



Only the fifth for North Dakota, but the third winter record, this Carolina Wren was in Cass County 22 (here 29) December 2006 through 4 February 2007. Photograph by Joe Gregg.



Well to the east of the species' usual haunts in the North Dakota Badlands, this Gray-crowned Rosy-Finch of the Hepburn's subspecies was present in Barnes County 19 (here 20) December 2006 through the end of the period. Photograph by Dean Riemer.

campus in Fargo until 30 Jan (p.a., DPW). Very rare in South Dakota in winter, a Field Sparrow was in Yankton 17 Dec (p.a., DS). Accidental in winter in South Dakota, Swamp Sparrows were in Yankton 17 Dec (p.a., DS) and in Fall River 28 Dec (p.a., JSP). Furnishing the first winter report for South Dakota, a Black-headed Grosbeak was in Pennington 2-4 Dec (p.a., TBW). Casual in winter in the Dakotas, Brown-headed Cowbirds were in Jamestown, ND 15 Dec and 27 Jan-10 Feb in Lake, SD (JSP).

A Gray-crowned Rosy-Finch of the Hepburn's subspecies was at a feeder in Barnes, ND 19 Dec+ (p.a., PRS, DWR). Pine Gros-

beaks made a very good showing, with seven reports in North Dakota and one each from South Dakota and Montana. The Red Crossbill peak in North Dakota was a flock of 70 at the Minot Country Club 23 Dec (REM). Small numbers of Hoary Redpolls were widely reported in North Dakota. A single was in Sully, SD 6 Jan (RDO). In Montana, a single was seen intermittently at Ft. Peck (CC), and one was in Choteau 6 Jan (JN).

Contributors (state editors in boldface): MONTANA: Scott Carlton, Charles Carlson, Luther Harris, Waneta Harris, Billie Hicks, Ross Lagasse, Bob Martinka, John Nordrum,

Dwayne Prellwitz, Mike Schwitters, Gary Swant, Dave Williams. NORTH DAKOTA: Corey D. Ellingson, Gary A. Eslinger, Eve E. Freeberg, Joe Gregg, Linda Gregg, Larry D. Igl, Dave O. Lambeth, Sherry D. Leslie, Ron E. Martin, Steve Millard, Mark A. Otmes, Dean W. Riemer, Paulette R. Scherr, H. Clark Talkington, Dennis P. Wiesenborn. SOUTH DAKOTA: Jocelyn L. Baker, Bill Huser, Michael Melius, Kenny Miller, Ricky D. Olson, Jeffrey S. Palmer, Mark Schmidtbauer, Dave Swanson, Tom and Brenda Warren. ☉

Ron Martin, 16900 125th Street SE
Sawyer, North Dakota 58781-9284, (jrmartin@ndak.net)

Southern Great Plains



W. Ross Silcock | Joseph A. Grzybowski

It was a relatively quiet winter in the Region for rarities. Of note are the increasingly larger numbers of waterfowl, cranes, and icterids lingering or wintering increasingly farther north. Shorebird and waterfowl migration seemed to jump-start early, particularly in southwestern Oklahoma. However, also of note was the paucity of some species such as Yellow-rumped Warblers and Spotted Towhees in central Oklahoma, or some corvids in western Nebraska. Some observers have speculated that West Nile virus or drought may be culprits in these situations, but no connections are clear.

Abbreviations: Hackberry (Hackberry Flat W.M.A., Tillman, OK); Harlan (Harlan County Res, NE); McConaughy (L. McConaughy, Keith, NE); Quivira (N.W.R., Stafford, KS);

Rainwater Basin (playa wetlands s.-cen. Nebraska); Red Slough (W.M.A., McCurtain, OK); Sandhills (large area of native grassland in n.-cen. Nebraska); Tenkiller (L. Tenkiller; Sequoyah, OK).

