

University of Nebraska - Lincoln

DigitalCommons@University of Nebraska - Lincoln

Nebraska Bird Review

Nebraska Ornithologists' Union

9-2006

The Nebraska Bird Review Whole Issue September 2006

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



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

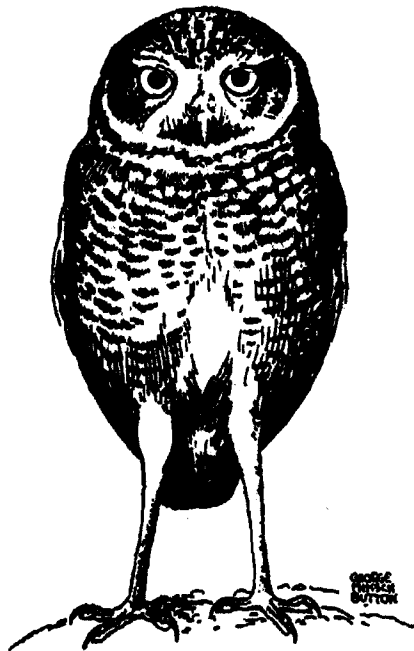
"*The Nebraska Bird Review* Whole Issue September 2006" (2006). *Nebraska Bird Review*. 392.
<https://digitalcommons.unl.edu/nebbirdrev/392>

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

The Nebraska Bird Review

A Magazine of Ornithology of the
Nebraska Region

Volume 74 September 2006 Number 3



Published by the
Nebraska Ornithologists' Union, Inc.
Founded 1899

Janis M. Paseka, Editor
Stephen J. Dinsmore, Co-editor

SSSN 0028-1816

SUMMER FIELD REPORT, June-July 2006

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

INTRODUCTION

Under "Old Business", numbers of Black-capped Chickadees are beginning to recover, but several observers mentioned that American Crows and, most recently, Black-billed Magpies are still suffering lowered numbers. On the plus side, Scissor-tailed Flycatchers continue in increasing numbers, including a pair (or at least one of a pair) that returned to the same location where they nested successfully last year and succeeded again this year.

And now "New Business". Evidence came to hand that both Western and Clark's Grebes may have suffered poor breeding success due to poor water conditions at traditional breeding sites. An intriguing observation on 28 Jul by Helen Hughson at Wind Springs Ranch of increased numbers of individuals unexpected at that date was attributed to the serious forest fires on the Pine Ridge some 50 miles to the north. Included were Red-eyed Vireo, Pinyon Jay, Yellow Warbler, and Western Tanager. Elsewhere, grassland birds showed some marked displacements, although most are quite well-adapted to undertake such movements as needed when grassland conditions change from year to year. A major westward movement of Dickcissels took place in spring and early summer, and young were raised by these birds, in contrast with the usual situation of westerly arrival in mid- to late summer, singing by males, no apparent breeding, and departure a few weeks later. Lark buntings were noted in good numbers eastward. Sedge Wrens normally appear in large numbers in late Jul, and may breed then. Some evidence was obtained that Henslow's Sparrows may do something similar but without the major north-south movement, merely moving from field to field as the season progresses, perhaps, however, for the same reasons Sedge Wrens (and other grassland species) undertake significant movements in mid- to late summer.

ABBREVIATIONS

BBS: Breeding Bird Survey; BOL: Branched Oak L, Lancaster Co; Cem: Cemetery; CLNWR: Crescent L NWR, Garden Co; Fontenelle Forest, Sarpy Co; GPD: Gavin's Point Dam, Cedar/Knox Cos; HCR: Harlan Co Res, Harlan Co; LM: L McConaughy, Keith Co; LO: L Ogallala, Keith Co; m.ob.: many observers; NC: Nature Center; NOURC: Nebraska Ornithologists' Union Records Committee; NWR: National Wildlife Refuge; PL: Pawnee L, Lancaster Co; Res: Reservoir; RWB: eastern Rainwater Basin, southcentral and southeast Nebraska; SCP: Spring Creek Prairie, Lancaster Co; SHP: State Historical Park; SL: Sewage Lagoon(s); SP: State Park; WMA: (State) Wildlife Management Area; WPA: (Federal) Waterfowl Production Area; WSR: Wind Springs Ranch, Sioux Co.

GAZETTEER

Ashford Scout Camp: Thurston Co; Chadron SP: Dawes Co; Fort Robinson SHP: Dawes/Sioux Cos; Kiowa WMA: Scotts Bluff Co; L Minatare: Scotts Bluff Co; Monroe Canyon: Sioux Co; North Lake Basin WMA: Seward Co; Oliver Res: Kimball Co; Platte River SP: Cass Co; Ponca SP: Dixon Co; Red Willow Res: Frontier Co; Schramm SP: Sarpy Co; Smith Lake WMA: Sheridan Co; Sowbelly Canyon: Sioux Co; Valentine NWR: Cherry Co; Wehrspann L: Sarpy Co; Wildcat Hills: Scotts Bluff-Banner Cos.

OBSERVERS

ADG: Alex DeGarmo, Greenwood;
AH: Alice Heckman, Kearney;
AK: Alice Kenitz, Gering;
AR: Alice Rumery, Kearney;
ARY: Allen Reyer, Bellevue;
AS: Audrey Sterkel, Sidney;
B&GC: Bev and George Canterbury, Omaha;
BFH: Bill F. Huser, South Sioux City;
BG: Bob Grier, Alliance;
CNK: Clem N. Klaphake, Bellevue;
CW: Cory Welsh, Council Bluffs, IA;
CWH: C.W. Huntley, Ogallala;
D&CN: Don & Colleen Noecker, Albion;
DJN: D. Jeff Nichols, Boone, IA;
DK: Dan Kim, Wood River;
EB: Elliott Bedows, Bellevue;
EM: Emily Munter, Alliance;
G&WH: Glen & Wanda Hoge, Alma;
GG: Greg Grove, University Park, PA;
HKH: Helen K. Hughson, Mitchell;
JC: John Carlini, Lincoln;
JED: James E. Ducey, Lincoln;
JG: Joe Gubanyi, Seward;
JGJ: Joel G. Jorgensen, Lincoln;
JJ: Jan Johnson, Wakefield;
JM: John Murphy, Kearney;
JP: Jerry Probst, Sioux City, IA;
JSt: Jon Strong, Omaha;
JWH: John W. Hall, Omaha;
KD: Kathy DeLara, Mitchell;
KJ: Karl Jungbluth, Boone, IA;
KN: Kay Niyo, Evergreen, CO;
KP: Kevin Poague, Lincoln;
KS: Kent Skaggs, Kearney;
L&BP: Loren and Babs Padelford, Bellevue;
LE: Larry Einemann, Lincoln;
LR: Lanny Randolph, Gibbon;
MB: Mark Brogie, Creighton;
ME: Mike Ellis, Omaha;

MUs: Moni Usasz, Lincoln;
NF: Nelli Falzgraff, Omaha;
NR: Neal Ratzlaff, Omaha;
PD: Paul Dunbar, Hastings;
RE: Rick Eades, Lincoln;
RH: Robin Harding, Gibbon;
RHa: Rick Hay, Oakland, IA;
RHu: Robert Hughes, Chicago, IL;
RS: Rick Schmid, Omaha;
RW: Rick Wright, Cave Creek, AZ;
SD: Scott Downes, Spokane, WA;
SJ: Stephen Jones, Boulder, CO;
SJD: Stephen J. Dinsmore, Ames, IA;
SS: Shari Schwartz, Lincoln;
TH: Tyler Hicks, Valentine;
TJW: T.J. Walker, Brady;
TP: Theresa Pester, Walton;
WM: Wayne Mollhoff, Ashland;
WRS: W. Ross Silcock, Tabor, IA.

SPECIES ACCOUNTS

Black-bellied Whistling-Duck: Nebraska's 6th record was a single seen perched and in flight with Mallards at PL 16 Jun (LE); it did not stay long, however (MUs).

Snow Goose: Among the usual single stragglers reported, 3 at PL 24 Jun (LE) was the best count.

Canada Goose: Routine reports.

Cackling Goose: One at Schramm SP 27 Jul (L&BP) appears to have become resident there.

Trumpeter Swan: Pairs with cygnets were reported during Jun from Grant (CNK,BFH) and Cherry (CNK,TH) Cos; at least 9 pairs were reported. Non-breeders were noted at Valentine NWR, 6 on 20 Jun (TH), and at CLNWR, 4-5 on 28-29 Jul (JSt,SJD,WRS,KN), as well as, surprisingly, an adult at North Platte SL 20 Jun (TJW). There are only 2 records away from the breeding range in Jun.

Wood Duck: Best counts were 40 at Fairmont SL 5 Jun, including 6 adults and 34 young (PD), and 35 at Tecumseh SL 9 Jul (L&BP). Brood dates have been reported 5 May-2 Aug.

Gadwall: Routine reports.

American Wigeon: A female at PL 28 Jun (LE) was a rare summer occurrence away from the western Sandhills.

American Black Duck: A male paired with a Mallard was flushed at Valentine NWR 12 Jul; it had a purple speculum and was overall rather dark in color, but was lighter than Mottled Duck, with which the observer is familiar (TH). No brood was evident (TH). This is the 3rd summer record for the western half of the state; one of the others also involved a male paired with a Mallard.

Mallard: Routine reports.

Blue-winged Teal: Routine reports.

Cinnamon Teal: Easternmost was a pair at Valentine NWR through at least 12 Jul (TH).

Northern Shoveler: Routine reports.

Northern Pintail: Routine reports.

Green-winged Teal: Routine reports.

Canvasback: The small summer population in the western Sandhills was represented by singles at Lakeside 21 Jun (GG) and CLNWR 29 Jul (SJD,WRS,KN).

Redhead: Routine reports.

Ring-necked Duck: A male at Fairmont SL 3-5 Jun (JGJ,PD) was tardy, while 1-4 at LO 22 Jun-29 Jul (GG,SJD,WRS,KN) add to the few summer records there. This species is not known to breed in Nebraska.

Lesser Scaup: As with Ring-necked Duck, a few scaup summer at LO; 1-3 were there 11 Jun-30 Jul (SJD,WRS,KN). Scottsbluff SL also attracts a few summering birds; 4 males were there 11 Jun (SJD). Elsewhere, summer stragglers are rare, with 3 reports this year: a female likely injured was near Burwell 27 Jun (RE), another female was in Lancaster Co 8 Jul (LE) and a single was at North Platte SL 8 Jul (MB).

Bufflehead: Reports in Jun-Jul away from the Sandhills are rare; a female at Scottsbluff SL 11 Jun (SJD) was tardy.

Hooded Merganser: A basic-plumaged adult male as late as 24 Jun in Lancaster Co (LE) is intriguing; an adult male breeding there would have molted by that date. Instances of breeding in Nebraska are rare. Female/immature-plumaged birds were widely-reported, as usual; most interesting of these was an apparent adult female at FF 5 Jul (NR); breeding may have occurred there this spring (see Spring Report).

Ruddy Duck: North Platte SL is a favored site for this species; the 14-20 there 20 Jun-8 Jul (TJW,MB) were intriguing, as there are no breeding records for Lincoln Co. Breeding may occur anywhere in the state on occasion, and so singles at Alma SL 6 Jul (G&WH) and at PL 21 Jul (LE) are of interest.

