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## Spring Field Report, March-May 2003

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**SPRING FIELD REPORT, March-May 2003**

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**INTRODUCTION**

This spring was characterized by a lack of significant ornithological events, although readers will find tidbits of interest under the following species: Greater White-fronted Goose, Mandarin Duck (believe it or not), Common Merganser, Peregrine Falcon, Buff-breasted Sandpiper, Great Horned Owl, and Blue-winged Warbler. A significant concentration of warblers and flycatchers was detected at Walnut Grove Park in Omaha in late May; check the species accounts for details. The restoration of prairie grasslands at Boyer Chute NWR seems to be paying off; Henslow's Sparrows were found there this spring for the first time. There were several new high counts, with perhaps the most intriguing counts being 28 Snowy Egrets; 200,000 Common Mergansers (described by the observer as a "wild guess," but not unprecedented); 118 Mountain Plovers; 86 Spotted Sandpipers; 372 Sanderlings; 2,490 American Crows; 50+ Rock Wrens; and 18 Summer Tanagers. The 343 Buff-breasted Sandpipers counted at one spot in the Rainwater Basin constituted 2% of the world population.

As far as rarities were concerned, the best by far was the state's 2<sup>nd</sup> Arctic Tern noted at L McConaughy. The rest were rather unexciting, but included the 3<sup>rd</sup> documented spring record Red-throated Loon (2); the 4<sup>th</sup> documented spring record Brant; the 1<sup>st</sup> Rainwater Basin Long-billed Curlew in 50 years; the 4<sup>th</sup> nesting Snowy Plover; the 1<sup>st</sup> Panhandle American Woodcock; a Lewis's Woodpecker at Gibbon for the NOU Spring Meeting (!); a Tufted Titmouse in extreme northeast Nebraska; an overwintering Curve-billed Thrasher still present and singing madly; a MacGillivray's Warbler in Lincoln; an Eastern Meadowlark in the southwest; and wintering Common Grackles reported in the Panhandle for the first time.

Finally, I want to mention the great work Joel Jorgensen does monitoring Rainwater Basin shorebirds and wetlands. His wry comments convey his expert knowledge of this area, its history, and the requirements of shorebirds using it. An example: "Finally in the unfortunate column, I went to visit one of my favorite "pasture basins" (Fillmore #85) and found that it had turned into a corn field. This is about a 70 acre wetland, half of which is highly modified by pits, but the good half had always been a fine site and productive for birds (since it was heavily grazed). In a time when agencies are nearly begging landowners to conserve such sites (and are compensated for doing so) and spending big \$ to restore others, it is indeed unfortunate. No doubt during the next wet

period, it will flood again and thus it will not make a good cornfield (unless you count crop insurance as a good yield). Thus, this landowner is bestowed with my "Jackball of the Year" award. Details on the ceremonial banquet will follow."

### ABBREVIATIONS

ADF: Arbor Day Farm, Otoe Co;  
BOL: Branched Oak L, Lancaster Co;  
CCM: Clear Creek Marshes, Keith/Garden Cos;  
Cem: Cemetery;  
CLNWR: Crescent L NWR, Garden Co;  
FF: Fontenelle Forest, Sarpy Co;  
FL: Funk Lagoon, Phelps Co;  
HCR: Harlan Co Res, Harlan Co;  
ICSP: Indian Cave SP: Nemaha/Richardson Cos;  
L: Lake;  
LM: L McConaughy, Keith Co;  
LO: L Ogallala (+L Keystone), Keith Co;  
NGP: Nebraska Game and Parks;  
NM: National Monument;  
NOU: Nebraska Ornithologists' Union;  
NWR: National Wildlife Refuge;  
PL: Pawnee L, Lancaster Co;  
RWB: Rainwater Basin; eRWB mostly Fillmore, Clay and surrounding counties; wRWB mostly Phelps Co;  
SCP: Spring Creek Prairie, Lancaster Co;  
SHP: State Historical Park;  
SL: Sewage Lagoon(s);  
SP: State Park;  
WMA: Wildlife Management Area (State);  
WP: Wilderness Park, Lincoln;  
WPA: Waterfowl Production Area (Federal);  
WSR: Wind Springs Ranch, Sioux Co.

### GAZETTEER:

Ash Hollow SHP: Garden Co;  
Boyer Chute NWR: Washington Co;  
Calamus Res: Loup/Garfield Cos;  
Conestoga L: Lancaster Co;  
DeSoto NWR: Washington Co;  
Dodge Park: Douglas Co;  
Enders Res: Chase Co;

Harvard Marsh: WPA, Clay Co;  
Hormel Park: Fremont;  
Hummel Park: Douglas Co;  
Kiowa Springs: WMA, Scotts Bluff Co;  
L Minatare: Scotts Bluff Co;  
Oliver Res: Kimball Co;  
Platte River SP: Cass Co;  
Ponca SP: Dixon Co;  
Rowe Sanctuary: Buffalo Co;  
Schramm Park: SRA, Sarpy Co;  
Scotts Bluff NM: Scotts Bluff Co;  
Sherman Res: Sherman Co;  
Wagontrain L: Lancaster Co;  
Walgren L: Sheridan Co;  
Walnut Grove Park: Omaha;  
Wehrspann L: Chalco Hills, Sarpy Co;  
West Lawn Cem: Gering;  
Wildcat Hills NC: Scotts Bluff Co;  
Winters Creek L: Scotts Bluff Co.

#### OBSERVERS

AB: Aaron Brees, Indianola, IA;  
AK: Alice Kenitz, Gering;  
AR: Alice Rumery, Kearney;  
AS: Audrey Sterkel, Sidney;  
B: Nebraska Birdline, operated by Loren and Babs Padelford;  
BFH: Bill F. Huser, South Sioux City;  
BKP: Brandon K. Percival, Pueblo, CO;  
BP: Babs Padelford, Bellevue;  
BW: Bruce Walgren, Casper, WY;  
CF: Carol Falk, Nebraska City;  
CG: Carlos Grandes, Geneva y Espana;  
CH: Carolyn Hall, Bassett;  
CHy: Carr Heaney, Omaha;  
CM: Connie McCartney, Grand Island;  
CNK: Clem N. Klaphake, Bellevue;  
CWH: C.W. (Bill) Huntley, Ogallala;  
DB: Duane Bright, Bellevue;  
DD: Dean Drawbaugh, Scottsbluff;  
DE: Doug Faulkner, Denver, CO;  
DH: Dave Heidt, Norfolk;  
DM: Don Maas, Omaha;  
DP: Don Paseka, Ames;  
DSt: Dave Stage, Lincoln;

DW: Donna Walgren, Casper, WY;  
EB: Elliott Bedows, Bellevue;  
EV: Eric Volden, Kearney;  
GH: Glen Hoge, Alma;  
GW: Gertrude Wood, York;  
HK: Hugh Kingery, Franktown, CO;  
HKH: Helen K. Hughson, Mitchell;  
HW: Harley Winfrey, Gering;  
JD: John Dinan, Lincoln;  
JG: Joe Gubanyi, Seward;  
JGJ: Joel G. Jorgensen, Blair;  
JJ: Jan Johnson, Wakefield;  
JK: Jim Kovanda, Omaha;  
JLL: Jeanine L. Lackey, Lincoln;  
JM: Jeff Meyer, Lincoln;  
JMc: John McCarty, Lincoln;  
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;  
KP: Kevin Poague, Lincoln;  
LB: Laurel Badura, Kearney;  
LE: Larry Einemann, Lincoln;  
LF: Laurence Falk, Nebraska City;  
LG: Linda Grdina, Lincoln;  
LO: Linda Ollinger, Wilsonville;  
LP: Loren Padelford, Bellevue;  
LR: Lanny Randolph, Gibbon;  
LRB: Linda R. Brown, Lincoln;  
LW: LaReesa Wolfenbarger, Omaha;  
MA: Mark Armstrong, Bellevue;  
MB: Mark Brogie, Creighton;  
MM: Marty Mathieson, Shelton;  
m.ob.: many observers;  
MU: Mark Urwiller, Kearney;  
MUs: Moni Usasz, Lincoln;  
NB: Norma Brockmoller, Winside;  
NP: Neva Pruess, Lincoln;  
NR: Neal Ratzlaff, Omaha;  
PD: Phyllis Drawbaugh, Scottsbluff;  
PDu: Paul Dunbar, Hastings;  
PS: Phil Swanson, Papillion;  
RB: Roland Barth, Bellevue;  
RD: Russell Duerksen, Bennet;

RG: Ruth Green, Bellevue;  
RH: Robin Harding, Gibbon;  
RS: Rick Schmid, Bellevue;  
SJD: Stephen J. Dinsmore, Starkville, MS;  
SJ: Sandy Kovanda, Omaha;  
SM: Steve McIlree, Omaha;  
SS: Scott Seltman, Nekoma, KS;  
SV: Steve VanSickle, Vermillion, SD;  
TEL: Thomas E. Labedz, Lincoln;  
TH: Tom Hoffman, Omaha;  
TJW: T.J. Walker, North Platte;  
TP: Theresa Pester, Lincoln;  
TR: Tommie Rogers, Rockport, MO;  
TS: Ty Smedes, Urbandale, IA;  
WH: Wanda Hoge, Alma;  
WM: Wayne Mollhoff, Ashland;  
WRS: W. Ross Silcock, Tabor, IA.

### SPECIES ACCOUNTS

Red-throated Loon: Two apparently molting loons of uncertain identity which appeared at Holmes L, Lincoln, on 10 May were later identified as this species based on the characteristic upturned head and bill jizz, whitish lores, and pale spots on the back and wing coverts; they remained until 20 May (LE, JM, details). This sighting signifies only the 3<sup>rd</sup> documented spring record (of 11 total); the 3 records occur in the period between 8 and 17 May.

Common Loon: About 15 were reported, between 11 April and 26 May, with best counts of 7 at LO on 16 May (SJD, AB) and of 3 at BOL on 29 April (LE). The last was one spotted at Swanson Res, Hitchcock Co, on 26 May (DF); the latest spring records tend to be westerly.

Pied-billed Grebe: The best count was 45, tallied at Wagontrain L on 2 May (LE). Two young were fledged at Wagontrain L by 20 May (LE), a very early date. According to Johnsgard ("Birds of the Great Plains"), the earliest egg dates occur on 1 May in Kansas and on 2 May in Iowa; and thus, with a 23-day incubation period (Johnsgard), eggs would have been laid at Wagontrain L in very late April.

Horned Grebe: About 30 were reported statewide from 25 March to 16 May, 12 of these at Twin Lakes WMA, Seward Co, on 12 April (LRB) and 7 at Crystal Cove L, Dakota Co, on 19 April (BFH).

Eared Grebe: Good numbers were reported statewide, including in the east, where it is least common; about 17 easterly birds were reported, with the most found in Lancaster Co; the best count there was 5, made at Wagontrain L on 10 May (LE). The best overall count was 104 at Walgren L on 10 May (JSt).

Western Grebe: Reports came from central Nebraska westward, with no large concentrations reported.

Clark's Grebe: Only 4 were reported: 2 seen at LO on the rather early date of 8 April (B) were still there mid-May (WRS); and singles were found at Walgren L on 25 April (BW, DW) and at FL 27 between 27 April and 6 May (LR, RH, RG).

American White Pelican: The first migrants were 4 rather early birds seen at HCR on 9 March (LR, RH). The best count reached 2,700 at LM on 16 May (SJD), a record high count for spring.

Double-crested Cormorant: Seven spotted at HCR on 14 March (LR, RH) were rather early. The best count was the 1,000 in Lancaster Co on 22 April, including 790 at PL (LE).

American Bittern: About 17 were reported statewide between 27 April and 17 May; the best count surprisingly totaled 5 at FF 2 May (DM), apparent migrants, but most were reported from potential breeding habitat at various RWB locations.

Least Bittern: The only report came from CCM on 14 May (WRS, SJD, AB); a few reports in recent years suggest that a few breed here and in Sandhills marshes.

Great Blue Heron: Three easterly rookeries were reported: one near Roca consisting of 16 nests on 10 April (NP); at least one nest in extreme southeastern Washington Co on 1 May (CHy); and a third, this one rather notorious because it was located on high-voltage power lines in Sarpy Co, and excrement from the 7 nests had been causing power outages since 22 March--concern had arisen about the potential for causing power outages at peak summer load times. The nests and eggs were later removed; all the required permits were obtained to enable the removal (Omaha World Herald). Another rookery, with 12 pairs on nests, was located north of Mitchell in Sioux Co on 24 April (KD).

Great Egret: Extremely early, the 3<sup>rd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> earliest ever, were singles spotted at Stagecoach L, Lancaster Co, on 17 March (LE) and Cunningham L, Omaha, on 24 March (JGJ). About 75 were reported, including a few westerly reports, where it is rare: 1-2 were found in the Kiowa Springs area between 14 April and 5 May (KD, PD, DD); 1-3 were found along the North Platte at Ogallala from 6 to 12 May (CWH); and singles were noted at LM on 14 May (SJD, AB, WRS), at Stateline Island WMA, Scotts Bluff Co, on 26 May (LR, RH), and at Enders Res on 29 May (TJW). There are fewer than 25 Panhandle reports in spring. And the best count totaled 12 at PL on 21 April (B).

