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Summer Field Report, June-July 1994

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SUMMER FIELD REPORT, JUNE-JULY 1994

Compiled by

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INTRODUCTION

I (Ross Silcock) would like to point out that observers who have information which adds to, modifies, or corrects this report are urged to send it to me; it is better published late than not at all! I like to think of these reports as a team effort to advance Nebraska ornithology.

Two nesting phenomena were significant this year: the continuing presence of nesting Clark's Grebes at the west end of L. McConaughy, and the stunning increase in numbers of nesting Mississippi Kites in Ogallala. Perhaps missed by some (it was in the Spring report) was the suggestive presence through June of a pair of Sharp-shinned Hawks near Morse Bluff in northern Saunders Co. Of similar significance was the presence of a Merlin on the Pine Ridge. Rosché noted that some species of waterbirds began nesting activities much earlier than normal in w NE.

Little information was received on the following dabbling ducks, all of which are regular nesters in some numbers in sandhill marshes and, in some cases, the Rainwater Basin and elsewhere: Mallard, Northern Pintail, Blue-winged Teal, Northern Shoveler, Gadwall, and American Wigeon; I assume that this means that numbers were as expected by observers and that none were noted out of their normal summer ranges, i.e. a "normal" year. Ditto the diving ducks Canvasback and Redhead.

Shorebirds were plentiful from late June onwards; RCR reported 16 species in a flooded wheat field south of Ogallala on 13 Jul. An interesting ongoing study by NPPD of Piping Plover and Least Tern productivity on islands and sandpits bodes well for the future of these birds in Nebraska, especially in that it demonstrates that successful fledging can occur despite the vagaries of river flow, natural or artificial.

Chuck-will's-widow appears to be expanding its range along the Missouri and Platte valleys; it may now occupy as much territory in the state as Whip-poor-will.

Most exciting was the possibility (unconfirmed as yet) that Three-toed Woodpeckers moved into the Smiley Canyon burn this summer. I would have expected Black-backed first, or of course Lewis', but who's complaining?

Of interest is the summer status of four Ponderosa pine species occurring in the Wildcat Hills; all breed on the Pine Ridge, but whether they do so in the Wildcat Hills is uncertain. These are Red-breasted and Pygmy Nuthatches, Yellow-rumped Warbler, and Red Crossbill.

Very interesting was an apparent range expansion by Savannah Sparrow; a nest was found in Scotts Bluff Co., for the southernmost in Nebraska so far.

SPECIES ACCOUNTS

Initials in parentheses refer to observers; a list follows this report. * = documented; CLNWR: Crescent Lake NWR; Co. = County; FF = Fontenelle Forest; fide = second-hand report; m. ob. = many observers; NBR = Nebraska Bird Review; NE = Nebraska; n,s,e,w = north, south, east, west; NPNWR = North Platte NWR; NPPD = Nebraska Public Power District; NWR = National Wildlife Refuge; Res. = Reservoir; SP = State Park; WMA = Wildlife Management Area; Jun =

June, Jul = July, Aug = August.

Gazetteer (place names, not listed here, can be located in a road atlas):

Arbor Lodge Farm, SP	Otoe Co.
Calamus Res.	Loup Co.
Chadron SP	Dawes Co.
Clear Creek WMA	Keith Co.
CLNWR	Garden Co.
FF	Sarpy Co.
Fort Robinson SP	Dawes Co.
Funk WPA	Phelps Co.
Gifford Farm	Sarpy Co.
Gilbert Baker WA	Sioux Co.
Indian Cave SP	Nemaha-Richardson Cos.
Jack Sinn Memorial WMA	Lancaster Co.
La Platte	Sarpy Co.
Mahoney SP	Cass Co.
L. McConaughy	Keith Co.
Merritt Res.	Cherry Co.
L. Minatare	Scotts Bluff Co.
NPNWR	Scotts Bluff Co.
Offutt Base L.	Sarpy Co.
Rowe Sanctuary	Buffalo Co.
Sacramento-Wilcox SWMA	Phelps Co.
Schramm SP	Sarpy Co.
Smiley Canyon	Sioux Co.
Sowbelly Canyon	Sioux Co.
Stagecoach L.	Lancaster Co.
Stateline Island	Scotts Bluff Co.
Sutherland Res.	Lincoln Co.
Valentine NWR	Cherry Co.
Walgren L.	Sheridan Co.
Wildcat Hills	Scotts Bluff-Banner Cos.
Winters Creek L.	Scotts Bluff Co.

Common Loon: Single birds appear most years on western NE lakes; most are immatures (prebreeders). This year, 1-2 were at NPNWR through the period (LMa, fide AKe), while 1 was on Calamus Res. 14 Jun (RH_a, LR_a).

Pied-billed Grebe: Best count for this common statewide breeder was 27 in Phelps Co. on 23 Jul (RH_a, LR_a). An unusually early nest, with 2 eggs, was at Lakeside on 17 May (RCR). None were reported from e NE.

Horned Grebe: The only report was of 2 at CLNWR on 28 Jul (LMa). This species is not known to breed currently in NE.

Eared Grebe: The only reports were from the west, where modest counts of 27 and 13 were made at CLNWR (LMa) and NPNWR (fide AKe), respectively. Nesting began early, with eggs at Lakeside on 7 May; 14 nests were there 17 May (RCR). No large "colonies" were noted, however (RCR). There were a few nests at scattered locations in Sheridan Co. 8 Jul (RCR, DJR).

Western Grebe: This species breeds regularly in small numbers in the Sandhills, but only very recently at the w end of L. McConaughy (RCR). This year about 20-25 adults with young were there on 16 Jul for the 2nd year of nesting (RCR, DJR). There was a large concentration of 450 non-breeders at the e end of L. McConaughy on 16 Jul (RCR, DJR), and 125 birds at the w end 12 Jun (BP, LP). A growing colony is at Bingham, where 12-15 broods were seen on 8 Jul (RCR). At CLNWR the best count was only 14 on 28 Jul (LMa). Farthest e were 6 on Merritt Res. on 16 Jul (JJo).