Gray Partridge: None were reported.

Ring-necked Pheasant: Routine reports.

Sharp-tailed Grouse: Routine reports.

Greater Prairie-Chicken: One in Nance Co 4 Jun (LR,RH) was at the east edge of the summer range north of the Platte River, and booming south of Red Willow Res 7 Jun (TJW) provided one of very few Red Willow Co records. South of the Platte River there are good numbers in sw. Nebraska, east to Frontier and Red Willow Cos, but few birds occur between there and Phelps and Harlan Cos and the large population in se. Nebraska.

Wild Turkey: Routine reports.

Northern Bobwhite: Rarest northwestward, reports were from Fort Robinson SHP 14 Jun (TJW), and near Alliance 17 Jun (EB). It was at its most numerous since 1998 in Harlan Co (G&WH). Along with reports from Brown Co 4 Jun (JED), ne. Lincoln Co 26 Jun (TJW), and Blaine Co 4 Jul (LR,RH), these reports may indicate some increase in numbers and range northwestward.

Pacific Loon: One at LO 7 Jun (KS) was the 9th summer record and 5th in alternate plumage; there have been few reports of this species in recent years, however.

Common Loon: One was at LO 7 Jun (KS), joined by a second 17 Jun (BFH,MB) and a third 29 Jul (SJD,WRS,KN); while all were in basic plumage, one of the 3 present 29 Jul was very small, but its structure matched Common Loon (SJD,WRS,KN). The only other report was of one in Blaine Co 4 Jul (LR,RH).

Pied-billed Grebe: Routine reports.

Eared Grebe: Mid-Jun reports away from the breeding range are scarce; one was at Oliver Res 10 Jun (SJD) and 4 were at LO 11 Jun (SJD).

Western Grebe: Dry conditions in the western Sandhills may have eliminated a breeding group at Willy L, Sheridan Co, where none were seen 23 Jun (WM). Breeding did take place at Valentine NWR, where 30 pairs with young were noted on North Marsh L 20 Jun (TH). At about the same time at another known breeding locality, LM, 179 were present 18 Jun, but no young were seen (WRS). By 29 Jul, there were 3365 birds at LM (SJD); peak counts are in late Sep.

Clark's Grebe: Few breeding sites are known, and so the pair with young at Valentine NWR 20 Jun (TH) was noteworthy; the only other known sites are LM and Willy L, both of which apparently had no breeding this summer. Indeed, the record high tally of 44 at LM by 30 Jul (SJD,WRS,KN) suggests that they did not breed, or failed, and congregated at LM earlier than usual. Failed breeding may have been the norm this year.

American White Pelican: A good count for the early date was 433 at LM 29 Jul (SJD,WRS,KN).

Double-crested Cormorant: Stragglers occur in summer in the se. on occasion, but are rare; one was at PL 28 Jun and 4 were there 29 Jul (LE), the latter probably early fall migrants.

American Bittern: Routine reports.

Least Bittern: In recent years there have a few reports of this species as far north and west as the Sandhills; this year one was heard in west-central Cherry Co 13 Jun (JED) and another at Dewey Marsh in Valentine NWR 20 Jun (TH). These are the 5th and 6th summer records from the Sandhills.

Great Blue Heron: Most colonies are in central and western Nebraska, but one in Cass Co had 44 young and 5 adults on nests 23 Jun (NF).

Great Egret: Routine reports.

Snowy Egret: Least numerous in summer, the only reports, both from LM, were of a tardy spring migrant 11 Jun (SJD) and 2 early fall migrants 30 Jul (SJD,WRS,KN).

Cattle Egret: Best count was a moderate 19 at HCR 6 Jul (G&WH). Few were reported.

Green Heron: One at Bridgeport 11 Jun (SJD) was west of the usual summer range, while one carrying food near North Platte 8-9 Jul (MB) was at the edge of the range. Panhandle reports are scarce.

Black-crowned Night-Heron: Routine reports.

Yellow-crowned Night-Heron: None were reported.

White-faced Ibis: One at Red Willow Res 7 Jun (TJW) was tardy, but a few frequenting cattails at the west end of HCR 16 Jul might have been breeding (JGJ); 1-2 of a group of 10 lingered into Jul there in 2005 also (G&WH). Despite generally dry conditions in the western Sandhills, good counts at CLNWR were 122, including juveniles, 29 Jul (SJD,WRS,KN); 20, including 2 juveniles, 22 Jun (GG); and 52 on 28 Jul (JSt). Other good tallies were the 53 near Lakeside 20 Jun (WM) and 31 at Valentine NWR 8 Jul (TH).

Wood Stork: Much excitement was generated by a short-staying Wood Stork seen at a small pond one mile west of Ashland 2-3 Aug (JC,SS,JGJ photo,JSt,B&GC). This fall date is included here because a couple of weeks later a drawing made by a 6-year-old budding birder clearly shows that the

bird (or another) was present about 10 miles away near Greenwood on 15 Jun (ADG, fide RW). This is only the 2nd documented record for Nebraska; intriguingly one was reported flying up the Platte River also in Cass Co 2 Jun 1996, but this record was not accepted by the NOURC.

Turkey Vulture: Routine reports.

Osprey: One near the Republican River at McCook 18 Jun (BFH) was probably an immature (1-3 years old) pre-breeder.

Mississippi Kite: A probable immature was reported at Fort Robinson SHP 14 Jun (fide TJW). All other reports were from Ogallala, where up to 6 were found; copulation was observed on 25 Jun (CWH) and a nest was found on 29 Jul (SJD,WRS).

Bald Eagle: Several reports of adults were received statewide; this species continues to do well as a breeder in the state. The long-time nest at Lake Alice, Scotts Bluff Co, fledged 3 young this year (fide AK).

Northern Harrier: Two recently-fledged young with an adult female were at Kiowa WMA 26 Jun (KD).

Sharp-shinned Hawk: While breeding on the Pine Ridge is assumed, evidence is scarce. A "possible nest" was reported near Fort Robinson SHP 14 Jun (TJW).

Cooper's Hawk: Reports are widespread during summer; this species is apparently a common breeder in Nebraska. A nest was found 8 Jun within the city of Omaha at a location used in 2005 (ME), and 3 juveniles were noted in Bellevue 12-31 Jul (L&BP).

Red-shouldered Hawk: One was seen overhead at FF, a regular site, 12 Jun (ARy) and a calling bird at Ashford Scout Camp that could not be sighted despite several attempts 11-13 Jun was strongly suspected of being this species (BFH,JP). There are few reports for Jun away from FF.

Broad-winged Hawk: The only report was of a single adult at FF 16 Jul (L&BP); nesting has occurred there on occasion, but no additional evidence was reported.

Swainson's Hawk: While some active observers thought numbers were significantly lower than usual this summer, good numbers persisted in the extreme west at Kiowa WMA, which held 3 nesting pairs 26 Jun (KD), and in the southern Panhandle, where 20-25 were seen 1-2 Jul (RHu).

Red-tailed Hawk: A chick in a nest near Gering 10 Jun (AK) seemed a little late; most fledging seems to occur by the end of Jun.

Ferruginous Hawk: Routine reports.

Golden Eagle: Routine reports.

American Kestrel: Routine reports.

Prairie Falcon: A pair with 2 fledglings was seen at a nw. Cherry Co nest site 27 Jun (JED); this may constitute the first confirmed report of breeding in the county, although suggestive evidence exists.

Peregrine Falcon: A juvenile at LM 29 Jul (SJD,WRS,KN) was rather early; even earlier was an immature (not Hatching Year) in Seward Co 16 Jul, but this might have been a bird hatched in 2005 in Lincoln (JGJ). Arrival of fall migrants is usually in the first few days of Aug and is usually with shorebirds. From 1996 through 2005, Zeus, the male Peregrine in Omaha, has produced 31 young with two mates, Winnie and Amelia; 23 of the young fledged (fide JGJ).

Yellow Rail: An intriguing report involved a group of 5, presumably a family, identified as this species by an observer familiar with Yellow Rails. They flew into a grassy ditch near Yankton, SD, but in Cedar Co, Nebraska, 31

Jul. There are no previous Nebraska records between 16 Jun and 16 Sep, and no known breeding sites near Nebraska. Late Jul is also very early for fall migrants.

Black Rail: The status of this species in Nebraska is unknown, but reports in recent years suggest it may summer in the Sandhills; one was "calling incessantly" at the west end of Calf Creek Valley at Valentine NWR 24 Jun (TH).

King Rail: This species is reported occasionally, usually in years in which water conditions in wetlands are good; this year the only report was of one calling at East Sweetwater L, Valentine NWR, 20 Jun (TH).

Virginia Rail: One with chicks was seen at CLNWR 22 Jun (GG).

Sora: Routine reports.

American Coot: Routine reports.

Sandhill Crane: Very exciting was the discovery of a pair with 2 chicks at Facus Springs, Morrill Co, 18 Jul (EM,BG; photos; fide JGJ). This is the second modern breeding record for the Panhandle, following one in northern Sioux Co in 2002; the only others for the state have been in the eastern RWB. A flyover in sw. Dixon Co 7 Jun (JJ) was likely a late migrant, although an attempt to breed in the area cannot be ruled out.

Black-bellied Plover: The only report was of a very early single at Valentine NWR 8 Jul (TH). Adults are first to arrive in fall, mostly at the end of Jul, but are scarce.

American Golden-Plover: As with Black-bellied Plover, adults of this species are scarce in fall. An alternate adult at LM 29 Jul (SJD,WRS,KN) was only the 16th state record for Jul-Aug.

Snowy Plover: The only reports were from LM; an adult male and 2 different juveniles were found 29-30 Jul (SJD,WRS,KN).

Semipalmated Plover: The only report was of 4 at LM 29 Jul (SJD,WRS,KN).

Piping Plover: Good numbers were again noted at LM (BFH,JSt,SJD); 50 were there 17-18 Jun (BFH) and 132, including many juveniles, 30 Jul (SJD,WRS,KN). Other sightings from summering locations included one in Knox Co along the Niobrara River 1 Jul (BFH), one at Schilling Refuge, Cass Co, 12 Jul (CNK), and one at Schramm SP along the Platte River 27 Jul (L&BP). One at PL 15 Jul (JGJ) may have been a migrant, but one near Valley 13 Jul must have wandering aimlessly, as it was color-banded as a chick in the GPD area in 2005, and was seen there 23 and 25 Jul 2006 (fide JGJ).

Killdeer: Best count was an excellent 483 at LM 30 Jul (SJD).

Mountain Plover: Numbers in the southern Panhandle continue at a good level as a result of efforts by Nebraska Prairie Partners personnel (fide JGJ); as of 16 Jun, 81 nests (84 total by the end of the period) had been located, at least 33 still under incubation. Of the rest, 37 were successful, 6 predated, one abandoned, one cultivated, and 3 destroyed by hail. Of 17 locations with plovers, 15 were on dryland agricultural fields and only 2 on rangeland.

