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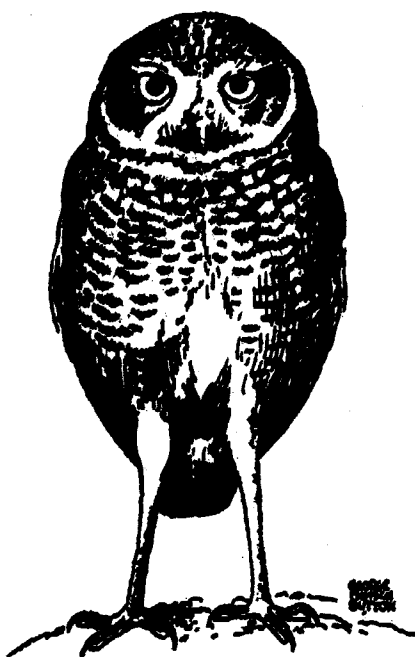
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# *The Nebraska Bird Review*

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Stephen J. Dinsmore, Co-editor

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## SUMMER FIELD REPORT, June-July 2005

Compiled by W. Ross Silcock  
P.O. Box 57, Tabor, IA 51653  
silcock@rosssilcock.com

### INTRODUCTION

The highlights of this season revolve around the excellent wetland habitat that existed in the eastern Rainwater Basin as a result of two things: a period of good rains in May and playa wetlands that have undergone restoration. The latter involves removal of accumulated silt and woody vegetation. Silt removal allows for germination of plants of the native soil bank in the original impervious pan, as well as somewhat deeper and more stable water conditions. These conditions resulted in several important breeding records, such as Pied-billed Grebe, American Coot, Northern Shoveler, and especially Black-necked Stilt. The good water conditions no doubt allowed waterfowl to linger, most unexpectedly Ring-necked Duck and Greater Scaup. Also related to the quality habitat were the increased numbers of lingering shorebirds, probably those which for several reasons may not have completed their northward migration. (Late shorebirds were at L McConaughy also, no doubt for similar reasons.) The removal of woody vegetation at Rainwater Basin wetlands is likely a contributor to the increasing numbers of Greater Prairie-Chicken and Henslow's Sparrow occurring in extensive grassland areas, not necessarily restricted to areas with native grassland species.

There is a clear increase in numbers of southern breeders in Nebraska such as Scissor-tailed Flycatcher and Northern Mockingbird, and White-winged Dove appears to be on the verge of becoming a Nebraska breeding species, if it has not already (see account). A major westward movement of Dickcissels was noted; western birders were quite excited to see this species in such numbers, although, as is typical in the west, they disappeared fairly early, perhaps without breeding.

The work being done by Rocky Mountain Bird Observatory personnel with Mountain Plovers and western Sandhills prairie birds, both efforts essentially on private lands, is encouraging. Mountain Plover nests were located and marked, with permission of the land owners, so that disking of fallow wheat ground did not destroy the nests. A surprisingly large number of nests was found in Kimball County, as well as one in Banner County; productivity was good for these nests. An intriguing find in Sheridan County was a Marbled Godwit nest, one of very few records for the state, but raising the possibility that this species indeed breeds in Nebraska in the vast, remote, and rarely-accessed grasslands of the western Sandhills.

Finally, various NEBirds posts highlighted the concept that hummingbirds that show up from late July to early August are very likely not Ruby-throateds, which do not appear until mid- or late August. Although this is no surprise to western birders, observers in central and eastern Nebraska at locations where hummers were not seen during the summer should carefully scrutinize any hummer that appears in late Jul-early August.

## ABBREVIATIONS

ADF: Arbor Day Farm, Otoe Co  
BBS: Breeding Bird Survey  
BOL: Branched Oak L, Lancaster Co  
Cem: Cemetery  
CLNWR: Crescent L NWR, Garden Co  
CRP: Conservation Reserve Program (USDA)  
FF: Fontenelle Forest, Sarpy Co  
FL: Funk Lagoon, Phelps Co  
GPD: Gavins Point Dam, Cedar/Knox Cos  
HCR: Harlan Co Res, Harlan Co  
ICSP: Indian Cave SP, Nemaha/Richardson Cos  
LM: L McConaughy, Keith Co  
LO: L Ogallala, Keith Co  
m.ob.: many observers  
MRET: Missouri River Ecology Trail, Neale Woods, Washington Co  
NC: Nature Center  
NF: National Forest  
NGP: Nebraska Game and Parks  
NM: National Monument  
NOURC: Nebraska Ornithologists' Union Records Committee  
NWR: National Wildlife Refuge  
PL: Pawnee L., Lancaster Co  
Res: Reservoir  
e. RWB: eastern Rainwater Basin, southcentral and southeast Nebraska  
SCP: Spring Creek Prairie, Lancaster Co  
SHP: State Historical Park  
SL: Sewage Lagoon(s)  
SP: State Park  
SRA: State Recreation Area  
WLC: West Lawn Cemetery, Gering  
WMA: (State) Wildlife Management Area  
WP: Wilderness Park, Lincoln  
WPA: (Federal) Waterfowl Production Area  
WS: Waco WPA/Spikerush WMA, York Co  
WSR: Wind Springs Ranch, Sioux Co.

## GAZETTEER

Ash Hollow SHP: Garden Co  
Chadron SP: Dawes Co  
Deep Well WMA: Hamilton Co  
Freeman Lakes WPA: Seward Co  
Harvard WPA: Clay Co  
Kiowa WMA: Scotts Bluff Co  
L Minatare: Scotts Bluff Co  
Monroe Canyon: Sioux Co  
North Lake Basin WMA: Seward Co  
Old Stage Hill Road: Scotts Bluff Co  
Sowbelly Canyon: Sioux Co

Spikerush WMA: York Co  
Waco WPA: York Co  
Wildcat Hills: Scotts Bluff-Banner Cos

#### OBSERVERS

AK: Alice Kenitz, Gering  
AR: Alice Rumery, Kearney  
ARy: Allen Reyer, Bellevue  
BFH: Bill F. Huser, South Sioux City  
B&LP: Babs & Loren Padelford, Bellevue  
BW: Bruce Walgren, Casper, WY  
BY: Ben Young, Salem, OR  
CK: Courtney Kerns, Alliance  
CNK: Clem N. Klaphake, Bellevue  
CT: Christine Thody, Lincoln  
DB: Duane Bright, Bellevue  
D&CN: Don & Colleen Noecker, Albion  
D&JP: Don & Janis Paseka, Ames  
DK: Dan Kim, Wood River  
DM: Don Maas, Omaha  
DSt: Dave Stage, Lincoln  
EB: Elliott Bedows, Bellevue  
EM: Erin McFadden, Omaha  
GL: Gary Lingle, Grand Island  
G&WH: Glen & Wanda Hoge, Alma  
HA: Henry Armknecht, Ovid, CO  
HKH: Helen K. Hughson, Mitchell  
JGJ: Joel G. Jorgensen, Blair  
JJ: Jan Johnson, Wakefield  
JSt: Jon Strong, Omaha  
JT: Jerry Toll, Omaha  
KD: Kathy DeLara, Mitchell  
KP: Kevin Poague, Lincoln  
KS: Kent Skaggs, Kearney  
L&CF: Laurence and Carol Falk, Nebraska City  
LB: Laurel Badura, Kearney  
LBl: Laurine Blankenau, Omaha  
LE: Larry Einemann, Lincoln  
LF: Lonnie Frimann, Scottsbluff  
LR: Lanny Randolph, Gibbon  
MB: Mark Brogie, Creighton  
MU: Mark Urwiller, Kearney  
NR: Neal Ratzlaff, Omaha  
P&DD: Phyllis and Dean Drawbaugh, Scottsbluff  
PDU: Paul Dunbar, Hastings  
PK: Page Klug, Omaha  
PS: Phil Swanson, Omaha  
RE: Rick Eades, Lincoln  
RG: Ruth Green, Bellevue  
RH: Robin Harding, Gibbon

SA: Sue Amiotte, Chadron  
SJ: Stephen Jones, Boulder, CO  
SJD: Stephen J. Dinsmore, Ames, IA  
TJW: T.J. Walker, Brady  
WF: William Flack, Madison  
WM: Wayne Mollhoff, Ashland  
WRS: W. Ross Silcock, Tabor, IA

#### SPECIES ACCOUNTS

**Greater White-fronted Goose:** The only stragglers reported were 2 at Harvard WPA 17-18 Jun (PDu,JGJ) and one at PL 30 Jul (LE).

**Snow Goose:** Stragglers were reported from the e. RWB 4-25 Jun, as is usual (JGJ,PDu,LE,WF); best count was only 4 (JGJ). Less usual were 2 in Antelope Co 22 Jun (MB).

**Canada Goose:** The 200 still in the e. RWB 4 Jun was noteworthy; only 30 were there 11 Jun (JGJ). Summering there is limited, and breeding essentially unreported (JGJ). The 100 at Conestoga L, Lancaster Co, 23 Jul (LE) was the first fall flock noted.

**Trumpeter Swan:** Three on a BBS route in n. Sheridan Co 18 Jun were unexpected, but their presence may have resulted from drier conditions farther east (CNK); the Gordon area is at the nw. edge of the summer range.

**Wood Duck:** Many broods were noted throughout the state; this species is doing very well.

**Gadwall:** Routine reports.

**American Wigeon:** Three on 4 Jun in the e. RWB (JGJ) and 4 on 5 Jun at LM (SJD) were a bit late.

**Mallard:** Routine reports.

**Blue-winged Teal:** A hen with 20 ducklings at Harvard WPA 5 Jun (PDu) had her "hands" full; the several irresponsible males with her fled the scene.

**Cinnamon Teal:** Numbers appeared to be down at Kiowa WMA, where only 2 males were reported on 4 Jun (SJD). The only other report was of a male at LM 5 Jun (SJD).

**Northern Shoveler:** Indicative of excellent habitat at a few e. RWB locations this summer was a brood at North Lake Basin 16 Jul (JGJ); breeding is unusual away from the Sandhills.

**Northern Pintail:** A straggler was at WS 4 Jul (DSt); few occur in mid-summer away from the Sandhills, but breeding occurs on occasion in the e. RWB.

**Green-winged Teal:** A few summered in the e. RWB (JGJ), probably molt-migrants or non-breeding stragglers.

**Canvasback:** None were reported; breeds regularly in small numbers in the Sandhills.

**Redhead:** Several presumed non-breeders were noted in the e. RWB through 9 Jul (JGJ,RE,LR,RH); best count was 25 on 24 Jun (JGJ).

**Ring-necked Duck:** This species does not breed in Nebraska and summer records are few, especially in the e. RWB, where there were only 5 records prior to this summer. Thus surprising was the presence of 6 males at 4 locations. Singles were at North Lake Basin 4-18 Jun (JGJ), WS 11 Jun-4 Jul (JGJ,DSt), and Sinninger WPA, York Co, 11 Jun-3 Jul (JGJ). Three were at Deep Well WMA 11 Jun-9 Jul (LR,RH) and 2 were there 17 Jul (MB).

- Greater Scaup:** Also rare in summer, a female apparently of this species was seen in Fillmore Co 3 Jul (JGJ; [www.jorgensencontracting.com/birding.htm](http://www.jorgensencontracting.com/birding.htm)). This is the first summer record for the state, and the only record 28 May-3 Oct.
- Lesser Scaup:** Also rare in mid-summer in the e. RWB, up to 7 were noted at various locations through 16 Jul (JGJ,LE).
- Hooded Merganser:** The usual female/immature-plumaged birds were noted in the e. RWB through 24 Jun, peak count 22 on 4 Jun (JGJ); interestingly, none were found 16 Jul or thereafter (JGJ). These birds are probably one-year-old pre-breeders of both genders and apparently depart for molt locations around the end of Jun.
- Common Merganser:** The only report was from a regular molt location (when water is present!), Lake Alice, Scotts Bluff Co, where 24 were present 23 Jul (KD). As many as 200 birds molt here, usually arriving around mid-Jul.
- Ruddy Duck:** A few (peak count 11 on 3 Jul) were noted in the e. RWB (JGJ,LR,RH,RE) but no breeding evidence was found other than displays by males. This species has bred on occasion in the e. RWB.
- Chukar:** One seen in the Little Lake Alice, Scotts Bluff Co, area 16 Jul (P&DD) was presumably an escapee, but the habitat in the area would seem more suitable for a population to be established than, say, Branched Oak Lake or Nebraska City!
- Gray Partridge:** Rather southerly were 2 in Hamilton Co 21 Jul (MB); the last southward expansion was in the 1980s, and this sighting as well as one of 16 birds in Dodge Co in 2003 suggest another may be underway.
- Ring-necked Pheasant:** Routine reports.
- Sharp-tailed Grouse:** Routine reports.
- Greater Prairie-Chicken:** Booming continued well into Jun, with active leks in Custer and Lincoln Cos 12 Jun (TJW), 13 birds on a lek near Grafton 11 Jun (JGJ), and up to 18 birds at Hultine WPA, Clay Co, 24 Jun (JGJ). The Hultine location is significant, as it is a renovated e. RWB playa wetland; use by prairie-chickens of these areas, where trees and brush have been removed, is on the increase (see Spring 2005).
- Wild Turkey:** Routine reports.
- Northern Bobwhite:** This species is doing well in canyon lands in Custer and se. Lincoln Cos; 30-35 were counted on a BBS route there 12 Jun, and a "fair number" of calling males were heard each day in se. Lincoln Co 15-21 Jun (TJW).
- Common Loon:** The only reports were from a regular summering location, LO, where a basic-plumaged bird was seen 21 Jun (SJD), possibly the same bird 3 Jul (MB), and an alternate adult rather early 14 Jul (BY); the latter may have been a failed breeder moving south early.
- Pied-billed Grebe:** The quality wetland habitat this summer in the e. RWB led to "widespread nesting" by this species (JGJ). Specific reports were of 2 broods at WS 16 Jul (JGJ) and an adult incubating at Deep Well WMA 16 Jul (LR,RH).
- Eared Grebe:** Three stragglers were in the e. RWB 11 Jun (JGJ), and as many as 36, including many in alternate plumage, were still at North Platte SL 5 Jun (WRS). Few are found away from breeding areas after the first week of Jun.
- Western Grebe:** Best count was 464 at LM 5 Jun (SJD).
- Clark's Grebe:** An adult at WS 4 Jun was the first e. RWB record and 2nd for the RWB as a whole (JGJ; details). This species is a casual spring migrant eastward. An excellent count was the 13 at LM 5 Jun (SJD).

