

Northern Great Plains Region

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Cool and mostly cloudy weather characterized the season, with precipitation somewhat spotty. Water levels were generally adequate in most areas and perhaps too good in some. Eastern North and South Dakota experienced some record-high levels that flooded roads and delayed spring planting. A minor warmup in early March in South Dakota and mid-March in North Dakota brought in the first waterfowl, but cool temperatures then ruled until the last few days of May. Two snowstorms hit most of the Region in April, and many North Dakota lakes were still half ice-covered April 15.

Grounding conditions were created by a series of low pressure systems in April and May and, fortunately for birders, most of these occurred on weekends. April 15 and May 13 were notably good days. These systems, often accompanied by southeast winds, brought some very early individual birds and some good numbers for April, but many species peaked one–two weeks later than average.

Season highlights included Golden-crowned Sparrows in all three states, Great-tailed Grackle in South Dakota, and a Louisiana Waterthrush and an eastern race Palm Warbler in North Dakota.

Swans to Shorebirds

Tundra Swans peaked Mar. 8 at 10,000 during a cold spell at Freezeout, MT. Many were stressed and >10 swans seen disabled were scavenged by Bald Eagles (MS). Ross' Geese were early Mar. 11 in *Lake*, SD (JSP), and Snow Geese peaked Apr. 8 at *one million* in *Cass*, ND (BES, CMN). Greater Scaup were record early Mar. 24 in *Grand Forks*, ND, and good peaks were noted, with 88 Apr. 17 in *Grand Forks* (EEF), and 75 in *McHenry*, ND (REM, GBB). Three South Dakota reports spanned Mar. 21–Apr. 22 (BKH, DS, RM). The first North Dakota spring record for Surf Scoter was provided by a single May 17 at Fargo (RHO, CMN), and an imm. male at Fort Peck, MT May 25+ furnished a first spring record for that area (CC).

Bald Eagles peaked at 41 Apr. 9 in *McHenry*, ND. The majority were at Clark Salyer N.W.R. feeding on a muskrat population said by refuge personnel to be 100 times what it was 2 years ago. Hundreds of rats could be seen from any one spot in the marshes. Several Broad-winged Hawks were noted May 6–8 near Choteau, MT (MS, PR, AD). Merlins put on a good show, with 9 records from South Dakota and 11 from North Dakota, the latest May 30 in *Morton*, ND (RK). Four Whooping Cranes were near New Town, ND Apr. 24 (BCH).

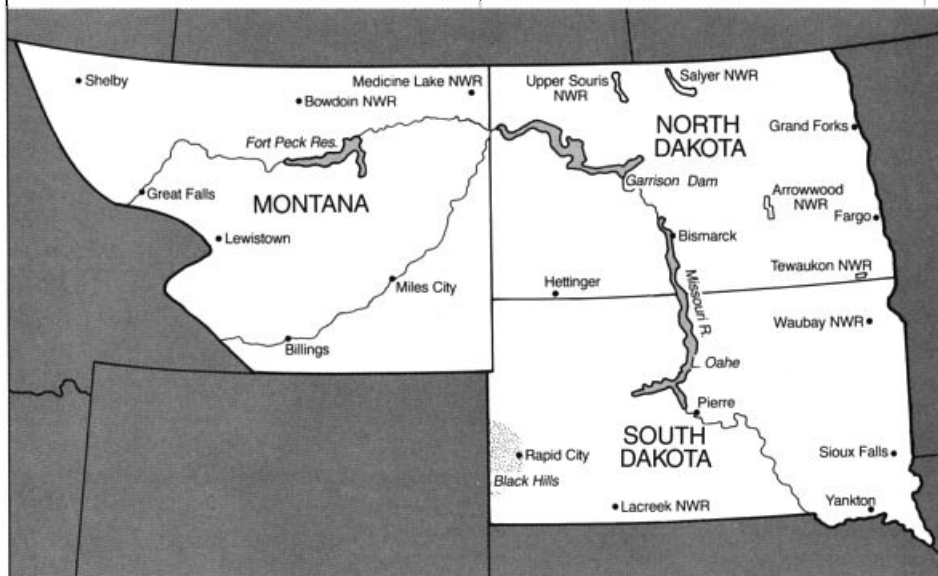
Shorebird numbers were even more dismal than last year in the Dakotas, with most apparently over-flying the Region because of the high-water levels. A Black-necked Stilt in *Brown*, SD May 7 was near last year's nest-

