

COLORADO COLONIAL WATERBIRD SURVEY

Final Report

November 1, 2010

The Rocky Mountain Bird Observatory (RMBO) entered an agreement with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS), the Colorado Division of Wildlife (CDOW), and the American Bird Conservancy in 2009 to conduct a census of colonial waterbirds in Colorado. This report presents the results the project for 2009 and 2010.

Approximately 75% of the historical colonies were assigned at the beginning of the project in 2009 to volunteers, agency cooperators, or other interested partners. In total, 53 participants in 2009 and 47 in 2010 contributed data to the effort in 2010. The CDOW all-bird coordinator assisted by contacting CDOW biologists and wildlife managers prior to the 2009 breeding season to determine if staff would be able to assist with the project. A data sharing agreement was also established with the coordinator of the second Colorado Breeding Bird Atlas and information from both years of these projects increased knowledge about colonial waterbirds in Colorado. The USFWS collected data at Arapaho National Wildlife Refuge in 2009 and 2010 and we received data from the Alamosa/Monte Vista National Wildlife Refuge complex in 2010. The Bureau of Land Management and the U.S. Forest Service were contacted with queries about knowledge of waterbird colonies which resulted in additional information. Colorado bird-watching list-serves, CoBirds and the West Slope Bird Network, were very useful sources of information for the project both years. The project coordinator responded to messages to these list-serves containing information about colonial waterbirds to gain further details about the breeding colonies. The online bird observation database, eBird, was another tool utilized often by the project coordinator to discover locations of colonial waterbirds during the breeding season.

Overall, count totals are similar for both years; however, timing of visits to sites and obtaining counts single years only (not visiting a site both years of the project) often resulted in large discrepancies in count totals between years for less common species. Count totals for both years of the project are presented in Tables 1 & 2.

Table 1. Number of sites with colonial waterbirds present in Colorado¹ during the breeding season, 2009-2010.

Species	2009	2010
Western Grebe	15	22
Clark's Grebe	2	2
Eared Grebe	14	11
California Gull	2	3
Franklin's Gull	2	3
Forster's Tern	4	4
Black Tern	5	4
Double-crested Cormorant	14	15
American White Pelican	2	5
White-faced Ibis	12	6
Great Blue Heron	73	58
Great Egret	2	1
Snowy Egret	10	9
Cattle Egret	3	2
Black-crowned Night-Heron	15	13

¹At some sites breeding was suspected but not confirmed

Table 2. Number of adult and juvenile colonial waterbirds and number of active nests for each species in Colorado, 2009-2010.

Species	Adults		Nests		Juveniles	
	2009	2010	2009	2010	2009	2010
Western Grebe	409	779	7	181	110	1
Clark's Grebe	2	8	0	0	1	0
Eared Grebe	1323	1413	150	533	206	0
California Gull	673	1134	0	309	317	0
Franklin's Gull	52	21	3	0	0	0
Forester's Tern	52	35	3	2	0	0
Black Tern	16	67	0	0	0	0
Double-crested Cormorant	1427	699	1140	1024	290	0
American White Pelican	79	1494	0	0	263	137
White-faced Ibis	125	850	0	0	0	0
Great Blue Heron	892	478	1413	1130	38	78
Great Egret	49	0	41	10	0	0
Snowy Egret	205	324	91	72	25	3
Cattle Egret	20	1	0	47	3	0
Black-crowned Night-Heron	648	201	344	238	36	21