Black-necked Stilt: Dry conditions reduced the numbers reported this summer, both in the Sandhills and RWB. The only nesting report for the eastern RWB was of young at North Lake Basin WMA 11 Jul (JGJ), the easternmost breeding record for the state to date. Although a pair was at the Fairmont SL 3-5 Jun, no nesting activity was observed (JGJ,PD). A nest with 4 eggs was located at Facus Springs, Morrill Co, 11 Jun (SJD).

American Avocet: Easternmost were 2 at Wehrspann L 2 Jul (JWH). Best count was the 94 at LM 29 Jul (SJD,WRS,KN).

Spotted Sandpiper: Routine reports.

Solitary Sandpiper: This species returns very early in fall, with early dates 24, 24, and 25 Jun; thus one at PL 26 Jun (JGJ) was rather early.

Greater Yellowlegs: As with Solitary Sandpiper, fall arrival is very early, with early dates 10, 10 and 11 Jun (late spring dates are 30, 30, and 31 May). Thus rather early was one in Grant Co 13 Jun (JED).

Willet: The large group of 40 at Ashby 18 Jun (EB) was at a date rather early for migration; this may have been due to dry conditions and possibly failed breeding in the Sandhills. Migration is usually evident by late Jun; the 2 at PL 23 Jun (MUs) were rather early, and the first noted south of the breeding range.

Lesser Yellowlegs: Fall arrival is somewhat later than for Greater Yellowlegs; earliest were singles in Grant Co (WM) and Sheridan Co (GG) on 21 Jun. Best count was the 295 at LM 29 Jul (SJD).

Upland Sandpiper: Several nests, each with 4 eggs, were found at Valentine NWR 20 Jun (TH); most egg dates are earlier.

Long-billed Curlew: A surprising location for an adult and 2 half-grown, short-billed young was a native prairie corner of a pivot-irrigated field sw. of Broadwater 18 Jun (WRS). Last reported were 2 at Brewster 22 Jul (HKH).

Hudsonian Godwit: A dark-colored godwit at PL 23 Jun was checked carefully with Marbled Godwit in mind but it lacked cinnamon underwings (MUs); this is the latest spring date and only the 3rd after 7 Jun.

Marbled Godwit: Continuing the trend of recent years, 3 more breeding reports involving 4 pairs were received. Two pairs, one in agitated courtship flight, were found near Wood Lake 17 Jun (BFH), a pair with fledglings was in southern Sheridan Co 13 Jun (JED), and another pair was at an undisclosed location in Dawes Co 20 Jun (fide WM). In addition to an old record for 1820, and one in 1990, there have been reports of 6 breeding pairs 2003-2006. This species forms pre-migration flocks in Jun; 28 were at a pond about a mile east of Lakeside 22 Jun (GG) and 26 were there 26 Jun (WM).

Sanderling: Third-latest ever for spring were the 2 at LM 11 Jun (SJD).

Semipalmated Sandpiper: Rather late was a single at LM 11 Jun (SJD), and rather early another in Lancaster Co 8 Jul (LE).

Western Sandpiper: A group of 10 at Wehrspann L 2 Jul (JWH; photo) provided a record-early fall arrival date by 2 days. Other reports were of 4 at Oliver Res 19 Jul (JGJ) and a molting adult at CLNWR 29 Jul (SJD,WRS,KN).

Least Sandpiper: Routine reports.

White-rumped Sandpiper: This species is a late spring migrant, and so one at LM 17 Jun (BFH) was merely a "routine report". Occurrence in fall is decidedly non-routine, however; the 15+ at LM 29 Jul (JSt, details) provided only the 5th documented fall record for the state, all within the last 5 years. Best count for the period was the 331 at Fairmont SL 5 Jun (PD).

Baird's Sandpiper: Stragglers were one at LM 18 Jun (WRS) and two at CLNWR 22 Jun (GG). These are the 2nd- and 6th-latest spring records, and probably are birds that stopped migrating to enjoy Nebraska.

Pectoral Sandpiper: Routine reports.

Stilt Sandpiper: A returnee at PL 7 Jul (LE) was rather early.

Buff-breasted Sandpiper: Fall reports westward are unusual and are usually of juveniles in Sep, thus a presumed adult at LM 30 Jul (SJD,WRS,KN) was unexpected and appears to be the first such report.

Short-billed Dowitcher: Fitting the pattern of adults moving through in Jul and very early Aug, 10 were reported; earliest 4 at North Lake Basin WMA 11

Jul (JGJ) and 4 at Schilling Refuge, Cass Co, 12 Jul (CNK). These are rather early arrival dates.

Long-billed Dowitcher: A spring straggler was rather late in Grant Co 22 Jun (GG). Returning adults arrive at the end of Jul, thus 113 at LM and 65 at CLNWR 29 Jul (SJD,WRS,KN) were on time.

Wilson's Snipe: One at Jack Sinn WMA, Lancaster/Saunders Cos, 2 Jun (LE) may have been attempting to breed; there are previous reports of breeding at this location.

American Woodcock: One flushed near Fort Niobrara NWR, Cherry Co, 22 Jun (JED) provided only the 7th summer report from Knox Co westward. One at FF 29 Jun (L&BP, photo) was at an expected breeding location, although reports are rare.

Wilson's Phalarope: Routine reports.

Jaeger sp.: A "large, dark, gull-like bird with very deep wing beats" at Sherman Res, Sherman Co, 24 Jun (TJW) appears to have been a jaeger, but was not well seen. At this date, adults are the expected age class.

Franklin's Gull: Significant movement had started by period's end, with 2835 at LM 30 Jul (SJD,WRS,KN). A few appear during summer, probably failed breeders; 19 were at PL 28 Jun (LE).

Bonaparte's Gull: A basic adult at LM 29-30 Jul (SJD,WRS,KN) was only the 3rd record for the species for Jul. There are no records for the second half of Jun and first half of Jul.

Ring-billed Gull: The start of fall buildup was noted at LM, where 1386 were counted 29 Jul (SJD).

California Gull: After a couple of summers with low numbers, LM saw an influx at the end of Jul, when 80 were counted on the 30th, including 70 adults, 8 juveniles, and single first- and second-alternate birds (SJD, WRS,KN). This mix of age classes suggests poor breeding success or breeding failure. Earlier, 15 were at LM 11 Jun (SJD), including 7 adults, 7 second-alternate, and one first-alternate bird (SJD); this is an un-surprising mix for that date, showing a high proportion of immatures ("pre-breeders"). An adult was still present 9 Jul (MB). At nearby Sutherland Res, Lincoln Co, an adult was seen 30 Jul (SJD,WRS). Unexpected, however, were 3 at Valentine NWR 8 Jul (TH) and another there 26 Jul (TH).

Herring Gull: An adult at LM 30 Jul (SJD,WRS,KN) provided only the 3rd record of an adult in the period 14 May-20 Sep. Adults do not usually appear until Oct.

Lesser Black-backed Gull: A first-alternate at LM 30 Jul (SJD,WRS,KN) was the earliest fall record and first on record for Jul. Of the 50+ records to date for the species, all but two are in spring and fall.

Least Tern: Breeding appeared to be successful at LM, where good numbers were found, including 12 on 19 Jun (BFH) and 44, 24 adults and 20 juveniles, on 29 Jul (SJD,WRS,KN). In addition, small numbers (1-4) were reported from other expected locations during the period (m. ob.).

Caspian Tern: The only report was from LO 7 Jun (KS); spring migrants occur regularly until 10 Jun.

Black Tern: Failed breeders and non-breeding "yearlings" occur during summer; fall migrants appear 1 Jul. Best count was a respectable 403 at LM 29 Jul (SJD,WRS,KN).

Common Tern: The only report was of an adult at LM 11 Jun (SJD, photo).

Arctic Tern: Only the 3rd documented record was an adult flying around the dam at LM 11 Jun (SJD, photo). All three records are from the LM area and by the same observer.

Forster's Tern: A record fall count was the 95 at LM 29 Jul (SJD). Numbers build up during Jul.

Rock Pigeon: Routine reports.

Eurasian Collared-Dove: Routine reports.

White-winged Dove: A pair had returned to Albion by 11 Jun (D&CN); no breeding evidence was reported, however. Three others were reported, singles at Fort Robinson SHP 14 Jun (TJW), at Kearney 23-24 Jun (AR), and at Champion 9 Jul (MB). This species is rapidly becoming a regular, albeit still rare, summer visitor.

Mourning Dove: Routine reports.

Yellow-billed Cuckoo: This species is least numerous westward; an observation from Sioux Co that in "all the years we have been here I think maybe we have had 4 nestings of them with real fledglings" (HKH), might indicate that aridity is a factor. Other westerly reports were from Keith Co 30 Jul (SJD) and Lincoln Co 1 Jun (TJW). One was carrying nest material in Lancaster Co 23 Jun (LE).

Black-billed Cuckoo: Reports are increasing; this summer 8 sightings involving 9 birds were made, including a single as far west as Chase Co 10 Jul (MB), where this species is rare.

Barn Owl: Two nest sites discovered in 2005 at the northern and eastern edges of the summer range were again occupied this year. Near Creighton adults and young were present 12 Jun (MB) and on 1 Jul the adults and 4 young were seen (BFH); at Ulysses adults and 3 juveniles were present 24 Jul (JG). The stronghold for the species is the southwest: 8 were at Red Willow Res 7 Jun (TJW), and a nest under a bridge in Deuel Co had an amazing 8 young 10 Jun (CNK,WM). One was at the long-time site near Clear Creek Marshes, Keith Co, 11 Jun and 29-30 Jul (SJD) and another was found near Alliance 17 Jun (EB).

Eastern Screech-Owl: Routine reports.

Great Horned Owl: Routine reports.

Burrowing Owl: Numbers continue to be impressive westward; 53 were found at 46 sites in a Prairie Partners survey in Scotts Bluff Co (KD; fide JGJ); best single-location count was 23 at Kiowa WMA 26 Jun (KD). Quite a sight were the 22 adults and 22+ juveniles at a prairie-dog colony in ne. Lincoln Co 26 Jun (TJW), as would have been the 8 adults and 6 juveniles in Hitchcock Co 18-19 Jun (BFH). Significant at the eastern edge of the range was the appearance of one at a prairie-dog colony previously unused by owls near Grafton 3 Jun (JGJ). More surprising was the presence of an adult and juvenile in ne. Dixon Co 1 Jul (BFH,JJ, photo); nesting in the east is rare. Family groups move around beginning in Jul; a group of 5 appeared near Kearney 27 Jul and left a few days later (AH).

Barred Owl: Routine reports.

Long-eared Owl: A nest with 5 young was found at Valentine NWR 20 Jun (fide TH), and one was seen at Smith Lake WMA 14 Jun (SJ), the latter a known nesting site. This species may nest anywhere in the state, but most reports are from areas of low human population.

Short-eared Owl: The only report was of one at Kiowa WMA 26 Jun (KD), a likely nesting site.

