

The winter of 2002 was dominated by an "El Niño" winter weather pattern that brought unusually mild temperatures to the Region; in fact, it was the third warmest January ever recorded in Idaho. An Arctic front in late February brought the only wintry weather of the season, when temperatures plunged into the teens in Boise, Idaho and as low as -45° F in Bozeman, Montana. Precipitation was near average across the Region, but many locations received little or no snow in December and January. Even many northernmost lakes remained ice-free well into the season, if not the entire winter, and above-average numbers and variety of waterfowl remained. Other themes of the season were the dearth of montane species in lowland areas and the below-average numbers of wintering Arctic breeders. Perhaps what made the season most memorable were the many unexpected species that lingered into December, remained for the entire season, or arrived early in February.

Abbreviations: A.F.R. (American Falls Res., by American Falls, ID); Latilong (area encompassed by one degree latitude and one degree longitude used in mapping bird distribution in both Idaho and Montana).

LOONS THROUGH SHOREBIRDS

The Yellow-billed Loon in *Blaine*, ID since mid-Nov was last reported 3 Dec (GS). Rare Pacific Loons lingered in n. Idaho, with up to 2 near Lewiston until 11 Jan (KC, m. ob.) and one in *Kootenai* 22 Dec (CM). An Eared Grebe near Bigfork, MT 14 Dec (DC) was a remarkable find, as were 3 in *Elmore*, ID (MC). Perhaps even less expected was a Clark's Grebe in *Gooding*, ID 25 Jan (DCI, MCr, CW). A flock of 9 Double-crested Cormorants in *Kootenai*, ID and 3 in *Lake*, MT held over all season; they are increasingly reported in the Region's n. in winter. Without doubt the most unexpected fall holdover was the White-faced Ibis in *Gooding*, ID 1-14 Dec (RLR, DT) that represented a first winter record for the Region. A Turkey Vulture in *Fremont*, ID 8-31 Jan (DG) and 2 in Bigfork, MT 13 Feb (BR) represented both states' earliest "spring" records.

Two Greater White-fronted Geese near Kalispell 5 Dec (BR) were interesting; typically they are less-than-annual visitors to nw. Montana in spring. A record-early Blue-winged Teal in *Canyon*, ID 9 Feb (AC) represented a winter first for Idaho, and 5 others in Polson, MT 21 Feb (JR) were about two months ahead of schedule. Idaho's winter season total of 5 Cinnamon Teal made a new record, as did the excellent tally of 11 Eurasian Wigeons. Eight Long-tailed Ducks

Idaho & Western Montana



was about double the usual winter total. A lingering White-winged Scoter near Ennis, MT 14 Dec (RI) provided a first winter record for Latilong 38. Ospreys are very rare in Idaho after Nov, so one in Boise 21 Dec (*vide* DT) was newsworthy. A Red-shouldered Hawk that overwintered in *Elmore* (RB) and one in *Gooding* 25 Jan (DCI, MCr, CW) represented Idaho's 20th and 21st records; nearly all have occurred since 1997. The total of 6 Gyrfalcons reported was about typical.

CRANES THROUGH JAYS

Both states reported tardy Sandhill Cranes, with 2 in Idaho and 4 in Montana. Also lingering in Idaho were 8 Greater Yellowlegs in *Gem* 21 Dec (CS); they are casual in winter. Another winter first in Idaho was the record-early Long-billed Curlew that visited *Ada* 2 Feb (AW). Least Sandpipers persisted in excellent numbers,

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with 5 in Emmett 6-11 Dec (RM) and up to 19 in *Elmore* 19 Dec—17 Feb (RB). Five Dunlin stayed near Lewiston, ID 31 Dec—1 Feb (KC), where they are rare but expected in winter. Two well-documented **Short-billed Dowitchers** provided a surprising first winter record for Idaho in *Elmore* 28 Dec, and 2 Long-billed Dowitchers also there represented Idaho's 2nd winter record (JD).

Up to 7 tardy **Franklin's Gulls** in *Gooding*, ID 7-14 Dec (JS) and one near Bigfork, MT 14 Dec (DC) were winter firsts. The season's tally of rare-but-expected gulls included 7 Mew, 9 Thayer's, 6 Glaucous-winged, and 5 Glaucous Gulls, all excellent totals. Even more unusual was Idaho's 12th Iceland Gull in *Elmore* 3 Jan (RLR, DT), 5th Western Gull in Lewiston 18 Jan—21 Feb (KC, KD, †CV), and 5th Lesser Black-backed Gull in Lewiston 15 Dec (KD, DH). Idaho's Eurasian Collared-Dove population was double last year's record count, with 30 near American Falls throughout the season (FB) and one in Burley 17 Jan (RL). A Barred Owl that wintered in *Canyon* (JH) provided a rare s. Idaho record.

