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Winter Field Report, December 2008 to February 2009

W. Ross Silcock
silcock@rosssilcock.com

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WINTER FIELD REPORT, December 2008 to February 2009

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

INTRODUCTION

This was one of the more "normal" winters for some time; I base this conclusion on the lack of unusually early or late dates or exceptional counts, as well as the lack of rarities. Although there were 11 species of gulls reported, perhaps we have become jaded by the gull extravaganza that is Lake McConaughy. It was a great winter for Common Redpolls and Snow Buntings as well, which was welcome as these birds do not appear in any numbers most winters. Perhaps the only group of birds that exhibited consistent aberration from the "norm" (I prefer "average") was the native sparrows, with several unexpected midwinter dates for various species.

ABBREVIATIONS

BOL: Branched Oak L, Lancaster Co
CBC: Christmas Bird Count
Cem: Cemetery
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
LM: L McConaughy, Keith Co
m.ob.: many observers
NWR: National Wildlife Refuge
PL: Pawnee L, Lancaster Co
Res: Reservoir
SL: Sewage Lagoon(s)
SP: State Park
WSR: Wind Springs Ranch, Sioux Co

GAZETTEER

DeSoto NWR: Washington Co

OBSERVERS

AD: Ann Duey, Scottsbluff
AK: Alice Kenitz, Gering
ARy: Al Reyer, Bellevue
BFH: Bill F. Huser, South Sioux City

BG: Betty Grenon, Bellevue
BM: Brad McKinney, Scottsbluff
BW: Ben Wheeler, Ord
B&DW: Bruce & Donna Walgren, Casper, WY
CM: Connie McCartney, Grand Island
CNK: Clem N. Klaphake, Bellevue
CS: Carolyn Sonderman, Omaha
CW: Chris West, North Platte
CWH: C.W. Huntley, Ogallala
DD: Debbie DeButts, Fremont
DM: Deborah Murphy, Omaha
DS: Dave Swanson, Vermillion, SD
D&CN: Don and Colleen Noecker, Albion
D&JP: Don & Jan Paseka, Ames
FM: Fran Maunder, Hastings
G&WH: Glen & Wanda Hoge, Alma
HKH: Helen K. Hughson, Mitchell
JG: Joe Gubanyi, Seward
JGJ: Joel G. Jorgensen, Lincoln
JJ: Jan Johnson, Wakefield
JR: Justin Rink, Omaha
JRi: Juanita Rice, Fairmont
JSt: Jon Strong, Omaha
JT: Jerry Toll, Omaha
JWH: John W. Hall, Omaha
KCR: Kathleen Crawford-Rose, Bellevue
KD: Kathy DeLara, Mitchell
KP: Kevin Poague, Lincoln
KS: Kent Skaggs, Kearney
KSt: Keith Storm, Broken Bow
LRB: Linda R. Brown, Lincoln
LBr: Lisa Bringewatt, North Platte
LD: Linda Deeds, North Platte
LE: Larry Einemann, Lincoln
L&CF: Laurence & Carol Falk, Nebraska City
L&BP: Loren & Babs Padelford, Bellevue
MB: Mark Brogie, Creighton
MH: Mace Hack, Omaha
NB: Norma Brockmoller, Winside
NF: Nancy Fish, Superior
NN: Nate Nye, Columbus, OH
NR: Neal Ratzlaff, Omaha
PB: Paul Bedell, Richmond, VA
PD: Paul Dunbar, Hastings
PS: Phil Swanson, Omaha
RD: Roger Dietrich, Yankton, SD
RK: Rodger Knaggs, Ogallala
RM: Ralph Morocco, Omaha
RS: Rick Schmid, Omaha

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Dunlin, North Lake Basin WMA, Seward Co.,
12 May 2008. Photo by Joel Jorgensen.

Brown Thrasher, Pawnee Lake
SRA, Lancaster Co., 4 June 2009.
Photo by Kenneth Carnes.

Barred Owl, Walnut Grove Park,
Douglas Co., 5 June 2009.
Photo by Rachel Hall.



