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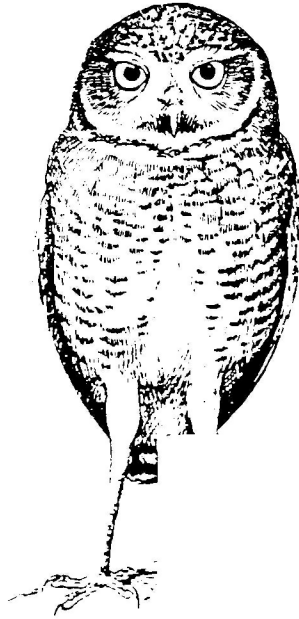
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# *The Nebraska Bird Review*

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### A SUMMER SURVEY OF THE BIRDS AT TWO EASTERN NEBRASKA WETLANDS

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#### ABSTRACT

This study compares the avian species diversity at two eastern Nebraska wetlands that differ in their relative isolation from an urban environment. Birds were surveyed by the point count method twice weekly at each site during June of 1998. Diversity was measured using species richness and species evenness. The percentage of bird species observed that depend on wetlands for breeding was also compared.

Results suggest that both species richness and evenness, as determined by the Shannon-Wiener index, were higher at the wetland located in a network of other marsh areas and agricultural land than at the suburban wetland. Immigration of species may be facilitated by closer proximity to other natural areas in general. However, the proximity to other marshes had little effect on wetland breeding species, as the difference between relative percentage of wetland birds present was small. Differences between species richness and evenness at the two sites may also be attributed to vegetative structure and varying levels of local traffic.

#### INTRODUCTION

According to the island biogeography model, the more isolated a habitat "island" is, the fewer species it receives from immigration and the lower the species richness (MacArthur and Wilson 1967). Habitat fragmentation has been shown to produce an island effect and lower avian species diversity in ecosystems such as forests (Lynch and Whigham 1984), parks (Gavareski 1976), prairie remnants (Herkert 1994), and wetlands (Brown and Dinsmore 1986). The effect of habitat fragmentation on birds has been little studied in Nebraska, aside from a study conducted on patch area and breeding birds in grasslands (Helzer and Jelinski 1999). The purpose of this study was to compare the avian diversity at two Omaha area wetlands that are similar in size but differ in their relative isolation from other wetlands. The freshwater wetlands at Heron Haven, west of 114th Avenue and Maple Street in Omaha, Nebraska, and at the "Y," the junction of Highway 275 and Dodge Street (hereafter referred to as the Y Marsh), approximately 11 kilometers west of Omaha city limits, were chosen because they are similar in area but differ in their proximity to an urban environment.

## METHODS

### Study Areas

Heron Haven is located in a suburban setting and is managed by the Audubon Society of Omaha for educational purposes. The 8.1 hectare portion of the area that was surveyed is bordered on the south by West Maple Road, on the west by Mulhall's Nursery, on the north by Old Maple Road and a golf course, and on the northeast and east by residences and 114th Avenue. The site consists of open floodplain forest, upland forest, two natural wetland areas, and two dredged, manmade ponds. The west natural wetland, located close to Maple Street, is disturbed and dominated by Arrowhead (*Sagittaria latifolia*), Cattail (*Typha latifolia*), and Reed Canary Grass (*Phalaris arundinacea*). The primary natural wetland to the east contains a variety of obligate wetland species such as Swamp Milkweed (*Asclepias incarnata*) and Blue Flag Iris (*Iris versicolor*) and attracts birds that are rarely seen in urban areas, such as Green Herons (*Butorides striatus*), and American Bitterns (*Botaurus lentiginosis*).

While the 9.3 hectare wetland at the Y Marsh is also bordered by major roads, it is located in a rural environment and there are approximately 25 wetlands within a one mile radius, compared to seven for Heron Haven (National Wetlands Inventory Maps, Irvington and Valley quadrants, 1992). The roadside wetland areas are dominated by Cattail and the inner portions of the wetland by shrubs and young Cottonwoods (*Populus deltoides*). No bird surveys had previously been conducted at the Y Marsh.

### Survey Methods

In June 1998, the study sites were each visited twice a week, 15-30 minutes after sunrise. On average, visits lasted 1 1/2 hours and were made on days when it was not raining and when wind speeds did not exceed 30 kilometers per hour. The wetlands were surveyed by the point count method (Bibby et al. 1992) because their small size and the inaccessibility of much of the Y Marsh made transect counts unsuitable. Five points, located approximately 150 meters apart, were chosen at each site and were surveyed for 10-15 minutes. At each point, the species, their sex (if it could be determined), and the specific location were recorded. Migrants were not included in the species list and statistical analysis. Bird species richness at each site was the total number of different species observed (Ludwig and Reynolds 1988). Species evenness for each site was calculated using the Shannon-Wiener Diversity Index, which indicates the distribution of species in a sample. A high value occurs when species are distributed evenly and a value of 0 occurs when there is no diversity or if only one species is present.



(Ludwig and Reynolds 1988). The formula for the index is (Ludwig and Reynolds 1988):

$$H' = - \sum_{i=1}^S [(n_i/n) \ln (n_i/n)]$$

In the formula,  $n_i$  represents the number of individuals of the  $i$ th species ( $S$  total species) observed in the sample, and  $n$  denotes the total number of individuals in the sample (Ludwig and Reynolds 1988). For this study, the average number of individuals of each species observed per day and the average total number of individuals recorded daily were used for  $n_i$  and  $n$ , respectively.

Table 1. Avian species recorded at two eastern Nebraska wetlands, June 1998.

Common Name	Scientific Name	Heron Haven	Y Marsh
Canada Goose	<i>Branta canadensis</i>		x
Wood Duck	<i>Aix sponsa</i>	x	x
Mallard	<i>Anas platyrhynchos</i>		x
Killdeer	<i>Charadrius vociferus</i>	x	
Mourning Dove	<i>Zenaida macroura</i>	x	x
Belted Kingfisher	<i>Ceryle alcyon</i>	x	
Red-headed Woodpecker	<i>Melanerpes erythrocephalus</i>	x	x
Red-bellied Woodpecker	<i>Melanerpes carolinus</i>		x
Downy Woodpecker	<i>Picoides pubescens</i>	x	x
Northern Flicker	<i>Colaptes auratus</i>	x	x
Eastern Kingbird	<i>Tyrannus tyrannus</i>		x
Tree Swallow	<i>Tachycineta bicolor</i>		x
Barn Swallow	<i>Hirundo rustica</i>	x	
Blue Jay	<i>Cyanocitta cristata</i>	x	
American Crow	<i>Corvus brachyrhynchos</i>	x	x

Common Name	Scientific Name	Heron Haven	Y Marsh
Black-capped Chickadee	<i>Parus atricapillus</i>	x	x
Carolina Wren	<i>Thryothorus ludovicianus</i>		x
House Wren	<i>Troglodytes aedon</i>		x
American Robin	<i>Turdus migratorius</i>	x	x
Gray Catbird	<i>Dumetella carolinensis</i>		x
Brown Thrasher	<i>Toxostoma rufum</i>		x
Cedar Waxwing	<i>Bombycilla cedrorum</i>		x
European Starling	<i>Sturnus vulgaris</i>	x	x
Warbling Vireo	<i>Vireo gilvus</i>	x	x
Yellow Warbler	<i>Dendroica petechia</i>		x
Common Yellowthroat	<i>Geothlypis trichas</i>		x
Northern Cardinal	<i>Cardinalis cardinalis</i>	x	x
Rose-breasted Grosbeak	<i>Pheucticus ludovicianus</i>		
Song Sparrow	<i>Melospiza melodia</i>	x	
Red-winged Blackbird	<i>Agelaius phoeniceus</i>	x	x
Common Grackle	<i>Quiscalus quiscula</i>	x	x
Baltimore Oriole	<i>Icterus galbula</i>	x	x
House Finch	<i>Carpodacus mexicanus</i>	x	
American Goldfinch	<i>Carduelis tristis</i>	x	x
House Sparrow	<i>Passer domesticus</i>	x	

## RESULTS

During the study, a total of 28 species of birds were observed at the Y Marsh and 22 species at Heron Haven (Table 1). According to the Shannon-Wiener Diversity Index ( $H'$ ), species evenness at the Y Marsh ( $H' = 2.95$ ) was higher than at Heron Haven ( $H' = 2.89$ ).

Of all the bird species observed at Heron Haven, five can be classified as wetland breeding species (Ehrlich et al. 1988) - Canada Goose (*Branta*

*candensis*), Wood Duck (*Aix sponsa*), Belted Kingfisher (*Ceryle alcyon*), Song Sparrow (*Melospiza melodia*), and Red-winged Blackbird (*Agelaius phoeniceus*). Five wetland species (Ehrlich et al. 1988) were also present at the Y Marsh - Canada Goose, Wood Duck, Mallard (*Anas platyrhynchos*), Common Yellowthroat (*Geothlypis trichas*), and Red-winged Blackbird. Converted to percentages, 22.7% of the total number of species observed at Heron Haven are wetland breeding compared to 17.9% at the Y Marsh.

#### DISCUSSION

Most of the species found at Heron Haven during this study had been previously observed there (Werthman 1998). I found a couple of migrants that were not included on the Audubon Society list: Yellow-bellied Flycatcher (*Empidonax flaviventris*) and Alder Flycatcher (*Empidonax alnorum*). Many common species to the area, such as the Great Blue Heron, were not observed in the course of this study. There have been no other bird surveys conducted at the Y Marsh.

There are several possible explanations for the lower avian species richness and evenness found at Heron Haven in this study. The most obvious may be related to the wetlands' locations. Heron Haven is an isolated wetland located in a suburban setting, while the wetland at the Y Marsh is surrounded by open farmland and several other wetlands. Another study on habitat fragmentation, conducted on Iowa wetlands, found an indirect relationship between isolation and species richness (Brown and Dinsmore 1986). However, it is difficult to explain the smaller percentage of birds that are wetland species at the Y Marsh since immigration from nearby wetlands can occur to a much greater extent than at Heron Haven. The difference may be partially explained by the presence of fish at Heron Haven, which attracts the Belted Kingfisher, and the denser vegetation, particularly trees, at Heron Haven may make it an attractive nesting site for larger wetland birds such as waterfowl (Ehrlich et al. 1988).

The difference in species richness and evenness may also have been related to the greater amount of traffic found on Maple road near Heron Haven than at the Y Marsh. According to Omaha City Traffic records, average daily traffic at the nearby intersection of 120th and Maple streets was 56,128 vehicles in 1995, the most recent year data is available (pers. comm., Glenn Hansen). In comparison, the Y, the junction of Highway 275 and Dodge, had an average of 8,495 vehicles per day in 1996 (pers. comm., Rick Ernstmeyer, Nebraska Department of Roads). Reijnen et al. (1995), in their study of the effects of car traffic on breeding bird density in deciduous and coniferous woodland, found that areas with a high noise load from traffic had a greater reduction in species density than areas with a low noise load. They hypothesized that noise could interfere with bird communication. Other traffic-related factors, such as visibility of cars, direct mortality, and pollution were found to have minor effects on the bird populations.



My study gave an indication of the avian species present at Heron Haven and the Y Marsh during June and the relative diversity at each site. As the areas have been the subjects of little research, additional surveys conducted in the spring, fall, and winter are needed to give a better description of the avifauna.

#### ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I would like to thank my thesis advisor, Dr. Roger Sharpe, for his assistance and Ione Werthman of the Audubon Society of Omaha for her input on Heron Haven's avifauna.

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\* \* \* \* \*

First record of a Brambling for Nebraska

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On 14 April 1999, an unusual bird was reported visiting the feeders of Phyllis and Dean Drawbaugh in Scottsbluff, Scotts Bluff County, Nebraska. The bird apparently arrived on 13 April immediately after the passage of a cold front with strong northwest winds. On 18 April, the Drawbaughs identified the bird as a female Brambling, and local birders Alice Kenitz and Helen Hughsen confirmed the sighting later that day. On 19 April, I made the trip to Scottsbluff and studied the bird from 7:51-8:55 a.m. in the company of the Drawbaughs, David Ely and Rachel Kolokoff, both of Fort Collins, Colorado. We arrived at the Drawbaughs' house at approximately 7:30 a.m.

After a short wait, a "different" bird appeared at the feeders with House Finches and American Goldfinches. The bird was slightly larger than a House Finch. The general appearance was of a small, plump bird with a short tail. The finch-like bill was fairly long, conical, and appeared dark with some yellow color at the base. The face pattern was very distinctive. The background color of the head was light gray. There was a broad, black malar stripe. Viewing the bird from above, I noted two narrow black bars along the sides of the crown and another black mark on the nape that was V-shaped with the open end of the V opening posteriorly. The eye was dark. The underparts were white with a buffy or orange wash on the upper chest and along the flanks. The tail appeared dark-colored and was notched. The wing pattern was also distinctive: the wings were dark with two pale wingbars; the upper wingbar was white and the lower wingbar was buffy. There was also a small white spot below the wingbars. The bird did not vocalize. Field notes from two other observers filled in some other features, including a white rump, a patterned mantle with orange scapulars, and the observation that the bird walked, rather than hopped, when on the ground. Based on the plumage, we concluded the bird was a female Brambling.

This sighting represents the first record of a Brambling for Nebraska. This species is a rare vagrant in the Great Plains with scattered records from most states. Records are especially concentrated along the Front Range of the Rocky Mountains in Montana, Wyoming, and Colorado. The winter of 1998-99 brought an unprecedented invasion of Bramblings to western North America (see Shepard 1999). There were at least 15 records, most (10) from British Columbia but also from as far southeast as Idaho, South Dakota, and Nebraska.



### Literature Cited

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### WINTER FIELD REPORT. DECEMBER 1999 to FEBRUARY 2000

Compiled by W. Ross Silcock, P.O. Box 57, Tabor, IA 51653  
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### INTRODUCTION

This rather mild season stood out for its wintering waterfowl, most obviously at Keystone L, where Stephen Dinsmore counted an amazing 22 species of waterfowl on 29 January. Check the species accounts for the incredible wintering numbers; species were topped by Nebraska's first Tufted Duck, and assorted other goodies, such as 5 Barrow's Goldeneyes. Waterfowl, loons, and grebes also rewrote the midwinter record book, including no fewer than 3 Red-necked Grebes. Some interesting wintering birds also appeared at Harlan Co Res.

Other interesting winter records, some no doubt due to the mild fall, included Greater Yellowlegs at two locations, Franklin's Gull and an adult Black-legged Kittiwake at Harlan Co Res, wintering Hermit Thrush at L Ogallala, a January Gray Catbird in the northwest, a male Dickcissel at Alma, and Orange-crowned and Northern Parula warblers in December, the latter at Keystone L! Sparrows which generally winter only very rarely in NE were well-represented, although poorly-documented, including a Smith's Longspur in Cass Co.

Present in good numbers were Northern Shrike and Purple Finch, the latter welcome after some low years, and Townsend's Solitaire appeared in low numbers. The Eurasian Collared-Dove continued its expansion in the state, even breeding during the winter period! Westerly reports involved a Red-bellied Woodpecker in Scotts Bluff Co, Carolina Wrens pushing westward, and Winter Wrens wintering in the L McConaughy area.

This winter produced some outstanding rarities also. Hiding among the numerous scaup, a Tufted Duck at Keystone L proved a frustrating dip-twitch for many, while a Pomarine Jaeger and Mew Gull were well seen only by one Stephen Dinsmore (who also found, and re-found many times for others, the Tufted Duck). Possibly most frustrating was what would likely have been a first state record Slaty-backed Gull at Harlan Co Res, which could not be re-found despite a two-day search. A tantalizing record was of Golden-crowned Sparrows in Cherry Co in early December, the 2nd winter in a row for this

species. A Dark-eyed (Gray-headed) Junco was spotted in Papillion, and a couple of White-winged Crossbills were found.

### CORRECTIONS TO PREVIOUS REPORTS

Normally I prefer to place corrections communicated to me in the appropriate season's report. This practice is convenient for researchers looking for information on certain species at certain seasons. Thus you will note some additions sent by Glen and Wanda Hoge for winter 1998-99 in the accounts below. If you have sightings that extend the information published here, feel free to send them in, as they are better brought to light a year late than not at all!

### ABBREVIATIONS

ADE: Arbor Day Farm, Nebraska City; BOL: Branched Oak L, Lancaster Co; CBC: Christmas Bird Count; CCM: Clear Creek Marshes, Keith and Garden Cos; Co: County; FF: Fontenelle Forest, Sarpy Co; EL: Funk Lagoon, Phelps Co; HCR: Harlan Co Res, Harlan Co; L: Lake; LM: L McConaughy, Keith Co; NC: Nature Center; NPNWR: North Platte NWR, Scotts Bluff Co; NWR: National Wildlife Refuge; Res: Reservoir; SHP: State Historical Park; SL: Sewage Lagoon(s); SP: State Park.

### GAZETTEER

Ash Hollow SHP: Garden Co; Buckskin Hills: WMA, Dixon Co; Carter L: Omaha; L Chappell: Chappell; Cunningham L: Omaha; DeSoto NWR: Washington Co; Facus Springs: WMA, Morrill Co; Gavin's Point Dam: Cedar and Knox Cos; James Ranch: part of Fort Robinson SP, Sioux Co; Johnson L: SRA, Gosper and Dawson Cos; Keystone Dam: forms Keystone L, Keith Co; Keystone L: Keith Co; Kingsley Dam: forms LM, Keith Co; Kiowa Springs: WMA, Scotts Bluff Co; Lewis and Clark L: Knox Co; Maloney: SRA, Lincoln Co; L Minatare: SRA, Scotts Bluff Co; Neale Woods: Douglas and Washington Cos; L Ogallala: Keith Co; Stateline Island: WMA, Scotts Bluff Co; Sutherland Res: SRA, Lincoln Co; Wehrspann L: Omaha; Wildcat Hills: Scotts Bluff Co; Winters Creek L: part of NPNWR, Scotts Bluff Co; Wolf L: Saunders Co.

### OBSERVERS

Alice Kenitz (AK), Gering; Birdline (B); Bill F. Huser (BFH), South Sioux City; Babs Padelford (BP), Bellevue; Bill Clemente (BC), Peru, Nemaha Co; Clyde E. Johnson (CEJ), Omaha; Carol Falk (CF), Nebraska City; Clem N. Klaphake (CNK), Bellevue; David L. Swanson (DLS), Vermillion, SD; Don Paseka (DP), Ames; Glen Hoge (GH), Alma; Gertrude Wood (GW), Elmwood; Helen K. Hughson (HKH), Scottsbluff; John Brennehan (JB), Omaha; Jim



Ducey (JD), Lincoln; Joe Gubanyi (JG), Seward; Joel G. Jorgensen (JGJ), Blair; Jan Johnson (JJ), Wakefield; Jan Paseka (JP), Ames; John Sullivan (JS), Lincoln; Jeffrey S. Palmer (JSP), Madison, SD; Jerry Toll (JT), Omaha; John W. Hall (JWH), Omaha; Kevin Poague (KP), Lincoln; Laurel Badura (LB), Kearney; Larry Einemann (LE), Lincoln; Laurence Falk (LF), Nebraska City; Loren Padelford (LP), Bellevue; Lanny Randolph (LR), Gibbon; Linda R. Brown (LRB), Lincoln; Mark Brogie (MB), Creighton; Mark Orsag (MO), Crete; Mindy Sheets (MS), Missouri Valley, IA; Mark Urwiller (MU), Kearney; Moni Usasz (MUS), Lincoln; Merlin Wright (MW), Brownville; Neva Pruess (NP), Lincoln; Neal Ratzlaff (NR), Omaha; Paul Kaufman (PK), Seward; Phil Swanson (PS), Papillion; Randall D. Williams (RDW), Sioux City, IA; Robin Harding (RH), Gibbon; Susan Herrick (SH), Lincoln; Stephen J. Dinsmore (SJD), Fort Collins, CO; Sandy Lemmon (SL), Crawford; Thomas E. Labeledz (TEL), Lincoln; Thomas Hoffman (TH), Omaha; Todd Jensen (TJ), Rapid City, SD; Wanda Hoge (WH), Alma; Wayne Mollhoff (WM), Lincoln; W. Ross Silcock (WRS), Tabor, IA; Zee Uridil (ZU), Chadron.

#### SPECIES ACCOUNTS

Common Loon: Rather late were singles noted at HCR on 19 December 1998 (GH, WH) and on 17 December on the HCR CBC (fide JGJ). Apparently wintering were a basic adult and a 1st basic immature seen at LM; these sightings were recorded on the LM CBC (WRS, LR, RH); the adult was noted again on 5 February (SJD) and the immature on 26 February (SJD). This identification represents only the 4th midwinter report for this species.

Pied-billed Grebe: Late birds were sighted at DeSoto NWR during CBC week on 19 December (fide MS) and at HCR on 15 December (GH, WH). Apparently wintering were 4 at LM seen on the CBC on 2 January and through at least 19 February (SJD). Probably very early migrants were the 2 birds found at CCM on 19 February (SJD), and rather early in the east was one spotted at Cunningham L on 29 February (JGJ).

Horned Grebe: Only casual in midwinter, the 2 birds seen at LM on 1 January and on 15 February (SJD) apparently wintered. Last in fall were the 12 birds discovered at Pawnee L on 4 December (JGJ).

Red-necked Grebe: As many as 3 (2 adults and an immature, the latter present since 6 November) wintered at L Ogallala and at LM (SJD, BFH); this report represents the first record of overwintering in Nebraska.

Fared Grebe: The only report was of one found in Cass Co on 7 December (GW), rather late.

Western Grebe: Overwintering at LM has become routine in recent mild winters, but numbers decline markedly as time passes, a fact well-documented this winter by Stephen Dinsmore: 656 were present on 2 December; 349 on 2 January; 239 on 5 February; and 155 on 19 February. One was still found at HCR as late as 1 January (GH, WH).

**Clark's Grebe:** The one spotted at L Minatare on 2 December (SJD) was rather late. Overwintering occurred at LM for only the 3rd time: as many as 7 were still present on 29 January, but apparently only one made it until 26 February (SJD, LR, RH).

**American White Pelican:** As has become normal in recent years, 4 apparently wintered at Sutherland Res, with one developing a full bill plate by 29 January (SJD). Less usual were the 3 to 4 that wintered at HCR (GH, WH); the first migrants appeared there on 21 February, 10 birds (GH, WH).

