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SPRING FIELD REPORT, March–May 2005

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INTRODUCTION

As is often the case, the spring season had something for everyone: potential range expansions, an incredible shorebird migration through the eastern Rainwater Basin, a scarcity of migrant warblers, and some genuinely rare birds.

Timely spring rainfall transformed the Rainwater Basin, leaving large areas of sheetwater for migrant shorebirds and improving the attractiveness of wetlands, particularly renovated wetlands, to certain breeding species.

Perhaps the most important bits of information we can record here are changes in breeding ranges or behavior. Of significance here is the second nesting record for Hooded Merganser, the increasing occurrence of Greater Prairie-Chickens at Rainwater Basin grasslands, the return of Mississippi Kites to Red Cloud, nesting Black-necked Stilts and American Avocets in the Rainwater Basin, discovery of Barn Owls in northeast Nebraska, expansion into the state of Scissor-tailed Flycatchers, possible breeding of Clark's Nutcrackers on the Pine Ridge, the continued feeding of grackle and robin chicks by the Sioux Co Curve-billed Thrasher (now considered to be a Husker), increasing evidence of Spotted Towhee introgression at Schramm State Park, and extra-limital nestings of Pine Siskin.

The shorebird migration through the Rainwater Basin was one for the ages, with record numbers of Hudsonian Godwits, Ruddy Turnstones, Dunlin, and Buff-breasted Sandpipers found. Numbers of other species were also high, and L McConaughy contributed with a record count of Whimbrels.

On the other hand, migrant warblers were drastically lower in numbers, notably Nashville Warbler (8), Chestnut-sided Warbler (3), Magnolia Warbler (1), Black-throated Green Warbler (1), and Blackburnian Warbler (0). What this means will have to wait for a regional or national perspective.

Rarities were in evidence also, with some real "zooties": Black-bellied Whistling-Duck, Anhinga, Glossy Ibis, White-tailed Kite, Red Knot, Ruff, Little Gull, White-eyed Vireo (in Sioux Co, no less), and Connecticut Warbler.

ABBREVIATIONS

ADF: Arbor Day Farm, Otoe Co;
BOL: Branched Oak L, Lancaster Co;
Cem: Cemetery;
CLNWR: Crescent L NWR, Garden Co;
FF: Fontenelle Forest, Sarpy Co;
GPD: Gavins Point Dam, Cedar/Knox Cos;
HCR: Harlan Co Res, Harlan Co;
ICSP: Indian Cave SP: Nemaha/Richardson Cos;
L: Lake;
LM: L McConaughy, Keith Co;

LO: L Ogallala (+L Keystone), Keith Co;
m.ob.: many observers;
NC: Nature Center;
NNF: Nebraska National Forest;
NWR: National Wildlife Refuge;
PL: Pawnee L, Lancaster Co;
Res: Reservoir;
RWB: Rainwater Basin;
 eastern RWB mostly Fillmore, Clay and surrounding counties;
 western RWB mostly Phelps Co;
SCP: Spring Creek Prairie, Lancaster Co;
SHP: State Historical Park;
SL: Sewage Lagoon(s);
SP: State Park; WMA: Wildlife Management Area (State);
WP: Wilderness Park, Lincoln;
WPA: Waterfowl Production Area (Federal);
WSR: Wind Springs Ranch, Sioux Co.

GAZETTEER:

Buckskin Hills: WMA, Dixon Co;
Burchard L: WMA, Pawnee Co;
Calamus Res: SRA/WMA, Garfield/Loup Cos;
Harvard Marsh: WPA, Clay Co;
Kiowa: WMA, Scotts Bluff Co;
L Minatare: Scotts Bluff Co;
Monroe Canyon: Sioux Co;
Oliver Res: Kimball Co;
Pine Ridge: Ponderosa Pine-covered escarpment in northwest Nebraska;
Platte River SP: Cass Co;
Ponca SP: Dixon Co;
Schramm SP: Sarpy Co;
Smith L: WMA, Sheridan Co;
Swanson Res: SRA/WMA, Hitchcock Co;
Wildcat Hills NC: Scotts Bluff Co;
Wilkins WPA: Fillmore Co.

OBSERVERS

AB: Aaron Brees, Ames, IA;
AG: Alan Grenon, Seattle, WA;
AH: Alice Heckman, Kearney;
AK: Alice Kenitz, Gering;
AR: Alice Rumery, Kearney;
ARy: Allen Reyer, Bellevue;
AS: Audrey Sterkel, Sidney;
BFH: Bill F. Huser, South Sioux City;
BG: Betty Grenon, Bellevue;
B&LP: Babs & Loren Padelford, Bellevue;
CC: Carol Carpenter, Verdon;

CG: Carlos Grandes, Geneva y España;
CH: Carolyn Hall, Bassett;
CNK: Clem N. Klaphake, Bellevue;
CT: Chris Thody, Lincoln;
DC: Dave Crawford, Bellevue;
DG: Dianne Guinn, Omaha;
DK: Dan Kim, Grand Island;
D&CN: Don & Colleen Noecker, Albion;
D&JP: Don and Jan Paseka, Ames;
DSt: Dave Stage, Elkhorn;
EB: Elliott Bedows, Bellevue;
EBa: Elaine Bachel, Lincoln;
ECT: Edna Claire Thomas, Morrill;
E&JM: Elizabeth & Jerry Mulliken, Nickerson;
EM: Eric McFadden, Bellevue;
EV: Eric Volden, Kearney;
G&WH: Glen & Wanda Hoge, Alma;
GSt: Greg Stoiber, Bellevue;
GW: Gertrude Wood, York;
HH: Heidi Hughes, Alda;
HKH: Helen K. Hughson, Mitchell;
JC: Jamalee Clark, Gering;
JDG: Jan De Garmo, Greenwood;
JG: Joseph Gubanyi, Seward;
JGJ: Joel G. Jorgensen, Blair;
JJ: Jan Johnson, Wakefield;
JM: Jeff Meyer, Lincoln;
JSt: Jon Strong, Omaha;
JT: Jerry Toll, Omaha;
JWH: John W. Hall, Omaha;
KD: Kathy DeLara, Mitchell;
KCR: Kathleen Crawford-Rose, Bellevue;
KS: Kent Skaggs, Kearney;
LE: Larry Einemann, Lincoln;
LF: Lonnie Frimann, Mitchell;
L&CF: Laurence & Carol Falk, Nebraska City;
LO: Linda Ollinger, Wilsonville;
LR: Lanny Randolph, Gibbon;
MB: Mark Brogie, Creighton;
MC: Marcia Claesson, Lincoln;
MH: Mace Hack, Lincoln;
MUs: Moni Usasz, Lincoln;
NB: Norma Brockmoller, Winside;
NMV: Nora Mae Vance, Scottsbluff;
NP: Neva Pruess, Lincoln;
NR: Neal Ratzlaff, Omaha;
PAJ: Paul A. Johnsgard, Lincoln;
P&DD: Phyllis & Dean Drawbaugh, Scottsbluff;
PDu: Paul Dunbar, Hastings;
PEL: Paul Lehman, Cape May, NJ;
PK: Peter Kondrashov, Maryville, MO;
PM: Paul Myers, Raymond;

PS: Phil Swanson, Omaha;
RB: Roland Barth, Bellevue;
RE: Rick Eades, Lincoln;
RG: Ruth Green, Bellevue;
RH: Robin Harding, Gibbon;
RW: Rick Wright, Tucson, AZ;
RZ: Ric Zarwell, Lansing, IA;
SG: Steve Griffaw, St. Charles, MO;
SJ: Stephen Jones, Boulder, CO;
SJD: Stephen J. Dinsmore, Starkville, MS;
SM: Sue Mattix, Omaha;
TEL: Thomas E. Labedz, Lincoln;
TJW: T.J. Walker, Brady;
TS: Tom Stehn, Austwell, TX;
TR: Tommie Rogers, Mound City, MO;
UL: Urban Lehner, Omaha;
WF: William Flack, Tucson, AZ;
WM: Wayne Mollhoff, Ashland;
WRS: W. Ross Silcock, Tabor, IA.

SPECIES ACCOUNTS

Black-bellied Whistling-Duck: A belated report was of 4 adults on a farm pond in Lancaster Co 22-24 May, 2004 (PM, details). This is the 4th documented record for Nebraska.

Greater White-fronted Goose: Best count was only 2500, in Butler Co 23 Mar (D&JP); stragglers were reported through 15 May, when one was in Douglas Co (JT). Rare in the Panhandle, 2 at Berggren Pond, Scotts Bluff Co, 30 Apr were unexpected (AK).

