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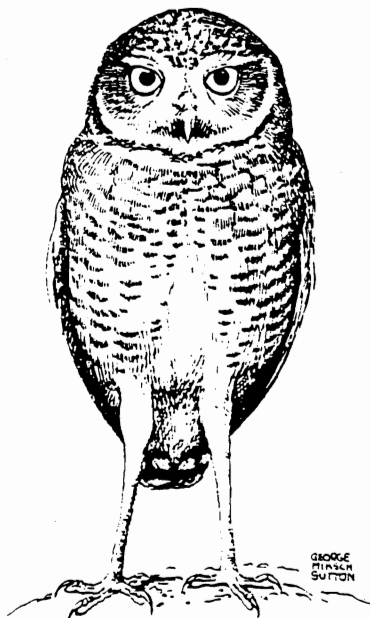
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WINTER FIELD REPORT, December 2000 to February 2001

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INTRODUCTION

What a difference a year makes! After all sorts of unusual midwinter reports last winter, this winter seemed more normal, as entire species actually left the state for a while. Although not extremely cold, the cool temperatures were persistent in November and December, flushing out many of the semi-hardy species and freezing most bodies of water.

There were, nevertheless, some notable tardies: a first Panhandle winter Wood Duck; a Spotted Sandpiper in December at Harlan Co Res; a first December Eastern Phoebe; a third January Gray Catbird; a second December Pine Warbler; a 3rd overwintering Yellow-headed Blackbird; and the farthest northwestward wintering Brewer's Blackbirds.

Rarities were topped by first state record Black Rosy-Finches; first state record "Hepburn's" Gray-crowned Rosy-Finches; a second state Glaucous-winged Gull; a second state Tufted Duck (probably the same bird which wintered last year); 3rd and 4th fall-winter Mew Gulls; a 4th fall Iceland Gull; and a Gyrfalcon--and that's just a list of what Steve Dinsmore found! Other rarities included the 7th documented "Gray-headed" Junco; the first Pine Grosbeak since 1988; the 5th Varied Thrush since 1991; and the 4th Seward Co Tufted Titmouse in 18 years.

Amazing single-observer, single-day counts were 150,000 Mallards seen at Harlan Co Res; 818 Buffleheads tallied at L Ogallala; 53 Rough-legged Hawks found in the Panhandle; and 11 Thayer's Gulls spotted at L McConaughy.

Expanding ranges included that of the Eurasian Collared-Dove, now reported from 16 locations, and of Northern Cardinals in the Panhandle section of the North Platte Valley. Perhaps in this category are Trumpeter Swans apparently moving east-west. Last, and probably least, were tantalizing reports, not substantiated, of Garganey and Bushtit. Oh well, we'll just keep looking!

ABBREVIATIONS

ADE: Arbor Day Farm, Otoe Co; **BOL:** Branched Oak L, Lancaster Co; **CBC:** Christmas Bird Count; **CCM:** Clear Creek Marshes, Keith/Garden Cos; **FF:** Fontenelle Forest, Sarpy Co; **HCR:** Harlan Co Res, Harlan Co; **LM:** L McConaughy, Keith Co; **LO:** L Ogallala, including Keystone L, Keith Co; **NC:** Nature Center; **NM:** National Monument; **NOURC:** Nebraska Ornithologists' Union Records Committee; **NWR:** National Wildlife

Refuge; PL: Pawnee L, Lancaster Co; Res: Reservoir; SHP: State Historical Park; SL: Sewage Lagoons; SP: State Park.

GAZETTEER

Calamus Res: Loup/Garfield Cos; DeSoto NWR: Washington Co; Facus Springs: Morrill Co; Gavin's Point Dam: Cedar Co; Johnson L: Gosper/Phelps Cos; Keystone Dam: Keith Co (forms L Ogallala); Kiowa Springs: Scotts Bluff Co; L Alice: Scotts Bluff Co; L Minatare: Scotts Bluff Co; Sutherland Res: Lincoln Co; Winters Creek L: Scotts Bluff Co.

OBSERVERS

Aaron Brees (AB), Indianola, IA; Alice Heckman (AH), Kearney; Alice Kenitz (AK), Gering; Alan Risor (AR), Wisner; Nebraska Birdline (B), Bill F. Huser (BFH), South Sioux City; Betty Grenon (BG), Bellevue; BW, Carol Falk (CF), Nebraska City; Carolyn Hall (CH), Bassett; Colleen Noecker (CN), Albion; Clem Klaphake (CNK), Bellevue; Duane Bright (DB), Bellevue; Dean Drawbaugh (DD), Scottsbluff; Don Noecker (DN), Albion; Don Paseka (DP), Ames; Elizabeth Allen (EA), Omaha; Glen Hoge (GH), Alma; Gertrude Wood (GW), Elmwood; Helen K. Hughson (HKH), Scottsbluff; John Brenneman (JB), Omaha; Joe Fontaine (JF), Fort Collins, CO; Joe Gubanyi (JG), Seward; Joel Jorgensen (JGJ), Blair; Jan Johnson (JJ), Wakefield; Jan Paseka (JP), Ames; Jerry Toll (JT), Omaha; Kathy Larson (KL), Mitchell; Kevin Poague (KP), Lincoln; Lorraine A. Lienemann (LAL), Bellevue; Larry Einemann (LE), Lincoln; Laurence Falk (LF), Nebraska City; Lanny Randolph (LR), Gibbon; Mark Brogie (MB), Creighton; Neal Ratzlaff (NR), Omaha; Phyllis Drawbaugh (PD), Scottsbluff; Paul Kaufman (PK), Seward; Ruth Green (RG), Bellevue; Robin Harding (RH), Gibbon; Stephen J. Dinsmore (SJD), Fort Collins, CO; Sandy Lemmon (SL), Crawford; Steve McIlree (SM), Omaha; Steve Van Sickle (SV), Yankton, SD; Thomas Hoffman (TH), Omaha; Wanda Hoge (WH), Alma; W. Ross Silcock (WRS), Tabor, IA; Zee Uridil (ZU), Chadron.

SPECIES ACCOUNTS

Pacific Loon: The only report was of a juvenile spotted at LM on 3 December (SJD), a rather late date.

Common Loon: Also the only report was of a juvenile identified at LM on 3 December (SJD), a rather late date.

Pied-billed Grebe: The last reported was one found at LO on 13 December (SJD, JF), a little tardy.

Horned Grebe: The last was one found at LM on 14 December (SJD, JF), also a little tardy.

Red-necked Grebe: A good count of 3--2 adults and a juvenile--was made at LM on 3 December (SJD). Although this report denotes only the 17th documented record for the species (there are 10 additional reports), it may be regular in fall at LM.

Eared Grebe: The last were singles identified at LM and at LO on 13 December (SJD, JF). This date is very late, with the only later date being 14 December 1998 at LO.

Western Grebe: For the first time in a few years, none wintered at LM (SJD); the last sighting was a single found on the LM CBC on 30 December (fide SJD). The best count at LM reached 482 on 3 December, dwindling to 172 on 14 December (SJD, JF). Three were spotted at Sutherland Res as late as 14 December (SJD, JF).

Clark's Grebe: The last was one seen at LM on 14 December (SJD), the latest date for a non-wintering bird. The only wintering has taken place at LM, in recent mild winters.

American White Pelican: The only report was of one noted at Carter L, Omaha, between 4 and 5 December (SM, B).

Double-crested Cormorant: The last were singles found in Cedar Co on 8 December (SV) and on the HCR CBC on 15 December--the latter was an immature (SJD) and a rather late date.

Great Blue Heron: A few winter regularly in the Platte Valley and lower Missouri Valley, such as the 9 spotted in the LO area on 3 February (SJD); but there are few midwinter reports elsewhere. One was identified at HCR on 3 February (GH, WH).

Black-crowned Night-Heron: An immature found at LO on 8 December (Rodger Knaggs fide SJD) was the second latest ever and the first for December.

Greater White-fronted Goose: There are fewer than 10 Panhandle records; thus the 6 spotted at CCM and the 3 found at Cabela's, Sidney, on 3 February (SJD) were unexpected. One identified at North Platte on 28 December (SJD) was rather far west for the late date. None was reported between 28 December and 3 February.

Snow Goose: Mid-winter records from the west are few; singles were seen at LO on 14 January (SJD); L Minatare on 27 January (SJD); L Alice the same day (SJD); and, rather far north in midwinter, at Calamus Res on 3 February (WRS). The last big group was the 700 tallied at HCR for the CBC on 14 December (JGJ).

Ross's Goose: Until recently, midwinter reports had been non-existent, but such reports can be expected whenever Snow Geese are present. There are fewer than 10 January records in all; thus the 3 reports this winter were significant: of 5 seen on the HCR CBC on 14 December (JGJ), one remained until 1 January (GH, WH), a rather late fall date; 2 adults were identified at Sutherland Res on 14 January (SJD); and an immature spotted at LO the same day was probably one of a group of 7 found there as late as 14 December and the same bird that remained for the LM CBC on 30 December (SJD).

Canada Goose: The best counts were rather large: 19,423 on the Scottsbluff CBC on 23 December (fide AK); 18,000 at L Minatare on 3 December (SJD); and 13,579 on the LM CBC on 30 December (SJD).

Trumpeter Swan: A large group wintered in the LM area; the peak count totaled 54 on 3 February, of which 43 were found at LO (SJD). The 3 adults seen in a field 2 miles southwest of Big Springs, Deuel Co, on 22 January were unexpected--one had a green neck collar R17 (Bill Prather fide SJD). These birds were likely from Iowa; Iowa birds have previously migrated to Colorado and back to Minnesota (Ron Andrews). The only other report was of one found with a red wing marker near Fremont, Dodge Co, on 20 December; it was from Minnesota (Ron Andrews fide Omaha World Herald).

Tundra Swan: The only report was of an adult found with the Trumpeter Swans at LO on 3 February (SJD, details). There are about 10 midwinter records.

Wood Duck: A surprising 7 birds noted at Winters Creek L on 27 January (SJD) provided the first Panhandle winter record; the few previous midwinter records came from the south and east. No others were reported after a single was seen below Keystone Dam on the LM CBC on 30 December (WRS).

