

Violet-green Swallow was unusually far e. in *Tripp*, SD 6 May (REP). A Brown Creeper gathering nest material at Sully's Hill N.G.P. 25 May provided the first evidence of nesting for that species in North Dakota (JPL, CDE). Blue-gray Gnatcatcher sightings continued to increase in the Dakotas with three reports nw. of normal migration areas. Out west, a single noted in *Custer*, SD 26 May was in an area where individuals have been seen in recent years (CN, p. a.).

WARBLERS

A massive fallout of Tennessee Warblers in North Dakota and e. Montana began 22 May, with birds remaining to the 25th in some areas. A few examples were the hundreds noted n. of Glasgow, MT 22 May (JC) and 200 estimated at Ft Benton, MT 23 May (JS). A peak of >650 was tallied at Fargo, ND 25 May, with most feeding on the streets (REM, KRC). Hundreds of Yellow Warblers were feeding on the ground in McElroy Park in Jamestown, ND 15 May (LDI). A good peak of 25 Magnolia Warblers was tallied in Lisbon, ND 21 May (BS), and at least four sightings were reported from e. Montana 22-23 May. Well to the w. for South Dakota, a single Magnolia was in *Pennington* 21 May (TJ).

Casual in Montana, Cape May Warblers were noted in *Phillips* 22 May (SD, p. a.), at Ft. Benton 23 May (JS, p. a.), and at Bowdon N.W.R. 23 May (SD, p. a.). Unusually far w. in South Dakota was a single Cape May in *Harding* 27 May (KM, CEM). Three Black-throated Blue Warbler reports in North Dakota were above average, with 2 out west at *Hettinger* 19-20 May (DAG, CG). Four Audubon's Warbler reports from North Dakota were well above average. A Townsend's Warbler documented at *McCluskey*, ND 20 May furnished the 7th report for the state (GRO, p. a.). A possible Townsend's x Hermit Warbler hybrid was documented in *Grand Forks* 15 May (EEF, p. a.). Another westward wandering warbler was a Blackburnian in *Meade*, SD 29 May (REP). Casual in Montana, Black-throated Green Warblers were seen n. of Glasgow (JC, p. a.) and in *Phillips* (SD, p. a.) 22 May, and a single was at *Loma* 23 May (JC, p. a.).

Providing the 3rd record for North Dakota, a **Yellow-throated Warbler** was photographed in *Fargo* 28 Apr—5 May (KRC, m. ob., p. a.). Four Bay-breasted Warblers were seen w. of the Missouri R. in North Dakota. In Montana, this casual species was noted at Ft. Peck 18 May (CC, JC, PH, p. a.), and 2 were seen at Ft. Benton 23 May (JS, p. a.). The 15th report for North Dakota, a Cerulean Warbler was singing at J. Clark Salyer N.W.R. 31 May (JR, AH, p. a.). Providing the 10th report for the state, a Worm-eating Warbler was identified in *Richland*, ND 23 May (DNS, BS, p. a.). Casual in South Dakota,

Prothonotary Warblers were reported 12 May in *Union* (JC, p. a.), and 19 May in *Lincoln* (KM, RDO, p. a.). Also casual in South Dakota, 2 Kentucky Warblers were in *Union* 31 May (JC, DS, p. a.). A Connecticut Warbler in *Great Falls*, MT provided the 7th report for the state (GS, p. a.). Above average were three Mourning Warbler reports from e. Montana and 4 MacGillivray's Warblers e. of normal areas in the Dakotas. A Wilson's Warbler in *Hughes*, SD 18 Apr tied the previous early date for the state (RDO).

TANAGERS THROUGH CROSSBILLS

Casual in South Dakota, Summer Tanagers were reported 9 May in *Union* (DS, p. a.) and 14 May in *Stanley* (RDO, p. a.). Casual in North Dakota, a Western Tanager was documented in *Dickinson* 13 May (JPL, p. a.). A Scarlet Tanager n. of Glasgow 22 May would provide the 12th record for Montana if accepted (JC, p. a.).

A **Black-throated Sparrow** photographed near *Chester*, MT 23 May will likely provide the 6th record for the state (HM, p. a.). Sparrow peaks included 520 White-throated Sparrows in *Grand Forks* 6 May (EEF) and 400 Harris's Sparrows at *Fargo* 11 May (REM). The 5th and 6th reports for North Dakota, Gray-headed Juncos were studied 19-20 Apr in *Bismarck* (DNS, p. a.) and 27 May in *Fargo* (DPW, DW, p. a.).

