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Winter Field Report, December 2005 to February 2006

W. Ross Silcock

Nebraska Game and Parks Commission, silcock@rosssilcock.com

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WINTER FIELD REPORT, December 2005 to February 2006

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

INTRODUCTION

The traditional mid-summer and midwinter "windows" wherein migrants were rarely detected have closed markedly in the last few years. The midwinter window is closing; where it once was around 20 Dec-20 Feb it is now more like 5 Jan-10 Feb. Many waterfowl were found in midwinter this season, and migrants such as Blue-winged Teal and Sandhill Crane appeared very early this spring. Similarly early were Turkey Vulture and Lincoln's Sparrow. In light of waterbirds lingering late in fall, markedly lower numbers of Western Grebes were a surprise.

Exotics were widely-reported; one, Pink-footed Goose, could possibly be a vagrant wild bird, while Egyptian Geese are certainly escaped or released captives. The possibility that releases of Chukars by hunters could lead to establishment of breeding populations in drier parts of western Nebraska exists; observers should report any occurrences of this species.

Species exhibiting various noteworthy behaviors or distributions include Franklin's Gull, Black-capped Chickadee, White-breasted Nuthatch, Varied Thrush, and Curve-billed Thrasher; check the species accounts.

Rarities were few, but included Harlequin Duck and Inca Dove.

ABBREVIATIONS

ADF: Arbor Day Farm, Nebraska City;
BOL: Branched Oak L, Lancaster Co;
CBC: Christmas Bird Count;
Cem: Cemetery;
FF: Fontenelle Forest, Sarpy Co;
GPD: Gavins Point Dam, Cedar-Knox Cos;
HCR: Harlan Co Res, Harlan Co;
LM: L McConaughy, Keith Co;
LO: L Ogallala, Keith Co;
m.ob.: many observers;
NC: Nature Center;
NWR: National Wildlife Refuge;
PL: Pawnee L, Lancaster Co;
Res: Reservoir;
RWB: Rainwater Basin, south-central Nebraska;
SCP: Spring Creek Prairie, Lancaster Co;
SHP: State Historical Park;
SL: Sewage Lagoon(s);
SP: State Park;

SRA: State Recreation Area;
WMA: Wildlife Management Area;
WSR: Wind Springs Ranch, Sioux Co.

GAZETTEER

DeSoto NWR: Washington Co;
Harvard Marsh: Clay Co;
Ponca SP: Dixon Co;
Sutherland Res: Lincoln Co;
Wildcat Hills: Scotts Bluff-Banner Cos.

OBSERVERS

AK: Alice Kenitz, Gering;
BB: Bob Barry, Missouri Valley, IA;
BFH: Bill F. Huser, South Sioux City;
BG: Betty Grenon, Bellevue;
B&DW: Bruce & Donna Walgren, Casper, WY;
B&LP: Babs & Loren Padelford, Bellevue;
CG: Carlos Grande, Geneva y España;
CNK: Clem N. Klaphake, Bellevue;
CT: Chris Thody, Denton;
DH: Dave Heidt, Norfolk;
DS: Duane Sifferling, David City;
DW: Duane Wolff, Norfolk;
D&CN: Don and Colleen Noecker, Albion;
D&JP: Don & Jan Paseka, Ames;
EB: Elliott Bedows, Bellevue;
EV: Eric Volden, Grand Island;
GW: Gabe Wilson, Ogallala;
G&WH: Glen & Wanda Hoge, Alma;
HKH: Helen K. Hughson, Mitchell;
JC: John Cecil, Des Moines, IA;
JED: James E. Ducey, Omaha;
JG: Joe Gubanyi, Seward;
JGJ: Joel G. Jorgensen, Lincoln;
JJ: Jan Johnson, Wakefield;
JM: John Murphy, Kearney;
JSt: Jon Strong, Omaha;
JT: Jerry Toll, Omaha;
KCR: Kathleen Crawford-Rose, Bellevue;
KD: Kathy DeLara, Mitchell;
KH: Kris Hammond, Bellevue;
KK: Ken Kranik, Sterling, CO;
KS: Kent Skaggs, Kearney;
LE: Larry Einemann, Lincoln;
LR: Lanny Randolph, Gibbon;
L&CF: Laurence & Carol Falk, Nebraska City;
MB: Mark Brogie, Creighton;
PD: Paul Dunbar, Hastings;
PR: Paul Roisen, Sioux City, IA;

PS: Phil Swanson, Omaha;
P&DD: Phyllis & Dean Drawbaugh, Scottsbluff;
RD: Roger Dietrich, Yankton, SD;
RE: Rick Eades, Lincoln;
RH: Robin Harding, Gibbon;
RSg: Ruben Siegfried, Scottsbluff;
SJD: Stephen J. Dinsmore, Ames, IA;
SV: Steve Van Sickle, Yankton, SD;
TD: Tom Dougherty, Bellevue;
TJW: T.J. Walker, Brady;
WF: William Flack, Madison;
WM: Wayne Mollhoff, Ashland;
WRS: W. Ross Silcock, Tabor, IA.

