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Nebraska Bird Review (December 2003) 71(4),
WHOLE ISSUE

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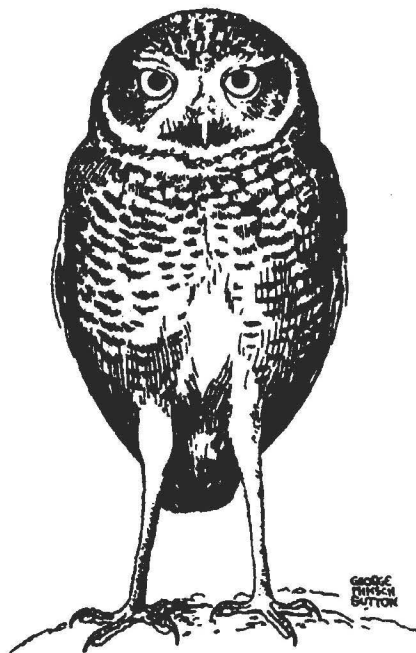
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The Neb. Review

A Magazine of Ornithology of the
Nebraska Region

Volume 71 December 2003 Number 4



Published by the
Nebraska Ornithologists' Union, Inc.
Founded 1899

Janis M. Paseka, Acting Editor
Stephen J. Dinsmore, Co-editor

SSSN 0028-1816

FALL FIELD REPORT, August-November 2003

Compiled by W. Ross Silcock
P.O. Box 57, Tabor, IA 51653
silcock@rosssilcock.com

INTRODUCTION

New in this Seasonal Report, direct from the American Ornithologists' Union (along with Wilson's Snipe, Rock Pigeon, etc.), is the modified checklist order, featuring geese, swans, and ducks at the beginning, followed by gallinaceous birds, then resuming the familiar order with loons.

Perhaps the most important use for these reports, in addition to their incorporation into the Southern Great Plains Region summary in *North American Birds*, is the noting of significant avian events in Nebraska. Some are of obvious importance, but the meaning of others is obscure, perhaps only to be revealed as subsequent reports show a trend, or events noted in Nebraska are corroborated by the same events noted in the other Southern Great Plains states, in Kansas and Oklahoma, or even on a national level.

Such events discussed in this report include a good showing of scoters, hints of a recovery of the Gray Partridge population, a sighting of 7+ migrating Mississippi Kites, a Clark's Nutcracker in Sowbelly Canyon, indications of declines in numbers of Black-billed Magpie, American Crow, and Black-capped Chickadee, westerly Carolina Wrens, rather low numbers of thrushes and warblers, westerly Rose-breasted Grosbeaks possibly breeding, good numbers of Purple Finches, no reports of Red Crossbills after 27 Sep, and few Pine Siskins.

A similar category of events, but perhaps better labelled "quirky", were some strange bobwhite items from the Panhandle, the occurrence of Eurasian Collared-Doves in 74 counties so far, the possibility that the Curve-billed Thrasher at the Frimann Ranch in Sioux County was able to sneak its genes into the Brown Thrasher pool, a Blue Grosbeak carrying a minnow, and an Orange Bishop (a bird, not a Dutch prelate) in Kearney.

Among significant early or late dates of occurrence were record late Caspian Terns, Panhandle Gray Catbird, and Bobolink (although the Bobolink was unsubstantiated), second-latest Forster's Tern and Western Kingbird, and record early Northern (Red-Shafted) Flickers eastward.

In-your-face numbers were the 321 Hooded Mergansers at L Yankton, 5 Yellow-crowned Night-Herons in the eastern Rainwater Basin, a fall record 247 Upland Sandpipers there also, an almost-record 283 Buff-breasted Sandpipers also in the eastern Rainwater Basin, 26,000 Franklin's Gulls at L McConaughy, a record 14 Caspian Terns at Branched Oak L, 30+ Burrowing Owls at a Scotts Bluff County location, and a record 12 Brown Creepers at Arbor Day Farm.

And for rarity buffs and state listers, there was limited joy this fall. Best were the 3rd state record Yellow-billed Loon at L McConaughy and 5th state record Tricolored Heron in the eastern Rainwater Basin. Significant also was a 3rd state fall record Hudsonian Godwit, at L McConaughy. Important Panhandle records were a

first record Summer Tanager (of the western subspecies *cooperi*), 2nd record Ruby-throated Hummingbird (as well as a 2nd record *Archilochus* hummingbird), 2nd record Winter Wren, first fall record Baltimore Oriole, 2nd fall record Mourning Warbler, and 3rd fall record Rose-breasted Grosbeak, a male. Other important records were a Tufted Titmouse at Ponca SP, apparently the same bird that was there in May, and the 8th fall record Rock Wren in the southeast.

ABBREVIATIONS

ADF: Arbor Day Farm, Otoe Co; BOL: Branched Oak L, Lancaster Co; Cem: Cemetery; Co(s): County(ies); FF: Fontenelle Forest, Sarpy Co; FL: Funk Lagoon, Phelps Co; GPD: Gavin's Point Dam, Knox/Cedar Cos; HCR: Harlan Co Res, Harlan Co; ICSP: Indian Cave SP, Nemaha/Richardson Cos; L: Lake; LM: L McConaughy, Keith Co; LNB: Lakes North and Babcock, Platte Co; LO: L Ogallala (includes contiguous Keystone L), Keith Co; NC: Nature Center; NGP: Nebraska Game and Parks Commission; NM: National Monument; NNF: Nebraska National Forest, Thomas Co; NOU: Nebraska Ornithologists' Union; NWR: National Wildlife Refuge; PL: Pawnee L, Lancaster Co; Res: Reservoir; RWB: Rainwater Basin, including parts of Phelps, Hamilton, York, Clay, Fillmore, and Thayer Cos; SCP: Spring Creek Prairie, Lancaster Co; SHP: State Historical Park; SL: Sewage Lagoon(s); SP: State Park; SRA: State Recreation Area; WMA: (State) Wildlife Management Area; WP: Wilderness Park, Lincoln; WPA: (Federal) Waterfowl Production Area; WSR: Wind Springs Ranch, Sioux Co.

GAZETTEER

Calamus Res: Loup/Garfield Cos; Cunningham L: Omaha, Douglas Co; DeSoto NWR: Washington Co; Johnson L: Gosper/Frontier Cos; L Alice: in North Platte NWR, Scotts Bluff Co; L Minatare: in North Platte NWR, Scotts Bluff Co; Niobrara Marsh: Knox Co; Oliver Res: Kimball Co; Ponca SP: Dixon Co; Schramm Park SRA: Sarpy Co; Sutherland Res: Lincoln Co; Swanson Res: Hitchcock Co; Wehrspann L: Sarpy Co; Wildcat Hills: Scotts Bluff/Banner/Morrill Cos; Wilderness Park: Lincoln, Lancaster Co; Winters Creek L: Scotts Bluff Co.

OBSERVERS

AK: Alice Kenitz, Gering; AR: Allan Reyer, Bellevue; AS: Audrey Sterkel, Sidney; B: Nebraska Birdline (Josef Kren, birdsne@yahoo.com); BE: Bruce Eichhorst, Kearney; BFH: Bill F. Huser, South Sioux City; BG: Betty Grenon, Bellevue; BP: Babs Padelford, Bellevue; BW: Bruce Walgren, Casper, WY; CF: Carol Falk, Nebraska City; CG: Carlos Grande, Geneva y España; CH: Carolyn Hall, Bassett; CHy: Carr Heaney, Omaha; CK: Chaiyan Kasorndorkbua, Ames, IA; CNK: Clem N. Klaphake, Bellevue; CWH: C.W. Huntley, Ogallala; DD: Dean Drawbaugh, Scottsbluff; DP: Don Paseka, Ames; DSt: Dave Stage, Lincoln; DW: Donna Walgren, Casper, WY; EB: Elliott Bedows, Bellevue; GH: Glen Hoge, Alma; GHa: Gerard Harbison, Lincoln; GSt: Greg Stoiber, Omaha; HA: Henry Armknecht, Ovid, CO; HKH: Helen K. Hughson, Mitchell; HW: Harley Winfrey,

Scottsbluff; JC: Jay Carlisle, Yankton, SD; JCy: Jackie Canterbury, Lincoln; JED: James E. Ducey, Omaha; JG: Joe Gubanyi, Seward; JGJ: Joel G. Jorgensen, Blair; JJ: Jan Johnson, Wakefield; JK: Josef Kren, Lincoln; JLL: Jeanine L. Lackey, Lincoln; JP: Jan Paseka, Ames; JSt: Jon Strong, Omaha; JU: Jan Uttecht, Stanton; KD: Kathy DeLara, Mitchell; KP: Kevin Poague, Lincoln; LB: Laurel Badura, Kearney; LE: Larry Einemann, Lincoln; LF: Laurence Falk, Nebraska City; LH: Lynea Hinchman, Michigan City, IN; LO: Linda Ollinger, Wilsonville; LP: Loren Padelford, Bellevue; LR: Lanny Randolph, Gibbon; LRB: Linda R. Brown, Lincoln; MB: Mark Brogie, Creighton; MM: Marty Mathieson, Shelton; NR: Neal Ratzlaff, Omaha; PD: Phyllis Drawbaugh, Scottsbluff; PJ: Paul Johnsgard, Lincoln; PS: Phil Swanson, Omaha; RB: Roland Barth, Bellevue; RG: Ruth Green, Bellevue; RH: Robin Harding, Gibbon; RS: Rick Schmid, Omaha; SA: Sue Amiotte, Chadron; TD: Tom Dougherty, Bellevue; TEL: Thomas E. Labeledz, Lincoln; TH: Thomas Hoffman, Omaha; TJW: T.J. Walker, Brady; TP: Theresa Pester, Lincoln; WH: Wanda Hoge, Alma; WRS: W. Ross Silcock, Tabor, IA.

SPECIES ACCOUNTS

Greater White-fronted Goose: Summer stragglers were at HCR 2 Aug (MB), in Lancaster Co 15 Aug (LE), and near Burwell 31 Aug (LR,RH). Migrants arrived 4 Oct, with 20 in Howard Co (LR,RH), and best counts the "hundreds" over the North Platte Fish Hatchery 4 Nov (TJW) and 525 at Johnson L 2 Nov (LR,RH).

Snow Goose: The expected summer stragglers, usually singles, were reported into fall. First migrants reported were 200 at Cunningham L 1 Nov (JGJ), and best count 100,000-200,000 estimated at DeSoto NWR 26 Nov (Bob Barry fide GSt). An apparent hybrid with Canada Goose was with a flock of Canadas in Cherry Co 28 Sep (LR,RH).

Ross's Goose: Routine reports.

Canada Goose: Best count was the 8000 at DeSoto NWR 26 Nov (GSt). Earliest small form was in Garfield Co 26 Oct (LR,RH), a typical date.

Brant: The *Omaha World-Herald* published a photo of an "eastern" Brant shot near Columbus Nov 2002. This is the 7th documented fall record, 11th in all.

Trumpeter Swan: Reports were from expected Sandhills locations, except for a wandering "first year" bird near York 30 Nov (LR,RH). There are fewer than 10 reports of fall migrants away from the Sandhills.

Tundra Swan: The only report was of a juvenile/first winter bird at Johnson L 30 Nov (JSt; details). This species is a regular but rare fall migrant statewide.

Wood Duck: Routine reports.

Gadwall: Although breeding is considered regular in the RWB, and this species is apparently the 3rd most common breeding waterfowl species there (*Birds of Nebraska*), the finding of a hen and brood at Heron WPA, York Co, 14 Aug (JGJ), was the first in about 8 years for this veteran observer.

American Wigeon: One at BOL 15 Aug (LE) was very early, possibly a molt migrant. An early aggregation of migrants was the 800 at LM 21 Sep (WRS).

American Black Duck: The only report was of one on the Missouri River in Knox Co 9 Nov (MB).

Mallard: A good tally for the early date was the 4400 at LM 21 Sep (WRS), but best count was the 13,000 at DeSoto NWR 26 Nov (fide GSt).

- Blue-winged Teal:** An indication of migration under way was the flock of 100 or so flying down river at Ponca SP 18 Aug (BP,LP). Rather late were 3 lingering at Cunningham L through 12 Nov (JGJ); few typically remain into Nov.
- Cinnamon Teal:** None were reported.
- Northern Shoveler:** Fall migrants arrived on schedule in late Sep, with 200 at LM 21 Sep (WRS) and 68 at Alma East SL 28 Sep (GH,WH).
- Northern Pintail:** Significant because of the large number for fall and the early date were the 450 in York Co 30 Aug (JGJ). These may have been failed breeders or molt migrants.
- Green-winged Teal:** This species also can arrive in numbers rather early in fall; 22 were in Lancaster Co 22 Aug (LE). Best count was the 1200 at LM 21 Sep (WRS).
- Canvasback:** Few were reported; best count was the 20+ at Jeffrey L, Lincoln Co, 2 Nov (TJW).
- Redhead:** Rather early was a male, record early for fall, at Alma East SL 12 Aug (GH,WH). There have been a few similar late Jul-early Aug records from Alma in recent years; perhaps this has become a molt migration or failed breeder destination for a small number of Redheads?
- Ring-necked Duck:** Routine reports.
- Greater Scaup:** About 15 were reported statewide 2-24 Nov (JGJ,TJW), typical of this species.
- Lesser Scaup:** Best count was a moderate 360 at Burchard Lake SRA, Pawnee Co, 9 Nov (JSt).
- Surf Scoter:** Three birds were reported, better than usual for this species: an immature was at Niobrara Marsh 1-6 Nov (MB), a female at BOL 15 Nov (LE), and a first winter bird at Walnut Creek L, Sarpy Co, 24-25 Nov (BP,LP,JSt).
- White-winged Scoter:** A good showing by this scoter, too, with 4 birds reported: an immature was at Niobrara Marsh 31 Oct (MB), singles were at PL 2 Nov (JGJ), and Summit L, Burt Co, 4 Nov (JGJ), and one was shot by a hunter at L Maloney, Lincoln Co, 6 Nov (Nick Lyman fide TJW).
- Black Scoter:** Two were reported: one was at Wagon Train L, Lancaster Co, 2 Nov (JGJ), and a juvenile was above GPD in Knox Co 9 Nov (MB). Probably the same bird was reported as a female /immature above the dam at the marina 19 and 24 Nov (JC).
- Long-tailed Duck:** The only reports were of a female at L Yankton, Cedar Co, 8 Nov (MB), and an adult above and a juvenile below GPD in Knox and Cedar Cos 9 Nov (MB).
- Bufflehead:** Routine reports.
- Common Goldeneye:** Routine reports.
- Hooded Merganser:** Excellent numbers were reported; best counts were an amazing 321 on L Yankton, Cedar Co, 8 Nov (MB), and 86 in Gosper Co 2 Nov, 78 of which were on a single small pond and most of which were alternate-plumaged males (LR,RH). Other good counts were the 65 at Cunningham L and 62 at Wehrspann L both on 2 Nov (JGJ,JSt), and 50 at Carter L, Omaha, 1 Nov (JED). The 15 in Lincoln Co 4 Nov was the most the observer had seen there (TJW). Clearly peak fall movement was in early Nov this year, with a total of 332 reported in the first 5 days of the month.
- Common Merganser:** Summering birds at LO were noted again 8 Sep (TJW), and 65 molt migrants were at L Alice 20 Sep (WRS), both apparently annual occurrences. One at SCP 12 Oct (KP) was early and a bit out of place, but few were reported before the end of the period.

