

where the species is usually rare. If accepted, a **Northern Wheatear** in *Sweetgrass*, MT, 30 Oct would provide the first state record (DJR, JR†). A Townsend's Solitaire was far e. in *Kingsbury*, SD, 10 Nov (RGR). Early for S. Dakota, Bohemian Waxwings were in *Stanley* 23 Oct (JSP, RFS).

WARBLERS THROUGH FINCHES

The warbler migration was notable in Montana this fall. There was a good movement through Freezeout L., with at least four Palm Warblers 12–19 Sep (MS). At least 16 species were noted at Westby in late Aug/early Sep, including Chestnut-sided, Cape May, Magnolia, Black-throated Green, Bay-breasted, Mourning, and Canada, all rare or casual in Montana but probably regular at Westby (MS†). Casual in fall in S. Dakota, a Blue-winged Warbler was in *Lincoln* 1 Sep (MJM). A MacGillivray's Warbler, casual away from the Black Hills, was banded at Pierre, SD, 21 Sep (FIB).

A Scarlet Tanager was far w. in *Pennington*, SD, 20 Sep (JLB). A hybrid Eastern ~ Spotted Towhee was at Minot, ND, 13 Oct (REM). If accepted, a **Golden-crowned Sparrow** in *Meade*, SD, 5 Nov would provide only the second record for the state (AKB†). A rare migrant in the Dakotas, McCown's Longspurs were noted 27 Sep in *Bowman*, ND (MLJ), in *Fall River*, SD, 7 Oct (RAP), and in *Custer*, SD, 18 Oct (MMM). Five Smith's Longspur reports from the Dakotas spanned 2–23 Oct. Latest on record for S. Dakota, a Blue Grosbeak was noted in *Lincoln* 2 Oct (MJM). Indigo Buntings were late 8 Oct in *Cass*, ND (DPW), and in *Lawrence*, SD, 10 Oct (VDF).

A Great-tailed Grackle in *Turner* 26 Nov provided the latest record for SD (LS). Seven White-winged Crossbill reports were tallied for N. Dakota and Montana, all in Nov and involving only one–three individuals per report. Com. Redpolls made a good showing and Hoary Redpolls were already in Montana and N. Dakota by mid-Nov, with the earliest Hoary in *Grand Forks*, ND, 10 Nov (EEF). Providing the third record for N. Dakota, a pair of "green-backed" **Lesser Goldfinches** came to a feeder in Minot 5 Aug (JK, *vide* REM†). Three Evening Grosbeak reports from N. Dakota were all at the e. edge of the state.

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southern great plains



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It is difficult to quickly summarize patterns of fall bird occurrences for the Region except to say that it was good—even darn good. This column is much too short to include all specific examples for over-summering ducks, the many early and tardy migrants, or all of the routinely observed but rare species. But the Region maintains the excitement of being a continental hiatus. That may be the season's special note, along with the graces of multi-annual benevolent weather continuing to help populations of marsh and water birds. If there was some contrast to good news, it comes for populations breeding to the north. Numbers of Greater Scaup, Peregrine

Falcons, Piping Plovers, and Sabine's Gulls took a lull in reporting from previous good seasons. Time will judge the nature of these pauses.

Abbreviations: Cheyenne Bottoms (*Cheyenne Bottoms W.M.A., Barton Co., KS*); Hefner (*Lake Hefner, Oklahoma Co., OK*); McConaughy (*L. McConaughy, Keith Co., NE*); L. Ogallala (*L. Ogallala, Keith Co., NE*); Quivira (*Quivira N.W.R., Stafford Co., KS*).