GEESE THROUGH FALCONS

A spectacular estimate of 307,000 geese, including the five expected species, came from Quivira 14 Dec (fide LM). Unexpectedly late were 5 Greater White-fronted Geese at Desoto N.W.R., Washington, NE 3 Jan (BB). A find in its own right was a dark-morph Ross's Goose photographed at Harvard Marsh, Clay, NE 26 Feb (PD). A survey of traditional Trumpeter Swan wintering areas in the Sandhills located 166 on 2 Jan (Nebraska Game and Parks, fide JGJ). Wintering Trumpeters southward in the Region were widely reported, as is becoming the norm, including 14 in Kansas (fide LM) and as many as 19 in Oklahoma (fide JL). Now



A rarity almost anywhere away from California, this dark-morph Ross's Goose was photographed at Harvard Marsh, Clay County, Nebraska 26 February 2007, providing just the fifth state record of this morph. Photograph by Paul Dunbar.

the rarer swan in the Region, 5 Tundras were claimed at Quivira Dec–Feb (MR), another in Coffey, KS 27 Jan (MG, AM), 4 in Garvin, OK 21 Dec (EBE), and 2–6 in Custer, OK 13 Dec–28 Jan (BS, EBE).

Unusual mid-winter stragglers were 2–3 Wood Ducks in Lancaster, NE 28 Jan and 4 Feb (LE). Now rare in the Region, the only American Black Ducks reported were 2 in Douglas, KS 14 Jan (MG, AM). An impressive 28,700 Mallards were reported at DeSoto N.W.R., Washington, NE 20 Dec (BB). Early returning Blue-winged Teal were a single in Tillman, OK 25 Feb (L&MT) and 4 at Red Slough 26 Feb (DA). An excellent count of Greater Scaup was 86 at McConaughy 27 Dec (SJD). Elsewhere, one Greater was in Lancaster, NE 9 Jan (JGJ), 5 in Tillman, OK 2 Dec (L&MT), and 6 in Douglas, KS 17 Dec (PW, RW). White-winged Scoters were noted in Doniphan, KS 16 Dec (2; DC), in Tulsa, OK 10–26 Feb (at least one; JH, SM, m.ob.), and in Alfalfa, OK 22 Feb (one; SW). Among the Black Scoters located were singles in Lancaster, NE 1 Dec (LE), Butler, KS 4 Feb (KG), and Tulsa, OK 10–23 Feb (TC, m.ob.). Two Long-tailed Ducks were in Douglas, KS 4 Feb (MG, AM), and at least one was in Tulsa, OK 16 Dec–Feb (DH, m.ob.). A regular occurrence in Scotts Bluff, NE was the female Barrow's Goldeneye 26 Jan (KDL), but up to 4 Barrow's in Kansas were unusual: 2 in Sedgwick 16 Dec (PJ), possibly a 3rd at a different Sedgwick location 6 Jan (D&FV), and another at Quivira 9 Jan (L&JQ). Common Mergansers winter in large numbers in the Region; best counts for each state were 11,750 at McConaughy 28 Dec (SJD), 18,040 in Mitchell, KS 17 Dec (MR), and 10,000 in Blaine, OK 3 Feb (NV, DW)—the latter number somewhat remarkable in recent years, as Commons have remained largely n. of Oklahoma lately. “Hundreds” of Hooded Mergansers in Blaine, OK 3 Feb (NV, DW) and another 285 in Woodward, OK 6 Dec (DGi)

were top counts mentioned.

Greater Prairie-Chickens numbered 100+ in Lincoln, NE 28 Jan (TJW). The only Red-throated Loons reported were all in Oklahoma; singles were in Oklahoma 17 Feb (PV, TU, JW), Bryan 21 Feb (BH), and 3–6 were at the “loon magnet,” Tenkiller, 26 Jan–10 Feb (JWA). Up to 8 Pacific Loons were at Tenkiller 26 Jan–27 Feb (JWA, m.ob.) among the many Common Loons, whose peak count hit 253 on 27 Jan (JWA). Another healthy count of Commons came from L. Texoma, Marshall, OK 8 Feb (EBE)—118 birds. The northernmost Commons were single juvs. in Keith, NE and Lincoln, NE 27 Dec (SJD). Now annual at Tenkiller, a Yellow-billed Loon was observed there 6 & 26 Jan (JWA) and 27 Feb (CC). A juv. Red-necked Grebe was late at McConaughy 27–28 Dec (SJD). Tenkiller also hosted 281 Horned Grebes 27 Jan (JWA). Tardy and wintering were single Eared Grebes at Red Slough 2 Dec (DA) and Tillman, OK 25 Feb (L&MT), with up to 5 in Comanche, OK 8 Jan (JAG) and 25 Feb (GK). Western Grebes winter in w. parts of the Region in small numbers, as open water permits, n. as far as McConaughy, where “a few” were present 7 Jan (TJW). Elsewhere, 8 Westerns were in Kansas through 2 Jan, one on the latter date as far e. as Linn (AM; *vide* LM), and at least 3 were in Oklahoma into Feb (*vide* JL), one of those e. to Cherokee (JWA). The only Clark's Grebes reported were a late single at McConaughy 28 Dec (SJD) and one in Comanche, OK 3–25 Feb (L&MT, m.ob.).