- Clark's Grebe:** Several adults with young were seen at the w end of L. McConaughy in Jun, Jul (BP,LP,RCR,m.ob.), and early Aug (WRS,SJD). The first nesting record for NE was in this location in 1993 (RCR). One with a suspected Western Grebe mate was at Walgren L. on 17 Jun (BP,LP).
- American White Pelican:** Nonbreeders begin southward movement in late Jul and are fairly common in w NE along with a few summering birds; best counts were 53 at Merritt Res. on 16 Jul (JJo) and 51 at CLNWR on 13 Jul (LMa).
- Double-crested Cormorant:** Nesting occurred at a new location at Alkali L., Cherry Co., where 8 adults were nesting on 13 May, and 6 nests were occupied at the Sutherland Res. colony on 18 May (RCR). Best counts were modest: 21 at NPNWR on 11 Jul (fide AKe) and 15 at both CLNWR on 8 Jun (LMa) and in Cherry Co. 1 Jul (RHa,LRa).
- American Bittern:** Encouraging was a count of 5 at CLNWR on 13 Jul (LMa). This species is still fairly common in w Sandhills marshes, but apparently is declining in many parts of its range.
- Least Bittern:** No reports were received; this species is rather locally distributed in NE, mainly in the e.
- Great Blue Heron:** Summering birds were noted statewide; breeding occurs throughout NE, although less commonly south of the Platte valley. Rosché located 9 rookeries containing 81 nests in Webster, Harlan, Hitchcock, Cheyenne, Kimball, Sheridan, and Sioux Cos; nesting success was good (RCR). Best counts, most likely of post-breeding groups, were 24 at NPNWR on 11 Jul (fide AKe) and 23 in Phelps Co. on 23 Jul (RHa,LRa). Information on location of heronries of any species would be of interest.
- Great Egret:** This species is rare during the nesting season, especially in w NE. The only reports were from the far w, at CLNWR on 8 Jun (LMa), a rather late date even for a spring migrant, and 2 at Box Butte Res. on 30 Jul (RCR,DJR), probably post-breeding dispersers.
- Snowy Egret:** Also rare in midsummer, the only reports, probably post-breeding wanderers, were of 2 at CLNWR 13 Jul and again on 28 Jul (LMa).
- Little Blue Heron:** This species is most often encountered in se NE as a post-breeding disperser; probably in this category were 2 in the marsh at FF on 16 Jul (BP,LP).
- Cattle Egret:** Summering birds of this species are usually associated with wet conditions and significant standing water, in which situations breeding often occurs. Indeed, 3 nests were found in willows at the w end of L. McConaughy on 6 Aug (SJD,WRS); 10-15 adults were present. Nesting was not noted for the only other reports: 45 near North Platte for 3 weeks in late Jun and early Jul (WWy), and 11 at LaPlatte on 20 Jun (BP,LP).
- Green Heron:** Towards the nw edge of its range was 1 in Blaine Co. on 3 Jul (RHa,LRa). Any reports from the nw half of NE are of interest.
- Black-crowned Night-Heron:** Breeding occurs commonly in Sandhills marshes, and possibly in the Rainwater Basin. While no nesting was reported, best counts were 8 at CLNWR on 13 Jul (LMa) and 4 in Phelps Co. on 23 Jul (RHa,LRa), possibly post-breeding dispersers.
- White-faced Ibis:** Several were found, although no evidence of nesting was obtained; there are a handful of previous breeding records. Single late spring migrants were at CLNWR on 8 Jun (LMa) and in Morrill Co. on 17 Jun (LMa). Likely post-breeding

dispersers were a large group of 11 at Sacramento-Wilcox WMA on 9 Jul and 2 at Funk WPA the same day (RHa,LRa), as well as a single at Clear Creek WMA on 16 Jul (RCR,DJR) and another near Crawford on 30 Jul (RCR,DJR).

Trumpeter Swan: Four nesting locations were reported, 3 with hatched young later in the season; this species appears to be widely established on Sandhills lakes. A nest with 1 cygnet was seen at Whitman 17 Jun (BP,LP), another 2 miles e of Hyannis on 17 May (RCR) had 5 cygnets on 17 Jun (BP,LP), and a third nest 5 miles w of Merriman on 13 May (RCR) had 1 cygnet on 17 Jul (JJo). A fourth nest was at Doc L., Grant Co., on 17 May (RCR).

Canada Goose: A total of 1030 were at NPNWR on 14 Jun (fide AKe). Nesting birds are now widespread throughout the state; Rosché reported nesting in 7 counties e to Lancaster.

Wood Duck: This species is well-established statewide, as exemplified by a count of 85 at NPNWR on 14 Jun (fide AKe), and a brood of 10-11 ducklings at the Gering Sewage Lagoons 1 Jun (AKe).

Green-winged Teal: Few were reported, as expected, as this duck is a rare nester in NE; only 4 were at CLNWR during the period (LMa) with no nesting evidence noted. None were reported e of the panhandle.

Mallard: Rosché considered this "a much better year than in the past 4-5 years", with broods seen as early as 14 May. Furthest e was a brood of 3 ducklings near Lincoln on 9 Jul (LEi).

Northern Pintail: Two broods were at Lakeside on 8 Jul (RCR,DJR) for the only report.

Cinnamon Teal: The only reports were of 2 at Gering Sewage Lagoons on 1 Jun (AKe), 4 at CLNWR on 8 Jun and 2 there on 28 Jul (LMa). No evidence of nesting was provided. This species is a very local nester in the panhandle.

Gadwall: The only report was of a brood of 7 n of Broadwater in Morrill Co. sandhills on 14 Jul (RCR).

Ring-necked Duck: The only report of this species was of 2 at NPNWR 14 Jun (fide AKe). Any summer records, especially in suitable breeding habitat, are of interest, as it is not currently known to breed in NE.

Lesser Scaup: A late migrant male was at the Gordon sewage lagoons on 2 Jun; 3 were there 8 Jul (RCR,DJR).

