

Colorado & Wyoming

It was a fine spring to bird Colorado and Wyoming, with several notable rarities, high counts, a first breeding record for Wyoming, and a species that had not been recorded as a breeder in Colorado for nearly a century. Temperatures were above average in March and May and near average in April. NOAA reported that Wyoming recorded its 13th driest spring in the last 110 years, while Colorado had its 27th driest. Drought remains extreme to moderate for most of the Region.

It is with great sadness that we report the passing of Jack Merchant. Jack was one of Colorado's most accomplished birders, who spent much of his time carefully watching bird behavior near Eagle, Colorado. His observations were a mainstay of the Mountain West region for decades. All of us who were lucky enough to know this quiet, unassuming man will miss him greatly.

Abbreviations: Barr (Barr Lake S.P., *Adams*); Bonny (Bonny Res. S.P., *Yuma*); Chico (Chico Basin Ranch, *El Paso/Pueblo*); C.V.C.G. (Crow Valley Campground, *Weld*); E.K.W. (Edness Kimball Wilkins S.P., *Natrona, WY*); John Martin (John Martin Res., *Bent*); Jumbo (Jumbo Res., *Logan & Sedgwick*); Seedskaadee (Seedskaadee N.W.R., *Sweetwater, WY*); W.H.R. (Wyoming Hereford Ranch, *Laramie, WY*); Yellowstone (Yellowstone N.P., *Park & Teton, WY*). Due to reporting biases, all locations can be assumed to be in Colorado except that each Wyoming location is noted as such the first time it appears in the text.

LOONS THROUGH DUCKS

Red-throated Loon was not recorded as a spring migrant in the Region until 1993, but the species is now nearly annual in spring. This season, birds were at Standley L., *Jefferson* 4–27 Apr (LS) and L. Henry, *Crowley* 3 May (SO). An alternate-plumaged Pacific Loon at Standley L. 5 May (LS) was the only report of this scarce spring migrant. A count of 209 Horned Grebes at Luna Res., *Adams* 9 Apr (TL) furnished one of the highest spring counts for the Region.

Single American Bitterns appeared unexpectedly at Black Sand Geyser Basin, *Yellowstone* 26 Apr (K. Loveless) and at Chico 22 May (TL). Relatively few American Bitterns are detected in the first half of Apr, so one at Lower Latham, *Weld* (BG) 6 Apr was noteworthy. A Great Egret in Canon City (D. Pantle) 4 Apr was ahead of the main influx of migrants (7 at widely scattered Colorado locations 16–20 Apr). Rare anywhere in Wyoming, a Great Egret was at Seedskaadee 2 May (C. Damberg). An ad. Little Blue Heron was along the Platte R. in *Adams* 11–12 May (GW, m.ob.). Very unexpected was a **Reddish Egret** at L. Beckwith 29 Apr (DS), which en-

dowed *Pueblo* with yet another county first. A Cattle Egret at Lower Latham 4 Apr (BG) was one of the earliest-ever reports. Another unexpectedly wandered to *Yellowstone's* Old Faithful geyser 7 May (ph. TM). Green Herons were noted in typical numbers at expected locations, but one at Mt. Ouray S.W.A. near Salida 26 May (RM) furnished a very rare mountain record and a first for *Chaffee*. A **White Ibis** flew over Rock Canyon in *Pueblo* 25 May (BKP, R. Hulsey); interestingly, all but the first of the previous five Colorado records are from spring. Glossy Ibis sightings, now almost mundane, included at least 8 birds 17 Apr–20 May, all in Colorado. Among these were potential county firsts for *Moffat* at Maybell 30 Apr (FL), *La Plata* at Zink's Pond 18 Apr, and *Custer* at L. Deweese 2 May (MP). A flock of White-faced Ibis at L. Holbrook, *Otero* 17 May included one pure Glossy Ibis and one apparent hybrid **Glossy Ibis** × **White-faced Ibis** (PEL, SM). The increase in hybrids in the Region calls for observers to be particularly careful in identifying Glossy Ibis.

