

9-2008

Nebraska Bird Review (September 2008) 76(3), WHOLE ISSUE

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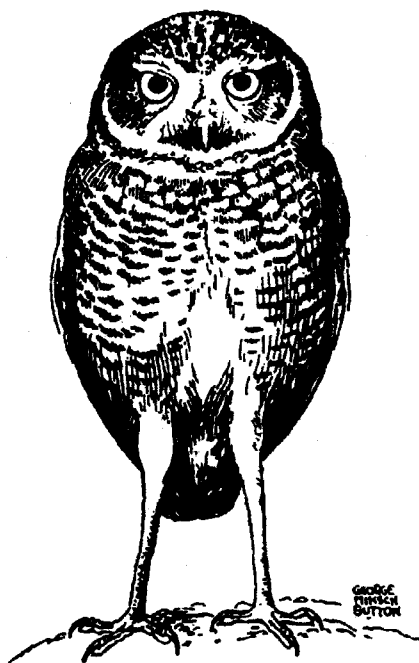
"*Nebraska Bird Review* (September 2008) 76(3), WHOLE ISSUE" (2008). *Nebraska Bird Review*. 1053.
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The Nebraska Bird Review

A Magazine of Ornithology of the
Nebraska Region

Volume 76 September 2008 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 2008

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INTRODUCTION

Generally excellent water conditions in the southeast, including the Rainwater Basin, and in the Sandhills resulted in some notable breeding records, such as Eared Grebes in York County. Ducks were numerous in the Sandhills, especially Redhead. These conditions may have encouraged shorebirds to linger; several late spring records were noted.

Three western species were found eastward; Western Wood-Pewee and Cordilleran Flycatcher were not unexpected based on recent records, but a major surprise was a pair of Pygmy Nuthatches in Cherry County.

ABBREVIATIONS

CLNWR: Crescent L NWR, Garden Co
FF: Fontenelle Forest, Sarpy Co
HCR: Harlan Co Res, Harlan Co
ICSP: Indian Cave SP, Nemaha/Richardson Cos
LM: L McConaughy, Keith Co
LO: L Ogallala, Keith Co
m.ob.: many observers
NLB: North Lake Basin WMA, Seward Co
NOURC: Nebraska Ornithologists' Union Records Committee
Res: Reservoir
RWB: Rainwater Basin, southcentral and southeast Nebraska
SCP: (Audubon) Spring Creek Prairie, Lancaster Co
SHP: State Historical Park
SL: Sewage Lagoon(s)
SP: State Park
SRA: State Recreation Area
WMA: (State) Wildlife Management Area
WPA: (Federal) Waterfowl Production Area

GAZETTEER

Bohemia Prairie: WMA, Knox Co
Calamus Res: SRA/WMA, Loup/Garfield Cos
Chadron SP: Dawes Co
Funk: Funk Lagoon WPA, Phelps Co
Harvard Marsh: WPA, Clay Co
Hultine: WPA, Clay Co
Sandhills: large sandhill prairie region n.-cen. Nebraska
Oliver Res: SRA, Kimball Co

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SPECIES ACCOUNTS

Black-bellied Whistling-Duck: One at Wagon Train L, Lancaster Co, 21-25 Jul (GSc et al., photo) was the 6th documented record for this summer visitor.



Black-bellied Whistling-Duck at Wagon Train SRA, 23 July 2008.
Photo courtesy of Judy Foreman.

Greater White-fronted Goose: The only straggler reported summered in Madison Co (MB).

Snow Goose: The usual summer stragglers were reported from the east; as expected, the best tally was from the e. RWB, 20 on 22 Jun (JGJ). One at LM 7 Jun (SJD) was westerly for summer.

Ross's Goose: A single at Hultine 2 Jun (LE) was a late migrant.

Cackling Goose: Rather late were singles near Nebraska City 1 Jun (L&CF) and at Hultine 2 Jun (LE), while another in the e. RWB 22 Jun (JGJ) may have been summering.

Canada Goose: Routine reports.

Trumpeter Swan: Routine reports.

Wood Duck: Routine reports.

Gadwall: Routine reports.

American Wigeon: Two in se. Keith Co 17 Jun (TJW) were late stragglers; breeding is rare in Nebraska.

Mallard: Routine reports.

Blue-winged Teal: Routine reports.

Cinnamon Teal: There are few summer records away from known breeding areas, thus singles at Funk 13-14 Jun (PD,KS) and Utica SL 30 Jun (JG) were unexpected. Despite several RWB summer records, breeding has not been confirmed there.

Northern Shoveler: Routine reports.

Northern Pintail: Unusually high numbers were reported well into Jun away from regular breeding areas, including 40 in the e. RWB 14 and 22 Jun (JGJ). "Surprisingly high numbers" were in Custer and Lincoln Cos 20 Jun (TJW), and 7 were in Custer Co 9 Jun (SJD). Breeding may occur anywhere in the state.

Green-winged Teal: The 35 in the e. RWB 22 Jun (JGJ) was unusual; late Jun and Jul birds may be molt migrants, as breeding away from the w. Sandhills is rare.

Canvasback: A pair at North Platte SL 8 Jul (TJW) was unexpected, although there are a few previous summer reports in Lincoln and Keith Cos; breeding occurs only in the w. Sandhills.

Redhead: Large numbers lingered into Jun in the e. RWB, where 275 were counted 14 Jun and 175 on 22 Jun (JGJ); 2 were at Harvard Marsh 13 Jul (L&RH). Breeding has occurred in the RWB. Five remained in Harlan Co 26 Jun (G&WH), and 30 were at North Platte SL 8 Jul (TJW), the latter likely molt migrants.

Ring-necked Duck: Stragglers included 2 in Harlan Co 8 Jun (G&WH) and 2 in the e. RWB 14 Jun (JGJ).

Lesser Scaup: Latest reported was at Alma 8 Jun (G&WH).

Bufflehead: Rare in Jun-Jul away from the Sandhills, a female/immature was in Hamilton Co 21 Jun (TL fide JGJ).

Common Goldeneye: A female in Sarpy Co 8 Jun (L&BP) was only the 13th record in the period mid-Jun through mid-Sep.

Hooded Merganser: The usual non-breeding female/immature-type stragglers were found in the RWB. Best count was 7 on 22 Jun (JGJ); 6 were in Holt Co 9 Jun (DH).

Common Merganser: The usual small summering group at LO included 4 on 9 Jun (SJD) and 3 males 17 Jun (TJW).

Red-breasted Merganser: One at LO 7 Jun (SJD) was only the 3rd ever for Jun-Jul. Latest spring and earliest fall dates are 28 May and 7 Aug.

Ruddy Duck: Good water conditions in the east allowed up to 7, including 5 males, to summer in Sarpy Co (L&BP); as many as 20, including displaying males, remained at Utica SL 30 Jun (JG); and 2 displaying males were still in York Co 22 Jun (JGJ).

Gray Partridge: The only report of this rather rare bird in Nebraska was of 2 near Naper, Boyd Co, 16 Jun (DH), within the expected ne. Nebraska range.

Ring-necked Pheasant: Routine reports.

Sharp-tailed Grouse: Routine reports.

Greater Prairie-Chicken: Booming was still going on at a lek on the Lincoln/Custer Cos line 20 Jun, the observer's latest date by about 10 days (TJW).

Wild Turkey: Routine reports.

- Northern Bobwhite:** "Good numbers" (TJW) were reported from n.-cen. Nebraska, with reports from Greeley (WF) Custer (TJW), and Garfield/Loup (RE) Cos. Recent years have seen a few records from the n. Panhandle; one was heard at Chadron SP 2 Jun (RE).
- Common Loon:** A few non-breeders are reported each summer, generally westward; 2 were at HCR 12 Jun (PD, KS), and 2 were at Calamus Res in Loup Co 15 and 21 Jul (LR, RH, RE).
- Pied-billed Grebe:** Breeding probably occurred at several locations in the east as a result of excellent water conditions; "multiple broods" were noted at NLB 30 Jun (JG).
- Horned Grebe:** One at LO 17 Jun (TJW) was late; there are very few records after early Jun.
- Eared Grebe:** Exciting was the discovery of at least 2 nests and some 12 adults at Kirkpatrick North WPA, York Co, 22 Jun (JGJ, photo), the first documented nesting in the e. RWB since 1914-15 (JGJ). Territorial behavior had been noted in Seward and Clay Cos in 2007 (JGJ, PD). A single was at the Utica SL 30 Jun (JG).
- Western Grebe:** This species breeds at CLNWR; a pair carrying young was there 21 Jun (WM). The usual "hundreds" were still at LM 18 Jun (RE), and Enders Res, Chase Co, and Oliver Res both had 15-20 during Jun (SJD, TJW). Easterly for the date were the 4 at Swan L, Holt Co, 4 Jul (LR, RH); breeding has not been documented east of Carson L, nw. Garfield Co, some 8 miles sw. of Swan L.
- Clark's Grebe:** Reports were from CLNWR (SJD), LM (RE, ARy), and Oliver Res (AK), with best count 6 at LM 9 Jun (SJD).
- American White Pelican:** A few non-breeders summer, usually northward; last high number reported was 488 at LM 7 Jun (SJD) and "hundreds" there 18 Jun (RE). The 112 at Calamus Res 15 Jul (LR, RH) were probably fall returnees.
- Neotropic Cormorant:** The first RWB record was of one first seen at Hultine 2 Jun (PD) and photographed 3 Jun (JGJ). This is Nebraska's 7th documented record. Another was reported without details at CLNWR 2 Jun; this is the 2nd undocumented record, both of which are likely correct.
- Double-crested Cormorant:** The "hundreds" at LO 18 Jun (RE) were likely immature non-breeders; 97 were there 7 Jun (SJD). Reports of 1-2 similar birds through the period were received from the e. RWB (JGJ), Otoe Co (L&CF), Pawnee Co (WF), Lancaster Co (LE), and Sarpy Co (L&BP); this many reports are unusual in se. Nebraska for summer.
- American Bittern:** Routine reports.
- Least Bittern:** Water conditions in the east suited this species; reports included singles in se. Sarpy Co 8 Jun-4 Jul (L&BP), at Hultine 9 Jun (PD), in a wet meadow in Thurston Co 19 Jun (BFH), and at NLB 28 Jul (JG).
- Great Blue Heron:** The large rookery along the Platte River in s. Sarpy Co had 130 birds 18 Jun (CNK), and a rookery in Thurston Co 23 Jun had 6 nests (BFH, JP). Three nests in cattails at CLNWR 21 Jun had eggs and young (WM).
- Great Egret:** Exciting was the discovery that Great Egrets were nesting in the Sarpy Co Great Blue Heron rookery; nest-building was underway with about 7 adults present 18 Jun (CNK, JGJ). This is only the 2nd record of nesting for Nebraska; the other was also in Sarpy Co, in the 1950s. Summer reports on non-breeders are fewest in Jun, and usually easterly; about 9 were reported for Jun including a westerly bird at CLNWR 21 Jun (WM). Post-breeding

wanderers usually arrive in Jul, but 9 in breeding plumage in the e. RWB 22 Jun suggest arrival can occur in late Jun (JGJ).

