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Northern Great Plains

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The first half of the period was warmer than normal, but October was cool. A major storm at the end of the month froze most water in eastern Montana and North Dakota during the first few days of November, and that month remained very cold. Waterfowl were widespread and abundant, and a good number and variety of waders were seen in North Dakota, but shorebird and passerine numbers seemed very low. A large number of late-lingering species were recorded; this was probably tied to the lateness of this year's breeding season. There was one bird added to the state list of each of the Dakotas and several new birds for Montana.

Abbreviations: p.a. (pending acceptance by state records committee).

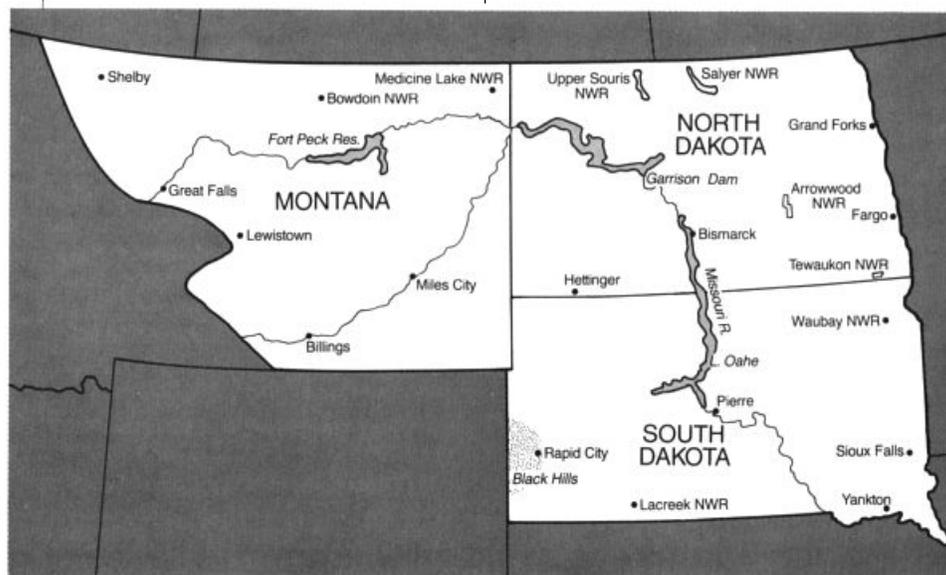
Loon to Rails

Loons made a big splash this fall. Two **Pacific Loons** at Hettinger, ND Oct. 30 (D&CG, p.a.) would provide the 5th state record, a **Red-throated Loon** found frozen into the ice in Hamlin, SD Nov. 2 (WM *et al.*, p.a.) recovered and was released, and the 12 Com. Loons on L. Sakakawea Oct. 29 was a record daily count (REM). Single Red-necked Grebes were seen in November in all 3 states, including at Billings, MT Nov. 1 (WR), another on L.

Sakakawea Nov. 4 (GB), and an extremely late one Gavin's Pt., Nov. 25 (BFH). An Am. White Pelican remained at Arrowwood N.W.R., ND through Nov. 30 (PS) and two stayed at Bowdoin until Nov. 6, several days after the lake froze.

Two "Bewick's" were noted among several thousand Tundra Swans at Freezout L., MT Oct. 29, while Ross' Geese peaked there at >20,000 (MS). An Am. Black Duck was far w. at Benton Lake N.W.R., Aug. 15 (SM). Cinnamon Teal are rarely reported from the Dakotas in fall, thus one in *Harding*, SD Sept. 3 (EM) and another shot in *Towner*, ND Sept. 30 were noteworthy. Waterfowl numbers were the highest since the 1970s, but widespread, abundant water dispersed birds, so most daily peak migration counts were unimpressive. A few exceptions were the 3000 Blue-winged Teal at Minot Sept. 2, 70 Hooded Mergansers at Fort Peck Nov. 30 (CC), 1000 Com. Mergansers in *Charles Mix* Nov. 10 and >1000 at Yankton, SD Nov. 28 (DRS, RM). The most unusual duck was South Dakota's first **Harlequin Duck** on L. Thompson, *Kingsbury*, Sept. 16–Oct. 4 (JP *et al.*).

Bald Eagles were early in *Charles Mix*, SD Aug. 16 (RM) and at Grand Forks Aug. 21 (EF). The 46 Bald Eagles, half immatures, at Upper Souris N.W.R., Nov. 5 provided a new high, as did the 70/hr N. Harriers observed from an office window in Fargo Oct. 13 (GN). A kettle of 150–200 Swainson's Hawks were near Fort Peck Sept. 16 (CC). Two Peregrine Falcons were very early in *Trip*, SD Sept. 1 (DGS). Partridge numbers may be rebounding slightly in North Dakota, but they and other gallinids are still greatly reduced. An ad. Com. Moorhen was in *Jerauld*, SD Aug. 23 (S&BS). At least 30





A second record for North Dakota (more than 80 years after the first) was provided by this Band-tailed Pigeon at Hettinger September 10, 1995. Photograph/Gordon B. Berkey.

Yellow Rails were calling in *Grand Forks* as late as Aug. 3, while one was found for the 2nd consecutive fall at Bowdoin Oct. 9 (DP). Totals of nine Virginia Rails and 60 Soras responded to hand claps and rock tossing at the Minot Lagoons Sept. 9.

