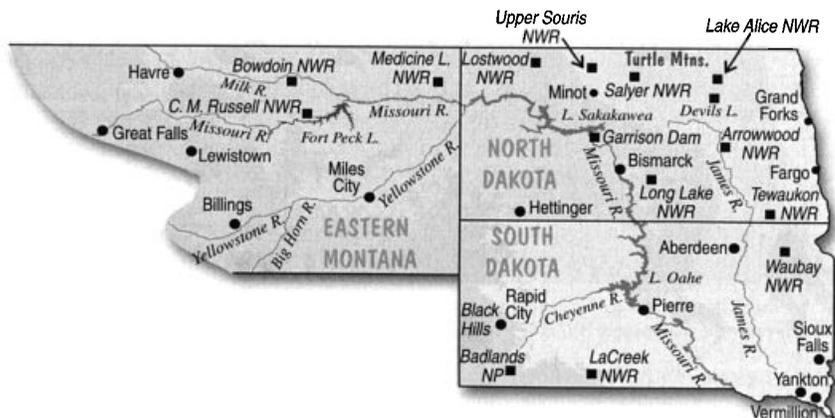


Northern Great Plains



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Below-average August temperatures capped off one of the coolest summers on record in the Northern Great Plains. At the Grand Forks, North Dakota weather station, August temperatures were 8° F below average. For the first time in recorded history, the Grassy Butte, North Dakota weather station recorded frost every month of the year. September and October temperatures were slightly above average, with variable precipitation. November temperatures were 5–6° F above average, and the month was very dry. Most lakes were open into late November.

The number of migrant birds was unimpressive after what appeared to be a poor nesting season. The Region seems to be moving into a drier period, and receding water levels created some good shorebird concentrations. The passerine migration was especially dismal, with low numbers and early departures. The warm November did produce a number of stragglers. On the other hand, it was a stellar season for rarities, with two potential first state records in North Dakota.

LOONS THROUGH HAWKS

Casual in e. Montana, a Red-throated Loon was at Ft. Peck 29 Oct (p.a., CC). The 8th report for North Dakota, a Pacific Loon was photographed in Williams 24 Oct (p.a., JPL). In Montana, a single Pacific Loon was at Great Falls 17 Oct (DC), and up to 2 at Freezeout L. N.W.R. 26 Oct–11 Nov provided the first records for the refuge (MS). If accepted, a Yellow-billed Loon photographed at Devil's Lake 1–13 Nov would furnish the first record for North Dakota (p.a., EEf, REM, ph. DOL). Accidental in e. Montana, a Yellow-billed Loon at Ft. Peck 15–22 Nov would provide the 2nd local record (p.a., CC, JC). Impressive Double-crested Cormorant peaks included 9000 at Big Bend Dam, SD 10 Oct (TJ) and 3000 at L. Etta, Kidder, ND 15 Sep (HCT). A Great Egret was far w. at Great Falls, MT 16 Oct (DC). The 2nd record for the refuge, 2 Cattle Egrets were at Freezeout L., MT 29 Oct (MS); casual w. of the Missouri R. in North Dakota, 2 were at Lake Ilo N.W.R. 21 Oct (JPL).

Single Brant, a

species casual in North Dakota, were noted 2 Oct in McHenry (p.a., ph. REM) and at Audubon N.W.R. 16 Nov (p.a., RJL). A new high count for North Dakota, 31,000 Northern Shovelers were tallied at Long Lake N.W.R. 16 Oct (HCT, CDE). Providing about the 16th report for North Dakota, a Harlequin Duck was at Audubon N.W.R. 28 Oct (p.a., MM). An impressive 19 White-winged Scoter reports from North Dakota included a very early individual 8 Aug in Stutsman (KRC, MO). Also above average in North Dakota were 10 Long-tailed Duck reports totaling 14 individuals 20 Oct–30 Nov; three observations from South Dakota spanned 4–7 Nov. A notable count for North Dakota, 52 Broad-winged Hawks were over West Fargo 21 Sep (KRC). Very rare in e. North Dakota, a Gyrfalcon was at Fargo 5 Nov (RHO). Hundreds of Red-tailed Hawks were moving over Pennington, SD 23 Sep (MMM).

