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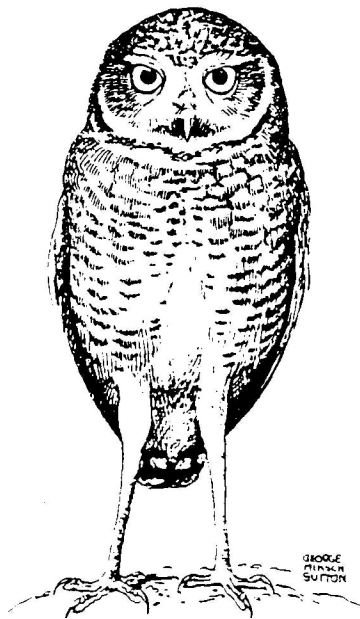
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# *Nebraska Bird Review*

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**SUMMER FIELD REPORT, June and July 2000**

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**INTRODUCTION**

I wish to remind observers to report dates of breeding evidence, such as nests with eggs and adults feeding fledglings. There is surprisingly little known about these things for Nebraska's breeding birds, even the common ones. Please report these regardless of the season!

This summer produced many interesting sightings; we'll lead off with significant breeding records: Snowy Plover provided a 2nd state breeding record; Black-necked Stilt a first for Keith Co; Acadian Flycatcher first for Thurston Co; Summer Tanager first for Otoe Co; and Eurasian Collared-Dove 3rd nesting locality, at Elmwood.

Late spring migrants included a record late Tennessee Warbler and a 2nd latest Hudsonian Godwit and Stilt Sandpiper. Early fall migrants were Pied-billed Grebe, Eared Grebe, 4th July record for Bufflehead, record early Short-billed and Long-billed Dowitchers, and 2nd earliest and 3rd July Orange-crowned Warbler.

Unusual summer records included firsts for Winter Wren and Pine Grosbeak, 6th Pacific Loon, first adult Ring-billed Gulls, 4th (10th state) for Laughing Gull and 4th for Pectoral Sandpiper.

Record counts were provided by 500 (actual count!) Lesser Yellowlegs, 20 to 30 Willets, 34 Spotted Sandpipers, 5642 Baird's Sandpipers, 10,000 Bank Swallows, and 21 Blue-gray Gnatcatchers in the Panhandle.

Definitely out-of-place were a White-throated Swift seen at L McConaughy, the first summering Republican Valley Ruby-throated Hummingbird, a Red-bellied Woodpecker located at McGrew, a singing Swainson's Thrush spotted near Orleans, and a singing Blue-winged Warbler found along the Niobrara for apparently the 2nd straight year.

There were even some rarities: A potential first state record Dusky Flycatcher, a potential 2nd Ash-throated Flycatcher, a 7th state Neotropic Cormorant, and a 9th Lesser Goldfinch.

**ABBREVIATIONS**

**ADF:** Arbor Day Farm, Otoe Co; **BOL:** Branched Oak L SRA, Lancaster Co; **CLNWR:** Crescent L NWR, Garden Co; **FF:** Fontenelle Forest, Sarpy Co; **FL:** Funk Lagoon WPA, Phelps Co; **HCR:** Harlan Co Res, Harlan Co; **ICSP:** Indian Cave SP, Nemaha-Richardson Cos; **LM:** L McConaughy, Keith Co; **NOURC:** Nebraska Ornithologists' Union Records Committee; **NWR:** National Wildlife Refuge; **RWB:** Rainwater Basin, pothole area in southcentral Nebraska; **SL:** sewage lagoons(s); **SP:** State Park; **SRA:** State Recreation Area; **WMA:**

(state) Wildlife Management Area; WPA: (federal) Waterfowl Production Area.

### GAZETTEER

Boyer Chute NWR: Washington Co; Burchard L: SRA, Pawnee Co; Harvard Marsh: WPA, Clay Co; Calamus Res: SRA, Loup-Garfield Cos; Enders Res: SRA, Chase Co; Fort Niobrara NWR: Cherry Co; Kiowa Springs: WMA, Scotts Bluff Co; L Alice: North Platte NWR, Scotts Bluff Co; L Ogallala: SRA, Keith Co; Monroe Canyon: Sioux Co; Neale Woods: Washington-Douglas Cos; Niobrara Valley Preserve: Keya Paha-Brown Cos; North Hultine Basin: WPA, Clay Co; Olive Creek Res: SRA, Lancaster Co; Oliver Res: SRA, Kimball Co; Pawnee L: SRA, Lancaster Co; Pine Ridge: Sioux, Dawes, Sheridan Cos; Ponca SP: Dixon Co; Rowe Sanctuary: Buffalo Co; Schramm Park: SRA, Sarpy Co; Sowbelly Canyon: Sioux Co; Spring Creek Prairie: Lancaster Co; Sutherland Res: SRA, Lincoln Co; Swanson Res: SRA, Hitchcock Co; Wildcat Hills: Scotts Bluff-Banner Cos.

### OBSERVERS

Alice Kenitz (AK), Gering; Bill F. Huser (BFH), South Sioux City; Babs Padelford (BP), Bellevue; Carol Falk (CF), Nebraska City; Carolyn Hall (CH), Bassett; Chris L. Wood (CLW), Fort Collins, CO; Clem N. Klaphake (CNK), Bellevue; Don Maas (DM), Omaha; Don Paseka (DP), Ames; Elizabeth Allen (EA), Omaha; Glen Hoge (GH), Alma; Gertrude Wood (GW), Elmwood; John Brennenman (JB), Omaha; Joe Fontaine (JF), Fort Collins, CO; Joe Gubanyi (JG), Seward; Joel G. Jorgensen (JGJ), Blair; Jan Johnson (JJ), Wakefield; Jim McLochlin (JM), Omaha; Jan Paseka (JP), Ames; John Sullivan (JS), Lincoln; Jerry Toll (JT), Omaha; John W. Hall (JWH), Omaha; Kevin Poague (KP), Lincoln; Larry Einemann (LE), Lincoln; Laurence Falk (LF), Nebraska City; Loren Padelford (LP), Bellevue; Lanny Randolph (LR), Gibbon; Linda R. Brown (LRB), Lincoln; Mark Orsag (MO), Crete; Merlin Wright (MW), Brownville; Neva Pruess (NP), Lincoln; Neal Ratzlaff (NR), Omaha; Paul Lehman (PL), Cape May, NJ; Paul Tebbel (PT), Kearney; Ruth Green (RG), Bellevue; Robin Harding (RH), Gibbon; Stephen J. Dinsmore (SJD), Fort Collins, CO; Thomas E. Labedz (TEL), Lincoln; Thomas Hoffman (TH), Omaha; Wanda Hoge (WH), Alma; Wayne Mollhoff (WM), Lincoln; W. Ross Silcock (WRS), Tabor, IA.

### SPECIES ACCOUNTS

Pacific Loon: A basic adult was spotted at L Alice on 16 June (WRS). This report represents the 6th summer record, all in the period between 10 June and 4 July.



**Common Loon:** One was seen at HCR from 20 to 30 July (WRS, GH, WH), and 3 were found at LM on 30 July (SJD); all were in basic plumage. Summering nonbreeders are regular on western reservoirs, but more sporadic eastward.

**Pied-billed Grebe:** An early migrant was found at Larkspur Area, Saunders Co, on 21 July (MO); grebes did not summer there. Most migrants arrive in August.

**Eared Grebe:** A flock of 45 spotted on 21 July at North Platte SL (WRS) were also very early migrants. Most migrants appear in mid- to late August.

**Western Grebe:** The fall buildup at LM was underway by 30 July, with 5700 tallied there (SJD).

**Clark's Grebe:** The one seen at HCR between 15 and 30 June (MB, GH, WH) was at an unusual location for the date. The only other similar records are of singles spotted at FL between 14 and 21 June and at BOL on 29 July.

**American White Pelican:** Sizeable numbers lingered into early July; 200 remained at BOL until then (LE), although only 4 were reported there on 2 July (JGJ); and 110 were found at Alma until on 29 June (GH, WH). Numbers bottomed out in mid-July. And the 120 counted at LM on 21 July (WRS) and the 130 tallied at Calamus Res on 23 July (LR, RH) were returnees. Mid-summer reports from the south and east are unusual.

**Neotropic Cormorant:** An apparent post-breeding adult was seen at Burchard L from 20 to 23 July (WRS, MO, GH, WH). It was well photographed by MO. This sighting represents the 7th state record, 6 acceptably documented, all since 1982.

**Double-crested Cormorant:** The colony at the west end of HCR is doing well, with 55 active nests counted on 5 June (GH, WH). The single bird that remained in Lancaster Co until early July (LE) was unexpected; such occurrences are unusual in the south and east.

**American Bittern:** The singles spotted at Calamus Res on 23 July (LR, RH) and at FL on 30 Jul (B) appeared at locations where breeding is likely; late July is rather early for migrants.

**Least Bittern:** The only reports came from locations with plenty of water following a dry spring with no reports: FF on 16 June (B) and FL on 16 July (LR, RH). No breeding evidence was reported, but in recent years consistent reports from FL indicate breeding there.

**Great Blue Heron:** A good count reached 50 at LM on 29 July (SJD).

**Great Egret:** The lowest numbers occur in late June to early July; 2 were found at Pawnee L on 18 June (LE); one at Harvard Marsh on 25 June (JGJ); and 2 at Olive Creek Res on 8 July (MO). Fall buildup began with 6 seen in the east RWB on 16 July (JGJ), and a rapid increase at Alma in late July led to an excellent peak count for the period of 93 tallied at a roost there on 31 July (GH, WH).

**Snowy Egret:** Numbers are lowest in late June to early July, especially westward; and so singles found at the west end of LM on 17 June (WRS) and at Kiowa Springs on 27 June (PL) were of interest. The best count for the

period totaled 4 in the east RWB on 16 July (JGJ). The single bird found at LM from 29 to 30 Jul (SJD) was also westerly.

Little Blue Heron: Only 4 were reported, all singles found at the following locations and dates: east RWB on 16 and 30 July (JGJ); an adult at Omaha Beach, LM, on 19 July (JF) and at Standing Bear L, Omaha, on 22 July (JM). The bird at LM was rather far west for the species; there are no summer or fall Panhandle records.

Cattle Egret: Only 23 were reported, 18 in the east RWB between 2 and 16 July (JGJ). The one spotted at FL on 16 July (LR, RH) represents the farthest west report.

Green Heron: Routine reports.

Black-crowned Night-Heron: An excellent count totaled 27 mostly adult birds at FL on 30 July (LR, RH), where breeding probably occurs; although at this date, these birds may have been migrants.

Yellow-crowned Night-Heron: The only report was of one seen at FF 3 on June (B); 1 to 2 adults had been there since 11 May (Spring Report).

White-faced Ibis: The one located in the Sandhills on 4 June (EA) was probably a fairly late migrant; the last spring dates occur in early June. Fall migrants appeared rather early, with 3 found in the east RWB on 2 July (JGJ). About 35 more were reported, many as *Plegadis* sp.--Glossy Ibis is a slim possibility at any time but difficult to identify in fall. The best count totaled 12 in the east RWB on 30 July (JGJ).

Turkey Vulture: Routine reports.