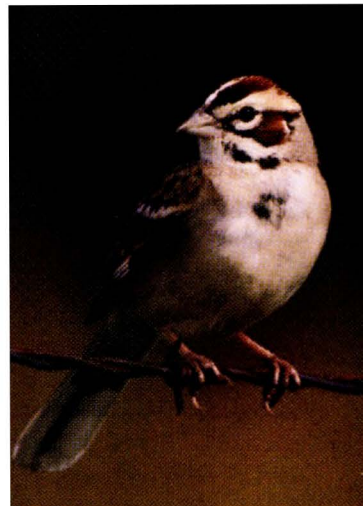


Cerulean Warbler,
Hummel Park, Douglas
Co., 21 May 2005. Photo
by Phil Swanson.

Common Yellowthroat, near Mallard
Haven WPA, Fillmore Co., 21 May 2008.
Photo by Carlos Grande.



Varied Thrush, Ogallala,
Keith Co., 26 Nov 2008.
Photo by Tina Simeon.



Lark Sparrow, near Ainsworth,
Brown Co., 12 June 2007.
Photo by Gordon Warrick.



RSi: Ruben Siegfried, Gering
RV: Richard Vitters, Fremont
SA: Scott Allison, North Platte
SJD: Stephen J. Dinsmore, Ames, IA
TEL: Thomas E. Labedz, Lincoln
TH: Tim Hajda, Broken Bow
TJW: T.J. Walker, Brady
TS: Tom Stehn, Rockport, TX
TSi: Tina Simeon, Ogallala
WF: William Flack, Kearney
WRS: W. Ross Silcock, Tabor, IA

SPECIES ACCOUNTS

Black-bellied Whistling-Duck: A surprise at the late date, which raises questions of provenance, was an unmarked bird with other waterfowl at Pier Park, Grand Island, early Dec (NN, photo).

Greater White-fronted Goose: Small numbers winter with Canada Geese most years; the 148 at Lexington 4 Jan (SJD) were late fall migrants. Spring arrival was in mid-Feb; 250 were at BOL 14 Feb (JGJ), and 466 were found in Lancaster Co by 23 Feb (LE). Rare in the Panhandle, one was in Scotts Bluff Co 20 Dec (AK).

Snow Goose: The usual few winter birds were reported; the 30 in Buffalo Co 9 Jan (KS) were tardy. First arrivals noted were the 1100 at Fairmont 7 Feb (JRi) and 1500 in Lancaster Co 10 Feb (LE).

Ross's Goose: Best count was 100 with 900 Snow Geese near Geneva 12 Feb (JRi).

Cackling Goose: First significant number reported for spring was the 77 in Lancaster Co 5 Feb (LE); "hundreds" were at Fairmont 11 Feb (JRi).

Canada Goose: Numbers were huge in Scotts Bluff Co; Scottsbluff CBC reported 19,877 on 20 Dec (fide AK), and 12,500 were at Kiowa WMA 13 Feb (KD).

Mute Swan: After several sightings in fall, 2-4 were noted at Boys Town L, Douglas Co, through 30 Jan (JSt, ARy, RM); one of the two present 1 Jan had a silver band on its right leg (JSt).

Trumpeter Swan: Routine reports.

Tundra Swan: Identification of swans in winter is very difficult. Ten swans in Stanton Co 22-25 Feb whose identity was in question (NB) would overwhelmingly be expected to be Trumpeters, but such flocks have been known to include Tundras.

Wood Duck: Three in Lincoln through 18 Jan (LE) were apparently attempting to winter; there are only about 20 reports mid-Jan through mid-Feb.

Gadwall: Rare in midwinter, 2 were in Polk Co 24 Jan (WF).

American Wigeon: Early were singles in Madison Co 7 Feb (WF) and Lancaster Co 8 Feb (WF). Over-wintering is rare.

Mallard: Routine reports.

Blue-winged Teal: One in Scotts Bluff Co during the 20 Dec CBC Count Week (AK) is, except for two overwintering records, the latest date on record for this warm-weather species.

Northern Shoveler: Routine reports.

