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NEBRASKA CHRISTMAS BIRD COUNT FOR 1996

The official count period for the 97th Audubon National Society's Christmas Bird Count was 20 December 1996 through 5 January 1997. One location (Harlan County) conducted counts outside the official period.

The numerical data are presented in Table 1 (pages 28-34) in a west (left) to east (right) order for nine locations in Nebraska. Unusual species that were underlined in the individual reports are marked by an asterisk (*) before the number in a particular column, and unusual numbers underlined in the reports are shown in **bold**. For Bald Eagles, the total number, which is given first, includes any adults and/or immatures (given in parentheses). Species with subdivisions such as for Snow Goose, Northern Flicker, and Dark-eyed Junco, are counted as a unit in getting species totals. Unidentified species are included in the total numbers but not in the number of species for a location except when no specific form was reported. Species seen in the count circle during the count period, but not on the count day, are listed at the end of the location descriptions.

The following descriptions of the nine locations with abbreviations (if used) in Table 1, are presented alphabetically, and include pertinent information and names of compilers and participants.

Beaver Valley: center 4 mi. west, 1.5 mi. south of Petersburg, Boone Co. (NW corner of Sec. 5, T21N, R7W); 29 Dec., 7:15 a.m. to 5:15 p.m., temp. -3 to 16° F, partly cloudy, wind NW 0-5 mph, snow 4" (100% snow-covered), still water frozen, moving water partly open; 5 observers in 2 parties + 1 at feeders; 14 hrs. and 10 mi. on foot, 4 hrs. and 46 mi. by car. Observers: Belle Esau, Dave Heidt, **Wayne Mollhoff** (compiler), Neal Pohlman, Brant Wolff, Duane Wolff. Comments by Wayne Mollhoff: "There was a very marked scarcity of birds due to a severe ice/sleet storm that gave 2-4" of ice, with 100% ice cover from mid-November through mid-December. There was still about 10% ice cover beneath the hard, crusted snow on count day."

Harlan County (Harlan Co): center 2 mi. east of Alma, center of Section 26, includes Harlan Co. Lake, Orleans, Republican City, and Huntley; 15 Dec., 7:00 a.m. - 5:00 p.m., temp. 20 - 31° F, wind NW 15-25 mph, water open; 5 observers in 3 parties (all in field); 1.5 hrs. and 2 mi. owling, 26 total party hrs., total party mi. 210 by car, 4 on foot. Observers: Robin Harding, Jerry Jorgensen, **Joel Jorgensen** (compiler), Lanny Randolph, and Ross Silcock. Species observed during count week but not on count day: Double-crested Cormorant (1), Greater White-fronted Goose (1), Snow Goose (3), Ross' Goose (1), Northern Pintail (1), Bufflehead (2), Lincoln's Sparrow (1), Swamp Sparrow (1), White-throated Sparrow (1).

Kearney: center 2 mi. west of Kearney Platte River bridge, circle includes Kearney Cemetery, Cottonmill Park, Fort Kearny State Parks including Hike-Bike Trail, Kearney, roadside areas, cropland, and grassland visible from the road; 21 Dec., 8:00 a.m. to 4:30 p.m., temp. 31-37°F, cloudy to partly cloudy, wind calm, no

(continued on p. 35)

Table 1. 1996 Nebraska Christmas Bird Counts for Nine Areas.