Snowy Egret: About 36 were reported statewide between 21 April and 28 May (JSt, EV, KD, TJW, DP, JP); most were observed in Hall Co, where a flock of 28 was seen flying north over the Platte River on 10 May (EV; details). This number is easily a record spring count, although the observer (EV) relates that he has seen groups of 10-15 along the Platte River at other times.

**Little Blue Heron:** Four were reported, about normal for spring for this uncommon species: an unaged bird spotted at Pioneer's Park, Lincoln, on 17 April (LE); an adult identified at HCR on 26 April (GH, WH); another observed at WP on 4 May (LE); and an unaged bird spotted in Lancaster Co on 27 May (LE).

**Cattle Egret:** About normal was the total of 56 birds reported from North Platte eastward from 15 April through 17 May. The best count was 15 at Bellevue on 17 April (JMc).

**Green Heron:** This species was widely reported in the east. However, as there are only 4 Panhandle reports, the following westerly sightings are of interest: one spotted in Lincoln Co on 29 April (TJW); a pair located at Medicine Creek Res, Frontier Co, on 5 May (TJW); one found near Sutherland on 14 May (SJD, AB); one spotted at CCM on 14 May (SJD, AB, WRS); and one found along Frenchman Creek near Enders Res on 29 May (TJW). This species is uncommon in the southwest, and rarer northwestward from there.

**Black-crowned Night-Heron:** Routine reports.

**Yellow-crowned Night-Heron:** The only reports of this rare migrant were from the eRWB: an adult was located near Geneva on 4 May (JGJ), and 2 birds were seen at Recharge L, near York, on 15 May (B).

**White-faced Ibis:** Numbers were good, with reports of about 123 statewide beginning on 18 April (KD), including these in the east, where it is uncommon: one seen in Sarpy Co on 20 April (B), and 2 identified in Lincoln on 16 May (LE). An excellent count reached 40+ in a flooded field near the North Platte Airport on 1 May (TJW).

**Turkey Vulture:** The earliest was one spotted in Lincoln on 15 March (Terri Brown fide MUs); 25 were found there two days later (MUs). Best count was an excellent 40 at two locations, Lincoln on 1 April (TEL), and Gering on 5 April (KD).

**Greater White-fronted Goose:** The best count was 400, at both FL on 16 March (LR, RH) and Pintail Basin, Hamilton Co, on 30 March (JGJ). Of interest was the presence in the latter flock of a large, dark individual; the status of these birds in the Central Flyway has been a topic of conjecture. Some believe they are representatives of a taxonomically distinct population breeding in the Mackenzie Delta, essentially an interior counterpart of the Tule Goose. There were a few May reports, as usual; one still remained at Conestoga L on 27 May (LE).

**Snow Goose:** Clearly, very large numbers passed through, with an estimate of 1,000,000 in the Kearney area (CNK) and "millions" flying northeastward over Wayne Co on 21 March (NP). A count at Massie Lagoon alone yielded 260,000 birds on 14 March (fide CG), and 200,000 were estimated at HCR on 9 March (LR, RH). "Only 8,000" were in the eRWB by 30 March, however (JGJ). One was seen at Kiowa Springs on 31 May (AK).



**Ross's Goose:** About 51 were reported, including a good count of 32 at Pintail Basin, Hamilton Co, on 30 March (JGJ). The 4 spotted in Sioux Co on 12 May (JSt) were rather late.

**Canada Goose:** The best count for the spring migration totaled 25,000 between Gibbon and Odessa on 1 March (LR, RH). First goslings reported were found at Kiowa Springs on 27 April (HW); incubation was in progress in Lincoln Co on 1 May (TJW), and 5 broods were noted at Scottsbluff SL on 20 May (PD, DD). The 600 counted in the eRWB on 30 May were mostly *hutchinsii*, the common small migrant through the RWB, with a few intermediate-sized birds, probably *interior* (JGJ). Large Canadas (*moffitti/maxima*) are uncommon in the RWB (fide JGJ). One *hutchinsii* and one intermediate-sized bird were still in the eRWB on 27 April (JGJ). The only other regularly-occurring Canada Goose subspecies in Nebraska is *parvipes*, a small goose which migrates through the Panhandle.

**Brant:** One carefully studied at Lexington on 20 March was a light bird, subspecies *bernicla* (JSt) as currently constituted; this sighting represents the 4<sup>th</sup> documented spring record, all *bernicla*. The taxonomy of Brant is in serious turmoil at present, and it may be very likely that these birds will be assigned to *B. hrota*, Eastern Pale-bellied Brant, with *B. bernicla* applying to European birds!

**Egyptian Goose:** Just for the record, a presumed escapee was observed at Fahrenholz Ponds, Dixon Co, on 27 April (JJ).

**Trumpeter Swan:** Incubating birds were seen between Antioch and Hyannis on 23 March (DSt), 13 miles west of Hyannis (RG), possibly the same bird, and at Doc L, just west of Whitman, on 10 May (JSt).

**Tundra Swan:** None was reported; this species is a rare spring migrant.

**Duck species:** The eRWB hosts large numbers of migratory ducks; thus the 12,000 estimated there on 30 March, reported as "only 12,000" by the observer (JGJ), was a disappointing showing.

**Wood Duck:** The best count was 14 south of Mitchell on 29 March (KD), and the first brood took place at Alma East SL on 23 May (GH, WH).

**Mandarin Duck:** Rather intriguing was a report of a free-flying bird which has appeared at the Riverside Park Zoo, Scottsbluff, the last two winters (AK). There is a small established population near Pueblo, Colorado, which began with releases in the 1960s; however, there is little or no evidence that any of those birds would "move that far away" (BKP). A fenced-in pair was noted at Berggren Ponds, Scotts Bluff Co, on 2 April (KD).

**Gadwall:** The one reported in Cedar Co on 1 March (SV) may have wintered there; the first migrants at HCR were 6 seen on 10 March (GH, WH). The best count reached only 207, in Lancaster Co on 18 March (LE).

**American Wigeon:** The best count of migrants was a moderate 350 at FL on 16 March (LR, RH); as many as 84 were found at LO as late as 15 May (SJD, AB).

**American Black Duck:** A “very dark brown duck the same size and shape as a Mallard” whose “bill looked gray” was observed with Mallards at Sherman Res on 19 April (LR, RH); spring records are unusual, especially so far west, but this species is usually found with Mallards.

**Mallard:** The best count was an excellent 200,000 at HCR on 9 March (LR, RH), by far a record spring count. Three broods were noted at Scottsbluff SL on 20 May (PD, DD).

**Blue-winged Teal:** A good count was 344 at Sherman Res on 19 April (LR, RH).

**Cinnamon Teal:** Good numbers were noted, about 40 in all. The best count totaled an excellent 15 in the Kiowa Springs area on 14 April, including 7 pairs (KD); Kiowa Springs is the best spot to see this species in Nebraska. Easterly were 2 spotted at Pioneer’s Park, Lincoln, between 7 and 9 April (KP, TEL, JG); in addition, 4 were counted in Hall Co on 10 May (fide EV). A good central Nebraska count was 6+ at FL on 22 March (fide DM).

**Northern Shoveler:** The best counts were moderate: 389 at BOL on 1 April (LE) and 329 in the Niobrara area on 23 March (WRS, TR).

**Northern Pintail:** The best count reached an excellent 200,000 at HCR on 9 March (LR, RH); this tally is by far a record spring count and may have resulted from dry conditions in the RWB, where few ducks were found this spring (JGJ).

**Green-winged Teal:** As many as 228 were still at LM on 15 May (SJD, AB); this species breeds only in small numbers in Nebraska.

**Canvasback:** Few were reported, with the best count only 76, in Lancaster Co on 17 March (LE).

**Redhead:** The best count totaled 700 at FL on 22 March (LR, RH), also a very low high count resulting from dry conditions in the RWB.

**Ring-necked Duck:** Another diving duck present in low numbers this spring, with best count only 289, that in Lancaster Co on 17 March (LE). The three seen at Wagontrain L between 20 and 27 May (LE) were a bit tardy.

**Tufted Duck:** Rather incredibly, the male which has been a fixture at LO each winter beginning 1999-2000 was still there as late as 14 to 16 May (SJD, AB, WRS). Extreme dates of occurrence for the 4 winters are 26 November and 16 May.

**Greater Scaup:** About 10 were reported through 24 March, about the norm, but one identified at LO on 14 May (SJD, AB, WRS) was 3<sup>rd</sup> latest ever for spring.

**Lesser Scaup:** Although widely reported, numbers were somewhat low for this species also, with the best count 1,132, in Lancaster Co on 25 March (LE). Two observed at Alma South SL on 26 May (GH, WH) were tardy for the southerly location.

**Bufflehead:** Few were reported, only about 100 in all.

Common Goldeneye: Rather late were 1-3 found at LO on 16 May (SJD). Few were reported.

Hooded Merganser: Good numbers were reported statewide, with the best count reaching 20 (13 males, 7 females) at HCR on 9 March (LR, RH).

Common Merganser: An all-time record high estimate of 200,000 made at HCR on 14 March was described as a "wild guess" of the number of birds present in a "giant raft" (LR, RH). Such a number is not unprecedented in the region, however, as there were high counts on Glen Elder Res, KS, in December 1980 of 200,000+ (fide Marvin Kraft). The North American population for the species is thought to be 1,090,000 ("Birds of North America" fide Tom Shane). HCR is a staging area for this species, with a previous high count of 40,000 recorded there, that in fall. Getting estimates of the number of birds covering an entire large reservoir is very difficult. A female lingered at Winters Creek L through 26 May (SJD, AK), a late date for a location other than LM; and 2 were almost as late on the North Platte River in Scotts Bluff Co on 25 May (LR, RH).

Red-breasted Merganser: About 45 were reported statewide through 27 May, when a male and female were spotted at BOL (LE), tying the 2<sup>nd</sup>-latest spring date ever. Also rather late was a female seen at LO on 15 May (SJD, AB). The best count was 24 at LO on 19 March (HK).

Ruddy Duck: The 6 males and 4 females found at Wagontrain L on 27 May (LE) were rather late, although breeding almost anywhere is not unlikely.

Osprey: Good numbers, with a total of 49, were reported, including excellent counts of 5 at HCR on 27 April (GH, WH) and at Smith L, Sheridan Co, on 1 May (HW). The earliest was rather early in Scotts Bluff Co on 22 March (KD); all other reports occurred in the rather short period between 19 April and 11 May.

Mississippi Kite: One in "1st spring plumage" appeared very early at the regular Ogallala breeding location on 13 April (HW). The early date (and plumage?) seems questionable, but data from Kansas show earlier arrivals in recent years (SS). A "probable" was seen in Lincoln Co on 23 April (TJW, details), also rather early if the bird is this species (as indeed suggested by the details); and singles were seen at Ogallala at "normal" arrival dates of 11 May (CWH) and 14 May (AB, SJD, WRS).

Bald Eagle: Nesting was under way at least by 23 March through the period at a few established sites: L Alice, Scotts Bluff Co (fide AK); along the Platte River near Louisville (CNK); Calamus Res (Mus); and DeSoto NWR (SM, DM). A flock of 18 immatures left a roost tree and departed northward in southeastern Otoe Co 9 Mar (WRS). Another group of immatures, 8 this time, were watched fighting over a prairie dog carcass at Kiowa Springs on 12 March; the scuffle was thought to be "hormone-related" (HW). Assignment to a nest site of an adult at FL as late as 29 April (LR, RH) would be speculative although an adult this late

would be assumed nesting in the area. Less surprising was an immature identified over Lincoln on 10 May (LE). The best count was 23 at HCR on 9 March (LR, RH).

**Northern Harrier:** Routine reports.

**Sharp-shinned Hawk:** A few late birds were noted; no details were provided on plumage, but most such sightings are of immatures (or male Cooper's Hawks!). Singles were reported in Hall and Phelps Cos on 17 May (NOU; no details); in Brown Co on 10 May (JSt), a locality where nesting occurs on occasion; and at Rowe Sanctuary on 6 May (LR, RH).

**Cooper's Hawk:** This species is being reported more often from all parts of the state. Nesting birds were found in Sarpy Co on 2 May (CNK) and near Orleans on 17 May (JGJ, WRS). The latter bird was calling very loudly, inducing wishful thoughts of Pileated Woodpecker in the minds of the observers.

**Northern Goshawk:** There were 4 reports. Singles were reported at Twin Lakes WMA, Seward Co, on 14 March (B, no details) and at FF on 1 April (B, no details). These are expected dates, but two additional sightings were rather late: one bird found at Prairie Dog WPA, Kearney Co, on 1 May (B, no details) and a "large female" observed at FL on 6 May (RG, EV, no additional details). Late dates for this species occur in mid-May, but separation of immatures, the age class expected in May, from female immature Cooper's and immature Red-tailed Hawks can be difficult.