SPECIES ACCOUNTS

Pink-footed Goose: One at Harvard Marsh 30 Jan raised the usual questions of provenance (PD, photos). Neck collar numbers have been obtained for some of the accompanying 50,000-80,000 Snow Geese and might provide interesting information. This species breeds in Greenland and there are accepted records for Newfoundland and Quebec and doubtful reports from New York and Massachusetts. Nebraska is more likely to get vagrant waterfowl from Asia than Europe.

Greater White-fronted Goose: Unusual numbers lingered at prime waterfowl locations into Jan, with as many as 60 at Harvard Marsh 9 Jan (PD) and 112 near Lexington 3 Jan (SJD,JC). Next reported were 7 in Thayer Co 4 Feb (LR,RH), and by 28 Feb 10,000 had arrived at Harvard Marsh (RE). Rare in the Panhandle in midwinter, one was in Scotts Bluff Co 13 Feb (KD), and close to the Panhandle, numbers peaked at 24 on 2 Jan in the LM area (SJD).

Snow Goose: Good numbers were reported through the period, with 5000 at Johnson L, Gosper and Dawson Cos, 3 Jan (SJD,JC), 5000 flying over Harvard Marsh 9 Jan (PD), an amazing 50,000 on the ground there 29 Jan (JGJ,PD), 16,000 in Thayer Co 4 Feb (LR,RH) and 16,000+ eastward to BOL 26 Feb (LE). Numbers at Harvard Marsh increased to 200,000 on 28 Feb (RE), and peak count in Dawson Co was 138,000 on 25 Feb (SJD). Flocks in the Panhandle generally consist of white birds, but recently more blues have appeared; one flock on 27 Feb had 10-15% blues (KD). A white bird with a neck collar at Scotts Bluff SL 27 Feb was from Queen Maud in the central Canadian Arctic (KD).

Ross's Goose: The 62 at Harvard Marsh were a bit early 31 Jan, no doubt having arrived with the large group of Snows there (PD); more timely, and typical of the larger numbers in recent years, were the "low hundreds" around North Platte 27 Feb (TJW).

Cackling Goose: Excellent counts for late fall were 1200 on the LM CBC 2 Jan (fide SJD), 1400 there the next day (SJD), and 700 in Hall Co 7 Jan (PD). Few were reported in midwinter; one in Lancaster Co 22 Jan (WF) was the only report between 11 Jan and 6 Feb.

Canada Goose: Best counts were on CBCs: 18,800 at LM on 2 Jan (fide SJD) and 14,644 at Scottsbluff 17 Dec (fide AK). A group of 200 identified as *interior* was found at Fremont 17 Feb (JSt); this eastern subspecies

apparently barely reaches e. Nebraska during migrations. A hybrid with Snow Goose was at LO 26 Feb (SJD).

Trumpeter Swan: About 40 were reported; best counts were the 11 on the LM CBC 2 Jan (fide SJD) and 8 in McPherson Co 21 Feb (WF). Pairs were on 3 territories along Highway 20 in Grant Co by 7 Feb (WM).

Tundra Swan: A rare migrant especially westward, a juvenile was at Sutherland Res 3 Jan (SJD,JC; photo).

Egyptian Goose: One with Canada Geese on a sandbar near Ponca SP 1 Jan (JJ) would appear to be an escaped or released bird.

Wood Duck: Rare in midwinter, 2 were at Bridgeport 9 Jan (KK), another was in Jefferson Co 11 Jan (RE), and one was at DeSoto NWR 9 Feb (BB).

Gadwall: Routine reports.

American Wigeon: A single at Harvard Marsh 9 Jan (PD) was rather late at a location where wintering does not usually occur. In recent years, several have wintered in Scotts Bluff Co; 50 were there 26 Jan (RSg). Very early migrants were 3 in Dixon Co 4 Feb (BFH) and 8 in Pierce Co 6-10 Feb (WF,JJ).

American Black Duck: Rarely reported in recent years, one was found, surprisingly, away from the Missouri Valley: a male at Harvard Marsh 9 Jan (PD).

Mallard: Best counts were from CBCs: 19,500 at LM 2 Jan (fide SJD) and 12,826 at Scottsbluff 17 Dec (fide AK). Another 20,000 were at Sutherland Res 25 Feb (SJD).

Blue-winged Teal: One in Lancaster Co 24 Feb (RE) was record early by 4 days.

Northern Shoveler: Two at North Platte SL 6 Jan (TJW) were rather late, although a few winter in the North Platte Valley most years. Rather early were 2 at Willow Creek Res, Pierce Co, 10 Feb (JJ). In recent years a few have wintered on the Alma SL; this year 10 were there 15-25 Jan (G&WH).

Northern Pintail: A good midwinter count was 50 near Alliance 22 Jan (KK); usually only single-digit numbers of birds are found with Mallards at that time. Another good count of early migrants was 300 in Thayer Co 4 Feb (LR,RH).

