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northern great plains region

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Following the mild winter, March came in with some snow and cold. April and May were mild with little precipitation, particularly in western North Dakota and eastern Montana. The migration was unusual, with a few individuals of some species appearing early, only to be absent for a couple of weeks thereafter.

There was a spectacular waterfowl migration at Freezeout Lake, Montana, in mid-March. Shorebirds, in good numbers at Freezeout Lake and in South Dakota, were unspectacular in North Dakota. Warblers and thrushes were universally noted in low numbers, and sometimes only a few individuals of a species were seen very late in the season. One of the few fallouts was noted in *McHenry*, North Dakota, May 9.

Highlights included possible first state records for Anhinga in North Dakota, Black Rail in South Dakota, and the first Common Raven nest this century in North Dakota.

GREBES TO MERGANSERS

South Dakota's earliest ever Pied-billed Grebe was in *Yankton* Mar. 9 (SVS), and one at Ft. Peck, MT, Mar. 29, was the earliest by 2 weeks (CC). Earliest by 7 days was a Red-necked Grebe at *Grand Forks*, ND, Apr. 5 (EEF). The first Eared Grebes were noted at Freezeout L., MT, Mar. 13, and W. Grebes arrived there Apr. 8, about 2 weeks earlier than average (MS).

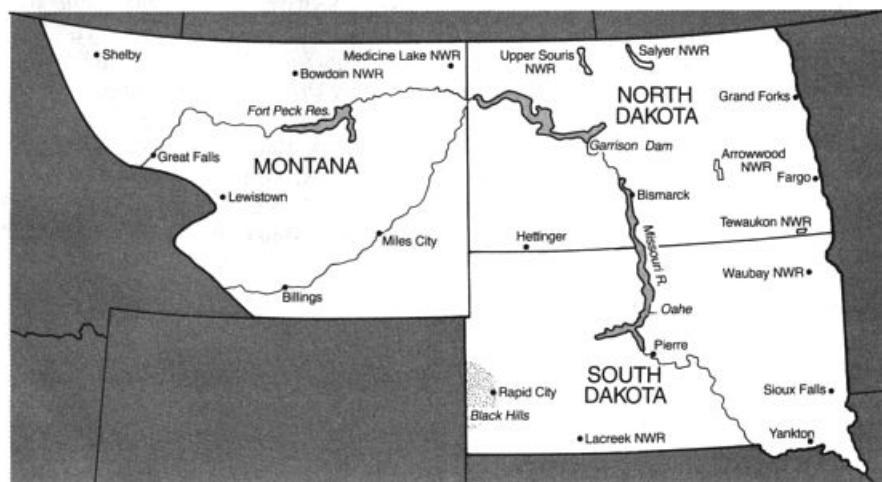
At Medicine L., MT, 3302 Am. White Pelican nests with young were counted May 26 (MR, MK). If accepted, North Dakota's first **Anhinga** was documented in *Cass* Apr. 29 (MH, JM, p.a.). Furnishing new early records in South Dakota were Great Egrets in *Lake Mar.* 29 (RMK), and Cattle Egrets in *Brown* Apr. 13 (DAT). North Dakota's earliest Little Blue Heron was noted at Kelly's Slough N.W.R. May 11 (EEF). In South Dakota, Little Blue Herons were also early Apr. 25 in *Brown* (REM, BKH) and *Lincoln* (JPS). A Yellow-crowned Night-Heron at DeWald Slough, *Kidder*, ND, May 25, provided the state's 18th record (HCT). South Dakota's earliest-ever White-faced Ibises were in *Brown* Apr. 13 (SLS), and the first record in *Cass*, ND, was provided by a pair Apr. 25 (GEN).

Wandering Trumpeter Swans were noted in all 3 states. South Dakota's 2nd **Mute Swan** was present in *Brown* Mar. 1-7 (DAT, p.a.).

