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## Fall Field Report, August-November 2002

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FALL FIELD REPORT, August-November 2002

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INTRODUCTION

In many ways this season was a run-of-the-mill fall, with few outstanding avian events in terms of numbers and distribution. As in every season, however, there are a few topics that can be discussed at some length and that are hopefully of general interest! Species in this category were California Gull, hummingbirds in general, *Empidonax* flycatchers, White-breasted Nuthatch, Curve-billed Thrasher, and Orange-crowned Warbler. These little discourses on my part are intended to stimulate thought and comment, so fire away!

There were a few record early or late sightings: Great Egret, Black-necked Stilt (Panhandle), and Blue-gray Gnatcatcher (Panhandle) were late, while Long-tailed Duck and Green-tailed Towhee had early dates reported. Species reported in unusually good numbers included Red-necked Grebe, scoters, Swainson's Hawk, Whooping Crane, Franklin's Gull, Eurasian Collared-Dove, Pileated Woodpecker, American Robin, Northern Cardinal in the Panhandle, and Bobolink. More information appears in the species accounts.

At the other extreme, there are always a few species that are of regular occurrence (occur 9 or 10 years out of every 10 in Nebraska) that are not reported. This absence occurs sometimes because no one looks for them, but also because of weather conditions or even population changes. The latter is extremely difficult to determine accurately from a report such as this; statisticians cringe at such conclusions. Species unreported probably because no-one looked for them after 31 July were Barn Owl, Long-eared Owl, Northern Saw-whet Owl, Whip-poor-will (let's get out at night more!), Violet-green Swallow, Sprague's Pipit, Northern Parula, Yellow-throated Warbler, Chestnut-collared Longspur, Snow Bunting, and Bullock's Oriole. Probably unreported because of weather conditions (drought in this case) was Yellow-crowned Night-Heron. Others present in low numbers at the best of times and probably simply missed by observers (or, of course, were actually absent) included Black-billed Cuckoo, Lewis's Woodpecker, Veery, Chestnut-sided Warbler, Common Redpoll, and Evening Grosbeak.

As far as rare birds go, this fall was fairly average. No new state birds were reported, but several with fewer than 10 records in all or 10 records for Fall were found. In the "state records" group were the 2<sup>nd</sup>

(or 2nd-4<sup>th</sup> if different birds) Gray Flycatcher for Nebraska; the 3<sup>rd</sup> Sharp-tailed Sandpiper; the 4<sup>th</sup> Black-throated Gray Warblers; and the 8<sup>th</sup> (5<sup>th</sup> documented) Curve-billed Thrasher. In the “fewer than 10 Fall records” group were the 1<sup>st</sup> (Panhandle) Hooded Warbler; the 3<sup>rd</sup> (eastern Nebraska) Barrow’s Goldeneye; the 7<sup>th</sup> Mew Gull; the 4<sup>th</sup>-6<sup>th</sup> Virginia’s Warblers; the 9<sup>th</sup> Red Phalarope; and the 10<sup>th</sup> Red-throated Loon.

A few words on documentation of sightings reported is in order. I receive many reports each season of rare or hard-to-identify birds. If they fit a pattern that has developed over the years (see “Birds of Nebraska”), I tend to accept them as correct. However, if they fall outside the range of prior reports, I usually email the observer and ask for some details about the identification and circumstances of the sighting. Everyone has been very nice about this process; observers sometimes take these requests as a questioning of their ability, but I haven’t run into this problem with Nebraska birders. Thus, when I report sightings in the Seasonal Reports, I believe readers can be reasonably sure that what I report actually happened. It is interesting that often the observer will let me know when I ask that the species reported was an error and another species was intended to be reported. Better to correct these types of reporting errors before publication!

An area where I have trouble is the NOU meeting reports. These are generally a list of species with no comments or observer names, thus precluding contact with the anonymous observer(s). Over the years there have been many rarities and other interesting sightings buried in these lists that cannot be traced and thus are lost to the record. I urge compilers/reporters of these lists to mark the “sign-in” lists of species set out at the meetings so that observers know which species are unexpected and should have details for substantiation. I’ve had to eliminate or cast doubt on many such reports because of a complete lack of any knowledge about the sighting; this Fall Seasonal Report is a good example (of course if I would attend all the meetings, I could ask around; let’s hear it for retirement!)

#### ABBREVIATIONS

ADF: Arbor Day Farm, Otoe Co;

BOL: Branched Oak L, Lancaster Co;

Cem: Cemetery;

CLNWR: Crescent L NWR, Garden Co;

CO(s): County(ies);

FE: Fontenelle Forest, Sarpy Co;

FL: Funk Lagoon, Phelps Co;

HCR: Harlan Co Res, Harlan Co;  
ISSP: Indian Cave SP, Nemaha/Richardson Cos;  
L: Lake  
LM: L McConaughy, Keith Co;  
LO: L Ogallala, Keith Co;  
m.ob.: many observers;  
MRET: Missouri River Ecology Trail, Neal Woods, Washington Co.  
NC: Nature Center;  
NGP: Nebraska Game and Parks Commission;  
NM: National Monument;  
NNE: Nebraska National Forest, Thomas Co;  
NOU: Nebraska Ornithologists' Union;  
NWR: National Wildlife Refuge;  
PL: Pawnee L, Lancaster Co,  
Res: Reservoir;  
RWB: Rainwater Basin, including parts of Phelps, Hamilton, York, Clay, Fillmore, and Thayer Cos  
SCP: Spring Creek Prairie, Lancaster Co;  
SHP: State Historical Park;  
SL: Sewage Lagoon(s);  
SP: State Park;  
UNL: University of Nebraska, Lincoln;  
UNSM: University of Nebraska State Museum (number in parentheses is specimen number)  
WSR: Wind Springs Ranch, Sioux Co.

#### GAZETTEER

Calamus Res: Loup/Garfield Cos;  
Cracker Barrel Marsh: Lincoln, Lancaster Co;  
Cunningham L: Omaha, Douglas Co;  
DeSoto NWR: Washington Co;  
Enders Res: Chase Co;  
Gavin's Point Dam: Knox/Cedar Cos;  
Gilbert-Baker Area: Sioux Co;  
Johnson L: Gosper/Frontier Cos;  
Kiowa Springs: Scotts Bluff Co;  
Kissinger Basin: Fillmore Co;  
L Alice: Scotts Bluff Co;  
L Minatare: Scotts Bluff Co;  
Medicine Creek Res: Frontier Co;  
Merritt Res: Cherry Co;  
Niobrara Marsh: Knox Co;  
Oliver Res: Kimball Co;

Platte River SP: Cass Co;  
Ponca SP: Dixon Co;  
Red Willow Res: Frontier Co;  
Stage Hill Road: Wildcat Hills, Scotts Bluff Co;  
Summit L: Burt Co;  
Sowbelly Canyon: Sioux Co;  
Sutherland Res: Lincoln Co;  
Valentine NWR: Cherry Co;  
Wehrspann L: Sarpy Co;  
Wilderness Park: Lincoln, Lancaster Co;  
Wildcat Hills NC: Scotts Bluff-Banner Cos;  
Winters Creek L: Scotts Bluff Co.

### OBSERVERS

AH: Alice Heckman, Kearney, NE;  
AK: Alice Kenitz, Gering;  
AR: Alice Rushton, Omaha;  
B: Nebraska Birdline;  
BFH: Bill F. Huser, South Sioux City;  
BM: Brad McKinney, Scottsbluff;  
BP: Babs Padelford, Bellevue;  
CF: Carol Falk, Nebraska City;  
CG: Carolyn Gann, Bishop, CA;  
CH: Carolyn Hall, Bassett;  
CNK: Clem N. Klaphake, Bellevue;  
CW: Chris Wood, Nowat, CO;  
DB: Duane Bright, Bellevue;  
DD: Dean Drawbaugh, Scottsbluff;  
DH: Dave Heidt, Norfolk;  
DM: Don Maas, Omaha;  
DP: Don Paseka, Ames;  
DSt: Dave Stage, Lincoln;  
EA: Elizabeth Allen, Omaha;  
ECT: Edna Claire Thomas, Morrill;  
EG: Elliott Gann, Bishop, CA;  
EL: Eric Liknes, Vermillion, SD;  
ET: Emily Thaden, Lincoln;  
EW: Elizabeth Winter, Taos, NM;  
GH: Glen Hoge, Alma;  
GJ: Gerry Jorgensen, Blair;  
GSt: Greg Stoiber, Omaha;  
GW: Gertrude Wood, York;  
HKH: Helen K. Hughson, Mitchell;

HW: Harley Winfrey, Scottsbluff;  
SW: Susan Winfrey, Scottsbluff;  
JC: Jay Carlisle, Yankton, SD;  
JF: Joe Fontaine, Fort Collins, CO;  
JG: Joe Gubanyi, Seward;  
JGJ: Joel G. Jorgensen, Blair;  
JJ: Jan Johnson, Wakefield;  
JLL: Jeanine L. Lackey, Lincoln;  
JP: Jan Paseka, Ames;  
KCR: Kathleen Crawford-Rose, Bellevue;  
KD: Kathy DeLara, Mitchell;  
KP: Kevin Poague, Lincoln;  
LE: Larry Einemann, Lincoln;  
LF: Laurence Falk, Nebraska City;  
LG: Linda Grdina, Lincoln;  
LP: Loren Padelford, Bellevue;  
LR: Lanny Randolph, Gibbon;  
LRB: Linda R. Brown, Lincoln;  
MB: Mark Brogie, Creighton;  
MM: Marty Mathieson, Shelton;  
MU: Mark Urwiller, Kearney;  
NP: Nathan Pieplow, Boulder, CO;  
PD: Phyllis Drawbaugh, Scottsbluff;  
RC: Robert Cecil, Des Moines, IA;  
RG: Ruth Green, Bellevue;  
RH: Robin Harding, Gibbon;  
SJD: Stephen J. Dinsmore, Starkville, MS;  
ST: Scott Taylor, NGP, Lincoln;  
SV: Steve Van Sickle, Vermillion, SD;  
SW: Susan Winfrey, Scottsbluff;  
TEL: Thomas E. Labedz, Lincoln;  
TH: Thomas Hoffman, Omaha;  
TJ: Todd Jensen, Rapid City, SD;  
TP: Theresa Pester, Lincoln;  
WH: Wanda Hoge, Alma;  
WM: Wayne Mollhoff, Ashland;  
WRS: W. Ross Silcock, Tabor, IA.

### SPECIES ACCOUNTS

Red-throated Loon: The only report was of a adult mostly molted to basic plumage found at BOL on 26 October (JGJ). This sighting marks only the 10<sup>th</sup> documented fall record.

Pacific Loon: A regular but rare migrant in fall, two were reported, singles seen at BOL on 31 October, "textbook basic I" (JGJ), and on 11 November (LE; details).

Common Loon: An excellent total of 69 was reported between 26 October and 19 November, all but one on eastern reservoirs; the exception was one spotted in the west, where it is an uncommon migrant, at Scottsbluff SL on 4 November (KD). The best count totaled 21 in Lancaster Co on 31 October (JGJ).

Pied-billed Grebe: The first migrants were one observed at PL on 2 August (LE) and 17 located at Orleans SL on 6 August (GH, WH); and the best count reached 37 in Lancaster Co on 5 November (LE).

Horned Grebe: A molting adult seen at Scottsbluff SL on 24 August (WRS) was an early migrant. The best count was 22 at BOL on 26 October (JGJ). Two found at Enders Res on 18 November (DSt) were the last reported.

Red-necked Grebe: This species is being reported in fall more regularly in recent years; there were 5 reports of at least 3 birds: singles were spotted at BOL on 30 October and again on 16 November (JGJ); one was identified at Enders Res on 18 November (DSt); and one observed at the Gavin's Point Dam Marina between 15 and 17 November (MB) just had to have swum into Nebraska sometime (both reports had the bird about 100 yards into South Dakota)! There are now about 30 reports, two-thirds documented.

Eared Grebe: The one spotted at BOL on 11 August (JGJ, CG) was rather early; migrants generally do not appear away from breeding areas until late August. One remained at Scottsbluff SL until 11 November (KD); and a surprise for the date were the 13 observed at Enders Res on 18 November (DSt).