Gadwall: There are fewer than 20 midwinter records, suggesting that overwintering is unusual. Of interest, therefore, were the 35 tallied at CCM on 14 January (SJD) and the (at least) 26 which wintered at LO (SJD). A small group, maximum 10, wintered at L Yankton, Cedar Co (JJ, SV).

American Wigeon: Rather late were singles identified at Johnson L on 7 January (LR, RH) and at Gering SL on 9 January (AK). The three found at Johnson L on 28 January (LR, RH) may have been there all winter hidden among the 4,000 Mallards there; these birds, along with the one found at CCM on 14 January (SJD) and the 16 which wintered at LO (SJD) were among fewer than 25 midwinter records.

American Black Duck: The only report was of one seen at BOL on 3 December (JGJ); it is rare but regular in winter in the east.

Mallard: the best count reached a record 150,000 on the HCR CBC (fide JGJ); another very large flock was 70,000 tallied near Burwell, Garfield Co, on 24 December (LR, RH). The best count for midwinter was 4,400 at Kiowa Springs on 21 January (SJD).

Northern Shoveler: Only casual in midwinter away from the Platte Valley, the 1 to 4 birds found at Alma SL, Harlan Co, between 1 and 15 January (GH, WH) were unexpected. One was seen at HCR on 15 January on "open water" (LR, RH).

Northern Pintail: Routine reports.

Garganey: One was reported on 30 December on the LM CBC as seen very briefly but having the field marks of a male; the sighting seems doubtful, however, as male Garganeys are in alternate plumage only from early Mar to midsummer.

Green-winged Teal: The best midwinter tally totaled 68 at LO on 3 February (SJD). Wintering is unexpected north of the Platte Valley and away from the east; the 12 spotted at Calamus Res between 3 and 4 February (WRS) were thus unexpected.

Canvasback: The only reports between 9 December and 27 February were of 6 to 8 birds which wintered at LO (SJD). This report represents only the 3rd record of overwintering; there are an additional 6 midwinter records.

Redhead: As with Canvasback, the only midwinter report was of 28 spotted at LO on 3 February; 40 were identified there on 14 January (SJD). The four found in Lincoln Co on 30 December (NR) was the only report elsewhere.

Ring-necked Duck: Another diving duck found in midwinter this year only at LO, where 46 was the low count, on 14 Jan (SJD).

Tufted Duck: An adult male, presumably the same bird which wintered last year, was noted at LO from 3 to 13 December (SJD; photos).

Greater Scaup: Apart from a single at L Minatare 3 Dec (SJD), the only reports were of 68 at LO 3 Dec, dwindling to a midwinter low of 21 on 3 Feb (SJD).

Lesser Scaup: The only ones reported in midwinter were at least 8 found wintering at LO--down from an excellent count of 764 on 3 December (SJD)--and 3 at Scottsbluff SL 27 January (SJD). There are fewer than 10 midwinter records away from the LM area.

Surf Scoter: None reported.

White-winged Scoter: Three female/immature types were identified at LO on 3 December, dwindling to one through 16 December (SJD, JF), a rather late date. No others were reported.

Black Scoter: None reported.

Long-tailed Duck: All reports came from LO, where 2 were present on 3 December (SJD), 3 on 14 December (SJD), and 2 adults on 16 December (JF).

Bufflehead: An amazing 818 were counted at LO on 3 December (SJD), dwindling to 53 on 3 February (SJD), which were wintering. The only other reports were from Gavin's Point Dam on 6 December (SV) and of a single seen in Lancaster Co on 17 December (LE).

Common Goldeneye: A male hybrid with Hooded Merganser was wintering at LO for the 3rd year (SJD). At least 323 wintered as usual on LO, with a peak count there of 1,145 made on 13 December (SJD). A surprising number for the location and date was the 159 tallied at Scottsbluff SL on 27 January (SJD). Other midwinter reports were of 7 seen at Gavin's Point Dam on 7 January (JJ), and 5 found at Buckskin Hills, Dixon Co, on 3 February (BFH); the latter birds must have been migrants.

Barrow's Goldeneye: The birds that arrived in November continued at LO, with up to 4, 3 adult males and an adult female, wintering (SJD). This area is a regular wintering location for this species.

Hooded Merganser: Midwinter reports all came from the west; 2 were spotted below Keystone Dam on 14 January (SJD); 3 were identified at L Alice on 27 January (SJD); and 5 were found at CCM on 3 February (SJD).

Common Merganser: The peak count at LM reached 32,000 on 13 December (SJD), and about 3,300 wintered in the area (SJD). A good count at a smaller reservoir totaled 9,000 at Johnson L on 3 December (LR, RH). Somewhat unusual were 7 noted at Winters Creek L on 27 January (SJD), and singles spotted near Lincoln on 28 January (LE) and in Hooker Co on 28 January (SJD).

Red-breasted Merganser: This species is being found amongst wintering flocks of Common Mergansers in small numbers in winter; it is still only a casual winter visitor, however. This winter, 2 males were seen at Johnson L on 7 January (LR, RH); 6 at LO on 14 January (SJD); and 2 at HCR on 21 January (GH, WH).

Ruddy Duck: The only reports of this usually cold-sensitive species came from LO, where 24 were present on 3 December, dwindling to the last sighting of a single on 14 December (SJD).

Bald Eagle: The best counts totaled 184 on the HCR CBC on 15 December (fide JGJ); 152 in Keith and Lincoln Cos on 14 January (SJD); and 124 at Johnson L on 7 January (LR, RH). An apparent pair which had been present on the Elkhorn River south of Wisner, Cuming Co, for about a month may have been preparing to nest (AR).

Northern Harrier: The best counts included 16 in the south Panhandle on 3 February (SJD) and 14 on the HCR CBC (fide JGJ).

Sharp-shinned Hawk: One wintering at a feeder in Nebraska City, Otoe Co, killed at least 2 starlings (LF, CF); a candidate for cloning? Another, which was in adult plumage, puzzled the observers because it had golden eyes, supposedly a sign of immaturity (LR, RH). On occasion, however, 2- or 3-year-old sharpies can retain golden eyes, according to Palmer (Handbook of North American Birds).

Cooper's Hawk: Routine reports.

Northern Goshawk: After the large numbers seen migrating south in fall past Hitchcock Nature Center (Iowa) by Mark Orsag and his crew, this winter looked to be a good one. The number of sightings was a bit disappointing, though, with only 5 birds reported. One was spotted on the Grand Island CBC on 17 December (fide B); an adult was noted just west of Omaha on 24 December (B); one was spotted near Wynot, Cedar Co, on 26 December (BFH); an adult was found at Merritt Res, Cherry Co, 28 December (SJD); and an immature was identified at Buckskin Hills, Dixon Co, 3 February (BFH).

Red-shouldered Hawk: None reported.

Red-tailed Hawk: Routine reports.

Ferruginous Hawk: A total of 13 were counted in the Panhandle for the period, including one dark morph (SJD). Easterly reports included one found on the Grand Island CBC on 17 December (fide B), and singles

sighted near Alma, Harlan Co, on 15 January (GH, WH, LR, RH), near Oxford, Furnas Co, on 5 January (GH, WH), and in northeaster Buffalo Co on 11 February (LR, RH).

Rough-legged Hawk: This species was much in evidence in the Panhandle. The best count reached 53 on 10 February, including 43 light morphs and one dark morph; the light morphs consisted of 12 adult males, 12 adult females, 16 juveniles, and 5 female/immatures (SJD, JF, AB). Other excellent counts included 41 on 21 February in Sioux Co (SJD), and 35 on the Henry Road, Sioux Co (HKH). Other dark morphs were seen in southeastern Washington Co 24 December (JT), and, likely the same bird, near Boyer Chute NWR, Washington Co, on 5 January (CNK).

Golden Eagle: Easterly were singles sighted near Center, Knox Co, on 28 January (B) and in Seward Co (PK); Golden Eagles are only casual in the east. A total of 21 were counted in the Panhandle for the period (SJD).

American Kestrel: The best count was 23 tallied in Scottsbluff Co on 27 January (SJD).

Merlin: About 18 were reported statewide; birds identified to subspecies included a male *richardsoni* spotted at Ponca SP, Dixon Co, on 1 January (BFH) and an immature male *richardsoni* found at Dakota City, Dakota Co, on 17 February (BFH). One wintering in a Scottsbluff yard killed a starling and a House Sparrow (DD, PD).

Prairie Falcon: A total of 17 were found in the Panhandle during the period (SJD), and an additional 16 or so were reported elsewhere. The farthest east were one sighted hover-hunting northeast of Ames, Dodge Co, on 15 February (DP, JP), and another identified near PL on 13 December (JG).

Peregrine Falcon: The only report was of one identified on the Grand Island CBC on 17 December (B). This species is rare between December and February, with most of the 45 or so records occurring in December.

Gyr Falcon: This species almost certainly occurs in Nebraska every winter, probably mostly in difficult to access northern and western grassland areas. However, an adult gray morph made itself obvious below Keystone Dam on 1 January when it killed and ate a Common Goldeneye in front of the lucky observers; the bird had not been seen in the area on the LM CBC on 30 December (SJD, AB; details).

Gray Partridge: None reported.

Ring-necked Pheasant: An excellent total of 340 was reported on the DeSoto NWR CBC on 17 December (B). The record high there is 565, recorded in 1983-84.

Sharp-tailed Grouse: This species is "getting harder to find" in Knox Co (MB), which is probably true at the eastern edge of its range in general. The best counts reached 32 in Sioux Co on 10 February (SJD) and 23 on the resurrected Crawford CBC on 31 December (BW).

Greater Prairie-Chicken: An amazing flock of 108 was seen south of Walnut in southwestern Knox Co on 10 December (MB); this species is

obviously doing better than its sharp-tailed congener there. The best count elsewhere totaled 44 on the LM CBC on 30 December (fide SJD).

Wild Turkey: This species is numerous statewide. The best count was the 253 totalled on the Scottsbluff CBC on 23 December; they were originally stocked in Carter Canyon, Scotts Bluff Co, in 1961 (fide AK). A record for the Omaha CBC was the 144 spotted on 23 December (fide BG); 137 were seen east of the Keystone-Roscoe bridge, Keith Co, on 29 December (SJD).

