

Great Basin



Rick Fridell

It was a cold but dry winter, with both temperatures and precipitation well below average throughout much of the Great Basin. It was also a relatively uneventful season in the Great Basin for wintering northern specialties. There were no reports of Bohemian Waxwings or Common Redpolls, following several consecutive winters with above-average numbers. However, more regular northern winter visitors—Rough-legged Hawks, Northern Shrikes, American Tree Sparrows—occurred in moderate numbers throughout much of the Region. Rare and vagrant highlights included a White-tailed Kite in Nevada lingering at Carson Lake, plus Utah's first documented Western Gull and second record of Scaled Quail.

Abbreviations: Antelope I. (Antelope Island 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); Farmington Bay (Farmington Bay W.M.A., Davis, UT); H.B.V.P. (Henderson Bird Viewing 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); Red Hills (Red Hills G.C., St. George, Washington, UT); Zion (Zion N.P., Washington, UT).

WATERFOWL THROUGH VULTURES

Trumpeter Swans turned up at several unusual locations this winter, including H.B.V.P. 12 Dec (JBr, CP, MB) and Farmington Bay 9-10 Feb (SG, ph. TA). A drake Eurasian Wigeon was again found this winter at the Rosewood G.C., Reno, Washoe, NV 22 Dec–2 Jan (GS et al.); another was on Swan L., Washoe, NV 25 Dec–14 Feb (TL, WR et al.). Two female Surf Scoters were observed at Antelope I. 2 Dec (GB), and 2 female White-winged Scoters were spotted there the following day (NB et al.). Surprisingly, Black Scoter was the most abundant scoter species in the Region this

winter, with 3 individuals documented: one at the Hite-Bullfrog ferry crossing of L. Powell, Garfield, UT 21 Dec (LG) and 2 at Sand Hollow S.P., Washington, UT 23 Feb–14 Mar (ph. RF, JW et al.). Long-tailed Ducks made a good showing in Utah this winter, with 2 at Hyrum S.P., Cache 2-26 Dec (BR et al.), one at Antelope I. (3-17 Dec (NB et al.), and one at Mountain Dell Res., Salt Lake 6-13 Dec (DH et al.).

Three Scaled Quail, found 6 Jan in Montezuma Canyon, San Juan, UT (JS, DSh), drew observers from far and wide to the seldom-birded se. corner of the state. The well-documented and photographed quail (†DW, ph. LG, JB) lingered through at least 20 Mar and became the 2nd accepted state record. A Red-necked Grebe was a major surprise on New Year's Day at Pyramid L., Washoe, NV (DSe et al.). A single White-faced Ibis made a rare winter appearance in Utah at Springville, Utah L., Utah 17 Dec (LG, BS, KAs). Large concentrations of wading birds were observed 17 Dec during the Fallon C.B.C. near the S-



Utah's second confirmed record of Scaled Quail was accepted this season. Three found 6 January 2007 (here 20 January) in San Juan County by Justin Shirley remained throughout the season, allowing many observers to add this elusive species to their Utah lists. Photograph by Lu Giddings.

line Res., Churchill, NV, including 85 White-faced Ibis, 80 Great Blue Herons, 180 Great Egrets, and 20 Snowy Egrets (DSe, DM).

HAWKS THROUGH TERNS

One of the highlights of the season was a very cooperative White-tailed Kite found at Carson L., Fallon, Churchill, NV 18 Dec (DSe,



This female Black Scoter was found 5 November 2006 on the Dyer Pond and almost certainly represents the first record for the nearly waterless Esmeralda County, Nevada. Three Black Scoters were observed in the Great Basin in the winter 2006-2007 season, a very high number. Photograph by Greg Scyphers.

DM); it was present through at least 27 Jan (BH) and provided great photographic opportunities (ph. MMe, ph. ST et al.). Another White-tailed Kite was reported 31 Dec near Blanding, San Juan, UT (p.a., MMo) but could not be relocated. Red-shouldered Hawks were reported from several Nevada counties (Clark, Lincoln, and Washoe) between 1 Dec and 24 Feb; none were reported in Utah. A Swainson's Hawk photographed 17 Dec at the Salt Lake City airport marshes, Salt Lake, UT (ph. CN, S&CS) is likely the first found in the Region during the winter.

It was a great winter for observing gulls, with many rare and unusual sightings. Mew Gulls were found in Washoe, NV at Paradise Park 11 Dec (EK), at Pyramid L. 1 Jan (GS, DM), and at Lemmon Valley 14-19 Feb (WR, ph. MMe). The only Mew Gull reported from Utah was an ad. at Farmington Bay 21 Jan (J&KB). High numbers of Thayer's Gulls were observed this winter from various locations around the Great Salt Lake, UT, including 7 at the Bountiful Landfill, Davis 23 Dec (TA), 5 at the Lee Kay Ponds, Salt Lake 28 Dec (TA et al.), and 3 at Farmington Bay 26 Feb+ (KP, PJ et al.). A good candidate for Utah's first Iceland Gull (p.a.) was found at Farmington Bay 26 Feb (†KP, ph. PJ). Three ad. Lesser Black-backed Gulls were reported from various Utah locations: Logan Landfill, Cache 8 Dec (KA), Lee Kay Ponds, Salt Lake 6-20 Jan (S&CS, JB, †J&KB), and Farmington Bay 10-11 Feb (TA). Utah's first accepted Western Gull was found 27 Dec at the Lee Kay Ponds, Salt Lake (ph., †TA, CN, m.ob.); it remained at these ponds through 20 Jan, then remarkably was refound at Farmington Bay 25 Feb–3 Mar (KP et al.). A Western Gull also made a rare Nevada appearance at Walker L., Mineral 30-31 Dec (ph. TL, DSe). Both Western Gulls observed this season were in third-winter plumage. Glaucous-winged Gulls were reported 8 Dec at the Logan Landfill, Cache, UT (KA), 15 Dec in Reno, Washoe, NV (MMe), and 1 Jan at Pyramid L., Washoe, NV (GS,

DM). Several first-winter Glaucous Gulls were also observed in Utah: at the Logan Landfill, *Cache* 8 Dec (KA), at Lee Kay Ponds, *Salt Lake* 2 Jan+ (LG, DS, m.ob.), and at Farmington Bay 2 Feb+ (J&KB et al.).

