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Winter Field Report, December 2013 to February 2014

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WINTER FIELD REPORT, December 2013 to February 2014

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INTRODUCTION

This was a low-key winter season in terms of reportable phenomena of any significance, although three species provided food for thought: high numbers of Rough-legged Hawks, the possibility of breeding Northern Saw-whet Owls in the cedar canyons of Lincoln Co, and the possible impending demise of Black-billed Magpie over most of the state. Also noteworthy is the continuing increase in mid-winter reports of a wide range of species that previously have accounted for very few such records. Notable in this respect are waterfowl, mimids, non-oriole icterids, and sparrows; a Say's Phoebe in December was the most surprising record in this group. "Winter finches" were in very low numbers.

Real rarities were lacking; the best in this category were Eurasian Wigeon, Great Black-backed Gull, and Steller's Jay.

ABBREVIATIONS

ad: adult
ADF: Arbor Day Farm, Nebraska City
BOL: Branched Oak L, Lancaster Co
CBC: Christmas Bird Count
Cem: Cemetery
CL: Carter L, Omaha
fem: female
FF: Fontenelle Forest, Sarpy Co
GPD: Gavins Point Dam, Cedar/Knox Cos
HCR: Harlan Co Res., Republican City
HL: Holmes L, Lincoln
imm: immature
juv: juvenile
ICSP: Indian Cave SP, Nemaha/Richardson Cos
LM: L McConaughy, Keith Co
LO: L Ogallala, Keith Co
m. ob.: many observers
NM: National Monument
NNF: Nebraska National Forest
NWR: National Wildlife Refuge
Res: Reservoir
SL: Sewage Lagoon(s)
SP: State Park

OBSERVERS

AK: Alice Kenitz, Gering
ARy: Al Reyer, Bellevue
AS: Amy Sheffield, Omaha
B&DW: Bruce & Donna Walgren, Casper, WY
BFH: Bill F. Huser, South Sioux City
BG: Betty Grenon, Bellevue
BW: Bruce Wendorff, Lincoln
CA: Chris Anderson, Yankton, SD
CNK: Clem N. Klaphake, Bellevue
CS: Connie Stevenson, Fremont
D&JP: Don and Jan Paseka, Ames
DE: Dave Ely, Salem, MA
DH: Dave Heidt, Norfolk
EA: Edward Allen, Lincoln
EB: Elliott Bedows, Bellevue
G&WH: Glen & Wanda Hoge, Alma
GD: Garrett Day, Omaha
GR: Gary Roberts, Fremont
J&GB: Jay & Ginger Belsan, Ogallala
JG: Joe Gubanyi, Seward
JGe: Julie Geiser, North Platte
JGJ: Joel G. Jorgensen, Lincoln
JGr: Jonas Grundman, Omaha
JJ: Jan Johnson, Wakefield
JK: Jon King, Lincoln
JMa: John Manning, Norfolk
JP: Jim Petersen, North Platte
JR: Justin Rink, Omaha
JRi: Juanita Rice, Fairmont
JT: Jerry Toll, Omaha
KD: Kathy DeLara, Mitchell
KeS: Ken Shuster, Fremont
KMD: Kathy Mihm Dunning, Denver
KS: Kent Skaggs, Kearney
L&BP: Loren & Babs Padelford, Bellevue
LDe: Linda Deeds, North Platte
LE: Larry Einemann, Lincoln
LF: Larry Falk, Nebraska City
LR: Lanny Randolph, Kearney
LRB: Linda R. Brown, Lincoln
MB: Mark Brogie, Creighton
MS: Marie Smith, Scottsbluff
MW: Michael Willison, Lincoln
NP: Neva Pruess, Lincoln
NR: Neal Ratzlaff, Omaha
NV: Nick Varvel, Olathe, KS

PD: Paul Dunbar, Hastings
RD: Roger Dietrich, Yankton, SD
RE: Rick Eades, Lincoln
RH: Robin Harding, Kearney
RMa: Robert Manning, Omaha
RSt: Ruth Stearns, Lincoln
RT: Richard Temple, Fairbury
SJD: Stephen J. Dinsmore, Ames, IA
SM: Steve Morris, Grand Island
SMa: Sam Manning, Omaha
SQ: Sally Quinn, Nebraska City
TEL: Thomas E. Labedz, Lincoln
TJW: T.J. Walker, Brady
VC: Virginia Clark, North Platte
WF: William Flack, Kearney
WM: Wayne Mollhoff, Ashland
WRS: W. Ross Silcock, Tabor, IA

