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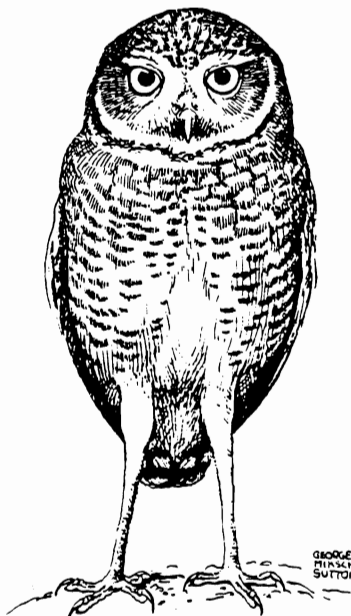
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# *The Nebraska Bird Review*

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**SPRING FIELD REPORT, March-May 2001**

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**INTRODUCTION**

As this is being written (July 2001), the new book "Birds of Nebraska" (Sharpe, Silcock, Jorgensen; University of Nebraska Press) has just been released. From now on everyone can check early and late dates and high counts as well as distribution within the state and have a much better feel for which sightings are significant. Of course, that does not mean that only significant sightings should be submitted, as all data are valuable and help to provide an overall picture of what is going on with each species in the season in question. The information gathered on the common species may be valuable at some time in the future for reasons we may not appreciate currently.

Of course a book like this cannot be done without the thousands of sightings submitted by many observers. The list below testifies to the large number of interested birders who currently take the time to submit their sightings, either to NEBIRDS or to me personally; all are taken into account when writing these seasonal reports. I actually entered about 3,000 sightings into the database for this spring report!

Probably the most outstanding ornithological events this spring were a few record early arrivals (Western and Clark's Grebes, Rose-breasted Grosbeak, Indigo Bunting) and a large number of "rather early" arrivals; "rather early" means not record early, but right up there. There were also some rather incredible numbers, mostly of waterfowl, including diving ducks in the eastern Rainwater Basin, an indication of the excellent water conditions there this spring. Notable were 81,000 Mallards, 40,500 Redheads, and 73,000 Northern Pintails. A few shorebirds were in outstanding numbers also: record counts of Greater and Lesser Yellowlegs and Long-billed Dowitchers (I said the water was deep!) Rather amazing were the 5,600 Ross's Geese in one central Nebraska flock, the 30,000 Ring-billed Gulls in Lancaster Co, the 350,000 Sandhill Cranes (didn't miss much of the entire population!), and excellent numbers of herons and ibis.

It was a quiet spring for listers and rarity-chasers; best were 3rd state record Tricolored Heron, 4th Dusky Flycatcher (1st for spring), and 9th Red Phalarope (1st for spring). A first documented spring record for Red-necked Grebe was also reported.

Other observations of interest included Gray Partridges in Sioux Co, Eurasian Collared-Doves everywhere in the Panhandle, 3rd nesting year in a row for Pileated Woodpecker, reduced numbers of Carolina Wrens, and increasing populations of Summer Tanagers at Fontenelle Forest and Indian Cave State Park.

Finally, there was something about a pied blackbird that I'm still not sure I understand; check the species accounts.

## ABBREVIATIONS

ADF: Arbor Day Farm, Otoe Co; BOL: Branched Oak L, Lancaster Co; CBC: Christmas Bird Count; CCM: Clear Creek Marshes, Keith/Garden Cos; CLNWR: Crescent L NWR, Garden Co; FE: Fontenelle Forest, Sarpy Co; FL: Funk Lagoon, Phelps Co; HCR: Harlan Co Res, Harlan Co; ICSP: Indian Cave SP, Nemaha/Richardson Cos; LM: L McConaughy, Keith Co; LO: L Ogallala, Keith Co; mob: many observers; NM: National Monument; NOU: Nebraska Ornithologists' Union, NOURC: NOU Records Committee; NWR: National Wildlife Reserve; RWB: Rainwater Basin, area from Phelps east to Fillmore and north to York Cos; SHP: State Historical Park; SL: Sewage Lagoons; SP: State Park.

## OBSERVERS

AB: Aaron Brees, Indianola, IA; AK: Alice Kenitz, Gering; AR: Alice Rushton, Omaha; B: NEBIRDS; BA: Betty Allen, Omaha; BFH: Bill F. Huser, South Sioux City; BG: Betty Grenon, Bellevue; BP: Babs Padelford, Bellevue; CEJ: Clyde E. Johnson, Omaha; CF: Carol Falk, Nebraska City; CG: Carlos Grandes, Barcelona, Spain; CH: Carolyn Hall, Bassett; CHe: Craig Hensley, Bellevue; CHy: Carter Heaney, Omaha; CK: Christine Kam, Omaha; CNK: Clem N. Klaphake, Bellevue; CO: Chuck Otte, Junction City, KS; DC: Donna Chance, Wathena, KS; DD: Dean Drawbaugh, Scottsbluff; DP: Don Paseka, Ames; DR: David Rintoul, Manhattan, KS; DT: Doug Thomas, Alliance; EB: Elaine Bachel, Lincoln; GH: Glen Hoge, Alma; GW: Gertrude Wood, Elmwood; HKH: Helen K. Hughson, Mitchell; JB: John Brennehan, Omaha; JED: James E. Ducey, Lincoln; JF: Joe Fontaine, Fort Collins, CO; JG: Joe Gubanyi, Seward; JGJ: Joel G. Jorgensen, Blair; JJ: Jan Johnson, Wakefield; JJD: James J. Dinsmore, Ames, IA; JK: Josef Kren, Lincoln; JM: Jim Meyer, Omaha; JP: Jan Paseka, Ames; JS: John Sullivan, Lincoln; JT: Jerry Toll, Omaha; JWH: John W. Hall, Omaha; KL: Kathy Larson, Mitchell; KMD: Kathy Mihm Dunning, Denver, CO; KP: Kevin Poague, Lincoln; LB: Laurel Badura, Kearney; LC: Linda Coulter, Ames; LE: Larry Einemann, Lincoln; LF: Laurence Falk, Nebraska City; LP: Loren Padelford, Bellevue; LR: Lanny Randolph, Gibbon; LRB: Linda R. Brown, Lincoln; LW: Leona Weed, Alliance; MB: Mark Brogie, Creighton; MM: Marty Mathieson, Shelton; MO: Mark Orsag, Crete; MR: Mike Rader, Wilson, KS; MU: Mark Urwiller, Kearney; MUs: Moni Usasz, Lincoln; NP: Neva Pruess, Lincoln; NR: Neal Ratzlaff, Omaha; PD: Phyllis Drawbaugh, Scottsbluff;

PL: Paul Lehman, Cape May, NJ; RB: Roland Barth, Bellevue; RCC: Richard C. Carlson, Palo Alto, CA; RG: Ruth Green, Bellevue; RH: Robin Harding, Gibbon; SA: Sue Amiotte, Chadron; SJD: Stephen J. Dinsmore, Fort Collins, CO; SS: Scott Seltman, Nekoma, KS; SV: Steve Van Sickle, Yankton, SD; TJ: Todd Jensen, Rapid City, SD; TML: Thomas M. Lufkin, St. Paul, MN; WH: Wanda Hoge, Alma; WM: Wayne Mollhoff, Lincoln; WRS: W. Ross Silcock, Tabor, IA; ZU: Zee Uridil, Chadron.

## GAZETTEER

Calamus Res: Loup/Garfield Cos; DeSoto NWR: Washington Co; Facus Springs: Morrill Co; Gavin's Point Dam: Cedar Co; Johnson L: Gosper/Phelps Cos; Keystone Dam: Keith Co (forms L Ogallala); Kiowa Springs: Scotts Bluff Co; L Alice: Scotts Bluff Co; L Minatare: Scotts Bluff Co; Sutherland Res: Lincoln Co; Winters Creek L: Scotts Bluff Co.

## SPECIES ACCOUNTS

Common Loon: Fewer than usual were reported, a total of only about 25, all within expected dates.

Pied-billed Grebe: Rather early for the location (not quite in the Panhandle) were the 2 noted at LM on 9 March (SJD); there are only two earlier dates for the Panhandle. At least 6 pairs were found nesting in the East RWB by 19 May (JGJ).

Horned Grebe: The 17 birds spotted at LM/LO on 9 March denote the 5th earliest ever (SJD). None was reported after 28 April.

Red-necked Grebe: An alternate-plumaged adult identified at LO on 28 April (SJD) represents the 8th reported but the first documented spring record for the state. The 8 available dates fall in the period between 7 April and 17 May.

Eared Grebe: Few were noted at HCR (GH, WH), but 100+ were found in the east RWB on 12 May (JGJ) and 65 were spotted there as late as 27 May (JGJ). Breeding has been suspected but not proved in the east RWB in recent years.

Western Grebe: None overwintered at LM/LO this year, and so the 3 spotted there on 4 March and the 13 found there on 9 March (SJD) were record early migrants. Uncommon so far east, one was identified at Zorinsky L, Omaha, on 9 May (CHy). No others were reported east of HCR.

Clark's Grebe: The previous earliest date for this species was 27 March, but this spring 2 were seen at LM on 9 March (SJD). One was also found there on 17 March (TJ). Also rather early were the 7 spotted at LO on 14 April, increasing to 8 by 28 April (SJD), and the one found rather far east--the observer's first for Knox Co--at Niobrara Marsh between 14 and 16 March (MB). Reports of this species appear to be increasing, with single migrants found at several new locations: Enders Res, Chase Co,

on 28 April (SJD); south Morrill Co on 12 May (KL): HCR between 22 and 23 May (GH, WH); and Medicine Creek Res, Frontier Co, on 26 May (LR, RH).

American White Pelican: The six located at LM on 9 March (SJD) were rather early, and the peak tabulated there of 2,390 on 28 April (SJD) was a record spring count. Large numbers passed through rather late; 1000+ were tallied in Thayer Co on 20 May (GH, WH), and as many as 300 remained at HCR as late as 28 May (GH, WH).

Double-crested Cormorant: Migration was routine, with best counts of 324 recorded at LM on 14 April (SJD) and 255 tallied at BOL on 31 March (LE). At least 30 nests were underway at the Alma colony, Harlan Co., by 7 April (GH, WH). This colony began around 1995.

American Bittern: This species apparently occurs in some numbers in suitable habitat; 11 were counted on 12 May in the east RWB "just from scoping" shorebirds (JGJ). Several reports during the latter half of May suggest local breeding: east RWB through 27 May (JGJ); Wilkins Basin, Fillmore Co, on 18 May (LR, RH); and Valentine NWR, Cherry Co, on 23 May (CG).

Least Bittern: The only report was of two spotted at LaPlatte Bottoms, Sarpy Co, on 21 May (BP, LP).

Great Blue Heron: Six were seen on nests at HCR on 15 April (GH, WH), and at least 15 nests were counted at a colony "almost in the city" at Burwell, Garfield Co, on 15 April (MUs).

Great Egret: This species was widely reported in good numbers from HCR eastward, for a total of about 185 birds. The best count reached 43 at Niobrara Marsh, Knox Co, on 14 April (MB), tying the spring high count, also from Knox Co. Only casual in the Panhandle, with about 20 records in all, the single bird identified at the Chadron City Dam 6 miles south of Chadron on 8 April (SA), record early for the Panhandle, was apparently still present on 25 April (SA).

Snowy Egret: This species occurs more often than the Great Egret in the west, but it is still rare there; the only report west of HCR, and also a spring high count, was of 5 spotted at Swanson Res, Hitchcock Co, on 28 April (SJD). About 25 were reported in all. The one located in the east RWB on 14 April (JGJ) was rather early.

Little Blue Heron: Only two were reported: an adult was seen at Cracker Barrel Marsh, Lincoln, between 12 and 13 May, intriguingly for the 3rd year running (LRB; LE), and a "calico"-plumaged bird was identified in the east RWB on 12 May (JGJ).

Tricolored Heron: An adult found at the west end of Swanson Res, Hitchcock Co, on 29 April (SJD; details) represents the 3rd documented Nebraska record, although there are 6 reports in all.

Cattle Egret: Although widely reported west to Custer Co (AK, HKH) and HCR (GH, WH), no large counts were reported. About 150 were reported in all. The one found in Hall Co on 8 April (LE) was rather early.

**Green Heron:** Westernmost was the one seen at Kearney on 5 May (LR, RH).

**Black-crowned Night-Heron:** The best count totaled 20 in the east RWB on 20 April, including one flock of 17 spotted in Fillmore Co (JGJ).

**Yellow-crowned Night-Heron:** None was reported; this species is a rare regular spring migrant in the southeast.

**White-faced Ibis:** This spring was great for this species, with reports statewide of about 230 birds. The best counts reached 52 in the east RWB on 12 May (JGJ) and 48 tallied west of Mitchell, Scotts Bluff Co, on 6 May (KL), both above the old record high count of 39. Rather early were 8 seen at LO between 14 and 15 April (SJD). It is uncommon in the east, where the only reports were of singles found at Arbor Lake, Lancaster Co, on 12 May (KP) and at Cracker Barrel Marsh, Lincoln, on 26 May (LE).

**Turkey Vulture:** Rather early were singles noted at Bellevue on 14 March (BP, LP) and at Nebraska City on 21 March (LF, CF). Vultures are very common in the lower Missouri Valley in spring; 63 were counted in Richardson Co on 12 May (WRS), a record spring total.

**Greater White-fronted Goose:** Good numbers moved through central Nebraska in mid-March, as is normal; the best counts reached an excellent 5,000 at HCR on 12 March (GH, WH), and 4,230 in the east RWB on 24 March (WRS, JS). Best eastern counts totaled 330 at Snyder's Bend, Dakota Co, on 18 March (BFH) and 330 at BOL the same day (LE). The only May sightings were of up to 4 found in the east RWB through 27 May (JGJ). A few stragglers summer most years.

**Snow Goose:** The usual massive numbers moved through the RWB in mid-March; "several hundred thousand" were seen there on 16 March (LR, RH) and 150,000 were tallied at FL on 25 March (LR, RH). They were "unusually numerous" in the west this year (SJD): 20,000+ were tallied at LM on 17 March (SJD), and 1,000 at Cochran L, Scotts Bluff Co on 21 March (AK). An excellent easterly count totaled 7,000 over Nebraska City on 11 March (LF, CF). The usual stragglers were found at various places into and through May; as many as 85 were found in the east RWB as late as 27 May (JGJ).

**Ross's Goose:** Observers are realizing that these geese occur in significant numbers among Snow Geese, but often in large homogeneous groups within Snow Goose flocks; a good sign is a very white-appearing Snow Goose flock. One such flock seen at a borrow pond at mile marker 168 on I-80 on 25 March contained a carefully-estimated total of 5,600 Ross's Geese out of a total of about 14,000 geese (WRS, JS). Some 200 per day were noted in central Nebraska around 20 March (PL), and 336 were counted at LM on 14 March (SJD). A few blue morph birds were identified in a flock at Cochran L, Scotts Bluff Co, on 21 March (AK), only the 4th record of this rare color morph. A bird shot in Gage Co during March was banded on 5 August 2000 in northwest Canada (Omaha World Herald). A new late date was set by 2 birds apparently staying in the east RWB on 27 May (JGJ); there are no June-July records for this species,

and only one in August. An adult spotted at Kiowa Springs, Scotts Bluff Co, on 9 May (SJD) was also rather late.

**Canada Goose:** The best count totaled an excellent 100,000 in Buffalo Co on 11 March (LR, RH). The goose flock containing a large number of Ross's Geese reported in Lincoln Co on 25 March (see preceding description) also contained about 400 Canadas, of which about 80% were "Hutchins's (Richardson's) Goose" (WRS, JS), a small form common during migration in central Nebraska. Rather late for small Canadas were two spotted in the east RWB on 27 May (JGJ). Large Canadas, introduced in the past decade or two, and which now breed throughout the state, are surprisingly uncommon in the east RWB (JGJ); only two were noted there during May (JGJ). One was found on a nest at FL on 8 April (LR, RH).

**Trumpeter Swan:** Unexpected was a single identified in northeastern Dixon Co on 2 March (JJ); there are still few reports of migrants away from the traditional wintering areas. On 4 March, at a traditional wintering area, 7 (2 adults, 5 immatures) were spotted on a pond northeast of Kingsley Dam, LM (SJD, JF), and 13 (7 adults, 6 immatures) were identified at CCM (JF, SJD). Breeders were noted on territory on 21 May, with pairs near Whitman, Hyannis, and west of Hyannis, Grant Co, (HKH, AK).

**Tundra Swan:** There were two reports of this rare migrant: two adults were found with the Trumpeters at LO on 4 March (SJD, JF) and one was seen flying over Nebraska City, Otoe Co, with Canada Geese on 10 March (LF).

**Wood Duck:** A good count for the location and date was 27 tallied in Scotts Bluff Co on 11 March (KL). Two broods were noted in Elmwood Park, Omaha: a hen with 5 very small downy young on 5 May and another hen with 11 very small downy young 9 May (CEJ). A hen with a brood was seen in York Co on 27 May (JGJ).

**Gadwall:** An excellent count was 1500 tallied in the east RWB on 17 March (JGJ). A hybrid with Mallard, named "Brewer's Duck" by J.J. Audubon, was seen in the east RWB on 14 April (JGJ). Evidence of breeding in Scotts Bluff Co, other than a few summer records, has not previously been noted, and so broods spotted south of Morrill on 26 May and at Gering SL the next day (KL) were significant. These are rather early dates for Gadwall broods, as early egg dates occur in early May and incubation takes 25-30 days (Bent, Palmer).

