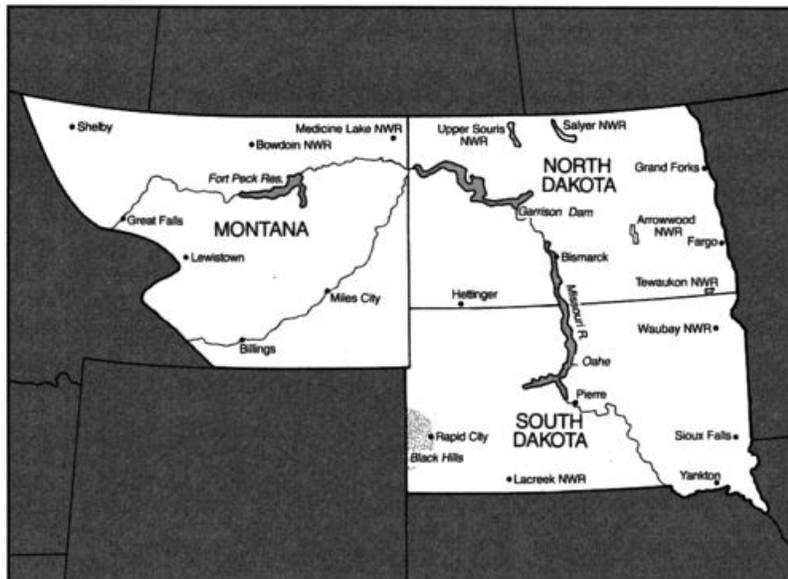


Northern Great Plains



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It was, by all accounts, not a terribly birdy winter. Raptor numbers were reasonably good, and Eurasian Collared-Doves continue to increase. The Region's first *Pyrrhuloxia* was documented in Montana. December and February temperatures were below average, but January was unusually warm. The eastern Dakotas, northwest North Dakota, and north-eastern Montana endured heavy snow cover all winter, but the rest of the Region had only light to moderate snow amounts. Mountain snow pack was very light, and Missouri River reservoirs were low.

Grebes Through Gyrfalcon

A Pied-billed Grebe noted near the end of the period in Jamestown, ND was in the same area where one was recorded on the C.B.C. 15 Dec. This provided the 2nd C.B.C. record and 2nd wintering record for the state (LI). Four Northern Pintails at Upper Souris N.W.R. 25 Feb furnished the earliest spring record for the species in N. Dakota (USNWRs). Two Green-winged Teal survived the season below Garrison Dam, providing the first wintering

record for N. Dakota (REM). The first Jan record for S. Dakota, a White-winged Scoter was noted 3 Jan in *Charles Mix* (RM). Casual in w S. Dakota, a Long-tailed Duck was noted in *Butte* 3 Dec (RAS).

Bald Eagles were noted in unusual numbers. The Garrison Dam, ND C.B.C. tallied 38 individuals 15 Dec, and 92 were counted at Ft. Peck, MT 17 Feb (CC). Eight Sharp-shinned Hawks on six N. Dakota C.B.C.s established a new high for the state. Northern Goshawks numbers were notable, with 18 on nine C.B.C.s in N. Dakota, and reports from six counties in S. Dakota. *Buteo* numbers were good in the Billings, MT area, with 39 Red-tailed Hawks and 23 Rough-legged Hawks counted on the C.B.C. 16 Dec. Gyrfalcon hunting was rewarding, with 12 noted in N. Dakota, 6 in Montana, and reports from four S. Dakota counties.

Gray Partridge Through Doves

Gray Partridge numbers in N. Dakota were up some from last year's very low totals, but the population remains well below the peaks of the early nineties. Ring-necked Pheasant populations were very high, i.e. 1200 in *Hettinger* 1 Jan (CDE, JPL), and 1584 on the Long Lake C.B.C. 14 Dec. At Ft. Peck, MT aggregations of 70 or more were found daily (CC).

A *jaeger* sp. in *Hughes*, SD 13 Feb provided

the first February record for the state for that genus (RDO). Casual in winter in S. Dakota, a Franklin's Gull was seen 6 & 9 Dec in *Yankton* (SVS, DS).

A Eurasian Collared-Dove found in *Malta*, MT during the Bowdoin NWR C.B.C. was in the area where the species raised young this summer. This furnished the 2nd state nesting record (PS). A Eurasian Collared-Dove in *Campbell*, SD in Jan provided about the 11th record for the state (*vide* DAT). In N. Dakota, the species was noted at five locations and recorded on three C.B.C.s. The 10th and 11th records were furnished by 2 individuals 14 Dec to the end of the period in *Bismarck* (HCT) and a single 9 Jan in *Hazelton* (PF). A peak of 8 was tallied on the *Mayville-Portland* C.B.C. 23 Dec (RMK).

