

# southern great plains region



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In an era of generally bad news for bird populations, the Plains—used to a history of boom and catastrophe—is playing out the “bear market” currency of water, good times being simply the years of normal to good water. Not unexpectedly, waterbirds appear to be doing well. Some are doing exceptionally well, such as Pied-billed and Western grebes, Great Egrets, and Wilson’s Phalaropes. Some less conspicuous marsh birds were also more widely reported this season, including Least Bitterns and Virginia and King rails.

Some waterbirds may be doing well because of events outside the Region. The increase in reports of Pacific Loons may simply signify a shift of migration pattern for some sub-population, but it could be the result of increased probabilities for extralimittals, when there are more birds capable of making the “mistake.” Greater Scaup and scoters may fall in this category, and implicate kinder conditions in Arctic and taiga breeding areas. More than the usually modest array of Buff-breasted Sandpipers, Red Knots, and Sanderlings, the seemingly high-

er-than-average numbers of Horned Grebes, the virtual boom in numbers Franklin’s Gulls, and the unprecedented numbers of Sabine’s Gulls observed this fall may be part of this pattern.

The season had the “traditional” array of fronts move through. Some in late September seemed to bring either larger populations of birds, or higher numbers concentrated by the fronts. These included species, such as Vesper Sparrows and Lapland Longspurs. While fronts through October seemed to bring some waterfowl and raptors down to the Region a little ahead of

schedule, the generally moderate fall weather seemed to result in more birds of species such as herons and tyrannid flycatchers lingering later.

More birds generally means more rarities. Besides the greater-than-normal flush of typical rarities, the Region also recorded one of the few North American records for Long-billed Murrelet. Also continuing was the recent surge in several dove species, or an assortment of others.

This Regional Editor is gratified that documentation of many unusual reports has improved as many birders recognize the contrasting difference between the knowledge gained from supporting their observations, compared to the muddle when they don’t. Even when some identifications are found in error, birders can be thankful that these records will not be able to achieve infamy, and drag the observer’s names into the mud of historical criticism. This does not include everyone, and honest mistakes will still be made, but the clarity of perception is still greatly enhanced. No small part of this trend is thanks to the support and encouragement of state compilers.

Finally, I would like to recognize two long-standing—and outstanding—contributors to the Southern Plains accounts, Richard and Dorothy Rosche, who have retired and left the Region to return to their older haunts in western New York. Richard and Dorothy have been enduring in their systematic and careful contributions, which have produced several significant publications on the birds of western Nebraska. Their meticulous observations make their work the most reliable for this vast, expansive, and sparsely populated region of Nebraska. While no longer physically present, I can hope and expect the summary and synthesis of their long-standing record-keeping will still continue to etch its way into the archives of Nebraska Ornithology.

**Abbreviations:** Cheyenne Bottoms (*Cheyenne Bottoms W.M.A.*, Barton Co., KS); Crescent Lake (*Crescent Lake N.W.R.*, Garden Co., NE); Fontenelle Forest (*Fontenelle Forest*, Sarpy Co., NE); KBRC (*Kansas Bird Records Committee*); McConaughy (*L. McConaughy*, Keith Co., NE); NOURC (*Nebraska Ornithologists’ Union Records Committee*); North Platte (*North Platte N.W.R.*, Scotts Bluff Co., NE); Ogallala (*L. Ogallala*, Keith Co., NE); OBRC (*Oklahoma Bird Records Committee*); Quivira (*Quivira N.W.R.*, Stafford Co., KS).

## LOONS TO WATERFOWL

Red-throated Loons were reported from Oct. 25–Nov. 8 in Douglas, KS (AP, m.ob.), and Oct. 31 (undocumented) in Cass, NE (*vide* WRS, JGJ). At least three different Pacific Loons were noted Oct. 26–Nov. 23 in North Platte (SJD, JS). Others were found in Lancaster, NE, Oct. 28 (LE); Madison, NE, Nov. 1–2 (MB, DH, NB); Tulsa Nov. 1–14 (BC, JWA et al.); Pawnee, OK, Nov. 22 (JWA); Russell, KS, Nov. 22–28 (PJ et al.); and Oklahoma Nov. 23 & 28 (NKU, LMA, JSt). Three Com. Loons summering at L. Ogallala, NE, were noted during August (SJD et al.), with a 4th at North Platte Aug. 2 (SJD et al.); another was observed in Noble, OK, Aug. 1 (JWA).

