

Great Basin



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Spring produced some rain to give a brief relief to the drought, but by the end of the season, the dry weather was back. Migration was judged somewhat slow compared to average years, with few eastern vagrants present. Large concentrations of migrants were little reported, especially of *Empidonax* flycatchers. There were several records of Least Terns, giving most birders a chance to add this scarce species to their state lists.

Abbreviations: A.I.C. (Antelope Island Causeway, Davis, UT); Ash Meadows (Ash Meadows N.W.R., Nye, NV); Bear River (Bear River Migratory Bird Refuge, Box Elder, UT); Corn Cr. (Corn Cr., Desert N.W.R., Clark, NV); Dyer (Esmeralda, NV); Farmington Bay (Farmington Bay W.M.A., Davis, UT); Fish Springs (Fish Springs N.W.R., Juab, UT); H.B.V.P. (Henderson Bird Viewing Preserve, Clark, NV); Indian Springs (Indian Springs, Clark, NV); Lemmon V.M. (Lemmon Valley Marsh, Washoe, NV); Lytle Ranch (Lytle Ranch Preserve, Washington, UT); Miller's

R.A. (Miller's Rest Area, Esmeralda, NV); Pahrnatagat (Pahrnatagat N.W.R., Lincoln, NV); Red Hills G.C. (Red Hills Golf Course, St. George, Washington, UT); Ouray (Ouray N.W.R., Uintah, UT); Overton (Overton W.M.A., Clark, NV); P.L. (Pyramid L., Washoe, NV); Q.C.R. (Quail Creek Res., Washington, UT); Sand Hollow (Sand Hollow Res., Washington, UT); Stillwater (Stillwater N.W.R., Churchill, NV); Zion N.P. (Washington, UT).

LOONS THROUGH WATERFOWL

A rare Red-throated Loon was photographed at Hyrum S.P., Cache, UT 22 Apr and seen through 27 Apr (BSr, DSh, ph. MMo). A Yellow-billed Loon first found 1 Jan. at P.L. was seen through 18 Mar (TL). Several Horned Grebes were reported throughout Utah Mar–Apr. As observer numbers have increased in the Region and their field skills refined, we have seen an increase in reports of this species. A very rare Red-necked Grebe was discovered at Hyrum S.P. 10 Apr (†RR, S&DD). The bird was described as “mostly in breeding plumage” and was seen through 28 Apr.

It looks as though there may be some budding young birders in Elko, NV, as a second-grade class had their teacher, Lois Ports, come outside during recess to confirm 24 American White Pelicans circling over their school. The class had just completed a season of Classroom Feederwatch and were disappointed that they could no longer report their data.

A Least Bittern was heard calling at Pahrnatagat 7 (JW) & 17 May (GS, MMe). This species is rarely reported n. of Clark, NV but is most likely regular at Pahrnatagat. A Green Heron at Ouray 26 May was in an area where seldom reported (J&KB). Up to 4 California Condors thrilled park visitors at Zion

N.P. 13–17 Apr (JCa et al.). The birds were feeding on a deer carcass across from Weeping Rock (a heavily visited spot in the park).

Three Trumpeter Swans were reported from Pineview Res., Weber, UT 9 Mar (KE, JR, KP), and one was seen at Ruby Valley N.W.R., Elko, NV 25 May (DMc). The only report of Greater White-fronted Goose came from Lemmon V.M., where 4 were seen 26 Apr (FP). Ross's Geese are regularly found in the Region in small numbers, so 75 in the Washington Fields, Washington, UT 2 Mar was a notable number (RF).

Wood Ducks were reported scattered throughout the Region in small numbers as expected, but a male and female reported nesting along the Truckee R. at Verdi, Washoe, NV 4–23 Mar were notable (RBn). A male Eurasian Wigeon (less than annual in the Region) graced Farmington Bay for one day only 22 Mar (J&KB). A Long-tailed Duck that wintered at East Canyon Res., Morgan, UT stayed until 21 Mar (BR et al.). Scoters in the Region are generally found in the fall and winter, but this spring all three species were recorded. An unusually late female Surf Scoter was at Indian Springs sewage ponds 3–4 May (RSa, RF, SSu). Two wintering White-winged Scoters lingered into the spring, one at Sand Hollow staying until 12 Mar (RF) and 2 at East Canyon Res., Morgan, UT to 22 Mar (BR). A male Black Scoter, the rarest scoter in the Region, was at Mona Res., Juab, UT 2–19 Mar (LG et al., ph. EL).

