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JOURNAL OF THE WESTERN SLOPE

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THE COVER: The cover drawing of a Black-capped Chickadee is by
Tim Armstrong, author of "Birds of Mesa County."

Contents

BIRDS OF MESA COUNTY

By Tim Armstrong

EDITOR'S NOTE: In keeping with the statement of policy to publish some manuscripts on the natural history of the Western Slope, the editors present Mr. Armstrong's fine ornithological study. The article should introduce the novice to the birds of Mesa County, as well as provide information of interest to experienced bird watchers. The organizational scheme of the Table of Contents follows the American Ornithologists' Union in which birds progress from primitive to advanced. The Appendix provides common and scientific names.

Tim Armstrong is an alumnus of Mesa College, now attending graduate school in biology at the University of Massachusetts, Amherst. Mr. Armstrong did all drawings for the article. The author wishes to thank Cathy Armstrong, Ted Armstrong, David Spector, and R. Tod Highsmith for constructive comments on the drawings and species descriptions. Joseph G. Hall, a friend of Tim Armstrong and an active member of the local chapter of the National Audubon Society, offered valuable assistance as a guest editor for the "Birds of Mesa County."

BIRDS OF MESA COUNTY

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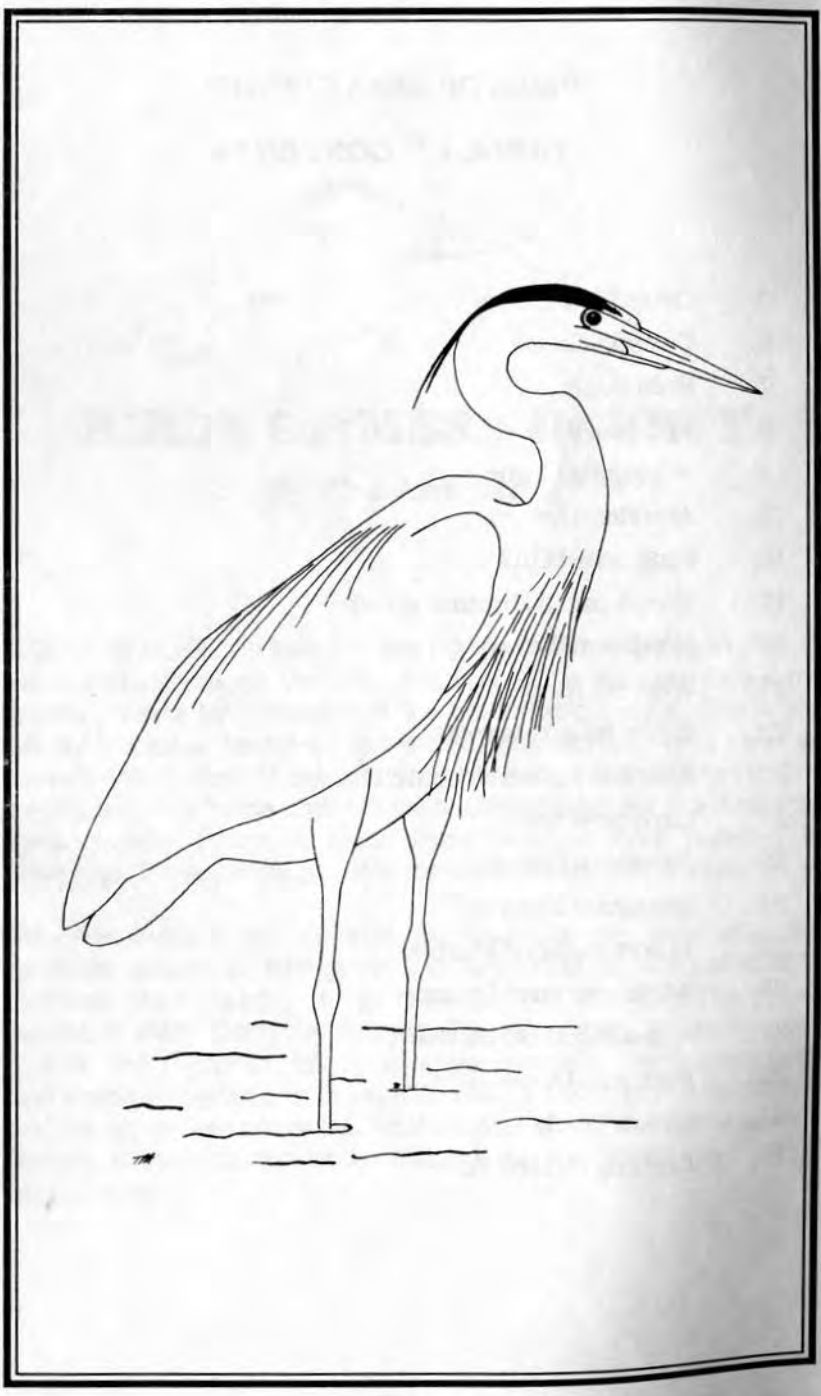


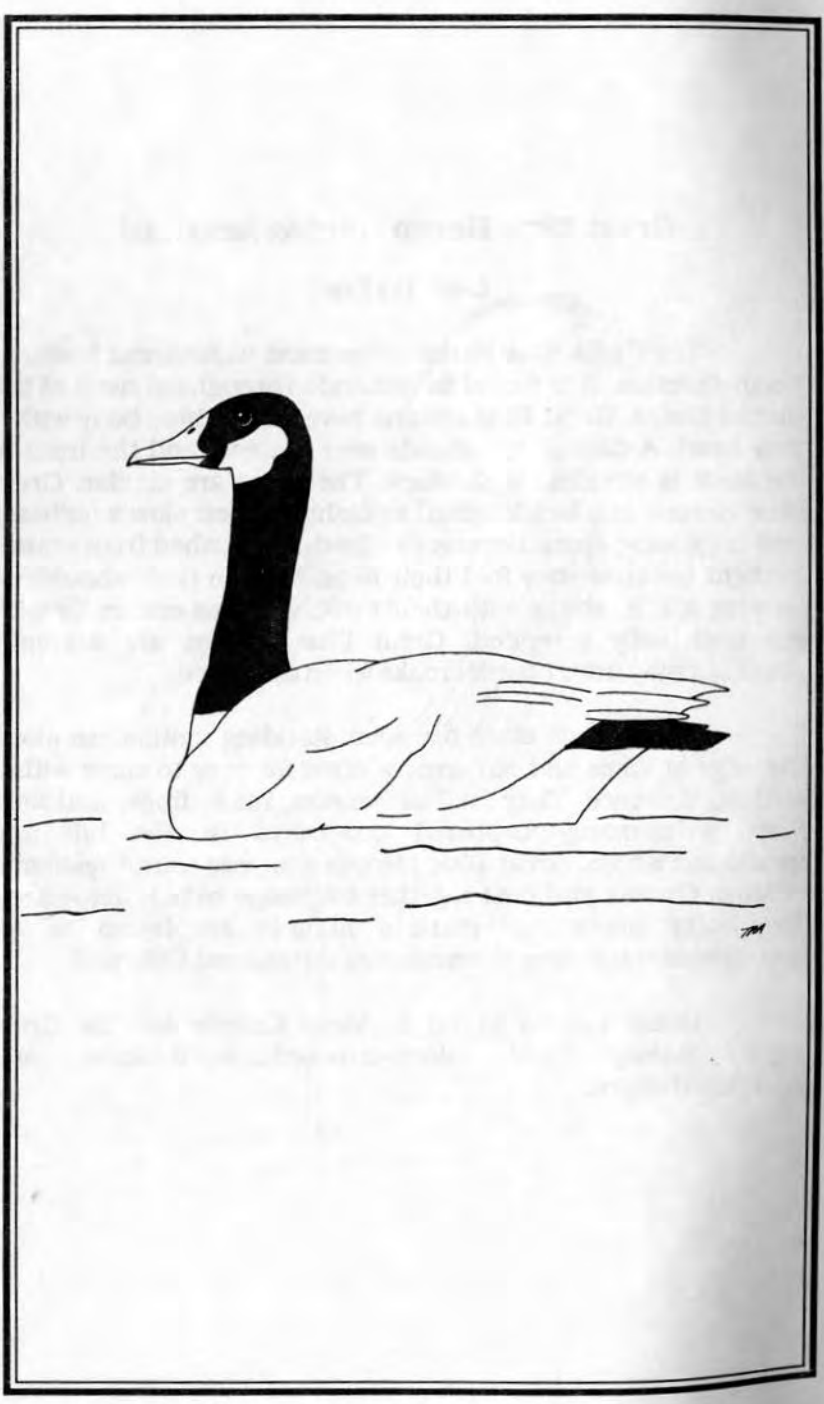
Great Blue Heron *(Ardea herodias)*

L 46" (117 cm)

The Great Blue Heron is the most widespread heron in North America. It is found in wetlands throughout most of the United States. Great Blue Herons have a slate blue body with a gray head. A dark strip extends over the eye, and the front of the neck is streaked with black. The sexes are similar. Great Blue Herons can be identified in flight by their slow wingbeats and large wing span. Herons can be distinguished from cranes in flight because they fold their head back to their shoulders, forming an "S" shape with their neck, whereas cranes fly with the neck fully extended. Great Blue Herons are normally silent but may utter hoarse croaks when disturbed.

These birds often are seen standing motionless along the edge of lakes and streams, waiting for prey to come within striking distance. They feed on insects, mice, frogs, and fish. Prey is normally captured crossways in the bill and swallowed whole. Great Blue Herons are year-round residents of Mesa County and nest together in groups called "heronries." The bulky nests that mark a heronry are found in tall cottonwood trees along watercourses throughout Colorado.

Other herons found in Mesa County are the Great Egret, Snowy Egret, Black-crowned Night-Heron, and American Bittern.



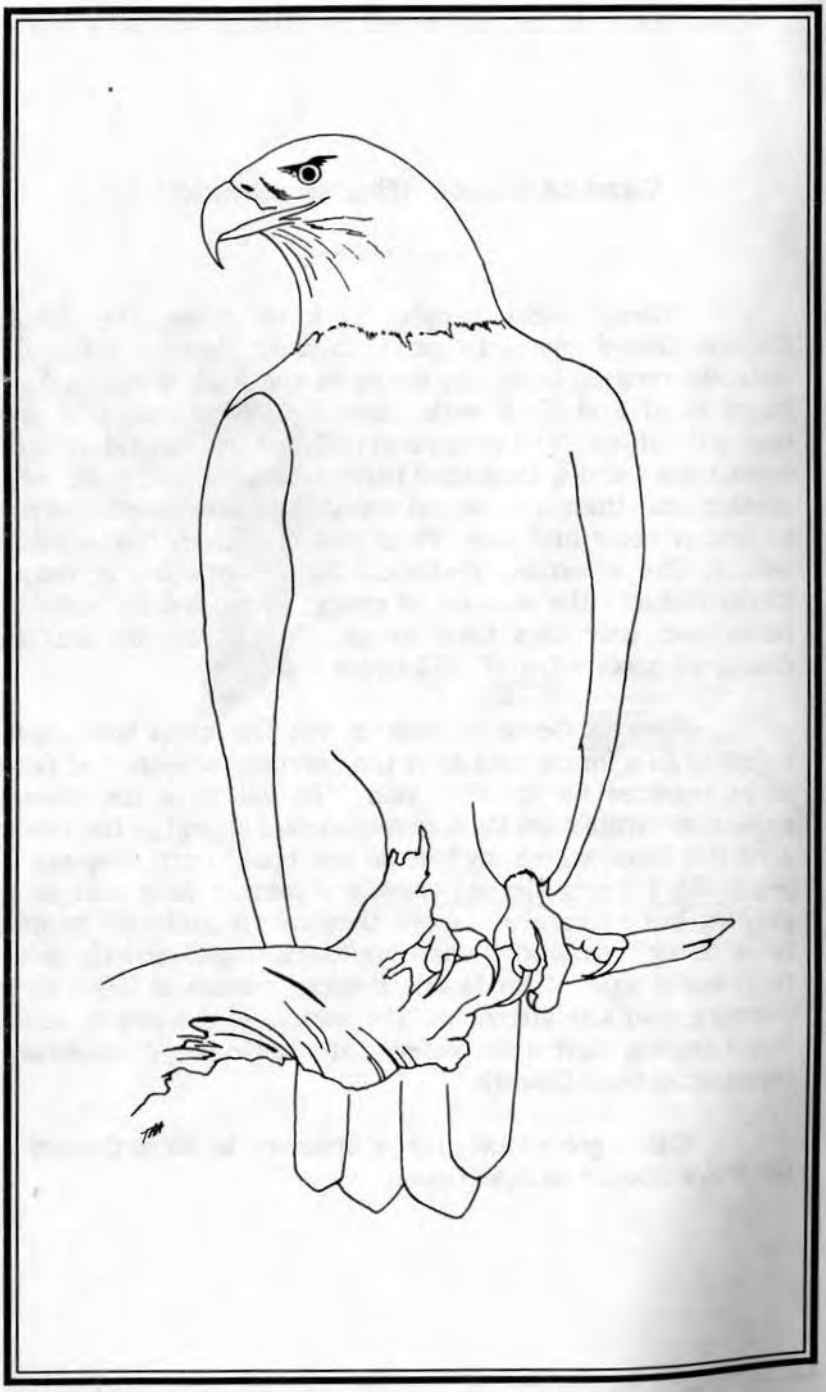
Canada Goose *(Branta canadensis)*

L 34" (86 cm)

When most people think of geese, the familiar Canada Goose comes to mind. Canada Geese are found in habitats ranging from city parks to the high arctic. It has a black head and neck with white cheek patches that meet under the throat. The wings and body are brown and the tail is black with a white, U-shaped band across the rump. Sexes are similar and there are eleven recognized subspecies differing in breast color and size. Their call is a deep "honk-a-lonk" sound. The common, V-shaped flight formation of Canada Geese reduces the amount of energy expended by individual birds and increases their range. The leader of the flock changes periodically and can be male or female.

Canada Geese are one of the few birds that remain together as a family unit after the breeding season. The family stays together for the first year. The young of the previous season separate from their parents upon arrival at the nesting area the following spring but do not breed until they are 2-3 years old. Canada Geese normally construct their nest on the ground but in rare instances they use abandoned nests in trees. They hiss loudly when approached and actively defend their nests against predators. Feeding occurs in fields in the morning and late afternoon. The middle of the day is usually spent resting near open water. Canada Geese are year-round residents of Mesa County.

Other geese that may be observed in Mesa County are the Snow Goose and Ross' Goose.



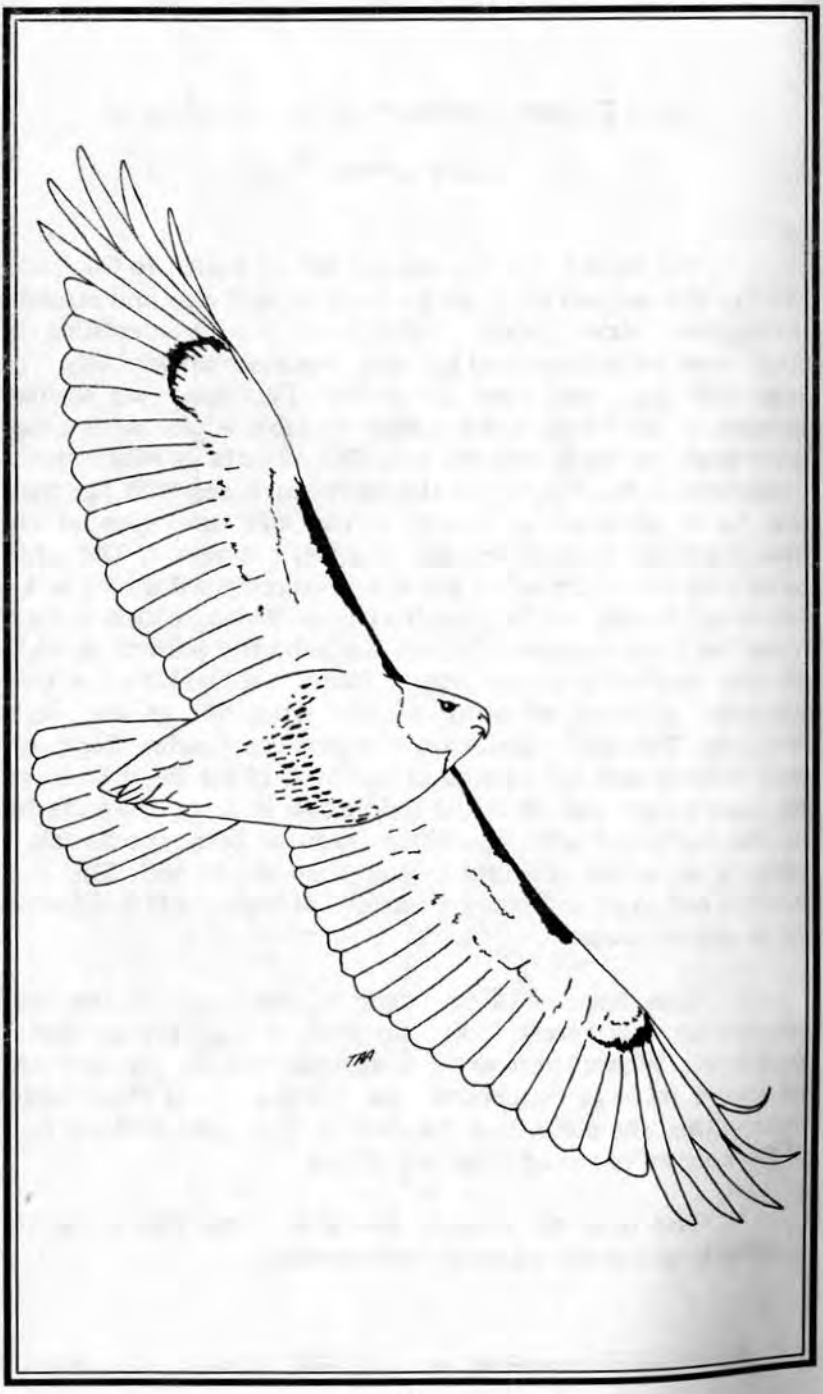
Bald Eagle *(Haliaeetus leucocephalus)*

L 34" (86 cm)

The Bald Eagle is a regular winter visitor to Colorado. During this season they can be seen along rivers and streams throughout Mesa County. Adults are readily identified by their pure white head and tail and chocolate-brown body. The large bill, legs, and eyes are yellow. The sexes are similar. Immature Bald Eagles are highly variable - plumages range from dark brown to mottled tan. The amount of white on the underside of the wings and the body increases with age until the adult plumage is reached. The bill and eyes of the immature are dark brown and the feet are yellow. The white head and tail of the adult are not acquired until a bird is 4-5 years old. Immature Bald Eagles can be distinguished in flight from the more common Golden Eagle by the pattern of white on the underside of the wings; immature Bald Eagles have irregular patterns of white on the wing linings and flight feathers. The white areas on the juvenile Golden Eagle are well-defined and are located at the base of the flight feathers. At close range, the bill of the Bald Eagle is larger than the bill of the Golden Eagle. Immature birds of both species show varying amounts of white at the base of the tail. The Bald Eagle's call is described as a mixture of high-pitched, squeaky chips and screams.

