

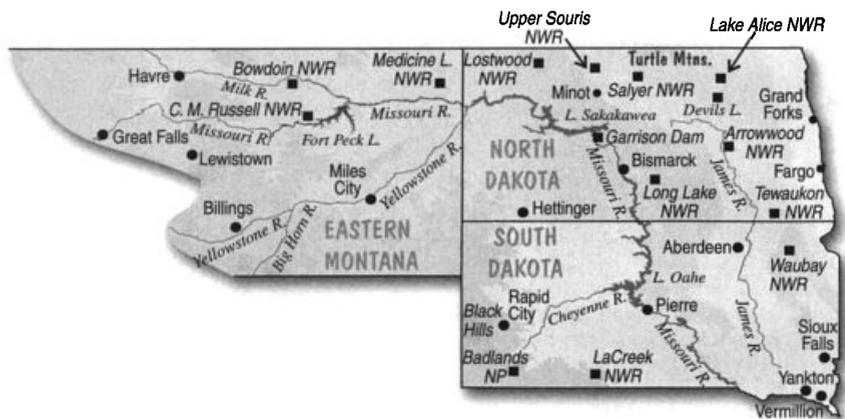
Even in a land where weather extremes are the norm, this winter season was notable for its weather extremes. Temperatures across the Region were well above average most of the season; however, late December and the first half of January saw temperatures well below average. During this three-week stretch, many days had high temperatures below zero. Most of the Region recorded snowfall totals well below average, and migration was evident by late February. Open water well into December produced numbers of lingering and wintering waterfowl. Several species of shorebirds made record late appearances in South Dakota. Notable movements of Townsend's Solitaires, Varied Thrushes, and Pine Grosbeaks were recorded. Owls made the biggest splash of all the irruptives, with Great Gray Owls and Boreal Owls making memorable appearances.

### GEESE THROUGH DOVES

A single Greater White-fronted Goose and 2 Snow Geese spent the season with a large flock of Canada Geese in *Morton, ND*. These represent the first wintering records for each species in the state (CDE). Unusual in mid-winter, a Trumpeter Swan was at Ft. Peck, MT 23 Jan (CC). Two Eurasian Wigeons had returned to Freezeout L., MT by 27 Feb (MS). Casual in winter in South Dakota, a Surf Scoter was in *Lyman* 11 Dec (JSP). Two Surf Scoters 14 Jan at Great Falls provided the first mid-winter record for e. Montana (GS). Very rare in winter in Montana, a single White-winged Scoter was at Yellowtail Afterbay 8 Feb (SD).

Bald Eagles were numerous across the Region this winter, and a pair was nesting in *Minnehaha, SD* by 26 Feb (MZ). A Sora below Garrison Dam, *McLean, ND* 10 Dec furnished the first winter season record for the state (p. a., REM). Two American Coots 16 Dec at Nelson L., *Oliver* provided the latest record for North Dakota (HCT). A single

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American Coot at Freezeout L., MT 27 Feb furnished the earliest spring arrival date for the refuge (MS). Wintering Virginia Rails were found again this year on the edge of the Black Hills, SD. Birds were located at two *Fall River* marshes 28 Feb (JLB). A Wilson's Snipe remained at Garrison Dam, ND through 26 Dec (DNS). Providing the first winter season records for South Dakota were a single Lesser Yellowlegs in *Day* 20 Dec (LH), 2 *Dunlin* 11 Dec in *Buffalo* (JSP), and an *American Woodcock* 6 Dec in *Clay* (JC).

An ad. Little Gull was at Big Bend Dam, *Lyman* 11 Dec, the same location where the 7th South Dakota record was found in Oct (p. a., JSP). About the 18th report for North Dakota, an Iceland Gull was at Garrison

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Dam 26 Dec–2 Jan (p. a., DNS, REM). Black-legged Kittiwakes were at Garrison Dam, ND 11–16 Dec (p. a., REM, CDE) and at Pierre, SD 18–19 Dec (p. a., RDO, KM). Eurasian Collared-Doves continued their expansion across the Region, and a new high for Montana was recorded 5 Jan, when 28 were noted at Ballantine (HC, BHa).



Casual in North Dakota, this unfortunate road-killed Boreal Owl was found in Fargo 5 (here 9) December 2004. Photograph by Paul Ode.



Providing the fifth C.B.C. record for North Dakota, this Northern Mockingbird was photographed on the Mayville–Portland count on 19 December 2004. Photograph by Dave Lambeth.