HAWKS THROUGH TERNS

Two Mississippi Kites in Nevada were great finds, one in Tonopah, Nye 17 May (ph. GS, MMe) and the other at Corn Cr. 21 May (B&PH, JW, ph. RF, DGh, RSk). A total of 125 Bald Eagles at Farmington Bay 2 Mar must have been an impressive sight (J&KB). Common Black-Hawks were evident this spring in sw. Utah. In addition to birds seen at the usual locations, one was found in Zion N.P. 6 Apr (LT); this follows last summer's sighting, the first for the park in many years. Other singles were at Virgin, Washington, UT 24 Apr (MC) and Baker Res., Washington, UT 6 May (LT). One reported from the Abajo Mts. at Verdure Cr., San Juan, UT 9 May was far from any previous report for this species in Utah (p. a., †BM et al.) and in an unusual habitat (Ponderosa Pine forest with aspen along a stream) and at the very high elevation of 2235 m. Zone-tailed Hawk is another sw. species reaching its extreme n. limits in sw. Utah and s. Nevada. Three were reported this spring: one at Silver Reef, Washington, UT 30 Apr (ph. RF), one at Corn Cr. 14–18 May (ph. RF et al.), and one at Kolob Res., Washington, UT 25 May (JS). A Northern Bobwhite in Emigration Canyon, Salt Lake, UT 8 May was likely an escapee (†S&JS).

Black-bellied Plovers made an impressive showing this season, with reports scattered

throughout the Region and a Utah high count of 1000+ along the A.I.C. 9 May (JBi). Nevada's high count of 100+ came from Carson L., *Churchill* 19 Apr (NB, MBi, JT). An interesting report of an Upland Sandpiper—very rare for the Region—came from the n. Ruby Valley, *Elko*, NV 10 May (AHR). Whimbrels are very scarce migrants through the Region, with only one or 2 usually reported during any season. Thus four reports of up to 3 birds was quite a good showing: one at Soda L., *Churchill*, NV 2 May (DT), one at Carson L. 15 May (GS, JW), up to 3 at Bear River 29 Apr–11 May (CJG, SB, C&ND), and up to 3 at A.I.C. 27 Apr–4 May (BR, PF, J&KB).

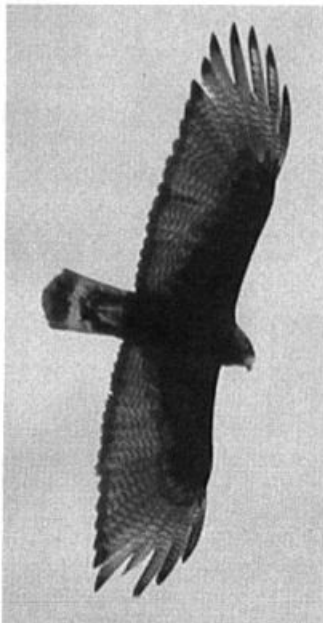
There were three reports of Ruddy Turnstone, a species not found every year: one at Soda L., *Churchill*, NV 8–10 May (JW), one at P.L. 10 May (JT, DMu), and one at Chicken Cr. Res., *Juab*, UT 10 May (J&KB). Red Knots, another scarce migrant not recorded every year, were observed four times this spring: 2 along the A.I.C. 11 May and one there 30 May (PF), one at Chicken Creek Res., *Juab*, UT 12 May (J&KB), and one at Lemmon V.M. 13 May (JW). Sanderling numbers were impressive at A.I.C. 10 Apr–15 May, where 1000+ were estimated 4 May (J&KB) and 3000+ on 15 May (JVM, PF). Away from A.I.C., there were only three reports: one at Lemmon V.M. 14 Apr & 6 May (NB, JT, CY, FP), 8 at Sand Hollow 19–20 Apr (RF, SSu), and one at Soda L. 15 May (GS, JW).