Green-winged Teal: An excellent late tally was the 103 at LM 1 Jan (SJD); 96 were found on the LM CBC the next day (fide SJD). This species often overwinters in small numbers.

Canvasback: Midwinter reports are few; one was in Lancaster Co 21 Jan (WF), another was in Dodge Co the same day (D&JP), and 9 were in Lancaster Co 29 Jan (JGJ,LE). As with shovelers, a few have appeared at Alma in midwinter recently, this year there were 18 on 3 Feb (G&WH).

Redhead: As with other ducks this winter, a few appeared in late Jan and early Feb after an absence of about 3 weeks; one was in Butler Co 31 Jan (WF), 12 were rather early at Alma SL 3 Feb (G&WH), one was in Colfax Co 4 Feb (WF), and 30 had arrived in Scotts Bluff Co by 6 Feb (KD).

Ring-necked Duck: Unusual in midwinter were one at Alma SL 14 Jan (G&WH), 4 in Dodge Co 21 Jan (D&JP), 12 in Lincoln 29 Jan (LE), and one at Harvard Marsh 31 Jan (PD). Rather early migrants were the 2 males in Dixon Co 4 Feb (BFH) and 67 at Chilibaba Ponds, Scotts Bluff Co, 6 Feb (KD). The latter must be a favored spot, as 120 lingered there as late as 30 Dec (P&DD).

Greater Scaup: Rather late were 15 on the LM CBC 2 Jan (fide SJD). Wintering has occurred at that location, as well as Scottsbluff SL, where 10 were found 30 Jan (AK) and 13 Feb (KD). Early were 4 in Burt Co 15 Feb (JSt).

- Lesser Scaup:** The only midwinter reports were of one at Alma SL 15 Jan (G&WH), 3 at Scottsbluff SL 30 Jan (AK), and one in Stanton Co 3 Feb (WF).
- Harlequin Duck:** A "yearling" male was found at the GPD inlet from Lewis and Clark L, Cedar Co, 27 Feb (SV; fide RD). [This bird, seen by many, was still present 26 Mar.] This is only the 4th documented record for the state.
- Long-tailed Duck:** After only a single report this past fall, 3 (possibly 4) were found this winter. An adult male at Alma SL 1 Jan (G&WH) and a male at HCR 4 Feb (KS,JM) may have been the same bird. A single was at Scottsbluff SL 30 Jan-6 Feb (AK,KD) and a juv. male was at LO 26 Feb (SJD). This species is only casual in occurrence Jan-Feb away from Keith and Lincoln Cos.
- Bufflehead:** Rather early were 2 at BOL 12 Feb (JGJ) and one in Madison Co the same day (WF). Three at Scottsbluff SL 30 Jan (AK) and one at Alma SL 3 Feb (G&WH) were unusual for midwinter.
- Common Goldeneye:** A good midwinter count was the 420 at L Minatare, Scotts Bluff Co, 29 Jan (KD). Fall and spring peaks at LO were 900 on 1 Jan and 1032 on 26 Feb (SJD).
- Barrow's Goldeneye:** None were reported; this has been a regular winter visitor recently in the North Platte Valley.
- Hooded Merganser:** Still rare in midwinter westward, 2 were in Scotts Bluff Co 6 Feb (KD); the 16 present 1-3 Jan at LM (SJD) were a good count for that location and date.
- Common Merganser:** Best count was 6545 on the LM CBC 2 Jan (fide SJD); up to 15,000 were in the LM area 1-3 Jan (SJD).
- Red-breasted Merganser:** Rather late were 6 on the LM CBC 2 Jan (fide SJD), although a few probably winter there with the hordes of Commons, and rather early were one at HCR 5 Feb (G&WH) and 3 at DeSoto NWR 15 Feb (BB).
- Ruddy Duck:** Rather late were one on the Calamus Res CBC 31 Dec (fide DH), 2 on the DeSoto NWR CBC 31 Dec (fide JT), and 5 on the LM CBC 2 Jan (SJD).
- Chukar:** One was found in Scotts Bluff Co 17 Dec (fide AK); this is likely a released bird, as there are no known established populations in the state.
- Gray Partridge:** The small population continues at WSR, where a "small flock" was seen 26 Feb (HKH).
- Ring-necked Pheasant:** Good counts were 168 on the Norfolk CBC 17 Dec (fide DW) and 150 in Dixon Co 2 Dec (JJ).
- Sharp-tailed Grouse:** Routine reports.
- Greater Prairie-Chicken:** Easternmost were 3 flyovers in Dixon Co 10 Dec (BFH) and 2 flyovers there 4 Feb (BFH).
- Wild Turkey:** A good count was the 371 on the DeSoto NWR CBC 31 Dec (fide JT), and 355 were counted there 11 Jan (BB).
- Northern Bobwhite:** While a new low count of 2 was set for the Seward-BOL CBC on 17 Dec (fide JG), and none were found in Lancaster Co for the period (LE), numbers in the North Platte Valley continue to be good, with 13 on the LM CBC 2 Jan (fide SJD) and 4 near Mitchell 9 Feb (KD).
- Pied-billed Grebe:** One during count week on the 17 Dec Norfolk CBC was rather late (fide DW).
- Horned Grebe:** The only report was of one rather late on the LM CBC 2 Jan (SJD). There are a few midwinter reports.