SPECIES ACCOUNTS

- Greater White-fronted Goose:** More than usual were reported through the winter, starting with a new count high of 20 on the North Platte CBC on 28 Dec (fide TJW); this species is uncommon to rare westward. One was at CL in Jan, joined by a second 7 Feb (ARy, JR, RSt), 8 were at HCR 14 Jan (G&WH), and 12 were in Cass Co 13 Jan (RSt). Migrants generally arrive in mid-Feb.
- Snow Goose:** A single overwintered at CL (JR, LE), and was joined by 5 more 7 Feb (JR). Unusually high numbers for winter were reported westward: 12,620 were on the LM CBC 28 Dec (fide SJD) with 15 still there 15 Jan (SM), and a "flock" was in Deuel Co 20 Jan (KMD). "Thousands" appeared in Nemaha Co 22 Feb (SQ).
- Ross's Goose:** Along with the large number of Snows on the LM CBC 28 Dec, 701 Ross's were counted also (fide SJD), by far the highest count that late. This species is reported more often in mid-winter as its numbers increase and Snow Geese are more numerous in mid-winter. Two other reports were of westerly singles: one at Scottsbluff SL 3 Jan (SMa) and one in Deuel Co 20 Jan (KMD). A Snow x Ross's hybrid was at CL 28 Jan-12 Feb (JR).
- Cackling Goose:** Generally occurring with wintering Canada Geese, Cackler numbers are lowest in Jan. However, 40 were still at CL 11 Jan (JR), dwindling to 1 by 23 Jan (LE, JR), but increasing to 15 by 7 Feb (JR). Other Jan reports were of 20 stragglers in Lancaster Co 3 Jan (LE) and 8 in western Douglas Co 11 Jan (JR).
- Canada Goose:** A total of 97,928 was reported on state CBCs, 28,426 of these at Scottsbluff (fide AK).
- Mute Swan:** The only report was of 2 at Boys Town L, Douglas Co, 12 Jan, likely captives (NR).
- Trumpeter Swan:** This species is becoming ubiquitous in winter. Best CBC tallies were the 60 on the Calamus-Loup CBC 19 Dec (fide DH) after 105 were

there 12 Dec (DH), and 53 on the LM CBC 28 Dec (fide SJD). These are expected wintering locations, but a new one is CL, where as many as 30 were present through the winter (JR, m. ob.). Among the CL flock was one with an orange patagial tag #387, originating from a Minnesota program (JR); this bird was first noted in western Douglas Co 5 Dec (JR). One with a red collar, from the Iowa program, was with a flock of 22 on Beach Rd, Cass Co, 20 Jan (L&BP). Apparently this flock was over-nighting there (CNK), and were likely different birds from those at Carter L; no red collars were reported from Carter L. Oddly, a veteran observer's first record of Trumpeter Swan in Knox Co was one on the Missouri River 17 Jan (MB).

Tundra Swan: This species is less than annual in mid-winter, and so the 3 reports were unexpected. A single ad wintered in the North Platte area, where it was reported from several locations 20 Dec-15 Feb (TJW, LE, VC photo), and a "dusky juv" wintered with the Trumpeters at CL 3 Jan-26 Feb (JT, m. ob.). The third report was of 2 at LO 4-12 Jan (SMa, MW), a regular wintering place for Trumpeters.

Mandarin Duck: Amazingly, a male returned to Pier Park, Grand Island, 12 Jan (SM) for the third straight winter. Its provenance is unknown.

Wood Duck: Although generally rare in mid-winter, especially westward, this species winters almost anywhere there is open water. One such location is Berggren Pond, Scotts Bluff Co; 3 were there 11 Jan (KD). Similarly, Pier Park in Grand Island attracts wintering birds; 18 were there 12 Jan (SM).

Gadwall: A few occur in mid-winter given open water, although more than usual were reported this winter following a similar showing during winter 2012-2013; 11 were at Berggren Pond, Scotts Bluff Co, 11 Jan (KD), up to 9 were on Salt Creek, Lincoln, through the period (LE, JK), 2 were in Jefferson Co 9-11 Jan (RT), and 2 were at LO 15 Jan (SM). A hybrid with Mallard, known as "Brewer's Duck", was at LM 16 Feb (JGJ); this is the 3rd report for the state.

Eurasian Wigeon: The only report of this rare spring migrant was of a pair at Walnut Creek L, Sarpy Co, 21 Feb (EB, details).

American Wigeon: This species is found in mid-winter only rarely; mid-winter sightings (generally mid-Jan through mid-Feb) of diving ducks anywhere in the state are, of course, dependent on the presence of open water. Last American Wigeons reported in fall were 1-3 in Cass Co 20-23 Jan (RSt, L&BP) and 3 at CL 23 Jan (JR), and first reported in spring were the 21 in Lincoln Co 17 Feb (TJW).

American Black Duck: A single male was at CL 9 Jan-23 Feb (JR, m. ob.); this species occurs most winters generally as single birds with larger Mallard flocks in the Missouri River Valley. Hybridization occurs with Mallard; one observer (JR) detected some "greenish on crowns" of a few female-type Mallards that may indicate mixing of genes.

Mallard: More than one third of the state CBC total of 64,916 was the 23,700 on the LM CBC 28 Dec (fide SJD). Oddly, 2 major rafts of Mallards on the Missouri River included 5200 floating past Nebraska City 15 Jan (LF) and an amazing 11,000 passing Sarpy Co 14 Feb (CNK).

Northern Shoveler: Up to 15 wintered at CL (JR, m. ob.), far fewer than in the past two winters. Elsewhere, one was in Lincoln Co 8 Jan (TJW) and another

appeared at Pier Park, Grand Island, 12 Jan (SM). Up to 5 were on Salt Creek, Lincoln, 3-12 Feb (LE).

Northern Pintail: Reports were routine for this regular winter visitor, usually males in small numbers with Mallard flocks.

Green-winged Teal: Reports were routine for this regular low-density winter visitor.

Canvasback: Noteworthy was one near North Platte 17 Jan (TJW), where mid-winter sightings are few.