This species is primarily a scavenger of fish and carrion and is rarely found far from water, except during migration. Where there is an abundant food supply, they can be found in large concentrations. A few pairs of Bald Eagles nest within the state, but Colorado is near the southern limit of the species' breeding range in the West.

The only other eagle found in Mesa County is the Golden Eagle, which is a year-round resident.



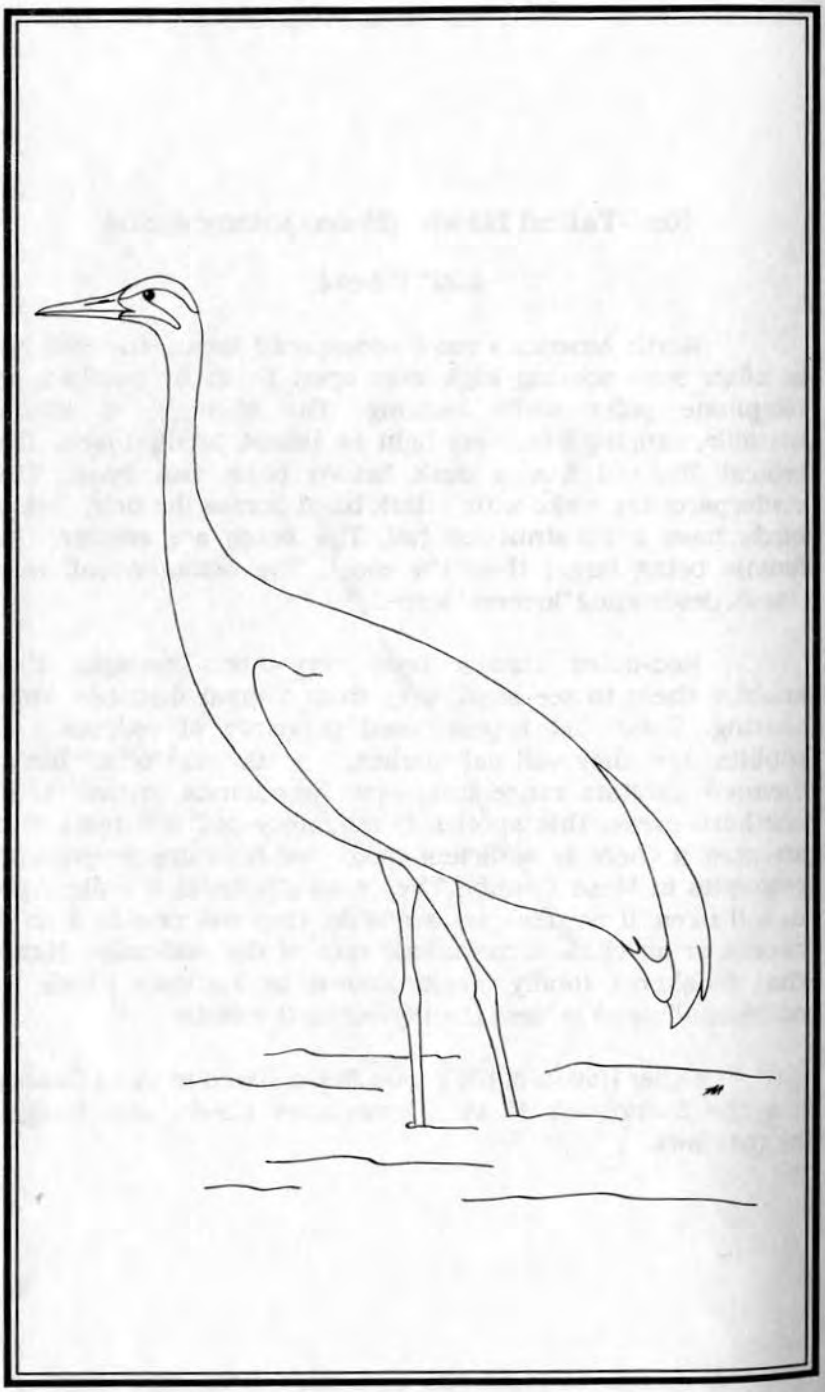
Red-Tailed Hawk *(Buteo jamaicensis)*

L 22" (56 cm)

North America's most widespread hawk, the Red-tail is often seen soaring high over open fields or perched on telephone poles while hunting. The plumage is highly variable, ranging from very light to almost totally black. The typical Red-tail has a dark brown back and head. The underparts are white with a dark band across the belly. Adult birds have a chestnut-red tail. The sexes are similar, the female being larger than the male. The common call is a harsh, descending "kreeeee" sound.

Red-tailed Hawks have very keen eyesight that enables them to see small prey from a great distance while soaring. Their diet is composed primarily of rodents and rabbits, but they will eat snakes, insects, and other birds. Favored habitats range from open woodlands to desert. In northern areas, this species is migratory but will remain in an area if there is sufficient food. Red-tails are year-round residents in Mesa County. They normally build a bulky nest in tall trees. If no trees are available, they will nest in a large cactus or on cliffs. A melanistic race of the Red-tailed Hawk that is almost totally black, known as Harlan's Hawk, is occasionally seen in Mesa County during the winter.

Other Hawks of the genus *Buteo* found in Mesa County are the Swainson's Hawk, Ferruginous Hawk, and Rough-legged Hawk.



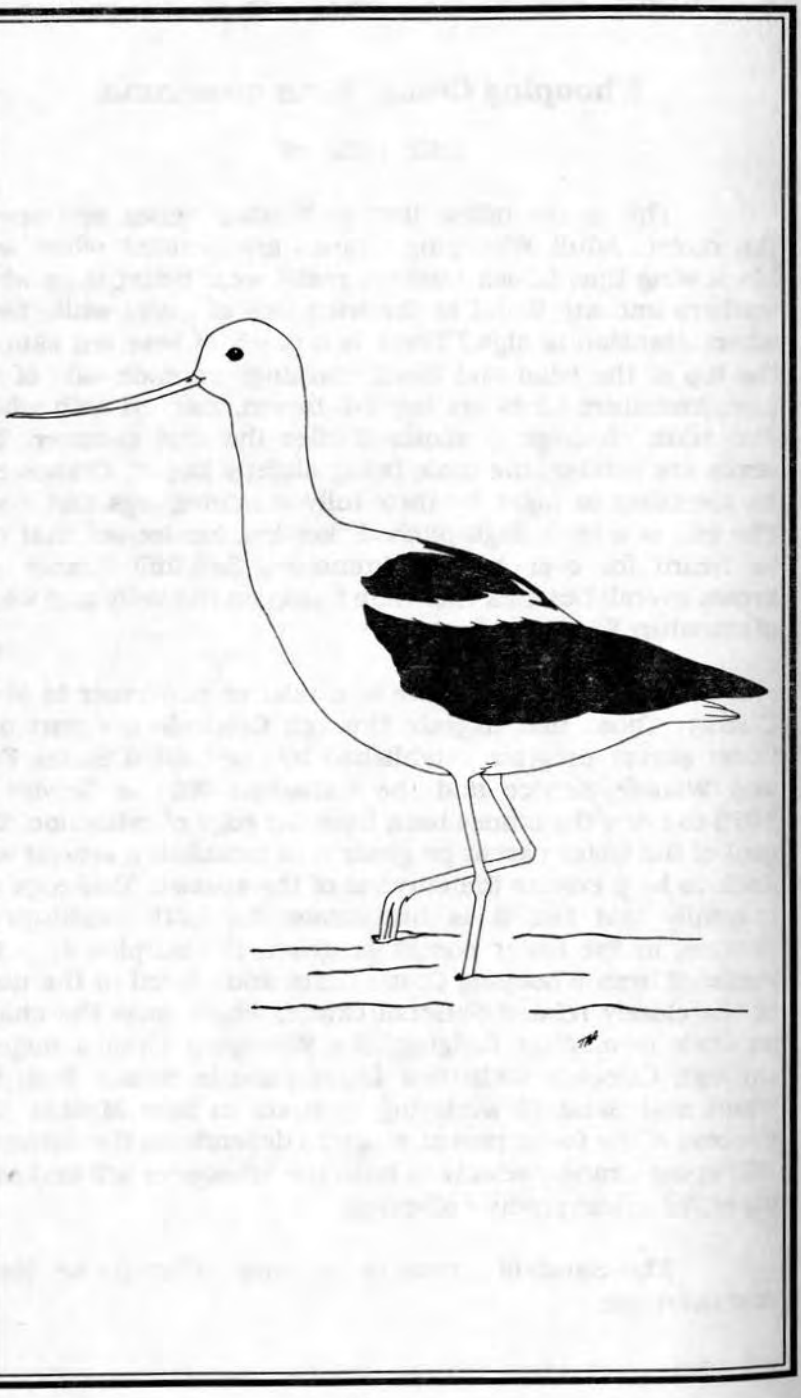
Whooping Crane *(Grus americana)*

L 52" (132 cm)

This is the tallest bird in North America and one of the rarest. Adult Whooping Cranes are brilliant white with black wing tips. (Black feathers resist wear better than white feathers and are found at the wing tips of many white birds where abrasion is high.) There is a patch of bare red skin on the top of the head and black markings on each side of the face. Immature birds are reddish-brown, mottled with white. The adult plumage is acquired after the first summer. The sexes are similar, the male being slightly larger. Cranes can be identified in flight by their fully extended legs and neck. The call is a loud, high-pitched "ker-loo, ker-lee-oo" that can be heard for over a mile. Immature Sandhill Cranes are brown overall but lack the white found on the belly and wings of immature Whooping Cranes.

The Whooping Crane is a relative newcomer to Mesa County. Those that migrate through Colorado are part of a foster parent program established by the United States Fish and Wildlife Service and the Canadian Wildlife Service in 1975 to bring the cranes back from the edge of extinction. The goal of the foster parent program is to establish a second wild flock to help ensure the survival of the species. Two eggs are normally laid but it is uncommon for both nestlings to survive. In the foster parent program, the surplus eggs are removed from Whooping Crane nests and placed in the nests of the closely related Sandhill Crane, which raise the chicks as their own. After fledging, the Whooping Cranes migrate through Colorado with their foster parents to and from the traditional Sandhill wintering grounds in New Mexico. The success of the foster parent program depends on the maturing Whooping Cranes; scientists hope the Whoopers will find each other, mate, and produce offspring.

The Sandhill Crane is the only other native North American crane.



American Avocet *(Recurvirostra americana)*

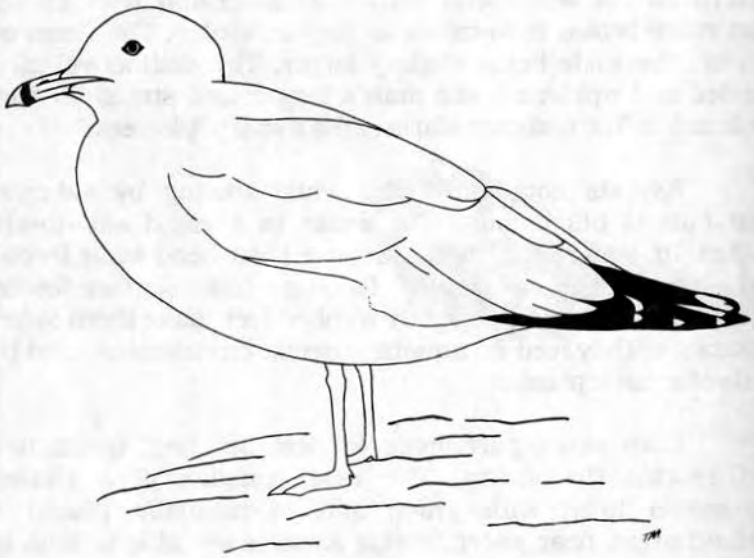
L 18" (46 cm)

This handsome, graceful shorebird frequents marshes and shallow lakes in the western United States. Avocets are large and long-legged, with a bold black and white pattern on the wings and body. The head and neck change from rusty-brown in summer to gray in winter. The sexes are similar, the male being slightly larger. The distinctive bill is slender and upturned, the male's longer and straighter than the female's. The common alarm call is a sharp "plee-eek."

Avocets commonly feed while wading by sweeping their curved bill through the water in a rapid side-to-side motion. In deep water, they submerge their head while feeding and have been observed feeding like surface-feeding (dabbling) ducks. Their slightly webbed feet make them strong swimmers. They feed on aquatic insects, crustaceans, and the seeds of aquatic plants.

Both sexes participate in nest building, incubation, and rearing the young. The nest consists of a shallow depression lined with grass and is normally placed in lowland areas near water. Young Avocets are able to fend for themselves soon after hatching. Most immatures attain breeding plumage the first year.

The Black-necked Stilt is the only other member of the avocet family found in the United States. Black-necked Stilts are uncommon migrants in Mesa County.



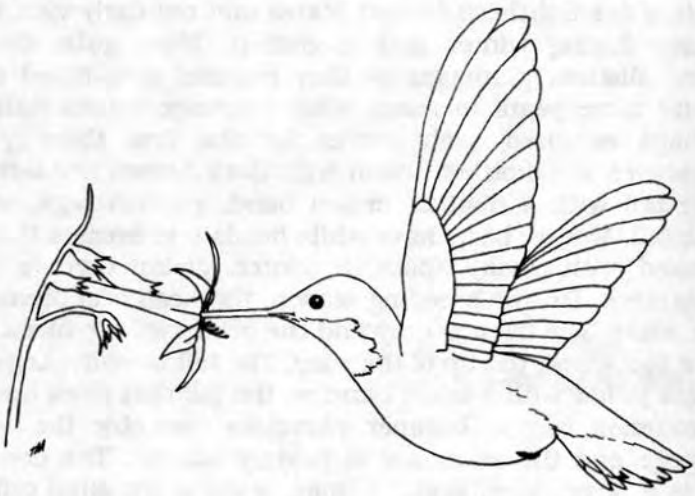
Ring-billed Gull *(Larus delawarensis)*

L 18" (45 cm)

If you ever thought you saw a "sea gull" in Colorado, it was probably the Ring-billed Gull, a common species often found far from the coast. Ring-billed Gulls winter throughout much of the Southern United States and regularly visit Mesa County during winter and migration. Most gulls develop several distinct plumages as they mature. Ring-billed Gulls require three years to reach adult plumage with a different plumage acquired each winter for the first three years. Immatures are mottled brown with dark brown primaries, a white tail with a distinct brown band, pinkish legs, and a black bill. Mature birds have white heads and breasts that are streaked with dusky spots in winter, giving them a dirty appearance. During breeding season, the head and breast are pure white. The back is gray and the primaries are black with white spots near the tip of the wing. The tail is white. Legs and bill are yellow with a black band on the bill that gives the bird its common name. Summer plumages resemble the winter plumage and the sexes are outwardly similar. The common call is a "kree, kree, kree." Immature gulls are often difficult to identify and a careful examination of the bird and consultation with an authoritative field guide is required for positive identification.

Gulls have webbed feet and are good swimmers – they often forage on the water's surface but do not dive for food. They eat virtually anything and perform a valuable function as scavengers. Special glands enable gulls and other seabirds to drink fresh or salt water and excrete excess salt through the nostrils. Gregarious throughout the year, they often breed in large colonies.

Other gulls found in Mesa County are Franklin's Gull, Bonaparte's Gull, and California Gull.



