

The Nesting Season 2000

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Summers can sometimes seem a lull from the migration periods, but with the trailing end of spring migration and the onset of fall migration, many shorebird species provide welcome additions to breeding waterbirds, particularly in such special areas such as Funk Lagoon in Nebraska, Quivira in Kansas, and Red Slough in Oklahoma.

Curiously, some species—such as Least Bittern and King Rail—do not seem to be expanding into available wetlands as rapidly as some others, such as White-faced Ibis and Black-necked Stilt. A number of Gulf Coast wading birds appear to be marching into southeastern Oklahoma—White Ibis and Wood Stork in particular.

For landbirds, the summer account is more modest, very much so for Neotropical migrants and grassland birds. Black-capped Vireos continue to increase in the Wichita Mountains under cowbird and habitat management. Ash-throated Flycatchers may be moving into the Plains.

Abbreviations: Cheyenne Bottoms (Cheyenne Bottoms W.M.A., *Barton*, KS); Hackberry (Hackberry Flats W.M.A., *Tillman*, OK); McConaughy (L. McConaughy, *Keith*, NE); Quivira (Quivira N.W.R. *Stafford*, KS); Rainwater Basin (pothole area in south-central Nebraska); Red Slough (Red Slough W.M.A., *McCurtain*, OK).

Loons Through Ducks

Quite unexpected was an ad. Pacific Loon in *Scotts Bluff*, NE 16 Jun (WRS), only the 6th summer record for the Region. The fall buildup of Western Grebes at McConaughy was underway by 31 Jul with 5700 present (SJD). Clark's Grebes were noted in *Harlan*, NE 15-30 Jun (MB, GH, WH) and 27-28 Jun in *Cimarron*, OK (BH).

Neotropic Cormorants continue to be observed farther n., with a post-breeding ad. at *Pawnee*, NE 20-23 Jul (WRS et al.). A small group of up to 5 was present at Red Slough (DA, BH).

Least Bitterns maintain a spotty distribution, with birds noted in *Sarpy*, NE 16 Jun (*vide* WRS), *Phelps*, NE 16 Jul (LR, RH), Red Slough 23 Jun & 6 Jul (DA), and *Major*, OK 7-19 Jul

(JAG, DE, JWA). A Little Blue Heron wandered n. and w. to McConaughy 19 Jul (JF). Tricolored Herons appeared in *Pottowatomie*, KS 18 Jun (PO), Quivira 1 Jul (SF, CG, CM), with 2 at Red Slough 2-20 Jul (DA), and 2 in *Alfalfa*, OK 19 Jul (JAG). A Yellow-crowned Night-Heron in *Sarpy*, NE 3 Jun (*vide* WRS) was the only report for Nebraska this season.

Ibises added accent to the season. Hundreds of White Ibis were present at Red Slough, where two nests were photographed 20 Jul on Ward L. (DA, JWA et al.), the first documented nesting for the Region. Glossy Ibises 12 & 20 Jul at Red Slough, 2 and one, respectively (DA), and one 11 May–25 Jul in *Kingfisher*, OK (JWA, JC, JAG) were well documented. In addition, a local collection of some 70-80 White-faced Ibises in *Kingfisher*, OK produced 40+ juvs. by 7 Jul (JWA), only the 2nd breeding site known in Oklahoma.

Several Roseate Spoonbills were found among the ibises at Red Slough 20 Jun–23 Jul (DA, BH, m.ob.). Also here were up to 55 Wood Storks 7 Jun–23 Jul (DA, BH). A Wood Stork wandered far afield to *Finney*, KS 16-19 Jun (DB, CG).

Vagrant summer waterfowl appear to be increasing. Among the more notable were 2 Greater White-fronted Geese in *Phelps*, NE 11 Jun (LR, RH) and one at Quivira 17 Jun (SS). While exceptional only a few years back, Black-bellied Whistling-Ducks made appearances in *Kingfisher*, OK (2-3 birds; JWA, JAG), *Osage*, OK 27 Jun (one bird; JL et al.), and Red Slough (2-4 birds; DA, BH, m.ob.).

A Cinnamon Teal in the e. Rainwater Basin 30 Jul (JGJ) was easterly. Nineteen were present in *Scotts Bluff*, NE 15 Jun (WRS). One or 2 Green-winged Teal were noted in *Phelps*, NE 11-18 Jun (LR, RH), Red Slough (2) 23 Jun (DA), *Major*, OK (2) 5 Jul (JWA, JD), and *Kingfisher*, OK (3) 29 Jul (JAG). One to 2 Gadwall and one Northern Pintail were observed south to Red Slough 29 Jun–23 Jul (DA).

