

# The 67<sup>th</sup> Report of the Colorado Bird Records Committee

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## **Introduction**

This 67<sup>th</sup> report of the Colorado Bird Records Committee (hereafter CBRC or Committee) presents the results of deliberations of the CBRC involving 49 reports submitted by 25 observers and documenting 41 occurrences of 29 species (or recognizable forms) from the period September 2000 to October 2012. 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 the West Slope's first Yellow-billed Loon, Colorado's third Curlew Sandpiper, the state's first Hermit Warbler since 2002, and numerous first county records. 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, Brandon Percival, Bill Schmoker, David Silverman, and Glenn Walbek.

## **Committee Functions**

The Committee solicits documentation of reports in Colorado for all species published in its Main Review List ([http://www.cfobirds.org/records/review\\_list.htm](http://www.cfobirds.org/records/review_list.htm)), species with no prior accepted record in Colorado, and sightings of regularly occurring species that are considered out-of-range or out-of-season. Documentary materials should be submitted online at the CBRC website (<http://www.cfobirds.org/CBRC/login.php>). Alternatively, one can fill out the form printed on the inside dust jacket of this journal and mail it to the CBRC Chair, or request an electronic Word document from the Chair or Secretary (see this journal's inside front cover for contact information).

## **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 (2003-2012). The latter number is of importance, as it is one of the criteria the

Committee uses to determine a species' continuance on or removal from the statewide Main Review List.

The records in this report are arranged taxonomically following the American Ornithologists' Union (AOU) *Checklist of North American Birds* (AOU 1998) through the 53<sup>rd</sup> Supplement (Chesser et al. 2012). 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.), State Park (SP), and State Wildlife Area (SWA).

## RECORDS ACCEPTED

**Yellow-billed Loon** – *Gavia adamsii* (24/8). The CBRC reviewed documentation for the West Slope's first individual of this species, a juvenile at Highline SP, Mesa, 25 December 2005 – 16 January 2006 (LA†; 2012-99; 7-0). The Committee appreciates the care that Mr. Arnold took to document this occurrence. The documentation outlined the dates on which each of the 23 observers, including contributing photographers, saw the loon.

**Tricolored Heron** – *Egretta tricolor* (25/5). An adult made a brief visit to the wildlife ponds at Crown Hill Park, Jefferson, 26 June 2012 (PP; 2012-93; 7-0). Birders looking for it within hours of its reporting and the next morning were unsuccessful.

**Yellow-crowned Night-Heron** – *Nyctanassa violacea* (28/13). Individual juveniles were found during July 2012. One was at Brush Hollow Res., Fremont, 22 July (BK†; 2012-92; 7-0) and one was observed for an undetermined period of time in mid- to late July in the Mary Carter Greenway along the South Platte River, Arapahoe (PR†; 2012-139; 7-0).

**Rough-legged Hawk** – *Buteo lagopus*. In a rare occurrence for early fall, an adult was observed near the Alpine Visitor Center in Rocky Mountain NP, Larimer, 12 September 2012 (BS; 2012-114; 6-1). The species is considered very rare in late September and there is one late August record according to Andrews and Righter (1992). Early dates in neighboring states include: 20 September, Kansas (Thompson and Ely 1989), a speci-

men (DMNS 37875) of a road-killed "roughie" found in August 1970 in southwestern Wyoming (Faulkner 2010), and three records from 14-16 September, Nebraska (Sharpe et al. 2001). The latter reference states that Rough-legged Hawks may leave their breeding range early during poor prey years and arrive on their wintering grounds as early as August.

**Snowy Plover** – *Charadrius nivosus*. A rare species along the Front Range, one southbound migrant stopped over at the Plum Creek Delta in Chatfield SP, Douglas, 12-13 September 2012 (GW†; 2012-123; 7-0).

**Ruddy Turnstone** – *Arenaria interpres*. Rarely observed away from the eastern plains, one at Blanca Wetlands, Alamosa, 26 August 2012 (PN†, LR; 2012-97; 7-0) represents that county's first record.

**Curlew Sandpiper** – *Calidris ferruginea* (3/2). Providing the opportunity to point out the danger of trying to interpret too much from too little data, the state's third Curlew Sandpiper, a juvenile, was found at Jackson SP, Morgan, 23 August 2012 (SMI†; 2012-103; 6-1) seven years after the state's second record in 2005. And that record came seven years after the state's first in 1998. It's hard to imagine any reason why the species should occur in Colorado on a seven-year cycle (but one has to wonder whether it will be 2019 before we see another).

