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Winter Field Report, December 2015 to February 2016

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WINTER FIELD REPORT, December 2015 to February 2016

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INTRODUCTION

As has been the trend in recent years, many species are lingering later in fall and even arriving earlier in spring. Along with lingering birds, mid-winter and overwintering records have increased. This winter was phenomenal in this respect, especially in that records were across the board in terms of species, suggesting that water conditions have moderated (more open water) and temperatures in general have also (passerines). Unprecedented records included first wintering White-winged Scoter and first Jan or Feb record of Orange-crowned Warbler. Second or third such records were set by Blue-winged Teal, Surf Scoter, Ruddy Duck, Eared Grebe, Greater Yellowlegs, Rock Wren, and Yellow-rumped (Audubon's) Warbler. Late-lingering species were many, highlighted by record late Red-throated Loon, Pied-billed Grebe, and Least Sandpiper. Other noteworthy laggards were Red-necked Grebe, Double-crested Cormorant, Whooping Crane, Ruby-crowned Kinglet, Hermit Thrush, Rose-breasted Grosbeak, Savannah Sparrow, Lincoln's Sparrow, and Dickcissel, while Eastern Bluebirds set a new CBC high and Yellow-rumped Warblers were present through winter in almost unprecedented numbers (see last winter). Early spring arrivals are usually determined by factors other than local Nebraska environmental conditions, and so are perhaps less variable; nevertheless there were early-arriving Turkey Vulture, American Woodcock, and Franklin's Gull.

Perhaps the presence of these numerous winter phenomena allowed other species to winter farther north; there were no Herring Gulls reported 6-27 Jan, only 3 Red Crossbill reports were received, at least one of those of Pacific Coast Type 3 birds, and very few Townsend's Solitaires were counted. Perhaps the only species that was unexpectedly low in numbers given these occurrences was Red-headed Woodpecker, virtually absent from the state, even at its winter stronghold, Indian Cave State Park. Additional significant numbers were a report of 10,000 American Robins, large numbers of Pine Siskins and American Goldfinches, and good numbers again of Yellow-bellied Sapsuckers.

Interesting observations included an apparent shift eastward of wintering Brown Creepers, the still-parlous state of Black-billed Magpie in the state, now only in fair numbers in Keith and Scotts Bluff Cos. Eurasian Collared-Doves are abundant in the west, but in the east numbers are far lower, albeit increasing slowly. The third record of Barred Owl in Lincoln Co was of one in a large parking lot in North Platte; it was surmised that all three may have been hit by semis on I-80 and transported there.

As well as all of the winter excitement, there were several rarities detected, including one first state record. Unfortunately, it was Mute Swan, finally added to the state list based on numerous reports that have been difficult to pass off as escapees or released birds. In addition, Nebraska's 7th Black-throated Sparrow appeared at the feeders of the Records Committee Chairman (I think it will be accepted), and there were rare sightings of Barrow's Goldeneye in the east, near-

adult Kumlien's Gull, Gyrfalcon, Common Raven (they like Applebee's and Burger King), Varied Thrush, and Pine Grosbeak.

As always, I welcome your comments, corrections of fact, and general thoughts. After all, much of this is my personal opinion, albeit hopefully factually-based! Contact me at silcock@rosssilcock.com.

ABBREVIATIONS

ad: adult

BOL: Branched Oak L, Lancaster Co

CBC: Christmas Bird Count

CBL: Capitol Beach L, Lincoln

Cem: Cemetery

CL: Carter L, Omaha

fem: female

FF: Fontenelle Forest, Sarpy Co

FL: Forest Lawn Cem, Douglas Co

HCR: Harlan Co Res., Republican City

HL: Holmes L, Lincoln

ICSP: Indian Cave SP, Nemaha/Richardson Cos

imm: immature

juv: juvenile

L: Lake

LM: L McConaughy, Keith Co

LNB: Lakes North and Babcock, Platte Co

LO: L Ogallala, Keith Co

m.ob.: many observers

NM: National Monument

NNF: Nebraska National Forest

NWR: National Wildlife Refuge

Res: Reservoir

PL: Pawnee L, Lancaster Co

PSP: Ponca SP, Dixon Co

SL: Sewage Lagoon(s)

SP: State Park

OBSERVERS

ABe: Ann Beckenhauer, West Point

AG: Alan Grenon, Seattle, WA

AK: Alice Kenitz, Gering

B&DW: Bruce and Donna Walgren, Casper, WY

BBi: Brad Biggerstaff, Ft. Collins, CO

BBr: Barbara Brown, Kearney

BET: B. Eric Traver, Lyons, CO

BFH: Bill F. Huser, South Sioux City

BG: Betty Grenon, Bellevue

BHe: Ben Heppner, Lincoln
BL: Ben Lashley, North Platte
BP: Brian Peterson, Omaha
BWo: Barb Woodbeck, Lincoln
CCr: Charlotte Croshaw, Fremont
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CGr: Carol Gronewold, Gothenburg
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DSt: Dave Stage, Omaha
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EJR: E J Raynor, Lincoln
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GHa: Gordon Haase, Tawas City, MI
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MKo: Maria Korver, Ponca
MR: Mike Resch, Pepperell, MA
MU: Mark Urwiller, Kearney
MW: Michael Willison, Lincoln
NA: Noah Arthur, Lincoln
PHo: Paula Hoppe, Colon
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SSc: Shari Schwartz, Lincoln
TDo: Teri Dolezal, West Point
TG: Tom Gannon, Lincoln
TJW: T.J. Walker, Brady
TLa: Tony Lau, Otsego, MN
VC: Virginia Clark, North Platte
WF: William Flack, Kearney
WL: William Lemburg, Cairo

SPECIES ACCOUNTS

Greater White-fronted Goose: Lowest numbers are found early Jan to mid-Feb, especially in the west, where rare. Thus good finds were the 5 at Scottsbluff SL 14 Jan (KD), a single at LO 27-28 Jan (MR), and 10 in Lincoln Co 28 Jan (MR).

Graylag Goose: Apparently a group is using N.P. Dodge Park, Omaha, seen there 19 Feb; these birds are apparently "a gift from the Humane Society" (JR).

Snow Goose: Lowest numbers are in mid-Jan, and so significant were 1-4 at CL 5 Jan-4 Feb (JR, GR, m. ob.) and one at BOL 16 Jan (MBe); rare westerly, 2 were at LO 27 Jan (MR) and 2 in Lincoln Co 28 Jan (MR). By the end of Jan, large numbers were returning; 10,600 were in Clay Co 30 Jan (LR,

RH). Peak count reported for the period was the 500,000 in Platte Co 26 Feb (CNK), a record spring count for the east.

Ross's Goose: None were reported 1-30 Jan; outside these dates, small numbers were found in Snow Goose flocks as expected (m. ob.).

