

Spring 2003 was “cool,” “wet,” and “late.” Frequent showers from southern Iowa to central Missouri provided significant drought relief, filling many lakes and ponds, and associated birds showed good diversity but limited numbers. The rains did not arrive soon enough to hold migrant waterfowl, and most divers moved on early in the season. The winter of 2002–2003 held no Regional invasions, so it was unsurprising that spring reports of irruptive species were nearly nonexistent. Passerine migration was lackluster in Missouri, with many observers finding small numbers of expected species. In Iowa, stormy weather to the north grounded birds, hence the widespread impression of “good” warbling.

Several breeders were documented at new locations or expanded numbers from years past. A 120-km Missouri Current River survey conducted by Mark Robbins tallied some impressive counts over a 10-day period—29 Red-shouldered Hawks, 204 Acadian Flycatchers, 570 Northern Parulas, 304 (male) Cerulean Warblers, 721 American Redstarts, 29 Swainson’s Warblers, 347 Louisiana Waterthrushes, 3 Connecticut Warblers, and 17 Hooded Warblers among them.

LOONS THROUGH HERONS

A Pacific Loon at Saylorville, IA 6 Apr was a one-day wonder (RC). Three first-spring Common Loons were reported at Smithville L., MO 19 May (Kathy Lewis), a late date for multiple birds. An impressive 75 were found on L. Springfield, Dade 29 Mar (X. Nobies). Although unrecorded in Missouri, Iowa reported 7 Red-necked and 10 Western Grebes from various locations. RM lucked into an Anhinga 3 May while birding the Kansas side of the Missouri R. near Weston Bend, MO. Another was reported in a more likely spot, Ten Mile Pond, Mississippi, MO 19 Apr (LK). Also at Ten Mile Pond was a Tricolored Heron 29 Apr (Shawn Club). An imm. White Ibis was called into the hotline by Four Rivers refuge personnel, Vernon, MO 12 May. Scattered White-faced Ibis sightings were reported, with Missouri birders reporting 8 from three spots and Iowa birders 4.

WATERFOWL THROUGH RAPTORS

Two Black-bellied Whistling-Ducks delighted birders at Squaw Cr. 26 Apr (SD). The Region’s high count of Snow Geese came from Squaw Cr., with 200,000 tallied 15 Mar (TR). Ross’s Goose numbers continue to increase, with an amazing Missouri count of 77 birds at Squaw Cr. 12 Mar (TR). Iowa’s numbers were equally impressive, with 131 reported 23 Mar in Wayne (AB) and 86 birds at Jester Park, Polk 6 Apr (BE). Peak Iowa flights of 92 Tundra Swans 29 Mar at Little Wall L. (JD) and of 88 at Zirbel,

Iowa & Missouri



Cerro Gordo were in stark contrast to Missouri’s zero. Cinnamon Teal reports were up, with 3 Iowa birds and 4 in Missouri. Surf Scoters were the most common scoter, with five Regional reports. Two White-winged Scoters were at Riverlands 7 Mar (JU), and a female was noted at Saylorville Res., IA 29–30 Mar (AB, BE). The Region’s only Black Scoter was an imm. at Big L., Holt MO 11 Mar (TR). A pair of Long-tailed Ducks lingered at Riverlands over the winter, last reported 15 Mar, and a drake dazzled dozens of birders 6 Apr–23 May near Iowa City (JF). Becoming somewhat annual in both states, single male Barrow’s Goldeneyes were discovered at Riverlands 3 Mar (Ed McCullough) and 22 Mar at New L., Woodbury, IA (BH). Two late female Red-breasted Mergansers were reported by Jim Zellmer 31 May at Bean L., Platte, MO.

A new nesting site for Osprey was discovered at Runnells, Marion, IA (AB). West Des Moines’s Mississippi Kites were first reported 9 May (JK). A Regional high of 12 Swainson’s Hawks was reported near Horseshoe L., Buchanan, MO 10 May (MG). An imm. Golden Eagle was spied at Swan L., MO 7 Mar (SK). Declining significantly, Ruffed

Roger D. McNeill

2520 Red Bridge Terrace

Kansas City, Missouri 64131

(Roger.D.McNeill@mail.sprint.com)

Grouse are still reported in scattered Missouri locations. A pair on a Henning C.A. trail, Taney 28 May was a surprise (Fred Canton). Greater Prairie-Chickens were reported from booming grounds across the Region, with a significant drop in numbers at Prairie State Park. Nearby construction impacted the lek negatively, and a high of only 17 males was counted displaying from a flock thought to number 50. A high of 20 booming males was at Dunn Ranch 22 Mar (LL). Some 12 to 15 birds (including females) were observed near Lockwood Golden City 6 Apr (m. ob.), and 20 birds were at the Hi Lonesome lek 12 Apr (JU). Iowa’s flock at Kellerton, Ringgold peaked at 18 lekking birds (RC, CE).