Northern Bobwhite: The best count was the 30 tallied at BOL on 15 December (LE). Excellent for the west was the count of 20 recorded west of Scottsbluff on 23 December (AK).

Virginia Rail: Wintering birds were noted at LO, Facus Springs, and CCM (SJD) as has been the norm in recent years.

American Coot: Some 272 wintered at LO; these were the survivors from about 290 reported there in late December (SJD). Unexpected was one sighted at Gering, Scotts Bluff Co, on 23 December (AK) and 7 spotted at Sutherland Res on 28 December (SJD). Wintering occurs on occasion if open water persists.

Sandhill Crane: In contrast to recent springs, the only January report was of a single seen with about 40 Canada Geese flying over Gibbon, Buffalo Co, on 6 January (LR, RH). It is likely that this bird wintered in the area. The first migrants were the 40 noted flying over Alma, Harlan Co, on 19 February (GH, WH). Somewhat westerly were 40 located at LO on 25 February (Rodger Knaggs fide SJD); a population of about 40,000 has used the CCM area in recent years.

Killdeer: The only wintering birds were 1 to 4 found below Keystone Dam; at least 2 still remained there on 3 February (SJD). Elsewhere, the last to leave was one seen in Lancaster Co on 17 December (LE).

Spotted Sandpiper: Rather amazing was a basic adult identified between 14 and 15 December at HCR (JGJ, SJD, JF; photos). This sighting represents the latest ever for Nebraska.

Common Snipe: Surprisingly, none was reported in midwinter; one was spotted below HCR Dam on 1 January (GH, WH), and 2 were seen at Scottsbluff on 23 December (AK).

Franklin's Gull: In recent years, single adults of this species in alternate plumage have appeared at a time when they should be in South America and in basic plumage. An example this year was one identified at Gavin's Point Dam from 6 to 9 December (SV, MB); it even had pink underparts (MB). Unexpected, however, was an adult in basic plumage found at L Minatare on 13 December (SJD).

Bonaparte's Gull: None was reported; late migrants are usually found into December.

Mew Gull: An adult was sighted at LO between 14 and 30 December, and 2 were found there on 14 January (SJD, JF; details). These denote only the 3rd and 4th fall records; the January record represents the 1st for that month.

Ring-billed Gull: A few were present in midwinter at HCR (GH, WH), at LO, and at LM (SJD). The best count reached 2,000 at Johnson L on 3 December (LR, RH); but 542 were tallied at LO as late as 14 January (SJD).

California Gull: Uncommon in midwinter, up to 4 wintered at LO (SJD). No others were reported.

Herring Gull: The only midwinter reports came from HCR, Sutherland Res, and LM; as many as 794 were counted at LM on 14 January (SJD), an excellent midwinter count--but there were only 62 seen at Sutherland Res on 14 January (SJD) and up to 5 at HCR through the period (GH, WH). A good count was 700 at Johnson L on 3 December (LR, RH).

Thayer's Gull: This species has become fairly common in Nebraska, especially at LM. This year some 18 were reported, including a peak count of 11 recorded at LO on 14 January (SJD). As many as 5 were seen at Sutherland Res on 14 December (SJD). Elsewhere, a "small, but textbook" 1st winter bird was spotted at PL on 3 December (JGJ); and a single was located on the HCR CBC on 15 December (JGJ, SJD).

Iceland Gull: The only report was of a 2nd basic bird found at LO on 14 December (SJD, JF; details). This sighting is the 4th fall (birds which did not stay into winter) record; the other 3 records occurred at Gavin's Point Dam.

Lesser Black-backed Gull: A 4th basic bird was spotted at Sutherland Res on 14 December (SJD) and may have moved to LO, where a similar bird was seen on 16 December (JF). An adult was identified at LM on 28 December (SJD), the 3rd-latest for fall (the latest is 1 January).

Glaucous-winged Gull: What would be Nebraska's second record if accepted by the NOURC was a 1st basic bird located at LO on 13 December (SJD; details). The first was another 1st basic bird seen there on 12 April 1995.

Glaucous Gull: Along with Thayer's Gull, this species has become fairly common in recent years. All reports came from LM, Sutherland Res, and HCR, with birds present throughout the period. Test best count totaled 9 on the LM CBC on 30 December (fide SJD); and at least 6 wintered there, including 3 1st basic, 2 adults, and a 3rd basic spotted on 14 January (SJD, JF). An immature was noted at HCR on 3 and on 19 December, and an adult was found there on 18 January (GH, WH).

Rock Dove: Routine reports.

Eurasian Collared-Dove: This species is rapidly becoming ubiquitous in Nebraska; reports came from Dakota City, Elmwood, Spalding, Ogallala, Kimball, and Mitchell. Of these, Spalding, Greeley Co, and Mitchell, Scotts Bluff Co, represent new locations, for a total of 16 locations for the species. The largest colony now seems to be in the area of the Bess Streeter Aldrich historical home in Elmwood, Cass Co, where as many as 12 were counted at one time in December; the birds formed a flock in winter, breaking into groups of 2 to 3 birds in late February; and mating was observed in February and in March (GW). The best count to date

from Ogallala, Keith Co, is 7 tallied on the LM CBC on 30 December (SJD). Spalding was a newly-reported location; as many as 8 have been present west of the park and swimming pool for the "past several years"; 5 were noted there on 21 January (CN, DN). The previously-reported colony in Dakota City, Dakota Co, continues to expand, with 5 present there on 20 February, although a Merlin there may have instituted some population control (BFH). At Mitchell, at least 3 were present most of February, "hanging around" near the water tower (KL, DD, PD, AK).

Mourning Dove: Midwinter reports came from the south and east, where wintering occurs in milder years, but perhaps was unexpected this year; the best counts reached 20 at the observer's Omaha feeders on 3 February (NR) and 10+ in northwestern Phelps Co on 28 January (LR, RH).

Eastern Screech-Owl: Routine reports.

Great Horned Owl: Routine reports.

Snowy Owl: None was reported, despite some early indications of southward movement to the north of Nebraska.

Barred Owl: Reports from the edge of the range were of one found at Ponca SP, Dixon Co, on 3 February (BFH), and at least one identified on the Seward-Branched Oak CBC on 15 December (fide JG), possibly at BOL, where one was noted on 17 February (LE).

Long-eared Owl: The best count totaled 6 on the LM CBC on 30 December (fide SJD), and cool yard birds were singles found in southwestern Dixon Co on 29 December (JJ) and near Gibbon, Buffalo Co, on 9 February (LR, RH). The only other report was of a single noted in southwestern Washington Co on 2 February (JT).

Short-eared Owl: This species is noted more often in winter; it is probably nomadic rather than migratory. Evidence of winter nomads was provided by 2 birds wintering near Ames, Dodge Co, (DP, JP), and 3 birds located in southeastern Washington Co on 2 February (JT).

Northern Saw-whet Owl: This winter, 1 to 2 birds were located in the LO area (SJD), and one was found on the south side of LM on 15 December (Jack Pollack fide SJD). Diligent searching of isolated cedars in the area may yield these owls with some regularity.

Belted Kingfisher: Routine reports.

Red-headed Woodpecker: The only report away from the southeastern corner of the state, where a few occur most winters, was of 4 birds spotted in Cedar Co on 26 December (BFH); reports in midwinter in this area are few.

Red-bellied Woodpecker: Westerly reports included a single located at McGrew, Scotts Bluff Co, on 12 January (AK)--apparently the same (lonely?) bird that appeared there in June--and 4 found on the LM CBC, about the west edge of the expected winter range.

Yellow-bellied Sapsucker: Only 4 were reported, all in December except for an immature seen at Crete, Saline Co, on 20 January (LE); midwinter records are few away from the lower Missouri Valley. An

immature identified in Seward, Seward Co, between 8 and 19 December (JG) was a bit westerly also.

Downy Woodpecker: Routine reports.

Hairy Woodpecker: Routine reports.

Northern Flicker: Easterly red-shafted birds were found both in northeastern Wayne Co on 11 December (JJ) and in southwestern Dixon Co on 27 February (JJ). Of an amazing 127 flickers tallied on the DeSoto NWR CBC on 17 December, 4 were red-shafted (fide B). Perhaps surprising in this seemingly cool winter were the 3 birds spotted as far north as Jackson, Dakota Co, on 20 January (BFH).

Pileated Woodpecker: The only report from FF was of one sighted on 9 January (B).

Eastern Phoebe: A surprise was a very late bird located at Neale Woods, Douglas-Washington Cos, on the DeSoto NWR CBC on 17 December (JB). This sighting represents the first December record for the state; there are 3 November records. What was it eating?

Northern Shrike: This species was widely reported, with the best count reaching 7 on the LM CBC on 30 December (fide SJD); 3 in a day were reported from BOL on 7 January (LE) and in Banner Co on 27 January (SJD). A total of 14 was found in Banner Co for the period (SJD). This species is rare in the extreme southeast, and so of interest was one identified in Cass Co on 8 January (GW).

Loggerhead Shrike: Somewhat surprisingly considering the winter conditions, two were reported: one was seen near BOL on 12 January (DP, JP; details) and the other was spotted at Wolf L, Saunders Co, on 3 February (TH; details). This species is rare in midwinter away from the extreme southeast.

Blue Jay: An excellent westerly count totalled 51 on the Scottsbluff CBC on 23 December (fide AK).

Pinyon Jay: The large flock that frequented Crawford, Dawes Co, totaled 37 for the Crawford CBC on 31 December (BW) and was estimated at 40 on 21 January (SJD, JF). Other reports included 37 found in eastern Sioux Co on 10 February (SJD); and throughout the period, 1-5 were seen in Gering, Scotts Bluff Co, (AK). Some were also found at the James Ranch, Sioux Co, feeders (SL).

