



Ron Martin

Temperatures and precipitation were near the averages for the season with the exception of April, which had above-average temperatures. Some areas of the Dakotas remained quite dry. There were no major weather events, and migration was rather lackluster. Waterfowl moved through quickly, and there were numerous early shorebird sightings. However, the bulk of shorebirds moved through perhaps a bit later than usual. Warbler migration was uninspiring.

The season provided a good number of vagrants and casual species in North Dakota. Possible first state records included an Anhinga in North Dakota, Great Black-backed Gull in South Dakota, and Smew and Blue-winged Warbler in Montana. Second state sightings were a Yellow-throated Vireo in Montana and Great Black-backed Gull in North Dakota.



Barn Owl sightings are on the rise in the Northern Great Plains. This bird was a good find in Dunn County, North Dakota 1 May 2006. Photograph by Jack Lefor.

## GEESE THROUGH HERONS

Thousands of Cackling Geese were in McLean, ND 24 Mar (REM). Still on the hypothetical list in South Dakota, a Mute Swan was in Stanley 8 Mar (p.a., RDO). In Montana, a Bewick's Swan was among Tundra Swans 25 Mar at Freezeout L. (MS). Providing

about the 16th report for North Dakota, a Eurasian Wigeon was documented in Stutsman 8 Apr (p.a., SS). Six American Black Ducks were reported from the Dakotas, with an additional two reports of hybrids from North Dakota. Four Cinnamon Teal were noted in South Dakota, and seven reports were received from North Dakota. Casual in

spring, 2 Surf Scoters were in Great Falls 22 Mar (AN). Long-tailed Ducks were in all three states; latest dates were 15 Apr in Traill, ND (REM), 17 Apr in Grant, SD (BU), and 6 May at Benton Lake N.W.R., MT (SK). A potential first for Montana, a male Smew was at Medicine Lake N.W.R. 12 May (p.a., PG, MC). Horned and Eared Grebes were early 18 Mar in Yankton, SD (RD), and a Clark's Grebe in Roberts 17 Apr tied the earliest date for South Dakota (BU).

A possible first for North Dakota, an Anhinga was seen soaring with Sandhill Cranes 9 Apr in Kidder (p.a., REM, SDL). Tying the earliest date for South Dakota, a Great Egret was in Day 27 Mar (WS). Casual in Montana, a Green Heron was near Laurel 12 Apr (p.a., BH).

## HAWKS THROUGH SHOREBIRDS

Rare migrants in the Dakotas, 3 Red-shouldered Hawks were observed. One was at Turtle River S.P., ND 28-29 Mar (p.a., TGD), and singles in South Dakota were in Moody (p.a., JSP) and Roberts (p.a., MO), 25 Mar and 12 May, respectively. Late Gyrfalcons were reported 20 Apr at Ft. Peck, MT (CC) and 28 Apr in Sully, SD (KM). The only Yellow Rails reported were 19 on 16 May in Grand Forks, ND (EEF). Reports of both Virginia Rail and Sora 9 Apr in Union, SD furnished the earliest recorded date for both species in the state (BFH). Very early for North Dakota, 3 Sandhill Cranes were at Long Lake N.W.R. 8 Mar (JW, CDE).

Marking the first report for North Dakota in 70 years, a Mountain Plover was videotaped 9 Apr at a Greater Sage-Grouse lek in Slope (p.a., AVN). Four Mountain Plovers were s. of Glasgow, MT 21 Apr (JC). The earliest for South Dakota, a Willet was in Beadle 7 Apr (BFW), and a Marbled Godwit was in Hand 31 Mar (BFW). A very rare migrant in South Dakota, 2 Red Knots were in Kingsbury 20 May (JSP, RFS). Also very rare in South Dakota, a Western Sandpiper was noted in Sully 14 May (RDO). Stilt Sandpipers were early 9 Apr in Union, SD (BFH) and 16 Apr in Burleigh, ND (HCT). American Woodcocks were displaying again this spring in Burleigh, ND. Nesting has not been confirmed in the area (HCT, CDE, BB).



A subspecies considered casual in Montana, this Bewick's Swan was with Tundra Swans at Freezeout Lake, Montana 28 March 2006. Photograph by Dan Casey.



This first-year Great Black-backed Gull at the Bismarck, North Dakota Landfill 8 April 2006 provided the second record for the state. Another individual of this species was found later the same day in an adjacent county. Photograph by Ron Martin.



Representing the second record for Montana, this Yellow-throated Vireo was at Bowdoin National Wildlife Refuge 27 28 (here 27) May 2006. Photograph by Stephen J. Dinsmore

## GULLS THROUGH GOATSUCKERS

About the 15th report for North Dakota, an ad. Little Gull was at the Fargo lagoons 15 May (p.a., CDE, REM). A new high count for spring, 1350 Bonaparte's Gulls were in Kidder and Logan, ND 8 Apr (REM, CDE, HCT). In Pierre, SD, a gull thought to be a Franklin's Gull x Ring-billed Gull hybrid was photographed 30-31 Mar (RDO); this combination is rarely reported. A Mew Gull was at Pierre, SD 23 Mar-2 Apr (RDO). Probably the same Iceland Gull reported in the winter season remained through 24 Mar in Pierre, SD (p.a., RDO). This was the 4th reported in the state. Spring Glaucous Gull reports continue to proliferate. The species was reported from two South Dakota counties, and two May reports in North Dakota included one 21 May in Kidder (HCT) and one through the end of the season in Grand Forks (EEF). On the



Furnishing about the eleventh record for North Dakota, this Sage Thrasher in Fargo 21 May 2006 was one of two reported in the state in the spring season.  
Photograph by Patrick Beauzay.



