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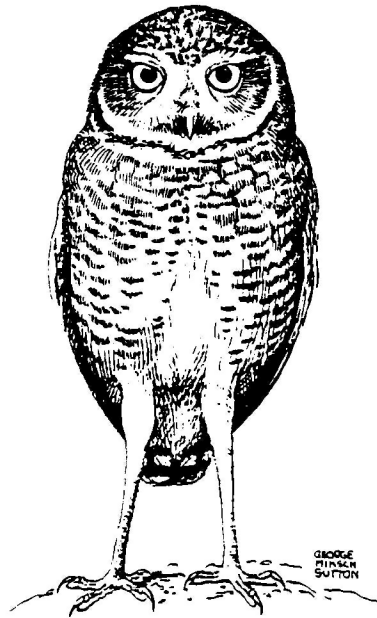
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## Review of The Breeding Status of Lewis's Woodpecker in Nebraska

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### KNOWN HISTORY IN NEBRASKA

Lewis's Woodpecker (*Melanerpes lewis*) was first mentioned as a possible breeder in Nebraska by Bruner (1901), who included it in a list of birds that breed in the state. None of the authorities he cited, however, had published conclusive evidence of breeding, and one of them (Bates 1900) cited only a winter record.

The species was mentioned in reports from the University of Nebraska field parties that worked in the Pine Ridge in 1900 and 1901. Crawford (1901) reports the discovery of only a single empty nest, despite weeks of fieldwork concentrated specifically on gathering nesting data on western species found in Nebraska's Pine Ridge. The nest which they reported was investigated between 18 May and 1 June 1900. It was "found about 60 feet from the ground in a dead tree, but contained no eggs. This same tree yielded a set of five Sparrow Hawk's eggs." He did not mention whether the nest was visited at a later date for proof of breeding. This remarkable absence of nesting data might be explained in part because the species frequently chooses the tallest available dead pine snag for a nest site, a site dangerous to visit under the best of conditions, and usually difficult or impossible to reach without specialized tree climbing equipment.

Cary (1902) comments that the species was "Nesting throughout the range of *Pinus ponderosa*--a characteristic species of the canyon sides," but he cited no details of nesting.

Despite the initial assessment by Bruner et al. (1904) that the species was a "Common summer resident and breeder in the pine-covered canyon districts of Sioux, Dawes, northern Sheridan and Scott's Bluff counties....," it is more likely that the species has always been uncommon or rare since first recorded in Nebraska. This interpretation is supported by the paucity of reports from other early field workers, and the failure to report more nests. Dawson (1921) remarks that he had spent "from two to three weeks in camp in the Pine Ridge Region of northwestern Nebraska for several years, namely, 1905, 1908, 1911, 1912, 1913, 1919, and 1920, with the seasons varying from June 15 to October 9. On all of these trips at least a part of the time has been devoted to bird study, but not until the past season [1920] did he [Dawson] succeed in finding the Lewis Woodpecker." He goes on to say that "While possibly a common migrant....the Lewis Woodpecker probably does not nest as commonly within the state as we have supposed." Similarly, in the late summer of 1911, while studying the bird

life of Fall River County, South Dakota, from the Nebraska border to the Black Hills, Visser (1912) failed to even find the species, at the season when they are most easily found.

The next report of breeding in Nebraska was from Logan County, where "In 1944 a pair apparently decided to nest in a cavity in a dead cottonwood tree seven miles southwest of Stapleton. In mid-July one of the pair disappeared. Its mate stayed on for a week and then it also left" (Glandon & Glandon 1948). When considered in the context of the dates and other reports, it seems likely that this nesting attempt was unsuccessful.

Rosche (1982) commented that the species "Bred in 1980 and 1981, and probably during the previous two years, among the dead standing timber resulting from the 1973 Deadhorse Fire in and adjacent to Chadron State Park." He gave no further details, however, of timing or what type of breeding activity he observed. He listed arrival and departure dates of 22 May and 24 September.

During the Nebraska Breeding Bird Atlas Project, the only breeding report was of a pair occupying a nest hole on 18 May 1985 in a pine snag at the site in Chadron State Park noted above by Rosche (Mollhoff in press). It was accepted as "confirmed" breeding in the block, and indeed it may well have been successful; however, in retrospect, due to the early date (18 May), it should have been listed as "probable."

Finally, Johnsgard (1998), in the absence of any detailed reports with conclusive evidence of breeding, and with few recent reports of any kind, rightly speculated that the species is "now either extremely rare or perhaps extirpated as a breeding species."

## HABITAT

In Nebraska, Lewis's Woodpecker has been regarded as a species restricted to old forest fire burn areas in the ponderosa pine forests of the Pine Ridge in Sioux, Dawes and Sheridan counties in the northwest corner of the state. Throughout most of their range, however, the species breeds not only in old burn areas and in open ponderosa pine forest, but also in riparian cottonwoods and in the scattered trees of farm- and ranch-lands (Tobalske 1997). The latter habitat describes much of the western half of Nebraska. Indeed, the 1944 report of nesting was in a cottonwood grove in Logan County, 200 km away from the Pine Ridge (Glandon & Glandon 1948). A more recent sighting of a single bird during breeding season was in a similar setting in Loup County, in the central Sandhills (Mollhoff 1989). Thus, although the species is found most frequently in the Pine Ridge, where birders tend to go to look for it, observers should be alert to the possibility of breeding whenever the species is found during the breeding season, anywhere in the western half of the state.



## HABITS

The species may mate for life and is noted for long-term site fidelity, often re-using the same tree or hole year after year (Baicich & Harrison 1997, Bent 1939, Harrison 1979, Tobalske 1997). Its reported long-term site fidelity and pair bonding may explain the apparently advanced breeding-related activities the species exhibits almost immediately on arrival in the spring. Despite apparently paired birds simply re-occupying established territories upon arrival, however, the nesting cycle of Lewis's Woodpeckers, like its congener the Red-headed Woodpecker (*Melanerpes erythrocephalus*), is about two weeks later than the other woodpeckers and flickers found in the area.

Nests are usually placed high in the biggest dead tree available. The large size of the bird and the requirement for an entrance hole of 6 to 7 cm in diameter make for a minimum trunk diameter at the nest of about 15 to 20 cm.

## CURRENT FINDINGS

In 1998, I attempted to collect breeding data on the species. On 15 May 1998, I found a single Lewis's Woodpecker while systematically searching the 1250-hectare area burned by the 1985 McIntosh Fire in West Ash Canyon, Dawes County. On 22 May, a pair was present and aggressively defending a territory that extended at least several hundred meters, driving off any Red-headed Woodpeckers that dared enter the airspace. During a morning's observation, the birds repeatedly entered a nest hole, sometimes both at one time, and remained inside for up to 10 minutes. The hole was located 17.5 meters up a 23 meter tall dead pine snag, the tallest in the area. Upon checking, however, I found the nest empty. In remarkable coincidence with the nest reported a century earlier by Crawford (1901), six meters lower in the tree, I found an American Kestrel (*Falco sparverius*) nest that contained 5 eggs (Mollhoff 1999).

When I returned on 12 June, the birds were not seen in the immediate vicinity, and the nest was empty. (However, the American Kestrel nest now held five 1 to 2 week-old young.)

The following spring, between 22 and 23 May 1999, I searched the area again. On my third search through the area, I finally found two Lewis's Woodpeckers in another branch of the canyon, about 300 meters away from the 1998 location. They fed together and were seen entering a nest hole together. The birds were territorial, driving all Red-headed Woodpeckers from the area. On this occasion, copulation by the pair on a horizontal branch of a nearby dead pine was noted as well. After they left the immediate area, I climbed to the nest hole, 11.3 meters up a 15.5-meter tall snag, and found it empty, as I expected for this date.

I returned on 12 June 1999, accompanied by John Dinan of the Nebraska Game and Parks Commission. While climbing the snag, I flushed an incubating bird off the nest and found a clutch of 5 eggs. On 25 June, I found 5 young about 1 week of age. A final visit on 13 August revealed an empty nest; but I did find one adult and a fledged, dark-headed young with grayish underparts, about 300 meters away, at the snag where I had found a pair briefly occupying a nest in 1998.

I believe this report represents the first detailed documentation of successful nesting in Nebraska.

#### PHENOLOGY

Based on previous reports, published references, and my own observations, the following breeding phenology seems likely:

Return from the wintering area	~ 15 to 20 May
Courtship, occupy/establish territory, "nest site selection, etc."	
Egg laying begins	~ 25 May to 1 June
Clutch completed / incubation begins	~ 5 June
Hatching	~ 20 June
Young fledged	~ 25 July
Migration to wintering area	~ mid-September

#### POPULATION

Reviewing the 1980 to 1999 issues of the Nebraska Bird Review, and after eliminating what appear to be duplicate reports from the same location, I found about 27 reports that fall within the breeding season, 15 May to 31 August. However, over half of these reports fall near the beginning or the end of summer and could well represent migrants. This situation leaves about a dozen reports, spread over two decades, with a reasonable probability of breeding. This, combined with my own observations, leads me to estimate the total annual breeding population in the state at no more than 10 to 20 breeding pairs. Although the birds are reported most frequently from old burn areas, there is no indication reported thus far in the state to indicate that the population increases significantly in an area following a large fire.

#### FUTURE WORK

Any sightings of single or paired Lewis's Woodpeckers during the May to July time period should be reported and investigated immediately, so that further nesting data can be collected. Specific information concerning numbers, dates, habitat, and locations is vital. Climbing to the nest cavities is discouraged, due to the danger of climbing the tall, extremely unstable snags. Careful observations to establish when the adults begin delivering food to the nest, when young are first seen looking out of or leaving the nest hole,

and when they fledge, will allow us to further document their breeding phenology.

Thanks are extended to John Dinan for assistance in documentation and to Gary Lingle for reviewing a draft of this report.

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#### SPRING FIELD REPORT, March to May 2000

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#### INTRODUCTION

This spring was a fairly normal, although I heard comments about warblers being rather tough to find. The reports did confirm that for many of the migrant northwoods species. There were a few rarities, none represented first state records, however. Foremost of these were White Ibis, Glossy Ibis, blue-morph Ross's Goose, Common Crane, Band-tailed Pigeon, Hammond's Flycatcher, and Black-throated Gray Warbler. The following birds may join these, although each may have fatal flaws, at least in the eyes of the NOURC: Red Phalarope and Slaty-backed Gull. Other interesting sightings included a Mississippi Kite in Lincoln; Gray Partridges in Scotts Bluff Co; 11th state records for both Little Gull and Mew Gull; a 10th location for Eurasian Collared-Dove; another (maybe?) White-winged Dove; Chuck-will's-widows in the Kearney area; Lewis's Woodpeckers in West Ash Creek Canyon; Pileated Woodpeckers continuing in Fontenelle Forest; an Acadian Flycatcher in Dixon Co; Blue-winged and Prairie Warblers near each other in Carter Canyon; the 17th spring record of Pine Warbler but still with none documented; the 9th (!) Panhandle Hooded Warbler; and the 10th eastern record of Lazuli Bunting.

A note is in order about reports of rare birds, either rare on a state level, or rare at the location or season. Each season I receive several such reports, many with excellent details of how the bird was identified. Those without details present a dilemma. In this (and subsequent) reports I will note observers of such sightings and follow their initials with "details" or "no details". The latter implies that the report, while possibly correct, is unverifiably so. This information is important for researchers who follow us and might have difficulty deciding which reports are substantiated and thus

useful on a scientific level. While I make an effort to get details prior to writing this report, I am unable to contact some observers (especially those without email!). Observers who have a "no details" report listed here are encouraged to send details, even if they are late. I forward any information I receive on state-level rarities to Joel Jorgensen, Secretary of the NOU Records Committee, the body charged with maintaining the official state bird list.

#### CORRECTION

I hoped to avoid this section, but Joel Jorgensen reminded me that in the spring report for 1999 I listed his and Steve Dinsmore's sighting of 25 Hudsonian Godwits at Bruning Dam rather than Bruning WPA. These are different locations, of course; the godwits were at Bruning WPA in Fillmore Co.

#### 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; Cem: Cemetery; CLNWR: Crescent L NWR, Garden Co; Co: County; EE: Fontenelle Forest, Sarpy Co; EL: Funk Lagoon, Phelps Co; HCR: Harlan Co Res, Harlan Co; ICSP: Indian Cave SP, Richardson-Nemaha Cos; L: Lake; LM: L McConaughy, Keith Co; NC: Nature Center; NM: National Monument; NOU: Nebraska Ornithologists' Union; NOURC: NOU Records Committee; NPNWR: North Platte NWR, Scotts Bluff Co; NWR: National Wildlife Refuge; Res: Reservoir; RWB: Rainwater Basin, south-central Nebraska; SHP: State Historical Park; SL: Sewage Lagoon(s); SP: State Park.

#### GAZETTEER

L Alice: NPNWR; Boyer Chute NWR: Washington Co; Carter Canyon: Scotts Bluff Co; Cunningham L: Omaha; Father Hupp Basin: (= Prairie Marsh) WMA, Thayer Co; Fort Niobrara NWR: Cherry Co; Harvard Marsh: WPA, Clay Co; Keystone L: Keith Co; Kiowa Springs: WMA, Scotts Bluff Co; Lange Basin: WPA, Clay Co; Long Canyon: Banner Co; Mallard Haven: WPA, Fillmore Co; Massie Lagoon: WPA, Clay Co; L Minatare: Scotts Bluff Co; Neale Woods: Washington-Douglas Cos; L Ogallala: Keith Co; Oliver Res: SRA, Kimball Co; Pawnee L: SRA, Lancaster Co; Pine Ridge: Sioux, Dawes, Sheridan Cos; Schramm Park: SRA, Sarpy Co; Spring Creek Prairie: Lancaster Co; Wehrspann L: Omaha; West Ash Creek Canyon: Dawes Co; Wildcat Hills: Banner and Scotts Bluff Cos; Wilderness Park: Lincoln; Winters Creek L: NPNWR; Wolf L: northern Saunders Co.

