

6-2004

Spring Field Report, March-May 2004

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Silcock, W. Ross, "Spring Field Report, March-May 2004" (2004). *Nebraska Bird Review*. Paper 366.
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SPRING FIELD REPORT, March-May 2004

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INTRODUCTION

This was a fairly typical spring with wide variations in temperature, although severe storms May 22 and 24 caused considerable damage to property and presumably nesting birds; dead robins and their blown-down nests were ubiquitous.

There continues to be an accumulation of observations indicative of earlier arrival of some species as well as possibly related range expansion northward of others (see species accounts for details). Notably early were most of the swallow species, Long-billed Curlew, and Bobolink. Northward range expansion seems to be occurring with Scissor-tailed Flycatcher, Hooded Warbler, and Summer Tanager. Numbers of Piping Plovers and Snowy Plovers at L McConaughy and Harlan Co Res are increasing, especially at McConaughy, as a result of extremely low water levels and resulting huge expanses of sand. A Greater Roadrunner was seen (see below).

Another adaptation that may be significant is the discovery at a few locations of Greater Prairie-Chickens booming in agricultural fields. Black-capped Chickadees are still scarce to non-existent south of the Platte Valley, from Lincoln west. No one has come up with a convincing explanation of what is happening, although West Nile Virus and drought are leading the speculation.

Interesting was the number of eastern warblers found in the west. Most significant were Blue-winged, Cape May, Black-throated Blue (only 3rd Panhandle spring record), Black-throated Green, Bay-breasted, Kentucky, and Mourning. Mentioned above, Hooded Warbler provided an amazing 7 sightings statewide. The Curve-billed Thrasher continues at the Frimann Ranch in Sioux County, where it is now feeding a brood of Common Grackles!

Significant field work was done by Mark Brogie in Antelope and Knox Counties and Joel Jorgensen in the Rainwater Basin this spring. Brogie discovered several territorial Northern Saw-Whet Owls; breeding by this species has not been proven in the state for many years. Jorgensen studied Buff-breasted Sandpipers and counted about 15% of the world's population passing through the Rainwater Basin this spring, an indication of the international importance of this region to migrating waterbirds.

A vexing problem for records committees is introgression. When does introgression reach a point where a report cannot be accepted as of a certain species? Excellent photos of a purported Glossy Ibis in the Rainwater Basin allowed far more detailed examination than that available in the field, and showed that there were some White-faced Ibis genes present. This is also a problem with species pairs such the grosbeaks, orioles, etc., in Nebraska.

Perhaps not surprising, given its occurrence in northern Kansas, a Greater Roadrunner was seen in Phelps County, pending Records Committee acceptance, the first record for Nebraska. The state's 5th Cave Swallow was found at L Ogallala; all are from the L McConaughy area. Other rarities (for spring) were a Red-throated Loon, a Red-necked Grebe, and two Dusky Flycatchers, the flycatchers identified by highly-experienced observers.

Finally, a note about "fledglings". I receive reports of "adults feeding fledglings" which suggests to me the altricial young are out of the nest, but still dependent on the adults, much like precocial young of Killdeer and Piping Plovers.

Wondering about the correct use of the term, and not being ornithologically trained, I looked it up, and discovered (Pettingill, *Ornithology*) that a fledgling is indeed "an altricial young bird from the time it leaves the nest until it becomes independent of its parents". Fledging is the point of first flight. Thus it might take a fledgling some time to fledge, and a fledgling may or may not have fledged!

ABBREVIATIONS

ADF: Arbor Day Farm, Otoe Co; BOL: Branched Oak L, Lancaster Co; CCM: Clear Creek Marshes, Keith/Garden Cos; Cem: Cemetery; FF: Fontenelle Forest, Sarpy Co; FL: Funk Lagoon, Phelps Co; GPD: Gavins Point Dam, Cedar/Knox Cos; HCR: Harlan Co Res, Harlan Co; ICSP: Indian Cave SP, Nemaha/Richardson Cos; L: Lake; LM: L McConaughy, Keith Co; LO: L Ogallala (+L Keystone), Keith Co; m.ob.: many observers; NM: National Monument; NOURC: Nebraska Ornithologists' Union Records Committee; NWR: National Wildlife Refuge; PL: Pawnee L, Lancaster Co; Res: Reservoir; RWB: Rainwater Basin; eRWB mostly Fillmore, Clay and surrounding counties, wRWB mostly Phelps Co; SCP: Spring Creek Prairie, Lancaster Co; SHP: State Historical Park; SL: Sewage Lagoon(s); SP: State Park; WMA: Wildlife Management Area (State); WP: Wilderness Park, Lincoln; WPA: Waterfowl Production Area (Federal); WSR: Wind Springs Ranch, Sioux Co.

GAZETTEER:

Abomination Marsh: Douglas Co;
 Harvard Marsh WPA: Clay Co;
 Hummel Park: Douglas Co;
 Kiowa WMA: Scotts Bluff Co;
 L Alice: Scotts Bluff Co;
 L Minatare: Scotts Bluff Co;
 Oliver Res: Kimball Co;
 Pine Ridge: Ponderosa Pine-covered escarpment in northwest Nebraska;
 Rowe Sanctuary: Buffalo Co;
 Scotts Bluff NM: Scotts Bluff Co;
 Wildcat Hills NC: Scotts Bluff Co.

OBSERVERS

AD: Ann Duey, Scotts Bluff Co;
 AK: Alice Kenitz, Gering;
 AR: Alice Rumery, Kearney;
 ARe: Allen Reyer, Bellevue;
 AS: Audrey Sterkel, Sidney;
 AW: Anne Wilber, Cherokee, OK;
 BFH: Bill F. Huser, South Sioux City;
 BP: Babs Padelford, Bellevue;
 BW: Bruce Walgren, Casper, WY;
 CC: Cris Carnine, CO;
 CF: Carol Falk, Nebraska City;
 CH: Carolyn Hall, Bassett;
 CHy: Carr Heaney, Omaha;

CNK: Clem N. Klaphake, Bellevue;
CTK: Charles Thornton-Kolbe, CO;
CWH: C.W. (Bill) Huntley, Ogallala;
DC: Donna Chance, Wathena, KS;
DD: Dean Drawbaugh, Scottsbluff;
DL: Daniel Leger, Lincoln;
DM: David Mills, Omaha;
DP: Don Paseka, Ames;
DS: Darrell Shambaugh, Somonauk, IL;
DSt: Dave Stage, Lincoln;
DW: Donna Walgren, Casper, WY;
EB: Elliott Bedows, Bellevue;
EV: Eric Volden, Kearney;
GH: Glen Hoge, Alma;
GHa: Gerard Harbison, Lincoln;
HA: Henry Armknecht, Ovid, CO;
HKH: Helen K. Hughson, Mitchell;
JC: Jamalee Clark, Gering;
JED: James E. Ducey, Omaha;
JGJ: Joel G. Jorgensen, Blair;
JH: Jerry Householder, Mt. Vernon, WA;
JJ: Jan Johnson, Wakefield;
JK: Josef Kren, Lincoln;
JO: Jerry Oldenettel, Socorro, NM;
JP: Jan Paseka, Ames;
JSt: Jon Strong, Omaha;
JT: Jerry Toll, Omaha;
JWH: John W. Hall, Omaha;
KD: Kathy DeLara, Mitchell;
KDn: Kenny Dinan, Grand Island;
KK: Ken Kinman, Hays, KS;
KP: Kevin Poague, Lincoln;
LAG: Linda Andes-Georges, Boulder, CO;
LB: Laurel Badura, Kearney;
LE: Larry Einemann, Lincoln;
LF: Laurence Falk, Nebraska City;
LO: Linda Ollinger, Wilsonville;
LP: Loren Padelford, Bellevue;
LR: Lanny Randolph, Gibbon;
LRB: Linda R. Brown, Lincoln;
MA: Mark Armstrong, Bellevue;
MB: Mark Brogie, Creighton;
ML: Mark Land, Overland Park, KS;
MM: Marty Mathieson, Shelton;
MS: Mary Schatz, Omaha;
MSu: Mark Suomala, Epsom, NH;
MUs: Moni Usasz, Lincoln;
NB: Norma Brockmoller, Winside;
NF: Nancy Fish, Nuckolls Co;
NP: Neva Pruess, Lincoln;
NR: Neal Ratzlaff, Omaha;
PD: Phyllis Drawbaugh, Scottsbluff;

PDU: Paul Dunbar, Hastings;
PL: Paul Lehman, Cape May, NJ;
RE: Rick Eades, Lincoln;
RG: Ruth Green, Bellevue;
RH: Robin Harding, Gibbon;
RS: Rick Schmid, Bellevue;
SJD: Stephen J. Dinsmore, Starkville, MS;
TEL: Thomas E. Labeledz, Lincoln;
TH: Tom Hoffman, Omaha;
TJW: T.J. Walker, Brady;
TP: Theresa Pester, Lincoln;
WH: Wanda Hoge, Alma;
WM: Wayne Mollhoff, Ashland;
WRS: W. Ross Silcock, Tabor, IA.