Cackling Goose: Flocks of wintering Canada Geese may contain a few Cackling Geese, but groups of more than 5-10 in mid-winter are rare; the small group (up to 20) wintering at CL (m. ob.), increased to a surprising 50 on 16 Jan (BHe, MW). Good counts for the dates and locations were 250 in Buffalo Co 4 Jan (TJW), and 30 at Pier Park, Grand Island, 6 Jan (SM). Migrants arrived in late Jan, as the CL group increased to 100 on 30 Jan (BBr) and the 105 at Conestoga L, Lancaster Co, 31 Jan outnumbered Canada Geese there (MW).

Canada Goose: Reports were routine of this common statewide resident and locally abundant winter visitor.

Mute Swan: This species was recently added to the Nebraska Official List (Brogie, NBR 83: 125-138), and so observers reporting Mute Swans should provide details that might clarify provenance. A candidate for a wild bird was an unmarked near-ad at CL 7 Dec (D&JP) which associated with the many Trumpeter Swans there and remained at least through 7 Feb (MCe). Another possibility for wild birds was a group of 6 that arrived at Blair 26 Jan 2015 (see Fall Report; this note updates that account) and was reduced to 5 a few weeks later, apparently by a coyote, but remained all summer. During Aug the group began regularly flying around the area and one departed by 20 Sep (CP), around the time an ad appeared at Prairie Queen L, Sarpy Co. The remaining 4 birds finally departed "before Christmas" (CP). There was no evidence that breeding took place; all birds were in ad (or near-ad.) plumage (CP). The only other report was of one in northeast Kearney 22 Jan, provenance unknown (JGJ).

Trumpeter Swan: Best count of wintering birds was the 83 at CL 4 Feb, including a pair with red collars and 2 juvs which had been absent for 3 weeks; red collars indicate MN, IA, or MO as sources (JR). The count of 83 probably included early spring migrants; prior to 4 Feb high count was 63 on 14 Jan (JR). The CL tally declined to 25 on 6 Feb (SMa) and none were there 18 Feb (JR). Elsewhere, 50+ were north of Stapleton 22 Jan (BL) and 41 were on the Calamus-Loup CBC 31 Dec (fide DH).

Tundra Swan: For the 3rd winter in a row, this species wintered at CL, this year an ad and an imm were seen 5 Jan-14 Feb (JR, m. ob.). Apart from these CL sightings, there are only 2 other records of wintering in the state.

Wood Duck: This species is regular in winter in the southeast in low numbers, but less than annual northwestward. The 12 at Pier Park, Grand Island, 6 Jan (SM) were at the westernmost known regular wintering location, but unexpected were one on the Scottsbluff CBC 19 Dec (fide AK, KD), another in North Platte 20-22 Dec (TJW), and two on the Calamus-Loup CBC 30 Dec (fide DH).

Gadwall: The 24 at Scottsbluff SL 14 Jan (KD) was a good mid-winter count for this species, which winters from the Platte and North Platte River Valleys southward as conditions allow. Recent winters have seen more such

records; 37% of all records 12 Jan-5 Feb have been in the winters 2012-2013 to date.

American Wigeon: The 62 at Scottsbluff SL 14 Jan (KD) was a good mid-winter count; as many as 100 have wintered in previous years at this location. This species winters in small numbers mostly in the Platte and North Platte River Valleys.

American Black Duck: One in Merrick Co 19 Dec (fide WL) was a little westerly. Hybridization between this species and Mallard is reported more often; there are concerns about invasion by Mallard of the American Black Duck genotype. Two hybrids were reported this spring: one at LM 2 Jan (SJD) and another in Platte Co 7 Jan (SB).

Mallard: Reports were routine of this locally abundant statewide winter visitor.

Blue-winged Teal: Generally absent from the state after mid-Nov, there were 3 reports of lingering birds, including a fem in Madison Co 13-15 Jan (WF); this is only the 3rd record for Jan of this species. Also tardy were 10 in Hall Co 12 Dec (fide CM) and 3 in Saunders Co 1 Dec (JGJ). All but two of the 11 late Nov through Dec records have been since 2010.

Northern Shoveler: Peak wintering tally at CL was 33 on 4 Feb (JR); wintering also occurs at Scottsbluff SL, where 13 were counted 14 Jan (KD) and 17 on 12 Feb (KD). Pier Park in Grand Island hosts an interesting mix of wintering ducks (e.g. Wood Duck); 15 shovelers were still there 6 Jan (SM). There was an early influx 15-17 Feb: 9 birds in all were in Lincoln (TJW) and Buffalo (GHa) Cos 15 Feb, and 2 were at HL 17 Feb (LE).

Northern Pintail: Reports were routine of this locally uncommon statewide winter visitor.

Green-winged Teal: Reports were routine of this locally uncommon winter visitor from North Platte and Platte River Valleys southward.

Canvasback: Wintering occurs most often in the L McConaughy area, where as many as 293 were there as late as 2 Jan (fide SJD) and 5 were present 27 Jan (MR), and at CL, where at least one was seen 13 Jan (MBe) and 2-4 were present 31 Jan-4 Feb (EB, JR). The flock of 40 flying up the North Platte River near Roscoe 28 Jan (MR) may have been early migrants heading for L McConaughy.

Redhead: Winter status of this species is similar to that of Canvasback, except, strangely, there were no reports from L McConaughy. Other regular wintering locations, however, had a few birds. CL hosted up to 14, those on 14 Jan (LE), and Scottsbluff SL had 11 on 14 Jan (KD). Elsewhere, two were in Madison Co 13-15 Jan (WF), one was at HL 14-16 Jan (TG, SKr, LE, EJr) and a likely early migrant was at L Wanahoo, Saunders Co, 31 Jan (RSt).

Ring-necked Duck: This diver and the previous two have similar winter status, although Ring-necked Duck tends to occur in higher numbers at favored locations in mid-winter, as well as on smaller bodies of water. There were 44 at Scottsbluff SL 14 Jan (KD), but over-wintering numbers at CL peaked at only 8 on 8 Jan (JR). The 50 at LO 27 Jan (MR) and 34 near Roscoe 28 Jan (MR) may have been early migrants, as were 11 on 30 Jan and 3 on 31

Jan at L Wanahoo, Saunders Co, (PHo, RSt). Three were at HL 20 Jan (EJa).

Greater Scaup: Best count was the 81 on the LM CBC 2 Jan (SJD), and rather early were the 8 at LO 27 Jan (MR). None were reported 3-26 Jan.

Lesser Scaup: Not unexpected were mid-winter (latter half of Jan) reports from Scottsbluff SL, where 2 were seen 14 Jan (KD), and CL, where one was present 14 Jan (LE). Unexpected away from these favored wintering locations were as many as 8 wintering at HL (m. ob.), one in Madison Co 15 and 24 Jan (WF), and two in Dodge Co 14-16 Jan (CCr, GR). Excellent counts for the dates were the 459 on the LM CBC 2 Jan (fide SJD) and 60 at LO 27 Jan (MR).

Surf Scoter: The only reports were of an imm at L Wanahoo, Saunders Co, 4-5 Dec (JGJ, EJR) and one rather late on the LM CBC 2 Jan (fide SJD). This is the 3rd Jan record for Nebraska; there are Feb and Mar records.

