


3-2011

Winter Field Report, December 2010 to February 2011

W. Ross Silcock

Nebraska Ornithologists' Union, silcock@rosssilcock.com

Follow this and additional works at: <http://digitalcommons.unl.edu/nebbirdrev>

 Part of the [Ornithology Commons](#), [Poultry or Avian Science Commons](#), and the [Zoology Commons](#)

Silcock, W. Ross, "Winter Field Report, December 2010 to February 2011" (2011). *Nebraska Bird Review*. 1160.
<http://digitalcommons.unl.edu/nebbirdrev/1160>

This Article is brought to you for free and open access by the Nebraska Ornithologists' Union at DigitalCommons@University of Nebraska - Lincoln. It has been accepted for inclusion in Nebraska Bird Review by an authorized administrator of DigitalCommons@University of Nebraska - Lincoln.

WINTER FIELD REPORT, December 2010 to February 2011

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

INTRODUCTION

This winter was pretty much a rerun of last, although perhaps not as severe; I could have used last winter's Introduction again. If there was an overall theme, it would be the widespread occurrences of species that would not be expected to linger into late December and January. Several species of waterbirds, notably Blue-winged Teal, scoters, Ruddy Duck, Common Loon, and Horned and Red-necked Grebes were in this category. Large numbers of Western Grebes were still at Lake McConaughy in early January, and surprisingly late individuals of Black-crowned Night-Heron and *Plegadis* ibis were located. Mourning Doves were in good numbers in the southeast, and, among passerines, Hermit Thrushes were in good numbers, also. Late surprises among sparrows included Clay-colored, Chipping, and Field. Other daringly-late passerines included two (!) Ruby-crowned Kinglets at Ogallala in February, and a Wilson's Warbler in December in Scotts Bluff Co. Things are happening with some woodpeckers; for the second consecutive winter, Yellow-bellied Sapsuckers were everywhere, and Pileateds continue to expand their range northward in the Missouri Valley. This was a great year for Snow Buntings, even better than last year's good showing.

Rarities were scarce; prominent of course was the carryover Ross's Gull from fall, but almost unbelievable was another Ross's Gull in Lancaster Co. in early December while the Gavins Point bird was still present. Also a carryover story, but apparently ending sadly, was the Brown-headed Nuthatch saga in Lincoln; 2 birds were last reported in mid-December, and the last sighting was at the end of January. Otherwise, rare birds were the Dark-eyed (Gray-headed) Junco and a small group of Gray-crowned Rosy-Finches, both in Scotts Bluff Co.

ABBREVIATIONS

BOL: Branched Oak L, Lancaster Co
CBC: Christmas Bird Count
Cem: Cemetery
FF: Fontenelle Forest, Sarpy Co
GPD: Gavins Point Dam, Cedar Co
LM: L McConaughy, Keith Co
LO: L Ogallala, Keith Co
m.ob.: many observers
NWR: National Wildlife Refuge

PL: Pawnee L, Lancaster Co
Res: Reservoir
SL: Sewage Lagoon(s)
SP: State Park

OBSERVERS

AD: Ann Duey, Scottsbluff
ADG: Alex DeGarmo, Greenwood
AK: Alice Kenitz, Gering
AP: Andrew Pierson, Gering
ARy: Al Reyer, Bellevue
B&DW: Bruce & Donna Walgren, Casper, WY
B&KG: Bob and Kathi Gerten, Burwell
BF: Bill Fink, Denver, CO
BFi: Betsy Finch, Elmwood
BFH: Bill F. Huser, South Sioux City
BG: Betty Grenon, Bellevue
CD: Curtis Dykstra, Grand Rapids, MI
CNK: Clem N. Klaphake, Bellevue
CM: Connie McCartney, Grand Island
D&CN: Don and Colleen Noecker, Albion
D&JP: Don and Jan Paseka, Ames
DC: Doug Chapman, Sioux Falls, SD
DH: Dave Heidt, Norfolk
DL: Dan Leger, Lincoln
EB: Elliott Bedows, Bellevue
GR: Gary Roberts, Fremont
GS: Greg Stoiber, Bellevue
JC: John Carlini, Lincoln
JGJ: Joel G. Jorgensen, Lincoln
JH: Jill Holmquist, Lincoln
JJ: Jan Johnson, Wakefield
JLC: Jill Liske-Clark, Lincoln
JLL: Jeanine L. Lackey, Doniphan
JO: Jim Ochsner, Ogallala
JR: Justin Rink, Omaha
JT: Jerry Toll, Omaha
JWH: John W. Hall, Omaha
KCR: Kathleen Crawford-Rose, Bellevue
KD: Kathy DeLara, Mitchell
KDi: Kenny Dinan, Grand Island
KDy: Keith Dyche, Shenandoah, IA
KS: Kent Skaggs, Kearney
KSc: Kathy Schwery, Plattsmouth
KZ: Karla Zeutenhorst, Yankton, SD
L&BP: Loren and Babs Padelford, Bellevue
LD: Linda Deeds, North Platte
LE: Larry Einemann, Lincoln