Snow Goose: Best count was an excellent 100,000 in Dixon Co 12 Mar (JJ); as many as 40 were still at Harvard Marsh 10 May (PDu) and 26 at HCR 26 May (G&WH). Of 4 neck-collared geese reported from Mormon Island Crane Refuge, Hall Co, 3 Mar (CG), 2 white birds were from Queen Maud Sanctuary in north-central Canada, where all are white, and a blue bird and a white bird were from Baffin and Southampton Islands, in the eastern part of the breeding range, where both blue and white birds occur.

Ross's Goose: Best count was 150 between Grand Island and Clay Center 22 Mar (PEL), and last were 3 at Harvard Marsh 10 May (PDu) and an adult at LM 16 May (SJD,AB).

Canada Goose: Some 30,000 were estimated in the central Platte River Valley 20 Mar, most large forms (WRS,TR,PK), and 200 of 500 in Kearney Co 3 Mar were *parvipes* (JSt). Kiowa hosted 15 "families" 22 May (KD).

Cackling Goose: Reports were statewide through 30 Apr, including a single in Scotts Bluff Co (AK), and a high count of 1000 in the central Platte Valley 3 Mar (PAJ). Singles at Schramm SP 29 May (WRS) and at Harvard Marsh 30 May (PDu) were likely injured.

Trumpeter Swan: Intriguing were 5 unmarked immatures near Syracuse 19-20 Feb (JDG) and presumably later at Burchard L, 20-26 Mar (TEL,RW); they may have also been seen at Schick L, McPherson Co, where 5 immatures were noted 7 Apr (TJW). Away from the Sandhills, 2 were at Czechland L, Saunders Co, 23 Mar (D&JP) and one was in Boone Co 2 Apr (D&CN).

Four nesting pairs were seen in the western Sandhills 15-26 May (SJD,EB,TJW).

Wood Duck: Rather early were 2 in Lincoln Co 4 Mar (TJW) and singles at BOL and in Saunders Co 5 Mar (LE).

Gadwall: A hen and brood were at Scottsbluff SL 13 May (KD); one in Douglas Co 27 May (JT) was rather late.

Eurasian Wigeon: The only report was of a male and apparent ("brownish") female at North Platte SL 7-13 Apr (TJW); recent years have seen fewer reports.

American Wigeon: Routine reports.

American Black Duck: None were reported.

Mallard: Routine reports.

Blue-winged Teal: Best count was a spring record 2500 at Harvard Marsh 30 Apr (JGJ).

Cinnamon Teal: Kiowa is the best place to see this species in Nebraska; 15-20 were there 9 Apr (AK). Of about 30 reported, easternmost were 3 in the eastern RWB 15 Apr, 3 May, and 22-23 May (PDu,JGJ), where it has been scarce in recent dry years. Male hybrids with Blue-winged Teal were at the Alda Bridge, Hall Co, 20-26 Mar (PEL,GSt) and at LM 16 May (SJD,AB).

Northern Shoveler: "Thousands" were at North Platte SL 13-21 Apr (TJW), a known staging area for the species.

Northern Pintail: Routine reports.

Green-winged Teal: Routine reports.

Canvasback: Routine reports.

Redhead: Routine reports.

Ring-necked Duck: Routine reports.

Greater Scaup: Of 58 reported statewide 3 Mar-15 Apr, a good tally of 40 was at Sherman Res, Sherman Co, 19 Mar (WRS,TR,PK).

Lesser Scaup: Routine reports.

Common Goldeneye: Routine reports.

Bufflehead: Routine reports.

Hooded Merganser: Very exciting was apparently the 2nd confirmed breeding record for Nebraska since 1915, a female and 9 young photographed at ADF 20 May; 7 young remained 26 May, and the observers believed the birds used a wood duck box (L&CF; photos). The other record was of 4 unaccompanied day-old young that were raised and released near Waterloo in 1997.

Common Merganser: Routine reports.

Red-breasted Merganser: An excellent spring count was the 54 at GPD 12 Mar (BFH).

Ruddy Duck: The "thousands" at North Platte SL 21-30 Apr (TJW) were a record spring count.

Gray Partridge: Most recent records from the traditional population in the northeast have come from the area from Holt to Wayne Cos; this spring about 16 sightings in that area were reported (MB,NB), more than usual. The other, more localized, population is in Sioux Co, where 5 were at WSR 14 Apr (HKH).

Ring-necked Pheasant: Routine reports.

Sharp-tailed Grouse: Mixed leks with Greater Prairie-Chickens are apparently rather common in the southern and eastern Sandhills; leks with a distinct minority of Sharp-tailed Grouse were near Loup City (4 grouse-14 chickens; WRS,TR,PK), Winnetoon (2-27; MB), and in McPherson Co (TJW). Hybrids were noted at Winnetoon (MB) and in McPherson Co (TJW); the

latter looked like a sharp-tail in front and a prairie-chicken from the back, sounded like a sage grouse, and was displaying by itself in a winter wheat field (TJW). Surprisingly far east was an apparent non-hybrid Sharp-tail at Buckskin Hills 9 Apr (BFH).

Greater Prairie-Chicken: Significant is the increasing number of sightings in the eastern RWB recently. It seems these birds are adapting to wetlands surrounded by extensive grassland, not necessarily native, although one lek had 22 birds displaying on the muddy edge of Hultine WPA, Clay Co, near some ducks (JGJ), and another had birds displaying by the water at Prairie Dog WMA (AG,BG). Small numbers were noted regularly during May in the Rauscher WPA-Wilkins WPA area of the eastern RWB (JGJ,WRS). The southeast Nebraska population is doing well; 35 were counted on a lek near Vesta 20 Mar (TEL), and 95 were in Johnson and Pawnee Cos 9 Apr (CNK). In McPherson Co 17 Apr, 77 were counted during a survey (TJW). Easternmost were 8 at Buckskin Hills 9 Apr (BFH).

Wild Turkey: Rare in the eastern RWB, a female and a displaying male were noted in separate locations 21 May (JGJ,WRS). A nest with 11 eggs was found in a Bellevue yard 2 May (ARy).

Northern Bobwhite: Considered noteworthy at the locations were 2 west of Creighton 31 Mar (MB) and one at Buckskin Hills 9 Apr, the first "after a long absence" (BFH).

Common Loon: About 14 were reported statewide, beginning rather early on 26 Mar at BOL (D&JP,LE), through 31 May (SJ); the latter was at Smith L.

Pied-billed Grebe: A good count was 34 at Conestoga L, Lancaster Co, 10 Apr (MUs).

Horned Grebe: One at Niobrara Marsh, Knox Co, 5 Mar (MB) was 4th earliest on record.

Eared Grebe: Routine reports.

Western Grebe: Easternmost and rather early were 5 at Niobrara Marsh, Knox Co, 16 Apr (MB).

Clark's Grebe: The only report was of 7 at LM 16 May (SJD,AB).

American White Pelican: The 126 at LM 5 Mar (CNK) had to be record-setting early migrants, and also rather early were 42 at Sutherland Res 11 Mar (TJW); previous early dates where wintering birds were not noted were 7, 8, and 9 Mar. A good spring count was 1202 at LM 16 May (SJD,AB).

Double-crested Cormorant: Routine reports.

Anhinga: A major surprise was a flyover single seen by experienced observers who had stopped to look at hawks overhead at ICSP 30 Apr (B&LP, details; CNK). This is the 3rd spring record, all in the period 27 Apr-5 May; there is one fall record.

American Bittern: The 6 at Harvard Marsh 30 Apr (JGJ) was an excellent count.

Least Bittern: The only report of this rare but regular spring migrant was of 2 in small marsh on the south side of the Elkhorn River just north of Meadow Grove in Madison Co 31 May (MB).

Great Blue Heron: Breeding activity was noted at Red Willow Res, Frontier Co (TJW), at Kruegers L, Cheyenne Co (AS), 3 miles east of Henry (P&DD), and north of Mitchell (AK). The two Scotts Bluff Co sites were the largest, with 10-12 nests at each.

Great Egret: Routine reports.

Snowy Egret: One in Hayes Co 17 Apr (WF) was rather early. Rare westward, one was at LO 16 May (SJD,AB).

