

# Colorado & Wyoming

Summer in Colorado and Wyoming is rarely as memorable as it was in 2005. Colorado added two astonishing first state records this season, both essentially Mexican species, while Wyoming recorded two new nesting species (one a first for the western United States). While climatic conditions were near normal across the Region in June (albeit a bit wetter in Colorado), a trend of late migration kept observers pleasantly busy. The second half of the nesting season was unusually hot and dry across the Region. Colorado's July was the third driest since 1895, and Denver matched its all-time record high of 105° F on 20 July. The northward expansion of species, including Bushtit, Bewick's Wren, Blue-gray Gnatcatcher, and Lesser Goldfinch was further documented in the Region this season.

**Abbreviations:** Adobe Creek (Adobe Creek Res. [also called Blue L.], *Bent/Kiowa*); Bonny (Bonny Res., *Yuma*); Chatfield (Chatfield S.P., *Jefferson/Douglas*); Crow Valley (Crow Valley Campground, Pawnee National Grasslands, *Weld*); F.C.R.P. (Fountain Creek Regional Park, *El Paso*); J.M.R. (John Martin Res., *Bent*); Jumbo (Jumbo Res., *Logan/Sedgwick*); Tamarack Ranch (Tamarack Ranch S.W.A., *Logan*). "West Slope" denotes locations west of the Rockies. 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.

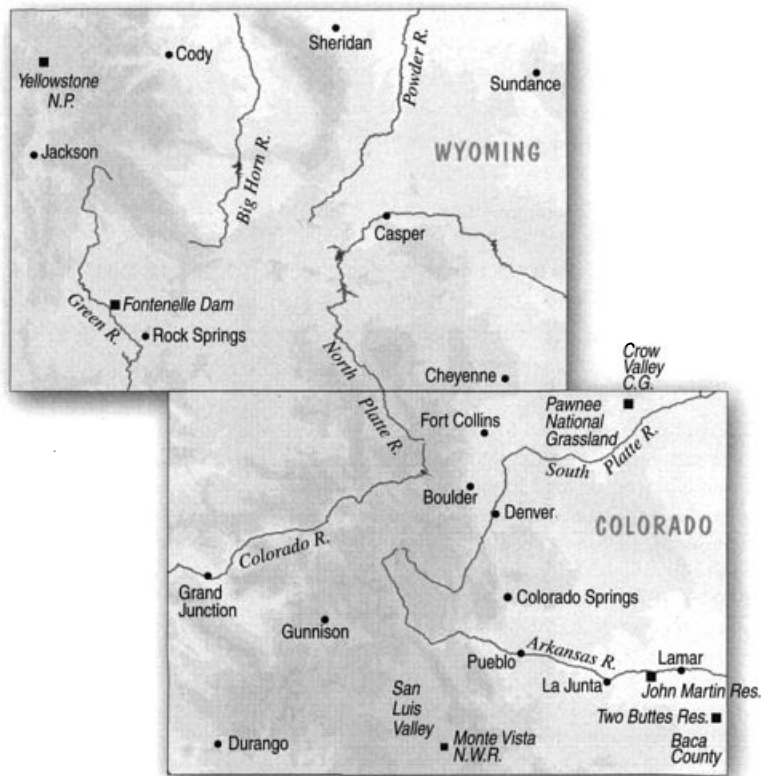
## LOONS THROUGH VULTURES

A basic-plumaged Pacific Loon found 18 Jun at Chatfield (JK) was present into Aug, conducting its wing molt and providing only a 2nd or 3rd Colorado summer record. Summering Common Loons included up to 4 at Jumbo (HA) and a single bird at Blue Mesa Res., *Gunnison* 21 Jul (CD, BW). A subad. Brown Pelican visited Windsor, *Weld* 10-18 Jun (m.ob.; finder undetermined); efforts to determine its subspecies were hampered by the bird's immaturity and some apparent variability within the U.S. subspecies. The bird was seen once or twice not far away at Fossil Creek Res., *Larimer* during its stay (CW et al.). A Neotropic Cormorant (age unreported) was a one-day wonder at J.M.R. 5 Jul (DN, I&TS).