| Species | Scotts -bluff | Lake McCon. | North Platte | Harlan County | Loup City | Kearney | Beaver Valley | Lincoln | Omaha |
|--------------------------------|------------------|----------------|-----------------|------------------|--------------|---------|------------------|---------|-------|
| Western Grebe | | 4 | | | | | | | |
| American White Pelican | | | | | | | | | |
| Great Blue Heron | | 6 | | 1 | | 2 | | 8 | 1 |
| blue form | | | | | | | | | |
| Trumpeter Swan | | 2 | | | | | | | |
| Greater White-fronted Goose | | | | | | 4 | | 1 | |
| Snow Goose | | 5 | | | | 25 | | 4 | 538 |
| blue form | | | | | | | | 1 | |
| Ross' Goose | | | | | | 2 | | | |
| Canada Goose | 12,873 | 13,700 | 5867 | 1687 | 1500 | 36,900 | 6 | 5557 | 617 |
| small forms | | | | | 150 | | | | |
| Wood Duck | | | | | | | | 2 | 8 |
| Green-winged Teal, Am. | 6 | 3 | | 1 | | | 28 | | 1 |
| Mallard | 10,448 | 2021 | 3 | 9009 | 1750 | 116 | 2500 | 1086 | 317 |
| Northern Pintail | 4 | 2 | | | | | 1 | 2 | |
| Gadwall | | 21 | | 1 | | | 1 | | |
| American Wigeon | 44 | 3 | | | | | | | |
| Redhead | | | | 1 | | | | | |

(continued from p. 27)

snow cover, still water frozen, moving water open; 8 observers in 2 parties and 5 feeder watchers; 2.5 hrs. and 4.5 mi. on foot, 13 hrs. and 104 mi. by car. Observers: John Bliese, George Brown, Marian Brown, Robin Harding, Wes Kellogg, John Kozak, Richard Luehrs, Eileen Paine, **Lanny Randolph** (compiler), Alice Rumery, Barbara Tebbel, Paul Tebbel, and Mark Urwiller.

Lake McConaughy (Lake McCon.): center at north end of Ogallala Beach Recreation Area, Gate 20, along south side of the lake, circle includes Lemoyne, Keystone, and Ogallala; 28 Dec., 5:45 a.m. to 5:00 p.m., temp. 21-52°F, mostly clear, wind variable 5-15 mph, snow cover 0-1", still water mostly frozen, moving water partly open; 11 observers in 6 parties (0 at feeders), 15 hrs. and 13.5 mi. on foot, 30.75 hrs. and 390 mi. by car, .5 hr. and 1 mi. owling. Observers: Mark Brogie, **Stephen J. Dinsmore** (compiler), Robin Harding, Bill Huser, Jerry Jorgensen, Joel Jorgensen, Babs and Loren Padelford, Lanny Randolph, Ross Silcock, John Sullivan.

Lincoln: center at intersection of Coddington and West A Sts., circle includes Pioneers Park, about 8 mi. in Wilderness Park, Lagoon Park, Yankee Hill Lake and Conestoga Lake areas, eastern half of Pawnee Lake, and Wyuka Cemetery; 21 Dec., 5:30 a.m. to 6:00 p.m., temp. 32-38° F, cloudy a.m., partly cloudy p.m., wind S 5 mph, no snow, still and moving water partly frozen; 20 observers in 12 parties, 3 feeder observers, 60 hrs. and 74 mi. on foot, 26 hrs. and 407 mi. by car, 2 hrs. and 1 mi. owling, 5 hrs. at feeders. Observers: Irene and George Alexander, Russ Benedict, Terry Brown, Cindy Cochran, Dave Cochran, Jan and Kevin DeGarmo, John Dinan, Larry Einemann, **Paul and Karla Kaufman** (compilers), Tim Knott, Jeanine Lackey, Linda and Peter Maslowski, Ken Reitan, Terry Stentz, Moni Usase, Diane West.

Loup City: northeast corner of Loup City, Sherman Co., northeast corner of Sec. 13, T15N, R15W; 1 Jan, 7:30 a.m. to 5:30 p.m., temp. 30-52° F, partly clear a.m., cloudy p.m., wind calm, no snow, still water frozen, moving water partly open; 3 observers in 1 party (none at feeders), 3 hrs. and 3 mi. on foot, 7 hrs. and 95 mi. by car. Observers: **Wayne J. Mollhoff** (compiler), Don and Colleen Noecker. Comments by Wayne Mollhoff: "A marked difference between this count and that for Beaver Valley, less than 100 miles apart, and with a similar mix of habitat. There was a relative abundance of ground feeders here. Wild fruit (juniper berries) was nearly non-existent."