Well nw. of their now established range in se. South Dakota, a Great-tailed Grackle was in

Butte 19 Apr (REP). A peak of 60 Orchard Orioles was tallied in *Fargo* 25 May (KRC) during the grounding of migrants there. A pair of Red Crossbills was nesting at the Minot Country Club, ND 28 Apr (REM), and three pairs of White-winged Crossbills nested in *Hettinger*, ND, with young fledged at the end of May (DAG, CG).

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Southern Great Plains



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In a Region where the abnormal too often seems the norm, it is difficult to assess a season in which most things seemed normal. Adjacent states' trends this season seemed out of

synch. For example, almost all unusual loon reports came from Oklahoma, Buff-breasted Sandpipers from Nebraska and Oklahoma, and crossbills from Nebraska. There was a shortage of water, low levels in some areas—not quite a drought, but enough to reduce some counts of waterfowl and shorebirds. Some species such as Western Grebes and California Gulls have certainly fared better in wetter years.

Abbreviations: Cheyenne Bottoms (Cheyenne Bottoms W.M.A., *Barton*, KS); Hackberry (Hackberry Flats W.M.A., *Tillman*, OK); Hefner (L. Hefner, *Oklahoma*, OK); McConaughy (L. McConaughy, *Keith*, NE); Quivira (Quivira N.W.R. *Stafford*, KS); Rainwater Basin (mostly *Filmore* and *Clay*, NE); Red Slough (Red Slough W.M.A., *McCurtain*, OK).

LOONS THROUGH DUCKS

The numbers of loons being observed in the Region have increased in recent years, but L. Tenkiller, *Sequoyah/Cherokee*, OK is a clear hotspot. On 4 Apr, four species of loons were observed there, including several hundred Commons, a Red-throated, 3 Pacific, and a **Yellow-billed Loon** (JWA). Three Red-throated Loons were there 16 Mar, when 500 Horned Grebes were counted among 302 Common Loons (JWA). A Red-throated Loon was also documented at Hefner 27 Mar (JWA). The typical scattering of Western Grebes occurred in the Region, but with only 800 building nests at McConaughy (SJD; below previous seasons) and 20+ at Cheyenne Bottoms (SS) by late Apr. A Clark's Grebe was performing a mating dance with a Western at Cheyenne Bottoms 20 Apr (SS). The numbers of Clark's are still relatively meager, with 3 noted at Cheyenne Bottoms 28 Apr (H&SG), and 2 at McConaughy 14-15 May (SJD, JF); single birds were in *Kimball*, NE 13 (PSw) & 17 May (JF, SJD) and in *Kearney*, KS 6 May (CW).



Part of the recent influx was this adult Glossy Ibis (an apparently pure individual), one of two present at Hackberry Flats, Tillman County, Oklahoma 12 May 2002. Photograph by Kurt Meisenzaht.

Becoming almost annual are Brown Pelicans. This season, singles were documented in *Murray*, OK 11 Mar—9 Apr (JMe) and *Phillips*, KS 23 Apr (SR). Two Neotropical Cormorants were located in *Coffey*, KS 3 Mar (DG), with another at Cheyenne Bottoms 6 May (BPe, CW), the only ones observed outside Red Slough, where they have become regular (DA, BH). Perhaps the most unusual heron in the Region is the Tricolored Heron, now appearing regularly at Red Slough, with 2 there 22 May (BH); one was at Cheyenne Bottoms 6 May (BPe, CW) and several breeders in *Alfalfa*, OK (*vide AW*). This season saw a surge of Glossy Ibis, unusual in numbers and in season, as most previous records appear to refer to post-breeding wanderers. This season, 2 were in *Alfalfa*, OK 24 Apr (EW, JL), 2 at Hackberry 26 Apr (JAG, DB) to 15 May (KM, BH, LT), and 2 on 30 Apr in *McCurtain*, OK (DA), with singles at Cheyenne Bottoms 7 May (BPe, CW) and Quivira 17 May (EW et al.). Hybrids between White-faced and Glossy Ibises were discovered in *Alfalfa*, OK at the end of the period (JWA; see summer report), which poses a genuine challenge for those evaluating extralimital *Plegadis*. The odd White Ibis put in appearances at Red Slough 20 Mar (DA), with another one w. to Hackberry 28 Apr (LT, MT) to 10 May (JAG, VF). A Black Vulture wandered w. to *Grady*, OK 21 May (JAG), for a first county record.