Redhead: As with Canvasback, a rare mid-winter report was of 2 near North Platte 17 Jan (TJW).

Ring-necked Duck: As many as 35 overwintered at CL (JR) and as many as 100+ were in the North Platte area 17 Jan (TJW). There are regular reports through mid-Jan and beginning again early Feb, so this species is virtually a regular winter species. Other than 1-2 on Salt Creek, Lincoln, 3-17 Feb (LE, RE), there were no reports in the second half of Jan except for the wintering birds at CL.

Greater Scaup: Mid-winter reports are few, most from LM, where a few winter most years; one was there 15 Jan (SM). Rare elsewhere at that time, one in Madison Co 18 Jan (MB, DH) was a good find.

Lesser Scaup: Like Ring-necked Duck, this species occurs with some regularity in fall into mid-Jan; last reported this winter were 2 at LM 15 Jan (SM), where wintering occurs most years. There are few records in mid-winter (mid-Jan through mid-Feb); first spring arrivals reported were 15 at Merritt Res, Cherry Co 16 Feb (WF).

Surf Scoter: Rather late were 2 at LO 20 Dec (PD); there are only 2 later dates, latest 20 Jan.

Black Scoter: None were reported; last dates are in mid-Dec.

Long-tailed Duck: The reports were all from LO, where 8, 3 fewer than the record count, were found 20 Dec (PD); 2 fems remained there 28 Dec-15 Jan (SJD, SM, m. ob.).

Bufflehead: One in Antelope Co 19 Jan (WF) was a rare mid-winter record away from favored winter sites; one of those sites is LO, where 180 were still present 29 Dec (fide SJD).

Common Goldeneye: Reports were routine for this common winter visitor.

Barrow's Goldeneye: A fem at the Scottsbluff SL 24 Dec-21 Jan (fide AK, RMa, KD) was the only report; this species is a regular winter visitor, usually as single birds, to the western North Platte River Valley and LO.

Hooded Merganser: Up to 11, most males, wintered at CL (JR, CNK); a rare occurrence. A male was in Madison Co 10 Jan (JMa), rather late. Most depart by 5 Jan.

Common Merganser: The 4300 on the LM CBC 28 Dec (fide SJD) was impressive, although high fall/winter counts are above 36,000.

Red-breasted Merganser: A few overwinter each year at LM with the Common Merganser flock; one was found 15 Jan (SM). Unexpected away from LM in mid-winter was a male near North Platte 8-17 Jan (TJW).

Ruddy Duck: Only casual in winter, with latest dates in early Jan, last reported was one on the LM CBC 28 Dec (fide SJD).

Northern Bobwhite: This species occurs in or near the Platte River Valley west to Colorado; singles were found in Custer Co 13 Feb (WF) and Lincoln Co 31

Dec (TJW). A good count for the northeast was the 25 on the Norfolk CBC 14 Dec (fide DH), and sightings of up to 12 on 3 occasions, possibly the same group, in Dodge Co during the period were considered unusual there (D&JP).

Chukar: Five were photographed along Wrights Gap Road, Banner Co, 15 Feb (MS); these are probably released game birds, although a major release of 700 birds was made in 1968 in southern Scotts Bluff Co, with consistent reports until 1977.

Gray Partridge: None of this uncommon and local northeast Nebraska resident were reported. The population appears to be currently at cyclical low.

Ring-necked Pheasant: Reports were routine for this locally common statewide resident.

Sharp-tailed Grouse: Reports were routine for this fairly common northern and western resident.

Greater Prairie-Chicken: The 8-10 at a booming ground in a Thomas Co hayfield 15 Feb (TJW) were anxious to get things going for the spring. Booming generally begins around this time.

Wild Turkey: Turkeys are now ubiquitous in Nebraska, often in large numbers; 300+ in 3 groups were in northern Knox Co 12 Jan (MB).

Common Loon: The only report was of a tardy bird on the LM CBC 28 Dec (fide SJD). There are only about 6 later dates, including an over-wintering bird.

Pied-billed Grebe: Latest was one on the LM CBC 28 Dec (fide SJD), and the only other report was of one on the Lincoln CBC 14 Dec (LE). This species has overwintered at LM, and only once elsewhere, at CL 2012-2013.

Horned Grebe: None of this fairly common statewide fall migrant were reported; last dates are in mid-Dec.

Red-necked Grebe: There were 2 reports of single birds at LM 20 Dec (PD) and 28 Dec on the CBC (fide SJD); these were likely the same bird. In recent years this species has been found each year at LM in late Dec.

Eared Grebe: None of this common statewide fall migrant were reported; last dates are in early Dec.

Western Grebe: The only report was of the 34 on the LM CBC 28 Dec (fide SJD). This is a low number for LM, where 100-200 usually linger into early Jan and overwintering of very low numbers of birds has occurred.

Clark's Grebe: One was on the LM CBC 28 Dec (fide SJD); recent years have seen a few linger late in fall with the many Western Grebes there. Overwintering has occurred twice there.

Double-crested Cormorant: Although overwintering has occurred (less often than American White Pelican) at Sutherland Res, 2-5 cormorants there 16-17 Feb (JGJ, TJW) may as likely have been early spring migrants.

American White Pelican: This species winters at Sutherland Res most years; 4 were there 16-17 Feb (JGJ, TJW).

