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Notes on a Three-toed Woodpecker Nest

Kim R. Eckert

On 30 May 1999, an active Three-toed Woodpecker (*Picoides tridactylus*) nest was found during a "Minnesota Birding Weekends" tour in Cook County. The location was in a predominantly coniferous woodland on the east side of the Gunflint Trail, just north of the South Brule River (T63N, R1E, Section 22).

The male Three-toed was first seen as it flew in to the sound of a Black-backed Woodpecker (*P. arcticus*) tape, and eventually we watched it enter a southwest-facing cavity about six feet up in a balsam fir or spruce. Later that same week, during the June 4-6 Boreal Birding Festival, several observers saw both the male and female in and around the nest cavity, and when I next visited the site, on 24 June, at least one young Three-toed could be seen and heard in the cavity as both adults came in with food. I am not aware of any subsequent visits by birders to the nest, nor do I know how many young were hatched or fledged.

Although the Three-toed Woodpecker is very rare or casual in Minnesota in summer, it is interesting to note that in June of three recent years — 1993, 1995 and 1996 — I also have found this species at this same location. This nest represents at least the sixth confirmed breeding record for the state. Of the five previous records, the first breeding record was in 1981 in Cook County (*The Loon* 53:221-222), and the other four have been in St. Louis County: in 1991 (*The Loon* 64:29), and for three consecutive years, 1993-1995, in the same tree (*The Loon* 66:24, 67:29 and 68:47).

There also have been at least three other probable Minnesota breeding



Three-toed Woodpecker, 20 June 1999, Cook County. Photo by Anthony Hertzell.

records. T. S. Roberts (*The Birds of Minnesota*, Volume 1, page 690) reports that "a young male nearly grown was taken there [Itasca State Park] on July 16, 1902." Also, a pair with fledged young was reported in 1985 in Cook County (*The Loon* 58:29). Finally, in my notebook of the transcription of the 28 June 1984 Duluth Birding Report, there is this mention of an unpublished record: "There is a pair of Three-toed Woodpeckers nesting in Scenic State Park in northern Itasca County. Either call me for directions or drive up to the park and ask for directions from the park naturalist."

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Locating Wintering Long-eared Owls In Minnesota

Paul Hertzel and Anthony X. Hertzel

In winter, the Long-eared Owl (*Asio otus*) is widely distributed across North America, but infrequently encountered. In Minnesota, statewide reports of winter roost sites average fewer than four per year. Spring and fall observations are only slightly higher, and summer reports are the fewest.

Various authors have expressed the opinion that the Long-eared Owl is more common in Minnesota than the sparse record indicates. We attempted to assess this hypothesis with respect to the winter population. For two consecutive winters, 1998–1999 and 1999–2000, we sought to gather information on the abundance of the Long-eared Owl in the southern third of the state. In the first year we searched sixteen Minnesota counties specifically for Long-eareds, finding them in fourteen of those counties, always in similar habitat. In the second winter we limited our searches to a single county (Washington) in an effort to gather information on the population density where suitable habitat seemed plentiful. We found birds at approximately the same rate in that single county as we found over our widely distributed searches conducted the previous winter.

Background

Minnesota is centrally located in the Long-eared Owl's North American range. The species occurs in the state throughout the year, breeding primarily in the north and wintering in the south (Roberts 1932, Janssen 1987).

Seasonal movements of the Long-eared Owl are enigmatic. Most northern populations withdraw some unknown distance in the fall. In Minnesota this movement is detected annually at the



Photo by Paul Hertzel.

Hawk Ridge Nature Reserve banding station at Duluth. From 1972–1999, 1,859 individuals were banded during the fall migration and many others were seen floating a few meters above the nets (Marks *et al.* 1994, Dave Evans, pers. com). However, in recent years the annual capture rate has declined to a fraction of the mean (66), with just 15 birds netted in 1998 and only 9 in 1999 (Dave Evans, pers. com).

In winter, this species is regarded as regular, though rare (Janssen 1987), based on a history of nearly annual but isolated reports. Statewide, Minnesota has averaged fewer than four reports per winter (1 December – 28 February) in the last 30 years. Occasionally, as in the winters of 1972–73, and 1988–89, there were no sightings of Long-eared Owls at all.

In the northern third of the state, very few birds are encountered after November. Since 1980 there have been only three winter records, all from the northeast, one of which was an individual found dead in St. Louis County (Bardon 1992).

The winter population in the central part of the state may differ little from that farther north. Reports are exceedingly scarce, with most central counties having no winter records. Only Clay County in the far west has more than one record in the past 20 years.

In the heavily-birded southern third of the state, the trickle of winter Long-eared Owl reports is more consistent. Roosts are discovered a few times nearly every winter season, often by some diligent Christmas Bird Count (CBC) participant. Yet those reports are scattered, and the collective CBC data strongly supports a model in which the owls' regular occurrence in any one area is not dependable. Nearly half (22 of 47) of the southern counties have no Long-eared Owl records at all in the past 30 winters. Of those counties that do have records, few other than Dakota have reports in even two consecutive years (*The Loon*, Winter Season reports). As recently as the 1996-97 season, Dakota County produced the state's only winter report.

For most species, a thin, irregular record of this sort would indicate a rare, irregular winter population. However, for such an elusive, nocturnal bird, it is probably incorrect to correlate the state population with the sight record. Indeed, the Long-eared Owl's preference for remote and dense habitat and its evasive behavior often have led others to write that the abundance of this species is not accurately reflected in the sight record. For instance, after classifying the species as a rare migrant, Janssen (1987) writes "Because of the secretive habits of this species, it may be more common." In a discussion of the distribution of raptors in Minnesota, Johnson (1982) writes "It is the opinion of this author that this species (*Asio otus*) is more abundant than

the current nest and sight records reveal." Also, regarding the summer population, Coyle, *et al.* (1996), wrote that the "lack of breeding records may be more a function of the owl's secluded nesting habitat than any scarcity in its numbers."

This assessment, that the owls are more common than the record indicates, occasionally has been supported by informal efforts to explore it. For example, during April 1992, Bob Janssen made a special effort to search isolated pine stands in western Minnesota. He found birds in Murray, Pipestone, Chippewa, and Lyon counties (*The Loon* 64:211). That year, seven southern counties had reports of Long-eared Owls, which was more than in any previous spring. In addition, Janssen's total alone nearly equaled the remaining spring reports statewide.

Since Minnesota seems not to have many wintering individual Long-eared Owls, the peak number of reports in the spring would seem to represent a migratory influx. But we believe a substantial percentage of these spring birds do, in fact, overwinter in Minnesota and that the two seasonal population totals may be more similar than a comparison of historical data indicates.

Methods

For two consecutive winters we sought Long-eared Owls in the southern third of Minnesota. In the first year we looked for owls in as many counties as we had time for, with no effort made to calculate abundances. In the second year we narrowed our searches to a single county in order to gather data on the localized abundances of overwintering owls.

Directed by past experience in Minnesota and other Midwestern states, we sought dense stands of cedar or juniper, and plantations of pine or spruce near open fields where the owls may find suitable hunting. All searches were conducted on foot during daylight hours in an effort to find birds at their daytime roosts.

Winter 1998-1999

From late December 1998 into February 1999 we periodically searched counties in southern Minnesota for Long-eared Owls, as time and weather permitted. We did not search any single county exhaustively. Since our goal was to confirm the breadth of the presence of wintering owls, we always moved on to a new county after birds were found. We confined our searches to evergreen habitat.

Winter 1999-2000

From late December 1999 into February 2000 we repeatedly visited Washington County in search of Long-eared Owls. We restricted ourselves to one county that appeared to have ample habitat, yet was poorly represented in the history of winter reports in the state. The rural hillsides of cedar that had given us success the previous year do not occur in Washington County. Instead, it is dominated by large wooded areas and regular plantations of primarily long-needle pines.

Results

Winter 1998-1999

In the first year, a total of 27 Long-eared Owls was found at 17 disjunct roost sites (Table 1). We found these in 14 southern counties from Washington County in the east to Yellow Medicine County in the west. On 30 December alone we found Long-eareds in five different counties. In three of the counties in which birds were discovered, (Houston, Chippewa, and Redwood), there are no prior winter records, and in each of six additional counties there is only one. In Fillmore County we found several recently-used roosts, but no birds, and in McLeod County we found no evidence at all.



Snow falls on a grove of cedars along the Minnesota River in Chippewa County — typical winter habitat for the Long-eared Owl. Photo by Anthony Hertzell.

When Long-eared Owls were encountered in stands of eastern red cedar, the roost almost always was located in a dense pocket of trees which were situated in otherwise semi-open habitat on sloping ground. Occasionally, plantations of long-needle pines or spruce produced birds, provided that the height of the trees was intermediate. Taller, more mature pines more often held Great Horned Owls (*Bubo virginianus*) if there were any owls at all.

Twelve encounters were with single birds, and six were with groups of two to four. Nearly all birds flew some short distance upon discovery. Some departed early as we approached, while others remained motionless at the roost until they were discovered, then departed, usually following eye-contact.

Six additional sites had evidence of recent use, but no birds. In many of these apparently unoccupied roosts we believe we may have flushed birds that eluded our notice. This opinion was based on

Table 1. Locations and descriptions of Long-eared Owl roosts found winter 1998–1999. Counties searched in which we had no success are not listed.

County	Birds	Habitat
Anoka	1	Small triangular grove of spruce with open fields surrounding.
Carver	2	Cedar grove on ground gradually sloping down toward small lake. Open fields immediate adjacent to the east and south.
Chippewa	1	Cedar pocket in semi-open hillside rising above open fields to the south.
Chippewa	4	Large-diameter cedar roost, well over 100 pellets about a mile to the east of the previous roost in similar habitat.
Dakota	1	Large plantation of near mature spruce with open fields to the west.
Hennepin	1	Small cedar grove atop a hill with open fields surrounding at Elm Creek Park.
Houston	1	Very dense mixed cedar/deciduous woods on steep hillside leading down to the Root River. Open fields across road to the west.
Houston	1	Dense mixed cedar/deciduous woods on hillside leading down to the Root River. Open fields across road to the west.
Nicollet	3	Dense pockets of cedars in mixed hillside rising above open fields to the southeast.
Ramsey	1	Planted grove of immature short-needle pines with extensive fields bordering to the west.
Redwood	1	Isolated, mixed evergreen stand with both long-needle pines and cedar trees in Cedar Rock WMA. Extensive open fields and bottomland surrounding.
Renville	3	Grove of cedars on a hillside rising above the Minnesota River.
Sibley	1	Steep ravine hillsides with many cedars. Extensive open fields on top.
Scott	2	Mixed cedars/deciduous woods on steep ravine-cut terrain north of Blakely.
Scott	2	Immature spruce plantation near Blue Lake with open fields to the north and west.
Washington	1	Isolated evergreen stand of pines near St. Croix River. Extensive open fields to the southwest.
Yellow Medicine	1	Hilly, extensive evergreen woods cut by ravines.

Table 2. Locations and descriptions of eight Long-eared Owl roosts found in Washington County, winter 1999–2000.

Location	Birds	Habitat
Near Copas	4	Most dense part of a stand of young, long-needle pines. Grassy understory, open fields immediately adjacent.
South of Copas	1	Loose stand of young, long-needle pines. Grassy understory, open fields immediately adjacent.
State highway 96 and Newgate Ave.	1	Very dense plantation of long-needle pines in rows, intermediate height, no understory. Semi-open fields nearby.
Falls Creek State SNA	1	Mixed evergreens in wooded area.
West of Co. Rd. 9, south of 105th St.	4	Very dense plantation of long-needle pines in rows, intermediate height, no understory. Open fields immediately adjacent.
North of 228th Street at Julep Ave.	6	Large island of predominantly evergreens surrounded by open fields.
East of U.S. Highway 61	2	Large plantation of nearly mature spruce with open fields south.
East of County Road 57 on County Road 61.	1	Modest stand of intermediate-height pines in otherwise semi-open area.

physical evidence at the site, such as the amount of whitewash visible on roost trees and the quantity and condition of nearby pellets.

The total field time spent searching for habitat as well as Long-eared Owls was 34 hours, yielding an average of 1.26 hours spent searching for each bird found.

Winter 1999–2000

In this year we found at least 20 individual Long-eared Owls at eight distinct roost sites in Washington County (Table 2). The habitat most often yielding owls was dense groves of long-needle pines of short-to-intermediate height (10–20 feet), and with little or no understory. Always nearby were open fields. Four additional sites had evidence of recent use, but no Long-eared Owls. In three of these sites we encountered Great Horned Owls. All 20 Long-eared Owls discovered flew to avoid us, either as we approached, or after eye-contact was made. In addition, we found nine Long-eared Owls at a site that proved not to be in Washington County, but just across the border in Ramsey County.

The total time spent searching Washington County for habitat as well as for Long-eared Owls was 30 hours. This yielded an average of 1.5 hours spent searching for each bird found, which is similar to the ratio from the previous winter. Our success rate in locating Long-eared Owls was about the same whether we searched across the state or in a small, localized area, providing there was suitable habitat.

In addition to finding 47 Long-eared Owls during these two winters, we found four other species of owl in small numbers. Nine Great Horned Owls were found, generally when we ventured into stands of mature pine. Only twice were Great Horneds found in close proximity to Long-eareds. We encountered five Northern Saw-whet Owls (*Aegolius acadicus*); three times when the cedars thinned and became mixed with understory, and twice when the average tree height dropped to about six feet. We also encountered one Short-eared Owl (*Asio flammeus*) in a loose stand of immature pines, and one Eastern Screech-Owl (*Otus asio*) leaving a Wood Duck box near a grove of immature pine.

Discussion

Few species in the U.S. are so wide-

spread in winter yet so infrequently encountered. There are no comprehensive studies estimating the population, but here in Minnesota such a consistent history of few annual reports makes it natural to infer low population densities. In our experience, the scarcity of reports is not due to an especially low number of owls, but is the result of the difficulty inherent in reaching and then detecting the birds. Although the factors dampening the frequency of encounters with Long-eared Owls are already known, they undoubtedly influence our perception of the rarity of wintering birds.

First, the owls are furtive and shy, and generally silent in winter; they do not want to be found. It is exceptional to find one purely by accident. Generally, one must locate suitable habitat, which is often remote, and do a lot of walking, sometimes crawling. In a typical Minnesota winter, this can be a brutal prospect. Particularly in the first winter, we often found ourselves sliding on steep, snow-covered and loose terrain. We moved slowly and stopped frequently to plan our route through the cedar branches so that we would be free to watch the trees while we walked.

What few birds may be present are easy to miss, especially when one searches alone. The owls will detect the owler before they are detected themselves, and then disappear in a low, zig-zag flight between the trees. Many times in otherwise ideal habitat we found fresh whitewash and pellets — sometimes not yet frozen — but no birds. The habitat conditions were essentially the same as those where Long-eared Owls were found prior to taking flight. We never inferred numbers of birds from this, rather, we counted only specific individuals confirmed by actual observation. But for these reasons, we believe our totals could easily represent only about 50% of the actual number of owls present in the areas we searched.

In general, when we worked together with one searcher spotting while the

other moved through the trees, our success was higher. However, this partnership was less important in Washington County, where much of the searching took place in plantations of white or other pines. Usually, Long-eared Owls in this habitat tolerated a closer approach before taking flight.

Second, much of what appears to be prime habitat is fragmented, far from roads, and often on private land. We did not search property posted "no trespassing" except in a few cases where the promise of owls was strong enough to prompt us to seek permission. This restraint limited our searching to what we conservatively estimate to be less than 25% of what suitable habitat was available.

With the prospect of searching in the often unpleasant conditions of a typical Minnesota winter, a habitat that is fragmented, difficult-to-reach, and usually privately-owned, it is not surprising people so infrequently encounter the Long-eared Owl. It is unclear if current habitat conditions differ significantly from those in the early 1900s, and if such differences might be reflected in the owl population. The only trend documented recently is Evans' report of a linear decline in capture rates at Hawk Ridge (Marks *et al.* 1994). Also, it may be relevant that winters in both 1998–1999 and 1999–2000 were unusually mild with below average snowfall.

To summarize, it is apparent that the dense islands of cedars and planted evergreens dotting the predominately agricultural landscape of southern Minnesota satisfy the Long-eared Owls' need for winter refuge, enabling a widespread population to overwinter. Furthermore, if the number of owls we found in Washington County in our second winter can be extended to each of the counties where we found birds in the first winter, then we can conclude the winter presence of the Long-eared Owl in Minnesota is "common" in suitable habitat in the southern third of the state. That is, overwintering birds can be found with regu-

larity in pockets of eastern red cedar on rural semi-open hillsides, or remote, dense stands of long-needle pines of intermediate height and with no understory.

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The Little Gull in Minnesota

Peder H. Svingen

A Little Gull found on Lake Winnibigoshish in October 1999 provided only the second Minnesota report of this species in juvenal plumage. This article reviews all previous occurrences of the Little Gull in Minnesota, presents documentation for the Lake Winnibigoshish record, and discusses the identification of juveniles.

The first confirmed record of the Little Gull (*Larus minutus*) in the state of Minnesota was 27–31 May 1973 in Duluth, when three adults and four immatures were discovered and photographed on Minnesota Point (Green 1974). This is still the record high count for the state. A previous and tentative report of two Little Gulls in Goodhue County (Lender 1972) was exceptionally early (25 March) compared to all subsequent records and was recently found Unacceptable by the Records Committee.

Occurrences in Minnesota

I reviewed seasonal reports in *The Loon* and compiled a total of 47 records from 1973 through 1999. Almost half of these are from Duluth. There are four records from Mille Lacs and single records from several other large lakes: Lake of the Woods, Lake Osakis, Lower Red Lake, Rainy Lake, and Lake Winnibigoshish. Most of the other records away from Duluth are from smaller lakes in the Twin Cities area or from sewage lagoons in western Minnesota.

These 47 Minnesota records involve no fewer than 72 individuals. Among those individuals that were aged, adults outnumber immatures by greater than two to one. First-year immatures have been seen during spring migration on several occasions (Janssen 1987) but none of these has lingered throughout the summer. Most migrants are seen for only one day, although adults have been reported for up to two weeks (1987 and 1988) during spring migration in Duluth, and fall migrants have remained on Mille Lacs for as long as six (1987), eight (1998), and eleven (1995) days.

Spring Migration

The earliest arrival dates in Minnesota are in May: 5 May 1987 (Duluth, St. Louis County), 7 May 1988 (Duluth), 7 May 1998 (Minnesota Lake, Faribault County), 9 May 1981 (Duluth), 10 May 1995 (Lake Calhoun, Hennepin County), and 11 May 1985 (Duluth). Most adults migrate through Minnesota during the third week of May. First-year immatures, although relatively few in number, tend to arrive later in the month. Single adults seen at Minnesota Lake, Faribault County, on 15 May 1997 and 7 May 1998 may have been the same bird. There are only three spring records from the western regions: 16 May in Kittson County (Bardon 1991), 14 May in Marshall County (Evers 1993), and 19 May in Big Stone County (Ellwanger 1997–98).

If two June records from Duluth (up to five immatures 17–18 June 1974 and one adult 6–9 June 1979) are included as late spring migrants, there is a total of 31 spring records. Supportive evidence for migration into June was gathered in 1975, when at least one of the immatures found in Duluth during late May stayed until 1 June, and in also 1997, when an immature found in Wright County during late May lingered through 2 June. Spring migration does extend into early June in Wisconsin (Robbins 1991) and possibly until 22 June in Michigan (Chu 1994).

Including these two June records, at least one Little Gull was found in Duluth during 17 of 21 spring migrations from 1973 through 1993. For unclear reasons, this species was then absent from Duluth for the next six years, until an adult was found 17–20 May 1999. The recent paucity of records from Duluth may be re-

lated to an apparent decline in the number of Bonaparte's Gulls (*L. philadelphia*) that migrate through the area (pers. obs.).

Summer Status

Two of the three summer occurrences in Minnesota were from North Heron Lake, Jackson County: one adult on 2 July 1985 (Tasler and Wells 1985) and a nesting pair in 1986 (Schladweiler 1986). The latter represents the only Minnesota breeding record. A total of 67 confirmed and probable nestings have been documented in North America according to Ewins and Weseloh (1999), primarily from the Great Lakes-St. Lawrence River basin and the lowlands of Hudson and James Bays, but none is from the 1990s.

The other summer record refers to an adult found 23–24 July 1993 on Rainy Lake, Koochiching County. The location is intriguing, since Little Gulls have also nested in Manitoba (McRae 1984), Ontario (Scott 1963, Carpentier 1986, Weseloh 1994), Quebec (Bannon 1983, Bannon and Robert 1996), Wisconsin (Tessen 1975, Erdman 1976) and Michigan (Tessen 1976, Chu 1994). However, the Rainy Lake bird was most likely an early fall migrant. This would be consistent with migration along the Lake Michigan shoreline, where the first wave of fall migrants arrives in mid-July (Robbins 1991, Chu 1994). Migrants also arrive at Point Pelee, Ontario, and western Lake Erie during the second half of July (Ewins and Weseloh 1999).

Fall Migration

Only 13 (or 14 if the July record is included) of the 47 Minnesota records represent fall migration. This differs from the seasonal pattern throughout most of North America, where sightings are more numerous in fall and winter compared to spring (Ewins and Weseloh 1999). There are only two August records in the state: 14–15 August 1984 in Nobles County and 24 August 1987 in Beltrami County. These are followed by five September, four October, and two November records. The latest Minnesota dates are

both from Mille Lacs: 8 November 1977 and 4–14 November 1995.

Except for two records in Duluth, all of the fall records are from the western or the north-central regions. Immatures are responsible for four fall records: two September records in Duluth (Mattsson 1981, Eckert 1982), one from Lake of the Woods on 24 October 1984 (Johnston 1984), and one from Lake Winnie on 3–4 October 1999 (see below). Based upon the published descriptions, both of the Duluth gulls were in first basic plumage.

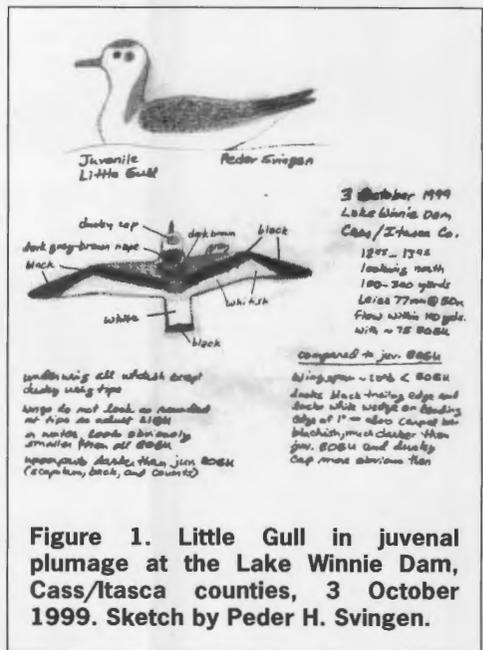


Figure 1. Little Gull in juvenal plumage at the Lake Winnie Dam, Cass/Itasca counties, 3 October 1999. Sketch by Peder H. Svingen.

Juvenile Little Gull on Lake Winnie

On 3 October 1999, while conducting surveys for loons and Bonaparte's Gulls on Lake Winnibigoshish, I discovered a Little Gull in juvenal plumage. It loosely associated with a flock of about 75 Bonaparte's Gulls at the Lake Winnie Dam. As stated earlier, the Little Gull is rare anywhere in the state during fall migration and there is only one previous Minnesota report of this species in juvenal plumage.

Recalling that juvenile Ross's (*Rhodostethia rosea*) and Little Gulls look very similar, I took detailed field notes (Figure

1) before consulting references. Most field guides neglect the juvenal plumage of small gulls and depict only "first-winter" immatures. This can lead to identification pitfalls; e.g., juvenile Bonaparte's can be misidentified as Sabine's Gull (*Xema sabini*) or Black-legged Kittiwake (*Rissa tridactyla*).

About half of the Bonaparte's Gulls at the Lake Winnie Dam were immatures, including several that were still in juvenal plumage. On the water, the Little Gull appeared smaller than the Bonaparte's, and the Little Gull's back, scapulars, and wing coverts were darker. Its small black bill, dusky auricular spot, and dark gray-brown nape patch were distinctive. Its dark cap was obvious from as far as 300 yards away through my Leica 77 mm spotting scope at 50X. In flight, the Little Gull's wingspan was estimated as 20% less than the Bonaparte's Gull's.

The Little Gull always sat on the water among the Bonaparte's Gulls, but foraged independently near emergent vegetation on both sides of the Mississippi River channel, above the Lake Winnie Dam. By doing so, it provided first county records for both Cass and Itasca. It appeared to fly more stiffly than the Bonaparte's and frequently dipped to the surface of the lake or rarely, plunged into the water while feeding. All of the gulls were gone when I returned to the dam at 4:30 P.M. but the Little Gull was relocated there the following day by Anthony Hertzell.

Identification of Juveniles

A Little Gull in juvenal plumage can be distinguished from one in first basic by its blackish hindnape patch, and its darker mantle and scapulars (Grant 1986). These darker scapulars are edged paler, producing a scaly appearance. The dark patch on its hindnape usually extends onto the upper back and towards the sides of its upper breast. This patch may be retained longer than the rest of its juvenal plumage, thereby causing confusion with Sabine's Gull or Black-legged Kittiwake.

In flight, juvenile Little Gull is readily separable from juvenile Bonaparte's if the

	Wingspan ¹	Wingspan ²
Little Gull	63–66 cm	70–77 cm
Bonaparte's	81–84 cm	85–90 cm
Ross's Gull	no data	83–91 cm
B.L. Kittiwake	90–92 cm	95–108 cm

Figure 2. Comparison of wingspans among four species of gulls. Data from ¹Harrison (1983) and ²Jonsson (1993).

wings are well seen. Its underwing appears essentially white, while Bonaparte's is "neatly black-bordered" (Grant 1986). Unlike juvenile Bonaparte's, Little Gull lacks Bonaparte's white wedge along the leading edge of its outer wing and lacks a black trailing edge on its upper wing (although it does show dark sub-terminal markings on its secondaries). The black carpal bars on juvenile Little Gull are wider and darker than on juvenile Bonaparte's. These carpal bars, along with its dark outer primaries, form an obvious "M" across its dorsum. A similar "M" pattern is shown by juvenile Ross's and Black-headed (*L. ridibundus*) gulls, as well as juvenile Black-legged Kittiwake. See Grant (1986) and Taylor (1991) for additional commentary.

The Little Gull's smaller size, smaller wingspan compared to the Bonaparte's, and lack of a long, wedge-shaped tail, combine to rule out juvenile Ross's Gull. According to both Grant (1986) and Jonsson (1993) there is almost complete overlap in wingspan (wingtip to wingtip) and wing length (maximum chord from the carpal joint to the tip of the longest primary) for Bonaparte's and Ross's gulls. The Little Gull is substantially smaller in comparison (Figure 2).

Summary

The Little Gull is among the rarest of Minnesota's Regular species, averaging fewer than two records per year. Despite its recent scarcity in Duluth, the statewide total during the 1990s (20 records) is comparable to the 1980s (17 records). Adults outnumber immatures by greater than two to one. Spring migrants (31

records) far outnumber fall migrants (14 records). Duluth is the traditional location during spring migration but there are a number of recent records from the Twin Cities area. Fall migrants can be looked for on large lakes in the central regions and on sewage lagoons in the western regions.

Acknowledgments

I thank Karl Bardon and Tom Erdman for reviewing earlier drafts of this paper. Parker Backstrom, Karl Bardon, Kim Eckert, Anthony Hertz, and Ben Yokel sent additional information on specific records.

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The Summer Season (1 June to 31 July 1999)

Terry Wiens

Following the extraordinary spring season, summer 1999 had a tough act to follow, but somehow managed to produce a remarkable showing of its own. A record high 275 species were tallied, including three Accidentals and five Casuals. Shorebird migration was noteworthy, warbler migration started early, and more than a dozen species not normally seen in the summer were documented.

Following a relatively mild spring, June temperatures and precipitation were very close to normal in all regions of the state. This was certainly in sharp contrast to a notably warm, wet, and stormy July! Some of the hottest weather in ten years settled in over the state, spawning a series of storms, one of which destroyed a large tract of boreal forest in northeastern Minnesota. Heavy rains and high winds pounded the northern regions of Minnesota on 4 and 5 July — literally millions of trees were blown down and extensive flooding occurred.

July concluded with two of the most humid days in Minnesota history. Heat index values (temperature combined with humidity) on 29 and 30 July climbed over 110 degrees in many parts of southern Minnesota.

Seasonal Highlights

An exceptional total of **275 species** was observed for the season, an all-time record high (the previous record of 273 was set in 1991) and well above the past ten-year average of 266 species. Seasonal reports and/or breeding information were submitted by no fewer than 138 individuals, also a record total. Contributors sent in 946 nest or brood cards, a slight decline in comparison to the past five years; breeding data were collected for 159 species (about average). Top contributors of breeding information included Jean Segerstrom & Mark Newstrom (191 nest/

brood cards), Jon Little & Jacob Langeslag (156), and Michael R. North (128). A very hearty thanks to all contributors for your outstanding time and effort!

For the third consecutive summer, late migrant **Red-throated Loons** were found on Lake Superior in early June; an amazing **26** individuals were counted from Park Point on 2 June, most likely the largest number ever seen in Minnesota! Other late migrants on Lake Superior included **Greater Scaup** (only four or so summer reports have been documented in the past ten years), **White-winged Scoter**, and **Oldsquaw**. Away from Lake Superior, reports for several species of waterbirds were down, such as **Pied-billed** and **Eared Grebes**, **Least Bittern**, **Great Egret**, and **Gadwall**. There were no **Snow Goose** reports at all, breaking a streak of 11 consecutive summers. In contrast, the three separate reports of **Little Blue Heron** represent the highest number of summer reports since the 1970s, and the appearance of both **Mute** and **Tundra Swans** was unexpected.

Perhaps benefiting from the recent mild winters, **Ring-necked Pheasant** and **Wild Turkey** both were reported more commonly. Surprisingly (given that conditions were good for pheasants), **Gray Partridge** reports declined again, a trend that has continued for almost ten years.

Similar to the previous year, shorebird

migration extended into early June, but the most impressive concentrations were found in mid-to-late July. At least 1,000 shorebirds (15 species) were counted along a Big Stone County shorebird survey route on 26 July. Several species were reported more than usual, including **Piping Plover** (apparent migrants observed in St. Louis, Becker, and Lac Qui Parle counties; summer reports away from the last remaining breeding location in Lake of the Woods County have been virtually nonexistent since the mid-1980s), **Lesser Yellowlegs**, **Buff-breasted Sandpiper** (for a couple of days, many birders were able to enjoy the 100+ concentrated at a sod farm in Dakota County!), and **Short-billed Dowitcher**. Capping off the parade of shorebirds was the appearance of an adult female **Ruff** in Big Stone County on 15 June, representing the seventh summer occurrence of this Casual species.

Thanks to the efforts of the Minnesota County Biological Survey and especially Karl Bardon, new ideas about the timing of shorebird migration are emerging. Field work documenting the waxing and waning of shorebird numbers has provided evidence that may help determine what direction those mid-summer birds are heading. For those of you who observe shorebirds on a regular basis, we encourage the reporting of exact numbers and dates!

Common Terns were reported nesting at their traditional site in Lake of the Woods County (300 adults with many eggs and young), but there were very few other reports of this species, raising concern about its precarious status in the state. More positive was the late June report of a **Least Tern** in Marshall County, a species for which only a handful of summer records exists.

Three **Eurasian Collared-Doves**, originally discovered in the winter, were relocated in extreme southwestern Minnesota on 25 July. This represents the first summer record for this species, which first appeared in the state in April

of 1998 (*The Loon* 70:199-200; also see *The Loon* 71:236-237 for a late spring record of this species in Mower County). The rapid expansion of this species in the U.S. suggests more records will surely follow. Another Accidental species was documented in July when a **Rufous Hummingbird** was discovered and photographed in Cook County (the first summer record since 1990).

Also photographed was a **Scissor-tailed Flycatcher** on 2 June (presumably a late migrant) in St. Louis County. This casual species is more likely to be discovered during the spring or fall season. A **White-eyed Vireo** was observed singing in Brown County from late June through early July, providing circumstantial evidence that this Casual visitor to southeastern Minnesota may, on rare occasion, breed in the state. Not too surprising was the presence of a **Carolina Wren** through 8 July at Rochester. This bird had been seen regularly at a feeder since the previous fall.

An exceptionally early fall migration of **warblers** was noted in the Twin Cities area. Ten species of warblers were observed in Hennepin County on 10 July. At roughly the same time, a large number of migrant warblers and **Swainson's Thrushes** was observed in Anoka County. Of note was the reappearance of at least one **Yellow-throated Warbler** in Kandiyohi County, where the species was recorded for four consecutive years (1994-97). Also documented were two separate records of **Yellow-breasted Chat**, a species that has become very scarce in the summer over the past couple of decades. Disturbing was the lack of any **Kentucky Warbler** reports. Although rare in the state, this species had been regularly seen at Seven Mile Creek County Park in Nicollet County for several years running, but now has been absent for three consecutive summers.

Also of interest was the late June **Summer Tanager** in Hennepin County. There are few summer records for this species, but this one was not too surpris-

ing considering the unprecedented number of individuals found during spring (see *The Loon* 71:216–220). Other records of interest included a very late migrant **American Tree Sparrow** at Duluth, and a **Rusty Blackbird** in Lake County. Despite evidence suggesting that Rusty Blackbirds breed regularly in extreme northeastern Minnesota, this was only the second summer record in the past 11 years.

And finally, we mustn't forget the third state record for **Eurasian Tree Sparrow**. A single bird, originally found in late May and seen into early June, was present at a feeder in Clay County. Most likely this was the same individual seen at the same feeder the previous year. It is remarkable how differently birders regard the third appearance of this species, in comparison to the first state record in 1990 (*The Loon* 62:175–177); the more recent record was documented by only two observers!

Format, Maps, and Acknowledgments

The format for the species accounts is similar to that of recent years. The key to the *Seasonal Report* is located below.

Breeding records are classified based

on the criteria found in *The Loon* 58:22 or in *Minnesota Birds*, p. 7 (Green and Janssen 1975). Each species having at least one nesting record in 1999 has an accompanying map indicating the counties in which the records occurred: **positive** nesting records are indicated by black shading, **probable** nesting records are indicated by gray shading. Counties for which positive breeding is documented for the first time since 1970 are listed in italics in the species accounts, and are identified as such according to updated versions of *County Nesting Records of Minnesota Birds* (Hertzel and Janssen, M.O.U. Occasional Papers: Number 2, 1998).

Divisions of the state into regions (e.g. west central, southeast) are based on those delineated in *Birds in Minnesota*, p. 25 (Janssen 1987).

A final thanks to all of the summer season reporters who make it possible to document avian distribution and migration. Thanks also to Anthony Hertzel for producing the breeding maps, and to Peder Svingen and Kim Eckert for their assistance in preparing this report.

3230 Strand Rd., Duluth, MN 55803.

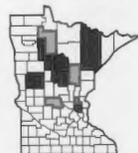
KEY TO SEASONAL REPORTS

1. Species listed in upper case (**LEAST TERN**) indicate a Casual or Accidental occurrence in the state.
2. Dates listed in bold (**10/9**) indicate an occurrence either earlier, later or within the earliest or latest dates on file.
3. Counties listed in bold (**Aitkin**) indicate an unusual occurrence for that county.
4. Counties listed in underline (Aitkin) indicate a first county record.
5. Counties listed in italics (*Aitkin*) indicate a first county breeding record.
6. Brackets [] indicate a species for which there is reasonable doubt as to its origin or wildness.
7. Counts listed in bold (**150**) indicate total within or exceeding the top three high counts for that species.

The Season publishes reports of bird sightings from throughout Minnesota. We particularly invite reports from parts of the state that have been neglected or covered lightly in past reports. To become a contributor, request a report form from the Editor of *The Season*, Peder Svingen, 2602 E. 4th St., Duluth, MN 55812.

Red-throated Loon — Unprecedented 26 individuals counted on 6/2 from Park Point, Duluth in St. Louis Co. KB. Two birds also observed on 6/3 at Grand Marais, Cook Co. KB.

Common Loon — Reported in 34 counties as far south and west as a line through Polk, Otter Tail, Kandiyohi, Waseca, Olmsted.



Pied-billed Grebe — Fewest reports in 15+ years. Seen in only 25 counties in all regions except northeast and southeast.



Horned Grebe — Late migrants 6/2 St. Louis (Duluth) KB and 6/3 Cook (Grand Marais) KB; plus 7/18 Roseau (two at Roseau River WMA) PS.

Red-necked Grebe — Reported in 16 counties as far south as Waseca, and in all regions except southeast and southwest. Late migrant 6/3 Cook (Grand Marais) KB. New nesting records in *Swift* PS, *Carver* WM.



Eared Grebe — Trend of few reports continues for fifth consecutive year: only reports from Marshall, Pennington, Wilkin, Lyon, Carver, Rice.

Western Grebe — Seen in Roseau, Lake of the Woods, Polk, Wilkin, Todd, Lac Qui Parle, Lyon, Kandiyohi, Meeker, Hennepin, Le Sueur; plus 130 young on 7/19 at Thielke L. in Big Stone Co. PS.

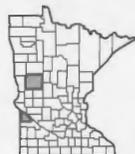


Clark's Grebe — Two reports: 6/6-18 Big Stone (Thielke L.) PS *et al.* and 6/12,29 Meeker (Long L.) DF.

American White Pelican — Reported in 26 counties throughout the state.



Double-crested Cormorant — Seen in 37 counties statewide.



American Bittern — Observed in 19 counties as far south as Lyon, Freeborn, Winona; unreported in the central region.

Least Bittern — Few reports: seen in Kandiyohi, Meeker, Hennepin, Anoka.

Great Blue Heron — Observed in 59 counties statewide.



Great Egret — Fewest reports since 1984. Seen in 20 southern counties plus Traverse, Otter Tail.



Snowy Egret — Two reports: 6/8 Dakota (Schmitt L.) AH, 6/14 Hennepin (E. Minneapolis) AH.

Little Blue Heron — More reports than usual. Single adults observed on 6/2 at Gun Club L. in Hennepin Co. AH and on 6/7 at Murphy-Hanrahan Park Reserve in Scott Co. FR; plus an immature (originally misidentified as Snowy Egret) present from 7/30 into August in Olmsted Co. CW.

Cattle Egret — All reports: 6/1 Rice (4)

TBo, 6/3 Hennepin (MSP Airport) PBU, 6/6 Jackson (3) PS, 6/21 Houston DBz; plus two throughout summer in Kandiyohi RJF.

Green Heron — Several observers reported increasing numbers; seen in 39 counties as far north as Polk, Beltrami, St. Louis.