A Least Bittern sang all day 5 Jun at Walden Ponds, *Boulder* (JK, ph. TL, ph. BS, m.ob.) and was present until at least 10 Jun. A Snowy Egret, quite rare in *Chaffee*, was at Clear Creek Res. 4 Jun (SY, TL); it was outshone there by a first-county-record Great Egret standing next to it (ph. TL, SY). An ad.

Snowy Egret graced Kenney Res. 5 Jun (VZ) for a rare *Rio Blanco* record. An ad. Little Blue Heron was elusive at Walden Ponds 1-5 Jun (EZ et al.). All Colorado summer Green Heron reports came from typical locations except for the single bird at the Carrizo Canyon Picnic Area, *Baca* 3 Jun (DAL). A molting imm. Yellow-crowned Night-Heron was at Banner Lakes S.W.A., *Weld* 18 Jul (SL); most Colorado summer records are of ads. The ciconiiform highlight of the season was the apparent nesting by at least 2 Glossy Ibis (each paired with White-faced Ibis) at Hut-ton Lake N.W.R., *Albany*, WY 26 May-20 Jul (DF, ph. BS), the first such nesting in the western United States. Another ad. Glossy Ibis was photographed near Lower Latham Res., *Weld* 22 Jul (SM). Nelson continued his monopoly on the finding of Black Vultures in Colorado, with single birds at J.M.R. 7 Jul (ph. DN) and 22-23 Aug (DN, ph. J. Yost).

White geese summer regularly now in Colorado, with this year's birds found in Jul-Aug, including a Snow Goose at Jumbo, *Logan and Sedgwick* (LS) and a Ross's Goose at Bonny (LS, TL). A "tagged" Trumpeter Swan was at Jackson, *Teton*, WY 23 Jul (TA), and the same or a similar bird visited El Jebel, *Eagle* six days later (M. Harris, L. Vidal). A male and a female Greater Scaup tarried at



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**SA** Every summer and early fall, ad. and juv. Mountain Plovers congregate in se. Colorado prior to heading to winter grounds in California (and elsewhere?). Rocky Mountain Bird Observatory personnel and other birders typically find aggregations of 100-500 at various playas, tilled fields, and reservoir shores late Jul-Aug and into Sep. The birds utilize these areas of bare (or nearly bare) dirt to forage upon insects, particularly beetles (TL, pers. obs.). This season, Nelson and the Schmokers chanced upon what must be the single largest migratory aggregation of the species ever reported. On 25 Jul, they were s. of Adobe Creek in Bent and found an estimated 800-1000 Mountain Plovers in tilled fields (DN, BS, JS), a significant portion of this species' population. Both ads. and juvs. were present. Interestingly, the ads. were all in the middle of their primary molt. As the number of birds is well in excess of what could be generated by local breeding, this event suggests to us that the species conducts a so-called molt migration and that this stopover area in se. Colorado may be critical to the species' natural history as a whole.



Up to 1000 Mountain Plovers were noted 25 July 2005 south of Adobe Creek in Bent County, Colorado, probably the largest migratory concentration of this species ever documented. Photograph by Bill Schmoker.

Long L., Larimer 26 Jun (GW) for a rare Regional summer record. A more-than-typical 4 Common Goldeneyes were found in Colorado this summer, highlighted by an imm. male first found in Salida, Chaffee during winter and still not in full alternate plumage this summer (SY). Though virtually unknown as a breeder in Colorado until very recently, Hooded Mergansers have provided at least the suggestion of breeding quite a few years in a row now. This year, two summer reports included the finding of 2 young 3 Jun at Chatfield, Jefferson (H&UK).

**KITES THROUGH TERNS**

Out-of-range Mississippi Kites included single birds at Ovid, Sedgwick 16 Jun (HA), Ft. Collins, Larimer 17 Jun (DAL), and F.C.R.P. 5 Jul (D. Elwonger, B. Goycoolea). Merlin is exceedingly rare in Colorado in summer and has not been proven to nest, so reports of a calling female from Bonny 9 Jul (LS) and a female or juv. from Phillips 30 Jul (JR) are of more-than-passing interest. Summer reports of Sandhill Crane from two s. West Slope counties, Mesa and Montrose (CD, BW), are nearly unique and suggest further colonization. Two Snowy Plovers visited Goldeneye Res., Natrona, WY 30 Jun-2 Jul (BR, CM, G&JL).