Western Grebe: The usual major buildup in numbers was seen at LM, where 30,000 were carefully estimated on 22 September (WRS); the record count at this time of year is 44,000. This species was widely reported through 26 November, when one was found at BOL (LE). Uncommon in the east, in all about 25 were reported between 26 October and 16 November (JGJ, LE, TEL) on Lancaster Co reservoirs, with additional singles seen at Cunningham L on 12 November (BP, L P) and at Ponca SP on 26 October (BFH).

Clark's Grebe: The only report was of 2 spotted at Merritt Res, Cherry Co, on 1 September (MB).

American White Pelican: The best counts reached 1,000 at Sherman Res, Sherman Co, on 15 September (LR, RH) and 800 at HCR on 8 September (GH, WH). One was still at Merritt Res, Cherry Co, at the end of the period (LR, RH).

Double-crested Cormorant: The best count totaled 1000+ at HCR on 30 October (GH, WH). Five spotted at BOL on 26 November (LE) were the last reported.

American Bittern: The only reports were of singles, one found within the breeding range at CLNWR on 2 August (EW) and the other a probable migrant spotted in Clay Co on 28 September (JGJ).

**Least Bittern:** Unexpected but not unprecedented, one was identified at FF on 8 September (GSt). The only other report was a female found at UNL on 7 October (UNSM 18154; TEL, ET).

**Great Blue Heron:** Routine reports.

**Great Egret:** Good numbers were noted, with best count the 42 tallied at HCR on 4 August (GH, WH). Record late was one seen at Wagontrain L, Lancaster Co, on 15 November (LE). Several others were unusually tardy, with the 3 observed in Lancaster Co on 5 November (LE) only 3 days from the previous latest ever date in fall, and another seen at Omaha on 28 October (EA). Rare in the west, 2 were located at Little L Alice, Scotts Bluff Co, on 11 October (PD, DD).

**Snowy Egret:** The only reports were from the heron magnet, HCR, where 5 were present between 4 and 15 August (GH, WH).

**Little Blue Heron:** Two were reported, about normal for fall: one spotted at HCR on 4 August (GH, WH), and a juvenile noted at PL from 11 to 16 August (JGJ, CG, LE).

**Cattle Egret:** Surprisingly, none was reported; this bird is normally a fairly common migrant from August to September.

**Green Heron:** The singles found in southwestern Greeley Co on 3 August (LR, RH) and at HCR between 6 August and 6 September (GH, WH) were at the westerly edge of the summer range. The 3 spotted at FF on 3 September (BP, LP) and the 3 found there on 8 September (WRS, CG, EG) were no surprise; but the one located in southeastern Otoe Co on 2 November (LF, CF) was rather late. The only others reported were 4 observed at PL on 3 August (LE) and one seen at Arbor L, Lancaster Co, on 8 September (LE).

**Black-crowned Night-Heron:** About 12 were reported, fewer than usual. Unusually late--on 3<sup>rd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> latest dates ever--were the 2 immatures found at Cunningham L, Omaha, on 22 November (CNK) and another immature seen at Burchard L, Pawnee Co, on 24 November (DSt).

**Yellow-crowned Night-Heron:** None was reported; this bird is a rare but regular early fall visitor to the southeast and southcentral.

**White-faced Ibis:** Somewhat fewer than usual were reported, although good counts were the 29 tallied in Garden and Sheridan Cos on 1 September (MB) and the 15 near Morrill on 8 August (KD, PD, DD). The last were 7 found at FL on 21 September (LR, RH) and one seen flying over Bellevue on 27 September (reported as Ibis sp.; BP, LP).

**Turkey Vulture:** The "vulture tree" in Gering hosted an amazing 90 birds on 15 September (KD). The one spotted at DeSoto NWR on 19 December (AR) was a bit slow in departing.

**Greater White-fronted Goose:** One was reported in Logan Co on 7 September at the NOU meeting (no details). At least one was discovered in Cedar Co on 25 October (SV), but numbers arrived the next day with flocks flying over BOL from 26 to 30 October (JGJ, LE); the best count of stationary birds was 250 at BOL on 29 October (LE), a good fall tally.



**Snow Goose:** Numbers arrived in late October, with 4,000 found at BOL by 31 October (LE); the best counts were 50,000 at L Babcock, Platte Co, on 9 November (DP, JP) and 50,000 at DeSoto NWR on 18 November (DM). The usual few summer birds were seen: singles found in Lancaster Co on 4 August (LE); at Cedar Co on 7 August and on 26 September (SV); and in Scotts Bluff Co on 8 August (KD, PD, DD).

**Ross's Goose:** No one looks for this species unless they have to; although it is fairly common in Snow Goose flocks, the only reports were of 8+ spotted at BOL on 31 October (JGJ) and 2 seen there on 3 November (LE), both rather early dates.

**Canada Goose:** A "huge flock heading south" on the early date of 11 August (KD) may have involved movement of local breeders, although migrants of smaller races may arrive early on occasion. Also likely local breeders were 315 tallied at LM on 11 August; these were larger birds (WRS). The one spotted at Scottsbluff SL on 21 October was described as "very small" (KD). Most small Canada Geese seen in Nebraska are "Richardson's" Geese (*Branta canadensis hutchinsii*), which have a pale area just below the bottom of the dark neck "stocking."

**Trumpeter Swan:** Sightings came from the Sandhills summer range: 4 adults and 4 young located at Whitman on 1 September (MB); at least one spotted in Cherry Co on 7 September (NOU Field Trip); and 2 found east of Hyannis on 24 September (HW).

**Tundra Swan:** The only report was of an immature seen at Czechland L, Saunders Co, on 31 October (JGJ), a rather early date. This species is a rare but regular fall migrant.

**Wood Duck:** Routine reports.

**Gadwall:** The best counts reached 645 in Lancaster Co on 21 October (LE) and 450 at Niobrara Marsh, Knox Co (MB), the latter the observer's largest all-time count for the county.

**American Wigeon:** The best count was 280 in Lancaster Co on 21 October (LE); the 5 seen at BOL on 26 November (LE) were a bit tardy.

**American Black Duck:** A male with Mallards spotted on the Missouri River near Rush Island in Cedar Co on 16 November (JC) was at an expected time for this species; there have been few reports in recent years. It is currently only a rare migrant.

**Mallard:** The best count totaled 35,000 at Johnson L on 23 November (LR, RH). Many probably Mallards, about 11,000 dabbling ducks were located at the west end of LM on 22 September; these were too distant to identify (WRS).

**Blue-winged Teal:** The best count was the 500+ tallied at FL on 2 September (LR, RH). Lingerers included one spotted in Cedar Co on 29 October (SV) and at least one found at SCP on 1 November (KP). November reports are unusual.

Cinnamon Teal: The only bird that made it into the fall report (eclipse plumage makes these birds inconspicuous prior to their fall departure) was one identified at CLNWR on 2 August (EW), where there is a small breeding population.

Northern Shoveler: The 108 counted at Scottsbluff SL on 25 August (WRS) were probably post-breeding flocks or possibly failed breeders. Shovelers do not normally undertake extensive molt migrations.

Northern Pintail: The three birds found at a Sarpy Co sod farm on 13 August (BP, LP) were very early, as were the 20 spotted at FL on 2 September (LR, RH); such early fall birds tend to be males moving to molt locations. No large numbers were reported.

Green-winged Teal: The 205 found at LM on 25 August (WRS) may have been molt migrants; large numbers appear at such favored locations early in fall. The best count reached 309 in Lancaster Co on 3 November (LE).

Canvasback: Few were reported, all in the period between 13 October and 5 November (KD, LE).

Redhead: The best count was 110 at Wagontrain L, Lancaster Co, on 5 November (LE). Nine spotted at Alma South SL on 4 August (GH, WH) and 4 seen at Scottsbluff SL on 25 August (WRS) were early. The Alma birds were a carryover from the unusual numbers present in the area in summer; late July-early August reports are few.

Ring-necked Duck: One seen in Cherry Co on 7 September (NOU Field Trip) was rather early; this species is only a casual breeder in Nebraska, with few summer records. The best count was 80+ at Winters Creek L on 13 October (KD).

Greater Scaup: Thought by some to be rare in fall ("Birds of Nebraska"), observers are probably getting better at picking these birds out, as about 11 were reported. An influx between 30 October and 1 November, rather early for the species, accounted for all but one of the birds reported. Three females were seen at BOL on 30 October (JGJ); another was found near Winnetoon the same day (MB); 3 birds were observed at PL on 31 October (LE), and 2 were identified at Holmes L, Lincoln, the same day (LE); a female was located below Gavin's Point Dam, Cedar Co, on 1 November (JC); and a single was spotted at Alma East SL on 8 November (GH, WH).

Lesser Scaup: The best count totaled a respectable 600 at Holmes L, Lincoln, on 31 October (LE).

Surf Scoter: This season produced a good showing for this usually rare species, with 9 reported in the period between 19 October and 16 November. Including these records, there are only about 45 in all for the state. An immature was shot and photographed in Cherry Co on 19 October (fide BM); a male and a female/immature were seen at BOL on 26 October (JGJ); two females/immatures were found at Stagecoach L, Lancaster Co, on 31 October (LE); an immature was seen above Gavin's Point Dam,

probably spending some time in Knox Co, on 1 November (JC); an immature/female was identified at Wagontrain L, Lancaster Co, on 5 November (LE); an immature was spotted at Niobrara Marsh, Knox Co, on 9 November (MB); and an immature male was found at Cunningham L, Omaha, on 16 November (JGJ).

**White-winged Scoter:** Three were reported, about normal for this species in fall: two females/immatures were found at BOL on 31 October (JGJ), and an adult male was seen at Johnson L, Gosper Co, on 2 November (LR, RH).

**Black Scoter:** Completing the "scoter sweep," an excellent showing of 6 birds was reported. An immature was shot and photographed in Cherry Co on 19 October (fide BM); 3 females/immatures were found at Wehrspann L on 16 November (JGJ); and two females/immatures were located on the Missouri River in Cedar Co on 16 November (JC).

**Long-tailed Duck:** At least 3 were reported: one was seen at Winters Creek L between 28 September and 5 October (KD, details; AK, PD, DD), record early by at least 2 weeks; another was spotted at Scottsbluff SL between 4 and 14 November (KD, AK); and a third was located above Gavin's Point Dam, Knox Co, from 15 to 17 November (JC, MB).

**Bufflehead:** Good numbers passed through in the period between 13 October and 19 November, with the best count totaling 100+ at Scottsbluff SL on 4 November (KD).

**Common Goldeneye:** The first was one spotted at BOL on 31 October (JGJ), and the best count was 200 at Scottsbluff SL on 4 November (KD).

**Barrow's Goldeneye:** A "fantastic male" was spotted at Cunningham L, Omaha, on the rather early date of 15 November with two immatures which appeared to be Common Goldeneyes (JGJ); this sighting was the observer's second of this species at the same place in 5 years, and only the 3<sup>rd</sup> fall record of the species in the east.

**Hooded Merganser:** This species was widely reported in good numbers from 28 September (Winters Creek L, KD) throughout the period. The best counts were a 3<sup>rd</sup>-highest-ever 64 at Cunningham L, Omaha, on 16 November (JGJ) and 51 tallied there on 31 October (JGJ).

**Common Merganser:** A single seen at BOL on 11 August (JGJ, CG) provided only the 4<sup>th</sup> August record for Nebraska away from Scotts Bluff Co, where molt migrants arrive in numbers in August: 124 were counted on L Alice on 24 August (WRS). Elsewhere, fewer than a hundred were reported prior to the end of the period, with the earliest, the single found at Holmes L, Lancaster Co, on 31 October (LE).

**Red-breasted Merganser:** About 50 were reported between 31 October and 16 November (JGJ, LE, JC), about normal for this species in fall. The best count reached 25 at BOL on 19 November (LE).

**Ruddy Duck:** The best count reached 550 in Sarpy-Douglas Cos on 26 October (JGJ). Five were found lingering at BOL on 26 November (LE).