SPECIES ACCOUNTS

Greater White-fronted Goose: Best single count was 5000 at Freeman Lakes WPA, York Co, and North Lake Basin WMA, Seward Co, 12 Mar (CNK). Total for the eRWB was 40,000-70,000 (JGJ). One was still in north-central Nebraska 15 May (CTK).

Snow Goose: Best single count was an estimated 1,000,000, a "river" of birds for 20 minutes on 3 Mar in the Gibbon area (LR,RH). A local TV report in Kearney put the total at 2,000,000 in the central Platte Valley 15 Mar (fide LR,RH). An estimated 200,000-500,000 were in the eRWB 14 Mar (JGJ).

Ross's Goose: Reports were statewide, peaking at 400 in Lincoln Co 5 Apr (TJW). Other good counts were 300-320 in the eRWB 14-23 Mar (JGJ,PL).

Canada Goose: One was incubating on an early date of 26 Mar in Lincoln Co (TJW).

Brant: One at Rowe Sanctuary 14 Mar was of the eastern race *bernicla* (fide LR,RH); this subspecies is reported most often in Nebraska. There are now 8 spring and 17 fall reports of this species.

Trumpeter Swan: Routine reports.

Tundra Swan: None were reported.

Wood Duck: Earliest brood was of 11 two-day-old young at L Maloney, Lincoln Co, 18 May (TJW).

Gadwall: Routine reports.

Eurasian Wigeon: Regular but rare in spring, there were 2 reports: single males were at Hupp (Prairie Marsh) WMA, Thayer Co, 14 Mar (JGJ, photos), and 2.5 miles south of Geneva 20 Mar (JSt).

American Wigeon: Routine reports.

American Black Duck: None were reported; this is a rare spring migrant in the east.

Mallard: Routine reports.

Blue-winged Teal: Earliest were 4 in the eRWB 14 Mar (JGJ), and best count an excellent 1080 at North Platte SL 2 May (WRS). Record spring count is 1825.

Cinnamon Teal: Widely reported, about 50 in all. Best count was 12 at Schmidt Implement Pond, Scotts Bluff Co, 21 Apr (PD,DD), and reports from the east, where the birds are rare, were of singles at Walnut Creek L, Sarpy Co, 6-10 May (CNK,MS) and at Abomination Marsh 29-30 May (CHy).

Northern Shoveler: A favored location in spring is the North Platte SL, where a record 3700 were counted 2 May (WRS) and "thousands" were present 8 Apr (TJW).

- Northern Pintail:** Good single-location counts in the eRWB 14 Mar were 4500 and 3330, with a day total of 20,000 (JGJ). High spring counts are at 75,000+.
- Green-winged Teal:** Rather late for the location away from known breeding areas were 6 in Cuming Co 25 May (DP,JP). A rather large count for the date was the 146, mostly males, at LM 14 May (SJD); there are surprisingly few breeding records for the state.
- Canvasback:** A female with 6 young was at Rat L, Cherry Co, 21 May (JED). Breeding reports from Cherry Co are few; in recent years most are in Garden Co.
- Redhead:** Four at Alma 29 May (GH,WH) were rather late.
- Ring-necked Duck:** Routine reports.
- Greater Scaup:** May reports are few, but 2 were at Abomination Marsh 3 May (JT), one was 5th latest on record at Walnut Creek L, Sarpy Co, 6-11 May (JSt,CNK).
- Lesser Scaup:** Routine reports.
- Long-tailed Duck:** A rare spring migrant, singles were at unusual locations for the species away from large reservoirs: one at Alma East SL 21 Mar (GH,WH,MSu) and the other at Fairmont SL 4-5 Apr (JGJ, photo, BP,LP).
- Bufflehead:** The only May reports were of up to 20 at LO 2-16 May (WRS,SJD); all appeared to be immatures (WRS).
- Common Goldeneye:** A female remained at LO through 16 May (SJD,TJW), a rather late date.
- Hooded Merganser:** The last alternate male reported was on 16 May at LO (SJD), rather late for a migrant and only the 5th such May record; breeding is almost unknown in Nebraska.
- Common Merganser:** A few stragglers were noted, latest one at BOL 29-31 May (LE); 2 singles were in Scotts Bluff Co 22 May (AK). Four (3 males, one female) were still at LO 19 May (TJW,SJD).
- Red-breasted Merganser:** Rare westward, except at LO and LM, where possibly the same female was sighted 23 Apr (TJW) and 13-15 May (SJD).
- Ruddy Duck:** Best count was the 2nd-highest ever for spring: 400 at North Platte SL 2 May (WRS); 200+ were still there 20 May (TJW).
- Chukar:** A few birds, mostly singles, were reported across the state. These are certainly released or escaped birds, usually related to hunting or dog training (TJW).
- Gray Partridge:** The Panhandle population was represented by 2 that showed up at the WSR back yard in a snow-storm 10 Apr (HKH). None were reported from the north or east.
- Ring-necked Pheasant:** Routine reports.
- Sharp-tailed Grouse:** Easterly were birds at a southern Knox Co lek 25 Apr (MB) and one displaying with prairie-chickens at the well-known Taylor Ranch lek northwest of Grand Island 21 Mar (ML).
- Greater Prairie-Chicken:** Intriguing were reports of booming birds in crop fields rather than the usual grasslands; the degree to which these birds tolerate agricultural practices may turn out to be an important factor in their continued survival in southern Nebraska. Also of interest is that these reports came from counties where few if any prairie-chickens have been noted for some years. A group of 10-15 males was in a cornfield adjacent to grassland in Lincoln Co 17 Mar (TJW), 16 birds, including a female, were in a central Fillmore Co cornfield with no nearby grasslands 24 May (JGJ), and 30-35 birds were in a wheat field planted this year to corn in Franklin Co 23 Mar (NF). Best counts were 100+ at 6 leks in McPherson Co 16 Apr (TJW) and 100 at several leks in Johnson Co 2 Apr, including a lek near Vesta with 30-40 birds (TEL). Furthest northeast were 2 leks with 11 birds in northwest Dixon Co 17 Apr (BFH); at least 20 leks were

located in Knox Co (MB). The Taylor Ranch lek near Grand Island had 20-25 males and 7-10 females 21 Mar (ML).

Wild Turkey: Best count was of 400 in Kearney Co 12 Mar; birds were displaying there later in the month (RG). Earliest nest with eggs was in Lincoln Co 12 Apr (TJW).

Northern Bobwhite: Uncommon in the Niobrara area, one was along Bazile Creek 5 May (BFH). A nest with 10 eggs was found in Harlan Co 23 May (GH,WH), where it is also uncommon. Westerly Platte Valley reports were from Lincoln Co (TJW), Garden Co (BW,DW), and Scotts Bluff Co (AK).

Red-throated Loon: Only the 4th documented spring record was a bird molting into alternate plumage at L Minatare 27 May-2 Jun (PL,JO). All of the documented records are in May-early Jun.

Common Loon: Best count was 12 at LO 23 Apr (TJW), an excellent count for a westerly location.

Pied-billed Grebe: Routine reports.

Horned Grebe: One near North Platte 9-11 Mar was rather early (TJW). About 22 were reported statewide.

Red-necked Grebe: The only report, and only the 2nd documented spring report, was one in alternate plumage at LO 23 Apr (TJW). This species has occurred annually at LO for a few years now, mostly in fall.

Eared Grebe: Two of the best 3 spring counts ever were the 460 at North Platte SL 2 May (WRS) and 392 in Sheridan Co 18 May (SJD).

Western Grebe: Best count was a moderate 713 at LM 13 May (SJD); numbers were ordinary this spring.

Clark's Grebe: Excellent numbers were reported this spring, a total of about 62, including an amazing 48 at LO and LM 14 May (SJD). Only casual in the east, one was at L North, Platte Co, 23 May (DP,JP).

American White Pelican: Best count was a moderate 625 in Dodge Co 14 Mar (JK).

Double-crested Cormorant: Huge numbers were noted this spring, with best counts a record 5000 roosting in trees just west of Odessa 4 Apr (TJW) and 2500 in Dodge Co 14 Apr (JK).

American Bittern: Routine reports.

Least Bittern: None were reported; this is a regular, although uncommon, spring migrant.

Great Blue Heron: New rookeries reported were in Lincoln, with 17 nests 24 Mar (LE); at Pawnee Slough, Lincoln Co, with 5 nests 26 Mar (TJW); and north of Mitchell in Sioux Co, with 11+ nests 17 Apr (AK,PD, DD). Largest rookery reported was 5 miles south of Merritt Res, Cherry Co, with 37 nests 16 May (NP). Earliest rookery activity was rather early on 14 Mar just east of Gothenburg along I-80 (TJW).

Great Egret: Rare westward, with only about 23 Panhandle records, close were 2 at LO 23 Apr (TJW) and one there 15 May (SJD). About 47 were reported in all.

Snowy Egret: Only about 6 were reported, a poor showing. Rare westward, one was at LM 13-15 May (SJD).