**Eurasian Wigeon:** At least one appears each year in the east RWB. This year one was identified at Anderson Basin, 1.25 miles south of Eckhardt Basin, Clay Co, on 24 March (JGJ); and another, possibly the same bird, was noted at nearby Hansen Basin, Clay Co, on 31 March (JGJ).

**American Wigeon:** Routine reports.

**American Black Duck:** None was reported; this bird is a rare regular spring migrant in the east.



**Mallard:** The best count reached a spring record 81,000 in the east RWB on 17 March (JGJ), although it is likely that few observers attempt to tally a day's count of Mallards at places like the RWB!

**Blue-winged Teal:** Hybrids with Cinnamon Teal were found in the east RWB on 7 April and again on 14 April (JGJ). This hybrid is reported fairly often ("Jorgensen's Duck"?). A brood was seen south of Morrill on 26 May (KL).

**Cinnamon Teal:** This species was widely-reported, about 20 to 30 in all, east to the east RWB, where about 7 were noted between 14 April and 12 May (JGJ). Most, as expected, were found south of Morrill at Kiowa Springs and vicinity in Scotts Bluff Co; the best count there totaled 12, composed of 6 pairs at 3 different ponds, on 29 April (KL).

**Northern Shoveler:** The best count was 395 recorded at BOL on 25 March (LE).

**Northern Pintail:** The second highest spring count (75,000 at LM was best) was the 73,000 tallied in the east RWB on 17 March (JGJ).

**Green-winged Teal:** An excellent count was 4,221, totaled at LM on 14 April (SJD). Rather late were the 1-3 birds spotted in the east RWB from 17 to 18 May (LR, RH); breeding is not known to occur there.

**Canvasback:** An excellent count reached 1,514 in the east RWB on 24 March (JGJ). A single located in the east RWB as late as 27 May (JGJ) was likely to have been an immature (sub-adult pre-breeder).

**Redhead:** Incredible numbers occurred in the east RWB this spring; the peak count totaled 40,500 on 31 March (JGJ). Most of these were found at Harvard Marsh, Clay Co, with 34,000, but 5,100 were located at Kissinger Basin, Clay Co (JGJ). By 14 April, fewer than 1,000 remained; but as late as 27 May, 105 still remained there (JGJ). Breeding may occur on occasion in the east RWB, but there is no definite evidence. Other good counts included 3,350 recorded at LM on 9 March (SJD) and "thousands" tallied at Winters Creek L, Scotts Bluff Co, on 17 March (KL).

**Ring-necked Duck:** The peak of 2,200 reached in the east RWB on 31 March denotes a record spring count; the observer's previous high in the region was 434 (JGJ). Two were found near Fremont, Dodge Co, as late as 20 May (DP, JP, LR, RH); and two more were identified in the east RWB as late as 27 May (JGJ).

**Greater Scaup:** Fair numbers were reported statewide from 4 March (SJD) through 20 April (GH, WH), for a total of about 75. The best count was a 2nd-highest ever 43 tallied at LO on 17 March (SJD).

**Lesser Scaup:** Another excellent diving duck count from the east RWB was 3,400 of this species located on 17 March (JGJ), a record high count for spring; it was eclipsed, however, by the 3,650 tallied at Pawnee L, Lancaster Co, and BOL on 25 March (LE). Six still remained in the area on 27 May (JGJ).

**White-winged Scoter:** Only casual in spring, one was spotted at Holmes L, Lincoln, between 27 and 31 March (LE, BP, LP). This sighting

represents only the 20th spring record for this species, and a rather early date.

**Long-tailed Duck:** The only one that made it into the spring season was a female found at Winters Creek L, Scotts Bluff Co, on 12 March (KL).

**Bufflehead:** The 2nd-highest spring count was the 418 tallied at LO on 14 March ; 343 still remained there on 28 April (SJD).

**Common Goldeneye:** The best count totaled 75 at BOL on 18 March (LE). Spring highs are generally not spectacular, with the record high (where wintering did not occur) at only 200.

**Barrow's Goldeneye:** A female, complete with orange bill, was spotted at LO on 4 March (SJD, JF). Another was seen at Walnut Creek Area, Saline Co, on 1 April (MO; details). This sighting denotes only the 9th report for spring (away from LM/LO), but the 5th from the east.

**Hooded Merganser:** This species occurred in surprising numbers, notably the 50+ (a record) seen at Niobrara on 1 April (JJ) and the 30 found at BOL on 24 March (Omaha Audubon, fide DP, JP). While this species occurs statewide in migration, fewer reports come from the west: one was identified at Winters Creek L, Scotts Bluff Co, between 6 and 17 March (KL); several were spotted at L Alice, Scotts Bluff Co, on 31 March (AK); and a male was seen south of Morrill on 26 May (KL). The latter is highly suggestive of local breeding. Most reports at that date are of female-plumaged birds, most probably immatures.

**Common Merganser:** An excellent spring count was the 2,950 tallied at LM on 9 March (SJD), and the 1,220 found at BOL on 18 March (LE) represents a good count for the east. A female located on the Republican River below HCR as late as 8 May (GH, WH) was intriguing; there are only 3 reports of breeding for the state, but a female was spotted at the Alma SL (adjacent to HCR) on 11 June 2000.

**Red-breasted Merganser:** This species is being reported more often in the west in recent years; this increase may be a result of construction of reservoirs (and observer density; don't take this personally, Steve!). However, a male spotted at Big Springs on 4 March was found on the Platte River (JF); Red-breasted Mergansers rarely utilize streams and rivers. All other reports came from reservoirs (artificial, as opposed to lakes, which are natural), with the best count reaching 31 at Gavin's Point Dam, Cedar Co, on 1 April (JJ).

**Ruddy Duck:** The 555 located at LO on 14 April (SJD) represents a record spring count.

**Osprey:** One spotted flying over Medicine Creek Res, Frontier Co, on 26 May (LR, RH) was rather late. Best counts included 3 identified at HCR both on 23 March and on 23 April (GH, WH).

**Mississippi Kite:** None was reported; there are several May records for the state, but arrival dates at Ogallala, the only known breeding site, are lacking.

**Bald Eagle:** The best counts reached 185 at LM/LO on 9 March, including 106 adults (SJD); 111 at Sutherland Res, Lincoln Co, on 4

March (SJD); and 47 at HCR on 2 March (GH, WH). Nesting birds were noted at known sites at Calamus Res, Loup/Garfield Cos, on 15 April (MUs), and at L Alice, Scotts Bluff Co, where the nest contained 3 chicks on 8 April; this year marks the 9th for this nest, which has fledged 18 chicks to date (AK). An adult seen flying over ICSP on 12 May (WRS) probably was nesting in the region.

**Northern Harrier:** The best count totaled 55 on 15 April in the Panhandle, 42 of which were found in Kimball Co (SJD); this total is by far a record spring count.

**Sharp-shinned Hawk:** A good count was 4 in Kimball Co on 14 April (SJD).

**Cooper's Hawk:** An adult was spotted near a nest in Carter Canyon, Scotts Bluff Co, on 9 May (SJD); nesting was noted there last year.

**Red-shouldered Hawk:** At least one was present through at least 25 May at FF (CNK), a regular nesting location. As usual, no others were reported.

**Broad-winged Hawk:** Few were reported. The only multiple count was of 12+ spotted flying over FF on 8 April (CNK, with the help of a captive Red-tailed Hawk as spotter). One was identified rather early in the season in Otoe Co on 24 March (LF, CF). A dark morph was found at Swanson Park, Omaha, on 11 May (CNK). The only report away from the Missouri Valley was of an immature located in southwest Hall Co on 12 May (LR, RH).

**Swainson's Hawk:** The best counts included an excellent total of 80 at Papillion on 11 April (LP) and 65 in the east RWB on 14 April, 29 of which were roosting at Krause Basin, Fillmore Co (JGJ). Two of 46 birds following a tractor disking in Seward Co on 13 April 2001 were dark morphs (JG). This proportion of dark to light morphs is similar to that noted by Scott Seltman (pers. comm. WRS) in western Kansas, where about 5% of birds seen over 25 years were dark morphs, but only one dark bird had been known to breed in the area.

**Red-tailed Hawk:** The only *harlani* reported was seen in Dixon Co on 15 March (JJ). Two nests under incubation were found at Walnut Creek L, Sarpy Co, on 14 March (CNK); and a nest with 2 "fluffy" young was found in Scotts Bluff Co on 12 May (KL).

**Ferruginous Hawk:** Singles were identified easterly at Kearney on 11 March (LR, RH) and in extreme eastern Adams Co on 17 March (JGJ). This location represents the eastern edge of the winter range.

**Rough-legged Hawk:** Routine reports.

**Golden Eagle:** Easternmost were a 1st-year bird spotted at FL on 8 April (LR, RH) and an adult seen in Harlan Co on 3 March (GH, WH).

**American Kestrel:** The best count totaled an excellent 53 in Kimball Co on 14 April (SJD).

**Merlin:** Singles identified to subspecies included an immature *richardsoni* spotted near Kearney on 11 March (LR, RH), a female *columbarius* identified in Kimball Co on 14 April (SJD), and a female

*columbarius* located in South Sioux City on 10 March (BFH). Only 7 birds were reported in all.

**Prairie Falcon:** Routine reports.

**Peregrine Falcon:** The three seen in Kearney Co between 9 and 16 March (RG) may have been wintering; this sighting is about a month early for migrants, as well as a good number for that time of year. Early arrival dates for migrants cluster around 6-7 April, and so one spotted in Knox Co on 29 March (SV) was rather early, although there are a few other late March-early April reports. Also rather early were 2 birds located in the east RWB on 7 April (JGJ) and singles reported at FF (CNK) and Twin Lakes, Seward Co, (JGJ), both on 8 April. The one identified at Dodge Park, Omaha, on 27 May (B) would have been a rather late migrant, but the bird was more likely one of the breeding birds from Woodmen Tower in downtown Omaha. The Omaha World Herald published an interesting summary of breeding at the Woodmen Tower: 3 chicks are in the box as of the end of May this year; the male parent is Zeus, fledged in Rochester, NY, in 1994 and mated to Winnie in Omaha 1996-99 when 12 chicks were produced. Winnie did not return in spring 2000, and Zeus was unmated until Amelia appeared late in 2000; the new pair wintered 2000-2001 in Omaha and produced this year's chicks. Amelia was fledged in Cedar Rapids, IA, in 1999.

**Gray Partridge:** None was reported for the Spring Season, but some interesting information was submitted by Helen Hughson (Wind Springs Ranch, Sioux Co). Two small flocks of this species reside in Sioux Co: one which winters at Wind Springs Ranch and then moves east about 1.5 miles to summer, and another in central Sioux Co. It is likely that these birds descended from a release several years ago by rancher Rick Kaan, or they may be derived from some releases by the Wyoming Game and Fish Dept.

**Chukar:** One spotted in a Ralston yard in March (fide Betty Grenon) was presumed to be an escaped or released bird.

**Ring-necked Pheasant:** Routine reports.

**Sharp-tailed Grouse:** Reports from the northeastern edge of the range included one bird seen in Knox Co on 1 April (JJ), and a lek with Greater Prairie-Chickens also present located 2 miles west of Winnetoon in Knox Co (MB).

**Greater Prairie-Chicken:** Two leks were reported with both this species and Sharp-tailed Grouse present: 2 miles north of Winnetoon (MB) and at one of the blinds at Nebraska National Forest, Halsey (MR). At the latter, however, only a single prairie-chicken was present (MR). There were 3 active leks in the Creighton area (MB). There is a population in relict sandhills south of the Platte River in central Nebraska: a lek with 18 birds located on 18 March (LR, RH) was observed in section 33-3-16 in Franklin Co (Mus); 2 birds were spotted 2 miles southwest of Lowell on 25 March (LR, RH); and one flew over Alma (yard bird!) on 7 April (GH, WH). Apparently the most northerly

location in the southeast is a lek found at Spring Creek Prairie near Denton, Lancaster Co; 2 birds were identified there on 2 April (KP).

**Wild Turkey:** This species is abundant at ICSP; 26 were counted just on the roads there on 12 May (WRS). It is also becoming an urban bird; 150 (!) frequented a yard in Bellevue, whose owners were buying corn "by the barrel" (fide RG). The observer's first for Clay Co was one seen east of Harvard on 27 May (JGJ). A brood of 3/4 grown young located at Medicine Creek Res, Frontier Co, on 27 May was considered early (LR, RH).

**Northern Bobwhite:** Another urban species! Two were spotted crossing a street in the middle of Kearney on 2 May (LR, RH). This species is establishing itself near and south of the North Platte River (along which it is fairly common) in western Scotts Bluff Co; one was noted south of Lyman on 12 May (KL), and singles were seen at Forest Lawn Cem, Gering, on 29 April (AK) and again on 2 May (SJD).

**King Rail:** None was reported; this species is borderline regular/casual in the east.

**Virginia Rail:** Apparently wintering birds were the 7 found on 9 March at CCM (SJD); wintering has been routine in the North Platte Valley in recent years. Few are reported from the arid southwest; however, an apparent migrant was identified at Rock Creek L, Dundy Co, on 29 April (SJD). The only other report was of another apparent migrant located at Nathan's L, Washington Co, on 5 May (JT).

**Sora:** Migrants were reported mostly from the east and central, but one was spotted at Rock Creek L, Dundy Co, on 29 April (SJD).

**American Coot:** At least 12 pairs nested at various east RWB locations by 19 May (JGJ). No large concentrations were reported. Rather unusual was one discovered wintering at Kiwanis Pond, Douglas Co (JT).

**Sandhill Crane:** The highest counts reported totaled 350,000 in Hall and Buffalo Cos on 22 March (LF, CF), which must have been most of the Sandhill Cranes using the central Platte flyway, and 100,000 in the Kearney area on 10 March (RCC). A flock of 64 seen flying high and west over North Platte on 24 March (WRS) may have been migrating; do birds move back and forth between the central Platte and western North Platte? Only casual in the east, one was spotted wandering about at Spring Creek Prairie, Denton, on 2 April (KP), and another trying to catch up was seen very late flying over Otoe Co on 29 May (LF, CF). A little to the east of the main flock were 63 found in southern Clay Co on 7 April (JGJ); a "Greater" Sandhill Crane was noted in the east RWB on 19 May (JGJ), where this form has bred recently. A pair spotted in the western Sandhills on 24 April "might have been thinking about breeding" (JED). The only recent breeding in the state has been in the east RWB.

**Whooping Crane:** The only reports were of singles spotted 4 miles east of Kearney on 23 March (B), 2 miles east of Denman on 30 March (RH), and east of Sheldon on 3 April (RG). These sightings, especially the latter two, may have been of the same bird.

**Black-bellied Plover:** The second best spring count ever was the 98 tallied in the east RWB on 19 May (JGJ).

**American Golden-Plover:** The one seen in the east RWB on 27 May (JGJ) and the 6 located in Seward Co on 28 May (JG) were rather late. There are only two June records.

**Snowy Plover:** The only sighting was of one found at the west end of Swanson Res, Hitchcock Co, on 29 April (SJD). For the first year since 1994, none was found in the east RWB (JGJ).

**Semipalmated Plover:** Uncommon westward, one was spotted at LM between 14 and 15 Apr (SJD), and 7 were seen at Swanson Res, Hitchcock Co, on 29 April (SJD).

**Piping Plover:** The count of 7 at DeJung Basin, Clay Co, on 20 April denotes a record count for the east RWB (JGJ). Migrants occur statewide, but the 2 birds identified at Swanson Res, Hitchcock Co, on 29 April (SJD) were unexpected. The three seen at LM between 14 and 15 April (SJD) were probably part of the local breeding population; but the one spotted at the Oreopolis Sand Plant, Cass Co, on 14 May (CNK) might have been a pioneer--the habitat there looks good (at least to a human!)

**Killdeer:** The 110 spotted flying in a synchronized flock near Gibbon on 28 March (LR, RH) must have been quite a sight; this count is also excellent, as was the 117 recorded in the east RWB on 31 March (JGJ). The breeding population in the east RWB is apparently of the same order, as 119 were counted there 19 May (JGJ). An unexpected sight was the 6 found foraging on ice at Nathan's L, Washington Co, on 12 March (JT). The first young reported were 2 located at Kearney L, Kearney, on 15 May (LR, RH).

**Mountain Plover:** Reports were all from Kimball Co, as expected: 5 were seen there between 14 and 15 April (SJD); 2 on 28 April (SJD); and 2 on 12 May (SJD).

**Black-necked Stilt:** Most of the reports came surprisingly from the central and east, where the species is only casual: one at Johnson Basin, Phelps Co, on 1 May (RG); 3 at Freeman Lakes, York Co, on 8 May (B); one in southeastern Otoe Co on 11 May (LC, CF); and one at North Hultine Basin (=Sandpiper WPA), Clay Co, on 15 May (B). The only other report was of 2 spotted at the traditional location at Mile Marker 106 between Lakeside and Antioch on 21 May (AK, HKH).

**American Avocet:** A good count was the 93 tallied at LM on 28 April (SJD). The only eastern reports, where avocets are uncommon, were of 19 located at BOL on 12 April (LE), 2 seen in Cuming Co on 29 April (LE), and 2 found in Lancaster Co on 13 May (LE).