Black-crowned Night-Heron — Seen in ten southern counties (but not in southeast region); plus Grant, Otter Tail, Marshall.

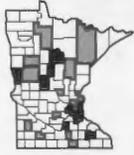
Yellow-crowned Night-Heron — Only report: 6/7 Ramsey (Pig's Eye L.) PS.

Turkey Vulture — Most reports ever for this species; seen in 50 counties statewide. New nesting record in Lincoln (on the ground in an alfalfa field!) *vide* CHE.



Greater White-fronted Goose — First summer record since 1992: 7/24 Rock (injured?) KE.

Canada Goose — Observed in 54 counties statewide; new nesting record in Todd MRN.



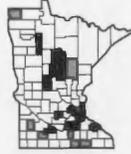
Mute Swan — First summer records in eight years: 6/2 Rice (same as 5/31?) TBo, throughout the season in Hennepin (Old Cedar Ave., also see spring report) SC *et al.*, 7/31 Carver (two at Goose L.) DBM.



Trumpeter Swan — Reported in Polk, Clearwater, Itasca, Hubbard, Wadena, Aitkin, Meeker, Hennepin, McLeod, Carver, Brown, Rice.

Tundra Swan — Seen (injured) on 6/24 at Crookston Sewage Ponds, Polk Co. ABo.

Wood Duck — Seen in 46 counties statewide; peak count 7/27 Anoka (402 at Carlos Avery WMA) KB.



Gadwall — Roughly half the number of reports in the previous three years; observed in Marshall, Polk, Clay, Big Stone, Lac Qui Parle, Meeker, Lyon, Martin.

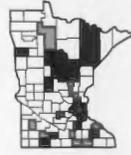


American Wigeon — Seen in Marshall, Polk, Lake of the Woods, St. Louis, Aitkin; plus 7/11 Sibley RbS, 7/28 Lac Qui Parle BOL, FE.



American Black Duck — Only records from St. Louis, Lake, Cook.

Mallard — Observed in 59 counties statewide.



Blue-winged Teal — Seen in 34 counties throughout state.



Northern Shoveler — Reported in nine southern counties (although none in southeast region); plus Kittson, Roseau, Polk, Beltrami, St. Louis. New nesting record in Jackson BBo.



Northern Pintail — Observed in Roseau; Beltrami, Big Stone, Lac Qui Parle, Sibley.



Green-winged Teal — Observed in 16 counties in all regions except southeast.



Canvasback — Reported in Roseau, Marshall, Polk, Mahnomen, Clay, Becker, St. Louis, Big Stone, Lac Qui Parle, and Hennepin.

Redhead — Observed in a total of 12 counties in the south as far east as Dakota. Also reported in the counties of Roseau, Marshall, Pennington, Clay, and St. Louis.

Ring-necked Duck — Seen in 15 counties as far south as Kandiyohi, Hennepin.



Greater Scaup — First summer report in five years; late migrants 6/2 St. Louis (2) KB.

Lesser Scaup — Reported in 13 counties scattered in all regions except east central and southeast.

White-winged Scoter — Late migrant 6/3 Cook (Kimball Cr.) KB.

Oldsquaw — Late migrant 6/3 Cook (Paradise Beach) KB.

Bufflehead — Only reports were from Marshall and Pennington.

Common Goldeneye — Observed in nine northern counties plus Kandiyohi



(two males through early July) RJF.

Hooded Merganser — Seen in 25 counties in all regions; new nesting record in Waseca JSe.



Common Merganser — Reported in Lake of the Woods, St. Louis, Itasca, Becker, Hubbard, Cass, Aitkin, Mille Lacs.



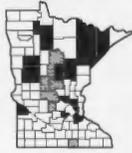
Red-breasted Merganser — All reports from St. Louis, Lake, Cook.

Ruddy Duck — Seen in 12 southern counties as far east as Anoka, Mower; plus Traverse, Clay, Polk, Marshall, Roseau.

Osprey — Seen in 23 counties from all regions of state. New nesting record in Mahnomen BK; probable nesting in Jackson (unusually far southwest) *fide* BBo.



Bald Eagle — Observed in 33 counties in all regions except southwest; new nesting record in Carver DBM.



Northern Harrier — Reported in 37 counties statewide.



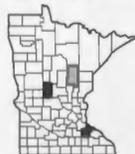
Sharp-shinned Hawk — Reported in the counties of Marshall, Becker, Otter Tail, Cass, Crow Wing, Aitkin, and St. Louis.

Cooper's Hawk — Observed in 25 counties from all regions except the southwest; new nesting record in *Goodhue* RH, JL, JLa.



Northern Goshawk — Only reports: St. Louis, Carlton.

Red-shouldered Hawk — New nesting records in *Kandiyohi* RE, RJF and *Goodhue* JL, JLa. Also observed in Clearwater, Aitkin, Crow Wing, Todd, Stearns, Stevens, Sherburne, Anoka, Hennepin, Dakota, and Washington.



Broad-winged Hawk — Seen in 21 counties as far west as a line through Marshall, Wadena, Kandiyohi, Nicollet, Fillmore; new nesting record in *Aitkin* WN.



Swainson's Hawk — Reported in seven western counties plus Brown, Waseca, Dakota, Washington.



Red-tailed Hawk — Observed in 59 counties statewide.



Rough-legged Hawk — Light-morph individual observed on 6/6 at Sax-Zim bog in St. Louis Co. BY, KSu.



Red-shouldered Hawks, 12 June 1999, Sibley State Park, Kandiyohi County. First county nesting record. Photo by Randy Frederickson.

American Kestrel — Observed in 56 counties throughout state.



Merlin — Reported in Beltrami, Itasca, St. Louis, Cook. Adult female *F. c. richardsonii* with three juveniles discovered in early June and seen as late as 7/18 in Roseau BSi, PS; male *richardsonii* also observed on 7/18 in Roseau 26 km away from location of female and juveniles PS.



Peregrine Falcon — Breeding evidence reported in 11 counties (Midwest Peregrine Restoration Project); also observed in St. Louis, Olmsted.



Gray Partridge — Fewest reports ever for this species. Seen in Meeker, McLeod, Sibley, Lyon, Redwood, Cottonwood, Watonwan, Rice, Jackson, and Freeborn.



Ring-necked Pheasant — Most reports since 1988. Observed in 41 counties as far north as Traverse, Wadena, and Pine.



Ruffed Grouse — Spring drumming counts down about 6% statewide from previous year. With the northwest zone showing a 35% increase, the north central zone a 35% decline, and other zones nearly stable, it is not clear which way the cycle is headed (MDNR). Anecdotal evidence suggests that poor reproduction may be due to wet weather. Reported in 20 counties as far west and south as Roseau, Becker, Stearns, Anoka; plus Fillmore.



Spruce Grouse — Only reports from Lake of the Woods, Beltrami.



Sharp-tailed Grouse — MDNR reports numbers up for the fourth consecutive year; recent rebound likely due to more prescribed burning, brush shearing, and other brushland management. Observed in Kittson, Marshall, Koochiching, Aitkin.



Greater Prairie-Chicken — Seen in Clay, Becker, Wilkin; reintroduction is occurring at Big Stone NWR in Lac Qui Parle Co.

Wild Turkey — Record high number of reports. Observed in 20 southern counties as far west as Kandiyohi, Cottonwood; plus 6/20 Kittson (seven adults and two young near Caribou WMA; wild?) PS, 6/15 Becker (wild?) RJ. New nesting record in Steele CH.



Northern Bobwhite — Male calling on 7/19 near Lewiston Sewage Lagoon in Winona Co. CW (probably a wild bird — good numbers of Bobwhites were recorded at several locations nearby in Wisconsin).

Yellow Rail — Heard of seen in Kittson, Roseau, Cass, Aitkin, and St. Louis.

Virginia Rail — Heard of seen in 12 scattered counties in all regions except north central and southeast.



Sora — Seen in 26 counties in all regions except southeast; new nesting record in Lake SW/MS.



Common Moorhen — New nesting record in Kandiyohi RE, RJF; also observed in Anoka, Washington, Wabasha, Houston.



American Coot — Reported in 22 counties in all regions except northeast (and only Wadena in north central). New nesting records in Sibley RbS, Dakota DBS.



Sandhill Crane — Seen in 18 counties within an area enclosed by a line from Kittson through Kandiyohi, Dodge, Pine, and Lake of the Woods; plus unusual sighting 7/19 Wilkin PS.



Black-bellied Plover — Spring migrants reported in St. Louis, Lake, Swift; late migrant 6/7 Swift.

American Golden-Plover — Only one report: 6/1 St. Louis.

Semipalmated Plover — Migrants observed in ten counties. Late migrant 6/5 Lake of the Woods, early migrant 6/18 Big Stone MCBS (survey results suggest that late June dates represent early fall migration). Peak count 7/26 Big Stone (24) KB.

Piping Plover — Observed on 6/5 and 7/18 at traditional breeding site in Lake of the Woods Co. (maximum of three) NWi *et al.* Unusual were several records away from breeding site: 6/1 St. Louis (pair since 5/29 in Duluth) PS; 7/19,20 Becker (Hamden Slough NWR) PS, BBe, MW; 7/21 Lac Qui Parle KB.

Killdeer — Reported in 59 counties throughout state. Of interest were these peak counts: 7/23 Anoka (149) KB, 7/26 Big Stone (73) KB, 7/28 Stearns (203) PC, 7/31 Kandiyohi (100+) RJ.



American Avocet — Colony of six adults and eight young found in Big Stone MCBS; also observed in Lac Qui Parle. Unusually far east was a report on 6/9,10 in Dakota County (probable late spring migrant) DBS.



Greater Yellowlegs — Only spring(?) migrants: 6/17 Chippewa, 6/18 Big Stone. Fall migrants reported in 13 counties;

early migrant 6/27 St. Louis. Peak count 7/26 Big Stone (60) KB is third highest on record in Minnesota.

Lesser Yellowlegs — Most number of reports since 1990; migrants observed in 30 counties statewide. Mid-summer reports include 6/14 Lac Qui Parle, 6/15 Big Stone, 6/17 Chippewa, 6/18 Big Stone, 6/22,26 Hennepin, 6/27 Kittson and Roseau, 6/28 Clay, 6/29 McLeod... illustrating the problem in separating spring from fall migrants! Peak counts 7/25 Becker (305) PC, 7/26 Big Stone (348) KB.

Solitary Sandpiper — Only one spring migrant reported: 6/2 Meeker. Late June and July records in 18 counties; early migrants 6/29 Big Stone, 6/30 Renville.

Willet — Late migrant 6/2 Hennepin SWe. Record early fall migrant 7/3 Renville DF; also reported 7/9 Big Stone (2) KB, 7/11 Sibley, 7/18 Big Stone, 7/27 Meeker.

Spotted Sandpiper — Observed in 27 counties statewide; new nesting record in McLeod RbS.



Upland Sandpiper — Reported in 14 western counties, plus Kandiyohi, Carver, and St. Louis.



Whimbrel — Only report: 6/3 Lake JMc.

Marbled Godwit — Reported in Kittson, Roseau, Clay, Becker, Wilkin, Big Stone, Lac Qui Parle; plus 6/6 Meeker (3) RJ, DF, 7/3 Renville DF, 7/18 Stearns PC.

Ruddy Turnstone — All reports: 6/1,2 St. Louis, 6/6 Swift, 7/18 Lake of the Woods.

Sanderling — Migrants observed in seven counties. Late migrant 6/3 Lake, early migrants 7/18 Big Stone and Stearns; peak count 6/1 St. Louis (~100) PS.

Semipalmated Sandpiper — Reported in 13 counties. Mid-summer records include 6/22 Hennepin, 6/24 Big Stone, 7/1 Hennepin, 7/4 Meeker. These may represent late spring migrants — census work in western Minnesota provides good evidence that fall migration did not begin until 7/9 (KB). Peak count 7/26 Big Stone (263) KB.

Least Sandpiper — Observed in 20 counties. Late migrants 6/2 in St. Louis, Chippewa and Meeker; early migrants 6/18 Big Stone MCBS, 6/22 Hennepin TBo. During census work, the gap in sightings between 6/2 and 6/18 suggests latter date represents southbound birds (KB). Peak count 7/16 Lac Qui Parle (293) BOI.

White-rumped Sandpiper — Migrants observed in eight counties; late migrants 6/19 Lyon RgS, 6/24 Big Stone MCBS. Also reported 6/29 Big Stone (spring or fall?) MCBS, 7/9 Big Stone KB. Peak count 6/6 Meeker (30) RJ.

Baird's Sandpiper — Reported in nine counties. Late migrant 6/7 Big Stone, early migrant 7/5 Stearns SWi; peak count 7/24 Lac Qui Parle (13) PC.

Pectoral Sandpiper — Migrants observed in 20 counties. Late migrants 6/10 Chippewa and Hennepin, early migrant 6/27 St. Louis NWi; mid-summer record 6/18 Big Stone (spring or fall?) MCBS. Peak count 7/26 Big Stone (92) KB.

Dunlin — Spring migrants recorded in six counties; late migrant 6/8 Stearns. Peak count 6/1 St. Louis (20) PS.

Stilt Sandpiper — Fall migrants observed in 11 counties; early migrant 6/28 (record early date for south) Big Stone MCBS. Peak count 7/26 Big Stone (133) KB.

Buff-breasted Sandpiper — A most re-

markable number of reports; late July migrants seen in six south counties. Early migrant 7/23 Anoka; unprecedented count of **119** on 7/30 at Empire sod farms in Dakota Co. mob.

RUFF — First record since 1994, and first summer record since 1991. Adult female observed 6/15 **Big Stone** (Thielke L.) KB (*The Loon* 72:55-56).

Short-billed Dowitcher — Almost double the usual number of reports. Spring records 6/2 Meeker, 6/6 Swift. Fall observations in 13 additional counties; early migrant 6/28 Big Stone MCBS. Peak count 7/26 Big Stone (23) KB.

Common Snipe — Observed in 25 counties in all regions except the southeast.

American Woodcock — Reported in 14 counties in all regions except northwest and southwest; new nesting record in *Todd* JSK.



Wilson's Phalarope — Reported in ten western counties plus Meeker, McLeod, Carver. Unusual report 6/12,19 Lake (Crest L.) SW/MS.

Red-necked Phalarope — Only spring report 6/8 Wilkin KB. Early fall migrant 7/9 Big Stone KB; also seen 7/18 Winona (unusually far east) CW, 7/27 Meeker DF.

Franklin's Gull — Observed in ten western counties plus Lake of the Woods, Beltrami, Meeker, Carver.

Bonaparte's Gull — All reports: 6/2 St. Louis, 6/12 Beltrami, 7/24 Lyon, Aitkin (no date); plus peak count 6/4 Beltrami (50+) DJo.

Ring-billed Gull — Reported in 38 counties in all regions except southeast; new nesting record in *Cook* (56 nests at



Long Island) JMc.



statewide; new nesting record in *Wilkin* GN.

Herring Gull — Few reports. 562 nests at ten sites in Susie Island archipelago near Grand Portage JMc, and about 20 pairs at Silver Creek Cliff colony JLi; also observed in St. Louis, Lake of the Woods, Beltrami, Grant, Cottonwood, Goodhue.



Caspian Tern — All reports: 6/3 St. Louis, 6/4 Goodhue and Marshall, 6/27 Grant SDM, 7/10 Lac Qui Parle *vide* BOI, 7/11 Otter Tail SDM, 7/24 Cass, 7/26 Lac Qui Parle.

Common Tern — Fewest reports ever. Nested at traditional site in Lake of the Woods Co. (300 adults with many eggs and downy young on 7/18) AnH, AH, PS; also observed in Mille Lacs, St. Louis.



Forster's Tern — Seen in 24 counties as far east as a line through Beltrami, Wadena, Washington, Freeborn.



LEAST TERN — First summer report since 1989. Single bird found on 6/24,25 with group of Forster's at Agassiz NWR in Marshall Co. JiW.

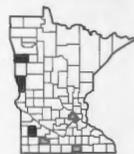
Black Tern — Seen in 39 counties in all regions except the northeast.



Rock Dove — Observed in 52 counties

EURASIAN COLLARED-DOVE — First summer records for the state (but likely not the last!). Three birds were observed on 7/25 at Jasper on the border of Rock and Pipestone counties (originally discovered in previous winter; see *The Loon* 71:139) KE. Also reported throughout the period in Mower (two birds, originally found in spring; see *The Loon* 71:236-237) mob.

Mourning Dove — Seen in 65 counties statewide; new nesting record in *Norman* GN.



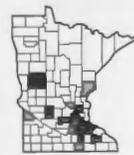
Black-billed Cuckoo — Observed in 33 counties throughout state.



Yellow-billed Cuckoo — Record high number of reports. Seen in 22 southern counties, plus Todd, Becker, Kittson. One unusual report in St. Louis (no date) JLi.

Eastern Screech-Owl — Recorded in Rock, Brown, Dakota, and Freeborn.

Great Horned Owl — Observed in 28 counties statewide; new nesting records in *McLeod* RbS, *Steele* JL, JLa.



Barred Owl — Reported in 22 counties in all regions of the state except west



central and southwest.

Great Gray Owl — Seen in Beltrami, St. Louis, and Lake.

Long-eared Owl — Only reports: nesting evidence in Marshall, Aitkin.



Short-eared Owl — Only report: 6/26,27 Kittson JJ, PS.



Northern Saw-whet Owl — Remarkably, only reports from east central region. New nesting record in *Washington* (six young successfully fledged from Wood Duck box in Baytown township, *The*

Loon 71:220–222) *fide* AH; plus 7/11–29 Hennepia (two in northeast Minneapolis yard) BME.

Common Nighthawk — Observed in 31 counties from all regions except northwest.

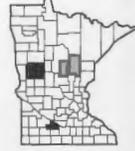


Whip-poor-will — Reported in Roseau, Lake of the Woods, Cass, St. Louis, Cook, Pine, Stearns, Le Sueur, Goodhue, and Houston.

Chimney Swift — Seen in 47 counties statewide.



Ruby-throated Hummingbird — More reports than usual. Observed in 46 counties throughout state; new nesting record in *Otter Tail* DST.



RUFIOUS HUMMINGBIRD — Earliest fall date on record for this species **7/15–22** Cook (near Cascade S.P.) *fide* KMH. A photograph of this bird was published in the *Cook County News-Herald*.

Belted Kingfisher — Seen in 49 counties statewide; new nesting record in *McLeod* RbS.



Red-headed Woodpecker — Fewest reports since 1994. Observed in 31 counties statewide, including 6/3 Cook (Grand Marais) KB.



Red-bellied Woodpecker — Seen in 29 counties and as far north as *Otter Tail*, *Beltrami*, *Aitkin*.



Yellow-bellied Sapsucker — Reported in 33 counties in all regions except southwest.



Downy Woodpecker — Observed in 53 counties statewide; new nesting record in *Waseca* JSe.



Hairy Woodpecker — Reported in 45 counties throughout state; new nesting record in *Houston* KK.



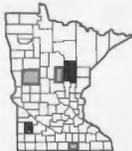
Three-toed Woodpecker — Nested along Gunflint Trail near S. Brule R. in Cook Co. KE *et al.* (*The Loon* 72:3).



Black-backed Woodpecker — Several reports. Observed in Beltrami, Cass, St. Louis, Lake, Cook; plus Carlton (no date) KE and 6/18,27 Pine (reported as nesting, but no documentation) SWe *et al.*



Northern Flicker — Seen in 50 counties statewide; new nesting record in *Aitkin* WN.



Pileated Woodpecker — Observed in 38 counties as far west as a line through Polk, Clay, Kandiyohi, Brown.



Olive-sided Flycatcher — Reported in Roseau, Beltrami, Koochiching, Itasca, St. Louis, Lake, Cook. June migrants recorded in seven southern counties; late migrant 6/12 Dakota DBS.



Eastern Wood-Pewee — Seen in 52 counties statewide.

Yellow-bellied Flycatcher — Reports nearly doubled. Observed in ten north central and northeast counties plus Roseau; also 6/2 Hennepin, 6/15 Morrison.

Acadian Flycatcher — Recorded in Hennepin, Dakota, Rice, Goodhue, Olmsted, Houston.

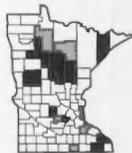
Alder Flycatcher — Observed in 22 counties as far south as a line through Clay, Stearns, Anoka; plus 6/5 Dakota, 6/5 and 7/27 Hennepin.

Willow Flycatcher — Seen in 20 counties as far north as Clay, Todd, Anoka.

Least Flycatcher — Observed in 42 counties statewide.



Eastern Phoebe — Most reports ever for this species. Seen in 50 counties from all regions except the southwest; new nesting record in *Meeker* RBs.



Great Crested Flycatcher — Observed in 54 counties throughout state.



Western Kingbird — Recorded in eight western counties plus Lake of the Woods, Meeker, Sherburne, Hennepin, Washington.

Eastern Kingbird — Seen in 56 counties statewide.



SCISSOR-TAILED FLYCATCHER — One was photographed on 6/2 at Duluth in St. Louis Co. TFr.

Loggerhead Shrike — Reported in Clay, Big Stone, Lac Qui Parle, Kandiyohi, Renville, Meeker, McLeod, Blue Earth, Waseca, Rice, Dakota, Washington, and Wabasha.



WHITE-EYED VIREO — Vocalizing bird observed 6/21 – 7/4 at Big Cottonwood R. Valley in Brown Co. JSp. In the past two decades, isolated records of this species have occurred once every two to four summers.

Bell's Vireo — Reported on 6/7 at Black Dog L. in Dakota Co. TBo, on 6/9 at Minneopa S.P. in Blue Earth Co. (same location where reported for past three years) MF, and on 6/19 and 7/11 at Highway 13 waterfowl management area in Waseca Co. (same site as previous year) JSe.

Yellow-throated Vireo — Most reports ever for this species. Observed in 38 counties in all regions except northeast (but only Lyon in southwest and Otter Tail in west central).



Blue-headed Vireo — Seen in eight north central and northeast counties, plus Roseau; also 6/19 Pine SWe, Mille Lacs (no date) JLi.

Warbling Vireo — Seen in 34 counties in all regions (including St. Louis in northeast).



Philadelphia Vireo — Reported in Lake; late migrant 6/4 Nicollet MF.

Red-eyed Vireo — Seen in 48 counties throughout state.



Gray Jay — Recorded in Beltrami, Itasca, Cass, Aitkin, Pine, Carlton, St. Louis, and Lake.



Blue Jay — Observed in 60 counties statewide.



Black-billed Magpie — Seen in Kittson, Roseau, Clay, Lake of the Woods, Beltrami, Aitkin, St. Louis.



American Crow — Seen in 66 counties throughout state.



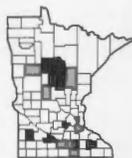
Common Raven — Found in 11 north central and northeast counties plus Kittson, Roseau, Morrison, Kanabec, Pine, Anoka.



Horned Lark — Seen in 32 counties in



all regions except northeast.

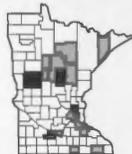


in *Hubbard* DBr, *Steele* CH, JHo.

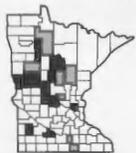
Purple Martin — Reported in a total of 38 counties statewide; new nesting record in *Aitkin* WN.



Black-capped Chickadee — The most reports since 1988; observed in 57 counties statewide.



Tree Swallow — Seen in 59 counties throughout state.



Boreal Chickadee — Reported in Aitkin, St. Louis, Lake.



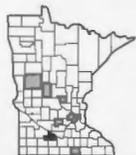
Northern Rough-winged Swallow — Observed in 31 counties statewide.



Tufted Titmouse — New nesting record in *Fillmore* NO; also found in Houston.



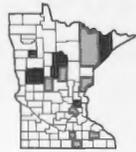
Bank Swallow — Seen in 30 counties in all regions except southeast.



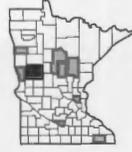
Red-breasted Nuthatch — Seen in 11 north central and northeast counties, plus Becker, Pine, Kanabec, Anoka. Also an unusual report 7/2 Cottonwood BBo.



Cliff Swallow — Seen in 50 counties statewide; new nesting records in *Mahnomen* GN, *Otter Tail* DST.



White-breasted Nuthatch — Observed in 49 counties statewide; new nesting record in *Otter Tail* DST.



Barn Swallow — Recorded in 61 counties throughout state; new nesting records

Brown Creeper — Recorded in Beltrami, Itasca, Cass, St. Louis, Lake, Cook,



Carlton, Anoka.

Carolina Wren — Third consecutive summer record. Individual originally found the previous fall (*The Loon* 71:92) seen through 7/8 at Rochester in Olmsted Co. LK.

House Wren — Observed in 56 counties throughout state.



Winter Wren — Many reports, similar to previous year. Seen in nine north central and northeast counties, plus Marshall, Becker, and Pine. Southern records include 6/4 Goodhue KB; 6/13,26 Houston (male singing at Beaver Creek Valley S.P.) KK, PC; 6/26 Washington (Falls Creek SNA) KB; and new nesting record in *Hennepin* (Old Cedar Avenue bridge) BBa, TBo. This represents the most southerly nesting record in the state; there is growing evidence that this species may breed sparingly into the south-east region.



Sedge Wren — Observed in 37 counties statewide.



Marsh Wren — Seen in 33 counties as far northeast as a line through Roseau, Beltrami, Carlton.



Golden-crowned Kinglet — Many reports, similar to previous year. Recorded in Beltrami, Itasca, Cass, Aitkin, Carlton, St. Louis, Lake, Cook. Unusual report (late migrant?) 6/6 Anoka RH.



Ruby-crowned Kinglet — Observed in Beltrami, Itasca, Cass, Aitkin, Carlton, St. Louis, Lake, Cook.

Blue-gray Gnatcatcher — Most reports ever for this species. Recorded in 20 southern counties as far west as Lyon, Jackson; plus Kanabec, Todd, 7/4 – 8/1 Aitkin CMG, 6/10,26 Wadena PBi, 6/20



Clearwater ABo. New nesting record in *Cass* MRN, PP.

Eastern Bluebird — Seen in 55 counties statewide; new nesting record in *Wilkin* GN.



Veery — Observed in 35 counties in all regions except west central and southwest; new nesting record in *Aitkin* WN.



Swainson's Thrush — Almost double the average number of reports. Seen in a total of eight north central and northeast counties, plus 6/2 Lac Qui Parle FE, 7/23 Anoka KB, 7/27 Anoka and Hennepin KB, SC.

Hermit Thrush — Recorded within range from 11 north central and northeast counties, plus Mille Lacs, Kanabec, Pine.

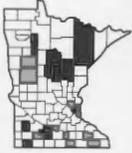


Wood Thrush — Most reports ever for this species. Observed in 30 counties as far west as Todd, Kandiyohi, Brown, and as far north as Itasca, St. Louis, Cook; plus 6/21 **Roseau** PS.



counties roughly along a line from Anoka and Hennepin to Fillmore and Houston; plus 6/12 **Jackson** DN, 7/3–20 Brown (“Lawrence’s” hybrid) JSp, 6/2–7 **Todd** JSK, SDu.

American Robin — Seen in 62 counties statewide.



Golden-winged Warbler — Recorded in 14 northern counties as far west as Beltrami, Becker, Todd; plus Anoka.

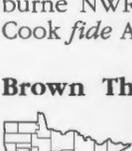


Gray Catbird — Reported in 56 counties throughout state.



Tennessee Warbler — Few reports, similar to last year. Observed in Cass, St. Louis, Lake, Cook; plus 7/1 Otter Tail (singing) SDM. Late migrant 6/10 Anoka; early migrants 7/10 Hennepin (4–6) SC, 7/10 Anoka (2) KB.

Northern Mockingbird — Four reports: 6/6 McLeod RTF, 6/13 Sherburne (Sherburne NWR) WSt, 6/19 Meeker DF, 6/19 Cook *vide* AH.



Nashville Warbler — Seen in ten north central and northeast counties plus Todd, Mille Lacs, Pine, Anoka. Early migrant 7/11 Scott WM; also recorded 6/2 and 7/8–31 Hennepin PBU, SC. Status of this species in Hennepin and adjacent counties is unclear... the possibility of limited breeding does exist.



Brown Thrasher — Observed in 44 counties statewide.

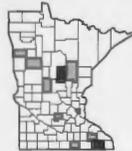


European Starling — Most reports since 1986; seen in 60 counties throughout state.



Northern Parula — Most reports since 1982. Seen in eight north central and northeast counties, plus Pine. Migrants were observed 6/2 Hennepin PBU, 7/10 Hennepin (record early fall date) SC, 7/29 Anoka (2) KB.

Yellow Warbler — Recorded in 52 counties throughout state.

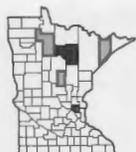


Cedar Waxwing — Recorded in 55 counties statewide.



Chestnut-sided Warbler — Seen in 20 counties as far west and south as a line through Kittson, Becker, Todd, Anoka;

Blue-winged Warbler — Seen in eleven



plus 6/18 Rice (Cannon River Wilderness Park) TBo. New nesting record in *Itasca* JLi.



new nesting record in *Aitkin* WN.

Magnolia Warbler — Reported in Becker, Itasca, Cass, Aitkin, St. Louis, Lake, Cook, Carlton, Pine.

Palm Warbler — Reported in Beltrami, Itasca, Cass, Aitkin, St. Louis, Lake.

Cape May Warbler — Double the usual number of reports. Seen in Becker, Hubbard, Cass, Itasca, St. Louis, Lake, Cook; plus new nesting record in *Aitkin* WN.



Bay-breasted Warbler — Only record from Cook.

Cerulean Warbler — Seen in Hennepin, Carver, Scott, Dakota, Rice, Olmsted, Houston.

Black-throated Blue Warbler — Seen in Itasca (no date) JLi, St. Louis, Lake, Cook.

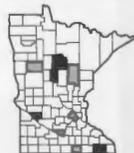
Black-and-white Warbler — Reported in 16 counties as far west and south as a line through Kittson, Becker, Stearns, Anoka; plus 7/9 Dakota TBo, 7/22 Hennepin SC (migrants?).



Yellow-rumped Warbler — Observed in ten north central and northeast counties, plus Mille Lacs, Kanabec, Pine; also reported on 6/27 (male singing on territory) and 7/10 (female seen) in Anoka Co. KB.



American Redstart — Observed in 47 counties from all regions except the southwest; new nesting record in *Chippewa* JLi.



Black-throated Green Warbler — Seen in a total of nine north central and north-east counties, plus Pine.

Blackburnian Warbler — Reported in eight north central and northeast counties, plus Pine; also 6/5,20 Anoka (singing male on territory) KB and record early migrant(?) 7/10 Hennepin SC.

Prothonotary Warbler — Reported in Nicollet, Hennepin, Ramsey, Washington, Scott, Dakota, Goodhue, Winona; plus 7/9 Stearns SWi.



YELLOW-THROATED WARBLER — At least one bird observed 6/12 - 7/24 at Sibley S.P. in Kandiyohi Co. mob (also see spring report). This is the same site at which one or more were seen from 1994 through 1997, and where nesting was documented in 1997.

Ovenbird — Most reports ever for this species. Seen in 43 counties in all regions except southwest (but only Otter Tail in west central); new nesting record in *Wabasha* JLi.



Pine Warbler — Seen in 14 counties as far west and south as a line through Beltrami, Clearwater, Wadena, Washington;

Northern Waterthrush — Reported in Cass, Itasca, St. Louis, Lake, Cook, Carlton, Pine; plus 6/7 Anoka RH, KB and



new nesting record in *Aitkin* WN.

Louisiana Waterthrush — All reports: Washington (Falls Creek SNA) KB, Winona (Whitewater S.P.) CW, Houston (Beaver Creek Valley S.P.) KK.

Connecticut Warbler — Recorded in Roseau, Lake of the Woods, Beltrami, Itasca, Cass, Aitkin, St. Louis, Lake.

Mourning Warbler — Seen in 12 northern counties as far west as a line through Beltrami, Clearwater, Mille Lacs; plus Anoka, Ramsey (four territories) KB, 7/24 Dakota (singing) DBS.



Common Yellowthroat — Observed in 57 counties statewide; new nesting record in *Cass* JS/MN.



Hooded Warbler — Several records: 6/5–27 Dakota and Scott counties (two males at Murphy-Hanrahan Park Reserve, which straddles the two counties) PC *et al.*; 6/19,26 Anoka (Carlos Avery WMA for former date, Linwood L. for latter — may be same bird) KB; 7/11 Carver (2) RD.

Wilson's Warbler — Observed 6/12 Lake (two singing males along Whyte Rd.) SW/MS, 6/23 Lake (singing male near Greenwood L.) KE, 7/3 Cook (Taconite Harbor) KB; plus late migrant 6/2 Hennepin.

Canada Warbler — Reported in Cass, Itasca, St. Louis, Lake, Cook, Carlton; plus 6/20 Anoka (four different territories in Boot Lake SNA) KB.



Connecticut Warbler, May 1999, Fort Snelling State Park, Hennepin County. Photo by Vija Kelly.

Yellow-breasted Chat — Seen 6/11–13 Kandiyohi (N. of Sibley S.P.) RJF, RE *et al.* and 6/16–22 Dakota (Black Dog L.) TBo, DBS.

Summer Tanager — Only the second summer record in 16 years, following an unprecedented influx of approximately 18 individuals in May (*The Loon*: 71:216–220). Single bird (heard only) on 6/24 at Old Cedar Ave. bridge in Hennepin Co. SC.

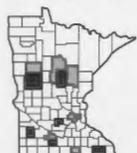
Scarlet Tanager — Observed in 36 counties as far west as a line through Roseau, Becker, Todd, Kandiyohi, Brown.



Spotted Towhee — Second summer record since the split three years ago; 7/10 Ramsey (St. Paul) VC.

Eastern Towhee — Seen in 14 southern counties as far west as Nicollet, Blue Earth; plus Pine, Wadena, Cass, Itasca, Beltrami.

American Tree Sparrow — Second summer record for the state; late migrant 6/1 St. Louis (Park Point, Duluth) JoH.



Chipping Sparrow — Observed in 62 counties statewide; new nesting records in *McLeod* RbS, *Watonwan* DBr.



Clay-colored Sparrow — Seen in 35 counties as far south as Watonwan, Blue Earth, Waseca; plus 6/13,30 Rock DN, MF.



Field Sparrow — Reported in 27 southern counties plus Traverse, Otter Tail, Todd, Morrison; new nesting record in *Rock* RbS.



Vesper Sparrow — Fewest reports since 1985. Seen in 36 counties in all regions (but only St. Louis in northeast); new nesting record in *Otter Tail* DST.



Lark Sparrow — Observed in Marshall, Otter Tail, Kandiyohi, Renville, Anoka, Washington, Scott, Dakota, and Wabasha.



Savannah Sparrow — Seen in 38 counties statewide.

Grasshopper Sparrow — Seen in 22 counties from all regions except the north central and northeast.



Henslow's Sparrow — All reports: 6/2 Rice (at least five still present at a game management area south of Faribault) TBo; 6/7 Clay (Bicentennial Prairie) AH, PS; 6/7 Wilkin (two at Elliott SNA) AH, PS; 6/16 Rice (one mile SW of Dennison) TBo; 6/18,27 Washington (two at Afton S.P.) RJ; 7/11-27 Scott (near Jordan) WM *et al.*

LeConte's Sparrow — Observed in 12 northern counties, plus 6/10 Lac Qui Parle RJ.

Nelson's Sharp-tailed Sparrow — Seen or heard in Kittson, Norman, Beltrami, Cass, and Aitkin.

Song Sparrow — Seen in 62 counties statewide; new nesting records in *Otter Tail* SDM, *Todd* JSK, *Lyon* RgS, *Watonwan* DBr.



Lincoln's Sparrow — Reported in St. Louis, Lake, Cass, Carlton; plus new nesting record in *Aitkin* WN.



Swamp Sparrow — Observed in 40 counties throughout state.



White-throated Sparrow — Observed in 14 northern counties as far west as a line through Kittson, Becker, Mille Lacs;



plus late migrant 6/2 Hennessee.

Dark-eyed Junco — Most reports since 1993. Seen in Roseau, St. Louis, Lake, Carlton, Pine; plus 6/10 – 7/18 Wadena PBI and late migrant(?) 6/2 Hennessee (singing) TBo.

Chestnut-collared Longspur — Only reported from traditional Felton Prairie breeding site in Clay Co.

Northern Cardinal — Observed in 34 counties as far north as St. Louis (Duluth) and as far west as a line through Otter Tail, Kandiyohi, Martin; new nesting record in *Nicollet* BBo.



Rose-breasted Grosbeak — Seen in 55 counties statewide; new nesting record in *Wabasha* JLU.



Blue Grosbeak — Reported in Rock, plus 6/6 Lincoln PS. First county record (and first record for seven-county metro area) on 7/9 in *Dakota* (immature male) RJ.

Indigo Bunting — Seen in 43 counties in all regions except west central.

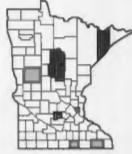


Dickcissel — Reported in 26 southern counties, plus Traverse. Lack of northern reports implies that the population is at an ebb in its erratic cycle, for the third consecutive year; however, several observers reported increased numbers.

Bobolink — Fewest reports since 1994. Observed in 38 counties throughout state; one new nesting record in *Cass* JS/MN. Southbound flock (100+) reported 7/19 Aitkin CB.



Red-winged Blackbird — Seen in 65 counties statewide; new nesting record in *McLeod* RbS.



Eastern Meadowlark — Reported from 23 counties in all but the three western regions.

Western Meadowlark — Fewest reports ever for this species; seen in 33 counties from all regions except the northeast and southeast.

Yellow-headed Blackbird — Reported in 36 counties in all regions except in the northeast and southeast.

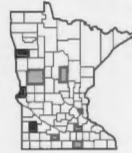


Rusty Blackbird — Second summer record in eleven years; 6/19 Lake (near Gabbro L.) MH.

Brewer's Blackbird — Seen in a total of 25 counties as far south as Waseca; new nesting record in *Aitkin* WN.



Common Grackle — Observed in 61 counties statewide; new nesting records in *Norman* GN, *Traverse* GN.



Brown-headed Cowbird — Reported in 60 counties throughout state; new breeding records in *Cass* MRN, *McLeod* RbS. Parasitized species included Eastern Phoebe, Tree Swallow (*The Loon*: 71:167), Yellow Warbler, Chestnut-sided Warbler, American Redstart, Chipping Sparrow, Song Sparrow, Swamp Sparrow, Northern Cardinal, and Red-winged Blackbird.



Orchard Oriole — Fewest reports since 1988. Observed in 13 south counties (although not reported from the southeast region) plus Norman, Clay; also peak count reported 7/18 Traverse (20+) TBo.

Baltimore Oriole — Seen in 52 counties statewide.