Broad-tailed Hummingbird *(Selasphorus platycercus)*

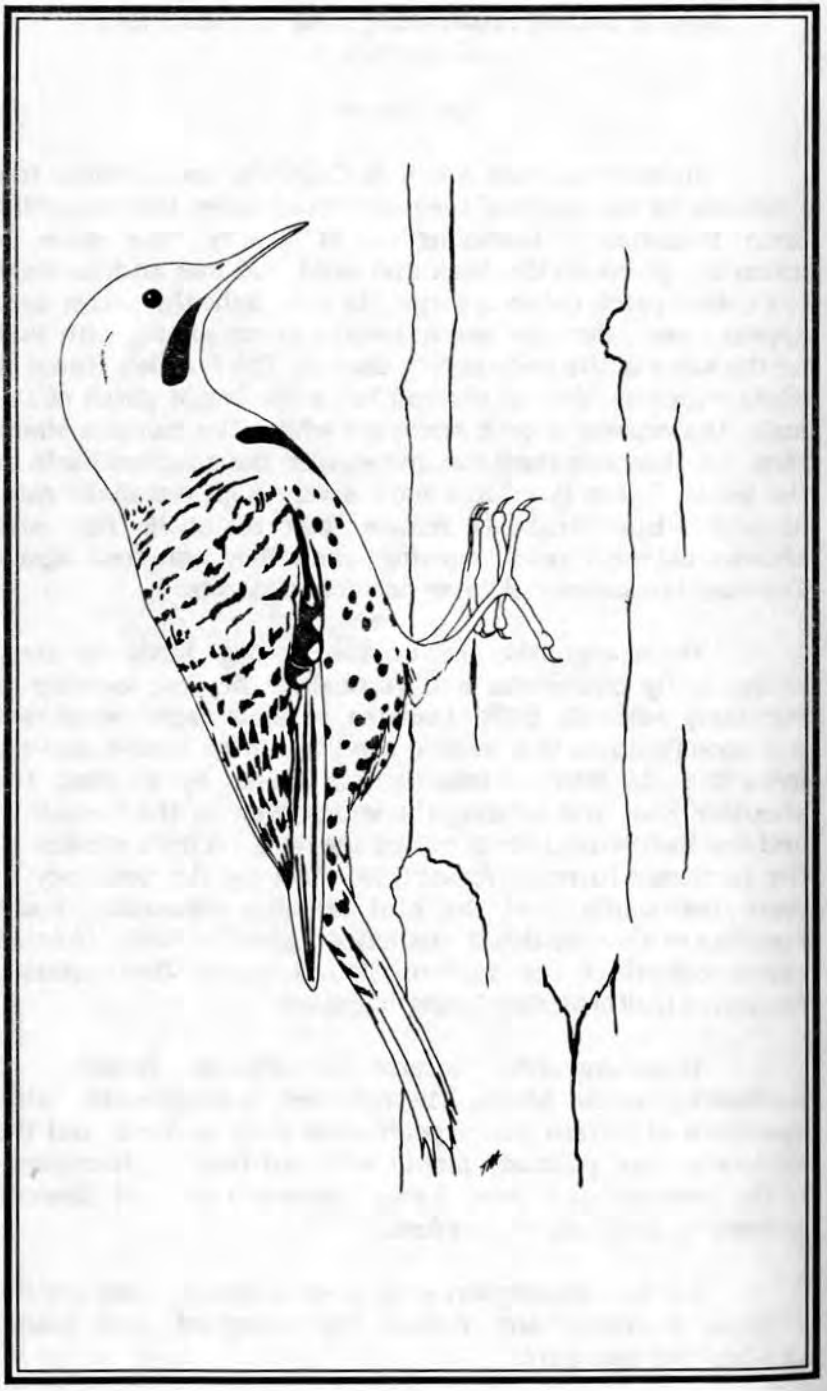
L 4" (10 cm)

In mountainous areas of Colorado the metallic trill produced by the wings of the male Broad-tailed Hummingbird often indicates a hummingbird is nearby. The male is iridescent green on the back and head and has an iridescent red throat patch called a gorget. In poor light the gorget may appear black. Females are iridescent green above, with buff on the sides of the body and in the tail. The female's throat is white with fine, dark spots and lacks the bright patch of the male. Underparts of both sexes are white. The call is a sharp chip. The hummingbird family includes the smallest birds in the world. These tiny birds have a very high metabolic rate. At night, hummingbirds reduce their metabolic rate and become dormant until morning when they can feed again. Their diet is composed of flower nectar and insects.

Hummingbirds are unique among birds in their ability to fly backwards and vertically. They are capable of extremely versatile flight because of their rapid wingbeats and modifications that enable the wing to be moved entirely from the shoulder. Hummingbirds hover by rotating the shoulder joint and turning the wings over on the forestroke and the backstroke; air is cut by the wing on both strokes so the tendency to move forward is offset by the tendency to move backwards, and the bird remains stationary. Some species are also capable of sustained flight; the Ruby-throated Hummingbird of the eastern United States flies nonstop across the Gulf of Mexico during migration.

Hummingbirds perform a valuable function in pollinating certain plants. The color red is outside the visual spectrum of certain insect pollinators such as bees, and the insects do not pollinate plants with red flowers. Hummingbirds perceive red, and forage primarily at red flowers, pollinating the plants as they feed.

Other hummingbirds reported in Mesa County are the Calliope Hummingbird, Rufous Hummingbird, and Black-chinned Hummingbird.



Northern Flicker *(Colaptes auratus)*

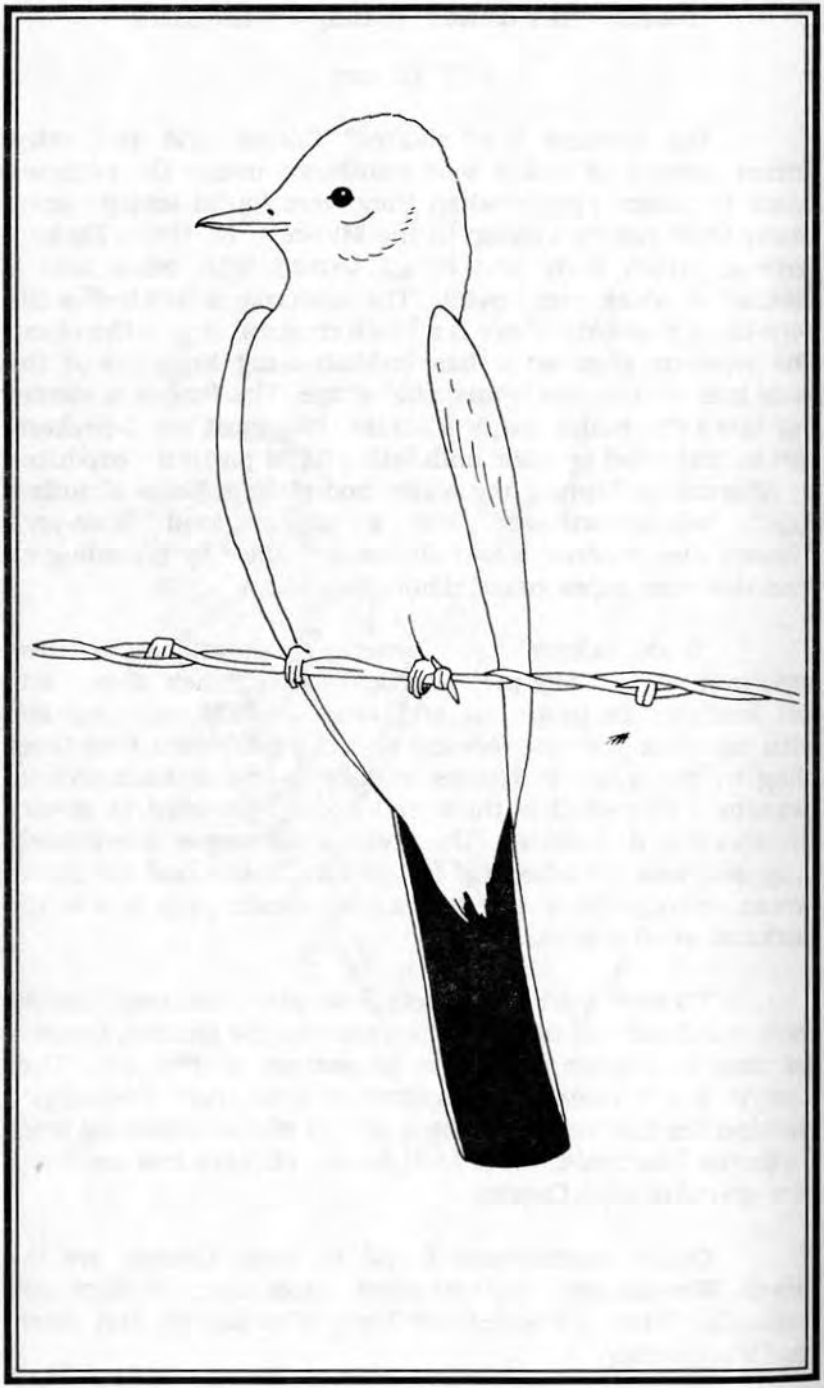
L 13" (33 cm)

The western "Red-shafted" Flicker and two other former species of flicker were combined under the common name Northern Flicker when they were found interbreeding where their ranges overlap in the Midwest. Northern Flickers have a brown body and wings barred with black and a distinctive white rump patch. The underparts are buff-white with black spots and there is a black crescent across the chest. The western population has reddish wing linings and the male has a red malar "mustache" stripe. The female is similar but lacks the malar stripe. Flickers, like most wood-peckers, can be identified by their undulating flight pattern – produced by alternately flapping the wings and gliding. Calls include a rapid "wik-wik-wik-wik" and a single, loud "klee-yer." Flickers also produce a loud drumming noise by pounding on resonant trees, pipes, or metal buildings.

Woodpeckers have several adaptations to their unique lifestyle. They perch vertically using their sharp, stiff tail feathers as props. In addition, specially modified feet with two toes pointing forward and two backward help them cling to the sides of trunks and even to the underside of branches. The skull is thick and heavily muscled to absorb the shock of hammering. The protrusible tongue is extremely long and has a barbed tip for probing into wood for insect larvae. Woodpeckers use hearing to locate prey inside the bark and wood of trees.

Flickers feed on insects and plant material. Unlike most woodpeckers, they are often seen on the ground, foraging for ants that make up a large proportion of their diet. They nest in holes, normally excavated in dead trees. Abandoned woodpecker holes are used by a variety of cavity-nesting birds including bluebirds, owls, and ducks. Flickers can be found year-round in Mesa County.

Other woodpeckers found in Mesa County are the Lewis' Woodpecker, Yellow-bellied Sapsucker, Williamson's Sapsucker, Downy Woodpecker, Hairy Woodpecker, and Three-toed Woodpecker.



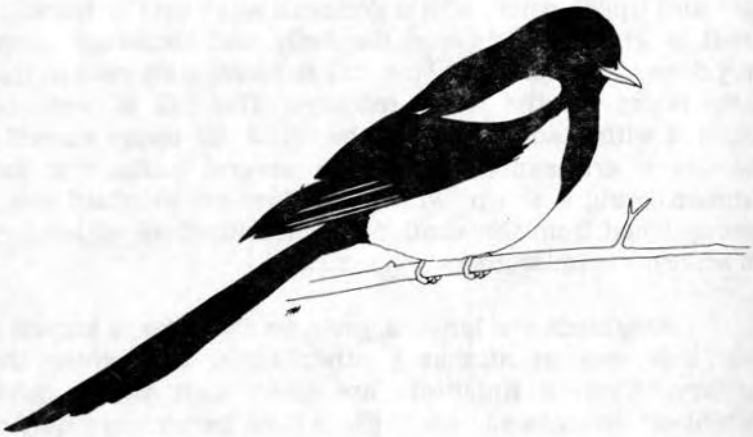
Western Kingbird *(Tyrannus verticalis)*

L 9" (23 cm)

The Western Kingbird is a common summer resident of open areas in Mesa County. Western Kingbirds have a gray head and upper parts, with a greenish wash on the back. The throat is grayish-white and the belly and undertail coverts are yellow. The relatively long tail is black with conspicuous white edges on the outer feathers. The bill is wide and flattened with a small hook at the tip of the upper mandible. The sexes are similar and have several calls, the most common being a sharp "whit." The Western Kingbird can be distinguished from the similar Cassin's Kingbird which lacks the white outer tail feathers.

Kingbirds are large, aggressive flycatchers known for their boldness in attacking other birds that enter their territory. Western Kingbirds are often seen sitting quietly upright on an exposed perch. From their perch, they dart out in pursuit of flying insects, which they catch with an audible snap of the bill. They also forage for insects on the ground and on foliage. Kingbirds build their nest in trees, on telephone poles, and on buildings. The nest is lined with animal hair or other soft material. After the young fledge, small family groups can be observed flycatching noisily.

Other kingbirds found in Mesa County are the Cassin's Kingbird and Eastern Kingbird.



Black-billed Magpie *(Pica pica)*

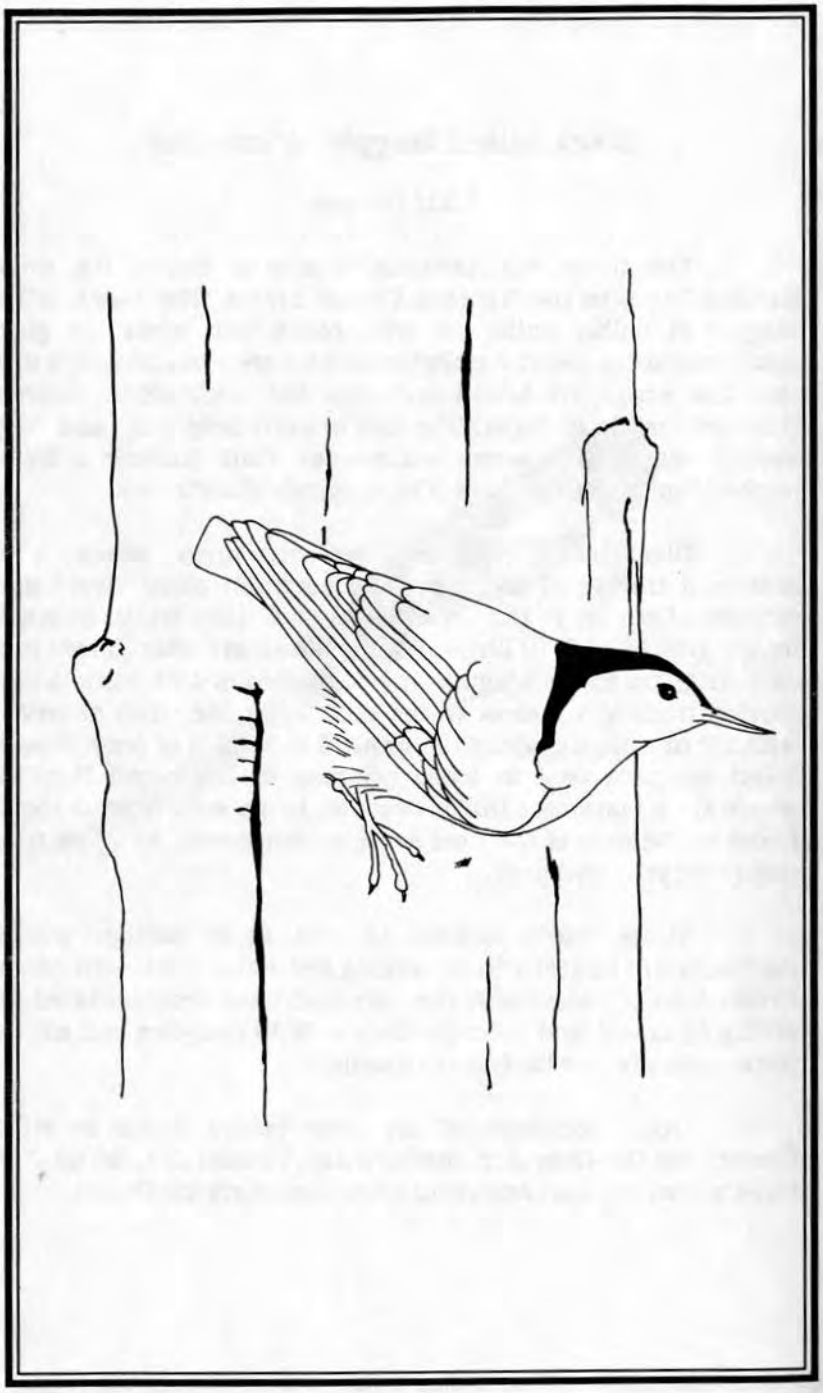
L 21" (53 cm)

The noisy, conspicuous Magpie is one of the most familiar birds in the Western United States. The Black-billed Magpie is boldly patterned with black and white. In good light, iridescent green highlights can be seen in the wings and tail. The wings are broad and rounded, with white patches that are visible in flight. The tail is extremely long and may appear ragged. The sexes are similar. Calls include a high-pitched "mawg" and a series of loud, harsh "chek" notes.

Black-billed Magpies live in open areas with scattered trees and are especially common along rivers and streams. Outside of the breeding season, they travel in small family groups of 6-10 birds. Winter flocks are often larger and can range up to 50. Magpies are omnivorous with insects and carrion making up most of the diet. They are often observed walking or hopping along the ground in search of prey. Black-billed Magpies nest in loose colonies in trees and thickets where they construct bulky nests of twigs with domed roofs. Holes in the side of the nest serve as entrances. Magpies may use a nest year after year.

These birds belong to the crow family, whose members are believed to be among the most intelligent birds. Crows have a remarkable memory and have demonstrated an ability to count and solve problems. Wild magpies can mimic the sounds of other birds and animals.

Other members of the crow family found in Mesa County are the Gray Jay, Stellar's Jay, Pinyon Jay, Scrub Jay, Clark's Nut- cracker, American Crow, and Common Raven.