This exotic European Goldfinch was a one-day wonder in Burleigh County, North Dakota 7 May 2006.  
Photograph by Allen Nass.

heels of the first state record last spring, 2 Great Black-backed Gulls were noted in North Dakota. Singles were photographed in Burleigh and Logan 8 Apr (p.a., REM, CDE, HCT). A potential first for South Dakota, a Great Black-backed Gull was in Sully 8-9 Apr (p.a., RDO, KM). The earliest record for South Dakota, a Caspian Tern was in Hughes 14 Apr (KM).

Providing the 5th report for North Dakota, a White-winged Dove was photographed in Fargo 30 Apr (p.a., MO). Still on the increase, Barn Owls were reported from four South Dakota counties in May, and a single was in Dunn, ND 1 May (p.a., JPL). Encouraging were four e. river Burrowing Owl reports from North Dakota. In South Dakota, Burrowing Owl was reported well to the e. in Hamlin 17 Apr (fide DB). Broad-tailed Hummingbirds were recorded in three counties in the Black Hills of South Dakota in late May. A rare migrant in North Dakota, a Whip-poor-will was observed migrating northward at dusk in Richland 19 May (CDE).

### WOODPECKERS THROUGH THRASHERS

American Three-toed Woodpeckers were excavating a cavity in Lawrence, SD 25-26 May (DS). A Western Kingbird was very early in Hughes, SD 13 Apr (p.a., RDO). Marking the

2nd sighting in Montana, a Yellow-throated Vireo was photographed at Bowdoin N.W.R. 27-28 May (p.a., SD, PS). Accidental in spring in North Dakota, a Gray Jay was in Grand Forks 1-12 Apr (p.a., EEf, DOL). Unusual in ne Montana, a Common Raven was in Valley 10 Apr (JC); one in Pierce, ND 16 Apr could indicate nesting, as the species nests in nearby McHenry (REM).

A Sedge Wren was early 25 Apr in Hughes, SD (KM). A late Townsend's Solitaire was in Mott, ND 1 May (DNS). Casual in Montana, a Northern Mockingbird was at Ft. Peck 27 May (JL). Furnishing the first North Dakota reports in six years, single Sage Thrashers were in Fargo 21 May (p.a., DPW, DWR) and in McHenry 28 May (SSH); these represented about the 11th and 12th reports for the state. The earliest reports of the species in Montana came from Carbon 1 Apr (BJ), while in South Dakota, Sage Thrashers were noted in Butte 14 & 20 May (EK, DC, MS).

### WARBLERS THROUGH FINCHES

A potential first for Montana, a Blue-winged Warbler was reported from Bowdoin N.W.R. 23 May (p.a., CM, MM, JM). A rare spring migrant in the Dakotas, Black-throated Blue Warblers were in Fargo 16 & 19 May (REM, CDE) and in Hughes, SD 2-6 May (EDS). Casual in South Dakota, a Townsend's Warbler was in Lawrence 27 May (p.a., DS). Casual in North Dakota, a Pine Warbler was at Grand Forks 24 Apr (DOL). Record early for North Dakota was an Ovenbird 14 Apr in Bismarck (MAG). Hooded Warblers were reported 24 May in Brown, SD (p.a., DAT) and in Fargo, ND 24-25 May (p.a., DPW). Other casual warblers reported in South Dakota included a Prothonotary Warbler 22 May in Minnehaha (p.a., PB) and a Worm-eating Warbler 19 May in Watworth (p.a., DC). A Common Yellowthroat was early in Stanley, SD 21 Apr (KM). Out-of-range Western Tanager were in Hughes, SD 4 May (EOS) and in Adams, ND 5 May (p.a., REM, JPL). The Green-tailed Towhee that wintered in Walsh, ND was still present 31 Mar (fide DNS). About the 10th report for South Dakota, a Green-tailed Towhee was in Harding 11 May (p.a., KM).

Usually reported only in the summer season, a Henslow's Sparrow was early in Barnes, ND 8-10 May (p.a., JL). A nice peak of 60 Fox Sparrows was tallied in Grand Forks, ND 6 Apr (EEF). Constituting about the 8th report for North Dakota, a Gray-headed Junco was in Stutsman 9 May (p.a., LC). Rare as spring migrants, 4 Smith's Longspurs were in Wells, ND 22 Apr (REM). Northern Cardinals continue to spread in far e. North Dakota: a peak of 4 was noted at Fargo 17 May (CDE). An-



This possible Franklin's Gull x Ring-billed Gull hybrid was in Pierre, South Dakota 30 and (here) 31 March 2006. Photographs by Ricky Olson (perched) and Doug Backlund (flight).

other species usually reported only in the summer season in North Dakota, Dickcissel was widely reported in the state by late May. Casual in North Dakota, an Eastern Meadowlark was in Ransom 29 Mar (BS). A European Goldfinch, surely an escapee, was photographed 7 May in Burleigh, ND (AN). There were only two reports of Red Crossbill from North Dakota, and no White-winged Crossbills were noted.

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