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NOTES ON THE BIRDS OF COLD SPRING MOUNTAIN, NORTHWESTERN COLORADO

Peter O. Dunn^{1,2} and Ronald A. Ryder¹

ABSTRACT.—Observations are presented on 117 bird species seen in a 250-km² area of northwestern Colorado adjacent to Utah and Wyoming. Three previously unreported species and seven status changes are listed for the Rangely, Colorado, latilong block.

The bird life of northwestern Colorado and adjacent Utah and Wyoming is among the least known in the lower 48 states. Previous descriptions of this area resulted from short-term visits between the early 1900s and the mid-1960s (Cary 1909, Hendee 1929, Behle and Ghiselin 1958, Hayward 1967). The need for more ornithological fieldwork in this area became apparent with the advent of bird mapping schemes in Colorado and Utah based on latilong blocks (1 degree latitude and 1 degree longitude in size) (Chase et al. 1982, Walters and Sorensen 1983, respectively). These distribution plotting systems are valuable for providing an environmental data base for land-use planning and management, and, with some additional effort, for testing hypotheses about migration routes and distributions (see Bock 1984 for a similar example using 5-degree latilong blocks).

However, for latilong information to be useful, all blocks should have adequate and similar data bases. Unfortunately, these maps often show not the distribution of birds but the distribution of bird-watchers. For example, vesper sparrow (*Poocetes gramineus*) and white-crowned sparrow (*Zonotrichia leucophrys*) were two of the most common breeding species on our study area (Table 1), yet they had not been recorded previously as breeding in the Rangely latilong block because of the paucity of bird-watchers. To supplement the inadequate ornithological records for northwestern Colorado and to increase the usefulness of the Colorado latilong data base, this report presents bird observations during a study of sage grouse (*Centro-*

cercus urophasianus) conducted in the northwestern corner of Colorado (northwest corner of the Rangely latilong block).

The sage grouse study was centered on Cold Spring Mountain approximately 1 km east of Utah, 7 km south of Wyoming, and immediately north of Browns Park National Wildlife Refuge, Moffat County, Colorado. Cold Spring Mountain (2,622 m) is part of the eastern extension of the Uinta Mountains, the largest east-west range in the Western Hemisphere. The topography of the study area varies from mountainous to rolling hills and mesas (1,820–2,909 m). Big sagebrush (*Artemisia tridentata*)–dominated rangeland and pinyon pine (*Pinus edulis*)–Utah juniper (*Juniperus osteosperma*) cover most of the study area. Quaking aspen (*Populus tremuloides*) woodland occurs on Cold Spring Mountain and in most canyons and mountainsides. Lodgepole pine (*Pinus contorta*) and Douglas-fir (*Pseudotsuga menziesii*) occur above 2,620 m on Middle Mountain (2,904 m) and Diamond Peak (2,909 m) near the Wyoming border. Snowfall at lower elevations occurs from November to April, whereas mountains in the study area often remain snow covered from late October to mid-May. This late snowmelt delays spring arrivals and nesting of many passerines on Cold Spring Mountain.

The annotated list (Table 1) is only of birds seen in the vicinity of Cold Spring Mountain, Diamond Peak, Middle Mountain, and Sugarloaf Flats; this is an area of approximately 250 km² covering the northwest corner of Colorado. The list of waterfowl and shorebirds is

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TABLE 1. List of bird species seen on Cold Spring Mountain and vicinity, northwestern Colorado.

