

Idaho & Western Montana

A repeat of last year, the fall of 2003 was mostly warm, dry, and without major storms. August was unusually torrid; in fact, it was Idaho's warmest August ever recorded. Drought and irrigation draw-downs dramatically lowered surface waters across the region, and some reservoirs dropped to record-low water levels. Waterfowl were severely impacted by the disappearing waters, but staging shorebirds and waders enjoyed an extensive bounty of mudflats. Record-cold temperatures in late October and early November added an unusual counterpoint to an otherwise mild season. Although prevailing clement conditions brought no spectacular migration fallouts, many exciting rare birds were discovered. The headline birds included three Asian vagrants and a seabird, an especially impressive list for an inland region.

With this report we say goodbye to longstanding Missoula, Montana subregional editor Jeff Marks, who leaves our ranks to pursue other projects. Thank you, Jeff, for your many years of superior reports and unflinching dedication to accuracy. We wish to extend a hearty welcome to new subregional editors Terry Toppins from Missoula and the team of Kathleen Cameron and Poo Wright-Pulliam from Idaho's Sun Valley area.

Abbreviations: A.F.R. (American Falls Res., Bingham and Power, ID); Camas (Camas N.W.R., Jefferson, ID); L.M. (Lee Metcalf N.W.R. near Stevensville, MT); L.P. (Idaho Bird Observatory's banding station at Lucky Peak near Boise).

LOONS THROUGH RAPTORS

Loon highlights of the season included a Red-throated in Fremont, ID 8–11 Nov (CW) and single Yellow-billed near Kalispell, MT 8 Oct (BR) and in Blaine, ID 17 Oct (KC, PWP). Both states reported 6 Pacific Loons each, an average fall total. American White Pelicans were more numerous and widespread than usual in w. Montana, with Aug counts of 100 in Lake and 52 in Powell (DC, GS). At least 4 wandering Great Egrets were in n. Idaho 20 Sep–14 Oct, where they are now rare but expected. Idaho's best wader of the season was the Green Heron in Owyhee 17 Sep (LG), a less-than-annual visitor. A White-faced Ibis at Mann L., Nez Perce 27 Sep (CS) represented the 3rd autumn record for n. Idaho.

A Whooper Swan was discovered near Somers, MT 15–30 Nov+ (DC), where one was seen about two years ago; questions of origin remain for both sightings. Eurasian Wigeon numbers were low, with only two reported in Idaho and one in Montana. Long-tailed Ducks were also scarcer than usual, with only two



Idaho reports. Although less spectacular than last year's record invasion, scoters came through in excellent numbers, with reports of 35 Surfs and 26 White-wingeds. Exciting news was the White-tailed Kite at L.M. 30 Nov+ (VV, ph. WT) that provided Montana's first record. Idaho's Red-shouldered Hawk reports were well above average, with one below the A.F.R. dam 10 Sep (CT) and singles noted at L.P. 28 & 29 Sep (RB). Broad-winged Hawk counts were the lowest in six years, with only 10 reports from each state. An out-of-range Ferruginous Hawk at Rathdrum Prairie, Kootenai, ID 17 Aug (JT) provided a very rare n. Idaho sighting and first local record. It was a very good fall for Gyrfalcons, with 2 in Idaho and 4 in Montana.

SHOREBIRDS THROUGH ACCENTOR

Total numbers for uncommon but expected shorebirds were above average, with 6 American Golden-Plovers, 4 Silt Sandpipers, and 5 Short-billed Dowitchers. A pair of Snowy Plovers at A.F.R. 25 Sep (CT) was newsworthy, as they are not quite annual. With fewer than 20 records in Idaho, 2 Red Knots at A.F.R. 11 Aug (CT) and one in Blaine, ID 13 Aug (GL, m. ob.) were exceptional. Sanderlings are not annual in w. Montana, so 5 near Somers, MT 17 Sep (BR) were of interest. Montana's 12th

David Trochlell

1931 Tallwood Lane

Boise, Idaho 83706

(dtrochlell@velocity.net)

Buff-breasted Sandpiper was at Canyon Ferry Res., Broadwater 14 Oct (†EH). Best shorebird of the season was a Ruff discovered in Cassia 3 Oct (†SB), providing Idaho's 2nd record.

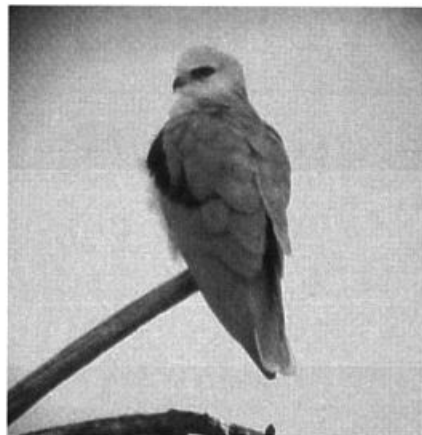
A Long-tailed Jaeger spotted on the Salmon R., Lewis 27 Aug (SD) constituted Idaho's 5th record. The tally of rare-but-regular gulls was lackluster, with only 2 Mews, 4 Thayer's, 2 Glaucous-wingeds, 2 Glaucous, and at least 8 Sabine's Gulls reported. An Arctic Tern was at A.F.R. 25 Sep (CT), where the species is now annual. An Ancient Murrelet in Ravalli 10 Aug (VW) represented Montana's 8th record.

