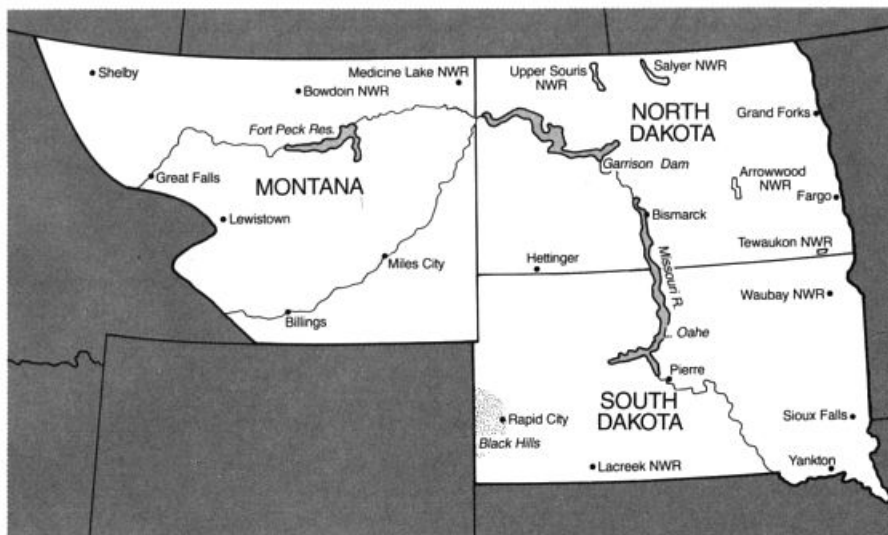


# northern great plains region



## RON MARTIN

Continuing the late spring, migrants lingered into the summer season and nesting was protracted, with some species singing at the end of the period. As is usual on the plains, precipitation was somewhat erratic. June started dry, with talk of drought, but the rains came, making much of the Region fairly wet again. June was warm and July humid by Regional standards. Warblers in the Dakotas were of special interest, first state nesting records were obtained for Great-tailed Grackle and Chestnut-sided Warbler in South Dakota, and the first Regional nesting record for Eurasian Collared-Dove was documented in Montana. Possible first state records in South Dakota included Western Bluebird and Virginia's Warbler.

## GREBES TO RAILS

A Red-necked Grebe in alternate plumage July 14 at Lower Veseth Res., Phillips, MT, was notable, as there are no breeding confirmations in e. Montana (SD). In North Dakota, Red-necked Grebes are pushing east, with one in Steele June 7 (DLK), 2 broods in Nelson July 21 (EEF), and a brood in Grand Forks Aug. 2 for the first confirmed breeding in that county (DOL). A Tricolored Heron was seen June 14 in Brown, SD, where two were present last year (JSP).

Seven Great Blue Heron nests at Kelly's

Slough N.W.R., Grand Forks, ND, furnished the first nesting record for that county (EEF). Another Cattle Egret nesting area was discovered in Stutsman, ND, June 16, with 31 birds near Pearl L. (RLB).

Waterfowl had another very successful year, with good water levels in much of the Region. Very rare in summer, two Greater Scaup were noted in Grand Forks, ND, July 22 (EEF). Two male Barrow's Goldeneyes were unexpected in early June at Bowdoin N.W.R., MT (SD). A Com. Goldeneye was at Stump L., Nelson, ND, July 29, an area where the species nested early in the century (EEF). Rare nesters in e. Montana, 2-3 broods of Hooded Mergansers were at Nelson Res. July 21 & 28 (SD). Out-of-season mergansers included a Common July 8 in Kidder, ND (HCT), and two Red-breasteds at Nelson Res., MT, June 9 (SD).

An Osprey was at Baldhill Dam, Barnes, ND, July 12 (GEN, RHO). Only one attempted nesting is documented for the state. North Dakota's 2nd **White-tailed Kite** was seen near Dickinson, Stark, June 1 (RP). Peregrine Falcons were noted June 21 s.w. of Malta, MT (SD) and July 23 at Minot, ND (REM).

Rails had another good year, with peaks of 25 Yellow Rails calling in Grand Forks, ND, in late July (DOL), and 21 Virginias in s.c. North Dakota July 6 (REM).

