

The 63rd Report of the Colorado Bird Records Committee

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Chair, Colorado Bird Records Committee

Introduction

This 63rd report of the Colorado Bird Records Committee (hereafter CBRC or Committee) presents the results of deliberations of the CBRC involving 60 reports submitted by 28 observers and documenting 45 occurrences of 28 species (or recognizable forms) from the period November 2009 to November 2011. Per CBRC bylaws, all accepted records received a final 7-0 or 6-1 vote to accept. Each report that was not accepted received five or fewer votes to accept.

Highlights of this report include a third state record for Black-chinned Sparrow, the first installment of records from an influx of Varied Thrushes in fall 2011, and the first confirmed record of nesting by Scarlet Tanager in Colorado. With publication of this report, the state list remains at 493 species.

Committee members voting on these reports were John Drummond, Doug Faulkner, Peter Gent, Bill Maynard, Bill Schmoker, Larry Semo, David Silverman, and Glenn Walbek.

Committee Functions

The Committee solicits documentation of reports in Colorado for all species published in its review list, including both the main list (http://www.cfobirds.org/records/review_list.htm) and the conditional lists (Semo et al. 2002; <http://www.cfobirds.org/records/reports.htm>), and for reports of species with no prior accepted record in Colorado. Documentary materials should be submitted online at the CBRC website (<http://www.cfobirds.org/CBRC/login.php>).

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 during the most recent full 10-year time period (2002-2011). The latter number is of importance, as it is one of the criteria for a species' continuance on or removal from the statewide Main Review List (Semo et al. 2002).

The records in this report are arranged taxonomically following



Orange variant Scarlet Tanager, North Cheyenne Canyon, El Paso, 8 Aug 2011. Photo by Bill Maynard



Yellow-throated Warbler, Chico Basin Ranch, Pueblo, 13 Sep 2011. Photo by Bill Maynard



Black-chinned Sparrow, Colorado National Monument, Mesa, 20 May 2011. Photo by Bill Schmoker



Sedge Wren, Chico Basin Ranch, Pueblo, 30 Sep 2011. Photo by Bill Maynard

the American Ornithologists' Union (AOU) Checklist of North American Birds (AOU 1998) through the 52nd Supplement (Chesser et al. 2011). 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, the second and third rounds (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 (or people) contributed documentation; additional contributors' initials follow in alphabetical order by last name. If the finder(s) is (are) known with certainty, but did not submit documentation, those initials are underlined and presented last. Observers submitting a photograph or video capture have a dagger (†) following their initials; initials of those who submitted video 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 is listed 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" 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 first and final dates on which a rare species was seen, as that provides historical evidence of the true extent of its stay.

For this report, abbreviations are used for Chico Basin Ranch (CBR), Reservoir (Res.), and State Wildlife Area (SWA).

RECORDS ACCEPTED

Mexican Duck – *Anas platyrhyn-*

chus diazi. A male of this Mallard subspecies was thoroughly described

at Boulder Res., *Boulder*, 12 May 2011 (SM, TF; 2011-47; 6-1). The documenting observers commented that the tertial pattern (paler and grayer than expected) and thickness of the anterior white speculum wing stripe (wider than expected) were of concern for the bird's being a pure Mexican Duck. The dissenting Committee member noted the observers' identification concern in his vote to not accept. Conversely, another member commented that genetic testing is not a requirement of the CBRC and that this individual was phenotypically a Mexican Duck. The CBRC has used the phenotype standard to accept records of other similarly challenging species, such as Glaucous-winged Gull (*L. glaucescens*). One of the observers of the *Boulder* duck photographed a male at the Firestone gravel pits, *Weld*, on the same date of 12 May 2011 (SM†; 2011-48; 7-0). This individual's plumage did not raise the same concerns as that of the *Boulder* bird.