Greater White-fronted Goose: Rare in midsummer, two were spotted at FL on 11 June (LR, RH).

Snow Goose: The usual scattered reports from the RWB were received; but unexpected was one of a bird discovered at a farm pond near Elmwood through 2 July, when it disappeared; it was apparently unable to fly (GW).

Canada Goose: An excellent summer count reached 700 at BOL on 18 June (LE). Reporting summer populations around the state would be of interest.

Trumpeter Swan: The only report was of 2 pairs still present (see Spring Report) at Doc L, near Whitman, Grant Co, on 13 June (B).

Wood Duck: A hen with chicks was found at FL on 16 July (LR, RH); the observers wondered, however, where she nested as there are "no trees left at Funk Lagoon."

Gadwall: The only report from FL, where it breeds, was of one seen on 11 June (LH, RH). A study by Robin Harding in Clay Co in the 1980s showed Gadwall to be the 3rd-commonest breeder after Blue-winged Teal and Mallard.

American Wigeon: The two spotted at FL on 11 June (LH, RH) add to a few summer records there in recent years that are suggestive of breeding; the one identified in the east RWB on 22 July (JGJ), one the other hand, may have been an early molt migrant.

Mallard: Nine ducklings were reported at a marsh 2 miles east of FL on 30 June (LH, RH).

Blue-winged Teal: Routine reports.



Cinnamon Teal: Rather easterly for the date was the one spotted in the east RWB on 30 July (JGJ). Kiowa Springs is clearly the place for this species in Nebraska: 19 were counted there on 15 June (WRS).

Northern Shoveler: Summering birds are scarcest in the south and in the east; a male was found near Alma, Harlan Co, on 6 July (GH, WH). Likely late migrants were the 45 spotted at FL on 11 June (LR, RH); the breeding population there is not particularly large.

Northern Pintail: Routine reports.

Green-winged Teal: Rare in midsummer away from the Sandhills, the 1 or 2 identified at FL between 11 and 18 June (LR, RH) were thus of interest. There is only a single known breeding record south of the Platte River, a nest found by Robin Harding in the 1980s in Clay Co.

Canvasback: Routine reports.

Redhead: As many as 43 still remained at the east Alma SL on 16 June, but all had departed by 23 June (GH, WH). An excellent summer count totaled 36 at FL on 16 July (LR, RH); summering birds of similar numbers in recent years are suggestive of breeding at FL.

Lesser Scaup: A female spotted at Pawnee L on 4 June (LE) was rather late for the southeast.

Bufflehead: A female found at L Ogallala on 30 July (SJD) may have summered, as 1 to 2 were spotted there in late May (see Spring Report); away from Garden Co this is only the 4th July record.

Hooded Merganser: The presence of immature/female birds anywhere in the east and central in summer has become expected in recent years; as many as 3 were seen in Clay Co on 9 July (JGJ), and 3 more were identified at different locations in the east RWB on 22 July (JGJ). Most likely these are one-year-old prebreeding immatures. Unexpected in the west, where rare, was one seen in immature/female plumage near Kiowa Springs on 15 June (WRS).

Common Merganser: This species is only casual in summer away from LM, but 3 were reported this year: a single identified at Alma SL on 11 June (GH, WH); a female spotted at BOL between 18 June and 4 July (LE, JGJ); and another single found on the Republican River south of Orleans, Harlan Co, where, interestingly, local people indicate that they occur in summer on occasion (GH, WH). There are only one confirmed and two possible breeding records for the state. Likely molt migrants, nine were seen at the spillway at Kingsley Dam, LM, from 21 July (WRS) through the end of the period (SJD).

Ruddy Duck: The 17 birds in basic plumage spotted at HCR on 16 June (GH, WH) must have been nonbreeders, likely one-year old birds. Alternate-plumaged males seen at Orleans SL between 16 and 30 June and at East Alma SL on 30 July (GH, WH) were suggestive of local breeding, rare away from the Sandhills and RWB. The 48 counted at North Platte SL on 21 July were early migrants, possibly failed breeders; some were in alternate plumage (WRS).

Osprey: Intriguing was one found at L Ogallala in early July (Rodger Knaggs, fide SJD); there are no modern nesting records for the state, but

there are about 20 late June to early July records. The bird seen at Pawnee L on 4 June (LE) was rather late.

Mississippi Kite: One or two continued to be reported at Ogallala throughout the period (WRS, SJD, B).

Bald Eagle: As many as 3 immatures were seen at the Niobrara Valley Preserve between 19 and 20 July (JJ). There are few summer reports away from known breeding sites, this report representing the third since 1982 from the same general area. As of 1998 there were active nests in Boyd and Holt Cos (John Dinan, Nebraska Game and Parks).

Northern Harrier: Routine reports.

Cooper's Hawk: A nest with chicks was discovered at Fort Niobrara NWR on 27 June (CA).

Red-shouldered Hawk: None was reported away from the regular site at FF.

Swainson's Hawk: Routine reports.

Red-tailed Hawk: Routine reports.

Ferruginous Hawk: Routine reports.

Golden Eagle: A nest with chicks was observed on the Hughson Ranch, Sioux Co, on 10 June (AK), about on schedule for this species in Nebraska.

American Kestrel: Numbers were considered much higher than in the previous two years in Harlan Co (GH, WH).

Prairie Falcon: Routine reports.

Peregrine Falcon: There are now only about 8 reports for June and July other than at known breeding locations of re-stocked birds. Of these 8 reports, two occurred this summer: one bird was spotted at ADF on 11 July (LF, CF), and a juvenile was seen harassing shorebirds at LM 30 July (SJD, JF). Of these 8 reports, 6 occurred in the period between 11 and 30 July, suggesting that a few birds migrate south early (most movement begins in August), possibly with migrant shorebirds.

Gray Partridge: None was reported, a continuation of a low population ebb.

Ring-necked Pheasant: Routine reports.

Sharp-tailed Grouse: Routine reports.

Greater Prairie-Chicken: the one identified at Olive Creek Res on 5 July (MO) was at an unexpected location, although a few have been noted in the general area of southern Lancaster Co in recent years, especially at Spring Creek Prairie.

Wild Turkey: Routine reports.

Northern Bobwhite: Numbers were clearly up: "all over the place" at Spring Creek Prairie (KP); "much more numerous this summer" in Harlan Co (GH, WH); and "as numerous as I've seen in region" of the east RWB (JGJ). Unusual very far from the North Platte Valley in the Panhandle, one was spotted near Redington, Morrill Co, on 8 July (AK).

Virginia Rail: The one sighted at FL on 30 July (LR, RH) suggests that a small breeding population continues there.



**Sora:** As many as 5 were counted in the east RWB on single dates during July (JGJ), and 2 were found at FL on 30 July (LR, RH). Breeding has not been confirmed in the RWB, but recent reports such as these are suggestive.

**American Coot:** Routine reports.

**Snowy Plover:** Only the second breeding record for the state--and the first apparently successful attempt--was provided by an adult with a young chick spotted on 3 July on the south shore of LM (Gabriel Wilson, Rodger Knaggs, fide SJD). An adult female was also seen on the north shore of LM on 31 July (CLW). The first record was of a nest with eggs that was destroyed by high water on the Missouri R near Ponca in 1998 (fide John Dinan, Game and Parks).

**Semipalmated Plover:** The one found in the east RWB on 16 July (JGJ) was rather early. In all, only 7 birds were reported.

**Piping Plover:** This season at LM, 20 pairs and 32 nests were counted (fide SJD).

**Killdeer:** An excellent count of presumed local breeders reached 200 at FL on 16 June (LR, RH), when fall flocking has not yet begun. By the middle of July, flocks begin to form; however, the 210 counted in the east RWB on 16 July (JGJ) and the 170 tallied at LM on 29 July (SJD) may have been mostly local breeding populations rather than migrants.

**Mountain Plover:** The only report was of 2 identified in the regular breeding area south of Kimball on 10 Jun (JS).

**Black-necked Stilt:** Numbers of this species continue to increase in the state. The presence of a defensive male with a fledgling--at the same place a pair had been present in late April--at the west end of LM between 29 and 30 July led the observer to conclude that there was "no doubt the birds nested there" (SJD, JF). This sighting would represent the first breeding record for Keith Co. There are few records of nesting for the state, all those previously in the Sandhills except for one at the Grand Island SL for which the outcome was not reported. Unexpected were 1 to 3 discovered at FL between 11 and 18 June (LR, RH, GH, WH); but the 2 seen at Kiowa Springs on 27 June (PL) added to several summer Panhandle records. And the 2 birds identified along Highway 2 at Mile Marker 106 east of Alliance on 13 June (B) appeared at a regular breeding location.

**American Avocet:** Breeding has been confirmed only once in the RWB; thus, the presence of a single there on 9 July (JGJ) was of interest, as were singles noted at HCR and near Orleans on 6 July (GH, WH). As many as 7 birds were found at FL through 18 June (LR, RH), but not thereafter. This species nests fairly early, and so migrants appear in mid-July; the 36 spotted at LM on 21 July (WRS) may have included migrants, but nesting appeared to be under way there in late May (Spring Report).

**Greater Yellowlegs:** Rather early was the one seen near Kiowa Springs on 15 June (WRS). Late June reports are not unusual, as this species leaves earlier in spring and arrives earlier in fall than Lesser Yellowlegs. An excellent count totaled 41 in the east RWB on 16 July (JGJ).



Lesser Yellowlegs: A record fall count reached 500 (actual count) in the east RWB on 16 July (JGJ), up from the then-record 476 tallied there on 9 July (JGJ). Rather early were the 16 found in the east RWB (JGJ) and the one noted at BOL (LE) on 25 June.

Solitary Sandpiper: Migrant numbers in the east RWB were excellent, peaking at a record 39 registered on 30 July (JGJ). At Calamus Res, 10 birds were found on 23 July (LR, RH). First, and rather early, was the one identified in the east RWB on 2 July (JGJ).

Willet: A record fall count reached 20 to 30 birds near Bayard, Morrill Co, on 8 July (AK); Willets are fewer in fall than in spring. They are also rare in the east in fall; 2 were spotted at Nathan's L, Washington Co, on 7 July (JT). The one found in the east RWB on 2 July (JGJ) was rather early, although earliest dates away from breeding areas occur in the last few days of June.

Spotted Sandpiper: A record count totaled 34 in about 150 yards of spring-fed grassy lake shore at Enders Res on 21 July (WRS); and the first bird since late May appeared at HCR on 17 July (GH, WH). These two reports indicate that fall migration definitely gets under way by late July. This species is a low-density nester statewide.

Upland Sandpiper: Routine reports.

Long-billed Curlew: Routine reports.

Hudsonian Godwit: The one bird in high alternate plumage seen at FL 11 on June (LR, RH; details) denotes the 2nd latest ever after a specimen collected on 12 June 1910, and the only one reported for the period. Normal last dates occur in early June.

Marbled Godwit: In fall, this species is rare east of the Panhandle; only the 13th such report was of 2 sighted at North Hultine Basin, Clay Co, on 25 June (JGJ). Excellent counts reached between 20 to 30 birds with Willets near Bayard on 8 July (AK) and 21 at LM on 29 July (SJD).

Sanderling: The only report was of 2 seen at LM on 29 July (SJD), presumably adults. Adults arrive in late July and early August; juveniles join them from mid-August on.

