

numbers of Dark-eyed Juncos, mainly recorded on CBCs. Red-winged Blackbird numbers were well above average in Alberta. Thirty-five Lapland Longspurs provided a good winter flock at Taber Jan. 13 (LB). The largest Snow Bunting concentrations were 5000 on a grain pile near Beiseker, AB Feb. 5 (JS, PS), 3000 at Frank L., AB Jan. 20 (WS), and >1500 near McArthur Falls, MB Dec. 29 (PT, RZ). Snow Buntings concentrated along railway tracks near Medicine Hat suffered heavy mortality from train collisions (DBo).

An unconfirmed **Brambling**, Saskatchewan's 2nd ever, visited a Saskatoon feeder just twice Feb. 6 (MC). Six-hundred Gray-crowned Rosy Finches graced Exshaw, AB Feb. 21 (JanR), and one wandered E to Swan R., MB Jan. 1 (*vide* HH). Pine Grosbeaks were common in w. Alberta and parts of s. Manitoba, especially in December. Red Crossbills occurred in small numbers in Alberta and w. Manitoba, but were overshadowed by an outstanding invasion of White-winged Crossbills, with especially high numbers in Saskatchewan and Alberta. Common Redpolls also made an excellent showing in the 2 w. provinces (m.ob.), as well as Thompson, MB (ZI). Winter site fidelity is not normally associated with nomadic finches, but a Com. Redpoll captured at Water Valley, AB Feb. 17 had been banded there Feb. 2, 1993 (RD). Hoary Redpolls were well represented in the redpoll flocks, the proportions probably varying with the expertise or confidence of the observers, but rarely exceeding 5%. Pine Siskin numbers were also high across the south, except in easternmost Manitoba. Several Am. Goldfinches wintered in Calgary, and a few in Medicine Hat (m.ob.). Evening Grosbeaks were abundant in Alberta, scarce in Saskatchewan, and found mainly in traditional areas in Manitoba.

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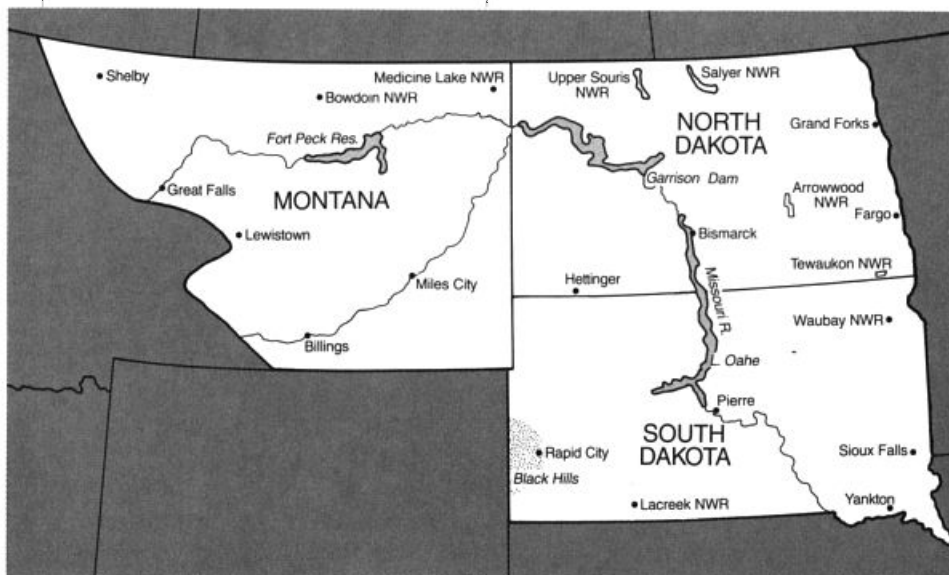
Northern Great Plains

RON MARTIN

It was a relatively severe winter, particularly in the eastern half of North Dakota. The 60 inches of snow that fell there was combined with several bouts of severe cold, with lows near -40° F. South Dakota, western North Dakota, and eastern Montana endured the same cold temperatures and above average snowfall, but the cold spells were punctuated by a few warm periods that helped keep the snow accumulation at a manageable level. Some warmer temperatures were experienced in mid-February, but by period's end below-zero readings had returned in many areas. Fortunately for birders, the CBC period was fairly mild and good species totals were achieved on some counts.