Black-billed Magpie: Excellent counts included 97 tallied on the LM CBC on 30 December (fide SJD)--the 2nd highest CBC total ever behind Scottsbluff's 98 in 1977-78--and 92 totalled on the Scottsbluff CBC on 23 December (fide AK). Southeasterly were one seen at Winnebago, Thurston Co, on 13 January (BFH) and at least one identified on the Seward-Branch Oak CBC on 15 December (fide JG).

American Crow: A surprising 910 were counted in a single flock at mile marker 190 on Interstate 80 on 29 December (WRS); and 635 were counted on the HCR CBC on 15 December (fide JGJ).

Horned Lark: The best count reached 3,260 in Sioux Co on 10 February (SJD).

Black-capped Chickadee: Routine reports.

Tufted Titmouse: Only the 4th Seward Co record for the observer in 18 years was a single observed at a feeder in Seward between 8 and 19 December (JG).

Red-breasted Nuthatch: Numbers were merely average, although reports were statewide; the best counts totalled only 11 on the LM CBC on 30 December (fide SJD) and 6 on the Scottsbluff CBC on 23 December (fide AK).

White-breasted Nuthatch: One of the western subspecies *nelsoni* was spotted at LO on 14 December (SJD), an easterly location for this summer resident of the Ponderosa Pine woodlands.

Pygmy Nuthatch: The only reports were of up to 5 found at the Wildcat Hills NC, Scotts Bluff Co, feeders (SJD, JF, AK).

Brown Creeper: Although generally considered less numerous westward, up to 7 wintered at LO (SJD), and 13 were counted on the LM CBC on 30 December (fide SJD).

Carolina Wren: The colder-than-recently winter may have had an effect on this species at the edge of its range: none was found at Wilderness Park, Lincoln, on 25 February (LE), although one was still at it near Alma, Harlan Co, on 6 January (GH, WH). One spotted at Towle Park, Omaha, on 19 February had clearly survived (NR). Spring observations will be of interest this year.

Winter Wren: The only reports were of one seen on the HCR CBC on 15 December (JGJ), rather westerly, and another, identified as of the western subspecies (*salebrosus*?), identified at Monroe Canyon, Sioux Co, on 21 January (SJD, JF). Winter Wrens are only casual in winter at both locations.

Marsh Wren: As is the norm lately, a few wintered at CCM and Facus Springs (SJD). Elsewhere, 4 were found on the LM CBC on 30 December (fide SJD), also a known wintering area; but the one located below the dam at L Alice on 27 January (SJD) was a bit of a surprise.

Golden-crowned Kinglet: Wintering birds were not widely noted; the best count for the period in Lancaster Co totaled 6 both at Wyuka Cem on 17 December (LE) and on the University of Nebraska-Kearney campus on 16 February (LR, RH). Although a good wintering count for a westerly location reached 7 at LO, 19 were found there on 3 December (SJD).

Eastern Bluebird: Reports were mostly from the southeast as expected, although 4 were spotted in Keya Paha Co on 21 February (CH); possibly early migrants, 2 were seen at Ponca SP on 3 February (BFH), and as many as 17 remained at HCR until 15 January (LR, RH). Away from the southeast, this species is only casual in midwinter.

Mountain Bluebird: The only reports were of 9 spotted at CCM on 1 January (SJD) and of 11 found below Keystone Dam on 14 January (SJD), expected wintering locations.

Townsend's Solitaire: The farthest east were the 2 discovered on the HCR CBC on 15 December (fide JGJ) and the 2 identified on the Grand

Island CBC on 17 December (fide B). The LM CBC on 30 December reported a good total of 58 (fide SJD).

American Robin: The best CBC count was the 1,984 tallied at HCR on 15 December (fide JGJ), while elsewhere 820 were noted in the cedar park land of Cottonwood Canyon, Lincoln Co, on 29 December (WRS). The species was absent, however, in Dakota Co during the period (BFH).

Varied Thrush: The single report, about par for a Nebraska winter, although only the 5th since 1991, was of one observed in a Lincoln yard for a few days prior to 12 December (Sue Samson fide KP).

Gray Catbird: A surprise was one found freshly dead at ADF on 8 January; it was very thin and likely died of starvation (LF, CF). This report represents only the 3rd January record for Nebraska.

Brown Thrasher: The only report was of one seen at a Waterloo, Douglas Co, feeder on 21 December (B). December records are fairly numerous.

European Starling: Routine reports.

Bushtit: Tantalizing was a report of "a different bird" in a Scottsbluff yard near Riverside Zoo on 27 January that was said to have matched this species in a field guide; unfortunately, it could not be checked out before it departed (fide AK). This species regularly appears in the eastern Colorado foothills north to the Wyoming border, and there is a record from Weld Co about 45 miles from the southwestern corner of Nebraska (Andrews and Righter, *Birds of Colorado*, 1992). There is also a record of 4 netted in Ellis Co, Kansas (Thompson and Ely, *Birds in Kansas*, 1992), some 80 miles south of Harlan Co, Nebraska.

Bohemian Waxwing: The only report came surprisingly from the east; one was identified with 15 Cedar Waxwings at Twin Lakes, Seward Co, on 13 December (JG).

Cedar Waxwing: The best counts totaled 300 at Niobrara SP on 9 December (MB) and 150 near Raymond, Lancaster Co, on 28 January (LE).

Yellow-rumped Warbler: A few were reported in December, all in the south and east as expected. The one spotted at Niobrara SP, Knox Co, on 29 January (B), however, was unusual for midwinter at that location. There are fewer than 10 February records for the state.

Pine Warbler: This species has a propensity for appearing at feeders in late fall; the one observed at a Bellevue suet feeder between 14 and 16 December (B) denotes the 2nd Nebraska record for December.

Spotted Towhee: Farthest north and west were singles found at Scotts Bluff NM, Scotts Bluff Co, on 23 December (AK) and at Homer, Dakota Co, on 13 January (BFH). Wintering birds are scarce and mostly confined to the south and east, although there are a few reports from the North Platte Valley in winter.

American Tree Sparrow: The best counts were from CBCs: an excellent 2,281 at HCR on 15 December (fide JGJ) and 737 at DeSoto

NWR on 17 December (fide B). The best single-observer count was 221 tallied at BOL on 15 December (LE).

Chipping Sparrow: One was reported without details on the DeSoto NWR CBC on 17 December. There is only one documented record for 15 December to 15 February.

Fox Sparrow: One was reported without details on the DeSoto NWR CBC on 17 December. While a little more likely in December than the Chipping Sparrow, there are few documented reports.

Song Sparrow: The best count was 39 recorded on the HCR CBC on 15 December (fide JGJ).

Swamp Sparrow: The only report was of two seen on the LM CBC on 30 December (WRS). There are few westerly reports late December-February, but most are from the North Platte Valley.

White-throated Sparrow: Wintering is rare, even in the southeast; after a few December reports, the only midwinter sightings were of 1 to 2 wintering birds found at Nebraska City, Otoe Co (LF, CF), and another which probably wintered in Omaha, with appearances at the observer's feeders on 19 January and again on 3 February (NR).

White-crowned Sparrow: The only midwinter reports were of 1 to 2 at BOL throughout the period (LE). The other reports occurred in December, all from the south, including 9 spotted on the LM CBC on 30 December (fide SJD).

Harris's Sparrow: This species is rare in the Panhandle, although a few winter in the North Platte Valley; one was found at Wind Springs Ranch, Sioux Co, on 31 December (HKH).

Dark-eyed Junco: The most unusual junco reported was a "Gray-headed" Junco seen at Riverside Park Zoo, Scottsbluff, on 2 February (KL; photographed). This sighting represents only the 7th documented record for the state. "White-winged" Juncos wintered at James Ranch, Sioux Co (SL), and were also noted in Scottsbluff (KL). A few winter in Nebraska each year. "Oregon" Juncos are rare in eastern Nebraska; one was identified at a Nebraska City, Otoe Co, feeder on 28 February (LF, CF); another was spotted at Jackson, Dakota Co, on 20 January (BFH); and 3 were found at Wakefield, Dixon Co, on 29 January (JJ). "Pink-sided" Juncos, *J. hyemalis mearnsi*, are rarely reported in the east, and to date undocumented, and so a surprise was the 4 seen (along with 855 other juncos) reported on the DeSoto NWR CBC on 17 December.

Lapland Longspur: The best count reached the "thousands" in a 12-mile stretch of road near North Bend, Dodge Co, on 25 January; they were gone by the end of January and none was present in February (DP, JP). The species was widely reported this winter.

Snow Bunting: This winter was good for this species, with numbers as far south as Elmwood, Cass Co, where an excellent total of 500 were seen on 14 December (GW). Other good counts included 50 seen near Ames, Dodge Co, between 20 and 25 January (DP, JP) and 13 tallied in Dixon Co on 26 December (JJ).

Northern Cardinal: There are now "definitely little groups of cardinals along the [North Platte] river and they are moving west" (AK). Reports included 2 spotted east of McGrew, Scotts Bluff Co, on 13 January (AK); 5 birds spotted a mile east of Bridgeport, Morrill Co (fide AK); and 5 found in a Bridgeport yard (fide AK).

Dickcissel: Unexpected was one located in a Bellevue yard on 11 December, seen at close range to have a "yellow breast" (LAL). This report is the 7th record for December-February; 4 of these occurred in December, and all from the south and east.

Red-winged Blackbird: Large numbers for midwinter were the 4,500 counted east of Gering SL on 27 January (SJD), possibly migrants, and the 250 totalled in northwestern Phelps Co on 7 January (LR, RH). A single wintered at Chadron, Dawes Co (ZU), where such occurrences are rare. Rather late were the 4,000 found in northern Lancaster Co on 1 January (LE).

Western Meadowlark: Unusual in midwinter were the 45 birds, some singing, located at Rowe Sanctuary, Buffalo Co, on 21 January (LR, RH). None was noted between 26 December and 3 February in Dakota Co (BFH).

Yellow-headed Blackbird: The 2 males and a female discovered with other blackbirds at a feedlot east of Gering, Scotts Bluff Co, (SJD, PD, DD) denote only the 3rd record of overwintering. At the other end of the state, another adult male seen in Knox Co on 28 January (B) represents only the 4th midwinter record.