**Double-crested Cormorant:** One or two may have made it through the winter at HCR; and as many as 41 were counted on the HCR CBC on 17 December (fide JGJ); 5 were still there on 22 January (JGJ); 2 were seen on 25 January (GH, WH), and one was reported on 5 February (JGJ). An injured bird spotted at LM may also have survived; it was last seen on 29 January (SJD). These reports mark the first records of overwintering away from Sutherland Res. A single, in addition, was noted on 16 January 1999 at HCR (GH, WH), and another was seen at Cunningham L on 29 January (JGJ). These reports represent only the 3rd and 4th midwinter records (not overwintering) away from Sutherland Res. The first spring arrivals in 1999 were record early, although perhaps not too surprising at such a southerly breeding site as Alma, Harlan Co: 15 birds arrived on 15 February (GH, WH).

**Great Blue Heron:** An excellent count at an usual winter location was the 15 tallied around Keystone L on 29 January (SJD). Midwinter records away from the Platte River Valley are few; the single bird spotted at Wolf L on 6 February (TH) may have been an early migrant.

**Turkey Vulture:** Very early was one seen 5 miles east of Kearney on 27 February (LB). Early spring dates occur at the end of February but are not well-documented.

**Greater White-fronted Goose:** A small flock, possibly 6 survivors, wintered at HCR; 30 were seen there on 26 December (GH, WH); 14 were present on 22 January (JGJ); 6 remained on 5 February (JGJ); and the first spring arrivals were noted on 20 February, 60 birds (GH, WH). The only other midwinter reports were of singles seen at L Minatare on 16 January (SJD) and at L Chappell on 29 January (SJD). This species is rare in the Panhandle, and so the 2 discovered at LM on 5 February (SJD) were of interest; they were also rather early. Indeed, spring arrivals were very early, both this year and last: 8 were found at HCR on 6 February 1999, the first noted (GH, WH), and this year 12 were spotted at Grandpa's Pond near Kearney on 6 February (MU). Fifty had arrived at FL by 13 February (LR, RH).

**Snow Goose:** A few apparently wintered at HCR (GH, WH, JGJ), Carter L (JB, B), BOL (LE), and possibly at L Minatare, where 9 were counted on 16 January (SJD). These locations usually freeze in midwinter. The best counts were the 20,000 seen flying southwest over Gibbon on 20 February (LR, RH) and the 4000 noted flying over Lincoln on 22 February (SH). About



1500 were counted at FL as early as 13 February (LR, RH), and 1169 still remained at BOL for the CBC on 17 December (fide JG).

Ross's Goose: A single adult was discovered with the 9 Snow Geese found at L Minatare on 16 January (SJD) and may have wintered. Singles apparently did winter with the small Snow Goose flocks at HCR (JGJ, GH, WH) and Carter L (JB, BP, LP). These sightings represent the first records of overwintering. Singles seen at LM on 5 February (SJD) and at Grandpa's Pond, Kearney, on 6 February (MU) were probably early arrivals. The best count totaled 14 in the L Minatare area on 4 December (SJD); there are few fall reports from the Panhandle.

Canada Goose: The largest wintering flock reported reached 8350 at LM on 5 February (SJD). As many as 10,000 flew over FL on 13 February (LR, RH); 5240 had arrived at Kiowa Springs by 20 February (SJD), and 5000 showed up at Alma the same day (GH, WH).

Trumpeter Swan: Several were scattered about the state, some clearly from re-establishing populations: 3 of which hung around Scribner, Dodge Co, between 30 December and 22 January—one had a green neck-band and another had an orange left patagial tag #277 (DP, C, JJ); and of the 5-6 reported at Carter L from 31 January until 19 February, one had an orange patagial tag #279 (BP, LP, JB). These birds (277 and 279) are apparently from Minnesota (Ron Andrews fide BP). The three found near Elkhorn on 6 February (B) may have been the Scribner birds. One of the Carter L group was much smaller than the others, but its identity was uncertain. The best count in the Keystone area, a regular wintering location, totaled 17 on 24 December (JS, LJ). Other sightings from interesting locations included 4 spotted on the DeSoto NWR CBC on 19 December (fide MS) and immatures found in Cottonwood Canyon, Lincoln Co, on 4 January (BP, LP). As the population increases, such sightings are becoming more commonplace.

Tundra Swan: The two immatures sighted at Wehrspann L on 12 December (B) may have moved to Carter L, where the 2 birds seen on 12 January had been present for "several weeks" (B). By 26 January, however, 6 swans were reported at Carter L, only one a small bird, the others apparently Trumpeter Swans (JB, BP, LP). Another immature was noted at Niobrara SP on the Missouri River on 30 January (MB). There are very few midwinter records for the state.

Wood Duck: Rather early were one spotted at BOL on 19 February (LE), 6 seen at L Minatare on 20 February (SJD), and a pair found in suitable breeding habitat at ADF on 21 February (CF, LF).

Gadwall: A large number wintered on Keystone L; 600 were gathered there as late as 2 January, and 373 remained until 29 January (SJD). Rather early were 22 spotted at Gavin's Point Dam on 7 February (JJ). Wintering is expected where open water occurs, although the 62 counted at CCM on 16 January (SJD) was a large number for that date and location.

American Wigeon: Amazing numbers wintered at Keystone L: 286 were found there on 29 January (SJD). This bird is only a casual wintering species, and so the 1-3 sighted at HCR throughout the period (GH, WH) and



the 22 noted at Kiowa Springs on 16 January (SJD) were noteworthy. Very late was a single reported at BOL on 13 January (B); it may have wintered, as one was seen there on 6 February (MO), possibly a very early migrant in this open winter. At HCR the first migrants were the 5 found there on 5 February (GH, WH, LR, RH).

**American Black Duck:** All reports originated from Lancaster Co. As many as 3 wintered with Mallards at BOL (JB, JS), and one was seen with a Blue-winged Teal and Mallards at the Chet Ager NC in Lincoln on 18 December (KP, fide LRB).

**Mallard:** The largest wintering flock reported totaled 40,000 at HCR on 6 February (GH, WH, LR, RH). This number represents a very high winter count that may have included early migrants.

**Blue-winged Teal:** Very late, and one of the very few documented December records, were the 2 found at Chet Ager NC, Lincoln, on 18 December (KP, fide LRB), but extraordinary was an "apparently healthy" immature male, aged by its wing coverts, spotted at Keystone L on 29 January; it was probably the same bird as was reported there on 16 December (SJD). This sighting marks only the 2nd documented winter record.

**Northern Shoveler:** As many as 19 wintered on Keystone L (SJD), where wintering is somewhat regular, and as many as 17 likewise wintered in the Alma area (JGJ, GH, WH), where it is unexpected. Other midwinter records, adding to the few to date, included an immature male and a female found at Pioneer Park NC, Lincoln, on 15 January (MO) and 7 spotted in Sioux and Dawes Cos on 17 January. A good December count reached 1700 at North Platte SL on 8 December (WRS). Migrants had arrived by 5 February at Alma, when 76 appeared at the Alma SL (JGJ, GH, WH).

**Northern Pintail:** Strangely, few if any overwintered at Keystone L; the 15 sighted there on 5 February were thought to be early migrants (SJD). A good midwinter count totaled 62 at Kiowa Springs on 16 January (SJD).

**Green-winged Teal:** Many wintered at Keystone L; the peak count reached 268 on 29 January (SJD). A good midwinter count was 56 tallied at Kiowa Springs on 16 January (SJD).

**Canvasback:** As many as 87, the count on 15 January, wintered at Keystone L (SJD), a record wintering total, and up to 5 wintered on the Alma SL (GH, WH, JGJ). There are few midwinter records. Rather late was one seen at Gering SL on 5 January (AK), and early was one found at Grandpa's Pond, Kearney, on 6 February (MU).

**Redhead:** This species also wintered in excellent numbers at Keystone L, with 209 birds present on 29 January, the number increasing to 397 on 5 February (SJD) and to 500 on 26 February (LR, RH) as migrants arrived. About 16 wintered at HCR (JGJ, GH, WH). One was spotted rather late at Gering SL on 5 January (AK), and rather early were migrants discovered at Keystone L on 5 February (see above) and at Grandpa's Pond, Kearney, on 6 February (MU).

**Ring-necked Duck:** Many wintered at Keystone L; the low count was 94 on 29 January (SJD), but 235 were present as early as 5 February (SJD). Six

wintered at HCR (GH, WH). Rather late were the 8-10 birds sighted at Gering SL on 5 January (AK).

**Tufted Duck:** Nebraska's first of this species wintered throughout the period at Keystone L, after first being found by Stephen Dinsmore on 3 December (SJD, m.ob.) When discovered, it had an obvious tuft, which later disappeared, but became prominent again by 5 February (SJD).

**Greater Scaup:** This species also wintered in excellent numbers at Keystone L; as many as 74 were present (SJD). Up to 4 also wintered on the Alma SL (JGJ, GH, WH, LR, RH). Numbers had not increased by period's end, and no migrants were detected elsewhere. These sightings represent only the 2nd and 3rd midwinter records. Rather late were 2 spotted at Gering SL on 5 January (AK).

**Lesser Scaup:** As many as 328 wintered at Keystone L (SJD); no wonder the Tufted Duck could be hard to find at times! Up to 16 wintered at Alma SL (JGJ, GH, WH).

**Surf Scoter:** Four (3 females and an immature male) were seen at Keystone L on 4 December (SJD), and one bird was noted there (a female) through 20 January (SJD, DCE, JS, LJ). January 20 is the latest ever for Nebraska.

**White-winged Scoter:** Two were reported, single females noted at Keystone L on 16 December (SJD) and at Alma SL on 19 December (GH, WH). These dates are very late; they represent, in fact, two of the 4 latest ever: December 16, 18, 19, and 19-20.

**Black Scoter:** A female and an immature male were sighted at Keystone L on 2 December (SJD) and remained until 15 January (SJD, WRS); 3 were reported there on 5 December (B). The late date of 15 January is the latest ever.

**Oldsquaw:** As many as 6 were present at Keystone L throughout the period, an adult female, 3 immature males, and 2 immature females (SJD, m.ob.). There are few wintering records. The only reports elsewhere included a female spotted at Wehrspann L on 12 December (B) and 3 seen at the Lewis and Clark L Marina on 19 December (DLS); the latter were questionably in Nebraska, but close!

**Bufflehead:** Yet another species with amazing numbers wintering at Keystone L; the low count there for the period registered a record 184 for wintering birds on 29 January (SJD). The two spotted at HCR on 22 January (JGJ) may have wintered; this report denotes only the 3rd midwinter record away from Keith Co.

**Common Goldeneye:** A regular in winter on Keystone L, the peak wintering count totaled 2096 on 29 January (SJD).

**Barrow's Goldeneye:** Also regular in winter among the Commons on Keystone L, as many as 5, a record count, were present this year: 3 males and 2 females, all adults, sighted on 5 February (SJD). At least one was found throughout the period (m.ob.).

**Hooded Merganser:** Wintering is not unexpected when open water is present; the best count at locations where birds were seen most of the period



totaled 13 at Winters Creek L on 16 January (SJD). A few wintered at HCR (JGJ, GH, WH) and at Keystone L (SJD). Two birds identified on Johnson L on 22 January (JGJ) may have wintered, as may have a single noted at CCM on 16 January and 5 spotted there on 29 January (SJD). The first migrants were 10 birds reported at Wehrspann L on 21 February (JWH). A male appeared to be courting a female Common at Alma SL on 28 February (GH, WH); hybrids with this parentage have been reported a few times in Nebraska.