SHOREBIRDS THROUGH TERNS

A Willet was late on 9 Oct in Lincoln, SD (DC). Casual in fall in Montana, a Hudsonian Godwit was at Westby 3 Sep (p.a., TN). In North Dakota, a good peak of 36 Hudsonians was noted in Ramsey 7 Aug (REM). A Western Sandpiper, a species casual in South Dakota, was in Fall River 7 Aug (p.a., JLB). The latest recorded for South Dakota, a Least Sandpiper was in Lake 13 Nov (JSP), and a Baird's Sandpiper was in Buffalo 20 Nov (JSP, RFS). A Dunlin 7 Aug in Pierre, ND was a very early fall migrant (REM). A juv. Curlew Sandpiper photographed in Grand Forks, ND 13 Oct would furnish the 3rd record for the state (p.a., DOL). A new high count for fall, 850 Short-billed Dowitchers were in ne. North Dakota 5 Aug (EEF). The latest date reported for North Dakota, a Wilson's Phalarope was in Grand Forks 11 Nov (EEF).

A Little Gull, furnishing a 7th report for South Dakota, was at Big Bend Dam 8 Oct (p.a., JSP). In North Dakota, single Little Gulls were noted at two locations on Devil's



This juvenile Yellow-billed Loon at Devil's Lake 1 November 2004 provided the long-awaited first accepted record for North Dakota. Photograph by Dave Lambeth.



A species casual in North Dakota, this Brant (subspecies *hrota*) in McHenry County 2 October 2004 was one of two seen in the state during the fall season. Photograph by Ron Martin.



Providing the third North Dakota record of the species, and the first in juvenal plumage, this Curlew Sandpiper (left bird, facing right) was found in Grand Forks County 13 October 2004. Photograph by Dave Lambeth.



Two Little Gulls (one here at right) were seen on the second annual Devil's Lake, North Dakota "pelagic" trip 2 October 2004; the species may be regular at this location. Photograph by Dave Lambeth.

L. 2 Oct (p.a., REM, DNS). These 2 provided 11th and 12th reports for the state. Mew Gull and Lesser-Black-backed Gull reports have become regular in the Dakotas since fall 2001. Both species are approaching the 20-record mark in the respective states. This fall, four Mew Gull reports in South Dakota spanned 6 Oct–20 Nov (p.a., JSP, RFS, KM, RDO). In North Dakota, 3 individuals were noted 8–21 Oct (p.a., REM, DNS, CDE, HCT). South Dakota Lesser Black-backed reports included one at Oahe Dam and one at Yankton 11 Nov (p.a., DS). In North Dako-

ta, a single Lesser Black-backed was at the Bismarck Landfill 18–27 Oct (p.a., CDE, DNS, MAG).

Six reports of 8 individual Sabine's Gulls in North Dakota spanned 14 Sep–30 Oct. A first-summer individual at the Minot Lagoons 29 Sep–30 Oct provided the first record for this plumage in the state (REM). Single Sabine's Gulls were in Lyman, SD 18 Sep (p.a., JSP) and at Freezeout L., MT 21–22 Sep (p.a., WT, MS). Single Black-legged Kittiwakes at Long Lake N.W.R., Burleigh 21 Nov (p.a., HCT, PCV) and 24 Nov in Grand Forks (p.a., EEF) would, if accepted, provide new county records in North Dakota. The species is accidental away from Garrison Dam. The first Nov reports for North Dakota, a Common Tern was in Fargo 14 Nov (KRC, DWR), and a Forster's Tern was at Devil's L. 2 Nov (EEF). Also very late was a Forster's in Stanley, SD 1 Nov (RDO). A new peak for North Dakota, 3300 Black Terns were at Devil's L. 6 Aug (REM).

DOVES THROUGH FINCHES

A new high count for North Dakota, 22 Eurasian Collared-Doves were in Dickinson 11 Sep (JPL). Accidental in Montana, a White-winged Dove was at Tiber Dam 27–31 Aug (p.a., HM). A form rarely seen in North Dakota, a rufous-morph Eastern Screech-Owl was in Grand Forks 16 Nov (DOL). A Northern Hawk Owl was in Cass, ND 13 Nov (p.a., DWR). Providing the latest records for South Dakota, a Broad-tailed Hummingbird was in Custer 25 Aug (JSP), and a Rufous Hummingbird was in Lawrence 22 Sep (DGP).

