

This was a spring of great shorebirding, a dearth of warblers, and several genuinely rare birds. Range expansions, particularly northward, seem to be the norm—White-winged Dove and Scissor-tailed Flycatcher could be called flagship species in this movement. Some southern and southeastern species are only making it into southeastern Oklahoma, but others, such as Blue-gray Gnatcatcher and Northern Cardinal, are becoming established in parts of central and western Nebraska. There were also noteworthy nestings of Piping Plover, Black-necked Stilt, Vermilion Flycatcher, and Pine Siskin this season. The drought of the past few years has taken its toll on marsh birds: Least Bittern, King Rail, and Common Gallinule are now very local nesters, and Eared Grebe, Western Grebe, and California Gull are in low numbers, particularly in Nebraska.

**Abbreviations:** Hackberry Flat (Hackberry Flat W.M.A., Tillman, OK); Harvard Marsh (Harvard W.P.A., Clay, NE); Hefner (L. Hefner, Oklahoma, OK); McCaughy (L. McCaughy, Keith, NE); Quivira (Quivira N.W.R., Stafford, KS); Rainwater Basin (playa wetlands in s.-cen. Nebraska); Red Slough (Red Slough W.M.A., McCurtain, OK).

### LOONS THROUGH RAILS

The 2–5 Pacific Loons wintering at *Sequoyah*, OK were present until at least 30 Apr (JWA); another Pacific and a Common Loon remained as late as 27 May in *Noble*, OK (JWA, JL). Very rare in Kansas, a Red-necked Grebe was in *Johnson* 1 May (MC, DS). Few Western Grebes were reported this season, but 5 were as far e. as *Knox*, NE 16 Apr (MB). The only report of Clark's Grebe was of 7 at McCaughy 16 May (SJD, AB). Neotropic Cormorants were limited to Oklahoma: at Hackberry 21 Apr (BH) and 25 May (2 birds; JAG, VF, JW) and at Hefner 21 May (JAG); at Red Slough, where they are regular, arrival was 17 May (DA, BH, MW). Surprises were single Anhingas in *Richardson*, NE 30 Apr (B&LP, CNK), furnishing the state's 4th record, and in *Delaware*, OK 14 May (B&KG, JM).

Outside Red Slough, the only report for Least Bittern was of 2 in *Madison*, NE 31 May (MB); populations of this species are at a lull in the Region. Unusual was a Little Blue Heron in *Douglas*, NE 12 May (JTo). Still quite rare, but on the rise Regionally, up to 2 Glossy Ibis were closely observed at Harvard Marsh 15 Apr (PDu)—26 May (JGJ, WRS, RE); they showed no characters suggestive of hybrid derivation (JGJ, WRS). Up to 2 Glossies were observed at Hackberry 21 Apr–21 May (BH, L&MT), and singles were in *Fillmore*, NE 3 May (JGJ) and *Clay*, NE 19 May (JGJ). Outside normal haunts were White Ibis 17 Apr in *Oklahoma*, OK (RHo)

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and in *Canadian*, OK 28 May (possibly the same bird; PG, JV); the season's first at Red Slough was noted 4 Apr (DA, BH).

A belated report of 4 Black-bellied Whistling-Ducks in *Lancaster*, NE 22–24 May 2004 (PM) would furnish only the 4th documented record for Nebraska. Black-bellieds began arriving at Red Slough 17 Apr, with up to 17 noted by 24 May (DA et al.). Other Black-bellieds were found in *Tulsa*, OK 10 Apr (FS) and *Comanche*, OK 13–14 May (KM, JT, L&MT). Somewhat tardy were 26 Snow Geese in *Harlan*, NE 26 May (G&WH) and a Ross's Goose at McCaughy 16 May (SJD, AB). Outside Nebraska, the only Trumpeter Swans noted were 2 in *Washington*, KS 11 Mar (DT) and a somewhat tardy bird in *Washington*, OK 4–6 Apr (J&ME et al.). Rare in Kansas, 4 Tundra Swans were at Quivira 12 Mar (MT, JJo).