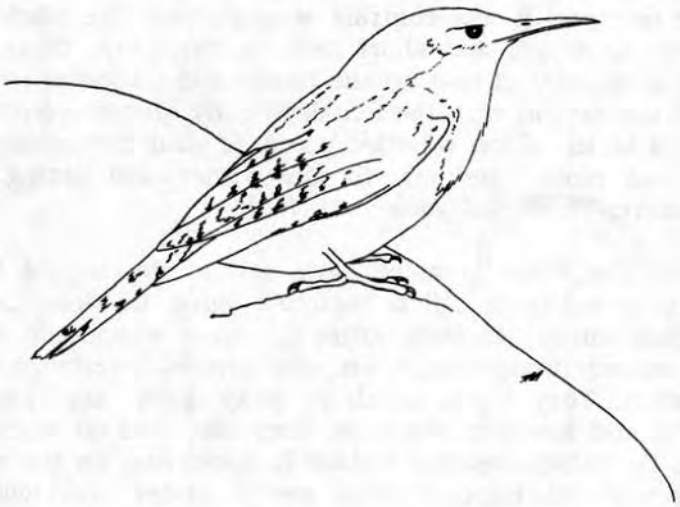
White-breasted Nuthatch *(Sitta carolinensis)*

L 6" (15 cm)

While feeding and in flight, White-breasted Nuthatches resemble tiny, short-tailed woodpeckers. They are small, stocky birds with large heads. The distinctive white face and breast contrast strongly with the black cap. The back, wings, and short tail are blue-gray. There is a variable amount of rust on the flanks and undertail coverts. Sexes are similar with the female slightly grayer overall. The song, a series of low whistled notes, is sung throughout the year but most frequently in late winter and spring. The common call is a nasal "yank-yank-yank."

The White-breasted Nuthatch is the largest North American nuthatch. All nuthatches found in Mesa County are year-round residents. They frequent woodlands where they actively forage up, down, and around tree trunks and branches. They travel in short, jerky hops, searching for insects and larvae in the bark. They also feed on seeds and nuts. The White-breasted Nuthatch stores food for the winter in crevices in bark. It is a cavity nester and will use abandoned woodpecker holes, bird boxes, or cavities it has excavated. Mated pairs remain together throughout the year.

Other nuthatches in Mesa County are the Pygmy Nuthatch and Red-breasted Nuthatch.



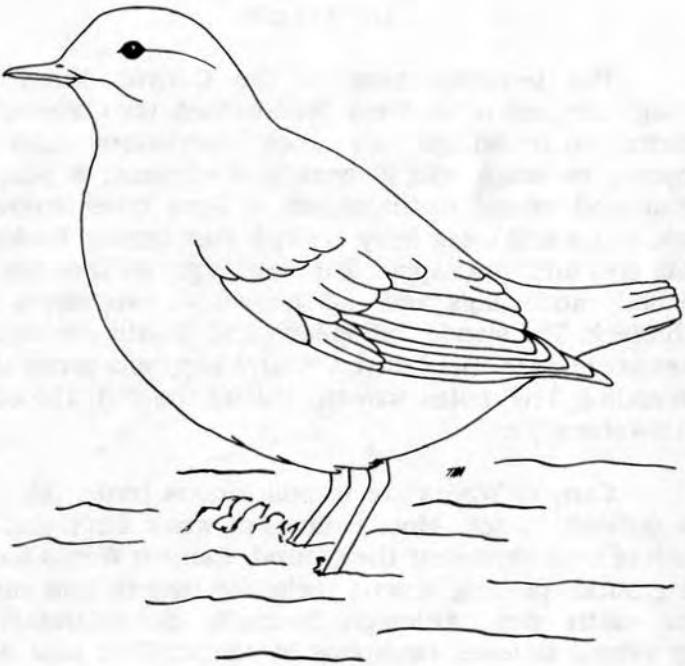
Canyon Wren *(Catherpes mexicanus)*

L 6" (15 cm)

The beautiful song of the Canyon Wren echoes through canyons of the West. Well-named, the Canyon Wren's favorite surroundings are rock formations and steep canyons, especially along rivers and streams. A pure white throat and breast distinguishes it from other wrens. The back, rump and lower belly are rich rust-brown, flecked with small gray and white spots. The head is grayer than the rest of the body and wings and tail are rust-brown, finely barred with black. The slender bill is long and slightly decurved. The sexes are similar. The Canyon Wren's song is a series of clear, descending "tew" notes, slowing toward the end. The common call is a sharp "jeet."

Canyon Wrens are inconspicuous birds, often heard but difficult to see. Most wrens are weak fliers and spend much of their time near the ground. Canyon Wrens forage on the ground, probing among rocks for insects that make up their entire diet. Although normally non-migratory, they may retreat to lower elevations in winter. They nest in small caves or under rocks but have adapted to nesting in artificial structures such as stone walls and buildings.

Other members of the wren family found in Mesa County are the House Wren, Rock Wren, Bewick's Wren, and Marsh Wren.

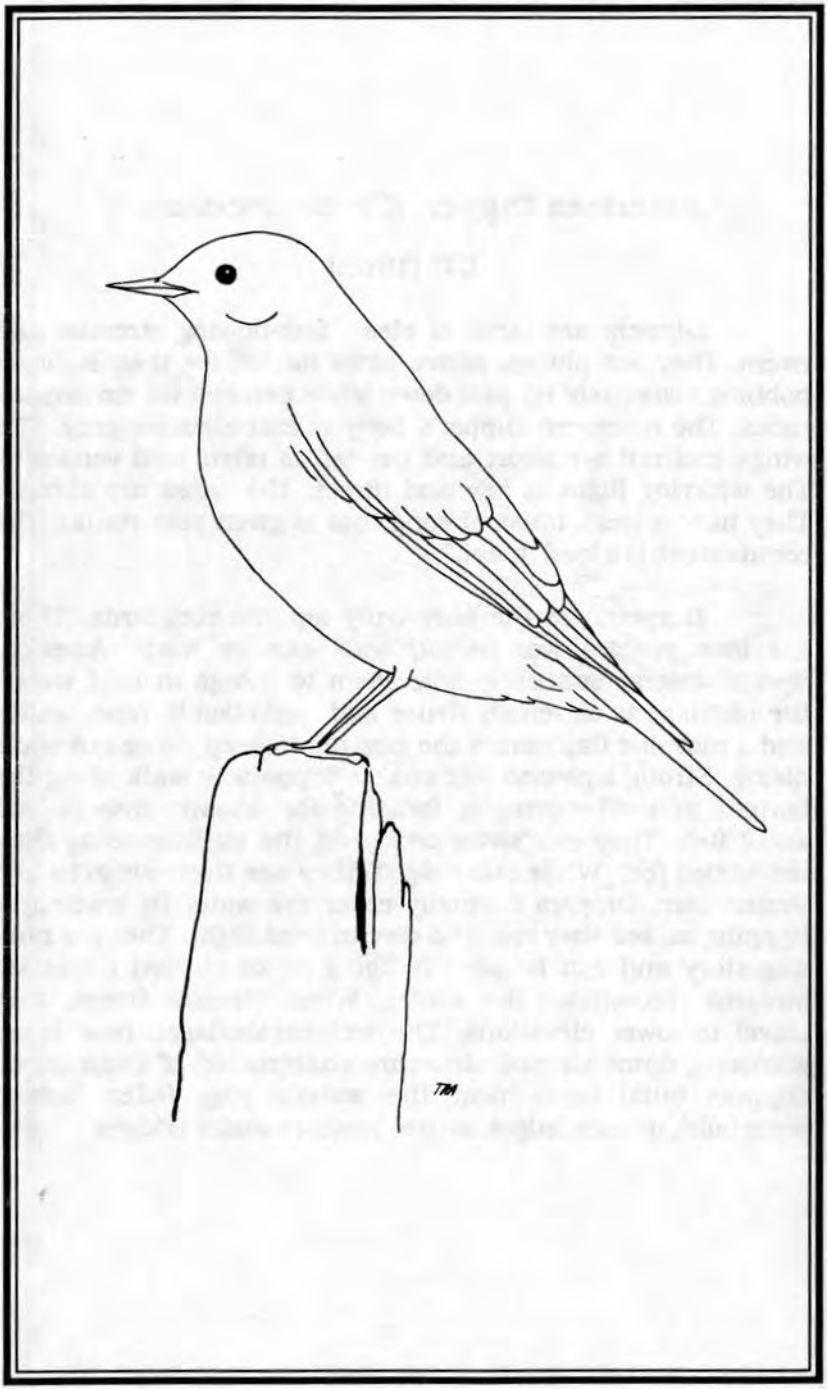


American Dipper *(Cinclus mexicanus)*

L 7" (18 cm)

Dippers are birds of clear, fast-flowing streams and rivers. They are plump, active birds named for their habit of bobbing vigorously up and down while perched on streamside rocks. The American Dipper's body is entirely slate-gray. The wings and tail are short and the tail is often held vertically. The whirring flight is low and direct. The sexes are similar. They have a loud, musical song that is given year-round. The common call is a loud "bzeet."

Dippers are the only truly aquatic songbirds. There are four species world-wide, with one in North America. Special characteristics enable them to forage in cold water: the plumage is extremely dense and well-oiled to repel water; and a movable flap covers the nostrils to keep water out while diving. Strong legs and feet enable Dippers to walk along the bottom in swift currents, foraging for aquatic insects and small fish. They can swim poorly on the surface using their unwebbed feet. While submerged, they use their wings to "fly" underwater. Dippers normally enter the water by wading or hopping in, but they can also dive in from flight. They are non-migratory and can be seen foraging in ice-choked mountain streams throughout the winter. When streams freeze, they travel to lower elevations. The well-camouflaged nest is an enclosed, dome-shaped structure constructed of fresh moss. Dippers build nests near the water's edge (often behind waterfalls), on rock ledges, on tree roots, or under bridges.



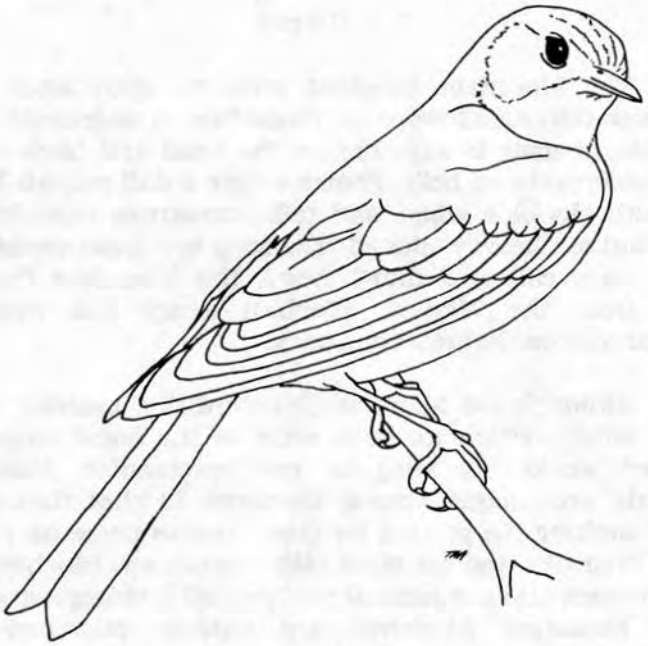
Mountain Bluebird *(Sialia currucoides)*

L 7" (18 cm)

The Mountain Bluebird inhabits open areas from high mountain meadows near timberline to sagebrush flats. The brilliant male is sky-blue on the head and back with a pale blue breast and belly. Females have a dull grayish-brown body with sky-blue wings and tail. Immatures resemble the female but are heavily spotted. The song is a short warble and the common call is a thin "phew." The Mountain Bluebird differs from the Western Bluebird which has extensive chestnut color on the breast and back.

Although the Mountain Bluebird is a member of the thrush family, which includes some of the finest singers in the bird world, its song is not spectacular. Mountain Bluebirds are unique among bluebirds in that they hover while searching the ground for prey. Insects make up a large part of their diet and are often taken in the air. Bluebirds are cavity nesters and use natural cavities, old buildings, and bird boxes. Mountain Bluebirds are usually migratory and congregate in large flocks during the winter. Bluebirds rely on plant material, such as dried berries, for food in winter when insects are scarce.

Other members of the thrush family found in Mesa County are the Western Bluebird, Townsend's Solitaire, Veery, Hermit Thrush, and American Robin.



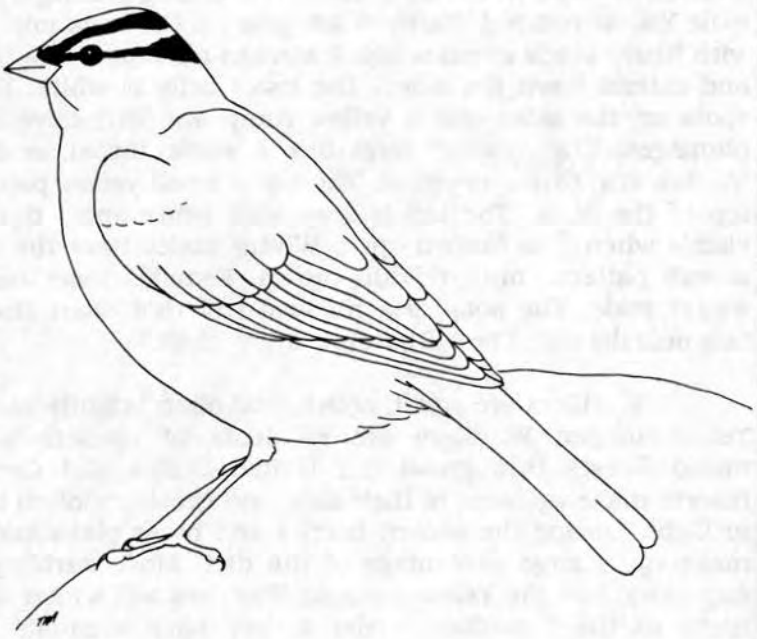
Yellow-rumped Warbler *(Dendroica coronata)*

L 5" (13 cm)

The Yellow-rumped Warbler includes two forms that interbreed freely where they overlap. The eastern and northern population was formerly called the "Myrtle" Warbler and the western form the "Audubon's" Warbler. The two forms differ primarily in the color of the throat and the amount of white in the wing bars. In breeding plumage, adult male Yellow-rumped Warblers are gray on the back and head with heavy black streaks. Black streaks also cover the breast and extend down the sides. The lower belly is white. Yellow spots on the sides and a yellow rump are distinctive in all plumages. The "Myrtle" form has a white throat, and the "Audubon's" throat is yellow. There is a small yellow patch on top of the head. The tail is gray with white spots that are visible when it is fanned open. Winter males have the same overall pattern, but are dull brown. Females resemble the winter male. The song is a musical trill that often rises or falls near the end. The call note is a sharp "chek."

Warblers are small, active, and often brightly colored. Yellow-rumped Warblers are residents of coniferous and mixed forests throughout the United States and Canada. Insects make up most of their diet, and these are often taken in flight. During the winter, berries and other plant material make up a large percentage of the diet. Most warblers are migratory, but the Yellow-rumped Warblers will winter as far north as the Canadian border if they have adequate food. Winter birds travel in small, loose flocks. The yellow-throated "Audubon's" form breeds in Mesa County, and some normally remain through the winter at lower elevations.

Other breeding warblers in Mesa County are the Orange-crowned Warbler, Virginia's Warbler, Yellow Warbler, Black-throated Gray Warbler, MacGillivray's Warbler, Common Yellow-throat, Wilson's Warbler, and Yellow-breasted Chat. Warblers that regularly migrate through Mesa County include the Nashville Warbler, Townsend's Warbler, and Northern Waterthrush.



White-crowned Sparrow *(Zonotrichia leucophrys)*

L 7" (18 cm)

Sparrows are generally small, drab, inconspicuous birds that spend much of their time on the ground. The boldly patterned White-crowned Sparrow is one of the easiest sparrows to recognize with distinctive black-and-white markings on the head. The wings are brown with two white wing bars and the back is streaked with gray and brown. The clear breast is pearl-gray and the bill ranges from pink to yellow. The sexes are similar. Immatures resemble adults but are browner overall with a brown-and-buff head pattern. The song varies geographically but is normally one or more clear introductory notes followed by a series of trills that vary in pitch. The call is a metallic "chink."

Sparrows inhabit a wide variety of habitats. They are often difficult to observe except during breeding season when the male sings from an exposed perch. White-crowned Sparrows are found year-round in Mesa County. In summer they breed at high elevations near open areas. The nest is built on the ground or low in a tree. Winters are spent at lower elevations in small flocks. They feed primarily on seeds, but also eat other plant material and insects. They forage on the ground, actively scraping aside debris with both feet in search of food.

Other members of the sparrow family found in Mesa County are the Green-tailed Towhee, Rufous-sided Towhee, American Tree Sparrow, Chipping Sparrow, Brewer's Sparrow, Vesper Sparrow, Lark Sparrow, Black-throated Sparrow, Sage Sparrow, Lark Bunting, Savannah Sparrow, Fox Sparrow, Song Sparrow, Lincoln's Sparrow, White-throated Sparrow, Harris' Sparrow, Dark-eyed Junco, and Lapland Longspur. The common House Sparrow, found in urban areas throughout the United States, was introduced from Europe and belongs to a separate family of Old-World sparrows.