- Common Nighthawk:** Concern was expressed about the absence of this species this summer at the University of Nebraska-Lincoln campus; predation or lack of nest sites were suggested as a cause (LE).
- Common Poorwill:** A good count was the 12 at Red Willow Res 6 Jun (TJW). Elsewhere few were reported.
- Chuck-will's-widow:** At the west edge of the range one was heard in dry oak woodland 8-29 Jul at Oak Glen WMA, Seward Co (JG,LE); the only regular reports farther west have been along the Platte River Valley.
- Whip-poor-will:** Along with a Chuck-will's-widow, good numbers of this species were at Oak Glen WMA also; best count was the 16 there 15 Jul (JG). Distribution is spotty, however; at nearby Burr Oak WMA, Seward Co, none were found (JG). Presence may be dependent on a healthy understory, or lack of deer or cattle browsing.
- Chimney Swift:** Routine reports.
- White-throated Swift:** Routine reports.
- Ruby-throated Hummingbird:** Appearance of fall migrants in Missouri River Valley counties is difficult to discern, as local family groups may appear at feeders in Jul. True migrants may not arrive until early Aug; none were reported away from the breeding range.
- Calliope Hummingbird:** The only report was of an immature at feeders near Mitchell 31 Jul (KD), the 3rd record for Jul, and 14th overall for fall.
- Broad-tailed Hummingbird:** Two had appeared at the DeLara feeders before period's end: a female 19 Jul and another individual 31 Jul (KD). This is a regular fall migrant in the west.
- Rufous Hummingbird:** The most common of the 3 regular western migrants, 6 were reported, including a male as far east as Valentine NWR 26 Jul (TH). Others included one rather early at WSR 12 Jul (HKH), singles south of Gering 16 and 31 Jul (AK), an adult male near Mitchell 21 Jul (KD) and a female there 31 Jul (KD).
- Belted Kingfisher:** Breaking a string of "routine reports" for this species, an adult feeding 2 young was found in Lancaster Co 24 Jun (LE).
- Lewis's Woodpecker:** The only report was of one at the traditional Deadhorse Canyon burn site at Chadron SP 1 Jul (RHu).
- Red-headed Woodpecker:** Routine reports.
- Red-bellied Woodpecker:** Routine reports.
- Downy Woodpecker:** Adults were feeding 2-3 young at a suet feeder near Mitchell 14 Jun (KD).
- Hairy Woodpecker:** Routine reports.
- Northern Flicker:** Routine reports.
- Pileated Woodpecker:** The only report was of one at a regular location, FF, 14 Jun (L&BP).
- Olive-sided Flycatcher:** One in Lancaster Co 16 Jun (LE) was the 2nd-latest on record for spring; migrants occur regularly as late as 10 Jun.
- Western Wood-Pewee:** A good count from the southwest was 8 in Dundy Co 8 Jun (TJW); these may have been late migrants, as there are only 4 other summer reports and no evidence for breeding in Perkins, Chase, Dundy, and Hitchcock Cos. Confirmed breeding at the Valentine NWR headquarters 12 Jul (TH) added to several reports in recent years in Cherry Co indicating that breeding occurs regularly east to the Valentine area. The 10 at Smith Lake WMA 14 Jun (SJ) were also noteworthy.
- Eastern Wood-Pewee:** Confirmed breeding at Rice/Duck L at Valentine NWR 12 Jul (TH) adds another location where both wood-pewee species probably

summer in the same general area; others are Valentine and the west end of LM. Westerly were a singing bird in Lincoln Co 1 Jun (TJW) and a single in Rock Co 19 Jun (JED).

Yellow-bellied Flycatcher: Last for spring was calling at Mahoney SP, Cass Co, 8 Jun (MB). This is the 3rd Jun record, and latest by 5 days.

Acadian Flycatcher: The only report was of a singing bird at FF 1 Jul (NR).

Alder Flycatcher: Important documentation of the timing of fall migration was provided by one banded and measured 30 Jul at Boyer NWR, Washington Co; it was an adult in non-breeding condition (RS). The few documented records indicate fall migrants pass through 21 Jul-4 Sep.

Willow Flycatcher: Preferred sites include Nathan's L, Washington Co, where they were "all over the place" 24 Jun (RS) and Lincoln Co, where "surprising numbers" were noted 8 Jul (MB). This species breeds statewide.

Least Flycatcher: None were reported; fall migration begins in Jul.

Cordilleran Flycatcher: Only the 4th summer report east of Sioux Co, one was at the Squaw Creek bridge in Ponderosa WMA, Dawes Co, 14 Jun (TJW). This species is fairly common only in Monroe and Sowbelly Canyons.

Eastern Phoebe: A nest with 4 eggs at PL 7 Jul may have been a second brood (LE), normal for this species in Nebraska.

Say's Phoebe: Routine reports.

Great Crested Flycatcher: One was at McCook 18 Jun (BFH); this species occurs only in low numbers west of Harlan Co in the Republican Valley.

Cassin's Kingbird: A nest with 2 eggs was found at a regular site in Morrill Co 10 Jun (CNK,WM). A nest under construction 17 Jun (WRS) and a good count of 7, including a family group of 5, south of Exit 1 on I-80 in Kimball Co 18 Jul (JGJ) indicated successful breeding there.

Western Kingbird: A good easterly count was 14 at BOL 16 Jul, including an immature being fed (LE). Aggregations begin to appear in late Jul.

Eastern Kingbird: A good count was the 33 in Cedar Co 23 Jun (JJ). A nest with 3 young was found at PL 8 Jul (LE).

Scissor-tailed Flycatcher: This species continues to extend from its Flint Hills, KS, range into se. Nebraska. A pair returned to the same location where they bred last year near Kearney and was again successful, with adults feeding 2 fledglings 8 Jul (JM,KS). Pairs were noted at two additional locations, without breeding evidence: PL 16 and 28 Jun (LE) and sw. of Liberty 27 Jul (L&BP). Yet another, a single, was at Eppley Airfield, Omaha, 5-10 Jul (CW,RHa).

Loggerhead Shrike: A good tally was the 9 in se. Nebraska 3 Jun, including a family group of 5 (WRS); the 8 in Sheridan Co 21 Jun (GG) were also noteworthy.

Bell's Vireo: Routine reports.

Yellow-throated Vireo: Northwesternmost were 2 at Wiseman WMA, Cedar Co, 23 Jun (JJ). Breeding status west of Ponca SP is not well understood, although there are reports west to Brown Co.

Plumbeous Vireo: Routine reports.

Warbling Vireo: Routine reports.

Red-eyed Vireo: Apparently not common in summer in the southern and central Panhandle, one was at Wildcat Hills, Scotts Bluff Co, 4 Jul (AK). Two that appeared at WSR, where unexpected, 28 Jul may have departed the Pine Ridge because of extensive fires there (HKH).

Blue Jay: Routine reports.

- Pinyon Jay:** A group of 11 appeared at WSR 28 Jun, probably also due to the Pine Ridge fires (HKH); this species is essentially unrecorded in summer away from Ponderosa Pine habitat.
- Clark's Nutcracker:** The only report was of one in Sowbelly Canyon 18 Jun (EB). At least one seems to be reported each summer from the western Pine Ridge.
- Black-billed Magpie:** Observers in the west expressed concern over low numbers; few were seen during the period in Scotts Bluff Co (AK), and none were found in western Nebraska during an early Jul trip (RHu).
- American Crow:** Reports also indicated lower numbers of this species during the period.
- Horned Lark:** Routine reports.
- Purple Martin:** A colony at Alma fledged its last young 14 Jul and had entirely departed by 29 Jul (G&WH). Twelve were at a martin house at Sherman Res 24 Jun (TJW); distribution in the Loup drainage is somewhat spotty.
- Tree Swallow:** Routine reports.
- Violet-green Swallow:** Routine reports.
- Northern Rough-winged Swallow:** Routine reports.
- Bank Swallow:** Routine reports.
- Cliff Swallow:** Routine reports.
- Barn Swallow:** A nest with 5 eggs was found at BOL 16 Jul (LE), a rather late date for eggs, even a second clutch.
- Black-capped Chickadee:** Some optimistic signs of recovery from the very low numbers of recent years were noted by Larry Einemann in Lancaster Co in his meticulous records of numbers seen on his regular coverage of the county. A family group with 4 fledglings was at Wiseman WMA, Cedar Co, 23 Jun (JJ).
- Tufted Titmouse:** One at Steinauer 26 Jun (L&BP) was in an area where few are reported, although the west edge of the summer range approximates the Big Blue Valley in the southeast.
- Red-breasted Nuthatch:** Unexpected were singles in Lincoln 24 Jun (MUs) and Omaha 26 Jun (RS); these are only the 6th and 7th breeding season records away from breeding habitat. Also unusual was a male present all summer at Valentine NWR, finally joined by another 8 Jul (TH). One was at Wildcat Hills NC 18 Jul (AK), where breeding may only be sporadic.
- White-breasted Nuthatch:** Routine reports.
- Pygmy Nuthatch:** Routine reports.
- Brown Creeper:** A pair in Ash Creek Canyon, Dawes Co, 14 Jun (TJW) indicates breeding there, where summering creepers have been found in recent years.
- Rock Wren:** One near Eli in Cherry Co 23 Jun (JED) was east of most recent Niobrara River Valley reports.
- Carolina Wren:** Westerly reports, becoming the norm in recent years as the breeding range expands, included singles at North Platte 8 Jul (MB) and in Kearney 11 Jul (LR,RH). An adult was feeding an immature in Lancaster Co 18 Jun (LE).
- House Wren:** Routine reports.
- Sedge Wren:** The 6 at Wehrspann L 1 Jun (JWH) and one at Jack Sinn WMA, Saunders/Lancaster Co, 2 Jun (LE) were probably late migrants, although one was still at Wehrspann L 3 Jul (L&BP); Jun and early Jul reports are few. Returning fall birds were first noted actively singing 9 Jul in se. Nebraska Henslow's Sparrow study sites (WRS) and 10 Jul at Burchard Lake WMA, Pawnee Co (L&BP); numbers had built up by the end of the

period to about one bird per acre in the study sites (WRS). The only other reports were of one near Fullerton 22 Jul (LR,RH) and 2 in Dixon Co 29 Jul (JJ).

Marsh Wren: Routine reports.

Blue-gray Gnatcatcher: This species continues its northward expansion, reaching the northern edge of the state in both east and west. One of 2-4 birds was carrying food at Ashford Scout Camp 11 Jun (BFH), the first breeding record for the northeast. One as far north as Sowbelly Canyon 19 Jun (GG) was the 3rd since 2002 there; the species has bred in Scotts Bluff Co for a few years. Adults with young at Oak Glen WMA, Seward Co, 3 Jul (JG) were at the nw. edge of the se. Nebraska range.

Eastern Bluebird: Routine reports.

Mountain Bluebird: Routine reports.

Swainson's Thrush: As usual, last were westerly: singles at WSR 9 Jun (HKH) and at Oliver Res 10 Jun (SJD). Latest dates in the nw. are in mid-Jun.

Hermit Thrush: A report from Fort Niobrara NWR 25 Jul was unaccompanied by details; the only other similar report is for 27 Jul 1980 in Douglas Co, also without details.

Wood Thrush: Northernmost reports were within the breeding range: singles at Ashford Scout Camp 13 Jun (BFH) and Ponca SP 25 Jun (JJ).

American Robin: Routine reports.

Gray Catbird: A good count was 24 in Lancaster Co 21 Jul (LE), when some post-breeding grouping probably begins. A nest with 3 eggs was found in Cedar Co 23 Jun (JJ).