Great Blue Heron: Reports were routine for this uncommon primarily western winter visitor.

Black-crowned Night-Heron: An imm on Salt Creek, Lincoln, 11 Jan (LE) was the second record for Jan and latest by 9 days. It may have been wintering, but there were no other reports at that location.

- Bald Eagle:** Apparently the highest single-location Jan count on record was the 250 at HCR 19 Jan (KS). Numbers usually start to increase in mid-Feb.
- Northern Harrier:** Reports were routine for this uncommon statewide winter visitor.
- Sharp-shinned Hawk:** Reports were routine for this uncommon statewide winter visitor.
- Cooper's Hawk:** Reports were routine for this fairly common resident and winter visitor.
- Northern Goshawk:** None were reported of this rare but regular statewide winter visitor.
- Red-shouldered Hawk:** One in Sarpy Co 19 Dec (EB) was the only one reported; this species is a rare but regular winter visitor (resident?) in the east.
- Red-tailed Hawk:** The 6 "Harlan's" Hawks found among 33 Easterns on the North Platte CBC 28 Dec was a count high there (TJW).
- Ferruginous Hawk:** Reports were routine for this uncommon western resident and rare central winter visitor.
- Rough-legged Hawk:** Numbers were high this winter; several CBCs and field observers reported more Rough-legged Hawks than Red-tailed Hawks as well as a few count all-time highs for the species. In north-central Nebraska 28 Dec, there were 37 Rough-legged Hawks counted compared with only 15 Red-tailed Hawks (MB), and 37 were counted between York and Ogallala 1 Jan (RMa). There is only one higher count, that of 53 in the Panhandle 10 Feb 2001. The total for all CBCs statewide was a surprising 184 (fide D&JP). There appeared to be some movement out of some areas in mid-Jan, where numbers dropped noticeably (TJW, JT).
- Golden Eagle:** Easternmost, where a few are expected each year, usually imms, singles were in Madison Co 1 Jan (DH) and Knox Co 2 Feb (MB).
- American Coot:** This species attempts to over-winter when open water is available; the 1504 on the LM CBC 28 Dec (fide SJD) had declined to 75 by 16 Feb (JGJ). The only others reported in mid-winter were up to 9 wintering on CL (JR, RSt, LE) and one near North Platte 17 Jan (TJW).
- Sandhill Crane:** The first spring migrants for this early arriver were 2+ over North Platte 13 Feb (TJW, JGe). First sightings are usually in late Jan.
- Killdeer:** As with American Coot, a few Killdeer attempt to overwinter around margins of open water, mostly in the North Platte River Valley. A total of 19 were reported at 4 CBC locations, including 13 at LM (fide SJD) and 2 away from the North Platte River Valley at Lincoln (fide LRB); the rest were found from North Platte westward. Most, if not all, of these birds overwintered (TJW, m. ob.).
- Wilson's Snipe:** This species, like Killdeer, winters regularly in the North Platte River Valley; a surprising number for the date, however, was the 25+ at Hiatt Memorial Wetland, North Platte, 8 Jan (TJW).
- Franklin's Gull:** This species occurs less than annually in Dec, and so the 3 reports were unusual: 3 were at PL 1 Dec (RSt), and singles were in Lancaster Co 6 Dec (JGr) and on the Calamus-Loup CBC 19 Dec, a first for that count (fide DH). The latter 2 reports are only the 25th and 26th in the period 6 Dec-15 Feb.

- Mew Gull:** One at LM 27-29 Dec (SJD, LE) was only the 19th fall record for the state. All but 5 of these fall records are from LM and GPD.
- Ring-billed Gull:** Reports were routine for this uncommon statewide winter visitor.
- California Gull:** The usual few late fall lingerers were at LM: 1-4 of various ages were reported 29 Dec-12 Jan (SJD, SMa, RMa, MW). Over-wintering of small numbers occurs at LM most years. Not unexpected was one at L Maloney, Lincoln Co, 2-3 Dec (TJW), but one at Alma 1 Dec (G&WH) was easterly.
- Herring Gull:** Numbers are fewest in Jan; the only report at that time was of one at BOL 22 Jan (LE).
- Thayer's Gull:** The fewer reports than usual involved possibly only 3 individuals: a juv was at LM 20 Dec (PD), 2 were counted on the LM CBC 28 Dec (no ages given; fide SJD), an ad and a juv were at LM 16 Feb (JGJ), and a juv was at GPD 6 Dec (PD).
- Lesser Black-backed Gull:** This species is a spring and fall migrant; only the 7th record for 4 Feb-11 Jan was of a first winter-plumaged bird which lingered at LM through at least 15 Jan (SM, m. ob.). Two (first- and third-winter plumages) were at LM 20 Dec (PD), and 2-3 had arrived at LM by 16 Feb (JGJ). The only other report was of an ad at GPD 6 Dec (PD).
- Glaucous Gull:** Reports were of 1-3 at LM during the period, including one each of first, second, and third-winter birds (SMa, JGJ, PD, m. ob.), likely the same juv at PL and BOL continuing from fall through 6 Dec (EA, PD, LE), and one at North Platte SL 31 Dec (TJW).
- Great Black-backed Gull:** An ad photographed at GPD 6 Dec (PD) was only the 15th fall record for the state.
- Rock Pigeon:** Reports were routine for this locally abundant statewide resident.
- Eurasian Collared-Dove:** Numbers continue to increase, especially in the west; of 1291 reported on CBCs this year, 456 were at Scottsbluff, a new count high (fide AK). Of interest was a group of 22 drinking at open water in Salt Creek, Lincoln, 22 Jan, the first large group seen by the observer in the inner city (LE).
- White-winged Dove:** 1-2 were at a Fremont feeder 1-4 Dec (CS), only the 13th report for the period 11 Oct-19 Mar.
- Mourning Dove:** CBCs indicated a fairly typical late fall distribution across the state; of 255 Mourning Doves reported, all were in the east except for the 6 on the LM CBC (fide SJD). An excellent one-location count for the date was the 200 feeding on spilled grain at a Sarpy Co elevator 2 Jan (ARy). One at Arnold 17 Dec (LE) was tardy at that northerly location.
- Eastern Screech-Owl:** Reports were routine for this common statewide resident.
- Great Horned Owl:** A pair made an early start on incubation at Fairmont 15 Feb (JRi); generally incubation begins around mid-Feb, but there are two reports of incubation in late Jan in recent years from Lincoln Co (TJW).
- Snowy Owl:** Possibly 6 were reported, a typical non-invasion year tally; singles were photographed in Johnson Co 21 Dec (fide JGJ), Jefferson Co 25 Jan (fide JGJ), at Eppley Airfield, Omaha, 27-28 Feb (GD, fide JT), and in Dodge Co 6 Feb (KeS fide GR). One was in Keith Co 27 Dec (SJD), and another in Keith Co 28 Jan was unconfirmed (fide TJW).