- Red-breasted Merganser:** One at SCP 12 Oct (KP) was early and out of place, lowering itself to associating with a single Common Merganser. Counts of up to 21 were reported during Nov, typical for the species.
- Ruddy Duck:** A good count of early migrants was the 655 in Cherry Co 1 Oct (B).
- Chukar:** One at BOL 18 Oct was thought to be a bird released for dog training (LE).
- Gray Partridge:** The 20 on the Frimann Ranch in southeast Sioux Co 7 Oct (fide AK) suggested that this species is continuing to maintain a population in southern Sioux Co. The 16 seen on the observers' Dodge Co farm 8 Nov (DP,JP) is indicative perhaps of some expansion in range in the northeast after several years of reduced sightings. The 13 near Spencer 23 Aug (DSt) were at a more expected location.
- Ring-necked Pheasant:** Routine reports.
- Sharp-tailed Grouse:** Reports were from the known range; best count was the 25 in Banner Co 7 Oct (AK). A hen with 2 almost fully grown young was in northeast Lincoln Co 11 Aug (TJW).
- Greater Prairie-Chicken:** Reports from the southeast part of the range included up to 11 at SCP (KP) and 9 in central Otoe Co 29 Oct (LF,CF). One was at a Sandhills outlier near Heartwell 16 Nov (LR,RH). Birds are regularly seen at these 3 locations. Other reports were from the expected range, with best count an excellent 45-60 in Logan Co 29 Oct (TJW).
- Wild Turkey:** Best count was the 69 in soybean stubble near Gibbon 25 Nov (LR,RH).
- Northern Bobwhite:** Somewhat northwesterly were 2 coveys at NNF 31 Aug (RG); others were seen in the area 27 Sep (TEL). Somewhat out of habitat were 2 near the Cabela's store in Sidney that "took off though a chain link dog kennel, around the pop machines and went behind the softener salt"; the observer (KD) may have been justified in assuming they were released. Interesting was a sighting in the observer's Scotts Bluff Co yard 23 Oct (KD) of a reddish individual that looked like a Masked Bobwhite, whose normal range is in the southwestern United States. Scott Taylor of NGP stated, however, that "wild bobwhites occasionally produce this color variant (often called a 'Tennessee red'), but they are available from game breeders as well. I received a report and photos of an apparently wild bird with these characteristics this summer from the Davenport area (about 50 miles southeast of Grand Island). The males essentially look the same as a male Masked Bobwhite. Female 'Tennessee reds' are typically rusty throughout the body and head, which differs from female Masked Bobwhites (which look similar to females of the other subspecies)."
- Common Loon:** An immature at Swanson Res 9 Aug (LR,RH) was apparently summering there, a regular phenomenon for western reservoirs. About 24 migrants were reported in Nov, all from HCR eastward except for one in Lincoln Co 6 Nov (TJW); best count was 5 at BOL 2 Nov (JGJ) and at GPD 1 Nov (MB).
- Yellow-billed Loon:** Nebraska's 3rd record was an immature bird at LM 2-8 Sep (RS,BG, details; JG,TJW; photos Rocky Hoffman). It may have still been present 26 Nov, although only a distant view was afforded (JGJ).
- Pied-billed Grebe:** Routine reports.
- Horned Grebe:** Reports were from the east 25 Oct (JC) through the period: best count was the 15 at BOL 19 Sep (LE), followed by the 14 at Carter L, Omaha, 3 Nov (JED).

- Red-necked Grebe:** Reports in fall have become more usual in recent years. This fall 3 were reported: one on the Ice Ponds at Fort Robinson, Dawes Co, 7 Oct (BW,DW), one above the GPD 24 Nov (JC), and 1-2 at LM 26 Nov (JGJ).
- Eared Grebe:** Routine reports.
- Western Grebe:** The usual buildup had begun at LM 8 Sep, with "thousands within viewing range" (TJW); 2600 were estimated in about 2 miles at the west end 21 Sep (WRS). Easterly were singles at BOL 26 Oct (LE) and on 2 and 8 Nov (JGJ,LE); at PL 2 Nov (JGJ); 5 birds at Summit L, Burt Co, 8 Nov (JGJ); and one lingering at Cunningham L 12-25 Nov (JGJ).
- Clark's Grebe:** The only report was of 2 at the west end of LM 21 Sep, a regular location (WRS).
- American White Pelican:** Migrants were noted 2 Aug, 60 in Otoe Co (LF,CF), through 26 Nov, one at DeSoto NWR (JSt,CNK), with best count 1200 at LM 21 Sep (WRS). A typical fall migration.
- Double-crested Cormorant:** Large numbers moved through in October; best counts were 5000 at HCR 5 Oct (GH,WH) and 3100 at Calamus Res 26 Oct (LR,RH). HCR has the 3 highest overall fall counts, 4000-5000+, in the period 5-20 Oct.
- American Bittern:** Only 4 were reported: 2 at Wehrspann L 10 Aug (CHy) may have been attempting to breed in the limited habitat there; one was in Brown Co 27 Sep for the NOU meeting (JU); and a very late bird was in Knox Co 16 Nov (Anne Brogie fide MB), which is the 4th latest recorded.
- Least Bittern:** The only report was far to the north, and 5th latest on record: one on the south side of Lewis and Clark L, about 5 miles west of GPD in Knox Co 23 Sep (TJW).
- Great Blue Heron:** Best count was a good 39 at BOL 21 Sep (LE). Regarding a count of 5 birds in Perkins Co 8 Sep, the observer noted "anyone familiar with Perkins County will understand why this is impressive" (TJW).
- Great Egret:** Moderate numbers were reported around the state; best count was 29 in Lancaster Co 22 Aug (LE). Less common southwestward and rare in the Panhandle, one was at Swanson Res 2 Aug (JSt).
- Snowy Egret:** A good count was the 11 at HCR 2 Aug (DSt,MB).
- Little Blue Heron:** There were few reports, typical for this species. Two were in the eastern RWB 2 Aug (JGJ), an immature was at HCR 2-4 Aug (DSt,MB,GH,WH), a juvenile was at Wehrspann L 10 Aug (CHy), 2 were in York Co 14 Aug (JGJ), and 2 white birds were in Clay Co 4 Sep (MB).
- Tricolored Heron:** Nebraska's 5th documented record was of 2 juveniles discovered at a private marsh north of Green Acres WPA, Clay Co, 30 Aug (JGJ; photos). Single birds were seen there subsequently through 2 Sep (WRS, photos; BP, LP).
- Cattle Egret:** Moderate numbers were reported through 27 Sep, best count 38 at FL 2 Aug (JSt,DSt,MB). Rather late was one at Stagecoach L, Lancaster Co, 2 Nov (JGJ). There are only a few later reports in Nov.
- Green Heron:** A good count was the 8 at Tail Race Park, Platte Co, 31 Aug (DP,JP). Westernmost were singles at Alma 30 Aug (GH,WH) and Cambridge 16 Sep (TJW).
- Black-crowned Night-Heron:** One in Cuming Co 8 Nov (JSt) was rather late. Only 5 in all were reported; see next species.
- Yellow-crowned Night-Heron:** The 5 in the eastern RWB 2 Aug outnumbered Black-crowned Night-Herons that day (JGJ). The only other report was probably of one of the same birds seen 4 Aug (CG).

- White-faced Ibis:** Fall birds are presumed this species; many observers correctly report them as "Plegadis sp.", as separation from Glossy Ibis in fall is difficult. Best count was the 46 in Cherry Co 1 Oct (B), and last were 2 in Dodge Co 5 Oct, reported as Plegadis sp., but appearing red-eyed (JP).
- Turkey Vulture:** Best count was the 48 at Ponca SP 28 Sep (BP,LP) and last was at Nebraska City 19 Oct, a typical migration. Unusual were the 12 roosting in the marsh at FF 14 Sep (BP,LP).
- Osprey:** From 1-5 were reported statewide 15 Aug-6 Nov. Best count was 5 at LO 21 Sep (WRS). The 2 at BOL 15 Aug (LE) were rather early, followed by one at Ponca SP 18 Aug (BP,LP).
- Mississippi Kite:** Recent years have shown that significant numbers migrate southward in the Missouri Valley, at least in some years, as recorded at the Hitchcock Nature Center on the Iowa side of the valley, and so the 7+ immatures soaring after dragonflies over the Platte River at Schramm Park 7 Sep (BP,LP,DP,JP) may be part of a regular, if sporadic, fall movement in the east.
- Bald Eagle:** A few summering/breeding birds were noted at expected locations. Best count of presumed migrants was the 40 in Scotts Bluff Co 31 Oct, including only 7 immatures (PD,DD, fide KD). DeSoto NWR hosted 12 birds, including 4 immatures, by the end of Nov (GSt,CNK).
- Northern Harrier:** Routine reports.
- Sharp-shinned Hawk:** First migrant was one at Nebraska City 20 Aug (LF,CF), about normal.
- Cooper's Hawk:** Routine reports.
- Northern Goshawk:** The only report was of one at Wehrspann L 17 Oct (DSt).
- Red-shouldered Hawk:** Unexpected away from the only known summering site at FF, but possibly derived from it, was an immature seen at 25th Street and Highway 370 in Bellevue 24 Sep (LH, details). There were no reports of fledging at FF, however; hawkwatches indicate that peak movement is in late Sep.
- Broad-winged Hawk:** Only about 15 were reported, all but two in the Missouri Valley 22 Aug-27 Sep. The exceptions were one in northern Saunders Co 3 Aug (TH), a date suggestive of breeding in the area, and one rather late over the Platte River at Fremont 24 Oct (MB). True migration begins in late Aug, and so Aug sightings may be indicative of breeding; 4 were at FF 22 Aug, and 2 immatures were there 24 Aug (BP,LP).
- Swainson's Hawk:** Migrants were noted 15-30 Sep, with best counts the 200+ in two roughly equal flocks in Seward Co 27 Sep (JG), and 56 in a field near Colon 26 Sep (KP).
- Red-tailed Hawk:** Best count of migrants was the 42 at Ponca SP 28 Sep (BP,LP). A "Harlan's Hawk" at Bellevue 21 Oct was thought by the observer to be the same bird that has wintered there for several years (RB). First dark bird reported was one in Howard Co 4 Oct (LR,RH). Both dates are rather early for dark forms.
- Ferruginous Hawk:** One at SCP 12 Oct (fide KP; no details) was rather far east if correctly identified, especially for a relatively early date. The few other reports were from expected locations, including one at a prairie dog town near Stamford 29 Nov (GH,WH).
- Rough-legged Hawk:** Rather early was one in Thomas Co 27 Sep (CNK), followed closely by another near North Platte 29 Sep (TJW). Best count was 5 in Cheyenne and Morrill Cos 29 Nov (KD).

- Golden Eagle:** Easterly was an immature in Lancaster Co 18 Oct (DSt); this is the expected age to wander eastward, although this is a rather early date.
- American Kestrel:** Large numbers were in the Panhandle 8 Sep; the observer "drove around 200 miles today and saw groups of Kestrels probably every 5 miles at the most including 2-6 or more" (TJW), which would suggest a minimum total of 80 birds. On 3 Sep 2000, 102 were counted in Banner and Scotts Bluff Cos.
- Merlin:** Six were reported statewide, earliest an intermediate-colored bird at Red Cloud SL 7 Sep (LR,RH).
- Prairie Falcon:** Birds appeared in the east in late Sep, rather early; one was near Verdigre 24 Sep (TJW) and singles were as far east as Ponca SP 28 Sep (BP,LP) and Niobrara Marsh 9 Nov (MB).
- Peregrine Falcon:** Only 5 were reported, all in the period 16 Sep-12 Oct, perhaps fewer than usual. Westernmost was one dining on duck at LM 21 Sep (WRS). Observations in recent years have shown that the majority of migrants through Nebraska are of the subspecies *tundrius* (fide JGJ).
- Virginia Rail:** Presumed migrants were at Oliver Res 30 Aug (BFH) and 6 Sep, the latter sighting of 2 birds below the dam (JG). Another responded to a taped call in Garfield Co 1 Sep (LR,RH).
- Sora:** Breeding can occur almost anywhere in the state, but mostly north and west. An adult with a downy chick was in an "irrigation-fed playa wetland functioning more like sandhills wetland" in Lincoln Co 12 Aug (TJW), an interesting-sounding habitat. Nine birds, including juveniles, were at Winters Creek L, Scotts Bluff Co, 6 Sep (PD,DD, fide KD). One in a Lincoln yard 14 Nov (David Ochsner fide LR,RH) was 4th latest on record.
- American Coot:** Breeding is usual in the eastern RWB; 4 broods of varying ages were at Moger WPA, Clay Co, 2 Aug (JGJ). Best count of migrants was the 2500 in Cherry Co 1 Oct (B).
- Sandhill Crane:** Good numbers were noted in Oct in the central and west, mostly flocks flying southward, such as 640 in Custer Co 18 Oct (LR,RH). Largest aggregation was the 3000-4000 frequenting North Platte NWR, Scotts Bluff Co, 12-13 Oct; 1700 that had roosted overnight at L Minatare 12-13 Oct departed in groups of 20-100 on 13 Oct, joined by large numbers that had apparently roosted elsewhere in the NWR (PD,DD,KD). Earliest was over NNF 27 Sep (TEL), and latest 30+ over North Platte 5 Nov (TJW) and flyovers at Kearney 6 Nov (LR,RH).
- Whooping Crane:** The only reports were each of 3 birds. Three were reported flying over Shelton 29 Oct (fide MM), apparently the same birds that arrived that afternoon at Cheyenne Bottoms, KS (fide JSt). Three adults were at Buffalo Bill SHP, Lincoln Co, 3 Nov (TJW).
- Black-bellied Plover:** Only 10 were reported, in the period 14 Aug (JGJ) through 4 Oct (LE).
- American Golden-Plover:** This species is scarce in fall, as most migrate to the Atlantic Coast. Only 3 were reported, one in the eastern RWB 2 Aug (JGJ), a juvenile golden-plover sp. at LM 21 Sep (WRS, photos), and a single at Cunningham L 1 Nov (JGJ). There are few reports of adults; the 2 Aug bird was only the 12th such report. The 1 Nov bird was rather late; latest dates are in mid-Nov.
- Snowy Plover:** Rarely noted in fall, 2 juveniles were at HCR 2 Aug (JSt,DSt,MB) and a single bird (unaged) was with Piping Plovers there 4 Aug (GH,WH).
- Semipalmated Plover:** About 19 were reported, 18 in the period 2-30 Aug, including one westerly at Kilpatrick L, Box Butte Co, 30 Aug (MB); the exception was one at Cunningham L 24 Sep (JGJ).

- Piping Plover:** An early fall migrant, some 11 were reported in the period 2-4 Aug. At HCR, where the species is not known to breed, 2 adults and 3 juveniles were present 2 Aug (JSt,DSt,MB), and 2 were there 4 Aug (GH,WH). Five were at LM, a known breeding location, 3 Aug (CG).
- Killdeer:** Best count was the 260 at L Alice 20 Sep (WRS). A lingerer was at PL 16 Nov (LE).
- Black-necked Stilt:** The family group that bred successfully at FL was still present 2 Aug (JSt, photos, DSt,MB), but only one of the adults was with the juveniles 16 Aug (LR,RH). At another successful non-Sandhills breeding site (see Summer 2003 Seasonal Report), an adult was still with a juvenile south of Morrill 11 Aug (KD). The only other report was of a single bird in Sheridan Co 3 Aug (CG).
- American Avocet:** A few migrants pass through the east, but the 35 at BOL on the rather late date of 2 Nov (JGJ) were unexpected. Best counts were an amazing 600 on 26 Sep at Lane L, Sheridan Co, a favored location for this species (AK), and "hundreds" along Highway 2 through the Sandhills 31 Aug (B).
- Greater Yellowlegs:** Best count was a good 50 at LM 21 Sep (WRS), and last a rather late single at Cunningham L 12-17 Nov (JGJ).
- Lesser Yellowlegs:** Best count was the 400 at LM 21 Sep (WRS).
- Solitary Sandpiper:** Routine reports.
- Willet:** One in Brown Co 27 Sep (JCy) was rather late.
- Spotted Sandpiper:** Routine reports.
- Upland Sandpiper:** Best count was the record for fall 247 in the eastern RWB 2 Aug (JGJ). Rather late was one in Dodge Co 30 Sep (DP,JP). There are very few Oct records.
- Long-billed Curlew:** Last to leave were 7 in Sheridan Co 30 Aug (MB); there are only 5 records for Sep.
- Hudsonian Godwit:** A juvenile at LM 21 Sep (WRS, photo) provided only the 3rd documented fall report of this species in Nebraska. The underwings were checked in flight to eliminate the possibility of Black-tailed Godwit.
- Marbled Godwit:** Last were 6 at LM 3 Aug (CG).
- Ruddy Turnstone:** The only report of this casual fall migrant was one at L North, Platte Co, 31 Aug (DP,JP). This is only the 14th fall report of this species for Nebraska.
- Sanderling:** Routine reports.
- Semipalmated Sandpiper:** Routine reports.
- Western Sandpiper:** The only report was from Box Butte Res, Dawes Co, 7 Oct (BW,DW).
- Least Sandpiper:** An excellent count was the 300 at LM 21 Sep (WRS).
- Baird's Sandpiper:** LM is a staging area for this species in fall, where high counts are in the 5000+ range: 3000 were there 3 Aug (CG) and 1500 on 21 Sep (WRS). Singles at BOL 2 Nov (JGJ) and in Knox Co 6 Nov (MB) were rather late.
- Pectoral Sandpiper:** Good numbers passed through the state, most in the east and central, as expected. Westernmost was one in Hayes Co 5 Aug (TJW). Best count was a record 720 at LNB 14 Aug (JGJ). Rather late was one at Holmes L, Lincoln, 4 Nov (LE).
- Dunlin:** There were only two reports of this usually late fall migrant: singles were at HCR 2 Nov (GH,WH) and at Wehrspann L the same day (JGJ).
- Stilt Sandpiper:** Routine reports.

