

types, a large-billed form resembling Type 6 and a smaller-billed form closer to Type 2. Two distinct vocalizations were heard but apparently not pegged to Type (EB). (The subspecies traditionally accepted as breeding in Ponderosa Pines in nw. Nebraska is *benti*, a large-billed form.) Certainly exceptional was a male White-winged Crossbill in *Scotts Bluff/Banner*, NE 15–23 Jun (SJD, TJ), only the 2nd documented summer record for the Region.

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## Spring Migration: 1 March–31 May 2001

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There is an aura to the Great Plains in spring, an aura of expansiveness overlain by collective memory of historical abundances—the great herds of bison, wealth of game animals, and sky-darkening clouds of birds. This season, at the scattered oases of its managed wetlands, some of the Region's past splendor could be imagined: waterfowl of several species and cranes were counted in poetic phrases that signify almost countless thousands of birds. Many concentrations of waterfowl were estimated in five or even six digits, as were groups of several shorebird species. The rush of all these wings must simply be experienced first-hand.

On the negative side, the ice storms of the previous winter took their toll. Across Kansas and Oklahoma, many observers noted the reduced numbers of Carolina Wrens, and Carolina Chickadees and Northern Cardinals were likely also similarly affected. It will be interesting to inspect more carefully the results of monitoring schemes such as the Breeding Bird Survey to match observers' impressions with available standardized data.

Discouraging too was the slow showing of Neotropical migrants. Even in the main time-windows and main eastern areas of migration, many were hard to come by. Though there were some extralimital observations, precious few of some expected species were found—such as Nashville Warbler or Chestnut-sided Warbler in eastern stretches.

**Abbreviations:** Cheyenne Bottoms (Cheyenne Bottoms W.M.A., *Barton*, KS); Funk Lagoon (*Phelps*, NE); Hackberry (Hackberry Flats

W.M.A., *Tillman*, OK); L. McConaughy (*Keith*, NE); L. Ogallala (*Keith*, NE); Quivira (Quivira N.W.R. *Stafford*, KS); Sooner L. (*Noble* and *Pawnee*, OK); Rainwater Basin (pothole area in south-central Nebraska); Red Slough (Red Slough W.M.A., *McCurtain*, OK).

### LOONS THROUGH DUCKS

L. Tenkiller, a clear-water reservoir in *Cherokee/Sequoyah*, OK, attracts an inordinate number of loons compared to other sites in the Region. In addition to the many Commons were 2 Red-throated Loons 2 Mar (JWA) and one to 2 Pacific Loons 7 Apr–14 May (JWA). Another Red-throated was located at Sooner L. 29 Mar (JWA).

A Red-necked Grebe at L. Ogallala 28 Apr (SJD) was the 8th reported, but first documented, spring record for Nebraska. In a still-developing pattern for Clark's Grebe, 2 were noted at L. McConaughy 9 Mar (SJD), the earliest arrival on record for Nebraska. Rather far e. was a Clark's in *Knox*, NE 14–16 Mar (MB). Another Clark's was located 17 Apr at Cheyenne Bottoms (RK), with 3 there 20 May (W.A.S.) and 2 in *Cimarron*, OK 21 Apr (JWA).

Neotropical Cormorants appear to be increasing. This season, they were reported at Cheyenne Bottoms beginning 7 Apr (SS, LH), *Mitchell*, KS on an early date of 15 Mar (PL), *Cowley*, KS 8 Apr (3 birds; GY), *Tulsa* 11 May (JL, PS) and Red Slough (one to 2 birds) by 1 Apr (DA, BH). An Anhinga in *Nowata*, OK 29 Apr (BG, MD) was n. of most.