- Barred Owl:** Reports were routine for this fairly common eastern, rare central, resident.
- Long-eared Owl:** Reports were routine for this uncommon statewide winter visitor.
- Short-eared Owl:** Seven were reported, a typical winter number, 6 in the east (m. ob.) and one on the LM CBC 28 Dec (fide SJD).
- Northern Saw-whet Owl:** Following the amazing survey estimate of some 48 breeding pairs in western conifer areas (Bly et al. 2008), interest in this species in Nebraska has increased. The species is silent during migration (<http://www.owlpages.com>), which suggests that calling birds are territorial and likely to breed where heard. Thus information from the cedar canyons in Lincoln Co is of interest; calling is heard there most years from late January-early Mar (LDe), and there are additional records of calling birds into May (TJW). It is possible that wintering birds may begin calling before migrating, but I found no information regarding this.
- Belted Kingfisher:** Winter numbers vary with amount of still, open water, but the 4 on the North Platte CBC 28 Dec was a count high there (fide TJW). Another was northerly for the date in Antelope Co 19 Jan (WM).
- Red-headed Woodpecker:** Numbers were still high in late fall in the southeast, with 160 on the Omaha CBC 21 Dec (fide BG), 45 at ICSP 19 Dec (LF, SQ) and 12-24 there 17-19 Feb (LF, SQ, RSt), and a count high of 38 (old high 8) at DeSoto NWR CBC 15 Dec (fide JT). Thus northerly stragglers were to be expected, such as the 2 on the Beaver Valley CBC 26 Dec (WM), and one at Valentine 4 Jan (MB).
- Red-bellied Woodpecker:** Reports were routine for this common eastern and central resident, rare in the west
- Yellow-bellied Sapsucker:** One on the North Platte CBC 28 Dec (fide TJW) was westerly, and another (or the same) lingered in Lincoln Co 1 Jan (JP). An ad male at a LM feeder 1-8 Feb (J&GB) was only the 2nd record for Feb away from the southeast. There were several mid-winter records from the southeast, where a few birds winter most years.
- Downy Woodpecker:** Reports were routine for this common statewide resident.
- Hairy Woodpecker:** A fem of the Rocky Mountain subspecies continued in a Scotts Bluff Co yard through the winter (KD).
- Northern Flicker:** Reports were routine for this fairly common winter visitor.
- Pileated Woodpecker:** The DeSoto NWR CBC 15 Dec reported 5; the first count record was of 2 in 2012 (fide JT). Omaha CBC reported 4 on 21 Dec (fide BG); these two counts indicate the continuing consolidation of this species in forests in the southeast, although extent of habitat may soon become a limiting factor.
- American Kestrel:** Reports were routine for this uncommon statewide winter visitor.
- Merlin:** Generally only a migrant through Nebraska, the earliest returning *Falco columbarius columbarius* reported was in Knox Co 28 Feb (MB); spring dates for this subspecies are 16 Feb-2 May. The expected wintering subspecies, *F. c. richardsoni*, was represented by one in Dakota Co 8 Dec (BFH).
- Gyr Falcon:** While there were no reports of this rare winter visitor, a falconer reported loss of a Peregrine x Gyr Falcon hybrid near Atkinson (fide JGJ).

Such birds are occasionally reported in the wild, and can present identification problems.

Peregrine Falcon: Mid-winter reports have become routine in recent years, almost all presumably of the resident ads in and near Lincoln and Omaha.

Prairie Falcon: Winter sightings are fewest in the southeast, although this winter several were reported there: singles were in York Co 4 Jan (SM), Sarpy Co 25 Jan (LE), Nuckolls Co 2 Feb (LR, RH), Thayer Co 10 Feb (DE), and Dodge Co 19 Feb (GR).

