

The 52nd Report of the Colorado Bird Records Committee

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Introduction

This 52nd report presents the results of deliberations of the Colorado Bird Records Committee (hereafter CBRC or Committee) on partial results of circulations held during mid-2009. This article provides results of the circulation of 55 reports submitted by 33 observers documenting 41 occurrences of 34 species from the period 2005 through 2009. Seventeen reports involving 16 species were not accepted because of insufficient documentation or because descriptions were inconsistent with known identification criteria. Per CBRC by-laws, 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 “accept” votes have transcended to a second round of deliberations, and results of those records will be published at a later date.

Highlights of this report include the long overdue first state record of Acadian Flycatcher (*Empidonax virescens*), which brings the state list to 489 species; the second record of Ross’s Gull (*Rhodostethia rosea*); and the fourth record of Ruff (*Philomachus pugnax*).

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, 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>).

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' continuance 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 sonograms 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

Brown Pelican – *Pelecanus occidentalis* (17/5). Representing the second record for Crowley, an immature bird was at Lake Meredith on 25 Apr 2009 (BM †; 2009-22; 7-0).

Tricolored Heron – *Egretta tricolor* (22/7). Members of the Ardeidae are known to wander outside their normal range following their breeding season. The late summer of 2008 was no exception in Colorado, as three juvenile Tricolored Herons were detected. The first was at Thurston Res., Prowers, on 28 July (BKP †, DAL; 2008-93; 7-0), furnishing the first record for that county. Two juveniles were on the Sedgwick portion of Jumbo Res. on 8 Aug (CWi †, BS; 2008-94; 7-0), together providing the first documented occurrence of the species for that county as well.

Ruff – *Philomachus pugnax* (4/3). On 1 May 2008, Floyd discovered a Ruff at Boulder Res., Boulder (DF †, PG; RH †, BK, NK †, NP, BS †, DW †, TW †, TF; 2008-42; 7-0) which was observed by many others during the day. The bird first appeared to be a female based on its dull plumage; however, certain plumage and size aspects of the bird seemed a bit odd. Of note were the bird's larger size compared to nearby Lesser Yellowlegs (*Tringa flavipes*) and its overall structure, which

differed from that of a female Ruff. If a male, it was a male with a complete absence of supplementary alternate male plumage (i.e., ruffs, ear tufts, ornate patterning). Compared to females, males are less delicate, with a rather angular shape and a proportionally smaller head and bill (Richard Chandler, pers. comm.).

Expert opinion from U.S. shorebird experts Richard Chandler and Kevin Karlson as well as from Jos Hooijmeijer from the Netherlands (pers. comm.) suggested that the bird was a "faeder" male, a recently recognized rare plumage type in male Ruffs (Jukema & Piersma 2006). Faeder males, which constitute only about 1% of the male population, are permanent female mimics. Faeders molt into a prenuptial male plumage, but do not develop the ornamental feathers of normal males. Although they sport a mostly female-type plumage, faeder males, as did the Colorado bird, have a more upright head posture than females and show erections of neck/ape feathers.

The faeder breeding system is intriguing: faeders obtain access to mating territories together with females and steal matings when females crouch to solicit copulation (Jukema and Piersma 2006). Females often seem to prefer copulations with faed-



Red Phalarope, DeWeese Lake, Custer County, 22 Sep 2008. Photo by Rich Miller

ers to copulations with normal males, and normal males also copulate with faeders (and vice versa) more often than with females. The homosexual copulations may attract females to the lek, like the presence of satellite males (Hooijmeijer, 2009). Jukema and Piersma (2006) opine that faeder birds may display the original male breeding plumage from before other male types evolved.

With only four records of the species in Colorado, the presence of a bird in the state with a plumage type that is only displayed in 1% of the total population would be quite amazing. However, Ruff expert David Lank from British Columbia (*fide* Paul Hess) does not believe the Colorado bird is a faeder: "From the size relative to the yellowlegs, I think it is simply a male, lacking [display] plumage. Some fraction of first-spring males are quite slow to develop plumage, or,

in captivity anyway, do not grow display plumage at all until their second year. By May 1, indeed, most males are up and running, but some, primarily younger birds, lag behind. They nonetheless do molt into 'breeding body plumage,' like the one here. Grossly, such males look like large females as far as I am concerned. The odds of its being a faeder are small."

