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Spring Field Report, March to May 1998

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SPRING FIELD REPORT, MARCH to MAY 1998

Compiled by

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INTRODUCTION

In most respects, this was a routine spring. While a few rarities and several interesting reports (see below) appeared, perhaps most interesting was the arrival of the electronic age. Foremost was the start-up of "NEBIRDS," the Nebraska Birding Listserver set up and operated by Robert Price at Kearney. This resource should greatly enhance communication and collective learning amongst birders in the state. We have culled several reports from observations submitted to NEBIRDS, and several reporters now contact us by email. We urge observers to forward their email addresses; if we have questions on their reports, communication would be easy! Submit reports and comments to Ross Silcock by email at silcock@sidney.heartland.net. We also gather sightings reported to the Nebraska Birdline, operated by Loren and Babs Padelford at Bellevue; these reports are placed on the Internet through BIRDCNTR, a service of the National Bird Hotline Cooperative. We should note here that this report contains unverified observations as well as documented observations.

And now to the birds! Considerable discussion has taken place about a very "slow" warbler migration, "slow" for birders, meaning low numbers of birds. While this is true, most species were indeed found, although very low numbers were found of Magnolia, Black-throated Green, Blackburnian, and Wilson's Warblers, and those that were reported occurred rather late in the migration period. Usually when we do not see many migrating warblers it means they have made long, non-stop flights with beneficial tailwinds right over us to their breeding ranges. Much has been made of the scarcity of migrant warblers this spring in the eastern United States, with blame allocated to habitat loss in the tropical wintering ranges, to forest fragmentation in the breeding ranges (in particular with the result of allowing cowbird access to deep-woods birds), and to extensive smoke encountered while crossing the Gulf of Mexico. The smoke, from major fires in Mexico, may have contributed to a slower migration for some species, but we will have to be patient (a human generation or two?) to see what if anything is actually happening.

Joel Jorgensen, who did weekly surveys of the eastern Rainwater Basin in April and May, gathered important shorebird data. These data are presented in the relevant shorebird species accounts. Although few early and late dates were set, a few amazing high counts occurred during the report period: for example, 39 Clark's Grebes, 236 Horned Grebes, and 1,732 McCown's Longspurs. Some interesting waterfowl appeared in the Rainwater Basin this spring, suggesting that scrutiny of the immense flocks can yield exciting discoveries: 2nd state Bean Goose, 2nd state Garganey, and even a Barnacle Goose, probably not a wild bird. Additional rarities of note included a 1st documented spring Red-throated Loon, 5th and 6th state Neotropic Cormorants, 4th nesting record White-faced Ibis, 3 Eurasian Wigeon, a 3rd documented spring Surf Scoter, 4th state Ruff, 1st state Short-billed Dowitcher of the eastern subspecies *Limnodromus griseus griseus*, 10th and 11th individual Mew Gulls for the state, 1st May Glaucous Gull, nesting Eurasian Collared-Doves, a possible nesting population of Monk Parakeets, 6th southeast

Nebraska Say's Phoebe, documented nesting Pinyon Jays south of Redington, at least 13 Blue-gray Gnatcatchers in the Panhandle, 2nd state Virginia's Warbler, 10th spring Townsend's Warbler, 2nd spring Panhandle Prothonotary Warbler, 2 Hooded Warblers, the lingering of an Omaha Black-throated Sparrow until 12 April, a photographed Baird's Sparrow in York Co, and the 2nd Panhandle breeding record for Great-tailed Grackle.

Read on and enjoy. And please forward your constructive criticism.

ABBREVIATIONS

= documentation provided; ad(s): adult(s); ADF: Arbor Day Farm; BOL: Branched Oak L; Cem: cemetery; CLNWR: Crescent L NWR; Co(s): County (ies); FF: Fontenelle Forest; FL: Funk Lagoon; HCR: Harlan Co Res; imm(s): immature(s); juv(s): juvenile(s); L: Lake; LM: L McConaughy; m. ob.: many observers; NC: Nature Center; NE: Nebraska; NM: National Monument; NNF: Nebraska National Forest; NOURC: Nebraska Ornithologists' Union Records Committee; NPNWR: North Platte NWR; NWR: National Wildlife Refuge; OPPD: Omaha Public Power Division; Res: Reservoir; RWB: Rainwater Basin; SL: Sewage Lagoon(s); SP: State Park; SRA: State Recreation Area; WHNC: Wildcat Hills NC; WMA: (State) Wildlife Management Area; WPA: (Federal) Waterfowl Production Area.

GAZETTEER

Arbor Day Farm: Nebraska City; Basswood Area: WMA, Dakota Co; Branched Oak L: SRA, Lancaster Co; Bruning L: WPA, Clay Co; Buckskin Hills: WMA, Dixon Co; Buffalo Creek: WMA, Banner and Scotts Bluff Cos; Bufflehead Pond: WMA, Buffalo Co; Calamus Res: SRA, Garfield and Loup Cos; Carter Canyon: Scotts Bluff Co; Carter L: Omaha/Carter Lake, Nebraska/Iowa; Chadron SP: Dawes Co; Clear Creek Marshes: WMA, Keith-Garden Cos; Crescent L NWR: Garden Co; Crystal Cove L: South Sioux City; Cunningham L: Omaha, Douglas Co; Dead Timber: SRA, Dodge Co; DeSoto NWR: Washington Co; Enders Res: SRA, Chase Co; Facus Springs: WMA, Morrill Co; Fontenelle Forest: Bellevue, Sarpy Co; Funk Lagoon: WPA, Phelps Co; Gavin's Point Dam: forms Lewis and Clark L, Knox and Cedar Cos; Gleason Lagoon: WPA, Kearney Co; Grandpa's Steakhouse L: behind Grandpa's Steakhouse, Kearney, Buffalo Co; Green Acres Basin: WPA, Clay Co; Griess Basin: WPA, Fillmore Co; Hansen Lagoon: WPA, Clay Co; Harlan Co Res: SRA, Harlan Co; Harvard Lagoon: (formerly Inland Lagoon) WPA, Clay Co; Holmes L: Lincoln, Lancaster Co; Jack Sinn Marsh: WMA, Lancaster and Saunders Cos; Jensen Lagoon: WPA, Kearney Co; Johnson Lagoon: WPA, Phelps Co; Johnson Res: SRA, Dawson and Gosper Cos; Keystone L: adjoins L Ogallala, Keith Co; Kingsley Dam: forms L McConaughy; L Alice: part of NPNWR, Scotts Bluff Co; L Babcock: Platte Co; Little Salt Fork Marsh: Lancaster Co; L McConaughy, Keith Co; L North: Platte Co; L Minatare: SRA, Scotts Bluff Co; L Ogallala: below Kingsley Dam, Keith Co; Louisville Lakes: SRA, Cass Co; Massie Lagoon: WPA, Clay Co; Moger Lagoon: WPA, Clay Co; Monroe Canyon: Sioux Co; Nathan's Lake: southeast Washington Co;

Neale Woods: Douglas Co; North Hultine Basin (formerly Sandpiper): WPA, Clay Co; North Platte NWR: Scotts Bluff Co; Offutt (Air Force) Base L: Sarpy Co; Olive Creek L: SRA, Lancaster Co; Oliver Res: SRA, Kimball Co; Omadi Bend: WMA, Dakota Co; OPPD Wetlands: Otoe Co; Pawnee L: SRA, Lancaster Co; Pilger Area: SRA, Stanton Co; Pintail Marsh: WMA, Hamilton Co; Pioneers Park: Lincoln, Lancaster Cos; Rainwater Basin: region of natural wetlands in southcentral NE; Rock Creek L: SRA, Dundy Co; (Lillian Annette) Rowe Sanctuary: Kearney Co; Sacramento-Wilcox: WMA, Phelps Co; Sandhills: native grassland region in northcentral NE; Schramm SP: Sarpy Co; Scotts Bluff NM: Scotts Bluff Co; Sinninger Lagoon: WPA, York Co; South Kirkpatrick Basin: WMA, York Co; Sowbelly Canyon: Sioux Co; Spikerush Basin: WMA, York Co; Stagecoach L: SRA, Lancaster Co; Standing Bear L: Omaha; Stateline Island: WMA, Scotts Bluff Co; Summit Res: SRA, Burt Co; Sutherland Res: SRA, WMA, Lincoln Co; Swan Creek Res: Saline Co; Taylor Ranch; northwest of Grand Island, Hall Co; Waco Basin: WPA, York Co; Wehrspann L: Omaha, Sarpy Co; Weis Lagoon: WPA, Fillmore Co; Wildcat Hills NC: Wildcat Hills SRA, Scotts Bluff Co; Wilkins Lagoon: WPA, Fillmore Co; Willow Creek L: SRA, Pierce Co; Winters Creek L: part of NPNWR, Scotts Bluff Co; Wolf L: Dodge and Saunders Cos; Wood Duck Area: WMA, Stanton Co; Wyuka Cem; Lincoln, Lancaster Cos; Yankee Hill L: SRA, Lancaster Co; Yellowbanks Area: WMA, Madison Co; Youngson Lagoon: WPA, Kearney Co; Zorinsky L: Omaha, Douglas Co.

OBSERVERS

Nebraska Birdline (B); Mark Brogie (MB), Creighton; Kathleen Crawford-Rose (KCR), Bellevue; Stephen J. Dinsmore (SJD), Fort Collins, CO; Larry Einemann (LE), Lincoln; Carol Falk (CF), Nebraska City; Laurence Falk (LF), Nebraska City; Ruth Green (RG), Bellevue; Joe Gubanyi (JG), Seward; John W. Hall (JWH), Omaha; Robin Harding (RH), Gibbon; David Heidt (DH), Norfolk; Thomas Hoffman (TH), Omaha; Helen K. Hughson (HKH), Mitchell; Bill F. Huser (BFH), South Sioux City; Jan Johnson (JJ), Wakefield; Joel G. Jorgensen (JGJ), Blair; Alice Kenitz (AK), Gering; Clem N. Klaphake (CNK), Bellevue; Jim Kovanda (JK), Omaha; Sandy Kovanda (SK), Omaha; Sandy Lemmon (SL), Crawford; Gary Lingle (GL), Grand Island; Wayne Mollhoff (WM), Lincoln; Babs Padelford (BP), Bellevue; Loren Padelford (LP), Bellevue; Bill Parker (BP), Lincoln; Don Paseka (DP), Ames; Janis Paseka (JP), Ames; Kevin Poague (KP), Lincoln; Lanny Randolph (LR), Gibbon; Neal Ratzlaff (NR), Omaha; W. Ross Silcock (WRS), Tabor, IA; John Sullivan (JS), Lincoln; Mark Urwiller (MU), Kearney; Bruce Walgren (BW), Casper, WY; Donna Walgren (DW), Casper, WY; Gertrude Wood (GW), Elmwood.