The taxonomic status of Mexican Duck has been somewhat controversial. The American Ornithologists' Union felt that hybridization with Mallard was frequent enough to consider Mexican Duck merely as a subspecies of Mallard (AOU 1998). However, some experts still consider Mexican Duck to be a full species, with specimen records confirmed from Colorado and Nebraska (Young 2005). Note that the entire population of Mexican Ducks was estimated at 55,000 in 2000, with a per annum average increase of 2.5% per year from 1960-2000 (Perez-Arteaga et al. 2002), which might partly explain the

sudden appearance of this taxon upon the Colorado scene.

Neotropic Cormorant – *Phalacrocorax brasilianus* (22/9). An adult was documented for Timnath Res., *Larimer*, 15 August 2011 (TF; 2011-109; 7-0).

Red Phalarope – *Phalaropus fulicarius*. An adult in transitional plumage was photographed at Empire Res., *Morgan*, 7 August 2011 (RG†; 2011-106; 7-0). A juvenile phalarope was found at Antero Res., *Park*, 20 September 2011 (BM†; 2011-123; 7-0) while the observer was viewing a juvenile Long-tailed Jaeger!

Mew Gull – *Larus canus*. An adult was at Valmont Res., *Boulder*, 4-6 February 2011 (TF; 2011-30; 7-0).

Long-tailed Jaeger – *Stercorarius longicaudus* (20/12). The CBRC reviewed and accepted documentations of three individuals found during fall 2011. The first was an adult at Cherry Creek Res., *Arapahoe*, 10-11 September 2011 (JD†, BM†, CT; 2011-115; 7-0). A juvenile visited Antero Res., *Park*, on 20 September 2011 (BM†, MP; 2011-122; 7-0). The third record was represented by a long-staying juvenile at Pueblo Res., *Pueblo*, 13-24 October 2011 (BKP†, BM†; 2011-139; 7-0). The bird at Pueblo Res. was particularly unusual in that it was about a month later than expected. Peak occurrence of this species along the coasts of Oregon and Washington, and inland in those states, is mid-August to mid-September (Marshall et al. 2003, Wahl et al. 2005). This bird represents Colorado's latest date for Long-tailed Jaeger, and only the fourth October record.

Black-billed Cuckoo – *Coccyzus erythrophthalmus* (26/10). Two juveniles were found in separate locations in Washington in mid-September 2011. The first was in the woods below Prewitt Res., 11 September (SM; 2011-117; 7-0), and the second at the Last Chance Rest Stop, 16 September (DF†; 2011-119; 6-1).

Lesser Nighthawk – *Chordeiles acutipennis* (26/11). Documentation of a male observed 11 August 2011 provided the fourth record for the Nucla, Montrose, area, at what is becoming a traditional location for finding this species: the sewage lagoons one mile west of town (CD; 2011-108; 7-0).

Black Phoebe – *Sayornis nigricans*. One visited private property near Lamar, Prowers, 10-11 April 2011 (JS†; 2011-26; 7-0).

Sedge Wren – *Cistothorus platensis* (20/5). One was photographed in the sedge meadow below the Upper Twin Pond dam at CBR, Pueblo, 30 September 2011 (BM†; 2011-126; 7-0).

Wood Thrush – *Hylocichla mustelina* (35/18). An immature was found on the El Paso side of CBR the morning of 21 September 2011 near the banding station, where it was eventually captured and banded that same afternoon (BM†, SB†; 2011-124; 7-0).

Varied Thrush – *Ixoreus naevius*. This species invaded the state during the fall and winter of 2011-12. This report includes accepted records for four individuals, and the CBRC will soon be reviewing documentations for another three individuals. A photographed female at Two Buttes Res., 16 October 2011, represented a rare Baca record (BKP†, DK; 2011-144;

7-0). An adult female was found deceased in Colorado Springs, El Paso, 7 November 2011 (BM†, JH; 2011-157; 7-0). A long-staying adult male apparently feasting on apples in a residential yard in Aurora, Arapahoe, was documented for the lone date of 21 November 2011 (SS, BSB; 2011-169; 7-0). Another adult male was found in a hedgerow at Duck Creek SWA, Logan, 27 November 2011 (KD; 2011-171; 7-0).