Northern Pintail: Routine reports.

Green-winged Teal: Routine reports.

Canvasback: Routine reports.

Redhead: Routine reports.

Ring-necked Duck: One at GPD 22 Jan (MB) and 2-8 at Boys Town L, Douglas Co, through 1 Feb were likely wintering (RM). There are fewer than 20 such reports.

Greater Scaup: One at GPD 22 Jan provided one of fewer than 10 winter reports away from LM. Spring arrivals were one at North Platte 15 Feb (CW) and 3 at Alma SL 20 Feb (G&WH).

Lesser Scaup: Routine reports.

White-winged Scoter: Only the 3rd midwinter report was one at GPD 11 Jan 2009 (RD).

Bufflehead: One in Lancaster Co 8 Feb (LE) was rather early, as were 20 at North Platte SL 11 Feb (TJW).

Common Goldeneye: Routine reports.

Hooded Merganser: This species arrived record early in good numbers at several locations. Two were at North Platte 11 Feb (TJW), 15 at Scottsbluff SL 13 Feb (KD), and 42 at BOL 14 Feb (JGJ). Although there are several midwinter reports from Scottsbluff, it seems unlikely that the 15 individuals wintered.

Common Merganser: Routine reports.

Red-breasted Merganser: LM hosts a few each winter among the large Common Merganser flocks there; 7 were reported on the LM CBC 3 Jan (fide SJD).

Ruddy Duck: Routine reports.

Gray Partridge: No reports were received from the sparse but persisting population in the northeast and north-central, but 5-6 were seen at WSR 10 Jan (HKH), where a small population has established in the last few years.

Ring-necked Pheasant: Best count reported was a moderate 75 in a Phelps Co cornfield 10 Dec (TH).

Sharp-tailed Grouse: Routine reports.

Greater Prairie-Chicken: Good numbers were found in the northeast Sandhills: 36 were at a traditional "roosting prairie" site in n. Antelope Co 6 Feb (MB), booming had begun at a new site near Bazile Mills 7 Feb some 10 days earlier than the previous early date (MB), and 2 leks near Winnetoon had 11 and 14 birds 8 Feb, but no Sharp-tailed Grouse as in past years (MB).

Wild Turkey: Best CBC count was 275 at Grand Island 20 Dec (fide CM). Record counts are well over 300.

Northern Bobwhite: Numbers thin out to the north, and so 6-8 in Boyd Co 2 Jan (JJ) were of interest.

Pied-billed Grebe: One in Lancaster Co 27 Feb (LE) was rather early; wintering is rare.

American White Pelican: Three at LM 3 Jan (fide SJD) were apparently attempting to winter there; another at HCR 7 Dec (G&WH) was a little tardy.

Double-crested Cormorant: Probably the only regular winter site for this species is the normally ice-free cooling pond at Sutherland Res, Lincoln Co; 3 were there 17 Feb (TJW). Singles in Sarpy Co 7 Dec (CNK) and Cass Co 10 Dec (L&BP) were tardy.

Great Blue Heron: Routine reports.

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Least Sandpiper in basic plumage,
Ayr Lake, Adams Co., 20 Oct
2008. Photo by Paul Dunbar.



White-breasted Nuthatch
with unusual bill, west of
Boyer Chute, Washington
Co., 27 Dec 2008. Submit-
ted by Jerry Toll; photo by
Marty Fitzgerald.



Field Sparrow, Audubon
Spring Creek Prairie,
Lancaster Co., May 2008.
Photo by Heather York,
Doane College.



Adult Glaucous Gull, Lake Ogallala, Keith Co.,
2 Jan 2009. Photo by Paul Dunbar.



Cedar Waxwing, Fontenelle Forest, Sarpy
Co., 5 May 2009. Photo by Phil Swanson.



Yellow-headed Blackbird, Harvard WPA, Clay Co., 28 May 2007. Photo by Paul Dunbar.

Turkey Vulture: There have been increased reports of this species in recent years north of the usual winter range; still unexpected, however, was one over Neale Woods, Douglas Co, 2 Jan (PS).