Red Phalarope –

Phalaropus fulicaria (41/22). The Committee recently deliberated on and accepted two Red Phalarope records from 2008. A juvenile at DeWeese Res., Custer, on 22 Sep was the first for the county (RM †; 2008-109; 7-0), while a basic-plumaged adult at Cottonwood Marsh on 5 Oct (NK †, AS †, KW; 2008-117; 7-0) was the second for Boulder.

Ross's Gull - *Rhodostethia rosea* (2/1). Establishing the second record for Colorado of this rare Arctic species, an adult in basic plumage was well described from Lagerman Res., Boulder, on 28 Oct 2007 (BS; 2007-75; 7-0).

Pomarine Jaeger – *Stercorarius pomarinus* (23/13). A juvenile intermediate morph was at Jackson Res., Morgan, between 4 and 5 Oct 2008 (CN † BK, AS; 2008-116; 7-0). Another juvenile, a light morph bird, entertained birders attending the



Acadian Flycatcher, Van's Grove, Bent County, 18 May 2009. Photo by Joey Kellner



Acadian Flycatcher, Van's Grove, Bent County, 18 May 2009. Photo by Brandon Percival

annual Rocky Mountain Bird Observatory picnic at Barr Lake, Adams, on 18 Oct 2008 (AS; 2008-123; 7-0).

Long-tailed Jaeger - *Stercorarius longicaudus* (14/7). An adult, the second for Larimer, was at Claymore Lake on 28 Aug 2007 (KE †; 2007-33; 7-0). This is the second accepted record of the species in August for Colorado.

Acadian Flycatcher – *Empidonax virescens* (1/1). On the morning of 12 May 2008, Percival detected an *Empidonax* at Van's Grove, a small grove of Siberian Elm (*Ulmus crassifolia*) located on the north side of John Martin Res., Bent, named after Van Truan. The bird had a greenish back with a thin, complete yellowish eye-ring, a very bright white throat, a long and wide bill with a completely orange lower mandible, blackish wings with two whitish wing bars, whitish underparts, and a long primary projection. Based on these traits, the bird could only have been one of three species of *Empidonax* flycatcher: Willow (*E. traillii*), Alder (*E. alnorum*), or Acadian. Excitement must have run through Percival's veins as he noticed that the bill on the bird was very wide and long, wider and longer than on Willow or Alder Flycatchers. The identification of the bird as Colorado's first Acadian Flycatcher was also based on the

presence of a discernible eye-ring and greenish upperparts, which eliminated Willow Flycatcher, and the longer wings and bill, which did not fit Alder. The peaked crown of the subject bird fit quite well for Acadian. CBRC review of the narrative descriptions and of photographs taken of the bird drew a unanimous deliberation that the bird was indeed an Acadian Flycatcher (BKP †, JK †, BM †; 2009-32; 7-0), a rather overdue species to be detected in the state, considering the relative proximity of its breeding range to Colorado.

Acadian Flycatchers breed in eastern North America west to extreme southeastern Nebraska, eastern Kansas and Oklahoma, and central Texas (Sibley 2003). According to Sharpe et al. (2001), up to four Acadian Flycatchers were netted in 1996 in Keith County, Nebraska, which abuts the northeastern tip of Sedgwick County, Colorado. The species has also been detected in New Mexico (Williams 2007) and there is at least one record of the species from California (California Bird Records Committee 2009).

Black Phoebe – *Sayornis nigricans*. Establishing a first record for Boulder, one was at Cottonwood Marsh on the early date of 8 Apr 2009 (MB; 2009-16; 7-0).

Purple Martin – *Progne subis*. A female-type Purple Martin, presumably of the eastern population (*P. s. subis*), was discovered at Lamar Community College, Prowers, on 6 May 2008 (BG; 2008-52; 7-0). Lamar hosted two second-year male martins in 2006. One wonders when the first

documented breeding colony of eastern Purple Martins will become established in southeastern Colorado.

Sedge Wren – *Cistothorus platensis* (19/4). One was at CBR on 21 Oct 2008 (BM; 2008-124; 7-0), providing the second record of the species for *El Paso*. Another, the first for *Bent*, was at Bent's Old Fort near La Junta on 2 Nov 2008 (JD; 2008-130; 6-1).

