

The fall 2002 season was mainly warm, dry, and without major storms. A record cold spell that plunged temperatures below zero in some areas briefly broke this pattern in late October through early November. As in the past few years, drought and irrigation demands in early autumn drew reservoirs down to very low levels, and migrating waterfowl and shorebirds took full advantage of these altered habitats. Continuing mild weather in late fall encouraged birds to linger, and a few stayed surprisingly late. Record numbers of rare sea ducks visited the Region, but Arctic and high-elevation migrants were unusually scarce or absent. A wonderful array of rarities was found, as evidenced by 16 reports that warranted boldface type.

**Abbreviations:** A.F.R. (American Falls Res., by American Falls, ID); Camas (Camas N.W.R., Jefferson, ID); I.B.O. (Idaho Bird Observatory at Lucky Peak, near Boise, ID); Latilong (area encompassed by one degree latitude and one degree longitude used in mapping bird distribution in both Idaho and Montana).

### LOONS THROUGH SHOREBIRDS

Highlights of the season included a Red-throated Loon near Helena, MT 13-20 Oct (GH, m. ob.) and a Yellow-billed Loon in Blaine, ID 15-24 Nov (GL, m. ob.); both are less than annual. The 8 Pacific Loons reported was about average. Common Loon counts of 130 at A.F.R. 18 Oct (CT) and 120 at Cascade Res., Valley, ID 27 Oct (MC, RLR) were unusually high. Out-of-range Red-necked Grebes visited Boise 23-28 Nov (RLR, DT) and A.F.R. 26 Nov (MJ, CT). An impressive 1000+ Western Grebes staged at Canyon Ferry Res., Broadwater, MT 1 Aug (JP). An extralimital Clark's Grebe in Custer, ID 2 Aug (TW) provided a first for Latilong 12. Although increasing in nw. Montana, a flock of 32 American White Pelicans in Lake 29 Sep (WT) was unusually large. Several post-breeding waders dispersed far n. of range, including a Great Egret in Kootenai, ID 16 Sep (SL) and up to 2 others at Mann L., Nez Perce, ID 7-9 Oct & 9-11 Nov (m. ob.), 2 Snowy Egrets in Madison, MT 8 & 16 Aug (MD, JP, RW), 3 Cattle Egrets in Kootenai, ID 15 Sep (AP), and 4 White-faced Ibis in Madison, MT 16 Aug (MD, JP).

An American Black Duck near Helena, MT 22 Nov (BM) provided a first record for Latilong 28. Four Eurasian Wigeon was about average for fall, but less expected was a Eurasian x American Wigeon hybrid in Boise 20-27 Oct (DT). An amazing 11 Long-tailed Ducks were reported, perhaps the Region's highest total ever. Idaho's 7th Black Scoter was in Power, ID 10-17 Nov (CT). Surf Scoters appeared in unprecedented numbers, with totals of up to 45 in Idaho and 30 in Montana. On the other hand, 10 White-

# Idaho & Western Montana



winged Scoters was about average. Southwest Idaho's five Red-shouldered Hawk reports was the highest seasonal count ever. Reports included the capture of a downy 8- to 9-week-old fledgling near Boise 17 Aug (BD), interesting since breeding has not been confirmed in the Region. A total of 22 Broad-winged Hawks was seen, less than half of last year's tally. Of these, 20 were at I.B.O. 13 Sep—2 Oct (GK). Totals of uncommon but expected shorebirds were about average, with 5 American Golden-Plovers, 2 Whimbrels, 25+ Stilt Sandpipers, and 4 Short-billed Dowitchers reported. Less expected was Idaho's 6th Hudsonian Godwit at A.F.R. 19-21 Sep (CT, m. ob.). Even better was the Sharp-tailed Sandpiper in Somers 2-10 Nov (DC, m. ob.) that represented Montana's first record and the Region's 2nd.

### JAEGERS THROUGH MOCKINGBIRDS

Idaho's 8th Pomarine Jaeger was discovered

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in *Fremont* 14 Sep (†CW). At least two weeks early were 2 Parasitic Jaegers at A.F.R. 23-30 Aug (CT). A wayward Franklin's Gull in Sandpoint, ID 25 Aug (MJ) was far n. of range. An ad. Little Gull at A.F.R. 23-26 Nov (CT) provided Idaho's 6th record. The tally of rare-but-regular gulls was typical, with 5 Mew, 5 Thayer's, 9 Sabine's, and 2 Glaucous Gulls reported. More interesting were single Lesser Black-backed Gulls discovered in Lewiston 2 Nov (KD) and Pocatello 13-14 Nov (Mcr, CT) that provided Idaho's 4th and 5th records. An Arctic Tern was at A.F.R. 12 Sep (CWo), where they are now annual. The only reported Band-tailed Pigeon visited I.B.O. 18 Oct (RB). Although confirmed breeding for Idaho's Eurasian Collared-Doves remains elusive, a begging juv. seen near American Falls 27 Aug suggested local nesting (CT). Owl totals at I.B.O. were the lowest ever, with only 12 Flammulated, one Western Screech-, and 67 Northern Saw-whet Owls captured 5 Sep—27 Oct (GK). Barred Owls continue to explore s. Idaho: one heard in *Cassia* 21-22 Sep provided a first record for Latilong 26 (MDe).