SPECIES ACCOUNTS

Red-throated Loon: Only the 8th spring report, but the first documented, an adult in basic plumage was at LM on 8 May (*SJD). Of the previous 7 reports, the NOURC did not accept one, and the others occurred in the period 6 April-13 May. The only other westerly report was of one in Sheridan Co on 29 April, 1989 (Am. Birds 43:500).

Pacific Loon: No details were received on one at Zorinsky L on 3 April (NR); if documented, this sighting would be the first spring record of Pacific Loon for NE.

Common Loon: Some 40 reported. Most migrants pass through eastern NE in April and early May, with later reports tending to be westerly, where summering birds are regular. Last in the east was at Pawnee L 9 May (JS), and best count in the east, 4 at Zorinsky L 5-9 April (NR), but 11 were at LM 14-15 May (SJD). One at LM, 5 April (SJD), was rather early for the west, while first in the east was also rather early, at Bufflehead Pond, 27 March (LR, RH).

Pied-billed Grebe: The first, 2 at Wehrspann L 4 March (BP, LP), were rather early. Best count was 35 at Offutt Base L, 13 April (BP, LP).

Horned Grebe: By far the best count known, 236 were at LM, 5 April (SJD), indicating peak migration. First were 2 at FL, 28 March (LR, RH), and last was one at L Ogallala, 9 May (SJD).

Eared Grebe: An excellent count was 162 at Harvard Lagoon, 18 April (JGJ). First were 4 at Massie Lagoon (JS), one at FL (LR, RH), and at least one in Cass Co (GW) on 28 March, and last away from known breeding areas were 5 at Harvard Lagoon on 31 May (JS).

Western Grebe: As many as 114 were at LM on the rather early date of 5 April (SJD), although many of these apparently wintered there. Peak at LM was 3,500 on 2 May, a little lower than recent years (SJD). A Western-Clark's hybrid was at LM on 18 April and 2 appeared on 9 May (SJD). The only easterly report was 1 at Norfolk, 30 April-3 May (DH).

Clark's Grebe: Farthest to the east was one at a very early date at BOL, 27 March (JS). Also early was one at L Ogallala on 5 April (SJD)--these reports are the two earliest ever for NE. Best count was a record 39 at LM, 15 May (SJD), and 19 were there on 9 May (SJD). One was at Oliver Res as late as 16 May (SJD, JG).

American White Pelican: Best counts were a record 1,400 at Wood Duck Area on 12 April (DH) and 500-1000 at Niobrara, Knox Co, on 19 April (JJ).

Double-crested Cormorant: First were 60 at BOL on 26 March (JS), high count reached 450 at Holmes L, Lincoln, on 3 May (LE), and last away from known breeding areas was a single at Harvard Lagoon on 31 May (JS).

Neotropic Cormorant: A portent of things to come, 2 were reported, the 5th and 6th records, all but one since 1992. One was at BOL with Double-crested Cormorants on the early date of 26 March (JS), and a one-year old was at Sutherland Res on 2 May (SJD). This species has now occurred in NE on 26 March-2 October, usually with Double-crested Cormorants.

American Bittern: This species is doing well in NE: some 20 were reported in the period of 17 April-31 May, including 2 in courtship flight at North Lakes Basin on 31 May (WRS, JS). Birds at other locations in the RWB where breeding has not been noted recently--but at dates suggestive of breeding activity--include 10 May near Tamora (JG), 16-17 May at FL (JGJ, MU), and 16 May at Griess Basin (JGJ). Best count was 3 at CLNWR on 15 May (SJD).

Least Bittern: None reported.

Great Blue Heron: The relatively new heronry at Alma had 37+ active nests on 16 May (JGJ).

Great Egret: This species was widely reported in the eastern half of the state, 2 April-31 May, with high counts of 10 at both Niobrara, Knox Co, on 19 April (JJ)

and near Fremont on 8 May (DP). Casual in spring in the west, one was at Clear Creek Marshes, 9 May (SJD).

Snowy Egret: About 8 reported, a normal spring. Earliest was one at Holmes L on the record early date of 10 April (LE, BPA). In contrast to Great Egret, Snowies tend to be westerly migrants in NE; about half the reports come from the western half of the state (where few birders reside).

Little Blue Heron: Uncommon in spring, only 3 were reported: singles at Chet Ager NC, Lincoln, 2 May (B), in Clay Co., 15 May (JGJ), and an immature at Nathan's L, 19 May (B).

Cattle Egret: Mostly ones and twos were reported in the period of 16 April-25 May, but record early by 5 days was one in Dodge Co on 29 March (DP). Best count was only 6, at Niobrara on 19 April (JJ).

Green Heron: Reports would have been routine, except for one which took over the fish pond at the observer's house on 11 May (JJ).

Black-crowned Night-Heron: As many as 30-40 were noted each weekend in the RWB, 18 April-1 May (JGJ). Earliest were 5 in Lancaster Co on 9 April (JS).

Yellow-crowned Night-Heron: Rare in spring, a sub-adult was at Griess Basin on 16 May (JGJ).

White-faced Ibis: Third-earliest ever was one at Walgren L, 13 April (B). Uncommon in the east, singles were in Dodge Co on 2 May (B), at Wood Duck Area on 5-8 May (DH), 2 at Little Salt Fork Marsh on 7 May (JS), and 2 at Crystal Cove L on 11 May (BFH). Only a casual breeder in NE, with about 3 recent records, of interest was nest building underway at CLNWR on 15 May, with 3 birds in the area (SJD).

Turkey Vulture: Routine report.

Trumpeter Swan: Two wintering birds were still below Keystone Dam on 4 March (B). An unmarked immature which wintered at Kiwanis Park, Omaha, was last seen on 21 March, although a flyover at Standing Bear L on 2 April may have been this bird (NR). Birds were noted in nesting areas on 25 April west of Merriman (B) and on 28 April in Grant Co (RG).

Bean Goose: An incredible record, although the 2nd for Nebraska, was a single at FL on 4 April (SJD). A photo was obtained, and Dinsmore believes the bird to be of the eastern Siberian race *Anser fabalis middendorfi*, as was the first record at DeSoto NWR, 29 Dec-10 Jan, 1984-85. This race is rarely kept in captivity.

Greater White-fronted Goose: Best count was 4,000 at FL on 4 April (SJD). Rare in the west, a single was at L Ogallala, 4-15 May (SJD). A straggler was still at Massie Lagoon on 31 May (JS).

Snow Goose: Best counts were 300,000 at HCR on 13 March (LR, RH) and 250,000 at FL on 22 March (LR, RH). Excellent counts away from the RWB were 10,000 in Dixon Co on 21 March (JJ), and 8000 at LM on 21 March (SJD). As many as 178 were still in the RWB on 31 May (JS, WRS).

Ross' Goose: Best count was 93 at Clear Creek Marshes on 18 April (SJD, JS). Not all Ross' are with Snows; small groups of white geese often are Ross'. Such a group was 7 northwest of Spencer on 13 April (DH). There are 4 reports in all after 10 May, all from the RWB, including one this spring of 2 on 15 May at Great Little Marsh, 3 miles north of Greenwing WMA in Clay Co (JGJ).

Barnacle Goose: Two reported. An adult was at Massie Lagoon with 12 small Canada Geese on 28 March-4 April (JS). This is the 3rd NE report of birds seen during migration periods; these birds are unlikely to be natural vagrants, but have

associated themselves with migrating Canada Geese. That the Massie Lagoon bird was unlikely to be wild would be especially true if it was the same goose seen at Harvard Lagoon on 9 May (JGJ), a date when a wild bird would be most unexpected. Canada Goose: No large concentrations reported, although 3,000 were at FL on 28 March (LR, RH). Most migrants through NE are medium to small-sized forms; several forms are involved. "At least 5 races" were observed in Kearney Co on 20 March (RG), and a "Richardson's" Goose was at L Ogallala as late as 14-15 May (SJD). Young were noted at CLNWR on 9 May (BW, DW).

Wood Duck: Two females and 20 recently-hatched downies were at Little Salt Fork Marsh on 30 May (LE).

Green-winged Teal: Routine reports.

American Black Duck: None reported.

Mallard: Routine reports.

Northern Pintail: An excellent count was 30,000 on the ice at Youngson Lagoon on 16 March (LR, RH).

Garganey: A male was at Wild Rose Ranch along the south side of the Platte River in southern Hall Co, 29 March-5 April (GL). This is the 2nd state record--the first, another male (possibly the same bird) 3 miles south of Kearney on 28 March 1997. The two sightings took place about 30 miles apart.

Blue-winged Teal: Many arrived rather early, in late March, the earliest, were 39 at Wehrspann L on 26 March (BP, LP). Best count was 155 at FL, 19 April (LR, RH). Hybrids with Cinnamon Teal were at Wild Rose Ranch on 6 April (JS) and on 21 April at LaPlatte (BP, LP), an easterly location for at least some Cinnamon Teal genes, if not the entire bird!

Cinnamon Teal: This species was well-reported, a total of about 35 birds. Earliest were rather early, singles in Kearney Co on 20 March (RG) and at FL on 28 March (B). Best counts were 7 at CLNWR on 18 April (SJD, JS) and 3 pairs at Kiowa Springs, Scotts Bluff Co, on 17 May (SJD), a known breeding location. A single at Facus Springs on 15-18 May (NR, LR, RH) was at another known breeding location. To the east, other than the hybrid mentioned above, was one southwest of Elmwood on 1 April (GW).

Northern Shoveler: Routine reports.

Gadwall: Routine reports.

Eurasian Wigeon: In line with the pattern of recent years, at least one was noted in the RWB, a male molting somewhat late into alternate plumage at Moger Lagoon, 10 April (JS, WRS). Unexpected, however, were 2 other males at opposite ends of the state: one at Clear Creek Marshes on 2 May (SJD) and the other near Wood Duck Area on 28 March (DH). These are the 18th-20th NE spring reports. An "obvious" hybrid was at North Hultine Basin on 15 April (JGJ).

American Wigeon: Routine reports.

Canvasback: A good count for the RWB was 167 at Weis Lagoon on 4 April (JGJ).

Redhead: A good count was 1,300 at Winters Creek L on 8 March (SJD). Breeding records are few in the RWB, and so the presence of 44 at Harvard Lagoon as late as 31 May (JS, WRS) and a single at FL 28 May (JJ) were of interest.

Ring-necked Duck: Rather late were 2 at Harvard Lagoon on 31 May (JS, WRS).

Greater Scaup: Last noted were 2 at CLNWR on 18 April (SJD, JS). The only other reports were of 3 at Cunningham L on 15 April (JGJ) and 2 at BOL on 26 March (JS).

Lesser Scaup: Routine reports.

Oldsquaw: An adult female lingered at L Ogallala until 15 April (SJD), a rather late date. No others were reported.

Surf Scoter: Only the 8th spring report and 3rd documented, a 1st-spring male was at Keystone L, 8-15 May (SJD, JS, JG, WRS). The other documented records are also in May, 3 and 7 May. The 5 undocumented reports are in April; most are probably correct.