Northern Mockingbird: Numbers were good throughout the southern Nebraska and Panhandle range; a surprising 12 were counted on a BBS route in Gage Co 27 Jun (L&BP), and 5 were south of Exit 1 on I-80 18 Jul (JGJ). An adult and fledgling were near Lewellen 28 Jul (JSt).

Sage Thrasher: The earliest migrants appear in late Jul; this year there were 4 separate sightings 19-25 Jul in Kimball Co, including a young bird with an adult (WM,JGJ).

Brown Thrasher: Routine reports.

Curve-billed Thrasher: The resident bird at the Frimann Ranch is still present, entering its 5th year there (fide AK). Another, too far away for the two to find each other, was at Valentine NWR 8-10 Jul (TH, photo). This is the 6th documented record for the state.

European Starling: A rather early flock of juveniles was the 100 near Dalton 18 Jun (WRS).

Cedar Waxwing: Nest-building was noted in FF 12 Jun (ARy).

Northern Parula: A pair incubating on a nest 30 feet up in a willow at Ashford Scout Camp 13 Jun (BFH,JP) is the first evidence of breeding that far north; the only previous summer report in the area was in 1998. A straggler at Valentine NWR 11-12 Jul (TH) provided a westerly sighting; there are several such reports away from the east.

Yellow Warbler: Another species apparently moved south by the Pine Ridge fires was Yellow Warbler; numbers appeared at WSR 28 Jul (HKH). Adults and a juvenile were in Lancaster Co 7 Jul (LE) and a pair feeding a cowbird were in the same county 26 Jun (LE).

Yellow-rumped (Audubon's) Warbler: The only report was of 2 at Chadron SP 18 Jun (EB) and another in Sowbelly Canyon the same day (EB). This species is a regular breeder at those locations.

Yellow-throated Warbler: Routine reports.

- Cerulean Warbler:** The only report was of one singing and seen well at Platte River SP 27 Jul (SD); at that date it was unlikely to be breeding there unless it had been missed during the summer.
- Black-and-white Warbler:** One at Bellevue 1 Jun (L&BP) was rather late; breeding has not been reported for many years in the Missouri Valley, and there are few summer sightings. Five others were reported 8 Jun-1 Jul from Knox Co (BFH) west to Chadron SP (GG), including locations along the Niobrara Valley in Rock, Brown, and Cherry Cos (JED), where breeding likely occurs.
- American Redstart:** This species is abundant in ne. Nebraska; 20-30 were at Ashford Scout Camp 11 Jun, including a pair carrying food (BFH), and 12 were at Ponca SP 25 Jun (JJ).
- Prothonotary Warbler:** After a flurry of spring sightings, none were reported Jun-Jul.
- Ovenbird:** Another species widely-reported in the north this summer (BFH,JED), sightings included a nest with 3 eggs in Brown Co 4 Jun (JED).
- Louisiana Waterthrush:** At the fringes of the summer range were singles at Ashford Scout Camp 13 Jun (BFH) and near Steinauer 26 Jun (L&BP).
- Kentucky Warbler:** Two at Platte River SP 27 Jul (SD) added to the expected Missouri Valley locations for this species.
- Common Yellowthroat:** A good count was the 14 in Lancaster Co 23 Jun (LE).
- Wilson's Warbler:** One at LO 7 Jun (KS) was the 11th report for Jun, and a male at Valentine NWR 8 Jul (TH) was the 4th report for Jul.
- Yellow-breasted Chat:** Northerly reports were east to Rock Co along the Niobrara River Valley (JED), about the easterly limit of the current breeding range there.
- Summer Tanager:** The only report was of 2 at Platte River SP 27 Jul (SD), a new location, but close to a traditional location, Schramm SP.
- Scarlet Tanager:** The reports, of singles in Cedar Co 23 Jun (JJ) and Rock Co 19 Jun (JED), were from northern Nebraska, where the species breeds west in the Niobrara Valley in small numbers as far as Brown Co.
- Western Tanager:** Another species possibly affected by the Pine Ridge fires, 2 appeared at WSR 28 Jul (HKH). Migrants are normally not seen away from breeding areas until mid-Aug.
- Spotted Towhee:** Routine reports.
- Eastern Towhee:** Westerly for a pure Eastern, one was in n. Rock Co 19 Jun (JED); west of Cedar Co pure Easterns occur in small and diminishing numbers westward, along with hybrids and increasing numbers of Spotted. An example of the mix was from n Cedar Co, where an Eastern was found, along with 4 Spotted 23 Jun (JJ).
- Cassin's Sparrow:** Probably because of dry conditions westward, and the ability of grassland birds to relocate from year to year depending on conditions, this species was widely reported in good numbers. As many as 37 were counted in Chase Co 10 Jul (MB), and the other reports added some 15 more. Breeding activity was reported as far east as LM, where adults and a fledgling were seen 30 Jul (SJD,WRS,KN) at a location where the species has bred previously, and also in Chase Co, where a pair was carrying food 18 Jun (BFH).
- Chipping Sparrow:** This species is least numerous in sw. Nebraska; one was at Red Willow Res 7 Jun (TJW). Any sightings west of Alma and south of the Platte River Valley should be reported. Copulation was observed in Lancaster Co 29 Jul (LE).

Brewer's Sparrow: None were reported.

Field Sparrow: A good count was 15 in Dakota Co 25 Jun (JJ). A nest with 2 eggs and 2 cowbird eggs was in Lancaster Co 24 Jun (LE).

Vesper Sparrow: The distribution of this species is of interest; it generally occurs in eastern and northern Nebraska, apparently different subspecies in each area, with highest numbers in nw. Nebraska. However its occurrence in the "interior" is not well known. Any such sightings are of interest and should be reported. This summer sightings at the west edge of the eastern range and south edge of the northern range included 2 near Oak Glen WMA, Seward Co, 3 Jul (JG) and one sw. of Fullerton 22 Jul (LR,RH).

Lark Bunting: This species was present in surprising numbers in the western Sandhills this summer, again possibly a result of the dry conditions further west and the ability of grassland specialists to relocate; 315 were counted in Garden Co 29 Jul (SJD).

Savannah Sparrow: Breeding was confirmed at Valentine NWR 20 Jun (TH), the southeasternmost of a limited number of breeding records for the state.

Grasshopper Sparrow: This species is doing well, with reports of good numbers in central (LR,RH) and se. Nebraska (WRS) and the e. RWB (LR,RH). Spring arrival, strangely, based on arrival dates in recent years, was about 10-14 days behind the norm at Crane Meadows NC, Hall Co (DK).

Henslow's Sparrow: A study area including all of the area s. and e. of Lincoln yielded 23 birds at 5 locations 3 Jun (WRS); at the end of Jul, birds were still present at only 3 of these, however (WRS). Interestingly, 2 were at SCP 24 Jul but absent until then (KP,CNK). This is another grassland specialist that has the ability to move around during summer in response to changing conditions, such as haying or excessive grazing. It may breed well into Aug, sometimes in conjunction with the many Sedge Wrens that appear at that time.

Song Sparrow: Numbers continue to increase around wetlands in central Nebraska; it was "abundant" along the Platte River in Lincoln Co 1 Jun (TJW). It is only in the last few years that numbers westward in the Platte River Valley have increased.

Swamp Sparrow: Reports were all from the Platte River northward, as expected; dry conditions in the e. RWB may have extirpated the small colony at Funk WPA, Phelps Co. The species was considered "surprisingly common" in parts of Valentine NWR 20 Jun (TH) and in "surprising numbers" in Lincoln Co 8 Jul (MB). A nest with 6 eggs was photographed at LM 11 Jun (SJD).

Harris's Sparrow: One was rather late at Walton 7 Jun (TP); there are several Jun and a few Jul records.

Dark-eyed (White-winged) Junco: Two pairs, one with 2 immatures, were at Chadron SP 18 Jun (EB); others were in Sowbelly Canyon the same day (EB) and at Chadron SP, also with young, 20 Jun (GG). Chadron SP appears to mark the eastern extent of the Nebraska Pine Ridge breeding range.

McCown's Longspur: Reports were from expected locations at the west edge of the Panhandle; a good count of 20 was made at 2-3 locations in Sioux and Kimball Cos 1 Jul (RHu).

Chestnut-collared Longspur: The summer range extends quite far ne. in Nebraska; one was seen near Springview in Keya Paha Co 1 Jul (DJN,KJ), about at the eastern edge of the range.

Northern Cardinal: This species is slowly expanding its range northwestward; one at Fort Robinson SHP 14 Jun (TJW) was one of very few recent records in the northwest. Also westerly were 2 in nw. Cherry Co 27 Jun (JED) and one in Thedford 3 Jul (LR,RH).

Rose-breasted Grosbeak: Far to the nw. of the usual southern and eastern summer range, one was singing at Smith Lake WMA 10-15 Jun (CNK,SJ), only about the 5th such summer record.

Black-headed Grosbeak: Routine reports.

Blue Grosbeak: Routine reports.

Lazuli Bunting: Hybrids with Indigo Bunting are most numerous in the Panhandle; they were considered "common" around Fort Robinson SHP 14 Jun (TJW).

Indigo Bunting: Routine reports.

Dickcissel: This was a banner year for Dickcissels westward. Normally, singing males show up in the west in late Jun and Jul, usually at alfalfa fields, sing for a while, then disappear. This year, they appeared early and stayed late, as though parts of their range to the south and east (Kansas and Oklahoma?) were unsuitable, possibly due to drought, but westerly conditions in Nebraska were very dry also. Indeed, a BBS route in ne. Lincoln Co that was run 23 Jun had fewer than usual, attributed to a dry spring and fewer broadleaf plants (TJW). Although a grassland species, Dickcissels prefer disturbed or weedy grasslands, including areas with scattered small shrubs and trees. Reports of singing birds at dates earlier than usual were from Clay Co 3 Jun, where broods were present by 4 Jul when usually adults are not seen until Jul (JGJ), and Crane Meadows NC, where they were "going great guns" by 4 Jun (DK). At least 10 were singing on a Sioux Co BBS route 10 Jun (HKH), and two were in Scotts Bluff Co 10 Jun (KD). They were in all counties visited on a Panhandle trip 11 Jun (SJD), and, despite not arriving at Valentine NWR until 5 Jun, they were "extremely common" by 15 Jun, including 2 nests found (TH). "A few" on the Pine Ridge 1 Jul "seemed strange", even to a visiting birder (RHu). An excellent count was the 75 in Cedar Co 21 Jun (JJ), and density point counts in a se. Nebraska Henslow's Sparrow study area yielded an estimated density of Dickcissels of about 80 per 100 acres (JGJ,WRS).

Bobolink: Sightings at locations in se. Nebraska considered unusual were of 1-3 in Lancaster Co 2 and 11 Jun (LE,MUs), and 8 in Pawnee and Johnson Cos 3 Jun (WRS). As with Grasshopper Sparrow, arrival at Crane Meadows NC was 10-14 days late (DK).

Red-winged Blackbird: Routine reports.

Eastern Meadowlark: Surprisingly scarce in the eastern RWB, one at Father Hupp WMA, Thayer Co, 18 Jun (LR,RH), was a good find.