Semipalmated Sandpipers are very rare in the spring, so the 3 at A.I.C. 3 May (J&KB) and one there 30 May (PF, KL, JVM) are very noteworthy. A remarkable White-rumped Sandpiper was photographed at the Blanding sewage ponds, *San Juan*, UT 27 May (ph. AS, †NP). Dunlin were reported scattered throughout the Region, with a high count of 60+ at Carson L. 19 Apr (JW). Only 2 Short-billed Dowitchers were reported, both in Nevada: 2 at Indian Springs 4 May (SSu, RF) and one at Lemmon V.M. 15 May (BH). A Red Phalarope photographed at Blanding sewage ponds 27 May provided a very rare spring record (ph. AS, NP).

Franklin's Gulls are regular migrants through the Region, but a count of 51 at H.B.V.P. 24 Apr was an unusually high number for s. Nevada (J&MC). A first-winter Mew Gull, very rare in the region, was reported

from H.B.V.P. 6 Mar (p. a., DAL, MJ, JBr). A first-winter Glaucous-winged Gull at Farmington 1 Mar (DG) was likely a wintering bird; this species is being reported more frequently around the Great Salt Lake.

Common Terns are uncommon migrants through the Great Basin, so the following records are of note: one at Provo Airport Dike, *Utah*, UT 24 Apr (CPy), one at Sand Hollow 5 May (RF), one at Las Vegas Bay, L. Mead, *Clark*, NV 30 May (MBA, fide JBr), and 3 at H.B.V.P. 30 May (JBr). Least Terns staged a mini-invasion into the Region: 2 at Lee Kay Ponds, *Salt Lake*, UT 15–23 May (†BR et al., ph. MMD), one at H.B.V.P. 18 May (DT, TS), one at Provo Airport Dike, *Utah*, UT 26–31 May (RSt, RBW et al.), one at St. George Golf Course, *Washington*, UT 28 May–1 Jun (MSc, JS, ph., †RF, ph. SSu), and one at Las Vegas Bay, L. Mead 30 May (MBA, fide JE).



Zone-tailed Hawks were recorded this spring in several unusual areas in southwestern Utah. This one cruised over Silver Reef, Washington County, Utah on 30 April 2003. Photograph by Rick Fridell.

PIGEONS THROUGH WOODPECKERS

A Band-tailed Pigeon in Holaday, *Salt Lake*, UT 27 Mar was considered early for that location (DO). A stray White-winged Dove in Orem, *Utah*, UT 19 Apr was far n. of its normal range (CPy). Eurasian Collared-Doves continued their presence in Nevada and Utah, with 12 reports involving 20+ individuals. Several were birds still present from locations previously reported in the fall and winter seasons for *Clark* and *Lincoln*, NV and *Beaver*, *Iron*, and *Washington*, UT. New reports included: one at Corn Cr. 17 May (RT, DT, JCo), one at Kanab Golf Course, *Kane*, UT 24 May (CS et al.), and 2 at Delta, *Millard*, UT 27 May (DAL). The male of a pair in Cedar Valley, *Iron*, UT since Dec was observed giving its nasal "kreeeow" call during display flight 5 May (SSu). A calling Inca Dove was at Indian Springs 4 May (RF, SSu), and 8 were seen there on 20 May (DT, JW et al.).

Yellow-billed Cuckoos are always a treat to find in the West, and the following single birds were in atypical areas: Garr Ranch, Antelope Island S.P., *Davis*, UT 23 May (DSh, LG), Porter Springs, *Pershing*, NV 30 May (DT, JW et al.), and Red Hills G.C. 31 May (KW, RF).

All were probably migrants. Flammulated Owls are regular breeding birds in the Region, but migrants are only rarely found; one at Welcome Spring just at the transition of Joshua Tree woodland and juniper woodland on the Beaver Dam slope, *Washington*, UT 3 May was exceptional (BHu, ph. MT).