- Western Grebe:** A Dec cold snap markedly reduced numbers at LM this fall; only one could be found 1 Jan (SJD) and the species was missed for the first time in 15 years on the CBC the next day.
- American White Pelican:** Wintering birds were found only at expected locations: one was at LO (SJD,WF) and 3-4 were at Sutherland Res (SJD,JC,WF). Early arrivals were 8 at HCR 27 Feb (G&WH), the 5th Feb arrival date for that location in recent years.
- Double-crested Cormorant:** A small number have attempted to winter at Sutherland Res in recent years; 3 were there 3 Jan (SJD,JC), but only one remained 21 Feb (WF).
- Great Blue Heron:** Birds were standing on nests at Sutherland Res by 26 Feb (SJD); earliest nest-building is 14 Mar (*Birds of Nebraska*).
- Turkey Vulture:** Tying the second-earliest arrival date was one at Brownville 26 Feb (RE); Feb 25 is earliest. A reliable but secondhand report was received of one remarkably early in Washington Co 17 Feb (fide JT).
- Bald Eagle:** An excellent count was the 172 on the LM CBC 2 Jan (SJD), and peak was a few days later at 237 (GW, fide SJD); this is perhaps not surprising considering the 40,000 or so waterfowl also present! A pair was tending the nest at DeSoto NWR by 20 Feb (BB).
- Northern Harrier:** Given suitable conditions, harriers can occur in significant concentrations, such as the 56 at LM 25 Feb (SJD); 37 were in the same area 4 Jan (SJD,JC).
- Sharp-shinned Hawk:** A new Seward-BOL CBC high count was an excellent 11, on 17 Dec (fide JG); DeSoto NWR CBC 31 Dec reported 6 (fide JT), also a good count.
- Cooper's Hawk:** Routine reports.
- Northern Goshawk:** Four were reported, a typical winter tally: one on the Norfolk CBC 17 Dec (fide DW), an immature at Bellevue 26 Dec (TD), one on the Beaver Valley CBC 2 Jan (D&JP, fide D&CN), and one near North Platte 28 Feb (TJW).
- Red-shouldered Hawk:** One of few reports away from FF was a well-studied immature at PL 2 Jan (LE).
- Red-tailed Hawk:** Six pairs were noted at breeding sites 27 Feb in the North Platte area (TJW); this is about on schedule for this species.
- Ferruginous Hawk:** Easternmost was one in Harlan Co 1 Jan (G&WH), where not unexpected in winter.
- Rough-legged Hawk:** An excellent CBC count was the 15 at Ponca SP 30 Dec (fide BFH).
- Golden Eagle:** Easternmost were an imm. in Dakota Co 10-11 Dec (BFH,PR) and another (or the same?) imm. on the Ponca SP CBC 30 Dec (fide BFH). This species is only casual this far east.
- American Kestrel:** Routine reports.
- Merlin:** Best CBC tally was the 4 on the Norfolk CBC 17 Dec (fide DW).
- Prairie Falcon:** Six were noted from cen. Nebraska eastward, including the second sighting in 13 years on the Seward-BOL CBC 17 Dec (fide JG) and one in Dodge Co 8 Dec (D&JP).
- Virginia Rail:** Two were found along the Niobrara River 10 Jan (JED), further confirming a wintering population there. Wintering in the North Platte Valley is well-known; 2 were on the LM CBC 2 Jan (SJD) and 5 at Clear Creek Marshes, Garden Co, 3 Jan (SJD).
- American Coot:** Routine reports.