Always a treat, a male Eurasian Wigeon was in *Lincoln*, NE 7–13 Apr (TJW); it was accompanied by an unidentified female wigeon. Cinnamon Teal seemed to skip Ok-

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lahoma this season, but 15-20 were in *Scotts Bluff*, NE 9 Apr (AK), with others noted e. to the Rainwater Basin (PDU, JGJ). Male Cinnamon Teal × Blue-winged Teal hybrids were in *Hall*, NE 20-26 Mar (PEL, GSt) and at *McConaughy* 16 May (SJD, AB). Indicative of peak movement times were the 50 Greater Scaup in *Tulsa* 15 Mar (JL et al.) and the 40 in *Sherman*, NE 19 Mar (WRS, TR, PK). Kansas hosted 3 Surf Scoters 9-26 Mar (LJ, BL, HA), and one was in *Tulsa*, OK 4-25 Mar (EE, m.ob.). Long-tailed Ducks were found at four locations in Kansas 5 Mar-28 May (*fide* LM), the latter an extremely late date for the individual in *Doniphan* (LL). Three Long-taileds were in *Tulsa*, OK 19-29 Mar (LMc, m.ob.). A female Hooded Merganser with 9 young in *Otoe* (L&CF) confirmed only the 2nd breeding record for Nebraska since 1915.

Southern vagrants appear to have the edge these days. Among them were a Black Vulture in *Cherokee*, KS 24 Mar (MR, TC) and single White-tailed Kites in *Lancaster*, NE 17 Apr (LE; only the 4th for Nebraska) and *Tulsa*, OK 21 Apr (RJ, GK, MK). Mississippi Kites returned to both established breeding sites in *Keith* and *Webster*, NE in May (KS). A Peregrine Falcon in downtown *Fremont*, *Dodge*, NE 22 Mar (JSt) was probably a migrant, whereas one in *Lincoln*, *Lancaster*, NE 25 Mar was likely a resident (RE); other migrants were noted as early as 14 Mar at *Red Slough* (DA, DSt), with *Hackberry* attracting up to 3 on 4 May (JAG, VF).

Mixed leks of Sharp-tailed Grouse and Greater Prairie-Chickens are apparently becoming more common in the s. and e. Sandhills of Nebraska, with some hybrids noted in *Knox* (MB) and *McPherson* (TJW). Surprisingly far e. was an apparently pure Sharp-tailed Grouse in *Dixon*, NE 9 Apr (BFH). The number of Greater Prairie-Chickens in the e. Rainwater Basin, where the species uses non-native habitats, appears to be increasing (JGJ). King Rails were reported n. to *Quivira*, where a surprising 10 were found 14 May (SS); another was in *Stafford*, KS 29 Apr (PJ). Two were at *Hackberry* 21 Apr (BH, L&MT) and 4 May (JAG, VF), and up to 5 were at *Red Slough* through the period (DA, BH). Apparently restricted to *Red Slough* this season were Common Moorhens, arriving by 4 Apr (DA). Quite a surprise for recent times was the discovery of a Virginia Rail with up to 9 young in *Tulsa* 2 Apr-8 May (JL, PS, m.ob.). Easterly for Kansas were 3 Sandhill Cranes in *Johnson* 17 Mar (MG). About 17 Whooping Cranes were reported in Kansas and Nebraska 28 Mar-14 Apr (*fide* LM, *fide* WRS).

## SHOREBIRDS THROUGH TERNS

The season brought better-than-average numbers of shorebirds, with the highest counts coming from Nebraska. Remarkable for the Region were the 613 Black-bellied Plovers in the e. Rainwater Basin 18 May, including single-location counts of 207, 176, and 165 (PDU, JGJ). A record-high 300 Semipalmated Plovers was at *Harvard Marsh* 10 May (PDU), with 257 there 30 Apr (JGJ). Numbers of Snowy Plovers continue to increase; a remarkable 300+ were at *Quivira* 14 May (SS); 8 had arrived at *McConaughy* by



This second-summer Lesser Black-backed Gull at *Lake Hefner*, *Oklahoma County*, *Oklahoma* 11 through 21 (here) May 2005 represented one of the later records of this expanding species in the Southern Great Plains. Photograph by *Pat Velte*.

