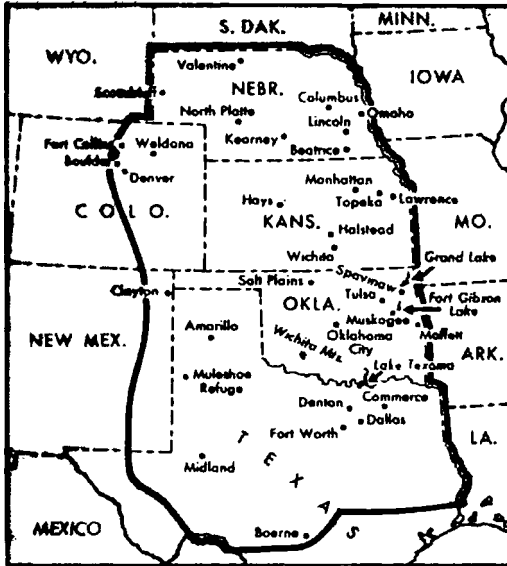


SOUTHERN GREAT PLAINS REGION / Frances Williams

Winter was warm and dry throughout the Region. Fall migrants lingered long past their usual departure time; many species wintered north of their normal range; some spring migrants arrived so early that observers speculated that the birds had never reached their traditional wintering grounds.



BLUE LIST — Nearly all contributors studied their records of these species and reported that the following have shown no significant decrease: Double-crested Cormorant, Turkey Vulture, Sharp-shinned Hawk, Ferruginous Hawk, Harris' Hawk, Marsh Hawk, Burrowing Owl, Bewick's Wren, the three bluebirds, Loggerhead Shrike.

GREBES, PELICAN, ANHINGA — A Red-necked Grebe in Pueblo Co., Colo., Mar. 5 was a first record (VT). Western Grebes wintered at L. Meredith in the Texas Panhandle (BL) and were sighted at Ft. Supply, Okla., Dec. 29 (MD). Two White Pelicans in Stephens Co., Okla. on the CBC were unusual winter sightings (FN), as were Anhingas at Dallas, Dec. 20 & 26 (D&EB, HBN) and Palestine, Tex. on the CBC.

HERONS, SWANS — A Cattle Egret at Union Reservoir east of Longmont, Colo., Nov. 20 was a first record (IB). In McLennan Co., Tex., 46 Cattle Egrets on Dec. 18 constituted a new high count (LMB). Other unusual winter records of this species were at Okla. City, Jan. 20 (BC), Midland, Tex., Feb. 19 (TJ), Fannin Co., Tex., Dec. 27 (WP *et al.*), Bell Co., Tex., Dec. 3 & Jan. 2 (MWi). A Snowy Egret at Dallas, Jan. 8 was very late (AH, HBN), as were Black-crowned Night Herons at North Platte, Nebr., Jan. 9 (MRC) and Jefferson Co., Colo., Dec. 12 (MOS). Localities reporting Whistling Swans increase each winter, as does the number of swans: Lincoln, Nebr., March 3-7 (L&BP); Greeley,

Colo., Jan. 14 (RAM); Denver, Dec. 10 (J&JC) & Dec. 18 (D.F.O.); Cleveland Co., Okla., Mar. 2 (GER); Washington Co., Okla., Jan. 6 (AMM); Buffalo Lake Nat'l Wildlife Refuge, Jan. 5 (PA); Midland, Dec. 11 (TJ). The highest count was 15 at Dallas, Dec. 22 (D.C.A.S.).

