC, JP, HT, RW), and one visited Bonner, ID 25-27 May (RD). Undoubtedly the warbler of the season was Montana's 2nd **Hooded Warbler** in Park 24 May (†DTh).

A **Summer Tanager** that graced Camas 17-18 May (DCl, MCr, CW) was Idaho's 5th. Rose-breasted Grosbeaks arrived in record numbers 5 in Idaho and 14 in Montana. The only Indigo Bunting was in Ronan, MT 9 May (FS). Idaho's 10th-11th **Clay-colored Sparrows** were found in Moscow (CS) and Bonner—both 20-23 May (RD); they are increasingly reported in recent years. With fewer than 15 Sage Sparrow records in Montana, a small breeding population found near Bannack, Beaverhead 6 May (TB, CP) was exciting news. An excellent total of 6 Golden-crowned Sparrows was reported in Idaho 1-17 May, but even more unusual were 2 in Stevensville, MT 6-12 May (GK).

At least 4 Idaho Great-tailed Grackles were reported at new locations in Ada and Owyhee 4 Mar—5 May (RB, BC). Following a two-year absence, 3 Common Grackles showed up in sw Idaho 16-22 May (CN, SP, DT). Single **Baltimore Orioles** discovered in West Glacier, MT 26-27 May (DC) and Seeley L., Missoula, MT 29 May (BM) were incredible finds. The **Brambling** discovered near Arlee, MT 21 Jan persisted until 3 Apr (MM). Both states found Purple Finches, with one in Latah, ID 23-24 Mar (TG) and 2 in Flathead, MT in late Apr (DO, BR); they are now rare but regular visitors to n. Idaho and nw Montana. Lesser Goldfinches continued to explore s. Idaho, with at least 8 found at new locations in Cassia, Elmore, Madison, and Twin Falls

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