- Little Blue Heron:** The only report of this rare spring migrant was of an adult in Douglas Co 12 May (JT).
- Cattle Egret:** This species was widely reported in good numbers from 10 Apr (PDu); best counts were an excellent 60 at Harvard Marsh 30 Apr (JGJ) and 35 in Hall, Buffalo, and Dawson Cos 12 May (TJW).
- Green Heron:** Routine reports.
- Black-crowned Night-Heron:** Routine reports.
- Glossy Ibis:** This species is increasing in frequency on the Great Plains in spring. Sightings of 1-2 birds closely-observed at Harvard Marsh 15 Apr (PDu) through 26 May (JGJ,WRS,RE) were intriguing; these birds were usually not associated with White-faced Ibises and showed no sign of hybrid characters (JGJ, WRS). Singles observed at Mallard Haven WPA, Fillmore Co, 3 May (JGJ) and Trumbull Basin, Adams Co, 19 May (JGJ) were likely different birds; if so, these are the 5th-7th documented spring records for this species, with the first as recent as 1999.
- White-faced Ibis:** Earliest of many found statewide was a bird reported as "ibis sp." rather early on 13 Apr near Gibbon (AG,BG) with 11 (7 reported as "ibis sp.") in the eastern RWB following closely 15 Apr (PDu,AG,BG). Best count was 34 at Waco WPA, York Co, 26 May (RE).
- Turkey Vulture:** Arrival was rather early, with singles in Bellevue 3 Mar (B&LP) and 4 Mar (EB) and in Omaha 4 Mar (JSt). Earliest dates are in the last few days of Feb. A good count was the 51 at Ponca SP 26 May (B&LP).
- Osprey:** Routine reports.
- White-tailed Kite:** An adult was carefully studied at close range at BOL 17 Apr (LE). This is only the 4th documented record for the state, but more are expected as this species is being reported more frequently on the Great Plains.
- Mississippi Kite:** Birds had returned to both known breeding sites in the state, Ogallala 15 May (KS) and, for the second year, Red Cloud 29 May (KS).
- Bald Eagle:** Nest sites were re-occupied near Odessa 18 Mar (AH) and in Dodge Co 9 Apr (TJW,D&JP). Immatures that are probably regionally-hatched are more often seen later in spring as breeding pairs increase in the state; 2 were near Schuyler 13 May (LE) and one was at Ponca SP 26-28 May (B&LP).
- Northern Harrier:** Routine reports.
- Sharp-shinned Hawk:** An adult in Monroe Canyon 18 May (SJD) was of interest in that breeding has occurred there previously.
- Cooper's Hawk:** A pair built a nest in a Bellevue yard 25 Mar but crows took it over and nested there instead (B&LP).
- Red-shouldered Hawk:** At least one bird was reported from the traditional breeding site at FF 23 Mar-10 Apr (B&LP,EB,RB), and another was nearby in Bellevue 13 Apr (ARy). Of interest at a potential new breeding site, which would be only the second for the state, were the 2 reports from Neale Woods of single birds 27 Mar (NR,CNK) and 10 Apr (CNK).
- Broad-winged Hawk:** Some 17 birds were reported from the eastern half of the state 17 Apr (JT,GSt) through 15 May (SJD). One at Schramm SP 29 May may have been a local breeder (WRS).
- Swainson's Hawk:** One at North Platte 31 Mar (TJW) was rather early. Best count was only 25, in Lincoln Co 14 Apr (TJW).
- Red-tailed Hawk:** An adult was incubating in Sarpy Co 13 Mar (RB), and 2 nests in Harlan Co fledged young rather early on 22 May (G&WH). Last *harlani* reported was rather late in Dixon Co 13 Apr (JJ) and last *krideri* on the Sarpy-Cass Cos line 24 Mar (RW).

Ferruginous Hawk: Routine reports.

Rough-legged Hawk: Routine reports.

Golden Eagle: Young in a nest at WSR were getting juvenile feathers by 31 May (HKH).

American Kestrel: Of 4 nest boxes in western Douglas Co, 2 had incubating females with 3 and 5 eggs 23 Apr (DSt).

Merlin: A bit tardy for the easterly locations were singles in Seward Co 9 May (JG) and in Garfield Co 14 May (NR).

Prairie Falcon: Routine reports.

Peregrine Falcon: One in downtown Fremont 22 Mar (JSt) may have been a very early migrant or, perhaps more likely, a visitor from Omaha, whereas one in Lincoln 25 Mar was likely a resident bird (RE).

Virginia Rail: Routine reports.

Sora: Singles were rather early on 17 Apr in both Sarpy Co (JT) and Hayes Co (WF). A fall-out was noted at North Lake Basin WMA, Seward Co, 15 May, when 51 were flushed from about 150 yards of grassy roadside edge (JGJ,WRS).

American Coot: About 10 pairs were nesting at North Lake Basin WMA, Seward Co, 26 May (JGJ).

Sandhill Crane: Peak count "estimated by locals" was 310,000 in the central Platte Valley 1 Apr (RZ). Good westerly counts were the 40-50,000 in the Lewellen area 5 Mar (CNK) and 20,000 in the Hershey area 10 Mar (TJW). Of interest was the 150 at a potential roost site along the Republican River in Dundy Co where clearing work is proposed (TJW). Rare in the east, 3 sightings this spring brought the total to only 19: 8 flew over Gage Co 12 Mar (LE), 100 were over Dodge Co 18 Mar (D&JP), and 5 were over BOL 26 Mar (D&JP). Last were 12 at Kiowa 28 May (AK).

Whooping Crane: A juvenile with Sandhill Cranes just east of Grand Island 28 Mar-2 Apr was believed to be the lone juvenile that wintered with Sandhill Cranes about 75 miles north of Aransas, Texas (fide TS). Six adults were in the RWB 5-6 Apr (fide TS).

Black-bellied Plover: Best count was a remarkable 613 in the eastern RWB 18 May, including single-location counts of 207 in flooded fields near Kenesaw (PDu), 176 at Wilkins WPA (JGJ), and 165 at Griess WPA, Fillmore Co (JGJ).

American Golden-Plover: Second-earliest ever was one at Harvard Marsh 20 Mar (PEL,PDu). Flooded fields in Butler Co yielded several good shorebird counts this spring; 40-56 golden-plovers were reported there 22 Apr (MB) through 15 May (D&JP,LR,RH,B&LP).

Snowy Plover: The only report was from LM, where 8 were found 16 May (SJD,AB). Several pairs bred there last year.

Semipalmated Plover: Record numbers were at Harvard Marsh, with 300 there 10 May (PDu) and 257 on 30 Apr (JGJ).

Piping Plover: A record single-location count for the RWB was 19 at Harvard Marsh 30 Apr (JGJ). As of 16 May, some 137 had returned to LM (SJD,AB). Following discovery of nesting at L Minatare for the first time in 2004, a displaying male was seen there 17 May (SJD,AB) and 4 birds were present 19 May (KD). On 20 May, a nest with 2 eggs was found there (KD); one adult was banded (right- green over orange; left- white). However, due to rising water, the eggs were moved to LM 28 May (fide KD). Reports were received from traditional eastern breeding locations also (MB,B&LP,WRS).

Killdeer: Routine reports.

Mountain Plover: The only report was of one at a regular location south of Kimball 17 May (SJD,AB).

Black-necked Stilt: Following the surprising sightings of 4 individuals in the eastern RWB 13-19 May (JGJ), a bigger surprise was 2 at Harvard Marsh 18 May (EV) and then 6 birds there acting defensively 20 May (PDu). Two days later 2 nests were found, one with a single egg (JGJ,WRS), but on 30 May there was one nest with 4 eggs and only 2 adults present (PDu). (Stay tuned for the Summer Report). An additional 2 birds were in York Co 23 May (JGJ).

American Avocet: Reports from the east were more numerous than usual, with good counts of 79 at Harvard Marsh 30 Apr (JGJ) and 40 at PL 22 Apr (JG). Most exciting was the discovery at Harvard Marsh of 2 pairs, one with a nest, but no eggs, 30 May (PDu). At Kiowa, a regular nesting site, the 12-15 nesting pairs 7 May were about half the number of last year (KD).

Greater Yellowlegs: The 140 in Lincoln Co 13 Apr (TJW) was an excellent spring count.

Lesser Yellowlegs: Two in Buffalo Co 19 Mar (CNK) and one at Harvard Marsh 22 Mar (PDu) were rather early.

Solitary Sandpiper: Rather early was one in Buffalo Co 26 Mar (UL) and rather late another in southeast Nebraska 28 May (SG).

Willet: Routine reports.

Spotted Sandpiper: Routine reports.

Upland Sandpiper: A good count was 20 in the North Platte area 21 May (TJW).

Whimbrel: This spring had an amazing total of 109, all but one in the period 10-24 May, as expected. One on the Platte River near Louisville 15 Apr (RE) was 3rd-earliest ever and only the 5th for April. The record spring count of 70 at LM 16 May (SJD,AB; photos) was amazing. The 3 highest counts on record are all 15-16 May. Another excellent count was the 34 in the eastern RWB 18 May, including 20 near Grafton (JGJ). Other reports were of singles at Harvard Marsh 10 May (PDu) and at Straight Water WMA, Seward Co, 15 May (JGJ,WRS), and 2 at Wilkins WPA 24 May (JGJ).

