

IDAHO

SNAKE RIVER DESERT,
June 9 - 22, 1921
Luther J. Goldman.

ITINERARY

On June 9th. 1921 I left Arco, Idaho with the R.W. Limbert Expedition on a trip of scientific investigation to the Snake River Desert.

Fourteen days were spent in the northern part of this desert among the comparatively recent eruptions, lava flows and craters. This section of the desert has recently been named, "The Craters of the Moon".

Leaving Arco by auto we traveled about 25 miles to a point on the northern edge of the desert passing the post office of Martin enroute. Here we crossed the first lava flow with team and pack horses and continued about 6 miles to Echo Crater. Camp was established and several days devoted to investigating the surrounding country and collection of natural history specimens.

On June 14 camp was shifted by pack horse from Echo Crater to Fissure Butte. Various points were visited from this camp and collection made of natural history specimens.

On June 18 we returned to the base camp at Echo Crater and on the 20th. moved to a water hole on the edge of the desert near Tiko Crater. A brief stop was made at this locality and on June 22 we returned to Arco where the expedition disbanded.

Owing to our limited facilities for carrying supplies, the most necessary equipment only could be taken on the trip. My means for collecting were a small shot-gun, six-shooter and a few traps. No attempt was made to secure series of mammals or a collection of birds. In the course of my work I shall have occasion to again visit this region from time to time and can make a point of picking up any further natural history material specially desired.

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PHYSIOGRAPHY

The Snake River Desert is located in the central part of southern Idaho. It comprises that section of country bounded on the south and east by Snake River, on the north by the basal slopes of the Sawtooth and Lemhi Mountains, and on the west by Wood River.

The heart of this desert, owing to a fancied resemblance to the supposed appearance of the moons' surface, has recently been named the "Craters or Valley of the Moon".

The formation throughout is lava rock, the greater part of ancient origin. In the northern half of the desert are found craters, lava flows and fields of cinders of comparatively recent eruption.

The region comprises an odd collection of craters, lava-flows, fissures, and caverns, some of which are natural refrigerators containing ice. Interspersed are areas of partially decomposed lava and cinders supporting a fine growth of grass, desert brush and scrub timber.

DRAINAGE

Big and Little Lost Rivers and Birch Creek enter the desert from the north. All of these finally sink and disappear. There is a general belief that Big Lost River emerges in a multitude of springs known as Thousand Springs, on the banks of Snake River near the mouth of Salmon river north of Hagerman, Idaho. Water may be found at frequent intervals in parts of the desert. There are numbers of pools in the lava-fields and craters, doubtless connected with an under-ground source. Pure water may also be obtained from several ice-caves.

VEGETATION.

The region supports a fine growth of bunch and rye grass, also several species of small plants and flowers. Sage and buck brush grow luxuriantly. Juniper, limber and pinon pines occur in parts.

June 9--22, 1921

Luther J. Goldman.

MAMMALSOdocoileus hemionus

Mule deer are reported as resident on Big Butte, a large mountain located in the eastern part of the desert. In winter these deer range from the Sawtooth Mountains to Snake River. In December 1920 a bunch of deer were reported from Snake River near Minidoka. I have frequently seen weathered antlers on the desert and in years gone by, the animals were no doubt plentiful in this region during the winter months.

* Antilocapra americana

A member of our party reported seeing an antelope in the central part of the desert, approximately 20 miles south-west of Big Butte. They are known to occur in small bands on Lost Rivers and Birch Creek.

✓ Ovis

Badly weathered horns and skulls were found among the craters in the northern part of the desert. In years gone by they were no doubt plentiful in this region.

Mr. Charles Matley, foreman for the Wood Live Stock Company, of Spencer, Idaho, tells me that a band of mountain sheep range the divide between the Antelope and Pahsamaroi Valleys, a few miles south of May, Idaho.

Bison americanus

A badly weathered horn was found.

* Sciurus (2756)

Not common. Found in the pine timber of the northern part of the desert.

* Citellus columbianus

Common about Martin, a post office on the ^{northern} edge of the desert. No ground squirrels were found beyond the first lava flows.

✓ Eutamias (2740)

Common throughout

✓ Marmota (2759)

Common throughout all parts of the desert visited, especially in the vicinity of water holes.