Osprey: Some 22 were reported statewide from 3 August to 19 November, a wide range of dates for this species. The first, record early, was spotted in Cedar Co (SV); such reports, most from large reservoirs, are likely young birds which have not reached breeding age. The last, rather late, was found at DeSoto NWR on 19 November (AR).

Mississippi Kite: An immature was identified at Ogallala, the only known regular summer location, on 27 August (GH, WH). Two birds reported as adult males were spotted in Garden Co on 9 September (RG), and a bird "possibly" this species was located in a Lincoln yard on 14 September (TP), but the observer did not have binoculars at the time. Migrants pass through in early September, presumably mostly birds which dispersed north past Nebraska after breeding. Such dispersal is usually more extensive in drought years, as demonstrated by numbers from the Hitchcock Nature Center Hawkwatch just across the Missouri River in Iowa: 1999--0 birds; 2000--38; 2001--1; 2002--15 (MO). Guess which were the drought years!

Bald Eagle: Summer reports are becoming more frequent as the number of nesting sites increases; a juvenile spotted at L Minatare, Scotts Bluff Co, on 17 August was near a breeding site (PD, DD), as was an immature spotted at Niobrara Marsh, Knox Co, on 22 August (BP, LP). An adult found in Douglas Co on 2 September (B) and an immature spotted at Platte River SP, Cass Co (B), were near breeding sites in southwest Iowa. Migrants arrived in small numbers during October, and the best count by the end of the period reached 25 at DeSoto NWR on 18 November, including 19 immatures (DM).

Northern Harrier: Migrants arrived on schedule during September (GH, WH); the best count of 28, tallied in the RWB on 19 October, included 8 females and 20 males (DSt), an excellent count of males.

Sharp-shinned Hawk: The one seen at CLNWR on 2 August (EW) was rather early; migrants usually appear in late August; the first was one identified south of Gering on 27 August (AK).

Cooper's Hawk: Routine reports.

Northern Goshawk: The only report was of one seen in northern Buffalo Co on 2 November (AH; no details).

Red-shouldered Hawk: The only report came from the only known regular location at FF on 6 October (BP, LP).

Broad-winged Hawk: Only five were reported, all singles. Casual westward, an adult was spotted at Oliver Res on 5 October (JG), only the 7<sup>th</sup> Panhandle report; and one was reported at Nebraska National Forest, Halsey, on 7 September (NOU; no details). More expected were singles observed in Seward Co on 21 and again on 28 September (JG) and a light morph juvenile identified in Pierce Co on 30 September (MB).

Swainson's Hawk: Migration was underway by late August, when 3 were observed kettling southwestward over Wildcat Hills NC, Scotts Bluff Co, on 22 August (HW); and one flew over Dixon Co on 31 August (BFH). Some excellent counts were received, including a report from NGP

personnel of "thousands" discovered in a field in Lancaster Co on 2 October (fide SH), and 557 tallied in Knox Co on 1 October, including 422 in one kettle (MB). The last reported were 200 observed near Bassett 3 October (CH).

**Red-tailed Hawk:** There were 3 reports of birds thought to be "Krider's" red-tailed hawks, but without details: one was seen in Cherry Co on 7 September (LR, RH); two in Seward Co on 26 September (JG); and one in Lancaster Co on 2 November (TP). "Harlan's" hawks were reported in Sherman Co on 13 October (LR, RH); and between 6 and 8 November in Dixon Co (JJ).

**Ferruginous Hawk:** The one found in McPherson Co on 28 August (GH, WH) was at the eastern edge of the summer range, and one spotted near Kearney on 3 November (AH) was near the eastern edge of the migration/winter range.

**Rough-legged Hawk:** The bird observed south of Morrill (KD) on 29 September was rather early, but not unprecedented; next was another (same bird?) identified near Morrill on 21 October (KD) followed by one seen in Harlan Co on 30 October (GH, WH). Relatively few were reported.

**Golden Eagle:** Routine reports.

**American Kestrel:** Young that were seen in a Scotts Bluff Co nest on 9 August had fledged by 11 August (KD). The best count totaled 26 in the Panhandle on 20 September, the usual time for peak migration (WRS).

**Merlin:** The earliest away from the breeding range was a "very dark" bird spotted in Box Butte Co on 31 August (MB); such birds are more numerous in the western part of the range of *richardsoni* and are doubtfully distinct subspecifically ("Birds of Nebraska"). Fall migrants often appear in the second half of August; other early birds included one observed in Hooker Co on 1 September (MB) and one identified as far east as Otoe Co between 4 and 5 September (LF, CF).

**Prairie Falcon:** One had reached as far east as Gavin's Point Dam by 20 October (BP, LP); this species is rare so far east.

**Peregrine Falcon:** A total of only 8 was noted between 4 August and 15 November, a relatively low number and a wide window of migration for this species. Establishing the window were one spotted at HCR on 4 August (GH, WH), rather early, and another located in Knox Co on 15 November (MB), rather late. A juvenile with a band on its right leg was identified at PL on 16 August (LE). The one seen near FL on 2 September was identified as an immature *tundrius* (LR, RH), a regular migrant through Nebraska, but probably less numerous than *anatum*.

**Gray Partridge:** The current distribution of this species in Nebraska is a bit of an enigma; the range in northeast Nebraska has contracted significantly in recent years; one spotted just west of Winnetoon was the observer's first in Knox Co for a year and a half (MB). The best numbers currently may be in the Kaya Paha, Brown, Rock, and Holt Cos area, likely a southward extension of the South Dakota population. There is also

a small population in southern Sioux and Scotts Bluff Cos, an eastward extension of a Wyoming population, perhaps augmented by releases of pen-raised birds in southern Sioux Co (ST). The bird observed at BOL on 3 November was thought to be an escape from the dog training area there (LE).

**Ring-necked Pheasant:** A hen with 5 young barely able to fly was observed in Lancaster Co on 3 August (LE), and another with 9 poults was seen in Phelps Co on 2 September (LR, RH). Six males were spotted in a tree at DeSoto NWR on 18 November by the Down and Dirty Birders (fide DM); maybe I should get to know these folks!

**Sharp-tailed Grouse:** A hen and young which took up residence during the summer on the WSR front porch (!) were still present on 20 September; the main threat to their safety was coyotes (HKH).

**Greater Prairie-Chicken:** The population at SCP continues to increase, very good news for the southeastern Nebraska population; 17, the most seen at one time, were there on 8 October (KP). Also from the southeast were 2 from 5 miles south and one mile west of Vesta in Johnson Co on 9 October (UNSM 18178,18179; TEL, ET). At the eastern edge of the summer range were 6 found just west of Winnetoon on 30 October (MB); but the 12 birds observed one mile east and one mile south of Eldorado in extreme northeast Clay Co on 19 October (DSt) were unexpected (see "Birds of Nebraska") and may indicate a southward extension of populations in Hall Co. There have been no records for many years from Clay, Nuckolls, or Fillmore Cos.

**Wild Turkey:** Routine reports.

**Northern Bobwhite:** This species is currently doing well in the North Platte Valley; 26 were found west of Scotts Bluff NM, Scotts Bluff Co, on 19 August (AK), and 12 to 15 were seen in the observer's yard on 17 November (KD).

**Virginia Rail:** Routine reports.

**Sora:** Nesting may have occurred at Crystal Cove L, South Sioux City, on 26 September (BFH), although, as the observer notes, there is a possibility that the birds had flown in to the area. On 26 September, in the extensive cattail marsh there, two adults and a juvenile, the latter full sized but with a brownish head, back and breast, were seen; and, on 1 October, three juvenile-plumaged birds, fully-grown and probably capable of flight, were foraging at the edge of the cattail and open water (BFH). The six birds spotted at Cracker Barrel Marsh on 8 September (LE) were migrants (none was found there the week before), but the bird located near FL on 2 September (LR, RH) was within the summer range.

**American Coot:** The best count reached 1,325 in Lancaster Co on 21 October (LE). High fall counts are in the 5,000+ range.

**Sandhill Crane:** This species was widely reported in good numbers, somewhat unusual for fall. Excellent counts were made in the Panhandle, where 500+ were tallied on the beach at L Alice, Scotts Bluff Co, on 13 October, with birds still arriving, peaking the next day at 2,000+ (KD);

and 2000 were found south of Gering on 14 October (AK). Also, 500 were tallied at Little L Alice, Scotts Bluff Co, on 10 October (PD, DD) and 1,000 in southern Sioux Co on 4 November (AK). In the central Platte Valley, the spring stronghold for the species, the best count was 310 flying over Gibbon on 13 October (LR, RH). Several were noted in the east, where the species is rare, with fewer than 20 reports in all: 7 flew over Omaha on 2 October (Jst); one was seen in Knox Co on 31 October (SV); and 6 flew over Lancaster Co on 3 November (LE). Flocks were flying over Harlan Co between 13 and 31 October (GH, WH); and 127 flew over Loup City on 13 October (LR, RH).

**Whooping Crane:** Three reports came to hand from wildlife authorities. Seven birds were seen northwest of Bassett on 28 October (Matt Dollison, NGP, fide CH), and a group of 13 spotted near Doniphan on 1 November was said to be "the largest number observed along the Platte at one time" (Wally Jobman, NGP, fide JLL). A group of 3 discovered in Custer Co on 1 November included banded adults that were 14 and 20 years old and had used Custer Co wetlands previously (fide JLL).

**Black-bellied Plover:** Routine reports.

**American Golden-Plover:** Far fewer move through Nebraska in fall than in spring, especially adults; there are only 10 records for July-August, when adults migrate. Thus significant was a molting adult found at BOL on 16 August (LE). Far more juveniles than adults pass through, these in September-October; a single seen at L Alice, Scotts Bluff Co, on 18 September (CW), and a good count of 21 as late as 2 November (JGJ) north of Blair were likely juveniles, although age was not stated in either case.

**Snowy Plover:** At LM, 1-2 were present through 6 August; 2 adults were identified on several occasions between 12 June and 6 July, and singles were located on several other dates through 6 August (Gabe Wilson fide SJD).

**Semipalmated Plover:** Routine reports.

**Piping Plover:** Two seen at Two Rivers SP, Douglas Co, on 1 August (BP, LP) and one identified at Ponca SP on 18 August (BFH) were in known breeding locations, but a migrant identified at L Minatare between 21 and 31 August (CW, MB) was unusual; breeding is unknown in the Panhandle, and this species is an uncommon migrant there. Breeding is usual not far from the Panhandle, however, at LM; this year data show that from 69 nests and 232 eggs, there were 206 chicks of which 132 fledged (Gabe Wilson fide SJD).

**Killdeer:** The best count reached 235 at L Alice on 21 September (WRS); 100+ were counted at Sarpy Co sod farms on 14 August (CNK). Still present at the end of the period was one found at BOL on 26 November (LE).

**Black-necked Stilt:** Reports from favored locations were of 1-4 spotted near Lakeside on 2 August (EW) and again on 1 September, the latter (only the 3<sup>rd</sup> Sep record) probably resulting from a late brood as

two immatures were accompanied by two adults (MB); and 2-3 were seen in the Kiowa Springs area of Scotts Bluff Co between 8 and 11 August (KD, PD, DD); these reports are significant in that there were previously only 5 Nebraska records later than July. These sightings provide the 6<sup>th</sup> and 7<sup>th</sup> such records, and the bird spotted at Alma on 5 September (GH, WH) provided only the 4<sup>th</sup> Sep record.

American Avocet: An excellent count was the 180 tallied in Sheridan Co on 21 September (RC). Generally uncommon in the east, about 60 were reported between 11 August and 3 November, including an excellent tally of 54 at BOL on 20 October (LE). Rather late were 6 spotted at Alma on 8 November (GH, WH).

Greater Yellowlegs: The best count was 25 near Hyannis on 24 September (HW, SW). Rather late was one bird seen in Lancaster Co on 15 November (LE), although one located in Burt Co on 24 October found itself in snow (JGJ).

Lesser Yellowlegs: The best count totaled a rather low 72 at Facus Springs, Morrill Co, on 20 September (WRS).

Solitary Sandpiper: Only the 19<sup>th</sup> report after 23 September, one was identified south of Morrill on 21 October (KD).

Willet: None was reported; most leave by the end of August.

Spotted Sandpiper: Routine reports.