**Red-shouldered Hawk:** Sightings of 1-2 birds at FF from 13 March (BP, LP) through 13 April (CNK, EB, DB) were welcome at this sole traditional site in Nebraska; unfortunately there were no reports after 13 April (CNK).

**Broad-winged Hawk:** Reports consisted of about 20 birds from HCR eastward; one was seen at HCR on 1 May (LR, RH). The earliest was one found at Neale Woods, Douglas Co, on 16 April (DP, J P); and the best count was the 6 found at ICSP on 26 April (CNK). Possibly breeding were 1-2 spotted at FF through at least 21 May (CNK) and singles seen twice at Hummel Park on 20 and 25 May (CNK, WRS); the 20 May bird was attacking a Red-tailed Hawk (CNK).

**Swainson's Hawk:** The earliest were singles identified in Box Butte, Sheridan, and Antelope Cos on 23 March (HW), followed by a kettle of 3 seen in Lincoln Co on 30 March (BW, DW). The best count reached an excellent 72 near Seward on 21 April (B). An immature dark morph was seen in the WRWB on 27 April (LR, RH), and an intermediate morph was reported on 22 April along the Henry Road, Sioux Co (HW). Several nests were being "worked on" on 1 May in Lincoln Co (TJW). Easterly reports occurred at peak migration: singles spotted in Douglas Co on 9 April (JT) and in Sarpy Co on 10 Apr (CNK), and several found in southeastern Nebraska on 16 April (DP, JP).

**Red-tailed Hawk:** The last dark birds reported were 2 located in Otoe Co on 9 March (WRS); last dates for dark Red-tails occur in mid April. A

"Harlan's" Hawk was seen at Bellevue on 2 March (CNK). The best count was 100+ in Gage Co on 2 March (DSt), a record spring count. Nesting was underway by 3 April near Mitchell (HW), and downies were first mentioned ("doing well") on 5 May, at Towl Park, Omaha (NR).

Ferruginous Hawk: Of about 10 reported, surprisingly far east for the dates were the 2 spotted at Prairie Dog WPA, Kearney Co, on 1 May (B); no details) and the one listed on the Spring Count in Hall Co on 10 May (fide EV; no details).

Rough-legged Hawk: About 15 were reported, with the last one identified in Otoe Co on 12 May (LF, CF), a rather late date for so far south and east.

Golden Eagle: Unusual so far east was an immature seen hunting a field near Cunningham L, Omaha, on 11 March (CHy).

American Kestrel: A pair was spotted at its previously-used nest site at an old drive-in theater in Scotts Bluff Co on 21 March (KD), a rather early date. The early egg date in Nebraska is 6 April. One bird found in Lancaster Co was nesting in a martin house on 26 May (fide KP). The best count was 22 in Gage Co on 2 March (DSt).

Merlin: The reports of 7 birds covered a statewide area, with last date of 25 April from Dawes Co (HW). One seen in Omaha on 7 March was of the subspecies *columbarius*, generally a migrant through Nebraska.

Prairie Falcon: A nest with a chick was found in Sioux Co on 12 May (JSt), which may be a rather early date, as a study by Nebraska Game and Parks personnel in the 1980s of 118 nests indicated that hatching occurred late May to early June. Easterly was one located at Wehrspann L on 13 April (JWH); this species is rare in the east.

Peregrine Falcon: About 18 were reported between 23 March and 17 May. The early date--on 23 March, of one bird identified at Carter L, Omaha (B; no details)--would be the 2<sup>nd</sup> earliest ever for spring, although there are occasional winter records. A pair was found nesting on the Capitol Building in Lincoln (JD) and seen there on 7 April (TEL) and again on 16 April (KP). Information provided by JD is that the female of this pair was raised on a building in Minneapolis in 2002 and the male on a Des Moines building in 2001, thus a very young pair. Two eggs were present on the Capitol Building on 21 May.

Chukar: An obvious release or escaped bird was seen around ADF in May, and photographed for the local newspaper (fide LF).

Gray Partridge: A consistent location recently has been within 20 miles or so of Creighton; 1-2 were seen at 3 locations in this area between 4 and 19 April (MB). Some people just look out into their yards: one was spotted in the observers' yard near Ames on 5 and 6 May (DP, JP). The only other report was of 2 identified northwest of Petersburg, Boone Co, on 10 May (JSt). These sightings suggest that the best numbers are currently in Antelope Co and adjacent counties.

Ring-necked Pheasant: Routine reports.

**Sharp-tailed Grouse:** The 3 reports came from the same lek northwest of Winnetoon where 1-2 were seen strutting with 23-26 Greater Prairie-chickens between 9 March and 19 April (MB, WRS, TR). It is not uncommon in Nebraska for Sharp-tailed Grouse to join the fun in mixed leks; there are hybrid specimens in the State Museum.

**Greater Prairie-Chicken:** This species was widely reported this spring; the best counts were from a lek northwest of Winnetoon, where 34 were present on 9 March (MB). Defining the eastern edge of the northern Nebraska range were one seen northwest of Laurel on 23 March (WRS, TR); up to 17 found at Buckskin Hills WMA, Dixon Co, from 23 March to 12 April (BFH, B); and 2 spotted near Obert on 12 April (BFH). The population at Burchard L, Pawnee Co, continues: the best count according to reporting cards turned in at the blinds was 14 (fide WRS); 2 were still on the lek there at 12.30 p.m. on 20 April (WRS). At SCP, welcome news is that 4-5 were seen between 24 March and 14 May (KP). Also in the southeast, at least 2 were booming near Dieken Prairie, Otoe Co, on 13 April (WRS). Near Gleason WPA, Kearney Co, in a region where small populations are found in small isolated areas of Sandhills, one of 4 birds flew into a tree and continued displaying there (DW, BW). The bird is somewhat spottily distributed in the southwest, but booming was heard near Medicine Creek Res, Frontier Co, on 5 May (TJW).

**Wild Turkey:** Numbers are rather large in most parts of the state; scattered groups in southeastern Washington Co totalled 135 on 11 March (JGJ), and 100+ were counted along Berggren Road in Scotts Bluff Co on 5 April (KD). Most restocked turkeys established in the wild in Nebraska have brown-tipped tails (most are *merriami*); one seen near Valentine on 11 May had a pale tail tip (JSt) and may have been a released domestic or southwestern bird (subspecies *intermedia*), both of which usually have pale tail tips.

**Northern Bobwhite:** Northerly were 12 identified west of Winnetoon on 19 April (MB); numbers were higher this year in the northeast (DP, JP), and 42 were counted in Hall Co 10 May (fide EV).

**King Rail:** The only report was of one closely watched and well described 4 miles east of Spalding on 26 April (Dave Trowbridge fide WRS). This species may appear almost anywhere in the state in spring, with arrival dates in late April.

**Virginia Rail:** Routine reports.

**Sora:** Earliest of several reports statewide was one observed at DeSoto NWR on 26 April (DP, JP), about on time.

**American Coot:** The best counts were 977 at Sherman Res on 19 April (LR,RH) and 852 in Lancaster Co on 17 April (LE). Nesting was underway at Wagontrain L by 27 May (LE).

**Sandhill Crane:** Significant numbers migrate through the Panhandle; 200 were found at Winters Creek L on 16 March (AK). "Hundreds of thousands" (DP) and even "jillions" (MM) were observed at their usual

central Platte River haunts in early April. About 100,000 were located at Rowe Sanctuary on 3 April (LR, RH), but large numbers were seen moving north on 12 April (MM, LR, RH). Rather late were 25-30 seen at FL on 1 May (RG); and 2 were spotted there on 6 May (RG) and 3 adults were identified at the west end of LM between 14 and 16 May (SJD, AB, WRS).

**Whooping Crane:** Two reports came to hand, both at peak migration time for the species: 2 were seen in the Rowe Sanctuary area from 2 to 5 April (AR, LR, RH, DP), and a family group of 3 were found near Rockville along the Middle Loup River on 31 March (Wally Jobman fide CH).

**Black-bellied Plover:** As usual, migrants moved through in a narrow window, this spring between 1 and 17 May, with the best count of 21 made at LM on 15 May (SJD, AB).

**American Golden-Plover:** Most were reported from the eRWB from 27 April to 17 May (JGJ), with 6 spotted in Sarpy Co on 4 May (BP, LP). The best count was an excellent 174 in the eRWB on 10 May (JGJ).

**Snowy Plover:** This species is taking advantage of the extensive sand flats that have been exposed at LM in the last 2-3 years. This year, 2 males and a female were found on 16 May, as well as a nest with 3 eggs (SJD). This report represents only the 4<sup>th</sup> nesting record for Nebraska, the 3<sup>rd</sup> at LM. Most recent years, at least one has also appeared in the eRWB; this spring 2 were found at Harvard Marsh on 14 May (SJD, WRS, AB).

**Semipalmated Plover:** Reports were statewide between 15 April and 17 May, with the best count 32 in the eRWB on 27 April (JGJ). This species is uncommon in the west; the 2 spotted at Winters Creek L on 25 April (KD) and the 1 seen at Kilpatrick L, Box Butte Co, on 28 April (BW, DW) were the only sightings west of FL.

**Piping Plover:** Recent years of low water levels have seen numbers expand at LM; this spring 34 were counted there on 15 May (SJD, AB), certainly only a part of the population expected to summer there. Singles found in Cedar Co on 12 May (SV) and near Niobrara on 25 May (MB) were at or near known breeding locations. Migrants were reported statewide, including singles observed at Stagecoach L, Lancaster Co, on 26 April (Mus); in Buffalo Co on 5 May (LB); at HCR on 15 May (GH, WH); and at L Minatare on 17 May (SJD).

**Killdeer:** Most locations reported first migrants in mid March; the one found in Buffalo Co on 1 March (LR, RH) probably wintered nearby. The best counts were an excellent 161 in Sarpy Co on 10 April (CNK) and 108 in heavy snow north of Blair on 6 April (JGJ).

**Mountain Plover:** Kimball Co continues to be the stronghold for this species in Nebraska; reports away from that county are very few, although 1 was observed in southern Banner Co on 10 May (Larry Snyder fide HW). An indication of numbers present was the 118 counted during a survey run by Rocky Mountain Bird Observatory in May 2002 (fide

NGP), although it was speculated that these numbers may have been augmented by drought-induced displacement from the Pawnee National Grasslands in neighboring Colorado, where "numbers have dropped off dramatically" (fide JGJ). The Kimball Co birds were found in fallow wheat fields, where most sightings have been made in recent years. A nest with 3 eggs was found in Kimball Co on 17 May (SJD), only about the 9<sup>th</sup> nesting record for the state, although nesting apparently now occurs each year in fallow wheat fields in Kimball Co.

**Black-necked Stilt:** A small population appears to be sustaining itself near Kiowa Springs in Scotts Bluff Co: 2 were located at the "County Road F Pond" between 27 April and 25 May (HW, KD, AK), where breeding probably occurred last year. Similarly, at Lakeside, 4 were present on 1 May (HW), where a small population appears to have established; and 4 more, or the same birds, were seen about a mile west of Lakeside on 11 April (JSt). The latter appears to be a new early date for the state by a couple of days.

**American Avocet:** The best count was the 70-80 tallied in Scotts Bluff Co on 14 April; "lots" were found "in all the ponds" there on 24 April (KD). Good numbers also appeared at various Lancaster Co locations between 22 and 29 April, with a peak count of 34 at BOL on 29 April (LE); this species is an uncommon migrant in the east.

**Greater Yellowlegs:** Routine reports.

**Lesser Yellowlegs:** Reports occurred in the period from 14 March--at Rowe Sanctuary (CNK) and the 3<sup>rd</sup> earliest report ever--through 31 May (LR, RH), with the best count reaching 283 in the eRWB on 27 April (JGJ).

**Solitary Sandpiper:** Routine reports.

**Willet:** Several appeared in the east, where it is uncommon: 3 were spotted in Dixon Co on 21 April (JJ); one was identified at DeSoto NWR on 26 April (DP, JP); 1-4 were seen in Lancaster Co between 28 April and 11 May (LE, DP, JP); and one was identified in Saunders Co on 8 May (JGJ). The best count was 47 at LM on 14 May (SJD, AB, WRS).

**Spotted Sandpiper:** One noted at Stateline Island, Scotts Bluff Co, on 13 March (HW; details) was record early by almost 2 weeks. The best count was also a spring record: 86 at LM on 15 May (SJD, AB). Many could be expected to summer there in the extensive habitat.

**Upland Sandpiper:** The best counts were both spring highs: 40 night-time flyovers identified by calls near Gibbon on 2 May (LR, RH) and 27 apparent summering birds found at Prairie Dog WPA, Kearney Co, 31 May, including a nest with 4 eggs (LR,RH).