The only reports of Least Bittern were of one to 3 at Red Slough beginning 30 Apr (DA et al.), and 2 in *Sarpy*, NE 21 May (BP, LP). The 3rd documented record of Tricolored Heron for Nebraska was an ad. in *Hitchcock* 29 Apr (SJD). Normally a very rare summer

vagrant, others were reported from Cheyenne Bottoms 28 Apr–6 May (m. ob.), *Douglas*, KS 5 May (AP, RB), *Jefferson*, KS 16 May (RF), and Quivira 30 May (RP, MP), with one to 3 at Red Slough beginning 5 Apr (DA, BH). Also with more sightings this season—exceptionally to more westerly reaches of the Region—were Glossy Ibis. This season, individuals were noted in *Kingfisher*, OK 19 Apr (2 birds, JWA, JS), *Texas*, OK 21 Apr (JWA), *Morton*, KS 5 May (SS, MR), and *Barton*, KS 15 May (TC) White Ibis numbers built to 400 at Red Slough by 10 Apr (DA, BH); among them was a Roseate Spoonbill 12–13 May (BH, FH)

Just a shadow of last year's numbers, single Black-bellied Whistling-Ducks were in *Major*, OK 7 (PB) and 30 Apr (JAG). Part of the Plains' splendor this season were "several hundred thousand" Snow Geese in the Rainwater Basin 16 Mar (LR, RH), with 150,000 at Funk Lagoon 25 Mar (LR, RH). Probably also part of increasing populations were the 5,600 Ross's Geese with about 8,500 Snows noted in *Lancaster*, NE 25 Mar (WRS, JSu) Exceptionally late were 2 Ross's in the e Rainwater Basin 27 May (JGJ).

A migrant Trumpeter Swan was in *Dixon*, NE 2 Mar (JJ), 7 were in *Keith*, NE, and 13 were seen in *Keith/Garden*, NE (JF, SJD), the latter two observations both 4 Mar. Another Trumpeter was noted in *Elsworth*, KS 13 Mar (D&PR), with 2 in *Kearney*, KS 3 Mar (TS, SSh). Two Tundra Swans wintering at Red Slough were last noted 6 Mar (DA). Two more Tundra Swans were with Trumpeters at L. Ogallala 4 Mar (SJD, JF); and another was noted flying over Nebraska City 10 Mar (LF) Currently of uncertain origin, 2 Mute Swans were present in *Creek*, OK 7–20 Mar (F&LH, GK).

A Eurasian Wigeon appeared in *Clay*, NE



This Wilson's Plover discovered at Sooner Lake, Oklahoma 5 May 2001 was only the second for the Region. A scarce species in North America, it is a red-letter find anywhere in the continent's interior. Photograph by James W. Arterburn.

24 Mar (JGJ), with a possible 2nd at another location in *Clay* 31 Mar (JGJ). The only American Black Duck reported was in *Linn*, KS 17 Mar (MC, MM). Two Mottled Ducks were flushed at Hackberry 9 May (JAG). Cinnamon Teal were widely reported this season, with high counts of 32 at Hackberry 14 Mar (JAG) and 12 in *Scotts Bluff*, NE 29 Apr (KL). By late May, a number of waterfowl species were tardy, vagrant, or had begun breeding.

Important and outstanding high counts included 73,000 Northern Pintail 17 Mar (JGJ) and 1,514 Canvasback 24 Mar in the e. Rainwater Basin (JGJ), with an incredible 40,500 Redhead there 31 Mar (JGJ). The 43 Greater Scaup at L. Ogallala 17 Mar (SJD) and 39 at Sooner L. 29 Mar (JWA) were at the peak of migration time for this species. An exceptional surprise was a subad. male **Harlequin Duck** in *Wyandotte*, KS 7–10 Mar (DH, RMc, m. ob.), a first for the Region if accepted. A White-winged Scoter, only casual in spring, was in *Chase*, KS 4 Mar (GF), with another in *Lancaster*, NE 27–31 Mar (LE, BP, LP). Long-tailed Ducks included singles in *Scotts Bluff*, NE 12 Mar (KL), *Douglas*, KS 17 Mar (RA), and *Cheyenne Bottoms* 1 Apr (PM, ME, m. ob.). More exceptional was an orange-billed female Barrow's Goldeneye at L. Ogallala 4 Mar (SJD, JF), with males in *Johnson*, KS 7-9 Mar (ML, m. ob.), and *Sedgwick*, KS 16 Mar (PJ), and a female in *Saline*, NE 1 Apr (MOR).

