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3-2004

## Winter Field Report, December 2003 to February 2004

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Silcock, W. Ross, "Winter Field Report, December 2003 to February 2004" (2004). *Nebraska Bird Review*. 357.

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WINTER FIELD REPORT, December 2003 to February 2004

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INTRODUCTION

Last year, I wrote: "Overall, this was a pretty quiet winter season. There were no major weather events, no major invasions (just one minor incursion), and, with one big exception, no real rarities." This is pretty much true of this winter too, except that there weren't even any minor incursions, unless Common Redpoll and Purple Finch qualify, and no drop-dead rarities, although Black-headed Gull comes close! In fact, we returned to a fairly normal type of winter with some cold weather and accumulating snow cover. This caused birds to leave in fall in normal fashion, and, in general, to arrive in spring at normal times. Waterfowl and blackbirds generally departed in early Jan and returned at the end of Feb, just like old times, and there were some half-hardy birds in evidence: Yellow-bellied Sapsucker, Hermit Thrush, Yellow-rumped Warbler, Fox Sparrow, and Brown-headed Cowbird. A surprise was the absence of scoters. There was a minor influx of Common Redpolls and Purple Finches, but other winter finches were in low numbers. Clearly declining in recent years, especially when compared to CBC numbers of around 20 years ago, is the House Sparrow. Numbers of Harris's Sparrow also were low, as were chickadees, the latter strikingly so in the Platte Valley. Huge numbers of robins, starlings, and crows were reported, as well as Canada Geese in the central and western Platte Valley. Eurasian Collared-Doves continued to occupy new counties, with only 17 unsullied; interestingly, 12 of these are Sandhills counties.

There were few late dates set; a Rock Wren was most noticeable, being 2 months later than the previous late date, and an Eared Grebe and a Lincoln's Sparrow were both 2nd latest ever for fall, the latter possibly wintering. Rare midwinter records were a Barn Owl and a Savannah Sparrow. Almost old friends were the Tufted Duck at L Ogallala, back for the 5th year, and the Curve-billed Thrasher in Sioux Co. A genuine rarity was a Black-headed Gull, only the 3rd state record (2nd acceptably documented, pending NOURC). Other rare birds were all gulls at L McConaughy, truly an incredible gulling experience this winter. The list of 12 species found there included Little Gull (13th state record), Great Black-backed Gull (14th), Iceland Gull (17th), and Mew Gull (19th). Far out of range for winter was a Carolina Wren in Scotts Bluff Co.

ABBREVIATIONS

**ADF:** Arbor Day Farm, Nebraska City; **BOL:** Branched Oak L, Lancaster Co; **CBC:** Christmas Bird Count; **Cem:** Cemetery; **FF:** Fontenelle Forest, Sarpy Co; **FL:** Funk Lagoon, Phelps Co; **GPD:** Gavins Point Dam, Cedar-Knox Cos; **HCR:** Harlan Co Res, Harlan Co; **LM:** L McConaughy, Keith Co; **LO:** L Ogallala, Keith Co; **m.ob.:** many observers; **N:** Nature Center; **NNF:** Nebraska National Forest; **NOURC:** Nebraska Ornithologists' Union Records Committee; **NWR:** National Wildlife Refuge; **PL:** Pawnee L, Lancaster Co; **RWB:** Rainwater Basin, south central Nebraska; **SCP:** Spring Creek Prairie, Lancaster Co; **SHP:** State Historical Park; **SL:** Sewage Lagoon(s); **SP:** State Park; **WSR:** Wind Springs Ranch, Sioux Co.

## GAZETTEER

**Boyer Chute NWR:** Washington Co; **DeSoto NWR:** Washington Co; **Johnson Res:** Gosper-Frontier Cos; **L Minatare:** Scotts Bluff Co; **Niobrara Marsh:** Knox Co; **Sutherland Res:** Lincoln Co; **Wildcat Hills:** Scotts Bluff-Banner Cos; **Winters Creek L:** Scotts Bluff Co

## OBSERVERS

**AK:** Alice Kenitz, Gering; **AS:** Audrey Sterkel, Sidney; **B:** Birdline; **BFH:** Bill F. Huser, South Sioux City; **BG:** Betty Grenon, Bellevue; **BKP:** Brandon K. Percival, Pueblo West, CO; **BP:** Babs Padelford, Bellevue; **BW:** Bruce Walgren, Crawford; **CF:** Carol Falk, Nebraska City; **CM:** Connie McCartney, Grand Island; **CNK:** Clem N. Klaphake, Bellevue; **DD:** Dean Drawbaugh, Scottsbluff; **DE:** Dave Easterla, Maryville, MO; **DH:** Dave Heidt, Norfolk; **DP:** Don Paseka, Ames; **DS:** Dave Stage, Elkhorn; **EB:** Elliott Bedows, Omaha; **GB:** Gordon Brown, Raleigh, NC; **GH:** Glen Hoge, Alma; **HA:** Henry Armknecht, Ovid, CO; **HKH:** Helen K. Hughson, Mitchell; **HW:** Harley Winfrey, Gering; **JC:** Jay Carlisle, Yankton, SD; **JED:** James E. Ducey, Omaha; **JG:** Joe Gubanyi, Seward; **JGJ:** Joel G. Jorgensen, Blair; **JJ:** Jan Johnson, Wakefield; **JP:** Jan Paseka, Ames; **JSt:** Jon Strong, Omaha; **JT:** Jerry Toll, Omaha; **KCR:** Kathleen Crawford-Rose, Bellevue; **KD:** Kathy DeLara, Mitchell; **KN:** Kay Niyo, Evergreen, CO; **KP:** Kevin Poague, Lincoln; **LE:** Larry Einemann, Lincoln; **LF:** Laurence Falk, Nebraska City; **LP:** Loren Padelford, Bellevue; **LR:** Lanny Randolph, Gibbon; **LRB:** Linda R. Brown, Lincoln; **MB:** Mark Brogie, Creighton; **MI:** Marshall Iliff, Irvine, CA; **MM:** Marty Mathieson, Shelton; **MS:** Mary Schatz, Omaha; **NB:** Norma Brockmoller, Winside; **NF:** Nancy Fish, Superior; **NP:** Neva Pruess, Lincoln; **NR:** Neal Ratzlaff, Omaha; **PD:** Phyllis Drawbaugh, Scottsbluff; **PK:** Peter Kondrasov, Maryville, MO; **RB:** Roland Barth, Omaha; **RG:** Ruth Green, Bellevue; **RH:** Robin Harding, Gibbon; **SJD:** Stephen J. Dinsmore, Starkville, MS; **TJW:** T.J. Walker, North Platte; **TL:** Tony Leukering, Brighton, CO; **TP:** Theresa Pester, Lincoln; **TR:** Tommie Rogers, Mound City, MO; **WH:** Wanda Hoge, Alma; **WRS:** W. Ross Silcock, Tabor, IA.