16 May (SJD, AB). Piping Plovers were also much in evidence this season, with 90+ at *Quivira* 30 Apr (GF), 137 at *McConaughy* 16 May (SJD, AB), and 19 at *Harvard Marsh* 30 Apr (JGJ). For the 2nd consecutive year, a Piping nest was found far w. at *L. Minatare*, *Scotts Bluff*; the female of this pair was banded in *Saskatchewan* as a nestling in 2004 (KD). Four Pippings at *Quivira* 16 Apr (SS) and singles at *Hefner* 30 Apr (JAG, GK, MK) and in *Washington*, OK 4 May (MD, J&ME) were the only other reports.

The number of Black-necked Stilts has continued to increase at *Hackberry*, where over 20 pairs were noted 4 May (JAG, VF). Six in the e. Rainwater Basin 13-23 May (JGJ) and 2-6 more at *Harvard Marsh* 18 May (EV) had nests with eggs by the end of the period (JGJ, PDU, WRS). Numbers of American Avocets at breeding locations are also improving Regionwide. Whimbrel reports included high counts of 70 at *McConaughy* 16 May (SJD, AB) and 34 in the e. Rainwater Basin 18 May (JGJ). Four were reported from Kansas 5-24 May (*fide* LM), with up to 4 at *Hackberry* 21 Apr (L&MT)-25 May (JAG, VF, JW) and 15 in *Tulsa* 14 May (JWA). Amazing counts of migrant Long-billed Curlews from Kansas were 400+ in *Kearny* 2 Apr (MRa) and 245 in *Finney* 25-28 Mar (TS). High Hudsonian Godwit counts of 1139 in the e. Rainwater Basin 15-16 May (JGJ, WRS) and 1033 in *Seward*, NE

20 May (JGJ) were equally remarkable. A record-early Hudsonian was as far n. as *Antelope*, NE by 6 Apr (MB); 4 were at *Red Slough* by 4 Apr (DA). Marbled Godwit by contrast posted a high count of only 14—in *Ellsworth*, KS 28 Apr (MR). Eight were late in *Clay*, NE 22 May (JGJ, WRS).

A count of 104 Ruddy Turnstones noted in the e. Rainwater Basin 15-26 May (JGJ) was very high; only 12 were reported from Kansas 30 Apr-26 May (*fide* LM). High shorebird numbers usually foretell some “zooties”; this season’s were 4 Red Knots in *Hamilton*, NE 18 May (EV) and a surprising 2 Ruffs: Nebraska’s 5th, an apparent male in basic plumage, was in *Clay* 26 Mar (JGJ); and a female was in *Reno*, KS 5 May (KK), one of fewer than 10 Kansas records. Other outstanding counts for the Region were 193 Sanderlings at *McConaughy* 16 May (SJD, AB), 3300 Semipalmated Sandpipers at *Harvard Marsh* 30 Apr (JGJ), 7000 White-rumped Sandpipers in *York*, NE 18-20 May (JGJ), and 6400 Baird’s Sandpipers at *Harvard Marsh* 30 Apr (JGJ). Buff-breasted Sandpiper’s numbers astonished; Joel Jorgensen’s surveys 3-24 May tallied minimally 3457 in the e. Rainwater Basin, where a significant portion of the world’s population funnels through a two-county-wide corridor. Up to 8 were seen as far w. as *Hackberry* 4 May (VE, JAG). The 89 Short-billed Dowitchers in the e. Rainwater Basin 18 May (JGJ) and 26 w. to *McConaughy* 16 May (SJD, AB) were unusual counts for the Region; a single was in *Wagoner*, OK 14 May (JWA). American Woodcock continues to push its w. limits in Nebraska, with singles in *Rock* 2 Apr (CHa), *Antelope* 3 & 13 Apr (MB), and *Hall* 5 May (HH). While 40 Red-necked Phalaropes in *Logan* 15 May (SJD) is only a modest number for w. Nebraska, a single female in *Wagoner*, OK 14 May (JWA) was unusual there.

