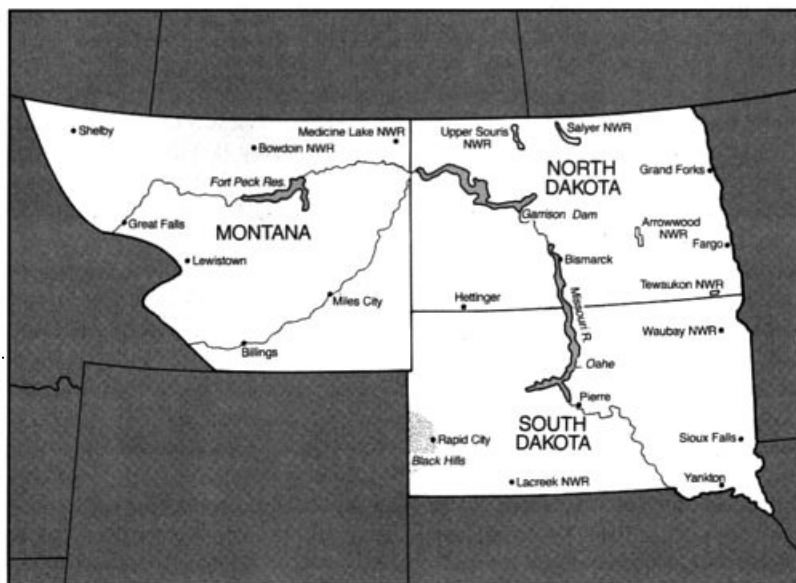


# Northern Great Plains



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Much of the Region received below-average precipitation this spring, but in the eastern Dakotas, a fairly substantial snow pack and cool weather kept water levels very high. Waterfowl numbers were again near record levels. Shorebird migration was good in Montana and South Dakota, but most flew over North Dakota. Passerine migration was unspectacular, with warblers making a particularly weak showing.

## LOONS THROUGH FALCONS

Common Loons made a strong showing at Ft. Peck, MT 23 Apr, with 92 noted on the river (CC). A peak of 8 was tallied in *Kingsbury*, SD 14 Apr (JSP). Record-early grebes included a Horned 15 Mar in *Gregory*, SD (RM) and a Clark's at Long Lake N.W.R., ND 6 Apr (HCT).

Tying the earliest recorded date, a Cattle Egret was at Hazelton, ND 10 Apr (PCV, NAB). Rare at Freezeout L., MT was a single Greater White-fronted Goose 25 Mar (MS). Montana

sightings of Eurasian Wigeon away from the usual Freezeout L. hotspot included singles at Dodson Dam 23 Apr (JG, BW) and Ft. Peck 26 Apr (CC). If accepted, North Dakota's 13th was recorded 6 Apr at Minot (REM). An exotic species, Mandarin Duck, was seen regularly in Fargo, ND 27 Apr-18 May (GEN). Very late in South Dakota, a Common Goldeneye was in *Miner* 26 May (JSP).

Awaiting committee review, a **Mississippi Kite** photographed in *Roberts*, SD 15 May would constitute the 3rd documented record for the state (DAT). Bald Eagles peaked at 58 at Bowdoin N.W.R., MT 30 Mar (DP, KE, PG). Late Northern Goshawks in the Dakotas included singles in *Hughes*, SD 16 Apr (KM) and *Grand Forks*, ND 26 May (DOL). Late at Medicine L. N.W.R., MT were a Rough-legged Hawk 10 May (LK, EM) and a white-morph Gyrfalcon 15 Apr (DR). Two **Peregrine Falcons** that arrived in Fargo, ND in late Mar were identified as hacked birds from Sioux Falls, SD and Omaha, NE. The pair eventually nested on a bank building and produced 3 young, the first recorded nesting in North Dakota since 1954 (WC, KRC).

## GROUSE THROUGH TERNS

The spring survey of North Dakota's vulnerable Greater Sage-Grouse population produced 226 males on 15 leks (N.D.G.F.). The largest flock ever recorded in North Dakota, 31 Whooping Cranes were over *McKenzie* 10 Apr (JAH). Three **Snowy Plovers** were documented in the Dakotas, with South Dakota's 2nd furnished by an individual in *Hughes* 14 May (RDO). In North Dakota, singles were tallied in *Mountrail* 15 May (EL) and in *Ward* 25 May (REM). If accepted, these would furnish the 4th and 5th records for the state. Whimbrels peaked in notable numbers, with 10 in *Bennett*, SD 19 May (DAT, RFS, JSP) and 55 n of Billings, MT 12 May (HC). The high in North Dakota was 4 at Minot 27 May (BD). Somewhat e. of their current range, a Long-billed Curlew was in *Kidder*, ND 7 May (BJ). The earliest ever for South Dakota, 3 Dunlin were noted 7 Apr in *Kingsbury* (JSP).