**Common Merganser:** This bird was one of the few waterfowl species whose occurrence was "normal" this winter! The best wintering count reached 32,000 at HCR on 22 January, but the lake had almost iced over by 5 February, when only 3000 were present (JGJ). Keystone L had 4000 on 5 February (SJD) and Sutherland Res registered 3000 on 29 January (SJD).

**Red-breasted Merganser:** In recent years, wintering has been noted on Keystone L; 27 birds wintered this year (SJD). Midwinter records elsewhere are few, but this year the one discovered at BOL on 13 January (B) may have wintered, as did at least two at HCR (JGJ, GH, WH). Probably an early returner was the one found at Johnson L on 5 February (JGJ).

**Ruddy Duck:** Up to 11, 2 males and 9 females, wintered at Keystone L (SJD), only the 2nd record of overwintering in the state. No others were reported in January and early February.

**Bald Eagle:** Few concentrations were noted, presumably because of widespread open water. The best count totaled 164 at Johnson L on 22 January (JGJ). Migration was underway by 19 February, when 49 flew over Neale Woods (B), and nesting was underway for about the 8th year at NPNWR (AK).

**Northern Harrier:** Routine reports.

**Sharp-shinned Hawk:** Routine reports.

**Cooper's Hawk:** Routine reports.

**Northern Goshawk:** Few were noted; the only reports included an adult found near Crane Meadows NC, Hall Co, on 9 December (B), another (the same?) sighted near Fort Kearny, Buffalo Co, 24 January (GL), and an immature seen near Grant, Perkins Co (JSe).

**Red-shouldered Hawk:** Midwinter reports are rare, especially away from the southeast, and so the one identified at Wolf L on 23 January (TH) was noteworthy. An adult was still at FF between 15 and 25 December (BP, LP), and a single was found in southeastern Otoe Co on 21 December (LF, CF).

**Red-tailed Hawk:** The most unexpected report was of none included on the Scottsbluff CBC! (fide AK). The DeSoto NWR CBC, however, reported 77, including 3 "Harlan's Hawks" (fide MS).

**Ferruginous Hawk:** A total of 12 were recorded in western Nebraska for the season (SJD).

**Rough-legged Hawk:** Fewer than usual were reported this winter, possibly because conditions allowed them to stay to the north. Only 34 were found for the season in western Nebraska (SJD).

Golden Eagle: Easterly were immatures discovered at Homer and in Thurston Co on 5 February (BFH).

American Kestrel: As expected, most reports specified males; these winter farther north than the females.

Merlin: Widely reported, as has become the norm. A good easterly count totaled 3 on the BOL CBC on 17 December (fide JG).

Prairie Falcon: A good count for this usually solitary species was 3 seen near the landfill in Perkins Co on 17 January (LR, RH).

Gray Partridge: The only report was of 6 flushed from a corn stalk field near Ames on 19 February (DP). There are few reports from this area of the state.

Ring-necked Pheasant: Routine reports.

Sharp-tailed Grouse: A good CBC count was 41 at LM on 2 January (fide SJD).

Greater Prairie-Chicken: A good CBC count totaled 48 at LM on 2 January (fide SJD).

Wild Turkey: Yet another good CBC count registered 91 at Scottsbluff on 18 December (fide AK).

Northern Bobwhite: These birds are well-established in the western North Platte Valley; 12 were counted on the Scottsbluff CBC on 18 December (fide AK), and 12 were totaled at Stateline Island on 5 January (BM).

Virginia Rail: That this species winters in surprising numbers at warm springs and seeps into the North Platte Valley has been well-documented in recent years by Steve Dinsmore. Counts this winter peaked at 13 at CCM, 7 at Keystone L, 5 at Facus Springs, and 7 at Kiowa Springs on 20 February, a new location (all SJD).

American Coot: At least 1100 wintered at Keystone L, the LM CBC total on 2 January (fide SJD), although 1316 were counted on 5 February (SJD). (Who else would count every coot when there are Tufted Ducks to see?) Overwintering is rare; the 63 counted at HCR on 8 January disappeared and none was seen until 31 showed up on 28 February (GH, WH). As many as 137 were seen at Winters Creek L on 4 December (SJD), but only 2 were found there on 16 January and one on 20 February (SJD). Unexpected, as was the open water present, were several found at Boystown L, Omaha, on 22 January (MO), two spotted at Carter L on 22 January (B), and 4 identified at CCM on 29 January (SJD).

Sandhill Crane: As usual in recent years, the first migrants appeared in January: 3 were seen east of Rowe Sanctuary, Buffalo Co, on 16 January (fide LR, RH), a record early date for presumed migrants, as we received no wintering reports. The first large group was 826 counted at CCM on 19 February (SJD) and 5000-10,000 were seen south of Kearney by 26 February (JJ, LB). Rather late for fall and unusual at the location was a single sighted at Crystal Cove L, Dakota Co, on 17 December (BFH). There are surprisingly few December records.

Killdeer: At least 11 overwintered in the Keystone L area (SJD), a regular wintering location; 20 remained there as late as 30 December (B). Three



were spotted at Stateline Island on 18 December and as late as 5 January (fide AK). Migrants were first noted on 1 February at Ames, Dodge Co, (DP) and at Alma (GH, WH).

**Greater Yellowlegs:** Marking only the 4th midwinter record, and the latest January record, a single was spotted at Keystone L on 15 January (SJD). A yellowlegs unidentified to species at Stateline Island on 5 January (BM, fide AK) was most likely a Greater; there are no documented records of Lesser Yellowlegs after November.

**Common Snipe:** At least 4 wintered around Keystone L (SJD), apparently a routine occurrence nowadays.

**Pomarine Jaeger:** A dark morph juvenile sighted at LM on 3 December (SJD) was only the 8th for the state, all in fall (June-December), and the 2nd latest ever. Late jaegers tend to be Pomarines.

**Franklin's Gull:** Since 1988, there have been 10 winter reports of Franklin's Gulls in alternate plumage; the one spotted at HCR on 17 December on the CBC (JGJ, SJD) provided the 11th. Apparently the same bird was still present between 22 and 25 January (JGJ, GH, WH).

**Bonaparte's Gull:** Rather late were 25 seen at Gavin's Point Dam on 1 January (JJ).

**Mew Gull:** Only the 2nd fall record (10th in all) was a basic adult discovered at L Maloney on 16 December (SJD). Most records occur in spring between February and March.

**Ring-billed Gull:** This species was more in evidence this winter than usual, with as many as 7000 counted at LM on 2 January (fide SJD) and 1400 tallied at Keystone L on 29 January (SJD); 1200 were seen at Johnson L on 17 January (LR, RH) and 1800 at HCR on 22 January (JGJ), with at least 200 wintering there (GH, WH). A few even wintered at BOL (LE), which is usually frozen in midwinter.

**California Gull:** All reports came from LM (m.ob.), where as many as 41 wintered (SJD).

**Herring Gull:** Excellent counts were the 800 found at HCR on 22 January (JGJ) and 350 seen at Johnson L on 22 January (JGJ). A few wintered at BOL (LE), an unusual overwintering location.

**Thayer's Gull:** Now regular in fall anywhere in the state and overwintering regularly at LM, at least 4 were spotted at LM during the period (2 adults, 1st basic, 3rd basic) (SJD, TJ). As many as 5 were identified at Sutherland Res, with 4 adults and a 1st basic seen on 29 January (SJD). Midwinter records elsewhere are still unusual, however, and so the two spotted at Johnson L on 22 January (JGJ) and the 4 reported at HCR, including at least 2 adults, the same day (JGJ) were noteworthy.

**Iceland Gull:** The only report was of a 3rd basic bird spotted at Lewis and Clark L on 19 December (DLS). This report represents the 3rd fall record (not remaining into winter); interestingly, all derive from the Gavin's Point Dam area.

**Lesser Black-backed Gull:** Two different birds were noted at Johnson L: a 2nd basic on 1 January (JGJ) and a 3rd basic on 22 January (JGJ) and 30



January (LR, RH). Another was identified at Lewis and Clark L on 26 February (JSP).

**Slaty-backed Gull:** A convincing report (to me, at least, but of course the Records Committee will decide) was received of a basic adult seen at HCR on 22 January (JGJ). Photographs were obtained, and all features visible in the photos and noted in the observer's description fit this species. Unfortunately, however, a single key field mark, the pattern of the underprimaries, was not seen, for the bird flushed with the other gulls present and could not be refound either that day or the next. This sighting would be (have been?) a first state record. Interestingly, a basic adult Slaty-backed Gull appeared on 6 March near Loveland, Colorado, also a state first, and is still present at this writing (31 March).

**Glaucous Gull:** About 10 were reported at various locations around the state, about normal for recent winters. The best counts totaled 3 (adult, two 1st basic) seen at HCR on 22 January (JGJ) and 3 found (2 adults, one juvenile) at Lewis and Clark L on 19 December (DLS).

**Black-legged Kittiwake:** A surprise was an adult found at HCR on the CBC on 17 December and seen again there the next day (SJD, JGJ, GH, WH, LR, RH). Even more unusual was another adult identified in the tailrace at Kingsley Dam on 29 January (SJD). These sightings represent only the 2nd and 3rd records of adults; and the Kingsley Dam record is the first for midwinter.

**Eurasian Collared-Dove:** This soon-to-be-ubiquitous bird appeared at 3 new locations this winter, for a total of 9 locations to date, from Ogallala eastward. The five birds seen at 1101 East 4th St in Ogallala on 22 January had been in the area since September (B). Four had been present several weeks prior to 23 January in the 400 block of South 17th St in Dakota City, Dakota Co, (BFH, RDW, JJ). And the two birds spotted at Elmwood, Cass Co, on 21 February had been present at a feeder "all winter"; by late February, they were mating and carrying nesting material into a tall pine (GW).

**Mourning Dove:** Considered casual in the Keith Co area in midwinter by Rosche, 11 were found on the LM CBC on 2 January (JSe, WRS). Also unexpected was one discovered at Scottsbluff on 2 February (AK). A good wintering count for the location was 61 seen near Ames (DP, JP). The first migrants were noted at Alma on 18 February (GH, WH) and Dakota Co on 20 February (BFH).

**Eastern Screech-Owl:** Routine reports.

**Great Horned Owl:** Two nests with sitting adults were found near Alma, Harlan Co, by 21 February, and 4 by the end of the period (GH, WH).

**Barred Owl:** Reports away from Missouri River Valley counties included singles found at Hormel Park, Fremont, Dodge Co., on 1 January (DP, JP), and 3 identified on the BOL CBC on 17 December (fide JG).

**Long-eared Owl:** The best count was of at least 10 flushed from cedars near Keystone L on 26 February (SJD, LR, RH).

**Short-eared Owl:** The best count totaled 5 at Buckskin Hills on 12 February (BFH).

**Belted Kingfisher:** Routine reports.

**Red-headed Woodpecker:** Unusual in midwinter at the location was a juvenile which molted into adult plumage while wintering in southwest Dixon Co (JJ).