Perhaps a “wave” of Horned Grebes were the 145 Nov. 8 at North Platte (SJD,

JS). Red-necked Grebe reports have really picked up in recent years; this season brought reports from *Brown*, NE, Sept. 27 (LR, RH); *Burt*, NE, Nov. 9 (JGJ); and *McConaughy* Nov. 16–24 (SJD, JS). Pied-billed Grebes seemed more abundant, as indicated by a count of 239 on L. Yahola in *Tulsa* Sept. 20 (JWA). Spectacular numbers of *W. Grebes* from *McConaughy* (20,000+ on Oct. 4–5; SJD et al.) is likely fueling some of the increased occurrences from the rest of the Region—at least 10 individuals from *Kansas* (fide CH) and 19 from *Oklahoma* (fide JSt). A healthy 764 were counted at *North Platte* Oct. 26 (SJD), and 5 pairs Aug. 22 in *Kearny*, KS (JD), may indicate another breeding outpost in *Kansas*. Eleven Clark's Grebes were discovered at *McConaughy* and *North Platte*, with another at *Lancaster*, NE, Oct. 11–19 (JGJ et al.), one–two in *Russell*, KS, Oct. 29 and Nov. 3 (MR), and one in *Blaine*, OK, Nov. 28 (JSt). A hybrid Western X Clark's Grebe was reported from *North Platte* Aug. 15 (SJD).

Encouraging were reports of 11 Am. Bitterns from *Nebraska* (fide WRS, JGJ), and at least three from *Kansas* (fide CH). As many as eight Least Bitterns were found in *Otoe*, NE, Aug. 5–16 (JS, m.ob.). Vagrant herons made generally good showings along the edges of their range, with 49 Great Egrets at *Harlan*, NE, during August (SJD, JGJ), 34 at *Clay*, NE, Aug. 10 (JGJ, JS), and 32 in *Otoe*, NE, Sept. 13 (LF, CF). The 400 Great Egrets counted in *Tulsa* Aug. 16 (JL) would underscore thriving numbers. Four Great Egrets wandered west to *Cimarron*, OK, Sept. 20 (JSt), and another lingered to a record-late Nov. 8 in *Lancaster*, NE (BFH, JS, MB). Also quite late was a Snowy Egret Oct. 15 in *Lancaster*, NE (JS), and another Nov. 1 in *Tulsa* (fide JL). Thirteen Little Blue Herons were reported from *s e Nebraska*, with singles *w. to Phelps*, NE, Aug. 2–10 (LR, RH); in *Harlan*, NE, Aug. 4–14 (SJD); and *Morton*, KS, Aug. 29 (BPe). The only Tricolored Herons reported were at *Quivira* Sept. 27 (TH) and *Alfalfa*, OK, Sept. 26–Oct. 1 (AW, DW, J&YH). Three imm. Yellow-crowned Night-Herons in *Otoe*, NE, Aug. 14 were exceptional (SJD, JS), one was also noted at *Clay*, NE, Aug. 10 (JGJ, JS). A Roseate Spoonbill roosting in *Iowa* encroached on *Nebraska* air space in *Otoe* Aug. 5 & 14 (SJD, WRS), and another appeared in *Osage*, OK, Sept. 3–5 (JWA et al.). Vagrant White Ibises were located in *Bryan*, OK, Aug. 1 (JSt, JWe), and *Kingfisher*, OK, Aug. 9 (PS, JL).

Tundra Swans were well reported in *Nebraska*, with 5 reports of 10 birds beginning

Nov. 1 at *McConaughy* (SJD); three were found at *Quivira* Nov. 15 (SS). Trumpeter Swans were "numerous" in the Sandhills during August (fide WRS, JGJ). Dave Hilley counted an impressive 50,000 Greater White-fronted Geese at *Quivira* Nov. 1. The count of 88 Ross's Geese at *North Platte* Nov. 9 (SJD) was the high for the fall period.

American Black Ducks are hard to come by, but at least one Mottled Duck was noted in *Barton*, KS, Aug. 8 (SS). The status of Greater Scaup is likely being rewritten for the *s. Great Plains*. *Nebraska* tallied 30–31 across the state (fide WRS, JGJ), and two were observed in *Tulsa* Nov. 19 (JWA). But the hotspot for the Region was *Sooner L., Pawnee/Noble*, OK, where 27 were counted on an early date of Oct. 18, and 64–96 were counted Nov. 8, 10, & 22 (JWA). Five Oldsquaws were reported from *Nebraska* (fide WRS, JGJ), six from *Kansas* (fide CH), and two from *Oklahoma*; one of the latter in *Tulsa* was observed Oct. 28, an early date (AM et al.).

