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Birds of the Rocky Mountains -- Paul A. Johnsgard

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***Birds of the Rocky Mountains*—Species Accounts, pages
392–416: Icterids, Finches, & House Sparrows**

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Bobolink (*Dolichonyx oryzivorus*)

Identification: Breeding males have an almost entirely black plumage except for white wing patches, a white rump, and a large patch of yellow on the nape and hindneck. Females closely resemble various female sparrows, but are somewhat larger and have buffy crown and "eyebrow" stripes, as well as slightly spotted flanks and a distinctly striped buffy and brown back. The male's song is a loud *bob-o-link*.

Status: A summer resident in grasslands mainly east of the mountains, but local in western Montana and northwestern Colorado. A rare migrant in most of the montane parks, but a reported breeder at Yellowstone N.P. and a possible rare breeder elsewhere.

Habitats and Ecology: Breeding occurs in tall-grass prairies, ungrazed or lightly grazed mid-grass prairies, wet meadows, hayfields, retired croplands, and similar habitats. Scattered bushes or other singing posts in the territory add to its attractiveness.

Seasonality: Colorado records are from May 4 to September 9. Wyoming records extend from May 13 to August 27, with migration peaks in May and September. In Montana the birds are usually present from mid-May to September, while in Alberta they often do not arrive on the breeding grounds until early June. Colorado nest records are from June 19 to July 1, while in Montana and Alberta active nest records extend from June 14 to the latter part of July.

Comments: Bobolinks have extremely long migratory routes, wintering in central South America south to northern Argentina.

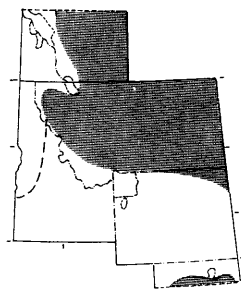
Suggested Reading: Martin, 1974; Wittenberger, 1978.

LATILONG STATUS

s	S	M	?
	S	s	s
V	S	S	s

s	S	s	s
M	S		
S	s	M	s

		M	M
M	s	M	M
	S	s	S



Red-winged Blackbird (*Agelaius phoeniceus*)

Identification: Males of this abundant species are entirely black except for their yellow-lined red epaulets, which are evident on standing as well as flying birds. Immature males are less colorful, and are somewhat brown and streaked, but with some reddish color on the upper wing surface. Females are heavily streaked with brown and resemble large sparrows, but have sharply pointed tapering beaks. The male's song is a liquid *kong-ka-ree*, uttered with the epaulets raised and the wings partially spread.

LATILONG STATUS

S	S	S	s
s	R	S	S
S	R	R	S

R	S	S	R
S	S	S	S
R	R	S	S

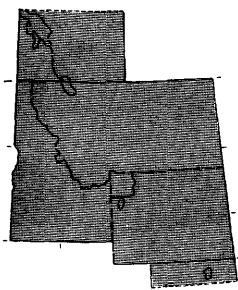
S	S	S	S
s	S	S	S
R	R	R	R

Status: A seasonal or permanent resident in suitable habitats throughout the region, including both lowlands and montane areas, and a relatively common breeder in all the montane parks.

Habitats and Ecology: Typical breeding habitats are wetlands ranging from deep marshes or the emergent vegetation zones of lakes and reservoirs through variably drier habitats including wet meadows, ditches, brushy patches in prairies, hayfields, and weedy croplands or roadsides. Wetlands with bulrushes or cattails are especially favored for nesting, but sometimes shrubs or other woody vegetation are used for nest sites. Outside the breeding season the birds often stray far from water, and seek grainfields, city parks, pasturelands, and other habitats offering food sources.

Seasonality: Year-round residency is typical, at least locally, in Colorado and parts of Wyoming, although large seasonal changes in abundance are evident. In Montana the birds are usually present from February through November, and in southern Alberta the birds begin to arrive in late March or early April. They usually remain until late October or early November. Wyoming egg records are from April 20 to June 9, while in Montana nest records extend from mid-May to late June. In southern Alberta eggs have been reported from May 28 to July 18.

Suggested Reading: Peek, 1971; Orians, 1961; Holm, 1973; Payne, 1969.



Western Meadowlark (*Sturnella neglecta*)

Identification: Meadowlarks are grassland songbirds with bright yellow underparts except for a conspicuous black V on the breast region. The upperparts are spotted and striped with brown and buff, and the outer tail feathers are mostly white (apparent only during flight). Eastern and western meadowlarks are almost impossible to separate visually, but the male western meadowlark has a complex, fluty song of many syllables. Eastern meadowlarks are unreported for the region.

Status: A seasonal or permanent resident almost throughout the region, becoming rarer northwardly, and not known to nest in the higher mountain areas of Alberta, although common on the adjacent plains and foothills.

Habitats and Ecology: During the breeding season this species occupies mixed-grass to tall-grass prairies, wet meadows, hayfields, the weedy borders of croplands, retired croplands, and to some extent short-grass prairies and sage prairies as well as mountain meadows as high as about 7,000 feet in southern parts of the region.

Seasonality: In Colorado this species is a local year-round resident. In Wyoming there is also some year-round residency, but major migrations occur in March and October. In Montana the birds are usually present from February to November, with peaks in early April and September. In Alberta they usually arrive in March and are mostly gone by the end of October. Colorado nest records extend from late May to early July. In Wyoming there are egg records from May 10 to June 26, and in Montana and Alberta there are egg records from mid-May to June 20.

Comments: Western meadowlarks are birds of the Great Plains, overlapping only slightly with the eastern meadowlark, which is adapted to moister grasslands of eastern North America.

