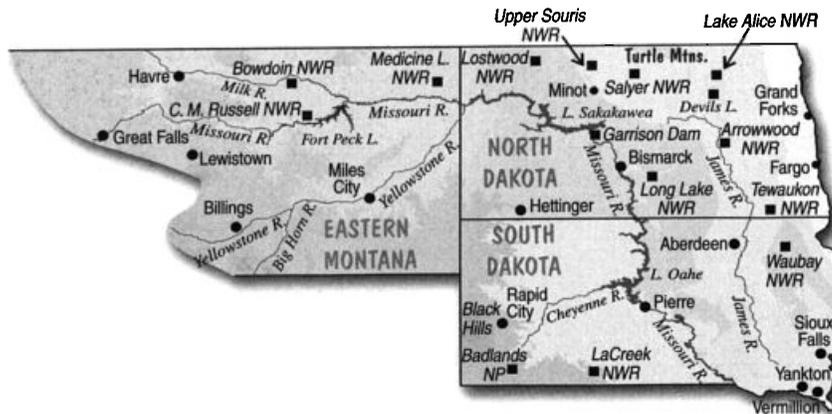


Northern Great Plains



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March and April were dry, and temperatures were slightly above average. The heavy winter snows in northeastern Montana and northwestern North Dakota produced only minimal runoff. Much of western Montana, southwestern North Dakota, and western South Dakota continue to suffer drought conditions. Species that usually begin arriving in March and the first half of April were generally ahead of schedule and produced many new early records.

The progress of migration and the breeding season slowed dramatically in May when cool, wet weather dominated the Region. A major snowstorm 11-12 May in the northern sections of the Region caused a massive die-off of passerines. Hungry and exhausted birds were everywhere, and mortality was high during this period. Leaves were still breaking out in some areas at the end of May, and vireo and warbler migration was still heavy in early June. Warblers made a strong showing west of their normal migration path, particularly Cape May, Bay-breasted, and Magnolia Warblers.

LOONS THROUGH RAILS

Accidental in spring in Montana, a Red-throated Loon was in Ft. Peck 27 Mar (p.a., CC). Providing the 2nd and 3rd spring sightings for South Dakota, Pacific Loons were at Pierre 22-26 Apr and 22-26 May (p.a., KM, RDO). Red-necked Grebes were notably early at Freezeout L., MT 2 Apr (MS) and in Ransom, ND 3 Apr (KRC, BS).

Casual in w. North Dakota, a Green Heron was in Mandan 25 May (HCT). A White-faced Ibis in Cass, ND 3 Apr eclipsed the previous early date for the state by 11 days

(DR, KRC). Now seen annually in North Dakota, 2 Trumpeter Swans were in Sioux 1 Apr (DNS). Eighteen Trumpeters at Benton Lake N.W.R., MT 14 Apr provided the 4th record for the refuge (SM). Furnishing the earliest spring report for North Dakota, 2 American Black Ducks were noted at Tewauckon N.W.R. 12 Mar (MO). The wintering Harlequin Duck at Pierre, SD remained until 29 Mar. A pair of Harlequin Ducks at Ft. Peck, MT 15 May furnished the 3rd local record (LP). Casual in North Dakota in spring away from Garrison Dam, a Long-tailed Duck was at Minot 16-19 Apr (REM).

A potential 4th record for South Dakota, a Mississippi Kite was in Union 22 May (p.a., JC). A new high count for North Dakota, 61 Bald Eagles were over Grand Forks 29 Mar (EEF). Accidental in w. South Dakota, a Red-shouldered Hawk was at Pierre 16 Apr (p.a., KM). Rough-legged Hawk peaks included 50 in the 112 km from Malta to Glasgow, MT 27 Mar (DP) and 116 in Grand Forks, ND 21 Mar (EEF).

Accidental in South Dakota, a King Rail was heard 14 May in Lincoln (p.a., JC). In addition to the two locations with wintering Virginia Rails last season in Lawrence, SD, multiple birds were noted at three additional marshes on the edge of the Black Hills. Birds were found in Lawrence, Fall River, and Butte, pointing to a probable wintering population in those areas (DB, JB). About the 6th report for North Dakota, a Common Moorhen was photographed in Cass 14-18 May (p.a., RHO, ph. KRC). Casual in South Dakota, a Common Moorhen was in Brown 20 May (p.a., BF-W).

PLOVERS THROUGH DOVES

A Mountain Plover was early 4 Apr in Phillips, MT (Charles M. Russell N.W.R.



This Pacific Loon at Pierre 26 May 2004 furnished the third spring report of the species for South Dakota and was one of two noted in the capital area this season. Photograph by Doug Backlund.