Purple Finch — Observed in 12 north central and northeast counties, plus Roseau, Polk, Becker, Mille Lacs, Pine, Anoka (Boot L. SNA) KB.



House Finch — Reported in 46 counties throughout state; new nesting record in *Ramsey* RH.



Red Crossbill — Recorded in Beltrami, St. Louis, Aitkin, Todd, Pine.

Pine Siskin — Observed in 15 northern counties plus Washington, Dakota.



American Goldfinch — Seen in 61 counties statewide; new nesting record in *Fillmore* NO.



Evening Grosbeak — Seen in Beltrami, Wadena, Cass, Itasca, Aitkin, St. Louis, Lake, Cook; migrants observed 7/4 along North Shore in St. Louis Co.

House Sparrow — Observed in 53 counties statewide; new nesting records in *Otter Tail* DST, *Wilkin* GN, *Traverse* GN, *Lyon* RgS.



EURASIAN TREE SPARROW — Single bird originally discovered in late May, but first documented in early June at a Parke Township feeder in Clay Co. (the same location as previous year) AH, PS. This represents the third state record although its appearance at the same feeder, at about the same date as last year, strongly suggests the same individual.

Observers

MA Mark Alt
 BA Betty Ammerman
 BBa Bruce Baer
 KB Karl Bardon
 ABa Al Batt
 TEB Tom & Elizabeth Bell
 BBe Betsy A. Beneke
 DBz Dedrick Benz

PBi Paul J. Binek
 TBo Tom F. Boevers
 BBo Brad Bolduan
 ABo Al Bolduc
 DBo Don A. Bolduc
 WB William L. Brown
 DBr Diane Bruderie
 JJB Jerry & Jared Bucksa

PBu	Paul Budde	WM	William Marengo
CB	Cindy Butler	DBM	Dennis & Barbara Martin
SC	Steve Carlson	JMc	Joan McKearnan
PC	Philip Chu	BMe	Becky Mellentin
VC	Val Cunningham	SDM	Steve & Diane Millard
ND	Nelvina De Kam	DN	David F. Neitzel
PBD	Pat & Bob DeWenter	BN	Bill Nelson
ED	Ed Duerksen	WN	Warren Nelson
Sdf	Sue Duffy	JN	Jeff R. Newman
RD	Robert Dunlop	PN	Pat Newman
SDu	Sue Durrant	GN	Gary E. Nielsen
KE	Kim R. Eckert	MRN	Michael R. North
FE	Fred A. Eckhardt	RO	Robert O'Connor
JEl	Jesse Ellis	BOl	Bridget Olson
RE	Ron A. Erpelding	KO	Ken Oulman
DEv	Dave Evans	NO	Nancy Overcott
ME	Molly Evans	PP	Pam Perry
AE	Audrey L. Evers	DMP	Daphne & Meyers Peterson
RTF	Roger & Tammy Field	PR	Pat Rice
LF	Lawrence W. Filter	FR	Flip Rogers
HJF	Herbert & Jeanette Fisher	SS	Steven Schon
DF	Dan Floren	RbS	Robert Schroeder
CF	Cole Foster	RgS	Roger Schroeder
TFr	Terry Frank	BSe	Blaine Seeliger
RJF	Randy & Jean Frederickson	JS/MN	Jean Segerstrom & Mark Newstrom
EF	Eve Freeberg	JSe	Julian P. Sellers
MF	Merrill J. Frydendall	BSi	Beth Siverhus
CMG	Clare & Maurita Geerts	RSm	Rolf C. Smeby
CH	Clifford Hansen	DBS	Drew & Becky Smith
JoH	John Heid	JSp	Jack Sprenger
CHe	Carrol Henderson	WSt	William Stauffer
MH	Mike Hendrickson	FKS	Forest & Kirsten Strnad
AnH	Ann Hertzell	KSu	Karen Sussman
AH	Anthony Hertzell	PS	Peder Svingen
JHo	John Hockema	DST	Dan & Sandy Thimgan
KMH	Ken & Molly Hoffman	TT	Tom Tustison
RH	Robert E. Holtz	JLU	Janice & Larry Uden
JH	James L. Howitz	JiW	Jim Waldie
RJ	Robert B. Janssen	SWe	Steve Weston
DJe	Douglas Jenness	TW	Terry P. Wiens
DJo	Douglas P. Johnson	SW/MS	Steve Wilson & Mary Shedd
MJ/DT	Murdoch Johnson & Dianne Tuff	SWi	Sylvia Winkelman
OJ	Oscar L. Johnson	NWi	Ned Winters
JJ	Jeanie Joppru	CW	Christopher L. Wood
BK	Byron R. Kinkade	MW	Mary Wyatt
KK	Karla Kinstler	BY	Ben Yokel
RRK	Ron & Rose Kneeskern	JZ	James E. Zimmerman
LK	Leslie Kotke	DZ	Dave C. Zumeta
JSK	John & Susan Kroll		
JLa	Jacob Langeslag	mob	many observers
SL	Sue Levy	MCBS	Minnesota County Biological Survey
JLi	Jim Lind	MDNR	Minnesota Department of Natural Resources
JL	Jon Little		
CMa	Craig R. Mandel	ZVAS	Zumbro Valley Audubon Society

Interactions Between Snowy Owls and Large Falcons at Duluth

David L. Evans

The enmity between large owls and large falcons during the breeding season is widely documented, particularly between Great Horned Owls (*Bubo virginianus*) and Peregrine and Prairie Falcons (*Falco peregrinus*, *F. mexicanus*) (cf. Palmer 1988, Steenhof 1998). Reports of interactions between large falcons and Snowy Owls (*Nyctea scandiaca*) are less common. Forbush (1927) reported a Snowy Owl killed by a Peregrine Falcon. Cade (1960) offered citations of Peregrines and Gyrfalcons (*F. rusticolus*) being chased by Snowy Owls (Watson 1957, Pitelka *et al.* 1955) and a Peregrine that attacked a Snowy Owl that landed near its nest (Sutton & Parmalee 1955).

Here, I report on observations of interactions between Snowy Owls and large falcons during winter, recorded during studies of Snowy Owl territoriality in the Duluth-Superior harbor.

On 27 January 1980, I observed a Prairie Falcon in Superior, Wisconsin and attempted to trap and band (it later proved to be an escaped falconry bird). As it was stooping at the trap, a nearby Snowy Owl on a telephone pole was screaming at it (Evans 1980). The Prairie was also calling, "cacking" (Palmer 1988). It soon left, with no further interaction.

On 2 February 1980, a Gyrfalcon was seen chasing pigeons over the grain elevator "Cargill C" in Duluth at 4:15 P.M. A Snowy Owl (wing tag E38, an adult female) was watching it, bobbing her head. From 4:20 to 4:30, the Gyrfalcon stooped on the owl multiple times, typically returning quickly with a second pass after the initial stoop before going back to the top of the elevator. The owl faced the oncoming Gyrfalcon with wings up and partially spread out with the head held

very low. On each stoop, the owl jumped up with feet extended as the Gyrfalcon went over her, then rushed to turn around to defend the second pass. At 4:45 the Gyrfalcon stooped on her twice more and left at 4:50, after which the owl was "jerking like it had a tic." While the Gyrfalcon cacked loudly on each stoop, the owl did not scream. The next day, on 3 February, the Gyrfalcon made several stoops on E38 at the same location over the course of a half hour.

On 1 February 1986 I was attempting to trap and band an adult Peregrine on the Port Terminal. At 1:30 P.M. I flushed it from a pigeon it had killed. A Snowy Owl (T30, immature female) was perched on a chimney on the American Hoist building, about 50 yards away. At 1:53 the Peregrine made a pass at the owl, which ducked and raised its wings slightly. At 1:54 the owl flew to the bay ice, with no pursuit by the Peregrine.

On 6 January 1992 I was driving on I-535 toward the Port Terminal and observed a Gyrfalcon that appeared to be on a kill on the bay ice between me and the WLSSD sewage treatment plant. As I proceeded, a Snowy Owl (T87, immature male) flew across in front of me from the Burlington Northern railroad yard toward the Gyrfalcon.

I continued around to North Star Steel and located the Gyrfalcon with my spotting scope. Before I could look for the owl the Gyrfalcon began flying, carrying a pigeon. Shortly, an adult Bald Eagle (*Haliaeetus leucocephalus*) appeared in the scope, pursuing the Gyrfalcon with great vigor. The laden Gyrfalcon was no match for the eagle and after several evasive maneuvers, dropped the pigeon which was then recovered by the eagle. When I looked out to see where the Gyr-

falcon had gone I saw it stooping hard on what I assumed was the eagle. However, in the scope, I saw it stoop 6-10 times on the Snowy Owl, which flipped up to meet it every time. The Gyrfalcon then left, flying towards downtown Duluth. (Clum and Cade (1994) reported one previous record of a Bald Eagle robbing prey from a Gyrfalcon).

On 27 December 1993 I observed a Gyrfalcon land on the Cargill B grain elevator. At 2:55 P.M. I placed a pigeon in front of the Gyrfalcon and circled around the elevator to observe from a distance. As I approached, at 2:57, the Gyrfalcon was stooping at something at the base of a pile of railroad ties. This turned out to be a Snowy Owl (L28, adult female) that I had observed at 2:34 sitting on a dirt pile at Bayfront Park, about 3/4 mile distant. The owl cowered at the base of the ties and did not jump up (it clutching a pigeon).

On 22 January 1994 I observed a Snowy Owl (L25, adult female) sitting on a tall powerline pole at the end of Winter Street in Superior. No interaction was observed with the Gyrfalcon sitting on the next pole west. The owl did not react when the Gyrfalcon left.

On 20 April 1994 a switchman for the Soo Line railroad on the Port Terminal called and reported a Snowy Owl (L26, immature female) being stooped on by a Peregrine and then getting harassed by gulls at about 11:00 A.M. I could not find the owl at 12:00 P.M. and it was not seen again that season.

In December 1999, I had three reports of a Peregrine stooping on Snowy Owls. One, by Anthony Hertzell, is described below:

"On 2 December 1999 I was driving through the Port Terminal in Duluth when I noticed a falcon diving steeply from an initial altitude of about 30 feet. Through my binoculars I could see that it was a Peregrine."

"As I watched it plunge toward the ground I discovered the object of the bird's intentions. An immature Snowy Owl was standing directly beneath the Peregrine, hunched next to one of the

large moorings which are common at the port terminal."

"The owl was standing in a defensive posture with its wings raised over its head and fanned out horizontally. It stood there with its bill open, neck arching forward, head looking up, and eyes glaring at the approaching Peregrine. Just before the falcon reached the Snowy, the young owl ducked and the Peregrine, having made no contact, turned quickly and made a nearly vertical climb back up to a height of about 30 feet. Again it turned and dove at the owl below. This time, as the falcon approached the Snowy, the owl jumped into the air, flipped upwards, and grabbed at the passing Peregrine with its talons, missing it by a wide margin. This was the only time it took any kind of an aggressive action toward the Peregrine."

"Yet again the falcon climbed, turned, and dove at the owl which this time retreated closer to the mooring, cowering close to it as if unable to decide what to do. The Peregrine swung past the owl, made a half-hearted grab at it, then as before, quickly ascended and turned to begin the next attack."

"This interaction was repeated perhaps six or seven times before the Peregrine suddenly broke off the attack, banked, and flew out of sight to the southwest. The entire episode lasted perhaps 60 seconds. The falcon never appeared to actually strike the owl, and after the encounter, the Snowy remained crouched beneath the mooring, wings raised and wide eyes staring, and it was still there when I left."

Peregrines and Gyrfalcons represent a considerable threat to wintering Snowy Owls. Given that Gyrfalcons are considerably larger (about 50% greater mass for females), they would appear to be the greater threat and this is also suggested by the stronger defensive response (i.e. jumping up with feet extended) to Gyrfalcon attacks.

Snowy Owls also change their roosting behavior when large falcons are present, typically choosing sites affording greater protection, e.g. hiding in jumbled chunks

of ice in the shipping lanes. Indeed, the arrival of a Gyrfalcon has often been signalled by the "disappearance" of territorial owls I had been observing over the course of the winter. They were still on their territories, but much harder to find.

When not constrained to defend a territory by the presence of neighboring owls, Snowy Owls will roost considerable distances from their hunting centers. This past winter (1999–2000) an adult female Peregrine had a roosting and activity center on the Blatnik bridge. There were only two owls wintering in the harbor, an adult female (T67, a return from the previous winter) and an immature male (T68). Both owls were often observed roosting up to three miles away from their hunting areas near the Blatnik bridge, considerably farther than normal. They also remained inactive much later than normal, rarely moving before almost complete darkness.

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Proceedings of the Minnesota Ornithological Records Committee

Kim R. Eckert, M.O.R.C. Chairman

The two most recent meetings of the Committee were held on 29 August and 5 December 1999. In attendance at one or both of these meetings were the other Committee members: Renner Anderson (alternate member),

Karl Bardon, Paul Budde (1999 alternate and regular member starting in 2000 replacing Dick Ruhme), Philip Chu (alternate starting in 2000 replacing Paul Budde), Bruce Fall, Anthony Hertzell, Kim Risen (alternate), Dick Ruhme (whose

term expired at the end of 1999), Peder Svingen and Tom Tustison.

Among the items on the agendas of these meetings were discussions of certain records, including: potential first state records; those involving a question of origin; those recirculated after inconclusive first-round votes; those with completed votes which are reconsidered at the request of a member; and those primarily or entirely documented with a photograph or tape recording. The results of these discussions and votes on these records are included below with the other records handled entirely by mail.

The following records were voted on August–December 1999 and found to be Acceptable:

- Ross's Goose, 22–26 September 1998, L. Byllesby, Dakota Co. (record #99–06, vote 7–0)
- Prairie Falcon, 5 May 1999, Sodus Twp., Lyon Co. (record #99–27, vote 5–2).
- Yellow-throated Warbler, 6 May – 24 July 1999, Sibley State Park, Kandiyohi Co. (record #99–28, vote 7–0).
- White-eyed Vireo, 16 May 1999, Forestville State Park, Fillmore Co. (record #99–30, vote 7–0).
- Arctic Tern, 21 May 1999, Duluth, St. Louis Co. (record #99–31, vote 7–0, **The Loon** 71:239).
- White-eyed Vireo, 14–29 May 1999, Hormel Nature Center, Mower Co. (record #99–32, vote 7–0).
- American Tree Sparrow, 1 June 1999, Duluth, St. Louis Co. (record #99–33, vote 6–1).
- Scissor-tailed Flycatcher, 2 June 1999, Duluth Twp., St. Louis Co. (record #99–34, vote 7–0).
- Least Tern, 24–25 June 1999, Agassiz N.W.R., Marshall Co. (record #99–36, vote 6–1).
- Lark Bunting, 28 September 1998, Duluth, St. Louis Co. (record #99–39, vote 6–1).
- Great-tailed Grackle, 26 March – 14 August 1999, Grover's L., Jackson Co. (record #99–40, vote 7–0).
- Great-tailed Grackle, 13 May 1999, Middletown Twp., Jackson Co. (record

#99–41, vote 7–0).

- Great-tailed Grackle, 11 September – 23 October 1999, Minneota Twp., Jackson Co. (record #99–42, vote 7–0).

- Swallow-tailed Kite, 15–27 May 1999, Lower Sakatah L., Rice Co. (record #99–44, vote 7–0, **The Loon** 71:173 and 176–178).

- Eurasian Collared-Dove, 29 May – July 1999, Udolpho Twp., Mower Co. (record #99–45, vote 7–0, **The Loon** 71:236–237).

- Eurasian Tree Sparrow, late May – 6 June 1999, Parke Twp., Clay Co. (record #99–46, vote 7–0).

- Ruff, 15 June 1999, Thielke L., Big Stone Co. (record #99–47, vote 7–0, **The Loon** 72:55–56).

- White-eyed Vireo, 21 June – 4 July 1999, near New Ulm, Brown Co. (record #99–48, vote 7–0).

- Rock Wren, 22–23 May 1999, Wilmington Twp., Houston Co. (record #99–53, vote 7–0, **The Loon** 71:205).

- Prairie Warbler, 12–19 August 1999, Richfield, Hennepin Co. (record #99–54, vote 7–0).

- Smew, 17 March 1999, Anderson County Park, Jackson Co. (record #99–55, vote 10–0). All ten members vote on potential first state records. At the 5 December 1999 meeting, the question of origin was discussed and voted on, and by majority vote (8–2) the individual was accepted as being of probable wild origin. At the same meeting, the photograph of the individual was also discussed and voted on, and by majority vote (7–3) the photo was accepted as identifiable on its own. As a result of these votes, this species was accepted to the state list as an unqualified Accidental — i.e., with no qualifying "o" or "s" subscripts.

- Black-headed Gull (1 adult), 26 March 1999, Spirit L., Jackson Co. (record #99–56, vote 7–0).

- Black-headed Gull (2 adults), 9–23 October 1999, Spirit L., Jackson Co. (record #99–57, vote 7–0).

- White-faced Ibis, 5–6 May 1999, Castle Rock, Dakota Co. (record #99–58, vote 7–0).

- Painted Bunting, 10–20 August 1999, Maple Grove, Hennepin Co. (record #99–60, vote 7–0).

- Pomarine Jaeger, 8–25 September 1999, Duluth, St. Louis Co. (record #99–61, vote 7–0).

- Rufous Hummingbird, 15–22 July 1999, near Cascade River State Park, Cook Co. (record #99–63, vote 7–0).

- California Gull, 6–20 November 1999, Minneapolis, Hennepin Co. (record #99–65, vote 6–1).

- Pomarine Jaeger, 22 November 1999, Vineland, Mille Lacs Co. (record #99–67, vote 7–0, *The Loon* 72:56–58).

- Prairie Warbler, early May 1999, L. Byllesby, Dakota Co. (record #99–68, vote 7–0).

- King Eider, 20 October 1999, Chippewa Co. (record #99–69, vote 7–0).

- Ancient Murrelet, 20 November 1999, Grand Marais, Cook Co. (record #99–71, vote 7–0, *The Loon* 72:43–45).

- Black-legged Kittiwake, 21 November 1999, Grand Marais, Cook Co. (record #99–72, vote 6–1, *The Loon* 72:59).

- King Eider, 22 November – 8 December 1999, Grand Marais and vicinity, Cook Co. (record #99–73, vote 7–0).

The following records were voted on August – December 1999 and found to be Unacceptable:

- Ovenbird, 1 December 1998, Forest Lake, Washington Co. (record #99–11; vote 4–3, with a 5–2 vote or higher required for acceptance).

The majority accepted this record because the bird was seen by two experienced observers, because the species is not easily confused with others, and because other late-lingering birds had been reported about the same time. Those not accepting the record agreed that the bird was probably correctly identified, but the documentation includes no direct description of the bird.

- Plumbeous Vireo, 8 May 1999, Bloomington, Hennepin Co. (record #99–29; vote 0–10, with all ten members voting on potential first state records).

The observer, who had no experience

with this species, only observed the bird for 10–15 seconds, and it was unanimously felt this was not long enough to make a relatively difficult identification of a first state record. Even though the extensive documentation (for which the observer is to be commended) suggests the bird may not have been a Blue-headed Vireo, it still does not preclude the possibility of it being a Cassin's Vireo or perhaps another species.

- Western Sandpiper, 7 June 1999, Thielke L., Big Stone Co. (record #99–35, vote 1–6).

The primary difficulty with this record is that the observers, who provided separate descriptions and did not agree on these birds' identity, also did not agree on some of the key field marks they observed. One says the three birds were like Baird's or White-rumped in their size and shape, while the other observer reports the size and shape were unlike this. One describes the call note as a Baird's-like "kreep," while the other says it was a "jeet" or "keep." Both describe a primary extension beyond the tail when the wings were folded, but it is unclear whether it was as long as on a Baird's or White-rumped. It is also unclear from the descriptions how extensive or contrasting the rusty coloration was on the scapulars, whether any rust was present on the crown or ear coverts, and what age/plumage the birds were in — the observer who felt the birds were Westerns reports they were in juvenile plumage, but in early June this is not possible.

- Mississippi Kite, 23 September 1986, Duluth, St. Louis Co. (record #99–37; vote 4–3, with a 7–0 vote required for acceptance).

This record had been previously voted on and not accepted (*The Loon* 59:58), but it was reconsidered at the request of a MORC member and again found to be Unacceptable. Although the majority felt the documentation is sufficient, primarily because white secondaries were observed, those not accepting the record felt that "large, dark" does not fit this species, the described size of the bird is

unclear and somewhat inconsistent, and nothing about the tail is described.

- Black-headed Gull, 24 April 1987, Heron L., Jackson Co. (record #99-38, vote 2-5).

This record had been previously voted on, accepted and published (*The Loon* 59:211-212), but it was reconsidered at the request of a MORC member and found to be Unacceptable. The identification primarily relied on the observer's description of this gull's bill color and hood shape and color, but these features are not easy to discern accurately at the distances involved. More importantly, the distinctive and diagnostic under wing pattern of this species was apparently not seen, since the documentation only says "it appeared dark from below."

- Arctic Tern, 11 May 1999, Duluth, St. Louis Co. (record #99-43, vote 1-6).

Although the experienced observer's documentation describes this tern's darker gray underparts, "surprisingly short" legs, and folded wing tips falling short of the tail tips, the distance involved and the light conditions at the time were less than optimal to see clearly these subtle features. While it was agreed the identification may well have been correct, the bill color and shape, the translucent flight feathers, and the width and extent of the black edge on the underside of the primaries were not visible or described. Also, this tern's body is described as "slimmer" in direct comparison with Common Terns, but in flight an Arctic Tern should appear more "neckless" and "pot-bellied" — not slimmer — in comparison with Commons.

- Hooded Warbler, 1-2 July 1999, Detroit Lakes, Becker Co. (record #99-49; vote 4-3, with a 5-2 vote or higher required for acceptance).

Although it was agreed this apparent adult male Hooded Warbler may have been correctly identified, there is nothing in the documentation about the color or pattern of the underparts, wings or tail. The entire description only mentions a "yellow brow and yellow sides of the head with a black hood."

- Lark Bunting, 9 July 1999, Cedar Rock W.M.A., Redwood Co. (record #99-50, vote 2-5).

The bird was only seen for a few seconds in flight, and the brief description only includes mention of a black bird with white wing patches. There is no mention of the size or position of the white patches, and the possibility of it being a partial albino blackbird is not precluded. In addition, the mostly wooded and shrubby habitat where the bird was seen would be atypical for this species.

- Red-throated Loon, 1 August 1999, L. Benton, Lincoln Co. (record #99-51, vote 0-7).

The field notes written at the time of the observation — for which the observers are to be commended — unfortunately are not detailed enough to include any diagnostic Red-throated Loon field marks and to eliminate a Common or Pacific loon (or even some of the grebes).

- Sage Thrasher, 21 May 1999, Duluth, St. Louis Co. (record #99-52, vote 3-4).

While this bird was probably correctly identified, the majority felt the observers' written descriptions are not complete or clear enough to preclude entirely other species of thrashers. The descriptions include features of the bill which seem inconsistent with Sage Thrasher: "long beak, with a downward curl... bill dark at the tip (about 25% of the length of the bill), basal part yellowish." One observer also describes the eye as "deep orange-yellow," which also is not consistent with this species.

- Black-chinned Sparrow, 22 May 1999, Afton State Park, Washington Co. (record #99-59; vote 0-10, with all ten members voting on potential first state records).

The descriptions of this bird were not written until six months after the observation, apparently only from memory, and this is not acceptable for such an unprecedented sighting (i.e., no other records in the eastern U.S.). The descriptions are also incomplete, with nothing said of the bill color or shape, and only one of the

observers mentions the key field marks of chin and wing colors. The bird's behavior (sitting on top of a 20–30 foot tree) and the habitat ("deciduous forest") would also be atypical for this species.

• Black-chinned Hummingbird, 28 August – 1 September 1999, Miesville Ravine County Park, Dakota Co. (record #99–64; vote 0–10, with all ten members voting on potential first state records).

Field separation of female/immature Black-chinned and Ruby-throated hummingbirds is considered very difficult if not impossible, and there is nothing in the observer's documentation which precludes Ruby-throated. There is no indication that any field notes were taken at the time of the observation, and the description provided appears to be written from memory six weeks after the sighting.

The efforts of all those observers who document their reports of unusual species are appreciated, whether or not those records are accepted. Accordingly, the Committee acknowledges with thanks those who provided documentation for the records listed in this article: Mark Alt,

Karl Bardon (four records), Dave Benson, Dedrick Benz (two records), Paul Budde, Philip Chu (four records), Kim Eckert, Laura Erickson, Terry Frank, John Heid, Anthony Hertzell (nine records), Ken and Molly Hoffman (two records), Bob Jansen, Jeanie Joppru, Greg Juenemann, Jon Kettunen, Fred Leshner, Sue Levy (two records), William Longley, Richard Miller, Mark Ochs, Anne Marie Plunkett, Steve Roman (three records), Rick Schroeder, Robert Schroeder, Roger Schroeder, Blaine Seeliger (two records), Richard Smaby, Drew Smith, Lois Sorenson, Jack Sprenger, Jeff Stephenson, Peder Svingen (16 records), Dave Thurston, Howard Towle, Tom Tustison (two records), James Waldie, Steve Weston (three records), Mary Wyatt.

There were also other observers who documented records which were not submitted for a vote to the Committee; their documentations, though not mentioned here, are also appreciated.

Summary: 46 records voted on: 34 Acceptable (74%), 12 Unacceptable (26%).

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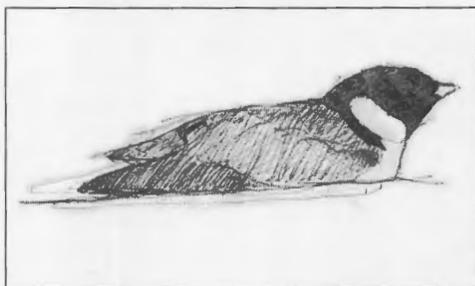
Seventh Record of the Ancient Murrelet in Minnesota

Dedrick A. Benz

On 20 November 1999, John Hockema, Philip Chu, Rick Hoyme and I were observing gulls off the west breakwater at the harbor at Grand Marais, Cook County. When all the gulls took flight, one lone bird remained floating about 150–200 yards out on the lake.

Thinking that it might be a small duck, such as one of the Buffleheads seen earlier swimming in the harbor, I put my scope on it. I have never taken a pelagic trip, but have thumbed the murrelet pages in my field guides and paid particular attention to the split of Marbled Murrelet, and had recently read an article

on this in *Birding* (Mlodinow 1997). This bird was no Bufflehead, and I shouted "There's a murrelet or something out there." The group was taken by surprise and started to look at the bird (Dave Thurston briefly joined us later). I got a few seconds look before it dove. I was able to note a white cheek patch on a short, squat, "neckless" bird before it shot down like a rocket into the water. Phillip, thankfully having more pelagic experience, made observations that confirmed it as an Ancient Murrelet.



Ancient Murrelet, 20 November 1999, Grand Marais, Cook County. Drawing by Phillip Chu.

Notes

The following is a word-for-word transcription of my notes taken in the field, followed by more complete documentation written on 20 November 1999 and 8 December 1999:

Ancient Murrelet - 11/20/99.

Time observed: 2:20-3:30.

On Lake Superior, just outside Grand Marais Harbor, Grand Marais.

Temp. in the 40s with overcast skies.

My scope - Kowa TSN-822 with 20-60X Zoom.

My Binoculars - Bausch & Lomb Elite 8X42.

Floating alone, sits very low in water.

Diving fiercely and quickly.

White cheek patch.

Head is virtually at same level as body.

No neck.

Bill color hard to make out.

White belly & breast extends to cheek patch.

Black head & neck contrasts with gray back.

Distance 150-200 yds.

Usually dives 10-30 seconds.

White underwings.

Not much white was visible above water line.

No markings in wings (upperside).

Description

While watching the bird, our group noted that the white patch was not an

isolated oval, but contiguous with the white belly and breast. The head and nape were black, contrasting with a gray back. There were no markings on the bird's gray back and wings. When swimming, only about an inch or two of white appeared above the water line. The bill was short, conical, and finch-like. Phillip mentioned that the Ancient Murrelet's bill should be yellow, which was difficult to determine from a profile view. But when the bird turned towards us, we were all able to make out a pale circle in the middle of a black head.

We watched the bird dive many times, which it did vigorously, in a way I've never seen before. On two occasions it flew; once for 10-20 yds., and once for 100 yards. This revealed white underwings, bordered in black, as well as a stiff, rapid from-the-shoulder flight. The bird was actively diving for most of the 70 minutes we observed it. It got as far out as 300-400 yards at times, and eventually worked its way east and out of sight.

The only guide consulted in the field was my 2nd edition of the *National Geographic Field Guide to the Birds of North America* (1987). Among the alcids, the only species showing a white cheek patch, a contrasting black head/gray back pattern with unmarked wings, and a short stubby bill is the Ancient Murrelet.

There was little discussion among observers regarding field marks. There are several things I wish I had noticed and

Date	Location	Source	Comment
5 November 1905	Lake Hook, McLeod Co.	Roberts 1932	Found alive in weakened state.
27 November 1950	Cutfoot Sioux Lake, Itasca Co.	Lupient 1950	Caught in bullhead net.
14 November 1961	Pelican Lake, Crow Wing Co.	Erickson 1962	Found in weakened state.
28 February 1969	Fort Ripley, Crow Wing Co.	Echternacht 1969	A road-kill specimen.
October 1970	Lake Kabetogama, St Louis Co.	Janssen 1987	Shot by a hunter.
29 October 1979	Lake Winnibigoshish, Cass Co.	Tefft 1981	Shot in flight with two Bufflehead.

Table 1. Minnesota's six previous Ancient Murrelet records.

hope were documented elsewhere:

1) Where did the black on the throat end? I recall the chin being black when trying to determine bill color, but I can't recall how far down the throat the black extended. The immature plumage on page 177 of *National Geographic* seems about right, though my memory is that the black was more well-defined. Furthermore, the impression this picture gives of a cheek patch contiguous with the underparts suits me well as opposed to the "amorphous blobs" in the other plumages.

2) Eye-ring — I did not note an eye-ring. The *National Geographic Guide* seems to exaggerate this more than any of the other guides I consulted, and it's conceivable from our distance that we couldn't make it out (See Peterson 1990).

3) Markings at the wingpits — Far from a clinching field mark, but for the sake of completeness, I wished I had noticed this mark mentioned by Harrison (1983). Of course, there isn't consistency among field guides here anyway. The two brief flights simply did not provide ample time to make detailed observations possible.

Previous Minnesota Records

Prior to this observation, there have been six occurrences of the Ancient Murrelet in Minnesota (Table 1). It is notable that all six previous Minnesota records of the Ancient Murrelet were of specimens, making this the first sight record for the state. Furthermore, despite its pelagic nature, all previous Minnesota records have been away from Lake Superior, and only

one of these was on a "big lake." Five of the six previous Minnesota records were from the northern third of the state. Some of the specimens were of birds initially found alive, but not identified until after the bird had died.

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BIRDING BY HINDSIGHT

A Second Look at Sparrows

Kim R. Eckert



Hawks. . . shorebirds. . . gulls. . . confusing fall warblers. Could there possibly be any other group of birds whose ID strikes so much fear and dread into the hearts and minds of so many Minnesota birders? Well, actually, yes, there is. It seems a lot of birders out there long have had lots of problems with sparrows, and it's surprising how few identification articles and books there are to supplement the information in their friendly neighborhood field guides. Indeed, this five-year series of Hindsight articles has only mentioned sparrows a few times in passing, so the following discussion of this group is long overdue.

Sparrows fall into the Family *Emberizidae*, and this includes 32 species which have been recorded in Minnesota. Of these, there are ten birds which don't have "sparrow" in their names: Greentailed, Spotted, and Eastern towhees; Lark Bunting; Dark-eyed Junco; McCown's, Lapland, Smith's, and Chestnut-collared longspurs; and Snow Bunting. Except for the longspurs, none of these ten presents any significant identification problems locally — and those female / immature / basic-plumaged longspurs would best be handled as the subject of their own ID article. There are also three Accidental sparrows which don't occur here often enough to consider (Brewer's, Black-

throated, and Golden-crowned), and this leaves us with the 19 species discussed below.

Before commenting specifically on each sparrow, it might be helpful to keep in mind five general guidelines about this group:

1) As always — and has been mentioned ad infinitum in almost every other *Hindsight* article — don't rely entirely on your field guide for help. Not even the *National Geographic Field Guide*. No, make that especially the *Geographic* guide! Here is one bird group (and perhaps the only one?) for which I am even tempted to recommend your old *Peterson* or *Robbins* guide over *Geographic*. While *Geographic's* pages on sparrows are superior in their accuracy and thoroughness of the text, maps and plumage variations, the color plates are far from adequate. I would judge well more than half the species as inaccurately or unnaturally illustrated, only a minority of them are passable, and I can't find a single one that I truly like.

Since it's the pictures in a field guide that birders primarily refer to, and often it's the only thing, I truly can't imagine anyone successfully identifying sparrows in the field with only the *Geographic* as their guide. My advice: by all means, read *Geographic's* text, consult its range maps, and study how plumages vary by range,

season and age. But then look at almost any other field guide's pictures to find out what most of the sparrows look like in real life. Better yet, as mentioned in the Fall 1998 issue of *The Loon* (70:163), invest in *The Sparrows of the United States and Canada*, authored by James Rising and very nicely illustrated by David Beadle.

2) When studying an unfamiliar sparrow's plumage, you'll generally have better success in making an accurate ID by concentrating primarily on its head, throat and breast patterns. These are the places on most sparrows where you'll find the diagnostic field marks. Sometimes a sparrow's bill or tail features are helpful as well, but relatively few species are distinguished by the patterns or colors of their back, wings, belly or legs,

And, of course, as is the case with most bird groups, size, shape, behavior and habitat can be just as useful as plumage features in the sparrow identification process. Note, for example, the smaller size of those in the genus *Spizella* (e.g., Field Sparrow) compared to sparrows in the genus *Zonotrichia* (like a White-crowned). Species of the *Ammodramus* genus (e.g., Grasshopper or Henslow's) tend to look relatively large-billed, flat-headed and short-tailed. Lincoln's and Fox sparrows tend to be shier and more reluctant to emerge from the brush than Song Sparrows, which, in turn, are less likely to venture into a wide open field than a Savannah or Vesper.

3) Contrary to popular belief, almost any sparrow with streaked underparts can have its streaks coalesce into a central breast spot. For some reason, many birders are under the impression that only the Song Sparrow has this field mark, even though all Fox Sparrows share this feature, as do most Savannahs, as well as many Vespers, Baird's, and Lincoln's. And, though I can't specifically remember if I've ever seen this on a Henslow's, Le Conte's, or Nelson's Sharp-tailed, undoubtedly some of them show central breast spots as well.

Interestingly, this field mark even shows up in the juvenal plumage of some sparrows. All sparrows, at least all those found in Minnesota, have streaked underparts to some extent after fledging while in juvenal plumage, and this includes those species which later are unstreaked below as immatures and adults. And — guess what — these juveniles often have central breast spots, and it's something I've noticed on Chippings, Swamps, and White-throateds.

By the way, juvenal plumage is not to be confused with immature or first-basic plumage. Normally it is only held a relatively short time in late summer on the breeding grounds, so it is not something you'd see in Minnesota on an American Tree, Harris's, or White-crowned sparrow. Generally, this article will have little to say about juveniles, since this plumage is held for a relatively short time, and because most juveniles already exhibit some of that species' key field marks.

4) A quiz. Take a look ahead at the 19 sparrows listed below, and name those which show white on the outer edges of their tails. Vesper and Lark are obviously correct choices, but you failed to pass the quiz if your answer stopped at those two species. Just as several other sparrows besides the Song can have streaked underparts with central breast spots, so it is that several sparrows can show white edges on their outer tail feathers.

This is something I have observed on some of the grassland species like Savannah, Grasshopper, and Le Conte's, and it is especially noticeable on Baird's Sparrows. I've also seen it on American Tree Sparrows and suspect that it is also visible on some other *Spizellas* (i.e., Chipping, Clay-colored, and Field). While the amount of white on these sparrows is more limited than on a Vesper or Lark sparrow, it is clearly visible, and it may lead to some confusion — if not misidentifications.

5) Finally, it's worth repeating here some advice given in an earlier *Hindsight* article: if you want to learn some bird

songs, there is no better place to start than with sparrows. One reason for this is almost all sparrow songs are distinctive and easily separable, unlike many sparrow plumages. An example would be the Baird's Sparrow: if you're eager to track down this Casual species for your Minnesota list, listen for its diagnostic song which is much more distinctive than its relatively nondescript plumage. The other advantage of knowing these songs is that singing sparrows, even the secretive ones, are easier to locate and study: they tend to sit up in plain sight rather than skulk in the undergrowth like, well, sparrows.

Now that the preliminaries have been addressed, following are some brief comments on each Minnesota sparrow:

American Tree Sparrow

It is sometime between November and March and you see this obviously rusty-capped sparrow in your yard without a clearly visible black breast spot on its unstreaked underparts. Could it be a Chipping, which, after all, you saw around your house all spring and summer? Perhaps, but that species is unusual here in winter with only a handful of documented records — and besides, winter Chippings have streaked crowns with at most a mere hint of rust.

If you take a second look at the bird, odds are you'll probably notice the dark line through the eye has a rusty tinge, as do the sides of its breast. Then examine the bill and note if the dark upper mandible contrasts with the pale lower one. All this adds up to American Tree Sparrow.

So what happened to the breast spot? One possibility is your bird fluffed up its breast feathers enough to conceal this spot — something tree sparrows often do. Another possibility is that, misled by the pictures on page 403 of your *Geographic* guide, you were expecting to see a sharply delineated jet-black bullseye. In reality, many tree sparrows have no more than a blurry dark smudge centered on its gray breast, and it could easily be

overlooked.

Chipping Sparrow

Since so many birders are unaware of this, it's worth repeating here that a Chipping Sparrow's cap in late fall and winter is streaked and often devoid of rust. At this time of year a Chipping simply does not look like it does in summer, nor does its cap look like an American Tree Sparrow's. What a Chipping does resemble in fall and winter, though, is a Clay-colored Sparrow, and then these two can be very difficult to separate. This identification problem seldom occurs here in winter, when a Clay-colored would be even rarer than the Chipping, but adults of both species in fall are present in Minnesota.

Field guides have long mentioned the difference in rump colors between the two (Chipping is gray, Clay-colored is brown), but folded wings almost always get in the way. Another difference mentioned is the unmarked lores of the Clay-colored as opposed as the Chipping's black eye line continuing into the lores; however, on some Chippings (mostly immatures?) the lores can look almost entirely clear. The thing to do then if the rump and lores are hard to see is to examine the lower edge of the brown cheek patch: on a Clay-colored it is bordered with black; on a Chipping it is unmarked. Clay-colored also tend to have a bolder malar streak (or "whisker") than Chippings.

