

# Mountain West



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This summer, almost all areas in the Region experienced one of the driest and hottest periods since the recording of weather data began over a century ago. In areas such as Pueblo, there was only a total of 5 cm of moisture for the whole year. This was typical of the lower elevations of the Region. Forest fires burned record numbers of acres in Colorado and continued through the summer beyond July, making national news and limiting access to some birding areas. Irrigation and domestic storage reservoirs were at very low levels.

The effects of these natural disasters (most of which were anthropogenic) on birdlife were many. The breeding season was a total loss in montane areas swept by fire; on the other hand, wandering failed breeders produced novel records for various locales. Fish die-offs attracted pelicans, gulls, vultures, and other piscivorous species along the reservoirs and rivers, but waterfowl nesting was clearly reduced. Downstream of Pueblo, the Rio Grande River below the Alamosa and

Arkansas Rivers was almost dry or at record-low flow rates. If it had not been for irrigation and domestic water releases, the rivers would have dried completely by mid-June. All sightings in this report are from Colorado unless otherwise indicated.

## LOONS THROUGH RAPTORS

An imm. **Brown Pelican** was at Big Meadows Reservoir, *Mineral* 2 Jul (KG, MPo), consistent with 100+ reports from Arizona this season, the influx attributed to prey scarcity in the Sea of Cortez. There are over 10 previous state records.

Great Egrets in Wyoming, where rare, included one or 2 ads. at Saratoga L., *Carbon* all summer (GB, DF, RL), one at Grand Teton N. P. 10-12 Jun (DP), and one at Cheyenne 11 Jun (SJD). A Green Heron was near Casper, WY 2 (CEM) & 20 Jun (DF), and another was at Cheyenne 24 Jul (GJ). A late Greater White-fronted Goose was at Ft. Collins, *Larimer* 27 May—1 Jun (NK). Rare in summer, a Ross's Goose was at Fruitgrower's Res., *Delta* 22 Jul (JB). A Ring-necked Duck was rare at Windy Gap Res., *Grand* 27 Jun (DJ). North of normal range, an ad. Mississippi Kite was in Holyoke, *Phillips* 4 Jun (BK). Broad-winged Hawks are unusual in summer in the Region, so the following sightings were noteworthy: a first-year bird at Tamarack Ranch, *Logan* 2 Jun (NKr), a pair in the Bear Lodge Mts., WY 18 Jun (NB), and a second-

year bird near Wetmore, *Custer* 19 Jul (BKP, CLW).

## SHOREBIRDS THROUGH FLYCATCHERS

A Snowy Plover was w. of Laramie, WY 22 Jul (GJ). A late White-rumped Sandpiper was at Cheyenne, WY 11 Jun (SJD). An ad. Short-billed Dowitcher was at Brunner L. in Broomfield 31 Jul (DCE, DAL). East of normal, a Band-tailed Pigeon was in Cottonwood Canyon, *Baca/Las Animas* 22 Jun (JN). An intermontane Eurasian Collared-Dove was in Gunnison 21 Jul (SO). A White-winged Dove was at a feeder in Ft. Collins 22 Jun (FK), and a singing Inca Dove was in Rye, *Pueblo* 20 Jul (CLW, BKP, DS). Three Yellow-billed Cuckoos were at Black Hills N.F. near Hulett, *Crook*, WY 23 Jun (DE, NB).

Three Flammulated Owls were in *Carbon*, WY 12-27 Jun (KB, DF, CEM, BS). Two Magnificent Hummingbirds were in Colorado, one in *Mesa* 4-5 Jul (NKe) and one in *Larimer* 8 Jul (HH). Two Black-chinned Hummingbirds observed 10-20 Jun were the first for *Grand* (DJ). An Eastern Phoebe was at Worland, WY 13 Jul (RS). A pair of Vermilion Flycatchers was in Cottonwood Canyon 23 Jun (JC). Scissor-tailed Flycatchers included: a pair s. of Lamar, *Prowers* since May that fledged 3 young 11 Jul (TB); an ad. with 3 young e. of Holly, *Prowers* 14 Jul (SS); and single birds in *Chaffee* 12 Jun (J&SF) and *Baca* 26 Jul (KS).

