

University of Nebraska - Lincoln

DigitalCommons@University of Nebraska - Lincoln

Nebraska Bird Review

Nebraska Ornithologists' Union

3-2003

Winter Field Report, December 2002 to February 2003

W. Ross Silcock

Nebraska Ornithologists' Union, silcock@rosssilcock.com

Follow this and additional works at: <https://digitalcommons.unl.edu/nebbirdrev>



Part of the [Ornithology Commons](#), [Poultry or Avian Science Commons](#), and the [Zoology Commons](#)

Silcock, W. Ross, "Winter Field Report, December 2002 to February 2003" (2003). *Nebraska Bird Review*. 345.

<https://digitalcommons.unl.edu/nebbirdrev/345>

This Article is brought to you for free and open access by the Nebraska Ornithologists' Union at DigitalCommons@University of Nebraska - Lincoln. It has been accepted for inclusion in Nebraska Bird Review by an authorized administrator of DigitalCommons@University of Nebraska - Lincoln.

WINTER FIELD REPORT, December 2002 to February 2003

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

INTRODUCTION

Overall, this winter season was pretty quiet. There were no major weather events, no major invasions (just one minor incursion), and, with one big exception, no real rarities. Indeed, one observer (JJ) said: "I don't think I've ever had such a poor winter with bird sightings." Thus I stoop to the point of mentioning the presence of a kangaroo in Crawford, dutifully recorded on the CBC there on 28 December (BW). It was not identified to species, unfortunately.

On a more serious note, it is important to keep in mind that what we do as birders can make a significant contribution to ornithological knowledge; thus the emphasis in summaries like this one on accuracy of identification, a sometimes unpopular thing to have to do as a compiler. Joel Jorgensen summarized our contributions as amateurs as follows: "Nevertheless, I think amateur birders have a tremendous ability to make an important contribution; birding is perhaps the "rock and roll" of science. In a state with such a limited observer base, I think it is key that the few observers we have keep reporting and keep participating on counts. If they don't, birders and scientists 200 years will be greatly hindered." Joel comes to this point after his meticulous research on historical accounts of birds in the Rainwater Basin, and understands very well how accurate information recorded now can be of great benefit many years hence.

And so, back to the birds: given the fairly mild conditions in fall, the expected collection of lingering waterfowl was duly noted, especially grebes, cormorant, pelican, and herons. Noteworthy was the latest ever Great Egret. Greater Yellowlegs and Long-billed Dowitcher were reported in December, and Bonaparte's Gull in January. The mildness of the late fall may have stimulated a group of prairie-chickens in north-central Nebraska to engage in booming on 28 December! Fewer late passerines were reported, but Gray Catbird, Orange-crowned Warbler, and Chipping Sparrow were among them, along with a real surprise, a Palm Warbler, which provided the only November or December record for the state.

Some of these lingerers would be expected to try to overwinter, and waterfowl were also prominent among unusual mid-winter records. Notable as well were a Barn Owl, a Pine Warbler wintering at a Doniphan feeder, Nebraska's first wintering Clay-colored Sparrow, and a wintering Brown-headed Cowbird, this last surprisingly a female (I will refrain from gender-related comments on this sighting). Kinglets of both species also were reported in mid-winter, Golden-crowned's conspicuously.

A mini-invasion of Montana species occurred in the Ogallala area, involving several Pinyon Jays and Mountain Chickadees, with a flock of Cassin's Finches thrown in for good measure. The phenomenon of alternate-plumaged Franklin's Gulls in mid-winter is discussed herein, along with the continuing rapid spread of Eurasian Collared-Doves, now reported in about half of Nebraska's counties and probably present in all. The spread westward along the North Platte Valley of the Carolinian life zone species Northern Cardinal and Red-bellied Woodpecker continued also, an odyssey vaguely reminiscent of Lewis and Clark. Rather out of place were a Tufted Titmouse in Rock Co and a Mountain Bluebird in Seward Co, while the status of Dark-eyed (Pink-sided) Junco in the east was a topic for discussion. Lacking in numbers this winter was Pine Siskin.

Rarities were topped by the state's 5th Curve-billed Thrasher which obligingly landed at the Sioux Co ranch feeders of congenial hosts Lonnie and Janet Frimann and was seen by many; the 9th Brant; 4th winter Tufted Duck, likely all the same individual; and 18th Mew Gull. In addition, a Common Raven was reported; the status of this species in Nebraska is somewhat nebulous. Finally, a Bar-headed Goose was reported.

I encourage observers to report such exotics; patterns can emerge from such sightings as they accumulate.

ABBREVIATIONS

ADE: Arbor Day Farm, Otoe Co;

BOL: Branched Oak L, Lancaster Co;

BRP: Berggren Road Ponds, Scott Bluff Co;

CBC: Christmas Bird Count

Cem: Cemetery;

CO(s): County(ies);

FF: Fontenelle Forest, Sarpy Co;

FL: Funk Lagoon, Phelps Co;

GPD: Gavin's Point Dam, Cedar-Knox Cos;

GSP: Grandpa's Steakhouse Pond, Kearney;

HCR: Harlan Co Res, Harlan Co;

ISSP: Indian Cave SP, Nemaha/Richardson Cos;

L: Lake

LM: L McConaughy, Keith Co;

LQ: L Ogallala, Keith Co;

m.ob.: many observers;

MRET: Missouri River Ecology Trail, Neal Woods, Washington Co.

NC: Nature Center;

NGP: Nebraska Game and Parks Commission;

NM: National Monument;

NNF: Nebraska National Forest, Thomas Co;
NOU: Nebraska Ornithologists' Union;
NWR: National Wildlife Refuge;
PL: Pawnee L, Lancaster Co,
Res: Reservoir;
RWB: Rainwater Basin, including parts of Phelps, Hamilton, York, Clay,
Fillmore, and Thayer Cos
SCP: Spring Creek Prairie, Lancaster Co;
SHP: State Historical Park;
SL: Sewage Lagoon(s);
SP: State Park;
UNL: University of Nebraska, Lincoln;

GAZETTEER

Boyer Chute NWR: Washington Co;
Carter L: Douglas Co;
DeSoto NWR: Washington Co;
Harvard Marsh: Clay Co;
L Minatare: Scotts Bluff Co;
Sutherland Res: Lincoln Co;
Wildcat Hills: Scotts Bluff-Banner Cos;
Winters Creek L: Scotts Bluff Co.