A Black Swift at the Carson Diversion Dam, *Churchill*, NV 10–11 May provided a very rare Nevada record of a migrant (DSi, LN). Vaux's Swifts were reported only from w. Nevada this year, with 8 reports involving 50+ birds in *Clark*, *Churchill*, and *Washoe*. An unconfirmed report of a Blue-throated Hummingbird came from a park visitor at Zion N.P. 13 May. Although park personnel could not relocate the bird and this report cannot go into the books, it is important to note the possibility that this species may have occurred here this spring; there is at least one previous record for the area. Anna's Hummingbirds continued their yearly presence in s. Utah, with 4 found in the Leeds area, *Washington*, UT 2 Mar (CS et al.) and one at Oak Grove, *Washington*, UT 18 May (RF, LT). Anna's Hummingbirds had been recorded yearly only in *Washington* for the last five years or so. A male Costa's Hummingbird in Oxbow Park, *Reno* 16 Apr was n. of its expected range in Nevada (DT). Costa's Hummingbirds are regularly recorded farther n. in n. California and Oregon, so their occasional occurrence in n. Nevada is not surprising. An early Broad-tailed Hummingbird was in Zion Canyon N.P. 12 Mar (RF). An Acorn Woodpecker first observed 15 Oct 2002 near Boulder Mt. along Hwy 12 between mile markers 93 & 94, *Garfield*, UT continued through the end of the period (†CT, m. ob.). The Yellow-bellied Sapsucker present since 1 Jan at Lytle Ranch, *Washington* continued until 22 Mar (LT et al.). What was considered



White-rumped Sandpipers are rarely found in the Great Basin Region. This remarkable photograph was taken at the Blanding sewage ponds, San Juan County, Utah on 27 May 2003. Photograph by Andrew Spencer.

a pure Yellow-shafted race Northern Flicker was seen at Springdale pond, *Washington*, UT 9 Mar (LT). Several such flickers are reported each year, but most appear to be intergrades.

FLYCATCHERS THROUGH WARBLERS

A photographed but silent Eastern Wood-Pewee was reported from Upper Galt Switch, *Lincoln*, NV 7 May (p. a., ph., †JW). Several marks in the photograph do suggest this species, but a few marks might not. Identifying silent vagrant wood-pewees is challenging, and the Nevada committee will decide this one. Several Least Flycatchers, all singles, were reported as follows: Red Hills G.C. 6 May (RF), Corn Cr. 10 (JE, Rsa, LT) & 14 May (ph. RF), Lytle Ranch 11 May (LT), and Lida, *Esmeralda*, NV 18 May (†GS, MME).

After last spring's influx of Least Flycatchers, the several reports this spring also suggest that this species has been an overlooked rare transient through the Region. A well-described Eastern Phoebe 7 May at Jordan R. Parkway, Salt Lake, UT provides a very rare Utah record for this species (p. a., †EC). An Eastern Kingbird at Five Mile Ranch, Nye, NV 17 May (GS, MMe) and one at Corn Cr. 28 May (NB, JT) were the only ones reported away from regular locations in n. Nevada and n. Utah. A Scissor-tailed Flycatcher at Corn Cr. 20–28 May (JHe, JM, NB, JT) and another at Miller's R. A. 24 May (FP, DT et al.) were very good finds.

A Bell's Vireo was observed singing at Lida, Esmeralda, NV 18 May, a somewhat n. location for this species (MMe, GS). Cassin's Vireos were noted in small numbers in Clark, NV and Washington, UT during late Apr and early May. Single Purple Martins, a very scarce migrant, were seen at Fish Springs 16 May (KCC) and Indian Springs sewage ponds 24 May (TW). Only 2 Swainson's Thrushes (an irregular migrant through the desert regions) were reported: Corn Cr. 14 May (RF) and Circle L Ranch, Dyer 21 May (DT et al.). Neither was identified to subspecies. Transient Gray Catbirds were noted at Gunnison Bend Res., Millard, UT 9 Mar (DAL), Miller's R.A. 27 May (GS), and Porter Springs, Pershing, NV 28 May (JW). The Gunnison Bend Res. bird was extremely early and may have been a lingering wintering bird, which would be a significant record. A Brown Thrasher at the Jordan R. Parkway on the early date of 26 Mar (JHo) could also have been a wintering bird. Another Brown Thrasher was observed at Red Hills G.C. 28 May (DSh). Le Conte's Thrashers were easily found this spring along the Alamo Rd. just outside of Corn Cr., and several fledged young were seen in early May (DT, RT et al.). Two ad. with 2 juv. Le Conte's Thrashers were found at Torrance Ranch, Beatty, Nye, NV, a n. location for this species (DT, RT et al.).

