

CBRC REPORT

The 54th Report of the Colorado Bird Records Committee

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Introduction

This 54th report presents the results of deliberations of the Colorado Bird Records Committee (hereafter CBRC or Committee) on partial results of circulations held during autumn 2009. This article provides results of the circulation of 50 reports submitted by 28 observers documenting 28 occurrences of 34 species from the period 2005 through 2009. Fifteen occurrences involving 13 species were not accepted because of insufficient documentation or because descriptions were inconsistent with known identification criteria. Per CBRC bylaws, all accepted records received final 7-0 or 6-1 votes to accept. Each report that was not accepted received fewer than four votes to accept in the final vote. Those records with four or five “ac-

cept” votes have transcended to a second round of deliberations, and results of those deliberations will be published at a later date.

Highlights of this report include the first, second, and third state records for “Mexican” Duck (*Anas platyrhynchos diazi*) and the third state record of Smith’s Longspur (*Calcarius pictus*).

Committee members voting on these reports were Doug Faulkner, Peter Gent, Rachel Hopper, Joey Kellner, Bill Maynard, Larry Semo, and David Silverman.

Committee Functions

All reports received by the CBRC (written documentation, photographs, videotapes, and/or sound recordings) are archived at the Denver Museum of Nature and Science (DMNS), 2001 Colorado Boulevard, Denver, CO 80205, where they remain available for public review. The Committee solicits documentation of reports in Colorado for all species published in its review list, including both the main and supplementary lists (Semo et al. 2002), and for reports of species with no prior accepted records in Colorado. Those lists can be found at <http://www.cfo-link.org/birding/lists.php>. Documentary materials should be submitted online at the CBRC website (<http://www.cfo-link.org/CBRC/login.php>).

Committee News

Rachel Hopper’s first term on the CBRC ended on 31 December 2009. Although Rachel was eligible for a second term, she chose to not continue on as a CBRC member at this time due to other responsibilities. The Committee sincerely thanks Rachel for her hard work and dedication to the CBRC. Peter Gent’s first term also terminated at the end of 2009 and Peter has opted to fulfill a second term on the Committee. Glenn Walbek was selected as the newest member of the CBRC. Glenn’s vast experience and expertise will be of great benefit in deliberations on identifications. The current CBRC membership includes Doug Faulkner, Peter Gent, Joey Kellner, Bill Maynard, Larry Semo, David Silverman, and Glenn Walbek.

Report Format

The organization and style of this report follow those of Leukering and Semo (2003), with some alterations. If present, the numbers in parentheses following a species’ name represent the total number of accepted records for Colorado, followed by the number of accepted records in the ten-year period preceding the submission. The latter number is of importance, as it is one of the criteria for a species’ con-

tinuance on or removal from the statewide Main Review List (Semo et al. 2002).

The records in this report are arranged taxonomically following the American Ornithologists' Union (AOU) Checklist of North American Birds (AOU 1998) through the 50th Supplement (Chesser et al. 2009). Each record presents as much of the following information as we have available: number of birds, age, sex, locality, county, and date or date span. In parentheses, we present the initials of the contributing observer(s), the official record number, and the vote tally in the first round and, if relevant, second round (with the number of "accept" votes on the left side of the dash).

The initials of the finder(s) of the bird(s) are underlined, if known, and are presented first if that person (those people) contributed documentation; additional contributors' initials follow in alphabetical order by name. If the finder(s) is (are) known with certainty, but did not submit documentation, those initials are presented last. Observers submitting a photograph or video capture have a dagger (†) following their initials; initials of those who submitted videotape are indicated by a lower-case, italicized "v" (v); and those who submitted audio spectrograms or recordings are indicated by a lower-case, italicized "s" (s). Thus, the parenthetical expression "(JD v, RA†, TL, JV, CW; 2001-36; 4-3, 6-1)" means: JD found the bird(s) and submitted documentation (including video) and, as the finder, is first in the list of those who submitted details, with initials underlined; RA, though alphabetically first of the five submitting observers, was not the finder, so comes second; RA submitted, at least, photographic documentation; the record number assigned to the occurrence was 2001-36; and in the two rounds of voting, the first-round vote was four "accept" votes and three "do not accept" votes, while the second-round vote was 6-1 in favor of accepting the report. The decision on most reports is completed in the first round.