White-winged Scoter: Only the 18th spring report, a female was at Cunningham L on 15 April (JGJ).

Common Goldeneye: Last reported, except for an injured male at Keystone L on 15 May (SJD), were 25 at BOL on 29 March (LE).

Bufflehead: Routine reports.

Hooded Merganser: Rare westward, a female-plumaged bird was at Hayes Center, Hayes Co, on 14 May (SJD). While several reports occurred in May, all were of female-plumaged birds; most of these birds probably were immature (prebreeding) males. No males were reported after 28 March (JJ), and there are no recent definite breeding records.

Red-breasted Merganser: This spring was a good one for this species. Best count was a record 103 at L Ogallala on 18 April (SJD). Earliest were 3 at BOL on 5 March (JS), and latest was a female still at L Ogallala on 15 May (SJD). Most reports are from the east, but the species appears to occur regularly in the LM area. Rare in spring elsewhere in the west, one appeared at Enders Res on 2 May (SJD).

Common Merganser: Best count was 2,500 at LM, 21 March (SJD); spring counts are not as large as those in fall. Very late was a male on the Missouri River in extreme northeastern Douglas Co on 24 May (BP, LP). As has become the norm, 19 remained at L Ogallala at the end of the period, including 9 alternate-plumaged males (SJD, WRS, JS); the reproductive status of these birds is not known.

Ruddy Duck: Routine reports.

Osprey: Routine reports.

Mississippi Kite: Surprising was a single north of Mitchell, 30-31 May (Steve Kerr, AK). Four, 3 adults and a 1st summer bird, had returned to Ogallala, the only known breeding location, by 14 May (SJD).

Bald Eagle: An excellent count was 275 at Carter L on 22 March (B). Last of the non-resident birds was in Dakota Co, 28 March (JJ), although an adult was noted at Ponca SP on 16 May; a nest across the Missouri River in South Dakota had been abandoned (BFH). An adult was at L Babcock on 2 May (JS); is there a breeding site nearby? A regular nesting site at L Alice was occupied again this year, with a pair noted on 17 May (BW, DW).

Northern Harrier: Best counts were 12 in southern Cheyenne Co on 17 April (SJD) and 10 at FL on 4 April (SJD). Suggestive of nesting was a pair in courtship flight in Dakota Co on 29 March (BFH) and a single at FL as late as 25 May (LR, RH). Nesting can occur anywhere in the state.

Sharp-shinned Hawk: Routine reports.

Cooper's Hawk: Nesting was underway at Chalco Hills Recreation Area, Sarpy Co, 9-10 May (NR, JWH), and the observer was dive-bombed by a pair presumably nesting at Pioneer Park, Lincoln, in May (LE). Two at a windbreak near FL on 25 May (LR, RH) were probably nesting.

Red-shouldered Hawk: One had returned to FF, 4 April (JS); this is the only breeding site known in NE.

Broad-winged Hawk: Reports were in the period 10 April-10 May, with a best count of 19 at FF on 5 May (BP,LP). Rare in the west, there were two reports, neither with details: two were in Dawes Co on 28 April (RG) and one was at Clear Creek Marshes on 9 May (BW,DW). One was kettling with gulls in Stanton Co, 25 April (DH).

Swainson's Hawk: Earliest were singles in Adams Co on 4 April (JGJ) and Lancaster Co the same day (LR, RH); the best count was an excellent 93 in the RWB on 18 April, including 23 roosting at Griess Basin (JGJ).

Red-tailed Hawk: A good count was 19 in Dixon Co, 28 March (JJ). A fledgling was noted on 21 May at Towle Park in the heart of Omaha (NR), and another "fuzzy" in Adams Co on 26 April (LR, RH).

Ferruginous Hawk: Last easterly bird was at Sacramento-Wilcox on 22 March (LR, RH).

Rough-legged Hawk: Last were singles in Kimball Co, 19 April (JS), and in Clay Co, an adult, 18 April (JGJ). Late-departing birds are usually immatures. Best count was 15 in Scotts Bluff Co, 11 of these at Kiowa Springs, on 8 March (SJD).

Golden Eagle: Routine reports.

American Kestrel: One was eating a live snake at FF on 4 April (JS), and another was on eggs at the Betsy Hancock Ranch in Cass Co the same day (JS). Best count was 14 in Dixon Co on 28 March (JJ).

Merlin: Last was one of the race *Falco columbarius columbarius* in Clay Co, 9 May (JGJ). Most identified as subspecies are *F. c. richardsonii*, the last of which was noted in Kimball Co on 19 April (SJD, JS). Unexpected was a female of the very dark race *F. c. suckleyi*, sometimes known as "Black Merlin," photographed at Oliver Res on 5 April (SJD). This race breeds on the Pacific Coast, but has probably occurred in Colorado and was found on 15 Jan 1998 in Banner Co.

Prairie Falcon: Last in the east was at Wood Duck on 29 March (DH), although another, reported without details, was seen far east of its summer range at FL on 16 May (JJ).

Peregrine Falcon: Migrants passed through as expected in the period 15 April-14 May, including about 21 birds. As usual, most appear to follow shorebirds through the RWB. An excellent count of 9 was made on 24 April between the RWB and Sarpy Co (JS).

Gray Partridge: There were 3 reports of 5 birds: 2 were 5 miles north and a half mile west of Ames, Dodge Co, on 27 April (DP); 2 were 3 miles north of Creighton, Knox Co, on 5 May (MB), and one was 6 miles east and 1 mile north of Creighton on 24 May (WRS, JS).

Chukar: One seen in south Sioux Co on 4 April was thought to be from a flock released several years ago by Rick Kaan (HKH).

Ring-necked Pheasant: Routine reports.

Greater Prairie-Chicken: Best counts were 17 at the lek at Burchard L, Pawnee Co, on 10 April (B) and 16 males displaying at the lek on Taylor Ranch on 14 March (JS). Singles were reported from habitat outposts near Rowe Sanctuary on 24 May (LR, RH) and 4 miles north of Heartwell on 3 May (LR, RH).

Sharp-tailed Grouse: This species is now well-established in areas of Kimball Co, where it previously was absent; 17 were found at Oliver Res, 8 March (SJD). A single male continues to try to introduce his genes into the prairie-chicken pool at Taylor Ranch; he was displaying among the prairie-chickens there 14 March-4 April (JS, B).

Wild Turkey: A good count was 83 below Keystone Dam, Keith Co, on 21 March (SJD). Turkeys are becoming more numerous in the Scotts Bluff Co area, appearing in strange places, such as residential areas in Gering (AK).

Northern Bobwhite: One was noted at Blyburg Creek, Dakota Co, for the first time since the winter of 1996-97 (BFH). This species is well-established in the North Platte Valley as far as Wyoming; several were calling at Stateline Island on 15-17 May (George Brown, WRS).

King Rail: A recording of calls from birds that might be this species was made at Hormel Park, Fremont, on 21 May were submitted to the NOURC (DP). The observer was not positive of the identification, however. In spring, King Rails may appear anywhere in the state.

Virginia Rail: Four spotted at Clear Creek Marshes on 21 March (SJD, JS) apparently wintered there; migrants usually arrive after mid-April. A few still present at Crystal Cove L at the end of the period likely were breeders (BFH). Breeding is rare in the south and the east.

Sora: Earliest were 2 rather early on 18 April at Mansfield Marsh, near Crawford (SJD, JS), and another at FL the next day (LR, RH). Breeding is rare south of the Platte Valley, so the one at Waco Basin on 31 May (JS, WRS) was of interest.

American Coot: High counts all better than the previous record high were 7,710 in Lancaster Co, including 6,135 at BOL on 10 April (LE), 3,000 at Omadi Bend on 28 March (BFH), and 2,400 at CLNWR on 8 April (SJD).

Sandhill Crane: A pair at Harvard Lagoon on 25 April-16 May was suggestive of a breeding attempt (JGJ); these were large cranes, possibly "Greater" (JGJ). A recently-increasing population using the Clear Creek Marshes area was represented by as many as 1,500 there on 5 April (SJD); only a single adult remained by 8 May (SJD). On 4 April, 225 were at Little L Alice, NPNWR (AK). No large counts were received from central NE. A good count for an easterly location was 170 over Niobrara on 10 April (BP, LP). An easterly straggler was at Wood Duck on 20-23 April (DH).

Whooping Crane: Only two reports, one of an adult which first appeared west of Doniphan on 15 Feb and which remained until 28 April (B), a juvenile southwest of Crane Meadows NC in Hall Co on 28 March-28 April (JS, B), and another of a bird north of the Alda exit on I-80 on 14 March (B).

Black-bellied Plover: High count was 73 in the RWB, 15-16 May (JGJ); the highest 3 counts for this species are in the period 15-19 May. The only other reports were of at least one in Cass Co on 18 April (GW), 2 at South Kirkpatrick Basin on 19 April (JGJ) and 10 north of Green Acres Basin on 14 May (JS).

American Golden-Plover: In the RWB, Jorgensen found a total of 320 in the period 4 April-16 May, peaking at 113 birds 9-10 May (JGJ). Last was an alternate-plumaged bird at Wood Duck on 18 May (DH).

Snowy Plover: Jorgensen has found this species in the RWB each year in recent years; this year's contribution was a mile north of Green Acres Basin on 25 April (*JGJ, JS). No others were reported.

Semipalmated Plover: Earliest were 2 in the RWB on 11 April (JGJ); best count 210 on 1-2 May (JGJ), and the latest one in Phelps Co on 17 May (MU). Uncommon westward, 21 was a good count north of Antioch on 15 May (SJD).

Piping Plover: Earliest were 7 at the Kingsley Dam breeding site on 18 April (SJD); by 14 May, 4 nests were underway (SJD). At least 2 were at the breeding site at Niobrara by 19 April (JJ). Jorgensen found a total of 8 in the RWB, 7 of

those 1-2 May and the other 9-10 May (JGJ). Breeding is unrecorded in the RWB. Westerly was one at Enders Res on 2 May (SJD).

Killdeer: Jorgensen found 201-297 each weekend from 4 April-16 May in the RWB, and 3 downy young were at Bruning L on 9 May (JGJ). A good count of 112 was made in Dixon Co, 1 April (JJ).

Mountain Plover: Up to 5 were found southwest of the Kimball airport from 17 April on (SJD, LR, RH, JS, JG); a nest scrape was being made on 16 May 7 miles south of Kimball (SJD, JS). Two were southeast of Sidney on 17 April (SJD), one of the very few reports east of Kimball Co.

Black-necked Stilt: The only reports away from the regular location along Highway 2 in Sheridan Co were of a single at Weis Lagoon on 9 May (JGJ) and 2 at the Scottsbluff SL on 13 May (AK). As many as 5 were along Highway 2 at mile Marker 106 on 15 May (SJD).