Clay-colored Sparrow

Since the primary ID problem with this sparrow involves the Chipping Sparrow, see the previous section. But there is another difficulty many birders have with this sparrow: they fail to appreciate its most distinctive field mark. Again, I have to fault the *Geographic* guide (page 404) for not showing the Clay-colored's obvious and clearly delineated gray nape, which nicely contrasts with the buffy tones on its underparts. This feature, by the way, is visible on both immature and adult Clay-colored; unfortunately, imma-

ture Chippings also share this same gray-and-buff contrast.

Field Sparrow

It's migration time, and you're out sorting through a flock of sparrows when you come upon some with pink bills and rusty crowns. A quick check through the field guides and you've concluded they must be Field Sparrows. An understandable conclusion, to be sure, but not necessarily a correct one. It seems the popular field guides have failed you again by not adequately showing what an immature White-crowned really looks like. Its crown stripes are actually reddish brown, and, coupled with the pink bill, it could easily be mistaken for a Field Sparrow.

Note, though, how much smaller a Field Sparrow is and how its eye ring gives it a dazed or blank facial expression. An immature White-crowned is not only a larger sparrow, but to my eye it always has a unique small-headed and peaked-crowned profile. Of course, your *Geographic* guide (page 417) fails by a long shot to accurately illustrate this profile, or its true crown color.

Vesper Sparrow

Once again, I'm afraid, it's time to criticize the pictures in *Geographic*. First of all, if you still own the second edition take a look at the Vesper Sparrow on page 393. Then, examine the new illustration on page 415 in the third edition. Now for the quiz: which one accurately depicts this species in real life? Unfortunately — and almost predictably — the answer is neither one. The picture in the second edition shows nothing of a white eye ring, and this is perhaps this species' most important field mark! Meanwhile, the third edition still fails to portray a bold enough eye ring, the rusty lesser wing coverts are absent (no, this mark isn't always visible, but more often than not this diagnostic feature is), and the bird's posture and shape are unnatural.

Lark Sparrow

Finally, a sparrow with no ID prob-

lems! Given any view at all of this unique species, it's hard to imagine it being confused with anything else.

Savannah Sparrow

As pointed out earlier, don't be surprised to see a Savannah with its breast streaks merging into a central breast spot or with white edges on its outer tail feathers. Otherwise, as long as the diagnostic yellow lores are visible, most birders can recognize this widespread species. The problem, however, is that on many Savannahs (especially immatures in fall?) this yellow is not evident, and then confusion with Song Sparrow is likely.

This Savannah vs. Song ID problem is something I admit having trouble with at times, and it then takes a second look at a combination of features to resolve the identification. What I look for, relative to the Song Sparrow, is the Savannah's paler plumage overall, its usually thinner malar stripe, the less densely streaked underparts, a shorter tail, and its brighter pink legs.

Grasshopper Sparrow

Here is another grassland sparrow which can have white edges on its tail, and, as is especially characteristic of this genus, it is large-billed, flat-headed, short-tailed. Also note its dark smudge on the ear coverts (a feature shared by other *Ammodramus* sparrows), while the lack of a malar stripe (atypical in this genus) contributes to its mostly plain facial pattern. Like most grassland sparrows, Grasshoppers have white median crown stripes. Some show obvious eye rings while others do not, and most have yellow lores. Perhaps its most important field mark (except in juvenile plumage) would be the unstreaked underparts — about the only other grasslands sparrow with this feature would be the dissimilar Clay-colored.

Baird's Sparrow

Of the grassland sparrows which aren't supposed to have white outer tail feathers, the Baird's Sparrow shows the most

white — enough so that one flying away could even be mistaken for a Vesper. Conversely, for a species which supposedly has a “necklace” of breast streaks, the Baird’s typically shows nothing more than random streaks without any clear pattern. More diagnostic is the ocher or dull orange median crown stripe which is widest at the nape, with this color on fresh plumaged birds washing down a bit on to the face. Also note the Baird’s face pattern: the dark spot on the ear coverts and the double malar marks, with the upper malar streak usually extending back along the ear coverts towards the ear coverts smudge.

Two other thoughts on Baird’s Sparrows to keep in mind. First, as previously mentioned, the song of this species is more diagnostic than any plumage feature. And, second, if you think you see a Baird’s in Minnesota, remember this is a very unusual species here, so that a second critical look accompanied by field notes which eliminate more likely species would be advisable.

Henslow’s Sparrow

Now, if you really want to see a sparrow with a well defined “necklace,” this is the one to look for, more so than the Baird’s. Other features to be aware of on the Henslow’s are its unique dull greenish head color in combination with the reddish-brown wings. Note as well this sparrow has a white median crown stripe, like a Grasshopper, and it shares the Grasshopper’s characteristic *Ammodramus* shape. Finally, its facial pattern is virtually the same as on a Baird’s: ear coverts smudge and double malar streaks.

More difficult to describe about the Henslow’s is its status in Minnesota. It is decidedly a rare bird in the state, so just a brief look and casual identification are not recommended, but it can appear almost anywhere in the state with suitable habitat. And just what makes that habitat suitable is not entirely clear — and would have to be the subject of its own article.

Le Conte’s Sparrow

To its credit, the third edition of the *Geographic Field Guide* did at least one thing right with the sparrows, and that was to improve the illustrations for the Le Conte’s and the two Sharp-tailed sparrow species (page 411). These improvements, however, still leave something to be desired, since they don’t clearly illustrate the difference between the Le Conte’s white median crown stripe as opposed to the Nelson’s Sharp-tailed’s gray stripe. And this difference is often the best way to separate these two species since many Le Conte’s Sparrows can appear as orange as a Sharp-tailed on its face and breast.

Both these sparrows have gray triangles on their ear coverts with a dark smudge behind, but the Le Conte’s also differs from the Sharp-tailed in its bill color (a beautiful powder blue in good light), while the Nelson’s Sharp-tailed differs from the Le Conte’s with its bold white back stripes and its gray nape patch which is almost reminiscent of a Clay-colored.

Nelson’s Sharp-tailed Sparrow

Since there seems to be no potential for the recently split Saltmarsh Sharp-tailed Sparrow to occur anywhere near Minnesota, it’s unlikely “our” Sharp-tailed sparrow should be mistaken for anything other than a Le Conte’s, which is discussed above. About the only other thing worth mentioning is how uncommon and local the Nelson’s Sharp-tailed is in certain northern Minnesota marshes, and that this sparrow is hardly ever seen in the state during migration. Routine identifications and reports of this species here, therefore, would have to be of dubious validity.

Fox Sparrow

Thus far, only the Lark Sparrow has been classified as an error-free identification zone, but now I would also say the Fox Sparrow is almost as unique in appearance. About the only thing I’ve heard birders confusing it with has been the

Hermit Thrush, but given a decent view these two species are easy enough to separate. I also suppose some brighter Song Sparrows, which can look reddish-brown rather than just brown, might be mistaken for a Fox.

Song Sparrow

While confusion with the Savannah is easy to understand (see above), the Song Sparrow can also closely resemble the Lincoln's Sparrow. This would happen with a Song in juvenile plumage, since then its underparts can be washed with buff and the streaking can be finer and narrower — and both features are characteristic of the Lincoln's.

Lincoln's Sparrow

Besides the juvenile Song Sparrow, there is yet another sparrow which can suggest a Lincoln's. Note that both juvenile and immature Swamps are finely streaked below (with juveniles also showing some buff on the underparts), and both Swamp and Lincoln's sparrows have similar areas of gray on their faces. As a result, more than once over the years I've had initial and brief looks at sparrows that I thought were going to be Lincoln's until a better second look actually showed them to be Swamp Sparrows.

Swamp Sparrow

This sparrow's similarity to Lincoln's aside, what else might a Swamp Sparrow be confused with? Though field guides often group it with the other rusty-capped sparrows (e.g., American Tree, Chipping, and Field), it doesn't really resemble these all that much. One thing about the Swamp Sparrow is how dark it appears overall, with the palest part of its plumage being the whitish throat. I would describe this sparrow as the darkest one of them all, with its dingy gray underparts and dark rusty back and wings. Note also this bird's breeding habitat: like the name suggests, look for this sparrow in wooded swamps and — even more frequently — in cattail-type

marshes.

White-throated Sparrow

Like the Lark and Fox sparrows, the White-throated's ID presents hardly any challenge. What may be unfamiliar about this familiar species, however, is its juvenile plumage. As mentioned earlier, "unstreaked" sparrows like the White-throated are streaked below as juveniles, and some even include a Tree-sparrow-like central breast spot among the streaks. Another point about this sparrow is that for years I had mistakenly assumed that White-throateds with brown and buff crown stripes and off-white throats were immatures — that all adults had the crisp black-and-white crowns and clean white throats. In reality, full adult White-throateds in breeding plumage also come in those duller shades.

Harris's Sparrow

Here is one last sparrow which involves no serious ID problems. I am aware that novice birders have mistaken male House Sparrows for Harris's, but that was only because they noticed nothing more than their black faces. A more interesting ID problem that some beginning birders have had, however, involves immature Harris's Sparrows and male Lapland Longspurs in winter: both have pinkish bills, buffy faces and blackish markings on their breasts.

White-crowned Sparrow

Early in this article, the Field Sparrow section included some criticism of the inaccurate immature White-crowned Sparrow illustrations found in the field guides. The result: immature White-crowneds mistaken for Fields. Of course, I would rate the *Geographic's* picture of this plumage (page 417) less accurate than those in the other guides. It is also arguably worse than any other of *Geographic's* sparrow illustrations — and I still say it looks like a female House Sparrow!

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BOOK REVIEWS

BLUEBIRD TRAILS, A GUIDE TO SUCCESS, Third Edition, edited by Dorene Scriven, published by the Bluebird Recovery Program, Audubon Chapter of Minneapolis, 1999, \$12.

Some bird books tell you where, others tell you what, this one tells you how, and does it as well as anyone could ask.

Now in its third incarnation, *Bluebird Trails* is more and better — an encyclopedia of details, stories, and photographs that cover the bluebird world from the appearance of the first bluebird in the spring to the last bird to leave in the fall.

Ms. Scriven, instrumental in formation of the Bluebird Recovery Program and its missionary work across North America on behalf of bluebirds when their population was thin and declining, has through her own passionate interest in this species become an authority on the specifics and idiosyncracies of bluebird propagation.

This book continues her efforts at giving the reader sound and useful information, clearly presented, on the birds, nest boxes, nest-box trails, monitoring procedures, nest-box competitors, predators, and bluebirds' feeding preferences.

The book includes information on all three species of North American bluebirds, Eastern, Mountain, and Western. It is illustrated with a well-chosen selection of color photographs which complement the text.

The book is invaluable for anyone providing nest boxes for bluebirds. It also is a fascinating read for the birder who would enjoy being immersed in the detailed world of one seemingly simple creature.

Bluebird Trails is available from the Bluebird Recovery Program, Audubon Chapter of Minneapolis, Box 3801. Minneapolis, MN 55403. Bluebird or bird organizations ordering five or more copies for resale can buy the books for \$7.37 each plus UPS shipping costs. **Jim Williams, 5239 Cranberry Lane, Webster, WI 54893.**

THE RAPTORS OF EUROPE AND THE MIDDLE EAST: A HANDBOOK OF FIELD IDENTIFICATION, by Dick Forsman (T & AD Poyser, London, 1999), 589 pages.

"Right book, wrong geographical area" might be your first thought upon seeing the title of this book; but this is not simply a tourist's guide to the raptors of the Old Country; it is an advance in the art of identifying raptors. Whereas it is now common for experienced raptor watchers to recognize flight patterns and distant silhouettes, this book combines that long-range focus with attention to individual feathers and patterns of molt.

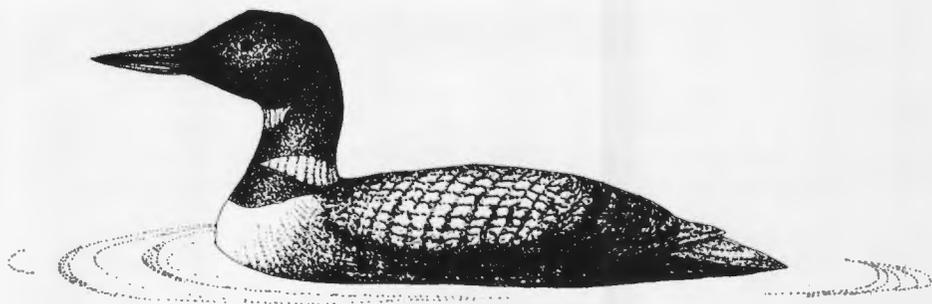
The introduction is an in-depth explanation of molt timing in various groups of raptors, and that theme is carried through the species accounts which make up the rest of the book. In those accounts, Forsman gives a summary of the basics, followed by sections on inflight distant looks, inflight closer looks, perched birds, and bare parts; this is followed by "confusion species" and sub-specific variation. Throughout, there is a careful consideration of aging and sexing that pushes well beyond simply naming the species.

That's fine, but the photos are what

will get you to buy this book — hundreds of splendid photos of raptors. Seven species occur both in Europe and North America: Osprey (10 photos), Goshawk (16), Rough-legged Hawk (19), Golden Eagle (21), Merlin (13), Gyrfalcon (18) and Peregrine Falcon (22). If that doesn't draw you in, perhaps the sections of spectacular photos of Lammergeier, Lanner, Saker, four species of Harrier, or six *Aquila* eagles will. In all, 43 species are covered. The one caveat for North American readers is that at this level of sophistication, some of the information

will not apply to the sub-species we know; but even here, the text is clear enough about what is presented that one can figure that out.

If you have a particular interest in one of "our" species that is in the book, or if you love bird identification books, or if you simply enjoy watching raptors, you will want this book when you've seen it. Be the first on your block to identify that first state record Hobby; or at least the first to see this satisfying book. **Dave Benson, 427 N. 16th Ave. E., Duluth, MN 55812.**



NOTES OF INTEREST

BLUE-GRAY GNATCATCHER IN COOK COUNTY — About 4:00 P.M. on 22 October



1999, we were at the west end of the Grand Marais tourist park, walking our dogs and birding. We were in a somewhat sheltered area of the park, trying to avoid a strong northwest wind which had been blowing for two days. We heard a sound which reminded us of the whining note of a distant sapsucker or catbird. Upon investigating this sound, our attention was soon drawn to a very active, kinglet-sized bird in some nearby small aspens. For about 15 minutes, we watched a Blue-gray Gnatcatcher actively trying to feed on a cold afternoon.

We had seen one years before in Grand Marais and were aware of its field marks. This bird was grayish on the head and back, white on the breast and belly, with a very distinct eye ring. It had a long, gray tail with white edges. We were fortunate; the bird was feeding at only 10 or 15 feet high in the small aspens and so we had many good looks. It continued to vocalize from time to time with the same querulous sound that first attracted us to it. Its long tail was made even more noticeable by constant

motion as the bird flicked it both up and down, and side to side. **Ken & Molly Hoffman, 196 County Road 44, Grand Marais, MN 55604.**

FAMILY OF SANDHILL CRANES IN MOWER COUNTY — On 7 August 1999, we first discovered a family of four Sandhill Cranes in Mower County, consisting of two adults and two nearly full grown juveniles. We saw them about 19 times over a period of two months. They were last seen on 9 October. Their primary location was a large pasture on County Road 25, one and one-half miles north of Lansing on the east side of the road. This pasture extends from the road back to the Cedar River, which is wooded along its banks. The pasture has low spots where water will stand during wet weather.



The cranes did not mingle with the cattle in the pasture and seemed to ignore them. The family members stayed close together all the times that we observed them. We occasionally could not find them even when driving around the area. We felt they may have gone back to the river where we were unable to see them from the road. We did not go there for fear of causing them to leave the area.

We never saw any effort by any of them to fly until 18 September, when the two young were jumping into the air and flapping their wings. On 19 September, all four cranes circled up in the air and landed in a nearby field. We then, at different times, saw them in a neighboring field. On 4 October, we saw them near U. S. Highway 218 in a field of corn stubble, over a mile from where we first observed them. Our last sighting on 9 October was back in the area where we originally found them. At this time, much of the corn in the county was being harvested with much activity in the fields. This may have been a factor in their decision to leave. During the preceding two months before the harvest, we never observed any human disturbance of these cranes. **Rose & Ron Kneeskern, 1208 5th St. NW, Austin, MN 55912-2962.**

RECAPTURED DARK-EYED JUNCOS — There is a continuous bird banding program at Carpenter Nature Center located along the St. Croix River (12805 St. Croix Trail, Hastings, Washington County). One of the benefits of banding in one location for a period of years is to recapture birds that were previously banded at the same station.



On 29 October 1999 we captured a Dark-eyed Junco, (*Junco hyemalis*), that we had banded on 21 December 1992. This junco was at least seven years old, older than the average, but it is not the oldest on record. The oldest recorded age according to the Bird Banding Laboratory is ten years, nine months.

Another fascinating aspect of recapturing migratory birds is the realization that a specific bird has returned to the same place as a destination or stop-over during migration. In October and early November of 1999 we retrapped five Dark-eyed Juncos that had been banded at our station. Three of those had been captured four different times, mostly during the season during which they were first banded. Other than the seven-year-old bird, the others captured were two and three years old.

Most Dark-eyed Juncos we band are hatching-year birds, as determined by eye color. Because we recapture so few in subsequent years, one wonders what happens to most of them. Many birds at the station are not captured, so previously banded birds may have returned and we have no record of them. Also we know that many birds do not survive to complete another migration. What we do not know is how many of our banded birds returned to a different location. We have had no band recoveries from other banding stations which would give us that knowledge. **Tom Bell, 5868 Pioneer Road South, St. Paul Park, MN 55071.**

CLARK'S GREBE IN BIG STONE COUNTY — On 6 June 1999, I discovered a Clark's Grebe (*Aechmophorus clarkii*) on Thielke Lake in Big Stone County. At least one dozen Western Grebes (*A. occidentalis*) were present for direct comparison. The Clark's was much paler than the Westerns, especially on its flanks, which first drew my attention to it. The identification was based on its orange-yellow bill color (greenish-yellow on *occidentalis*), white feathering surrounding its eye (black cap usually surrounds eye on *occidentalis*), and its narrow black hindnape stripe in direct comparison to that of *occidentalis*.



The bird was too far away to determine whether or not the margin of the black cap was S-shaped. Its back was paler gray than *occidentalis* and its flanks were essentially whitish. Its face, foreneck, and breast were white. It did not appear to ride lower in the water, which has been mentioned as a supportive criterion for the identification of *clarkii*. No vocalizations were heard. **Peder Svingen, 2602 E. 4th Street, Duluth, MN 55812.**

RUFF IN BIG STONE COUNTY — A Ruff was present at Thielke Lake, Big Stone County on 15 June 1999. This bird was seen foraging in shallow water with emergent grass on the east side of the lake, and was immediately recognizable as a Ruff because of its plain brown plumage, bright orange legs, and heavy-bodied, small-headed shape. Both field notes and a sketch were completed while watching the bird.

The only shorebird present for comparison was a Killdeer which was seen to briefly land near the Ruff; the Ruff appeared similar in size. The most conspicuous feature of this bird was the bright orange legs, as bright as the brightest yellowlegs ever appears. The legs were nearly as long in proportion to the body as a yellowlegs, but the body was heavier, and the neck thicker than a yellowlegs. The blackish bill was slightly decurved, and slightly thicker at the base than at the tip, clearly different than any yellowlegs. I did not see any paler coloration at the base of the bill. There was some subtle, brownish mottling on the breast and flanks (slightly crosswise in pattern), which contrasted with the whitish belly and undertail, but this bird lacked the obvious barring and spotting shown on the underparts of both Lesser and Greater Yellowlegs in alternate plumage. The head and neck coloration of the Ruff was darkest on the crown and hindneck, grading to pale whitish on the forehead, throat, and foreneck. This white coloration was most striking on the forehead around the base of the upper mandible. The mantle, coverts, scapulars and tertials were all brownish with obvious dark feather centers, lacking the white spotting present on the upperparts of alternate plumaged yellowlegs. The dark feather centers were most obvious on the long tertial feathers which hung over the primaries of the folded wing.

As the bird preened off and on for over 15 minutes, I was also able to study the uppertail and rump pattern. Two broad, white ovals on either side of the uppertail were separated by a dark line down the center. The width of this dark line depended on the arrangement of the ovals. The tips of the dark tail feathers extended slightly beyond the white ovals, and in conjunction with the dark line down the center of the uppertail coverts, created a dark "T" pattern.

This bird was apparently an adult female (Reeve) in basic plumage. The Killdeer-like size strongly supports female as the sex of this bird, and the orange leg color indicates an adult (at least two years old), as indicated by data in *Shorebirds: An Identification Guide* (1986) by Hayman, Marchant and Prater. Furthermore, the lack of dark mottling on the underparts, and the whitish foreneck, throat and forehead, indicate this bird was mostly in basic plumage.

There are currently 33 records of this Casual species in Minnesota. The spring records range from 19 April – 4 June (20 total), and the fall records range from 9 July–2 October (12 records). The present record therefore represents an odd date which probably cannot be confidently classified as either a spring or fall migrant. Although this species was regular during the period 1982–1992 (only year missed was 1989), and the Minnesota Ornithological Records Committee had indicated this species' official status would be Regular on the 1993 checklist (*The Loon* 65:33), this decision was reversed (*The Loon* 66:43) before publication of the checklist. The Thielke Lake Ruff is the first observation of this species since 1994, and a first county record. **Karl Bardon, 13073 Hastings St. NE, Blaine, MN 55449.**

ABNORMAL PIGMENTATION IN A FRANKLIN'S GULL — From 3:00 to 3:10 P.M. on 7 August 1999, on Lake Benton in Lincoln County, I saw a Franklin's Gull with abnormally pigmented plumage.



The abnormally pigmented individual was part of a group of hundreds of Franklin's Gulls. For most of the observation period, the gulls were floating on the water 300–400 yards offshore. Periodically one individual or another flew, and the abnormally pigmented bird was no exception; its short flight at the end of the observation period provided useful views of its spread wings.

In my field notes, I recorded the following information. In size and shape, the abnormally pigmented bird was indistinguishable from the normally pigmented Franklin's Gulls surrounding it. Its bill was blackish-red, becoming purer red toward the tip; its legs, seen only briefly, were dark. It was wholly white except for a complete, but extremely faint, brown-gray hood and an even fainter gray mantle. Regarding the latter, my notes identify the faintly gray areas as the back, scapulars, upper secondary-coverts, secondary bases, upper primary-coverts, and primary bases; both secondaries and primaries were white-tipped.

I cannot overemphasize the pallor of the pigmented areas of plumage. The hood was so faint that 15–20 seconds of observation were required to verify its presence, and, as for the mantle, my field notes describe it as, "the faintest gray imaginable — just barely darker than the breast and neck, just barely darker than the primary tips." As a result, except under close scrutiny the bird appeared entirely white; indeed, when I viewed it from a second vantage point 500–700 yards away I could see nothing but a faint discoloration of the head, and even that was so weak that it could have been mistaken for dirt, or an artifact of the imagination. **Philip C. Chu, Department of Biology, St. John's University, Collegeville, MN 56321.**

POMARINE JAEGER ON MILLE LACS LAKE, MILLE LACS COUNTY — Shortly after noon on 22 November 1999, during a periodic survey of loons and gulls on Mille Lacs, Peder Svingen and Anthony Hertzell found a juvenile Pomarine Jaeger (*Stercorarius pomarinus*) near the mouth of the Rum River on Vineland Bay, Mille Lacs County. The previous day, we had studied a probable Parasitic Jaeger (*S. parasiticus*) as it harassed gulls in the Grand Marais harbor, Cook County, and heard that a possible Parasitic had been reported by Maurita Geerts along the north shore of Mille Lacs near Wealthwood, Aitkin County. We started at Malmo and surveyed the north and west shoreline of Mille Lacs as usual, but found no signs of any jaeger.



Proceeding south from Vineland on U.S. Highway 169, we crossed the Rum River and turned east onto Mille Lacs County Road 35. As soon as we stopped at the next

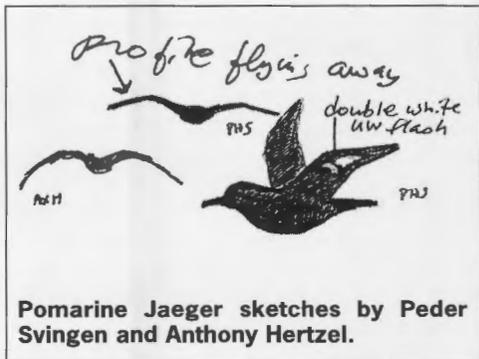
survey point, Peder noticed an unidentified adult gull that was repeatedly diving at a dark bird on the surface of the lake. He suggested that the dark bird might be a jaeger, based on previous observations of similar interaction between these two species. We set up our spotting scopes and quickly determined that it was indeed a jaeger — but which one? This would be an extremely late date for a Parasitic in Minnesota (prior to this year, the latest dates for were 22, 27, and 28 October). Even though the Pomarine Jaeger had occurred only once in Minnesota away from Lake Superior (Bardon 1997) and its status had recently changed from Casual to Accidental (MORC 1999), we knew that the odds favored Pomarine over Parasitic during late November (Sherony 1999).

We were immediately struck by this jaeger's dark appearance and large size. It looked big and bulky, even while floating on the surface of the lake. The gull had departed by this time, so the jaeger began bathing and preening its plumage. It flapped its wings a few times, showing a large white under-wing flash on the base of its primaries. It then rolled onto its side and preened its tail, which revealed brown barring on its whitish under-tail coverts. The under-tail coverts contrasted with its dark brown rectrices and the rest of its underparts, which appeared dark.

While it sat on the surface of the lake, we noted contrast between its blackish face (primarily the lores and malar area) and its dark brown head, another criterion in favor of its identification as *pomarinus* (Kaufman 1990). Tony felt that its hind nape showed a golden tinge, but this was subtle and not consistently apparent. Its nape did not appear buffy in flight. Several times in flight and consistently while it sat on the surface of the lake, we could see that its bill was pale with a dark tip. At times, the basal portion of the bill seemed to disappear against the background of the lake surface, suggesting that it was bluish-gray in color. When the jaeger looked towards us, the pale base of its bill gleamed brightly against its blackish lores and malar area. According to Olsen and Larsson (1997) when a dark-tipped and pale-based bill is detectable on any jaeger at 200 yards or more, it is probably *pomarinus*.

Following the initial period of bathing and preening, the jaeger held its wings open while preparing for take-off and revealed for the first time the "double under-wing flash" that is characteristic of juvenile *pomarinus* (Olsen and Larsson 1997). We confirmed this important field mark repeatedly over the next several minutes, as it flew in lazy circles at altitudes up to about 150 feet over Vineland Bay. Although it never flew directly overhead, we had excellent looks at the under-wing pattern and tail shape. The upper-wing pattern was more difficult to see and we never had an adequate look at its rump in flight.

At first, we were unable to detect any projection of the two central rectrices, but as it approached within about 200 yards, we dialed our spotting scopes to 50x and determined that these were thumb-shaped. These feathers barely extended beyond the tip of its tail, so it was difficult to even detect them; central rectrices that are difficult to detect and blunt in shape are characteristic of juvenile *pomarinus* (Olsen and Larsson 1997). We relied on recent experience with the juvenile Pomarine Jaeger in Duluth (8–25 September 1999) and with Parasitics to discuss the proportions and "jizz" of this jaeger as it circled over Vineland Bay.



Pomarine Jaeger sketches by Peder Svingen and Anthony Hertzell.

It consistently gave an impression of slow, powerful wing strokes, although Tony cautioned that it was not chasing anything at the time. It looked "heavy" in the chest and resembled a large gull as it flew ponderously around the bay. It made several short glides and showed an angular profile that recalled the Pomarine in Duluth — the inner wing was just above horizontal, while the outer wing or "hand" was angled down (see sketch). The inner aspect of its wing looked very broad. We estimated that the width of its wing at the base was greater than the distance from the trailing edge of its wing to the tip of its tail (not including the projection of its central rectrices). According to Sherony and Brock (1997) this strongly suggests *pomarinus*.

After flying around Vineland Bay for about ten minutes without chasing any of the gulls, the jaeger landed on the lake near its original position. Earlier in the day, we had encountered Karl Bardon near Garrison and since it looked as though the jaeger would stay in Vineland Bay, Peder continued watching it while Tony drove around the lake until he found Karl watching gulls near Malmo. Unfortunately, by the time they returned, the jaeger had flown towards the southeast and could not be relocated that day despite extensive searching. While Tony was gone, Peder had additional opportunities to study it in flight as it began harassing birds. Its wingspan appeared identical to one of the Ring-billed Gulls in the same field of view. It continued to look large and bulky, so may have been a female based on size (Catry *et al.* 1999). It attacked a flock of Bufflehead (*Bucephala albeola*) which took frantic flight or dove below the surface of the lake as the jaeger approached. Interestingly, it completely ignored all of the Bonaparte's Gulls (*L. philadelphia*) even if they flew directly over the jaeger as it sat in the water.

The rest of its plumage appeared all dark, except for an indistinct, pale comma-shaped mark on the upper-wing, located along the base of its primaries. Unlike the dramatic flash of white on its under-wing, this mark was difficult to detect and we could not determine whether it involved the webs themselves or just the shafts of the primaries. At times, we could detect barring on its under-wings and belly as it flew around Vineland Bay. The skies were overcast, which probably masked the barring on its underparts and made the entire bird appear darker than usual.

Peder discovered and documented an adult Pomarine Jaeger in Duluth five years ago (Svingen 1994). We both watched the juvenile Pomarine in Duluth during September 1999. Additional experience for Peder includes observations in Alaska, Florida, Manitoba, and many times during pelagic trips off Monterey in California, where Pomarines of all ages may be seen. Tony has also seen Pomarines in California and the Canadian Maritime Provinces.

Field notes and sketches were done during and immediately after the observation, without the use of field guides or other references. We were looking east (bird on the water) to northeast (in flight) under overcast skies, from 12:05 to 12:40 P.M. and observed the bird for approximately 20 (AXH) to 35 (PHS) minutes. Distances varied from about 300 yards (on the water) to less than 200 yards (in flight). When it attacked the group of Bufflehead and Ring-billed Gulls, they were approximately 400 yards away.

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Peder H. Svingen, 2602 E. 4th Street, Duluth, MN 55812-1533. Anthony X. Hertz, 8461 Pleasant View Dr., Mounds View, MN 55112.

BLACK-LEGGED KITTIWAKE IN GRAND MARAIS — Shortly after noon on Sunday,



21 November 1999, Carol Schumacher and I were standing on the rocks adjacent to the west breakwater at Grand Marais with several birders who had been attracted to the area by the report of an Ancient Murrelet seen the previous day. Having grown weary of searching for the lost murrelet, we were scanning through the gulls perched on the breakwater where both Glaucous and Iceland Gulls were present. As it was getting time to head home, I decided to take one more scan across the lake. As I panned across the harbor entrance,

a smallish gull came flying into my scope view.

This gull had a distinct wing pattern that soon registered in my mind as that of a possible immature Black-legged Kittiwake. The upper wings showed a bold black band of relatively uniform width along the leading edge from the tip to the body, giving the characteristic “M” pattern of an immature gull. In addition, a black hind collar band was visible on the flying gull. While shouting to the others, I continued to track the bird in flight as it flew closer to us at an angle and then finally settled down on the water only 40 to 50 yards offshore. Carol Schumacher, John Hockema and Dedrick Benz all got their scopes on the bird as it floated on the lake.

From this vantage, the black hind collar and indistinct black spot behind the eye on the mostly white head were easily seen. The gray mantle was similar in tone to the Herring Gulls in the area, but this bird had an all black and obviously smaller bill. The winds were quite brisk, resulting in a reasonably high swell on the lake. Consequently, the bird was only visible about half the time. Unfortunately, it only stayed for a short time, maybe a minute or so, before getting up with a group of gulls to fly off. No one else saw the Black-legged Kittiwake on this day.

Based on records published in *The Loon*, Black-legged Kittiwakes have been reported at least once each year since 1994, including three sightings in 1995, with all reports between mid-September and December. All sightings have been of single, first-winter plumaged birds, perhaps because of the notable field marks as well as the erratic wanderings of the young. Although many sightings have occurred on Lake Superior, reports also came from Dakota, Cass and Otter Tail counties. It would appear that this species, currently listed as Casual in Minnesota, might be considered for the Regular list soon. **Howard Towle, 7915 Western Ave., Golden Valley, MN 55427.**

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Purpose of the M.O.U.

The Minnesota Ornithologists' Union is an organization of both professionals and amateurs interested in birds. We foster the study of birds; we aim to create and increase public interest in birds, and to promote the preservation of birdlife and its natural habitat.

To carry out these aims, we: publish a journal, *The Loon*, and a newsletter, *Minnesota Birding*; conduct field trips;



encourage and sponsor the preservation of natural areas; and hold seminars where research reports, unusual observations and conservation discussions are presented. We are supported by dues from members, affiliated clubs and special gifts. The MOU wishes to point out that any or all phases of the MOU program could be expanded significantly with gifts, memorials or bequests willed to the organization.

Suggestions to Authors

The editors of *The Loon* welcome submissions of articles, "Notes of Interest", color slides, and color or black & white photographs. Submissions should be typed, double-spaced and single-sided. Notes of Interest should be less than two pages. Photographs should be 5"x7". Whenever possible, please include a copy of your submission in any standard format on any 3 1/2 inch computer disk.

Club information and other announcements of general interest should be sent to the Newsletter editors. See inside front cover. Bird sighting reports for "The Season" should be sent promptly at the end of February, May, July and November to Peder Svingen. See key to the "The Season".

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Obituary

Dr. Alden Fairchild Risser

14 May 1912 – 5 December 1999

Dr. George M. Rysgaard

Dr. Alden F. Risser had the distinction of being a founding member of both the Minnesota Bird Club in 1929 and the Minnesota Ornithologists' Union in 1938. To the best of my knowledge those yet living who share this distinction are Dr. Charles Evans, Dr. Walter Breckenridge, and Dr. Donald Mahle.

However, Dr. Alden Risser's interest in birds and birding antedate the 1929 formation of the Minnesota Bird Club by some years when he recruited others as companions or traveled solo in the pursuit of his hobby. He kept a journal in which he noted his companions as well as details of his observations of flora and bird species. Many of his bird observations were used extensively by Dr. Thomas S. Roberts in his preparation of the text of his monumental product *Birds of Minnesota*, as he trusted Alden's observations.

Alden was blessed with a keen, discriminating, and logical mind which grasped details of his observations and filed them away in an orderly manner for later recovery. His ability to store pertinent information served him and his patients well and earned him their respect as an astute diagnostician.

It must be emphasized that Alden was much more than an ornithologist, as he was well versed in the flora and other natural history disciplines. He might better be characterized as a true naturalist who found enjoyment in all the out-of-doors.

But Alden must also be remembered as a deeply religious individual who practiced his religion on a daily basis and in his own quiet manner.



Alden Risser, about 1932.

He had a contagious and long-lived malady which was called "Love of Nature" which he transmitted to many during his long lifetime and for which he will be long remembered.

Alden lived and enjoyed a life enriched by a supportive and loving wife and family, a love of his chosen profession, his appreciation of the out-of-doors which recharged his batteries, and his religious faith. What more can we say than "he left this world better by his life."

913 East 4th Street, Northfield, MN 55057.

Editor's Note: Alden Risser was instrumental in the 1929 formation of the Upper Mississippi Bird Club. He, along with Gustav Swanson, Charles Evans, Samuel Grimes, Walter Breckenridge, and eight other enthusiastic young birders, were the first members of this early Minnesota birding organization. The name was soon changed to the Minnesota Bird Club and in 1931 Alden was elected Secretary-Treasurer. He was editor of its publication, *The Flicker* from 1932-1933, and in 1935 the club elected him its President. In 1938, the Minnesota Bird Club joined with the T. S. Roberts Ornithology Club of St. Cloud and the Duluth Bird Club to form the Minnesota Ornithologists' Union.

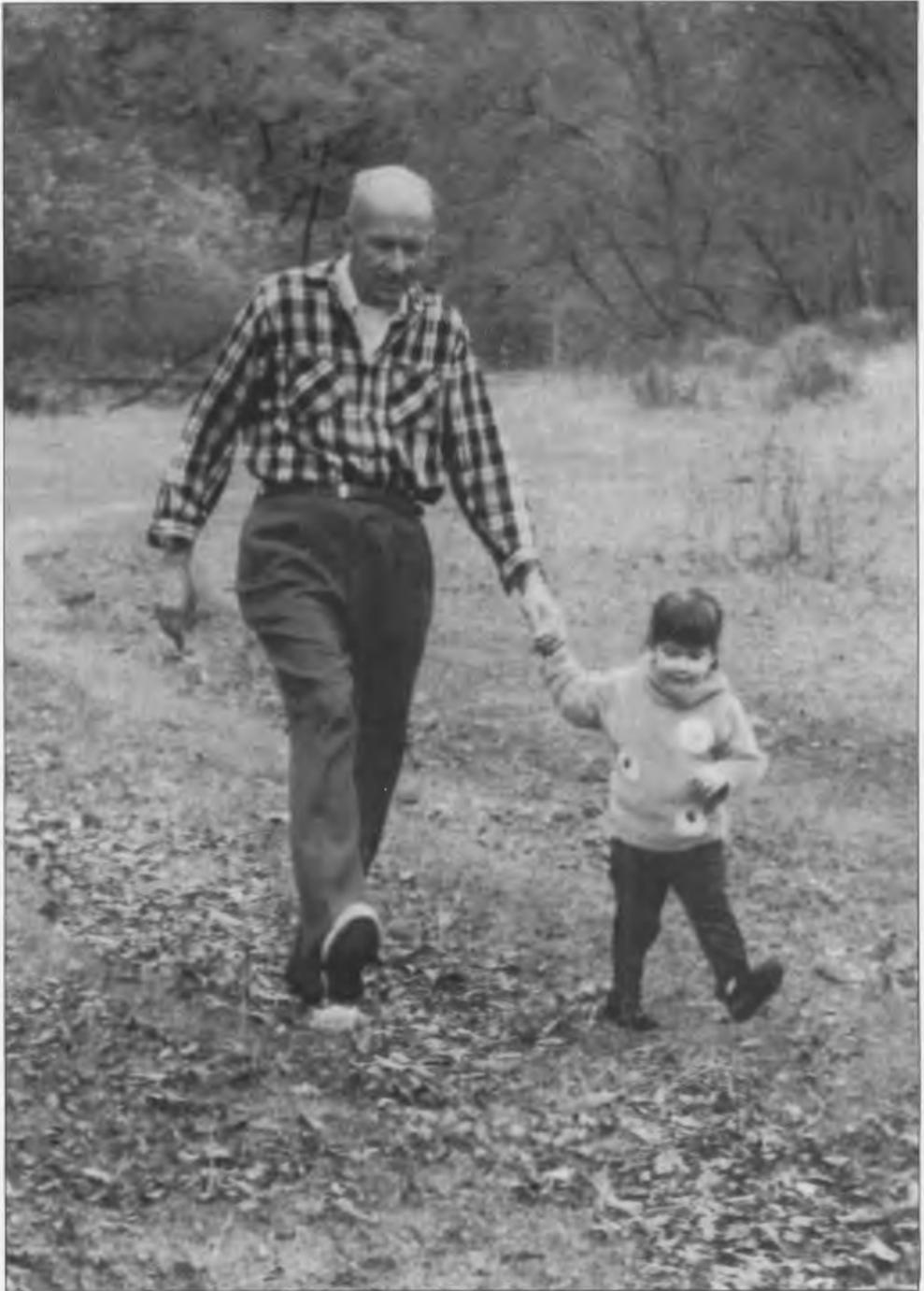
In those early days Dr. Risser was an avid birder, out in the field nearly every day. In early 1932 he had the dubious distinction of being the first person to confirm the European Starling in Minnesota (*The Flicker* 5:16-17). The species had been reported by a farmer in Houston County in the fall of 1931.