In this report, county names are italicized in keeping with the style established for the "News from the Field" column in this journal. We have attempted to provide the full date span for individual records, with the seasonal reports in *North American Birds* and this journal being the primary sources of those dates. The Committee has not dealt with the question of full date spans as compared to submitted date spans when documentations do not provide such. The CBRC encourages observers to document the final date on which a rare species was seen, as that provides historical evidence of the true extent of its stay.

For this report, the CBRC abbreviations are used for Chico Basin Ranch (CBR), Reservoir (Res.), and State Park (SP).

RECORDS ACCEPTED

“Mexican” Duck – *Anas platyrhynchos diazi* (3/3). Establishing the first accepted record of this “subspecies” in Colorado, a male was photographed at Walden Res., Jackson, on 20 Apr 2006 (BG †; 2006-36; 6-1). Providing the second record, a female was observed at Stollsteimer Marsh near Arboles, Archuleta, on 16 May 2006 (JBy; 2006-66; 6-1). The third, another male, was photographed at Lower Latham Res., Weld, on 15 Apr 2009 (DLA †; 2009-17; 6-1).

Taxonomic treatment of the Mallard (*Anas platyrhynchos*) and related species in North America has had a difficult history. The Mexican Duck is currently recognized as a non-migratory subspecies of Mallard that is resident from southern Texas, New Mexico, and Arizona south through northern and central Mexico (AOU 1998). Historically, the breeding dis-

tribution of Mexican Ducks extended northward to north-central New Mexico in Rio Arriba, but the duck had largely disappeared as a breeding species in the U.S. by 1970 (Aldrich and Baer 1970). The Mexican Duck was listed as Endangered under the Endangered Species Act in 1967, but was subsequently removed from that list in 1978, as populations in the U.S. had grown and were also deemed to be a hybrid swarm with Mallards (USFWS 1978).

Mallards and Mexican Ducks were formerly recognized as distinct species (*A. platyrhynchos* and *A. diazi*). Robert Ridgway (1886) described *Anas diazi* from Puebla, Mexico, noting that it differed from the Mallard by the lack of sexual dimorphism and from the Mottled Duck by its more Mallard-like characteristics, namely a distinct white band on the secondary coverts and an overall less

fulvous coloration (Johnsgard 1961). Thirty-six years later, Huber (1920) published a description of another species of dark Mallard-like duck from New Mexico that he named the New Mexican Duck (*Anas novimexicana*). Huber was unaware of the similarities between the “New Mexican” Duck and the Mexican



Alder Flycatcher, Chico Basin Ranch, El Paso County, 14 May 2006. Photo by Brian Gibbons

Duck, but contemporary ornithologists accepted and published occurrences of Huber's duck, as there was a paucity of specimens and field observations of the ducks collected from the two separate locations. As such, Conover (1922) maintained that extralimital specimens of ducks from Nebraska pertained to *A. novimexicana*, and Phillips (1924) treated the "New Mexican Duck" in his monograph. It was not until 1946 when Lindsey summarized the dilemma: "The known nesting range of the New Mexican Duck is confined to a small area of the south-western United States, but the presumptive range extends southwards into Chihuahua, Mexico, where its relation to the northern breeding limits of the Mexican Duck is undetermined" (1946). In 1957, the AOU treated *A. novimexicana* as a subspecies of *diazi*, although Hellmayr and Conover (1948), Delecour (1956), and Johnsgard (1961) considered the subspecific distinction unwarranted.

To complicate matters, Lindsey (1946) indicated that Mexican Ducks in the U.S. had shared characteristics with Mallards and noted that hybrids usually outnumbered pure Mexican Ducks wintering in Albuquerque, New Mexico. Aldrich and Baer (1970), however, maintained (via personal communication with William Huey) that the Albuquerque birds were an anomaly because the ponds the birds inhabited were associated with the Albuquerque Zoo, which had domestic Mallard-type birds. But Aldrich and Baer themselves found that specimens from

New Mexico and Chihuahua showed traces of Mallard characteristics, including varying amounts of green on the head and vermiculation on the dorsal plumage, indicating that hybridization was occurring.