## OBSERVERS

Alice Kenitz (AK), Gering; Bruce Eichhorst (BE), Kearney; Bill F. Huser (BFH), South Sioux City; Babs Padelford (BP), Bellevue; Bruce Walgren (BW), Casper, WY; Christopher Anderson (CA), Valentine; Carol Falk (CF), Nebraska City; Carolyn Hall (CH), Bassett; Christopher L. Wood (CLW), Lakewood, CO; Clem N. Klaphake (CNK), Bellevue; Carole Rasmussen (CR), Omaha; Dean Drawbaugh (DD), Scottsbluff; David DeFord (DDe), Omaha; Dave Heidt (DH), Norfolk; Don Maas (DM), Omaha; Don Paseka (DP) Ames; Dave Rintoul (DR), Manhattan, KS; Donna Walgren (DW), Casper, WY; Glen Hoge (GH), Alma; Gary Lingle (GL), Kearney; Gertrude Wood (GW), Elmwood; John Brenneman (JB), Omaha; Jim Ducey (JD), Lincoln; Joe Fontaine (JE), Fort Collins, CO; Joe Gubanyi (JG), Seward; Joel G. Jorgensen (JGJ), Blair; Jim I. Turner (JIT), Traverse City, MI; Jan Johnson (JJ), Wakefield; Jim McLochlin (JM), Omaha; Jan Paseka (JP), Ames; John Sullivan (JS), Lincoln; Jerry Toll (JT), Omaha; John Vanderpoel (JV), Niwot, CO; John W. Hall (JWH), Omaha; Kathleen Crawford-Rose (KCR), Bellevue; Kathy Larsen (KL), Mitchell; Kevin Poague (KP), Lincoln; Kim Wolcott (KW), Leawood, KS; 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; Melissa Hansen (MH), Ogallala; Mark Orsag (MO), Crete; Mark Urwiller (MU), Kearney; Moni Usasz (MUs), Lincoln; Neva Pruess (NP), Lincoln; Neal Ratzlaff (NR), Omaha; Phyllis Drawbaugh (PD), Scottsbluff; Phil Swanson (PS), Papillion; Raymond Davis (RD), Lyons, CO; Robin Harding (RH), Gibbon; Rick Schmid (RS), Omaha; Stephen J. Dinsmore (SJD), Fort Collins, CO; Steve McIlree (SM), Omaha; Scott Seltman (SS), Nekoma, KS; Thomas E. Labedz (TEL), Lincoln; Thomas Hoffman (TH), Omaha; Tim Hansen (THa), Ogallala; Whit Andrews (WA), Omaha; Wanda Hoge (WH) Alma; W. Ross Silcock (WRS), Tabor, IA.

## SPECIES ACCOUNTS

Common Loon: The one sighted at Cunningham L on 23 March in alternate plumage was the 2nd-earliest ever (JGJ). An excellent spring count was the 12 found at L Alice on 22 April (SJD). The one reported at Oak L, Lincoln, on 28 May (B) was rather late.

Pied-billed Grebe: Routine reports.

Horned Grebe: A good count of 69 was made in Scotts Bluff Co on 8 April; 42 were found on Winters Creek L and 27 on L Minatare (SJD).

Eared Grebe: The one found below Keystone Dam, LM, on 12 March (LR, RH) was rather early. A good count totaled 224 in Scotts Bluff Co on 22



April, 199 of which were counted at L Alice, and the rest at L Minatare (SJD). The same day, 10 were located at BOL (JS), where fewer are normally seen than in the west. Large numbers summer in the western Sandhills, such as the 550 counted in the Ellsworth-Lakeside vicinity on 15 May (LR, RH), although some of these may have been migrants.

**Western Grebe:** As many as 188 appeared to have made it through the "winter" (semi-winter?) at LM (SJD); about the same number were found there on 19 February. Numbers built rapidly after that date to an estimated 18,000 on 22 April (SJD), a record spring count. Uncommon in the east, there was a good showing this year, with 2 sighted at BOL on 22 April (JS); 2 found at L North, Platte Co, on 28 May (DP, JP); and singles spotted near Fremont on 30 April (DP, JP), at Pawnee L on 7 May (LE), at BOL on 13 May (SJD), and at Nathan's L, Washington Co, on 28 May (SM).

**Clark's Grebe:** Rather far east was one seen with a Western Grebe west of Fremont, Dodge Co, between 29 and 30 April (DP, JP; details), one of only 2 spring records for the east. Courting was seen at Willy L, in extreme southeastern Sheridan Co, a known breeding location, on 19 May (WRS); but a new location would be Crescent L, Garden Co, where courting was seen on 9 and 16 May (SJD, JG). The only other known breeding location is at the western end of LM. The presence of 3 at Smith L WMA, Sheridan Co, on 19 May (LR, RH) was also intriguing.

**American White Pelican:** Rather early migrants were the 12 sighted at L Ogallala on 7 March (Rodger Knaggs fide SJD) and the first arrivers noted at HCR on 9 March (GH, WH). A good count reached 1000 at FL on 1 April (LR, RH).

**Double-crested Cormorant:** The three spotted at BOL on 12 March (LE) were very early; there are only a handful of earlier reports where wintering did not occur.

**American Bittern:** A good count totaled 5 just north of Lakeside, Sheridan Co, on 15 May (LR, RH).

**Least Bittern:** None was reported, possibly a consequence of extremely dry conditions in its southeastern NE range.

**Great Blue Heron:** Routine reports.

**Great Egret:** A record spring count totaled 43 in Knox Co on 23 April (MB). Also a good count was the 25 seen at Cunningham L on 7 April (JGJ). Rare in the west, where there only about 20 Panhandle records, 3 were spotted at L Ogallala on 22 April (SJD); one was found at LM on 17 May (SJD); and one was found in Sheridan Co on 20 May (NOU).

**Snowy Egret:** Routine reports, with a total of 14 reported statewide.

**Little Blue Heron:** The only reports came from FF; on 7 May, 2 adults were present (BP, LP), and on 11 May an adult and a calico-phase bird were seen (SJD, BP, LP).

**Cattle Egret:** Rare in the west, singles were reported at CCM on 22 April (SJD), at L Ogallala on 9 May (SJD), and east of Oshkosh on 9 May (JG). 3 birds were found east of Ogallala along I-80 on 17 May (BP, LP), and in Box Butte Co on 20 May (NOU).

**Green Heron:** This species is uncommon in the LM area; 3 were located, however, at L Ogallala on 9 May (SJD). In the Panhandle, it is rare; the bird found in Sheridan Co on 20 May (NOU; no details) represents only the 4th Panhandle report.

**Black-crowned Night-Heron:** Routine reports.

**Yellow-crowned Night-Heron:** Out of the expected range were 2 northerly birds spotted southeast of Bassett, Rock Co, around 10 May (CH). The only others reported were 1 to 2 adults located at FF between 11 and 28 May (SJD, BP, LP, JE).

**White Ibis:** An adult was seen briefly at L Ogallala on 17 May (AB, SJD). If accepted by the NOURC, this sighting would represent the 4th report and 2nd documented for the state.

**Glossy Ibis:** One was noted with 15 White-faced Ibis at McMurtry Refuge, Clay Co, on 6 May (JGJ; accepted by NOURC). This report is only the 2nd documented record for this species as well; the other was also in the RWB and in a spring flock of White-faced Ibis. This time may be the only one of year this species can be identified with certainty.

**White-faced Ibis:** Good counts were the 33 seen at FL on 10 May (SJD) and the 30 located at Alma, Harlan Co, on 1 May (GH, WH). A total of 31 birds were found in the east RWB on 6 May (JGJ). JGJ has pointed out the presence in migrating flocks of birds with pink facial skin; presumably these are in 1st alternate plumage, as they resemble alternate adults without the white facial feathering. Three such birds were seen at CLNWR on 21 May (WRS).

**Turkey Vulture:** A record high spring count totaled 60 in Gering, Scotts Bluff Co, on 11 April (PD, DD). Some of these may include the 35 spotted roosting in west Gering for about 2 weeks through 29 April (AK).

**Greater White-fronted Goose:** Rare in the Panhandle, the only report there was of one spotted at Kiowa Springs on 26 April (PD, DD, AK).

**Snow Goose:** A rather high count for May reached 91 at Massie Lagoon on 10 May (SJD); 55 were still there on 28 May (JGJ).

**Ross's Goose:** Continuing the trend of increasing numbers in recent years, the peak count in the east RWB totaled 410 on 25 March at Hansen Lagoon, Clay Co; 340 were counted at Mallard Haven on 19 March (JGJ). A pure flock of 50+ spotted in Hall Co on 18 March contained 3 blue morph birds (SS); this report represents only the 3rd record of this rare morph in NE.

**Canada Goose:** Large flocks of migrants are not often reported in the east; 800 were found, however, in Dixon Co on 25 March (JJ).

**Trumpeter Swan:** A note from the winter: the orange patagial tags seen on the swans at Carter L, Omaha, and near Scribner, Dodge Co, denote birds from Minnesota (Ron Andrews fide LP, BP). Two birds of unknown origin were spotted at Loup Park, Columbus, Platte Co, on 18 March (JJ). Six adults were also seen in Grant Co from 15 to 19 May: 4 were found at Doc L, on the western edge of Whitman (LR, RH), one on the large (unnamed?) lakes just east of Hyannis (WRS), and 2 were located at the Wolfenberger Lakes, just west of Hyannis (WRS).



**Wood Duck:** This species is now rather common in the west; several were reported at the Chadron NOU meeting. A female with 12 ducklings about 2 weeks old was seen at ADF on 8 May (LF, CF).

**Gadwall:** An excellent count totaled 1800 at Harvard Marsh on 9 April (JGJ).

**Eurasian Wigeon:** This species and hybrids with American Wigeon appear each year in the RWB. A presumably "pure" bird was seen by birders from Massachusetts at Harvard Marsh on 5 April (fide LB). A hybrid was identified at Massie Lagoon on 9 April (JGJ); apparently the same bird was still there on 22 April (JGJ). This sighting represents the observer's 3rd record of such hybrids in the east RWB: one was at located FL in 1994 and another at North Hultine Basin, Clay Co, in 1998.

**American Wigeon:** The 2200 located at Harvard Marsh on 22 April (JGJ) was an excellent count.

**American Black Duck:** None reported.

**Mallard:** A "Brewer's Duck," a Mallard and Gadwall hybrid, was seen in the east RWB on 1 April (JGJ).

**Blue-winged Teal:** The one spotted at Walnut Creek L, Sarpy Co, on 2 March (B) was rather early.

**Cinnamon Teal:** A record count totaled 20 at Kiowa Springs on 6 May (SJD). The only report from the east, where the species is rare, was of a possible hybrid with Blue-winged Teal identified near Cunningham L on 17 April (EA, TEL).

**Northern Shoveler:** Excellent east RWB counts reached 1800 at Massie Lagoon and 1500 at Harvard Lagoon on 9 April (JGJ). Rather late, especially considering the number counted, were the 70+ found at Alma SL on 28 May (GH, WH). Most are on breeding territory at that time.

**Northern Pintail:** Routine reports.

**Green-winged Teal:** The 6300 located at Harvard Marsh and Mallard Haven on 9 April (JGJ) represent close to a record count. The presence of a pair at the Alma East SL on 28 May, with only the male seen on 30 May (GH, WH), is suggestive of breeding. There is only a single breeding record, however, south of the Platte River, in Clay Co in 1985 (RH).

**Canvasback:** Routine reports.

**Redhead:** Rather late were singles noted at Holmes L, Lincoln, on 30 May (MO) and a female spotted the same day at Alma East SL (GH, WH).

**Ring-necked Duck:** Routine reports.

**Tufted Duck:** The male that wintered on Keystone L was last seen on 29 April (SJD). The bird was NE's first.

**Greater Scaup:** A record count was 60 at Keystone L on 25 March (SJD). Rather late were two found at FL on 6 May (LR, RH).

**Lesser Scaup:** Routine reports.

**Surf Scoter:** The only report was of 2 females seen at Keystone L on 22 and 29 April (SJD; details). This sighting represents only the 9th spring report and the 4th documented report.

**White-winged Scoter:** Only one was found: an immature male at Oliver Res on 26 March (SJD; details). This report is only the 19th spring report, and ties the early date.

**Long-Tailed Duck:** Of an amazing 4 still on Keystone L on 23 April (SJD), the last to leave was an adult male on 29 April (SJD), a rather late date.

**Bufflehead:** Routine reports.

**Common Goldeneye:** A male spotted at L Ogallala on 17 May (SJD) was rather late.

**Barrow's Goldeneye:** Of the wintering birds found on Keystone L, 2 adult males and an adult female remained until 25 March (SJD).

**Hooded Merganser:** Surprisingly, there have been no breeding records since 1915, although summer reports of female/immature-plumaged birds, most likely immatures, are not uncommon. In recent years, there have been few if any reports of adult males in May, which would be suggestive of breeding. This year, however, two birds were seen at Pintail Basin, Hamilton Co, on 7 May (JGJ); and singles were also identified at Nathan's L, Washington Co, on 10 May (NR) and in Clay Co on 14 May (JGJ).

**Common Merganser:** A female located at Fahrenholz Ponds, Dixon Co, on 25 May was rather late (JJ).

**Red-breasted Merganser:** An excellent westerly count totaled 57 at LM on 25 March (SJD). Until very recently, this species was believed to be rare in the west. The single bird found below Keystone Dam, LM, on 15 May (SJD) was rather late.

**Ruddy Duck:** Routine reports.

**Osprey:** The one spotted at HCR on 19 March (GH, WH) was record early by a couple of days.

**Mississippi Kite:** At the regular breeding location, Ogallala, the first arrivals were 3 found on 14 May (THa, MH). Unexpected, however, was an adult seen flying over Lincoln on 27 May (B). There are very few reports away from Ogallala.

**Bald Eagle:** Occasionally immatures linger into spring; the bird spotted at Platte River SP on 30 May was identified as a 2-year-old (MO); an immature was identified at LM on 16 May (SJD). The nest at L Alice had at least one chick by 1 April; this nesting represents the 18th since the site was established in 1993 (AK). An adult was located near an inactive nest south of Bayard on 25 March (SJD).

**Northern Harrier:** The one seen in Fillmore Co between 20 April and 1 May was suspected of breeding (JGJ); the last to leave the HCR area was one seen on 12 May (GH, WH). Egg dates occur in early May.

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

**Cooper's Hawk:** An adult at a nest was found in Carter Canyon on 15 May (SJD); courtship flights had been observed there in 1997. And based on their behavior, a pair was thought to be nesting at Wilderness Park on 29 April (KP).

**Red-shouldered Hawk:** Reports came from FF, the only known breeding location. A pair was seen courting there on 15 April (DP, JP).

**Broad-winged Hawk:** Breeding probably occurs most years in FF; 1 to 2 were identified there between 6 and 11 May (BP, LP, SJD). Best count of migrants totaled 16 in the FF area on 26 April (BP, LP). Rarely reported in NE, a dark morph ("very cool bird") was found in Omaha on 9 April (JGJ). Rare westward, one was seen at Ash Hollow SHP on 9 May (SJD).

**Swainson's Hawk:** An excellent count was 38 tallied in the east RWB on 22 April (JGJ). Another good count of 22 registered at BOL on 19 April included 2 dark morph birds (JS).

**Red-tailed Hawk:** Apparently the best spring count on record, 56 flew over FF between 9:30 am and 11:30 am on 26 March (BP, LP). A "Krider's" Red-tailed Hawk was seen in Dodge Co on 6 April (JP, DP). Most of these birds leave during April. Two downy young were identified in a nest at Towle Park, Omaha, on 21 April (NR).