**Greater Yellowlegs:** A record count was the 260 recorded in the east RWB on 7 April (JGJ). Rather late were singles spotted both in the east RWB on 27 May, record late for that region (JGJ), and in Sarpy Co on 28 May (CNK).

**Lesser Yellowlegs:** The weekend of 28 and 29 April saw a record count of 1,812, including single-site records of 470 at Wilkins Basin, Fillmore Co, and 344 at Freeman Lakes, York Co (JGJ).

**Solitary Sandpiper:** Routine reports.

**Willet:** An excellent count totaled 74 in the east RWB on 20 April (JGJ); most spring records occur in the period between 20 and 30 April, and so a good count for the late date was 11 recorded in the east RWB on 27 May (JGJ).

**Spotted Sandpiper:** Routine reports.

**Upland Sandpiper:** Few were reported. This species does not congregate in numbers; thus good counts included the 17 spotted in the east RWB on 3 May (JGJ) and the 15 tallied in southwestern Hall Co on 12 May (LR, RH). Peak migration occurs in early May.

**Whimbrel:** Only 4 of this rare migrant were reported: one was seen in a flooded pasture 2 miles south of Verona on 12 May (JGJ); two were located in a flooded pasture north of Angora on 13 May (KL); and one was found near Harvard on 27 May (JGJ). The latter was a rather late date.

**Long-billed Curlew:** Nesting was under way by 15 April near Burwell (MUs). Unexpected were 2 birds spotted at the eastern edge of the migration corridor at Alma on 30 April (GH, WH).

**Hudsonian Godwit:** An excellent count was the 109 tallied in the east RWB on 12 May (JGJ). This date is rather late for a high count, as usually the best counts occur early in the migration period, around April 20. There were rather early reports of 2 spotted at Kearney L, Kearney, on 12 April (LR, RH); 4 identified in the east RWB on 14 April (JGJ); and 3 found near Winnetoon, Knox Co, on 14 April (MB).

**Marbled Godwit:** Rather early were the 2 seen in the east RWB on 7 April (JGJ). A good count was the 55 totaled at Alma on 15 April (GH, WH). One was seen rather late in Lancaster Co on 26 May (LE); most godwits seen in late May are Hudsonians.

**Ruddy Turnstone:** The only reports were of 2 spotted in the east RWB on 12 May (JGJ) and one seen at Tamora Basin, Seward Co, on 27 May (JGJ).

**Sanderling:** The best count reached 40 south of Clay Center on 25 May (CG). Not commonly seen in the east, 13 were identified in Dixon Co on 26 May (BFH).

**Semipalmated Sandpiper:** All reports came from FL eastward. Numbers were down from averages, at least early in the migration in the east RWB (JGJ); only 153 were counted on 12 May, compared to the average for the 2nd week of May of 754 (JGJ). There were, however, 200 at FL on 5 May (LR, RH). The best count in the east RWB was 590 recorded on 27 May (JGJ).

**Western Sandpiper:** This bird is a rare spring migrant in Nebraska; most Western Sandpipers move up the Pacific Coast in spring, peaking in late April. A few pass through the interior in late April to early May, however, including Nebraska; documented Nebraska records are in the

period from 18 April to 19 May. This spring singles were found in the east RWB on 3 May (JGJ) and in Dakota Co on 9 May (BFH); and 3 were located in Dodge Co on 18 May (DP, JP). An additional report of 6 birds seen with White-rumped Sandpipers at the late date for the species of 26 May was equivocal.

**Least Sandpiper:** The one reported in Thurston Co on 7 April (BFH) was rather early. Most have passed through by late May, and so 75 was a good count in the east RWB on 27 May (JGJ).

**White-rumped Sandpiper:** Large numbers move through in late May; the 2,738 tallied in the east RWB on 27 May was only the 3rd-highest count for the species (JGJ). Numbers increased from 114 on 3 May to 673 on 12 May, and from 1,472 totaled on 19 May up to the high of 2,738 (JGJ). No details were provided for a very early report from 15 April and another rather early on 28 April.

**Baird's Sandpiper:** Routine reports.

**Pectoral Sandpiper:** Routine reports.

**Dunlin:** The one spotted in Thurston Co on 7 April (BFH) was rather early; few are recorded in April. All reports came from the east RWB eastward, as expected for this easterly migrant.

**Stilt Sandpiper:** The three found on 20 April--a new early date for the region (JGJ)--in the east RWB were rather early. The best count reached 469 on 19 May in the east RWB (JGJ).

**Buff-breasted Sandpiper:** Most migrate in a narrow corridor through the east RWB; The best count totaled a record 266 there on 27 May, including 94 spotted in a single field near Smith Basin, Clay Co (JGJ). This date is also a rather late for the species; the migration in general for the species was rather late. This spring a few occurred further east: one was seen in Dakota Co on 14 May (BFH), and a good count of 24 was tallied in western Douglas Co on 22 May (BP, LP).

**Short-billed Dowitcher:** Like the Western Sandpiper, this species is another which can be difficult to identify and for which our database on early and late dates needs some work. The single bird found in Dixon Co on 24 April (JJ; no details) was rather early, and the 6 seen at LaPlatte Bottoms, Sarpy Co, on 25 May (CNK; details) were rather late. Both reports originated on or near the extreme documented dates for spring migration.

**Long-billed Dowitcher:** The 1,294 tallied on 3 May in the east RWB (JGJ) was the 2nd best count ever; the 3 high counts occur in the period between 1 to 3 May. Rather late were 2 found near Bayard, Morrill Co, on 28 May (KL).

**Common Snipe:** Routine reports.

**American Woodcock:** Good populations are present in the Elkhorn Valley: 6 were spotted at Powderhorn Area, Dodge Co, on 5 April (DP, JP). Four birds seen 3 miles south of Niobrara on 14 April (MB) indicate a healthy population along the lower Niobrara Valley also. The



only other reports were of singles spotted southwest of Elmwood, Cass Co, on 9 April (B) and in Cedar Co on 29 March (SV).

**Wilson's Phalarope:** Numbers arrived suddenly in the east RWB: 779 were counted on 20 April, whereas none was found a week prior (JGJ). The best count was 1,115 in the west RWB on 5 May (LR, RH). Breeding apparently occurs in the east RWB, but there appears to be only a single conformed report of successful breeding there. Thus of interest was a pair observed copulating on 12 May, and other pairs were seen "acting suspiciously" (JGJ). As many as 71 were counted in the east RWB as late as 27 May (JGJ).

**Red-necked Phalarope:** This bird is a late migrant; the few reports all occurred in the very short period between 23 and 28 May, most, surprisingly, coming from the eastern half of the state, where there were only about 20 previous records. The species is only casual in the east, but there were several reports: singles seen in Seward Co on 24 and 28 May (JG); 2 to 4 located at LaPlatte Bottoms, Sarpy Co, from 25 to 26 May (CNK, RB, BP, LP); and 3 spotted in Lancaster Co on 26 May (LE). The other reports were of 8 found at Valentine NWR, Cherry Co, on 23 May (CG); 5 identified at Alma East SL on 24 May (GH, WH); one seen in York Co on 27 May (CO); and 20 counted in the east RWB on 27 May (JGJ).

**Red Phalarope:** Nebraska's first documented spring record (and 9th overall record) was of one molting to alternate plumage spotted at Wilkins Basin, Fillmore Co, on 28 April (JGJ; details). There are 10+ spring records from neighboring states in the period between 10 May and 5 June, with most occurring in late May. There were several birds reported in states to our south this spring (Colorado, Kansas, Oklahoma).

**Franklin's Gull:** Excellent counts reached 6,000 at FL on 5 May (LR, RH) and "thousands" in the east RWB on 20 April (JGJ).

**Bonaparte's Gull:** Routine reports.

**Mew Gull:** LM hosted 1 to 2 adults from 9 through 25 March (SJD, WRS; details); this sighting denotes the 10th spring record (14 birds in all), all since 1996 with all but one from LM (the other was at Johnson L, Gosper Co).

**Ring-billed Gull:** The 30,000 tallied at HCR on 15 March (PL) represents a record spring count; also better than the previous record of 19,000 reached at LM on 14 March 1994 was the 20,000 counted at BOL on 24 March (Omaha Audubon, fide DP, JP). To emphasize the incredible numbers in the state in mid-March, 11,000 were found at Pawnee L, Lancaster Co, on 25 March, possibly including many of those seen at BOL the day before (WRS); 5,125 were also located at LM on 17 March (SJD).

**California Gull:** Few occur during the spring, and the species is only casual away from LM. Unexpected was an adult spotted with Ring-billed Gulls at Alma on 26 March (GH, WH). The only other reports originated in LM, where up to 4 wintered; 3 were seen there on 9 March (SJD) and 6 were seen on 25 March (WRS). Migrants arrive in mid-March.

**Herring Gull:** The 1,302 found at LM on 9 March (SJD) signify a new record count for spring. Later migrants are immatures; two spotted at Ayr L, Adams Co, on 3 May were 1st-year birds (JGJ). Of 325 counted at LM on 25 March, however, only 40 were immatures (WRS). Adults are rare after mid-April.

**Thayer's Gull:** Excellent numbers were recorded at LM, where 11 were present in January; the peak count totaled 13 there on 9 March (SJD), and as many as 8 (6 1st-winter, one 2nd, and one adult) still remained there on 25 March (WRS)--and an adult lagged behind until 15 April (SJD). Away from LM, the only report was of an adult identified at Sutherland Res, Lincoln Co, on 4 March (SJD, JF).

**Iceland Gull:** A 1st-winter bird found at LM on 24 March (WRS, JS) was carefully studied; its long primary extension, very pale plumage--including a visible but faint tail band--and delicate build--including head and bill--were noted in direct comparison with several same-age Thayer's Gulls. There are now about 20 records of this species for the state.

**Lesser Black-backed Gull:** The only reports were of two seen at LM, an adult present from 4 to 25 March (SJD, JF, WRS) and a 2nd basic bird identified on 17 March (SJD). These sightings denote the 15th and 16th spring records for this species.

**Glaucous-winged Gull:** The 1st-year bird spotted at Sutherland Res, Lincoln Co, on 3 March (AB), if the report is accepted by the NOURC, will represent the 3rd state record.

**Glaucous Gull:** An amazing 15, including 5 adults, a 3rd basic, and 9 1st basic birds, were counted at LM on 9 March (SJD). Elsewhere, a 1st basic bird was seen at Sutherland Res, Lincoln Co, on 4 March (SJD, JF); 3 (one adult and two 1st basic) were found at HCR on 15 March (PL); and a single 1st basic bird was identified at BOL between 22 and 26 March (PL, mob).

**Caspian Tern:** The only reports came from an NOU field trip on 19 May, when flyovers were identified at Hummel Park, Omaha (NOU Newsletter), and singles were reported at BOL and Pawnee L, Lancaster Co, on 13 May (LE).

**Common Tern:** None was reported. This species is an uncommon migrant statewide.

**Forster's Tern:** Routine reports.

**Least Tern:** The one spotted in southern Clay Co on 19 May represents the observer's first for the easter RWB (JGJ). The only other reports were from the NOU meeting on 19 May in Dodge and Saunders Cos, and two identified in Dodge Co on 24 May (DP, JP).

**Black Tern:** This species was a bit late arriving this spring; the first seen by a regular observer in Lancaster Co took place on 26 May (LE). The first sighting occurred in the Sandhills, where there were "plenty" found on 10 May (DR). They had arrived in force by 27 May, when a

record count of 2,100 was made in the east RWB, including 400 located at Harvard Marsh, Clay Co (JGJ).

**Rock Dove:** Routine reports.

**Eurasian Collared-Dove:** Reports are becoming commonplace. Dinsmore noted that the species "is now residing in many of the larger towns in the Panhandle"; Dinsmore also stated to WRS (in an unguarded moment) that one could enter almost any Panhandle town and find one in a few minutes, usually sitting on top of a light pole. Panhandle sightings included 1 to 3 birds seen in Mitchell between 26 Feb and 12 May (KL, SJD, JF); singles were identified in Big Springs on 4 March (SJD, JF), between Minatare and Scottsbluff on 8 April (KL), at Oliver Res, Kimball Co, between 14 and 15 April (SJD), at Kimball on 28 April (SJD), and at Haigler on 29 April (SJD). Elsewhere, sightings at previously-known locations included 2 spotted in Elmwood on 22 March (PL) and 2 found in Dakota City on 10 March (BFH). New locations included Omaha, where one was spotted at 114th and Gold St from 22 to 23 March (B), and another located in Minden, Kearney Co, on 11 April (MR).

**White-winged Dove:** This species is another expanding its range northward. The one spotted in the Drawbaugh yard, Scottsbluff, between 11 and 13 May (PD, DD, fide KL) denotes Nebraska's 11th. The bird which appeared at Kearney among Eurasian Collared-Doves in early June 1998--and that wintered and reappeared there in May 2000--showed up again in early May this year (Roger Newcomb, fide LR, RH) and is still present at this writing in early July (LB). It seems safe to assume that these sightings are of the same persistent individual. So far there have been no Nebraska reports of 2 or more birds.

**Mourning Dove:** The one found at Wind Springs Ranch, Sioux Co, on 9 March (HKH) was rather early, and it may have wintered nearby; wintering occurs on occasion along the North Platte Valley. The first birds referred to as migrants appeared in Alma on 13 March (GH, WH), at Gering on 3 April (AK), and at Mitchell on 8 April (KL). A good count of probable migrants totaled 83 in southwestern Hall Co on 12 May (LR, RH).

**Black-billed Cuckoo:** Only 6 were reported; observers are urged to send in any sightings. One was seen near Salem, Richardson Co, on 12 May (WRS); singles were found in Otoe Co on 17 and 29 May (LC, CF), and in Cuming Co on 27 May (LE). And 2 were spotted at Basswood Area, Dakota Co, on 22 May (BFH).

**Yellow-billed Cuckoo:** None was reported west of Lancaster Co.

**Barn Owl:** A fresh road-killed (actually vehicle-killed?) bird was found in Deuel Co on 18 March (JJD, fide SJD), a rather early date. Earliest dates occur around 10 March.

**Eastern Screech-Owl:** Routine reports.

**Great Horned Owl:** Adults were found on nests around HCR as early as 2 March (GH, WH), and in Franklin Co on 9 March (GH, WH). Nesting was also underway at Wilderness Park, Lincoln, by 10 March (KP, LE).

A very pale bird had usurped a Prairie Falcon nest site at Scotts Bluff NM (AK, RB, NR). Two fledglings were seen at Wehrspann L, Omaha, on 13 May (JWH).

**Snowy Owl:** An immature with a noticeably dark crown and spotted plumage identified sitting on an ice shelf at BOL on 25 March (WRS, JS) came as a total surprise; it must have been passing through, as it was not there the day before (Omaha Audubon) or the day after (NP). This date is also rather late, although there are 4 records for April.

**Burrowing Owl:** Courtship-feeding was underway near Valentine by 12 May (DR).

**Barred Owl:** Westerly reports included one located at Powderhorn Area, Dodge Co, on 5 April (DP, JP), along the Elkhorn River, where the species is patchily distributed. To know where these birds occur along the Elkhorn would be of interest; there are a couple of CBC reports from Madison Co (Norfolk CBC). Another bird was spotted east of Niobrara on 14 Apr (MB), an area where it is also known to occur in small numbers. As many as 8 were counted at ICSP on 12 May (WRS).

**Long-eared Owl:** The only report was of a freshly road-killed bird discovered near Lewellen, Garden Co, on 16 March (SJD).

**Short-eared Owl:** Two were seen roosting for a period of time at least through 12 March in pines near Boyer Chute NWR, Washington Co; 50-100 pellets were noted (JT). Some conventional wisdom has it that this species does not utilize pines for roost sites, and that such reports are misidentifications of Long-eared Owls; however, this report and a few others indicate that Short-ears indeed do roost occasionally in pines, especially when snow cover precludes ground-roosting. Short-ears and Long-ears are very similar in flight upon being flushed and are consequently difficult to tell apart at such times.

**Northern Saw-whet Owl:** None was reported; wintering birds depart by mid-April.

**Common Nighthawk:** Few were reported, none away from the east; the first were 2 spotted in Dakota Co on 13 May (BFH), and one was seen in Lincoln on 14 May (JG). These dates are rather late arrival times for this species.

**Common Poorwill:** The only report was of one found in southwestern Kimball Co on 28 April (SJD), a rather early date.

**Chuck-will's-widow:** None was reported. Information on current locations would be welcome.

**Whip-poor-will:** Whips were numerous at ICSP on 12 May, where at least 14 were counted (WRS). This number represents a (surprisingly) high spring count. Two were found at Willis, Dakota Co, on 24 May (BFH). The only other report was significant: one was spotted flying continuously in a low oval over a small prairie at dusk on 22 May near Gibbon; it was identified by small size (LR, RH). There are only 3 reports further west.

**Chimney Swift:** The four noted at Gering on 29 April (AK) were rather early for the Panhandle. And the one seen at Alma on 20 April (GH, WH) was also on the early side. No early reports came from the east.

**White-throated Swift:** At least 5 were spotted at Scotts Bluff NM, Scotts Bluff Co, on 24 April (AK), a rather early date.