- American White Pelican:** Best count was 544 at LM 5 Jun (SJD), and the last roving spring bands were 105 at Lewellen 18 Jun (KD) and 82 at Sutherland Res, Lincoln Co, 23 Jun (TJW). First fall returnees were 83 at PL 23 Jul (LE). A few stragglers occur in mid-summer.
- Double-crested Cormorant:** Unexpected in mid-summer in the south and east were singles at HCR 6 Jul (G&WH) and at North Lake Basin 16 Jul (JGJ).
- American Bittern:** More conspicuous than usual in the e. RWB were 1-3 at Harvard WPA 17-18 Jun (PDu,JGJ) and one at Deep Well WMA 11 Jun (LR,RH). Breeding status is uncertain at LM; one was there 21 Jun (SJD).
- Least Bittern:** Good water conditions at a few locations produced several sightings of this elusive species, most in the e. RWB. Two in Madison Co 2 Jun (MB) were furthest north. One was at Harvard WPA 12 Jun (PDu), 1-2 were at Rauscher WPA, Fillmore Co, 18 Jun (JGJ), and up to 4 (on 24 Jun) were at WS 20 Jun-17 Jul (ARy,JGJ, m. ob.).
- Great Blue Heron:** The "typical mid-summer surge" yielded 60 in the e. RWB 24 Jun (JGJ), and 47 were at WS 4 Jul (DSt).
- Great Egret:** Jun usually has the lowest numbers, and this Jun was about normal, with 1-3 at various e. RWB locations (JGJ,ARy,D&JP). Numbers generally increase in Jul, but best count was only 7, in the e. RWB 16 Jul (JGJ). Two at Kiowa WMA 16 Jul (P&DD) and one in Scotts Bluff Co 18 Jul (KD) were among few fall records and the earliest yet for the Panhandle.
- Snowy Egret:** Three singles were reported, all westerly: one stood out in a cattle feedlot in Greeley Co 4 Jun (LR,RH), one was at LM 5 Jun (SJD), and another was in Morrill Co 25 Jun (AK). Late Jun records are unusual.
- Little Blue Heron:** Rare in Jun, an adult was at WS 11 Jun (JGJ). No others were reported.
- Cattle Egret:** Good counts were 41 at wetlands near Verona 18 Jun (JGJ) and 25 at HCR 6 Jul (G&WH). Small groups wander about in summer and may breed if suitable conditions are found.
- Green Heron:** One at LM 5 Jun (SJD) and another at Paxton 21 Jun (SJD) were westerly.
- Black-crowned Night-Heron:** Routine reports.
- Yellow-crowned Night-Heron:** The only report was of a juvenile at North Lake Basin 3 Jul (JGJ). There are few reports of this rare summer visitor to Nebraska, most in recent years from the e. RWB.
- White-faced Ibis:** Exciting was the 3rd confirmed nesting record for the e. RWB: 6-10 birds were present 24 Jun and 3 pairs were discovered nesting in cattails at Rauscher WPA, Fillmore Co, 3 Jul (JGJ, photos). The two previous attempts were unsuccessful: a pair nesting in 1916 were shot and the marsh dried up to end a 2001 attempt. Others (1-4) were noted through Jun at various locations, including 10 at HCR 30 Jun (G&WH); 1-2 remained there through the period (G&WH) and 2 were at Deep Well WMA 17 Jul (MB).
- Turkey Vulture:** Routine reports.
- Osprey:** One of fewer than 30 summer reports was at Valentine Fish Hatchery 14 Jul (B&LP). Summer Ospreys in Nebraska are likely birds not yet of breeding age.
- Mississippi Kite:** Up to 6 were seen at Ogallala during the period (MB,EB,SJD,AR,KS); the high count was 6 on 3 Jul (MB). Two had returned to Red Cloud, the only other currently known breeding site, and were present from late May to mid-Jun (KS); no breeding activity was noted.



- Bald Eagle:** A nest near Rogers had 3 juveniles standing beside it 1 Jun (D&JP). The long-documented nest at Lake Alice, Scotts Bluff Co, fledged one chick in mid-Jun, the 30th fledged from that nest (Brad McKinney, fide AK).
- Northern Harrier:** Adults seen at locations suitable for breeding were one at Mallard Haven WPA, Fillmore Co, 11 Jun (JGJ) and a pair over CRP grassland in Chase Co 23 Jun (TJW).
- Cooper's Hawk:** A pair in Bellevue ousted by crows (see Spring Report) moved a short distance and nested successfully, fledging 4 young (B&LP).
- Red-shouldered Hawk:** Good news was the presence of one at Neale Woods, Douglas Co, 6-7 Jun (JT,NR); currently the only known summering location is FF, where one was found 26 Jun (CNK).
- Broad-winged Hawk:** The only report was of an adult in north Omaha 10 Jul (B&LP); summering and breeding birds are reported occasionally in the Missouri River Valley.
- Swainson's Hawk:** South-easternmost were singles in Dodge Co 2-6 Jun (D&JP) and at Springer WPA, Hamilton Co, 11 Jun (LR,RH); both may have been late migrants.
- Red-tailed Hawk:** Three recently-fledged juveniles were seen in Custer Co 12 Jun (TJW).
- Ferruginous Hawk:** Routine reports.
- Golden Eagle:** Routine reports.
- American Kestrel:** Routine reports.
- Prairie Falcon:** Routine reports.
- Peregrine Falcon:** Two birds were at the Capitol Building in Lincoln 12 Jun (WF); no breeding evidence was reported. One chasing shorebirds in Sarpy Co 26 Jul (B&LP) was likely one of the Omaha breeding pair. Another at Harvard WPA 5 Jun (PDu), if not from Omaha or Lincoln, was a very late migrant.
- Virginia Rail:** Reports in Jun from suitable habitat indicate breeding; south-easternmost, where scarcest, were singles at WS 20 Jun (ARy) and Wood Duck WMA, Stanton Co, 8-9 Jun (WF). Also uncommon in the southwest, one was "probably nesting" in Dundy Co 7 Jun (TJW).
- Sora:** Possibly even more rare in mid-summer in the RWB than Virginia Rail, 2-5 were reported at various basins 4-18 Jun (JGJ,LR,RH).
- Common Moorhen:** One of fewer than 10 e. RWB records, and about 35 in all for the state, was a single at Waco WPA, York Co, 11-20 Jun (JGJ,ARy).
- American Coot:** Good water levels at a few e. RWB wetlands resulted in breeding; at least 20 nests were at North Lake Basin as well as a few at other sites 4 Jun (JGJ). At least 4 nests were at Deep Well WMA 11 Jun (LR,RH) and at least one brood with 7 chicks was present there 15-16 Jul (MB,LR,RH). Five broods, one with 6 chicks, were at WS 16 Jul (JGJ).
- Sandhill Crane:** The only report was of a flyover near Sacramento-Wilcox WMA, Phelps Co, 7 Jun (PK); this may have been a late migrant, but there are several recent summer records, including breeding, from the RWB.
- Black-bellied Plover:** A female in York Co 10 Jun (JGJ) was record late for the e. RWB; there is but a handful of later records statewide.
- American Golden-Plover:** Only the 3rd and 4th Jun records for Nebraska were one in York Co 17 Jun (JGJ) and 2 birds, one molting and the other in basic plumage and with an injured leg, at WS 24-25 Jun (JGJ,LE), with one also present 26 Jun (JSt). An alternate-plumaged bird at Deep Well WMA 9 Jul (LR,RH) was the earliest fall date on record; another was at Freeman Lakes 16 Jul (JGJ).

**Snowy Plover:** The only reports were of 3-4 at LM 5-21 Jun (SJD), where 7 nests were located by Central Nebraska Public Power and Irrigation District personnel (Gabe Wilson, fide SJD). The total nests found in 2004 and 2005 is 17, rather amazing considering that the 2 nests found there in 2003 were Nebraska's 4th and 5th breeding records!

**Semipalmated Plover:** Fourth-latest for Nebraska, but record-late for the e. RWB, were 2 at Wilkins WPA, Fillmore Co, 11 Jun (JGJ). First for fall was one in the e. RWB 16 Jul (JGJ).

**Piping Plover:** The incredible numbers nesting at LM continue: 202 nests were located by Central Nebraska Public Power and Irrigation District personnel (Gabe Wilson, fide SJD) this summer, following the 182 in 2004 and 117 in 2003. The Northern Great Plains population of Piping Plovers was only 1981 in 2001 and the world population was 5945 (*The Birds of North America Online*), which indicates the importance of the LM breeding population since. The Spring Report noted that on 28 May (actually 27 May) the 4 eggs from the nesting pair at L Minatare were removed due to rising water levels and transferred to nests at LM (fide KD). The transfer was unsuccessful, as at LM 2 eggs were destroyed by dogs and the other two were abandoned when the adults departed with two newly-hatched chicks from their own eggs (fide KD). However the L. Minatare plovers renested after the transfer, with 1 egg present 6 Jun (KD). No other eggs were laid in this new nest, and the single egg was moved to LM 9 Jun; it too was predated, apparently by a skunk (fide KD). High water levels prevented any further nesting activity. The female of the nesting pair at L Minatare was one of 3 banded at L Diefenbaker, Saskatchewan, in 2004 (fide KD). Rare in the e. RWB, 2 were in se. York Co 11 Jun (LE). High water reduced the number of nesting sites to two along the Platte River between Columbus and Plattsmouth (CT).

**Killdeer:** Best count was 182 at a single e. RWB location 16 Jul (JGJ); Jul aggregations are probably local birds and their young.

**Mountain Plover:** Working with landowners in the s. Panhandle to protect known nests from tillage loss by locating and marking the nest locations has been a success; this year 47 nests in Kimball Co and one in Banner Co, located in about 20,000 acres of dryland wheat fields, were successful (fide CK). A nest with 3 eggs was found in Kimball Co 5 Jun (SJD).

**Black-necked Stilt:** This species has become quite numerous in the w. Sandhills in recent years, but unexpected was its major incursion into the e. RWB this spring and summer, including nestings at 3 locations, the first for the e. RWB and easternmost for Nebraska (pers. comm. JGJ). These events followed heavy rains that filled playa basins, notably newly-renovated basins at Trumbull Basin, Adams Co, and Spikerush WMA. The Spring Report noted the presence at Harvard WPA of 6 birds and 2 nests in late May; by 19 Jun only 2 birds were present, but the pair had a nest containing 4 eggs (PDu,JGJ). There were 7 birds at Harvard WPA 23 Jun (PDu), but the active nest was empty, with no eggshells present (PDu). No stilts were at Harvard WPA 30 Jul (PDu). A single at Trumbull Basin, Adams Co, 4 Jun and 8 birds there 17 Jun (JGJ) were followed by successful nesting: a pair with 3 downy young, as well as another agitated pair of adults, were seen 24 Jun (JGJ). No further information was received. Two birds were found at Spikerush WMA 15-16 Jun (GW,EBa), and 4 were there, along with a nest containing 2 eggs, on 18 Jun (JGJ). Up to 6 adults were present 20 Jun (ARy) through 17 Jul (DSt,MB), and the nest remained active through 6 Jul (JGJ, m.ob.) but was found predated 11 Jul (DSt). In addition to birds

associated with these 3 nesting events, no fewer than 11 additional were found 13-24 May in Adams, Fillmore, and York Cos; the 2005 e. RWB sightings of around 25 stilts outnumbered the total for all previous years combined (JGJ).

**American Avocet:** Although no nesting activity was noted, 1-4 were found 4 Jun-3 Jul at the same locations that Black-necked Stilts nested (JGJ,LE). There are a few previous breeding records and several summer sightings for the e. RWB.

**Greater Yellowlegs:** Reports 10 Jun in Seward Co (JGJ) and 15 Jun in Morrill Co (AK) were likely fall migrants; there are several records ending 31 May and then beginning 10 Jun, with only one in between. An additional 13 birds were reported 18 Jun-23 Jul (JGJ,AK,LE,BY).