Snowy Egret: None were reported; this species normally occurs with Great Egrets in small numbers during late summer.

Little Blue Heron: The only report of this uncommon visitor was of an immature at Hultine 9 Jun (PD), one of only a handful of e. RWB records for Jun.

Reddish Egret: Nebraska's second record (pending NOURC acceptance) was of one in "full breeding plumage" at Funk 12 Jun (KS);

Cattle Egret: Surprising numbers were reported for the period; numbers are usually lowest in Jun-early Jul, but 85 were in the e. RWB 14 Jun (JGJ) and up to 25 were in se. Sarpy Co through the period (L&BP, m. ob.), increasing to 36 by 23 Jul (CNK).

Green Heron: This species is fairly common as far w. as Lincoln Co along the Platte River, where 7 birds (one per river mile) were counted 23 Jun (TJW).

Black-crowned Night-Heron: Nests with eggs and young were found at CLNWR and Avocet WMA, Grant Co, 21 Jun (WM). Seven at Funk 13 Jun (PD) and 2 at Jack Sinn WMA, Lancaster/Saunders Cos, 25 Jun (LE) were suggestive of local breeding.

Yellow-crowned Night-Heron: Most occur in Jul-Aug, and so an adult at Funk 14 Jun (KS, photo) was unexpected. There are only 4 records of breeding for the state and about 30 records mid-Jun through mid-Jul.

Glossy Ibis: The surprising explosion of reports of this species by experienced birders continues; at least 3 individuals were found. Two at Hultine 12-14 Jun were with nesting White-faced Ibises and may have nested also, but this could not be confirmed (PD, JGJ), and one was at NLB 27-31 Jul (JG photo, JGJ). Of the 21 documented records, 18 are in the period 2006-2008.

White-faced Ibis: Numbers continue to increase, and nesting has become annual for this species in recent years; 107 birds and 20 nests, 9 with eggs, were at Hultine 12 Jun (PD), and 19 of 23 nests at CLNWR 21 Jun had eggs and the other 4 had eggs and/or young (WM). NLB hosted 80 birds 27 Jul (JGJ); in all, about 400 were reported statewide.

Turkey Vulture: Routine reports.

Osprey: The pair that attempted nesting near Winters Creek L, Scotts Bluff Co, was unsuccessful as the nest (see photo in the *NBR* March 2008, p. 14) was mostly destroyed in a storm 23 May; the birds were still present 23 Jun, however (SK, KD, AK). Rare summer stragglers were singles at HCR 16 Jun (PD, KS), LO 18 Jun (RE), and Sutherland Res 28 Jul (TJW). There are about 35 such summer reports in all.

White-tailed Kite: Probably under-reported in the state, but a great find, only the 5th documented record (pending NOURC acceptance) was one in Lincoln Co 1 Jul (TJW, details).

Mississippi Kite: Routine reports.

Bald Eagle: Six birds on the Platte River between Venice and Schramm SP, Sarpy Co, 30 Jul consisted of "two loose family groups"(JGJ).

Northern Harrier: Routine reports.

Sharp-shinned Hawk: At best a rare breeder in the state, of interest was a male in Brown Co 17 Jun (DH), where breeding has occurred; one of few Jun-Jul reports away from known breeding areas was one in Cherry Co 19 Jul (DH).

Cooper's Hawk: Routine reports.

Red-shouldered Hawk: None were reported; the only known regular location is FF.

Broad-winged Hawk: An exciting discovery was a nesting pair at North Platte; 3 adults and at least one “fluffy” chick were present 3 Jul (TJW, photos). The nest was seen 7 Jul (ARy), but was damaged by a storm by 17 Jul and young could not be located (TJW). This is the only breeding record away from se. Nebraska.



Broad-winged Hawk in North Platte, 3 July 2008. Photo courtesy of NEBRASKAland Magazine.

Swainson's Hawk: One in Dodge Co 29 Jun (D&JP) was easterly at that date; breeding is rare in that part of the state.

Red-tailed Hawk: Routine reports.

Ferruginous Hawk: Routine reports.

Golden Eagle: Routine reports.

American Kestrel: Groups of up to 15 were noted in Lincoln Co 15 Jul (TJW), indicative of fall movement or early migration.

Merlin: One near Chadron SP 2 Jun (RE) was of interest; there are only a few breeding records from the w. Pine Ridge.

Prairie Falcon: One as far east as Funk 14 Jun (KS) was a surprise; there is only a handful of summer reports away from the breeding range, likely immatures or non-breeders.

Peregrine Falcon: None were reported; see Spring Report for failure of nesting in both Lincoln and Omaha.

Virginia Rail: Rare in summer in the east, one was calling in a wet meadow in Thurston Co 19 Jun (BFH). One photographed in Seward Co 31 Jul (JG) may have been an edge-of-range breeder also; water conditions there were conducive to breeding.

Sora: Up to 3 in se. Sarpy Co 21-23 Jul (CNK, L&BP) were likely early migrants; there was no evidence of breeding.

Common Moorhen: Rarely reported in Nebraska, although not too surprising this year given the excellent water conditions, one was in se. York Co 14 Jun (JGJ).

American Coot: At least 2 broods and up to 26 adults were in se. Sarpy Co during the period (L&BP, m.ob.), where breeding only occurs in occasional wet years.

Sandhill Crane: The pair near Facus Springs, Morrill Co, had a nearly full-grown chick 14 Jun (KD); this is the 4th year this pair has nested, raising at least one chick each year. Adults and a nearly full-grown chick were in Rock Co 18 Jun (WM, photo); a pair nested there in 2006 also.

Black-bellied Plover: One at Hultine 14 Jun (JGJ) was record late for the e. RWB in spring, although there are 2 later mid-Jun records for the state.

American Golden-Plover: Two in nw. Seward Co 14 Jun (JGJ) and one at Hultine 22-28 Jun (JGJ, PD) were only the 4th and 5th Jun records. An alternate-plumaged bird in Sarpy Co 8 Jul (CNK) was record early by one day, and only the 17th Jul-Aug record for this uncommon fall migrant. Most fall migrants are juveniles arriving in Sep.

Snowy Plover: Habitat is reduced at LM, as suggested by the presence of only 2 Snowies 9 Jun (SJD); previous years have seen as many as 20 adults (2004).

Semipalmated Plover: The only report was of a migrant in Sarpy Co 30 Jul (L&BP), about on time.

Piping Plover: Despite reduced habitat, 63 were at LM 9 Jun (SJD). Nesting continued for the 2nd consecutive year at CLNWR, with at least 2 nests there 7 and 19 Jun (SJD, B&DW); Sandhills nesting records are few. Corps of Engineers data show 167 nests along the Missouri River in ne. Nebraska, 28 of these at Lewis & Clark L, Knox Co (fide JED).

Killdeer: Routine reports.

Mountain Plover: The only report was from a regular location in w. Kimball Co 21 Jun (AK).

Black-necked Stilt: Breeding continues in the e. RWB; the 5th record, all records have been since 2005, was a nest at Hultine 22 Jun (JGJ). In addition, a pair was copulating in w. Seward Co 14 Jun and seen there 22 Jun (JGJ), and a territorial pair was at Harvard Marsh 2 Jun (PD). NLB hosted up to 8 adults 25-31 Jul (JGJ, JG) and 4 were at Funk 13-14 Jun (PD, KS). Nesting has occurred in the w. Sandhills since 1985; one was on a nest near Ellsworth 3 Jul, and young were present 17 Jul (ZC).

American Avocet: As with Black-necked Stilt, easterly nestings for this species are increasing; 3 pairs were nesting at Harvard Marsh 2 Jun (PD), and one was incubating at Hultine 3 Jun (PD, JGJ).

Spotted Sandpiper: Routine reports.

Solitary Sandpiper: Rather early, but not unprecedented for fall arrival, was one at Hultine 28 Jun (PD).

Greater Yellowlegs: Routine reports.

Willet: One in Sarpy Co 8 Jul (B&LP, CNK) was easterly; this species is rare in fall in the east.

Lesser Yellowlegs: Last spring migrant was one at Hultine 3 Jun (JGJ); it may have been the same apparently-injured bird that was there 14 Jun (JGJ). First fall returnees were the 13 in the e. RWB 22 Jun (JGJ), about on time.

Upland Sandpiper: An adult and a “very young” chick in Dodge Co 18-19 Jun (D&JP) were at a rather late date for fledging.

Long-billed Curlew: Easterly for the s. Panhandle was a pair in n. Cheyenne Co 24 Jun; a pair there had raised a chick in 2007 and 2008 (fide JGJ). A few breed in w. Scotts Bluff Co; one was there 18 Jun (AK, KD).

Marbled Godwit: Breeding pairs of this species have been found in recent years in remote parts of the w. and n. Sandhills; 2 territorial pairs were 12-15 miles se. of Alliance 20 Jun (WM), and a pair was in a wet meadow hayfield in extreme n. Cherry Co 22 Jun (DH).

Sanderling: Routine reports.

Semipalmated Sandpiper: Rather late, even for this late migrant, were 6 at LM 9 Jun (SJD) and 4 in Merrick Co the same day (SJD). One in Fillmore Co 22 Jun (JGJ) must have terminated its attempt at northward migration; there are now 4 records 20-30 Jun.

Western Sandpiper: Two were at Calamus Res 21 Jul (RE), the only report.

Least Sandpiper: Last for spring was at LM 9 Jun (SJD), rather late, and first reported for fall were 6 about on time in Sarpy Co 16 Jul (L&BP).



White-rumped Sandpipers at Hultine WPA, 28 June 2008. Photo by Paul Dunbar.

White-rumped Sandpiper: This is a late spring migrant, as indicated by counts of 288 in the e. RWB 14 Jun (JGJ) and 144 in Merrick Co 9 Jun (SJD), and the 26 still in the e. RWB 22 Jun, the 2nd-latest date there (JGJ). However, 4 at Hultine 28 Jun included one in first-alternate plumage, seemingly a mix of alternate and basic (PD, photo). This plumage is rarely seen in interior North America, as most either do not migrate north or do so only partially as in this case. Another was very late near Louisville on the Platte River 3 Jul (JGJ,

MB). These last two records were likely birds that cut short northward migration, and are the latest for spring. There are only 6 documented fall records, 20 Jul-9 Sep.

Baird's Sandpiper: Routine reports.

Pectoral Sandpiper: Rather late were 18 in the e. RWB 14 Jun (JGJ).

Dunlin: Unprecedented for Nebraska was an alternate-plumaged Dunlin in se. Sarpy Co 29-31 Jul (CNK details, MCv). In contrast to most other small shorebirds ("peeps"), adult Dunlin generally do not migrate early but wait to migrate with juveniles. Usual early fall arrival dates are 4, 6, and 8 Sep, although there are 3 reports for Aug.

Stilt Sandpiper: Two of fewer than 10 late Jun records were provided by singles at Waco WPA, York Co, and Hultine 22 Jun (JGJ).