Semipalmated Sandpiper: The four found in the east RWB on 4 June (JGJ) were clearly spring migrants; and the one found at FL on 11 June (LR, RH) was likely a rather late spring migrant. However, the two spotted at FL 25 June (JGJ), if indeed they were fall migrants, identify the earliest ever. There is no way to know whether mid-June records of arctic breeders represent birds which did not migrate all the way north, or whether the birds arrived on the breeding grounds at the normal time and just left early after a failed nesting. The 84 totaled at LM on 29 July (SJD) represent a good count.

Western Sandpiper: The only reports came from LM: 9 seen on 19 July (JF), and a molting adult identified on 30 July (SJD). The first to arrive in fall, Adults are reported more often in western Nebraska.

**Least Sandpiper:** Rather early were 14 discovered in the east RWB on 9 July (JGJ). The 97 tallied in the east RWB on 16 Jul (JGJ) was an excellent count.

**White-rumped Sandpiper:** The 10 found at FL on 11 June (LR, RH) and the single sighted at BOL 18 Jun (LE) were rather late. The latter merely ties the 3rd latest date for this late migrant!

**Baird's Sandpiper:** A record 5642 were counted at LM on 30 July (SJD, JF). LM has recorded by far the highest fall numbers in the state; Baird's Sandpipers tend to prefer to migrate in fall through the western Great Plains. By comparison, the high count in the east RWB totaled (drum roll) one! (on 16 July, JGJ).

**Pectoral Sandpiper:** A single was found at Harvard Marsh on 25 June and on 2 July; it may have summered (JGJ). There are 3 other records in the period between 15 June and 4 July. Rare to the west, 13 were spotted at LM on 29 July (SJD).

**Dunlin:** The only report was of a record late bird seen at FL on 11 June (LR, RH). Spring arrival was late as well (Spring Report).

**Stilt Sandpiper:** The four discovered at FL on 11 June (LR, RH) and the one spotted at BOL on 18 June (LE) denote the 2nd and 4th latest ever for spring.

**Buff-breasted Sandpiper:** None had arrived by the end of the period; most arrive in August.

**Short-billed Dowitcher:** The three birds seen in the east RWB on 9 July (JGJ) were record early for fall. More normal for the date were the 31, an excellent count, found in the east RWB on 16 July, followed by 24 sighted the next day (JGJ). It should be noted that Jorgensen banded the RWB in July this year for the first time and suspects that Short-billeds are regular there in July (JGJ). Dowitchers in July should be carefully identified, as relative abundance and timing of early migration in fall of the two species is not well known (see Long-billed Dowitcher).

**Long-billed Dowitcher:** The seven reported at LM on 19 July (JF, CLW; details) tied the earliest documented fall record for this species. Based on documented reports, most July dowitchers are Short-billeds, at least until the last few days of the month, as the 12 Long-billeds seen at LM on 30 July (SJD) suggest. Six Long-billeds were also identified in the east RWB on 23 July, a day when no Short-billeds were found (JGJ). In Missouri, Long-billeds do not outnumber Short-billeds until late in August (Robbins and Easterla, Birds of Missouri).

**Common Snipe:** The one identified in the east RWB on 30 July (JGJ) was possibly an early migrant, but there are occasional summer reports away from the Sandhills and the Panhandle breeding range.

**American Woodcock:** The only report was of one seen on River Trail at Neale Woods on 8 June (JB). Few are reported during the summer.

**Wilson's Phalarope:** Reports from FL of as many as 17 still present on 18 June (LR, RH) are suggestive of local breeding, as are the presence of 5 in the east RWB on 3 July, as well as the 2 found there on 16 July (JGJ). The



latter, as well as the 14 counted there on 22 July (JGJ), may have been early migrants, however. The one spotted south of Bayard, Morrill Co, on 8 July (AK ) may have been a nearby breeder.

**Red-necked Phalarope:** None had arrived by the end of the period; most arrive in August.

**Laughing Gull:** The second alternate seen at Omaha Beach, LM, on 19 July (CLW, JF) represents the 4th documented summer record. Three of the records were second alternate birds sighted in the period between 14 June and 19 July, and one was a juvenile identified on 3 August. There is now a total of 10 documented records of this species in Nebraska.

**Franklin's Gull:** A few stragglers were noted, including 2 birds seen as late as 11 June at FL (LR, RH); and returning birds were first seen on 17 July, when 100 arrived at HCR (GH, WH). An excellent count for July reached 685 in the LM area on 30 July (SJD).

**Ring-billed Gull:** The usual summering immatures were reported, but of more significance was the presence of 4 adults in the east RWB as early as 16 July (JGJ). There are few if any documented reports of adults in July. Numbers had built to 472 in the LM area by 30 July (SJD).

**California Gull:** The fall buildup was underway at LM by the end of the period, with 21 found there on 30 July and 18 counted there the next day (SJD). No others were reported.

**Herring Gull:** There are fewer than 20 documented reports for mid-June through mid-August; many old reports are likely to have been California Gulls. This season, a second alternate was identified at LM on 29 July and was joined by a juvenile the next day (SJD). There are no documented records of adults for mid-June through mid-August.

**Caspian Tern:** This species tends to linger into June, and several did so this spring: the one reported as an immature at CLNWR on 10 June (EA, KCR) was presumably a 2nd-year bird, as this date would be very early for a hatching-year bird; singles were noted at BOL and at Pawnee L on 18 June (LE); and a surprising 6 were spotted at BOL on 25 June (LE). As in the case with gulls, these birds are likely immatures. Good counts of fall migrants were 7 found at Burchard L on 23 June (GH, WH) and 5 seen at Sutherland Res on 30 July (SJD, JF). An adult was also reported at L Minatare, Scotts Bluff Co, on 20 July (JF).

**Common Tern:** Only 2 birds were reported: an adult spotted at Swanson Res on 22 July (WRS) and a molting adult identified at Sutherland Res on 30 July (SJD, JF). There are few July records; the preceding birds may have been failed breeders.

**Forster's Tern:** Spring stragglers and midsummer (mid-June through mid-July for this species) records away from breeding locations are few. Thus the 3 birds reported at HCR on 16 June (GH, WH) were unusual, as was the one spotted at BOL on 25 June (LE). More unexpected was a group of 23 noted at Martin's Bay, LM, on 17 June (WRS), a group which included adults in alternate plumage as well as subadults.

Least Tern: At LM for the breeding season, there were 2 pairs, 2 nests, and a lone adult (fide SJD), somewhat fewer than in recent summers. Suggestive of breeding success at a known site were the 2 adults and 2 juveniles found at Ponca SP on 30 July (BFH). All reports received originated from known breeding locations.

Black Tern: An excellent count of fall returnees totaled 450 in the east RWB on 16 July (JGJ).

Rock Dove: Routine reports.

Eurasian Collared-Dove: The little group of 3 located at Elmwood finally produced 2 young, seen on 25 July (GW). By 30 July, 6 birds were present (GW). This locale describes the 3rd location at which breeding has been recorded, after Kearney and Pierce. Additional reports included one bird spotted at Tyson's Elevator in Blair, Washington Co, on 15 July, which was not seen again (JGJ, GJ), and a displaying male along highway 61 just north of Kingsley Dam, LM, on 30 July (SJD, JF). These records bring the Nebraska total to 12.

White-winged Dove: One bird was seen on 8 July feeding on grain near a storage building 3 miles south of Lamar on highway 6 in Chase Co (Francisco Rivas, fide BP, LP). Photographs were apparently taken, but I have not seen them. This sighting represents the 10th record for Nebraska.

Mourning Dove: The first flocks, of 100 and 145, were noted on 11 July at Elmwood (GW). Most early flocks are of juveniles.

Black-billed Cuckoo: Few are reported these days. The only reports included one spotted in Dixon Co on 13 Jun (JJ); another seen at ADF between 21 and 29 Jul (LF, CF); and one located near ICSP on 30 July (B).

Yellow-billed Cuckoo: Routine reports.

Barn Owl: Routine reports.

Eastern Screech-Owl: A recently-fledged juvenile was seen in Sowbelly Canyon on 20 July (JF).

Great Horned Owl: Three fledged from a nest on the Hughson Ranch, Sioux Co, on 9 June (AK).

Burrowing Owl: Routine reports.

Barred Owl: Routine reports.

Long-eared Owl: None was reported.

Short-eared Owl: The only report was of one bird spotted along highway 26 on 20 July (JF). Most recent summer reports come from this general area of the Panhandle.

Common Nighthawk: Quite a sight were the 24 nighthawks seen hawking insects in bright daylight over University L, Sioux Co, on 16 June (WRS), they looked like a flock of mini-jaegers.

Common Poorwill: Routine reports.

Chuck-will's-widow: Small populations persist at the northwestern limits of the species' entire North American range: 1 or 2 were heard at Wolf L, Saunders Co, throughout the period (TH); and one was heard on 20 June in extreme southern Buffalo Co (PT).

Whip-poor-will: Routine reports.



**Chimney Swift:** Westernmost was one identified near Bayard on 8 July (AK); this species has been established along the North Platte River for about 30 years.

**White-throated Swift:** The one found at the Hughson Ranch, Sioux Co, on 10 June (AK) was unexpected; but rather amazing was another spotted as far east as the west end of LM on 29 July (SJD, JF; details). This sighting denotes the easternmost record for the species other than an undocumented report from Lincoln Co from 13 October 1984.

**Ruby-throated Hummingbird:** A male found at a feeder in Alma from 7 June to 30 July (GH, WH) appears to be the first such record from the Republican Valley. As a breeder, this species is essentially restricted to the Missouri Valley, the lower Platte Valley, and adjacent counties. A report of two pairs seen on 15 June 17 miles northeast of Bassett, Rock Co, (CH) may have been of migrants. Breeding is not known west of the confluence of the Niobrara and Missouri, although the species summered in Brown Co in 1970.

**Broad-tailed Hummingbird:** None was reported. Early migrants arrive around 20 July.

**Rufous Hummingbird:** The only report was of a female seen at Bushnell, Kimball Co, on 29 July (SJD, JF).

**Belted Kingfisher:** Routine reports.

**Red-headed Woodpecker:** Routine reports.

**Red-bellied Woodpecker:** Adding to recent sightings suggesting incipient westward expansion in the North Platte Valley was one identified at McGrew, Scotts Bluff Co, around 10 June (fide AK).

**Downy Woodpecker:** Routine reports.

**Hairy Woodpecker:** Routine reports. For this species and the Downy Woodpecker, Panhandle observers should check the degree of white spotting in the greater coverts ("shoulders"); Rocky Mountain birds have very little and eastern birds extensive white spotting. Most western Nebraska birds are probably intergrades, but we don't really know!

**Northern Flicker:** Routine reports.

**Pileated Woodpecker:** Evidence that the FF population is doing well were counts of 4 on 18 June (B) and 6 on 4 July (KM, CM).

**Western Wood-Pewee:** The color of the underbill is a useful clue in identifying silent wood-pewees; although there is overlap, Easterns have orange underbills and Westerns dark underbills. Partial orange and dark bills can be of either species. Five birds were carefully checked in the Panhandle on 15 June; all but one had completely dark underbills and the other had a dark bill with an orange base (WRS). All Easterns seen during the period (identified by song) had completely orange underbills (WRS).