**Ferruginous Hawk:** The single bird reported at a prairie dog town in Harlan Co on 13 May (GH, WH) was rather late.

**Rough-legged Hawk:** Routine reports.

**Golden Eagle:** An active nest found in Long Canyon contained large downy young on 15 May (SJD). A nest was also under construction in Rifle Sight Canyon, Scotts Bluff Co, on 6 May (SJD). The observer's first record for the east RWB was a subadult spotted at Mallard Haven on 9 April (JGJ).

**American Kestrel:** Routine reports.

**Merlin:** Routine reports.

**Prairie Falcon:** Routine reports.

**Peregrine Falcon:** Some 21 birds were reported statewide in the period between 15 April and 21 May (m. ob.).

**Chukar:** One seen at county roads 14 and K in Dodge Co on 19 May was presumed to be an escapee (DP, JP). Presumably an escapee or a released bird, another was found in Scottsbluff on 6 March and taken to the zoo (AK).

**Gray Partridge:** The two birds found on 6 May along Rifle Sight Canyon Road, Scotts Bluff Co (SJD), may well have been wild birds from a population in southeastern Wyoming; there have been recent reports from along the North Platte River, notably around Huntley, WY, which is not far from Lyman, Scotts Bluff Co (Greg Johnson, pers. comm. WRS). One of the few recent reports came from Dakota Co, where a single bird was identified near Willis on 24 May (BFH).

**Ring-necked Pheasant:** Routine reports.

**Sharp-tailed Grouse:** The relatively recently-established population in western Kimball Co continues; 25 were seen there on 8 April (SJD). Hybrids with Greater Prairie-Chicken are reported reasonably often in NE; one among a lek of 17 sharp-tails was spotted at Fort Niobrara NWR on 12 April (DR). A sharp-tail was also identified at a prairie-chicken lek near Creighton on 23 April (MB); this area describes the eastern edge of the range.

Greater Prairie-Chicken: Five found at Spring Creek Prairie on 26 March (KP) suggest a population that has persisted there since sightings in the 1960s. Are there other prairie-chicken sites in Lancaster Co?

Wild Turkey: Routine reports.

Northern Bobwhite: Rare in the west except along the North Platte River, one was reported in Sheridan Co on 21 May (NOU; no details).

King Rail: None was reported. This species has been rather regular in occurrence in recent years, but the lack of water this spring is no doubt a factor.

Virginia Rail: The one seen at FL on 5 March (LR, RH) was very early and may have wintered in the area. There are no previous comparable reports from FL. Rarely reported in the arid southwest, singles were reported from the only marsh for miles, at Rock Creek L, Dundy Co, on 29 April (SJD) and on 15 May (BP, LP).

Sora: Routine reports.

American Coot: Routine reports.

Sandhill Crane: This spring was an interesting one for cranes, as this and the following accounts suggest. An estimate of 175,000 along the Platte River 4 March was submitted (fide KW). Cranes were more numerous than usual in the east; "waves" flew over Creighton on 25 March (MB); 1 or 2 were heard at BOL on 2 April (JS); and a few were spotted just west of Elmwood on 6 March (GW). One, thought to be a "Greater" (most migrants in NE are "Lessers"), was seen rather late at Father Hupp Basin through 21 May (JGJ). "Greater" are the subspecies which has recently nested in the east RWB.

Common Crane: An exciting event for listers--those often-maligned denizens of the birding world--was the appearance of NE's 6th bird, and about the 12th for North America, reported near Prosser on 10 March. It was found by birders from Boulder, CO, Marty and Alex Colon and Jim and Michael Coury. Seen by many through 2 April, the bird was last reported by Jack Revare and Mike Gaume of Leawood, KS. Of great interest was the observation that this bird was associated with an apparent "Lesser" Sandhill Crane and 2 young birds which appeared to be hybrids (fide MU). Debate ensued as to whether this group was the same family group seen in northwestern Quebec on 7 October 1999 and later at Jasper-Pulaski Federal Wildlife Area in Indiana between 30 October and 13 November 1999. While Sandhill Cranes are "hard-wired" to their traditional migration corridors (fide DR), and the Indiana birds (essentially all "Greater") do not mix with those using NE migration corridors (mostly "Lessers"), the presence of an apparently dominant (male?) Common Crane in the group may have upset the traditional pattern of movement of its Sandhill Crane mate. Most observers thought that this Common Crane was not the same as the pale individual that appeared in NE in March 1999. An interesting summary by Phil Kelly on possible origins of the Indiana Common Crane (and any that appear in North America) can be found in the BIRDCHAT Archives.

**Whooping Crane:** A treat for listers going for the North American "crane slam" was the presence near the Common Crane site of two Whooping Cranes, one on each side of Doniphan, and about 5 miles apart. Both may have arrived in late February with Sandhills (fide KW); at least one bird has migrated with Sandhill Cranes for the last 4 years or so after being separated from its parents en route to Aransas, Texas (fide DR). The bird east of Doniphan was last reported on 22 March (NP) and the other on 26 March (B).

**Black-bellied Plover:** Record high counts reached 469 in the RWB on 10 May, including 334 counted at Harvard Marsh (SJD). A few days later, between 13 and 15 May, 400 were found in the east RWB (JGJ), and 102 were still present between 20 and 21 May (JGJ).

**American Golden-Plover:** The one seen in Nemaha Co on 14 March (MB) was record early, and the one spotted in the east RWB on 28 May (JGJ) was rather late. Rare in the west, one in basic plumage was found at LM on 13 May (SJD). A good count was 167 in the east RWB on 30 April (JGJ).

**Snowy Plover:** This species has become a regular, though rare, spring visitor to the east RWB. A record 6 for the season were found this year. Singles were spotted at the following locations: Mallard Haven (a male) on 22 April (JGJ); Massie Lagoon (apparent female) on 22 April (JGJ); Massie Lagoon (male) between 6 and 13 May (JGJ, SJD); Father Hupp Basin on 6 May (JGJ); Harvard Marsh on 20 May (JGJ); and west of Mallard Haven on 28 May (JGJ).

**Semipalmated Plover:** A near-record count totaled 169 in the east RWB on 30 April (JGJ).

**Piping Plover:** Nest sites can be precarious; houses were being built on a Saunders Co sand pit where plovers are usually seen (DP, JP). Nesting continues at the east end of LM, where 9 birds were seen on 29 April (SJD) and 5 were found on nests in the parking lot enclosure on 21 May (WRS). Nesting was underway at the Western Sand and Gravel Plant near Ashland on 30 May (MO), and also at the Lyman Ritchie Sand and Gravel Plant at Oreapolis in eastern Cass Co on 30 May, after birds were first seen there on 27 April (BP, LP).

**Killdeer:** A good spring count totaled 80 birds 5 miles east of FL on 18 March (LR, RH).

**Mountain Plover:** The only reports were of singles noted at the regular area in southwestern Kimball Co on 26 March, 8 April, and 9 May (SJD). The 26 March date is the earliest ever for NE; normal arrival on Pawnee National Grasslands in adjacent Colorado is around 1 April.

**Black-necked Stilt:** This species is apparently on the increase. In addition to reports from the summer range--6 found in southern Sheridan Co west of Lakeside on 22 May and 7 seen north of Lakeside on 15 May (LR, RH)--two males were found at LM on 22 April (SJD), and singles were spotted at FL on 6 May (LR, RH), at Mallard Haven (a male) on 10 May (SJD), and at Father Hupp Basin between 13 and 14 May (JGJ, SJD).

**American Avocet:** The one seen near Cunningham L on 19 March (B) was record early by one day. Migrants are uncommon in the east, but there were



several such reports in addition to the previous sighting: a total of 45 were found at 7 locations between 11 April and 28 May (m. ob.). On the periphery of the breeding range (mostly in the Sandhills), one was spotted on a nest and 2 more were seen copulating at the west end of LM on 21 May (WRS).

Greater Yellowlegs: A good count of 72 was made in the east RWB on 25 March (JGJ); and 50+ were counted at L Babcock, Platte Co, the next day (CNK).

Lesser Yellowlegs: Numbers were down in the east RWB, characterized as a "terrible showing" and "the most pathetic performer" of the shorebird migrants (JGJ). Some, however, were seen at FL, where a good count of 250 was made on 23 April (LR, RH).

Solitary Sandpiper: Routine reports.

Willet: The one spotted in the east RWB on 28 May was rather late (JGJ) away from the breeding range. A near-record count totalled 140 in the east RWB on 22 April (JGJ); 110 were found there 30 April (JGJ).

Spotted Sandpiper: Routine reports.

Upland Sandpiper: Routine reports.

Whimbrel: There were more reports than usual for this species. It does not stay long at any location, however, and can be easily missed. One was found at LM on 9 May; 10 were seen there on 14 May and 6 on 15 May (SJD). One was also found at Massie Lagoon on 13 May (JGJ). At Harvard Marsh, 9 were counted on 14 May but only remained there 20 minutes; one arrived later the same day (JGJ), and 10 were seen there the next day, 15 May (AB fide SJD).

Long-billed Curlew: A good count reached 14 courting in breeding habitat in west Banner Co on 8 April (SJD), an area where there have been few indications of breeding. One bird seen in northern Brown Co on 21 May (NP) was near the eastern edge of the summer range.

Hudsonian Godwit: Only casual in the west, one was spotted at LM on 29 April (SJD).

Marbled Godwit: A record count totaled 264 at LM on 22 April, including 196 in one flock (SJD). There were 4 reports from the east, where it is rare: 2 were seen at Pawnee L on 15 April (JGJ), 7 at BOL on 19 April (JS), 2 near Ames on 8 May (DP, JP), and one in Cass Co on 9 May (GW).

Ruddy Turnstone: An excellent count was the 21 found at various lakes in Lancaster Co on 21 May (JS). More than usual were reported for the season, for a total of 61 in the period from 6 to 28 May (m. ob.), second only to the 76 reported in 1997.

Sanderling: Large numbers were reported this year, with the most at LM, where a record 120 were found on 15 May (SJD). Peak count in the east RWB was 81 on 13 May (JGJ).

Semipalmated Sandpiper: Excellent counts totaled 1210 in the east RWB on 30 April (JGJ); 1100 at Harvard Marsh on 14 May (JGJ); and 900 at Mallard Haven on 13 May (SJD).

Western Sandpiper: Few are reported in spring, especially from the east, and so the 11 spotted at Oreapolis, Cass Co, on 8 May (CNK; details) were surprising. Another was noted in Lincoln on 7 May (LE). Regular, careful

coverage of the east RWB yielded only 4 birds: 3 on 30 April (JGJ) and a bright alternate male at Mallard Haven on 13 May (JF, SJD). The only other reports consisted of a single spotted at FL on 6 May (LR, RH) and a molting adult found at Kiowa Springs the same day (SJD).

**Least Sandpiper:** Yet another excellent count came from the east RWB, this one a record 452 tallied on 6 May (JGJ).

**White-rumped Sandpiper:** Routine reports.

**Baird's Sandpiper:** The single seen at Massie Lagoon on 12 March (JGJ) was rather early. An excellent count totaled 800 at LM on 29 April (SJD). Generally an early migrant, the 620 birds counted at Harvard Marsh as late as 14 May was a surprise (JGJ).

**Pectoral Sandpiper:** A record 521 were found in the east RWB on 30 April (JGJ). Rare westward (there are only about 30 records west of Phelps Co), from 1 to 5 birds were spotted at LM between 22 and 29 April (SJD).

**Dunlin:** For the first time in several years of surveys, none arrived until May in the east RWB (JGJ). The best count there reached 16 on 6 May (JGJ).

**Stilt Sandpiper:** Record numbers appeared in the RWB: 1500 were counted at Harvard Marsh on 13 May (JGJ); 1230 were found in the east RWB on 14 May (but only 98 remained the next day!) (JGJ); and 857 were tallied there on 10 May (SJD).

**Buff-breasted Sandpiper:** As expected, most reports originated from the RWB; the spring migration corridor is very narrow. The 15 spotted near Ames on 9 May (DP, JP), however, showed up a little east of the expected route. And the four seen in the east RWB on 28 May (JGJ) were record late.

**Short-billed Dowitcher:** Rather early were the 2 birds seen in the east RWB on 30 April (JGJ), and rather late were the 3 birds identified by vocalizations at Pawnee L on 21 May (JS). A record count was the 66 found in the east RWB on 14 May (JGJ).

**Long-billed Dowitcher:** The one found at FL on 16 March was record early by two days (fide LR, RH). A good count was the 720 spotted in the east RWB on 30 April (JGJ). High count data in recent years indicate that Short-billed Dowitcher numbers peak in mid-May and those of the Long-billed Dowitcher around May 1.

**Common Snipe:** The two seen in Lancaster Co on 18 March (LE) and the three identified at Wolf L on 19 March (TH) were probably very early migrants. Up to 4 were winnowing at Kiowa Springs through 14 May (SJD); breeding probably occurs there. Breeding may also occur in the L Ogallala area, where one was seen on 17 May (SJD).

**American Woodcock:** Routine reports.

**Wilson's Phalarope:** Outstanding counts reached 2172 in the RWB on 10 May (SJD), including the 1704 tallied at Harvard Marsh (SJD). This year was considered the best ever for this species in the east RWB (JGJ). If you do not believe experience is important in counting shorebirds, compare the latter total with the 1700 estimated at Harvard Marsh the same day by a different observer (JGJ). Both Stephen Dinsmore and Joel Jorgensen have been surveying shorebirds for many years on a regular basis.

**Red-necked Phalarope:** Only about 20 reports originate from the east, and so the one spotted at Pawnee L on 27 May (LE) was of interest.

**Red Phalarope:** Strangely, NE has no confirmed spring records, although there are several from surrounding states in the period between 10 May and 5 June. Thus, an intriguing report was of one identified at Mile Markers 96-97 south of Alliance, Box Butte Co., on a roadside pond on 19 May, apparently an alternate female (KL; details). The report has been sent to the NOURC for their determination. The same observer recalled another sighting, east of McGrew, Scotts Bluff Co., around 12 May 1998.

**Franklin's Gull:** Routine reports.

**Little Gull:** A 1st alternate bird was seen in the east RWB on 6 May (JGJ; accepted by NOURC). This sighting denotes the 3rd spring record for NE and only the 11th overall.

**Bonaparte's Gull:** One arrived very early at Alma SL on 7 March (GH, WH); and 3 were spotted in the area on 9 March (GH, WH). A record count totaled 792 birds at LM on 23 April (SJD).

**Mew Gull:** An adult appeared at L Ogallala on 1 March (SJD; details); none had been found there since December. This report represents the 9th spring record and 11th overall for NE.

**Ring-billed Gull:** Routine reports.

**California Gull:** Routine reports.

**Herring Gull:** Adults generally pass through by early April, so the single adults discovered at Harvard Marsh on 30 April ("very bizarre") (JGJ) and at Sutherland Res, Lincoln Co, on 10 May (SJD) were unexpected.

