

# Great Basin



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After several consecutive seasons of drought, this winter brought welcome relief to much of the Great Basin, with some areas, particularly in the northern half of the Region, receiving almost normal levels of snowfall. However, through most of southern Nevada and Utah, water levels in lakes, reservoirs, and streams remain well below normal. Higher-than-normal numbers of regularly wintering northern species were observed (e.g., Bald Eagles, Rough-legged Hawks, Northern Shrike) in southern portions of the Region. The most unexpected sightings of the season included a Ruff near the Great Salt Lake, a Broad-billed Hummingbird at Lake Mead, and a Smith's Longspur at Carson Lake, Nevada.

Abbreviations: A.I.C. (Antelope Island S.P., Causeway, Davis UT); Bear River (Migratory

Bird Refuge, Box Elder, UT); Carson L. (Churchill, NV); Corn Cr. (at Desert N.W.R., Clark, NV); Farmington Bay (W.M.A., Davis, UT); Fish Springs (N.W.R., Juab, UT); H.B.V.P. (Henderson Bird Viewing Preserve, Clark NV); L. Mead (N.R.A., Clark, NV); Lytle (Lytle Ranch Preserve, Washington UT); Overton (W.M.A., Clark, NV); Pahrnatag (N.W.R., Lincoln, NV); P.L. (Pyramid L., Washoe NV); Q.C.S.P. (Quail Creek S.P., Washington, UT); Red Cliffs (R.A., Washington, UT).

## LOONS THROUGH WATERFOWL

The only Pacific Loon reports were of a single individual at Q.C.S.P. 13–25 Jan and 2 at the same location on 23 Feb (RF). A Yellow-billed Loon was observed during the Walker Lake C.B.C., Mineral, NV 30 Dec (p.a., DGh, RSt) but was not reported thereafter. A few Horned Grebes, rare but regular visitors to the Region, were reported wintering at P.L. in Nevada (DSe et al.) and at Q.C.S.P. in Utah (J&KB). Single out-of-season American White Pelicans were reported from Fallon, Churchill, NV 1 Dec (DT), Walker L., Mineral, NV 29 Dec (DSe, GS), and Southgate G.C., Washington, UT 9 Dec–7 Feb (SS et al.). A high count of 16 Trumpeter Swans was reported from Ruby Lake N.W.R., Elko, NV 15 Dec (DGh, RSt). Typically, a few Greater White-fronted Geese are found wintering in the Region; this year, one to 6 were observed in Clark, Churchill, and Washoe, NV (JW, SM, MMe). Eurasian Wigeons were observed at three locations in Utah: 2 males at Fish Springs 4 Jan (fide CoN), a male at Riverside G.C., Utah 17–24 Jan (CaN, ph. MMe et al.),

and one at Deer Creek S.P., Wasatch 27–29 Jan (DSh). Eurasian Wigeons were also reported from Lakeridge G.C., Washoe, NV 30 Nov+ (GS) and at Pahrnatag 12 Jan (CT, HH, JAB, RSc). A few Long-tailed Ducks typically winter at Utah's Great Salt L., and they were reported throughout the season at A.I.C., with a high count of 10 on 28 Dec (MMe, DGh, ph. TA). Another was observed at Bear R. 1 Dec (AJ). The only Surf Scoter report was of an imm. at P.L. 12–16 Dec (DSe, DT), and the only White-winged Scoter observed during the winter period was also at P.L. 1 Dec (JW).

## HAWKS THROUGH TERNS

Single Red-shouldered Hawks were observed at several Nevada locations including Numana Wetlands, Washoe 13 Dec (DSe), Floyd Lamb S.P., Clark 14 Dec–22 Feb (RSa), Las Vegas, Clark 16 Feb (SG), and Overton 17 Feb (JW). The only report from Utah was of an imm. photographed at Gunlock, Washington 30 Jan (LT). A first-winter Harris's Hawk was a big surprise at Overton 25 Jan (RSt, DGh, JW, ph. LT); it was last reported 6 Mar, having been observed by many Regional birders. The provenance of this bird is unknown; however, there was no indication it had been in captivity and, it may well have been a natural vagrant from Arizona.