Eurasian Collared-Doves explored new territory in both states, with singles in Sanders, MT 4 Aug (BR) and at Boise, ID 17 Aug (JC). Barred Owls continue to show up in new areas of Idaho, with one in Butte 27 Oct (DH). Anna's Hummingbirds were reported from both states: singles in Moscow, ID 5 Sep (CS) and Missoula, MT 31 Oct–3 Nov (GS, CT). A Red-headed Woodpecker in Nampa, ID 29

Aug (BC) was about Idaho's 11th. The 6 Blue Jays reported made an exceptionally poor showing for this species. Now annual somewhere in the Region, a Blue Jay x Steller's Jay hybrid was at Coeur d'Alene, ID 11-30 Nov+ (NM). Out-of-range Bushtits in *Gem*, ID 25 Aug (F&MZ) provided an interesting latilong record. Sightings of 4 Bewick's Wrens in sw. Idaho 4 Oct-1 Nov were well above the norm. Two reports of Northern Mockingbird in s. Idaho were typical, but one in n. Idaho's *Bonner* 29 Sep (BB) was exceptional. The bird of the season was a marvelous Siberian Accentor in *Park* 22-30 Nov+ (†EHe, SW, m. ob.)—Montana's first record and the Region's 2nd.

WARBLERS THROUGH GRACKLES

The list of rare-but-expected warblers in Idaho was impressive and included single Tennessee Warblers at L.P. 31 Aug (RB) and Camas 21 Sep (MCr); Chestnut-sided Warblers at Camas 2 & 6 Sep (MCr) and in Boise 12 Sep (DT); Magnolia Warblers at Camas 6 Sep & 8 Oct (MCr) and near Boise 5 Oct (MC); a Black-throated Blue Warbler near Rexburg 11 Oct (DCl); Palm Warblers in Boise 9 Sep (MC) and in *Madison* 7-8 Nov (DCl); Blackpoll Warblers at Camas 12 & 16 Sep (MCr) and near Boise 1 Oct (MC); and a Black-and-white Warbler at Camas 30 Aug (MCr). Unexpected were a Bay-



One of the Region's most exciting events of the fall season was the discovery of Montana's first White-tailed Kite near Stevensville on 30 November 2003 (here 1 December) by Virginia Vincent.

Photograph by Wayne Tree.

breasted Warbler in Boise 15 Sep and a Hooded Warbler there 28 Oct (MC). Especially rare in fall were a Rose-breasted Grosbeak at L.M. 29 Aug (DG) and a Lark Bunting in *Flathead*, MT 10 Sep (BR). A migrating Nelson's Sharp-tailed Sparrow found in Bozeman, MT 6 Oct (†RW) was the Region's first; the nearest edge of its known range is more than 500 km away in ne. Montana. Swamp

Sparrows were unusually numerous. Idaho's reports included one near Rexburg 13 Oct (DCl), 6 in *Elmore* 15 Nov (DT), and one in *Canyon* 28 Nov (DT). Even more unusual was one near Bozeman, MT 11 Oct (†EH) that represented Montana's 12th record. The tally of rare-but-regular *Zonotrichia* sparrows was well above average, with 26 White-throated, 8 Golden-crowned, and 15 Harris's Sparrows reported. Four Rusty Blackbirds constituted an average fall total for the Region. A total of 4 Common Grackles in sw. Idaho 4 Oct-17 Nov was well above average.

Contributors: (subregional editors in bold-face): IDAHO: Bob Bond, Ryan Brady, Kathleen Cameron, Jay Carlisle, Darren Clark (DCl), Marty Collar (MCr), Mark Collie, Brian Cooper, Sue Danver, **Kas Dumroese**, Laurie Goodrich, Douglas Halford, Lisa Hardy, George Livingston, Nancy Mertz, **Hadley Roberts**, Brian Sturges, **Shirley Sturts**, Charles Swift, Joe Taggart, David Trochlell, Chuck Trost, Cliff Weisse, **Poo Wright-Pulliam**, Fred and Melly Zeillemaker. MONTANA: Dan Casey, Deb Goslin, Ed Harper, Eric Hendrickson (EHe), John Parker, Bob Rost, Don Skaar, Gordon Skaggs, Gary Swant, Carole Toppins, **Terry Toppins**, Virginia Vincent, Sue Williams, Robin Wolcott, Vita Wright. ☉

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