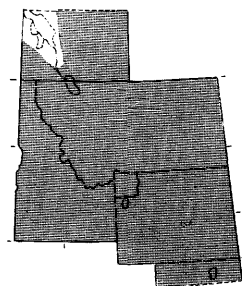
Suggested Reading: Lanyon, 1956, 1957; Falls & Krebs, 1975; Rowher, 1971.

LATILONG STATUS

R	S	s	s
s	R	S	S
R	R	S	S

R	S	S	R
S	S	S	S
S	s	s	S

S	S	S	S
S	S	S	S
R	R	S	R



Yellow-headed Blackbird (*Xanthocephalus xanthocephalus*)

Identification: Males of this large blackbird have bright yellow on the head, neck, and upper breast, and white wing-patches, but otherwise are entirely black. Females are less obviously striped than are female red-winged blackbirds, and have a yellowish throat and breast. The "song" of males is a grating croak resembling the sound made by a rusty hinge.

LATILONG STATUS

S	S	s	s
	S	s	S
S	S	S	s

S	S	S	S
S	S	S	S
S	S	s	S

S	s	S	S
M	S	S	S
S	S	S	S

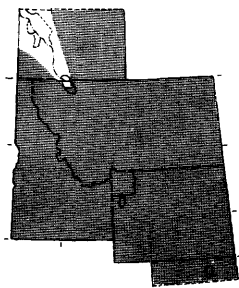
Status: A summer resident in wetland habitats throughout almost the entire region; rarer in montane areas and not known to breed in most of the Canadian montane parks, although common on the nearby prairie marshes. Breeds to about 8,000 feet in mountains at the southern end of the region.

Habitats and Ecology: Restricted during the breeding seasons to relatively permanent marshes, the marsh zones of lakes, and the shallows of river impoundments where there are good stands of cattails, bulrushes, or phragmites. Although sometimes breeding in the same areas as red-winged blackbirds, yellow-headed occupy the deeper areas adjacent to open water.

Seasonality: Colorado records extend largely from March 14 to October 3, with rare overwintering. Wyoming records are from April 14 to October, rarely to December. In Montana the birds are usually present from late April to late September or early October, and in Alberta they are typically present from early May to September. Colorado egg records are from May 18 to June 15, and in Wyoming there are egg records from May 20 to early July. Montana and Alberta egg records are from late May to June 19, with nestlings reported to late July.

Comments: This species is more dependent upon aquatic insects than is the red-winged blackbird, and thus is much more limited to relatively permanent water areas than is that species.

Suggested Reading: Willson, 1964; Orians & Christman, 1963, 1968.



Rusty Blackbird (*Euphagus carolinus*)

Identification: Male rusty blackbirds are very similar to Brewer's blackbirds, but have less iridescent plumage that is somewhat greenish rather than purplish. Females are slightly more brownish than males, and have pale yellowish eyes. During fall the male has a rusty brown plumage with yellowish eyes, and females are a brighter rust. More often found near water than the Brewer's blackbird.

Status: A local summer resident in woodland wetlands near the northern limits of the region, breeding south to Jasper N.P.; rare in summer and breeding unproven for Banff N.P. Otherwise an irregular to uncommon migrant over much of the region, mainly east of the mountains.

Habitats and Ecology: During the breeding season this species is largely limited to wooded wetlands including alder-willow bogs, the brushy borders of lakes and slow-moving streams, receding muskegs, forest edges, and the borders of beaver ponds. Nests are usually placed over water, either in bushes or low conifers. On migration and during winter they use a much bigger variety of habitats, but typically roost in marshy or swampy areas.

Seasonality: In Colorado these are overwintering migrants, with records from August 29 to May 19. In Wyoming and Montana they are spring and fall migrants, with most records for fall. Alberta records are from April 3 to December 3, but they typically arrive in mid-April and migrate south in October and November. Alberta egg records are from May 15 to June 30, with the majority between May 21 and June 6.

Comments: The close similarity of this species and the Brewer's blackbird no doubt helps to account for the relatively few available migration records, especially in spring, for the rusty blackbird in this region.

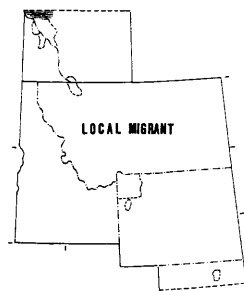
Suggested Reading: Kennard, 1920; Bent, 1958.

LATILONG STATUS

M	M	M	
	M	?	
V	M	M	

M			M
	M		

		M	
		M	
			W



Brewer's Blackbird (*Euphagus cyanocephalus*)

Identification: Males of this blackbird are entirely a glossy black, with a purplish head sheen and more greenish on the body, and with a yellow eye. Females are a uniformly dark brown, with dark brown eyes. The male rusty blackbird is very similar in spring, but is less iridescent, with no greenish tinges. Females of the two species are also similar in plumage, but the difference in eye color helps to separate them.

LATILONG STATUS

S	S	s	s
s	S	s	S
S	S	S	S

S	S	S	S
s	S	S	S
S	S	S	S

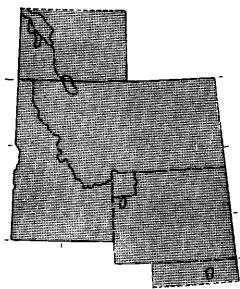
S	s	S	S
s	S	S	S
S	S	S	R

Status: A summer resident virtually throughout the entire region, breeding in most habitats from plains to mountain meadows, and a fairly common breeder in nearly all the montane parks.