Two Upland Sandpipers migrating overhead in e. Colorado Springs, El Paso 29 Jul (MP, J. Peterson) were w. of usual. A pair of Long-billed Curlews apparently produced at least one juv. this summer along the Utah line near Rabbit Valley, Mesa (fide LA); the species has been confirmed as nesting in only one other Colorado West Slope location, also in Mesa. A Hudsonian Godwit was an exceedingly rare fall-migration find at Goldeneye Res. 30 Jun (BR). An alternate-plumaged Dunlin graced Ramah Res., El Paso 4 Jun (MP, GW et al.), and a basic-plumaged individual was found at Adobe Creek 25 Jul (DN, BS, JS). Rare on the West Slope, an alternate-plumaged Stilt Sandpiper

provided some excitement at Fruitgrowers Res., Delta 15 Jul (FL). The Schmokers found an alternate-plumaged Short-billed Dowitcher at Adobe Creek, Kiowa 26 Jul. A Red-necked Phalarope was slightly tardy at Ft. Bridger, Uinta, WY 10 Jun (TA).

A Pomarine Jaeger (age unreported) was a great find at the BP Pond, Natrona, WY 24 Jul (CM); all previous summer Regional jaeger reports have been of Pomarines and all (or nearly all) have been of subads. A first-summer Laughing Gull visited Metro L., Col-



Appropriately, this subadult Brown Pelican turned up at one of the Pelican Lakes in Windsor, Weld County, Colorado on 10 June 2005. Throughout its stay (here 14 June), it ventured off to neighboring Larimer County but still returned to roost in Windsor. Photograph by Tony Leukering.

orado City, Pueblo 11 Jul (+DS). Summer reports of Caspian Terns in both states were numerous and highlighted by 2 ads. with 2 juvs. at L. John, Jackson 4 Jul (T. Jones). The North Park area of Colorado is very important for

breeding waterbirds, supporting a wide variety of colonial breeders, including the only known Colorado colonies of Franklin's Gull. It would seem to be a logical place for Caspian Tern to breed in the state. However, because L. John does not have a suitable nesting island and because the juvs. were flying (and family groups in this species migrate together shortly after the young fledge), the record does not confirm the species as breeding in the state. Least Terns out of place on 3 Jun were an ad. at Grand Junction, Mesa (LA) and a first-year bird at Beebe Draw, Weld (GW, JK); this date seems a bit late for 100 Black Terns to be at Jumbo (JK, GW).

**DOVES THROUGH FLYCATCHERS**

Only 2 White-winged Doves were reported this summer, singles at residences in Broomfield 17 Jun (S. Arnesen, EZ) and Ft. Collins 18 Jun (B. Dillon, N. Komar). Inca Doves continue in Lamar, Prowers (DAL) and Rocky Ford, Otero. A Black-billed Cuckoo at Julesburg S.W.A., Sedgwick 5 Jun (SL) was probably a migrant. A singing bird at Bonny 6 Jun (N. Pieplow) through at least 9 Jul (LS) was more likely a bird attempting to nest. This species used to breed in Colorado, but it has been extremely scarce in the state in summers for the past several decades. A Barn Owl present at Wilson, Teton, WY 1 Jul 1 Aug (N. Osterburg) was locally rare.

Colorado's first West Slope Eastern Wood-Pewee remained at The Nature Conservancy's Yampa River Preserve until at least 21 Jun (N. Korte). Others were detected by song at Tamarack Ranch 11 Jun (JR, RS) and along the N. Shanahan Trail, Boulder 31 Jul-2 Aug (RL). Increased coverage in late spring has revealed that Alder Flycatcher is an annual migrant in e. Colorado during the second half of May into early Jun. Up to 3 were at a private ranch in e. Weld 3 Jun (JK, ph. GW), and another was at Dixon Res 5 Jun (ph. R. Hopper). We continue to encourage a cautious approach in identifying this species, particularly when dealing with silent birds. A male Vermilion Flycatcher made a one-day appearance at F.C.R.P. 6 Jul (K. Lafreniere, I. Huskey). One each of Cassin's Kingbird and Ash-throated Flycatcher at Crow Valley were unexpected on