LJH: Luke J. Hamilton, Bridgeport
LR: Lanny Randolph, Minden
LRB: Linda R. Brown, Lincoln
MB: Mark Brogie, Creighton
MS: Malcolm Swan, Rolla, MO
PD: Paul Dunbar, Hastings
PJ: Pete Janzen, Wichita, KS
PR: Paul Roisen, Sioux City, IA
PS: Phyllis Salyards, Hastings
R&SW: Ron and Susan Whitney, Lincoln
RB: Roland Barth, Bellevue
RD: Roger Dietrich, Yankton, SD
RE: Rick Eades, Lincoln
RH: Robin Harding, Minden
RJ: Rita Jensen, Hooper
RL: Roger Lawson, Curtis
RSt: Ruth Stearns, Lincoln
RW: Rick Wright, Vancouver, BC
SJD: Stephen J. Dinsmore, Ames, IA
SM: Steve Morris, Grand Island
SS: Shari Schwartz, Lincoln
SW: Scott Wessel, Norfolk
TH: Tim Hajda, Broken Bow
TJW: T.J. Walker, Brady
VC: Virginia Clark, North Platte
WF: William Flack, Kearney
WRS: W. Ross Silcock, Tabor, IA

SPECIES ACCOUNTS

- Black-bellied Whistling-Duck:** The single bird at an Omaha pond, Nebraska's 11th and by far the latest date, was last seen 8 Dec (D&JP).
- Greater White-fronted Goose:** The 4 in Kearney Co 9 Feb (TH) was an unusual mid-winter sighting, but the few birds that wintered in Scotts Bluff Co (KD) provided only the 9th Panhandle winter record. First large group noted was the 175 at North Platte SL 16 Feb (TJW).
- Snow Goose:** Early movement was noted 7 Feb, with "waves" flying north in Hall Co (JLL). Best count "for many years" was the 50,000 in Sarpy Co 19 Feb (L&BP).
- Ross's Goose:** Reports were routine; these birds can be picked out of most Snow Goose flocks with some patience.
- Cackling Goose:** Best count was the 5042 on the North Platte CBC 18 Dec (fide TJW). Five were in Lancaster Co 12 Jan (LE); numbers are fewest eastward.
- Canada Goose:** Best counts were in Dec, with 25,000 at Sutherland Res 7 Dec (TJW), 19,614 on the Grand Island CBC 18 Dec (fide CM), and 12,464 on the Scottsbluff CBC 18 Dec (fide AK). The 9606 on the Omaha CBC 18 Dec was a count high (fide BG). A good wintering tally for the location was the 4600 on Salt Creek, Lincoln, 9 Feb (LE).

- Mute Swan:** One at Wehrspann L, Sarpy Co, in late Nov was still present 1 Dec (RSt), and another at Grand Island 16 Jan is apparently the last of a small group that has been there for many years (SM).
- Trumpeter Swan:** Best counts of wintering groups were moderate: 54 at Calamus Res 18 Jan (fide JGJ) and 30 at LO 8 Jan (PD, BF).
- Wood Duck:** A rare mid-winter surprise, especially in the north, was a male at the Broken Bow SL 21 Jan (TH).
- Gadwall:** The 8 at North Platte SL 6 Jan (TJW) were tardy; late fall dates and early spring dates for most duck species in Nebraska are determined by timing of fall freeze-up and spring thaw.
- American Wigeon:** The 50 at LO 11 Jan (TJW) was a good number for the date; a few overwinter below LO most winters.
- American Black Duck:** Apparently 3 different individuals were reported in the extreme east, where expected though rare: singles were in Sarpy Co and Cass Co 16 Jan, the latter seen again 22 Jan (L&BP), and in Omaha 22 Jan (CNK). There are very few reports westerly; one with Mallards in Keith Co 2 Dec (TJW) was only about the 5th winter record for the western half of the state.
- Mallard:** Sutherland Res had its usual large late fall flock this year, a bit larger than most years, estimated at 50,000-80,000 on 9 Jan (PD, BF), up from the 25,000 there 7 Dec (TJW) and an excellent count for Jan. Best CBC tally was 10,828 on the Ames CBC 14 Dec (fide D&JP).
- Blue-winged Teal:** Unexpected in a Winter Report, this warm-weather bird was represented by one on the Omaha CBC 18 Dec, a new species for this long-running CBC (fide BG). Fewer than 6 records exist for Dec-Jan for Nebraska.
- Northern Shoveler:** This species was late in fall and early in spring, taking advantage of sewage lagoons in both cases: 8 were at North Platte SL 6 Jan (TJW) and 24 showed up at the Scottsbluff SL 18 Feb (KD).
- Northern Pintail:** Reports were routine for this uncommon winter visitor and abundant statewide spring migrant.
- Green-winged Teal:** Reports were routine for this uncommon winter visitor and common statewide spring migrant.
- Canvasback:** LO often has a few overwintering; this year 30 were there 11 Jan (TJW).
- Redhead:** As with Canvasback, a few winter at LO most years; this year 12 were there 11 Jan (TJW), down from the 165 there 2 Jan (fide SJD).
- Ring-necked Duck:** As with Canvasback and Redhead, a few winter at LO most years; this year 22 were there 11 Jan (TJW), down from the 197 present 2 Jan (fide SJD).
- Greater Scaup:** Best count was an excellent 65 on the LM CBC 2 Jan (fide SJD). The only other reports were of singles in Johnson Co 10 Dec (CNK) and on the Lincoln CBC 18 Dec, a new species for the CBC (fide LRB).
- Lesser Scaup:** As with Canvasback, Redhead, and Ring-necked Duck, a few winter at LO most years; this year 16 were there 11 Jan (TJW), down from the 331 present 2 Jan (fide SJD).
- Surf Scoter:** 1-2 were at LO 1-8 Jan (SJD, PD, BF), with an adult female and a juvenile male present 2 Jan (SJD). This is only the 2nd record for Jan.
- White-winged Scoter:** A single juvenile male was at LO 1-8 Jan (SJD, PD, BF), only the 5th record for Jan.