OBSERVERS

AB: Aaron Brees, Indianola, IA;
AK: Alice Kenitz, Gering;
AR: Alice Rumery, Kearney;
B: Birdline;
BB: Bub Blake, Chambers;
BFH: Bill F. Huser, South Sioux City;
BM: Brad McKinney, Scottsbluff;
BP: Babs Padelford, Bellevue;
BW: Bruce Walgren, Crawford;
CF: Carol Falk, Nebraska City;
CG: Carlos Grande, Geneva y Espana;
CH: Carolyn Hall, Bassett;
CHy: Carr Heaney, Omaha;
CNK: Clem N. Klaphake, Bellevue;
CW: Chris Wood, Niwot, CO;
CWH: C.W. "Bill" Huntley, Ogallala;
DB: Duane Bright, Bellevue;
DD: Dean Drawbaugh, Scottsbluff;

DH: Dave Heidt, Norfolk;
DP: Don Paseka, Ames;
DS: Dave Stage, Elkhorn;
DM: Don Maas, Omaha;
DSt: Dave Stage, Elkhorn;
ET: Emily Thaden, Lincoln;
GH: Glen Hoge, Alma;
GHa: Gerard Harbison, Sprague;
HW: Harley Winfrey, Gering;
JC: Jay Carlisle, Yankton, SD;
JG: Joe Gubanyi, Seward;
JGJ: Joel G. Jorgensen, Blair;
JJ: Jan Johnson, Wakefield;
JLL: Jeanine L. Lackey, Lincoln;
JM: John Murphy, Kearney;
JP: Jan Paseka, Ames;
JSt: Jon Strong, Omaha;
JT: Jerry Toll, Omaha;
JWH: John W. Hall, Omaha;
KCR: Kathleen Crawford-Rose, Bellevue;
KD: Kathy DeLara, Mitchell;
KN: Kay Niyo, Evergreen, CO;
KP: Kevin Poague, Lincoln;
LaB: Laurine Blankenau, Omaha;
LE: Larry Einemann, Lincoln;
LF: Laurence Falk, Nebraska City;
LP: Loren Padelford, Bellevue;
LR: Lanny Randolph, Gibbon;
MA: Mark Armstrong, Bellevue;
MB: Mark Brogie, Creighton;
MI: Marshall Iliff, Irvine, CA;
MM: Marty Mathieson, Shelton;
MO: Mark Orsag, Crete;
MU: Mark Urwiller, Kearney;
MUs: Moni Usasz, Lincoln;
NB: Norma Brockmoller, Winside;
PD: Phyllis Drawbaugh, Scottsbluff;
RB: Roland Barth, Omaha;
RG: Ruth Green, Bellevue;
RH: Robin Harding, Gibbon;
SJD: Stephen J. Dinsmore, Starkville, MS;
SV: Steve Van Sickle, Yankton, SD;
TEL: Tom E. Labedz, Lincoln;
TJW: T.J. Walker, North Platte;
TP: Theresa Pester, Lincoln;
TR: Tommie Rogers, Mound City, MO;

TyH: Tyler Hicks, Mulvane, KS;

WH: Wanda Hoge, Alma;

WRS: W. Ross Silcock, Tabor, IA.

SPECIES ACCOUNTS

Pacific Loon: A basic adult was spotted on LM from 14 to 15 December (MB, DH, SJD, details). This sighting is the latest for fall, although there are two January records, also at LM.

Common Loon: The only one making it into the winter report was a basic adult identified at LM on 15 December (SJD).

Pied-billed Grebe: A juvenal lingered at LO until December 16 (SJD, KN); and one which probably wintered in the outlet channel at Plum Creek Res, Dawson Co, was seen on 9 February (LR, RH). In common with many waterbirds, a few individuals linger as long as water remains open.

Horned Grebe: Tardy were the 3 located at BOL on 1 December (JGJ) and the 2 found at PL on 3 December (LE); and even tardier was one listed for the Grand Island CBC on 21 December (B). There are only about 5 later reports.

Red-necked Grebe: In keeping with annual fall reports from LM in recent years, a juvenal was noted there on 15 December (SJD).

Eared Grebe: None was reported; late dates occur in mid-December.

Western Grebe: On the LM CBC of 15 December, 183 were counted (SJD); 2 were still present at LO on 27 December (CNK) and 2 on LM on 18 January (JGJ, WRS). Since the mid-1990s, a few have survived most winters there. Easterly was one seen at BOL between 1 and 3 December (JGJ, LE).

Clark's Grebe: The only report was of one discovered at Gering SL on 14 December (SJD, KN, WRS). This date is the 4th latest on record.

American White Pelican: At least one attempts to winter at Sutherland Res each year; the one spotted there on 10 February had an aluminum band and a blue plastic band (TJW). Unusually late in the east was one seen on the Missouri River at DeSoto NWR on 14 December (DP, JP), and another found at BOL on 1 December; the observer inferred from the latter bird's complete and utter lack of movement that it was deceased (JGJ).

Double-crested Cormorant: An immature identified at Johnson L, Gosper-Furnas Cos, on 9 February may have been trying to overwinter (LR, RH); there are very few such records.

American Bittern: One was reported at FL on the Kearney CBC of 14 December, but details provided were not sufficient to eliminate an immature Black-crowned Night-Heron, which is more likely at this date.

Great Blue Heron: The usual scattered wintering birds were noted; 3 located on the ice at HCR on 25 January "looked cold" (GH, WH). The

most unexpected location for the date was probably Fremont Lakes, Dodge Co, where a bird was spotted on 1 January (DP, JP).

Great Egret: One seen at the observers' farm between 4 and 5 December was "not quite right" (DP, P); understandable, as this date is the latest ever for the species.

Black-crowned Night-Heron: One was reported on the Grand Island CBC of 21 December (B, no details). This date is the 2nd latest ever, if the bird was correctly identified.

Greater White-fronted Goose: The only apparently wintering birds were the one found among "thousands" of Canada Geese at BRP on 4 January (KD) and 16 birds observed among wintering Canada Geese at GSP on 1 February (LR, RH). Few were reported in December, and spring arrivals were led by 30 seen in Lancaster Co on 17 February; 25 of those were located at Bluestem L (LE). The best spring tally reached 350 at Harvard Marsh on 22 February (JGJ).

Bar-headed Goose: An apparent escapee was spotted in Cedar Co between 12 and 24 February (SV); this species has been reported in Nebraska before, all presumably either escaped or released birds.

Snow Goose: The best December count totaled 30,000 at BOL on 14 December (JG). Large numbers were noted into January, despite a lack of open water: 30-40,000 were found at DeSoto NWR on 11 January even though the lake was 99% frozen (DM); all but one had gone, however, by 18 January (DM). Spring birds push north as soon as possible; 10,000+ were seen flying over HCR on 31 January (GH, WH), and a few had arrived at Twin Lakes, Seward Co, by 4 February (LE). Some 300 had arrived in Scotts Bluff Co on 15 February, including only 4 "blue" geese (KD); westerly Snow Goose flocks tend to contain mostly white morph birds. "Thousands" were spotted along the central Platte Valley on 20 February (AR), and 15,000 were observed flying around Harvard Marsh on 22 February (JGJ).

Ross's Goose: These birds often occur in small groups away from Snow Geese; 5 were apparently wintering with a few hundred Canada Geese at GSP on 1 February; there are only a few midwinter records. The usual few, a total of 9 birds, were reported in December and February.

Canada Goose: This species is abundant in the North Platte Valley. Although the 3,570 counted on the Scottsbluff CBC was the lowest count since 1989, there was no shortage in the county; "thousands" were found at BRP on 4 January (KD), and 5,100 were located at L Minatare and Winters Creek L on 15 December (SJD, WRS, KN). A large group of migrants were the 5,000 seen flying over Kearney on 12 December (LR, RH). A flock of 2,800 found on L Chappell, Deuel Co, on 16 December contained mostly "Lesser" Canada Geese, prompting the observer (SJD) to look for Brant (see that species). Large numbers of Canada Geese winter at GSP; 4,500 were estimated there on 1 February (LR, RH). The wintering flock at BOL reached 2,170 on 9 February (WRS); most were small and mid-sized birds, with the local large birds congregating

separately (JGJ). A hybrid Canada-Greater White-fronted Goose was identified at BOL on 9 February (WRS) and again on 22 February (JGJ); apparently a different bird of similar parentage was observed at Carter L on 13 February (CG), where one had been seen last year (JT). A survey of the Lancaster Co lakes on 25 February yielded a total of 5,236 Canada Geese (LE). Perhaps augmented by spring arrivals, 10,000 were encountered in 20 miles in Scotts Bluff Co on 15 February (KD).