**Buff-breasted Sandpiper** – *Tryngites subruficollis* (36/10). It's unclear just how many Buff-breasted Sandpipers were at Jackson SP, Morgan, during the fall of 2012 (DF†, JD†, NK†, SMI†; 2012-100; 7-0). Three juve-

niles were first reported on 21 August. Various numbers were reported until the last date when the high count of eight was seen on 3 September. Most records of this species are of single birds or small groups (3-6) reported for just a few days. The seemingly constant presence of this species and fluctuating number of reported individuals would suggest that the site saw turnover during the 14-day period in which the species was observed. The species may have had a slight westerly shift in migration route as it was documented from two other sites in eastern Colorado during fall 2012. Two juveniles were found at Prewitt Res., Washington, 25 August 2012 (SMI†; 2012-104; 7-0) and one juvenile at Jumbo Res., Sedgwick, 8 September (SMI; 2012-109; 7-0).

**Little Gull** – *Hydrocoloeus minutus* (29/7). Among the multitude of rarities at Jackson SP, Morgan, during the 2012 fall migration was a juvenile Little Gull observed on the lone date of 25 August (GW†; 2012-126; 7-0).

**Laughing Gull** – *Leucophaeus atricilla* (44/15). An alternate-plumaged adult cruised Barr Lake SP, Adams, 16 August 2012 (SMI; 2012-94; 7-0) for the single observer fortunate enough to be at the right place at the right time. Birders looking for the gull within hours of its initial sighting were unable to refind it.

**Caspian Tern** – *Hydroprogne caspia*. The first for Huerfano was found at the Wahatoya SWA, 13 September 2012 (PN†; 2012-111; 7-0).

**Arctic Tern** – *Sterna paradisaea* (20/10). The second record for Lake Beckwith and the fourth for Pueblo is

represented by one in second-cycle plumage, 13 September 2012 (DS; 2012-113; 7-0). Unlike Lake Beckwith, which lies in just one county, birders keeping county lists were pleased with an adult visiting Chatfield SP, Douglas/Jefferson, 25-26 September 2012 (GW†; 2012-124; 7-0) as it presented the rare opportunity for a double county tick in counties that previously had one Arctic Tern record each.

**Long-tailed Jaeger** – *Stercorarius longicaudus* (21/13). The much-delayed review of documentation of a juvenile jaeger originally submitted in 2001 yielded yet another rarity record for Jackson SP, Morgan, 5 September 2000 (TL, JR; 2001-209; 7-0).

**Black-billed Cuckoo** – *Coccyzus erythrophthalmus* (28/10). Although this species is generally regarded as a spring migrant (late May - mid-June), the acceptance of two records from fall 2012 brings the total of fall records to six. Four of these six records have come since 2011. Despite searches on subsequent days, an immature in Nucla, Montrose, was seen only on 22 September (BW†, CD†; 2012-125; 7-0). An immature cuckoo at CBR, Pueblo, 5 October, was also a one-day wonder (BM†, JD†, BKP†; 2012-129; 7-0).

**Alder Flycatcher** – *Empidonax alnorum* (38/24). A singing male at The Nature Conservancy's Fox Ranch, 24 May 2012, represented the first Yuma record since one was collected in Wray in 1906 (TF; 2012-96; 7-0). Colorado's 38<sup>th</sup> record pertains to one at the Last Chance Rest Stop, Washington, 30 August – 2 September 2012

(GW†, SMI; 2012-106; 7-0). Based on Colorado's other records, these individuals fell within the expected timespan for spring (late May – early June) and fall (late August – early September) migrants, respectively.

**Blue-headed Vireo** – *Vireo solitarius* (40/31). Although there is yet to be an August record, one at Beecher Island near Wray, Yuma, 1 September 2012 (SMI†; 2012-106; 7-0) was the seventh record in the first week of September. Most records, including another for fall 2012 of one at Last Chance, Washington, 27 September (SMI†; 2012-131-7-0), are from mid-September to late October.

**Philadelphia Vireo**—*Vireo philadelphicus* (43/16). The CBRC can report on three of an unprecedented 24 documentations (representing approximately 20 individuals) submitted for 2012: one at the Lamar Community College, Prowers, 11 May (DG; 2012-53; 7-0), one at Burchfield Lake SWA, Baca, 12 May (SMI†; 2012-61; 7-0), and one at Jackson SP, Morgan, 9 September 2012 (SMI; 2012-110; 7-0).

