

COLORADO FIELD ORNITHOLOGISTS RECORDS COMMITTEE

REPORT 1977-1980--Part 1.

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This report contains the results of records reviewed by the Colorado Field Ornithologists Records Committee (R.C.) from 1977, 1978, 1979, and 1980. Activities of the R.C. from its inception in May 1972 through 1977 have been reported by Reddall (1973a,b,c; 1974a,b; 1975; 1976a,b) and Andrews (1978, 1979). The list of Colorado birds as recognized by the R.C. stands at 429 species as of 1 January 1981.

The R.C. currently consists of nine members: Robert Andrews (Denver), Charles Chase (Longmont-Chairman), David Griffiths (Pueblo), Edward Hollowed (Meeker), Harold Holt (Denver), Tim Manolis (Boulder), Peter Moulton (Niwt), Ronald Ryder (Ft. Collins), and Richard Stransky (Durango). All R.C. records are deposited in the Department of Zoological Collections, Denver Museum of Natural History.

All records received are reviewed by the committee and rated according to an A-B-C-D system. A is a record for which the submitted documentation supports the stated or claimed identification. B indicates that the submitted documentation indicates a misidentification was probably made. C indicates that the submitted documentation is too brief or incomplete to allow its inclusion in either of the two previous categories. D is used when a member is reviewing his/her own record or is unfamiliar with the species in question and can give no opinion. A record, once completed will be resubmitted through the Committee only if an error was made initially or if new information regarding the identification of the species in general is brought forward. Since all records are stored at the Museum and are open to the public, anyone may use these records as they wish.

The following is the list of species for which the R.C. desires documentation (in addition to any species unrecorded from Colorado):

Red-throated Loon, Red-necked Grebe, Brown Pelican, Olivaceous Cormorant, Anhinga, Little Blue Heron, Reddish Egret, Louisiana Heron, Wood Stork, Glossy Ibis, Roseate Spoonbill, Trumpeter Swan, Brant, European Wigeon, Harlequin Duck, Black Scoter, Swallow-tailed Kite, Red-shouldered Hawk, Gyrfalcon, Whooping Crane (except W. slope), King Rail, Yellow Rail, Purple Gallinule, Common Gallinule, American Woodcock, Eskimo Curlew, Sharp-tailed Sandpiper, Hudsonian Godwit, Ruff, Red Phalarope, all Jaegers, Great Black-backed Gull, Lesser Black-backed Gull, Thayer's Gull, Laughing Gull, Little Gull, Ivory Gull, Black-legged Kittiwake, Arctic Tern, Caspian Tern, Ancient Murrelet, White-winged Dove, Groove-billed Ani, Barred Owl, Spotted Owl, Boreal Owl, Whip-poor-will, Lesser Nighthawk, Anna's, Rivoli's, and Blue-throated Hummingbirds, Olivaceous Flycatcher, Black Phoebe, Alder Flycatcher, Eastern Wood Pewee, Vermilion

Flycatcher, Purple Martin (E. slope only), Short-billed Marsh Wren, Long-billed and Bendire's Thrashers, Gray-cheeked Thrush, Sprague's Pipit, Phainopepla, White-eyed Vireo, Yellow-throated Vireo, Swainson's, Blue-winged, Lucy's, Cape May, Hermit, Cerulean, Yellow-throated, Pine, and Prairie Warblers, Louisiana Waterthrush, Kentucky, Connecticut, Mourning, and Canada Warblers, Painted Redstart, Eastern Meadowlark (except at Red Lion State Wildlife area), Scott's Oriole, Great-tailed Grackle (except San Luis Valley), Hepatic Tanager, Painted Bunting, LeConte's, Sharp-tailed, Baird's, and Golden-crowned Sparrows.

Part I -- Species added to the Colorado list

PURPLE GALLINULE (*Porphyryla martinica*). One adult (17-78-55) approximately 8 mi. south of Durango, La Plata Co., 6 and 7 Aug 1978. The R.C. has received reports from Dr. Howard Winkler and Elva Fox, who also provided an exceptionally sharp and clear photograph of this bird. While the possibility of this bird being an escape cannot be totally eliminated, the date of observation and location in southwestern Colorado make it very likely that this bird is a post-breeding wanderer from Arizona. Gallinules as well as most other members of the Rallidae are renowned for their post-breeding wanderings. The white upper frontal shield, reddish bill with a yellow tip, as well as the purple coloration are well described in the reports in addition to being very obvious in the photo.

