

It was a very good year for Nelson's Sharp-tailed Sparrows. Fifteen to 25 per day were tallied in late Jun in *Eddy*, ND (LI, DH). The species was also reported from *Brown* (JSP, RFS) and *McPherson*, SD, and 3 males were noted in the Medicine L., MT area (EM).

Casual in w. South Dakota, a Northern Cardinal was in Rapid City 4 Jul (JLB). A pair was feeding young in Fargo, ND in Jun, providing the first nest record for the state since 1986 (CC).

Contributors (state editors in boldface): MONTANA: Tim Barksdale, **Charles Carlson**, Dan Casey, Dave Fallow, Lisa Hendricks, Paul Hendricks, Elizabeth Madden, Jeff Marks, Dwain Prellwitz, Ronnie Sanchez, Mike Schwitters, John Shipley. NORTH DAKOTA: Angelica Bebel, Bruce Burkett, Curt Christensen, Kim Eckert, **Corey D. Ellingson**, Lisa Flaman, Eve E. Freeberg, Tom Gibson, Deke Hobbick, Craig Hultberg, Larry Igl, Marshall Iliff, Gwen Kappes, David O. Lambeth, Jack P.

Lefor, Ron E. Martin, Bob Murphy, Robert H O'Connor, Katy L. Phelps, Karen Smith, Dan N. Svingen, Frederic Vanhove. SOUTH DAKOTA: Doug Backlund, Jocelyn L. Baker, Kevin Hachmeister, Bruce Harris, Michael M Melius, Ricky D. Olson, **Jeffrey S. Palmer**, Michael Retter, Robb F. Schenck, Dave Swanson, Dan A. Tallman, Tom and Brenda Warren, J. David Williams.



Southern Great Plains



Joseph A. Grzybowski
715 Elmwood Drive
Norman, Oklahoma 73072
(grzybow@aix1.ucok.edu)

As is typical of summer seasons on the Plains, this one was chiefly interesting for records of waterbirds, at least before many marshes and waterholes dried up. Vagrants from the Gulf coast wandered northward in limited numbers across the Region, with the exception of southeastern Oklahoma, which once again was inundated with southern waders. Although some species—such as White-faced Ibis, American Avocet, and Black-necked Stilt—appear to be doing well as

nesters, Western and Eared Grebes have not fared as well. Other marsh and freshwater species, although present in variety, were quite localized at widespread locations.

Whether from absence, heat, bugs, lack of pursuit, or otherwise, it was a less eventful season for landbirds, though these are difficult data to interpret. Cave Swallows were much in the news: sightings this season suggest as yet undiscovered breeding within the Region.

Abbreviations: Cheyenne Bottoms (Cheyenne Bottoms W.M.A., *Barton*, KS); Hackberry (Hackberry Flats W.M.A., *Tillman*, OK); L. McConaughy (*Keith*, NE); L. Ogallala (*Keith*, NE); Quivira (Quivira N.W.R., *Stafford*, KS); Rainwater Basin (pothole area in s.-cen. NE); Red Slough (Red Slough W.M.A., *McCurtain*, OK).

LOONS THROUGH DUCKS

Among the stranger summer finds, but one occurring more frequently in recent years, is the 7th summer record of Pacific Loon for Nebraska, this one at L. Ogallala 3–23 Jun (SJD, TJ, BP, LP). Clark's Grebe appears to be more frequent as well: as many as 36 at L. McConaughy and L. Ogallala 29 Jun, with 16 others reported in w. Nebraska, 6 of them in *Lincoln*, NE 21 Jul (SJD). Two Clark's were located in *Cimarron*, OK 26–29 Jun (JWA, JS), with one at Cheyenne Bottoms 21 Jul (MG).

Neotropical Cormorants from Oklahoma included one to 5 at Red Slough (DA, m. ob.), with singles w. to *Cimarron*, OK 28 Jun (JWA, JS), and Hackberry 19 (JAG, VF) & 27 Jul (KM, LT, JDT). Nesting was noted among the 23 Anhingas at Ward L., *McCurtain*, OK 12 Jun (DA, JWA).