## SPECIES ACCOUNTS

**Greater White-fronted Goose:** A good fall count was the 330 at Johnson Res 19 Dec (SJD). First flocks of overflying spring migrants were noted 21 Feb, with 250+ over LM (TR,DE,WRS,PK), and 100+ were with Canadas near North Platte 22 Feb (TR,DE,WRS,PK). Hybrids with Canada Goose are being reported more often: 2 on the Omaha CBC 27 Dec (fide BG) and one at Cody Park, North Platte, 28 Feb (TJW). The latter (park birds) exemplifies a far more likely source of these hybrids than wild birds.

**Snow Goose:** Best fall count was the 35,000 at HCR 22 Dec (SJD,GB), and for spring the 250,000 flying over HCR 22 Feb (LR,RH). Good numbers were on the move by the end of the period. The flock of thousands in Dawson Co 3 Jan (TJW) was a good aggregation for the date, and 850 at Enders Res 26 Dec (JSt) was a good fall Panhandle count, although close by were 7200 at L McConaughy 21 Dec (fide SJD).

**Ross's Goose:** Best count was the several hundred with Snows near Bellevue 28 Feb

(EB), and 4 other tallies in the 10-30 range were received (SJD,GB,TJW,LR,RH).

**Canada Goose:** Rather amazing numbers occurred along the entire North and Central Platte Valley. The Scottsbluff CBC reported 12,738 on 20 Dec (fide AK), hundreds of thousands were in southern Sioux Co 15 Feb (KD), a rough estimate from Ogallala to North Platte along I-80 22 Feb was 19,500 (WRS,DE,TR, PK), 20,000 were flyovers near Gibbon 22 Feb (LR,RH), and unbelievable numbers were along I-80 in central Nebraska 22 Feb (TJW). A flock of 7500 at exit 312 (North Platte) 22 Feb was composed of very small to medium birds, clearly migrants (WRS,DE,TR,PK). Another large aggregation was the 21,000 in Lincoln Co 17 Jan (LR,RH).

**Trumpeter Swan:** Single red-collared birds accompanied by 2-3 un-collared birds, the former derived from Iowa re-introductions, were noted near York 2 Dec (fide BP,LP) and in Richardson Co 15 Jan (TR). Best count was 24 at Diamond Bar L, McPherson Co, 29 Dec (Daryl Bauer fide TJW).

**Wood Duck:** Nine in Scotts Bluff Co 3 Jan (KD) were late for the Panhandle. A female was early at Creighton 14 Feb, the observer's first Feb rec for Knox Co (MB).

**Gadwall:** Wintering birds were 22 at North Platte SL 17 Jan (LR,RH) and 6 at LO 23 Jan (TJW). There are only about 25 reports 9 Jan-6 Feb.

**American Wigeon:** Large numbers lingered in the west: 340 were found on the Scottsbluff CBC 20 Dec (fide AK), 213 of these at the Scottsbluff SL (SJD,KN), 102 on the LM CBC 21 Dec (fide SJD), and as many as 100+ were still at the Scottsbluff and Gering SL 12 Jan (KD). Elsewhere, 35 were at a feedlot in Dawson Co watered by a branch of the South Platte River 12 Jan (LR,RH), and a male was in Dixon Co 24 Jan (BFH).

**American Black Duck:** The two reports were somewhat westerly for this species: a male at Johnson Res 19 Dec (SJD) and two on the Grand Island CBC 20 Dec (no details).

**Mallard:** Excellent fall counts were the 45,000 at Sutherland Res 19 Dec (SJD) and 42,000 at HCR 22 Dec (SJD,GB). By comparison, the wintering population at Sutherland Res was estimated at 18,500 on 17 Jan (LR,RH). The LM CBC counted 8863 on 21 Dec (fide SJD), but 18,000, clearly including migrants, were there 21 Feb (WRS,DE,TR,PK).

**Northern Shoveler:** More than usual in winter were noted, with 18 fall migrants at both HCR 22 Dec (SJD,GB) and in Dodge Co 1 Jan (DP,JP). Midwinter reports were of a female at the feedlot in Dawson Co 12 Jan (LR,RH), and 5 at North Platte SL 2 Feb (TJW).

**Northern Pintail:** Few were reported in fall, but hundreds had arrived at Sutherland Res by 25 Feb (TJW).

**Green-winged Teal:** Routine reports.

**Canvasback:** Best count was 71 on the LM CBC 21 Dec (fide SJD), and 6-7 were still there 23 Jan (TJW, MI). Rare elsewhere in midwinter, 2 were in Scotts Bluff Co 12 Jan (KD).

**Redhead:** The only midwinter report was of 10 at Scottsbluff SL 12 Jan (KD). There was a sudden spring influx with 700 at HCR 22 Feb (LR,RH) and 450 at LM the same day (WRS,DE,TR,PK).

**Ring-necked Duck:** Best count was the 194 on the LM CBC 21 Dec (fide SJD). A good count for midwinter was the 26 in Scotts Bluff Co 12 Jan (KD); apart from this sighting, none were reported 28 Dec-21 Feb. Males hurry north faster than females: 57 males and 6 females were at Niobrara Marsh 28 Feb (MB).

**Tufted Duck:** A male, probably the same individual present each winter for the 5th year, was at LO 19-22 Dec (SJD,KN), but could not be found 19 Jan (MI) or 1 Feb (HA).

**Greater Scaup:** The few reports were of 2 at L Yankton, Cedar Co, 6 Dec (JC), one at Scottsbluff SL 20 Dec (SJD,KN, photo), 37 at LO on the LM CBC 21 Dec (SJD), and 22 spring migrants at LM and LO 21 Feb (DE,TR,WRS,PK).

**Lesser Scaup:** Best count was 128 on the LM CBC 21 Dec (fide SJD), with 30+ still on LO 23 Jan (TJW). An excellent midwinter tally was the 31 in Scotts Bluff Co 12 Jan (KD).

**Surf Scoter:** None were reported; late dates are in mid-Dec.

**White-winged Scoter:** None were reported; late dates are in mid-Dec.

**Black Scoter:** None were reported; late dates are in mid-Dec.

**Long-tailed Duck:** Only one was reported: a juvenile female at HCR 22 Dec (SJD,GB).

**Bufflehead:** Best count was the 128 at LO on the LM CBC 21 Dec (fide SJD), with 6 still present there 23 Jan (TJW), but only one, a female, possibly a migrant, 21 Feb (WRS,DE,TR,PK). A male appeared at HCR 22 Feb (LR,RH), and 12 at Sutherland Res 25 Feb (TJW), signaling the onset of migration.