## SHOREBIRDS TO HUMMINGBIRDS

Piping Plovers were completely washed out by high water on the Missouri R. system, but the species fared better in n.w. North Dakota and n.e. Montana. Spotted Sandpipers peaked at 210 at the Minot Sewage Lagoons, ND, July 26 (REM). Wandering far to the east was a single Long-billed Curlew July 15 in Ransom, ND (TE, KK). Providing about the 16th and 17th records for Montana were single Hudsonian Godwits June 2 and July 14 at Bowdoin (SD). Ruddy Turnstones were early July 20 in Grand Forks and Benson, ND (EEF, REM). The eight Red Knots at Bowdoin July 30 represented a notable number (SD). Very rare in North Dakota, W. Sandpipers were at Minot July 12 (REM) and Upper Souris N.W.R. July 23 (MV, LV). In Montana, one to 13 were noted at Bowdoin June 2-30 (SD). Very rare in fall migration, a White-rumped Sandpiper was in Grand Forks, ND, July 25 (EEF).

An Am. Woodcock July 10 at Arrowwood N.W.R., ND, was w. of known breeding areas (PRS, RAR). Occasionally Red-necked Phalaropes summer in the Region, and this year they were present in varying numbers in June and July at Bowdoin (SD). The species peaked at 4500 July 20 at the Devil's L. Sewage Lagoons, ND (REM). North Dakota's 9th **Red Phalarope** was documented in Kidder June 16 (DB). A jaeger reported from Upper Souris N.W.R., Renville, ND, July 17 was identified as a Parasitic, but the documentation was inconclusive to species (CT, LV, MV). Caspian Tern peaks included three at Nelson Res., MT, July 28 (SD), and eight at Big Stone L., Roberts, SD, July 26 (BKH). The record-high water on the Missouri R. system pushed Least Terns out to some new areas. A single was at Nelson Res., MT, June 8 (SD). In North Dakota, 4 nests were found at the Falkirk Mine, 10 mi from the river, for the first state nesting away from a river sandbar (MO). However, only about 25 young were produced from 40 pairs that managed to nest this year. In South Dakota, 21 Least Terns were at the extreme w. edge of their range June 26-27 in Meade and Pennington. (MMM).

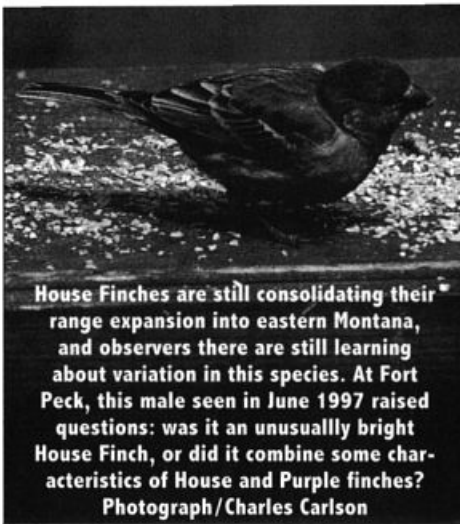
A pair of **Eurasian Collared-Doves** nested at Joplin in n.c. Montana, furnishing the first nesting record in the Region (CC, m.ob.). There were also reports of several individuals in the Billings area (HC). In South Dakota, the species was again noted in *Edmunds*, the same area where the first state record was noted last fall (MZ). Short-eared Owls were scarce in North Dakota, except for scattered pairs in the n.w. corner of the state (RM). A Rufous Hummingbird July 7 in *Custer*, SD, furnished the 2nd-earliest fall migrant record (KH).

#### FLYCATCHERS TO WARBLERS

An early Alder Flycatcher was at Grand Forks, ND, July 29 (DOL). Great Crested Flycatchers were more numerous this year at the n.w. edge of their range in North Dakota along the Souris River. Sedge Wrens had another good year in North Dakota, and one was notably far southwest in *Golden Valley* June 1 (REM).

Blue-gray Gnatcatchers made a big showing in the w. Dakotas. North Dakota's 18th record was furnished by an individual June 26 in the Ponderosa Pines of *Slope* (HCT, BF). In South Dakota, one was in *Meade* July 13 (REP), and two were observed July 2 & 4 in Redbird Canyon, *Custer* (JSP). The birds in Redbird Canyon were in juniper habitat similar to areas used in Wyoming. They are apparently regular migrants in the Cheyenne area to the southwest of the Black Hills. If accepted, a **Western Bluebird** reported in *Pennington* June 28 would provide a first record for South Dakota (TJ). A Wood Thrush was heard at Smith Grove, *Oliver*, ND, June 27, furnishing one of the westernmost records for that state (HCT, BF). A Sprague's Pipit singing in July in *Lyman*, SD, was one county s. of the normal range (SF), and 9 nests were found at Bowdoin during grassland studies (PG, JH, JW, MA).