Long-billed Curlew: At the east edge of the summer range was one with Hudsonian Godwits (and thus likely a late migrant) in a wet pasture in Garfield Co 14 May (G&WH). The sight of 3 curlews on a burnt field in Phelps Co 12 Apr (JSt) caused a few rapid heartbeats until the observer deftly (thankfully?) confirmed their identity as Long-billeds.

Hudsonian Godwit: This was an amazing spring for this species. Beginning with a record-early single in Antelope Co 6 Apr (MB), many were reported in the eastern half of the state through 28 May, with 2 in Douglas Co (JT). No sooner was an incredible all-time eastern RWB high count of 1139 set 15-16 May (JGJ,WRS; no duplicated sites), than a new single-location count of 1033 was set at Freeman Lakes WPA, Seward Co, 20 May (JGJ). These counts were made at extensive sheetwater on renovated playa wetlands, which bodes well for the design and execution of the renovations.

Marbled Godwit: A few stragglers occur into mid-May most years, but 8 in Clay Co as late as 22 May (JGJ,WRS) were a surprise.

Ruddy Turnstone: Excellent numbers were found in the eastern RWB, peaking at 59 on 19 May, including 42 at Wilkins WPA (JGJ). Total for the eastern RWB 15-26 May was about 104 (JGJ,PDu,WRS,EV). Elsewhere, one at LM 16 May (SJD,AB) was only the 14th record for the western half of Nebraska.

- Red Knot:** The only report of this casual migrant was of 4 in breeding plumage at Springer WPA, Hamilton Co, 18 May (EV, details). This is only the 14th spring report, 10 of which are in the period 15-26 May.
- Sanderling:** Excellent counts were 193 at LM 16 May (SJD,AB) and 106 along the Missouri River near Niobrara 18 May (MB). The 3 high spring counts are in the period 14-16 May at LM.
- Semipalmated Sandpiper:** Record early by 2 days were 15 in Buffalo Co 19 Mar (CNK). An amazing record spring count was the 3300 at Harvard Marsh 30 Apr (JGJ); 2300 were there 10 May (PDu). Less common westward, 61 at LM 16 May (SJD,AB) was a good tally for the location.
- Western Sandpiper:** A rare migrant in spring, the only reports were of one at Harvard Marsh 30 Apr (JGJ) and 3 there 10 May (PDu). It takes patience to find a Western among 330 Semipalmateds!!
- Least Sandpiper:** Best count was 300 at Harvard Marsh 10 May (PDu).
- White-rumped Sandpiper:** Another amazing "peep" count was the record 7000 White-rumps that were present in eastern York Co 18-20 May (JGJ). Other good counts were the 1900 at Harvard Marsh 24 May (JGJ) and 1500 there 30 May (PDu).
- Baird's Sandpiper:** Yet another record single-location count for the eastern RWB was the 6400 at Harvard Marsh 30 Apr (JGJ).
- Pectoral Sandpiper:** A count of 150 in Fillmore Co 26 May was a surprisingly late spring peak for this species (JGJ), which usually peaks around 1 May.
- Dunlin:** Good numbers were reported in the eastern half of the state 18 Apr (PDu) through the period, a total of about 143. Best counts were 50 near Kenesaw 20 May (PDu) and 46 in the eRWB 15 May (JGJ,WRS).
- Stilt Sandpiper:** Rather early were singles (same bird?) at Harvard Marsh 15 and 18 Apr (PDu).
- Buff-breasted Sandpiper:** Joel Jorgensen continued his study of this fascinating species in the eastern RWB this spring. His 2004 total count was a surprising 2174 birds, but this year an amazing 3457 were found 3-24 May (JGJ). The world population is estimated at only 15,000. Similar numbers have not been recorded elsewhere in the Great Plains and the evidence suggests a funneling of this species through the eastern RWB on a scale similar to the Sandhill Cranes in the central Platte River Valley (but Buffies are much harder to find!). An excellent count at the north edge of the eastern RWB was 200 in a flooded field in Butler Co 15 May (B&LP).
- Ruff:** The rarest shorebird this spring was Nebraska's 5th (and earliest) spring record, a basic-plumaged bird with "blazing pumpkin-orange legs", probably a male, at Eckhardt WPA, Clay Co, 26 Mar (JGJ). This is the 7th overall for the state, 5 of which have occurred in the RWB.
- Short-billed Dowitcher:** Good numbers were reported during the rather short mid-May migration period, including an excellent 89 (35 of these at Griess WPA, Fillmore Co) in the eastern RWB 18 May (JGJ). A good westerly count was 26 at LM 16 May, at which time no Long-billed Dowitchers were found (SJD,AB; photo). A pale Short-billed Dowitcher was photographed in Clay Co 23-24 May (JGJ); its putative identity as eastern *griseus* is difficult to confirm due to the possibility of intermediates between expected *hendersoni* and *griseus* in central Canada (fide Jaramillo) as well as the occurrence on the Texas coast of freshly-molted rather pale *hendersoni* (fide Karlson).
- Long-billed Dowitcher:** Rather early was one at Harvard Marsh 18 Mar (PDu), and best count a moderate 770 at Harvard Marsh 30 Apr (JGJ).

- Wilson's Snipe:** Winnowing birds were heard within the expected summer range south and east to Nance Co 14 Apr (WF) and Lincoln Co 13 Apr-21 May (TJW).
- American Woodcock:** This species continues to push the western limits of its range in major drainages; one was heard near Bassett 2 Apr (CH), single birds were in northern Antelope Co 3 and 13 Apr (MB), and one was at Crane Meadows NC, Hall Co, 5 May (HH).
- Wilson's Phalarope:** Good counts were the "thousands" at North Platte SL 30 Apr (TJW) and 2648 in Logan Co 15 May (SJD). Four nesting pairs were in meadows along White Horse Creek, Lincoln Co, 21 May (TJW).
- Red-necked Phalarope:** Only 50 were reported, 40 of these in Logan Co 15 May (SJD).
- Franklin's Gull:** A good count was the 4000 tallied flying over for the day 1 May in Butler Co (LR,RH). Rather early was one with Ring-billed Gulls in Lincoln Co 17 Mar (TJW).
- Little Gull:** The only report was a juvenile at Calamus Res, Loup Co, 15 May (SJD). This is the 4th spring record and 10th overall for the state.
- Bonaparte's Gull:** Routine reports.
- Ring-billed Gull:** Routine reports.
- California Gull:** Unusual away from LM, and only the 5th such record in spring, an adult was at L Babcock/L North, Platte Co, 13 May (B&LP). Easterly adults are likely the larger and paler northern prairie-breeding subspecies *albertaensis*. The only other report was of 9 at LM 16 May, including 6 adults and 3 3rd-alternate birds (SJD,AB).
- Herring Gull:** Routine reports.
- Thayer's Gull:** None were reported; last spring dates are in mid-Apr.
- Lesser Black-backed Gull:** This species continues to be reported regularly, with 3 sightings this spring: one was at BOL 26 Mar (LE), a 2nd-year was at Cunningham L, Omaha, 20 Apr (JGJ), and a 1st-alternate was at LM 16 May (SJD,AB). There are now almost 50 records for the state, 23 in spring.
- Glaucous Gull:** None were reported; last spring dates are around 1 Apr.
- Caspian Tern:** Rather early was one at BOL 22-23 Apr (JG,MB,LE). Only about 8 others were reported.
- Common Tern:** Rather early was one at Swanson Res 4 May (TJW); most sightings are from the second half of May.
- Forster's Tern:** Routine reports.
- Least Tern:** One at Hastings 10 Apr was "well seen" (PDu); there are only two earlier sightings, neither documented. First birds are usually seen in late Apr.
- Black Tern:** Good counts were the 1200 at Harvard Marsh 22 May (WRS,JGJ) and 1000 at HCR the same day (G&WH).
- Rock Pigeon:** Routine reports.
- Eurasian Collared-Dove:** New county records were for Adams, two at Kenesaw 15 Apr (WF), Gosper, one at Smithfield (WF), and Logan, 2 seen 15 May (SJD). This leaves only these 13 without reports: Blaine, Boyd, Cedar, Cherry, Grant, Hooker, Jefferson, Keya Paha, Loup, Pawnee, Saline, Sherman, and Thomas. Nesting was underway in a dying elm in Brady by 5 Mar (TJW). Interesting were two instances of this species initiating nesting then departing when Mourning Doves arrived for the summer; these were in Scottsbluff (KD) and Sidney (AS).
- White-winged Dove:** The first sighting of multiple birds was in Kearney in 2001; again in Kearney, 2 were seen at a feeder 7 May (KS). There are now about 35 records for Nebraska, all since 1988.

Mourning Dove: Routine reports.

Black-billed Cuckoo: None were reported; arrival is in mid- to late May.