**Lesser Yellowlegs:** Reports were almost continuous through the period, but with a significant 10-day gap 8-16 Jun, which corresponds well with previous data indicating that spring migration ends around 7 Jun and fall birds appear around 16 Jun (compare with Greater Yellowlegs, above). Last was one in Douglas Co 7 Jun (JSt) and first for fall was one at Harvard WPA 17 Jun (PDu). A good early fall count was 84 in the e. RWB 24 Jun (JGJ), and best count was 120 in Sarpy Co 26 Jul (B&LP).

**Solitary Sandpiper:** One in the e. RWB 18 Jun (JGJ) was likely an early fall migrant; continuous fall dates begin 24 Jun. About 7 more were reported through 10 Jul (JGJ,WF,LE).

**Willet:** A bit early for fall, but not by much, were 3 in the e. RWB 24 Jun, including 2 at WS (JGJ). The only other report away from the breeding range was of one in Sarpy Co 26 Jul (B&LP).

**Spotted Sandpiper:** The only report of potential breeding activity was of 2 territorial pairs in Dundy Co 7 Jun (TJW). This species is an uncommon breeder statewide.

**Upland Sandpiper:** Routine reports (whew!).

**Long-billed Curlew:** One in se. Lincoln Co 23 Jun (TJW) was probably a fall migrant, as breeding birds start to leave around mid-Jun, although the se. limit of the breeding range is not well-defined. A good count was the 70 at Winters Creek L, Scotts Bluff Co, 23 Jul (KD).

**Hudsonian Godwit:** Two birds at Freeman Lakes 4 Jun (JGJ) tied the 5th-latest spring date.

**Marbled Godwit:** Exciting was the discovery of a nest with 3 eggs in s. Sheridan Co 16 Jun (CK). This is only the 4th breeding record for the state, but the 3rd since 1990, and it suggests that this species may be breeding in small numbers in the vastness of the w. Sandhills. This species moves through early in spring and so early Jun sightings are likely immatures or failed breeders returning southward. Singles were at Harvard WPA 5 Jun (PDu) and LM the same day (SJD). One at Freeman Lakes 12 Jun was designated the "first fall shorebird" (JGJ). Definite fall movement was indicated by the 35 at LM 21 Jun (SJD).

**Ruddy Turnstone:** One at Harvard WPA 4 Jun was record-late for the e. RWB (JGJ) and tied the 2nd-latest ever for Nebraska.

**Sanderling:** The only reports were from LM, where 7 were found both 5 Jun and 21 Jun (SJD). These may have been the same birds, lollygagging there instead of migrating. There are only 5 records in all from 5 to 30 Jun, all but one at LM.

**Semipalmated Sandpiper:** Generally a late spring migrant, 300 were still in the e. RWB 4 Jun (JGJ) and 41 at LM 5 Jun (SJD). Until this year there were only 8 records 12 Jun-1 Jul. This year there were 3: singles were in the e. RWB 18

and 24 Jun (JGJ) and at LM 21 Jun (SJD). In addition, there were 2 late spring migrants in the e. RWB 11 Jun (JGJ) and another at North Lake Basin the same day (LE). First for fall were 3 at Waco WPA, York Co, 3 Jul (JGJ), rather early.

**Western Sandpiper:** None were reported.

**Least Sandpiper:** Routine reports.

**White-rumped Sandpiper:** Although a notoriously late spring migrant, huge numbers were still at Harvard WPA into Jun, with 3200 there 4 Jun (JGJ) and 3000 the next day (PDu). Some 600 were still in the e. RWB as late as 11 Jun (JGJ) and 60 on 18 Jun (JGJ). Last in the e. RWB was one on 19 Jun (JGJ), but 5 were still at LM 21 Jun (SJD), rather late even for this species.

**Baird's Sandpiper:** Routine reports.

**Pectoral Sandpiper:** Another species that tends to linger in spring, 2 were still at Rauscher WPA, Fillmore Co, 12 Jun (JGJ), but 4-5 in the e. RWB 18 and 24 Jun (JGJ) were very late. There are only 3 previous records 21 Jun-3 Jul. One at WS 4 Jul (DSt) was rather early; first fall dates are 4-5 Jul.

**Dunlin:** New late records for the e. RWB were provided by a single at Harvard WPA 4 Jun (JGJ), another at Freeman Lakes 5 Jun (JGJ), and probably the same bird still at Freeman 11 Jun (LE), a record late date for the state.

**Stilt Sandpiper:** As with other species this spring, several stragglers were reported. Singles at Conestoga L, Lancaster Co, 18 Jun (LE) and in the e. RWB 24 Jun (JGJ) joined only 6 other reports 15 Jun-6 Jul. Some 85 had returned to the e. RWB by 16 Jul (JGJ).

**Buff-breasted Sandpiper:** After record-breaking numbers were found during this spring, it might not be too surprising that the only two Jun records ever were made this year. Singles were at Harvard WPA 4 Jun (JGJ) and WS 25 Jun (LE). Previous late date for the state was 28 May and early fall date 17 Jul.

**Short-billed Dowitcher:** The only report was a rather early "very orange *hendersoni*" identified by call at Deep Well WMA 15 Jul (MB).

**Long-billed Dowitcher:** Two birds in the e. RWB 24 Jun (JGJ) provided only the 2nd record for the state 14 Jun-5 Jul. In the west, 23 in Scotts Bluff Co 18 Jul (KD) were rather early.

**Wilson's Snipe:** First for fall was one in Sarpy Co at a sod farm 26 Jul (B&LP). This is only the 3rd Jul report away from breeding areas, all in the period 26-31 Jul, and indicates that fall movement indeed begins at this time despite the fact that the next earliest fall record is 9 Aug.

**American Woodcock:** This species has moved westward along the Platte River Valley in recent years, previously as far as Kearney and Elm Creek (fide LR,RH). A report has come to hand, however, of one as far west as Sarben, se. Keith Co, 18 Jun 2002 (TJW). Another westerly record was of one near the dam at Calamus Res, Garfield Co, Jun 2000 (LB), and one was displaying at Willow Creek Res, Pierce Co, 14 Jun (WF). These reports suggest that woodcocks may occur in low numbers in damp, wooded areas throughout much of e. and c. Nebraska. Presumably a fall migrant was the one that dropped into the observer's Lincoln yard 24 Jul (LE; homeowners' insurance covers falling objects). There are few fall records.

**Wilson's Phalarope:** Although not very common in mid-summer in the e. RWB, there are a few breeding records. One was presumed nesting based on its behavior at Harvard WPA 17 Jun (PDu), and others were reported in the e. RWB through 18 Jun (JGJ) and 3 Jul (LE). A male in Merrick Co 25 Jun (WF) was out of place, and 8 birds in e. Wheeler Co 23 Jun (MB) were at the east edge of the breeding range.

**Red-necked Phalarope:** None were reported.

**Laughing Gull:** Nebraska's 8th summer record, 15th in all, was an alternate adult at GPD, Cedar Co, 26 Jul (MB). The summer records include birds of all ages.

**Franklin's Gull:** Last spring migrants were 21 at LM 21 Jun (SJD), and first for fall was one in the e. RWB 3 Jul (JGJ). As many as 200 were still present in the e. RWB 11 Jun (JGJ). A leucistic bird, white with bright orange bill and legs, was at Harvard WPA 4 Jun (JGJ).

**Little Gull:** Nebraska's first Jun record, 15th overall, was a first alternate-plumaged bird at LM 21 Jun (SJD).

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

**California Gull:** Small numbers begin to drift in to LM by late Jun, presumably after breeding or breeding failure; only one bird was there 5 Jun (SJD,WRS), but 30 were counted 21 Jun, including 19 adults and 11 immatures (SJD). The only other reports were of a 2nd-summer bird at L Minatare 15 Jun (KD, photo) and 3 birds there 9 Jul (KD).

**Herring Gull:** Only the 2nd documented record for the state of adults in the period 14 May-20 Sep was of two at LM 21 Jun (SJD).

**Lesser Black-backed Gull:** The first alternate-plumaged bird at LM this spring continued through 21 Jun (SJD) for only the 2nd summer record; there are now nearly 50 records in all for the state, most in spring and fall.

**Caspian Tern:** The only reports, all within expected migration periods, were of 3 at LM 5 Jun (SJD) and singles at HCR 20 Jul (G&WH) and at GPD 26 Jul (MB).

**Common Tern:** The only reports were from LM, where an adult was found 5 Jun and 3 adults 21 Jun (SJD), the latter a late spring date. There are no documented records 22 Jun-21 Jul.

**Forster's Tern:** Presumably a spring straggler was one in Scotts Bluff Co 17 Jun (AK); reports away from breeding areas 11 Jun-3 Jul are scarce. Also rather late were 2 at WS 11 Jun (LE). First fall arrivals are in early Jul; 2 were at Deep Well WMA 9 Jul (LR,RH).

**Least Tern:** As with Piping Plover, which often nests in association with this species, high water reduced the number of nesting sites to two along the Platte River between Columbus and Plattsmouth (CT); sightings were made along the eastern Platte River west to Buffalo Co (WF,D&JP). At LM, 13 were present 5 Jun and 6-8 on 14 Jul (BY). A few were noted along the Niobrara River, including 5 in Holt Co 14 Jul (B&LP,D&JP) and 6 at GPD 26 Jul (MB). Unexpected for the date was one at WS 11 Jun (LE); at this time most are at breeding locations. At LM, 19 nests were located by Central Nebraska Public Power and Irrigation District personnel (Gabe Wilson, fide SJD).

**Black Tern:** An excellent count for this late migrant was 1569 at LM 5 Jun (SJD); peak numbers usually occur around the end of May. Late spring migrants (adults and non-breeding year-old immatures) occur well into Jun or early Jul; 12, mostly immatures, were in the e. RWB 11 Jun (JGJ), and 4-7 non-breeding adults were at WS 25 Jun-3 Jul (LE). No age was noted for one at North Lake Basin 25 Jun (LE). The first juveniles appear in mid-Jul and most migrants pass through in Aug.

**Rock Pigeon:** Routine reports.

**Eurasian Collared-Dove:** There were two new counties reporting this species: one was at Laurel, Cedar Co, 10 Jun (WF) and another in Saline Co 30 Jun (D&JP). There are only the following 11 counties without reports, most in

the Sandhills except for Jefferson and Pawnee: Blaine, Boyd, Cherry, Grant, Hooker, Jefferson, Keya Paha, Loup, Pawnee, Sherman, and Thomas.

**White-winged Dove:** Following in the footsteps of the preceding species, reports are increasing rapidly for this species, which, in contrast to Eurasian Collared-Dove, does not seem to hang around during winter. Including a spring record at Kearney, 6 have been reported this spring and summer. Most intriguing was a young bird downed by a storm at Albion 21 Jun (D&CN; photo) that may have fledged in Nebraska, but appeared old enough to have dispersed northward into the state (WM). Others were singles at Alma 3 Jun (G&WH), LM 5 Jun (SJD, photo), near Chadron 5 Jul (SA), and in Brady 23 Jul (TJW). The Chadron and Brady birds were at feeders. There are now about 40 records for Nebraska, all since 1985.

**Mourning Dove:** Routine reports.

**Black-billed Cuckoo:** This was the best season for this species for several years, with about 20 birds reported statewide. A BBS route near Brady tallied 4 (TJW), and 4 were found in e. Otoe Co 14 Jun (L&CF). An adult at a nest with 1-2 young and an egg was seen at Goose Lake WMA, Holt Co, 4 Jul (LR,RH). The cedar canyons in se. Lincoln Co appear to hold a good population, with 3-4 seen per day 15-21 Jun (TJW).

**Yellow-billed Cuckoo:** Good numbers were reported for this cuckoo also, including 20 at ICSP 18 Jun (KD) and 8-10 per day in the cedar canyons of se. Lincoln Co 15-21 Jun (TJW). One at WSR, where unusual, was first seen in spring and continued through the period (HKH).

**Barn Owl:** Routine reports.

**Eastern Screech Owl:** Routine reports.

**Great Horned Owl:** Routine reports.

**Burrowing Owl:** The first e. RWB record since 1998 was of two birds using an old badger hole near Fairmont in n. Fillmore Co 11 Jun (LE); extralimital easterly nestings usually are found in similar situations rather than in (the usually nonexistent!) prairie-dog towns. It is interesting that there is an active prairie-dog town not far away at Wilkins WPA, Fillmore Co, that has not recently hosted Burrowing Owls. Numbers continue high in Scotts Bluff Co; 26 were counted in the Kiowa WMA area 16 Jul (P&DD). Other good counts were 15 at Fort Niobrara NWR, Cherry Co, 15 Jul (D&JP,B&LP) and 12 on a Dundy Co BBS route 6 Jun (DM).

**Barred Owl:** Near the west edge of the current range were 2 at Wood Duck WMA, Stanton Co, 2 and 9 Jun (WF). There are a few CBC records from Madison Co.

**Long-eared Owl:** Four juveniles well-seen 25 Jun in sw. Brown Co (PDu) provided the only report. Breeding probably occurs statewide, especially in areas mostly unpopulated by humans.

**Short-eared Owl:** The only 3 reported were from Panhandle locations: singles from near Kiowa WMA 4 Jun (EB) and 16 Jul (P&DD), and one near Gordon 18 Jun (CNK).

**Common Nighthawk:** Considered migrants were the 31 in Kimball Co 5 Jun (SJD); spring aggregations are unusual, and, somewhat surprisingly, this is a record high spring count.