**Pacific Wren** – *Troglodytes pacificus* (3/3). The third to be accepted for the state since the species was split from its congener Winter Wren (*T. hiemalis*) in 2010, but the second for Pueblo, one was photographed at Valco Ponds, 12 October 2012 (BKP†; 2012-140; 6-1).

**Sedge Wren** – *Cistothorus platensis* (22/7). The first for Kit Carson was found by Dave Leatherman at the Flagler SWA, 27 September 2012 (SMI†, DL; 2012-132; 7-0). This observation is the earliest documented during the

fall, and is only the second record for September. Dixon Res. hosted the second for Larimer, 5 October 2012 (BB†; 2012-137; 7-0), a date that is also a tad early for this species. Before these two records, seven of the state's nine fall records fell between 16 October and 9 November.

**“Russet-backed” Swainson’s Thrush** – *Catharus ustulatus ustulatus*. One was photographed at Andrick Ponds SWA, Morgan, 6 May 2012 (SMI†; 2012-102; 7-0) providing the sixth record of this form since 2006 (also see Mlodinow et al. 2013).

**Brown Thrasher** – *Toxostoma rufum*. Furnishing a first county record, one was documented for Lathrop SP, Huerfano, 17 September 2012 (PN; 2012-115; 7-0).

**Curve-billed Thrasher** – *Toxostoma curvirostre*. Rare in Colorado anywhere outside its usual southeastern range, one at a private residence in Livermore, Larimer, 15 June 2012 (KMC†; 2012-91; 7-0) provided that county with its second record, both since 2004. The bird was of the expected *oberholseri* subspecies which breeds in Colorado.

**Mourning Warbler** – *Geothlypis philadelphia* (31/10). The first record for Morgan and second for Yuma were provided by individual immature females at Jackson SP, 31 August 2012 (SMI; 2012-105; 6-1) and Stalker Pond near Wray, 1 September 2012 (SMI; 2012-107; 6-1), respectively.

**Hermit Warbler** – *Setophaga occidentalis* (13/1). The first Hermit Warbler in more than a decade thrilled birders lucky enough to see the immature female the two days it was



*Hermit Warbler*, Last Chance, Washington County, 9 Oct 2012. Photo by Glenn Walbek



*Sedge Wren*, Flagler, Kit Carson County, 27 Sept 2012. Photo by Dave Leatherman

observed at the Last Chance Rest Stop, Washington, 8-9 October 2012 (KMD†, BM†, SMI†, CS; 2012-138; 7-0).

**Eastern Towhee** – *Pipilo erythrophthalmus* (25/13). Along with an Eastern Meadowlark (see below), the Holyoke cemetery, *Phillips*, also hosted an immature male Eastern Towhee on 30 September 2012 (SMI†; 2012-134; 7-0).

**Golden-crowned Sparrow** – *Zonotrichia atricapilla* (32/15). As testimony that it's never too late to submit documentation, the CBRC reviewed a report submitted in 2012 of an immature near Fruita, Mesa, 11 February 2006 (JB†; 2012-127; 7-0).

**Scarlet Tanager** – *Piranga olivacea*. The CBRC reviewed documentation that extended the dates of occurrence of one in Fort Collins, *Larimer*, by a

day to 21 December 2003 (RL; 2003-94; 7-0).

**Eastern Meadowlark** – *Sturnella magna* (15/10). The Committee endorsed two records for fall 2012: one giving the diagnostic “bzzrrrt” call note from atop a tree in the Holyoke cemetery, *Phillips*, 30 September (SMI, JK, AK; 2012-128; 7-0), and another calling individual in Wray, Yuma, 6 October (SMI; 2012-135; 7-0).

**Purple Finch** – *Haemorhous purpureus* (41/10). A female-plumaged individual was found during the Bonny Res. Christmas Bird Count at the bunkhouse in the Bonny SWA, Yuma, 16 December 2011 (GW†; 2012-98; 7-0)

## 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 similarly looking species. The Committee emphasizes that the standard for acceptance is not whether a report will stand up among one's contemporary peers, but whether it will withstand scrutiny 40 years from now by birders and researchers who may not know you.

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.cfobirds.org/cbrcfiles/writingbirddescriptions\\_leukering.pdf](http://www.cfobirds.org/cbrcfiles/writingbirddescriptions_leukering.pdf)). All non-accepted reports 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.