## HAWKS THROUGH GULLS

Current signs of a better time for Bald Eagles were the 185 in *Keith*, NE 9 Mar and 111 in *Lincoln*, NE 4 Mar (SJD). Nesting now occurs at more locations in the Region than can be reported individually. Of very few reports from w. Kansas were 3 Broad-winged Hawks in *Scott* 12 May (TS, SSh, M&MR). Peregrine Falcons now include a growing number of birds that probably winter, including 3 seen in *Kearney*, NE 9–16 Mar (RG). Migrants may be broadening their migration windows, with a possible early arrival in *Knox*, NE 29 Mar (SVS). In addition, breeding Peregrines occur in Omaha, with 3 chicks present at the end of May (*vide* WRS).

Black Rails were found at Quivira by 5 May (GP, DS, MS). Only a few King Rails were reported, those from Hackberry 22 Apr (KM, LT) and 24 May (JAG), *Douglas*, KS 5 May (PW, RW), and Red Slough 1 May (DA, SW). Seven Virginia Rails in *Keith/Garden*, NE 9 Mar (SJD) apparently wintered. Among the Region's splendors were the 350,000 Sandhill Cranes in *Hall* and *Buffalo*, NE 22 Mar (LE, CF).

High counts of Black-bellied Plovers for the Region included 98 in the e. Rainwater Basin 19 May (JGJ). A Snowy Plover was noted as far n. as *Hitchcock*, NE 29 Apr (SJD). A pure surprise was a **Wilson's Plover** located at Sooner L. 3–5 May (JWA, JC, KK, m. ob.), only the Region's 2nd. A few Piping Plovers moved

through Oklahoma and Kansas 17 Apr–12 May.

Certainly on the rise in recent years are reports of Whimbrel. Surprisingly early were one at Quivira 14 Apr (SS, DB) and 2 on 21–22 Apr at Hackberry (LT, MT). High counts included 44 at Hackberry 6 May (LT, MT) and 35 at Sooner L. 23 May (JWA, JS). Several excellent counts for Hudsonian Godwits included 150 at *Cheyenne Bottoms* 14 Apr (SS, DB) and about 420 at Hackberry 28 Apr (JAG). Rather early for Nebraska were 2 Marbled Godwits in the e. Rainwater Basin 7 Apr (JGJ), with one rather late in *Lancaster*, NE 26 May (LE). Ruddy Turnstones were more widely reported this season, with 2 early arrivals 2 May in *Oklahoma* (JAG), and a record 51 at Sooner L. 23 May (JWA). Almost unheard of in spring, Red Knots were present in unprecedented numbers: singles were observed at Quivira 12 (SS, MR) & 20 May (W.A.S.), with 2 at Hackberry 22 (LT, MT) & 24 May (JAG, VF), and 26 in *Russell*, KS 23 May (PJ).

The status of Dunlin in Mar and early Apr, before their normal migration period, is difficult to assess. This season, 5 were noted as early as 14 Mar at Hackberry (JAG), with one in *Thurston*, NE 7 Apr (BFH). The 4,500 Semipalmated Sandpipers at Hackberry 28 Apr (JAG) was an astounding number in our experience. Short-billed Dowitchers migrate through the Region in a narrow window, and largely in the eastern parts of the Region, but difficulty in identification still clouds the record. This season, reliable reports of 2 birds came from Sooner L. 23 May (JWA) and Hackberry 24 May (JAG), with 6 birds in *Sarpy*, NE 25 May (CNK). Red-necked Phalaropes graced Nebraska and Kansas in a very narrow window 23–28 May, with up to 8 individuals reported in both *Cherry*, NE 23 May (CGr) and *Washington*, KS 25 May (DT). Only 2 were seen in Oklahoma, those in *Alfalfa* 22 May (JM et al.). Much rarer and almost unheard of in spring were Red Phalaropes, with singles in *Fillmore*, NE 28 Apr (JGJ), and Quivira 30 Apr (MI, JF) & 6 May (DS, GP, MS).