**Thayer's Gull:** Since 1993 (including this year), there have been 14 records involving about 24 birds of all age classes that were not present during the winter. These records occur in the period from 20 February to 23 April, suggesting that there is a regular spring movement through the state. This year, a 1st basic bird was spotted at Johnson L, Dawson-Gosper Cos, on 16 March (B); 3 birds (an adult, a 1st basic, and a 4th basic) were identified at L Ogallala on 25 March (SJD); and an adult was found at L Minatare on 25 March (SJD).

**Lesser Black-backed Gull:** The only report was of a 1st alternate bird seen at LM on 30 April (SJD). This sighting represents the 13th spring record, but only the 5th of a 1- to 2-year-old individual reported. This species was first recorded in NE in 1992, and it is now a regular but rare spring migrant.

**Slaty-backed Gull:** If accepted by the NOURC, the basic adult spotted at HCR on 22 January 2000 (JGJ) will represent the first NE record. Photos were taken and are strongly suggestive of this species, but the flock flushed before some key confirming field marks were noted. Most important in this respect is the pattern of the underprimaries. Despite a careful search over 2 days, the bird could not be relocated. There are single records each for Iowa, Missouri, and Colorado in the period between 20 December and 28 March; the Colorado record was also of an adult, intriguingly only about a month after the HCR report previously described.



**Caspian Tern:** The one discovered at Massie Lagoon on 22 April (JGJ) was rather early, and also the observer's first for the east RWB.

**Common Tern:** A good count totaled 8 adults in the LM area on 9 May (SJD), also an early date. There is only one documented record prior to 9 May, that on 1 May. The Common Tern is primarily a late May to early June migrant in NE.

**Forster's Tern:** A good count totaled 113 at LM on 30 April (SJD).

**Least Tern:** Nesting was reported at the east end of LM, where 3 were seen on nests on 21 May (WRS) and near Ashland, Saunders Co, at Western Sand and Gravel on 30 May (MO). Unusual were the two spotted at Hole 2 of the Tregaron Country Club, Omaha (B); perhaps they would nest in a large sand trap?

**Black Tern:** Good counts reached 500+ at L North, Platte Co, on 28 May (DP, JP) and 500 in Sheridan Co on 19 May (LR, RH).

**Band-tailed Pigeon:** One was seen at the Clark feeder in Gering between 14 and 18 May (Jamalee Clark, fide AK; SJD. Accepted by NOURC). Excellent photos were obtained. This report is NE's 2nd, after one at Morrill, Scotts Bluff Co, on 15 October 1996. There are few records of vagrants on the Northern Great Plains.

**Eurasian Collared-Dove:** At the established Kearney location in the Newcomb neighborhood, "lots" have been present (Roger Newcomb, fide LR, RH) and a nest with one egg was found in a cedar there on 7 April (LR, RH). The small group of 3 at Elmwood also continues, comprised of a pair and a young male, although nesting has not yet been confirmed (GW). Single birds were also reported at Dakota City, Dakota Co, on 11 March and 14 May (JJ). A new location, the 10th to date, was Beemer, where one bird was seen at the corner of 5th and Canfield on 15 April (B). Obviously, this species is on the increase in NE, although so far it seems to prefer smaller towns.

**White-winged Dove:** One identified with the Eurasian Collared-Doves in Kearney for 3 days around 15 May (Roger Newcomb, fide LR, RH) was probably the same bird that appeared there from Jun 1998 to May 1999; maybe it never left! If it was a different bird, it would be only the 9th ever in NE (5th documented) for this northward-expanding species.

**Monk Parakeet:** The small group at Freedom Park, Omaha, may be no more; none was present this spring (JP, DP). If anyone has any information on these birds or their (intended?) demise, please let me know.

**Black-billed Cuckoo:** As usual, few were reported--only 6, 3 of which were seen at Blyburg L, Dakota Co, on 20 May (BFH). Rather early were singles found at Ponca SP on 6 May (JJ) and in southeastern Otoe Co on 7 May (CF, LF).

**Yellow-billed Cuckoo:** A good count was 9 at ICSP on 12 May (SJD).

**Barn Owl:** Routine reports.

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

**Great Horned Owl:** At least 5 broods were located in Harlan Co, including 3 nests with 2 young each on 14 April; nesting began in February, and a nest located near Orleans still contained 2 young on 6 May (GH, WH).

Burrowing Owl: An excellent count totaled 18 in Scotts Bluff Co on 22 April (SJD). None was reported east of those found at Fort Niobrara NWR (DR).

Barred Owl: Routine reports.

Long-eared Owl: The one seen at CLNWR on 30 April (SJD) was late enough to indicate nesting, although no evidence was noted.

Short-eared Owl: Routine reports.

Common Nighthawk: Spring concentrations are rarely reported; 23 were spotted in Dixon Co on 23 May (JJ).

Common Poorwill: Routine reports.

Chuck-will's-Widow: At least 3 were heard on 23 April near Fort Kearney in Buffalo Co (sec 16-8-15) (GL), and another was heard there on 13 May (fide LR, RH). There are no known more westerly locations. And this arrival date is the earliest yet for NE, followed by one or two heard at a regular location at Wolf L between 29 April and 27 May (TH). Rounding out sightings at the periphery of the range was one identified at a traditional location near Willis, Dakota Co, on 24 May; unfortunately it was found dead (BFH).

Whip-poor-will: Rather early was one seen in Omaha on 21 April (NR) and especially early were the singles reported as far north as Knox Co on 23 April (MB) and Dakota Co on 30 April (BFH).

Chimney Swift: Routine reports.

White-throated Swift: A good count totaled 19 at Scotts Bluff NM on 22 April (SJD).

Ruby-throated Hummingbird: Routine reports.

Belted Kingfisher: Seldom are numbers reported; movements of this species are not well documented, and so the 5 seen in southeastern Otoe Co on 6 May (LF, CF) may be indicative of migrating birds. The available data suggest movement in mid to late April.

Lewis's Woodpecker: The only reports were of 3 spotted in West Ash Creek Canyon (WM), which required a short hike to see by NOU members at the annual meeting from 20 to 21 May.

Red-headed Woodpecker: A juvenile which wintered in the observer's yard in southwestern Dixon Co assumed alternate plumage and acquired a mate (JJ); this report is rather northerly for wintering Red-headed Woodpeckers. The first arrivals where wintering did no occur were singles found in Washington Co on 22 April (JGJ); at Rowe Sanctuary, Buffalo Co, on 2 May (LR, RH); and near McGrew, Scotts Bluff Co, on 13 May (AK), suggesting later arrival westward. Numbers were down at both Wolf L (TH) and around Homestead NM, Gage Co (MO); "gazillions" of starlings at the latter location were suggested as a reason (MO).

Red-bellied Woodpecker: One which wintered in the observer's yard west of Scottsbluff was last seen on 30 April (KL). Tantalizing was a glimpse of one near Camp Norwesca, Dawes Co, at the NOU meeting on 21 May (NP). This sighting would represent the first summer record for the Panhandle,

although it is more likely a straggling wintering bird, but still a very rare sighting.

**Yellow-bellied Sapsucker:** Only two were reported: one was seen in a Bellevue yard between 9 March and 8 April (BP, LP); and another was found in FF on 9 April (WA).

**Sapsucker sp.:** A female sapsucker was spotted at Bushnell on 8 April; the observer cautiously reported it as unidentified to species, although it was very likely a Red-naped (SJD).

**Downy Woodpecker:** Routine reports.

**Hairy Woodpecker:** A female found in the observer's yard west of Scottsbluff was thought to be the same female which had wintered there for 4 to 5 years (KL). Some wintering Hairys in the west may be Rocky Mountain birds, subspecies *monticola*; they can be distinguished by the generally unmarked white back, while eastern birds (*villosus*) generally have the white back variably marked with black.

**Northern Flicker:** Routine reports.

**Pileated Woodpecker:** Reports continue of the small population at FF: there were 5 sightings of singles during the period (CNK, BP, LP, DP, JP).

**Olive-sided Flycatcher:** Westerly reports included one sighted at the Geneva Cem on 13 May (WRS), and, rare in the Panhandle, one found at Oliver Res on 24 May (CLW). Few are reported west of the Missouri Valley.

**Western Wood-Pewee:** The eastern extent of the range in NE is the LM area, where singles were identified at L Ogallala on 14 May (SJD) and at CCM on 21 May (WRS). At least the latter was vigorously territorial. The Eastern Wood-Pewee occurs rarely as far west as this area; any interactions should be observed and reported.

**Eastern Wood-Pewee:** The one sighted at DeSoto NWR, Washington Co, on 29 April (DP, JP) was rather early. None was reported west of Lancaster Co.

**Yellow-bellied Flycatcher:** None reported.

**Acadian Flycatcher:** The one reported singing in the observer's yard in southwestern Dixon Co on 24 May was identified as this species by comparing its song to tapes (JJ). This sighting appears to be the only record from the northeast, although there is a Cherry Co specimen; and there are banding reports from Cedar Point Biological Station. No others were reported.

**Alder Flycatcher:** Only 3 singles were reported: at ICSP on 12 May (SJD), a rather early date, and at FF on 24 and on 28 May (BP, LP). While good numbers probably move through the state in late May, identification of silent birds is difficult, and the diagnostic call-note can be hard to hear.

**Willow Flycatcher:** The singles spotted at ADF on 2 May (LF, CF) and at Crete on 6 May (MO) were rather early. Details should be submitted for sightings of empids other than Least before 10 May.

**Least Flycatcher:** A good count reached 25 at ICSP on 12 May (SJD).

**Hammond's Flycatcher:** The bird identified in the pines near the entrance to Oliver Res on 24 May (CLW; details) represents NE's 3rd spring record and the 10th overall. This species apparently migrates in small numbers through the Panhandle in spring and fall.

Cordilleran Flycatcher: Routine reports.

Empidonax sp.: I suspect that reporters leave out unidentified birds; however, total numbers and locations used by these birds are of interest. Five unidentified birds were found at Wehrspann L on 21 May (JWH).

Eastern Phoebe: Although not unexpected as a migrant in the Panhandle, the 2 birds found "probably nesting" at Enders Res, Chase Co, on 29 April (SJD) would provide one of the very few nesting records that far west.

Say's Phoebe: Again, a single appeared in southwestern Dixon Co, on 26 April; (JJ); so far no more than one has been reported, and without any evidence of nesting. The sightings at McMurtry Refuge, Clay Co, on 14 and on 28 May were suggestive of breeding (JGJ); there are no recent breeding records from the RWB.

Great Crested Flycatcher: Routine reports.

Cassin's Kingbird: A good count tallied 6 in the Panhandle on 6 May (SJD); spring counts are much lower than those in fall. Long Canyon also hosted 6 birds on 15 May (SJD).

Western Kingbird: Arrival is about 2 weeks later in the Panhandle than elsewhere; a single spotted in Scotts Bluff Co on 25 April (AK) was rather early. Good numbers had arrived in the Panhandle by 29 April (SJD).

Eastern Kingbird: Routine reports.

Scissor-tailed Flycatcher: One of only about 25 spring reports for the state was a "mature male" identified at Wehrspann L on 3 May (JWH).

Northern Shrike: Routine reports.

Loggerhead Shrike: One was spotted carrying nesting material in Kearney Co on 23 April (LR, RH).

Bell's Vireo: The one found at Twin Lakes, Seward Co, on 8 April (MO) was record early by about 3 weeks; it was also seen and heard at a regular breeding location.

Yellow-throated Vireo: A nest was being built in FF on 21 May, but was abandoned by 28 May (BP, LP).

Plumbeous Vireo: Routine reports.

Blue-headed Vireo: Routine reports.

Warbling Vireo: This species arrived early and in good numbers. The one sighted at Wilderness Park on 18 April (MUs) was rather early; and an amazing 100+ were counted at Twin Lakes, Lancaster Co, on 6 May (MO). First in the west was a comparative laggard identified on 13 May in Scotts Bluff Co (AK).

Philadelphia Vireo: Only 3 of this uncommon eastern migrant were reported. Singles were discovered in southwestern Dixon Co on 14 and again on 25 May--the latter's song was compared to a tape (JJ); and one bird was spotted in Cass Co on 15 May (GW).

Red-eyed Vireo: A record high count totaled 49 at ICSP on 12 May (SJD).

Blue Jay: Routine reports.

Pinyon Jay: None reported.

Black-billed Magpie: Consolidating the species' gradual range expansion eastward was a pair found nesting in a fir in Cuming Co on 15 April (LE).

Other easterly reports included one seen at Willis on 24 May (BFH) and 2 discovered in Franklin Co on 28 May (LR, RH).

American Crow: Routine reports.

Horned Lark: Routine reports.

Purple Martin: The westernmost known Republican Valley breeders are found at Alma; birds occupied 6 houses there this spring (GH, WH). None was reported farther west anywhere in the state this spring.

Tree Swallow: Routine reports.

Violet-green Swallow: Birds were seen near a nest cavity in West Ash Creek Canyon pm 21 May (WM, LR, RH). All reports originated from expected summer locations in the Pine Ridge and the Wildcat Hills.

Northern Rough-winged Swallow: Routine reports.

Bank Swallow: A large colony was noted on the cliffs along the eastern side of Jeffrey Res, Lincoln Co, on 9 May (JG); most colonies are situated in rather unstable locations such as sand pits.

Cliff Swallow: Routine reports.

Barn Swallow: Routine reports.

Black-capped Chickadee: Routine reports.

Tufted Titmouse: Routine reports.

Red-breasted Nuthatch: Late dates away from the breeding range occur in late May, and so the bird identified in Bellevue on 28 May (BP, LP) pushed the envelope. Breeding has not been proved at L Ogallala, although a female with an active brood patch was recently banded there, and 5 were counted there in early June 1994; thus of interest was one spotted at the southwest corner of L Ogallala on 21 May (WRS). There appears to be a healthy population in Carter Canyon--6 were found there on 6 May (SJD); and one acting very territorial on 29 April was "having a bad hair day" (AK), presumably as a result of its hair-raising activity.

White-breasted Nuthatch: Routine reports.

Pygmy Nuthatch: A pair was reported nesting in the well-known stub at the Wildcat Hills NC; they were seen excavating on 22 April and were still present on 14 May (SJD, AK). Possibly increasing in the Wildcat Hills, another was seen in Carter Canyon on 29 April (AK).

Brown Creeper: The isolated breeding population (1 to 2 pairs?) at FF continues; singing birds were heard there on 11 and again on 28 May (SJD, BP, LP). Low numbers summer in the Pine Ridge also; one was noted at West Ash Road on 1 May (LR, RH).

Rock Wren: Routine reports.