Jumbo Res. hosted some 500 Greater White-fronted Geese 12 Mar (H. Armknecht), a high count for the Region. Ross's Geese were widely noted in Colorado, including an impressive count away from the far e. plains of 14 at Lower Latham, *Weld* (W. Finch). The only report

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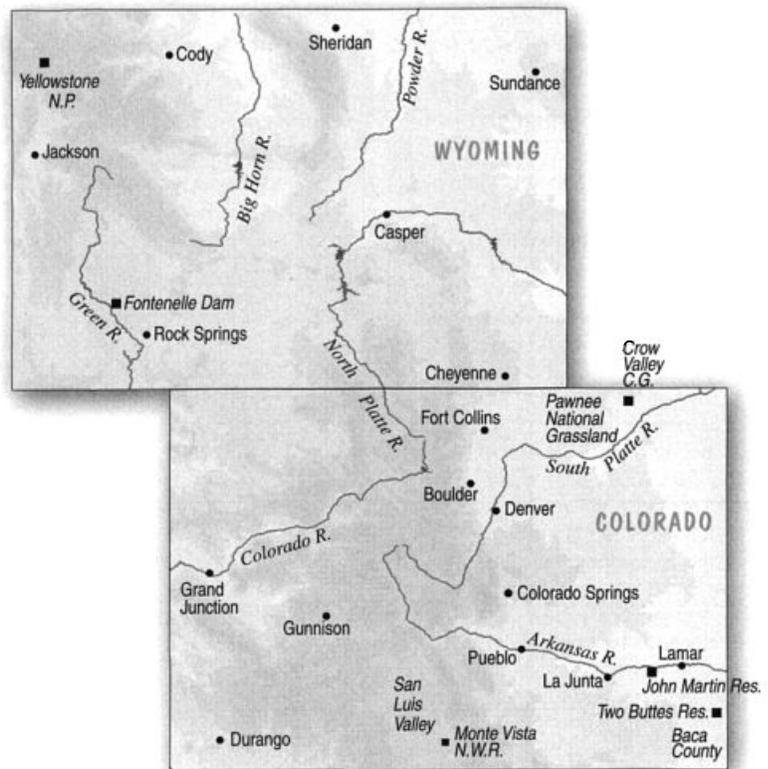
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from Wyoming was of a single in *Yellowstone* 22 Mar (M. Becker). Wintering Trumpeter Swans largely departed the Region in late Mar and early Apr, although an imm. was found outside Boulder 7 Apr–3 May (DW, A. Hicks). Four or more Tundra Swans were seen during the last week of Mar in *Larimer*. Wyoming's continuing Whooper Swan departed the Hayden Valley 1 Mar (TM).



Always rare, single male Eurasian Wigeons dropped into Wellington S.W.A., Larimer 21–26 Mar (G. Lefko) and Fountain Creek R.P., El Paso 17 Apr–9 May (BM, MP). We have come to expect reports of a few Surf Scoters in May, so a female at L. Hasty, Bent 1–10 May (GW, DAL) was expected. Spring Park Res., Eagle hosted a fine assemblage of 52 Barrow's Goldeneye 27 Mar (D. Filby).

HAWKS THROUGH SHOREBIRDS

A record-early Osprey for Wyoming was noted at Seedskaadee 13 Mar (fide SP), while one at Grand Junction 24 Mar (LA) was the earliest for Colorado's West Slope. It was a relatively poor season for Broad-winged Hawks with, at most, 20 individuals away from Dinosaur Ridge Hawkwatch. A jamboree of some 500 Sandhill Cranes was at Bonny 29 Apr (DFi)—a very late date for such a concentration. Some 17 remained there through 8 May (LS), while 2 others lingered at Lower Latham 14 May (B. Guarente).