LOONS THROUGH DUCKS

Pacific Loons, once dubbed exceptional, appeared at *Scotts Bluff*, NE, 16 Oct (SJD); at least 11 more were reported in Nebraska through 23 Nov (SJD, LR, RH), with two others in *Kingman*, KS, 30 Oct (CG) and two in *Noble/Pawnee*, OK, 24 Nov (JWA, JSi). Most surprising was an imm. **Yellow-billed Loon** photographed on shore at Hefner 12 Aug (JAG, JWA). Although not observed again, it may have been the same individual present the previous winter and spring. An imm. Red-necked Grebe was documented at L. Ogallala 6 and 19 Nov (SJD); an ad. was observed in *Tulsa* 23 Nov (JWA). Continuing an astounding trend of increase over the past decade were the 35,000 W. Grebes estimated at McConaughy 26 Sep (SJD). Carrying capacity may be a more appropriate concern in these times. Surprisingly, reports away from w. Nebraska included only four singles in e. Nebraska and Oklahoma. Eleven Clark's Grebe were at McConaughy 26 Sep (SJD), with two 15 Aug and up to three 26 Sep–18 Nov in *Scotts Bluff*, NE (SJD). Double-crested Cormorant numbers are also burgeoning, with 5,000+ in *Harlan*, NE, 5–16 Oct

(GH, WH). In some places fishermen now view cormorants suspiciously, creating their own set of conflicts. A Neotropical Cormorant at Cheyenne Bottoms 24 Sep (DK, WC, DV) was the only one reported.

A remarkable count for Nebraska was the 130 Great Egrets in *Harlan* 24 Sep (GH, WH). A **Reddish Egret** reported at Cheyenne Bottoms 22 Sep (RK) would constitute the first for Kansas if accepted by the K.B.R.C. Tricolored Herons again summered in *Alfalfa*, OK (AW), remaining until 3 Oct (SM). Others of this rare vagrant were observed in *McCurtain*, OK, 31 Aug (DA) and at Cheyenne Bottoms 20 Sep (RK). The imm. Yellow-crowned Night-Heron in *Lancaster*, NE, 1 and 14 Aug (LE) was the most northerly for the Region this season. White Ibis numbers built to 51 in *McCurtain*, OK, 31 Aug (BH). Only one other was reported outside *McCurtain*, that in *Muskogee*, OK, 10 Aug (RR et al.). Other vagrant ciconiids included a Roseate Spoonbill 23 Aug–22 Sep in *Alfalfa*, OK, (AW, JWA) and up to 28 Wood Storks in *McCurtain*, OK, 2 Aug–13 Sep (BH et al.).

While the origins might be questioned, the two ad. **Black-bellied Whistling-Ducks** seen in *Clay* 2–3 Aug (JGJ, GC, BCa) and relocated 21–28 Aug (JS, WRS, m.ob) represent the second documented record for Nebraska. Adding to sentiments of wild status were adults with 12 downy ducklings photographed in *Kingfisher*, OK, during Sep (MK, FC et al.), the second confirmed nesting for Oklahoma. Perhaps adding to the confusion were the 14 to 16 observed in a more avicultural setting in *Tulsa* 13 Sep–1 Oct (MK, LU). Even more exotic was a **Fulvous Whistling-Duck** noted 23 Sep at Cheyenne Bottoms (MR). A **Black Brant** was in *Scotts Bluff* 23 Nov (SJD), only the second documented for Nebraska (*vide* WRS). Accompanying the surge of incredible increases in Snow Goose populations, 150,000 Gr. White-fronted Geese were estimated at Quivira 9 Nov (*vide* LM). Trumpeter Swans were reported only from w. Nebraska, perhaps a condition of the mild weather.

An excellent count of 515 Canvasback was made in *Garden*, NE, 6 Nov (SJD), a hopeful sign for this hunter's delicacy. Reports of scoters were a little more scant. Among those of Surf Scoters were an ad. male 16 Oct in *Clark*, KS, (SP, CH), two basic-plumaged birds in *Lancaster*, NE, 19 Oct (JS), two in *Geary*, KS, 11 Nov (CO), and two at L. Ogallala 19 Nov (SJD). A White-winged Scoter was in *Lancaster* rather early 30 Oct (LE). Still the rarest of

the scoters, two basic-plumaged Blacks were in *Scotts Bluff* 16 Oct (SJD), a rather early date, with two at L. Ogallala 19 Nov (SJD). A male Barrow's Goldeneye at L. Ogallala 19 Nov (SJD) was the only report for this rare visitor. Com. Mergansers flocks did not build at McConaughy this season, a sign of more n. distribution. Only a small handful of Red-breasted Mergansers appeared in the Region (*vide* WRS, LM, JWA).