**Whimbrel:** About 17 were reported in their usual narrow migration window from 14 to 20 May; all, as expected, were from HCR westward. The most, 14, were found at LM on 14 May (SJD, AB, WRS), declining to 1 on 16 May (SJD). In addition, singles were seen at L Minatare between 16 and 17 May (SJD) and at HCR on 17 May (WRS, JGJ). At least one was noted at Box Butte Res, Dawes Co, on 20 May (HW).



**Long-billed Curlew:** The first eRWB record for 50 years was one identified at Sandpiper WMA, Fillmore Co, on 27 April (JGJ, photos). There are fewer than 20 records in all from east of the Sandhills and south of the Platte River. A record spring count was the 30+ tallied just east of North Platte in a flooded meadow on 1 April (TJW). May reports away from the breeding range are unusual; one was found at HCR on 4 May (GH, WH).

**Hudsonian Godwit:** Reports, as expected, came from central Nebraska eastward, in the period from 21 April (CHy) through 17 May (JGJ). No high counts were noted, with the best only 24, in Lancaster Co on 10 May (LE).

**Marbled Godwit:** Several were reported in the east, where it is generally rare: 2 at Wehrspann L on 21 April (Chy); one at Fahrenholz Ponds, Dixon Co, on 21 April (JJ); one at Abomination Marsh, Douglas Co, on 3 May (JT, Jmc); one at BOL on 9 May (B); one at Conestoga L on 10 May (LE); one at Waco Basin, York Co, on 14 May (B); and one near Niobrara on 25 May (MB). The latter was rather late; this species does not breed in Nebraska.

**Ruddy Turnstone:** About 5 of this rare migrant were reported: singles spotted at BOL on 9 May (B); at LM on 16 May (SJD); in the eRWB on 17 May (JGJ); at FL on 17 May (LR, RH); and near Niobrara on 25 May (MB, no count given).

**Red Knot:** The only report of this casual migrant was of 2 alternate-plumaged adults found at LM on 15 May (SJD, AB). This sighting is only the 6<sup>th</sup> documented spring record, although there are 13 reports in all.

**Sanderling:** Triple the previous record spring count was the amazing count of 372+ made at LM on 15 May (SJD, AB). The large amount of exposed sandy shoreline obviously is a magnet for this species. About 18 others were reported between 10 and 25 May.

**Semipalmated Sandpiper:** The best counts were moderate, although the 148 found at Winters Creek L on 10 May (WRS) was a good Panhandle count. Elsewhere, 211 were located in the eRWB on 4 May (JGJ).

**Western Sandpiper:** Reports of this species in spring are problematic to me, especially when, as was the case this spring, none is accompanied by details. Western Sandpiper is a rare spring migrant in Nebraska, more common in fall. Reports from the 2<sup>nd</sup> half of May are especially questionable, as this species migrates earlier than Semipalmated Sandpiper. I received 8 reports of 1-12 birds in the period between 27 April and 20 May, and question all of them (of course, some may be correct, but who knows?). I think it significant that none was reported by experienced observers covering shorebird spots on a regular basis throughout the spring.

**Least Sandpiper:** A good count was 244 in the eRWB on 10 May; about 200 of them were observed at Harvard Marsh (JGJ).

**White-rumped Sandpiper:** Seven spotted in the eRWB (JGJ) and one in Lincoln Co (LRB), both on 27 April, were rather early. The best count was mediocre for this species, 923 in the eRWB on 17 May (JGJ).

**Baird's Sandpiper:** This species has a long migration period; reports occurred in the period from 19 March (B) through 31 May (LR, RH). The best count was an unspectacular 190 in the eRWB on 10 May (JGJ).

**Pectoral Sandpiper:** Rather early were singles seen at Rowe Sanctuary on 14 March (CNK) and in Lancaster Co on 17 March (LE). No reports came from the west, where this species is rare in spring.

**Dunlin:** Also an eastern migrant, 38 were reported from HCR eastward from 5 to 20 May. The best counts reached 6 in the eRWB on 17 May (JGJ) and 5 in Lancaster Co on 10 May (LE).

**Stilt Sandpiper:** One was reported at Stagecoach L, Lancaster Co, on 10 April (NP), record early for the species by 4 days. The best count was a mediocre (for this species) 240 at Conestoga L on 13 May (LE).

**Buff-breasted Sandpiper:** All reports were by JGJ from the narrow eRWB migration corridor; an amazing total of 777 were found from 4 to 17 May. Incredibly, 343 were counted in one location north of North Lake Basin, Seward Co, on 10 May; this number is significant in that it represents 2% of the world population, and is the highest single location count for the species "anytime, anywhere" (JGJ). A record count for the eRWB overall was made on 17 May, when 391 were counted (JGJ). It is likely that most of the world's population of this species passes through a narrow corridor in spring probably less than 100 miles across, centered in Fillmore, York, and Polk Cos.

**Short-billed Dowitcher:** About 40 were reported from 4 to 20 May from FL eastward, a pretty typical migration for this species in Nebraska. The best count reached 10 at Abomination Marsh, Douglas Co, on 10 May (JT).

**Long-billed Dowitcher:** The one seen at FL between 19 and 22 March (LR, RH) was rather early. The best count was a mediocre for the species 405 in the eRWB on 27 April (JGJ).

**Wilson's Snipe:** Routine reports.

**American Woodcock:** Only 5 were reported, including two westerly birds: one was noted at Bridgeport on 22 Mar (DSt) and another was observed near Page in early May (David Trowbridge fide WRS). This species occurs westward some distance along major river valleys, but the Bridgeport sighting is the farthest west to date and the only Panhandle record.

**Wilson's Phalarope:** The one seen at FL on 3 April (DB) was a little early. The best counts were rather low: 291 in the eRWB on 4 May (JGJ) and 259 at FL on 14 May (SJD, AB, WRS).

**Red-necked Phalarope:** Reports all came, as in usual, from LM westward in the period from 10 to 26 May. The best count was a good 42 at LM on 16 May (SJD).

Franklin's Gull: The best count was a moderate 1,500 at PL and BOL on 10 May (LE).

Bonaparte's Gull: Reports occurred in the period between 25 March and 17 May, with no large counts reported.

Ring-billed Gull: The best count was mediocre for the species, 1,755 at BOL on 25 March (LE). One spotted in high breeding plumage, with bright orange legs and a pink flush, was with 200 normal birds at Cunningham L, Omaha, on 7 April (JGJ).

California Gull: Few reports were received, all from regular haunts of the species. At least 7 were found at LM between 14 and 16 May, including 5 adults and single 2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> alternate-plumaged birds (SJD, WRS, AB). Six were noted at L Minatare on 16 May (SJD), and 2 were observed at Winters Creek L on 25 April (KD).

Herring Gull: The best count was only 13, at BOL on 18 March (LE). None was reported after 17 May, when 3 were identified at HCR (GH, WH) and one was spotted at L Minatare (SJD).

Thayer's Gull: Only about 4 were reported: 1-3 were found at HCR between 9 and 14 March (LR, RH), and one was located at LM on 19 March (B).

Glaucous Gull: The only report was of one seen at LM on 19 March (B).

Caspian Tern: The usual few passed through in May; about 8 were reported from 9 to 17 May statewide.

Common Tern: A few more than usual were reported, including a good count of 6 adults at LM on 14 May (SJD, WRS, A B). Another adult was found at HCR on 17 May (WRS, JGJ), and 3 adults were a surprise at the location, the Dodge Park Marina, Omaha, on 25 May (WRS; details). Generally Common Terns are found on large reservoirs.

Arctic Tern: An alternate-plumaged adult was found at LM on 16 May (SJD; details) and seen there again on 19 May (MB; details). This sighting is only the 2<sup>nd</sup> record for Nebraska, the other occurred on 20 September 2000 at L Minatare (SJD).

Forster's Tern: The second-highest spring tally ever reached 133 at LM on 14 May (SJD, WRS, AB); 48 were found in Hall Co on 10 May (fide EV).

Least Tern: Apparent migrants were found at somewhat unexpected locations: 2 in Hall Co on 10 May (EV); 2 at Rowe Sanctuary on 18 May (LR, RH); and one in Dodge Co on 13 May (DP, JP).

Black Tern: An excellent count was 1,500 at LO on 26 May (LR, RH), the second highest spring tally ever.

Rock Dove: Routine reports.

Eurasian Collared-Dove: A harbinger of things to come was a comment from Ogallala that this species was more common this spring than Mourning Doves (CWH). In Kearney they are "all over town now" (LR, RH). The species was widely reported, although no more than 6 were found at any one location. New counties for the species included Gage

(Dst); Wayne (EB); Harlan (GH, WH); Red Willow (TJW); Perkins (TJW); and Hitchcock (JSt), bringing the total to 52 counties.

**White-winged Dove:** Another dove which is expanding its range northward, this species was reported at 3 locations this spring, and, belatedly, one last spring. The belated report was of one spotted in a Beatrice yard in April and May 2002 (fide DSt). This spring, one was seen in flight in Scottsbluff on 15 April (KD); one had been visiting a Melbeta yard for 2 weeks as of 25 April (Walter Johns fide AK); and one was observed at a Gering feeder the last week of May (B). The last 3 may have been the same bird. The 4 reports cited here bring the total for the state to 20, all but one since 1994, and most in just the last few years.

**Mourning Dove:** One seen south of Morrill on 15 March (AK) was rather early for the location. An unusual nest site was the martin house being used by a pair in Lancaster Co (JLL). A flock of 50-75 spotted near Gering on 26 May was unexpected (AK); at this date, it is difficult to explain such an aggregation, unless they were attracted by a food source. The date seems early for fledged birds in the Panhandle, although fledged birds appear in numbers by late April in the east. The Hall Co Spring Count of 10 May found 673 (fide EV).

**Black-billed Cuckoo:** Only 3 were reported: singles located at Bennet on 18 May (RD), at ICSP the same day (RD), and at ADF on 30 May (LF, CF). This species is rarely reported in recent years.

**Yellow-billed Cuckoo:** The earliest were singles seen at SCP (KP) and FF (B) on 13 May. The only report from the west was of one located at Enders Res on 29 May (TJW).

**Barn Owl:** Most reports come from the west, and so the one observed beside the road at dawn 5 miles north of ICSP on 18 May (RD) was unexpected. In the LM area, 4 adults at 3 new nest sites were found on 15 May (SJD, AB). One was observed at the traditional CCM site on 14 May (SJD, WRS, AB). And another was seen in the observer's Scotts Bluff Co yard on 21 May (KD).

**Eastern Screech-Owl:** A good total of 11 were found in Hall Co on 10 May (fide EV).

**Great Horned Owl:** Nesting was underway by 14 March at Walgren L, and 3 young were seen in the nest on 14 May (BW, DW); nesting was also underway at HCR on 22 March (GH, WH). One was found at a nest at the traditional site on the south face of Scotts Bluff NM on 27 April (KD). A pair with 2 as-yet-unfledged young were identified at Stateline Island WMA, Scotts Bluff Co, on 26 May (LR, RH). Of interest was a report of 2 pale birds observed on nests in extreme southeastern Sheridan Co and in northwestern Garden Co on 20 April (TS, photos). Such pale color morph birds appear occasionally in populations of otherwise darker Great Horned Owls; data on such birds nesting in Nebraska are scarce, however. Subspecific identification of most breeding Great Horned Owls in Nebraska is difficult; most are probably introgressants of brownish eastern *virginianus* and paler, gray-brown western *occidentalis*. In addition,

*occidentalis* is now considered to consist of integrades between northern *subarcticus*, a very pale subspecies that appears in Nebraska in winter on occasion, and somewhat darker, but still pale, *pallescens* of the southwest (see Pyle, "Identification Guide to North American Birds"). Perhaps the rare pale bird breeding in Nebraska carries genes from wintering birds of the very pale northern subspecies which did not return to their natal area.

**Burrowing Owl:** None was reported east of Kearney Co.

**Barred Owl:** This species is common in FF; it was even described as a "trash bird" there on 9 May (DM). It is also common at ICSP (WRS). A chick was seen in a nest at FF on 12 April (EB). At the western edge of its range, in Seward Co, singles were noted at Oak Glen WMA on 30 April (DP, JP) and along Plum Creek near Seward on 21 May (JG). Also westerly was one spotted at Redtail WMA, Butler Co, on 30 April (DP, JP).

**Long-eared Owl:** The only report was of one located at Rockford L SRA, Gage Co, on 2 March (DSt). It would be worthwhile to check areas where these birds roost in winter to see if a pair or two might remain to nest.

**Short-eared Owl:** Three were reported from areas where they could be expected to be resident: Walgren L on 14 March (DW, BW), Scotts Bluff Co on 1 April (HW), and in a hayfield in southwestern Dixon Co on 2 April (JJ). The one seen at Schramm Park on 6 May (RG) was unexpected. This species tends to be nomadic in winter rather than migratory in the true sense.

**Common Nighthawk:** The one identified at ICSP on 2 May (EB) was a bit early.

**Common Poorwill:** The only reports were of 2-3 observed at Ash Hollow SHP on 14 May (WRS, SJD, AB) and one seen in Dawes Co on 27 May (HW).