American Woodcocks are locally fairly common on the e. edge of the Dakotas, but relatively few nests have been found. This year nests were documented in *Marshall*, SD 20 Apr (WS) and in the Sheyenne National Grasslands, ND 19 May (HK). An apparent breeding population was also discovered rather far w. at Pierre, SD, when 4 were counted there 14 May (RDO, KM).

If accepted, a **Laughing Gull** documented at Medicine L. N.W.R. 31 May would furnish the 4th record for Montana (TB). Now casual at Ft. Peck, MT, a second-winter Glaucous-winged Gull was noted 22 Mar (CC). Arctic Terns returned to Bowdoin N.W.R., MT for the 4th consecutive year, with a single seen 29 May (KP). So far all nesting attempts have been unsuccessful.

## DOVES THROUGH WHEATEARS

Eurasian Collared-Doves continued at many previously mentioned locations, and the first in the Rapid City, SD area was noted 29 May (TJ). A **White-winged Dove** documented from *Yankton*, SD 4-6 May would furnish the 2nd record for the state if accepted (SVS). A White-winged Dove was also documented from Montana, with a single at Billings 31 May (BM, GM). If accepted this would provide only the 2nd record for Montana. In the continuing saga of the shrinking range of the Burrowing Owl in the Dakotas, Palmer noted that the species has not been reported from e. South Dakota for the last seven springs. In North Dakota, only two reports were received for the species n. and e. of the Missouri R. **Chuck-will's-widows** returned 13 May to last year's nesting area in *Stanley*, SD (RDO). Though fairly widespread in the e. quarter of North Dakota, a Pileated Woodpecker found nesting

in Turtle R. S.P. 15 May provided only the 3rd nesting record for the state (DOL).

Rare nesters in the Region, Cassin's Kingbirds were reported from traditional areas in *Bennett*, SD 19–20 May (DAT, RFS, JSP) and s of Birney, MT 25 May (CP). Casual in South Dakota, but seemingly on the increase, 3 White-eyed Vireos were reported in this spring. Singles were in *Union* 7 May (JC), *Bennett* 19 May (RFS, JSP), and *Clay* 21 May (JC). Local in the n. Black Hills, an American Dipper survey in Spearfish Canyon, SD turned up 28 ads. and 15 active nests (DB). Six Golden-crowned Kinglet reports from the Dakotas was an incredibly low number for an often common migrant. If accepted, a **Northern Wheatear** documented in *Stutsman*, ND 8 May would furnish only the 2nd record for the state (PRS).

### WARBLERS THROUGH ORIOLES

A **Black-throated Gray Warbler** in *Union*, SD 5 May would provide the 3rd record for the state if accepted (DS). Accidental in the Region, 2 **Townsend's Warblers** were documented. South Dakota's 5th was banded in *Hughes* 11 May (FLB), and a single in Ft. Peck, MT 15 May provided only the 2nd local record (CC). Furnishing the earliest record for the

state, and the first in Apr, 2 American Redstarts were noted at Arrowwood N.W.R. 30 Apr (SRW). Summer Tanager reports documented in North Dakota included a male at Minot 29 Apr (TL) and a female at Minot 15 May (REM). These would provide the 18th and 19th records for the state.

A Green-tailed Towhee at Malta, MT 4–6 May furnished a new record for Latilong 9 (TP, KTP, PP). Unusually far w. was an Eastern Towhee in *Hughes*, SD 6 May (RDO). Seldom reported in migration at the e. edge of the Dakotas, a Baird's Sparrow was in *Yankton*, SD 24 Apr (SVS). Unusually far w. was a Red Fox Sparrow in Custer, SD 11 Apr (CMW). A **Golden-crowned Sparrow** 14–15 May in *Burleigh*, ND would furnish the 5th record for the state if accepted (DA, HCT, CDE). Following a sighting last winter, another **Gray-headed Junco** was found in North Dakota: a single in *McKenzie* 2 May provided perhaps the 4th or 5th record for this race in the state (JAH).

Lazuli Bunting was noted in extreme e. North Dakota for the 2nd consecutive year, with a single 16–19 May in *Cass* (EP). A little n. of the species's usual haunts, an Eastern Meadowlark was noted in *Mellette*, SD 27 May (KH). At the extreme w. edge of typical range

in the Region, an Orchard Oriole was very early 10 May in Malta, MT (TP). A Bullock's Oriole at Arrowwood N.W.R., ND 27 May was well e. of their usual range (MLV).

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# Southern Great Plains



## Fall Migration: 1 August to 30 November 2000

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**A**s fall seasons go, this one was more or less remarkable—it was just Great! Birds can fly, and there are many more that can fly around in the fall just after the breeding season than at most other times. Many birders in the Region focus on proven birding hot spots, particularly at the western periphery of the Region, improving the chances of finding western strays, as well as eastern species west. As is true every autumn, there was more to report than these pages can hold; what follows can only be the highlights.

This was perhaps a year to have a western focus, as more than the usual number of west-