**Common Poorwill:** This species occurs some distance eastward in spring, but probable local breeders were singles in different se. Lincoln Co canyons 18-19 Jun (TJW). There are only 2 other records from se. Lincoln Co, one a road-killed bird last year (TJW). A good count was 5-7 at Chadron SP 3 Jun (EB).

**Chuck-will's-widow:** None were reported.

**Whip-poor-will:** Routine reports.

**Chimney Swift:** Perhaps the last town in the Panhandle without a record of this species, Harrison had 2 on 16 Jun (BW); another possibility might be Redington (is it a town??), where none were found 25 Jun despite their presence in nearby open spaces (AK).

**White-throated Swift:** Routine reports.

**Ruby-throated Hummingbird:** A belated but significant report is of a nest in Hitchcock Co in 1975 (JSt); this is the only nest reported for the Republican River Valley, although since 1990 this species has occurred each year and young birds have been seen at Alma (fide G&WH). The Kansas Breeding Bird Atlas shows no summer records west of 97 degrees, roughly south of Jefferson Co.

**Calliope Hummingbird:** Perhaps of annual occurrence with knowledgeable Panhandle feeder watchers reporting, this fall's first was one at the observer's feeder 21-26 Jul (KD; photo). This is the earliest of the 12 fall records to date.

**Broad-tailed Hummingbird:** First for fall was a female near Mitchell 20 Jul, with another or the same one there 26 Jul (KD). Easterly was a hatch-year or second-year male at a Minden feeder 22-23 Jul (GL; details); this is about the 10th record from Keith Co east. A belated report was of two at Culbertson 13 Aug 2003 (JSt).

**Rufous Hummingbird:** First was a female in the observer's Scotts Bluff Co yard 16-18 Jul; it was followed by a male 21 Jul, and one of each 28-30 Jul (AK). Two females were near Mitchell 29 Jul (KD). A female/immature hummingbird at McCook 20 Jul (fide TJW) and another hummer that "zipped by" the observer at Fort Kearny SHP, Kearney Co, 24 Jul (GL) may have been Rufous or Broad-tailed Hummingbirds based on date and location; Ruby-throateds do not normally appear until mid-Aug.

**Belted Kingfisher:** Routine reports.

**Red-headed Woodpecker:** First brown-headed immatures were noted 30 Jul in Lancaster Co (LE).

**Red-bellied Woodpecker:** A pair excavating a nest hole in Chase Co 15 Jun (MB) provided a westerly nesting record; breeding occurs westward to northeast Colorado and regularly westward to Keith Co in Nebraska.

**Downy Woodpecker:** A "very dark" bird in a Scottsbluff yard 9 Jun (P&DD) resembled the dark Pacific Coast subspecies. Although the occasional melanistic bird does appear, it is not uncommon for this species (and Hairy Woodpecker) to pick up soot from burned trees or to have feathers soiled with suet and adhering dirt after visiting feeders.

**Hairy Woodpecker:** Routine reports.

**Northern Flicker:** The removal of Russian Olives and cedars as part of habitat restoration work along the Republican River in Dundy Co created a cottonwood/willow savannah which resulted in the presence of 2 pairs of flickers 7 Jun (TJW).

**Pileated Woodpecker:** The only report was from FF, where one was seen 4 Jul (B&LP).

**Olive-sided Flycatcher:** The only report was of the last spring migrants: 2 in Dawes Co 3 Jun (EB). This species is rare in the west.

**Western Wood-Pewee:** A good count was the "dozens" at Chadron SP 3 Jun (EB). The easternmost regular location in summer is probably the Valentine City Park and Fish Hatchery, where one was found 15 Jul (D&JP,B&LP). Both pewee species summer here, although Easterns far outnumber Westerns.

**Eastern Wood-Pewee:** Records from the Loup River drainage are erratic, especially northwesterly; thus of interest were singles at Goose Lake WMA, Holt Co, 4 Jul (LR,RH) and at Pibel Lake SRA, Wheeler Co, 4 Jun (LR,RH).

**Acadian Flycatcher:** None were reported.

**Willow Flycatcher:** Although a statewide breeder (rarest in the southwest), reports from the western North Platte Valley are scarce; one was at WSR 4 Jun (SJD,WRS).

**Least Flycatcher:** The status of singles at WLC and WSR, both 4 Jun (SJD,WRS), was unconfirmed, although both were probably late migrants. There are no confirmed breeding records for the state, although breeding apparently occurs in cottonwoods at Smith L WMA (fide R. Rosche) and possibly elsewhere in the north and west.

**Cordilleran Flycatcher:** Late migrants were singles at WLC (SJD,WRS), and Oliver Res (WRS), both 4 Jun. Intriguing was a report of one calling from tall trees at Harrison 17 Jun (BW); habitat at this date suggests a migrant also, albeit very late, or even a wanderer from nearby Pine Ridge breeding locations.

**Eastern Phoebe:** Rather westerly was a pair nesting in Chase Co 14 Jun (MB); adding interest was a nesting pair of Say's Phoebes 10 yards away on the same structure (MB). This species is rare in sw. Nebraska, but does breed rarely in ne. Colorado.

**Say's Phoebe:** Easternmost was one near Merna in Custer Co 10 Jun (MB).

**Great Crested Flycatcher:** Although breeding in some numbers in the Pine Ridge, Panhandle occurrences elsewhere are rare, with fewer than 10 such reports. Evidence suggests that in recent years this species is expanding its numbers westward, adapting to habitats other than forest. Singles were at WSR 10-11 Jun (HKH), and in a Scotts Bluff Co yard 14 Jun (fide AK). Sightings have been few in the southwest also, and so the 3 pairs in restored riparian habitat in Dundly Co 7 Jun (TJW) and at least 3 birds s. of Benkelman 11 Jun (MB; possibly the same birds?) were encouraging.

**Cassin's Kingbird:** Routine reports.

**Western Kingbird:** Routine reports.

**Eastern Kingbird:** Routine reports.

**Scissor-tailed Flycatcher:** This species is clearly expanding its range northward into sc. Nebraska. A pair, accompanied by an apparent immature male, nested in extreme nw. Kearney Co (MU,KS,m.ob.), the 11th nesting record for Nebraska. Nest building was underway 12 Jun (KS) and 2-3 young were present 17 Jul (KS), but the young were gone, possibly predated, 24 Jul, even though the adults were still present (KS). Two other reports involved single birds: one in Sarpy Co 10-18 Jun (DB, m.ob.) and another in Saline Co 24 Jun (RE).

**Loggerhead Shrike:** This species is doing well in nc. Nebraska according to results from a BBS route near Gordon (CNK).

**Bell's Vireo:** As usual, best numbers were found in cen. Nebraska; 8-9 were found on a BBS route near Brady 30 Jun (TJW) and 7 were in Greeley Co 4 Jun (LR,RH).

**Yellow-throated Vireo:** At the west edge of the range, one was at WP 18 Jun (LE). There are few summer records west of the Missouri River Valley.

**Plumbeous Vireo:** Two at Chadron SP 3 Jun (EB) were east of the currently-known breeding range, but may have been late migrants.

**Warbling Vireo:** Routine reports.

**Red-eyed Vireo:** Six at Ash Hollow SHP 5 Jun (SJD) was a good westerly count.



**Blue Jay:** Routine reports.

**Pinyon Jay:** None were reported.

**Clark's Nutcracker:** Following winter's incursion in the Pine Ridge, activity suggestive of breeding was noted in Monroe Canyon 18 May (SJD). Later visits to Monroe Canyon 3 and 14 Jun found as many as 40 birds, all adults, but no further evidence of breeding (WM). This was attributed to the almost total lack of cones following an "almost complete cone crop failure" in 2004 (WM).

**Black-billed Magpie:** Routine reports.

**American Crow:** Routine reports.

**Horned Lark:** Routine reports.

**Purple Martin:** Best count was 52 at ADF 27 Jul (L&CF); first fall flocks are noted at the end of Jul. Also westerly were 3 in Benkelman 11 Jun (MB), where breeding has occurred since the late 1980s.

**Tree Swallow:** Summering in Scotts Bluff Co is still noteworthy; one nesting in a tree hole at L Minatare 9 Jun (KD) appears to be the first nesting record for the county; the first Scotts Bluff Co report of the species was in 1993. Also westerly was a pair nesting in Chase Co 11 Jun (MB); nesting has occurred in the southwest only since about 1990.

**Violet-green Swallow:** The only report was of "dozens" at Chadron SP 3 Jun (EB).

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

**Bank Swallow:** Uncommon in the Panhandle, a colony of 30 nests was at Berggren Pond, Scotts Bluff Co, 15 Jun (KD), and 100 birds were near Kiowa WMA 18 Jul (KD), the latter likely staging migrants.

**Cliff Swallow:** Routine reports.

**Barn Swallow:** Routine reports.

**Black-capped Chickadee:** This species remains scarce in Lancaster Co; only 12 were found on 13 regular trips around the county during the period, 4 of these birds in Lincoln (LE). Two birds in the observer's yard 29 Jun were the first seen there since Jan (LE).

**Tufted Titmouse:** One at Rose Creek WMA, Jefferson Co, 17 Jul (LR,RH) was at the west edge of the range.

**Red-breasted Nuthatch:** The first fall arrivals are usually seen in early Aug, and so one in Omaha 20-21 Jul (PS) was record early. Even more surprising was the presence of one at a different Omaha feeder for 3 weeks through 24 Jun (fide LBI, fide DB); the only other similar records away from breeding areas are for Lancaster Co 8 Jun 1978 and 30 Jun 1992, and for Adams Co 3 Jul 1986. These may be wintering birds that did not migrate due to injury or other causes.

**White-breasted Nuthatch:** One at Wildcat Hills NC 17 Jul (KD) was one of fewer than 10 summer reports for Scotts Bluff Co; those identified to subspecies so far have been eastern *cookei*, which appears to be spreading westward along the North Platte River valley.

**Pygmy Nuthatch:** Routine reports.

**Brown Creeper:** None were reported; a family group was reported at FF in spring, however.

**Rock Wren:** Good numbers were noted in dirt cut-banks in se. Lincoln Co cedar canyons during the period (TJW); this is probably the easternmost regular Platte River Valley breeding site.

**Carolina Wren:** Far to the west was one singing at McCook 21 Jul (LR,RH); westernmost summering birds have been at HCR, although this outpost may have been extirpated (G&WH)

**House Wren:** Routine reports.

**Sedge Wren:** One at Flatsedge WMA, Polk Co, 24 Jun (JGJ) was only the 2nd Jun record for that region. Ten birds in about 1.5 km at Boyer Chute NWR, Washington Co, 2 Jun (JT) may have been late migrants, although 4-5 were present there in Jul (JT). A few drifted in in Jul as is usual; first of these was one at Troester WPA, Hamilton Co, 3 Jul (LE), which may have been present in Jun also, and 2 at Deep Well WMA 16 Jul (LR,RH).

**Marsh Wren:** "Several" apparently were summering at Jack Sinn WMA, Lancaster/Saunders Cos, where 3 were counted 25 Jun (LE). Summering south of the Platte River Valley is irregular.

**Blue-gray Gnatcatcher:** Scattered reports from Panhandle locations indicate the western population is expanding: 2 were at Ash Hollow SHP 5 Jun (SJD), 1-2 were at CLNWR 24 Jun (HA), and several were seen in Morrill, Banner, and Scotts Bluff Cos 25 Jun (fide AK), where most were found in Mountain-mahogany. Westerly for eastern birds were 1-3 in Lancaster Co 11-18 Jun (LE).

**Eastern Bluebird:** A good total of 80 had fledged from boxes at ADF by 31 Jul (L&CF).

**Mountain Bluebird:** Routine reports.

**Veery:** A late migrant of the expected non-rufous western subspecies *salicicolus* was at WLC 4 Jun (SJD,WRS).

**Swainson's Thrush:** A rather late fallout of this species was detected 4 Jun in the s. Panhandle, where 37 were counted (SJD,WRS). A single calling in Chase Co 11 Jun (MB) was rather late, although migration in the Panhandle usually extends into Jun, with late dates Jun 17,18,19.

**Wood Thrush:** One singing at Dead Timber WMA, Dodge Co, 15 Jul (LE) was westerly.

**American Robin:** Flocking had begun as usual by 15 Jul, with 87 seen in se. Cuming Co in 2 miles (LE).

**Gray Catbird:** Routine reports.

**Northern Mockingbird:** Good numbers continue to be reported, as this is another southern species expanding slowly northward. Best counts were 8, including 3 pairs, on 30 Jun on a 10-mile segment of a BBS route near Brady that passes through cedar canyons (TJW), and 5 in Gage Co 15 Jun (B&LP). A pair was nest-building at SCP 23 Jul (LE), presumably a second brood. One in sw. Brown Co 25 Jun was northerly, as was the observer (PDU).

**Sage Thrasher:** The only report was of an early fall migrant at WSR 23-24 Jul (HKH); most pass through in Aug.

**Brown Thrasher:** Routine reports.

**Curve-billed Thrasher:** The Sioux Co bird was still present 7 Jul, and for the second summer fed both grackle and robin chicks (LF). It has been present since Oct 2002.

