

A Rufous-sided Towhee wintered near Burlington, ND and another was seen at L. Andrea Calderone, SD Dec. 21. A dark Fox Sparrow, believed to be an Alaskan bird rather than a Rocky Mts. one, wintered at the same Burlington, ND feeder (SL, REM, GB). All previous North Dakota Fox Sparrows have been light eastern birds. An imm. Golden-crowned Sparrow graced Carlson's Ft. Peck yard Dec. 15–17 and stayed just long enough to become the first for a Montana CBC. Pine Grosbeak numbers were the best in some years, though not spectacular; the largest number was the 12 at Denbigh, ND Jan. 14. Most plains observations were from North Dakota, but the other 2 states had a few reports. There were two Gray-crowned Rosy-Finch flocks reported from w. North Dakota and singles in *Meade* and *Custer*, SD. Over 300 rosy-finches used a Ft. Smith, MT feeder. There were only 2 reports of each crossbill species from North Dakota. Redpolls drew comments because of their near absence. American Goldfinches were present in North Dakota in the best numbers since 1982–1983, when redpolls were completely absent. Do winter goldfinch peaks and redpoll *minima* normally coincide? North Dakota had only one report of a single Evening Grosbeak.

Corrections: The first Sage Thrasher nest for South Dakota reported last breeding season should have been credited to Juanita L. Peterson. The *Edmunds*, SD Rufous Hummingbird in the fall 1994 report was present Sept. 20–25.

Contributors (subregional editors in bold-face): MONTANA: Charles Carlson, Harriet Marble, Ted Nordhagen, Michael Schwitters. N. DAKOTA: **Gordon Berkey**, Eve Freeberg, David & Carolyn Griffiths, David Lambeth, Sherry Leslie, Ron E. Martin, Robert O'Connor, Robert Randall, Paulette Scherr, Clark Talkington, Mark Vaniman, Dennis & Diane Wiesenborn. S. DAKOTA: Bruce Harris, Ron Mabie, Earl & Vernet Palmer, **Jeffrey Palmer**, Steve Van Sickle, Jerry Stanford, Dan Tallman, Nathaniel Whitney.

—*Gordon Berkey, Division of Science, Minot State University, Minot, ND, 58707.*

Southern Great Plains Region

JOSEPH A. GRZYBOWSKI

Winters have all been relatively mild the past five or so years, with only brief periods of difficult weather—not enough in most places to eliminate the half-hardies, fool-hardies, and aspiring “tough guys” (those that think they could make it through worse). This season featured many of these birds staying north of their expected northern limits.

Mixed with the effects of a warmer season were the effects of the adequately wet or wetter years of late. Perhaps this helps species like Sandhill Cranes to winter farther north, or Virginia Rails and Marsh Wrens to simply be present, not to mention the more northerly lingerings of Ospreys, Killdeer, snipe, and a several other shorebirds.

Common Loons, cormorants, American White Pelicans and many dabbling ducks did not let winter decide their flights or fate. The push of Common Mergansers normally expected to materialize in Oklahoma during the season from freeze-ups in Nebraska and Kansas suffered in part from the open water on reservoirs at least as far north as Ne-

braska. And, with the grand warm weather of February to the south, many waterbirds moved northward early, with seemingly exceptional numbers of geese in Nebraska during early February.

The winter finch populations continued their meager numbers. Pine Siskins and American Goldfinches are down Region-wide; redpolls, Red Crossbills, and Snow Buntings were in less than moderate numbers in northern Nebraska. No irruption of finches was seen, though House Finch populations are still on the rise. It didn't appear as if sparrow numbers in Oklahoma were impressive this season, but Kansans thought it a better year for some. The pulse of LeConte's Sparrows noted in the past few years has apparently dissipated.

Abbreviations: McConaughy (*Lake McConaughy, Keith Co., NE*); Quivira (*Quivira N.W.R., Stafford Co., KS*).