Buff-breasted Sandpiper: Two at Hultine 22 Jun (JGJ) comprised only the 3rd Jun record for the state. Fall returnees were led by 16 in Dodge Co 28 Jul (D&JP).

Short-billed Dowitcher: First fall arrival was one in se. Sarpy Co 27 Jul (CNK): 6 were there 29 Jul (CNK).

Long-billed Dowitcher: Routine reports.

Wilson's Snipe: Routine reports.

American Woodcock: The only report was of one at Bohemia Prairie, where one was found 7 Jul (MB). Summer reports are few; this regular location is towards the w. edge of the Nebraska range.

Wilson's Phalarope: There were several Jun reports (LE, JGJ, PD, JG) from the e. RWB suggestive of breeding, which is occasional there. No nests or recently-fledged young were reported, however.

Red-necked Phalarope: None were reported; migration timing barely includes early Jun and late Jul.

Long-tailed Jaeger: An ad. was photographed at LM 9 Jun (SJD); this is the 5th documented record for the state, and the earliest. The others are in the period 1 Sep-3 Oct.

Franklin's Gull: Routine reports.

Ring-billed Gull: Routine reports.

California Gull: An adult at LM 7 Jun (SJD) was not unusual there, but a near-adult in nw. Phelps Co 2 Jun was a new species for the RWB (JGJ).

Herring Gull: The only report was of a first-summer bird at LM 7 Jun (SJD); summer records are few, and almost all of immatures.

Lesser Black-backed Gull: Immatures have become somewhat regular in spring at LM, but a first-summer bird there 7 Jun (SJD, photo) was only the 3rd record 1 May-30 Jul.

Least Tern: Reports were generally from the usual locations along the lower Platte and along the Missouri River in ne. Nebraska, as well as LM, where 9 were counted 9 Jun (SJD). One was in Lincoln Co 23 Jun (TJW). Good numbers were reported on Corps of Engineers artificial sandbars in ne. Nebraska, with 215 nests (fide JED), and 40 adults and 10 fledglings were in Dixon Co along the Missouri River 27 Jul (BFH). Copulation was seen at Spencer Dam, Boyd/Holt Cos, where 5 adults were present 5 Jul (LR, RH); breeding occurs mostly along the lower Niobrara River.

Caspian Tern: Late for spring were 2 at LO 17 Jun (TJW) and another in Dodge Co 17 Jun (JGJ, MB), while early for fall were singles in Saunders/Sarpy Cos 12 Jul (JGJ, MB) and in Gosper Co 13 Jul (MB).

- Black Tern:** Fall birds appear in mid-late Jun, most probably failed breeders and one-year-old immatures; 40 in Sarpy Co 18 Jun were mostly adults (CNK), and 30 there 8 Jul were mostly first-year non-breeders (CNK).
- Common Tern:** The only sightings were at LM, where 2 adults were seen 7 Jun (SJD) and 2 individuals 18 Jun (RE), the latter rather late.
- Forster's Tern:** Four at HCR 15 Jun (G&WH) were tardy. Fall return was led by one in se. Sarpy Co 8 Jul (L&BP).
- Rock Pigeon:** Routine reports.
- Eurasian Collared-Dove:** It appears this species now common statewide; it was "common even here" in the Sandhills in Jun (RE); the Sandhills was the last part of the state to be colonized, except perhaps for major cities like Omaha and Lincoln.
- White-winged Dove:** The avalanche continues, with no fewer than 6 reports totaling 8 birds; amazingly, 4 of the reports were on 15 Jun. Singles were in sw. Dixon Co 15 Jun (JJ), at North Bend 15 Jun (D&JP), at Funk 15 Jun (LR, RH), at Bartley 15 Jun (LR, RH), at Gering 22-23 Jul (BM, fide AK), and 3 were in a Chadron yard 20 Jul (JF). For 2008 alone there are now 11 reports of 15 birds. No nesting was reported, however.
- Mourning Dove:** Fall flocking was evident with 155 counted in Lancaster and Saunders Cos 31 Jul (LE).
- Yellow-billed Cuckoo:** Routine reports.
- Black-billed Cuckoo:** There have been more reports the last year or two for this generally rather scarce species in Nebraska. This summer there were 8 reports statewide (m. ob.).
- Barn Owl:** For the 4th year at least one adult was at the Ulysses nest site, unusually far east; however, bad weather may have precluded breeding (JG). A nest on a combine in s.-cen. Nebraska had 5 chicks at most 5-6 days old 3 Jul (CT); this is not an unusually late date (WM).
- Eastern Screech-Owl:** Two young fledged 23 Jun from a nest in North Platte (LD).
- Great Horned Owl:** Routine reports.
- Burrowing Owl:** The Scottsbluff landfill continues to host a large population; 30, including 21 young, were counted there 13 Jul (KD). Scarce in the e. RWB, 2 were at a prairie-dog colony (also scarce) in Clay Co 22 Jun (JGJ). Good counts were the 15 in Perkins Co 28 Jul (TJW) and 12 in Lincoln Co 3 Jun (TJW).
- Barred Owl:** Towards the west edge of the range were singles in Seward Co 30 Jun (JG) and Bohemia Prairie 7 Jul (MB).
- Long-eared Owl:** None were reported; this is a regular but low-density breeder in Nebraska.
- Short-eared Owl:** A successful nest in a Perkins Co stubble field was reported by a landowner 28 Jul (fide TJW). Although this species probably nests regularly in Nebraska, especially in the Sandhills, this is only the 2nd nest reported since 1970.
- Common Nighthawk:** An excellent count was the 70 in Box Butte Co 7 Jun (SJD).
- Common Poorwill:** Up to 3 were heard at Bohemia Prairie 7-9 Jul (MB); this is the farthest east this species occurs regularly, although there are nesting records for Lancaster and Jefferson Cos (1976 and 1963 respectively).
- Chuck-will's-widow:** Completing an improbable single-location goatsucker sweep for Nebraska was a single calling at Bohemia Prairie 7-12 Jul (MB, m. ob.). This is the northernmost record for this species in the state. Despite the

presence of at least one at Oak Glen WMA, Seward Co, in 2006 and 2007, none were present 30 Jun this year (JG).

Whip-poor-will: Just for the record, this species was “numerous” at Bohemia Prairie 7 Jul (MB). This species occurs along the Niobrara Valley to e. Cherry Co, but encouraging was the continued presence in Boyd, Brown, and Keya Paha Cos 16-17 Jun (DH).

Chimney Swift: Routine reports.

White-throated Swift: Routine reports.

Ruby-throated Hummingbird: Evidence is accumulating that breeding may occur west in the Platte Valley to Keith Co; one of several recent westerly summer records was of a pair present all summer in Brady (fide TJW). Although early fall records where breeding was not noted are in early Aug, one in a sw. Dixon Co yard 26 Jul was the first since spring (JJ).

Calliope Hummingbird: A female was an early arrival in a Scotts Bluff Co yard 14 Jul (KD); this is the 2nd-earliest of about 24 documented records.

Broad-tailed Hummingbird: Exciting was the presence for the 2nd consecutive year of a pair in a s. Scotts Bluff Co yard; a female was seen 20 Jun and a male a few days later, with both present for about 3 weeks (AK). Nesting has not been confirmed in Nebraska. A female was record early in a n. Scotts Bluff Co yard 26 Jun, and a male in the same yard 9 Jul (KD) may have summered nearby also.

Rufous Hummingbird: First reported was a male in a Scotts Bluff Co yard 12 Jul (KD), about on time for early dates.

Belted Kingfisher: Routine reports.

Red-headed Woodpecker: Routine reports.

Red-bellied Woodpecker: Routine reports.

Downy Woodpecker: Routine reports.

Hairy Woodpecker: Routine reports.

Northern Flicker: Routine reports.

Pileated Woodpecker: Routine reports.

Olive-sided Flycatcher: Last for the spring was one at FF 1 Jun (L&BP).

Western Wood-Pewee: The presence of 1-2 singing birds in Lincoln Co 3 Jun (TJW) follows a spring sighting there in 2007 (CNK), apparently the first spring records for Lincoln Co. Eastern Wood-Pewee breeds in low numbers in Lincoln Co (TJW) and westward neighbor Keith Co; Westerns have been present for several years in Keith Co at the west end of LM. Thus this species and Eastern Wood-Pewee now have ranges touching in the lower North Platte Valley and in the cen. Niobrara Valley. Sightings of Westerns this summer mark the current east edge of the range, with 5 birds 10-20 miles sw. of Valentine Jun-Jul (DH), one calling in Logan Co 8 Jun (LR, RH), one calling at LO 18 Jun (RE), Lincoln Co (see above), and 3 “fuzzy fledglings” in Dundy Co 15 Jul (TJW).

Eastern Wood-Pewee: See discussion under Western Wood-Pewee.

Acadian Flycatcher: Reports were from probably the only regular location, ICSP; singles were calling there 14 Jun (ME) and 26 Jul (L&CF).

Willow Flycatcher: Routine reports.

Least Flycatcher: Two in Thomas Co 2 Jun (LR, RH) were likely late migrants, although this species does occur in summer, usually in the north and in tall cottonwoods. However, one as far south as ne. Gosper Co was singing under a cottonwood canopy at Phillips L 13 Jul (MB).

Cordilleran Flycatcher: This species continues to expand its range eastward in the Pine Ridge; nest-building was underway at Ponderosa WMA, Dawes Co, 4 Jun (WM), where birds were found in 2006 (TJW). One was 2 miles s. of Chadron SP 12 Jun (WM), and another was at Fort Robinson SP, Dawes Co, 3 Jun (RE).

Eastern Phoebe: Routine reports.

Say's Phoebe: Easterly reports were of a nesting pair in Custer Co 4 Jul (TH) and one in Phelps Co 13 Jun (WF).

Great Crested Flycatcher: Reports from areas where this species is a regular breeder but in low numbers were of singles in Thomas Co 2 Jun (LR, RH), Logan Co 8 Jun (LR, RH), and West Ash Canyon, Dawes Co, 20 Jun (B&DW).

Cassin's Kingbird: Routine reports.

Western Kingbird: Post-breeding groups form in late Jul; such a group was seen in Perkins Co 28 Jul (TJW).

Eastern Kingbird: Routine reports.

Scissor-tailed Flycatcher: Consolidation of the breeding range in Nebraska continues with the 14th and 15th breeding reports; one was from a known site sw. of Kearney, where an apparent loose family group was found 21 Jul (KS) for the 3rd year. A new site near Denton was added, where a nest was seen 8-10 Jul (CT, KP). In addition, one was in extreme se. Blaine Co 1 Jun (LR, RH), and 2 were in Douglas Co 17 Jun (WF).

Loggerhead Shrike: Adults feeding fledged young were widely-reported 17 Jun (TJW) through 31 Jul (LE), the latter in Lancaster Co where breeding has not been reported for a while (JGJ).

Bell's Vireo: This species reaches its highest numbers in cen. Nebraska; it was one of the most numerous species in Blaine Co 1 Jun (LR, RH).