Onychomys

Should occur in this part of Idaho, none were taken on the trip. I have collected them in the south-western part of the state.

✓ Peromyscus (2751)

Extremely common in all parts visited.

✓ Neotoma (2758)

Common in the lava fields and craters, especially in the vicinity of water holes.

MAMMALS (Continued)Microtus (2749)

Not abundant, but taken occasionally in the traps, on the sage brush grown cinder flats many miles from the nearest running water and in localities where no water ever ran.

Lagurus

Should occur, no specimens were taken.

Thomomys

Not plentiful. A few mounds were found in the grass grown cinder and lava ash. Evidently a small species. No specimens were taken. At some future time I will collect them to represent the locality.

Perognathus (2753)

Pocket mice are unusually plentiful in this region. Curiously enough, I several times took them alive in gopher runways. Much of this section of country is covered with a layer of rather fine cinders. This deposit is of such recent origin that but a few inches of the surface is partially decomposed. The gopher runways are so near the surface that a light touch causes them to cave in, and they may be exposed with the bare hands. In searching for the main gopher burrows, I sometimes found pocket mice at the end of the laterals.

Ochotona (2761)

Pikas were found in small numbers in the lava slides at Echo Crater. In the lava fields farther in the interior of the desert I found an abundance of old sign, but experienced the greatest difficulty in securing one specimen from this section of the locality. Evidently as a result of disease or other cause the pikas have for the time disappeared. It is possible that at other points in the desert I might have found them in abundance.

Lepus ()

small numbers.

Black-tail jack rabbits were found in

Lepus

White -tail jack rabbits occur. I found one dead animal at the bottom of a blow-out. No living animals were seen by our party. An abundance of rabbit "sign" was seen everywhere. It is possible the rabbits have migrated for the summer to the adjacent foot-hills of the mountains.

Sylvilagus

Not common. A few individuals were seen.

Brachylagus (2764)

Not plentiful. A few pigmy rabbits were seen in several sections of the desert. They range to the basal slopes of the Sawtooth Mountains. The specimen was taken at Minidoka at the southern end of the desert.

Lynx

None seen. No doubt bobcats are plentiful in the vicinity of water holes.

MAMMALS (Continued)Canis

Coyotes were found quite plentiful in this region. Three families of pups were seen by various members of the party, also several adults. We also saw an abundance of tracks. On one occasion we jumped a big brown mountain coyote at such short range I was able to help him on his way with a charge of fine shot. On another occasion I came on a family of half grown pups near Fissure Butte. Few people enter the interior of this desert and it is probable these coyotes had never seen a man. They permitted me to approach to within about 100 yards, when with the wild animals' usual distrust of man decided that a closer acquaintance was undesirable.

Vulpes

Reported by local inhabitants.

Ursus

No positive indications of the presence of bears was found by any member of the party. They are known to inhabit the region and I had thought their main stronghold might be found in this seldom visited section of the interior of the desert. The indications are that the bears live along the outer edges of the desert only, possibly occasionally wandering into the craters of the north-central part.

Stockmen have frequently reported depredations by grizzly bears. These reports come from the country just north of Minidoka in the southern part of the desert. From Liedlowe Park, a lava ringed prairie east of the town of Carey and from the vicinity of Big Butte on the eastern edge of the desert. These losses occur in the early summer months when the sheep are trailed from the winter feeding grounds along Snake River to the summer ranges in the Sawtooth and Lemhi Mts.

There is a wide-spread belief among the people of south Idaho that a small, yellowish, woolly grizzly inhabits this region. While on this trip I talked with Mr. James Lindsay of Arco. Mr. Lindsay has ranged sheep in this section for a number of years. He tells me that he has had sheep killed by bears, but described them as a "big bald faced cinnamon bear". He told me of finding a dead bear this spring in the vicinity of Big Butte, and promised to secure the skull for me. He also told me of a bear killed by one of his herders and will try to find the skull.

Some time ago I sent in the skull of a grizzly killed near Minidoka. This skull was identified by Dr. C. Hart Merriam as the same species of grizzly found in Wyoming.