White-winged Scoter: The first over-wintering record was of 1-2 at LO; 2 birds, at least one a male (CNK), were reported on the LM CBC 2 Jan (fide SJD), 2 were there 22 Jan (JGJ), a single male on 27 Jan (MR) and a single fem 21 Feb (NA). These reports likely refer to the same 2 birds, the fem possibly lingering longer than the male.

Black Scoter: The only report was of 3 rather late imms at CBL 3-5 Dec (LE, MW, BHe), declining to 2 on 6 Dec (EJR, EJa, EA) and one on 12 Dec (JGJ). Last dates are 16-17 Dec.

Long-tailed Duck: The only report was of 2 on the LM CBC 2 Jan (fide SJD) which apparently wintered, as 2 were still present 21 Feb (NA) and there were sightings 22 (JGJ) and 27-28 Jan (MR).

Bufflehead: The 402 on the LM CBC 2 Jan (fide SJD) was an excellent count for the date.

Common Goldeneye: One at CBL 4 Dec had an "almost entirely yellow/orange bill" (MW). Some Common Goldeneyes can be misidentified as Barrow's Goldeneyes because of this uncommon feature.

Barrow's Goldeneye: A male and a fem were identified at LO 27 Jan (MR); between 2 Jan and 21 Feb, singles, all listed as males, were reported there (fide SJD, JGJ, NA). The fem discovered in Lancaster Co 29 Nov (JGJ) remained only until 1 Dec (JGJ).

Hooded Merganser: Over-wintering occurred at CL, with peak counts 22 on 8 Jan (JR) and 12 on 4 Feb (JR). There were early arrivals: one at L Wanahoo 31 Jan (RSt), one at Prairie Queen L, Sarpy Co, 6-17 Feb (COI), and one in Dodge Co 7-14 Feb (CCr). These preceded an influx beginning 18 Feb (m. ob.).

Common Merganser: Best count was an impressive 13,561 on the HCR CBC 21 Dec (fide JGJ). High fall (through Dec) tallies are 36,119 to 48,000.

Red-breasted Merganser: Over-wintering is less-than-annual, but a male persevered through the winter at CL (JR, m. ob.). There were several tardy individuals: 6 were in Sarpy Co 21 Dec (SQ), 2 on the North Platte CBC 22 Dec (fide TJW), one at BOL 29 Dec (LE), and 14 on the LM CBC (fide SJD), where the species often over-winters in small numbers among the huge rafts of Common Mergansers.

- Ruddy Duck:** CL continued as an over-wintering location, the only regular site away from LO. A fem wintered (JR, m. ob.), and 3 more were present 31 Jan (EB) although not thereafter. A surprise was one wintering at HL (m. ob.), only the second over-wintering record away from LO and CL. The 31 on the LM CBC 2 Jan (fide SJD) was a good count for the date. Rather early were 4 at Conestoga L, Lancaster Co, 19 Feb (SKr); previous early dates were 21-23 Feb.
- Northern Bobwhite:** This species is doing very well at one of the northernmost extremities of its range in Loup Co, where 102 were tallied on the Calamus-Loup CBC 30 Dec (fide DH).
- Gray Partridge:** None were reported of this uncommon to rare regular resident northeast and north-central, rare in Sioux and Scotts Bluff Cos.
- Sharp-tailed Grouse:** Reports were routine of this locally common regular resident north of the North Platte and Platte River Valleys in central and west, rare northeast; uncommon southwest Panhandle; rare casual south of Platte River east of Panhandle.
- Greater Prairie-Chicken:** This species is doing well in the central parts of its range. An amazing 500+ were tallied in Wheeler Co 3 Jan (SJD), and a North Platte CBC high was the 173 counted there 22 Dec (fide TJW). Even at the extreme northeastern part of its Nebraska range, in Dixon Co, 30 were counted on the Ponca SP CBC 14 Dec (fide BFH).
- Wild Turkey:** Reports were routine of this common, locally abundant, regular resident statewide.
- Red-throated Loon:** By far the latest of 20 fall records is of a juvenile on the L McConaughy CBC 2 Jan 2016 (SJD). Of the 20 records, 17 are in the period 26 Oct-25 Nov.
- Common Loon:** None were reported; last expected fall dates are in mid-Dec, although there are several late Dec-early Jan records from LM.
- Pied-billed Grebe:** Rather late were 5 on the LM CBC 2 Jan (fide SJD) and 2 in Dodge Co 2-3 Jan (CCr); previous last dates were 1,5,6 Jan. One in Buffalo Co 5 Feb (BBr) provided a rare mid-winter record.
- Horned Grebe:** Reports were routine of this fairly common regular spring and fall migrant statewide.
- Red-necked Grebe:** There were two reports of this rare statewide fall migrant. Four rather late birds on the LM CBC 2 Jan (fide SJD) provided a new high count, with counts of 3 reported 3 times previously. In the east, one was at HL 1-3 Dec (TG, m. ob.).
- Eared Grebe:** One on the LM CBC 2 Jan (fide SJD) was only the 3rd record for Jan, and another on the Lincoln CBC 19 Dec (fide LDi; BHe, et al.) was rather late; previous last expected dates were 18-19 Dec.
- Western Grebe:** A good count for the late date was the 339 on the LM CBC 2 Jan (fide SJD); there were no later reports suggesting over-wintering. One in Sarpy Co 7 Dec (WF) was second-latest on record for the east.
- Clark's Grebe:** The only report was of one on the LM CBC 2 Jan (fide SJD); this is the 14th CBC record there.
- Double-crested Cormorant:** This species is leaving later and arriving earlier. One in Dodge Co 28 Feb (CCr) was rather early; expected early dates are 27

Feb-2 Mar. Expected last fall dates are 20-22 Dec, thus there were several lingerers this fall: one was northerly for the date on the Calamus-Loup CBC 30 Dec (fide DH), 4 were counted on the HCR CBC 21 Dec (fide JGJ), 13 were on the Branched Oak-Seward CBC 20 Dec (fide JG), and one was at CL 19 Dec (MW). A group of 10-14 probably wintered at BOL; 14 were there 12 Jan (LE), but none were reported subsequently.

American White Pelican: The 60 at HCR 20 Feb (BBr) were rather early; previous early dates were 21-25 Feb. Wintering occurred as expected at Sutherland Res; 5 were there 28 Jan (MR).

Great Blue Heron: This species is a rare local winter visitor in the North Platte and Platte River Valleys and southward; thus unexpected was a northerly bird on the Calamus-Loup CBC 30 Dec (fide DH).

Turkey Vulture: This species seems to arrive earlier every year. Previous early dates were 25-26 Feb, but there was a surprisingly early influx to eastern Nebraska: there were sightings of 1-4 birds 19-20 Feb at FL (RMa, m. ob.), singles in western Douglas Co 19 Feb (DSt), at Neale Woods, Douglas Co, 20 Feb (SQ), and in Lancaster Co 20 Feb (RSt).

Osprey: Late dates for this species are not well-documented; one was seen briefly by an experienced observer on the Omaha CBC 19 Dec (ARy, fide BG).

Bald Eagle: Reports were routine of this common, locally abundant, regular winter visitor statewide.

