

Southern Great Plains

Nelson's Sharp-tailed Sparrows made a fair showing in Kansas, with at least 14 reported 14 Oct–11 Nov (*fide* LM); 4 were located in e. Nebraska and 2 in Oklahoma. The westernmost was one at Quivira 11 Nov (SS). Westerly was a Swamp Sparrow at L. Ogallala 25 Oct (SJD). Quite early was a White-crowned Sparrow 1 Sep in Coffey, KS (AS). The 2 Snow Buntings in Tulsa 9 Nov (G&MK) were among fewer than 10 for Oklahoma. Far afield were a Pyrrhuloxia 25 Oct in Kearney, KS (BPe, PG) and a Dickcissel 4 Aug in Sioux, NE (JWH).

A Cassin's Finch was collected on the early date of 22 Sep in Morton, KS (MT, m. ob.), with others found there 7 Oct (CG, m. ob.) and 10 Nov (PJ, MG, m. ob.). Rosy-finches attracted attention. Two flocks of Gray-crowned Rosy-Finch (216 and 105) were located in Sioux, NE 12 (SJD) & 14 Nov (SJD, HKH). A male **Black Rosy-Finch** was present with the Gray-crowns on 12 Nov (SJD)—a first Regional record. Red Crossbills made a modest showing in w. Kansas, with up to 10 noted in Harvey, KS 13 Nov (CG). The only report for Common Redpoll was one in Halsey, NE 25 Nov (TEL).

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Winter Season:

1 December 2000 to 28 February 2001

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Unlike some recent winters, this one was more like a winter, with some real cold fronts passing through by mid-December, even freezing over some Oklahoma reservoirs. This clearly cut back on the half-hardy species, particularly those species needing some shallow water. Thus, the more typical highlights included bigger birds, gulls in particular, and a few fringillids. The Region typically showcases a rich mix of both eastern-western and northern-southern avifaunas, owing to its mid-continental location, and for this winter season, the mix was especially memorable.

Abbreviations: L. Ogallala (*Keith*, NE), McConaughy (L. McConaughy, *Keith*, NE), Red Slough (Red Slough W.M.A., *McCurtain*, OK).

LOONS THROUGH DUCKS

Red-throated Loons were located 5 & 19 Dec in *Noble*, OK (JWA), and 16 Jan & 24 Feb in *Sequoyah*, OK (JWA). A juv. Pacific Loon was found at McConaughy 3 Dec (SJD), a rather late date for Nebraska, with another in *Trego*, KS 19 Dec (SS), and 2 in *Sequoyah*, OK 16 Jan & 24 Feb (JWA).

Three Red-necked Grebes, rare vagrants, lingered at McConaughy until 3 Dec (SJD) Quite tardy were Eared Grebes last noted at McConaughy and L. Ogallala 13 Dec (SJD, JF). A count of 483 Western Grebes at McConaughy quickly dwindled to one by 30

Dec (SJD). A Clark's Grebe was identified at McConaughy 14 Dec (SJD), and in Trego, KS 19 Dec. (SS).

A Great Egret lingered to 5 Dec in Cowley, KS (GY), while an imm. Black-crowned Night-Heron lingered at L. Ogallala until at least 8 Dec (RK *fide* SJD).

A large group of Trumpeter Swans wintered in the McConaughy area, with a peak count was 54 on 3 Feb (SJD). Collared Trumpeters from Iowa's and Minnesota's introduction sites can now be found in the Region (*fide* WRS). Groups of up to 8 birds were located in Kansas (*fide* LM), with singles as far s. as Tulsa (JL, PS, MK), Kay (DDa), McClain (LMA), Custer (JAG, DH), and Comanche (KM), all in Oklahoma. Kurt Meisenzahl was lucky enough to find not only a Trumpeter, but a Tundra and Mute Swan in company! Other Tundras were most commonly in twos at eight other locations in Kansas and Oklahoma.

Braving the cold were 7 Wood Ducks in Scotts Bluff, NE 27 Jan (SJD), the first winter record for the Nebraska panhandle. Perhaps for a slightly better showing this season, American Black Ducks were noted in Lancaster, NE 3 Dec (JGJ), Tulsa 16 Dec (JL, PS, MK); Red Slough 23 Jan (BH, DA), Sedgwick, KS 1 Feb (CG), Osage, KS 3 Feb (BF, CG), and Riley, KS 11 Feb (TC). The best count of Mallards was a record 150,000 in Harlan, NE (*fide* JGJ).

The ad. male Tufted Duck at L. Ogallala continued its presence 3–13 Dec (SJD). Greater Scaup numbered 68 at L. Ogallala 3 Dec (SJD) and an impressive 403 in Noble, OK 5 Dec (JWA). At least one ad. male Barrow's Goldeneye wintered in Sedgwick, KS (PJ, m. ob.), with up to 4 wintering at L. Ogallala (SJD) and one other 17 Dec in Tulsa (SM, JH). Among the high counts for Common Merganser were an estimated 32,000 at McConaughy 13 Dec (SJD), and 18,000 in Russell, KS 17 Dec (MR).