OWLS THROUGH THRASHERS

A Short-eared Owl was found 26 Dec at Corn Cr. (CT, IP). Northern Saw-whet Owls were reported from n. Nevada locations 6 Jan (Indian Lakes, *Churchill*; BH) and 15 Feb (Stead, *Washoe*; BG). At least 5 Acorn Woodpeckers were observed 3 Dec in the Kolob Meadows, *Washington* (RF, KC), likely part of an undocumented breeding colony in sw. Utah. A first-year Yellow-bellied Sapsucker was photographed 26 Jan–5 Feb at the Bunkerville City Park, *Clark*, NV (RS, DG). A Red-breasted Sapsucker made a rare Utah appearance at Lytle 26 Jan–4 Feb (KE, LT, ph. LG, m.ob.). A probable female Gilded Flicker was briefly observed 19 Feb on the Beaver Dam Slope,



This first-cycle Thayer's Gull was noted at Farmington Bay Wildlife Management Area, Utah 28 February 2007. Photograph by Jerry Liguori.

Washington, UT (p.a., RF, KW). If accepted, this would be the first confirmed record of the species for Utah.

Black Phoebes were found n. of their expected range in Rush Valley, *Tooele*, UT (30 Dec; TA) and Idlewild Park, *Reno*, *Washoe*, NV (21 Feb; FP). Moderate numbers of Northern Shrikes were reported this winter from four Nevada counties (*Carson*, *Churchill*, *Nye*, and *Washoe*) and five Utah counties (*Davis*, *San Juan*, *Tooele*, *Utah*, and *Washington*). A Blue Jay was an unexpected Christmas Day surprise at East Canyon, *Morgan*, UT (KP). Wintering Varied Thrushes were reported in Nevada from Mogul, *Reno*, *Washoe* 6 Dec (J&GA) and from Las Vegas, *Clark* 26 Jan (RS, DG); Utah reports came from the Springdale Pond, *Washington* (17 Dec–27 Jan; KW, DK et al.), *Smithfield*, *Cache* (26 Dec; BR), and the Jordan River Parkway, *Salt Lake* (22 Jan–2 Feb; RW, PF). A Sage Thrasher was a



This Mew Gull, one of several observed in the Great Basin this winter, visited Lemmon Valley, *Washoe* County, Nevada from 14–19 (here 19) February 2007. Photograph by Martin Meyers.

surprise winter visitor on 27 Jan at Carson L., *Churchill*, NV (MMe).

SPARROWS THROUGH FINCHES

A Swamp Sparrow was a nice winter find 13 Jan at Utah L., *Utah*, UT (S&CS, JB). White-throated Sparrows were reported from only two Nevada counties (*Churchill* and *Clark*); however, 11 were found in seven Utah counties: *Box Elder*, *Cache*, *Davis*, *Salt Lake*, *San Juan*, *Wasatch*, and *Washington*. The only Nevada Harris's Sparrow was at Manzanita Park, *Reno*, *Washoe* 16 Dec (GS et al.), while 5 were found between four Utah locations: 15 Dec at South Weber, *Davis* (KP); 4 Dec+ at Lytle (LT et al.); 22 Jan at Howell, *Box Elder* (BB); and 26 Jan–10 Feb at Willard Bay S.P., *Box Elder* (KP et al.). As in previous years, the wintering longspur hotspot in the Great Basin was at Carson L., *Churchill*, NV. A single McCown's Longspur was found there 26 Dec (TL), and 5 were reported 6 Jan (MMe). At least 3 Lapland Longspurs were found at Carson L. 20 Dec–13 Jan (MMe, RS et al.), and a Chestnut-collared Longspur was there 26 Dec (TL). Counts of more than 20 Lapland Longspurs were reported from opposite ends of Utah; longspurs were observed mixed with Horned Lark flocks in the Hurricane Fields, *Washington* (14 Jan–1 Feb; RF et al.) in the sw. corner of the state and near Howell, *Box Elder* (18–22 Jan; KP et al.) in the nw. corner. Snow Buntings graced Rush Valley, *Tooele*, UT 30 Dec (TA), Howell, *Box Elder*, UT 21–22 Jan (ph. TA, CN), and Farmington Bay 4 Feb (J&KB). An ad. male Rose-breasted Grosbeak brightened a residence in s. Reno, *Washoe*, NV 10 Dec (JH).

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Two third-winter Western Gulls were found in the Great Basin in winter 2006–2007, including this individual photographed 27 December 2006 at the Lee Kay Ponds, *Salt Lake* County, Utah. This gull, which confirmed a first state record, remained at the Lee Kay Ponds through 20 January 2007; remarkably, it was relocated over a month later, on 24 February, at Farmington Bay Wildlife Management Area, in *Davis* County. Photograph by Tim Avery.

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