Loons to Ducks

Common Loons in *Scottsbluff* Feb. 15 (LK) and in *Cass* Feb. 24 (GW) appear to provide the first February records for Nebraska (*vide* WRS). More than the usual numbers were present in c. and e. Oklahoma during February, with >80 at L. Tenkiller, *Sequoyah*, OK Feb. 27 (JM, JH). A Horned Grebe in *Gosper-Dawson*, NE Jan. 29 (JJ) was the first January record for Nebraska (*vide* WRS). Two W. Grebes each overwintered at McConaughy (SJD) and *Scottsbluff*, NE (LKM). Others were noted Dec. 3 in *Geary*, KS (DLS) and Feb. 12 in *McIntosh*, OK (JI).

An Am. White Pelican in *Lincoln*, NE Feb. 5 (SJD) was the northernmost overwintering. A Great Egret lingered to Dec. 21 in *Johnston*, OK (JW).

Six Tundra Swans were observed in *Pawnee*, OK Jan. 7 (LC, JD), and five were spotted in *Alfalfa* Feb. 17 (JH *et al.*). A group of 10–11 Trumpeter Swans was present Jan. 15 & 29 at McConaughy (LKM, JJ); four returned to Crescent Lake N.W.R., *Garden*, NE Feb. 27 (LKM). Others were observed Dec. 20–31 at Quivira (BF), Jan. 3 (GL) to Feb. 17 (JM *et al.*) in *Alfalfa*, OK, Jan. 8 in *Wyandotte*, KS (LM), and Jan. 17 & 21 in *Garfield*, OK (JR).

Among early moving waterfowl were 5000 Greater White-fronted, 20,000 Snow and 40,000 Canada geese in *Phelps*, NE Feb. 4–5 (SJD, WRS). Several Ross' Geese were present in *Buffalo*, NE Jan. 22 (LR, RH), and five in *Lincoln*, NE Feb. 5 (SJD). Exceptional in the Region was a **Brant** in *Geary*, KS Dec. 3–4 (DLS).

American Black Ducks were reported only in *Linn*, KS Jan. 7 (two, MM), and *Douglas*, KS Jan. 15 (five; GP). An impressive 60,000 Mallards were counted in *Scotts-*



bluff, NE Dec. 2 (LK). Two N. Shovelers that wintered in *Scottsbluff*, NE Jan. 2–Feb. 26 (LKM) were the northernmost of a pattern of more common occurrences in Kansas and Oklahoma this season.

Six Greater Scaup wintered at McConaughy (LKM); most others appeared from Jan. 15 (three at 2 locations in *Tulsa*; JL, PS) to Feb. 28 (one in *Hamilton*, NE; JG). Over 50 were counted in *Pawnee*, OK Feb. 5 (JAG, DE), similar to a count made there at this time the previous year by Norman. These records imply a migratory window, though data from earlier years put this window in early March.

Oldsquaws were reported in *Coffey*, KS Dec. 3 (MM, LM), *Lancaster*, NE Dec. 5 (JJ), *Jefferson*, KS (MM, GP, LM) and *Douglas*, KS Dec. 10 (MR), and *Keith*, NE Jan. 28 (JJ). Among the rare scoters present this season were a Surf in *Jefferson*, KS Dec. 29 (LM), and a White-winged in *Harvey*, KS Dec. 13–16 (GF). A special find was a ♀ *Barrow's Goldeneye* at L. Yahola, *Tulsa* Jan. 2 (PS, JL) & 4 (LF). Common Mergansers stayed mostly in Nebraska this year with 40,000 present on McConaughy Dec. 23 (SJD).

Raptors to Owls

Late was a Turkey Vulture Dec. 3 in *Coffey*, KS (MM, LM); another was early Feb. 1 in *Linn*, KS (LM). Reports of wintering Ospreys came from *Tulsa* Dec. 3–Feb. 5 (m.ob.), and *Cleveland*, OK Jan. 15 (VB). Northern Goshawks were scarce this season with only 3 reports from Nebraska (*fide*, WRS) and one for Kansas (*fide*, LM).

The fall Harris' Hawk story continued into the winter. One was sighted in *Scottsbluff*, NE Jan. 13 & 27 (LKM), providing only the 2nd Nebraska record. The bird reported earlier in *Tulsa* was last noted Jan. 21.



