

Great Basin



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The winter season finally brought some welcome relief to several consecutive years of drought in the Great Basin. Winter storms brought significant precipitation throughout most of the Region, and snowpack levels were well above normal. These conditions will provide much-needed flow to streams and rivers, increase depleted water levels in lakes and reservoirs, and replenish water tables. The winter season also brought some significant bird sightings as well. Highlights include a Common Ground-Dove and a Red-headed Woodpecker near Hurricane and Utah's first Rufous-backed Robin near Springdale.

We note with great sadness the death of Jack Walters, a fixture of Nevada birding. Jack's passion for pursuing, promoting, and conserving Nevada's birdlife was contagious, and his warm smile and companionship are irreplaceable and will be deeply missed.

Abbreviations: Antelope I. (Antelope I. S.P. and Causeway, Davis, UT); Bear River (Bear River Migratory Bird Refuge, Box Elder, UT); Corn Cr. (Corn Creek Unit, Desert N.W.R., Clark, NV); H.B.V.P. (Henderson Bird View-

ing Preserve, Clark, NV); Lake Mead (Lake Mead N.R.A., Clark, NV); Lytle (Lytle Ranch Preserve, Washington, UT); Miller's R.A. (Miller's Rest Area, Esmeralda, NV); Ouray (Ouray N.W.R., Uintah, UT); Pyramid L. (Washoe, NV); Red Hills (Red Hills G.C., St. George, Washington, UT); Sand Hollow (Sand Hollow S.P., Washington, UT); Zion (Zion N.P., Washington, UT).

LOONS THROUGH TERNS

American White Pelicans are seldom found during the winter in the Region, so an individual observed 3 Jan on the Walker Lake C.B.C., Mineral, NV was unexpected (DS et al.). Two California Condors observed 28 Feb flying along I-15 near Hurricane, Washington, UT made a pleasant surprise (DR).

A Greater White-fronted Goose graced the Spring's Pond in St. George, Washington, UT this winter. The goose was first reported 27 Sep (KC, RF) and was still present 25 Apr (KW). A Common (Eurasian Green-winged) Teal was observed at Lemmon Valley, Washoe, NV 2-11 Feb (MM, GS et al.); a drake was at the same location in Feb 2003. A Eurasian Wigeon was also at Lemmon Valley 11 Nov-12 Dec (SAM, MM et al.). Additional Eurasian Wigeons reported this winter included drakes at Lakeridge G.C., Washoe, NV 12 Dec (GS) and Utah Lake, Utah, UT 26 Feb (DSh). A few Long-tailed Ducks are usually found wintering at Antelope I., so 2 observed 2 Dec-28 Feb+ (KPU et al.) were expected. More surprising were Long-tailed Ducks reported from Mountain Dell Res., Salt Lake, UT 1 Dec (PF), H.B.V.P. 3-19 Dec (JAB et al.), and Pyramid L. 5 Jan

(CNI). The only scoters reported during the season were 2 imm. White-wingeds wintering at Sand Hollow 11 Nov-15 Jan (RF, SS et al.).

Red-shouldered Hawks were reported from six locations in three Nevada counties (Clark, Mineral, and Washoe); however, the only report from Utah was of an imm. 21 Jan-5 Feb at Virgin, Washington (PL, KW, GB, ph. RF). Snowy Plovers are a rare sight in winter in the Region, so one observed at Antelope I. 2 Dec (KPU) and 5 at Walker L. 3 Jan (GS et al.) were notable. A Spotted Sandpiper, also observed 3 Jan at Walker L., was equally unexpected (GS et al.). A Sanderling seen 5 Dec at Antelope I. was late (J&KB). Rounding out the winter shorebirds were Dunlin observed at Antelope I. 5 Dec (J&KB) and at H.B.V.P. 12 Dec-14 Feb (JAB et al.).

A first-winter Franklin's Gull was very late at Virginia L., Washoe, NV 30 Nov-21 Dec (FP et al.). An ad. Mew Gull was a great find at Lemmon Valley, Washoe, NV 12-19 Dec (FP, GP, DM). Thayer's Gulls were observed at two Davis, UT locations: Farmington Bay W.M.A. 7 Jan (TA) and the Bountiful Landfill 23 Jan-5 Feb (J&KB, CW). The Bountiful Landfill is one of the premier locations for rare wintering gulls in the Region, and this winter was no exception, with several exciting finds there. Lesser Black-backed Gulls were well represented at the landfill: a third-winter Lesser was documented 21 Dec (p.a., CN), and a first-winter bird was there 3-14 Jan (†TA, KB). An ad. Glaucous-winged Gull was also observed at the Bountiful Landfill 3 Jan (TA, KB). Up to 3 Glaucous-winged Gulls were at Pyramid L. 6 Dec-13 Feb (JW et al.), and a first-winter bird was photographed at Las Vegas Bay, Lake Mead 23 Jan (LT). Two Glaucous Gulls were reported from the Bountiful Landfill 23 Jan-5 Feb (J&KB, CW), and another was observed 24 Jan at Farmington Bay W.M.A. (JB, BHU).