**Common Goldeneye:** Best count was the 1703 on the LM CBC 21 Dec (fide SJD), although a good count was the 905 at Johnson Res 19 Dec (SJD).

**Barrow's Goldeneye:** None were reported; usually 1-2 winter on LO.

**Hooded Merganser:** Westerly midwinter reports were of a female/immature at Sutherland Res 17 Jan (LR,RH), and 2 at LO 23 Jan (TJW). A hybrid of this species with Common Goldeneye was photographed at LO 19 Jan (MI); this hybrid has been reported there most recently during the three winters beginning 1999-2000, and this year's sighting may be of the same bird.

**Common Merganser:** An amazing tally was the 36,119 on the LM CBC 21 Dec (fide SJD); 24,000 had been estimated there 19 Dec (SJD). Excellent also was the 20,000 at HCR 22 Dec (SJD,GB). These two reservoirs hold very large numbers in late fall on a regular basis.

**Red-breasted Merganser:** A few may winter among the hordes of Commons at LM; 14+ were there 23 Jan (TJW), but 21 counted 22 Feb (DE,TR,WRS,PK) probably included some migrants. The only reports elsewhere were of a female at GPD 6 Dec (JC) and two birds at Johnson Res 19 Dec (SJD).

**Ruddy Duck:** Last were the 3 on the LM CBC 21 Dec (LR,RH, fide SJD). None had arrived by the end of the period.

**Chukar:** One on the Branched Oak-Seward CBC (not counted!) was likely a bird released for dog training (fide JG).

**Gray Partridge:** The only reports were of 6 on the Norfolk CBC 20 Dec (fide DH) and one 15 miles east of Creighton 1 Jan (MB); the latter observer noted that the species is increasingly harder to find.

**Ring-necked Pheasant:** Washington Co is prime habitat currently; a count of 327 was made in the Boyer Chute NWR area 20 Jan, with females making up 75% of the total (JT). Southwest Dixon Co also hosted large numbers: two feeding flocks of 100-150 each were seen 30 Jan (JJ). The habitat alteration taking place at BOL with the aim of improving upland habitats appears to be working; the 2nd-highest Branched Oak-Seward CBC tally of 42 was made 14 Dec (fide JG).

**Sharp-tailed Grouse:** Reports were routine, even the 3 in a pine tree eating pine buds at Calamus Res 7 Dec (LR,RH).

**Greater Prairie-Chicken:** Best count was 32 in Lincoln Co 31 Jan (TJW). Encouraging were regular flyovers a few miles east of SCP, near Lincoln, Dec-Jan (fide KP).

**Wild Turkey:** Some rather amazing counts were received; obviously this species is assuming plague proportions in some areas! A single flock of 331 contributed to a total count of 500+ in 7 groups in the cedar canyons of southeast Lincoln Co 22 Jan (TJW), and a flock of 265 was south of Verdigre 2 Jan (MB). A record total of 407 was found on the Grand Island CBC 20 Dec (fide CM).

**Northern Bobwhite:** This species is doing well in the BOL area also; 92 were counted on the Branched Oak-Seward CBC 14 Dec (fide JG); 40 were at BOL 31 Jan (LE). Far to the northwest, 7 were found on the Crawford CBC 19 Dec (LR,RH), an area of the state where it is uncommon.

**Common Loon:** None were reported; late dates are in early Dec. A loon unidentified to species was seen in flight 6 Dec above GPD (JC).

**Pied-billed Grebe:** None were reported; late dates are in mid-Dec.

**Horned Grebe:** Except for one at Sutherland Res 31 Dec (TJW), reports were from LM, where 5 were found 19 Dec (SJD,KN), 4 on the LM CBC 21 Dec (fide SJD), and 2 on 31 Dec (TJW).

**Red-necked Grebe:** None were reported; latest dates are in early Jan.

**Eared Grebe:** The only reports were of a juvenile at Sutherland Res 19 Dec (SJD) and 3 juveniles at LM the same day (SJD,KN). These are the 2nd-latest ever dates for fall.

**Western Grebe:** Four were at Sutherland Res 19 Dec (SJD). The 71 at LM 19 Dec (SJD) declined to 52 for the LM CBC 21 Dec (fide SJD), 13 on 25 Dec (WRS), and to only one on 23 Jan (TJW), although 5 were found there 21 Feb (DE,TR,PK,WRS).

**Clark's Grebe:** Rather late were two at LM 19 Dec (SJD), only one of which was found for the LM CBC 21 Dec (fide SJD).

**American White Pelican:** The only wintering report was of 4 at LO which were seen there 23 Jan (TJW) and 22 Feb (WRS,DE,TR,PK). Seven at Sutherland Res 8 Dec (TJW) declined to one by 31 Dec (TJW) and none were reported thereafter. Very early migrants were 20 at HCR 27 Feb (GH,WH).

**Double-crested Cormorant:** Only 3 were reported, one at BOL 1 Dec (NP), an immature at Calamus Res 7 Dec (LR,RH), and a juvenile rather late at Sutherland Res 19 Dec (SJD).

**Great Blue Heron:** Unexpected was one on the Norfolk CBC 20 Dec (fide DH); by that date sightings are generally limited to the Platte Valley. Probably early migrants were 9 at HCR 22 Feb (LR,RH).

**Osprey:** No details were received for singles reported on the Norfolk and Grand Island CBCs, both on 20 Dec. There are no documented reports after 21 Nov; much more likely are immature Bald Eagle, Ferruginous Hawk, or various pale Red-tailed Hawks.

**Bald Eagle:** Best counts were 240 at LM, including 60% adults, on 22 Feb (DE,TR,WRS,PK) and 100 at HCR 22 Feb (LR,RH). A nest was under construction just east of the bridge to NNF, Halsey, 16 Jan (RG) and another nest was visible from 277th and Pacific St in western Douglas Co 1 Jan (DS).

**Northern Harrier:** Routine reports.

**Sharp-shinned Hawk:** A count high was the excellent tally of 7 on the Branched Oak-Seward CBC 14 Dec (fide JG).

**Coopers Hawk:** Another good CBC total was the 5 at DeSoto NWR 20 Dec (fide JT).

**Northern Goshawk:** Six were reported, about average. One was found on the Kearney CBC 12 Dec (LR,RH), an adult was photographed near LM 19 Dec (SJD,KN), an immature was in Monroe Canyon, Sioux Co, 30 Dec (MB), one was in a Bellevue yard 31 Dec (CNK), one was at Sutherland Res 17 Jan (LR,RH), and an adult male was in Custer Co 25 Jan (TJW).

**Red-shouldered Hawk:** The only report was of one at FF 21 Feb (EB).

**Red-tailed Hawk:** Best count was the 86 on the Omaha CBC 27 Dec (fide BG). Single Harlan's Hawks were in Sarpy Co 11 Jan (CNK), Otoe Co 8 Feb (WRS), and Washington Co 12 Dec (JT).