**Red-bellied Woodpecker:** The individual which appeared at Mitchell in November (see Fall Report) remained until at least 25 February (Kathy Larsen fide AK). It became the first ever on a Scottsbluff CBC (fide AK). Now regular in winter as far west as Keith Co in the Platte Valleys, 3 were counted on the LM CBC on 2 January (fide SJD).

**Yellow-bellied Sapsucker:** As expected, midwinter singles appeared in the southeast: ADF on 4 January (LF, CF), and Peru State College, Nemaha Co, on 16 January (BC).

**Downy Woodpecker:** Routine reports.

**Hairy Woodpecker:** Routine reports.

**Northern Flicker:** A "red-shafted flicker" was recorded on the Lincoln CBC on 18 December, the 6th time in the last 10 counts (LRB).

**Pileated Woodpecker:** Presumably one of the resident birds was found in FF on the Omaha CBC on 18 December (BP).

**Northern Shrike:** Many reports of good numbers were received statewide. As many as 45 were tallied in western Nebraska for the period (SJD), and an excellent 11 were counted as far southeast as the BOL CBC on 17 December (fide JG). It has been recorded on 7 of the last 10 Lincoln CBCs (LRB).

**Loggerhead Shrike:** Winter reports are usually confined to the extreme southeast, where, for example, it has been recorded on 7 of the last 10 Lincoln CBCs (LRB), the same as the Northern Shrike. The 3 reported on the Grand Island CBC, however, appeared at the western edge of the early winter range.

**Blue Jay:** It seems most leave the high northwest in winter, as only 2 appeared at a feeder in Chadron all winter (ZU). On the other hand, a good count of 17 was made on the Scottsbluff CBC on 18 December (fide AK).

**Pinyon Jay:** A flock was spotted south of Crawford, Dawes Co, on 3 January (B), and a few attended the James Ranch feeders throughout the period (SL). There were no other reports.

**Black-billed Magpie:** Reports came from the slowly-expanding southeastern edge of the range were as many as 6 were found on the BOL CBC on 18 December (fide JG); 3 appeared in the Crete, Saline Co, area on 6 February (MO); one was identified at Wolf L on 16 January (TH); and 2 were seen south of Scribner, Dodge Co., on 21 January (DP, JP).

**American Crow:** Routine reports.

**Horned Lark:** The best count reached 3460 in Perkins Co on 1 January (LR, RH).

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

**Tufted Titmouse:** Routine reports.

**Red-breasted Nuthatch:** Many reports were received, but none from west of Kearney (LR, RH). The best count totaled 11 at BOL on 30 January (LE),



and, on CBCs, 28 at BOL on 17 December (fide JG). In general, numbers were about normal.

**White-breasted Nuthatch:** In Scotts Bluff Co, where it is a winter visitor, 3 were spotted at Wildcat Hills NC on 18 December (AK). Observers in the west should try to hear the calls as both eastern and western subspecies probably occur in winter. The western birds (high-pitched *yank*, *yank*, sounds more like a chip) sound very different from the eastern (lower-pitched nasal *yank*, *yank*).

**Pygmy Nuthatch:** An excellent count was 38 tallied in Sioux Co and 13 in Dawes Co on 17 January (SJD).

**Brown Creeper:** Generally rarer westward, up to 9 wintered in the Keystone L area (SJD), and one spotted was at CCM on 19 February (SJD). The best count reached 10 at BOL on 16 January (JS), and the HCR CBC on 17 December registered a good total of 22 (fide JGJ).

**Carolina Wren:** The summer range is in the southeast, but Carolina Wrens tend to occur outside this range in winter on a casual basis as a prelude to range expansion if they survive the winter. The most western outpost is at HCR, where 3 were counted on the CBC on 17 December (fide JGJ) and 1-2 birds were noted at different spots around HCR during the period (GH, WH, LR, RH). Birds were seen at HCR in December 1998 also, but were not reported during the summer of 1999. Also westerly were singles sighted at Crane Meadows NC, Hall Co, 4 January (B) and on the Doane College campus at Crete, Saline Co, on 22 January (LE).

**Winter Wren:** There were more reports than usual in the usual winter haunts in the Missouri River valley, mostly of singles, but a surprising number of westerly reports were received. As many as 3 were found on the LM CBC on 2 January (fide SJD); and 2 were at spotted Ash Hollow SHP on 19 and 26 February (SJD). Interestingly, one of the latter was of the western subspecies *pacificus*, distinguishable from the eastern birds by call notes (SJD). The birds at Keystone L were easterns (*hiemalis*) (SJD), as was one discovered at HCR on the CBC on 17 December (SJD). In Lincoln, Winter Wrens have been found on 3 of the last 10 CBCs (LRB), and one was spotted at BOL on 16 January (JS).

**Marsh Wren:** Wintering birds appeared at several western locations, found to be the norm in recent years along the North Platte Valley: one at Kiowa Springs, 2 at Facus Springs, 6 at CCM, and 3 at Keystone L (SJD). A rather late find at a northerly location was one identified on the Calamus CBC on 28 December (LR, RH).

**Golden-crowned Kinglet:** Good numbers were reported throughout the period, especially in the west, where wintering is uncommon. As many as 56 were found on the LM CBC on 2 January (fide SJD); 2 were discovered at Ash Hollow SHP on 19 February (SJD); 7 were seen there on 26 February (LR, RH); and 5 were spotted at CCM on 19 February (SJD).

**Ruby-crowned Kinglet:** The only report was of a very late bird seen in Lincoln on 30 December (LE). This species is a rare but regular winter visitor in the extreme southeast.

**Eastern Bluebird:** As is usual, small numbers were reported in midwinter west to Ash Hollow SHP and north to Niobrara, Knox Co. Six were found at Niobrara on 22 January (B) and 7 were seen at Ash Hollow SHP on 19 February (SJD). At HCR, none was found between 8 January and 21 February (GH, WH), exemplifying the tendency for most Eastern Bluebirds to move out in midwinter.

**Mountain Bluebird:** Unexpectedly far east were the 3 birds that wintered in Seward Co, at least until 4 February (PK, JG). This sighting is the 14th record for eastern Nebraska. Confirming the cedar canyons in southeastern Lincoln Co as a regular wintering site, 400 were found in Cottonwood and Boxelder Canyons on 2 January (B). Can we call the movement from the summer range in northwestern Nebraska to Lincoln Co an altitudinal migration? More than usual, as many as 81, wintered below Keystone Dam (SJD).

**Townsend's Solitaire:** Almost as amazing as the absence of Red-tailed Hawks from the Scottsbluff CBC was the absence of this species also (AK). Solitaires were very scarce in the west this winter (SJD), and only 14 were counted on the LM CBC (fide SJD). A belated report identifies one wintering at HCR 1998-99 (GH, WH), rather far south and east.

**Hermit Thrush:** At least one wintered in the Keystone L area (SJD, DCE); it was of the eastern subspecies *faxoni* (SJD). This sighting is only the 2nd record of overwintering for the state; and the following records are only the 12th and 13th for midwinter: two were seen at Neale Woods (Krimlofski Tract) as late as 2 January (B), and another was spotted at Bassway Strip, Buffalo Co, on 13 February (LB). The latter and the Keystone L bird denote only the 2nd and 3rd midwinter records away from the east.

**American Robin:** The best count of wintering birds totaled 465 at ADF on 21 January (LF, CF), and best count overall was 1200 migrants at Wolf L on 27 February (TH). The first for spring in the northwest were 8-10 spotted at a Chadron feeder on 8 February (ZU), while the last in fall were 2 reported there on 7 December (ZU).

**Gray Catbird:** Only the 2nd January record for the state, the other in Buffalo Co, one was identified at James Ranch on 3 January (SL). No others were reported.

**Northern Mockingbird:** Westerly for midwinter were singles sighted on the LM CBC on 2 January (JSe, WRS) and at CCM on 15 January and 26 February (SJD, LR, RH). There are very few February reports for this species.

**Brown Thrasher:** Overwintering is rare, but one made it at the Neale Woods feeders (JB). Another which probably wintered was seen southwest of Elkhorn, Douglas Co., on 1 February (B). One was also recorded on the LM CBC on 2 January (fide SJD) but was not subsequently reported.

**European Starling:** A high count of 16746 was made on the HCR CBC on 17 December (fide JGJ).



**Cedar Waxwing:** Numbers were low this winter; the best count reached only 115, at Wolf L on 16 January (TH). Last winter, 1999-99, 800+ were counted at Alma on 1 January (GH, WH).

**Orange-crowned Warbler:** Very late was one seen on the Lincoln CBC on 18 December (LE), the 3rd December record for the state.

**Northern Parula:** An amazing record was an immature male photographed at Keystone L on 4 December (SJD), by far the latest ever in fall.

**Yellow-rumped Warbler:** A surprising 18 were still at HCR on 1 January (GH, WH); 10 wintered there 1998-99 for probably the only overwintering report for the state. Rather late for the location was a female "myrtle" found below Kingsley Dam 15 January (SJD), one of few January records that far west. Two Yellow-rumped Warblers were found on the LM CBC on 2 January (fide SJD).

**Spotted Towhee:** Routine reports.

**American Tree Sparrow:** Very good CBC counts were made in the east: 1367 tallied at BOL on 17 December (fide JG) and 1114 counted at DeSoto NWR on 19 December (fide MS). At Scottsbluff, however, the 10 birds tallied was the lowest count ever (AK).

**Field Sparrow:** The only reports, neither with details, but both at likely locations, were of singles found on the Lincoln CBC on 18 December, where it has been reported 4 of the last 10 counts (LRB), and at DeSoto NWR CBC on 19 December (fide MS).

**Savannah Sparrow:** No details were provided for one discovered at Nebraska City on 27 February (LF, CF); this bird would be a very early migrant (arrival is usually in late March) or possibly a nearby winterer, and the first February record for Nebraska.

**Fox Sparrow:** The only midwinter record was of one seen in northern Lancaster Co on 16 January (LE). A good total of 4 was reported on the BOL CBC on 17 December (fide JG).

**Song Sparrow:** Rare in midwinter in the northwest, one appeared at a Chadron feeder from 2 to 3 February (ZU). First singing was heard near Ames, Dodge Co, on 21 February (DP, JP).

**Lincoln's Sparrow:** Wintering is casual at best for this species, although there are a few January records but none in February except for a belated report of 1 to 2 wintering at HCR 1998-99; one was still present on 25 January and on 17 February; and details were provided. This winter, one in the observers' yard near Gibbon between 29 and 30 January (LR, RH), details provided, may have been wintering nearby. Late and westerly was one identified on the LM CBC on 2 January (fide SJD).

**Swamp Sparrow:** Although wintering is rare, especially as far west as Kiowa Springs, where 2 were found on 20 February (SJD), singles were spotted at Wehrspann L on 22 January (MO) and Niobrara Marsh near Niobrara, Knox Co, the same day (B). A good count was 9 at Nathan's L, Washington Co, on the DeSoto NWR CBC on 19 February (fide MS).

**White-throated Sparrow:** As expected, a few wintered in the extreme southeast, at Lincoln (LE), Nebraska City, Otoe Co, (LF, CF), and Bellevue,



Sarpy Co, (BP, LP), and reports occurred west to Kearney (LR, RH) and the HCR (JGJ) area. Unexpected was one seen on the LM CBC on 2 January (SJD); the species is rare that far west at any time of year.