American Avocet: Avocets occurred eastward in good numbers: 62 in Dakota Co on 26 April (BFH), 43 in Lancaster Co on 3 May (LE), 36 at Willow Creek L on 13 April (DH), and 9 in Otoe Co on 26 April (CF, LF). Best counts statewide were 117 in the RWB on 1 May (JGJ) and 69 at Clear Creek Marshes on 2 May (SJD).

Greater Yellowlegs: Best counts were 65 in the RWB on 11 April (JGJ) and 65 at the Minden I-80 exit on 16 April (LR, RH). Reports occurred between 2 April (BP, LP, JS) and 14 May (JJ).

Lesser Yellowlegs: Best counts were 812 in the RWB, 24-25 April (JGJ), 260 there 1-2 May (JGJ), and 200 at Clear Creek Marshes on 2 May (SJD). Jorgensen recorded a total of 1,524 in the RWB in the period 4 April-16 May.

Solitary Sandpiper: Reports came in the period 16 April (LR, RH)-9 May (JGJ, BW, DW).

Willet: Jorgensen counted 110 in the RWB between 18 April and 16 May; the best count was 70 on 25-26 April (JGJ). Good counts for the east were 65 at Jack Sinn Marsh on 25 April (LE), 30 in Dixon Co on 5 May (JJ), and one in Cass Co on 18 April (GW). Two in extreme west Knox Co on 25 May were in suitable breeding habitat, but far east of the usual breeding range (WRS, JS), and one was rather late at BOL on 30 May (LE). Migrants normally pass through by 20 May.

Spotted Sandpiper: Jorgensen counted a total of 35 in the RWB--the most, 25 on 9-10 May (JGJ).

Upland Sandpiper: Best counts were 17 in the RWB on 15 May (JGJ); a total of 41 there on 24 April-16 May (JGJ), 12 at Valentine NWR on 10 May (LF, CF), and 11 near Keystone on 9 May (SJD).

Whimbrel: The 5-6 birds reported were slightly ahead of peak migration, usually 10-24 May. Singles were noted near Keystone on 2, 9, and 14 May (SJD), near the Dismal River Campground on 10 May (*RG), and 3 were at Sutherland Res on 14 May (*SJD).

Long-billed Curlew: A large concentration for the date, when birds are usually on territories, was 26 at L Ogallala, 2 May (SJD). Eight birds, including 2 on nests, were near Keystone on 9 May (SJD). One was calling in suitable breeding habitat south of Exit 1 on I-80 on 9 May (SJD); breeding records in the area are lacking.

Hudsonian Godwit: A total of 169, rather low, was recorded in the RWB 18 April (B)-10 May (LF, CF); best count was 93 on 18-19 April, including 46 at Kirkpatrick Basin on 26 April (JGJ). Reports occurred between 16 April through 4 May, with none, as expected, west of the RWB.

Marbled Godwit: Best counts were modest: 17 in the RWB, 24-25 April (JGJ), and 11 near the Minden exit on I-80, 16 April (LR, RH). Rare in the east, one was in Dakota Co on 23 April (BFH), and 2 were at Scribner on 16 May (DP), the last reported.

Ruddy Turnstone: Only 5 reported. One was photographed (and posted to the observer's Web Site!) at FL on 17 May (MU), 3 were at L Babcock on 25 May (WRS, JS), and 1 was rather late at Wilkins Lagoon on 31 May (JS, WRS).

Sanderling: Best count was 14 at Sutherland Res, 8 May (SJD). Reports occurred between 2 and 31 May, the latter a banded individual (right leg yellow over dark green) at Harvard Lagoon (JS, WRS). At this writing, we have not been able to determine its provenance.

Semipalmated Sandpiper: Jorgensen counted an excellent 2,642 in the RWB between 18 April and 16 May. Migrants were still being observed at the end of the period, however; 60 were in the RWB on 31 May (JS, WRS). Best counts were 1,354 on 1-2 May (JGJ), 227 north of Antioch on 15 May (SJD, JS), and 140 on 2 May at Clear Creek Marshes (SJD), the latter excellent westerly counts. Earliest were noted on 18 April (SJD, JGJ).

Western Sandpiper: This species is only a rare migrant in the Great Plains in spring and should be identified with care. There are few documented spring reports for NE. Most migrate up the Pacific Coast in late April. A note of advice from an East-Coast observer stated that "If having difficulty separating a bird from Semipalmated Sandpiper, it's not a Western." Westerns in spring resemble miniature Dunlin, with a reddish cast to the upperparts and a long, droopy bill. This spring, reports were in the expected period, 18 April (JGJ)-25 May (LR, RH), with the best count of 11 at Clear Creek Marshes on 9 May (SJD). Rather late was one northwest of Heartwell on 25 May (LR, RH).

Least Sandpiper: A total of 603 were found in the RWB, 18 April-16 May, peaking at 361 on 9-10 May (JGJ). Best westerly count was 40 at Clear Creek Marshes on 8 May (SJD). Reports were between 18 April (JGJ, SJD) and 30 May (LE).

White-rumped Sandpiper: This species migrates through the RWB in large numbers. Jorgensen found a total of 3,304, including a peak count of 1,725 on 9 May (JGJ), the most numerous species this spring. A late migrant, the first were rather early, 6 in the RWB on 24 April (JGJ); the earliest documented record is 19 April. It was still numerous at the end of the period, with 385 counted in the RWB on 31 May (JS, WRS). Best westerly count was 123 north of Antioch, 15 May (SJD).

Baird's Sandpiper: In contrast to White-rumped Sandpiper, this species is an early migrant; first were 8 at Kirkpatrick Basin on 29 March (B). Jorgensen found 1,619 in the RWB on 4 April-16 May, with the best count of 557 on 1-2 May. A few remained into June, but it is far less numerous at that time than White-rumped; 24 were counted in the RWB on 31 May (JS, WRS).

Pectoral Sandpiper: This was a good spring for this species, which is sometimes not very numerous in spring; Jorgensen found 1,492 in the RWB on 11 April-16 May--best counts, 506 on 1-2 May and 480 on 9-10 May. Rare in the west, only a single was reported west of the RWB, at Clear Creek Marshes on 2 May (SJD).

Dunlin: Only an uncommon migrant in NE, a good total of about 67 birds was reported, including 46 on 9 May in the RWB (JGJ). Earliest were 2 in the RWB on

24 April (JGJ), and 3 were at Wilkins Lagoon on 31 May (JS). Also rare westward, none was reported west of the RWB.

Stilt Sandpiper: Another common RWB migrant, Jorgensen found 1,058 in all, 927 of them on 15-16 May, 265 of these at Jensen Lagoon on 16 May (JGJ). Best single day count was 339 in the Lakeside-Antioch area, Sheridan Co, on 15 May (SJD). Rather late were one near Heartwell, Kearney Co, on 28 May (LR, RH), 4 in Lancaster Co on 29 May (JS), and 6 in Lancaster Co on 30 May (LE).

Buff-breasted Sandpiper: As expected, migrants were restricted to their narrow eastern RWB spring route. Jorgensen reported a total of 166, 99 on 15-16 May, 52 of these at Wilkins Lagoon on 15 May, and 67 on 9-10 May. No others were reported.

Ruff: Nebraska's 4th record, 3rd for spring, was a female in extreme north eastern Antelope Co on 9 April (*MB). Photos showed the brightly-colored legs, typical of this species, in this case, orange.

Short-billed Dowitcher: Data on movements are limited, especially documented early records for this late-migrating species. Jorgensen documented a basic-plumaged individual by its diagnostic yellowlegs-like call notes at Wilkins Lagoon on 25 April, an early record. Another was reported at the Minden I-80 exit on 19 April, but without details. A 1st state record of the eastern subspecies *Limnodromus griseus griseus* was an adult photographed by Jorgensen north of Bradshaw on 2 May; it was described, among other details, as colored "very differently" from Short-bills of the expected central race *L. g. hendersoni* (*JGJ). Jorgensen found only 15 during his spring survey in the RWB, singles on 25 April and on 2 May, 10 on 9-10 May, and 4 on 15-16 May. The only others reported were singles on 3 May in Lancaster Co, without details (LE), 6-8 May in Dixon Co, without details (JJ), and 3 at Little Salt Fork Marsh on 8 May (*JS), and one there on 16 May, without details (LE).

Long-billed Dowitcher: Jorgensen found 1,783 of this common migrant in the RWB on 4 April-16 May, with a peak count 1,152 of on 1 May (JGJ). Best single-location count was 323 at Wilkins Lagoon on 23 April (JS). Earliest were singles at Gleason Lagoon (SJD) and near Hastings, Adams Co, (BP, LP) on 4 April. Last were 100 north of Fremont, Dodge Co, on 12 May (DP).

Common Snipe: No concentrations were noted. Migrants were reported, 26 March (DH)-10 May (LE). May reports may be of late migrants or indicative of breeding; winnowing birds were west of Lodgepole, Cheyenne Co, on 8 May (SJD) and at Clear Creek Marshes on 9 May (BW, DW).

American Woodcock: Very early (but see Winter Report!) were a single at Wood Duck on 4 March, at a location where 2 were displaying later (DH), and as many as 8 at BOL the next day (JS). The westerly outpost in Kearney Co was occupied again by at least one bird on 13 March (LR, RH).

Wilson's Phalarope: A common spring migrant, 2,756 were counted in the RWB by Jorgensen, 8 April through 31 May; over 700 were noted on 3 different weekends (JGJ). Best single location count was 568 near Hayes Center, Hayes Co, on 2 May (SJD). Breeding probably occurs at Harvard Lagoon, where 4 were still present on 31 May (JS, WRS).

Red-necked Phalarope: The only reports were a good count of 54 north of Antioch, Sheridan Co, on 15 May (SJD) and 2 near Lakeside, Sheridan Co, the same day (JS).

Franklin's Gull: Best count was a modest 300 at Sutherland Res on 2 May (SJD).

Bonaparte's Gull: Best count was a record 465 at LM on 18 April (SJD).

Mew Gull: Rapidly becoming a regular species at LM, 2 were found this spring: a basic-plumaged adult on 21 March (SJD) and an adult on 18-19 April (SJD, JS). These are the 10th and 11th individuals to date, all in the period 1 Dec-11 May. Only one record is not from LM.

Ring-billed Gull: Best count was 2,200 in the LM area, 21 March (SJD).

California Gull: Migrants arrive in April, and the 11 birds at LM, 21 March (SJD), probably wintered (see Winter Report). Subsequently few were noted: 1-2 adults were in the L Ogallala area on 18 April-15 May (JS, SJD). Reports away from LM are few, but more likely in spring than other seasons. Surprisingly far to the east was an adult at BOL on 30 April (JS); one was sighted south of Antioch, Sheridan Co, on 9 May (BW, DW), and an adult was at Sutherland Res on 14 May (SJD).