Osprey at Lake Yahola, Tulsa County, Oklahoma, January 2, 1995. Photograph/ Patricia Seibert.

In *Oklahoma*, a 2nd Harris' appeared at the end of January (NG). Another was reported from *Garvin*, OK Jan. 7 (JS). Although the bird reported from Kansas last fall was suspected of being an escape, the general pattern of occurrences seems more like an irruption.

Golden Eagles were spotted e. to *Tulsa* Dec. 17 (JC), *Mayes*, OK Dec. 18 (VS), and *Delaware*, OK Jan. 12 (RS). Merlins were reported uncommonly in Kansas and Oklahoma. An ad. Peregrine Falcon was observed Feb. 15 in *Cleveland*, OK (VB).

Perhaps an artifact of previous years of generally wet weather in the Region was reports of wintering Virginia Rails. At least seven were detected in *Garden*, NE Dec. 22 (SJD, WRS, GB). Four others were present in *Sequoyah*, OK (JM *et al.*), one in *Oklahoma* Dec. 17 (JSS), and two in *Texas*, OK Feb. 20 (LH *et al.*). One King Rail was claimed for *Texas*, OK Feb. 20 (JH, JM, JS).

More than usual numbers of Sandhill Cranes wintered in Nebraska and Kansas, with high counts of 90 reported in *Kearny*, NE Jan. 15 (LR, RH), and 3000 at Quivira Dec. 26 (J&SB). Surprising was a Whooping Crane Feb. 20 & 24 in *Texas*, OK (JM *et al.*; DB).

Nine Killdeer managed to winter in *Keith*, NE (SJD, WRS). A very late ad-plumaged Baird's Sandpiper was also present there Dec. 23 (SJD, WRS, GB). Greater Yellowlegs persisted at Quivira to at least Dec. 26 (J&SB). Others were noted through the season in *Cleveland*, OK (NK), and Feb. 3 in *Greer*, OK (JDT) and Feb. 13 in *Cotton*, OK (JDT). Spotted Sandpipers lingered to Dec. 18 in *Johnston*, OK (JW). Late were eight Dunlin at Quivira Dec. 9 (JR), and ≤17 in *Tulsa* through Jan. 21 (JA). A Long-billed Dowitcher remained in *Sequoyah*, OK to Dec. 2 (JM, JH).

Unusual any season in Nebraska, but exceptional during winter, was a Laughing Gull in first-winter plumage Dec. 22 at *Lincoln*, NE (SJD, WRS, GB). A Franklin's Gull Jan. 12 in *Sedgwick*, KS (BG, PJ) was the only one reported. Three Bonaparte's Gulls Dec. 5 in *Lancaster*, NE (JJ) were tardy. An ad. Little Gull was spotted in *Coffey*, KS Dec. 3 (MM, LM). A first-winter Com. Black-headed Gull was detected Jan. 27 in *Marshall*, OK (JW).

The wintering population of California Gulls at McConaughy peaked at 123 Dec. 23 (SJD). Two Thayer's Gulls were reported from *Sedgwick*, KS Dec. 11 (PJ, JGa), one in *Oklahoma* Jan. 31 (JAG), and one from *Douglas*, KS Feb. 11 (MM, GP). A possible Iceland Gull observed in *Sedgwick*, KS Dec. 11 (PJ, JGa) is already the subject of debate on the Iceland being conspecific with Thayer's.

An ad. Lesser Black-backed Gull first seen Jan. 12 in *Oklahoma* (JS) was believed to be the same bird occurring there since 1984. Another Lesser Black-backed in 2nd-winter plumage present Jan. 28 (DE) through Feb. 11 (NK) overlapped in occurrence with the adult.

Glaucous Gulls were reported at McConaughy (five Dec. 22; SDS, JJ, WRS); two were present at *Lincoln*, NE Dec. 24 (JJ). One ad. Glaucous Jan. 7 (MM), and one in 2nd-winter plumage Jan. 8 (LM), were reported in *Miami*, KS. Glaucous Gulls were also noted in *Oklahoma* Jan. 12 (JS) to Feb. 11 (NK), with up to four present Jan. 31 (JAG). A Black-legged Kittiwake was spotted Dec. 3–4 in *Coffey*, KS (MM, LM).