Habitats and Ecology: Low-stature grasslands are the primary breeding habitats of this species, including mowed or burned areas, farmsteads and residential areas, the edges of marshes, especially where scattered shrubs are present, aspen groves, the brushy edges of prairie creeks, and similar locations. Nesting occurs on the ground or in low shrubs, and shrubs or fenceposts also serve as singing posts where they are available. Outside the breeding season a wider array of open habitats are used, especially grainfields, orchards, berry farms, and similar agricultural lands.

Seasonality: Locally resident as far north as southern Colorado, and in Wyoming the records are mainly from early March to early December, with migration peaks in May and October. In Montana the birds are usually present from late April to October, and in Alberta they normally arrive in late April and leave by October, with a few laggards remaining until November. Colorado egg records are from May 16 to June 17, and in Montana records of active nests are from May 16 to June 6. Alberta egg records are from May 20 to July 2, with a peak in late May and early June.

Suggested Reading: Orians & Horn, 1969; Horn, 1968, 1970; Williams, 1952.



Common Grackle (*Quiscalus quiscula*)

Identification: This is a large, long-tailed blackbird that has pale yellow eyes in both sexes, a highly iridescent plumage with bronzy sheen on the back, a long, tapering beak, and a tail that is often bent upwards in a V (males) or U (females) while in flight. The male has a loud, wheezy call in spring. Juveniles are uniformly brownish, and have dark eyes.

Status: A summer resident in suitable plains or foothills habitats over most of the region east of Idaho, but generally rare in the mountains, and usually rare or absent from the montane parks. There is one Idaho breeding record.

Habitats and Ecology: Breeding habitats consist of woodland edges, areas partially planted to trees such as residential areas, farmsteads, shelterbelts, coniferous or deciduous woodlands of an open nature, woody shorelines around lakes, and riparian woodlands. Junipers, spruces, and other small and dense conifers are preferred for nesting, although hardwoods, shrubs, buildings, birdhouses, and even cattails are sometimes also used.

Seasonality: A local year-round resident as far north as Colorado, and in Wyoming the records extend from April 11 to December 18, with migration peaks in April and October. In Montana the birds are usually present from mid-April to late October, and in Alberta from the latter part of April until October. Active nest records from Colorado are from April to mid-June, and in Montana and Wyoming eggs have been found from May 15 to June 11. Alberta egg records are from May 12 to June 2.

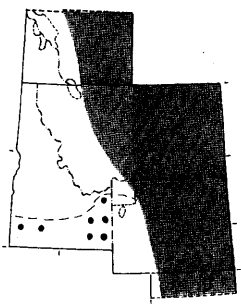
Suggested Reading: Maxwell & Putnam, 1972; Maxwell, 1965, 1970; Ficken, 1963.

LATILONG STATUS

	M	s	s
	s	?	s
V	M		S

S	S	S	S
	V	S	S
	M	S	S

s	M	S	s
	s	S	M
S	s	S	S



Brown-headed Cowbird (*Molothrus ater*)

Identification: Unlike the other "blackbirds," males of this species have a short, strongly tapering beak, and a sharp contrast between the iridescent body and the non-glossy and brownish head and neck. Females are a very uniformly grayish brown without any distinctive field-marks, but they are stouter than the other blackbird females and have a much shorter and blunter beak. The male's song is squeaky and gurgling.

LATILONG STATUS

S	S	S	s
s	S	S	S
S	S	S	S

S	S	S	S
s	S	M	S
	S	S	S

s	s	S	s
s	S	S	S
S	S	S	S

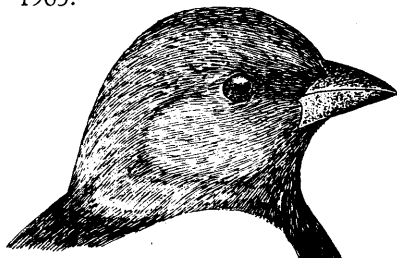
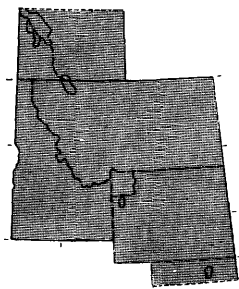
Status: A summer resident throughout the region in most habitats; variably common in the montane parks and probably breeding in all.

Habitats and Ecology: Breeding occurs in a variety of woodland edge habitats, including brushy thickets, forest clearings, brushy creek bottoms in prairies, aspen groves, sagebrush, desert scrub, agricultural lands, and open coniferous forests at lower altitudes (up to about 7,000 feet in southern parts of the region).

Seasonality: Most Colorado records are from late March to December, with a few for January and February. Wyoming records are from February 6 to late fall, with a few winter records. In Montana and southern Alberta the birds are usually present from late April or early May to late August.

Comments: This species is a social parasite, laying its eggs in the nests of such common species as meadowlarks, red-winged blackbirds, American robins, and others.

Suggested Reading: Friedmann, 1963; Payne, 1965, 1973; Norman & Robertson, 1975; Mayfield, 1965.



Orchard Oriole (*Icterus spurius*)

Identification: Adult males have black heads and upperparts including the breast and upper back, chestnut-brown underparts and rump, and blackish wings and tail. They are smaller and much duller than northern orioles, and larger and less colorful than redstarts, which also have white underparts and orange patches on the tail. Females are mostly lime-green to yellowish, with whitish wing-bars, and first-year males are similar to females but have black chins and throats. The male's song is a long and complex melodious warbling, often ending in a descending slurred note.