**Golden-crowned Sparrow:** Several were seen feeding together 9 miles southwest of Brownlee, Cherry Co, on 3 December; their "colorful yellow crowns" were seen well (JD). This report represents the 7th record for the state, the 4th in fall.

**White-crowned Sparrow:** Generally, low numbers overwinter in the state, especially in the east, and so the 32 birds seen near Keystone on 29 January (SJD) was a good count. All White-crowns identified to race belonged to the pale-lored subspecies *gambelii* (SJD, LR, RH).

**Harris's Sparrow:** Wintering birds are fewest westward, although regularly found in the North Platte Valley; one was noted at a Scottsbluff feeder throughout the period (fide AK) and at least one wintered at Keystone L (SJD). More unusual were a few discovered at the James Ranch feeders near Crawford, Dawes Co, throughout the period (SL). The best count reached 190 on the BOL CBC on 18 December (fide JG).

**Dark-eyed Junco:** The biggest surprise was the presence of a "grey-headed" junco in a Papillion, Sarpy Co, yard between 16 January and 14 February; it was beautifully documented (PS). Pure individuals of this taxon are rarely reported; this sighting is only the 6th documented record for the state, despite many reports without details. Many "pink-sided" juncos can have reddish backs, but pure "grey-headed" juncos are fairly large, have no pinkish-brown flank wash, are evenly grey except for the back, and are usually unaccompanied by other juncos. The only "white-winged" junco was one identified at the James Ranch feeders on 14 February (SL); a few winter within the summer range. "Oregon" juncos are scarce in the east; a fairly typical ratio was found on the Lincoln CBC on 18 December: 8 "oregons" and 231 "slate-colored" (LRB).

**Lapland Longspur:** The best count tallied an excellent 9050 in 4 flocks in Deuel Co on 5 February (SJD).

**Smith's Longspur:** A report was received without details of one located at Buccaneer Bay, Cass Co, on 18 December (B). In a mild winter, such an occurrence is not unexpected, but there are few documented records. There are two prior December reports, both on Lincoln CBCs.

**Snow Bunting:** There were 3 reports: the 7 seen on the BOL CBC on 18 December were the first count record (fide JG, LE); 20 were found in Cass Co on 24 December (GW); and 10 were located at a LM parking area on 5 and 19 February (SJD).

**Northern Cardinal:** Routine reports.

**Dickcissel:** A male in "bright breeding plumage" was spotted at Alma, Harlan Co, on 1 January (GH, WH). This sighting is the 6th winter record.

**Red-winged Blackbird:** The best fall count was 15,000 near Gering, Scotts Bluff Co, on 4 December (SJD); but the 20,706 tallied (counted 'em all!) at CCM on 29 January (SJD) may have been an early migrant flock, for wintering flocks of that size are rare. More the norm, although still unusual

at the location, was a wintering flock of 200 spotted near Ames, Dodge Co, (DP, JP). The earliest migrants are usually males, as was a flock located near Crete, Saline Co, on 6 February (MO). The earliest females were in a mixed flock found near Gibbon, Buffalo Co, on 20 February (LR, RH).

**Eastern Meadowlark:** The first songs were heard in northern Lancaster Co on 27 February (LE) and at ADF on 29 February (LF, CF).

**Western Meadowlark:** The first songs were heard in southeastern Otoe Co (LF, CF) and at Spring Creek Prairie near Denton (KP) on 17 February. As far west as Gering, Scotts Bluff Co, the first song occurred about the same time, on 19 February (AK).

**Yellow-headed Blackbird:** A single male may have wintered at Kiowa Springs 1997-98, but this year none was noted there between 4 December, when a male and female were present, and 20 February, when a single male was seen (SJD). Additional early single males were spotted at Keystone L on 19 February (SJD) and east of Gering on 20 February (SJD).

**Rusty Blackbird:** Singles or small groups winter occasionally in the east; the singles seen at Niobrara Marsh on 22 January (B) and near Ames on 2 February (DP, JP) were probably in this category. Essentially an eastern species, reports were received west to Alma, Harlan Co, 16 found on 1 January (GH, WH), and Crane Meadows NC, Hall Co, 22 sighted on 1 December (B).

**Brewer's Blackbird:** A good count of fall migrants was 55 at Nebraska City, Otoe Co, on 6 December (LF, CF), and early migrants were the 3 spotted at Wolf L on 23 February (TH).

**Common Grackle:** A good CBC count totaled 34 at Lincoln on 18 December (fide LRB); this bird has been recorded there on 2 of the last 10 counts. Probably attempting to winter were 2 located in Crawford, Dawes Co, on 17 January (SJD). Midwinter reports from the northwest are rare. The one seen east of Gering, Scotts Bluff Co, on 20 January (SJD) and as many as 19 at Lewellen, Garden Co, on 29 January (SJD) were also unexpected. Early migrants were the 6 spotted in Dixon Co on 29 February (JJ).

**Great-tailed Grackle:** Westerly reports for winter are increasing; the 10 found at CCM on 15 January (SJD) may have been some of the 13 seen there on 2 December (SJD). As many as 200 had returned to FL by 13 February (LR, RH). No wintering birds were reported in the east.

**Brown-headed Cowbird:** Midwinter records are few, especially of numbers and away from the southeast. A feedlot near Alma, Harlan Co, hosted 10 on 20 January 1999 and 20 on 8 January this year (GH, WH).

**Gray-crowned Rosy-Finch:** Flocks were found at the usual locations in southwestern Sioux Co; up to 15 were seen along the road north of Henry between 3 January and 20 February (SJD), and about 50 were wintering in buttes on the Hughson Ranch in southern Sioux Co (HKH).

**Purple Finch:** The many reports were encouraging after a few low years, although few were found in Cass Co, where a long decline has been noted (GW). The best counts were recorded on CBCs: 61 at DeSoto NWR on 19 December (fide MS) and 34 at BOL on 18 December (fide JG). Rare westward, an adult



male was seen at Keystone L on 2 January (SJD); a female was found at a feeder near Gibbon, Buffalo Co, on 17 January (LR, RH), and 2 were located at Crane Meadows NC feeders in Hall Co 9 Dec (B).

**House Finch:** Where do summering birds go in winter? Near Ames, Dodge Co, none was around until 21 February (DP, JP).

**Red Crossbill:** Routine reports.

**White-winged Crossbill:** Only two singles were reported: an immature spotted at the Tekamah Cem, Burt Co on 5 December (JGJ), and one bird at the Lutheran Cem, Norfolk, Madison Co, on 15 January (B). These, after a single male in the fall, were the sum for the winter!

**Common Redpoll:** Only singles were reported, from all parts of the state. It is rare as far southeast as Bellevue, Sarpy Co, and Nebraska City, Otoe Co, where one was reported at Bellevue on 18 December (B) and another at a Nebraska City feeder on 19 February (LF, CF). Other singles were noted at a feeder near Seward, Seward Co, on 5 February (JG), at Crane Meadows NC, Hall Co, on 4 January (B), and at Scottsbluff on 12 December (AK).

**Pine Siskin:** Numbers were generally low; the best count was 81 on the Scottsbluff CBC on 18 December (fide AK).

**American Goldfinch:** Routine reports.

**Evening Grosbeak:** None reported.

**House Sparrow:** Routine reports.

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The Nebraska Ornithologists' Union Fall meeting took place once again at the Nebraska National Forest at Halsey between October 8 and 10. The following table represents the count, 108 species in all, for the five areas listed. As usual, the counts for Thomas and Blaine counties exclude the National Forest land in both counties.

COUNTIES

Species	Cherry	Brown	Blaine	Thomas	Forest
Pie-billed Grebe	x	x			
Western Grebe	x	x			
American White Pelican	x	x			
Double-crested Cormorant	x	x	x	x	x
American Bittern		x			
Great Blue Heron	x	x		x	x

Species	Cherry	Brown	Blaine	Thomas	Forest
Black-crowned Night-Heron		X			
Trumpeter Swan	X				
Great White-fronted Goose					X
Snow Goose					X
Canada Goose	X	X	X	X	
Wood Duck	X	X			X
Green-Winged Teal	X	X			
Mallard	X	X		X	X
Northern Pintail	X				
Blue-Winged Teal	X	X			X
Northern Shoveler	X				
Gadwall	X	X			
American Wigeon	X	X			
Canvasback	X				
Redhead	X	X			
Ring-necked Duck	X				
Lesser Scaup	X				
Bufflehead	X				
Ruddy Duck	X	X			
Turkey Vulture				X	X
Northern Harrier	X	X	X	X	X
Sharp-shinned Hawk			X		X
Cooper's Hawk					X
Swainson's Hawk	X				
Red-tailed Hawk	X	X	X	X	X
Ferruginous Hawk	X	X			
Golden Eagle	X			X	X
American Kestrel	X	X	X	X	X



Species	Cherry	Brown	Blaine	Thomas	Forest
Merlin				x	
Prairie Falcon	x				x
Ring-necked Pheasant	x		x	x	
Greater Prairie-Chicken	x	x	x	x	x
Sharp-tailed Grouse	x		x		x
Wild Turkey		x	x		x
Northern Bobwhite					x
Sora		x			
American Coot	x	x			
Sandhill Crane	x	x	x	x	x
Killdeer	x	x	x		
Greater Yellowlegs	x		x		
Least Sandpiper	x				
Baird's Sandpiper	x				
Long-billed Dowitcher	x				
Common Snipe	x	x			
Franklin's Gull	x				
Ring-Billed Gull	x	x			
Forster's Tern		x			
Rock Dove	x			x	
Mourning Dove	x	x	x		
Eastern Screech-Owl					x
Great Horned Owl	x				x
Belted Kingfisher	x	x		x	
Red-headed Woodpecker			x	x	
Red-bellied Woodpecker		x			x
Downy Woodpecker	x	x			x
Hairy Woodpecker	x				x

Species	Cherry	Brown	Blaine	Thomas	Forest
Northern Flicker	x	x			x
Horned Lark	x	x			x
Blue Jay					x
Black-billed Magpie					x
American Crow	x	x	x	x	x
Black-capped Chickadee	x		x		x
Red-breasted Nuthatch					x
White-breasted Nuthatch					x
Golden-crowned Kinglet	x				x
Ruby-crowned Kinglet					x
Eastern Bluebird			x		x
Townsend's Solitaire					x
American Robin	x	x	x	x	x
American Pipit	x	x			
Cedar Waxwing	x	x		x	x
European Starling	x		x		
Orange-crowned Warbler	x	x	x		x
Nashville Warbler					x
Yellow-rumped Warbler	x	x	x		x
Common Yellowthroat	x		x		
Northern Cardinal					x
Spotted Towhee	x				x
American Tree Sparrow	x				x
Chipping Sparrow	x			x	x
Clay-Colored Sparrow	x				x
Field Sparrow	x			x	x
Vesper Sparrow	x		x		x
Savannah Sparrow	x	x	x	x	



Species	Cherry	Brown	Blaine	Thomas	Forest
Grasshopper Sparrow					x
Song Sparrow	x	x	x		x
Lincoln's Sparrow		x			
Swamp Sparrow			x		
White-throated Sparrow			x		x
White-crowned Sparrow	x	x	x		x
Harris' Sparrow	x				x
Dark-eyed Junco	x				x
Red-winged Blackbird	x	x	x	x	x
Western Meadowlark	x	x	x	x	x
Yellow-headed Blackbird	x				
Brewer's Blackbird	x		x		
Common Grackle	x	x			x
Brown-headed Cowbird	x				
House Finch					x
Red Crossbill					x
American Goldfinch	x	x			x
House Sparrow			x		x
<b>Total Species For Each Area</b>	<b>77</b>	<b>49</b>	<b>32</b>	<b>24</b>	<b>61</b>

<b>Number of species Identified:</b>	<b>108</b>
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### The 1999-2000 Nebraska Christmas Bird Count

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The 1999-2000 Christmas Bird Count (CBC) period included ten counts in Nebraska (Table 2). These counts reported a total of 133 species, a

great total for so few counts. Counts were scattered statewide, but most effort was in the eastern half of the state where most of the birders are. The top count this year was Lake McConaughy, where the combination of several lingering rarities, excellent participation, and great count weather led to a new record Nebraska count of 101 species, breaking the old record of 87 species. Other excellent totals were 85 at Harlan County, 84 at Branched Oak-Seward, and 74 at both Lincoln and Omaha. Not surprisingly, Omaha (32) and Lincoln (26) had the most field observers.