Northern Pintails peaked at around *one million* at Freezeout L., MT, Mar. 13-16 (MS). A hybrid Cinnamon x Blue-winged Teal was found May 17 in *Clark*, SD (RD, BD, BKH). Four times the previous record high for North Dakota, *1100* Greater Scaup were counted in *Grand Forks* Apr. 10; a few were still present at the end of the period (EEF). Rare in e. Montana, four were noted at Medicine L. Apr. 23 (MK). Very rare in spring in South Dakota, Oldsquaw were reported from *Hughes* and *Gregory* Mar. 17-Apr. 2 (JCS, RFS, JSP, RM). Casual in spring, **Surf Scoters** were observed in *Yankton*, SD, Apr. 23 (SVS, p.a.), and in *Phillips*, MT, May 25 (SD, JJ). Very rare in spring, White-winged Scoters were noted in *Hughes*, SD, Apr. 8 (DAT) and *Grand Forks*, ND, May 13 (EEF).

HAWKS TO TERNS

Seldom noted away from the badlands, a Sharp-shinned Hawk nest was found in Sibley Park, Bismarck, ND (CDE, HCT). A Red-shouldered Hawk was at Sica Hollow S.P., SD, May 25 (JPS, TH, BE, p.a.), and North Dakota's 14th was present for 3 weeks at Sully's Hill National Game Preserve, be-



ginning May 2 (DOL). The long-anticipated nesting of **Merlin** away from the badlands in North Dakota was finally recorded Apr. 10 when a nest of the Richardson's race was located in a cemetery in *Grand Forks* (DOL).

Recent Greater Prairie Chicken reintroduction efforts in Grand Forks, ND, appear to be succeeding, with 120 there Mar. 1 (NDGFD, *vide* EEF). The first April record of Yellow Rail in North Dakota was furnished by an individual Apr. 29 in *Grand Forks* (DOL). Pending review, a **Black Rail** in *Brown* May 21 would represent South Dakota's first (DAT, DGP, p.a.).

Thirty Black-bellied Plovers Apr. 11 in *Miner* were South Dakota's earliest ever (RMK, p.a.). At least 2000 Am. Golden-Plovers were present in *Brown*, SD, May 16 (SDOU). Rare in Montana, Red Knots were reported May 9–22, with a peak of nine at Freezeout L. May 20 (MS). Record-early were Least Sandpipers in *Minnehaha*, SD, Apr. 4 (RFS, JSP, p.a.). Up to 100 Buff-breasted Sandpipers were in *Brown*, SD, May 16 (SDOU). Unprecedented, and furnishing N. Dakota's 8th record for the species, four female **Ruffs** were studied in *Grand Forks* May 6 (EEF). South Dakota's earliest Short-billed Dowitcher was noted in *Hutchinson* Apr. 18 (RM, p.a.).

South Dakota's earliest ever Bonaparte's Gull was in *Charles Mix* Mar. 29 (RM), and a new high of 1000 was noted at Devil's L., ND, May 13 (LM). Rare in spring, four Glaucous Gull reports from the Dakotas spanned Mar. 9–Apr. 18. Caspian Terns made a spectacular showing in North Dakota, with a new high count of 35 in *McLean* May 22 (REM). Good numbers included 29 at New John's L., *Burleigh*, May 16 (CDE, HCT) and 11 in *Grand Forks* May 14 (EEF).

DOVES TO SHRIKES

Eurasian Collared-Dove was again tallied in *Yankton*, SD (SVS), and one spent the winter and spring at Joplin, MT, where they first nested last year. One bird was also seen near Chester, MT, Apr. 23 (HM). A Pileated Woodpecker May 21 at Sica Hollow S.P., SD, was new to that area and probably pioneered from the Big Stone L. population (DAT, DGP, AH). A Red-bellied Woodpecker was seen Mar. 4 along the Sheyenne R. in n.w. *Richland*, ND, where they are thought to nest regularly at the n.w. edge of their range (HCT, CDE).

An E. Phoebe Mar. 29 in *Lincoln*, SD, tied the earliest date for that state (RFS, JSP), and the species peaked at 32 Apr. 22 in *Grand Forks*, ND (EEF). A **Common Raven** nest with two large young was discovered

May 24 at Clark Salyer N.W.R., *McHenry*, ND (MPN). This was the first documented nesting this century in North Dakota. A Com. Raven was also heard in good nesting habitat in the Turtle Mts. of *Bottineau*, ND, Apr. 14 (GGB), and an out-of-place individual was in *Grand Forks*, ND, May 20 (DOL).