At the time, the Biological Species Concept was the fundamental ethos in defining speciation. The Biological Species Concept classifies organisms as being of the same species if they are potentially capable of interbreeding and producing fertile offspring. Since then, flaws with the Biological Species Concept have been identified, namely that some widely recognized "species" actually are capable of interbreeding and producing fertile offspring—e.g., coyotes (*Canis latrans*) and wolves (*C. lupus* and *C. rufus*); various gulls; and Blue-winged (*Vermivora pinus*) and Golden-winged Warblers (*V. chrysoptera*). Many taxonomists have now turned to the use of the Phylogenetic Species Concept, which defines species as the smallest diagnosable cluster of individual organisms within which there is a parental pattern of ancestry and descent, which can be demonstrated by comparing alleles between populations.

Interestingly, despite acknowledging that hybridization was occurring, Aldrich and Baer (1970) did not totally agree with the Biological Species Concept, as they agreed with the hypothesis of Johnson (1961) that the Mexican Duck, like the American Black Duck (*A. rubripes*), had differentiated from the wide-ranging, sexually dimorphic Mallard in the past as a result of ecological or dis-

tance barriers to gene flow and different sets of selection factors. They concluded their study by claiming that the Mexican Duck has a certain amount of reproductive isolation from the Mallard in areas of sympatry and should, therefore, taxonomically be considered a distinct species.

Hubbard (1977) disagreed with Alridge and Baer (1970) when he published findings showing a wide array of phenotypic intermediates between northern Mallards and Mexican Ducks in the general region of the U.S.-Mexico border, with fewer *platyrhynchos* characteristics to the south and more to the north. The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service used Hubbard's research in support of the delisting of Mexican Duck in 1978. Later, Scott and Reynolds (1984) conducted a similar study and concurred with Hubbard that Mexican Duck specimens from throughout the range showed a relatively smooth clinal change from north to south, with northern populations influenced by Mallard phenotypes. They stated that they did not know whether hybridization was increasing or decreasing, but hypothesized that introgression of the Mallard genome into *diazi* populations may have been historical, as there was a documented decline in *platyrhynchos* populations in Mexico.

The American Ornithologists' Union (AOU) had treated the Mexican Duck as a species through five editions of the AOU Checklist, but opted to reduce it to subspecies rank in the sixth edition (AOU 1983). The explanation was that "Extensive hybridization in southeastern

Arizona, southern New Mexico, and west-central Texas compels merger of the two groups, formerly recognized as distinct species" (AOU 1998). The AOU continues this treatment through the latest supplement to the seventh edition of the Checklist, based on Hubbard's (1977) analysis of hybridization

More recently, however, McCracken et al. (2001) challenged the subspecies status of the Mexican Duck using mitochondrial DNA control region sequencing that takes hybridization into account. They found that the Mexican Duck is the southwestern sister "species" of the Mottled Duck (*A. fulvigula*) and the American Black Duck (*A. rubripes*), all members of a set of original and monomorphic "mallards" that speciated in North America before dimorphic "green-head" Mallards expanded their range from Europe to North America. They are all closely related members of a recent allopatric radiation with no postzygotic barriers to gene exchange between them. However, they mate assortatively, and do not interbreed freely. McCracken et al (2001) therefore recommended that "Mexican ducks be designated as [a] species so that the nomenclature is consistent with phylogeny." Recently, the International Ornithological Congress has elevated Mexican Duck back to true species rank (Gill and Donsker 2010), although the AOU has not yet acted on the recommendation.