Hooded Merganser: Surprisingly few were reported. Two were rather far w, n of Ellsworth, on 8 Jul (RCR,DJR). At a more expected location was 1 at Jack Sinn Memorial SWMA (JMo). No further details were provided, but this species probably breeds in heavily wooded riparian areas in e NE and rarely to the w; it often uses Wood Duck boxes.

Common Merganser: There are apparently 2 nesting records for NE, in Custer Co. (NBR 37:45) and "in the North Platte Valley to the w of L. McConaughy" (RCR). Thus of interest were good numbers of summering birds at NPNWR, with an excellent high count of 73 on 11 Jul (fide AKe). Broods should be looked for in this area.

Ruddy Duck: A few reports were received from the breeding range, but most unusual was a bird described as an immature at Offutt Base L. on 4 Jul (RCG). The observer, a long-time resident, noted that it was the first she had ever seen in e NE at this time of year. Broods were at Lakeside on 8 Jul (RCR,DJR).

Osprey: Of interest was 1 at Winters Creek L. and L. Minatare on 24 Jun (LMa). There are no nesting records for NE.

Mississippi Kite: Possibly the most exciting news of the summer was a report of 5 adults soaring over Ogallala on 15 Jul

(RCR,DJR). The next day, along the South Platte River in south Ogallala, an apparently territorial adult was studied (RCR); presence of a nest will be checked when the leaves fall. Later, on 6 Aug (and included here for completeness) at least 11 adults, 3 subadults, 2 nests (both in elms), and at least 2 chicks were found in Ogallala (SJD,WRS). The owner of one of the properties containing a nest tree stated that the birds had nested there for several years. There have been sightings from Ogallala of 1 bird in summer of 1992 and an adult in late May 1993, as well as suspected nesting in late Jul 1993 (RCR), and a few earlier scattered sightings along the e Platte valley, but the 1994 numbers are unprecedented in NE, as was the confirmation of nesting.

Bald Eagle: There were 3 reports of summering birds, including a successful nest at NPNWR which fledged 2 young (AKE). A total of 4 birds were at NPNWR 26 Jun (fide AKE), and 1 was at CLNWR 28 Jul (LMA).

Northern Harrier: The only evidence of nesting was of a female repeatedly carrying nesting material at a site at Alkali L., Cherry Co., on 13 May (RCR). Additional summer sightings were of singles at NPNWR on 14 Jun (fide AKE) and s of Gering 18 Jul (AKE).

Cooper's Hawk: The only report was of 1 at Schramm SP on 29 Jun (JMO). Nesting is possible in the Missouri and lower Platte valleys, although there are only 2 records since 1921 (JED).

Red-shouldered Hawk: No reports were received after the nest in FF fledged young on 6 Jun (see SPRING FIELD REPORT).

Swainson's Hawk: Rosché noted 38 nests this summer; Cherry and Sheridan Cos each had 8, with nests e to Cherry, Grant, Arthur, Keith, and Perkins Cos. Earliest was 18 Apr, and it was an "outstanding" year, with ample food supplies, especially in wet sandhills meadows, allowing most nests to support 2-3 young in mid-July (RCR). Most easterly report was of 2 which summered in Kearney Co. (RHa,LRa).

Red-tailed Hawk: Nest success was very good this year in the 47 nests under observation by Rosché; these nests were located e to Webster Co., and most fledged 2-3 young.

Ferruginous Hawk: Rosché noted 7 nests as follows: 1 successful in Cherry Co.; 2 successful in Dawes Co.; 1 deserted in Grant Co.; 1 deserted in Morrill Co.; 1 with 4 young on 28 May in Sioux Co.; and another deserted in Sioux Co. Additional reports of 1-2 birds came from the breeding range in Dawes (JJo), Garden (LMA), and Cherry (JJo) Cos.

Rough-legged Hawk: A report of 2 at NPNWR 11 Jul was unexpected for this winter visitor and arctic breeder; no details were provided for what would be an extraordinary record.

Golden Eagle: Reports of 1-2 birds were received from within the breeding range in Scotts Bluff Co., where 2 were s of Lyman on 9 Jul and another near Morrill on 23 Jun (AKE).

Merlin: Two intriguing reports were received. In Dawes Co. 1 was seen 17 Jul (JJo); there are 2 nest records for the Pine Ridge. Another was far out of range in Phelps Co. on 23 Jul; it was identified as a female and considered by the observers to be a post-breeding disperser (RHa,LRa). This may be the first Jul report for NE away from the Pine Ridge.

Peregrine Falcon: No report came to hand of the nesting birds on Omaha's Woodmen Tower.

Prairie Falcon: Two at the Scottsbluff National Monument on 9 and 30 Jul (LMA) may have been nesting, but 2 singles, 1 in Buffalo Co. 16 Jul and the other in Sherman Co. 10 Jul (RHa,LRa), were out of the panhandle breeding range and were

thought by the observers to be post-breeding dispersers. One-year-old birds (prebreeders) may spend time wandering about also, sometimes outside the breeding range. It is possible that these 2 sightings were of the same bird.

Ring-necked Pheasant: A healthy total of 95 were at CLNWR 13 Jul (Lma); numbers reported from other parts of the state were much lower.

Greater Prairie-Chicken: The only report was of a large group of 35 se of Loup City on 17 Jul (RHs,LRa).

Sharp-tailed Grouse: An easterly report was of 11 in sandhills prairie w of Eddyville on 30 Jul (RHs,LRa).

Wild Turkey: Scattered reports indicated that this species is established virtually statewide, although no large congregations were noted as yet.

Northern Bobwhite: Furthest north and west were reports from Brown Co. 2 Jul (RHs,LRa) and Scotts Bluff Co., where 1-2 were seen 12 Jun and 30 Jul (Lma). This species is uncommon to rare in the panhandle and northwest NE. Best count was 23 in Buffalo Co. 11 Jun (RHs,LRa).

Virginia Rail: One report of 1 at CLNWR on 8 Jun was received (Lma). This species breeds throughout most of NE, although it is rarely reported in summer.

Sora: A good count of 7 were in Phelps Co. 31 Jul (RHs,LRa); presumably these were resident birds. Sora probably breeds statewide also.