- Black Scoter:** There were two reports: a single was at BOL 3 Dec (JGJ), and a juvenile was at LO 2-8 Jan (SJD, PD, BF), the latter only the 4th record for Jan.
- Long-tailed Duck:** Completing the "sea duck slam" (scoters and Long-tailed Duck) for the period was an excellent showing of this species, with 18 reported in all. Up to 3 were at Capitol Beach L, Lincoln, 1-10 Dec (LE, JGJ, RSt), including 2 immatures and an adult male (JGJ), and 4 were at L Bennington, Douglas Co, 3 Dec (JR). LO hosted at least 11 different birds 22 Dec (BF fide PD) through 8 Jan (SJD, PD, BF); on 2 Jan 6 birds were on LM (SJD).
- Bufflehead:** The 74 at LM 2 Jan (fide SJD) was a good count for the date.
- Common Goldeneye:** The 630 at Sutherland Res 3 Jan (SJD) was a good count. Despite its dull yellow bill, a female at Capitol Beach L, Lincoln, 5 Dec was identified as this species by head shape (JGJ); females are sometimes difficult to separate from female Barrow's Goldeneyes because of this.
- Barrow's Goldeneye:** None were reported; this is a rare but regular winter visitor in the North Platte Valley, notably at LO.
- Hooded Merganser:** Rather early for the number were the 38 in Lancaster Co 25 Feb (LE).
- Common Merganser:** Best count was the 12,235 at Sutherland Res 1 Jan (SJD). This is close to the maximum number that is reported from either Sutherland or LM in mid-winter most years.
- Red-breasted Merganser:** A few can be found with patience at LM among the Common Mergansers; 15 were on LO 1-2 Jan (SJD).
- Ruddy Duck:** There are few Jan records, so 22 at Carter L, Omaha, 5 Jan (CNK) were unexpected. Also rather late were 4 at LM 1-3 Jan (SJD). Rather early for spring were 2 at BOL 23 Feb (RSt).
- Northern Bobwhite:** Northerly reports were of 12 on the Calamus-Loup CBC 28 Dec (fide DH) and 17 near Broken Bow 1 Jan (TH).
- Gray Partridge:** At the south and west edges of the current ne. Nebraska range were 8 birds near Elgin, Antelope Co, 15 Jan (MB) and 6 in a disked corn field in Holt Co 12 Feb (BFH, MB, DH).
- Ring-necked Pheasant:** Large flocks reported were the 70+ in Antelope Co 15 Jan, the observer's "largest for many years" (MB) and 57 in Washington Co 26 Dec (JT).
- Sharp-tailed Grouse:** Reports were routine for this mostly northern and western prairie resident.
- Greater Prairie-Chicken:** Best counts were 114 on the Beaver Valley CBC 19 Dec (fide D&CN) and 76 in one flock in Lincoln Co on the North Platte CBC 18 Dec (fide TJW). Impressive at the e. edge of the range were the 64 at Buckskin Hills WMA, Dixon Co, 14 Dec (BFH). A surprise was one in restored tall grass prairie on the Lincoln CBC 18 Dec (fide LRB); there are nearby populations in w. Lancaster Co and se. Butler Co. At the latter location 17 were counted 23 Feb (CNK). Nine anxious males were on a booming ground near Winnetoon as early as 9 Feb (MB).
- Wild Turkey:** Reports were routine for this widespread resident.
- Common Loon:** One at LM 1-2 Jan (SJD) was one of only 3 Jan records; there are 3 for Feb and an overwintering record from LM also. One at BOL 3-4 Dec (LE) was also rather tardy.
- Pied-billed Grebe:** One in Lincoln 23 Feb (LE) was the earliest spring arrival on record. As many as 14 were at LM 2 Jan (fide SD), and 2 were still there