#### DISCUSSION OF SPECIES

In the following discussion, I have attempted to discuss what I believe are the more important aspects of this year's Christmas Bird Counts. This information includes my general impressions about some of the more common species, mention of rarities, notable misses, and other topics.

The species totals for each count are listed in Table 1. The 1999-2000 Nebraska CBC period will probably be best remembered for the extremely mild pre-count weather, much like last year. As in 1998-99, many lakes and rivers were completely ice-free at the beginning of the count period. There was some colder weather around Christmas, but warmer weather returned in late December.

The semi-hardy waterbirds were well represented this year. The only loons were Common Loons: 2 at Lake McConaughy and 1 at Harlan County. Grebe totals were excellent, but most were at Lake McConaughy: 1 Horned, 2 Red-necked, 352 Western, and 11 Clark's. Noteworthy were the 5 Western Grebes at Harlan County. Four American White Pelicans were at Harlan County, a regular CBC locale for this species. Harlan County also hosted an excellent count of 41 Double-crested Cormorants; singles were at Branched Oak-Seward and Lake McConaughy (an injured bird). The total of 27 Great Blue Herons was respectable, although half of these were at Lake McConaughy.

Waterfowl were well represented again this year with an outstanding 29 species reported statewide. Among the geese, there were Greater White-fronted Geese on two counts, small numbers of Snow Geese on six counts (all in the east), and 2 Ross' Geese at Branched Oak-Seward. Canada Geese were recorded on all but one count and were most numerous along the Platte River Valley. The only swans this year were 11 well-documented Tundra Swans at Omaha. Duck numbers were generally excellent this year. Lake McConaughy hosted impressive numbers of several species, including 604 Gadwall, 165 American Wigeon, 210 Redhead, 63 Greater and 380 Lesser Scaup, 271 Bufflehead, and 19 Red-breasted Mergansers, many of which are record CBC totals for Nebraska. Other noteworthy totals included 104 Northern Shovelers at Branched Oak-Seward and 24,075 Common and 14 Red-breasted mergansers at Harlan County. A number of unusual waterfowl were found this year, highlighted by the male Tufted Duck at Lake McConaughy, which had been present since early December and is the first report of this species in Nebraska. Other good finds included an American Black Duck at Lincoln, single



Greater Scaup at Harlan County and Branched Oak-Seward, and single Surf and Black scoters, 6 Oldsquaw, and 3 Barrow's Goldeneye at Lake McConaughy.

The only Virginia Rails were 4 at Lake McConaughy, an expected winter location. Birders should check any open water with dense cattail beds for this species and Marsh Wren in winter. Both species are known to be widespread in winter in the Panhandle, and they could occur much farther east. There were small numbers of American Coots on several counts, plus an amazing 1,100 at Lake McConaughy. Killdeer were found on five counts and Common Snipe were on three counts. Gull numbers were good this year, but diversity on several counts was disappointing. An exception was Harlan County, which reported 7 species including a single alternate-plumaged Franklin's Gull, 16 Bonaparte's Gulls, a California Gull, and an adult Black-legged Kittiwake. Lake McConaughy hosted a large number of Ring-billed Gulls (7,000) plus 41 California Gulls, but no unusual gull species were found there.

Small numbers of Mourning Doves were found on five counts, perhaps indicative of the scarcity of this species in Nebraska this winter. Expected numbers of the three common owls (Eastern Screech-, Great Horned, and Barred) were found this year, plus single Long-eared Owls on three counts. Small numbers of Belted Kingfishers were found on all but two counts. Only 9 Red-headed Woodpeckers were found on three counts, all in the southeast. This total, plus the generally low numbers of Blue Jays, is probably indicative of a poor acorn crop. A single Red-bellied Woodpecker was noteworthy as far west as Scottsbluff, where the species has only recently appeared. Other interesting woodpecker reports included 2 Yellow-bellied Sapsuckers at Lincoln and a single Pileated Woodpecker at Omaha. The only Loggerhead Shrike was a single at Lincoln, but Northern Shrikes were more numerous with single count totals of 11 at both Lake McConaughy at Branched Oak-Seward. Observers should take care when identifying winter shrikes in Nebraska. A few Loggerhead Shrikes might be expected in southeastern Nebraska in winter, but Northern Shrike is far more numerous over the remainder of the state.

It was a good year for Red-breasted Nuthatches with small numbers reported on seven counts. The high count was 31 at Lincoln. Brown Creepers were also numerous this year with a high count of 46 at Lincoln. Wrens made a strong showing this year. An excellent total of 10 Carolina Wrens was reported at Omaha and small numbers were found west to Harlan County and Kearney. Winter Wrens were found on four counts with a high count of 3 at Lake McConaughy. Marsh Wrens were found at Lake McConaughy and Calamus-Loup. I also suspect this species winters regularly within the Scottsbluff count circle. It was a great year for Golden-crowned Kinglets with 167 found on six counts, including 56 at Lake McConaughy and 43 at Lincoln. Eastern Bluebirds were found on six counts with a high of 54 at Branched Oak-Seward. Small numbers of Mountain Bluebirds and Townsend's Solitaires and a single Hermit Thrush were at Lake McConaughy. American Robins were recorded on every count with a high of 2,502 at Lake McConaughy. The only

Northern Mockingbird was a single at Lake McConaughy, and single Brown Thrashers were found on three counts. Cedar Waxwings were a bit scarce this year with a high count of 178 at Norfolk. Noteworthy was an Orange-crowned Warbler documented at Lincoln. The only other warblers were 2 Yellow-rumped Warblers at Lake McConaughy.

Sparrow numbers were generally very good this year, especially the *zonotrichid* sparrows. Small numbers of Spotted Towhees were found on three counts, all in the east. A single Field Sparrow was a good find at Lincoln, while the only Lincoln's Sparrow was at Lake McConaughy. White-throated Sparrows were found in good numbers this year. The high count was 21 at Omaha and a single was unusual as far west as Lake McConaughy. It was a banner year for Harris' Sparrows with three counts each exceeding 100 individuals. White-crowned Sparrows were also numerous, especially in the west, with a high count of 73 at Harlan County. Lapland Longspurs were found on six counts with a high of 647 at Norfolk. The only Snow Buntings were 7 at Branched Oak-Seward.

Icterids were a mixed bag this year. Red-winged Blackbirds were found on every count; the peak was 1,094 at Scottsbluff. In winter, this species is typically most numerous in western Nebraska. It was a good year for meadowlarks, and quite a few Westerns (37) were singing at Lake McConaughy. Rusty Blackbirds were found in good numbers on several eastern counts and single Brewer's Blackbirds were described at Kearney, Norfolk, and Omaha.

In general, it was another poor year for winter finches. Purple Finches made a decent showing on eastern counts with a single bird as far west as Lake McConaughy. Two Red Crossbills at Lake McConaughy and 2 Common Redpolls at Omaha were the only reports for those species. Pine Siskins were present in small numbers statewide with a high count of 345 at Lake McConaughy. American Goldfinches were also widespread in small numbers.

#### NOTABLE MISSES

A number of species were not reported this year, including Trumpeter Swan, Glaucous Gull, Eurasian Collared-Dove, Short-eared Owl, and Great-tailed Grackle.

#### UNDOCUMENTED REPORTS

There were a number of reports this year that probably should have been accompanied by some supporting details or more thorough documentation. These included an Osprey and a Bohemian Waxwing at Norfolk, 2 Blue-winged Teal at Lincoln, and a Smith's Longspur at Omaha. For this reason, these reports were not included in my summary.



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**Dakota-Dix** Bill Huser (compiler)

Table 1: 1999 Christmas Bird Count

Species	Scotts Bluff	Lake McConaughy	Harlan County	Kearney	Calaums-Loop	Norfolk	Branched Oak-Seward	Lincoln	Omaha	Dakota-Dix	Total
Common Loon		2	1								3
Pie-billed Grebe		4							2		6
Horned Grebe		1									1
Red-necked Grebe		2									2
Western Grebe		352	5								357
Clark's Grebe		11									11
American White Pelican			4								4
Double-crested Cormorant		1	41				1				43
Great Blue Heron	1	13	4	1			1	6	1		27
Great White-fronted Goose				7			2				9
Snow Goose			203		5	35	1169	150	420		1982
Ross' Goose							2				2



Species	Scotts Bluff	Lake McConaughy	Harlan County	Kearney	Caliums-Loop	Norfolk	Branched Oak-Seward	Lincoln	Omaha	Dakota-Dix	Total
Canada Goose	12065	5741	2293	9205	2576	228	3096	1816	627		37647
Tundra Swan									11		11
Wood Duck								1			1
Gadwall		604	38	13		10	9	56	12		742
American Wigeon	17	165	1				1	7			191
American Black Duck								1			1
Mallard	6710	20868	31161	232	1886	139	6015	2611	730		70352
Northern Shoveler		16	61	2		1	104	1			185
Northern Pintail	9	6	4			4	4		1		28
Green-winged Teal		72	47				10		6		135
Canvasback		82	4		3	2	4		5		100
Redhead		210	14	13				19			256
Ring-necked Duck		84					2				86
Tufted Duck		1									1
Greater Scaup		63	1				1				65
Lesser Scaup		380	89				47	2	29		547

Species	Scotts Bluff	Lake McCon- naughy	Harlan County	Kearney	Caliums- Loop	Norfolk	Branched Oak- Seward	Lincoln	Omaha	Dakota- Dix	Total
Surf Scoter		1									1
Black Scoter		1									1
Oldsquaw		6									6
Bufflehead		271	6				2				279
Common Goldeneye	10	896	148	17	6		69	72	83	4	1305
Barrow's Goldeneye		3									3
Hooded Merganser		6	7				5	11	7		36
Common Merganser		4392	24075	7	30		611	4	14	5	29138
Red-breasted Merganser		19	14				1	1			35
Ruddy Duck		12	1	1			3	4	5		26
Bald Eagle	11	39	109	7	34	11	2		6	4	223
Northern Harrier		16	18	10	5	6	9	5	2		71
Sharp-shinned Hawk	1	4	1	3		2	3	1	7		22
Cooper's Hawk		1		2	1	1	2	3	2		12