GEESE, DUCKS — Five White-fronted Geese were noted at Ft. Collins, Colo., Dec. 22 (JWa). Ross' Geese were carefully identified at Ft. Collins, Jan. 1-17 (RAR). Weld Co., Colo., Mar. 30 (RAR), and the Muleshoe Nat'l Wildlife Refuge CBC. A Barnacle Goose remained at Tishomingo Nat'l Wildlife Refuge, Johnston Co., Okla., Dec. 16-March 1 (EJ). Sea ducks were absent from the southern plains for the first time in several years. No large flights of ducks arrived in the southern half of the Region until after the CBC, and numbers of diving ducks remained low throughout the period. A Black Duck was caught in a banding trap in Weld Co., Jan. 29 (CB *et al.*). Cinnamon Teal were sighted in McLennan Co., Mar. 4 (RC); Bell Co., Mar. 10 & 30 (MWi). This species wintered in Tom Green Co., Tex. in greater numbers than usual (CCW). A European Widgeon was sighted in Hutchinson Co., Tex., Jan. 18-20 (BL, mob). An unusual record for the season was that of a Wood Duck in Cleveland Co., Dec. 18 (MC) and unusual for the habitat was a Wood Duck in a residential area of Dallas, Jan. 17 (KH). A Barrow's Goldeneye remained in Pueblo Co. Dec. 17-Mar. 16 (VT, mob). A Ruddy Duck at Ft. Collins, Dec. 22 was north of its normal winter range (RAR). Hooded Mergansers wintered in Pueblo Co. (VT, mob) and were recorded in Jefferson Co., Mar. 11 (D.F.O.), Bell Co., Dec. 3 (MWi), Howard Co., Tex., Feb. 20 (LBP), Cimarron Co., Okla., Dec. 28 (MD); Butler Co., Kans., Mar. 21 (MMi).

VULTURES, HAWKS — Observers at Ft. Worth estimated 631 Turkey Vultures occupying a roost in the CBC circle (MRa). A migrating flock of 150 Turkey Vultures was sighted at Tahlequah, Okla., Feb. 25 (LD). A White-tailed Kite was present in Freestone Co., Tex., Jan. 4 (JCT). A Mississippi Kite sighted in McLennan Co., Mar. 8 was early (LMB). Goshawks were reported at Pueblo, Dec. 18 (DGr); Ft. Collins, Jan. 24 (JWa) & Feb. 26 (JMc); Kenton, Dec. 29 (MD); Ft. Worth, Dec. 18 (F.W.A.S.). Very few reports of Cooper's Hawks were received. Harlan's Hawks are so difficult to identify that it is moot whether they are rare or just overlooked. Records this winter included Ft. Collins, Dec. 22-Feb. 5 (WR *et al.*); Tom Green Co., Feb. 20 (CCW); throughout the period in Oklahoma at Ripley (ZM), Claremore (RS) and Oklahoma County (JGN). Observers who recognized the significance of their observations and gave good details reported Swainson's Hawks Feb. 13 at Bellevue, Nebr. (TK) and Feb. 26 at South Bend, Nebr. (TM). The Swainson's Hawk in Pueblo Co., Mar. 19 was very early (DGr, VT). White-tailed Hawks continue to be reported from the Dallas area but as yet no specimen has been secured to substantiate these sight records. On February 6, a hawk count was made along 46 miles of highway in Ector and Crane counties in w. Texas. Live hawks seen were 45 Harris' and five Marsh Hawks. Dead hawks on the roadside included nine Harris', two Red-tailed and three Ferruginous

Hawks. Probably most of the dead hawks had been struck while feeding on jackrabbits killed by automobiles (JH). More reports of Golden Eagles were received than in the past five years, and the number recorded on the Denver CBC was the highest in 20 years. One was sighted in an urban area of Ft. Worth during December and January (MRA). Bald Eagles winter at all the large reservoirs of the Region, and the population at several lakes increased this year. Ospreys were noted at Hays, Kans., Mar. 1 (GC); Clayton, New Mex. (no date given—WC); Dallas, Mar. 19 (BV). Caracaras nesting in Brazos Co., Tex. had two eggs Mar. 24 (GFC, OG). This species was sighted in Freestone Co., Tex., Dec. 1 & Jan. 13 (JCT), McLennan Co., Feb. 29 (LMB). Prairie Falcons wintered in good numbers on the Colorado plains. The only Peregrines reported were at Ft. Worth, Jan. 28 (RP) and Dallas, Feb. 1 (D.C.A.S.). More Pigeon Hawks were sighted in the Region than last winter. At Ft. Collins, 35 Sparrow Hawks were banded during the last week of March (JMc).