**SA** In Wyoming, Flammulated Owl was known only as a rare migrant until 2002, when 3 singing birds were found in the Battle Creek drainage of the Sierra Madre Mts. by a Rocky Mountain Bird Observatory (R.M.B.O.) biologist. The mixed aspen/conifer habitat found on the w. slope of this range is approximately 48 km from a Colorado breeding population in similar habitat. Flammulated Owls found in 2003 and 2004 by R.M.B.O. staff and local birders further established the belief that a small, localized breeding population exists here. With assistance from the U.S. Forest Service and Cheyenne Audubon, Doug Faulkner and Rich Levad organized a field trip 8-10 Jul to survey for Flammulated Owls. Ten were detected on nocturnal surveys 9 Jul, including one each at three locations away from the Battle Creek drainage but on the w. side of the Continental Divide. On 9 Jul, during a daytime search, Kim Potter discovered an owl occupying a cavity. Apparently, Flammulated Owls use cavities only for nesting purposes, thus this finding constitutes the first known nest in the state. Thanks to Doug Faulkner for supplying the information presented here.

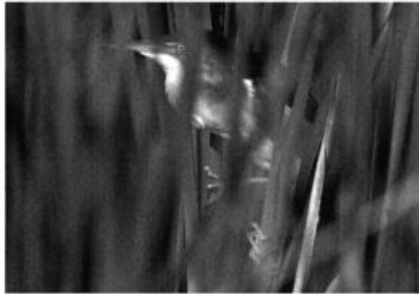
the odd date of 13 Jun (BS, TF). The only Scissor-tailed Flycatcher reported in the Region was n. of Boulder 27 Jun (AB).

### SWALLOWS THROUGH FINCHES

Three Purple Martins were found 9 Jul in the Sierra Madre Mts., near Battle, Carbon, WY (DF et al.), where the species was first found breeding last year. A female Purple Martin was reported from Julesburg 17 Jun (HA); there are few documented records of this species from Colorado's Plains even during migration. A single ad. Cave Swallow was at J.M.R. 9 Jul (S. Seltman). This is the 4th Cave Swallow found by a single observer in se. Colorado; it seems only a matter of time before this species is documented with photographs or video in the Region. A Bushitit in the Sierra Madre Mts. that crossed the state line from Carbon, WY to Routt, CO 9 Jul (DF, CM) was a rarity in both counties. The spring's Carolina Wren at Tamarack Ranch continued through at least 1 Jul (m.ob.). Even more unexpected was one, possibly 2 Bewick's Wrens found at separate locations in Boulder 3 (TF, BS) & 29 Jun (TF), roughly 160 km n. of where they are normally found. Continuing their northward expansion, a Blue-gray Gnatcatcher was in Daniel, Sublette WY 13 Jun (SP), while others were noted in the Jackson, WY area (fide SP).

The Front Range of Colorado has always been a good place for late spring migrants and strays attempting to summer; a Wood Thrush at Gregory Canyon, Boulder 10-11 Jun (TF, BS) is a good example of this phenomenon. Golden-winged Warblers are also nearly annual, with one reported this year at Gregory Canyon 2 Jun (PG). Chestnut-sided Warblers exhibited this phenomenon with such regularity that they were illustrated on range maps as reaching the Front Range in some older field guides; this season, a pair of Chesnut-sideds was at Dixon Res., Larimer 4 Jun (RH), and a male sang at Lair o' the Bear, Jefferson 12 Jun (J. Hackos). Undeniably the least expected bird to show up along the Front Range this summer was a singing Tropical Parula at Grandview Cemetery, Ft. Collins, 18 Jun-4 Jul (DAL, J. Mammoser).

The nearest record of this species is from the panhandle of Texas. Late migrant Northern Parulas were at Pueblo 1 Jun (BKP) and Lamar 2 Jun (DAL). A female Black-throated



This Least Bittern was more easily heard than seen as it vocalized very close to the Cottonwood Marsh Boardwalk at Walden Ponds, Boulder County on 5 June 2005. Photograph by Bill Schmoker.

Blue Warbler paused at Crow Valley 9 Jun (DAL). A first-year American Redstart in Craig 7 Jun (FL) furnished a very rare record for nw. Colorado. Two RMBO biologists (K. Behrens, C. Cox) discovered a large breeding population of Northern Waterthrushes in early Jul along Rock Cr. on the n. flank of the Medicine Bow Mts. This species was not previously known to nest in the Rockies s. of nw. Wyoming, exceptions being pairs docu-



This territorial male Eastern Meadowlark in Bellevue, Colorado tipped its hand by singing and calling 22 June through at least 11 July 2005 (here). Photographs by Steve Messick.

mented for three years along the Little Laramie R. in the s. Medicine Bow Mts. and for two years in e. North Park, CO.