HAWKS THROUGH GULLS

Good counts of Bald Eagle were 184 in Harlan, NE 15 Dec (*fide* JGJ) and 152 in Keith and Lincoln, NE 14 Jan (SJD). Northern Goshawks made a modest appearance, with 5 reported from Nebraska (*fide* WRS) and 4 from Kansas (*fide* LM). A Harris's Hawk in Cowley, KS was noted until 5 Dec (m. ob.). Golden Eagles were found e. to Red Slough (DA, BH).

Merlins are becoming more commonplace, perhaps aided by the acclimation of some individuals to residential neighborhoods. Perhaps as a result of recent pro-



A most unusual threesome, these Trumpeter, Tundra, and Mute Swans crossed paths 18 February 2001 in Lawton, Comanche County, Oklahoma. Photograph by Kurt Meisenzahl.

grams to help the *anatum* subspecies, Peregrine Falcons were noted in Tillman, OK 3 Dec (KM) and Tulsa 30 Dec (JWA). Always a grand find are Gyrfalcons: gray morphs were reported from Keith, NE 1 Jan (SJD) and Russell, KS 5 Feb (MR).

Sharp-tailed Grouse are getting harder to find in Knox, NE (MB). The best count was of 32 in Sioux, NE 10 Feb (SJD). A nice group of 108 Greater Prairie-Chickens was seen in Knox, NE 10 Dec (MB).

While Virginia Rails are thinly distributed as a winter resident n. into Nebraska, Soras may also be maintaining a few local groups, with one 22 Dec in Sequoyah, OK (DGL, JM) and several in Cleveland, OK in mid-Jan (JAG). Sandhill Cranes were already on the move 25 Feb, when 50,000 were in Barton, KS (SS, DS, DB).

Shorebirds were generally much harder to find this season than in recent winters, particularly after a few heavy cold fronts moved through in mid-Dec. A few Killdeer wintered in Keith, NE, at least 2 still there 3 Feb (SJD). Tardy were 2 Black-bellied Plovers and 2 Dunlin 5 Dec in Pawnee, OK (JWA). A Spotted Sandpiper, surprising as it was, likely did not make it past 14–15 Dec in Harlan, NE (JGJ, SJD); another was found in Cherokee, OK 23 Dec (JM et al.). Probably 3 late and 2 early migrant Long-

billed Dowitchers were noted at Red Slough 5 Dec and 20 Feb, respectively (DA, BH).

An anytime "zootie" was a Pomarine Jaeger in Russell, KS 9 Dec (MR). An ad Mew Gull was at L. Ogallala 14–30 Dec, with 2 there 14 Jan (SJD) and one in Sedgwick, KS 11 Jan (PJ). The small scattering of California Gulls reported was what has become the norm, with up to 4 each at L. Ogallala (SJD) and Sedgwick, KS 28 Dec (DV).

Reports of Thayer's Gulls are becoming regular as well. Up to 11 were observed at L. Ogallala 14 Jan (SJD), with at least 6 reported from both Kansas (*fide* WRS) and Oklahoma (*fide* JWA). Possibly still a Nebraska specialty for the Region was a second-winter Iceland Gull at L. Ogallala 14 Dec (SJD), only Nebraska's 4th.

Lesser Black-backed Gulls, still quite rare in the Region, appear as migrants in Nebraska. Adults were in Lincoln, NE 14 Dec (SJD) and McConaughy 28 Dec (SJD), the latter a late date. Others, mostly ads, were found in Sedgwick, KS 10 Jan (B&NB) & 11 Feb (PJ), Tulsa 24 Jan (JWA, JL, GK), Coffey, KS 11 Feb (GP, MM), Butler, KS 19 Feb (DW), with up to 3 in Oklahoma 31 Jan (JWA, JL). Also increasing in frequency are Glaucous Gulls: up to 9 were noted on McConaughy 30 Dec (*fide* SJD) and at least

7 in Kansas (*vide* LM) and 12 in Oklahoma (*vide* JWA). A Great Black-backed Gull in Russell, KS 17 Dec (MR) was an outstanding find. Not routine this year was a Forster's Tern in McCurtain, OK 14 Feb. (BH).

DOVES THROUGH WAXWINGS

Eurasian Collared-Doves likely have much more than a foothold in the Region. In Cass, NE, up to 12 were counted during Dec, one of about 16 locations known for Nebraska (*vide* WRS). Twenty Collared-Doves visited a feeder in Crawford, KS 1 Dec (MP), and 8 were noted in an Oklahoma panhandle town in Cimarron 14 Dec (JAG, JWA). One must say almost "ditto" for Inca Doves in Oklahoma and s. Kansas.

Given the tough weather, a Rufous Hummingbird kept alive 11 Dec–6 Jan in Delaware, OK (EW) was an accomplishment. Probably more common than presumed from reports, but very tough finds, were Northern Saw-whet Owls. This winter one to 2 were located in Keith, NE during Dec (SJD), with one discovered quite far s. in Sedgwick, KS 3 Feb (PJ). Perhaps as remarkable to find was the first Dec record of Eastern Phoebe for Nebraska, that in Douglas–Washington 17 Dec (JB).