Common Moorhen: Two sightings (same bird?) on 15 and 19 Jun in the marsh at FF (JAl) were among few NE reports of this species, at best of casual occurrence in the state.

American Coot: Nesting began very early with an adult on a nest near Lakeside on 7 May (RCR). The high count of 125 at CLNWR on 13 Jul (Lma) was rather modest.

Piping Plover: The two reports received were of birds in expected haunts: 3 were on the Platte River at Schramm SP on 4 Jun (BP,LP), and another was on the same river near Morse Bluff on 25 Jun (THo). Perhaps surprising to some observers was the drastic difference noted in a 4-year study of productivity between birds nesting in artificial sandpits and those nesting on islands in the Elm Creek-Lexington area (NPPD study published in Omaha World Herald, 29 Jul). The sandpits produced 28 chicks while the islands produced none, although 2 islands near Overton produced 1 chick in 1993. I am interested in hearing comments on this study from observers familiar with it.

Killdeer: Rosché considered this a rather poor nesting year. Earliest downy young was at L. Maloney, Lincoln, Co., on 18 May and latest a very late downy near Crawford on 30 Jul (RCR,DJR). Largest concentration was 51 at CLNWR on 8 Jun (Lma).

Black-necked Stilt: After an excellent spring count of some 27 adults, nesting success was limited in the usual Sheridan Co. sandhills locations, with only one pair successfully fledging young; 2 downy young were near Lakeside on 8 Jul (RCR,DJR). The first Dawes Co. nesting was detected on the Mansfield Ranch near Crawford on 28 May, when 2 adults were incubating eggs; unfortunately the attempt did not succeed (RCR,DJR).

American Avocet: Nesting began about 2 weeks earlier than usual when a nest at Lane L., near Lakeside, was found 17 May (RCR). At the other end of the spectrum was a very late nest with 3 eggs at Lakeside on 8 Jul (RCR,DJR). Three nests with incubation under way on 28 May at Mansfield Ranch near Crawford provided the first nesting record for Dawes

Co. (RCR,DJR), and an adult was incubating at University L., Sioux Co., on 24 May (RCR,DJR). All reports were from the panhandle, including a peak count at CLNWR of 116 on 13 Jul; 33 were there 8 Jun and 46 on 28 Jul (LMa).

Greater Yellowlegs: Returning birds were led by 1 at Sacramento-Wilcox SWMA on 26 Jun (RHa,LRa). This is a very early date for this statewide migrant. Earliest in the w were 2 in Keith Co. on 15 Jul (RCR,DJR). Best count for the period was only 5, in Cherry Co. on 17 Jul (JJo) and Garden Co. on 28 Jul (LMa).

Lesser Yellowlegs: Earliest was a single at Sacramento-Wilcox SWMA on 26 Jun (RHa,LRa); best counts were the 27 there 23 Jul (RHa,LRa), and 18 at CLNWR on 13 and 28 Jul (LMa). Earliest in the w were 4 on 4 Jul near Crawford (RCR,DJR).

Solitary Sandpiper: One of the earliest species to arrive in fall, 1 was at Arbor Lodge Farm on 15 Jun (LLF). An unusually high count was the 14 near Lewellen on 16 Jul (RCR,DJR). Earliest in the w was 1 near Lakeside on 8 Jul (RCR,DJR).

Willet: Best count of summering birds was 12 at CLNWR on 8 Jun (LMa), while 10 were at NPNWR on 11 Jul (fide AKe). The latter birds were probably migrants, being somewhat w of the breeding range. Many of the large prairie-breeding shorebirds move south in July. No Willets were reported from central or e NE.

Spotted Sandpiper: Reports were received statewide of this summer resident; best count was 8 in Phelps Co. on 26 Jun (RHa,LRa).

Upland Sandpiper: Areas of abundance for this statewide summer resident were indicated by counts of 28 in Cherry Co. on 17 Jul (JJo) and 10 at CLNWR on 8 Jun (LMa). Far to the e were 2 in s Otoe Co. near Cook on 9 Jun through 4 Jul (LLF) and 1 at Gifford Farm on 26 Jul (BP,LP).

Long-billed Curlew: Rosché considered this only a "fair nesting season". Young were with adults near Lakeside on 8 Jul, and 4 young were found near Broadwater in Morrill Co. sandhills on 14 Jul along with 2 small downy young e of Broadwater the same day (RCR,DJR). Late Jul-Aug groups contained a "fair number of young of the year" (RCR).

Marbled Godwit: Best count of fall migrants, and the earliest report, was the 8 at NPNWR on 11 Jul (fide AKe). This species does not breed in NE.

Semipalmated Sandpiper: Earliest was 1 at CLNWR on 13 Jul (LMa), a rather early date, although as many as 15 were at Merritt Res. on 16 Jul (JJo). A belated report was of a very early spring migrant in Adams Co. on 28 Mar (GJK).

Western Sandpiper: A very early bird was in Phelps Co. on 9 Jul (RHa,LRa); others were there through Jul. The only other report was of 1 at CLNWR on 28 Jul (LMa).

Least Sandpiper: Earliest were 2 at CLNWR on 13 Jul (LMa) followed closely by 3 at Oshkosh sewage lagoons and 17 in Keith Co. on 14 Jul (RCR,DJR); the first reported in Phelps Co. arrived 23 Jul (RHa,LRa).

White-rumped Sandpiper: The last 2 spring migrants were at Jack Sinn Memorial WMA 3 Jun (BP,LP), while last in the w were 10 at Gordon sewage lagoons on 2 Jun (RCR,DJR). Very rare in NE in fall, this species migrates s to South America over the w Atlantic Ocean, like Hudsonian Godwit. However, 2 wayward birds were in Phelps Co. 31 Jul (RHa,LRa).

Baird's Sandpiper: This species arrives early in fall in numbers; first were a very early 8 on 4 Jul near Crawford and 17 in Sheridan Co. on 8 Jul (RCR,DJR), followed by 7 in Phelps Co. on 9 Jul (RHa,LRa). Best count was about 275 near Crawford on 30 Jul (RCR), while 26 were in Phelps Co. on 24 Jul (RHa,LRa)

and 47 at CLNWR on 28 Jul (LMa).