Little Blue Heron: About average for a spring, 3 were reported: singles were at Straightwater WMA, Seward Co, 12 May (JGJ), in Clay Co 21 May (JGJ), and at Jack Sinn WMA, Lancaster Co, 29-31 May, an immature (LE).

Cattle Egret: About 49 passed through this spring, a moderate showing.

Green Heron: One at South Sioux City 21 Mar (BFH) was rather early, and singles at LO 14-16 May (SJD), Lewellen 17 May (BW,DW), and at LM 19 May (TJW) were westerly for the species.

Black-crowned Night-Heron: Best count was 12 in Lincoln 9 May (LE).

Yellow-crowned Night-Heron: None were reported; this is a rare spring migrant.

Glossy Ibis: One photographed near Krause WPA, Fillmore Co, 21-22 May (JGJ, PDU) would have been Nebraska's 4th record, but there was some doubt as to its purity; close examination of photos taken by JGJ suggested (see <http://www.jorgensencontracting.com/birding.htm>) some introgression with White-faced Ibis (pers. comm. Jim Arterburn), a probably under-appreciated phenomenon in *Plegadis* ibises on the Great Plains (Arterburn and Grzybowski, *N. Am. Birds* 57:136-139.)

White-faced Ibis: Easterly was one at Abomination Marsh 4 May (JT).

Turkey Vulture: This species is becoming more numerous it seems, with excellent counts of 80 at Gering 3 Apr (AK) and 50+ in Johnson Co 10 Apr (CNK). Rather early were two different birds in Omaha 5 Mar (EB, JGJ) and another at Rowe Sanctuary 8 Mar (GH, WH).

Osprey: Routine reports.

Mississippi Kite: Returning birds were at Ogallala 14-15 May (SJD).

Bald Eagle: Nesting was underway in Apr at sites near Odessa (LR, RH) and at DeSoto NWR, Washington Co (DS), and, for the 13th year, chicks were present at L Alice 17 Apr (fide AK). Late adults, likely nesting nearby, were at Burwell 25 Apr (LR, RH) and in Kearney Co 28 Apr (RG), the latter likely from the Odessa nest site. An older immature was near an unoccupied nest in Lincoln Co 12 May (TJW).

Northern Harrier: Excellent spring counts were the 30-40 in southwest Nebraska 30 Mar (TJW) and 24 (eating waterfowl corpses!) in the eRWB 14 Mar (JGJ). A pair was building a nest at HCR 12 May (SJD).

Sharp-shinned Hawk: Routine reports.

Cooper's Hawk: Routine reports.

Northern Goshawk: Two were reported, one each at Harvard Marsh 28 Mar (PDU) and at ICSP 4 Apr (WRS).

Red-shouldered Hawk: None were reported; this species occurs most years at FF.

Broad-winged Hawk: Few were reported, typical of recent springs. A surprise was a one-year-old bird at LO 15 May (SJD, WRS), where it is rare. One was at FF 17 Apr (CNK, BP, LP) but unreported subsequently, while 1-2 at Hummel Park 3 May (JT) and 31 May (BP, LP) may have been nesting, as likely was one at ICSP 30 May (WRS).

Swainson's Hawk: Earliest was in Lincoln Co 29 Mar (TJW), and best count 54 near Mitchell 29 Apr, including one dark phase bird (KD). First nest-building noted was in Lincoln Co 26 Apr (TJW).

Red-tailed Hawk: Earliest incubating bird was at Republican City 7 Mar (GH, WH). A nest with 2 chicks was in Omaha's Towl Park 9 May (NR). Only one "Harlan's Hawk" was reported, at HCR 28 Mar (AR)

Ferruginous Hawk: Routine reports.

Rough-legged Hawk: Routine reports.

Golden Eagle: One was incubating in Long Canyon, Banner Co, 1 May (WRS).

American Kestrel: Routine reports.

Merlin: Only 9 were reported, scattered statewide through 15 May in Keith Co (JT).

Prairie Falcon: Easterly were singles at FL 28 Mar (AR) and near Alma 29 Mar (GH, WH).

Peregrine Falcon: An amazing 5 were counted at LM 13 May (SJD); about 13 were reported in total statewide. Of interest was a pair nesting in Topeka, KS, both of which were fledged in Omaha, the male in 1999 and the female in 2002 (DC). One in Lincoln Co 31 Mar was rather early (DS).

Virginia Rail: Routine reports.

Sora: One at Nathan's L, Washington Co, 21 Apr (JT) was a little early.

American Coot: Best count was an excellent 1645 in Lancaster Co 17 Apr (LE).

Sandhill Crane: Numbers peaked at about 500,000 in the Fort Kearny area of central Nebraska late Mar (RG); "hundreds of thousands" were said to be in one field near Doniphan 20 Mar (ML). Clearly it is difficult to estimate numbers of these birds! A good westerly concentration was the 12,000-15,000 between Hershey and North Platte 24 Mar (TJW), and 500 were in Scotts Bluff Co 2 Apr (fide KD).

Whooping Crane: A single with Sandhill Cranes was along the Platte River in Hall Co 8-14 Mar; it had wintered in northern Texas, never reaching Aransas (AW); it was likely the bird seen flying north with Sandhill Cranes over Hays, KS, 10 Feb (KK). The only other report was of two pairs of adults below the Carns bridge on the Niobrara River 15-16 Apr; 2 others were upstream from there (fide CH).

Black-bellied Plover: A good count was the 49 at LM 15 May (SJD).

American Golden-Plover: Good numbers moved through the eRWB in early May, peaking at an excellent 500 on 9 May (JGJ). Rather early were 12 there on 4 Apr (JGJ), and a basic-plumaged bird at LM 27 May (PL) was tardy.

Snowy Plover: Numbers are increasing in the state, most obviously at LM and HCR due to extensive drought-induced exposed shoreline, but the 5 migrants reported in the RWB were also more than usual: 2 were in Adams Co 28 Apr (PDu, RG, EV), and 3 separate singles were in the eRWB 9 May (JGJ). A new nesting location (the 3rd known) was HCR, where 3 pairs and a lone male as well as a nest with 3 eggs were found 12 May (SJD). A total of 7 had arrived at LM by 27 May (PL, JO), following a male there 13 May (SJD).

Semipalmated Plover: Routine reports.

Piping Plover: As with Snowy Plover, numbers of this species are increasing. An excellent count of 11 migrants at 8 eRWB locations was made 1-3 May (JGJ). Another 11 were at the west end of LM by 2 May (WRS), and numbers had increased to 103 at LM by 14 May (SJD).

Killdeer: Large flocks of migrants were noted in the eRWB 14 Mar; 141 and 87 were the biggest, with a total of 442 birds counted (JGJ). Earliest young were still in a nest 28 Apr in Dodge Co (DP, JP), and young were running along a road 2 May near Lincoln (LE).

Mountain Plover: The only reports were from the Kimball Co stronghold: 4 birds on 16 Mar (CC fide AK), the earliest date ever by 10 days, and a single on 17 May (SJD).

Black-necked Stilt: This species is becoming more generally established in the Panhandle. A total of 17 birds, 7 pairs plus 3 males, were found in Sheridan Co 18 May (SJD), and a pair was nesting at the County Road F Pond, near Kiowa WMA, by 22 May (KD, AK, PL, JO). A single was in the wet meadows north of North Platte airport 26 May (fide TJW).

American Avocet: Earliest were 16 in Cherry Co 28 Mar, seen in flight from a helicopter, no less (JED). Several pairs were nesting in the Kiowa WMA area by 17 Apr (AK), and an adult with 4 small chicks was seen there 25 May (KD).

Greater Yellowlegs: Rather late were singles near Waco 15 May (JGJ) and at Abomination Marsh 30 May (CHy).

Lesser Yellowlegs: Routine reports.

Solitary Sandpiper: One at the North Platte Fish Hatchery 27 May (TJW) was 3rd latest ever for spring.