Very late were a Least Bittern in Johnson, KS 2 Dec (DF), a Great Egret in Sedgwick until 3 Dec (H&SG), and a Little Blue Heron in Oklahoma 11 Dec (PV). Another Great Egret wintered at Red Slough (DA). Also challenging their thermoregulation abilities were 3 Black-crowned Night-Herons in Sedgwick through at least 12 Feb (D&FV). Perhaps Nebraska's first documented winter record of a Turkey Vulture came from Scotts Bluff 15 Jan (AK, LK). Returning Turkey Vultures were as far n. as Box Butte, NE by 26 Feb (KK). Definitely a Regional “zootie” was the White-tailed Kite in Oklahoma, OK 6 Feb (DW, TU). The best count of Bald Eagles was of 155 in Geary/Clay, KS 8 Jan (C&JO). This was a normal winter for Northern Goshawks, with the 3 reported in Kansas being the most southerly (*vide* LM). One of fewer than five records for Nebraska and Kansas was an apparently wild Harris's Hawk photographed in

Sedgwick, KS 11 Jan (*vide* PJ). Red-shouldered Hawks continue to edge westward, with 3 as far so as Harvey, KS (G&JF; *vide* LM). A late Swainson's Hawk was in Cleveland, OK 18 Dec (MP). Golden Eagles were reported e. to Red Slough (ad.) 5 Feb (DA) and 26 & 28 Feb (DA). Merlins continue their more prominent presence in the Region, where they are now being more routinely reported in towns. The Peregrine Falcon pairs that nest in Omaha and Lincoln, NE appear to be resident (JGJ, GB). A Peregrine was also noted in Manhattan, KS 25 Feb (DR). A Prairie Falcon wandered e. to Linn, KS 6 Dec (MG), with a surprising 2 in McCurtain, OK through the period (J&DV).

RAILS THROUGH WOODPECKERS

A King Rail in Lincoln 15 Dec was identified by its single *kek* calls (TJW)—if accepted, the 2nd Dec record for Nebraska. The first returning Sandhill Cranes were in Kearney, NE 5 Feb (*vide* RL); about 10,000 were in the cen.



Both rare in Oklahoma, these White-winged and Black Scoters were photographed at Lake Keystone, Tulsa County 17 February 2007. Photograph by Steve Metz.

Platte R. Valley, NE 27 Feb (DK). An amazing 48,000 lingered at Quivira 14 Dec (MR).

Continuing a recent trend of overwintering, good numbers of Greater Yellowlegs were in Oklahoma during the period, including 82 at Hackberry 25 Feb (early migrants?) and 27 apparently wintering there 21 Jan (L&MT). Another was as far n. as McConaughy 28 Dec (SJD), and 2 were in Cowley, KS 24 Dec (GY). Two Lesser Yellowlegs were still surprising at Hackberry 25 Feb (L&MT). A Spotted Sandpiper in McCurtain, OK 2 Dec (DA) was late enough, but another in Cherokee, OK 21 Jan (JWA) was a mid-winter surprise. Among the early arrivals were 26 Long-billed Curlews at Hackberry 25 Feb (L&MT). Quite tardy for Nebraska was a Baird's Sandpiper that lingered in Lancaster until 1 Dec (LE). More expected, but still early, were 6 Baird's at Hackberry 25 Feb (L&MT). More likely to be wintering in recent years, Dunlin was recorded at Hackberry 2 Dec (2; L&MT) and in Alfalfa, OK 16 Dec (16; AW et al.). Also pushing the



This nice comparison of Western and Clark's Grebes comes from Lake Lawtonka, Comanche County, Oklahoma on 10 February 2007. Photograph by Lou Truex.

season were 23 Long-billed Dowitchers at Hackberry 18 Feb, with 62 there by 25 Feb (L&MT).