Brant: A juvenile "Black Brant" of the subspecies *nigricans*, was identified with a large flock of "Lesser" Canada Geese on L Chappell, Deuel Co, on 16 December (SJD). This sighting marks the 6th documented fall record, the third of *nigricans*. The 3 documented spring records include none of *nigricans*.

Trumpeter Swan: The largest group reported was the 6 that gathered at Carter L between 5 and 19 February (JT, m.ob.); four were adults, two with red neck bands reading J54 and J80 (CG); these birds are from the Iowa reintroduction effort (fide Mary Gustafson). The best count at LM/LO reached only 5, those tallied on LM on 5 January (AB); one was smaller, but distance precluded confirmation as a Tundra Swan (AB), but see below. Two adults and an immature found roosting at a South Platte River sandpit at Ogallala on 4 January were the first the observer had seen roosting away from LM (CWH). Elsewhere, 1-2 were reported on the Calamus-Loup CBC on 27 December (fide NB) and on a creek in Cherry Co on 2 February (DH).

Tundra Swan: An immature was seen at LO on 15 January (MI), possibly the same bird as the one noted on 5 January by AB, referenced previously. This species is only casual in midwinter.

Wood Duck: Rare in midwinter, as many as 4 wintered in Scotts Bluff Co: 3-4 were spotted at BRP on 11 January and again on 15 February; (KD) and one was found on the Scottsbluff CBC of 14 December (fide AK). The one seen in Cedar Co on 16 December (SV) was rather late. The only other report was of 2 located at Carter L on 5 February (JT).

Gadwall: Apparently wintering were 8 discovered at LO on 18 January (WRS, JGJ, CNK), down from the 178 counted there on 15 December (SJD, MU). There are only about 20 records for the period between 9 January and 6 February. First for spring were 2 spotted at Stagecoach L, Lancaster Co, on 25 February (LE).

American Wigeon: The best counts occurred in the fall: 215 on the Scottsbluff CBC of 14 December (fide AK) and 166 at LO on 15 December (SJD, MU). Of the latter, 26 still remained on 18 January, presumably trying to overwinter (WRS, JGJ). An amazing 100 were counted with "thousands" of Mallards at the BRP on 11 January (KD). Other mid-winter reports included singles seen at Alma South SL on 29 January (GH, WH); on 14 and 23 January in Cedar Co (SV); and with Mallards along the Fort Kearny Hike-Bike Trail, Buffalo Co, on 1 February (LR, RH). Migrants appeared in Lancaster Co on 17 February (LE).

American Black Duck: The only report was of 2 found below GPD on 1 January (DH, MB).

Mallard: The largest mid-winter count reported was the “thousands” at BRP (KD). The best counts were of migrants: 22,000 at L Minatare on 14 December (SJD, WRS, KN); 16,226 on the Scottsbluff CBC (actually the lowest count since 1981; fide AK); and 16,140 at HCR on 16 February (GH, WH). The latter represents the 3rd highest spring count on record.

Blue-winged Teal: A “brown teal with a large bill” was spotted at GSP on 1 February (LR, RH); this sighting is the first February record for Nebraska. There were two prior records for December, and now a third: one was found on the Scottsbluff CBC of 14 December (BM).

Northern Shoveler: A record count of 202 was made on the Scottsbluff CBC of 14 December (fide AK). A small group attempted to winter at Alma South SL, but only one remained by 1 February (GH, WH). The Alma area sewage lagoons appear to provide conditions that allow wintering attempts, as there have been mid-winter reports most years since 1998-99. This species is only casual in mid-winter. The only report of spring migrants was of 3 spotted at BOL on 22 February (JGJ).

Northern Pintail: One appeared rather early at Twin Lakes, Seward Co, on 4 February (LE); the first group of spring migrants was the 29 found at HCR on 16 February (LR, RH); and best count totaled 400 at Harvard Marsh on 22 February (JGJ).

Green-winged Teal: Lingering was one spotted at BRP on 4 January (KD). The first in spring were the 177 found in Scotts Bluff Co on 15 February (KD); this total was also the best count reported.

Canvasback: A good count of 69 was made at LO on 15 December (SJD, MU), and 18 were still present, apparently wintering, on 18 January (WRS, JGJ). A female wintered at Alma South SL; it was joined by a pair on 20 February, the first for spring (GH, WH). The only other spring migrants reported were the 4 located at BOL on 25 February (LE).

Redhead: The best count totaled 213 at LO on 15 December (SJD, MU), 14 of which were still present on 18 January (WRS, JGJ). The first spring migrants were the 3 seen at Alma South SL on 20 February (GH, WH) and, far to the north, in Cedar Co the same day (SV).

Ring-necked Duck: As with the preceding two species, the best count was at LO, 102 on 15 December (SJD, MU); and 22 still remained on 18 January (WRS, JGJ). The first spring migrants were 2 observed at HCR on 21 February (GH, WH). The 16 noted on the Scottsbluff CBC of 14 December provided the count high (fide AK).

Tufted Duck: The LM CBC designated Tufted Ducker was brought in to search out the male, which apparently returned for the 4th consecutive winter; it was found on LO on 15 December (SJD). The bird has provided all of Nebraska’s records; it prefers the company of Greater Scaup.

Greater Scaup: The 3 found at Scottsbluff SL on 14 December (SJD, KN, WRS) were a CBC first (fide AK). As usual, the best count was at LO, where 64 were present on 15 December (SJD, MU), dwindling to 14 by

18 January (WRS, JGJ); 60+ were still there on 5 January (AB), but only 15 remained by 15 January (MI). That other mid-winter hotspot, Alma South SL, featured a female between 29 January and 1 February (GH, WH).

Lesser Scaup: The best count was the 257 tallied at LO on 16 December (SJD, KN); none was reported between 27 December and 17 February.

Surf Scoter: The only reports included a juvenile spotted at LO on 16 December (SJD, KN) and the two birds found there on 19 December (TyH). December reports are few for this species.

White-winged Scoter: As for the Surf Scoter, the only reports came from LO: 1-3 were present between 2 and 19 December, including 2 adult males and a juvenile observed from 15 to 16 December (SJD, LR, RH, TyH, m.ob.). These dates are rather late for this species.

Black Scoter: After an excellent fall showing, none lingered into the winter period.

Long-tailed Duck: After a few sightings in fall, none was reported for the winter period.

Bufflehead: Wintering is rare in this species, but one was identified in Cedar Co on 1 and again on 31 January (SV); and a female was seen in the Canaday Power Plant Canal, Gosper Co, on 11 January (LR, RH). First spring migrants were the two located at Alma South SL on 20 February (GH, WH). Best count was the excellent 373 at LO on 15 December (SJD, MU).