Herring Gull: Migrants essentially cleared the LM area by mid-April (SJD), although a single remained until 15 May (SJD), and another was at Sutherland Res until 14 May (SJD). Most May birds are immatures, as was a 1st summer individual at Swanson Res, Hitchcock Co, 14 May (SJD).

Thayer's Gull: An amazing 20 or so birds wintered at LM (see Winter Report); 15 were still present on 4 March (SJD), and two 1st winter birds were still there on 18 April (JS). None reported elsewhere.

Iceland Gull: An adult at LM (see Winter Report) remained until 4 March (B).

Lesser Black-backed Gull: Two adults at LM (see Winter Report) remained until 5 April (*SJD) and one of the 2nd-winter birds present in winter (see Winter Report) was reportedly still present on 16 March (B), although no details were provided.

Glaucous Gull: Seven, including a remarkable 3 adults, were still at LM on 21 March (SJD); only 2 adults were noted in late Feb (see Winter Report). Record late was a worn 1st alternate bird at Sutherland Res on 2 May (SJD). This is the first May record for this species in NE. As wintering numbers continue to show spectacular increases, such records can be expected in the future.

Great Black-backed Gull: There were 2 reports, neither with details: a 1st winter bird at L Ogallala on 16 March (B), and one east of Niobrara, Knox Co, on 25 March (B).

Caspian Tern: Only 3 reported, in Cass Co on 4 May (GW), at Pawnee L on 10 May (LE), and at Sutherland Res on 14 May (SJD).

Common Tern: Only one reported, an alternate-plumaged adult at L Babcock on 25 May (WRS, JS).

Forster's Tern: Best counts were 85 at L Ogallala on 9 May (SJD) and 10 along the Missouri River in Dakota Co the same day (BFH).

Least Tern: Earliest was in Cass Co on 2 May (GW). All reports for the period were from the Platte River, west to the Kearney area.

Black Tern: Large numbers did not appear until the end of May; 230 were in the RWB on 31 May (JS, WRS), and 60 were at CLNWR on 15 May (SJD). Earliest were 2 at Wood Duck on 4 May (DH).

Rock Dove: Routine reports.

Eurasian Collared-Dove: This species appears to have begun a major expansion into NE. Thanks to Lanny Randolph and Robin Harding, their presence in southcentral NE is well recorded. The single bird which wintered at Shelton, the state's first, was last reported on 7 April (Marty Mathieson, fide LR, RH), about the same time

as a pair carrying nest material was noted at the Roger and Marilyn Newcomb residence in Kearney on 22 April; this pair nested and had fledged 2 young by 19 May. As of this writing, it appears that a second brood is on the way.

Mourning Dove: Routine reports.

Monk Parakeet: Jan Paseka observed Monk Parakeets at Freedom Park, Omaha, early this spring. The writer and Jim and Sandy Kovanda checked Freedom Park on 10 May and found 2 birds. The park attendants stated that 1-2 birds had been present for several years, and that 2 nests were under construction this year. Interestingly, the birds depart in winter "when it gets cold" and return late April-early May. They are also difficult to find during the day when the public is present. This is the first report of this species in NE since the 1970's.

Black-billed Cuckoo: The few reports, of 5 birds, were from the southeast, beginning on 14 May with 2 at ADF (LF, CF).

Yellow-billed Cuckoo: Earliest were one at ADF on 12 May (LF, CF) and 4 at Schramm Park the same day (JS). First in the west was in south Sioux Co on 30 May (HKH).

Barn Owl: The reliable nesting location just north of Clear Creek Marshes was occupied by 2 birds on 5 April (SJD). A report from Pierce Co on 9 April without details (B) is from an area of the state where there have been few reports.

Eastern Screech-Owl: Routine reports.

Great Horned Owl: An adult with a well-grown fledgling was at Wyuka Cem on 9 May (LE).

Burrowing Owl: Earliest and best count was 11 in southeast Cheyenne Co, 17 April (SJD). Easternmost were 3 near Harvard, Clay Co (JGJ).

Barred Owl: Near the western edge of the breeding range, 2 young were seen at Wilderness Park, Lincoln, on 19 May (KP); adults were seen there on 10 and 23 May (LE).

Long-eared Owl: None reported.

Short-eared Owl: None reported.

Northern Saw-Whet Owl: None reported.

Common Nighthawk: Most reports were from the east, the earliest on 8 May in Lancaster Co (JS); none reported from the west until 29 May south of Gering, Scotts Bluff Co (AK).

Common Poorwill: Amazingly, one with a broken wing was found in Lincoln, at the eastern edge of the migration route, on the record early date of 14 April (JS); prior earliest dates were 18 and 24 April. The bird was sent to Tom Labeledz at the State Museum. Elsewhere, the only report was of calling birds in West Ash Canyon, Dawes Co, on 15 May (WM).

Chuck-will's-widow: The only report was also record early: one at Wolf L area in north Saunders Co on 2 May (TH), a regular breeding location for this species with a patchy distribution.

Whip-poor-will: Not a record, but rather early were 3 at FF on 25 April (B). Three were 4 miles north of Creighton, Knox Co, on 9 May (DH); migrants are not often reported west of the counties along the Missouri Valley.

Chimney Swift: Routine reports.

White-throated Swift: Tying the record early date was a single at Scotts Bluff NM on 19 April (SJD, JS); a good count of 20 was made there on 17 May (SJD). One at Stage Hill Road in the Wildcat Hills on 16 May (SJD) was away from any known breeding site.

Ruby-throated Hummingbird: Routine reports.

Belted Kingfisher: Routine reports.

Lewis' Woodpecker: Not numerous in NE, one was reported in West Ash Canyon on 15 May (WM).

Red-headed Woodpecker: This highly migratory woodpecker was a little late in arriving; first in areas where wintering does not take place were 2 in Dixon Co on 6 May (JJ), one near Gibbon, Buffalo Co, on 7 May (LR, RH), one in eastern Cherry Co on 14 May (RG), and finally one in Scotts Bluff Co on 15 May (AK).

Red-bellied Woodpecker: Routine reports.

Yellow-bellied Sapsucker: Only 4 were reported, all in April and from the east, about a normal spring. Singles were at Wehrspann L on 4 April (B), Rulo Bluffs, Richardson Co, on 12 April (JS), northeast of Ames, Dodge Co, on 16 April (DP), and at Wyuka Cem on 21 April (JS).

Downy Woodpecker: Routine reports.

Hairy Woodpecker: Routine reports.

Northern Flicker: A "red-shafted" bird was at Laurel, Cedar Co, on 10 April (B), a late sighting for this bird in the east. Another, reported as a male "red-shafted," was at Walgren L, Sheridan Co, on 10 May (BW,DW), rather late for a pure "red-shafted" flicker. Most summer birds in the west are hybrids, or "salmon-shafted" flickers.

Olive-sided Flycatcher: First was at FF on 23 May (BP, LP). The only other report was of another at Schramm Park on 24 May (JS).

Western Wood-Pewee: Rather far to the east and rather early was one at Valentine NWR on 10 May (LF, CF); no details were provided, however, on what can be a difficult identification. Reports from this area are not unprecedented, but none is documented.

Eastern Wood-Pewee: First was in Cass Co on 8 May (GW). One was reported west of Wolf L on 24 May (TH).

Acadian Flycatcher: The only report was of one somewhat northerly at Neale Woods on 19 May throughout the period (JS).

Alder Flycatcher: All reports were, as expected, from the east, first a single near Allen, Dixon Co, on 17 May (JJ). One still singing at ADF on 25 May was the last reported (LF, CF).

Willow Flycatcher: Earliest was one identified by calls at Wood Duck on 8 May (DH), rather early, and one was assumed to be this species rather than Least by its small head, on 5 May near Gibbon in Buffalo Co (LR, RH). In the west, first was at Rock Creek L on 14 May (SJD). Best count was 4 at Rowe Sanctuary on 24 May (LR, RH).

Least Flycatcher: There were numerous reports, west to L Ogallala, in the period 5-31 May; they were "everywhere" around Seward, Seward Co, on 22 May (JG), and 3 were at Schramm Park on 20 May (JS), indicating peak movement.

Cordilleran Flycatcher: None reported.

Eastern Phoebe: Earliest was one in the observer's Bellevue yard, Sarpy Co, on 25 March (BP, LP). Uncommon in the west during migration, only two were reported, at Clear Creek Marshes on 18 April (SJD).

Say's Phoebe: Although uncommon as far east as Kearney Co, the first NE sighting occurred there on 29 March (B). A much rarer occurrence was one "ticked" in Lancaster and Saunders Counties as it flew from one to the other near

Jack Sinn Marsh on 18 April (NR). This sighting is only about the 6th southeast of Polk Co. Best count was 11 south of Exit 1 on I-80, Kimball Co, on 8 May (SJD).

Great Crested Flycatcher: First was in Cass Co on 4 May (GW). Most westerly was one at Rowe Sanctuary on 24 May (LR, RH).

Cassin's Kingbird: The only reports came from breeding locations: 2 south of Exit 1 on I-80, Kimball Co, on 8 May (SJD), 3 in Long Canyon on 17 May (JGJ), and 6 in the canyon south of Redington on 14 May (AK). There are only 4 reports of spring migrants east of the breeding range.

Western Kingbird: First was in Cass Co on 29 April (GW), and, in the west, singles at Enders Res and Swanson Res, 2 May (SJD). Best count was 8 at FL on 16 May (JJ).

Eastern Kingbird: First was at Wolf L on 5 April (TH), and in the west, at Clear Creek Marshes on 8 May (SJD).

Scissor-tailed Flycatcher: A great find during the NOU Spring Meeting at Scottsbluff was one a mile north of the Scotts Bluff Co line in Sioux Co, 17-19 May (Neva Pruess fide AK, HKH, m. ob.). Only about 25 spring sightings for this species have been reported.

Horned Lark: Best count was 1,830 in Scotts Bluff Co on 8 March (SJD).

Purple Martin: Earliest were 1-2 in South Sioux City on 10 April (BFH). Westerly was one at Hultine Basin on 15 April (JGJ).

Tree Swallow: Earliest, and best count, was 60 at BOL on 26 March (JS), a rather early date, followed by 4 at Wehrspann L on 29 March (BP, LP). Another good count was 50 at Niobrara on 19 April (JJ). Increasing in recent years westward, 1-4 were noted at Walgren L on 10 May (BW, DW) and at Winters Creek L on 17 May (BW, DW).

Violet-green Swallow: The only reports were of one at Scotts Bluff NM on 9 May (SJD) and another there on 16 May (LR, RH).

Northern Rough-winged Swallow: Earliest was a single at Wood Duck on 5 April (DH).

Bank Swallow: Earliest was at Wolf L on 25 April (TH), and the best count a colony of 30 at Yellowbanks Area, 6 May (DH). In the west, earliest were 4 at Walgren L, 10 May (BW, DW).

Cliff Swallow: Earliest was one at L Ogallala on 18 April (SJD) and the best count was 2,000 there on 9 May (SJD).