**Eastern Wood-Pewee:** Two nests with incubating birds were found at Schramm Park on 10 June (JWH). The western edge of the range in the Republican Valley is the quality woodland south of Orleans, where one was reported singing on 20 July (WRS).

**Acadian Flycatcher:** The one spotted at Schramm Park on 4 June (BP, LP) was found at an unexpected but not really surprising location; but a nesting



pair identified at Ashford Scout Camp in extreme northern Thurston Co on 4 July (BFH) was a great find. The birds were discovered at the same site as a singing male spotted in 1998 and a pair seen in 1999. And this year the territory straddled the Thurston-Dakota County Line, but the nest was 3 meters up in an elm and in Thurston Co (BFH). The elm was in a well-watered ravine with towering old cottonwoods and mature elm, hackberry, and ironwood (BFH). This habitat is not unlike that along Trail 9 at ICSP where the species has summered in recent years. This nesting is the second since 1952; the other was an unsuccessful attempt in Douglas Co in 1991.

Alder Flycatcher: None was reported. Late spring dates occur in early June.

Willow Flycatcher: Routine reports.

Dusky Flycatcher: Convincing documentation was forwarded to the NOURC of one identified at Wellfleet L, Lincoln Co, on 21 July (WRS; there has to be some advantage to writing these reports!) Most interesting about this silent bird was its underbill, which was extensively dark for the distal half. Other features (primary extension, eyering shape and prominence, worn plumage, pale nape) also point to this species. If the NOURC accepts this report, it will represent the first for the state. There are several records for western Kansas, and the species breeds in the Black Hills of South Dakota. On the eastern Colorado plains (Barr Lake), it is the most numerous *Empidonax* flycatcher in fall (Tony Leukering, pers. comm.).

Cordilleran Flycatcher: This species has become fairly common in the western Pine Ridge Canyons (Sowbelly, Monroe) in recent years; an excellent count of 11 was made in Sowbelly Canyon on 20 July (JF).

Eastern Phoebe: Rare in summer in the southwest, one was reported singing at Swanson Res on 22 July (WRS).

Say's Phoebe: The one spotted in northern Harlan Co on 2 June (GH, WH) was easterly.

Ash-throated Flycatcher: One was heard calling about 5 times (but not seen) in lower Sowbelly Canyon on 20 July by observers experienced with the species (CLW, JF). If accepted by the NOURC, this identification would represent the 2nd state record. The first was of one seen by Dick Rosche on 29 August 1987 in Dawes Co. Any *Myiarchus* flycatcher located in the Panhandle in late summer should be carefully identified, as this species may occur more often than currently realized.

Great Crested Flycatcher: Rare in the Republican drainage west of Harlan Co, one was discovered feeding a loud fledgling at Champion L, Chase Co, on 21 July (WRS). The three found at McMurtrey Refuge, Clay Co, on 22 July (JGJ) may have been either migrants or possibly a family group which nested nearby--in either case, an uncommon occurrence at that location.

Cassin's Kingbird: An excellent count totaled 14 in southwestern Kimball Co on 29 July (SJD). Adults were seen feeding at least 2 young in a nest in a canyon south of Redington, Morrill Co, a known breeding location, on 8 July (AK).

**Western Kingbird:** A pair with a fledgling were spotted at South Sioux City on 12 July (BFH), and a family group was located in Omaha on 14 July (B). There were additional sightings at the eastern edge of Nebraska also, where the species appears to be doing well.

**Eastern Kingbird:** Obviously on the move by the end of the period, 46 were counted in southwestern Dixon Co on 30 July (JJ); and 15 were counted the same day in Pawnee Co (CNK).

**Loggerhead Shrike:** Adults with 3 fledglings were found in southwestern Dixon Co on 5 June (JJ), and a family group of 4 was seen in Harlan Co on 7 July (GH, WH), the latter somewhat late for young still to be dependent.

**Bell's Vireo:** Routine reports.

**Yellow-throated Vireo:** Two were seen at Schramm Park on 10 June (JWH); although regular in the Platte Valley west to about Saunders Co, numbers decline rapidly away from the immediate vicinity of the Missouri River.

**Plumbeous Vireo:** The western Pine Ridge population is doing well; 4 were identified in Monroe Canyon on 11 June (JS), and 3 were spotted in Sowbelly Canyon on 20 July (JF).

**Warbling Vireo:** Observers should look carefully at Warbling Vireos in the central and west to determine the ranges of the eastern *gilvus* and western *swainsoni* subspecies. *Gilvus* breeds in the east, but has spread westward in the 20th century; one discovered at Benkelman, Dundy Co, on 22 July was apparently a *gilvus*, based on its evenly gray head and back (WRS). *Swainsoni* has a darker gray head contrasting with a lighter gray back; presently it is known to breed only in the Pine Ridge.

**Red-eyed Vireo:** Routine reports.

**Blue Jay:** Indicative of at least early flocking and possibly early migration, 14 appeared in the observers' yard on 23 July (LR, RH).

**Pinyon Jay:** Unexpected were the 2 spotted at the Singleton Ranch about 11 miles north of Dix, Kimball Co, on 17 June (WRS); they flew into a hillside of juniper. This area is a few miles west of the Redington canyon, which is at the eastern limit of the summer range.

**Black-billed Magpie:** The one spotted at Thurston on 17 June (BFH) appeared at the edge of the bird's range in the northeast.

**American Crow:** An unexpected sight in the southwest, where it is not as numerous as elsewhere in the state, was a flock of 53 discovered in Dundy Co on 21 July (WRS).

**Horned Lark:** Routine reports.

**Purple Martin:** A successful first year for the observers' martin house in Alma resulted in 5 pairs nesting; the last young were fledged on 28 July (GH, WH). This species becomes less common westward in the Republican drainage, being rare as far west as Dundy Co. At the west end of the known North Platte Valley range were the 5 birds seen in Ogallala on 30 July (SJD).

**Tree Swallow:** Young in a tree cavity were being fed near HCR on 16 June (GH, WH). Nesting was underway also at Buckskin Hills, Dixon Co, on 25 June (BFH) and at ADF on 29 June (LF, CF).



**Violet-green Swallow:** A small population summers in the Wildcat Hills; one was sighted at Stage Hill Road on 3 July (AK) and another was identified a few miles east at Wright's Gap on 8 July (AK).

**Northern Rough-winged Swallow:** Routine reports.

**Bank Swallow:** Concentrations of swallows in the RWB in late July can be enormous, but an estimate of 10,000 seen flying over the FL marshes on 30 July (LR, RH) boggles the mind, among other things. Bank Swallows leave their colonies early, but one colony was still using its nest holes at Ponca SP on 30 July (JJ).

**Cliff Swallow:** The best count was an excellent 1700 tallied at FL on 16 July (LR, RH).

**Barn Swallow:** Two chicks fledged from a nest in the observers' yard near Gibbon on 12 July (LR, RH). Nests with young have been found in Nebraska as late as 6 September.

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

**Tufted Titmouse:** Routine reports.

**Red-breasted Nuthatch:** The presence of one at Oliver Res on 29 July (SJD), not a breeding location, was suggestive of an early fall movement; usually fall migrants appear in early or mid-August. The two spotted at Wright's Gap, extreme northeastern Banner Co, on 29 July (SJD) appeared at the eastern edge of the bird's Wildcat Hills' range or they were perhaps also early migrants.

**White-breasted Nuthatch:** This species summers in the Platte Valley westward in small numbers to the Kearney area; one was found at Rowe Sanctuary on 30 June (LR, RH), and another appeared in the observers' yard near Gibbon on 30 July (LR, RH). Presumably these are of the eastern subspecies *cookei*. The one seen at Stage Hill Road on 3 July (AK) represents only the 3rd summer report in the Wildcat Hills. It would very interesting to determine the subspecies of birds in the Wildcat Hills; tape-recording is best, as the subspecies differ in their vocalizations. The expected subspecies is *nelsoni* of the Rocky Mountains; all of 24 tape-recorded in Sowbelly Canyon, where the species breeds regularly, were of this subspecies (CLW).

**Pygmy Nuthatch:** Routine reports.

**Brown Creeper:** None were reported.

**Rock Wren:** Routine reports.

**Carolina Wren:** Routine reports.

**House Wren:** Routine reports.

**Winter Wren:** Apparently the first state record for summer was of a territorial bird discovered singing near Tyler Falls in the Niobrara Valley Preserve, Cherry Co, between 23 May and 13 June (CA). A tape was made of the song, but a subspecies is yet to be determined. There are cool micro-climates in this area; perhaps this bird thought he was much further northwest or northeast. The nearest regular breeding is in northeast Minnesota and northwest Montana.

**Sedge Wren:** As is typical of this species, there were a few early- to mid-June reports, last one originating at Thurston on 17 June (BFH); after that

report, none occurred until mid-Jul, when it seems that breeding occurs. The first returnees were singles identified at Rowe Sanctuary on 8 July (LR, RH) and 5 miles north of Ames on 11 July (JP, DP). All Jul reports came from central Nebraska eastward, as expected, with best counts reaching 10 in the east RWB on 16 July (JGJ); 8 at Rowe Sanctuary on 29 July (LR, RH); and "lots" at Spring Creek Prairie, with one seen carrying nest material, on 30 July (KP).

**Marsh Wren:** A phenomenon similar to that of the Sedge Wren may have taken place this period, with 4 birds found in the east RWB on 16 July after rain had caused some wet areas to reappear; no birds appeared in the area prior to the rains (JGJ). Similarly, two were spotted in a marsh 2 miles east of FL on 30 July where they were previously unrecorded (LR, RH).

**Blue-gray Gnatcatcher:** The population in the Stage Hill Road area of Wildcat Hills continues to grow; an amazing 21 birds were counted there on 29 July (SJD, JF). One was seen in another regular western location, the Limber Pines near I-80 exit 1 in Kimball Co, on 17 June (WRS); and the outlying population along the Republican River south of Orleans continues with 3 found there on 20 July (WRS). A good count totaled 6 at Schramm Park on 4 June (BP, LP), and an adult was identified feeding young at Wilderness Park, Lincoln, on 4 June (LE).

**Eastern Bluebird:** At Wildcat Hills NC, more of this species were found nesting this summer than Mountain Bluebirds (AK), continuing a trend of recent years.

**Mountain Bluebird:** A male and a juvenile were seen together on 17 June in Ponderosa Pines in extreme southeastern Banner Co (WRS).

**Townsend's Solitaire:** The one seen on Corkscrew Road near Glen, Sioux Co, on 16 June (WRS) was rather late.

**Swainson's Thrush:** One was heard singing in excellent riparian woodland south of Orleans on 6 July by observers familiar with the song from living in Washington (state) for several years (GH, WH). The song was described as "oh my camelia," with a rapid upscale on "camelia" (WH).

**Wood Thrush:** Routine reports, with 6 birds reported in Missouri Valley locations.

**American Robin:** A good count for the date reached 53 on 27 July in Dixon Co (JJ). Fall flocks begin to form in late July.