Common Goldeneye: The best count reached 500 at Scottsbluff SL on 2 December (KD); the 390 tallied on the Scottsbluff CBC of 14 December was a count record (fide AK). A few wintered in Lancaster Co (LE) and at two locations in Scotts Bluff Co: 13 were counted at Scottsbluff SL and Winters Creek L on 28 January (PD, DD). The best spring tally was 160 at HCR on 16 February (LR, RH). A male hybrid with Hooded Merganser was seen at LO on 16 December (LR, RH); this bird is likely the same one seen there between 1999-2000 and 2000-2001 (SJD; photo at <http://www2.msstate.edu/~sd122>). Another photo of the same hybrid (different bird) seen at Cunningham L, Omaha, (JGJ) is located at <http://www.jorgensencontracting.com/hybr.htm>.

Barrow's Goldeneye: The only report was of a male found below the Keystone Diversion Dam, LO, on 15 December (SJD); this species is regular in small numbers in the LM area in fall and winter.

Hooded Merganser: The best count totaled 16 at Winters Creek L on 14 December (SJD, WRS, KN). Five apparently wintered at LO; they were present on 18 January (WRS, JGJ). No spring birds were reported. See Common Goldeneye.

Common Merganser: Excellent late fall counts included 7,900 at LM on 15 December (fide SJD) and "several thousand" at HCR on 24 December (LR, RH). Small numbers wintered in Lancaster Co (LE) and on the Missouri River at Ponca SP (BFH). The best spring count was 1,615 at HCR on 26 February (LR, RH).

Red-breasted Merganser: GPD hosted 1-3 through the winter (SV, JC). Wintering has been noted there before, but this species is only casual in winter away from LO. The only other reports were of 2-3 located at BOL between 1 and 3 December (JGJ, LE) and one seen at LM from 15 to 16 December (SJD).

Ruddy Duck: The last to depart were 2 spotted at BOL on 31 December (LE), a rather late date; most years, few remain into December.

Bald Eagle: The best count was 88 in Phelps and Gosper Cos on 11 January (LR, RH); and as many as 49, those tallied on 17 February, frequented the same field near Nebraska City during the winter (LF, CF). Unusual was one that was at least 75% white that was present near Jeffrey Res, Lincoln Co, for 2 weeks in January (TJW). Also unusual was nest-building by two immature-plumaged birds at NNF, Halsey, on 26 February (Brad Mellema fide RG); this activity is not unprecedented in this species, but such nesting attempts are rarely successful.

Northern Harrier: Routine reports.

Sharp-shinned Hawk: The 4 found on the Scottsbluff CBC of 14 December represent a count record (fide AK).

Cooper's Hawk: Routine reports.

Northern Goshawk: Six were reported, a good tally, 5 in December and one in February. Adults were identified at LM on 19 December (TyH) and in Otoe Co on 27 December (LF, CF; details); and an immature was spotted in Greeley Co on 28 December (DH). Others were located in Wheeler Co on 1 December (DSt) and on the Grand Island CBC on 21 December (B). A juvenile was seen in a Shelton yard, Buffalo Co, on 3 February (MM).

Red-shouldered Hawk: The only report came from FF on 7 January (BP, LP). Wintering, presumably by the resident breeding birds, occurs on occasion at this location.

Red-tailed Hawk: The 20 noted on the Scottsbluff CBC of 14 December is a count record (fide AK); and a good count was the 19 tallied in Otoe Co on 25 December (LF, CF). A pair was observed nest building near North Platte on 20 February (TJW).

Ferruginous Hawk: About 7 were reported, east to HCR, where one was seen on 23 December (LR, RH), and in the Calamus-Loup CBC area, where one was counted during count week on 27 December (fide NB). The species is rare east of these locations.

Rough-legged Hawk: This species was widely-reported in about average numbers, with best counts the 8 noted on the Scottsbluff CBC of 14 December (fide AK) and the 8 tallied along River Road near North Platte on 14 December (LR, RH). One observer counted twice as many Rough-legs as Red-tails in western Nebraska on 27 December (CNK).

Golden Eagle: Unusual so far south and east were adults (probably the same bird) spotted at HCR on 22 December and on 1 February (GH, WH). Most easterly birds in winter are immatures.

American Kestrel: The best counts reached a count record of 39 on the Scottsbluff CBC of 14 December (fide AK) and of 15 in Pawnee Co on 25 December (LF, CF).

Merlin: About 11 were reported statewide, including a *columbarius* identified at LM on 18 January (JGJ, WRS); a "dark male," also apparently *columbarius*, seen near Axtell, Kearney Co, on 8 December (LR, RH); and a *richardsonii* observed in Dawson Co on 9 February (LR, RH). Both may occur in winter, but usually fewer *columbarius* are noted.

Prairie Falcon: About 12 were reported, including southeasterly birds found in Dodge Co on 7 February (DP, JP); in Douglas Co on 28 December (JWH; <http://groups.yahoo.com/group/NEBirds>); and in Richardson Co on 28 December (TR).

Gray Partridge: None was reported.

Ring-necked Pheasant: An amazing 250+ were located at Nathan's L, Washington Co, on 25 January (DM).

Sharp-tailed Grouse: The only reports were of 2 noted on the Crawford CBC of 28 December (BW) and a sighting in Knox Co on 6 January (SV). Knox Co is at the northeastern edge of the Nebraska range.

Greater Prairie-Chicken: The best count was 42, registered on the Calamus-Loup CBC of 28 December (LR, RH). A surprise was the 9 engaged in booming on a lek for the Calamus-Loup CBC of 28 December (DH). Additional birds were heard booming the next day in Butler Co, but the area did not contain prime lekking habitat (DH). Butler Co is east of the known breeding range; however, in winter, prairie-chickens often move southeastward. Perhaps the 6 previous days of 15 degrees above normal temperatures led to the booming (DH).

Wild Turkey: The best counts reached 111 on the Scottsbluff CBC of 14 December (fide AK) and 110 in a single flock found along the North Loup River in Valley Co on 29 December (LR, RH).

Northern Bobwhite: The best count was 30 at BOL on 14 December (LE). Far to the west, 12 appeared in the observer's yard west of Scottsbluff on 2 January (KD). This species is fairly numerous in the North Platte Valley, generally close to the river.

Virginia Rail: The only report was of the 7 counted on the LM CBC of 15 December (SJD, MU); this species winters regularly in small numbers in the count area.

American Coot: The best, and the only double-digit, count was 293 at LO on 15 December (SJD, MU); 9 still remained there on 27 December (CNK). Unexpected for midwinter was one spotted west of Scottsbluff on 8 January (AK).

Sandhill Crane: Few were reported. The first birds appeared on schedule, although the 11 that flew over GSP on 1 February (LR, RH) were a bit early. They were followed by 38 flyovers near Gibbon on 13 February (LR, RH). Unusual so far east were 2 seen at BOL between 17 and 22 Feb (LE, JSt), about the 16th such sighting; this species is only casual in spring in the east.

Killdeer: Probably wintering were the 3 spotted on the Hike-Bike Trail near Fairfield Inn, Kearney, on 1 February (LR, RH). The last non-wintering birds were 2 found at BOL on 25 December (JSt).

Greater Yellowlegs: A rather tardy bird was spotted at Conestoga L, Lancaster Co, on 3 December (LE); there are fewer than 10 records for December and January of this fairly cold-tolerant species.

Long-billed Dowitcher: The one present since November at HCR was last seen on 11 December (GH, WH); this species often occurs in November, but this report signifies only the 3rd record for December, and the 2nd latest ever.