Northern Shrikes wandered down to s. Kansas (*vide* LM), but none were reported from Oklahoma. More surprising were 2 Loggerhead Shrikes, one in Lancaster, NE 12 Jan (DP, JP) and the other in Saunders, NE 3 Feb (THo). While a Purple Martin 16 Feb in McCurtain, OK (BH) might be a little early, go figure a Barn Swallow in Wagoner, OK 21 Feb (ES, JM et al.).

Part of the fall's fallout were a Western Scrub-Jay in Finney, KS 3 Jan (BC, TS) and a Pinyon Jay in Hamilton, KS 31 Dec (CG, TH, MG). Fewer than 5 Black-capped Chickadees have been documented in Oklahoma, including the one 13 Dec in Cimarron, OK (JAG, JWA). Possibly 2 birds were later seen there (m ob). Mountain Chickadees moved out to Meade, (TF), Scott (TS, SSh), Hamilton (CG, TH, MG), and Finney, KS (TS, SSh), with 25 noted in Morton, KS 29 Dec (SP) and 8 in Grant, KS (TS, SSh). A Juniper Titmouse was seen again 31 Dec in Morton, KS (JR). A crossroads for several parid species, Nebraska had a Tufted Titmouse in Seward 8–19 Dec (JG), rather far n. for the species.

Two White-breasted Nuthatches of the w. subspecies *nelsoni* were located in Cimarron, OK 13 Dec (JWA, JAG), with one at L. Ogallala 14 Dec (SJD). A Rock Wren wandered e. to Jefferson, KS 7 Dec (RR), while a

Sedge Wren staked out a winter home in Barber, KS 6 Jan (PJ).

A Varied Thrush was reported from Lancaster, NE in early Dec (SSa *vide* KP), only the 5th since 1991 (*vide* WRS). A surprise was a very thin Gray Catbird found dead 8 Jan in Otoe, NE (LF, CF). A bird particularly scarce in most of the Region almost since the 1960s invasion, a Bohemian Waxwing in Stafford, KS 25 Dec was a welcome sight (GP).

WARBLERS THROUGH FINCHES

The only warblers of note to report were Pine Warblers, one attending a feeder in Sarpy, NE 14–16 Dec, only the 2nd Dec record for Nebraska (*vide* WRS), the other in Meade, KS 29 Dec–5 Jan (TF).

Of note were 2 intermediate-form Fox Sparrows in Cimarron, OK 13 Dec (JAG, JWA). The specimen record for Oklahoma contains no birds of this type. Gray-headed Juncos are occasionally reported, their purity sometimes good, sometimes not. This season, Gray-headed were noted in Johnson, KS 24 Nov–12 Dec (DWe) and Scotts Bluff, NE 2 Feb (KL). Few White-winged Juncos are reported away from w. Nebraska; this season one was observed in Cimarron, OK 13 Dec (JAG, JWA). Not many American Tree Sparrows ever make it to se. Oklahoma, so up to 19 noted at Red Slough 20 Dec–23 Jan (BH, DA) were quite unusual.

Imagine if you can 250,000 Lapland Longspurs in Marion, KS 8 Dec (CG). During snow storms, they travel widely, or take any port in the storm, as did about 50 using Scott Seltman's porch in late Jan. Snow Buntings also appeared in good numbers in Nebraska, with a few edging s. into Sedgwick, KS 21–22 Dec (CG, PJ), Cowley, KS 21 Dec (MT), Ellsworth, KS 29 Dec (MR), Scott, KS 30 Dec (DR), and Jefferson, KS 16 Feb (P&LW).

Several Dickcissels persisted, one in Douglas, KS 10 Dec (MG, DG) and another in Sarpy, NE 11 Dec (LAL). Among a short list of half-hardies this season were 3 Yellow-headed Blackbirds in Scotts Bluff, NE (SJD, PD, DD).

In the very nw. corner of Nebraska are regular possibilities for Gray-crowned Rosy-Finches. All await official review, but among three flocks of several hundred birds each of the regular montane Gray-crowned Rosy Finches in Sioux, NE, Steve Dinsmore documented 6, 5, and 2 individuals of the Hepburn's subspecies—and in two of these flocks were 4 and 6 Black Rosy-Finches, a species that strayed widely, as far as eastern California, in winter 2000–2001. In addition, a Hepburn's was located in Scotts Bluff (RS *vide*

AK). This is the first time that Hepburn's and Black Rosy-Finches have been documented in the Region.

Not to be left out was a male Pine Grosbeak in Lincoln, NE 29 Dec (WRS). Red Crossbills made modest showings in Nebraska, with 15 in Ellsworth, KS 6 Jan (ER, HR). A White-winged Crossbill visited a farmstead in Rush, KS 4 Dec (SS). Scarce even in Nebraska, a Common Redpoll still managed to reach this season Cheyenne, KS 24 Feb (HA).

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