Upland Sandpiper: A late-hatched juvenile, barely flighted, was spotted with two adults in southwestern Greeley Co on 3 August (LR, RH). Migration is well underway by mid-August; 12 were heard flying over Blair on 9 August (JGJ). Overall, few were reported, with the last a single seen at NNF on 9 September (TEL).

Long-billed Curlew: None was reported; few remain into August.

Marbled Godwit: Few remain after August, especially in the east, where this species is only casual in fall. Marking only the 17<sup>th</sup> fall record away from the Panhandle were 2 found in Lancaster Co on 11 August (LE). The only other reports came from the Panhandle, where one was observed at L Minatare from 24 to 25 August (WRS); 13 birds (an excellent count) were found there on 31 August (MB); and 2 were located in Box Butte Co on 31 August (MB).

Sanderling: Few were reported for this normally common-in-fall migrant: one was seen at L Minatare on 31 August (MB), and 4-5 were discovered at BOL between 3 and 8 September (JG, LE).

Semipalmated Sandpiper: The best count was 70+ in Sarpy Co on 17 August (CNK).

Western Sandpiper: Few were reported; this species is thought to be more numerous in fall than in spring, and juveniles more numerous than adults. Three were found in Sarpy Co on 17 August (CNK); one was seen at Ponca SP on 18 August (BFH); two adults were observed at Oliver Res on 24 August (WRS); and four juveniles were identified at L Minatare on 25 August (WRS). No details were received for the NOU Field Trip reports of 7 September in Brown and Cherry Cos.



Least Sandpiper: A record count of 400, mostly juveniles, was made at L Minatare on 25 August (WRS); juveniles begin to arrive in mid-August.

White-rumped Sandpiper: Clearly very rare in fall in the interior (like Hudsonian Godwit), there are 3 documented fall records for Nebraska. Sightings must be documented in order to carefully establish the fall status of this species; one reported without details from the NOU Field Trip of 7 September in Brown Co would have been the 4<sup>th</sup> if documented.

Baird's Sandpiper: The two found at BOL on 3 November (LE) were tardy. The best count totaled a rather low 125 at L Alice on 20 September (WRS).

Pectoral Sandpiper: A count of 100 made at sod farms in Sarpy Co on 13 August (BP, LP) was a good tally. One seen at BOL on 3 November (LE) was rather late, and one spotted in snow in Knox Co on 23 October (MB) probably thought the same thing.

Sharp-tailed Sandpiper: A juvenile was found at L Alice on 18 September (CW; details); this sighting marks Nebraska's third record of the species, all in fall and all juveniles.

Curlew Sandpiper: A juvenile was reported by a visiting birder in Sheridan Co on 6 September, but the report was later withdrawn.

Dunlin: Unusual among *Calidris* shorebirds, adult Dunlin wait and migrate with young birds; thus the earliest were 2 observed at BOL on 26 October (JGJ). Two were located there on 30 October (JGJ), and one on 3 November (LE). No others were reported.

Stilt Sandpiper: The best count was the 200 tallied at FL on 21 September (LR, RH).

Buff-breasted Sandpiper: As expected, most moved through the eastern half of the state in August, with a few found in September; the last were 10 spotted at HCR on 8 September (GH, WH). The best count reached 24 on sod farms in Sarpy Co on 13 August (BP, LP); this species is partial to such short-grass areas.

Short-billed Dowitcher: Singles were reported in early August, presumably adults, which move through very early; these birds were found at CLNWR on 2 August (EW); at FL on 4 August (EW); at BOL on 11 August (LE); and in Sarpy Co on 17 August (BP, LP). Three birds located in Garden Co on 1 September were juveniles (MB), as were presumably "several" found in Scotts Bluff Co on 10 September (KD).

Long-billed Dowitcher: The two found at HCR on 29 November (GH, WH), the 3<sup>rd</sup> latest date for the state. The best count was 100 at L Alice on 5 October (JG).

Common Snipe: the best count was the 38 tallied at Cracker Barrel Marsh on 28 September (LE).

**American Woodcock:** The only report was of one spotted at ADF on 21 October (LF, CF).

**Wilson's Phalarope:** Migrants may appear in numbers early: 83 were counted at BOL on 4 August (LE) and 122, including about 20% juveniles, were tallied at Scottsbluff SL on 25 August (WRS). Peak fall counts for this species are in the 1,500+ range, usually occurring in mid-August.

**Red-necked Phalarope:** The best count reached 14, including 10 molting adults and 4 juveniles, at L Minatare on 24 August (WRS). Few were reported in all, a total of 28. Uncommon in the east, there were two reports: one was seen at BOL on 28 September (LE), and another was observed record late at Niobrara SL on 31 October (SV; details).

**Red Phalarope:** A winter-plumaged bird was found at FL on 21 September (LR, RH; details). This report represents the 9<sup>th</sup> fall record for Nebraska. Most of the fall records to date have been of birds in juvenal plumage or molting from juvenal to first basic plumage.

**Franklin's Gull:** An amazing all-time high count was the 300,000 tallied at and flying over Calamus Res, on 29 September (LR, RH); another excellent count was 30,000 on the Missouri River at Niobrara on 1 October (MB). The latter included an albino that observers wanted to be an Ivory Gull, but "no self-respecting Ivory Gull would hang out with a bunch of whimp Franklin's" (MB). Prior high count for this species was 85,000+ at Sutherland Res, but those were on the lake. Adding flyovers on a peak migration day could indeed yield a figure as high as 300,000; the North American breeding population is estimated at around 500,000 birds, suggesting a total number of fall migrants of perhaps 600,000 birds, largely migrating through central and eastern Nebraska and Kansas ("Birds of North America"; Tom Shane).

**Bonaparte's Gull:** No concentrations were noted. The one seen on the Missouri River at Niobrara on 1 October (MB) was rather early; there are only 12 reports prior to 1 October.

**Mew Gull:** An adult was found at Gavin's Point Dam, Cedar Co between 6 and 8 November (JC, MB; photo Julie Wilcox). This report marks the 7<sup>th</sup> fall record (and earliest for fall) and the 17<sup>th</sup> record for the state. All of the records from the east occur in fall.

**Ring-billed Gull:** Calamus Reservoir must have been a blizzard of white (and gray) on 29 September, with 300,000 Franklin's Gulls and, to boot, 100,000 Ring-billed Gulls, including flyovers (LR, RH). The previous high count for Ring-billed Gull was 6,000-8,000. Other good counts, which pale by comparison, were 1,495 at L Alice and L Minatare on 24 August (WRS) and 1,000+ at L Alice on 14 October (KD).

**California Gull:** Few were reported: an adult was spotted at L Alice on 20 September (WRS); 9 basic adults were located at LM on 21 September (WRS); and an adult was observed at BOL on 26 October (JGJ). The latter bird, providing only the 5<sup>th</sup> eastern fall record, had the characteristics of the northern prairie-breeding race *albertaensis*, as did the 5 other adults seen in eastern Nebraska (spring and fall) by the

observer (JGJ). Looking at breeding range maps would support this likelihood, as the darker-mantled subspecies *californicus* is the more southerly breeder. The bird noted at L Alice 20 Sep also had characters of *albertaensis*: mantle not much darker than Ring-billed Gulls nearby, and head shape more reminiscent of a Herring Gull than the rounded look of *californicus*, and with a heavy-looking bill. It is likely that spring and fall migrants in Nebraska are *albertaensis*, occurring statewide, although rare in the east, and that *californicus* occurs primarily as a post-breeding disperser, mostly at LM in the period of peak California Gull numbers, July-December.

**Herring Gull:** Immatures are rare in summer away from LM, and thus of significance was an early-arriving 1<sup>st</sup>-summer bird identified at L Minatare between 24 and 25 August (WRS). There are no documented records of adults anywhere from 15 June to 20 September; a record early fall adult date was provided by 3 basic-plumaged birds found at LM on 21 September (WRS).

**Thayer's Gull:** The only reports were of a rather early 1<sup>st</sup> winter bird spotted at Gavin's Point Dam on 1 November (JC) and an adult noted there on 24 November (JC).

**Lesser Black-backed Gull:** The two reports were probably of the same bird, a 1<sup>st</sup> summer-2<sup>nd</sup> winter bird seen at LM on 19 September (CW) and on 21 September (WRS, details). This sighting represents the 17<sup>th</sup> fall record and 34<sup>th</sup> overall.

**Glaucous Gull:** None was reported; the earliest dates occur in mid-November.

**Sabine's Gull:** The only reports were of one seen at L Minatare on 18 September (CW) and a juvenile identified at Willow Creek Res, Pierce Co, on 11 October (Scott Buss, fide MB).

**Black-legged Kittiwake:** An adult was spotted at Gavin's Point Dam on 24 October (MB) through 8 November (JC); a beautiful photograph can be seen at <http://huskertsd.tripod.com/digiscoping.htm>. This report is the 18<sup>th</sup> fall record, the 26<sup>th</sup> overall, and only the 4<sup>th</sup> of an adult.

**Caspian Tern:** Only 7 were reported statewide in the period between 3 August and 28 September.

**Common Tern:** The only report was of one identified at Ponca SP on 18 August (BFH).

**Forster's Tern:** An excellent count was the 83 tallied at PL and at BOL on 11 August (LE, JGJ, CG).

**Least Tern:** Reports from breeding locations were of one spotted at Two Rivers SP, Douglas Co, on 1 August (BP, LP); one observed at Fort Kearny, Buffalo Co, on 4 August (EW); one found at Ponca SP on 18 August (BFH); and 3 seen at Niobrara Marsh, Knox Co, on 21 August (BP, LP). Apparent migrants were the 5 seen at PL on 2 August (LE) and the 2, an adult and an immature, located there on 16 August (LE). Breeding data from LM show that 12 nests had 35 eggs and produced 27 chicks, of which 20 fledged (Gabe Wilson fide SJD).

**Black Tern:** The best count totaled 150 at PL on 7 August (B).

**Rock Dove:** A large count was the 2,000 tallied at Union Pacific overpass near Morrill on 26 September (PD, DD); 85 were found at Valentine on 30 November (LR, RH). Anyone got more? Where are the largest colonies of these birds?

**Ringed Turtle-Dove:** Two "fairly tame" birds in a Crete yard on 14 August (fide KP) were commendably not assumed to be Eurasian Collared-Doves. Observers should be aware that Ringed Turtle-Doves pop up from time to time.

**Eurasian Collared-Dove:** Numbers continue to increase; we are now in high count mode for this species, rather than excitedly reporting new locations (although those are still important, especially in the east). The best counts included 15-20 in Gering on 21 October (PD, DD); 14-16 in Gibbon on 14 November (MM); and 8 at University of Nebraska-Kearney on 8 November (LR, RH). One was observed carrying nest material at Bushnell on 31 August (MB). Reports are increasing in the east, where it has been slower to spread than in the west. Two were spotted at Niobrara on 22 August (BP, LP) and again on 19 October (LR, RH); one was discovered in a rural yard near Ames on 10 September (DP, JP); and one was located at Gretna on 3 October (DSt). The colony at Elmwood continues, with 3 birds seen there on 19 September (B). New central locations include Ord, where 3 were seen on 29 September (LR, RH), and Alma, where 4 were found on 20 October (GH, WH), causing the observers to note that they had "run out of luck."

**White-winged Dove:** Another southern invader in recent years, albeit in small numbers, a single of this species was identified at Bushnell on 26 August (CW). This sighting marks the 16<sup>th</sup> Nebraska record, all but one since 1994.

**Mourning Dove:** Obviously on the move at this date, "several hundred" were noted in southcentral counties on 21 September (LR, RH).

**Black-billed Cuckoo:** None was reported; normal departure occurs in September.

**Yellow-billed Cuckoo:** The last reported were singles spotted at BOL on 14 September (JG) and at MRET on 15 September (WRS). There were no reports from the west.

**Barn Owl:** None was reported; normal departure takes place in October.

**Eastern Screech-Owl:** Volunteering itself as a stakeout for the Scottsbluff CBC was one which took up residence in a yard near Mitchell between 11 and 12 August (KD). Another westerly sighting was of one located in near Monroe Canyon on 9 November (WM).