Sprague's Pipit – *Anthus spragueii* (16/11). Single individuals were documented on typical dates for fall migrants at traditional locations in Yuma: The Nature Conservancy's Fox Ranch, 7 October 2011 (BM†; 2011-135; 7-0) and the Republican SWA, 15 October 2011 (SM, MP; 2011-141; 7-0).

Tennessee Warbler – *Oreothlypis peregrina*. A fall migrant was observed along the Animas River Trail in Durango, La Plata, 16-18 September 2011 (SA; 2011-120; 7-0). Though regular in small numbers east of the Rocky Mountains, this species is rare west of the Front Range (Righter et al. 2004).

Blackburnian Warbler – *Setophaga fusca*. An adult male was photographed at Prewitt Res., Washington, 4 September 2011 (JD†, 2011-113; 7-0).

Yellow-throated Warbler – *Setophaga dominica*. One was photographed at the CBR headquarters, Pueblo, 12-13 September 2011 (JD†, BM†; 2011-118; 7-0).

Prairie Warbler – *Setophaga discolor* (32/11). An immature male was captured at a migratory bird banding

station near Fountain, *El Paso*, 20 August 2011 (DE, 2011-110; 6-1).

Canada Warbler – *Cardellina canadensis* (34/11). A female, probably an immature, was found at the Last Chance Rest Stop, *Washington*, 5 September 2011 (SM†, GW; 2011-114; 7-0). Another, either an adult female or an immature male, was photographed at Prewitt Res., *Washington*, 23 September 2011 (PG†; 2011-125; 7-0).

Black-chinned Sparrow – *Spizella atrogularis* (3/3). An adult male apparently set up territory along the Devil's Kitchen Trail in Colorado National Monument, *Mesa*, where it was documented for 13 April – 22 May 2011 (JD†, PG†, BKa, BM†, RO†, BKP†, NP s, BSk†, LF; 2011-27; 7-0). The male was observed interacting with a second sparrow, probably a female, on 20 May 2011. The CBRC would welcome additional documentation supporting a nesting attempt or an extension of the date range for these individuals.

Le Conte's Sparrow – *Ammodramus leconteii* (12/3). One resided in a sedge meadow below the Upper Twin Pond dam at CBR, *Pueblo*, 17 September – 5 October 2011 (BM†, JD†; 2011-121; 7-0).

Scarlet Tanager – *Piranga olivacea*. An orange-variant male was documented for lower North Cheyenne Canyon, *El Paso*, 8-9 August 2011 (BM†, MW; 2011-107; 7-0), where it was observed feeding a juvenile tanager. The juvenile tanager had two wingbars and was the presumed hybrid offspring of this male and a female Western Tanager. Hybridiza-

tion between Scarlet and Western Tanagers has been recorded a number of times (McCarthy 2006). Scarlet Tanager had not previously been confirmed breeding in the state, although the Colorado Breeding Bird Atlas II website (<http://bird.atlasing.org/Atlas/CO/>) shows one probable breeding record near Boulder, *Boulder*. That report probably pertains to the male Scarlet Tanager found in Gregory Canyon in 2007 that returned the following two springs. That tanager apparently defended a territory, but a mate or offspring were never detected.

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 CBRC believes the observer misidentified or did not see the species. A non-accepted report only indicates that, in the opinion of at least two of the seven Committee members, the documentation did not provide enough evidence to support the identification of the species reported. Many non-accepted reports do not adequately describe the bird(s) observed or adequately rule out similarly looking species. For more information on what the CBRC considers during its review, the Committee recommends that observers consult Leukering (2004), which is available through the

CBRC website at <http://www.cfobirds.org/records/reports.htm>, when writing documentation of a rare bird.

All non-accepted reports may be reconsidered by the Committee if new information is provided (e.g., photos, supplemental documentation). We summarize below why the following reports were not accepted.