**Ruby-throated Hummingbird:** Only casual as a migrant in central Nebraska, one was seen at Alma on 30 April (GH, WH), and another was located at Kearney on 5 May (LR, RH). Birds still around in the last week of May could be breeders; although egg dates peak in June (Johnsgard), a nest was found at Schramm Park, Sarpy Co, on 22 May 1995. Two males were found in the observer's yard in southwestern Dixon Co on 27 May, with one remaining there through 31 May (JJ). One was spotted at Ponca SP, Dixon Co, on 26 May (BFH), and one was identified at ICSP on 28 May (WRS).

**Belted Kingfisher:** Routine reports.

**Lewis's Woodpecker:** None was reported; this bird is currently thought of (Sharpe et al 2001 "Birds of Nebraska") as a rare but regular spring migrant in the west, but there are not many recent records other than of summering birds.

**Red-headed Woodpecker:** The one spotted in Madison Co on 8 April (JJ) was rather early; wintering is rare there.

**Red-bellied Woodpecker:** This species occurs west in the Republican Valley to Colorado, but the 2 males found at Rock Creek State Fish Hatchery, Dundy Co, on 29 April (SJD) may well represent a first for that location. The species is now regular in the LO area, where 3 were found on 9 March (SJD); however, west of there reports are few. One was seen at CCM on 23 March (SJD); and the one which was first found on 10 June 2000 east of McGrew in extreme southeastern Scotts Bluff Co was still present on 8 April (AK).

**Yellow-bellied Sapsucker:** Surprisingly, none was reported.

**Downy Woodpecker:** Routine reports.

**Hairy Woodpecker:** The one seen at FF on 2 May had a brownish hue to the white feathering, looking somewhat like the Pacific Northwest subspecies (JT).

**Northern Flicker:** An excellent count reached 40 in a Buffalo Co campground on 19 April (LR, RH). A "red-shafted" flicker was identified south of Alliance on 4 May (AR), rather late for pure red-shafted flickers. Most Panhandle birds in the summer are "salmon-shafted" flickers.

**Pileated Woodpecker:** Reports continue from FF, including confirmation of nesting again this year north of Gifford Rd, where a pair was observed bringing food to the nest hole on 11 May (BP, LP). Nesting was first reported in 1999 and occurred again in 2000 (BA). There were no reports of more than 2 birds.

**Olive-sided Flycatcher:** Although this is a late migrant, only 4 were reported, all from the east, as expected. One was found at Schramm Park,

Sarpy Co, on 12 May (B); two were sighted at BOL 26 May (LE); and another was seen at Schramm Park, Sarpy Co, on 27 May (B).

**Western Wood-Pewee:** The only report was of one spotted at Oliver Res, Kimball Co, on 17 May (SJD, JF), about on schedule.

**Eastern Wood-Pewee:** The singles found on 29 April at opposite ends of the Missouri Valley were rather early: a silent bird carefully identified was located at Missouri River Ecology Trail, Neale Woods (WRS; details), and one was spotted at Ponca SP, Dixon Co (JJ). Furthest west was the one found at Geneva Cem on 18 May (LR, RH). An excellent count was the 15 tallied at ICSP on 28 May (WRS).

**Yellow-bellied Flycatcher:** Only one was reported: it was seen at Crystal Cove L, South Sioux City, on 31 May (BFH). There are only two later dates, on June 1 and 7, for this late migrant.

**Acadian Flycatcher:** The only report was of one identified singing on 28 May on Trail 9, ICSP (WRS). In recent years, this location has become regular.

**Alder Flycatcher:** The 3 reports came from the Missouri Valley, the earliest in Towle Park, Omaha, on 24 May (NR). Others were spotted in Dixon Co on 27 May (JJ) and at Bellevue on 28 May (BP, LP). This species is also a late migrant.

**Willow Flycatcher:** The one discovered at Kearney on 5 May (LR, RH) was rather early for the location, although one was banded in Lincoln on 9 May (JK, fide LRB). They had become numerous in the east RWB by 27 May, when 16 were counted there (JGJ). None was reported further west.

**Least Flycatcher:** Rather early were singles spotted at Neale Woods, Douglas Co, on 27 April (JB) and at FF on 29 April (BP, LP). This species was widespread and found in good numbers this spring.

**Dusky Flycatcher:** One was well-studied at Oliver Res, Kimball Co, on 9 May (SJD, JF; details). If accepted by the NOURC, this sighting will represent the first documented spring record.

**Eastern Phoebe:** This early arriver was first detected in the east on 14 March at ADF (LF, CF), and not until 14 April in the Panhandle, at Oliver Res, Kimball Co (SJD). It is uncommon in the Panhandle; another bird was located south of Chadron on 28 May (KL).

**Say's Phoebe:** First in the west was one located in Kimball Co on 15 April (SJD). Farthest east was the one seen near Alma, where it is uncommon, on 17 April (GH, WH).

**Great Crested Flycatcher:** The one spotted at FF on 29 April (B) was rather early. The only Panhandle report was of one identified at Alliance on 13 May (LW). They were numerous at ICSP, where 26 were counted on 28 May (WRS).

**Cassin's Kingbird:** The one identified in southwestern Kimball Co on 2 May (SJD) denotes the 2nd earliest spring date; and another seen in Carter Canyon, Scotts Bluff Co, on 9 May (SJD, JF) was also rather early. These were the only reports.

**Western Kingbird:** The single seen at Oliver Res, Kimball Co, on 28 April (SJD) was rather early for the Panhandle, where arrival dates are generally about 2 weeks later than elsewhere in the state. Two were spotted at Standing Bear L, Omaha, on 27 April (NR). And nesting was underway at Chadron on 10 May (ZU).

**Eastern Kingbird:** The first reported were singles found in Phelps Co (LR, RH) and in Lancaster Co (LE) on 28 April. Good counts reached 49 in southwestern Hall Co on 12 May (LR, RH) and 22 in Dixon Co on 27 May (JJ).

**Scissor-tailed Flycatcher:** Surprisingly, there were 2 reports of this casual spring and summer visitor: one was seen on the MoPac East Trail near Walton, Lancaster Co, on 19 April (KP), and another was identified ("gorgeous") near Krause Basin, Fillmore Co, on 20 April (JGJ). These dates are early, with 19 April being the record. There are about 27 spring records in all.

**Northern Shrike:** Only one bird made it into April, that one identified southeast of Johnson L, Gosper Co, on 1 April (LR, RH).

**Loggerhead Shrike:** The bird found in Lincoln on 18 March (LE) was rather early. Courting (amongst shrikes) began about 1 April at Big Daddy's Ornithological Gardens, Clay Co (JGJ). Numbers were good in the Panhandle by 12 April, when 13 were counted (SJD). A family group of 6 were seen out and about in Richardson Co as early as 12 May (WRS).

**White-eyed Vireo:** One remained at FF from 29 April to 12 May (DP, JP, MO, B). This sighting represents only the 20th spring report since 1981.

**Bell's Vireo:** The first was one seen in Lancaster Co on 6 May (LE), and another was banded in Lincoln on 8 May (JK, fide LRB).

**Yellow-throated Vireo:** Farthest west was the one found at Hormel Park, Fremont, on 20 May (LR, RH).

**Plumbeous Vireo:** The only report was of one seen north of Mitchell on 28 May (KL).

**Blue-headed Vireo:** The single located at Neale Woods, Douglas Co, on 27 April (JB) was rather early. There are few records away from the Missouri Valley; farthest west was one spotted at Seward on 12 May (LP).

**Warbling Vireo:** The bird found at FF on 21 April (JM) was rather early, and the one spotted at Rock Creek L, Dundy Co, on 29 April (SJD) was also early; the earliest date for the Panhandle is 1 May. Excellent counts totaled 40 at Medicine Creek Res, Frontier Co, on 26 May (LR, RH) and 34 in Douglas and Washington Cos on 29 April (WRS).

**Philadelphia Vireo:** Only 2 were reported: one found at ADF on 2 May (LF, CF), and one spotted at Platte River SP, Cass Co, on 6 May (JGJ).

**Red-eyed Vireo:** The bird seen at FF on 29 April (B) was rather early. Good counts were 18 at ICSP on 12 May (WRS) and 10 at FF on 16 May (CNK).

**Blue Jay:** This species was thought to be "really increasing" in Thomas Co (RG).

Pinyon Jay: None was reported.

Black-billed Magpie: Nesting in southeastern Cuming Co is near the eastern edge of the breeding range; nestbuilding by adults and 3 of last year's 4 fledglings as helpers was reported underway in an ash tree near last year's nest site a few miles southeast of West Point on 29 April (LE). The nest was abandoned, however, by 27 May (LE).

American Crow: This species is strongly migratory on the Great Plains; 400+ flyovers were seen near Gibbon on 4 March (LR, RH). One bird was spotted carrying nest material to a pine tree in Omaha on 8 March (JT), and adults were reported feeding 4 barely-flighted young with "baby gape" in Frontier Co on 26 May (LR, RH).

Horned Lark: Routine reports.

Purple Martin: Westernmost were the 6 males found at nestboxes at Shelton, Buffalo Co, on 6 April (MM), the 3 seen at Alma, Harlan Co, the next day (GH, WH), and the 12 identified in Kearney on 13 April (LR, RH).

Tree Swallow: The one located at Standing Bear L, Omaha, on 31 March (B) was rather early. Apparently territorial birds were spotted at several sites with nest boxes in Lancaster Co (LE) and Frontier Co on 26 May (LR, RH); and a nesting pair was seen at Memphis Lakes, Saunders Co, on 6 May (CNK). Nesting is regular in the Missouri Valley and Platte Valley at least as far west as Keith Co, but increasing only in recent years in the southwest.

Violet-green Swallow: The only reports were of 4 spotted at Scotts Bluff NM, Scotts Bluff Co, on 9 May (SJD) and of 8 seen at Chadron SP, Dawes Co, on 28 May (KL); nesting has been reported at both locations in previous years.

Northern Rough-winged Swallow: The two identified at HCR on 8 April (GH, WH) were rather early.

Bank Swallow: About 1000 were found nesting in banks all around Medicine Creek Res, Frontier Co, on 26 May (LR, RH).

Cliff Swallow: The one found at Alma on 9 April (GH, WH) was rather early.

Barn Swallow: Routine reports.

Black-capped Chickadee: Routine reports.

Tufted Titmouse: There were indications of unrest at the northern and western edges of the range this spring. A few seen at a feeder in west Lincoln were unusual enough for the observer to note their presence (KP), although titmice occur in Wilderness Park in Lincoln (LE). In Blair, Washington Co, where the species is sporadic in occurrence, one wintered at a feeder, and others were seen in March and on 30 April (JGJ). It is present, however, along the Platte River at Hormel Park in Fremont, Dodge Co, (DP, JP), the northwesternmost point of the Nebraska range.

Red-breasted Nuthatch: The latest sighting away from the breeding range was of one found at Oliver Res, Kimball Co, on 17 May (SJD).



**White-breasted Nuthatch:** The eastern subspecies *cookei* breeds throughout most of the Republican Valley and across northern Kansas (Kansas Breeding Bird Atlas, 2001); a pair was seen at Medicine Creek Res, Frontier Co, on May 27 (LR, RH). Also at the edge of the summer range for (presumed) eastern birds were one identified at CCM on 14 April (SJD) and one banded in Thomas Co on 9 May (RG); the species is probably resident in small numbers at both sites. The species is not known to breed in Kimball Co; a western bird spotted at Oliver Res on 22 March, the observer's first for the county (SJD), had probably wintered in the area. Another western bird, probably the same bird that wintered at Wind Springs Ranch, Sioux Co, was still there on 9 May (SJD) but has since departed (HKH); there are no known records of breeding in Sioux Co away from Ponderosa Pine habitat.

**Pygmy Nuthatch:** One was seen "working the snag" (known nest site) at Wildcat Hills NC, Scotts Bluff Co, on 28 April (AK). Near the east edge of the species' Ponderosa Pine range, 1-2 were spotted at a feeder 6 miles south of Chadron through 20 April (SA).

**Brown Creeper:** It is hoped that the small nesting population at FF continues; singles were found singing on 11 May on Sycamore and Stream Trails (BP, LP). The last wintering bird reported was located at Wehrspann L, Omaha, on 18 April (JWH). An excellent count totaled 9 at Wilderness Park, Lincoln, on 10 March (LE).

**Rock Wren:** Only 2 were reported, one spotted at Oliver Res, Kimball Co, on 28 April (AK) and one seen at Scotts Bluff NM, Scotts Bluff Co, on 27 May (KL).

**Carolina Wren:** This winter apparently saw the most severe reduction in numbers due to tough conditions since at least 1984-85 (SS). None was found at Wilderness Park, Lincoln, either this winter or spring (LE), although 2 were noted in different Lincoln neighborhoods (KP, Mus); numbers were also down noticeably at FF (BP, LP) and ICSP (WRS). Most unexpected so far west, especially after this winter, was one identified singing at Kearney on 6 March (LR, RH). However, there were a few hardy survivors scattered about from Omaha south (mob), and population rebuilding was underway with adults spotted feeding young in Bellevue on 19 May; a second brood was being contemplated, at least by a strongly-singing male (RB).

**House Wren:** A good count reached 40 at Wilderness Park, Lincoln, on 12 May (LE).

**Winter Wren:** Only 2 were reported, one located at an expected location in FF on 14 April (B), and the other identified far to the west at Wind Springs Ranch, Sioux Co, on 2 May (SJD). Although there are a few reports of birds attempting to winter in the Panhandle, there are no records of survivors after February. Panhandle records probably are of birds of the western subspecies *pacificus*.

**Sedge Wren:** This spring was typical for this species in the sense that, as noted by Don Paseka, they "usually appear in mid-May, sing tirelessly

and leave in June." However, atypically, there was only one report, of one found on the Paseka farm northwest of Ames, Dodge Co, on 16 May (DP, JP). Nesting does not usually occur until after birds return in July.

Marsh Wren: Routine reports.

Golden-crowned Kinglet: Routine reports.

Ruby-crowned Kinglet: The one spotted at Cunningham L, Omaha, on 24 March (JT) was rather early.

Blue-gray Gnatcatcher: Reports are now numerous from the west; it is "obviously becoming widespread and almost common" in the Panhandle (SJD), where a total of about 14 were found. It is less common immediately eastward from the Panhandle; one was spotted at LO on 28 April (SJD), and 3 were found in the Rock Creek L area in Dundy Co on 29 April (SJD). All other reports were in or close to the Missouri Valley, north to Ponca SP, Dixon Co, where it is uncommon; but 1-2 were found there beginning 29 April (JJ).

Eastern Bluebird: Rather early for the west, where wintering is rare, was the one spotted at L Minatare, Scotts Bluff Co, on 16 March (SJD).

Mountain Bluebird: The first to return were 2 found south of Gering on 7 March (AK). The best count reached 55 in Kimball Co on 16 March (SJD), a good count; and 2 were seen investigating nestboxes at Wildcat Hills NC, Scotts Bluff Co, by 31 March (AK).

Townsend's Solitaire: Routine reports.

Veery: The only reports were of one identified at ADF on 4 May (LF, CF), and one seen on 9 and 10 May at FF (BP, LP).

Gray-cheeked Thrush: The migration was about normal, with 11 birds reported in the period between 29 April and 25 May. The 29 April sighting took place at Boyer Chute NWR, Washington Co (JT).

Swainson's Thrush: The one spotted in Phelps Co on 22 April (LR, RH) was rather early, although singles had reached Ponca SP, Dixon Co, and South Sioux City by 29 April (JJ, BFH). A good count for this statewide migrant was the 28+ totaled at Oliver Res, Kimball Co, on 17 May (SJD, JF).

Hermit Thrush: Reports came either from the Missouri Valley or the Panhandle. The Rocky Mountain subspecies *auduboni* occurs in the Panhandle, moving through later in spring and earlier in fall than eastern Hermit Thrushes, which are probably all *faxoni*. Two *auduboni* were seen at Wind Springs Ranch, Sioux Co, on 2 May (SJD), and a Hermit Thrush identified at Alliance on 16 May (LW) was also probably *auduboni*. Eastern reports were of 4 birds seen in the period between 4 April and 3 May (mob).

Wood Thrush: The single spotted at Neale Woods, Douglas Co, on 27 April (JB) was rather early. A good count totaled 11 at ICSP on 12 May (WRS). None was reported west of Dodge and Lancaster Cos (DP, JP, JK fide LRB), about the western limit of spring migration.

American Robin: Routine reports.

**Varied Thrush:** There have been only 6 reports since 1999, thus the one found at Alliance 9 May (LW) was a surprise, especially at this rather late date. This bird probably wintered, as a belated report was received of apparently the same bird spotted in Alliance December 2000 (DT).

**Gray Catbird:** Excellent counts totaled 50 in Lincoln on 12 May (LRB) and "dozens" in FF on 3 May (DP, JP). Uncommon in the west, one was spotted in Scottsbluff on 11 May (KL, PD, DD).

**Northern Mockingbird:** There were 5 reports (mob), the first coming on 20 April in Omaha (B).

**Brown Thrasher:** Routine reports.

**European Starling:** Unusual were 6 pairs discovered nestbuilding in the same cottonwood at Mitchell on 8 April (KL). Although starlings usually nest solitarily, nesting may be colonial when sites are scarce (Busby and Zimmerman, Kansas Breeding Bird Atlas, 2001).

**American Pipit:** Routine reports.

**Sprague's Pipit:** None was reported.

**Bohemian Waxwing:** The only report was of 2 seen at LO on 9 March (SJD). There was also only one winter report, that from the east.