**Gray Catbird:** The one found in Harlan Co on 10 June (GH, WH) appeared in an area where numbers begin to decline rapidly westward in the Republican Valley. The 20 spotted at Rowe Sanctuary on 17 June (LR, RH) represents an interesting concentration; this report is at least indicative of excellent habitat there.

**Northern Mockingbird:** Routine reports.

**Sage Thrasher:** The only report was of 7 spotted in southwestern Kimball Co on 29 July (SJD, JF), obviously early migrants.

**Brown Thrasher:** A good count totaled 20+ at Cunningham L, Omaha, on 8 June (DM), providing another example of excellent habitat for the species.



European Starling: Juveniles begin flocking in July; a flock of 300 was spotted near Glenvil FWPA, Clay Co, on 22 July (WRS).

Cedar Waxwing: Small groups of as many as 10 birds were noted at various locations in the central and eastern areas of the state, but no breeding evidence was detected.

Blue-winged Warbler: A surprise was one found singing near Buffalo Bridge in Fort Niobrara NWR between 5 and 6 June; it was tape-recorded (CA). This bird was in about the same place as a singing male identified on 18 June 1999. This year's record represents only the 5th for the state later than 3 June.

Tennessee Warbler: The one seen in Seward Co from 10 to 11 June (JG) was rather late, representing the latest spring date after June 10 (twice).

Orange-crowned Warbler: Very early was one seen perched on a mist-net stringer at Wehrspann L, Omaha, on 27 July (RG). This report represents the 2nd-earliest for fall after one seen by Rosche on 19 July 1977 in Keith Co, and the 3rd July record; the other one originated from Harlan Co on 28 July 1999.

Northern Parula: Routine reports.

Yellow Warbler: An adult was identified feeding a fledgling at Rowe Sanctuary on 12 July (LR, RH).

Chestnut-sided Warbler: The one discovered at Neale Woods River Trail on 8 June (JB) is the 7th latest ever for spring.

Yellow-rumped Warbler: One was reported without details of subspecies in the Sandhills on 4 June (EA). At that date and location, it may have been either *auduboni* (Audubon's) or *coronata* (Myrtle). The last regular spring date for Myrtle is Jun 2, but there is a later report on 15 June 1992 in Lincoln Co.

Yellow-throated Warbler: The only report was of one spotted at Neale Woods River Trail on 8 June (JB), where there appears to be a small summering population.

Cerulean Warbler: The small population found at FF the last few years has apparently gone; none was reported from there. Singles were spotted, however, at Schramm Park on 4 June (BP, LP) and on the Neale Woods River Trail on 28 June (NR). No evidence of breeding was reported.

Black-and-white Warbler: Good counts from the breeding range included 5 seen along the Niobrara R between Valentine and Sparks on 16 June (JG) and the 4 identified in Monroe Canyon on 11 June (JS).

American Redstart: The only reports since the 1970s in Scotts Bluff Co were a pair found in 1999 and at least one noted north of Scottsbluff through early July this year (AK). Good counts from the breeding range included 12 spotted at Ashford Scout Camp, Thurston-Dakota Cos, on 4 July (BFH) and 8 found in Sowbelly Canyon on 20 July (JF).

Prothonotary Warbler: An unusual report was of one discovered nesting in a bluebird house near Brownville, Nemaha Co, on 27 June; the nest had 5 eggs (MW). This sighting denotes the only report of nesting south of Sarpy Co since the 1970s. Recent reports away from Sarpy Co are few; but a



population may be establishing itself at Neale Woods in extreme southeastern Washington Co, where singles were found on 8 and again on 28 June (NR, B).

Ovenbird: Routine reports.

Louisiana Waterthrush: None reported.

Kentucky Warbler: The only reports were of 1 to 2 birds identified at Schramm Park on 4 Jun and on 2 July (BP, LP, B). None was reported from a regular location at Hummel Park, Omaha.

Mourning Warbler: None was reported; the last spring dates usually occur in early June.

Common Yellowthroat: An excellent count totaled 37 in southwestern Dixon Co on 30 July (JJ); these may have been early fall migrants.

Yellow-breasted Chat: Unusual in the east was one seen at Larkspur Area in extreme southwestern Saunders Co on 21 July (MO). This species is now only casual in the east. A recent fledgling was found along Stage Hill Road on 3 July (AK).

Summer Tanager: This spring and summer saw a marked increase in numbers of this species, including locations which, while within the expected southeast Nebraska breeding range, were usually unoccupied in summer. An adult was identified feeding a young bird in southeastern Otoe Co on 21 July (LF, CF), for only the 3rd documented breeding record since 1980, twice in Sarpy Co and once in Saunders Co. A male, possibly territorial, was identified at Ponca SP between 15 and 16 July (JT); and another male, possibly the same bird, was spotted there on 30 July (BFH). There are a few reports from Ponca SP in recent years, but no evidence of breeding. Following the high counts at ICSP this spring, 5 were seen there on 30 July (B), suggestive of a breeding population.

Scarlet Tanager: One to two were reported at Schramm Park from 4 to 10 June, with a male feeding a fledgling on the latter date (JWH, BP, LP). Both Summer and Scarlet Tanagers regularly summer at Schramm Park. The only other report was of a singing male found at Wilderness Park, Lincoln, on 18 June (LE). The latter appears to be only the 4th summer record for Lancaster Co; breeding has not yet been documented there.

Western Tanager: Routine reports.

Spotted Towhee: The easternmost reports defined the approximate eastern edge of the summer range: Knox Co (JJ), Buffalo Co (LR, RH), and Harlan Co, where it was numerous through the summer period (GH, WH).

Eastern Towhee: The one spotted at BOL on 4 June (LE) was within the breeding range, but the one seen only once near Gibbon on 30 July (LR, RH) appeared on the edge of the breeding range. The range extends farthest west along the Republican River; an apparently pure bird was identified just west of Bostwick in Nuckolls Co (WRS), but the single bird discovered south of HCR on 20 July, while appearing pure, sang a clearly "mixed" song (WRS). Hybrids and pure birds of both species occur in Harlan Co, but there are no breeding season records of Eastern Towhee west of there.

Cassin's Sparrow: There were good numbers reported, apparently with an extensive range occupied this year. Two were found at the northeast edge of

the known range on the Arthur BBS on 13 June (BP, LP). None was recorded there, however, last year on 21 June (BP, LP). Whether these birds stop singing in mid-June or whether they were actually absent last year was not known to the observers, although none was heard singing in Dundy Co on 17 June (WRS) where a total of 11 were counted on the Benkelman BBS on 10 June (JS). As many as 6 were found south of I-80 exit 1 during 10 and 27 June (JS, PL).

**Chipping Sparrow:** There is no evidence for breeding in the southwest; this year a few were seen around Alma, but no evidence of breeding was obtained, as it was last year (GH, WH). One bird was spotted attending a begging Brown-headed Cowbird fledgling at Wildcat Hills NC on 3 July (AK); Scotts Bluff Co is the only Platte Valley Co west of North Platte where Chipping Sparrows are common. Observers are encouraged to report sightings in and south of the North Platte-Platte Rivers and west of highway 183.

**Brewer's Sparrow:** One was seen carrying food in Dundy Co on 21 July (WRS); this sighting appears to represent the first record of breeding in Dundy Co, even though this species breeds throughout the northeast Colorado plains. The bird was a long-tailed, dingy, small sparrow with unremarkable facial or head pattern and unstreaked underparts.

**Field Sparrow:** Good counts reached 27 around Calamus Res on 23 July (LR, RH) and 24 in Dixon Co on 30 July (JJ). Two birds were heard singing at the western end of Swanson Res on 22 July (WRS), where the species is uncommon.

**Vesper Sparrow:** Apparently only the 9th report in the breeding season south of the Platte Valley was of 2 identified in the east RWB on 22 July (JGJ). Vesper Sparrows tend to be northerly breeders, occurring southward to some extent in the Missouri Valley; but the possibility of these birds being early migrants cannot be ruled out.

**Lark Sparrow:** Indicative of abundance in drier western areas was a count of 28 in about 2 miles of dirt road from highway 20 towards Glen, Sioux Co, on 16 June (WRS).

**Lark Bunting:** Routine reports.

**Grasshopper Sparrow:** An excellent estimate totaled 75 around Calamus Res on 23 July (LR, RH); this species is doing well in central and western native grasslands.

**Henslow's Sparrow:** This species is being detected with more frequency recently. Two seen at Meadowlark L, in extreme northeastern Seward Co, on 19 June (JG) appeared at a known location; but the one spotted on 24 June at Redtail Area, in extreme southeastern Butler Co (JG), and only about 6 miles northwest of Meadowlark L, was at a new location. One was heard singing on territory at Boyer Chute NWR between 15 June and 7 July (JT), also a new location. A singing male discovered at Harvard Marsh was in the same place as last year but was not detected earlier this year (JGJ); this location is the westernmost summer location. Do these birds move around in response to environmental conditions like Sedge Wrens?



**Song Sparrow:** This species has become numerous at FL; the best count there reached 64 on 16 July (LR, RH). It may be almost as numerous at other RWB locations; 20 were counted, for instance, at Deep Well Basin, Hamilton Co, on 1 July (LR, RH).

**Swamp Sparrow:** Most breeding locations occur in the northcentral part of the state in fairly extensive cattail marshes, but breeding may occur in such habitat wherever it occurs. The colony at FL continues, with 5 reported on 16 July (LR, RH). An apparent new location is the west end of LM, where up to 6 were present between 29 and 30 July (SJD).

**Dark-eyed Junco:** Routine reports.

**McCown's Longspur:** Routine reports.

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

**Northern Cardinal:** Routine reports. No reports were received on the small population in Scotts Bluff Co.

**Rose-breasted Grosbeak:** Reports from the western edge of the summer range included a pair found near Gibbon throughout the period (LR, RH) and one seen 2 miles east of the Gibbon exit on 1 July (LR, RH). South of Orleans a male in heavy molt was seen on 20 July, associating with a bird which looked most like a first fall male Black-headed Grosbeak, but which may have been a hybrid female (WRS).

**Black-headed Grosbeak:** At the eastern edge of the summer range was the one seen north of FL on 11 June (LR, RH) and another found near Gibbon on 12 June (LR, RH).

**Blue Grosbeak:** Good numbers were noted in the northeast, with 5 males spotted at Thurston on 17 June (BFH); 3 reported in Knox Co on 5 June (JJ); and 3 identified in Dixon Co on 30 July (JJ). This species is uncommon further south in the east, but 2 were found at Haworth Park, Bellevue, on 27 July (B).

**Lazuli Bunting:** Routine reports.

**Indigo Bunting:** This species is rare in summer in Scotts Bluff Co; one was seen at Stage Hill Road on 3 July (AK).

**Dickcissel:** An excellent count totaled 47 in Dixon Co on 14 July (JJ). Rare in the southwest, a singing male discovered beside an alfalfa field in Dundy Co just 6 miles from Colorado on 21 July was unexpected (WRS).

**Bobolink:** Generally spotty in distribution south of the Platte Valley, a male was spotted at Sacramento-Wilcox Basin, Phelps Co, on 18 June (GH, WH). The prairie at Rowe Sanctuary hosted as many as 26 on 3 July (LR, RH).