Yellow-throated Vireo: There were several reports westward in the Niobrara drainage, where this species has generally been scarce; 1-2 were singing in Boyd Co 9 Jun (DH) and Holt Co 16 Jun (DH). Also westerly were singles in Knox Co 9 Jul (MB) and n. Antelope Co 6 Jul (LR, RH). Evidence for breeding west of Knox Co is lacking.

Plumbeous Vireo: Easterly was an apparent late migrant at CLNWR 7-8 Jun (CG, SJD); this is only the 2nd Jun record away from the Pine Ridge breeding range.

Blue-headed Vireo: Routine reports.

Warbling Vireo: Routine reports.

Philadelphia Vireo: None were reported; this is a regular fall migrant in the east.

Red-eyed Vireo: Routine reports.

Blue Jay: Routine reports.

Pinyon Jay: Somewhat elusive in summer, several were found in the Pine Ridge in Sioux Co 11-12 Jun (WM).

Clark's Nutcracker: This species apparently occurs in small numbers in the w. Pine Ridge most summers if looked for; 2 were in Sioux Co 12 Jun (WM).

Black-billed Magpie: One in Clay Co 4 Jun (WF) was an easterly surprise; consolidation appears to be underway near Gibbon, where it was "most reliably seen in 14 years" (LR, RH), and one was in Pierce Co 26 Jul (DH).

American Crow: Family groups begin to aggregate in late Jul; 13 birds were in se. Sarpy Co 23 Jul (CNK).

Horned Lark: Routine reports.

Purple Martin: Northwestern reports near the edge of the range were of 3 in Holt Co 4 Jul (LR, RH) and a few at Calamus Res 14-21 Jul (LR, RH, WF, RE). Numbers increased suddenly at Broken Bow 11 Jul, suggesting imminent fall flocking (TH).

Tree Swallow: A pair with eggs in a nest box in Cheyenne Co 25 Jun was the "first nesting in the area" (AS); the s. Panhandle probably has fewest breeding birds in the state. Young were fledged in Ogallala 25 Jun (CWH).

Violet-green Swallow: Somewhat easterly were two in West Ash Canyon, Dawes Co 20 Jun (B&DW).

Northern Rough-winged Swallow: Routine reports.

Bank Swallow: Routine reports.

Cliff Swallow: Routine reports.

Barn Swallow: Routine reports.

Black-capped Chickadee: Routine reports.

Tufted Titmouse: Routine reports.

Red-breasted Nuthatch: Following the large numbers seen this past winter, a few were noted through summer far from the known breeding range, although no evidence of breeding was obtained; there are only about 11 such records. Two apparent pairs were at Forest Lawn Cem, Omaha, 13 Jul (JR), and at least one spent the summer in or around a Lincoln yard (RE); another was in Lincoln 20-21 Jun (LRB).

White-breasted Nuthatch: Routine reports.

Pygmy Nuthatch: This species is rare away from its known breeding range even in winter, and so a major surprise was the presence of a pair at Steer Creek Campground, McKelvie National Forest, Cherry Co, 19 Jul (DH). This is the only summer record for the species away from the Pine Ridge and Wildcat Hills.

Rock Wren: Good numbers continue in the cedar canyons of se. Lincoln Co, where 12-15 were found 15 Jul (TJW).

Carolina Wren: One was in Knox Co 9 Jul at the same location as last year (MB); these are the northwesternmost reports to date.

House Wren: Routine reports.

Sedge Wren: Mid-late Jun reports in Nebraska are scarce for this species, which usually migrates north of Nebraska to breed in Jun. Interestingly, most Jun records are in the northeast, closer to where Jun breeding occurs in South Dakota. This summer, more than usual were reported in Jun in the northeast, with one singing in Stanton Co 9 Jun (WF), one near Ord 20 Jun (LB), one in Dodge Co 30 Jun (D&JP), and one in Pierce Co 1 Jul (MB).

Marsh Wren: Evidence is accumulating in recent years for summer movement in this species not unlike that noted for Sedge Wren. One in w. Seward Co 22 Jun was "newly arrived" (JGJ), and they were "everywhere" in w. Seward Co by 31 Jul (JG). At Twomile L, Cherry Co, 8-10 were present on 19 Jul while none were found May-Jun (DH).

Blue-gray Gnatcatcher: Northerly reports continue, mostly from the nw. and ne.; one was in Morrill Co 14 Jun (AK), a pair was at Spencer Dam, Boyd/Holt Cos 16 Jun (DH), suggesting movement westward in the Niobrara Valley, and 2 were in Cedar Co 13 Jul (JJ). Three young fledged 15 Jul in Bellevue (L&BP).

Eastern Bluebird: A rather late nest with 4 eggs was “new” near Bennington 15 Jul (JM). Young were seen to fledge by flying 75 yards from the nest box to a nearby tree near Sidney 25 Jul (AS).

Mountain Bluebird: Routine reports.

Townsend’s Solitaire: This species occurs on rare occasions in summer in pines in Sioux Co, and has bred there; one was near Glen 28 Jun (AK).

Swainson’s Thrush: Last in the se. were at FF (ARy) and in Lancaster Co (LE), both on 1 Jun. Last records for the state are usually in the north; one was in Sheridan Co 3 Jun (CNK) and 7 in Thomas Co 2 Jun (LR, RH).

Wood Thrush: Two were in Knox Co along Schindler Creek 9 Jul where it has been scarce in recent years (MB).

American Robin: Routine reports.

Gray Catbird: Uncommon in the nw., one was at Chadron SP 2 Jun (RE).

Northern Mockingbird: Still rare in the north, a pair was in Brown Co in Jun (DH).

Sage Thrasher: One of fewer than 5 Jun records was one on Sowbelly Road, Sioux Co, 1 Jun (RT); nesting has not been confirmed in Nebraska.

Brown Thrasher: Routine reports.

European Starling: Routine reports.

Cedar Waxwing: Routine reports.

Orange-crowned Warbler: Fifth-latest on record was one at FF 1 Jun (ARy); this is usually an early migrant.

Northern Parula: Routine reports.

Yellow Warbler: Routine reports.

Yellow-rumped Warbler: Unexpected was one in pines in Seward Co 27 Jun; its subspecies could not be determined (JG). This is the 11th report in the period 27 Jun-11 Aug.

Yellow-throated Warbler: Routine reports.

Cerulean Warbler: None were reported; this is a regular but rare summer visitor in the southeast.

Black-and-white Warbler: This species is most common in summer in the e. Niobrara Valley; one was in Keya Paha Co 23 Jun (DH).

American Redstart: Unusual in summer in Scotts Bluff Co, a pair continued on the west edge of Scottsbluff (fide AK) where it was first observed in 2005. This species is a common breeder along the Niobrara Valley, where “numerous pairs” were seen in Holt, Brown, Keya Paha, and Cherry Cos Jun-Jul (DH). One was in Thomas Co 2 Jun (LR, RH), where summering birds are scarce.

Prothonotary Warbler: A singing male was heard as late as 30 Jun in FF (L&BP, ARy). Only the 5th Panhandle record was one in Scotts Bluff Co 3 Jun (RSm, fide AK).

Ovenbird: Like American Redstart, this species is a common breeder in the Niobrara Valley; several were calling in Keya Paha, Brown, Holt, and Cherry Cos Jun-Jul (DH), and 2 were at Spencer Dam, Boyd/Holt Cos 5 Jul (LR, RH).

Louisiana Waterthrush: None were reported; this species is inconspicuous after singing ceases in late spring.

Kentucky Warbler: The only report of this lower Missouri Valley summer resident was of one in Otoe Co 13 Jun (L&CF).

Common Yellowthroat: Routine reports.

Wilson's Warbler: One in Omaha 7 Jun (JED) was rather late; it is the 10th Jun record for the state, the latest was 13 Jun.

Yellow-breasted Chat: One in Otoe Co 16 Jul (L&CF, details) was a surprise; reports from the southeast have been few in recent years. Also easterly was one in Polk Co 9 Jun (SJD), and 4 at HCR 26 Jun were at the only known site there (G&WH).

Summer Tanager: Routine reports.

Scarlet Tanager: Breeding occurs currently in the Niobrara Valley west probably to Brown and Keya Paha Cos; reports were received from Holt, Boyd, and Rock Cos in Jun (DH, CH).

Western Tanager: Routine reports.

Green-tailed Towhee: One in a Sidney yard 7 Jun (AS) was 2nd-latest for spring.

Spotted Towhee: One in Webster Co 24 Jun (WF) was easterly at that date. An unseen bird singing an Eastern Towhee song in Lincoln Co 3 Jun (TJW) was likely a hybrid at that location.

Eastern Towhee: One at LO 17 Jun "looked and sounded" like this species (TJW); other westerly reports were in Antelope Co 7 Jul (LR, RH) and at Calamus Res, Loup/Garfield Cos 21 Jul (RE). These areas are mostly occupied by intermediates, but phenotypic Easterns and Spottededs also occur. A female Eastern in Platte Co 10 Jun was well-described; it was paired with a male intermediate (WF).

Cassin's Sparrow: This species was more in evidence in the s. Panhandle than usual; at the n. and e. extent of the range 2 males returned to a known location at LM 7 Jun (SJD) and 2 were near CLNWR 7 Jun (CG). Less surprising were 2 in w. Scotts Bluff Co 18 Jun (AK, KD), singles in Morrill and Kimball Cos 18 Jun (AK), and one in courtship display s. of Exit 1 on I-80 21 Jun (AK).

Chipping Sparrow: This species is less common in summer in the southwest than elsewhere in the state; singles were in Harlan and Furnas Cos 24 Jun (WF), and one was in se. Lincoln Co 8 Jul (TJW).

Brewer's Sparrow: The only report was of 2 near Box Butte Res, Dawes Co, 2 Jun (RE), within the expected summer range.

Field Sparrow: Good counts were 15 in Dixon Co 7 Jun (JJ) and 12+ in a single Breeding Bird Atlas block in Burt Co 13 Jul (CNK).

Vesper Sparrow: Two observers (JJ, MB) observed that this species is found in soybean fields Jun-Jul, at least in the northeast, where it has adapted to agricultural practices. Breeding is rare in the cen. and w. Platte Valley, and so sightings in Buffalo Co 1 Jun (D&JP) and Keith Co 17 Jun (TJW) were of interest.

Lark Sparrow: Routine reports.

Lark Bunting: Routine reports.

Savannah Sparrow: None were reported; this is a localized breeder in the Panhandle.

Grasshopper Sparrow: This species is doing well in Nebraska, as it adapts to a variety of grasslands, including those being actively grazed by cattle. A good count was 28 in Dixon Co 7 Jun (JJ).