Eastern warblers were in short supply this season. Northern Parulas were observed at three locations: Springdale pond, Washington, UT 14 May (BSw), Dyer 20 May (DT), and the Watchman residence area, Zion N.P., a singing male that persisted from 25–28 May (LB, †BSw et al.). A Chestnut-sided Warbler was along the Muddy R., Emery, UT 29 May (MW), and a Magnolia Warbler was in Dyer 24 May (GS, DSe, JT et al.). Hermit Warblers are rare-but-regular transients through the Region, but only 2 were reported this spring: one at Corn Cr. 14 May (RF) and one at Lida, Esmeralda, NV 18 May (GS, MMe). A Yellow-throated Warbler was also at Lida 18–20 May (GS, DT). The Palm Warbler that wintered at Carson L. was last seen 31 Mar (DAR). A basic-plumaged Palm Warbler, very rare in spring, was seen briefly at Corn Cr. 3 May (RF,

SSu). Four Black-and-white Warblers were found during May in Clark, Esmeralda, and Washington—at or slightly below normal. Only 3 American Redstarts were reported (Pershing, NV, Utah and Wasatch, UT). An Ovenbird was along the Jordan R. Parkway 8 May for a rare local record (†EC). A well-described Louisiana Waterthrush was at Lytle 5 May (p. a., †LT); there are no accepted Utah records. An extremely early Wilson's Warbler showed up at the Parker Ranch Preserve, Nye, NV 15 Mar (LC). For at least the 3rd spring in a row, Painted Redstarts were found in Zion N.P., this year 3 Apr+ (KS, fide BSw). Others were at Red Rock N.C.A., Clark, NV 5 Apr (DSm et al.) and Beaver Dam Wash above Lytle 19 Apr (RF, LT).

SPARROWS THROUGH FINCHES

Only one White-throated Sparrow was reported, that being 8 Mar at Reno (AWa). Single Harris's Sparrows were reported in Utah at Camelot Woods, Utah 11 Mar (KCC), Coalville, Summit 26 Mar (PF, BHg), Provo Airport Dike, Utah 12 Apr (J&KB) & 1 May (different bird; RW), and at a residence in w. Weber 5 May (PM). Golden-crowned Sparrows are regular in Nevada and are becoming more so in sw. Utah. One that wintered at Red Cliffs Recreation Area, Washington lingered until 9 Mar (RF), and another was along the Virgin River Parkway, Washington 12 Mar (LT).

Rose-breasted Grosbeak numbers were a bit above average: one at Bluff, San Juan, UT 16 May (JHk, LH, TD), one at Circle L Ranch, Dyer, Esmeralda, NV 18 May (GS, MMe), with 2 there 21 May (JW), a female at Corn Cr. 18–22 May (JE et al.), and a female at Red Hills G.C. 26 May (RF, KCo). Three Indigo Buntings at Corn Cr. 18 May were unusual for a single location (JCo). As is now quite normal, a few others were reported; this species is probably a regular but scarce Regional breeder.

Wayward Bobolinks were at Miller's R.A. 17–28 May (GS, MMe, NB, JT), Springville, Utah 19 May (CPT), and Tonopah Cemetery, Nye 24 May (DSe). Up to 43 Tricolored Blackbirds were in the Centerville area of Carson Valley, Douglas 7–24 Apr, where this species has been found now for several years (m. ob.). A female Bronzed Cowbird was at Red Hills G.C. 9–28 May (LI, GB, ph. RF), providing another report of this species to add to the handful of Utah records. A female Orchard Oriole was a great find at Corn Cr. 16–22 May (MSM, RSa); there are very few Regional records. At least one and likely 2 first-year Hooded Orioles were in Fernley, Lyon, NV 21–25 Apr, visiting two different feeders (DT, JT, NB, DSe), followed on 16 May by a 3rd bird, an ad. male (DSe). Fernley is quite far n. for this species in Nevada. Another unusually northerly record was of a male Hooded Oriole

in Salt Lake City 29 Apr–17 May (MSt et al.). A Baltimore Oriole stopped in at Miller's R.A. 25 May (DT, BD).