A few Least Bitterns were found this season at locations scattered from *Cedar*, NE 29 Jun (SVS) and *Lancaster*, NE 2–23 Jun (LE) to Red Slough, where up to 15 individuals and nesting activity were observed 5 Jun–25 Jul (DA, m. ob.). Rare in the Region, Tricolored Herons were located at Cheyenne Bottoms 8 Jun (GP), Quivira 13 Jun (SP, CH), *Alfalfa*, OK 17 Jul (JWA), and, of course, Red Slough (2 birds, DA, m. ob.). A juv. Yellow-crowned Night-Heron was in *Clay*, NE 1 Jul (JGJ). The explosion of Glossy Ibis observations of recent years continues: one was documented in *Clay*, NE 14 Jul (JGJ), only the 2nd for Nebraska, with one or 2 there 20 Jul (WRS, SJD). Other Glossy Ibis were noted in *Major*, OK 8 Jun and 6 Jul (JWA), Hackberry 19 Jul (JAG, VF), and Cheyenne Bottoms 21 (MG) & 27 Jul (B&NB). The increase in Glossy Ibis records (and numbers) has accompanied a similar increase in White-faced Ibis, which were found at a new nesting location—Hackberry—confirmed 19 Jul (JAG, VF). A minimum of 25 pairs and six

nests counted 24 Jun in *Clay*, NE represented the first nesting record for e. Nebraska and 4th for the state. Away from Red Slough, the only White Ibis reported was one 26 Jun in *Texas*, OK (JWA, JS), out to the west.

Still unusual finds are Black-bellied Whistling-Ducks, with one from *Major*, OK 8 Jun (JWA) and one to 4 from Red Slough 13 Jun–31 Jul (DA, m. ob.). Summer vagrant waterfowl included many of the now usually reported species. More remarkable among them were the 90 Snow and 2 Ross's Geese in the e. Rainwater Basin 2 Jun, one of the latter remaining until 15 Jun (JGJ). A Cinnamon Teal was still present at Hackberry 15 Jun (LT, MT), with 21 Cinnamons in *Texas*, OK 15 Jul (JWA). Male Ring-necked Ducks were found in *Clay*, NE and *York*, NE 15 Jun (JGJ), while a female and yearling-male Red-breasted Mergansers summered at L. Ogallala (SJD).

HAWKS THROUGH TERNS

Occasional in summer, an Osprey was in *Keith*, NE 11 Jun (RK, *vide* SJD), possibly a late-migrating imm. The growing information on nesting Bald Eagles from Nebraska and Kansas is most encouraging. One of very few summer reports was that of a male Merlin in *Sioux*, NE 12 Jul (RW). A Peregrine Falcon in the e. Rainwater Basin 2 Jun (JGJ) was believed a record-late spring migrant for Nebraska (*vide* WRS). A dark Peregrine was noted at Cheyenne Bottoms 17 Jul (DG).

Black Rails are reported annually from Quivira, a location presumed to be isolated from other breeding sites. Persistent searching by Dinsmore at Panhandle marshes in Nebraska located a Black Rail at Facus Springs 9 Jul, with 4 Virginia Rails also present (SJD). A surprising find for Oklahoma were the 5 Soras in *Texas* 15 Jul (JWA, SP). A scattering of Common Moorhens was located in the Region n to *Clay*, NE 20 Jul (SJD). And quite a delight for many birders was the concentration of up to 8 Purple Gallinules (and nesting activity) at Red Slough through most of the period (DA, m ob.).

Summer is normally a hiatus period for shorebirds, with many lagging on their north-bound migration or beginning their south-bound movement—or just hanging around to confuse their status in the Region. Some assignments of migratory direction become quite arbitrary in late Jun and early Jul. Two apparently tardy Black-bellied Plovers were noted 2 Jun in the e. Rainwater Basin (JGJ). Up to 6 Black-bellieds were noted at Hackberry 15 Jun (LT, MT). A northerly Snowy Plover was photographed at L. McConaughy 21 Jul (SJD). Most encouraging for the jeopardized popula-

tions of Piping Plovers were the record 62 tallied at L. McConaughy 21 Jul, 49 of them imms. (RK, *vide* SJD). Three migrant Pippings were located in *Pawnee*, OK 21–22 Jul (GK, MK), with one at Quivira 27 Jul (BF). Two ad and 2 juv. Mountain Plovers were observed in *Kimball*, NE 9 Jul (SJD).