Three Black Scoters—the rarest of the scoters—were found Nov. 13 in *Lancaster*, NE (JS); one was in *Riley*, KS, Oct. 26 (TC), and two were in *Pottawatomie*, KS, Nov. 11 (CR). Three Surf Scoters were found at *North Platte* Oct. 27 (SJD), one in *Wabaunsee*, KS, Nov. 2 & 8 (DLS), seven (!) in *Johnson*, KS, Nov. 8 (MC), and two in *McClain*, OK, Nov. 19 & 27 (JSt, PM, BM). White-winged Scoters, however, outdid the rest, with 11 birds reported from *Nebraska* and three from *Kansas*—the earliest were Oct. 21 in *Geary*, KS (CO), Oct. 25 in *Douglas*, NE (JGJ), and Oct. 28 at *Lancaster*, NE (JS), with three there Nov. 3 (JGJ).

A Com. Goldeneye Sept. 11 at *Crescent Lake* (MF) was either summering, an exceptionally early migrant, or possibly even a *Barrow's*. Common Merganser numbers at *North Platte* rose to 12,107 Nov. 25 (LK). Another species whose numbers are increasing is the Red-breasted Merganser; 47 in *Burt*, NE (JGJ), and 28 at *North Platte* (SJD, JS), both Nov. 9, were considered outstanding (fide WRS, JGJ).

#### RAPTORS TO RAILS

The *Mississippi Kites* nesting at *Ogallala*, NE, may represent a breeding outpost; five adults managed to fledge at least two young (SJD). Northern Goshawks were documented as far south and as early as Oct. 4 in *Creek*, OK (JWA). Encroaching west was a Red-shouldered Hawk Nov. 15 at *Quivira* (SS, MR). An ad. Broad-winged Hawk in *Morton*, KS, Sept. 14 (BPe, MR et al.), and an immature in *Halsey*, NE, Sept. 27 (JS,

BH) were farther west than most. Golden Eagles wandered E to at least *Lancaster*, NE, Oct. 17 (JS) and *Fontenelle Forest* Oct. 21 (BP, LP). An impressive 28 Merlins were reported from *Nebraska*; birders there are including details on plumage type, separating the paler *richardsoni* from the darker *columbarius* (3 reports; fide WRS, JGJ). Four Merlins were reported from *Kansas*, and seven from *Oklahoma*. Migrant Peregrine Falcons windowed the period from Sept. 2 to Oct. 12 (fide WRS, JGJ), but with only one report from *Kansas* (fide CH) and four from *Oklahoma* (fide JL, JSt, JWA).

King Rails were noted in *Otoe*, NE, Aug. 5–16 (SJD, WRS, JS); *Texas*, OK, Sept. 9 (JSt et al.); and *Tillman*, OK, Sept. 30 (JSt, NKu). Elusive, but likely more regular, six Virginia Rails were present at *Keith-Garden*, NE, Nov. 15 (SJD). A Yellow Rail was noted Oct. 18 in *Douglas*, KS (DKI, KB), and one was found dead Oct. 20 in downtown *Tulsa* (JWA). Probably nesting was a Com. Moorhen noted with a juvenile in *Otoe*, NE (JS, m.ob.); one Nov. 7 at *Quivira* was late (MRo). *Quivira* posted 90,000 Sandhill Cranes Nov. 1 (DH1). Whooping Cranes windowed the period from Oct. 16 to Nov. 4 in *c. Kansas*; 13 was the high count Oct. 25 at *Quivira* (DH1).

Four Piping Plovers were found Aug. 17 at *Platte*, NE (JGJ, GJ). A list of tardy charadriiforms included an Am. Avocet Nov. 2 at *Morrill*, NE (SJD), and seven Nov. 22 at *Quivira* (MT, GY et al.); a Lesser Yellowlegs Nov. 23 at *McConaughy* (SJD); two Long-billed Curlews Nov. 4 at *Quivira* (PJ, DV); Baird's Sandpiper Nov. 23 at *Quivira* (MRo); and a Dunlin at *Lincoln*, NE, Nov. 16 (SJD). Surprising was a count of 14–16 Red Knots Aug. 4–5 at *Sedgwick*, KS (TH, PJ). Tens of Sanderlings were reported from *w. Nebraska* and *c. Oklahoma*. Reports of Short-billed Dowitchers from *Nebraska*, all juveniles, ranged from Aug. 19 (*Douglas*, NE; JGJ) to Sept. 11 (*York*, NE; JGJ, GJ). The reports from *Kansas* and *Oklahoma* windowed Aug. 3 to Sept. 27 (fide CH, JL). Among the best tallies for Buff-breasted Sandpipers were 167 and 179 in *Tulsa* Aug. 17 (JL, PS) & 19 (JWA), respectively. Reports were generally more numerous this season, from Aug. 2–Sept. 14. A tidy 2000 Wilson's Phalaropes graced *Crescent Lake* Aug. 24 (JS). Red-necked Phalaropes occurred mostly in *w. Nebraska*, with high counts of 14 at *Scottsbluff* Sept. 6 (JS, SJD) and 16 in *Seward*, KS, Sept. 21 (PJ et al.).