As observers keep checking the increasing numbers of gulls, the rarer ones are seen in higher frequencies. This season, L. McConaughy hosted one to 2 ad. Mew Gulls 9–25 Mar (SJD, WRS). A record 30,000 Ring-billed Gulls was estimated in *Harlan*, NE 15 Mar (PL), with 11,000 in *Lancaster*, NE 25 Mar (WRS). Among about 1300 Herring Gulls at L. McConaughy 9 Mar were 13 Thayer's Gulls (SJD); the last was noted 15 Apr (SJD). Kansas posted at least 12 Thayer's, the last noted 3 Apr at *Cheyenne Bottoms* (MR). Surprising was a carefully studied first-winter Iceland Gull at L.

McConaughy 24 Mar (WRS, JSu).

Lesser Black-backed Gulls included 2 at L. McConaughy—an adult present 4–25 Mar (SJD, JF, WRS) and a second-winter bird 17 Mar (SJD). A first-winter **Glaucous-winged Gull** was identified in *Lincoln*, NE 3 Mar (AB), the 3rd for Nebraska if accepted by that state's Records Committee. An amazing 15 Glaucous Gulls were still at L. McConaughy 9 Mar (SJD), with 9 others from the rest of the Region, all noted in Mar. Among the better gull finds was a Great Black-backed Gull in *Coffey*, KS 10 Mar (ML).

## DOVES THROUGH WAXWINGS

Eurasian Collared-Doves have become more commonplace, with breeding birds established in many towns across the Region. Also expanding and establishing local breeding groups are White-winged Doves. Nesting was noted in *Atchison*, KS 16 May (TA, NBo, m. ob.) A small group could be located in Lawton, OK (KM), with singles noted at eight other locations in the Region. With them are Inca Doves, up to 15 counted in *Meade*, KS (TF), with singles in *Crawford*, KS (MPr), *Comanche*, OK (KM, SM), and *Oklahoma* (SSt)

One species observed less frequently is Black-billed Cuckoo, with only 6 reported from Nebraska (*fide* WRS), none elsewhere. A total surprise for a non-invasion year was an imm Snowy Owl on the ice in *Lancaster*, NE 25 Mar (WRS, JSu). Also a real "zootie" was a **White-throated Swift** trapped in a granary in *Ford*, KS 23 Apr (K&MS, SB). Not a normal spring occurrence, a male Broad-tailed Hummingbird visited a yard in *Finney*, KS 12 May (M&PR, TS, SSh), while a female Rufous Hummingbird visited another yard there (TS, SSh)

A Dusky Flycatcher in *Kimball*, NE 9 May (SJD, JF) will provide the first spring record for Nebraska, pending acceptance by that state's committee. A genuine ornithological event was the incursion of Vermilion Flycatchers into new areas of the Region. In Kansas, the first was photographed in *Barton*, KS 15 Mar. (Mrs. B), with others in *Morton* 5 Apr (DV, FV, L&RS) to 6 May (SS, MR), *Meade*, KS 15–16 Apr (GSc), and *Leavenworth*, KS 19 May (D&AR). In Oklahoma, a pair was located in *Cimarron* 7 Apr (EE) through at least 20 Apr (JWA), with singles in *Comanche* during mid-Apr and *Tillman*, OK 14 Apr (LT, MT, KM).

Among e. vireos wandering onto the Plains were a White-eyed 22 Apr in *Finney*, KS (MO), and a Yellow-throated in *Dodge*, NE 20 May (LR, RH). A Western Scrub-Jay wandered e. to *Grant*, KS 7 Mar (JT), while a peculiarly sta-

tionary Pinyon Jay was in *Gray*, KS until at least 27 Apr (MCu). White-breasted Nuthatches wintering in w. portions of the Region are likely the *cookei* race: one so noted was in *Kimball*, NE 22 Mar (SJD), with another in *Sioux*, NE as late as 9 May (SJD). This was probably not a good year for Carolina Wrens, populations from Nebraska to Oklahoma having taken serious hits from this winter's ice storms.