When he became a physician, the amount of time he had to devote to birding diminished greatly, but he continued to contribute records for many years. In the first ten years of *The Flicker's* existence, Alden Risser wrote more than 30 articles and short notes. The following is a complete bibliography of those writings:

- 1929. Pine Grosbeaks, *The Flicker* 1(2):4.
- 1929. Pileated Woodpecker Notes, *The Flicker* 1(3):3-4.
- 1929. Ramblings Rewarded, *The Flicker* 1(4):10-11.
- 1929. Bird Notes of the Season, *The Flicker* 1(5):3.
- 1930. Recollections of the Sixties, *The Flicker* 2:3-4.
- 1930. Another Canada Jay Record, *The Flicker* 2:7.
- 1930. Three Days in Florida, *The Flicker* 2:14-15.
- 1930. General Notes, *The Flicker* 2:16-17.
- 1930. The Spring Migration of 1930, *The Flicker* 2:20-21.
- 1930. Connecticut Warbler at Fort

- Snelling, *The Flicker* 2:22.
- 1930. Notes on Some Birds Seen in Western Minnesota, June 28 to July 1, 1930, *The Flicker* 2:38-39.
- 1930. Flying Squirrel at Fort Snelling, *The Flicker* 2:42.
- 1930. The 1930 Christmas Census, *The Flicker* 2:44.
- 1931. Bird Notes from Frontenac, on Lake Pepin, for 1930, *The Flicker* 3:7-8.
- 1931. Unusual Nesting Sites, *The Flicker* 3:10-11.
- 1931. Two Notes on the Long-billed Marsh Wren, *The Flicker* 3:11.
- 1932. The 1932 Nesting Season, *The Flicker* 4:19-32.
- 1932. (with Charles Evans), Godwits and Nitwits, *The Flicker* 4:38-40.
- 1933. The Expedition to Frontenac, *The Flicker* 5:8.
- 1933. A Recollection, *The Flicker* 5:9.
- 1933. The Lake Harriet Swan, *The Flicker* 5:12.
- 1933. Birds and Automobiles, *The Flicker* 5:12.
- 1933. Our Favorite Birds, *The Flicker* 5:18-19.
- 1933. (with Gustav Swanson), Obituary, Donald Fischer, *The Flicker* 5:52-54.
- 1933. Notes on Field Identification of Minnesota Shore Birds, *The Flicker* 5:56-58.
- 1933. Untangle This One, *The Flicker* 5:60.
- 1933. A Few More, *The Flicker* 5:61.
- 1934. An Arctic Visitor, *The Flicker* 6:10.
- 1934. Screech Owl Notes, *The Flicker* 6:22.
- 1934. Surf Scoter Near St. Paul, *The Flicker* 6:23.
- 1934. A Chickadee Lends Charm, *The Flicker* 6:24.
- 1934. A Few More or Less Stray Individuals, *The Flicker* 6:60.
- 1934. Submersible Sandpiper, *The Flicker* 6:61.
- 1934. (with G. A. Risser), Animals — Wild and Otherwise, *The Flicker* 6:70-73.
- 1936. Visitors of the Feeding Box, *The Flicker* 8:4.

— AXH



Alden Risser with granddaughter Tamara, 1967.

First Minnesota Breeding Record of the Richardson's Merlin

Peder H. Svingen

The first Minnesota nesting record of the Richardson's Merlin in 1998 (Kittson County) was followed by probable nesting in 1999 (Roseau County). These were in the northwest region as expected — but in 2000, Richardson's nested in the Twin Cities! This article reviews the nesting ecology, identification, and regional status of this subspecies. Previous Minnesota breeding records all refer to the nominate "Taiga" Merlin.

The Richardson's or "Prairie" Merlin (*Falco columbarius richardsonii*) has become a regular migrant and rare winter visitant in western Minnesota. The recovery of its breeding population in the Prairie Provinces of Canada and its recent expansion into urban centers has been well chronicled, especially in the city of Saskatoon, Saskatchewan.

In 1998, Richardson's Merlin nested for the first time in Minnesota, near Lake Bronson in Kittson County. Then, in July 1999, three fledglings were found with an adult female near the Roseau Community Hospital in Roseau County. Just across the state line in the city of Grand Forks, North Dakota, this subspecies nested in 1998, 1999, and again in 2000, the first nesting records for northeastern North Dakota. But most surprising of all was the 2000 nesting in the Twin Cities!

Nesting in Kittson County — 1998

On 29 June 1998, during a Breeding Bird Survey (BBS) in Kittson County, I discovered a territorial pair of Merlins at an uninhabited farm northeast of Lake Bronson. They called loudly, a strident "ki-ki-ki-ki-ki" and were quite agitated, suggesting active nesting in the vicinity. The male eventually perched on top of a spruce tree only 40 yards away, where its pale plumage and whitish tail bands were obvious. I recognized it as a Richardson's Merlin and knew that this represented a potential first Minnesota breeding record.

Subsequent to the initial discovery and before returning to the Kittson County site five days later, I reviewed Clark and Wheeler (1987) and carefully studied an adult female "Taiga" Merlin (*F. c. columbarius*) in Duluth, using a spotting scope at close range. The Kittson County birds were then relocated for further study on 4 July. Compared to the Taiga Merlin seen two days earlier, they appeared much paler, especially on the head, nape and upperparts. They showed almost no detectable mustachial stripe. Their underparts were lightly streaked with pale brown, unlike the thick, heavy brown streaks of *columbarius*. Their tails showed broader pale bands compared to the tail of *columbarius*. These bands were definitely white, not buffy or blue-gray as in female and male *columbarius*, respectively.

One Richardson's Merlin (probably the adult male) was observed at the Kittson County site on 10 July by Jeanie Joppru and Cathy Severin; at least one additional bird was heard calling near the nest. On the 12th, between 9:30 and 11:15 A.M., four Merlins (presumably an adult female with three juveniles) were seen together for the first time. I wrote detailed notes and took photographs of all four birds as they perched on dead branches in the same tree. The descriptions and photographs, along with photographs of the nest and the nesting site, have been archived in the M.O.U. files at the Bell

Museum of Natural History.

On 26 July 1998, the Kittson County nest was closely approached for the first time. It appeared to be an old crow's nest and was located ~10 feet below the top of a 40–45 foot spruce tree. The nest tree itself was bordered by spruce trees on two sides. A solitary deciduous tree with dead branches was located ~50 feet to the south of the nest tree. The Merlins frequently perched in this or one other solitary tree nearby, and used them both while preening. Several rows of planted trees, predominantly poplar, boxelder, cottonwood and willow, bordered the north and west sides of the nest site. The farm was located in an area of aspen-parkland habitat, with extensive hayfields and sedge meadows on three sides.

The male Richardson's was not seen after 10 July, but the other four Merlins remained at or near this nesting site through at least 26 July. None could be found when the site was next checked on 2 August. This was not unexpected, as most depart their breeding grounds in early August (Sodhi *et al.* 1993). Anthony Hertz and I searched this area the next spring and found a territorial pair of Richardson's Merlins in the same farmyard on 18 May 1999. However, they could not be relocated during subsequent visits in either June or July of that year.

Roseau County — 1999

During mid-May 1999, Beth Siverhus first heard and eventually saw a territorial Richardson's Merlin near the Community Hospital in Roseau, Roseau County. This adult male was vocal and conspicuous through early June, when it became less active. It was not until 9 July, when Beth found a second bird, either a female or an immature Richardson's, that the possibility of nesting was considered.

Beth examined two old crows' nests in spruce trees on the hospital grounds, but could not determine whether they had been recently used by either crows or Merlins. Thus, although nesting in the city of Roseau was strongly suspected in 1999, an actual nest was never found, so



Richardson's Merlin, 3 July 2000, Kittson County. Photo by Peder H. Svingen.

breeding could not be confirmed.

Aware of my recent interest in the Richardson's Merlin, Beth contacted me on 10 July after concluding that the birds were indeed *richardsonii*. On 18 July, I arrived in Roseau and immediately found a Richardson's Merlin. Presumably, this was the adult female (as stated elsewhere in this paper, adult female and juvenile Richardson's may not be distinguishable in the field).

As is typical for Richardson's Merlin, it showed no detectable mustachial stripe. It appeared to have whitish (rather than buff) pale tail bands. The visible portion of its primaries, including the anterior webs, were extensively marked with pale tan or buff spots. While it preened its tail, I was able to count at least five pale tail bands; there may have been a sixth band obscured by the tail coverts.

After several minutes of study through a spotting scope, the Merlin abruptly flew towards a cemetery located southwest of the hospital. I followed and found three more Merlins in fresh-looking plumage, all apparently juveniles! One of them was initially sitting on top of a cement fence post — not perched — sitting like a dove and almost prone, but holding its head up while calling loudly. It suddenly stood up, took off and landed in an elm tree where the other two juvenile birds were

already perched.

Meanwhile, the presumed adult female retained a sentinel perch on top of a tall spruce tree in the cemetery. An adult male was neither seen nor heard during this observation. The following day, Beth Siverhus obtained several photographs of the juveniles as they perched in a spruce tree near the hospital.

Immediately after leaving the hospital grounds on 18 July 1999, I drove toward the Roseau River W.M.A. and found an adult male Richardson's Merlin hunting shorebirds just northwest of Duxby. This location is approximately 26 km from the hospital in Roseau. Becker and Sieg (1987) reported mean home range of male Richardson's Merlins in Montana as 23.3 +/- 4.6 km² with each male traveling up to 9 km from its nest. Studies of urban nesting Merlins (primarily in Saskatoon) have found hunting ranges even smaller than this. The Roseau River W.M.A. is therefore well beyond the usual hunting range for a Richardson's Merlin from the city of Roseau. Of course, it could have been an early migrant from elsewhere, or even a non-breeding bird.

Breeding Update — 2000

During early April 2000, residents of northeast Minneapolis, Hennepin County, observed a copulating pair of Merlins. Matthew Solensky, biologist at the University of Minnesota's Raptor Center, confirmed the male as *richardsonii* but was unable to positively identify the subspecies of the female at that time. Further details on this significant record can be found elsewhere in this issue.

In the Northwest Region, a pair of Richardson's Merlins returned to the site near the Community Hospital in Roseau this spring. They apparently did not nest and were not observed after May 2000 (B. Siverhus, pers. comm.).

The Kittson County site was occupied in 2000 for the third consecutive spring. A pair established a breeding territory and were still present in early July (pers. obs.). In Thief River Falls, Pennington County, Jeanie Joppru and Shelley Steva

located a pair of Merlins near the local Law Enforcement Center in late March. They showed characteristics of *richardsonii* and were observed intermittently into early July. Although a nest was never found, they were seen with two or three recently fledged juveniles on 9 July 2000.

Identification of Richardson's Merlin

Richardson's Merlin is larger and much paler overall than the other two North American subspecies. It shows minimal streaking on the head and a very faint mustachial stripe. Compared to nominate *columbarius*, larger and more extensive pale markings are found on its remiges (Clark and Wheeler 1987). Temple (1972a) examined hundreds of specimens from across North America and found that in contrast to the other subspecies represented in his study, *richardsonii* could be characterized essentially by the presence of barring on the anterior web of its primaries.

Richardson's Merlin shows complete, whitish (on females and immatures) to whitish or pale gray (males) tail bands, that are wider than on *columbarius*. The number of pale bands in Richardson's tail is usually five according to Temple (1972a), three or four according to Clark and Wheeler (1987). Among the 116 specimens of *richardsonii* examined by Temple, only 10% had four or fewer pale bands. In his study, three or four pale bands were typical for *columbarius*. Five or more pale bands were present in only 5% of the 137 "Eastern Taiga Merlin" specimens.

In a separate paper (1972b), Temple proposed a key for sexing and aging Merlins in the hand. The rump and upper tail coverts of immatures were reportedly the same shade of brown as their back color, but adult females showed contrast between their brown back and "slate-brown" (grayish) rump and upper tail coverts. The reliability of this criterion for aging female *richardsonii* has been questioned; in Saskatoon, Warkentin *et al.* (1992) reported that 12 of 25 known adult females were classified as having a

brown rump, while 2 of the 9 yearling females caught for banding showed some gray in the rump coloration. Wheeler and Clark (1995) state that adult female and juvenile *richardsonii* are not separable from one another by plumage.

One of the four Merlins (adult female?) documented at the Kittson County site on 12 July 1998 had plumage characteristics that suggested nominate *columbarius*. It was relatively dark overall compared to the other Merlins, especially on its head and nape. It showed thick, brown streaks on its breast. Its mustachial mark was still faint, but more discernable compared to the other three birds. Although buffy spots were noted on its wing coverts, none were apparent on its remiges. Lastly, its pale tail bands were tan, not whitish. Thus, the Kittson County record may have involved a male *richardsonii* breeding with a female *columbarius*.

Nesting Ecology

Courtship displays may start as early as mid-February (Feldsine and Oliphant 1985). Nesting begins no later than early May, possibly earlier by the Richardson's Merlin on the prairie, compared to the Taiga Merlins breeding in the coniferous forest region. The intensely studied urban population of *richardsonii* in Saskatoon lays eggs from late April through late May (Sodhi *et al.* 1992). If egg-laying started by late April at the Kittson County site in 1998, one or more of the juveniles could have just fledged by 29 June, when the first observation was made.

The 28–32 day incubation is mostly by the female and begins before completion of the clutch, which may contain two to seven eggs, but is usually five to six (Baicich and Harrison 1997). The young are mostly feathered by 18 days and fledge about 29 days after hatching, but remain in the breeding area for one to four weeks before becoming completely independent (Sodhi 1992, Sodhi *et al.* 1993).

The Merlin will nest on cliff ledges, in tree cavities, or even on the ground, but typical nests are 15–35 feet (sometimes as

high as 60 feet) above the ground, using an old, large nest constructed by other birds (Baicich and Harrison 1997). Old corvid nests situated in deciduous trees are favored by rural populations of *richardsonii* (Fox 1964, Houston and Schmidt 1981, Becker and Sieg 1985).

Urban nesters prefer conifers but still use old corvid nests (Oliphant 1974, Smith 1978, Warkentin and James 1988). The recent spread of *richardsonii* into urban areas across the Prairie Provinces of Canada is thought to be related to the availability of prey in these cities and the presence of planted conifers for nesting sites (Sodhi *et al.* 1992).

Summer Status in Northwestern MN

The first Minnesota nesting records of the Merlin, from Cook County in 1935 (Craighead and Craighead 1940), clearly were *columbarius*. Subsequent papers on the Merlin in Minnesota either focused exclusively on the nominate subspecies (Johnson 1982, Doolittle and Balding 1995) or ignored *richardsonii* completely (Beer 1966).

In 1997 Karl Bardon (pers. comm.) suggested the possibility of summering/breeding status for *richardsonii* in northwestern Minnesota when he wrote "On 1 July, I observed an adult male of this type along the Tombstone Highway, also known as Co. Rd. 51, about five miles east of Highway 59 in Kittson County. The bird even called (typical whining chatter of the species), and so may have been territorial, although I have nothing else to prove this except that I have only heard this call on the breeding grounds." Karl had previously reported "a heavily worn immature individual feeding on a Savannah Sparrow" in Kittson County on 8 June 1992. The latter could have been either a late spring migrant or a non-breeding *columbarius* since it was not identified at the time as *richardsonii*.

In late June 1998, while conducting point counts in the extensive tamarack and black spruce bog within the Agassiz N.W.R. Wilderness Area, Marshall County, Jeanie Joppru (pers. comm.) found a pair

of territorial Merlins. Based on habitat, these were probably *columbarius*. The summer records from Agassiz National Wildlife Refuge (N.W.R.) in 1985–87, including reports of possible nesting (various observers in M.O.U. files and published in *The Season*), most likely refer to *columbarius* for the same reason. A vague report of possible nesting from Agassiz N.W.R. during summer 1980 had no specific date or details.

Seasonal reports and other references (Roberts 1932, Roberts 1938, Janssen 1987) were reviewed for summer records of the Merlin in northwestern Minnesota. One in Clay County on 18 July 1993 could have been an early fall migrant of either subspecies. Reports from Marshall County on 20 July 1900, Becker County on 6 July 1966, and Otter Tail County on 15 July 1978, most likely refer to *columbarius* near the periphery of the coniferous forest, although once again, early fall migrants of either subspecies cannot be eliminated. Most interesting was a report (Huber 1963) on 4 July 1963 of "several pairs seen along Aspen-Jackpine edges" in Kittson and Roseau counties. Unfortunately, the subspecies was not identified and no other details were published.

Regional Trends

Although BBS data have relatively low credibility for the Merlin due to statistical considerations, positive trends for this species in North America from 1966 to 1998 were found survey-wide (Sauer *et al.* 1999). Other data, including migration counts and Christmas Bird Counts, show that the Merlin population is increasing or stable (Buchanan 1988, Duncan 1993, Kirk and Hyslop 1998). Note that these data are not broken down by subspecies. The species is not considered globally threatened (del Hoyo *et al.* 1992).

Richardson's Merlin recently has made a remarkable recovery across the Prairie Provinces of Canada (Kirk *et al.* 1994–95, Houston and Hodson 1997). Habitat loss and organochlorine pesticides were both implicated in the decline of *richardsonii*

during the 1950s and 1960s (Fox 1971, Fyfe *et al.* 1976, Houston and Schmidt 1981). Similar declines occurred among other populations of the Merlin (Fyfe 1976, Newton and Haas 1988).

During its recent population recovery, Richardson's Merlin expanded its wintering range farther north (James *et al.* 1987) and also extended its breeding range into urban areas where its prey selection changed (Sodhi *et al.* 1992, Sodhi and Oliphant 1992, 1993). These studies also showed that House Sparrows (*Passer domesticus*) and Horned Larks (*Eremophila alpestris*) were taken more often than expected, considering their relative abundance.

The 1998 nesting of *richardsonii* in Grand Forks was a first for northeastern North Dakota (David Lambeth, pers. comm.) and proved to be a harbinger of additional breeding range expansion into northwestern Minnesota. "Prairie" Merlins will probably colonize larger cities in the northwest region, such as Crookston and Thief River Falls. It will be interesting to see whether the ubiquitous House Finch (*Carpodacus mexicanus*) is added to the Merlin's menu of preferred urban prey!

Acknowledgments

I thank an anonymous Kittson County landowner for permission to document nesting on his property. Jeanie Joppru, Cathy Severin, and Shelley Steva helped monitor the 1998 nesting site, and Jeanie contributed notes on her observations at Agassiz N.W.R. Beth Siverhus discovered Richardson's Merlins in Roseau County in 1999, and graciously forwarded her notes and photographs for use in this article. Kim Eckert and Frank Nicoletti reviewed earlier drafts and offered suggestion that improved its content. Ron Martin provided extensive data on the Richardson's Merlin in North Dakota. Karl Bardon and David Lambeth assisted with research on records in northwestern Minnesota and northeastern North Dakota, respectively. I also thank both of them for stimulating discussions about the regional status of Richardson's Merlin.

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2602 East 4th St., Duluth, MN 55812.

Merlins Nesting in Minneapolis

Matthew J. Solensky

On 3 April 2000, The Raptor Center (TRC) at the University of Minnesota received a call reporting a pair of falcons being observed in the yard of a north Minneapolis, Hennepin County, residence. Donnelle Burlingame of TRC investigated the sighting and the following morning reported that the birds were Merlins (*Falco columbarius*). I immediately proceeded to the area to investigate.

On arrival, I saw two falcons silhouetted in a large sugar maple. The first bird I viewed closely turned out to be the female. Her uniform brown back and thin, pale "mustache" mark clearly defined her as a Merlin. Her dark nape and

heavily streaked breast suggested that she was a "Taiga" Merlin (*F. c. columbarius*), which is the most common race found nesting in Minnesota. The male on the other hand was a uniform powder blue dorsally from the base of his neck to the rump. The top of his head appeared grayish and the nape, cheeks, and side of his head were very pale (Figure 1). The streaks of brown on his breast and belly were thin and did not dominate (Figure 2). I was confident that he was a "Richardson's" (or "Prairie") Merlin (*F. c. richardsonii*). Both birds appeared quite sedate and did not call to each other for the 40 minutes while I was there.

On 6 April, I observed the pair copu-



Figure 1. Adult male Richardson's Merlin dorsal view, 12 June 2000, Minneapolis, Hennepin County. Photo by Matthew J. Solensky.

lating in nearly the same spot that I had seen them perched on 3 April. Mark Martell, Gary Duke and I saw the pair again on 18 April. We observed a prey delivery by the male to the female and heard calling between the two. I saw the pair attacking a gray squirrel (*Sciurus carolinensis*) several blocks west of the previous location on 13 May. After the squirrel fled, the female Merlin flew to the top of a large white spruce where she entered an old American Crow (*Corvus brachyrhynchos*) nest and settled down into an incubating posture.

At 9:00 A.M. the male flew from his perch, attacked a crow, drove it from the area and continued flying out of sight. At 9:40 A.M. the male returned with prey and perched in a sugar maple 50 feet from the nest tree. He called once, the female flew from the nest, and he relinquished his catch to her. The female immediately began plucking the prey, while the male flew directly to the nest and lowered himself into an incubating posture. At

9:59 A.M. the female flew to the nest and relieved the male.

On 8 June, the male arrived at the nest area at 6:45 A.M. with prey, and called several times. Prior to his arrival, I could see that the female was sitting higher in the nest than on my previous visits. At 6:54 A.M. she took the prey from the male and brought it directly to the nest. Immediately she began pulling apart the prey and leaning into the bowl of the nest. I could hear faint chirping coming from the nest, but even with good light, an unobstructed view, and a 60x Leica spotting scope, I could not see the chicks' heads above the edge of the nest. I concluded that the chicks were less than three days old. The feeding lasted ten minutes, and when she was finished she brooded the chicks.

On 12 June, with the help of Lori Arent, and using a permanently disabled Great Horned Owl (*Bubo virginianus*) to lure in the Merlins, I captured both adults and banded them with standard silver



Figure 2. Adult male Richardson's Merlin ventral view, 12 June 2000, Minneapolis, Hennepin County. Photo by Matthew J. Solensky.

USFWS bands on one leg and uniquely coded green bands on the other. With the help of several TRC staff, I banded the nestlings on 21 June, three males and one female that I estimated to be 16 days old, based on an aging key in Doolittle, 1992. On 29 June, I saw all fledglings flying near the nest. The last bird seen in the area was on 11 July.

On 10 July an unbanded fledgling female Merlin was brought from north Minneapolis to TRC with a slight tear in its wing. I investigated the area where the bird had been found on 11 July. Immediately upon my arrival I saw one Merlin flying and an old crow nest at the top of a white spruce with downy feathers lining the outside edge of the bowl. Within an hour I counted at least three chicks flying around a two-block radius of the nest tree. I was able to determine on 12 June that there were four young Merlins (two male, two female) flying in the area. I could see that the female had the coloration and markings of a "Taiga" Merlin

and the male was a "Richardson's" Merlin with a single silver band on his right leg.

On 14 July, Richard Jones and Rachel Goossen from TRC returned the rehabilitated fledgling to the nest area. I was able to read enough of the adult male's band to confirm that he had been admitted to TRC as an adult in April 1998 with a severely broken humerus. He had been found approximately three miles southwest of this nest location in Minneapolis and released 14 weeks later, fully recovered. This second nest was approximately three miles from the first.

These two successful nestings represent the first known breeding by Merlins in the Twin Cities area. A possible nesting may have occurred in Bloomington, Hennepin Co., in 1977 (*The Loon* 50:12) where a single bird had been seen.

Though these nestings are new for Minneapolis, there are other records of Taiga Merlins breeding in urban areas. In the Midwest breeding Merlins have been found in Duluth, MN, Superior and

Ashland, WI, and Thunder Bay, Ontario, Canada (Doolittle 1992, D. Evans pers. comm., H. Tordoff pers. comm., pers. obs.). A well-studied population in Saskatoon, Saskatchewan, Canada, has been established in the city for some 30 years (Oliphant 1974). Oliphant attributes the success of the Saskatoon population to the abundance of nests built by crows and a large prey base in summer, primarily House Sparrows (*Passer domesticus*). These two Minneapolis breeding pairs, and perhaps other pairs still undiscovered, were probably also attracted by a combination of old Crow nests in tall conifers and a good food supply.

The interbreeding of individuals of two subspecies is noteworthy. I suspect that the Minneapolis females are between *F. c. columbarius* and *F. c. richardsonii*, based on my observations of numerous adult females in the hand at Hawk Ridge, Duluth, and in northern Wisconsin.

I thank Donnelle Burlingame for reporting her observations to me, John and

Lori Arent for helping with the banding, and the landowners who graciously granted me access to their property to study the falcons. I would also like to extend my gratitude to Nancy Johnson and Carmen Walsh for bringing the injured birds to TRC, and Bill Campbell for notifying TRC of his observations. Many thanks to Harrison "Bud" Tordoff for making numerous helpful comments on this article.

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The Fall Season (1 August to 30 November 1999)

Paul Budde

*The highlight of the season was an **Ancient Murrelet** found on Lake Superior. Birders who flocked to Grand Marais to look for this seventh state record were unable to refind the murrelet, but discovered other exciting birds, including one of the two **King Eiders** found in the state this fall and a **Black-legged Kittiwake**. Two **Pomarine Jaegers** were the stars of a good fall flight of jaegers. Other rarities making headlines were a pair of **Black-headed Gulls** at Spirit Lake and a second-year **California Gull** that joined the large gull roost on Lake Calhoun in Minneapolis. A **Williamson's Sapsucker** was briefly seen but could not be relocated along the North Shore. Minnesota's first fall record of a **Prairie Warbler** and the first **Painted Bunting** that could be easily refound after its initial discovery were cooperative in Hennepin County.*

No **Red-throated Loons** were on Lake Superior. Two **Pacific Loons** was a more normal number, after the seven reported last fall. One was on

Lake Superior and the other was found by gull-watchers on Lake Calhoun in Minneapolis.

August **Horned Grebes** were earlier

than usual in Minneapolis and along the state's western border. A first county record **Red-necked Grebe** was found in Traverse. **Clark's Grebes** continued from the summer season at Thielke Lake in Big Stone County, while two more were seen on Clear Lake in Stevens County.

Two **Snowy Egrets** were found in the west-central region while an immature **Little Blue Heron** continued in Olmsted County. **Cattle Egrets** were reported from only three counties, but included an unusual report in mid-November from Aitkin.

Greater White-fronted and **Snow Geese** were scarce, but **Ross's Geese** were found in four counties, including first county records in Lake of the Woods and Chippewa. In general, the migration of waterfowl was late throughout the state. This was probably related to the unusually warm weather in November. Most of these species lingered into the winter period. Diving ducks didn't show up in any numbers in the south until late November. The one exception was the sea ducks — scoters and their allies — whose early and late dates were very close to their recent median arrival and departure dates.

Single **King Eiders** were found in two different locations. One was in Grand Marais, where it stayed for almost two weeks. The other was shot by a hunter in Chippewa County and identified through the photograph that appeared in the local newspaper! Local birders in Meeker County had an exciting fall when up to three **Black Scoters** and one or two **White-winged Scoters** lingered on Lake Ripley. A **Long-tailed Duck** in nearby Kandiyohi County made central Minnesota the hot spot for sea ducks this fall! There were more reports of these species away from Lake Superior than usual.

The 15th of September was undeniably a spectacular day for migration at Hawk Ridge Nature Reserve (HRNR) in Duluth. Peak counts for the entire season were set that day for **Turkey Vulture**, **Northern Harrier**, **Cooper's Hawk**, **Broad-winged Hawk**, **Swainson's Hawk**, and

Peregrine Falcon (Table 1). The record number of **American Kestrels** counted this season (2,861 compared to 2,686 in 1993) was also noteworthy. The entire season at HRNR was simply outstanding. Frank Nicoletti, writing in the April 2000 *Hawk Ridge Annual Report*, says that the 1999 composite total of 128,639 hawks was the second highest since 1972. No fewer than seven species each had totals that were the second highest on record!

Away from Hawk Ridge, two or three **Ferruginous Hawks** were found in western Minnesota and several **Rough-legged Hawks** appeared in September. In addition to those counted at HRNR, good numbers of **Golden Eagles** were reported in seven counties. Unusual was the **Prairie Falcon** reported from Duluth Twp., St. Louis County, while others from Clay and Hennepin (where one has been wintering recently) were more expected.

There were several reports of late rails. **Yellow Rails** were discovered in Jackson County during September, and in Cook and Hennepin counties during October. This species is rarely detected in Minnesota as a fall migrant. A **Sora** in Kandiyohi County on 28 November was unusually late but stay tuned for the winter season!

Regular surveys at Big Stone NWR by Bridget Olson for the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and excellent habitat at S. Heron Lake in Jackson County produced exceptional counts for several species of shorebirds. **Killdeer** and **Spotted, Least, Pectoral**, and **Stilt Sandpipers** were all found in impressive numbers. Most of the shorebird migration proceeded on a timely basis, with no surprises.

Jaegers made a strong showing this fall. A juvenile **Pomarine** spent much of September on Lake Superior near downtown Duluth, and another was found on Mille Lacs near the end of November. The latter is only the second Pomarine ever found in Minnesota away from Lake Superior; the first was a November 1996 report of a juvenile on Lake Pepin (*The Loon* 69:3-6). Two or three **Parasitics** were off Park Point in mid-September,

and one or two more were in Lake and St. Louis counties during mid-October. An unidentified jaeger in Grand Marais in mid-November rounded out the season.

An estimated 30,000 **Franklin's Gulls** was a staggering number at S. Heron Lake, Jackson County, in late September. The only **Little Gull** this fall was still in juvenal plumage in early October. Two **Black-headed Gulls** were found once again at Spirit Lake on the Iowa border, and a **California Gull** roosted for two weeks on Lake Calhoun in Minneapolis. There were very few reports of "white-winged" gulls, probably due to the warm November. An immature **Black-legged Kittiwake** was seen in Grand Marais by observers hoping to refine the seventh state record **Ancient Murrelet** that had been discovered the previous day. What is particularly noteworthy about the murrelet is that this was the first Minnesota alcid discovered by birders while alive and apparently healthy. All other records refer to specimens — birds shot by hunters, picked up exhausted, or found dead.

Four **Eurasian Collared-Doves** were in Fairmont, Martin County, while others continued in the southwest corner of the state. Its expansion into Minnesota will undoubtedly continue but observers must carefully distinguish this species from the very similar, exotic **Ringed Turtle-Dove**. Blaine Seeliger's videotape of one of the Fairmont birds as it showed each of its field marks is the best documentation of this species that the records committee has ever seen!

The six **Snowy** and two **Northern Hawk Owls** found in November were somewhat surprising considering the mild temperatures and lack of snow cover. **Short-eared Owls** made a strong showing, with at least four in Duluth and several others reported from the west-central region. The three **Boreal Owls** banded at HRNR were the only reports of this species.

A late **Red-headed Woodpecker** was unusual in Mille Lacs County, but most unexpected was the third state record **Williamson's Sapsucker** at Taconite

Harbor in Cook County. There are few extralimital records of this species in the Midwest and most of those are from spring. Unfortunately, the sapsucker was only seen about one minute before it disappeared.

Flycatchers generally departed the state earlier than normal. Readers should note that due to our policy of requiring details for *Empidonax* flycatchers during migration, we can expect more reports of "empid species." Late dates over the last few years and into the future will not be comparable to median departure dates developed since 1985 due to the more stringent documentation requirements currently in place.

This fall there were fewer reports of **Loggerhead Shrikes** than usual, but this was balanced by plenty of **Northern Shrikes** which appeared throughout the state beginning in mid-October. Both **Philadelphia** and **Red-eyed Vireos** made late season cameo appearances along the North Shore. A **Blue-gray Gnatcatcher** was found in Cook County, in what is fast becoming a tradition of late fall North Shore occurrences.

Five **Mountain Bluebirds**, thirteen **Townsend's Solitaires** and four **Varied Thrushes** were good fall numbers for each of these species. As many as seven solitaires were in Cook County and four others were in St. Louis County. The first Pipestone County record of this species, which preceded all the north reports, and a September report from Hennepin County, were both highly unusual.

Highlights of the fall warbler migration included very unusual November reports of **Yellow, Cape May, Bay-breasted,** and **Blackpoll Warblers**, plus **American Redstart**. Less unexpected were reports of both "**Brewster's**" and "**Lawrence's**" **Warblers**. Minnesota's first-ever autumn **Prairie Warbler** stayed for a week just west of the MSP airport.

Two **Summer Tanagers** were found, including the almost obligatory October record along the North Shore. More **Lark Sparrows** were reported in the northern half of the state than in the south!

Table 1. Fall 1999 Hawk Ridge Nature Reserve composite totals.

Species	Aug.	Sep.	Oct.	Nov.	Dec.	Total	Peak	Peak#
Turkey Vulture	19	1107	786	-	-	1912	9/15	306
Osprey	53	383	6	-	-	442	9/11	47
Bald Eagle	50	601	1164	1267	73	3155	11/6	130
Northern Harrier	54	971	333	15	-	1373	9/15	184
Sharp-shinned Hawk	906	14646	4890	7	-	20449	9/10	1185
Cooper's Hawk	17	224	48	1	-	290	9/15	44
Northern Goshawk	2	68	361	123	4	558	10/22	54
Red-shouldered Hawk	-	-	5	-	-	5	-	1
Broad-winged Hawk	378	86092	43	-	-	86513	9/15	44367
Swainson's Hawk	-	17	-	-	-	17	9/15	11
Red-tailed Hawk	56	856	8212	642	4	9770	10/22	1626
Rough-legged Hawk	-	-	438	394	2	834	10/26	86
Golden Eagle	-	-	52	68	1	121	11/14	14
American Kestrel	129	2573	159	-	-	2861	9/23	276
Merlin	16	182	74	4	1	277	9/19	24
Peregrine Falcon	2	54	6	-	-	62	9/15,19	6

Nelson's Sharp-tailed Sparrows were discovered in five counties, including McLeod for the first time. A possible "**Gray-headed Junco**", a subspecies of the Dark-eyed Junco which would be considered accidental in the state, made a brief appearance at a feeder in Pipestone County. **Smith's Longspurs** were in the usual spots on expected dates, between late September and late October.

Birding in the Twin Cities area became more exciting during the hot August month when Mary Ann Novak reported a male **Painted Bunting** coming to her feeder. Patient observers invariably got good looks at this southern specialty. **Great-tailed Grackles** continued to haunt the Grovers Lake area of Jackson County. Up to 50 were reported just north of here in mid-October.

Good numbers of **Pine Grosbeaks** were counted at HRNR, and it was an excellent year for redpolls in the north. **Hoary Redpolls** were reported from five counties, including several reports from Cook. Redpolls also made a strong showing in the south, but no Hoarys were found among them.

Undocumented Reports: **Black-legged Kittiwake** 11/26 Cook (Five Mile Rock), **Band-tailed Pigeon** 10/25 St. Louis (HRNR).

Escapes and Exotics: Whooper Swans (pair in October) in Stillwater, Washington Co. *vide* AH; Egyptian Goose 8/1 and 8/15 Hennepin (Dayton) SC.

Weather Summary: During the first three months of this season, temperatures across the state were close to average, but a change in the jet stream brought temperatures well above average during November. Monthly averages throughout the state were 7-10 degrees warmer than normal in November. This contributed to the late movement of waterfowl and the lingering warblers that are described in the species accounts.

During August and September, precipitation was significantly above average in the northwestern quarter of the state, while the southwest got less than half their normal rainfall. In October, however, every region of the state received less than half its normal rainfall except for the south-central, which was still below average. During November, parts of the state received scarcely any precipitation, and the statewide average was one-third of normal.

Acknowledgments: I thank Karl Bardon for reviewing this report, and also Peder Svingen for his help with the compilation and for suggesting changes that improved earlier drafts. Kim Eckert and Anthony

Hertzell summarized reports called in to the MOU "hotlines" in Duluth and the Twin Cities. Data from HRNR were made available by Frank Nicoletti. Support the research and educational programs at HRNR — become a Friend of Hawk Ridge! Early and late dates have been compiled by Robert Janssen. Medians of recent arrival and departure dates were

calculated by Paul Budde from published and unpublished data used to compile these seasonal reports during 1985–99. Finally, many thanks to the observers who submit sightings and documentation each season. Special thanks to those who respond to requests for additional details.

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KEY TO SEASONAL REPORTS

1. Species listed in upper case (**LEAST TERN**) indicate a Casual or Accidental occurrence in the state.
2. Dates listed in bold (**10/9**) indicate an occurrence either earlier, later or within the earliest or latest dates on file.
3. Counties listed in bold (**Aitkin**) indicate an unusual occurrence for that county.
4. Counties with an underline (Aitkin) indicate a first county record.
5. Counties listed in italics (*Aitkin*) indicate a first county breeding record.
6. Brackets [] indicate a species for which there is reasonable doubt as to its origin or wildness.
7. Counts listed in bold (**150**) indicate total within or exceeding the top three high counts for that species.
8. Dagger "+" preceding observer's initial denotes documentation was submitted.

The Season publishes reports of bird sightings from throughout Minnesota. We particularly invite reports from parts of the state that have been neglected or covered lightly in past reports. To become a contributor, request a report form from the Editor of *The Season*, Peder Svingen, 2602 E. 4th St., Duluth, MN 55812.

Loons to Vultures

Red-throated Loon

No reports.

Pacific Loon

Only two reports, down from last fall's remarkable seven: **9/13**–10/17 St. Louis (L. Superior) MH, †PS, †KE *et al.*, 11/12 through **11/20** (latest south date) Hennepin (L. Calhoun) BBa, †PBu, mob.