**European Starling:** First flocking noted was 100 birds in Dixon Co 25 Jul (JJ).

**Cedar Waxwing:** Routine reports.

**Blue-winged Warbler:** Quite a surprise was a female at WLC 4 Jun (WRS,SJD); this is the 3rd Panhandle record.

**Tennessee Warbler:** Last spring migrants were one rather far west at WLC 4 Jun (SJD,WRS) and another in Dodge Co 6 Jun (D&JP).

**Virginia's Warbler:** A female at WSR 4 Jun (SJD,WRS) provided the 9th state record, 3rd in spring.

**Northern Parula:** Routine reports.

- Yellow Warbler:** Two reports indicated uneven distribution of this species: none were found on a BBS route in Custer and Lincoln Cos 12 Jun (TJW) but 32 were counted at Dannebrog 25 Jun (LR,RH).
- Chestnut-sided Warbler:** Rather often found into Jun, a singing bird was westerly at Ash Hollow SHP 5 Jun (SJD), the 15th Panhandle spring record. Even later was one singing in the observer's Hastings yard all day 17 Jun (PDu). The latter is the 7th record from 12 Jun through the last date, 19 Jun.
- Yellow-rumped Warbler:** One along Old Stage Hill Road 4 Jul, although reported as "race unknown" (AK), was likely *auduboni*; although there are 6 summer reports for this form, breeding has not been confirmed in the Wildcat Hills.
- Yellow-throated Warbler:** None were reported; a few were found in spring at FF.
- Cerulean Warbler:** The only report was of one at FF in early Jul (fide EM); none were reported there in spring.
- Black-and-white Warbler:** Routine reports.
- American Redstart:** Routine reports.
- Prothonotary Warbler:** None were reported, although a few were found in spring.
- Ovenbird:** One at Ash Hollow SHP 5 Jun (SJD) was rather late. A good count was 6 at Ashford Scout Camp, Thurston Co, 4 Jul (BFH), where breeding is regular.
- Northern Waterthrush:** The only report was of a late migrant at WSR 4 Jun (SJD,WRS); this species is an uncommon migrant west.
- Louisiana Waterthrush:** Of interest was the presence of at least 2 birds and possibly 2 pairs at Ashford Scout Camp, Thurston Co, 4 Jul (BFH), where there have been previous summer sightings in 1999 and 2002 without confirmation of breeding. The northernmost confirmed breeding to date is in Washington Co.
- Kentucky Warbler:** None were reported.
- Mourning Warbler:** None were reported; migrants regularly occur into Jun.
- Common Yellowthroat:** Routine reports.
- Yellow-breasted Chat:** One west of Niobrara 8 Jun was unexpected (MB); this is only the 9th record since 1981 from the eastern half of the state, 3 of these from Knox Co.
- Summer Tanager:** A few continue to be reported from FF, which has only recently been occupied in summer by this species; one was there 19 Jun (TP). Two were at ICSP, a regular location, 28 Jul (B&LP).
- Scarlet Tanager:** A female with young was at FF 26 Jun (CNK).
- Western Tanager:** Two females at WSR 4 Jun (SJD,WRS) were late migrants.
- Spotted Towhee:** This species was reported east to Harlan Co, with 2 on 6 Jul (G&WH); in this area most birds are Spotted, although Easterns are at the west edge of their range here and hybrids occur also. The "vast majority" of calls in the cedar canyons of se. Lincoln Co this summer were typical of Spotted as expected, but one was likely a hybrid (TJW).
- Eastern Towhee:** Routine reports.
- Canyon Towhee:** In the Summer Report for 2003 (NBR 71:124), I mentioned a sighting of this species in Platte Co 5 Jul 2000 (TJW). Since then I received interesting information from William Flack, who visits Madison Co regularly from Arizona. After seeing 1-2 Canyon Towhees at different times mid-Jun 1999 in Madison, with additional sightings through 5 Jan 2000, he was told that a few had been brought from Arizona in 1998 and some had survived the winter 1998-99 at feeders. It seems plausible that one of these towhees survived the winter 1999-2000 and drifted to Platte Co, not too distant, where it was seen in summer 2000.

**Cassin's Sparrow:** The only report was of 5 birds south of Imperial in Chase Co 12 Jun (MB). Two observers (TJW,MB) noted, however, that none were located in Dundy Co at sites previously used west of Benkelman. This species is variable in numbers from year to year, however, at times being absent.

**Chipping Sparrow:** Routine reports.

**Brewer's Sparrow:** The only report was of 1-2 at a regular location west of Harrison 4 Jun (EB).

**Field Sparrow:** Routine reports.

**Vesper Sparrow:** This species breeds in low numbers in eastern Nebraska, where it has adapted to nesting in roadside grasses adjacent to field crops; a nest with 5 eggs in Douglas Co 12 Jun was in mowed brome adjacent to a soybean field (PK). Vesper Sparrows are rare to absent in summer in the Loup drainage and most of the area south of the Platte River from about Lancaster Co westward; only the 9th-11th records from this area were 2 singing birds in Seward Co 18 Jun and singing singles (could they find mates online?) were in Polk and Clay Cos 24 Jun (JGJ). More common in the northeast, 9 were in Dixon Co 31 Jul (JJ). At the east edge of the Loup drainage a fledged chick was found in Dodge Co 5 Jun (D&JP).

**Lark Sparrow:** A nest with 6 eggs was found in Greeley Co 6 Jun but was empty 18 Jun (LR,RH).

**Lark Bunting:** Two observers in the Panhandle thought numbers were lower than usual (AK,CNK). Several were noted 18 Jun in sw. Nebraska in foot-tall corn and wheat stubble, some courting, whereas few were in sandsage prairie (TJW); this may have been related to "invertebrate abundance and/or ease of prey capture on the bare ground between crops" (CK).

**Savannah Sparrow:** One at LM 5 Jun (SJD) was rather late, although several were noted singing in damp sedgy habitat at LM in 2004.

**Grasshopper Sparrow:** Routine reports.

**Henslow's Sparrow:** Of the 4 reports, 2 were at previously-known locations: 2 birds at Boyer Chute NWR, Washington Co, 2 Jun (JT) and one at SCP 8 Jun (KP). Unexpected were only the 3rd and 4th e. RWB records, singles at Lange WPA, Clay Co, 11 Jun (JGJ) and Harvard WPA 18 Jun (JGJ). Presence of this species, along with Greater Prairie-Chickens, is encouraging at these managed grasslands.

**Song Sparrow:** Routine reports.

**Swamp Sparrow:** This species breeds at various preferred sites with wet meadows or cattail marshes mainly in cen. Nebraska, and so likely breeders were one in Madison Co 2 Jun (MB), 1-2 at LM 5 and 21 Jun (SJD), one in a wet meadow near Spalding where one was seen in 2004 (LR,RH), and 2 at Lake Ericson, Wheeler Co, 3 Jul (LR,RH).

**White-crowned Sparrow:** One at a Scottsbluff garden center 9 Jun (KD) tied the 4th latest ever spring date.

**Dark-eyed (White-winged) Junco:** A pair at Chadron SP 3 Jun (EB) was at the e. edge of the breeding range; there are no summer reports east of Dawes Co.

**McCown's Longspur:** Good numbers were noted in the expected summer range along the Wyoming border west of Harrison 4 Jun (EB) and on a Kimball Co BBS route the same day (WRS). Another was found in Kimball Co 20 Jun (ARy).

**Chestnut-collared Longspur:** The only reports were from expected locations: 3 west of Harrison 4 Jun (EB) and 10 in Kimball Co the same day (WRS).

**Northern Cardinal:** The small population along the North Platte River in Scotts Bluff Co continued (AK), and the quest for the western edge of the summer

range in the Loup Drainage found none in Arthur, McPherson, or Garden Cos in Jun (JT); thus westernmost in that area currently are in Thomas and Logan Cos.

**Rose-breasted Grosbeak:** One in Scottsbluff 4 Jun (SJD,WRS) was a late migrant; there are a few similar records from the Panhandle. Two that looked like "pure adult males" in Wheeler Co 4 Jun (LR,RH) were also likely late spring migrants. Westerly were small numbers in the cedar canyons of se. Lincoln Co 15-21 Jun (TJW), presumably summering, and one at Goose Lake WMA, Holt Co, 4 Jul (LR,RH) was one of fewer than 10 summer records for the western Elkhorn River drainage.

**Black-headed Grosbeak:** In contrast to the small numbers of Rose-breasted encountered in se. Lincoln Co, 12+ Black-headed per day were found 15-21 Jun (TJW). Easternmost was one in Greeley Co 3 Jul (LR,RH), the east edge of the summer range.

**Blue Grosbeak:** Best numbers were on a Brady BBS route, with 12 counted there 30 Jun (TJW). Numbers were thought to be down in Dixon Co (JJ).

**Lazuli Bunting:** Routine reports.

**Indigo Bunting:** A hybrid reported in May was still present at Ash Hollow SHP 5 Jun (SJD). A good count was 13 at WP 18 Jun; one was carrying nest material (LE).

**Dickcissel:** There was a strong westerly push of this species this summer, although as is typical in the Panhandle, the birds departed rather early, likely without breeding. One near Gering 3 Jul-2 Aug was described as a "happy surprise" (AK), a description rarely used by eastern birders! "Surprising numbers" were in se. Lincoln Co, where a BBS route came up with a remarkable 89 (TJW). Good numbers were in Dundy Co 6 Jun (DM), and they were "numerous" at CLNWR 24 Jun (HA). Observers were "amazed at how many we saw and heard" in Scotts Bluff Co 25 Jun (fide AK), and 12 were around a small pond at Winters Creek L, Scotts Bluff Co, 9 Jul but had gone by 23 Jul (KD). There are fewer than 10 records from the Panhandle south of the North Platte River, and so significant were one in Kimball Co 20 Jun (ARy) and no fewer than 8 perched on an alfalfa pivot in ne. Banner Co 18 Jun (CK). Out west, alfalfa is candy to a Dickcissel!

**Bobolink:** At a hayfield study area in Hall Co, all but 15 of 150+ nests had fledged by 4 Jul, indicating that delaying haying until mid-Jul would significantly reduce mortality among Bobolinks nesting in hayfields (DK).

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

**Eastern Meadowlark:** Surprisingly common in certain wet meadows in the Sandhills, 6 were found at CLNWR 24 Jun (HA), and one was at LM 14 Jul (BY). In contrast, it is surprisingly rare in the e. RWB, where one at Harvard WPA 18 Jun was noteworthy (JGJ).

**Western Meadowlark:** Routine reports.

**Yellow-headed Blackbird:** A lone yearling male was decidedly out of place at an abandoned Kimball Co farmyard 4 Jun (WRS), although it was likely a late migrant; flocks of immatures occur into late May.

**Brewer's Blackbird:** Routine reports.

**Common Grackle:** First fall flocking was noted in Fillmore Co 3 Jul: a flock of 180 (LE).

**Great-tailed Grackle:** A small breeding population continues at Kiowa WMA, where 2 were seen 2 Jun (SJD), while a first Morrill Co record was a single there 25 Jun (AK). The RWB is the current center of abundance: "lots of breeding" was taking place there 18 Jun (JGJ).

**Brown-headed Cowbird:** Routine reports.

**Orchard Oriole:** Routine reports.

**Baltimore Oriole:** Westernmost report was of 3 in Dundy Co 7 Jun (TJW), where it occurs regularly in summer in small numbers.

**Bullock's Oriole:** Pure birds are rare anywhere east of the Panhandle; a male was at Sandy Point, LM, 21 Jun (SJD). A BBS route north of Dalton found 6 Bullock's Orioles 5 Jun and a hybrid which looked like a Baltimore with large white wing patches (WRS).

**House Finch:** In Nebraska, this species is usually found near human habitations, and so a pair in se. Lincoln Co 2 miles from the nearest house and 20 miles from the nearest town was unexpected (TJW).

**Red Crossbill:** Six birds as far east as Albion 3-4 Jun (D&CN) were unexpected and probably unexplainable; such birds may be either late spring stragglers or possibly even early post-breeding wanderers. Up to 12 birds of all ages were at the Wildcat Hills NC feeders through the period (WRS,KD), a regular occurrence, even though breeding has not been confirmed in the Wildcat Hills.

**Pine Siskin:** Several nesting records away from the usual summer range were noted in the Spring Report; further evidence was the presence of a hatch-year bird in a Bellevue yard 16 Jun (RG). Also out of range were 2 at Ash Hollow SHP 5 Jun and 2 at LM the same day (SJD).

**American Goldfinch:** Routine reports.

**House Sparrow:** Routine reports.

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### In Memory of John J. Dinan, 1954 - 2005

by Wayne J. Mollhoff

It was immediately obvious to anyone who knew John that his work with the birds and other wildlife of Nebraska was more than just a job – it was his life, and he lived it with a passion. Although not always a formal member of the Nebraska Ornithologists' Union, John, as much as anyone, was “dedicated to the study, appreciation, and protection of birds” in Nebraska.

Those privileged enough to spend time afield with John quickly became aware of the presence of not just a professional biologist, but one still fired with that first innocent curiosity at discovering Nebraska's natural environment. That curiosity led him to discover the first Nebraska specimen record of a Great-tailed Grackle. He continually challenged his own observations with the practiced skepticism of the professional observer. Even better, he also possessed the rare ability to teach that attitude to others, by letting them “discover” that even their most obvious observations needed to be questioned, rather than simply telling them that what they saw might be open to other interpretation.