**Brant** – *Branta bernicla*. The split vote on the documentation of a juvenile reported at Glasser Res., *Broomfield*, 1 December 2007 (2007-100;

4-3, 2-5) highlights the Committee's struggle with readily identifiable species and written descriptions that do not rule out other species. While three of the dissenting members commented that it likely was a Brant given the observer's skill, the written description lacked details to definitively rule out other species, particularly juvenile dark Snow Goose.

**Zone-tailed Hawk** – *Buteo albonotatus*. A sight report of an adult near Durango, *La Plata*, 20 September 2004 (2010-182; 4-3) did not sufficiently rule out other dark hawks, particularly dark morphs of our more common *Buteo* species, in the opinion of a majority of dissenting members. The written report noted a dark hawk with yellow legs, yellow beak, barred primaries and secondaries, and one large white band near the end of the tail, but that no "smaller bands closer to the body as on the zone-tailed hawk" were observed. The observer was familiar with Common Black-Hawk and ruled out that species by the bird's more slender body shape and wings. One dissenting member commented that the observer made no mention of flight characteristics or shape being similar to Turkey Vulture, which is the usual comparison for most Zone-tailed Hawk sightings.

**Magnificent Hummingbird** – *Eugenes fulgens*. Two reports of this species in 2012 were not endorsed by the CBRC as state records. One was reported in Littleton, *Jefferson*, 21 July 2012 (2012-88; 4-3, 2-5) during a birding field trip to a well-known hummingbird location. The lone observer noted a dark emerald green

hummingbird that “easily dwarfed the other hummingbirds in the garden” with no white markings on the body or tail. Two dissenting members commented that the description certainly implied a rare hummingbird species, but that the description did not rule out other large green hummingbirds such as Green Violetear.

A female reported briefly observed at a feeder in Boulder, *Boulder*, 15 August 2012 (2012-112; 1-6) received little support from the CBRC. The observer relied too heavily on the coloration of the bird’s leggings, which were white, as the defining characteristic in separating this bird from Colorado’s common hummingbird species. While Magnificent Hummingbirds do show white leggings, the size of the bird was not intentionally stated. Several dissenting members commented that even if the hummingbird’s size was not in doubt, Blue-throated Hummingbird was not sufficiently ruled out as a possibility.

**Chihuahuan Raven** – *Corvus cryptoleucus*. The report of two at Bonny Res., *Yuma*, 15 October 2011 (2011-140; 5-2, 4-3, 4-3) once again raised the specter of potential out-of-range Chihuahuan Ravens in northern Colorado. The experienced observer noted corvids of size and shape intermediate between American Crow and Common Raven with heftier bills and more attenuated appearances than

a crow. Committee members were in agreement that the birds were, at least, ravens. Dissenting members commented that the 200+ yard distance, albeit with a scope, and the inherent challenges of separating the two raven species even at close range, was of enough concern to vote to not accept.

**Baltimore Oriole** – *Icterus galbula*. A photographed female oriole at the Thompson Ranch, *Lincoln*, 5 September 2011 (2011-128; 4-3, 3-4) ultimately succumbed to several Committee members unable to rule out the possibility of a hybrid Baltimore × Bullock’s Oriole. Several key characteristics pointed favorably to Baltimore genes, including the brightness of the orange chest, brownish head and neck, gray back with brownish streaking, and lack of an eyeline. Dissenting members noted that the greater covert white wingbar appeared too broad for Baltimore Oriole and the amount of orange-yellow coloration on the head, particularly on the forehead, suggested an infusion of Bullock’s genes. There may well be considerable plumage variation within the immature age class, and it’s possible that this was a pure Baltimore Oriole; however, Colorado’s location in the Baltimore × Bullock’s hybrid zone warranted enough caution for several members to vote to not accept as a Baltimore Oriole record.

## REPORTERS AND CITED OBSERVERS

The CBRC graciously thanks the following individuals for submitting records of or discovering and reporting the rare species in Colorado discussed in this report: Larry Arnold, Jason Beason, Brad Biggerstaff, Karen Mary Castanova (KMC), Coen Dexter, John Drummond, Kathy Mihm Dunning (KMD), Doug Faulkner, Ted Floyd, David Gillilan, Joey Kellner, Rhonda Kelly, Nicholas Komar, Alison Kondler, Bill Kosar, Dave Leather-



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