Two Blue-winged Warblers were singing in Newton Hills S.P., *Lincoln*, SD, June 3 (RFS). There is no confirmed South Dakota nesting as yet. A pair of Orange-crowned Warblers was carrying fecal sacs in the Little Rockies, MT, July 9 (SD). Migrant Nashville Warblers included nine headed N June 1 (EEF) and one headed S July 29 (DOL) in Grand Forks. Furnishing the first state record for South Dakota were nine **Virginia's Warblers** at 6 locations in Redbird and Roby Canyons, *Custer*, SD, July 2 & 4 (JSP, RAP, JLP, DS). The nearest known nesting area is near Casper, Wyoming. A N. Parula was seen in *Meade*, SD, June 16 (REP). There are less than 10 summer records for



House Finches are still consolidating their range expansion into eastern Montana, and observers there are still learning about variation in this species. At Fort Peck, this male seen in June 1997 raised questions: was it an unusually bright House Finch, or did it combine some characteristics of House and Purple finches? Photograph/Charles Carlson

South Dakota. The first nesting of **Chestnut-sided Warbler** for South Dakota was documented June 28 in *Meade*, when a pair was photographed at a nest (BAS). This area is about halfway between the next nearest nesting localities in the first range of Colorado and the Turtle Mts. of North Dakota. Also of note was a Chestnut-sided singing in good nesting habitat in Sica Hollow, *Marshall*, SD, June 9 (BKH). The Black-throated Blue Warbler in *Minnehaha* June 10 would provide about the 3rd summer record for South Dakota (MZ). An out-of-place Yellow-rumped Warbler was in Fargo, ND, June 25-26 (RHO), and a Pine Warbler was singing July 5 at Denbigh Experimental Forest, providing one of the westernmost records for North Dakota and the first for *McHenry* (REM, GBB). A singing Cerulean Warbler June 27 at Smith Grove, *Oliver*, provided the westernmost record for North Dakota (HCT, BF).

#### GROSBEAKS TO GOLDFINCHES

The 3rd confirmed nesting of **Blue Grosbeak** in North Dakota was furnished by a pair with two grosbeak and three cowbird young near Solen, *Sioux*, July 21 (KH, HCT). The nest was later found depredated, probably by cats. Elsewhere, a male Blue Grosbeak was at Hettinger, ND, July 31 (D&CG), and a pair was far west in *Meade*, SD, June 18 (EEM). A bird identified as a hybrid Green-tailed X Spotted Towhee was at Camp Cr. in the Little Rockies, MT, June 27 & 28 (JW, JH). Two Field Sparrows singing July 20 at Sully's Hill Game Preserve provided the first breeding season record for *Benson*, ND (REM).

Twenty-one Baird's Sparrow nests were found at Bowdoin during the period (SD). Casual in South Dakota, a Henslow's Sparrow was singing June 17-24 in *Miner* (RGR, JSP, RFS). North Dakota's 17th E. Meadowlark record was provided by a bird singing near DeWald Slough, *Kidder*, June 19 (DB). A **Great-tailed Grackle** was carrying nesting material at Wagner, *Charles*

*Mix*, establishing the first recorded nesting for South Dakota (RC). Documentation was requested for two Purple Finches reported July 2 in *Pennington*, SD (TBW). The status of this species in the Black Hills is uncertain. House Finches were confirmed nesting in Malta, MT (DP). At Ft. Peck, a male *Carpodacus* thought to have features of both Purple and House finches was paired with a female House Finch. When the pair brought young to a feeder it was noted that they could be mistaken for Cassin's Finches, with streaked undertail coverts and a facial pattern more distinct than on adult House Finch (CC). Red Crossbills were feeding young in *Day*, SD, June 19 (DRS), and Red and White-winged crossbills lingered to July 5 at Denbigh Experimental Forest, ND (REM, GBB). A Lesser Goldfinch was in Hot Brook Canyon, *Fall River*, SD, July 2 (RAP). They have now occurred in the canyon for 7 consecutive years.

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