A rare Anna's Hummingbird visited Missoula, MT 8 Aug (S & GS), where one was present last year. Idaho's 10th Red-headed Woodpecker visited Boise 26 Sep (RR). A White-headed Woodpecker discovered in *Kootenai* 20 Oct (DSc) was newsworthy; they

are rarely reported in n. Idaho. The bird of the season was a vocalizing **Tropical Kingbird** videotaped at Camas 22 Sep (DCl, †Mcr, GR); it provided a first record for Idaho and the Region. Idaho's 3rd **Blue-headed Vireo** was captured at I.B.O. 12 Sep (ph. RB). Another 3rd record for Idaho was the **Philadelphia Vireo** in *Fremont* 31 Aug (†CW). Blue Jays made their best showing in three years, with a total of 27 reported. Most significant of these reports was the discovery of Blue Jay fledglings in Livingston (SM), which established the first breeding record in s.-cen. Montana. Adding an odd footnote to the jay reports were single Blue x Steller's Jays in Hamilton, MT 5 Sep (WT) and Coeur d'Alene, ID 26 Sep—18 Nov (NM). A Purple Martin in Boise 11 Sep (BC) was the first Idaho report in nine years. Record late were up to 2 Tree Swallows in *Power*, ID 26-30 Oct (CT) and a Barn Swallow in *Fremont*, ID 13-20 Nov (CW). Idaho birders found rare Northern Mockingbirds in *Canyon* 10 Sep (JH), at Camas 21-25 Sep (DCl, MCr), and in Marsing 4 Oct (MC). Very unusual anywhere in nw. Montana, was a family of Sage Thrashers in *Sanders* 5 Aug (BR).

#### WARBLERS THROUGH FINCHES

It was an outstanding season for rare warblers. Single Chestnut-sided Warblers were reported at Camas 22-24 Sep (Mcr) and in

*Fremont*, ID 2 Oct (CW). A Magnolia Warbler was near Boise 2-10 Sep (RB, MC, DT), and one was at Camas 27 Sep (DCl, MCr). The **Black-throated Blue Warbler** at Red Rock Lakes N.W.R., *Beaverhead* 14 Aug (CW) was about the 3rd for w. Montana. An errant Black-throated Gray Warbler was near Boise 5 Oct (CF), where they are less than annual. Also discovered at I.B.O. was Idaho's 2nd **Hermit Warbler** 14 Aug (†JC, ES). Single **Blackburnian Warblers** at Camas 12 Sep (Mcr, MJ, DM) and in Boise 12 Oct (DT) provided Idaho's 2nd and 3rd records. Idaho's 5th **Bay-breasted Warbler** appeared in *Minidoka* 12 Sep (†SB, CWo). A total of 8 Blackpoll Warblers visited Idaho in Sep, the highest seasonal count ever. The only reported Black-and-white Warbler was in *Bingham*, ID 25-26 Aug (DM). At least 4 American Redstarts visited *Ada*, ID, where they are not annual. Especially rare in fall was an Ovenbird that came through Boise 15 Sep (MC). Boise also hosted Idaho's 4th **Hooded Warbler** 7 Oct (MC). A Wilson's Warbler in Boise 11 Nov+ (DT) was the Gem State's latest ever.

Especially rare in fall was a Rose-breasted Grosbeak captured at I.B.O. 1 Sep (RB). Single Swamp Sparrows in *Ravalli*, MT 18 Oct (WT) and *Gooding*, ID 29 Nov (RB, CF) were noteworthy, since they are less than annual. Rare *Zonotrichia* sparrows were relatively scarce; only 8 White-throated, one Golden-crowned, and 3 Harris's Sparrows were found. Fourteen Rusty Blackbirds made an excellent fall total. Idaho's Great-tailed Grackles nested successfully in Marsing, and one remained throughout the fall in *Owyhee* (RLR). Several Common Grackles were noted, but the flock of over 200 in Helena, MT 16 Sep (DSu) was undoubtedly a Regional record. A Purple Finch at Camas 19 Sep (Mcr) was a first for Latilong 21. Lesser Goldfinches continue to wander ever northward; a flock of 4 in *Clearwater* 4 Nov (JCe) provided a surprising Idaho panhandle record.

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