Barn Swallow: Earliest were singles at Neale Woods (B) and at FL (B), both on 12 April.

Steller's Jay: One was reported at Carter Canyon on 16 April (B), but no details were forthcoming. None reported during the winter, although 2 were present in the winter of 1996-97.

Blue Jay: A good count was 60 at Kenesaw, 26 April (LR, RH).

Pinyon Jay: These birds are difficult to locate when nesting, but flocks of 5-75 were noted in western Morrill Co on 15-17 May (WM, AK, LR, RH), including young of the year; 2 used nests were located, one of these probably used this year (WM). In the Black Hills, dependent young have been seen as early as mid-April (Johnsgard, 1979: Birds of the Great Plains).

Black-billed Magpie: An easterly nest was found south of Norfolk in Madison Co, 29 March; 3-5 adults were in the area (DH). Nesting occurs regularly east to Dakota, Saunders, and Clay Cos.

American Crow: Rather gruesome, but normal for this omnivorous species, was the sight of 100 birds eating dead geese at FL, 20-22 March (DH, LR, RH).

Black-capped Chickadee: Routine reports.

Tufted Titmouse: Routine reports.

Red-breasted Nuthatch: Last were in the southeast, far from known breeding areas: one was at the observers' Bellevue feeder, Sarpy Co, until 5 May (BP, LP), and another was at Nebraska City, Otoe Co, until 30 April (LF, CF).

White-breasted Nuthatch: Routine reports.

Pygmy Nuthatch: Routine reports.

Brown Creeper: Last in non-breeding locations was one in north Lancaster Co on 10 April (LE). There were 3 reports of this rare breeder in breeding locations: 4 at Chadron SP on 18 April (SJD) may have been migrants, but the species is rare there in summer; at the most dependable breeding location, FF, 2 were feeding together on 28 April and seen again on the same tree on 2 May (BP, LP); and one was singing at Krimlofski Tract, Neale Woods, 24 May (BP, LP).

Rock Wren: First was rather early at Scottsbluff NM on 18 April (JS,SJD).

Carolina Wren: The current range was outlined by the reports, which were north and west to Schramm SP (JG, JWH); it seems that numbers have declined somewhat from those of recent years, although 4 were at Pioneers Park on 16 May (LE).

House Wren: Earliest was at ADF on 17 April (LF, CF), about on schedule.

Winter Wren: The 4 birds reported were migrants in the period 3-19 April, all in the Missouri River Valley (B).

Sedge Wren: Earliest was one at Arbor L, Lancaster Co, on 10 May (LE), and 2 were in a Dodge Co pasture on 16 May; they still sang there on 31 May (DP). One that appeared at Gibbon, Buffalo Co, on 12 May was still present on 31 May (LR, RH). Breeding in June is not common; and most birds move through in spring. Most breeding in Nebraska occurs in July-September. As expected, none was reported west of Gibbon.

Marsh Wren: This species winters at a few known localities in the North Platte Valley; the 3 at Kiowa Springs on 8 March were in this category (SJD). Few arrivals of summering birds were reported; the one in Dakota Co on 9 May was probably a migrant (BFH).

Golden-crowned Kinglet: Few were reported; last in Cass Co, 12 April (GW).

Ruby-crowned Kinglet: Reports occurred in the period from 3 April at FF (B) and Wood Duck (DH) through 10 May at Wehrspann L (JWH). Uncommon in the west, singles were at Clear Creek Marshes on 5 April and 9 May (SJD).

Blue-gray Gnatcatcher: Earliest in the east were at FF on 14 April (B) and as far north as Hoskins on 16 April (B). A few have occurred in recent years north to Dakota Co. Amazing numbers were discovered in the west; in recent years, single birds had been noted in the west Panhandle, but this spring no fewer than 13 were found. Five were north of Exit 1 on I-80 at Oliver Res, and five more were south of Colton in Cheyenne Co, on the same 8 May (SJD). 5 were also reported along Stage Hill Road in the Wildcat Hills of Scotts Bluff Co on 16-17 May (SJD), and 3 in Long Canyon on 17 May (JGJ). An isolated breeding population in the Cheyenne, Wyoming, area has persisted for some time, apparently an outlier of the small population in the northeastern Colorado foothills.

Eastern Bluebird: Best count was a moderate 13 near Wood Duck on 1 April (DH). A small breeding population has become established in the nest boxes around

WHNC in recent years; a pair was nest building there on 19 April (SJD, JS). Earliest west was at James Ranch on 30 March (SL); another was in Dawes Co on 28 April (RG).

Mountain Bluebird: Earliest reports of migrants were on 4 March at James Ranch (SL) and on 5 March at L Minatare (Brad McKinney, fide AK). A nest with eggs in a Ponderosa Pine snag in West Ash Canyon was found on 15 May (WM). Breeding occurs regularly east to at least Dawes Co. Easternmost was 1 at CLNWR, 15 May (SJD).

Townsend's Solitaire: None reported.

Veery: This rare migrant was detected only once, a single bird singing at Platte River SP on 24 May (JS).

Gray-cheeked Thrush: Only 4 were reported, a poor year for this species, but amazingly, 2 were from the west, where this species is only a casual migrant. Singles were at Ash Hollow SHP on 8 May (SJD) and at L Ogallala on 9 May (SJD). There are only about 20 Panhandle reports in spring. The lone eastern birds were at Willis on 9 May (BFH) and in Cass Co on 14 May (GW).

Swainson's Thrush: This usually-common statewide migrant was reported in good numbers, in contrast to Gray-cheeked Thrush; best counts were 13 in Ash Hollow SHP on 8 May (SJD) and 10 at Sutherland Res the same day (SJD). They were "everywhere" in Seward Co on 22 May (JG). One was very early, but not unprecedented, at Wyuka Cem on 13 April; it had a tail the same color as its back and a bold eye-ring (*JS). Last was one at the Gering Cem, 28 May (AK).

Hermit Thrush: Migrants were reported from 3 April at FF (B) through 3 May at FF (JS). Best count was 4 at FF on 4 April (JS).

Wood Thrush: As expected, all reports came from the Missouri River Valley; earliest were at FF (JS) and in Dakota Co (BFH) on 9 May. One was on a nest at Krimlofski Tract, Neale Woods, on 30 May (JS).

American Robin: Best count was 120 at BOL on 15 March (LE).

Gray Catbird: Probably overwintering was one at a Bellevue feeder in Sarpy Co on 9 March (B); this sighting represents only the 6th March record for the state. Most reports were from the east, the earliest, 2 at Wood Duck on 5 May (DH); earliest in the west was at Gering Cem on 16 May (AK). A record count was 35 at Rowe Sanctuary on 24 May (LR, RH), indicating peak movement.

Northern Mockingbird: Earliest was at Harvard Lagoon on 15 April (JGJ). This species is being reported routinely statewide and has apparently increased its numbers in recent years.

Sage Thrasher: Although generally considered a casual spring migrant, recent reports suggest it is a regular migrant in low numbers. Only 2 were found: singles south of Exit 1 on I-80 in Kimball Co and 7 miles west of Bushnell on 17 April (SJD).

Brown Thrasher: An amazing sight must have been the 60 near Kenesaw on 26 April (LR, RH), a record count.

American Pipit: Migrants were noted statewide on 11 April, 6 at Homer (BFH), through 8 May, one at Sutherland Res (SJD), about normal. Best count was 67 at Clear Creek Marshes on 18 April (SJD, JS).

Sprague's Pipit: None reported.

Cedar Waxwing: Routine reports.

Northern Shrike: Last were rather far to the southeast: 2 at BOL on 23 March (JS).

Loggerhead Shrike: Earliest migrant noted away from the wintering range in the southeast was in Dixon Co on 29 March (JJ), and one was as far west as Stateline Island by 3 May (AK). Nest building was underway as early as 29 March in northern Lancaster Co (LE). Good counts were 13 in south Cheyenne Co on 17 April (SJD) and 13 south of Exit 1 on I-80, 8 May (SJD).

European Starling: Routine reports.

Bell's Vireo: Earliest was near Lilley, Kimball Co, on 9 May (LR, RH). Best count was 6 at Rock Creek L on 14 May (SJD).

Blue-headed Vireo: This eastern migrant was reported from 9-23 May, about normal. Westernmost report was of one at Shickley on 9 May (JGJ). There are no documented records from the western third of the state.

Plumbeous Vireo: This Rocky Mountain species is an uncommon migrant in the west and breeds in the northwest. There were several reports on 16-17 May, with the easternmost at CLNWR on 17 May (JS).

Yellow-throated Vireo: As expected, reports were from the east, the earliest, 2 at ADF on 8 May (LF, CF); the farthest west occurred 3 miles west of Meadowlark L, Seward Co, on 23 May (JG). Unexpected, however, was one at Halsey on 15 May (RG).

Warbling Vireo: Earliest in the east was one near Denton on 26 April (JS), and in the west, one was at Sutherland Res on 8 May (SJD). Best count was 7 at Pioneers Park on 16 May (LE).

Philadelphia Vireo: None reported.

Red-eyed Vireo: Earliest were in Cass Co on 4 May (GW). There were "many" at Schramm Park by 24 May (JG).

Golden-winged Warbler: Surprisingly, in light of numerous records in recent years, only one was reported, at FF on 11 May (NR).

Tennessee Warbler: Essentially an eastern migrant, best count was 23 at Pioneers Park on 16 May (LE). Reports were in the period 8-30 May. Rare in the west, none was noted west of one at Halsey on 15 May (RG).

Orange-crowned Warbler: An early statewide migrant, the first was one at Blair on 12 April (B), and the last departed ADF on 22 May (LF, CF). Best counts were 20 at Lilley, Kimball Co, on 9 May (LR, RH) and 11 at Sutherland Res on 8 May (SJD).

Nashville Warbler: This was a low spring for this eastern migrant, with only about 12 reported, and a high count of only 3, at Basswood Area on 9 May (BFH). Reports were in the period 4-25 May, all in the Missouri River Valley.

Virginia's Warbler: Only the 2nd documented record for the state was a male at that renowned birding hotspot, the Bushnell Cem, 17 May (*JGJ). Migrants probably pass through the west Panhandle in very low numbers, especially in light of this spring's discovery of over 100 in the South Dakota Black Hills. Where might they nest in NE?

Northern Parula: In recent years, FF has hosted a small population; first there was noted on 18 April (BP, LP), and the most there, 3, on 29 April (JS). The only report elsewhere was one at Towle Park, Omaha, 11 May (NR).

Yellow Warbler: First was rather early at Gleason Lagoon on 24 April (B), and the best count, 45, at Rowe Sanctuary on 24 May (LR, RH).

Chestnut-sided Warbler: As expected, reports were easterly, all in the period 9-26 May, both seen by the same observer (NR). Some 11 birds were reported in all.