Mexican Duck – *Anas platyrhynchos diazi*. The Committee required two voting rounds to reach a decision regarding documentation of an adult female duck at Russell Lakes SWA, *Saguache*, 28 March 2011 (2011-22; 4-3, 2-5). The observer noted that separation from Mottled Duck (*A. fulvigula*) was “perhaps not possible” for this individual. Several Committee members commented on the observer’s uncertainty in their vote to not accept. An adult male in eclipse (alternate) plumage was reported near Punkin Center, *Lincoln*, 22 July 2011 (2011-102; 3-4). The eclipse plumages of our “regular” Mallard and the Mexican Duck subspecies are very similar, creating a further conundrum regarding separation of these two forms in summer. When considering the extent of hybridization between these forms, the identification challenge is substantial enough for the CBRC to conservatively not accept documentation lacking physical evidence or considerable description of plumage features and discussion on the individual’s phenotypic purity, which this report did not provide.

Brown Pelican – *Pelecanus occidentalis*. Documentation for a reported immature at Williams Creek Res., *Hinsdale*, 15 July 2010, required two

voting rounds for the Committee to reach a decision (2010-117; 4-3, 3-4). The documentation included photos of the bird. Unfortunately, the small image size did not definitively support the species identification and the report’s written description did not provide enough details for several members to conclude without a doubt that the bird was the reported species.

Krider’s Red-tailed Hawk – *Buteo jamaicensis krideri*. Photos of an adult observed in flight near Lafayette, *Boulder*, 2 April 2011 (2011-29; 5-2, 3-4) were submitted to two outside experts by the documenting observer, and their comments were included in the report. Notably, the observer did not submit this bird to the CBRC as a pure Krider’s, having obtained this outside input. Both experts considered the hawk to be a Krider’s type, but noted the difficulty in confidently labeling it as a “pure” Krider’s. One expert specifically mentioned the probability of introgression with the Eastern subspecies *borealis*. The question of where on the introgression spectrum the CBRC considers an individual “acceptable” is open-ended. In this case, because the bird was identified by an outside expert as a probable intergrade, several dissenting Committee members noted that the bird did not fit the phenotypic definition of a “pure” individual and should not be considered a record of that subspecies.

Vega Herring Gull – *Larus argentatus vegae*. Our understanding of Vega Herring Gull taxonomic relationship is incomplete, with some authorities recognizing the taxon as a subspecies of Herring Gull (AOU 1957, Grant

1986) and others, more recently, as a full species (Olsen and Larsson 2004, Howell and Dunn 2007). For simplicity, the (sub)species generally looks like a Herring Gull (*L. argentatus*) in all plumages, with adults having a slightly darker mantle than does the form of Herring Gull (*L. a. smithsonianus*) occurring regularly in the state. The report submitted to the CBRC was of a first-cycle individual at Lake Loveland, Larimer, 22 February 2011 (2011-20; 0-7). The Committee held this report to a higher standard than other reports since it would constitute a first state record (and one of only a handful in the lower U.S.) for this taxon. The Committee received outside expert opinion which did not endorse the identification as a Vega Herring Gull. Given this outside opinion and individual Committee members' own experience with and understanding of the high degree of plumage variation in the Herring Gull, none of the CBRC members supported the report as pertaining to the *vegae* subspecies.

Chihuahuan Raven – *Corvus cryptoleucus*. The photographic documentations of an adult near Blanca, Costilla, 20 August 2009 (2009-81; 5-2, 3-4), and another near Longmont, Boulder, 23 April 2011 (2011-38; 3-4), were inconclusive for several Committee members. The CBRC remains conservative in accepting out-of-range Chihuahuan Raven reports given the identification challenges posed by Colorado's two raven species.

Pacific Wren – *Troglodytes pacificus*. With publication of the *Fifty-first Supplement to the American Or-*