**Cedar Waxwing:** There may be two peaks of migrants in this species, an early one in March, often masked by wintering birds, and a later one in May-early June, the latter possibly birds which wintered far south of Nebraska (see Robbins and Easterla, Birds of Missouri). This pattern was evident this spring, when the two best counts overall were 150 tallied in Knox Co on 1 April (JJ) and 133 at LO on 14 April (SJD). The next best totals were 50 at Oak Glen, Seward Co, on 12 May (BP, LP), and 71 at Geneva Cem on 18 May (LR, RH). A flock of 10 spotted at ICSP on 28 May (WRS) may also have been migrants.

**Golden-winged Warbler:** Another good spring for this species, which has become more numerous in recent years. About 9 were reported in the period between 5 and 12 May (BP, LP, WRS, JGJ), west only to Schramm Park, Sarpy Co (NR).

**Tennessee Warbler:** The usual large numbers were reported from 29 April to 27 May. The best counts reached 30+ at ICSP on 12 May (WRS) and 27 at Dodge Park, Omaha, on 5 May (JGJ). As expected, none was found west of the east RWB.

**Orange-crowned Warbler:** Also numerous this spring, the high count totaled 100+ in the east RWB on 3 May (JGJ), a record spring count for this statewide migrant. Reports arrived from 19 April through 19 May.

**Nashville Warbler:** Reports occurred in the period from 29 April to 18 May, with about 17 reported, none from west of Lancaster Co.

**Northern Parula:** This species is fairly common in its preferred habitat (duh!). Up to 4 were seen at FF, the first report for this early migrant coming from there on 14 April (BP, LP); and 6 were located at ICSP on 28 May (WRS)--these remained singles through the period, probably summering. Other reports included singles spotted at Neale Woods,

Washington Co, on 28 April (JB), in the sycamores at the northwestern corner of Schilling Refuge, Plattsmouth, on 6 May (WRS), and in the "neighbor's sycamore tree" in Lincoln on 6 May (MUs).

Yellow Warbler: Geneva Cem is a good migrant trap, as illustrated by an excellent count of 33+ tallied there on 18 May (LR, RH). The earliest was one located at FF on 29 April (BP, LP), and, in the west, at Alliance on 7 May (LW).

Chestnut-sided Warbler: This spring was good for this eastern migrant, with about 18 reported in the period between 5 and 26 May. The best count was 4 at FF on 10 May (BP, LP). Unexpected was a male spotted at Goose L, CLNWR, on 19 May (KMD), the 12th Panhandle report for spring.

Magnolia Warbler: About 9 were reported, in the period from 5 to 24 May; westernmost were singles noted in southwestern Hall Co on 12 May (LR, RH) and at Geneva Cem on 24 May (CG).

Cape May Warbler: The only report was of one seen at Blair, Washington Co, on 7 May (JGJ). This report is only the 13th since 1982.

Yellow-rumped Warbler: Another statewide migrant reported in numbers this spring, the best count reached 100+ in the east RWB on 3 May (JGJ). Reports occurred in the period between 12 April and 24 May.

Black-throated Green Warbler: Only 7 of this uncommon migrant were found, all in the Missouri Valley from 2 to 16 May (JB, DP, JP, JGJ, CNK).

Blackburnian Warbler: In the period between 5 and 25 May, 6 were found, all in Dodge and Sarpy Cos (JGJ, BP, LP, CNK, NR).

Yellow-throated Warbler: The first were 2 seen at FF on 14 April (BP, LP). The only other reports were of single birds found at Missouri River Ecology Trail, Neale Wood--where apparently this species has summered in recent years--on 27 April (JB) and on 8 May (NR). Unexpected was one identified in a sycamore grove at the northwestern corner of Schilling Refuge, Plattsmouth, on 6 May (WRS).

Pine Warbler: None was reported this spring; confirmation of the 3rd spring record was received, a bird discovered at a Bellevue feeder between 12 and 17 March 2000 (fide BP, LP). Spring reports of this species, 18 in all, are poorly documented.

Palm Warbler: The one spotted at Wehrspann L, Omaha, on 14 April (B) was 4th earliest ever; this species is an early migrant in general. Good numbers were reported, with about 20 seen in the east in the period between 14 April to 12 May, and one identified at LO of the western subspecies *palmarum* on 28 April (SJD). The latter is only the 9th Panhandle report, and the earliest. *Palmarum* occurs over most of the state in migration and is rarer westward. Eastern *hypochrysea*, more yellowish, has been reported occasionally from the east.

**Bay-breasted Warbler:** Much more rare in spring than in fall, 3 were reported: the observer's first for Wayne Co on 7 May (MB), one at FF on 8 May (B), and another there on 19 May (NOU).

**Blackpoll Warbler:** Much more common in spring than fall, good numbers were reported in the period between 29 April and 25 May. Four birds were reported on 29 April, a rather early date: 2 in Lincoln (MUs), and singles at FF (BP,LP), and Crystal Cove L, South Sioux City (BFH). Furthest west were the 11 spotted in the east RWB from 12 to 24 May (JGJ, CG).

**Cerulean Warbler:** The only reports were of one seen at Neale Woods, Douglas Co, on 1 May (JB), a rather early date, and 2 identified at Trail 9, ICSP, on 28 May (WRS).

**Black-and-white Warbler:** The two located south of Chadron on 30 April (SA) were rather early for the west, as was a female discovered at Bushnell Cem on 2 May (SJD). Other than these reports, and one at Kearney on 2 May (LR, RH), all others occurred in the Missouri Valley in the period between 27 April to 11 May; this bird is an early migrant. The best count reached a total of 7 at ICSP and Schilling Refuge, Plattsmouth, on 6 May (WRS).

**American Redstart:** This species was much in evidence this spring, with good numbers reported statewide beginning on 29 April in the east (JJ) and on 17 May in the west (SJD, JF). Excellent counts were led by an amazing 46 in Sowbelly Canyon, Sioux Co, on 28 May (KL) and 27 at Ponca SP, Dixon Co, on 20 May (JJ). This species is indeed a common statewide migrant.

**Prothonotary Warbler:** One was seen at FF on 3 May (DP, JP), and 1-2 were reported through 24 May (mob). At Hormel Park, Fremont, 1-2 were present between 6 and 20 May (DP, JP, LR, RH); this species is rarely found away from the Missouri Valley. Singles were spotted at widely-spaced locations at ICSP on both 12 and 28 May (WRS); and it was reported from Washington Co on 19 May (NOU, fide JP).

**Worm-eating Warbler:** One was reported from Hastings Cem on 7 May (B; no details).

**Ovenbird:** The first was one found at Neale Woods, Douglas Co, on 27 April (JB). None was reported west of Cherry and Fillmore Cos.

**Northern Waterthrush:** About 27 were reported in the period from 2 to 17 May, most from the Missouri Valley--but also from Oliver Res, Kimball Co, where one was found on 2 May (SJD) and two on 17 May (SJD, JF). This species is uncommon in the Panhandle.

**Louisiana Waterthrush:** Reports of this rare migrant and summer resident came from expected locations: FF, where one arrived on 14 April (CHe); and either it or another (never 2) was reported through 16 May (CNK, BP, LP, JT), and at ICSP, where 1-2 were found near St Deroin on 6, 12, and 28 May. A strongly territorial pair was also spotted along Trail 5 on 28 May (WRS).

**Kentucky Warbler:** This species has become more numerous in recent years throughout the Missouri Valley. The first reported was seen in the far north at Crystal Cove L, South Sioux City, on 29 April (BFH), tying the 2nd earliest date ever. One was reported at Hastings Cem on 7 May (B; no details); this report represents only the 7th away from the Missouri Valley. More usual were the 2 found at Schramm Park, Sarpy Co, on 10 May (NR); and singles were noted in eastern Otoe Co on 22 and on 29 May (LF, CF). The species was almost common at ICSP, where 1-2 were found on each trail checked on 28 May, for a total of 7, a record count; 1-2 were identified on Trail 9 beginning on 6 May (WRS).

**Connecticut Warbler:** One was reported, about normal for a Nebraska spring: this one was seen at FF on 12 May (Bill Parker, fide BP, LP; details).

**Mourning Warbler:** Only 7 were reported, all from the Missouri Valley in the typically late period between 17 and 28 May (mob).

**MacGillivray's Warbler:** The only one reported was spotted at Oliver Res, Kimball Co, on 17 May (SJD, JF). Numbers are usually greater in the fall.

**Common Yellowthroat:** The one identified at Harvard Marsh, Clay Co, on 24 April (BP, LP) was the first detected. A good count of 20 was made at Lincoln on 12 May (LRB) and 18 were tallied in southwestern Hall Co on 12 May (LR, RH).

**Hooded Warbler:** The only report of this casual migrant, which may be becoming a rare regular spring visitor, occurred in a South Sioux City yard on 5 May (fide BFH). This spring report is about the 43rd for the state.

**Wilson's Warbler:** Reports were rather routine, all in the period from 5 to 25 May (mob) and distributed statewide. The total was rather low, with only about 14 in all.

**Canada Warbler:** None was reported; this species is a rare but regular spring migrant in the east.

**Yellow-breasted Chat:** Reports came from Alma west, as expected, with earliest occurring on 8 May at Alma (GH, WH).

**Summer Tanager:** This species has increased its numbers in two areas of apparently suitable habitat where few have been reported until the last 2 years or so, FF and ICSP, suggesting a northward range expansion in the Missouri Valley. One was noted at FF on 29 April (B), a rather early date, and 1-2 were seen in Mormon Hollow at FF through at least 16 May (BP, LP, CNK). At ICSP, 7 were counted on 12 May, and territorial pairs were observed on the St Deroin road and at the St Deroin Cem on 6 and again on 28 May (WRS). Reports also came from Otoe Co of a 1st-year male spotted on 3 May and a single bird noted on 29 May (LF, CF). Another 1st-year male was found at Ft Atkinson SHP, Washington Co, on 5 May (JGJ).

**Scarlet Tanager:** All reports were from the Missouri Valley, beginning with singles noted at Neale Woods, Douglas Co, on 28 April (JB) and at FF

on 29 April (B), rather early dates. A female was seen gathering nest material at FF on 27 May (BP, LP).

**Western Tanager:** The only reports were of singles found in Scottsbluff on 8 May (PD, DD, fide KL)--a rather early date--and again on 19 May (KL).

**Green-tailed Towhee:** This rare but regular migrant was found 3 times: on 2 and on 9 May at Oliver Res., Kimball Co, (SJD) and on 14 May there also (RB).

**Spotted Towhee:** An excellent count of migrants reached 28+ at McMurtrey Refuge, Clay Co, on 3 May (JGJ). Peak movement of this species occurs around 1 May. Wintering birds leave the southeast by mid-May, and so rather late was the bird spotted at FF on 12 May (MO). Migrants appeared first in the central, as is usual, with the two seen at the Sacramento-Wilcox Area, Phelps Co, on 22 April representing the first noted (LR, RH). On 4 May near Gibbon, migrant Spotted and Eastern Towhees were found together with hybrids (see Eastern Towhee; LR, RH). The first in the west was a bird identified south of Chadron on 27 April (SA).

**Eastern Towhee:** This species is common at ICSP, where 9 were counted on 28 May (WRS), and at FF, where 6 were found on 26 April (CNK). Westernmost were singles discovered in southwestern Hall Co and near Gibbon on 4 and 12 May; at least one hybrid was noted on each of these dates, as well as 2 hybrids on 1 May (LR, RH). Arrival in the southeast is in early and mid-April.

**Cassin's Sparrow:** None was reported; arrival usually takes place in late May.

**American Tree Sparrow:** An estimated 2,000 were located in southern Buffalo Co on 11 March (LR, RH). Few were reported elsewhere, however; only 10 were found in Lancaster Co on 18 March in 7-8 hours of birding (LE). The last reported were the 2 seen at BOL on 31 March (LE) and the one noted at ADF the same day (LF, CF).

**Chipping Sparrow:** A good count was 75+ in Buffalo Co on 1 May (LR, RH), and they were reported "in every spruce tree" in Bassett, Rock Co, by 6 May (CH).

**Clay-colored Sparrow:** This species was widely-reported from 27 April (LR, RH) through 12 May (DR, LR, RH); it was "amazingly abundant" near Valentine on the latter date (DR). The best count (actual number) totaled 120 in Kearney on 10 May (LR, RH).

**Brewer's Sparrow:** None was reported; arrival is in mid-April.

**Field Sparrow:** The one banded in Bellevue on 2 April (RG) was rather early. This species is a rare migrant in the Panhandle; most Nebraska birds, at least in the north and west, are *arenacea* (grey auriculars), but intergrades with eastern *pusilla* (reddish auriculars) occur in the east and southeast. Single *arenacea* were spotted at Wind Springs Ranch, Sioux Co, on 2 and 9 May (SJD, JF). Two birds of unspecified subspecies were identified at Rock Creek L, Dundy Co, on 29 April (SJD), and a good count

for the southwest reached 11 at Medicine Creek Res, Frontier Co, on 26 May (LR, RH).

Vesper Sparrow: Rather early was the one found at BOL on 24 March (Omaha Audubon, fide DP, JP); this species can appear very early in spring. Two subspecies nest in Nebraska; uncommon in the east (north of Nemaha Co) is the eastern subspecies *gramineus*, which has adapted to nesting in field borders of corn fields, and whose range thus probably coincides with that of dry land corn. A nest with 4 eggs was found near Schramm Park, Sarpy Co, on 16 May (CNK). Migrants usually are gone by early May, and so the one discovered near Wilkins Basin, Fillmore Co, on 18 May (LR, RH) was a little late, although 5 still remained in southwestern Hall Co on 12 May (LR, RH); nesting is not known in that part of the state.

Lark Sparrow: The six noted in Harlan Co on 8 April (GH, WH) were rather early.

Lark Bunting: Reports arrived from the Panhandle; the first were in Kimball and Dundy Cos on 28 April (SJD), and "lots" were seen in southern Sioux Co by on 28 May (KL).

Savannah Sparrow: The two migrants spotted at Wilkins Basin, Fillmore Co, on 18 May (LR, RH) were rather late. One or more identified on Sowbelly Rd, Sioux Co, 28 May (KL) may have been breeders; breeding occurs in certain locations in northwestern Nebraska.

Grasshopper Sparrow: The one found at Rock Creek L, Dundy Co, on 29 April (SJD) was rather early; arrival dates in western Nebraska are significantly later than those in the east.

Baird's Sparrow: This species continues to pop up in unexpected places; one was observed near Elmwood 1-2 May; its song was compared with a tape on the 2nd day (GW, EB). There are now 8 documented spring records, 4 from the east in the period from 24 April to 10 May; all 8 statewide occurred in the period between 24 April and 16 May.

Henslow's Sparrow: None was reported; arrival is usually in late April.

LeConte's Sparrow: Only 2 were reported: one seen at Missouri River Ecology Trail, Neale Woods, on 27 April (JB) and another located at FF on 3 May (DP, JP). This species is far more secretive in spring than in fall.

Nelson's Sharp-tailed Sparrow: None was reported; most move through mid-late May.

Fox Sparrow: Routine reports.

Song Sparrow: Routine reports.

Lincoln's Sparrow: Routine reports.

Swamp Sparrow: Routine reports.

White-throated Sparrow: Overwintering occurs in the southeast; the two that wintered in Lincoln were still present in mid-March (LE). The last reported was banded in Thomas Co on 9 May (RG), not a particularly late date. Uncommon in central Nebraska, 1-2 passed through the Gibbon area between 27 April and 4 May (LR, RH).



**White-crowned Sparrow:** At least one of 4 birds spotted near Gibbon 4 May was "gray-lore'd" (LR, RH), apparently *gambelii*, the most widespread subspecies.

**Harris's Sparrow:** Numbers were down to some extent; "few this winter" was a comment from central Nebraska (LR, RH), and only 3 were seen in Lancaster Co in 7-8 hours of birding on 18 March (LE). The best count was only 35, near Gibbon on 4 May (LR, RH). At least one was noted with flocks of Chestnut-collared Longspurs near Valentine on 12 May (DR).

**Dark-eyed Junco:** The last to leave was a "Slate-colored" Junco banded on 9 May in Thomas Co (RG); most depart by mid-May.

**McCown's Longspur:** Large numbers pass through the Panhandle in mid-April; 1,075 were counted in Kimball Co, and 730 were tallied eastward in Cheyenne Co on 14 April (SJD); "hundreds" were also found in the Panhandle the next day (SJD). The record spring count is over 2,000.

**Lapland Longspur:** A good count of 2,500 was made in Dixon Co on 15 March (JJ); the peak spring count is an amazing 50,000!

**Chestnut-collared Longspur:** The four seen at LM on 23 March (SJD) were rather early, and the 2 located near Valentine on 12 May (DR) were rather late, although breeding occurs in northcentral Nebraska. "Hundreds" were found in the Panhandle on 15 April (SJD).

**Snow Bunting:** An excellent count reached 80 on the beach at Sandy Point, LM, on 4 March (SJD).

**Northern Cardinal:** One was spotted east of Scottsbluff on 1 April (AK), continuing the small population there (hopefully another was around somewhere!). At Wilderness Park, Lincoln, a nest located 6 feet up in a cedar had 3 cowbird and 2 cardinal eggs on 12 May (LE).