Yellow-billed Cuckoo: Third-earliest ever for the Panhandle was one at Sidney 14 May (AS).

Barn Owl: A major surprise were the 3 records from northeast Nebraska, including the first known nesting record north and east of Holt, Boone, and Platte Cos. These are only the 3rd-5th records ever from this part of the state. A road-killed bird was found in Pierce Co 31 Mar (MB), and one in a farm building 21 Apr, the observer's first for Knox Co, remained through the period (MB). Two adults with an egg were discovered 27 Apr in a grain bin near Laurel, but when the grain drying fan was started, the birds abandoned the site (DSt). One at Brady was first heard 5 Mar and remained at least until 21 Apr (TJW); wintering may occur in this part of the state, but spring arrival is usually in late Mar. Nesting was underway at CLNWR by 20 May (GW,EBa).

Eastern Screech-Owl: Red morph birds are uncommon in Nebraska; two were reported from Lincoln, one on 2 Apr (NP) and the other mated to a gray morph bird at a nest hole with young 11 May (MC).

Great Horned Owl: Earliest nesting reported was an incubating bird near Alma 1 Mar; young were almost grown by 24 Apr (G&WH). Another was incubating in Saunders Co 4 Mar (CNK).

Burrowing Owl: An adult with 2 young was at Kiowa, 22 May (KD), rather early for young to be visible.

Barred Owl: Routine reports.

Long-eared Owl: Two nesting reports were received, one of adults with downy young at the point of leaving the nest near Bloomfield 20 May (MB) and another of 5 downy young photographed in a Russian Olive tree in Dundy Co 9 May (TJW). The only other report was of one at Smith L 31 May (SJ), a location where nesting has occurred in recent years.

Short-eared Owl: One at Kiowa 30 Apr-1 May was seen diving at a Ferruginous Hawk, suggesting possible nesting by the owl (KD). The only other reports were of 3 at Harvard Marsh 22 Mar (PDu) and one in Dundy Co 6 Apr (TJW).

Northern Saw-whet Owl: None were found this year at places they were seen in 2004 in Antelope and Knox Cos (MB).

Common Nighthawk: Routine reports.

Common Poorwill: Routine reports.

Chuck-will's-widow: Only one could be found at ICSP 6 May (WRS,PEL), a rather early date. No others were reported.

Whip-poor-will: Intriguing was a report of one heard well at Chadron SP, Dawes Co, 20 May (EB); vocalizations of the southwestern subspecies *arizonae* were heard at WSR in Jun 2003. These are the only Panhandle records.

Chimney Swift: Four at Brady 19 Apr (TJW) were rather early that far west.

White-throated Swift: Routine reports.

Ruby-throated Hummingbird: Routine reports.

Belted Kingfisher: Routine reports.

Red-headed Woodpecker: One at Laurel 13 Apr (NB) was rather early.

Red-bellied Woodpecker: Routine reports.

Yellow-bellied Sapsucker: Only 4 were reported 9 Mar-30 Apr (B&LP,JT,SM,DSt), in contrast to the good numbers last fall and winter. Last was one rather late at ICSP 30 Apr (DSt).

Downy Woodpecker: A nest with young was found in Cass Co 27 May (CNK).

Hairy Woodpecker: Routine reports.

Northern Flicker: Last red-shafted birds were 2 with 16 yellow-shafted migrants in Sarpy Co 6 Apr (JWH). It was noted that in southeast Nebraska 22-29 Mar the “vast majority” of flickers seen were males (RW); information from *The Birds of North America Online* indicates that males migrate north first in spring, and 22-29 Mar is indeed the vanguard of spring migration for flickers in Nebraska.

Pileated Woodpecker: It was thought that at least 2 pairs are nesting on the FF/Gifford Farm floodplain, based on separation of nesting locations (CNK). There were several sightings at FF through the period, and sightings continued at ICSP also, with reports 6 May (PEL,WRS) and 28 May (SG).

Olive-sided Flycatcher: Rare in the west, one in Scotts Bluff Co 11 May (KD) was also rather early.

Western Wood-Pewee: A major fallout was the 40-50 at Box Butte Res, Dawes Co, 26 May (TJW).

Eastern Wood-Pewee: Westerly, and at about the western extent of the summer range in the Platte River Valley, was one in Lincoln Co 22 May, the observer's 2nd record since 2002 (TJW).

Yellow-bellied Flycatcher: There were 2 reports of 3-5 birds within expected dates and locations: one was at ADF 16 May (L&CF) and 2-4 were at Schramm SP 21 May (EB).

Acadian Flycatcher: Four were reported as expected in late May from the southeast: one at ADF 16 May (L&CF), singles at Schramm SP 21 and 29 May (EB,WRS), and one at ICSP 30 May (ARy).

Alder Flycatcher: This late spring migrant through the east was reported four times also: 2 birds were at Rumsey Station, Sarpy Co, 22 May (JT), one was in a Dixon Co yard 23 May (JJ), and singing birds were at Ponca SP 26 May (B&LP) and FF 28 May (B&LP).

Willow Flycatcher: One in Gage Co 6 May (LE) was rather early.

Least Flycatcher: Routine reports.

Cordilleran Flycatcher: One was well-seen at Riverside Park, Scottsbluff, 14 May (KD, details). Reports of spring migrants are few, this only the 8th, with most dates 10-21 May.

Eastern Phoebe: Rather early was one in Buffalo Co 13 Mar (LR,RH), and one reappeared at last year's nesting site at Swanson Res 30 Mar (TJW). Breeding occurs throughout the Republican River Valley, but numbers are low westward.

Say's Phoebe: Surprisingly, the earliest reported was rather easterly, a single in Knox Co 9 Apr (MB).

Great Crested Flycatcher: One at Swanson Res 4 May (TJW) was rather early, and “many” had arrived in Dundy Co 9 May (TJW). Nesting activity was noted near Orleans (carrying nest material) 23 May (G&WH) and at Box Butte Res, Dawes Co, (prospecting) 26 May (TJW).

Cassin's Kingbird: The only reports were of 3 in Kimball Co 17 May (SJD,AB) and one south of Redington 25 May (TJW), both usual locations for the species.

Western Kingbird: A good count was the 40 in the L Minatare area 19 May (KD). Interesting counts made across the state 15-17 May showed a Western to Eastern ratio east of the Panhandle of 302:112 and in the Panhandle 213:31 (SJD).

- Eastern Kingbird:** Very early, but not unprecedented, was one in Dixon Co 9 Apr (BFH), and a good count was the 126 in the eastern RWB 15 May (WRS,JGJ).
- Scissor-tailed Flycatcher:** This species is clearly increasing in Nebraska; this spring there were 3 reports: a male was at Eppley Airfield, Omaha, 5 May (EB), two birds were near Denton 16 May (CT), and another was near Lincoln 21 May (JM).
- Northern Shrike:** Very late, but not unprecedented, were 2 at NNF, Halsey, 10 May; they were compared to a nearby Loggerhead Shrike (L&CF).
- Loggerhead Shrike:** Routine reports.
- White-eyed Vireo:** The first for a few years was a singing male very surprisingly far to the northwest at Coffee Park in Sowbelly Canyon, Sioux Co, 18 May (SJD, details). This is only the 2nd Panhandle record.
- Bell's Vireo:** One at Bushnell Cem 17 May (SJD,AB) was the first for Kimball Co for the experienced observers; summering numbers for this species are probably lowest in the Panhandle.
- Yellow-throated Vireo:** Migrants are hard to find very far west of the Missouri River Valley; one in Holt Co 29 May was the first there for both experienced observers (MB,DSt).
- Plumbeous Vireo:** An excellent count was the 18 in Monroe Canyon 18 May (SJD); a migrant was at Oliver Res 17 May (SJD,AB).
- Blue-headed Vireo:** Routine reports.
- Warbling Vireo:** The 42 in Furnas Co 29 May (LR,RH) was an excellent count.
- Philadelphia Vireo:** Only one was reported, from Douglas Co 24 May (MB).
- Red-eyed Vireo:** Routine reports.
- Blue Jay:** Routine reports.
- Pinyon Jay:** The only reports of this somewhat local and elusive species were of 2 in the Pants Butte, Sioux Co, area 18 May (SJD) and 15 at a regular location south of Redington 25 May (WM).
- Clark's Nutcracker:** After the winter influx to western Pine Ridge canyons of Sioux Co, "2-3 dozen" were still in the area 5 Mar (WM) and 5 were in Monroe Canyon 7 Mar (CNK). A single was in Pants Butte Canyon 18 May (SJD), and 8 were in Sowbelly Canyon 20 May (GW,EBa). Seven birds in Monroe Canyon 18 May were courting and nest-building (SJD); this would be only the 3rd instance of breeding in the state.
- Black-billed Magpie:** Sightings were south and east to Colfax (MB,WF) and Dodge (D&JP) Cos; a pair built a nest at the same place in Dodge Co as last year, but disappeared before laying eggs (D&JP).
- American Crow:** Excellent spring counts were the 600-800 in Jefferson Co 6 Mar (RE) and 480 in the eastern RWB 20 Mar (WRS,TR,PK). Aggregations are usually smaller in spring than in fall.
- Raven sp.:** A large black corvid was seen about 20 yards from a crow in Dundy Co 20 Apr (TJW,KSc); identification of silent large corvids is tricky, but there are several reports of possible ravens from western Nebraska in recent years. A complication for Nebraska is that the closest regularly-occurring ravens are Chihuahuans in west-central Kansas, rather than Common Ravens in Colorado or Wyoming. The Kansas Chihuahuans move north in spring, and so it is not unlikely that an overshoot indeed occurred in Dundy Co.
- Horned Lark:** Routine reports.
- Purple Martin:** Five birds in Bassett 2 Apr (CH) were rather early that far north and also near the west edge of the range in the north, currently believed to be at Ainsworth. Six birds at Calamus Res 7 and 14 May (LR,RH) were also at

the western edge of the range in the Loup Drainage. Breeding occurs west to Ogallala in the North Platte River Valley and throughout the Republican River Valley.

