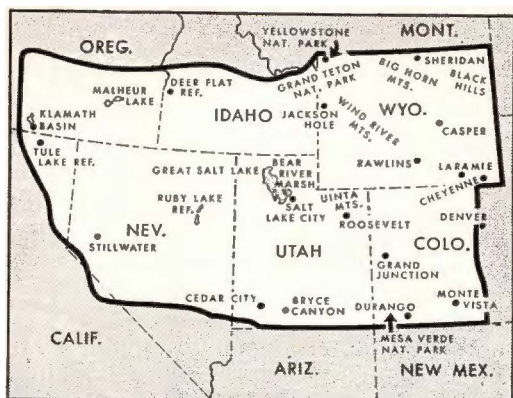


GREAT BASIN, CENTRAL ROCKY MOUNTAIN
REGION.—All seasons are unusual, but I
suppose this past winter was way out of line. It
started by



being very mild with late staying birds which gave record high Christmas counts in many areas. January looked normal, but February came in with more snow, blow and cold. In March, the worst winter month, it snowed so much as to break records. Ski resorts closed because of too much snow. It was building up to something special when the season ended. The climax of this continued story will be in the next installment, labeled "spring." A brief summary of the season should read: "snowed and frozen out." This description only applies to the northern part of this Region.

Southern Utah and southern Colorado were as dry or drier than usual. At Zion Park, Utah, it was the driest season on record until mid-March (DLC). This means no precipitation. There is some evidence that northern birds were pushed south into the snow-free areas. (See Waxwings).

Ibis—A White-faced Ibis was seen at the Malheur Refuge, eastern Oregon, on Jan. 3—the first winter record there (EK).

Swans—Trumpeter Swans wintered well at Ruby Lakes, eastern Nevada (DEL). The total count was 21—a new high. Winter still gripped this Refuge at the end of the season and the marsh was just beginning to thaw a month late. There is plenty of snow in the mountains. Malheur had 35 Trumpeters—another new high. The snowpack in the mountains there is sufficient for at least a normal run-off, breaking a 5-year drought, if the snow melts fast enough and doesn't all evaporate (EK). Jackson Hole, northwestern Wyoming, had 38 Trumpeters on Flat Creek beside the highway in the National Elk Refuge (FSD).

Ducks and Geese—Malheur had its spring high in ducks on March 18, with 154,000; 117,750 were Pintails. This is a better flight than last year's total of 101,000. Malheur's spring is much retarded. The peak of the Snow Geese came on April 2 at 105,000, instead of on March 7, as last year, with 129,000 (EK).

The Klamath Basin reports excellent run-off prospects for the coming season. Peak numbers of ducks: Pintail, 250,000, March 1 (almost twice the number of last year). Other ducks in much smaller numbers: Am. Widgeon with 32,960 on Dec. 29. The first week of December attained the peak of the

ducks with 442,000—an improvement over last year's 408,000. Spring concentrations were small by the end of this season. There were 400 Ross' Geese present in December (EJO'N).

Deer Flat Refuge, western Idaho, in the Snake River Valley, had a peak of 606,000 ducks (700,000 last year) just before the freeze-up, Dec. 21. Of these 520,000 (86%) were Mallards and 75,000 (12%) were Pintails with minor numbers of other ducks. One of the minor species was 50 Hooded Mergansers. After December they had a cold, moist, hard winter—the ice broke up on Lake Lovell (major portion of the Refuge) in March. On March 20 there were only 85,500 ducks present (WCR).

Bear River Marshes, upper end of Great Salt Lake, normally breaks up in mid-February, but this year it was still frozen by the end of this period. On March 31 there were 145,000 ducks present, compared with a peak of 276,000 on March 22 a year ago. The ducks were up the Bear River from the Refuge in warm spring along the foothills (GMN).

At Minidoka Refuge, Snake River, Idaho, the Refuge froze, Dec. 12, and was still frozen on April 1. This is not an all-time record, but is the longest freeze in recent years. The waterfowl managed well by flying south, but the refuge personnel were hard hit by "cabin fever" before spring came. At the start of December there were 106,000 ducks on the refuge: predominantly Mallard, Canvasback and Pintail (SRW). Monte Vista Refuge in the high, dry San Luis Valley, Colorado, is still growing and the ducks stayed through the winter. By far the most common are the Mallards. This year there were up to 33,760, Dec. 23 (CRB).

It is interesting to note that among the scattering of ducks wintering on the National Elk Refuge, Jackson Hole—in a region of deep snow and low temperatures—in water kept open by warm springs, is the Ring-neck. There were 25 this winter (FSD). The Ring-neck is believed to be the most common breeding duck in the adjacent Grand Teton Park. Rare ducks reported were 4 Wood Ducks at Springdale, southern Utah, from Feb. 6 (DLC). There were 10 Wood Ducks at Flat Refuge, March 28 (WCR). A male European Widgeon was banded at Malheur, March 8 (EK).

Hawks—A Harlan's Hawk was observed at Honey Lake, Calif., in the Great Basin (GMcC). This bird is only casual in the area. About 250 Rough-legs and 150 Red-tails were present at Malheur in December (EK). Presumably these high figures are due to the explosion of mice in that area.

Eagles—We have a scattering of eagle reports but no great trend is shown. All the great wildlife refuges of this area have them. The most notable concentration was at the Klamath Basin with 67 Bald and 27 Golden Eagles in January against last year's 48 and 3, respectively (EJO'N). The eagle flyway in central Wyoming was very active into January, owing to the unseasonably warm fall. There was little movement down it until mid-December. This gives a false impression of the Christmas count number of 45 Golden Eagles, which cannot be equated with previous years (OKS). There was a wintering

population of 117 Bald Eagles along the Snake River, above Roberts, Idaho, in January (AB). There were more eagles of both species at Parowan in southern Utah this year as compared with last (SM).

Cranes—there were 1100 Sandhill Cranes at the Monte Vista Refuge, Colo., from March 15 (CRB). This is the first large concentration, not only in that area, but in this entire Region.

Gulls—There was a Glaucous Gull at Farmington Bay on Great Salt Lake, near Salt Lake City, March 8 (GK). There are several recent records for this casual bird in Utah.

Owls—At Malheur Refuge nesting sites are built for Great Horned Owls. Four out of 7 artificial sites were occupied (EK). Eighteen Short-eared Owls at Farmington Bay on March 18 was a good count. A Pygmy Owl was netted at Zion Park, Jan. 19 (DLC); this bird is rarely seen there.

Hummingbirds—The report of a White-eared Hummingbird on Grand Mesa, western slope of Colorado, in June 1963 was held over from a previous report (JW). This bird had not been noted in Colorado previously.

Waxwings—This year saw a heavy flight of Bohemian Waxwings which penetrated into southern Utah and Colorado. The highest number reported was 2000 at Salt Lake City, Jan. 12 (RF). About 350 were seen at Fort Bidwell, Calif., Dec. 21 (HMcC). They were at Estes Park, Colorado Rockies, in flocks all winter (AC). They were common as far south as Bryce Canyon (RW/R) and Zion Park (DLC). In Colorado Bohemians were present in large numbers with flocks up to 500 as far southwest as Durango (DR) and up to 100 high in the central Rockies at Buena Vista (DR).

Warblers—An oddity of the Malheur Christmas count was a Northern Waterthrush on Dec. 21 (JCS, PK).

Sparrows—Another immature Harris' Sparrow was seen at Honey Lake, Calif., on Dec. 22 (GMcC). A White-throated Sparrow at Tule Lake in the Klamath Basin on Dec. 20 (GMcC) probably represents an unusually late fall migrant.

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