One Greater and 7 Lesser Yellowlegs at Hackberry 22 Jun (LT, MT) were likely early migrants. Unusual in fall was a Whimbrel 16 Jul in *Texas*, OK (JWA). But what can one say about a Marbled Godwit 13 Jun at Quivira or the 4 at L. McConaughy 17 Jun (SJD)? Also problematic in terms of their migratory direction were 2 Pectoral Sandpipers 24 Jun in e. Rainwater Basin (JGJ).

In the possibly "quite tardy" category were 2 Ruddy Turnstones in *Jefferson*, KS 3 Jun (AS, TFL) and a Sanderling in the e. Rainwater Basin 2 Jun (JGJ), with an amazing 79 at L. McConaughy the next day (SJD). Returning southward were a Semipalmated Sandpiper at L. McConaughy 29 Jun (SJD), 28 Baird's Sandpipers at L. McConaughy 9 Jul (SJD), and a Short-billed Dowitcher 4 Jul in *Riley*, KS (LJ). Exceptional in some regard were the 300 Wilson's Phalaropes in *Texas*, OK 26 & 29 Jun (JWA, JS). Quite early was a molting ad. Red-necked Phalarope in *Scotts Bluff*, NE 22 Jul (SJD). Exceptional by any standard was a **Red Phalarope** in basic plumage in *Clay*, NE 15 Jun (WRS).

The ad. light-morph **Pomarine Jaeger** 21 Jul at L. McConaughy (SJD, WRS) must have been a sight, but it was the 3rd Nebraska summer record, all of ads. (*vide* WRS). A Laughing Gull 27 Jul at Cheyenne Bottoms (BF) was the most exceptional gull reported for the season. Somewhat surprising was a Common Tern at L. McConaughy 3 Jun (SJD), with 2 at Quivira 13 Jun (SP). Least Tern chicks counted in Tulsa 30 Jun came to 23 (*vide* BH).

DOVES THROUGH FINCHES

A single ad. White-winged Dove with a few smaller unidentified doves appeared in Kearney, NE (RN). White-winged Doves were also reported from four locations in Kansas (*vide* LM), and in Lawton, OK (JAG, VF). An Inca Dove was noted in *Meade*, KS 13 Jun (TF).

Along the westernmost periphery of their range were the several Ruby-throated Hummingbirds in *Harlan*, NE in summer 2000 (GH, WH). Another Ruby-throated was observed just n. in Kearney 6 Jun (*vide* LR, RH). Two Calliope Hummingbirds were the stuff of envy in *Scotts Bluff*, NE 30 Jul (KL), likewise the single Calliope in *Finney*, KS 29 Jul (L&BR). A Rufous Hummingbird appeared in *Alma*, NE 7 Jul (GH, WH), an early date, with

four other sightings later in Jul for the Nebraska Panhandle (*vide* WRS). A Lewis's Woodpecker was a long way from home in *Geary*, KS 10 Jun (DR).

Two Yellow-bellied Flycatchers were banded in *Keith*, NE, with one seen and heard even farther w. in *Garden*, NE 3 Jun (SJD). A pair of Willow Flycatchers nested unsuccessfully but far s. for the species at Red Slough 5 Jun–25 Jul (DA, MD, m. ob.). Ash-throated Flycatchers on the edge of what may be an expanding range were the 3 in *Texas*, OK 15 Jul (JWA, SP) and 2 in *Morton*, KS 5 Jun (AP, S&KS). Only casual in Nebraska, a Scissor-tailed Flycatcher was rather far w. in *Morrill* 9 Jun (AK). Numbers of Black-capped Vireos topped 600 pairs this season in *Comanche*, OK, where a prescribed burning program and aggressive cowbird control are helping recovery of this federally Endangered species (JAG).

Perhaps expected in the wake of last year's tentative sightings were the **Cave Swallows** discovered at two locations in the Region. The first 2 were juvs. or yearlings at Cheyenne Bottoms 13–15 Jul (SP, CH, m. ob.). A possible ad. was later seen there 27 Jul (BF). The 2nd location was at Hackberry, where 3 juvs and one ad. were discovered 19 Jul+ (JAG, VE, m ob.). It is quite possible that Cave Swallows are currently breeding in the Region, but their nesting areas have yet to be discovered.

Among a meagre list of more exceptional passerines was a Veery singing in *Washington*, NE 7 Jun (JB), probably a late migrant. A male Blackpoll Warbler in *Garden*, NE 3 Jun (SJD) was late and w. of areas of typical occurrence. Unusual anytime but also on the late side was a Black-throated Blue Warbler 4 Jun in *Morton*, KS (AP, S&KS). A female Summer Tanager wandered w. to *Garden*, NE 3 Jun (SJD), one of few records for the Nebraska Panhandle.