Tree Swallow: Routine reports.

Violet-green Swallow: One at Berggren Pond, Scotts Bluff Co, 30 Apr (AK) was rather early.

Northern Rough-winged Swallow: One in southeast Lincoln Co 4 Apr (TJW) was rather early.

Bank Swallow: Rather early were 6 in Otoe Co 17 Apr (L&CF). Occasionally, especially westerly, cliff faces are used as nesting sites; one such was at Arcadia Diversion Dam WMA, Custer Co, 24 May (TJW).

Cliff Swallow: One observer (TJW) noted that two bridges in the North Platte area were settled about a week apart and asked whether one was a better location than the other or whether the colonies traveled together. Fascinating information was kindly provided by Dr. Charles Brown, who has carried out highly significant studies on Cliff Swallows for many years, mostly in the LM area. Although Cliff Swallows arrive in groups, radio-tracking has shown that birds do move around looking for a colony to join. A site is settled synchronously, and new birds do not join it after it has been settled, in part due to initiation of reproduction of ectoparasites as a colony is settled. Groups of birds may arrive over a 6-week period, and so colonies in the same general area can be settled some weeks apart.

Barn Swallow: Routine reports.

Mountain Chickadee: One wintering in a Scottsbluff yard was last seen 1 Apr (P&DD). A surprise was one at Smith L 31 May; 2 Black-capped Chickadees were there also (SJ).

Black-capped Chickadee: Long-time observers noted that numbers remain very low in parts of eastern and southern Nebraska; there were none in Dodge Co (D&JP), none at a banding station at Fort Kearny, Buffalo Co (RG), and only 7 birds found in 16 birding trips Mar-May throughout Lancaster Co, where one at Wyuka Cem 11 May was the first seen in Lincoln for 2 months (LE).

Tufted Titmouse: Westernmost were singles at Mayberry WMA, Pawnee Co, 27 Mar (TEL) and Burchard L 18 May (RE). The currently-known westward limits are in Saline and Thayer Cos.

Red-breasted Nuthatch: Small numbers were reported statewide away from the breeding range, last singles in Garfield and Loup Cos 14 May (MB,CNK). Three birds were at Smith L 31 May (SJ), where breeding has not been confirmed.

White-breasted Nuthatch: Two birds at Riverside Park, Scottsbluff, 16 Mar were of the eastern subspecies (AK), which has recently become established there.

Pygmy Nuthatch: After a large winter influx, numbers remained good into spring; 25 were found in Monroe and Sowbelly Canyons 5 Mar (WM).

Brown Creeper: The very small breeding population at FF continues: a family group of 3 was noted 28 May (ARy). One at ICSP 30 Apr (CNK) was rather late; breeding has not been noted there.

Rock Wren: Strangely, the first reported was far to the east in Stanton Co 11 Apr (WF), only about the 9th eastern record. An excellent count was the 30 in the canyon area south of Redington 25 May (TJW).

Carolina Wren: Range expansion northward may be continuing; the observers' first for Dodge Co was one at Hormel Park, Fremont, 12 May (D&JP). Nesting was underway early in Bellevue, with a nest built by 17 Mar and the first

egg laid 28 Mar (ARy). An adult with 2 young was seen in Sarpy Co 5 May (JT).

House Wren: Rather early was one in Dodge Co 8 Apr (D&JP).

Winter Wren: The only reports were of singles at FF 4 Apr (B&LP) and 10 Apr (ARy). These dates are in the period of peak migration.

Sedge Wren: Rather early was one in Dodge Co 24-30 Apr (D&JP).

Marsh Wren: Routine reports.

Golden-crowned Kinglet: Routine reports.

Ruby-crowned Kinglet: Routine reports.

Blue-gray Gnatcatcher: Another early arrival somewhat out of range was one at Amick Acres, Hall Co, 10 Apr (PDu), and another out-of-range migrant was along Jones Canyon Rd, Garfield Co, 15 May (NR). There is a breeding population near Orleans, where one was seen 23 May (G&WH), but sightings in central Nebraska are few. The western population is doing well, with "lots" along Old Stage Hill Rd, Scotts Bluff Co, 13 May and nest-building noted the next day (KD); one was at West Lawn Cem, Gering, 7 May (KD). One was gathering nest material at Hummel Park, Omaha, 3 May (JT).

Eastern Bluebird: Five arrivals in Cheyenne Co 23 Mar (AS) were rather early for the Panhandle. Nest-building was underway in Dixon Co 13 Apr (JJ), and fledglings were noted 27 May in Plattsmouth (CNK). Unusual these days was a pair nesting in a "plum-like" tree at ICSP 30 Apr (LE).

Mountain Bluebird: Routine reports.

Townsend's Solitaire: Routine reports.

Veery: This species is being reported more regularly from the west, where the browner western subspecies *salicicolus* is expected; one was at West Lawn Cem, Gering, 17 May (SJD,AB). In the east, presumably inhabited by the more reddish-brown subspecies *fuscescens*, one was at ICSP 8 May (RD) and 2 at WP 15 May (RE).

Gray-cheeked Thrush: More than usual were reported, a total of 14, with 3 seen at WP 15 May (RE) the best count. None were seen west of Colfax Co, where singles were found 13 May (LE) and 15 May (JSt).

Swainson's Thrush: One at HCR 24 Apr (G&WH) was rather early. Good numbers were reported statewide with best counts 57 at Hormel Park, Fremont, 12 May (D&JP) and 30 at Smith L 31 May (SJ).

Hermit Thrush: One in Sarpy Co 28 Mar (RB) was early, although wintering occurs on occasion in the southeast.

Wood Thrush: One singing in the extreme southeast at Verdon 20 Apr (CC) was record early by 3 days.

Gray Catbird: More are being reported in the west; one was in Scottsbluff 11 May (AK) and another at Smith L 31 May (SJ).

Northern Mockingbird: This species is being reported in increasing numbers each year recently, especially from the south and west. About 25 were found, earliest 7 Apr at Burchard L (RE). A pair at Sidney were carrying nest material into a pine tree 29 May (AS).

Curve-billed Thrasher: The amazing saga of the long-staying male (since Oct 2002; he is now in his fourth calendar year) at the Lonnie Frimann Ranch in southeast Sioux Co continues; the bird was aggressively feeding robin and grackle chicks this spring (LF).

Brown Thrasher: One at ADF 6 Apr (L&CF) was rather early, as were westerly birds in Hayes Co 17 Apr and at Brady 18 Apr (TJW). Two in Sidney 5 May (AS) were first to arrive in the Panhandle.

European Starling: Routine reports.

American Pipit: Good numbers were detected in migration; the 75 in Hamilton Co 9 Apr (LR,RH) was a record spring count, and 50 in Dixon Co 13 Apr (JJ) was also an excellent count.

Sprague's Pipit: None were reported; migrants pass through mostly in Apr.

Bohemian Waxwing: Surprisingly, after the winter influx, none were reported.

Cedar Waxwing: Best counts were "hundreds" in the Brady area 8 Mar and near North Platte 16 May (TJW).

Blue-winged Warbler: The only report was of one at Rumsey Station, Sarpy Co, 22 May (JT).

Golden-winged Warbler: None were reported.

Tennessee Warbler: This was one of few species of warblers appearing in good numbers this spring. Best count was 30, at both Hormel Park, Fremont, 12 May (D&JP) and WP 17 May (LE). Uncommon westward, one was in Gering 5 May (JC), the 31st Panhandle spring record, and tying the earliest date.