Wilson's Snipe: The usual few scattered mid-winter birds were reported, all, as expected, along major river systems except for one observed at the Chet Ager NC, Lincoln, on 4 February (LE).

Franklin's Gull: An alternate-plumaged adult was spotted at Alma South SL on 12 December (GH, WH); the phenomenon of Franklin's Gulls appearing in mid-winter (1 December to 21 February) in the northern Great Plains is not new; there are now 13 such reports for Nebraska, all but 2 since 1988 and most of birds in alternate plumage. Perhaps they are best described as very early spring vagrants, somewhat analogous to the first Purple Martins or Red-winged Blackbirds, which also appear as singles or in very small groups. An interesting explanation as to why most of these birds appear in alternate plumage was discussed by Alvaro Jaramillo on BIRDCHAT: birds wintering in the southern hemisphere, such as the Franklin's Gull, initiate molt into alternate plumage coincident with shortening day length in the winter quarters. If, however, such a bird happens to winter out of range in the northern hemisphere, shortening day length in the northern fall could cause an out-of-synch transition to alternate plumage which would thus be worn in the northern winter.

Bonaparte's Gull: As many as 70-80 still remained at LM from 15 to 16 December (SJD, KN); and 6 lingered there until 5 January (AB). The latter provided only the 6th January record for the state, and the 2nd latest overall. There are no records between 13 January and 21 February.

Mew Gull: A 2nd-basic bird was wintering at LO/LM between 16 December and 18 January (SJD, KN, WRS, J GJ, photos; AB). There are now 10 spring and 8 fall records for this species; the 18 January date cited here is the latest.

Ring-billed Gull: The best counts included 620 at HCR on 23 December (LR, RH); 430 at LM on 15 December (SJD, MU); and 400 wintering there on 18 January (JGJ, WRS).

California Gull: A few linger late in fall at LM; 8 adults were present on 15 December (SJD, m.ob.), and only 2, both adults, were found on 5 January (AB). Four birds spotted at HCR on 24 December (LR, RHp; details) were unusual but not unprecedented; the species is casual away from LM and the Panhandle.

Herring Gull: Few were reported in January, with the best count the 125 wintering at LM on 18 January (WRS, JGJ). At BOL as many as 16 were still present on 7 January (LE), but none reappeared until 3 were found on 17 February (LE). The 2 observed at HCR on 1 February were the first seen there since mid-December (GH, WH).

Thayer's Gull: As many as 5, including 2 adults, 2 juveniles, and a 2nd-basic, were located at LM between 15 December and 18 January (AB, m.ob.). This location is a regular wintering area for this species, with increased numbers there in late fall and early spring. There is some variation in the appearance of birds seen at LM, although LM seems to be far enough west that birds appearing there are almost all phenotypically pure Thayer's Gulls. Birds showing structural features of Kumlien's Gull (now generally considered a hybrid swarm between Iceland and Thayer's Gulls) such as long primary projection, smallish bill, and rounded head are very rare at LM, representing perhaps 5% of Thayers-Iceland birds found.

Iceland (Kumlien's) Gull: Most years, one "Iceland" Gull (probably more correctly "Kumlien's" Gull--see preceding description) appears at LM; a basic adult was found there from 15 to 27 December (SJD details; MU, KN, CNK). There are now 18 Nebraska records of birds identified as Iceland Gulls.

Lesser Black-backed Gull: The only report was of an adult seen at LM between 15 and 19 December (SJD, details; MU, TyH). This sighting marks the 18th fall record, and the 8th of an adult. In contrast to spring, most fall records are of immatures.

Glaucous Gull: Two were reported in fall, none in mid-winter, and one in spring, rather few compared to recent years. A 1st-winter bird was identified at GPD on 11 December (B), and a juvenile was found at LM on 16 December (SJD, KN). Surprisingly for the location, a basic adult remained at Carter L between 5 and 20 February (JT, m.ob.)

Rock Dove: A count record of 347 was tallied on the Scottsbluff CBC of 14 December (fide AK). The highest CBC total in Nebraska appears to be from Lincoln, 685 birds in 1992. How long will it be before the following species becomes more numerous?

Eurasian Collared-Dove: This species has now occurred and is probably established in about half the counties of Nebraska, including many in the east, where it was slower to arrive (MB, DH, SJD). From now on, additional county records will not be listed in these Seasonal Reports, but only high totals and nesting records. A total of about 53 were reported, with the best count the 10 totaled at Elmwood on 10 February (B), the site of a fairly long-established breeding population. Now we will have to take some care with dove identification in Nebraska!

White-winged Dove: A report without details was received of one spotted at Oshkosh on 14 December (B); at that date this sighting seems more likely to have been of a Eurasian Collared-Dove. A report of 2 present at a Beatrice feeder for two weeks on 28 February was checked,

and the birds turned out to be (surprise!) Eurasian Collared-Doves (DSt).

Mourning Dove: The few mid-winter reports came, as expected, from Kearney and Alma eastward; the best counts were the 16 wintering in Nebraska City (LF, CF) and 15 observed in the observers' Bellevue yard on 3 and again on 18 January (BP, LP).

Barn Owl: Most of the few midwinter Barn Owl records, only 4 since 1980, are of emaciated birds found dead or dying; thus half unusual was one in good condition found dead in a barn in southeast Wayne Co on 1 February; it thoughtfully died just as its finder was teaching a unit on owls (JJ). Strangely, there are no winter Barn Owl records from the west or southwest, where summer populations are highest.

Eastern Screech-Owl: The resident bird in the observer's Scotts Bluff Co yard became her 71st yard bird (KD), and hopefully a long-term reliable CBC stakeout!

Great Horned Owl: Nesting was underway with 2 incubating birds noted in the North Platte area on 20 February (TJW). Apparently rather susceptible to West Nile Virus, an amazing 47, many victims of West Nile Virus, were under care at the Raptor Recovery Center near Lincoln as of 16 December (Betsy Finch, fide DSt).

Snowy Owl: Following last year's fairly good showing, 3 were reported this year. A juvenile was photographed at the west end of LM on 16 December (SJD photos at <http://www2.msstate.edu/~sd122/Snowy%20Owl%201.jpg> ; KN); one was spotted north of Morrill on 18 January (fide AK); and the one found dead on 2 February in Madison Co became a specimen at the State Museum (UNSM 18104; TEL, ET).

Barred Owl: Apparently unafraid of human activity was one observed in Towle Park in the heart of Omaha on 8 January (NR). Towards the west edge of the range, singles were noted at Hormel Park, Fremont, on 1 January (DP, JP) and on the BOL-Seward CBC of 14 December (fide JG).

Long-eared Owl: The only reports came from CBCs: singles found at BOL-Seward on 14 December (fide JG) and at LM on 15 December (fide SJD).

Short-eared Owl: None was reported, typical of recent years, and possibly of some concern.

Northern Saw-whet Owl: None was reported, probably as few observers systematically search for this regularly wintering species.

Belted Kingfisher: The 9 counted on the Scottsbluff CBC of 14 December was a count record (fide AK).

Red-headed Woodpecker: The only midwinter reports were of 2 located at FF on 8 January (BP, LP) and one spotted there on 25 January (CNK); a few winter most years in the extreme southeast.