Drought in e. Colorado created some of the best spring shorebird habitat in years along the Arkansas R. Valley and at Bonny. Lake Holbrook briefly hosted outrageous collections of long-legged shorebirds, including what may be record spring counts for three species on 6 Apr: 345 American Avocets, 380 Greater Yellowlegs, and 155 Lesser Yellowlegs (CLW, D. Hallenbeck). An astounding tally of 150 Semipalmated Sandpipers was made at Bonny 29 Apr (DFi), which may also furnish a record spring count for Colorado. The few who were able to negotiate the myriad two-track "roads" at John Martin found impressive numbers of shorebirds, including what is likely a high spring count of 750 Stilt Sandpipers 17 May (PEL, SM).

Exceptionally rare in the Denver Metro Area, an ad. Snowy Plover was at Lower Church L. 22 May (J. Roller, ph. LS). Several Piping Plovers were found away from their breeding grounds, with reports of single birds at Thurston Res., Prowers 16 Apr (GW, LK), L. Henry 30 Apr (GW, JK, NE), and Black Hollow Res., Weld 14 May (CS); 3 were at Bonny 29 Apr (DFi). A best-ever seasonal total of at least 7 Hudsonian Godwits was found in e. Colorado: one at Bonny 17–29 Apr (CLW, m.ob.), 2 at L. Henry 30 Apr–3 May (JK, NE, GW), 2 at Adobe Creek Res., Kiowa 27–28 Apr (DN, BKP, J. Truan), one at Neenoshe Res., Kiowa 1 May (T. Jones), and one at John Martin 17 May (PEL, SM). White-rumped Sandpiper was one of the few shorebird species that appeared in below-average numbers. The highest reported total was only 14 birds, from a site w. of where such a concentration is expected, at Cheyenne, WY 25 May–2 Jun (PEL, JO). A small push of 4 single Dunlin was noted in Colorado 24

Apr–2 May, including a west-slope bird in Mesa 28 Apr (LA). Other singles were seen 13 May at Thurston Res. (DS, DJ) and 25 May at L. Henry (JO, PEL, vt. SM). The only Short-billed Dowitchers were 2 at Pastorius S.W.A., La Plata (SA, JB) and one at L. Henry 25 May (JO, PEL, vt. SM).

A Little Gull reported at Blue Mesa Res., Gunnison 11–15 Apr (DFi) would furnish only the 2nd report from the West Slope of Colorado. A bit fewer than in recent springs, but beyond anything recorded prior to the last decade, 9 Lesser Black-backed Gulls were noted from e. Colorado. One remained until at



At least three Lucy's Warblers were found in the vicinity of the newly designated Canyon of the Ancients National Monument in southwestern Colorado on 16 May 2004. Adults were seen carrying food to young in a nest 27 May (here), establishing the first recorded nesting attempt for Colorado since 1913. Photograph by Tony Leukering.

least 29 Apr at Lower Church L., Jefferson (DCE). Six Glaucous Gulls were reported, including one at the J.T.L. Pond, Natrona, WY (S. Bogart, CM, B. Rickman, J&GL). Caspian Terns put on a strong showing, with at least 9 birds in Colorado 3 Apr–31 May. Two were seen in Wyoming: one 6 May at Alpine Wetland, Lincoln (SP) and another 25 May at Cheyenne (PEL, JO). Common Terns were reported from Wyoming, both 8 May, one at Seedskaadee (fide refuge personnel), and one at South Park Habitat Ponds, Teton (SP). Nine Common Terns were reported in Colorado, including exceptionally early ads. 26 Apr at Lower Church L. (DCE). Two well-studied birds were at Fruitgrowers Res., Delta (GW, ph. BS, m.ob.); West Slope spring records are particularly noteworthy. Least Terns were noted away from their breeding areas, with reports from L. Henry 23–25 May (PEL, SO), Sweitzer L., Delta (C.F.O.), and Florence 14–27 May (AB, m.ob.), the latter furnishing a first for Fremont. A Black Skimmer 29 Apr at Pastorius Res. (J. Winegardner, SA, ph. JB) provided only the 2nd record for Colorado and first for the West Slope.

