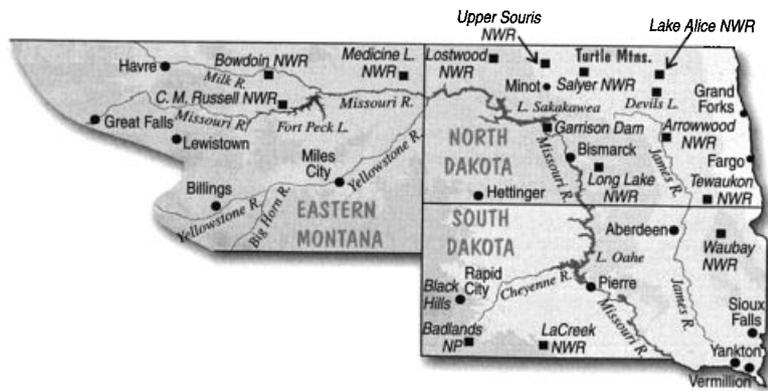


Northern Great Plains



Ron Martin

16900 125th Street SE

Sawyer, North Dakota 58781-9284

(jrmartin@ndak.net)

The first half of the season saw mild temperatures, but the period from mid-January through February was very cold. Snow amounts were below average across the Region. The early mild weather produced some late lingerers during the Christmas Bird Count period. Northern birds made an extremely poor showing. Several over-wintering firsts were recorded in North Dakota, and South Dakota had some notable January and February sightings.

LOONS THROUGH GULLS

A potential first for Montana, if accepted, a Yellow-billed Loon was photographed 19 Dec at Priest Butte L. in Teton (LB, MS, TB, CP, p. a.). For the 2nd consecutive year, a Western Grebe wintered at Nelson L., Oliver, ND (CDE). These represent the only wintering records for this species in the state. Providing the 2nd January record for North Dakota, an American White Pelican remained at Garrison Dam, Mercer through 5 Jan (REM, CDE).

Large numbers of Canada Geese remained to early Feb at the n. edge of the Region. Some 20,000 were below Garrison Dam, ND 1 Feb (REM), and tens of thousands were at Ft. Peck, MT well into Jan (CC). Casual in winter in South Dakota, an American Black Duck was in Stanley 10-22 Feb (KM). Furnishing the latest record for North Dakota, a Ring-necked Duck was seen at Garrison Dam, McLean 5 Jan (CDE). Casual away from Rapid City, a Barrow's Goldeneye was seen 24 Jan in Charles Mix, SD (RM, p. a.). In Montana, a single wintered at Ft. Peck (CC), and Casey reported that about one per cent of the hundreds of goldeneyes on the Missouri R. at

Great Falls were Barrow's (DC). A Red-shouldered Hawk wintered in Day, SD for the 4th consecutive year (DRS). Despite the moderate snow amounts, Rough-legged Hawk numbers were very low in North Dakota and extreme e. Montana. Gray Partridge numbers continue to recover, with 268 on 10 North Dakota C.B.C.s the highest in some years. The species was also more common than previous years in the Medicine L., MT area (EM). Sharp-tailed Grouse populations were noted to be good by many observers.

Casual along the Missouri R. in South Dakota in winter, Franklin's Gulls were in Charles Mix 5-11 Jan (SVS, RD) and in Hughes 6-18 Jan (RDO, KM). A second-winter Mew Gull at Garrison Dam, ND 1 Dec provided the 11th report for the state (CDE, JPL, p. a.). The 6th report for South Dakota was provided by a Lesser Black-backed Gull in Charles Mix 5 Jan (SVS, p. a.). An Iceland Gull documented at Garrison Dam 6-11 Dec furnished the 16th report for North Dakota (REM, DNS, JPL, p. a.). At Ft. Peck, MT, an individual thought to be an Iceland Gull was present and documented 28 Dec—9 Jan (CC, p. a.).

DOVES THROUGH SPARROWS

The saga of the Eurasian Collared-Dove continues: high counts for North Dakota were 7 at the beginning of the period in Grand Forks (DOL) and 15-20 in Mayville (RMK), while in South Dakota, 6 were noted in Belle Fouché 1 Feb (BAS), 14 were tallied on the Rapid City C.B.C. 28 Dec, and 33 were counted on the Pierre C.B.C. 23 Dec. First recorded in the winter season last year in South Dakota, Barn Owls were seen this year in Stanley 2 Jan (KM, p. a.) and in Tripp 27 Jan (RDO, p. a.). Snowy Owls were back to their usual low numbers after last year's massive invasion. A Barred Owl that wintered in Grand Forks, ND provided only the 3rd report there in 26 years (DOL).

The Carolina Wren first reported in the fall season at Bismarck, ND remained

through the period, providing the first wintering record for the state (DNS, p. a.). Casual in South Dakota, a Carolina Wren was in Clay through at least 15 Dec (RDO, KM, p. a.). Providing the first Jan report for the state, 10 Eastern Bluebirds were photographed near Bismarck, ND 30-31 Jan (fide Todd Hanson, p. a.). A Hermit Thrush 1 Feb in Minnehaha, SD furnished only the 3rd winter report for the state (JSP, RFS, p. a.). The first Feb report for South Dakota, a Gray Catbird was in Lincoln 8 Feb (RFS, p. a.). A Yellow-rumped Warbler spent the season in Mandan, Morton, ND. This represents the first overwintering for the species in the state (TH, p. a.). Three Yellow-rumped Warblers were noted in South Dakota. A Chipping Sparrow photographed 9 Feb in Mandan provided the first Feb report for North Dakota (TH, p. a.). A Clay-colored Sparrow found 1 Mar in Burleigh, ND was presumed to have wintered, a first for this species in the state (CDE, p. a.). Four Fox Sparrow reports for North Dakota was above average, including the first overwintering record for Grand Forks (fide DOL).

LONGSPURS THROUGH FINCHES

The first winter report for South Dakota and the Region, a Smith's Longspur was studied in Sully 20 Jan (DB, p. a.). A pair of Northern Cardinals through the season at Minot, ND furnished a first local wintering record (JM). Twelve Great-tailed Grackles in Charles Mix 6 Dec furnished the 3rd winter report for South Dakota (JC). Purple Finch numbers were low. House Finch numbers remained strong through the season in North Dakota, with a peak of 617 on the Bismarck-Mandan C.B.C. 21 Dec. There were a few scattered reports of Red Crossbills in North Dakota, but no White-winged Crossbills were noted for the Region. Redpoll numbers were extremely low, with only 25 reported on eight North Dakota C.B.C.s. There were only two South Dakota reports, and none were seen in the Medicine L., MT area this winter (EM). Meanwhile, American Goldfinches had a banner year in North Dakota, with 1454 on 19 C.B.C.s. As usual, few Evening Grosbeaks were noted.

Contributors (state editors in boldface): MONTANA: Tim Barksdale, Lou Bruno, Chuck Carlson, Dan Casey, Elizabeth Maden, Caleb Putnam, Mike Schwitters. NORTH DAKOTA: Corey D. Ellingson, Todd Hanson, Robert M. Krueger, David O. Lambeth, Jack P. Lefor, Ron E. Martin, Judy Mettler, Dan N. Svingen. SOUTH DAKOTA: Doug Backlund, Jay Carlisle, Rosemary Draeger, Ron Mabie, Kenny Miller, Ricky D. Olson, Jeffrey S. Palmer, Robb F. Schenck, Bud and Alice Shaykett, Dennis R. Skadsen, Steve Van Sickle. 🐦