**Ferruginous Hawk:** Good counts were the 4 birds seen in Perkins and Chase Cos (2 in each) 8 Dec (TJW) and on the LM CBC 21 Dec (fide SJD). None were seen east of Harlan Co (GH,WH) and Loup Co (DP, JP).

**Rough-legged Hawk:** This species was widely reported, with best totals a count record 29 on the Grand Island CBC 20 Dec (fide CM) and an excellent 12 in Knox Co 26 Dec (MB).

**Golden Eagle:** Routine reports.

**American Kestrel:** Rather amazing was the count record 60 on the Scottsbluff CBC 20 Dec (fide AK). Females are unusual in midwinter, but one was in Sarpy Co 11 Jan (CNK).

**Merlin:** This species continues to be widely reported statewide, with about 33 reported this winter. Those identified to subspecies (16) were all *richardsonii*, 6 Dec-18 Feb. This subspecies appears to account for most wintering Merlins in Nebraska.

**Prairie Falcon:** Also much in evidence this winter with 19 reported. Unusually far east were singles in Sarpy Co 1 Jan (CNK), Merrick Co 31 Jan (LR,RH), Boone Co 21 Feb (DP,JP), and near Columbus 22 Feb (TJW).

**Peregrine Falcon:** Generally not a late fall or early spring migrant, one in Washington Co 13 Dec, identified as *tundrius*, was rather late (JSt), and rather early were an immature at HCR 22 Feb (LR,RH) and a single in Scottsbluff 24 Feb (HW). One at the State Capitol in Lincoln 27 Dec (LRB) may have been the same bird seen in south Lincoln 20 Feb (TR,DE,WRS,PK); there is a resident pair which attempted to nest on the State Capitol in 2003.

**Virginia Rail:** The usual wintering birds were detected in the LM area, with 5 counted on the LM CBC 21 Dec (fide SJD), but more unexpected further east was one at Chester Island WMA, Lincoln Co, 13 Dec (TJW).

**American Coot:** The excellent total of 294 on the LM CBC 21 Dec (fide SJD) dwindled to only 12 on 23 Jan (TJW) and one on 21 Feb (TR,DE,PK,WRS). The 22 at Scottsbluff SL for the Scottsbluff CBC 20 Dec, a count high (fide AK), declined to only 2 there 12 Jan (KD), but were supplemented by early migrants which brought the total to 52 on 23 Feb (KD). Rather late were 3 on the Grand Island CBC 20 Dec (fide CM), and one in Dixon Co 24 Jan (BFH).

**Sandhill Crane:** Five flyovers in Scotts Bluff Co 23 Dec (KD) were rather late; there are fewer than 15 reports for Dec. Returnees were widespread in late Feb with the first sighting 12 flyovers near Gibbon 18 Feb (LR,RH); there were a few hundred in the Kearney area within the next few days (LR,RH).

**Killdeer:** At a regular wintering site were the 2-3 below Keystone Diversion Dam, LO, through 26 Dec (SJD,JSt), but less usual were the 3 on the DeSoto NWR CBC 20 Dec (fide JT). One at the west end of LM 22 Feb (TR,DE,PK,WRS)

probably wintered nearby, but likely early migrants were singles arriving on the 28 Feb at 4 sites: Franklin Co (LR,RH), Sarpy Co (MS), Burt Co (DP,JP), and BOL (LE).

**Wilson's Snipe:** Somewhat northerly lingering birds were 3 on the Calamus CBC 27 Dec (fide NB) and 5 on the Norfolk CBC 20 Dec (fide DH). One near Nenzel along the Niobrara River 27 Feb (JED) probably wintered there.

**Little Gull:** As Bonaparte's Gulls linger later in numbers (see that species), one might expect to find straggling Little Gulls; however mid-Dec is still rather late for an adult basic Little Gull (and a Black-headed Gull: see that species) found with a flock of 284 Bonaparte's at LM 19 Dec; it was seen again on the LM CBC 21 Dec (SJD,KN). This is the 10th fall record, 13th overall, for Nebraska.

**Black-headed Gull:** A major surprise was Nebraska's 3rd record (including one second-hand report, probably correct, but not accepted by NOURC). This was a basic adult with the aforementioned flock of Bonaparte's Gulls at LM 19-21 Dec, including the LM CBC 21 Dec (SJD,KN). The 3 reports are in fall, Aug-Dec.

**Bonaparte's Gull:** As mentioned above, numbers of this species are occurring later in fall in recent years. This fall as many as 284 were at LM 19 Dec, but declined rapidly with 241 tallied for the CBC there 21 Dec and 157 on 22 Dec (SJD). However there were still about 20 there 1 Jan (BKP,TL), and an immature that apparently wintered was found 21 Feb (WRS,DE,TR, PK). This is the first wintering record for Nebraska. A good Dec count for the location was the 42 below GPD 7 Dec (MB).

**Mew Gull:** A basic adult was photographed at LM 19 Dec (SJD,KN) and two basic adults were found together on the LM CBC 21 Dec (WRS,TR,KN). None were found 1 Jan (BKP,TL) or 21-22 Feb (WRS, DE,TR,PK), which fits the current status as a spring and fall migrant. This the 9th fall record, 19th overall, for Nebraska. The fall records are in the period 6 Nov-14 Jan, most at LM.

**Ring-billed Gull:** None were reported between 3 Jan and 20 Feb, although undoubtedly a few were present. The 7400 at LM 22 Feb, 95% of which were adults (WRS,DE,TR,PK), indicated a major spring influx; best count elsewhere was the 200 at BOL 28 Feb (LE). Spring peak counts are in the 20,000+ range and occur in mid-Mar. Best fall count was the 819 on the LM CBC 21 Dec (fide SJD).

**California Gull:** Rare away from LM, one at HCR 14-27 Dec (GH,WH) was a pleasant surprise. Few were at LM, with only 5 on the LM CBC 21 Dec (fide SJD) and 2 found 1 Jan (BKP,TL) and 22 Feb (DE,WRS, TR,PK).

**Herring Gull:** The LM CBC counted 282 on 21 Dec (fide SJD), but only 50 were found 11 Jan (HW). Spring migrants at LM totaled 650, including 85% adults, on 22 Feb (WRS,DE,TR,PK). Other good counts were 170 at Johnson Res 19 Dec (SJD) and 130 at HCR 22 Dec (SJD,GB). The 13 on the Omaha CBC 27 Dec made a count high (fide BG).