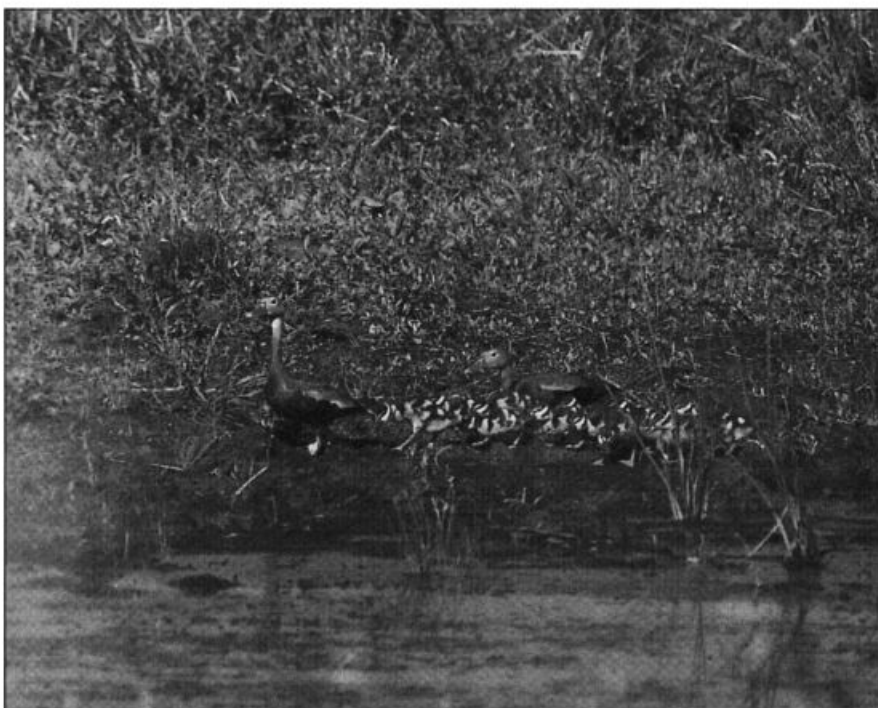
RAPTORS THROUGH TERNS

N. Goshawks were first noted 31 Oct in *Otoe*, NE, (LF, CF) and *Buffalo*, NE, (GL) with only one other report, an adult in *Knox/Cedar*, NE, 27 Nov (BFH). Wandering afield were a Red-shouldered Hawk at Quivira 16 Nov (CG, TH) and Broad-winged Hawks in *Morton*, KS, 18 Sep (MR, SS) and *Cimarron*, OK, 19 Sep (JSt et al.). Golden Eagles wandered e. to *Washington*, NE, 26 Oct (JGJ), *Delaware*, OK, 31 Oct (TM), and *Seward*, NE, 17 Nov (JG). Merlins are being reported far more often in recent years, with 26 from Nebraska alone (*vide* WRS). Perhaps surprisingly in this flurry, only two Peregrine Falcons were reported from Nebraska (*vide* WRS), and three from Oklahoma (*vide* JL, JM). Unusual for date was a Prairie Falcon 27 Aug in *Kingfisher* (JWA).

This is certainly a good time for rails in the Region. A Black Rail was salvaged in *Beaver*, OK, 9 Sep (ED), while others were

noted late at Quivira 10 Oct (SM) and even later 23 Oct in *Sedgwick*, KS (CG). King Rails were observed 13 Oct and 17 and 24 Nov in *McCurtain*, OK (DA et al.). Virginia Rails with half-grown downy young were seen in *Cherry*, NE, 29 Aug (JS), a rather late date for downy young. Several possible breeders were noted in s.-cen. Nebraska 15–22 Aug (JGJ). The 17 Soras reported in s.-cen. Nebraska during Aug also imply breeding (JGJ, LB), although no direct evidence was forthcoming. Whooping Cranes traipsed central Kansas 18 Oct–9 Nov (*vide* LM). Rather far w. of its usual migration corridor was a single Whooping Crane with Sandhill Cranes 17 Oct in *Scotts Bluff* (*vide* AK).

