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### **Clark's Nutcracker at Lake McConaughy**

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On 1 November 1998 I observed a Clark's Nutcracker along the north shore of Lake McConaughy in Keith County. Specifically, the bird was along the road of the Cedar Vue Recreation Area, just east of the main boat ramp. I studied and photographed the bird from 11:32 to 11:50 a.m. I was driving along the entrance road to Cedar Vue when I spotted a bird perched in a dead tree. As I approached the tree, I was thinking about stopping when the bird suddenly took flight. The flight silhouette resembled that of a flicker, although the undulating flight and slower wingbeats didn't seem quite right. The bird landed in a large pine tree not too off the road, so I decided to walk over and have a closer look. I was quite surprised when I discovered the bird was a nutcracker. The bird was roughly the size of a flicker, except that it was a bit chunkier. The head, underparts, and mantle were

light gray. On a couple of occasions, I noted what appeared to be a light brown wash around the base of the bill. The eye was dark, and there was a faint white eye ring. The bill was black, stout at the base, and pointed. The legs were black. The wings were jet black except for a white patch along the trailing edge of the secondaries. The tail appeared black when the bird was perched, but in flight I noted that the outer feathers were white. The flight was slow and undulating with deep wingbeats. In fact, it was the distinct flight behavior that caused me to take a closer look at the bird in the first place. I did not age the bird, although I wondered if it was an immature because of the appearance of some brown color on the face.

This sighting is unusual because of the easterly location. Most Nebraska records of this species are from the Panhandle, especially the Pine Ridge area of northwestern Nebraska. However, there are at least six records of birds east of the Panhandle, all in the period 29 September through 18 February (W. R. Silcock, pers. comm.). Interestingly, all of these records are from Nuckolls County eastward. This record is also unusual because it did not occur in an eruption year when larger-than-normal numbers of Clark's Nutcrackers move east of their normal range.