**Thayer's Gull:** A fairly typical winter season for this species had about 9 birds reported, most at LM, where spring migrants accounted for most of the 7 found 22 Feb, 2 adults and 5 first winters (WRS,DE,TR,PK). Only a single first winter bird was counted on the LM CBC 21 Dec (fide SJD), a single unaged bird was at LM 1 Jan (BKP,TL), and single adults were reported there 19 Jan (MI) and 1 Feb (HA). Elsewhere, an adult was at GPD 7 Dec (MB), and another adult was at HCR 21-27 Dec (SJD,GH,WH).

**Iceland (Kumlien's) Gull:** A juvenile/first winter individual frequented the Kingsley Dam spillway at LM 21 Dec-1 Jan (SJD, WRS, BKP, TL, MI, KN, TJW ,HA, photos). This is the 10th fall record, 17th overall for Nebraska.



**Lesser Black-backed Gull:** At least two were found at LM; an adult was on the LM CBC 21 Dec (fide SJD) and possibly the same bird was present 21-22 Feb (TR,WRS,DE,PK). If the same bird, it was not noted in midwinter; there are no midwinter records (2 Jan-6 Feb) for this species. A first basic bird was reported there 1 Jan (BKP,TL).

**Glaucous Gull:** Reports were more widespread than usual, involving about 9 birds. LM hosted a total of at least 4 birds, an adult and 2 juveniles counted on the LM CBC 21 Dec (fide SJD) and 3 first winter birds reported 19 Jan (MI). Elsewhere, reports were in fall: 2 first winter birds were at GPD 6-7 Dec (JC,MB), an adult was at Johnson Res 19 Dec (SJD), a juvenile was at HCR 22 Dec (SJD,GB), and a single was at BOL 27 Dec (fide JT).

**Great Black-backed Gull:** Remarkable as the 13th gull species reported this season, Nebraska's 7th winter record was a first winter bird at LM 19 Jan (MI, details). There are 7 additional spring and fall records, for a total of 14.

**Rock Pigeon:** Routine reports.

**Eurasian Collared-Dove:** Reports from Madison, Madison Co, 18 Feb (B) and Nebraska City, Otoe Co, where two wintered (Pam Esser photos fide SJD), provided the only new county records; there are now only these 17 counties without records: Adams, Arthur, Blaine, Boyd, Cedar, Cherry, Gosper, Grant, Hooker, Jefferson, Keya Paha, Logan, Loup, Pawnee, Saline, Sherman, Thomas. Most of these counties are in or near the Sandhills, which may be acting as a barrier to the spread of this species. Best counts (but see below) were an amazing 46 at Clearwater 25 Jan (DH, fide MB), 24 at the observer's Brady feeders through the period (TJW), 22 at Benkelman 1 Jan (JSt), and 21 at Gibbon 10 Feb (LR,RH). An interesting situation is developing in the Mitchell area, where it appears that about 20 captive collared-doves, including at least one male African Collared-Dove (black band across upper tail) and at least one Ringed Turtle-Dove (noticeably paler than the Eurasian Collared-Doves), were released in Mitchell, adding to the existing wild flock of 20-25 Eurasian Collared-Doves for a total of about 40 birds (KD). In addition, there appears to be another flock of about 60 birds frequenting a farm and feedlot along the North Platte River south of Mitchell (KD).

**Mourning Dove:** The best CBC count was surprisingly at Scottsbluff, where 63 were found (fide AK). Midwinter reports were, as expected, restricted to the southeast and Platte Valley, thus a bit out of range for the dates were one in a Dixon Co yard 4 Jan and 5 there 17 Feb (JJ), one at Creighton 3-7 Feb (MB), and 4 in South Sioux City 15 Feb (BFH). An excellent Feb count was the 40 in a brush pile in southeast Washington Co 15 Feb (NR).

**Barn Owl:** Rather late was one in a hole in the bank along the outlet canal from Johnson Res 19 Dec (SJD). This is only the 5th Dec-Feb record since 1980; the 2 Feb records were of birds found dead.

**Eastern Screech-Owl:** An owl survey at DeSoto NWR consisting of 26 stops yielded 12 screech-owls on 14 Feb (JT). A good total was the count record 18 on the Grand Island CBC 20 Dec (fide CM).

**Great Horned Owl:** Routine reports.

**Snowy Owl:** No details were provided for the only report, that of one in or near Lincoln 18 Dec (fide KP).

**Barred Owl:** The DeSoto NWR owl survey 14 Feb found a record 10 Barred Owls in 26 stops (JT); the DeSoto NWR CBC 20 Dec reported 8 (fide JT). Reports from the edge of the range were of one near Niobrara 24 Dec and 1 Jan (MB), one

on the Norfolk CBC 20 Dec (fide DH), 3 on the Branched Oak-Seward CBC 14 Dec (fide JG), and one road-killed near Gilead in Thayer Co 3 Jan (JSt). The latter is the westernmost report in southeast Nebraska; this report and a few for Jefferson Co indicate that the Little Blue River drainage supports a population of this species.

**Long-eared Owl:** Observers look for these birds on CBCs; small numbers were found statewide, about 12 in all.

**Short-eared Owl:** A count record 6 were found on the Grand Island CBC 20 Dec (fide CM). Interesting for the location near Omaha were 2 at Eppley Airfield 9 Jan (JT). CRP grassland is clearly helping this species; 3 were in such habitat south of Arnold 30 Jan (TJW) and 3 in similar habitat near Paxton 31 Dec (TJW). The only other reports were of singles at FL 22 Dec (SJD,GB) and in Antelope Co 19 Dec (MB).

**Red-headed Woodpecker:** Good numbers were still present for southeastern CBCs, best tally an excellent 65 at Omaha 27 Dec (fide BG). Only 3-5 were reported in FF 1 Jan (BP,LP) and 31 Jan (CNK), but dozens were there 21 Feb (EB), suggesting some local movement. Migrants usually arrive in Apr. Up to 3 were wintering at Wilderness Park, Lincoln; an adult and 2 molting juveniles were there 3 Jan (LE), and an adult 14 Feb (LE). One as far north as Knox Co 1 Jan (MB) and a wintering bird in Dixon Co, seen 24 Jan (BFH), were unexpected, as was one on the Norfolk CBC 20 Dec (fide DH).

**Red-bellied Woodpecker:** Best CBC counts were 90 at DeSoto NWR 20 Dec (fide JT), 88 at Omaha 27 Dec (fide BG), and 69 at Branched Oak-Seward 14 Dec, the latter a count high (fide JG). A few continue in Scotts Bluff Co, where the 2 counted on the Scottsbluff CBC 20 Dec (fide AK) are still a significant find; in contrast the 2 on the LM CBC 21 Dec (fide SJD) have become an expected occurrence in recent years as this species moves slowly westward in the North Platte Valley. Surprising was one at Big Springs 19 Jan (MI), the first South Platte River valley record for Nebraska.