Status: A local summer resident in eastern Montana and extreme eastern Wyoming, and a migrant farther south, with vagrants occasionally reaching the mountains.

Habitats and Ecology: Associated with lightly wooded river bottoms, scattered trees in open country, shelterbelts, farmsteads, residential areas, and orchards during the breeding season, and extending into sagebrush and juniper woodlands during the non-breeding season. Nests are built in small to moderately large trees, from 5 to 70 feet above ground.

Seasonality: Records in Colorado and Wyoming are from May 11 to late September. Too few records for Montana exist to estimate migration periods, but in North Dakota the birds are present from late May to early September. Colorado nest records are from June 5 to July 14, and North Dakota egg records are from May 21 to July 3.

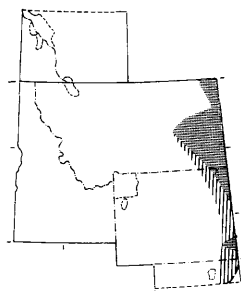
Comments: Nests of this species are much smaller and rounder than those of the northern oriole, and are less easily found. However, kingbirds and orioles often share the same nesting trees, with the orioles presumably gaining protection from the highly territorial defensive behavior of the kingbirds.

Suggested Reading: Dennis, 1948; Bent, 1958.

LATILONG STATUS

			?
	M	M	

		M	M
V			M



Northern Oriole (*Icterus galbula*)

Identification: Adult males are a brilliant golden to orange-red on the underparts, outer tail feathers, and white wing-patches, and with black upperpart coloration and a black throat. The race that breeds over most of the region (Bullock's oriole) has the orange-yellow color extending forward to the cheeks and has more white on the wings, while the more easterly race (Baltimore oriole) has a completely black head and less white but more yellow on the upper wing surface. Females and first-year males are yellowish to grayish on the underparts, with a brighter yellowish breast than occurs on the female orchard oriole, and immature males have varying amounts of black on the throat.

LATILONG STATUS

M	S	s	
s	S	s	s
S	S	S	S

S	S	S	S
M	S	M	S
s	S	s	S

S	M	S	S
M	s	s	S
S	S	s	S

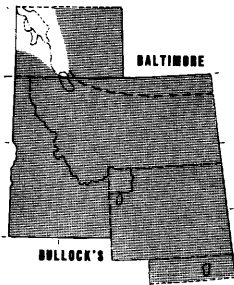
Status: A local summer resident in wooded plains and foothills areas throughout most of the region, but becoming rare in the mountains, and absent from most of the northern montane parks. Breeds up to about 7,000 feet at the southern portions of the region.

Habitats and Ecology: During the breeding season males of the Bullock's race especially favor river bottom forests of willows and cottonwoods, but also occur in city parks, and plains or foothill slopes and valleys with aspen, poplars, birches, and similar vegetation. Later on in the summer the birds are attracted to trees and bushes that provide berries.

Seasonality: Colorado records extend from March 15 to November 15. Wyoming records are from April 30 to September 6, and those from Montana are from May 8 to September 8. Active nests in Colorado have been seen from June 2 to 27, and in Montana and Wyoming from May 29 to early July.

Comments: Originally considered two species, the Baltimore and Bullock's orioles are known to hybridize over a rather wide zone in the Great Plains.

Suggested Reading: Bent, 1958; Sibley & Short, 1964.



Rosy Finch (*Leucosticte arctoa*)

Identification: These are small alpine finches with rose-tinted rumps, underparts, and wing coverts. In northern areas the birds ("gray-crowned rosy finches") have gray crowns and reddish brown back and breast colors. From central Idaho and west-central Montana south through central Wyoming the nape color is still gray, but the back and breast are dusky brown ("black rosy finch"). Finally, in Colorado and adjacent southeastern Wyoming the crown and nape are dark brownish, and the breast and back are grayish brown, becoming reddish on the belly ("brown-capped rosy finch"). Hybrids occur in some areas (Seven Devils area of western Idaho and Bitterroot Mountains of eastern Idaho), and during winter the northern forms occur south of their breeding ranges.

Status: All three forms are limited to alpine areas of high mountains in the region, probably occurring on all such montane areas, including all the montane parks.

Habitats and Ecology: During the breeding season these birds inhabit cirques, talus slopes, alpine meadows with nearby cliffs, and adjacent snow and glacial surfaces (where foraging for frozen insects occurs). Nesting is done in cliff crevices or among talus rocks. During fall and winter the birds move to lower elevations including mountain meadows, grasslands, sagebrush areas, and agricultural lands.

Seasonality: Collectively these birds are resident throughout the region, although on the foothills and plains areas they are present only as winter visitors. Colorado egg records are from June 28 to July 27, in Wyoming active nest records extend from July 1 to August 11, and in Montana and southern Alberta nestlings have been observed in July and early August.

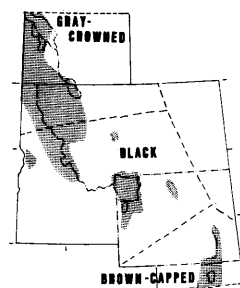
Suggested Reading: Hendricks, 1978; Shreeve, 1980; Twining, 1940; Johnson, 1965; French, 1959.

LATILONG STATUS

S	R	R	—
s	M	S	M
R	S	S	M

r	S	S	M
r	R	R	—
M	R	R	M

W		W	
W	W	R	W
W	R	R	R



Pine Grosbeak (*Pinicola enucleator*)

Identification: This is the largest of the reddish finch group, or about the size of an American robin, and has the combination of a blunt, uncrossed beak and blackish wings with double white wing-bars. Males are reddish on the head, back, and breast, while females and young males are mostly grayish olive except for the white wing-bars and blackish wings. The male's song is a musical warbling.