North Platte and Lincoln County: no official center given according to the rules of the National Audubon Society; 21 Dec., 8:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m., temp. 16-38°F, overcast, wind 5 mph. Observers (all members of Tout Bird Club): Robert Bailey, Florence Clough, Esther and Harold Cunningham, Greg Hoover, Pat McEvoy, Nancy Norton, Darlene Schick, Carol Somerholder, **Wilma Wyman** (compiler), Howard Wyman. Comments by Wilma Wyman: "The one Sandhill Crane seems to take sanctuary on the north side of the North Platte River and feeds in the harvested corn fields nearby. Burt Somerhalder, a knowledgeable birder in our club, has sighted the crane twice, once within 10 feet of his blind. He was amazed at the beauty of its plumage and that it is still here in the cold. The Mountain Chickadee was sighted for several weeks at the TV office and broadcasting studio north of North Platte. Loren and Babs Padelford drove out to see it and were successful. Loren said it was the first Mountain Chickadee reported this far east."

Omaha: center at Offutt Air Force Base Lake, Bellevue, circle includes Fontenelle Forest, Lake Manawa (Iowa) State Park, Plattsmouth Waterfowl Refuge, and portions of the Platte and Missouri Rivers; 4 Jan., 7:30 a.m. to 5:00 p.m., temp. 20-29° F,

clear in a.m., partly cloudy in p.m., wind NW 10-20 mph, no snow, still water frozen, moving water open; 38 observers in 12-13 parties (none at feeders), 28 hrs. and 23.25 mi. on foot, 27.75 hrs. and 393 mi. by car, 1 hr. and 1 mi. owling. Observers: Betty Allen, Roland Barth, Elliott Bedows, Laurene Blankenau, Duane Bright, Manit Bunnamit, Kathleen Crawford-Rose, Kevin DeGarmo, Sharon Draper, Dick Gilson, Shirley Gilster, Chad Graeve, Ruth Green, **Betty Grenon** (compiler), Essie and Sam Grill, Craig Hensley, Clem Klaphake, Ray Korpi, Eunice Levisay, Toby Lyons, Don Maas, Jim McLochlin, Frances Mendenhall, Don Paseka, Janis Paseka, Dick Rasmussen, Eric Scholar, Greg Stoiber, John Sullivan, Jerry Toll, Pam Vaughn, Jeff Wallace, Patrice Wallace, Chris Williams, Alexander Wilson, Edith Wilson, Gertrude Wood. Species seen during the count period but not on the count day: American Black Duck, Northern Pintail, Cooper's Hawk, and Winter Wren.

Scottsbluff: The center of the circle, intersection of County Roads P and 20, has been moved approximately 1.75 miles SE of previous center, which was at Visitors' Center, ScottsBluff National Monument, in order to include a new Nature Center. The circle includes the cities of Gering and Scottsbluff, Wildcat Hills Nature Center, part of Carter Canyon, Scotts Bluff County Airport, and Robidoux Pass; 21 Dec., 7:15 a.m. to 4:00 p.m., temp. 27-44° F, cloudy, wind ESE 3-18 mph, no snow, still water partly open, moving water open; 8 observers in 1-2 parties (none at feeders), 1 hr. and .75 mi. on foot, 12.5 hrs. and 152 mi. by car, no owling. Observers: Bob DeLara, Mary Hunt, **Alice Kenitz** (compiler), Kathy Larson, Larry Malone, Brad McKinney, Annie Sherrill, Cherie Terwilliger. Species seen during count week but not on count day: Sharp-shinned Hawk. Comments by Alice Kenitz: "We are having an interesting winter with a number of species visiting our area - Cassin's Finch, Mountain Chickadee, and Steller's Jay. We speculate that this is happening because of drought and fires in the mountains and in the west, causing a lack of food supply in those areas."