Pelicans to Cranes

The **American White Pelican** last seen Jan. 9 at Arrowwood N.W.R. furnished the first-ever records for December and January in North Dakota (PRS). In South Dakota, Greater White-fronted Geese were early Feb. 24 in *Kingsbury* (JSP) and *Minnehaha* (RS). The thousands of Canada Geese in the Garrison Dam area in December had diminished to zero by early February due to the harsh weather (GBB). The species arrived on schedule in mid-late February at refuges in the n. part of the Region, but the return of cold weather



late in the month forced some back off the refuges (DP). A Wood Duck was very late at Bismarck, ND Dec. 23 (RNR), and Green-winged Teal were present at Garrison Dam until Dec. 17 and at McNeil Slough near Malta to Dec. 20 (DR). Mallards were present in higher-than-usual numbers in the Chester area this winter, but many were found dead in February due to stress and starvation from the cold weather and snow (HM). A Blue-winged Teal Feb. 25 in *Yankton* provided possibly the earliest record for S. Dakota (DPW).

An Oldsquaw wintered at Fort Randall Dam, SD (v.o.) and two spent the season at Garrison Dam, marking the 3rd time the species has wintered there in the 1990s. Farther west, four were at Great Falls, MT Dec. 16 and one remained to Dec. 31 (SM). A Black Scoter at L. Sakakawea Dec. 2 was the latest ever for North Dakota (GBB), and a male discovered Dec. 16 at Fort Peck, MT, remained for 2 weeks. The bird furnished about the 7th record for Montana (CC). Three Com. Goldeneye wintered at Hettinger, ND (D&CG), and two Barrow's Goldeneye were near Rapid City in January (NRW, BKH). A Bufflehead provided the 3rd wintering record at Garrison Dam (REM).

North Dakota observers reported six Sharp-Shinned Hawks, with wintering at Grand Forks and Bismarck (DOL, HCT, CE). Three Cooper's Hawks were noted in North Dakota, with one apparently wintering at Fargo, a rare occurrence in that state (RLR, CAS). Northern Goshawk numbers were unspectacular. Unusual at Bowdoin, a "Harlan's" Red-tailed Hawk spent the period at the refuge headquarters (DP). Rough-legged Hawks moved through the n. part of the Region in the first half of December, and a few remained to winter. Undoubtedly n. migrants were 26 in *Burleigh*, ND Feb. 24 (HCT, CE). Peregrine reports included one Dec. 19 at Chester, MT (HM), one at Yellowtail Dam, MT Dec. 30, 3 South Dakota observations in January (LCS, DS), and one Feb. 20 at Lake Ilo N.W.R., providing the 3rd February record for North Dakota (DB). Four Gyrfalcons were noted in N. Dakota, including a white morph at Medora Dec. 16 (HCT, BM). In Montana, singles were at Medicine L., Jan. 28 (LK, MK), and near Yellowtail Dam Dec. 30.

Gray Partridge remain low in North Dakota, with CBCs recording the 2nd-lowest average per count. A Virginia Rail Jan. 16 at Spearfish provided one of only a few winter records for South Dakota (*vide* BKH). Sandhill Crane flocks totaling 780 were early Feb. 19 in *Meade*, SD (EEM).