Bald Eagle: This species has been establishing new nest sites in recent years along the Lower Platte River (from Columbus downstream), with at least 9 sites currently known (JGJ); an apparent new site was found near Fremont with an attendant adult 13 Feb (DD, JGJ). Elsewhere, incubating birds were noted at a long-time site at Calamus Res, Loup Co, 21 Feb (D&CN) and at Elba and Ord 24 Feb (BW). A good count was the 105 at GPD 7 Dec (D&CN).

Northern Harrier: Routine reports.

Sharp-shinned Hawk: Routine reports.

Cooper's Hawk: Routine reports.

Northern Goshawk: The only report of this rare winter visitor was of an adult in Antelope Co 7 Dec (MB).

Red-shouldered Hawk: There were several sightings of a single adult at both PL and BOL through the period (LE); it is likely that these were of the same bird, as two birds were never seen together (LE).

Red-tailed Hawk: Routine reports.

Ferruginous Hawk: Easternmost were singles about as far east as expected at Ord 22 Feb (BW), in Buffalo Co 1 Feb (WF), and in Harlan Co 14 Feb (G&WH). The 4 on the Scottsbluff CBC 20 Dec was a count high (fide AK).

Rough-legged Hawk: Routine reports.

Golden Eagle: Singles in Dakota Co 2 Feb (JJ) and Webster Co 7 Feb (WF) were easterly, but not unexpected.

American Kestrel: Routine reports.

Merlin: A very dark bird ("black and white") photographed near Gothenburg 1 Jan (JRi) was puzzling; it was thought unlikely to be *suckleyi* from the Pacific Northwest and possibly a dark *columbarius*, but that subspecies is usually only a migrant in Nebraska (TEL, JGJ). There are previous Jan sightings of very dark Merlins in Banner (SJD) and Dawson (MB) Cos.

Prairie Falcon: Singles were unusually far east on CBCs at Seward-Branched Oak 14 Dec (fide JG) and DeSoto NWR 27 Dec (fide JT) and in Lancaster Co 17 Dec (LE).

Peregrine Falcon: The only sightings were presumably of the resident "city birds" in Lincoln 17 Dec (TEL) and on the Lincoln CBC 27 Dec (fide LRB). Nonresident Peregrines generally do not winter in Nebraska.

Virginia Rail: Routine reports.

American Coot: Routine reports.

Sandhill Crane: Spring arrival is in late Jan, and so rather early was a flock of 200 between Hershey and North Platte 15 Jan (TJW). By 23 Feb 8000-9000 were in the same area (TJW).

Whooping Crane: The lone juvenile near Alma 15 Oct-4 Dec (see Fall Report; CS photo) apparently wintered with Sandhill Cranes in Oklahoma and returned with them to the cen. Platte River 20 Feb; it was still present at the end of the period (TS, JGJ, PB).

Killdeer: Routine reports.

Wilson's Snipe: Routine reports.

Franklin's Gull: One at BOL 1 Dec (LE) was rather late; there are only 17 reports 2-21 Feb.

Bonaparte's Gull: None were reported; a few linger into Dec most years.

Mew Gull: One was reported at GPD 15 Dec (DS fide MB); this is the 12th fall record, 23rd overall.

Ring-billed Gull: Routine reports.

California Gull: None were reported; a few are usually present at LM.

Herring Gull: Routine reports.



Juvenile Whooping Crane with Sandhill Cranes on the Platte River in Hall Co. in March 2009. Photo by Justin Reed.

Thayer's Gull: A regular fall migrant, reports were of a basic-plumaged adult in Phelps Co 1-8 Dec (PD) and one at LM 3 Jan (fide SJD). Generally less common as a spring migrant, a first-year bird was at BOL rather early on 14 Feb (JGJ); another or the same was there 25 Feb (JGJ).

Iceland Gull: A first-winter bird was at LM 3-31 Jan (fide SJD, TH, KS); this is the 11th winter record, 22nd overall.

Lesser Black-backed Gull: The only report was of one on the LM CBC 3 Jan (fide SJD), about the 40th fall record.