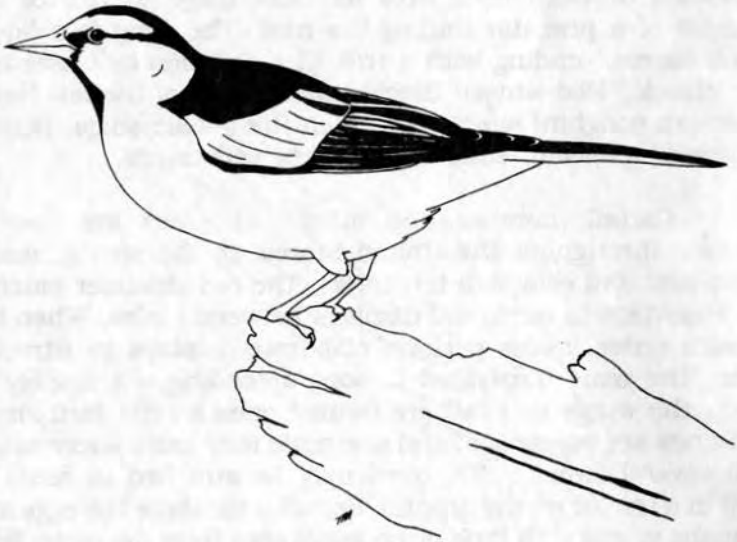
Red-winged Blackbird *(Agelaius phoeniceus)*

L 9" (23 cm)

The familiar Red-winged Blackbird is one of the first birds to return to its breeding grounds in the spring. Males are glossy-black with bright reddish-orange shoulder patches. The shoulder patches are bordered with yellow that may not be visible when a bird is perched. The female is dark brown with a heavily streaked breast and belly and a buff stripe over the eye. Immature males resemble females but have variable amounts of reddish-orange on the shoulder. The cryptic coloration of the female acts as camouflage to reduce the chances of a predator finding the nest. The song is a liquid "konk-ka-ree," ending with a trill. The common call note is a low "chuck." Red-winged Blackbirds are one of the few North American songbird species in which the female sings. During the breeding season, females sing "duets" with males.

Cattail marshes and other wet areas are favorite habitats throughout the United States. In the spring, males arrive first and establish territories. The red shoulder patches are important in territorial displays between males. When the females arrive, males perform elaborate displays to attract a mate. The male illustrated is song-spreading – a display in which the wings and tail are fanned open as the bird sings. Redwings are polygnous, and one male may mate successfully with several females. The nest may be attached to reeds or built in a tree or on the ground. Females incubate the eggs and raise the young with little or no assistance from the male. Red-winged Blackbirds forage in upland areas away from the nest. Seeds and grain compose most of the diet, but they also feed on insects. Redwings form huge flocks with other blackbirds on their wintering grounds.

Other members of the blackbird family that breed in Mesa County are the Western Meadowlark, Yellow-headed Blackbird, Brewer's Blackbird, Common Grackle, and Brown-headed Cowbird.



Northern Oriole *(Icterus galbula)*

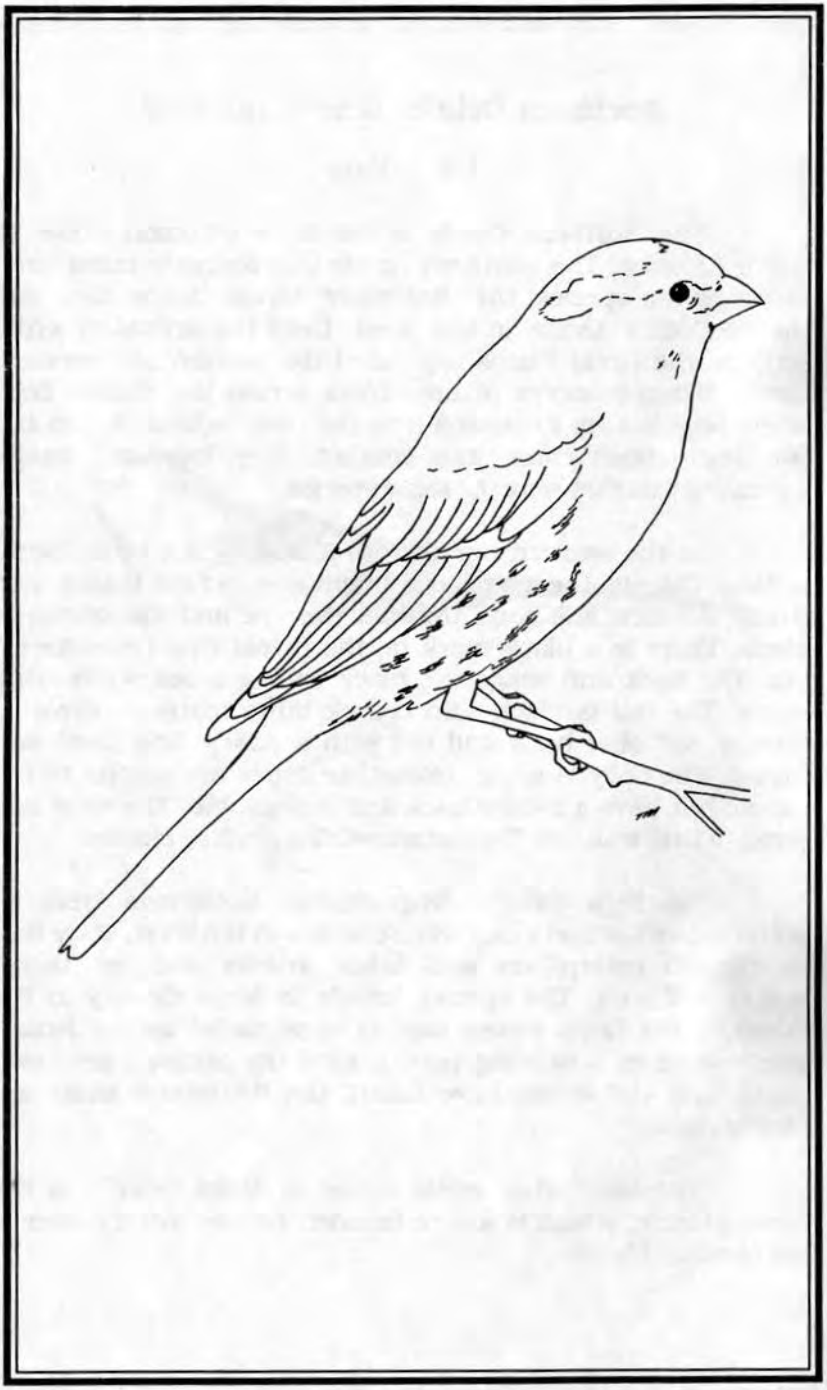
L 8" (20 cm)

The Northern Oriole is the most common oriole in North America. The Northern Oriole was formerly considered two separate species, the "Baltimore" Oriole in the East and the "Bullock's" Oriole in the West. Until the arrival of white settlers, the Great Plains separated the eastern and western forms. When pioneers planted trees across the plains, both oriole populations expanded into the new habitat. When the two populations came into contact, they interbred freely, indicating that they were the same species.

In the western population, including the birds found in Mesa County, the male has a bright orange face, breast, and rump. A black line runs through the eye and the crown is black. There is a black mark on the throat that resembles a bib. The back and wings are black with a broad white wing patch. The tail is black with orange outer feathers. Females have a dull olive back and tail with a pale yellow head and breast. The belly is white. Immature males are similar to the female but have a darker back and a black bib. The song is a series of loud whistles. The common call is a rolling chatter.

Northern Orioles frequent tall deciduous trees in suburban areas and along watercourses in the West. They feed heavily on caterpillars and other insects and eat flower nectar and fruit. The species breeds in Mesa County in the summer; the finely woven nest is constructed by the female and resembles a hanging pouch. After the orioles have flown south and the leaves have fallen, the distinctive nests are clearly visible.

The only other oriole found in Mesa County is the Scott's Oriole, which is a rare breeder. Orioles are member of the blackbird family.



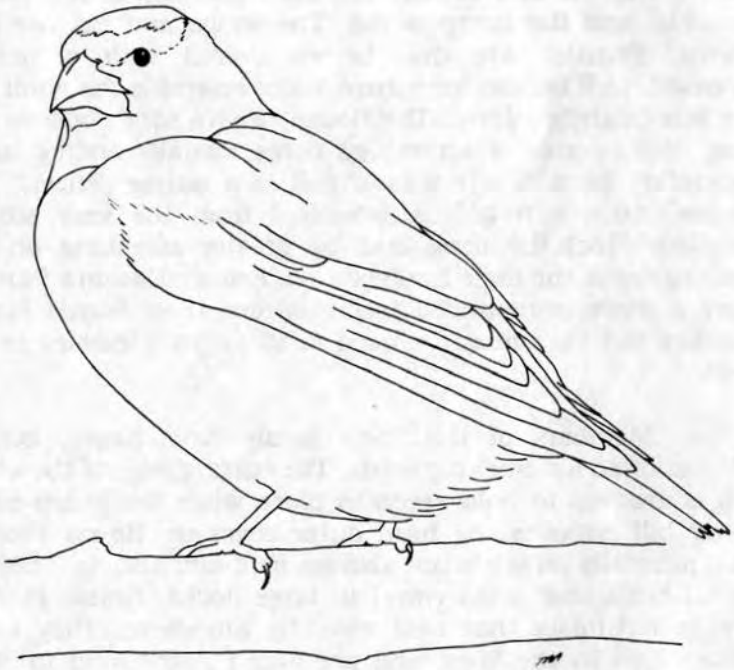
House Finch *(Carpodacus mexicanus)*

L 6" (15 cm)

The House Finch is a familiar bird in residential areas and a common visitor at feeding stations. Males have a broad red eyebrow that extends from the forehead to the back of the head. A poorly defined red throat patch gradually blends into the buff breast. The back and flanks are heavily streaked and the rump is red. The wings and tail are dull brown. Females are dull brown overall with a heavily streaked, buff breast. Immature males resemble the adult but are less brightly colored. The House Finch's song consists of a long, lively series of scrambled notes, usually ending in an ascending buzz. The common call is a coarse "cheet." The House Finch can be distinguished from the very similar Cassin's Finch by song and by greater streaking on the undersides of the male House Finch. Female Cassin's Finches have a more pronounced facial pattern than female House Finches but care must be used in identifying females in the field.

Members of the finch family have heavy, conical bills adapted for cracking seeds. The cutting edge of the upper bill is grooved to hold seeds in place while the sharp-edged lower bill removes the hard outer covering. House Finches feed primarily on seeds but also eat fruit and insects. They are social birds that often travel in large flocks. House Finches are opportunists that nest virtually anywhere. They are a native bird in the West and are found year-round in Mesa County. In the 1940s, House Finches were introduced to Long Island, New York, and they have rapidly expanded across much of the eastern United States.

Other members of the finch family found in Mesa County are the Rosy Finch, Cassin's Finch, Red Crossbill, Pine Siskin, Lesser Goldfinch, and American Goldfinch.



Evening Grosbeak *(Coccothraustes vespertinus)*

L 8" (20 cm)

The Evening Grosbeak is a big, stocky member of the finch family. The common name "Grosbeak" refers to the large, heavy bill. Adult males have yellow foreheads and eyebrows. The dark brown head gradually blends with the bright yellow rump and belly. The tail and wings are black and there is a large white patch on the trailing edge of the wing. Females are gray overall with a black tail and wings. The white in the wings is more extensive on the female. Immature males resemble the adult but are less brightly colored. The bill is pale greenish-yellow in summer and white in winter. Evening Grosbeaks are easily recognized in flight by their white wing markings, undulating flight pattern, and distinctive flight call, a continuous "tchew-tchew-tchew." Other call notes include a sharp "peeer."

Evening Grosbeaks are highly gregarious, traveling in small flocks throughout the year. In summer they are found in coniferous forests at high elevations, and in winter they may migrate to lower elevations if they cannot find sufficient food. Grosbeaks feed primarily on seeds and tree buds. In years when food is scarce in the far North, they travel South in huge flocks in search of food.

Grosbeaks found in Mesa County are members of two different families. The Evening Grosbeak and Pine Grosbeak belong to the finch family while the Rose-breasted Grosbeak, Black-headed Grosbeak, and Blue Grosbeak are members of the cardinal family.

APPENDIX OF BIRDS MENTIONED IN TEXT

Common and Scientific Names

American Bittern	*Botaurus lentiginosus*
American Crow	*Corvus brachyrhynchos*
American Goldfinch	*Carduelis tristis*
American Robin	*Turdus migratorius*
American Tree Sparrow	*Spizella arborea*
Black-capped Chickadee	*Parus atricapillus*
Black-chinned Hummingbird	*Archilochus alexandri*
Black-crowned Night Heron	*Nycticorax nycticorax*
Black-headed Grosbeak	*Pheucticus melanocephalus*
Black-necked Stilt	*Himantopus mexicanus*
Black-throated Gray Warbler	*Dendroica nigrescens*
Black-throated Sparrow	*Amphispiza bilineata*
Blue Grosbeak	*Guiraca caerulea*
Bonaparte's Gull	*Larus philadelphia*
Brewer's Blackbird	*Euphagus cyanocephalus*
Brewer's Sparrow	*Spizella breweri*
Brown-headed Cowbird	*Molothrus ater*
California Gull	*Larus californicus*
Calliope Hummingbird	*Stellula calliope*
Cassin's Finch	Carpodacus cassinii
Cassin's Kingbird	*Tyrannus vociferans*
Chipping Sparrow	*Spizella passerina*
Clark's Nutcracker	*Nucifraga columbiana*
Common Grackle	*Quiscalus quiscula*
Common Raven	*Corvus corax*
Common Yellowthroat	*Geothlypis trichas*
Dark-eyed Junco	*Junco hyemalis*
Downy Woodpecker	*Picoides pubescens*
Eastern Kingbird	*Tyrannus tyrannus*
Ferruginous Hawk	*Buteo regalis*
Fox Sparrow	*Passerella iliaca*
Franklin's Gull	*Larus pipixcan*
Golden Eagle	*Aquila chrysaetos*
Gray Jay	*Perisoreus canadensis*
Great Egret	*Casmerodius albus*
Green-tailed Towhee	*Pipilo chlorurus*
Hairy Woodpecker	*Picoides villosus*
Harlan's Hawk	*Buteo jamaicensis harlani*
Harris' Sparrow	*Zonotrichia querula*
Hermit Thrush	*Catharus guttatus*
Lapland Longspur	*Calcarius lapponicus*
Lark Bunting	*Calamospiza melanocorys*
Lark Sparrow	*Chondestes grammacus*

Lesser Goldfinch	*Carduelis psaltria*
Lewis' Woodpecker	*Melanerpes lewis*
Lincoln's Sparrow	*Melospiza lincolnii*
MacGillivray's Warbler	*Oporornis tolmiei*
Nashville Warbler	*Vermivora ruficapilla*
Northern Waterthrush	*Seiurus noveboracensis*
Orange-crowned Warbler	*Vermivora celata*
Pine Grosbeak	*Pinicola enucleator*
Pine Siskin	*Carduelis pinus*
Pinyon Jay	*Gymnorhinus cyanocephalus*
Pygmy Nuthatch	*Sitta pygmaea*
Red-breasted Nuthatch	*Sitta canadensis*
Red Crossbill	*Loxia curvirostra*
Rose-breasted Grosbeak	*Pheucticus ludovicianus*
Ross' Goose	*Chen rossii*
Rosy Finch	*Leucosticte arctoa*
Rough-legged Hawk	*Buteo lagopus*
Ruby-throated Hummingbird	*Archilochus colubris*
Rufous Hummingbird	*Selasphorus rufus*
Rufous-sided Towhee	*Pipilo erythrophthalmus*
Sage Sparrow	*Amphispiza belli*
Sandhill Crane	*Grus canadensis*
Savannah Sparrow	*Passerculus sandwichensis*
Scott's Oriole	*Icterus parisorum*
Scrub Jay	*Aphelocoma coerulescens*
Snow Goose	*Chen caerulescens*
Snowy Egret	*Egretta thula*
Song Sparrow	*Melospiza melodia*
Steller's Jay	*Cyanocitta stelleri*
Swainson's Hawk	*Buteo swainsoni*
Three-toed Woodpecker	*Picoides tridactylus*
Townsend's Solitaire	*Myadestes townsendi*
Townsend's Warbler	*Dendroica townsendi*
Veery	*Catharus fuscescens*
Vesper Sparrow	*Pooecetes gramineus*
Virginia's Warbler	*Vermivora virginiae*
Western Bluebird	*Sialia mexicana*
Western Meadowlark	*Sturnella neglecta*
White-throated Sparrow	*Zonotrichia albicollis*
Williamson's Sapsucker	*Sphyrapicus thyroideus*
Wilson's Warbler	*Wilsonia pusilla*
Yellow-bellied Sapsucker	*Sphyrapicus varius*
Yellow-breasted Chat	*Icteria virens*
Yellow-headed Blackbird	*Xanthocephalus xanthocephalus*
Yellow Warbler	*Dendroica petechia*

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CRAWFORD: A GOOD LITTLE TOWN

by Peggy Barnett

Peggy Barnett is a Grand Junction professional archeologist. This paper was written for a course in historical research at Mesa College.