LATILONG STATUS

r	R	r	M
M	r	r	M
R	r	r	M

r	R	r	M
s	R	R	
s	r	r	

r		M	
		R	R
W	W	S	R

Status: A permanent resident in coniferous forests throughout the region, including all of the montane parks, and probably breeding in all of them.

Habitats and Ecology: Breeding occurs in the upper levels of the coniferous forest, primarily the alpine fir, Engelmann spruce zone. Nesting usually occurs in such conifers, especially in open or scattered woods near meadows or streams. Outside the breeding season the birds descend to lower conifer zones, especially the pinyon-juniper zone, where the birds often feed on pinyon nuts. Some berries, grains, and other food sources are also used, but conifer seeds are primarily eaten.

Seasonality: A permanent resident throughout the region, although altitudinal movements cause the birds to be migrants or winter visitors at lower altitudes. Active nests in Colorado have been observed from June 23 to August 25. In Wyoming eggs have been reported in late June, and in Montana dependent young have been observed in early September.

Comments: The young of this species are fed regurgitated materials that are primarily of vegetable matter, including various berries and seeds, as well as some insect materials.

Suggested Reading: French, 1954; Bent, 1968.



Purple Finch (*Carpodacus purpureus*)

Identification: Males of this small wine-red colored finch are rather uniformly red over the entire head and upper breast, including the hind-neck. The upper back is also distinctly tinted with reddish. Females resemble heavily streaked brown and white sparrows, but have notched tails and a conspicuous whitish eyebrow stripe. The male's song is a rich, bubbling warble that may last for several seconds.

Status: A local summer resident at the northern edge of the region, breeding south uncommonly to Jasper N.P. and occasionally to Banff N.P. Farther south it is a migrant and wintering visitor in Montana, an occasional winter visitor in Wyoming, and an accidental winter visitor in Colorado.

Habitats and Ecology: Breeding in this species occurs in natural conifer forests, mixed forests, and conifer plantings, especially where moist and shaded habitats occur. Preference seems to be for mixed forests, with the birds nesting in conifers but feeding in deciduous trees. Buds and blossoms of a variety of broad-leaved trees are favored in spring, while in summer they consume a variety of berries, fruit, and insects. During the winter period they eat a variety of weed and grass seeds, and thus have a broad winter habitat distribution.

Seasonality: In Alberta these birds are present from about the last week of April until early October. Alberta egg records are from June 2 to 12, and in British Columbia there are egg records from May 1 to July 25. Fledged young have been observed at Jasper N.P. by June 28.

Comments: In spite of their transcontinental Canadian breeding distribution, wintering in the Rocky Mountain area is strangely almost entirely lacking except apparently in Montana; even there it has been reported from only 11 latilongs.

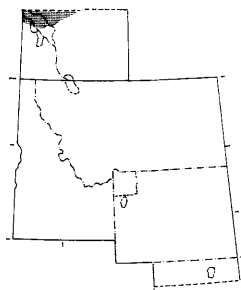
Suggested Reading: Salt, 1952; Bent, 1968.

LATILONG STATUS

	M		
	M		
V		M	

M	M		W
M		W	
	?		

			W
			W



Cassin's Finch (*Carpodacus cassinii*)

Identification: This small finch resembles the purple finch and house finch, but males have a much more brownish and less reddish upper back and hindneck than the purple finch, and a whitish, unstreaked belly and flanks rather than the heavily streaked underparts of the Cassin's finch. Females very closely resemble females of the purple finch, but are more strongly streaked on the underparts and have a more streaked and obscured facial pattern, without nearly white striping present above the eye or in the mustache area. The male's call-note is a two-noted *kee-up*, unlike the purple finch's *tick* note.

LATILONG STATUS

S	S	s	
s	r	r	s
R	r	R	r

R	s	s	r
r	R	R	M
S	R	R	R

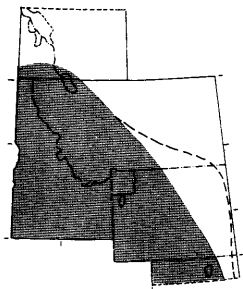
r	r	r	r
R	r	r	r
R	r	R	R

Status: A local summer or permanent resident in coniferous forests of the region north to extreme southern British Columbia and adjacent Alberta (breeding at Watertown Lakes N.P. and reported rarely north to Jasper, but not known to breed there).

Habitats and Ecology: Breeding typically occurs in open, rather dry coniferous forests, including ponderosa pine forests, with the nests placed at considerable heights in large conifers. Generally it occurs at rather higher altitudes than do either the house finch or the purple finch, sometimes almost to timberline. Throughout the year it is primarily vegetarian, feeding on buds, berries, and seeds, especially those of conifers.

Seasonality: In Colorado and Wyoming the birds are year-round residents, with substantial movements up and down the mountains with the seasons. In Montana the birds are more clearly migratory, with some seasonal movements out of northern regions, such as Glacier N.P. Seasonal movements probably also occur in Canada, but remain undocumented. Colorado egg records are from June 11 to July 30, and in Wyoming and Montana nest-building or incubation activities have been reported from May 20 to July 17.

Suggested Reading: Salt, 1952; Samson, 1976; Jones & Baylor, 1969.



