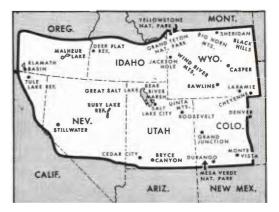
## GREAT BASIN-CENTRAL ROCKY MOUNTAIN REGION / Hugh E. Kingery

The spring's hot dry weather continued du ring the summer, bringing excellent nesting conditions to the wildlife refuges and promoting second broods of song-birds in many locales. In some desert areas, however, the conditions were too dry; at Vernon, Utah, Brewer's and Vesper Sparrows and robins nested 2-3 weeks early and had only 3 eggs instead of the usual 4 ( 4LK).



Highlights of the season were the first confirmed nestings of the Scott's Oriole in Idaho and the Blackthroated Sparrow in Oregon (and suspected Orangecrowned Warblers in Colorado and Mockingbird in Idaho); returning rarities like Utah's Rivoli's Hummingbird and Colorado's Boat-tailed Grackles; 2 Parasitic Jaegers in Utah; and huge populations of Red Crossbills and Pine Siskins, along with lesser numbers of Redbreasted Nuthatches and Evening Grosbeaks. Last year we reported on the calamitous decline of many nesting species at Farmington Bay Waterfowl Management Area on the Great Salt Lake, where almost every nesting species had dropped to 10-20 per cent of their 10year average populations. This year we can report an improvement: most species improved over last year, but none came to better than 30 per cent of the 10-year average.

PREDATORS — The nesting season brings opportunities for observation of predator action. This season we learned of nest predation by weasels, pigs, chipmunks, snakes, parasites, and botulism, but mostly man. At Monte Vista N.W.R., Colo., nest failure analysis came up with these figures: 60% destroyed by avian predators. 11% by mammals, 21% abandoned, 4% flooded, and 4% unknown. In the report which follows, man's depredations are detailed under egrets, cormorants, and Cliff Swałlows.

LOONS, GREBES, PELICANS, CORMORANTS - Scattered Com. Loons summered in the Regionone all summer at Camas N.W.R., Idaho; 2 in nonbreeding plumage at Curlew Valley, 70 mi. s. of Pocatello on July 15; a pair July 30 at Yellowstone Nat'l Park; and single birds at Hotchkiss, Colo. June 16-17 (FRL) and Gunnison, Colo. July 6-8. Malheur had 800 Eared Grebe nests, down 100 from last year, while the Klamath Refuges produced 7000 young. In Jackson Co., Colo, there were 70 occupied nests July 30 at L. John (HEK). Western Grebes produced 3800 young at Klamath Refuges, Ore. and Calif., and 700 at Stillwater W.M.A., Nev. At Stillwater the breeding season spanned three months, with adults incubating eggs from May 2 through at least Aug. 8. Farmington Bay had a breeding population of 200 pairs. White Pelicans produced 1300 young at Klamath and 2500 at Pyramid L., Nev.-down 16 per cent-(LDN); but Farmington Bay's breeders doubled to 600 pairs. At Malheur pelicans reached a peak population of 1650 on July 24, but they have not bred there for 12 years. Double-crested Cormorants brought off 900 young at Klamath, 675 at Pyramid L., 115 at Bear River N.W.R., Utah, and had 70 nests at Malheur, 60 nests at Mud L. near Roberts, Idaho, and 50 at Farmington Bay. At Pyramid L. Superintendent Larry Napier points out that bird production varies considerably, showing no trends. The major factor in nesting success probably is human interference; one group landing on an island and walking through can cause substantial losses of pelicans and cormorants from gull depredation.

