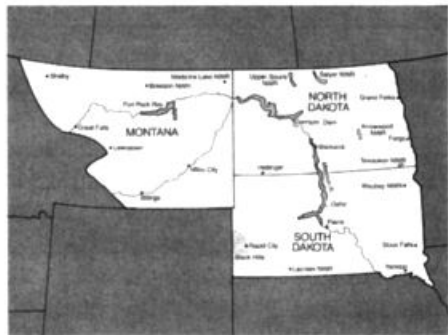


# northern great plains region



## RON E. MARTIN

The wet period that began in mid-1993 continues. Water levels that last year defied description were even higher this year. Devil's Lake in north-central North Dakota has risen 20 feet since 1993. Temperatures were about average for March, but April and May were cool, and May brought heavy rains after a relatively dry early spring. Most species of waterfowl reached South Dakota by early March. Migration was generally early, but somewhat sporadic, with a species appearing, then absent for a week or two. Peak numbers of many species went through in narrow time windows. As has been the case in recent wet years, most shorebirds overflowed the Region. Other migrant numbers were generally unspectacular. Seasonal highlights include possible first state records of Northern Cardinal in Montana, and Purple Gallinule, Elegant Tern, and Arctic Tern in South Dakota. In North Dakota, second records were established for Snowy Plover and Brewster's Warbler. Sightings marked with a dagger (†) are subject to review by appropriate state records committee.

## LOONS THROUGH DUCKS

A Red-throated Loon on Nelson Res., MT, 29–30 May furnished the 9th record for the state and first for spring (SD, †DE). Record early grebes included Pied-billed in Fargo, ND, 17 Mar (DPW), and Western in Stanley, SD, 23 Mar (RDO). Twenty-five Great Egret nests were located on the e. end of Devil's L., ND (DOL), and far west was an individual in Meade, SD, 14 May (REP). A

Snowy Egret 26 Apr at Bowdoin N.W.R., MT, provided a rare early spring record for an area that usually sees only post-breeding individuals (KE). Casual in South Dakota, a Tricolored Heron was noted in Clark 22 May (RFS, †JSP). A Yellow-crowned Night-Heron was a rare visitor to Brown, SD, 5 May (†DAT). Unusual in w. South Dakota were up to nine White-faced Ibis in Butte 8–13 May (RAS, REP, VDF). A Cattle Egret was far west in Meade, SD, 14 May (VDF). If accepted, a Green Heron at Lebo L. near Twodot would provide the 11th Montana record (†MD). By far the largest number ever observed in North Dakota, 25 Brant near Lostwood N.W.R. 12 Apr provided the 13th state record (†BD). South Dakota's earliest ever Tundra Swans were noted in Lake 7 Mar (JSP), and the species peaked at 6500 in Grand Forks, ND, 12 Apr (EEF). Providing the 11th North Dakota record was a Eur. Wigeon in Traill 17–18 Apr (DLK).

## RAPTORS THROUGH OWLS

Impressive Bald Eagle numbers were noted in all 3 states, with high counts of 77 at Bowdoin 1 Apr (DP, KE), 40 in Grand Forks, ND, 26 Mar (EEF), and 113 in Brown, SD, 16 Mar (DAT, SLS). A Red-shouldered Hawk was at Sully's Hill National Game Preserve, ND, 1 May, where at least one spent several weeks last year (REM). Another was noted at Clark Salyer N.W.R. 8 May (GGB). These provided the 15th and 16th records for North Dakota. Several observers commented on the paucity of Swainson's Hawks. An impressive 25 Merlins were tallied in North Dakota, and the species was again nesting in Grand Forks, where the first e. North Dakota breeding was recorded last year (DOL). A late report was received of a successful Merlin nesting in summer 1998 at the Minot AFB, ND. Four fledgling females were photographed 20–24 Jul, documenting the first nesting in that area (MAJ).