Glaucous Gull: About 7 individuals were reported: an adult was in Phelps Co 8-10 Dec (PD, TH), up to 3 were at LM through the period (fide SJD, TJW, KS), one wintered at HCR (G&WH, KS), and 2 first-winter birds were at GPD 11 and 22 Jan (RD, MB).

Great Black-backed Gull: A first-winter bird at LM 3-31 Jan (fide SJD, TJW, KS) was the 6th midwinter record, 21st overall.

Rock Pigeon: The 525 on the Scottsbluff CBC 20 Dec was a count high (fide AK); numbers have increased in the city and have become a nuisance (fide AK), possibly as mild winters allow almost year-round breeding.



American Avocets, near Lakeside, Sheridan Co.,
20 Aug 2006. Photo by Carlos Grande.

White-faced Ibis, Harvard WPA, Clay Co.,
22 April 2006. Photo by Paul Dunbar.



Greater Prairie-Chicken, west of Wood
Lake, Cherry Co., 15 June 2007. Photo
by Gordon Warrick.



Sharp-tailed Grouse, near Mullen, Hooker Co., 14 April 2006. Photo by Phil Swanson.



American Woodcock chick, Oak Glen WMA, Seward Co., 11 May 2009. Photo by Joe Gubanyi.

Dickcissel, Audubon Spring Creek Prairie, Lancaster Co., 16 June 2009. Photo by Josef Kren.



- Eurasian Collared-Dove:** Best counts were the 112 on the LM CBC 3 Jan (fide SJD) and 84 on the Crawford CBC 27 Dec (fide B&DW). Gering had the best non-CBC tally, 76 on 13 Feb (RSi).
- Mourning Dove:** Three on the Crawford CBC 27 Dec (fide B&DW) were late for that n. Panhandle location. Lingerers are not unexpected in the Platte Valley; one was near North Platte 26 Jan (LBr) and 4 were on the Scottsbluff CBC 20 Dec (fide AK).
- Inca Dove:** The wanderer that attended a Brule feeder (see Fall Report) arrived 22 Oct and was last seen 13 Dec (fide CWH). This is the 7th report for Nebraska.
- Barn Owl:** One at a cliff nest site in Scotts Bluff Co 28 Feb (AK) was early and may have wintered; early arrival dates are in late Mar, but there are about 20 reports Dec-Feb.
- Eastern Screech-Owl:** Routine reports.
- Great Horned Owl:** Earliest reports of incubating birds were about on time: Wehrspann L, Sarpy Co, 7 Feb (JWH) and Lincoln Co 16 Feb (TJW).
- Snowy Owl:** Only 2 were reported: one near Hastings 25 Feb (fide KP) and the other in Nuckolls Co 26 Feb (photo seen, fide NF).
- Barred Owl:** One in Stanton Co 26 Jan (WF) was at the w. edge of the range in Nebraska.
- Long-eared Owl:** Routine reports.
- Short-eared Owl:** About 5 were reported, including 3 near Rowe Sanctuary, Buffalo Co, 27 Jan (KS). Singles were there 7 Jan (KS) as well as in Colfax Co 11 Feb (WF) and Thurston Co 27 Dec (BFH).
- Northern Saw-whet Owl:** The only report was of one on the LM CBC 3 Jan (WRS).
- Belted Kingfisher:** Routine reports.
- Red-headed Woodpecker:** Away from the se. and Missouri Valley, winter reports are rare; an adult in Boyd Co 2 Jan (JJ) is the only winter report from the north-central.
- Red-bellied Woodpecker:** Numbers are increasing around Ogallala (CWH), near the w. edge of the North Platte Valley range; this species is rare w. of LM.
- Yellow-bellied Sapsucker:** More than usual for winter were reported, a total of 14, including these away from the east: one at a Brady feeder 21 Dec (TJW) and another in Custer Co 3 Jan (KSt).
- Downy Woodpecker:** Routine reports.
- Hairy Woodpecker:** Routine reports.
- Northern Flicker:** Routine reports.
- Pileated Woodpecker:** An Omaha CBC count high was the 3 found 28 Dec (fide BG).
- Northern Shrike:** The 8 on the Seward-Branched Oak CBC 14 Dec (fide JG) was a good tally.
- Loggerhead Shrike:** None were reported; most years a few winter in the extreme southeast.
- Blue Jay:** Routine reports.
- Pinyon Jay:** None were reported; most winters a few occur on the Pine Ridge.
- Black-billed Magpie:** One near Norfolk 7 Feb (WF) was at the e. edge of the range.
- American Crow:** Routine reports.
- Horned Lark:** Routine reports.
- Black-capped Chickadee:** Routine reports.