HERONS, EGRETS, IBIS — Great Blue Herons produced 400 young at Bear R. and 600 at Klamath. Nests increased to 150 at Malheur, along with 750 of Black-crowned Night Heron. Snowy Egrets enjoyed a good hatch in the Great Basin: at Mud L.; 350 at Bear R.; 100 at Fish Springs N.W.R. near Dugway, Utah; 50 breedings pairs at Farmington, and 80 at Malheur along with 285 Com. Egrets there. However Snowy Egrets had a disastrous year in the San Luis Valley (near Monte Vista and Saguache), Colo. Where usually hundreds of young are produced, only 5 young fledged this year. The cause of the problem is three-fold: low water, pesticides, and especially man. Operators of nearby private fish hatcheries have been shooting and trapping egrets and Black-crowned Night Herons (RAR). Around Pocatello, where a similar problem has existed for several years, federal enforcement has somewhat ameliorated the situation. The hatchery operators have begun to use methods to frighten the birds away. The White-faced Ibis colony at Carson L., Nev., has become significant because it does not show the drastic decreases in breeding population, as do those in Utah and Texas. In 1972 the estimated 1300 nests amounted to twice the 1970 total (LDN). On the Great Salt Lake, Bear R. produced 700 young this year, and Farmington had a hopeful 700 breeding pairs. In the San Luis Valley only a few fledglings survived—but for unknown reasons; their lack of success is not due to fish hatchery slaughter as ibises have a different diet (RAR).

SWANS, GEESE, DUCKS — Trumpeter Swans had an off-year at Yellowstone this year—only one cygnet seen compared with 6 last year. Malheur's 7 nests produced 17 cygnets. Malheur did not match last year's record goose production: only 1630 this year compared with 2400 last year. At Deer Flat N.W.R., Idaho, the goose population reached 700 on July 31 (HES); Klamath had 3000 and Bear R. 1500 young, with Farmington Bay showing 120 breeding pairs.

Among the wildlife refuges, Malheur reported decreased production, owing in part to extra habitat available off-refuge. The duck production of 30,800 dropped 25 per cent from last year. Klamath produced 38,000 ducks, an improvement over the past 2 years; notably improved were Redhead on Tule L. Stillwater had the same number of breeding ducks as last year, but dabblers (Mallards, Shovelers, Cinnamon Teal) increased 17 per cent and divers dropped 23 per cent (mostly Ruddies). Bear R. had 11,160 young, including 7000 Gadwalls and 2500 Redheads; neighboring Farmington Bay had 4070 breeding pairs including 1000 Ruddies and 1000 Cinnamon Teal-the total up from 2700 pairs last year. Monte Vista N.W.R. showed improved per-nest success but with only two-thirds as many nests; total duck production was 10,000, the lowest in 10 years. Duck production in Jackson Co., Colo., dropped, but while Arapaho N.W.R. produced 1530 young, a slight increase, its sister refuges, Hutton L. and Pathfinder N.W.R.s, Wyo., showed slight decreases, with 659 young between them (RFK).

A Green-winged Teal nest was found in Summit Co. (HEK), and a brood in Gunnison Co., Colo., both possibly first nesting records for their respective counties. Ring-necked Ducks may be spreading their recorded Colorado nesting locations: up to 14 of them inhabited ponds around Hahns Peak during May and June, and they were observed all summer near Durango. Barrow's Goldeneye did well in Yellowstone, with 3 broods observed. A Harlequin Duck escorted 4 young around Hellroaring R, in Yellowstone on July 24. Surprising was a <sup> $\sigma$ </sup> Hooded Merganser on Yellowstone R. in the Park on June 25. Also of interest were the several pairs of Com. Mergansers on the Dolores R. near Durango all summer and Red-breasted Mergansers at Bear R. in June and August (WS, MRC).

HAWKS, EAGLES — Goshawks apparently did well, with 6 nests reported and 6 other locations observing them. We had 5 observations of Sharp-shinned

Hawks and 8 of Cooper's Hawks. West of Salt Lake City Red-tailed Hawks did well, with 6 of 7 nests successful, producing 13 young; the other nest was too near the road. Two Swainson's Hawk nests failed in the same area, and Malheur had no nesting pair this summer. However in s.e. Idaho they nested successfully, nearby at Snowville, Utah a flock of 20 on June 22 apparently consisted of non-breeders, as nearby nesting hawks already were sitting (CHT). In the area west of Salt Lake City, 9 of 10 Ferruginous Hawks' nests succeeded, fledging 21 young. In s.e. Idaho the Ferruginous Hawks which hatched young did well, but a disturbing number of nest desertions occurred with either no eggs or no hatching-a situation possibly typical of this species. The 38 fledge before the larger 99, all had left their nests by June 30. Many reported Golden Eagles this summer, but the only definite news is bad: Malheur's nesting pairs have dropped from 10 in 1969 to 4 this year. A nest with 4 young near Denver lost 2 of them (legally) to falconers (fide SB). We received no reports from the n.e. California and s. Oregon nesting centers of the Bald Eagle. Marsh Hawk seemed down at Pocatello, with fewer sky dances this spring and only one nest found. It continued its disastrous decline at Farmington Bay: 10-year average of 50 pairs, 8 pairs last year, 6 pairs this year. Ospreys nested successfully in Grand Co., Colo. (2 nests-JWJ); Durango; Nampa; Ashton, Idaho (several, CHT); and Yellowstone (3). We received no report from Eagle L., Calif., a concentration area for Osprey nesting.