Carolina Wren: This species continues to expand its range slowly. The bird spotted at Spring Creek Prairie on 26 March (KP) represents a first record for that area. And one was discovered singing for about a month in April in the Blair area, where this species is still rare (JGJ).

House Wren: The one sighted at HCR on 2 April (GH, WH) was very early but not unprecedented. And an excellent count tallied 67 at Wilderness Park on 7 May (LE).



Winter Wren: Although possibly a late migrant, a singing bird found in the Fort Niobrara NWR area on 23 May was surprising; tapes of the vocalizations were made, and it was suggested that the bird might be of one of the western subspecies (CA fide DR). Evidence for occurrence of western Winter Wrens in NE, however, remains scanty.

Sedge Wren: Most birds in spring (into early June) are likely migrants, as few are reported in June; the best count totaled 19 at Boyer Chute NWR on 22 May (B). The two to three identified at Little Salt Fork Marsh, Lancaster Co, between 21 and 22 April (JS) were rather early.

Marsh Wren: Routine reports.

Golden-crowned Kinglet: Routine reports--although fewer than 10 were reported.

Ruby-crowned Kinglet: A little early for the high numbers was the count of 15 made in FF on 31 March (CNK). Migration generally peaks in mid-April.

Blue-gray Gnatcatcher: The "invasion of the southern Panhandle" continues apace: as many as 7 were spotted along Stage Hill Road in the Wildcat Hills on 6 May (SJD); and 3 were found in Long Canyon the same day (SJD). In addition, singles were noted at Bushnell on 30 Apr (SJD), at Oliver Res on 15 May (SJD), and as far northeast as CLNWR 30 on April (SJD). The range in the east was outlined by the 1 to 2 identified at Wilderness Park from 29 April to 7 May (KP, LE) and by the one seen at Ponca SP on 14 May (JJ). One spotted on a nest at Neale Woods in Washington Co on 4 May was still on the nest on 10 May (JB).

Mountain Bluebird: Routine reports.

Townsend's Solitaire: The singles found in Carter Canyon on 29 April (AK) and in Dawes and Sioux Cos on 20 May (NOU meeting) were rather late, although in recent years lingering solitaires have been reported more often.

Veery: The two birds found at Laurel, Cedar Co, on 18 May (BFH) were the only ones reported. This bird is a rare migrant.

Gray-cheeked Thrush: Although this species is generally uncommon, one observer considered it present in "relative abundance" in FF on 7 May (WA). Only casual in the Panhandle and rarely reported outside the Missouri Valley, singles were spotted at CLNWR on 9 May (SJD) and at Geneva Cem on 13 May (WRS).

Swainson's Thrush: Routine reports.

Hermit Thrush: There are a few fall records of the Rocky Mountains subspecies *auduboni*, but the first for spring, sighted in Long Canyon on 6 May (SJD), is a member of this subspecies. This race is larger and grayer than the eastern Hermit Thrushes; both races are probably rare migrants in the Panhandle.

Wood Thrush: An excellent count totaled 12 at ICSP on 2 May (SJD). "Several" were also found at Hormel Park, Fremont, on 6 May (DP, JP); none was reported farther west.

American Robin: Routine reports.

Gray Catbird: The one sighted on 30 April at CLNWR (SJD) was very early for the Panhandle. Arrival in the west usually takes place in mid-late May; one was spotted south of Gering on 16 May (AK).

Northern Mockingbird: This species is clearly becoming more numerous in NE, especially from the Platte River south and in the southern Panhandle. It is now routine to count several in a day in southwestern Kimball Co, where up to 3 per day were counted between 6 and 17 May (SJD). Other reports were widely scattered, north to Saunders Co on 20 March (DP, J P) and at L Ogallala on 23 April (SJD).

Brown Thrasher: Routine reports.

European Starling: Routine reports.

American Pipit: Routine reports.

Sprague's Pipit: This species is a regular but rarely reported migrant through the state. One was seen at CCM on 23 April (SJD; details).

Cedar Waxwing: Robbins and Easterla (Birds of Missouri, 1992) suggest that there are two spring migration peaks, one in March, often masked by the presence of wintering birds, and one in late May consisting of birds that wintered as far south as Central America. Flocks are rarely reported in NE in late May, but 3 flocks of 12 to 18 birds spotted at Wolf L 25 May (TH) and 20 birds identified at Boyer Chute NWR on 27 May (B) appear to be examples of a late spring movement.

Blue-winged Warbler: Only two were reported, about as expected. One was spotted in Towle Park, Omaha, on 7 May (NR), but the other, found in Carter Canyon on 6 May (SJD), was a surprise. The latter represents only the 2nd Panhandle record.

Golden-winged Warbler: Four were reported between 8 and 17 May (CNK, LE, DP, JP), which is about normal for recent years.

Tennessee Warbler: Record counts (who else takes the trouble?) registered 112 in Sarpy Co on 11 May (SJD) and 72 at ICSP 12 May (SJD). Although this bird is not a breeder in NE, copulation was observed in the observers' bird-bath on 12 May (BP, LP). Only a rare migrant in the west, singles were found at L Ogallala on 16 May (SJD) and at Gering on 18 May (AK). No others were reported west of Ames and Lincoln.

Orange-crowned Warbler: One of very few wood-warblers that are statewide migrants, its abundance in the west is indicated by counts of 23 at CLNWR on 30 April (SJD) and 17 in Dundy Co on 29 April (SJD).

Nashville Warbler: This year was slow for this species; only about 12 were reported, including only 3 for the season in the Sarpy Co area (BP, LP).

Northern Parula: Counts totaled 5 at ICSP on 12 May (SJD) and 4 at FF on 30 April (BP, LP) and on 11 May (SJD). A surprise in the southwest, although there are about 15 Panhandle records, was one identified singing at Swanson Res, Hitchcock Co, on 15 May (BP, LP). Most were reported at locations adjacent to the Missouri R; exceptions were one found at Schramm Park on 13 May (CNK) and another seen at Wagontrain L, Lancaster Co, on 21 May (JS).

**Yellow Warbler:** Good counts reached 24 at Geneva Cem on 7 May (JGJ), 20 at Blyburg L, Dakota Co, on 20 May (BFH), and 19 at Lange Basin on 7 May (JGJ).

**Chestnut-sided Warbler:** Only 8 were reported from the east, hardly overpowering the surprising two birds spotted in the west. Singles were identified at the Rock Creek State Fish Hatchery, Dundy Co, on 29 April (JF, SJD) and at Gering Cem on 20 May (MB, DH, WRS). The Dundy Co bird was the 2nd earliest report ever for the state for this generally mid-late spring migrant. The other reports occurred in the period between 11 and 23 May.

**Magnolia Warbler:** About 10 were reported, an average spring, all from the Missouri Valley between 1 and 21 May, except for the 2 seen at Wilderness Park on 19 May (WRS).

**Black-throated Blue Warbler:** This rare statewide migrant can pop up anywhere. This spring, a male was found at L Ogallala near Cedar Point Biological Station on 15 May (JF, SJD). There are still only 22 spring records, with half coming since 1982.

**Yellow-rumped Warbler:** Routine reports.

**Black-throated Gray Warbler:** The 2nd documented record for the state (out of 9 reports) was an apparent first-year male (looked like a female but singing) identified in Otoe Co on 25 May (LF, CF; details. Accepted by NOURC).

**Black-throated Green Warbler:** Only 3 were reported; this species seems to be less common in recent years. Two were found at ICSP on 12 May (SJD) and one was spotted at Lange Basin on 14 May (JGJ), the latter a rare non-Missouri Valley record. This species has been one of the least likely to be recorded westward.

**Blackburnian Warbler:** Only 2 were reported, also a trend in recent years. Singles were seen in Cass Co on 15 May (GW) and at FF on 21 May (JT).

**Yellow-throated Warbler:** The best count at FF reached 3 on 24 and 30 April (CNK, BP, LP). The sightings between 28 April and 1 May at Krimloski Tract, Neale Woods (JB, NR, JT), are suggestive of migrants, although breeding probably occurs there, albeit as yet unproven. None was reported elsewhere.

**Pine Warbler:** Very rare (hypothetical?) in spring in NE, only the 18th report was of one seen very early at a Bellevue feeder from 12 to 17 March (fide BP, LP). As yet, no details have been received on either this bird or any of the other 17 spring reports for NE. Pine Warblers can appear very early in spring, but can be easily confused with other species.

**Prairie Warbler:** A singing male provided a major surprise in Carter Canyon on 6 May (SJD; details); it was not far away from a Blue-winged Warbler! 15 spring reports now exist, with only 6 documented--this one is the earliest--scattered statewide. The Prairie Warbler is truly a scattershot spring overshoot migrant.

**Palm Warbler:** Record early and rather rare so far west, a bird was spotted at Fort Kearny Hike-Bike Trail, Buffalo Co, on 19 March (JV, RD;



details. Accepted by NOURC). The bird had very yellow underparts, indicating it was of the eastern subspecies *hypochrysea*.

**Bay-breasted Warbler:** Although a rare spring migrant, none was reported, which is somewhat surprising.

**Blackpoll Warbler:** Routine reports.

**Cerulean Warbler:** Only one was reported, at ICSP on 12 May (SJD). None was detected at FF, where it has been noted over the past few years.

**Black-and-white Warbler:** Routine reports.

**American Redstart:** Good counts totaled 20 at ICSP on 12 May (SJD), and 15+ at Ponca SP on 21 May (JJ). There were, however, "gazillions" reported at FF 21 May (JT). This species was clearly present in good numbers statewide this spring.

**Prothonotary Warbler:** Arriving rather early was the one (possibly a pair) found at Towle Park, Omaha, on 23 April, and seen again on 25 and on 28 Apr (NR). Also rather early were apparently different singles identified at Neale Woods on 28 April (JB, NR). And as many as 5 were counted at FF on 8 May (DP, JP). Nesting was underway in a grassy marsh area at FF on 7 May (WA) and copulation was noted at FF on 22 May (BP, LP). A singing bird was also spotted somewhat westerly at Hormel Park, Fremont, on 6 and on 17 May (DP, JP).

**Worm-eating Warbler:** One was spotted at ICSP on 12 May (SJD); this species is only a casual migrant, essentially restricted to the Missouri Valley.

**Ovenbird:** Routine reports.

**Northern Waterthrush:** Although generally rare westward, there were 6 Panhandle and near-Panhandle reports: singles were found at CLNWR on 9 May (SJD); at Oliver Res on 15 May (SJD); at Champion L, Chase Co, on 16 May (SJD); at Rock Creek State Fish Hatchery on 16 May (SJD), and along Blue Creek south of CLNWR on 21 May (WRS). Two were also discovered at Mud Springs State Historical Site, Morrill Co, on 9 May (SJD).

**Louisiana Waterthrush:** Only 4 were reported, singles seen in FF on 14 and on 21 April (BP, LP), in Cass Co on 10 May (GW), and at ICSP on 12 May (SJD).

**Kentucky Warbler:** Birds were located at the usual reliable summering spots: one was seen along Paw Paw Trail in Neale Woods from 4 to 28 May for the 4th year in a row (JB); one was identified singing at Hummel Park, Omaha, on 10 May (NR); and as many as 4 were spotted at Schramm Park between 7 and 13 May (MUs, CNK).

**Connecticut Warbler:** Although a regular but rare migrant, none was reported.

**Mourning Warbler:** Routine reports.

**MacGillivray's Warbler:** Only two were reported: singles sighted in Carter Canyon on 14 May (SJD) and at Oliver Res on 17 May (SJD). This species is a rare but regular Panhandle migrant.

**Common Yellowthroat:** Routine reports.

Hooded Warbler: One surprised the observers by singing loudly to announce its presence on 21 May at the Gordon Cem (MB, DH). Also surprising for a wood-warbler with southeastern affinities, this sighting denotes the 9th Panhandle record!

Wilson's Warbler: Few reports of this statewide migrant were received; only about 11 birds were reported, including 4 spotted at CLNWR on 9 May (SJD) and only one all spring seen at FF (BP, LP).

Canada Warbler: Only 4 were reported; this species is generally more numerous in fall. A female was found at FF on 19 May (JT), and a male appeared in the observer's yard in southwestern Dixon Co the same day (JJ); and two birds were seen at Wehrspann L on 21 May (JWH).

Yellow-breasted Chat: A single was reported in Cass Co on 28 May (GW). There have been very few recent reports in the east, and the species is now only casual there. All other reports arrived from Harlan (GH, WH) and Kearney (LB) Cos westward, where the species is doing well.

Summer Tanager: In recent years, there have been increasing reports away from Schramm Park, the only regular known breeding location. However, some rather surprising reports arrived this spring, including a female seen as far west as L Ogallala on 15 May (SJD; details); while this location is just east of the Panhandle, there are only 3 Panhandle reports. An amazing 11 were counted at ICSP on 12 May, including 8 males and 3 females (SJD); surely breeding occurs there? Also unexpected at Wilderness Park, a first-year bird was seen there on 27 May (LE). Not discovered in as unusual a location as in the preceding reports, but still a rare find and in fact the 3rd earliest ever, was the one identified at FF on 30 April (BP, LP).

Scarlet Tanager: Routine reports.

Western Tanager: Routine reports.

Green-tailed Towhee: No reports were received on this rare but regular Panhandle migrant.

Spotted Towhee: Last in the east were 3 birds found in northern Lancaster Co on 26 March (LE); and migrants arrived near Gibbon on 23 April (LR, RH) and at HCR on 25 April (GH, WH). A record count totaled 85 at L Ogallala on 30 April (SJD), indicating that at this date these birds are definitely on the move. On the same day, the same observer counted an additional 41 at CLNWR (SJD). A few were reported from the northeast extent of the summer range at Ponca SP (JJ) and near Newcastle in northern Dixon Co (BFH).

Eastern Towhee: The one seen at ADF on 18 March (LF, CF) probably wintered nearby, but the 2 spotted near Kearney on 19 March (fide RD) may have been early migrants, as apparently was one found near Gibbon on 1 April (LR, RH).

American Tree Sparrow: Rather late was the one identified at DeSoto NWR, Washington Co, on 29 April (JT). Departure dates for this species are in early May but are poorly documented. Most leave by mid-April.

Chipping Sparrow: Routine reports.

**Clay-colored Sparrow:** Excellent counts reached 350+ at FL on 29 April (LR, RH) and 250 there the next day (LR, RH). This species was widely reported this spring.

**Brewer's Sparrow:** A good count tallied 24 in western Banner Co on 6 May (SJD).

**Field Sparrow:** Reports from the southeast of singles spotted in March are probably of birds that wintered nearby; migrants generally arrive at the end of March. One such bird was discovered at ADF on 7 March (LF, CF). Another identified in northern Lancaster Co on 26 March (LE) and one found in Cass Co on 31 March (GW) were rather early. Only one was reported from the west, where the species is rare; the report was from the NOU meeting from 20 to 21 May, but no details were provided.