Pectoral Sandpiper: Rare in the w in spring, 1 was at the Gordon sewage lagoons on 2 Jun (RCR,DJR). Very early in fall was 1 at Sacramento-Wilcox SWMA on 9 Jul (RH_a,LR_a), while earliest in the w was 1 at Ogallala airport on 15 Jul (RCR,DJR). Best count was 15 at Sacramento-Wilcox SWMA on 31 Jul (RH_a,LR_a), while 10 were at CLNWR on 13 Jul (LMa).

Stilt Sandpiper: Earliest were 1 in Keith Co. and 2 in Perkins Co., all in flooded wheat fields, on 15 Jul (RCR,DJR), while a sizeable flock of 22 arrived in Phelps Co. on 22 Jul (LR_a,RH_a); best counts were an excellent 77 in Phelps Co. on 24 Jul (RH_a,LR_a) and 25 near Crawford on 30 Jul (RCR,DJR).

Long-billed Dowitcher: Two early groups were the only reports: 7 were at CLNWR on 13 Jul (LMa) and 15 were near Merritt Res. on 16 Jul (JJo).

Common Snipe: There are very few nesting records for NE, although it may be overlooked as there are several summer records, notably of winnowing birds. Late Jul reports may be of migrants, although 1 near Morrill 31 Jul (AK_e) was near where another was seen 23 Jun (ECT); the latter date is well within the nesting season. The status of 3 in Holt Co. on 16 Jul (JJo) is conjectural.

Wilson's Phalarope: Best count of summering birds was a modest 16 at CLNWR on 8 Jun (LMa); Rosché thought this to be an "extremely poor year, following the same for the past several years;" it is considered by Rosché a "disaster species." Unusually high water levels and intense Jun heat probably contributed this year (RCR). However, migrants appeared in good numbers in late Jul, beginning with a "paltry" 65-70 at Facus Springs, Morrill Co., on 21 Jul (RCR,DJR), and increasing to 1500 in Morrill Co. on 28 Jul (LMa). The best count further e was only 30, in Phelps Co. on 23 Jul (RH_a,LR_a). A sighting of 4 birds on 9 Jul in Phelps Co. may have been summering birds; confirmation of nesting in the Rainwater Basin would be significant.

Ring-billed Gull: By late Jul southward movement was evident, with 129 at NPNWR on 26 Jul (fide AK_e) and 50 at Merritt Res. on 16 Jul (JJo). Few are found in Jun and early Jul; most summer birds are year-old prebreeders. Observers should note ages of gulls and terns seen in NE in summer; most should be prebreeders.

California Gull: Only 1 was reported, at L. McConaughy on 24 Jul (JMo). Numbers generally build up in late summer and early fall, with sizeable numbers remaining into Dec.

Caspian Tern: Unusual, as there are very few early Jul reports, were 3 at Base L. on 7 Jul (RB_a). Fall movement does not begin in earnest until late Jul.

Common Tern: The only report was of 1 at CLNWR on 13 Jul (LMa). This species is uncommon in NE and fall immatures can be difficult to identify compared to same-age Forster's Terns.

Forster's Tern: Rather uncommon in NE as a breeder and probably restricted to the Sandhills, best count of summering birds was the 27 at CLNWR on 8 Jun (LMa). A probable late spring migrant was in Dawson Co. 4 Jun (RH_a,LR_a), although 3 in Keya Paha Co. on 1 Jul (RH_a,LR_a) were in an area where breeding could occur. A single in Phelps Co. 26 Jun (RH_a,LR_a) may have been a wandering prebreeder.

Least Tern: Reports were mainly from known nesting areas, especially e Platte R. sites. Near Schramm SP 3 were on nests 4 Jun (BP,LP). Probably nesting in the area were 1-4 near Morse Bluff throughout the period (THo), 7 near Rowe Sanctuary

- on 16 Jul (RHa,LRa), and a single near the highway 10 Platte R. bridge on 11 Jun (RHa,LRa). A single bird over Stagecoach L. 9 Jul (LEi) was of unknown origin. Of interest were 2 carrying fish at Offutt Base L. and a small lake nearby 7-9 Jul (RGr); it was not known where these birds may have been nesting, although this site is close to the Midwest Power ponds in Pottawattamie Co., Iowa, a known nesting site, and the only known Iowa nesting site at present. In reference to an NPPD study described above under Piping Plover, sandpits fledged 73 Least Tern chicks while islands fledged none.
- Black Tern:** Best counts were 47 at CLNWR on 28 Jul (LMa) and 20 near Merriman on 17 Jul (JJo). This species nests mainly in the Sandhills.
- Black-billed Cuckoo:** Reports were received from Garden Co. (LMa) to Otoe Co. (LLF), but in no case was more than 1 bird counted. Are there any NE locations where this bird is numerous?
- Yellow-billed Cuckoo:** Best count was 8 at Morse Bluff on 16 Jul (THo). This cuckoo also breeds statewide, although it appears to be becoming scarcer in w NE, where the only observation was of 2 singing birds on territory at the w end of L. McConaughy on 16 Jul (RCR,DJR).
- Barn Owl:** The long-established road-cut nest n of Clear Creek WMA contained 5 birds this summer (JMo,BP); they were still there 7 Aug (SJD,WRS). No other reports were received.
- Great Horned Owl:** Rosché considered this the most successful nesting year in many, with 3-4 young fledged from most of the 45 nests under observation by 15 May. Earliest nest was noted 4 Mar (RCR).
- Burrowing Owl:** Most easterly report was of 1 at a prairie dog town s of Lyman on 12 Jun (RHa,LRa). An excellent total of 19 was s of Lyman on 8 Jul (LMa), while 16 were n of Alliance on 14 Jul and 8 s of Bridgeport on 16 Jul (RCR,DJR).
- Common Nighthawk:** A good count of 50 was made in Scotts Bluff Co. on 11 Jun (LMa).
- Chuck-will's-widow:** Interesting data was supplied by THo for the Morse Bluff area along the Platte R. Up to 3 were present this summer, and THo has noted the species each year from 1991 to date. In 1991 birds were recorded 24-25 May, in 1992 on 8 May, and in 1993 up to 3 were found 12 May-17 Jul. This may be the westernmost NE locality for this species.
- Chimney Swift:** It should be pointed out that this species may not breed regularly in extreme w NE; in Scotts Bluff Co. there were no sightings between 1 Jun, when 6 were at Gering (AKe), and 31 Jul, when 10 were there (AKe). Further information on this species in the extreme w would be of interest.
- White-throated Swift:** The Scotts Bluff National Monument may be the best spot for this species at present; 10 were there on 12 Jun (LMa) and 5 on 30 Jul (AKe). No reports were received from the Pine Ridge.
- Ruby-throated Hummingbird:** Only 1 bird was noted, that at Arbor Lodge Park on 28 Jul (LLF). Reports from w of the Missouri valley are of interest.
- Broad-tailed Hummingbird:** This species is probably a regular fall migrant in the panhandle; 1 was s of Gering on 20 Jul (AKe). Females and immatures are very hard to tell from same-age Rufous Hummingbirds, which are probably the most common hummingbird in the panhandle. Observers there should be alert also for Calliope and Black-chinned Hummingbirds; either may pass through on occasion in early fall.
- Lewis' Woodpecker:** The only report was of 1 at the (still?) reliable Deadhorse Burn above Chadron SP on 13 Jun (BP,LP).