The troubled taxonomic past of the Mexican Duck, coupled with the difficulty of separating it from various "dark" Mallard-like hybrids, has

clouded the history of its occurrence in Colorado. Bailey and Niedrach (1965) listed three specimens from the state. The first, a female (DMNS specimen no. 20557), was collected by the authors on 29 Oct 1939 along the South Platte River near Henderson in *Adams*. The second, a male, was collected on 19 Nov 1944 by Bailey at the Mile High Duck Club near Barr Lake (DMNS specimen no. 24392). The third, another female, was collected at Jumbo Reservoir in *Sedgwick* on 4 Mar 1947 by G.I. Crawford (DMNS specimen no. 25374). These three specimens were later examined by John R. Hubbard of the New Mexico Department of Game and Fish, a noted expert on Mexican Ducks, who determined that the specimens were not Mexican Ducks (Andrews 1979). Other observations of possible Mexican Ducks in Colorado include a pair seen on Spring Creek in *Rio Grande* by Robert Ryder on 16 May 1950 and a male seen by Bailey at the Mile High Duck Club on 20 Jun 1957 (Bailey and Niedrach 1965). Neither Andrews and Righter (1992) nor Righter et al. (2004) reference any Mexican Duck observations.

Red-throated Loon – *Gavia stellata* (37/14). An adult at Sweitzer Lake on 26 Oct 2008 (JBn †, AR; 2008-117; 7-0) was the first for *Delta* and only the fourth for the West Slope.

Brown Pelican – *Pelecanus occidentalis* (19/7). An adult at Totten Res. on 25 Apr 2009 (JBy †; 2009-21; 7-0) was the first for *Montezuma*. This



Brown Pelican, Montezuma County, 25 April 2009. Photo by Jim Beatty

is also only the second documented record for the West Slope, the first being of one collected at Woods Lake in *Eagle* by P.J. Engelbrecht in July 1908. If this “pattern” of one Brown Pelican every 100 years on the West Slope continues, it does not offer much hope for today’s birders to see another in that region.

Least Bittern – *Ixobrychus exilis* (21/6). One, the first for *Prowers*, was heard calling from the cattails (*Typha* spp.) at Thurston Res. on 28 Jul 2008 (BKP; 2008-92; 5-2, 7-0).

Little Blue Heron – *Egretta caerulea*. A second-cycle bird in “calico” plumage was seen in a flooded field near Merino, *Washington*, on 29 Aug 2009 (TD; 2009-59; 5-2, 6-1). This represents the first county record.

Reddish Egret – *Egretta rufescens* (10/6). A second-cycle bird was at DeWeese SWA near Westcliffe between 17 and 18 Jul 2009 (LE †, BM †, BKP †, RM; 2009-70; 7-0), providing the first record for *Custer* and the westernmost ever in Colorado.

Yellow-crowned Night-Heron – *Nyctanassa violacea* (20/6). An adult, the fifth for Logan, was at Jumbo Res. on 30 Aug 2009 (BK, MP, BSt; 2009-60; 7-0).

Glossy Ibis – *Plegadis falcinellus* (53/36). An adult, La Plata's third, was at Pastorius Res. on 25 Apr 2006 (JBy, SA; 2006-37; 5-2, 5-2, 7-0). Another adult was along US Highway 50 between Salida and Poncha Springs, Chaffee, on 14 May 2008 (NP; 2008-59; 5-2, 6-1).

White-rumped Sandpiper – *Calidris fuscicollis*. Providing only the second West Slope accepted record, and a very early record for Colorado, one was at a pond near Paradox on 7 May

2008 (AS; 2008-54; 5-2, 7-0). This is a first county record for Montrose.

Red-headed Woodpecker – *Melanerpes erythrocephalus*. Providing a rare westerly record for modern times, an adult was photographed at Soapstone Ranch in Larimer on 25 May 2006 (CWⁱ †, RS; 2006-88; 7-0).

The range of this species has contracted eastward in Colorado. Cooke (1897) indicated that Red-headed Woodpeckers were common and that the species “Breeds on the plains and up to 10,000 feet. Rather more common on the plains than in the mountains.” Edward Warren (1910) recounted his mammalian collecting trip with Harold Durand from Colorado Springs to the San Luis Valley in 1909, remarking that Red-headed Woodpeckers were “Abundant near our camp at Glendale [eastern Fremont], June 5-6.” He went on to say that “Not another one was seen until we got to Pueblo, where Durand saw one in the City, and after we got about 15 miles north of that place they were very common, seen often among the trees along Fountain Creek.” In *El Paso*, Aiken and Warren (1914) also noted the species to be common. They maintained that “This species breeds over the lower portions of the County especially in the cottonwoods along the streams; not going into the mountains in the nesting season, but after that time may wander quite extensively...”