"Pelagic" trips on *Nebraska's McConaughy* Oct. 4–5 produced a juv. Parasitic Jaeger (JS et al.)—only *Nebraska's*

2nd, if accepted by the N.O.U.R.C. A **Pomarine Jaeger** Nov. 15–19 in *Lancaster*, NE, possibly Nebraska's 5th, must also pass the acceptance gauntlet. Two other reports will have to settle for jaeger species: Sept. 22 at *Lancaster*, NE (JS), and Oct. 12 at *McConaughy* (SJD).

Fears of crashes in Franklin's Gull populations are tempered by estimates of 100,000 in *Coffey*, KS, Oct. 24 (CB, FY), and 500,000 (certainly lots) in *Sedgwick*, KS, also Oct. 24 (PJ). Somewhat surprisingly, there was only one report of a Laughing Gull, in *Rogers*, OK, Aug. 2 (JWA). Little Gulls were noted Sept. 6 at North Platte (juveniles; SJD, WRS, JS), and at *Burt*, NE, Oct. 19 (JGJ). The high count for California Gulls at *McConaughy* was 105 Oct. 4 (SJD et al.). Away from *McConaughy*, Californias were found at *Harlan*, NE, Aug. 4 (*vide* WRS, JGJ); Aug. 14 and Nov. 2–16 at *Lincoln*, NE (SJD et al.), *Oklahoma*, Aug. 11 (MO, JSt); *Douglas*, KS, Nov. 8–9 (LM); *Lancaster*, NE, Nov. 9 (JGJ); and *Pierce*, NE, Nov. 22 (JS). An ad. Thayer's Gull was well-studied at *Keystone L.*, *Keith*, NE, Oct. 4 (SJD et al.); first-winter birds were at *Ogallala* Nov. 10 (JS) and in *Lancaster*, NE, Nov. 16 (JGJ), and a 3rd-winter bird was noted Nov. 22–29 at North Platte (SJD, JS).

Second-winter Lesser Black-backed Gulls were documented from *Tulsa* Nov. 11–22 (JCH et al.) and *Lancaster*, NE, Nov. 29–30 (JGJ et al.). A first-winter Great Black-backed Gull at *Knox/Cedar*, NE, Nov. 2 (MB) was about Nebraska's 11th. Records for both of these species were nonexistent 10 years ago.

Reports of Sabine's Gulls occur each fall, although they are few and far between, making them hot-line finds. This year, however, they were difficult to count and separate in Nebraska. At least 24, possibly 30, birds were reported from Nebraska between Sept. 6–Oct. 15 (*vide* WRS, JGJ). Nine (two adults and seven immatures) were counted at North Platte Sept. 21 (SJD, DCE); five juveniles were noted at *McConaughy* Sept. 13–14 (SJD). A meager two



**An outlier from a major invasion occurring farther north, this male White-winged Crossbill was in Johnson County, Kansas, in mid-November 1997. Photograph/Debarah Arnett**

immatures were found in Kansas, one Sept. 11 at *Cheyenne Bottoms* (AS, BPe) and Sept. 15 & 27 at *Quivira* (CH, SP, EP). Two immatures were found in *Tulsa* and *Pawnee*, OK, Sept. 7–11 (JL, PS), with another Sept. 7–9 in *Oklahoma* (NKu, m.ob.).

Common Terns are rare but regular through the Region in the fall, with most reports for September; this year as many as seven were noted at North Platte Sept 13–21 (SJD, DCE, JGJ) and *Douglas*, KS, Oct. 11 (MM, GP, DS). Several documented reports for very late birds included singles at *Lancaster*, NE, Oct. 25 (JS), and North Platte Nov. 1 (SJD). A Forster's Tern lingered to Nov. 23 in *Tulsa* (BC).

Undoubtedly the find of the decade was a **Long-billed Murrelet** Nov. 21 at *Wilson Res.*, *Russell*, KS (MR, m.ob.). Those rushing out were rewarded, but by the afternoon of Nov. 22, it could no longer be found.

