

ber in e. Kansas (*vide* LM). Up to three Clark's Grebes were present in early January on McConaughy (SJD); a single was at *Scotts Bluff*, NE, 17 Dec (SJD).

Perhaps fewer Am. White Pelicans lingered in Nebraska and Kansas than in recent winters, but 48, likely early migrants, appeared in *Harlan*, NE, 17 Feb, with 200 there 28 Feb (GH, WH et al.). A Great Egret lingered (survived) until at least 3 Jan in *McCurtain*, OK (KS). An imm. Black-crowned Night-Heron at McConaughy 2 Jan (SJD, DCE) was a surprise. One was in Tulsa 27 Dec–3 Jan (AL), and another was in *Cleveland*, OK, 3 Jan (JAG, B&SD). A Turkey Vulture in *Osage*, KS, 6 Dec (JB) was tardy, whereas two early migrants appeared in *Johnson*, KS, 15 Feb (JLe), with another in *Riley*, KS, 18 Feb (IH).

Snow Geese began arriving *en masse* during early February in Nebraska, with up to 100,000 present in *Buffalo* 14 Feb (LR, RH). High winter counts of Ross's Geese included 50 at *Quivira* 5 Dec (SS, MR) and 33 in *Harlan*, NE, 18 Dec (SJD). A **Brant** in *Sedgwick*, KS, 21 Dec (JN) was quite a rare find. A Tundra Swan accompanied Trumpeters at *Quivira* 5 Dec–10 Feb (SS, MR), and three were there 21 Feb. Two Tundras were with a neck-banded Trumpeter in *Douglas*, NE, 5–7 Feb (NR), and six were at *Russell*, KS, 20 Dec (BM), with one at *Cheyenne Bottoms* 23–24 Feb (AM). Varying numbers of Trumpeter Swans were found at *Ogallala* Jan–Feb, peaking at 21 on 23 Jan (SJD). A collared Trumpeter in *Oklahoma* 12 Jan–Feb (CC, m.ob.) was a captive-reared 2-year old released in Iowa. Groups of one–five were also found in *Wyandotte*, KS, 30 Dec–17 Jan (DH, m.ob.), *Leavenworth*, KS, 3 Jan (GP), *Riley/Pottawatomie*, KS, 4 & 10 Jan (GS, TC), *Neosho*, KS, 15 Jan (BB), and *Crawford*, KS, in Jan (RM). One was found shot at the last locality.

Poorly reported in recent years, documented Am. Black Duck observations included a drake in *Harlan*, NE, 30 Dec (SJD), one–two in *Lancaster*, NE, 6 & 13 Feb (JS), and one in *Knox*, NE, 28 Feb (MB); two were in *Osage*, KS, 3 Dec (EM et al.). Up to 12 Greater Scaup were at McConaughy 9 Jan (SJD); groups of one–seven were noted at a number of locations through the Region (*vide* WRS, JGJ, LM, JL, JAG). Scoter specials included White-winged at *Ogallala/Keystone* 5 Dec (SJD) and *Tulsa* 13 Dec (BC). Among a slug of Blacks this season, the rarest Regional scoter, were a female in *Coffey*, KS, 3–12 Dec (EM et al.), up to four at *Ogallala/Keystone* 5 Dec–1 Jan (SJD et al.), and singles below *Knox/Cedar*, NE,

1–16 Dec (DLS) and in *Lancaster*, NE, 25 Feb (MO). Up to nine Long-tailed Ducks were at *Ogallala/Keystone* 5 Dec–2 Jan (SJD, DCE, DAL), the high count this season. Male Com. Goldeneye × Hooded Merganser hybrids were at *Ogallala* 23 Jan and 6 Feb (SJD), and in *Douglas*, NE, 28 Feb (JGJ). Barrow's Goldeneye, a tough find, included an ad. male in *Scotts Bluff*, NE, 17 Dec (SJD), a female at *Ogallala* 1 Jan (SJD), and an imm. male at McConaughy 9 Jan (SJD). Part of an apparent increasing trend, many Red-breasted Mergansers were reported (*vide* WRS, JGJ, JAG). A flock of 21 was in *Lancaster*, NE, 5 Dec (SJD), but only one 9 Jan (SJD). Not needing to travel farther south were the 35,000 Com. Mergansers in *Harlan*, NE, 30–31 Dec (SJD), and 20,000 in *Russell*, KS, 6 Jan (MR).

DIURNAL RAPTORS THROUGH TERNS

An Osprey was in *Tulsa* 19 Dec (BC)–19 Feb (JWA et al.). Bald Eagles continue a good news pattern, with some counts of near to over 100 from several locales. The only N. Goshawks reported were in *Gearry*, KS, 13 Dec (CO, JO), and *Greeley*, NE, 29 Jan (JP, DP). Rough-legged Hawk numbers were unimpressive this winter, while Merlins were widely reported from Nebraska and Kansas.