CRANE, RAILS, SHOREBIRDS — The birders who picked out one Common Crane (*Grus grus*), in a flock of 10,000 Sandhill Cranes at North Platte, March 26-30 were certainly sharp-eyed (I W, LC, mob). What was assumed to be a different individual was located at Elm Creek, Nebr., Mar. 31 (MT). At least five Virginia Rails wintered in Pueblo Co. (VT). Four or more Suras wintered at Midland (M N.) and one in Howard Co., Feb. 19 was a new county record (LBP). A Mountain Plover was located in Dallas Co., Mar. 25 (D.C.A.S.). An Am. Woodcock at Wichita Nat'l Wild. Ref., Dec. 28 was a first record (JT), and one in McLennan Co., Dec. 14 was a noteworthy winter sighting (BF). A flock of 300 Long-billed Curlews wintered at Midland, the largest flock in the 27 years records have been kept (M.N.). Another flock of about 50 birds wintered in nearby Glasscock Co. (SC). Spotted Sandpipers were sighted in Howard Co., Jan. 7 & Feb. 4 (LBP) and McLennan Co., Dec. 18 (LMB). Dunlins occurred at Dallas, Jan. 22-Feb. 5 (HBN, mob) and at Oklahoma City, Dec. 14-15 (JS). Two Am. Avocets were located at Waverly, Colo., Feb. 27 (HKH).

GULLS, TERN — Glaucous Gulls continue to be sighted on the large reservoirs of the plains. Records this winter included L. McKinney, Kearny Co., Kans., Dec. 22 (JWW); Union Reservoir, Jan. 20 (IB); Denver, Dec. 18 (D.F.O.); Ft. Gibson, Okla., Jan. 1 (JNo); L. Hefner and Overholser, Okla. Co., Dec. 18-Feb. 13 (JGN). Franklin's Gulls lingered at Topeka until Dec. 18 (EL). Twelve at Loveland, Colo., Mar. 19 were early migrants (RAR). A Forster's Tern remained in Tom Green Co. through December (CCW).

OWLS, HUMMINGBIRDS — Most contributors did not have enough data to report on the status of the Barn Owl. South Plains birders should make a special effort to locate pairs of this species. Nineteen Great Horned Owls were counted on the Denver CBC. The average total for the past 10 years has been four. On the Pawnee Nat'l Grassland in March there were 14 pairs of Great Horned Owls, but only 8 pairs were nesting (RRO). In Dallas County, 6 Great Horned Owl nests had eggs or young Mar. 5 (B&KO). A Pygmy Owl at Ft.

Collins, Dec. 22, was the first CBC record in 25 years of counts at that locality (CB). Burrowing Owls wintered farther north than normal: Stillwater, Okla., Feb. 18 (HB); Greer Co., Okla., Feb. 25 (BC, mob); Pueblo, Mar. 31 (DGr). At least 10 Long-eared Owls wintered in Weld Co. (KM). Short-eared Owls were observed only in Dallas Co., Jan. 31 (DJ) and Tom Green Co., Jan. 8 (CCW). A Ruby-throated Hummingbird remained at a feeder in Tulsa until Dec. 23 (JW), mob). Black-chinned Hummingbirds arrived one to two weeks early in most of the western plains.