After the removal of the Utes from Western Colorado in the 1880s a number of small towns sprang up in the area as service centers for agricultural, livestock, and lumbering operations. Among these new centers was the town of Crawford in southeastern Delta County, "the kind of place that poets write about and people dream about."[1]

Today, one gets to Crawford following Highway 92 out of Delta in the Gunnison Valley. Beyond Hotchkiss the highway passes through farm and ranch lands spreading over mesas and into valleys as far as the eye can see. To the east are the snow-capped peaks of the West Elk Mountains, part of the Gunnison National Forest. To the southwest, the Gunnison River flows through the Black Canyon, a dark, spectacular steep-walled gorge more than one-half mile deep in places. Part of the canyon is set aside as the Black Canyon of the Gunnison National Monument. The river canyon has been a forbidding barrier to people and animals since this land was formed, but tributaries and drainages of the river such as Crystal Creek, Clear Fork, and Smith Fork have attracted people since the earliest times. Crawford itself lies on a sloping hillside high above the north bank of the Smith Fork. As Crawford is approached, traffic may be stopped by cattle moving on the highway, herded by cowboys in traditional attire, a reminder of the history of Crawford and of the time when it was a cowtown and the center of the cattle trade in the area.[2]

Thousands of years before Crawford existed, the land was occupied by various aboriginal groups. Evidence of these people is sparse near the town, but camp sites, projectile

Photo courtesy of Martha Savage

A post card showing the main intersection of Crawford, about 1940. Printing on the back of the card reads: "Life is good hereabouts 'cause a man don't keep eternally in a sweat about things.

Photo courtesty of Martha Savage

Townspeople in front of the Crawford post office on July 4, 1898.

points, and other stone tools have been found in the area. The Ute Indians, the last group to live there, were hunter-gatherers who wandered in the hills and valleys in search of game and wild plant foods. The Ute band living in what is now the Crawford area was called Tabeguache, or Uncompahgre, Utes.[3]

In September of 1879, the Utes of the White River Agency near what is now Meeker, Colorado, rose in rebellion, killed agent Nathan Meeker, and fought a major battle with the United States Army on nearby Milk Creek. For the Euro-American population in Colorado, the "Meeker Massacre" was the excuse needed to demand the removal of the Indians from western Colorado. In March, 1880, an agreement was signed that called for the Utes at the White River and Uncompahgre agencies to relinquish their remaining reservation lands and relocate to the Uintah Ute reservation in eastern Utah territory. In September of 1881, the army escorted the Utes from Colorado. It is said that a hillside near the Black Canyon National Monument still bears the scars of a fire that was set by the Indians as they left the area.[4]

Settlement of the Crawford area rapidly followed the removal of the Indians. Although the former reservation lands were not officially or legally open for claims until the summer of 1882, historical accounts state that trespasses were made on the reservation lands by Euro-Americans before the Indians left. Cattle and horses were grazing on the abundant wild grasses and a few people had built cabins. Cattlemen like Sam Hartman grazed herds over a large area from the Smith Fork to what is now Fruitland Mesa. Hartman, like many others, brought his cattle over the Black Mesa from the Gunnison area following an old Indian trail, a route that continued to be used by others entering the Crawford area. The trail eventually became the first road into the valley.[5]

As was common in most of the West, the practice was to graze stock in the mountains in the summer, then bring them down into the valleys to forage on left over grasses and crops in the winter. By 1882, thousands of head of cattle, horses, and sheep were grazing in the valley, drastically reducing the carrying capacity of the native grasslands. In the winter of 1883-1884, severe weather and the depleted supply of forage caused the death of most of the livestock in the area. Thereafter, stockmen raised their own hay, and some settlers began growing hay to sell to the stockmen. These events may have prevented a conflict that occurred in other areas of the

West: the conflict between the stockmen who wanted to graze the land and the homesteaders who wanted to farm it.[6]

By 1882, there were apparently enough settlers in the area near the present site of Crawford to justify a post office. Accounts vary, but it is reported that George A. Crawford (founder of the towns of Delta and Grand Junction, Colorado) was out riding in the area and met Harry Grant, a resident of what is now Crawford Mesa. Crawford suggested to Grant that a post office was needed for "all those people," pointing to the homesteads in the area. Grant took his suggestion and set up a temporary post office in a tent on his property west of what is now Crawford naming it "Crawford." Later that year, Joel Preston made an official application for a post office under the same name, and on April 13, 1883, the Crawford post office was established by the U. S. Post Office Department. Preston, as the first official postmaster, opened the post office in a log cabin on the Smith Fork near the present Highway 92 bridge.[7]

Photo courtesy of Martha Savage

The Maher post office in 1916.

In 1881, a store was opened on Crystal Creek for the "traffic" coming over the Black Mesa and the Maher post office opened along that route in April 1884. However, the settlers near the Smith Fork decided that the place for a real settlement should be near the Crawford post office. In about 1883 or 1884, a few of the settlers formed a cooperative and opened a store near the post office. Soon after it opened, a blacksmith shop opened next door, and about 1885, a dance hall with an eating establishment was built near the store.

Photo courtesy of Peggy Barnett

Crawford Community Methodist Church
(formerly the John Finney Memorial Methodist Episcopal Church).

However, by 1888 the small settlement was surrounded by cultivated land with nowhere to grow.[8] The 1890 census reported that the Crawford area had a population of 271 people.[9]

The only uncultivated land near the little settlement was above the Smith Fork and it had already been "claimed" by Mrs. Elizabeth Ong, who built a store there about 1892. Mrs. Ong ran the store with her son, Floyd Zimmerman, and her partner, Paul Kremmling. In 1897, Mr. and Mrs. Carl Wilson opened a rival store across the street, and a blacksmith shop was started near the two stores some time later.[10]

In August 1899, Mrs. Ong apparently deeded several acres to the town for a church and cemetery. The John Finney Memorial Methodist Episcopal Church was built on the land by Zaun and Zaun of Hotchkiss for $164.00. The church (now called the Crawford United Methodist Church) has a white-painted wooden frame with a front gable and a bell tower. The Garden of Memories Cemetery is located behind the church. Mrs. Ong died in late 1899, apparently leaving her property to Zimmerman and Kremmling.[11]

Early farmers soon discovered that agriculture was difficult, if not impossible, without an adequate supply of water. The Crawford area receives only a little over 10 inches of annual precipitation, humidity is low, and the altitude and terrain limits the growing season to about 105 days a year.

Photo courtesy of Martha Savage

Leslie J. Savage, life-long promoter of the Crawford community.

Dry farming was attempted at first and general feed crops were successful, but production depended on rainfall and spring run-off. Droughts made this type of agriculture a precarious business. Beginning in 1883, natural flows of the Smith Fork and other tributary streams began to be appropriated for irrigation. In general, small ditches such as the Aspen Ditch were constructed by individuals while irrigation companies were incorporated to construct and operate larger ditches. The Clipper Ditch, probably the earliest company project, was built between 1885 and 1887.[12]

At one time, peas, potatoes, various seed crops, and some commercial fruits were grown, but were found unprofitable because of water shortages and market conditions. In 1901, the Gould family of Fruitland Mesa organized the Fruitland Land, Water, and Livestock Company for the purpose of constructing a reservoir and system of canals. This system was to provide water for the extensive orchards that were envisioned for Fruitland Mesa, southwest of Crawford. Construction on the Gould Reservoir and canals started in 1901 and was completed in 1910. Though the system did provide added irrigation water to Fruitland Mesa, because of the altitude and climate, fruit in the Crawford area was not ready for market until after the fruit from other North Fork areas was at the market. Eventually, the settlers on the mesa (known as the "Dutch Colony") gave up on the fruit business and most of the farms were abandoned, though remnants of the orchards can be seen on the mesa today.[13]

Leslie J. Savage, one of the area's leading citizens in the early years of the twentieth century, was especially active in solving the "water problem." As the local banker, he was also a link to outside entities and people. In the early 1930s, he enlisted the help of then-Secretary of the Interior Oscar L. Chapman, Congressman Wayne N. Aspinall, and President Franklin D. Roosevelt to obtain funds from the Works Progress Administration (WPA) for an irrigation project.

Photo courtesy of Martha Savage

Crawford's farmland produced bumper crops of grain. Leslie J. Savage is on the far right.

Although the endeavor proved fruitless, Savage and several members of the Crawford community managed to interest the U. S. Bureau of Reclamation in exploring the possibilities of a project. In 1935, the Bureau began to study several possible plans for a water storage project in the upper Smith Fork Basin.[14]

In April of 1956, the Smith Fork Project was authorized for construction by Congress, and in March, 1957, the Crawford Water Conservancy District was organized with Oscar Linman as president; Thomas B. Le Valley, vice-president; Leslie J. Savage, secretary-treasurer; and Clarence Collins, Basil McKissen, and Leon Hotchkiss directors of the board. On October 3, 1960, work started on the Crawford Dam and the project was completed in 1962.[15]

Obtaining good water for domestic and municipal use was also a problem in the early years. Martha Savage, daughter of Leslie Savage, began attending school in Crawford in 1918 and recalled that the town had no running water. Buckets of water were carried from the Clipper Ditch to every house in town where the ditch water was supplemented by rain water caught in barrels. Robert Sutton (Leslie Savage called him Crawford's "Water Works") had an old horse hitched to a sled-like platform which held a large water barrel. He hauled water from the Clipper Ditch to the townspeople, for which he charged a small fee.[16]

In the early 1920s, Crawford bought Wiley Springs on Lands End Mountain about six miles northeast of town. Bonds were issued in 1924, and a water system was installed in 1925. Since then, water has been piped from the spring to storage tanks in town.[17]

After 1900, Crawford grew rapidly and became recognized as a regional trading center for the cattle and lumber industries in that area. New businesses were established: Zimmerman and Kremmling transferred land to Bert Crawford who built a store where the present post office now stands; the Fosters built a granary next to the Ong building; the blacksmith shop on the Smith Fork was moved into town; and what later became the *Crawford Chronicle* building was constructed by Dr. A. F. Groves, who opened a drugstore there. After 1901, only two businesses were still down on the Smith Fork - Goodwin's sawmill and a livery barn. The town had moved "up the hill."[18]

In 1905, Zimmerman and Kremmling sold the Ong building to George Hendricks. The building and general store and post office that operated there saw a succession of owners and postmasters until the mid-1950s when the last business closed.[19]

K. C. Collins, owner of the Crawford Blacksmith Shop, built the first elegant house in town in 1907. Collins was one of the first settlers on the Clear Fork, south of town. The large, two-story house, built by a local stone mason, was a contrast to the simple log cabins built by the early settlers and symbolic of the wealth of the growing community. The editor of the *Crawford Chronicle* mentioned it in the first issue, saying: "...and when completed will be the finest residence in Crawford." The Collins family sold the house many years later to John Stafford who, in turn, sold it to the American Legion in 1948. The house was again purchased in the late 1970s by the town and became the first town hall. The town hall was moved into the old Crawford school in 1982; the Collins house has had a variety of uses since that time.[20]

The town gained a newspaper in 1907. William Hopkins, at the suggestion of C. T. Rawalt, editor of a newspaper in the nearby town of Paonia, moved some spare printing equipment to Crawford and started the *Crawford Chronicle*. The "boosterism," crusading, and local color found in the first issues shows evidence of a society in transition from frontier to civilization:

> Let us all get together for the good of the Smith Fork at large and boost for a larger and more prosperous country. There are golden opportunities for landseekers. We have the largest and finest tract of land in Delta County, with a first-class water right and all that we need is good genuine boosting and the country will come to the front. Although the Crawford and Maher country is known as one of the finest cattle countries in Colorado we also have just as good land adaped for fruit raising as anywhere in Colorado. We raise more wheat, hay, and oats than all the rest of Delta County put together....[21]

Evidence of the growth and prosperity of the town could be seen also in the advertising and articles of the *Chronicle's* first issue:

G. W. Hendrick's general store and post office (Ong building)
Wilson's Grocery Crawford Blacksmith Shop
J. A. Stithem and Son Blacksmith Shop
Bert Crawford's general store
Foster's granary
Dr. A. F. Groves' Crawford Drugstore
Welborn's Drugstore
E. H. Porter's Crawford Hotel and Livery Stable
Dr. G. C. Faris, dentist
Dr. Daly, physician
Gus Pace's Pool Hall and Poker Parlor
Livesay's general store
R. L. Burch's Crawford Barbershop
G. W. Goodin's lumber yard
an insurance agency, a telephone company, theater and dance hall, a school, and a church.[22]

Photo courtesy of Martha Savage.

Panoramic view of early Crawford.

Hopkin's little newspaper, under various owners and editors, continued to record events in the Crawford area until the 1960s but not without its difficulties. For instance, in 1930 Don J. McCarthy, owner, editor, and publisher, disappeared sometime during the week before the February 20, 1930, issue. Two copies of the newspaper were printed on that day by unknown people. One copy, with only four pages, displayed a notice on the front page that read: "It is hoped the next issu (sic) of the *Chronicle* will be more complete. The editor, McCarthy, left in the dark." The second copy, a complete issue, had a notice on the front page stating: "This is an emergency edition of the *Chronicle.* It is printed at the office of the *Paonian*...." The issue following the disruption stated that the owners were "...the Crawford Chamber of Commerce: H. E. Welborn, President; William DenBeste, Secretary; and C. E. Drexel, Chairman of Advertising Committee." The vanished editor was not mentioned.[23]

A statement of ownership in the issue of April 3, 1930, listed the officers of the bank as owners: "E. E. Drexel, Publisher, Editor; C. E. Sammons, Business manager; L. J. Savage, Owner," Apparently the Crawford State Bank had taken over the newspaper in receivership. In July 1930, Charles M. Hillman was hired as editor and publisher, presumably with the bank still the owner.[24]

In 1950, the newspaper was sold to G. G. and Parma Tyson who moved the *Chronicle* to Hotchkiss, where they lived. The *Chronicle* continued to be published as a Crawford newspaper until 1969, when it was purchased by Gene Wells of Hotchkiss, who began publishing the *North Fork Herald-Chronicle* as: "The sucucessor to the *Hotchkiss Herald* and the *Crawford Chronicle.*"[25]

Telephones came to Crawford in 1903 when the Hotchkiss-Crawford-Maher Telephone Company was organized. Dr. Willard Follansbee, a Paonia doctor, had established a cooperative telephone exchange the year before for Paonia, Hotchkiss, and Cedaredge. Crawford's exchange was a part of that system. The "co-op" provided local service only, since it had no long distance connection. Mountain Bell brought long distance service to Crawford in 1948 but area residents and businesses then needed two phones, one for local calls and one for long distance. In 1958 the systems were over-hauled and united, using one phone for both services.[26]

The only "highway" to Crawford before 1901 was the road over the Black Mesa (the way that Sam Hartman and the

settlers came into the area) that continued on to Hotchkiss. Other roads around Crawford were two-wheel tracks from farm to farm or town to town. In 1901, the "'dobes" road from Crawford to Paonia was built. Before this road, the only way to get to Paonia was through Hotchkiss. The new road reduced transportation costs and thus increased profits for Crawford area producers. None of the "roads", however, were graveled or paved, making travel difficult, if not impossible, in bad weather. In winter, there were often problems getting mail from Hotchkiss to Crawford and on to the Maher post office; sometimes it was carried on horse-back.[27]

Post Card courtesy of Martha Savage

Crawford residents on an outing, about 1930.

Significant road improvements in the area waited the arrival of the automobile in the 1920s. In 1928 the State Highway Department instituted a road improvement program which included the realignment and surfacing of Colorado Highway 92 between Hotchkiss and Crawford, an undertaking not completed until 1954. Also in response to the use of motor vehicles, the Garage (later called the Crawford Auto Shop) opened in the mid-1920s, converted from the Crawford Blacksmith Shop. The Silver Spruce Service Station started business in 1930, named for the four Blue spruce trees that the owner planted on the site. The trees were taken down at the request of the state highway department in 1939 or 1940. One of the trees was transplanted to the yard in front of the Methodist Church where it still grows today.[28]

Construction on the first Crawford school began in 1906, with the first floor of the two-story, stone building ready for grade school in the fall of that year. A high school started in 1907, when the second floor interior was finally finished, and graduated the first two students in 1911. On December 12, 1912, the upper story of the school caught fire and the entire interior burned. Using the same type of building materials, the school was repaired and was once more ready for students by the fall of 1913.[29]

In the early twentieth century, the Crawford school district charged tuition to students who lived in other districts but attended high school in Crawford. A few students and their mothers from Maher, Onion Valley, and Clear Fork moved into town so the children could attend high school in Crawford without paying the tuition.[30] A gymnasium was completed on the school grounds in 1929. The building had been started several years earlier by the community, but problems had developed. The *Chronicle* reported in May 1928:

> The partly constructed building which had been started as a school gym has been torn down and a new and better building is expected to be built as a part of the present school building. Those who were responsible for and worked to get the frame structure under way should feel encouraged that their efforts of a few years ago are to bear fruit in the erection of a more substantial building.[31]

During the Depression Era, Federal relief funds provided by the WPA allowed the community to improve the entrance to the gym and landscape the school grounds.[32]

The economic conditions in most small towns in the nation during the 1930s and 1940s led to reduced school enrollments and the loss of teachers to better paying jobs. The general population losses throughout Delta County made it difficult to support the schools and teachers on a declining tax base. In October of 1950, all Delta county school districts were reorganized and became part of the Delta County District No. 50, with parts of Gunnison, Montrose, and Mesa Counties. The small rural schools in the Crawford area were closed; the Clear Fork School was the last and the building was moved to the Crawford school grounds in 1951.[33]

Continued erosion of the tax base and loss of population resulted in the Crawford High School closing in 1962. The students were then bused to Paonia. A new elementary school was built on the east side of town in 1981,

and in 1982, the old Crawford School and its associated buildings were abandoned by the district. Later in 1982, the Crawford school building was purchased for use as the town hall. Currently children in grades from kindergarten through eighth grades attend school in Crawford, while high school pupils go to Hotchkiss. The old school is also occupied by the Crawford Community Library and the Berea Baptist Church in addition to the town hall.[34]