Oddball Franklin's Gulls in alternate plumage appeared in Cedar, NE 5 Jan (BFH), Comanche, OK 8 Jan (JAG), Lancaster, NE 12-15 Jan (LE), and Oklahoma, OK 11 Feb (DW, KB, JCu). An excellent count of 3000 Bonaparte's Gulls was made in Sequoyah, OK 27 Jan (JWA). California Gulls in Nebraska included 30 presumed migrants tagging along with 500+ Ring-billed Gulls at Harlan 23 Feb (G&WH). Rarer southward, 2 California Gulls were found in Kansas in Dec (DF, MR, RP), and 2-4 were in Oklahoma through the period (JAG, JWA, JL, GK). Thayer's and Lesser Black-backed Gulls are now regular in winter throughout the Region; about 18 Thayer's and 8 Lesser Black-backed were tallied from all three states (*vide* WRS, *vide* LM, *vide* JL). Another regular in winter, Glaucous Gulls were reported s. to Alfalfa, OK 16 Dec (2; AW et al.), Blaine, OK 3-15 Feb (NV, DW, m.ob.), and Oklahoma 15-24 Feb (PV, JW, GK), with several in Tulsa through the period (JWA, TC, JW). A Slaty-backed Gull reported (p.a.) from Sarpy, NE 21 Dec may have been the well-documented individual found a km from the Region, in Iowa, in late Dec. Two Black-legged Kittiwakes were reported; one in Coffey, KS, present since 11 Nov, was seen 2 Dec (DG), with another in Cherokee, OK 10 Feb (JWA).

Eurasian Collared-Doves were gathering twigs as early as 23 Feb in a Cheyenne, NE yard (AS). While also invading much of the Region, the 142 White-winged Doves in Finney, KS 11 Dec (T&SS) made a shocking total. Inca Doves, now regular locally across Oklahoma, are also increasing and spreading in the Region, with singles located as far n.



Baird's Sandpiper is normally rare anywhere in the United States in the winter season, but this bird was one of six noted at the Salt Plains National Wildlife Refuge, Alfalfa County, Oklahoma on 26 February 2007. Photograph by Steve Metz.

and w. as Keith, NE 28 Dec (ph. SJD) and Morton, KS 30 Dec (SP). Spreading more slowly, Greater Roadrunners were found Clark, KS 28 Dec (GP) and Cowley, KS 24 Dec (GY). Of 8 Snowy Owls reported, 7 were in Kansas (*vide* LM) and the other in Nebraska (SJD). Barred Owls are moving westward, with one in Clark, KS 28 Dec (GP) and 2 in Jefferson, NE 18 Feb (RE). Long-eared Owls were widely reported in Nebraska and Kansas, with a best count 14 in Lancaster, NE 16 Dec (*vide* JG). Only 4 Northern Saw-whet Owls were reported, 2 each from Nebraska and Kansas (WRS, EB, *vide* DWo, C&JO, *vide* BG). A Red-headed Woodpecker in Madison, NE 23 Dec (*vide* DWo) was northerly for the date. Far to the ne. of the usual sw. Regional locations, a female Ladder-backed Woodpecker appeared in Riley, KS 9-11 Dec (ph. LJ) in the same location a female had been seen in 2001 (LJ). Another indication of warming trends, Yellow-bellied Sapsuckers again wintered more commonly than usual n. to se. Nebraska (*vide* WRS).

FLYCATCHERS THROUGH WAXWINGS

Becoming an expected event now, a (or the) Black Phoebe continued at Broken Bow Dam in McCurtain, OK, remaining at least through 10 Feb (DA, BH, EBe). Eastern Phoebes are hardy for flycatchers, but the 2 in Neosho, KS 6 Jan (RM) and one in Riley, KS 16 Dec (DR) were pushing their luck. Northern Shrikes penetrated southward to Cimarron, OK 27 Jan (JW, MF), and Alfalfa, OK 15-16 Dec (AW), about as expected. C.B.C. compilers in Scotts Bluff and Lancaster, NE (AK, JG) noted the scarcity or absence of Black-billed Magpies; along with Black-capped Chickadee and

American Crow, these species appear to have had significant population reductions in recent years in cen. Nebraska, although chickadees may be rebounding (*vide* LRB).