Western Meadowlark: The great abundance of this species in the Panhandle was illustrated by the count of 203 on a BBS route in Scotts Bluff Co 27 Jun (AK).

Yellow-headed Blackbird: Few remain to the south in summer, and so 2 at HCR 11 Jun, the observers' first ever there in Jun (G&WH), were a good find.

Brewer's Blackbird: Routine reports.

Common Grackle: Routine reports.

Great-tailed Grackle: Reports were statewide, including 3 as far nw. as Smith Lake WMA 14 Jun (SJ). This species now occurs throughout the state in association with wetlands, usually with cattails.

Brown-headed Cowbird: Routine reports.

Orchard Oriole: An excellent count was the 41 at LM 11 Jun (SJD).

Baltimore Oriole: One was at Smith Lake WMA with 3 Bullock's Orioles 14 Jun (SJ); this is only the 9th Panhandle record for apparent Baltimore Orioles (most probably carry some Bullock's genes). Adults were feeding young in Lancaster Co 23 Jun (LE).

Bullock's Oriole: Excellent numbers were found around L Minatare 6 Jun, including 7 pairs, one feeding young, and 2 additional males, for a total of 16 adults (KD). A consistent location for hybrids is the Dalton BBS route, where a female Bullock's along with 5 hybrids were tallied 18 Jun (WRS). Easternmost Bullock's was one near Eli 23 Jun (JED).

House Finch: Routine reports.

Red Crossbill: Although breeding apparently can happen at any time, this summer evidence for "normally-timed" spring breeding was reported from several locations. Adults were feeding young at the Gordon Cem 10 Jun (CNK) and in a canyon south of Redington the same day (CNK,WM). An apparent family group with immatures was at Fort Robinson SHP 14 Jun (TJW). The only other reports were of 1-3 at Wildcat Hills NC feeders 23 Jun and 18 Jul (GG,AK).

Pine Siskin: Breeding records are generally from the northwest, such as adults feeding young at Gordon Cem 10 Jun (CNK), but less usual was an adult feeding a juvenile at Brule 17 Jun (CWH). The only other reports were of singles at North Platte 1 Jun (TJW) and Oliver Res 10 Jun (SJD). A pair was nestbuilding at the latter site this spring.

Lesser Goldfinch: A black-backed male at Sidney 16 Jun (AS, details) was Nebraska's 10th documented record.

American Goldfinch: One was gathering nest material in Lancaster Co 8 Jul (LE); this species is a late nester.

House Sparrow: Routine reports.

AERIAL SEARCHES FOR WHOOPING CRANES ALONG THE PLATTE RIVER, NEBRASKA

⁽¹⁾John G. Sidle (JGS)

⁽²⁾Wallace G. Jobman (WGJ)

⁽³⁾Craig A. Faanes (CAF)

(1) Great Plains National Grasslands, USDA Forest Service, 125 N Main St.,
Chadron, NE 69337; jsidle@fs.fed.us

(2) U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, 203 W 2nd St., Grand Island, NE 68801

(3) U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, 4401 N. Fairfax Dr., Arlington, VA 22203

The endangered Whooping Cranes (*Grus americana*) that migrate between Wood Buffalo National Park, Alberta and Northwest Territories, and the Aransas National Wildlife Refuge Area, Texas, roost at many aquatic stopover locations (Austin and Richert 2001) including the central Platte River, Nebraska (Johnson

1982; Lingle et al. 1984, 1986, 1991; Faanes et al. 1992; Richert 1999). Under the U.S. Endangered Species Act, 90 km of the central Platte have been designated as critical habitat for the Whooping Crane, although suitable Platte River habitat for Whooping Crane and Sandhill Crane (*Grus canadensis*) continues to decline (Sidle et al. 1989, Currier 1997). The Whooping Crane has a long history of using the Platte River, and public agencies and private organizations have endeavored to learn more about Whooping Crane roost sites to enhance conservation of the species through regulatory and other efforts (Sidle et al. 1990a; Faanes 1992; Faanes and Bowman 1992; Ziewitz 1992). On the average, about 7% of the Whooping Cranes use the central Platte River as a stopover during migration (National Research Council 2005). Here we describe our aerial survey technique to locate roosting Whooping Cranes.

Knowing the locations of Whooping Cranes roosting on the Platte River is necessary to improve our understanding of crane distribution and habitat characteristics of roost sites on the river. Records of roosting Whooping Cranes have largely relied upon observations reported by the public to government agencies or conservation organizations. There has been a need, however, for a more consistent, objective method of determining roost site locations. One methodical approach to locate Whooping Cranes is to fly in a light aircraft along the Platte River at dawn or dusk. At dawn, the birds are close to leaving the roost to migrate north or south, or to feed in adjacent wet meadows and croplands. At dusk, the birds may be just arriving from meadows and cropland. Whether at dawn or dusk, there is a narrow window to visually detect roosting Whooping Cranes.

During 23 March to 1 May, 1984-1993, we flew a Cessna 172 daily, weather permitting, along the Platte River from east to west between the Highway 34 bridge southeast of Grand Island, Nebraska, and the J-2 irrigation canal return near Lexington (143 km). One of us (JGS) piloted the aircraft during 1987-1993, accompanied by one observer (WGJ, CAF, or other). Our ground speed was about 110 kph, our altitude was 120-150 m above ground level (agl), and we flew along the south bank of the Platte River. We departed Hall County Regional Airport north of Grand Island at 0700 CST and usually returned around 0840 CST via the north bank of the Platte. During 1987-1989 springs, we also flew along the Platte during the evening beginning at 1900 CST and returning to the airport by 2040 CST. Fall surveys were carried out during 1-31 October 1987-1990 from 0700 to 0840 CST. Upon detecting a suspect Whooping Crane, we descended to 60-90 m agl to inspect the species or object. The Whooping Crane is easily visible, as are scattered American White Pelicans (*Pelecanus erythrorhynchos*) (Sidle et al. 1990b, Sidle et al. 1993). We commonly inspected the pelicans as well as large pieces of white plastic, very light-colored drift wood, and an occasional white cow.

We carried out 191 spring morning flights, 66 spring evening flights, and 106 fall morning flights for a total of 363 flights (508 hr of flight time). We made 35 Whooping Crane observations (22 Whooping Cranes), typically in the wide channels described by Faanes et al. (1992). Eighteen of these Whooping Crane observations were of the same Whooping Crane that roosted daily with flocks of Sandhill Cranes during March-April, 1987 (Faanes and Lingle 1988). We consistently located this Whooping Crane without pre-flight knowledge of its location and despite its presence in large flocks of Sandhill Cranes. Of the remaining 17 observations, nine observations (11 Whooping Cranes) were of Whooping Cranes that had already been reported by the public the evening prior to a

morning flight or in a diurnal observation reported before an evening flight. We made eight observations of ten unreported Whooping Cranes at five separate locations. For a substantial investment in flight and personnel time, the aerial surveys almost doubled the number of already observed Whooping Cranes.

The central Platte River valley is flat with open meadows and cropland. Feeding Whooping Cranes are easily visible in the valley and there is enough sensitivity to the Whooping Crane that the likelihood of ground sightings of Whooping Cranes is high. However, some Whooping Cranes pass unnoticed or are observed but not reported. They are, after all, one of the rarest species on Earth. During our 1984-1993 aerial surveys, the world Whooping Crane population ranged from 86 to 146 birds and numbered 237 in 2006 (U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service news release dated 18 December 2006).

Discussion about the Whooping Crane's use of the Platte River continues (Chavez-Ramirez 2004), although the central Platte is still recognized as important stopover habitat (Canadian Wildlife Service and U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service 2005). The National Research Council (2005) concluded that there are no apparently suitable alternatives to replace the central Platte River in its function as habitat for migrating Whooping Cranes, and loss of Platte River habitat would have potentially serious consequences for the species. Combined aerial and ground detection of Whooping Cranes will likely reveal more about the stopover behavior of the Whooping Crane along the Platte River.

We thank G.R. Lingle and the late P. J. Currier for participating in some of the Whooping Crane searches.

LITERATURE CITED

- Austin, J. E., and A. L. Richert. *A Comprehensive Review of Observational and Site Evaluation Data of Migrant Whooping Cranes in the United States, 1943-1999*. U.S. Geological Survey, Northern Prairie Wildlife Research Center, Jamestown, North Dakota, 2001. Northern Prairie Wildlife Research Center Online. 01 July 2003.
<<http://www.npwrc.usgs.gov/resource/2003/wcdata/wcdata.htm>>
- Canadian Wildlife Service and U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service. "Draft International Recovery Plan for the Whooping Crane." Ottawa: Recovery of Nationally Endangered Wildlife (RENEW), and U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Albuquerque, New Mexico. 2005.
- Chavez-Ramirez, F. "Whooping Cranes in Nebraska: Historical and Recent Trends." *The Braided River* 20 (2004):1, 3-5.
- Currier, P.J. "Woody Vegetation Expansion and Continuing Declines in Open Channel Habitat on the Platte River, Nebraska." *Proceedings of the North American Crane Workshop* 7 (1997):141-152.
- Faanes, C. A., and G. R. Lingle. "Length of Stay Record for a Whooping Crane in Nebraska." *The Prairie Naturalist* 20 (1988):46.
- Faanes, C. A., D. H. Johnson, and G. R. Lingle. "Characteristics of Whooping Crane Roost Sites in the Platte River." *Proceedings of the North American Crane Workshop* 6 (1992):90-94.

- Faanes, C. A. "Factors Influencing the future of Whooping Crane Habitat on the Platte River in Nebraska." *Proceedings of the 1988 North American Crane Workshop, River Ranch Outdoor Resort, Lake Wales, Florida, February 22-24, 1988*, D. A. Wood, ed., 1992, pp. 101-109. Florida Game and Fresh Water Fish Commission Nongame Wildlife Program Technical Report 12.
- Faanes, C. A., and D. B. Bowman. "Relationship of Channel Maintenance Flows to Whooping Crane Use of the Platte River." *Proceedings of the 1988 North American Crane Workshop, River Ranch Outdoor Resort, Lake Wales, Florida, February 22-24, 1988*. D. A. Wood, ed., 1992, pp. 111-116. Florida Game and Fresh Water Fish Commission Nongame Wildlife Program Technical Report 12.
- Johnson, K. A. "Whooping Crane Use of the Platte River, Nebraska -- History, Status, and Management Recommendations." *Proceedings 1981 Crane Workshop*. J. C. Lewis, ed., 1982, pp. 33-44. National Audubon Society, Tavernier, Florida.
- Lingle, G. R., P. J. Currier, and K. Lingle. "Physical Characteristics of a Whooping Crane Roost Site on the Platte River, Hall County, Nebraska." *Prairie Naturalist* 16 (1984):39-44.
- Lingle, G. R., K. J. Strom, and J. W. Ziewitz. "Whooping Crane Roost Site Characteristics on the Platte River, Buffalo County, Nebraska." *The Nebraska Bird Review* 54 (1986):36-39.
- Lingle, G. R., G. A. Wingfield, and J. W. Ziewitz. "The Migration Ecology of Whooping Cranes in Nebraska, U.S.A." *Proceedings of the International Crane Foundation, Workshop, 1-10 May, 1987, Qiqihar, Heilongjiang Province, People's Republic of China*. J. Harris, ed., 1991, pp. 395-401.
- National Research Council. *Endangered and Threatened Species of the Platte River*. The National Academies Press, Washington, DC, 2005.
- Richert, A. L. "Multiple Scale Analyses of Whooping Crane Habitat in Nebraska." Ph.D. Dissertation, University of Nebraska, Lincoln, 1999.
- Sidle, J. G., P. J. Currier, and E. D. Miller. 1989. "Changing Habitats in the Platte River Valley of Nebraska." *Prairie Naturalist* 21 (1989):91-104.
- Sidle, J. G., M. LeValley, and J. G. VanDerwalker. "FERC Attempts to Protect Platte River." *National Wetlands Newsletter* 12.4 (1990a):8-10.
- Sidle, J. G., C. A. Faanes, and W. G. Jobman. "Occurrence of American White Pelicans on the Platte River, Nebraska." *Prairie Naturalist* 22 (1990b):165-170.
- Sidle, J.G., H. Nagel, R. Clark, C. Gilbert, D. Stuart, K. Wilburn, and M. Orr. 1993. "Aerial Thermal Infrared Imaging of Sandhill Cranes on the Platte River, Nebraska." *Remote Sensing of Environment* 43 (1993):333-342.
- Ziewitz, J. W. "Whooping Crane Riverine Roosting Habitat Suitability Model." *Proceedings of the 1988 North American Crane Workshop, River Ranch Outdoor Resort, Lake Wales, Florida, February 22-24, 1988*. D. A. Wood, ed., 1992, pp. 78-81. Florida Game and Fresh Water Fish Commission Nongame Wildlife Program Technical Report 12.