**Yellow-bellied Sapsucker:** A surprising number was reported, most from the southeast, where winter records are not unexpected. Of a total 22 birds, 9 were found in Dec, 4 in Jan, and 2 in Feb in the southeast; the others were an adult and subadult in Knox Co 26 Dec and an adult there 1 Jan (MB), a juvenile in Brown Co 15 Jan (fide MB), a female at Verdigre around 19 Jan (fide MB), an adult and an immature in Dixon Co 24 Jan (BFH), and one on the LM CBC 21 Dec (fide SJD).

**Downy Woodpecker:** Routine reports.

**Hairy Woodpecker:** A good CBC count was the 23 at DeSoto NWR 20 Dec (fide JT).

**Northern Flicker:** An excellent CBC total was the 174 at DeSoto NWR 20 Dec (fide JT). Single red-shafted flickers were far to the east in Otoe Co 28 Jan (LF,CF), in Lincoln 3 Jan (LE), and on the Branched Oak-Seward CBC 14 Dec (fide JG).

**Pileated Woodpecker:** The only report was of a count week bird on the Omaha CBC 27 Dec (fide BG).

**Northern Shrike:** Good numbers were reported statewide, with best counts 6 in Knox and Pierce Cos 7 Dec (MB) and 6 on the LM CBC 21 Dec (fide SJD).

**Loggerhead Shrike:** A few winter on occasion in the southeast, but one in Furnas Co 22 Feb (LR,RH) was probably an early migrant. No others were reported.

**Blue Jay:** Emphasizing the now statewide distribution of this species was the CBC

count high of 92 at Scottsbluff 20 Dec (fide AK).

**Pinyon Jay:** None were reported.

**Black-billed Magpie:** Easterly were 2 on the Branched Oak-Seward CBC 14 Dec (fide JG) and 2 on the Norfolk CBC 20 Dec (fide DH).

**American Crow:** Excellent counts were the state and count CBC record 9602 on the 27 Dec Calamus CBC (fide NB), and 3000 in 2 flocks in Jefferson Co 3 Jan (JSt). In contrast, the Branched Oak-Seward CBC 14 Dec reported a count low of 401 (fide JG).

**Horned Lark:** One observer (TJW) noted that it is unbelievable how many there are, while reporting hundreds of thousands in the Panhandle 1 Dec. Thousands were reported in southwest Nebraska 7 Jan (TJW), and in Sioux Co 14 Feb (KD).

**Black-capped Chickadee:** Considerable concern was expressed by observers regarding low numbers of chickadees seen this fall and winter. CBC data show only moderate reduction in Missouri River counts at Omaha and DeSoto NWR and at Crawford in the northwest, whereas Platte River CBCs and observers noted drastic declines in chickadee numbers. Omaha reported 284 chickadees (fide BG), and the 261 at DeSoto NWR was the 6th highest since 1987 (fide JT). Numbers were also high on the Crawford CBC 19 Dec (BW,DW). These three counts are in areas least affected by drought, which was suggested by several observers as a cause for the scarcity of chickadees. CBCs in the Platte Valley, where drought has been serious, showed drastic declines in chickadee numbers. On the Branched Oak-Seward CBC 14 Dec only 28 were found compared to the 10-year average of 169 and previous low of 122 (fide JG). Similarly, the Lincoln CBC 17 Dec showed a count low of 26 relative to the previous low of 172 (fide LRB), and the Grand Island CBC 20 Dec had its lowest ever total of 15 (fide CM). Only one chickadee was seen in Harlan Co all winter (GH,WH). Banding in the central Platte Valley in summer 2003 found few chickadees, all adults, suggesting poor reproductive success (Bill Scharf, fide LRB). This could also be related to dry conditions.

West Nile Virus was suggested also as a cause of low chickadee numbers, as was the spraying to combat mosquitoes carrying the virus (AS). However, the declines in numbers are most severe in drier areas, where one would expect mosquitoes to be less prevalent.

Interesting information was contributed by banders Rick Schmid and Betty Grenon in Bellevue, whose wing chord measurements of chickadees this winter were suggestive of an influx of the western subspecies *septentrionalis*, averaging larger than the resident *atricapillus*. They also banded fewer birds than usual at this time of year. It is possible that the reduction in numbers of local chickadees resulting from a combination of poor reproductive success and drought-induced deaths or movement out of the area allowed the larger western birds to move into eastern Nebraska. At the least, any influx, whether regular in occurrence or unique to this winter, would be easier to detect if the numbers of resident chickadees in the Platte Valley and Bellevue area had been reduced.

**Tufted Titmouse:** Sightings of single birds continued at Wilderness Park, Lincoln (LE), which is at the west edge of the range.

**Red-breasted Nuthatch:** Few were reported, most in Dec, but reports were statewide, including 2 at Elmwood Park in Omaha 31 Dec (JED) and 15 Feb (BP,LP). Best count was 13, a new high count, on the Scottsbluff CBC 20 Dec (fide AK).

**White-breasted Nuthatch:** As with chickadees, best counts were the 124 at the

Omaha CBC 27 Dec (fide BG) and 92 at DeSoto NWR CBC 20 Dec (fide JT). Individuals of the eastern subspecies *cookei* spread out into parts of the state where they are absent in summer; 3 were in Scotts Bluff Co 20 Dec (SJD,KN) and 4 at LO 21 Dec (SJD). Some movement of western *nelsoni* also occurs; one was at LO 21 Dec (SJD).

**Pygmy Nuthatch:** Best counts were from expected locations: 10 were at Wildcat Hills NC 1 Dec (TJW) and 6 were counted on the Crawford CBC 19 Dec (BW,DW).

**Brown Creeper:** Best count was the 14 on the Omaha CBC 27 Dec (fide BG).

**Rock Wren:** A definite surprise was one on the LM CBC 21 Dec (LR,RH, details). This is the latest record ever in fall by almost 2 months.

**Carolina Wren:** Best counts were, as expected, on Missouri Valley CBCs, with 10 at Omaha 27 Dec (fide BG) and 5 at DeSoto NWR 20 Dec (fide JT). This winter there were signs of range expansion, with one seen and heard by experienced observers on the Scotts Bluff CBC 20 Dec (TR,WRS), the first Panhandle record for the species. A probable sighting was made near Paxton 31 Dec (TJW), and one was at Yankton, SD, 2 Feb (JW).

**Winter Wren:** Good numbers of wintering birds, about 13, were reported from the southeast, including 5 at Omaha parks with open running water 26 Jan (JED). Westerly were 2 on the LM CBC 21 Dec (SJD).

**Marsh Wren:** Birds attempting to winter were widespread; as expected in the North Platte Valley, 6 were found on the LM CBC 21 Dec (fide SJD) and 2 on the Scottsbluff CBC 20 Dec (fide AK). Unexpected, however, were one on the Crawford CBC 19 Dec (LR,RH), one below the dam at HCR 1 Jan (GH,WH), and 2 on the Niobrara River near Nenzel 27 Feb (JED). These latter 3 records appear to be the first winter records away from the North Platte Valley.