GREAT BLACK-BACKED GULL (*Larus marinus*). One immature (23-80-14) Centennial Park, Arapahoe Co., 1 Jan - 30 Jan or possibly into the first week of Feb 1980. This bird was first reported by Jack Reddall and J.V. Remsen on 1 Jan and was subsequently seen by more than 25 observers. Reports have been received by the R.C. from only three observers: Tim Manolis, Bruce Webb, and Charles Chase with photos from the latter two. This is an extremely poor reporting rate that could have resulted in the species not being added to the state list had the few reports and photos received not adequately documented this occurrence. The R.C. would still appreciate any additional reports on this or any other species.

The extremely large size (though smaller than many observers had thought), the tail with a white background and extensive mottling and heavy flight characteristics eliminate all other immature gulls. A photograph of the tail while the bird is in flight is on file with the R.C., courtesy of Bruce Webb.

ALDER FLYCATCHER (*Empidonax alnorum*). An earlier specimen, DMNH 36457, than has been previously reported was located at the Denver Museum of Natural History. One male taken 28 May 1904 on Clear Creek, Arvada, Jefferson Co., by H.G. Smith. The bird was identified by Dr. A.R. Phillips, who will provide a short article to the C.F.O. Journal, in the near future, on how to identify and separate alder and willow flycatchers.

MOURNING WARBLER (*Oporornis philadelphia*). One immature (DMNH

34586) Sedalia, Douglas Co., 18 Oct 1964. Mist netted and collected by Mildred Snyder.

Part II--Reported species not added to the Colorado list

Reports of the following species not currently on the Colorado list of birds were received and reviewed by the R.C.. For the reasons stated, none of these species was added to the Colorado list.

BLACK-BELLIED WHISTLING DUCK (*Dendrocygna autumnalis*). One (8-78-74) observed near Silt, Garfield Co., on 27 May 1978. The basis of this identification seems to be that since the duck appeared to land in a tree and was dark colored (?) it was a tree duck. Since mallards and other ducks are known to land in trees and with the acute lack of details accompanying this report, this species was not added to the Colorado list.

RUDDY SHELDUCK (*Tadorna ferruginea*). Two (8-79-21) at Cherry Creek Res., Arapahoe Co., 16 Oct 1978. Both this and the next report are considered to be escapes from one of the many waterfowl breeders in the area, especially since neither of these is ever expected to turn up in Colorado. If local breeders would either band or pinion their birds it would make it easier to distinguish between wild and escaped captive birds.

RED-CRESTED POCHARD (*Netta rufina*). One male (8-78-67) at Chatfield Res., Douglas Co., 17 Sept 1978. Noted above.

BLACK VULTURE (*Coragyps atratus*). One bird (9-78-75) was sitting on a roof in Boulder, Boulder Co., 10 Sept 1978. While the details of this bird while perching (large, all black bird with a shiny black, bald head and short tail) tend to support this identification, the lack of flight details, extremely abnormal flight behavior, and no other reports force the R.C. not to add this species to the state list. Reporters should be aware that immature turkey vultures have very dark heads and possibly partially grown tails that could give the appearance of a black vulture. Since this bird is reported as flying with difficulty it is quite possibly a very young turkey vulture.

BLACK VULTURE (*Coragyps atratus*). One (9-78-54) at Pawnee National Grasslands, Weld Co., 6 June 1978. While this report contains very good details and undoubtedly describes a black vulture, the fact that only a single observer is involved precludes it from being added to the state list. It will be added to the hypothetical list based on this and other single observer reports over the years.

ZONE-TAILED HAWK (*Buteo albonotatus*). One (10-80-3) near mile marker "7" on Hwy. 101 south of Las Animas, Bent Co., 2 Nov 1979. This single observer report does not adequately eliminate the rough-legged hawk, which is the common hawk in this area in November. The banded tail does occur occasionally in rough-legs as well as in immature Harlan's type redtails which are also to be found in SE Colorado.

WESTERN GULL (*Larus occidentalis*). One adult (23-79-6) at Cherry Creek State Recreation Area, Arapahoe Co., 23 May 1978. This report contains very few details especially for comparing with similar species. A report of a new state bird has to show adequate details to at least describe the bird, its situation, other birds present, etc., even if the species is relatively easy to identify.