A Sharp-tailed Grouse was out of place at Willard Bay S.P., Box Elder, UT 11 Jan (KCh, EH). A Common Moorhen at Powell Slough, Utah, UT 13 Feb (KCh) was n. of expected range. A Snowy Plover was a surprise winter visitor to the A.I.C. 18 Jan (CoN), and there were several other unexpected wintering shorebirds observed in the Region. Spotted Sandpipers were seen in both n. Nevada and Utah, with single individuals at Truckee Meadows, Washoe, NV 20 Dec (JT, RSt), and at Utah L., Utah, UT 22 Dec (CDa, ND). A single Long-billed Curlew was reported from Carson L. 13 Dec (JW, RSt, DGh), and 9 were observed at Walker L., Mineral, NV 30 Dec (EA, JBa). A Pectoral Sandpiper was a rare winter find at Carson L. 13 Dec (JW, RSt, DGh). Wintering Dunlin are also rare in the Region, so a flock of up to 40 at Carson L. 13 Dec–14 Jan (JW, RSt, DGh, TL) and 2 observed at Truckee Meadows, Washoe, NV 20 Dec (JE, HJ, LB) were noteworthy. Certainly the shorebird of the season was a well-studied Ruff at Farmington Bay 14–17 Feb (BS, LG, ph. JL, ph. TS, †J&KB).

A first-winter Mew Gull was photographed at Virginia L., Washoe, NV 20 Dec (ph. GS, MMe, JD) and remained through 13 Feb (FP). The Bountiful Landfill (Davis, UT) enhanced its reputation as a hotspot for viewing rare gulls this season by hosting up to 5 Thayer's Gulls 12 Dec–16 Feb (CW, MMe et al.), one or 2 Lesser Black-backed Gulls 5 Jan–2 Feb (ph. †EH, KCh, CoN, PF, GB), a first-winter Glaucous-winged Gull 17–29 Jan (ph. CoN et al.), and a Glaucous Gull 12 Dec–23 Jan

(MMo et al.). Another Lesser Black-backed Gull, or perhaps the same individual seen at the Bountiful Landfill, was observed at nearby Farmington Bay 22 Feb (J&KB). First-winter Glaucous-winged Gulls were also observed at two locations around P.L. 12 Dec–15 Mar (JW, DSe).

## DOVES THROUGH WOODPECKERS

Eurasian Collared-Doves continued their rapid colonization of the Region. They continued to be reported from previously documented locations in Clark and Washoe, NV, and Iron, Utah, and Washington, UT and were observed at several new locations in Utah, including Snowville, Box Elder 12–13 Dec (PF, JV), Duchesne, Duchesne 14 Dec (KCh, EH), Mona, Juab 27 Jan (KCh), Huntington, Emery 7 Feb (MW), and West Jordan, Salt Lake 18 Feb (ph. JoM). A flock of up to 12 White-winged Doves spent the 2nd consecutive winter in Washington City, Washington, UT. Inca Doves are being reported with ever-increasing frequency in s. Nevada and sw. Utah. An albino Roadrunner—first reported at Kayenta, Washington, UT 11 Nov (LT, BD, MD)—entered observers throughout the period.

A female Broad-billed Hummingbird was discovered 1 Feb visiting feeders at Boulder Beach Campground, L. Mead (ph., †LT). Fortunately, this cooperative hummingbird remained throughout the season and was observed and photographed by nearly all Nevada (and several Utah) birders (ph. MMe, ph. GS, ph. CT et al.). Anna's Hummingbirds were observed in their usual locations in s. Nevada (RSa et al.) and sw. Utah (CS et al.), where they are gradually becoming more common. However, reports from n. locations of North Ogden, Weber, UT 30 Nov–5 Jan (MS, JBi et al.) and Reno, Washoe, NV 21 Dec (GS) were unexpected.

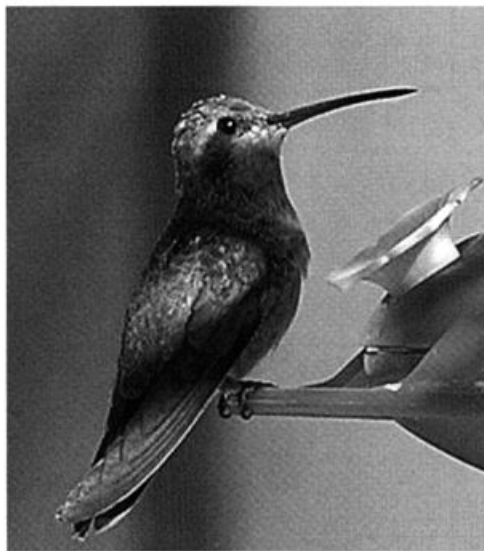
Following an unprecedented fall 2003 showing, Acorn Woodpeckers continued to be reported from many Nevada locations. A pair was observed throughout the season at Spring Mountain S.P., Clark (ph. RSa, DC, J&MC); another was found at Truckee Meadows, Washoe 20–22 Dec (CDo, ph. DM, JT, RSt); and finally one was in Reno, Washoe 17–21 Jan (JT, NB, DT, MMe). A Red-breasted Sapsucker was reported during the Cedar City C.B.C., Iron, UT 19 Dec (CS et al., p. a.). If submitted and accepted, this would be only the 4th documented record in Utah. Williamson's Sapsuckers are rarely reported during the winter in the Region, so a female along the Truckee R., Washoe, NV 17 Jan (JT, NB) and a male at Overton 17 Feb (JW) were nice finds.