Gulls to Shrikes

Fort Randall Dam was the gull hotspot in South Dakota this year. Pending records committee acceptance, a **Laughing Gull** there Dec. 4 and Jan. 5 would represent the 3rd South Dakota and 7th Regional record (BKH, SVS). Also present Dec. 2-4 was an ad. **Little Gull**. If accepted, this would represent the first state record for South Dakota (DS, BKH, MS). Very unusual in winter was a **Franklin's Gull** Jan. 9 at Ft. Randall Dam (DS). Bonaparte's Gulls remained late in good numbers, with 20 at Garrison Dam Dec. 2 (HCT), and >100 at Ft. Randall Dam Dec. 4 (BKH). Not to be outdone, a very late bird in full alternate plumage was at Ft. Peck Jan. 19 (CC). North Dakota's 10th **Iceland Gull** was at Garrison Dam Dec. 10 (REM). **Eight** Glaucous Gulls at Garrison Dam Dec. 10 established a new peak for North Dakota, and the species maximum in South Dakota was four at Ft. Randall Dam Jan. 1 (SVS). A Black-legged Kittiwake remained at Garrison Dam to Dec. 17 (m.ob.), while one-two were at Ft. Randall Dam Dec. 2-9 and one was at Gavins Pt. Dam Dec. 4 (DS).

Snowy Owl numbers were spotty except in portions of c. and e. North Dakota. **Eighteen** were found in n.e. North Dakota Jan. 31 (EEF). The **Northern Hawk Owl** found in *Pembina*, ND in the fall was present to at least Dec. 29, and another was in Grand Forks from mid-January+ (MA, EEF, DOL). Short-eared Owls followed the lead of Rough-legged Hawks and staged their major movement the first half of December. The peak occurred at Bismarck, ND, with 21 Dec. 10 (WEC). A **Red-naped Sapsucker** provided only the 2nd winter record for South Dakota Jan. 13 at Rapid City (NRW). A Com. Raven n. of Ft. Peck Jan. 16 furnished a new latilong record (CC), and six on the Icelandic CBC in *Pembina*, ND, provided the highest count ever for a CBC in that state.

The 211 Red-breasted Nuthatches recorded on North Dakota CBCs represented the highest number ever. Their abundance was indicated by the wintering of >50 individuals at both Minot and Bismarck. Two **Ruby-crowned Kinglets** in Malta, MT Dec. 30 were very unusual in winter there (DP). Bohemian Waxwing numbers were generally unspectacular. The only exception was 1000 at Denbigh Experimental Forest, ND Jan. 14 (REM). Northern Shrikes were present in average numbers, but a documented **Loggerhead Shrike** at Arrowwood N.W.R., Jan. 9 was very unusual in winter in North Dakota (RB).

Warblers to Finches

A Yellow-rumped Warbler in *Meade*, SD Dec. 21 was very late (EEM). Lapland

Longspurs remained in good numbers through the CBC period in North Dakota, and thousands were seen after storms in the Hettinger area (D&CG). Snow Buntings were present in large numbers across much of the Region, with flocks in the 100s encountered routinely. The North Dakota CBC total of 10,400 was the highest since 1969. Snow Buntings were common in the Chester, Malta, and Ft. Peck areas of Montana. The **Bullock's Oriole** present in the fall at Sturgis, SD, remained to Dec. 21 (EEM). Pine Grosbeaks were almost totally absent, except for a nice flock of 60 at the Peace Gardens, ND Feb. 17 (GBB). Purple Finch numbers were average, while House Finch numbers continue to rise, with another record CBC total in North Dakota of nearly 1200. A ♂ **Cassin's Finch** was documented at a Mandan, ND feeder Jan. 18 (WAB). Only one other documented record exists for North Dakota. Three Cassin's Finches were reported for the N Unit Theodore Roosevelt CBC, but no details were received (*vide* JAH). Very few Red Crossbills were noted, but White-winged Crossbills staged a major invasion into North Dakota, with a highest-ever CBC total of 173. In Montana nine were in Chester Feb. 24 (HM), and in South Dakota four were noted Dec. 10 in *Minnehaha* (RS). Common Redpolls made a strong showing, particularly in South Dakota, with Swanson banding 58 in Vermillion, where only one had been observed in the previous 5 years. Flocks in the 100s were regular in North Dakota. With the Com. Redpolls came the sometimes difficult to identify Hoary Redpolls. Small numbers were reported widely in North Dakota, and 2 South Dakota reports included one Jan. 21 in *Brown* (DAT), and one Feb. 3 in *Lake* (JSP). In North Dakota Pine Siskins were present in good numbers in cities, and small flocks of Am. Goldfinches were also noted. The only Evening Grosbeak reported was a single in Malta, MT in February (JM).