Red-breasted Nuthatches were excavating a nest hole in Grand Forks, ND, Apr. 11 (DOL). The species nests in small numbers in the larger cities of the state. Two Winter Wrens were tallied in *Lawrence*, SD, May 25 (REP). Nesting is suspected in this area of the Black Hills. Providing North Dakota's 20th record, and the earliest on record, a Blue-gray Gnatcatcher was noted in Fargo Apr. 26 (RMK).

A Hermit Thrush in *Lawrence*, SD, May 19 tied the latest date for that state (VDF), and North Dakota's latest was recorded May 30 in *Rolette* (NDBS). Not often recorded in spring, North Dakota's 2nd-latest Varied Thrush was in Bismarck Apr. 25 (RK). South Dakota's latest ever N. Shrike was a single in *Meade* May 6 (REP, p.a.).

VIREOS TO WARBLERS

South Dakota's earliest ever Bell's Vireo was an individual May 8 in *Charles Mix* (LAS). Tying the earliest date for North Dakota were two May 13 at Bowman-Haley Dam (D&CG). A Yellow-throated Vireo May 3 in Fargo was North Dakota's earliest ever by 3 days (CDE).

Montana's 6th **Northern Parula** was singing at Ft. Peck May 28 (SD, JJ, p.a.). Only two Cape May Warblers were reported. Some notably early warblers in South Dakota included Yellow Warbler Apr. 21 in *Meade* (EEM), Blackpoll Apr. 15 in *Minnehaha* (JPS, p.a.), Black-and-white Apr. 9 in *Minnehaha* (MKZ, p.a.), Am. Redstart in *Minnehaha* Apr. 14 (JPS, p.a.), Connecticut May 12 in *Brown* (DAT), and Com. Yellowthroat Apr. 25 in *Bennett* (TJ). A Prothonotary Warbler was unusual in *Minnehaha* May 15 (JPS, TH, p.a.). More than 30 **Virginia's Warblers** were counted in *Custer*, SD, May 24, the same area where the first for the state were discovered last year (JSP et. al).

In North Dakota, a good peak of 750 Yellow-rumped Warblers was noted in *McHenry* May 9 (GGB). A Pine Warbler was heard at Denbigh Exp. Forest, *McHenry*, May 9, where one was discovered last July (REM). Another Pine Warbler furnished a first record for *Ward* May 12 in Minot (REM, HCT). A N. Waterthrush Apr. 10 in Fargo provided North Dakota's 2nd-earliest record (RHO), and the species peaked at a new high of 62 in *Ward* May 10 (REM).

TANAGERS TO REDPOLLS

North Dakota's 16th Summer Tanager was found in Fargo May 17 (RMK et al.) and a Scarlet Tanager was far west in *Meade*, SD, May 28–29 (REP, RAS, EEM). Eastern Towhees were far west in *Lawrence*, SD, Apr. 29 (VDF, p.a.) and May 2 (RAS, p.a.).

Sparrows were also early in South Dakota, with Field Sparrow in *Lincoln* Mar. 18 (MKZ, p.a.), Vesper in *Yankton* Mar. 31 (SVS), Savannah in *Clay* Mar. 25 (DS), and Le Conte's Apr. 9 in *Miner* (RMK). In Montana, three Le Conte's were singing near the Canadian border n.e. of Chester May 25, furnishing the first record in latilong 6 (HM). Notable sparrow peaks in North Dakota were 540 White-throated and 320 White-crowned in *McHenry* May 9 (GGB) A "Gray-headed" Junco was unusual at Ft. Peck Apr. 27 (CC).

Great-tailed Grackles were noted in 7 South Dakota counties, with one as far north as *Brown* Apr. 4 (CDE HCT). A Baltimore Oriole was chasing a Bullock's May 23 s. of Freezeout L., MT (MS), and an early Bullock's was in *Billings*, ND, Apr. 26 (JPL) Wintering White-winged Crossbills remained into the spring season, with 9 reports from the Dakotas. A Com. Redpoll Apr. 15 in *Meade* provided South Dakota's 2nd latest (EEM).

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