Mountain Chickadee: The only report was of one at a Scottsbluff feeder From Dec through the period (BM photo; fide AK).

Tufted Titmouse: Routine reports.

Red-breasted Nuthatch: This was about an average winter, with reports statewide in low numbers (m. ob.).

White-breasted Nuthatch: Routine reports.

Pygmy Nuthatch: The 17 on the Harrison CBC 28 Dec (fide B&DW) was about average for that location.



Mountain Chickadee in Scotts Bluff Co., 21 Feb 2009.

Photo by Connie McKinney.

Brown Creeper: Routine reports.

Carolina Wren: Apparently the 4th winter record from North Platte (there is a single Panhandle record) was one at a feeder 14 Dec-3 Jan (SA); this is the 3rd straight winter this species has wintered at North Platte feeders.

Winter Wren: Rare in midwinter, even in the east, singles were at Bellevue 22 Jan (KCR) and FF 22-23 Jan (JR). Less expected were singles at Hormel Park, Dodge Co, 29 Dec (D&JP) and on the LM CBC 3 Jan (fide SJD).

Marsh Wren: Routine reports.

Golden-crowned Kinglet: Although regular-but-rare in the se. in midwinter, 6 were reported in Jan (LE, JR). Farther afield, one was in Dodge Co 30 Dec (D&JP), and stretching the winter range were 2 near Halsey 17 Jan (TH).

Eastern Bluebird: The 176 on the DeSoto NWR CBC 27 Dec (fide JT) was a good tally. Although a few are present most winters in the se., one at Alma 1 Jan after 4 days of below zero weather (G&WH) was pushing its luck.

Mountain Bluebird: The 23 in se. Lincoln Co 15 Feb (LD) were in a known wintering area. First reported back on the summer range were 4 in Scotts Bluff Co 28 Feb (AK), about on time.

Townsend's Solitaire: Routine reports.

Hermit Thrush: A total of 5 was reported for the period, the latest at Ponca SP, Dixon Co, 11 Jan (BFH). There are about 5 reports of over-wintering in the east; apart from those, this is only the 6th for Jan.

American Robin: Best CBC counts were excellent: 5987 at Ponca SP 3 Jan (fide BFH) and 4018 at DeSoto NWR 27 Dec (fide JT); highest CBC counts are over 9000.

Varied Thrush: One of the 3 reported in fall remained into winter: the single at Ogallala was last seen 7 Dec (TSi). A 4th for the winter was in Douglas Co 3 Jan (DM, photo). The last few winters have seen increased reports.

Gray Catbird: One at North Platte 18 Dec (TJW) was one of fewer than 20 Dec-Feb reports for the state.

Northern Mockingbird: Numbers decline rapidly through Dec; one on the DeSoto NWR CBC 27 Dec was new to the count (fide JT), and two on the LM CBC 3 Jan (fide SJD) were a surprise there. There are only 14 records mid-Jan through Feb, and so singles in Pawnee Co 20 Jan (WF) and one at an Ogallala feeder from about 20 Dec through at least 20 Jan (RK fide CWH) were of interest.

European Starling: Routine reports.

Cedar Waxwing: Best count was a count record 301 on the DeSoto NWR CBC 27 Dec (fide JT).

Orange-crowned Warbler: One at PL 11 Dec (LE) provided the 6th record for Dec and 5th latest on record.