The sixth for North Dakota, this Common Moorhen turned up in Cass County 14–18 May 2004 (here 17 May). Photograph by Keith Corliss.



Only the fourth record for South Dakota, this Laughing Gull was photographed at Pierre 27 March 2004. Photograph by Doug Backlund.

staff). Black-necked Stilts nesting in *Brown*, SD 27 May provided the 3rd nesting record for the state (p.a., BF-W). Several shorebird species produced new earliest records in the Dakotas. A Lesser Yellowlegs was in *Ward*, ND 24 Mar (D.L.N.W.R. staff). In South Dakota, a Stilt Sandpiper was noted 2 Apr in *Davison* (DS). A Long-billed Dowitcher in *Burleigh*, ND 25 Mar was 18 days earlier than the previous early date (CDE, HCT, REM, ph.). Also early was a Long-billed Dowitcher in *Miner*, SD 27 Mar (JSP). Producing new high counts for North Dakota, 3000 Ruddy Turnstones and 1000 Sanderlings were estimated at Devil's L. 18 May (WE). The 14th report for Montana, a Buff-breasted Sandpiper was near *Malta* 11 May (p.a., DB).

A potential 4th record for South Dakota, a Laughing Gull was at *Pierre* 27–28 Mar (p.a., KM, RDO). A Mew Gull 17 Apr in *Stutsman*, ND would furnish the first spring

record for the state (p.a., LDI).

About the 10th report for South Dakota, a Lesser Black-backed Gull was in *Pierre* 9 Apr–13 May (p.a., RDO, KM). Providing the 4th through 7th spring reports for North Dakota, 5 Lesser Black-backed Gulls noted at *Bismarck*, *Long Lake N.W.R.*, and *Garrison Dam* spanned 25 Mar–22 May (p.a., CDE, HCT, DNS, REM).

A White-winged Dove in *Fargo* 31 May–2 Jun would furnish the 3rd record for North Dakota (p.a., WE, RHO, CMN). Barn Owl reports continued to increase. Two were in *Pierre*, SD 5 May (RDO), and a single was near *Great Falls*, MT 10 Apr (CDM). In North Dakota, a single was photographed in *Kidder* 18 Apr (p.a., JK), and another was seen 11 Apr in *Wells* (p.a., MT). Active Northern Saw-whet Owl nests in the *Cave Hills* and *Slim Buttes* provided the first nesting evidence for this species in *Harding*, SD (KM).

WOODPECKERS THROUGH WARBLERS

Accidental away from *Westby*, a Yellow-bellied Sapsucker was in *Malta*, MT 18 Apr (p.a., DP, TP). Phoebes made an early showing in North Dakota, with an Eastern Phoebe in snowy *Grand Forks* 25 Mar (DOL) and a Say's Phoebe in *McKenzie* 2 Apr (JAH). Casual away from the *Badlands*, a Violet-green Swallow in *Mandan* 30 May provided a first county record for *Morton*, ND (p.a., REM). A Rock Wren 6 Apr in *Stanley*, SD eclipsed the previous early date for the state by 11 days (DB).

A Blue-gray Gnatcatcher 7 May at *Lone-tree W.M.A.*, ND furnished the first record for *Sheridan* (p.a., WE, ph. SE). The latest ever for spring, a Varied Thrush was photographed in *Eddy*, ND 24 May (WE). The 3rd report for South Dakota, a Brewster's Warbler was in *Aberdeen* 11 May (p.a., DAT). West of their usual migration corridor, Golden-winged Warblers were in *Bowman*, ND 19 May (SJD) and in *Meade*, SD 27 May. The South Dakota bird was in the same area where one held a territory last year (RP). Continuing the trend of the last two years, large numbers of Magnolia, Cape May, and Bay-breasted Warblers were noted. Thirty-eight Magnolias were counted in *Fargo*, ND 19 May (KRC). Cape May Warbler numbers in North Dakota were unprecedented. Reported nearly statewide, a peak of 21 was noted in *McHenry* 23 May (REM). A rare migrant in e. South Dakota, Cape Mays were tallied from five e. and cen. counties. Accidental in the west, a single was in *Pennington* 25 May (TJ). In Montana, an individual was in *Ft. Peck* 24 May (SJD). Yellow-rumped Warblers peaked at 1500 in *Kidder*, ND 13 May (DNS). The 9th report for North Dakota, a Townsend's Warbler was in *Fargo* 17 May (p.a., CMN). Well e. of typical range in Montana, a Townsend's was at *Ft. Peck* 10 May (p.a., CC). Casual in



Rare in North Dakota east of the *Badlands*, this Violet-green Swallow was a first for *Morton County* 30 May 2004. Photograph by Ron Martin.