House Finch (*Carpodacus mexicanus*)

Identification: These are small finches (size of house sparrows) in which the males are bright red on the rump, breast, throat, and crown, but with little or no red on the rear cheek area, and with distinctly streaked flanks and underparts. The females are streaked with brownish, lack pale markings on the head, and have only a very slightly notched tail. The male's song is a scrambled warbling, and the calls include a hoarse *weet* note and a sweeter, often repeated *cheep*.

Status: A local summer resident from northern Idaho to southeastern Wyoming, mainly at lower altitudes, including plains and foothills up to 9,000 feet at the southern end of this region. Generally rare or absent from the montane parks, but an uncommon nester in Rocky Mountain N.P.

Habitats and Ecology: Now generally associated with human habitations over most of its range, nesting on buildings in such areas. Otherwise it nests in open woods, river-bottom woodlands, scrubby desert or semi-desert vegetation such as sagebrush, and tree plantings. Deciduous underbrush, preferably close to water, is favored over dense coniferous woods, and sources of seeds, berries, or fruits are also needed throughout the year.

Seasonality: A year-round resident throughout the region, becoming more uncommon and local northwardly and at higher altitudes. Colorado egg records are from April 24 to July 22, with a peak during the second half of May. Egg records in Wyoming are from April 27 onward, with nestlings observed to August 16. In Idaho eggs have been seen as early as April 28.

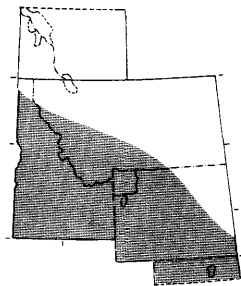
Suggested Reading: Thompson, 1960; Van Riper, 1976; Evenden, 1957.

LATILONG STATUS

	M	?	
	M		
S	R	R	M

r	M	s	r
	V	R	M
	V	r	R

r	M	r	M
R	R	r	R
R	s	R	R



Red Crossbill (*Loxia curvirostra*)

Identification: Only this and the following species have beaks with crossed tips, and this species lacks the double white wing-bars typical of the white-winged crossbill. Males are variably reddish, depending on age, and females are mostly yellowish green, with a typical finch-like notched tail and a yellowish rump. The call is a repeated *kip* note, often uttered in flight.

LATILONG STATUS

r	R	r	?
r	r	r	s
R	r	R	r

R	s	s	R
s	R	r	
	r	r	r

r	M	r	r
M	r	r	R
r	R	R	R



Status: A local resident in coniferous forest areas throughout the region, including all the montane parks, where it is a probable breeder in all.

Habitats and Ecology: Breeding is associated with coniferous forest habitats, especially those of pines, including ponderosa, lodgepole, and pinyon, but nesting in the region has also been observed in Engelmann spruces and subalpine firs, at elevations from 4,000 feet to as high as 10,000 feet or more. Breeding in the Rocky Mountain region seems associated with the higher levels of coniferous forests, but the pinyon zone is often used by wintering birds.

Seasonality: A year-round resident throughout the region, but altitudinal movements occur, with the birds moving to foothills and plains during winter. Nesting times are irregular and apparently dependent upon seed crop availability; in Colorado nesting has been observed from December to mid-September. In Wyoming nestlings have been noted from February 12 to June, and newly fledged young observed in August. In Montana active nests or newly fledged young have been seen from April 30 to July 27, and in Alberta there are egg records from March 3 to May 3. Probable nesting activities in Idaho have been noted from February 21 (carrying nesting materials) to July (singing males).

Suggested Reading: Griscom, 1937; Snyder, 1954; Nethersole-Thompson, 1953; Bailey et al., 1953.

White-winged Crossbill (*Loxia leucoptera*)

Identification: Like the previous species this one has uniquely crossed mandibles and black wing and tail coloration, but unlike the red crossbill this species has two broad white wing-bars on the upper wing surface. Otherwise, both species are nearly identical in plumage color. The songs and call-notes of the two species are also very similar, the song consisting of an extended series of trills, often given in flight, and the call a series of *wink* notes, often uttered in flight. The call of this species is somewhat less harsh than that of the red crossbill, and is inflected upwardly, rather than downwardly.

Status: A local resident in coniferous forests of the northernmost part of the region (Banff and Jasper N.P., Cypress Hills), has possibly bred in Glacier N.P., locally resident through the mountains of Montana south almost to Yellowstone, but no definite breeding records. There are summer observations for five Wyoming latilongs.

Habitats and Ecology: During the breeding season associated with coniferous forests and mixed forests containing spruces. Generally, spruces and tamaracks seem to be this species' prime food sources, as their beaks are too weak to handle the larger cones of pines. Although nesting occurs most commonly during spring and summer or early fall, like the red crossbill it can apparently occur almost any time a rich seed source becomes available. In spring, catkins of aspens and poplars are sometimes eaten, and large weed seeds may be eaten in fall and winter.

Seasonality: A permanent resident in the region. There are no specific nesting records for the area. Throughout Canada nesting has been reported for every month of the year.

Comments: Like the red crossbill this is a seemingly eruptive species that might occur in a particular area for several years, then disappear and not be seen again in the area for an indefinite period.

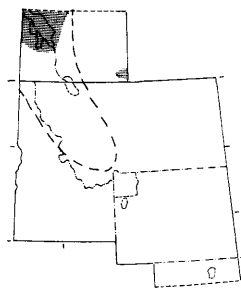
Suggested Reading: Bent, 1968; Newman, 1972.