WHITE-CHEEKED GEESE IN NEBRASKA

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

INTRODUCTION

The intent of this paper is to summarize the current state of knowledge regarding White-cheeked Goose subspecies whose occurrence can be documented in Nebraska. The name "White-cheeked Goose" is used in reference to the various taxa included within the two species Canada Goose (*Branta canadensis*) and Cackling Goose (*B. hutchinsii*), as constituted by the American Ornithologists' Union (AOU; 2004). Using culmen measurements, confirmation of both species' and the "expected" subspecies' occurrence in Nebraska was documented, but culmen measurements alone could not confirm occurrence of any of the "unexpected" subspecies.

TAXONOMY

As many as 10 subspecies of White-cheeked Goose were described by the AOU (1957), five of which (*interior*, *maxima*, *parvipes*, *taverneri*, and *hutchinsii*) were assumed to occur in Nebraska by Rapp et al. (1958). Since then there have been additional attempts to delineate subspecific relationships. Palmer (1976) attempted to clarify the evolutionary histories and relationships among populations and modified the AOU (1957) classification. These works and others have left considerable taxonomic confusion that also impacts our understanding of the subspecies found in Nebraska. The most recent treatment is that of Mowbray et al. (2002), who listed 11 subspecies of White-cheeked Goose. Genetic studies have shown that two groups can be discerned within these 11 subspecies, one containing 7 large subspecies and the other 4 small subspecies. Recently, the AOU (2004) designated these two groups full species, Canada Goose (*B. canadensis*), consisting of the 7 large subspecies *canadensis*, *interior*, *maxima*, *moffitti*, *parvipes*, *occidentalis*, and *fulva*, and Cackling Goose (*B. hutchinsii*), consisting of the 4 small subspecies *hutchinsii*, *taverneri*, *minima*, and *leucopareia*.

PUTATIVE NEBRASKA OCCURRENCE

According to ranges described by Mowbray et al. (2002), Bellrose (1976), and Palmer (1976), subspecies of Canada Goose likely to occur in Nebraska are *interior*, *maxima*, *parvipes*, and *moffitti*, and of Cackling Goose the only likely subspecies is *hutchinsii*.

B. c. interior is a medium-large goose that breeds in east-central Canada and migrates primarily along the Mississippi Flyway, with small numbers using the Missouri Valley, and winters from Squaw Creek NWR in northwest Missouri southward. This subspecies would be expected in eastern Nebraska as a migrant, but is a large goose and thus difficult to separate in the field from *maxima* and *moffitti* and their intergrades (see below).

There are old reports of occurrence of *B. c. minima* in Nebraska, but cited evidence (measurements, see below) does not exclude *hutchinsii*. More recent field observations of small brown-breasted geese are more problematic, however; similar reports in Ontario and on the Atlantic Coast have been considered dark examples of *hutchinsii* or escapes (Abraham 2005). Nevertheless, it is possible that occasional strays of the northwest Pacific Coast and Alaska populations of Cackling Goose might occur in Nebraska.

METHODS

Armed with this background information, I decided to investigate which White-cheeked Goose subspecies could be documented for Nebraska. An interesting paper was published by DuMont and Swenk (1934), who presented measurements and, importantly, gender, of 404 specimens of White-cheeked Geese collected in the central Platte Valley 1 Oct-11 Dec 1884 and 18 Mar-11 Apr 1885. DuMont and Swenk concluded that 17 of the 404 were *hutchinsii* (4%), 325 *leucopareia* (80%), and 62 *canadensis* (15%). At that time, *leucopareia* was used for birds currently named *parvipes* or *moffitti*, and *canadensis* for larger birds currently *maxima*, *moffitti*, or *interior*.

Swenk also noted measurements of specimens encountered in various collections that he visited, notably those of Brookings, Black, and Olsen, but also others. The few White-cheeked Goose specimens for which he recorded data were included in this study. The University of Nebraska State Museum (UNSM) collection has a few skins and skulls of White-cheeked Geese. These were examined by the author and Joel Jorgensen in January 2005 with the expert help of Thomas Labedz, Collection Manager.

A widely-reported measurement was chosen to determine subspecies, "exposed culmen", sometimes referred to as "bill" (Palmer 1976). This measurement is the distance from bill tip along the top of the culmen (mandible, or upper bill) to the base of the first feathers. In White-cheeked Geese, males generally have larger culmen measurements than females. Although there is considerable overlap between subspecies and gender in this measurement, the number of available Nebraska specimens of known gender help in improving accuracy of identification. I compared culmen data from the sources discussed above to reference measurements from Palmer (1976) and Mowbray et al. (2002) and used this as a basis for confirming the presence of White-cheeked Goose subspecies in Nebraska. Only culmen length was used; the intent of this study was to see whether these data could confirm at least the occurrence in Nebraska of Cackling and Canada Geese, as well as the expected subspecies. Thus a conservative approach required placing only those measurements which could be assigned unequivocally within known ranges for the expected subspecies, and omitting the remainder.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Table 1 summarizes culmen measurements found in the various sources examined and compares these to ranges cited by Mowbray et al (2002) and Palmer (1976); the measurements from these two sources were combined but kept separate by gender, and are shown in Table 1 as "reference". Only 160 of the 404 specimens listed by DuMont and Swenk (1934) could be safely assigned to a subspecies; only these are included in Table 1.

TABLE 1. Culmen measurements (mm) of Nebraska White-cheeked Geese.

| | <i>hutchinsii</i> | <i>parvipes</i> | <i>interior</i> | <i>maxima</i> |
|-------------------------|-------------------|------------------|--------------------|------------------|
| FEMALES | | | | |
| reference | 31.7-39.3 | 36.0-45.5 | 43.0-56.0 | 50.5-63.0 |
| non-overlap range | <35.9 | 39.4-42.9 | 45.6-50.4 | >56.0 |
| DuMont and Swenk (1934) | 33.0-35.6 (n = 9) | 40.6 (n = 38) | 45.7-48.3 (n = 40) | 63.5 (n = 1) |
| UNSM skull (1991) | | | | 69.3 (n = 1) |
| MALES | | | | |
| reference | 32.3-43.8 | 38.0-46.0 | 46.0-61.0 | 55.6-72.0 |
| non-overlap range | <38.0 | 43.9-45.9 | 46.1-55.5 | >61.0 |
| DuMont and Swenk (1934) | 35.6 (n = 8) | 45.7 (n = 32) | 48.3-53.3 (n = 30) | 63.5 (n = 2) |
| UNSM skin (1990) | 34.9 (n = 1) | | | |

Although only 160 of the 440 specimens listed by DuMont and Swenk (1934) could safely be assigned to subspecies (the others were within areas of overlapping measurements between subspecies), only one of the 440 was entirely outside the reference ranges of the four subspecies listed above. This was a very small male *hutchinsii*, culmen 30.5 mm. While this measurement is within the range of *minima*, it is probably more likely that this bird was small as a result of malnourishment or disease, a frequent phenomenon in wild geese (Leafloor et al. 1998, Abraham 2005). Also, young birds in their first fall may be only 90% of adult size (Abraham 2005). That the assignments in Table 1 are plausible is supported by the fairly even numbers of males and females assigned to each taxon; there is no reason to believe the collectors favored either gender, and White-cheeked Geese tend to be paired throughout their lives. It is also assumed here that approximately equal numbers of male and female White-cheeked Geese occur in Nebraska.

The data in Table 1 confirm the occurrence in Nebraska of two species of White-cheeked Goose, Canada and Cackling, and within Canada, three subspecies, *parvipes*, *interior*, and *maxima*. At the time of collection of the specimens analyzed by Swenk, *maxima* was rare; this is supported by the finding that only one male and two females from DuMont and Swenk's paper shown in Table 1 were assigned to *maxima*. The number of birds assigned to *interior* is somewhat surprising, as this subspecies is generally thought to occur east of Nebraska, perhaps west to the

Missouri River Valley. It is possible that some of the birds assigned to *interior* are in fact *moffitti*, but this is unlikely in that when the DuMont and Swenk specimens were collected in the 1880s there were no re-introduced *moffitti*, as there are today. Thus the data suggest that *interior* may indeed occur in central Nebraska in good numbers, or possibly that in the 1880s it occurred rather further westward than it does today. DuMont and Swenk (1934) assigned 4% of the studied specimens to *hutchinsii*; Table 1 assigns 16 of the 160 specimens listed to *hutchinsii*, about 16%. This discrepancy possibly results from Swenk's inclusion in *leucopareia* of many of the larger *hutchinsii*.

OCCURRENCE OF OTHER WHITE-CHEEKED GOOSE TAXA IN NEBRASKA

Earlier authors mentioned other taxa of White-cheeked Goose occurring in Nebraska. Rapp et al. (1958) listed *taverneri* without documentation, and currently this name is used for Alaskan breeders that winter along the Pacific Coast. DuMont and Swenk (1934) used the names *leucopareia* and *canadensis*; the former is now restricted to the population breeding in the Aleutian Islands and wintering in California, and the latter to the easternmost subspecies of Canada Goose, breeding in eastern Canada and wintering along the Atlantic Coast.