## VIRES THROUGH THRUSHES

A pair of **White-eyed Vireos** fledged 2 young in Gregory Canyon in Boulder 11 Jul (BK, m. ob.), a first state breeding record. Also, a singing White-eyed was in Rye, *Pueblo* 16 Jun—31 Jul (DS). Extraordinary was a female **Yellow-throated Vireo** paired with a Plumbeous Vireo; the female was later seen on a nest in Poudre Canyon, w. of Ft. Collins, *Larimer* 3-30 Jun (NKr, DAL, RH). A first nesting record? A Cassin's Vireo was in Colorado City, *Pueblo* 21 Jul (DS). A late Steller's Jay was in Cottonwood Canyon 22 Jun (JN). An imm. male Purple Martin was in Ovid, *Sedgwick* 5 Jun (TL); there are no breeding records of the species for e. Colorado Canyon Wrens nested for the first time in *Eagle* this year (JM). A singing Winter Wren was in the Wet Mts., near L. Isabel, *Custer* 5 Jul (BKP). A Veery was singing in Rye 16-17 Jun (DS). A **Wood Thrush** was found at Little America, in sw. Wyoming, in early Jun, an excellent find (RCH).

# Great Basin

## WARBLERS THROUGH CROSSBILLS

A singing male **Golden-winged Warbler** was at Black Hills N.F., near Hulett, *Crook*, WY 17-23 Jun (MR, DF). Late migrant warblers included a male Black-throated Blue Warbler in Denver 10 Jun (MB); a male Blackpoll Warbler at Colorado City, *Pueblo* 4 Jun (DS); a male Prothonotary Warbler in Ft. Collins 1 Jun (NKr); and a male Kentucky Warbler in Ft. Collins 7-9 Jun (NKr). The male Hooded Warbler found in late May in *Montezuma* was still present 2 Jun (*vide* SA), and a female Hooded Warbler was at Tamarack Ranch, *Logan* 2 Jun (NKr). Two male (one ad. and one first-year) Summer Tanagers were in Pueblo 13-14 Jun (VAT). Four singing Cassin's Sparrows were e. of Torrington, *Goshen*, WY 21 Jun (DF, RL); apparent numbers in Colorado were much reduced by the extreme drought. North of normal, 2 ad. and 3 juv. Black-throated Sparrows were in Loveland, *Larimer* 26 Jun—3 Jul (NK, DAL, RH). A Northern Cardinal was singing in the Bear Lodge Mts., WY 18 Jun (NB). A male Painted Bunting was in Cottonwood Canyon, *Baca/Las Animas* 23 Jun (JC). A male Baltimore Oriole was at Florence, *Fremont* 11 Jul (MPe). A pair of White-winged Crossbills was found breeding in *Eagle* 29 Jun (TJ, DJ).

**Cited observers:** Susan Allerton, Jim Beatty, Greg Bergquist, Nick Block, Michele Bloom, Katie Brashear, Tamie Bulow, John Cobb, Stephen J. Dinsmore, David C. Ely, Doug Faulkner, Jacque & Scott Fisher (J&SF), Kim Garwood, Hank Henry, Rachel Hopper, Rich C. Hoyer, Dave Jasper, Greg Johnson, Tina Jones, Bill Kaempfer, Fritz Knoff, Nick Komar (NKr), Nic Korte (NKe), David A. Leatherman, Tony Leukering, Rich Levad, Jack Merchant, Chris E. Michelson, John Nothrop, Stan Oswald, Debra Patla, Brandon K. Percival, Mark Peterson (MPe), Molly Pollock (MPo), Michael Retter, Michael San Miguel, Scott Shaum, David Silverman, Bob South, Rick Steenberg, Kathy Stevens, Van A. Truan, Christopher L. Wood.