Wood Thrush – *Hylocichla mustelina* (30/18). A territorial singing male was at Dixon Res., Larimer, on 11 Jun 2008 (AS †s, ED; 2008-88; 7-0). Based on discussions on COBirds, the state birding listserv, the bird may have been present at that location for a lengthier period of time; however, no details on latter dates of occurrence were submitted to the CBRC.

Sprague's Pipit – *Anthus spragueii* (11/7). Birders walking short grasslands in northeastern Colorado during late September and early October have found Sprague's Pipits to be fairly regular in that area during fall migration. An additional two birds were seen at the Fox Ranch near Idalia, Yuma, on 4 Oct 2008 (NP, AS; 2008-115; 7-0).

Lucy's Warbler – *Vermivora luciae* (9/7). Pieplow documented the returning breeding Lucy's Warblers at Yellowjacket Canyon, Montezuma, where he saw a pair on 8 May 2008 (NP; 2008-55; 7-0). The CBRC removed the requirement of documenting Lucy's Warblers from this specific location in August 2008 (Semo 2009). Observations of Lucy's Warblers from all other locations in Colorado are still requested, however.

Northern Parula – *Parula americana*

cana. Very late was one present at a residence in Lakewood, Jefferson, on 23 Nov 2008 (CB †; 2008-153; 7-0). Other previous late records of Northern Parula in Colorado include one in Paonia, Delta, on 26 Nov 2005 and another found dead in Boulder on the extremely late date of 15 Jan 2006.

Yellow-throated

Warbler – *Dendroica dominica* (35/12). The second for Yuma, and the first since 1977, an alternate-plumaged male was at Bonny Res. on 11 May 2009 (CWo †; 2009-31; 7-0).

Grace's Warbler – *Dendroica graciae*. Quite far north was an adult male at Estes Park, Larimer, on 7 May 2009 (RH †, BC; 2009-29; 7-0).

Palm Warbler

– *Dendroica palmarum*. Rare for the mountains, a western race (C. *p. palmarum*) Palm Warbler was at the Blue River Water Treatment pond in Silverthorne, Summit, on 29 October 2006 (AS †, JK; 2006-148; 7-0).

Kentucky War-



Northern Parula, Lakewood, Jefferson County, 23 Nov 2008. Photo by Carla Blair

bler – *Oporornis formosus* (35/9). A male, the first for CBR, was present on the Pueblo side of the ranch on 1 May 2009 (BM †; BP †; 2009-26; 7-0), establishing the seventh record for the county.



Kentucky Warbler, Chico Basin Ranch, Pueblo County, 1 May 2009. Photo by Bryan Patrick

Scarlet Tanager – *Piranga olivacea* (33/14). The male that established a territory in Gregory Canyon, Boulder, during the summer of 2007 returned in 2008, where it was documented on 11 Jun (AS †s, MM; 2008-87; 7-0). The bird was reported off and on during the summer season, but unfortunately the Committee only received details of its presence for the one date.

Sage Sparrow – *Amphispiza belli*. East of normal, an adult was at Estes Park on 2 May 2008 (RH †, GM; 2008-44; 7-0).

RECORDS NOT ACCEPTED

The Committee recognizes that its “not accepted” decisions may upset those individuals whose documentation 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, in the opinion of at least three 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 it looks for, 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.

Mute Swan – *Cygnus olor*. The description and photographs of a first-winter Mute Swan at Cherry Creek Res., Arapahoe, on 9 Feb 2008 were conclusive in substantiating its identification; however, many Committee members felt that provenance of the bird could not be reasonably established and, therefore, decided not to accept this report as the state’s first record (2008-14; 2-5). One consenting member noted that the species is migratory in its European range and that populations in the northeastern U.S. move in response to the freezing of water bodies during winter. If a pattern for dispersal develops within western North America, not just in Colorado, then this report may be reconsidered in light of that new evidence. The Committee urges observers to continue to submit documentation of Mute Swans that may be of wild origin to help establish a pattern of occurrence in the state.