**Rose-breasted Grosbeak:** Surprisingly, the first to arrive were discovered in the Panhandle: one reported at a Bayard feeder on 22 April had been there about 10 days (AK), providing the record earliest documented date for the state. Generally rare (but regular) in the Panhandle in spring, a rather early male was identified at Oliver Res on 28 April (SJD); another was seen there on 17 May (SJD); one was spotted in Alliance on 9 May (LW), and yet another male was located in Scotts Bluff Co on 10 May (KL). A good count totaled 30+ in Lincoln on 12 May (LRB).

**Black-headed Grosbeak:** The one seen south of Chadron on 30 April (SA) was rather early. Migrants occur regularly east to a line from Antelope Co to Adams Co, so the 2 found in Dodge Co, only the 3rd-4th eastern records since 1981, were unexpected. One was seen at a feeder 4 miles west of Fremont between 8 and 10 May (Linda Coulter, fide DP, JP) and the other was identified at Hormel Park, Fremont, on 10 May (DP, JP).

**Blue Grosbeak:** Routine reports.

**Lazuli Bunting:** Only the 12th-13th reports from the east were single birds (the same?) spotted at different sections of Wilderness Park, Lincoln, on 12 and again on 19 May (LE). Easterly was the one found at Hastings Cem on 7 May (B).

**Indigo Bunting:** Record early was the one identified in Otoe Co on 13 April (LF, CF). Most arrive in early May. Westernmost was one spotted south of Chadron on 28 May (KL), where it is a rare spring migrant. A good count reached 10 in Otoe Co on 22 May (LF, CF).

**Dickcissel:** None was reported west of Harlan and Frontier Cos (LR, RH, GH, WH); this species is rare further west and usually does not arrive there before June. The Frontier Co sighting was of 2 birds spotted on 26 May (LR, RH).

**Bobolink:** Four seen in Clay Co on 3 May (JGJ) were rather early.

**Red-winged Blackbird:** The observer sympathized with a pied bird located in Towle Park, Omaha, on 25 April, suggesting that it should be considered variegated so as not to be baked in a pie (NR). (Note to observers: it doesn't take much to avoid "Routine reports").

**Eastern Meadowlark:** Although this species is fairly common in the Sandhills (where it occupies "valley meadows") as well as in its core range in the southeast, it is surprisingly absent from the RWB. Although the RWB has wet potholes, water levels are rather variable, and there is very little "valley meadow" habitat. The singles seen at Harvard Marsh, Clay Co, on 19 May (JGJ) and North Hultine Basin, Clay Co, on 27 Mar (JGJ), new records for Clay Co, led the observer to suspect infiltration by the species.

**Western Meadowlark:** Routine reports.

**Yellow-headed Blackbird:** The one found at the Schramm Park, Sarpy Co, feeders on 1 March was typical of early arrivers: single and at a feeder (Carl Wolfe, Dariel Fiet, fide RG). Peak migration occurs in mid-April; "several thousand" were located in the east RWB on 20 April (JGJ). Nesting occurs almost everywhere where conditions are suitable; this year up to 3 were located in cattails in Sarpy Co (an ephemeral habitat there) between 19 and 26 May (CNK, LR, RH). They were thought to be nesting in Lancaster Co also (LRB).

**Rusty Blackbird:** At the west edge of the migratory range were the 2-3 identified near Gibbon between 17 and 21 April (LR, RH; details). The only other reports were of 14 spotted at Wehrspann L, Omaha, on 14 March (CNK); 2-5 located in Dixon Co between 21 and 31 March (JJ); and a female spotted in Dixon Co on the very late date on 31 May (no details). The latest date for Kansas is on 17 April, for Missouri on 23 April, and for South Dakota on 16 May.

**Brewer's Blackbird:** Rare in the east, up to 6 were spotted in Dakota Co on 21 and on 22 April (BFH). All other reports came from the east RWB westward. The best count was an excellent 1,000 tallied in the east RWB on 14 April; 800 of these were located at a burned field near Krause

Basin, Fillmore Co, a favored habitat (JGJ). Within the breeding range, a female was seen at a Chadron feeder as late as 20 May (ZU).

**Common Grackle:** Rather early were 4 seen near Wakefield on 5 March (JJ). An excellent spring count reached 1,100 in Lancaster Co on 25 March (LE).

**Great-tailed Grackle:** About 40 discovered at Cracker Barrel Marsh, Lincoln, on 25 March (LE) were the first migrants noted; but 70 were seen there on 15 April (LE), and nesting appeared to be in progress there by 12 May (LRB). Nesting was apparently in progress by 12 May also at the Lincoln City Landfill and Arbor L in Lancaster Co (LRB). Reports of migrants originated from several locations in east and central Nebraska. The best count reached between 300 and 400 in the east RWB, where it was widely-distributed and apparently breeding at several of the larger marshes by 27 May (JGJ). Reports from the Panhandle have become regular in recent years, especially at Kiowa Springs, Scotts Bluff Co, now a regular summering location. Up to 5 birds were noted there from 12 April on (AK, KL, SJD), and a female was spotted at Oliver Res, Kimball Co, on 14 April (SJD).

**Brown-headed Cowbird:** A single blackbird exhibiting early arrival strategy at a feeder was spotted at Elmwood on 11 March (B). Migrants were apparent by 25 March (LE).

**Orchard Oriole:** The one spotted in southeastern Otoe Co on 11 April (LF, CF) was the earliest on record. Most arrive in late April. An excellent count was the 40+tallied in Lincoln on 12 May (LRB).

**Baltimore Oriole:** The one found at FF on 20 April (B) was rather early. A good count reached 30+ in Richardson Co 12 May (WRS). A female was spotted nestbuilding in Lincoln on 9 May (JK fide LRB). None was reported from the Panhandle.

**Bullock's Oriole:** Reports came from the Panhandle. The one identified near Mitchell on 2 May (KL) was rather early; and an excellent count totaled 18 in the Panhandle on 28 May (KL).

**Gray-crowned Rosy-Finch:** After the winter's rosy-finch excitement, the last birds sighted were the 20 seen at the Wind Springs Ranch, Sioux Co, feeders on 9 March; at least one "Hepburn's" Rosy-Finch was noted with them (HKH; see next species).

**Black Rosy-Finch:** One was seen with the last small flock of Gray-crowned Rosy-Finches at the Wind Springs Ranch feeders on 9 March (HKH).

**Purple Finch:** Only 4 were reported: 3 located at Spring Creek Prairie, Denton, on 1 March (KP) and one spotted south of Gering, where it is rare, on 12 March (AK).

**House Finch:** Routine reports.

**Red Crossbill:** Few were reported. Two were identified at Wildcat Hills NC, Scotts Bluff Co, on 16 March (SJD); one was found at Oliver Res, Kimball Co, on 17 May (SJD, JF), and at least one was a surprise, identified as far east as Cedar Co and as late as 29 May (SV).

Common Redpoll: None was reported; departure is usually complete by late March.

Pine Siskin: The only significant numbers reported were 40+ discovered at a Chadron feeder on 11 March (ZU) and 40 found at Wildcat Hills NC, Scotts Bluff Co, on 23 March (AK). Surprising were 2 spotted at a feeder on the Johnson-Nemaha Cos line on 28 May; no nesting activity was noted (B). Occasionally, stragglers will remain and breed at odd locations. The one bird seen feeding another (ages not stated) in Buffalo Co on 23 April (LR, RH) may have been indicative of breeding; there is a long-established population at University of Nebraska-Kearney.

American Goldfinch: The one banded in Bellevue was recaptured in Kearney Co on 2 May; this recapture marks the 2nd time the bander has had this happen (RG), and the incident is indicative of at least some regular westward movement in spring along the Platte Valley

Evening Grosbeak: The only reports were of 4 spotted at Wildcat Hills NC, Scotts Bluff Co, on 16 March (SJD) and of one seen at Alliance on 11 May (LW).

House Sparrow: Routine reports.

\* \* \* \* \*

## Comments on Nebraska's Falconiform and Strigiform bird fauna

Paul Johnsgard, School of Biol. Sciences, Univ. of Nebraska-Lincoln

Owing to a lack of long-term survey data, determining whether Nebraska's raptor numbers are stable, increasing, or decreasing is difficult. Unlike our relatively well-monitored gamebirds, no regular surveys have been performed, and raptors barely register on the state's Breeding Bird Surveys or Christmas Bird Counts, owing to their relative rarity. However, a few data-points of interest do exist, which might be worth summarizing.

In one of the first multi-year surveys of Sandhills avifauna, H. Elliott McClure (1966) summarized raptor abundance data based on three years of study in the Nebraska Sandhills (1941-1944). During that period, he typically drove from a ranch near Ord to Valentine National Wildlife Refuge each Thursday, returning on Friday or Saturday, and driving 350 miles round trip. On these trips he tallied all the larger birds seen, including raptors. He summarized these data as birds seen per day, but they have here been converted to relative percentage abundance of species, to facilitate comparisons (Table 1).

In 1959 John and Ann Mathisen published a population study of diurnal raptors in the Panhandle, based on one year (1957) of roadside surveys. They traveled 17,807 miles over a year-long period, making surveys on 128 days that included counts made every month, from as few as 6 to as many as 15 days per month. Their findings provide an invaluable snapshot of the species composition and relative abundance of the Panhandle's hawks, falcons, and eagles as they existed in the 1950's. Their data are also summarized in Table 1. A somewhat similar but much more limited winter roadside survey was later made by Shupe and Collins (1983) in southeastern Nebraska.

From 1970 to early 1972 Ross Lock and other Game and Parks personnel did roadside raptor surveys throughout the state, driving 67,368 miles in 1970-71, and 55,710 miles in 1971-72. These data were presented in Lock's reports as birds-per-100 or birds-per-10,000 miles. Actual numbers seen were not provided for both years, although in 1970-71 a total of about 2400 identified hawks, falcons, and eagles were seen. Probably similar numbers were seen the following year, so that this database might approach 5,000 birds. Counts were made in all seasons, and throughout the state, but mostly in

southeastern Nebraska and the Panhandle. The combined data are shown in Table 1; regional and seasonal analyses were provided in the original reports.

For 25 years Raptor Recovery-Nebraska has been caring for and releasing injured and orphaned birds of prey brought to its headquarters near Lincoln. Most of these birds have come from eastern Nebraska, providing a sample of raptor populations biased toward the eastern part of the state, and supplementing the other data (see Table 1, "RR-Neb."). Unlike the previous summaries, owls are included in the database, which presently extends from 1976 through 2000.

Lastly, we have an increasing number of state-wide breeding records for raptors, as compiled by Ducey (1988) and Mollhoff (2001), and recently summarized by Canterbury and Johnsgard (2000). They encompass the period from approximately 1900 to 1988, and are collectively shown in summary form in Table 1 ("State Nesting Records"), using the collective numbers of breedings reported by Canterbury and Johnsgard.

## Discussion

It is apparent that the raptor compositions in the Panhandle and Sandhills are (or at least historically were) quite different from the eastern regions and from the state as a whole, with golden eagles, ferruginous hawks and rough-legged hawks especially typical of the high plains of the Panhandle, and northern harriers and American kestrels particularly abundant in the Sandhills. Peregrines were evidently more common in the Panhandle during the 1950's than one would have predicted; and perhaps some of the birds identified as peregrines by the Mathisens were actually prairie falcons, which curiously did not appear on their list. It is interesting that McClure saw no red-tailed hawks in his Sandhills surveys; even today red-tails are far rarer than Swainson's hawks in the central Sandhills, where there are too few adequately large trees for nesting. Clearly, bald eagles have become more common statewide in the past few decades. On the other hand, there are fewer recent state records for red-shouldered hawks than one would have predicted, but both the red-shouldered and broad-winged hawks have now essentially been extirpated from Nebraska. Additionally the data of Lock suggest that accipiters are rarer than they actually are, as these birds are rarely seen from roadsides. His numbers for red-tailed hawks seem unaccountably low.

Comparing Raptor Recovery records with the Nebraska breeding records, it is obvious that several species recorded by Raptor Recovery efforts do not appear among the breeding data (e.g., snowy and northern saw-whet owls, rough-legged hawk), as their breeding ranges fall outside the state. Bald eagles appear in Raptor Recovery statistics more often than the other abundance data would predict, but northern harriers have

appeared far less frequently. Additionally, it is interesting that the two most abundant hawks (red-tailed and American kestrel) and the corresponding two owls (great horned owl and eastern screech-owl) each are about equally common; and in both cases the two species comprise 60-80 percent of the total hawk or owl sample. Furthermore, each of these two species pairs represents a large, generalized and powerful rodent-eater, and a considerably smaller generalist that consumes a mixture of small rodents (mainly in winter) and (in summer) large insects. Collectively, these two ecological counterpart birds reduce their competition and divide their food base by having different periodicities of hunting activities.

### Acknowledgments

I am extremely grateful to Betsy Hancock of Raptor Recovery-Nebraska, for letting me use her files of records for the purpose tabulating occurrence data, and to the entire organization for doing so much to help preserve our raptor populations. Barbara Voeltz provided me with copies of the reports by Ross Lock, and Linda Brown helped with tallying the Raptor Recovery data.

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**Table 1 : Species composition of Nebraska's raptors from five comprehensive surveys, 1900-2000. Species composition was calculated as a percentage of all reports within a survey; the actual number of each species is shown in parentheses.**

Species	Sandhills* Mathisens (1941-44)	Panhandle** McClure (1957)	State*** Locke (1970-72)	State RR-Neb. (1976-2000)	State Nesting Records (1900-88)
Hawks	N=?	N=546	N=?	N=2566	N=1004
Osprey		.18%	.03%	.67% (17)	0
Mississippi Kite				.23% (6)	0
Northern Harrier	36.4%	29%	27.3%	2.7% (69)	9.4% (94)
Bald Eagle	.8%	.18%	3.0%	4.1% (105)	.90%
Sharp-shinned		.18%	.005%	3.0% (76)	1.1% (11)
Cooper's			.2%	1.3% (34)	2.9% (30)
Northern Goshawk			.005%	.19% (5)	0
Red-shouldered			2.6%	.04% (1)	.70% (7)
Broad Winged				.66% (17)	.40% (4)
Swainson's	10.8%	4.3%	0.0%	5.3% (138)	17.3% (174)
Red-tailed		3.5%	11.5%	39.1% (1003)	29.7% (298)
Ferruginous	4.9%	.7%	0.5%	1.4% (35)	2.2% (22)
Rough-legged	10.2%	25%	8.1%	3.0% (77)	0
Golden Eagle	2.8%	11.5%	1.2%	3.2% (81)	4.0% (40)



American Kestrel	32.2%	20%	36.1%	31.2% (800)	28.0% (282)
Merlin		.18%	.03%	1.4% (37)	.60% (6)
Prairie Falcon	1.9%		.6%	2.0% (52)	2.6% (26)
Peregrine Falcon		4.3%		47% (12)	.1% (1)
Gyr Falcon				.04% (1)	0
Owls				N=2517	N=715
Barn				5.8% (149)	11.3% (81)
Eastern Screech-				42.2%(1086)	20.0% (150)
Great Horned				42.5%(1092)	41.1% (294)
Snowy				.54% (14)	0
Burrowing				.58% (15)	14.8% (106)
Barred				2.9% (76)	4.2% (30)
Long-eared				2.9% (76)	3.2% (23)
Short-eared				11.9% (50)	4.3% (31)
Northern Saw-whet				.51% (13)	0

\* Total numbers of birds seen were not indicated; percentages were calculated indirectly.

\*\* Excludes unidentified raptors and turkey vultures; Krider's hawk included with Red-tailed hawk.

\*\*\* Total numbers of birds seen were not indicated, and too few owls were seen to include. Excludes unidentified raptors and turkey vultures; Krider's hawk included with Red-tailed hawk.

\* \* \* \* \*

1999 (Eleventh) Report of the NOU Records Committee  
compiled by Joel G. Jorgensen, NOURC Chairperson  
1218 Jackson St., Blair, NE 68008

The functions and methods of the NOU Records Committee are described in its bylaws (NOU Records Committee 1986). The committee's purpose is to provide a procedure for documenting unusual bird sightings and to establish a list of all documented birds for Nebraska. THE OFFICIAL LIST OF THE BIRDS OF NEBRASKA was first published in 1988 (NOU Records Committee 1988) and has been appended nine times (Mollhoff 1989, Grenon 1990, Grenon 1991, Gubanyi 1996a, Gubanyi 1996b, Gubanyi 1996c, Brogie 1997, Brogie 1998, Brogie 1999). An update of the OFFICIAL LIST OF THE BIRDS OF NEBRASKA was first published in 1997 (NOU Records Committee 1997).

### Species that have incurred a change in status

Pacific Loon: Casual to Regular  
Red-necked Grebe: Casual to Regular  
Black Scoter: Casual to Regular  
Common Moorhen: Accidental to Casual  
Snowy Plover: Casual to Regular  
Mountain Plover: Casual to Regular  
Whimbrel: Casual to Regular  
Lesser Black-backed Gull: Casual to Regular  
Pileated Woodpecker: Accidental to Casual  
Hammond's Flycatcher: Accidental to Casual  
Blue-winged Warbler: Casual to Regular  
Prairie Warbler: Accidental to Casual  
Nelson's Sharp-tailed Sparrow: Casual to Regular

### 1999 Additions to the State List

Glossy Ibis (*Plegadis falcinellus*): Accidental, III.  
White Ibis (*Eudocimus albus*): Accidental, I-P.  
Tufted Duck (*Athya fuligula*): Accidental, I-P.  
Gray Flycatcher (*Empidonax wrightii*): Accidental, III.  
Black-throated Gray Warbler (*Dendroica nigrescens*): Accidental, III.  
Hepatic Tanager (*Piranga rubra*): Accidental, I-P.  
Brambling (*Fringilla montifringilla*): Accidental, III.