Species	Status	Abundance ²	Dates seen ³		Nesting dates ⁴	Comments
	Latilong study ¹ (Changes, this study)		Earliest	Latest		
Horned Grebe (<i>Podiceps auritus</i>)	M	U		10 Aug ⁵		
Eared Grebe (<i>Podiceps nigricollis</i>)	B		20 May ⁵			
Green-winged Teal (<i>Anas crecca</i>)	R	FC	30 Apr	6 Oct	Young:8 Jul	
Mallard (<i>Anas platrhynchos</i>)	R	C	31 May	10 Aug		
Northern Pintail (<i>Anas acuta</i>)	R	FC	30 Apr	10 Aug		
Blue-winged Teal (<i>Anas discors</i>)	B	FC	20 May	8 Jul	Young:8 Jul	
Northern Shoveler (<i>Anas clypeata</i>)	R	U	21 May	10 Aug		
American Wigeon (<i>Anas americana</i>)	R	FC	8 Jun	25 Aug	Young:8, 15 Jul	
Turkey Vulture (<i>Cathartes aura</i>)	B	FC	24 May	27 Sep		
Bald Eagle (<i>Haliaeetus leucocephalus</i>)	W	R	5 Apr	7 Nov		
Northern Harrier (<i>Circus cyaneus</i>)	R	FC	Seen every month			
Sharp-shinned Hawk (<i>Accipiter striatus</i>)	R	U		4, 26 Aug ⁵		
Coopers Hawk (<i>Accipiter cooperii</i>)	B	U	30 Apr	13 Sep	Nest:30 Apr	
Northern Goshawk (<i>Accipiter gentilis</i>)	R(B)	U	30 Apr	19 Sep	Nest:30 Apr	
Swainson's Hawk (<i>Buteo swainsoni</i>)	B	FC	16 Aug	27 Sep		
Red-tailed Hawk (<i>Buteo jamaicensis</i>)	R	FC	5 Apr	19 Sep		
Ferruginous Hawk (<i>Buteo regalis</i>)	B	U		5, 6 Apr ⁵		
Rough-legged Hawk (<i>Buteo lagopus</i>)	W	C	1 Nov	7 May		
Golden Eagle (<i>Aquila chrysaetos</i>)	R	FC	Seen every month		Nest:10 Apr	
American Kestrel (<i>Falco sparverius</i>)	R	FC	16 Apr	3 Oct		5 birds feeding on Mormon Crickets on 5 and 6 Aug
Merlin (<i>Falco columbarius</i>)	M		20 Aug ⁵			
Prairie Falcon (<i>Falco mexicanus</i>)	B	FC	4 Apr	27 Jul		
Chukar (<i>Alectoris chukar</i>)	R	U	20, 24 Jul: 8 Sep ⁵			
Blue Grouse (<i>Dendragapus obscurus</i>)	R	FC	20 Apr	19 Sep	Young:19 Jul	
Sage Grouse	R	C	Seen every month		Nests:9(2 nests), 19, 20(2), 21, 31(2) May; second nests: 21, 31, May; 5, 17 June; young:many 3-week and older chicks after 12 Jul	
American Coot (<i>Fulica americana</i>)	B		30 May ⁵			
Sandhill Crane (<i>Grus canadensis</i>)	M	R		4, 5 Apr ⁵		
Killdeer (<i>Charadrius vociferus</i>)	R	C	16 Apr	15 Aug	Many juvenile birds: 26-31 Jul	
American Avocet (<i>Recurvirostra americana</i>)	B		20 May ⁵			
Greater Yellowlegs (<i>Tringa melanoleuca</i>)	M			23 Jul ⁵		
Lesser Yellowlegs (<i>Tringa flavipes</i>)	M			4 Aug ⁵		
Solitary Sandpiper (<i>Tringa solitaria</i>)	M			22 Jul ⁵		
Spotted Sandpiper (<i>Actitis macularia</i>)	B	FC	31 May	17 Aug		
Western Sandpiper (<i>Calidris mauri</i>)	M	FC		13, 15 Aug ⁵		
Long-billed Dowitcher (<i>Limnodromus scolopaceus</i>)	M	U		3 Aug ⁵		
Common Snipe (<i>Gallinago gallinago</i>)	B	FC	26 Apr	23 Jul		
Wilson's Phalarope	b	FC	30 Apr	28 Jul		
Franklin's Gull (<i>Larus pipixcan</i>)	M			7 May ⁵		
Mourning Dove (<i>Zenaida macroura</i>)	R	C	7 May	6 Oct		
Great Horned Owl (<i>Bubo virginianus</i>)	R	C	Seen or heard every month			
Northern Pygmy-Owl	(W)		Seen in Irish Canyon on 4 Feb 1984			
Long-eared Owl (<i>Asio otus</i>)	R	U	18 Jun	21 Sep		Hendee (1929) found a nest 28 May near the Little Snake River
Common Nighthawk (<i>Chordeiles minor</i>)	B	FC	31 May	25 Aug		
Common Poorwill	b(B, Hendee 1929)	FC	14 Jul	19 Sep		Most common second week in Aug, 20-40 birds/night
White-throated Swift	b	U	12 May	26 Sep		
Broad-tailed Hummingbird (<i>Selasphorus platycercus</i>)	B	C	3 Jun	26 Aug		
Red-naped Sapsucker (<i>Sphyrapicus nuchalis</i>)	M	R	18 Apr	21 May		
Downy Woodpecker	b	FC	12 Apr	19 Sep		
Hairy Woodpecker (<i>Picoides villosus</i>)	M	FC	18 Jul	17 Aug		

Table 1 continued.