Species	Scotts Bluff	Lake McCon- naughy	Harlan County	Kearney	Calaums- Loop	Norfolk	Branched Oak- Seward	Lincoln	Omaha	Dakota- Dix	Total
Northern Goshawk						1	1				2
accipiter sp.		1									1
Red-Shouldered Hawk									1		1
Red-tailed Hawk		22	49	30	7	29	66	51	93	5	352
Ferruginous Hawk		1	1								2
Rough-legged Hawk	1	4	2	3	10	5	2				27
Golden Eagle	5	1	1			1					8
American Kestrel	13	36	13	18	17	12	15	19	18	4	165
Merlin		3	1	1		1	3				9
Prairie Falcon				1	1						2
Ring-necked Pheasant	2	47	1	15	3	109	8		5	1	191
Sharp-tailed Grouse		41			4						45
Greater Prairie- Chicken		48			23	1					72
Wild Turkey	91	5		53	100		1		101		351

Species	Scotts Bluff	Lake McCon- naughy	Harlan County	Kearney	Calauus- Loop	Norfolk	Branched Oak- Seward	Lincoln	Omaha	Dakota- Dix	Total
Northern Bobwhite	12		16	15	1	16	34		5		99
Virginia Rail		4									4
American Coot		1100	49			5	5	9	7		1175
Killdeer	2	17	3			3			1		26
Common Snipe	10	5				12					27
Franklin's Gull			1								1
Bonaparte's Gull			16								16
Ring-Billed Gull	43	7000	3150	14			54	52	58		10371
California Gull		41	1								42
Herring Gull		82	369				53	4	1		509
Thayer's Gull			2								2
Black-legged Kittiwake			1								1
Rock Dove	88	106	47	217	15	173	113	509	131		1399
Mourning Dove		11	13				8	23	26		81
Eastern Screech- Owl		2	7			6	11	6	5		37



Species	Scotts Bluff	Lake McCon- naughy	Harlan County	Kearney	Calauis- Loop	Norfolk	Branched Oak- Seward	Lincoln	Omaha	Dakota- Dix	Total
Great Horned Owl	1	10	6	2	4	8	7	10	3	1	52
Barred Owl						1	3	3	2		9
Long-eared Owl						1	1			1	3
Belted Kingfisher	2	7	5		1	4	4	3	4		30
Red-headed Woodpecker							5	3	1		9
Red-bellied Woodpecker	1	3	29	3	1	14	36	49	118	5	259
Yellow-bellied Sapsucker								2			2
Downy Woodpecker	5	22	43	4	11	44	72	161	156	5	523
Hairy Woodpecker	1	8	5	1	3	17	8	16	15		74
Northern Flicker	10	52	55	10	6	12	62	37	61	3	308
Pileated Woodpecker									1		1
Loggerhead Shrike								1			1
Northern Shrike	2	11	3		2	3	11	3			35

Species	Scotts Bluff	Lake McConaughy	Harlan County	Kearney	Caliums-Loop	Norfolk	Branched Oak-Seward	Lincoln	Omaha	Dakota-Dix	Total
Blue Jay	17	7	17	11		35	156	141	93	3	480
Black-billed Magpie	18	159	34	37	1	29	6			3	287
American Crow	49	85	121	66	1869	870	817	943	251	140	5211
Horned Lark	30	262	183	928	17	1138	47	18	2587		5210
Black-capped Chickadee	25	73	145	20	96	75	144	221	353	19	1171
Tufted Titmouse									63		
Red-breasted Nuthatch		2	3	8	3	14	28	31	10		99
White-breasted Nuthatch	3	23	30	8	1	31	70	61	204	7	438
Brown Creeper		9	22	6	2	5	16	46	17		123
Carolina Wren			3	2			1	2	10		18
Winter Wren		3	1				1	1			6
Marsh Wren		3			2						5
Golden-crowned Kinglet		56	8			3	38	43	19		167



Species	Scotts Bluff	Lake McCon- naughy	Harlan County	Kearney	Calauis- Loop	Norfolk	Branched Oak- Seward	Lincoln	Omaha	Dakota- Dix	Total
Eastern Bluebird		9	1		3		54	7	21		95
Mountain Bluebird		13									13
Townsend's Solitaire		14									14
Hermit Thrush		1									1
American Robin	71	2502	309	23	1	1	624	91	297	15	3934
Northern Mockingbird		1									1
Brown Thrasher		1	1					1			3
European Starling	3932	558	16746	1284	250	5554	1178	1670	1874	70	33116
Cedar Waxwing		40	21	7	21	178	103	16	68	113	567
Orange-crowned Warbler								1			1
Yellow-rumped Warbler		2									2
Spotted Towhee				2	2		4				8

Species	Scotts Bluff	Lake McCon- naughy	Harlan County	Kearney	Caliums- Loop	Norfolk	Branched Oak- Seward	Lincoln	Omaha	Dakota- Dix	Total
American Tree Sparrow	10	575	807	388	62	1127	1367	1811	722	5	6874
Field Sparrow								1			1
Fox Sparrow			1				4		1		6
Song Sparrow	1	30	42	6	1		17	9	56		162
Lincoln's Sparrow		1									1
White-throated Sparrow		1	1	1			4	9	21		37
Harris' Sparrow		20	123	21	2	95	190	142	61		654
White-crowned Sparrow	11	28	73	1	10			6			129
Dark-eyed Junco	36	759	404	190	177	1184	1611	951	1738	24	7074
Lapland Longspur		55	73	3		647	8		81		867
Snow Bunting							7				7
Northern Cardinal		13	85	22	17	36	100	154	179	2	608
Red-winged Blackbird	1094	325	246	84	110	338	11	346	4	4	2562



Species	Scotts Bluff	Lake McConaughy	Harlan County	Kearney	Caliums-Loop	Norfolk	Branched Oak-Seward	Lincoln	Omaha	Dakota-Dix	Total
Western Meadowlark		37									37
meadowlark sp.	7	53	287	130		101	136	87	155		956
Rusty Blackbird						26	16	35		20	97
Brewer's Blackbird				1		1			1		3
Common Grackle		3	13			1	1	34	15		67
Brown-headed Cowbird			20			19					39
Purple Finch		1				1	34	10	5		51
House Finch	40	138	174	44	8	358	62	70	158	4	1056
Red Crossbill		2									2
Common Redpoll									2		2
Pine Siskin	81	345		6	4	5	33	43	10		527
American Goldfinch	87	250	44	73	154	79	157	60	195	1	1100
House Sparrow	346	181	202	292	74	1215	146	617	549	26	3648
TOTAL SPECIES	43	101	85	57	50	64	84	74	74	27	133
TOTAL BIRDS	24971	49675	82479	13571	7642	14083	18949	13410	12603	494	237877

Table 2. Site data for 1999-2000 Nebraska Christmas Bird Counts.

Count Name	Date	Species	Total birds	Obs.	Pt.	Hrs.	Temp L	H	Snow	Wind
Scottsbluff	18 Dec	43	24,971	9	2	13	20	56	0	W 0-55
Lake McConaughy	2 Jan	101	49,675	17	9	66	28	45	0	NW 0-15
Harlan County	17 Dec	85	82,479	6	4	35	19	28	1	NE 5-20
Kearney	18 Dec	57	13,441	14	7	32	20	32	1	S 0-15
Calamus-Loup	28 Dec	50	7,368	10	5	28	40	55	0	NW 10-25
Norfolk	18 Dec	64	14,236	16	8	?	16	43	1	SW 0-12
Branched Oak -Seward	17 Dec	84	20,974	17	9	63	20	27	2	NNW 10-20
Lincoln	18 Dec	74	13,454	26	13	103	20	27	0	?
Omaha	18 Dec	74	12,603	32	13	72	15	34	0	NW 0-10
Dakota-Dix	2 Jan	27	494	1	1	8	27	33	0	light



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### Black-throated Gray Warbler at Oliver Reservoir

Stephen J. Dinsmore  
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On 1 May 1999, I was birding a point along the north shore of the lake when I encountered a small flock of Yellow-rumped and Orange-crowned Warblers. At approximately 8:06 a.m. I was working my way through the flock when I heard a different chip note. The bird was feeding in a nearby tree, and I immediately recognized it as a male Black-throated Gray Warbler. I was able to study the bird at close range until 8:16 a.m. The bird was roughly the size of an Orange-crowned Warbler and was noticeably smaller and shorter-tailed than a Yellow-rumped Warbler. The head pattern was striking: solid black except for a yellow loreal spot, a white eyebrow, and a broad white whisker mark. The throat and upper breast were also black. The remainder of the underparts was white except for some darker streaking along the flanks. The mantle was gray and was slightly paler than the head. The wings were also gray with two narrow white wingbars. The tail was dark gray above and showed a lot of white when viewed from below. The warbler-like bill was short, thin, and dark-colored. The legs were also dark-colored. On the basis of the solid black throat, I concluded it was an adult male.

Surprisingly, this represents the first documented record of a Black-throated Gray Warbler in Nebraska. There are at least five previous reports of this species in Nebraska from May (3), August, and September. Black-throated Gray Warblers are annual migrants, mostly in spring, on the eastern plains of Colorado and future records can be expected from the Nebraska Panhandle.

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### Gray Flycatcher at Oliver Reservoir

Stephen J. Dinsmore, Loren Padelford, and Babs Padelford

On 17 May 1999, we were birding near the main entrance of Oliver Reservoir State Recreation Area in Kimball County, Nebraska. At 8:05 a.m. we found a very gray *empidonax* flycatcher in the scattered trees south of the main entrance. After studying the bird for a few minutes, we concluded that

the bird was a Gray Flycatcher. We studied and photographed the bird at close range until we left at 8:55 a.m.

The bird was clearly an *empidonax* because of the small size and typical flycatcher behavior. What initially caught our attention was the very lead gray appearance of this bird. The head, mantle, and tail were dull gray, contrasting with the white underparts. On the basis of these features alone, this bird stood out from the approximately eighty *empidonax* flycatchers we had seen in Nebraska in the previous two weeks. The general appearance was that of a long-billed, small-headed, long-tailed *empidonax*. The wings appeared dark gray, but we later noticed some brown color on the primary shafts when the bird was viewed through a scope. The wing showed two narrow white wingbars. The primary projection was very short, giving the bird a short-winged look that accentuated the long-tailed appearance. The bird had a narrow white eyering that was obvious only at close range. The bill was rather long with a pale base to the lower mandible. The tail was dark gray with conspicuous white outer tail feathers, easily seen when the bird was foraging. Perhaps the most distinctive behavior of this bird was the constant tail-pumping, a behavior that was reminiscent of a phoebe. The tail was dropped slowly, then rapidly returned to its normal position. The bird did not vocalize. The combination of general coloration, tail-pumping behavior, bill size and color, short primary projection, pattern of the rectrices, and facial pattern eliminates all other *empidonax* flycatchers.

This sighting represents the first record of a Gray Flycatcher in Nebraska. The species occurs regularly as close as Colorado, breeding locally in the extreme southeastern corner of the state (Las Animas and Bent counties) and across much of the western third of the state (Andrews and Righter 1992). It is a casual spring migrant on the eastern plains of Colorado, usually in May. In 1999, there were two records from this area on 18 April and 8 May. It is likely that this species will occur in Nebraska again, probably in May and most likely somewhere in the western Panhandle.

#### Literature Cited

Andrews, R., and R. Righter. 1992. Colorado Birds. Denver Museum of Natural History, Denver, CO. 442 pp.



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