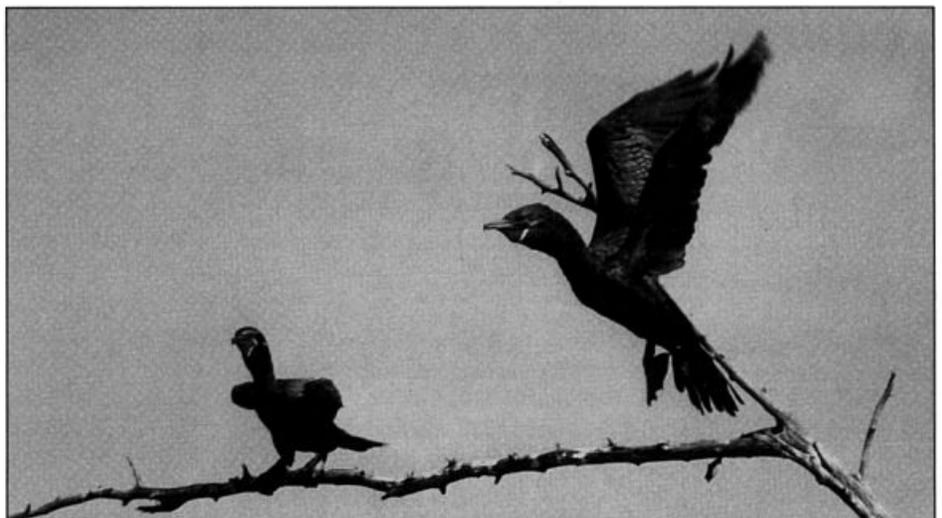
A Redhead pair produced two young by 5 Jul in *Major*, OK (JWA). Among seldom summering waterfowl were a female Canvasback at Hackberry 6 Jul (JAG) and a female Bufflehead in *Keith*, NE 30 Jul (SJD). Although scattered records of nesting Hooded Merganser have emerged in recent years, the 7 reported from Nebraska were believed most likely to be pre-breeding yearlings (*vide* WRS). A female Hooded was in *Riley*, KS 15 Jun (TF), with 3 Hoodeds in *Johnston*, OK 23 Jun (MS). Common Mergansers, only casual in summer away from McConaughy, were found at two locations in *Harlan*, NE 11 Jun (GH, WH), and in *Lancaster*, NE 18 Jun–4 Jul (LEi, JGJ).

Raptors Through Terns

An Osprey in *Keith*, NE during early Jul (RK *vide* SJD) was intriguing. Summer reports of Peregrine Falcon came from *Otoe*, NE 11 Jul (LE, CF); a juvenile was harassing shorebirds at McConaughy 30 Jul (SJD, JF).

Reports of Gray Partridge from Nebraska continue to be sparse, possibly suggesting a continuation of a low population ebb. In contrast, numbers of Northern Bobwhite were clearly up (*vide* WRS).

King Rails were found at Red Slough 7 Jun–12 Jul (DA), and Hackberry 17 Jun (JAG)



The Red Slough W.M.A., McCurtain County, Oklahoma has become an oasis for a number of southern waterbirds including these Neotropic Cormorants found 12 July 2000. Photograph by Steve Metz.



This nest with three eggs, one of two observed 20 July 2000, provides the first documentation of breeding of White Ibis for the Region—at none other than Red Slough W.M.A., McCurtain County, Oklahoma. Photograph by James W. Arterburn.

Black Rails continue to be found at Quivira and in *Stafford*, KS (*vide* LM), the apparent lonely outposts. Common Moorhens also made a few extra appearances this season, producing up to 11 young in *Major*, OK (JAG, JWA), 7 in *Kingfisher*, OK (JWA), 6 at Red Slough (DA), and at least one young in *Barber*, KS (PJ).

Only the 2nd breeding record of Snowy Plover for Nebraska was provided by an ad. with a young chick 3 Jul on the s. shore of McConaughy (GW, RK *vide* SJD). An ad. female was seen on the n. shore of McConaughy 31 Jul (CLW). About 20 pairs of Piping Plovers at McConaughy this season attempted 32 nestings (*vide* SJD). A Piping Plover was also noted at Quivira 12 Jun (CG), with a migrant appearing at Red Slough 19-20 Jul (JWA et al.). Two Mountain Plovers were noted from *Kimball*, NE 10 Jun (JS), the only report.