Among the species with both e. and w. subspecies traversing the Region is the Hermit Thrush. Fewer data exist for w. forms in the Region. Individuals of the Rocky Mountain subspecies of the Hermit Thrush were noted in *Sioux*, NE 2 May (SJD). No small surprise was a Varied Thrush in *Box Butte*, NE 9 May (LW). A nest box program in the mesa country of nw. *Cimarron*, OK netted a nesting pair of Mountain Bluebirds observed 15–17 May (B&DG). A Townsend's Solitaire wandering e. to *Sedgwick*, KS was observed 1 Mar (CG), and a Curve-billed Thrasher was seen w. in *Grant*, KS 4 Mar (JT). The only Bohemian Waxwings reported were 2 at L. Ogallala 9 Mar (SJD).

## WARBLERS THROUGH FINCHES

As the years progress, warblers on migration seem to be increasingly scarce. However, picking up in recent years, 9 Golden-winged Warblers were reported from Nebraska in the period 5–12 May (*fide* WRS), with 5 from Kansas (*fide* LM). Westerly were a Blue-winged Warbler in *Finney*, KS 23–25 Apr (MO), a male Chestnut-sided Warbler in *Garden*, NE 19 May (KMD), a Pine Warbler in *Sedgwick*, KS 22 Apr (LH), and a Cerulean Warbler 7 May in *Sedgwick*, KS (DV, KK, MLe). Worm-eating Warblers showed up 17 (DF) & 21 Apr (TS) in *Finney*, KS and 27 Apr at Cheyenne Bottoms (RK). Also westerly were single Hooded Warblers in *Finney*, KS 2–15 May (MO) and *Dakota*, NE 5 May (*fide* BFH). Among the rarest warblers in the Region is Cape May. Singles were in *Washington*, NE 7 May (JGJ), and *Riley*, KS 15 May (LJ). Another hoped-for species for many in the Region, a Connecticut Warbler was found 12 May at *Sarpy*, NE (BPa *fide* BP, LP). A Palm Warbler at L. Ogallala 28 Apr was of the subspecies *palmarum* (SJD). Only 4 Bay-breasted Warblers were reported for the entire Region, including singles in *Wayne*, NE 7 May (MB), *Sarpy*, NE 8 & 19 May (*fide* WRS), and *Linn*, KS 12 May (MC).

A small up-note were the 24 Scarlet Tanagers counted in *Tulsa* 5 May (JL, PS). Others were noted w. in *Scott*, KS (MRy), *Quivira* (SS, MR), *Sedgwick*, KS (PJ), and *Cowley*, KS (JN), all coincidentally 12

May—the Spring Migration Day Count Certainly a tough bird to see, even when present, was a Green-tailed Towhee 6 May in *Finney*, KS (MO, LRI, TS, SSh). Always surprising are migrant Baird's Sparrows. This season, one was observed in *Gosper*, NE 1–2 May (GW, EB). And always interesting, 1075 McCown's Longspurs were present during mid-Apr in *Kimball*, NE, with 730 eastward in *Cheyenne*, NE 14 Apr (SJD). Very early arrivals were an Indigo Bunting in *Otoe*, NE 13 Apr (LF, CF), and Orchard Orioles: one also in *Otoe*, NE 11 Apr (LF, CF) and another in *McCurtain*, OK 6–12 Apr (BH).

After the winter's rosy-finch excitement, the last Gray-crowns sighted were 20 at *Sioux*, NE feeders 9 Mar; at least one Hepburn's-race Gray-crowned Rosy-Finch and one **Black Rosy-Finch** were with them (HKH). Surprising was a small array of Red Crossbills in Kansas, including a "flock" in *Sedgwick* 17–23 Mar (MTh), 2 in *Riley* 5 Apr (DBu), 2 in *Pottawatomie* 5 Apr (DG, LEd), and 4–10 in *Finney* 21 Apr–6 Jun (MLk, TS). A Lesser Goldfinch in *Oklahoma* 31 Mar (BHo) was outside normal limits for the species. An Evening Grosbeak noted 8 & 29 Mar in *Finney*, KS (TS, SSh) was the sole representative of this increasingly rare species.