- 11 Jan (TJW); LM is the only location where wintering has occurred, albeit rarely, and there are 2 early Feb records elsewhere.
- Horned Grebe:** Only the 7th Jan record was provided by 3 at LM 2 Jan (fide SJD). There is one record of overwintering, also at LM.
- Red-necked Grebe:** One on the LM CBC 2 Jan (SJD) was the 4th Jan record in addition to the single record of overwintering, all at LM since 1997.
- Eared Grebe:** The only report was of one on the North Platte CBC 18 Dec (fide TJW); expected last dates are in early Dec, but there are a few Jan records as well.
- Western Grebe:** Rather amazing for the date were the 776 on the LM CBC 2 Jan (fide SJD). One at Sutherland Res 3 Jan (SJD) was rather late, as was another in Frontier Co 12 Dec (LR, RH).
- Clark's Grebe:** The 3 on the LM CBC 2 Jan (fide SJD) were the 4th Jan record, all from LM.
- Double-crested Cormorant:** Last was one on the North Platte CBC 18 Dec (fide TJW); stragglers occur on occasion into late Dec.
- American White Pelican:** Sutherland Res is a favored late fall and winter spot for this species; 12 were there 7 Dec, dwindling to 3 on 7 Jan (TJW). LO is also a regular spot; one was still there 3 Jan (SJD). Elsewhere, stragglers were the 4 on the Omaha CBC 18 Dec (fide BG) and one on the Calamus-Loup CBC 28 Dec (DH).
- Great Blue Heron:** Reports were routine for this regular but localized winter visitor.
- Black-crowned Night-Heron:** An immature was found on the Grand Island CBC 18 Dec (SM); this is the 3rd-latest date on record.
- Plegadis ibis* sp.:** Amazingly, one materialized in a drainage ditch near GPD 2 Dec through 5 Dec (MB, RD, BFH; KZ photo), latest on record by 22 days. (See photo on page 42.)
- Bald Eagle:** Nesting begins in mid-Feb; a pair was copulating (on ice!!) at BOL 19 Feb (LE). Adults at a nest in Cass Co 1 Jan (L&BP) may have been establishing territorial rights prior to nesting.
- Northern Harrier:** Reports were routine for this fairly common, essentially year-round visitor and resident.
- Sharp-shinned Hawk:** The 7 on the DeSoto NWR CBC 2 Jan (fide JT) was a good CBC tally. High CBC tally for the state is 11.
- Cooper's Hawk:** Reports were routine for this rather common year-round resident and migrant.
- Northern Goshawk:** None were reported; this is a rare winter visitor.
- Red-shouldered Hawk:** Two apparently different singles were reported, both in regular locations: a juvenile was at PL 28 Dec (JR), a single was there 3 Jan (LE), and one was at BOL 4-5 Dec (PJ, RSt).
- Red-tailed Hawk:** The 146 on the Omaha CBC 18 Dec (fide BG) was a record CBC tally for Nebraska.
- Ferruginous Hawk:** Reports were routine for this uncommon western resident.
- Rough-legged Hawk:** Best count was a surprising 30 in n.-cen. Nebraska 12 Feb (BFH, MB, DH); 27 were in Scotts Bluff Co 16 Jan (KD).
- Golden Eagle:** Easterly were adults in Dixon Co 14 Dec (BFH) and Holt Co 28 Feb (SW fide JGJ).
- American Kestrel:** Anecdotal reports from Raptor Recovery suggest that numbers are have declined in recent years, possibly due to the apparently increasing numbers of Cooper's Hawks in the state (BFi).

- Merlin:** Reports were routine for this fairly common statewide winter visitor.
- Peregrine Falcon:** Unexpected in mid-winter except for the resident breeders in Omaha and Lincoln, singles were in York Co 9 Jan (SM) and at Fremont 16 Jan (D&JP). Both latter sightings could be of Omaha or Lincoln birds; it is unknown how far these birds range in winter.
- Prairie Falcon:** Easterly were singles in Butler Co 20 Dec (CD) and Dodge Co 14 Dec (fide D&JP) and 2 Feb (D&JP).
- Virginia Rail:** A good find were the 4 on Lonergan Creek at LM 2 Jan (SJD). A few winter regularly at seeps around LM.
- American Coot:** Reports were routine for this species, which lingers well into Dec in many parts of the state.
- Sandhill Crane:** Earliest migrants appear in late Jan most years, although the only such report this year was of one apparently lost bird with Snow Geese near Riverside Zoo at Scottsbluff 14-28 Jan (AK). Otherwise, first reported was one in Hall Co 3 Feb (JLL), followed by the first flock of 50 near Lewellen 19 Feb (LJH).
- Killdeer:** Stragglers may remain very late in fall and overwinter at favored locations along the North Platte Valley. Away from those locations Jan reports are few, but this year 5 were in Dawson Co 3 Jan (ARy) and one was in Lancaster Co 7 Jan (LE). Earliest in spring were about on time, with one at Scottsbluff 18 Feb (KD), which may have wintered there, and several arrivals 20 Feb: 2 in Lincoln (RE), one at Bellevue (GS), 3 at Offutt Base L, Sarpy Co, and 2 at La Platte Bottoms, Sarpy Co, (CNK).
- Greater Yellowlegs:** Apt to linger rather late, one was at the Calamus-Loup CBC 28 Dec (fide DH).
- Wilson's Snipe:** This species can be found along the North Platte Valley late in fall also; 16 were in the LM area 2 Jan (fide SJD) and 6 were at North Platte 6 Jan (TJW).
- Black-legged Kittiwake:** Three juveniles were reported: one at GPD, a traditional hotspot for this species, 8 Dec (fide MB), one at BOL 1-5 Dec (m. ob.), likely the same bird that was there in late Nov (see photo on page 6), and one which provided Nebraska's latest record by 11 days at Sutherland Res 3 Jan (SJD).
- Bonaparte's Gull:** One at LO 3 Jan (SJD) was tardy; latest date is 5 Jan. Fewer than usual were reported; best count was only 22 at BOL 4 Dec (JGJ).
- Ross's Gull:** The individual at GPD in Nov (see photos on page 6) continued to be seen by many through 7 Dec (MB), but a major surprise was another bird at BOL 3 Dec (JGJ, video). These are Nebraska's 2nd and 3rd records, and were part of an influx of at least 5 birds into the Northern Great Plains.
- Franklin's Gull:** One at LM 8 Jan (PD, BF) was only the 18th record overall for 2 Dec-18 Feb. Early arrival is in mid-Feb; showing the way were 1-2 at PL 19-23 Feb (RSt, LE).
- Mew Gull:** One at GPD 1-2 Dec (DC, PR) had no chance of avoiding the many birders there for the Ross's Gull. This is Nebraska's 14th for fall.
- Ring-billed Gull:** Reports were routine for this uncommon winter visitor and abundant migrant.
- California Gull:** As is usual, most were at LM; 16 were counted on the CBC 2 Jan (fide SJD) and one was there 8 Jan (PD, BF). Elsewhere, a juvenile/first winter bird was at BOL 3 Dec (JGJ), the Scottsbluff CBC recorded its first ever 18 Dec (LJH, fide AK, KD), and one was at Sutherland Res 1 and 3 Jan (SJD).