This species should be moving into the burns near Fort Robinson SP anytime.

Red-headed Woodpecker: This species is least common in the extreme w panhandle, although it occurs into Wyoming along the North Platte R.; 2 were at Morrill on 10 Jul (ECT). Best count was 15 in Dixon Co. on 27 Jun (JJo), but numbers were thought to be down in FF (KCR).

Red-bellied Woodpecker: Rather far w was 1 in Custer Co. on 30 Jul (RHa,LRa). Regular breeding occurs in the Platte valley w to about North Platte, but away from the Platte this species is rare in c and w NE.

Three-toed Woodpecker: Of extreme interest was a report of 2 in burned woodland in Smiley Canyon 18 Jul (JJo). No documentation was supplied, although the observer was told of the birds' presence by others who had seen them there in late May or early Jun. This would be a logical place to find this species, even though the Black-backed Woodpecker might be more likely to show up as it is by far the more common of the two in the Black Hills. Nevertheless, there are no confirmed records for NE of the latter, but a specimen of Three-toed Woodpecker was taken in Monroe Canyon, Sioux Co., on 15 Jun, 1916 (UNSM 6345), for the only NE record.

Western Wood-Pewee: Reports were from the expected panhandle breeding range; easternmost was 1 at CLNWR on 8 Jun (LMa).

Acadian Flycatcher: In recent years potential summering birds have been rare, although reports may be increasing; of interest were 2 on Trail 9 at Indian Cave SP 15 Jun (JGu). A single bird at Schramm SP on 3 Jun probably defines the w edge of expected occurrence.

Alder Flycatcher: The last migrant was noted in Dixon Co. on 4 Jun (JJo).

Least Flycatcher: Although nesting occurs in NE, confirmed records are rare. Of interest was a singing bird at Gilbert Baker WA on 21 Jun (BP,LP), and another in a somewhat unexpected location in sw Dixon Co. on 13 Jul (JJo), possibly a late spring migrant. According to the few available reports, nesting birds are virtually restricted to tall cottonwoods in NE, generally in the northern row of counties.

Cordilleran Flycatcher: The only report was from the regular Sowbelly Canyon location on 16 Jul (MBr).

Say's Phoebe: In recent years this species has been virtually absent from eastern NE except for a few isolated locations. Unexpected was a report of adults and an immature on 26 Jun at Sacramento-Wilcox SWMA, where it "probably bred" (RHa,LRa).

Cassin's Kingbird: What may be the first confirmed NE nesting was of an adult feeding 2 juveniles scarcely capable of sustained flight sw of Bushnell on 21 Jul (RCR,DJR). In addition, 2 adults were in the Belmont area of the Pine Ridge 30 Jul (RCR,DJR). The only other report of this uncommon w panhandle summer resident was of 1 in Dawes Co. on 17 Jul (JJo); the location was not noted.

Western Kingbird: A good total for an easterly location was the 6 pairs at South Sioux City throughout the period (BFH).

Purple Martin: The furthest w nesting location known currently is a martin house at Ogallala, where 7 adults were present on 18 May; at least 7 young were there on 15 Jul (RCR,DJR).

Tree Swallow: This species has spread westward in recent years, mainly due to provision of nest boxes; 2 were at CLNWR on 8 Jun (LMa). Fall movement had begun by the end of the period, with 40 at CLNWR on 28 Jul (LMa).