The spring gull show was unremarkable by recent standards. A first-winter Little Gull in *Loup*, NE 15 May (SJD) and an ad. Laughing Gull in *Sequoyah*, OK 6 Mar (BH) were the only ones of their species reported. California Gulls away from *McConaughy* included ads. at *Hackberry* 4 May (JAG) and *Platte*, NE 13 May (B&LP), plus a subad. at *Hefner* 5 & 11 May (PV, JAG). Lesser Black-backed Gull continues to consolidate its seasonal pattern as a migrant: singles were in *Lancaster*, NE 26 Mar (LE), at *Omaha* 20 Apr (JGJ), in *Mitchell*, KS 23 Mar (PEL), at *Hefner* 11-21 May (JAG), and at *McConaughy* 16 May (SJD, AB). An ad. Arctic Tern in *Morton*, KS 12 May was a major rarity (CH, MT, SP), only the 2nd for the state. Very early Least Terns were noted in *Pawnee*, OK 9 Apr (JWA, JSi) and at *Hastings*, NE 10 Apr (PDU). Good counts of Black Terns were 1200 at *Harvard*

Marsh 22 May (WRS, JGJ) and 1000 in Harlan, NE the same day (G&WH).

## DOVES THROUGH PIPITS

White-winged Doves, such as the 2 in Kearney 7 May (KS), are still rare sights in Nebraska, but there are now several towns in Oklahoma with well-established populations of the species. Still rare in the Region, a Common Ground-Dove was noted 16 Mar–6 Apr at Red Slough (DA). Black-billed Cuckoos seem harder to come by in recent times; the only reports come from Oklahoma at Tulsa 28 Apr (JWA), in Delaware 14 May (BH, JM), and in Ellis 24 May (DR). The only Snowy Owl that lingered into the spring season was in Coffey, KS 8 Jan–1 Mar (LF, RM). Nesting Long-eared Owls were noted in Knox, NE 20 May (MB), and 5 downy owlets were photographed in Dundy, NE 9 May (TJW); the species is a very local nester in the Region. A Whip-poor-will (of uncertain subspecies) was found in Dawes, NE 20 May (EB); an individual of the subspecies *arizonae* was noted in 2003 in nearby Sioux, NE, the only other Panhandle record for the species. A Lewis's Woodpecker persisted in Cleveland, OK until 5 May (PF).

The Black Phoebe observed in McCurtain, OK during winter remained until 23 Mar (BH, m.ob.). Fallouts of Neotropical migrants have been few in the past several seasons, so the count of 40–50 Western Wood-Pewees in Dawes, NE 26 May (TJW) was noteworthy. A migrant Cordilleran Flycatcher was studied in Scotts Bluff, NE 14 May (KD). Quite early were Say's Phoebes in Cimarron, OK 5–6 Mar (MP) and Knox, NE 9 Apr (MB). At an isolated breeding outpost, several pairs of Vermilion Flycatchers were recorded in Cimarron, OK; they had arrived by 3 Apr (MBS). Another Vermilion was a surprise in Clark, KS 21 Apr (GP). An Ash-throated Flycatcher 13 Apr in Beaver, OK (WH) may have been a pioneer, while one in Barber, KS 23 Apr (*vide* LM) fit a scanty pattern of previous sw. Kansas reports. Scissor-tailed Flycatchers were observed n. to Omaha 5 May (EB) and at two locations in Lancaster, NE 16 (2; CT) & 21 May (JMe).

