

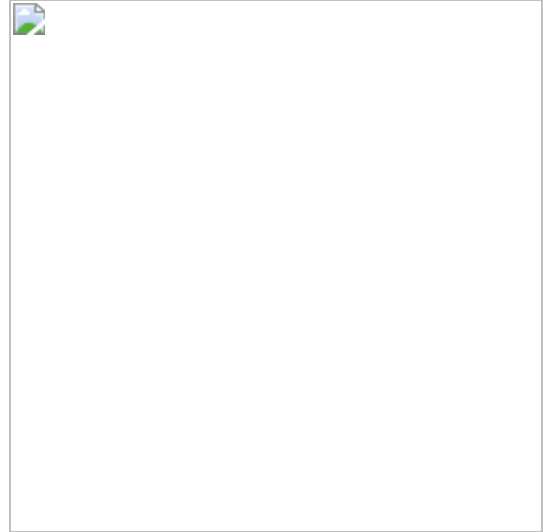
Highlights from August 18 Shorebird Trip to NE Colorado

 evergreenaudubon.org/highlights-from-august-18-shorebird-trip-to-ne-colorado

Chuck Aid

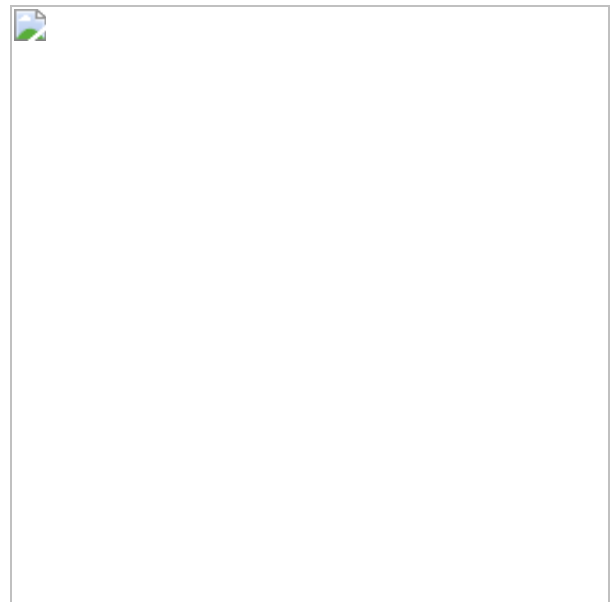
August 23, 2018

Eleven of us spent a wonderful day with the King of the Marbled Godwits (Garbled Modwits?), Brad Andres, and he delivered big time with fifteen shorebird species. The weather was gloriously mild for mid-August, and we made a successful run in the appropriate direction when things started to get a bit dark and blustery. Our itinerary began with a group of playas north of Brush and Fort Morgan. Then, after eating lunch at the city park in Fort Morgan, we visited the north shore of Jackson Reservoir, Loloff Reservoir, and a couple of playas in the Beebe Draw area immediately south of Lower Latham Reservoir.



Marbled Godwit (c) Mick Thompson

Before we get to the highlights it needs to be emphasized that we did not spend a lot of time with certain birds – our focus was shorebirds and we tried to keep them as a priority. So, while we did see eight or nine species of ducks, the males were mostly in eclipse plumage, and while we tried to grab the easy identifications when the opportunity arose, we didn't get obsessed with needing to figure everything out. And we may have also skipped on a few sparrows along the way.



Baird's Sandpiper (c) Bill Schmoker

Sticking with the waterbirds, one of the big highlights of the day was the number of nesting Eared Grebes we had at one of the larger playas. Not only were there several on nest, but there was some active nest-building, or perhaps nest-repairing going on. Evidently the nests are continually maintained throughout the incubation period. These nests are about a foot across and made of floating mats of emergent vegetation, and generally anchored to either emergent or submergent vegetation. Initially, it takes the parents about three hours to build a nest, and the pile of vegetation may be almost 18" high. This quickly gets pushed down in the center by the adults, and once they have eggs, the lower half of each egg is always in the water.