This Ruff, present 14–17 (here 15) February 2004 at Farmington Bay Wildlife Management Area, Davis County, provided Utah's third confirmed record of the species. Photograph by Jerry Liguori.

## FLYCATCHERS THROUGH THRASHERS

Vermilion Flycatchers are occasional winter visitors in the s. portion of the Region, so reports from Logandale, Clark, NV 12 Dec (RSc, JC) and Bloomington, Washington, UT 4–24 Jan (M&KD et al.), as well as 4 at Overton 17 Feb (JW) were somewhat expected. More unexpected, however, was an early Cassin's Kingbird observed at the H.B.V.P. 1–8 Feb (JH, CP). Above-average numbers of Northern Shrikes were reported in the Great Basin this winter. Northern Shrikes were reported from five Nevada counties (Carson City, Elko, Lyon, Nye, and Washoe) and five Utah counties (Box Elder, Davis, Duchesne, Juab, and Washington). A Plumbeous Vireo put in a very rare winter appearance in the Region at Hurricane, Wash-



This female Broad-billed Hummingbird was located on 1 (here 8) February 2004 at the Boulder Beach Campground, Lake Mead National Recreation Area, Clark County, Nevada. It remained throughout the season and was enjoyed by dozens of observers. Photograph by Larry Tripp.

ington 20 Dec (SH). A Blue Jay graced a North Ogden, Weber, UT neighborhood 7 Nov–20 Dec (MMo et al.). Varied Thrushes are rare winter visitors in Utah, so the following reports are of note: one at the Logan Country

Club, Cache 11 Dec–1 Mar (SP) and one at Beus Pond, Weber 17 Jan–16 Feb (BF, ph. MS et al.). Single Brown Thrashers were found at Corn Cr. 23 Nov–28 Feb (RSa, DC et al.) and at Lytle 27 Jan–15 Feb (MW, ph. LT et al.).

## WARBLERS THROUGH FINCHES

An out-of-season Yellow Warbler was a very unexpected find at the Virgin River Trail, St. George, Washington, UT 7 Dec (LT). It was a typical winter for American Tree Sparrows, with a few reported from n. portions of the Region (Elko, NV, and Davis and Uintah, UT). A wayward Lark Sparrow was a surprising find during the Truckee Meadows C.B.C., Washoe, NV 20 Dec (JE, HJ, LB). Slate-colored Fox Sparrows were reported from two Washoe, NV locations: Mayberry Park, Reno 18 Dec (RB) and Davis Cr. Park 19 Jan (NB, JT). The only Fox Sparrows reported during the winter in Utah were a pair of Slate-colored observed near Silver Reef, Washington 20 Dec (KW, EM). A Swamp Sparrow was an excellent find at the Virgin River Trail, St. George, Washington, UT 21 Dec–18 Feb (ph. LT et al.). Another was briefly observed at the H.B.V.P. 21 Feb (MB, fide JAB). White-throated Sparrows were observed at several locations in the Region this winter. They were found at three Nevada locations: Fernley, Lyon 7–12 Dec (DSe), Reno, Washoe 9 Jan (LP), plus 2 at L. Mead 1–9 Feb (LT, JW). They were also observed in Cedar City, Iron, UT 1 Jan (SS, PS) and at two Washington, UT locations:

Bloomington 19 Jan (KCo, RF) and Red Cliffs 28 Nov–18 Apr (RF, DSh, LG, KW). It was a very strong winter season for Harris's Sparrows in the Region, with six reports from Utah: Spanish Fork River, Utah 26 Dec–22 Feb (DSh, AT et al.), Jensen, Uintah 5 Jan (KPa), Provo, Utah 10 Jan–25 Apr (TR), Virgin River Trail, Washington 11 Jan–15 Feb (ph. SS, PS), Moab, Grand 12 Jan (fide DF), and Heber Valley, Wasatch 29 Jan (KCh). The only Harris's Sparrow report from Nevada was of an individual observed at Fernley, Lyon 31 Jan (RSe). Rounding out the Zonotrichia in Utah were 2 Washington Golden-crowned Sparrows (they are more regular in Nevada): one at Red Hills 6 Dec–5 Jan (LT, RF) and one at the Virgin River Trail, St. George 13 Jan–28 Feb (RF, J&KB).

One of the highlights of the season was the incredible array of longspurs observed at Carson L., Churchill, NV. The fun started on 16 Dec, when several Lapland and Chestnut-collared Longspurs and a first-year female Smith's Longspur were observed accompanying the huge flocks of wintering Horned Larks (†JW et al.). Eventually a McCown's Longspur was also discovered 28 Dec–31 Jan (JW, DT, ST), and a Snow Bunting was observed 17 Dec–19 Jan