- Buff-breasted Sandpiper:** Reports were from the east, including a near-record fall count of 283 in the eastern RWB 2 Aug (JGJ). Last were 11 at LNB 31 Aug (DP,JP).
- Short-billed Dowitcher:** There were 3 reports: one was in the eastern RWB 2 Aug (JGJ), 5 juveniles were there 30 Aug (JGJ), and a single juvenile was at Cunningham L 10 Sep (JGJ). The last is a rather late date for this species.
- Long-billed Dowitcher:** Moderate numbers were reported on several dates through 2 Nov, on which date 3 birds were seen at Wehrspann L (JGJ).
- Wilson's Snipe:** One at FL 16 Aug (LR,RH) was likely a rather early migrant, although breeding could occur there.
- American Woodcock:** There were 4 reports. One at FF 8 Aug (RB) may have summered there. Other reports were of singles, presumed migrants, at Spring Lake Park, Omaha, 5-6 Sep (JED), ADF 1 Nov (LF,CF), and Buckskin Hills WMA, Dixon Co, 2 Nov (BFH).
- Wilson's Phalarope:** Routine reports.
- Franklin's Gull:** Best count was a carefully-estimated 26,000 at LM 21 Sep (WRS). LM is a major staging area for this species in fall, but this count is not even in the top 3 for the species in fall! Rather late were 3 at GPD 9 Nov(MB).
- Little Gull:** A 2nd-winter bird above GPD 1 Nov (MB, details) is the 9th fall record for the state, 12th overall. It ties the previous latest date.
- Bonaparte's Gull:** Moderate numbers were reported 16 Oct-26 Nov, the latter a good count of 62 in Knox Co (MB). Best count was a good 167 at Johnson L 2 Nov (LR,RH); there are only 2 higher counts, both 500+.
- Ring-billed Gull:** Best count was 4000-5000 at Shoemaker Marsh, Lincoln, 8 Nov (JED).
- California Gull:** The 7 birds reported were at usual locations: single adults, not necessarily the same bird, were at L Minatare 1-24 Sep (WRS,KD), and 4 birds were at LO 26 Nov (JGJ). There are usually more than this at LM during the fall.
- Herring Gull:** None were reported in Sep; first were 2 at HCR 5 Oct (GH,WH). Best count was only 75, at BOL 8 Nov (LE).
- Thayer's Gull:** The only report was of an adult below GPD 9 Nov (MB).
- Glaucous Gull:** None were reported; first birds usually appear in late Nov.
- Sabine's Gull:** A light showing saw only two reported, single juveniles at GPD 28-29 Sep (MB,JC) and at HCR 4 Oct (GH,WH).
- Black-legged Kittiwake:** None were reported; early dates are in Nov.
- Caspian Tern:** Migrants at expected times were one at LNB 30 Aug (JGJ), a record fall count of 14 at BOL 6 Sep (LE), and 3 at Lewis and Clark L, Knox Co, 23 Sep (TJW), but 2 seen and heard near Red Willow Res, Frontier Co, 7 Nov (TJW, details) were record late. Previous late date was 20 Oct; only one of the 4 latest records is documented.
- Common Tern:** The only reports were of 8 at L Minatare 20 Sep (WRS), and singles there 24 Sep (KD) and at North Platte 6 Oct (TJW).
- Forster's Tern:** Best count was the 19 at BOL 22 Aug (LE). Tied for 2nd latest ever was one at Wehrspann L 1 Nov (JGJ).
- Least Tern:** Migrants were noted on schedule: 4 were at Wehrspann L 10 Aug (CHy), 2 juveniles were at LNB 14 Aug (JGJ), and 2 were at BOL 22 Aug (LE).
- Black Tern:** Routine reports.
- Rock Pigeon:** Routine reports.

- Eurasian Collared-Dove:** Numbers and locations continue to increase. Best counts are now well into double digits, with 22 in one tree at Sutton 29 Nov (LR,RH) and 19 attending the observer's Brady feeder in mid-Nov (TJW). The species was reported from 6 new counties this fall, bringing the total to 74 counties. Reports from new counties are: Brown, one on 31 Aug (MB); Burt, one on 13 Aug (JGJ); Franklin, one on 7 Sep (LR,RH); Garfield, one on 26 Oct (LR,RH); Sheridan, one on 31 Aug (MB) and 2 at Hay Springs 10 Sep (BW,DW); Webster, one on 3 Aug (DSt,MB) and 2 in Red Cloud 7 Sep (LR,RH). In case you were wondering, here are the 19 counties which have not yet reported this species: Adams, Arthur, Blaine, Boyd, Cedar, Cherry, Gosper, Grant, Hooker, Jefferson, Keya Paha, Logan, Loup, Madison, Otoe, Pawnee, Saline, Sherman, Thomas.
- White-winged Dove:** The bird that showed up at Cody Park, North Platte, in Jul (the 25th state record) was still present 25 Sep (TJW). Nebraska's 26th record was one photographed in the Ilene Paine yard in Kearney (fide LR,RH, photo).
- Mourning Dove:** Best count was the 164 in Garfield Co 31 Aug (LR,RH), when fall flocking is well underway. The only reports for Nov were from the southeast, as is usual.
- Black-billed Cuckoo:** The only reports were from Dixon Co: one in the southern part of the county 3 Aug (JJ), and one at Ponca SP 18-19 Aug (BP,LP). Reports of this species seem to be on the decline.
- Yellow-billed Cuckoo:** A good count was the 7 in eastern Otoe Co 2 Aug (LF,CF). Last was one at Red Cloud 7 Sep (LR,RH), a typical late date for fall.
- Barn Owl:** The only report was of one at Swanson Res 31 Aug (B).
- Eastern Screech-Owl:** Routine reports.
- Great Horned Owl:** Routine reports.
- Burrowing Owl:** Scotts Bluff Co has the state's best populations of this species it seems. An excellent count of 30+ was made near Buffalo Creek WMA 2 Aug (KD), and 11 were at the Scottsbluff Landfill 29 Aug (PD,DD). Last of this migratory species was one in Lincoln Co 4 Oct (AR).
- Barred Owl:** Routine reports.
- Long-eared Owl:** None were reported. Wintering birds begin to arrive in late Oct.
- Short-eared Owl:** More than usual were reported, although there were only 4: singles were at NNF 31 Aug-1 Sep (RG); near Valentine NWR, Cherry Co, 27 Sep (CNK); at SCP 3 Oct (KP); and at Buckskin Hills WMA, Dixon Co, 2 Nov (BFH).
- Northern Saw-whet Owl:** None were reported; arrival of winter visitors is in late Oct.
- Common Nighthawk:** Excellent numbers of migrants were reported, with best counts 260 over Bellevue 20 Sep (CNK), 200+ over Mitchell 1 Sep (B), and 180+ over Omaha 2 Sep (JED). Last were 45+ over Bellevue rather late on 5 Oct (TD).
- Common Poorwill:** The only report was of 2 in Monroe Canyon, Sioux Co, 30 Aug (MB), a regular location.
- Chuck-will's-widow:** The only report was from a regular summering location, Wolf L, Saunders Co, on 9 Aug (TH).
- Whip-poor-will:** The only report was a first for the observers' Dodge Co "yard" (=farm), one on 2 Sep (DP,JP).
- Chimney Swift:** Rather late were 9 at FF 17 Oct (BP,LP). Uncommon westward, the only such report was of at least one at NNF 31 Aug (RG).

- White-throated Swift:** The only reports were from Scotts Bluff NM, Scotts Bluff Co, a regular location; a good count of 20 was made there 12 Aug (PD,DD) and last were 3 on 6 Sep (JG).
- Ruby-throated Hummingbird:** Reports were numerous, a total of about 32 birds, most, as expected, in the east. Best count was the 6, a male and 5 females, at a Wakefield feeder 31 Aug (JJ), and 5+ were at a Creighton feeder 25-27 Aug (MB). Rather late was a single in Shelton trying to pick red paint off a pole 2 Oct (MM), and another was at a Bellevue feeder 6 Oct (BP,LP). Only the 2nd and 3rd Panhandle records were one at Harrison 30 Aug (MB, accepted by NOURC), and one at a Mitchell feeder 11 Sep (KD, details; accepted by NOURC as *Archilochus* sp.); the latter bird had no rufous coloration, a greenish (not gray) crown, and did not pump its tail at the feeder.
- Calliope Hummingbird:** Following an excellent fall last year for this species, 3 were reported this fall. One at an Ogallala feeder was videotaped 4 Aug (CWH), one was at a Mitchell feeder 13 Aug (KD) and, for the 2nd year in a row, one, a female/immature, was at a Creighton feeder 26-28 Aug (MB). These bring the total of fall records to 13, along with 2 for spring.
- Broad-tailed Hummingbird:** The only report was of 2 at a Mitchell feeder 13 Aug (KD).
- Rufous Hummingbird:** The only reports were from Mitchell in early Aug, where as of 13 Aug "none had been seen for a week or so" (KD), and from Harrison, where one was found 30 Aug (MB).
- Belted Kingfisher:** A good count was the 5 at 3 locations in Buffalo Co 13 Sep (LR,RH).
- Lewis's Woodpecker:** None were reported.
- Red-headed Woodpecker:** Best count was 32 at ICSP 13 Sep, presumably birds on the move southward (WRS). Away from the southeast, last were a juvenile in Dixon Co 1 Oct (JJ), one in Blaine Co 27 Sep (PJ), and one in Scotts Bluff Co 6 Sep (AK).
- Red-bellied Woodpecker:** One returned to a Brady feeder 2 Nov for the first time since spring (TJW).
- Yellow-bellied Sapsucker:** More than usual were reported, a total of about 10, in the period 1 Oct-23 Nov. The last sighting was of 2 birds at a Brady feeder, one of which, an immature male, appeared 17 Nov (TJW, details). This species is rare westward.
- Downy Woodpecker:** Routine reports.
- Hairy Woodpecker:** An excellent count was the 5 in eastern Otoe Co 12 Sep and 6 Oct (LF,CF); they may have been a family group.
- Northern Flicker:** Groups of migrants were the 23 near Stratton, including 12 in one dead tree, 31 Aug (B), and 23 in Garfield Co 31 Aug (LR,RH). First red-shafted birds east of the Panhandle were singles near Gibbon 17 Sep (LR,RH) and at Victoria Springs SRA, Custer Co, 18 Sep (TJW). These are the earliest such dates on record. A comment from Kathy DeLara in Scotts Bluff Co indicates the variety of plumages that can be seen in this species in fall in western Nebraska: "Then there was one that was bright yellow with bright red malars, very much like the Gilded Flicker. We have so many color combinations, some with a red malar on one side and black on the other or a combination of both colors. Another thing that I did notice was it did not have any red on the back of its head, most all of the males around here do."
- Pileated Woodpecker:** The only report was from FF, a regular location, 15 Aug (BP,LP).

- Olive-sided Flycatcher:** About 12 were reported 10 Aug-20 Sep, all but 2 in the east. Westerly reports are few, and so these were unexpected: one was at Oliver Res 30 Aug (BFH) and a juvenile was at Swanson Res 31 Aug (JSt).
- Western Wood-Pewee:** Last was one at Oliver Res 20 Sep (WRS).
- Eastern Wood-Pewee:** Last was one in Brown Co 27 Sep (JK). Four adults were with 3 nearly-grown begging young at WP 11 Sep (LE).
- Yellow-bellied Flycatcher:** One was singing at Lewis and Clark L, Knox Co, 23 Sep (TJW), a rather late date, but within the migration period as determined by documented records in neighboring states.
- Willow Flycatcher:** Last reported was one at ADF 23 Sep (LF,CF); no details were provided for what would be a rather late date, although the same observers had a calling Willow Flycatcher in the same area 28 Sep 2002. One was at Oliver Res 31 Aug (BFH, details); this bird was described as having "essentially no eye-ring", typical of this species, especially in western parts of its range.
- Least Flycatcher:** Last were 2 in extreme southeast Sioux Co 6 Sep (JG) and one at WSR the same day (HKH). This species departs early in fall.
- Hammond's Flycatcher:** Three were reported with details at expected times and places; one was at Oliver Res 31 Aug-1 Sep (BFH, details), one was at WSR 6 Sep (HKH), and one was at Oliver Res 20 Sep (WRS, details). There are now 21 fall records.
- Dusky Flycatcher:** The only report, also at an expected location and date, was of one at Oliver Res 30 Aug (BFH, details). This is the 20th fall record for the species.
- Cordilleran Flycatcher:** One was reported at WSR 6 Sep (HKH). This species is rarely reported during migration, despite being a regular breeder in the Pine Ridge and Black Hills of South Dakota. It has been suggested that the possibility of occurrence of Pacific Slope Flycatcher on the western plains is a complicating factor in identifying "Western"-type flycatchers in fall.
- Eastern Phoebe:** The 4th latest ever was one at the Botanical Gardens in Omaha 2 Nov (PS). Family groups with fledged young comprised the 6 birds at Schramm Park 20 Sep (CNK).
- Say's Phoebe:** The sporadic appearances in southwest Dixon Co continued, with one there 13 Sep, first for 2-3 years (JJ). Other reports were from the usual westerly range, the last a rather late bird in Lincoln Co 1 Oct (TJW).
- Great Crested Flycatcher:** Reports were statewide; this species breeds west to the Pine Ridge. Best count was 7 at ICSP 13 Sep (WRS) and last one at BOL 28 Sep (LE).
- Cassin's Kingbird:** Best count was 10-20 in Carter Canyon, Scotts Bluff Co, 6 Sep (AK), and last were 5 in Kimball Co 20 Sep (WRS). High counts in fall are in the 40+ range.
- Western Kingbird:** A few lingered rather late in the Panhandle; one in Scotts Bluff Co 8 Oct (KD, no details) was 2nd latest ever for fall. Most kingbirds after mid-Sep in the Panhandle tend to be Cassin's (Dick Rosche, pers. comm.).
- Eastern Kingbird:** Best count was 104 in Garfield Co 31 Aug (LR,RH), clearly emphasizing the timing of peak migration for this species.
- Northern Shrike:** Seven were reported by period's end, the first one in Dawes Co 7 Oct (BW,DW). One had penetrated as far as Otoe Co as early as 29 Oct (LF,CF).
- Loggerhead Shrike:** Routine reports.
- Bell's Vireo:** Routine reports.
- Yellow-throated Vireo:** Routine reports.