ing location (DAT). American Avocets peaked Apr. 25 at Benton Lake, MT, when 2400 were noted (SM). Lesser Yellowlegs were very early Mar. 25 in *Stark*, ND (JH), and *Clay*, SD (DS). A Whimbrel Apr. 23 in *Grant*, SD furnished the earliest record for that state (DB), as did two Least Sandpipers Apr. 8 in *Clay* and a Baird's Sandpiper Mar. 17 in *Clay* (SVS). Tying the record-early date was a Dunlin Apr. 8 in *McHenry*, ND (REM), and a single at Benton L., May 21 represented the 4th record there (SM, MP). Two Short-billed Dowitcher observations in South Dakota and one in North Dakota were indicative of the scarcity of some species, but eight birds near Westby May 18 (TN) and one at Freezeout May 6 (PR) were rare migrants for Montana. Many of the 122 Com. Snipe in *Grand Forks* Apr. 25 were displaying above CRP fields (EEF). An Am. Woodcock was early Apr. 1 in *Ward*, ND and furnished a first county record (REM).

Gulls to Shrikes

For the 2nd consecutive spring, a Glaucous Gull was found in *Grand Forks*, ND (EEF). Very rare away from Garrison Dam, this year's bird was seen Apr. 30. A Snowy Owl was late in *Brown*, SD April 28 (SLS), and a Barred Owl was unusual Mar. 22 in *Grand Forks*, ND (EEF). Yellow-bellied Sapsuckers made an extraordinary showing with 59 at Fargo April 15 (m.ob.), and 38 Apr. 20 in *Grand Forks*. A Yellow-bellied at Westby, MT Apr. 27 added to the few records for that state (TN). An Eastern Phoebe at Fort Peck furnished only the 6th record for Montana (CC). Establishing a new early date for South Dakota was an individual in *Minnehaha* Mar. 25 (*vide* ND), and the peak of 40 in *Grand Forks* Apr. 21 provided a new high for North Dakota.

Record early was a N. Rough-winged Swallow in *Charles Mix*, SD Apr. 8 (RM). Also early were one each Barn, Bank, and Cliff swallows feeding on the ice at the Minot Sewage Lagoons Apr. 16. After only 4 observations in the Dakotas last spring, Winter Wrens were noted in unusual numbers, with no less than 26 reports. The species peaked at seven in *Beadle*, SD Apr. 16 (RGR), and the single at Fargo May 15 (DDW) was the latest ever for North Dakota. Many observers noted the extraordinary numbers of Ruby-crowned Kinglets. The species was early Mar. 26 in *Minnehaha*, SD (NP), and latest ever May 29 in *Lake*, SD (JSP). A new peak of 100 was established at Fargo, ND May 6 (RHO), and Nordhagen reported them daily May 4–28 at Westby, MT. Several observers commented on the abundance of thrushes. Hermit Thrush peaked at 76 in Fargo Apr. 15,



and the last observed May 28 at Fargo was the latest ever for North Dakota (RHO). Unusual in spring, two Varied Thrushes were in the Chester, MT area April 2–5 (HM). Latest ever by 5 days was a N. Shrike Apr. 29 in Mercer, ND (GGB).

Vireos to Warblers

The bulk of the vireo migration occurred in late May in North Dakota, and most warbler species peaked about a week later than average. Cape May Warblers were noted May 6–29 in North Dakota and a new high of nine was recorded at Grand Forks May 11 (EEF). Yellow-rumpeds peaked at 800 in Grand Forks during the fallout May 13, and on the same day North Dakota's first record of the yellow c. race Palm Warbler was established at Upper Souris N.W.R. (GGB). The 4th record for Louisiana Waterthrush was furnished by a single at Minot May 7 (REM, ph GBB). In Union, SD, a Blue-winged Warbler was observed May 24 (DS), and one of the 8 Golden-winged sightings included a single w. of the Missouri R. at LaCreek N.W.R., May 17 (DS, SVS, KD). Other rare South Dakota migrants included a Prothonotary May 19 in Lake (JSP, ph.), a Hooded May 15 in Brown (DAT, DGP, AH), and a Pine Warbler May 9 in Union (DS). In Montana, Nordhagen reported a Magnolia Warbler May 27 and single Mournings May 28 & 29.

Tanagers to Siskin

Underscoring the lateness of many migrants was the Scarlet Tanager in Grand Forks May 31, the only one reported in North Dakota. A Scarlet Tanager near Westby May 21 provided about the 7th record for Montana (TN). Western Tanagers made a good showing in North Dakota, with one May 22–25 at Devil's L. (ECA), and one near Minot May 25 (LDI). Several North Dakota observers noted unusual numbers of Rose-breasted Grosbeaks at feeders during the cool May weather. A Lazuli Bunting in Lake, SD May 24 was well to the e. of their range (RGR). Good numbers of Baird's Sparrows were reported from the Medicine L. and Chester areas of Montana (MR, HM). With the wet conditions Lark Buntings were again very low over most of the Dakotas.