Rather late were an Am. Avocet and three Black-bellied Plovers 7 Nov in s.-cen. Nebraska (JGJ). Early was an Am. Golden Plover in *Kingfisher* 12 Aug (JWA, JAG). A very tardy Semipalmated Plover lingered to 24 Nov in *Oklahoma* (JAG). Only five reports of Piping Plovers were received, all singles at *Douglas*, KS, 12 Aug (AP), Quivira 2 Sep (MR), *Oklahoma* 8–9 Sep (LMa, JN), *Alfalfa*, OK, 9 Sep (JWA), and *Sedgwick*, KS, 11 Sep (PJ, CG). The 70 to 100 Mountain Plovers in *Morton*, KS, 19 Sep (MR, SS) sustain hope for this species. Eight Black-necked Stilts were present in *Tillman*, OK, 10 Aug (MK), with three in *Kingfisher* 12 Aug (JWA, JAG) and one there 17 Sep (MK). A juv. Ruddy Turnstone in *Scotts*



A pair of Black-bellied Whistling-Ducks with ducklings in tow in Kingfisher, Oklahoma, 13 Sep 1999 provided only the second breeding record for the state and fits the pattern of spread shown by this species. Photograph/Jean Carl



This confiding female Williamson's Sapsucker near Kenton 18 Sep 1999 represented only the second documented record for Oklahoma. Photograph/Steve Metz



A state and likely Regional first was provided by this Black Phoebe at Webbers Falls Wildlife Management Area, Oklahoma, 27 Oct–30 Nov 1999. This image was captured 30 Oct. Photograph/Steve Metz

Bluff 3–4 Sep (SJD) fell within the window of only six other reports for Nebraska 15 Aug–9 Sep (*vide* WRS). The only Red Knots reported were five in *Osage*, OK, 27 Aug (JWA), two in *Alfalfa*, OK, 9 Sep (JWA), and a tardy bird at Hefner 5 and 10 Oct (JW). A Semipalmated Sandpiper in s.-cen. Nebraska 10 Oct (JGJ), the latest documented for Nebraska (*vide* WRS), was outdone by one documented 24 Nov in *Oklahoma* (JAG). A species to be watched, the 32 Buff-breasted Sandpipers 1 Aug in s.-cen. Nebraska (*vide* WRS), and the 75+ 6 Sep in *Wagoner*, OK, (JM, JN) were the best counts of a generally modest showing. A Ruff was documented in *Kingfisher* 2 Aug (JWA, JL), the potential second for Oklahoma if accepted by the O.B.R.C. Dowitcher observations followed a typical pattern. Nine adult Short-billeds were at *Phelps*, NE, 1 Aug (LR, RH), and 12 juvs. were in *Scotts Bluff* 3 Sep. (SJD). The best count of Long-billeds was 381 in s.-cen. Nebraska 10 Oct (JGJ). An Am. Woodcock in *Garden*, NE, 6 Nov (SJD) may continue the pattern for this species in pressing westward. Red-necked Phalarope reports included one 4 Sep in *Morton*, KS, (PJ, m.ob.), 2–6 at *Quivira* 6–19 Sep (MR, SS, CG) and five in s.-cen. Nebraska 25 Sep (JGJ). Single **Red Phalaropes** were at Hefner 11 Sep (LM, SM et al.) and *Quivira* 19 Sep (MR, SS).

Regional observations of jaegers are not an annual occurrence. **Pomarine Jaegers** are generally later than the others, so a

light-morph ad. in *Cherry*, NE, 28–29 Aug (JS) was early. At *McConaughy*, one to three juvs., two dark-morph, and one intermediate Pomarine, were noted 18–19 Nov (SJD); there is a small handful of records for Nebraska. Gulls will not carry the column this season, but offered some highlights. An imm. Laughing Gull was reported in *Tulsa* 4 Aug (MK, GK), with adults noted there irregularly 30 Aug–12 Nov (JWA) and in *Wagoner*, OK, 26 Oct (JWA). A juv. Little Gull was identified at *Cheyenne Bottoms* 28 Sep (RK); the handful of records for this species during Sep through mid-Oct have all been of juveniles. California Gull numbers gradually build up at *McConaughy* beginning in late Aug; "several" there 24 Aug became 75 by 6 Nov (SJD). Away from w. Nebraska were singles 7 Oct in *Tulsa* (JWA) and *Wagoner*, OK, 26 Oct (JWA). Seasonal surprises were the two Herring Gulls at *McConaughy* 15–16 Aug (SJD). Among Thayer's Gulls identified were adults in *Lincoln*, NE, 6 Nov (SJD), with a distinguishably different bird there 19 Nov (SJD). A second-winter Lesser Black-backed Gull was at *McConaughy* 24 Aug and 26 Sep (SJD), an early seasonal date for an expanding species but still a Regional rarity. A first-year bird 3 Oct was documented in *Jefferson*, KS (MM). In contrast to the numbers in recent fall seasons, only one Sabine's Gull was reported, a juv. in *Scotts Bluff* 3 Sep (SJD). Com. Terns appeared within the normal Sep window,