- Herring Gull:** The 186 at Sutherland Res 3 Jan (SJD) was a good count for a Jan date.
- Thayer's Gull:** This regular fall visitor was reported from 6 locations through 8 Jan, a total of 16 birds. An excellent count of 8 (7 juveniles and an adult) was reported at Sutherland Res 3 Jan, and on 1 Jan a 2nd basic bird was present also, for a reservoir total of 9 over the 3 days (SJD). Elsewhere, an immature was at North Platte 1 Dec (TJW), an adult was at BOL 3-4 Dec (LE, MS fide JGJ), an adult was at GPD 5 Dec (MB), 1-2 were at L Maloney, Lincoln Co, 7-18 Dec (TJW), and an adult and a juvenile were at LM 1-8 Jan (SJD, PD, BF).
- Lesser Black-backed Gull:** As with Thayer's Gull, this species is a regular fall visitor in small numbers. Eight were reported from 5 locations 3 Dec-3 Jan (JGJ, m. ob.).
- Glaucous Gull:** The only reports of this regular winter visitor were of one on the North Platte CBC 18 Dec (fide TJW) and an adult at Sutherland Res 1 Jan (SJD).
- Great Black-backed Gull:** This species is being reported more often recently. The two reports were of single first-winter birds at GPD 1-4 Dec (DC, MB, BFH, RD), likely the same bird reported there in late Nov (MB), and on the North Platte CBC 18 Dec (fide TJW). The latter is the 11th fall record.
- Rock Pigeon:** Reports were routine for this common resident.
- Eurasian Collared-Dove:** At opposite ends of the spectrum, and illustrating this species' preference for small towns and cities in the west, were the 357 on the Scottsbluff CBC 18 Dec, a count high (fide AK), and the first ever appearance on the Lincoln CBC, where 42 were counted 18 Dec (fide LRB).
- Mourning Dove:** Unusually high numbers lingered in the southeast, including 241 on the Lincoln CBC 18 Dec (fide LRB), 90+ in Lincoln 6 Jan (LE), and "an exceptional" 100+ in Sarpy Co 9 Jan (L&BP). North of the Platte Valley this species is rare to absent in winter; 2 were on the Calamus-Loup CBC 28 Dec (fide DH), and rather late westward were 7 in York Co 2 Jan (SM), 4 in Adams Co 14 Jan (PD), and one at Brady as late as 17 Jan (TJW).
- Monk Parakeet:** This species, of enigmatic occurrence in Nebraska, made one of its periodic appearances; one was in Greenwood 18 Feb (ADG fide RW). There are currently no known breeding sites in the state.
- Eastern Screech-Owl:** Reports were routine for this common statewide resident.
- Great Horned Owl:** Reports were routine for this common statewide resident.
- Snowy Owl:** Despite this not being a Snowy Owl winter on the Great Plains, there was a single report: one was near Elgin 13 Jan (KDi fide JGJ).
- Barred Owl:** Reports were routine for this common eastern resident.
- Long-eared Owl:** There were 4 reports of this unobtrusive but fairly common species. One wintering at Holmes L, Lincoln, (see photo on page 4) was seen by many of the nuthatch crowd 5 Dec-13 Feb (LE, m. ob.), 2 were on the Ponca SP CBC 14 Dec (fide BFH), 2 were on the LM CBC 2 Jan (fide SJD), and one was on the Norfolk CBC 18 Dec (fide DH).
- Short-eared Owl:** There were 7 reports involving 11 birds of this nomadic winter visitor, more than usual (m. ob.).
- Northern Saw-whet Owl:** There was only one report, about the norm: one was well-studied at Brady 13 Feb (TJW).
- Belted Kingfisher:** Reports were routine for this low-density resident.

Red-headed Woodpecker: Reports were routine for this uncommon winter visitor in the southeast.

Red-bellied Woodpecker: Westerly reports continue as this species slowly establishes itself in the w. North Platte Valley; singles were on the Scottsbluff CBC 18 Dec (fide AK) and in Morrill Co 28 Dec (LJH).

Yellow-bellied Sapsucker: Something remarkable has been happening with this species in recent years. There was an amazing number of reports this winter, virtually statewide, for this species which has previously been a rare mid-winter visitor only in the extreme southeast. However, even in the Omaha-Bellevue area several observers were surprised by sightings in Jan-Feb: one in a Bellevue yard 9 Feb was the observer's second there in 30 years (RBa), and at least 9 others were reported in the metro area 16 Jan-6 Feb (m. ob.). Lincoln observers also had multiple sightings, perhaps more unexpected than those in the Omaha-Bellevue area: 6 were reported Jan-Feb (m. ob.), including 2 wintering at a feeder (fide JLC). Away from these areas, winter reports are rare, but this winter there were no fewer than 12: one was at Curtis 5 Dec and 1 Jan (same bird? RL), 2 at a Burwell feeder 11 Dec had been there some time (B&KG), one was in Frontier Co 11 Dec (LR, RH), one was on the North Platte CBC 18 Dec (fide TJW), another was near North Platte 27 Dec (LD), 2 were on the Calamus-Loup CBC 28 Dec (fide DH), one was in Custer Co 6 Jan (TH), one at Grand Island 9 Jan had been there for 3 weeks (SM), one was in Buffalo Co 23 Jan (B&KG), one was in Colfax Co 25 Jan (LE), one was in Geneva 7 Feb (fide JRi), and one was in Wheeler Co 16 Feb (WF). The Wheeler Co record is the first for Feb north of the Platte Valley away from the east, and the four Jan-Feb records cited above for north of the Platte Valley comprise one third of all such records.