Continuing the recent incursion of Inca Doves, there were one each at 2 separate localities in *Muskogee*, OK Jan. 26+ (VJ) and Feb. 24 (VH). No small "wow" should go to the discovery of a Mourning Dove incubating 2 eggs in *Tulsa* Feb. 11 (JA).

The only Snowy Owl report was of one in *Phillips*, KS Dec. 24 (RR). A N. Saw-whet Owl was retrieved Dec. 26 in *Burt*, NE (JJ).

The *Anna's Hummingbird* present in *Cowley*, KS was last seen Feb. 19 (MT). A Rufous Hummingbird was noted in *Tulsa* Dec. 9 (MH).

Woodpeckers to Shrikes

Yellow-bellied Sapsuckers were present n. to at least *Cass*, NE Jan. 1 (GW, KDG), and *Lancaster*, NE Feb. 13 (LF). Early E. Phoebe appeared in *Tulsa* Feb. 12 (PS, JL). A Barn Swallow lingered until Dec. 3 in *Tulsa* (JA), and Purple Martins arrived in *Comanche*, OK Feb. 18 (RP). Fish Crows have been expanding their range up the Red R. valley in Oklahoma to *Johnston* (WAC).

Two Winter Wrens in *Keith*, NE Feb. 5 (SJD) were unexpected for location and date; one in *Lancaster*, NE (JG) was n. of expected occurrence. Marsh Wrens wintered n. to *Keith*, NE where two were seen Dec. 23 and Feb. 5 (SJD, WRS). Others were reported from across Kansas and Oklahoma. Townsend's Solitaires were noted e. to *Howard*, NE Jan. 8 (LR, RH), and *Sedgwick*, KS Dec. 11 (PJ). An imm. ♂ *Varied Thrush* wintered in *Douglas*, NE (SJD, NR).

A Gray Catbird Dec. 18 in *Johnston*, OK (CB) was among only a handful of December records for the Region. Six Am. Pipits noted Jan. 22 in *Reno*, KS may have wintered (PJ). At least three N. Shrikes were reported from Nebraska (*fide* WRS), eight from Kansas (*fide* LM), and one from Oklahoma, the latter Jan. 1 in *Cimarron* (JAG, NG, NK). A Loggerhead Shrike wintered n. to *Otoe*, NE (LF, LE).

Vireos to Finches

A Solitary Vireo Jan. 31 in *McCurtain*, OK (BH) continued the recent pattern for wintering birds for this area. An Orange-crowned Warbler wintered n. to *Douglas*, KS (MW).

A Yellow-rumped Warbler in *Seward*, NE Feb. 8 & 15 (JG) provided only the 4th February record for Nebraska (*vide* WRS). An "Audubon's" was noted Dec. 8 and Jan. 8 in *Wyandotte*, KS (LM), e. of most records even during migration. Extralimital Pine Warblers were noted n. to *Geary*, KS Dec. 10–Jan. 29 (DLS), and w. to *Rogers*, OK Feb. 19 (DLR, BG). A Com. Yellowthroat weathered it to at least Feb. 21 in *Tulsa* (AR).

A *Pyrrhuloxia* Feb. 5 in *Sedgwick*, KS Feb. 5 (DR) was only the 5th reported for Kansas. A **Golden-crowned Sparrow** in *Osage*, KS Jan. 9 (JB) will undergo review by the Kansas Bird Records Committee. Up to nine Chipping Sparrows were noted in *Tulsa* Dec. 17 (SS *et al.*), with other December reports from *Cleveland*, OK (JAG), *Comanche*, OK (JDT), and *Johnston*, OK (CG, JK). For Snow Buntings, only 4 reports of up to five birds were received from n. Nebraska, a low number of reports and birds (*vide* WRS).

Five Brown-headed Cowbirds persisted n. to *Lancaster*, NE Jan. 21 (LE), with others noted Feb. 5 in *Hall*, NE (RH, LR) and Feb. 27 in *Buffalo*, NE (LR, RH). Two Com. Redpolls occurred in *Grant*, KS Jan. 7 (MMc); another was seen briefly in *Cleveland*, OK Dec. 3 (JAG).