Red-bellied Woodpecker: This species continues to move westward in the North Platte Valley; at least 3 birds were wintering in Scotts Bluff Co this winter (fide AK), two of which were counted on the Scottsbluff CBC (fide AK). It is regular as far west as Keith Co, where 2 were found on

the LM CBC of 15 December (fide SJD); and one was seen in the observer's Ogallala yard on 24 December and again on 5 January (CWH). It has occurred throughout the Republican Valley for some time; 2 were observed in Red Willow Co on 16 February (DH).

Yellow-bellied Sapsucker: A few linger on occasion in the extreme southeast; one was counted on the BOL-Seward CBC of 14 December (fide JG). Overwintering is rare, but one was spotted at Arbor Lodge SHP, Nebraska City, a favored location, on 25 January (LF, CF).

Downy Woodpecker: Routine reports.

Hairy Woodpecker: Routine reports.

Northern Flicker: An interesting comparison was afforded by counts at opposite ends of the state: a flock of 26 birds discovered in southeastern Otoe Co on 26 January contained only yellow-shafted birds (WRS), while the 36 birds counted on the Scottsbluff CBC of 14 December consisted of 19 red-shafted, 3 "hybrid," 7 yellow-shafted, and 7 unknown-shafted flickers (fide AK). The 5 birds found at a Scotts Bluff Co feeder on 11 January were all "hybrids" (KD).

Pileated Woodpecker: Reports came from a regular location, FF, where 1-2 were found between 1 and 11 February (DB, B).

Northern Shrike: About 24 were reported statewide, including one located as far southeast as Otoe Co on 9 December (LF, CF).

Loggerhead Shrike: This species lingers into winter in the extreme southeast, where even there it is rare. The only reports were of singles seen at Arbor L, Lancaster Co, on 21 January (LE); at BOL on 28 January (LE); and in Otoe Co on 10 December (LF, CF).

Blue Jay: This bird has been common statewide for some time now. An indication of this status was the 54 birds counted on the Scottsbluff CBC of 14 December (fide AK).

Pinyon Jay: Within the usual range, one was counted on the Crawford CBC of 28 December (BW). More surprising, and indicative of a minor incursion, were reports of one identified at a feeder 5 miles northeast of LM in early December (fide CWH) and of a group of 5 birds discovered in an Ogallala neighborhood from about 1 December throughout the period (CWH; fide SJD). Such easterly reports usually occur in or near the North Platte Valley, but few have been noted for many years.

Black-billed Magpie: Easternmost reports came from regular locations; one was seen south of Waco on 20 January (B) and at least one was found on the BOL-Seward CBC of 14 December (fide JG). In Harlan Co, the largest group found totaled only 5, leading the observers to suggest that West Nile Virus might have had some impact on magpies in that area (GH, WH). Apparently this concern is not the case in Scotts Bluff Co, where 63 were counted on the CBC there on 14 December (fide AK).

American Crow: The best count was the 648 tallied on the Scottsbluff CBC of 14 December, where they were said to be "everywhere" (fide AK).

Common Raven: A belated report by an experienced observer was received of one east seen of Pine Bluff on 5 January 2002 (CW). Somewhat enigmatic in Nebraska, there are a few recent reports in winter, none documented. There is no reason why an occasional bird would not wander to the Panhandle in winter, however, as they occur fairly close to Nebraska in northeastern Colorado and southeastern Wyoming.

Horned Lark: Territorial pairs were noted in Lancaster Co as early as 17 February (LE), about typical for the species, which is a very early breeder. Juveniles first appear in late March. Some observers mentioned a scarcity of Horned Larks this winter; indeed, no large counts were reported, with the best count reaching 673 in Dawson Co on 9 February (LR, RH).

Black-capped Chickadee: An excellent count was of about 100 at a Brown Co feeder on 30 December (fide CH).

Mountain Chickadee: Three reports were received, all in the Ogallala area. One was frequenting the Ogallala Nature Park in south Ogallala, where feed was being provided, throughout the period (CWH, m.ob.), and 2 were seen at a Brule feeder throughout the period (CWH; fide SJD). Another was reported at LO on 19 December (TyH). These sightings represent the 4th and 5th records since 1997 of this casual winter visitor.

Tufted Titmouse: This species is unusual in Lincoln, which is at the western edge of its Nebraska range. Several reports were received from there: 1-2 were spotted in various yards, at Pioneer Park, and at Chet Ager NC between 24 January and 4 February (MUs, JLL, LE). A virtually unprecedented report so far north and west was of one discovered at a Rock Co feeder on 30 December (fide CH); a similar report of an out-of-range wintering titmouse came from northwestern Iowa this winter (Matt Kenne, per.comm. WRS). The only prior plausible report at any distance from the usual range is of a singing bird carefully studied by Dick Rosche on 23 May 1979 ("Birds of Northwestern Nebraska and Southwestern South Dakota").

Red-breasted Nuthatch: A "good invasion" was reported at Ogallala (CWH), but elsewhere numbers seemed normal, with best counts 2-4 birds (m.ob.).

White-breasted Nuthatch: Several reports were received of birds in westerly areas where summering does not occur; all identified to subspecies were eastern birds. Two were seen at a Sidney feeder on 1 February (KD); 3 birds were found east of Scottsbluff on 14 December (SJD, WRS, KN); and singles were spotted at LO and Ogallala from 15 to 16 December (SJD, MU, KN). Unfortunately, one listed on the Crawford CBC of 28 December (BW) was not identified to subspecies; at this location, the western subspecies is likely.

Pygmy Nuthatch: Reports came from Wildcat Hills: a record count of 5 on the Scottsbluff CBC of 14 December (fide AK) and one banded at Wildcat Hills NC on 11 February (RG; fide HW).

Brown Creeper: The best count totaled 7 at LO on 15 December (SJD, MU).

Carolina Wren: Several were reported, suggesting a slow recovery in numbers; all reports originated south and east of a line from Lincoln to Omaha. Singles were spotted in Otoe Co on 29 and again on 31 December (different birds, LF, CF); a pair has wintered regularly in the observer's Omaha yard and was found there on 31 December (RB); one was seen at a Bellevue feeder on 18 January (DM); a pair was located at another Bellevue feeder throughout the period (BP, LP); one was observed in a Lincoln yard on 24 January (Mus); 1-2 were located at Pioneers Park, Lincoln, between 28 January and 11 February (LE); and singles were spotted at the SCP feeders on 4 February (KP) and at the Chet Ager NC feeders the same day (LE).

Winter Wren: The only mid-winter report was of one seen at FF on 8 January (BP, LP); wintering in the southeast is rare but regular. Westerly were the 2 birds found at LO on 15 December and another, a different bird, noted on 16 December, all identified as eastern birds (SJD, MU). Another seen was somewhat westerly near Fort Kearny, Buffalo Co, on 14 December (B).

Marsh Wren: Reports came from the North Platte Valley, where wintering is regular: one was found on the Scottsbluff CBC of 14 December (SJD, WRS, KN), and 11 were counted at LO on 15 December (SJD, MU).

Golden-crowned Kinglet: This species was widely-reported in good numbers in fall, with several remaining in the southeast in mid-winter. The best fall counts were a fall record 65-70 at Regency L, Omaha, on 16 December (Chy); 20 at the same place the next day (Chy); and 20 in Lancaster Co on 21 December (LE). Four Bellevue feeders hosted 1-2 throughout the winter (DB, KCR, MA, BP, L P). Two spotted at Wagontrain L, Lancaster Co (LE), were very early and may have wintered nearby.