- Sandhill Crane:** First migrants often arrive in late Jan, with numbers present by mid-Feb; this year, "thousands" were along the cen. Platte River by 9 Feb (CG). However, reports for early Jan are few; thus surprising were 24 near Alda 7 Jan (PD) and 12 flying over Lincoln Co 8 Jan (TJW).
- Killdeer:** The only Jan reports were from a known wintering location: 9 were found on the LM CBC 2 Jan (SJD) and a single was there the next day (SJD,JC).
- Wilson's Snipe:** Best CBC tally was the 4 at LM 2 Jan (fide SJD).
- Franklin's Gull:** Another example of the odd phenomenon of alternate-plumaged adult Franklin's Gulls turning up in interior states in midwinter in recent years was one at Sutherland Res 3 Jan (SJD,JC). Of 15 similar reports for Nebraska, all but 2 occurred since 1988. Another appeared rather early at BOL 26 Feb (LE).
- Bonaparte's Gull:** The only report was of 1-3 rather late at LM 1-3 Jan (SJD,JC). This is only the 7th Jan record, most from LM.
- Ring-billed Gull:** Best counts were 1430 on the LM CBC 2 Jan (fide SJD) and 1000 at HCR 14 Jan (G&WH).
- California Gull:** The only report was from LM, where 3-4 were found 1-2 Jan (fide SJD), fewer than usual.
- Herring Gull:** The 415 on the LM CBC 21 Jan (fide SJD) was an excellent total for Jan; peak at LM was 653 on 26 Feb (SJD).
- Thayer's Gull:** The only reports were from LM, where 5 were found on the CBC there 2 Jan (fide SJD), with 2 present 1 and 3 Jan (SJD,JC).
- Lesser Black-backed Gull:** Three different birds were at LM 31 Dec-3 Jan, including first and second basic individuals and an adult (SJD). The 3 Jan date is the latest for this species in Nebraska; it has not yet been reported wintering. A first winter bird appeared at BOL 26 Feb (LE); there are now some 30 spring records.
- Glaucous Gull:** Two juveniles and a second-year bird were at LM 31 Dec-3 Jan, all found for the CBC there 2 Jan (fide SJD); 3 birds were still there 18 Feb (SJD). The only other report was of a juvenile at Sutherland Res 25 Feb (SJD).
- Great black-backed Gull:** This species is becoming a regular frequenter of LM; this season 2 were found. A second basic bird was there 31 Dec-2 Jan (SJD) and an adult appeared 26 Feb (SJD; photo). These are the 16th and 17th records for the state.
- Black-legged Kittiwake:** A first winter bird was rather late at GPD 6 Dec (MB); most records are in Nov.
- Rock Pigeon:** An apparent all-time CBC high for Nebraska was the 1286 on the Lincoln CBC 18 Dec (fide RE).
- Eurasian Collared-Dove:** Best count was the Scottsbluff CBC high of 50 on 17 Dec (fide AK). Other good counts were the 35 in Dorchester 12 Feb (LE), 29 all in one tree near Nebraska City 1 Jan (L&CF) and 29 on the Calamus CBC 31 Dec (fide DH). New county records were provided by 4 in Jefferson Co 28 Dec (MB), one in Sherman Co 1 Jan (WF) and 7 in Pawnee Co 25 Jan (WF). There are now only two counties without records: Loup and Keya Paha (then I can stop writing about this species!).
- White-winged Dove:** A count first was one on the Scottsbluff CBC 17 Dec (LR,RH,fide AK). This is only the second Dec record; there is one for Feb and none for Jan. Overall, this is the 43rd record for the state, all since 1988.
- Mourning Dove:** Midwinter sightings are rare away from the southeast, although a few may winter in the North Platte Valley, where 2 were found on the LM

CBC 2 Jan (fide SJD) and 10 in Scotts Bluff Co 4 Jan (AK). Casual elsewhere in the Panhandle after Oct, only the 7th such record was of one on the Crawford CBC 31 Dec (fide B&DW).

Inca Dove: One that had been present since late Nov 2005 in a Sarpy Co yard was fortuitously made known (fide CNK) and seen by many on 26 Feb and subsequently. This is the 5th record for Nebraska, all in fall and winter, and usually at feeders.

Barn Owl: A persistent call heard in Jan along the Niobrara River was attributed to this species after comparison to tapes (JED); this species is very rare in winter, with only 6 reports since 1980 statewide, one of these from the South Sioux City area but none from the northcentral or northwest.

Eastern Screech-Owl: Routine reports.

Great Horned Owl: One was on a nest at HCR 27 Feb (G&WH), about on time.

Snowy Owl: Three were reported, about an average tally for a winter season: an adult male near David City 21 Dec (DS), a juv. male at LM 1 Jan (SJD), and another single near Kearney 30 Dec (fide KS).

Barred Owl: Westernmost were singles at Ponca SP 30 Dec (BFH), on the Norfolk CBC 17 Dec (WF, fide DW), in Platte Co 22 Dec (WF), and near Seward 12 Feb (LR,RH).

Long-eared Owl: Best CBC count was 9 on the Seward-BOL CBC 17 Dec (fide JG). In all, 23 were reported from Grand Island eastward.

Short-eared Owl: Of 14 reported, a surprising 11 were counted at one location at dusk over brushy flats at LM 25 Feb (SJD). A large number of Northern Harriers were at the same location earlier in the evening.

Northern Saw-whet Owl: One was found on the Grand Island CBC 17 Dec (fide EV), and an intriguing, but unverified, report was of one heard calling in cedar canyons in se. Lincoln Co 10 Feb (fide TJW).

Belted Kingfisher: Routine reports.

Red-headed Woodpecker: A few winter rarely northward in the Missouri Valley; this winter an adult and an imm. remained at Ponca SP through the period (BFH), and 2 in Dakota Co 22 Feb (D&JP) probably wintered in the area also. Unexpected were 5 in Nance Co 29 Jan (LR,RH); this is one of only 10 midwinter records away from the southeast and Missouri River Valley.

Red-bellied Woodpecker: Numbers continue to increase in the North Platte Valley; 13 were counted on the LM CBC 2 Jan (fide SJD).