nithologists' Union Checklist of North American Birds (Chesser et al. 2010), the eastern and western forms of the North American Winter Wren were each recognized as distinct species from their Old World counterpart (now Eurasian Wren *T. troglodytes*; see Leukering and Pieplow 2010 for more discussion on the split). Unfortunately, aside from seasonal and geographic ranges in which both new species were noted for Colorado, Chesser et al. (2010) gave little information regarding plumage differences of the two new species. David Sibley created a webpage shortly after Chesser et al. (2010) was published to help birders identify the two species (<http://www.sibleyguides.com/2010/08/distinguishing-pacific-and-winter-wrens/>). This webpage remains the best online resource for identification, while Leukering and Pieplow (2010) is a valuable publication to keep a copy of in the car. David Sibley accurately forewarned that the identification information provided on the website "requires field testing....for there will surely be a lot of new discoveries and refinements over the next few years." While the identification challenges are getting sorted out in the field, the CBRC has reviewed six documented occurrences on which the Committee was not able to reach a positive decision due to identification ambiguity or similar concerns. As new identification information becomes available, the CBRC may revisit these reports. For the sake of brevity, the six reports (all of single individuals) are listed herein without discussion of individual circumstances: Gregory Canyon,

Boulder, 10 November 2009 (2009-92; 5-2, 3-4); Fountain Creek Regional Park, El Paso, 15 December 2009 (2009-91; 5-2, 3-4); Last Chance, Washington, 9 October 2010 (2010-129; 1-6); Wheatridge Greenbelt, Jefferson, 8 November 2010 (2010-174; 2-5); Fort Collins, Larimer, 15 November 2010 (2010-148; 4-3, 3-4); and Bear Canyon Trail, Boulder, 19 December 2010 (2010-165; 1-6).

Rufous-collared Sparrow – *Zonotrichia capensis*. The discovery of a singing male in Georgetown, Clear Creek, in May 2010 prompted considerable discourse on the probability of its being a wild, naturally occurring vagrant and, therefore, a first U.S. record of the species (2011-56; 0-7). The CBRC received only two documentations for this sparrow despite its being observed by many (potentially more than a hundred) birders over the course of its stay. It was observed until at least 6 August 2010. The photographs in the two documentations clearly supported the identification as a Rufous-collared Sparrow, and outside expert opinion placed it as one of the non-migratory northern subspecies in southern Mexico and Central

America (also see <http://earbirding.com/blog/archives/3112> for commentary on the bird's songtypes, and geographic variation in the species). The CBRC was reluctant to accept this as a first U.S. record due to concerns about its provenance in the absence of precedent for extralimital movement by this species in the northern portion of its range in Mexico. Should a pattern of vagrancy develop, the CBRC may revisit this report.

Eastern Towhee – *Pipilo erythrophthalmus*. The reporting observer noted that the adult male towhee at Plaster Res., Broomfield, 19 April 2011 (2011-34; 4-3, 0-7), had only a few white spots on the wings and sang a song unlike that of Spotted Towhee (*P. maculatus*). Several CBRC members were concerned about the lack of discussion ruling out a possible hybrid, and one member mentioned that hybrids may sing either species' song.

Purple Finch – *Carpodacus purpureus*. The description of a female-plumaged finch on the Grand Mesa, Mesa, 16 April 2011, did not sufficiently rule out the more likely Cassin's Finch (*C. cassinii*) in the opinion of a majority of CBRC members (2011-32; 3-4).

REPORTERS AND CITED OBSERVERS

The CBRC graciously thanks the following individuals for submitting records of or discovering the rare species in Colorado discussed in this report: SA: Susan Allerton; BB: Ben Bailey; JB: Jim Beatty; SB: Steven Brown; TD: Todd Deininger; CD: Coen Dexter; JD: John Drummond; DE: David Elwonger; KD: Kathy Mihm Dunning; DF: Doug Faulkner; TF: Ted Floyd; LF: Lev Frid; RG: Rolando Garcia; PG: Peter Gent; AG: Al Guarente; JH: Jeff Hayes; MH: Mike Henwood; BKa: Bill Kaempfer; DK: Doug Kibbe; NK: Nicholas Komar; BM: Bill Maynard; SM: Steve Mlodinow; RO: Ric Olson; AP: Arvind Panjabi; BKP: Brandon Percival; MP: Mark Peterson; NP: Nathan Pieplow; BSb: Buzz Schaumberg; BSk: Bill Schmoker; SS: Steve Stachowiak; JS: Jane Stulp; WS: Walter Szeliga; CT: Cheryl Teuton; GW: Glenn Walbek; MW: Melissa Walker; EZ: Eric Zorawowicz.

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