LATILONG STATUS

r	r	s	?
	M	M	M
V	M	M	M

s	s	?	M
	r	W	
	W	W	

W		W	W
		W	W
		r	W



Common Redpoll (*Carduelis flammeus*)

Identification: This is a small and gregarious finch with a notched tail, a black chin, and a bright red cap. The only similar species of the region is the rare hoary redpoll, which is considerably paler throughout, including a whitish, unstreaked rump. The common redpoll's song is a rapid mixture of whistles, trills, and buzzy notes, and its call-notes are repeated *chit* notes as well as a goldfinch-like *sweeet* note that rises in pitch.

LATILONG STATUS

W	W	W	
W	W	W	M
W	W	W	W

W	W	M	W
M	W	W	
W	W	W	

W		W	
			W
W		W	W



Status: A local wintering migrant almost throughout the region, both in montane areas and in plains or foothills, but probably commoner at lower altitudes in winter. The nearest breeding records are from central Alberta (Edmonton), but regular breeding occurs along the northern edges of the prairie provinces.

Habitats and Ecology: Breeding typically occurs in subarctic forests, typically nesting in dwarf spruces or in thickets of willows and alders. In the Rocky Mountain region the birds are associated with such open habitats as desert scrub, sagebrush, and grasslands. They also visit cities during winter to eat the seed cones of birches, visit bird feeders, and seek out weedy patches.

Seasonality: From central Alberta southward this species is a variably common overwintering migrant. In southern Alberta and Montana they usually arrive in mid-October, and remain until early April. In Wyoming the records extend from October 14 to April 14, but are primarily present from November to March. In Colorado the records extend from October 21 to April 25.

Comments: These are gregarious little finches that move south in winter only as far as their food supplies require, and are highly tolerant of snow, occasionally even spending the night in snow tunnels.

Suggested Reading: Bent, 1968.

Hoary Redpoll (*Carduelis hornemanni*)

Identification: This species closely resembles the common redpoll, but is noticeably paler, with only sparse streaking on the flanks and a pure white rump. Its song is apparently identical to that of the common redpoll, and its call-notes are extremely similar if not identical. Most likely to be seen as lone individuals within a flock of common redpolls.

Status: A rare wintering visitor in the region, with the nearest breeding areas in northeastern Manitoba, along the coast of Hudson Bay. In Alberta the species is generally but not invariably less common than the common redpoll in wintering flocks, but in Montana it has been reported in only about half as many latilongs as has the common redpoll. In Wyoming there are reports from four latilongs (vs. 16 for the common redpoll), and in Colorado it is as yet unreported. It is also unreported from Idaho, but is likely to occur in northern parts of the state.

Seasonality: A wintering visitor throughout the region, with a seasonality that probably coincides with that described for the common redpoll.

Comments: The taxonomic level of distinction of this form from the common redpoll is still in doubt, and some ornithologists consider them as no more than racially distinct.

Suggested Reading: Alsop, 1973; Bent, 1973.

LATILONG STATUS

	M		
	M		?
V	M	M	M
M	?	M	M
	V		
		V	



Pine Siskin (*Spinus pinus*)

Identification: This small finch has a short, notched tail, a rather sharp but short beak, and a body that is mostly streaked with brownish and white, but with yellow markings at the base of the tail and the base of the inner flight feathers. Usually seen in groups, and almost always near conifers. The song is a goldfinch-like warbling, and the calls include a hoarse *tee* and a hoarse *jeeeah* note.

LATILONG STATUS

r	R	R	s
s	r	r	s
R	R	R	R

R	S	s	R
S	R	R	R
S	R	R	R

r	r	R	r
M	R	R	R
S	S	S	R

Status: A local resident in coniferous forests virtually throughout the region, including all the montane parks, where common to abundant, and probably breeding in all.

Habitats and Ecology: Breeding occurs in coniferous or mixed forests, and rarely in deciduous woodlands. Nesting preferentially occurs in conifers of almost any type, but has also been observed in cottonwoods, lilacs, and willows in the Rocky Mountain region. Foods are mainly conifer seeds, but also may include those of alders, birches, or various weeds, and seasonally feed on flower buds and insects.

Seasonality: A permanent resident almost throughout the region, although with considerable seasonal movements and with most birds moving out of Alberta from October to May. Colorado egg records are from April 21 to July 5, while in Wyoming and Montana there are egg records for late June and newly fledged young observed as late as the latter part of August.

Comments: Like many of the true finches, these birds often nest in small, loose colonies, and with the colonies often shifting in location irregularly.

Suggested Reading: Rodgers, 1937; Weaver & West, 1943.



Lesser Goldfinch (*Carduelis psaltria*)

Identification: Males in this part of the species' range have a plumage similar to that of an American goldfinch, but with the back, rump, and hindneck dark greenish rather than yellow. Females have a uniformly colored greenish back and rump color. The male's song is similar to that of an American goldfinch but more scratchy, while the calls are plaintive or questioning notes.

Status: A very local summer resident in the south-easternmost part of the region, breeding north to near Lyons, or 20 miles from Estes Park, and observed in Rocky Mountain N.P. as a rare visitor. Occasional at Dinosaur N.M. and a potential breeder there.

Habitats and Ecology: Breeding occurs in sagebrush and riparian thicket areas, as well as where scrub oaks merge with ponderosa pines. In Colorado it has been found breeding between 5,000 and 11,500 feet, but is certainly most common at the lower elevations in oak-pine woodlands. It also nests commonly in trees in cities and suburbs.

Seasonality: Migratory at the northern end of its breeding range, and usually present from about April to mid-September. Active nests in Colorado have been reported from May 10 to August 3. A few stragglers sometimes persist into December.