For the 5th consecutive year, seasonally-rare Lewis's Woodpeckers wintered in

Ravalli, MT (CP), and another visited Salmon, ID 6 Dec (MK). Even less expected was the Red-naped Sapsucker in *Nez Perce*, ID 4-11 Jan (DH) that provided a first winter record in Latilong 4. Blue Jays made their best showing in four years, with 11 reported in Idaho and at least 21 noted in Montana. In addition, single Blue x Steller's Jay hybrids wintered in Coeur d'Alene, ID (NM) and Hamilton, MT (JO). Wayward Western Scrub-Jays visited Idaho in Payette 4 Dec—28 Feb (BW) and Boise 31 Dec (MC), where they are casual.

SWALLOWS THROUGH FINCHES

A record-early Tree Swallow in *Owyhee*, ID (AW) 7 Feb provided a first winter record for Latilong 23, and a Barn Swallow below A.F.R. dam 10 Feb (MCR, CW) was a state winter first. Bewick's Wrens in *Owyhee* 17 Jan (MC, RLR, DT) and *Canyon* 25-31 Jan (CS) strayed far s. of their usual Idaho range. An exceptionally early Gray Catbird near Bozeman, MT 16 Feb (RW) provided a surprising and rare winter record. Reports of Northern Mockingbirds are especially unusual in winter, so singles in Idaho's Grandview 18 Dec—6 Jan (SP) and Payette 3 Feb (MC) were good finds.

A typical total of 10 Orange-crowned

Warblers came from sw. Idaho. Less expected were single Yellow-rumped Warblers in Hamilton, MT 25-30 Jan (WT) and *Bonner*, ID 21 Feb (RD). A highlight of the season was the Wilson's Warbler that overwintered in Boise (CL, DT), a Regional first record. Rare anywhere in the West in winter and unprecedented in the Region was an Indigo Bunting in *Elmore*, ID 3-25 Jan (RLR, DT). A pair of Chipping Sparrows showed up a month early in *Gem*, ID 20 Feb (MW) and provided a rare winter record. Also unprecedented in the Region was a Brewer's Sparrow in *Cassia*, ID 28 Jan (MA) that likely overwintered. At least 16 Savannah and 6 Lincoln's Sparrows were present throughout Jan in *Elmore* and *Owyhee* (DT), an unprecedented winter count for Idaho. Even more unusual was the Lincoln's Sparrow near Condon 21 Dec (RA), since few Montana winter records exist. Fox Sparrows are seldom reported after fall, so 2 near Hamilton, MT 14 Dec (JO) and one that wintered in *Gem*, ID (MW) were newsworthy. Swamp Sparrows are not annual, so this season's record total of 10 in s. Idaho was considered extraordinary. Rare *Zonotrichia* sparrows showed up in typical numbers, with a total of 6 White-throated and 27 Harris's Sparrows reported. Rusty Blackbirds, rare but regular in both states, included one in *Jefferson*, ID 5-12 Dec (DCI) and 5 at Melrose, MT 22 Jan (BF). Idaho's Great-tailed Grackle reports were fewer than last year, with 2 below the A.F.R. dam 15 Dec (CT) and one that wintered in *Owyhee* (SP). Two Common Grackles were noted in sw. Idaho, where they are rare in any season. A rare Purple Finch was an excellent find near Kalispell, MT 29 Dec (BM).

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2003 BIRDING TOURS

MALAYSIA

Malaya, Borneo (Mt. Kinabalu)
4-27 July

NORTH BURMA EXPEDITION

SE Himalayas
1-30 November

MALAYSIA

Malaya, Borneo, Mt. Kinabalu
3-25 July

SOUTH SUMATRA

30 July-22 August

2004 BIRDING TOURS

VIETNAM

North, South
2-25 January

THAILAND

Northwest, Central, Peninsular
3-25 January

PHILIPPINES

Luzon, Mindanao, Cebu, Palawan, Bohol, Negros
30 January-1 March

WEST BURMA

Mt. Victoria, Pagan
5-28 March

BHUTAN

2-25 April

NW CHINA

Xinjiang Province
21 May-13 June

TIBET TRAVERSE

12 June-13 July