Northern Harrier: Reports were routine of this uncommon regular statewide winter visitor.

Sharp-shinned Hawk: Reports were routine of this uncommon regular statewide winter visitor.

Cooper's Hawk: Reports were routine of this uncommon regular statewide winter visitor.

Northern Goshawk: There were 5 reports, more than usual of this rare winter visitor: a juv was at BOL 5 Dec (LE), a single was in the Calamus-Loup CBC circle count week (count date 30 Dec; fide DH), an imm was eating a coot at CL 1 Jan (AG), one was in Dixon Co 9 Feb (HWi), and a licensed falconer trapped a grey-phase bird near Taylor, Loup Co, 23 Jan (fide JGJ).

Red-shouldered Hawk: None were reported of this rare winter visitor to the southeast.

Red-tailed Hawk: The pale subspecies *Buteo jamaicensis krideri* is less-than-annual in winter, but is regular as a migrant. One at BOL 17 Feb (LE) may have been either.

Rough-legged Hawk: Reports were routine of this fairly common regular winter visitor statewide.

Ferruginous Hawk: There are a few reports of this species in the east, generally not well-documented. This winter, a "dark juv" was well-described at BOL 12 Feb (LE), while one in Hall Co 25 Feb (GAt) was at the east edge of the expected winter range.

Golden Eagle: About as far east as possible for this rare eastward winter visitor were imms over ICSP 15 Feb (SQ, LF) and PSP 13-14 Feb (MB). Even less expected are easterly ads; one was on the PSP CBC 14 Dec (fide BFH). Another, age not noted, was in Saunders Co 15 Feb (J&LS).



Northern Goshawk is a rare winter visitor to north-central Nebraska; this individual was trapped and photographed in Loup Co 23 Jan by a licensed falconer.

Virginia Rail: Reports were routine of this uncommon local regular winter visitor to the North Platte Valley, central Niobrara Valley, and Dundy Co.

American Coot: Reports were routine of this uncommon regular local winter visitor.

Sandhill Crane: One at LNB 4 Dec (CNK) was tardy; last dates are 1-4 Dec, although wintering has occurred on occasion in the central Platte River Valley.

Whooping Crane: The 6 birds that appeared at Father Hupp WMA, Thayer Co, 16 Nov (CNK) remained until 1 Dec (JC, SSc); there are only two other Dec records.

Killdeer: One at L Wanahoo, Saunders Co, 10 Feb (PHo) was rather early; non-wintering early dates are 10-11 Feb.

Greater Yellowlegs: The second and third Feb records for the state were singles in Webster Co 21 Feb (MB) and Buffalo Co 27 Feb (MB). Expected early dates are 1-3 Mar and there are 4 records for Jan.

Least Sandpiper: Conestoga L, Lancaster Co, hosted 1-2 on 19-25 Dec (JSS, m. ob.); these were counted on the Lincoln CBC 19 Dec. This was only the second Nebraska CBC record; the first was at Lincoln 16 Dec 2001 (fide LDi). This is also the latest of the 4 records all-time for Dec. Along with yellowlegs, this is one of the more likely shorebirds to linger late in fall.

Wilson's Snipe: Reports were routine of this rare regular local winter visitor statewide.

American Woodcock: One in Lancaster Co 29 Feb (LE) was rather early; early dates are 22-27 Feb.

Black-legged Kittiwake: The only report was of a very late ad at LO 1 Jan (JR, photo) and present the next day for the LM CBC (fide SJD). Last expected dates are 6-9 Dec, but there are 5 later records through 3 Jan. Ads are rarely-reported in Nebraska.



This adult Black-legged Kittiwake lingered until 2 Jan 2016 at L McConaughy (photo here 1 Jan by Justin Rink). Adults are rare in Nebraska.

- Bonaparte's Gull:** There are currently only about 20 records for Dec-early Jan, and none of overwintering. Thus noteworthy tardy records were of 5 on the LM CBC 2 Jan (fide SJD), and up to 15 at HCR through 26 Dec (MW, m. ob.).
- Franklin's Gull:** Two at CBL 11 Feb (LE) were very early, or possibly wintered in or near Nebraska; there are only two earlier Feb dates.
- Mew Gull:** The two reports were 20th and 21st for fall; Mew Gull tends to occur in late fall rather than in winter, with only 3 of the total 36 records of the species in Jan. Singles were at HCR 20-21 Dec (JGJ) and Sutherland Res, Lincoln Co, 1 Jan (fide CNK).
- Ring-billed Gull:** Reports were routine of this uncommon statewide winter visitor.
- California Gull:** Expected in winter only at LM, 1-3 were there 27 Dec-2 Jan (MR, fide SJD). Elsewhere, where rare, there were two reports: an ad and an imm were at L Maloney, Lincoln Co, 1 Dec (TJW), and one was on the HCR CBC 21 Dec (fide JGJ).
- Herring Gull:** Unusually, none were reported 6-27 Jan. Mid-winter numbers are highly variable, with highest mid-winter counts 1100 on 5 Feb 1999 and 1500 on 15 Jan 1998.
- Thayer's Gull:** Rare in mid-winter, at least one, an ad, probably wintered at LO; it was reported 2 Jan on the LM CBC (fide SJD) and 28 Jan (MR). A first-year bird was at LM 21 Feb (NA). The only other reports were of 1-2 ads at BOL 13-21 Feb (LE, GR, EJR).
- Thayer's Gull:** Rare in mid-winter, at least one, an ad, probably wintered at LO; it was reported 2 Jan on the LM CBC (fide SJD) and 28 Jan (MR). A first-year bird was at LM 21 Feb (NA). The only other reports were of 1-2 ads at BOL 13-21 Feb (LE, GR, EJR).
- Iceland (Kumlien's) Gull:** A pale gull at LM 23-28 Jan (JGJ photo, MR) was judged to be a 3rd-year bird which had a grayish distal tail band and hints of a Thayer's-like "venetian blind" appearance in its primaries. Another ad, in similar plumage to the LO bird, was at BOL 28 Feb (NA, photo). These are the 13th winter and 9th spring records respectively.
- Lesser Black-backed Gull:** This species is an uncommon regular migrant in Nebraska, but less-than-annual in mid-winter (4 Jan-2 Feb), when there are only 8 records. The 9th was provided by two 3rd-year birds at LM 1-28 Jan (JR, MR, m. ob.). Two migrants appeared during the period, a first-year at LO 21 Feb (NA), and an ad at Conestoga L, Lancaster Co, 21-24 Feb (MW, m. ob.), probably the same bird seen that day at CBL (MW, BHe).
- Glaucous Gull:** The only reports were from Lancaster Co, where possibly the same juv was present 5-22 Dec (LE, m. ob.) and it or possibly two were at BOL 10-18 Feb (LE, m. ob.) and Lincoln city lakes 20-21 Feb (LE, m. ob.).
- Rock Pigeon:** Lincoln is the center for abundance of this species; this year's Lincoln CBC was down a bit at 1707 (fide LDi), third-highest Lincoln CBC count on record after 2693 on 20 Dec 2014 and 2309 on 18 Dec 2010. There were 2418 counted on the Grand Island CBC 12 Dec (fide CM).