**Vesper Sparrow:** Routine reports.

**Lark Sparrow:** Routine reports.

**Lark Bunting:** Somewhat further east than expected, a female was seen at Sacramento-Wilcox Area, Phelps Co, on 12 May (GH, WH), and a male was spotted in Harlan Co on 11 May (GH, WH).

**Savannah Sparrow:** Routine reports.

**Grasshopper Sparrow:** Routine reports.

**Henslow's Sparrow:** Two birds were seen singing at Spring Creek Prairie on 6 May (KP) and remained through the period (KP, SJD). Presence of Henslow's Sparrows indicates prairie that is close to its natural condition, which includes only occasional burning, perhaps none for several years. These birds require grassland with previous years' dead grasses and some small shrubs, a habitat annual burning destroys. Thus they do not remain on prairies completely burned annually for grazing management.

**Le Conte's Sparrow:** The only report was of a very early bird seen on 5 March at Big Daddy's Ornithological Gardens in Clay Co (JGJ). This spotting signifies the earliest documented record for NE; there is a specimen from Lancaster Co on 17 March 1909. This is a hardy species and may winter close to or even in NE, although there are no documented records of overwintering.

**Nelson's Sharp-tailed Sparrow:** The only report was of one spotted in switchgrass at Boyer Chute NWR on 22 May (JT, details). Although this species is a regular migrant, few are reported (or looked for?).

**Fox Sparrow:** Very early was one seen at ADF on 2 March (LF, CF). An excellent count was the 18 totaled in Cass Co on 30 March (GW). This species is rare away from the east; thus unusual was the one seen at FL on 1 April (MU, LR, RH).

**Song Sparrow:** A good count tallied 65 at FL on 6 May (LR, RH).

**Lincoln's Sparrow:** Migrants arrive in late March, thus rather early were 2 discovered at Alma on 29 March (GH, WH). However, while there are no February records for the state, about 20 exist for March (prior to 29 March). None is documented, but may be of birds which wintered close to NE. This spring, a few additional birds like these were reported, none with details, but suggestive of early migration: one seen in Otoe Co on 10 March

(LF, CF); one identified at Pawnee L on 11 March (B), and one spotted in southwestern Dixon Co on 11 March (JJ).

**Swamp Sparrow:** Away from the east, migrants are rare away from known breeding sites, and so the 4 birds discovered at North Platte SL on 10 May (SJD) were of interest.

**White-throated Sparrow:** Rare in the west, one was identified at Rock Creek State Fish Hatchery, Dundy Co, on 29 April (SJD), and another was spotted at CLNWR on 16 May (SJD). The only other report away from the east was of 3 found along the Platte River in Buffalo Co (LB).

**White-crowned Sparrow:** One reported at Neale Woods on 12 March (JB) probably wintered nearby; migrants arrive in April. An example was the 8 that wintered in a Scotts Bluff Co yard; they were joined by 41 additional birds on 26 April that departed 30 April (KL).

**Harris's Sparrow:** Rare in the west, one was seen in Scottsbluff 6 April (AK).

**Dark-eyed Junco:** The "Gray-headed" Junco seen in a Papillion yard from 16 January to 14 February reappeared on 9 March (PS). This sighting represents only the 6th documented record for this form.

**McCown's Longspur:** Migrants arrive in late March and peak numbers occur in early to mid-April. A record count was the 2302 tallied in southwestern Kimball Co on 8 April (SJD); the observer has found 1700+ there at this time for each of the last 3 years.

**Lapland Longspur:** None was reported. Late departure dates are in mid-April.

**Chestnut-collared Longspur:** Routine reports.

**Snow Bunting:** None was reported. Late departure dates occur in early March. Apparently this species and Lapland Longspur left early on account of the nice weather!

**Northern Cardinal:** In addition to the small colony just east of Scottsbluff, there may be a second establishing at McGrew in the southeast corner of Scotts Bluff Co; a single was spotted there on 18 May (AK).

**Rose-breasted Grosbeak:** Rare in the Panhandle, 4 reports originated from that area: one bird was found at Oliver Res on 17 May (SJD), another was seen at Gering Cem on 20 May (DH), and it was reported at the NOU meeting on 20 to 21 May for both Sioux and Dawes Cos. Individuals seen in the Panhandle should be carefully observed for signs and extent of hybridization with Black-headed Grosbeak.

**Black-headed Grosbeak:** The one identified at Lange Basin 14 May (JGJ) was rather far east. Surprisingly, this sighting represents only the 2nd report east of Adams Co since 1981.

**Blue Grosbeak:** Routine reports.

**Lazuli Bunting:** The first-spring male spotted at Wilderness Park on 13 May (SJD) represents only the 10th record from the east. All the eastern records have come since 1985, and this species has been recorded almost annually in recent years in western Iowa. Another easterly bird was found near Kearney on 13 May (LB).

**Indigo Bunting:** A good count reached 21 in southeastern Otoe Co on 19 May (LF, CF). Rare in the west, where most show some evidence of hybrid character, singles identified as this species were sighted at CLNWR on 9 May (SJD); at Gering on 15 May (AK); south of Gering on 16 May (AK); and in Dawes Co on either 20 or 21 May (NOU).

**Dickcissel:** Two were found north of Keystone L on 17 May (SJD); in the west this species is rare and usually does not arrive until late May.

**Bobolink:** One in the e RWB 30 Apr (JGJ) was rather early.

**Red-winged Blackbird:** Routine reports.

**Eastern Meadowlark:** Now well-established locally in the Sandhills and other damper areas in the west such as CCM--where one was noted on 25 March (SJD)--a possible new location is the wet pastures just west of Walgren L, Sheridan Co, where the observers' first identification at that location was made on 21 May (BW, DW). However, Rosche in 1982 considered this species "fairly common" in wet pastures in western Sheridan Co.

**Western Meadowlark:** Routine reports.

**Yellow-headed Blackbird:** Most arrive in April, but late flocks of immatures are seen well into May; examples included 30+ found near Alma on 16 May (GH, WH) and 53 seen in the observers' yard on 19 May (JP, DP). The first arrivals are usually lone males, such as the one reported at L Ogallala on 25 March (SJD); but the female spotted as early as 18 March at FL (LR, RH) came as a surprise.

**Rusty Blackbird:** Routine reports.

**Brewer's Blackbird:** An excellent count for the RWB reached 300 in a field being worked in Fillmore Co on 22 April (JGJ). A good count of 55 was also made in southeastern Otoe Co 15 on April (LF, CF). I suspect that more Brewer's Blackbirds migrate through the state, especially in the east, than are detected because of the hordes of Common Grackles moving through at about the same time.

**Common Grackle:** Routine reports.

**Great-tailed Grackle:** The singles seen in northern Lancaster Co on 4 March (LE) and at FL on 5 March (LR, RH) were rather early; the first migrants appear around the beginning of March. By 18 March, 100 were found at FL (LR, RH). Migrants away from known breeding areas in the west are still unusual, such as the one seen in Grant Co on 29 April (SJD), and the single spotted at Winters Creek L 6 May (SJD). The colony at Kiowa Springs continues, with a courting pair seen there on 8 April (SJD) and several individuals found in the vicinity on 29 April (AK). A possible new breeding location in the Loup Valley is indicated by the presence of 3 to 4 birds noted in marshes east of Mason City, Custer Co, on 15 May (LR, RH).

**Brown-headed Cowbird:** A flock of 15 spotted in northern Lancaster Co on 4 March (LE) was rather early, as were 2 large flocks seen at FF 31 on March (CNK). Peak migration occurs in late April.

**Orchard Oriole:** Routine reports.



**Baltimore Oriole:** Rare in the Panhandle, one was spotted with two male Bullock's Orioles at Riverside Park, Scottsbluff, on 13 May (AK). The species was reported at the NOU meeting from Dawes and Sheridan Cos, with no details.

**Bullock's Oriole:** Routine reports.

**Purple Finch:** Routine reports, except for one reported singing at FF on 20 March (B).

**House Finch:** A female with an albino head was seen at Nebraska City on 25 March (LF, CF).

**Red Crossbill:** A family group with 3 juveniles was identified at Wildcat Hills NC on 22 April (SJD); breeding probably occurs in the Wildcat Hills, but to date there is no direct evidence. This family group may have originated elsewhere.

**White-winged Crossbill:** One was reported in Lincoln on 7 May (AB, fide LRB; no details). This sighting denotes only the 4th report for May, none documented; most birds are found in November.

**Common Redpoll:** One showed up in the Drawbaugh yard (home of the Brambling) in Scottsbluff between 27 March and 1 April (fide AK), a rather late date. This bird may have been the same one reported from Scottsbluff in December (see Winter Report).

**Pine Siskin:** This species was widely reported this spring. Of interest as potential nesters were the "large numbers" still found on the Doane College campus in Crete on 3 May where 40+ were counted on 31 March (MO); and 2 birds remained through the end of May in the observers' yard in Bellevue (BP, LP).

**American Goldfinch:** At McGrew on 13 May, "jillions" were present (AK); is this number more than "gazillions"?

**Evening Grosbeak:** Routine reports.

**House Sparrow:** Routine reports.

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#### NOU SPRING COUNT

The NOU Spring meeting took place from May 19 to 21 in Chadron. Table 1 lists the 165 total species identified in five counties during this period.

A Red Phalarope was reported in Box Butte Co. by Kathy Larson. Details have been submitted to the Records Committee, and the species is not included in this table pending the committee's decision.

Reports for the following species are included in this list with the following comment suggested by W. Ross Silcock:, "No details on ID; rare in this part of NE": Northern Bobwhite\*, Short-billed Dowitcher\*, and Field Sparrow\*.

Species	Grant	Sioux	Dawes	Box Butte	Sheridan
Common Loon					X

Species	Grant	Sioux	Dawes	Box Butte	Sheridan
Pie-billed Grebe	x				x
Eared Grebe	x	x			x
Western Grebe	x		x	x	x
Clark's Grebe					x
American White Pelican	x				x
Double-Crested Cormorant			x		x
American Bittern	x				x
Great Blue Heron	x	x	x		x
Great Egret					x
Snowy Egret					x
Cattle Egret				x	
Green Heron					x
Black-Crowned Night-Heron	x				x
White-Faced Ibis	x				x
Trumpeter Swan	x				
Ross's Goose					x
Canada Goose	x		x		x
Wood Duck	x	x	x		
Green-winged Teal	x		x		x
Mallard	x	x	x	x	x
Northern Pintail	x		x		x
Blue-Winged Teal	x	x	x	x	x
Cinnamon Teal	x				x
Northern Shoveler		x	x		x
Gadwall	x		x		x
American Wigeon	x	x			x
Canvasback	x				x

Species	Grant	Sioux	Dawes	Box Butte	Sheridan
Redhead					x
Lesser Scaup					
Long-tailed Duck					x
Bufflehead					x
Ruddy Duck	x				x
Turkey Vulture		x	x		x
Osprey		x			x
Northern Harrier		x	x		x
Cooper's Hawk		x	x		
Swainson's Hawk		x			x
Red-tailed Hawk		x	x		x
Ferruginous Hawk		x			
Golden Eagle	x		x		
American Kestrel		x	x		x
Peregrine Falcon					x
Prairie Falcon		x			
Ring-necked Pheasant		x	x	x	x
Greater Prairie-Chicken			x		
Sharp-tailed Grouse	x	x	x	x	
Wild Turkey		x	x	x	x
Northern Bobwhite*					x
Virginia Rail					x
Sora					x
American Coot	x		x		x
Killdeer	x	x	x		x
Black-necked Stilt	x				x
American Avocet	x		x		x
Willet	x				x



Species	Grant	Sioux	Dawes	Box Butte	Sheridan
Spotted Sandpiper			x		
Upland Sandpiper		x	x		x
Long-billed Curlew	x			x	x
Stilt Sandpiper					x
Short-billed Dowitcher*					x
Common Snipe					x
Dowitcher sp.					x
Wilson's Phalarope		x	x		x
Franklin's Gull			x	x	x
Ring-billed Gull					x
Forster's Tern					x
Black Tern	x		x		x
Rock Dove			x	x	x
Mourning Dove	x	x	x	x	x
Eastern Screech-Owl			x		
Great Horned Owl			x		x
Burrowing Owl		x			x
Common Nighthawk	x				x
Chimney Swift			x	x	
White-throated Swift		x	x		
Belted Kingfisher		x	x		x
Lewis' Woodpecker			x	x	
Red-headed Woodpecker		x	x	x	x
Red-bellied Woodpecker			x		
Downy Woodpecker		x	x		x
Hairy Woodpecker			x		x
Northern Flicker		x	x		x
Western Wood-Pewee			x		x

Species	Grant	Sioux	Dawes	Box Butte	Sheridan
Least Flycatcher					x
Cordilleran Flycatcher		x			
Eastern Phoebe		x	x		
Say's Phoebe		x	x		x
Great Crested Flycatcher			x		x
Western Kingbird	x	x	x	x	x
Eastern Kingbird		x	x	x	x
Horned Lark	x	x	x	x	x
Tree Swallow	x	x	x		x
Violet-green Swallow		x	x		
Northern Rough-Winged Swallow	x	x	x		x
Bank Swallow					x
Cliff Swallow		x	x		x
Barn Swallow		x	x	x	x
Blue Jay		x	x		x
Black-billed Magpie		x	x		
American Crow		x	x	x	x
Black-capped Chickadee		x	x		x
Red-breasted Nuthatch		x	x		x
White-breasted Nuthatch		x	x		
Pygmy Nuthatch		x	x		
Brown Creeper			x		
Rock Wren		x	x		
House Wren	x	x	x	x	x
Marsh Wren	x				x
Eastern Bluebird		x	x		x
Mountain Bluebird		x	x	x	

Species	Grant	Sioux	Dawes	Box Butte	Sheridan
Townsend's Solitaire		x	x		
Swainson's Thrush		x	x		x
American Robin	x	x	x	x	x
Gray Catbird			x		x
Northern Mockingbird					x
Brown Thrasher		x	x		x
Cedar Waxwing			x	x	x
Loggerhead Shrike		x	x	x	x
European Starling		x	x	x	x
Plumbeous Vireo		x	x		
Warbling Vireo			x		x
Red-eyed Vireo		x	x		
Tennessee Warbler			x		x
Yellow Warbler	x	x	x	x	x
Yellow-rumped Warbler		x	x		x
Black-and-white Warbler		x	x		
American Redstart		x	x		x
Ovenbird		x	x		
Common Yellowthroat	x	x	x		x
Hooded Warbler					x
Wilson's Warbler			x		
Yellow-breasted Chat		x	x		
Western Tanager		x	x	x	x
Rose-breasted Grosbeak		x	x		
Black-Headed Grosbeak		x	x	x	x
Lazuli Bunting			x		
Indigo Bunting			x		
Spotted Towhee		x	x	x	x

