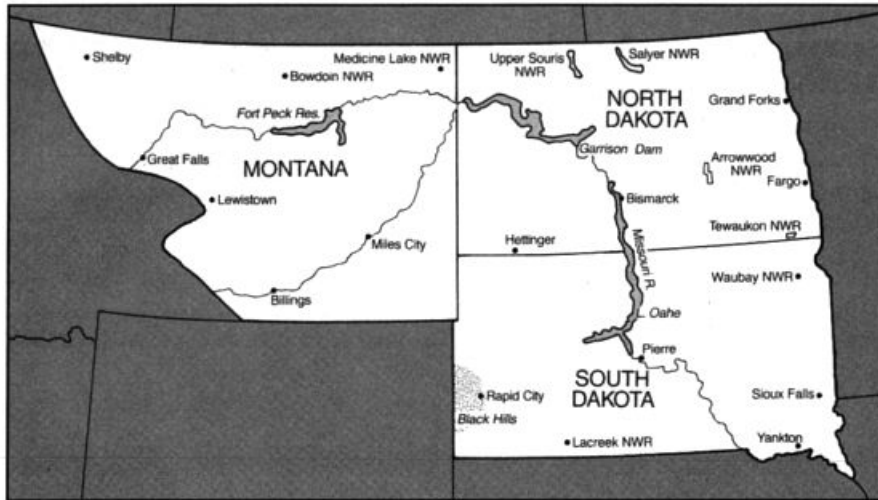


# northern great plains



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The early migration of late winter continued into March, with most waterfowl already moving into northern North Dakota by early in the month. Lakes opened earlier than normal, but there was little runoff as snowpack was light. March was warm and dry, April about average, and May was warm and wet.

There was a major warbler fallout in North Dakota 18 May, and several species were reported only on that day. Along with the numerous early species, some species were also late and in above-average numbers. Of particular note this spring were the numbers of Northern Harriers, Long-eared Owls, and Short-eared Owls. Few rarities were noted. Seasonal highlights included a Chuck-wills-widow in South Dakota and Great-tailed Grackle and Lesser Goldfinch in Montana.

**Conventions:** Observations marked with a † are subject to review by the appropriate state records committee.

## GREBES THROUGH SCOTERS

The earliest record by ten days, a Pied-billed Grebe was in Fargo, ND, 7 Mar (DPW). A Red-necked Grebe 2 Apr in Brown, SD, tied the earliest date for the state (DAT). The Clark's Grebe at Long Lake N.W.R., ND, 14 Apr provided the earliest record for the state (HCT), and a peak of 7 was tallied in Kidder 13 May (REM). Waders generally considered

casual at best were noted in the Medicine L. N.W.R., MT, area, including a Great Egret (EM), a Cattle Egret 29 Apr (RS), and a Green Heron 27 May that furnished about the 12th record for the state (†RS, NP, EU). Also unusual at Medicine L. were White-faced Ibises 7 May and 11 May (EM, MR). Casual in North Dakota, a Little Blue Heron was noted 20–21 May in Kidder (HCT).

Migrant geese were noted in numbers in the northern reaches of the region by early March. A Ross's Goose in Burleigh, ND, 2 Mar was the earliest by 12 days (PCV). Providing the first records for North Dakota, single blue-morph Ross's Geese were noted the week of 20 Mar near Lostwood N.W.R. (*fide* BD) and in McHenry 9 Apr (REM). South Dakota's first was recorded 9 Mar when one was shot in Codrington (LL). Tundra Swans peaked at 15,000 at Freezeout L., MT, 16 Mar (MS), and 4 Trumpeter Swans in Cass, ND, 22 Mar provided the 18th record for the state (†CAS, CMN).

The breeding success of waterfowl in recent years was reflected in peak counts in North Dakota of 10,000 Gadwall in McLean and Sheridan 16 Apr, and 13,000 Mallards and 47,000 Pintails in Burleigh 18 Mar (DS, HCT, REM). Single Eurasian Wigeons in Steele 9 Apr (†DLK) and Adams 14–15 Apr (†DAG, CG) provided the 12th and 13th records for North Dakota. A peak of 25 male Eurasian Wigeons was tallied at Freezeout L., MT, 17 Mar, where they have been increasing since at least 1987 (MS). Another migrant seemingly on the increase in North Dakota, 2400 Greater Scaup were counted in ne. North Dakota 15 Apr (EEF). A Black Scoter

observed in Kingsbury 18 Mar (†JSP) provided only the 3rd spring sighting in South Dakota. Furnishing only the 2nd May record for North Dakota, a Long-tailed Duck was tallied 13 May in Grand Forks (†EEF).

## RAPTORS THROUGH DOVES

The first nesting attempt by a pair of Bald Eagles in the Fort Peck, MT, area produced a completed nest, but the birds abandoned the area by late March (CC). Northern Harriers were widespread in above-average numbers. Common and increasing, 30-plus Cooper's Hawk nests were found in n. North Dakota this spring, with three nests in one quarter section in Grand Forks, ND (DOL, BM, v.o.). Rough-legged Hawks made a strong late-season showing, with one in Harding, SD, 15 May (VDF), and 5 in Stutsman, ND, 26 May (LDI). Regular sightings of 2–4 Peregrine Falcons in downtown Fargo, ND, during May led to speculation about a nesting attempt (WC). The last confirmed nesting in the state was in 1954.