A flock of 30 Red Crossbills wandered far out of habitat in Lida 18–21 May (MMe, GS et al.). A very unusual Common Redpoll was reported from a Sparks, Washoe, NV feeder on the very late date of 22 May (CE, fide AWa); details were scant. An unexpected Lawrence's Goldfinch was at a Fernley, Lyon, NV feeder 9–29 Mar (DT, DSe, MMe), an outlier in last fall's irruption.

Observers: Dave Allen (DAL), Gisela Anderson, Martha Ann, Keith Archibald, David Arsenault (DAR), Mike Baker (MBa), Glenn Barlow, Sarah Beckwith, Betsy Beneke (BBE), Joel & Kathy Beyer, Jack Binch (JBi), Mike Bish (MBi), Nancy Bish, Douglas Booth, Lonny Boring, Bob Bradley (BBR), Michael Bradley (MBr), Je Anne Branca (JBr), Robert Brown (RBw), Richard Brune (RBn), John Cavitt (JCa), KC Childs (KCC), Joan Clarke (JCl), Jack Cochran (JCo), Kristen Comella (KC), Edward Conrad, Jim & Marian Cressman, Laura Cunningham, Matt Curtis, Carol & Nicky Davis, Tamara DeRosiers, Sue & Dave Drown, Bob Dunn, Jim Eidell, Clare Engeseth, Keith Evans, Rick Fridell, Pomeria Fronce, Sharon Gander, Lou Giddings, Dennis Ghiglieri (DGh), Dana Green (DGr), C.J. Grimes (CJG), Carol Gwynn (CGw), Anne Halley (AHL), Bill Hart (BHa), Alex Hartman (AHR), Brian & Phoebe Hawson, Jim Healy (JHe), Shelly Hernandez, Jack Holley (JHo), Jim Hook (JHk), Luanne Hook, Eric Huish, Bill Hunter (BHU), Bob Huntington (BHg), Mike Johnson, Lee Jones, Tony Jones, Josh Kreitzer, Edson Leite, Tim Lenz, Kent Lewis, Jeff Madsen, Sue Anne Marshall, Brian Maxfield, Don McIvor (DMc), Paul Merola, Milton Meyers (MMe), Mike Monson (MMn), Milton Moody (MMD), Darren Murphey (DMu), Larry Neal, Deedee O'Brien, Bridget Olson, Christian Peay (CPy), Cheryl Peterson (CPT), Fred Petersen, Nathan Pieplow, Lois Ports, Kristin Purdy, Jack Rensel, Kathy Robertson, Bruce Robinson, Ron Ryel, Susan & Jeffrey Saffle, Mike San Miguel (MSM), Rick Saval (RSa), John Schijf, Mike Schijf (MSc), Rita Schlageter (RSc), Greg Scyphers, Dennis Serdehely (DSe), Charlie Sheard, Kevin Shipp, Bryan Shirley (BSr), Dennis Shirley (DSh), Bob Showler (BSw), David Sibley (DSi), Dan Small (DSm), Andrew Spencer, Mark Stackhouse (MSt), Sparky Stensaas (SSt), Reed Stone (RSt), Rose Strickland (RSk), Toby Sulenski, Priscilla Summers, Steve Summers (SSu), Jane Thompson, Matthew Thorum, Carolyn Titus, Alton Thygerson, Larry Tripp, Dennis Trousdale, Ryan Trousdale, Julie Van Moorhem (JVM), Robin Walcott, Alan Wallace (AWa), Jack Walters, Merrill Webb, Kevin Wheeler, Larry Williams, Alan Wright (AWr), Tom Wurster, Carol York. ●