- Plumbeous Vireo:** More migrants than usual were noted; 3 singles in the Panhandle were at Oliver Res 31 Aug (BFH, details) and 6 Sep (JG), and in Carter Canyon, Scotts Bluff Co, 6 Sep (AK,KD).
- Cassin's Vireo:** The only reports were of one at Oliver Res 30 Aug (BFH, details) and 2 in Carter Canyon 6 Sep (KD). This species is a regular but uncommon migrant in the Panhandle in fall.
- Blue-headed Vireo:** Since the split of "Solitary Vireo" into 3 species, Blue-headed Vireo has been reported least often of the 3 in the Panhandle. The only 2 previous documented fall records for the Panhandle are 20 and 27 Sep, and the few Colorado records are mostly in late Sep and Oct. So 2 this fall for the Panhandle were significantly early: 30 Aug at Oliver Res (BFH) and 6 Sep at Carter Canyon, Scotts Bluff Co (AK,KD, details).
- Warbling Vireo:** Rather late in the west, where a different subspecies occurs from the later-migrating eastern one, was one at West Lawn Cem, Gering, 6 Sep (JG).
- Philadelphia Vireo:** Only 2 of this uncommon migrant were reported, singles at ADF 15 Sep (LF,CF) and in Knox Co 20 Sep (MB).
- Red-eyed Vireo:** Routine reports.
- Blue Jay:** Best count was 59, most of them in a single flock, at ADF 5 Oct (LF,CF). Record count of fall migrants is 110; migration peaks in early Oct. An interesting observation was that Blue Jays seem to leave during summer at Sidney; first to return was one on 30 Sep (AS).
- Pinyon Jay:** None were reported.
- Clark's Nutcracker:** The only report was of one in Sowbelly Canyon 30 Aug (MB). This species may occur every year in western Pine Ridge Canyons. There are a few summer records, including breeding records, but most reports are in fall, beginning in late Aug, as in this case.
- Black-billed Magpie:** Some concern exists for this species, with some blaming West Nile Virus; none were seen in Harlan Co (GH,WH) and numbers were "way down" in Scotts Bluff Co (KD).
- American Crow:** Similar concerns for this species have been expressed also; no large numbers were reported, and one veteran observer was amazed that only 2 were seen at NNF in late Aug (RG). Best count was 840 in Custer Co 18 Oct (LR,RH); high fall counts are in the 2000+ range. That the species is probably least common in the southwest is underscored by the first sighting in 21 years for the observer's yard and the town of Wilsonville, on 30 Oct (LO).
- Horned Lark:** Routine reports.
- Purple Martin:** The total of 143 banded in eastern Nebraska this summer was considered low; it was suggested that cold fronts in early spring had reduced numbers making it this far north (RG). A pair with 2 young delayed departure from Alma until 30 Aug, the observers' latest date there (GH,WH).
- Tree Swallow:** Best counts were the 250 at BOL 21 Sep (LE) and the 200 at Bluestem L, Lancaster Co, the same day (GHa).
- Violet-green Swallow:** None were reported; departure occurs by late Aug.
- Northern Rough-winged Swallow:** Rather late were 3 in Otoe Co 6 Oct (LF,CF).
- Bank Swallow:** A good count was the 770 in the eastern RWB 2 Aug (JGJ).
- Cliff Swallow:** Routine reports.
- Barn Swallow:** Best count was a moderate 400 in Kearney Co 13 Sep (LR,RH).
- Black-capped Chickadee:** Several reporters mentioned a scarcity of chickadees this fall. While it is difficult to determine such things with any statistical confidence, one observer (LE) noted that in the Aug-Oct period for the last 5 years, he found 27 chickadees in 9 trips in Lancaster Co in 1999, 70 in 12 trips

in 2000, 129 in 14 trips in 2001, 96 in 16 trips in 2002, and 11 in 16 trips in 2003. We will see what winter brings!

Tufted Titmouse: One was at Ponca SP 29 Sep (BFH), presumably the same bird seen there in May. This is the only record for this species at Ponca SP.

Red-breasted Nuthatch: First to appear away from the breeding range was one at FF 30 Aug (BP,LP). Fall movement usually begins in Aug. Few were reported.

White-breasted Nuthatch: An apparent migrant of the western subspecies, which breeds on the Pine Ridge, was heard near Bushnell 20 Sep (WRS). Movement out of breeding areas, when it occurs, begins in mid-Sep, with birds (of both eastern and western subspecies) moving into areas of the state where they do not occur in summer.

Pygmy Nuthatch: Routine reports.

Brown Creeper: A single at FF 30 Aug (BP,LP) was probably one of the very few local breeders. Arrival of migrants elsewhere began 18 Oct, with singles in Lancaster (LE) and Lincoln (TJW) Cos, and a record fall count of 12 was made at ADF 28 Oct (TJW).

Rock Wren: One far to the east in Dodge Co 12 Oct was billed as the "Return of Rocky", as one had been seen there in Sep 2000 (DP,JP). This is only the 8th fall record in the southeast. Rather late were 5 still present at WSR 10 Oct, down from the 15 there in prior weeks (HKH). Several nests had been found at WSR, each with a small white rock among the eggs (HKH).

Carolina Wren: There are signs of range expansion underway. Of interest were reports from Ponca SP 29 Sep (BP,LP) and 12 Oct (TJW); the latter bird was unbanded, and, along with the presence of a banded bird the past 2 winters, suggests that at least 2 birds are now present. Also out of range were singles at Buffalo Bill SHP, Lincoln Co, 24 Oct (TJW) and one in Kearney 15 Nov (Chuck Dummer fide LR,RH), suggestive of a westward push in the Platte Valley. Testing the limits of the current range were 2 at Red Cloud 7 Sep (LR,RH), one in southwest York Co 30 Nov (LR,RH), and one in Burt Co 15 Aug (JGJ). Adults were feeding 2 fledged young at Schilling WMA, Cass Co, 14 Aug (CNK).

House Wren: Last was one at Curtis 1 Oct (TJW). One banded at Schramm Park 14 Sep was "very dark copper brown, much darker than most here" (RG).

Winter Wren: All but one of the reports were in the east, about 14 birds, from 22 Sep (CNK) through the period. Singles were lingering at ADF (LF,CF) and in the Omaha area (JED) at the end of the period; wintering occurs on occasion. One at WSR 4 Nov (HKH) adds to the few westerly reports and appears to be only the 2nd Panhandle record at any season.

Sedge Wren: Best count was of 11 in the eastern RWB 2 Aug (JGJ); no evidence of breeding was noted. Last was one near Lincoln 18 Oct (LE), rather late.

Marsh Wren: Routine reports.

Golden-crowned Kinglet: Routine reports.

Ruby-crowned Kinglet: Arrival is significantly earlier in the north and west, and so a surprise was the earliest report at ADF 15 Sep (LF,CF), rather early for the southeast. One lingered at Johnson L through 8 Nov (LR,RH), rather late away from the southeast.

Blue-gray Gnatcatcher: One was unexpected as far north as Sioux Co 30 Aug (MB); the Panhandle population continues to expand. Rather late were 2 in the Wildcat Hills 20 Sep (WRS) and 2 at Ash Hollow SHP, Garden Co, 21 Sep (WRS).

- Eastern Bluebird:** Best counts were the 75 east of Seward 11 Nov (Lloyd Kaufman fide JG) and 65 in southeast Otoe Co 31 Oct (LF,CF).
- Mountain Bluebird:** Migrants were apparent by mid-Oct, with several at LM 13 Oct (HA) and 4 in Logan Co 29 Oct (TJW).
- Townsend's Solitaire:** Earliest was one in Sowbelly Canyon, Sioux Co, 30 Aug (MB), about on time for the first migrants. By period's end, none had moved farther east than Brown, Blaine, and Lincoln Cos.
- Veery:** None were reported; migration takes place in Sep.
- Gray-cheeked Thrush:** The only report was of one in Knox Co 6 Sep (MB). This species is only casual in fall, with only about 30 reports in all for the state.
- Swainson's Thrush:** Few were reported, about 10, in the period 31 Aug (JJ) through 19 Oct (JJ), the latter rather late. Usually this species is a common migrant in fall.
- Hermit Thrush:** The 3 grayish birds at WSR 28 Sep and another there 19 Oct (HKH) were the Rocky Mountain subspecies *auduboni*, which migrates earlier than eastern birds, which are presumably *faxoni*. First in the east was one in Seward Co 23 Oct (JG). The reports cited here were the only sightings, a poor showing for this species.
- Wood Thrush:** Routine reports.
- American Robin:** A roost in Lancaster Co had 701 birds as early as 17 Aug; last year's high count there was 712 (JLL). Flocks begin to form in late Jul. Best counts elsewhere were the "thousands" at GPD 24 Nov (JC) and "hundreds, possibly thousands" at North Platte 15 Oct (TJW).
- Gray Catbird:** One at WSR 29 Oct (HKH) was latest ever for the Panhandle, where the species is uncommon. Latest elsewhere was one at ADF 9 Oct (LF,CF) and best count was a fall record 23 in Hamilton Co 23 Aug (LR,RH).
- Northern Mockingbird:** Routine reports.
- Sage Thrasher:** The only report of this rare fall migrant was of an adult at Scotts Bluff NM, Scotts Bluff Co, 2-6 Sep (JG).
- Brown Thrasher:** Best count was the 7-8 in the observer's yard near Mitchell 10 Sep (KD), presumably migrants; one was still present 4 Oct (KD). One in Lincoln Co 20 Nov (TJW) was rather late for the location. See next species.
- Curve-billed Thrasher:** As of 7 Oct the long-staying bird at the Lonnie Frimann Ranch in extreme southeast Sioux Co. was still present; it had molted into fresh plumage (Lonnie Frimann, fide AK). A very interesting development was the presence 6 Sep within a brood of otherwise normal Brown Thrashers at the ranch of one with a gray head and back (JG). The Curve-billed Thrasher had demonstrated reproductive propensities as it attempted to feed freshly-fledged American Robins 24 Aug (Lonnie Frimann, fide AK). There is a previous record of an apparent hybrid of Curve-billed and Brown Thrashers from Florida.
- European Starling:** Routine reports.
- American Pipit:** Singles at Box Butte Res, Dawes Co, 30 Aug (MB) and Kilpatrick L, Box Butte Co, 31 Aug (DSt) were 4th and 5th earliest fall records. Best count was 42 in Cherry Co 1 Oct (B).
- Sprague's Pipit:** Encouraging news for state listers was the dependable presence at SCP of as many as 56 of this species 15 Sep-21 Oct (KP). The 56 were counted 12 Oct, when flocks of 5-10 were observed flying overhead (KP).
- Cedar Waxwing:** Best count was the 80 at Johnson L 2 Nov (LR,RH).
- Golden-winged Warbler:** The only report was of one at FF 31 Aug (BP,LP). This is only the 19th fall report for the state.

- Tennessee Warbler:** Of 5 reports of single birds, 4 were in the east as expected, 31 Aug-1 Oct, but one at Chadron 7 Oct (BW,DW, details) was only the 10th fall Panhandle record, and the latest by 5 days.
- Orange-crowned Warbler:** One at Bellevue 24 Aug (CNK) was rather early. There were many reports of this statewide migrant, although best count was modest: 27 in Lancaster Co 28 Sep (LE).
- Nashville Warbler:** Most reports were as expected from the east, 23 Aug (JJ) through 5 Oct (LF,CF,DP,JP). However, one at Chadron 7 Oct (BW,DW, details) was only the 8th fall Panhandle record; the details provided indicated it was of the western subspecies *ridgwayi*, the 3rd fall record of this taxon.
- Northern Parula:** None were reported; departure is in Sep.
- Yellow Warbler:** Routine reports.
- Chestnut-sided Warbler:** None were reported; most depart by early Oct.
- Magnolia Warbler:** The only reports were of one somewhat westerly at Valentine NWR, Cherry Co, 27 Sep (CNK) and one at ADF 8 Oct (LF,CF).
- Black-throated Blue Warbler:** The only report of this rare statewide fall migrant was of one at WSR 22 Sep (HKH).
- Yellow-rumped (Audubon's) Warbler:** Rather late were singles at the North Platte Fish Hatchery 15 Oct (TJW) and Sutherland Res 16 Oct (TJW). Best count was an excellent 32 at Oliver Res 20 Sep, accompanied by only 2 "Myrtle" Warblers (WRS).
- Yellow-rumped (Myrtle) Warbler:** Earliest was one at Dannebrog 18 Sep (LB), best count 44 at FF 17 Oct (BP,LP) and in Lancaster Co 28 Sep (LE), and last one at ADF 24 Nov (LF,CF). Away from the southeast, where a few linger into Dec, one was rather late at Johnson L 8 Nov (LR,RH).
- Black-throated Green Warbler:** The only reports were of one rather early at FF 31 Aug (B) and 2 at ICSP 13 Sep (WRS).
- Townsend's Warbler:** Only 4 of this regular western fall migrant were reported, all in the Panhandle 31 Aug (MB) through 3 Oct (AK), the latter rather late.
- Blackburnian Warbler:** The only report was of one at FF 31 Aug (B).
- Yellow-throated Warbler:** None were reported; most depart by early Sep.
- Palm Warbler:** The only report was of one at ADF 5 Oct (LF,CF). This species is only casual in fall, with about 35 records in all.
- Bay-breasted Warbler:** None were reported; most depart by early Oct.
- Black-and-white Warbler:** Two at Ponca SP 19 Aug (BP,LP) were probably rather early migrants, although, while it is possible breeding may occur there, no recent documentation exists.
- American Redstart:** Several of the 10 birds at Ponca SP 18 Aug were still singing (BP,LP); this species is a fairly common breeder there.
- Prothonotary Warbler:** The only report was of an adult male rather late at FF 24 Aug (BP,LP); this species breeds there in low numbers, and usually departs by 1 Sep.
- Ovenbird:** Routine reports.
- Northern Waterthrush:** Unexpected was one near Mitchell 3 Sep (KD); there are only about 15 fall records for the Panhandle.
- Louisiana Waterthrush:** None were reported; most leave by 1 Sep.
- Kentucky Warbler:** None were reported; most leave by mid-Sep.
- Mourning Warbler:** Only 3 were reported: one in the eastern RWB 30 Aug (JGJ), one at FF 31 Aug (BP,LP), and an immature unexpectedly in the observers' Scottsbluff yard 4 Oct (PD,DD,AK,KD,SA, details). This last bird was described (among other features) as having a thin, incomplete eye-ring, not the thick semicircular broken eye-ring of MacGillivray's, also seen the same day.

This is the 2nd fall Panhandle record for this species.

MacGillivray's Warbler: Ten were reported, all from the Panhandle 21 Aug-4 Oct.

Best count was 3 at WSR 6 Sep (HKH).

Common Yellowthroat: Routine reports.

Wilson's Warbler: Best count was 59 in Kimball Co 20 Sep (WRS); high counts for this species in fall are from the Panhandle and are in the 70+ range.

Canada Warbler: Three were reported, singles in the observer's Dixon Co yard 23 Aug (JJ), at FF 24 Aug (BP,LP), and at WP 31 Aug (LE).

Yellow-breasted Chat: Routine reports.

Summer Tanager: As there are no previous records of this species from the Panhandle, one at Ash Hollow SHP 21 Sep (WRS) was a surprise. Given the location, it may not be as surprising that the bird was a member of the dark-billed southwestern subspecies *cooperi*. It responded aggressively to an Eastern Screech-Owl tape with repeated "pitucky-tuck" calls and was closely observed for about 5 minutes. A tanager seen in Scotts Bluff Co 13 Jun 1983 was not seen well enough to identify, but may have been a Summer (NBR 51:78). Back in the expected range of summering birds in southeast Nebraska, a probable family group consisting of a male with 1-2 drab birds at the south end of Hummel Park, Omaha, may indicate a new breeding location (JED).

Scarlet Tanager: A female was carrying food at the north end of Hummel Park, Omaha, 6 Aug (JED), where breeding presumably occurs regularly. A female in Lancaster Co 4 Oct (LE) was rather late.

Western Tanager: The 6 reports of 8 birds were from the Panhandle 7 Sep-7 Oct; singles in Scotts Bluff Co 4 Oct (fide AK) and at Chadron 7 Oct (BW,DW) were rather late.

Green-tailed Towhee: The only reports were of 2 at Oliver Res 20 Sep (WRS) and one at WSR 28 Sep (HKH). These are only the 15th and 16th fall reports for this casual-but-probably-regular fall migrant.

Spotted Towhee: Webster Co is in an area of the state where Spotted and Eastern Towhees both occur, along with hybrids; phenotypic examples of both species were seen there 3 Aug (MB). Most Spotteds leave the Panhandle in Oct; one in Lincoln Co 6 Nov (TJW) was thus about on time. Arrival of Spotteds in the east is in early Oct; thus singles in Lancaster Co 21 Sep (LE) and SCP 22 Sep (KP) were rather early.

Eastern Towhee: This species occurs in phenotypically pure form (along with Spotteds and hybrids) throughout most of the Republican Valley, declining in numbers westward, and thus somewhat unexpected were "many" in Curtis 1 Oct (TJW). Also a bit out of range was a northwesterly bird at NNF 27 Sep (BE,CNK).

American Tree Sparrow: Rather early were the sightings at the NOU meeting 27 Sep in Thomas, Cherry, and Blaine Cos at NNF (LR,RH,JK,JCy).

Chipping Sparrow: Last were one at a typical location for single late birds, a feeder in Lincoln, 28 Oct (TP), and 2 in Lancaster Co 8 Nov (LE). Best count was the 51 at NNF 1 Sep (RG).

Clay-colored Sparrow: Reports were statewide in the period 26 Aug (TJW) through 25 Oct (LR,RH), typical fall migration timing. No large counts were reported.

Brewer's Sparrow: The only report was of 8 north of Henry in Sioux Co 30 Aug (MB).

Field Sparrow: Best count was a moderate 19 at NNF 1 Sep (RG).

Vesper Sparrow: Routine reports.

Lark Sparrow: Routine reports.

Lark Bunting: Routine reports.