MEW GULL (*Larus canus*). One (23-80-37) Centennial Park, Arapahoe Co., 27 Jan 1980. The details of this single observer report do not adequately eliminate ring-billed gull though it is a strong possibility that this was a mew gull.

RUBY-THROATED HUMMINGBIRD (*Archilochus colubris*). One adult male (31-80-1) Beulah, Pueblo Co., 31 Aug 1979. This report is another case of an observation that is probably correct but similar species are not adequately eliminated, in this case the broad-tailed hummingbird is a significant possibility. At this date (31 Aug) broad-tails should be undergoing molt which could easily result in a forked tail and reduced or non-existent sound from the primaries, which is the source of the buzzing sound.

MEXICAN JAY (*Aphelocoma ultramarina*). One (37-78-68) Colorado Springs, El Paso Co., 6 Sept 1978. This report distinguishes Mexican from scrub jays on the basis of "no white throat." Since both immature and Woodhouse's type scrub jays have dingy gray throats and are present in this area in early September, it seems quite likely that this bird is not a Mexican jay. Mexican jays have no history of wandering anywhere near Colorado.

WHEATEAR (*Oenanthe oenanthe*). Twenty (44-79-3) Mount Evans, Clear Creek Co., 4 Sept 1978. This flock was observed while facing the sun and while the flock was flying into the sun. There are very scanty details and no other observers. The description given fits female and immature mountain bluebirds much closer than it does wheatears. Due to the apparent misidentification this species was not added to the state list.

BLACK-TAILED GNATCATCHER (*Polioptila melanura*). One pair (N-45-80) 2 mi. north of Ridgway, Ouray Co., 12-14 May 1977. This species is quite restricted to desert scrub of the Southwest and is not known to wander. No calls were noted, and the birds were found in riparian habitat. The description is not nearly exhaustive enough for a new state species let alone one that is as difficult to differentiate from the blue-gray gnatcatcher as this species is.

BLACK-TAILED GNATCATCHER (*Polioptila melanura*). One (48-78-7) Browns Park NWR, Moffat Co., 30 June 1977. This single observer report provides very few details except that the bird appeared to have a black cap. Since blue-gray gnatcatchers can actually have a darker contrasting cap than pictured in field guides and are common in this area, it is felt by the R.C. that there are not enough details to add this species to either the state or hypothetical lists.

Part III -- Species deleted from the Colorado list

COMMON EIDER (*Somateria mollissima*). The single report from 25 Feb 1932 contains no details except a location of Marston Res., Jefferson Co., observed by Bergtold. The R.C. feels that with no details or a specimen there is no justification for the common eider to be on the state list.

SMITH'S LONGSPUR (*Calcarius pictus*). This species is being removed for two reasons. The first is that one of the major characters used to identify Smith's in the past has been the white shoulder patches. Lately it has been discovered that chestnut-collared longspurs also have this character. Second, most reports are from September and often have large numbers of birds involved (5-75). According to records in northern states and Canada, Smith's should not arrive in Colorado until mid-October. After looking over the reports on file, the R.C. has decided to remove this bird from the state list. The extreme difficulty in identifying this species and its congeners will necessitate an exhaustive report, a photograph, and/or a specimen.

Part IV -- Reports of Rare Species

The following is a summary of the class B and C records received and processed by the R.C. in 1977-1980 (records in which the submitted documentation indicates a misidentification was probably made or in which details are incomplete). The class A records will be summarized in Part 2, which will be in the next issue of the CFO Journal.

LITTLE BLUE HERON (*Florida caerulea*). One (5-79-12) Salida, Chaffee Co., 16 Jan 1979. Details are barely adequate to determine that this was a heron at all; no details presented to distinguish species.

TRUMPETER SWAN (*Cygnus buccinator*). Two (8-78-73) Shadow Mountain - Grand Lake Channel, Grand Co., 16 Jan - 9 Mar 1978. The R.C. felt that this observation had insufficient details.

BLACK SCOTER (*Melanitta nigra*). Four females (8-77-66) Boulder Res., Boulder Co., 24 July 1977. The R.C. felt that this observation had insufficient details.