The Region’s only Yellow Rail was seen at Bradford Farms, Boone MO 10 May (PMc). A

large number for Missouri was a flock of 60 Sandhill Cranes spotted flying over Mingo 4 Mar (Neal Young). Iowa and Missouri shared reports from another 14 locations. Four **Whooping Cranes** hatched in 2002 at Necedah N.W.R. in Wisconsin flew unseen over ne. Iowa on 22 May, exploring as far w. as Decorah, *Wineshiek* before turning around and heading back to Wisconsin.

SHOREBIRDS

American Golden Plovers moved through the Region on schedule, with a high of 150 birds 13 Apr at Prairie Slough, MO (Scott Schuette); Iowa's high of 73 came from Boone 5 May (AB). Two Snowy Plovers were discovered at Chillicothe Wetlands, Livingston, MO 8 May (SK), and each state had 2 reports of Piping Plover. Missouri's were all at Squaw Cr., 2 on 6 May (DE) and one 12 May (TR), while 4 Iowa birds were at MidAmerican Ponds 7 May (BP, LP) and 3 more on 17 May at Sweet Marsh (RC). Away from the Missouri Bootheel, Black-necked Stilts are notable. Two single Iowa birds were discovered, one 5 May at New L. (JD) and the other 16 May in Clay (LS). Twenty-eight American Avocets made a good spring count at Smithville L. 18 Apr (Chris Valentine). Nine other birds were reported from six additional locations.

Four unidentified yellowlegs were reported by Doris Fitchert at Pershing Park, Linn, MO 3 Mar, early for either species. Two Whimbrels at Riverlands 25 May were found by Dan Kassebaum, and JL reported 3 at Eagle Bluffs, Boone, MO 29 May. Iowa's only report was of a bird at Cardinal Marsh 27 May (DH). Good numbers of Hudsonian Godwits were reported from the w. fringe, with a high of 100 near MidAmerican Ponds 10 May (Janet Greer). Scattered Marbled Godwits were found at seven Iowa locations, and two Missouri reports were of singles at Riverlands.

Iowa's 2nd earliest Western Sandpiper report came from Hawkeye 13 Apr (James Huntington). Three Missouri singles were reported, all from the w. edge of the state. Singles were at Squaw Cr. 4 Apr (TR) and 6 May (DE); another was detected at Schell-Osage, MO 29 Apr (PM). Iowa reported an early White-rumped Sandpiper 26 Apr at Diehl (AB); 300 was a Regional high count at Squaw Cr. 8 May (TR). A single-day high of 120 Dunlin was counted upstream of the Riverlands dam 25 May (Mike Grant). Sev-

enty-two Wilson's Snipe at Squaw Cr. 2 Apr (TR, J. Greer) and at Amaná L., IA 12 Apr (CE) were the Region's best snipe hunts. A very early female Wilson's Phalarope was reported by Dave Silverman at Squaw Cr. 18 Mar. With the large number of Wilson's Phalaropes reported this season—1025 from Squaw Cr. 10 May (DE)—it is not surprising that a few Red-necked Phalaropes would be sorted out, some 6 in Iowa and 3 in Missouri.

Good gull diversity was reported, but mostly singles or small numbers. A Laughing Gull at Riverlands 18 May (DB) stayed a week. Rare in the e., Riverlands hosted 11 Franklin's Gulls 11 May (BR), mostly ads.

in pink alternate plumage. Iowa's two reports of Little Gull were a first-year bird 21–23 Apr at Coralville Res. (Mike Dooley) and an ad. 29 Apr at Spirit L. (ET); both are under committee review. An ad. Black-headed Gull was present again 10–12 Apr at Spirit L., IA (LS). Bonaparte's Gulls lingered longer than usual, with an alternate-plumaged bird at Bean L. 15 May (LL) and a bird still in winter dress at Riverlands 25 May (BR). Five "messy" first-summer Herring Gulls stayed until 25 May at Riverlands (BR). A first-year Thayer's Gull was Iowa's 3rd latest record at Red Rock 8 Apr (AB). An ad. Iceland Gull was reported 2 Mar from Riverlands (JM), and a first-year Glaucous Gull was recorded late at Red Rock, IA 8 Apr (AB). Up to 2 Lesser Black-backed Gulls were found at Riverlands 2 Mar (DB), and Iowa had its 2nd latest report of an ad. at Coralville Res. 10 Apr (JF). Riverlands held all of the Region's Great Black-backed Gulls, with birds reliably seen most of the late winter and early spring. A first-winter bird 1 Mar (JM) was later joined by another first-winter and a second-winter bird later the same weekend (JU). Ten Mile Pond was flooded 22 May, much to the liking of 75 Least Terns (LK). Iowa had 3 return to the MidAmerican Ponds 10 May (BP, LP). The Region's high of 140 Black Terns was at Squaw Cr. 12 May (TR).