Willet: Uncommon in the east and also rather late was one at Abomination Marsh

- 30 May (CHy). Good eastern counts were 18 near Hastings 28 Apr (PDu) and 18 at Tecumseh SL 25 Apr (CNK).
- Spotted Sandpiper:** An excellent count was 31 at LM 13 May (SJD); most of these were probably migrants, but the 18 in Scotts Bluff Co 27 May (KD) were likely local breeders.
- Upland Sandpiper:** A good count was 19 in Sheridan Co 18 May (SJD). At this location and date, these were likely local breeders.
- Whimbrel:** LM is a favored location for migrants during the short migration window: 63, a record spring tally, were there 16 May, but only one on 14 May and 10 on 15 May (SJD). Rare elsewhere, one was at North Hultine WPA, Clay Co, 11 May (JGJ).
- Long-billed Curlew:** Only the 2nd RWB record in the last 50 years was one well-described at Deep Well WMA, Hamilton Co, 16 Apr (KDn); the other was in Fillmore Co 27 Apr 2003 (JGJ). Singles in central Cherry Co 21 Mar (JED) and at WSR 23 Mar (HKH) were 2nd and 4th earliest ever. A good count was 10 in the meadow north of LO 23 Apr (TJW); concentrations are unusual in spring.
- Hudsonian Godwit:** A good count was 70 in the eRWB 9 May (JGJ). Rare westward, one was at LM 27 May (PL,JO).
- Marbled Godwit:** Rather late was one at LM 27 May (PL,JO). Peak count at LM was 31 on 2 May (WRS), and 15 were in the meadow north of LO by 23 Apr (TJW). The 13 birds east of Creighton 25 Apr (MB) were the most easterly this spring.
- Ruddy Turnstone:** About normal for spring were the 8 birds in 4 locations: one in York Co 12 May (JGJ), 4 at LM 13-15 May (SJD), one in the eRWB 21 May (JGJ), and 2 at L North, Platte Co, 23 May (DP,JP). The LM record is only the 12th for the western half of the state.
- Sanderling:** An excellent count was 142 at LM and LO 14 May (SJD); the 3 highest spring counts are from LM and all are 14-15 May.
- Semipalmated Sandpiper:** Best count was 700 at Prairie Marsh WMA, Thayer Co, 3 May (JGJ).
- Western Sandpiper:** Reports of this rare spring migrant during the expected migration period, late Apr and early May, were of singles at Deep Well WMA, Hamilton Co, 27 Apr (LB); in Kearney Co 28 Apr (RG); 3 at the North Platte Fish Hatchery 5 May (TJW); and one in the Valentine area 15 May (MB, CTK). Rather late was one compared to Semipalmated Sandpipers in Dodge Co 23 May (DP,JP, details).
- Least Sandpiper:** Rather early were singles near Alda 22 Mar (PL) and at Harvard Marsh, Clay Co, 28 Mar (PDu).
- White-rumped Sandpiper:** Routine reports.
- Baird's Sandpiper:** A record spring count was the 1000+ in the eRWB 9 May (JGJ); 929 were at 3 locations 6 May (JGJ).
- Pectoral Sandpiper:** Routine reports.
- Dunlin:** Few were reported, including one at LM 13 May (SJD), only the 7th for Lincoln Co westward. The only other reports were of one in the eRWB 2 May (JGJ), 3 in Sarpy Co 6 May (CNK), and one near Valentine 15 May (MB,CTK).
- Stilt Sandpiper:** Routine reports.
- Buff-breasted Sandpiper:** Joel Jorgensen was studying this species in the eRWB this spring and found a remarkable 2174 birds 1-25 May, including single-location counts of 121 near Griess WPA, Fillmore Co, 22 May and 111 at Freeman Lakes WPA, York Co, 6 May. The total represents about 15% of the world population of the species, highlighting the significance of the extremely narrow eRWB migration corridor for Buff-breasted Sandpipers. No others were

reported.

Short-billed Dowitcher: Good numbers, about 120, were reported at appropriate times and locations for this species, 2-21 May. Best counts were 40 at Abomination Marsh 4 May (JT) and 28-55 at LM 16-19 May (SJD,TJW). Rather late was one identified by calls at Jack Sinn WMA 29-31 May (LE).

Long-billed Dowitcher: Amazing counts were made in the eRWB; an all-wetlands-covered record was the 3435 on 1-3 May, a record single-day total was the 3257 on 2 May, and a record single location count was the 1670 at North Lake Basin WMA, Seward Co, 1 May (JGJ).

Wilson's Snipe: An indication of the large numbers that pass through undetected came from the eRWB 4 Apr, where a Red-tailed Hawk flushed 46 at one wetland and a 200-foot walk at another wetland flushed 25; the day's total was 77 (JGJ). Unexpected was one displaying in Burt Co 6 May (DP,JP), somewhat southeast of the usual breeding range.

American Woodcock: The only reports involved singles at ADF 19 Mar (LE) and at South Sioux City the same day (BFH), but "multi" birds were at Grove Lake WMA, Antelope Co, 31 Mar (MB). The latter is an indication that the breeding range is spreading westward in the Elkhorn River Valley.

Wilson's Phalarope: The North Platte SL is a staging area for this species in spring; a careful count of 8760 there on 2 May (WRS) was only the 2nd highest (to 10,000 on 6 May 1996). An excellent count also was the 3591 in Garden Co 13 May (SJD), the 3rd highest spring count ever.

Red-necked Phalarope: By far a record spring count was the 460 in Sheridan Co 18 May (SJD). Reports were from the eRWB westward.

Franklin's Gull: Best count was a moderate 1750 in Garfield Co 25 Apr (LR,RH).

Bonaparte's Gull: Rather late was one at HCR 30 May, the only one seen there during the season (GH, WH).

Ring-billed Gull: Routine reports.

California Gull: Few were reported. One was at Oliver Res 17 May (LE), and the others were at LM, where 8 were found 13 May, including 2 adults, 5 2nd alternate, and one 1st alternate (SJD), and 4 on 27 May (PL,JO).

Herring Gull: An adult at LM 13 May (SJD) provided the latest spring date for an adult on record; most adults are gone before May.

Lesser Black-backed Gull: A first-winter bird at GPD 13 Mar was the first Knox Co record (MB) and 19th Nebraska spring record.

Glaucous Gull: The only report was of one in Sarpy Co 20 Mar (EB).

Great Black-backed Gull: A first alternate bird was at LM 15-16 May (SJD, details); this is only the 5th documented spring record for Nebraska and about the 16th overall.

Caspian Tern: Most sightings are in May and Jun, and so surprising were two mid-Apr reports. Two in southern Dodge Co 17 Apr (JK) were record early, and one at LO 23 Apr (TJW) was also rather early.

Common Tern: Few were reported, with 1-3 at LM 13-27 May (SJD,PL,JO) and one at South Sioux City 13 May (BFH).

Forster's Tern: Good counts were 90 at BOL 9 May (LE) and 90 at LM 13 May (SJD).

Least Tern: This species arrives in Nebraska rather late; earliest was one at LM 16 May (SJD). Another was there 27 May (PL), and, rare in the eRWB, one was at Spikerush WMA, York Co, 17 May (JGJ). No others were reported.

Black Tern: Best count was a moderate 600 at LM 15 May (SJD).

Rock Pigeon: Routine reports.

Eurasian Collared-Dove: The only first county record was for Arthur Co, 14 May

(SJD), leaving 16 counties without records: Adams, Blaine, Boyd, Cedar, Cherry, Gosper, Grant, Hooker, Jefferson, Keya Paha, Logan, Loup, Pawnee, Saline, Sherman, and Thomas.

Ringed Turtle-Dove: A few appear to be occurring with Eurasian Collared-Doves; some were released near Mitchell recently (see Winter Report), and one with collared-doves at a Brady feeder 26 Apr was photographed (TJW).

White-winged Dove: Reports continue to accumulate for this species, which is moving northward on the Great Plains. The 3 singles reported were near Krause WPA, Fillmore Co, 2 May, the first eRWB record (JGJ), in Omaha 17 May (DC), and at West Lawn Cem, Gering, 26 May (PL,JO). There are now 29 records, all since 1988.

Mourning Dove: Earliest young reported were in Lincoln 12 May (NP).

Black-billed Cuckoo: Only 3 were reported, singles at ICSP 12 May (SJD) and 22 May (WRS), and at SCP 19 May (KP).

Yellow-billed Cuckoo: A record spring count was 26 at ICSP 22 May (WRS).

Greater Roadrunner: By far the most exciting record of the spring was Nebraska's first roadrunner (pending NOURC acceptance), a bird that ran across the road 29 Mar a mile northwest of Funk in front of a car driven by folks familiar with the species (JH, details). There have been recent records not far from Nebraska, notably at Lawrence, KS, and at other locations in northern Kansas. Considering the influx of armadillos, White-winged Doves, and hot sauce, a roadrunner is not too surprising!

Barn Owl: At least 4 individuals were found in the LM area 13-27 May (SJD, BW,DW,PL, m.ob.), and two were roosting in a barn in Scotts Bluff Co 17 Apr (AK). Another was in a cedar at Pawnee Slough, Lincoln Co, 26 Apr (TJW).

Eastern Screech-Owl: Routine reports.

Great Horned Owl: Routine reports.

Burrowing Owl: Excellent counts were the 15-20 in Kearney Co 28 Apr (RG) and 15 at the Scottsbluff Landfill area 8 May (PD,DD). Prairie Dog WPA, Kearney Co, hosted 5-6 on 17 Apr (MS).

Barred Owl: At the west edge of the range was one east of Crete in Saline Co (LE).

Long-eared Owl: The only reports were of singles in Dodge Co 28 Mar (DP,JP) and along Verdigre Creek in Knox Co 7 Apr (MB).

Short-eared Owl: The two reports were from areas where breeding probably occurs: one at Walgren L, Sheridan Co, 5 May (BW,DW), and one at Kiowa WMA 25 May (KD).

Northern Saw-whet Owl: Patient work by Mark Brogie with help from Dave Heidt in the upper Verdigre River and Merriman Creek watersheds in Antelope and Knox Cos located 5 calling birds, 3 in Antelope Co 31 Mar-7 Apr, and 2 in Knox Co 7 Apr. This is the area where a road-killed juvenile was found on 25 May 2002 (MB), and is indicative that breeding is occurring in the area. There has been no confirmed breeding in Nebraska for many years; until 2002 it was assumed that breeding occurred on the Pine Ridge, but no evidence exists.