Shorebirds to Woodpeckers

Shorebird numbers were generally disappointing, but the 31 Hudsonian Godwits at Grand Forks Oct. 11 were an exception. A Whimbrel at the Fort Pierre N.G., Sept. 7 (CE) provided one of only a few fall records for the Region. Record-late lingerers included Lesser Yellowlegs at Garrison Dam Nov. 18, Spotted Sandpiper Oct. 26, Red-necked Phalarope Nov. 17 at Grand Forks, and Short-billed Dowitcher Oct. 1 in *Kingsbury*, SD (BFH). North Dakota's 5th Mew Gull and 2nd Lesser Black-backed Gull were both at Garrison Dam Nov. 12 (REM,GB); it seems likely that the 2nd-winter Lesser Black-backed Gull in *Hughes*, SD Nov. 13–18 (BKH, JP p.a.) was the same bird. Forster's Terns were record late in both Dakotas, with 7 at Devils L. Oct. 22 and in *Kingsbury*, SD Oct. 14.

The Band-tailed Pigeon at Hettinger, ND Sept. 9–11 provided the state's 2nd record (DR, D&CG *et al*); the first was in 1912. The eight Black-billed Cuckoos in *Ransom*, ND Sept. 18 (JH) represented a record fall peak for this secretive species. Even more interesting were the Yellow-billeds there Sept. 8 & 15, and the one found dead at Finley Sept. 14 (DK); there had been no previous September records. Black-billeds did not start calling until July at some sites, so perhaps both species nested later than normal. Very late Com. Nighthawks were in *Butte* and *Lake*, SD Oct. 9 & 12 (V&DF, JP). North Dakota's overdue first Rufous Hummingbird graced 2 Bismarck feeders Sept. 9 (LM, J&GB). The cooperative bird remained to thrill many visitors. Its condition was

deteriorating when it was captured Nov. 1 and taken to warmer quarters at the zoo, but it later died. A Yellow-bellied Sapsucker collected at Westby Sept. 16 (TN) was the first verifiable record for Montana.

Passerines

A Yellow-bellied Flycatcher at Westby, MT Aug. 30 provided a first state record. Dusky and Cordilleran flycatchers as late as Sept. 5 in *Fall River*, SD (RP), where no migrants would be expected, seemed to provide another indicator of late breeding. Tree Swallows peaked at 8000 in *Grand Forks*, ND Aug. 28. A major movement of Red-breasted Nuthatches was seen, with the highest reported at 33 in *Cass*, ND Aug. 26. After several poor years, a good Brown Creeper movement was heartening. Creeper was early Sept. 9 in *Lake* and House Wren late Oct. 14 in *Kingsbury*, SD. New highs included 32 Sedge Wrens in *Grand Forks* Aug. 12 (probably breeders), 200 Marsh Wrens at Minot Sept. 9, and 10 Hermit Thrushes at Fargo Sept. 21 (CS). Varied Thrushes were at Christine, ND Nov. 22–26 (L&JW) and in *Edmunds*, SD Nov. 9–10 (MZ). A N. Shrike in *Kingsbury*, SD Oct. 14 would seem to be that state's earliest, but the species was already near the border at Hettinger, ND Oct. 1. The 56 Warbling Vireos at Minot Aug. 27 more than doubled the previous high. Nordhagen on the e. fringe of Montana at Westby continues to add to his e. warbler records for that state. This fall the more unusual were Chestnut-sided, Magnolia, Black-throated Green, Mourning Warbler, and Canada. For good measure a Townsend's also wandered over from the west. A Worm-eating Warbler at New Town Oct. 24 (RS p.a.) was not only extremely late but very rare in fall. An Ovenbird in Bismarck (*fide* RR) Nov. 6 stayed too late, as it was found dead Nov. 8. Connecticut Warbler was



Long anticipated and considered overdue was this Rufous Hummingbird, a first for North Dakota, at Bismarck September 16, 1995. The bird remained for much of the fall. Photograph/Gordon B. Berkey.

very early at Grand Forks Aug. 5.

The 20 LeConte's Sparrows Sept. 18 and 12 Fox Sparrows Oct. 1 in *Grand Forks* provided good daily counts. A Lincoln's Sparrow at Ayr, ND Nov. 20 was exceptionally late. A Dark-eyed "White-winged" Junco in Bismarck Aug. 6 and a "Slate-colored" in Grand Forks Aug. 9 both beat the previous early fall dates. Reporters seldom comment on abundant species such as Lapland Longspur, but this species seem to be greatly reduced over the past few years. Snow Buntings were present in the north in above-normal numbers by the end of the period. Western Meadowlarks lingered late in numbers in North Dakota, as all active observers reported them in November. A Bullock's Oriole at Sturgis, SD Nov. 23–29 was very late (EM). Up to 20 Red Crossbills at Fort Peck after Oct. 16 was the only report of that species out of the Black Hills, while White-wingeds were reported from 4 locations in the Dakotas. Common Redpolls made a good movement in North Dakota, and there were already a few reports of Hoarries by the end of November. Two ♂ Lesser Goldfinches were at Hot Brook Canyon, *Fall River*, SD Aug. 5. Evening Grosbeaks appeared in 3 e. North Dakota cities, with a peak of 15 at Fargo Nov. 12 (AL). The only other reports were from the Black Hills.

Addendum

The White Ibis reported in the breeding season report (*NASFN* Vol. 49, No. 5) was the 4th for South Dakota, not the first.

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