Wyoming finally had its first confirmed breeding record of Eurasian Collared-Dove, from Albin, Laramie 26 May (PEL, JO). Nineteen White-winged Doves were reported in

Colorado, mostly from the southeast. West-Slope birds included one at Cortez, probably Montezuma's first, 27 May (LS, ph. m.ob.). Up to 4 Inca Doves continued in Rocky Ford (SO), and up to 8 were found in Lamar (JT, NE, DL). Black-billed Cuckoos seem to have vanished as breeders in Colorado, and migrants are rarely seen: the only one this spring was at L. Hasty Campground 7 May (GW, JK, RO).

A Flammulated Owl was found in a Russian Olive grove at Chico 8 May (R.M.B.O.); the only previous Colorado plains record was 16 Apr 1959 at Longmont, Boulder. Rarely noted in the Wet Mts., a Northern Pygmy-Owl was heard calling near Beulah, Pueblo 13 May (BKP, TL, CLW). A pair of Spotted Owls was found nearby on the same night at "the traditional locale" (BKP, TL, CLW). A Whip-poor-will was reported from Chico 12 May (BM); there are very few records from anywhere in Colorado, and the few records of migrants have been particularly troublesome to evaluate critically as to subspecies. Black Swifts flooded Delta in astounding numbers. Seventy-five at Sweitzer Lake S.P. 31 May (GW, m.ob.) was a fine count, but five km away at Confluence Park, observers carefully counted some 340 Black Swifts minutes later (DF, BS, m.ob.)! We can only wonder if these were local breeders, migrants (perhaps from the Canadian Rockies), or a combination of the two. Whatever the case, this is the largest collection of Black Swifts ever found in the Region.

A male Calliope Hummingbird was at Grand Junction 30 Apr–3 May (LA), and a Rufous/Allen's Hummingbird was in Huerfano 12 May (CLW); there are fewer than 10 spring records for each species/species group. Casual in Colorado, an Acorn Woodpecker was seen in Aguilar 15–17 May (S. Gifford). Among the 5 Yellow-bellied Sapsuckers found this spring in Colorado was an ad. female at Maurico Canyon 27 Mar, perhaps the first report from Las Animas (CLW, BKP).

A singing Eastern Wood-Pewee was reported at Rock Canyon, Pueblo 27 May (P. Sandstrom-Smith). A stunning total for Colorado, 13 Alder Flycatchers were reported 17–25 May including 9 at Chico, with at least one bird banded and others heard singing. Two territorial Gray Flycatchers were in tall sagebrush at Sand Dunes R.A., Sweetwater, WY 14 May+, an unusual habitat for this species in the Region (DF). Black Phoebe wandered to Waterton Canyon, Jefferson 28 Apr (M. Johnson) and Boedecker L., Larimer 30 Apr (C. Wild). The Lake Estes area, Larimer had an Eastern Phoebe observed 7 Apr (Scott Rashid). Four Vermilion Flycatchers were reported, with the most unusual being an ad. male at L. Cata-mount, Routt 16 Apr (fide FL). Nearly a month early was an Eastern Kingbird at Two Buttes

Res., *Baca* 27 Mar (S. Moss); another along Upper Hoback R. road, *Sublette* WY 31 May appears to be a first county record (SP). A pair of Scissor-tailed Flycatchers returned to the AT&T tower s. of Lamar, *Prowers* for the 3rd straight year (GW, LK, G. Goodrich). Single Scissor-tailed were also reported from Spurgeo Res. No. 1, *Boulder* 3 May (B. Kaempfer) and *Chico, Pueblo* 14 May (T. VerCauteren).