Black-bellied Whistling-Ducks continue to appear in Oklahoma, with 4 in *Canadian* 24 Apr (MF), up to 2 at Red Slough 14 Apr+, and 2 in *Alfalfa* 24 (EW, JLe) to 30 May (JWA). Impressive counts of Snow Goose included 250,000 in *Geary*, KS 3 Mar (C&JO), 470,000 from the e. Rainwater Basin 10 Mar (LR, RH), and “perhaps a million” in *Knox*, NE 23 Mar (BD, RD). The best count of Ross's Goose was only 21 in the e. Rainwater Basin 14 Mar (JGJ). Two Ross's lingered in *Barton*, KS to 7 May (MRo, DK), with 5 at McConaughy 15 May (SJD, JF). Swans stayed north. A record count of Tundra Swans for the Region was the 17 in *Douglas*, NE 17 Mar (JGJ). Elsewhere, 3 were in *Knox*, NE 3-16 Mar (MB), with an ad. in *Dakota*, NE 22 Mar (BFH).

Although the Region hosts major movements of waterfowl, unusual high counts or extralimitals were not as prevalent this season. Two American Black Ducks were in *Osage*, KS 5 Mar (DG). A Mottled Duck was identified in *McCurtain*, OK 20 Mar (DA). A bird reported as a Eurasian Wigeon 7 Mar in *Cimarron*, OK (JM, BH et al.), appeared to have some characters indicative of hybrid origin, probably with American Wigeon. A good count of 282 Canvasback was made in *Knox*, NE 17 Mar (MB). Among the more exceptional lingering

birds were a Ring-necked Duck at *Scotts Bluff*, NE 27 May (KL) and a Greater Scaup there 24 May (JWA), plus a Common Goldeneye 4 May in *Noble*, OK (OBS?). Long-tailed Ducks were noted to 6 Apr in *Washington*, OK (RP) and 12 Apr in *Sedgwick*, KS (PJ, m. ob.).

HAWKS THROUGH TERNS

Broad-winged Hawk movements through the Region are difficult to quantify, as the birds have already dispersed from the large flocks seen in Texas. A juv. managed to wander w. to *Kimball*, NE 16 May (SJD, JF). Rather far e. were Golden Eagles in *Lancaster*, NE 3 Mar (LE), *Osborne*, KS 31 Mar (CA), and *Keya Paha*, NE 7 Apr (DS). Merlins of both *richardsoni* and *columbarus* subspecies were noted in all states. Rather late were Merlins in *Pierce*, NE 19 May (MB) and *Antelope*, NE 25 May (MB, DHe). Also adding some spectacular flavor to Plains birding are foraging Peregrines Falcons at various waterfowl and shorebird staging areas from late Apr to mid-May. Both *anatatum* and *tundrius* subspecies occur and were noted this season.

Gray Partridges still persist in the Region, with reports of 2 birds each from *Holt* and *Boyd*, NE 29 May (MB). Four Black Rails were found in *Comanche*, KS 19 Apr (m. ob.) for the only report. A **Yellow Rail** found at a private residence in *Tulsa* 27 Apr was a piece of luck (JTe et al.) The very sparse sprinkling of King Rails in the Region included one in *Linn*, KS 13 Apr, with family groups at Red Slough during May (DA, BH, m. ob.). Purple Gallinules again graced Red Slough, the only breeding location in the Region, beginning 14 May (DA). Sandhill Cranes staging in cen. Nebraska reached estimated highs of 250,000 and 278,500 on 20 (PT) & 23 Mar (*vide DM*), representing what is believed to be 75% of the total crane population (*vide WRS*).