Early shorebird movement was unprecedented in the Dakotas, with nine species recorded in March in South Dakota and six species in North Dakota. Black-necked Stilt sightings continue to increase: three reports from South Dakota included the state's earliest 11 Apr in Sanborn (RGR). Second-earliest for North Dakota, a pair was noted in Cass 29 Apr (KRC). Four Red Knot reports from Montana spanned 12–26 May (CC, CP, SD, AB). Two American Woodcocks were well nw. of their normal range at Des Lacs N.W.R., ND, 6 May (BM). The earliest for the state and the 12th record, a Red Phalarope spent 14–18 May at the Minot Sewage Lagoons, ND (BD). For the 3rd consecutive year, Arctic Terns were noted at Bowdoin N.W.R., MT, where 2 were present from 20 May+ (SD).

A Eurasian Collared-Dove 19 May in Malta, MT, was joined by another 29 May. These birds were in the same area where Montana's 4th record was documented in 1999 (GF). North Dakota's 5th and 6th records were provided by one in Hettinger 21–28 Apr (DAG, CG) and a pair in May in Dickinson (*fide* DAG). In South Dakota, 2 were found in Hughes 30 Apr (EDS) and one was at the Shadehill Recreation Area 19 May (CW, LW). There are now about 10 records for the state.

## OWLS THROUGH GNATCATCHERS

A Burrowing Owl, now rare east of the Missouri R. in North Dakota, was seen 24 Apr in *Stutsman* (CGO). Long-eared Owl numbers were the highest in at least the last 20 years, and the species was relatively easy to find in some areas of North Dakota. At least 24 nests were found in nw. and nc. ND (BM, var. obs). Short-eared Owls were even more numerous, with daily counts in double figures not uncommon in North Dakota. Vole populations appeared to be high in some areas. In South Dakota, observers reported both species more than normal, with Long-eareds noted in four counties and Short-eareds in 11 counties. South Dakota's 6th record of the **Chuck-will's-widow** was furnished by a singing bird 15 May below Oahe Dam, *Stanley* (RFS, JSP). This species was recorded in the same area from 1986–1988.

South Dakota's earliest-ever Eastern Phoebe was in *Roberts* 27 Mar (BKH). A late Northern Shrike in *Grand Forks* 3 May (EEF) provided the 2nd May record for North Dakota. Record-early vireos were a Yellow-throated 29 Apr in *Minnehaha*, SD (RFS, JSP) and a Philadelphia in Jamestown, ND, 28 Apr (SRM, HLM). Two extralimital Violet-green Swallows were reported in North Dakota, with one at Lostwood N.W.R. 11 May (BM) and one in *Kidder* 13 May, the latter the most easterly record in the state (REM, LEM).

A female Red-breasted Nuthatch with a well-developed brood patch was banded in Aberdeen, SD, 25 May, furnishing the first breeding evidence for the species in e. South Dakota (DAT). A Rock Wren was found well to the east of usual range in *Grand Forks*, ND, 2 May (EEF). Casual in Montana, a Sedge Wren was near Medicine L. N.W.R. 8 May (†EM). Blue-gray Gnatcatchers continue to increase away from known breeding areas, with two North Dakota reports and two ne. South Dakota observations.

## THRUSHES THROUGH GOLDFINCHES

A Varied Thrush in *Ward* 10 May (DL) provided the second-latest observation for North Dakota. Record-early in South Dakota was an American Pipit 18 Mar in *Kingsbury* (JSP). Montana's 12th record of Cape May Warbler was noted at Medicine L. NWR 17 May (†RS). **Black-throated Blue Warbler** reports included Montana's 7th at Fort Peck 16 May (†CC) and a late individual at Arrowwood N.W.R., ND, 31 May (*vide* PRS). Casual in South Dakota, a Worm-eating Warbler was in *Union* 21 May (†DS), and a Hooded Warbler was in *Union* 20 May (†TH). A Hooded was also found in North Dakota, the state's 18th,

at Fargo 29 May (†DPW). A Scarlet Tanager in *Lincoln* 20 Apr (MKZ) provided South Dakota's earliest record.

Sparrows made an early showing in South Dakota, with a Savannah in *Clay* 22 Mar (DS), a Lincoln's in *Sanborn* 2 Apr (RGR), and a Swamp in *Clay* 22 Mar (DS). In North Dakota, a Field Sparrow in Fargo 30 Mar was the earliest for *Cass* by 11 days (DPW). A new peak for North Dakota was the 75,000 Lapland Longspurs in *Ward* 10 Apr (REM); a late individual was in Jamestown 26 May (LDI). Two Black-headed Grosbeaks in Jamestown, ND, 15 May were in an area where they have been observed for five consecutive years (DHJ). Also at Jamestown, a Lazuli Bunting was e. of normal range 19 May (SRM, HLM). Rare in Montana, an Indigo Bunting was at Dodson Dam, *Phillips*, 14 May (KE).

Providing the 2nd Montana record, a male **Great-tailed Grackle** was found at Medicine L. N.W.R. 30 May (JE, †SP). A Gray-crowned Rosy-Finch 13 Apr in Oakes, ND, furnished the latest and easternmost record for the state (*vide* DK). A male **Lesser Goldfinch** was at a Glasgow, MT, feeder 15 May (†DE), providing the 3rd record for the state, all in the Glasgow-Fort Peck area.

**Corrigendum:** In *N. Am. Birds* 53:402, I incorrectly stated that "As yet unconfirmed in South Dakota, Nelson's Sharp-tailed Sparrows. . ." There is one confirmed breeding record from *Walworth* 12 Jul 1992 by Williams and Zimmer (*South Dakota Breeding Bird Atlas*, p. 240, Richard Peterson).

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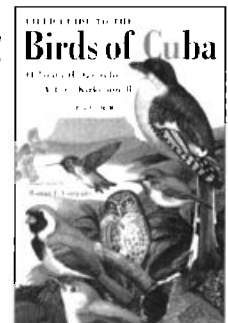
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