Continuing a longer-term pattern were reports of wintering Virginia Rails scattered across the Region, with an amazing 16 in *Morrill*, NE, 10 Jan (SJD). The 100,000 Sandhill Cranes at *Quivira* 6 Dec (TH, CS) would have been tardy 10 years ago; 667 were counted in *Barber*, KS, 9 Jan (*vide* LM). The four Whooping Cranes in *Barber*, KS, 5 Dec included a crippled adult (SS, MR).

It was clearly possible for many half-hardy shorebirds to linger north. Even so, the Am. Avocet, possibly injured, at McConaughy 5 Dec (SJD) was an amazing find. Perhaps expected during a warmer winter are a few Killdeer, Greater Yellowlegs, Least Sandpipers, and Com. Snipe; each was commonly reported. But clearly lingering were a Spotted Sandpiper 16 Dec in *Johnson*, KS (JR), Baird's Sandpiper 19 Dec at McConaughy (SJD), Pectoral Sandpiper 24 Jan in *Sequoyah*, OK (TA), Dunlin 11 Dec in *Jefferson*, KS (MM) and 3 Jan in *Cleveland*, OK (JAG, B&SD), and a Long-billed Dowitcher 12–18 Dec in *Lancaster*, NE (LE). Seven Lesser Yellowlegs were among 20 Greater at *Cheyenne Bottoms* 5 Dec (SS, MR).

Our "Niagara-of-the-Prairie" Region again produced its fair share of extralimital

gulls. Among few winter records was a Laughing 13 Feb in *Sequoyah*, OK (PBO, JM). An imm. Little was still present in *Tulsa* 3 Dec (JWA, SM). Two ad. **Mew Gulls**, differentiated by plumage, were found in *Riley*, KS, 6 Feb (GS) & 7 (GP, LM), with another at *Dawson/Gosper*, NE, 21 Feb (JGJ, WRS). McConaughy hosted up to 38 Californias 5 Dec (SJD), perhaps lower than in recent years. Elsewhere singles were in *Tulsa* 17–24 Dec (JWA), *Mitchell*, KS, 19 Dec (*vide* LM), *Lancaster*, NE, 31 Dec and 9 Jan (SJD), and *Dawson/Gosper*, NE, 21 Feb (JGJ, WRS), with two in *Barton*, KS, 6 Dec and another two in *Russell*, KS, 4 Jan (MR). An excellent high count was 1100 Herring Gulls at McConaughy and *Ogallala* 6 Feb (SJD). Thayer's were too commonly reported to list, including 10 estimated at *Ogallala* 6 Feb (SJD).

First-winter **Iceland Gulls** were documented in *Sedgwick*, KS, 24 Dec (GP, DS) and at McConaughy 10 Jan (SJD); a 2nd-winter bird was identified at *Ogallala* 6 Feb (SJD). The only Lesser Black-backed reported were in *Sedgwick*, KS (*vide* LM), *Oklahoma City* during Dec–Jan (JSt, JGN), and in *Tulsa* 24 Dec (JWA). Glaucous Gulls generally arrived later this winter, with multiple birds detected only by 31 Dec in Nebraska (*vide* WRS, JGJ); six were reported from Kansas (*vide* LM). A **Great Black-backed Gull** in 2nd-winter plumage was identified in *Sedgwick*, KS, 21 Dec (JN), with a first-winter bird at *Dawson/Gosper*, NE, 21 Feb (JGJ, WRS). Two to three Black-legged Kittiwakes were in *Cedar*, NE, 1 Dec (DLS)–16 Dec (WRS, JS), with another in *Osage*, KS, 8 Dec (B&AK). Among surviving half-hardies were about 10 Forster's Terns in *Sequoyah*, OK, 30 Jan (DVR, JM).

DOVES THROUGH WAXWINGS

The Eur. Collared-Dove colony at *Kearney*, NE, continued, with a maximum of eight (RN, *vide* LR, RH); a White-winged Dove was still present among them. The four collared-doves in *Lincoln*, KS, last winter multiplied to about 12 this season (LD). A cluster of at least 15 White-wingeds was present in *Canadian*, OK (LRO, m.ob.), through the period; another was in *Tulsa* 24–27 Feb (JBi). An Inca Dove visited a feeder in *Cherokee*, OK, through the period (CW).