By 1939, the species was considered to have increased in



Reddish Egret, Custer County, 17 July 2009.
Photo by Bill Maynard

numbers in the Denver area, as Niedrach and Rockwell (1939) detailed that “This species is one of several eastern birds which gradually are extending their range westward, and it is much more common in the Denver area than it was thirty years ago.” Bailey and Niedrach (1965) also noted that the distribution of the species “extends from the plains of Eastern Colorado into the foothills to possibly 8000 feet, and more rarely west of the Continental Divide.” They did not provide information as to the abundance pattern of the species at the foothill edge at the time, however.

It is unclear when the species’ range retracted eastward in Colorado. Andrews and Righter (1992) stated that the species was an “Uncommon to fairly common spring and fall migrant and summer resident on extreme eastern plains from Morgan and Otero counties eastward; rare west to foothills.” It appears, based on published literature, that between the period of 1965 and 1992, the western edge of the plains and the foothills were excluded from the normal distribution of the Red-headed Woodpecker. In 2002, the CBRC placed Red-headed Woodpeckers on the Conditional Review List that requests details on observations of the species west of the 6,000-foot elevation contour in the state (Semo et al. 2002). Perhaps declines in the westernmost population in Colorado had already commenced prior to 1965, as Bailey and Niedrach (1965) did not comment on the abundance of the species in that area.

It is well known that European

Starlings (*Sturnus vulgaris*) aggressively compete with Red-headed Woodpeckers for nesting cavities, and declines in woodpecker populations have been attributed to that competition (Ingold 1978, Jackson 1970). It is interesting to note that European Starlings entered Colorado during the 1930s. The first flocks were seen in Logan in 1937 and the first specimen was secured at Barr Lake in 1938 (Bailey and Niedrach 1965). Urbanization and conversion of farmlands along the Front Range most likely also caused a decline in the amount of breeding habitat for the woodpecker. The CBRC encourages observers to provide details of Red-headed Woodpeckers in the foothills and areas west so that the distribution of the species can continue to be tracked.

Alder Flycatcher – *Empidonax alnorum* (28/18). One was at Chico Basin Ranch, El Paso, on 14 May 2006 (BG †; 2006-55; 5-2, 5-2, 6-1).

Vermilion Flycatcher – *Pyrocephalus rubinus* (38/23). Vermilion Flycatchers made an unparalleled push into Colorado during 2009. Setting the stage was the alternate-plumaged male discovered at the Barr Lake State Park Nature Center on 24 Mar (BSc †, DF, LS †, CWi †; 2009-12; 7-0), which was, surprisingly, the first for well-birded Adams. A female was at Crow Valley CG, Weld, on 15 Apr (RH †, CK; 2009-18; 7-0). Another female was at Sawhill Ponds in Boulder between 18 and 19 Apr (NP, WS †, BK, LS †; 2009-20; 7-0). Lastly, another male was in Florence, Fremont, on 19 Apr as well (BKP †, MP, CWi; 2009-34; 7-0).

Scissor-tailed Flycatcher – *Tyrannus forficatus* (34/22). Establishing the first record for *Grand*, and only the sixth west of the Front Range, an alternate-plumaged male was photographed near Granby on 6 Aug 2006 (ODB †; 2006-183; 7-0). Another male was photographed near Grover, *Weld*, on 14 May 2009 (ES †; 2009-39; 7-0) and is the fourth for the county.

Yellow-throated Vireo – *Vireo flavifrons*. Although the species is no longer on the state review list, the Committee received documentation of a summer bird that briefly held territory in Pueblo West, *Pueblo*, on 16 Jun 2009 (BKP †; 2009-51; 7-0).

Purple Martin – *Progne subis*. Providing another rare record of the species on the Eastern Plains, a female-plumaged bird was at CBR, *Pueblo*, on 21 May 2009 (BG †; 2009-42; 7-0).

Le Conte's Sparrow – *Ammodramus leconteii* (11/3). Multiple birds, perhaps as many as 10, were found in a weedy field at Fox Ranch near Idalia, *Yuma*, on 3 Oct 2009 (BM †, BPa †, TF; 2009-67; 7-0), establishing the second record for the county. This is also the first accepted record of the species in Colorado since 2002.