Red-throated Loon – *Gavia stellata*. One reported from Union Reservoir, Weld, 5 Nov 2006, took the divided Committee two rounds of voting (2006-154; 4-3, 3-4). The observer described the bird as a small, pale grayish loon with a prominent

white cheek and small, slightly upturned bill – all features consistent with Red-throated Loon. The observer, however, mentioned that Pacific Loon was eliminated with caution, and some Committee members wondered whether the observer was convinced of the identification. The observer noted taking photos; unfortunately, none were submitted with the documentation.

Yellow-crowned Night-Heron – *Nyctanassa violacea*. The report of an adult along the Arkansas River near Howard, Fremont, on 12 Feb 2008 went through two rounds of voting (2008-17; 4-3, 3-4). Committee members were in disagreement over whether the description of the head plumage was strong enough to support the identification. The description of “creamy/white crown, black mask, white cheek and black chin” could also have been used for a poorly seen Great Blue Heron in the opinion of some members, while others voting in favor of the report considered the “black chin” a substantive characteristic in support of Yellow-crowned Night-Heron. Ultimately, the majority of Committee members voting not to accept did so because of the observer’s description of the bird being similar in size to a Great Blue Heron and also because of the winter date of the observation, a time period in which no records of the species have been documented in Colorado.

Ross’s Gull – *Rhodostethia rosea*. Documentation of a small larid at John Martin Reservoir on 14 Oct 2007, thought to be a basic-plumaged adult Ross’s Gull, did not receive

CBRC endorsement as a state record (2007-72; 2-5). The CBRC originally reviewed this document as a different individual from the accepted *Boulder Ross’s Gull* (2007-75) due to the time between sightings (approximately two weeks).

The Committee struggled with this documentation, as each member knew the two observers—only one of whom submitted documentation—and respected their birding expertise. However, as with all documentations, it was essential to refrain from taking the identity of the observer into account in order to come to an unbiased decision on the report. With that in mind, all of the dissenting members mentioned that the distance of observation (500 yards) on a very windy day was their main concern, since the observer admittedly could provide very few definitive details regarding size and plumage. Two members supported the documentation, and had the second observer also submitted a report with corroborating details, or the bird been closer or the day less windy, the fate of this report may very well have been more positive.

Vaux’s Swift – *Chaetura vauxi*. A single calling bird near Paonia, Delta, on 2 May 2007 would have represented the first state record if accepted (2007-81; 0-7). Description of the bird sufficiently identified it as a *Chaetura* swift, and the described call of “single high-pitched notes spaced approximately one second apart” may suggest Vaux’s. The observer noted that the bird sounded similar to the Vaux’s Swift recordings on Cornell’s *Bird Songs of the Rocky Mountain States*

and Provinces, which he listened to 5-10 minutes after the observation. The current makeup of the Committee, however, is reluctant to accept a first state record based solely on a written vocalization description.

Sedge Wren – *Cistothorus platensis*. Lack of comparison with Marsh Wren ultimately undid the documentation of one near Hygiene, *Boulder*, 12 April 2008 (2008-27; 2-5). Dissenting members mentioned that several features were not adequately compared to those of Marsh Wren (*C. palustris*), specifically the crown pattern, bill length, and vocalizations. The bird was observed in an area of cattails (*Typha* spp.) with multiple Marsh Wrens, and many Committee members would have liked to have more analysis of separation of this bird from that species.

Pacific-slope Flycatcher – *Empidonax difficilis*. The CBRC reviewed two reports of Pacific-slope Flycatchers captured at bird banding stations in Lyons, *Boulder*, 20 Sep 2007 (2007-67; 2-5) and Barr Lake SP on 1 Sep 2008 (2008-97; 2-5). Both birds were photographed and readily identifiable as belonging to the “Western” Flycatcher complex. Identification of both birds rested on in-hand measurements taken during the normal banding process for *Empidonax* flycatchers, which includes several measurements additional to those normally taken for other species. The banders relied exclusively on the formula provided in the *Identification Guide to North American Birds* (Pyle 1997) to separate Cordilleran (*E. occidentalis*) and Pacific-slope Flycatchers.