Common Loon

Peak numbers on Lakes Winnibigoshish and Mille Lacs were down compared to the record high counts last fall: 10/15 (1,153 on L. Winnibigoshish compared to 1,599 in 1998) PS, 11/8 (528 on Mille Lacs compared to 1,688 in 1998) AH, PS. See winter report for late migrants north and south.

Pied-billed Grebe

Peak north 10/4 Becker (110) BBe. Late north 11/4 St. Louis JN, 11/6 Aitkin WN and Cass MRN. See winter report for late south migrants.

Horned Grebe

Two extremely early migrants south. Early north 8/31 St. Louis TW, 9/3 Beltrami DJo. Early south **8/25** Hennepin †SC, **8/26** Lac Qui Parle (3) RgS, 9/21 Meeker CMA. See winter report for late migrants.

Red-necked Grebe

First county record 8/28 **Traverse** MBW. Possible early migrant 8/1 Lincoln PS. See winter report for late migrants.

Eared Grebe

Very scarce, continuing the trend noticed

this summer. Only north records were in Norman, Polk, and Traverse in August, plus a late migrant 10/23 Marshall JJ. Reported south in Lac Qui Parle and Stevens, then 10/9 Anoka JH, 10/18 Chippewa ABO.

Western Grebe

Late north 10/19 Marshall PS, 10/29 Todd RJ, 11/11 Todd GS. Late south 11/7 Lyon and Lincoln RgS, 11/21 Big Stone KB.

Clark's Grebe

Two adults found in June were reported through 8/29 Big Stone (Thielke L.) †KE *et al.* Two more on 8/29 Stevens (Clear L.) †KE *et al.* were at a location where this species has occurred in previous years.

American White Pelican

Total of 146 this season at HRNR in St. Louis, including a peak of 67 on 9/15 (FN). Late north 9/19 Wadena PBi. The largest flocks were 8/15 Big Stone (1,875 at BSNWR) AH and 9/19 Jackson (1,200) MJC. Late south 11/21 Chippewa, Lac Qui Parle KB, McLeod DF, but at least two also overwintered in Dakota.

Double-crested Cormorant

Reported throughout the state. Peak number 9/17 Lyon (670) RgS. See winter report for late north migrants.

American Bittern

Only eight reports. All north reports after August: 9/5 Wadena PBi, 9/23 Aitkin CB, 10/2 Aitkin WN, 10/6 Cook KMH. All south reports: 9/10 Hennepin RH, 9/30 Freeborn ABA, 10/29 Lac Qui Parle BOL.

Least Bittern

No reports north. All south reports were in August: Freeborn, Hennepin, Lac Qui Parle, Olmsted, and Stearns. Last reported 8/22 from two counties.

Great Blue Heron

Largest count 8/12 Lac Qui Parle (43 at BSNWR) BOL. See winter report for late migrants.

Great Egret

Peak numbers 8/18 Big Stone NWR (81) BOL, 10/4 Kandiyohi (94) RgS. Unusual north reports included 8/16 Cass PS, 9/13 St. Louis (Duluth) AE. Late north 9/25 Wilkin AH. Two November reports: 11/7 Meeker DF, 11/13 Dakota DBS.

Snowy Egret

All reports: 9/23 Stevens (near Morris) *fide* AH, 10/1-3 (third latest south) Lac Qui Parle WM.

Little Blue Heron

One immature, originally reported as a Snowy Egret, was identified correctly by Wood (see summer report) and stayed through 8/7 in Olmsted mob. This highlights the care that needs to be taken when identifying small white waders.

Cattle Egret

More reports than usual: 9/27 Jackson (2) mob, 10/1 Lac Qui Parle (Walter Twp.) WM, 10/11 Lac Qui Parle (2, Cerro Gordo Twp.) AH, PS, 11/10-12 (latest north date) Aitkin WN.

Green Heron

Departed well before the recent median departure dates both north (10/3) and south (10/21). Late north 9/11 Kanabec BA, 9/23 Carlton SL. Late south 10/10 Hennepin SC and McLeod DF.

Black-crowned Night-Heron

Only two north reports: 8/22 Polk ABO and 8/28 Traverse mob. Both these observations were well before the recent median north departure date (9/21). Late south 10/12 Jackson PS, 10/16 Hennepin SC, 10/26 Ramsey AH, but also see winter report.

Yellow-crowned Night-Heron

No fall reports since 1993.

Turkey Vulture

Late north 10/2 Lake and St. Louis JSt, 10/9 Kanabec BA, 10/31 St. Louis (HRNR) FN. Late south 10/10 Rice SWE, 10/23 Blue Earth SL, 10/31 Winona NWi.



Tundra Swans and American Coots, 20 October 1999, Crookston lagoons, Polk County. Photo by Peder H. Svingen.

Waterfowl

Greater White-fronted Goose

Scarce throughout the state. Only north report: 10/14 Aitkin (32) PJ. All south reports: 10/2 Lyon (43) RgS, 10/7 Jackson (30) MJC, 10/23 Chippewa ABo.

Snow Goose

Early north 9/19 St. Louis SWe, then no reports until mid-October. Reported from only seven counties statewide. Peak count at BSNWR only 1,050 on 11/17 (BOI). Last reported 11/26 Mower DSm, but also see winter report.

Ross's Goose

All reports: 10/19 **Lake of the Woods** (adult south of Rocky Point) †PS, 11/4 **Chippewa** (adult at Watson) †AH, 11/17 Lac Qui Parle (3 adults at BSNWR) †BOI, 11/21 Big Stone (immature with 2 adults at Graceville) †KB.

Canada Goose

Reported throughout the state. Peak

numbers 11/17 Lac Qui Parle (61,172 at BSNWR) BOI, 10/31 Lac Qui Parle (105,000 at Lac Qui Parle L.) FE.

Mute Swan

No north reports. One spent the entire period near the Old Cedar Ave. Bridge in Bloomington, Hennepin County; it then moved to Black Dog L., Dakota County, in December. Also reported 7/31–8/1 Carver (2 at Goose L.) DBM, 11/3–4 Rice (Mud L.) JL, TBo, and 11/5 Wright (Cokato) DF. This last sighting is near the location of a November 1998 report of this species.

Trumpeter Swan

Reported from 7 north and 15 south counties throughout the period. All were 1–6 birds, except for 19 in Wright in early November and 10/4 Becker (70 at Tamarac NWR) BBe.

Tundra Swan

Early north 8/22 Polk ABo (see summer report), 10/9 Cass (5) MRN and Polk (10)

PS. Early south 9/27 Houston (50) MFO, 10/2 Dakota †SL, 10/15 McLeod DF. Peak numbers 10/17 Aitkin (4,000+) WN, 11/26 Houston (**13,000** includes Wisconsin birds) PJ. See winter report for latest north and south.

Wood Duck

Reported from 16 north and 39 south counties. Peak numbers 9/28 Becker (130) BBe, 8/12 Lac Qui Parle (48 at BSNWR) BOL. See winter report for late migrants.

Gadwall

Reported from 8 north and 24 south counties. Peak numbers 10/20 Lac Qui Parle (167 at BSNWR) BOL, 11/19 Rice (88) RJ. See winter report for late north migrants.

American Wigeon

Reported from 7 north and 24 south counties. Last north report 11/16 St. Louis JN, but see winter report for additional report from St. Louis and for late south migrants.

American Black Duck

Reported from five north counties. See winter report for late and overwintering birds. Reported south from 14 counties including 8/15 Big Stone (Toqua Twp., not far from August 1998 bird at Thielke L.) PC, 8/18 Stearns SWi.

Mallard

Reported throughout the state. Peak count 11/17 Lac Qui Parle (37,307 at BSNWR) BOL.

Blue-winged Teal

Peak 8/18 Lac Qui Parle (851 at BSNWR) BOL. Late north 10/20 Becker BBe, 10/28 St. Louis JN, 11/6 Aitkin WN. Late south 11/4 McLeod and Meeker DF, 11/9 Hennepin RH. This is one to two weeks later than the median departure dates north (10/24) and south (11/2).

Cinnamon Teal

No reports — but this species would be

exceptional during fall migration.

Northern Shoveler

A relatively late migration throughout the state. In the north they were found up to two weeks beyond the recent median departure date, while in the Twin Cities area they didn't begin to stage in large numbers until early to mid-December. Peak count 11/17 Lac Qui Parle (1,208 counted at BSNWR) BOL. Late north 11/11 Grant GS, 11/13 Douglas RH and Marshall GS. See winter report for late south migrants.

Northern Pintail

Peak number 10/29 Lac Qui Parle (5,450 at BSNWR) BOL. Late north 10/18 Cook KMH, 10/19 Roseau PS, 10/23 Marshall JJ. See winter report for late south migrants.

Green-winged Teal

Reported from 10 north and 27 south counties. Peak 10/29 Lac Qui Parle (11,525 at BSNWR) BOL. Late northwest reports 10/19 Roseau PS, 10/23 Marshall JJ. In the northeast region, birds lingered later: 11/6 Lake CMA, 11/18 Cook KMH; also see winter report.

Canvasback

Reported from 8 north and 18 south counties. Peak 11/22 Houston at Pool #8 of the Upper Mississippi River NWFR where **121,450** (mostly in Wisconsin) were counted. See winter report for late dates.

Redhead

Reported from 8 north and 17 south counties. No significant concentrations reported. See winter report for late dates.

Ring-necked Duck

Late migration through Twin Cities, where not regularly observed until late November. Largest concentrations 10/21 Aitkin (10,000) PJ and 11/2 Becker (19,635 at TNWR) BBe. Late north 11/21 Carlton LW, 11/23 Cass MRN. See winter report for late south and overwintering birds.

Greater Scaup

Two birds were found on Lake Superior well before the median early north date (10/16). Early north **9/18** St. Louis SWe, **9/20** Cook DBM, 10/19 Roseau PS, 11/13 St. Louis JSt. Early south 10/17 Chippewa ABo, 10/25 Meeker DF, then no reports until mid-November, which is when the species is more expected (median south arrivals 11/14). No details were provided for any of these early arrivals. See winter report for late migrants.

Lesser Scaup

Peak 11/2 Becker (1,000 at TNWR) BBe. See winter report for late migrants.

KING EIDER

An eider shot by a hunter 10/22 **Chippewa** *fide* DNR was tentatively identified as a Common, but a photograph published in the 28 October 1999 issue of *Montevideo American-News* clearly shows an immature or female King. Another immature or female 11/22 Cook (Grand Marais) †KMH was then not relocated until 11/27 near Five Mile Rock, where it remained into early December.

Harlequin Duck

Unusual location 10/23–11/29+ Aitkin (Mille Lacs L.) KE *et al.* More reports than usual from Cook, where first seen 10/6 (Grand Marais) KMH. At least three birds were in Grand Marais during the second half of November and two were in the Hovland area all month. Other reports from Paradise Beach and the mouths of the Brule and Cascade rivers brought the seasonal total in Cook to 10–14 birds!

Surf Scoter

Reported north 10/3 Cass (L. Winnibigoshish) PS, 10/16 Cook AH, PS, BSe and Lake AH, 10/30 Lake WM, 11/3 Cook (3) DSp. Three south reports: 10/28–11/21 **Rice** (2) TBo, mob, 10/30 Faribault JSt, 11/26 Houston (Reno Bottoms, not in Wisconsin?) mob.

White-winged Scoter

Most reports were from Cook, beginning

9/20 (DBM) through 11/21 (AH), plus a few reports from Lake County. Reported away from Lake Superior 10/15 Cass (7 on L. Winnibigoshish) PS, 11/8 Aitkin (2 on Mille Lacs) AH, PS. First county record 11/18–30 **Meeker** (max. 2 on L. Ripley) †RbS, †DF.

Black Scoter

Lake Superior reports from Cook 10/16 (AH, PS) through 11/7 (mob). More reports than usual away from Lake Superior: 10/19 Roseau (3 female/immatures at Roseau lagoons) PS, 10/23 Crow Wing (Mille Lacs L.) AH, PS. First county record in **Meeker** with a female present on Lake Ripley from 10/25–11/2 and an immature male at the same location 11/2–11/5 (†DF). One of these, or perhaps a third bird was at this location 11/18 (†RbS)! The latest report was from the southwest: 11/24 Lyon (Lady Slipper L.) PE.

Long-tailed Duck

Early north 10/16 Lake RgS, 10/22 Cook PS. Several reports of concentrations in excess of 100 birds during the third week of November in Cook County. All south reports: 11/18 **Kandiyohi** RbS, 11/29–30 **Kandiyohi** †DF, 11/26 Houston (at Reno Bottoms, not in Wisconsin?) mob. This diver was formerly named the Oldsquaw.

Bufflehead

Early south **8/21** (earliest date south) Stevens CMa, 10/1 Lac Qui Parle BOI, WM, 10/14 Hennepin SC. Peak counts in flocks did not exceed 100 individuals. See winter report for late migrants and overwintering birds.

Common Goldeneye

Early south 10/22 Olmsted CH, 10/23 Chippewa ABo. Peak number 11/8 Mille Lacs L. (1,000) AH, PS, 11/26 Houston (3,000 including Wisconsin birds) PJ, DN. See winter report for late migrants.

Hooded Merganser

Reported from 11 north and 18 south counties. Peak counts 10/28 Ramsey (100 on L. Vadnais) DJE, 11/10 Becker (97)

BBe, 11/26 Ramsey (~250) RH. See winter report for late migrants.

Common Merganser

Reported only from eastern and central parts of the state. Early south 10/24 Hennepin CMA, 11/8 Ramsey SL. Also see winter report.

Red-breasted Merganser

Early south 8/26 - 9/8 (earliest south by 25 days, but may have been an oversummering bird) Hennepin (Lakes Harriet and Calhoun) SC, PBU, 10/26 Hennepin (10 at French L.) SC, 11/16 Renville CMA. Late dates cannot be given as this species was widely reported in winter.

Ruddy Duck

Largest concentrations 10/20 Lac Qui Parle (455 at BSNWR) BOL, 10/27 Meeker (150) RJ. Among the few north reports was an unusual location: 10/10 St. Louis (2) JN. No north reports after 10/20 Polk PS. See winter report for late migrants.

Raptors

Osprey

Departed much earlier than the recent median north (11/1) and south (11/15) dates. Late north 10/3 Itasca PS, 10/10 St. Louis (HRNR) FN, 10/16 Cook AH, PS. All south reports after September: 10/11 Rock PS, 10/20 Dakota DBS.

Bald Eagle

Reported from 24 north and 33 south counties, including a partial albino 11/4 Big Stone †AH. Peak concentration away from HRNR was 10/20 Big Stone/Lac Qui Parle (21 at Big Stone NWR) BOL.

Northern Harrier

Reported throughout the state from 21 north and 29 south counties. See winter report for late migrants.

Sharp-shinned Hawk

Reported from 17 north and 33 south counties. Early south 8/6 Big Stone NWR (county?) BOL, 8/7 Hennepin OJ, 8/12

Stearns CMA. See winter report for late migrants.

Cooper's Hawk

Reported from 16 north and 24 south counties. Late north 10/16 Aitkin WN and Cass MRN, 10/17 Wadena PBi.

Northern Goshawk

Reported north from Clay, Cook, Itasca and St. Louis. Only south report: 11/13 Washington DN.

Red-shouldered Hawk

All north reports: 8/14 Mahnomen (3) BK, 8/15-30 Aitkin WN, 9/11 Todd (4) JSK, SDu, 10/4 Becker DN, and total of five at HRNR in Duluth between 10/10 and 10/23 (FN *et al.*). Reported from 10 south counties.

Broad-winged Hawk

Flocks of several dozen observed kettling as early as 8/23 in Hubbard (PBU). Early south 8/6 Washington RH, 8/10 Hennepin CMA, 8/18 Ramsey TT. Latest reports were comparable to recent median departure dates. Late north 10/16 Douglas RH, 10/23 St. Louis (HRNR) FN. Late south 9/19 Freeborn ABA, 10/9 Rice SWe.

Swainson's Hawk

Only north reports: Becker, Clay, Wilkin, plus more reports than usual from St. Louis (HRNR). Few south reports after August: 9/11 Jackson CMA, 10/2 Lyon (2) RgS, 10/9 Lyon RgS.

Red-tailed Hawk

Reported from 24 north and 46 south counties. One "Krider's" found 10/1 Todd JSK, SDu.

Ferruginous Hawk

After no fall 1998 reports, two or three were documented this year: 8/15 Polk †SKS, 8/21 Polk (adult at Mentor Ranch) †PS, 9/25 Lac Qui Parle (adult along the Auto Tour at BSNWR) †AH.

Rough-legged Hawk

Reported from all regions of the state,

and overwintered in many areas (see winter report). Early north 9/21 Becker MWy, 9/30 Clay (50) DDC. First seen at HRNR 10/25 St. Louis FN. Early south 9/2 (third earliest date south) Cottonwood BBo, 10/2 Dakota SL and Jackson CMa.

Golden Eagle

Early north 10/3 St. Louis (Floodwood) PS, 10/4 Mille Lacs AH. Late north 11/27 Aitkin ABo, 11/29 St. Louis (Aurora) CMa. All south reports: 10/11 Big Stone/Lac Qui Parle AH, PS, 10/17 Chippewa ABo, 11/19 Meeker DF, 11/21 Stearns DF.

American Kestrel

Reported from 20 north and 40 south counties. Largest number away from HRNR: 9/15 Lyon (39) RgS.

Merlin

Reported from 10 north and 12 south counties. Five reports (eight last fall) of *richardsonii* from four west-central counties and 11/23 Dakota DBS. The first such migrant, 8/15 Big Stone AH, PS, was on the same early date as in 1998. Merlins were reported from every region but the southeast.

Gyr Falcon

No reports.

Peregrine Falcon

Reported from six north and six south counties. Early migrants north and south: 8/30 Marshall JJ and 8/29 Big Stone *vide* KE, respectively. Late north 11/15 Becker BBe. Late south 10/3 Lincoln RgS, but see winter report.

Prairie Falcon

All reports 8/2 (second earliest north) Clay (Felton Prairie) PS and St. Louis (Duluth Twp.) JG, 11/13+ Hennepin BF, mob.

Partridges to Cranes

Gray Partridge

Reported from six counties in the southwest region (max. 12 in Pipestone), plus

Freeborn, Martin, Meeker, Waseca, and Watonwan.

Ring-necked Pheasant

Reported from 8 north and 34 south counties, including unusual reports in October from 40th Ave. West in Duluth (wild from Wisconsin or release?).

Ruffed Grouse

Reported from 14 north and 5 south counties.

Spruce Grouse

Reported from Lake and St. Louis.

Sharp-tailed Grouse

Reported from Marshall, Lake of the Woods, Aitkin (15–17, WN), and St. Louis (21 in Sax-Zim bog, *vide* KE).

Greater Prairie-Chicken

Reported from usual locations in Wilkin, plus probable released birds farther south: 10/11 Lac Qui Parle (BSNWR) AH, 10/23 Chippewa ABo.

Wild Turkey

Reported in 20 south counties, plus 8/1 Traverse PS, 10/29 Todd RJ.

Northern Bobwhite

Only report: probable escape in Big Stone (Odessa) BOL.

Yellow Rail

All north reports: 8/13 St. Louis (Sax-Zim) PWe, 10/6 Cook (Spruce Creek) KMH (unusual location and second latest north date). All south reports: 9/22 Jackson (Cotton-Jack WMA) †BBo, 10/10 Hennepin (Crow-Hassan Park) †SC.

Virginia Rail

Only north report: 8/18 Traverse CMa. All south reports after August: 9/8 Meeker DF, 9/18 Hennepin CMa, 9/21 Meeker CMa, 10/4 Hennepin TT.

Sora

Only north report: 8/18 Traverse CMa. Reported from all south regions; latest

10/20 Jackson (3) BBo, **11/28** Kandiyohi RJF. Also see winter report!

Common Moorhen

Reported through 8/5 Kandiyohi (see summer report) DF and 9/6 Anoka (family group at Carlos Avery WMA) *fide* AH.

American Coot

Peak concentrations at staging areas: 10/5 Dakota (9,500) RJ, 10/14 Becker (22,205 at TNWR) BBe, 10/16 Hennepin (10,000+) AJo. See winter report for late migrants.

Sandhill Crane

Numerous reports through mid-October, then only 10/31 Wadena PBi. Numbers up at HRNR in Duluth (148) FN. Reported from only six south counties, where last seen 10/9 Mower RRR (*The Loon* 72:54).

Shorebirds

Black-bellied Plover

Migration north and south congruent with median dates. North reports all between 9/23 St. Louis NWi and 10/23 Marshall JJ. Early south 8/6 Lac Qui Parle (BSNWR) BOL, 8/22 Hennepin TT. Late south 11/9 Dakota DBS, 11/13 Big Stone PC. Reported from all nine regions in October. Only significant count 10/19 Roseau (17) PS.

American Golden-Plover

Most north reports were mid-September to mid-October; most south reports were October. Early north 8/18 Traverse CMa. Early south 8/6 Lac Qui Parle (BSNWR) BOL. Late north 10/20–24 Aitkin WN. Late south 11/13 Big Stone (3 locations) PC, **11/11–16** Hennepin SC, **11/17** (ties the second latest south date) Dakota DBS.

Semipalmated Plover

Peak north 8/2 Becker (31 at Hamden Slough NWR) PS; peak south 8/18 Lac Qui Parle (50 at BSNWR) BOL. Few north reports, where last reported 9/19 St. Louis TW. All south reports after the end of September: 10/2 Dakota TT, **10/26** (second latest south date) Lyon RgS.

Piping Plover

No reports.

Killdeer

Peak count 10/16 Jackson (**328** at South Heron L.) PC. Late north 10/16 Douglas RH and Wilkin CN. Late south 11/20 Dodge JSt, 11/25 Le Sueur (Waterville) KB, 11/29 Le Sueur (St. Peter sewage ponds) KB; also see winter report.

American Avocet

All reports: 8/18 Lac Qui Parle (3 at BSNWR) BOL, 9/10 Lac Qui Parle (4 at BSNWR) BOL, 9/13 Jackson (3 at North Heron L.) BBo, 9/27 Jackson (2 at South Heron L.) mob, 10/17 Chippewa ABo.

Greater Yellowlegs

Reported north through 11/4 St. Louis JN, 11/6 Lake CMa, NWi. Many south reports through 11/2, then only 11/13 Big Stone PC. These dates are similar to medians of recent departure dates north (11/2) and south (11/9).

Lesser Yellowlegs

Peak concentrations 8/2 Becker (179 at Hamden Slough NWR) PS, 8/18 Lac Qui Parle (343 at Big Stone NWR) BOL, 9/27 Jackson (310 at South Heron L.) KE *et al.* Late north 10/23 Marshall JJ, 10/24 Aitkin WN. Late south 11/1 Lyon RgS, 11/3 Lac Qui Parle (Big Stone NWR) BOL. These departure dates are typical for this species.

Solitary Sandpiper

Reported throughout the state except for the northwest region. All October reports: 10/1 Lac Qui Parle (Big Stone NWR) BOL, 10/3–10 Beltrami DJo, 10/10 Carlton LW, 10/12 Mower RRR.

Willet

Only two reports, both in August from the west-central part of the state: 8/7 Lac Qui Parle WM, 8/15 Chippewa (5) PC. Fall migration for this species is usually during the first two weeks of August.

Spotted Sandpiper

Peak count 8/12 Lac Qui Parle (**60** at

BSNWR) BOI. In all, reported from 14 counties north, with latest reports in mid-September: 9/11 Beltrami DJo, 9/18 St. Louis SWe, 9/19 Cook KMH. Only south report after mid-September: 10/7 Hennepin TT.

Upland Sandpiper

Only reported from the west-central and southwest regions of the state: 8/1 Rock PS, 8/17 Stevens CMA.

Whimbrel

The only report was from Duluth, the most reliable location in the state for this species: 9/9 St. Louis (1) JLi.

Hudsonian Godwit

No reports.

Marbled Godwit

All reports: 8/1 Traverse JJ, 8/2 Becker PS, 8/18 Traverse CMA.

Ruddy Turnstone

Only eight reports, from opposite corners of the state! All north reports: 8/20 St. Louis DN, 9/25 Cook DBS, 10/16 Cook AH, PS. Early south 8/15 Big Stone AH, PS, PC, 8/29 Lac Qui Parle RgS. Late south **9/12–27** Jackson (third latest south) CMA, mob.

Red Knot

No reports.

Sanderling

Three of the five north reports were in mid-October: 10/16 Cook AH, PS, 10/17 St. Louis PS, 10/20 Polk PS. More south reports than usual, especially from South Heron L., Jackson Co. (max. 28 on 10/11 RgS). Latest south 10/25 Jackson CMA and Stearns SWi.

Semipalmated Sandpiper

All north reports: 8/14 Douglas CMA, 8/16 Becker PS, 8/20 St. Louis DN. Peaks 8/12 Lac Qui Parle (297 at BSNWR) BOI, 8/18 Lac Qui Parle (500 at BSNWR) BOI. Late south 10/21–23 Hennepin †SC.

Least Sandpiper

Record high count (**1,787**) at BSNWR on 8/12 Lac Qui Parle BOI. The only north report after mid-August was two months later: 10/20 Polk (2) PS. Late south 10/20 Renville CMA, 10/25 Jackson CMA.

White-rumped Sandpiper

This species is a very rare fall migrant in the state before September, but there were two August reports this year, both from the west-central region: 8/15 Big Stone PC, 8/28 Stevens MBW. Only north report: 9/21 Becker MRN. Late south 10/15 Lyon RgS.

Baird's Sandpiper

No significant peak counts. Only north reports: 8/16 Becker PS, 9/13 Cook KMH. Reported from 17 south counties, where last seen 11/1 Lyon RgS.

Pectoral Sandpiper

Peak concentrations 8/18 Lac Qui Parle (**713** at Big Stone NWR, record high count) BOI, 9/27 Jackson (371 at South Heron L.) KE *et al.* Reported throughout the state from all regions during October. Only north report after October: 11/6 Lake KE *et al.* Four November reports south, the last being 11/11 Lyon RgS. These dates are approximately a week later than recent median departures.

Dunlin

Only one report before October. Early north 10/9 Polk PS. Early south 9/26 Lyon RgS. Late north 10/31 Cook mob. Late south 11/1 Lyon RgS, 11/3 Rice MF.

Stilt Sandpiper

Peak concentrations 8/18 Lac Qui Parle (432 at BSNWR) BOI, 9/27 Jackson (500 at South Heron L.) KE *et al.* Only north reports: 8/16 Becker PS, 9/20 Cook DBM. Early south 8/6 Carver OJ, WM, 8/7 Lac Qui Parle WM. Late south 10/6 Meeker DF, 10/15 Lyon RgS.

Buff-breasted Sandpiper

See summer report for peak migration

counts. Only north reports later than mid-August: 9/17 Lake (8) RJ, 9/29 Cook *fide* KE. Late south 8/24 Meeker DF, 9/1 Rice TBo, FKS, 9/12 Jackson (South Heron L.) KE, CMa.

Short-billed Dowitcher

Only two north reports: 8/14 Douglas CMa, 8/16 Becker PS. Reported from 10 south counties through 9/11 Hennepin SC and Mower RRR. No significant peak concentrations reported.

Long-billed Dowitcher

Only two north reports, where last seen 9/25 Wilkin (32) AH. Most south reports were in October, but early reports 8/8 Big Stone TT and Carver SWe. Late south 10/25 Jackson CMa and McLeod RbS, 10/29 Dakota DBS. Very few of either these or the Short-billed Dowitcher reports were documented in any way.

Common Snipe

Largest concentration 10/20 Lac Qui Parle (51 at Big Stone NWR) BOI. Many November reports throughout state. See winter report for overwintering north and south.

American Woodcock

Reported from six north and nine south counties, including three in November: 11/4 Kanabec CM, 11/5 Washington RJ, **11/20** (latest date north) St. Louis SD.

Wilson's Phalarope

All north reports: 8/18,28 Traverse CMa, mob, 8/21 Norman GS, 9/25 Wilkin AH. Reported from nine south counties, the latest from Jackson: 9/11–12 CMa, 9/27 mob.

Red-necked Phalarope

Reported from 3 north and 10 south counties; most were from the central and west-central regions during the first week of September. All north reports: 8/18 Traverse CMa, 8/28 Polk (26) AH and Traverse mob, 9/11 Beltrami DJo. Early south 8/6 Carver PBU. Late south 9/12 Dakota DBS and Jackson CMa.

Jaegers to Murrelets

POMARINE JAEGER

One juvenile 9/8–25 St. Louis (Canal Park in Duluth) DBu, †PS *et al.* is apparently only the second Pomarine ever photographed in Minnesota. The first is shown on the cover of *The Loon* 44(3). Another juvenile **11/22 Mille Lacs** (Vineland Bay on Mille Lacs L.) †PS, †AH is only the second ever found away from L. Superior (*The Loon* 72:56–59). Late fall dates are typical for this species in the Great Lakes Basin (Sherony and Brock 1997, Jaeger Migration on the Great Lakes, *Birding* 29:372–385).

Parasitic Jaeger

All reports: 9/19 St. Louis (two Parasitics plus one unidentified off Park Point in Duluth) mob, 10/17 Lake (adult light morph in Two Harbors) *fide* KE, 10/20–21 St. Louis (adult light morph in Duluth) SDM, †PS, †KE. The latter two reports probably refer to the same individual. Many observers reported an immature jaeger 11/14–22 Cook (Grand Marais) as a Parasitic, but no documentation was submitted. This would be record late for a Parasitic but prime time for a Pomarine.

Franklin's Gull

Singles reported from unusual locations 9/4 St. Louis (Duluth) PS, 9/15 Lake *fide* KE. Few other north reports, where last observed 10/15 Douglas RH. One with abnormal was pigmentation documented 8/7 Lincoln PC (*The Loon* 72:56). Many south reports into late October and early November; last reported 11/11 Lyon RgS, **11/29** Sibley (immature at the Gaylord lagoons) KB. An overwhelming **30,000** were estimated 9/27 Jackson (South Heron L.) AH.

Little Gull

Only report: 10/3–4 **Cass/Itasca** (one in juvenal plumage on L. Winnibigoshish) †PS, AH (*The Loon* 72:10–13).

BLACK-HEADED GULL

Reported 10/9–**11/13** Jackson (near Spirit

L.) †AH, †PH, mob (*The Loon* 72:121–122). At least one of these two adults had previously been seen on the Iowa side of the border.

Bonaparte's Gull

Lingered into December on Mille Lacs L., where counts peaked at 2,239 on 10/14 (AH, PS). Similar surveys on L. Winnibigoshish peaked at 2,120 on 10/3 (PS). Many November reports south, including 11/27 Scott JSt and 11/29 in three more counties.

Ring-billed Gull

Reported throughout the state. See winter report for late migrants north and south. Peak count 9/21 Hennepin (2,000+ on L. Harriet) AJo. For the second consecutive fall, an albinistic Ring-billed was found in Duluth 8/28 St. Louis †PS.

CALIFORNIA GULL

This Casual species was reported 11/6–21 Hennepin (second-winter individual on L. Calhoun) †PBu, †PS, mob (*The Loon* 72:119–120).

Herring Gull

Reported from 7 north and 18 south counties. Peak counts 11/15 and 11/21 Cook (3,000+ in Grand Marais) RJ, PS.

Thayer's Gull

Fewer reports than recent fall migrations. Unusual locations 10/19 Lake of the Woods (juvenile bird near Rocky Point) †PS, 11/22 Aitkin (adult on Mille Lacs L.) PS. Also reported north 10/14+ St. Louis and 10/16+ Cook mob. As usual, adults arrived before immatures: first seen 10/3 Hennepin (2) PBu, then additional south reports from Hennepin, Dakota, 10/24 Rice (2 adults) TBo, 11/26 Isanti (2) KB. See winter report for peak count.

Iceland Gull

Only two reports: 11/14+ Cook (Grand Marais) CK, JSt *et al.*, plus an additional first-winter bird 11/20 Cook †PC.

Lesser Black-backed Gull

One adult 10/3 Hennepin (L. Calhoun)



Black-headed Gull, 9 October 1999, Spirit Lake, Jackson County. Photo by Anthony Hertzell.

†PBu was relocated 10/20–11/6, when it was joined by a second adult gull. One or both of these were then consistently reported on L. Calhoun, and in Burnsville 11/24+ Dakota †KB. See winter report for late dates.

Glaucous Gull

Early north 10/27 Cook DF, then 10/30+ (Grand Marais) mob. Only south report 10/29 Hennepin (imm. on L. Harriet) †PBu. This is the first October record for the southern half of the state.

Great Black-backed Gull

No reports.

BLACK-LEGGED KITTIWAKE

Only documented report: 11/21 Cook (Grand Marais) †HT *et al.* (*The Loon* 72:59).

Caspian Tern

Peak 9/10 Beltrami (20) DJo. Late north 10/9 Cass PS, 10/17 Wadena PBi. All south reports were in September, except for 8/31 McLeod CMA and 10/9 Dakota DBS. A first county record 9/6 Dodge JSt



Caspian Tern, 4 October 1999, Garrison, Crow Wing County. Photo by Peder H. Svingen.

was also relatively early.

Common Tern

Only reported from three north and three south counties. All north reports: 8/21 Cass MRN, 10/1 Crow Wing MRN, 10/9 Becker BK. All south reports: 8/12 Lac Qui Parle BOI, 8/17 Dakota DBS, 9/17 Meeker DF.

Forster's Tern

Late north 10/9 Becker BK and Cass PS, 10/14 Crow Wing AH, PS. Late south 9/27 Jackson CMa, 10/2 Ramsey SL.

Black Tern

Migrated earlier than usual across the state. All north reports were in August (recent median departure date is 9/3). Reported from 17 south counties, latest 9/11 Jackson CMa.

ANCIENT MURRELET

Seventh Minnesota record 11/20 **Cook** (Grand Marais) †DBz, †PC *et al.* (*The Loon* 72:43-45). This is the first time that any alcid has been found alive and healthy in the state of Minnesota by birders! Other records (two Dovekie and six Ancient Murrelet records) refer to specimens, birds found moribund or dead, or those shot by hunters from flocks of waterfowl.

Doves to Kingfishers

Rock Dove

Reported throughout the state.

EURASIAN COLLARED-DOVE

Up to four frequented a feeder in **Martin** (Fairmont) starting in mid-October (†EBK, †BSe video!). About the sixth state record,

all since spring 1998. Three doves first found in late January 1999 continued in Jasper, Pipestone/Rock counties.

Mourning Dove

Reported throughout the state.

Black-billed Cuckoo

Apparently migrated earlier than usual. Only two north reports, both in August. Reported from 15 south counties, mostly early August. Three September reports south; last reported 9/13 Hennepin TT (median south departure 9/28).

Yellow-billed Cuckoo

No north reports. Only south report after mid-September was 10/6 Hennepin OJ.

Eastern Screech-Owl

Unusual location 10/8–24 **St. Louis** (Rice Lake Twp.) FN. Other than two old records, this species has not been found in St. Louis County! It was caught and banded while Nicoletti was netting Saw-whets in his backyard. Also reported from Todd, Lac Qui Parle, Pipestone, Murray, Jackson, Brown, Freeborn, and Hennepin.

Great Horned Owl

Reported from 14 north and 23 south counties in all regions of the state.

Snowy Owl

All reports: 11/7–8 Becker BBe, 11/13 Aitkin WN and Anoka JHa, 11/14 Ramsey *fide* AH, plus two November reports from Cook.

Northern Hawk Owl

Two second-hand reports: 10/20 Mah-nomen *fide* BBe, 11/17–18 St. Louis *fide* DBE.

Barred Owl

Reported from 11 north and 18 south counties, in all regions except the west-central and southwest.

Great Gray Owl

All reports: 10/23 Becker *fide* BBe, 11/9

Cook *fide* DBE, 11/21 Aitkin WN, 11/29 St. Louis CMA.

Long-eared Owl

All reports: 10/19 Scott RJ, 10/22 Chippewa ABo, 10/28 Cook DF, 11/11 St. Louis (Ely, injured) SS, 11/26 Anoka (2) and Ramsey (4) AH, PH.

Short-eared Owl

Continuing one of the best years for this species in recent memory, at least four different birds were in St. Louis between 9/22 and 11/6 (all Duluth, mob) and up to four were observed at The Nature Conservancy's Plover Prairie 10/1–12 Lac Qui Parle WM *et al.* All other reports: 11/3 Wilkin SDM, 11/11 Otter Tail DST.

Boreal Owl

Three were banded in St. Louis (HRNR in Duluth): 10/1 (relatively early) and two in November (DEv *et al.*).

Northern Saw-whet Owl

Early south 11/6 Brown *fide* MRN. Also reported from Anoka, Hennepin, Rice, and St. Louis. Total of 879 banded at HRNR (DEv *et al.*).

Common Nighthawk

Peak movement occurred in late August as expected: 8/20 St. Louis (9,189) JN. Late north 9/15 Mahnomen MRN, 9/16 Cass MRN. Reported from a total of six south counties in October; last reported 10/9 Brown JSp, Jackson AH, PH, and Waseca JSe.

Whip-poor-will

No north reports. Only south reports: 9/9 Hennepin SC, 9/18 Stearns MJ/DT, 9/19 Houston MFO.

Chimney Swift

Apparently departed earlier than usual north and south. Three early September reports north, where the recent median departure date is 9/16. Last reported 9/5 Polk EF (north) and 9/21 Hennepin SC (south). Median south departure is more than two weeks later (10/8).

Ruby-throated Hummingbird

Late north 9/22 Polk EF. Departed on time north and south, except for one that lingered until 10/19 in Nicollet MF (the recent median is 10/6).

Belted Kingfisher

Reported from 21 north and 40 south counties. Please see winter report for late migrants and overwintering birds.

Woodpeckers to Kingbirds

Red-headed Woodpecker

Reported from 7 north and 24 south counties in all regions except the north-east. Not found north after September, except for 11/8 Mille Lacs AH.

Red-bellied Woodpecker

More reports than usual from the north-central and northeast regions. Total of five reports from St. Louis, including one northwest of Ely (9/4, DF) and 10/31 HRNR *vide* KE. In all, reported from 12 north and 35 south counties.

WILLIAMSON'S SAPSUCKER

Third state record **10/16 Cook** (male at Taconite Harbor) †AnH, †AH, †PS (*The Loon* 72:115-117). Very few extralimital records of this species in the Midwest have been during autumn.

Yellow-bellied Sapsucker

Peak migration north during September, then four October reports (latest 10/30 Cook AH). Lingering south reports through the end of the period.

Downy Woodpecker

Reported throughout the state.

Hairy Woodpecker

Reported throughout the state.

Three-toed Woodpecker

Only report: 10/27 Cook DF.

Black-backed Woodpecker

Numbers were up along the North Shore during October and November, including

12 migrants at HRNR (8 last fall). Also reported 8/15 Hubbard RSm.