Violet-green Swallow: Fall movement in this species was underway

- by the end of Jul, with 5-12 s of Gering on 25-28 Jul (AKe).
- Bank Swallow:** A colony at Elbow Bend, on the Missouri R. in Sarpy Co., had 500 birds on 15 Jun (RCG). Another very large colony, at Sutherland Res., had several hundred birds on 18 May (RCR).
- Cliff Swallow:** One of the commonest summering birds in NE, the largest colony was of 500 birds on the Missouri R. bridge at Nebraska City (LLF).
- Blue Jay:** Now occurring statewide, a count of 9 at Stateline Island on 29 Jun (LMa), was of interest from the far w.
- Clark's Nutcracker:** Following the appearance of 2 birds in Scotts Bluff Co. last winter, intriguing was a report of 1 in Sowbelly Canyon on 16 Jul (MBR), apparently only about the 4th summer record for NE.
- Red-breasted Nuthatch:** Currently this species is well established as a regular breeding bird in the central Niobrara valley; 6 were in pine woodland in Keya Paha Co. on 3 Jul (RHa, LRa). Undocumented as a breeding site, however, is the Wildcat Hills, where 8 were found on 24 Jul (LMa). Confirmation of breeding there would be desirable.
- White-breasted Nuthatch:** This species does not breed regularly in the Platte valley w of Lincoln Co., and so sightings of single birds at Stateline Island on 29 Jun and 9 Jul were significant (LMa). No nesting evidence was observed, however.
- Pygmy Nuthatch:** While Sowbelly Canyon is a regular location for the bird seen there 17 Jul (JJo), status of this species in the Wildcat Hills is unclear. It may have bred there in the past, and the presence of 3 there 26 Jun and an amazing 8 on 28 Jul (LMa) is highly suggestive. More information on this species in the Wildcat Hills would be welcome.
- Brown Creeper:** At perhaps the only regular breeding site in NE, 2 were in FF on 12 Jun (RCG); no nesting activity was noted, however.
- Carolina Wren:** The only reports were, as expected, from the extreme southeast. At Bellevue, 4 of 5 fledglings were banded 1 Jul (RCG), and another was at Arbor Lodge Park on 28 Jul (LLF).
- Sedge Wren:** Of 6 reports, 4 were in ne NE. A presumed pair was in n Thurston Co. on 11 Jun (BFH), the site of 1 of the very few recent nesting records; at least 2 were in Dixon Co. 12-15 Jul (JJo), and it was reported from Valentine NWR on 1 Jul (RHa, LRa). Another was in Kearney Co. on 31 Jul (RHa, LRa), while 1 was at a rather southerly location at Mahoney SP on 31 Jul (LEi). All reports are within the expected Jun-Jul nesting period.
- Marsh Wren:** This species, which may be in fact 2 species, is most common in Sandhills marshes, as exemplified by a good count of 45 at CLNWR on 8 Jun (LMa).
- Blue-gray Gnatcatcher:** The only report was a belated one of a rather early migrant in Adams Co. 19 Apr (GJK); Adams Co. is also about as far w as this species regularly appears.
- Eastern Bluebird:** Uncommon in the far w, this species was represented by 2 at Stage Hill, part of the Wildcat Hills in Scotts Bluff Co., on 30 Jun (AKe), and singles in the same county 22 Jun (LMa) and 24 Jul (LMa). Nesting is rare in the panhandle, and so the fledging of 4 young from a tree-hole nest at Box Butte Res. on 8 Jul (RCR, DJR) is significant.
- Townsend's Solitaire:** Rather rare in summer, and restricted to the Pine Ridge, 1 was at Chadron SP on 13 Jun (BP, LP).
- Wood Thrush:** Only 3 reports were received; this species is apparently in decline in NE. It was noted at Arbor Lodge Park (LLF), Mahoney SP (LEi), and near Morse Bluff during Jul

(THo). Reports of this species are welcomed.

Gray Catbird: No reports were received from the w half of the state, where this species is uncommon to absent.

Northern Mockingbird: One of few breeding records for w NE was of 2 chicks fledged from a nest near Gering in early Jul (AKe). An immature was near Hay Springs on 12 Jul (DJR). At a somewhat regular location was an adult near Keystone on 15 Jul (RCR,DJR). A total of 5 were found in Otoe Co. during the period (LLF,BP,LP).

Cedar Waxwing: Several reports of fewer than 3 birds came from locations statewide, although no nesting was indicated. Nesting apparently occurs mainly in the e and w, and so reports from Brown Co. on 2-3 Jul, Cherry Co. on 1 Jul, Valley Co. on 18 Jun, and Dawson Co. on 4 Jun (RH_a,LR_a) are of interest.

Loggerhead Shrike: This species is doing fairly well in NE in comparison with other parts of its range, although Rosché found only 2 nests this year, far below average. A good count of 8 was made 15 miles s of Merritt Res. on 16 Jul (JJo).

Bell's Vireo: Of interest were reports from Loup Co. on 28 Jun and 1 Jul (RH_a,LR_a). There are few reports from the Loup drainage for this species, which is most numerous in n and e NE.

Red-eyed Vireo: This species breeds statewide, but is least common in the southwest, where 2 were in Dundy Co. on 22 Jun (LM_a). It is also rare in summer as far w in the Platte valley as L. McConaughy, where 1 was singing 16 Jul in cottonwoods at Clear Creek WMA (RCR,DJR).

Northern Parula: The only report was from a regular location, FF, where 1 was on North Stream Trail 25 Jun (BP,LP).

Black-throated Blue Warbler: A belated report was received of a spring migrant in Adams Co. on 15 May (EHe). No details were submitted for this sighting of a casual species; there are fewer than 20 spring records for NE.

Yellow-rumped Warbler: While regular in summer in w Pine Ridge areas, status in the Wildcat Hills is unclear; thus of interest is a report of 1 at Stage Hill on 30 Jun (AKe). There are very few reports from the Wildcat Hills in summer.

Yellow-throated Warbler: The small population persists in the FF sycamore grove; 1 was singing there on 25 Jun (BP,LP). This is the northwesternmost breeding population known in the US.

Black-and-white Warbler: This species, like that following, breeds primarily in the Niobrara valley; the only reports were from Brown and Keya Paha Cos. (RH_a,LR_a).

American Redstart: This species was noted in Brown Co. (RH_a,LR_a), where it breeds regularly along the Niobrara valley. Regular breeding elsewhere is apparently restricted to the Pine Ridge and Missouri valley. Reports from Valentine NWR 16 Jul (JJo), and Buffalo Co. (LR_a,RH_a), were of interest, but no breeding activity was noted.

Worm-eating Warbler: The Schramm SP bird present in spring persisted until 13 Jun (JGu,JMo); it apparently did not find a mate.

Louisiana Waterthrush: This species is present most years in small numbers in the lower Missouri valley, although confirmed breeding records are few. The only reports were from FF on 14 Jun (JAl) and Indian Cave SP on 15 Jun (JGu).

Kentucky Warbler: A single was in Hummel Park, Douglas Co., on 26 Jun (BP,LP). The presence of territorial birds there earlier suggests nesting, which has probably become regular in recent years in the lower Missouri valley, although confirmation is needed.