Five White-eyed Vireos were reported 22 Apr–20 May, all from the e. plains. Rare in e. Colorado, a Gray Vireo was observed in *Huerfano* 21 May (GW, LK). Five Yellow-throated Vireos were reported: *Campo, Baca* 22 Apr (M. J. Iff, B. Gibbons), *Eads, Kiowa* 27 Apr (BKP, J. Truan), *Colorado City, Pueblo* 13–16 May (CLW, TL, BKP), *Dixon Res., Larimer* 21 May (CS), and *Varsity Pond, Boulder* 23 May (PG). Rare in spring, single Cassin's Vireos were observed at *Chatfield S.P., Jefferson/Douglas* 25 Apr (S. Stachowiak, JK), *Lamar* 7 May (JK, RO, GW), and *Chico, El Paso* 12 May (BM). Spring reports of Philadelphia Vireos are rare and well-documented birds rarer still. A welcome exception was one carefully observed at *Broomfield N.A.* 15 May (DCE, LS), a first for *Broomfield*. Individual Carolina Wrens were observed at four locations 17 Apr–10 May, all from along Colorado's Front Range. Very rare at high elevations, a Bewick's Wren was reported at *Rocky Mountain N.P., Larimer* 12 Apr (D. Irwin). A Blue-gray Gnatcatcher near *Higbee Cemetery, Otero* 28 Mar (DAL, JT) was somewhat early. Rare but annual in spring, single Gray-cheeked Thrushes were reported at *C.V.C.G.* 8 May (GR) and *Chico, Pueblo* 22 May (DCE, JM, S. Mammoser). Rarer still, but annual, a Wood Thrush was seen at *Last Chance* 20 May (CLW, TL).

WARBLERS THROUGH FINCHES

Thirty-seven of species warbler were found in Colorado this spring, up from 33 last year. Golden-winged Warbler rebounded from zero in 2003 to 4 in 2004: *Ordway, Crowley* 7 May (LS), *Chico, Pueblo* 8 May (MP, DF, Peter Hosner), *Neenoshe Res., Kiowa* 18 May (DN, JB), and *Pueblo City Park, Pueblo* 23 May (BKP). At least 3 Lucy's Warblers were at *Yellowjacket Canyon, Montezuma* 16 May+ (J. Prather, M. & D. Hill, B. & I. Prather). On 27 May, 2 ads. were seen here feeding young in a cavity (CLW et al.), establishing the first nesting record since 1913. Regular in small numbers, at least 17 Northern Parulas were reported 20 Apr–29 May, with the only reports away from the e. plains coming from *Salida* 26 Apr (V. Truan) and *Pike's Stockade, Conejos* 23 May (C.J. Grimes, J. Poe). Two of the 11 Chestnut-sided Warblers (7–31 May) were in Wyoming: one at *E.K.W.* 18 May and the other in *Casper* 30–31 May (CM). Nine Magnolia Warblers were reported, including one in *E.K.W.* 19–20 May (AH). Casual in spring, a singing male Cape May Warbler in *Boulder* 10–15 May thrilled birders. Warblers that winter in the West Indies are much rarer in spring than in fall, and a to-

tal of 5 Black-throated Blue Warblers (13–28 May) was a fine showing. Three Black-throated Green Warblers were reported: *C.V.C.G.* 15 May (BG), *Chico, El Paso* 17 May (BKP, DEC, MP, P. Gaede), and *Dixon Res.* 29 May (R. Halpin). A male Blackburnian Warbler sang near *Florence* 16 May (AB), and singles were spotted at *Gregory Canyon, Boulder* 20 May (PG) and *Sondermann Park, El Paso* 23 May (AB, MP, BM). A singing Yellow-throated Warbler visited *Chico, El Paso* 13–14 May (NG, m.ob.), while another was found near *Lake Estes* 22 May (GM). A total of 3 Pine Warblers was good for spring: *Pueblo City Park* 20–26 Apr (M. Ackley, m.ob.), *Varsity Pond* 15–16 May (D. & S. Kennedy, DW), and *Rye, Pueblo* (DS). A singing Prairie Warbler in *Kiowa* was about two weeks early, while another Prairie Warbler dignified *Doudy Draw, Boulder* 31 May (M. Smith). Five Palm Warblers were noted 14–22 May; these rather late dates (when compared to the main passage of Palm Warblers to the east) are not unexpected in the Region, although a typical spring would include a few earlier reports. Only 6 Blackpoll Warblers were reported (3–26 May); the only Wyoming report, and only report of a female, came from *W.H.R.* 25–26 May (JO, PEL). The only Prothonotary Warbler report came from *Dixon Res.* 21 May (D. Smith). Six Worm-eating Warblers appeared in Colorado (5 from 6–22 May), with a rather early bird for the ne. at *Tamarack Ranch, Sedgwick* 22 Apr (R. Martin, J. Lefor). Male Kentucky Warblers put on a strong showing, with 5 in e. Colorado 24 Apr–25 May. A Connecticut Warbler was carefully studied at *Dixon Res.* 28 May (RO); there are fewer than 10 records for Colorado and the Region. Very rare in Wyoming, 2 Mourning Warblers were at *W.H.R.*: a female 25–27 May (DAL, PEL, JO) and a male 27–28 May (TF, P. Hess et al.). Careful coverage of e. Colorado in the last decade has revealed that Mourning Warblers are rare but regular in spring, with five reports this season (13–20 May). Eight Hooded Warblers were reported (28 Apr–30 May), all from Colorado.