with one lingering to 1 Nov in *Wagoner*, OK (JWA).

DOVES THROUGH WAXWINGS

Continuing the pattern of dove proliferation, a White-winged appeared at a Lincoln feeder 7–10 Oct (DKo, *vide* JS), the seventh reported for Nebraska (*vide* WRS). Another was shot by a dove hunter in *Leavenworth*, KS, 1 Sep (*vide* LM). Eurasian Collared-Doves were reported from *Barton*, *Morton*, *Pratt*, and *Stevens*, KS (*vide* LM), and *Alfalfa*, *Cimarron*, and *Oklahoma*, OK. Inca Doves were reported from *Pratt*, KS, 31 Aug (L&JQ) and 4 Sep (M&EC), *Sumner*, KS, 17 Nov (WC), and *McCurtain*, OK, 6 Sep (BH) and 4 Oct (DA). Rounding out our dove collection with the (currently) rarest were one to two Com. Ground-Doves reported from *McCurtain*, OK, 29 Aug–24 Nov (BH, DA).

An imm. male **Broad-tailed Hummingbird** in *Cimarron*, OK, 3 Sep (DR, BG, JP) provided the first actually documented for Oklahoma. A female or imm. Broad-tailed and a similarly-plumaged Rufous Hummingbird were in *Kimball*, NE, 15 Aug (SJD). A male Broad-tailed was also in *Seward*, KS, 22 Aug (LE). A female **Williamson's Sapsucker** in *Cimarron* 18 Sep (SM, JM et al.) represented only the second documented for Oklahoma. A Red-naped Sapsucker in *Morton*, KS, 17 Oct (SP, CH) was later than expected, but from a very limited collection

of observations.

Kansas birders continue in their observations and expectations of w. *Empidonax* flycatchers in *Morton*, KS. The most expected, Hammond's, was identified 3 Sep (BPe). Still uncertain, but reported, were one Dusky 3 Sep (BPe) and two 10 Sep (BPe et al.). Also reported there was a Gray Flycatcher 18 Sep. These represent the record of potential, if uncertain, observations for this troublesome group this season. Most unexpected was a **Black Phoebe** 27 Oct–30 Nov in *Muskogee*, OK (JM, SM, m ob.), the first for Oklahoma and likely the Region (see Thompson and Ely 1992). A surprising high count of 150 Eastern Kingbirds marked a significant movement in *Buffalo*, NE, 23 Aug (LR, RH). Two in *Tulsa* 19 Oct (JL) were exceptionally late. An imm. N. Shrike in *Scotts Bluff* 2 Oct (SJD) was rather early.

Among the recently split sisters of the Solitary Vireo were Plumbeous Vireos 5 Sep (BPe) and 10 Sep (BPe et al.) in *Morton*, KS. Thankfully documented, but still subject to review, were Cassin's Vireos in *Cimarron*, OK, 3 Sep (DR et al.) and 18 Sep (SM) and *Morton*, KS, 11 Sep (MM). Cassin's were also identified in *Kimball*, NE, 15 Aug (SJD) and *Morton* 3 Sep (BPe). A Blue-headed Vireo in *Hall*, NE, 25 Sep (LR, RH) is the only documented record for central Nebraska (*vide* WRS). Another was reported for *Morton*, KS 17 Oct (SP, CH). Most unexpected was a Mountain Chickadee in *Kimball*, NE 1 Aug (MB); no others were reported this fall. Red-breasted Nuthatches were widely reported, although nowhere concentrated. First to arrive away from the breeding range was one in *Otoe*, NE, 6 Aug (LF, CF), a record early date. Blue-gray Gnatcatchers continue expanding in Nebraska, with adults feeding young in *Kimball* 22 Aug (JS, WRS). A male Varied Thrush in *Madison*, NE, during much of Nov (MB, GH, WH) was a rare find.