Extraordinary were three Golden-crowned Sparrow reports, one from each state. South Dakota's first ever was furnished by an adult May 10 in Madison, Lake (RB, JS, et al.). North Dakota's 3rd record was documented at Clark Salyer N.W.R., May 16 (GAE). In Montana, the 6th record was provided by a single May 7 & 8 in Billings (SM, HC, DL). A "White-winged" Dark-eyed Junco was banded in Bismarck, ND Apr. 15 (RNR). North Dakota's 13th record

for E. Meadowlark was provided by a singing male May 7–June 11 near Hope (DLK). South Dakota had 2 Great-tailed Grackle reports, the 2nd and 3rd for the state. A single was in Charles Mix Apr. 6 (SVS), and four males and one female were in Clay, May 24–28 (JS, DS, JSP). Unusual numbers of N. Orioles were noted eating oranges at feeders during the cool May in North Dakota, and at one feeder they were observed eating sunflower seeds. Only 2 Com. Redpoll observations were received, but the species was late April 25 in Meade, SD (EEM). An estimated 300 Pine Siskins were feeding on dandelion seeds in Westby May 26.

Cited observers (area editors in boldface):

MONTANA: Charles Carlson, Helen Carlson, Amanda Dumin, Dave Lewis, Harriet Marble, Stephen J. Martin, Sarah Mast, Ted Nordhagen, Meghan Piercey, Michael Rabenberg, Paul Rodewald, Michael Schwitters. NORTH DAKOTA: Eldon C. Anderson, Gordon Berkey, Gary Eslinger, Eve Freeberg, Justin Hoff, Bernice Houser, Larry Igl, Randy Kreil, Don Kubischta, Ron Martin, Connie Norheim, Bob O'Connor, Bob Randall, Bonnie Stout, Dennis and Diane Wiesenbom. SOUTH DAKOTA: Robert Buckman, Doug Buri, Kurt Dean, Arlen Hansen, Bruce K. Harris, Ron Mabie, Ernest E. Miller, Nathan Pieplow, Jeffrey S. Palmer, D. George Prisbe, Bob Rogers, Sand Lake N.W.R. staff, Jim Shekleton, David Swanson, Dan A. Tallman, Steve Van Sickle.

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Southern Great Plains Region

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The season was marked by being very warm early, and cooler and wetter than normal later. In late April and early May cold fronts moved through the Region almost on a weekly basis, retarding migration. Rosche commented on the late-season snows in western Nebraska. There were record rain falls in some areas, most notably Kansas City, which received 12.75 inches during May. Temperatures across the Region were below average in late April and May. This led to an unusual mix of exceptionally early migration by early season birds, and exceptionally late departures and arrivals of some later-season migrants. Most individuals commented on the wealth of warblers species. Although most birders did not see them, this season produced a healthy collection of extralimital firsts.

Abbreviations: Crescent Lake (*Crescent Lake N.W.R., Garden Co., NE*), Fontenelle Forest (*Fontenelle Forest, Sarpy Co., NE*), Hefner (*Lake Hefner, Oklahoma Co., OK*), McConaughy (*Lake McConaughy, Keith Co., NE*), North Platte (*North Platte N.W.R., Scotts Bluff Co., NE*), Quivira (*Quivira N.W.R., Stafford Co., KS*)

Loons to Waterfowl

Common Loons were reported into late May in Dawes, NE (RCR, DJR), Deuel and Kimball, NE (BP, LP), and Rooks (MZ), Trego (SS), and Russell, KS (GN, LW). In Cherokee, OK, 75 were counted Mar. 28 (DV, NV). Three Horned Grebes lingered until May 11 in North Platte (LK, LKM). A exceptional high count of 4500 migrating W. Grebes was noted on McConaughy Apr. 22 (WRS). Western Grebes away from breeding areas included singles at Hefner Apr. 8 (JAG), Lancaster, NE Apr. 30–May 3 (WRS, SJD), and Quivira May 6 (m.ob.). The only Clark's Grebes reported were at Phelps, NE Apr. 19 (SJD) and Keith, NE May 5 (JJ, GJ).

About 3400 Double-crested Cormorants were noted at Lancaster, NE Apr. 27 (SJD). Among the season's early arrivals was an Anhinga Mar. 13 in McCurtain, OK (BH). An eager Snowy Egret made it to Keith, NE by