Five Henslow's Sparrow were noted in *Lancaster*, NE 30 Jun (KP) and another in *Franklin*, KS 4 Jul (MG, ML); one hopes this unobtrusive species is more widespread than these few records indicate. The scattering of Swamp Sparrow records along the s. edge of their breeding range included one *Phelps*, NE 7 Jul (LR, RH), and up to 7 at the w. end of L. McConaughy 17 Jun (SJD).

A male Lazuli Bunting in *Knox*, NE 5 Jun–3 Jul (MB) was quite far e. of the expected summer range. A peculiar outpost for Lazuli Bunting is the Wichita Mts., OK where about 20 males, some of them mated, were located this season (JAG). Interesting was a flock of up to 61 Red Crossbills, including 2 streaked juvs in *Scotts Bluff/Banner*, NE 15 Jun–7 Jul (SJD, KL, AK, TJ). An analysis of Red Crossbills in Sowbelly Canyon 9 Jun (EB) suggested two

types, a large-billed form resembling Type 6 and a smaller-billed form closer to Type 2. Two distinct vocalizations were heard but apparently not pegged to Type (EB). (The subspecies traditionally accepted as breeding in Ponderosa Pines in nw. Nebraska is *benti*, a large-billed form.) Certainly exceptional was a male White-winged Crossbill in *Scotts Bluff/Banner*, NE 15–23 Jun (SJD, TJ), only the 2nd documented summer record for the Region.

Cited observers (area editors in boldface): KANSAS: Bill & Nancy Beard, Bob Fisher, Tom Flowers, Tom Flanigan (TFL), Dan Gish, Matt Gearheart, Chris Hobbs, Lowell Johnson, Mark Land, **Lloyd Moore**, Sebastian Patti, Galen Pittman, Alexis Powell, Leonard & Betty Rich, Dave Rintoul, Scott and Kylee Sharp, Art Smalwell. NEBRASKA: Elliott Bedows, John Brennehan, Mark Brogie, Stephen J. Dinsmore, Larry Einemann, Robin Harding, Glen Hoge, Wanda Hoge, Todd Jensen, Joel G.

Jorgensen, Alice Kenitz, Roger Knaggs, Kathy Larson, Roger Newcomb, Babs Padelford, Loren Padelford, Kevin Poague, Lanny Randolph, Steve Van Sickle, **W. Ross Silcock**, Rick Wright. OKLAHOMA: David Arbour, **James W. Arterburn**, Marvin Davis, Vic Fazio, Joseph A. Grzybowski, B. Harwood, George Kamp, Marty Kamp, **Jo Loyd**, **Jeri McMahon**, Kurt Meisenzahl, Sebastian Patti, Jerry Sisler, Lou Truex, Mary Truex, Jack D. Tyler.



Spring Migration: 1 March–31 May 2001

Joseph A. Grzybowski

715 Elmwood Drive
Norman, Oklahoma 73072
(grzybow@aix1.ucok.edu)

There is an aura to the Great Plains in spring, an aura of expansiveness overlain by collective memory of historical abundances—the great herds of bison, wealth of game animals, and sky-darkening clouds of birds. This season, at the scattered oases of its managed wetlands, some of the Region's past splendor could be imagined: waterfowl of several species and cranes were counted in poetic phrases that signify almost countless thousands of birds. Many concentrations of waterfowl were estimated in five or even six digits, as were groups of several shorebird species. The rush of all these wings must simply be experienced first-hand.

On the negative side, the ice storms of the previous winter took their toll. Across Kansas and Oklahoma, many observers noted the reduced numbers of Carolina Wrens, and Carolina Chickadees and Northern Cardinals were likely also similarly affected. It will be interesting to inspect more carefully the results of monitoring schemes such as the Breeding Bird Survey to match observers' impressions with available standardized data.

Discouraging too was the slow showing of Neotropical migrants. Even in the main time-windows and main eastern areas of migration, many were hard to come by. Though there were some extralimital observations, precious few of some expected species were found—such as Nashville Warbler or Chestnut-sided Warbler in eastern stretches.