Another Neotropical migrant casual in North Dakota, this Hooded Warbler was in Fargo 1 June 2004. Photograph by Keith Corliss.

Montana, Blackburnian Warblers were noted in Ft. Peck 24 May (p.a., CC) and at Medicine L. 28 May (p.a., AG). A Pine Warbler in Union, SD 25 May furnished the latest spring report for the state (DS). Reported for the 4th consecutive spring, a Yellow-throated Warbler in Sheridan, ND 14–15 May would provide the 6th record for the state (p.a., WE, ph. SE). The 8th report for Montana, a Black-throated Gray Warbler was at Bear Canyon in the Pryor Mts. 29 May (p.a., PH).

Considerably w. of their usual migratory path, Bay-breasted Warblers peaked at 11 in Kenmare, ND 23 May (RR). In Montana, a single was at Ft. Peck 18 May (JG). Casual in South Dakota, Worm-eating Warblers were at Pierre 14 May (KM, RDO, DB) and Brookings 15 May (KS). Connecticut Warblers

made a strong showing in the Dakotas, with 22 individuals reported. Casual in the Dakotas, a Hooded Warbler was in Clay, SD 24–25 May (JC, DS). The most ever reported in a season in North Dakota, 4 Hooded Warblers spanned 11 May–1 Jun (p.a., DAG, MO, TE, DPW).

TANAGERS THROUGH GOLDFINCHES

Vagrant Western Tanager reports were higher than usual, with 3 in e. South Dakota spanning 14–31 May. Three singles were reported in North Dakota 19–27 May. Early Savannah Sparrows were noted 16 Mar in Minnehaha, SD (RFS) and 30 Mar in Fargo, ND (DPW). A Golden-crowned Sparrow

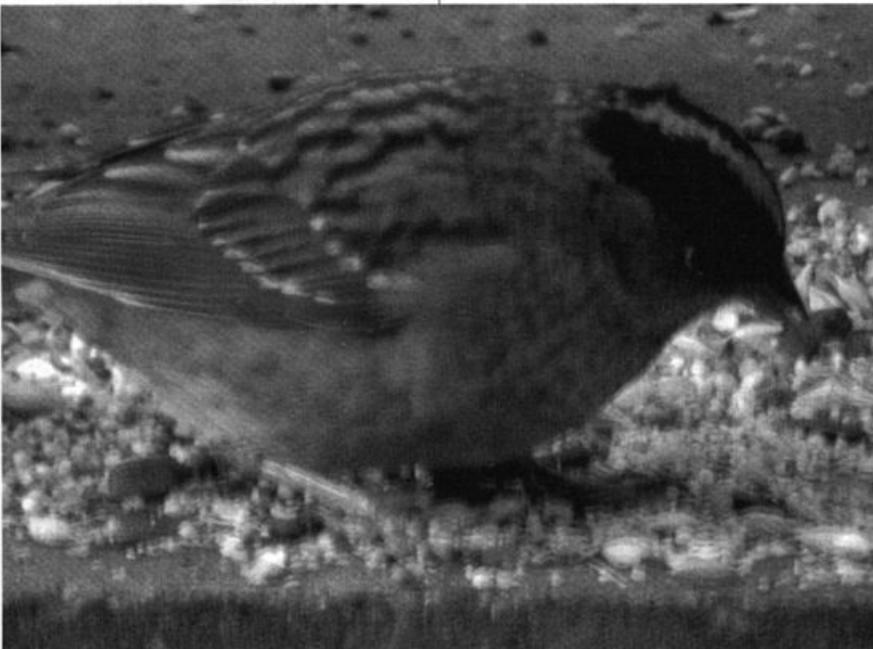


This Western Tanager in Grand Forks, North Dakota 27 May 2004 was a rarity there. Photograph by Dave Lambeth.

photographed in New Town, ND 4–7 May would furnish the 6th record for the state (p.a., BH, ph. REM).

The 2nd record for ne. South Dakota, up to 3 Great-tailed Grackles were in Brown 26 Apr–28 May (BF-W). A casual nester in North Dakota, a recently fledged White-winged Crossbill was at Minot 14 May (REM). A potential 7th record for Montana, a Lesser Goldfinch was at Ft. Peck 21 Apr (p.a., CC). A Lesser Goldfinch on a nest in Fall River, SD 23 May provided the long-awaited first nesting record for the state (p.a., KM, RDO).

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This Golden-crowned Sparrow provided the sixth report for North Dakota at New Town 4–7 May 2004 (here 6 May). Photograph by Ron Martin.