- Savannah Sparrow:** An excellent count was the 200+ in Douglas Co 6 Oct (B).
- Grasshopper Sparrow:** One at Nathan's L, Washington Co, 18 Oct (EB) was 5th-latest ever, although normal late departure dates are in early to mid-Oct.
- Le Conte's Sparrow:** An excellent count was the 29 at Boyer Chute NWR, Washington Co, 5 Oct (CK, photos). All reports in the period 4-27 Oct were from the RWB eastward, the latter 2 rather late in Fillmore Co (TJW).
- Nelson's Sharp-tailed Sparrow:** The 3 reports were from SCP 12 Oct (KP), Nathan's L, Washington Co, 18 Oct (EB), and Cracker Barrel Marsh, Lincoln, 18 Oct (LE).
- Fox Sparrow:** One in Cherry Co 27 Sep (LR,RH) was rather early and rather westerly; another in Buffalo Co 14 Nov (LR,RH) was westerly and a bit late for the location.
- Song Sparrow:** Routine reports.
- Lincoln's Sparrow:** As usual, most were found in the east, and so singles at Curtis 1 Oct (TJW) and at Dunning 28 Sep (LR,RH) were westerly, where the species is uncommon.
- Swamp Sparrow:** One at FL 16 Aug (LR,RH) was probably a local breeder, but one in winter plumage 20 Sep in Valley Co (LR,RH) may have been on the move; if so, it was rather early. Last reported was one at FF 9 Nov (BP,LP); a few linger into Dec in the southeast.
- White-throated Sparrow:** Best count was 25 at FF 4 Oct (BP,LP). Earliest was one at ADF 25 Sep (LF,CF). Rarer westward, 4-6 were at LM 13 Oct (HA), and a few were in Chase Co 18 Oct (TJW).
- White-crowned Sparrow:** This species is a migrant in most of Nebraska; earliest was 20 Sep (LR,RH) and latest 16 Nov (JED, LR,RH). Best count was "lots and lots" in Washington Co 18 Oct (EB).
- Harris's Sparrow:** Best count was 65 in Otoe Co 29 Nov (LF,CF).
- Dark-eyed (White-winged) Junco:** None were reported.
- Dark-eyed (Slate-colored) Junco:** A junco unidentified to form in Carter Canyon 6 Sep (AK) was rather early. Next was one in Rock Co 26 Sep (LR,RH). Best count was a moderate 75 in Howard Co 30 Nov (LR,RH).
- Dark-eyed (Oregon) Junco:** First reported was a male at a Lincoln feeder 11 Oct through at least 8 Nov (TP), unexpectedly far east at such an early date. A few "Pink-sided" Juncos were reported, none, as expected, east of Chase Co and North Platte (TJW).
- Dark-eyed (Gray-headed) Junco:** One was banded at NNF 27 Sep (RG), only the 9th documented record. Brightly-marked "Oregon" Juncos with reddish backs are often misidentified as "Gray-headed", but the latter are plain gray birds except for a strongly reddish back.
- McCown's Longspur:** The only report was of 3 in southern Sioux Co 7 Oct (HKH), an expected location for migrants.
- Lapland Longspur:** Arrival was on time, with 16 in Dodge Co 23 Oct (DP,JP). Best count was a moderate 700 in Clay Co 16 Nov (LR,RH). High counts are in the thousands.
- Chestnut-collared Longspur:** The only report was of 20 in southern Sioux Co 2 Oct (HKH).
- Snow Bunting:** Just making it into the Fall Report were the 9 at BOL 28 Nov (LE). Typical arrival is in early Nov.
- Northern Cardinal:** Two pairs were seen several times around the North Platte Fish Hatchery office during the period (TJW); regular occurrence in the North Platte Valley currently extends (fewer than 10 birds) into Scotts Bluff Co, but significant numbers only occur west as far as Ash Hollow SHP, Garden Co,

where 2 were seen 21 Sep (WRS).

Rose-breasted Grosbeak: Unexpected was the appearance of a male at a feeder near Mitchell 1-7 Sep (KD); this is only the 3rd fall record for this species in the Panhandle. Intriguing also was the presence at Brady 4 Aug of 2 immatures (identified as this species by their red wing-linings), but no adults have been seen there so far (TJW). Westernmost breeding in the Platte Valley to date is in the Gibbon area (LR,RH).

Black-headed Grosbeak: Few were reported; easternmost was in the observers' Gibbon yard at the east edge of the summer range, a female 16 Aug and an immature male 19 Aug (LR,RH).

Blue Grosbeak: Adults were feeding presumably normal food to their young in Scotts Bluff Co 17 Aug (AK), but their exploits were eclipsed by an adult carrying a minnow (!) to its young at Oliver Res 30 Aug (BFH).

Lazuli Bunting: The only report was of one in Carter Canyon 6 Sep (AK), rather late.

Indigo Bunting: Best count was the 18 at Schilling WMA, "all constantly singing" (CNK); one assumes they were psyching themselves up for migration. Last were 3 at ADF 5 Oct (LF,CF), rather late.

Dickcissel: Boding well were the 35, mostly juveniles, in Garfield Co 31 Aug (LR,RH), and the 23, including many juveniles, at Schilling WMA 14 Aug (CNK). Last was one in Douglas Co 6 Oct (B).

Bobolink: Only 3 were reported, all rather late; this species is inconspicuous in fall and generally departs in early Sep. Singles were at Mallard Haven WPA, Fillmore Co, 21 Sep (JGJ), SCP 25 Sep (KP,LH), and in Douglas Co 6 Oct (B, no details), the last record late if correct.

Red-winged Blackbird: Routine reports.

Eastern Meadowlark: One at Wilsonville in early Sep (LO) was in a part of the state with few records of this species. In all, there are only 5 records from Harlan and Phelps Cos westward and south of the Platte Valley.

Western Meadowlark: A good count was the 300 in Clay Co 12 Oct (LR,RH); movement becomes discernible in Oct.

Yellow-headed Blackbird: Routine reports.

Rusty Blackbird: Unexpected as far west as North Platte, a winter-plumaged female was at the Fish Hatchery 24 Oct (TJW). There are only about 15 records for the Panhandle, and the species is rare in the western half of the state. The remaining reports were from the east, of about 20 birds through the period, with earliest one rather early at BOL 28 Sep (LE),.

Brewer's Blackbird: Reports were statewide, best count 100 in one flock in Lincoln Co 8 Oct (TJW). Migrants were reported in the period 20 Sep-29 Nov.

Common Grackle: Some huge flocks were reported: "a river 2 miles long" over Wood River 4 Oct (LR,RH) and "thousands" in a flock moving south at Wehrspann L 13 Oct (RG).

Great-tailed Grackle: Best counts were the 200 at Mallard Haven WPA, Fillmore Co, 24 Sep (JGJ) and 130 in one flock with cattle in the eastern RWB 2 Aug (JGJ). Northerly for the date were 18 near Niobrara 22 Nov (MB); late flocks have been found at this location since 1998.

Brown-headed Cowbird: A flock of 82 (along with 45 Common Grackles) in a Bellevue yard 2 Nov put pressure on the food supply (CNK). At this date, cowbirds are usually found only in the southeast.

Orchard Oriole: A good count was the 16 in Hamilton Co 23 Aug (LR,RH).

Baltimore Oriole: The first documented fall report for the Panhandle was of a juvenile near Mitchell 30 Aug (KD, details). The bird was described thus: "the

body was a bright yellow-orange including the belly, and the head was gray and had no black on the throat or around the eye". The bright coloration, including the belly, would seem sufficient to eliminate the possibility of at least an obvious hybrid. Another was reported without details in Carter Canyon 6 Sep. The only other Panhandle fall report is 3 Sep 1966 in Scotts Bluff Co. A record fall count was the 20 near Gibbon 30 Aug (LR,RH).

Bullock's Oriole: Last was in a yard near Mitchell 3 Sep (KD), about on time.

Gray-crowned Rosy-Finch: None were reported; arrival is in late Oct.

Purple Finch: After several years with few reports, this species was reported by most observers this fall, with about 58 birds in all. All reports were from the east, earliest the 2 at FF 24 Oct (RB), and best count the 12 at FF 30 Oct (BP,LP).

House Finch: Some interesting information from a veteran Bellevue bander (RG): 600+ have been banded this year to date, an indication of the abundance of this species; numbers banded are lowest Dec-Feb, when at least some local birds vacate this area.

Red Crossbill: None were reported after 27 Sep. Best counts were 30 at the Wildcat Hills NC feeders 19 Sep (HW) and 15 in Thomas Co 27 Sep (CNK). Apart from the latter sighting, reports were from the Panhandle.

Common Redpoll: Perhaps a harbinger of things to come, the "first for several years" were 2 at an Omaha feeder 27 Nov (NR), and 4 in Burt Co 29 Nov (TJW).

Pine Siskin: Few were reported, a total of only about 14 birds, all in the Panhandle, except for a single at an Omaha feeder 25 Nov (NR).

American Goldfinch: Routine reports.

House Sparrow: Routine reports.

Orange Bishop: Although listed by the American Ornithologists' Union as established in Southern California, this is unlikely to happen here, even though a "beautiful male" was seen in a Kearney yard on the potentially chilly dates 24 Oct-24 Nov (Ilene Paine, fide LR,RH).

Breeding Black-necked Stilts at Funk Waterfowl Production Area

Jeff Drahota
United States Fish and Wildlife Service
Rainwater Basin Wetland Management District
P.O. Box 1686
Kearney, NE 68847
Jeff_Drahota@fws.gov

On 21 July 2003, I was mapping wetland vegetation on Funk Waterfowl Production Area (WPA), Phelps County, when I encountered two adult Black-necked Stilts and two young on the Teal Unit, NE 1/4 of Section 16, T-6-N, R-17-W. I was using an airboat to map pockets of open water throughout the WPA. When I launched the airboat on the Teal Unit, I immediately noticed an adult Black-necked Stilt flying above the small pool. While driving the perimeter of this pool, I noticed two adult Black-necked Stilts continually flying over a small point of cattails surrounded by shallow water. As I passed along the opposite shoreline near the adults, I could see two unidentified, long-legged shorebirds walking just inside the edge of the cattails. As I followed the edge of the cattails around the pool, I slowly approached the area where I had seen the two unidentified shorebirds.

Approximately 10 meters from where I had last seen them, two fuzzy, gray, long-legged Black-necked Stilts appeared and slowly walked just 5 meters in front of the boat for a short distance before weaving back into the cattails. I slowly departed the area and ceased operations on this particular unit. Habitat near the brood location consisted of a large (3.1 acre), shallow (average water depth was 9 cm) opening covered with a mat of common duckweed (*Lemna minor*) and surrounded by a dense cattail (*Typha glauca*) marsh with an average height of 4.7 meters.

These two young birds had black legs approximately 15-20 cm long, a narrow, straight, black bill approximately 2-4 centimeters long, and no distinguishing feather markings due to their young age. These birds appeared to be in natal down and had no visible flight feathers.

This represents the first breeding record in the Rainwater Basin (Sharpe et al. 2001). There have been, however, three other reported sightings by Rainwater Basin Wetland Management District (WMD) staff of Black-necked Stilts at Funk WPA. Mark Humpert and I saw one on 9 April 2002, Tom Koerner reported seeing one on 15 April 2002, and on 1 June 2002 I saw 12 using the Peterson moist soil unit. However, no other pre-fledged young have been documented in the Rainwater Basin area.

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Another Sandhill Crane Breeding Record in the Eastern Rainwater Basin

Joel G. Jorgensen
1829 South St., #28
Blair, NE 68008
zrtac@huntel.net

Jorgensen (2002) recently summarized breeding-season occurrences of the Sandhill Crane (*Grus canadensis*) in the Eastern Rainwater Basin (eRWB). Summering birds were first detected in 1992 (*The Nebraska Bird Review* 60:145). Breeding first occurred in 1994 with four additional nesting or breeding records in subsequent years. The most recent breeding records were in 1999 when breeding activity was detected at both Kissinger Basin Wildlife Management Area (WMA) (Hoffman 1999) and Harvard Waterfowl Production Area (WPA) (Silcock and Jorgensen 1999), both in Clay County. Since late 1999 the eRWB has experienced persistent drought. This has affected wetland conditions because water levels are dictated by precipitation. Breeding-season observations have been less frequent during these drier years suggesting birds may have abandoned individual wetlands and the region. Variable wetland conditions caused by fluctuations in precipitation is what led Jorgensen (2002) to question whether breeding in the eRWB would be sporadic and possibly even limited to the short period in the 1990s. An additional 2003 breeding record answers, at least partially, some of the questions regarding the Sandhill Crane's status in the eRWB. I summarize this recent record below.

Drought persisted into 2003, and many eRWB wetlands had below normal water levels or were dry. Drought was less intense in southeast sections of the

eRWB and a few wetlands in that area, including Mallard Haven WPA, had persistent water through much of the spring. This was supplemented by heavy rains in mid-June. On the morning of 28 June 2003, I visited Mallard Haven WPA in Fillmore County and viewed the wetland from the east side. The water level appeared normal and the wetland was dominated by emergent vegetation, primarily bulrush (*Scirpus* spp.). Approximately 100 head of cattle were grazing the wetland, thereby reducing the vegetation density. While scoping the wetland I saw a bird with a long, pale gray neck and head, a red crown, and a long, dark bill visible above the vegetation approximately a half mile from where I was located. I immediately recognized the bird as an adult Sandhill Crane. Moments later I saw a similar bird with a pale, rusty-colored neck and a pale bill, which I recognized as a juvenile Sandhill Crane. I then noted another juvenile and a second adult. I noticed that one adult was leading the group and the other adult followed behind, indicating that this was a family group. Furthermore, despite my distance from the birds, the group was very wary and difficult to follow despite their size. The birds were not observed in flight, but the juveniles appeared to be at flight stage or nearly so. Despite this observation, I was unable to detect the family group on later visits to the wetland and surrounding area. My only other 2003 eRWB breeding-season observation was a lone adult crane at a cattle feedlot adjacent to Sinninger WPA, York County, on 12 July 2003.

The above record is the sixth breeding or nesting record for the species in the eRWB in the last decade. Breeding has not been detected anywhere else in Nebraska in over a century, despite regional increases. This is also the first known breeding record in Fillmore County. It is possible that the pair nested at another wetland in the region and moved to Mallard Haven. This is unlikely, however, because Mallard Haven was the only large wetland that had adequate water and favorable conditions throughout spring and early summer. Sandhill Cranes require large, undisturbed areas with a variety of wetland and grassland habitats for breeding (Tacha et al. 1992). Mallard Haven totals nearly 900 acres and is similar in size to the other two sites, Kissinger Basin WMA and Harvard WPA, where breeding has occurred in the eRWB. This pair also apparently fledged two young, an indication of favorable conditions at Mallard Haven, as the species rarely fledges more than one chick except in a years of abundant food (Tacha et al. 1992).

The few large wetlands that are presumably favorable for breeding Sandhill Cranes likely limit the region to only a few pairs. This factor, along with the dynamic habitat conditions, raises questions about whether the Sandhill Crane will maintain its foothold in the eRWB. This latest breeding record during a period of prolonged drought serves as a harbinger that the Sandhill Crane may indeed become a permanent fixture of the eRWB's breeding avifauna.

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Halsey Fall Field Days

by Alice Kenitz
(reprinted from the October 2003 NOU Newsletter)

Forty-one NOU members and friends gathered at the 4-H Camp at Halsey in the Nebraska National Forest on September 26-28, 2003, for the annual Fall Field Days. Fall colors were beautiful and the weather was generally good except for a brisk wind on Friday and Saturday. The ongoing drought was evident in the low level of lakes and ponds, with some of the smaller bodies of water being completely dry.

On Friday evening, Bub Blake wowed us once again with his bird photography, showing slides he has taken in Nebraska and Kansas recently. On Saturday evening, Kevin Poague of Audubon Nebraska talked to us about the Important Bird Areas (IBA) Program.

Field trips were held all day Saturday and on Sunday morning. On Saturday, Dave Heidt led a trip north to Ainsworth and vicinity. Clem Klaphake led a trip to the Valentine NWR. Others were on their own to bird in the Forest or nearby areas. Sunday morning most of us enjoyed birding around the Forest. The tree dump is always a popular place for finding birds. Towhees - both Eastern and Spotted - seemed very numerous this year. Ruth Green had her banding stations set up behind the Lodge, so we could all get a good look at birds-in-the-hand. We enjoyed close-up looks at Eastern and Spotted Towhees, Red-breasted Nuthatches, White-throated Sparrows, the gray-headed race of the Dark-eyed Junco, and other species. There were 119 species identified in Thomas, Hooker, Cherry, Brown and Blaine Counties as well as the Forest. Interestingly, this is the same number of species we had last year.

It is always exciting to see Trumpeter Swans, and we weren't disappointed. Several of the guys found a Burrowing Owl on the road on Friday evening. There was a Magnolia Warbler seen at Valentine NWR - a species we don't see very often at the Fall Field Days.