- Henslow's Sparrow:** One was singing at SCP 6 Jun (TF) where the prairie is rotationally-grazed; none were at a prairie in Pawnee Co Jun-Jul that was being fairly heavily grazed by cattle but where large numbers were present in 2007 under very light grazing (WRS). A surprise was 2 singing in Merrick Co 9 Jun (SJD); summering is known north to Stanton Co.
- Song Sparrow:** One in Hayes Co 25 Jun (WF) follows a record of a territorial bird singing in Red Willow Co this spring and together these provide the only evidence that breeding might occur in the Republican Valley. This species is slowly expanding its range s. and w. in Nebraska, however.
- Swamp Sparrow:** There are scattered breeding colonies in established cattail marshes along and just s. of the Platte Valley, generally marking the s. edge of the breeding range; two singing in Hall Co 21 Jun (PD) were an example of this distribution.
- Dark-eyed (White-winged) Junco:** Breeding birds were reported from expected locations at Chadron SP 2 Jun (RE) and in Sioux Co, where fledglings were seen 28 Jun (AK).
- McCown's Longspur:** None were reported; this species breeds regularly along the w. edge of the Panhandle.
- Chestnut-collared Longspur:** None were reported; this species breeds regularly in the Panhandle.
- Northern Cardinal:** One at Chadron SP 2 Jun (RE) was only the 6th record since 1960 in the northwest.
- Rose-breasted Grosbeak:** Routine reports.
- Black-headed Grosbeak:** One near Gibbon 19 Jun was considered unusual, though apparently regular there (LR, RH); this is the easternmost regular site on the Platte River.
- Blue Grosbeak:** Routine reports.
- Lazuli Bunting:** One in Thomas Co 2 Jun (LR, RH) was probably a late migrant; recent years have seen numerous spring records eastward.
- Indigo Bunting:** Routine reports.
- Dickcissel:** Excellent numbers occurred westward; there were "very many" in Logan Co 8-9 Jun (LR, RH), they were "everywhere" in Keith Co 17 Jun, where the observer surmised that wetter conditions allowed for more weeds (TJW), and "abundant" in Lincoln/Custer Cos where a Breeding Bird Survey route recorded them at 25 of the 50 stops (TJW).
- Bobolink:** A loose flock of 12 males 8 Jul in Cuming Co (LE) signaled the start of fall movement for this early fall migrant.
- Red-winged Blackbird:** Routine reports.
- Eastern Meadowlark:** Wetter conditions in Custer and Lincoln Cos apparently resulted in an increase of this species; Westerns are usually the only species present in the area (TJW). Not uncommon in the Sandhills generally, one was at Calamus Res 21 Jul (RE).
- Western Meadowlark:** Routine reports.
- Yellow-headed Blackbird:** Routine reports.
- Brewer's Blackbird:** Reports were from expected locations in Sioux and Morrill Cos (AK), although the presence of at least one pair for the 2nd year on the n. side of Scotts Bluff NM, Scotts Bluff Co, was in unusual habitat (AK). Breeding records from Scotts Bluff Co are lacking.
- Common Grackle:** A large group of 800 adults and immatures was at Nebraska City as early as 20 Jul (L&CF).

Great-tailed Grackle: Reports were statewide in small numbers, including 2 nests at CLNWR 21 Jun, one with eggs, the other with eggs and young (WM).

Brown-headed Cowbird: Routine reports.

Orchard Oriole: A nest with 3 eggs was in Hitchcock Co 15 Jul (TJW), somewhat late. A good count was 19 in the LM area 7 Jun (SJD).

Baltimore Oriole: Routine reports.

Bullock's Oriole: Routine reports.

Cassin's Finch: A pair s. of I-80 Exit 1, Kimball Co, 21 Jun (AK) provided only the 3rd Jun-Jul record for this species; there is a single breeding record.

House Finch: Routine reports.

Red Crossbill: Singles at Oliver Res 6 Jun (SJD) and as far east as Bassett in the Niobrara Valley 6 Jun (CH) may have been post-breeding wanderers; this species can breed as early as Feb in Nebraska.

Pine Siskin: Most reports were from the north and west, and fairly widespread after the large winter numbers. Breeding resumed in a Cheyenne Co yard where adults were feeding young 25 Jun (AS), and juveniles were at an Ogallala feeder 3 Jul (fide CWH). Breeding may have been attempted in the se., where 3 birds, including one carrying thistle down, were seen through the summer (L&CF).

Lesser Goldfinch: The only report was of a male at CLNWR 7-8 Jun (CG, SJD); this is about the 15th documented record, most of which are recent.

American Goldfinch: Routine reports.

House Sparrow: Routine reports.

2007 (19th) REPORT OF THE NOU RECORDS COMMITTEE

Compiled by Mark A. Brogie (NOURC Chairperson)
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The functions and methods of the Nebraska Ornithologists' Union (NOU) Records Committee are described in its bylaws (NOU Records Committee 1986). The committee's purpose is to provide a procedure for documenting unusual bird sightings and to establish a list of all documented birds for Nebraska. The "Official List of the Birds of Nebraska" was first published in 1988 (NOU Records Committee 1988) and has been updated two times (NOU Records Committee 1997, 2004).

The "Official List" has been appended seventeen times: (Mollhoff 1989; Grenon 1990, 1991; Gubanyi 1996a, 1996b, 1996c; Brogie 1997, 1998, 1999, 2003, 2004, 2005, 2006, 2007; Jorgensen 2001, 2002, 2003). This report includes all accounts submitted during the calendar year of 2007 covering 30 records with accession numbers 1176-1205.

All records mentioned here are available to interested persons at the NOU archives at the University of Nebraska State Museum (UNSM), Lincoln, NE. Interested parties should contact the current NOU Librarian, whose address can be found in the latest issue of *The Nebraska Bird Review* (NBR).

State List

The American Ornithologists' Union Checklist of North American Birds, Seventh Edition (1998) and the Forty-first, Forty-second, Forty-third, Forty-fourth, Forty-fifth, Forty-sixth, and Forty-seventh Supplement to the American Ornithologists' Union (AOU, 1997, 2000, 2002, 2003, 2004, 2005, 2006, 2007) contain many taxonomic changes affecting North American birds. The following summarizes all 2007 revisions by the AOU in regards to changes in scientific names, and changes in assignments to family and order of species to the most recently published "Official List of the Birds of Nebraska: 2003" (NBR 72: 108-126).

Additionally, the list reflects changes in frequency of occurrence as determined by the NOU Records Committee, which reviewed records of bird occurrences in Nebraska for 1998-2007. Frequency of occurrence is indicated by the following terms (NOU Records Committee 2004):

- Regular - acceptably reported in 9-10 of the past 10 years.
- Casual - acceptably reported in 4-7 of the past 10 years.
- Accidental - acceptably reported in 0-2 of the past 10 years.
- Extirpated - not acceptably reported in the past 50 years.
- Extinct - no longer found alive anywhere in the world.

The frequency of occurrence for any species that is acceptably reported in 3 or 8 of the last 10 years is discussed by the committee and placed in a category felt most appropriate by the committee.

With this report, the following changes are made to the "Official List of the Birds of Nebraska: 2003".

Changes in Frequency of Occurrence

1. White-winged Crossbill (*Loxia leucoptera*) Regular to Casual.

Changes Involving Nebraska Species Due to Taxonomic Revisions and/or Changes in English or Scientific Names

1. Bean Goose (*Anser fabalis*) becomes Taiga Bean-Goose (*Anser fabalis*) as a result of a split in the Bean-Goose complex. *A. f. middendorffii* is the subspecies associated with the sightings in Nebraska (AOU 2007).
2. Belted Kingfisher (*Ceryle alcyon*) becomes (*Megaceryle alcyon*) (AOU 2007).

Changes in Sequence

1. The vultures (family - *Cathartidae*) are moved from the order Ciconiiformes and once again placed in the order Falconiformes (AOU 2007). The *Cathartidae* family will be placed at the beginning of the Falconiformes, in front of the *Accipitridae* family in the "Official List of the Birds of Nebraska".

Criteria for Accepted Records

In order for a record to be accepted, a minimum of six votes in favor is required with no more than one dissenting vote (NOU Records Committee 1986). Records in the following classes are listed as accepted:

- I-S - a diagnostic, labeled specimen exists.
- I-P - a diagnostic, labeled photograph or slide exists.
- I-R - a diagnostic, labeled recording exists.
- II - three or more independently written diagnostic documentations of the same bird exist.
- III - one or two independently written diagnostic documentations of the same bird exist.

Each account of an accepted record includes a brief statement noting the species, class, date, location, and initial(s) of observers.

Pre-2007 Accepted Records

Raven (*Corvus*) species unknown

1. A single bird was observed (Class III; JO) near the Nature Conservancy's Niobrara Valley Preserve headquarters, north of Johnstown, Brown Co., 29 December, 2006. Initially submitted as Common Raven (*Corvus corax*) but changed to raven species as bird was not heard. Accession # 1176

2007 Changes in Firmness of Data

1. Ash-throated Flycatcher (*Myiarchus cinerascens*) changed from Class III to Class I-P.

2007 Additions to State List

There were four new additions in 2007. With the addition of these species, the "Official List of the Birds of Nebraska" now stands at 452 species.

1. Frigatebird: *Fregata* (unknown species)
Insert: Family *Fregatidae*: Frigatebirds after Anhinga (*Anhinga anhinga*)
Insert: *Fregata* (unknown species), Accidental, I-P after *Fregatidae*

2. Zone-tailed Hawk (*Buteo albonotatus*), Accidental, III
Insert between: Swainson's Hawk (*Buteo swainsoni*) and Red-tailed Hawk (*Buteo jamaicensis*)
3. Royal Tern (*Thalasseus maximus*), Accidental, I-S
Insert after: Forster's Tern (*Sterna forsteri*)
4. Eurasian Tree Sparrow (*Passer montanus*), Accidental, I-P
Insert after: House Sparrow (*Passer domesticus*)

2007 Accepted Records

Red-throated Loon (*Gavia stellata*)

1. A first-year bird was photographed (Class I-P, PD) at Harvard WPA, Clay Co., 04 November 2007. Accession # 1203

Glossy Ibis (*Plegadis falcinellus*)

1. A lone adult bird was observed (Class III; EB) south of Bellevue, Sarpy Co., 25 May 2007. Accession # 1187

Frigatebird (*Fregata*) species unknown

1. A frigatebird (unidentifiable to species) was photographed (Class I-P, TG, BT) near the 1st Street Elkhorn River Bridge in Norfolk, Madison Co., at dusk on 28 August 2007. Accession # 1191
**This represents the first documented record for this genus in Nebraska.
2. An all dark frigatebird (unidentifiable to species) was observed below Gavins Point Dam, Cedar Co.; 08 September 2007 (Class III, MG). Accession # 1194

Zone-tailed Hawk (*Buteo albonotatus*)

1. A single bird was described (Class III; CRB) and photographed (SK) on 25 April 2007 at a "vulture roost" below Lake McConaughy, Keith Co., (near the entrance gate to the Cedar Point Biological Station). The photographic evidence was very suggestive but was deemed insufficient to be stand-alone documentation. Accession # 1186
**This represents the first documented record for this species in Nebraska.