**Golden-crowned Kinglet:** Best count was an excellent 19 on the Branched Oak-Seward CBC 14 Dec (fide JG). Most Dec and mid-winter reports are from the southeast, thus out of range were 5 on the LM CBC 21 Dec (fide SJD), one in Knox Co 26 Dec (MB), and one in Lincoln Co 9 Feb (TJW).

**Ruby-crowned Kinglet:** Most depart the north and west by the end of Nov, and so one on the LM CBC 21 Dec (fide SJD) and 4 at Burwell 7 Dec (LR,RH) were late for the locations. Last were singles in Lincoln 3 Jan (LE) and at Alma 1 Jan (GH,WH).

**Eastern Bluebird:** Best counts were the 86 on the DeSoto NWR CBC 20 Dec (fide JT) and 61 on the Omaha CBC 27 Dec (fide BG). A few occur in the southeast in midwinter; one was at BOL 31 Jan (LE).

**Mountain Bluebird:** The cedar canyons in southeast Lincoln Co host a good wintering population; 100+ were in Snell Canyon 31 Jan (TJW), and 86 in Snell and Cottonwood Canyons 25 Dec (WRS). The only other report was of 5 on the LM CBC 21 Dec (fide SJD).

**Townsend's Solitaire:** Best count was 50+ in Upper Box Elder Canyon, Lincoln Co, 29 Dec (TJW). Easternmost was one on the Calamus CBC 27 Dec (fide NB).

**Hermit Thrush:** Nine birds lingered into winter, including 7 on CBCs. A remarkable 5 were counted on the DeSoto NWR CBC 20 Dec (fide JT), 2 on the Branched Oak-Seward CBC 14 Dec (fide JG), and one as far west as LM 19-20 Dec, found again on the CBC 21 Dec (SJD). Rare in midwinter, singles were in Washington Co 8 Jan (JED), and, surprisingly, as far north as Ponca SP 24 Jan (BFH). The latter are only the 13th and 14th midwinter records.

**American Robin:** Some remarkable concentrations were reported. Thousands were

flying over Brady 7 Dec heading southeast (TJW), probably to roost in the cedar canyons, and the same number were seen in Snell Canyon, Lincoln Co, 31 Jan (TJW). Incredible were the 13,136 on the Calamus CBC 27 Dec (fide NB) and almost so the 6148 on the Branched Oak-Seward CBC 14 Dec (fide JG). Both were count highs, the latter count's previous high only 2387. First yard bird was in Scottsbluff 16 Feb (PD,DD).

**Gray Catbird:** The only report was of one in Hastings 19 Jan; no details were provided for what would be only the 3rd Jan record for Nebraska.

**Northern Mockingbird:** Casual in winter, one was near Lincoln 11 Feb (fide KP), only the 6th Feb record for the state.

**Curve-billed Thrasher:** The long-staying (now resident?) bird at the Frimann ranch in southeast Sioux Co was still present at the end of the period (Lonnie Frimann fide AK).

**Brown Thrasher:** The only report was of one on the Norfolk CBC 20 Dec (fide DH). There are more than 40 CBC reports, but reports after the CBC period are few.

**European Starling:** A count record was the 15,568 on the Grand Island CBC 20 Dec (fide CM). Tens of thousands were seen in Franklin Co 28 Feb (LR,RH), presumably returning migrants.

**Cedar Waxwing:** Best counts were the hundreds in Snell Canyon, Lincoln Co, 31 Jan (TJW), followed by the 154 on the DeSoto NWR CBC 20 Dec (fide JT).

**Yellow-rumped Warbler:** Generally casual in winter, a surprising number were reported, notably as many as 18 at Niobrara SP 26 Dec, with 6 still there 1 Jan (MB). Westerly were 2 on the LM CBC 21 Dec (fide SJD), and 2 at Sutherland Res 17 Jan (LR,RH), the latter only the 7th report from the western half of Nebraska for Jan. Only the 11th and 12th reports statewide for Feb were singles at Wilderness Park, Lincoln, 14 Feb (LE) and surprisingly so far north, one at Anderson Bridge WMA, Cherry Co, 27 Feb (JED). An additional 12 birds were reported in Dec from the southeast.

**Spotted Towhee:** A few winter in the southeast; singles were at BOL 31 Jan (LE), in Bellevue (fide CNK), and, rather far afield, at Niobrara SP 26 Dec (MB). A single in Washington Co 12 Dec (JT) and two birds on the DeSoto NWR CBC 20 Dec were reported as hybrids with Eastern Towhee (fide JT).

**Eastern Towhee:** The only report (other than hybrids with Spotted Towhee, see above) was of a male at FF 21 Feb (EB). This species is only casual in winter.

**American Tree Sparrow:** Numbers were generally good; best counts were 579 on the DeSoto NWR CBC 20 Dec (fide JT), 345 on the LM CBC 21 Dec (fide SJD), and 182 at BOL 31 Jan (LE).

**Field Sparrow:** A report without details of 10 on the Grand Island CBC 20 Dec almost certainly refers to American Tree Sparrows.

**Savannah Sparrow:** One at Nebraska City 22 Jan (LF,CF, details) provided only the 2nd documented mid-winter record for Nebraska.

**Fox Sparrow:** Normally only casual in winter, a total of 9 was reported, all in the southeast; 3 were on CBCs, with additional later sightings of 2 at Hummel Park, Omaha, 29 Dec (JED), 2 at Wyuka Cem, Lincoln, 17 Jan (LE), and 2 at Wagon Train L, Lancaster Co, the same day (LE).

**Song Sparrow:** A good mid-winter count was the 11 at FF 31 Jan (CNK). Elsewhere the 57 on the Crawford CBC (BW,DW) was an excellent count, and the 17 on the Scottsbluff CBC 20 Dec was a count high (AK).

**Lincoln's Sparrow:** One at Ponca SP 24 Jan was said to be wintering there (BFH).

This is the 2nd-latest date on record, apart from one which wintered at Neligh two centuries ago (*Birds of Nebraska*).

**Swamp Sparrow:** More than usual were found in the southeast and along the Platte Valley. A good count of 10 was at FF 31 Jan (CNK), where wintering occurs on occasion. Two were on the DeSoto NWR CBC 20 Dec (fide JT), and one on the LM CBC 21 Dec (SJD).