The Committee solicited comment from Peter Pyle, the developer of the formula the banders used, on the efficacy of that formula to convincingly separate the two “Western” Flycatcher species. Mr. Pyle’s response (pers. comm.) urged caution when relying solely on the formula provided in the *Identification Guide*, especially when tested against the standards of proof normally in place for first state records. Mr. Pyle stated, “there are three problems that I think should prevent these records from being accepted as Pacific-slope Flycatchers, although both (and particularly 2007-67) could well have been these. The first problem is that the formulae on wing morphology presented in the *Identification Guide* were originally based on specimens. Since publication of that work in the Allan Phillips Festschrift [Dickerman 1997] we have learned that measures from specimens do not equate exactly to measures in live birds, especially regarding the longest-primary-to-longest-secondary measure. The formulae presented in that paper to separate the two wood-pewees, while generally indicative, have since been proven to be less reliable for separating live birds, and I suspect the same may be the case for separating Pacific-slope from Cordilleran Flycatcher. The second problem is that it can be difficult to obtain consistent measures of primary spacing between observers. One or two values being slightly off can greatly affect the overall value for the longer formulae. The third problem is that the original paper splitting these two species (Johnson 1980) did not

address what happens with the complex across southern Canada, where they may form a cline in vocalizations, appearance, and morphology. If this is the case it may be impossible to eliminate either 'species' if it came from southern British Columbia or Alberta, which I would guess may be the origin for Colorado birds that look and measure out more like Pacific-slope Flycatchers. My personal opinion is that these two taxa probably should not have been split. For these reasons, I never identified a Cordilleran Flycatcher during 24 falls on the Farallones, despite getting some interesting looking birds late in the season that measured into the COFL range. We had to call all to be simply 'Western' Flycatchers."

Echoing Pyle's sentiments, one Committee member noted that there is some discussion in the scientific and birding communities as to whether "Western" Flycatcher should ever have been split, and whether re-lumping Cordilleran and Pacific-slope back into a single species may be prudent.

Swainson's Thrush – *Catharus ustulatus*. The documentation of one at CBR, El Paso, on 23 May 2005 noted the bird as belonging to the western russet-backed subspecies group, which is known from Colorado (Bailey and Niedrach 1965). The report met little support from the Committee (2005-61; 2-5) since the experienced observer's description of "a Swainson's Thrush with brighter buffy face pattern and a rich russet back" was not enough for most Committee members to accept the report as a state record.

The observer noted taking photos; unfortunately, none were submitted with the documentation. As with all non-accepted reports, the Committee will reconsider the documentation if photos or further evidence is provided.

Pine Warbler – *Dendroica pinus*. The minimal description of a fall-plumaged male at Overland Pond Park, Denver, 8 Dec 2008, provided too few characteristics to distinguish this species from similar-looking warblers, such as Blackpoll (*D. striata*) and Bay-breasted (*D. castanea*) [2008-139; 1-6]. Many of the features noted by the observer, including bright yellow throat and breast, white underparts, and olive back, are consistent with Pine Warbler. Those features are also consistent with other species, including Yellow-throated Vireo (*Vireo flavifrons*), but the report did not rule out those other species.

Swainson's Warbler – *Limnothlypis swainsonii*. Although the record garnered some support, the Committee did not endorse the documentation of one near Sale Lake, Boulder, on 14 May 2008 as Boulder's second and the state's eighth record (2008-62; 2-5). Several dissenting members specifically mentioned that the description of the crown as being "solid dark brown" did not fit Swainson's Warbler, which has a reddish-brown crown, and that the overall description did not sufficiently rule out other species.

Le Conte's Sparrow – *Ammodramus leconteii*. The highly detailed description of two birds at Hopper Ponds SWA, Yuma, 3 Oct 2008, observed only in flight and for four seconds to-

tal, gave several Committee members pause (2008-113; 3-4). The precision with which the observer noted details such as the bird's size ("15-28 percent" smaller than nearby White-crowned Sparrows) and plumage details of the rump, back, tail, chest, and head, but not the coloration of the wings, which was "hard to quantify," did not fit with the experience of several Committee members who have observed small passerines under similar conditions. The observer noted seeing the birds on 4 and 5 Oct as well, but did not provide details of those observations. The Committee urges observers to carefully consider whether their documentation objectively reports on the field conditions and actual observation for the date(s) provided. It is conceivable that the observer was biased in the description by multiple days of observation or misreported the duration of observation; however, the Committee had to consider only the information provided on the report form, which in this case was of multiple flight views on a single day, none of which could have lasted longer than a single second, since the report noted total observation time as four seconds.