Until 1910 Crawford was an unincorporated political entity. Then, on December 19, 1910, nearly 20 years after Mrs. Ong had opened the first business on the town site, Crawford was incorporated. The population had increased substantially and there were about two dozen businesses and services in town. More businesses were established in 1910 as the town continued to prosper: Sweet's general store; the Crawford State Bank; a flour mill; and a beauty and barber shop. The first city election was held in February, 1911: Charles Stoner was elected mayor and James Tressling was chosen town clerk. After the election, the town built a jail and attempted to appoint law enforcement officers, but no one would stay in the job very long. The jail has never been used on a regular basis.[35]

One of Crawford's most vigorous promoters was Leslie J. Savage who arrived from his native Hamburg, Arkansas on March 16, 1916 having moved to Colorado for his health. Savage traveled to Colorado with E. W. Gates of Arkansas, who had extensive holdings in Colorado. Savage kept books for the Gates and Morrow Land and Cattle Company.[36]

Savage homesteaded property near Cathedral Rock on Crystal Creek in Montrose County, then sent for his wife, Sallie, and his daughters, Janie, Martha, and Annie Laura, who arrived in Colorado in May 1916. The family lived in a log cabin owned by Gates on the Crystal Creek property for three summers, the time required to "prove up" on a homestead. The family moved into Crawford in 1918. Martha Savage remembers moving day. It was snowing and the big log racks on the sled runners that carried their belongings tipped over. With no dry provisions and no room in the hotel, they were invited to spend the night in the home of the Porters, owners of the hotel.[37]

After moving to Crawford, Leslie Savage continued to keep books for Gates and later for Sam Hartman as well. Savage opened an insurance business and, in 1924, purchased the majority stock in the Crawford State Bank and became the

cashier. Sometime during the 1930s he became the president of the bank.[38]

Although the bank appeared to be in good financial condition after the audit in 1940, Savage liquidated it in 1941. He then devoted his time to his insurance business and community activities. In addition to water projects, his interests included the growth and development of Western State College in Gunnison and the improvement of State Highway 92 over the Black Mesa as a scenic highway. Savage died in January of 1969 at the age of 85. He had lived to see the library at Western State named for him in 1951, and to attend the dedication of the Smith Fork Project in 1963. But, the Black Mesa Scenic Highway was not quite finished in October of 1968 when he saw it for the last time. Leslie J. Savage will be remembered for these accomplishments and for his bell collection on display in the yard of his family home on Cedar Street in Crawford.[39]

Martha Savage, Leslie's daughter, graduated from Crawford High School in 1927 and from Western State in 1931. She taught school in Hooper, Colorado for 3 years and in Hotchkiss for 6 1/2 years before being elected to the office of Delta County Superintendent of Schools in 1940. After the reorganization of the county school districts and the closing of the smaller schools, the office of the Superintendent was closed in 1967. Miss Savage had served continuously in that office for 27 years.[40]

World War I invigorated the economy of the Crawford area as beef prices rose, the result of large military consumption. But the end of the war brought an end to this market and cattle prices dropped. Thereafter, many of the area cattlemen turned to the dairy business. A cheese factory and the Mutual Cream Station opened in town in response to this change, helping, for a time, to stabilize Crawford's economy.[41]

Martha Savage especially remembers the celebration of Armistice Day on November 11, 1918. Speeches were made from a big, open wagon bed and there was a huge bonfire. There was great cheering and noisemaking at the hour the armistice went into effect.[42]

Not until 1926 did Crawford obtain a fire department, a volunteer one. An article in the *Chronicle* on May 6, 1926, stated: "Crawford's volunteer fire department was organized...and the Chief is going to have them out for

Photo courtesy of Martha Savage.

Rubble left by the big fire in November of 1926.

practice regular. It is hoped we never need their services, but the town must be prepared." But these services were soon needed for in November of 1926, a fire destroyed three buildings in Crawford's business district: Zeldenthuis's General Store, Welborn's Drug store, and the Crawford State Bank. It is said that officials at the time suspected arson by the man who was leasing and operating Sweet's general store, a competitor of Zeldenthuis. The man vanished after the fire, abandoning the store. Welborn's drug store moved into the building in 1927. Out of the fire came progress. The bank was apparently rebuilt by November of 1927. A notice in the *Chronicle* said: "The Crawford State Bank will install electric lights in the next few days, getting the current from the plant at the Leslie Savage home."[43]

Crawford prospered during the 1920s - more businesses were started and the Chamber of Commerce and Business Men's Association were great "boosters" for the town. The future looked bright. The *Chronicle* reported on May 17, 1928 that the Co-op telephone book had 173 listings, including 19 businesses and offices.[44]

In 1929, however, the years of prosperity for the area came to an end as the nation plunged into the Great Depression. The livestock industry, most important to Crawford's economy, experienced reductions in the numbers and value of stock raised. These effects were worsened by frequent droughts and resulting water shortages.[45]

The silver anniversary edition of the *Chronicle* in January, 1931, celebrated the history of the newspaper and

Photo by Kenton Main

A "Jolly Miller" flour sack from the Crawford Miling Company.

the town, but a notice in that issue showed clearly that the depression was taking its toll. Drugstore owner Henry Welborn, informed his customers that he could not stay in business unless he was paid in cash. Although he realized that everyone was "in the same boat," he would no longer extend credit for purchases.[46]

The flour mill continued to be one of Craford's most important enterprises during the Depression. It was cheaper to have flour ground from one's own grain than to buy it. However, the Mutual Cream Station, the Hollywood Cream Station (opened in 1923), and a cheese factory did not make it through the depression.[47]

Between 1930 and 1940, Federal relief programs and actions assisted financially-troubled Crawford and the surrounding area, even though some were initially met with opposition. Two that directly affected the Crawford area were the WPA and the Rural Electrification Administration (REA). The REA was created on May 11, 1935, to: "...finance the construction of rural electric distribution systems in areas not already served...." Apparently the proposal was not met with total enthusiasm. There was great dissension in the area over the installation of the system and one rancher said he would not have the poles on his property.[48]

The country was seeing the end of the depression by 1939, and in September of that year Europe was once again engaged in war. The war years saw modest prosperity return to Crawford, though the post-World War II period was not kind to small towns like Crawford. Though the cattle industry revived briefly as a result of higher farm and cattle prices in

revived briefly as a result of higher farm and cattle prices in the late 1940s, the area's economy was not healthy during the 1950s and 1960s. The bank closed as did Welborn's Drugstore and Ed Rice's Crawford Market. Many people were taking their business to the larger towns in the area. The flour mill, sustained by custom milling of grain, stopped operating as people turned to "store bought" food products. Some older buildings in town were torn down and not replaced. The only sign of progress was the building of a new post office in 1963.[49]

Since the 1960s, Crawford has been in a transition period. Services and businesses began to change in response to new consumer demands. The Crawford Dam and Reservoir completed in 1962, the nearby mountains, forests, and the Black Canyon National Monument began to draw more tourists to the area.[50] Crawford continues to serve as a trade center, but with a different emphasis than in the early years. The general stores advertise and sell more fishing and hunting equipment; and guide and pack services and ranch lodgings are available in the area. And though business customers are still the townspeople and ranchers and farmers, an increasing number of customers are outsiders either tourists or new residents who are buying old farms and ranches in the area. The latter phenomenon can be attributed to a national trend in land speculation and investment affecting the traditional uses of the land. As in most rural areas, the farmers and ranchers of the Crawford area are in serious financial trouble, with bank foreclosures on rural properties reaching Great Depression levels. As traditional farmers and ranchers sell out, properties fall into the hands of those interested in them for recreational and speculative purposes, not agriculture or livestock raising. The vigorous land exchange business is evidenced by the presence of two real estate companies in Crawford, a town of only 250 people.

Thus national and regional events take charge of things in Crawford. Cowboys yield to tourists. A vigorous young population yields to retirees. Crawford is becoming a "convenience" town, serving a reduced, older population and tourists, a far different town than its founders envisioned. But, as Martha Savage says,

> It's hard to make a living here - always has been. People love the land, work hard, and are happy. "A good, little bank in a good, little town" was the sentiment expressed on the post card conveys the reason why people love to live here - far from a doctor or a hospital.[51]

NOTES

[1]The quote is taken from Leslie J. Savage's personal postcard depicting the main street of Crawford during the 1930s. The card was contributed by Martha Savage.

[2]Joe Ben Wheat, Report of an Archeological Survey of the Crawford Reservoir site, Delta County, Colorado" in *Preliminary Planning Report: Recreation Use and Development, Crawford Reservoir, Smith Fork Project, Gunnison River Sub-Basin, Colorado* (Santa Fe: U.S.D.I. National Park Service, November 1958), 1-4; Curtis W. Martin, *A Cultural Survey for the Uncompahgre Basin Resource Area: Grazing. Final Environmental Statement* (Boulder: University of Colorado, 1977), 77-78; State Historical and Archaeological Resources Data System CYPB (SHARDS CYPD) (Denver: Office of Archeology and Historic Preservation, 1985), 9-13 (hereafter cited as SHARDS).

[3]Wilson Rockwell, *The Utes: A Forgotten People* (Denver: Sage Books, 1956), 15.

[4]*Ibid.*, Appendix III; Interview with Martha Savage, Crawford, Colorado, 12 November 1985 (hereafter cited as Savage interview).

[5]United States Code (22 Stat. 178; Ch. 357), Act of July 28, 1882; Paul M. O'Rourke, *Frontier in Transition: A History of Southwestern Colorado*, U.S.D.I., Bureau of Land Management Cultural Resources Series no. 10 (Denver: Colorado State Office, 1 980), 54; Steven F. Mehls, *The Valley of Opportunity*, U.S.D.I., Bureau of Land Management Cultural Resources Series no. 12 (Denver: Colorado State Office, 1982), 44; Mamie Ferrier and George Sibley, *Long Horns and Short Tales: A History of the Crawford Country, vol. 1:* Places (N.P., 1982), 9, 10, 37 (hereafter cited as *Long Horns*).

[6]U. S. Department of the Interior, Bureau of Reclamation, *Smith Fork Project, Colorado: A Supplement to the Colorado River Storage Project Report*, Project Planning Report, no. 48a.68-0 (Salt Lake City: Bureau of Reclamation, February 1951), 5 (hereafter cited as *Smith Fork PPR*); Ferrier and Sibley, *Long Horns*, 12.

[7]The story of George A. Crawford and Harry Grant appears to have no factual basis, but the account has been told and written about (in various versions) in the following: Ferrier and Sibley, *Long Horns.*, 44-45; Wilson Rockwell, *New Frontier: Saga of the North Fork* (Denver: The World Press, 1945), 89 (hereafter cited as *New Frontier*); Colorado Writers Project "Colorado Place Names (C)," *Colorado Magazine* (July, 1940), 125-143; Brochure Committee, *Hotchkiss and Crawford, 1881-1910* (Delta, Colorado: *Delta County Independent*, 1976), n.p. (hereafter cited as Brochure Committee). The postmaster appointments are found in: William H. Bauer, James L. Ozment, and John H. Willard, *Colorado Postal History: The Post Offices* (Crete, Nebraska: J-B Publishing Co., 1971), 40 (hereafter cited as *Colorado Postal History*); *Appointments of Postmasters, 1832-1971, Adams-Kit Carson Counties, Colorado*. Microfilm roll no. 14, National Archives, Washington, D. C. Crawford's postmasters, mayors, newspaper owners, and population figures are listed in the appendix.

[8]Ferrier and Sibley, *Long Horns*, 44-46; Wilson Rockwell, *New Frontier*, 87; Colorado Postal History, 40; *Smith Fork DPR*, 13. Without further research, it can not be determined if these businesses were located on land claims, or whether they were "squatters." None of the now privately-owned land in the Crawford area was patented until after October 2,1888, because government surveys of the former reservation lands were not complete. These included surveys by the state that were used to realign county boundaries in the process of adding counties and dividing existing ones. Originally the present townsite of Crawford was a part of Lake County, but became a part of Gunnison County in 1877. Delta County was formed from a part of Gunnison County in 1883. The Delta County survey was finished in 1889.

[9]Suzanne Sculze, comp., *A Century of the Colorado Census*, rev. ed. with microform collection by Robert Markham (Greeley, Colorado: University of Northern Colorado, Michener Library, 1977), 1890:3. Remaining population figures can be found at: 1900:5; 1910:11; 1920:4,7; 1930:9,21; 1940:10,17; 1950: 9,16; 1960:11,13; 1970:5,11; and in: U. S. Department of Commerce, Bureau of the Census, *Current Population Reports: Local Population Estimates*, ser. P-26, no. 82-6-SC (Washington: Government Printing Office, September 1984), 7; *Current Population Reports*, ser. 27, no. 84-0-SC (Denver: Regional Bureau of the Census, December 1985), 5.

[10]Ferrier anad Sibley, *Long Horns*, 46-48; Rockwell, *New Frontier*, 89; SHARDS, 10; Savage interview. Mrs. Ong. Wilson, and others may have held preemptive claims on those properties, or they may have been "squatters." Records of the General Land Office, now kept by the U.S.D.I. Bureau of Land Management, Denver, Colorado, show that the first patents on the land that is now the town of Crawford were filed in 1899, 1902, and 1908. The southern half of the town was patented by Silas S. Eggleston in 1899 (#26548), and by Paul Kruemling in 1902 (#1154, two patents). This is the part of town where the Ong building sits. The northern half of town was patented by John A. Phillips in 1908 (#1155). Kruemling's first patent was cancelled because the name was misspelled-Kruembing. Kruemling was probably Paul "Kremmling," Mr. Ong's partner - the names are pronounced the same. It is not clear, however, why Kruemling did not patent the property until 1902, three years after Mrs. Ong's death, nor why Mrs. Ong's son, Floyd Zimmerman, did not file the patent.

[11]Savage interview; SHARDS, 10; Ferrier and Sibley, *Long Horns*, 48, 55-56; Brochure Committee, n.p.

[12]U. S. Department of the Interior, Bureau of Reclamation, *Final Environmental Statement: Fruitland Mesa Project, Colorado*, INT FES 77-10 (Salt Lake City: Bureau of Reclamation, 25 March 1977), 11 (hereafter cited as Fruitland Mesa, FES); *Smith Fork PPR*, 6.

[13]*Smith Fork PPR*, 23; *Fruitland Mesa FES*, 3; Ferrier and Sibley, *Long Horns*, 25-30.

[14]U. S., Department of the Interior, Bureau of Reclamation, *Project History: Smith Fork Project-Colorado*, vol. 1, *Initial Project History, 1936-1968* (Grand Junction, Colorado: Bureau of Reclamation Projects Office, 1960), 4 (hereafter cited as *Smith Fork: Project History*); *Smith Fork PPR*, 8.

[15]*Smith Fork: Project History*, 10-12; United States Code (70 Stat. 105), Colorado River Storage Project Act of April 11, 1956. 43 U.S.C. 620, et seq., P. L. 84- 485, as amended.

[16]Savage interview.

[17]Savage interview; U.S., Department of Interior, Bureau of Reclamation, *Smith Fork Project, Colorado: Definite Plan Report* (Salt Lake City: Bureau of Reclamation, May 1959), 42 (hereafter cited as *Smith Fork DPR*); Ferrier and Sibley, *Long Horns*, 55.

[18]Ferrier and Sibley, *Long Horns*, 48, 72; SHARDS, 10, 12; Savage interview.

[19]Ferrier and Sibley, *Long Horns*, 68-70.

[20]SHARDS, 9; Ferrier and Sibley, *Long Horns*, 70; *Crawford Chronicle*, 19 July 1907; Savage interview.

[21]*Crawford Chronicle*, 19 July 1907. The owners, editors, and publishers of the *Chronicle* are found in: Walter H. Stewart and Elma St. John Stewart, *Colorado Newspapers: Editors, Owners: 1935-1977* (Greeley, Colorado: Elmarry Publications, 1978), 102; Ferrier and Sibley, *Long Horns*, 76-77; Colorado State Board of Immigration, *Year Book of the State of Colorado*, 8 vols. (Denver: Bradford-Robinson Printing, (1935-1955), (1945-1947), 370, (1951-1955), 534 (hereafter cited as *Year Book, 1935-1955)* Colorado State Planning Division, *Year Book of the State of Colorado*, 3 vols. (Denver: State Planning Division, 1956-1964), (1956-1958), 515, (1959-1961), 568, (1962-1964), 39 (hereafter cited as *Year Book, 1956-1964*); *Crawford Chronicle*, 1923-1928: various, 27 February, 3 April, 10 July 1930, 28 Jan. 1931; *The North Fork Herald-Chronicle*, 1 Jan.1970.

[22]*Crawford Chronicle*, 19 July 1907.

[23]Ibid., 20 February (two issues) and 27 February 1930.

[24]Ibid., 3 April and 10 July 1930.

[25]*Year Book, 1956-1964*, (1956-1958), 515; (1959-1961), 568; (1962-1964), 395; *The North Fork Herald-Chronicle*, 1 January 1970.

[26]*Delta County Co-operative Telephone Company*, (Paonia, Colorado: Delta County Cooperative Telephone Company, 1979), 8 (hereafter cited as *Telephone Company)*.

[27]Ferrier and Sibley, *Long Horns*, 39; Savage interview.

[28]Ferrier and Sibley, *Long Horns*, 40, 78-80; Savage interview.

[29]SHARDS, 12; Savage interview; Ferrier and Sibley, *Long Horns*, 89.

[30]Savage interview.

[31]SHARDS, 12; *Crawford Chronicle*, 17 May 1928.

[32]Ferrier and Sibley, *Long Horns*, 90.

[33]*Year Book*, 1935-1955, (1945-1947),: 378-379; Savage interview; Ferrier and Sibley, *Long Horns*, 92.