For some unknown reason, the gate to the fire tower was unlocked and several birders were able to go to the top. I remember doing that about 20 years ago - what a view!

Thanks to Bub Blake for donating a beautiful framed photo of a Wood Duck. It was raffled and \$69.05 was added to our treasury. There were donations of many lovely door prizes.

It was a great weekend of birding and fellowship!! Those of us who lingered as long as possible on Sunday afternoon were privileged to see and hear a flock of Sandhill Cranes flying over the Lodge. Great end to a great weekend.

NOU Fall Field Days - September 2003 - Halsey

	Halsey NF	Thomas	Hooker	Cherry	Brown	Blaine
Canada Goose				x	x	x
Trumpeter Swan				x		
Wood Duck	x	x		x	x	x
Gadwall				x	x	x
American Wigeon				x	x	
Mallard				x	x	x
Blue-winged Teal				x	x	x
Northern Shoveler				x	x	
Northern Pintail				x	x	
Green-winged Teal				x	x	x
Redhead				x		
Ring-necked Duck				x		
Lesser Scaup				x	x	
Ruddy Duck				x	x	
Ring-necked Pheasant				x	x	x
Sharp-tailed Grouse	x				x	
Greater Prairie-Chicken	x	x		x	x	x
Wild Turkey	x	x		x		x
Northern Bobwhite	x					
Pied-billed Grebe	x			x	x	
Western Grebe				x		
American White Pelican				x		
Double-crested Cormorant				x	x	
American Bittern					x	
Great Blue Heron				x	x	x
Turkey Vulture	x	x		x	x	x
Osprey	x	x				
Northern Harrier	x			x	x	x
Sharp-shinned Hawk	x			x		x
Cooper's Hawk		x				
Swainson's Hawk	x	x		x	x	x
Red-tailed Hawk	x	x	x	x	x	x
Ferruginous Hawk						x
Rough-legged Hawk		x				
American Kestrel	x	x		x	x	x
Merlin	x					
Prairie Falcon	x			x	x	x
American Coot				x	x	
Sandhill Crane	x					x
Killdeer		x		x	x	x
American Avocet				x	x	

NOU Fall Field Days - September 2003 - Halsey

	Halsey NF	Thomas	Hooker	Cherry	Brown	Blaine
Greater Yellowlegs				x	x	x
Lesser Yellowlegs				x	x	x
Willet					x	
Least Sandpiper					x	
Baird's Sandpiper				x		
Pectoral Sandpiper					x	
Stilt Sandpiper					x	x
Long-billed Dowitcher					x	
Dowitcher sp.						x
Wilson's Snipe	x			x		x
Wilson's Phalarope					x	
Franklin's Gull				x		
Ring-billed Gull				x	x	
Forster's Tern				x	x	
Rock Pigeon		x	x		x	x
Mourning Dove	x	x	x	x	x	x
Great Horned Owl	x					x
Burrowing Owl	x					
Short-eared Owl				x		
Belted Kingfisher		x		x		x
Red-headed Woodpecker						x
Downy Woodpecker	x			x	x	x
Hairy Woodpecker	x					
Northern Flicker	x	x		x	x	x
Eastern Wood-Pewee					x	
Eastern Phoebe				x		
Shrike sp.						x
Blue Jay	x			x	x	x
American Crow	x	x		x	x	x
Horned Lark	x	x		x	x	x
Northern Rough-winged Swallow					x	
Barn Swallow		x		x	x	x
Black-capped Chickadee	x	x				x
Red-breasted Nuthatch	x	x				
White-breasted Nuthatch	x					
House Wren						x
Marsh Wren						x
Eastern Bluebird	x					x
Townsend's Solitaire	x			x		
Swainson's Thrush	x					
American Robin	x	x		x		x

NOU Fall Field Days - September 2003 - Halsey

	Halsey NF	Thomas	Hooker	Cherry	Brown	Blaine
Gray Catbird		x				
Brown Thrasher	x			x	x	x
European Starling				x	x	x
American Pipit				x		
Cedar Waxwing	x	x			x	x
Orange-crowned Warbler	x	x		x		x
Magnolia Warbler				x		
Yellow-rumped Warbler	x	x		x		x
Common Yellowthroat	x			x		x
Wilson's Warbler	x					
Spotted Towhee	x			x		x
Eastern Towhee	x					
American Tree Sparrow		x		x		x
Chipping Sparrow	x	x		x		x
Clay-colored Sparrow	x	x		x		x
Field Sparrow	x	x		x	x	
Vesper Sparrow	x	x		x	x	x
Lark Sparrow		x			x	x
Lark Bunting	x			x		
Savannah Sparrow				x	x	x
Fox Sparrow				x		
Song Sparrow				x		
Lincoln's Sparrow	x	x		x		x
White-throated Sparrow	x	x		x		x
Harris's Sparrow				x		x
White-crowned Sparrow	x	x		x	x	x
Dark-eyed Junco	x			x		x
Northern Cardinal	x					
Red-winged Blackbird		x		x	x	x
Western Meadowlark	x	x	x	x	x	x
Yellow-headed Blackbird					x	x
Brewer's Blackbird				x		x
Common Grackle	x	x			x	x
Brown-headed Cowbird				x	x	x
House Finch	x				x	x
Red Crossbill	x	x				
American Goldfinch	x	x		x	x	x
House Sparrow						x
	56	39	4	78	62	69
Total Species: 119						

Index to Volume 71

- Alexander,
 George 35
 Irene 35
 American Ornithologists' Union 146
 Amiotte, Sue 35, 36, 148
 Anderson, Chris 101
Archilochus sp. 147, 157
 Arizona 119
 Armknecht, Henry 147
 Armstrong, Mark 5, 35, 61
 Arnold, Jackie 34
 Avocet, American 72, 114, 154, 170
- Bachel, Elaine 35
 Backer, Gordy 35
 Badura, Laurel 61, 108, 148
 Barry, Bob 148
 Barth, Roland 5, 61, 148
 Bauer, Bette 35
 Beachly, Diana 35
 Beaver Valley CBC 31-55
 Bedows, Elliott 35, 61, 108, 147
Bee-News 25
 Bessert, Mike 34
 BIRDCHAT 13
Birds of Missouri 85
Birds of Nebraska 106, 119, 148, 167
Birds of North America 67, 168
Birds of the Great Plains 62
 Bishop, Orange 146, 166
 Bittern,
 American 6, 63, 109, 140, 151, 170
 Least 63, 109, 151
 Blackbird,
 Brewer's 23, 45, 55, 94-95, 126, 165, 172
 Red-winged 13, 22, 45, 54, 94, 126, 165, 172
 Rusty 22, 45, 55, 94, 165
 Yellow-headed 22, 45, 55, 94, 106, 126, 165,
 172
 Blake, Loren (Bub) 4, 35, 169
 Blankenau, Laurine 5, 35
 Bluebird,
 Eastern 18, 43, 53, 83, 122, 161, 171
 Mountain 3, 18, 34, 43, 53, 83, 122, 161
 Western 141
 Bobolink 94, 126, 146, 165
 Bobwhite,
 Northern 12, 33, 41, 50, 70, 113, 150, 170
 Masked 150
 "Tennessee red" 150
 Borgelt, Joyce 35
 Boyer Chute 31
 Brambling 97, 100
 Branched Oak-Seward CBC 31-55
 Brant 3, 7, 8, 58, 65, 148
 Pacific black 8
 Eastern pale-bellied 65
- Branta*
bernicla
bernicla 65
nigricans 8
canadensis
hutchinsii 65
interior 65
maxima 65
moffitti 65
parvipes 65
hrota 65
 Brees, Aaron 4, 60
 Bright, Duane 4, 60
 Brock, Chad 34, 141
 Brockmoller, Norma 5, 35, 61
 Brogie,
 Anne 151
 Ed 35, 141
 Joseph 35
 John 35
 Mark 5, 35, 61, 97, 101, 108, 136, 141, 148
 Brown,
 Al 35
 Charles 107
 Evan 35
 Linda 34, 35, 61, 148
 Bruner, Lawrence 82
Bubo virginianus
occidentalis 76-77
pallescens 77
subarcticus 77
virginianus 76
 Bufflehead 10, 39, 49, 66, 111, 149
 Bunting,
 Indigo 93, 94, 126, 165
 Lark 90, 125, 163, 172
 Lazuli 93, 126, 165
 Painted 140
 Snow 22, 93, 164
- Calamus-Loup CBC 31-55
Calidris sp. 138
 Canterbury, Jackie 35, 148
 Canvasback 9, 39, 48, 66, 111, 149
Caprimulgus vociferus arizonae 119
 Cardinal, Northern 3, 22, 34, 45, 54, 93, 122, 125,
 164-165, 172
 Carlini, John 35
 Carlisle, Jay 5, 108, 148
 Catbird, Gray 2, 19, 34, 44, 53, 84, 122, 146, 161,
 172
Catharus
fuscescens salicicolus 83, 122
guttatus
auduboni 161
faxoni 161
 Chat, Yellow-breasted 89, 124, 163
 Cheyenne Bottoms, KS 153

Index to Volume 71

- Chickadee.
 Black-capped 17, 43, 52, 81, 121, 137, 146,
 159-160, 171
 Mountain 3, 17, 23, 34, 43, 52, 81, 121, 137
Christmas Bird Counts 31-55
Chuck-will's-widow 77, 106, 118, 156
Chukar 69, 113, 150
Churchwell, Roy 126
Colborn, Gerry 108
Colorado 17, 72, 79, 91, 119, 159
Coot, American 12, 41, 50, 70, 113, 153, 170
Cormorant,
 Double-crested 6, 32, 38, 47, 63, 109, 151, 170
 Neotropic 137
Counties
 Adams 140, 156
 Antelope 19, 68, 69, 99, 138, 139
 Arthur 125, 156
 Banner 71, 83, 89, 91, 150, 153
 Blaine 156, 161, 163, 169-172
 Boone 69, 139, 140
 Box Butte 68, 71, 92, 118, 124, 125, 153, 161
 Boyd 156
 Brown 17, 68, 119, 124, 151, 156, 158, 161,
 169-172
 Buffalo 8, 11, 71, 90, 91, 94, 112, 113, 116,
 123, 127, 157, 164
 Burt 82, 111, 119, 120, 149, 151, 156, 160, 166
 Butler 12, 22, 77
 Cass 81, 160
 Cedar 7, 8, 9, 10, 20, 65, 71, 81, 118, 119, 125,
 138, 139, 149, 156
 Chase 113, 115, 123, 125, 126, 139, 164
 Cherry 8, 99, 109, 115, 116, 148, 150, 152,
 153, 156, 161, 162, 163, 164, 169-172
 Cheyenne 122, 139, 152
 Clay 95, 98, 99, 109, 110, 112, 116, 151, 153,
 164, 165, 167
 Cuming 100, 151
 Custer 20, 112, 117, 122, 127, 153, 157, 159
 Dakota 62, 109
 Dawes 69, 72, 77, 79, 88, 91, 118, 123, 151,
 154, 158, 161
 Dawson 6, 12, 17, 22, 94, 98
 Deuel 7, 8, 83
 Dixon 21, 22, 65, 70, 72, 73, 77, 90, 91, 94,
 110, 113, 122, 125, 126, 127, 140, 155, 156,
 157, 158, 163
 Dodge 7, 12, 23, 75, 79, 81, 83, 118, 150, 152,
 154, 156, 160, 164
 Douglas 12, 68, 73, 74, 82, 91, 93, 109, 164,
 165
 Dundy 111
 Fillmore 73, 74, 112, 164, 165, 168
 Franklin 125, 156
 Frontier 64, 70, 94, 118, 155
 Furnas 6, 114
Counties, continued
 Gage 69, 75, 77, 94
 Garden 76, 90, 122, 139, 160, 164
 Garfield 99, 148, 156, 157, 158, 165
 Gosper 6, 10, 11, 149, 156
 Grant 140, 156
 Greeley 11
 Hall 22, 63, 66, 68, 69, 70, 75, 76, 78, 79, 80,
 81, 82, 84, 85, 88, 89, 90, 91, 92, 93, 94, 95,
 113
 Hamilton 64, 65, 122, 161, 165
 Harlan 31, 76, 80, 81, 89, 90, 92, 94, 111, 113,
 115, 126, 159, 165
 Hayes 80, 86, 110, 113, 122, 126, 154
 Hitchcock 62, 76, 80, 98
 Hooker 156, 169-172
 Howard 117, 118, 148, 152, 164
 Jefferson 156
 Johnson 88, 91
 Kearney 12, 68, 69, 70, 72, 77, 94, 122, 159
 Keith 15, 21, 80, 93, 98, 119, 122
 Keya Paha 113, 119, 156
 Kimball 71, 72, 100, 112, 120, 125, 139, 158,
 163
 Knox 12, 19, 90, 92, 93, 109, 112, 117, 118,
 119, 124, 125, 138, 139, 140, 148, 149, 151,
 154, 155, 158, 159, 161
 Lancaster 7, 8, 10, 13, 16, 17, 18, 22, 62, 63,
 64, 65, 66, 69, 70, 71, 72, 73, 74, 76, 77, 83,
 90, 91, 92, 93, 94, 95, 110, 111, 114, 117,
 118, 120, 125, 138, 148, 149, 151, 153, 159,
 160, 161, 162, 163
 Lincoln 11, 18, 64, 65, 67, 68, 74, 80, 84, 85,
 93, 111, 112, 113, 115, 116, 119, 124, 126,
 149, 150, 153, 160, 161, 163, 165
 Logan 126, 150, 156, 161
 Loup 156
 Madison 15, 156
 Merrick 122, 123, 124
 Morrill 80, 100, 116, 120, 152
 Nance 112
 Otoe 11, 16, 18, 21, 22, 68, 69, 70, 78, 79, 89,
 90, 91, 92, 94, 109, 112, 114, 124, 150, 151,
 156, 157, 158, 159, 161, 164
 Pawnee 12, 70, 81, 91, 149, 156
 Perkins 76, 115, 151
 Phelps 11, 68, 79, 90, 98, 165, 166-167
 Platte 109, 110, 115, 117, 124, 151, 154
 Polk 74
 Red Willow 16, 76
 Richardson 12
 Rock 3, 17, 115, 121, 164
 Saline 156
 Sarpy 18, 63, 64, 68, 71, 85, 87, 89, 93, 101,
 122, 123, 139, 140, 149
 Saunders 19, 72, 77, 84, 86, 110, 112, 113,
 117, 118, 123, 152, 156