DOVES THROUGH WARBLERS

One of the biggest surprises of the season was Utah's 2nd Common Ground-Dove, found 30 Dec at a pecan orchard near Hurricane, Washington, UT (†DW, LW). The bird remained through 6 Jan and was observed and photographed by numerous birders. It was discovered by birders chasing another major Utah rarity wintering in the same pecan orchard—Utah's 2nd confirmed Red-headed Woodpecker, first found 27 Dec (†MW et al.) during the Silver Reef C.B.C. and remaining through 3 Feb (ph. TA, RF, CR). A Red-breasted Sapsucker reported near Virgin, Washington 31 Dec (KS, MTh) would also be one of only a few Utah records, if accepted. Rare wintering Williamson's Sapsuckers were observed at Alum Canyon, Washoe, NV 5 Dec-20 Feb



Utah's second confirmed Red-headed Woodpecker was one of many exceptional vagrants found this winter in Washington County. This bird was located in a pecan orchard near Hurricane, Washington County, during the Silver Reef C.B.C. on 27 December 2004 and remained through at least 3 February 2005 (here 15 January). Photograph by Cameron Rognan.

(RB) and at Virgin, Washington, UT 6–15 Jan (LG, DSh, MW et al.). An Anna's Hummingbird observed 18 Dec in Reno, Washoe, NV (GS) was out of season and n. of expected range.

A Cassin's Kingbird was an early arrival at the H.B.V.P. (21 Jan–6 Mar; JAB) for the 2nd straight year. Far fewer than typical numbers of Northern Shrikes wintered in the Region, with only two reports; an ad. at Echo Res., Summit, UT 5 Dec (J&KB) and an imm. at Swan L., Washoe, NV 2–5 Feb (JE, JT, DT). After an exceptional fall for Blue Jays in the Great Basin, a few individuals lingered through the winter, including singles in Nevada: 27 Nov–25 Dec at Lovelock, Pershing (SM, D&RP) and 19–30 Jan at Ely, White Pine (DM, BH et al.). Up to 3 Blue Jays spent the winter visiting feeders at Clarkston, Cache, UT 20 Oct–22 Feb (TG, SP et al.).

The highlight of the season was certainly Utah's first Rufous-backed Robin, found in an apple orchard in Springdale, Washington on 18 Dec during the Zion C.B.C. (MT, ST, †K&DH) and fortunately remaining through 31 Dec to be enjoyed by several observers (ph. RE, †TA). The only Varied Thrush reported during the season was from Fernley, Lyon, NV 7 Dec (DT). A Brown Thrasher was an unexpected visitor at Lytle (26 Dec; PF), and a Crissal Thrasher at New Harmony, Washington, UT was n. of expected range (6 Dec; JJ). It was strong winter for Bohemi-

an Waxwings in Utah, with flocks of up to 100 individuals reported from several n. counties (Cache, Daggett, Summit, and Utah); however, the only report from Nevada was a flock of approximately 70 in Ely, White Pine 12 Dec (JW).

SPARROWS THROUGH FINCHES

Chipping Sparrows are seldom observed in the Region during winter, so a flock of over 20 near Hurricane, Washington, UT 1 Jan–19 Feb was very unusual (SS et al.). There were several Utah reports of wintering White-throated Sparrows, including 2 in Washington 22 Jan (JJ) and 5 Feb (LT, RF) and single individuals in Francis, Summit 22 Jan (TR et al.) and Provo, Utah 25 Jan (DSh). It was an exceptional winter for Harris's Sparrows in the Great Basin, with 3 individuals reported from two Nevada counties (Lyon and Washoe) and 8 reported from five Utah counties (Box Elder, Davis, Salt Lake, Washington, and Weber). A Golden-crowned Sparrow found at the Provo Airport Dike, Utah 16 Feb (RS) was rare in n. Utah in winter. Another surprising winter visitor was a female Bullock's Oriole observed 22 Dec–3 Jan in Springdale, Washington, UT (RE, LT, J&KB).

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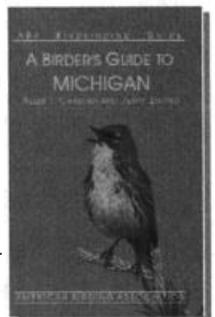


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