Arriving early were a Purple Martin in Tulsa, OK 21 Feb (PDe) and a Tree Swallow at Red Slough 22 Feb (DA). Displaced Rock Wrens included one far to the e. in McCurtain, OK for the period (BH, m.ob.); northerly were 2 in Russell, KS through 11 Jan (MR) and one in Ellsworth, KS 7 Jan (DG). Two wintering pairs of Carolina Wrens as far w. as North Platte, NE (*vide* TJW) continued this species' northwestward expansion. A tardy or lingering House Wren was at Quivira 14 Dec (MR). Winter Wrens were reported on Christmas counts n. to Washington, NE 23 Dec (*vide* JT) and w. to Russell, KS 16 Dec (MR). A northerly Sedge Wren was at Quivira 14 Dec along with 24 Marsh Wrens (MR), while a northerly Marsh Wren was knocking on South Dakota's door in Cedar, NE 16 Jan (MB).

Chancing its metabolic functions was a Ruby-crowned Kinglet in Scotts Bluff 16 Dec (AK). Good numbers of Eastern Bluebirds are remaining well into Nebraska during Dec, with 143 in Lancaster 16 Dec (*vide* JG) and 65 n. to Dodge 3 Jan (D&JP). Large numbers of Mountain Bluebirds were in w. Kansas: 686 in Barber 30 Dec (PJ) and 624 in Russell 16 Dec (MR). Eye-boggling must have been the 100,000 American Robins estimated in McCurtain, OK 21 Dec (BH). Always an exciting find in the Region, 3 Varied Thrushes appeared in se. Nebraska mid-Dec-23 Jan (*vide* DL, LE, JK, KL, L&CF), and another made it s. to Ellis, KS 1 Jan (T&SM). Another displaced westerner, a Sage Thrasher, made it e. as far as Nowata, OK 28 Dec (MD), and our resident Sioux, NE Curve-billed Thrasher,

which arrived in Oct 2002, was still present through the period (*fide* AK). The only reports of Bohemian Waxwing were of a flock of 60 in *Dawes*, NE 7-8 Feb and a smaller flock there 21 Feb (JF).

WARBLERS THROUGH WEAVERS

Half-hardy parulids w. of usual sites were 2 Pine Warblers as far n. as North Platte, NE 7 Dec (TJW) and another in *Cleveland*, OK 25 Dec (JAG). A Western Palm Warbler was in *Douglas*, KS on the unprecedented date of 20 Feb (DG). A Common Yellowthroat was in *Cleveland*, OK 9 Feb (RG), later than the latest Jan records. Unexpected so far w. in Oklahoma, Eastern Towhees were in *Caddo* 7 Dec (NV, MF, NH), *Comanche* 21 Jan (L&MT), and *Blaine*, OK 15 Feb (EBe, KM). Northerly Chipping Sparrows were in *Riley* (DR) and *Shawnee*, KS 16 Dec (GH), and as many as 18 were in *Alfalfa*, OK 16 Dec (AW et al.). In addition to Chippings, other half-hardy sparrows included a Field Sparrow in *Clark*, KS 28 Dec (GP) and single Vesper Sparrows in *Alfalfa*, OK 16 Dec (AW et al.) and *Tulsa*, OK 19 Jan (GK). At the likely n. edge of their winter range, up to 5 Henslow's Sparrows were at Red Slough through the period (DA, DWd et al.). Single Fox Sparrows in *Cimar-*



Henslow's Sparrow, normally a skulker in winter, can sometimes provide a patient watcher with stunning studies, such as this one at Red Slough Wildlife Management Area, McCurtain County, Oklahoma 17 January 2007. Photograph by Berlin Heck.

dence than usual in Nebraska; some 72 were reported s., but only to about the Platte Valley (*fide* WRS).