Index to Volume 71

- Counties, continued
- Scotts Bluff 7, 8, 9, 10, 15, 16, 22, 63, 64, 67, 69, 70, 72, 76, 77, 78, 80, 81, 82, 83, 84, 89, 90, 92, 93, 94, 98, 99, 100, 110, 112, 116, 118, 119, 120, 121, 122, 124, 125, 126, 139, 141, 150, 152, 153, 156, 157, 158, 159, 161, 163, 164, 165, 166
 - Seward 3, 7, 9, 18, 22, 62, 68, 74, 77, 80, 83, 118, 125, 138, 152, 161
 - Sheridan 67, 68, 76, 90, 109, 111, 117, 120, 126, 154, 156
 - Sherman 115, 139, 156
 - Sioux 3, 19, 20, 23, 63, 65, 68, 69, 80, 84, 90, 91, 93, 99, 101, 119, 121, 123, 125, 126, 146, 150, 156, 158, 160, 161, 163, 164
 - Stanton 90, 115, 125
 - Thomas 140, 152, 156, 163, 166, 169-172
 - Valley 12, 164
 - Washington 12, 63, 70, 78, 82, 86, 87, 88, 109, 118, 120, 123, 141, 164
 - Wayne 15, 23, 64, 76
 - Webster 156, 163
 - Wheeler 11
 - York 73, 74, 84, 113, 114, 115, 116, 117, 148, 149, 151, 160, 168
- Cowbird, Brown-headed 2, 23, 27, 45, 55, 95, 127, 165, 172
- Crandell, Gay 35
- Crane,
- Sandhill 12, 70, 106, 113-114, 153, 169, 170, 167-168
 - Whooping 71, 153
- Crawford CBC 31-55
- Crawford, David 35
- Crawford-Rose, Kathleen 5, 61, 108
- Creeper, Brown 18, 43, 53, 82, 122, 146, 160
- Crossbill,
- Red 23, 28, 96, 127, 146, 166, 172
 - White-winged 99, 137, 140
- Crow, American 16, 33, 43, 52, 58, 81, 121, 146, 159, 171
- Cuckoo,
- Black-billed 76, 118, 156
 - Yellow-billed 76, 118, 156
- Curlew, Long-billed 58, 73, 115, 154
- Curtis, Tony 35
- Cutshall,
- Isolde 35
 - Roger 35
- DeLara (Larson), Kathy 5, 36, 61, 101, 108, 141, 148
- Dendroica palmarum hypochrysea* 87
- palmarum* 87
- Des Moines 113
- DeSoto CBC 31-55
- Detwiler, Jill 34
- Dickcissel 94, 126, 165
- Dinan,
- Amber 35
 - Erin 35
 - John 35, 61, 112
 - Michaela 35
- Dinsmore, Stephen J. 5, 35, 36, 62, 101, 108, 141
- Dougherty, Tom 148
- Dove,
- Eurasian Collared- 3, 14, 33, 42, 51, 75-76, 106, 118, 137, 141, 146, 156
 - Mourning 15, 33, 42, 51, 75, 76, 118, 156, 171
 - Ringed Turtle- 141
 - Rock 14, 33, 42, 51, 75
 - White-winged 14, 76, 98, 118, 137, 156
- Dowitcher,
- Long-billed 2, 13, 74, 116, 155, 171
 - Short-billed 74, 116, 139, 155
- Drahota, Jeff 114, 116, 166-167
- Draper, Sharon 35
- Drawbaugh,
- Dean 4, 35, 36, 60, 107, 141, 147
 - Phyllis 5, 35, 36, 61, 101, 108, 141, 148
- Ducey, James E. 25-31, 108, 127-135, 148
- Duck,
- American Black 9, 32, 48, 66, 148
 - Harlequin 99
 - Long-tailed 10, 136, 149
 - Mandarin 58, 65
 - Ring-necked 9, 32, 39, 48, 66, 111, 149, 170
 - Ruddy 11, 40, 49, 67, 111-112, 150, 170
 - species 65
 - Tufted 3, 9, 32, 66
 - Wood 8, 32, 39, 48, 65, 110, 148, 170
- Duensing, P. D. 35
- Duerksen, Russell 61
- Dummer, Chuck 160
- Dunbar, Paul 35, 61
- Dundee News* 29-31
- Dunlin 74, 154
- Eagle,
- Bald 11, 40, 49, 67, 112, 152
 - Golden 11, 33, 40, 50, 69, 112, 153
- Easterla, David A. 85
- Egret,
- Cattle 64, 110, 151
 - Great 2, 7, 63, 109, 151
 - Snowy 58, 63, 109, 151
- Eichhorst, Bruce 147
- Einemann, Larry 5, 34, 35, 61, 108, 148
- Elmwood Park 25, 27-30
- Empidonax* sp. 78

Index to Volume 71

- Falco*
columbarius
columbarius 12, 69
richardsonii 12
peregrinus tundrius 153
- Falcon,
Peregrine 32, 58, 69, 106, 112-113, 153
Prairie 12, 41, 50, 69, 112, 153, 170
- Falk,
Carol 4, 60, 107, 147
Laurence 5, 61, 108, 148
- Falzgraf, Nelli 35
- Faulkner, Doug 60
- Finch, Betsy 15
- Finch,
Cassin's 3, 23, 45, 55, 95-96
House 23, 45, 55, 96, 127, 166, 172
Purple 23, 45, 55, 95, 146, 166
- Flack, William 35
- Flicker, Northern 16, 42, 52, 78, 119, 157, 171
gilded 157
hybrid 16
red-shafted 16, 146
yellow-shafted 16
- Flycatcher,
Acadian 79
Alder 79, 120
Cordilleran 79, 106, 120, 158
Dusky 158
Gray 139
Great Crested 80, 120, 158
Hammond's 139, 158
Least 79, 120, 158
Olive-sided 78, 119, 158
Pacific Slope 158
Scissor-tailed 120
Yellow-bellied 79, 158
Willow 79, 120, 158
- Forest Lawn Cemetery 27
- Fredricksen,
Jane 35
Linnea 35
- Frimann,
Janet 3, 19
Lonnie 3, 19, 84, 106-107, 123, 161
- Frimann Ranch 20, 84, 106-107, 123, 146, 150, 161
- Fox, Mitzi 34
- Fuchs, Bob 35
- Gaddie, Gene 35
- Gadwall 8, 39, 48, 65, 110, 148, 170
- Gallinule, Purple 136
- Garganey 137
- Gentes, Sue 19, 84
- George Lake 30
- Getter, Jerad 35
- Gilson, Dick 35
- Glen Elder Reservoir 67
- Gnatcatcher, Blue-gray 83, 122, 160
- Godwit,
Black-tailed 154
Hudsonian 73, 146, 154
Marbled 73, 115, 154
- Goldeneye,
Barrow's 10, 32, 39, 49, 100
Common 10, 39, 49, 67, 100, 111, 149
Common x Hooded Merganser 10
- Goldfinch,
American 24, 46, 55, 96, 127, 166, 172
Lesser 100, 137
- Goose,
Bar-headed 3, 7
Canada 7, 32, 38, 48, 65, 110, 148, 170
lesser 7, 8
Canada x Greater White-fronted 8
Egyptian 65
Greater White-fronted 7, 38, 47, 58, 64, 110, 148
Ross's 7, 32, 38, 47, 65, 148
Snow 7, 32, 38, 47, 64, 110, 148
blue 7
- Goshawk, Northern 11, 32, 40, 49, 68, 152
- Grackle,
Common 23, 45, 55, 58, 95, 126, 165, 172
Great-tailed 95, 106, 126, 137, 165
- Grand Island CBC 31-55
- Grande, Carlos 4, 60, 107, 147
- Grdina, Linda 61
- Grebe,
Clark's 6, 38, 47, 63, 109, 138, 151
Eared 6, 62, 109, 151
Horned 6, 32, 38, 47, 62, 150
Pied-billed 6, 32, 62, 109, 150, 170
Red-necked 6, 38, 47, 151
Western 6, 32, 38, 47, 63, 109, 151, 170
- Green, Ruth 5, 62, 108, 148, 169
- Greenleaf, Miles 25-31
- Greer, Janet 35
- Grenon,
Alan 97, 101, 136, 142
Alice 35
Betty 35, 147
- Griswold, Sandy 26, 28, 31
- Groff, Gene 35
- Grosbeak,
Black-headed 93, 126, 165
Blue 93, 126, 137, 146, 165
Evening 96
Rose-breasted 93, 126, 146, 147, 165
- Grouse,
Greater Sage- 136
Sharp-tailed 12, 33, 41, 50, 70, 113, 150, 170

Index to Volume 71

- Grove, Greg 108
 Gubanyi, Joseph A. 5, 34, 35, 61, 97, 101, 108, 136, 141, 142, 148
 Guild, Sue 34
 Guineafowl, Helmeted 113
 Gull,
 Bonaparte's 2, 13, 33, 41, 51, 75, 116, 155
 California 13, 41, 51, 75, 116-117, 155
 Franklin's 3, 13, 75, 116, 146, 155, 171
 Glaucous 14, 33, 75, 155
 Herring 14, 41, 51, 75, 117, 155
 Iceland (Kumlien's) 14, 33, 42, 51
 Lesser Black-backed 14, 33, 42, 51
 Little 155
 Mew 3, 13, 33, 137, 139
 Ring-billed 13, 41, 51, 75, 116, 117, 155, 171
 Sabine's 155
 Thayer's 14, 33, 41, 51, 75, 155
 Gustafson, Mary 8
 Gyrfalcon 98
- Hack, Mace 35
 Hall,
 Carolyn 4, 60, 147
 John 5, 61
 Halsey (Nebraska National Forest) 169-172
 Harbison, Gerard 5, 147
 Harding, Robin 5, 35, 62, 78, 108, 141, 148
 Harrier, Northern 11, 40, 49, 68, 112, 152, 170
 Hatch, Vonie 36
 Hatfield, Blake 35
 Hauswald,
 Dave 35
 Deb 35
 Hawk,
 Broad-winged 68, 106, 112, 152
 Cooper's 11, 40, 49, 68, 112, 152, 170
 Ferruginous 11, 33, 40, 49, 69, 112, 152, 170
 Red-shouldered 11, 49, 68, 112, 152
 Red-tailed 11, 40, 49, 68-69, 112, 152, 170
 Harlan's 69, 152
 Rough-legged 11, 40, 50, 69, 152, 170
 Sharp-shinned 11, 40, 49, 68, 112, 152, 170
 Swainson's 68, 112, 152, 170
 Heaney, Carr 4, 60, 147
 Heidt, Dave 5, 35, 60, 141, 169
 Held, Renae 34
 Helzer, Sue 35
 Heron,
 Great Blue 6, 32, 38, 47, 63, 109, 151, 170
 Green 64, 110, 151
 Little Blue 64, 110, 151
 Tricolored 98, 106, 110, 146, 151
- Hicks, Tyler 6
 Hinchman, Lynea 148
- Hitchcock Nature Center 152
 Hoffman,
 Rocky 150, 167-168
 Thomas 62, 108, 148
 Hoge,
 Glen 5, 61, 108, 147
 Wanda 6, 62, 108, 148
 Hoppe, Barbara 35
 Huebschman, Jeff 34
 Hughson, Helen K. 35, 36, 61, 108, 147
 Hummingbird,
 Broad-tailed 106, 119, 157
 Calliope 139, 157
 Costa's 97, 98
 Ruby-throated 78, 119, 147, 157
 Rufous 101, 119, 137, 139, 157
 Rufous/Allen's 139
 Humpert, Mark 167
 Humphries,
 Merrill 118
 Sylvia 118
 Huntley, C. W. (Bill) 4, 35, 60, 107, 147
 Huser, Bill F. 4, 60, 107, 147
- Ibis,
 Glossy 98, 152
 White 98
 White-faced 64, 98, 110, 152
Identification Guide to North American Birds 77
 Iliif, Marshall 5
 Important Bird Areas 169
 Iowa 8, 17, 62
- Jaeger, Pomarine 98, 99
 Jaramillo, Alvaro 13
 Jay,
 Blue 16, 27, 33, 42, 52, 80, 120, 159, 171
 Pinyon 3, 16, 23, 33, 43, 52, 80, 121, 139, 159
 Jenkins, George 35
 Jobman, Wally 71
 Johns, Walter 76
 Johnsgard, Paul 34, 35, 62, 148
 Johnson, Jan 5, 61, 108, 141, 148
 Jorgensen, Joel G. 2, 5, 58-59, 61, 97, 100, 101, 106, 108, 142, 148, 167-168
 Junco, Dark-eyed 3, 34, 45, 54, 92, 98, 172
 Gray-headed 98, 164, 169
 Oregon 21-22, 92, 164
 Pink-sided 3, 22, 164
 Slate-colored 21, 92, 164
 White-winged 21-22, 125, 164
Junco hyemalis
 caniceps 98
 cismontanus 22

Index to Volume 71

- Kangaroo 2
 Kansas 62, 67
 Kasorndorkbua, Chaiyan 147
 Kaufman, Lloyd 120
 Kaul, Robert 35
 Kelly, Laura Lou 141
 Kenitz, Alice 4, 36, 60, 107, 147, 169
 Kenne, Matt 17
 Kestrel, American 12, 40, 50, 69, 112, 153, 170
 Killdeer 13, 41, 50, 71, 114, 154, 170
 Kincanon, Gene 35
 Kingbird,
 Cassin's 80, 120, 158
 Eastern 80, 120, 158
 Western 80, 120, 139, 146, 158
 Kingery, Hugh 61
 Kingfisher, Belted 15, 42, 51, 78, 119, 157, 171
 Kinglet,
 Golden-crowned 2, 18, 34, 43, 53, 83, 160
 Ruby-crowned 2, 18, 34, 43, 53, 83, 160
 Kite, Mississippi 67, 112, 146, 152
 Kittiwake, Black-legged 139, 155
 Klaphake,
 Bette 35
 Clem 4, 35, 60, 107, 147, 169
 Knot, Red 73, 100, 137
 Knott, Tim 35
 Koehlmoos, Lyla 35
 Koerner, Tom 167
 Kovanda,
 Jim 35-36, 61
 Sandy 36, 62
 Kraft, Marvin 67
 Kramer, Glen 141
 Kren, Josef 34, 35, 147, 148
 Kruse,
 Ann 35
 Ron 35
 Kuper, Catherine 36
- Labeledz, Thomas 5, 34, 35, 62, 108, 141, 148
 Lackey, Jeanine L. 5, 61, 108, 148
 Lake McConaughy CBC 31-55
 Lamphere, Steve 35, 36
 Lark, Horned 17, 27, 43, 52, 81, 121, 159, 171
 Larson, Kathy See DeLara, Kathy
Larus californicus albertaensis 117
 Lassek, Terry 36, 108
 Lincoln CBC 31-55
 Longspur,
 Chestnut-collared 93, 125, 164
 Lapland 22, 45, 54, 92, 164
 McCown's 92, 125, 164
 Smith's 93
- Loon,
 Common 6, 32, 38, 47, 62, 109, 150
 Pacific 6, 32, 38, 47, 106, 109
 Red-throated 58, 62
 Yellow-billed 146, 150
- Maas,
 Don 5, 35, 36, 60
 Shirley 35, 36
 Magpie,
 Black-billed 16, 43, 52, 81, 121, 137, 146, 159
 Eurasian 137
 Malfait, Jennifer 34, 35
 Mallard 9, 39, 48, 66, 111, 148, 170
 Marsh, Billy 28-29
 Martin, Purple 13, 81, 121, 159
 Maslowski,
 Linda 35
 Pete 35
 Mathieson, Marty 5, 61, 148
 Mattix, Sue 35, 36
 McArtor, Deanna 101
 McCartney, Connie 35, 60
 McCarty, John 61
 McIlree, Steve 62, 108
 McKinney,
 Brad 4, 36, 112
 Connie 36
 Meadowlark,
 Eastern 55, 58, 94, 106, 126, 165
 species 45, 55
 Western 22, 45, 54, 94, 126, 165, 172
Meleagris gallopavo
 intermedia 70
 merriami 70
 Mellema, Brad 11
 Merganser,
 Common 10, 40, 49, 58, 67, 111, 149, 150
 Hooded 10, 40, 49, 67, 111, 146, 149
 Hooded x Common Goldeneye 10
 Red-breasted 11, 32, 40, 49, 67, 150
 Merlin 12, 40, 50, 69, 112, 153, 170
 Meyer,
 Jeff 35, 61
 Jim 35
 Michelson, Christian 35
 Minneapolis, MN 112
 Mockingbird, Northern 19, 84, 122, 161
 Mollhoff, Wayne 62, 97, 102, 108, 136, 141, 142
 Montana 119
 Morris, Rosalind 35
 Murphy, John 5