The Region forms the guts of major inland shorebird movements, hosting a diversity rivaling or exceeding that in most coastal areas and comprising primary corridors for some regional specialties; nevertheless, high counts this season were somewhat modest. Good for the Region were the 75+ Black-bellied Plovers observed at Cheyenne Bottoms 5 May (MR) and 84 Marbled Godwits in *Phelps*, NE 21 Apr (WRS). And 1500 Stilt Sandpipers 6 May at Hackberry were a sight to behold (JAG, VF, MGe). A Snowy Plover reached *Phelps*, NE 2-5 May (MU). Among the persisting numbers of Piping Plovers in the Region were a small scattering of reports for up to 4 birds beginning 20 Apr; a high count of 13 was made at *Reno*, KS 28 Apr (PJ, LEd). Black-necked Stilts, once quite a find except in cen. Kansas, are now found more broadly n. and w. to *Scotts Bluff*, NE (KL), and n. and e. to *Omaha* 26 May (JSt, 3 birds). Double-digit stilt counts

are routine at Hackberry (LT, MT). Small numbers of the formerly exceptional Whimbrel were also located this season beginning 28 Apr, with high counts of 21 in *Noble*, OK 17 May, and 51 in *Wagoner*, OK 25 May (JWA).

Ruddy Turnstones appeared mostly in Nebraska 14-27 May with 12 in *Knox*, NE 18 May (BP, LP). The only other reports were of a single bird in *Linn*, KS on the early date of 28 Apr. (MC) and 2 in *Tulsa* 25 May (BC). Exceptional in spring are Red Knots: singles in *Kimball*, NE (SJD, JF) and *Noble*, OK (JWA, SM) were both seen 17 May. Buff-breasted Sandpipers reports were erratic in distribution as usual, the high count of 115 birds coming from the e. Rainwater Basin 18 May (JGJ).

On most birder's "keep-looking" list, a Ruff, Nebraska's 6th record and a female, was in *Lancaster* 4 May (CB). Short-billed Dowitchers were noted in e. Nebraska 2-17 May with 31 in *Burt*, NE 17 May (JGJ); 11 were found in *Tulsa* also on 17 May (JWA). Very early were 3 Wilson's Phalarope observed in *Phelps*, NE 18 Mar (PL, MJI, KE). Red-necked Phalaropes were unusually abundant in the Nebraska Panhandle this spring, with a record count of 557 in *Scotts Bluff* 17 May (SJD, JF). Only casual elsewhere in the Region, singles were at *Quivira* 3-4 May (DG et al.), *Cheyenne Bottoms* 6 May (MRo, DK), *Burt*, NE 6 & 24 May (JGJ), and *Morton*, KS 9 May (BPe, CW).

Very early was a Franklin's Gull in *Douglas*, NE 2 Mar (DS). Rather late were the 29 Bonaparte's Gulls in *Kimball*, NE and 24 at *Scottsbluff* 28 May (JF, JB). Surprisingly low, only 5 California Gulls were noted at *McConaughy*, those on 20 Apr (WRS), with singles in *LeFlore*, OK 4 Apr (JWA, JS), *Cheyenne Bottoms* 6 May (BPe, CW), and *Scotts Bluff*, NE 11 May (KL), and "several" in *Scotts Bluff*, NE 23 May (JG). Lesser Black-backed Gulls included a first-winter bird 9 (JAG) & 27 Mar (JWA) at *Hefner*, one 17 Mar in *Lancaster*, NE (PL), and one 5 May at *Cheyenne Bottoms* (MR). The only Glaucous Gull noted was on 10 Mar in *Douglas*, KS (AP).

DOVES THROUGH FINCHES

Among the more newsworthy doves was a White-winged in *Kearney*, NE 6 May (*vide* LR, RH). Farther s., 5 were reported from *Kansas*, with repeat observations coming from *Wichita* and up to 5 at a time from *Oklahoma City* (PV) and *Lawton* (JAG). Inca Doves also appear to be establishing themselves in several towns in the Region, particularly in s. *Oklahoma*. The odd Inca was noted n. to *Meade*, KS (TF) and *Johnson*, KS (MC). The Common Ground-Dove reported last season stayed until 2 Mar in *Johnson*, KS (MC).