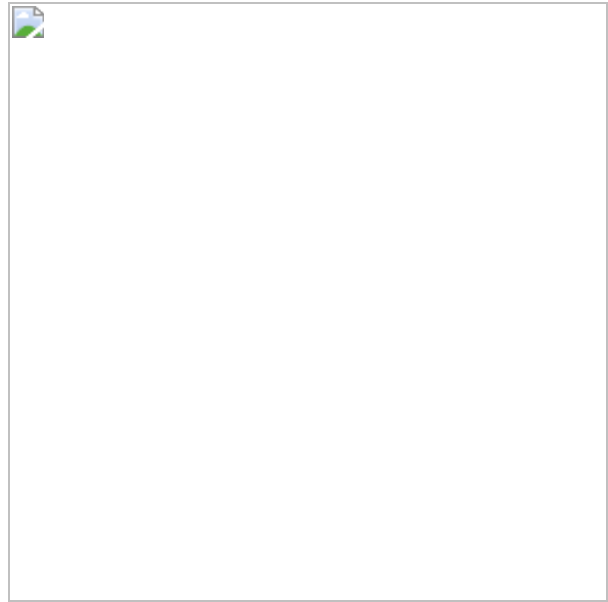
But what about the shorebirds, you're saying. Well, we had big ones, medium-sized ones, and little ones. To start with the big ones, the American Avocets, Black-necked Stilts, Killdeer, single Marbled Godwit, Long-billed Dowitchers, Greater and Lesser Yellowlegs were all stupendous – the Avocets still being in breeding plumage.

It was with the medium-sized shorebirds where much of our learning took place. We quickly established that Baird's Sandpipers were to be the dominant shorebird for the day, and we worked to become familiar with their wingtips extending well beyond the tip of the tail. We, then, worked to compare other comparably sized birds to them. These included the Stilt Sandpiper (one of my personal favorites, as I've seen it so seldomly), with its yellow legs and long, slightly drooping bill; the pectoral Sandpiper with its yellowish legs, heavily streaked breast, and robust body shape; the Spotted Sandpiper with its distinctive bobbing behavior; and the Solitary Sandpiper with its darker plumage and white spectacles. Finally, in this size class were the Wilson's Phalaropes, easily identified by their active feeding behavior – turning in tight circles when in the water, and darting around when on shore.

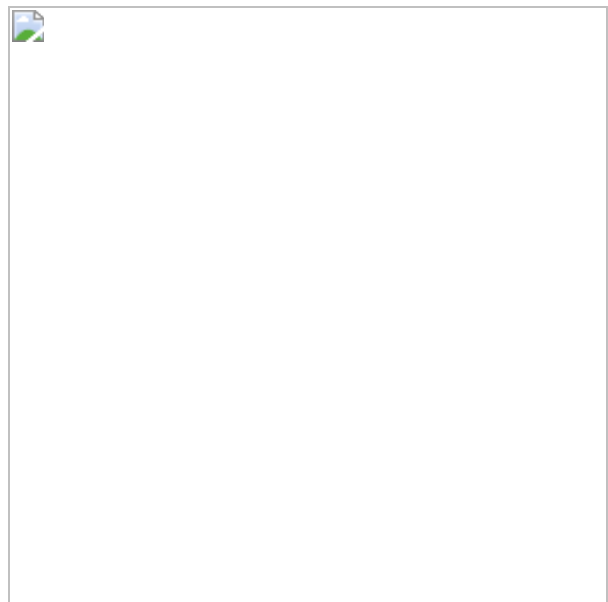
And then there were our two species of "peeps," the little shorebirds, and we found Semipalmated (short, straight, blunt bill) probing out in front of themselves as they foraged, and Least Sandpipers (yellow legs) foraging between their toes and picking items from the surface rather than probing.

Other highlights for the day included four gull species: Franklin's, Ring-billed, California, and Herring – this last was unusually early, as they don't generally start showing up until mid-September. We also had three White-faced Ibis, two Red-headed Woodpeckers, two Loggerhead Shrikes, and a single Blue Grosbeak.

All in all, a most fulfilling day, thanks to the King of the Marbled Godwits!