Species	Grant	Sioux	Dawes	Box Butte	Sheridan
Chipping Sparrow		x	x		x
Clay-colored Sparrow			x		x
Brewer's Sparrow		x			
Field Sparrow*		x			
Vesper Sparrow		x	x		
Lark Sparrow		x	x	x	x
Lark Bunting		x	x	x	x
Grasshopper Sparrow		x	x		x
Lincoln's Sparrow			x		
Dark-eyed Junco		x	x		
McCown's Longspur		x			
Chestnut-collared Longspur		x			x
Bobolink		x	x	x	x
Red-winged Blackbird	x	x	x	x	x
Eastern Meadowlark					x
Western Meadowlark	x	x	x	x	x
Yellow-headed Blackbird	x				x
Brewer's Blackbird		x	x	x	
Common Grackle		x	x	x	x
Brown-headed Cowbird		x	x	x	x
Orchard Oriole		x	x	x	x
Baltimore Oriole			x		x
Bullock's Oriole			x		x
House Finch			x		x
Red Crossbill		x	x		
Pine Siskin		x	x		x
American Goldfinch		x	x	x	x

Species			Grant	Sioux	Dawes	Box Butte	Sheridan
House Sparrow			x	x	x	x	x
Total	Species	Per	44	91	114	40	124
County							
TOTAL FOR FIVE COUNTIES							165

\* \* \* \* \*

### Yellow-billed Loon at Lake McConaughy

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On 8 August 1998 we observed a Yellow-billed Loon (*Gavia adamsii*) at Lake McConaughy in Keith County, Nebraska. We arrived at the pull-off on the south end of the dam at 6:25 p.m. and soon spotted a distant loon off the dam. On the basis of the yellow bill, head pattern, and large size, we concluded the bird was a Yellow-billed Loon. We studied the bird until 7:33 p.m. and again from 9:03-9:45 a.m. on 9 August. Compared to a Common Loon, this bird was huge and large-headed. The neck was very thick with an almost puffy appearance. The bird was also conspicuously dark-backed and pale-necked. The bill was long, thick, and dull yellow. The bill and head were held upturned and a slight angle. The head and neck were pale except as follows: the forehead was dark, the crown was very pale, and the nape and back of neck were light brown. There was a darker auricular patch. There was also a third dark mark on the side of the chin. The age of the bird was problematic. It was clearly not an adult because of the facial markings and pattern of the upperparts. Similarly, the very early August date suggested the bird was not a juvenile. After some study, we concluded the bird was probably in first-alternate plumage (see Appleby et al. 1986). On the basis of the bird's behavior around boats, we strongly suspect that it had spent the entire summer at this location.

The Yellow-billed Loon remained at this location through at least 18 October 1998. Most sightings were off the south end of Kingsley Dam, although it was seen west to Arthur Bay (SJD). This is the second record of a Yellow-billed Loon in Nebraska. The first record was of an immature bird from 17-22 November 1996 at Branched Oak Lake in Lancaster County (Silcock and Jorgensen 1996). This record is particularly unusual because of the date. Yellow-billed Loons are increasingly regular in the interior U.S. with most records from November and December with a few birds

overwintering. Mlodinow and O'Brien (1996) list 7 summer records through 1996. These records are from Oregon (4), California (1), and Colorado (2). Four of these were birds that lingered through early June before departing. The other three records (1 from California and 2 from Oregon) were from July and August and likely represent "summering" birds. We thank W. Ross Silcock for helping us locate other summer reports of Yellow-billed Loons in North America.

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#### A Century of Breeding Birds in Nebraska

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With the imminent publication of the Nebraska Breeding Bird Atlas and the turning of a new millennium, it is perhaps an appropriate time to survey the state of breeding birds in Nebraska. Wayne Mollhoff's summary of the N.O.U.'s Nebraska Breeding Birds Atlasing Project (Mollhoff, 2000) provides important data bases for the latter part of the past century, and the historic overview by James Ducey (1988) offers a useful basis for judging the breeding avifauna of Nebraska from about the beginning of the century. The Biological Resources Division of the U. S. Geological Survey's (WSGS-BRD) annual Breeding Bird Survey data currently extends back more than three decades and continues to accumulate new information. And R. S. Sharpe, W. R. Silcock, and J. G. Jorgensen will publish in early 2001 their authoritative book, *The Birds of Nebraska*.

Ducey (1988) plotted individual county breeding records for records for three time periods, namely pre-1920, 1921-1960, and from 1961 until the late 1980s. His data summary thus overlaps with the Nebraska Ornithologists' Union's period of data collection for the Breeding Bird Atlas, which extended from 1984 to 1988. We have counted and tallied all of the counties for which one or more breeding record existed within each of Ducey's three time periods. These totals thus probably often represent a smaller overall number than would the total number of breeding records per county, which were usually not indicated. Mollhoff (2000) classified the



available N.O.U. records into four categories of increasing confidence for breeding; but for our tallying purposes, we used and summed only the three highest probability categories.

The Breeding Bird Survey data are based on standardized survey routes of 24.5 miles, with periodic stops for visual and auditory sampling of birds. These data are later analyzed both as to relative species abundance and for statistically significant trends in population density over multi-year time periods to 1993 (Price et al., 1995). The most recent BBS data (through 1998) are available from internet sources, but these do not provide relative abundance data for Nebraska as a whole. The only state-based summary data thus available are for long-term population trend estimates, and the summed sample sizes (total routes in which the species was encountered) provided for two data subsets (1966-79, and 1980-98) seem to offer the best general index to relative statewide abundance. In a very few cases there were more data points indicated for the entire time period than for the summed subsets; in such cases the larger numbers were used. These numbers are shown in the table, as well as positive or negative trend estimates for estimates based on larger sample sizes (usually those of ten or more data points). Those trends that are significant at the 99 percent confidence level are indicated by asterisks.

A summary of all three of these data sources is presented in Table 1. They suggest that the number of species now breeding in Nebraska is approximately 200, which agrees closely with an earlier summary (Johnsgard, 1979). Several species that were listed by Ducey clearly now no longer breed in Nebraska; such records were either erroneous, represent species that have since become extirpated or extinct, or are extralimital records of species now breeding only some considerable distance from Nebraska's borders. We have suggested the likely basis for the records of these species, which are listed in parentheses. Several species (Clark's Grebe, Pileated Woodpecker, Eurasian Collared-dove, Yellow-throated Warbler, Henslow's Sparrow) have certainly bred in Nebraska recently, but were not documented in any of these listings; and the Sage Thrasher is also a very likely if rare Nebraska Panhandle breeder that still needs documentation.

For the purpose of identifying Nebraska's rarer breeding species, we have constructed a "Rarity Index" representing the sum of the three sets of Ducey's numbers, plus those of Mollhoff, and provided such totals relative to those species for which the total is less than 20. These "Watch-list" species are also underlined in the accompanying table. They represent species that are rare in Nebraska for various reasons, such as are those at the edges of their overall ranges (the majority of the listed species); those species having inherently small and scattered populations (several large falcons and hawks); are elusive and easily overlooked species (such as the King Rail and Brown Creeper); or are ones that have suffered serious population declines (such as the several threatened and endangered species on the list, including the Mountain Plover, Least Tern and Piping Plover).

Grassland-adapted species that have been in serious decline nationally recently (1966-1993) include the Greater Prairie-chicken (-85.3% decline nationally); Long-billed Curlew (-36.5%); Loggerhead Shrike (-54.7%); Bell's Vireo (-40.4%); Field Sparrow (-57%); Lark Sparrow (-61.2%); Grasshopper Sparrow (-67.8%); Lark Bunting (-44.1%); and Dickcissel (-35.8%). The collective average rate of national decline for these nine species is -53.6%, but the mean trend for these same species in Nebraska is +1.1%! All of these species are grassland-dependent birds, and most of them are concentrated in the Nebraska Sandhills. Nebraska should be regarded as critical habitat for all of these species, only one of which is a "gamebird" and is thus receiving adequate monitoring by state agencies. The Henslow's Sparrow is also in very sharp decline nationally (-74.7%), but is clearly increasing both its range and abundance in southeastern Nebraska, perhaps because of the C.R.P land-use program.

At the opposite end of the spectrum, Nebraska's four most abundant breeders, judging from Ducey's data, are (in descending sequence) Red-winged Blackbird, Barn Swallow, House Wren, and Western Kingbird. Judging from Mollhoff's data, they are the Mourning Dove, Barn Swallow, Western Meadowlark and Eastern Kingbird. According to the Breeding Bird Survey, they would include the Mourning Dove, Barn Swallow, Western Meadowlark and Red-winged Blackbird. Curiously, the Barn Swallow appears all three lists, while the Red-winged Blackbird and Western Meadowlark each are on two. Few would have predicted the Barn Swallow to head the state abundance list, and breeding density data published by Price et al. (1995) suggest that on a statewide basis, the Barn Swallow is probably less common than the Mourning Dove, Red-winged Blackbird or Western Meadowlark, any one of which might thus qualify as our most abundant breeding bird.

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Table 1. Checklist of Nebraska Breeding Birds

	Ducey 1988	(County Records)		Mollhoff 2000	Rarity Index*	BBS data	
	Pre-1920	1921-60	Post-1960	1984-88 records		1966-98	
					(Total prior records)	Years	Trend
Pied-billed Grebe	9	2	10	55		4	+1.6
<u>Horned Grebe</u>	1		1		2		
Eared Grebe	5	2	3	31			
Western Grebe	1	2	6	26			
(Clark's Grebe)	(Breeding occurs but was not documented during cited studies)						
Double-c. Cormorant		6	3	31		7	+15.3
American Bittern	6	4	3	37		5	+8.9
<u>Least Bittern</u>	4	3	1	11	19		
Great Blue Heron	4	7	30	198		35	+4.4
<u>Great Egret</u>		1			1		
<u>Snowy Egret</u>	2	1	3		6		
<u>Little Blue Heron</u>	1		1		2		
Cattle Egret		1			1		
Green Heron	9	5	4	82		7	+4.0
Black-c. Night-Heron	6	6	6	32		3	-5.0
<u>Yellow-c. Night-Heron</u>			2		2		
<u>White-faced Ibis</u>	1		2	1	3		
Turkey Vulture	8	2	7	113		13	+2.0
Canada Goose	6	1	12	47		7	+15.2
(Snow Goose)	1(dubious record)						
Trumpeter Swan	2	3	9				
Wood Duck	2	1	13	194		13	+16.5
Gadwall	2	3	13	42		6	+3.7
American Wigeon	1	1	4	19			
Mallard	8	9	24	250		33	+3.0
Blue-winged Teal	8	8	19	154		18	-3.6
<u>Cinnamon Teal</u>		1	1	8	10		
Northern Shoveler	5	5	10	57		5	-3.8

	Ducey 1988 (County Records)			Mollhoff 2000 1984-88 records	Rarity Index* (Total prior records)	BBS data 1966-98	
	Pre-1920	1921-60	Post-1960			Years	Trend
Northern Pintail	1	8	13	77		10	-10.8
Green-winged Teal	3	1	3	39		2	+4.0
<u>Canvasback</u>	1	1	4	11	17		
Redhead	5	3	4	40		5	+8.4
<u>Ring-necked Duck</u>	4 (extirpated?)				4		
<u>Lesser Scaup</u>			1 (extralimital)		1		
<u>Hooded Merganser</u>		1			1		
<u>Common Merganser</u>	2			1 (extralimital)	3		
Ruddy Duck	4	3	8	38		3	-6.3
(Osprey)	2( extirpated)						
(Swallow-tailed Kite)	4 (extirpated)						
(Mississippi Kite)			(Has bred during 1990s at Ogallala)				
Bald Eagle	5		2	2	9		
Northern Harrier	13	6	13	65		21	-3.0
<u>Sharp-shinned Hawk</u>	2		2	7	11		
Cooper's Hawk	8	2	2	18			
<u>Red-shouldered Hawk</u>	4	2	1		7		
<u>Broad-winged Hawk</u>	2	1	1		4		
Swainson's Hawk	5	10	19	140		27	+0.5
Red-tailed Hawk	10	6	33	249		37	+3.6
Ferruginous Hawk	2	1	9	10		3	-13.7
Golden Eagle	5	3	14	18		3	+24.7
American Kestrel	7	4	16	255		36	+1.3
<u>Merlin</u>			3	3	6		
Prairie Falcon	3	2	7	14			
<u>Peregrine Falcon</u>	1				1		
Gray Partridge			1	13	14		
(Chukor )		3 (unsuccessfully introduced)					

	Ducey 1988	(County Records)		Mollhoff 2000	Rarity Index* (Total prior records)	BBS data	
	Pre-1920	1921-60	Post-1960	1984-88 records		1966-98 Years	Trend
Ring-necked Pheasant		11	27	339		44	-1.2
(Sage Grouse)	1	2 (extirpated)					
(Ruffed Grouse)	2 (extirpated)						
Greater Prairie-Chicken	1	5	8	52		8	+16.6
Sharp-tailed Grouse	5	3	9	82		6	+4.4
Wild Turkey	1		10	134		12	+4.4
Northern Bobwhite	8	17	19	240		34	-1.1
(Scaled Quail)			1 (unsuccessfully introduced)				
(California Quail)		1 (unsuccessfully introduced)					
<u>King Rail</u>	2				2		
Virginia Rail	3	3	4	20			
Sora	6	3	5	23		2	-0.7
<u>Common Moorhen</u>	3	2	3		8		
American Coot	11	5	15	86		6	+8.5
Sandhill Crane	2				2		
Piping Plover	4	8	24	30			
Killdeer	11	10	33	387		43	+1.0
<u>Mountain Plover</u>	3	1			4		
<u>Black-necked Stilt</u>		2	2		4		
American Avocet	1	3	5	25		4	-9.2
(Greater Yellowlegs)	1 (dubious or extralimital record)						
(Lesser Yellowlegs)	1	1 (dubious or extralimital records)					
(Solitary Sandpiper)	1 (dubious or extralimital record)						
Willet	3	3	3	33		5	-4.7
Spotted Sandpiper	7	2	6	126		4	+41.7
Upland Sandpiper	9	8	24	234		36	+1.9
Long-billed Curlew	5	6	12	68		14	-8.2
(Marbled Godwit)	1 (dubious or extralimital record)						