Missouri's only Greater Roadrunners were reported from Polk on 24 & 27 May at Henning C.A. (Bo Brown; J&PM). Only a single Barn Owl was reported this season, that being in Tama, IA 26 Apr (AB). Very unusual in the Region, a Burrowing Owl was discovered 13 May at Fremont, IA (SJD). Absent from many of their usual haunts, 5 Long-eared Owls were at Iowa's Swan L., Carroll 5

Mar (RT), and 10 birds were found s. of Chillicothe, MO 21 Mar (LL, SK). The day before, the same duo found 3 Short-eared Owls in the same area. Iowans reported 7 Short-eared Owls from three spots during the last week of Mar. Five Iowa Northern Saw-whet Owls were seen from four locations in Mar.

Empidonax flycatchers were reported in strong numbers, with many migrants lingering very late into May. Late reports of Yellow-bellied, Least, and Alder Flycatchers came from both states. Western Kingbirds continued their e. push, with reports widespread from e. Missouri. A Warren Scissor-tailed Flycatcher was spotted 2 May (MO), and a pair returned to the Kansas City International Airport this spring, representing the northernmost known Missouri nesting location (RM). Fish Crows keep pushing n. and w.; one in residential Kansas City 9 Apr was a surprise (RM), and a single bird 10 May at Weston Bend (MG) represented the season's northernmost sighting.

Possibly Missouri's bird of the season was a male Mountain Bluebird discovered at Taberville S.P., MO 26 Mar (J&PM). Unfortunately, this bird was not rediscovered. The report is under review by the Missouri Records Committee. A single Townsend's Solitaire was found 30 Mar near Cherokee, IA (Dick Bierman). Hermit Thrushes are rarely reported in double digits, so 25 birds reported by John Berger at the Tower Grove, MO bubbler 14 Apr were exceptional. An overwintering Varied Thrush at Sioux Rapids, IA was last seen 8 Mar (Megan Whitaker). Sprague's Pipit is rarely reported in the spring, and years may go by with no reports. A bird 5 Apr near L. Contrary, MO (LL) and 2 at Taberville S.P. 26 Mar (SD) were the first in several years. A single Bohemian Waxwing was spied at Marble Beach, Spirit L. 11 Mar (LS).

WARBLERS THROUGH FINCHES

For at least the 4th year in a row, a male Brewster's Warbler returned to Weston Bend 7 May (Nancy Leo) and lingered throughout the period. A good find for w. Missouri was a male Cape May Warbler 17 May at Bluff Woods C.A. (LL). Iowa counts of 30 on 17 May at Sweet Marsh (MK, RC) and 10 on 20 May at Eagle L. (MK, RG) were much higher than normal. Black-throated Blue Warblers were missing from Missouri, but Iowa reported 3—a male 9 May at Walnut Woods (Denny Thompson), a 15 May female at Mason City (CF, RG), and an Emmet male 15 May (DH). An Audubon's Warbler was documented 11 May at Ledges S.P., Boone, IA (MO), and a late Myrtle Warbler was found 31 May at Algona (MK). Pine Warblers are rare in the glaciated plains of Missouri; therefore, a



A pair of Black-bellied Whistling-Ducks was discovered during the Audubon Society of Missouri's spring meeting at Squaw Creek N.W.R. on 26 April 2003. Photograph by Dave Easterla.

first-year female was a good find 11 Apr at Fountain Grove, MO (LL). A Prairie Warbler discovered at Watkins's Mill, MO in the 3rd week of May was seen throughout the season (Kristy Mayo). A record-early Iowa Yellow-throated Warbler was discovered 4 Apr at Lacey-Keosauqua (ChF). Weston Bend appears to be the n. breeding Missouri limit for Cerulean Warbler, and 4 males returned this year (WT). An out-of-range Cerulean in Iowa was seen 22 May at Bacon Creek Park (GV).