A Eur. Collared-Dove appeared Nov. 29 in *Buffalo*, NE (RH, LR), to provide N.O.U.R.C. with its first decision on origin for this species. Several others were noted in *Sherman*, KS, Aug. 9 (TC, m.ob.). Conventional wisdom seems to favor expansion of the southeastern U.S. population, but some are uncertain. White-winged Doves continue their pulse with several in *Canadian*, OK (LRO), and one in *Reno*, KS, Aug. 30–Sept. 15 (LW). Inca Doves are doing likewise, with reports continuing from s.c. and w. Kansas at *Sedgwick* (Gillmore,

m.ob.) and *Morton* (MR, R&LS), and others in *Tulsa* Nov. 27–30 (JBi et al.) and *Canadian*, OK (LRO). A Com. Nighthawk lingered until Nov. 3 in *Tulsa* (BC). The W. Screech-Owls on the Colorado border in *Morton*, KS, continue to draw the attention of Kansas birders (SP et al.).

Hummingbirds have been almost as interesting as gulls in recent years. Ruby-throated Hummingbirds were reported as far west as *Kearney*, NE, Sept. 9 when five female/immatures were noted (GB). One was identified in *Seward*, KS, Aug. 31 (SP). Another Ruby-throated lingered

to Nov. 6 in *McCurtain*, OK (BHe). Unidentified *Archilochus* were noted in *Morton*, KS, Aug. 30 (T&NG) and Sept. 21 (PJ et al.). A female **Calliope Hummingbird** photographed in *Finney*, KS, Aug. 22 (JD) will undergo review. A female Broad-tailed Hummingbird photographed in *Pawnee*, KS, Aug. 20–22 (DK) is being reviewed by the K.B.R.C. Rufous Hummingbirds reports included a female in *Kimball*, NE, Aug. 11 (BFH); *Sumner*, KS, Aug. 31–Sept. 2 (JSn); *Sedgwick*, KS, Sept. 12–14 (JM); and *Johnson*, KS, Nov. 20–30 (GT, JG, NL). An additional eight *Selasphorus* sp. were reported, all between Aug. 1–Sept. 6, and all in *Kimball*, NE (*vide* WRS, JGJ).

A Lewis's Woodpecker in *Ellis*, KS, Oct. 28–Nov. 4 (CK) was e. of most. Among the identification treats or threats were those for *Empidonax* flycatchers. On these, you can't always believe everything you see, but you may not see them if you don't believe them, making their identification range from "sure it was" to an agonizing problem depending on the caution, expertise, confidence, false confidence, or "twitch" factors of the observers. With this in mind, a Yellow-bellied Flycatcher was reported from *Dodge*, NE, Aug. 16 (DH), an early date; six reports of Hammond's Flycatchers came from w. Nebraska and Kansas, between Sept. 8 and 21. A Cordilleran Flycatcher was reported from *Sioux*, NE, Sept. 7 (WRS, JS). Up to 10 Cordillerans were identified and documented in *Morton*, KS, Aug. 29–30 (SP,

MT et al.). Several Gray Flycatchers were reported from *Morton*, KS; one documentation for a Sept 21 observation (PJ et al.) is under review by the K.B.R.C.

A Say's Phoebe was reported in *Brown*, NE, Sept. 27 (LR, RH), e. of most. An Ash-throated Flycatcher from *Morton*, KS, Aug. 11 (JR) was nice, but one from *Linn*, e. KS, Sept. 6 (MM) was exceptional. Western Kingbirds passed through in a flurry with 300+ counted in *Morton*, KS, Aug. 30; only three could be found Aug. 31 (MT et al.). Late August presented good counts of E. Kingbirds, with 180 Aug. 22 at *Stanton*, NE (DH) and 100s Aug. 30–31 in *Riley* (TC). A late Cassin's Kingbird was noted in *Scottsbluff*, NE, Oct. 5 (AK), and a Scissor-tailed Flycatcher persisted to Nov. 22 in *Garvin*, OK (JSt).

Perhaps carry overs from last year were two Steller's Jays in *Scottsbluff*, NE (SB). Three Com. Ravens were documented in *Morton*, KS, Nov. 8 (SP, MR). Strongly suggestive of a fall influx was a count of 168 Black-capped Chickadees in *Scottsbluff*, NE, Sept. 17 (NK). A Mt. Chickadee appeared early in *Cimarron*, OK, Sept. 20 (JSt et al.). Several Bushtits wandered east to *Morton*, KS, Nov. 8 (SP, MR). Red-breasted Nuthatches made a modest show across the Region in better than normal, but not exceptional, numbers. Far afield was a Carolina Wren Nov. 15–16 in *Cheyenne*, KS (*vide* CH).

Marsh Wrens have ways of surprising us with both their presence and absence. One was noted in *Otoe*, NE, Aug. 6 (MB), a date suggestive of nesting; another was noted Nov. 20 at Crescent Lake (MF), and will likely winter or die there. A Rock Wren in *Alfalfa*, OK, Sept. 26–Oct. 1 (AW, DW, J&YH) was unexpected.