Rusty Blackbird: Only casual in the north and west, especially in midwinter, 2 were spotted below Keystone Dam on 14 January (SJD). A few birds have been counted in recent years at HCR, about as far west as the species can be expected; this year as many as 62 were included on the HCR CBC on 15 December (fide JGJ). Some 40 still remained there on 15 January (GH, WH). Small numbers, 1 to 3, were reported at several locations in the southeast through 14 January (JG, LE), although as many as 20 were spotted in Lancaster Co on 20 January (LE). This species is rare in midwinter in the southeast, but it overwinters on occasion.

Brewer's Blackbird: As many as 41 were counted on the LM CBC on 30 December (fide SJD); and 23 were still present below Keystone Dam from 14 January to 3 February (SJD). This sighting represents the only documented record of wintering that far west and north. The only other report was one found on the Grand Island CBC on 17 December (B; no details).

Common Grackle: The only midwinter records included 4 to 8 which wintered at feeders as far north as Wakefield, Dixon Co (JJ), and a single spotted at a saleyard in Columbus, Platte Co, on 17 January (DP, JP). The first migrant appeared at Dakota City, Dakota Co, on 15 February (BFH).

Great-tailed Grackle: In recent winters, this species has become casual in occurrence in winter. Only 6 birds were reported: one was seen at Niobrara Marsh, Knox Co, on 9 December (MB); one was found during

the LM CBC count week (fide SJD); and 2 males and 2 females were seen in Ogallala, Keith Co, on 1 January (SJD).

Brown-headed Cowbird: A few midwinter reports were received, all from the south and east, where overwintering occurs on occasion: as many as 45 were found at a feedlot near Alma, Harlan Co, on 15 January (GH, WH, LR, RH); 3 were located near Republican City, Harlan Co, on 18 January (GH, WH); and singles were spotted in northwestern Phelps Co on 28 January (LR, RH) and at a feeder in South Sioux City, Dakota Co, the same day (BFH). The latter denotes only the 4th midwinter record from the northeast.

Gray-crowned Rosy-Finch: Thanks to the dogged efforts of Stephen J. Dinsmore, some rather amazing *Leucosticte* records were made this winter. Not only was a new species added to the state list (see Black Rosy-Finch), but an additional taxon, the Alaskan "Hepburn's" Gray-crowned Rosy-Finch, *L. tephrocotis littoralis*, was found also, not to mention large numbers of regular old interior mundane Gray-crowns, *L. t. tephrocotis*. These birds tend to winter in an area near their favored roost site; Dinsmore has located at least 3 of these sites. The largest flock totalled 300+ at the Wind Springs Ranch, southern Sioux Co, roosting at an escarpment near the ranch house; this flock contained at least 6 "Hepburn's" (HKH, SJD, m.ob.). Another large flock of 200+ was found along Henry Road, roosting at the large escarpment a few miles north of Henry in Sioux Co; this flock contained at least 5 "Hepburn's" (SJD). Another flock of 120 was located at Agate Fossil Beds SHP, Sioux Co; this flock contained 2 "Hepburn's" (SJD, JF, AB). A single "Hepburn's" was seen in a Gering, Scotts Bluff Co, yard throughout the period (Rod Smith, fide AK). Additional Gray-crowned Rosy-Finches (without "Hepburn's") included 6 spotted at a new roost in southwestern Cheyenne Co on 3 February (SJD), and 13 identified in Harrison, Sioux Co, on 10 February (SJD, JF). The Cheyenne Co record represents only the 9th away from Sioux and Scotts Bluff Cos.

Black Rosy-Finch: Along with "Hepburn's" Gray-crowned Rosy-Finch, this taxon was new to the state list this winter. Dinsmore and Helen Hughson located and photographed at least 4 in the Wind Springs Ranch flock of Gray-crowns (HKH, SJD, JF, m.ob), and others spotted included at least 6 in the Henry Road flock (SID, JF) and one in the Agate Fossil Beds SHP flock (SJD, JF, AB). These sightings represent the easternmost North American records for the species, except for a single Ohio record.

Pine Grosbeak: This species has not been reported in the state since 1988, and so a male identified with a flock of House Finches, American Goldfinches, and Eastern Bluebirds in Cottonwood Canyon, Lincoln Co, on 29 December was a surprise (WRS; details and a cool drawing).

Purple Finch: Few were reported. The best count, surprisingly, as far west as Keith Co, was the 25 tallied on the LM CBC on 30 December (fide SJD). Other westerly reports included singles spotted south of Gering,

Scotts Bluff Co, on 2 January (AK) and at LO, a male, on 3 February (SJD). The rest of the reports involved a total of about 16 birds, all in the southeast.

House Finch: The best count reached 191 on the LM CBC on 30 December (fide SJD). An albino, with eyes and legs orange, was located at an Elmwood, Cass Co, feeder with other House Finches for several weeks (GW, photographs).

Red Crossbill: Small groups visiting feeders were noted statewide. The farthest east were a few found at feeders in Tekamah, Burt Co, throughout the period (Joan Benson fide RG); between 5 and 10 were observed at the Neale Woods feeders in northern Douglas Co throughout the period (B); 2 were seen at a feeder in Bellevue on 10 December (DB); and 2 were spotted at feeders in Nebraska City, Otoe Co, on 17 February (LF, CF). Red Crossbills are generally rare in the southeast.

Common Redpoll: The only report was from the Seward-Branched Oak CBC on 15 December; a number was not given (JG).

Pine Siskin: This year was about average overall for this species; the best counts included 100+ at a Chadron, Dawes Co, feeder on 28 January (ZU), and 86 on the HCR CBC on 15 December (fide JGJ).

American Goldfinch: An average year for this species also; the best count totalled 718 on the DeSoto NWR CBC on 17 December (B).

Evening Grosbeak: The only report was of small numbers located at Wildcat Hills NC, Scotts Bluff Co, and in Gering, Scotts Bluff Co, throughout the period (AK), about as expected.

House Sparrow: Routine reports.

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The 2000-2001 Nebraska Christmas Bird Count

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The 2000-2001 Christmas Bird Count (CBC) period included nine counts in Nebraska, down one from last year. New this year was the resurrected Crawford count while Kearney and Dakota-Dix were missing (Table 1). These counts reported a total of 117 species and nearly 138,000 individuals, which is not bad for such a cold count period. Counts were scattered statewide, but most effort was in the eastern half of the state where most of the birders are. The top count again this year was Lake McConaughy with 93 species. Other excellent totals included 71 at Harlan County and 65 at Branched Oak-Seward. Not surprisingly, Lincoln (27) and Omaha (22) had the most field observers. This year, the average count recorded 56 species.

DISCUSSION OF SPECIES

In the following discussion, I have attempted to discuss what I believe are the more important aspects of this year's Christmas Bird Counts. This includes my general impressions about some of the more common species, mention of rarities, notable misses, and other topics.

The species totals for each count are listed in Table 2. The 2000-2001 Nebraska CBC period will probably be best remembered for the extremely cold pre-count weather. Cold weather settled in by early November with below-normal temperatures statewide for November and December. Only one count (Scottsbluff) reported a count temperature above freezing. One indication of the cold weather was the fact that Lake McConaughy froze for the first time since the winter of 1997-98, and it did so on the early date of 26 December 2000 (typical freeze over occurs in mid-January). With the cold weather came snow, especially in the eastern half of the state. Only Scottsbluff and Lake McConaughy lacked snow cover on count day.

The semi-hardy water birds were poorly represented this year. The only grebes were single Horned/Eared and Western grebes lingering in the last open water at Lake McConaughy. Harlan County hosted a lone Double-crested Cormorant this year. Only 9 Great Blue Herons were found, mostly in the west at Lake McConaughy (4) and Scottsbluff (3).

Waterfowl were scarce this year, in contrast to their abundance the last two winters. Noteworthy were Greater White-fronted Geese at Harlan County (5) and Lincoln (1). A large flock of Snow Geese at Harlan County contained 5 Ross's Geese, but a single Ross's Goose farther west at Lake McConaughy was very unusual in winter. Canada Geese were abundant, especially in the west, and were missed only at Crawford. A record 35 Trumpeter Swans were at Lake McConaughy while another 4 were found at Calamus-Loup. Mallards were the only other abundant waterfowl species, but numbers were considerably below normal. Most were at Harlan County, where a much higher count raised the suspicions of the compiler and hints at the difficulty of accurately counting large flocks of birds. Other notable waterfowl totals included a Wood Duck, 27 Greater Scaup, and a Barrow's Goldeneye at Lake McConaughy, a well-described Barrow's Goldeneye at Calamus-Loup, and 2 Wood Ducks at Omaha.

Bald Eagles were reported from all counts with a high of 184 at Harlan County. A record 86 were at Lake McConaughy, no doubt aided by abundant ice cover. A good total of 44 Northern Harriers was reported from six counts. Accipiters were well reported with 23 Sharp-shinned and 15 Cooper's hawks. The only Ferruginous Hawks were four at Lake McConaughy. Rough-legged Hawks staged a major irruption with a total of 65 birds reported. They were reported from all counts, but most were in the western two thirds of the state. A total of 6 Golden Eagles was found on the three westernmost counts. American Kestrels were found in average numbers, along with nice totals of 5 Merlins and 6 Prairie Falcons. Merlins at Norfolk (1) and Branched Oak-Seward (2) were notable for eastern Nebraska. Observers are encouraged to report the race of all Merlins seen in winter in Nebraska since both the pale western race *richardsonii* and the darker eastern race *columbarius* can occur.

Gallinaceous birds were found in good numbers, aided by abundant snow cover. Ring-necked Pheasants were numerous in the east but scarce in the west, a trend that has been evident for more than a year. Prairie grouse reports included 28 Sharp-tailed Grouse on two counts in western Nebraska and 143 Greater Prairie-Chickens on three counts. Wild Turkeys had a great year with 460 on seven counts including 253 at Scottsbluff and 144 at Omaha. Surprisingly, Northern Bobwhite were widely reported in good numbers with a total of 195 on seven counts. I wonder how many of these survived the winter? As expected, the only Virginia Rail was a single at Lake McConaughy, a regular wintering locale.