Two juv. Yellow-bellied Sapsuckers were in Westby 16 Sep, the only location where they are regularly seen in Montana (GS, LS, DS). The earliest fall record for South

Dakota, a Yellow-bellied Flycatcher was banded in Brown 4 Aug (DAT). On the heels of the summer report of a Scissortailed Flycatcher in North Dakota, another individual was photographed 25 Oct in Morton (p.a., HB). Apparently present for about a week, this bird provided the 9th report for the state. The 4th report for North Dakota, a Plumbeous Vireo was documented at Hettinger 19 Sep (p.a., HCT). Casual in North Dakota, Clark's Nutcrackers were in Ward 5 Sep (p.a., REM) and from mid-Oct through the end of the period in Pembina (p.a., m.ob.). Providing new high counts for North Dakota were 8630 Tree Swallows tallied in four ne. counties 27 Aug (EEF) and 40,000 Bank Swallows in Benson 14 Aug (REM).

Casual in fall in North Dakota, a Blue-gray Gnatcatcher was photographed in Jamestown 24 Sep (p.a., CDE, ph. REM). A Blue-gray Gnatcatcher in Brown, SD 25 Oct furnished the 2nd latest record for the state (DAT). Townsend's Solitaires staged a strong movement e. of breeding areas. Early migrants were in Hughes, SD 13 Sep (KM) and at Ft. Peck, MT 14 Sep (CC). Twelve individuals were noted e. of the Badlands in North Dakota. A new high count for the fall season, 40 Swainson's Thrushes were in Grand Forks 21 Sep (EEF). A good peak of 50 Sprague's Pipits was tallied in Jones, SD 26 Sep (DB).

Accidental in w. North Dakota, a Golden-winged Warbler was at Minot 8–10 Sep (REM). Tennessee Warblers appeared in unusually high numbers this fall in North Dakota, with a peak of 80 at Fargo 6 Sep (DPW). The latest record for North Dakota, a Nashville Warbler was at Fargo 7 Nov (DPW). If accepted, 2 Virginia's Warblers at Hettinger 15–17 Sep would provide the first record for North Dakota (p.a., DAG, CG). A late Cape May Warbler was in Fargo, ND 27 Oct (KRC). The latest report for North Dakota and the 2nd for Nov, a Black-throat-



One of eight Sabine's Gulls seen this fall in North Dakota, this first-summer bird stayed for over a month (29 September–30 October 2004; here 6 October) at the Minot Lagoons and furnished the first record of this plumage for the Northern Great Plains Region. Photograph by Ron Martin.

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On the heels of last winter's sighting of the species, this Northern Hawk Owl was a one-day wonder in Cass, North Dakota 13 November 2004. Photograph by Dean Reimer.



This late Scissor-tailed Flycatcher in Morton, North Dakota 25 October was the second recorded in the state in 2004. Photograph by Holly Burch.

ed Blue Warbler was in *Hettinger* 10 Nov (JW). About the 10th report for North Dakota, a *Townsend's Warbler* was in *Hettinger* 19 Sep (p.a., DAG, CG). In South Dakota, five *Townsend's Warbler* reports from four counties spanned 24 Aug–18 Sep (p.a., DS, JSP, KM, TJ). The first Nov records for South Dakota, a *Bay-breasted Warbler* was in *Stanley* 14 Nov (DB), and a *Wilson's Warbler* was banded in *Brown* 20 Nov (DAT). A new fall peak for North Dakota, 25 *Blackpoll Warblers* were at *Minot* 10 Sep (REM). A species casual in North Dakota, a *MacGillivray's Warbler* was at *Hettinger* 19 Sep (p.a., DAG, HCT).

A first for the park at *Westby, MT*, 2 *Western Tanagers* were seen 16 Sep (GS, LS, DS). Many species of sparrow lingered into Nov in North Dakota. *Nelson's Sharp-tailed Spar-*

rows were late 12 Oct in *Hughes (KM)* and *Lincoln, SD (DC)*. A *Lincoln's Sparrow* 11 Aug in *Lawrence, SD* provided the earliest fall record for the state (DGP). Eight *Smith's Longspurs* were late 26 Oct in the *Sheyenne National Grasslands, ND (DNS, MAG)*.

An *Eastern Meadowlark* was n. of typical range in *Stanley, SD* 6 Sep (RDO). *Pine Grosbeaks* made their strongest showing in years, with three Nov reports each from South Dakota and North Dakota. Birds were also at two e. Montana locations. On the heels of last year's *Common Redpoll* invasion, good numbers were noted again this year, with flocks of over 100 by the end of the period in North Dakota. *Pine Siskins* staged a strong movement into North Dakota and e. Montana, with some feeders hosting over 100 individuals. Now a rare fall migrant, five reports of *Evening Grosbeak* were noted in North Dakota and e. Montana.

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