**Chuck-will's-widow:** ICSP is the place to hear (or see?) this species; 6 were counted there on 2 May (EB) and 3 were spotted near the Horse Barn on 14 May (SJD, WRS, AB). The small population in the central Platte Valley continues: it was reported from just west of Rowe Sanctuary on 18 May (DP, JP). The population near Wolf L, Saunders Co, also continues: 2 were heard there on 17 May (TH). This species has a curiously disjunct, although generally southeasterly, distribution in Nebraska.

**Whip-poor-will:** ISCP is a good location for this species also; 11 were counted there on 14 May (SJD, WRS, AB). A bit westerly were 2 reports from Lancaster Co, on 29 April (JM) and 1 May (JMc).

**Chimney Swift:** One appeared at Gering on 28 April (AK), rather early for the west.

**White-throated Swift:** The four birds located at Scotts Bluff NM on 18 April (AK) were the 2<sup>nd</sup>-earliest for spring. The only reports received came from this location.

**Ruby-throated Hummingbird:** Reports came from the east, the earliest of one noted at WP on 4 May (LE). Nestbuilding was underway at Hummel Park on 13 May (JTS).

**Belted Kingfisher:** Routine reports.

**Lewis's Woodpecker:** In addition to helping organize the NOU Spring Meeting at Rowe Sanctuary, LR and RH arranged for a Lewis's Woodpecker to hang out at their residence near Gibbon between 11 and 16 May, where it was seen by many grateful NOU members (photos at NOU website). There are two older records from this vicinity, but none further east in spring for this migratory woodpecker: on 16 May 1900, a specimen from Kearney, and on 30 May 1943 from Adams Co.

**Red-headed Woodpecker:** The one seen southeast of Blair on 11 March (JGJ) probably wintered nearby; spring arrival occurs in mid April. The earliest arrivals were noted in Lincoln on 24 April (TP) and near Alma on 27 April, a bird which still had some gray head feathering (GH, WH).

**Red-bellied Woodpecker:** One that wintered in the observer's yard near Mitchell was still present on 12 April (KD). Probably only single-digit numbers currently occur in Scotts Bluff Co.

**Yellow-bellied Sapsucker:** One was spotted at ADF on 1 April (LF, CF), an expected date and location for this migratory species. Unexpected, both by date and location, were 2 reported in Hall Co on 10 May (no details); these appear to have been misidentified.

**Downy Woodpecker:** Routine reports.

**Hairy Woodpecker:** Routine reports.

**Northern Flicker:** Heavy snow north of Blair on 6 April concentrated 31 birds along roadsides (JGJ), a good spring count.

**Pileated Woodpecker:** Reports from ICSP are increasing; one was heard on Trail 5 on 26 April (JMc) and another on Trail 7 on 13 May (SJD). Another report came from southeastern Otoe Co, where one was found on 14 March (LF, CF). An active nest was found again this year at FF; it was first discovered north of Gifford Road on 12 April (EB), and young were present in the nest hole on 29 May (RB). One was also spotted in the upland forest at FF on 27 April, the observer's first at FF away from floodplain forest (CHy).

**Olive-sided Flycatcher:** Only 7 were reported from the east, the earliest found at Neale Woods in southeastern Washington Co on 13 May (NR).

**Western Wood-Pewee:** Only 3 were reported, singles observed in Scotts Bluff Co on 19 May (KD, AK) and on 24 May (LR, RH).

**Eastern Wood-Pewee:** The first was one seen at HCR on 5 May (GH, WH); it, along with 2 noted near Orleans on 17 May (JGJ, WRS), were the most westerly. This area is at or near the western summer limit for the species along the Republican River.

**Empidonax species:** Careful observers reported many empids unidentified to species. A "large number" were located at Walnut Grove

Park on 22 May (JWH), and "dozens" were found there on 24 May (RS), dates suggestive of Alder Flycatcher which is numerous but often silent during spring passage through Nebraska. On 10 May, 53 "empid sp." were reported in Hall Co (fide EV).

Yellow-bellied Flycatcher: The one present in an Omaha yard for a few days finally sang on 25 May, identifying itself as this species; one had been present last year also (CHy). No others were reported.

Acadian Flycatcher: The only reports came from the extreme southeast: one was calling at ICSP on 14 May (SJD, AB, WRS) and another was spotted in southeastern Otoe Co on 26 May (LF, CF, details). This species has been reported at ICSP for the last few years.

Alder Flycatcher: A total of 11 birds was reported from the southeast in the period from 21 to 27 May. One was seen at FF on 21 May (CNK); 6 were located at Dodge and Hummel Parks on 25 May (WRS); 3 were observed at Walnut Grove Park on 26 May (JWH); and one was identified at ADF on 27 May (LF, CF).

Willow Flycatcher: Only about 8 were reported statewide, with the earliest an "empidonax flycatcher with an indistinct eye-ring" in Lincoln on 5 May (NP), presumably this species. Willow Flycatchers are less common westward; one was spotted at Oliver Res on 17 May (SJD).

Least Flycatcher: The first arrival reported came from Dodge Co on 27 April (DP, JP), about on time for this earliest of Empidonax flycatcher migrants. No large counts were reported, although there were "lots" seen at FF on 13 May (CNK), and they were described as "everywhere" at Platte River SP on 14 May (CNK). A total of 23 were counted in Hall Co on 10 May, along with 53 "empid sp." (fide EV).

Cordilleran Flycatcher: None was reported; presumably this species migrates through the Panhandle, although the scarcity of records of spring migrants (about 6 away from the breeding range) might suggest that it migrates north in the Rocky Mountain foothills of eastern Colorado and then eastward to the Pine Ridge of Nebraska and Black Hills of South Dakota.

Eastern Phoebe: The earliest reported were singles found at Osage WMA, Johnson Co, (TEL) and at ADF (LF, CF) on 16 March. The only reports from the Panhandle, where it is uncommon, came from Dawes Co on 20 May (HW) and from Enders Res on 29 May (TJW).

Say's Phoebe: Easternmost were some 10 birds found in southwestern Phelps Co, apparently different individuals: 2 territorial pairs and a single bird were found on 12 April (LR, RH); 2 were spotted west of Atlanta on 17 May (DP, JP); and one was observed a mile north of Atlanta Basin on 31 May (LR, RH). A nest with eggs was found southwest of Jones WPA, Phelps Co, on 17 May (TEL, LR, RH). In recent years, Phelps Co is as far east as this species has bred, at least south of the Platte River. Rather early, and far east of the usual range in migration, was one located at Wehrspann L on 31 March (B; no details). Early arrival dates occur around 20 March.

Great Crested Flycatcher: This species is fairly common westward during spring migration; 7 were counted at LO on 26 May (LR, RH). The earliest was one seen at FF on 30 April (JT), about on time.

Cassin's Kingbird: The only report came from typical summer habitat for this species: 4-5 were spotted in Smiley Canyon, Sioux Co, on 24 May (BW, DW).

Western Kingbird: Arrival timing is about the same statewide; the first were several birds spotted on 27 April in central Nebraska (JGJ, GH, WH, LR, RH, TJW), and in the west, one arrived in Scotts Bluff Co on 3 May (HW). The best count reached a moderate 14, at West Lawn Cem on 11 May (PD, DD).

Eastern Kingbird: Arrival occurs later in the west; the first reported there were 4 found in Morrill Co on 11 May (KD); whereas in the east, singles were observed near Alda (HW) and in Harlan Co (GH, WH) on 21 April. A total of 158 were counted in Hall Co on 10 May (fide EV).

Northern Shrike: The last were singles observed surprisingly far south and east: in Harlan Co on 25 March (GH, WH) and in extreme northeastern Seward Co on 22 March (fide DP, JP).

Loggerhead Shrike: Nestbuilding was noted at SCP on 11 April (KP). "Large numbers" were noted in the northwest on 28 April (BW, DW); this bird was said to be "plentiful" in the Panhandle (HW). This species is doing well in most of Nebraska, especially the west.

Bell's Vireo: Rather early for westerly locations were singles identified at Swanson Res, Hitchcock Co, and Hayes Center WMA, Hayes Co, both on 5 May (TJW).

Yellow-throated Vireo: The first was one spotted at ADF on 23 April (LF, CF), about on time. A bit westward was one observed in Seward Co on 23 May, only the observer's 2<sup>nd</sup> for the county (JG).

Plumbeous Vireo: Rarely reported away from the Pine Ridge breeding range, single migrants were seen at Oliver Res, at Bushnell, and at Carter Canyon, Scotts Bluff Co, on 17 May (SJD).

Blue-headed Vireo: Reports came mostly, as expected, from the east, but one was seen in Harlan Co on 5 May (GH, WH), where it is only casual in occurrence.

Warbling Vireo: Routine reports.

Philadelphia Vireo: More than usual were reported, in the period between 12 and 29 May; the total was about 10, including a high count of 3 at Walnut Grove Park on 26 May (JWH). Westernmost was one located at Hormel Park on 20 May (BP, LP, DP, JP).

Red-eyed Vireo: The best count was an excellent 24 at ICSP on 14 May (SJD, WRS, AB).

Blue Jay: Nestbuilding was underway in a box elder at WP on 9 May (LE).

Pinyon Jay: The small group of 5 birds which wintered in Ogallala was still being seen as late as 16 May (CWH). This species occurs only casually east as far as Lincoln and Keith Cos, usually in the North Platte



Valley. The only other report was from within the usual range, north of Hay Springs on 15 March (BW, DW).

**Black-billed Magpie:** Reports from the northeast, where the range seems to be expanding, came from Martinsburg on 27 April (JJ) and Cedar Co on 22 April (SV). On the other hand, it was thought "still scarce" in Harlan Co (GH, WH). Near the eastern edge of the range were 4 found in Hall Co on 10 May (fide EV).

**American Crow:** An amazing count of 2,490 in northeast Nebraska on 23 March included one flock of 2,000+ birds carefully estimated near Redbud (WRS, TR), by far the best spring count ever. This species is strongly migratory through Nebraska.

**Horned Lark:** Routine reports.

**Purple Martin:** The two spotted at martin houses in Bassett on 1 April (CH) were near the western edge of the summer range in the Niobrara Valley. The best count was 15 at one location in Lexington on 3 May (LR, RH).

**Tree Swallow:** The two noted at Nine Mile Prairie, Lincoln, on 18 March (MUs) were the 2<sup>nd</sup>-earliest on record. One seen at BOL on 22 March was also rather early (fide RB, DP, JP). Excellent counts were the 345 in Hall Co on 10 May (fide EV), and 285 in southeastern Nebraska on 20 April--200 of these were found at Tecumseh SL and 85 were noted at Burchard L SRA, Pawnee Co (WRS). Nesting in bluebird boxes is common, but the use of one on the observers' Dodge Co farm was their first (DP, JP).

**Violet-green Swallow:** The only reports were of singles located at Wildcat Hills NC on 17 May (SJD) and at Scotts Bluff NM on 24 May (AK, LR, RH).

**Northern Rough-winged Swallow:** The one seen at Alma on 1 April (GH, WH) was record early by 3 days. And the three spotted at Louisville Lakes SRA, Cass Co, 5 April (CNK) were also rather early.

**Bank Swallow:** The one found in Scotts Bluff Co on 14 April (KD) was a little early for the Panhandle. An excellent count was 195 in Hall Co on 10 May (fide EV).

**Cliff Swallow:** An excellent count was the 3,000 tallied at LO on 23 May (LR, RH). Another reached 2,000 at Broadwater on 18 May; the observer (HW) wrote: "I didn't hang around too long for fear their immense weight would bring down the power lines most of them were perched on."

**Barn Swallow:** An all-time early arrival date was made by one seen at Shelton on 18 March (MM). There are 3 other late March dates, but most birds arrive in early April. A record spring count was 708 in Hall Co on 10 May (fide EV).

**Black-capped Chickadee:** Routine reports.

**Mountain Chickadee:** The wintering bird at Ogallala was last seen on 12 April (CWH).

**Tufted Titmouse:** Apparently the first record so far north in about 100 years was one spotted at feeders at Ponca SP on 7 May (BFH). The only prior record north of Burt Co was for Dakota City, cited by Bruner et al in 1904. Several were reported from the Lincoln area, where numbers appear to be increasing in recent years (m.ob.). This species appears to be undergoing range expansion from its stronghold in the southeast.

**Red-breasted Nuthatch:** The last away from summer range was one found in Lincoln on 2 May (LE), about normal for last wintering birds. Two located in trees at Scotts Bluff NM on 24 May (LR, RH) were of interest in that breeding might occur there as it does in the nearby Wildcat Hills. Few were reported.

**White-breasted Nuthatch:** Routine reports.

**Pygmy Nuthatch:** The only report away from the regular location at Wildcat Hills NC came from ponderosa pine habitat north of Hay Springs on 15 March (BW, DW), also an expected site for the species.