Abbreviations: Cheyenne Bottoms (Cheyenne Bottoms W.M.A., *Barton*, KS); Funk Lagoon (*Phelps*, NE); Hackberry (Hackberry Flats

W.M.A., *Tillman*, OK); L. McConaughy (*Keith*, NE); L. Ogallala (*Keith*, NE); Quivira (Quivira N.W.R. *Stafford*, KS); Sooner L. (*Noble* and *Pawnee*, OK); Rainwater Basin (pothole area in south-central Nebraska); Red Slough (Red Slough W.M.A., *McCurtain*, OK).

LOONS THROUGH DUCKS

L. Tenkiller, a clear-water reservoir in *Cherokee/Sequoyah*, OK, attracts an inordinate number of loons compared to other sites in the Region. In addition to the many Commons were 2 Red-throated Loons 2 Mar (JWA) and one to 2 Pacific Loons 7 Apr–14 May (JWA). Another Red-throated was located at Sooner L. 29 Mar (JWA).

A Red-necked Grebe at L. Ogallala 28 Apr (SJD) was the 8th reported, but first documented, spring record for Nebraska. In a still-developing pattern for Clark's Grebe, 2 were noted at L. McConaughy 9 Mar (SJD), the earliest arrival on record for Nebraska. Rather far e. was a Clark's in *Knox*, NE 14–16 Mar (MB). Another Clark's was located 17 Apr at Cheyenne Bottoms (RK), with 3 there 20 May (W.A.S.) and 2 in *Cimarron*, OK 21 Apr (JWA).

Neotropical Cormorants appear to be increasing. This season, they were reported at Cheyenne Bottoms beginning 7 Apr (SS, LH), *Mitchell*, KS on an early date of 15 Mar (PL), *Cowley*, KS 8 Apr (3 birds; GY), *Tulsa* 11 May (JL, PS) and Red Slough (one to 2 birds) by 1 Apr (DA, BH). An Anhinga in *Nowata*, OK 29 Apr (BG, MD) was n. of most.

The only reports of Least Bittern were of one to 3 at Red Slough beginning 30 Apr (DA et al.), and 2 in *Sarpy*, NE 21 May (BP, LP). The 3rd documented record of Tricolored Heron for Nebraska was an ad. in *Hitchcock* 29 Apr (SJD). Normally a very rare summer

vagrant, others were reported from Cheyenne Bottoms 28 Apr–6 May (m. ob.), *Douglas*, KS 5 May (AP, RB), *Jefferson*, KS 16 May (RF), and Quivira 30 May (RP, MP), with one to 3 at Red Slough beginning 5 Apr (DA, BH). Also with more sightings this season—exceptionally to more westerly reaches of the Region—were Glossy Ibis. This season, individuals were noted in *Kingfisher*, OK 19 Apr (2 birds, JWA, JS), *Texas*, OK 21 Apr (JWA), *Morton*, KS 5 May (SS, MR), and *Barton*, KS 15 May (TC) White Ibis numbers built to 400 at Red Slough by 10 Apr (DA, BH); among them was a Roseate Spoonbill 12–13 May (BH, FH)

Just a shadow of last year's numbers, single Black-bellied Whistling-Ducks were in *Major*, OK 7 (PB) and 30 Apr (JAG). Part of the Plains' splendor this season were "several hundred thousand" Snow Geese in the Rainwater Basin 16 Mar (LR, RH), with 150,000 at Funk Lagoon 25 Mar (LR, RH). Probably also part of increasing populations were the 5,600 Ross's Geese with about 8,500 Snows noted in *Lancaster*, NE 25 Mar (WRS, JSu) Exceptionally late were 2 Ross's in the e Rainwater Basin 27 May (JGJ).

A migrant Trumpeter Swan was in *Dixon*, NE 2 Mar (JJ), 7 were in *Keith*, NE, and 13 were seen in *Keith/Garden*, NE (JF, SJD), the latter two observations both 4 Mar. Another Trumpeter was noted in *Elsworth*, KS 13 Mar (D&PR), with 2 in *Kearney*, KS 3 Mar (TS, SSh). Two Tundra Swans wintering at Red Slough were last noted 6 Mar (DA). Two more Tundra Swans were with Trumpeters at L. Ogallala 4 Mar (SJD, JF); and another was noted flying over Nebraska City 10 Mar (LF) Currently of uncertain origin, 2 Mute Swans were present in *Creek*, OK 7–20 Mar (F&LH, GK).

A Eurasian Wigeon appeared in *Clay*, NE