Despite the lack of open water, 298 American Coots were hanging on at Lake McConaughy; the only other report was a single at Scottsbluff. Shorebirds were scarce with only 8 Killdeer and 15 Common Snipe statewide. However, a surprising adult Spotted Sandpiper was along an open creek at Harlan County, the first winter report for Nebraska. Gulls were scarce this year with most reports from Lake McConaughy where counters found an adult Mew Gull, a low count of two California Gulls, and respectable totals of 7 Thayer's and 9 Glaucous gulls. The only other interesting gull was a lone Thayer's Gull at Harlan County.

Eurasian Collared-Doves continue to solidify their range in Nebraska with 7 seen in Ogallala on the Lake McConaughy CBC. The three common owls were all found in average numbers. Interesting owls included 6 Long-eared and 2 Northern Saw-whet owls at Lake McConaughy and a Short-eared Owl at Branched Oak-Seward. Small numbers of Belted Kingfishers were found on all counts except Crawford. Red-headed Woodpeckers were restricted to southeast Nebraska with a single at Lincoln and 33 at Omaha. A single Yellow-bellied Sapsucker was at Branched Oak-Seward; this species is rare in Nebraska in winter. Northern Shrikes were present in average numbers after last year's invasion.

The 37 Pinyon Jays at Crawford are the first CBC report in several years, but were not unexpected for this locale. With all the snow cover it was not surprising that Horned Larks were abundant, topped by a count of 660 at Branched Oak-Seward. Red-breasted Nuthatches staged a minor irruption this year with 25 birds statewide, 11 of them at Lake McConaughy. A single Pygmy Nuthatch was at Scottsbluff, a regular breeding locale. Brown Creepers were unusually abundant with 88 counted statewide, including an impressive 34 at Lincoln. As expected, none were found on the two westernmost counts (Crawford and Scottsbluff). A total of 6 Carolina Wrens was found on three counts, including three a bit far west at Harlan County. Single Winter Wrens were at Harlan County and Calamus-Loup while 4 Marsh Wrens were at Lake McConaughy. Golden-crowned Kinglets were generally scarce, except in eastern Nebraska where there were 24 at Lincoln. Eastern Bluebirds were widespread with a total of 105 found on 5 eastern counts. Townsend's Solitaires were common in the west, although the 4 at Branched Oak-Seward were more unusual. This was a great winter for American Robins with more than 12,000 counted. Calamus-Loup had more than half the total with three other counts (Branched Oak-Seward, Harlan County, and Lake McConaughy) tallying more than 1,000 individuals each. Numbers of other frugivores such as Cedar Waxwings were generally low, and the only Yellow-rumped Warblers were three at Harlan County.

Sparrows were generally found in good numbers this year. A nice total of 10 Spotted Towhees was found, including one bird a bit far west at Scottsbluff. Song Sparrows were found in only average numbers while the

only Swamp Sparrows were two at Lake McConaughy and one at Lincoln. Small numbers of White-throated Sparrows were found on three counts, all in the southeast. Harris's Sparrows were found in excellent numbers in the eastern half of the state, topped by 143 at Branched Oak-Seward. Surprisingly, none was found in the west. Small numbers of Lapland Longspurs were found on five counts while the only Snow Buntings were the five at Lake McConaughy. Surprisingly, it was a good year for icterids, despite the cold weather. Four Eastern Meadowlarks were reported at Lincoln; the winter distribution of meadowlarks in Nebraska needs further study since a few Eastern's presumably winter in the southeast corner of Nebraska. Rusty Blackbirds were found on four counts with a high of 61 at Harlan County. The only Brewer's Blackbirds were 41 found at Lake McConaughy, a good number for late December. Common Grackles and Brown-headed Cowbirds were found in average numbers and an excellent total of 121 Great-tailed Grackles was found at Omaha (although the birds were barely in Iowa).

Finches were once again scarce this winter. Small numbers of Purple Finches were found on four counts with the most, surprisingly, at Lake McConaughy. Pine Siskins were seen on all counts, although only in small numbers. The only unusual finches were two Red Crossbills and a Common Redpoll at Branched Oak-Seward.

NOTABLE MISSES

A number of species were not reported this year, including Pied-billed Grebe, American White Pelican, Northern Shoveler, Loggerhead Shrike, Mountain Bluebird, and Fox Sparrow. Most of these are cold-sensitive species, so it was not unusual to miss them this year.

OBSERVERS

Crawford Bruce Walgren (compiler), Donna Walgren

Scottsbluff Mary Allison, Dillon Beede, Clancy Bohlander, Byrla Carson, Robert DeLara, Dean Drawbaugh, Phyllis Drawbaugh, Helen Hughsen, Alice Kenitz (compiler), Kathy Larson, Brad McKinney

Lake McConaughy Aaron Brees, Betty Claphake, Clem Claphake, Stephen J. Dinsmore (compiler), Robin Harding, Helen Hughsen, Bill Huntley, Alice Kenitz, Lanny Randolph, Ross Silcock, Jerry Toll

Harlan County Stephen J. Dinsmore, Joe Fontaine, Robin Harding, Glen Hoge, Wanda Hoge, Jerry Jorgensen, Joel G. Jorgensen (compiler), Lanny Randolph

Calamus-Loup Norma J. Brockmoller (compiler), Darlene Finkhouse, Gene Gaddie, David Heidt, Nancy Powers, Jan Uttecht, Duane Wolff, Marty Wolff

Norfolk Duane Wolff (compiler), no list of observers submitted

Branched Oak-Seward John Brenneman, Larry Einemann, Mike Ellis, Joe Gubanyi (compiler), Paul Kaufman, Thomas Labedz, Jeanine Lackey, Jeremiah Penn, Jessica Penn, Kevin Poague, Amy Richert, Scott Taylor, Jerry Toll

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Table 1: Site data for 2000-2001 Nebraska Bird Counts

Count Name	Date	Species	Total Birds	Obs.	Pt.	L	H	Depth	Wind
Crawford	31 Dec	27	545	2	2	12	22	9"	Calm
Scottsbluff	23 Dec	49	34,704	11	3	18	35	0	SE 0-15
Lake McConaughy	30 Dec	93	26,217	11	8	15	29	0	SE 0-10
Harlan County R	15 Dec	71	17,222	10	5	7	24	1	SE 10-15
Calamus-Loup	30 Dec	44	9,709	8	3	10	17	2	SW 5-10
Norfolk	27 Dec	46	6,574	10	7	9	17	3	SW 5-15
Branched Oak-Seward	15 Dec	64	10,494	19	11	14	27	7	NW 5-10
Lincoln	17 Dec	56	11,108	27	15	-1	15	9	S 0-17
Omaha	23 Dec	59	6,561	22	8	17	20	8	N 10-20

Table 2: 2000 Christmas Bird Count

Species	Crawford	Scottbluff	Lake Mcconough	Hartan County R.	Clatsma- Loop	Norfolk	Branched Oak- Seward	Lincoln	Omana	TOTAL
Horned Eared Grebe			1							1
Western Grebe			1							1
Double-crested Cormorant				1						1
Great Blue Heron		3	4	1				1		9
Great White-fronted Goose				5				1		6
Snow Goose			3	700				39		742
Ross' Goose			1	5						6
Canada Goose		19523	13579	1204	299	2	521	3243	341	38712
Trumpeter Swan			35		4					39
Wood Duck			1						2	3
Gadwall			19							19
American Wigeon		43	25	4						72
Mallard		11285	3236	15000	66	2	38	310	40	29977
Northern Pintail		4	2	2						8

Species	Crawford	Scottsbluff	Lake McConaugh	Harlan County R	Calamus-Loup	Norfolk	Branched Oak-Seward	Lincoln	Omana	TOTAL
Green-winged Teal			125	13					22	160
Canvasback			5							5
Redhead			48							48
Ring-necked Duck			44							44
Greater Scaup			27							27
Lesser Scaup			13					24	2	39
Bufflehead			37					1		38
Common Goldeneye		1	448	11	26				48	534
Barrow's Goldeneye			1		1					2
Hooded Merganser			1							1
Common Merganser			2120	1500	56		50		52	3778
Red-breasted Merganser			1							1
Bald Eagle	1	8	86	184	17	4	5	1	30	336
Northern Harrier		2	9	14			7	10	2	44
Sharp-shinned Hawk		3	4	2	2	2	3	5	2	23
Cooper's Hawk			1	3	1	3	2	4	1	15

Species	Crawford	Scottsbluff	Lake Mcconough	Harlan County R	Calamus- Loop	Norfolk	Branched Oak- Seward	Lincoln	Omana	TOTAL
accipiter sp.							1		1	2
Red-tailed Hawk	2	7	23	40	12	34	39	35	78	270
Ferruginous Hawk			4							4
Rough-legged Hawk	4	4	12	12	16	13	1	1	2	65
Golden Eagle	3	2	1							6
American Kestrel	1	22	26	8	7	9	8	3	14	98
Merlin		1		1		1	2			5
Prairie Falcon	1	1	3	1						6
Ring-necked Pheasant	1	11	10	1		89	46	28	40	226
Sharp-tailed Grouse	23		4		1					28
Greater Prairie- Chicken			44	5	94					143
Wild Turkey	4	253	2	4	13		40		144	460
Northern Bobwhite		20	28	11		2	77	25	32	195
Virginia Rail			1							1
American Coot		1	298							299
Killdeer			5	2				1		8

Species	Crawford	Scottsbluff	Lake McConaugh	Harlan County R	Calauma-Loup	Norfolk	Branched Oak-Seward	Lincoln	Omana	TOTAL
Spotted Sandpiper				1						1
Common Snipe		2	5			6		1	1	15
Mew Gull			1							1
Ring-Billed Gull			586	5						591
California Gull			2							2
Herring Gull			497	15			1			513
Thayer's Gull			7	1						8
Glaucous Gull			9							9
Rock Dove	69	161	144	78	49	322	35	996	271	2125
Eurasian Collared-Dove			7							7
Mourning Dove				8			13	104	62	187
Eastern Screech-Owl			5	5		1	9		6	26
Great Horned Owl		1	15	5	1	11	6	6	3	48
Barred Owl						4	4		3	11
Long-eared Owl			6							6
Short-eared Owl							1			1