WOODPECKERS, FLYCATCHER — Pileated Woodpeckers were sighted in Cleveland Co., Jan. 7 (GER); Lindsay, Okla., Mar. 28 (MAJ *et al.*); Dallas, Feb. 12 & Mar. 4 (PJ *et al.*). A Pileated Woodpecker at a feeder in an urban area of Tulsa must have been a startling sight (MJH). Numbers of Red-headed Woodpeckers were counted at Tulsa, where there were 57 on Jan. 2 (T.A.S.) and Norman, Okla., where at least 20 are present in a small wooded tract (GER). This species appeared at Pueblo, Feb. 19 (DGr) and San Angelo, Dec. 20 (CCW). Yellow-bellied Sapsuckers do not normally winter in Omaha, but one was sighted there, Jan. 22 (TM). A Lewis' Woodpecker at Midland, Jan. 18 to end of period (TJ, mob) and two at San Angelo, Dec. 20 to end of period (CCW, mob) were so far out of range that the records on the plains of Colorado seemed normal. Sightings were made at Las Animas, Jan. 29-March 15 (CR) and at Harmony, Mar. 19 (RAR). A Lewis' Woodpecker was also recorded during the Scottsbluff, Nebr. CBC. Wandering Vermilion Flycatchers caused excitement at Waterton, Colo., Mar. 19-20 (NH, mob) and in Cleveland Co., Mar. 15 (PB) and Mar. 19-20 (WH, mob). At the same period, one strayed eastward to McLennan Co. (RC).

LARK, SWALLOWS, CORVIDS — The Horned Larks which were missing from the Colorado plains (RAR) must have been at Ft. Worth, where 1119 were counted on the CBC (F.W.A.S.). Tree Swallows arrived in Jefferson Co. (D.F.O.) and Dallas Co. (HBN) Mar. 11. Bank, Rough-winged and Barn Swallows were included in the flight at Dallas on that date (HBN). There was a large wintering population of Blue Jays in Dallas (HBN). In Midland, 15 Blue Jays were sighted on Jan. 23, the largest number ever counted at that locality (JK). Nine Black-billed Magpies were observed at Ames, Nebr. in late November (LH). A Com. Raven was located on Pawnee Grasslands, Dec. 20 (HK) and a White-necked Raven at Denver, Dec. 18 was a first CBC record (D.F.O.).

VERDIN, NUTHATCHES, WRENS — A Verdin collected in Jackson Co., Okla., Jan. 2 constituted the first specimen for the state (GMS). Fourteen White-breasted Nuthatches on the Payne Co., Okla. CBC was an unusually large number (ZM). Red-breasted Nuthatches were absent or scarce at most localities. A Carolina Wren wintered at Hays (WM, BW). A Long-billed Marsh Wren and a Rock Wren were reported at Ft. Collins, Dec. 22 (JWa). A Rock Wren was also sighted at Nunn, Colo., Dec. 20 (RAR).

MIMICS, THRUSHES — A Cathbird at Tulsa, Mar. 2 was an early arrival (YT). A Brown Thrasher wintered

at Hays (CAE); another remained in El Paso Co., Colo., Dec. 12-Jan. 1 (MSP) and one was sighted at Spavinaw, Okla., Jan. 1 (JNo). A Curve-billed Thrasher wintered in Pueblo (VT). A roost of thousands of Robins was located at Tahlequah in January, but the Robins were soon displaced by Starlings. Red-winged Blackbirds and cowbirds (LD). Hermit Thrushes lingered through the CBC period as far north as Denver and c. Oklahoma. Western Bluebirds were observed again at Kenton, Okla. in December (MD). Mountain Bluebirds wandered to Washington Co., Okla., Jan. 19 (DGo) and McLennan Co., Feb. 13-27 (LMB, mob). Almost three times the usual number of Townsend's Solitaires were counted during the Denver CBC. This species wintered at Topeka (RG) and one was located at Ft. Worth, Mar. 4 (I & AB, mob).

WAXWINGS, PHAINOPEPLA, SHRIKES — Bohemian Waxwings were reported only at Ft. Collins, Feb. 24 (WS) and El Paso Co., Feb. 20 (MSP). Hundreds of Cedar Waxwings were present in Tulsa (HS) and Midland (M.N.) during February. A Phainopepla frequented a residential area of Midland during January (JH). Northern Shrikes were comparatively rare on the plains, being sighted only at Clayton, Jan. 22 (AK, WC) and Salt Plains Nat'l Wildlife Refuge, Dec. 30 (LB *et al.*).