Addendum

The sooty Fox Sparrow present last winter near Burlington, ND was identified as one of the *unalaschcensis* group that breeds coastally from the Aleutian Is. to Vancouver I. Thanks to Dr. Robert Zink of the Bell Museum.

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Southern Great Plains Region

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Was this a "normal" winter? For the most part—probably so, but perhaps on the cold side of the median. Several serious winter storms with very cold temperatures erupted in late January, and open water may have become scarce for periods of time in Oklahoma and Kansas, except on the larger reservoirs. The cold weather was probably a culling factor for some resident species or others wintering too far north. Most of Oklahoma had little to no (western sections) precipitation through the period, and observers in Nebraska reported a drier than normal season.

Some notes on die-offs in waterfowl from aspergillosis and cholera came in from Larry Malone for the Nebraska Panhandle. While we all hope for the good news of good numbers of birds, such events are inevitable outcomes from high densities, or concentrating factors where more birds are in contact with each other, and transmissions of diseases between individuals is made easier. In this case, the drier weather both limits wetland habitat



and concentrates the birds that are left.

Rarities seemed hard to come by this season, except for the gulls at McConaughy. There was a modest invasion of redpolls in Nebraska, which overflowed into Kansas, but Pine Siskins were still present only in low densities. Cedar Waxwings made an apparent surge in numbers in central Oklahoma late in the period, but were barely noticeable through January, and present only in mediocre numbers in Nebraska.

Finally welcome data compy, both this author and other local compilers are left in the lurch over records of both geographic and seasonal rarities with no or limited documentation. Ross Silcock comments that seasonal rarities so reported are not infrequently "typos." In other cases, one is left wondering whether that wintering Chipping Sparrow was actually a American Tree Sparrow; a lingering Lincoln's Sparrow or that gray-faced western race of the Song Sparrow. In generating this account, I am left depending on the local compilers or left to make some arbitrary decisions on inclusiveness based on my own subjective instincts for the probabilities or possibilities of misidentification.

Abbreviations: McConaughy (*L. McConaughy, Keith Co., NE*); Quivira (*Quivira N.W.R., Stafford Co., KS*).

Loons to Ducks

The only Red-throated Loon reported for the Region was one Dec. 2 in Trego, KS (SS). A Yellow-billed Loon Dec. 10–15 (MR, SS, m.ob) in Russell, KS provided the first record for that state. A Red-necked Grebe Dec. 21 McConaughy (SJD), if accepted by the N.O.U.R.C. will provide only the fifth documented record for Nebraska. A count of 133 W. Grebes at McConaughy Dec. 21 was remarkably high for the season (*fide* WRS). One W. Grebe was located at Lincoln, NE also Dec. 21 (SJD, WRS).

American White Pelicans lingering farther and farther north into the winter have become the norm. Some are birds trapped by injury. This year, at least two injured birds were reported in Nebraska, with another known to have died by Dec. 30, and other counts of birds dwindling through the period (*fide* WRS). At least six were noted in Kansas.

Tundra Swans were observed Dec. 17 (MC, ML) and Jan. 1 (AS) in Miami, KS, and Dec. 23–Jan. 6 in Saunders, NE (THo). Up to nine Trumpeter Swans were located at McConaughy through the winter, with seven in Hayes, NE during February (RH). Singles were noted in Miami, KS Dec. 12–17 (AS, DA), Johnson, KS