The celebrated "sun bear" remains at large. However I settled one point on the trip. The craters and lava flows of the interior of this desert is not the stronghold of grizzlies. The place to get them will be on the sheep ranges along the outer edges of the desert.

In 1917 Mr. Carlos McIntosh, one of my hunters killed a bear in the lava fields north of Minidoka. This specimen was shipped to Washington with a consignment of coyote skins. The shipment was lost enroute, I understand was traced as far as Chicago, and there disappeared. This animal was rather small and of a dirty brindle color. I believe it was a grizzly, judging from the toe-nails and color. The loss of this bear was a great misfortune, it might have settled this "lava or sun bear" question.

MAMMALS (Continued)

(2757) (2762)

Bats were rare in the interior of the desert, but fairly common in the pine timber along the northern edge. They flew for a short time late in the evening and appeared to be feeding on the abundance of winged insects found buzzing about the pine trees.


Luther J. Goldman,
Predatory Animal Inspector.

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BIRDS

Oxyechus vociferus

Common about marshy pools along Lost River, near Arco.

✓ Centrocercus urophasianus

A female bird with brood of young was seen near Martin, on the north edge of the desert. I also saw one female sage hen near Fissure Butte in the interior. A little sign was seen but they evidently are not plentiful.

✓ Zenaidura macroura

Mourning doves are common in the desert in the vicinity of water holes. It is by watching the flight of these doves that many of the pools in the lava-fields were located.

✓ Cathartes aura

Turkey buzzards are not common. I observed an individual at Fissure Butte.

✓ Buteo borealis calurus

LT Hawk

Several of these hawks were seen. A pair were found nesting on a ledge of rock in Echo Crater. The nest contained two half grown young. On one occasion a parent bird was observed carrying a snake to the nest.

Aquila chrysaetos

Golden eagles occur throughout this region. I observed but one individual on the trip.

✓ Falco sparverius

Common throughout the region visited. A pair was found nesting in a hollow tree near our camp at Fissure Butte.

✓ Bubo virginianus pallascens (604)

A family of one adult and two young fully feathered and flying about the cliffs, were found at Echo Crater. I also saw an adult at Tiko Crater.

✓ Colaptes cafer

Flickers were fairly common in the pine timber at all points visited.

Chordeiles

Night hawks were not plentiful, but a few were observed in all sections of the desert.

✓ Tyrannus

A few kingbirds were observed about Arco, and Martin.

BIRDS (Continued)Sayornis saya

Not common. Observed at Fissure Crater.

Otocoris

None were observed in the interior of the desert. They occur along the northern edge.

Pica pica hudsonica

None were observed in the interior of the desert. Common along the northern edge.

Nucifraga columbiana

A few were seen in the pine timber in the vicinity of Fissure and Echo Craters.

Agelaius phoeniceus

None seen in the desert. They were observed on Lost River near Arco.

Sturnella magna neglecta

Meadow larks were common in the desert in the vicinity of water holes. A nest containing 4 eggs was found near Echo Crater.

Scolecophagus cyanocephalus

None seen in the desert. Common along Lost River.

Chondestes grammacus strigatus

None seen in the interior of the desert. A few were observed along the northern edge between Arco and Martin.

Spizella breweri

Common throughout the desert.

Pipilo maculatus

spotted
Townees were fairly common, especially in the vicinity of water holes.

Oreospiza chlorura

GT Towhee
Occasionally seen about our camps at Echo Crater and Fissure Butte.

Petrochelidon lunifrons

None found in the interior of the desert. A colony was observed nesting on the lava-rock rims of Lost River.

Tachycineta thalassina lepidus

A colony of violet green swallows was found nesting in crevices of the cliffs at Echo Crater.

Lanius

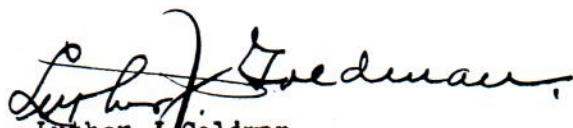
LH Shrike
None seen in the interior of the desert. Observed along the northern edge between Arco and Martin.