Common Moorhen (*Gallinula chloropus*)

1. An adult bird was photographed (Class I-P, JG) at Tamora Basin WPA, Seward Co., 17 May 2007. Accession # 1185

Laughing Gull (*Larus atricilla*)

1. A second-year bird was observed (Class III; MAB) at Weigand Marina, Knox Co., 03 October 2007. Accession # 1195

Royal Tern (*Thalasseus maximus*)

1. An adult bird was photographed (Class I-P, DP, JP) at Lake Babcock/Lake North, Platte Co., 08 September 2007. The bird was found dead on 10 September and salvaged (SR) under authorization of the Nebraska Game and Parks Commission. The carcass was donated to the University of Nebraska State Museum (UNSM), prepared (Class I-S, TL),

and added to the research collection as # ZM-18317 - an adult female in definitive basic plumage (Rehme et al. 2008). Accession # 1192

**This represents the first documented record for this species in Nebraska.

Broad-tailed Hummingbird (*Selasphorus platycercus*)

1. A description (Class III, RS) was received of a single bird observed at a feeder in Bellevue, Sarpy Co., 18 & 22 October 2007. Accession # 1200
2. A second written description (Class III, BG) was received of the above bird from observations on 18 & 22 October 2007. Accession # 1201

Scissor-tailed Flycatcher (*Tyrannus forficatus*)

1. One of two birds present was photographed (Class I-P, JT) at Eppley Airfield, Sarpy Co., 03 June 2007. Accession # 1188
- The NOURC no longer seeks documentation for this species.

Ash-throated Flycatcher (*Myiarchus cinerascens*)

1. A single bird was observed (Class III, WJM) south of Exit 1, Kimball Co., 28 June 2007. Accession # 1189
 2. An adult bird was photographed (Class I-P, JG) and recorded at the above location 10 July 2007. Accession # 1190
- Subsequent sightings at this location in 2007 led to the "First Report of Ash-throated Flycatcher (*Myiarchus cinerascens*) Breeding in the Nebraska Panhandle Region" (Mollhoff et al. 2008).

Mountain Chickadee (*Poecile gambeli*)

1. A single bird was observed (Class III, AD) at Scottsbluff, Scotts Bluff Co., 25 October 2007. Accession # 1202

Varied Thrush (*Ixoreus naevius*)

1. A single adult male was photographed (Class I-P, KL via DL) coming to a bird waterer south of Lincoln, Lancaster Co., 21 February 2007. Accession # 1180

Curve-billed Thrasher (*Toxostoma curvirostre*)

1. A single bird was photographed (Class I-P, JJ) east of Madrid, Perkins Co., 22 April 2007. Accession # 1181

Blue-winged Warbler (*Vermivora pinus*)

1. A single female was observed (Class III, KD) east of Scottsbluff, Scotts Bluff Co., 08 May 2007. Accession # 1184

Yellow-throated Warbler (*Dendroica dominica*)

1. A single bird was photographed (Class I-P, JC) coming to a bird feeder near Lincoln, Lancaster Co., 11 December 2007. Accession # 1204

Golden-crowned Sparrow (*Zonotrichia atricapilla*)

1. A single adult was photographed (Class I-P, BW) on White River Road, Sioux Co., 04 May 2007. Accession # 1182

Smith's Longspur (*Calcarius pictus*)

1. A single male bird was observed (Class III, RE) at Hultine WPA, Clay Co., 10 October 2007. Accession # 1199

Brewer's Blackbird (*Euphagus cyanocephalus*)

1. A single immature male bird was observed (Class III, LR, RH) east of Gering, Scotts Bluff Co., 15 December 2007. Accession # 1205

Lesser Goldfinch (*Carduelis psaltria*)

1. A "black-backed" male was photographed (Class I-P, JJ) along Wright's Gap road, Scotts Bluff Co., 01 September 2007. Accession # 1193

Eurasian Tree Sparrow (*Passer montanus*)

1. A single adult bird was photographed (Class I-P, ELB) near Enola, Madison Co., 03 February 2007. Accession # 1179
**This represents the first documented record for this species in Nebraska (Brogie 2007).

Unaccepted Records

Records in the following classes are considered unaccepted (NOU Records Committee 1986):

IV - probably correct, but not beyond reasonable doubt.

V - a record with insufficient evidence to support the identification claimed.

VI - a probable released or escaped bird or mistaken identification.

Each account of an unaccepted record includes a brief statement noting the species, class, date, location, and reasons for the committee's failure to accept the record.

Unaccepted Records (Received in 2007)Eurasian Wigeon (*Anas penelope*)

1. A description of an adult male observed 06 March 2007 at Spikerush WMA, York Co., lacked sufficient details for approval. Class IV. Accession # 1198

Turkey Vulture (*Cathartes aura*)

1. A series of written reports were received of a single bird observed at the Riverside Zoo in Scottsbluff, Scotts Bluff Co.; 11 & 15 January 2007. Although very suggestive, the descriptions in these documentations lacked sufficient details for approval. Class IV. Accession # 1177

Slaty-backed Gull (*Larus schistisagus*)

1. A bird described as "at least a 3-year gull, probably going into the 4th year" was observed at Offutt Air Force Base Lake, Sarpy Co., 21 December 2006. This observation occurred during the time that this

species was present nearby at Lake Manawa, Iowa; however, the description in this documentation lacked sufficient details for the addition of this species to the "Official List of the Birds of Nebraska". Class V. Accession # 1178

Common Raven (*Corvus corax*)

1. A written report was received of a single bird observed near Brownlee, Cherry Co., 29 September 2007. Although very suggestive, the description in this documentation lacked sufficient details for approval. Class IV. Accession # 1197

Blue-winged Warbler (*Vermivora pinus*)

1. A written report was received of a male and female in an orchard at Scottsbluff, Scotts Bluff Co., 08 May 2007. The description in this documentation lacked sufficient details for approval (Class IV); however, this was the initial sighting that led to the above Blue-winged Warbler documentation (Accession # 1184) and was, at least in part, undoubtedly correct. Accession # 1183

MacGillivray's Warbler (*Oporornis tolmiei*)

1. A photograph was received of an immature *Oporornis* female warbler observed south of Nickerson, Dodge Co., 08 September 2007. Although suggestive, the documentation provided did not conclusively rule out a female Mourning Warbler (*Oporornis philadelphia*), which also may have broken eye rings. Class IV. Accession # 1196

Acknowledgments

The NOU Records Committee would like to thank the following observers who contributed records included in this report: Elliott Bedows (EB), Ellen L. Brogie (ELB), Mark A. Brogie (MAB), Charles R. Brown (CRB), Jennifer Cantrell (JC), Kathy DeLara (KD), Ann Duey (AD), Paul Dunbar (PD), Rick Eades (RE), Tom Gannon (TG), Mary Gertsema (MG), Ruth Green (RG), Betty Grenon (BG), Joe Gubanyi (JG), Robin Harding (RH), Joel Jorgensen (JJ), Alice Kenitz (AK), Clem Klaphake (CK), Sarah Knutie (SK), Tom Labedz (TL), Keith Lacey (KL), Dan Leger (DL), Wayne J. Mollhoff (WJM), Jerry Mulliken (JM), John Ortmann (JO), Don Paseka (DP), Janis Paseka (JP), Lanny Randolph (LR), Sarah Rehme (SR), Rick Schmid (RS), Jerry Toll (JT), Bruce Trindle (BT), and Bruce Walgren (BW).

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Migration Chronology, Nesting Ecology, and Breeding Distribution of Mountain Plover (*Charadrius montanus*) in Nebraska

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INTRODUCTION

The Mountain Plover (*Charadrius montanus*) is a loosely colonial (Graul 1975) upland shorebird that breeds across the xeric tablelands of the western Great Plains and shortgrass prairie ecoregion of North America (Knopf and Wunder 2006). This is a species of conservation concern throughout its range because of apparent range-wide population declines (Knopf and Wunder 2006). The U.S. Shorebird Conservation Plan (USSCP) recently classified the species as globally highly-imperiled (Brown et al. 2001; USSCP 2004). Reasons for the decline of Mountain Plovers are not fully understood. Habitat destruction and the tendency of the species to nest in agricultural fields, where nests may be susceptible to destruction from agricultural practices, have been identified as possible causes (Shackford et al. 1999, Dreitz 2005, Knopf and Wunder 2006).

Bruner et al. (1904) described the species as “not uncommon in extreme western Nebraska” at the turn of the 20th Century and noted the species had been observed in Cheyenne, Dawes, and Sioux Counties. Observed declines in Mountain Plover abundance in Nebraska over the following decades were likely the result of actual population declines and a lack of systematic surveys for the species (i.e., detectability). As late as the new millennium, Sharpe et al. (2001) described the species as a rare, regular breeder limited to southwestern Kimball County. Sharpe et al. (2001) also suggested that the earliest spring migrants in Nebraska arrived in early April, and that most migrants left by the middle or end of July.

However, the conclusions of Sharpe et al. (2001) regarding the status of Mountain Plovers in Nebraska were largely based on inconsistent and opportunistic observations of nesting Mountain Plovers on stony, overgrazed rangeland.

Additional information was gleaned from the results of Shackford et al. (1999) who found plovers on agricultural fields (e.g., winter wheat) in southwestern Kimball County. Mountain Plovers are cryptically colored, oftentimes remain motionless when approached by perceived threats, and occupy a range within Nebraska that is largely privately owned. These three factors have made locating plovers difficult, and have compounded our poor comprehensive understanding of Mountain Plover's abundance across its distribution in Nebraska. Despite this, the species is state-listed as threatened under the Nebraska Nongame and Endangered Species Conservation Act and is classified as a Tier I, at-risk species according to the Nebraska Natural Legacy Project (Schneider et al. 2005).

In 2002 the Nebraska Prairie Partners (NPP), a cooperative partnership between the Rocky Mountain Bird Observatory (RMBO) and Nebraska Game and Parks Commission (NGPC), initiated a project to identify the extent of the breeding distribution and population size of Mountain Plover in Nebraska. The NPP made a concerted effort to gain access to private lands in the southwestern panhandle before initiating systematic research and monitoring activities focused on Mountain Plover ecology. Specific monitoring activities included road-side surveys, early spring visual checks in areas where plover were found in previous years, and monitoring nests in agricultural fields (nest marking) throughout May and June of most years. In addition, surveys of randomly selected 200x200 meter patches (patch surveys) were conducted in late April and May of the 2004-2007 field seasons.

The purpose of this paper is to provide an updated, descriptive assessment of Mountain Plover in Nebraska. We base our conclusions on six years (2002-2007) of Mountain Plover monitoring data in the southwestern panhandle of Nebraska. We reviewed data collected from our monitoring activities to reassess the status of Mountain Plover in Nebraska including 1) estimated arrival dates of spring migrants and departure dates of fall migrants, 2) nesting chronology and time intervals of peak nesting activity, and 3) a general distribution of breeding Mountain Plovers in the southwest panhandle.

METHODS

Study Area

The majority of surveys outlined in this manuscript took place across the Kimball Grasslands Biologically Unique Landscape (BUL) in the southwestern panhandle (Schneider 2005), including portions of Kimball, Cheyenne, and Banner Counties. Surveys were also conducted in the 17 westernmost counties of Nebraska during the 2004 field season. The Kimball Grassland BUL is characterized by xeric tablelands on both sides of the Lodgepole Creek drainage. On the tablelands the predominant composition of the land is native rangeland and dryland wheat/millet farming (pers. obs.). Both intensively grazed rangeland and dryland wheat farming provide Mountain Plovers with essential breeding habitat, specifically flat, disturbed areas with greater than 30% bare ground (Knopf and Miller 1994). The Kimball Grasslands BUL adjoins Wyoming to the west and lies adjacent to the northern boundary of the Pawnee National Grassland in Weld County, Colorado, once considered a major stronghold for Mountain Plover before recently observed population declines (Knopf and Rupert 1996).