The limits of Blue-gray Gnatcatcher range in the Nebraska panhandle are still being worked out; the four reported this fall may be a sign of more regular occurrence in this area (*vide* WRS, JGJ). Several W. Bluebirds were reported from Kansas, but only a female in *Morton* Nov. 8 (SP) was documented and is under review by the K.B.R.C. A Varied Thrush was located Oct. 21 in *Russell*, KS (MR). Sage Thrashers were found e. to *Morton*, KS, Sept. 16 (RM) and *Pawnee*, KS, Sept. 21 (SS), and a Curve-billed Thrasher also wandered onto the plains at *Morton*, KS, Sept. 14 & 20 (DV et al.).

#### VIREOS TO WARBLERS

A report of 30 Bell's Vireos in *Garfield/Loup*, NE, Sept. 7 (LR, RH) was encouraging; the distribution of this species may

have become more heterogeneous and difficult to interpret in recent decades.

Species splits always bring new interest to old birds, and wonder of whether they were there all the time, or are part of a surge in expectancy bias. We have Blue-headed Vireos reported in e. Nebraska and Kansas from Sept. 3–Oct. 28 (latter late for Nebraska; *vide* WRS, JGJ); the westernmost documented Blue-headed Vireo was noted in *Cimarron*, OK, Sept. 21 (JSt, JW). For the newly recognized Cassin's Vireo, two (old) Nebraska and three Oklahoma specimens exist. Six documented reports for this species (under review) were received for Aug. 24–Sept. 21, five for birds from the Nebraska Panhandle—2 locations in *Scottsbluff*, Aug. 24 (SJD, JS) and Sept. 6 & 7 (SJD, WRS, JS), and in *Kimball* Sept. 1 & 21 (SJD). One Cassin's was documented from *Morton*, KS, Aug. 30 (MT et al.); several other Cassin's were reported from *Morton*, KS, but the very brief descriptions left their identity ambiguous. This editor fears that both careful reading and *assimilation* of information in publications such as Heindel (*Birding* 28:458–471) will be needed to provide more accurate reporting of this species. A Plumbeous Vireo was documented from *Stanton*, NE, Sept. 21 (DH); if accepted by the N.O.U.R.C., it will represent the first for this taxon in e. Nebraska. Another Plumbeous was documented for *Cimarron*, OK, Sept. 21 (JSt, JW). A Philadelphia Vireo at *Scottsbluff* Sept. 3 (NK) provided only the 3rd Nebraska panhandle record.

Golden-winged Warblers are among the Region's "zootie" finds. Singles were noted Sept. 4 in Fontenelle Forest (JA), and Sept. 23 in *Shawnee*, KS (MP, E&KM); another even more surprising was found in *Sioux*, NE, Sept. 14 (JGJ). Other tough finds were a Blue-winged Warbler Sept. 6 in *Linn*, KS (MM), Black-throated Blue Warbler Sept. 25 in *Douglas*, NE (JB), and a Connecticut Warbler Sept. 9 in Fontenelle Forest (JA).

Tennessee and Orange-crowned warblers present interesting identification issues which observations have probably not separated, at least not for this editor. Dull imm. Yellow Warblers are probably not too uncommonly misidentified as Orange-crowns, an error which over enhances the reports of Orange-crowned Warblers in August. Some observers use the gray and white head pattern rather than (or in preference to) the color of undertail coverts to identify Tennessee Warblers, creating potential errors which probably over-represent fall reports of Tennessees. Nonetheless, two Tennessee Warblers, unusual in the Nebraska

Panhandle, were noted Sept. 13–14 in *Kimball* (SJD). Possibly early were Orange-crowned Warblers reported Aug. 26 in *Otoe*, NE (LF, CF), and *Scottsbluff*, NE (NK).

Among eastern warblers wandering west were a N. Parula in Halsey, NE, Sept. 22 (RG); Chestnut-sided Warblers Sept. 13 at North Platte (JGJ) and Sept. 17 in *Scottsbluff* (NK); a Blackburnian in *Garden*, NE (SJD), Bay-breasted Sept. 8 at Crescent Lake (WRS, JS); a Prothonotary at *Scottsbluff* Sept. 13 (MB, DH, JGJ); and Hoodeds in *Jefferson*, KS, Aug. 9 (MM), and *Tulsa* Sept. 25 (JWA). A small flurry of Pine Warblers were reported in Kansas w. to *Harvey* Aug. 2 (BD), *Finney* Aug. 22 (JD), *McPherson* Aug. 31 (TH, CS), and *Sedgwick* Sept. 24 (CG). Western warblers included five Townsend's Warblers Sept. 6–21 in *Kimball*, NE (SJD et al.), and a Black-throated Gray Warbler Aug. 28 (BPe) and Sept. 12 (SP, BPe) in *Morton*, KS. Blackpoll Warblers, more typically moving along Atlantic fronts in the fall, were noted Sept. 4 at Fontenelle Forest (JA), Sept. 12 in *Morton*, KS (TC, BPe), and Sept. 13 in *Dixon*, NE (JJ).