Black-necked Stilt numbers continue to explode. In Nebraska, an ad. with a fledgling at the w. end of McConaughy 29-30 Jul (SJD, JF) provided the first breeding record for *Keith*. Four young in *Meade*, KS hatched before 13 Jun (LE), with young also noted in *Barber*, KS 23 Jul (DAn et al.). Remarkably, up to 40 Black-necked Stilts defended scattered young at *Hackberry* 6 Jul (JAG). Breeding also occurred in *Major* and *Kingfisher*, OK with at least 2 young produced at each location (JWA, JAG). Other stilts (2-4 birds) were found in *Wagoner*, OK 1 Jun (JWA), *Phelps*, NE 11-18 Jun (LR et al.), *Box Butte*, NE 13 Jun (*vide* WRS), *Scotts Bluff*, NE 27 Jun (PL), and Red Slough 7 Jun-23 Jul (DA). The status of Long-billed Curlews found in *Meade*, KS 10 Jun (TF), *Sedgwick*, KS 11 Jun (PJ), *Seward*, KS 15

Jun (5 birds; LE) and *Edwards*, KS 5 Jul (MR) might be open to several interpretations—from breeders to vagrants to migrants.

Tardy were 4 Semipalmated Sandpipers in the e. Rainwater Basin 4 Jun (JGJ) and 4 in *Phelps*, NE 11 Jun (LR, RH). Two Semipalmateds at the latter 25 Jun (JGJ) may simply have extended their stay or were very early returning fall migrants. Also tardy were a Dunlin in *Phelps*, NE 11 Jun (LR,

RH), 4 Stilt Sandpipers in *Phelps*, NE 11 Jun (LR, RH), with one in *Lancaster*, NE 18 Jun (LEi).

More exceptional early returns among shorebirds included a Semipalmated Plover in the e. Rainwater Basin 16 Jul (JGJ), Greater Yellowlegs in *Scotts Bluff*, NE 15 Jun (WRS), a Marbled Godwit at Quivira 25 Jun (SF, CG), and a Buff-breasted Sandpiper 20 Jul at Red Slough (JWA et al.). Summer vagrants (late spring migrants or failed nesters already moving south) were a Whimbrel at Quivira 25 Jun (SF, CG), a Hudsonian Godwit (in high alternate plumage) in *Phelps*, NE 11 Jun (LR, RH), and Pectoral Sandpipers in *Clay*, NE 25 Jun & 2 Jul (JGJ), and *Hackberry* 27 Jun (JAG).

Although several thousand can be seen on occasion in the Region, the 5642 Baird's Sandpipers individually counted at McConaughy 30 Jul (SJD, JF) was a record by far. A Short-billed Dowitcher was found 27 Jun at *Hackberry* (JAG), with 3 in the e. Rainwater Basin 9 Jul (JGJ). A Common Snipe was a vagrant or an early migrant in the e. Rainwater Basin 30 Jul (JGJ). Suggestive of breeding were reports of 17 Wilson's Phalaropes from *Phelps*, NE 18 Jun (LR, RH) and the 5 from the e. Rainwater Basin 3 Jul (JGJ).

A Laughing Gull in second-alternate plumage at McConaughy 19 Jul (CLW, JF) was the 4th documented summer record for Nebraska. Another was in *Wagoner*, OK 22 Jul (JWA). An ad. California Gull apparently summered in *Wagoner*, OK (JWA). Quite unusual was a second-year Herring Gull at McConaughy 29 Jul, joined by a juv. Herring the next day (SJD). Ad. Common Terns reported in *Hitchcock*, NE 22 Jul (WRS) and *Lincoln*, NE 30 Jul (SJD, JF) were likely failed breeders.

Doves Through Finches

Continuing the Eurasian Collared-Dove saga, reports have almost been doubling annually since 1995, when the first was reported in Muskogee, OK. A small group in *Cass*, NE produced young observed 25 Jul (GW), the 3rd breeding site identified in Nebraska. Other reports came from *Washington* and *Keith*, NE (*vide* WRS), *Crawford*, *Douglas*, *Edwards*, *Pratt*, and *Sedgwick*, KS (*vide* WRS), and *Alfalfa*, *Blaine*, *Cimarron*, and *Wagoner*, OK. A White-winged Dove was found 8 Jul in *Chase*, NE (FR), the 10th for Nebraska. A pair of Inca Doves was present 9 Jul in *Pushmataha*, OK (D&GG).