With these additions, the state list now includes 441 species.

### Criteria for Accepted Records

For a record to be accepted, a minimum of six votes in favor is required with no more than one dissenting vote (NOU Records Committee, 1986).

Records in the following classes listed as accepted:

I-S—a diagnostic, labeled specimen exists.

I-P—a diagnostic, labeled photograph or slide exists.

I-R—a diagnostic, labeled recording exists.

II—three or more independently written diagnostic documentations of the same bird exist.

III—on or two independently written diagnostic documentations of the same bird exist.

Each account of an accepted record includes a brief statement noting the species, class, date, location, and the initial of the observer(s).

### 1999 Accepted Records

#### Red-throated Loon (*Gavia stellata*)

1. A molting adult was observed at Lake McConaughy, Keith County, on 16 May 1999 (Class III; SJD).

#### Pacific Loon (*Gavia pacifica*)

1. A bird in first-basic plumage was observed at Lake McConaughy, Keith County on 9 January 1999 (Class III; SJD). This sighting represents only the second documented mid-winter occurrence for the species in the state.

2. Two written documentations were received of an individual that was observed at Lake Ogallala, Keith County between 12 and 19 May 1999 (Class III; SJD, BP&LP).

#### Hared Grebe (*Podiceps nigricollis*)

1. Two birds were observed at Lake Ogallala, Keith County on 2 January 1999 (Class III: SJD). This sighting denotes the first mid-winter report, documented or otherwise, for this species (Sharpe et al. 2001).

#### Red-necked Grebe (*Podiceps grisegena*)

1. An individual was observed at Lake McConaughy, Keith County on 1 January 1999 (Class III; SJD).

#### Black-crowned Night-Heron (*Nycticorax nycticorax*)

1. A juvenile was observed in a ditch north of Keystone Lake, Keith County on 2 January 1999 (Class III; SJD). ). This sighting represents

the first mid-winter report, documented or otherwise, for this species (Sharpe et al. 2001).

**Glossy Ibis** (*Plegadis falcinellus*)

1. An adult in alternate-plumage was observed at Wilkins Waterfowl Production Area, Fillmore County on 24 April 1999 (Class III; JGJ). This is the first accepted Nebraska record for the species.

**White Ibis** (*Eudocimus albus*)

1. An individual in first-alternate plumage was observed at Kissinger Basin Wildlife Management Area, Clay County 5-25 July (Class I-P; JGJ, JS)(Class III; BP,LP). This is the first accepted Nebraska record for the species.

**Black-bellied Whistling-duck** (*Dendrocygna autumnalis*)

1. A pair of adults was seen at Sandpiper Waterfowl Production Area, Clay County on 24 August 1999 (Class III; SJD).

**Brant** (*Branta bernicla*)

1. Two written documentations (Class III; SJD, JF) were received of an individual of the western race, *B.b. nigricans*, located at Lake Minatare, Scotts Bluff County on 23 November 1999.

**Tundra Swan** (*Cygnus columbianus*)

1. Two birds were observed at a sandpit in western Douglas County on 5-7 February 1999 (Class III;NR). NOURC no longer seeks documentation for this species.

**Tufted Duck** (*Athya fuligula*)

1. A male was observed at Lake Ogallala, Keith County 3 December 1999-26 February 2000. One photographic record (Class I-P; SJD) and several written records (Class III; SJD, WRS, BH, MB) were accepted. This is a first state record for the species.

**Common Crane** (*Grus grus*) 1. An adult was observed southeast of Gibbon, Kearney County on 6-9 March 1999 (Class I-P; LB)(Class III; RH, SJD).

**Snowy Plover** (*Charadrius alexandrinus*)

1. An individual was observed at Wilkins Waterfowl Production Area, Fillmore County on 8 May 1999 (Class III; BP, LP). NOURC no longer seeks documentation for this species.

**Least Sandpiper** (*Calidris minutilla*)

1. An individual was observed at Lake McConaughy, Keith County on 17 December 1998 (Class III; SJD). This report is the latest, documented or otherwise, on record (Sharpe et al 2001).

**American Woodcock** (*Scolopax minor*)

1. An individual was observed at Crescent Lake National Wildlife Refuge on 6 November 1999 (Class III; SJD). This record is the first from the Panhandle.

**Pomarine Jaeger** (*Stercorarius pomarinus*)

1. A total of 3 juveniles were observed at Lake McConaughy, Keith County 18-19 November and 3 December 1999 (Class III; SJD).

**Mew Gull** (*Larus canus*)

1. An adult was observed at Lake Maloney, Lincoln County on 16 December 1999 (Class III; SJD).

**Lesser Black-backed Gull** (*Larus fuscus*)

1. An individual identified as being in fourth-basic plumage was observed at Lake Ogallala, Keith County on 8 March 1999 (Class III; SJD).

2. An individual in second-alternate plumage was observed at Lake Ogallala, Keith County on 24 August and 26 September 1999 (Class III; SJD).

**Black-legged Kittiwake** (*Rissa tridactyla*)

1. An adult was observed at Harlan County Lake, Harlan County on 17 December 1999 (Class III; SJD).

**White-winged Dove** (*Zenaida asiatica*)

1. An individual was observed at a feeder in Creighton, Knox County on 23 April 1999 (I-P; MB).

2. An individual was seen in Lincoln, Lancaster County on 8 October 1999 (I-P, DK)

**Acadian Flycatcher** (*Empidonax virescens*)

1. A singing male was observed at Thomas Ashford Scout Reservation, Thurston County (or possibly in Dakota County-observer's note) on 13-14 June 1999 (Class III; BFH).

**Hammond's Flycatcher** (*Empidonax hammondi*)

1. An individual was observed at Scotts Bluff National Monument, Scotts Bluff County on 11-12 May (Class III; SJD).

**Gray Flycatcher** (*Empidonax wrightii*)

1. An individual was observed at Oliver State Recreation Area, Kimball County on 17 May 1999 (Class III; SJD, BP, LP). This sighting represents a first Nebraska record for this species.

**Sage Thrasher** (*Oreoscoptes montanus*)

1. An individual was observed south of Interstate 80 Exit 1, Kimball County on 28 March 1999 (Class III; SJD).

**Sprague's Pipit** (*Anthus spragueii*)

1. An individual was observed at Funk Waterfowl Production Area on 5 September 1999 (Class III; RH).

**Northern Parula** (*Parula americana*)

1. An immature male was observed at Cedar Point Biological Station, Keith County on the very late date of 4 December 1999 (Class III; SJD).

**Blackburnian Warbler** (*Dendroica fusca*)

1. A very late bird was mist-netted at a 4-H Camp (adjacent to Schram State Park), Sarpy County on 26 October 1996 (RK).

**Black-throated Gray Warbler** (*Dendroica nigrescens*)

1. A male was observed at Oliver State Recreation Area, Kimball County on 1 May 1999 (Class III; SJD). This sighting denotes the first Nebraska record for the species.

Prairie Warbler (*Dendroica discolor*)

1. A male was observed approximately 2 miles east of the Alda Interstate 80 interchange, Hall County on 7 May 1999 (Class III; JT).

Hepatic Tanager (*Piranga flava*)

1. A sub-adult male was photographed at Dr. and Mrs. Mlnariks feeder at West Point, Cuming County on 6 January 1999 (Class I; BP, LP). This identification represents the first Nebraska record for this species.

Savannah Sparrow (*Passerculus sandwichensis*)

1. An individual was observed south of Lake McConaughy, Keith County on 2 January 1999 (Class III; SJD).

Baird's Sparrow (*Ammodramus bairdii*)

1. Two or more individuals were observed at Clear Creek Marshes, Keith County on 26 September 1999 (Class III; SJD).

Nelson's Sharp-tailed Sparrow (*Ammodramus nelsoni*)

1. An adult was observed at 2 miles south and .5 miles east of the Wood River Interstate 80 interchange, Hall County on 2 October 1999 (Class III; RH).

Golden-crowned Sparrow (*Zonotrichia atricapilla*)

1. An additional report was received of an individual spotted at Harlan County Reservoir, Harlan County 18 December 1999 (Class III; SJD). A previously submitted report was accepted in 1998 (Brogie 1999).

Smith's Longspur (*Calcarius pictus*)

1. A single adult was identified at Little Salt Fork, Lancaster County on 12 April 1999 (Class III; JS)

Brambling (*Fringilla montifringilla*)

1. Two reports were received of a female coming to a feeder in Scottsbluff, Scotts Bluff County 18-19 April 1999 (Class III, PD, SJD). This record is the first for Nebraska for this species.

Lesser Goldfinch (*Carduelis psaltria*)

1. A "green-backed" male was observed at Oliver State Recreation Area on 24 August 1999 (Class III; SJD)

## 1999 Unaccepted Records

Records in the following classes are considered unaccepted (NOU Records Committee 1986))

IV-Probably correct, but not beyond a reasonable doubt

V-a record with insufficient evidence to support the identification claimed

VI-a probable released or escaped bird or mistaken identification

Each account of an unaccepted record includes a brief statement noting the species, class, date, location, and reasons for the committee's failure to accept the record.

## Pre-1999 unaccepted records

### Arctic Tern (*Sterna paradisaea*)

1. An apparent immature *sterna* tern seen at the tailrace and spillway below Gavin's Point Dam, Cedar County on 6 December 1998 (Class IV) was identified as this species. Although suggestive, the documentation lacked details for approval.

### Indigo Bunting (*Passerina cyanea*)

1. An individual identified and photographed as this species was observed near Wakefield, Dixon County on 19-30 December 1998 (Class IV). While it was agreed that the individual observed was a *passerina* bunting, and indeed very likely an Indigo Bunting, other similar species could not be conclusively eliminated from consideration.

## 1999 Unaccepted Records

### Iceland Gull (*Larus glaucoides*)

1. An individual identified as this species was observed at Lake McConaughy, Keith County on 26 March 1999 (Class IV). While very suggestive, the description lacked sufficient detail to eliminate other species from consideration.

### Mountain Chickadee (*Parus gambeli*)

1. An individual identified as this species was observed at Oliver Reservoir on 22 August 1999 (Class IV). While very suggestive, the description lacked sufficient details for approval. Some members believed a hybrid chickadee was not eliminated as a possibility.

### Savannah Sparrow (*Passerculus sandwichensis*)

1. An individual identified as this species was observed in Otoe County on 20 February 1999 (Class IV). While suggestive, the documentation lacked sufficient details for approval.

## Acknowledgements

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## 1999 - 2000 NEBRASKA NESTING REPORT

Wayne J. Mollhoff, 1817 Boyd St., Ashland, NE 68003

In the interest of expediency, the nesting reports for the 1999 and 2000 seasons are combined. In addition to records from those two years, several other previously unreported records are also included. Full dates are included with each record to minimize confusion.

Observations by the following individuals (identified in the report by their initials) are included in the nesting report: John Brenneman (JB), John Dinan (JD), Dale Dvorak (DD), Jon Farrar (JF), Michael Forsberg (MF), Joe Gabig (JG), Chris Helzer (CH), Jan Johnson (JJ), Alice Kenitz (AK), Joanne Luebbert (JL), Nick Limon (NL), Leonard McDaniel (LM), Wayne Mollhoff (WM), Gregory Pavelka (GP), Jean Pearson (JP), Neal Ratzlaff (NR), and Bill Whitney (BW).

A total of 221 records were reviewed, representing 79 species. Details will be presented only on the more significant records, with other species listed at the end of the report.

Abbreviations used in the text include: NGPC--Nebraska Game & Parks Commission; NWR--National Wildlife Refuge; UNSM--University of Nebraska State Museum; WMA--Wildlife Management Area.

## SPECIES REPORTED

Great Blue Heron: A colony of 25 occupied nests was found in a grove of old cotton-woods along the Niobrara River 9 miles southwest of Harrison, Sioux Co, on 3 June 2000. Several one-third-grown young were noted peering over the sides of the nests (WM).

Trumpeter Swan: A pair of adults with 2 cygnets was noted on Gainsforth Lake, 28 miles north of Hyannis, Cherry Co on 17 June 1999 (NR).

Bufflehead: An adult female and 4 downy young approximately 2 weeks old were found by a NGPC waterfowl biologist on 24 June 2000, on Hagan Lake, Brown Co. (NL *vide* JD). This report appears to be the first of nesting in the state.

Hooded Merganser: Four unaccompanied day-old young were found on 5 May 1997, wandering around a residential area of Waterloo, Douglas Co, several blocks from a small pond. After observers watched them for 4 hours without seeing any sign of adults, the young birds were captured and turned over to wildlife rehab personnel to prevent accidental death by cats or traffic. They raised and later released the birds (JL, JG, JD).

Although breeding has been reported in the past, this documentation is the first in many years. During the atlas project, adults were reported in Arthur, Hayes, and Pierce counties, and are occasionally reported during the summer elsewhere. Any such mid-summer sighting should be investigated for evidence of breeding.

**Golden Eagle:** A cliff nest with 2 young birds was found on Niobrara River bluffs southwest of Harrison, Sioux Co, on 3 June 2000 (MF). Another was noted in the Wildcat Hills 8 miles southeast of Redington, Morrill Co, on 11 June 2000 (WM).

**Red-tailed Hawk:** A nest with 2 downy young was noted in the edge of the Great Blue Heron colony reported previously, within 100 ft. of an occupied heron nest, on 3 June 2000 (WM).

**American Kestrel:** Four young fledged on 6 July 1999 from a farmstead nest 7 miles northwest of Wakefield, Dixon Co, (JJ). A pair found 12 June 1999 were occupying the same nest hole used the previous year in West Ash Canyon, Dawes Co (JD, WM).

**Northern Bobwhite:** A rather late nest with eggs was located on 19 August 1999, 3 miles east of Brainard, Butler Co. It was still being incubated on 24 August but was found abandoned on 2 September (DD).

**Sandhill Crane:** Following several years of tantalizing hints of breeding activity, breeding was confirmed at 2 separate locations in Clay Co by Joel Jorgensen (Silcock & Jorgensen 1999), and by a NGPC biologist (Hoffmann 1999). The last previous mention of breeding was in 1883-84 when Bruner found 3 broods in a single day in Holt Co (Bruner 1902).

**Snowy Plover:** While conducting surveys for Piping Plovers on the Missouri River, U.S. Army Corps of Engineers biologists found a pair of Snowy Plovers and their nest with 3 eggs on 10 June 1998. It was located on a sandbar 1 mile northeast of Santee, Knox Co, on the Nebraska side of the river. The sandbar also held 2 Piping Plover nests. The site was visited again on 17 June; and although the Snowy Plovers were still present, the nest had been destroyed by rising water. Re-nesting was not noted (GP). This report is the first of nesting in the state. This nesting has been erroneously reported as "...a nest with eggs that was destroyed by high water on the Missouri R near Ponca in 1998." (NBR 68(3): 112). The following year, in June 1999, a pair of Snowy Plovers was seen at a Piping Plover colony at River Mile 838.0, about 10 miles upstream from the 1998 nest, but no nest was found. In May 2000, a single Snowy Plover was seen on a sandbar below Gavins Point Dam at River Mile 756.3 but was not seen again (GP).

**American Avocet:** A nest with 4 eggs was discovered beside a small pothole 2.5 miles west of Lakeside, Sheridan Co, on 1 July 2000 (WM).

**Black-necked Stilt:** An adult was located attending a single small young 3 miles west of Lakeside, Sheridan Co, on 24 July 1999 (WM).

**Common Snipe:** At least 6 Common Snipe in display flight on 3 June 2000 were spotted "winnowing" above a wet meadow alongside the

Niobrara River 8 miles southwest of Harrison, Sioux Co. Local ranchers stated that they are regular summer residents. No further evidence of nesting was searched for or noted (BW, WM).

**Wilson's Phalarope:** Two nests, each with 4 eggs, were found on 3 June 1999 on a wet meadow beside the Niobrara River 8 miles southwest of Harrison, Sioux Co (BW).

**Common Nighthawk:** A nest with 2 eggs was found in the Sandhills near Pelican Lake, Valentine NWR, Cherry Co, on 2 June 1999 (LM, JF). A single young bird, 3 weeks old, was found in the Wildcat Hills 9 miles southwest of Redington, Morrill Co, on 7 July 2000 (WM). Although common breeders in the state, the birds, eggs, and young are so cryptically marked that they are rarely discovered while nesting in their natural habitat.

**Common Poorwill:** A nest with 2 eggs was found in West Ash Canyon, Dawes Co, on 13 August 1999 (WM). One of the eggs hatched on the following day. The timing, in conjunction with previous reports of late May/early June egg dates in the same area the 2 previous years (Mollhoff 1999), may indicate that the species is double brooded in Nebraska, as reported in other parts of its range (Csada & Brigham 1992).

**White-throated Swift:** The nest (in annual use since it was first found in 1997) in West Ash Canyon, Dawes Co, still empty on 21 May 1999, held 4 eggs on 12 June. When visited on 25 June 1999, it held 3 eggs and 1 just-hatched young. On 24 July at least 2 fully feathered, but apparently unfledged, young appeared to be still confined to the nest crevice (WM). On 2 June 2000, the nest held 3 eggs and incubation was underway by 4 June. When next visited on 30 June 2000, the nest held 3 young birds whose head, back and wing feathers were just beginning to emerge from the quill sheaths (WM).