Pectoral Sandpiper (c) Bill Schmoker

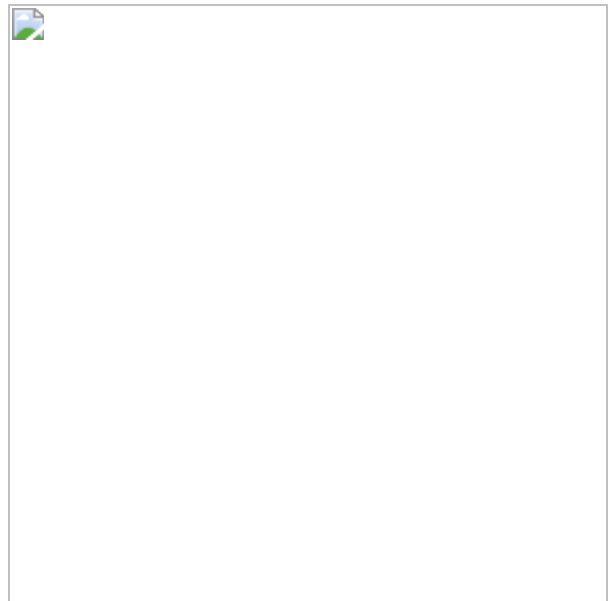


Solitary Sandpiper (c) Bill Schmoker

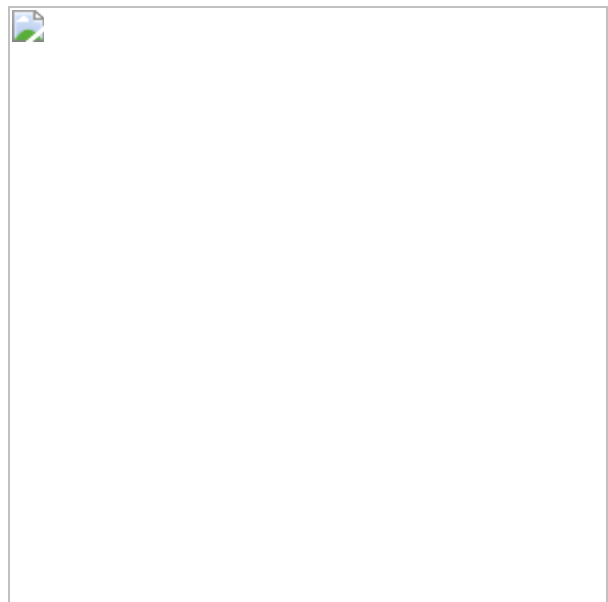
Chuck Aid
Director of Bird Monitoring

Aug 18, 2018, Playas north of Brush and Fort
Morgan, north shore of Jackson Res, Loloff
Res, and Beebe Draw.
68 species

Canada Goose 50
Blue-winged Teal 40
Cinnamon Teal 4
Northern Shoveler 5
Gadwall 4
Mallard 15
Northern Pintail 6
Green-winged Teal 30
Ruddy Duck 1
Ring-necked Pheasant 2
Pied-billed Grebe 3
Eared Grebe 12
Rock Pigeon (Feral Pigeon) 1
Eurasian Collared-Dove 10
Mourning Dove 20
American Coot 12
Black-necked Stilt 2
American Avocet 2
Killdeer 80
Marbled Godwit 1
Stilt Sandpiper 2
Baird's Sandpiper 60
Least Sandpiper 2
Pectoral Sandpiper 2
Semipalmated Sandpiper 3
Long-billed Dowitcher 3
Wilson's Phalarope 18
Spotted Sandpiper 3
Solitary Sandpiper 2
Greater Yellowlegs 8
Lesser Yellowlegs 13
Franklin's Gull 30
Ring-billed Gull 50
California Gull 2
Herring Gull 2

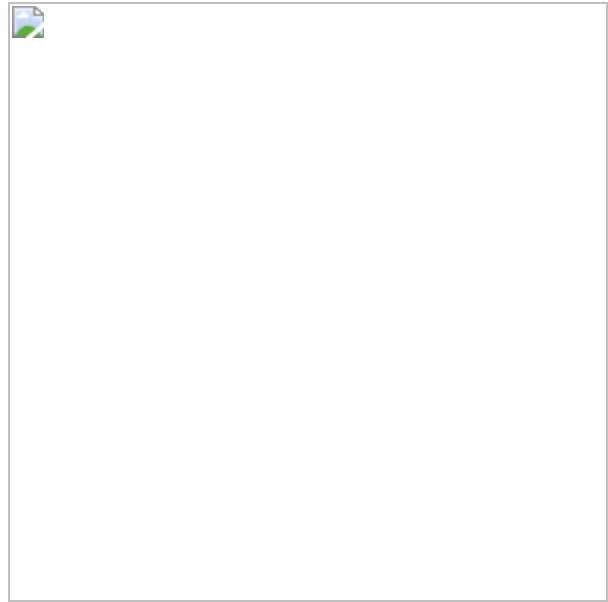


Stilt Sandpiper (c) Bill Schmoker



Semipalmated Sandpiper (c) Mick Thompson

Double-crested Cormorant 3
American White Pelican 70
Great Blue Heron 7
Snowy Egret 10
White-faced Ibis 3
Northern Harrier 8
Bald Eagle 2
Swainson's Hawk 15
Red-tailed Hawk 8
Red-headed Woodpecker 2
American Kestrel 2
Western Kingbird 8
Eastern Kingbird 3
Loggerhead Shrike 2
Blue Jay 2
Black-billed Magpie 1
Horned Lark 2
Tree Swallow 8
Bank Swallow 1
Barn Swallow 50
Cliff Swallow 1
American Goldfinch 1
Lark Bunting 7
Yellow-headed Blackbird 200
Western Meadowlark 14
Red-winged Blackbird 50
Brown-headed Cowbird 20
Brewer's Blackbird 5
Common Grackle 2
Great-tailed Grackle 1
Yellow Warbler 1
Blue Grosbeak 1
House Sparrow 5



Least Sandpiper (c) Mick Thompson