Say's Phoebe: A major surprise was a single near LM 27 Dec (fide SJD); this is over 2 months later than the previous latest date.

Loggerhead Shrike: Neither of the 2 northerly reports received were accompanied by details; this is a rare bird away from the southeast in mid-winter.

Northern Shrike: This species is least common in the southeast and so the 6 on the DeSoto NWR CBC 15 Dec (fide JT) were noteworthy.

Pinyon Jay: Only 1 and 4 were reported on the CBCs at Harrison 22 Dec and Crawford 21 Dec respectively (fide B&DW), but 30 were at a regular feeding site near Dalton 3 Jan (RMA). Flocks are rather conspicuous in most winters.

Steller's Jay: Following last winter's incursion of 7-8 birds into Scotts Bluff Co, a repeat was noted this year, as up to 7 were found in fall, at least 3 wintered, and the last one reported was seen 13 Mar (AK, RMa, SMa). There are still fewer than 40 records for this species in Nebraska.

Blue Jay: Reports were routine for this winter visitor, most common eastward.

Black-billed Magpie: The range of this species has shrunk quite quickly in the last few years, with the stronghold now the North Platte River Valley from LM westward and in the Pine Ridge, with only isolated colonies elsewhere. Only 32 were reported on CBCs, all in the west: 16 at LM 28 Dec (fide SJD), 10 at Scottsbluff 14 Dec (fide AK), 5 at Crawford 21 Dec (fide B&DW) and one at Harrison 22 Dec (fide B&DW). Three in Deuel Co 16 Feb were the only ones seen on a 3-day western Nebraska trip 15-17 Dec (JGJ). The only easterly report was from the "usual place" near Crofton, where 1-2 were seen 13-15 Dec (RD, CA, MB). One was between Oconto and Broken Bow in Custer Co 22 Feb (LE) and 6 were at Scotts Bluff NM 27 Dec (LE).

American Crow: Some 85% of all crows reported on CBCs were at Calamus-Loup 19 Dec, where 5000 were estimated (fide DH). The 1500 in a flock near Maxwell was "the largest concentration I have ever seen" (LE), but the LM CBC reported only one (fide SJD)!

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

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

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

Red-breasted Nuthatch: This was a low numbers year; the best count was 7 at PP 14 Dec (RSt), which no doubt contributed to the 20 on the Lincoln CBC (fide LRB); only 46 were reported statewide on CBCs.

White-breasted Nuthatch: The 50+ in FF 31 Dec (EB) was an excellent single-observer tally, suggestive of the presence of winter visitors as well as residents.

- Pygmy Nuthatch:** This is a common species on the Pine Ridge, as indicated by the tally of 41 on the Harrison CBC 22 Dec (fide B&DW); this tally may also have been augmented by winter visitors.
- Brown Creeper:** Numbers reported were generally as expected, but the 7 on the North Platte CBC 28 Dec was a count high there fide (TJW).
- Winter Wren:** A few winter in the southeast each year, such as one in Omaha 12 Jan (JR), but unexpected were singles on the Harrison CBC 22 Dec (WM, MB), and at LO 4-15 Jan (SMa, RMa); both were identified by calls as Winter Wrens and not Pacific Wrens. One was a bit northerly on the Ponca SP CBC 14 Dec (BFH).
- Marsh Wren:** Wintering attempts are expected in the North Platte River Valley; 2 were on each of the Scottsbluff CBC 14 Dec (fide AK) and North Platte CBC 28 Dec (fide TJW).
- Carolina Wren:** As expected, all but one of the 31 CBC Carolina Wrens were in the southeast, the exception was one at Norfolk 8-15 Dec, which was present for the CBC 14 Dec (fide DH).
- Golden-crowned Kinglet:** Wintering occurs most years in the southeast, but one in Sheridan Co 15 Feb (WF) was only the 5th Panhandle record for Feb.
- Ruby-crowned Kinglet:** Similarly-distributed in winter to Golden-crowned, but in much lower numbers, a surprise was one as far west as southeastern Garden Co 15 Jan (SM), only the 7th Jan-Feb record for the Panhandle.
- Eastern Bluebird:** This species was reported through the period as far north as Knox Co (MB); it is less than annual there in mid-winter.
- Mountain Bluebird:** A good count of wintering birds at the regular location in the cedar canyons of southeast Lincoln Co was the 12 there 16 Feb (TJW); 2 had arrived there by 29 Dec (LE).
- Townsend's Solitaire:** A good count of 112 was made on the LM CBC 28 Dec (fide SJD). This species has been found on 11 of the 20 years of the Seward-Branched Oak Lake CBC, but this year's tally of 7 was a count high (fide JG); also easterly were singles in Gage Co 20 Jan (LE) and Lancaster Co 3 Feb (LE).
- Hermit Thrush:** This species is not uncommon into Dec in the southeast, but overwintering is less than annual; one was at BOL from 14 Dec (MW) at least until 11 Jan (MW, LE). The 3 on the DeSoto NWR CBC 15 Dec (fide JT) was a good count for the date.
- American Robin:** Large counts reported were the "thousands" between Center and Niobrara, Knox Co, 12 Jan (MB) and 1000+ in Antelope Co 2 Feb (MB). The 200 in Scotts Bluff Co 11 Jan was considered an "unusual number" there for the date (KD).
- Northern Mockingbird:** This species is becoming more conspicuous in winter; one wintered in the North Platte area (TJW), 2 were on the LM CBC 28 Dec (fide SJD), and one on the Omaha CBC 21 Dec was the first there since 1978 (SMa, BG).
- Brown Thrasher:** Although there are numerous records into Dec, over-wintering is unexpected; one that wintered in a Lincoln yard (NP) was only the 5th such documented record. One in Lincoln Co 5 Jan (LDe) was only the 9th record for Jan-Feb away from the southeast.