**White-throated Sparrow:** The only wintering birds were, as expected, in the southeast: one was at a Bellevue feeder (BP,LP), and 1-4 were at a Nebraska City feeder (LF,CF). Possibly wintering in the area was one near Gibbon 30 Jan (LR,RH). Elsewhere about 28 birds were reported through 30 Dec, most in the southeast, with notable exceptions a 2nd count record individual on the Scottsbluff CBC 20 Dec (SJD,KN). Best count was a surprising 13 on the DeSoto NWR CBC 20 Dec (fide JT).

**White-crowned Sparrow:** Best counts are in fall and spring, and this year was no exception: 75 on the LM CBC 21 Dec (LR,RH) and 68 in Furnas Co 14 Feb (LR,RH). Few occur in midwinter, usually in the south; this year a small group was wintering at WSR (HKH), and the best tally in midwinter was the 16 at BOL 9 Jan (LE).

**Harris's Sparrow:** Numbers were noticeably lower than in recent winters, best non-CBC count only 25, at ADF 25 Jan (LF,CF). Highest CBC count was only 29, that on the Branched Oak-Seward CBC 14 Dec (fide JG). The only sighting west of Nuckolls Co (NF) was one on the LM CBC 21 Dec (fide SJD); this species is rare in the western half of Nebraska.

**Dark-eyed Junco:** Several Oregons were reported in the east; more than the usual 4/year were banded by a veteran bander in Bellevue (RG). The relative scarcity of Oregons in eastern Nebraska is indicated by the 15 included in a total of 787 juncos (the rest Slate-colored) on the Branched Oak-Seward CBC 14 Dec (fide JG). Rare or even casual in the east are Pink-sided juncos; one was at Bellevue 1 Jan (CNK, details), and another at a Lincoln feeder 2 Feb (TP). Many intermediate and odd juncos were reported; some, those with obvious dark hoods that are not Oregons, are probably Rocky Mountain juncos (*cismontanus*); such birds were reported in Omaha 8 Dec (DC) and Lincoln 6 Jan (TP). The only White-winged juncos reported were a few wintering at WSR (HKH). WSR also hosted a Gray-headed junco (HKH, details); there are fewer than 10 documented records of this taxon.

**Lapland Longspur:** Routine reports.

**Snow Bunting:** A few were reported, with best numbers in the LM area, where 6-17 birds were found 19-22 Dec (SJD,GB, CNK). Elsewhere, 5 were counted on the DeSoto NWR CBC 20 Dec (fide JT), one was in Dixon Co 8 Feb (JJ), and one was at BOL 20 Feb (JT).

**Northern Cardinal:** Numbers are slowly increasing in the North Platte valley; 15 were found on the LM CBC 20 Dec (fide SJD) and 4 on the Scottsbluff CBC 20 Dec (fide AK).

**Red-winged Blackbird:** More than usual were in evidence in midwinter; 40 birds at HCR 10 Jan were the first there since Nov (GH,WH), BOL hosted 200 on 17 Jan and 400 on 31 Jan (LE), and 1200 were on the Seward-Lancaster Cos line 31 Jan (LE). First noted on territory were 9 at LM 21 Feb (WRS,TR,DE,PK), and tens of thousands had returned to Franklin Co 28 Feb (LR,RH).

**Eastern Meadowlark:** None were reported; earliest singing dates are mid- to late Feb.

**Western Meadowlark:** First singing birds were a 43-strong choir in a Sioux Co cottonwood tree 14 Feb (KD).

**Rusty Blackbird:** A few winter stragglers were reported: one on the DeSoto NWR CBC 20 Dec (fide JT), 25 in Seward Co 31 Jan (LE), an excellent mid-winter count, and 1-3 at Alma 31 Jan-4 Feb (GH,WH). Wintering is regular in the south and east, although Alma is a westerly location for the species.

**Brewer's Blackbird:** Overwintering is rare, although a male and female at a Lancaster Co feedyard 14 Feb may have wintered there (LE). Probably early migrants were the 5 in Seward Co 28 Feb (JG). One was reported without details at Hastings 24 Jan (B), and one was found on the Scottsbluff CBC 20 Dec (fide AK).

**Common Grackle:** One wintered at WSR (HKH), a rare occurrence in the Panhandle. Two at Creighton 5 Feb (MB) were very early and may have wintered nearby. Spring arrivals appeared in Keith Co 26 Feb (TJW).

**Great-tailed Grackle:** Best count was 141 at Lexington 19 Dec (SJD, photo). An excellent mid-winter count was the 72 at Grand Island 31 Jan (LR,RH). Becoming a regular event was the appearance of a few birds near Niobrara in late fall; this year 3-7 were in the area 6-7 Dec (MB). Also northerly were 2 below GPD 14 Dec (JC).

**Brown-headed Cowbird:** This species is rarely reported in mid-winter, but this year several were found, all in the southeast. Two were at an Alma feedyard 1 Jan (GH,WH), one was in Lancaster Co with starlings 9 Jan (LE), two were at Hastings 24 Jan (B, no details), 10 were with starlings at a Nance Co feedyard 31 Jan (LR,RH), and 6 were with 1200 Red-winged Blackbirds on the Seward-Lancaster Cos line 31 Jan (LE).

**Gray-crowned Rosy-Finch:** The only report was of 35 wintering at Moore Buttes in southern Sioux Co (HKH), a regular location for this species.

**Purple Finch:** After a few lean years, this species was conspicuous this year in good numbers. Best counts were a count record 111 on the Branched Oak-Seward CBC 14 Dec (fide JG), including 85 in one flock (KP), and 60 on the Omaha CBC 27 Dec (fide BG). Elsewhere 50 were in Dixon Co 24 Jan (BFH). Reports were as expected from the east, westernmost 6-8 in Snell and Cottonwood Canyons in Lincoln Co 25-29 Dec (WRS, TJW).

**House Finch:** Best count was the 184 on the LM CBC 21 Dec (fide SJD).

**Red Crossbill:** This was a quiet winter for this species. The only reports were of 25 on the Pine Ridge 28 Dec and 26 Jan (HKH), 25 on the Crawford CBC 19 Dec (BW,DW), and a single near Nenzel 27 Feb (JED).

**Common Redpoll:** This was a fairly good year for redpolls, with about 30 scattered statewide, most at feeders. Other than 5 on the Grand Island CBC 20 Dec (fide CM), all reports were in Jan-Feb.

**Pine Siskin:** This was a low year for siskins. Other than the 70 on the Scottsbluff CBC 20 Dec (fide AK) and the many at a Norfolk Cemetery 21 Feb (MB), only about 17 were reported.

**American Goldfinch:** Best counts were 250 at BOL 9 Jan (LE) and 244 on the LM CBC 21 Dec (fide SJD).

**House Sparrow:** Best count was 762 on the Norfolk CBC 20 Dec (fide DH). This pales by comparison with the counts of 4500+ in urban Nebraska CBCs in the 1965-1985 period. Recent years have seen a decline in House Sparrows.