Species	Status		Dates seen ³		Nesting dates ⁴	Comments
	Latilong study ¹ (Changes, this study)	Abun- dance ²	Earliest	Latest		
Three-toed Woodpecker (<i>Picoides tridactylus</i>)	(n or b)		Seen on 24 July 1981 at Swede Spring on Cold Spring Mountain			
Northern Flicker (<i>Colaptes auratus</i>)	R	C	Seen every month			
Western Wood Pewee	b	FC	8 Jun	10 Aug		
Dusky Flycatcher (<i>Empidonax oberholseri</i>)	B	FC	7 Jun	18 Aug		
Gray Flycatcher (<i>Empidonax wrightii</i>)	B		3 Jun ⁵			
Western Kingbird (<i>Tyrannus verticalis</i>)	b	R	8 May	15 Aug		
Horned Lark (<i>Eremophila alpestris</i>)	R	C	Seen every month		Nest: 5, 7 Jun	
Tree Swallow (<i>Tachycineta bicolor</i>)	B	C	11 Apr	5 Aug		
Violet-green Swallow (<i>Tachycineta thalassina</i>)	b(B)	C	21 May	3 Aug	Adult carrying fecal sac: 23 Jun	
Barn Swallow (<i>Hirundo rustica</i>)	B	FC	15 Apr	5 Aug		
Steller's Jay (<i>Cyanocitta stelleri</i>)	R	FC	19 Jul	13 Sep ⁵		
Scrub Jay (<i>Aphelocoma coerulescens</i>)	R	FC	Seen every month			
Pinyon Jay (<i>Gymnorhinus cyanocephalus</i>)	R	C	Seen every month			More than 50 birds feeding on Mormon Crickets 5 Aug
Clark's Nutcracker (<i>Nucifraga columbiana</i>)	R	C	Seen every month			Ten birds feeding on Mormon Crickets 5 Aug
Black-billed Magpie (<i>Pica pica</i>)	R	C	Seen every month			More than 100 birds feeding on Mormon Crickets 5 and 17 Aug
American Crow (<i>Corvus brachyrhynchos</i>)	R	FC	Seen every month			
Common Raven (<i>Corvus corax</i>)	R	FC	Seen every month			
Black-capped Chickadee	W(N)	FC	20 Feb, 14 Apr, 3 May, 15, 17 Aug, 19 Sep ⁵			
Mountain Chickadee (<i>Parus gambeli</i>)	R	FC	Seen every month			
Plain Titmouse (<i>Parus inornatus</i>)	B	FC	3, 4, 8 May ⁵			
Bushtit	b		5 May ⁵			
Red-breasted Nuthatch (<i>Sitta canadensis</i>)	R	U	29 Jun	26 Aug		
White-breasted Nuthatch (<i>Sitta carolinensis</i>)	R		21 May ⁵			
Rock Wren (<i>Salpinctes obsoletus</i>)	B	U	Seen every month			
House Wren (<i>Troglodytes aedon</i>)	B	C	4 May	24 Aug	Fledglings: 27 Jun	
Ruby-crowned Kinglet (<i>Regulus calendula</i>)	M	U	17, 21 May ⁵			
Blue-gray Gnatcatcher (<i>Poliophtila caerulea</i>)	B		15 Jun ⁵			
Mountain Bluebird (<i>Sialia currucoides</i>)	B	FC	17 Mar	3 Oct		
Townsend's Solitaire (<i>Myadestes townsendi</i>)	M	FC	4 May	3 Oct		
American Robin (<i>Turdus migratorius</i>)	R	FC	Seen every month at lower elevations		2 nests with 4 eggs: 5 Jun	
Northern Mockingbird (<i>Mimus polyglottos</i>)	b	UC	6 Jun	3 Oct		
Sage Thrasher (<i>Oreoscoptes montanus</i>)	B	FC	6 Apr	25 Aug		
Water Pipit (<i>Anthus spinoletta</i>)	(b or M)		3 Oct 1981 ⁵			4 birds near Arthur's Reservoir
Bohemian Waxwing (<i>Bonhycilla garrulus</i>)	W		3 Nov ⁵			
Northern Shrike (<i>Lanius excubitor</i>)	W	U	1, 7 Nov ⁵			
Loggerhead Shrike (<i>Lanius ludovicianus</i>)	B	U	31 May, 4 Jun ⁵			
European Starling (<i>Sturnus vulgaris</i>)	R	C	Seen every month			
Warbling Vireo (<i>Vireo gilvus</i>)	b(B)	FC	31 May	19 Sep	2 nests: 19 Jun	
Yellow Warbler (<i>Dendroica petechia</i>)	B	FC	15 Jun	17 Aug		
Yellow-rumped Warbler (<i>Dendroica coronata</i>)	B	U	21 May	17 Aug	Adult feeding young: 14 Jul	
Black-throated Gray Warbler (<i>Dendroica nigrescens</i>)	B	U	17, 21 May ⁵			
MacGillivray's Warbler (<i>Oporornis tolmiei</i>)	B	FC	9 Jun	19 Sep		
Common Yellowthroat (<i>Geothlypis trichas</i>)	B		15 Jun ⁵			
Wilson's Warbler (<i>Wilsonia pusilla</i>)	B	FC	17, 18, 25 Aug			
Western Tanager	b	FC	10 Aug ⁵			
Black-headed Grosbeak (<i>Phaeicticus melanocephalus</i>)	B	FC	1 Jun	17 Aug	Female with food: 27 Jul	

Table 1 continued.