In addition to the Current R. Swainson's Warblers, Missouri birds were reported at the Greer Springs Campground 31 May (Mark Mittleman) and at Roaring River S.P., Barry 27 Apr (Lisa Berger). Connecticut Warblers, when found, are often one of the latest migrants of the spring; surprisingly early was a singing male found 26 Apr at Springfield, MO (PMc). Iowa and Missouri reported 9 and 6 additional birds, respectively. A very good count of 10 Mourning Warblers came from Weston Bend 17 May (WT). North of its usual Missouri nesting range, a Hooded Warbler was found at Watkins Mill S.P. 2 May (Steve Dillinger), and an Iowa overshoot was seen 22 May in Emmet (DH). Iowa tied its earliest-ever Canada Warbler with a 9 May bird at Lacey-Keosauqua S.P. (RC). Five singing birds

along a half-km stretch of the Blue R. in Kansas City made Missouri's seasonal high 18 May (RM).

Only 2 Spotted Towhees were reported this season, a 13 May Missouri bird from a suburban Kansas City yard (RM) and an Iowa bird 8 May at Owego Wetlands (GV). Eighteen Clay-colored Sparrows in a mixed *Spizella* flock made a nice find in Kansas City 9 May (RM, MG). Mike Bradley found Missouri's only Le Conte's Sparrow off the Epstein Prairie Trail in sw. St. Louis 9 Mar. Just three reports came from Iowa: 30 Mar in Johnson (CE), 11 Apr at Pinchey Bottoms, Marion (AB), and 27 Apr at Eagle L., Kossuth (MK). Surely also more common than records would suggest, 2 Nelson's Sharp-tailed Sparrows at Squaw Cr. 13 May (TR) and one bird at Dunn Ranch 15 May (Brad Jacobs) were all that Missouri reported. A late singing Nelson's was seen 28 May at Cardinal Marsh, IA (PH). Over 60 Smith's Longspurs were reported from four Iowa locations this spring (m. ob.).

A wintering Black-headed Grosbeak in Des Moines, IA was last reported 28 Mar (ChF). A few Missouri Lazuli Buntings were reported this season, among them a transitional bird 11 May at Bluff Woods C.A. (J&PM), while in Iowa, singles were found 15 May at Algona (MK) and at Spirit L.

20-24 May (ET). Last year's Katy Trail Painted Bunting was back in St. Charles, MO (m. ob.). A wildly out-of-range male Hooded Oriole was photographed 25 May at the Meiencke feeder in ne. Blackhawk, IA; it is currently under review by the Iowa Records Committee.

Additional Species under review by the states' records committees: Iowa: Little Gull, Ruff, Common Raven, Fish Crow. Missouri: Lazuli Bunting.

Contributors (subregional editors in bold-face): Aaron Brees, David Becher, Ray Cummins, Steve Dilks (SD), Jim Dinsmore, Stephen J. Dinsmore (SJD), Dave Easterla, Chris Edwards, Berry Engebretsen, Carolyn Fischer (CF), Chuck Fuller (ChF), Jim Fuller, Matt Gearheart, Jay Gilliam, Rita Goranson, Dennis Hendrickson, Paul Hertzler, Bill Huser, Tom Johnson, Matt Kenne, Tom Kent, Joseph Kennedy, Steve Kinder, Leslie Koller, Larry Lade, Jean Leonatti, Jim Malone, Paul McKenzie (PMc) Roger McNeill, JoAnn and Pete Moroz (J&PM), Mike Overton, Babs Padelford, Loren Padelford, Tommie Rogers, Bill Rowe, Lee Schoenewe, Will Chatfield-Taylor, Ed Thelen, Rob Thelen, Josh Uffman, Gerald Von Ehwegen, Doug Willis. 🐦

Faces of the Great Plains Prairie Wildlife

Photographs and Field Notes
by Bob Gress

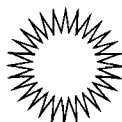
Text by Paul A. Johnsgard

"Bob Gress, one of the premier nature photographers in America, and Paul Johnsgard, a recognized Great Plains scholar, have produced a near perfect marriage of image and text. . . . A captivating and welcome addition to the natural history of the Great Plains."—George Potts, coauthor of *Watching Kansas Wildlife: A Guide to 101 Sites*

"A unique book that should have a substantial general audience among wildlife enthusiasts, educators, and youngsters who visit or live on the Great Plains."—Tom White, editor of *NEBRASKAland Magazine*



192 pages, 151 color photos,
9 x 12", Cloth \$34.95



University Press of Kansas

2501 West 15th Street • Lawrence KS 66049
Phone 785-864-4154 • Fax 785-864-4586 • www.kansaspress.ku.edu