**Brown Creeper:** For some time, the only known breeding location in the Missouri Valley has been FF, and so a significant record was the observation of nestbuilding in southeastern Washington Co at the Krimlofski Tract of Neale Woods on 20 May (CNK). The last wintering bird was noted at Wehrspann L on 13 April (JWH); one was reported without details in Hall Co on 10 May, an extremely late date at a non-breeding location.

**Rock Wren:** Reports were all in or near the Panhandle, typical of recent years, with first arrival on 23 April at WSR "right on time" (HKH). A seemingly amazing count of 50+ was made in Scotts Bluff Co on 23 May; however, as one of the observers (LR, RH) stated: "At the most, I had identified a dozen Rock Wrens before that weekend. In the right habitat, Rock Wrens were quite easy to find. I must have seen at least fifty." If one concentrates on a single species and searches for it, large counts obviously can be the result.

**Carolina Wren:** Numbers appear to be increasing, as reports were widespread in the southeast. Range limits were defined by one seen at the regular spot at Methodist Cove, HCR, on 22 March (GH, WH); one identified in Hall Co on 10 May (fide EV); and one found at Hummel Park on 20 May (CNK). Most reports came from locations in the Missouri Valley from Douglas Co south, but there were several reports from Pioneer's Park and WP in Lincoln, where a population has become established in recent years.

**House Wren:** A good count was 40 at WP on 10 May (LE).

**Winter Wren:** Few were reported, including one located at FF on 17 March (DB), which probably wintered; singles noted there on 1 April (B) and on 19 April (Mus); and 2 seen at ICSP on 20 April (WRS). Migration peaks in August. Unexpected was one identified at HCR on 26 April (GH, WH); there are very few records away from the east.

**Sedge Wren:** Few were reported, most, if not all, migrants: "lots" were spotted at Allwine Prairie, Lincoln, on 1 May (Jmc); 8 were found at SCP on 2 May (KP); 1-2 were seen in Lancaster Co between 2 and 6 May (LE); at least one was observed at Boyer Chute NWR on 22 May (JT); and one was spotted in Dodge Co on 30 May (JP, DP). Observers should monitor spring birds in suitable breeding habitat to see if they stay into June. Many leave in May but return late July-August and breed then.

**Marsh Wren:** The one seen at L Chappell, Deuel Co, on 22 March (DSt) was the 4<sup>th</sup> earliest on record, and the 2 observed at FL on 3 April (DB) were also very early. Most arrive after 10 April, and March records are likely of birds that wintered at the site where reported or nearby.

**Golden-crowned Kinglet:** Few were reported, only about 12 in the period between 8 March and 13 April, all in the east. March dates likely are of birds that overwintered nearby; the last dates in spring usually occur in early and mid May.

**Ruby-crowned Kinglet:** The many reports spanned the expected migration period, from 23 March to 26 May. The best counts were 15 at FF on 12 and 19 April (EB). Uncommon in the west, 1-4 were reported from 3 April (AK) through 20 April (HW); 4 were counted in the Panhandle on 10-11 May (WRS).

**Blue-gray Gnatcatcher:** Rather early were 2 spotted at Schramm Park on 12 April (JWH). The best counts for the two discrete populations in the state, southeast and west, were, respectively, 10 at ICSP on 26 April (fide CNK) and 7 in the Panhandle between 10 and 11 May (WRS). Another good western count was the 5-6 found in Scotts Bluff Co on 23 May (LR, RH). At the western edge of the southeast range were 2-3 found near Orleans on 17 May (JGJ, WRS). Indicative of range expansion northward in the east were 2 seen at Ponca SP on 11 May (JJ); gnatcatchers are still rare and sporadic in the northeast.

**Eastern Bluebird:** Nesting begins early; birds were checking nestboxes in Lancaster Co on 18 March (JLL) and at Wildcat Hills NC on 22 March (KD). The first nest with eggs was discovered at Twin Lakes WMA, Seward Co, on 12 April (LRB).

**Mountain Bluebird:** First arrivals were the 6 seen at WSR on 10 March (HKH). By 22 March, 8 pairs were observed at nestboxes in the Wildcat Hills in Banner and Scotts Bluff Cos (KD). A report of this species at the NOU meeting at Rowe Sanctuary on 17 May appears to be an error.

**Townsend's Solitaire:** The only report was of one spotted north of Hay Springs on 15 March (BW, DW), an expected location and date for a wintering bird.

**Veery:** Two were reported from the Panhandle, where migrants are of the western subspecies *salicicolus*; a "dark" bird was observed at Sidney on 1 May (AS), and another bird was seen at Oliver Res on 17 May (SJD). Veery is an uncommon migrant both in the east and west, but only

casual in the central part of the state. Only one was reported in the east in mid April; although some details were provided for what would be an extraordinarily early date, these did not eliminate the far more likely Hermit Thrush, whose migration peaks in mid April.

**Gray-cheeked Thrush:** Good numbers were found, all in the east between 30 April and 21 May. The 25 reported included an estimate of 6 found in Seward on 21 May (JG) and 4 located at Memphis Lakes SRA, Saunders Co, on 8 May (JGJ).

**Swainson's Thrush:** Good numbers were reported statewide from 25 April to 31 May. Singles spotted at Chadron on 29 April (HW) and at ADF on 25 April (LF, CF) were rather early for the west and east respectively. The best counts included 42 in the Panhandle from 10 to 11 May (WRS) and 27 in southeastern Nebraska on 8 May (JGJ).

**Hermit Thrush:** The individual wintering at a Bellevue bird bath was present through 29 March (Sue Gentes fide BP, LP); there are only about 3 instances of known overwintering, but there are about 12 single-day sightings for midwinter. The first 2 migrants were noted at FF on 12 April (EB). All but one of the reports of migrants came from the east between 12 April and 6 May, the latter at Hormel Park and a bit late for the species (DP, JP). Even later was one technically in the central: sighted in Hall Co on 10 May (fide EV; no details).

**Wood Thrush:** Only casual as a spring migrant in central or western Nebraska, 2 were seen at a woodlot in southwestern Lincoln Co on 16 May (TJW). All other reports came from the east, as expected. Rather early were 3 singing birds noted at ICSP on 26 April (fide WRS, JMc). The best count reached 15 at ICSP on 14 May (SJD, WRS, AB), a new spring high count.

**American Robin:** A good total of 852 was made in Hall Co on 10 May (fide EV).

**Gray Catbird:** A good count was the 17 tallied in southwestern Hall Co on 10 May (LR, RH). Two spotted at Oliver Res on 10 May (WRS) were rather early for the Panhandle, where the species is uncommon.

**Northern Mockingbird:** This species is being reported more often in recent years. This spring, about 22 were reported statewide, with the earliest one observed at Melbeta on 30 March (Walter Johns fide AK). This date is rather early, and the bird may have wintered nearby.

**Brown Thrasher:** The one found in a Scotts Bluff Co yard on 26 April (KD) was rather early for the west; arrival there occurs about 3 weeks later than in the east. Another bird seen in a Wilsonville yard on 19 April (LO) was also a bit early.

**Curve-billed Thrasher:** The wintering (now summering?) bird at the Frimann Ranch in extreme southeastern Sioux Co was still present on 26 May (fide AK); it was "singing up a storm" by 11 April (Lonnie Frimann fide JSt). Previous northerly vagrants to the northern Great Plains have generally disappeared in April.

**European Starling:** Routine reports.

American Pipit: Average numbers were reported from North Platte eastward between 26 March and 27 April, the usual migration period. The best count was 30 in western Sarpy Co on 8 April (DSt).

Sprague's Pipit: The only report of this species, which is probably much more common than the few reports indicate, was of one spotted in a grassy parking area at Kirkpatrick Basin North WMA, York Co, on 18 April (GW). Peak spring migration through Nebraska occurs in April, and most reports come from central Nebraska.

Cedar Waxwing: No large concentrations were reported other than the "gazillions" found at LO on 18 May (AK), a bit late for such numbers. Also rather late for the number seen were the 50 counted at LO on 26 May (LR, RH); "fairly large groups" were still being seen in the North Platte area on 26 May (TJW) and "small groups" were reported passing through Wilsonville on 26 May (LO). Sizeable groups of migrants that pass through in late May-early June are thought to be birds that winter as far south as Central America (Robbins and Easterla, "Birds of Missouri").

Blue-winged Warbler: The only report was of one identified a few miles south of Verdigre along the Verdigre River on 24 May; it was singing in the same place one was found last year (MB). It has been suggested (JGJ) there might be a small breeding population in the lower Niobrara River drainage, but evidence is as yet only fragmentary.

Golden-winged Warbler: There were only 3 sightings, fewer than in recent years. One was found in Lincoln on 4 May (JM), rather early, and 2 were seen at Schramm Park on 8 May (JGJ, B).

Tennessee Warbler: Rare in the west, 2 were spotted at LO on 16 May (SJD). Good numbers were reported in the period between 2 and 29 May, with the best count 35 at ICSP on 14 May (SJD, WRS, AB).

Orange-crowned Warbler: This common statewide migrant was reported between 23 April and 26 May, the latter date rather late (JWH). The best counts included 31 in the Panhandle on 10 May; 22 at Oliver Res (WRS) and 25 at HCR on 1 May (LR, RH); and 22 in the eRWB on 27 April (JGJ).

Nashville Warbler: Common only in the east, westernmost was one found in southwestern Lincoln Co on 16 May (TJW). Sightings occurred in the period from 27 April to 22 May, with no significant counts reported.

Northern Parula: Reports were all from the usual range in the southeast, with the first one spotted at FF on 16 April (B) and the best count the 5 located at ICSP on 20 April (WRS).

Yellow Warbler: The earliest was one seen in Lincoln on 23 April (LRB), rather early. Numbers were concentrated at Walnut Grove Park on 24 May, when "dozens" were present, including some paired birds (RS). The best count totaled 70 in Hall Co on 10 May (fide EV).

**Chestnut-sided Warbler:** About 19 were reported, all in the east, between 13 and 28 May. The best count was an excellent 5 at Walnut Grove Park on 24 May (RS).

**Magnolia Warbler:** About 19 of this species also were reported, also all in the east, from 7 to 26 May. The best count was a record-tying 7, also at Walnut Grove Park on 24 May (RS).

**Cape May Warbler:** The only report of this casual spring migrant was of a male located at Lutheran Cem, Norfolk, on 10 May (MB, photos). The 14 spring records since 1982 have all occurred in the narrow period from 7 to 21 May.

**Black-throated Blue Warbler:** The only report of this casual spring migrant was of a female spotted just east of Hamlet in southwestern Hayes Co on 26 May (DF). This sighting represents only the 23<sup>rd</sup> spring report for the state, and the 11<sup>th</sup> since 1982.

**Yellow-rumped (Audubon's) Warbler:** The earliest was one spotted near Mitchell on 20 April (KD), right on time. Good numbers were found at Riverside Park, Scottsbluff, by 1 May (KD); other migrants (not in breeding habitat) were seen in the Panhandle through 11 May (WRS). One identified at Old Stage Hill Road in the Wildcat Hills on 3 May was in likely breeding habitat (AK).

**Yellow-rumped (Myrtle) Warbler:** This taxon is a statewide migrant; almost all Yellow-rumps identified in the Panhandle this spring were "Myrtle Warblers" (HW). "Myrtles" were reported as early as 1 March, when 3 were spotted at Wolf L, Saunders Co (TH); these likely wintered nearby. Presumed migrants appeared at FF on 17 March (DB) and were widely reported through 20 May (DP, J P). The best counts were the 60 at Crystal Cove L, South Sioux City, on 27 April (BFH) and the 53 at WP on 4 May (LE).

**Black-throated Green Warbler:** Only 4 were reported, all between 11 and 14 May: singles noted at WP on 11 May (Mus); at Schramm Park on 11 May (DP); at ICSP on 13 May (SJD); and at FF on 14 May (B). This bird, along with Bay-breasted Warbler, is one of the rarer of the regular migrant species in Nebraska.

**Blackburnian Warbler:** Good numbers for this uncommon migrant were reported, about 15 were seen in the period between 3 and 26 May. Reports all originated in the east. The best count was 3 at Walnut Grove Park on 24 May (RS).

**Yellow-throated Warbler:** This species occurs regularly at the northwest corner of its summer range in North America at FF and in the Krimlofski Tract of Neale Woods in southeastern Washington Co. There are few records elsewhere; this spring a single was found at Schramm Park on 12 April (JWH), presumably a migrant. Four were identified at FF on 12 April (EB), the high count for the spring; and one was singing at Neale Woods in southeastern Washington Co on 16 April (DP, JP).

**Pine Warbler:** This species is rarely reported in Nebraska, and the few reports are poorly documented. There are now 21 spring reports,

but only 6 have details (including the two reported this spring). The two reports were of one observed singing at Arbor Lodge SHP, Nebraska City, on 13 April (JK,SK) and another seen at DeSoto NWR on 26 May (JT, LW; details).