Ruby-crowned Kinglet: Rare in winter, 3 were reported, 2 listed on the LM CBC of 15 December (fide SJD) and one found in mid-winter at Lincoln; it was seen from 4 feet away in a cedar on 25 January (TP).

Eastern Bluebird: Mid-winter reports came, as expected, from the southeast, with the best count the 15 tallied in western Sarpy Co on 26 January (CNK).

Mountain Bluebird: Easterly was a male attending a Seward Co feeder where 3 had been seen 3 winters ago through at least 19 January (fide JG). This species is only casual in the east. A major wintering area is the canyons in southeastern Lincoln Co, especially Cottonwood Canyon (TJW); this location makes this species an altitudinal migrant in Nebraska!

Townsend's Solitaire: Easternmost was one noted on the BOL-Seward CBC of 14 December (fide JG). No large concentrations were reported.

Hermit Thrush: Occasionally wintering is attempted in the extreme southeast; one survived throughout the period in Bellevue, visiting a birdbath (Sue Gentes; fide BP, LP). Reports in December are not unusual; singles were spotted in the Seward Cem on 12 December (JG); at LO on 15 December (SJD, MU); and in Seward on 24 December (JG).

American Robin: The largest concentration reported was the "thousands" congregating around LM between 15 and 18 January (WRS, JGJ, MI). Mere "hundreds" were found in northern Saunders Co on 8 January (DP, JP). The first "spring" lawn bird (Chestnut-breasted Lawn-Thrush?) was a really impatient one found at Bassett on 30 January (CH).

Gray Catbird: Two lingerers were found: one spotted at LM from 15 to 16 December (SJD, MU photos; KN) rather westerly; the other, noted on the BOL-Seward CBC of 14 December (fide JG), was in a more expected location. These are only the 6th and 7th December records for the state; there are 2 for January and 3 for February. One of the January records is for Sioux Co!

Northern Mockingbird: The only report was of one spotted at an Omaha birdbath on 25 December (LaB). Midwinter records are scarce.

Curve-billed Thrasher: The bird wintering at the feeders of Lonnie and Janet Frimann in extreme southeastern Sioux Co continued throughout the period, providing the 5th documented record for the state. The bird was captured and banded on 12 February and found to be a 2nd-year male, hatched in 2002 (RG, HW). While there is considerable overlap in measurements between males and females, this bird was outside the range for females (RG). Its capture and banding initiated a rather exciting discussion about benefits and problems related to such activity; messages can be read on the NEBIRDS archives.

European Starling: The only concentration reported was the 1,551 listed on the Scottsbluff CBC of 14 December (fide AK).

Bohemian Waxwing: The only report was of 2 juveniles found at Grove L, Antelope Co, on 1 January (DH).

Cedar Waxwing: Routine reports.

Orange-crowned Warbler: Surprisingly, two were reported: one was seen at the observers' Bellevue birdbath on 4 December (BP, L P), and the other was observed with a flock of 20 Golden-crowned Kinglets at Regency L, Omaha, on 17 December (CHy). These sightings mark only the 4th and 5th December records for the state, with latest on 21 December. There are none for January.

Yellow-rumped (Myrtle) Warbler: Stragglers in December are not unusual; this year one was spotted at GPD on 11 December (SV); 6 were counted on the LM CBC of 15 December (fide SJD); and one was located in Knox Co on 28 December (SV). Two birds still remained in the LM area

on 15 January (MI); this report is about the 6th westerly one for January.

Pine Warbler: Although this species is rather cold-tolerant, an adult male wintering at Doniphan was a surprise; video was taken on 3 February of the bird, which had been present since 28 November (fide JDD). Equally surprising is that this sighting signifies the 2nd wintering record, along with 2 additional December records.

Palm Warbler: One was reported on the Calamus-Loup CBC of 27 December; it was foraging along the river below the dam (BB, details). This report marks the first record for either November or December, and is especially surprising as this species is only casual in occurrence in fall in Nebraska.

Common Yellowthroat: One was reported without details singing in Pioneers Park, Lincoln, on 1 February; this songster was almost certainly a Carolina Wren, as a yellowthroat is very unlikely to be present in midwinter, let alone singing at that time. There are no Nebraska records of Common Yellowthroat between 16 December and 1 April.

Spotted Towhee: The only report was of one rather tardy bird included on the Scottsbluff CBC of 14 December (SJD, WRS, KN); few remain away from the southeast after December.

Eastern Towhee: Most Eastern Towhees leave the state in winter, and so December sightings are unexpected. The one reported on the BOL-Seward CBC of 14 December was only the 2nd for the count (fide JG).

American Tree Sparrow: The best count was the 400 in Custer Co on 5 January (LR, RH).

Chipping Sparrow: Midwinter reports are problematic but not unprecedented. Usually, single birds spotted at feeders are the norm, albeit rare. The one seen in Cedar Co at the Visitor's Center feeder at GPD on 11 December was therefore a rather typical occurrence, even though it was still in alternate plumage (SV, details). However, a report of 5 birds identified at a central Nebraska feeder as late as 11 January was atypical of this species and seems unlikely to be correct. The latest documented records for Nebraska are 28 November and the preceding GPD bird.

Clay-colored Sparrow: A single bird wintering at the same southeastern Sioux Co Frimann feeders that hosted the famous Curve-billed Thrasher was first noticed on 5 January (MB); it was netted on 12 February and found to be "healthy and fat" except that it had only one eye (RG). This identification is the only documented winter record for the state.

Fox Sparrow: This species overwinters occasionally in the southeast; one at BOL was seen on 14 and 31 December and again on 18 February (LE); the sightings probably were of the same bird. If so, this sighting represents the 4th record of overwintering. Another late bird was

discovered in an Elkhorn yard on 23 December (Dst); and the one noted at Sprague on 25 February (GH, photo) may have been an early spring migrant.

Song Sparrow: Good CBC counts included the count record 13 at Scottsbluff on 14 December (fide AK) and the 11 tallied at BOL-Seward on 14 December (LE). This species is rare in winter away from the south and east, although December reports are not uncommon almost anywhere in the state.

Swamp Sparrow: The only report was of an apparently wintering bird seen at BOL on 14, 16, and 27 December and on 21 January (LE). Overwintering is only casual, this report marking one of fewer than 10 such records. There are, however, several additional December-January reports, few documented.

White-throated Sparrow: Several reports were received of 1-2 birds, most spotted at feeders, all from the southeast as expected, except for one bird noted as far west as LO on 16 December (SJD, KN). This species is a rare migrant westward.

White-crowned Sparrow: The best count was the 59 on the Scottsbluff CBC of 14 December (fide AK); several wintered at the observer's feeders near Mitchell, peaking at 24 on 15 February (KD). Numbers are lowest in mid-winter, especially in the east; the only such reports were of 9 immatures wintering at BOL (LE); one found at Towle Park, Omaha, on 11 January (Jst); and 5 seen at Nebraska City on 17 February (LF, CF).

Harris's Sparrow: The best counts included 66 at BOL on 14 December (LE) and 50 in Dixon Co on 9 February (JJ). This species is rare in the western part of the state; one was found on the Scottsbluff CBC of 14 December (fide AK); and 2 were spotted at LO between 15 and 16 December (SJD, MU, KN).

