

The prevailing El Niño weather pattern relaxed its tenacious grip on the Region after March, resulting in mostly average to cool temperatures and above-normal precipitation in April and May. That said, some interesting exceptions to this general trend occurred, given the vagaries of climate across the Region's wide sweep of the northern Rocky Mountains. On the one hand, west-central Montana was really wet in April; in fact, several locations experienced their wettest April ever recorded. In contrast, some valleys in southern Idaho—not blessed by these spring storms—began the summer under serious and unrelenting drought conditions.

Bird arrival dates were fairly typical, according to most observers. Birders from western Montana opined that some late season migrants—such as Willow Flycatchers and Swainson's Thrushes—were unusually tardy. Even more troubling were reports from eastern Idaho that bemoaned the low numbers of migrating birds and mysterious absence of some local nesters. Was this merely a manifestation of unfavorable flying conditions in late spring, or was it one more indication of declining Neotropical migrant populations? Only time, and future bird surveys, will tell.

Abbreviations: A.F.R. (American Falls Res., by American Falls, ID); Camas (Camas N.W.R., Jefferson, ID).

LOONS THROUGH DOVES

Especially unusual in spring were 2 Pacific Loons in Kootenai, ID 6–27 Apr (SS). An amazing 110 Common Loons staged at Twin Lakes, Franklin 21 Apr (CT), Idaho's highest tally in five years. A Clark's Grebe in Shoshone, ID 26 May (LH) was well n. of range and a local first. Although American White Pelicans are now regular in the Region's n. reaches, a flock of 25 in Benewah, ID 31 May (SS) was unusually large. Reports of extralimital waders included 2 Great Egrets near Lewiston, ID 24 Apr (AW), another in Broadwater, MT 11 May (BM), and a Snowy Egret near Helena, MT 4 Jun (KO).

The season's total Eurasian Wigeon count was only 15, half of last year's number. Although nearly annual, a Eurasian Wigeon x American Wigeon hybrid in Ravalli, MT 9–29 Mar (WT) was interesting. A tally of 1100 Canvasbacks at A.F.R. 29 Mar–17 Apr (MC, CT) was an amazing concentration and perhaps an Idaho record. One of the highlights of the season was Idaho's 2nd Tufted Duck near Cataldo, Kootenai 20–29 Mar (†LH, ph. WT). Usually not reported in spring, 3 Long-tailed Ducks below the A.F.R. dam 15 Mar–2 Apr (MCr) were surprising. Single Broad-

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winged Hawks visited A.F.R. 28–30 Apr (CT) and Camas 10 May (DCl), a typical number in spring.

Definitely off course was a Whooping Crane near Bozeman, MT 15 Mar (BMo); only a few records exist from w. Montana. A Snowy Plover was a good find near Challis 30 May (D&EF), as they are less than annual in Idaho. A total of 3 Whimbrels was found in e. Idaho 6 Apr–21 May, an average total. A flock of 3 Red Knots at A.F.R. 10–13 May (MCr) represented Idaho's 15th record.

A record-early Baird's Sandpiper was below A.F.R. dam 15–20 Mar (MCr). Short-billed Dowitchers made an excellent showing, with 7 reported in May. The season's rare-but-expected gulls in Idaho included single Mew, Thayer's, and Glaucous Gulls, an unexceptional total. Far

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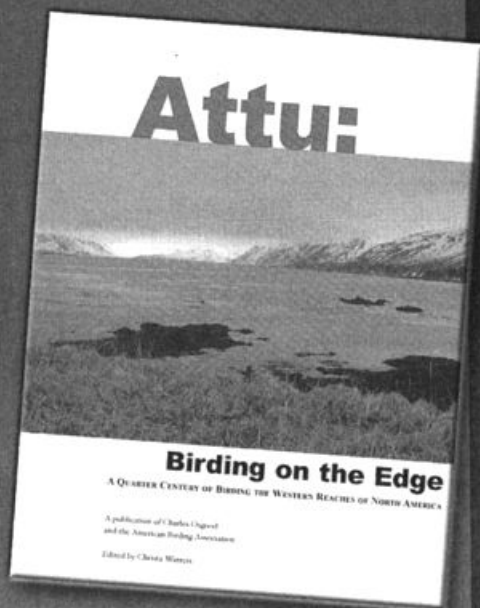
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better was a Lesser Black-backed Gull at A.F.R. 11 May (MCr, CT) that represented Idaho's 6th record. Band-tailed Pigeons had a great showing in Idaho, with 2 in Boise 27 Mar (MC), one in Hailey 11–23 Apr (BS), and one in Latah 25 May (KD). Two Eurasian Collared-Doves in Rexburg, Madison and one in Roberts, Jefferson 11 May (DCl, CW) provided Idaho's 5th and 6th records.

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CUCKOOS THROUGH GOLDFINCHES

Two Yellow-billed Cuckoos were reported in se. Idaho 25–29 May (MCR, DCI, CT), a typical total. A tally of 85 Short-eared Owls in the Mission Valley, Lake, MT 8 Mar (WT) was likely a Regional record. A Western Scrub-Jay report from Canyon 18 May (MC) added to the growing number of recent sightings in sw. Idaho. At least two weeks early were 2 Barn Swallows below A.E.R. dam 16 Apr (MCR). Two Bewick's Wrens in Boise 19 Mar and 2 May (MC) were far s. of their usual Idaho range. A Gray-cheeked Thrush discovered at Camas 20 May (MCR) represented Idaho's 2nd record and first verified sighting in 52 years. A total of 2 Northern Mockingbirds in sw. Idaho was about average. A Brown Thrasher, not quite annual in Idaho, was found at Camas 24 May (MCR).

Idaho's 7th and 8th Northern Parulas, lately an annual species in late May through early Jun, were at Camas 25 May (MCR) and Mountain Home 30 May (SP). Arriving about a month ahead of schedule was a Yellow Warbler in Payette, ID 3 Apr (DH). Other rare-but-expected warblers at Camas included a Magnolia Warbler 28 May, a Blackpoll Warbler 22 May, and a Black-and-white Warbler 17–22 May (MCR). An amazing discovery was a Prairie Warbler in Missoula 21–25 Apr (BC), furnishing Montana's 3rd record. Two Ovenbirds in Boise, ID 11 & 15 May (MC, DT) was a typical spring total. A long-anticipated find was a Mourning Warbler at Camas 22 May (MCR); it represented a first record for Idaho and the Region.

Rose-breasted Grosbeaks were present in usual numbers, with 3 in Idaho 19 Apr–29 May and one in Montana 28–29 May. Three Golden-crowned Sparrows in Idaho 1–9 May was an above-average Regional total. Also above the norm were 4 Great-tailed Grackles in the Boise, ID area 22 Mar–21 May. An excellent total of 6 Common Grackles was reported in sw. Idaho 9 Apr–29 May. A wayward Lesser Goldfinch discovered in Orofino 24 May (CV) provided n. Idaho's 3rd record.

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