Yellow-rumped (Myrtle) Warbler: Feb sightings are few; a female was in Omaha 5 Feb (JR). There were a surprising 4 reports for Jan, including a flock of 12 in Cass Co 17 Jan (CNK) and 4 there 21 Jan (LE). Other Jan reports were of 3 in Lancaster Co 2 Jan (LE) and one in Pawnee Co 20 Jan (WF).

Common Yellowthroat: One seen along a creek near Scottsbluff 7 Dec (AD fide AK) was both the westernmost and 2nd-latest on record.

Spotted Towhee: Most of the rare midwinter reports are from the se.; one wintering at a Lincoln Co feeder (SA) was only the 13th such report from the North Platte Valley. The 4 additional reports were indeed from the se. (PS, LE, MH).

Eastern Towhee: Lingering into Dec is not unusual, although the 4 on the Seward-BOL CBC 14 Dec (fide JG) was a high count. Midwinter reports are rare, even in the se., such as the female at PL 10 Feb (LE). A hardy male at Ponca SP, Dixon Co, 11 Jan (BFH) was only the 2nd midwinter report north of Omaha in the east.

American Tree Sparrow: Best count was 381 in Lancaster Co 14 Feb (LE) and for CBCs the 626 at DeSoto NWR 27 Dec (fide JT). Both tallies are only moderate historically; best CBC tally is 2281 on the HCR CBC in 2000, and best non-CBC tally is 4290 in Phelps and Kearney Cos 31 Jan 1999.

Chipping Sparrow: Last reported was an adult in Phelps Co 10 Dec (TH); a probable in Omaha 25 Feb, closely observed, albeit without binoculars, and heard calling, may have wintered in the area (JR). Earliest spring dates are in late Mar and there are fewer than 10 documented winter records.

Field Sparrow: A surprising 2 midwinter reports of this rare winter visitor or resident were received, including one as far north as Jackson 11 Jan (BFH, details); the other was in Cass Co 23 Jan (WF, details). There are only 9

other Jan-Feb reports other than the 4 documented records of over-wintering. Rare even on CBCs, one was on the Seward-Branched Oak CBC 14 Dec (fide JG).

Fox Sparrow: Latest reported was one at PL 17 Dec (LE); Dec reports are not uncommon.

Song Sparrow: Routine reports.

Lincoln's Sparrow: Only the 2nd Feb record for Nebraska was one at ICSP 16 Feb (L&CF); early spring arrival is in late Mar.

Swamp Sparrow: Rare in midwinter and usually only in the se., singles at PL 7 and 17 Jan (LE) and ICSP 16 Feb (L&CF) were only the 12th and 13th Jan-Feb reports.

White-throated Sparrow: Routine reports.

White-crowned Sparrow: This species winters in numbers only in the Panhandle and sometimes in the south; as many as 156 were counted 20 Dec for the Scottsbluff CBC (fide AK), and elsewhere probable early returnees were 15 in Adams Co 14 Feb (FM) and one in Gosper Co 28 Feb (WF).

Harris's Sparrow: Routine reports.

Dark-eyed (White-winged) Junco: One at a feeder near North Platte 26 Jan (LBr, details) was at the e. edge of the expected winter range.

Dark-eyed (Slate-colored) Junco: CBC numbers are greatest in the east; 1028 were found on the DeSoto NWR CBC 27 Dec (fide JT). The record Nebraska CBC count is 7189.

Dark-eyed (Oregon) Junco: The form *montanus* is most common in Nebraska, but scarce in the east; only 3 were found on the DeSoto NWR CBC 27 Dec amongst the 1025 Slate-colored (fide JT). Less numerous, and generally restricted to the west, is Pink-sided (*mearnsi*); one reported on the DeSoto NWR CBC without details may have been a brightly-colored *montanus* or an intergrade.

Lapland Longspur: An amazing estimate, done carefully, was of 50,000 in a Dodge Co field 16 Dec (D&JP), tying the previous high count, also from Dodge Co. Just think, 50,001 would have been a new record!