Early in John's career with the Nebraska Game & Parks Commission (NGPC), one of the projects that fit in with his preference for field work was a multi-year nesting study of Panhandle raptors – primarily Ferruginous Hawks, Prairie Falcons and Golden Eagles. It involved strenuous hiking, climbing, and rappelling - and the occasional gut-wrenching, heart-stopping moment on a cliff when a rope slipped unexpectedly. Twenty-five years later, I had a chance meeting with a local blacksmith in Crawford who specifically remembered making some steel belay stakes to use above treeless cliffs for John and "those other crazy kids."

Perhaps one of his longest-running projects involved work with threatened and endangered bird species, especially Piping Plovers and Least Terns. Any attempt to modify or preserve critical nesting sites and other habitat along the Platte River inevitably had an impact on human use in the area by farmers, irrigators, gravel mining operations, and recreational users of the river. John was noted for turning those encounters between economic and recreational interests and the endangered species under study into joint ventures acceptable to all involved, rather than the acrimonious, litigious, head-butting contests that have dominated headlines elsewhere.

One recent, time-devouring project of particular interest to the NOU involved John in the publication of *The Nebraska Breeding Bird Atlas*. He not only found a major part of the funding for publication, but more importantly, he devoted his time to guide the writing, rewriting, editing, and other details required to shepherd the manuscript through the process, finally seeing it through to completion. Without John's guidance, persistence, and the patience of a saint in dealing with all the individuals involved, it might still be unfinished.

John became the public face for other projects as well: Peregrine Falcon introduction in downtown Omaha, Whooping Crane monitoring, American Kestrel nest box placement along the highways, the Nebraska Natural Heritage Project, and others. When someone contacted NGPC with a question concerning non-game birds, they often asked directly for John, and, if they didn't, were frequently referred to him.

At the time his leukemia was discovered, John was a key part of the team bringing the Nebraska Natural Legacy Project, a statewide effort to conserve and protect the habitats and wildlife of Nebraska, to fruition. As his illness played out, he faced it with the same dignity, unflinching courage, resolution, and good humor that marked the rest of his life. Hours before his death, he was still able to manage an abashed chuckle at his own inability several years previously to scramble up a spindly ponderosa pine to look into the nest of a Western Tanager he had found; it was only the second such nest found in the state.

Lost unexpectedly in the prime of his life and career, John will be sorely missed by a host of colleagues and friends.

## MULTIPLE BLACK-NECKED STILT NESTING RECORDS IN THE RAINWATER BASIN

Joel G. Jorgensen  
Nebraska Game and Parks Commission  
2200 N. 33rd St.  
Lincoln, NE 68503  
joel.jorgensen@ngpc.ne.gov

Paul Dunbar  
846 Chesnut Ave.  
Hastings, NE 68901  
pastorpauldunbar@yahoo.com

Black-necked Stilts (*Himantopus mexicanus*) have increased throughout much of the mid-continent in recent decades (Will 1999, Brinkley 2003, Brinkley and Baicich 2004). Prior to 1970 there were fewer than ten Nebraska records (Sharpe et al. 2001). Reports have increased since 1970 and are now annual. Breeding was first recorded in Nebraska in 1985 at Crescent Lake National Wildlife Refuge (Helsingier 1985). Breeding has been more or less regular in the western Sandhills since then (Sharpe et al. 2001) and additional breeding records have occurred in Scotts Bluff (Silcock 2002b), Keith, and Hall Counties (Silcock 2000b).

In the Rainwater Basin, there was only one record prior to 1996, a specimen collected in Adams County 12 May 1956 (Sharpe et al. 2001). From 1996 through 2004, there were fourteen additional reports (see Table 1). This includes apparent successful breeding at Funk Waterfowl Production Area (WPA), Phelps Co., in 2003 (Silcock 2003).

The Rainwater Basin has been experiencing persistent drought since 2000. While drought has been a general theme, occasional localized heavy precipitation events have filled wetlands. Such was the case on 11-12 May 2005 when 3-8" inches of rain fell in portions of the Eastern Rainwater Basin, including Adams, Fillmore, and York Counties. Not long after, Black-necked Stilts were found at multiple wetlands, and several pairs attempted nesting. Below, we summarize observations of nesting Black-necked Stilts in the Eastern Rainwater Basin during 2005.

**Harvard WPA, Clay County:** Even though the authors visited the wetland on several occasions during May, stilts were not observed until 20 May when 6 birds were found (PD). Five birds were present 22 May (JGJ, WRS). Two nests were found 22 May in the south-central portion of the main wetland. Both nests were built-up mounds of vegetation approximately 10 meters from each other in 10-20 cm of water in an area with sparse aquatic vegetation (*Scirpus* spp.). One nest had no eggs and the other had one. The circumstances suggest that nesting had commenced only days after stilts first appeared at the wetland. At least one nest, containing 4 eggs, remained active through 19 June (PD, JGJ). Seven stilts were found 23 June, but the nest no longer contained eggs, and young were not observed (PD). Five stilts were present 27 June, but none were found 30 July or 20 Aug (PD).



Table 1. Rainwater Basin Black-necked Stilt Records, pre-2005.

Location	County	Date	Observation	Source
Unknown	Adams	12 May 1956	Specimen, HMM 28534	NBR 24:66, Sharpe et. al 2001
Funk WPA	Phelps	11 June 1996	1 bird	Silcock and Jorgensen 1996
North Lake Basin WMA	Seward	2-10 June 1997	1-2 birds	Jorgensen 2004
Funk WPA	Phelps	5-10 June 1997	1 bird	Silcock and Jorgensen 1997
Kissinger Basin WMA	Clay	20 May 1999	1 female	Jorgensen 2004
Mallard Haven WPA	Fillmore	10 May 2000	1 male	Jorgensen 2004
Hupp WMA	Thayer	13-15 May 2000	1 female	Jorgensen 2004
Funk WPA	Phelps	6 May 2000	1 bird	Silcock 2000a
Funk WPA	Phelps	11-18 June 2000	1-3 birds	Silcock 2000b
Johnson WPA	Phelps	1 May 2001	1 bird	Silcock 2001
Freeman Lake	York	8 May 2001	3 birds	Silcock 2001
North Hultine WPA	Clay	15 May 2001	1 bird	Silcock 2001
Funk WPA	Phelps	13-14 April 2000	1 bird	Silcock 2002a
Funk WPA	Phelps	9-15 April 2002	1 bird	fide JD
Fillmore Wetland #24	Fillmore	27 May 2002	1 female	Jorgensen 2004
Funk WPA	Phelps	1 June 2002	12 birds	fide JD
Funk WPA	Phelps	Summer 2003	nesting pair, 2 young	Silcock 2003
Harvard WPA	Clay	11 May 2004	2 birds	PD

**Trumbull Basin, Adams County:** A single bird was present 4 June (JGJ) and 8 were found 17 June (JGJ). On 24 June, a pair was tending to 3 newly-hatched chicks. A second pair was very agitated, suggesting the second pair was at some stage of breeding. Three adults were present 21 Aug, but no evidence of successful breeding (i.e., juveniles) was noted (PD).

**Spikerush WMA, York County:** Four birds were observed 15-19 June (JGJ, GW, EB). A nest found 18 June was near the east edge of the property and approximately 30 meters west of County Road R, the north-south road bisecting the wetland. The nest contained 4 eggs and was a built-up mound of vegetation in 30-40 cm of water. The nest was located in a stand of dead Giant Ragweed (*Ambrosia trifida*) stalks that had grown the previous year. The wetland was recently renovated and 2005 was the first year it had filled with water since that work. The nesting attempt remained active through 6 July (JGJ, DS, LE, JS), but by 11 July the nest was found depredated (DS).

Non-breeders were recorded throughout the region in 2005; these sightings are summarized in Table 2.

Table 2. Additional Black-necked Stilt Observations - 2005.

Location	County	Date	Observation	Source
Theesen Basin	Adams	13 May	Male and Female	JGJ
Wilkins WPA	Fillmore	14 May	Male	JGJ
Brauning WPA	Fillmore	19 May	Male	JGJ
York Wetland #128	York	24 May	Male and Female	JGJ
Sinninger Basin	York	5 Aug	4 birds	JGJ

The 2005 nesting records are the 2nd, 3rd, and 4th for the Rainwater Basin, the first for the Eastern Rainwater Basin, and the most easterly attempts recorded in Nebraska (Sharpe et al. 2001). It is not known whether any attempt fledged young. The number of birds (>25) recorded in 2005 is more than has been recorded in any previous year. This increase in the number of stilts in the Rainwater Basin during the past decade is consistent with the pattern of increase observed elsewhere in North America. It is likely that future nesting records will occur in the Rainwater Basin at wetlands possessing favorable habitat.

#### CITED OBSERVERS

Elaine Bachel (EB), Jeff Drahota (JD), Paul Dunbar (PD), Joel G. Jorgensen (JGJ), W. Ross Silcock (WRS), Dave Stage (DS), Jon Strong (JS), Gertrude Wood (GW). Non-firsthand observations are from field reports obtained from NEBirds or personal communications.

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## THE 2005 NEBRASKA NEST REPORT

Wayne J. Mollhoff  
2354 Euclid St.  
Ashland NE 68003

The drought that gripped much of western Nebraska for the past 5 years loosened its hold this year as rain returned to more normal levels, especially in the northwest Panhandle. Some other areas of the state still remained at below normal rainfall levels.

### OBSERVERS

The following observers submitted records for the nest report: Kathy DeLara (KD), Stephen J. Dinsmore (SJD), Mike Fritz (MF), Robin Harding (RH), Derrick Keim (DK), Alice Kenitz (AK), Courtney Kerns (CK), Daniel H. Kim (DHK), Thomas Labedz (TL), Andre Lima (AL), Leonard McDaniel (LM), Wayne Mollhoff (WM), Colleen Noecker (CN), Don Paseka (DP), Janis Paseka (JP), Lanny Randolph (LR), Allen Reyer (AR), Ben Skipper (BS), Dave Stage (DS), Susan Sullivan (SS), Cara Walker (CW), and Thomas Walker (TW).

A total of 305 reports were received on 68 species. Species reported but not individually included in the following report are: Canada Goose, Wood Duck, Mallard, Wild Turkey, Northern Bobwhite, Pied-billed Grebe, Great Blue Heron, Swainson's Hawk, Red-tailed Hawk, American Kestrel, Rock Pigeon, Mourning Dove, Great Horned Owl, Red-bellied Woodpecker, Western Wood-Pewee, Say's Phoebe, Western Kingbird, Warbling Vireo, American Crow, House Wren, Yellow Warbler, Northern Cardinal, Common Grackle, Brown-headed Cowbird, Orchard Oriole.

### ABBREVIATIONS USED

NGPC : Nebraska Game & Parks Commission  
PLJV : Playa Lakes Joint Venture  
RMBO : Rocky Mountain Bird Observatory  
VNWR : Valentine National Wildlife Refuge  
WCT : Whooping Crane Trust (=Platte River Whooping Crane Maintenance Trust)

### SPECIES ACCOUNTS

**Trumpeter Swan** A pair was noted on Doc Lake, 1 mi. SW of Whitman, Grant Co., on 2 March 2005. Three teal-sized young were seen with the pair on 17 June (WM).

**American White Pelican** Old records recently made available show that eggs were occasionally "dumped" by non-breeding pelicans in a Double-crested Cormorant colony on Marsh Lake, VNWR, Cherry Co. Two eggs were found there on 25 May 1988, 4 eggs were found on 2 June 1991, and 4 eggs

were found 17 May 1993.

While checking on waterfowl production 24 May 1995 at the above site, a biologist found attempted breeding with pelicans on 10 nests. On 29 May he found the remains of the nests and eggs abandoned. Later, on 12 June, he again found 4 eggs randomly scattered in the cormorant colony (LM). This is the only nesting reported in the state.

**Bald Eagle** A nest with 2 young was noted on 22 April 2005, 5 mi. W of North Bend, Dodge Co. Three young were present on 13 May and 1 June. No activity was noticed during a later visit on 22 June (DP).

**Cooper's Hawk** Staff at NGPC were entertained through the spring by a pair nesting in a white pine on the west side of the headquarters building at 2200 N. 33rd St., in Lincoln, Lancaster Co. On 15 April 2005 an adult was still brooding. By 15 June, two young had already fledged, leaving the other two full-grown young still exercising their wings near the nest (MF, WM).

**Golden Eagle** A long-occupied cliff nest in a canyon near the upper Niobrara River 8 mi. SW of Harrison, Sioux Co., held a pair of 2 to 3-week-old young on 23 April 2005 (DK, WM).

An adult captured prey and delivered it to a tree nest in an old windbreak several miles S of Bridgeport, Morrill Co., on 24 April 2005. On 25 May the nest appeared to be empty and no activity was seen in the area (WM).

**Piping Plover** A male was digging scrapes on 17 May (SJD), and an adult was later banded at a nest with 2 eggs on 20 May 2005 at Lake Minatare, Scotts Bluff Co. By 24 May the nest held 4 eggs but was threatened by rising water levels. Because of continued rising water, on 27 May biologists moved the eggs to foster nests at Lake McConaughy (Keith Co.) but the move was unsuccessful due to predation by dogs and abandonment (KD).