- Yellow-breasted Chat:** This species is apparently extirpated from the NE. No reports were received from Brown and Loup Cos. (RHa, LRa).
- Summer Tanager:** After a good year last year, the only reports were from perhaps the most northerly regular location for the species, at Schramm SP, where singles were seen 4 and 9 Jun (BP, LP) and 24 Jul (LEi).
- Northern Cardinal:** It is only in the last 20 years that this species has become regular in summer in Scotts Bluff Co.; of interest was a male feeding young near Scottsbluff on 31 Jul (AKe), apparently the first documented breeding record for the county. A report of 1 in Dundee Co. on 22 Jun (LMa) is one of few records for that area.
- Black-headed Grosbeak:** One was near the edge of the breeding range in Loup Co. on 18 Jun (RHa, LRa). There are few records of this point in the Loup drainage. A female was in cottonwoods at Clear Creek WMA on 16 Jul; the status of this species in the North Platte valley is unclear (RCR, DJR), although recent summer reports from Phelps Co. suggest summering somewhat west of Keith Co. The breeding range of this species has retreated westward during this century, however.
- Blue Grosbeak:** Reports were statewide, although nowhere numerous, with the best count 5 on Gosper Co. on 4 Jun (RHa, LRa).
- Lazuli Bunting:** This species is restricted to the northern panhandle as a breeder in NE; reports were received from Dawes (JJo) and Scotts Bluff (AKe) Cos., with the best count 3 in the Gering Cemetery on 1 Jun (AKe), probably migrants. During migration, especially in spring, birds wander eastward, but are very rare as far as the Missouri valley. Unexpected was a belated report of 1 in Adams Co. 12-16 May (GJK, EHe).
- Indigo Bunting:** Reports from the far west included 1 in Scotts Bluff Co. on 26 Jun (LMa) and 3 in Dawes Co. on 17 Jul (JJo).
- Dickcissel:** A good count for the panhandle, especially at a rather early date, was 14 at CLNWR on 8 Jun (LMa); these birds often do not arrive in the panhandle until Jul, most of these later birds being displaced from elsewhere (RCR). In this latter category were 6 in Sheridan Co. and 2 in Grant Co. on 8 Jul (RCR, DJR). Best count elsewhere was 44 in Buffalo Co. on 11 Jun (RHa, LRa).
- Rufous-sided Towhee:** Birds of the western "spotted" race were noted in Brown and Keya Paha Cos. 1-2 Jul (RHa, LRa). This race breeds over most of the northwest half of NE, while the eastern race occupies the southeast quarter. In between are mostly intermediates. Best count was a healthy 12 near Morse Bluff on 16 Jul (THo).
- Brewer's Sparrow:** The only report was from Dawes Co., of 2 on 17 Jul (JJo); exact location and habitat were not noted. This is east of the usual range, although there are a few recent reports from Dawes Co.
- Field Sparrow:** No reports were received from the west half of NE, where this species is uncommon to rare.
- Lark Bunting:** This was a poor year for this species; the best count was only 80 in Scotts Bluff Co. on 11 Jun (LMa). Rosché considered this year to be a continuation of a "long downward trend". Furthest east was 1 in Buffalo Co. on 11 Jun (RHa, LRa), about at the edge of the regular range.
- Savannah Sparrow:** An adult was flushed from a nest with 4 eggs in Scotts Bluff Co. on 15 Jul (LMa). The exact location or habitat was not mentioned. The only other confirmed breeding locations are in the northern panhandle, and so this is the southernmost NE site known.

- Grasshopper Sparrow:** This species is doing well in NE, especially in native grass areas such as CLNWR, where an excellent count of 185 on 13 Jul included at least 60% young of the year (LMa).
- Henslow's Sparrow:** Following the sightings in the SPRING FIELD REPORT, none were reported after 11 Jun at the Denton location (BP,LP). No further report was received of birds using CRP pastures near Bennett.
- Song Sparrow:** This species currently breeds widely in n and e NE, including the Loup drainage and Platte valley w to about Buffalo and Phelps Cos., but is very local further s and w. Somewhat westerly was a report from Dawson Co. on 4 Jun (RHs,LRa), and 2 singing birds at Oliver Res., Kimball Co., on 21 Jul were at the only regular summering site in w NE (RCR,DJR).
- Swamp Sparrow:** This species breeds locally in the Sandhills and Loup drainage, and on occasion in the Rainwater Basin. One of few reports from the latter was of 1-2 at Funk WPA, Phelps Co., on 26 Jun and 23 Jul (RHs,LRa), possibly a regular location. A singing bird was at Hannaman Bayou, Loup Co. on 18 Jun (RHs, LRa).
- Bobolink:** An excellent total of 40 was recorded in Buffalo Co. 16 Jul (RHs,LRa); the Platte valley is near the s edge of the breeding range in NE, as were 3 at Lorton on 9 Jun and 4 Jul (LLF). The Sandhills is the center of abundance in the state.
- Eastern Meadowlark:** A belated report was of a very early spring arrival in Adams Co. on 1 Mar (GJK). Very few winter in NE; those that do are limited to the extreme se.
- Great-tailed Grackle:** The only report was from the species' center of abundance in NE, the Rainwater Basin, where 2 were in Phelps Co. on 23 Jul (RHs,LRa).
- Orchard Oriole:** Southwest NE is a good place to find this species; it occurs in good numbers there, as exemplified by a count of 19 in Dundy Co. on 22 Jun (LMA). It may currently be as common or more so in w Ne than in the east.
- Red Crossbill:** This is another species whose breeding status in the Wildcat Hills is unconfirmed. There are several recent summer reports, however, including this year's, when 2 were at Stage Hill on 30 Jun (AKe) and another in the same area 24 Jul (LMA). Currently, regular breeding occurs only on the Pine Ridge.
- Pine Siskin:** The presence of 3 in Smiley Canyon on 30 Jul (JJo) and 1-2 in Scotts Bluff Co. during the period (LMA) was expected, as this species summers regularly on the Pine Ridge and in Scotts Bluff Co.; confirmation of breeding is needed for the latter location, however. Unexpected were birds at an Otoe Co. feeder 9 Jun (LLF); no evidence of breeding was noted.
- Evening Grosbeak:** The only report was of a single female at the Rosché feeder in Chadron on 28 Jul (RCR,DJR). This species is a casual summer visitor and possible breeder in the Pine Ridge.

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