White-throated Sparrow – *Zonotrichia albicollis*. Furnishing a rare record for southwestern Colorado and a first for *Dolores*, one was near Cahone on 4 Mar 2006 (GD; 2006-22; 7-0).

Smith's Longspur – *Calcarius pictus* (3/3). One was found near Bonny Res., *Yuma*, on 30 Sep 2006 (AS, ABo; 2006-137; 4-3, 7-0) and is a first for the county.



Vermilion Flycatcher, *Barr Lake SP*, *Adams County*, 24 March 2009. Photo by Bill Schmoker

Scarlet Tanager – *Piranga olivacea* (34/15). Returning for its third consecutive year, the adult male that has established a summer territory in Gregory Canyon, *Boulder*, since 2007 was present again in 2009, and documented on 6 and 7 Jun (NP; 2009-49; 7-0).

Scott's Oriole – *Icterus parisorum*. Providing a rare record for the San Luis Valley and a first for *Conejos*, an immature male was near Manassa on 23 May 2009 (NP, DAL; 2009-46; 7-0).

Purple Finch – *Carpodacus purpurea* (38/10). A female was photographed at a feeder in Colorado Springs, *El Paso*, on the late date of 11 May 2008 (ABu †; 2008-56; 6-1). The winter of 2007-2008 saw an unprecedented influx of Purple Finches into Colorado, with at least 38 different birds being accepted (Semo and

Faulkner 2009a, Semo and Faulkner 2009b). It is not surprising, therefore, that at least one lingered post-winter.

RECORDS NOT ACCEPTED

The Committee recognizes that its “not accepted” decisions may upset those individuals whose documentations did not receive endorsement as state records. We heartily acknowledge that those who make the effort to submit documentation certainly care whether or not their reports are accepted. However, non-accepted reports do not necessarily suggest that the observer misidentified or did not see the species. A non-accepted report only indicates that the documentation did not provide enough evidence to support the identification of the species reported in the opinion of at least three of the seven Committee members. Many non-accepted reports do not adequately describe the bird(s) observed or adequately rule out similar species. The Committee recommends that observers refer to the article written by Tony Leukering on documenting rare birds (Leukering 2004), which is available online through the CBRC website (http://www.cfo-link.org/records_committee/CBRC_articles.php). All non-accepted reports are archived at the Denver Museum of Nature & Science and may be reconsidered by the Committee if new information is provided (e.g., photos, documentation from other observers). We summarize below why the following reports were not accepted.

Red-shouldered Hawk – *Buteo lineatus*. Documentation of an adult in Broomfield, *Broomfield*, on 9 Oct 2008 received enough initial support to garner a second round of voting. After review of first round member comments, the Committee decided that there was not enough definitive information to accept this report as Colorado’s 18th record (2008-118; 4-3, 2-5). The observer noted a flying buteo at relatively close distance, but without optics, showing a rufous body, a short tail with two bands, and a “crested” (we assume he meant

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Purple Martin, Chico Basin Ranch, Pueblo County, 21 May 2009. Photo by Brian Gibbons

“crescent”) in the wings, which were described as rufous only on the upperparts. Some Committee members were concerned about the lack of particular features and details that should have been seen, such as the rufous feathering on the underwings and a more precise description of which upperwing feathers were rufous. Although this call for detail may seem overly picky, several Committee members had difficulty definitively ruling out the more likely Broad-winged Hawk (*B. platycercus*) based on the few details provided in the written description.

Gyr Falcon – *Falco rusticolus*. An adult briefly observed near Antero Reservoir, *Park*, on 10 Nov 2008 received considerable Committee support during the first round of voting, but during the second round several members wavered in their certainty that Peregrine Falcon (*F. peregrinus*) or hybrids were sufficiently ruled out (2008-133 †; 5-2, 2-5). Of most concern to a majority of members were the brief 30-second view and the level of detail discernable on a bird flying away from the observer during much of the observation period. Photographs showed what was likely a large falcon but they were inconclusive in the opinion of a majority of Committee members to positively identify it as a Gyr Falcon.