**Great Horned Owl:** Routine reports.

**Snowy Owl:** Following a few reports last year, a repeat may be on for this year. Two were reported just before the end of the fall reporting period: one was spotted 2 miles east and 2 miles north of Tekamah, Burt Co, on 26 November (B) and another was seen 2 miles west and 1.5 miles south of O'Neill on 28 November (DSt).

Burrowing Owl: Good counts included a group of 8 found in Garden Co on 1 September (MB) and of 7 noted in the Kiowa Springs area on 8 August (KD, PD, DD).

Barred Owl: Routine reports.

Long-eared Owl: None was reported; winter visitors arrive around 1 November.

Short-eared Owl: The only report was of one seen in central Dodge Co on 18 October (DP, JP); this species is not really migratory, but is nomadic, moving as necessary. Based on the paucity of reports, numbers currently are at a low ebb.

Northern Saw-whet Owl: None was reported; fall arrival occurs in late October.

Common Nighthawk: The best count reached 100 over Kearney on 13 September (fide LR, RH). And the last was one rather late spotted at Nebraska City on 1 October (LF, CF). There are few October records.

Common Poorwill: The only reports were of one seen at Wildcat Hills, Scotts Bluff Co, on 10 August (PD, DD); one found nearby, south of Gering, on 17 August (AK); and the usual report from the NOU meeting at NNF, this year from 6 to 7 September. This almost annual at this location meeting has established much of our departure data for this species.

Whip-poor-will: None was reported; departure is usually complete by mid-September.

Chimney Swift: A good Panhandle count was the 30 tallied at Gering on 9 September (AK). The latest reported were small groups of 2-13 seen migrating rather late over Forest Lawn Cem, Omaha, on 13 October; about 25 in all passed over in about 90 minutes of a futile hawkwatch (WRS).

White-throated Swift: Reports came from the Panhandle; the best count was 30, made on an escarpment west of Gering Cem on 24 August (WRS); and the last were 11 counted at the same location on 20 September (WRS). Wildcat Hills sightings included 5 in Banner Co on 31 August (MB), two at Wildcat Hills NC on 1 September (MB), and at least one noted there on 22 August (HW).

Ruby-throated Hummingbird: Things were interesting at the Creighton feeder of Mark Brogie, where 2+ Ruby-throats, including a male, were present into September; of significance was the presence of other hummingbird species (see following account), raising a warning flag about identification of hummingbirds in fall in central Nebraska. Many, if not most, may not be Ruby-throats! A male Ruby-throat was seen at Bassett on 17 September (CH, details). No Ruby-throats were reported further west, but an occasional Ruby-throat does indeed reach the Panhandle. Indeed, an *Archilochus* hummingbird (Ruby-throated or Black-chinned) was seen for 30 seconds (quite some time for a hummingbird!) at Bushnell on 26 August (CW); another *Archilochus* hummer was reported at Kimball on 4 August 1996 (SJD). The westernmost documented records (see "Birds of Nebraska") are 3 September 1912, Thomas Co (specimen, UNSM ZM10637); 15

September 1985, Chase Co (specimen, UNSM ZM15512); and a female identified in Dawes Co on 29 September 1996 (Field Notes 51:81). The last Ruby-throats reported this fall were two spotted at a Lincoln feeder on 4 October (DSt).

**Calliope Hummingbird:** Following a good fall for this species on the western plains last year, this season offered another good one, for this species and for western hummingbirds eastward in general. About 5-6 Calliopes were reported, including an immature male seen by many at the Brogie feeders in Creighton between 19 August and 13 September (MB, BP, LP, m.ob.), the easternmost record for Nebraska, and the only documented record east of the Panhandle. However, a female was reported at Bassett from 21 to 22 August (CH, no details). Others were found in the Panhandle: an immature/female at West Lawn Cem, Gering, on 25 August (WRS, details); at least one at Bushnell between 26 and 31 August (CW, MB; details); and one in the observer's yard near Mitchell on 24 August (KD). These 5 reports add to the previous 5 for the state, three of which occurred in 2001, for a total of 10 fall reports.

**Broad-tailed Hummingbird:** Amazingly, a female appeared at the Brogie feeder in Creighton between 18 and 30 August for a 4th hummingbird species (see Rufous, below) at those feeders this fall (MB, GH, WH), and the 3<sup>rd</sup> overall record of the species from the east. Also somewhat east of the usual range was a "probable" observed at Ogallala from 3 to 4 August (CWH). Reports of another 5 came, as expected, from the Panhandle: singles spotted at a Mitchell feeder on 1 August and again on 15 September (KD); one identified at Gering on 1 August (AK); one photographed at Bushnell on 26 August (CW); and another seen at Bushnell on 31 August (MB).

**Rufous Hummingbird:** This species and Broad-tailed are the expected hummingbirds in fall in the Panhandle. Several of this species were reported from or near the Panhandle in the period from 1 August to 20 September, a total of about 12 birds, including 6+ noted at Bushnell from 26 to 31 August (CW, MB). Surprising, however, were 5-6 birds located in the east during the "normal" Panhandle migration period, ending around mid-September. Most easterly records have occurred after mid-September, until this year: an immature male chased a Ruby-throat from the observers' feeder in Bellevue on 7 August (BP, LP); one was spotted at a feeder at 90<sup>th</sup> and Maple in Omaha between 19 and 23 August; and presumably a different bird was found there on 2 October (B); an immature was observed at the Brogie feeder in Creighton on 21 August (BP, LP, BFH); a male was found in the observer's Bellevue yard on 30 August (RG); and a possible Rufous (described as a "brown hummer") was seen at a Lincoln feeder on 21 August (fide TEL).

**Belted Kingfisher:** Routine reports.

**Lewis's Woodpecker:** None was reported; this species is a rare but regular migrant in the Panhandle.

**Red-headed Woodpecker:** The last in the west was one spotted south of Gering on 17 September (AK), and one still lingered at ICSP in the east on 26 October (LF, CF), where a few usually overwinter.

**Red-bellied Woodpecker:** This species is slowly becoming more noticeable in Scotts Bluff Co. For the 2<sup>nd</sup> winter in three years, a male attended a Mitchell feeder; this year it arrived on 2 November, the same date one arrived in 1999 (KD). Another was reported at Winters Creek L on 17 August (PD, DD).

**Yellow-bellied Sapsucker:** Only two were reported, both from the east during the normal migration period: an immature was located on a utility pole in Lancaster Co on 28 September (LE), and an immature was found at Norfolk on 3 October (Mary and Gene Kincanon, fide DH).

**Red-naped Sapsucker:** One was seen at WSR for several days "the week of 7 October"; the observer noted that the bird "is seen there at least once every fall" (HKH). Although this species is apparently a regular fall migrant in small numbers in the Panhandle, there are still few documented records.

**Downy Woodpecker:** Routine reports.

**Hairy Woodpecker:** An excellent count for this low-density species was the 5 tallied at Niobrara SP on 19 October (LR, RH), possibly a family group.

**Northern Flicker:** Summering birds in the Panhandle are generally salmon-shafted, as the population there is a hybrid swarm intermediate between yellow- and red-shafted birds to the east and west, respectively. A few red-shafted birds occur in winter, but all collected specimens are intergrades. The first easterly red-shafted birds were the two spotted at Merrit Res, Cherry Co, on 24 September (TP), and one identified in Gosper Co on 2 November (LR, RH). A pale salmon-shafted bird with a black moustache was seen as far east as ICSP by 3 November (WRS). Yellow-shafted birds begin to arrive in the Panhandle as migrants in September; the earliest this year were one identified at West Lawn Cem, Gering, on 21 September (WRS) and two "very pale yellow" birds found at Winters Creek L on 13 October (KD). The best count for the species totaled 22 in Otoe Co on 5 October (LF, CF).

**Pileated Woodpecker:** The small population at FF continues; a maximum of 2 birds was reported during the period (m.ob). Of interest are increasing reports from two other locations. At the south end of ICSP two were reported on 2 August (BP, LP), and one was spotted on 24 November about a half mile north of the "cave" (DSt). A bird (birds?) seen in eastern Otoe Co may also be on a territory; singles were reported from about 2.5 miles south of the Omaha Public Power Plant on the Steamboat Trace trail on 5 occasions during the period (LF, CF).

**Olive-sided Flycatcher:** Rare in the west, one was spotted along Stage Hill Road on 12 August (KD). The remaining reports, of about 16 birds, originated in the east between 26 August and 8 September (m.ob.), the

normal migration period. The best count was 4 at FF on 31 August (CNK).

Western Wood-Pewee: A major push of migrants was detected along Stage Hill Road on 12 August, when a fall record 34 were counted; some were apparently local residents, still feeding juveniles (KD). The last reported was one spotted at Oliver Res on 1 September (KD, PD, DD).

Eastern Wood-Pewee: Reports came from Gibbon east; the last was one sighted at ADF on 30 September (LF, CF).

Willow Flycatcher: Few were reported. A calling bird located at ADF on 28 September (LF, CF) was later than the last banding date of 18 September in a northeast Kansas study; establishing late fall dates for *Empidonax* flycatchers is difficult.

Least Flycatcher: The last reported in the west was one noted at Oliver Res on 1 September (PD, DD; no details) and in the east on 11 September in Otoe Co (LF, CF; no details). This species tends to be an early fall migrant, especially adults, most of which probably pass through by 20 August or so.

Hammond's Flycatcher: This species is a regular fall migrant in the western Panhandle, and is one of the easier empids to identify structurally and by plumage at that time of year. Four were reported: singles spotted at Oliver Res on 26 August (adult, CW); on 30 August (TJ); and on 1 September (KD, PD, DD)--and excellent photographs were posted to NEBIRDS of a hatching year (HY) bird at Greenwood Cem, Sidney, on 19 September (CW). These photos showed a fairly pale underbill, normal in juveniles, but which darkens as the bird ages (CW).

Gray Flycatcher: Prior to this fall, there was a single record for this species in Nebraska, a single spotted at Oliver Res in May 1999 (SJD). This fall saw a bit of an incursion onto the northwestern plains; reports came to hand of birds found in southeast Wyoming and eastern Colorado (fide CW). No one was more surprised than the observer when one popped up at Oliver Res on 24 August (WRS, details); to his relief, two other sightings were made by excellent and experienced birders, also at Oliver Res, possibly of the same bird, but at different locations around the lake. These were singles were found on 31 August (MB, details) and on 4 September (JF, details). All three observers noted the bland grayness of the head and characteristic tail action.

Dusky Flycatcher: Netting studies by Steve Dinsmore have shown that this species and Hammond's Flycatcher are likely regular fall migrants through the western Panhandle. Both are not too difficult to identify in fall with experience, especially considering that few, if any, September empids in the Panhandle seem to be either Least or even Willows. There were three reports of Dusky Flycatcher, all singles identified at Oliver Res: on 24 August (WRS, details), on 30 August (TJ, no details), and again on 31 August (MB, details). A bird seen on 4 September (JF) was described as a "dusky/least" type.



Cordilleran Flycatcher: Chris Wood pointed out that we cannot be sure that "Western"-type empids seen in the fall in the Panhandle are Cordillerans; debate is ongoing as to whether Pacific-slope Flycatcher may occur also, as it breeds in the same area where species like Cassin's Vireo and Townsend's Warbler breed. It is of interest that bander Tony Leukering (pers. comm. WRS) observed "On the Colorado plains, I'm not even willing to identify silent migrant 'Westerns'. This is because I believe it is too likely that Pacific-slope could be regular over here, where, 30 miles east of the foothills, Cassin's Vireo is more common in fall than is Plumbeous!" Back in Nebraska, four "Western" Flycatchers were reported: a HY bird was spotted at Bushnell Cem from 24 to 26 August (WRS, CW; photos, details), and singles were observed at Oliver Res on 31 August and again on 1 September (MB, KD, PD, DD; no details), and at Wildcat Hills NC on 7 September (HW, no details).

Eastern Phoebe: Reports came from the eastern half of the state, with latest bird spotted at ADF on 14 October (LF, CF).

Say's Phoebe: Encouraging was the appearance of one at the northeastern edge of the summer range, in southwestern Dixon Co on 28 August; none had been seen there in two years (JJ). Other reports came from Valley Co (LR, RH) westward; the last was one found in Banner Co on 15 September (KD).