This 3rd-year Kumlien's Gull was at L Ogallala 23-28 Jan 2016 (JGJ, MR), here photographed 23 Jan by Joel Jorgensen.

Eurasian Collared-Dove: This species is by far most numerous in the west, but is increasing significantly east of the Panhandle; CBCs reflect this distribution, with Scottsbluff reporting 943 (fide AK), North Platte 310 (fide TJW), HCR 142 (new high count; fide JGJ), and Omaha 31 (new high count; fide BG).

White-winged Dove: Overwintering is a recent phenomenon in the state, first noted in a Scottsbluff yard 2009-2010, although there has been only one other record since then. This winter there were a surprising 4 overwintering reports: one wintered in the same yard as the 2009-2010 record in Scottsbluff (RSg), one wintered in a Kearney yard, joined by a second bird 21 Jan (BBr), one was in an Ogallala yard (JO), and as many as 3 (on 22 Jan) were in an Aurora yard (DMi).

Mourning Dove: Unexpected were 2 in a Gordon yard 13-15 Feb (BWo), and 12 in Loup Co 14 Feb (DDa). These are only the 5th and 6th mid-winter (7 Nov-12 Mar) reports west of Boone and Antelope Cos and north of the Platte River Valleys.

Eastern Screech-Owl: Reports were routine of this common statewide resident.

Great Horned Owl: Reports were routine of this common statewide regular resident and rare regular winter visitor.

Snowy Owl: There was a good showing of Snowies this winter; reports of least 12 were received statewide 7 Dec-16 Feb (m. ob.), a number comparable to the

“echo” flight following the huge invasion of around 200 in winter 2011-2012. Most winters have fewer than 10 reports.

Barred Owl: One found dead in the Menard’s parking lot in North Platte 4 Dec (TJW) is the 3rd record from North Platte, following reports there in 2006 (found dead; photo) and 2007 (found dead; photo). The possibility was raised (TJW), however, that a semi-tractor may have hit the bird in eastern Nebraska and carried it west on I-80.

Long-eared Owl: Best tally of wintering birds was a moderate 6 at BOL 10 Feb (SSc).

Short-eared Owl: Best counts of wintering birds were in the LM area; 4 were there 22 Jan (JGJ) and 3 were in fields on the north side of LO 27 Jan (MR). Seven were counted on the LM CBC 2 Jan (fide SJD).

Northern Saw-whet Owl: Only one was reported, heard calling at Keller Park, Brown Co, 22 Feb (WF). Wintering birds may occur statewide.



Another photo taken by Joel Jorgensen 23 Jan 2016 at L Ogallala of the 3rd-year Kumlien’s Gull.

Belted Kingfisher: This species probably has the most “Reports were routine” notations of any in these reports. To break the string, a good count of 10 was reported on the Lincoln CBC 19 Dec (fide LDi). High CBC counts are 11-16.

- Red-headed Woodpecker:** Numbers were low this winter; none were found at ICSP 15 Feb where usually they winter in good numbers (SQ), and only two were found on the Omaha CBC 19 Dec (fide BG) and one on the Lincoln CBC 19 Dec (fide LDi). None were reported, even in the southeast, 27 Dec-12 Feb. A good find for the date and northerly location was an imm in Keya Paha Co 18 Feb (WF); this is only the 3rd mid-winter (3 Oct-20 Apr) record in the north.
- Red-bellied Woodpecker:** Reports were routine of this common southeastern, uncommon northwestern, rare Panhandle resident.
- Yellow-bellied Sapsucker:** Good numbers were in the south and southeast; 7 were on the Lincoln CBC 19 Dec (fide LDi) and 4 on the HCR CBC 21 Dec (fide JGJ). Four were at FL 17 Dec (JR). There were 3 reports westward in the Platte River Valley; one was at Cottonmill Park, Kearney, 30 Dec and 18 Jan (BBr, BET), 2 in a North Platte yard 2 Jan-15 Feb (JP) and one on the CBC there 22 Dec (fide TJW), and one on the LM CBC 2 Jan (fide SJD).
- Downy Woodpecker:** Reports were routine of this common statewide resident.
- Hairy Woodpecker:** Reports were routine of this common statewide resident.
- Northern Flicker:** The usual few "red-shafted" flickers made it to the east (BHe, EJR, HTe, TJW); the Lincoln CBC reported two among the total of 39 Northern Flickers.
- Pileated Woodpecker:** All reports were from the currently-known Missouri River Valley locations in Washington, Douglas, Sarpy, Otoe, Nemaha, and Richardson Cos (m. ob.).
- American Kestrel:** Rarest in the northwest in mid-winter, singles in Cherry Co 22 Jan (TLa), Dawes Co 18 Jan (SLe), and Box Butte Co 6 Jan (RSg) were noteworthy.
- Merlin:** The northern breeding subspecies *Falco columbarius columbarius* has been thought to be a rare winter visitor in Nebraska, but the last two winters have had 3 records each. This winter, singles were in Douglas Co 4 Jan (SMA), Lincoln Co 31 Jan (BBi), and Kearney Co 7 Feb (LR, RH).
- Peregrine Falcon:** Apart from the resident birds in Omaha and Lincoln, Feb reports are few; singles in Saunders Co 26 Feb (GR), possibly one of the Omaha birds, and in Sherman Co 27 Feb (MB) were only the 10th and 11th such records.
- Prairie Falcon:** Easternmost were singles in Washington Co 2, 22, and 24 Jan, probably the same bird wintering in the area (GR, JR, fide JT) and Dodge Co 17 Dec (fide D&JP).
- Gyr Falcon:** There were no reports of this rare winter visitor.
- Loggerhead Shrike:** None were reported of this rare, annual winter visitor in the southeast.
- Northern Shrike:** Reports were routine of this fairly common regular winter visitor statewide.
- Pinyon Jay:** None were reported of this erratic, enigmatic, supposedly common winter visitor west.
- Blue Jay:** Reports were routine of this common statewide resident.
- Black-billed Magpie:** This species is in dire straits currently in Nebraska, but a bright spot was its "reappearance" in Madison Co, with 3 on the Norfolk

CBC 19 Dec (fide DH) and one between Madison and Norfolk 11 Dec (WF). On the other hand, the HCR CBC 21 Dec found none, compared with 3 last year and an average of 24 per year 1996-2001 (fide JGJ). The North Platte CBC had 5 this year, the best count for 2008-2015, but insignificant compared to the count's record of 194 in 1938 (fide TJW). Scotts Bluff and Keith Cos are the species' stronghold at present; 24 were on the Scottsbluff CBC 19 Dec (fide AK), there were 8 additional reports from Scotts Bluff Co of 1-6 birds (m. ob.), the LM CBC had 21 (fide SJD), 3 were at Ogallala Cem 23 Jan (JGJ), and one was near Roscoe 28 Jan (MR). Finally, a surprise was 2 in Dawson Co 23 Jan (RL), where there have not been recent reports.