Hepatic Tanagers were found near *Pryor, Huerfano* 21 May for the 2nd year in a row (LK, GW). The only Summer Tanagers reported for Wyoming were 2 in the Rawhide area, *Goshen* 16 May (CM, J&GL, AH); Colorado hosted 9 (29 Apr–24 May). An unprecedented 7 Scarlet Tanagers were found this spring (6 between 10–18 May); the earliest was a female at *Sand's L. in Salida* 4–5 May (RM), furnishing a rare mountain report. The arrival dates of Cassin's and Grasshopper Sparrows have been somewhat controversial, but this year several were heard singing as early as 6 Apr in *Baca* and *Prowers* (v.o.), earlier than many suspected that these species arrived. In addition to the known breeding locales in *Otero* and the West Slope, up to 3 Black-throated Sparrows appeared on potential breeding grounds outside *Florence* 31 Mar+ (R. Miller, MP). Another appeared at *Walden Pond* 23 May, furnishing a very rare

record for *Boulder* (C. Cornelius, m.ob.) *Lake Estes'* birders tallied a Sage Sparrow 21 Mar (J. Wright, SRa) and a Lark Bunting 9 May (GM, SR). Present since 26 Nov, the Red Fox Sparrow in *Nucla, Montrose* was last seen 18 Mar (CD, BW). Amazingly, White-throated and Harris's Sparrows were also suspected of wintering here, each last seen on 6 May (CD, BW). Another Red Fox Sparrow visited *Belmar Park, Jefferson* 22–24 Apr (M. Chavez, DF). The only Snow Bunting report came from *Jackson, Teton, WY* 2 Mar (SP). Although as many as 135 have been reported in spring in Colorado, 51 Rose-breasted Grosbeaks was still an impressive number. Far out of range was a male Indigo Bunting at *Yellowstone* 22 May (TM). Painted Buntings appeared at *Chico, El Paso* 11 May (NG, m.ob.) and near *Ft. Lyon, Bent* 24 May (CLW) but were not seen at *Cottonwood Canyon*, where the species was thought to be breeding (m.ob.). Single Eastern Meadowlarks of the *lillianae* subspecies were found near *Campo, Baca* 3–16 Apr (JM, CLW, m.ob.) and a little farther se. in *Baca* 19 Apr (R. Siebert). This taxon was first confirmed near here two years ago. Providing a 2nd San Luis Valley record, an Orchard Oriole was at *Del Norte, Rio Grande* 23 May (V. Simmons). A male Baltimore Oriole in *Hooper, Saguache* 16 May (K. Maleug) represented the first San Luis Valley record. A male Scott's Oriole was found in *Bent* 7 May (LS), where rare. A male Lesser Goldfinch in *Lamar* 7–10 May was about 48 km from *Kansas* (DAL).

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