Great Crested Flycatcher: Reports were from the eastern half of the state, with the last a bird identified at NNF on 9 September (TEL).

Cassin's Kingbird: Last in the Panhandle were 2 birds discovered in Long Canyon, Banner Co, on 20 September (WRS). One was reported without details at an unlikely location, NNF, on an NOU Field Trip on 7 September.

Western Kingbird: A late bird was carefully studied in Sherman Co on 14 October (MB, details); this report is the latest ever in fall. Good counts were the 50 tallied both at Scotts Bluff NM on 30 August (PD, DD) and in Morrill Co on 13 September (PD, DD).

Eastern Kingbird: Excellent counts were the 85 tallied in Lancaster Co on 24 August (LE) and the 70 totaled at Scotts Bluff NM on 30 August (PD, DD). The last were 2 spotted in Carter Canyon, Scotts Bluff Co (KD) and one found in Nebraska City (LE), both on 15 September.

Scissor-tailed Flycatcher: There were two reports of this casual-but-verging-on-regular species, one belated, in fact from 1991, when one was seen at Fort Niobrara NWR, Cherry Co, on 1 October (Jeff Fields, fide Ricky Olson); this date is rather late. The other bird was reported without details on an NOU Field Trip at NNF on 7 September.

Northern Shrike: The first to arrive was one spotted in Scotts Bluff Co on 29 September (KD, AK); three had reached southeast Nebraska, at BOL, by 29 October (LE). About 12 were reported.

Loggerhead Shrike: Stragglers linger in the southeast; one such bird was observed at Arbor L, Lancaster Co, on 19 November (LE).

**Bell's Vireo:** There were no reports were from the western half of the state for this statewide breeder. The last was one found in Lincoln on 14 September (TP).

**Yellow-throated Vireo:** The best count was 4 singing birds noted at FF on 8 September (WRS, CG, EG); last were 3 spotted in Otoe Co on 11 September (LF, CF). One was reported without details from Oliver Res on 4 September; there are prior undocumented reports from McPherson and Perkins Cos for fall, and 4 fall records on the eastern Colorado plains.

**Plumbeous Vireo:** The only report came surprisingly from outside the Panhandle, but not far: the one spotted at Whitman on 1 September (MB) nevertheless provided only the 2<sup>nd</sup> record outside the Panhandle.

**Cassin's Vireo:** Four were reported; this bird is a regular fall migrant in the Panhandle in small numbers. Singles were spotted near Bushnell and at Bushnell Cem on 26 August (CW), and at Oliver Res on 26 August (CW) and again on 4 September (JF).

**Blue-headed Vireo:** Only five were reported, all from the east in the period between 10 and 21 September (TEL, ET, WRS, BP, LP, LE).

**Warbling Vireo:** The best count was an excellent 13 in Douglas and Sarpy Cos on 15 September (WRS). And the last reported in the east was one seen at UNL on 3 October (TEL, ET). Departure takes place significantly earlier in the west, probably because a separate subspecies occurs there; the last there was one identified at Oliver Res on 1 September (PD, DD).

**Philadelphia Vireo:** The only report of this uncommon migrant was of one located at FF on 31 August (CNK).

**Red-eyed Vireo:** The best count totaled 7, in Otoe Co on 11 September (LE) and in Douglas and Sarpy Cos on 15 September (WRS). The last was one spotted in Lincoln on 21 September (LE).

**Gray Jay:** What would have been an exciting record if substantiated was a sighting by an observer experienced with Rocky Mountain birds of a possible juvenile in a Morrill yard from 9 to 10 November (ECT fide AK); the observer conservatively opted not to submit a documentation. This species breeds in the Black Hills of South Dakota, and was last reported (albeit undocumented) in Nebraska from Scotts Bluff Co on 29 December 1966. There are 13 reports for Nebraska, but only two are documented.

**Blue Jay:** The best counts reached 46 at ADF on 29 September (LF, CF) and 35 near Gibbon on 10 August and 15 November (LR, RH). At times this species stages significant movements with conspicuous flocks passing through.

**Pinyon Jay:** The best count was the 31 noted at Gilbert-Baker Area on 9 November (WM). A surprise for an already birdy yard was the observer's first record at WSR of this species when a flock of 12 flew through on 29 September (HKH). The only other report was of two seen in a Morrill yard on 18 November (ECT).

Clark's Nutcracker: The only report of this rare but virtually regular visitor to northwestern pine forest was of one spotted a mile west of the Gilbert-Baker Area campground on 8 November (WM); its future there was in doubt due to a "near-total failure of the pine cone crop" (WM).

Black-billed Magpie: Easterly reports were of one seen at Little Fork Salt Creek Marsh near Lincoln from 19 to 20 November (LE) and of one observed south of Craig in Burt Co on 27 October (DP, JP).

American Crow: The best count was 400 at the Howard/Greeley Cos line on 10 November (LR, RH); this species is strongly migratory on the Great Plains.

Horned Lark: The only significant count received was the 500 tallied in Sioux Co on 8 November (PD, DD).

Purple Martin: The best count reached an excellent 55 at Alma on 2 August (GH, WH), and last were 5 found in Nebraska City on 18 September (LF, CF).

Tree Swallow: The best count was 175 at BOL on 28 September (LE), and the last were two seen at Wagontrain L, Lancaster Co, on 5 November (LE). The latter date is 3<sup>rd</sup> latest ever.

Violet-green Swallow: None was reported; departure occurs in August.

Northern Rough-winged Swallow: Routine reports.

Bank Swallow: Routine reports.

Cliff Swallow: Large aggregations routinely occur in fall in the Rainwater Basin; this fall's best count was 2,000 at Sacramento-Wilcox Basin, Phelps Co, on 2 September (LR, RH).

Barn Swallow: The best count reached 1,260 at FL on 21 September (LR, RH). The last was one located at Offutt Base L, Sarpy Co, on 25 October (BP, LP).

Black-capped Chickadee: A bit of a surprise was the 40 found in the observers' yard near Gibbon on 29 November (LR, RH); this many suggest some sort of movement, which happens occasionally in this species.

Tufted Titmouse: Routine reports.

Red-breasted Nuthatch: Most were reported from the summer range: 3 were found at Gilbert-Baker Area on 8 November, although the observer noted that many more Pygmy Nuthatches were found (WM; see that species), and 4 were banded at NNF on 23 September (RG, HW). Elsewhere, only about 7 wanderers were reported; 1-2 were noted statewide beginning with one seen at Oliver Res on 24 August (WRS), and another made it as far southeast as Nebraska City by 18 November (LF, CF).

White-breasted Nuthatch: Three birds spotted at Riverside Park, Scottsbluff, between 24 and 25 August gave eastern calls, further indication that the eastern subspecies has spread westward in the Platte and North Platte Valleys almost to the Wyoming border (WRS). Another

eastern bird was identified at Ash Hollow SHP, Garden Co, on 21 September (WRS). The three observed at Gilbert-Baker Area on 8 November (WM) were presumably of the western subspecies, which breeds in the area. Singles spotted at Stateline Area, Scotts Bluff Co, on 19 October (KD) and in the observer's yard near Mitchell on 7 November (KD) were not identified to subspecies.

Pygmy Nuthatch: This species has a strong flocking tendency in winter, but the count of 16 at Gilbert-Baker Area between 8 and 9 November was a surprise (WM). The only other report was of 1 to 3 birds identified at Wildcat Hills NC (KD, HW), where the species is resident in small numbers.

Brown Creeper: The first reported were 2 found at Wilderness Park on 21 October (LE). Only about 10 were reported in all.

Rock Wren: Few reports are received for this species, but the amazing 17 tallied in Carter Canyon on 15 September (KD) made up for the lack, tying the fall high count. Interestingly, included in the count was a begging young bird (KD).

Carolina Wren: This species continues to re-occupy areas abandoned after the cold winter of 2000-2001, with reports limited to the southeast, but as far north as Blair, where singles were noted between 2 and 6 August (GJ, JGJ). About 13 were reported in Lancaster, Sarpy, Douglas, and Otoe Cos. One was reported without details on an NOU Field Trip at NNF on 7 September; this area is quite a distance from the current range.

House Wren: One spotted at Oliver Res on 20 September was generally gray, becoming browner on the lower back and tail (WRS). While there is considerable variation in coloration of Nebraska House Wrens, there is a tendency towards grayer plumage westward; nevertheless, all 4 birds seen at Stage Hill Road on 21 September were overall brown (WRS). The last one reported was identified at ADF on 16 October (LF, CF), rather late.

Winter Wren: Only two were reported, singles seen at Hastings on 28 October (B) and at BOL on 19 November (LE).

Sedge Wren: Few were reported; one spotted in sudan grass near the observer's yard in southwestern Dixon Co on 18 August (JJ) was early enough to be attempting nesting. Others were singles found at Cracker Barrel Marsh on 28 September, on 5 October, and between 19 and 20 October (LE); and one located in a weedy field near Dwight on 9 November (JG). The latter report is the 2<sup>nd</sup> latest ever in fall.

Marsh Wren: The last ones reported were 6 identified at Cracker Barrel Marsh on 28 September (LE).

Golden-crowned Kinglet: The earliest was one spotted at Alma on 2 October (GH, WH), rather early. Except for this report and another of one bird seen at NNF on 29 November (LR, RH), all reports came from the southeast, through the end of the period.

**Ruby-crowned Kinglet:** There were numerous reports statewide in the period between 14 September and 19 November. The earliest was one observed at BOL on 14 September (JGJ), and the latest was a single seen in Douglas Co on 19 November (BP, LP). The best count reached 10+ at Oliver Res on 5 October (JG).

**Blue-gray Gnatcatcher:** An adult was observed feeding two begging young at Stage Hill Road on 12 August; in all, 6 birds were present (KD). One was still at Stage Hill Road on 21 September (WRS), the latest ever date from the Panhandle (although the species has not been there long!)

**Eastern Bluebird:** A flock of 20 found in the observer's yard south of Gering on 6 October was considered unusual (AK); flocks of Mountain Bluebirds are the norm in fall. The best counts elsewhere included the excellent 108 at Niobrara SP on 19 October (LR, RH); 54 at Ponca SP on 12 October (BFH); and 45 in Otoe Co on 18 October (LF, CF). Early to mid-October is peak for fall movement; a migrating group of 22 flew over Forest Lawn Cem, Omaha, on 13 October (WRS).

**Mountain Bluebird:** Routine reports.

**Townsend's Solitaire:** The first to arrive was a single noted in the Scotts Bluff Co section of the Wildcat Hills on 15 September (KD). Reports all came from the Panhandle except for one from Sherman Co on 13 October (LR, RH), rather early that far east. The best count was the 13 tallied at Gilbert-Baker Area between 8 and 9 November (WM).

**Veery:** None was reported; this species is a rare but regular fall migrant along the eastern and western edges of the state.

**Swainson's Thrush:** Reports of this rather common migrant were statewide in the period between 2 September and 5 October; best count was a carefully estimated "dozens" at NNF on 23 September (TEL).

**Hermit Thrush:** A later migrant than Swainson's, 7 were reported from 10 September to 9 November, with only 2 seen in September. The earliest was one spotted at NNF on 10 September (TEL), rather early (although western *auduboni* are early migrants in the Panhandle); and the last was one found at FF on 19 November (BP, LP).

**Wood Thrush:** None was reported; most leave by early October.

**American Robin:** The best count reached a mind boggling 7,000 at Merritt Res on 30 November (LR, RH); this area of the state (northcentral, on the east edge of the Sandhills) is known for huge numbers of robins in late fall, presumably because of the extensive cedar woodlands.

**Gray Catbird:** This species was widely-reported statewide, including 6 sightings from the Panhandle, where it is uncommon; the dates were rather late for that part of the state, where in prior years there were only 5 reports for September. All 6 sightings this fall occurred in September, including one at Oliver Res on 5 October (JG), the latest ever for the west. Probably the same bird was reported there on 1 September (PD, DD) and again on 20 September (WRS); and singles were seen in Carter Canyon, Scotts Bluff Co, on 15 September (KD); near Bushnell on

20 September (WRS); and in Scotts Bluff Co on 28 September (AK). Elsewhere, the best count was 12 in Sherman Co on 15 September (LR, RH), and the latest reported was one observed at a Bellevue feeder between 2 and 3 November (KCR), rather late, even in the southeast.