Yellow-bellied Sapsucker: A few winter in extreme se. Nebraska most years, where about 8 were reported during the period (m. ob.), but one in Frontier Co 22 Feb (WF) was westerly.

Downy Woodpecker: Routine reports.

Hairy Woodpecker: Routine reports.

Northern Flicker: Easterly red-shafted flickers were reported from the Missouri Valley in good numbers, a total of 11, more than usual (BFH,JG,B&LP,JT).

Pileated Woodpecker: Two sightings came from a new Haworth Park, Bellevue, trail adjacent to the south edge of FF 11 Dec (CNK) and 27 Feb (B&LP). Two were reported on the Omaha CBC (fide BG).

Northern Shrike: Good numbers were reported, including 7 on the Calamus-Loup CBC 31 Dec (fide DH) and 4 on the Seward-BOL CBC 17 Dec (fide JG). In late Dec and early Jan, 10 were tallied in cen. Nebraska, including 5 in Keith Co (SJD).

Loggerhead Shrike: One was reported on the Grand Island CBC 17 Dec without details; this species is rare after Nov away from extreme se. Nebraska.

Blue Jay: Routine reports.

Pinyon Jay: None were reported; usually flocks are encountered on the Pine Ridge in winter.

Clark's Nutcracker: None were reported; apparently the recent influx during winter 2004-2005 has dissipated.

Black-billed Magpie: Although seemingly absent in Harlan Co (G&WH), reports were received of 1-2 birds eastward to Ponca SP 30 Dec (BFH), Stanton Co 7 Dec (WF), Lancaster Co 17 Dec (fide JG) and 5 Jan (CT), and Jefferson Co 26 Jan (WF). There is some movement in winter most years s. and e. of the breeding range.

American Crow: Best counts were 2671 on the Calamus-Loup CBC 31 Dec (fide DH), where count highs have been in the 9000+ range, and 1200 at Harvard Marsh 28 Feb (PD). The 3 found on the Scottsbluff CBC 17 Dec was the lowest count there since 1968 (fide AK).

Horned Lark: "Thousands" were in Box Butte Co 19 Feb (WF).

Black-capped Chickadee: Reduced numbers (and the debate as to cause) continue, most notably in areas of southern Nebraska from Lancaster Co west as far as Scotts Bluff Co (m. ob.). Timing of the rapid drop in numbers that occurred around 2002-2003 coincided with the arrival of West Nile Virus, providing circumstantial evidence for a cause. Nick Komar points out, however, that the connection, while likely, may indeed be coincidental and that proof can be difficult to establish. Complicating the Nebraska picture are the high CBC numbers that have continued in the Missouri River Valley, possibly due to birds moving in during winter from elsewhere (banding studies by Betty Grenon and Rick Schmid) or some degree of immunity in southeastern birds that might have been previously exposed to West Nile Virus, as suggested by Tom Labedz. Furthermore, different parts of the state may have different species of mosquitos adapted to different habitats (riparian, woodland, prairie, etc.) that may have different propensities for carrying viruses, as noted by Tony Leukering and T.J. Walker. T.J. Walker notes also that chickadee numbers have been stable in the dry loess canyons of se. Lincoln Co, where one might assume mosquitos to be scarce.

Tufted Titmouse: Routine reports.

Red-breasted Nuthatch: Routine reports.

White-breasted Nuthatch: A clear-cut difference in habitat use by different subspecies was noted in nw. Nebraska: 6 individuals belonging to the western subspecies *nelsoni* on the Harrison-Sioux Co CBC 1 Jan were all found in pines while 24 found on the Crawford CBC were all of the eastern subspecies *cookei* and were found in deciduous trees (EB).

Pygmy Nuthatch: High numbers were detected on two nw. Nebraska CBCs: 104 at Harrison-Sioux Co 1 Jan (fide EB) and 27 at Crawford 31 Dec (fide B&DW).

Brown Creeper: An excellent CBC count was the 19 at Lincoln 18 Dec (fide RE).

Carolina Wren: All reports were from the southeast except for one along the eastern Niobrara River Valley 10 Jan (JED). This and a Dec record for Scotts Bluff Co are the northwestern-most winter sightings to date.

Winter Wren: Following last year's discovery of several wintering along the Niobrara River, 2 were found again this year 10 Jan (JED). Other reports were in Dec, including one on the Norfolk CBC 17 Dec (DW), one on the Ponca SP CBC 30 Dec (fide BFH), and another that spent its time around a cattle waterer and some hay bales in Dodge Co 10-21 Dec (D&JP).