- European Starling:** Good numbers were reported on the North Platte CBC, where 12,510 were tallied 28 Dec (fide TJW), about 40% of the statewide CBC total of 31,014. Highest CBC local count tallies are 100,000+.
- American Pipit:** The 4 on the LM CBC 28 Dec (fide SJD) comprised only the 6th record for Dec for the state; there are none for Jan-Feb.
- Bohemian Waxwing:** There were only 2 reports, both from expected locations in the Pine Ridge: 36 were found on the Harrison CBC 22 Dec (MB, fide B&DW) and 2 were in Chadron 21 Dec (NV).
- Cedar Waxwing:** Reports were routine for this common statewide winter visitor.
- Lapland Longspur:** Reports were routine for this abundant statewide winter visitor.
- Snow Bunting:** Reports were widespread although total numbers were only average. Best CBC count was 22 at Scottsbluff 14 Dec (fide AK), and 14 were in Dodge Co 3 Jan (D&JP). In all, about 64 were reported.
- Yellow-rumped (Audubon's) Warbler:** One on the LM CBC 28 Dec (fide SJD) was only the second winter record; it may have been the same individual photographed there 13 Feb 2013 (MB).
- Yellow-rumped (Myrtle) Warbler:** The 16 on the LM CBC 28 Dec (fide SJD) and 5 in Lincoln Co 17 Dec (TJW) were good westerly counts, and the presence of 1-2 in Antelope Co 19 Jan-23 Feb (WF, MB) was an unexpected northerly mid-winter record.
- Spotted Towhee:** This species is rare in mid-winter in the south and absent elsewhere; one in Knox Co 12 Jan (MB) was only the 7th record for Jan-Feb north of the Platte River Valley.
- Eastern Towhee:** There are several Dec and CBC records from the southeast, likely birds attempting to over-winter, but Jan-Feb records are few. This year one was at a Lancaster Co location 1 Jan and 14 Feb (BW).
- American Tree Sparrow:** Distribution was apparently very spotty; an active statewide birder turned in 41 eBird lists for the period, only 11 of which recorded this species (WF). As well, none were seen in Dixon Co between 10 Jan and 3 Feb (JJ). However 803 were counted on the Branched Oak-Seward CBC 15 Dec (fide JG).
- Field Sparrow:** One in North Platte 12 Feb (TJW) was only the 11th record for Jan-Feb for the state.
- Fox Sparrow:** The trend in recent years of increasing mid-winter reports in the southeast after mid-Jan continued, with 3 still present at BOL 22 Jan but not later (LE), 5 at Malcolm Cem 8 Feb (RSt), one in Douglas Co 9 Feb (JGr), 2 in Lancaster Co 12 Feb (LE), and 1-2 in southeastern Washington Co 18-22 Feb (CNK, EB). Away from the southeast the only report was of one at a feeder in southeast Lincoln Co 9-14 Feb (LDe). Prior to these records, there had been only about 25 reports for Feb, including over-wintering birds, and so the 5 this winter is a significant showing.
- Song Sparrow:** Good numbers winter at least in the southeast; best CBC tally was the 33 at DeSoto NWR 15 Dec (fide JT).
- Lincoln's Sparrow:** Numbers were present in southeastern Washington Co last winter, 2012-2013, and this winter was a repeat, with 8 on the DeSoto NWR CBC 15 Dec (fide JT) and the latest one at Boyer Chute NWR 25 Jan (LE). This is still a rare, likely less-than-annual, winter visitor in the extreme southeast.