If accepted, a **Purple Gallinule** 22 May in Clark would provide a South Dakota first (RFS, †JSP). Only the 2nd for North Dakota, a **Snowy Plover** was photographed 1 May in Grand Forks (†DOL). Five times the

previous spring peak, 4000 Long-billed Dowitchers were counted at McKenzie Slough, Burleigh, ND, 4 May (HCT). Gulls made an early showing across the Region, with most first arrivals in early March. Rare in spring, a Black-legged Kittiwake was noted 16 Apr in Stanley, SD (RDO). Caspian Terns were unusually widespread, with 11 reports. Far from its usual w. coast haunts, an **Elegant Tern** was documented at Oahe Dam, SD, 15 May (RFS, JSP, †OS), providing the first South Dakota and Regional record, if accepted. **Arctic Terns** again made news, with South Dakota's first at Oahe 16–17 May (RFS, JSP, OS, †TJ). The species attempted nesting again at Bowdoin N.W.R. (SD, DE, JF, †TH), with two–three adults and a nest in late May.

A W. Screech-Owl picked up 3 Mar in Great Falls, MT, later died in captivity, providing one of the easternmost Montana records, the first of any screech-owl in the Great Falls area, and perhaps only the 2nd Regional record (SM). Long-eared and Short-eared owl reports were widespread.

## FLYCATCHERS THROUGH GNATCATCHERS

Flycatchers were generally early, but numbers were only average. Alder Flycatchers peaked at 20 in Fargo, ND, 22 May (NDBS) and at four below Ft. Peck Dam, MT, 30 May (SD, DE), but there were only 2 reports from South Dakota. Casual in South Dakota, an amazing 3 reports were received for White-eyed Vireo, with one documented in Minnehaha 6 May (JSP, RFS, †ND), one banded in Brown 11 May, and one heard at another location in Brown 16 May (†DAT). Common Ravens nested again this year at Clark Salyer N.W.R., ND, the same area where the state's first nesting this century was documented last year (*vide* GBB). A vagrant individual was noted in the Badlands of w. North Dakota 23 Apr (MLJ). Record early in South Dakota were Tree Swallow in Minnehaha 31 Mar (NP) and Cliff Swallow in Charles Mix 18 Apr (RM). A Blue-gray Gnatcatcher was far west 12 May in Hughes, SD (RDO), and the now almost annual individual appeared in Fargo, ND, 7–11 May (RHO, GEN, MAO).

## WARBLERS

Only the 2nd for North Dakota, a **Brewster's Warbler** was noted in *Fargo* 8–11 May (RHO). A Blue-winged Warbler was early 4 May in *Minnehaha*, SD (NP), and one was banded far west at Pierre 10–11 May (RDO, FIB). South Dakota's earliest-ever Orange-crowned was in *Day* 5 Apr (DRS). Cape May Warblers made a strong showing in North Dakota 5–21 May, but were almost absent in South Dakota. Far west was a Black-throated Blue Warbler in *Dunn*, ND, 19 May (JL). Somewhat e. of its normal range was a Townsend's Warbler in *Malta*, MT, 16 May (KP, †DP). Also in Montana, a Black-throated Green Warbler was noted at Bowdoin 18 May, furnishing the 7th state record (DBB, †CHSB). For the 3rd consecutive year a Pine Warbler was on territory at the Denbigh Experimental Forest, ND; this year it was first noted 8 May (REM). South Dakota's earliest-ever Cerulean Warbler was in *Lincoln* 9 May (RES), and one in *Brown* 15 May was unusually far northwest (AH). Casual in South Dakota, a Prothonotary Warbler was noted in *Minnehaha* 10–11 May (NP, †RFS). Also casual in the Region, Worm-eating Warblers were documented 17 Apr in *Lake*, SD (JSP), and far west in *Pennington* 10 May (†JLB); North Dakota's 9th was documented in *Fargo* 3 May (†RHO). Record early by 2 weeks, an Ovenbird was noted 12 Apr in *Custer*, SD (†CMW). Unusually far west was a Connecticut Warbler 11 May in *Meade*, SD (REP). MacGillivray's Warblers made a strong showing with 3 reports from e. Montana 18–31 May and three early individuals in S. Dakota 9–11 May; North Dakota's 17th was in *Minot* 20 May (REM). Hooded Warblers were also notable in South Dakota with singles in *Lake* 17 Apr (†JSP), *Hughes* 4 May (RDO, †FIB), and *Minnehaha* 6–10 May (RFS, NP, †SFB). If accepted, an individual in Morton, ND, 15 May would constitute the 17th state record (†FM).