American Crow: This species can occur in huge flocks on occasion; 1000 were in cedar canyons in southeastern Lincoln Co 14 Feb (LD), and 3000 were reported on the Calamus-Loup CBC 30 Dec (fide DH). High all-time CBC counts are 5223-9602 and non-CBC highs are 3000-4500.

Common Raven: A rather bizarre occurrence was the sudden appearance of 3 Common Ravens at the North Platte Applebee's for the North Platte CBC 22 Dec (EB; fide TJW). The next day, one was at the local Burger King (TJW) and another was seen in the same area (MU). They have not been seen since. In Oklahoma and Kansas Common Ravens are "getting out in the open plains, and should be considered a viable option, in winter especially" (JAG).

Horned Lark: Reports were routine of this abundant statewide winter visitor.

Black-capped Chickadee: Reports were routine of this fairly common statewide resident.

Tufted Titmouse: Reports were routine of this fairly common southeastern resident.

Red-breasted Nuthatch: This species was widely-reported in low numbers, about a normal winter; 25 were reported on CBCs. Best non-CBC count was 6, in a North Platte subdivision 14 Feb (MBr).

White-breasted Nuthatch: Reports were routine of this uncommon regular winter visitor away from breeding range (central, east, and northwest).

Pygmy Nuthatch: Reports were routine of this common regular resident west, local north.

Brown Creeper: The 6 at Ft. Kearny SRA, Buffalo Co, 16 Jan (BBr) and also at Elmwood Park, Omaha, 7 Feb (SMa) 7 Feb tied the high count for this species, typically a low-density winter visitor, more common eastward. The 11 on the Ames CBC 17 Dec was a count high there (fide D&JP). These sightings suggest higher numbers than usual in the east, and, together with the absence of reports this winter west of Buffalo Co, suggests an eastward shift in wintering birds.

Rock Wren: The only winter records are two from LM, where one was seen 21 Dec 2003 (LR, RH; Brogie 2005), and this winter one on 18 Feb; it was said to occur there "each winter on the rocks" (J&GB).

Winter Wren: Wintering occurs most years in the extreme southeast, although survival might be low as there are few Mar records. This winter reports were widespread there, with at least 8 individuals reported for Feb (m. ob.).

Surprising were 3 on the LM CBC (fide SJD), although there are a few other mid-winter reports from Keith Co.

Marsh Wren: Only 4 were reported, although this species winters in low numbers at favored locations mostly in the North Platte River Valley and central Niobrara River Valley. Thus perhaps not unexpected was one at Agate Fossil Beds NM, Sioux Co, 16 Jan (KD). Along the North Platte River Valley, one was on the LM CBC 2 Jan (fide SJD) and another was reported during Count Week for the North Platte CBC 22 Dec (fide TJW). Finally, one was in Lincoln 16 Jan (EJa).

Carolina Wren: Westerly birds in the south included 2 on the HCR CBC 21 Dec (fide JGJ, TJW), a known summer location, and 1-2 in a Grand Island yard 28 Dec-9 Jan (SM), where summering is not known. This species occurs on occasion north and west of its Nebraska breeding range.

Golden-crowned Kinglet: Most reports, as expected, were from the southeast and south, west to LM, where 29 were found on the CBC 2 Jan (fide SJD), but there was a noteworthy northerly report of one on the Calamus-Loup CBC 30 Dec (fide DH).

Ruby-crowned Kinglet: As expected, reports were from the south and southeast through Jan (m. ob.), with westernmost one on the LM CBC 2 Jan (fide SJD), and a surprising 4 near North Platte 15 Feb (TJW), the only Feb report this winter. Reports in Jan have increased in recent years.

Eastern Bluebird: The 234 on the Branched Oak L-Seward CBC 20 Dec (fide JG) was second-highest CBC tally for the state, after the 286 on the same count in 2011. Wintering occurs in the south and southeast, but few remain into Feb-early Mar; thus the 8 in Lincoln Co 15 Feb (TJW) were noteworthy.

Mountain Bluebird: The major known wintering area is in southern Lincoln and adjacent counties to the south; at least 45 were counted during Jan (TJW). Wintering occurs but is sporadic in the north, although this winter there were reports as far east as Dixon Co, where one was on the PSP CBC 14 Dec (fide BFH). There was a "large flock" at Halsey NNF 30 Jan (LR, RH), and along the Niobrara River Valley in Boyd Co 4-5 were found 18 Feb (WF).

Townsend's Solitaire: This was a very low year for this species; the Scottsbluff CBC 19 Dec found only one (fide AK), and a veteran observer there noted, "Maybe I just wasn't in the right places, but they seemed scarce this winter." (AK). Only 24 (14 of these at LM) were found on all CBCs, none east of North Platte, and only 16 were reported otherwise, notably one southeasterly in Jefferson Co 23 Jan (JGJ) and another in Kearney 15 Feb (BBr).

Hermit Thrush: Although this species is often reported on Dec CBCs in the southeast, mid-winter and over-wintering reports are scarce. Only the 7th documented record of over-wintering was of 1-2 at BOL 1-2 Jan (MW, LE), 15 Jan (BHe), and 24 Jan (2; BHe, MW). One survived at least to 11 Jan at FL (CNK). One on the LM CBC 2 Jan (fide SJD) was only the 7th winter record away from the east; its subspecies was not noted.

- American Robin:** This species often occurs in winter in huge flocks in areas with extensive cedars; 10,000 were in the cedar canyons of southeastern Lincoln Co 8 Jan (TJW). High winter count is 20,000 in Brown Co.
- Varied Thrush:** The only report of this less-than-annual winter visitor was of one at Cairo, Hall Co 18 Jan-13 Feb (WL fide D&JP, m. ob.).
- Brown Thrasher:** Over-wintering occurs in the southeast and is less-than-annual. Two were reported in early Feb, both likely wintering: one at FF 1 Feb (CNK) and one at a Heron Haven feeder, Omaha, 12 Feb (JFu).
- European Starling:** Best CBC tally was 6557 on the Norfolk CBC 19 Dec (fide DH), and best mid-winter non-CBC was 5000 on 10 Jan near North Platte (TJW). Highest CBC tallies are 33,000+ to 250,000+.
- American Pipit:** The only report was of one (reported on eBird as 2) on the Scottsbluff CBC 19 Dec (fide AK, KD), one of only 6 total Nebraska records for Dec, including 4 on CBCs. There are no Jan-Feb records for the species.
- Bohemian Waxwing:** The only report of this erratic winter visitor was about as far east as possible; 2 were on the PSP CBC 14 Dec (BFH). This species is less-than-annual in the east.
- Cedar Waxwing:** Reports were routine of this common statewide winter visitor.
- Lapland Longspur:** Reports were routine of this common statewide winter visitor.
- Smith's Longspur:** A major surprise was the presence of up to 9 at SCP 21-26 Feb (MW, m. ob.), only the 3rd record for Feb in Nebraska, the others 5 Feb 1959 Nemaha Co and 12 Feb 1988 Lancaster Co. This species winters regularly north to the Flint Hills of east-central Kansas; previous early dates for spring arrivals in Nebraska are 31 Mar-1 Apr with an earlier date 21 Mar. Whether these SCP birds were early migrants or were wintering is conjectural, but this group of sightings joins many other instances in this Seasonal Report of early spring arrivals and unexpected winter dates. In addition, one was in Lancaster Co 1 Dec (LE); there are only 4 later dates in Dec, none in Jan.
- Snow Bunting:** This species was in higher numbers than usual; there were 4 flocks of 50-100 in Dixon Co and 75 in Knox Co 11 Jan (JJ).
- Orange-crowned Warbler:** Most unexpected was one at Conestoga L, Lancaster Co, 27-28 Feb (BHe, photo), the first record for Nebraska for Jan-Feb. Whether it wintered in the vicinity or was a very early migrant is conjectural, although it is probably most likely to have traveled north with early migrant Yellow-rumped Warblers, although only 1-2 of the latter were reported on the eBird checklists for the two days (BHe). As noted for Smith's Longspur, this is another unprecedented mid-winter record; wintering is expected north only to Oklahoma and Arkansas.
- Yellow-rumped (Audubon's) Warbler:** A surprise was one on the LM CBC 2 Jan (SJD); this is the 3rd winter record of this subspecies, all from LM. One in Lancaster Co 24 Jan was judged to be a hybrid with "Myrtle" Warbler (NA, BHe, MW); of the 3 records of this hybrid, 2 are in winter, one at LM and this record. It seems that close examination of Yellow-rumped Warblers would yield more records of both easterly Audubon's and hybrids/introgressants.