Downy Woodpecker: Reports were routine for this statewide resident.

Hairy Woodpecker: Reports were routine for this statewide resident.

Northern Flicker: Reports were routine for this common resident and winter visitor.

Pileated Woodpecker: Reports continue from FF, a regular location (JR, L&BP, CNK), but northward expansion seems to be underway, with a pair at Dodge Park, Omaha, 6 Dec-5 Jan (CNK, JT, JR, RSt). Farther north, there was a belated report of 2 at DeSoto NWR 28 Feb 2010 (JR, SS).

Loggerhead Shrike: Generally only a rare lingering species in the southeast, two were found on CBCs, singles on the Grand Island CBC 18 Dec (fide CM) and DeSoto NWR CBC 2 Jan (fide JT).

Northern Shrike: Good counts were the 6 between North Platte and Grant 7 Dec (TJW) and 10 on the Calamus-Loup CBC 28 Dec (fide DH).

Pinyon Jay: None were reported; this is a generally common but erratic winter visitor.

Blue Jay: The 353 on the Lincoln CBC (fide LRB) was a good count.

Black-billed Magpie: The current erratic occurrence pattern south of the Platte Valley continues; sightings this winter included 2 in Franklin Co 5 Dec (LR, RH) and one in Frontier Co 7 Dec (RL).

American Crow: The 1540 on the Calamus-Loup CBC 28 Dec (fide DH) was a good count, but far below the CBC record of 9602 from the same location.

Horned Lark: The 5000 in Scotts Bluff Co 19 Feb (KD) was a good count; large flocks occur in Feb, probably as northward migration begins.

Black-capped Chickadee: Numbers are recovering in Lancaster Co; 1-5 were found on most trips there as opposed to none during the last few years (LE), and a

good count of 236 was made 18 Dec on the Lincoln CBC (fide LRB). One at Brady 27 Dec was the "first there for a long while" (TJW).

Tufted Titmouse: Reports were routine for this common eastern resident.

Red-breasted Nuthatch: The 55 on the Lincoln CBC 18 Dec (fide LRB) was a good CBC tally for a non-invasion year. Although widespread at feeders, numbers were about normal.

White-breasted Nuthatch: Reports were routine for this common eastern and northern resident and winter visitor elsewhere.

Pygmy Nuthatch: Reports were routine for this northern Panhandle resident.

Brown-headed Nuthatch: The remarkable discovery of 2 birds in fall at Holmes L, Lincoln (LE), was extended into mid-winter, with many reports of 1-2 birds, including 2 on the Lincoln CBC 18 Dec (fide LRB). The Nebraska winter may have been too much, however, as one on 31 Jan, "appeared cold, having second thoughts about its Nebraska trip" (JC, SS). Despite searching in Feb, none were found (LE). The last report of 2 birds was on the CBC. An intriguing report of "squeaky calls" came from Pioneer Park, Lincoln, 3 Dec (RE). (See photo on page 40.)

Brown Creeper: An apparent record high CBC count was the amazing 43 at Lincoln 18 Dec (fide LRB).

Carolina Wren: This species is making a slow recovery after a few down years. Most reports were as expected from the southeast, with a few exceptions: one was at Hastings 3-19 Jan (PS, PD), one at the Sutherland exit of I-80 was photographed 3 Jan (SJD), and one was in a Grand Island yard 8-9 Jan (SM). The 6 found on the Lincoln CBC 18 Dec (fide LRB) was encouraging.

Winter Wren: There was only one report away from the southeast where a few winter most years: 3 were found on the LM CBC 2 Jan (fide SJD). There are only about 30 Dec-Feb records in northern and western Nebraska.

Marsh Wren: As usual, there were a few reports from the North Platte Valley, where this species winters at seeps; one was at Winters Creek L, Scotts Bluff Co, 5 Dec (AD), and the North Platte, LM, and Scottsbluff CBCs each had 1-3 birds (fide TJW, fide SJD, fide AK).

Golden-crowned Kinglet: Two in Lincoln Co 21 Feb (TJW) were mid-winter rarities there. The 83 on the Lincoln CBC 18 Dec (fide LRB) was a record CBC tally.

Ruby-crowned Kinglet: Reports of singles of this generally cold-sensitive species near Scottsbluff 7 Dec (AD) and at L Maloney on the North Platte CBC 18 Dec (fide TJW) were surprising, but amazing were 2 photographed at an Ogallala feeder 11 Feb (JO), only the 4th Feb record for the western half of the state.

Eastern Bluebird: A count high of 175 was recorded on the Omaha CBC 18 Dec (fide BG); this is the 2nd highest CBC count by one!

Mountain Bluebird: The 10 n. of Brady 16 Feb (TJW) were likely moving to the breeding range; wintering birds are confined to the cedar breaks s. of the Platte River in Lincoln Co.

Townsend's Solitaire: One in Omaha 14 Dec (JR) was the only report from the east; most years at least a few get to eastern Nebraska.