IDAHOSNAKE RIVER DESERT
June 9 - 22, 1921. L.J.G.BIRDS (Continued)✓ Oreoscoptes montanussage thrasher
Common especially in the vicinity of water holes.✓ Salpinctes obsoletusRock wren
One of the most common birds of the region.✓ Parus

Chickadees were common in the pine timber of the northern part of the desert.

Merula migratoria propinqua

Common along the northern edge of the desert.

✓ Sialia arcticaMountain bluebirds were common in the northern part of the desert.
Found nesting in hollow trees.

 Luther J. Goldman
 Predatory Animal Inspector.

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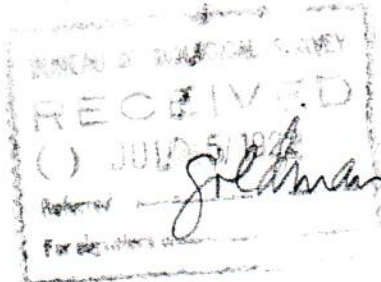
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IDAHO.



BIRD NOTES.

Tyrannus On May 24, 1922 the first of these birds observed this season were seen near Carey, Blaine Co. Idaho.

Querquedula cyanoptera - Cinnamon Teal
Several were seen at Lava Lake, Blaine Co. on May 25, 1922. The birds apparently were nesting.

Coccothraustes vespertinus montanus Numbers of these birds were observed along the roads near Carey, Idaho May 24-25, 1922.

Ampelis cedrorum A individual observed near Idaho City, Idaho on June 12, 1922. The bird was of small size and undoubtedly the cedar waxwing.

Carpodacus cassinii Numbers of these birds observed feeding about the sheep corrals at the Anderson Ranch a few miles below Idaho City, on June 12, 1922.

Luther J. Goldman
Predatory Animal Inspector.

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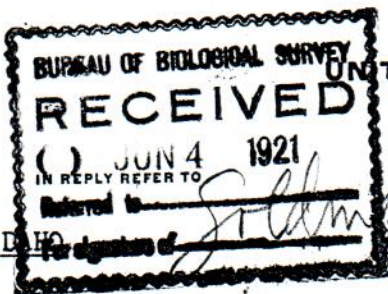
Idaho. various localities

L. J. Goldman

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UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE
BUREAU OF BIOLOGICAL SURVEY

ID. NO.

BIRD AND MAMMAL NOTES

JANUARY 19 - 25, 1921.

Castor canadensis Common on the headwaters of the Blackfoot River. Mr. William Stoddard estimated that there were 166 beaver on his ranch. This ranch is located on Beaver Creek, a tributary of the Blackfoot River, about 27 miles north-east of the town of Blackfoot, Idaho.

Lepus White-tailed jack rabbits occur in small numbers in the hills east of Blackfoot, Idaho. A number of beautiful specimens were seen bouncing along in their characteristic manner. Usually they will lope along over the crusted snow drifts, finally stopping about 100 yards away, then before the hunter can dismount from his horse and get into action with his rifle, they are again on their way, usually disappearing over some nearby ridge,

Lepus Black-tailed jack rabbits fairly swarm about Moreland, Idaho. I think at this time there are more rabbits of this species at Moreland than in any other section of Idaho I have visited.

Sylvilagus Common in the sage brush and lava rocks about Moreland and Blackfoot, Idaho.

Brachylagus A few seen in the sage brush desert east of Moreland, Idaho.

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C.D. & B.R.

10/27/22.

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APR 20 1922

Howe, Butte County.

January 1922

Luther J. Goldman, Biological
Assistant.

Leucosticte

On January 25, while riding a poison line for coyotes in Little Lost River Valley, near Howe, Idaho, I observed a flock numbering not less than 100 of these handsome winter residents.

Owing to the depth of snow (about 2 feet on the level) the outlook for their gaining a livelihood in this barren, desert valley appeared a bit precarious. The little fellows were busily and cheerfully engaged in searching out a patch of Russian thistle, the dried tops of which appeared just above the snow level and evidently found enough seed to interest them.

The gray crowns of some of the male birds near at hand were very noticeable.

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Bellevue, Blaine County.
March 1922.
Luther J. Goldman,
Biological Assistant.