Species	Crawford	Scottsbluff	Lake McConaugh	Harlan County R	Calamus- Loup	Norfolk	Branched Oak- Seward	Lincoln	Omana	TOTAL
Northern Saw-whet Owl			2							2
Belted Kingfisher		4	4	2	1	1	1	8	3	24
Red-headed Woodpecker								1	33	34
Red-bellied Woodpecker			4	33	1	24	35	27	93	217
Yellow-bellied Sapsucker							1			1
Downy Woodpecker	2	10	31	34	14	23	61	83	107	365
Hairy Woodpecker	3	2	5	4	1	8	7	9	16	55
Northern Flicker		33	45	22	25	12	58	34	44	273
Northern Shrike	2		7	3	5	1	5		1	24
Shrike sp.							1			1
Blue Jay		51	26	8	6	55	159	269	86	660
Pinyon Jay	37									37
Black-billed Magpie	18	92	97	19		38	5			269
American Crow	21	123	34	635	928	603	856	673	616	4489
Horned Lark	1	8	343	180		119	660	107	227	1645

Species	Crawford	Scottsbluff	Lake Mcconough	Harlan County R	Calamus-Loup	Norfolk	Branched Oak-Seward	Lincoln	Omana	TOTAL
Black-capped Chickadee	13	33	66	81	34	108	191	205	297	1028
Tufted Titmouse							1		55	56
Red-breasted Nuthatch	1	6	11			1	3	3		25
White-breasted Nuthatch	7	2	12	32	1	14	61	50	85	264
Pygmy Nuthatch	1	1								1
Brown Creeper			13	12	4		11	43	14	88
Carolina Wren				3				2	1	6
Winter Wren				1	1					2
Marsh Wren			4							4
Golden-crowned Kinglet			7	1	5	1	12	24	2	52
Eastern Bluebird				31	24		36	5	9	105
Townsend's Solitaire		11	58	2			4			75
American Robin		332	1147	1984	6528	11	2393	12	3	12410
European Starling	104	956	694	2507	277	1433	670	1451	1413	9505
Cedar Waxwing		112	82	8	114		163	30	40	549

Species	Crawford	Scottsbluff	Lake McConaugh	Harian County R	Calamus- Loup	Norfolk	Branched Oak- Seward	Lincoln	Omaha	TOTAL
Yellow-rumped Warbler				3						3
Spotted Towhee		1		4			5			10
American Tree Sparrow	36	9	152	2281	178	660	1208	670	169	5363
Song Sparrow		1	24	39	1		34	22	11	132
Swamp Sparrow			2					1		3
White-throated Sparrow							2	8	5	15
Harris' Sparrow				114	3	8	143	57	23	348
White-crowned Sparrow		9	9	38			2			58
Dark-eyed Junco	74	129	484	283	98	209	943	429	639	3288
Lapland Longspur			59	145		1	97		2	304
Snow Bunting			5							5
Northern Cardinal			28	43	7	19	127	141	132	497
Red-winged Blackbird		915	19	4201	375	1082	476	369		7437
Eastern Meadowlark								4		4
Western Meadowlark				2				6		8

Species	Crawford	Scottsbluff	Lake Mcconough	Harlan County R	Calaums- Loup	Norfolk	Branched Oak- Seward	Lincoln	Omana	TOTAL
meadowlark sp.		10	23	50		124	319	109	105	740
Rusty Blackbird			5	61		4	18			88
Brewer's Blackbird			41							41
Common Grackle			9			1	1	7	1	19
Great-tailed Grackle									121	121
Brown-headed Cowbird				32		4	1			37
Purple Finch			25				5	1	7	38
House Finch	24	37	191	54	14	90	54	244	15	723
Red Crossbill							2			2
Common Redpoll							1			1
Pine Siskin	16	77	25	86		30	1	7	3	245
American Goldfinch	3	37	308	180	336	128	480	86	225	1783
House Sparrow	74	343	494	152	59	1227	241	980	758	4328
TOTAL SPECIES	27	49	93	71	43	46	65	56	58	56.444
TOTAL BIRDS	545	34702	26217	32222	9705	6544	10463	11007	6560	137965

* * * * *

First confirmed records of Dusky Flycatcher for Nebraska

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Prior to the fall of 2000, there were no accepted records of Dusky Flycatcher for Nebraska. With the exception of a single sight record by Silcock (17 May 1992) judged "Hypothetical" by the Nebraska Ornithologists' Union Records Committee, this species had been unreported in Nebraska. Dusky Flycatchers breed locally in the Black Hills of South Dakota (Peterson 1990) and were presumed to occur in western Nebraska. Here, we report the capture of three Dusky Flycatchers in Kimball County and three additional sight records from western Nebraska.

On 31 August 2000, we were mist netting below the dam of Oliver Reservoir in Kimball County. At 10:05 a.m., we captured an *Empidonax* that we suspected was a Dusky Flycatcher. We returned to the car to measure and photograph the bird before releasing it at 10:45 a.m. The bird was clearly an *Empidonax* flycatcher on the basis of the small size, wingbars, eyering, and bill shape. The bill was rather long with a moderately broad base and a strong triangular shape (the sides of the bill were not convex). The underbill was bright orange at the base with the proximal one half being dark-colored. The color distinction on the underbill was not sharp, but was instead rather gradual. There were prominent whiskers (at least 1 cm in length) at the base of the bill. The head was dark gray, a bit darker on the crown. The bird had a prominent white eyering that broadened slightly behind the eye (a "teardrop" shape). The throat was paler and contrasted with the darker olive-gray upper breast. The mantle was olive and distinctly contrasted with the grayer head. The wings were dark with two clear white/buff wingbars. The rectrices were dark olive. The legs were black. The bird did not vocalize. After photographing the bird, we took a series of measurements suggested by Pyle (1997) to confirm our identification (see Table 1). The primary projection was short, and we also noted that p4 and p10 were roughly the same length. On the basis of moderate feather wear, ossified skull, underbill coloration, and plumage, we concluded the bird was an adult Dusky Flycatcher. Furthermore, on the basis of the relatively short (for a Dusky Flycatcher) measures for wing and tail lengths, we concluded the bird was probably a female, but this conclusion is by no means solid.

On 7 September 2000, Dinsmore and Loren and Babs Padelford were mist netting along the north side of Oliver Reservoir when they captured an *Empidonax* at approximately 12:00 p.m. The bird bore a strong resemblance to a Dusky Flycatcher the authors had captured there on 31 August. With that possibility in mind, they took the bird back to the car for measurement (see Table 1). While in the hand, the bird vocalized several times. Mostly, it gave a single, high-pitched "whee" note, although it also gave a raspy "burr" note on a couple of occasions. On the basis of the very fresh plumage, they speculated that the bird was a juvenile Dusky Flycatcher. The bird did not have any wear in either the flight feathers or rectrices that would be more suggestive of an adult bird.

On 20 September 2000, Dinsmore was birding the north side of Oliver Reservoir when he noticed an *Empidonax* feeding along the edge of a willow thicket. He observed the bird for a couple of minutes at close range and identified it as a Dusky Flycatcher. Features noted included the gray head contrasting with the olive mantle, the short primary projection, the orange underbill with a dusky tip, the white, teardrop-shaped eyering, and the bill which was of medium length and fairly broad. At 9:30 a.m., the bird was captured in a nearby mist net. Because of the close proximity of the bird to the net, and the fact that there were no other *Empidonax* observed at Oliver Reservoir that day, he concluded that both encounters were with the same bird. After capturing the bird, he took it back to the car and took a series of measures suggested by Pyle (1997) to confirm the identification (see Table 1).

All of the measurements in Table 1 fall within the range for Dusky Flycatcher (see Pyle 1997). Separation from other species of *Empidonax* was based on a wide range of morphological and plumage characters. Bill shape (sides of bill straight, not convex) and coloration should eliminate all eastern *Empidonax* flycatchers. This elimination leaves four other species to consider: Gray, Hammond's, Cordilleran, and Pacific-Slope flycatchers. The combination of bill color (underbill not solidly orange), feather measurements, and narrower bill eliminates Cordilleran and Pacific-Slope flycatchers. Gray Flycatcher was eliminated on the basis of plumage coloration (e.g., olive mantle), specific pattern on underbill (dark coloration reduced and much more sharply defined on Gray Flycatcher), and series of wing and tail measurements (most of these overlap for the two species, but all measurements were more "normal" for Dusky Flycatcher and often unusually small or large for Gray Flycatcher). Hammond's Flycatcher was eliminated on the basis of plumage coloration, the short primary projection, and morphology (especially the various wing and wing minus tail measurements).

In addition to the above records, there were three additional sight reports of Dusky Flycatchers in fall 2000. These included single birds spotted on 21 July at Wellfleet, Lincoln Co. (WRS, pers. obs.); 11 September at Mud Springs, Morrill Co. (SJD, pers. obs.); and 20

September at Wind Springs Ranch, Sioux Co. (SJD, pers. obs., Helen Hughson). Each of these birds was identified by a combination of features including short primary projection, bill shape, color pattern on the underbill, plumage, and call notes.

On the basis of the reports for fall 2000, it appears that Dusky Flycatcher may be a regular fall migrant throughout the Nebraska Panhandle, with a few possibly occurring farther east. It is also interesting that all three *Empidonax* captured at Oliver Reservoir turned out to be Dusky Flycatchers. More netting will be necessary before we fully understand the occurrence of the various *Empidonax* in western Nebraska. However, it is now clear that Dusky Flycatcher occurs there and indeed may be one of the more common species in fall.

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Pyle, P. 1997. Identification guide to North American Birds. Part I. Slate Creek Press, Bolinas, California. 732 pages.

Table 1. Measurements taken from Dusky Flycatchers captured at Oliver Reservoir, Kimball County, Nebraska in fall 2000.