Magnolia Warbler: Definitely a low year, with only about 8 reported, 7 in the east in the brief period 20-26 May (JS, JG, BP, LP, DH, LE) and the other far to the west in Cemetery Gulch, Scotts Bluff Co, on 16 May (WRS), the 13th Panhandle spring record.

Black-throated Blue Warbler: This casual statewide migrant was found once: a male sighted at the CLNWR Headquarters on 15 May (*SJD, *JS). This is only about the 21st spring record for the state, and only the 2nd for the Panhandle. Most of the few spring records come from the east, with fall records more evenly distributed over the state.

Yellow-rumped Warbler: "Myrtles" were reported statewide, as expected, from 9 April, in Bellevue, Sarpy Co, (BP, LP), through 16 May, at Pioneers Park (LE); best count was 107, reported as "Myrtles" at Lilley, Kimball Co, on 9 May (LR, RH). Earliest migrant "Audubon's" was somewhat easterly, at Jensen Lagoon on 3 May (LR, RH) and last reported were 6 at CLNWR on 17 May (WRS, JS). At least one "Audubon's" was still in the Wildcat Hills on 17 May (AK); breeding is unconfirmed there.

Townsend's Warbler: Much rarer in spring than in fall, one was at L Minatare on 17 May (*BW, DW). This spring report is the 10th for the state, but only the 3rd documented. Most of the undocumented reports are from the central part of the state, and one of the documented records is from the east.

Black-throated Green Warbler: Only 2 reported, a poor year for this albeit uncommon species: on 20 May at Towle Park, Omaha (NR), and on 22 May in Seward Co (JG).

Blackburnian Warbler: Another species in low numbers this year, only 7 were reported, all in the short period 12-25 May: singles were in Cass Co on 12 May (GW), at Schramm Park on 20 and 24 May (JS), Seward on 22 May (JG), Wolf L (TH) and FF (BP, LP) on 23 May, and in Cuming Co on 25 May (LE).

Yellow-throated Warbler: At FF, where there has been a small population in recent years, 1-2 were noted beginning 11 April (BP, LP), tying the record early date. Exciting was the presence of as many as 5 at the Krimlofski Tract, Neale Woods, 17 April-24 May (B, WRS). A single was at Neale Woods on 23 May (JS). None reported elsewhere.

Palm Warbler: This uncommon easterly migrant was reported in the period 2-12 May, and only 5 were noted. These were at FF on 2 and 5 May (BP, LP), in Dakota Co on 9 May (BFH), in Dixon Co on 10 May (JJ), and in Cass Co on 12 May (GW). An addition from 1997 was 2 birds at BOL on 27 April apparently of the yellowish eastern subspecies *Dendroica plamarum hypochrysea* (JS), probably only a casual migrant in the east. Most NE Palm Warblers are rather pale below.

Blackpoll Warbler: This was a good spring for this species, which is usually a fairly common spring migrant in the east and uncommon in the west. At least 25 were reported in the period 6-29 May, including 6 at Streeter Park, Aurora, on 10 May (JGJ), and about as far west as one could be, 3 at Stateline Island on 16 May (WRS), one at the Gering Cem on 16 May (AK), 2 at Bushnell Cem on 17 May (JGJ), and one at Oliver Res on 17 May (SJD).

Cerulean Warbler: The only report was from FF, where one was found on 9 May (JS). Although always present in very low numbers, these birds were not as much in evidence at FF as they have been in recent years.

Black-and-white Warbler: All reports came from the east, west to Hall Co (LR, RH), presumably all migrants, in the period 13 April-22 May. Only singles were reported, totalling about 8 birds, a low count.

American Redstart: Reports were in the period 9-24 May, even though summering birds occur in the Missouri River Valley. Best count was 5 at FF on 23 May (JS). It breeds along the north edge of the state, but westerly migrants away from breeding areas are uncommon; singles were at L Ogallala and at Oliver Res on 9 May (SJD).

Prothonotary Warbler: FF birds now are being found only at Hidden L, where a singing male was found on 5 May at least through 23 May (JS). Another was singing in extreme southeastern Washington Co, 14-24 May (BP, LP). Unusual was one at Schramm Park on 23 May (JG), and most unusual was one in Scotts Bluff Co on 16 May (WRS). The latter is only the 2nd spring Panhandle report on record.

Ovenbird: Routine reports.

Northern Waterthrush: This species was well-reported from 3-25 May, mostly in the eastern and central parts of the state. Although generally considered rare in the west, there were 4 reports: as many as 3 were at Walgren L on 10 May (BW, DW), and singles were at CLNWR on 15 May (JG), Oliver Res on 16 May (SJD), and Scottsbluff on 17 May (WRS).

Louisiana Waterthrush: Fewer reports than usual, all but one from only 2 locations. As many as 4 arrived at FF on 11 April (BP, LP, B), but none was reported after 25 April, when one was noted (BP, LP). At Platte River SP, one appeared on 22 April (B) and 2 remained in a likely breeding location at least through 24 May (JS). The exception was one at Wyuka Cem on 9 May (LE), one of very few reports away from known breeding locations.

Kentucky Warbler: One that appeared at Schramm Park on 9 May (CNK, JS) was still present on 31 May (JS). Singles were also at Hummel Park, Omaha, on 10 May (WRS), Neale Woods on 19 May (B), and ADF on 22 May (LF, CF). Breeding likely occurs in all these locations.

Connecticut Warbler: This rare migrant was found twice: singles at Schramm Park on 23 May (JG) and at Ashford Scout Camp on 25 May (WRS, JS).

Mourning Warbler: This species also was reported in lower numbers than in recent years. The 3 reports were of one at FF on 23 May (BP, LP), another at Ponca SP the same day (DH), and 2 at Bellevue, Sarpy Co, on 24 May (B).

MacGillivray's Warbler: About 5 were reported, all within a 2-day period, 17-18 May: as many as 4 were at Oliver Res on 17 May (JGJ); singles appeared at Cemetery Gulch and Scotts Bluff Co on 17-18 May (SJD, NR), and at Bushnell Cem (JGJ) and Kimball City Park on 17 May (JGJ).

Common Yellowthroat: Earliest was one at ADF on 26 April (LF, CF), and best counts were 24 in Lancaster Co on 10 May (LE) and 12 in Dixon Co on 24 May (JJ).

Hooded Warbler: This casual spring migrant was reported twice: one at Pioneers Park on 9 May (KP) and a singing male at Krimlofski Tract, Neale Woods, on 23 May (JS).

Wilson's Warbler: This statewide migrant, usually fairly common, was reported in low numbers relative to recent years, with only about 8 in all, in the period 8-24 May.

Canada Warbler: Rare in spring and a late migrant, this species lived up to this status, with only one reported: a single at Krimlofski Tract on 24 May (BP, LP).

Yellow-breasted Chat: Generally only casual in the east, a single was at Wood Duck on 14 May (DH). Good counts of 9 at each location were made at Rock Creek L on 14 May (SJD) and at Cemetery Gulch on 17 May (SJD). This species is locally common in the west.

Summer Tanager: The first to arrive at the traditional breeding location at Schramm Park was found on 9 May (CNK). Rare away from the southeast, with about 12 reports prior to this spring, there were 2 such reports, an immature male with greenish wings and an orange body was reported at Basswood Area on 9 May (BFH), and a subadult male was banded at Halsey on 10 May (RG).

Scarlet Tanager: Reports were from the Missouri River Valley beginning 9 May. Best count was 4 at Schramm Park on 25 May (JWH). Nesting was observed at Platte River SP (GW).

Western Tanager: Routine reports.

Northern Cardinal: About as far west as this species occurs in any numbers, Ash Hollow SHP, 3 were found on 9 May (BW, DW). At least one pair remained just east of Scottsbluff (AK) throughout the report period.

Rose-breasted Grosbeak: Far to the west, one was reported at WHNC on 16 May (AK); this species is a casual migrant in spring in the Panhandle. Earliest was at FF on 29 April (B). At about the western edge of the breeding range in the Platte River Valley, at least one pair "must be nesting" as of 31 May; 2 males and 2 females had been present (LR, RH).

Black-headed Grosbeak: First was at James Ranch, 7 May (SL). Individuals were noted east to Kearney on 9 May and Gibbon on 23-29 May (LR, RH), and at Halsey on 11 and 15 May (LF, CF, RG). These locations are at the eastern edge of the breeding range.

Blue Grosbeak: Earliest were at Wehrspann L (JWH) and north Lancaster Co (LE), 10 May. The few reports were statewide.

Lazuli Bunting: Earliest was south of Gering on 3 May, and 7 were there on 22 May (AK). It was conspicuous in the Wildcat Hills on 16-17 May, with 4 at Stage Hill Rd on 17 May (SJD) and duelling males in Carter Canyon on 16 May (WRS). None reported east of the Panhandle. A hybrid with Indigo Bunting was south of Gering on 16 May (AK).

Indigo Bunting: Reports were from Missouri River and Lower Platte Valley counties, first in Sarpy Co (CNK) and at ADF (LF, CF) on 9 May.

Dickcissel: None reported west of Pierce, Dodge, and Saunders Cos (DH, DP, TH). Earliest was in Cass Co on 4 May (GW). Best count was 10 in northwest Pierce Co, 9 May (DH).

Green-tailed Towhee: As observers check brushy areas, more of these birds are being found, although it is still only casual in spring. Singles were found south of Gering on 2 May (AK), south of Exit 1 on I-80 on 16 May (JS, SJD, JG), in Cemetery Gulch and Scotts Bluff Co, on 16 May (JS, m. ob.), at Bushnell Cem on 17 May (JGJ), and south of Gering on 31 May (AK), the latter rather late.

Eastern Towhee: Reports were from the eastern part of the range, north to Ponca SP, west of where (in northern NE) most birds are hybrids or Spotted Towhees. It leaves the northern part of the range in winter; one had returned to Hoskins by 16 April (BFH). A good count was of 5 males at Basswood Area on 9 May (BFH).

Spotted Towhee: In the east, this species is mostly a winter visitor; one was at the observer's feeder through the winter until at least 7 March (NR). A movement

of migrants can also be detected in the east; presumably in this category were a few birds seen from Lancaster and Cuming Cos eastward in the period 13 April (B) through 13 May (DH). At Wolf L, where the summering towhees are Eastern, the last Spotted was noted on 10 May (TH). Certainly migrants were 45 at Lilley on 9 May (LR, RH), and 35 at Kenesaw on 26 April (LR, RH).

Cassin's Sparrow: None reported.

American Tree Sparrow: Best count was 105 in Lancaster Co on 15 March (LE), and last to leave was one at Buckskin Hills on 11 April (BFH).

Chipping Sparrow: Earliest was rather early in Dixon Co, 26 March (JJ); one had reached the northwest in Dawes Co by 28 April (RG). Best count was 75 in Lancaster Co on 27 April (LE).

Clay-colored Sparrow: Migrants were reported statewide in the period 24 April, at Gibbon (LR, RH), through 23 May, at the ADF (CF, LF), with best count a modest 45 in Long Canyon on 9 May (SJD). One was singing in suitable breeding habitat at the south end of Ponca SP on 25 May (WRS, JS). Breeding is not well documented in NE.