**Northern Mockingbird:** A surprise was the 8 birds seen together in cedars near Arthur on 21 September (RC); presumably these were migrants that had grouped together. Three were spotted in Carter Canyon on 15 September (KD).

**Sage Thrasher:** The only reports of this rare migrant were of singles spotted south of I-80 Exit 1 on 31 August (MB) and at Oliver Res on 4 September (JF).

**Brown Thrasher:** The best count was 18 in Lancaster Co on 31 August (LE), a new high count for fall. The latest reported was one identified at ICSP on 27 October (B).

**Curve-billed Thrasher:** One was present at a southeast Sioux Co ranch from 20 October throughout the period (fide AK; photo KD). This report marks only the 8<sup>th</sup> Nebraska record, the 5<sup>th</sup> documented; observations (MB) and the photo (KD) suggest that this latest bird is of the subspecies *oberholseri* (see below). Two of the documented records (including this one) fit a tendency of this species to wander northeastward in fall and attempt to overwinter on the northern Great Plains. Taxonomy of this species is unsettled. Phillips (1986) listed the subspecies *palmeri* as resident in southern and western Arizona and into Sonora, Mexico, and *oberholseri* (including *celsum*) as resident from southeastern Arizona north and east to Colorado and southwestern Kansas. Phillips also listed 4 additional subspecies confined to Mexico, none of which would be expected to occur in Nebraska, although this possibility would be difficult to rule out conclusively. A specimen collected at North Platte (UNSM ZM 6646) was referable to *palmeri*, and another UNSM specimen (ZM13001) has been identified as the subspecies *oberholseri* (TEL). Thus, both subspecies resident in the United States have occurred in Nebraska; Iowa reports indicate that both have occurred there also.

**European Starling:** This species is migratory on the Great Plains; migrating groups of 8-35 flew over Forest Lawn Cem, Omaha, on 13 October (WRS). The best count totaled 600 in a flock at Stagecoach L, Lancaster Co, on 21 October (LE).

**American Pipit:** Two birds were seen at Fahrenholz Ponds, Dixon Co, on the very early date of 18 August (JJ, no details). There are only two other August reports for the state. Elsewhere, migrants were reported statewide between 20 September and 1 November, with best counts reaching 105 in southern Knox Co on 14 October (MB), the observer's best count ever, and 75+ in southwestern Dixon Co on 31 October (JJ).

**Sprague's Pipit:** None was reported; this bird is an uncommon to rare migrant in fall, mostly central.

**Cedar Waxwing:** Juveniles were reported on 11 August at PL (LE) and on 24 August at Stage Hill Road (WRS). The best count was 100, both in a

Bassett yard on 25 November (CH) and at Merritt Res on 30 November (LR, RH).

Tennessee Warbler: Only 4 were reported, but they were scattered across the state. Two were spotted in the east as expected on 15 and again on 29 September (WRS, JJ); but the one observed near Bushnell on 4 September (JF, details) signifies only the 9<sup>th</sup> fall Panhandle record. The one noted at NNF on 10 September (TEL) split the difference.

Orange-crowned Warbler: This statewide migrant was widely reported in good numbers; the best counts were 34 at Wilderness Park on 5 October (LE), and 14 at Oliver Res on 20 September (WRS). Joseph Gryzbowski has pointed out that reports of this species in Oklahoma in August probably are misidentifications of immature Yellow Warblers; this situation applies in Nebraska too, but only in the case of the widely occurring subspecies *celata*. A few Orange-crowned Warblers migrating through the Panhandle are of the Rocky Mountain subspecies *orestera*, which migrates significantly earlier than *celata*. There are indeed a few very early (as early as July) records of Orange-crowned Warbler in the Panhandle which are almost certainly *orestera*. The earliest reported this fall was one found at Bushnell Cem on 24 August; despite its rather pale plumage, it was very likely *orestera* (WRS); the one spotted at Oliver Res 31 August was "quite yellow," and was probably also *orestera*. First in the east was one seen at ADF on 9 September (LF, CF), and the last reported one identified in Bellevue on 2 November (BP, LP), about the 7<sup>th</sup>-latest ever in fall. A very pale yellow bird with an exquisite lemon-yellow eyering but otherwise fitting the description of an Orange-crowned was observed at Oliver Res on 20 September (WRS); it may have been an immature of the western subspecies *lutescens*, which, interestingly, breeds in the area where Cassin's Vireo and Townsend's Warblers breed, and thus a few might move south through the western Great Plains (see discussion under Cordilleran Flycatcher).

Nashville Warbler: An eastern migrant, about 80 were reported from Sherman Co (LR, RH) eastward between 8 September and 11 October. An excellent count was the 20 tallied at Wilderness Park on 5 October (LE). A picture posted to NEBIRDS of an immature found in Lincoln on 11 October (LG) that was pale enough to induce thoughts of Virginia's Warbler, but a Colorado expert, Tony Leukering, judged the bird a Nashville (as expected on geographic grounds) due to its browns and yellows being too strong for a Virginia's.

Virginia's Warbler: This species appears to be a regular spring and fall migrant in small numbers in the Panhandle; this fall, 3 were reported: a single noted near Bushnell on 26 August (CW); an immature spotted at Oliver Res on 31 August (MB, details); and an immature or adult female observed at Oliver Res on 4 September (JF). There are now 6 fall records, all from 2000-2002, in the short period between 26 August and 4 September.

Northern Parula: None was reported; most depart by mid-September.

Yellow Warbler: The last reported were 2 located in Douglas and Sarpy Cos on 15 September (WRS).

Chestnut-sided Warbler: None was reported; this regular migrant occurs mainly in September.

Magnolia Warbler: None was reported; this regular migrant occurs mainly in September.

Black-throated Blue Warbler: The only report of this rare-but-regular statewide migrant was of a female seen in the zinnias and small shrubs at a Scottsbluff garden center on 4 October (KD).

Yellow-rumped ("Audubon's") Warbler: There were 3 reports of this subspecies, all from the Panhandle as expected in the period from 10 September (HW, RG) through 5 October (JG).

Yellow-rumped ("Myrtle") Warbler: The earliest were one that "collected itself" at UNL on 17 September (TEL, ET) and 32 counted at Louisville on 19 September (B); and last reported was one spotted near Gibbon on 2 November (LR, RH). The best count was the 70 tallied at FF on 6 October (BP, LP).

Black-throated Gray Warbler: Only the 4<sup>th</sup> documented Nebraska record, the 2<sup>nd</sup> in fall, was an adult male located at the Hyannis Cem on 1 September 2002 (MB; details). There are an additional 5 undocumented reports, most probably correct.

Black-throated Green Warbler: Only 3 were reported, all in the east, as expected. The one seen at ADF on 25 August (LF, CF) became the earliest fall record ever by one day; one hit a campus window at University of Nebraska-Lincoln on 10 September, providing the first specimen record since 1921 (UNSM 18148; TEL, ET); and one was found at Wilderness Park on 28 September (LE).

Townsend's Warbler: About 6 were reported, all in the Panhandle from 21 August to 4 September: 1-2 were spotted at Bushnell Cem between 21 August and 4 September (CW, WRS, JF); one was noted at Box Butte Res on 2 September (NP); and one was observed at Oliver Res on 4 September (JF).

Blackburnian Warbler: Only 4 were reported, with 3 of them found together in a Lincoln yard on 14 September (TP). The other was spotted record late in a southwestern Dixon Co yard on 2 November; it was studied through a telescope (JJ, details). The previous latest date was 29 October.

Yellow-throated Warbler: None was reported; there are only about 10 records after August.

Pine Warbler: Marking only the 2<sup>nd</sup> Panhandle record was an adult male spotted at Greenwood Cem, Sidney, on 19 September (CW); a male observed singing at Oliver Res between 29 August and 13 October 1998 was the other. One came to a Bellevue feeder on 29 October (DB); the latter marks the 25<sup>th</sup> report in all for fall, very few of which are documented, however. This species may be the most poorly documented



for the number of reports of all the wood warblers. Most reports come from the east.

Prairie Warbler: One was reported at FF on 31 August (CNK); this sighting is the 4<sup>th</sup> report for fall, and only the 2<sup>nd</sup> with any details.

Palm Warbler: This species is far more rare in fall than in spring; it is only a casual fall migrant with some 35 reports in all. Thus significant were the two reports, both rather late: one was spotted at ADF on 13 October (LF, CF), and another, of the widespread western subspecies *palmarum*, was seen near Creighton on 20 October (MB).

Bay-breasted Warbler: Usually more numerous in fall than in spring, surprisingly only one was reported, found in a Bellevue yard on 12 September (BP, LP).

Blackpoll Warbler: This species is only casual in fall, and so a tentative report for Lincoln (observer noted "not sure") is best left as "one that got away."

Black-and-white Warbler: Surprisingly, only 3 were reported: one spotted at NNF on 10 September (TEL) and 2 located in Douglas and Sarpy Cos on 15 September (WRS).

American Redstart: Uncommon in the west, singles were observed at Bushnell Cem on 26 August (CW) and Ash Hollow SHP on 21 September (WRS). Only 3-4 others were reported, from NNF (TEL) eastward.

Ovenbird: Routine reports.

Northern Waterthrush: Only 4 were reported, 3 in the Panhandle, where it is uncommon, between 24 and 30 August (WRS, CW, TJ). The only eastern bird was banded at Bellevue on 13 August (RG); fall arrival generally occurs in mid-August.

Louisiana Waterthrush: None was reported; most depart by the end of August.

Kentucky Warbler: This species is another which usually departs early in fall and is generally restricted to the east. Thus very much of a surprise was the male seen at WSR on 20 September (HKH), the first Panhandle record. There are fewer than 5 fall records on the eastern Colorado plains.

Mourning Warbler: Only 3 were reported, all from Lincoln, two as window-kills at University of Nebraska-Lincoln on 26 August and again on 10 September (UNSM 18134, 18149; ET, TEL). The latter bird was at first thought to be a Connecticut Warbler (and first state specimen), but measurements indicated it was a Mourning, despite its "exceptionally bright and nearly complete eye-rings" (TEL). The other report was of one spotted at Wilderness Park on 21 September (LE).

MacGillivray's Warbler: Good numbers of this regular Panhandle migrant were reported between 26 August and 28 September, for a total of about 18 birds. The best count was the 7 tallied in Kimball and Banner Cos on 31 August (MB). Easternmost was the one found at NNF on 7 September (BP, LP; details), one of the few documented records away from the Panhandle.

Common Yellowthroat: The last reported was one identified at ADF on 6 October (LF, CF).

Hooded Warbler: Marking only the 2<sup>nd</sup> fall report accompanied by any details, a male was spotted at Wilderness Park on 21 September (LE). The only other fall record with details for the state came surprisingly from the Panhandle, although this species has a propensity for westerly vagrancy, especially in spring.

Wilson's Warbler: As usual, this species was widely reported in good numbers statewide. Reports were for 18 August through 5 October, with best counts as usual from the west: 32 in Kimball Co on 24 August (WRS) and 24+ at Oliver Res on 1 September (KD, PD, DD).

Canada Warbler: Only two were reported for this rare fall migrant, singles identified near Center in Knox Co on 22 August (BP, LP), and at NNF on 7 September (NOU Field Trip, no details). The latter sighting, if correct, represents only the 9<sup>th</sup> report away from the east.

Yellow-breasted Chat: Only two were reported, singles spotted at West Lawn Cem, Gering, on 25 August (WRS) and at NNF on 7 September (NOU Field Trip).

Summer Tanager: The only report was of a female found in eastern Otoe Co on 11 September (LF, CF); it was at a location where summering occurred (LF, CF), but is only the 7<sup>th</sup> fall record away from Schramm SP.

Scarlet Tanager: The only report was of one observed at Bellevue on 12 September (B).

Western Tanager: Only 4 were reported, all at Riverside Park, Scottsbluff, between 20 and 29 September (KD).