Black-billed Cuckoos can be difficult to find in the Region, particularly w., where one in *Morrill*, NE was located 30 May (HW, SW). Quite a surprise during spring was a male Broad-tailed Hummingbird in *Finney*, KS 27 May (TS, SSh). A Snowy Owl was found dead in *Ellsworth*, KS 3 Mar (LH), the latest documented for the recent invasion. A road-killed juv. Northern Saw-whet Owl found in *Antelope*, NE 25 May (MB, DHe), which suggested local breeding. A Whip-poor-will pushing the w. limits was in *Keya Paha*, NE 7 May (NRe *vide* CH). Sapsuckers' distributions in the Region form a mosaic: 3 Yellow-bellied were in *Cimarron*, OK 9 Mar (BH, JM et al.) and one Red-naped in *Scott*, KS 17 Mar (TS, SSh). Wandering far afield was a Lewis's Woodpecker in *Finney*, KS 26 May (CS).

A Yellow-bellied Flycatcher in *Omaha* 15 May (CHy) was the only one of this possibly under-reported species recorded this season. Details were provided for a Dusky Flycatcher in *Kimball*, NE 17 May (SJD, JF), only the 2nd spring report for Nebraska. A pair of Vermilion Flycatchers was found in *Cimarron*, OK 10 May+ (SM, m. ob.). Singles were noted in *Cowley*, KS 2 Apr (BL) and *Ellis*, KS 12 May (OK) as well. Unexpected so far w. was a Yellow-throated Vireo at *McConaughy* 5 May (AC). The 17 Philadelphia Vireos tallied in e. *Kansas* 3-27 May (*vide* LM) and 5 in *Tulsa* 2-4 May (*vide* JL) represented something of an invasion.

Among difficult to find mountain vagrants was a lone Clark's Nutcracker in *Sioux*, NE 6 Apr (WM). Adding a detail to the distributional patterns of White-breasted Nuthatch races in w. Nebraska was the observation of a bird determined to be *cookei*, the e. race, in *Scotts Bluff* 17 May (SJD, JF). A Rock Wren wandered out to *Scott*, KS 31 Mar (TS, SSh). A House Wren in *Lincoln*, NE 7 Apr (JK *vide* LRB) was rather early. Details for a report of 2 Western Bluebirds in *Scottsbluff*, NE 9 May (PD, DD) may support the first documented record of this species for Nebraska. Real surprises were the 6 Veeries 16-17 May (SJD, JF) and 5 Gray-cheeked Thrushes 15-24 May located in the Nebraska Panhandle (*vide* WRS). Quite exceptional was the count of 50+ Sage Thrashers in *Cimarron*, OK 8 Mar (JM, BH et al.).

What would spring be without warblers? Reports of migrant Blue-winged Warblers were limited to singles in *Comanche*, OK 30 Apr (KM), *Douglas*, KS 7 (BA) & 11 May (PW), *Lincoln*, NE 11 May (LE, MUs), and *Johnson*, KS 12 May (MG). Two Blue-wingeds were noted at a breeding location in *Cherokee*, OK 25 Apr (JWA). Golden-winged Warbler seemed to be faring better. Seven were reported 5-17 May (m. ob.) in *Nebraska* (*vide* WRS), 10 in *Kansas* (*vide* LM), and 2 in *Oklahoma* (PS, BG). Rounding



This Vermilion Flycatcher was the male of a pair nesting at Black Mesa State Park, Cimarron County, Oklahoma during May 2002 (here 10 May); the species is quite rare here. Photograph by Steve Metz.

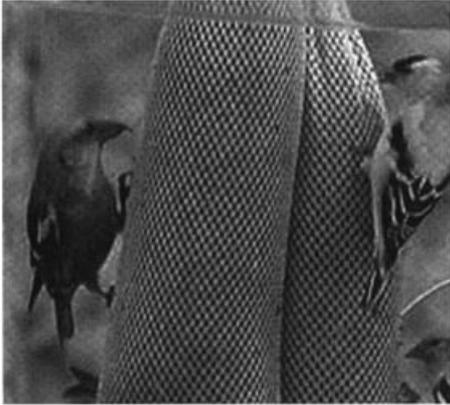
out the unusual *Vermivora* warblers for the Region were the Virginia's Warblers in *Morton*, KS 10 May (CW) and at two locations in *Cimarron*, OK 17 May (DW, JL, PS).