Northern Flicker

Reported from 23 north and 38 south counties in all regions of the state through the end of the period. A "Red-shafted" Flicker was found 10/1 in St. Louis (Duluth) JN.

Pileated Woodpecker

Reported from all regions of the state, in 19 north and 17 south counties.

Olive-sided Flycatcher

Departed from the north one week early, but migration in south typical. Early south 8/4 Brown JSp, 8/8 Hennepin SC and Waseca JSe. Late north 8/25 Hubbard PBU, 8/29 Carlton LW and Otter Tail SDM. Late south 9/8 Brown JSp and McLeod RbS, 9/11 Dakota DBS, 9/19 Hennepin TT.

Eastern Wood-Pewee

Late north 9/6 Polk EF, 9/9 Beltrami DJo, 9/19 Carlton LW. Late south 9/22 Brown JSp, 9/23 Fillmore NO, 9/25 Olmsted CH; compare these dates to the recent median departure (10/4).

Yellow-bellied Flycatcher

Only north reports: 8/16 Aitkin WN, 8/19 Cass MRN, 8/20 Clearwater ABo. Early south 8/14 Hennepin SC, 8/17 Brown JSp. Late south 9/10 Hennepin TT.

Acadian Flycatcher

All reports: 8/1 Rice TBo, 8/10 Hennepin SC. This is much earlier than the median south departure date (8/27).

Alder Flycatcher

Very few north reports. Late north 8/24 Cass MRN. Late south 8/7 Dakota TT and Hennepin SC, 8/21 Brown JSp; compare to median south departure (9/2).

Willow Flycatcher

Only north report: 8/2 Wilkin PS. All south reports: 8/1 Dakota TT and Rice TBo, 8/14 Hennepin SC. **Note:** During

spring and fall migration, undocumented records of silent *Empidonax* flycatchers are not published in this report. Please be sure to indicate singing or calling birds on the Seasonal Report form.

Least Flycatcher

Aside from one late individual south, all reports were earlier than recent median departure dates north (9/23) and south (9/26). Late north 9/4 Cook KMH, 9/10 Beltrami DJo. Late south 10/1 Hennepin SC.

Eastern Phoebe

Stayed 5 to 10 days later than normal. Late north 10/4 Becker DN and Cass MRN, 10/6 Kanabec BA, 10/16 Cook AH. Late south 10/18 Hennepin PBU, 10/29 Brown JSp, 11/11 Lyon RgS.

Great Crested Flycatcher

Departed 7 to 10 days earlier than normal. Only one north report in September. Late north 8/28 Traverse SL, 8/30 Aitkin WN, 9/12 Wadena PBi. Late south 9/15 Brown JSp, 9/16 Fillmore NO and Meeker DF.

Western Kingbird

Late north 8/28 Traverse MBW, 8/29 Otter Tail SDM, 9/19 St. Louis (Stony Pt.) JG. Only south reports: 8/4 Lyon RgS, 8/7 Lac Qui Parle WM, 8/8 Swift TT, 8/17 Stevens CMa, 9/8 Meeker DF. Except for the one unusual report from St. Louis, departed two weeks early in the north.

Eastern Kingbird

Aside from one late individual in Jackson, also departed earlier than normal (recent medians 9/19 in north and 9/25 in south). Late north 9/10 Cass MRN, 9/12 Wadena PBi, 9/15 Cook KMH. Late south 9/17 Meeker DF, 9/19 Hennepin TT, 10/9 Jackson AH, PH.

Srikes to Swallows

Loggerhead Shrike

Very few reports. Only north report: 8/22 Wilkin FKS. Late south 8/16 Blue Earth MF. Also reported from Lac Qui Parle (4),

Meeker, at least two different locations in Dakota, and Washington. **Note:** Please continue to give exact locations and numbers for all seasons (per instructions on Seasonal Report form) so accurate numbers can be determined.

Northern Shrike

Appeared suddenly and widely distributed throughout the state beginning in mid-October. Numbers were up along the North Shore. Early north 10/12 Aitkin CB and Otter Tail DST, 10/13 St. Louis SS. Early south 10/12 Hennepin SC, 10/13 Dakota DBS. DF had 46 observations of this species from 41 different locations, 23 of these within Meeker County; his high count of 11 occurred on 11/21.

Bell's Vireo

Only report: 8/6 Dakota TT.

Yellow-throated Vireo

Late north 9/11 Kanabec CM and Otter Tail DST, 9/12 Carlton LW, **9/27** Beltrami PBD. Late south 9/19 Hennepin SC, 9/21 Meeker CMa, 9/22 Fillmore NO.

Blue-headed Vireo

Arrived and departed on time in the south. Early south 8/14 Meeker DF, 8/21 Hennepin SL, 8/25 Stearns MJ/DT. No north reports during the two weeks prior to the median departure date (10/11), but a lingering bird was discovered at Stony Point on 10/20 St. Louis JG. Late south 10/11 Hennepin TT and Mower RRR, 10/13 Hennepin ABo.

Warbling Vireo

Late north 8/28 Traverse JSt, 9/4 Otter Tail SDM, DST, 9/10 Beltrami DJo. Late south 9/12 Jackson CMa, 9/18 Scott SL, 9/29 Ramsey RH.

Philadelphia Vireo

Early south 8/19 Lac Qui Parle FE, 8/26 McLeod DF, 8/30 Lyon RgS. All reports north after August: 9/4 Aitkin CB, 9/16 Cook KMH, 9/18 Kanabec CM, 9/19 St. Louis SWe, **10/30** (second latest north) St. Louis (banded at HRNR) DG. Late

south 9/19 Brown JSp, 9/21 Hennepin TT, 9/28 Hennepin SC.

Red-eyed Vireo

Except for one straggler, birds departed the north by the median date (9/26). Late north 9/24 Cook KMH, 9/25 Cass MRN, **10/22–28** (latest north date) Cook †DF, AH, PS. Latest south reports also around this time, except for a late individual in Hennepin. Late south 9/25 Rice JSt, 9/27 Meeker DF, 10/7 Hennepin SC.

Gray Jay

Reported throughout the period in Aitkin, Beltrami, Cook, Hubbard, Itasca, Lake, Roseau, and St. Louis. Numbers up along the North Shore in October, but scarce by November (KE).

Blue Jay

Reported throughout the state.

Black-billed Magpie

Reported from Aitkin, Itasca, Pennington, Roseau, plus an unusual report 9/25 St. Louis (near Stony Pt.) JLi.

American Crow

Reported throughout the state.

Common Raven

Reported throughout the period from its usual range, plus 8/13 Chisago RH in the south. Largest movements reported by FN from Hawk Ridge were 10/13 (129) and 10/23 (128), where the seasonal total was 1,828.

Horned Lark

Reported throughout the state. Peak counts were unimpressive.

Purple Martin

Departed about one week early, north and south. Late north 8/29 Wadena PBi, 9/2 Beltrami DJo, 9/5 St. Louis (19) FN. Late south 8/30 Brown JSp and Meeker DF, 9/6 Steele JSt, 9/11 Jackson CMa.

Tree Swallow

Peak number 8/16 St. Louis (1,832) JN.

Late north 9/6 Aitkin WN and Polk (440) EF, 9/12 Wadena PBi, then no reports until 10/4 Douglas RH, which is near the median north departure date (10/2). Late south 10/4 Dakota TT and Hennepin CMa, 10/19 Hennepin SC, 10/26 Meeker DF.

Northern Rough-winged Swallow

Late north 8/21 Grant CMa and Wadena PBi, 8/28 Grant SL; compare these to the recent median departure date (9/20). Late south 9/21 Hennepin SC and Meeker CMa, 10/1 Hennepin PBu.

Bank Swallow

Departed about one week early, north and south. Peak 8/1 Traverse (**2,500** near Mud L., a record high count in one flock) PS. Late north 8/21 Grant CMa, 8/28 Traverse JSt, 9/6 Wadena PBi. Late south 9/6 Waseca JSe, 9/11 Hennepin SC, 9/12 Jackson CMa.

Cliff Swallow

Departed the north on time, except for one straggler in Cook. All north reports after August: 9/6 Aitkin WN and Wadena PBi, 9/14 St. Louis TW, **10/2** Cook KE *et al.* Late south 10/6 Meeker DF, 10/9 Jackson and Rock AH, PH.

Barn Swallow

Largest flock was 315 birds in Stevens on 9/25 (RJ). Most birds left on time by the middle of October, but at least one lingered later than any other in Minnesota history. Late north 9/10 Beltrami DJo, 9/12 Wadena PBi, 10/3 Cass MRN. Late south 10/12 Rock PS, 10/19 Hennepin SC, **11/14–17** (latest date in state) Scott CMa, †SC.

Chickadees to Gnatcatchers

Black-capped Chickadee

Reported throughout the state.

Boreal Chickadee

Reported from Aitkin, Cook, Itasca, Lake, and St. Louis.

Tufted Titmouse

Reported from Fillmore, Houston, Mower,

and Olmsted.

Red-breasted Nuthatch

Reported throughout the state.

White-breasted Nuthatch

Also reported throughout the state.

Brown Creeper

Reported throughout the state, including 11/13 Goodhue (20+) SWe.

Carolina Wren

Only report from Olmsted (Rochester) at a feeder through 9/8 (*fide* AH).

House Wren

Migration consistent with recent median departure dates. Late north 9/13 Kanabec BA, 9/23 St. Louis LW, 10/6 Itasca BN. Many south reports through 10/8, then only 10/15 Yellow Medicine RJ, 10/20 Murray ND.

Winter Wren

Early south 9/10 Fillmore NO, 9/14 Hennepin SC. Late north 10/20 Cook KMH, 10/24 Lake LW. Many south reports through mid-October, then 10/18 Brown JSp, 10/29 Mower RRR, 11/5 Fillmore NO, 11/7 Olmsted *fide* AH. This was the earliest south departure since 1993.

Sedge Wren

All north reports after the first week of September: 9/21 Todd JSK, 9/23 Wilkin SDM, 10/13 Aitkin PJ, 10/16 Douglas RH. All south reports later than September: 10/1 Hennepin PBU, 10/4 Lyon RgS, 10/5 Hennepin SC.

Marsh Wren

Departed the north one month ahead of the recent median departure date, except for one straggler **10/31** Cook KE which tied the second latest date north. Many south reports through the first week of October, then only 10/12 Renville CMA, 10/17 Chippewa ABo.

Golden-crowned Kinglet

Many north reports through the end of

October, then only 11/21 Carlton LW. Early south 9/20 Hennepin SC, 9/21 Meeker CMA, then quickly spread throughout the other southern counties during the last week of September and first few days of October.

Ruby-crowned Kinglet

Quickly spread throughout the south beginning 9/10 Hennepin SC, 9/11 in three counties. Many north reports through 10/20, then 10/27 Clay CN, and one much later individual 11/21 St. Louis JN. Late south 10/31 Dakota SWe, 11/1 Meeker DF, 11/20 Hennepin TT.

Blue-gray Gnatcatcher

North reports in Cass, Crow Wing, Grant, Otter Tail, and Todd through August, then 9/5 Otter Tail DST, **10/22** Cook †KMH (*The Loon* 72:53-54). The latter record continues this species' pattern of late fall reports along the North Shore (*The Loon* 69:106-107). It is a month later than the latest south date this season and it's later than all but one south date ever recorded in the state. Late south 9/16 Fillmore NO, 9/18 Dakota TT and Scott SL.

Bluebirds to Waxwings

Eastern Bluebird

Significant counts 9/6 Polk (59) EF, 10/11 St. Louis (167) FN, 10/16 Cass (30) MRN. Frequent north reports until the last week of October, then 10/25 Cook KMH, 10/31 Wadena PBi, 11/6 Aitkin WN. Late south 11/15 Blue Earth MF, 11/18 Brown JSp; also see winter report.

Mountain Bluebird

All reports: 10/4 **Mille Lacs** (female near Princeton) PS, 10/14 Kanabec (female at Ogilvie) AH, 10/14-15 Dakota (female at L. Byllesby) †DBS, 11/3 Pipestone (pair at Holland) *fide* AH.

Townsend's Solitaire

All north reports: up to **seven** individuals in Cook, from 10/20 (DSp *et al.*) through 11/28, plus at least four locations in St.



Mountain Bluebird, 15 October 1999, Lake Byllesby, Dakota County. Photo by Anthony Hertzell.

Louis, where first reported 10/24 at HRNR (FN). Only south reports: 9/28 Hennepin (Crow-Hassan Park) †SC and a first for the county 10/12 **Pipestone** (Pipestone N.M.) †PS. These represent the second and third earliest south dates on record.

Veery

Few reports of this species. Earliest north departure since 1988. Late south date comparable to median departure date. Late north 8/27 Clearwater ABo, 9/3 Cook KMH, 9/4 Aitkin WN. Late south 8/18 Stearns SWi, 9/5 Ramsey TT, 9/17 Rice TBo.

Gray-checked Thrush

Only reported from four counties. All north reports: 9/3 Carlton LW, 9/12 Otter Tail SDM, 9/23 Carlton SL. South reports were mostly from Hennepin: 9/5 TT, 9/6 OJ, 9/10–12 SC, 9/19 TT. The one exception was 9/15 Sherburne GS.

Swainson's Thrush

One was early south 12 days before the median arrival date, then not reported for three weeks! Early south 8/3 Hennepin SC, 8/24 McLeod RbS, 9/2 Brown JSp.

Late north 10/8 Todd JSK, 10/16 Lake BSe, 10/17 Kanabec CM. Late south 10/15 Wright DF, 10/23 Watonwan SL, BSe.

Hermit Thrush

Migration similar to Swainson's Thrush: one arrived south almost a week earlier than expected, then no reports for over two weeks. Early south 9/4 Hennepin ChM, 9/6 Houston MFO, 9/23 Hennepin TT. Late north 10/9 Cass MRN and Itasca ABo, 10/12 Todd JSK, 10/13 Carlton LW. Reported south frequently through end of October, then only 11/6 Winona AH, PH.

Wood Thrush

Reported in August and early September from Fillmore, McLeod and Meeker, then only 9/23 Hennepin SC, 9/27 Meeker DF.

American Robin

Reported throughout the state.

Varied Thrush

All reports: 9/23 (third earliest north date) Cook †KMH (*The Loon* 71:235–236), 11/3 Anoka *vide* AH, 11/20 Crow Wing JBI, late-November (subsequently overwintered) in Roseau JFo.

Gray Catbird

Reported in three north counties on 9/23, then only 10/1 St. Louis JN. Frequent south reports through 10/13, then only 11/3 Lac Qui Parle FE, 11/13 Goodhue CMA.

Northern Mockingbird

Remarkably, the only two reports were from the most northeastern county and both were found by the same observers! Reported 9/19 Cook (Tofte) and 11/21 Cook (Hovland) DBM. This species made an appearance in Cook last fall also.

Brown Thrasher

Earliest north departure in 15+ years. Late north 9/12 Kanabec BA, Otter Tail SDM and Wadena PBI. Regular reports south through mid-September, then only 9/23 Hennepin PBU, 10/23 Washington TEB, 11/19 McLeod DF, 11/20 Hennepin SC, TT.

European Starling

Reported throughout the state.

American Pipit

Many south reports from the last week of September through early November, about one week later than median south arrival and departure dates. Early north 9/11 St. Louis SS, 9/15 Cook KMH. Early south 9/21 Meeker CMa, 9/22 Hennepin SC. Peak numbers 9/26 Otter Tail (**500-600**, record high count) SDM (*The Loon* 72:118), 10/4 Cass (**300**) MRN. Late north 10/29 Todd RJ, 11/4 St. Louis JN. Late south 11/3 Le Sueur MF and Hennepin SC, 11/6 Dakota SL.

Bohemian Waxwing

Reported from Aitkin, Becker, Beltrami, Cook, Lake, and St. Louis; first seen 10/16 Cook AH, PS, 10/19 St. Louis LW.

Cedar Waxwing

Reported throughout the state.

Warblers

Blue-winged Warbler

No north reports. Late south 8/29 Brown JSp and Rice TBo, 9/3 Fillmore NO, 9/6 Dakota SWe — earliest south departure since 1991.

Golden-winged Warbler

Early south 8/15 Hennepin SC, TT, 8/24 Ramsey RH. Late north 8/30 Aitkin WN, 9/5 Carlton LW, 9/12 Kanabec CM (recent median 9/6). Late south 9/11 Dakota DBS, 9/12 Hennepin SC, ten days earlier than normal. DBr found a "Lawrence's" hybrid in Watonwan County on 8/25, and TT reported a "Brewster's" from T. S. Roberts Sanctuary in Hennepin County on 9/5.

Tennessee Warbler

Please see summer report for early south migrants; also reported 8/1 Hennepin SC, 8/3 Ramsey SL. Late north 10/16 Lake BSe, 10/19 Cook KE, 10/24 St. Louis JN. Late south 10/10 Hennepin TT, 10/12 Ramsey RH, 10/27 Ramsey TEB.

Orange-crowned Warbler

A few early individuals seen in August, followed by many reports north and south after 9/9. Early north 8/16 Aitkin WN, 8/29 St. Louis †BY, 9/10 Beltrami DJo. Early south 8/28 Lyon RgS, 8/31 Fillmore NO, 9/9 Hennepin KO. Departures on time. Late north 10/9 Cook KMH and Itasca ABo, 10/16 Carlton LW, 10/28 St. Louis KE. Late south 10/22 Goodhue SL, 10/23 Hennepin RJ. **Note:** Orange-crowned Warblers are among the latest fall warblers in Minnesota. Please provide details for reports before early September so as to distinguish them from the more expected and similar looking Tennessee Warbler.

Nashville Warbler

Please see summer report for early south migrants; also discovered 8/1 Hennepin SC, 8/12 Hennepin DBo. Late north 10/6 Aitkin CB, 10/10 Cook KMH and St. Louis JN. Late south 10/11 Hennepin TT and Lac Qui Parle AH, 10/23 Watonwan SL.

Northern Parula

All September reports north: 9/2 Beltrami DJo, 9/12 Carlton LW, 9/17 Itasca ABo. Early south 8/14 Meeker DF, 8/15 Hennepin SC. Peak number 8/30 Dakota (8) DBS. Latest south reports all from Hennepin: 9/11 WM, 9/20 TT, 9/25 SC.

Yellow Warbler

This species usually leaves the state by the end of September, but TT found a record late bird during the last week of October and then an extraordinarily late individual at the end of November! Late north 9/12 Aitkin WN and Wadena PBi, 9/18 Hubbard HJF, 9/19 St. Louis TW. Late south 9/16 Hennepin SC, **10/24** (second latest in state) Dakota TT, **11/28** (record late) Ramsey †TT.

Chestnut-sided Warbler

Early migrants south 8/12 Hennepin DBo, 8/14 Hennepin SC, TT, 8/15 Rice TBo. Late north 9/18 Kanabec CM, 9/19 St. Louis SWe, **10/19** (banded at HRNR, the latest date north by 12 days!) St. Louis DG. Late south 9/25 Houston MFO, 9/28

Hennepin SC, 10/9 Hennepin TT.

Magnolia Warbler

One south report on time (recent median 8/15) in Hennepin, then no reports until rapid movement south nine days later. Departed north and south about one week early. Early south 8/14 Hennepin SC, TT, 8/23 Brown JSp, Fillmore NO and Freeborn ABa. Late north 9/19 Carlton LW and St. Louis SWe, TW, 9/22 Cook KMH. Late south 9/23 Fillmore NO, 9/26 Hennepin SC, TT and Mower DSm.

Cape May Warbler

Early south 8/22 Hennepin SC, 8/24 Dakota TT. Late north 10/24 St. Louis JN, **11/6** (third latest north date) Lake KE *et al.* Late south 9/19 Anoka JH, 9/22 McLeod DF, 10/8 McLeod DF, RbS.

Black-throated Blue Warbler

Fewer reports than usual, though SC seemed to have no trouble finding them in Hennepin! All reports: 8/26 Hennepin (female at Cedar L.) SC, 9/2 Hennepin (female at Elm Creek) SC, 9/8 Washington RJ, 9/15 Ramsey *fide* AH, 9/17-21 Hennepin (male at Cedar L.) SC, ChM, 10/11 McLeod (female) †DF.

Yellow-rumped Warbler

Reported south 8/24 Ramsey RH, 8/25 McLeod DF, 8/28 Stevens SL. Numerous reports in mid-October, including 10/10 Fillmore (~100) NO. Regularly reported north through the third week in October, then only 11/3 Cook KMH, 11/14 St. Louis FN. All south reports after October: 11/8 Dakota and Washington SL, 11/13 Hennepin SL.

Black-throated Green Warbler

Early south 8/24 Ramsey RH and Rice TBo, 8/25 McLeod DF, 8/27 Fillmore NO. Late north 9/17 Itasca ABo, 9/19 Carlton LW, 9/20 Aitkin CB. Frequent south reports through mid-September, then 9/22 McLeod DF, 10/12 Renville CMa.

Blackburnian Warbler

Early south 8/12 Rice TBo, 8/14 Meeker

DF and Hennepin DBo, followed by frequent reports after 8/20. Late north 9/13 Pennington JJ, 9/16 Beltrami DJo, 10/11 St. Louis JN. Late south 9/11 Hennepin WM, 9/12 Houston MFO, 9/15 Stearns SWi, about two weeks earlier than usual.

Pine Warbler

Late north 9/19 Carlton LW and Lake DBM, 9/25 Cass MRN, 10/24 Cook *fide* KE. Only south reports: 8/31 Washington RJ, 9/11 Watonwan DBr, 9/12 Houston MFO.

PRAIRIE WARBLER

First fall report ever! This bird was found at the Richfield community gardens west of the MSP airport on 8/12 Hennepin †TT. The bird was seen by many, documented by few, and lingered through 8/19. This will be the last remarkable discovery at this migrant trap (which produced Sage Thrasher and Lark Bunting in recent years), as the gardens are being paved over for a new runway as part of the airport expansion.

Palm Warbler

Many south reports beginning 9/9 were preceded by two early migrants: **8/7** (record early south by 8 days) Hennepin †SC, 8/26 Hennepin DBo. Frequent north reports through the first half of October, then 10/17 St. Louis PS, 10/21 Lake AH. Late south 10/17 Meeker DF and Ramsey SL, 10/28 Hennepin TT.

Bay-breasted Warbler

Almost all south reports occurred during the three-week period between 8/27 and 9/14. Outside of this range were early reports 8/14 Hennepin SC, TT, 8/17 Nicollet MF, 8/19 Pope CMa, and late reports 9/25 Rice JSt, 10/3 Hennepin TT, 10/5 Hennepin SC. Late north 9/23 St. Louis SL, then two unusually late reports: 10/22 Cook BSt, **11/6** (second latest date in state) Cook ChM, MiM.

Blackpoll Warbler

Only four north reports: 8/25 Hubbard PBU, 9/12 Otter Tail SDM and Wadena

PBi, 9/15 St. Louis LW. Early south 8/27 Hennepin TT, 8/28 Stevens SL, 8/29 Anoka JH. Late south 9/27 Washington TEB, 10/2 Ramsey SL, **11/3** (record late date) Rice †CGj.

Cerulean Warbler

No reports.

Black-and-white Warbler

Departed north and south *en masse*, about two weeks earlier than usual. Late north 9/16 Beltrami DJo, 9/19 Carlton LW and St. Louis SWe, TW. Late south 9/26 Fillmore NO, Freeborn ABa, Hennepin TT, and Mower DSm.

American Redstart

Many reports through September north and south, then only two north reports: 10/16 Cook PS, **11/6** (second latest date north) Lake KE *et al.* Late south 10/1 Hennepin TT, 10/7 Hennepin SC.

Prothonotary Warbler

Only report: 8/30 Dakota DBS, compared to five last fall.

Worm-eating Warbler

No reports. Only one fall record (1992) since 1976.

Ovenbird

Late north 9/17 Itasca ABo, 9/22 St. Louis SS, 10/3 Carlton LW. Late south 9/28 Dakota DBS, 10/4 Hennepin TT, 10/26 Washington TEB.

Northern Waterthrush

Early south 8/10 Hennepin SC, TT, 8/19 Brown JSp, 8/20 Stearns CMA. Left the north well before recent median (9/28). Late north 8/30 Beltrami DJo, 9/6 Carlton LW and Polk EF. Late south 9/18 Scott SL, 9/20 Brown JSp, 10/3 Hennepin TT.

Louisiana Waterthrush

No adequately documented reports.

Kentucky Warbler

No reports (species considered accidental in fall).

Connecticut Warbler

All reports: 9/11 Hennepin DBo, 9/12 Wadena PBi, 10/3 Wadena PBi.

Mourning Warbler

Departed the state (north and south) about two weeks earlier than usual. Early south 8/19 Hennepin SC, 8/20 Brown JSp, 8/28 Lyon RgS. Late north 8/24 Cass MRN, 8/29 Aitkin WN, 9/3 Carlton LW. Late south 9/11 Fillmore NO and Nicollet MF, 9/16 Meeker DF, 9/18 Hennepin SC.

Common Yellowthroat

Late north 9/27 Clay DDC, 10/9 Cook KMh, **10/30–31** Cook DBM, WM. Late south 10/6 Meeker DF, 10/22 Chippewa ABo, 10/31 Brown JSp.

Hooded Warbler

No reports.

Wilson's Warbler

Early north 8/16 Aitkin WN, 8/19 Otter Tail SDM. Early south 8/14 Hennepin SC, 8/18 Stearns SWi, 8/19 Brown JSp. Late north 9/4 Cook KMh, 9/6 Polk EF, 9/7 Aitkin CB. Late south 9/21 Hennepin SC, 9/26 Fillmore NO and Freeborn ABa.

Canada Warbler

All September reports north: 9/4 Kanabec CM, 9/13 Cass MRN, 9/22 St. Louis SL, the last bird one week later than usual. Early south 8/12 Hennepin DBo, 8/14 Hennepin TT. Late south 9/16 Hennepin SC, 9/19 Fillmore NO, 10/1 Lac Qui Parle FE. Movement through the south was typical, except for one straggler in a western county.

Yellow-breasted Chat

No reports.

Tanagers to Snow Bunting

Summer Tanager

All reports: 8/20 Anoka (Spring Lake Park) †AH, 10/21 Lake (Knife River) AH, †PS. The latter perpetuates the recent pattern of this species being found along the North Shore in October.

Scarlet Tanager

Earlier departure than normal; from north about ten days early and from south about one week early. Late north 8/24 Carlton LW and Hubbard PBU, 8/27 Beltrami RJ, 9/11 Cook KMH. Late south 9/20 Houston MFO, 9/23 Hennepin SC, 9/26 Hennepin TT.

Western Tanager

No reports.

Spotted Towhee

Only reports from the southwest region, where this species is most likely to be found during migration: 10/1 Lac Qui Parle WM, 10/17–18 Murray ND.

Eastern Towhee

Only two north reports: 819 Hubbard ABO, 8/21 Wadena PBI. Late south 10/5 Meeker DF, 10/10 Houston MFO, 10/12 Freeborn ABA.

American Tree Sparrow

Early north 9/19 St. Louis SWe, 9/22 Becker BBe, 9/24 St. Louis FN, 10/1 Itasca ABO. First observed in the south in Meeker 9/27 (DF), then not until 10/12 Hennepin RH, TT. Afterwards, moved quickly throughout the south; seen in nine additional counties 10/16–25.

Chipping Sparrow

Only north reports after September: 10/12 Traverse PS, 10/16 Aitkin WN and Cass MRN, 11/8 Becker BBe. Late south 10/20 Renville CMA, 10/31 Hennepin TT, 11/4 McLeod RbS. Both extreme dates were within a week of departure medians.

Clay-colored Sparrow

Late north 9/25 Pennington JJ, 9/28 Aitkin CB and St. Louis LW. Late south 10/5 Meeker DF, 10/7 Dakota DBS, 10/10 Lyon RgS.

Field Sparrow

No north reports. No stragglers in the south, as indicated by these latest dates: 10/18 Chippewa ABO, 10/19 Hennepin SC, 10/20 Renville DF.

Vesper Sparrow

All north reports after September: 10/10 Wadena PBI, 10/12 Cass MRN, 10/24 Todd JSK. Many south reports through 10/12 Renville CMA, with two lingering: 10/31 Meeker DF, 11/1 Lyon RgS.

Lark Sparrow

More north than south reports! All north reports: 8/18 Traverse CMA, 9/20 Cook DBM, 9/23 Morrison MJ/DT. Only south report: 8/24 Dakota TT.

Savannah Sparrow

Only north reports after September: 10/16 Aitkin WN and Wilkin CN, 10/30 Cook KMH. In contrast, many south reports through the end of October. Late south 10/25 Jackson CMA, 10/28 Hennepin SC, 10/30 Faribault JSt.

Grasshopper Sparrow

Only reported during August, with latest north report 8/31 Todd JSK and latest south report 8/19 Swift CMA. Both of these are almost identical to the medians of recent departures north (8/31) and south (8/15). Also reported south from Chisago, Hennepin, Lac Qui Parle, Lyon, and Wright.

Henslow's Sparrow

No reports.

LeConte's Sparrow

All north reports: 8/2 Wilkin PS, 8/20 Clearwater ABO, 9/6 St. Louis DF, 10/2 Aitkin WN. Early south 9/8 Hennepin ABO, 9/24 Hennepin TT. Peak number 10/12 Hennepin (5) SC. Last reported on 10/21 Hennepin SC, 10/23 Meeker DF.

Nelson's Sharp-tailed Sparrow

All reports: 9/9 Hennepin TT, 9/26 Olmsted JSt, 10/5 Jackson BBo, 10/8–10 **McLeod** †DF, †RbS, 10/9 Dakota TT. More reports than usual for this species, which is rarely detected during migration.

Fox Sparrow

Early north 9/24 Aitkin CB, 9/25 Cook KMH and Itasca ABO. Early south 9/20



Lapland Longspur, 2 October 1999, Grand Marais, Cook County. Photo by Vija Kelly.

Hennepin SC, 9/26 Dakota TT, 9/27 Meeker DF. Late north 10/27 Clay CN, 11/7 Aitkin WN. Late south 11/13 Brown JSp, 11/16 Hennepin SC (also see winter report).

Song Sparrow

Reported throughout the state and throughout the period south. Only three November reports north (but also see winter report): 11/6 Aitkin WN, 11/7 Wadena PBi, 11/15 St. Louis JN.

Lincoln's Sparrow

Early south 9/5 Hennepin SC, TT, 9/11 Meeker and Wright DF, 9/12 Watonwan DBr. Late north 10/12 Traverse PS, 10/16 St. Louis JN and Wilkin CN. Late south 10/23 Lyon RgS, 10/26 Hennepin SC, 10/31 Dakota TT.

Swamp Sparrow

Late north 10/22 Cook KMH, PS, 10/30 Lake WM. Many south reports through

the end of October, then only 11/3 Meeker DF, 11/19 Hennepin TT, 11/30 Hennepin SC. Also see winter report.

White-throated Sparrow

Early south 8/19 Hennepin SC, 8/22 Houston NJ, 9/4 Olmsted CH. Late north 11/7 Aitkin WN, 11/13 St. Louis JN. Also see winter report.

Harris's Sparrow

Reported from 15 counties north, with early reports 9/17 Clay DDC, 9/19 St. Louis NJ, 9/20 St. Louis TW. Many reports thereafter through mid-October. Peak number 10/12 Traverse (30) PS. Late north 10/16 Cass MRN and Wilkin (4) CN, 10/27 Clay (12) CN, 10/31 St. Louis JN. Reported from 21 counties south, with early reports 9/20 Dakota TT, 9/26 Lyon RbS, followed by many reports throughout October. Afterwards, only 11/3 McLeod DF, 11/20 Waseca JSe, 11/26 Hennepin SC.

White-crowned Sparrow

Early north 9/15 Cook KMH, 9/17 St. Louis JN, followed by frequent reports beginning 9/19. Early south 9/11 Nicollet MF, 9/18 Scott SL, 9/22 Hennepin SC. Late north 10/16 Cook AH, 10/21 Lake AH and St. Louis LW. Late south 10/14 Jackson BBo, 10/15 McLeod DF, 10/17 Ramsey SL. The latest north this season is three weeks earlier than usual, but the latest south is earlier than any departure since before 1985!

Dark-eyed Junco

Apparent migrants north began appearing 9/12 in Wadena (PBi) and were widely distributed by 9/20. Early south 9/16 Hennepin SC, 9/18 Hennepin TT, 9/20 Hennepin SL and Stearns MJ/DT. Widely reported south by 9/25. Very interesting was the apparent "Gray-headed" Junco briefly described 10/8 Pipestone ND. The "Oregon" Junco was recorded 10/17-30 Dakota (2) DBS and 10/24 Cass MRN.

Lapland Longspur

Early north 9/15 Cook KMH, 9/18 St. Louis SWe. Laplands were not found in the north away from Lake Superior until 10/6 Itasca ABo and 10/16 Wilkin (30) CN. Early south 9/19 Hennepin TT, 9/29 Dakota DBS. Peak numbers 10/23 Lyon (420) RgS, 10/29 Jackson (400) TT. Late north 10/26 Mille Lacs CMa, 10/31 Aitkin WN, 11/7 Cook CMa.

Smith's Longspur

All north reports: 9/25 Wilkin (3 birds at Rothsay WMA) AH, 10/20 Marshall (3 near Warren lagoons) PS, 10/20 Polk (1 near Crookston lagoons) PS. Only south reports: 9/26-10/25 Cottonwood (near Jeffers Petroglyphs) BBo, mob.

Chestnut-collared Longspur

No reports.

Snow Bunting

Early north 10/2 Cook VK, 10/3 Cass PS, 10/9 St. Louis SS, then many beginning 10/13. Moved quickly into the south with first reports 10/18 Chippewa ABo, 10/19



Painted Bunting, 10 August 1999, Maple Grove, Hennepin County. Photo by Dave Cahlander.

Hennepin SC, 10/21 McLeod RbS plus many more during the next few days. Several counts of 100 were dwarfed by the record high count **20,000** reported by WN on 10/31 in Aitkin!

Cardinals to Orioles

Northern Cardinal

Continued expansion in the north with reports from Aitkin, Becker (TNWR), Cook, Hubbard, Kanabec, Lake, Otter Tail, St. Louis, and Wadena. Reported throughout the south.

Rose-breasted Grosbeak

Late north 9/12 Kanabec BA, 9/18 Otter Tail DST, 9/19 Aitkin WN. Late south 9/24 Houston Mfo, 9/28 Hennepin SC, 10/2 Dakota TT. Departed more than two weeks early, north and south.

Blue Grosbeak

Reported only from Rock through 8/7, then 9/15 Murray (5) ND.

Indigo Bunting

Late north 8/21 Todd JSK and Wadena PBi, 8/23 Aitkin CB, 8/25 Cass MRN. Late

south 10/4 Hennepin DBM, TT, 10/5 Fillmore NO.

PAINTED BUNTING

A cooperative male appeared at the Novak's feeder in **Hennepin** (Maple Grove) in late June or early July. It was first documented 8/10 by many observers and remained through at least 8/20.

Dickcissel

Late north 8/1 Traverse PS. Late south 8/6 Brown JSp, Goodhue SL and Lyon RgS, 8/10 Meeker and Renville DF.

Bobolink

Late north 8/21 Wadena PBi, 8/26 Todd JSK, 9/12 Aitkin WN. Only south reports after 9/4 were 9/25 Hennepin TT, 10/1 Hennepin (Richfield community gardens) PBU, 10/2 Hennepin (Wood Lake) SC.

Red-winged Blackbird

Reported throughout the state, but only two north reports later than 11/6. Peak number 10/3 Dakota (10,000+) SWe.

Eastern Meadowlark

Late north 10/16 Aitkin WN. Late south 10/9 Jackson AH, PH, 10/10 Goodhue (15) NWi, 10/23 Hennepin SC

Western Meadowlark

Peak number 8/2 Wilkin (58) PS. Late north 10/10 Wadena PBi, 10/16 Todd JSK, 11/6 Lake NWi. Late south 10/18 Chippewa ABo, 10/23 Jackson SL, 11/4 Lyon RgS

Yellow-headed Blackbird

Late north 8/22 Clay FKS, 8/28 Traverse JSt, 9/6 Wadena PBi. Only south reports after 10/9 were 10/21 Houston SL, 10/23 Jackson SL, **11/26** Jackson BBo.

Rusty Blackbird

Early north 9/19 St. Louis (west Duluth) DJe and St. Louis (HRNR) FN, 9/25 St. Louis TW. Early south 9/15 Stearns SWi, 9/18 Hennepin CMa, TT. Late north 11/14 Pine CM, 11/15 St. Louis JN. See winter report for additional migrants.

Brewer's Blackbird

Only north reports after August: 10/1 Carlton LW and Itasca BN, 10/28 Todd JSK. Late south 11/20 Meeker DF, 11/21 McLeod DF, 11/24 Lyon RgS.

Common Grackle

Reported throughout the state.

GREAT-TAILED GRACKLE

The colonization in the Grovers L. area of Jackson, just north of the Iowa border, continues to expand. Up to 40-50 birds were found in October between Grovers L. and areas along Highway 86 north of the border. Last reported 10/23 Jackson (2) SL.

Brown-headed Cowbird

Only north reports after August: 9/23 Morrison MJ/DT, 10/10 Wadena PBi, 11/30 Aitkin WN. Late south 11/19 Murray ND, 11/21 Big Stone KB, but see winter report for additional south occurrences.

Orchard Oriole

Reported from Rock and Big Stone in early August, and then only 8/16 Meeker DF, 8/17 Pope and Stevens CMa, 8/18 Traverse CMa.

Baltimore Oriole

All north reports after August: 9/4 Otter Tail DST, 9/12 Aitkin WN, 9/18 Kanabec CM. Late south 9/5 Hennepin NWi and Nicollet LW, 9/9 Hennepin SC

Finches to Weaver Finches

Pine Grosbeak

Reported from the usual north counties. A large and early flock reported 10/3 St. Louis (**165** at HRNR in Duluth) FN, was followed by many observations beginning 10/22. First occurrences this season show an apparent movement into the state from the northeast towards the north-central and south regions: 10/22 Cook KMH, PS, 10/23 Carlton LW, 10/24 Aitkin CB, 10/26 Itasca BN, 10/28 Becker BK, 11/6 Pine CM, 11/18 Hubbard HJF. HRNR seasonal total 918 (FN).

Purple Finch

Reported throughout the north and wide-spread in the south (24 counties). Early south 8/16 Fillmore NO, 8/22 Brown JSp, 8/24 McLeod RbS.

House Finch

Reported throughout the state, though only one report from the less-frequently birded northwest corner of the state (9/6 Polk EF).

Red Crossbill

Reported from Beltrami, Cook and Lake, all between 10/21 and 11/6.