	31 August	7 September	20 September
Wing (natural wing chord)	64.9	65.1	67.9
Tail length	59.9	61.0	62.5
Wing minus tail	5.0	4.1	5.4
Bill length (nares to tip)	6.6	7.6	7.4
Bill width	4.3	4.5	4.7
Longest primary	64.9	63.2	62.7
Longest secondary	50.4	52.8	51.7
Longest primary (p8) minus longest secondary	14.5	10.5	11.0
Longest primary (p8) minus p6	3.0	1.3	1.5
p6 minus p10	8.8	8.0	9.2
p9 minus p5	5.4	2.9	3.4

* * * * *

NOU Fall Field Days 2000

The 2000 NOU Fall Field Days were held on 8-10 September in Ogallala. Most of the field trips focused on Lake McConaughy and the surrounding sites, which is where most of the birds were. An excellent total of 162 species was found, including the following rarities: a Pacific Loon, 2 Red-necked Grebes, 2 Ruddy Turnstones, a flock of 5 Red Knots, 2 Pomarine Jaegers, an adult Lesser Black-backed Gull, 1-2 juvenile Sabine's Gulls, Plumbeous and Cassin's vireos, and Townsend's and MacGillivray's warblers.

COUNTIES

Species	Lincoln	McPherson	Arthur	Garden	Keith
Pacific Loon					x
Pied-billed Grebe	x		x		x
Red-necked Grebe					x
Eared Grebe					x
Western Grebe			x		x
Clark's Grebe					x
American White Pelican					x
Double-crested Cormorant		x	x		x
Great Blue Heron			x	x	x
Great Egret					x
Snowy Egret					x
Green Heron				x	
Black-crowned Night-Heron					x
Plegadis sp.			x		x
Turkey Vulture	x			x	x
Canada Goose	x				x
Trumpeter Swan			x		
Wood Duck					x
Gadwall					x

Species	Lincoln	McPherson	Arthur	Garden	Keith
American Wigeon					x
Mallard	x	x			x
Blue-Winged Teal	x	x			x
Northern Shoveler			x		x
Northern Pintail	x				x
Green-Winged Teal					x
Canvasback					x
Redhead					x
Common Merganser					x
Ruddy Duck					x
Osprey	x				x
Mississippi Kite					x
Northern Harrier			x	x	x
Sharp-shinned Hawk	x			x	x
Cooper's Hawk					x
Swainson's Hawk		x	x	x	x
Red-tailed Hawk		x	x	x	x
Ferruginous Hawk					x
American Kestrel		x	x	x	x
Peregrine Falcon					x
Prairie Falcon					x
Greater Prairie-Chicken		x			
Wild Turkey				x	x
Sora					x
American Coot			x		x
Black-bellied Plover					x
Semipalmated Plover					x
Killdeer	x	x			x
American Avocet			x		x
Greater Yellowlegs	x		x		x

Species	Lincoln	McPherson	Arthur	Garden	Keith
Lesser Yellowlegs					x
Solitary Sandpiper					x
Willet					x
Spotted Sandpiper					x
Upland Sandpiper					x
Marbled Godwit					x
Ruddy Turnstone					x
Red Knot					x
Sanderling					x
Semipalmated Sandpiper					x
Western Sandpiper					x
Least Sandpiper					x
Baird's Sandpiper					x
Pectoral Sandpiper					x
Stilt Sandpiper			x		x
Buff-breasted Sandpiper					x
Long-billed Dowitcher			x		x
Common Snipe					x
Wilson's Phalarope					x
Red-necked Phalarope					x
Pomarine Jaeger					x
Franklin's Gull					x
Ring-billed Gull	x			x	x
California Gull					x
Herring Gull					x
Lesser Black-backed Gull					x
Sabine's Gull					x
Caspian Tern					x
Common Tern					x
Forster's Tern					x

Species	Lincoln	McPherson	Arthur	Garden	Keith
Black Tern					x
Rock Dove	x				x
Mourning Dove	x	x		x	x
Yellow-billed Cuckoo				x	x
Eastern Screech-Owl					x
Great Horned Owl					x
Common Nighthawk					x
Common Poorwill					x
Chimney Swift					x
Hummingbird sp.				x	x
Belted Kingfisher	x			x	x
Red-headed Woodpecker		x		x	x
Downy Woodpecker				x	x
Hairy Woodpecker					x
Northern Flicker	x	x	x	x	x
Western Wood-Pewee				x	x
Great Crested Flycatcher				x	x
Western Kingbird				x	x
Eastern Kingbird					x
Loggerhead Shrike	x	x			x
Horned Lark				x	x
Plumbeous Vireo				x	
Cassin's Vireo				x	
Warbling Vireo				x	x
Red-eyed Vireo					x
Blue Jay				x	x
Black-billed Magpie				x	x
American Crow		x	x	x	x
Tree Swallow			x		x
Bank Swallow					x

Species	Lincoln	McPherson	Arthur	Garden	Keith
Cliff Swallow					x
Barn Swallow	x	x			x
Black-capped Chickadee				x	x
Red-breasted Nuthatch					x
White-breasted Nuthatch				x	x
Rock Wren				x	x
House Wren		x		x	x
Marsh Wren					x
Blue-gray Gnatcatcher				x	x
Eastern Bluebird				x	x
Mountain Bluebird				x	
Townsend's Solitaire				x	x
American Robin				x	x
Catharus sp.				x	x
Gray Catbird				x	x
Northern Mockingbird				x	x
Brown Thrasher		x		x	x
European Starling	x	x		x	x
Cedar Waxwing				x	x
Orange-crowned Warbler				x	
Yellow Warbler					x
Yellow-rumped Warbler					x
Townsend's Warbler				x	
Black-and-white Warbler				x	
American Redstart				x	
Ovenbird					x
MacGillivray's Warbler				x	
Common Yellowthroat				x	x
Wilson's Warbler			x	x	x

Species	Lincoln	McPherson	Arthur	Garden	Keith
Yellow-breasted Chat				x	
Western Tanager				x	
Spotted Towhee				x	x
Chipping Sparrow					x
Clay-colored Sparrow		x	x		x
Field Sparrow					x
Vesper Sparrow		x	x		x
Lark Sparrow					x
Lark Bunting			x		
Savannah Sparrow			x		
Dark-eyed Junco				x	
Northern Cardinal				x	x
Red-winged Blackbird	x		x	x	x
Western Meadowlark		x	x	x	x
Yellow-headed Blackbird		x		x	x
Common Grackle				x	x
Great-tailed Grackle					x
Brown-headed Cowbird					x
Baltimore Oriole				x	
Baltimore X Bullock's Oriole					x
House Finch				x	x
American Goldfinch	x	x	x	x	x
House Sparrow		x			x
Total Species For Each Area	20	24	27	61	144

Total Species in all Five Counties	162
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First record of a Reddish Egret for Nebraska

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On 27 September 2000, I was birding the west end of Lake McConaughy from Marina Landing. At 2:15 p.m. I noticed a few egrets farther east off Cedar Vue. By 2:30 p.m. I had arrived at Cedar Vue and began looking over the egrets. The egrets were loosely scattered in a small area with numerous Great Blue Herons, approximately 400m from the north shore of the lake. There were six egrets present--4 Great Egrets, 1 Snowy Egret, and an intermediate-sized bird that I identified as a white morph Reddish Egret. The Reddish Egret foraged for about half an hour and then flew to some snags in the middle of the mudflat and was sleeping by 3:30 p.m. I returned at 5:15 p.m. and found the bird actively foraging with the Snowy Egret within 200m of the north shore. By 6 p.m., the bird had returned to its roost in the middle of the mudflat and was asleep when I left the area at 6:08 p.m.

During the initial observation period, the bird was often in the company of Snowy and Great egrets, allowing for direct comparisons to both species. The bird was noticeably larger than a Snowy Egret and only slightly smaller than a Great Egret under direct comparisons to both species. The plumage was entirely white with no dark mottling or dusky wingtips. There were a few scraggly plumes along the sides of the neck, but these were not as extensive as those of an adult Reddish Egret. The bill was long, dagger-shaped, and in good light appeared light gray with the distal 5% black. The bill was essentially a large replica of a Snowy Egret's bill, and was noticeably thinner (especially at the base) than a Great Egret. I estimated that the bill was at least 90% of the length of a Great Egret's bill. At times, the facial skin appeared to be pale (probably pink), but I could not adequately discern the specific color because of the distance and lighting. The eye was yellow with a black iris. The legs were a very dark gray/black color with no yellow color on the legs or feet. Although the bird appeared white when perched, I thought it showed a pale gray cast (especially on the wings) in flight, but this could have been due to backlighting. The bird's behavior was very distinctive and typical of a Reddish Egret. When feeding, the bird began with a low, crouched trot that gradually became a run. At the end of the run, the bird would raise its neck, spread one or both wings, take a few erratic steps, and then jab at something in the water. This process was repeated continuously, and the bird covered a lot of ground when feeding. The low crouched trot that precedes the open-wing foraging behavior is very typical of Reddish

Egrets, and I have never seen this behavior emulated by any other wader. On the basis of bill color and plumage, I concluded the bird was an immature white morph Reddish Egret. While the exact age of the bird is speculative, the combination of bill pattern, pale lores, leg color, and scraggly plumages at the base of the neck may be indicative of a second-year Reddish Egret (R. Paul, pers. comm., Paul 1996).

The Reddish Egret remained in this area through at least 15 October and was seen by several birders. This is the first record of a Reddish Egret for Nebraska. Reddish Egrets are the rarest of the North American herons (Paul 1996). The U. S. breeding population is thought to number about 2,000 pairs; about 1,500 pairs breed in Texas (Paul 1991). Reddish Egrets are exceedingly rare vagrants northward to the Great Plains with published records from Oklahoma (3), Kansas (2), and Colorado (5). Most records are from the post-breeding period (July-September), but there are also a few spring records in May. To date, all previous records have been of dark morph birds, mostly immatures. White morph birds comprise about 5-12% of the Gulf Coast population in Texas (Hancock and Kushlan 1984), so they would be expected to occur inland much less frequently than dark morph individuals. Identification problems with white morph birds may also contribute to the paucity of interior records: unless a white morph Reddish Egret was seen at close range or actively foraging, it could easily be passed off as some other species, most likely a Snowy Egret. I thank Richard T. Paul of the National Audubon Society for helping with the ageing of white morph Reddish Egrets.

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