WARBLERS — Myrtle Warblers were found at Topeka, Dec. 18 (A&JM) and Ft. Collins, Dec. 22 (RAR). Golden-cheeked Warblers had arrived in Kendall Co., Tex. by Mar. 11 (IS, MSh), and were sighted at Meridian State Park, March 18 (AMo) and Johnston Co., Mar. 22 (I.&AB). A Pine Warbler remained at Tahlequah, Feb. 11-27 (LD). A N. Waterthrush in Brazos Co., Mar. 12 was early (JvO).

ICTERIDS, Tanager — All blackbirds were low in numbers at Tyler, Tex. (GS) and w. Texas — at least they were not concentrated in CBC circles. A Yellow-headed Blackbird lingered in El Paso Co. until Dec. 5 (MSP). Four or imm. orioles were sighted in various parts of Dallas during January (D.C.A.S.). Rusty Blackbirds occurred west to Pueblo, Jan. 30 (DS, VT); Hays, Mar. 4 (MRo); Longmont, where they wintered (VB). A Com. Grackle at Clayton, Feb. 4 & 29, was a first winter record (WC). A ♀ Summer Tanager was observed at Ft. Worth, Jan. 31 & Feb. 7 (MP).

FRINGILLIDS — Evening Grosbeaks were sighted at Omaha, Jan. 22 (TM, mob) and during the Duncan, Okla. CBC. Purple Finches occurred in small flocks throughout the Region, south to Bell Co. (MWi) and west to Midland (JK), but their distribution was spotty. Four Pine Grosbeaks remained at Omaha, Jan. 10 to end of the period (TM, mob). About 100 Gray-crowned Rosy Finches frequented a feeder in Denver, where they were occasionally joined by seven Black Rosy Finches (RB). A small flock of Brown-capped Rosy Finches at Lyons, Colo., Jan. 8 provided a second record at that locality (MWh). A Hoary Redpoll was studied carefully at Bellevue, Nebr. daily from Feb. 28-Mar. 15 (TM, mob). Common Redpolls were more abundant than ever before at Omaha, Jan. 9-Mar. 15 (TM, mob). On Mar. 1, about 400 were sighted in Holt Co., Nebr. (GL), and 75 came to a feeder at Lyons Jan. 10 (CM). The species wintered at Hays (CAE), and was sighted at Ft. Collins, Feb. 2 & 24 (ATC, JWa). Pine Siskins were absent or in

low numbers over most of the Region, being reported as common only at Omaha. A Lesser Goldfinch was located in Adams Co., Colo., Feb. 21 (MOS). White-winged Crossbills appeared at Omaha, Mar. 27 (MMo, mob). The occurrence of a Green-tailed Towhee at Oklahoma City, Dec. 18-Mar. 1 was inexplicable (JS, mob). The high count of 85 Rufous-sided Towhees found during the Wichita Mts. CBC was probably related to the mild fall temperature. A Grasshopper Sparrow was found dead in a residential area of Dallas, Dec. 1 (HBN), and one on the McLennan Co. CBC was a first winter record (LMB). Baird's Sparrows wintered in Palo Duro Canyon (KS). Le Conte's Sparrows were recorded on CBCs as far west as Hagerman Nat'l Wildlife Refuge, Ft. Worth, and Tom Green Co. Although more Oregon Juncos were sighted at Omaha than usual (TM), juncos of all species were generally low in numbers. Chipping and White-throated Sparrows remained north of their normal winter range. A Harris' Sparrow was sighted at Longmont, Dec. 28 (F.A.C.). In Cleveland Co., Chestnut-collared Longspurs were very rare all winter (GMS) whereas Smith's were seen in small numbers from Nov. 20 to Feb. 2 (WH). In Brazos Co., a flock estimated to contain 1000 longspurs was observed on February 4 (KAA, mob). This flock was composed of 90% Lapland Longspurs, the others being McCown's and Chestnut-collared Longspurs.

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