### Rick Fridell

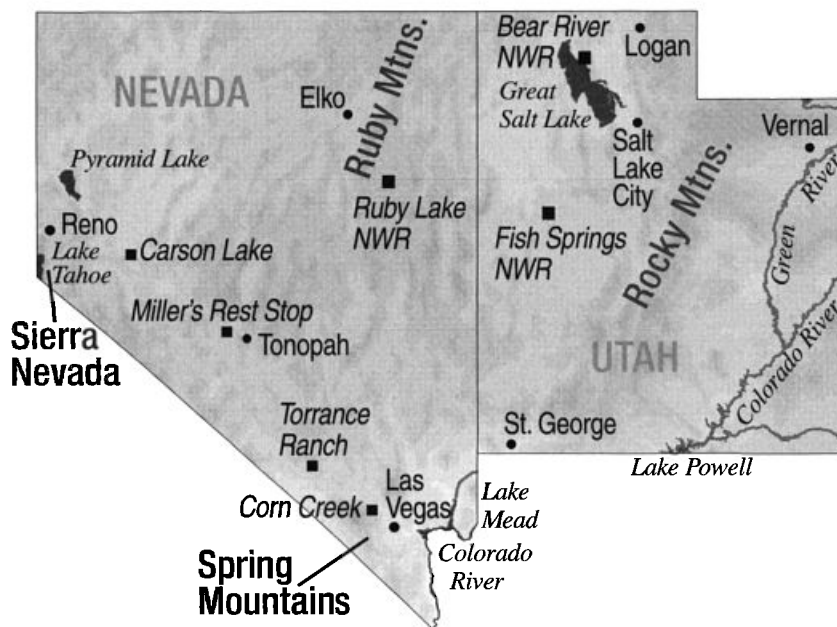
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The extended drought in the Great Basin continued through the summer season. Water levels in many streams, lakes, and reservoirs reached all-time lowest recorded levels. There were very few bird reports on the Internet birdlines during the season and even fewer summer reports submitted. It is difficult to speculate to what extent the continuing high heat and drought influenced the distribution of birds in the Region—or rather the activity of birders.

**Abbreviations:** Ash Meadows (Ash Meadows N.W.R., *Nye*, NV); Corn Cr. (Corn Creek, Desert N.W.R., *Clark*, NV); H.B.V.P. (Henderson Bird Viewing Preserve, *Clark*, NV); Hurricane S.P. (Hurricane/SR-9 Sewer Ponds, *Washington*, UT); Lytle (Lytle Ranch Preserve, *Washington*, UT); Miller's R.A. (Miller's Rest Area, *Esmeralda*, NV); Red Hills G.C. (Red Hills G.C., *St. George*, *Washington*, UT); S.M.M.W.P. (Scott M. Matheson



Wetlands Preserve, Moab, *Grand*, UT), S.S.G.S.L. (South Shore of the Great Salt Lake, *Salt Lake*, UT), Sunset Park (Sunset Park, *Las Vegas*, *Clark*, NV).

## LOONS THROUGH TERNS

There were two reports of Common Loons summering in the s. part of the Region: Ash Meadows 5 Jul (JC) and 19 Jul+ at the recently constructed Sand Hollow Reservoir, *Washington*, UT. Two to three pairs of Eared Grebes successfully fledged 8 young at the H.B.V.P. in s. Nevada (RS). Great Egrets are irregular during the summer in Utah, so one at the James W. Fitzgerald W.M.A., *Toole*, UT 28 Jul was noteworthy (KCh et al.). Blue-winged Teal, a scarce but regular summer visitor to the Region, were reported from two Nevada counties (*Clark*, *Washoe*) and two Utah counties (*Wasatch*, *Washington*), with a high count of 10 observed at H.B.V.P. 6 Jul (RS).

A **White-tailed Kite** was reported from Locomotive Springs W.M.A., *Box Elder*, UT (†JN). This would be the 4th Utah record (p a.). A pair of Common Black-Hawks was seen along the N. Fork of the Virgin R., *Zion* N.P. on 21-22 Jun (DH). It is not known whether these black-hawks were nesting or were post-nesting visitors to the area. Although Common Black-Hawks have recently nested in other riparian areas within *Washington*, UT, it has been over 30 years since the last