Brewer's Sparrow: The only reports could be called routine: one south of Exit 1 on I-80 on 2 May (SJD) and 3 singing in the same area on 16 May (JS).

Field Sparrow: Earliest was at Cunningham L on 28 March (B), and best count was 10 at Sacramento-Wilcox on 11 April (LR, RH); reports were westward to Phelps Co. This species is a rare migrant in the Panhandle, where the western subspecies *Spizella pusilla arenacea* probably accounts for most if not all of the reports; *S. p. arenacea* is paler and more grayish than the common eastern subspecies *S. p. pusilla*, and lacks the rusty markings to the rear of the eye. One with characteristics of *arenacea* was reported south of Colton on 8 May (SJD), and a Field Sparrow was reported without details at Cemetery Gulch, Scotts Bluff Co, on 16 May (JG).

Vesper Sparrow: Earliest was a single at Sinninger Lagoon on 29 March (BP, LP) and 2 at Arbor L, Lancaster Co, the same day (LE). Except for the east, most birds in the south are migrants; reports were in the period 29 March-17 May (BP, LP, SJD, LR, RH). Best count was 15 in Dixon Co on 10 April (JJ).

Lark Sparrow: Earliest were 3 in Otoe Co on 27 April (LF, CF), a rather late arrival date.

Black-throated Sparrow: The wintering bird in Omaha stayed until 12 April (Marilyn Jensen, pers. comm. WRS).

Lark Bunting: Earliest were 20 in Kimball Co on 10 May (AK), and best count was 250 in the western Panhandle on 15 May (WRS).

Savannah Sparrow: Migrants were reported west to Phelps Co on 28 March (TH) through 17 May (MU, LF, CF). Best count was 25 at Jack Sinn Marsh on 25 April (LE).

Baird's Sparrow: There were 2 reports; and as observers concentrate on this bird, reports should increase. Conventional wisdom has it that it migrates primarily through the Panhandle in native grasslands, but this spring's records suggest otherwise. One was at Clear Creek Marshes on 9 May in non-native (brome?) grassland edge (*SJD); and unbelievable if it had not been extensively photographed at very close range was one which remained at the same spot 6 miles north and a half mile west of Bradshaw in York Co on 26 April-10 May (*JGJ,*JS). The 26 April date is the earliest documented in NE by one day, although there is a report from Sarpy Co on 12 April which was not accepted by the

NOURC; perhaps it will be reevaluated soon in light of developing knowledge of this migrant poorly understood in NE. Documented records are (now) in the period 26 April-11 May, and all reports from 12 April to 23 May.

Grasshopper Sparrow: Earliest were somewhat late, 3 May, all in east and central NE (DH, LR, RH). Best count was 14 singing at Standing Bear L on 27 May (NR). None reported from the west.

Henslow's Sparrow: A burn at the traditional Burchard L spot south of the prairie-chicken blinds changed the habitat, and the birds were not present there (WRS, JS). At least 2 were singing, however, at a new location in prairie at Meadowlark L, in northeastern Seward Co, 30-31 May (JG, WRS, JS). Another was reported from Boyer Chute on 3 May but without details of either the bird or habitat (B).

LeConte's Sparrow: Essentially an eastern migrant, only singles were reported, all from the Missouri Valley in the period 18 April (NR) through 6 May (NR).

Nelson's Sharp-tailed Sparrow: None reported.

Fox Sparrow: Also an eastern migrant (the reddish eastern race *Passerella iliaca iliaca*; western races may be casual in the west), reports were from Lancaster and Saunders Counties in the east from 22 March (TH) through 29 April (LF, CF), the best count an excellent 22 on 1 April at Wood Duck (DH).

Song Sparrow: Best count was 50 at Wood Duck on 2 April (DH). More than one was at Kenesaw Marsh on 31 May (LR, RH), suggestive of breeding there.

Lincoln's Sparrow: The one at a feeder at Gibbon on 7 March (LR, RH) was very early, but not unprecedented; the rest of the reports were in the period 3 April (B) through 24 May (LF, CF) statewide. Best count was 30 at Kenesaw, 26 April (LR, RH).

Swamp Sparrow: Reports were from presumed non-breeding locations, all in the Missouri River Valley, in the period 22 March (BFH), a rather early date for the northeast, through 6 May (NR). Best count was 7 on 28 April at FF (BP, LP).

White-throated Sparrow: Reports for this easterly migrant came from Lilley eastward in the period 15 March (LE) through 10 May (JWH, LE), with a rather late bird in Cuming Co on 25 May (LE). A few winter in the southeast on occasion; these may account for early reports. Most migrants pass through around 1 May.

White-crowned Sparrow: Most wintering and migrant white-crowns in NE are of the pale-colored race *Zonotrichia leucophrys gambelii*; the black-colored race, *Z. l. leucophrys*, is essentially a migrant in the east. Birds identified to race were all *Z. l. gambelii*, and all were from Sacramento to Wilcox west, in the period 8 March-2 May; best count was 91 at Enders Res on 2 May (SJD). The rest of the reports were in the period 6 April (DP)-25 May (LR, RH).

Harris' Sparrow: Last were 3 at Pilger Area on 14 May (DH). Best count was 100 ("more than I can remember") in the observer's yard in southwest Dixon Co on 7 May (JJ). Reports were all from the east and central portions of the state.

Dark-eyed Junco: Last "Oregon" and "Slate-colored" Juncos left James Ranch by 30 March (SL). A bird southeast of Bellevue on 12-13 April was identified as a "Gray-headed" Junco (B); no details have been provided, however. Some "Pink-sided" Juncos can be rather red-backed, but true "Gray-headed" Juncos have no brownish-cinnamon coloration on the flanks. There are only 4 documented records of this form for NE but about 45 reports in all. For the species, the last

reported was one at Gibbon on 1 April (LR, RH). Best count was 140 in Otoe Co on 25 March (LF, CF).

McCown's Longspur: Earliest was a male southwest of Bushnell on 21 March (SJD), record early by 2 days. Incredible was the count of 1,732 in south Kimball Co on 19 April (SJD, JS), clearly indicating peak movement.

Lapland Longspur: Best count was 2,000 northwest of Wakefield on 1 March (JJ), presumably migrants. Last were 500 in Dixon Co on 1 April (JJ).

Chestnut-collared Longspur: Earliest were 18 south of Kimball, 4 April (SJD). Five had returned to the most easterly breeding location known, northeast of O'Neill, by 13 April (DH), and 3 were believed nesting near Walgren L on 9 May (BW, DW); the latter is also a known nesting area.

Snow Bunting: None reported.

Bobolink: A late migrant, the earliest arrival was one at Little Salt Fork Marsh on 4 May (JS). Best count was good for spring: 100 at Rowe Sanctuary on 24 May (LR, RH).

Red-winged Blackbird: Best count was 35,000 at Kiowa Springs on 8 March (SJD).

Eastern Meadowlark: This species occurs in large numbers in a few suitable locations in the Panhandle, notably CLNWR. Four were at Clear Creek Marshes and another north of Oshkosh on 9 May (BW, DW).

Western Meadowlark: Routine reports.

Yellow-headed Blackbird: Tying the record early arrival date of migrants, but thought by the observer to have overwintered, were 4 males east of Gering on 8 March (SJD). Migrants had arrived in strength by mid-April, when 10,000 were at FL, 19 April (LR, RH).

Rusty Blackbird: This species is an easterly migrant; the farthest west report was of at least one at FL on 13 March (B). Spring migration is protracted, beginning in late Feb; no large counts were reported, although 40 were at FF on 5 April (BP, LP).

Brewer's Blackbird: Earliest were 3 near Wood Duck, 2 April (DH); this species is a rare migrant in the east. Mollhoff provided interesting breeding data from western Morrill Co; a canyon south of Redington is the southeastern-most breeding location known in NE. At least 15 pairs were present on 15-16 May; an active nest with eggs was found on 16 May, and at least 3 females were carrying nesting material (WM).

Great-tailed Grackle: Arrival is in late March; first was one at Charlie's Grill in Omaha on 21 March (B), and numbers quickly followed, with 35, mostly males, at Nebraska City, Otoe Co, by 23 March (LF, CF). By 9-19 April, there were up to 100 at FL (B), a favored breeding location among several in the RWB. Colonization of the northeast continues. A male appeared as far north as Crystal Cove L, 27 March (BFH), and 4, including 3 males, were nearby along the Missouri River on 9 May (BFH). The establishing breeding population at Wood Duck returned on 26 March, when 2 males and 2 females were present (DH); the group increased to 9 males and 8 females on 18 April (DH). Colonization of the west continues also: 4 males and 3 females were nest building at Kiowa Springs on 17 May (SJD). A single was at Clear Creek Marshes on 9 May (BW, DW).

Common Grackle: Best count was 2,000 at ADF, 9 April (LF, CF).

Brown-headed Cowbird: Reports were from the east, first in Cass Co on 1 March (GW) and 4 birds at a Bellevue feeder on 9 March (B). No large counts were reported.

Orchard Oriole: Routine reports.

Baltimore Oriole: Western-most report was of one below Keystone Dam on 14 May (SJD); this species is a rare spring migrant in the Panhandle, although "pure" Baltimores are unlikely that far west. Best count was 13 in Pioneers Park on 16 May (LE).

Bullock's Oriole: Routine Reports.

Gray-crowned Rosy-Finch: The only report of this rare Panhandle winter visitor was of a flock of 21 north of Henry on 8 March (SJD).

Purple Finch: Few are reported these days. Are they being overlooked among House Finches, or are they at a low period of a population cycle? Only about 5 birds were reported (DH, LP, BP), west to Rowe Sanctuary, where one was noted on 26 April (B), rather late and somewhat westerly for this species.

Cassin's Finch: None reported.

House Finch: The winter movements of these birds are somewhat mysterious; summer populations seem to depart and reappear in spring; a group reappeared at the observer's Dodge Co feeders on 10 March after a winter absence (DP). Probably the last area to be occupied by this species is the central and northwest Sandhills; 9 were at Hay Springs on 9 May (BW, DW), and one was at Halsey on 15 May (RG).

Red Crossbill: Of interest was the presence of a flock of 30-40 at the WHNC feeders throughout the period; many juveniles were in this group (SJD), although their provenance can only be guessed. Breeding in this species is erratic, but most egg-laying occurs Dec-Aug.

White-winged Crossbill: The wintering birds at Norfolk's Lutheran Cem remained until at least 5 March, when 11 were present (DH).

Common Redpoll: Following a fairly good winter for this species, there were several reports; all were of single birds, most at feeders, statewide until 16 March, when one was at James Ranch (SL).

Pine Siskin: Routine reports.

American Goldfinch: Routine reports.

Evening Grosbeak: None reported.

House Sparrow: Routine reports.