Another nest at Lake Minatare, which held a single egg on 6 June 2005, also was moved to stay above rising water. It was moved again on 9 June 2005 to a foster nest at Lake McConaughy, as the water continued to rise, but the move was unsuccessful due to predation by a skunk (KD).

**Marbled Godwit** A biologist with the RMBO/PLJV reported a nest with 3 eggs in southern Sheridan Co. on 16 June 2005, apparently the first nest with eggs reported in the state (CK). Two other reports of nesting in Nebraska were both at Smith Lake, in central Sheridan Co.

**Eurasian Collared-Dove** A flightless young bird was found below spruce trees on a ranch house lawn 8 mi. SW of Harrison, Sioux Co., on 27 August 2005 (DK, WM).

**White-winged Dove** A recently-fledged young bird was found and photographed following a thunderstorm in Albion, Boone Co., on 21 June 2005. Pictures of the bird confirm its immaturity due to lack of a sub-auricular spot, brown iris, white leading edges of the primary and secondary feathers, outer primary shorter than scapulars, and longest primary only slightly longer than secondaries (Pyle 1997, Ridgway 1916, Schwertner et al. 2002). Birds had been heard calling in the area earlier in the summer, and a pair with a young bird was also noted at a neighbor's feeder. This is the first report of nesting in Nebraska (CN).

**Black-billed Cuckoo** Despite a well-deserved reputation for being inconspicuous, a nest with eggs and young was found on 4 July 2005 at Goose Lake WMA, Holt Co. (LR,RH).

**Common Barn Owl** A "nest" with 1 egg was found atop the corn in a steel grain bin ~3 mi. W of Laurel, Cedar Co., on 27 April 2005 (DS).

**Long-eared Owl** Five downy young were found in a nest 2 mi. W of Parks, Dundy Co., on 9 May 2005 (TW).

**Northern Saw-whet Owl** An old report recently made available is of a pair of adults with three fledged young on 24 June 1978. The young were reared at Hackberry Lake Headquarters, VNWR, Cherry Co., and seen only by moonlight or the aid of artificial lights (LM). Although out of the expected range, the timing is consistent with a report of young in a nest in South Dakota on 20 May 1993 (Peterson 1995).

**Lewis's Woodpecker** A pair was seen occupying a nest 15 mi. SE of Crawford, Dawes Co., on 23 May and 16 June 2005, but the nest was not examined (WM).

**Northern Flicker** A red-shafted flicker nest with 7 eggs was found in Sowbelly Canyon 4 mi. NE of Harrison, Sioux Co., on 22 May 2005 (WM).

A yellow-shafted flicker fed a nearly-fledged young in Dannebrog, Howard Co., on 25 June 2005 (LR, RH).

**Loggerhead Shrike** A nest in the Sandhills north of the Calamus Reservoir in Loup Co. held 5 eggs on 15 May 2005 (WM).

A nest 13 mi. S of Agate, Sioux Co., held 7 eggs on 24 May 2005. On 3 June, 2 eggs and 5 small young were present (WM).

**Clark's Nutcracker** A flock of 40-50 birds over-wintered in the area of Sowbelly and Monroe Canyons in the Pine Ridge north of Harrison, Sioux Co. They were observed on 11 occasions by several observers 28 Dec 2004 to 14 June 2005.

On 18 May, nest-building by a pair was observed for 1/2 hr in Monroe Canyon, although the nest itself was not seen (SJD). A pair was observed in East Monroe Canyon near the above nest-building site on 6 occasions 22 May to 14 June, but no further evidence of breeding was found (WM). Whether the nesting attempt was ultimately successful is unknown.

While nest-building normally occurs in mid-late March, the late activity noted on 18 May might be explained by the almost complete failure of the Ponderosa Pine cone crop for several years (possibly due to the 5-year drought) and the inability of the invading flock to find and store an adequate supply of seeds, usually a prerequisite for successful nesting (Diana F. Tomback, pers. com.).

**Horned Lark** Although a breeder statewide, there are few fully documented reports. A fledged young bird was noted 5 mi. N, 1 mi. W of Ames, Dodge Co., on 16 April 2005 (DP).

On 14 June 2005 a fledged young bird was seen with adults 5 mi. S of Harrison, Sioux Co., while nearby on the same date a nest with 3 eggs was found (WM).

**Tree Swallow** A nest with well-feathered young was found on 14 June 2005 at Smith Lake, Sheridan Co., 22 mi. S of Rushville (WM).

Adults were seen delivering food to a nest at Lake Minatare, Scotts Bluff Co., on 9 July 2005 (KD).

**Violet-green Swallow** An incubating female allowed herself to be pushed gently far enough to one side to allow sight of her eggs but refused to leave her nest in West Ash Canyon, 11 mi. SE of Crawford, Dawes Co., on 16 June 2005 (WM).

**Bank Swallow** Part of a dryland colony 6 mi. SSW of Harrison, Sioux Co., was abandoned this year due to partial collapse of the blowout bank, but egg-laying had just begun in some of the remaining holes by 3 June 2005 (WM).

- Barn Swallow** A pair successfully raised 2 broods 5 mi. SE of Gibbon, Buffalo Co., with young fledging on 24 June 2005 and again on 3 August (LR, RH).
- Black-capped Chickadee** Despite a decline in numbers in parts of the state, a nest with several recently-hatched young was found in Monroe Canyon, 7 mi. NNW of Harrison, Sioux Co., on 15 June 2005 (WM).
- White-breasted Nuthatch** A nest with eggs was found on the floor of West Ash Canyon, 11 mi. SE of Crawford, Dawes Co., on 23 May 2005 (WM).
- Pygmy Nuthatch** Nest building was noted in a pine snag beside the road in Sowbelly Canyon 4 mi. NE of Harrison, Sioux Co., on 23 April 2005. On 22 May seven eggs were being incubated and on 3 June young birds were present in the nest (WM).
- Carolina Wren** Nest building appeared to be complete by 17 March 2005 on a front-porch nest in Bellevue, Sarpy Co. The first egg appeared on 28 March (AR).
- Sedge Wren** Tallgrass prairie researchers at the WCT, Hall Co., discovered several nests from late May through July 2005, extending the known range of breeding dates in the state. Previously reported breeding dates have been in August, with only a single July date noted (SS).
- Eastern Bluebird** A clutch of 4 eggs was found in a nest box on 14 April 2005, 5 mi. N, 1 mi. W of Ames, Dodge Co. Other nearby nest boxes had young hatching on 22 May and 6 July (JP).
- Mountain Bluebird** Roadside nest boxes 3 mi. NE of Harrison, Sioux Co., held 2,3 & 4 eggs on 22 May 2005 (WM).  
Another roadside nest box 15 mi. SE of Crawford, Dawes Co., held 6 eggs on 23 May 2005 (WM).
- Swainson's Thrush** Singing, territorial birds were again present in West Ash Canyon 11 mi. SE of Crawford, Dawes Co., in mid-June 2005, but a nest search in the area was unsuccessful (WM).
- American Robin** A vigorous, multi-species defense led the observer to a nest 10 ft. up a pine in West Ash Canyon 11 mi. SE of Crawford, Dawes Co., on 23 May 2005. However, the newly-emptied nest had just furnished a meal to a 58-in. bull snake which was removed from the tree, measured, and released (WM).
- American Redstart** A very cooperative female put in the final nest lining while an observer snapped pictures from 8 ft. away on 23 May 2005 in West Ash Canyon, Dawes Co. On 16 June the nest held 3 eggs (WM).  
Another nearby nest was also under construction on 23 May, while a third was being completed on 16 June (WM).
- Lark Sparrow** A bird was flushed from a nest with 6 eggs on 4 June 2005, located 6 1/2 mi E, 3 mi. S of Ericson, Wheeler Co. (LR,RH).
- Grasshopper Sparrow** Dozens of nests were found during tallgrass prairie research at WCT, Hall Co. Young were noted in nests 2 June - 26 July 2005 (DHK, CW, BS, AL).
- Henslow's Sparrow** Following the first discovery of nests in the state last year (Kim, in press), several more nests were found this year at WCT, Hall Co., with eggs noted 9 July 2005, and young in the nests noted 17-28 July (DHK, AL, BS).
- McCown's Longspur** An adult fed a just-fledged young bird that was capable of 4- to 6-ft. flights in a sparsely vegetated area 4 mi. S of Harrison, Sioux Co., on 14 June 2005. Movement in the background about 40 ft. away revealed a young Swift Fox peeking out of its den (WM).

- Rose-breasted Grosbeak** A nest with 4 eggs at the edge of Ashland, Saunders Co., was being incubated by the male when first observed on 29 May 2005. The female was on incubation duty the following day (WM).
- Black-headed Grosbeak** A nest with 4 eggs and 2 just-hatched young was found in West Ash Canyon 11 mi. SE of Crawford, Dawes Co., on 16 June 2005. Another nest nearby held a clutch of 3 eggs on the same date (WM).
- Blue Grosbeak** A pair was observed feeding young in a nest ~7 mi. S of Gering, Scotts Bluff Co., on 18 July 2005. The pair was observed occupying the same nest on 1 August, and on 11 August they were again noted feeding young. Young from the second clutch fledged on 20 August (AK).
- Dickcissel** Numerous nests were found at WCT, Hall Co., with egg dates ranging from 23 June to 26 July 2005 (BS, AL, SS).
- Bobolink** Dozens of nests were found during a tallgrass prairie ecological study at WCT, Hall Co. Egg dates ranged from 27 May to 19 June 2005 (AL, BS).
- Brewer's Blackbird** A nest in a colony of 4 to 6 pairs 14 mi. S of Chadron, Dawes Co., held 6 eggs on 24 May 2005 (WM).  
Two nests 12 mi. E of Harrison, Sioux Co., held 2 & 6 eggs on 24 May 2005. There were 6 to 10 pairs in the colony (WM).  
A colony of only 2 pairs was noted 5 mi. S of Harrison, Sioux Co., on 14 June 2005. The single nest found held 6 eggs (WM).
- Great-tailed Grackle** Nest-building was underway in a new colony 3 mi. SW of Waverly, Lancaster Co., on 5 May 2005. On 9 May two nests held 2 & 3 eggs (WM).

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## STATUS OF THE CERULEAN WARBLER (*Dendroica cerulea*) IN NEBRASKA

(1) Ross Silcock, (2) John J. Dinan, (3) Bill Huser, and (2) Joel G. Jorgensen

(1) P.O. Box 57, Tabor, IA 51653

(2) Nebraska Game and Parks Commission, 2200 N. 33rd St., Lincoln, NE 69503

(3) 140 Oakmont Dr., South Sioux City, NE 68776

### INTRODUCTION

The Cerulean Warbler is a species of high conservation concern because of apparent long-term declines throughout its breeding range (Hamel 2000a, Hamel et al. 2004, Sauer et al. 2005) and threats to and reduction of breeding and wintering habitat (Hamel et al. 2004, Rick et al. 2004). Nebraska has traditionally been at the western periphery of the species' breeding range, where it is restricted to mature woodlands in the Missouri River Valley (Sharpe et al. 2001, Mollhoff 2001). The Cerulean Warbler is a Tier I "at-risk" species under the Nebraska Natural Legacy Plan because it is a conservation priority (Schneider et al. 2005). In 2004, then Nebraska Game and Parks Commission Nongame Bird Program Manager John Dinan initiated a project to inventory the species' breeding distribution in the state. Here, we review the species' status in Nebraska by reference to previous reports and by summarizing results of the 2004 inventory. We also comment on habitat associations observed in Nebraska and consider possible explanations for the species' limited distribution in the state.

### BACKGROUND

The Cerulean Warbler is a rare summer resident in extreme eastern Nebraska (Mollhoff 2001, Sharpe et al. 2001). Reports of birds, let alone nests, have been few and inconsistent during the last century, and whether the species breeds in Nebraska every year is conjectural. The difficulty in locating nests or finding evidence of breeding for this species is well-known due to its propensity to forage and nest high in leafy trees. Mollhoff (2001) reported the species at 4 sites in 1984-89, but breeding was not confirmed. Sharpe et al. (2001) cite only one instance of breeding since 1978: a female gathering nest material at Ashford Scout Camp in Thurston County 17-18 May 1997, observed by the authors. In addition, there is an unpublished report of a pair at Ashford Scout Camp 12 May 1993 (Huser, pers. obs.). The female was on the nest 14 May; however, the entire nest disappeared prior to 15-16 May, unrelated to weather conditions.

Prior to these records, Ducey (1988) cites breeding records in Sarpy County in 1944 and 1978, and in Sarpy and Dakota Counties prior to 1920. On 13 July 1978 Diggs and Diggs (1978), while banding at Fontenelle Forest, Sarpy County, netted a female in post-breeding molt with a large brood patch, indicating that it had bred in the vicinity. Their mist-net was set up immediately northeast of the Camp Gifford Road railroad crossing. Garrett (1944) found a nest at Fontenelle Forest in 1944; the nest was just north of the railroad tracks between Mill and Handsome

Hollows. Wallace (1901) found 3 nests in 1900 "near Bellevue"; two contained eggs and the third a young bird. At this time Cerulean Warbler appears to have been more numerous, as Bruner et al (1904) describe it as "a rather common summer resident along the wooded bluffs of the Missouri river, where it breeds." The only other nesting record is of a nest found by Aughey on Pilgrim Hill in Dakota County in 1865 (Youngworth 1957); Sharpe (1993) questioned this report based on Aughey's statement that Aughey had found 6 nests in Nebraska, all of which were in plum bushes 2-4 feet above ground, a most unlikely nest site for a Cerulean Warbler. In this same paper, Sharpe (1993) mentioned that he himself had observed 3 nests of Cerulean Warbler in Nebraska, all above 40 feet; unfortunately no details of these nestings have been published, although presumably they took place in the period 1960-1980 when Sharpe was active in the field.