GROUSE. CRANE, COOT — Many Blue Grouse bred around the Mammoth Lakes, Mono Co., Calif., and around Hahns Peak, Colo., and both Blue and Ruffed Grouse produced young at Crater L. Nat'l Park, Ore. White-tailed Ptarmigan had successful broods on Mt. Audubon and Longs Peak in Colorado's Front Range (HEK). At Clear L., Calif., Sage Grouse had fair production, with an average of 6 chicks. Sandhill Cranes had low nesting success at Malheur: on Aug. 1 only 1550 birds were present (last year, 458 breeding birds); we have no report from Grays L. N.W.R., Idaho, one of the principal crane nesting locations. At Farmington Bay, 3000 pairs of Am. Coots bred; at Stillwater, 760 pairs; a 67 per cent decline for unknown reasons.

PLOVERS, SANDPIPERS - Snowy Plovers produced 25 young at Bear R., with similar numbers estimated from the 10 pairs at Farmington Bay. One was seen at Alvord Basin, Ore. June 11. The limited reports of successful Killdeer nesting (Bear R., 350 young; Farmington, 75 pairs; Durango, "thick") belie the abundance of this plover in our Region. Mountain Plover nested again west of Pueblo, Colo. At Nampa 90 Long-billed Curlew were found July 19. The 6 breeding pairs at Farmington compare with 2 pairs last year. Solitary Sandpipers appeared at Sheridan, Wvo., and Nampa in July. Willets produced 200 young at Klamath, 105 young at Bear R., and the 30 pairs at Farmington showed a recovery toward the 10-year norm, from the 7 pairs of last year. Flocks of 62 Willets and 42 Marbled Godwits were unusually early and large for their July 14 date at Sheridan (PIH). Am. Avocets produced 2100 young both at Stillwater (down 10-20 per cent) and Bear R.; There were 800 young at Klamath (best in 3 years); and 300 pairs nested at Farmington. Black-necked Stilts had good success at Bear R., and Farmington's 200 nesting pairs doubled last year's population; but the 1000 young at Stillwater represented a 20-30 per cent drop.

JAEGERS, GULLS, TERNS — Two Parasitic Jaegers at Bear R. seemed far from home at an odd time for wandering; they are accidental in Utah. California Gulls nested at Antero Res., Colo. (150 young—RAR); Bear R. (500 young); Farmington Bay; Klamath (3000 young of California and Ring-billed); and Mono L. (200 breeding pairs). Franklin's Gulls increased from 300 nests last year to 800 this year at Farmington; at Malheur from 185 in 1969 to 500 nests this year. At Mud L. were 500 nests and at Bear R. 250 young Iledged. Farmington Bay's nesting pairs of Forster's Terns doubled to 300; at Bear R. they raised 250 young. At Farmington, nesting Caspian Terns increased to 20 pairs, from 4 last year. At Bear R. Black Terns produced 400 young.

PIGEONS, CUCKOOS, OWLS --- Fledgling Bandtailed Pigeons at Mammoth L. confirmed the first known nesting for that species on the east side of the Sierras, and probably had a relationship to last year's w. Nevada invasion. Mourning Doves had good success this year with hot, dry weather in many areas, and at Eldora, Colo., and Crater L. they were more common than recently. The only Oregon Yellow-billed Cuckoo records in 25 years came from 2 different birds at Malheur on June 6. Black-billed Cuckoos were seen at Sheridan as usual and at Pocatello-unusual (LP). The only Barn Owl reported came from Alvord Basin June 11. Screech Owls, probably like most owls more common than the few reports suggest, had successful nests at Malheur and Salt Lake City (GLK); one appeared in Springdale June 2. Summer Pygmy Owl reports came from Bryce Canyon Nat'l Park (MRC) and Burns, Ore. (CDL). Burrowing Owls met varying success; in s.e. Oregon 14 dens were known to be active, and 7 young debuted at Bear R. No young fledged at Pocatello, but 20 came from 4 dens in Curlew Valley. Three Longeared Owl nests west of Salt Lake City failed, while one fledged 3 young at Malheur. Few areas reported Short-eared Owls, with Bear R. having only 6 young, but Farmington's 6 nesting pairs was an improvement over last year's 2, yet insignificant against the 10-year average of 50. Saw-whet Owls, rarely reported from our Region, produced young in Mono Co., and possibly in R.M.N.P., where an imm. became a road casualty (ACr).