- Marsh Wren:** At known wintering locations, 2 were found on the LM CBC 2 Jan (fide SJD) and one at Scottsbluff 17 Dec (fide AK), but 2 on the Calamus-Loup CBC 31 Dec (fide DH,WF) were unexpected.
- Golden-crowned Kinglet:** Rather late for the locations were one in Dakota Co 25 Jan (BFH), one on the Beaver Valley CBC 2 Jan (fide D&CN), and one on the LM CBC 2 Jan (fide SJD). A good count was 34 on the Lincoln CBC 18 Dec (fide RE), and 2 on the Scottsbluff CBC 17 Dec were the first on the count since 1993 (fide AK).
- Ruby-crowned Kinglet:** One in a Scottsbluff yard 1 Jan-13 Feb (P&DD) was only the 7th Panhandle winter record, five of which are from Scotts Bluff Co.
- Eastern Bluebird:** Good numbers lingered in the Missouri River Valley well into Dec; a new count high was the 95 on the DeSoto NWR CBC 31 Dec (fide JT) and 21 were found on the Ponca SP CBC 30 Dec (fide BFH).
- Mountain Bluebird:** Apart from one on the LM CBC 2 Jan (fide SJD), reports were of migrants returning on time: 6 were at WSR 26 Feb (HKH), one arrived at Wildcat Hills NC, Scotts Bluff Co, the same day (AK), and 2 were in Banner Co 27 Feb (WF).
- Townsend's Solitaire:** An excellent count was 157 on the LM CBC 2 Jan (fide SJD).
- Hermit Thrush:** Two reports of apparently 3 birds were suggestive of wintering: one was in a Bellevue yard 6 Feb (fide KCR), and another photographed at Schramm SP, Sarpy Co, 4 Feb was likely a different bird from one seen on a trail at about the same time (KH). Nine others were reported through 29 Dec, including a surprising 5 on the Lincoln CBC 18 Dec (fide RE).
- American Robin:** Routine reports.
- Varied Thrush:** Two were reported, which, along with one in fall, made this a great winter for this species. Three sightings were made in Scotts Bluff Co, within at most 15 miles from each other. Photos (KD) show that the first of these, a fall bird at WSR, was different from one in Scottsbluff 17 Dec, which was counted on the CBC that day and present in another yard about a half mile away for a few days prior to 17 Dec. Photos show the Scottsbluff sightings to be the same bird (KD). The final sighting was of a juvenile male at LO 26 Feb (SJD).
- Gray Catbird:** One at North Platte 6 Dec (fide TJW) was westerly and rather late; it appears to be only the 6th Dec-Feb record away from the east.
- Northern Mockingbird:** A few linger into Dec and the first few days of Jan each year; last were one in Otoe Co 21 Dec (L&CF) and another in Jefferson Co 7 Jan (RE).
- Brown Thrasher:** None were reported; lingerers usually occur in Dec.
- Curve-billed Thrasher:** The bird at the Frimann Ranch in se. Sioux Co was still present at the end of Dec (fide AK); it has been at the ranch since Oct 2002.
- European Starling:** Best count was 13,484 on the Norfolk CBC 17 Dec (fide DW); the only good thing about that is that the CBC high count is 100,000+!
- Cedar Waxwing:** Best count was a moderate 200 in Lancaster Co 3 Dec (LE).
- Yellow-rumped (Myrtle) Warbler:** Only about 18 were reported, 8 of those in Jefferson Co 7 Jan (RE), and westernmost 2 on the LM CBC 2 Jan (fide SJD) and one at LO 26 Feb (SJD). Surprisingly far north were 1-2 in Keya Paha Co 10-11 Jan (JED,WF).
- Spotted Towhee:** One on the Crawford CBC 31 Dec (fide B&DW) was quite a bit late; most depart the west before Nov. In the se., where a few winter, 4 were on the city campus of the University of Nebraska-Lincoln 7 Jan (LE).