Few Black-billed Cuckoos have been reported of late. Reports this season included singles in *Harvey/McPherson*, KS 3 Jun (GF), *Sedgwick*, KS 11 Jun (CG, PJ), *Dixon*, NE 13 Jun (JJ), and *Otoe*, NE 21-29 Jul (LE, CF). A White-throated Swift in *Sioux*, NE 10 Jun (AK) was unexpected, even more so was one documented at the w. end of McConaughy 29 Jul (SJD, JF). The only reports of Rufous Hummingbird came from *Finney*, KS 19 & 28 Jul (T&SS, L&BR), *Seward*, KS 28 Jul (LE), and *Kimball*, NE 29 Jul (SJD, JF). An exceptional find was a **Calliope Hummingbird** in *Finney*, KS 28 Jul (L&BR).

Among those species creeping northward was an Acadian Flycatcher pair nesting in *Thurston*, NE 4 Jul (BFH), the 2nd known nesting in Nebraska. A Dusky Flycatcher credibly documented in *Lincoln*, NE 21 Jul (WRS) will be reviewed by the state records committee. Cordilleran Flycatchers have become more common (or more apparent) in the w. Pine Ridge Canyons of Nebraska in recent years; a count of 11 was made in *Sowbelly Canyon*, *Sioux*, NE 20 Jul (JF). A record of an Ash-throated Flycatcher heard calling in lower *Sowbelly Canyon* 20 Jul (CLW, JF), a possible 2nd for Nebraska, will require records committee review. An Ash-throated wandered through a site in *Blaine*, OK 10-12 Jun (JAG). A Cassin's Kingbird managed its way e. to *Morton*, KS 2 Jun (JB).

Black-capped Vireos under management continue to increase in the Wichita Mountains, about 450 territories were mapped (JAG, RW, DF), up from about 60 in 1988. However, only nine females could be located in *Blaine*, OK (JAG). Four Plumbeous Vireos were in *Sioux*, NE 11 Jun (JS), with 3 more seen at a separate locality 20 Jul (JF). The Region flirts with two Warbling Vireo forms. A nominate type was identified as far w. as *Dundy*, NE 22 Jul (WRS). The westerly *swainsoni* form is known to breed only in far nw. Nebraska (*vide* WRS).

Unexpected were 2 Pinyon Jays in *Kimball*, NE 17 Jun (WRS). Bank Swallow concentrations built to 10,000 flying over marshes in

Phelps, NE 30 Jul (LR, RH). Intriguing were reports of juv. Cave Swallows, one & 2 birds 29 Jun and 2 Jul at Red Slough (DA), and one to 2 birds at Hackberry 20 Jul (JAG); these are under review by the Oklahoma Bird Records Committee.

Unusual was a pair of Red-breasted Nuthatches that fledged 2 young in *Sedgwick*, KS by 27 Jun (H&SG). Other errant Red-breasteds, possibly early migrants, were one in *Kimball*, NE and 2 in *Banner*, NE, both 29 Jul (SJD).

Another species with multiple subspecies in the Region is the White-breasted Nuthatch. The eastern form (*cookei*) summers in the Platte Valley w. to the Kearney area. One in *Scotts Bluff/Banner*, NE 3 Jul (AK) was only the 3rd summer report in the Wildcat Hills, but it was of undetermined race. Those taped in *Sioux*, NE are the Rocky Mountain form (*nelsoni*; CLW).

Apparently the first summer record of Winter Wren for Nebraska was of a territorial bird taped singing in *Cherry*, NE 23 May–13 Jun (CA). Unexpected was a Swainson's Thrush heard singing in *Harlan*, NE 6 Jul (GH, WH). Possibly an early migrant was a Sage Thrasher in *Kimball*, NE 29 Jul (SJD, JF).

There was only a handful of warbler records

upon which to comment—hopefully not an ominous sign. A surprise was a Blue-winged Warbler w. in *Cherry*, NE 5-6 Jun (CA). Tardy were a Tennessee Warbler in *Seward*, NE 10-11 Jun (JG), and a Chestnut-sided Warbler in *Washington/Douglas*, NE 8 Jun (JBr). The small population of Cerulean Warblers in Omaha, NE area was reduced to 2 single males (BP, LP). Wandering w. was a Northern Parula 1 Jul in *Butler*, KS (PJ). Pine Warblers fledged young in *Tulsa* (BC), an outlying site. Yellow-breasted Chats, now casual in e. Nebraska, were seen in *Saunders* 21 Jul (MO). A recent fledgling was found in *Scotts Bluff*, NE 3 Jul (AK).

South of typical range was a Spotted Towhee in *Pawnee*, KS 18 Jun (SS). A Brewer's Sparrow carrying food in *Dundy*, NE 21 Jul (WRS) provided a first apparent breeding record for this county. Henslow's Sparrows were detected at four locations in se. Nebraska (*fide* WRS), with a singing male seen west to *Clay*, NE (JGJ). A Bachman's Sparrow, a species with a very local distribution in e. Oklahoma, was noted 4 & 9 Jun in *Osage*, OK (BG).