Leucostictes

On March 21, while riding a poison line for coyotes on Wood River near Bellevue, Idaho I observed almost continuous flocks of these birds for a distance of about 2 miles. It is probable there were several hundred of them. The snow lay at a depth of from one to three feet on the arid hill sides. The birds were feeding in the sage brush tops appearing above the snow.

The winter of 1921-1922 has been the most severe in Idaho for many years. I have observed more Leucostictes in the hills and small valleys along the basal slopes of the mountains than at any time during the several years I have spent in this state.

Aquila chrysaetos

Golden eagles are common about Bellevue, Idaho. They are a great annoyance to the coyote hunters using poison, as they quickly find the dead coyotes, appear to have a great liking for this meat and ruin the pelts by tearing into the sides of the poisoned animals. They feed on the carcasses used as poison stations but apparently never pick up the fat baits placed for the wolves and coyotes.

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APR 20 1922

Dubois, Clark County.

March 1922.

Luther J. Goldman,
Biological Assistant.

C+C
10/27/22
BAP

Leucosticte

On March 13, while riding poison lines for coyotes on the Medicine Lodge River a few miles west of Dubois, Idaho I observed a number of these birds feeding in the sage brush tops which just appeared above the deep snow.

Amphispiza garrulus

A single individual was seen March 13 on the Medicine Lodge River. I have in other years observed small flocks of these birds in January and February about Pocatello, Idaho.

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APR 20 1922

Goldman

1E
Mayfield, Elmore County.

March 1922.

Luther J. Goldman, Biological
Assistant.

C-6
10/26/22.
BR

Leucosticte

While riding poison lines for coyotes on the desert along the basal slopes of the mountains bordering the north side of the Snake River Valley, I saw on March 28 a number of these interesting birds. As usual they were busily feeding about in the sage brush and bunch grass.

Zenaidura macroura

An individual observed March 27 near Mayfield, Idaho. This is the first of these birds observed this season.

Agelaius

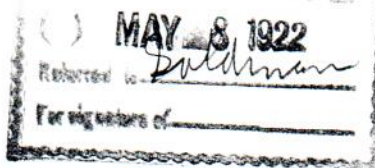
Several seen between Mayfield and Orchard, Idaho March 26.

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MAMMAL NOTES.

✓
CORRAL, CANAS COUNTY. Alt. 5100 ft.
April 16-25/1922.
L. J. Goldman, Biological
Assistant.

Castor canadensis Occurs on the Malad River a tributary of Wood River. I observed where the animals had cut down several fence posts made of fresh green cottonwood timber with the bark on.

Fiber zibethicus Occurs on the Malad River.

Microtus (2820-2821) Common in the meadows along the Malad River. At the time of my visit to this locality there was considerable melting snow. I saw many winter nests of this mouse constructed of chopped grass and long fibers. They were located on the surface of the meadows in the standing dead grass. Due to the activities of the animals and the presence of the pile of grass material the snow in many cases was melted away for a few inches about the nest.

Vulpes fulva Reported from Soldier Mountain a few miles north of Corral. All color phases have been taken from this locality including the highly prized black animals.

Martes americana Reported from Soldier Mountain.

Citellus columbianus Extremely numerous. They were burrowing up thru the snow and probably finding it a cold and cheerless world. At this season they are not very active and no doubt fall easy victims to their many enemies.

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Luther J. Goldman,
Biological Assistant.

MAY 8 1922

BIRDS

The following list of birds was observed while engaged in predatory animal extermination investigations.

Anas boschas Mallard ducks were observed in flocks, and paired off evidently contemplating nesting. The season is a month late this year in Idaho, with much snow and ice on the rivers and ponds.

Nettion carolinensis Several observed on the Malad River.

Aythya americana Observed with other ducks on the open ponds and the Malad River.

Grus mexicana A small flock observed on Camas Prairie, near Corral, Idaho.

Callinago delicata A number were seen on the tributaries of the Malad River. While at the Fletcher Ranch south of Corral, I heard each morning and evening its odd whirring noise produced with the wings.

Oxyechus Common.

Lophortyx californicus Small flocks seen in the hills south of Corral.

Centrocercus urophasianus Fairly plentiful. These birds winter in the Snake River Valley, migrating locally to Camas Prairie in summer. At this season the cocks may be seen on sunny mornings, strutting about making a brave display in their white waist coats.