Hermit Thrush: Although reports into Dec, including CBCs, are fairly regular, mid-winter records are scarce, especially westward. A westerly count week bird reported for the North Platte CBC 18 Dec (fide TJW) was only the 6th Dec-Mar report away from the east. All other reports were from the southeast,

where there were more Jan-Feb reports than usual: 5 Jan at Dodge Park, Omaha, (CNK), 6 Jan and 4 Feb at Pioneers Park, Lincoln, (LE), 11 and 20 Jan at FF (CNK, JR), 22 Jan at Omaha (CNK), 2 in a Bellevue yard 2 Feb (BG), one at Plattsmouth 5 Feb (KSc), and one at FF 27 Feb (CNK). Hermit thrushes were recorded 9 out of the last 10 years in one or more CBCs in the state with as many as 3 counts in some years. Interestingly, from 1990-1999, only two birds were recorded on CBCs in the state while from 2000-2009, 26 birds were recorded.

American Robin: Large counts were the 5200 on the Calamus-Loup CBC 28 Dec (fide DH) and 3697 on the North Platte CBC 18 Dec (fide TJW). High CBC counts are 10,000+. An intriguing very grey robin was photographed near North Platte 8 Feb (VC).

Northern Mockingbird: One apparently wintering was seen several times at PL (RSt, LE); over-wintering is rarely documented, although there are quite a few mid-winter sightings. One was on the Lincoln CBC 18 Dec (fide LRB), singles were at BOL 10 and 21 Dec (RSt), and a surprise for the northerly location were the 2 on the Calamus-Loup CBC 28 Dec (fide DH).

Brown Thrasher: One on the LM CBC 20 Jan (fide SJD) was one of fewer than 10 Jan-Feb reports away from the southeast.

European Starling: Best tally was 5007 on the Omaha CBC 18 Dec (fide BG), which is historically mediocre; high CBC counts are 30,000+.

Bohemian Waxwing: The only report of this erratic winter visitor was from an expected location: 4 were on the Harrison CBC 22 Dec (fide B&DW).

Cedar Waxwing: Reports were routine for this common but erratic winter visitor.

Lapland Longspur: Huge aggregations occur on occasion; a careful observer estimated 36,000, 3rd best total on record after 50,000 twice, in a 3-mile square near Funk 28 Jan (PD). Elsewhere, 8000 were in Dixon Co 24 Dec (JJ).

Snow Bunting: This was one of the best years on record for this species in Nebraska. Impressive counts reported were 600 in Pierce and Wayne Cos 27 Dec (JJ), 210 in Dixon Co 15 Jan (BFH), and 200-300 in Clay Co 23 Jan (KS, JLL). Reports were overwhelmingly from the east and north-central, with patchy occurrence westward: only one was located amongst those 36,000 Lapland Longspurs near Funk 28 Jan (PD). The 36 found on the Harrison CBC 22 Dec was a count first there (fide B&DW). After much searching in the Mitchell area 2 were found 19 Feb (KD), and another was in Scotts Bluff Co 2 Feb (AP). Few were reported south of Lincoln/Omaha and the Platte Valley: singles were in Gage Co 22 Jan (LE), Saline Co 23 Jan (LE), and Otoe Co 24 Jan (LE).

Yellow-rumped (Myrtle) Warbler: This species has been increasingly reported on CBCs and into early Jan in recent years, with reports mid-Jan through Mar increasing also. This year there were several mid-winter sightings statewide, including singles northerly in Wheeler Co 26 Feb (WF) and in Burwell 20 Jan (B&KG). Others were 2 near Willis 7 Feb (BFH), 3 in Kearney Co during Jan (KS) and 9 Feb (TH), and 2 in Lincoln Co 21 Feb (TJW). One in Bellevue 5 Feb (KCR) rounded out the total of 5 reports for Feb; previously there have been only 24 reports statewide for Feb, 4 of those in 2007-2008.

Wilson's Warbler: A major surprise was a male near Scottsbluff 29 Dec (AD), the latest on record by a couple of months; there is a report from Boone Co 20 Nov 1976.