Owls Through Varied Thrush

A form rarely seen in N. Dakota, a red-morph Eastern Screech-Owl was noted occasionally in *Grand Forks* (DOL). Snowy Owls made a good showing in S. Dakota, with reports for 10 counties. A group of 8 Long-eared Owls in *Brown*, SD 21 Feb was a high number for winter in this Region (DAT). Possible early migrants, the birds were not seen earlier in the winter in this area. A Boreal Owl was photographed at *Icelandic S.P.*, ND 28 Jan (JPL, CDE, HCT). There are now >20 records for the state.

Common Ravens continue to increase in N. Dakota. *Thirty* were noted 30 Dec in *Pembina* and *Cavalier*, the highest one-day count ever for the state (DOL). In n.-cen. N. Dakota, 6 were found on a trip 13 Jan (REM, DNS), and 4 were at *J. Clark Salyer N.W.R.* 10 Jan (GAE). Accidental in recent decades in S. Dakota, a single Common Raven was in *Haakon* 4 Jan (TJ).

A nearly frozen Ruby-crowned Kinglet allowed close approach at *Bowdoin*, MT 11 Dec (JS, DH). There are few winter records for the area (DP). Casual in winter in S. Dakota, a Mountain Bluebird was e. of normal haunts in *Yankton* 25 Jan (SVS). Townsend's Solitaires were noted in 11 N. Dakota counties, and 16 were tallied on the *Little Rocky Mts.*, MT C.B.C. 3 Jan. In S. Dakota, the species was seen in three counties away from the *Black Hills* *Five Varied Thrushes* in N. Dakota during the period was a notable number, and a single was in *Butte*, SD 22-28 Jan (RAS).

Southern Great Plains



Spring Migration 2000

Sparrows Through Redpolls

American Tree Sparrows were present in several e. N. Dakota areas this winter where they are usually absent. A Chipping Sparrow found on the Grand Forks, ND C.B.C. 17 Dec was seen through the following week (DOL, EEF). This provided only the 3rd C.B.C. record for the state. A Gray-headed Junco was documented in Rolette, ND 13 Jan (REM, DNS). This provided at least the 3rd record for the state for this subspecies. A White-winged Junco was e. of usual haunts in Yankton, SD 31 Dec (DS).

Northern Cardinals made a strong showing, with 7 individuals reported from five N. Dakota counties. In n. S. Dakota the species was noted in Edmonds 27 Jan (JDW), and 2 spent the period in Brown (DAT).

The bird of the season, a *Pyrrhuloxia* was reported from a feeder by a casual observer in Billings, MT in early Dec. The sighting was later confirmed by Helen Carlson and others, and photos suitable for confirmation of the identification were obtained. The bird was later tallied on the Billings C.B.C.. The homeowner originally reported 2 birds, but others saw only the single individual. This furnished the first record for Montana and the Region.

Gray-crowned Rosy-Finch peaks in the Dakotas were 100 in Lawrence, SD 20 Jan (RDO), and 85 on the Medora, ND C.B.C. 4 Jan (HCT). Red Crossbill numbers were low, with seven N. Dakota observations and reports from three e. S. Dakota counties. Two reports of White-winged Crossbills from N. Dakota totaled only four individuals. Common Redpolls were scarce, with only seven sightings in N. Dakota and two reports from Montana.

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Recent years have revealed changes in the breeding distributions of some southern waterbirds and shorebirds northward, some of which probably relates to good water conditions, at least on average. Some special birding areas have developed recently, in part through habitat management, as noted below. For whatever reasons, the several species of dove, particularly Eurasian Collared-Dove, continue to increase in the Region. Gulls did not offer the diversion of earlier seasons, and it was generally a weak season for warblers, expected to be most in evidence during spring periods. The very warm March weather provided for some exceptional arrival dates.

Abbreviations: Cheyenne Bottoms (Cheyenne Bottoms W.M.A., Barton, KS), K.B.R.C. (Kansas Bird Records Committee); L Ogallala (L. Ogallala, Keith, NE); McConaughy (L. McConaughy, Keith, NE); Quivira (Quivira N.W.R. Stafford, KS); Red Slough (Red Slough W.M.A., McCurtain, OK).

Loons Through Ducks

Part of the relatively recently "outbreak," a **Yellow-billed Loon**, Oklahoma's 5th, was photographed 2-28 Apr at Sooner L., Pawnee, OK (JWA). Horned Grebes lingered until 20 & 21 May in Cimarron and Roger Mills, OK, respectively (JL et al.) Also among relative recent outbreaks were Red-necked Grebes noted 19 Mar–8 Apr in Tulsa (BC et al.) and 12 Apr in Sedgwick, KS (CG). Western Grebe numbers built to about 18,000 on 22 Apr at McConaughy (SJD). Formerly uncommon