Despite the few breeding records, especially in recent years, there are several reports most years of singing males in spring, almost all from a few publicly-owned locations which preserve a large proportion of the remaining deciduous upland and bottomland forest in Nebraska. These reports are from Ponca State Park, Dixon County, in 1994; Ashford Scout Camp, Thurston County, most years since 1984; Neale Woods, Washington County, in 2000; Fontenelle Forest, Sarpy County, most years since 1983; and Indian Cave State Park, Richardson County, in 1995 and since 2001. Away from these locations, there are fewer than 20 reports, all but 3 of which are in extreme southeast Nebraska and the eastern Platte River Valley. The exceptions are one at Lake Ogallala, Keith County, 7 May 1999 (Brown and Brown 2001); a specimen collected near Rushville in Sheridan County 6 June 1964, which had enlarged testes but was considered to be a migrant (Short 1965); and an undocumented report 2 May 1978 in Sioux County (*The Nebraska Bird Review* 46:81).

## METHODS

We conducted surveys for Cerulean Warblers in eastern Nebraska in May, June and July 2004. We began by focusing on sites where Cerulean Warblers had been previously reported, including 1) Ashford Scout Camp in extreme northern Thurston County and adjacent privately-owned land in southern Dakota County, 2) Neale Woods, Douglas and Washington County, 3) Hummel Park, Douglas County, 4) Fontenelle Forest, Sarpy County, and 5) and Indian Cave State Park, extreme eastern Nemaha and Richardson Counties. These locations all allow public access, and contain virtually all of the remaining upland and bottomland forest in the Missouri River Valley. Other woodland tracts with public or Tribal ownership were surveyed despite the absence of previous Cerulean Warbler sightings. These included the Nature Conservancy's Rulo Bluffs, Richardson County; Dodge Park, Douglas County; two locations in Thurston County owned by the Omaha Tribe, Hole-in-the-Rock and Big Elk Parks; two locations in Thurston County owned by the Winnebago Tribe, one about 1.5 miles west of Big Bear Creek and the other about 1.5 miles upstream from the mouth of Horsehead Creek; and Basswood Ridge State Wildlife Management Area, Dakota County.

Cerulean Warblers have been found in Nebraska almost exclusively near a geographically significant stream. We reviewed maps provided by Realty and Environmental Services, Nebraska Game and Parks Division, in an attempt to locate streams and significant woodlands in private ownership. There are few of these;

Silcock accessed two, one located along Winnebago Creek in Richardson County, and the other along Wine Branch Road in Richardson County. Silcock was unable to contact another landowner in Richardson County, whose property also looked promising. Huser surveyed privately-owned land in southern Dakota County immediately north of and contiguous with Ashford Scout Camp (data from this site are included with those from Ashford Scout Camp). Jorgensen surveyed from a county road in an area southwest of Blair, Washington County, that has promising woodland habitat along a stream.

Cerulean Warblers forage and nest high in leafy deciduous trees that extend above the forest canopy and therefore they are difficult to see and study. Males are loud, persistent singers and are usually vocal for most of the day. Thus, we used song identification as our primary method for locating birds. We used taped Cerulean Warbler songs occasionally, with no set protocol, in order to attract a singing bird for better observation or perhaps induce a quiet bird to sing. Such use of tapes did not result in discovery of any additional Cerulean Warblers. We did not set up specific listening posts or transects, but covered likely habitat, often several times, by walking and recording the route and singing locations with a GPS unit. Maintained trails were followed when they led to or through traditional Cerulean Warbler locations or alongside streams, but much of the walking was off trails, especially along ridges and upper reaches of streams some distance from trails. Special effort was made to survey a range of habitats, including those from which we were unaware of any previous sightings.

Because the song is rather loud and carries some distance, we consider it unlikely that a singing bird would be missed during the May-June song period, as our slow-to-medium walking pace would place us within the territory of a singing bird for several minutes, ample time to hear the persistently-given song at least once. The song generally follows a consistent species-characteristic pattern, but some songs are aberrant to some degree. Because of this, we attempted to observe any bird singing a song that at least slightly resembled that of a Cerulean Warbler to be certain of its identity. Northern Parula (*Parula americana*) and American Redstart (*Setophaga ruticilla*), both commonly found in southeast Nebraska in summer, sometimes sing songs which, if not heard well, might suggest a Cerulean Warbler, and, in fact, the presence of Northern Parula was considered indicative of habitat which might also support Cerulean Warblers. Other such "indicator species" we noted are Acadian Flycatcher (*Empidonax virens*), Kentucky Warbler (*Oporornis formosus*), and Louisiana Waterthrush (*Seiurus motacilla*). During our surveys, all birds seen or heard were noted, with particular attention given to those species of interest to the Nebraska Natural Heritage Program.

When a singing Cerulean Warbler was located, we attempted to see it to confirm its identification, and we looked carefully for any evidence of the presence of a nest or a female. Return visits were made to these locations to ascertain whether the singing bird was still there, and, if so, to gather additional evidence for presence of a female or nesting behavior.

## RESULTS

The results of survey trips are shown in Table 1. We expended 75 hours surveying for or re-checking previously-found Cerulean Warblers. During searches we

**TABLE 1. Sites surveyed for Cerulean Warblers in eastern Nebraska, 2004.** The final column indicates whether birds seen were previously reported, and when.

Date	Location	County	Hours	Cerulean Warblers
May 15	Ashford Scout Camp	Thurston	5	0
May 22	Basswood Ridge WMA	Dakota	5	0
	Indian Cave State Park	Richardson	6.75	1 male (new)
May 23	Neale Woods (MRET)	Washington	2	1 male (new)
	Hummel Park	Douglas	1	1 male (new)
May 26	Hummel Park	Douglas	1.5	1 male (23 May) 1 female (new)
	Neale Woods (MRET)	Washington	1.5	0
May 29	Rulo Bluffs	Richardson	3.5	0
	Wine Branch Road	Richardson	1	0
May 30	Indian Cave State Park	Richardson	4	1 male (22 May)
	Indian Cave State Park	Nemaha	5	0
May 31	Indian Cave State Park	Richardson	3	1 male (22 May)
Jun 6	Hummel Park	Douglas	1	1-2 males
	Neale Woods (MRET)	Washington	1	0
	Dodge Park	Douglas	1	0
	Fontenelle Forest	Sarpy	2.25	1 male (new)
Jun 12	Indian Cave State Park	Nemaha	0.5	0
	Winnebago Creek	Richardson	1	0
	Tobacco Island WMA	Cass	1	0
	Fontenelle Forest	Sarpy	1	0
Jun 13	Indian Cave State Park	Richardson	3.5	1 male (22 May)
Jun 18	Ashford Scout Camp	Thurston-Dakota	7.5	1-2 males (new)
Jun 26	Hole-in-the-Rock	Thurston	5	0
Jun 27	County Rd 228	Washington	1	0
Jul 2	Big Bear Creek	Thurston	5	0
Jul 11	Horsehead Creek	Thurston	2	0
	Big Elk Park	Thurston	1	0
	Fontenelle Forest	Sarpy	1	0
	Hummel Park	Douglas	1	0
Totals			75	5-7 males
				1 female

found between 5 and 7 singing males and one female. All "new" birds were found in the period mid-May through mid-June. The sole female was paired with a singing male at Hummel Park at a location where a singing male had been present for several years previously. At this location, Silcock and other observers (Loren and Babs Padelford, pers. obs.) were fairly sure that two singing males were present; the Padelfords heard singing males at two locations about a half mile apart, and later Silcock heard what seemed to be songs coming from different directions but only ~200 yards apart. Furthermore, 2 singing males had been observed in prior years by Jorgensen. Similarly, at Ashford Scout Camp Huser heard either two males 80-100 yards apart or a single male singing from the extremes of a single breeding territory. Apart from the observation of a paired female at Hummel Park, no evidence of breeding was obtained. The singing male at Neale Woods apparently departed, as it was not heard on later visits.

Based on our findings, we can make a rough estimate of the number of singing male Cerulean Warblers present in Nebraska May-July, 2004. In this survey, our minimum count was 5, and our maximum 7. The number could be higher due to the possibility that the birds occupy unsurveyed sites, but our survey indicates that the number of Cerulean Warblers present in Nebraska during the breeding season is likely limited to a handful of individuals.

#### DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSIONS

Cerulean Warbler breeding numbers in Nebraska are likely limited because of quality and quantity of suitable habitat. The species is considered "area sensitive" and large forest tracts may be required to support "stable breeding populations" (Hamel 2000b). Minimum area requirements to support breeding birds have not been conclusively established, but estimates range from 75 to 1700 acres depending on region (Hamel 2000b). Extensive mature woodland tracts in Nebraska are limited and relatively small compared to other areas of the species' range. Nebraska's largest remaining contiguous area of upland woodland is the roughly 3000 acres at Indian Cave State Park and of bottomland forest the roughly 400 acres at Fontenelle Forest.

Forest tract size is, however, only one variable limiting numbers in Nebraska. Cerulean Warblers require a specific forest canopy structure (Hamel 2000b). Hamel stated: "Important habitat elements for this species thus appear to be large forest tracts with big deciduous trees in mature to older-growth forest with horizontal heterogeneity of the canopy". Hamel (2000b) noted that the forest utilized by Cerulean Warblers, whether upland or bottomland, has a discontinuous canopy and an open understory which provides open space below the nest site; gaps and openings are compatible with the presence of Cerulean Warblers, and, indeed, may attract them. Remaining forested areas in eastern Nebraska have all been logged in the past, removing tall trees that extend through the canopy and thereby eliminating the canopy discontinuity favored by the species (Hamel 2000b).

An important observation of this survey was the similarity of habitat features at each location Cerulean Warblers were found in Nebraska. These are finer features than are usually provided in the literature: (1) adjacent or surrounding extensive forest, (2) presence of a geographically significant stream, and (3) a fairly flat area with tall supra-canopy deciduous trees. This raises an intriguing question: why do Cerulean Warblers appear not to utilize ridges or other upland forest in

Nebraska, as they do in most other parts of their breeding range (Hamel 2000b), and, indeed, appear to require the presence of a stream? Due to the importance of canopy discontinuity in maintenance of stable breeding populations of Cerulean Warblers, we further believe that the consistent occurrence of Cerulean Warblers in Nebraska adjacent to streams may result from the canopy discontinuity, both horizontal and vertical, provided by the presence of a stream.

Cleared areas, even the presence of roads, adjacent to forested streams may not be a deterrent, such as at the Hummel Park site. This site, the only location in this study that provided evidence of breeding, was adjacent on one side of a significant stream to an open area with a small public park area beside a well-used paved road, and on the other side to steep hillsides of oak-hickory forest. Although nesting may not have occurred at Hummel Park in 2004, we observed the female there only in tall trees immediately adjacent to the stream. Of course, the presence of an open area or road also provides the canopy discontinuity important to Cerulean Warblers, as discussed above. At three additional locations, Indian Cave State Park, Fontenelle Forest, and Ashford Scout Camp, habitat was tall supra-canopy trees (oak, hickory, or cottonwood) located on flattish stream benches surrounded for at least 300 yards by rather steep hillsides of upland hardwood forest. At Neale Woods, habitat was similar: the singing male was utilizing tall trees (cottonwoods in this case) adjacent to a stream bordered by steep upland forest on one side and bottomland forest on the other.

In this study, no Cerulean Warblers were found entirely within bottomland forest, such as the floodplain areas at Fontenelle Forest. Nevertheless, Cerulean Warblers were present along North Stream Trail in Fontenelle Forest essentially annually until 1999, although no female has been found there since 1996. Significantly, North Stream Trail is adjacent to a stream; the south end of the trail is in the general area where Diggs and Diggs (1978) netted a female with an active brood patch. The only prior evidence for nesting in this floodplain habitat at Fontenelle Forest was a nest located in 1944 along a bottomland stream bordered on one side by railroad tracks and steep hillside forest and on the other by floodplain forest. We have no information as to location of the nests found by Wallace (1901).

Sites currently used by Cerulean Warblers in Nebraska are relatively secure from large-scale habitat alterations. Continuing regeneration and maturation of woodland tracts, particularly those on reserves such as Indian Cave State Park, may provide additional, albeit limited, suitable habitat in the future. Variables unrelated to habitat quality and extent may, however, threaten Nebraska's small population. Cerulean Warbler range has shifted northeastward over the past several decades (Hamel et al. 2004). This may further isolate breeding birds in Nebraska that are already relatively isolated from one another and from areas farther east that have higher densities and may potentially serve as a source of additional breeding birds. Fluctuations of populations at core breeding areas can affect a species' status in peripheral areas of a species' range (Jorgensen and Dinsmore 2005). Thus, the presence of suitable habitat may not be enough to sustain breeding birds in Nebraska.

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