Snow Bunting: This was the best winter for several years for this species. At least 600 were reported, almost all in Dec-Jan, including best counts of 225 in Wayne Co 13 Jan (JJ), 200 in Pierce Co 12 Jan (JJ), and 87 in Dodge Co 27 Jan (D&JP). Strangely, the only report for Feb was of one in Sarpy Co 28 Feb (CNK).

Northern Cardinal: Helping maintain the species' tenuous hold in Scotts Bluff Co were two on the Scottsbluff CBC 20 Dec (fide AK). First song reported was in Sarpy Co 7 Feb (JWH).

Red-winged Blackbird: Usually midwinter sightings northerly are of single males, and so a female in Dakota Co 11 Jan (BFH) was a surprise.

Eastern Meadowlark: Whether this species over-winters in the state on a regular basis is as yet unproven; earliest dates of singing birds are in mid-Feb. One was singing in Otoe Co 13 Feb (L&CF).

Western Meadowlark: Earliest singing was 10 Feb in Lancaster Co (LE).

Rusty Blackbird: This apparently declining species was present in better numbers than in recent years, with a total of about 220 reported. The surprising 92 on the DeSoto NWR CBC 27 Dec was a count record (fide JT), the 25 in Washington Co 24 Dec (CNK, JT) were likely included in the DeSoto NWR

CBC tally a few days later, 25 were at BOL 7 Jan (LE), and 20 were in Seward Co 15 Feb (JG). Most reports were in Dec, but 5 reports were in Jan-Feb, involving about 60 individuals (LE, RS, NR, JG); all reports were from the east.

Brewer's Blackbird: A rare winter visitor southward, there were 2 reports: 6 were found in Lincoln Co 3 Jan (TJW) and a female was in Seward Co 15 Feb (JG).

Common Grackle: The 15-20 at North Platte 5 Jan (TJW) were late for a flock; midwinter records are usually of single males. More surprising was a "huge flock" in Lincoln Co 8 Feb (SA). More typical of winter records were singles in Omaha 11 Feb (JR) and Colfax Co the same day (WF).

Great-tailed Grackle: This species is rare in midwinter; stragglers were 15 near North Platte 5 Jan (TJW), and singles at Alma 7 Jan (G&WH) and in Dodge Co 11 Jan (RV). A probable early migrant was in North Platte 16 Feb (TJW), and the first migrant group was a mixed-gender flock of 60 at Axtell 27 Feb (WF).

Brown-headed Cowbird: Arrival was earlier than usual; singles were in Custer Co 13 Feb (TH) and Nebraska City the same day (L&CF), 6 were at BOL 14 Feb (JGJ), and one was at Boyer Chute NWR, Washington Co, 15 Feb (CNK).

Gray-crowned Rosy-Finch: A major surprise was one at an Ogallala feeder 3-4 Jan (CWH, video), only the 2nd record east of the Panhandle. Regular at WSR in s. Sioux Co, 21 wintered there, including 2 of the "Hepburn's" form (HKH).

Purple Finch: Westerly were one on the Scottsbluff CBC 20 Dec (fide AK) and 2 in Custer Co 10 Jan (KSt). Numbers overall were about average.

Cassin's Finch: None were reported; most years it is reported from the Panhandle.

House Finch: Routine reports.

Red Crossbill: Few were reported; easterly were 15 at BOL 1 Dec (LE), with 6 there 13 Jan (LE), and 2 in Omaha 8 Jan (JR). The only other reports were of 4 on the LM CBC 3 Jan (fide SJD) and 4 in Lincoln Co 3 Jan (SA).

Common Redpoll: Reports were widespread, but numbers were low, the total 30-35. Best count was 9 at an Omaha feeder for 2 weeks in mid-Feb (MH).

Pine Siskin: Excellent numbers were reported statewide, but especially in the west; best count was a "record" 300 in a yard near Mitchell 8 Feb (KD). Other good counts were 245 on the Scottsbluff CBC 20 Dec (fide AK) and 100 in Lincoln Co 3 Jan (TJW).

American Goldfinch: The 548 on the Seward-Branched Oak CBC 14 Dec was 2nd-highest ever (fide JG).

House Sparrow: Routine reports.