Common Nighthawk: Routine reports.

Common Poor-will: Routine reports.

Chuck-will's-widow: One was reported 29 May at Wolf L, Saunders Co (TH), a regular summering location.

Whip-poor-will: One 8 miles north of Creighton 23 Apr (MB) was both rather early and towards the west edge of the range.

Chimney Swift: Routine reports.

White-throated Swift: Rather early were 4 at Scotts Bluff NM, Scotts Bluff Co, 18 Apr (PD,DD).

- Ruby-throated Hummingbird:** This species is only casual in the western half of the state, and so unexpected was a male in the observer's Brady yard 9-22 May; no female was seen (TJW). This is only the 3rd documented record for the western half of Nebraska; observers should not assume that hummingbirds seen west of about Grand Island (or anywhere) are Ruby-throats! An unidentified hummingbird at honeysuckle in Scottsbluff mid-late May could have been almost anything (fide AK).
- Belted Kingfisher:** Routine reports.
- Red-headed Woodpecker:** A good count of birds which probably wintered was 12 at ICSP 14 Mar (WRS).
- Red-bellied Woodpecker:** Routine reports.
- Yellow-bellied Sapsucker:** One in Loup Co 30 May (DSt) was rather late; there are only 3 Jun and a few Jul records, but breeding is unknown. Intriguing was a report of a sapsucker near Odessa 29 Mar that had a red head and breast (LB); unfortunately it could not be refound.
- Downy Woodpecker:** Routine reports.
- Hairy Woodpecker:** Routine reports.
- Northern Flicker:** An excellent count was 40-50 in Lincoln Co 27 Mar, including 2-3 "Red-shafted" Flickers (TJW).
- Pileated Woodpecker:** Reports were from regular locations: a pair nesting again this year in FF was noted 22 Apr (CNK), and one was heard at ICSP 22 May (WRS).
- Olive-sided Flycatcher:** Only 3 were reported, at Towl Park, Omaha, 19 May (NR), ICSP 22 May (WRS), and at ADF 24 May (LF,CF).
- Western Wood-Pewee:** Five singles were reported in the Panhandle, earliest one on 17 May at WSR (HKH) and another the same day at Oliver Res (LE).
- Eastern Wood-Pewee:** One was seen well by several observers at LO 15 May (LE,WRS,SJD); its lower mandible was entirely yellow and it lacked a "vested" appearance. Two reports in the east during the first week of Apr were unconfirmed; neither calling bird was seen, and starlings or Black-capped Chickadee (BFH) vocalizations can sound like pewees. Normal arrival is in early May.
- Yellow-bellied Flycatcher:** There were 2 reports: one was calling and seen well at ICSP 12 May (SJD) and another was well seen, although silent, at Krimlofski Tract, Neale Woods, 23 May (WRS).
- Acadian Flycatcher:** Earliest was one calling in eastern Otoe Co 14 May near where one was heard last year (LF,CF). Excellent numbers were evident at ICSP, where 8 were located 22 May (WRS) and one on 29 May (BP,LP). No others were reported.
- Alder Flycatcher:** One was banded and measured at SCP 19 May (KP), but a sighting for 9 May, a rather early date, was undocumented. Five others were reported 22-24 May (BP,LP,WRS,NR). Earliest documented date is 12 May (specimen).
- Willow Flycatcher:** Reports were statewide; earliest reports were singles at WP 8 May (RE) and ADF 9 May (LF,CF).
- Least Flycatcher:** Reports were numerous, starting with one at FF 4 May (BP,LP) and peaking with counts of 8 at Walnut Grove Park, Omaha, 21 May (JWH,WRS) and in Dixon Co 23 May (JJ). Last were 4 in Dixon Co 25 May (JJ).
- Dusky Flycatcher:** There were two reports by very experienced observers. One was at West Lawn Cem, Gering, 17 May (SJD) and the other at Oliver Res 25-26 May (PL,JO). This is a casual spring migrant in the Panhandle, now with 4 records 9-26 May.
- Cordilleran Flycatcher:** The only report of a migrant was of at least one bird at WSR 17-21 May (HKH). There are few reports of this species away from the

breeding range, none well-documented.

Eastern Phoebe: Earliest were 2 singing birds at ICSP 14 Mar (WRS).

Say's Phoebe: Rather early, and easternmost, was one at Stamford 21 Mar (GH,WH).

Great Crested Flycatcher: Earliest were 2 at ADF 30 Apr (LF,CF).

Cassin's Kingbird: Near the eastern edge of the Nebraska range was one north of Rushville 18 May (SJD). Two pairs were at the regular location south of Redington 20 May (WM).

Western Kingbird: The 4th earliest ever was one near Gibbon 3 Apr (KD); there are late Mar records for Colorado. An amazing tally was the 311 in Keith Co 13 May (SJD), easily a record spring count.

Eastern Kingbird: Also on 13 May in Keith Co, 94 were counted (SJD), a 3:1 numerical advantage to Western Kingbirds at that location and date. Another great count and record was the 196 at HCR 12 May (SJD). Who but SJD would count kingbirds??

Scissor-tailed Flycatcher: A pair found in North Platte 18 May could not be refound later (TJW). This is the 31st spring report of this species.

Northern Shrike: Routine reports.

Loggerhead Shrike: A good count was the 23 in the Panhandle 1 May (WRS).

Bell's Vireo: A good count was 8 singing males north of Hershey 22 May (TJW).

Yellow-throated Vireo: Rather early was one at ADF 23 Apr (LF,CF), and a good count was the 6 at ICSP 29 May (BP,LP). At the western edge of its range in Knox Co, one at Bazile Creek WMA 10 May was at one of only 3 known summering locations in the county (MB). Westerly was one along the Niobrara River about 5 miles west of Norden Bridge 15 May (CTK).

Plumbeous Vireo: Five migrants were reported 15-27 May, east to Ash Hollow SHP (BW,DW,SJD,AK,PL,JO).

Blue-headed Vireo: Some 13 birds were reported 4-22 May, the latest somewhat westerly at Orleans (GH,WH); this appears to be only the 3rd spring record west of Grand Island.

Warbling Vireo: Routine reports.

Philadelphia Vireo: Four were reported, a good spring for this species. Singles were in southwest Dixon Co 29 Apr (JJ), rather early, Swanson Park, Omaha, 8 May (CNK), Bazile Creek WMA, Knox Co, 10 May (MB), and at ICSP 12 May (SJD).

Red-eyed Vireo: An excellent count was the 48 at ICSP 12 May (SJD).

Blue Jay: Routine reports.

Pinyon Jay: None were reported; this species is resident on the Pine Ridge.

Black-billed Magpie: Adults were feeding young near Brule 17 May (TJW). The observers were prevented from discharging their ornithological duties (nest checking) by a pair that nested in a rather thorny locust tree at the edge of their range in Dodge Co (DP,JP). Two near Buckskin WMA, Dixon Co, 17 Apr (BFH) were also at the eastern edge of the range.

American Crow: Routine reports.

Horned Lark: One was carrying nest material near ICSP 14 Mar (WRS), and fledged young were found in Dodge Co 16 Apr (DP,JP).

Purple Martin: Earliest was one at Minden 26 Mar (RG) and westerly a female at LO 15 May (TEL). Four were huddled in a snowstorm at Alma 12 Apr (GH,WH).

Tree Swallow: Rather early were 3 at FF 20 Mar (EB).

Violet-green Swallow: One at Chilibaba West Pond, Scotts Bluff Co, 23 Apr (fide AK) was record early.

Northern Rough-winged Swallow: Rather early were singles at FF 3 Apr (EB) and

in Franklin Co 4 Apr (JSt). Nesting was underway in Dundy Co by 21 Apr, with 3+ pairs carrying nesting material (TJW).

Bank Swallow: Routine reports.

Cliff Swallow: Rather early were singles at Odessa 4 Apr (LR,RH) and Alma 6 Apr (GH,WH).

Cave Swallow: An adult grounded with a large group of Cliff Swallows by cold weather at LO was observed 13 May (SJD, details). This is the 5th Nebraska record, and first of an adult.

Barn Swallow: Rather early were singles in Nuckolls Co 3 Apr (JSt) and Clay Co 4 Apr (JGJ).

Black-capped Chickadee: Concern continued for this species in the southern part of the state. In Buffalo Co none had been seen since Dec 2002 (MM), none for two springs in southern Lancaster Co (GHa), they were absent from a yard in Bellevue (RG), none had been to another yard in Scotts Bluff Co for a year (KD), and none had appeared since last fall in a Nuckolls Co yard (NF). One in southwest Dixon Co was having difficulty moving properly and a dead bird found later was probably the same (JJ). Where they are seen, numbers are low, such as in Lancaster Co (LE), and Scotts Bluff Co (KD). Opinions center around drought, which has been extreme in southern and western Nebraska, and West Nile Virus. Numbers seem to be normal along the Missouri River, however.