	Ducey 1988	(County Records)		Mollhoff 2000	Rarity Index* (Total prior records)	BBS data	
	Pre-1920	1921-60	Post-1960	1984-88 records		1966-98	
						Years	Trend
Common Snipe	2	1	6	35		7	+20.3
American Woodcock	3	3		15			
Wilson's Phalarope	3	4	7	72		5	-3.6
(Franklin's Gull)		1 (extralimital record)					
(Ring-billed Gull)	1 (dubious or extralimital record)						
Forster's Tern	3	1	3	13		3	-2.1
Least Tern	6	12	27	41			
Black Tern	5	2	3	54		6	-13.7
Rock Dove	2	13		182		31	+22.5
(Eurasian Collared-Dove)		(Bred during 1990s at Kearney)					
Mourning Dove	15	27	53	440		44	-0.8
(Carolina Parakeet)	1 (extinct)						
Black-billed Cuckoo	6	3	11	102		17	-2.2
Yellow-billed Cuckoo	9	11	14	198		33	-0.4
Barn Owl	13	7	35	26			
Eastern Screech-Owl	12	4	16	118			
Great Horned Owl	18	17	37	222		30	-4.8
Burrowing Owl	14	4	18	70		13	+0.3
Barred Owl	6	2	3	19			
Long-eared Owl	6	3	7	7			
Short-eared Owl	6	4	5	16			
(N. Saw-whet Owl)	2 (extralimital records)						
Common Nighthawk	10	3	17	202		28	-4.8
Common Poorwill	1	1	5	15			
<u>Chuck-will's-widow</u>			1	8	9		
Whip-poor-will	4		1	22			



	Ducey 1988 (County Records)			Mollhoff 2000 1984-88 records	Rarity Index* (Total prior records)	BBS data 1966-98	
	Pre-1920	1921-60	Post-1960			Years	Trend
Chimney Swift	7	3	11	210		29	-0.7
<u>White-throated Swift</u>	3	3	1	7	12		
<u>Ruby-th. Hummingbird</u>	3	1	3	11	18		
Belted Kingfisher	7	2	12	197		12	-12.4
<u>Lewis's Woodpecker</u>	2	1	1	1	5		
Red-headed Woodpecker	10	9	26	357		40	-0.6
Red-bellied Woodpecker	2	4	10	109		11	+6.1
(Yellow-bellied Sapsucker) 2 (extralimital records)							
Downy Woodpecker	11	8	22	247		24	+0.4
Hairy Woodpecker	8	5	12	102		11	-4.6
Northern Flicker	10	10	29				
Yellow-shafted Flicker (see also Northern Flicker)				335		34	-1.7
Red-shafted Flicker (see also Northern Flicker)				30		7	-18.1
(Pileated Woodpecker)			(Bred in 1999 at Fontenelle Forest)				
Western Wood-Pewee	2	2	3	39		4	-0.2
Eastern Wood-Pewee	4	2	7	103		7	+20.3
<u>Acadian Flycatcher</u>	1	1			2		
(Alder Flycatcher)	4		4 (dubious or extralimital records)				
Willow Flycatcher	3	1	3	42		7	+4.3
<u>Least Flycatcher</u>	2			2			
<u>Cordilleran Flycatcher</u>	1			2	3		
Eastern Phoebe	12	9	20	135		17	-13.5
Say's Phoebe	12	14	15	50		11	-1.7
Great Cr. Flycatcher	10	6	9	157		16	+1.7
<u>Cassin's Kingbird</u>				10	10		
Western Kingbird	12	15	34	363		44	-2.9
Eastern Kingbird	13	10	35	424		44	-0.1
<u>Scissor-tailed Flycatcher</u>		5	1	2	8		

	Ducey 1988 (County Records)			Mollhoff 2000 1984-88 records	Rarity Index* (Total prior records)	BBS data	
	Pre-1920	1921-60	Post-1960			1966-98	
						Years	Trend
Loggerhead Shrike	8	8	26	200		42	-0.9
(White-eyed Vireo)	4 (extralimital record)						
Bell's Vireo	11	11	11	133		15	+0.8
<u>Plumbeous Vireo</u>	1	1	1	3	6		
Yellow-throated Vireo	7	3	2	9			
Warbling Vireo	7	8	12	265		27	+6.0
Red-eyed Vireo	4	11	8	81		12	-11.5
Blue Jay	9	9	23	333		40	+0.7
<u>Pinvon Jay</u>	3	1	1	10	15		
<u>Clark's Nutcracker</u>		1		3	4		
Black-billed Magpie	5	6	17	151		24	-14.2
American Crow	12	8	16	288		43	+1.9
(Chihuahuan Raven)		1	1 (probably extirpated)				
(Common Raven)	1 (extirpated)						
Horned Lark	18	13	23	261		41	-3.1
Purple Martin	11	7	16	59		10	-2.7
Tree Swallow	6		8	57		4	-17.4
<u>Violet-green Swallow</u>	1	1	1	10	13		
Northern R-w. Swallow	11	4	18	311		29	+1.2
Bank Swallow	13	4	13	86		15	-17.9
Barn Swallow	16	12	42	433		44	-1.1
Cliff Swallow	16	17	28	193		25	+2.2
Black-capped Chickadee	12	12	18	277		29	-1.6
Tufted Titmouse		1	3	18		4	-2.6
Red-breasted Nuthatch			3	21			
White-breasted Nuthatch	4	2	9	160		14	+6.0
<u>Pygmy Nuthatch</u>		1	2	8	11		
<u>Brown Creeper</u>	3		2		5		

	Ducey 1988 (County Records)			Mollhoff 2000 1984-88 records	Rarity Index* (Total prior records)	BBS data	
	Pre-1920	1921-60	Post-1960			Years	Trend
Rock Wren	10	5	5	40		3	-4.6
<u>Carolina Wren</u>		2	3	5	10	2	+15.0
<u>Bewick's Wren</u>	1	2 (possibly extirpated)			3		
House Wren	10	15	40	342		38	+1.3
Sedge Wren	3		2	16		3	+14.3
Marsh Wren	4	5	8	48		3	-20.0
Blue-gray Gnatcatcher	4	2	4	15			
Eastern Bluebird	11	8	23	144		22	+5.2
Mountain Bluebird	3	1	3	16			
<u>Townsend's Solitaire</u>	1	1		1	3		
<u>Swainson's Thrush</u>	1	1			2		
(Hermit Thrush)	1 (dubious or extralimital record)						
Wood Thrush	13	7	4	43			
American Robin	11	19	45	393		44	+0.9
Gray Catbird	10	10	17	228		23	-2.2
Northern Mockingbird	14	6	9	61		16	-3.1
(Sage Thrasher)	(Breeding probably occurs but not yet documented for Nebraska)						
Brown Thrasher	14	20	31	364		41	-0.6
European Starling		7	22	336		41	+1.9
Cedar Waxwing	2	5	6	67		8	+22.7
<u>Blue-winged Warbler</u>	2				2		
(Tennessee Warbler)		1 (extralimital record)					
(Nashville Warbler)	1	1 (extralimital record)					
<u>Northern Parula</u>		1			1		
Yellow Warbler	13	12	15	278		32	+1.0
<u>Chestnut-sided Warbler</u>	1		1		2		
<u>Yellow-rumped Warbler</u>	1	1	1	8	13		
(Prairie Warbler)	2 (extralimital records)						

Ducey 1988 (County Records)				Mollhoff 2000	Rarity Index*	BBS data	
Pre-1920	1921-60	Post-1960	1984-88 records	(Total prior records)	1966-98	Years	Trend
(Yellow-throated Warbler) (Breeding occurs but was not documented in cited studies)							
<u>Cerulean Warbler</u>	2		1	4	7		
Black-and-white Warbler	8	1		14			
American Redstart	14	2	4	33			
<u>Prothonotary Warbler</u>	3	1		7	11		
Ovenbird	5	2	6	27			
(Northern Waterthrush)	3 (extralimital or dubious records)						
<u>Louisiana Waterthrush</u>	4	1	1	4	10		
<u>Kentucky Warbler</u>	4	1		9	14		
Common Yellowthroat	13	7	14	340		39	-0.3
Yellow-breasted Chat	9	7	1	67			
<u>Summer Tanager</u>	1		2	7	10		
Scarlet Tanager	7	3	3	18			
<u>Western Tanager</u>	1			12	13		
Rufous-sided Towhee	15	11	11	144			
Eastern Towhee (recently split from Rufous-sided Towhee)						9	+2.7
<u>Spotted Towhee</u> (recently split from Rufous-sided Towhee)				1	1	7	-17.3
<u>Cassin's Sparrow</u>			1	3	4		
Chipping Sparrow	9	9	12	135		23	+1.4
<u>Clay-colored Sparrow</u>	1	1	1		3		
<u>Brewer's Sparrow</u>		3	2	6	10		
Field Sparrow	15	10	14	190		26	+5.0
Vesper Sparrow	14	5	5	42		14	+2.7
Lark Sparrow	12	23	28	310		37	+0.8
Lark Bunting	17	8	16	157		34	-1.3
<u>Savannah Sparrow</u>	1				1		
(Baird's Sparrow)	1 (extralimital record)						
Grasshopper Sparrow	11	9	21	319		43	-1.1

	Ducey 1988 (County Records)			Mollhoff 2000 1984-88 records	Rarity Index* (Total prior records)	BBS data 1966-98	
	Pre-1920	1921-60	Post-1960			Years	Trend
(Henslow's Sparrow)	(Breeding occurs but was not documented in cited studies)						
Song Sparrow	1	3	9	81		10	+15.7
Swamp Sparrow	3	2	2	29			
<u>Dark-eyed Junco</u>	2		2	4	8		
<u>McCown's Longspur</u>	1		2	9	12		
<u>Chestnut-c. Longspur</u>	1	1	2	8	12	4	+18.5
Northern Cardinal	9	16	21	204		25	+3.3
Rose-breasted Grosbeak	14	16	11	135		15	-4.1
Black-headed Grosbeak	12	12	6	52		4	-13.1
Blue Grosbeak	8	18	13	152		31	-1.7
Lazuli Bunting	2		1	22			
Indigo Bunting	12	9	10	179		20	-3.9
Dickcissel	13	15	19	305		37	-0.7
Bobolink	11	2	8	133		25	+3.6
Red-winged Blackbird	16	17	38	422		44	+0.2
Eastern Meadowlark	1	5	8	101		20	-9.4
Western Meadowlark	14	12	23	424		44	-0.8
Yellow-headed Blackbird	13	6	12			18	+0.1
Brewer's Blackbird	4	1	6	12		3	-12.8
(Rusty Blackbird)			1 (extralimital record)				
Common Grackle	13	14	34	410		44	-2.4
Great-tailed Grackle			6	14			
Brown-headed Cowbird	15	8	27	406		44	+0.1
Orchard Oriole	12	17	24	355		42	-1.2
Northern Oriole	18	12	25				
Baltimore Oriole (previously part of Northern Oriole)				339		37	+0.9
Bullock's Oriole (previously part of Northern Oriole)				48		5	+26.8
<u>Cassin's Finch</u>			1		1		

	Ducey 1988 (County Records)			Mollhoff 2000 1984-88 records	Rarity Index* (Total prior records)	BBS data	
	Pre-1920	1921-60	Post-1960			1966-98 Years	Trend
House Finch	1	2	4	37		11	+26.0
Red Crossbill		3	3	16			
Pine Siskin	4	11	9	23			
American Goldfinch	13	16	18	358		39	+1.2
House Sparrow	5	5	31	381		43	-1.9
<b><u>Total Species</u></b>		209	169	205	191		

**Note:** *Ducey's* records refer to numbers of counties with one or more nestings for the indicated period, not the total number of records.

*Mollhoff's* records include all possible, probable, and confirmed records.

The "*Rarity index*" is the sum of *Ducey's* county records plus the *Mollhoff* records, for species with fewer than 20 such records.

*Extinct, extirpated* species, and those species with records considered dubious are not tallied, and such species are shown in parentheses.

*Breeding Bird Survey* records show sample size and population trends for those species appearing on surveys from 1966 through 1998.



\* \* \* \* \*

## Tufted Duck at Lake Ogallala: First record for Nebraska

Stephen J. Dinsmore  
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Fort Collins, CO 80521

On 2 December 1999, I was birding at the east end of Lake Ogallala in Keith County. I was scanning the large diving duck flock just above the Keystone diversion dam when I noticed a scaup-like duck with a thin crest. I quickly realized that the bird was a male Tufted Duck. I carefully studied the bird from 9:32-10:28 a.m. The bird spent all of its time actively foraging with a large flock of Greater and Lesser Scaup. It was approximately the same size as a Lesser Scaup. The head shape was rounded like a scaup, not "peaked" like a Ring-necked Duck. The bill was bluish with a black tip and a narrow white subterminal band, unlike the bill of a male Ring-necked Duck (black tip with a broad white subterminal band). The bill also lacked the white base of the bill of a male Ring-necked Duck. The eye was yellow. The head appeared dark-colored, except that it had a purplish sheen at some angles. The most conspicuous feature was the narrow crest, or tuft, which I estimated to be at least 5 cm long. This was visible at all times, except that it was sometimes flattened against the head immediately after the bird surfaced after a dive. The flanks were similar to those of a male Ring-necked Duck, except that they were a dirty white color instead of gray. The flanks were not clean white like those of many male Lesser Scaup. The mantle was conspicuously black, and lacked the pale vermiculations of a male Lesser Scaup. In flight, the upperwings were dark with a bold white stripe on the secondaries and inner primaries. The upperwing pattern very closely resembled that of a Greater Scaup. I did not note the tail pattern. On the basis of the flank color and long tuft, I aged the bird as an adult male molting into alternate plumage. According to Tootin (1998), the molt sequence of Tufted Ducks is consistent with this conclusion.

I had several opportunities to study the bird on later dates. On 4 December, I relocated the bird in the same general area, took several distant photographs, and confirmed my original identification. By 31 December, I noted that the crest had disappeared, and this was reaffirmed during many observations of the bird in January. On these occasions, I noted that the bird had a much "dumpier" appearance than a scaup, perhaps caused by a shorter neck. I also noted that there was a notch on the back of the head where the tuft should have been. I surmised that the tuft had worn off, a frequent occurrence with this species. On later occasions I noted that the flanks were a clean white color and lacked the darker smudging noted earlier in December. By early February, the tuft was again present.

I carefully considered the possibility that the bird was a hybrid, most likely with a Greater or Lesser Scaup. However, all of the features were consistent with a pure Tufted Duck; there were no white vermiculations on the mantle, the bill color was as expected for Tufted Duck, and the eye was yellow. None of the physical attributes of the bird pointed to anything other than a pure Tufted Duck. Additionally, I carefully examined the legs for bands while the bird was preening on 23 April; no bands were seen.

The Tufted Duck remained at this location through at least 29 April 2000 and was seen by dozens of birders. It was always with the large flock of Greater and Lesser Scaup and did not associate with Ring-necked Ducks or other diving ducks. This represents the first record of a Tufted Duck for Nebraska and one of very few records for the Great Plains. Relying heavily on Tootchin (Tootchin, M. 1998. Possible anywhere: Tufted Duck. *Birding* 30: 370-383.), I searched for other records of Tufted Ducks from the Great Plains region. I located records from Kansas (1), Colorado (1), and Wyoming (2), and Montana (1). Perhaps careful searching of large scaup flocks will produce more records of this species in Nebraska.

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