Orange-crowned Warbler: Also widely-reported, best count was 35 at Calamus Res 7 May (LR,RH). One in Dixon Co 31 May (JJ) was rather late.

Nashville Warbler: Only 8 were reported, those in the east 5-12 May (JT,EB,PEL,WRS,B&LP), a poor showing for a purportedly common migrant.

Northern Parula: Good numbers were reported in the southeast for this increasingly numerous summer resident. First were at FF 14 Apr (B&LP) and best count 7 at ICSP 19 Apr (D&JP).

Yellow Warbler: Routine reports.

Chestnut-sided Warbler: Only 3 were reported; a male at Calamus Res, Loup Co, 15 May was surprisingly far west (SJD,B&LP,LR,RH).

Magnolia Warbler: The only report was of one at Ong 15 May (JGJ).

Yellow-rumped (Audubon's) Warbler: The only reports were of one in Scotts Bluff Co 7 May (KD) and another at Sidney 15 May (AS).

Yellow-rumped (Myrtle) Warbler: One at Wolbach 6 Mar (LR,RH) was rather early; it might have wintered nearby. A good count was 40 at Calamus Res 7 May (LR,RH).

Black-throated Green Warbler: The only report was of a rather late bird at Schramm SP 24 May (RE).

Blackburnian Warbler: None were reported.

Yellow-throated Warbler: Reports were only from the regular summer location at FF, maximum count 2 on 15 and 17 Apr (B&LP,CNK). Arrival was 14 Apr (B&LP).

Palm Warbler: A good total of 8 was reported, including 5 at FF 5 May (EB); another was there 7 May (ARy), and singles were in Dakota Co 29 Apr (BFH) and at Fremont 15 May (JSt).

Bay-breasted Warbler: Only 2 were reported, including one as far west as Calamus Res, Loup Co, 15 May (SJD,B&LP,LR,RH). This is only the 9th record from central and western Nebraska. The other sighting this spring was at WP, also 15 May (RE).

Blackpoll Warbler: One of few migrant warblers to appear in any numbers, about 30 were reported, with two westerly reports: one in Dundy Co 17 May (TJW) and another at Smith L 31 May (SJ). This species does occur with some regularity in the west.

Cerulean Warbler: An amazing report was of a male observed repeatedly at close range in a Scottsbluff yard 14-16 May (NMV, fide AK; details); there is a

specimen collected Jun 1964 in Sheridan Co. A bird recognized by its odd song had returned by 6 May to the same spot at ICSP it occupied in 2004 (PEL,WRS), and there were definitely two singing males at the north end of Hummel Park, Omaha, 16-21 May (JT,CNK, PS photo); the presence of 2 males was suspected but not confirmed in 2004. Another was singing in Child's Hollow, FF, 10 May (B&LP).

Black-and-white Warbler: Routine reports.

American Redstart: Good numbers were noted at Ponca SP, where they were in "very high density" 28 May (B&LP), and 10 were counted 8 May (JJ). Breeding has not been confirmed in Scotts Bluff Co, and so a pair returning to a regular "summering spot" just northwest of Scottsbluff was of interest (fide AK). A female was nest-building at ICSP 30 May (ARy).

Prothonotary Warbler: Singles were reported at FF 5-15 May (EB,B&LP,DC) and 2 were at ICSP 6 May (PEL,WRS). These may be the only currently regular summering locations.

Ovenbird: Routine reports.

Northern Waterthrush: This species was reported in at least average numbers 4-17 May, including westerly reports from Morrill 10 May (ECT), Oliver Res 17 May (SJD,AB) and WSR 17 May (SJD,AB). It is a statewide migrant, but generally uncommon westward.

Louisiana Waterthrush: Several were reported at regular locations: ICSP, FF, Schramm SP, and Platte River SP. Earliest was at FF 7 Apr (B&LP). Unusual was one banded at Wehrspann L, Omaha, 10 May (RG).

Kentucky Warbler: ICSP continues to be the stronghold, with 7 counted there 6 May (WRS,PEL). Others were in Otoe Co 15 May (L&CF), Schramm SP 21 May (EB), and Hummel Park, Omaha, 28 May (CNK).

Connecticut Warbler: A singing bird was at Rumsey Station, Sarpy Co, 13 May (JT, CNK); this is a rare but supposedly regular migrant in the east.

Mourning Warbler: Only 3 were reported: singles at WP 17 May (LE), FF 28 May (ARy), and Lincoln 31 May (MUs).

MacGillivray's Warbler: None were reported.

Common Yellowthroat: Rather early was one in Nemaha Co 30 Apr (LE).

Wilson's Warbler: Only 10 were reported 12-22 May.

Canada Warbler: A good total of 6 of this late migrant was reported; one was at FF 14 May (EM), another in a Bellevue yard 23-24 May (B&LP), 2 were at ICSP 30 May (ARy), and a pair were in southwest Dixon Co 30 May (JJ).

Yellow-breasted Chat: Routine reports.

Summer Tanager: Arrival was rather early, with one at Rumsey Station, Sarpy Co, 4 May (JT) and 5 at ICSP 6 May (WRS,PEL).

Scarlet Tanager: A good count was 6 at Schramm SP 21 May (EB).

Western Tanager: A good count was 4 along Old Stage Hill Rd, Scotts Bluff Co, 15 May (KD).

Spotted Towhee: The presence of a pair of towhees which looked like Spotted on territory at Schramm SP 21 May (EB) was intriguing. A later look at the male 29 May (WRS) revealed that although the bird sang much like a Spotted Towhee and was indeed heavily spotted, it did possess about half of the white primary patch typical of Eastern Towhee, indicating the bird was a hybrid or introgressant. The presence of this bird, as well as another bird (not seen) singing an intermediate song, suggests that there is a significant pool of Spotted Towhee genes at Schramm SP that appears to be a recent phenomenon. It would be worthwhile for observers to look at towhees along the Platte River Valley westward to Grand Island to get an indication as to

the status of towhees there. A towhee at FF 15 May had a white wing patch but also 6-8 back spots (DC).

Eastern Towhee: One in Stanton Co 8 Mar (D&JP) was an early migrant that might have wintered nearby, although wintering Eastern Towhees are rare and usually restricted to the extreme southeast. Two at FF 31 Mar (CW) and 3 there 3 Apr (EB) were also rather early, and also likely migrants, as none were reported during the Omaha CBC, which includes FF. Westerly was one at Crane Meadows NC, Hall Co, 5 May (HH).

Cassin's Sparrow: The only report was of one in Morrill Co 13 May (AK,P&DD). This is an early date for this species, although there are few data, as silent migrating birds are difficult to find and identify.

American Tree Sparrow: Routine reports.

Chipping Sparrow: One at ADF 29 Mar (L&CF) was rather early, and an excellent count was the 410 at Calamus Res 7 May (LR,RH).

Clay-colored Sparrow: This species and Chipping Sparrow can occur in large numbers at peak migration, such as the 875 Clay-coloredreds at Calamus Res 7 May (LR,RH).

Brewer's Sparrow: The only report was of one west of Harrison, a known summering location, 20 May (GW,EBa).

Field Sparrow: One of only about 20 Panhandle reports was one in Monroe Canyon 18 May (SJD).

Vesper Sparrow: Routine reports.

Lark Sparrow: Another excellent 7 May Calamus Res sparrow count was the 155 Larks there (LR,RH). A nest with 4 eggs was found near Bassett 30 May (CH).

Lark Bunting: Few were reported before the end of the period, from Garfield and Loup Cos westward, with no large aggregations.

Savannah Sparrow: One singing in Dixon Co as late as 26 May (JJ) may have been breeding, although there are no such records for northeast Nebraska. A good count was 65 in Butler Co 1 May (LR,RH).

Grasshopper Sparrow: Two in McPherson Co 7 Apr (TJW) were rather early.

Le Conte's Sparrow: Only 4 were reported, all at expected places and times: singles in Hall Co 3 May (DK) and at FF 5 May (EB), and 2 at Spikerush WMA, York Co, 13 May (MH).

Nelson's Sharp-tailed Sparrow: A record spring tally was the 12 at Spikerush WMA, York Co, 13 May (MH); the only other report was of one at Buckskin Hills 15 May (JJ). There are few records for spring, possibly because this is an often-overlooked, mid-late May migrant.

Fox Sparrow: This species was reported in good numbers, including a record spring count of 23 at FF 29 Mar (RW); 15 were there 3 Apr (EB). One in Garfield Co 14 May (CNK,B&LP) was the latest ever for the state and also rather westerly for this species.

Song Sparrow: Routine reports.

Lincoln's Sparrow: One at FF 29 Mar (RW) was rather early.