#### TANAGERS TO FINCHES

A Scarlet Tanager in *Sedgwick* Sept. 25 (PJ) was w. of most, as was an E. Towhee in *Rush*, KS, Oct. 22 (SS). A Field Sparrow at *Sioux*, NE, Sept. 13 (MB) was at the w. limits of its range. Exceptionally early were four Am. Tree Sparrows Sept. 24 in *Rush*, KS (SS). Also early was a Vesper Sparrow Sept. 2 in *Tulsa* (AR). Nelson's Sharp-tailed Sparrows were found in numbers, with two Oct. 3 in *Geary*, KS (CO), and four–six in *Sumner*, KS, Oct. 23–28 (MT et al.). Others were at *Lancaster/Saunders*, NE, Oct. 12 (JS), and *Hamilton*, NE (2), Oct. 21 (JGJ, WRS). Two Bachman's Sparrows were located in *Tulsa* Aug. 23 (JL, LF et al.). A Harris's Sparrow Oct. 1 in *Knox*, NE (MB), was early. About 10,000 Lapland Longspurs converged on *Rush*, KS, by Nov. 15 (SS). A late migrant Bobolink was found in *Douglas*, KS, Nov. 9 (MRo). Considering that late July may be the primary migration time for Orchard Orioles, a pair with brood Aug. 11 in *Kimball*, NE (BFH), draws some wonder. Late for such numbers were the 100+ Orchard Orioles in *Morton*, KS, Aug. 30 (MT et al.).

A hefty 46 Gray-crowned Rosy-Finches were noted Nov. 22 at *Scottsbluff*, NE (SJD), six more were found in *Sioux*, NE, Nov. 29 (SJD). Perhaps marking an impending influx were five–seven White-winged Crossbills in *Madison*, NE, Nov. 4 (NB, MB), with singles Nov. 10–17 in *Johnson*, KS (DA),

and Nov. 17–30 at *Sarpy*, NE (JS). A Com. Redpoll Nov. 9 in *Douglas*, KS (MRo), furnished an early fall record for an exceedingly rare winter visitor.