Migration Chronology

Preliminary surveys detected Mountain Plovers across the study area in early spring. These surveys were usually limited to southern Kimball County, and were conducted in early April during the 2002-2005 field seasons. In 2006 and 2007 these surveys were initiated on 3 April and 20 March, respectively, in order to better approximate the first day Mountain Plovers arrive in Nebraska. These surveys were also conducted opportunistically at similar areas in late August and early September in 2006 and 2007 to document the last day that Mountain Plovers were observed across the study area before fall migration.

Nesting Ecology

The Mountain Plover nest marking program was developed in 2003 by Fritz Knopf in cooperation with RMBO and the Colorado Division of Wildlife, to locate and protect Mountain Plover nests from accidental tillage on privately-owned agricultural fields. NPP implemented the program in Nebraska from late April through the end of June in all field seasons beginning in 2004. Working in conjunction with local producers, nests were located in agricultural fields by driving parallel transects with ATVs in fallow and stubble strips till adult birds were flushed off a nest, at which point technicians backed off the area and waited for the adult to return before determining the exact location of the nest. Once located, the nest was marked with orange-painted wooden lathe, and an incentive payment was offered to landowners for each nest they avoided with tillage operations.

When we located a nest, we floated the eggs to estimate nest age according to Dinsmore et al. (2002). We subsequently revisited nests twice a week to determine their fate (e.g. – successful, predated, abandoned, etc.). We assumed a 29-day incubation period (Knopf and Wunder 2006) to estimate when nests were initiated, and in the event a nest succeeded between revisits, we used the midpoint between revisits and the average 29-day incubation period (Knopf and Wunder 2006) to estimate the laying date. While nest marking was concluded at the end of June, nest checks during the 2005 through 2007 field seasons were continued as long as needed to assign a fate to all marked nests. After estimating nest initiation dates for nests monitored during the 2005-2007 field seasons, we grouped the three years together by interval and tested for the existence of two distinct sets of nest initiation dates by comparing a 2 component normal mixture distribution with a single normal distribution, and carrying out a likelihood ratio test with 3 degrees of freedom to account for the additional 3 parameters needed for a 2 component mixture distribution.

Mountain Plovers were sometimes observed incubating eggs and exhibiting several different agonistic behaviors (see Graul 1973 or Knopf and Wunder 2006 for descriptions) during patch surveys, suggesting that nesting occurred in close proximity, and provided further information on the nesting habits across this study area. In order to explore potential patterns between Mountain Plover nesting chronology (e.g., cold weather delaying nest initiation) and local climatic conditions, we accessed the High Plains Climate Research Center database (University of Nebraska-Lincoln, Lincoln, Nebraska) and obtained temperature and precipitation data for April through July during the 2006 and 2007 field seasons from a weather station in Kimball County, Nebraska.

Breeding Distribution

Roadside transect surveys and the patch surveys began in mid-April of all years, and continued through the end of May or first week in June. In 2003, we conducted roadside surveys to determine Mountain Plover occupancy throughout the 17 counties of extreme western Nebraska; Sioux, Dawes, Sheridan, Box Butte, Scotts Bluff, Banner, Morrill, Kimball, Cheyenne, Deuel, Garden, Keith, Perkins, Chase, Dundy, Hayes, and Lincoln Counties. Patch surveys were conducted during the 2004-2007 field seasons at areas where plovers were encountered during the 2003 surveys. While patch surveys had an underlying experimental design and were therefore more informative (e.g., as opposed to solely documenting presence/absence), they were also more labor intensive and were therefore only conducted on the reduced range where plover were encountered during the 2003 roadside transects, specifically in Banner, Kimball, and Cheyenne Counties. Patch surveys were conducted to determine breeding Mountain Plover habitat associations and to estimate the relative abundance of plovers in Nebraska, and while not specifically designed to address the objectives in this paper, they provided sightings important in estimating the distribution of plover in Nebraska.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Migration Chronology

The earliest observations of Mountain Plovers in Kimball County were 2 adults on 5 April 2002, 4 adults on 18 March 2003, 5 adults on 8 April 2004, 4 adults on 3 April of 2006, and multiple groups of three plovers on 24 March 2007. Because some of these dates are the first day of the season that we attempted to locate plover (2004 and 2006), and are probably later than when plover truly arrived, evidence presented here suggests that Mountain Plover likely begin migrating into Nebraska as early as the middle to end of March. Our latest observations of Mountain Plover in Nebraska for the 2002, 2003, and 2004 field seasons were 1 August (10 fledglings), 15 August (1 adult), and 16 July (5 adult, 4 fledglings), respectively. However, increased survey effort in the fall of 2006 and 2007 resulted in the observation of a flock of 28 plovers (mostly juveniles) on land adjacent to an area with relatively high nest densities on 31 August 2006. Additionally, on 3 September 2007 we observed 78 Mountain Plover (both adults and juveniles) on the adjoining land to the south of where the 2006 group was observed. Both the 2006 and 2007 observations suggest migration dates that are much later than previously believed.

Nesting Ecology

While few Mountain Plover nests had ever been located in Nebraska (see Sharpe et al. 2001 for a listing of all events), our monitoring efforts yielded a total of 278 nests (272 on agricultural fields and 6 on native rangelands) over the duration of this study. The majority of Mountain Plover nests in Nebraska were initiated during the first two weeks of May. Using these nests, we were able to back estimate the onset of Mountain Plovers nesting to late April of all years. This estimate is interesting because we rarely located nests during nest marking in late April. We believe this pattern is likely because plovers were not displaying behavioral cues that would suggest the presence of a nest.

We estimated the earliest nests were initiated on 26 April 2006 and 28 April 2007, based on hatching dates and a 29-day incubation period. These dates are nearly a month later than earliest arrivals were detected on the study area. While the earliest date of arrival of spring migrants in 2006 is not known, a colder April in 2007 (avg. low = -1.83°C) compared to 2006 (avg. low = -0.21°C) could be responsible for the observed delay between plover arrival and nest initiation. However, our results could be an artifact of some other events not addressed in this study. The first two weeks of May coincided with the onset of warmer weather in both 2006 (avg. low = 1.29°C) and 2007 (avg. low = 5.18°C). This was also the period when plovers began to display behavioral cues associated with nesting, a requirement for identifying exact nesting locations.

We based our observed plover nesting chronology on data from the 2005-2007 field seasons, and the histogram of our estimated initiation dates suggested a skewed, bimodal distribution for all three field seasons (Figure 1). After grouping the three field seasons together we found statistical support for a bimodal distribution, where the two component model was a better approximation to the data ($\chi^2 = 50.5$, $\text{df}=3$, $p < 1e^{-11}$). Approximately 70% of the nests are assigned to the first component with an average initiation date of 6 May (Ordinal Day = 126, $\sigma^2=25.6$), and the other 30% of nests are in the second component with an average initiation date of 1 June (Ordinal Day = 152, $\sigma^2=37.7$) (Figure 2).

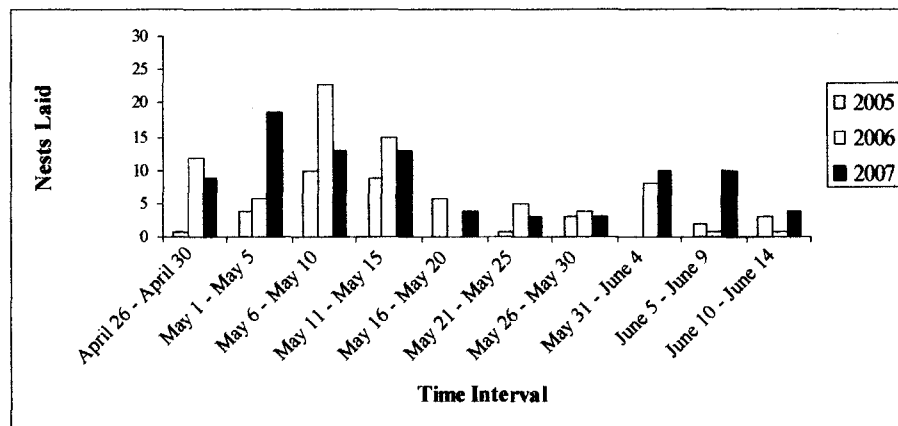


Figure 1. Estimated date that Mountain Plover eggs were laid based on a 29-day incubation period. For nests hatched between revisits, 29-day incubation is applied from the middle of relevant nest visits. Nests were located in Kimball County, Nebraska during nest marking for the 2005-2007 field seasons.

This result suggests that the largest numbers of nests were initiated in early May, with another pulse of nest initiation in late May and early June. One explanation for this observed pattern was that the initial peak represents first nesting attempts, while the second peak represents second nesting attempts by resident plovers (or inexperienced first time breeders) who lost their first nests (Knopf and Wunder 2006). Another explanation is that the second peak is nests initiated by non-

resident plovers dispersing into Nebraska following nest failures elsewhere (Knopf and Rupert 1996). While it is possible that the smaller grouping of nests initiated in early June are first nesting attempts, it seems more probable that these are second nests being laid in response to previous nest failures in mid-May.

We observed Mountain Plovers incubating eggs into the middle of July, which is when it was previously believed that plovers were migrating south (Sharpe et al. 2001). While the possibility exists that the birds observed in late August and early September of 2006 and 2007 were migrants from areas farther north, the contents of a number of our marked nests in Nebraska during the 2006 and 2007 field seasons did not hatch until mid-July. This information coupled with the 34-36 day chick-fledgling period (Knopf and Wunder 2006), suggest that the groups observed in late August and September could have been locally-reared juveniles that had not yet migrated.