WARBLERS THROUGH FINCHES

Warblers may be most noteworthy for not dominating the passerine portion of this report. Scrub and tangle-loving *Vermivora* may have fared the best, with a Blue-winged Warbler in *Morton*, KS, 3 Sep (H&SG) and Golden-winged Warblers 30 Aug (JNo) and 3 Sep (H&SG) in *Sedgwick*, KS, 4 Sep in *Morton* (BPe), and *Tulsa* 29 Sep (BC). Virginia's Warblers were found in *Morton* 4 Sep (BF) and 10 Sep (BPe et al.). Among surprisingly few observations for these warblers were single Chestnut-sideds in *Otoe*, NE, 8 Sep (LF, CF) and in *Sarpy*, NE, 27 Sep (BP, LP), and a Magnolia 29 Sep in *Tulsa*

(BC). Among an exceptional array for one of the Region's rarest warblers were the Black-throated Blues in *Morton* 4 (BF) and 5 Sep (BPe), *Loup/Garfield*, NE, 25 Sep (MB, DH), *Kimball*, NE, 26 Sep (SJD), *Oklahoma* 3 Oct (JW et al.), and *Cleveland*, OK, 14 Oct (VB). Six Palm Warblers noted in Nebraska w. to *York* 18 Sep–6 Oct (LE, JS, BA, BP, LP) represent 20% of the entire fall total for this species (*vide* WRS). Palms were also reported from *McCurtain*, OK, 29 Sep (DA) and 7 Oct (BH). Pine Warblers were noted in *Sedgwick*, KS, 8 Sep and 3 Oct (CG). Breeding of Yellow-throated Warbler was confirmed for only the second time in Nebraska in *Sarpy* where two adults were feeding two young 6–9 Sep (BP, LP). Among w. warblers east were Black-throated Grays 4 Sep in *Morton*, KS, (BPe) and 17 Oct in *Harvey*, KS (CS). Townsend's Warblers were found in *Morton*, KS, 4 (BPe) and 18 Sep (MR, SS), with four noted 17–18 Oct (SP, CH).

Among the limited reports of Green-tailed Towhee were one in *Cimarron*, OK, 18 Sep (JT et al.), one in *Morton*, KS, 19 Sep (MR, SS), and two in *Kimball*, NE, 20 Sep (SJD). A Bachman's Sparrow, almost invisible in fall, was noted in *Creek*, OK, 3 Sep (JWA). Always a rare find, two Baird's Sparrows were documented in *Keith/Garden*, NE, 26 Sep (SJD), with singles in *Pawnee*, KS, 29 Sep (SS), and *Coffey*, KS, 25 Oct (AS). Perhaps more elusive than rare, Nelson's Sharp-tailed Sparrows were more commonly reported in Nebraska this season, including six in *York* 14 Oct (JG), five in *Lancaster* 2 Oct (JG), four in *Lancaster/Saunders* 3 Oct (JS), and singles in *Hall* 2 Oct (LR, RH). One appeared in a building entranceway in *Oklahoma* 29 Sep (JAG), two in *Sumner*, KS, 16 Oct (GY), and one in *Sedgwick*, KS, 23 Oct (CG). A Snow Bunting wandered s. to Cheyenne Bottoms 1 Nov (RK). Tardy, or awaiting death, was a Baltimore Oriole 9 Nov in *Seward*, NE (PK). Purple Finches showed some spark of existence in e. Nebraska this season. One in *Sioux*, NE, 13 Nov (JG) was exceptionally far west. A male White-winged Crossbill was in *Burt*, NE, 21 Nov (JGJ), the only report for the season. Somewhat enigmatic were Lesser Goldfinches, with singles in *Kimball*, NE, 21–27 Aug (MB et al.), 10 Sep (BPe et al.), and 18 Sep (MR, SS) in *Morton*, KS. Three Evening Grosbeaks, hard to come by for quite a few years, were in *Sedgwick*, KS, 26 Nov (PJ).

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