Generally spotty in distribution s. of the Platte Valley, a male Bobolink was in *Phelps*, NE 18 Jun (GH, WH). A prairie in *Buffalo*, NE hosted at least 26 on 3 Jul (LR, RH). Certainly a surprise was a **Pine Grosbeak** seen briefly at

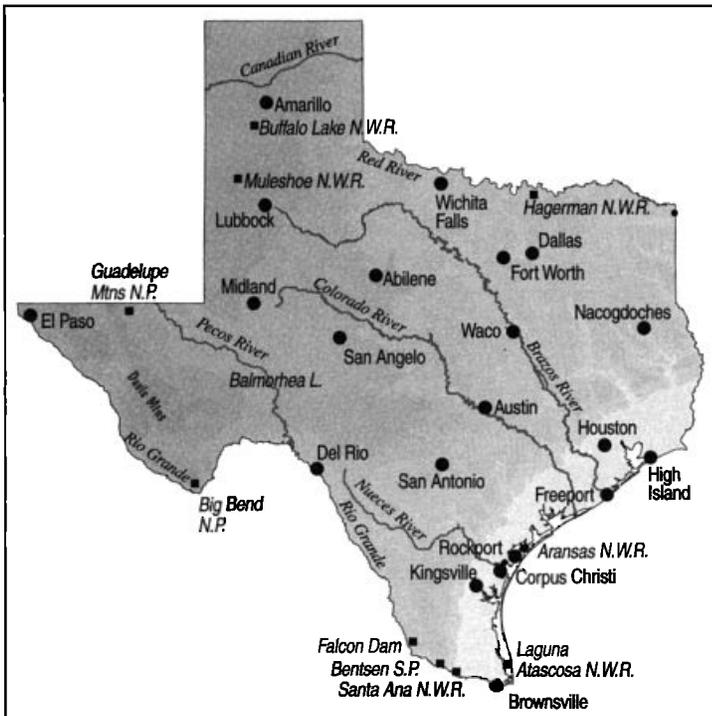
feeders in *Scotts Bluff/Banner*, NE 10 Jun (JS) Lesser Goldfinches visited feeders in *Scotts Bluff*, NE 12-15 Jun (JCI *fide* AK); at least one was a green-backed male (*fide* WRS).

Cited observers (area editors boldfaced)

KANSAS: Dennis Angle (DAn), Daniel Baffa, James Barnes, Lisa Edwards, Suzanne Fellows, Tom Flowers, Gregg Freisen, Harry & Sharon Gregory, Chet Gresham, Pete Janzen, Cheryl Miller, **Lloyd Moore**, Peter Oviatt, Mike Rader, Leonard & Betty Rich, Scott Seltman, Tom and Sara Shane. NEBRASKA: Christopher Anderson, John Brenneman (JBr), Mark Brogie, Jamella Clark (JCI), Stephen J Dinsmore, Larry Einemann (LEi), Carol Falk, Laurence Falk, Joe Fontaine, Joe Gubanyi, Robin Harding, Glen Hoge, Wanda Hoge, Bill F Huser, Jan Johnson, Joel G. Jorgensen, Alice Kenitz, Roger Knades, Paul Lehman, Mark Orsag, Babs Padelford, Loren Padelford, Lanny Randolph, **W. Ross Silcock**, John Sullivan, Gabriel Wilson (GWi), Chris L. Wood, Gertrude Wood, Merlin Wright. OKLAHOMA David Arbour, **James W. Arterburn**, Bill Carrell, Jeff Cox, John Dole, David Elmendorf, Dan Farrell, Bonnie Gall, David and Gere Gill, Joseph A. Grzybowski, Berlin Heck, Jo Loyd, Michael Schumner, Rob Wood.



Texas



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“We actually had a winter!” was the surprised refrain of several observers, reflecting the memory of mild conditions of recent years. There were repeated cold snaps through December and January, and the period was quite wet over most of the state. Yet we seemed to have just the right combination of timing and pattern of fronts to hold many lingering birds in the shelter of the coastal zone while pushing winter’s usual visitors a bit farther coastward. The montane/western invasion of the fall was a conspicuous theme in the western half of the state, and it sent many ambassadors well to the south and east. Drought conditions still plagued deepest south Texas, but most of the Trans-Pecos was wet enough to anticipate a marvelous late winter wildflower bloom of immense diversity. The latter area still lacked a good seed crop for grassland species, however,