**Palm Warbler:** A good showing of 13 birds was reported, most from the east in late April to early May, as expected for this early migrant. Two subspecies occur in Nebraska; most are the brownish western subspecies *palmarum*, which occurs statewide, but the yellower eastern subspecies *hypochrysea* has been reported regularly in recent years from the eastern half of the state. The latter was thus a surprise find as far west as CCM; a bright bird, the westernmost record to date, was seen there on 14 May (SJD, AB, WRS). One noted at Cozad WMA on 3 May (LR, RH) was *palmarum*; it was the westernmost report this spring other than the bird found at CCM.

**Bay-breasted Warbler:** True to form, this rare spring migrant was reported only twice: at Conestoga L on 13 May (LE) and in the observer's Lincoln yard on 16 May (LE).

**Blackpoll Warbler:** This common statewide spring migrant (uncommon in the west) was widely reported from 3 to 28 May. The best count reached 6, at Hormel Park on 20 May (DP, JP, BP, L P) and at FF on 21 May (CNK). Westerly reports were of a female seen in Riverside Park, Scottsbluff, on 10 May (WRS, details), and singles observed at Walgren L on 14 May (BW, DW) and in Dawes Co on 20 May (HW).

**Cerulean Warbler:** A cooperative bird repeated last year's performance by returning with an apparent mate to Hummel Park on 7 May (JT) and singing loudly there through 26 May (CNK, m.ob.); two birds were still present on the latter date (CNK). One was spotted at ICSP on 13 May (SJD), also a location where a single bird was seen last year. Unusual, there were two reports away from these locations: singles were seen at WP on 9 May (LE) and at Walnut Grove Park on 26 May (DSt).

**Black-and-white Warbler:** The best count for this common but low-density statewide migrant was 4, at Dodge Park on 30 April (JGJ) and at FF on 4 May (MA). The last was one found in Omaha on 26 May (DSt).

**American Redstart:** The earliest for this common statewide migrant was one seen in Sarpy Co on 2 May (CNK), and best counts included 29 in southeastern Washington Co on 25 May (WRS) and 28 at ICSP on 13 May (SJD, AB, WRS). Three males and "dozens" of females were noted at Walnut Grove on Park 24 May (RS).

**Prothonotary Warbler:** Fewer than usual were reported, surprisingly so for FF, usually a regular site. Only 3 were reported from 2 sites: 2 were seen at ICSP on 13 and 14 May (SJD), and one was located northwesterly at Hormel Park on 20 May (DP, JP). The latter sighting recalls some prior sightings at the same park, on 28 May 1999 (TP) and on 27 May 2002 (JP, DP). There is no evidence that the

species breeds at Hormel Park, although it seems likely; if so, it would be the northwesternmost known location in the state.

**Worm-eating Warbler:** The only report of this casual spring visitor was of one spotted at FF on 10 May (CNK). There are about 45 spring records in all.

**Ovenbird:** The earliest and best count were the 6+ observed at ICSP on 26 April (CNK, WRS, JMc). First in the west was the one found in Dawes Co on 20 May (HW).

**Northern Waterthrush:** About 22 were reported from 27 April (BFH) through 20 May (JG). Uncommon in the west, one was seen at LO on 16 May (AK), and 2 were identified at Oliver Res on 17 May (SJD).

**Louisiana Waterthrush:** All reports but two came from locations where a few appear each year and probably summer most years: 1-2 were found at two locations at FF from 12 April (EB); 1-2 were spotted at two locations at ICSP from 20 April (WRS); one was noted singing along Rock Creek at the north end of Neale Woods in Washington Co from 15 April (NR); and one was observed at Platte River SP on 14 May (CNK). The only other reports were of one spotted at Schramm Park on 26 April (MUs) and one noted at an unexpected spot just west of Bellevue on 2 May (CNK).

**Kentucky Warbler:** Another "southeastern" warbler species, this one was reported from the extreme southeast only, north to Neale Woods in southeastern Washington Co, where singles were reported from 12 to 13 May (RS, NR). In recent years, most mature woodlands in the southeast host at least one pair of Kentucky Warblers. Unexpected was one observed at Osage WMA, Johnson Co, on 4 May (TEL); few reports occur away from the Missouri River Valley. The best count was 6 at ICSP on 13 May (SJD).

**Mourning Warbler:** This species is rather common if looked for at the right time (between 15 and 30 May); an excellent count of 7 was made in southeastern Washington Co on 25 May (WRS). A total of 16 were reported from 13 to 29 May, all in the Missouri River Valley except for one seen at Hormel Park on 20 May (DP, JP, LP, BP).

**MacGillivray's Warbler:** A total of 7 were reported, 6 found in or near the Panhandle, as expected, from 4 to 17 May. Most unexpected was a male with "bold white crescents distinctly visible above and below the eye" spotted at WP on 14 May (LE). This sighting marks only the 4<sup>th</sup> documented record in the east.

**Common Yellowthroat:** Good counts included the 20 tallied at LO on 26 May (LR, RH) and the 16 found in southwestern Hall Co on 10 May (LR, RH).

**Hooded Warbler:** Despite its "southeastern" distribution, this species has been reported several times as far west as the Panhandle. Perhaps on its way there was a male located in a Wilsonville neighborhood between 23 and 27 April (LO, details). This sighting, about the 45<sup>th</sup> for spring overall, ties the 2<sup>nd</sup>-earliest spring date.



Wilson's Warbler: About average numbers were reported from 1 to 26 May, all from the east except for one seen at LO on 16 May (SJD).

Canada Warbler: Usually only a rare migrant in spring, more than usual were reported this spring. A total of at least 5 was found in southeastern woodlands: one was discovered at FF on the very early date for this late migrant of 9 May (DM); 1-2 were seen at Walnut Grove Park from 24 to 26 May (RS, JWH, Dst); a male was identified at Krimlofski Tract, Neale Woods, between 25 and 26 May (WRS, CNK); and a male was noted at Hormel Park on 25 May (WRS). The latter sighting marks only the 14<sup>th</sup> spring record away from the Missouri River Valley.

Yellow-breasted Chat: This species is rare to absent in the east these days, so the following two reports were significant: singles were spotted at Swanson Park, Bellevue, on 11 May (JT, CNK) and at ICSP on 13 May (SJD). The best count 7 in Carter Canyon, Scotts Bluff Co, on 17 May (SJD).

Summer Tanager: The increase in numbers and sightings in the last 2-3 years of this species in southeastern Nebraska woodlands has been amazing. The center of abundance once was Schramm Park; the species is still there, but ICSP has become the new location of choice for the birds. At ICSP, 18 were counted on 13 May (SJD), a new high count for the species in Nebraska. Sightings at locations other than Schramm Park were considered highly unusual until the last couple of years; now, along with the major increase at ICSP, such sightings are becoming more numerous. Single birds were found at FF between 7 and 13 May (CNK, B); a pair was seen at Hummel Park on 25 May (WRS); a first spring male was observed in the observer's Omaha yard on 25 May (Chy); and another pair was spotted in southeastern Otoe Co on 26 May (LF, CF).

Scarlet Tanager: Reports were as expected from Missouri Valley locations, starting with one found at Platte River SP on 2 May (B). A new spring high count was 12 at ICSP on 14 May (SJD, WRS, AB); obviously tanagers are finding something to their liking at ICSP! Westerly was one noted in Harlan Co on 17 May (NOU; no details).

Western Tanager: A total of 14 were reported from non-breeding habitat in the Panhandle from 11 to 17 May; the best count was 8 on 17 May, including 5 tallied at Oliver Res, 2 at Bushnell, and one in Long Canyon, Banner Co (SJD). This count is a new spring high for the state.

Green-tailed Towhee: Three were reported: 2 were spotted at West Lawn Cem on 11 May (PD, DD, AK), and one was seen in Carter Canyon, Scotts Bluff Co, on 17 May (SJD). There are about 40 spring reports in all of this rare migrant; it is probably more common, however, than these records indicate.

Spotted Towhee: The first to return to the Panhandle was rather early: one identified at Wildcat Hills NC on 11 April (WJ). The last to leave the southeast was found in Sarpy Co on 1 May (CNK). The best counts were 18 in Hall Co on 10 May (fide EV); 18 presumed migrants at

Sacramento-Wilcox WPA, Phelps Co, on 1 May (B); and 17 in the Panhandle from 10 to 11 May (WRS).

**Eastern Towhee:** The singles seen at FF (EB) and in Bellevue (KCR) on 18 March had probably wintered nearby; spring arrival usually occurs in early to mid April. Thus, the excellent count of 10 at FF on 5 April (EB) and one at SCP on 6 April (LR, RH) were also somewhat early. Individuals had reached Knox Co by 6 May (SV), Buffalo Co by 5 May (LB), and Harlan Co by 17 May (NOU); these locations approximate the western edge of the summer range. The 12 tallied in Hall Co on 10 May (fide EV) was a good count for that far west.

**American Tree Sparrow:** The last were 3 seen in a Lancaster Co yard on 8 April (JLL).

**Chipping Sparrow:** Record early for the Panhandle was one discovered at the observer's feeder near Mitchell from 15 to 16 March (KD). One which reached Dixon Co by 30 March (JJ) was also rather early. The best counts included 355 in Hall Co on 10 May (fide EV) and 100 at FL on 27 April (LR, RH).

**Clay-colored Sparrow:** Good numbers were reported statewide between 25 April and 13 May, except for a rather late single spotted in Otoe Co on 23 May (LF, CF). The best counts were 301 in Hall Co on 10 May (fide EV), 45 in Hastings on 3 May (Pdu), and 38 in the wRWB on 27 April (LR, RH).

**Brewer's Sparrow:** Only 3 were reported, fewer than usual. Singles were found at West Lawn Cem on 12 May (KD); in western Sioux Co on 12 May (HW); and, somewhat east of the usual range, at Walgren L on 14 May, where it was considered "new for the area" (BW, DW).

**Field Sparrow:** The earliest seen was record early at SCP on 20 March (KP); another was rather early at ADF on 26 March (LF, CF). Rather early for the central Nebraska location was one spotted in the observers' Gibbon yard from 29 to 30 March (LR, RH; details). Only the 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> spring reports for the Panhandle were singles observed at Walgren L on 14 May, considered "new for the area" (BW, DW), and in extreme northwestern Sheridan Co on 29 May, a singing bird (HW).

**Vesper Sparrow:** A record spring count was the 75-100 tallied in an alfalfa field and on the adjacent road in southern Sioux Co on 24 April (KD). The earliest was one spotted at Wood Duck WMA, Stanton Co, on 30 March (NB).

**Lark Sparrow:** Somewhat intriguing if also rather indeterminate was a report of "vast numbers" observed in Scotts Bluff Co on 23 May (LR, RH).

**Lark Bunting:** The easternmost reported was one found in Harlan Co on 11 May (GH, WH). This location is near the eastern edge of the range south of the Platte Valley. The best count was 185, tallied in 4 stretches totalling 72 miles in Sioux and Garden Cos on 30 May (LRB); at this date these would be on summer range.

**Savannah Sparrow:** Only moderate numbers were reported, all but one from the east in the period between 24 March and 18 May. The exception was one seen at Box Butte Res, Dawes Co, on 28 April (BW, DW).

**Grasshopper Sparrow:** Arrival in the Panhandle is about a month later than in the east; one was spotted in Douglas Co on 16 April (DP, JP), while first in the west was identified in Banner Co on 15 May (HW). Few were reported.

**Baird's Sparrow:** One was reported at the NOU meeting on 18 May without details and is best considered a reporting error.

**Henslow's Sparrow:** This species, which moves its breeding location from year to year with changing grassland habitat conditions, apparently found the prairie under restoration at Boyer Chute NWR to its liking this spring. As many as 5 birds were found there, including singing birds, on 22 May throughout the period (JT, CNK). An early arrival at a more traditional location was one observed singing at Burchard L SRA, Pawnee Co, on 20 April (WRS), an early spring date by 2 days.

**LeConte's Sparrow:** The only report was of one spotted in southeastern Otoe Co on 5 April (LF, CF).

**Nelson's Sharp-tailed Sparrow:** Like the preceding species, few are found unless looked for; the two reported were discovered at locations most observers would not look as they lack typical wetland edge habitat preferred by this species: one seen at Osage WMA, Johnson Co, on 4 May (TEL), rather early for this species, and another noted "singing" at Boyer Chute NWR on 22 May (JT).

**Fox Sparrow:** Good numbers, about 40, were reported, as expected, from the eastern half of the state between 14 March-10 April.

**Song Sparrow:** Wintering birds make spring arrival difficult to detect, but the first in Dixon Co was noted on 23 March (JJ). Good counts, often indicators of migration timing, were 35 at FL on 12 April (LR, RH); 23 at BOL on 1 April (LE); and 20 in southwestern Hall Co on 10 May (LR, RH). These dates suggest a prolonged migration period. Nest material was being carried by a bird in Lancaster Co on 2 May (LE). Song Sparrows now breed widely in the east, but they are still local in the Panhandle.