Green-tailed Towhee: Only 3 were reported, all at Oliver Res; one seen on 31 August (MB) and two noted on 4 September (JF). These are only the 13<sup>th</sup> and 14<sup>th</sup> fall records, and the 31 August record becomes the earliest ever for fall. Most of the records occur in the first half of September, all but one from the Panhandle.

Spotted Towhee: Migration was clearly underway in the Panhandle between 20 and 21 September, when 22 were counted, including 11 found at West Lawn Cem, Gering, on 21 September (WRS). The first to arrive in the east was one seen at BOL on 28 September (LE); as many as 13 were found in the east between 28 September and 12 October, but none subsequently. One spotted in Buffalo Co on 4 August (EW) was likely a summer resident there; this location is the eastern edge of the summer range.

Eastern Towhee: Singles seen in Buffalo Co on 4 August (EW) and near Gibbon on 5 October (LR, RH) were at the western edge of the summer range, although the latter bird was taking its time departing. One noted in eastern Nemaha Co 3 Nov (WRS) was a bit late also, although a few attempt to winter in the extreme southeast. One was reported at NNF on 7 September without details; this location is to the west of the breeding range.

Cassin's Sparrow: The only report was of 1-3 found south of CLNWR on 2 August (EW); there are a few reports from Garden, Keith, and Arthur Cos, the northeastern and somewhat sporadic edge of the summer range in Nebraska.

American Tree Sparrow: The earliest were the 500 estimated at Bazile Creek, Knox Co, on 19 October (LR, RH).

Chipping Sparrow: The westernmost breeding population in the Republican Valley appears to be at Alma, where 12 were present on 6 August (GH, WH). The best count totaled an incredible 700 feeding in a soybean field and flushing to a windbreak as cars passed on 5 October near Burwell (LR, RH).

Clay-colored Sparrow: Moderate numbers were reported between 7 September and 6 October, including counts of 16 at FL on 21 September (LR, RH) and 13 in Lancaster Co on 28 September (LE).

Brewer's Sparrow: Only 6 were reported, all in the Panhandle from 21 August to 21 September (CW, WMB, WRS).

Field Sparrow: The best count was the 12 found in the observers' yard near Gibbon on 13 October (LR, RH). Rather late was one spotted at ADF on 19 November (LF, CF, details).

Vesper Sparrow: The last was one seen in Lancaster Co on 20 October (LE).

Lark Sparrow: Routine reports.

Lark Bunting: Easternmost were 60 tallied in Thomas Co on 8 September (LR, RH). Few were reported.

Savannah Sparrow: Moderate numbers were reported between 7 September and 20 October, with the best count of 19 made near Lowell on 21 September (LR, RH). The one spotted in Knox Co on 18 October was "far darker than we usually see" (LR, RH); while several subspecies have been reported in Nebraska, Savannah Sparrows exhibit dichromatism, occurring in pale and dark forms.

Grasshopper Sparrow: The best count reached 35+ near Ravenna on 10 August, mostly immatures (LR, RH). Last reported was one seen at Arbor L, Lancaster Co, on 20 October (LE).

Baird's Sparrow: One described by an experienced observer as "definite" was seen at NNF on 9 September (TEL). Occurrence of this species in Nebraska is not well known; this is a rather early fall date, although there is a specimen for 17 August from Logan Co. Documented fall records occur in the period between 17 August and 15 October.

Le Conte's Sparrow: Few were reported: Arbor L, Lancaster Co, hosted 2-5 birds between 13 and 20 October (LE); two were spotted in southeastern Washington Co on 19 October (BP, LP); and 2 were located in Lancaster Co on 20 October (LE). The last was one found at ADF on 5 November (LF, CF; details).

Nelson's Sharp-tailed Sparrow: The only reports of this uncommon eastern Nebraska fall migrant were of singles identified at Cracker Barrel Marsh on 28 September and again from 19 to 20 October (LE).

Fox Sparrow: About 18 were reported, all "Red Fox Sparrows" in the east, in the period between 13 October and 12 November. Best count totaled 7 in southeastern Otoe Co on 27 October (WRS).

Song Sparrow: Routine reports.

Lincoln's Sparrow: Reports occurred in the period between 7 September and 3 November. Uncommon in the west, two were spotted near Mitchell on 29 September (KD) and one was observed at West Lawn Cem, Gering, on 5 October (JG). The best count was 16 in Lancaster Co on 5 October (LE).

Swamp Sparrow: This species is a localized breeder in cattail marshes in central Nebraska; one was singing in breeding habitat at Ericson L, Wheeler Co, on 3 August (LR, RH). Migrants were reported only from the east between 28 September and 30 November, the latter from UNL campus (UNSM 18168; TEL,ET).

White-throated Sparrow: This species was reported in good numbers, mostly in the east, where it is most common. It is rare in the west, but this fall 10+ were found at West Lawn Cem, Gering, on 5 October (JG). The earliest reported was seen in southwestern Dixon Co on 29 September (JJ).

White-crowned Sparrow: Good numbers were reported statewide. First, and the best count, were the 46 found in the Panhandle between 20 and 21 September (WRS); and last were 3 spotted near Gibbon on 2 November (LR, RH). All identified to subspecies were the pale-lored subspecies *gambelii*.

Harris's Sparrow: The earliest was one noted in Lancaster Co on 22 September (LE), and best counts reached 72 in Lancaster Co on 3 November (LE); 60 at Bazile Creek Area, Knox Co, on 19 October (LR, RH); and 55 in Otoe and Nemaha Cos on 3 November (WRS). Westernmost were the 19 tallied in Sherman co on 13 October (LR, RH) and the 3 at Alma on 31 Oct (GH, WH).

Dark-eyed ("White-winged") Junco: The only reports were of feeder birds observed around Scottsbluff. One was located near Mitchell on 15 October (KD), and at least one was discovered at feeders in Scottsbluff (no dates or numbers given; PD, DD).

Dark-eyed ("Slate-colored") Junco: The earliest was one banded at NNF on 24 September (HW, RG), and the best count totaled an excellent 204 in Otoe and Nemaha Cos on 3 November (WRS). A bird thought to be of the form *cismontanus* (like a Slate-colored but with a clearly defined hood) was observed at L Minatare on 14 October (KD); these birds occur in small numbers mostly in the Panhandle. A bird located in Otoe Co on 3 November which had some characters reminiscent of "Pink-sided" Junco was likely an intergrade (WRS).

Dark-eyed ("Oregon") Junco: The only reports came from the Panhandle, the earliest occurring on 14 October (KD). There were no reports of "Pink-sided" Juncos.

Dark-eyed ("Gray-headed") Junco: The only report, without details or date, was of one identified at a Scottsbluff feeder. This subspecies is rare in Nebraska and should be documented.

McCown's Longspur: None was reported; departure is complete by late October.

Lapland Longspur: The first reported were two spotted at BOL on 26 October (JGJ), followed by 35 observed in Harlan Co on 31 October (GH, WH).

Chestnut-collared Longspur: None was reported; departure is completed by late October.

Snow Bunting: None was reported; arrival usually takes place in early November.

Northern Cardinal: Numbers continue to increase slowly in the North Platte Valley in Scotts Bluff Co; the observer's first at a Mitchell feeder was a female seen on 7 November (KD). Also at the edge of the range was a pair found at the Joyce Menzel feeder and a female noted at the Geneva Davis feeder, both in Bassett, on 16 November (fide CH); cardinals are "very unusual except along the river and wooded tributaries" in this area (CH).

Rose-breasted Grosbeak: At the west edge of the summer range, a female and 4-5 young were spotted at a soaker hose in a yard near Gibbon on 9 September, and 3 immatures were observed there on 15 September (LR, RH). Another was reported at NNF on 7 September (NOU Field Trip). Migrants occur on occasion in spring in the Panhandle, but the one identified near Bushnell on 26 August (CW) marked only the 2<sup>nd</sup> fall record..

Black-headed Grosbeak: Routine reports.

Blue Grosbeak: The few reports were statewide, including the best count of 4 made near Bushnell on 21 August (CW), and last reported was one seen at NNF on 7 September (NOU Field Trip).

Lazuli Bunting: None was reported; departure is completed by early September.

Indigo Bunting: The one seen at FF on 8 October (BP, LP) was rather late.

Dickcissel: A loose group of 33 migrating birds spotted in Lancaster Co on 31 August (LE) was of interest; specific information and high counts for fall migrants are lacking. Few others were reported.

Bobolink: A peak count of 500, by far a record high fall count, was made in a southwestern Dixon Co soybean field on 7 September; the birds fed in this field for a week, leaving on 15 September (JJ). The only other reports were of 3 seen in Lancaster Co on 2 August (LE); at least one noted near Brownlee on 3 August (EW); and 3 identified at Niobrara SP on 21 August (BP, LP). Migration takes place mostly during August, but Bobolinks are inconspicuous in fall, and few are reported.

Red-winged Blackbird: The best count reached 3,500 at Cracker Barrel Marsh on 5 October (LE). An early congregation was the 150+

found in Sarpy Co on sod farms on 10 August (CNK); flocks of young birds and females form as early as July.

Eastern Meadowlark: One was heard at CLNWR on 2 August (EW); there is a sizeable breeding population in the wetter parts of the Sandhills.

Western Meadowlark: On 19 November a "singing group" of 31 was noted in Lancaster Co (LE); a pretty impressive choir, no doubt.

Yellow-headed Blackbird: A count of 100 was made at Facus Springs on 30 August (PD, DD), presumably local breeders. A feedlot just east of the Gering SL attracts large numbers of blackbirds, usually including some Yellow-headed; "a few" were found there on 8 October (AK).

Rusty Blackbird: There were 4 reports, including a somewhat westerly flock of 22 located in Valley Co on 29 September (LR, RH); this date is also rather early. The other reports came from the east: at least one bird was seen in Cedar Co on 25 October (SV); 35 were counted at Wagontrain L, Lancaster Co, on 31 October (LE); and 15 were observed in Lancaster Co on 3 November (LE).

Brewer's Blackbird: "Quite a few" were located at the feedlot east of Gering SL on 8 October (AK); and 4 easterly birds were spotted north of Blair on 4 November (JGJ). This species is a rare fall migrant in the east.

Common Grackle: The best count was 3200 in Otoe Co on 2 November (LF, CF). Rather late for such a number were the 200 counted at Grand Island on 30 November (MM). The bird seen in a Lincoln yard on 24 October had white central tail feathers (NP).

Great-tailed Grackle: The only large number reported was the 125 tallied in Lancaster Co on 26 October (JGJ). The only other reports were of 3 spotted at Cracker Barrel Marsh on 13 October (LE) and 3 located near Kiowa Springs on 11 November (KD, PD, DD). The latter birds were a bit tardy for the west.

Brown-headed Cowbird: The latest reported were the 15 noted in Lancaster Co on 3 November (LE). Seven found south of Morrill on 21 October (KD) were rather late for the west.

Orchard Oriole: Apparent migrants were the 15 spotted in the observers' yard near Gibbon on 1 September (LR, RH). The last reported was one observed at Gavin's Point Dam on 6 September (JC).

Baltimore Oriole: Routine reports.

Bullock's Oriole: None was reported; most depart by early September.

Gray-crowned Rosy-Finch: None was reported; arrival occurs in early November.

Purple Finch: The only reports were of a female observed in Omaha on 31 October (EA) and of two females found in the observer's yard at Creighton on 21 November, the first reported there for several years (MB). Numbers of this species seem to have declined in recent years. One was reported at NNF on 7 September without details (NOU Field Trip); this sighting would be a record early date if correct.

House Finch: Routine reports.

Red Crossbill: The few reports were of birds found at Wildcat Hills NC from 3 to 5 September (HW) and at NNF on 7 September (NOU Field Trip), regular locations for this species, although numbers seem much reduced from recent years.

Common Redpoll: None was reported; arrival occurs usually in early November.

Pine Siskin: This species was virtually absent; the only reports were of one seen at a Mitchell feeder on 21 October (KD) and of two located in eastern Otoe Co on 3 November (WRS).

American Goldfinch: The best count was a mediocre 67 in Otoe and Nemaha Cos on 3 November (WRS).

Evening Grosbeak: None was reported; arrival usually occurs in early October.

House Sparrow: Routine reports.