Nelson's Sparrow – *Ammodramus nelsoni*. Documentation of one at Hopper Ponds SWA on 4 Oct 2008 included a suggestive description and field sketch (2008-114; 1-6). Committee members were mostly in agreement that the three-second observation of a flying bird was too brief to convincingly eliminate other contenders such as Le Conte's Sparrow, a species reported from this location

the previous day (see species account immediately above).

Note that with publication of the Fiftieth Supplement to the American Ornithologists' Union's *Checklist of North American Birds* (Chesser et al. 2009), the name of this species, formerly "Nelson's Sharp-tailed Sparrow," has been changed to simply Nelson's Sparrow.

Snow Bunting – *Plectrophenax nivalis*. Twelve buntings were reported feeding with Horned Larks (*Eremophila alpestris*) along State Highway 50 between Delta, Delta, and Grand Junction, Mesa, on 22 Jan 2008. As with many other non-accepted documentations in this CBRC report, the subject birds were inadequately described in the opinion of most Committee members (2008-7; 1-6). The one-sentence description only mentioned that the birds were "in typical winter plumage" and "white with light brown markings." While the observer does have considerable experience with the species in the upper midwestern U.S., some Committee members expressed concern that similar species also likely to occur, such as Lapland Longspur (*Calcarius lapponicus*) and rosy-finches (*Leucosticte* spp.), were not considered and expressly ruled out in the report.

Scarlet Tanager – *Piranga olivacea*. A basic-plumaged male coming to a feeder in Fort Collins, Larimer, 2 Dec 2007, initially met with considerable Committee endorsement (2007-101; 5-2, 3-4). Dissenting members in the first round, however, noted the unusual behavior for a tanager of the bird "breaking open seeds in [its] bill"

while feeding on the ground with finches and juncos. After considering these first-round comments, several Committee members openly questioned whether Red Crossbill (*Loxia curvirostra*) had been sufficiently ruled out, as the description and behavior were also suggestive of that species. A female/immature Red Crossbill was noted at the location shortly after the date of this report. However, a couple of Committee members who voted to accept in both rounds noted that a Scarlet Tanager overwintering in Boulder approximately 20 years ago fed on seed.

Painted Bunting – *Passerina ciris*. The report of a female-plumaged Painted Bunting at CBR, Pueblo, 13 May 2008, initially received favorable support from the Committee, as the observer is very experienced with this species and the bird was seen by

many other observers, including a Committee member, although none submitted documentation (2005-44; 4-3, 1-6). However, the two-sentence description of a “wholly green bunting” with “paler yellowish-green on the throat and breast” left many Committee members wondering whether it was sufficient for the Committee to accept this report of a distinctive species and plumage. Ultimately, the Committee decided that it was not, as members were left to make their decisions based on the observer’s skills and not the actual description. While that is easy for Committee members who know the observer, the report would not stand on its own if the observer had not been known. The bird was reportedly photographed, and the Committee would reconsider the report if photos are provided or if other observers submit documentation.

REPORTERS AND CITED OBSERVERS

The CBRC graciously thanks the following individuals for submitting records of or discovering the rare species in Colorado that prompted this circulation: Patricia Backes; Jason Beason; CB: Carla Blair; MB: Maggie Boswell; BC: Bob Chase; ED: Eric Defonso; KE: Ken Ecton; DF: Doug Faulkner; TF: Ted Floyd; PG: Peter Gent; BG: Brian Gibbons; RH: Rachel Hopper; BK: Bill Kaempfer; JK: Joey Kellner; CK: Connie Kogler; NK: Nick Komar; Cheyenne Laczek-Johnson; Mike Henwood; DAL: David A. Leatherman; BM: Bill Maynard; MM: Mark Miller; RM: Rich Miller; Brook Nelson; BP: Bryan Patrick; BKP: Brandon K. Percival; BS: Bill Schmoker; NP: Nathan Pieplow; AS: Andrew Spencer; Walter Szeliga; KW: Knut Waagan; DW: David Waltman; TW: Tom Wilberding; CWi: Cole Wild; CWo: Christopher Wood.

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