Species	Status		Dates seen ¹		Nesting dates ⁴	Comments
	(Changes, this study)	Abundance ²	Dates seen ¹			
			Earliest	Latest		
Lazuli Bunting (<i>Passerina amoena</i>)	b		11 Aug ⁵			
Green-tailed Towhee (<i>Pipilo chlorurus</i>)	B	FC	4 May	13 Sep	Nest with 4 eggs: 5 Jun; young:20 Jun	
Rufous-sided Towhee (<i>Pipilo erythrophthalmus</i>)	B	U	1 May	7 Jun		
American Tree Sparrow (<i>Spizella arborea</i>)	W	FC	3 Nov	4 Apr		
Chipping Sparrow (<i>Spizella passerina</i>)	B	FC	16 Jun	25 Aug		
Brewer's Sparrow (<i>Spizella breweri</i>)	B	C	31 May	19 Sep	Nest:8, 21 Jun; young:23 Jun, 24 Jul	One of the most common breeding species
Vesper Sparrow	b(B)	C	25 Apr	26 Sep	Eggs:21 Jun; fledglings:27 Jun, 23–31 Jul	One of the most common breeding species
Lark Sparrow (<i>Chondestes grammacus</i>)	B	FC	8 May	4 Jun		
Sage Sparrow (<i>Amphispiza belli</i>)	B	R	3, 6, 30 Apr ⁵			
Savannah Sparrow (<i>Passerculus sandwichensis</i>)	b		17 Aug ⁵			
White-throated Sparrow (<i>Zonotrichia albicollis</i>)	M		31 May ⁵			
White-crowned Sparrow	M(B)	C	10 May	26 Aug	Nests:1 Jun eggs:1,5 Jun young:15 Aug Nest:16 Jun young:28 Jun	Very common breeding species
Dark-eyed Junco (<i>Junco hyemalis</i>)	R	FC	Seen every month			
Red-winged Blackbird (<i>Agelaius phoeniceus</i>)	R	C	20 Apr	19 Sep		
Western Meadowlark (<i>Sturnella neglecta</i>)	R	FC	13 Apr	3 Oct		
Yellow-headed Blackbird (<i>Xanthocephalus xanthocephalus</i>)	B	FC	2 May	19 Jul		
Brewer's Blackbird (<i>Euphagus cyanocephalus</i>)	B	FC	1 May	19 Sep	Nest:19 Jun	More than 100 birds feeding on Mormon Crickets on 6, 18 Aug
Brown-headed Cowbird (<i>Molothrus ater</i>)	B	FC	2 May	4 Sep		
Rosy Finch (<i>Leucosticte arctoa</i>)	W	U	1 Nov	12 Apr		
Cassin's Finch (<i>Carpodacus cassinii</i>)	R	FC	16, 18 May ⁵			
Red Crossbill (<i>Loxia curvirostra</i>)	b		31 May ⁵			
Pine Siskin (<i>Carduelis pinus</i>)	W	FC	1 Nov	30 Apr		
American Goldfinch (<i>Carduelis tristis</i>)	B		30 May ⁵			

¹Status given in Chase et al. (1982). R = Resident year-round (breeds); N = Nonbreeder present year-round, or a year-round resident whose breeding has not been documented; B = Breeding (documented); b = Likely breeder; W = Winter visitor; M = Migrant; blanks indicate no record.

²Abundance categories: C = Common; FC = Fairly common; U = Uncommon; R = Rare; Ir = Irregular. Abundance was estimated in this study, and categories are from Chase et al. (1982). A blank indicate too few data to evaluate.

³Dates observed represent our records and may not be indicative of actual arrival/departure dates for migrants and summer residents in the entire region.

⁴Nesting dates are presented only where information is known.

⁵Only date(s) seen.

relatively short because most of these species stop at better habitat in Browns Park; Cold Spring Mountain is mostly xeric, with the exception of six small reservoirs. A notable aspect of the species list is that the breeding status of several relatively common species remains to be documented. Future field workers in this area should attempt to document breeding for Wilson's phalarope (*Phalaropus tricolor*), northern pygmy owl (*Glaucidium gnoma*), common poorwill (*Phalaenoptilus nuttallii*), white-throated swift (*Aeronautes saxatalis*), downy woodpecker (*Picoides pubescens*), western wood pewee (*Contopus sordidulus*), western kingbird

(*Tyrannus verticalis*), black-capped chickadee (*Parus atricapillus*), bushtit (*Psaltirparus minimus*), and western tanager (*Piranga ludoviciana*), among others. The northern pygmy owl, three-toed woodpecker, and water pipit were recorded for the first time from this area.

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