**Cited observers (area editors in boldface):**

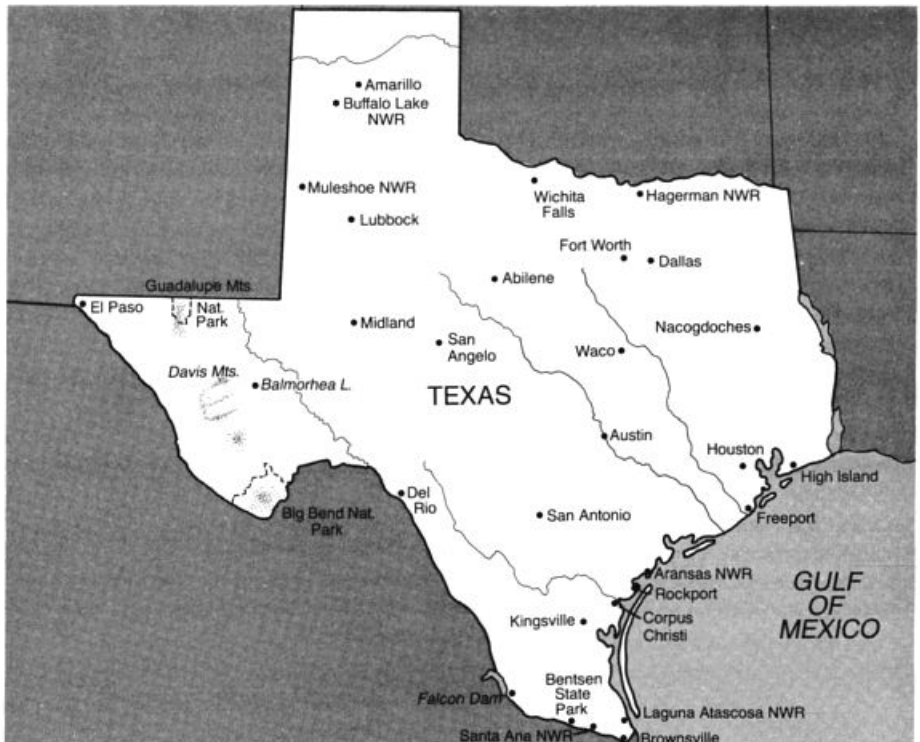
KANSAS: Debarah Arnett, Kim Bostwick, Curtis Brobisky, Ted Cable, Mike Cooper, Bob Dester, Jon Dunn, JoAnne Garrett, Terrell & Nelda Giddens, Chet Gresham, Tyler Hicks, Dave Hilley (DH*i*), Chris Hobbs, Pete Janzen, Don Kazmaier, Dan Kluza (DK*i*), Charlie Kraus, Dan LaShelle, Nancy Leo, Erin and Kathy McDowell, Jane McFarland, Mick McHugh, Roger McNeill, **Lloyd Moore**, Chuck Otte, Sebastian Patti, Brandon Percival (BPe), Galen Pittman, Marie Plinsky, Alexis Powell, Eric Preston, Mike Rader, John Rakestraw, Mark Robbins (MRo), Chad Runco, Carolyn Schwab, David Seibel, Scott Seltman, Andy Siglar, Ruth and Lawrence Smith, Joe Steiners (JS*n*), George Taylor, Max Thompson, Don Vannoy, Linda Willbanks, Fred Young, Gene Young. NEBRASKA – Jim Alt, Stella Bigsby, John Brenneman, Norma Brockmoller, Mark Brogie, George Brown, Stephen J. Dinsmore, Larry Einemann, David C. Ely, Carol Falk, Laurence Falk, Marlin French, Ruth Green, Betsy Hancock, Robin Harding, Dave Heidt, Bill F. Huser, Jan Johnson, Gerry Jorgensen, **Joel G. Jorgensen**, Alice Kenitz, Lucy Koenig, Nick Komar, Babs Padelford, Loren Padelford, Lanny Randolph, **W. Ross Silcock**, John Sullivan. OKLAHOMA: James W. Arterburn, J. Bible (JB*i*), Bill Carrell, Lynda Fritts, Berlin Heck (BHe), Jack & Yvonna Hill, James C. Hoffman, Nathan Kuhnert (NKu), **Jo Loyd**, Larry Mays (LMa), **Louis McGee** (LMc), Brian Muzny, Pat Muzny, Mitchell Oliphant, Linda Robertson (LRo), Aline Romero, Pat Seibert, John Sterling (JSt), Jeff Webster (JWe), Anne Wilbur, Dick Wilbur, Jim Woodard.

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Place names that are frequently mentioned, but very long, may be abbreviated in a form such as "C.B.B.T." or "W.P.B.O." Such local abbreviations will be explained in a key at the beginning of the particular regional report in which they are used. Standard abbreviations that are used throughout *Field Notes* are keyed on page 21.

# texas region



**GREG W. LASLEY, CHUCK SEXTON, MARK LOCKWOOD, CLIFF SHACKELFORD, and WILLIE SEKULA**

Heavy rains in much of east, central, and south Texas contributed to abundant surface water and wild food resources. There were a few good fallouts of passerines during the biggest downpours along the coast. The weather in the Panhandle was "unexceptional" and for the most part mild. The migration was termed "a bit dull" in much of central and west Texas, although the latter area garnered some significant rarities. Early arrival dates and late lingering migrants gained much mention statewide; we include only the more remarkable of these in the space available. Numbers of many wintering species were way down (especially westward), yet nuthatches made an incursion into the eastern part of the state. Grassland birds were seemingly sparse in the western half, but notably abundant to the east. Matt White in north Texas remarked, with some irony, that "rare loons and larids in November are now almost routine, as birders con-

tinue to scrutinize the area lakes."

Overall the reporting network was uneven this season, with some missing pieces of the picture in the Dallas-Ft. Worth area and under-birded parts of east and central Texas. Two pelagic trips out of Port O'Connor August 23 and September 20, and another pelagic trip out of Port Isabel September 20, continued to round out our picture of Texas' offshore avifauna. The west Texas mountains began to get the attention they deserve in the exciting late-summer period.

The timely reporting of hawk-watching results, notably by Winnie Burkett (Smith Point) and Patty Beasley (Coastal Bend), was just thrilling this season. The Smith Point event takes place at the Candy Absher Wildlife Management Area at the edge of Galveston Bay. The Coastal Bend watch is at Hazel Bazemore County Park near Corpus Christi. As always, we are grateful to John Economidy and the Hawk Migration Association of North America for their efforts and information.

The concentration of eager observers at such events as the fall Texas Ornithological Society meeting in Greenville in early