Tufted Titmouse: Routine reports.

Red-breasted Nuthatch: Only one was reported away from likely breeding areas: it was at Wyuka Cem, Lincoln, 6 Mar (LE). One at Steer Creek Campground, Cherry Co, 9 Mar (JED) and 3 in Pine Canyon, western Custer Co, 18 Mar were in intriguing habitat for potential breeding (TJW).

White-breasted Nuthatch: A pair cleaning out a nesting hole in a cottonwood at Riverside Park, Scottsbluff, 28 Apr and 8 May (AK) posed a dilemma as to which subspecies they belonged; the evidence to date suggests that the eastern subspecies *cookei* is spreading west along the North Platte Valley.

Pygmy Nuthatch: The only report was of 2 at an expected location along Old Stage Hill Road, Scotts Bluff Co, 29 May (AK).

Brown Creeper: Last wintering bird was at Wyuka Cem, Lincoln, 16 Apr (LE), but one at Krimlofski Tract, Neale Woods, 23 May was very likely breeding there, although no evidence could be detected (WRS). One was building a nest there in spring 2003 (CNK).

Rock Wren: Routine reports.

Carolina Wren: Numbers appeared to be down this spring; few were reported, all from the lower Missouri Valley except for one westerly straggler near Kearney 20 Mar (LAG).

House Wren: One at Bellevue 12 Apr (RG) was rather early.

Winter Wren: Routine reports.

Sedge Wren: Typical of spring migration, few were reported, 4 in the east 4-29 May (JJ,RE,LE), and 2 a bit further west, at Harvard Marsh 18 May (JGJ) and near Valentine 15 May (CTK).

Marsh Wren: Routine reports.

Golden-crowned Kinglet: Indicating an early move northward were 5 at Ord 7 Mar (LR,RH) and one at Steer Creek Campground, Cherry Co, 9 Mar (JED). Early dates in the north are in mid-late Mar. Few were reported.

Ruby-crowned Kinglet: One at WP may have wintered (LE), although early spring dates are in mid-Mar. Late spring dates tend to be from the west; last reported was at LO 15 May (CNK).

Blue-gray Gnatcatcher: Nestbuilding was underway rather early in Bellevue 21 Apr

(BP,LP) and in WP 25 Apr (LE). Rarest in central Nebraska, one was at Lange WPA, Clay Co, 2 May (JGJ). At the east edge of the western range, where numbers and distribution continue to increase, one was in Sidney 22 May (AS), another was along highway 385 north of Bridgeport 17 May (SJD), and 2 were just north of Ash Hollow SHP 17 May (BW,DW).

Eastern Bluebird: Nest boxes were being tended in Brady 7 Mar (TJW), at ICSP 14 Mar (WRS), and in Nuckolls Co 16 Mar (NF). An egg was in a nest in Lancaster Co 3 Apr (LRB) and 5 eggs were in a Nuckolls Co nest 12 Apr (NF). In southwest Dixon Co 2-3 day-old hatchlings were present 30 Apr, the observer's earliest ever (JJ).

Mountain Bluebird: Migrants, 37, were on the move in ScottsBluff Co 11 Mar (PD,DD), and rather late for migrants were a pair at Bushnell Cem 1 May (WRS). Most birds are on the breeding grounds by mid-Mar.

Townsend's Solitaire: One was still in Kearney Co 28 Apr (RG), rather late for the location. Few were reported.

Veery: Of the 4 reported, all were in the west, where the western subspecies occurs, 12-26 May. Two were in Lincoln Co 12-14 May (TJW), one was at LO 16 May (SJD), and one was at Oliver Res 26 May (PL,JO). This species occurs with about equal frequency from the extreme east and west, although most recent reports have been from the west.

Gray-cheeked Thrush: The only reports were from Lancaster Co 9 May (LE) and South Sioux City 21 May (BFH).

Swainson's Thrush: As with Veery, far more were reported in the west, including an amazing 40 at Oliver Res and Bushnell 25 May (PL,JO). Only 6 were banded in Bellevue, 3 of those on 11 May (RG). Rather early for the west was one at WSR 29 Apr (HKH).

Hermit Thrush: One at WSR 9 Mar (HKH) likely wintered locally; early migrants arrive in the west in very late Mar. An additional 10 were reported 14 Mar-22 Apr, all from the east; the 14 Mar bird at WP (LE) may have wintered in the area.

Wood Thrush: Tying a record early date was one in Bellevue 23 Apr (CNK), and one near Valentine 15 May (CTK,MB) was at the west edge of the migration range.

American Robin: Nestbuilding by 3 pairs was underway in Lincoln Co 24 Mar (TJW), eggs were present at Brady 20 Apr (TJW), and first fledged young were observed there 12 May (TJW).

Gray Catbird: Rather early for the Panhandle was one at WSR 12 May (HKH); one in Kearney Co 28 Apr (RG) was also a bit early.

Northern Mockingbird: This species appears to be increasing its numbers in Nebraska; about 17 were reported, including 4 in southeast Gage and southwest Pawnee Cos 27 Apr (BP,LP).

Brown Thrasher: Rather early for the east was one at ADF 3 Apr (LF,CF); it may have wintered nearby. Another in Dundy Co 21 Apr (TJW) was also rather early for the westerly location. A nest with 4 eggs was found north of Hershey 27 May (TJW).

Curve-billed Thrasher: The long-staying bird at the Frimann Ranch in southeast Sioux Co continued its unusual behavior patterns by repeatedly feeding a brood of Common Grackle nestlings 27 May (PL,JO). This bird was first noted at the ranch 20 Oct 2002.

European Starling: Routine reports.

American Pipit: Rather early was one in the eRWB 14 Mar (JGJ), and record late was one at Yellowthroat WMA, Brown Co, 31 May (LR,RH). A good count was 23 in southwest Dixon Co 30 Apr (JJ).

- Sprague's Pipit:** Although regularly seen in fall at SCP, the first spring sightings there were of 7 on 15 Apr and 2 on 23 Apr (KP). Rarely reported elsewhere, 2 were in Sarpy Co 23 Apr (CNK).
- Cedar Waxwing:** The phenomenon of large flocks moving through the state in late May has been mentioned here before; another example was the "hundreds", including a flock of 300+, in cedars at the Maranatha Bible Camp, Lincoln Co, 28 May (TJW). It has been suggested (*Birds of Missouri*, Robbins and Easterla) that these are migrants which wintered far to the south of the United States.
- Blue-winged Warbler:** A singing male seen by many at LO 15 May (KP, SJD, m.ob.) was the 2nd Keith Co record; there are 2 spring Panhandle records.
- Golden-winged Warbler:** The only report was of one at University of Nebraska-Lincoln, Lincoln, 18 May (TEL). Reports have been fewer in recent years.
- Tennessee Warbler:** A surprising number of singles was reported westward. Bringing the Panhandle total of records to 30 were singles at Ash Hollow SHP 15 May (SJD), Box Butte Co 18 May (SJD), and Gering Cem 27 May (PL,JO). Close to the Panhandle were singles at LO 15 May (SJD) and North Platte 18 May (TJW). Best count was 51 at ICSP 12 May (SJD).
- Orange-crowned Warbler:** Routine reports.
- Nashville Warbler:** Good counts were 7 at Walnut Grove Park, Omaha, 6 and 9 May (JWH). All reports were from the east, as expected.
- Northern Parula:** A good count was 9 at ICSP 22 May (WRS), while westerly was one singing at LO 15 May (SJD, m.ob.). Surprisingly, there are 13 Panhandle reports.
- Yellow Warbler:** A good count was the 50+ in Lincoln Co 14 May (TJW).
- Chestnut-sided Warbler:** Good numbers were reported, a total of 16, including 4 at Walnut Grove Park, Omaha, 21 May (JWH). Westerly, where it is rare, one was near Bridgeport in Morrill Co 17 May (SJD), and another was at Oliver Res 17 May (LE). These bring the total of Panhandle records to 14.
- Magnolia Warbler:** Only 9 were reported, west to Pintail WMA, Hamilton Co, where one was seen 12 May (JGJ).
- Cape May Warbler:** The only report was of a female at Smith L WMA, Sheridan Co, 18 May (SJD, details). This is only the 15th record since 1982, and 5th ever from the Panhandle.
- Black-throated Blue Warbler:** The two reports were widely scattered and rather late: a female was at West Lawn Cem, Gering, 27 May (JO,PL) and a singing male was at Krimlofski Tract, Neale Woods, 28 May (CNK). The Gering Cem sighting was only the 3rd for the Panhandle in spring; there are far fewer records in spring than in fall.
- Yellow-rumped (Audubon's) Warbler:** A good count of migrants was the 4 males and a female in the Panhandle 2 May (WRS).
- Yellow-rumped (Myrtle) Warbler:** Best count was 31 in the Panhandle 2 May, 29 of which were males; compare with Audubon's Warbler above (WRS). One at a feeder in Hitchcock Co 5 Mar (JSt) was early or may have wintered nearby, while 5 at ADF 29 May (LF,CF) were rather late.
- Black-throated Green Warbler:** The only report was surprisingly of 2 singing males at LO 15 May (SJD, m.ob.). This species is very rare westward, with only one Panhandle record.
- Blackburnian Warbler:** Five of the 6 reports were from the east, but a surprise was a male at Smith L WMA, Sheridan Co, 18 May (SJD). The latter is the 11th Panhandle spring record. Rather late was one at Hummel Park 28 May (CNK).
- Yellow-throated Warbler:** Early to arrive, one was at FF 9 Apr (RS), the 2nd-earliest date ever. FF is a regular breeding location; 2 were singing there 16 Apr