Cited observers (area editors boldfaced):

KANSAS: James & Susan Barnes, Joann Brier, Bob Fisher, Greg Freisen, Joann Garrett (JGa), Bob Gress, **Pete Janzen**, Dan LaShelle (DLS), Marion McClure (MMc), Mick McHugh, **Lloyd Moore**, Galen Pittman, Mike Rader, John Rakestraw, Dale Roark, Richard Rucker, Max Thompson, Margaret Wedge. NEBRASKA: Gordon Brown, Kevin DeGamino (KDG), Stephen J. Dinsmore, Larry Einemann, Laurence Falk, Joe Gubanyi, Robin Harding, Joel Jorgensen, Lucy Koenig, Larry K. Malone, Lanny Randolph, Neal Ratzlaff, **W. Ross Silcock**, Gertrude Wood. OKLAHOMA: Jim Arterburn, David Brotherton, Charles Brown, Vicki Byre, William A. Carter, L. Cooms, Jeff Cox, J. Dole, David Elmendorf, L. Fritts, Bonnie Gall, Neil Garrison, Cindy Goddard, Joseph A. Grzybowski, Jim Harman, M. Harrall, Vanessa Harris, Berlin Heck, Laura Hunnicutt, Jay Isbell, Vera Jennings, June Ketchum, Nathan Kuhnert, Glenda Leslie, **Jo Loyd**, **Louis McGee** (LMc), **Jeri McMahon**, **John G. Newell**, Jim Norman, R. Phillips, Dan L. Reinking, J. Robertson, Aline Romero, Pat Seibert, Virginia Seibert, John S. Shackford, John Sterling, Shari Stoddard, Richard Stuart, Jack D. Tyler, Jeff Webster.

—*Joseph A. Grzybowski, 715 Elmwood Drive, Norman, OK 73072.*

Texas Region

GREG W. LASLEY, CHUCK SEXTON, WILLIE SEKULA, AND MARK LOCKWOOD

"Due to the mild winter..." You point to a record, you highlight the trend, you ask the question, and you'll get the same answer from us. Species after species, we're afraid this column will sound like a broken record. This was the warmest winter Seyffert could recall in the Panhandle; Bryan suggested that "for all practical purposes, there was no winter season in the Trans-Pecos." The southern third of the state had no freezing weather at all; Dallas had a record high of 82°F in early February. There was sufficient moisture in north, central, and east Texas (and curiously in El Paso), but most of far west and deep south Texas continued with harsh drought conditions. This latter effect, coupled with the mild temperatures, added the only significant wrinkles to our otherwise monotonous seasonal tale. The drought left little or no food resources in the Big Bend region; no food meant no seed-eating birds and no rodents; no rodents meant no raptors. Bryan described the low desert areas (and even the few water sources) as being devoid of all but the hardy Black-throated Sparrow and a few Sage Sparrows. He wrote: "You couldn't even find a Cactus Wren out there!" Nonetheless, although the rest of us were generally robbed of robins or we pined for Pine Siskins, we took consolation in a set of wintering birds whose composition was dominated by reluctant neotropical migrants that just didn't feel like heading any farther south.

We mourn the passing of our friend Andy O'Neil, who died February 10 after a year's illness. No summary of Texas birds and birders would be complete without voluminous reference to the contributions of this dedicated South Texas observer. Dr. O'Neil, former president of the Texas Ornithological Society, set a standard against which we should all strive for thoroughness and persistence in researching the avifauna of our home stomping grounds. The passing from the scene of this unassuming, gentle man will leave a huge gap. We miss him greatly. With respect, we dedicate this column to his memory; the initials "AO" will be reserved and retired from this forum henceforth.

Abbreviations: Ft. Bliss (*Fort Bliss sewage ponds, El Paso*); G.M.N.P. (*Guadalupe Mountains N.P.*); L.R.G.V. (*Lower Rio Grande Valley*); S.S.W.T.P. (*South Side Water*)



Male Pyrrhuloxia at Wichita, Kansas, February 5, 1995. Notably far northeast for this species. Photograph/Dale Roark.