- Spotted Towhee:** A few winter in s. and se. Nebraska, but Jan-Feb reports elsewhere are unexpected; a male was near Sutherland 3 Jan (SJD) one was at Hooper 11 Jan (fide RJ), and one was in Cuming Co 25-27 Jan (LE).
- Eastern Towhee:** Overwintering occurs rarely in the se., where Spottedts are more likely in mid-winter; possible wintering Easterns were one at FF 11 Jan (CNK) and another near Fremont 12 Jan (D&JP).
- American Tree Sparrow:** Reports were routine for this abundant winter visitor.
- Chipping Sparrow:** Late stragglers were a "first winter" bird at Forest Lawn Cem, Omaha, 5 Dec (JR), an adult there with juncos 26 Dec (JR), and one in a Hastings yard 3 Jan (PD, photo). The latter is only the 4th documented for Jan.
- Clay-colored Sparrow:** Amazingly, 2 reports were received: 2 on the Omaha CBC 18 Dec (fide BG, EB details) and one at Hastings 3 Jan (PD). Previously there had been 2 reports for Jan and one in Dec.
- Field Sparrow:** Only the 9th record for mid-Jan through mid-Feb was one heard singing and then seen amongst 80+ American Tree Sparrows near Broken Bow (TH). Reports are rare on CBCs in the se., almost always of single birds, and 5 on the Lincoln CBC (fide LRB) was an unexpected tally.
- Fox Sparrow:** Rare westward, one on the LM CBC 2 Jan (fide SJD) was identified as a grayish "Red" Fox Sparrow (WRS, KDy). Reports from Kearney Co 11 and 16 Jan (KS, LR, RH) and 26 Feb (LR, RH) may have been of the same bird over-wintering. The remaining reports, fewer than last winter, were from the se., where wintering occurs on occasion. One was in Lincoln 4 Feb (LE).
- Song Sparrow:** Reports were routine for this uncommon but widespread winter visitor.
- Swamp Sparrow:** One at FF 27 Feb (CNK) was likely an early migrant; there are a few early Mar records.
- White-throated Sparrow:** A bit westerly for Jan-Feb were 5 at a Hastings feeder 3 Jan (PD, PS).
- Harris's Sparrow:** This species is rare in the west, but most likely in the North Platte Valley, where one was at a Scottsbluff feeder 15 Dec (AD) and 4 were near Sutherland 3 Jan (SJD).
- White-crowned Sparrow:** Largest mid-winter numbers occur in the west, with fewer eastward; 112 were on the Scottsbluff CBC 18 Dec (fide AK) and 40 were at a Mitchell feeder 16 Jan (KD). In the east, the only mid-Jan through Feb reports were of 1-2 in Sarpy Co 15-16 Jan (ARy, L&BP), one in Omaha 17 Jan (JWH), 1-2 in Lincoln 22-24 Jan (R&SW), and 2 in Cuming Co 27 Jan (LE).
- Dark-eyed (White-winged) Junco:** None were reported; a few winter in the west most years.
- Dark-eyed (Slate-colored) Junco:** The 986 on the DeSoto NWR CBC 2 Jan (fide JT) was an impressive CBC total.
- Dark-eyed (Oregon) Junco:** The 28 "Oregon" Juncos on the Lincoln CBC 18 Dec (fide LRB) was a good tally; about 5-10% of wintering juncos in the east are "Oregons".
- Dark-eyed (Pink-sided) Junco:** This form is rare in the east, with few well-documented records. However, 2 different birds photographed in Lincoln showed features consistent with this form: 22 Feb (RSt) and 27 Feb (JH).

- Dark-eyed (Gray-headed) Junco:** The only report was of one on the Scottsbluff CBC 18 Dec (fide AK), only the 9th documented record; reports have increased to perhaps one a year recently.
- Northern Cardinal:** Reports were routine for this common resident.
- Red-winged Blackbird:** The 5000 at a Brady feedlot 2 Jan (TJW) was a large group for the date. As noted by the observer, most winter birds are males, and so 3 females in Scotts Bluff Co 9 Jan (KD) were unexpected.
- Eastern Meadowlark:** None were reported; a few likely winter in the southeast.
- Western Meadowlark:** First singing was heard in Sarpy Co 26 Feb (L&BP). Northwesternly for the dates were 6 near Broken Bow 1 Jan (TH) and 12 near Gering 4 Jan (AK).
- Yellow-headed Blackbird:** The only report was of a male on the Ames CBC 14 Dec (DL, fide D&JP).
- Rusty Blackbird:** This species is a regular, though rare, winter visitor in the east; thus unexpected were singles at L McConaughy 1-2 Jan (SJD) and at Broken Bow 28 Jan (TH). There are only 12 Panhandle records Nov-Mar, and so a flock of 110 at Walgren L, Sheridan Co, 24 Dec (B&DW) was a surprise.
- Brewer's Blackbird:** Three at Walgren L, Sheridan Co, 24 Dec (B&DW) and 2 in Cass Co 26 Dec (RSt) were late.
- Common Grackle:** The 31 at North Platte 9 Feb (TJW) were likely early migrants; wintering birds are usually singles, such as one in Kearney Co 30 Jan (LR, RH).
- Great-tailed Grackle:** Wintering occurs in the south on occasion; 7 were in Fillmore Co 3 Feb (LE). A male near Gothenburg 15 Feb (TJW) and one at BOL 19 Feb (LE) were likely early migrants.
- Brown-headed Cowbird:** An early arrival was one in Lancaster Co 25 Feb (LE).
- Gray-crowned Rosy-Finch:** The only report of this localized Panhandle winter visitor was of 10 on the Scottsbluff CBC 18 Dec (fide AK).
- Purple Finch:** Numbers were about average, best count the 23 on the Lincoln CBC 18 Dec (fide LRB). Less common westerly, good finds were the single on the Scottsbluff CBC 18 Dec (fide AK) and 2 near Sutherland 1 Jan (SJD).
- House Finch:** The 263 on the Lincoln CBC 18 Dec (fide LRB) was a good count.
- Red Crossbill:** Only one bird was reported from the east, that on the Lincoln CBC 18 Dec (fide LRB). Only about 20 were reported in all.
- Common Redpoll:** As is often the case with this species, good showings are followed by no showing. None were reported.
- Pine Siskin:** Reports were widespread, although numbers were moderate; best count was from a CBC, as might be expected: 109 at Lincoln 18 Dec (fide LRB), but 100 were at a feeder near Gering 28 Jan (AK). This species is an early breeder and may nest anywhere in the state; two appeared to be engaged in courtship feeding at Bellevue 18 Feb (L&BP).
- American Goldfinch:** Numbers at feeders were higher than in recent years; the 200+ in the observer's yard 1 Feb were the most there for 15 years (JJ). Elsewhere, 200+ were in a Lincoln yard 31 Jan (R&SW), and the best CBC count was 372 on the Lincoln CBC 18 Dec (fide LRB).
- House Sparrow:** Reports were routine for this common commensal.