SWIFTS, HUMMINGBIRDS — The Black Swift appeared for the second year on Mt. Evans west of Denver (DSt). At Springdale the dry summer and consequent dearth of flowers brought record numbers of hummingbirds into town, but at Dubois none appeared. Interesting Black-chinned observations came from McCoy, Pikes Peak, and Ogden, Utah (nest with 2 eggs --MLK). Broad-tailed Hummingbirds thrived as usual in Colorado, with late nests found July 15 at R.M.N.P. (CC) and July 25 at Hahns Peak, with 2 young. The first Rufous Hummingbirds to arrive came to far-south Springdale July 5, Bailey, Colo. July 9, and Yellowstone Park July 10. In Mono Co. a Calliope Hummingbird nested within sight of a Goshawk nest. For the second year in a row, at the same feeder, Springdale hosted a **Rivoli's Hummingbird**, from May 23 through the end of July.



Adult & Blue-throated Hummingbird Rock Creek Canyon, s. of Colorado Springs, Colo. July 30, 1972. First state record? Photo / Dominic A. Bartol, Jr.

WOODPECKERS — A Pileated Woodpecker record came from Crater L. June 25. Lewis' Woodpeckers were numerous over s. Colorado; at LaVeta a pair driven out of a nest hole by Starlings found another spot and successfully fledged young. A White-headed Woodpecker was feeding young at Burns, Ore. June 14. At Mammoth L. a woodpecker appeared at a feeder which was identified as a hybrid White-headed X Hairy (JD).

FLYCATCHERS, SWALLOWS - The E. Kingbirds failed to nest this year at Honey L., Calif., although in May they had returned to last year's nest site. Several were seen at Nampa and McCoy in June and July and one at Dubois June 23. W. Kingbirds had an unusually successful breeding season at Springdale (C&LH). Pueblo's Black Phoebes, Colorado's first (Am. Birds 26:789), struggled through 3 unsuccessful nesting attempts, the third wiped out by a flash flood; the last observation occurred Aug. 5. Say's Phoebes had successful nesting, with second broods noted at Durango, Springdale, and Malheur. The Least Flycatcher seen several times at Beulah, Colo., was west and south of of its normal summer range (VT). Despite the success of other flycatchers, two observers, at Salt Lake City (GLK) and Evergreen (DSt), reported fewer W. Wood Pewees this summer. Cliff Swallows continue to take advantage of man's structures for nest sites-and sometimes to suffer for their choices. In Colorado they nest

on dams, under bridges, and on mountain condominiums (where they are not always welcome). Some condominium managers attempt to dislodge the pesky birds from their modern-day cliffs with brooms and garden hoses. At Eleven-Mile Res., Colo., where they tried to nest on old-fashioned cliffs, vandals destroyed 300 nests between July 15-29 (BMM). At Durango use of an historical nesting cliff has decreased over the past few years until this year it was abandoned altogether; hopefully this reflects movement to another nest site rather than the result of spraying in the valley. Near Durango the swallows still occupied other nest sites at Dolores and Falfa. At Bear R. they produced 450 young, and 200 were counted at Nampa June 11.



Black Phoebe, St. Charles River, Colo. Summer, 1972. First Colorado record.



Nesting (unsuccessful) site of Black Phoebe at St. Charles River, near Pueblo, Colo. Photos / Michael P. Schultz.