- Eastern Towhee:** Lingering in the east were 2 on the DeSoto NWR CBC 31 Dec (fide JT). A few winter in the southeast.
- American Tree Sparrow:** Best count was a historically moderate 384 on the DeSoto NWR CBC 31 Dec (fide JT); highest CBC counts are in the 2000+ range.
- Fox Sparrow:** The 13 reported were in the southeast, last were the 4 in Jefferson Co 7 Jan (RE) and one apparently attempting to overwinter at BOL 29 Jan (LE). The latter is the 2nd-latest report apart from 4 wintering records.
- Song Sparrow:** Most are in the se. by CBC time, and so the 27 at LM CBC 2 Jan (fide SJD) was a good count.
- Lincoln's Sparrow:** Rather late and westerly was one on the LM CBC 2 Jan (SJD); there are only a few Jan records, most from the southeast, and only one of overwintering. One well seen in an Omaha yard 28 Feb (PS) is the first ever for Feb and may have wintered nearby or not far to the south.
- Swamp Sparrow:** Last were 3 at FF 23 Dec (CNK); there are a few records of wintering in the southeast.
- White-throated Sparrow:** Several were reported in Jan, as far west as the 3 on the LM CBC 2 Jan (SJD); the species is rare westward. A few may winter in the southeast in suitable years, and this winter these may have succeeded: two singles were found in Lancaster Co (LE,RE), 2 at Nebraska City (L&CF), and one in Bellevue (B&LP).
- Harris's Sparrow:** Numbers were generally low; best count was only 47 on the Seward-BOL CBC 17 Dec (fide JG). Rarer westward, 6 were on the LM CBC 2 Jan (fide SJD) and one on the Scottsbluff CBC 17 Dec (fide AK).
- White-crowned Sparrow:** Wintering is rare away from the west; one in Fillmore Co 26 Jan (WF) was unusual. A new count high was the 162 on the Scottsbluff CBC 17 Dec (fide AK).
- Dark-eyed (White-winged) Junco:** The only report was of 19 on the Harrison-Sioux Co CBC 1 Jan (fide EB).
- Dark-eyed (Slate-colored) Junco:** Best CBC tally was the 354 on the Seward-BOL CBC 17 Dec (fide JG).
- Dark-eyed (Oregon) Junco:** A few Oregons were reported in the east on CBCs as is usual; easternmost was one at DeSoto NWR 31 Dec surrounded by 428 Slate-colored Juncos (fide JT).
- Dark-eyed (Pink-sided) Junco:** Pink-sideds were reported as expected only in the west, from the Harrison-Sioux Co, Scottsbluff and LM CBCs (fide EB, fide AK, fide SJD).
- Lapland Longspur:** Best count was an excellent 4894 on the Ames CBC 29 Dec (fide D&JP). Highest ever for a CBC is 23,452 at Lincoln in 1978! One wonders just how many of these birds are out there.
- Snow Bunting:** Good numbers were reported, including 29 on the LM CBC 2 Jan (fide SJD) and 15 in Dixon Co 10 Dec (JJ). Most reports were from the northeast, as is usual.
- Northern Cardinal:** Routine reports.
- Red-winged Blackbird:** Routine reports.
- Eastern Meadowlark:** First songs were heard 23 Feb at ADF (L&CF), about on time for returning migrants.
- Western Meadowlark:** Singing was heard 6 Feb in Scotts Bluff Co (KD), presumably wintering birds tuning up for the big dance.
- Yellow-headed Blackbird:** Last was one on the Scottsbluff CBC 17 Dec (fide AK).

- Rusty Blackbird:** The 2 reports were from the east, where the species is expected in small numbers in Dec; both were on CBCs 17 Dec. Totals of 12 were found at Seward-BOL (fide JG) and 3 at Norfolk (fide DW).
- Brewer's Blackbird:** The only report was of 5 on the LM CBC 2 Jan (fide SJD). This species is uncommon in Jan this far west.
- Common Grackle:** Not unexpected, but unusual, were 15-30 in Alma 21-30 Jan (G&WH); wintering occurs on occasion in the south and east, but in most cases only single birds are seen. Late for the west was one at Gering 22 Dec (AK), and very early (if they were not present in winter) were 1 in Scottsbluff and 10 in Bayard 20 Feb (P&DD).
- Great-tailed Grackle:** Rather late for the northerly locations were one during count week of the Calamus-Loup CBC 31 Dec (fide DH) and as many as 10 on the Beaver Valley CBC 2 Jan (WF; fide D&CN). A flock of 25-26 lingered until 5 Feb at Alma (G&WH), and a flock of about 150 present for 2 weeks prior to 27 Feb was said to have "pretty much wintered" in North Platte (TJW); wintering is still unusual in the state.
- Brown-headed Cowbird:** Rather late were 2 westerly birds on the LM CBC 2 Jan (fide SJD) and one at an Alma feedyard 1 Jan (G&WH). Rare in midwinter, one was in Seward Co 16 Jan (D&JP,LR,RH).
- Gray-crowned Rosy-Finch:** The only report was from a regular location, Chalk Buttes at WSR, where 30 were seen 16 Dec (HKH).
- Purple Finch:** Average numbers were reported, all from the east except for 2 rather westerly on the LM CBC 2 Jan (fide SJD). Best count was a moderate 25 at Ponca SP 2 Jan, only 2 of which were males (BFH).
- Cassin's Finch:** This species has occurred 3 times on the LM CBC, this year there was a single bird 2 Jan (fide CBC). A few apparently enter the North Platte Valley and Pine Ridge most winters.
- House Finch:** A new all-time Nebraska CBC high was the 348 at Scottsbluff 17 Dec (fide AK). Another excellent total was the 280 at Lincoln 18 Dec (fide RE).
- Red Crossbill:** The only high number reported was the 85 on the Harrison-Sioux Co CBC 1 Jan (fide EB). Only a few others were reported: 2 on the Crawford CBC 31 Dec (fide B&DW), one in Banner Co 28 Feb (WF), and, rare in the east, 3 on the Ames CBC 29 Dec (fide D&JP).
- Common Redpoll:** None were reported.
- Pine Siskin:** Most were as usual in the west, with best counts 162 on the Scottsbluff CBC 17 Dec (fide AK) and 100 south of Gering 15 Dec (AK).
- American Goldfinch:** A good CBC count was the 314 at Lincoln 18 Dec (fide RE).
- House Sparrow:** Routine reports.