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

**Eastern Meadowlark:** The observers' first for Harlan Co was one noticed at Orleans on 30 July (GH, WH); this species is uncommon and local south of the Platte Valley and west of Kearney.

**Western Meadowlark:** Routine reports.

**Yellow-headed Blackbird:** Routine reports.

**Brewer's Blackbird:** Young were being fed at a regular breeding location south of Redington, Morrill Co, on 8 July (AK). The one seen at CLNWR on 4 June (EA) was a little east of the breeding range; such reports are few.

Common Grackle: Routine reports.

Great-tailed Grackle: Good counts away from the center of abundance in the RWB included 38 at Haworth Park, Bellevue, on 20 July (B) and 37 near Gibbon on 14 July (LR, RH). These reports are likely flocks of young birds and non-breeders, but no ages or genders were reported. The observers' first for Harlan Co was a pair spotted flying over the west end of HCR on 27 June (GH, WH).

Brown-headed Cowbird: Routine reports (but see Chipping Sparrow).

Orchard Oriole: Routine reports.

Baltimore Oriole: Routine reports.

Bullock's Oriole: Routine reports.

Pine Grosbeak: Perhaps the most surprising report of the season was of a male seen briefly at the feeders at Wildcat Hills NC on 10 June (JS; details). The features observed appear to eliminate other possibilities. This species is a casual summer visitor in the Black Hills of South Dakota, and there is a well-documented record for Scotts Bluff Co as late as 22 May as well as several other May reports for the northwest.

House Finch: Routine reports.

Red Crossbill: Routine reports.

Pine Siskin: The colony at University of Nebraska-Kearney may be declining; none was noted there after 1 June (LR, RH). An unexpected though not unprecedented sighting was of one found at a feeder near Cunningham L, Omaha, on 26 June (B).

Lesser Goldfinch: Two birds visited the feeders of Jamalee Clark in Gering between 12 and 15 June (fide AK); at least one was a green-backed male (WRS). Of 6 documented records, 2 have involved black-backed males and 3 green-backed. Current understanding is that these are color phases rather than subspecific differences. There are now 9 reports in all for the state of Lesser Goldfinch.

American Goldfinch: Routine reports.

House Sparrow: Routine reports.

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## REVIEW OF THE BREEDING STATUS OF PINYON JAY IN NEBRASKA

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### HISTORIC RECORD

The Rev. J.M. Bates (1900) was the first to suggest breeding by Pinyon Jays (*Gymnorhinus cyanocephalus*) in Nebraska when he reported, "Breeding at Holly, Sheridan Co., north of Rushville, July 15, '97." While he gave us no indication of what he saw, the date cited in the report, 15 July,



should raise a cautionary flag, since by that date the young are normally 2 months past fledging and would be free-flying and moving about with the flock.

In discussing birds which breed in the state, Bruner (1901) placed the species in Part II of the list, along with other species which "undoubtedly breed here, but concerning which more definite data as to such breeding is desired."

Later, reporting on the 1901 field work in the Pine Ridge by a team from the University of Nebraska, Cary (1902) reported, "Both adults and young abundant, but the only breeding evidence secured was a couple of old nests which Mr. Carriker found at the head of Gerlach's Canyon." Cary was confident enough of the finding that he included Pinyon Jays in a list of species for which "breeding.... was definitely established" in a note to the Auk (1901). He gave no indication, however, that the nests were collected; and there was neither a description of them, nor a statement of how they were identified.

On that basis, in their "Preliminary Review of the Birds of Nebraska," Bruner et al. (1904) comment that the species is a "Common resident, spending the summer and occasionally breeding along the Pine Ridge."

Later, however, in a frequently overlooked review of the status of Pinyon Jays in the Nebraska, Bates (1918) comments, "Following my notes, rather than my memory, I find my first acquaintance with this gentle robber beginning at Holly, Sheridan County, July 15, 1897, as far as Nebraska is concerned. Holly is a post office on the road from Rushville to Pine Ridge Agency, less than half way. *I don't recall inquiring whether they nested there, but they undoubtedly did*" (my emphasis). Thus, he admits that he did not see nesting himself, nor apparently did he even ask if anyone else did. Again, while he still did not tell us what he actually saw, it seems most likely that he saw adults and what he took to be young of the year. Thus, regarding this critical, oft-quoted first report of breeding in the state, the author casts doubt on his initial report.

Based on the preceding, most subsequent local bird lists have included the species either as a breeder or as a resident (and assumed breeder) (Swenk 1919, Haecker et al. 1945, Rapp et al. 1958, Rosche 1982, Johnsgard 1980, 1998, Ducey 1988). Bent (1946), however, was more cautious, commenting: "It has been recorded in summer without evidence of breeding in .... northern Nebraska."

During the Nebraska Breeding Bird Atlas Project the species was "confirmed" as breeding in survey blocks in Scotts Bluff and Sioux counties, in both cases by the observation of begging fledged young as they were fed by adults. Since the young were free-flying and following the flock, however, it could be argued that they might have been hatched at some distance from where they were found (Mollhoff in press).

Other indications of breeding include a report of young seen in Dawes County in 1966, but without a location or date (Sharpe 1967). More



recently, I reported finding used nests in the immediate vicinity of adults and young of the year on 17 May 1998 near Redington, Morrill County (Silcock and Jorgensen 1998). After further research, however, the identification of the nests was retracted (Mollhoff 1999).

Thus, although Pinyon Jays have been locally accepted as breeders in Nebraska for a century, the supporting evidence has been scanty; and conclusive evidence in the form of an active nest or non-flying young restricted to the natal site has not been presented.

### CURRENT FINDINGS

After being repeatedly unsuccessful in March and April nest searches from 1987 through 1998, finding many more snowstorms and spring blizzards than nests, I obtained a copy of The Pinyon Jay (Marzluff & Balda 1992). In it the authors and their associates detail the highly complex social behavior of this fascinating species. In their decades-long study of several flocks in Arizona and New Mexico, they found that the species forms stable, coherent flocks made up of pairs which appear to mate for life. The flocks maintain long-term territories of many square kilometers, which contain discrete nesting areas within which the flock nests as a loose colony. They found that nesting consistently began mid-March to mid-April and was followed by attempted re-nesting by pairs that were unsuccessful on the initial attempt. After fledging, the young form creches (nursery groups of just-fledged young) that stay in the area of the nests for 2 to 3 weeks, until they can fly well enough to join the flock. Rarely, on some years with exceptionally heavy pinyon nut crops, the flock was found nesting again in the fall. The authors repeatedly point out the fact that the species breeds, and does everything else, as a flock.

On 22 May 1999, while studying Pygmy Nuthatches (*Sitta pygmaea*) in the Gilbert-Baker State Wildlife Management Area in East Monroe Canyon, Sioux County, Nebraska, I found myself among a silently feeding flock of about 30 Pinyon Jays which included a number of mousy, brownish-gray young of the year. The young birds were foraging for themselves on the ground alongside some adults and flew off across the canyon with the rest of the flock when it left, indicating that they were probably over a month old (Bateman & Balda 1973).

I searched through the flock for adults exhibiting behavior that might indicate nesting and after 10 to 15 minutes noticed two birds which appeared to be following each another. After tracking their movements for a few minutes, I saw one of them pick up and begin carrying several long blades of dead grass, still followed by the other bird. After I tracked them with difficulty for 5 to 10 minutes as they moved among the flock, from ground level to treetop and back again, the bird with the grass flew off about 30 meters to a low horizontal pine branch where it disappeared into dense foliage. It was soon followed by the other bird, where they remained out of sight for several minutes before emerging without the grass to rejoin the

flock momentarily. The pair then flew off across the canyon by themselves, giving a soft "wheer" call. The rest of the flock flew off in the same general direction shortly afterward. After they left, I investigated the site the pair visited. I was unable to see any sign of a nest from below; but after climbing the tree, I found a well-hidden, incomplete nest saddled on a horizontal branch, 3.5 meters from the ground and 0.6 meters from the trunk. The nest platform was complete and the nest cup perhaps half finished.

The flock returned about a half hour later, and a pair of birds flew down to the aforementioned horizontal branch and disappeared from sight briefly before rejoining the flock. I could not see if they carried nesting material. The flock spent an hour in the area before leaving about 1030 hrs MDT and did not return before I left at dusk.

I returned on 11 June 1999, accompanied by John Dinan, a biologist with Nebraska Game and Parks Commission. We found a Pinyon Jay on the nest when we arrived at 1100 hrs. It was attended by another adult, which fed the incubating bird on the nest before chasing away a pair of Western Tanagers (*Piranga ludoviciana*) that approached too closely. When we checked the nest at 1300 hrs, I found it contained four eggs and two newly hatched young. When I returned at 1600 hrs to obtain photos, I found that a third egg had hatched.

I visited the nest again on 25 June, found and photographed five well-feathered young packed tightly inside. On 13 August, I salvaged the remains of the deserted nest, which bore only slight resemblance to the original structure. It has been placed in the collections at the University of Nebraska State Museum.

This report appears to be the first of an active Pinyon Jay nest in Nebraska. This late nesting also appears to be a second nesting attempt, following an unsuccessful first attempt, as described by Marzluff & Balda (1992).

There is little doubt that Pinyon Jays have been regular breeders in Nebraska since first reported a century ago. Flocks seem to be established throughout the Pine Ridge portions of Sioux, Dawes and Sheridan counties, and the Wildcat Hills area in Scotts Bluff, Banner, and Morrill counties. Their breeding distribution appears to coincide closely with the ponderosa pine scarp woodlands in those counties. Although individuals and flocks occasionally wander to other parts of the state, and occasionally remain into the breeding season, there has been no indication of breeding away from the Wildcat Hills and the Pine Ridge.

#### NESTING PHENOLOGY

Using the times reported by Marzluff and Balda (1992) for successive periods of the nesting cycle, and working backward from my own and others reported observations of free-flying young by the second or third week of May, the following nesting phenology is estimated for Nebraska:



Nest building	~ first or second week of March
Egg laying	~ second or third week of March
Hatching	~ first or second week of April
Fledging	~ 1 May
Creching	~ first half of May
Free-flying young	~ second or third week of May

Obviously, much more work is needed to discover basic life history data in Nebraska on this extreme edge of their range.

#### ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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Birds of the Untamed West. The History of Birdlife in Nebraska. 1750 to 1875. by James E. Ducey. 2000. Making History Press, Omaha, NE.

Book Review by W. Ross Silcock, P.O. Box 57, Tabor, IA 51653.

Those with an interest in the birds of the Great Plains will be familiar with Jim Ducey's Nebraska Birds: Breeding Status and Distribution, published in 1988. I was amazed then by Jim's diligence in searching a wide range of sources and compiling an exhaustive list of Nebraska breeding records organized by county. Jim's new book, Birds of the Untamed West, reflects the same dogged pursuit of obscure sources unavailable to most of us and compilation of the results. If you expect such a compilation to be dry and boring, you will be pleasantly surprised, especially if you are a Nebraska history buff. This book is a "good read" as well as being an extremely useful source for bird records in the period 1750 through 1875.