Great-tailed Grackles keep staying farther n., in larger numbers, with 80 still in *Harlan*, NE 1 Dec (G&WH), 1500 in *Leavenworth*, KS 31 Dec (JS), and 600+ in *Douglas*, KS 14 Jan (MG, AM). Only moderate numbers of Purple Finches appeared, including one as far w. as *Scotts Bluff*, NE 2 Dec (KDL). Common Redpolls were found in small numbers in Nebraska also, with 13 reported, including 9 in *Washington* 23 Dec (EB, WRS). Pine Siskins were few except in the w.; 76 were in *Scotts Bluff*, NE 16 Dec (*fide* AK). A candidate for best bird of the season was the **Eurasian Tree Sparrow** photographed near *Norfolk*, NE 3 Feb (MB) and seen again 11 Feb (PR, BFH). This species has been gradually expanding northwestward in Iowa over the past few years; the nearest Iowa record previous to this Nebraska sighting was some 112 km e. of the Nebraska border.

Cited observers (area editors in boldface): NEBRASKA: Bob Barry, Elliott Bedows, Gary Berthelsen, Mark Brogie, Linda R. Brown, , Kathy DeLara, Stephen J. Dinsmore, Paul Dunbar, Rick Eades, Larry Einemann, Larry & Carol Falk (L&CF), William Flack, John Flavin, Joe Gubanyi, Glen & Wanda Hoge (G&WH), Bill F. Huser, Joel G. Jorgensen, Alice Kenitz, Lee Kenitz, Dan Kim, J. Kirk,

Clem N. Klaphake, Ken Kranik, Keith Lacy, Dan Leger, Richard Luehrs, Don & Jan Paseka (D&JP), Paul Roisen (PR), **W. Ross Silcock**, Audrey Sterkel, Jerry Toll, Bruce & Donna Walgren (B&DW), T.J. Walker, Duane Wolf (DWO). KANSAS: Donna Chance, Dave Fischer, Gregg & Joanna Friesen (G&JF), Matt Gearheart, Dan Gish, Harry & Sharon Gregory (H&SG), Bob Gress, Kevin Groeneweg, Gary Haden, Pete Janzen, Lowell Johnson, Robert Mangile, Terry & Sam Mannell (T&SM), Lloyd Moore, Aaron Mitchell, Chuck & Jaye Otte (C&JO), Sebastian Patti, Rob Penner, Galen Pittman, Dwight Platt, Lee & Jane Queal (L&JQ), Mike Rader, David Rintoul, Tom & Sara Shane (T&SS), Joe Soukup, Don & Fran Vannoy (D&FV), Phil Wedge, Ryan Williams, Gene Young. OKLAHOMA: David Arbour, James W. Arterburn, Karen Bays, Eric Beck (EBe), Cameron Cox, Jane Cunningham (JCu), Tom Curtis, P. Detrick (PDe), Melinda Droege, Max Fuller, David Gill (DGi), Joseph A. Grzybowski, Richard Gunn, Berlin Heck, Neland Hill, Jim Hoffman, Donna Horton, George Kamp, Jo Loyd, Kurt Meisenzahl, Steve Metz, Michael Patten, Brady Surber, Lou & Mary Truex (L&MT), Terry Underhill, Joyce & Don Varnier (J&DV), Patricia Velte, Nancy Vicars, Dora Webb (DWe), Anne Wilbur, Don Winslow, Doug Wood (DWd), Jimmy Woodard, Shane Woolbright. 🌱

W. Ross Silcock, P.O. Box 57
Tabor, Iowa 51653, (silcock@rosssilcock.com)
Joseph A. Grzybowski, 715 Elmwood Drive
Norman, Oklahoma 73072, (j_grzybowski@sbcglobal.net)



Extending its range from Iowa, Eurasian Tree Sparrow made its Nebraska debut at Norfolk, Madison County 3 (here) through 11 February 2007. Photograph by Mark Brogie.

ron, OK 27 Jan (JW, MF), *Otoe*, NE 17 Feb (L&CF), and *Lancaster*, NE 23 Feb (CNK) may have been getting a jump on the season, although single Swamp Sparrows in *Cass*, NE and *Sarpy*, NE 1 Feb (WF) must have been wintering, a rare occurrence that far north. A regional "zootie," with fewer than 20 records in all, a Golden-crowned Sparrow was found in *Harvey*, KS 16 Dec (JS, DP). Rare during winter in Nebraska, 2 White-winged Juncos in *Dawes* 3 Jan (B&DW) were the only ones reported. Snow Buntings were more in evi-