GYRFALCON (*Falco rusticolus*). One (12-80-23) 2 mi. W. Ft. Collins (Horsetooth Lake area), Larimer Co., 25 Dec 1979. One (12-80-36) 2 mi. N. Ridgway, Ouray Co., 3 Mar 1980. Both of these reports had insufficient details to eliminate similar species.

YELLOW RAIL (*Coturnicops noveboracensis*). One (17-78-43) one mi. W. Colo. 125, North Park, Jackson Co., Labor Day 1976. Photo clearly demonstrates an immature sora.

AMERICAN WOODCOCK (*Philohela minor*). One (19-80-30) Loveland, Larimer Co., 17 May 1980. Insufficient details to eliminate common snipe.

THAYER'S GULL (*Larus thayeri*). One (23-80-7) Loveland Lake, Loveland, Larimer Co., 24 Dec 1979. The R.C. felt that this observation had insufficient details.

LESSER NIGHTHAWK (*Chordeiles acutipennis*). Fifteen (29-80-41) 2 mi. N. Ridgway, Ouray Co., 15 July 1980. Time of year, details of the report, and comments of other observers in same area and at the same time combine to suggest that the birds were immature common night-hawks.

SCISSOR-TAILED FLYCATCHER (*Muscivora forfic*). One (34-78-10) Brown's Park NWR, Moffat Co., 3 July 1968. No details submitted to substantiate this report of a species normally occurring only in SE Colorado.

EASTERN WOOD PEWEE (*Contopus virens*). One (34-78-61) Animas River, near Durango, La Plata Co., 24 Aug 1978. The R.C. felt that this observation had insufficient details.

GRAY-CHEEKED THRUSH (*Catharus minimus*). One male (44-80-42) top of Genesee Mountain, 17 mi. SW. Colo. State Capitol in Denver, Denver Co., 18 and 28 June and 6 July 1980. Based on song notes and description this bird seems to be a dark hermit thrush, specimens of which are available with dark tail and dark eye-ring.

PHAINOPEPLA (*Phainopepla nitens*). Six to 10 (48-80-33) Eldorado Springs Canyon, S. of Boulder, Boulder Co., 27 May 1979. The R.C. felt that the details on this report of such an unusual number of this very rare (in Colorado) bird were not exhaustive enough.

GRAY VIREO (*Vireo vicinior*). One (51-80-55) W. of Horsetooth Res. W. of Ft. Collins, Larimer Co., 2 and 6 Apr 1980. The R.C. felt that this observation did not eliminate the warbling or solitary vireos both of which can be variable in plumage characters and easily mistaken for gray vireo.

PHILADELPHIA VIREO (*Vireo philadelphicus*). One (51-78-11) one mi. S. Fort Morgan, Morgan Co., 12 May 1977. One (51-78-70) Wheatridge, Jefferson Co., 6 Oct 1978. Both of these reports provide fairly good details but seem unaware that warbling vireos in the west can be quite yellow on the breast with similar head markings. One character field observers should look for is whether or not the band across the breast is broken or solid. If solid then possibly a Philadelphia, if broken then the bird is most likely a warbling vireo. The R.C. felt that these observations lacked adequate details.

PINE WARBLER (*Dendroica pinus*). One (52-79-1) 2 mi. N Ridgway, Ouray Co., 19, 26, 28, 29 Oct 1978. The R.C. felt that the details submitted did not eliminate similar species.

MOURNING WARBLER (*Oporornis philadelphia*). One spring male (52-80-27) Pueblo, Pueblo Co., 13 May 1975. One male (52-78-66) Barr Lake State Park, Adams Co., 20 May 1978. One male (52-78-78) Lakewood,

Jefferson Co., 20 May 1978. These reports seem to rely on the absence of an eye-ring as the key to this species. It has been shown from specimens that MacGillivray's warbler does not always have an eye-ring. Phillips dealt with this question quite thoroughly in the 1979 Taxonomy Clinic at the Denver Museum of Natural History; the transcript of which appeared in the C.F.O. Journal 13: 92-100. While the presence or absence of an eye-ring is a 98% sure character, attention must also be paid to the color and degree of black on the dark hood, the facial features, and the length of the tail which should give the MacGillivray's a stubbier appearance.

SHARP-TAILED SPARROW (*Ammodramus caudacuta*). One (56-78-44) Middle Park, Grand Co., 29 May 1978. The photograph submitted with this report clearly shows a savannah sparrow.

References

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