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Stephen J. Dinsmore

Iowa State University, cootjr@iastate.edu

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The 2000-2001 Nebraska Christmas Bird Count

Stephen J. Dinsmore
Department of Wildlife and Fisheries
Box 9690/257 Thompson Hall
Mississippi State, MS 39762

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

DISCUSSION OF SPECIES

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

NOTABLE MISSES

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

OBSERVERS

Crawford Bruce Walgren (compiler), Donna Walgren

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

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

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

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

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

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

Lincoln Betty Adams, Irene Alexander, Linda Brown (compiler), Terri Brown, Jackie Canterbury, Sam Cunningham, Sherri Cunningham, Lynn Darling, Anne DeVries, Larry Einemann, Tim Epp, Sue Guild, Eve Hoffman, Don Hogg, Gen Hogg, Paul Johnsgard, Tim Knott, Josef Kren, George May, Linda Maslowski, Pete Maslowski, Kevin Poague, Paul Reagan, Phyllis Reagan, Ken Reitan, Dick Rhodes, Ramona Rhodes, Amy Richert, Scott Richert, Jeanette Richoux, Carol Rustad, Donald Showen, Judy Showen, Adam Smith, Bill Smith, Dave Tittertington, Moni Usasz, Joyce Vannier, Lyle Vannier, Diane West, Kay Young

Omaha Elliot Bedows, Warren Bielenburg, Bob Fuchs, Betty Grenon (compiler), Lois Inskeep, Clem Klaphake, Jim Kovanda, Sandy Kovanda, Catherine Kuper, Steve Lamphere, Howard Mattix, Sue Mattix, Shirley Noar, Babs Padelford, Loren Padelford, Don Paseka, Gary Poore, Neal Ratzlaff, Kathleen Rose, Eric Scholar, Vicky Scoville, David Smith, Jerry Toll

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

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

Table 2: 2000 Christmas Bird Count

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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