JAYS, CHICKADEES, NUTHATCHES — Blue Jays pushed only to the edge of the mountains this year; they nested at Colorado Springs (BMM) and were seen all summer at Cheyenne (AKG). The Scrub Jay seen at Eldora this spring was an imm. and it attended a feeder there daily from June 28 through the end of the period. Piñon Jays thrived in w. Colorado (RSy, FRL). Chickadees reversed their usual nesting sites at Durango, with a pair of Black-capped nesting up in the spruce forest, and a pair of Mountains coming down to the piñon/ juniper forest to nest. Observers at Crater L. found a Chestnut-backed Chickadee at a new location in the s.e. corner of the park. Red-breasted Nuthatches have appeared throughout the area, but in small numbers and apparently not uniformly. Reports came from along the Front Range from Cheyenne south to Pueblo (nests found at Pueblo and Dillon,) with no reports from the rest of w. Colorado or Wyoming; fewer at Salt Lake City (GLK); several arrived in July at Malheur and at Camas, the latter in habitat lacking conifers for miles.

WRENS, THRASHERS, THRUSHES - Many observers noted groups of House Wrens nesting: 6 nests in 100 yards at Brighton, Utah (GLK); 6 nests in a garden at LaVeta, Colo. (LAC); second nesting at Evergeen; abundant and successful nesting at Durango, Zion Nat'l Park, Unionville, Nev., and many other locations. On July 26 both a House Wren and 2 Winter Wrens appeared at Crater L., where both are uncommon. Further north than usual, a Bewick's Wren sang continuously and began building a nest in a yard in Colorado Springs from June 18-21; it departed without success, having found no mate. Long-billed Marsh Wrens did well at Farmington Bay and at Bear R. (600 young). Mockingbirds carrying food June 27 in juniper/ sage flats near Howe, Idaho provided evidence of nesting, not yet documented in Idaho (CHT). In Curlew Valley another was observed June 21. Malheur's first appeared July 24, and Sheridan had one Aug. 12. In the bird's more normal range, Springdale reported it unusually abundant (C & LH) but Durango and Cortez, Colo. had few. Robins had a successful nesting season, it seems, with special comments coming from Colorado Springs, Evergreen, Zion, Nampa, and Cheyenne ("more nestlings survived the neighborhood cats"-AKG). An unusual number of reporters commented on Veeries; observers saw them during June and July at Nampa, Sheridan, Dolores, Colo. (WWB), and on the Yampa, Colo. B.B.S. (LW); and found a nest at Woodland Park, Colo. June 26 with 4 eggs (DL). Although supposedly regular in our Region, observers do not report it frequently. Mountain Bluebirds apparently had a good year in many places: Crater L., Dubois, Idaho Falls (46 in a 3-mile stretch July 12-KAM), and Evergreen; but none were seen from June 18-Aug. 10 at Eldora, and at Yellowstone fewer appeared, although they had good nesting success. Cedar Waxwings-irregular and unusual-were seen at Nampa June 1; Jackson, Wyo. (MH); Steamboat Springs, Colo. June 14 (FRL); and fledglings fed on honeysuckle berries in Durango after leaving the nest.

VIREOS, WARBLERS — Both Gray and Solitary Vireos occur in w. Colorado, often in the same piñon/ juniper habitat.

— S.A.—

An eastern observer points out that because the Rocky Mt. form of the Solitary (V. s. plumbeus) differs markedly from the eastern subspecies, having a gray head like the Gray Vireo, it may confuse eastern birdwatchers and be misidentified as the Gray Vireo (FRL).

Two possible nesting sites for Orange-crowned Warblers indicate that its nest will shortly be found in Colorado: they exhibited a pair of "very protective" adults at McCoy and a territorial  $\mathcal{J}$  at Avon (RLB). A Nashville Warbler, never found nesting in Colorado, was singing at the same place at Yampa, Colo. June 17 and July 15 (LW). Ovenbirds stayed all summer at Rye, Colo. (DAG) and occurred in both June and July at Sheridan. Observers "most surprisingly" saw no Yellow-breasted Chats at Springdale during the summer. Observers at Pueblo speculated as to whether the dry conditions caused a few Wilson's Warblers to remain on the river bottom instead of on their timberline nesting grounds. At Gunnison a pair of Am. Redstarts acted, during June and July, as if they were nesting, and another d was singing.