Eastern warblers farthest w. included Magnolias at two locations in *Morton*, KS 3 (CG, SPh) & 10 May (BPe, CW) and at two locations in *Garden*, NE 10 (HW, SW) & 15 May (SJD, JF), Chestnut-sided Warblers at two locations in *Cimarron*, OK 9 & 11 May (SM); a quite exceptional Prothonotary Warbler in *Scotts Bluff*, NE 16-17 May (SJD, JF); Worm-eating Warblers in *Scotts Bluff*, NE 6 (PD, DD) & 17 May (SJD, JF) and in *Morton*, KS 9 May (CW); a Kentucky Warbler 4 May in *Morton*, KS (CG, SPh); and Hooded Warblers in *Scotts Bluff*, NE 4 (*vide* AK, PD, DD) & 17 May (SJD, JF). The only western warbler e. was a quite unprecedented male Hermit Warbler photographed in *Knox*, NE 15 May (MB, BB).

"Zooties" anywhere in the Region are Cape May Warblers. This season, however, they were too numerous to list individually, with 10 reported from e. Nebraska 10-18 May (*vide* WRS) and 6 from *Kansas* 6-17 May (*vide* LM). One was exceptionally w. to *Pawnee*, KS 13 May (SS). The list for very rare Black-throated Blue



One of a vagabond group was this Red Crossbill noted in Choctaw, central Oklahoma 16 May 2002. Photograph by Bill Horn.



Part of a multi-regional influx was the White-winged Crossbill at Bartlesville, Washington County, Oklahoma 17 April 2002. Photograph by H. Gleaton.

Warbler is shorter, with singles in *Johnson*, KS 3 May, *Sedgwick*, KS 9 May, Omaha, NE 10 May (CHy), and far w. in *Cimarron*, OK 28 May (BH, JM, et al.). The very rare Connecticut Warbler was seen 16 May in *Cherokee*, KS (DH), the only record.

Among se. warblers edging into the Region was a Pine Warbler that visited a feeder in *Sarpy*, NE during cold spells 3, 14 & 25 Mar (BP, LP). A Cerulean Warbler passed through *Dixon*, NE 15 May (JI). A male Prothonotary Warbler in *Sarpy*, NE 17 Apr (BP, LP) was the next-earliest recorded for Nebraska. A Louisiana Waterthrush in *Knox*, NE 9 May (MB) provided a first county record (*vide* WRS). Records of Hooded Warblers extended w. in the Region to *Sedgwick*, KS 27 Apr (CG) & 20 May (JB) and Tulsa 20 Apr (JWA) to 11 May (GK, MK).

An Eastern Towhee in *Otoe*, NE 13 Mar (LE) may have wintered. A Black-throated Sparrow 8 Mar in *Cimarron*, OK (BH, JM, et al.) was either exceptionally early or also wintered. Henslow's Sparrows are reported in se. Nebraska each year; this spring, singles were in *Seward* 29 May (JG) and *Pawnee* 30 May (BP, LP). The only report for Nelson's Sharp-tailed Sparrow was of one found in *Stanton*, NE 18 May (LR, RH). In surveying *Comanche*, KS, 24 Rufous-crowned Sparrows were located 18-19 May, extending the presumed breeding range into Kansas (m. ob.). A Lincoln's Sparrow in Lincoln, NE 16 Mar (LE) probably beat the odds of not surviving a Nebraska winter.

Westerly were male Rose-breasted Grosbeaks in *Scotts Bluff*, NE 14 May (HW, SW) and *Cimarron*, OK 29 May (BH, JM et al.). Odd Lazuli Buntings reported from e. reaches of the Region in all three states have become part of a general annual pattern. Red Crossbill flocks were detected within their summer range in nw. Nebraska. Away from breeding areas were reports for Nebraska, and one for Oklahoma—up to 6 in Oklahoma City 11-31 May (BHo).

More newsworthy were White-winged Crossbills. Following a rough tally of 75 birds reported during the winter period in Nebraska, about 30 were noted for the spring season (*vide* WRS). The peak count was the 7 (one ad., one imm. male, 5 females) in Omaha 24 Mar (NR). Five were still present in Omaha 25 May (CH), with 3 in *Madison*, NE 26 May and 2 in *Otoe*, NE 1-12 May (LF, CF). Single White-wingeds were noted s. to *Finney*, KS 16 Apr (TS, SSH), *Washington*, OK 17 Apr (HG), and Lawton, OK in late May (*vide* DB). Among the wandering fringillids was a Lesser Goldfinch n. to *Finney*, KS 10 May (TS, SSH).

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