King Rail – *Rallus elegans*. The heard-only bird at the Green Heron Slough near Las Animas, *Bent*, on 28 and 29 Apr 2007 needed two rounds of voting before the Committee reached a decision (2007-27; 5-2, 2-5). Heard-only birds are very

difficult for the Committee to accept, although it does happen. Members must not only be able to reasonably accept the description of the song or call as pertaining to the reported species, but they must also consider how much that description was influenced by field guides (text or audio) after the fact. The favorable initial support for this documentation came from the observer’s comments on how the series of single “kek” notes heard from this bird differed from those given by Virginia Rails (*R. limicola*), which are often doubled in succession as “kikik”. The observer, however, ruled out Clapper Rail (*R. longirostris*) by range only, as both it and King Rail sound very similar. While primarily a denizen of coastal saltmarshes, Clapper Rail has occurred inland and many Committee members felt that without a recording or other additional information, Clapper Rail must be considered as a possibility.

Iceland Gull – *Larus glaucooides*. Documentation of an adult in basic plumage roosting on Lake Loveland, *Larimer*, on 7 Dec 2008 required three rounds of voting and outside expert opinion (2008-138 †; 5-2, 5-2, 1-6). The outside expert considered this bird a “tweener,” which is one that exhibits plumage features muddled between the “classic” examples of Iceland Gull and Thayer’s Gull (*L. thayeri*). In this case, the photos showed a bird with a slightly darker mantle than neighboring Herring Gulls (*L. argentatus*), intermediate gray wingtips, and brownish-yellow irides. This combination, as noted by the outside expert, was enough to

warrant caution in placing an unconditional species name on this individual. A majority of Committee members demurred to the expert's opinion during the third round of voting.

Black-headed Gull – *Larus ridibundus*. An adult in alternate plumage was described from Blue Mesa Reservoir, Gunnison, on 5 Apr 2009 (2009-15 †; 3-4). Per the CBRC By-laws, the first round of voting is cast without discussion between members, so it is particularly interesting that three of the four dissenting members mentioned the bird's white scapular crescent as one reason for not accepting this as a state record. All four members were also concerned about the large white eye arcs. Neither of the above two plumage features is shown by Black-headed Gull, but both are displayed by Franklin's Gull (*L. pipixcan*). However, in their written comments, the four members also were intrigued by the bird's partial dark hood and red bill, both favorable for Black-headed Gull. The photos were not definitive for Black-headed Gull, but neither were they definitive for Franklin's Gull. The Committee is not required to provide an alternate identification for any bird it does not accept as the reported species, and it chooses not to do so with this intriguing hooded gull.

Laughing Gull – *Larus atricilla*. The description of a young gull reported as a first-winter Laughing Gull at Sterling Reservoir, Logan, on 29 Aug 2009 was too brief for many Committee members (2009-58; 5-2, 1-6). Although it was observed flying with two Franklin's Gulls, the report

did not include pertinent information such as a size comparison of the side-by-side birds. Dissenting members also noted during first round voting that, in August, juveniles of other species like Franklin's, Ring-billed (*L. delawarensis*), and California (*L. californicus*) gulls are also brown. No mention of how the latter two species were ruled out was given in the documentation. This fact apparently swayed many members during second round voting.

Winter Wren – *Troglodytes troglodytes*. As noted above in the discussion of the King Rail documentation, this heard-only bird had a couple members questioning how to conclude species identification from a written song description. In the case of Winter Wren, whose song is often lengthy, complex, and unlike any other North American species, identification should prove to be a bit simpler. It did not with the documentation of a heard-only individual near Mosca, Alamosa, on 13 Jun 2005 (2005-67; 5-2, 5-2, 0-7). The aurally astute observer provided a thorough and clearly written description of the song that satisfied a majority of Committee members to accept it as a Winter Wren, as indicated by the 5-2 votes in the first two rounds. However, the observer, while remaining convinced of the identification, nonetheless requested that the documentation be pulled from review over concerns that the juvenile subsong of other species had not been sufficiently ruled out, and all of the Committee members obliged during the third round of voting.