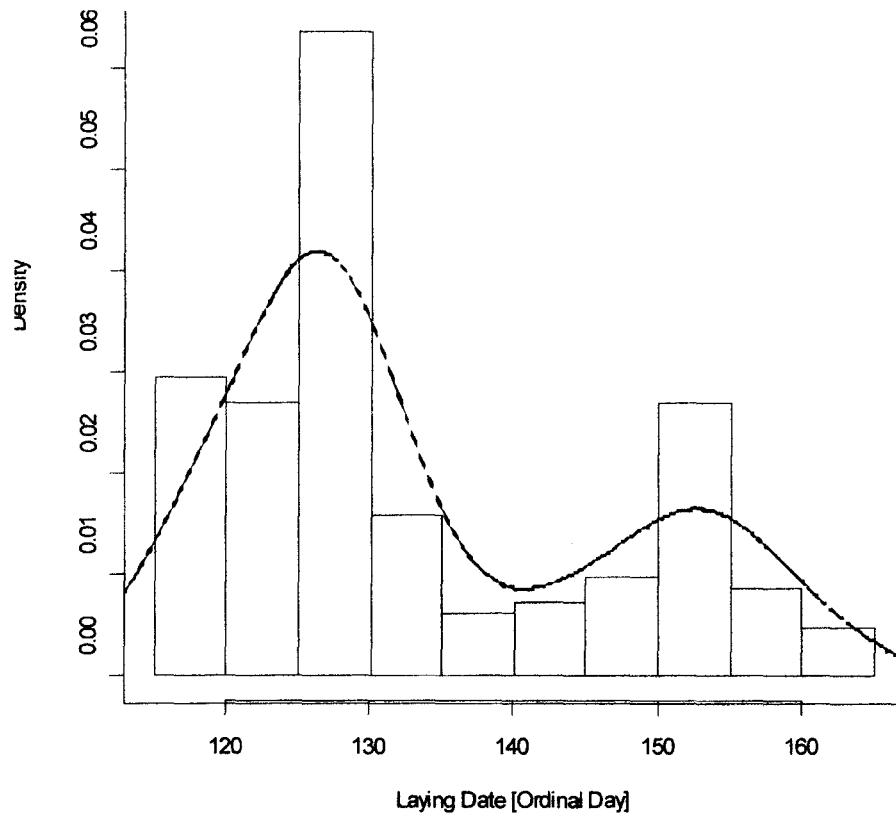


Figure 2. Frequency histogram of nest initiation date for Mountain Plovers in Nebraska. The solid curve is a kernel density estimate using a Gaussian kernel.

Breeding Distribution

Mountain Plovers were observed in Banner, Cheyenne, and Kimball Counties during patch surveys. Approximately 83% of our occupied survey patches were located south of I-80 in Kimball County. Plover nests were also located in the three aforementioned counties, but most nesting by plovers was concentrated in southern Kimball County. The NPP has received landowner reports of Mountain Plovers in agricultural fields in both Deuel and Scotts Bluff Counties, but these sightings have not been verified and, if true, are likely attributable to extralimital individuals or migrants. Based on our data, we estimate the current distribution of plovers in Nebraska (Figure 3) to include the southwestern portion of Cheyenne County (southwest of Sidney and south of I-80), all of Kimball County except the area north of I-80 and east of Highway 71, and the very southern portion of Banner County (west of Highway 71). While Mountain Plovers were located across this entire range, we found multiple core nesting areas (all within Kimball County) where breeding densities were much higher.

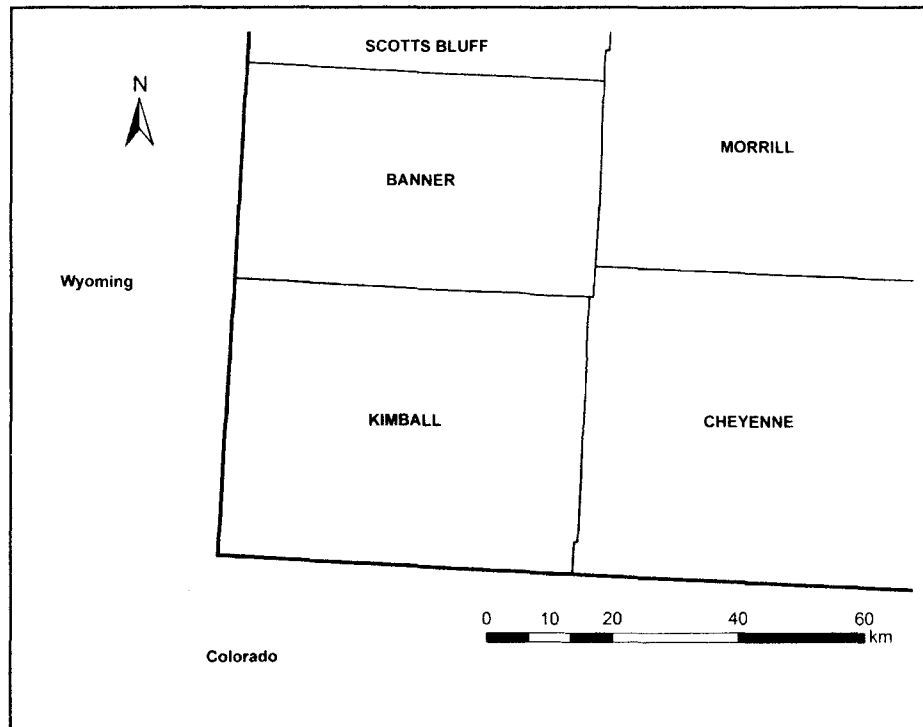


Figure 3. Rough distribution of breeding Mountain Plover (shaded area) observed in the southwest panhandle of Nebraska during the 2002 through 2007 field seasons.

CONCLUSIONS

In 2007, we conducted our nest marking program on 23,575 acres of agricultural fields, and located a total of 111 Mountain Plover nests. If we assume that ~70% of our total nests are nests belonged to original (not renesting) nesting birds (Figure 2), we would deduce a minimum number of approximately 40 breeding pairs (80 breeding adults) of Mountain Plovers in the 2007 field season. This number does not depend on whether or not the perceived renesting attempts (Figure 2) are made by resident or non-resident birds in response to original nest failure, and also does not take into account the number of non-breeding birds on the study area, or detection probabilities associated with the nest marking method. Therefore, the actual number of Mountain Plovers across this landscape is almost certainly greater than our minimum number (~80), and with 106,450 acres of suitable dryland wheat/millet available across the landscape in 2007 (NPP, unpublished data) the number might range up to 180 breeding pairs (360 breeding adults).

Compared with historically documented sightings, our results indicate that Mountain Plovers are more numerous in Nebraska than previously believed. Our results suggest a spring migration chronology similar to that suggested in Colorado (Graul 1975), with Mountain Plover arriving in Nebraska in mid- to late March, which is earlier than previously documented in Nebraska (Sharpe et al. 2001). Our data also suggest that juveniles may reside within the state as late as early September, which is significantly longer than previously documented (Sharpe et al. 2001). If true, this suggests that Mountain Plovers are present on the breeding grounds in Nebraska for approximately 5 months in any given year. Our assessment of Mountain Plovers in Nebraska, using the same terminology of Sharpe et al. (2001), suggests that their status should be revised from a rare, regular breeder to a fairly common, regular breeder with a localized distribution within the state.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

Funding for this project was provided through a grant awarded to the Nebraska Prairie Partners from the Nebraska Environmental Trust, State Wildlife Grants awarded to the University of Nebraska - Lincoln, a Neotropical Migratory Bird grant awarded to the Rocky Mountain Bird Observatory, Nebraska Game and Parks Commission's Nongame and Endangered Species Conservation Fund, and Landowner Incentive Program funding through the Nebraska Game and Parks Commission. This work was only possible with the willingness of private landowners to grant us permission to conduct these surveys, so we thank them immensely for their involvement in conserving this native prairie bird. We greatly appreciate and recognize the late John Dinan for his foresight and assistance in developing the Nebraska Prairie Partners that helped make this research possible. We thank our technicians Travis Wooten, Cameron Shelton, Jesse Williamson, Cris Carnine, Brian Monser, and Courtney Kerns who worked many long, hot days to collect the information presented in this manuscript. We also thank Joel G. Jorgensen with the Nebraska Game and Parks Commission, and Alison Cariveau with the Rocky Mountain Bird Observatory for their review and support of this

manuscript. This work also would not have been possible without the statistical input and editorial revisions of Max Post van der Burg and Dr. Andrew Tyre with the University of Nebraska – Lincoln.

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OBSERVATION OF HAILSTORM-CAUSED MORTALITY OF LEAST TERNS
AND PIPING PLOVERS ON THE NIOBRARA RIVER, NEBRASKA

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Hail has been documented to be a cause of mortality to adult Least Terns and Piping Plovers as well as to eggs and young (Boyd 1992, Lingle 1993, Schweitzer and Davis 2000, SD Dept. of Game, Fish and Parks 2005).

While on an airboat survey to document Least Tern (*Sternula antillarum*) and Piping Plover (*Charadrius melodus*) use of a portion of the Niobrara River (from Highway 137 to the Spencer Dam, approximately 40 river miles), the authors observed the remnants of a Least Tern and Piping Plover colony that had been hit by an overnight rainstorm accompanied with large hail. The colony was found on the morning of June 18, 2008, in the southwest corner of Boyd County, Nebraska (UTM 14 northing 480112.1, easting 4739856.9 in Section 30, T33N, R16W). A number of terns and plovers were observed flying over a riverine sandbar and displaying courtship activities. Further investigation of the area to count adults and investigate the possibility of nesting resulted in the discovery of several dead adults. These dead birds showed obvious signs of trauma,

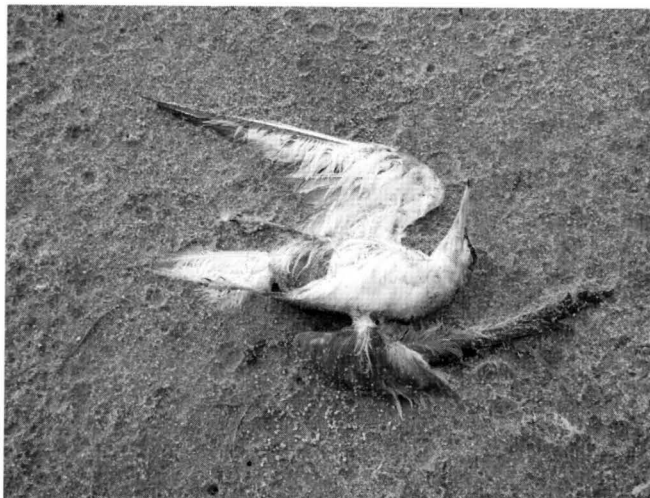


Figure 1. Least Tern. Photo by Mark Peyton.

including broken wings and legs (see Figure 1). The site was surveyed on foot for approximately 20 minutes by the survey team. Dead birds were collected from an area approximately 150 feet in diameter. No evidence of nests, eggs or chicks was observed. It is believed that most, if not all, dead birds on the sandbar were discovered and collected. We observed 7 live adult Least Terns using the area and four dead adults and 8 live adult Piping Plovers and two dead adults.

The surrounding sandbar surface was pockmarked from hail, which fell as a series of storms moved through the area the previous evening. According to the Nebraska Rainfall Assessment and Information Network website, the nearby cities of Spencer and Atkinson, Nebraska, received 0.76 and 1.62 inches of rain, respectively, as the storm system passed through the area. Hail approximately three inches deep was observed on Highway 281 the previous evening as a result of the storm, and hail stones were observed by the survey team in road ditches west of Naper, Nebraska, in the early morning hours of June 18th. Hailstone size at the colony was estimated as large as 1 inch in diameter (see Figure 2 for scale).



Figure 2. Sandbar surface pockmarked by hailstones. Photo by Mark Peyton.

The carcasses of the dead birds were collected and later transferred to the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service in Grand Island, Nebraska, in accordance with scientific permit requirements. None of the dead birds were banded although two live plovers using the area had green flags on their upper right legs, indicating they were banded on the Missouri River.

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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.

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