Index to Volume 71

- NEBirds 19, 23
 Nebraska Game and Parks Commission 69
NEBRASKAland Magazine 168
 Nesbitt, S. A. 168
 Nighthawk, Common 77, 118, 156
 Night-Heron,
 Black-crowned 6, 7, 32, 38, 47, 64, 110, 151
 Yellow-crowned 64, 110, 146, 151
 Niyo, Kay 5, 35, 36
 Noecker
 Colleen 34
 Don 34
 Norfolk CBC 31-55
 NOU Records Committee 97-102, 136-142
 Nutcracker, Clark's 146, 159
 Nuthatch,
 Pygmy 18, 34, 53, 82, 122, 160
 Red-breasted 17, 43, 52, 82, 121, 160, 169,
 171
 White-breasted 17, 34, 43, 52, 82, 122, 160,
 171
- Ochsner, David 153
 Oklahoma 126
 Oldsquaw 136
 Ollinger, Linda 4, 61, 108, 148
Omaha Bee 25-26, 29, 31
 Omaha CBC 31-55
Omaha World-Herald 25-31, 63, 148
 Oriole,
 Baltimore 95, 127, 147, 165-166
 Bullock's 95, 127, 166
 Orchard 95, 127, 165
 Orr, Vicky 35
 Orsag, Mark 5, 35, 101
 Osprey 32, 67, 152, 170
 Ovenbird 27, 88, 123, 162
 Owl,
 Barn 2, 15, 76, 118, 156
 Barred 15, 33, 42, 51, 77, 118, 156
 Burrowing 77, 118, 146, 156, 169, 171
 Eastern Screech- 15, 42, 51, 76, 118, 156
 Great Horned 15, 33, 42, 51, 58, 76, 118, 156,
 171
 Long-eared 15, 42, 51, 77, 156
 Northern Saw-Whet 15, 139, 156
 Short-eared 15, 51, 77, 118, 156, 171
 Snowy 15, 33
- Padelford,
 Babs 4, 34, 36, 60, 107, 141, 147
 Loren 5, 34, 36, 61, 108, 141, 148
 Paine, Ilene 166
 Parks, June 35
 Parsons, Rob 108
 Partridge, Gray 12, 69, 113, 138, 146, 150
 Parula, Northern 85, 123, 162
- Paseka,
 Don 5, 35, 36, 60, 108, 147
 Janis 5, 31, 35, 61, 108, 148
 Pawnee National Grasslands 72
 Pekas, Jerry 35
 Pelican,
 American White 6, 32, 38, 47, 63, 109, 151,
 170
 Brown 138
 Pemberton,
 Cynthia 35
 Eldon 35
 Percival, Brandon K. 60
 Pester, Theresa 5, 62, 148
 Peterson,
 Juanita 101
 Richard 101
 Phalarope,
 Red 98, 136, 140
 Red-necked 74, 116
 Wilson's 74, 116, 155, 171
 Pheasant, Ring-necked 12, 33, 41, 50, 69, 113,
 150, 170
 Phillips, Jack 35
 Phoebe,
 Eastern 79, 120, 158, 171
 Say's 79, 120, 158
 Picraux, Leslie 35
 Piercy, Willard 36
 Pigeon, Rock 117, 146, 155, 171
 Pintail, Northern 9, 39, 48, 66, 111, 149, 170
 Pipit,
 American 85, 161, 172
 Sprague's 85, 161
Piranga rubra cooperi 147, 163
Plegadis sp. 152
 Plover,
 American Golden- 71, 114, 153
 Black-bellied 71, 114, 153
 Mountain 58, 71, 114
 Piping 71, 106, 114, 153, 154
 Semipalmated 71, 114, 153
 Snowy 58, 71, 106, 114, 153
 Poague, Kevin 5, 34, 35, 61, 108, 148, 169
 Poor-will, Common 77, 118, 156
 Prairie-Chicken, Greater 2, 12, 33, 41, 50, 70,
 113, 150, 170
 Pruess, Neva 61
 Putensen, Kathie 35
 Pyle, Peter 77
 Pyper, Kathleen 35
- Rail,
 Black 100, 137, 138
 King 70
 Virginia 12, 33, 41, 50, 70, 113, 153
 Randolph, Lanny 5, 35, 61, 78, 108, 141, 148
 Raptor Recovery Center 15

Index to Volume 71

- Rasmussen, Dick 35, 36
 Ratzlaff, Neal 35, 36, 61, 108, 148
 Raven, Common 3, 17
 Read, Verma 36
 Redhead 9, 39, 48, 66, 111, 149, 170
 Redpoll, Common 23, 34, 96, 166
 Redstart, American 87, 123, 162
 Rehme, Sarah 34
 Reitan, Ken 35
 Reyer, Allen 147
 Rhodes,
 Dick 35
 Ramona 35
 Robbins, Mark B. 85
 Robin, American 19, 44, 53, 84, 122, 123, 161,
 171
 Roche, Richard 17, 121, 126, 158
 Rocky Mountain Bird Observatory 71
 Roehrs, Zac 34, 35
 Rogers,
 Ron 108
 Tommie 5, 62, 108
 Rome, Mary Jo 36
 Rose, Robert 36
 Rosy-Finch,
 Black 99
 Gray-crowned 23, 95, 166
 Ruff 137, 138
 Rumery, Alice 4, 60, 107
 Rustad, Carol 35
- Sanderling 58, 73, 115, 154
 Sandpiper,
 Baird's 74, 115, 154, 171
 Buff-breasted 58, 74, 106, 116, 146, 155
 Least 73, 115, 154, 171
 Pectoral 74, 116, 138, 154, 171
 Semipalmated 73, 115, 154
 Solitary 72, 115, 154
 Spotted 58, 72, 115, 154
 Stilt 74, 116, 154, 171
 Upland 72, 115, 146, 154
 Western 73, 115, 154
 White-rumped 74, 115
 Sankey, Brent 34
 Sapsucker,
 Red-naped 137
 Yellow-bellied 16, 42, 52, 78, 157
 Saskatchewan 119
 Scaup,
 Greater 9, 32, 39, 48, 66, 149
 Lesser 10, 32, 39, 48, 66, 111, 149, 170
 Schmid, Rick 36, 62, 148
 Scholar, Eric 35, 36, 108
 Schwartz, Shari 35
 Schwery, Kathy 36
- Scoter,
 Black 10, 149
 Surf 10, 32, 149
 White-winged 10, 32, 39, 48, 149
 Scottsbluff CBC 31-55
 Scoville, Vicki 36
 Seltman, Scott 62
 Shane, Tom 67
 Sharpe, Roger 106, 167
 Sheets, Melinda 35
 Shoveler, Northern 9, 39, 48, 66, 111, 149, 170
 Showen, Donald 35
 Shrike,
 Loggerhead 16, 80, 120, 158
 Northern 16, 42, 52, 80, 158
 species 171
 Silcock, W. Ross 2, 6, 35, 36, 58, 62, 101, 106,
 108, 141, 146; 148, 167, 168
 Sims,
 Shirley 35
 Terry 35
 Siskin, Pine 3, 23, 46, 55, 96, 127, 146, 166
 Smedes, Ty 62
 Smith, David 36
 Snipe,
 Wilson's 13, 41, 50, 74, 116, 136, 146, 155,
 171
 Common 136
 Solitaire, Townsend's 19, 43, 53, 83, 161, 171
 Sora 70, 113, 153
 South Dakota 79, 119, 158
 Sparrow,
 American Tree 20, 27, 44, 54, 90, 163, 172
 Baird's 91
 Brewer's 90, 125, 163
 Cassin's 124-125, 137
 Chipping 2, 20, 90, 125, 127, 163, 172
 Clay-colored 2, 20, 90, 163, 172
 Field 44, 54, 90, 125, 163, 172
 Fox 20-21, 44, 54, 91, 164, 172
 Grasshopper 91, 125, 164
 Harris's 21, 44, 54, 92, 125, 164, 172
 Henslow's 58, 91, 125, 137
 House 24, 46, 55, 96, 127, 166, 172
 Lark 90, 125, 163, 172
 Le Conte's 91, 164
 Lincoln's 44, 54, 91, 164, 172
 Nelson's Sharp-tailed 91, 164
 Sage 100-101
 Savannah 91, 125, 164, 172
 Song 21, 44, 54, 91, 125, 164, 172
 Swamp 21, 44, 54, 91-92, 125, 164
 Vesper 90, 125, 163, 172
 White-crowned 21, 44, 54, 92, 164, 172
 White-throated 21, 44, 54, 92, 164, 169, 172
 Spoonbill, Roseate 136
 Staehr, Dan 35
 Stage, Dave 5, 34, 60, 108, 147

Index to Volume 71

- Starling, European 19, 34, 44, 53, 84, 123, 161, 172
- Sterkel, Audrey 60, 107, 147
- Stilt, Black-necked 72, 106, 114, 154, 166-167
- Stoiber, Greg 36, 108, 147
- Stolen, Justin 36
- Strong, Jon 5, 61, 108, 148
- Sullivan, John 101
- Swallow,
- Bank 81, 106, 121, 159
 - Barn 81, 121, 159, 171
 - Cave 106, 121
 - Cliff 81, 121, 159
 - Northern Rough-winged 81, 121, 159, 171
 - Tree 81, 121, 159
 - Violet-green 81, 121, 159
- Swan,
- Trumpeter 8, 39, 48, 65, 110, 148, 169, 170
 - Tundra 8, 65, 148
- Swanson, Phil 61, 148
- Swenk, Myron 28
- Swift,
- Chimney 77, 119, 127-135, 156
 - White-throated 77, 119, 157
- Tacha, T. C. 168
- Tanager,
- Hepatic 100
 - Scarlet 89, 124, 163
 - Summer 58, 89, 124, 147, 163
 - Western 89, 124, 163
- Taylor, Scott 150
- Teal,
- Blue-winged 9, 48, 66, 111, 149, 170
 - Cinnamon 66, 111, 149
 - Green-winged 9, 39, 48, 66, 111, 149, 170
- Tern,
- Arctic 58, 75
 - Black 75, 117, 155
 - Caspian 75, 117, 146, 155
 - Common 75, 117, 155
 - Forster's 75, 117, 146, 155, 171
 - Least 75, 117, 155
- Thaden, Emily S. 5, 35
- Thieman, Ted 141
- Thomas, Edna Claire 108
- Thrasher,
- Brown 84, 123, 146, 161, 172
 - Curve-billed 3, 19, 20, 58, 84, 106, 123, 146, 161
 - Sage 139, 161
- Thrush,
- Gray-cheeked 84, 161
 - Hermit 19, 34, 44, 53, 84, 161
 - Swainson's 84, 122, 161, 171
 - Wood 84, 122, 161
- Titmouse, Tufted 3, 17, 43, 52, 58, 82, 121, 147, 160
- Toll, Jerry 5, 35, 36, 61, 101, 108, 141
- Towhee,
- Canyon 106, 124
 - Eastern 20, 44, 54, 90, 124, 163, 169, 172
 - Eastern/Spotted 124
 - Green-tailed 28, 89, 137, 163
 - Spotted 20, 54, 89-90, 124, 163, 169, 172
- Trowbridge, David 70, 74
- Turkey, Wild 12, 33, 41, 50, 70, 113, 150, 170
- Turnstone, Ruddy 73, 154
- Tweety, Ken 35
- University of Nebraska at Omaha 25
- Urwiller, Mark 5, 35, 61, 101
- Usasz, Moni 5, 35, 61, 108
- Uttecht, Jan 35, 148
- Van Sickle, Steve 5, 62, 108
- Veery 83-84, 122, 161
- Vermivora ruficapilla ridgwayi* 162
- Vireo,
- Bell's 80, 120, 158
 - Blue-headed 80, 159
 - Cassin's 137, 159
 - Philadelphia 80, 159
 - Plumbeous 80, 120, 159
 - Red-eyed 80, 120, 159
 - Solitary 159
 - Warbling 80, 120, 159
 - Yellow-throated 80, 120, 158
- Vohs, P. A. 168
- Volden, Eric 35, 61
- Vulture, Turkey 64, 110, 152, 170
- Walgren,
- Bruce 4, 35, 60, 107, 147
 - Donna 35, 61, 108, 147
- Walker, T. J. 5, 62, 108, 148
- Walnut Grove Park 58
- Warbler,
- Bay-breasted 87, 162
 - Black-and-white 87, 123, 162
 - Blackburnian 86, 140, 162
 - Blackpoll 87
 - Black-throated Blue 86, 162
 - Black-throated Gray 140
 - Black-throated Green 86, 162
 - Blue-winged 58, 85, 99
 - Canada 89, 140, 163
 - Cape May 86
 - Cerulean 87, 123
 - Chestnut-sided 86, 162
 - Golden-winged 85, 161
 - Hermit 137, 140
 - Hooded 88, 137, 141
 - Kentucky 88, 124, 162

Index to Volume 71

- Warblers, continued
 MacGillivray's 58, 88, 124, 162, 163
 Magnolia 86, 106, 123, 162, 169, 172
 Mourning 88, 147, 162-163
 Nashville 85, 162
 Orange-crowned 2, 19, 85, 162, 172
 Palm 2, 20, 34, 44, 53, 87, 162
 Pine 2, 20, 86, 140
 Prothonotary 87, 123, 162
 Tennessee 85, 123, 162
 Townsend's 137, 162
 Virginia's 137, 139
 Wilson's 89, 163, 172
 Worm-eating 88, 141
 Yellow 85, 123, 162
 Yellow-rumped 34, 44, 53, 172
 Audubon's 86, 123, 162
 Myrtle 19, 86, 162
 Yellow-throated 86, 123, 162
- Waterthrush,
 Louisiana 88, 123, 162
 Northern 88, 162
- Waxwing,
 Bohemian 19
 Cedar 19, 34, 44, 53, 85, 123, 161, 172
- Weihe, Corrine 35
- Welch, Kevin 141
- Wessel, Scott 101
- West Nile Virus 15, 16, 33, 159
- West, William 36
- Whimbrel 72, 138
- Whip-poor-will 77, 119, 156
 Eastern 107, 119
 Western 107, 119
- Whistling-Duck, Black-bellied 99
- Wigeon, American 8, 39, 48, 65, 111, 148, 170
- Wilcox, Juli 141
- Willet 72, 115, 154, 171
- Williams, Pat 35
- Wilson, Gabe 114
- Winfrey,
 J. Harley 5, 36, 61, 108, 147
 Sarah 36
- Wolfenbarger, LaReesa 61
- Wolff, Duane 35
- Wood,
 Christopher 4, 141
 Gertrude 61
- Woodcock, American 58, 74, 116, 155
- Wood Creek 25, 27, 30
- Woodpecker,
 Downy 16, 42, 52, 78, 119, 157, 171
 Hairy 16, 42, 52, 78, 119, 157, 171
 Lewis's 58, 78, 157
 Pileated 16, 78, 119, 157
 Red-bellied 3, 15, 42, 52, 78, 119, 122, 157
 Red-headed 15, 33, 52, 78, 119, 157, 171
- Wood-Pewee,
 Eastern 27, 78, 106, 120, 158, 171
 Western 78, 106, 119-120, 158
- Wren,
 Bewick's 99
 Carolina 18, 20, 53, 82, 122, 146, 160
 House 82, 122, 160, 171
 Marsh 18, 34, 43, 53, 83, 122, 160, 171
 Rock 58, 82, 122, 147, 160
 Sedge 83, 122, 126, 160
 Winter 18, 34, 43, 53, 82, 99, 147, 160
- Wylie, Bonnie 35
- Wyoming 17
- Yellowlegs,
 Greater 2, 13, 72, 114-115, 154, 171
 Lesser 72, 115, 154, 171
- Yellowthroat, Common 20, 88, 124, 138, 163, 172
- York Democrat* 27
- Zeillemaker, Fred 122

The Nebraska Bird Review is published quarterly by the Nebraska Ornithologists' Union, Inc., as its official journal and is sent to members not in arrears of dues. Annual subscription rates (on a calendar-year basis only): \$15 in the United States, \$18 in Canada and \$30 in all other countries, payable in advance. Single copies are \$4 each, postpaid, in the United States, \$5 in Canada, and \$8 elsewhere. Send orders for back issues to Mary Lou Pritchard, NOU Librarian, c/o University of Nebraska State Museum, W-436 Nebraska Hall, Lincoln, NE 68588-0514.

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President and Newsletter Editor: Alice Kenitz, 190648 Co. Rd. 22,
Gering, NE 69341; akenitz@prairieweb.com

Vice-President: Dave Heidt, 1703 Hilltop Drive, Norfolk, NE 68701-2031;
daveh@northeastcollege.com

Secretary: Mitzi Fox, 2560 Fairgrounds Road, Albion, NE 68620-5200;
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Treasurer: Betty Grenon, 1409 Childs Road East, Bellevue, NE 68005;
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Librarian: Mary Lou Pritchard, 6325 O Street #515, Lincoln, NE 68510

Directors:

Loren Padelford, 1405 Little John Road, Bellevue, NE 68005;
lpdlfrd@juno.com (2005)

Steve Lamphere, 3101 Washington St., Apt. 98, Bellevue, NE 68005;
kingfisher65@aol.com (2006)

Jan Uttecht, Box 823, Stanton, NE 68779; jautek@stanton.net (2007)

Records Committee Chairman: Mark Brogie, Box 316, Creighton, NE 68729;
mbrogie@esu1.org

Acting Editor of *The Nebraska Bird Review*: Janis Paseka, 1585 Co. Rd. 14 Blvd.,
Ames, NE 68621; paseka@tvsonline.net

Occurrence Report Compiler: Ross Silcock, P.O. Box 57, Tabor, IA 51653;
silcock@rosssilcock.com

Breeding Bird Atlas Project and Nest Records Coordinator: Wayne Mollhoff,
1817 Boyd St., Ashland, NE 68003; wmollhoff@netscape.net

NOU Website: <http://rip.physics.unk.edu/NOU/>

Nebraska Birdline: c/o Josef Kren 402-721-5487, ext. 6490, or
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Table of Contents

Fall Field Report, Aug - Nov 2003 by W. Ross Silcock	146
Breeding Black-necked Stilts at Funk Waterfowl Production Area by Jeff Drahotka	166
Another Sandhill Crane Breeding Record in the Eastern Rainwater Basin by Joel G. Jorgensen	167
NOU Fall Field Days 2003 Halsey	169
Index to Volume 71	173
Subscription and Organization Information.....	183