Thick-billed Kingbird – *Tyrannus crassirostris*. An out-of-state birder documented a bird thought to be a juvenile Thick-billed Kingbird at a Fort Collins, *Larimer*, nature preserve on 5 Sep 2007 (2007-62; 1-6). The description of a brown back, a white breast, and a bill more diminutive than a shrike's did not match that of the reported species in the opinion of most Committee members. Juvenile Thick-billed Kingbirds have gray upperparts, a pale yellow belly (which should have been noticed given the 5 minutes of observation), and a massive bill characteristic of the species. The bird's flycatching behavior and wing feathers "outlined in a lighter rust or buffy color" were intriguing. It was unclear what species the bird may have been, as the most likely candidate, Eastern Kingbird (*T. tyrannus*), does not show rusty coloration on the wings in any plumage.

Blue-headed Vireo – *Vireo solitarius*. Because of the similarity between dull Blue-headed Vireos and bright Cassin's Vireos (*V. cassinii*), all reports of this species without some form of physical documentation have been held to high standards. Such is the case for one reported in Boulder, *Boulder*, on 28 Sep 2005 (2005-101; 2-5). The written report describes a vireo with dark blue-gray head, contrasting white spectacles and throat, green back contrasting with head, and strongly yellow flanks, clearly placing it in the Solitary Vireo complex; however, several Committee members commented that they would like to have seen more discussion on how this bird differed from Cassin's

Vireo—in particular, the degree of contrast between the auriculars and throat. Even so, such a comparison is subjective and experts occasionally disagree on species identification of photographed Solitary Vireos. As noted for the Iceland Gull report in this section, some individuals may not be conclusively identified.

Sprague's Pipit – *Anthus spragueii*. The August date for a pair of Sprague's Pipits near Ellicott, *El Paso*, was a chief concern for several Committee members, as noted in comments in their dissenting votes (2005-158; 2-5). Several members also wrote that the seasonally and geographically more likely juvenile Horned Lark (*Eremophila alpestris*), which can easily be mistaken for Sprague's Pipit, was not sufficiently ruled out in the written description.

Bohemian Waxwing – *Bombycilla garrulus*. The Committee did not support the documentation of a waxwing at Bear Creek Park, *Jefferson*, on 12 Sep 2009, thought to be this species (2009-63, 1-6). Due to the bird's being partially obscured by vegetation, only its head, described as having "some rufous color, with a sleek crest" and a black mask, was seen by the reporting observer. Early September would be exceptionally early for a Bohemian Waxwing in Colorado. According to the e-Bird website (www.ebird.org), the earliest occurrences of Bohemian Waxwing in Colorado are from mid-October. A majority of Committee members noted that to accept such an unseasonably early report they would need a description of the wing pattern and vent color.

Blackburnian Warbler – *Dendroica fusca*. The only description provided in the documentation of a possible Blackburnian Warbler coming to a Fort Collins, Larimer, feeder on 4 May 2005 (2005-159, 1-6) was that the bird had an “iridescent, carrot-orange throat and bib”. Without noting other plumage features, let alone size of the bird in general or in comparison with other birds at the feeder, the throat-bib coloration could be used to describe other possible species like House Finch (*Carpodacus mexicanus*) or Eastern Bluebird (*Sialia sialis*). The Committee must rely only on what is provided in the documentation, and reporting observers are urged to consider this when writing their bird descriptions. However simplistic or unnecessary it may seem to include information about the “general size and shape” of a bird, these are the building blocks that Committee members use to form a mental picture of the bird being described. Without

them, descriptions of only a few features, however awe-striking, leave too much to the imagination.

Henslow’s Sparrow – *Ammodramus henslowii*. The Committee received documentation from three observers of a Henslow’s Sparrow at Hopper Ponds SWA near Idalia, Yuma, for 3-4 Oct 2008 (2008-112; 5-2, 3-4). Although they were initially supportive of the combined documentation, during second round voting two members decided that the brief observation time (30 seconds total for the two days), the misidentification of a Song Sparrow (*Melospiza melodia*) in flight as the reported species by one of the original finders during a second-day chase by several birders, and the level of detail provided in the documentation for this briefly observed bird, provided enough cause for concern to derail what would be Colorado’s third record of the species and the first in 20 years.

REPORTERS AND CITED OBSERVERS

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