Dark-eyed (White-winged) Junco: As expected, most reports came from the west, where reporting feeders all seemed to have a few. The best count was the 6 banded at Wildcat Hills NC on 11 February (RG, HW). In Keith Co, they were more numerous than usual (CWH); and one was found as far southeast as HCR, where it is only casual, on 23 December (LR, RH).

Dark-eyed (Slate-colored) Junco: The best counts came from HCR, with 425 tallied on 16 December (LR, RH), and from the east, where other junco types are uncommon: 137 were found in southeastern Otoe Co on 17 February (LF, CF); 125 in 4 flocks were noted in Otoe and Nemaha Cos on 26 January (WRS); and 116 were counted at BOL on 14 December (LE). Numbers in the west were higher than usual; more Slate-colored than Oreos (fide AK) were found on the Scottsbluff CBC of 14 December. Slate-colored Juncos were thought to be unusually numerous in Keith Co (CWH).

Dark-eyed (Oregon) Junco: Some interesting information on juncos surfaced during a NEBIRDS discussion: based on banding studies,

Dark-eyed (Oregon) Junco comprised about 10% of juncos in the east, increasing to 50% at Alda, Hall Co, (TEL). In the west, Oregon and Slate-colored Juncos are most numerous; no Oregons were reported from the east. The Scottsbluff CBC of 14 December listed juncos identified to types as Oregon 59; Slate-colored 67; Pink-sided 10; and White-winged 3 (fide AK).

Dark-eyed (Pink-sided) Junco: An interesting discussion developed on NEBIRDS concerning whether the Dark-eyed (Pink-sided) Junco occurs in eastern Nebraska. Photos of possibilities were submitted (JGJ, Gha); however, both were thought by most contributors to be females of or hybrids with Oregon Junco or, alternatively, the *cismontanus* form of the Slate-colored Junco (consider the photos posted at <http://www.jorgensencontracting.com/pink.htm> and at <http://setanta.unl.edu/birds/j5.jpg>). However, good details were provided for a Pink-sided spotted at Boyer Chute NWR on 8 February (CNK). Elsewhere, the easternmost Pink-sideds were 2 seen at LM on 18 January (WRS, JGJ) and at HCR on 23 December (LR, RH).

Lapland Longspur: The best count reached 3,000 around FL on 8 December (LR, RH).

Snow Bunting: None was reported.

Northern Cardinal: One was spotted in a Dixon Co yard on 9 February, where it was considered "rare" (JJ). Apparently this species is doing well and increasing along the North Platte Valley in Scotts Bluff Co; and the 6 (2 males, 4 females) reported on the CBC of 14 December (SJD, KN, WRS) marks the best count total to date (fide AK). Best counts reported were 42 in southeastern Otoe Co on 17 February (LF,CF) and 39 at BOL on 14 December (LE).

Red-winged Blackbird: A count record 6,525 was noted on the Scottsbluff CBC of 14 December (fide AK); 6,500 of these were in a flock attending a feedyard east of Gering (SJD, KN, WRS). Flocks as large as the 1,000 observed in Buffalo Co on 1 February (LR, RH) and the 500 seen in Lancaster Co on 14 January (LE) were unusual for mid-winter.

Western Meadowlark: A group of 30 singing in Seward Co on 28 January (LE) was an early date for these birds to thus identify themselves. Another 31 spotted near Darr, Dawson Co, on 9 February (LR, RH) were also singing. It seems that early-migrating birds remain in these singing groups (choirs?) before breaking up into territorial pairs.

Yellow-headed Blackbird: Lingering birds included a count record 8 (2 adult males, 3 adult females, 3 juveniles) on the Scottsbluff CBC of 14 December (SJD, WRS, KN) and a single adult male seen at LO on 15 December (SJD, MU photos).

Rusty Blackbird: A few may winter in the southeast in milder years; one was identified at Boyer Chute NWR on 25 January (DM). A little westerly but probably still not unexpected at the locations were the 6 noted below the dam at HCR on 1 December (GH, WH); the 40 found near

HCR on 1 February (GH, WH); a "fall male" observed near Kearney on 8 December (LR, RH); and the 9 spotted near Kearney on 1 February (LR, RH).

Brewer's Blackbird: Only two were reported, about the norm: a male was found at LO on 15 December (SJD, MU), and a single was reported without details on the Grand Island CBC of 21 December (B). On occasion, single birds are reported on CBCs in the southeast.

Common Grackle: The norm for midwinter is a single bird sighted at a feeder, and so the 6 which wintered at a Gering feeder pushed the envelope (AK). Although not apparently all were seen at feeders, for midwinter singles were spotted in a Shelton yard on 19 January (MM); at Dead Timber Area, Dodge Co, on 2 February (LE); and at Boyer Chute NWR on 8 February (CNK).

Brown-headed Cowbird: Attempting to overwinter, and making it at least as far as 29 January, were the 20+ located in a feedyard near Alma (GH, WH). A female apparently did make it at the Wakefield school feeder in Wayne Co; she remained as late as 18 February (JJ). Others that may have overwintered included the 3 noted at PL on 21 January (LE). Overwintering is rare in the southeast, a region whose limits are defined by the preceding reports. Early for spring was one identified near Gibbon on 24 February (LR, RH).

Gray-crowned Rosy-Finch: The only report was of 10 found along the Henry Road, Sioux Co, on 2 December (B); the species occurs in this area most years.

Purple Finch: Few reports were received, typical of recent winters. A male was spotted at a Winside feeder on 3 December (NB), perhaps the same bird reported on the Calamus-Loup CBC of 27 December (fide NB); a male and female attended the Wakefield school feeder between 3 December and 18 February (JJ); and two were observed at the Neale Woods feeders on 1 February (B).

Cassin's Finch: Not unexpected was a female found at a Scottsbluff feeder on 27 February (HW; pictures posted to the NEBIRDS website allowed this bird to be identified). Suggestive of a minor incursion of this species (along with Mountain Chickadee and Pinyon Jay) was a flock of 14 discovered along the South Platte River in Ogallala on 15 December (WRS, KN; details); the birds were studied on two separate occasions by observers familiar with the species, which is casual in winter in the Panhandle and in central Nebraska.

House Finch: The best count was 154, tallied on the Scottsbluff CBC of 14 December (fide AK).

Red Crossbill: Rather incredibly, none was reported.

Common Redpoll: The only reports were of one spotted in an Elkhorn yard on 24 December (DSt) and 6 seen at Boyer Chute NWR on 1 February (B, no details).

Pine Siskin: This year was poor for this species; the 7 tallied on the Scottsbluff CBC of 14 December signifies the lowest count since 1985

(fide AK); only one was seen in Alma, that on 1 January (GH, WH); the only ones present all winter in the observers' Scottsbluff yard were the 10 noted on 23 January (PD, DD); and the first for winter did not appear at an Omaha feeder until 2 showed on 3 February (NR). The best count was somewhat of a surprise, therefore: the 42 banded at Wildcat Hills NC on 11 February (RG, HW); 20 was the peak count in a Chadron yard, on 23 and 24 January (ZU).

American Goldfinch: The best count totaled 60+ in a Chadron yard on 23 February (ZU).

House Sparrow: The best count reached 570 on the Scottsbluff CBC of 14 December (fide AK).