[34]Savage interview; *Year Book, 1956-1964*, (1962-1964), 361; Ferrier and Sibley, *Long Horns*, 93.

[35]Colorado State Board of Immigration, *Year Book of the State of Colorado*, 15 vols. (Denver: Bradford-Robinson Printing, 1925-1934), Gazetteer (hereafter cited as *Year Book, 1925-1934*); Savage interview; Ferrier and Sibley, *Long Horns* , 48-49, 61, 79, 84-85, 93, 98. Crawford's government editorials are also found in:*Year Book, 1925-1934*, Gazetteer; *Year Book, 1935-1955*, Gazetteer;*Year Book, 1956-1964*, Gazetteer; Interview, Susan Hansen, Crawford, Colorado, 25 November 1985, 16 June 1986.

[36]Savage interview.

[37]Savage interview; *U. S. Code* (35 Stat. 639; 43 U. S.C. 218), Act of February 19, 1909; (32 Stat. 384; Ch. 10 80), Act of June 13, 1902; (12 Stat. 3932), Homestead Act of 1862.

[38]Savage interview.

[39]Ferrier and Sibley, *Long Horns*, 64-66; *Year Book, 1935-1955*, (1939-1940) Gazetteer; Savage interview.

[40]Savage interview; *Year Book; 1935-1955*, (1945-1947), 532; (1954-1959), 571; *Year Book, 1956-1964* (1959-1961), 199; (1962-1964) 361.

[41]*Smith Fork* PPR, 8; Ferrier and Sibley, *Long Horns*, 70.

[42]Savage interview.

[43]*Crawford Chronicle*, 6 May 1926, 24 November 1927; Ferrier and Sibley, *Long Horns*, 84.

[44]*Year Book, 1925-1934*, (1925), 186, Gazeteer; *Crawford Chronicle*, 17 May 1928.

[45] Paul M. O'Rourke, *Frontier in Transition: A History of Southwestern Colorado*, 155; Duane Vandenbusche and Duane A. Smith, *A Land Alone: Colorado's Western Slope* (Boulder, Colorado: Pruett, 1981) 215; Smith Fork PPR, 17.

[46]*Crawford Chronicle*, 28 January 1931.

[47]Ferrier and Sibley, *Long Horns*, 85, 94.

[48]*Year Book, 1935-1955*, (1943-1944), 490; Savage interview.

[49]Ferrier and Sibley, *Long Horns*, 67, 69, 74, 77, 94; Smith Fork PPR, 7; *Year Book, 1935-1955*, (1948-1950): Gazetteer.

[50]Ferrier and Sibley, *Long Horns*, 33; *Telephone Company*, 8.

[51]Savage interview.

CHINESE IN EARLY GRAND JUNCTION

By Christian J. Buys

Christian J. Buys is Vice President for Academic Affairs and Professor of Psychology at Mesa College.

Yep Mow arrived in Grand Junction on November 19, 1882. The *Grand Junction News*, barely one month old, took notice of this "first Chinaman" who settled in the town. The editor praised Mow's "great faith" in Grand Junction, his investment in local real estate, and his proposed laundry business.[1] Surely Mow's native land was China, although he had not recently braved an ocean to get here. He had traveled by wagon from Gunnison, Colorado, his home of several years.

Nine months later Yep Mow's name again appeared in the young town's only newspaper. This time the editor heralded him as an exemplary Chinaman who should not be driven from the city.[2]

Unfortunately, Mow's experiences in and contributions to early Grand Junction have slipped from the grasp of Western Slope history – a grasp loosened by the prejudice and selective perception of the general public late in the nineteenth century. Thus, Yep Mow's fragmented story is typical for Chinese, and other minorities as well, in frontier towns. To fill in the gaps, one must make inferences based on a paucity of well documented incidents and then chance more inferences based on enticing bits of fragile evidence.

The United States census for Mesa County showed three Chinese in1890, four in 1900, two in 1910, and one in 1920.[3] Of the approximately 885 marriage certificates issued in Mesa County between the first of March 20, 1883 and January 1, 1900, no Chinese names appeared.[4] Nor has there been found, to date, a single recorded Chinese grave site in early cemeteries in Mesa County which include close to 3,000

From *Grand Junction News* of December 2, 1882.

Tantalizing items like the newspaper advertisement above indicate a Chinese population during the frontier period of the Western Slope.

names.[5] Vital statistics regarding births and deaths in Mesa County in the late nineteenth century similarly lack Chinese names.[6] That a few Chinese took American names and simply merged with all the others is likely, but could not account for the majority who kept their native surnames. Finally, no mention was made of the ubiquitous Chinese "coolies" in a detailed history of the Denver and Rio Grande Western Railway (D&RGWRy), the first railroad to connect Grand Junction with Denver and Salt Lake.[7] Thus, it is tempting to conclude that few Chinese ventured into Grand Junction and even fewer stayed.

The information presented above, however, is unreliable, incomplete, or both. Census takers during this period often "overlooked" or "bunched together" most minorities.[8] For instance a census report published in the *Grand Junction News* on July 20, 1901 (p. 3) found that 179 "colored males and females" including Negroes, Japanese, Chinese, and Indians lived in Mesa County. Since Chinese were not granted legal status in Colorado and the United States, they seldom, if ever, obtained marriage licenses.[9] In the Chinese mind, burial in foreign soil – in this case Mesa County soil – was unthinkable because it meant the certain loss of eternal life. Indeed, Chinese throughout the American West buried their deceased in shallow graves to facilitate exhuming the bodies, scraping the bones, and shipping them back to China.[10] Lastly, a short note in the *Grand Junction News* on December 14, 1884 (p. 3) stated, "There are about 1,000 Chinamen at P. V. [Pleasant Valley Junction, Utah]" pushing the D&RGWRy toward Grand Junction. This has been confirmed by the author who has visually inspected a half-dozen sites along the narrow gauge route (D&RGWRy) built in 1882 and abandoned in 1890. About half of the sidings and work camps between Grand Junction, Colorado and Green River, Utah have scattered pieces of Chinese opium tins, crockery, and ceramic ware. Most of these Chinese worked strictly on railroad crews and had little occasion to frequent towns. A few, however, settled in nearby towns following the completion of their obligations to the railroads.

Other evidence suggests that more Chinese lived in Grand Junction after the arrival of Yep Mow. On December 2, 1882, an ad for the "Sam Sing" laundry on Main Street appeared in the local paper. Early in 1883 the same paper noted that "The Sam Sing Chinese laundry has moved into a new quarters on Colorado Avenue, near Third Street."[11] Sam Sing advertised in each weekly edition of the *Grand Junction News* until April 12, 1884 when his ad abrubtly ceased, never to appear again. In 1893 and 1895, however, Sam Sing Laundry is listed as a Grand Junction enterprise in the *Colorado State Business Directory*. Thus, the evidence, albeit indirect, suggests Sam Sing and possibly a few Chinese co-workers were Grand Junction businessmen for at least fifteen years.

Other Chinese names and business listings appeared randomly in various documents related to early Grand Junction. The names "Tung Chum" and "Wah Gee" appeared on lists of unclaimed letters at the post office during 1884.[12] A "Youn (sometimes spelled with a "g") Quong" laundry appeared under Grand Junction in the *Colorado Business Directory* in 1891, 1893, and 1894. In 1896 Youn Quong was listed in association with a "Chinese goods and laundry store." "C. H. Wah" and "Sing Wing" were both listed as owners of laundries in the *Directory*, but appear only in 1893.

In the spring of 1883 a short news item reported a Chinese male lost control of "one of Hammond's team" and was "dragged several rods with his head in a tight place," although no physical harm resulted.[13] This same summer the city council passed an ordinance prohibiting the "opium joints" which had recently appeared. A newspaper article published soon after the new ordinance passed revealed that the law was not being enforced and that "others," probably Anglo Americans, were culpable:

> The poor Chinamen are being cursed for keeping opium joints, while the facts are no Chinamen are engaged in the business. If there isn't something done about certain dens in this town we shall publish names.[14]

Hostilities toward the Chinese which were beginning to percolate to the surface in Grand Junction also suggest the presence of more than a few Chinese. In a back-handed slap on August 11, 1883 one reads in the *Grand Junction News*: "The danger to Mesa County on account of Chinese and Mormons combined, is not half that arising from her own statesmen and the gods of Gunnison."[15] The very next week the

editor of the *Grand Junction News* accused the mayor of complicity in a plot to drive the Chinese out of Grand Junction. An armed "desperado" and an "equally desperate band of followers" were persuaded to disband by Sheriff Florida after he incarcerated their leader. The desperado, "Buck," broke out of jail only to be found that night in the mayor's office. This raised the ire of the editor who cried foul immediately and praised the sheriff and "Captain Crawford's Company" for preventing violence toward "our Chinese inhabitants [who are] protected as completely as any of their white brothers." The *Grand Junction News* singled out Yep Mow, "a Christianized Chinaman, a man worth from $1,000 to $1,500," as the kind of Chinese person who should not be arbitrarily driven from town. Lastly, the editor states "[those] who could wish the Chinamen out of town, are largely in excess of those who would keep them here. . . . [but] when violence knows that law will wink at it, what wonder that it grows bold."[16] A week prior to this the *Grand Junction News* reprinted a lengthy and eloquent plea for Chinese rights by Chin Foo of New York.[17]

Lest one get the wrong impression, attitudes toward the Chinese were undoubtedly negative in most quarters of the Grand Junction population – even among those who tried, on occasion, to be fair. The next issue of the *Grand Junction News* (August 25, 1883) carried a truculent statement:

> The Chinese are unpleasant, but the man who expresses his hate by breaking windows and such dirty work is meaner than the Mongolians. There are decent methods of extermination.[18]

This affair of the summer of 1883 stuck with W. P. Kingsley, the editor of the *Grand Junction News*. In a letter from this pioneer newsman (he had long since left Grand Junction) to the *Grand Junction News* on March 30, 1895 he related stories about a gang on "Hoodo St." which was going to run "certain inoffensive and industrious Chinamen out of the city."

Perhaps some praise – over a century late – is due editor Kingsley, Sheriff Florida, and Crawford's Company for helping squelch a mob from descending upon the Chinese in early Grand Junction. After all, their neighbors to the north in Rock Springs, Wyoming Territory formed a similar mob which resulted in the deaths of twenty-eight Chinese in September of 1885.[19]

The massacre in Wyoming Territory attracted scant attention in the *Grand Junction News*. This was surprising given the racial tension which had, and probably still, existed in the town. Mention of the Rock Springs murders finally found its way into the back pages of the *Grand Junction News* nearly three weeks later:

> Taken altogether, their burying their gold and silver in the ground–as at Rock Springs–to be taken back to China: their exclusive dealing and consumption of Chinese supplies as far as possible; their abasement, so far as their life in America is concerned, of that God's best gift to man, sweet woman, to a form of prostitution to which life in a Holladay street bagnio is decent; and finally, the reeking filth and the foul odors of the sepulchral cellars in San Francisco, to which even the sickening stench of two skunks was an amelioration; taken altogether it my be said that the sooner "they go" the better it will be for America.[20]

Indeed, during the 1880s the Chinese faced difficult times in many western towns. Several things about them upset Americans. Their desire to return to China, their parsimonious ways, their eating and drinking habits, as well as their "strange" dress, speech, and religion, offended most Americans, who ignored the fact that the Chinese were outstading workers, frugal businessmen, and exhibited a passive demeanor. The Chinese seemed to be a conspicious exception to the American melting pot ideal.

There were additional complaints: too few of their families accompanied them; the small number of Chinese women shipped to America were presumed to be enslaved prostitutes from the lower classes. But the most significant complaint was economic: the Chinese worked harder and longer for less money than their American counterparts. Consequently, Denver, Seattle, Tacoma, San Francisco, Los Angeles, and numerous other large and small cities experienced anti-Chinese riots, murders, and general antipathy toward Chinese.[21] It seems that Grand Junction, thanks to some strong equalitarian leadership, somehow avoided a violent confrontation.

Nevertheless, several articles in the *Grand Junction News* contained scathing views of the Chinese presence in America and, by inference, Grand Junction.[22] The focus of these venomous attacks usually, as suggested earlier, fixated on the belief that cheap labor would undermine the American economy and ultimately topple any hope for the illusive

"American dream." For example, on January 30, 1886 the *Grand Junction News* published the following article about the despised "celestials":

> The bullet in Garfield's body was not more fatal to the life of that industrious statesman than foreign and pagan incongruity of the Chinese to the moral, intellectual and industrial life of the American nation.[23]

It would serve no useful purpose to document the frequent ethnic slurs in the *Grand Junction News* directed at, among others, the Chinese. Suffice it to say the *Grand Junction News*, as other papers of the time, devoted its fair share of print to confirming and to reinforcing negative stereotypes of people from the "Flowery Kingdom."[24] Given the frequency and prevalance of such negative stereotypes it seems incredible, as mentioned previously, that more ethnic violence did not occur in Grand Junction.

Or did violence occur? As with Yep Mow's enigmatic role in early Grand Junction, only bits and pieces of information are available. For instance, on November 7, 1888 (p. 3) a short "Local Affairs" item in the *Grand Junction News* mentioned that Joseph Young, the one who was tried for killing "Chinaman Charlie," was shot and killed at Moab, Utah. Although the editor expressed pleasure at Young's death, "his untimely taking off will probably save the county many hundreds of dollars of expense," nothing else was written about Chinaman Charlie. Does this hint of other similar incidents? There is no way to confirm such speculation.

Since the newspaper and civic leaders devoted so much time to grappling with their attitudes toward the Chinese presence in the community, state, and nation, it is logical to infer that the Chinese Grand Junction during the 1880s and 1890s comprised a readily recognizable minority of the town. There remains a frustrating lack of information regarding precisely how many of Grand Junction's one thousand or so denizens in the 1880s and triple this number in the 1890s were Chinese. A historical vacuum also exists about the lives of Grand Junction's early Chinese residents. That they helped clean clothes in this pioneer city – viewed by another newspaper in 1882 to be "as dirty, ornery looking place as it ever falls to the lot of a mortal to see" may have been no small matter.[25] Clearly the Chinese played other roles as well, perhaps significant ones, in Grand Junction's formative social, business, and political years.

NOTES

[1] *Grand Junction News*, 25 November, 1882, p. 3.

[2] *Ibid.*, 25 August 1883, p. 3.

[3] Rose Hum Lee, *The Growth and Decline of Chinese Communities in the Rocky Mountain Region*. New York: Arno Press, 1978.

A State of Colorado Census Bureau report for Mesa County dated 17 November 1885 lists one person of Chinese heritage (a "Lee" with an undecipherable last name beginning with "B").

[4] Date obtained from a list compiled by the Grand Junction Geneological Society. Available at The Ancestor Shop in Grand Junction, Colorado. Special thanks to owners Gene H. and Phyllis George.

[5] Gene H. and Phyllis George have documented approximately 15,000 of an estimated 30,000 names found in 14 Mesa County cemeteries. Gene George kindly assisted the author in reviewing all names recorded prior to 1900.

[6] *State Board of Health Report 1876-1894* (Denver State Printing Office). Available in Denver Public Library.

[7] Robert G. Athearn, *Rebel of the Rockies*. New Haven, Connecticut: Yale University Press, 1962.

[8] Stanley Steiner, *Fusang, the Chinese Who Built America*. New York: Harper & Row, 1979, p. 124.

[9] John R. Wunder, "Chinese in Trouble: Criminal Law and Race on the Trans-Mississippi West Frontier," *The Western Historical Quarterly* 17 (1) (January 1986), pp. 26-41.

[10] *Grand Junction News*, 26 September 1885, p. 2.

[11] *Ibid.*, 10 February, 1883, p. 3

[12] *Ibid.*, 8 March 1884, pp. 2 and 5 July 1884, p. 3.

[13] *Ibid.*, 19 May 1883, p. 3.

[14] *Ibid.*, 25 August 1883, p. 3.

[15] *Ibid.*, 11 August 1883, p. 3

[16] *Ibid.*, 25 August 1886, p. 3.

[17] *Ibid.*, 18 August 1883, p. 2.

[18] *Ibid.*, 25 August 1885, p. 3.

[19] Paul Crane and Alfred Larson, "The Chinese Massacre." *Annals of Wyoming*, Vol. 12, No. 1 (January, 1940), pp. 47-55.

[20] *Grand Junction News*, 26 September 1885, p. 2.

[21] Roger Daniels, ed., *Anti-Chinese Violence in North America*. New York: Arno Press, 1978.

[22] *Grand Junction News*, 17 May 1884, p. 1; 9 August 1884, p. 1; 27 March 1886, p. 1; 27 October 1888, p. 1; 7 September 1889, p. 1.

[23] *Ibid.*, 30 January 1886, p. 1.

[24] *Ibid.*, 20 January 1883, p. 4; 23 June 1883, p. 4; 15 September 1883, p. 2; 18 March 1884, p. 2; 5 July 1884, p. 1; 11 July 1885, p. 4; 25 July 1885, p. 4; 8 August 1886, p. 2; 1 February 1890, p. 1; 22 February 1890, p. 3.

[25] *Ibid.*, 18 November 1882, p. 1. Numerous other references to the events and Chinese persons mentioned in this article appeared in the *Grand Junction News* between 1883 and 1890: 28 April 1883; 4 August 1883; 23 August 1883; 8 September 1883; 13 December 1884; 14 February 1885; 3 October 1885; 16 January 1886; 17 July 1886; 9 April 1887; 3 December 1887; 3 May 1890.

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