In his introduction Jim states, "The primary intent of this work is to provide a single source of historical information on the birdlife of just one portion of the Plains. I hope this goal has been accomplished." In my opinion, this goal has indeed clearly been accomplished. In addition, Jim has presented fascinating historical information, including pictures, on the early travelers in the region, the habitat they reported, and the birds they saw. This part of the book makes interesting reading and is probably the only single source for this material. Jim makes the point that this information provides a baseline for comparisons with the present status of bird species and their habitat. In itself, this is a valuable contribution. Observations of birds were not the first priority of most of the expeditions, but usually excellent naturalists and artists were along to record what was seen. Later expeditions, notably those of Major Stephen Long (with Thomas Say), John Kirk Townsend, and Gouverneur Kemble Warren, included trained zoologists who preserved several specimens of Nebraska birds, including a few new to science; many of



these specimens are still extant. Birder-historians will recognize the names Say and Townsend as in Say's Phoebe and Townsend's Warbler.

Personally, as one who is co-author of a forthcoming comprehensive book on the birds of Nebraska, I found the final chapter, "List of Species," most interesting and useful. Usually, records of Nebraska birds begin with the publications of observers such as Samuel Aughey, a University of Nebraska professor who published the first comprehensive list of Nebraska birds in 1878. Despite the date span in the title of Jim's book, he has used Aughey's list as one of his sources in compiling the List of Species. I think this is a good idea, as Aughey's list signalled the beginning of scientific study of Nebraska's birds at the University of Nebraska, and the close of the period of exploration in the state by Europeans.

The List of Species compiles all reports of each species that Jim was able to extract from his large number of sources. Not only do these sources include the journals of the European explorers, notably Lewis and Clark, Major Long, Prince Maximilian, John J. Audubon, and the Warren Expedition, but Jim has delved into Native American traditions and oral history. I find the latter to be extremely interesting as it demonstrates how important birds were in tribal traditions and how much was known about birds by Native Americans. I am amazed by Jim's struggles with the various Native American languages; he probably is rather conversant with some of them as a result of his research for this book!

I found this book to be well bound and printed in an easily-readable font. It is an excellent value at the published price of \$25, and I recommend it wholeheartedly to anyone with an interest in Nebraska's birds and early history.

\* \* \* \* \*

#### Historic Birds of Lincoln's Salt Basin Wetlands and Nine-mile Prairie

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The changes that have occurred in the bird life of the Lincoln area during the past century must certainly be great, but we have little evidence to document this point. There is, however, an annotated bird list from 1900 for the salt basin wetlands of western Lincoln, an area then gradually being developed for recreational use. This list was published by J. S. Hunter in the Proceedings of the First Annual Meeting of the Nebraska Ornithologists' Union (1900, 18-21). At this time, the recently impounded but still saline lake was 2 to 3 feet deep, and it covered about two hundred acres (roughly half its present

size). Hunter reported that some 84 species (by modern taxonomy) had been seen by him and other bird-club members, including such modern-day rarities as the Whooping Crane, Least Tern, Piping Plover, and Trumpeter Swan.

That the now extremely rare Black Duck was "uncommon" and, contrariwise, that the Wood Duck was already "frequent" is surprising. Similarly surprising, the Hooded Merganser was the most common of the three merganser species. Nearly all the birds on this list are water birds and shorebirds. The recent establishment of a small wetland nature sanctuary at the east end of Capitol Beach should help restore some of the marsh-dependent species that once occurred there, such as the rails and herons.

In 1940 a list of 86 (85 by current taxonomy) species of birds reported from what is now called Nine-Mile Prairie was published by D. B. Whelen (Nebraska Bird Review, 8:50-55). These species, of course, are nearly all upland birds, so the two lists scarcely overlap and collectively offer an excellent idea of both upland and lowland bird species occurring in the Lincoln area prior to World War II. Missing from the list are such late-appearing species in eastern Nebraska as the European Starling and House Finch, and even the certainly already-present Rock Dove is missing. The Cliff and Tree Swallows are also missing, as is the Greater Prairie-Chicken, which by 1940 was already becoming rare in eastern Nebraska. Burrowing Owls, however, have apparently not bred in Lancaster County since the 1960s, and the Blue Grosbeak that was once seen at the prairie is now quite rare in the county. Sedge Wrens, now known to nest at Nine-mile Prairie, are lacking from the list, but were first reported nesting in Nebraska near Salt Basin as early as 1902. The American Woodcock, a fairly recent arrival in Lancaster County and a species that has sometimes been either seen or heard on the prairie, is also missing. The Sora Rail was almost certainly present but simply overlooked at the Salt Basin in 1900. The King Rail has also been found there in recent years, and the Common Moorhen has nested.

The following list includes those species reported in either or both summaries, with notes on their relative frequency at the stated times:

Common Loon [*Gavia immer*] Uncommon at Salt Basin.  
Pied-billed Grebe [*Podilymbus podiceps*]. Common at Salt Basin.  
Horned Grebe [*Podiceps auritus*]. Frequent at Salt Basin.  
Eared Grebe [*Podiceps nigricollis*]. Frequent at Salt Basin.  
American White Pelican [*Pelecanus erythrorhynchos*]. Frequent at Salt Basin.  
Double-crested Cormorant [*Phalacrocorax auritus*]. Rare at Salt Basin.  
American Bittern [*Botaurus lentiginosus*]. Common at Salt Basin, also reported at prairie.  
Least Bittern [*Ixobrychus exilis*]. Rare at Salt Basin.  
Great Blue Heron [*Ardea herodias*]. Uncommon at Salt Basin.



Snowy Egret [*Egretta thula*]. Rare at Salt Basin.  
Little Blue Heron [*Egretta caerulea*]. Rare at Salt Basin.  
Green Heron [*Butorides virescens*]. Common at Salt Basin.  
Black-crowned Night-Heron [*Nycticorax nycticorax*]. Common at Salt Basin.  
Greater White-fronted Goose [*Anser albifrons*]. Rare at Salt Basin.  
Snow Goose [*Chen caerulescens*]. Common at Salt Basin.  
Canada Goose [*Branta canadensis*]. Common at Salt Basin.  
Trumpeter Swan [*Cygnus buccinator*]. Rare at Salt Basin.  
Tundra Swan [*Cygnus columbianus*]. Rare at Salt Basin.  
Wood Duck [*Aix sponsa*]. Frequent at Salt Basin.  
Gadwall [*Anas strepera*]. Common at Salt Basin.  
American Wigeon [*Anas americana*]. Uncommon at Salt Basin.  
American Black Duck [*Anas rubripes*]. Uncommon at Salt Basin.  
Mallard [*Anas platyrhynchos*]. Common at Salt Basin.  
Blue-winged Teal [*Anas discors*]. Common at Salt Basin.  
Cinnamon Teal [*Anas cyanoptera*]. Very rare at Salt Basin.  
Northern Shoveler [*Anas clypeata*]. Common at Salt Basin.  
Northern Pintail [*Anas acuta*]. Common at Salt Basin.  
Green-winged Teal [*Anas crecca*]. Common at Salt Basin.  
Canvasback [*Aythya valisineria*]. Frequent at Salt Basin.  
Redhead [*Aythya americana*]. Frequent at Salt Basin.  
Ring-necked Duck [*Aythya collaris*]. Very rare at Salt Basin.  
Lesser Scaup [*Aythya affinis*]. Frequent at Salt Basin.  
Surf Scoter [*Melanitta perspicillata*]. Rare at Salt Basin.  
White-winged Scoter [*Melanitta fusca*]. Rare at Salt Basin.  
Black Scoter [*Melanitta nigra*]. Very rare at Salt Basin.  
Bufflehead [*Bucephala albeola*]. Common at Salt Basin.  
Common Goldeneye [*Bucephala clangula*]. Very rare at Salt Basin.  
Hooded Merganser [*Lophodytes cucullatus*]. Frequent at Salt Basin.  
Common Merganser [*Mergus merganser*]. Rare at Salt Basin.  
Red-breasted Merganser [*Mergus serrator*]. Rare at Salt Basin.  
Ruddy Duck [*Oxyura jamaicensis*]. Common at Salt Basin.  
Northern Harrier [*Circus cyaneus*]. Nest found at prairie.  
Sharp-shinned Hawk [*Accipiter striatus*]. Seen once at prairie.  
Swainson's Hawk [*Buteo swainsoni*]. Seen during March and May at prairie.  
Red-tailed Hawk [*Buteo jamaicensis*]. Seen during March and May at prairie.  
American Kestrel [*Falco sparverius*]. Reported April and May at prairie.  
Ring-necked Pheasant [*Phasianus colchicus*]. Several seen at prairie.  
Northern Bobwhite [*Colinus virginianus*]. Seen in April and May at prairie.  
Virginia Rail [*Rallus limicola*]. Common at Salt Basin.  
American Coot [*Fulica americana*]. Common at Salt Basin.  
Sandhill Crane [*Grus canadensis*]. Rare at Salt Basin.  
Whooping Crane [*Grus americana*]. Rare at Salt Basin.  
Black-bellied Plover [*Pluvialis squatarola*]. Uncommon at Salt Basin.  
American Golden-Plover [*Pluvialis dominica*]. Frequent at Salt Basin.  
Semipalmated Plover [*Charadrius semipalmatus*]. Common at Salt Basin.

Piping Plover [*Charadrius melodus*]. Rare at Salt Basin.  
Killdeer [*Charadrius vociferus*]. Common at Salt Basin.  
American Avocet [*Recurvirostra americana*]. Uncommon at Salt Basin.  
Greater Yellowlegs [*Tringa melanoleuca*]. Uncommon at Salt Basin.  
Lesser Yellowlegs [*Tringa flavipes*]. Common at Salt Basin.  
Solitary Sandpiper [*Tringa solitaria*]. Frequent at Salt Basin.  
Willet [*Catoptrophorus semipalmatus*]. Infrequent at Salt Basin.  
Spotted Sandpiper [*Actitis macularia*]. Uncommon at Salt Basin.  
Upland Sandpiper [*Bartramia longicauda*]. Frequent at Salt Basin.  
Hudsonian Godwit [*Limosa haemastica*]. Infrequent at Salt Basin.  
Marbled Godwit [*Limosa fedoa*]. Infrequent at Salt Basin.  
Ruddy Turnstone [*Arenaria interpres*]. Very rare at Salt Basin.  
Red Knot [*Calidris canutus*]. Very rare at Salt Basin.  
Sanderling [*Calidris alba*]. Rare at Salt Basin.  
Semipalmated Sandpiper [*Calidris pusilla*]. Recorded at Salt Basin.  
White-rumped Sandpiper [*Calidris fuscicollis*]. Common at Salt Basin.  
Baird's Sandpiper [*Calidris bairdii*]. Very common at Salt Basin.  
Pectoral Sandpiper [*Calidris melanotos*]. Uncommon at Salt Basin.  
Dunlin [*Calidris alpina*]. Very rare at Salt Basin.  
Stilt Sandpiper [*Calidris himantopus*]. Uncommon at Salt Basin.  
Buff-breasted Sandpiper [*Tryngites subruficollis*]. Uncommon at Salt Basin.  
Short-billed Dowitcher [*Limnodromus griseus*]. Infrequent at Salt Basin.  
Long-billed Dowitcher [*Limnodromus scolopaceus*]. Infrequent at Salt Basin.  
Common Snipe [*Gallinago gallinago*]. Infrequent at Salt Basin.  
Wilson's Phalarope [*Phalaropus tricolor*]. Common at Salt Basin.  
Red-necked Phalarope [*Phalaropus lobatus*]. Uncommon at Salt Basin.  
Pomarine Jaeger [*Stercorarius pomarinus*]. Very rare at Salt Basin.  
Franklin's Gull [*Larus pipixcan*]. Seen in May over prairie; common at Salt Basin.  
Laughing Gull [*Larus atricilla*]. Listed as "Frequent" at Salt Basin, but certainly a mis-identification, perhaps involving Franklin's Gull.  
Bonaparte's Gull [*Larus philadelphia*]. Uncommon at Salt Basin.  
Ring-billed Gull [*Larus delawarensis*]. Seen in May over prairie; uncommon at Salt Basin.  
Herring Gull [*Larus argentatus*]. Seen in May over prairie; rare at Salt Basin.  
Caspian Tern [*Sterna caspia*]. Very rare at Salt Basin.  
Forster's Tern [*Sterna forsteri*]. Uncommon at Salt Basin.  
Common Tern [*Sterna hirundo*]. Uncommon at Salt Basin.  
Least Tern [*Sterna antillarum*]. Uncommon at Salt Basin.  
Black Tern [*Chlidonias niger*]. Common at Salt Basin.  
Mourning Dove [*Zenaidura macroura*]. Common at prairie.  
Yellow-billed Cuckoo [*Coccyzus americanus*]. Seen once at prairie.  
Barn Owl [*Tyto alba*]. Seen once at prairie.  
Eastern Screech-Owl [*Otus asio*]. Seen several times at prairie.  
Great Horned Owl [*Bubo virginianus*]. Seen once at prairie.  
Burrowing Owl [*Athene cunicularia*]. Seen in April at prairie.