- Yellow-rumped (Myrtle) Warbler:** Following last winter's invasion of wintering birds, within which there were an unprecedented number of Feb records, there was a moderate repeat this year, all from the southeast. Wintering has occurred at BOL since about 2007, and this winter as many as 8 were there during Feb (RSt, LE); probably wintering were singles in Seward Co 12 and 29 Feb (LE), singles at Conestoga L, Lancaster Co, 18 and 27-28 Feb (LE, BHe), and singles at PL 14 Feb (SSc) and 26 Feb (LE). Another single was in Cass Co 29 Feb (KSc). These Feb reports bring the all-time total of such reports to 41, 21 of these in the last two winters. There were reports in Jan as far west as LM, where 27 were counted on the CBC there 2 Jan (fide SJD) and 2 were there 28 Jan (MR); in Lincoln Co one was found 6 Jan (TJW).
- Spotted Towhee:** This species is rare but annual in winter from the Platte River Valley south, although scarcer westward; one was on the North Platte CBC 20 Dec (fide TJW) and one wintered at a Buffalo Co feeder (BBR). In the southeast, mid-winter reports were of one in Merrick Co 9 Jan (SM), one in Cass Co 13 Jan (GJo), singles at FF 14 Jan (EB) and 18 Jan (JCr), and 4 there 1 Feb (CNK), one in northeastern Douglas Co 20 Feb (JR), one at SCP 21-24 Feb (MW, m. ob.), and one in Lincoln 25 Feb (TG).
- Eastern Towhee:** Most winters, most leave, with a few wintering but less-than-annually. The only reports were of 2 on the DeSoto-Boyer CBC 2 Jan (fide JT), one on the Omaha CBC 19 Dec (fide BG), and one in southeastern Washington Co 23 Feb (JR).
- American Tree Sparrow:** Reports were routine of this abundant statewide winter visitor.
- Chipping Sparrow:** The only report was of a tardy bird at Schramm Park RA, Sarpy Co, 29 Dec (RW); this is only the 12th report after mid-Nov, including one of over-wintering.
- Vesper Sparrow:** One in Lancaster Co 28 Jan (SCo) was only the 5th record for Jan, and the latest for that month.
- Black-throated Sparrow:** One in a Creighton yard 5 Dec-10 Jan (MB, m. ob.) was Nebraska's 7th record of the species; the 4 over-wintering records are all from the east in the period 4 Dec-12 Apr.
- Savannah Sparrow:** This relatively cold-tolerant species is known to have over-wintered twice, but there are only 5 additional reports for Feb. This winter, there were 3 more: one was at BOL 4 Feb (LE), 2 were at Boyer NWR, Washington Co, and one was in Otoe Co 22 Feb (SQ). Expected wintering occurs north to southeast KS.
- Fox Sparrow:** This species winters each year in low numbers in the southeast, although this year there were only 2 reports in Feb. A total of 21 were reported on CBCs, all in the southeast, including 9 on the Branched Oak L-Seward CBC 20 Dec (fide JG). Good tallies were the 4 at FF 14 Jan (EB) and a surprising 8 there 1 Feb (CNK). BOL is a favored site in winter; there were reports of up to 3 there through 24 Jan (MW, BHe, m. ob.). Boyer Chute NWR is also a good place to look; one was there 24 Jan (GR). There were 2 additional mid-winter reports: singles in Saline Co 31 Jan (BHe) and in Nuckolls Co 26 Feb (DE, photo).

Song Sparrow: Wintering birds occur every winter from the North Platte and Platte Valleys southward and in the east; elsewhere they are rare, with the only such reports this winter of one in Sioux Co 13 Feb (KD) and 2 on the Calamus-Loup CBC 30 Dec (fide DH).

Lincoln's Sparrow: There is a good number of reports over the years on CBCs of mostly single birds; this year there were 3 at Omaha 19 Dec (fide BG) and 4 at DeSoto-Boyer 2 Jan (fide JT), but Jan reports are scarce, and there were only previous 5 records in all for Feb. This winter, there were 2 reports for Feb: one was at BOL 4-13 Feb (LE, m. ob.), and one was in Lincoln 13 Feb (GMa).

Swamp Sparrow: None were reported after 3 Jan, when 3 were at FF (AG) and 2 at N.P. Dodge Park, Omaha (SMa). The only CBC report was of 5 at Omaha 19 Dec (fide BG). Over-wintering is less-than-annual.

White-throated Sparrow: All reports, as expected, were from the southeast through the period, but numbers were moderate at best, with highest count only 8, in Omaha 25 Dec (SMa). Feb reports were numerous, high count 6-7 in the Heron Haven, Omaha, vicinity 9-21 Feb (KGo, BP).



This Black-throated Sparrow, Nebraska's 7th, was at the Mark Brogie feeder in Creighton 5 Dec-10 Jan 2015-2016, here photographed by Roger Dietrich 8 Dec.