Zenaidura macroura Several observed and heard calling.

Aquila chrysaetos An individual seen. These birds are often taken in steel traps by the predatory animal hunters when meat bait is employed as a lure for wolves and coyotes. They quickly locate the poisoned coyotes and ruin the pelts by tearing open the animals sides to feed on the carcass. They may frequently be seen feeding on the horses and sheep killed for coyote bait. They apparently have a special fondness for this class of food since rabbits of several species are very plentiful throughout southern and central Idaho, and the birds are not driven by hunger to carrion eating habits. They may be poisoned thru eating poisoned carcasses, but apparently rarely or never eat the small fatty baits we systematically place about the carcasses. Since the greater part of our poisoning is done with small baits, few of the eagles are killed by strychnine.

Falco sparverius An individual seen.

Dryobates One seen at the Montgomery Ranch near Corral.

Birds

Colaptes cafer collaris Several seen.

Otocoris Common on Camas Prairie about Corral.

Pica pica hudsonica Few were seen. They are a great pest to the predatory animal poisoner, as they take the small fatty baits. They are easily poisoned and it is probable that hundreds of thousands of these birds have been killed by the hunters. Trappers have a saying that the magpie is "the friend of the coyote", since they are frequently seen together. It is believed that the birds follow and observe the movements of the coyote, waiting their chance to make a meal from the remains of his kill. The number of sage hen eggs eaten by these birds must be enormous and their extermination by the predatory animal hunters will prove a blessing to birds of all kinds. Magpies frequently assist the hunter in locating poisoned coyotes, as they quickly locate the dead and gather about to feed on the carcass of their erstwhile "friend".

During the month of December 1921, I spent several days at Pocatello, Idaho engaged in poisoning coyotes. On one occasion as I approached a "poison station" I observed a flock of magpies feeding on the horse I had killed as an attraction for the coyotes. Placing a large number of very small fat baits loaded with strychnin for the birds I continued to a second station higher up the mountain side. Looking back after I had gone a few yards I saw one of the birds returning. Out of curiosity I paused to note its actions. The bird at once picked up a bait and instead of eating it, flew away about 100 yards and cached the bait by a sage bush. By this time another bird had arrived on the scene and presently more until a dozen birds were industriously carrying off the baits and dropping them in the brush at distances varying from 50 to 160 yards from the carcass. So far as I could see, only one bird ate a bait at the time and quickly commenced going about in circles. The birds were evidently storing these baits for future use.

The magpie frequently causes serious annoyance and injury to stock, thru picking at the fresh brands.

Corvus americanus Crows were very plentiful about the ranches. They are a very serious pest to the predatory animal poisoner as they carry off the small fat baits. The standard coyote bait is a bit too large for them to swallow. They pick and maul it about until the greater part of the loose poison has spilled. The small amount adhering to the walls of the baits is usually not sufficient to kill them.

Corvus corax sinuatus Few ravens were seen in this locality. They are a great annoyance to the hunters as they thoroly peck and shake the coyote baits before swallowing and as apparently a large amount of poison is required to kill, are seldom destroyed while robbing the stations. I have used cyanide on them with good success.

I have known cases where these birds have carried baits for considerable distances and finally dropping them where they were picked up by valuable stock dogs.

Nucifraga columbiana An individual seen in the hills south of Corral.

Agelaius phoeniceus Common.

Scolecophagus cyanocephalus Common.

BIRDSSturnella magna neglecta

Common.

Junco hyemalis

Common in the fir timber and along the brush grown streams of the hills north of Corral.

Pipilo

An individual seen.

Dendroica

The unmistakable call of a yellow warbler was heard from a willow thicket along the Malad River. A cheery reminder that spring is at hand altho the country is still covered with a good depth of snow and my means of travel a pair of skis.

Merula migratoria propinqua

Common.

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Idaho Blackfoot River

Jan 19-25, 1921

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Pedioecetes A small flock seen on the Blackfoot River
about 20 miles east of Blackfoot, Idaho.

Centrocerus urophasianus A few seen on the headwaters of the Blackfoot River
20 miles east of Blackfoot, Idaho.

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