- and 2 were carrying nest material 1 May (BP,LP). High count at FF for the spring was 3 on 22 Apr (CNK). None were reported elsewhere.
- Palm Warbler:** Only 4 were reported, singles at FF 29 Apr (CHy), 2 May (BP,LP), and 5 May (BP,LP), as well as one at LO 15 May (SJD), where it is rare. The LO bird was of the yellowish eastern race, for which there are now 7 Nebraska records, 2 from LO.
- Bay-breasted Warbler:** Normally rare in spring, there were 3 reports, two westerly. One at LO 16 May (JT) and another in Brown Co 18 May (NP) were only the 6th and 7th spring records for the western half of the state; another was in Cuming Co 10 May (DP,JP).
- Blackpoll Warbler:** Good numbers were reported for this statewide migrant; rarer westward, a female was at Oliver Res 17 May (SJD), another was in Cherry Co 22 May (JED), and one was in Scotts Bluff Co 24 May (AD).
- Cerulean Warbler:** A persistently-singing male returned to the north end of Hummel Park 6 May (JT); it was seen there through the period, and was accompanied by a female (WRS,BFH). There were 2 males singing there 31 May (BP,LP). Additional singing males were at ICSP 22 May through the period (WRS), and at Krimlofski Tract, Neale Woods, 23 May (WRS), but not later (CNK,WRS).
- Black-and-white Warbler:** Routine reports.
- American Redstart:** Good counts were 28 at ICSP 22 May (WRS) and 24 there 12 May (SJD).
- Prothonotary Warbler:** The few reports were from summering localities; 1-2 were at FF (BP,LP,ARe,CHy, CNK), one was at ICSP (SJD,WRS), and one was at the north end of Neale Woods (WRS). None were at the Hormel Park, Fremont, outpost due to dry conditions (DP,JP).
- Worm-eating Warbler:** The only report was of one at ICSP 22 May (WRS); this is a casual spring migrant.
- Ovenbird:** Routine reports.
- Northern Waterthrush:** Although expected statewide, a good Panhandle count was the 3 at Oliver Res 17 May (SJD). Six were found at FF 1-8 May by 2 observers (BP,LP).
- Louisiana Waterthrush:** More than usual were reported, a total of about 10 in known summering locations, except for sightings at SCP 15 and 23 Apr and 18 May (KP), and one singing at Brownville Cem 25 Apr (WRS). Unexpected was one as far north as Crystal Cove L, South Sioux City, 25 Apr (BFH).
- Kentucky Warbler:** Numbers were good this spring, especially at ICSP, where 12 were counted 22 May (WRS) and 9 males were heard 12 May (SJD). Reports of about 18 birds were received, all from the Missouri Valley, except for a most surprising singing male at LO 15 May (SJD,WRS, m.ob.). There is only one record farther west, that in Garden Co.
- Connecticut Warbler:** One singing in WP 22 May (LE) was the only report; it was about the 35th spring record for Nebraska.
- Mourning Warbler:** Only about 7 were reported in the Missouri Valley, but a real surprise was a well-seen singing male at the CCM Headquarters, Keith Co, 27 May (PL,JO, details). This bird was about a mile short of being the 4th Panhandle spring record.
- MacGillivray's Warbler:** Three were reported as expected in the Panhandle 9-26 May (HKH,SJD,PL).
- Common Yellowthroat:** Routine reports.
- Hooded Warbler:** An amazing 7 were reported, suggesting that this species is occurring more often in Nebraska. Surprisingly, records are statewide. All were

singles: WSR on 8 May and 28 May (HKH), the 12th and 13th Panhandle spring records, WP on 12 May (LE), a male at Jeffrey's Island, Dawson Co, 13 May (LB), a singing male at Walnut Grove Park, Omaha, 20 May (JWH), one at Basswood Ridge WMA, Dakota Co, 22 May (BFH), and one at Hummel Park 31 May (fide LP,BP).

Wilson's Warbler: Routine reports.

Canada Warbler: The only reports of this rare spring migrant were of singles at FF 17 May (MA) and Hummel Park 25 May (MA).

Yellow-breasted Chat: Most reports were from the north and west; there was "singing everywhere" in the Wildcat Hills, Scotts Bluff Co, 22 May (AK). Somewhat southeasterly was one at L Babcock, Platte Co, 23 May (DP,JP); this species is now only casual in the east.

Summer Tanager: Good numbers persist at ICSP, where 13 were found 12 May (SJD), but individuals popped up at some surprising locations this spring, indicative of continued range expansion. The 4 reports away from the Missouri Valley added significantly to only 13 previous such reports. One was at Bazile Creek WMA, Knox Co, 10 May (MB), an immature was near Arthur 16 May (NB), an immature male was in northeast Custer Co 25 May (fide LR,RH), and a single was at Table Rock WMA, Pawnee Co, 12 May (SJD). Previously rare at FF, a male was seen there 14-20 May (BP,LP) and a single 31 May (CNK). One was in southeast Otoe Co 8 May at a site where birds have been found in recent years (LF,CF).

Scarlet Tanager: In contrast with the previous species, Scarlet Tanagers, although in good numbers, stayed within their usual eastern range. Best counts were 9 at ICSP 12 May (SJD) and 8 there 22 May (WRS), both above the previous high count.

Western Tanager: A good tally of 13 migrants was reported in the Panhandle 17-31 May (m.ob.).

Green-tailed Towhee: None were reported; this is a rare but regular spring migrant in the Panhandle.

Spotted Towhee: Rather late for the east was a female at WP 22 May that was associating with an Eastern Towhee (LE). One at LO 16 May looked like an Eastern, but was singing a Spotted song (WRS).

Eastern Towhee: One had reached Dakota Co by 16 Apr (BFH) and another Buffalo Co by 18 Apr (LR,RH); these locations approximate the opposite ends of the western edge of the summer range. One at Jeffrey's Island, Dawson Co, 13 May (LB) was west of the usual range in the Platte Valley. The extent of introgression is underscored by the strange songs often heard being sung by Nebraska towhees; one at FF 26 Mar sounded like a Northern Cardinal with introductory Black-capped Chickadee notes; the "chink" call was typical, reminding us that (usually) songs are learned and calls innate (BP,LP).

Cassin's Sparrow: None were reported; arrival is in late May.

American Tree Sparrow: Best count was 100 in the observer's yard in Dixon Co after a snow 15 Mar (JJ). Rather late was one in Kearney Co 28 Apr (RG).

Chipping Sparrow: Rather early were singles in Otoe Co 30 Mar (LF,CF) and as far west as Lincoln Co 2 Apr (TJW). Best count was 50+ in Lincoln Co 30 Apr (TJW).

Clay-colored Sparrow: "Hundreds" were in Lincoln 4 May (TEL) and in Lincoln Co 14 May (TJW). Rather late were 4 at Oliver Res 26 May (PL).

Brewer's Sparrow: The only reports were of singles in Banner Co 1 May (WRS) and in Sheridan Co 5 May (BW,DW).

Field Sparrow: One at ADF 22 Mar (LF,CF) was rather early and may have

wintered nearby. Two singing west of Sutherland Res, Lincoln Co, 6 Apr (TJW) were rather early for that westerly location.

Vesper Sparrow: A good count was 31 in the Panhandle 2 May (WRS).

Lark Sparrow: Routine reports.

Lark Bunting: A good count was 150+ at WSR 3 May (HKH). Surprisingly far east were one at Pintail WMA, Hamilton Co, and 5 near Harvard Marsh 12 May (JGJ).

Savannah Sparrow: Singles in Nemaha Co 14 Mar (WRS) and Johnson Co 20 Mar (BP,LP) may have wintered nearby. The falling water level at LM has allowed sedges to grow alongside exposed streams feeding the lake; 8 singing territorial males were noted there 2 May (WRS). This is a marginal breeding species in Nebraska.

Grasshopper Sparrow: "Many" had arrived in McPherson Co 16 Apr (TJW), rather early for that part of the state. A nest with 5 eggs was found in Plum Creek Valley WMA, Brown Co, 18 May (CH).

Baird's Sparrow: After extensive effort by the observer all spring, a single calling bird was found near Creighton in a weedy, ungrazed, abandoned alfalfa field 18 May (MB). There are now 11 documented spring records statewide in the period 24 Apr-19 May.

Henslow's Sparrow: The only report was of one at SCP 23 Apr (KP), a rather early date.