## TANAGERS THROUGH FINCHES

A Summer Tanager was in *Fargo* 11 May, providing about the 17th record for North Dakota (GEN). A W. Tanager was far east in *Minnehaha* 6 May (RFS, JSP, †NP), and a very early individual was noted in *Custer* 16 Apr (†CMW). A Scarlet Tanager at Bowdoin 31 May would furnish about the 10th state record (†CS). Montana's first **North-ern Cardinal** was photographed 12 May in Glasgow and remained to the end of the period (†CC). Casual in e. North Dakota, a Blue Grosbeak was in *Fargo* 29 May (JK, JTB). Earliest by 2 days, a Lazuli Bunting



North Dakota's second Snowy Plover, at Grand Forks 1 May 1999.  
Photograph/ David O. Lambeth

was at Minot 2 May (REM). A good peak of 1200 Clay-colored Sparrows was noted at Minot 12 May (REM). As has been the case the last few wet years, the center of abundance of Baird's Sparrows was again in the w. part of the Dakotas and e. Montana. Rarely reported away from breeding areas, a McCown's Longspur was well to the east in *Burleigh*, ND, 8 May (†HCT).

Bullock's Oriole range in the Dakotas generally includes only the extreme w. edges of those states. This spring in North Dakota they were recorded in the w.c. region in *New Town* 14 May (RS) and *Bismarck* (*vide* HCT). Far east was one in *Pembina* 22 May (LFM), and in South Dakota an individual was in *Hughes* 10 May (RDO). Gray-crowned Rosy-Finches remained to 14 Apr in *Custer* (KH), the 2nd latest record for the state. Red Crossbills nested widely in appropriate habitat in North Dakota. The largest post-nesting flock of 150 was noted in *McHenry* 8 May (GGB).

## EXOTICS

A Ringed Turtle-Dove was in *New Town*, ND, 13 May to the end of the period (RS, REM).

## Contributors (state editors in boldface):

MONTANA: **Charles Carlson**, Chinook High School Biology, Steve Dinsmore,

Mark Donahue, David Ely, Kathleen Erickson, Joe Fontaine, Tim Hanks, Steve Martin, Dwain Prellwitz, Kelsey Prellwitz, Michael Schwitters, Caroline Stahala. NORTH DAKOTA: J. Tyler Bell, Gordon B. Berkey, Bob Danley, **Corey D. Ellingson**, Eve E. Freeberg, M. Alan Jenkins, Mayme L. Johnson, Jane Kostenko, Don L. Kubischta, David O. Lambeth, Jack Lefor, Ron E. Martin, Floramay Miller, Laura F. Mitchell, Gary E. Nielsen, North Dakota Birding Soc., Robert H. O'Connor, Mark A. Otnes, Rita Satermo, H. Clark Talkington, Dennis P. Wiesenborn. SOUTH DAKOTA: Jocelyn L. Baker, Corey D. Ellingson, Farm Island Banders, Vic and Donna Fondy; Kevin Hachmeister, Arlen Hanson, Todd Jensen, Ron Mabie, Ricky D. Olson, **Jeffrey S. Palmer**, Nathan Pieplow, Randy E. Podoll, Sand Lake Staff, Robb F. Schenck, Odean Selchert, Ralph and Alick Shaykett, Sioux Falls Bird Club, Dennis R. Skadsen, Dan A. Tallman, Steve Van Sickle.

**Ron E. Martin**, 16900 125th St. SE, Sawyer, ND 58781-9284 (jrmartin@ndak.net)