Only a few hummingbirds were reported, surprising given the weather. A Rufous was present in *Tulsa* 11–27 Dec (WW, JWA et al.), and a *Selasphorus* survived until 26 Dec in *Tulsa* (JL et al.). Long-eared Owls were better reported this season, with 15 each in *Lyon*, KS, 3 Dec (EM et al.) and



White-winged Doves continue to establish a stronghold in the southern Great Plains (and throughout much of the Southeast). This one was at Tulsa, Oklahoma, 27 February 1999. Photograph/Jo Bible

Trego, KS, 26 Dec (*vide* LM). A Red-headed Woodpecker lingering to 30 Dec in *Phelps* (LR, RH) provided one of few winter records for Nebraska. Yellow-bellied Sapsuckers wintered n. to *Sarpy*, NE (KCR). A Blue-headed Vireo graced *McCurtain*, OK, 3 Jan (BH). Northern Shrikes made a good showing in Nebraska and Kansas, including 15 in *Scotts Bluff* 2 Jan (*vide* AK) and 12 in *Garfield*, NE, 27 Dec (*vide* NB). Quite exceptional was a N. Rough-winged Swallow in *Jefferson*, KS, 7–9 Feb (AP, RR). Winter Wrens, exceptional during Nebraska winters, were in *Keith* (two birds) 12 Dec (DCE, DAL) and *Douglas* (six) 19 Dec (*vide* BP, LP). A House Wren in *Russell*, KS, survived to at least 20 Dec (SS, MR). Marsh Wrens wintered n. to at least *McConaughy* (*vide* SJD) and *Morrill*, NE (SJD); 12 at *Quivira* (PJ, DV) furnished the high count.

Eastern Bluebirds at *Antelope*, NE, 7 Feb (MB) and *Dakota*, NE (BFH), would have been pushing their luck most years. The “countless thousands” of Am. Robins in *Dodge*, NE, 5 Feb (JP) was representative of several locales in the Region. Townsend’s Solitaires wandered e. to *Johnson*, KS, 13 Dec (BW) and *Leavenworth*, KS, 3 Jan (*vide* LM). Gray Catbirds in *Russell*, KS, 20 Dec (*vide* LM) and *Wyandotte*, KS, 31 Dec (LM) were daring the warm trend. A Sage Thrasher in *Pratt*, KS, 10 Feb (PJ, DV) and two in *Morton*, KS, 25 Feb (JC) were both n. and e. of more typical occurrences. Bohemian Waxwings in *Sioux* during late Dec (JJ) and at *Kimball* 24 Jan (SJD) were the only to appear in Nebraska for a few years. Another was reported from *Geary*, KS, 29 Dec (TC).

DOVES THROUGH FINCHES

Very late was an Orange-crowned Warbler in *Harlan*, NE, 18 Dec (*vide* JGJ). A Yellow-rumped Warbler was as far north as

Dodge/Saunders, NE, 27 Feb (TH). A male Black-throated Green Warbler in *Sedgwick*, KS, 1 Dec (TH) was surprising both for range and that it was the only exceptional warbler this warm winter. Common Yellowthroats were noted in *Muskogee*, OK, 2 Dec (JM) and *Sequoyah*, OK (two), 31 Dec (LH, JM). Astounding was a male **Hepatic Tanager** documented at the feeders of David Mnarik in *Cuming*, NE, 6 Jan (BP, LP, WRS). Although present since about 18 Dec, its disappearance after 6 Jan disappointed many.

Savannah Sparrows were documented in *Harlan*, NE, 12 Dec (SJD), *McConaughy* 2 Jan (SJD, DCE), and in *Otoe*, NE, 20 Feb (LF, CF), well beyond the line of limited snow cover most seasons. A **Golden-crowned Sparrow**, an immature and only the 3rd documented for Nebraska, was in *Harlan* 18 Dec (JGJ); another was reported from *Russell*, KS, 13 Dec (MR). A very large number of 50,000 Lapland Longspurs were noted in *Dodge*, NE, 16 Jan (JP, DP). Not too surprising for a mild Nebraska winter, the only Snow Buntings were one in *Garfield*, NE, 27 Dec (*vide* NB) and six in *Knox*, NE, 3 Jan (MB).

Among the “no-hardy” finds was an imm. male Indigo Bunting at a feeder in *Dixon*, NE, 19 Dec that survived until the evening of 2 Jan when the wind-chill was -47 F (JJ). A Baltimore Oriole was present in *Cleveland*, OK, until at least 3 Jan (*vide* PB). Likely adapting to more northerly existences was an ad. male Yellow-headed Blackbird and 14 Great-tailed Grackles in *Lancaster*, NE, 9 Feb (JS). Kansas again reported the disaster kill of the season, this time of a very large number of blackbirds poisoned at a feedlot in *Barton*. Perhaps more disconcerting, were the Bald Eagles, N. Harriers, Red-tailed, Rough-legged, and Ferruginous hawks, and Am. Kestrels, total-

ing perhaps 40, apparently feeding on the dead and dying blackbirds (SS, MR).

Purple Finches have been noticeably scarce in recent years. House Finch numbers in larger towns may not be as large as they were in the first few years after colonization. Red Crossbill reports away from the Nebraska summer range were almost non-existent: 15 were noted in *McCurtain*, OK, 3 Jan (DVr, JV). Pine Siskin numbers were significantly lower than in recent years—the pattern for almost the decade; pathogens and the tendency of finches to cluster at feeders may be the common denominators.

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