BLACKBIRDS - At Malheur researchers colorbanded 49 Bobolinks; the population there was estimated at over 300 individuals, including 144 38. A Yellowheaded Blackbird strayed to Arches Nat'l Monument, Utah, July 3 (SWS)-a new record for that desert beauty spot. Last year we reported the spread of Scott's Orioles north to c. Utah; this year we report the first nesting record for Idaho! At Curlew Valley a nest with 4 young was found July 4 in the juniper/sage flats; the nest failed, since at the end of July it held only 2 dead voung. Bullock's Orioles also nest in the same habitat, but the two species apparently do not interact (LP, CHT). Observers at both Springdale and Durango noted abundance of Bullock's Orioles; at Durango they have caused comment by drinking from hummingbird feeders. Male Boat-tailed Grackles stayed single all sammer in Durango (Am. Birds 26:790) and during June in Gunnison, the third successive summer there. Com. Grackles continue their spread westward: they were seen at Sheridan and Dubois all summer; in Deer Creek Canyon near Denver June 9; and 2-3 pair fed fledged young at Gunnison July 25. A small flock of Brownheaded Cowbirds at Arches Nat'l Monument completed the pair of blackbird records there on July 3 (SWS). They were noted as common this summer at Black Canyon Nat'l Monument, Colo. (JCD) and 3 juveniles accepted seeds from White-crowned Sparrows at Dubois.

FRINGILLIDS - Rose-breasted Grosbeaks become more frequent in the West: 38 were noted singing and territorial both at Gunnison and McCoy this summer. Indigo Buntings also are moving west: they are now regular at Sheridan and Pueblo; 33 spent June and July at Dolores and Pagosa Springs, Colo. (RSv). Evening Grosbeaks returned to the Region in force. Nests and young were noted all over Colorado; they began flocking, with 100 seen at LaVeta Aug. 10. At Nampa, observers counted 75 July 20, and they were abundant at Crater L. at lower elevations. One Black Rosy Finch flocked with 6 Brown-capped Rosy Finches in s. Wyoming's Snowy Range July 28 (DSt). Pine Siskin constituted the most abundant bird at Crater L., where flocks of 10-30 swirled about, and counts of 200-300 in a 4-hour period were common; this abundance spilled into conifer habitats all over s.e. Oregon (HN) and s.w. Idaho (150 July 20-HES). Some Colorado observers also noted it as common. Conifer habitats throughout the Region supported thriving numbers of Red Crossbills. Large flocks have spread all over the Front Range south to the Pikes Peak and Pueblo areas; west to Summit Co., and north to Sheridan. They are nesting at Mammoth L., Mono Co., and abundant in s.e Oregon-in the same area as the siskins-Malheur counted 139 June 29. Harry Nehls reports a curious observation: on June 13 he found several dead young crossbills and Cassin's Finches showing no cause of death except that one finch was singed, and 11 were found about the remains of campfires. "As this was on Tuesday perhaps the weekend crowd built the fires and the birds came in Sunday night or Monday and got into hot coals. Several birds came into the cold charcoal while we were there."

Scattered Lark Buntings inhabited the Curlew Valley in June and July, and one had already appeared at an Estes Park feeder in early July (MP), early with its customary post-breeding vertical migration. In the Alvord Basin B.B.S., Lark Sparrows increased noticeably, particularly in the farming areas. A nest with 3 eggs July 11 brought confirmation of the long-suspected breeding of the Black-throated Sparrow in Oregon; the nest was near Malheur (TH). It was also seen at Malheur June 26 and Alvord L. June 24, the latter a young bird. At Honey L. sparrows reversed their expected abundance on a B.B.S., with the supposedly scarce Black-throated (18 counted) more numerous than Brewer's (13), Lark (11), and Sage (6). The Sage Sparrow count on the Alvord Basin B.B.S. dropped to 50 per cent of the 1969 numbers; its numbers may have suffered from the hot, dry weather, or it may have accelerated its nesting dates because of the hot dry weather and the early spring migration. Sparrows at Vernon, Utah, did accelerate their nesting dates 2-3 weeks, and consistently had only 3 eggs instead of the normal 4 (MLK). Finally the 11 sightings of Song Sparrows along the Wind River at Dubois was termed disturbingly low.

ABBREVIATIONS—B.B.S.: Breeding Bird Survey; R.M.N.P.: Rocky Mountain Nat'l Park.

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