**Lincoln's Sparrow:** Singles spotted in southern Sioux Co on 16 March (BW, DW; no details) and at Fort Kearny, Buffalo Co, on 18 March (MUs; no details) were very early, suggestive of wintering nearby, although there are no records of overwintering in Nebraska. There is, however, a record for an 18 March sighting near Barr L, in northeastern Colorado. Arrival is usually around 1 April; the next report this spring was of one seen at FF on 5 April (EB). Migrants were reported statewide from 5 April to 21 May, the normal migration period.

**Swamp Sparrow:** Good numbers were reported from the east in the period between 17 March and 17 May; they were "seemingly everywhere" at FF on 12 April (EB); 15 to 20 were counted there on 19 April (EB); and "lots" were at Allwine Prairie, Lancaster Co, on 1 May (JMc). The early dates reported, 17 March at ADF (LF, CF) and at

Wagontrain L, Lancaster Co (LE), and 22 March at FF (CHy) may have been birds that wintered in the area. Usual first arrivals are noted around 1 April. One was singing at the usual location at FL on 17 May (LR, RH).

**White-throated Sparrow:** In recent years more mid-winter reports have come to hand; this winter, overwintering was documented at an Omaha feeder, where an adult and apparently 2 juveniles were present from December through April; the juveniles were observed to be molting (JT). Curiously, another bird in juvenile plumage was reported in Harlan Co on 21 April (GH, WH). Excellent counts were 250+ at Dodge Park on 30 April, where "the woods were filled with a chorus of singing birds" (JGJ), and 80+ at FF on 27 April after strong southerly winds the night before (CNK). The last to leave was one noted at Nebraska City on 19 May (LF, CF). All reports came from Mullen and Harlan Co eastward. The Mullen report, of 5 birds observed on 10 May (JSt), is a bit west of the usual range in migration; this species is rare as far west as the Panhandle.

**White-crowned Sparrow:** This species overwinters in small numbers; at least one had attended the observer's Scottsbluff feeder for "8 straight months" as of 16 May (HW). None was found during winter, however, at Alma; the first arrival there was noted on 27 April (GH, WH). The best counts totaled 76 in Hall Co on 10 May (fide EV), and 40 in the observer's yard near Mitchell on 28 April (KD), but "several flocks of 25-40" were seen in Scotts Bluff Co on 27 April (HW). One observer (RG) said: "Never have I seen such a migration of Gambels White-crowned Sparrow." No dark-lored birds were reported.

**Harris's Sparrow:** Good numbers were reported west, as expected, only to Knox and Hall Cos; the best count reached 200 in Lincoln on 23 April (LRB). The last was one found in Nebraska City on 12 May (LF, CF).

**Dark-eyed Junco:** The best count was 77 in southeastern Otoe Co on 9 March (WRS). The sad saga of "Jack" the "Slate-colored" Junco in Lincoln provided one of the latest spring dates on record (there is a handful of early Jun records); Jack had suffered a serious head injury, including loss of an eye. Healing was underway until Jack was found dead in the observer's pond on 28 May (LG). Two "Oregon" Juncos were spotted in Nebraska City on 5 and 9 March (LF, CF); this taxon is rare in the east. More often seen are intergrades of "Oregon" and "Slate-colored" Juncos; 2 such were found at ICSP on 20 April (WRS).

**McCown's Longspur:** The only reports came from the Panhandle between 12 and 16 May (DW, BW, JSt, HW). Somewhat east of the usual range, and indicative of dry conditions, were birds spotted at several locations in Box Butte Co on 16 May (HW).

**Lapland Longspur:** The best count, and also last date reported, was the 1,000 found at a feedlot west of Gretna on 8 April (DSt).

**Smith's Longspur:** The only report of this rare and somewhat enigmatic spring migrant was of 2 spotted in Sarpy Co on 8 April (B, no details). Available data suggest that in spring the migration route of this species barely reaches Nebraska, crossing the extreme southeastern part of the state. Thus this report fits the pattern, despite the lack of substantiating details.

**Chestnut-collared Longspur:** A few occur in migration in the east every year, usually revealed only by snowstorms causing roadside congregations. This year, however, 3 were seen with Lapland Longspurs at the feedlot west of Gretna on 8 April (DSt). One identified at Creighton Airport on 7 April provided the happy observer's 300th species for Knox Co (MB). The only other reports came from Sioux Co (HW, LRB).

**Snow Bunting:** None was reported; departure takes place in early March.

**Northern Cardinal:** Reports continue to increase in Scotts Bluff Co; 1-2 attended the observer's feeders near Mitchell (KD), and a female was seen at Riverside Park, Scottsbluff, on 10 May (WRS). Unexpected was a female seen in the Imperial Town Park on 26 May (DF); cardinals occur throughout the Republican Valley, and west in the Platte Valley in numbers to Keith Co, but reports away from these valleys are few. The 38 counted at the observer's Lancaster Co feeder on 18 Mar set a yard record (JLL).

**Rose-breasted Grosbeak:** A male seen at Hormel Park on 24 April (DP, JP) was rather early. Only a rare (but regular) migrant in the west, 2 were noted at a Sidney feeder on 15 May (AS).

**Black-headed Grosbeak:** The earliest was a rather early bird found in Lincoln Co on 30 April (TJW). Easternmost were the regular summering birds located in the Gibbon area; at least one was present from 7 May throughout the period (LR, RH).

**Blue Grosbeak:** Reports occurred statewide, beginning with one spotted in Sarpy Co on 11 May (JT, CNK); numbers are lowest in the east. The best count was 5, in Scotts Bluff Co on 23 May (LR, RH).

**Lazuli Bunting:** Numbers seemed higher than in the last few years; a total of 21 were reported, beginning with a rather early bird seen in a yard near Mitchell on 28 April (KD), tying the 3<sup>rd</sup>-earliest spring date. The best count was the 3 found on Old Stage Road, Scotts Bluff Co, on 24 May (LR, RH). A surprising number of reports came from the east, where the species is rare in spring (It should be noted for completeness that some of these are undoubtedly introgressants with Indigo Bunting but resemble Lazulis; see next species). One was observed at a feeder at Elk City, Douglas Co, on 10 May (B); another was found in a Lancaster Co yard on 14 May (JLL); and one was spotted at WP on 26 May (LE). These are only the 17<sup>th</sup>-19<sup>th</sup> spring records from the east, but most have been in the last few years. Another bird was found in Hall Co on 10 May (fide EV).

**Indigo Bunting:** The one spotted in Lincoln on 23 April (LRB) was about the 4th earliest date ever, and a record spring count was provided by the 45 discovered in southeastern Otoe Co on 16 May (LF, CF). One in Scotts Bluff Co on 28 April was "blotchy brown and blue" (KD), likely a first-summer male; this species is uncommon in the west. Schramm Park had a mixed bag of hybrids this spring; one that looked like a "Lazuli Bunting without the brown breast" was studied carefully on 11 May (JWH), and 2 hybrids were banded there on 14 May (RG).

**Dickcissel:** Westernmost were 2 identified in Dawson Co on 2 May (LR, RH) and one seen in Harlan Co on 17 May (GH, WH). Few were reported, except for the presence of large numbers noted in Kearney Co on 31 May (LR, RH).

**Bobolink:** The one found in Lancaster Co on 30 Apr (DP, JP) tied the 5th-earliest spring date. The 208 counted in Hall Co on 10 May (EV) provided a record spring count. Good numbers were reported statewide, including an apparent first refuge record at Boyer Chute NWR (JT), an indicator of improving grassland/meadow habitat there.

**Red-winged Blackbird:** Routine reports.

**Eastern Meadowlark:** The first identified (by vocalizations) was heard in Lancaster Co on 17 March (LE); winter status of this species is unclear. At least one was present with Western Meadowlarks in a damp meadow east of North Platte on 21 April (TJW); there is a sizeable population in the Sandhills, and the species breeds in wet meadows along the North Platte to Keith Co. In Hall Co on 10 May, 11 Easterns and 536 Westerns were counted (fide EV). One spotted at Medicine Creek Res, Frontier Co, on 5 May (TJW) provided one of fewer than 10 reports south of the Platte River and west of Kearney. Observers are encouraged to report sightings of this species south of the Platte River and west of Lancaster and Gage Cos; it is rare even in the eRWB.

**Western Meadowlark:** Wintering in small numbers occurs throughout most of southern Nebraska, but migrants arrive in March; birds were "back at Eppley" Airfield, Omaha, on 13 March (JT), and 18 were counted singing in southeastern Otoe Co on 9 March (WRS). The first ones reported back in the northeast were the 6 spotted in Dixon Co on 23 March (BFH). Very early, and probably a wintering bird, was one seen near Gering on 3 March (AK).

**Yellow-headed Blackbird:** A good count was 1,200 near the Wood River exit on I-80 on 30 April (MM). Small groups of late migrants are seen on occasion, usually immatures or females; one such instance was the 10 females discovered at the Roca Cem, Lancaster Co, on 10 May (LE).

**Rusty Blackbird:** Few were reported, a total of only about 15, west to Buffalo Co, from 17 March (LE) through 9 April (LR, RH).

**Brewer's Blackbird:** A few more than usual were reported from the east, where it is a rare migrant; a female was spotted at Bellevue on 7 April (BP, LP); one was located in Omaha on 17 April (Jmc); and 17 were seen in a mixed flock of blackbirds at Boyer Chute NWR on 30 April

(JT). As many as 58 were located in Hall Co on 10 May (fide EV), but best count was 100+ in a mixed flock of blackbirds found near Kiowa Springs on 24 April (KD).

**Common Grackle:** This species is regular in winter only in the southeast, thus 6 which wintered near Gering, noted there on 1 March (AK), provided the first record of overwintering for the Panhandle. Migrants arrive in mid March statewide. A good count was 988 in Hall Co on 10 May (fide EV).

**Great-tailed Grackle:** This species is now found statewide except for the Pine Ridge and, curiously, the Sandhills, where there appears to be abundant cattail habitat. The first arrivals were 2 spotted in Clay Co on 7 March (JSt), and the best count totaled 141 in Hall Co on 10 May (fide EV). A surprise was as many as 51 noted at Bazile Marsh, Niobrara, on 23 March, including 13 males and 38 females (TR, WRS). At their western breeding outpost, two were spotted at Kiowa Springs on 29 March, before the ice had thawed (AK). Other westerly reports included 2 identified at LO on 14 May (SJD, AB, WRS) and a male seen at Enders Res on 29 May (TJW). Poor conditions in the eRWB drastically reduced numbers in the marshes there (JGJ), normally a center of abundance for the species in Nebraska. The only birds found were 2 observed at Kissinger Basin as late as 17 May (JGJ); perhaps they all went to Hall Co!

**Brown-headed Cowbird:** The earliest were 2 located in Lancaster Co on 17 March (LE), about on schedule. The first in the west was found near Gering on 9 April (AK), rather early there. A good (?) count was 518, made in Hall Co on 10 May (fide EV).

**Orchard Oriole:** One spotted in Lancaster Co on 26 April (LE) was rather early. First in the west was a bird seen near Broadwater on 18 May (HW). The best count reached 36 in Hall Co on 10 May (fide EV).

**Baltimore Oriole:** The first was one observed in Lincoln on 23 April (LRB), a bit early, but not excessively so. An excellent tally totaled 128 in Hall Co on 10 May (fide EV). The only report from the Panhandle, where it is a rare spring migrant, was from near Bayard on 21 May (HW). Nestbuilding was in progress in Lincoln on 25 May (MUs).

**Bullock's Oriole:** The few reports came from Roscoe westward, starting with 2 males seen at Oliver Res 11 May (WRS). A hybrid was identified at West Lawn Cem on 13 May (KD).

**Gray-crowned Rosy-Finch:** None was reported; last dates are in late March.

**Purple Finch:** Only two reports were received, continuing a disappointing trend in recent years. A female which had wintered at the school feeder in Wakefield was last seen on 20 March (JJ), and one was spotted in a Lincoln yard on 2 May (LG), the latter a rather late date.

**Cassin's Finch:** The only report was of a female identified from photos posted by the observer; the bird was found at his Scottsbluff feeder on 27

February and reappeared on 31 March (HW). This species is a rare winter visitor in the west.

House Finch: Two were nestbuilding at Wildcat Hills NC on 22 March (KD). The rarely-reported yellow form was seen in Nebraska City on 3 April (LF, CF). Birds in this part of the state are derived genetically from the "eastern invasion."

Red Crossbill: A very quiet year for this species resulted in only one report: at least one was spotted at Wildcat Hills NC on 24 May (HW).

Common Redpoll: None was reported; departure, when birds are present, occurs in late March.

Pine Siskin: With two exceptions, reports came from the Panhandle, most at feeders, through 13 May (KD, AK). One was seen in a North Platte yard on 26 May (TJW); at this date such birds are usually nesting in the area as an isolated pair, an occurrence which is characteristic of this species. The only report from the east was of one located at ICSP on 26 April with White-throated Sparrows (WRS).

American Goldfinch: Routine reports.

Evening Grosbeak: None was reported, nor has been for several years.

House Sparrow: Routine reports.

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