A male White-eyed Vireo in Sioux, NE 18 May (SJD) furnished only the 2nd Panhandle record; a Bell's Vireo in Kimball, NE 17 May (SJD, AB) provided a first county record. Also wandering westward were single Yellow-throated Vireos in Finney, KS 4 May (CO) and Holt, NE 29 May (MB, DSg). Eighteen Plumbeous Vireos in Monroe Canyon, Sioux, NE 18 May (SJD) was a significant observation. Only a few Philadelphia Vireos were reported: in McCurtain, OK 7 May (BH), at Red Slough 10 May (DA),

and in Douglas, NE 24 May (MB). Cave Swallow probably nests somewhere in Oklahoma; an ad. and a juv. were noted on the Red R. in McCurtain, OK 31 May (MW).

Clark's Nutcrackers were still counted by the dozen in Sioux, NE on 5 Mar (WM); also in Sioux, 5 were in Monroe Canyon 7 Mar (CNK), one in Pants Butte Canyon 18 May (SJD), and 8 in Sowbelly Canyon 20 May (GW, EBa). The 7 nutcrackers in Monroe Canyon 18 May were courting and building nests (SJD), only the 3rd instance of breeding documented in Nebraska. Fish Crows



This nest of Long-eared Owl in Dundy County, Nebraska represented a rare find in the Southern Great Plains. This species apparently nested widely throughout the southern-central portion of the continent in 2005, probably in response to an abundance of prey (and abatement of drought). Photograph by Larry Williams.

were reported in numbers in ne. Kansas, including a kettle of 17 in Linn 7 May (CH); one was in the same county 2 Apr (MM, GP), and another was in Coffey 17 Apr (MG). A Mountain Chickadee wintering in Scotts Bluff, NE was last seen 1 Apr (P&DD). Two White-breasted Nuthatches far w. in Scotts Bluff, NE 16 Mar were of the e. subspecies (AK). A Rock Wren in Stanton, NE 11 Apr (WF) was e. of typical range. Rather early was a House Wren in Dodge, NE 8 Apr (D&JP). After several off years, migrant Swainson's Thrushes appeared to be more abundant across the Region this season. One in Harlan, NE 24 Apr (G&WH) was early, as was a Wood Thrush in Richardson, NE 20 Apr (CC). A Wood Thrush in Comanche, OK 14 May (JAG) was w. of usual areas. Townsend's Solitaires were observed e. to Ellsworth, KS 14 Mar (MR) and Payne, OK 9 & 13 Apr (TO, PV, TU). The long-staying (since Oct 2002) male Curve-billed Thrasher in Sioux, NE continues; this season, it fed robin and grackle nestlings (LFr). A Sprague's Pipit at Red Slough 17 Mar (DA, MW, BS) provided one of few local records.

## WARBLERS THROUGH FINCHES

Warbler migration was light this season. A Blue-winged Warbler in Sarpy, NE 22 May (JTo) and one w. to Morton, KS 13 May (MT, SP, CH) were the only reports of this rare

species from those states; at least 2 made it to Oklahoma (*vide* JM). Single Golden-winged and Cape May Warblers in Washington, OK 9 May (MP) made a good morning; another Golden-winged was at Red Slough 10 May (DA). Tennessee Warblers appeared in better numbers this spring in Nebraska, but it seems to be getting more difficult to find the normally common Nashville Warbler. A rather rare migrant in the Region, a Virginia's Warbler was in Morton, KS 12 May (SP, CH). Single Chestnut-sided Warblers in Comanche, OK 5 May (JAG, VF) and Loup, NE

15 May (SJD, B&LP, LR, RH) were w. of usual corridors. Palm Warblers were reported from Nebraska in above-average numbers, including 5 in Sarpy, NE 5 May (EB) and 9 at Red Slough 3 May (DA, BH, MW). Several Bay-breasted Warblers were seen in McCurtain, OK 7–10 May (BH, DA, FB), and one was a rarity as far w. as Loup, NE 15 May (SJD, B&LP, LR, RH). Blackpoll Warblers made a reasonable showing in the Region, with 30 reported from Nebraska alone. Any Cerulean Warbler records are noteworthy these days; singles were noted at two locations in LeFlore, OK 17 Apr (DR et al.) and 5 May (BH), in Richardson, NE 6 May (WRS, PEL), and in Sarpy, NE 10 May (B&LP); one in Scotts Bluff, NE 14–16 May was much farther n. and w. than