- Swamp Sparrow:** This is another sparrow species that generally is a rare, likely less-than-annual, winter visitor in the southeast. This winter a surprise was the wintering group at PL; 5 were there 3 Jan (LE), with 3 there 15 Feb (LE) and one on 25 Feb (LE). The only other reports were of singles on the Omaha CBC 21 Dec (fide BG) and at FF 25 Jan (MW).
- White-throated Sparrow:** This species winters each year in the southeast in varying numbers and is less than annual elsewhere. Thus unexpected was one in Antelope Co 23 Feb (MB). Numbers were low, even in the southeast.
- Harris's Sparrow:** This species is rare in the west; the 3 reports were of singles on the North Platte CBC 28 Dec (fide TJW), in a Lincoln Co yard 1 Jan and 6 Feb (VC, photo), and in a Scotts Bluff Co yard 7 Feb (KD).
- White-crowned Sparrow:** Reports were routine for this uncommon winter visitor in the west, rare east.
- Dark-eyed (White-winged) Junco:** This form is an uncommon winter visitor in the west; the only reports were from CBCs, with one at Scottsbluff 14 Dec (fide AK), 3 at Crawford 21 Dec (fide B&DW) and 6 at LM 28 Dec (fide SJD).
- Dark-eyed (Slate-colored) Junco:** Reports were routine for this abundant statewide winter visitor.
- Dark-eyed (Cassiar) Junco:** Reports are increasing as observers pay more attention to plumage variation in Nebraska juncos. This form appears to be an uncommon statewide winter visitor. Two wintered in a Dodge Co yard (D&JP, photo), one was in Cass Co 16 Feb (SMA, details), 3-4 were at FF 24 Feb (EB), and one was in Lincoln Co 17 Dec (TJW).
- Dark-eyed (Oregon) Junco:** In the east, CBCs that separated out Oregon and Slate-colored Juncos (Lincoln and Branched Oak-Seward) reported 4 amongst 602 Slate-colored Juncos; Oregon Junco is uncommon in the east.
- Dark-eyed (Pink-sided) Junco:** This form is less than annual in the east; some highly-colored Oregon Juncos are mis-identified as this form. Details were provided for one at an Omaha feeder 1-7 Feb (JR).
- Northern Cardinal:** A male was "singing strongly" in Lincoln on the rather early date 28 Jan (TEL), as was another in Bellevue the same day (CNK). There are a few previous reports of singing in late Jan, the earliest 13 Jan (JGJ).
- Red-winged Blackbird:** This species tends to be scarcest in mid-winter, when occasional wandering flocks of mixed gender and age may be found. This winter up to 2200 wintered at BOL (LE), and CBCs totaled 10,065 birds, more than usual. Territorial males were first noted 13 Feb at North Platte (TJW), and a male flock of 300, usually the first type of flock to arrive, was in Sheridan Co 14 Feb (WF).
- Eastern Meadowlark:** First reported songs were on 22 Feb in Pawnee Co (EA); there are two earlier such records, 13 and 16 Feb, in prior years.
- Western Meadowlark:** "Multiple singing" was heard in northern Antelope Co 12 Jan (MB), the earliest singing on record. There is another late Jan record in southern Nebraska, but most are in mid-Feb.
- Yellow-headed Blackbird:** Rather early was one in Kearney Co 23 Feb (LR, RH); earliest dates, usually lone males with Red-winged Blackbirds, are 17-19 Feb. The 3 on the Calamus-Loup CBC 19 Dec (fide DH) were northerly for the date; there are only about 5 records for Jan.

- Rusty Blackbird:** This species is a late fall and early spring migrant in the east, but rare in mid-winter; numbers are lowest in mid-Jan through early Feb. Thus of interest were a westerly bird on the LM CBC 28 Dec (fide SJD), 30 rather late fall migrants in Dixon Co 2 Jan (JJ), and 12 rather early spring migrants in Antelope Co 23 Feb (MB).
- Brewer's Blackbird:** Reports were routine for this abundant fall migrant westward, uncommon in the east, and rare winter visitor in the south.
- Common Grackle:** One in a Scotts Bluff Co yard 8 Feb (KD) was only the 12th Feb record away from the east.
- Great-tailed Grackle:** An impressive flock of 150 was counted on the North Platte CBC 28 Dec (fide TJW); flocks of this size are unusual in late Dec.
- Brown-headed Cowbird:** Away from the usual southeast Nebraska range for the CBC period were 5 at LM 28 Dec (fide SJD), one at Calamus-Loup 19 Dec (fide DH) and 6 at Norfolk 14 Dec (fide DH). Unexpected for mid-winter were the 5 in Cass Co 31 Jan (CNK), where the species is less than annual in late Jan.
- Gray-crowned Rosy-Finch:** The only report of this locally uncommon winter visitor in the western Panhandle was of 3 at Scotts Bluff NM on the Scottsbluff CBC 14 Dec (KD, fide AK).
- House Finch:** Observers in Lancaster Co found increased numbers; 97 were counted 12 Feb (LE) and as of 8 Feb there were "significantly more House Finches this year than I've seen before" (RSt).
- Purple Finch:** Numbers were lower than in most winters; only 30 were on CBCs.
- Cassin's Finch:** The only report of this annual winter visitor in the Panhandle was of 3 in Gering Cem along with 2 others elsewhere (total 5) on the Scottsbluff CBC 14 Dec (fide AK, KD).
- Red Crossbill:** Most were reported from the west as expected, including 42 on the Harrison CBC 22 Dec (fide B&DW) and 40 in Carter Canyon, Scotts Bluff Co, 29 Dec (JR). The only reports farther east were of "multiple" birds in Cherry Co 5 Jan (MB) and one in Boyd Co 28 Dec (MB).
- Common Redpoll:** Only 11 were reported, a drastic change from last winter's maxi-invasion year with over 1500 reported; this winter, 6 were on the Lincoln CBC 14 Dec (fide LRB), one on the Ponca SP CBC 14 Dec (fide BFH), and 4 at FF 31 Dec (EB).
- Pine Siskin:** Continuing a lack-luster "winter finch" winter, numbers of siskins were low; at a Scotts Bluff Co feeder only 10-15 were present, when usually 50-75 were there (AK), and only 55 were tallied on the statewide CBCs, 29 of these at LM 28 Dec (fide SJD).
- American Goldfinch:** Reports were routine for this abundant statewide winter visitor.
- House Sparrow:** Reports were routine for this common statewide resident.

Literature Cited:

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