One of seven reported this winter in North Dakota, this Varied Thrush was photographed in Minot 2 January 2005. Photograph by Ron Martin.

## OWLS THROUGH WAXWINGS

Rare in North Dakota, a red-morph Eastern Screech-Owl was at Jamestown 19 Jan (MS). On the heels of a sighting in the fall season, another Northern Hawk Owl was in North Dakota 19 Dec in *Grand Forks* (RC). Barred Owls were noted w. of their usual ranges in the Dakotas, with a single 17 Feb at Jamestown, ND (TS, JS) and one 16 Dec in *Day*, SD (LH). In Montana, a Barred Owl was seen at Ballantine 1–3 Jan (p. a., HC, BH, GM). This provided only the 2nd report of this species in the e. half of the state. **Great Gray Owl** was certainly the bird of the winter in North Dakota. An individual was photographed and seen by many 22–29 Dec in *Grand Forks* (p. a., TD, DOL), and another



One of two documented in North Dakota this winter, this Great Gray Owl was near *Grand Forks* 22–29 (here 25) December 2004. The last report for North Dakota previous to these sightings was in 1966. Photograph by Dean Riemer.

er was documented 12 Feb in *Steele* (p. a., DLK). There were also two undocumented reports. Prior to these sightings, there were only eight previous reports for North Dakota, the most recent in 1966. Two **Boreal Owls** were recorded: a road kill at *Fargo*, ND 5 Dec (p. a., PO) and a live bird 14 Jan n. of *Ft. Peck*, MT (p. a., NP). There are no previous records of this retiring species for the e. half of Montana. *Fifty-one* Northern Saw-whet Owls were found during the season in the *Pierre*, SD area (KM). In North Dakota, seven Feb reports were well above average for winter.

A **Yellow-bellied Sapsucker** was late in *Lake*, SD 4 Dec (p. a., JSP), and a **Red-naped Sapsucker** was in the *Little Rockies*, MT 14 Dec (p. a., DP). There are no accepted winter records for this species in e. Montana. The **Clark's Nutcracker** reported

in the fall in *Pembina*, ND remained through the season (*vide* DOL). A **Brown Creeper** wintered at a *Ft. Peck* feeder, the first wintering record for the species in ne. Montana (CC). **Migrant Mountain Bluebirds** were noted in all three states by late Feb. **Townsend's Solitaires** made a strong showing, with 40 on seven C.B.C.s in North Dakota and an additional 20 individuals reported. In South Dakota, the species was reported in 11 counties away from the *Black Hills*. **Varied Thrushes** made an above-average showing in North Dakota, with seven reports. One South Dakota report came from *Brookings* 15 Jan (BH).

A **Northern Mockingbird** was photographed 18 Dec on the *Mayville–Portland* C.B.C., ND (p. a., DOL), a 5th C.B.C. record for the state. **Bohemian Waxwings** peaked at 5000 in *Pennington*, SD 5 Jan (TJ) and at *Ft. Peck*, MT 6 Feb (SD).

## TOWHEES THROUGH EVENING GROSBEEK

Accidental in winter in North Dakota, an East-

ern Towhee spent the season at *Fargo* (p. a., *vide* DPW). A **Chipping Sparrow** was noted on the *Mayville–Portland*, ND C.B.C. 18 Dec (p. a., DOL). This was the 4th year in the last five that the species has been reported in the winter season. A **Savannah Sparrow** in *Grand Forks*, ND 6 Dec provided the 2nd Dec report for the state (p. a., EEF).

Accidental in cen. South Dakota, a **Gray-crowned Rosy-Finch** was in *Stanley* 4 Dec (p. a., KM). **Pine Grosbeaks** made their strongest showing in years, with reports from six South Dakota counties. In North Dakota, the species was noted at eight locations in six counties, and a single 1 Dec ne. of *Malta*, MT was unexpected (DP). **Common Redpolls** were unusually numerous for an "off" year, with single flock reports in the



Casual in North Dakota, this Clark's Nutcracker passed the season in *Pembina County* (here 18 December 2004). Photograph by Dean Riemer.

hundreds in the Dakotas. As usual, a few **Hoary Redpolls** were also noted. **Pine Siskin** numbers were the strongest in some years, with peaks of 300 at *Pierre*, SD 30 Jan (DB) and 1164 on the *Minot*, ND C.B.C. 19 Dec. Now very rare in winter away from the *Black Hills*, 4 **Evening Grosbeaks** wintered at *New Town*, ND (RS).

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