most (NMV, *vide* AK). Two Ceruleans each were in Douglas, NE 16–21 May (JTo, CNK, PSw) and Leavenworth, KS 7 & 14 May (DF, JS). Among warblers moving westward were 2 Pine Warblers (now established in Tulsa, OK) in Payne, OK 2 Apr (TO); 2 Northern Parulas in Woodward 17–30 May (TO, PS); and 3 Louisiana Waterthrushes were in Woodward, OK 17 May+ (TO, PS). A Connecticut Warbler in Sarpy, NE 13 May (JTo, CNK) was the only one reported.

The male of a pair of Spotted Towhees seen 21 May in Sarpy, NE (EB) had a diluted white spot at the base of the primaries (WRS), which suggests introgression with Eastern Towhee at this location. Searches for Bachman's Sparrows in Oklahoma have had success in McCurtain and Pushmataha (MHo), with one noted in Tulsa 16 May (EE). Searches also located single Rufous-crowned Sparrows 23 Apr in Comanche and Barber, KS (*vide* LM), where the species apparently summers. Nelson's Sharp-tailed Sparrows were reported in York, NE 13 May (12 birds; MH) and Dixon, NE 15 May (one bird; JJ). A Fox Sparrow in Garfield, NE 14 May (CNK, B&LP) and a Harris's Sparrow in Dixon, NE 28 May (JJ) were both quite late. A small group of 10 Chestnut-collared Longspurs 15 Apr in Cimarron, OK (WH) was likewise on the late side.

A Northern Cardinal found a westerly home in Cheyenne, NE 1 May (AS), only the

2nd report for the county. Westerly were Rose-breasted Grosbeaks in *Scotts Bluff*, NE 12–14 May (KD) and *Alfalfa*, OK 19 May (AW), while Black-headed Grosbeaks were found e. to *Douglas*, NE 8–14 May (DGu), *Riley*, KS 11 May (LJ), *Lancaster*, NE 13 May (RE), and *Sedgwick*, KS 14 May (PJ, JB). Less unusual in recent years are easterly Lazuli Buntings; notable this season were s. records from Oklahoma in *Washington* 14 May (BG) and *Wagoner* 23–24 May (SR, SM). Indigo Bunting × Lazuli Bunting hybrids, not uncommon, were reported from *Comanche*, OK (VF), *Dixon*, NE (JJ), *Garden*, NE (SJD, AB), and *Scotts Bluff*, NE (KD). Contrary to the usual pattern of yearlings arriving later in the season, a first-year male (color-banded) Bobolink arrived early on 20 Apr in *Hall*, NE (DK). Large numbers (up to 144) were noted later in the season in *Lincoln*, *Butler*, *Custer*, and *Valley*, NE (TJW).

The incursion of Pine Grosbeaks into w. Kansas during the winter ended with a male and 2 females in *Grant* last seen 15 Mar (KH). Red Crossbills were found across Nebraska: 3 were in *Lancaster* 20 Mar–17 Apr (LE, D&JP), 12 at *Kearney* 10 Apr (*fide* LR, RH), up to 50 in *Scotts Bluff* in May (AK, KD, AR), and 4 in *Kimball* 17 May (SJD, AB). Among the last reports for lingering Com-

mon Redpolls were one at a *Garfield*, NE feeder 4–5 Mar (LR, RH) and 3 in Omaha through 6 Mar (NR). Pine Siskins were carrying nest material in *Wheeler*, NE 19 Mar (LR, RH) and *Cass*, NE 26 Mar (*fide* RW), typical early dates for Regional nesting, which may also have occurred in Kansas this season (*fide* LM). Of note for being the only one reported was an Evening Grosbeak in *Scotts Bluff*, NE 15 May (AR).

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