Swamp Sparrow: Somewhat locally-distributed in summer, mostly in cattail marshes in central Nebraska, a good location for singing males in spring is the meadow and cattail habitat just east of North Platte and north of the Platte River and Highway 30, and along adjacent White Horse Creek, where 10 singing males were found 21 May (TJW).

White-throated Sparrow: An excellent count was 65 at Rumsey Station, Sarpy Co, 5 May (JT). A bit westerly were singles in Valley and Wheeler Cos 14 May (SJD,D&JP).

- White-crowned Sparrow:** Best counts were an excellent 90 at Calamus Res 7 May (LR,RH) and 50 at Winters Creek L, Scotts Bluff Co, 5 May (KD). Most Nebraska birds are pale-lored *gambelii*, but black-lored birds (*leucophrys*) occur occasionally, usually in the east. Two such were at Ponca SP 4 May (BFH).
- Harris's Sparrow:** Although widely-reported, numbers seemed low to several observers, and the best count was only 28 (JJ). One in Dixon Co 28 May (JJ) was rather late.
- Dark-eyed (White-winged) Junco:** One at Chadron SP 20 May (GW,EBa) was near the eastern edge of the summer range, and may have been a migrant.
- Dark-eyed (Slate-colored) Junco:** Routine reports.
- Dark-eyed (Oregon) Junco:** "Pink-sided" Juncos are rare in eastern Nebraska; a tour leader reported that he sees at least one most years in the Grand Island area, this year on 21 Mar (PEL); a few were still in Dundey Co 24 Mar (TJW).
- McCown's Longspur:** None were reported; arrival is in early Apr.
- Lapland Longspur:** Routine reports.
- Smith's Longspur:** The only report of this elusive migrant was a flock of 18 in southwest Dixon Co 14 Apr; they were flying back and forth across the road between corn and soybean stubble fields (JJ). The 13 spring records of this species (8 in the period 8-20 Apr) are from extreme eastern Nebraska.
- Chestnut-collared Longspur:** Two had returned to WSR by 28 Mar (HKH), and the only other report was of 10 at a regular location east of O'Neill 22 May (MB). Birds have been at the latter location since 1989, but the original field was plowed this spring and the birds moved north to a nearby field; unfortunately Lark Buntings and Burrowing Owls were not present this year as they had been previously (MB).
- Snow Bunting:** None were reported; late dates are in early Mar.
- Northern Cardinal:** One at Sidney 1 May (AS) appears to be only the 2nd for Cheyenne Co; although cardinals occur along the South Platte and are fairly common in Ogallala, sightings in Sidney suggest some westward expansion along Lodgepole Creek.
- Rose-breasted Grosbeak:** Rather early was a male at ICSP 19 Apr (D&JP). A rare but regular spring migrant in the Panhandle, a male was in a Scotts Bluff Co yard 12-14 May (KD).
- Black-headed Grosbeak:** At the eastern edge of the summer range were a male near Gibbon 12 May (LR,RH) and another in Holt Co 22 May, the latter a first county record for the two observers (MB,DSt). Surprisingly far east were a male at Neale Woods, Douglas Co, 8-14 May (DG), and a female in Lincoln 13 May with an "orange breast and less streaking" than a Rose-breasted (RE). These are only the 5th and 6th reports since 1981 east of Grand Island.
- Blue Grosbeak:** An excellent count was the 11 in the Buffalo Creek area of Scotts Bluff Co (3 pairs, plus 5 singing males) 22 May (KD). One was carrying nesting material in Furnas Co 28 May (LR,RH).
- Lazuli Bunting:** There was an influx into the east this spring, a tendency that has become more noticeable in recent years, led by a rather early bird in Lincoln 30 Apr (MUs), and followed by a male in Dixon Co 19 May (JJ), one at Hummel Park, Omaha, 21 May (PS, details), and a singing male near Ponca SP 27 May (B&LP). These 4 reports add to the previous 19 eastern reports.
- Indigo Bunting:** Hybrids with Lazuli Bunting are not uncommon and may occur statewide, although more so westerly. Two were reported: a blue bird with white wingbars and a white belly in Dixon Co 16 May (JJ), and a hybrid at Ash Hollow SHP, Garden Co, 16 May (SJD,AB). Still noteworthy in the

central and southern Panhandle, one was at a Scotts Bluff Co feeder 19-20 May (KD).

Dickcissel: Large numbers were noted as far west as Lincoln Co 22 May in hayfields near Pawnee Slough (TJW); such numbers are unusual early in summer.

Bobolink: Record early, on 20 Apr, was a male at Platte River Whooping Crane Trust, Hall Co; it was a color-banded male, probably hatched in 2004 (DK). Large numbers, including a count of 50, were in hayfields near Pawnee Slough in Lincoln Co 22 May (TJW), they were seen "by the gross" (at least 144?) in Butler Co 22 May (LR,RH), and were "everywhere" in Custer and Valley Cos 24 May (TJW).

Red-winged Blackbird: A flock of immature males was seen in southeast Nebraska 13 Mar; adult males were on territory and no females were seen (WRS).

Eastern Meadowlark: First singing birds were in Sarpy Co 17 Mar (CNK). As many as 30 were found in the meadows east of North Platte 21 Apr (TJW), and 5 singing males around Diamond Bar L, McPherson Co, 7 Apr were surrounded by "uncountable" Western Meadowlarks (TJW). This species occurs in suitable wet meadow habitat throughout the Sandhills. Strangely, it is essentially only a rare spring migrant in the eastern RWB, where permanent damp meadows are uncommon, particularly those consisting of cool weather species; one was at Harvard Marsh 22 May (JGJ). (Jorgensen, <http://rip.physics.unk.edu/NOU/eRWBbirdlistJGJPDF.pdf>)

Western Meadowlark: Routine reports.

Yellow-headed Blackbird: Routine reports.

Rusty Blackbird: Rare westward, 30-35 were in Lincoln Co 14 Mar and 2 were there 2 Apr (TJW).

Brewer's Blackbird: Rare in the east, 3 were in Butler Co 22 Apr (MB) and 20 were there 23 Apr (D&JP).

Common Grackle: Routine reports.

Great-tailed Grackle: Best counts were 150-200 in Lincoln Co 21 Apr (TJW) and 37 at Chilibaba Ponds, Scotts Bluff Co, 17 Apr (KD), indicating the increasing numbers being seen westward; reports are now regular throughout the Platte River Valley. Sandhills reports are still few; 2 were in Logan Co 15 May (SJD,AB) and one was at CLNWR 16 May (SJD,AB). Females were carrying nest material in Scotts Bluff Co 17 Apr (KD) and in David City 1 May (LR,RH).

Brown-headed Cowbird: Routine reports.

Orchard Oriole: Routine Reports.

Baltimore Oriole: The lure of grape jelly was shown when 15 were banded in a Bellevue yard in 4 hours on 19 May (RG).

Bullock's Oriole: Routine Reports.

Gray-crowned Rosy-Finch: None were reported; departure is in early Mar.

Purple Finch: Last in the east were 4 birds in Bellevue, 2 each at different feeders, on 2 Apr (ARy,KCR). Rare in the Panhandle, "a few" at a feeder in Sidney lingered until 1 May (AS).

House Finch: Routine reports.

Red Crossbill: Easterly reports were of 3 at BOL 20 Mar-17 Apr (LE,D&JP), a female at PL 26 Mar (D&JP,E&JM) and 12 at Kearney 10 Apr (fide LR,RH). A mixed-age flock of up to 50 attended the feeders at Wildcat Hills NC during May (AK,KD,AR), and 4 were at Bushnell Cem 17 May (SJD,AB).

Common Redpoll: The only reports were of one at a Burwell feeder 4-5 Mar (LR,RH) and 3 attending an Omaha feeder through 6 Mar (NR).

Pine Siskin: This species was widespread this spring, although not in huge numbers, remaining into May at several locations, and apparently nesting at possibly 4 locations outside the usual breeding range. Such extra-limital nestings are initiated very early, and the fledged birds and adults are usually gone by Jun. Fitting this pattern were birds carrying nest material (horsehair) at Ericson L, Wheeler Co, 19 Mar (LR,RH) and a pair "generally acting domestic", one reportedly carrying nest material, at Louisville Lakes SRA, Cass Co, 26 Mar (fide RW). A female with a brood patch was seen in Bellevue Cem 19 May (CNK), and a nest with 3 young was found among "several nests" at Sidney 15 May (AS); 10-15 birds were still present at Sidney 18 May and 2 on 29 May (AS). Last report away from the usual breeding range was one in Dixon Co 27 May (JJ), and best count 50 south of Gering 11 Apr (AK).

American Goldfinch: Routine reports.

Evening Grosbeak: The only report was a female at the Wildcat Hills NC feeders 15 May (AR).

House Sparrow: Routine reports.