LeConte's Sparrow: None were reported; this is a regular, though secretive, spring migrant in the east.

Northern Sharp-tailed Sparrow: The only report was of one in Washington Co 9 May (JT). There are surprisingly few spring records for this regular migrant.

Fox Sparrow: Although the type specimen of the dark Rocky Mountain subspecies *schistacea* was collected in 1858 in Nebraska, there have been no reports since. More likely is the western subspecies *zaboria*, which is a bit grayer than expected reddish *iliaca*, but difficult to distinguish from it in the field. *Zaboria* breeds north of *schistacea*, but unlike *schistacea*, migrates through Nebraska to winter from Iowa and Kansas south to Texas. Rosche suggested that grayish birds seen in western Nebraska are probably *zaboria*. A grayish bird reported from FF 20 Mar (EB) was probably *zaboria*.

Song Sparrow: A good count was the 50+ at FF 20 Mar (EB). Several singing along the Platte River west of Sutherland Res, Lincoln Co, 6 Apr (TJW) were in a part of the state where the species is less numerous; 2 at Oliver Res 2 May (WRS) are presumed to be at the westernmost breeding site for the state. Information on summering locations along the Platte Valley in the west would be of interest.

Lincoln's Sparrow: One at FF 3 Apr (EB) was rather early.

Swamp Sparrow: Two at FF 20 Mar (EB) may have wintered there or nearby, as was likely with one at FL 28 Mar (AR), although the latter is a known breeding location.

White-throated Sparrow: One in Hayes Co 16 May (KP) was a bit west of the usual range.

White-crowned Sparrow: A few winter, usually in the west, and so 2 at Walnut Creek L, Sarpy Co, 3 Mar (MS) were unexpected. Migration peaks in late Apr and early May; "hundreds" were in Lincoln Co 30 Apr (TJW); high spring count is 275. Among 48 counted in the Panhandle 2 May, 2 were dark-lored, most likely the Rocky Mountain subspecies *oriantha*, although eastern *leocophrys* is possible (WRS).

Harris's Sparrow: After low winter numbers, migrants made a better showing; "large numbers" were in southeast Nebraska 25 Apr (CNK), "scads" were in

- Buffalo Co 6 May (LR,RH), and "multitudes" were in Cuming Co 10 May (DP,JP).
- Dark-eyed (White-winged) Junco:** The only report was of one at Wildcat Hills NC 6 Mar (HA).
- Dark-eyed (Slate-colored) Junco:** The only *cismontanus* was one at a Scottsbluff feeder 19 Mar (KD).
- Dark-eyed (Oregon) Junco:** Routine reports.
- Dark-eyed (Pink-sided) Junco:** This is a regular winterer in the Panhandle; the last at a Mitchell feeder were seen 11 Mar (KD). Only casual in the east, now with 3 documented records, one was photographed at Hastings 22 Mar (PL); the observer has only 2 records in several years as far east as Grand Island.
- Dark-eyed (Gray-headed) Junco:** One was reported without details with a mixed group of juncos at the Wildcat Hills NC feeders 6 Mar.
- McCown's Longspur:** The only reports were of 5 migrants on 24 Apr and one on 29 Apr at WSR (HKH).
- Lapland Longspur:** Last migrants were the 1000 in Dixon Co 16 Mar (JJ). Large numbers of migrants are often seen at this time of year.
- Smith's Longspur:** The only report was of one at Nine-mile Prairie, Lincoln, 3 Apr (DL, details). The 12 spring reports for the state are exclusively from the southeast corner of the state in the period 21 Mar-3 May.
- Chestnut-collared Longspur:** First arrival at WSR was 27 Mar and nesting was underway there by the end of the period (HKH). At the northeast edge of the summer range in the state were 4 in Holt Co 29 May (DSt).
- Snow Bunting:** None were reported; departure is in early Mar.
- Northern Cardinal:** Nesting was underway by 14 Mar at Wilsonville, and adults were escorting a juvenile 23 May (LO).
- Rose-breasted Grosbeak:** Although considered a rare spring migrant in the Panhandle (*Birds of Nebraska*), reports are becoming more numerous in recent years. This spring there were at least 7 individuals reported, including a rather early male 21 Apr at Scottsbluff (PD,DD). A good count was the 36 at ICSP 22 May (WRS).
- Black-headed Grosbeak:** The only report from the east was one without details at FF 8 May; this species is far more rare eastward than Rose-breasted is westward in spring.
- Blue Grosbeak:** Routine reports.
- Lazuli Bunting:** Easternmost, and rather early, was one near Gibbon 1 May (LR,RH); 3 were there 6 May (LR, RH).
- Indigo Bunting:** One in Otoe Co 30 Apr (LF,CF) was rather early. A female was carrying nest material at WP 16 May (MUs).
- Dickcissel:** Rather early was one in Dodge Co 1 May (DP,JP).
- Bobolink:** Two in Lancaster Co 24 Apr (LE) tied the earliest date ever; next reported was one in Buffalo Co 6 May (LR,RH). Ideal habitat in riparian meadows along North River Road in Lincoln Co yielded 40 birds 27 May (TJW). Nesting was underway in Dodge Co by 31 May (DP,JP).
- Red-winged Blackbird:** Among the age groups, resident females arrive last; a flock of 75 females was at Oliver Res 1 May (WRS).
- Eastern Meadowlark:** Singing birds had arrived at Pawnee Creek, Lincoln Co, by 26 Mar (TJW) and in McPherson Co by 6 Apr (TJW). This species is greatly outnumbered by Western Meadowlarks in the west; 3 Easterns and 50+ Westerns were noted in seemingly ideal habitat for Easterns along Pawnee Creek in Lincoln Co 14 May (TJW).
- Western Meadowlark:** Routine reports.

Yellow-headed Blackbird: Routine reports.

Rusty Blackbird: There were only 3 sightings 14-23 Mar (TJW,DP,JP,NF), west to Doniphan (ML).

Brewer's Blackbird: Best count was 50-100 at Wilsonville 14 Mar with Red-winged Blackbirds (LO); the only other sightings were of a territorial pair in Long Canyon, Banner Co, 1 May (WRS) and one in Keith Co 15 May (JT).

Common Grackle: Returnees appeared in early Mar; one was at Alma 7 Mar (GH,WH). About 30 fresh nests near Hershey 22 May were empty and may have already fledged young (TJW), although the limited information available suggests that this would be rather early.

Great-tailed Grackle: Best count was 60 at Grand Island 22 Mar (PL), and 50+ were near North Platte 19 Apr (TJW). Nesting appears to be taking place anywhere in the state with suitable wetland habitat. Nest material was being gathered by 7 females at Odessa 4 Apr (LR,RH), one at BOL 17 Apr (LE), and nesting was almost certainly occurring north of the North Platte Airport, where at least 12 territorial males were present 17 May, and at least 3 females by 19 May (TJW).

Brown-headed Cowbird: Routine reports.

Orchard Oriole: Routine reports.

Baltimore Oriole: Nest building was underway at FF 5 May (ARe), and a pair with young was seen there 27 May (DM), both rather early dates.

Bullock's Oriole: Only about 5 were reported, all from the Panhandle except for one at Ogallala 16 May (CWH). Nestbuilding had started in Scotts Bluff Co by 25 May (KD).

Gray-crowned Rosy-Finch: None were reported; last dates are in late Mar.

Purple Finch: After a good winter, a few persisted, but not for long; best count was 10 at FF 23 Mar (BP,LP) and last were 2 at SCP 2 Apr (KP).

House Finch: Barely elevating above the "Routine Reports" category (no offense intended), there were 4 reports of orange or yellow males (TP,LF,CF,TJW). This is a reasonably common color variant in males.

Red Crossbill: Apart from a mixed-age flock of as many as 40 at Wildcat Hills NC 17-29 May (LE,AK), the only report was of one near Valentine 15 May (CTK). This is a poor showing for this species.

White-winged Crossbill: The only report was of 2 at Old Lutheran Cem, Norfolk, 12 Mar (MB).

Common Redpoll: The only reports were of one at a Scottsbluff feeder 4-19 Mar (PD,DD) and one at Old Lutheran Cem, Norfolk, 12 Mar (MB). Most depart by the end of Mar.

Pine Siskin: A few were scattered around the state, mostly at feeders, through the period with best count 20-30 at Wildcat Hills NC 6 Mar (HA), and "lots" at Old Lutheran Cem, Norfolk, 12 Mar (MB). A bit surprising was one at the Frimann Ranch, home of the Curve-billed Thrasher, 27 May (PL,JO). Last to leave outside the Panhandle was one in Nuckolls Co 23 Apr (NF).

Lesser Goldfinch: Two were reported, a nice surprise: a black-backed male was at a Gering feeder 23-24 May (JC) and a single was at Bushnell 27 May (PL,JO). There are 9 records, these two the 2nd and 4th earliest; 7 of the 9 records are in May-Jun.

American Goldfinch: A good count was the 300 near Gibbon 10 Mar (LR,RH).

House Sparrow: Adults were feeding fledglings in Lincoln 9 May (NP).