Long-eared Owl [*Asio otus*]. Seen several times at prairie.  
Short-eared Owl [*Asio flammeus*]. Seen in April and May at prairie.  
Chimney Swift [*Chaetura pelagica*]. Seen in May at prairie.  
Red-headed Woodpecker [*Melanerpes erythrocephalus*]. Common at prairie.  
Downy Woodpecker [*Picoides pubescens*]. Seen commonly at prairie.  
Hairy Woodpecker [*Picoides villosus*]. Seen several times at prairie.  
Northern Flicker [*Colaptes auratus*]. Commonly seen at prairie.  
Olive-sided Flycatcher [*Contopus cooperi*]. Seen once at prairie.  
Least Flycatcher [*Empidonax minimus*]. Seen in May at prairie.  
Eastern Phoebe [*Sayornis phoebe*]. Seen March to May at prairie.  
Great Crested Flycatcher [*Myiarchus crinitus*]. Heard during May at prairie.  
Western Kingbird [*Tyrannus verticalis*]. Seen in May at prairie.  
Eastern Kingbird [*Tyrannus tyrannus*]. Seen May to August at prairie.  
Bell's Vireo [*Vireo bellii*]. Common in May at the prairie.  
Red-eyed Vireo [*Vireo olivaceus*]. Reported in May at prairie.  
Blue Jay [*Cyanocitta cristata*]. Seen spring and fall at prairie.  
Black-billed Magpie [*Pica pica*]. Seen once at prairie.  
American Crow [*Corvus brachyrhynchos*]. Commonly seen at prairie.  
Horned Lark [*Eremophila alpestris*]. Seen January to May at prairie.  
Purple Martin [*Progne subis*]. Seen in May at prairie.  
Northern Rough-winged Swallow [*Stelgidopteryx serripennis*]. Seen once at prairie.  
Bank Swallow [*Riparia riparia*]. Seen April to May at prairie.  
Barn Swallow [*Hirundo rustica*]. Seen April to October at prairie.  
Black-capped Chickadee [*Poecile atricapillus*]. Commonly seen at prairie.  
Tufted Titmouse [*Baeolophus bicolor*]. Seen once at prairie.  
House Wren [*Troglodytes aedon*]. Nest found at prairie.  
Eastern Bluebird [*Sialia sialis*]. Seen March to May at prairie.  
Swainson's Thrush [*Catharus ustulatus*]. Seen once in May at prairie.  
American Robin [*Turdus migratorius*]. Few present in prairie and ravines.  
Gray Catbird [*Dumetella carolinensis*]. Common from May to September at prairie.  
Brown Thrasher [*Toxostoma rufum*]. Seen April to August at prairie.  
American Pipit [*Anthus rubescens*]. Seen September and October at prairie.  
Yellow Warbler [*Dendroica petechia*]. Common in May at prairie.  
Yellow-rumped Warbler [*Dendroica coronata*]. Seen in May at prairie.  
Blackpoll Warbler [*Dendroica striata*]. Seen once in May prairie.  
American Redstart [*Setophaga ruticilla*]. Seen in May at prairie.  
Common Yellowthroat [*Geothlypis trichas*]. Seen in April at prairie.  
Yellow-breasted Chat [*Icteria virens*]. Seen in May at prairie.  
Eastern Towhee [*Pipilo erythrophthalmus*]. Seen April to August at prairie.  
American Tree Sparrow [*Spizella arborea*]. Seen November to April at prairie.  
Chipping Sparrow [*Spizella passerina*]. Seen April and May at prairie.  
Clay-colored Sparrow [*Spizella pallida*]. Seen once in May at prairie.

Field Sparrow [*Spizella pusilla*]. Seen April and May at prairie.  
Vesper Sparrow [*Pooecetes gramineus*]. Seen April and May at prairie.  
Grasshopper Sparrow [*Ammodramus savannarum*]. Common nester at prairie.  
Song Sparrow [*Melospiza melodia*]. Seen February to May at prairie.  
White-throated Sparrow [*Zonotrichia albicollis*]. Seen in May at prairie.  
Harris's Sparrow [*Zonotrichia querula*]. Common from October to May at prairie.  
White-crowned Sparrow [*Zonotrichia leucophrys*]. Seen once in May at prairie.  
Dark-eyed Junco [*Junco hyemalis*]. Seen in November and in April at prairie.  
Northern Cardinal [*Cardinalis cardinalis*]. Common in ravines at prairie.  
Rose-breasted Grosbeak [*Pheucticus ludovicianus*]. Seen once in May at prairie.  
Blue Grosbeak [*Guiraca caerulea*]. Seen once in May at prairie.  
Lazuli Bunting [*Passerina amoena*]. Seen once in May at prairie.  
Indigo Bunting [*Passerina cyanea*]. Seen once in May at prairie.  
Dickcissel [*Spiza americana*]. Common from May to August at prairie.  
Bobolink [*Dolichonyx oryzivorus*]. Seen once in May at prairie.  
Red-winged Blackbird [*Agelaius phoeniceus*]. Seen in May at prairie.  
Eastern Meadowlark [*Sturnella magna*]. Common through summer at prairie.  
Western Meadowlark [*Sturnella neglecta*]. Common through summer at prairie.  
Common Grackle [*Quiscalus quiscula*]. Common in spring flying over prairie.  
Brown-headed Cowbird [*Molothrus ater*]. Seen April and May at prairie.  
Orchard Oriole [*Icterus spurius*]. Seen in May at prairie.  
Baltimore Oriole [*Icterus galbula*]. Seen in May at prairie.  
American Goldfinch [*Carduelis tristis*]. Common in ravines at prairie.  
House Sparrow [*Passer domesticus*]. Seldom seen at prairie.

\* \* \* \* \*

### Virginia's Warblers in Kimball County

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This fall 2000 season was marked by a very westerly flavor to the passerine migration with many sightings of western warblers, vireos, and flycatchers in western Nebraska. Most notably, Townsend's Warblers and Cassin's Vireos were seen in good numbers. Additionally, three sightings of Virginia's Warbler and five of Dusky Flycatcher added to the excitement. In this note, we



report this fall's sightings of Virginia's Warbler and comment on the status of this species in Nebraska.

On 26 August 2000, Dinsmore observed a Virginia's Warbler (*Vermivora virginiae*) along the north side of Oliver Reservoir. He studied the bird at close range from 9:52-10:05 a.m. as it foraged with a large flock of migrant passerines. The identification of the bird as a Virginia's Warbler was straightforward. Features noted included the generally dull gray/brown plumage, slightly paler underparts with a very dull yellowish or buff patch at the center of the breast and bright yellow undertail coverts, conspicuous white eyering, plain, unmarked wings, and the nearly constant sideways flicking of the tail. On the basis of the brown tones to the plumage, dusky underparts, lack of a rufous cap, and only a faint hint of a yellow/buff breast patch, he concluded that the bird was an immature female Virginia's Warbler (see Dunn and Garrett 1997). Fontaine saw this individual briefly on 27 August in the same general area.

On 27 August 2000, Fontaine observed a Virginia's Warbler along the gravel road south of exit 1 off Interstate 80 in southwestern Kimball County. The bird was seen shortly after sunrise from 6:45-6:50 a.m. foraging in a stand of Limber Pine approximately 15 meters from the roadside. The Virginia's Warbler was in the company of a loose flock of migrants composed of Wilson's Warblers, Blue-gray Gnatcatchers, and a Brown Thrasher. The bird was seen flicking its tail as it moved from tree to tree. Based on the clean gray breast and bold lemon yellow undertail coverts, he concluded the bird was an adult female.

The final sighting occurred on 3 September 2000 while we were birding together at Oliver Reservoir. From 9:35-9:40 a.m., we observed a Virginia's Warbler with a small flock of migrant passerines below the dam of Oliver Reservoir. The bird appeared in response to our pishing, and we studied it at a distance of no more than 15m. This individual differed markedly from the Virginia's Warbler we saw along the north side of Oliver Reservoir on 26-27 August. This bird was generally a vivid pearl gray color, except that the underparts were slightly paler (whiter). The plain gray head was unmarked except for a bold white eyering and at least a couple of rusty feathers on the crown (remnants of the rufous crown). The wings were plain and lacked any wingbars. The paler underparts were unmarked except for a bright yellow breast patch and bright yellow undertail coverts. The tail was gray as well. The bird spent most of its time perched motionless on a willow branch, although it did flick its tail sideways on at least a couple of occasions. On the basis of the very gray plumage, paler underparts, remnants of a rufous cap, and bright yellow color on the breast and undertail coverts, we concluded that the bird was an adult male Virginia's Warbler.

These records represent the third through fifth reports of Virginia's Warblers in Nebraska. Previous records were on 22 May 1995 at Morrill, Scotts Bluff County (Gubanyi 1996) and on 17 May 1998 at the Bushnell Cemetery, Kimball County (Silcock and Jorgensen 1998). The species has recently been found breeding in small numbers in the western Black Hills of South Dakota (Palmer 1998), and this population may be the source of the birds occurring in Nebraska. An alternative source population may be the Front Range in southeastern Wyoming and northern Colorado. Virginia's Warblers are annual migrants (mostly in spring) at Crow Valley Recreation Area in Weld County, Colorado. This location is approximately 40 km southwest of the southwestern corner of Kimball County. Given the annual status of this species on the well-birded eastern plains of Colorado and the paucity of observers in western Nebraska, we surmise that Virginia's Warblers occur annually in western Nebraska during spring and fall migration. Observers should be aware of this species when birding in the western portion of the state.

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