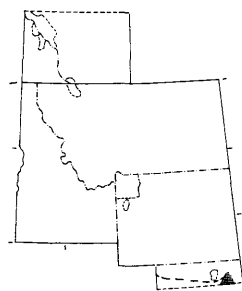
Comments: This species also occurs in a black-backed male plumage type that is variably common from Colorado southward into Mexico.

Suggested Reading: Linsdale, 1957; Coutlee, 1968a, 1968b.

LATILONG STATUS

		M	M
		M	

		M	
		M	M
s	s		S



American Goldfinch (*Carduelis tristis*)

Identification: Breeding males have a bright lemon-yellow plumage except for a black forehead, a black notched tail, and mostly black wings except for white forewing patches. Winter males and females are much duller, but have white wing-bars, a short and notched tail, an unstreaked yellowish to brownish buff breast and underpart color, and a short, stubby beak. The usual call is a *per-chik-o-ree* or *ti-dee-di-di*, often given in flight while wing-beating between gliding phases of flight.

LATILONG STATUS

r	s	s	s
s	s	s	s
S	s	s	S

R	S	S	S
s	S	S	S
S	S	s	S

M	s	s	s
M	s	s	S
S	R	S	R

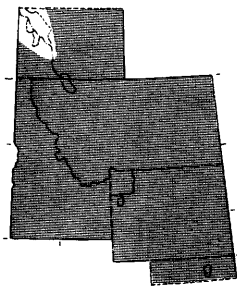
Status: A seasonal or permanent resident almost throughout the entire region, but absent from the northernmost montane areas, and apparently only a rare breeder in the montane parks.

Habitats and Ecology: Breeding occurs in open grazing country, especially where thistles are abundant, or where cattails are to be found. The seeds of thistles and other composites are used for feeding the young, and the "down" of thistles or cattails are used in nest construction. Riparian woodlands near weed-infested fields provide an ideal nesting situation. During winter the birds range widely over weedy fields and farmlands.

Seasonality: A permanent resident throughout much of the region, but migratory to the north, and usually absent from Alberta from November to late May. In Montana and Wyoming the birds are present mainly from May until September or October. Nesting records in Colorado are from July 31 to August 10, while in Wyoming and Montana active nests have been observed from mid-July to early September.

Comments: This is perhaps the most widespread and familiar of the true finches of the region, and is often called the "wild canary" by laymen.

Suggested Reading: Nickell, 1951; Coutlee, 1961; Stokes, 1950.



Evening Grosbeak (*Hesperiphona vespertina*)

Identification: This is a large, stocky finch with a short, massive beak, black wings and tail (the wings having white outer patches in females and white inner patches in males), and a bright yellow (males) to dingy gray (females) body color. In both sexes the beak is whitish to pale greenish. Like other finches it flies in a distinctive undulating flight, and a loud *cleep* is the most common call. Males also utter a warbling song.

Status: A local resident in coniferous forests almost throughout the region. Present in all the montane parks and probably breeding in all of them.

Habitats and Ecology: During the breeding season this species is primarily associated with mature coniferous forests, although nesting has also been observed in riparian willow thickets and also in city parks and orchards. Nesting in elms, maples, and box elders has been reported, and seeds of the last-named tree appear to be a highly favored food. During fall and winter they often occur in flocks that feed on such large and nutritious seeds as maples, ashes, and sunflowers.

Seasonality: A permanent resident throughout the region, but with major seasonal wanderings or migrations. Nesting in Colorado has been reported from early June to late July. Dependent young have been seen in Montana in early July, and there are Manitoba egg records for mid-June.

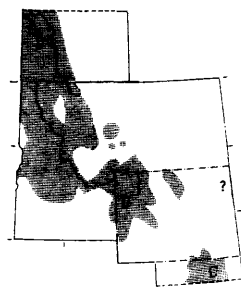
Suggested Reading: Parks & Parks, 1963; Blair & Parks, 1964; Bent, 1958.

LATILONG STATUS

r	R	s	
s	r	r	s
R	R	R	r

R	R	s	s
s	R	R	M
	R	M	M

r		M	
M	r	M	
M	M	M	S



House Sparrow (*Passer domesticus*)

Identification: Males of this abundant sparrow have black beaks, throats, and breasts, while their cheeks are pale gray and their napes a chestnut brown. Females closely resemble several other sparrow species, but have an unstreaked breast, a buffy eyebrow line, and a back that is broadly streaked with bright buff. The most commonly uttered call is a loud, monotone chirp. Invariably found rather close to human habitations.

LATILONG STATUS

R	R	R	r
r	R	R	R
R	R	R	R

R	R	R	R
r	r	R	R
R	R	r	R

R	R	R	R
M	R	R	R
R	R	R	R

Status: A local permanent resident throughout the region in human-associated habitats. Generally locally common in the montane parks around developed areas, but rare or absent in more remote habitats.

Habitats and Ecology: Associated throughout the year with humans, and breeding occurs in cities, suburbs, farmsteads, ranches, developed campgrounds in parks, etc. Nesting is usually done on artificial structures such as buildings that offer cavities or crevices, such as vine-covered buildings, billboard braces, bird houses, or old nests of other species, but occasionally occurs in tree cavities.

Seasonality: A permanent resident throughout the region. Nesting occurs over an extended period, usually of at least four months, and at the latitudes concerned typically begins in early April and may last to mid-September. During this time single pairs may produce two or three clutches, rarely as many as four.

Comments: This introduced species, like the starling, is an aggressive nester that often excludes more desirable bird species from nesting boxes or nest cavities, and thus tends to reduce avian diversity in areas near humans.

Suggested Reading: Kendeigh, 1973; Sappington, 1977; Summers-Smith, 1963.