In addition to the more expected reports from Las Animas and Huerfano, a single Hepatic Tanager was found far out of range along FR 60 in Routt (A. Boyce). Very rarely reported in the Region, even in Wyoming, a

singing Baird's Sparrow was found e. of Cheyenne 16 Jun by another RMBO biologist (ph. P. Hosner); the bird was present the next day (DF) but was not found thereafter. Northern Cardinals are still very rare away from the far e. plains. One (sex unreported) at Castlewood Canyon, Douglas (B. Shade, HK, UK) and a female at Salida 20 Jun (ph. N. Vickery, M. Emmer) were noteworthy. A singing Eastern Meadowlark was observed by many at Bellevue, Larimer 22 Jun-11 Jul (DAL, ph. SM, m.ob.); local birders reported a female at the site, too, and the area has hosted the species previously. A handful of Baltimore Orioles wandered westward in early Jun, with singles ne. of Boulder 2 Jun (fide S. Plooster), at Watson L., Larimer 4 Jun (S. Roderer), and at Crow Valley 5 Jun (NK, CW).

Early-summer snows at high elevations kept Brown-capped Rosy-Finches visiting lower-elevation feeders in numbers as high as 200 in Estes Park, Larimer through 13 Jun (N. Gobris et al.). Even single birds are rarely noted well below timberline after mid-May. It is not unexpected for Pine Siskins to linger on the plains following even mediocre flight years, as last winter was. Included among reports was the first confirmed nesting at Grandview Cemetery, where Leukering photographed a recently fledged juv. 21 Jun. A single Pine Siskin was at Keenesburg, Weld 29 Jun (LH); more unexpected, however, were 2 Lesser Goldfinches 7 Jun (LH) at the same locale. In addition to wintering more regularly in the Region, small numbers of Lesser Goldfinches have spread onto the sprawling Front Range suburbs during summer.

Cited observers (subregional editors in boldface): Susan Allerton, Henry Armknecht, Larry Arnold, Tim Avery, **Jim Beatty** (sw. Colorado), **Coen Dexter** (w.-cen. Colorado), **Doug Faulkner** (Wyoming), Ted Floyd, Lauren Hyde, Joey Kellner, Hugh & Urling Kingery, Steve Larson, **Gloria & Jim Lawrence** (statewide RBA, Wyoming), David A. Leatherman, Tony Leukering, **Forrest Luke** (nw. Colorado), **Terry McEneaney** (Yellowstone), Steve Messick, **Chris Michelson** (Casper, WY), Duane Nelson, Susan Patla (Jackson, WY), **Brandon K. Percival** (se. Colorado), **Mark Peterson** (cen. Colorado), **Bert Raynes** (Jackson, WY), Betty Rickman, Joe Roller, Ira & Tammy Sanders, Bill Schmoker, Jim Schmoker, **Larry Semo** (ne. Colorado), David Silverman, **Glenn Walbek** (n.-cen. Colorado), Cole Wild, Brenda Wright, Sherrie York, Eric Zorawowicz, Vic Zerbi. Many other individual observers contributed information to this report but could not be personally acknowledged here; they all have our thanks and appreciation. 🐦

**SA** Though few Colorado birders had the species on their short lists of the next species to occur in Colorado, an ad. female **White-eared Hummingbird** was nonetheless found and well documented by Allerton at her Durango, La Plata feeder on the evening of 19 Jun. It returned early the next morning but was not seen again in Jun. However, Allerton canvassed the neighborhood and was rewarded with the news that her neighbors, the Fishers, were hosting the bird a few doors down. The Bouriciuses banded the bird 17 Jul there, and a few days later it reappeared at Allerton's feeder to spend the rest of its stay (until 7 Aug).

Amazingly, Allerton received a phone call on 20 Jul from another Durango-area resident (R. Brown) some 48 km away reporting that he was hosting a female **White-eared Hummingbird**. Allerton visited the location and confirmed the identification. The bird was later photographed by Semo and was present through 21 Aug.



This White-eared Hummingbird at La Plata, Colorado 30 July was one of two in the state in summer 2005. Photograph by Larry Semo.