**Lewis's Woodpecker:** As reported elsewhere, an active nest with 5 eggs was found on 12 June 1999 in West Ash Canyon, Dawes Co (Mollhoff 2000). The same nest was the focus of activity again in 2000, when a bird was present on 20 May. On 21 May 2000, three birds were present, when the pair, after driving off the other bird, engaged in courtship activities and copulation. On 2 June the nest held 6 eggs, and on 30 June begging young were heard in the nest (WM).

**Red-bellied Woodpecker:** Excavation of a nest hole by an unseen woodpecker was heard on 6 May 2000 near Ashland, Saunders Co. On 13 May the cavity held 3 eggs, and a female Downy Woodpecker was flushed from the nest. On 17 May the nest held only 1 egg, but the only birds present were a pair of very agitated Red-bellied Woodpeckers! On 22 May the nest held 4 eggs; and the only bird present, an agitated male Red-bellied Woodpecker, immediately entered the hole as I left. On 9 June the nest held 4-5 young, and by 12 June their feathers were emerging. Red-bellied Woodpeckers were in attendance on both dates. By my next visit on 2 July, the young had fledged (WM). So what was going on? On my first examination of the hole, on 13 May, the entrance hole

diameter was 2 inches, large for a Downy but just the right size for a Red-bellied. If it truly was a Red-bellied nest, was the female Downy making a surreptitious visit to steal eggs? Or, were they both laying eggs in it? The young appeared to be Red-bellied, but I could not be present to examine them at a later stage of development to establish certain identity.

**Western Wood-Pewee:** On 7 July 2000, three nests were found in the Wildcat Hills 9 miles southwest of Redington, Morrill Co. One nest held 3 eggs, the second held 3 young, 3-4 days old; and the other held 3 week-old young. One of the nests was later salvaged for the UNSM collections (WM). These reports seem to be the first detailed ones of active nests in the state. During the atlas project, territorial birds were found in Dundy Co as late as 31 May, but they did not remain to nest. Since egg-laying does not appear to begin in mid- to late June, earlier activity should be viewed with caution, unless breeding is confirmed by finding active nests with eggs or young.

**Cassin's Kingbird:** A nest with 2 eggs was found in the limber pines area south of I-80, Exit 1, Kimball Co, on 10 June 2000 (WM). Two more nests, with 5 & 2 eggs, were also found on 10 June 2000 in the Wildcat Hills 9 miles southwest of Redington; and a fourth nest with eggs was found nearby on 11 June 2000 (WM). On 8 July 2000, a nest with at least 2 young was also reported southwest of Redington (AK). While the first indication of nesting (nest-building) was reported during the atlas project, these sightings appear to be the first detailed reports of active nests in the state. After the young fledged, a nest of each of the kingbirds (Western, Cassin's, & Eastern) was salvaged for the UNSM collections. The nests were collected within an area of 200 meters to provide a comparison of nest construction within the same habitat. Within that immediate area, I estimate that Cassin's comprised 50%, Westerns 35%, and Easterns 15% of the kingbird population in 2000 (WM).

**Pinyon Jay:** The nest with 3 eggs and 3 young noted on 11 June 1999 in East Monroe Canyon, Sioux Co, has been reported elsewhere (Mollhoff 2000). The nest was later salvaged for the UNSM reference collections. A search of the Monroe Canyon flock's nesting area, as well as the nesting territories of flocks in Dawes and Morrill Cos, was made in spring 2000. However, given the almost complete failure of the 1999 ponderosa pine cone crop, the failure to find evidence of nesting was not surprising. Repeated searches for young of the year birds in all 3 flocks in May, June, and July failed to turn up any evidence of young birds, even though adult birds were found on each visit, leading to the suspicion that breeding might not have occurred. Although fall nesting has been reported in Arizona and New Mexico, it has been reported only with the maturation of an exceptionally large crop of pinyon pine cones in late summer, a resource not available here (Ligon 1971).

**American Crow:** After the warmest, mildest winter on record, followed by an early spring, finding a pair engaged in nest-building in Lincoln, Lancaster Co, on 28 Feb. 2000, led to the expectation of

unusually early nesting. The clutch of 4 eggs was complete by 3 April, with hatching by 16 April. (WM). However, a review of historical records in the UNSM collections revealed that this date was merely average, with several earlier egg dates recorded in the 1890's, a decade of notoriously severe winters!

**Horned Lark:** A nest with 3 eggs was found in a shortgrass prairie area 7 miles southwest of Harrison, Sioux Co, on 3 June 2000 (WM). Although the bird a common breeder, there have been few detailed reports of nesting.

**Tree Swallow:** Nest boxes were the focus of intense activity at Mahoney State Park, Cass Co, on 6 May 2000, with 4 nests under construction, and another already holding an egg. By 12 May two clutches were complete, while the other 3 nests were still under construction (WM).

**Violet-green Swallow:** Nest-building was noted in an old Pygmy Nuthatch hole in Monroe Canyon, Sioux Co, and in a hole in a cliff in West Ash Canyon, Dawes Co, on 11 June 1999. On 25 June the former nest held 4 eggs, while the latter held 5 eggs. By 24 July the young in the Dawes Co nest were nearly ready to fledge (WM, JD). These reports seem to be the first detailed ones of active nests in the state. The remains of the cliff nest were later salvaged for the UNSM reference collections. Nest-building was nearly complete on 2 June 2000 in the same two holes mentioned above. On 30 June the Dawes Co nest held 5-6 young 4-7 days old. The Sioux Co nest was not visited again because of the instability of the nest snag (WM).

**Black-capped Chickadee:** A nest with 6 half-grown young was found on 12 June 1999 in West Ash Canyon, Dawes Co (WM). A nest with 6 day-old young was found in Ashland, Saunders Co, on 6 May 2000. Another nest with 5 eggs was found in East Monroe Canyon, Sioux Co, on 19 May 2000; and a nest with 4-5 half-grown young was located in the Wildcat Hills 9 miles southwest of Redington, Morrill Co, on 11 June 2000. On a visit to the Redington nest on 7 July, the chickadees were gone as expected, but the cavity now held the 4 eggs of a pair of Eastern Bluebirds (WM).

**White-breasted Nuthatch:** A nest with 5 eggs was found on 20 May 2000 in West Ash Canyon, Dawes Co, in the same natural cavity used by a pair in 1997. The cavity had not been occupied during the intervening years (WM).

**Red-breasted Nuthatch:** A nest with 5 eggs was found in West Ash Canyon, Dawes Co, on 23 May 1999 (WM). Another nest in the same area held 4-5 half-grown young on 21 May 2000 (WM).

**Pygmy Nuthatch:** Adults were still adding bits of nest material to a nest that already held 9 eggs in East Monroe Canyon, Sioux Co. on 22 May 1999. A nearby nest held 8 eggs on the same day and was attended by a "pair" of 4 birds. On 11 June the latter nest held at least 6 fully feathered young (WM). A flurry of nest excavation was noted from 25 to

27 March 2000 in Dawes and Sioux Cos, with 5 nest holes in initial stages of excavation. However, later visits revealed that none of the 5 holes was completed or used this year. On 19 May 2000, two nests were found in Monroe and East Monroe Canyons, Sioux Co, with 6 and 7 eggs respectively (WM). Hole excavation was also noted on 22 April 2000, 7 miles south of Gering, Scotts Bluff Co. (AK).

**Blue-gray Gnatcatcher:** Although initially reported via the internet as a bird on a nest at the unusually early date of 4 May 2000, further inquiry revealed that it was simply sitting in the incomplete cup while it continued nest construction at Neale Woods Nature Center, Douglas Co. By 18 May it had abandoned the site and was salvaging the material to reconstruct the nest at another, undiscovered location (JB). A report of an adult feeding begging young on 22 August 1999 in the limber pines area south of Exit 1, I-80, Kimball Co, (Silcock 1999) prompted a search of the area the following spring for further evidence of breeding. On 10 June 2000, several pairs were located, and a nest with 4 eggs was found (WM). On 11 June 2000, 3 more nests were located in the Wildcat Hills 9 miles southwest of Redington, Morrill Co. One was complete but still empty; one held a clutch of 4 eggs; and the third held 2 eggs and a single just-hatched young bird. One of the nests was later salvaged for the UNSM reference collections (WM).

**Eastern Bluebird:** A nest with 4 half-grown young was found in West Ash Canyon, Dawes Co, on 2 June 2000. On 6 May 2000, a nest box in Mahoney State Park, Cass Co, held 2 bluebird eggs plus a House Sparrow egg, the latter probably an accidental deposit from a pair of sparrows occupying a box just a few feet away (WM). (See also one reported in the previous chickadee report.)

**Townsend's Solitaire:** Discovery of a suspicious-acting adult prompted an unsuccessful search for evidence of breeding in East Monroe Canyon, Sioux Co, on 11 June 1999 (JD, WM). A few birds seem to be regular summer residents of the Pine Ridge in at least Dawes and Sioux counties; but since there are only a few reports of breeding, a search for evidence of breeding should be made whenever they are found.

**Swainson's Thrush:** Several territorial singing males were present around the picnic ground in West Ash Canyon, Dawes Co, in May, June, and July 1999, but no evidence of nesting was found (JD, WM). The only nest reported in the state was found in that area (Rosche 1974). Whenever the birds are found, a search for evidence of nesting should be made. The birds were not present in that area during the same time frame in 2000 (WM).

**Yellow-rumped Warbler:** A nest with 4 half-grown young was found 48 ft. up a 54 ft.-tall ponderosa pine in West Ash Canyon, Dawes Co, on 12 June 1999 (JD, WM). The nest was later salvaged for the UNSM reference collections. This is apparently only the second detailed nest report for the state.

**Yellow Warbler:** An exceptionally high nest was found 40 ft. up on a low cottonwood branch in the Gilbert-Baker State WMA campground in Monroe Canyon, Sioux Co, on 11 June 1999 (JD). Nests are typically placed 4-8 ft. above ground.

**Kentucky Warbler:** A ground nest with 4 eggs was found on 15 June 2000 at Neale Woods Nature Center, Washington Co (JB).

**American Redstart:** Nest-building by a female was noted in West Ash Canyon, Dawes Co, on 12 June 1999. On 25 June it held a single egg but the nest subsequently disappeared (JD, WM).

**Western Tanager:** After a long, patient search, a nest with 3 eggs (and 4 Brown-headed Cowbird eggs) was located in a small pine in West Ash Canyon, Dawes Co, on 12 June 1999 (JD). This nest is apparently only the second one reported with details. The nest was later salvaged for the UNSM reference collections.

**Chipping Sparrow:** A nest with 3 eggs was found on 11 June 1999 in Monroe Canyon, Sioux Co (WM, JD). The nest was later salvaged for the UNSM reference collections. Another nest with 3 eggs was found in West Ash Canyon, Dawes Co, on 2 June 2000 (WM). Although they are one of the common breeders in the Pine Ridge, few details of nesting in the wild have been reported.

**Lark Sparrow:** A ground nest with 2 eggs (plus a Brown-headed Cowbird egg) was found beneath a clump of yucca and bunchgrass on 10 June 2000 in the limber pines area south of Exit 1, I-80, Kimball Co (WM).

**McCown's Longspur:** A nest with 3 eggs was found on 3 June 2000, 7 miles southwest of Harrison, Sioux Co. It was located in a busy "colony" of a dozen or so displaying birds (WM).

**Rose-breasted Grosbeak:** Nest-building was noted 14 May 2000 near Ashland, Saunders Co. The nest held 4 eggs on 22 May. The nest was later salvaged for the UNSM reference collections (WM).

**Black-headed Grosbeak:** A nest with 4 young, 3-5 days old, was found on a horizontal box elder branch in West Ash Canyon, Dawes Co, on 12 June 1999 (JD). This report seems to be the first detailed one of an active nest. The nest was later salvaged for the UNSM reference collections. On 4 June 2000, a pair was putting the finishing touches on an inaccessible nest in West Ash Canyon. On 30 June 2000, another nest with 4 half-grown young was found nearby (WM). Both nests were in the area of the 1999 nest reported above.

**Bobolink:** Data was made available from a study of nest placement and parasitism in native grass wet meadows along the Platte River in Hall Co in 1997. Eight nests with eggs were found, with egg dates of 6-30 June and 2-18 July. All nests were parasitized by Brown-headed Cowbirds, apparently causing frequent abandonment by the Bobolinks. Young Bobolinks were successfully fledged from only 2 or 3 of the nests(CH).

**Brewer's Blackbird:** Two nests with 4 and 5 half-grown young, and another with 1 egg plus 4, 2-3 day-old young, were found in the

grasslands 9 miles east of Harrison, Sioux Co, on 11 June 1999 (JD, WM). A nest was later salvaged for the UNSM reference collections. A nest with 5 eggs (in the same area mentioned above) was abandoned after a heavy rainstorm on 19 May 2000. The eggs were later salvaged for the UNSM collections. Another nearby nest held 4 eggs on 2 June 2000. A nest in the Wildcat Hills 9 miles southwest of Redington, Morrill Co, held 3 eggs on 11 June 2000. Nests were found on the ground in a buckbrush (*Symphoricarpos* sp.) patch, 2 ft. up in skunkbush sumac (*Rhus aromatica trilobata*), 2 ft. up a juniper sapling, and 2-10 ft. up in ponderosa pine (WM). Adults were also noted feeding begging young 9 miles southwest of Redington, Morrill Co, on 8 July 2000 (AK).

**Bullock's Oriole:** On 10 June 2000, a nest with 3 eggs was found in the Wildcat Hills 9 miles southwest of Redington, Morrill Co. Another nest, found in the same area on 11 June, was complete but still empty. All 3 nests found in the area were placed in the top branches of ponderosa pines. One was later salvaged for the UNSM collections (WM).

**House Finch:** A nest with 5 eggs (plus a Brown-headed Cowbird egg AND an adult female cowbird!) was found on 6 May 2000 at Mahoney State Park, Cass Co (WM). A nest with 3 eggs (plus 2 cowbird eggs) was found in southwestern Lincoln, Lancaster Co, on 25 May 2000 (JP). A nest with young in the process of fledging was found 27 May 2000 in North Loup, Valley Co. (WM).

**Red Crossbill:** Following a bumper ponderosa pine cone crop in 1998, adults and young were abundant in the Pine Ridge in May 1999. An adult male was noted feeding a pair of begging fledged young in West Ash Canyon, Dawes Co, on 21 May 1999. Total numbers running into the hundreds were noted in a morning's work in East Monroe Canyon, Sioux Co (WM). Following the bumper crop of 1998, a near-total failure of the cone crop in summer 1999 led to lowered expectation of nesting in spring 2000. Despite extensive searching in the Pine Ridge and the Wildcat Hills, only a single family-sized group of birds, feeding a single begging young, was located 10 miles southwest of Ft. Robinson, Sioux Co, on 3 June 2000 (WM).

**Pine Siskin:** A number of birds lingered into the breeding season in Lincoln, Lancaster Co, but only a single nest was located. It was built in Woods Park between 19 and 24 April 2000; but being of typically flimsy construction, the nest was blown from its branch in a Douglas fir during a moderate wind on 28 April. Other nest-building was noted in the area, but no other nests were located (WM).

**House Sparrow:** Forgoing more typical protected sites in nest boxes and inside buildings, a pair was found building its domed nest in a mulberry tree beside a barracks at Camp Ashland, Saunders Co, on 15 April 2000. On 23 April the nest held 2 eggs, and considering the extremely dry spring, was very likely successful (WM).



## ADDITIONAL SPECIES

Species reported which were not detailed in the account above include: Western Grebe, Canada Goose, Wood Duck, Mallard, Redhead, Wild Turkey, Killdeer, Mourning Dove, Great Horned Owl, Downy Woodpecker, Eastern Phoebe, Western Kingbird, Eastern Kingbird, Loggerhead Shrike, Red-eyed Vireo, Blue Jay, Northern Rough-winged Swallow, Cliff Swallow, Barn Swallow, Rock Wren, House Wren, American Robin, European Starling, Northern Cardinal, Red-winged Blackbird, Common Grackle, and Western Meadowlark.

## REQUEST FOR REPORTS

Anyone finding evidence of breeding by wild birds (nest building, active nests with eggs or young, adults feeding or tending young) is encouraged to submit the information for inclusion in the nesting report. Interested observers who anticipate finding nests are encouraged to familiarize themselves with the type of information needed. Reports of breeding and requests for breeding data cards should be directed to the author. All observers who contribute data will be credited in the nest report.

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

In addition to the contributing observers, appreciation is extended to the following individuals: Thomas Labeledz for making available records from the UNSM egg collection, and to John Dinan for reviewing a draft of the report.

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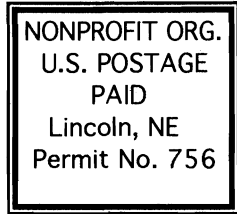
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Table of Contents

Spring Field Report, compiled by W. Ross Silcock	46
Species Accounts	48
Comments on Nebraska's Falconiform and Strigiform bird fauna by Paul Johnsgard	80
1999 (Eleventh) Report of the NOU Records Committee compiled by Joel G. Jorgensen,	85
1999 - 2000 Nebraska Nesting Report by Wayne J. Mollhoff	92
NOU Treasurer's Report, Calendar Year 2000	102

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