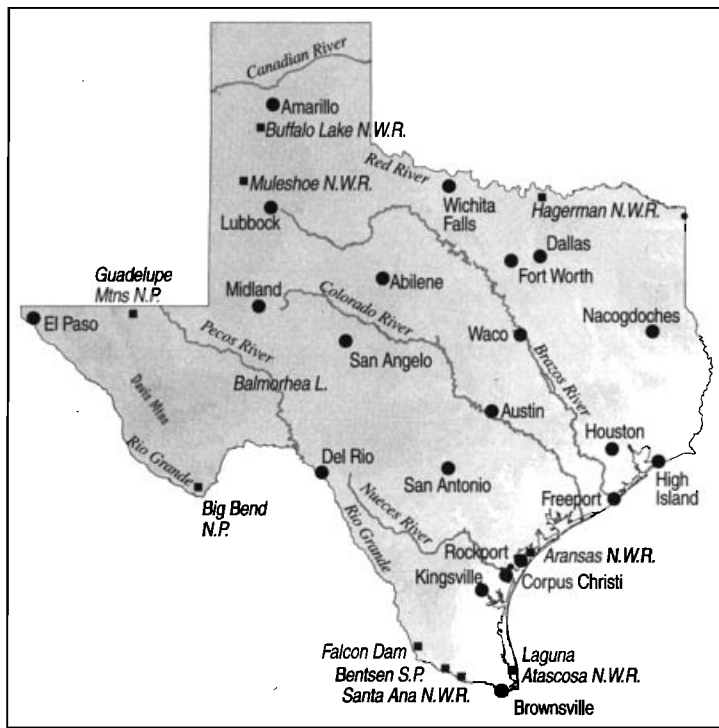
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# Texas



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**S**ome stark contrasts of climate played out across Texas this season. While Tropical Storm *Allison* deluged the southeast corner, Big Bend National Park was going through its second driest summer in the past 25 years. The northern Panhandle was quite green and moist into June, but almost all parts of central Texas from Abilene south to the Lower Rio Grande Valley were very dry. Many areas from Austin up to Amarillo suffered through July with excessive heat, setting records for the number of days over 100 degrees Fahrenheit by late summer. The breeding season was understandably beneficial for waterbirds and for most passerines in the wetter areas. With the exceptions of the drought-plagued Rio Grande corridor, earlier rains still allowed for a reasonable nesting effort for most birds.

Tropical Storm *Allison* developed quickly in the northern Gulf of Mexico in early June. After making landfall near Galveston on 5

June, rather than dissipating, it proceeded to wander back and forth over the Houston area for the next five days, dumping as much as 20–35 inches of rain and paralyzing Texas's largest city. Probably due to the storm's nearby point of origin and short offshore life span, a single Band-rumped Storm-Petrel found in Seabrook, Harris County on 6 June seems to have been the only overt storm-blown stray. The storm's legacy was expressed subsequently in an excellent breeding season for freshwater species such as Pied-billed Grebe, Least Bittern, Fulvous Whistling-Duck, King Rail, Purple Gallinule, and Common Moorhen...along with a bumper crop of mosquitoes.

**Abbreviations:** L.R.G.V. (Lower Rio Grande Valley); S.W.T.P. (Southside Water Treatment Plant, *Dallas*); T.B.R.C. (Texas Bird Records Committee); U.T.C. (Upper Texas Coast). The following are shortened names for the respective local, county, state, or national parks and wildlife refuges, etc.: Alazan Bayou, Anahuac, Aransas, Balmorhea, Big Bend, Big Bend Ranch, Brazoria, Buffalo Lake, Dolan Falls, Laguna Atascosa, Muleshoe, Palo Duro