Currently, many re-established populations of Canada Geese in Nebraska are intergrades of *maxima* and *moffitti*, and also possibly *interior*. These (along with *canadensis*) are the largest subspecies of Canada Goose. Although many re-established Canada Geese are sedentary, a large portion of the population undertakes an extensive molt-migration to the Hudson and James Bays area. According to Mowbray et al. (2002), 70% of these molting birds were 1-2 years old, with the remainder mostly failed adult breeders. This molt migration takes place in late May through mid-June, and returning birds would be expected with the usual fall influx of Canada Geese. Thus there should be a component of fall migrant Canada Geese that are *moffitti/maxima* intergrades. If these birds are returning from the Hudson and James Bay area, they would mingle with migrating *interior* and *hutchinsii*, which breed in that area, as well as migratory *parvipes* once Nebraska is reached. By comparison with these taxa, *moffitti/maxima* intergrades would appear very large except when with *interior*, which may only occur in numbers in extreme eastern Nebraska.

There is no documented occurrence of migratory Great Basin *moffitti* for Nebraska, despite the nearness of its migratory corridor to the western Panhandle. It seems entirely likely that a few migratory *moffitti* occur in the Panhandle. The Hi-Line Management Unit of Canada Geese (Hansen and Nelson 1964, Bellrose 1970) consists entirely of *moffitti* (Mowbray et al 2002); this population breeds east to north-central Colorado and migrates a short distance southward, wintering east to central Colorado (Mowbray et al 2002). The data in DuMont and Swenk (1934) contained no measurements that unequivocally confirm occurrence of *moffitti*; this is not surprising in that these specimens were collected in central Nebraska, where migratory *moffitti* would not be expected.

Recently, field reports have been received of small, dark-breasted geese identified as *minima*. Their identity remains a question; *minima* would be unlikely to occur in Nebraska as it breeds in western Alaska and winters in the Pacific Northwest. Swenk (Notes) cites measurements of two specimens considered to be *minima*; both, however, can be assigned safely to *hutchinsii*. Abraham (2005) cites

banding data that show that of over 9000 White-cheeked Geese banded between 1975 and 1994 in the central and western arctic breeding areas none were recovered east of the Missouri River.

LITERATURE CITED

- Abraham, K. "Cackling Goose, NOT New to Ontario." *OFO News* 23 (2005):2-6.
- [AOU] American Ornithologists' Union. *The AOU Checklist of North American Birds*. 5th ed. Baltimore: Port City Press, 1957.
- "Forty-fifth Supplement to the American Ornithologists' Union Checklist of North American Birds." *The Auk* 121 (2004): 985-995.
- Bellrose, F.C. *Ducks, Geese & Swans of North America*. Harrisburg, PA: Stackpole Books, 1976.
- DuMont, P.A., and M.H. Swenk. "A Systematic Analysis of the Measurements of 404 Nebraska Specimens of Geese of the *Branta canadensis* Group, Formerly Contained in the D.H. Talbot Collection." *The Nebraska Bird Review* 2 (1934):103-116.
- Hansen, H.A., and H.K. Nelson. "Honkers Large and Small." *Waterfowl Tomorrow*. U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service, 1964.
- Leafloor, J.O., C.D. Ankney, and D.H. Rusch. "Environmental Effects on Body Size of Canada Geese." *The Auk* 115 (1998):26-33.
- McLaren, I. Re: Small Canada and Cackling Goose. BIRDWG01@LISTSERV Archives. 24 July 2004.
- Mowbray, T.B., C.R. Ely, J.S. Sedinger, and R.E. Trost. "Canada Goose (*Branta canadensis*)."
The Birds of North America, No. 682 (A. Poole and F. Gill, eds.). The Birds of North America, Inc. Philadelphia, PA, 2002.
- Pearce, J.M., B.J. Pierson, S.L. Talbot, D.V. Dickerson, D. Kraege, and K.T. Schribner. "A Genetic Evaluation of Morphology Used to Identify Harvested Canada Geese." *J. Wildlife Management* 64 (2000): 863-874.
- Rapp, W.F. Jr., J.L.C. Rapp, H.E. Baumgarten, and R.A. Moser. *Revised Checklist of Nebraska Birds*. Occasional Papers 5. Crete, Nebraska: The Nebraska Ornithologists' Union, 1958.
- Shields, G.F., and A.C. Wilson. "Subspecies of Canada Goose (*Branta canadensis*) Have Distinct Mitochondrial DNAs." *Evolution* 41 (1987): 662-666.
- Swenk, M.H. Notes before 1925. Bird notes from A.M. Brooking of Hastings, C.A. Black of Kearney, and B.J. Olson of Kearney, based chiefly on their collections, up to January 1, 1925. Typed manuscript in NOU Archives.
- Van Wagner, C.E., and A.J. Baker. "Association Between Mitochondrial DNA and Morphological Evolution in Canada Geese." *Journal of Molecular Biology* 31 (1990): 373-382.

Correction to Winter Bird Numbers Article

Editor's Note: We regret that there was an error in the text of the Paul Johnsgard article "Recent Changes in Winter Bird Numbers at Lincoln, Nebraska" published in the March 2006 *Nebraska Bird Review* (Volume 74 Number 1). The last sentence in the first full paragraph on page 18 should read: "(The House Sparrow is declining annually at a rate of 2.5%, and the House Finch is increasing at an annual rate of 1.15%.)"

"Letter of Information" Excerpts

In the early years of the Nebraska Ornithologists' Union, which was founded in 1899, the organization published its *Proceedings*, yearly through 1902 and less frequently for the following 13 years. Beginning in 1916, the NOU allied itself with the Wilson Ornithological Club, and its annual proceedings were published by that organization for the next nine years. In 1925, distribution of a mimeographed "Letter of Information" began, with NOU Secretary-Treasurer Myron H. Swenk acting as editor. These Letters, which contain announcements, accounts of meetings and field trips, and notes on bird sightings from members, were published through 1932. They bridged the gap between the more formal publication of the Wilson Ornithological Club and *The Nebraska Bird Review*, which began in 1933.

A few original sets of the Letters of Information are preserved in the NOU Archives in Nebraska Hall at the University of Nebraska at Lincoln. The Letters range from serious to whimsical and provide a fascinating glimpse into birding in Nebraska in the 1920s and 1930s. In upcoming issues of *The Nebraska Bird Review*, we will reprint excerpts from the Letters, as space allows, for a view of what our organization was like 75+ years ago.

February 10, 1927 Letter of Information #20

Rev. J. H. Bates of Red Cloud reports under date of January 19 that for the past month or so, large flocks of the Saskatchewan Horned Lark have been feeding on cane seed and similar seed in that vicinity. Rev. Bates sends a specimen of these birds that was brought to him on January 18 to enable accurate identification. He reports that the birds are quite shy. Also, Rev. Bates makes mention that Miss Emma Smith of Franklin, Nebraska, reports that eight Pinyon Jays are wintering in that vicinity. Rev. Bates has rather made a special study of the Pinyon Jay in Nebraska, and says that these are the first birds of the species to be reported from that part of the state for several years.

October 6, 1930 Letter of Information #53

Under date of September 24, Mrs. A. H. Jones writes that Mr. Lockwood, who lives along the Platte River north of Hastings and makes a specialty of growing melons, lost his entire crop of early melons because of depredations by the Ring-necked Pheasant. Lack of water, the Platte River being entirely dry at that time, is considered by Mr. Lockwood to be the cause of these attacks on his melon patch. By actual count the pheasants destroyed 482 of Mr. Lockwood's melons. In a 40-acre field he counted 17 coveys of pheasants, which indicates the abundance of these birds in his locality.

November 15, 1932 Letter of Information #68

Under date of November 1, Mr. Wilson Tout of North Platte sends in a fine specimen of Double-crested Cormorant shot near that place. Mr. Tout reports that there are a great many Lesser Canada Geese ("Hutchins Goose") migrating through there this year, even more than of the larger form, the Common Canada Goose, though he observes that it may be a little early for the main flight of the latter birds.

The Nebraska Bird Review is published quarterly by the Nebraska Ornithologists' Union, Inc., as its official journal, and is sent to members not in arrears of dues. Annual subscription rates (on a calendar-year basis only): \$15 in the United States, \$18 in Canada and \$30 in all other countries, payable in advance. Single copies are \$4 each, postpaid, in the United States, \$5 in Canada, and \$8 elsewhere. Send orders for back issues to Mary Lou Pritchard, NOU Librarian, c/o University of Nebraska State Museum, W-436 Nebraska Hall, Lincoln, NE 68588-0514.

Memberships in the NOU (on a calendar-year basis only): Active, \$15; Sustaining, \$25; Student, \$10; Family Active, \$20; Family Sustaining, \$30; Life, \$250. Send dues and subscription requests to Betty Grenon, NOU Treasurer. (see address below) Contributions to the NOU are tax deductible.

Send manuscripts and notes on bird sightings to Janis Paseka, Editor. (see address below) Send quarterly bird reports to Ross Silcock. (see address below)

President and Newsletter Editor: Dave Heidt, 1703 Hilltop Drive, Norfolk, NE 68701-2031; daveh@northeastcollege.com

Vice-President: Urban Lehner, 15526 Pierce Circle, Omaha, NE 68144; urbanity@hotmail.com

Secretary: Kevin Poague, 379 S. 46th St., Lincoln, NE; kpoague@audubon.org

Treasurer: Betty Grenon, 1409 Childs Road East, Bellevue, NE 68005; grenon925@aol.com

Librarian: Mary Lou Pritchard, 6325 O Street #515, Lincoln, NE 68510

Directors:

Jan Uttecht, Box 823, Stanton, NE 68779; jautek@stanton.net (2007)

Loren Padelford, 1405 Little John Road, Bellevue, NE 68005; lpdldfrd@juno.com (2008)

Steve Lamphere, 3101 Washington St., Apt. 98, Bellevue, NE 68005; kingfisher65@aol.com (2009)

Records Committee Chairman: Mark Brogie, Box 316, Creighton, NE 68729; mbrogie@esu1.org

Editor of The Nebraska Bird Review: Janis Paseka, 1585 Co. Rd. 14 Blvd., Ames, NE 68621; paseka@tvsonline.net

Occurrence Report Compiler: Ross Silcock, P.O. Box 57, Tabor, IA 51653; silcock@rosssilcock.com

Breeding Bird Atlas Project and Nest Records Coordinator: Wayne Mollhoff, 2354 Euclid St., Ashland NE 68003; wmollhoff@netscape.net

NOU Website: <http://rip.physics.unk.edu/NOU/>

Nebraska Birdline: c/o Josef Kren 402-721-5487, ext. 6490, or 800-642-8382, ext. 6490, or birdsne@yahoo.com

Nebraska Ornithologists' Union, Inc.
3745 Garfield
Lincoln, NE 68506-1028

NONPROFIT
ORG.
U.S. POSTAGE
PAID
Lincoln, NE
Permit No. 756

Address Service Requested

Table of Contents

| | |
|--|-----|
| Summer Field Report, June - July 2006 by W. Ross Silcock | 78 |
| Aerial Searches for Whooping Cranes along the Platte River, Nebraska by John G. Sidle, Wallace G. Jobman, Craig A. Faanes | 95 |
| White-cheeked Geese in Nebraska by W. Ross Silcock | 99 |
| Correction to Paul Johnsgard's "Recent Changes in Winter Bird Numbers at Lincoln, Nebraska" (Vol. 74 No. 1) | 105 |
| Excerpts from the NOU's "Letters of Information" | 106 |
| Subscription and Organization Information | 107 |