- Harris's Sparrow:** This species is uncommon westward; however, there were 13-15 at a North Platte feeder 12-14 Feb (MBr), and singles at a rural North Platte yard 2 Jan and 13 Feb (VC).
- White-crowned Sparrow:** This species winters uncommonly from the North Platte and Platte River Valleys southward, usually in small numbers, with Scotts Bluff Co a major exception, this winter exemplified by an amazing count-high 446 on the Scottsbluff CBC 19 Dec (fide AK). In the east, best CBC tally was 30, at DeSoto-Boyer 2 Jan (fide JT) and non-CBC count only 14, at BOL 12 Feb (LE). A good central count was the 32 in Dawson Co 11 Feb (CGr).
- Dark-eyed (White-winged) Junco:** The only report of this uncommon western winter visitor was of one on the LM CBC 2 Jan (SJD). This is the east edge of the winter range.
- Dark-eyed (Slate-colored) Junco:** Reports were routine of this abundant statewide winter visitor.
- Dark-eyed (Cassiar) Junco:** As observers study juncos more carefully, this form is being reported more often in the east. It is probably fairly common statewide. Reports were of 1-4 from several locations in Douglas and Sarpy Cos (SMa).
- Dark-eyed (Oregon) Junco:** The usual few appeared in the east. On the Lincoln CBC 19 Dec there were 10 Oregons and 902 Slate-coloreds (1% of identified Oregon + Slate-colored) (fide LDi) and on the Scottsbluff CBC 19 Dec there were 175 Oregons and 29 Slate-colored (86%) (fide AK).
- Dark-eyed (Pink-sided) Junco:** Only the 13th and 14th eastern winter reports were of singles in Otoe Co 4 Dec (SQ) and at FF 14 Jan (EB). Better documentation of eastern reports is needed; only one has tangible documentation.
- Northern Cardinal:** The small population in Scotts Bluff Co continues; 2 were on the Scottsbluff CBC 19 Dec (fide AK), and "the first in months" was back at a Mitchell yard 30 Dec (KD).
- Rose-breasted Grosbeak:** A basic-plumaged bird at HL 1 Dec (TG) was only the 6th record for Dec; there are no Jan-Feb records.
- Dickcissel:** Only the 10th record for Dec-Feb was of one in Harlan Co 20 Dec (JGJ, photo); of the 10 records, all from the south and east, 7 are in Dec. Most winter records are at feeders, often with House Sparrows.
- Red-winged Blackbird:** First birds on territory were reported from Scotts Bluff Co 12 Feb (KD), about on time. A record large mid-winter flock of 25,000 was in the Brady-Maxwell area of Lincoln Co 30 Dec and 15 Jan (TJW).
- Eastern Meadowlark:** The available evidence suggests that most if not all depart the state in mid-winter, except possibly for the south and east; presumed returning birds were first heard 20 Feb at BOL (TG).
- Western Meadowlark:** First singing was heard in Sarpy Co 17 Feb (EB).
- Yellow-headed Blackbird:** A male with Red-winged Blackbirds in Buffalo Co 15 Feb (GHa) was rather early; previous early dates were 17-19 Feb.
- Rusty Blackbird:** This species is a regular though rare winter visitor in the North Platte and Platte River Valleys west to North Platte, and in the east; westerly were 40 on the North Platte CBC 22 Dec (fide TJW), and 3 near

North Platte 28 Jan (MR). Spring movement is detectable in late Feb, when reports increase. BOL hosted 16 on 17 Feb (LE), and the 39 at Brewster 26 Feb (JJ) had progressed north of the expected winter range. Best CBC tally was the 80 at Branched Oak-Seward 20 Dec (fide JG).

Brewer's Blackbird: This species is a rare winter visitor from the North Platte and Platte River Valleys southward; it is less often-reported in the Panhandle, but one in a Scotts Bluff Co yard 20 Jan (KD, photo) led the observer to note that winter sightings were increasing there (KD). Other westerly reports included one on the LM CBC 2 Jan (fide SJD) and 10 at a Lincoln Co feedlot 28 Jan (MR).

Common Grackle: Westernmost mid-winter reports were of 3-6 in Buffalo Co 12-13 Jan (BBr). This species is an uncommon winter visitor, usually singles, in the southeast.

Great-tailed Grackle: The only CBC reports were of 171 at Grand Island 12 Dec (fide CM) and 150 at North Platte 22 Dec (fide TJW). These two locations host significant winter flocks; North Platte hosts a flock of around 150 each winter (TJW), and 330 were in Grand Island 6 Jan (SM). Migrants arrived with a bang in mid-Feb, when an amazing flock of 525 was found in Hall Co 13 Feb (MW, photo).

Brown-headed Cowbird: A few winter most years in the southeast, but an unusually high count for the date was the 30 with starlings in a Douglas Co feedlot 6 Jan (SMa). One on the LM CBC 2 Jan (fide SJD) was westerly.



This fem/imm Pine Grosbeak wintered at Forest Lawn Cem, Omaha, 19 Dec-9 Feb, found by Ben Heppner and photographed here 20 Dec by Brian Peterson.

- Gray-crowned Rosy-Finch:** The only report of this uncommon northwestern winter visitor was of a single bird on the LM CBC 2 Jan (fide SJD); this record is outside the usual Scotts Bluff and Sioux Co winter range, but was preceded by a video-recorded bird in Ogallala 3-4 Jan 2009.
- Pine Grosbeak:** A long-staying individual appeared at FL 19 Dec (BHe) and stayed through 9 Feb (m. ob., photos). It was variously considered to be a hatch year bird of indeterminate gender, or an ad fem. The only other report was of 3 in Lancaster Co 1 Feb (LE).
- Purple Finch:** This species was widely-reported in small numbers in the eastern half of the state; westernmost was one at an LM feeder 14 Feb (J&GB). Best non-CBC count was 10 in Cuming Co 13 Feb (ABe); 11 were on the Lincoln CBC 19 Dec (fide LDi).
- House Finch:** Reports were routine of this common statewide resident.
- Cassin's Finch:** This species is annual but rare in the west from the North Platte River Valley northward. The only report was of 3 on the Crawford CBC 31 Dec (KD, fide B&DW).
- Red Crossbill:** There were only 3 reports; the only CBC report was of 2 on the LM CBC 2 Jan (fide SJD), one was photographed in Buffalo Co 21 Feb (BBr), and up to 10 wintered in FL 20 Dec-14 Jan (BP, JR, m. ob.). Nebraska's breeding crossbills are Type 2, but interestingly, spectrograms of 25 Dec recordings of the Forest Lawn birds determined they were Type 3, "Western Hemlock Crossbill", which breeds in northern coastal areas of the western United States and occurs eastward on occasion in winter. The photo of the Buffalo Co bird (BBr) shows it to be probably the large-billed Type 2.
- White-winged Crossbill:** The only report was of a single bird in Seward Co 15 Jan (CD fide JG; photo).
- Common Redpoll:** There was a moderate showing this winter, with reports statewide 17 Dec- 14 Feb (m. ob.); best count was the 22 in Boyd Co 3 Jan (RSt). Best CBC tallies were 20 at LM 2 Jan (fide SJD) and 17 at Crawford 31 Dec (fide B&DW).
- Pine Siskin:** Good numbers were reported statewide, best non-CBC count the 55 in Dakota Co 13 Feb (TDo); best CBC tally was 115 at Scottsbluff 19 Dec (fide AK).
- American Goldfinch:** Numbers this winter were high, with the 2nd and 3rd-highest counts on record the 300 estimated at both PSP 13 Feb (PHo, MKo) and BOL 24 Jan (BHe, MW). High count remains 320.
- Evening Grosbeak:** None were reported of this uncommon and erratic northwestern winter visitor, less-than-annual elsewhere.
- House Sparrow:** Reports were routine of this abundant statewide resident.