White-winged Crossbill

Reported from Aitkin, Becker, Cook, Lake, Otter Tail and St. Louis in the north, plus Hennepin and Jackson in the south. Early north 10/16 Cook AH, PS, BSe, 10/21 Lake AH. Early south 11/13 Jackson MJC, 11/20 Hennepin TT.

Common Redpoll

In keeping with the two-year cycle of this species, the scarcity of reports in 1998 was followed by many observations in 1999. Early north 10/15 Cass PS, 10/20

Cook KMH, 10/21 Lake AH. Peak number along the North Shore 10/22 Cook (2,800) AH, PS. Early south 10/23 Hennepin SC, Meeker DF and Murray ND. This species rapidly spread through the south.

Hoary Redpoll

All reports: 10/22 Cook AH, †PS, 10/30 Cook (2) AH, 10/30 Mille Lacs †PC, 11/2 Becker BK, 11/6 Lake CMa, 11/7-14 Aitkin †CB, WN, 11/14 Cook JSt, 11/21 Becker BBe.

Pine Siskin

Reported throughout the north. Many south reports beginning 9/21, but one was much earlier: 8/3 Ramsey SL.

American Goldfinch

Reported throughout the state.

Evening Grosbeak

Reported from Aitkin, Becker, Beltrami, Cass, Cook, Crow Wing, Hubbard, Itasca, Lake, Pennington, and St. Louis. No south reports.

House Sparrow

Reported throughout the state.

Contributors and Cited Observers*

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ABo	Al Bolduc	DBS	Drew & Becky Smith		Fisher
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AJo	Andrew Johnson*	DF	Dan Floren	JG	Janet Green*
BA	Betty Ammerman	DG	Dave Grossheusch*	JH	James Howitz
BBo	Brad Bolduan	DJe	Doug Jenness	JJ	Jeanie Joppru
BK	Byron Kinkade	DJo	Doug Johnson	JL	Jon Little
BN	Bill Nelson	DMP	Daphne & Meyers	JLi	Jim Lind*
BOL	Bridget Olson*		Peterson	JLU	Janice & Larry Uden
BSe	Blaine Seeliger	DSm	Dick Smaby	JN	Jeff Newman
BSt	Bill Stjern*	DSp	Dory Spence	JSe	Julian Sellers
CB	Cindy Butler	DST	Dan & Sandy	JSK	John & Susan Kroll
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ChM	Chet Meyers*	EF	Eve Freeberg	KB	Karl Bardon
CM	Craig Menze	FE	Fred Eckhardt	KK	Karla Kinstler
CMa	Craig Mandel	FKS	Forest & Kirsten	KMH	Ken & Molly
CN	Connie Norheim		Strnad		Hoffman
DBM	Dennis & Barb Martin	FN	Frank Nicoletti	KO	Ken Oulman
DBo	Don Bolduc	GN	Gary Nielsen	KRv	Kathryn Rivers

LW	Larry Weber	PBu	Paul Budde	SS	Steven Schon
LW	Lawrence Filter	PC	Philip Chu	SWe	Steve Weston
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MFo	Marilynn Ford	PJ	Paul Jantscher	TEB	Tom & Elizabeth Bell
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MJ/DT	Murdoch Johnson & Dianne Tuff	PS	Peder Svingen	TW	Terry Wiens
MJC	Mary Jo Christopherson	PWe	Philip Wedge*	VK	Vija Kelly
MRN	Michael North	RbS	Robert Schroeder	WM	William Marengo
ND	Nelvina DeKam	RgS	Roger Schroeder	WN	Warren Nelson
NJ	Nancy Jackson	RH	Robert Holtz	mob	many observers
NO	Nancy Overcott	RRK	Ron & Rose Kneesern	BSNWR	Big Stone NWR
NWi	Ned Winters	RSm	Rolf Smeby	HRNR	Hawk Ridge Nature Reserve
OJ	Oscar Johnson	SC	Steve Carlson	MBW	Minnesota Birding Weekends
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The MOU Conservation Committee

Robert E. Holtz

In early spring of 1994, MOU President Bonnie Mulligan asked me if I would chair a new MOU committee, the Conservation Committee (MOUCC). Because this seemed to mesh nicely with two of my interests — birds and environmental issues — I said yes.

From a list of interested MOU members, birders I recruited, and volunteers, an initial committee of 15 members was formed. At our first meeting Tony Smith volunteered to serve as secretary. Six of the original committee continue as active members today. Currently there are 14 committee members and often a guest attends in order to inform the committee about some issue.

Our first meeting was held on 15 May 1994. The first order of business the drafting of a mission statement which we still use as our guiding principle, "The MOU Conservation Committee shall be a voice for Minnesota birds." In addition,

we developed four objectives:

1. To comment on natural resource issues that may affect bird populations and their habitats.
2. To influence sound decision making on key avian issues by a) commenting on natural resource issues, and b) researching and disseminating information to decision makers.
3. To develop positions for MOU endorsements.
4. To seek out and collaborate with other groups on issues of mutual concern.

Of all the above objectives, the committee has found number 4 to be the most effective. To carry out these objectives, the committee meets three or four times per year.

To assist the committee in identifying issues of concern, the concept of county watchdogs was developed. At this point in time, most counties do not have a

watchdog. However, in the counties where there are watchdogs, issues have been brought to the committee's attention on several occasions.

Issues

The committee has been involved in many issues during the past six years, so only some will be listed here to present an overview of the committee's work and only for a few will any details be provided.

1. A variety of forestry issues. Janet Green, a committee member, keeps us informed.

2. The Alaska Coalition to protect the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge. This falls under our mission statement because some Minnesota birds utilize the refuge for breeding purposes.

3. The Twin Cities Army Ammunition Plant. Land could become available for a wildlife area.

4. Beaver Creek Valley State Park and trout habitat changes and the effect on Louisiana Waterthrush habitat. This involved meeting between MOUCC members, DNR fisheries personnel, DNR non-game personnel, and trout organization members. Discussions were held, field trips were taken, and DNR presentations were made. As a result, Louisiana Waterthrush habitat received more consideration and protection from alteration.

5. The Savage Fen.

6. Murphy-Hanrehan Park road proposals. Several proposals to run a new road through the park were halted. This issue was confronted by a variety of organizations.

7. Cleary Lake and Spring Hill Center golf courses.

8. Wetlands drainage in Aitkin Co.

9. Gravel mining on the Felton Prairie.

10. Depredation of Double-crested Cormorants.

11. Off-road vehicle use in state forests.

12. Airport runway extensions affecting the Minnesota Valley National Wildlife Refuge. Because of clauses in the original charter for the airport, it was not possible to prevent this proposal. However, Tom Bell and the author served as consultants

to write a definition of a bird sanctuary and describe the problems which will be caused by increased low fly-overs. For this work their compensation of \$100 went into the MOU treasury.

13. Poisoning blackbirds in sunflower fields.

14. Con Con lands.

15. Proposed dirt bike trails in the Minnesota Valley National Wildlife Refuge.

On some issues, individual (or small group) committee members track the issue and keep the committee informed. Often the committee authorizes the chair to send a letter stating our position and indicating we speak for a group of nearly 1,500 birders. Sometimes committee members report problems which they continue to monitor for the committee until it seems appropriate for action or deletion from the agenda. Occasionally, the chair responds via a letter on an issue and informs the committee of said action at the next board meeting.

Current Projects

In order to move beyond just responding to issues once a problem is brought to the committee's attention, a sub-committee of Mark Alt, Tom Bell, Brad Bolduan, and Bob Holtz was formed to explore the idea of educating people about the value of bird habitat. The rationale for this proposal was that an educated public would help prevent many of the problems the Conservation Committee deals with before they arise.

The sub-committee decided to initiate the first step in this proposal by developing an education program aimed at elementary school children – mainly grades three through six. There are two goals for the project. Firstly, we want to get children interested in birds, and secondly, we will educate them about the value and necessity of habitat. These goals are directly in line with the Conservation Committee's mission statement.

The proposed program will rely on volunteers to make presentations at elementary schools. Such presentations (a

few have already been made) will be followed up by a birding field trip geared to the age of the children. The presenter may do a follow-up, small group, field trip for those students who are particularly enthusiastic about birding.

A major task for the sub-committee was to put together kits, which each presenter could use when making presentations and leading the field trips. It was determined that each kit would contain 15 pairs of binoculars, a spotting scope, field guides, a set of bird slides illustrating a variety of bird habitats, audio tapes, and maybe a CD or a video.

To obtain these items each member of the sub-committee volunteered to approach various large business organizations, explain the project to them, and request their assistance with the project. The initial response to our requests has been most gratifying. Mark Alt has obtained a \$1,000 donation from his employer, Best Buy Company, and has made application for a larger grant. Tom

Bell has obtained 45 field guides from the Wild Birds Stores. Bob Holtz contacted a National Camera executive and they will provide three spotting scopes. In addition, that executive approached the Bushnell people and they have agreed to provide 45 pairs of binoculars at no charge. Bob has gotten Eagle Optics to agree to a donation similar to the National Camera / Bushnell gift. He also got the Cornell Lab of Ornithology to sell bird slides for \$1.00 each, instead of the usual \$2.95. Finally, Bob asked and got a favorable response from Bruce Pearson of Bruce's Binocular and Camera Service for repairing binoculars at no charge.

The sub-committee's plan is eventually to supply a minimum of nine kits. It is hoped that the volunteers will be located in strategic areas of the state and the kits will be scattered throughout the state, thereby maximizing the impact of this program.

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BIRDING BY HINDSIGHT

A Second Look at Doves

Kim R. Eckert



Well, this shouldn't take long, should it? After all, there are currently only two species in the family *Columbidae* on the Regular list of Minnesota species, and what misident-

ifications could a Rock Dove or Mourning Dove possibly be involved in? Not many, perhaps, although I suspect the good old pigeon has at times been mistaken for at least a few other species. And I still have

fond memories of a certain rank amateur in the early sixties in suburban Chicago hearing the cooing of a Mourning Dove for the very first time and assuming it had to be an owl.

The potential for Rock Dove misidentifications exists mostly among less experienced birders unfamiliar with the plumage variations possible in oft-domesticated pigeons. One of these atypical pigeons appears a uniform dark reddish-brown — and it is virtually certain that years ago a report received of a Red-billed Pigeon in the Twin Cities was actually of one of those Rock Doves. Another frequent variation is a mixture of black and white, and I think it possible some of these are mistaken for White-winged Doves. I also strongly suspect it is even more common for a black-and-white Rock Dove to be misidentified as a magpie — yes, of course the tail is all wrong, but a bird's size and shape are often completely disregarded by those with too much enthusiasm or not enough experience.

As for the Mourning Dove, even if you'd never hear one cooing and be tempted to call it an owl, I'd be willing to wager there are times you still catch a glimpse of a gliding Mourning Dove and initially think a raptor just went by. With their pointed-wing and long-tailed profile, speedy flight and steady glide, they can bear a strong resemblance to a small falcon.

But there are six other pigeons/doves in Minnesota to consider — sort of. One of these is the extinct Passenger Pigeon, which, of course, is no longer an identification issue. Another is that domestic bird known as the Ringed Turtle-Dove, which apparently occurs nowhere in the wild in the world and is no longer recognized as a real or "countable" bird by the American Birding Association. Or by the M.O.U., for that matter, even though this dove can show up here and present a real ID problem: e.g., in February 2000, three turtle-doves — initially thought by a Minneapolis home owner to be Eur-

asian Collared-Doves — were eventually identified as Ringed Turtle-Doves. More on these two doves later.

Then there are these four Minnesota Accidentals: Band-tailed Pigeon, White-winged Dove, Common Ground-Dove, and Eurasian Collared-Dove. Given any sort of a decent view, the Band-tailed Pigeon is not easily confused with anything else. Though there are fewer than ten state records, it has been spotted in fall at Hawk Ridge in Duluth at least four times, so be sure to take a second look at any pigeon you see cruising down the North Shore this fall.

There are only two White-winged Dove records: both in fall and both in Duluth. However, this species has been spreading north in recent years, and additional Minnesota records seem inevitable. Its ID would seem to be straightforward — but see the comment above under Rock Dove.

Even more unusual is the Common Ground-Dove, which has only been documented once in the state: it was — of course! — at Hawk Ridge in the fall. (In addition, an undocumented ground-dove from Carlton County was reported a few years ago, and a documented report from this year in Freeborn County is currently under review by M.O.R.C.) As for the ID, the only other similar dove to consider would be the Inca Dove; though there are no records yet in the state, it is to be expected here eventually since there are a few Ontario records.

The fourth "Accidental" dove is actually on the verge of Regular status. Though the first state record occurred only two years ago, the rapidly spreading Eurasian Collared-Dove now has been recorded from at least eight locations, all of these along, or south of, the Minnesota River valley, between the town of Ortonville and Mower County. And it is with this dove that we arrive at the main topic of discussion in this article.

To begin with, this journal has already presented information on collared-dove identification: once in a *Hindsight* article



Ringed Turtle-Dove, 3 February 2000, Minneapolis, Hennepin County. Photo by Anthony Hertzell.

three years ago about this and other species representing potential first state records (*The Loon* 68:232–237), and again in the account of that first record in 1998 (*The Loon* 70:199–200). These articles also refer to some ID points published in two other journals: primarily “The Eurasian Collared-Dove Arrives in the Americas” (*American Birds* 41:1371–1379), and the shorter note “Identifying the Eurasian Collared-Dove” (*Birding* 20:311–312).

Since it is assumed most readers presently still have access to the two earlier articles in *The Loon*, there is probably no need to repeat all the ID information they present, although some clarification and updates are in order. To begin with, Eurasian Collared-Dove ID should be less of a problem now that it is included in the third edition of the *National Geo-*

graphic field guide; it had been such a recent arrival in the U.S. that it was only mentioned in passing under Ringed Turtle-Dove in the second edition.

Unfortunately, however, the new Geographic guide does not mention one of the two most diagnostic features of the collared-dove: its vocalizations. As summarized in that 1997 *Hindsight* article (*The Loon* 68:233–234): The Eurasian Collared-Dove has a “three-syllabled plain cooing song (transcribed as ‘kuk-kooooooo-kook’, accented on the second syllable), and its loud and harsh single-syllabled call note. By contrast, note the Ringed Turtle-Dove’s. . . more rolling or trilled two-syllabled ‘kook-krrrrrooo’ song, and its softer chuckling call notes.”

It is also unfortunate this new edition fails clearly to address by text or illustration the other diagnostic field mark separating collared-doves from turtle-doves: the pattern on the underside of the tail. As is mentioned in the articles and notes in *American Birds*, *The Loon*, and *Birding*, from below the bases of the rectrices (tail feathers) on both the Eurasian collared-dove and the Ringed Turtle-Dove are black. However, on a collared-dove this black extends all the way on to the outer webs of the outermost rectrices; on a turtle-dove the outer webs of the two outer rectrices are entirely white.

Of course, it is often not that easy to get a decent view of the undersides of those outer rectrices to determine the exact pattern, and, more importantly, there are two additional features to be aware of when examining them — features which are not pointed out in any of those four articles. One of these is to note how the black on the outer webs on the collared-dove extends farther down towards the tail tip than it does on the rest of the tail. As illustrated in a recent article on Eurasian Collared-Doves in *North American Birds* (53:348–353), this creates a black “W” or “M” pattern on the underside of the tail not present on the Ringed Turtle-Dove.

A second and potentially confusing

thing to be aware of regarding the black on those outer webs on a collared-dove's tail is that it may not extend all the way to the very outer edges of the tail. There is typically a very thin but visible whitish edge outside the black, which might lead to a genuine Eurasian Collared-Dove being passed off as just a turtle-dove. I have clearly seen this narrow white outer edge in the field on more than one occasion, and it is quite visible in some photos illustrating some of the collared-dove articles: see *American Birds* 41:1371 and 1373, *Birding* 20:311, and *North American Birds* 53:349. The point is that if the two outer webs are entirely white with no black, you're looking at a Ringed Turtle-Dove; if those webs have any black on them, then it's a Eurasian Collared-Dove.

Some other things to keep in mind when seeing — and documenting — a Eurasian Collared-Dove:

1) While trying to view the under tail pattern, note the dark gray tail coverts which are typically darker than the rest of the underparts (whiter under tail coverts on a turtle-dove, often paler than the rest of the underparts);

2) Also note the black on the rectrices reaching about to the tip of the under tail coverts (the black tends to stop short of the end of those coverts on a turtle-dove);

3) The contrasting blackish outer primaries (also somewhat darker on a turtle-dove, but not as blackish or contrasting — and probably never as black as shown in the second edition of *Geographic!*);

4) The overall darker and grayer or browner plumage (paler and more creamy or buff on a turtle-dove);

5) The "three-toned" upper wing surface (see *Birding* 20:311), with a paler grayish area between the dark primaries and the medium grayish-brown secondary coverts (however, more information is needed on this — turtle-doves might show a similar three-toned pattern);

6) The larger and bulkier size compared to a Mourning Dove (turtle-dove

about the same as — or a bit smaller than — a Mourning Dove);

7) The somewhat wary behavior (turtle-dove tends to be tamer and more approachable);

8) Beware of the potential for collared-dove X turtle-dove hybrids (which do occur in the "wild" and would show intermediate characteristics), and of changing light conditions and angles (which affect the apparent shades and darkness of the plumage features);

9) Be skeptical of, take a second look at, and carefully document any apparent collared-doves in central or northern Minnesota, since there are (so far!) no accepted records north of the Minnesota River.

By the way, remember that beginner who had trouble telling a Mourning Dove from an owl? He went on to bigger and better misidentifications. Like the swimming adult Bonaparte's Gull he saw on Lake Michigan which he thought to be a goldeneye — since when, he reasoned, does any bird other than a duck swim? Or the time on the California coast when he assumed that distant Black Oystercatcher was a dark Rock Dove — it was asleep, you see, with its bill and legs tucked out of sight. Years later up in Churchill he glimpsed a wheatear out of the corner of his eye and tentatively called it a Solitary Sandpiper — there was, after all, a visible flash of white in the tail as it flew by and it began bobbing its rear end after it landed. And then there was that distant group of swimming pelicans initially passed off as just an ice floe. . . .

But I digress. The point is this novice went on to author several articles in more recent years on bird identification. So when he says that birds like doves with straightforward field marks still present some ID difficulties, listen to him. He knows all about misidentifying things.

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BOOK REVIEWS

THE AMERICAN ROBIN, by Roland H. Wauer, 1999, University of Texas Press, 112 pages, 19 color photos, two maps. List hardcover \$17.95.

You might shy away from a book on robins. What is there to know about a bird so common? Mr. Wauer has provided a fine life history illuminating not only the subject bird in detail but also providing insight and information about birds in general. Reading this, I was reminded of the deep pleasure I have taken from the books of Alexander Skutch, including *Life of the Tanager* and *Life of the Woodpecker*. When those books were finished and set aside, I knew more not only about those families but also about birds, period. Mr. Wauer makes a similar contribution.

He has collected information from a large number of sources, weaving it with his own observations into a tight and enjoyable story that gives dimension to this bird so common. The photos serve essentially as design elements in what is again a nicely produced book. The author is a retired National Park Service park interpreter, scientist, and resource specialist, and author of three other books, including *A Field Guide to the Birds of the Big Bend*.

Jim Williams, 5239 Cranberry Lane, Webster, WI 54893.

RAILS: A GUIDE TO THE RAILS, CRAKES, GALLINULES AND COOTS OF THE WORLD. Barry Taylor, 1998, Yale University Press, New Haven, \$49.95, 600 pp. with 43 color plates by Ber van Perlo.

In the first comprehensive treatment of the *Rallidae* since Ripley's (1977) *Rails of the World*, Taylor describes "all 150 living

and recently extinct rail species." The wealth of detailed information in this book makes it an invaluable addition to any reference library, although the price is difficult to justify for the average birder. Only eight members of this family have occurred in Minnesota. But who among us could resist learning more about the Inaccessible Rail, the Invisible Rail, and the Snoring Rail!

More than 50 pages of introductory material include well-written and up-to-date overviews of phylogeny and classification, the evolution of flightlessness (56 species are known only from islands and more than half of these are flightless), habitat and food requirements, vocalizations, behavior (e.g., kleptoparasitism in gallinules and coots), breeding ecology, movements, and conservation. Almost a quarter of the 135 surviving members of the *Rallidae* are considered to be globally threatened.

The amount of information varies widely among species. Just over three pages of text are devoted to the Yellow Rail while more familiar species receive up to twelve. The species accounts are well-organized with a pleasing format, and include descriptions of immatures and juveniles when known. Sections on each species' vocalizations, geographical variation, moult, distribution and status, migration, habitat, food and feeding, habits, social organization, social and sexual behavior, and breeding and survival, round out the species accounts.

The extensive bibliography contains references through 1997 — an impressive feat for a book published the very next year. It cites literature from around the world and from a wide variety of publi-

cations, including at least one from *The Loon* (64:162-163). The citations that I checked were accurate and so was the index; indeed, the apparent absence of typographical errors throughout the text was itself remarkable.

No review would be complete without a few complaints. The range maps in the species accounts would be more useful if more geographical features were labeled. When I looked at the maps for those species I had seen in Palau — *Rallina eurizonoides*, *Gallirallus philippensis*, *Porzana cinerea*, *Gallinula chloropus* — it was difficult to distinguish among the island groups in the Southwest Pacific.

The color plates were disappointing —

the artist's palette was much too reddish for my taste. For example, the Virginia Rail (plate 18) is shown with a bright rufous breast and rufous wing coverts. Some species (e.g. the Sora on plate 29) looked too pale and washed out. The moorhens (plates 39 and 40) were quite nice and it was gratifying to see so many juvenile rails depicted in this section.

Taylor's carefully researched text and cogent style of writing sets new standards for excellence in its treatment of the *Rallidae*. This book should therefore be considered essential for all academic and reference libraries.

**Peder H. Svingen, 2602 E. 4th St.,
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Blue-gray Gnatcatcher Breeding in Cass County

Michael R. North

The Blue-gray Gnatcatcher (*Poliop-tila caerulea*) is a bird of eastern deciduous forests, southern pine forests, and western forests and scrub lands. This species has been expanding its range northward in the U.S. (Ellison 1992, Kaufman 1996, Versaw 1999). In the east, it is usually associated with oak, ash, or maple dominated forests, and nests are usually located in deciduous trees (Brewer *et al.* 1991, Ellison 1992, Kaufman 1996). In the west, the expansion has been along the eastern foothills of the Rocky Mountains, and included shifts into new habitat types (from traditional pinyon-juniper to ponderosa pine and ponderosa-juniper; Versaw 1999). In Minnesota, the northward expansion has been primarily along major river valleys (Janssen 1987).

Blue-gray Gnatcatchers have been documented breeding in northern Minne-

sota only in Clay, Grant, Hubbard, Morrison, and Otter Tail counties (Hertzell and Janssen 1998). Only the record for Morrison County occurred before 1979 (see Janssen 1987). In 1999, I found two nests and observed one or more family groups in extreme southern Cass County (north-east quarter of Section 24, Sylvan Township), less than one kilometer from the Crow Wing River which separates Cass and Morrison counties.

Arrival in the breeding locale apparently occurred in mid-May during peak migration of other Neotropical migrants. The first observation was of one individual on 15 May in open jack pine scrub. One was also recorded in Crow Wing County that day by Pam Perry (Minnesota DNR Regional Nongame Specialist). Another individual or pair was heard in an adjacent deciduous oak forest on 31 May.



Figure 1. Jack pine in which the Blue-gray Gnatcatcher nest was located. Note openness of the site and relatively short grass and forb cover. Photo by P. Perry, 14 June 1999.

On 12 June, I found a pair feeding young in a nest in a jack pine (Figure 1). On 14 June, Pam Perry photographed the nest which, though not visible in the image, contained four young (Figure 2). Their flight feathers were just beginning to emerge. The incubation period for Blue-gray Gnatcatchers is 15 days (Baicich and Harrison 1997). Flight feathers break sheaths at 6–7 days; young fledge at 12–13 days and are fed by their parents for another 19 days (Baicich and Harrison 1997). Based on this information, the young in the first nest probably hatched on or about 7 June, incubation would have begun about 24 May, and egg laying would have begun about 21 May. Young were still in the nest 20 June, but were gone by 22 June.

On 12 July I found a second nest be-

ing incubated by a female in another jack pine located 53 m from the first nest. I assumed the female was the same one from the first nest, as Blue-gray Gnatcatchers are known to be double-brooded (Ellison 1992, Kaufman 1996, Baicich and Harrison 1997). Also, on 1 July, I found the first nest on the ground. Blue-gray Gnatcatchers frequently reuse nest material in subsequent nests (Ellison 1992), and I assumed this was the cause of the first nest being dislodged from the tree. Second nests are usually built 5–10 days after young fledge from the first nest (Ellison 1992). The female was still present at the second nest on 20 July, but was not present on 22 July or 26 July. On 28 July I checked the nest and found it empty. The nest was almost certainly depredated, as no young were ever seen in it.

Family groups in which adults were feeding young were observed in a nearby jack pine stand on 1 July (35 birds); in quaking aspen on 2 July (3 birds); in oak forest on 6 July (~2 birds), 7 July (4 birds), 8 July (2 birds), and 11 July (4–5 birds); and in jack pine/aspen on 12 July (2 birds) and 13 July (2 birds). I assumed that only one family group was present and that it came from the nest I found, but neither of these assumptions are definitive. The wide spacing between observations and the variable size of the family groups could be indicative of the presence of more than one family group. Individuals and small groups of 2–5 Blue-gray Gnatcatchers continued to be observed along county road 36 and the northern fringe of the deciduous forest semi-regularly from 26 July – 27 August, but I could not be sure if they were family groups, locals, or migrants. Two Blue-gray Gnatcatchers were also observed in a white pine in shrub habitat near the Sylvan Dam in late August.

Measurements were collected at both nests on 19 August, after nest outcome was definitive. Nest height and tree height were estimated with the aid of a 16-foot 1" x 2" board marked off in 0.5-foot intervals, and measurements were



Figure 2. Blue-gray Gnatcatcher nest on lateral limb of a jack pine, 14 June 1999, Cass County. Photo by Pam Perry.

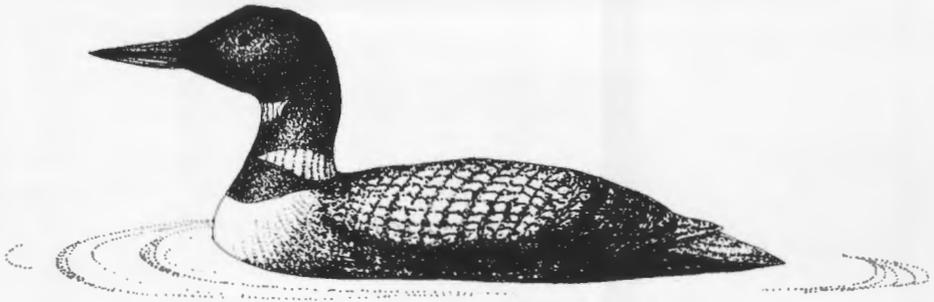
later converted to metric. Tree diameter was measured with a dbh (diameter at breast height) tape. The first nest was located on a lateral limb 4.3 m up a 10 m tall jack pine, and 60–75 cm out from the trunk. The tree had a dbh of 22 cm. The second nest was located on a lateral limb 5.1 m up a 10.7 m tall jack pine, and 102 cm out from the trunk. This tree had a dbh of 27.2 cm. The two nests were located 53 m apart.

Both nest trees were part of a band of sparse jack pine located between the edge of a deciduous forest and an open grassland. The jack pine stand was somewhat more dense at the second nest site than the first. The open grassland was dominated by smooth brome and big bluestem, although the big bluestem was not as apparent as the brome at the onset of the nesting season. By the end of the nesting season, big bluestem was more apparent than the smooth brome. The deciduous forest was dominated by bur oak, but red oak was also well represented. Some aspen, green ash, basswood, jack pine, and red pine were also present in the deciduous forest. The use of jack pine scrub for nesting may represent a habitat shift as the species continues to expand northward in Minnesota.

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NOTES OF INTEREST

THIRD MINNESOTA RECORD OF THE WILLIAMSON'S SAPSUCKER —



On 16 October 1999, the three of us (Ann and Anthony Hertz, Peder Svingen) stopped at Taconite Harbor, Cook County, during an all-day birding trip along the North Shore of Lake Superior. Skies were overcast with light northwest winds. Just before reaching the observation area, we encountered a small flock of American Robins feeding on mountain ash berries and got out of the truck to look for additional birds. Almost immediately, we heard an unfamiliar call, apparently given by a bird perched in a small spruce. We then noticed a bird flying towards

us from the southwest that undulated in flight like a typical woodpecker, although its glides were relatively shallow and not as deeply pitched as Downy (*Picoides pubescens*) and Hairy (*P. villosus*) Woodpeckers. We all focused our attention and binoculars on the bird as Tony called out "Woodpecker!"

As the bird flew by, just above eye level and no farther than 20 yards away from any of us, Tony had the best looks from a distance of only 10–15 yards. More importantly, as it approached and passed by our position at 9:50 A.M., Tony was looking towards the northwest, with the sun at his back, and followed the bird as it flew to the northeast. Even though it was overcast, the light conditions were less favorable for Ann and Peder, who were standing on the opposite side of the road from Tony, and facing the lake as the bird flew within 20 yards of their position.

The unusual call first drew our attention to this bird, although we never actually saw it calling. The call was a two or three syllable, low-pitched, guttural sound that was croaking and raspy in quality. This sounded most unlike any woodpecker that we have heard in Minnesota. We characterized it as "kzrr-kzrr-kzrr."

In flight, the Taconite Harbor bird appeared all black except for its facial markings, an obvious white patch on its upper wing coverts, an unmarked and obvious white rump, and a pale belly. Its back was entirely black. These features were seen by all three of us as the bird flew by. Due to favorable lighting conditions and a better viewing angle, Tony was able to determine that its "pale belly" was actually yellowish and that its entire chest was black. He also described an area near the bird's tail that was "barred or perhaps checkered." This undoubtedly refers to barring on the flanks rather than on the rectrices, since he saw this pattern intermittently as the bird flapped its wings. All three of us noted that the woodpecker's head appeared all black except for a long, thin, white mustachial stripe. Both Ann and Tony reported seeing a second

white line on the bird's head as it flew by, but they were unable to determine its exact placement with respect to the mustachial stripe.

None of us detected the color of its chin and upper throat as it flew by. If its throat was white (indicating an immature male Williamson's, which otherwise resembles the adult male), this should have contrasted well with its black chest and mostly black head; however, a red throat (as on adult male Williamson's) would have been relatively difficult to see under these viewing conditions. Unlike the juvenile Yellow-bellied Sapsucker (*S. varius*) which attains adult plumage during its first winter (most will resemble adults by March–April), a juvenile Williamson's Sapsucker attains adult plumage before fall migration (Howell and Webb 1995, Pyle 1997).

We independently estimated its size as between Downy and Hairy Woodpecker, but closer to the size of Hairy. Unfortunately, there were no birds in the vicinity for direct comparison. It flew into a tall spruce tree, gave its guttural call several more times, then flew out over the lake briefly before circling back towards us. We hoped it would return and land in the spruce tree again, but it turned towards the northeast and flew out of sight. We searched the area where it was last seen for at least 30 minutes, and searched again later in the afternoon, but this woodpecker was never relocated. Our total viewing time was approximately 45 seconds.

No other North American woodpecker except the Acorn Woodpecker (*Melanerpes formicivorus*) shows this combination of black back, white rump, and white wing patches. The Acorn Woodpecker rarely wanders from its range in the southwest U. S. and the Pacific states, but has been recently recorded in British Columbia (first Canadian record) and North Dakota (at a feeder in Minot). Acorn Woodpecker has a black breast like the Williamson's Sapsucker, but it has a white belly and a completely different head pattern. Yellow-bellied Sapsucker shares many field marks of Williamson's, including the white wing patches, white rump, and yellow belly. However, its back is obviously mottled rather than solidly black, it has a small black bib rather than a solidly black chest, and its white facial markings are very broad and obvious (there is actually more white than black on the face of a Yellow-bellied, so its head would never look almost entirely black). Red-headed Woodpecker (*M. erythrocephalus*) shows white on its secondaries but not on its wing coverts, and has an obvious red (adult) or brown (immature) head, with a white breast and belly. Black-backed Woodpecker has completely black upperparts, showing neither a white rump nor white patches on its wings; it also has a white chest, not black like the Williamson's.

After returning to Duluth, we reviewed a commercial recording of Williamson's Sapsucker (Cornell 1992) which contains only one call type. This sounded unlike the calls we heard at Taconite Harbor. However, Short (1982) states "There are at least six, and perhaps more, vocalizations" of this species. As shown below, the *Birds of North America* account (Dobbs *et al.* 1997) lists six call types of the Williamson's Sapsucker, and "high variability" is emphasized:

CHURR CALL. Often given in association with drumming... consists of 1–6 (or <15) *cheeur* notes and functions in territorial announcement, pair formation, mate location, and even as aggressive alarm (Crockett 1975, Hadow 1977, Short 1982). Mainly a male territorial vocalization; females occasionally utter higher pitched Churr Call (Hadow 1977).

CHATTER CALLS. Vary from slow *ch-ch-ch* series to rapid bursts (few and up to 37 notes); usually given softly as communication between mates, often pre-copulatory (Crockett 1975, Short 1982).

CA-HAW. Consists of 2 hoarse syllables, the second being lower in pitch, longer in duration, and less emphatic than the first. Given at beginning of

territorial or courtship interaction; also used as alarm call.

RATTLE CALL. Rapid guttural trill. Often used at the end of territorial or courtship encounters.

SCOLD or ALARM CALL. The most common vocal response to intruders near nest or sap tree; a short, sharp, hoarse guttural role [sic], which drops rapidly in pitch.

SCREAM CALL. A "shrill, high-pitched call," often given when bird is caught and held by humans.

Howell and Webb (1995) describe the voice of Williamson's Sapsucker as "A quiet, slightly purring growl *abrrr...*" Winkler *et al.* (1995) describe a call that is very similar to what we heard at Taconite Harbor: "A low-pitched guttural k-k'-r-r-r." This description reads like Bent (1939) who quoted directly from Dr. Elliot Coues who in 1874 wrote: "it has an abrupt, explosive outcry, much like that of other species of Woodpeckers, and also an entirely different call note. This sounds to me like a number of rolling r's, beginning with a guttural [sic] k-k'-r-r-r — each set of r's making a long syllable. This note is leisurely given, and indefinitely repeated, in a very low key."

This represents the third Acceptable record of this species in Minnesota. A female was sighted on 22 April 1972 in Worthington, Nobles County (Hatelid 1972) and a male was photographed during its stay from 21–30 May 1988 in Itasca State Park, Hubbard County (Fall 1988). A previously accepted record from Winona, Winona County on 25 May 1981 (*The Loon* 53:232–234) was reconsidered by the Minnesota Ornithological Records Committee and found Unacceptable (*The Loon* 64:138–140).

According to the AOU (1998), the breeding range of Williamson's Sapsucker extends "from extreme south-central British Columbia, Idaho, western Montana, and Wyoming south in the mountains to northern and east-central California, northern Baja California, central Arizona, and southern New Mexico." It winters in California, Arizona, New Mexico, western Texas (rarely farther north) and portions of Mexico. This species is considered casual or accidental (AOU 1998) east to southern Alberta (Pinel 1993), southern Saskatchewan (Godfrey 1986), central South Dakota (SDOU 1991), north-central Minnesota (Fall 1988), Illinois (Bohlen 1989), eastern Nebraska (Bray *et al.* 1986), Kansas, Oklahoma, east-central and east Texas (TOS 1995), and southwestern Louisiana (Remsen 1991).

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LARGE NUMBER OF AMERICAN PIPITS RECORDED IN OTTER TAIL COUNTY —



On 26 September 1999, my wife Diane and I were birding in Western Township, Otter Tail County. The sky was overcast, temperature 55°, wind WNW 20–25 mph. The time was approximately 1:00 P.M. We were driving south on a county road and stopped to identify several birds standing on the paved roadway. They were resting and bathing in puddles on the road. All birds were identified visually and by ear as American Pipits.

For the next quarter hour we watched as more pipits continued to fly from northeast to southwest, passing in front of us over the open farmland. Numerous birds landed on the roadway or the shoulders of the road resting briefly on their journey. One particularly tight, swirling flock contained 150–200 pipits. As the birds continued to pass, we could not detect any longspurs or Horned Larks mixed in. Therefore, I believe this large flock to have been “pure”, with only American Pipits in its make-up. I estimate that we saw at least 500–600 birds, but this is conservative, and there were probably many more.

The passage of so many pipits so quickly was more than I've seen in all my other sightings combined. Since 1971 there have been four reports of one hundred or more individuals in Minnesota. The highest previously reported total was of approximately 200 American Pipits seen at Duluth, St. Louis County, by Lloyd Paynter on 29 September 1974. **Steve Millard, 630 W. Laurel, Fergus Falls, MN 56537.**

CALIFORNIA GULL IN MINNEAPOLIS — On 6 November 1999 I was scanning through the gulls which were coming in to roost on Lake Calhoun in Minneapolis, Hennepin County, when I noticed one immature gull that stood out from the others. It was fairly close — about 150 meters away — and light was still good since it was a cloudless evening and just after sunset. The bird was intermediate in length between a Herring and a Ring-billed Gull, and more slender than a Herring Gull. Mantle, scapulars and wing coverts were a noticeable shade of gray/blue-gray darker than the darkest Herring Gull or Ring-billed Gull near it. This coloration is what first drew my attention to the bird and made it quite easy to relocate. I thought it might be a California Gull, but was not certain. The next evening I returned and watched it from 4:45 – 5:15 P.M.



I suspected the bird was in second-winter plumage, but parts of the plumage seemed advanced beyond second year. I hadn't seen an immature winter-plumaged California Gull for many years. Being uncertain as to its age, how could I be sure of its identity? I was also hoping to see it in flight, so as to get a look at the tail and wings. It wasn't until I had studied photos and texts over the next day that I convinced myself that the bird on Lake Calhoun was indeed a California Gull in second winter plumage. Other birders were notified. In the meantime, Sue Levy found the bird independently. Peder Svingen photographed the bird on 20 November at the north end of the lake, and it was last reported on the 21st.

The general size of the bird was comparable to the adult Lesser Black-backed Gull which at one time swam alongside it. It was nearly the length of the Herring Gulls, but was noticeably smaller and slimmer in body shape. It also had a smaller, more rounded head. The bill appeared long and straight. It was dark at the tip (distal one fourth). I could not tell whether the dark color extended to the tip or if there was a thin sliver of pale coloration as some immature gulls show. As best as I could see, the basal three-fourths of the bill was pale. Others reported to me later that they could see color on this portion of the bill, but I could not. The head showed brown mottling, mostly on the crown and around the eye. There was a little bit of brown on the nape. Significantly more brown showed on the hindneck, and this extended like a collar across the lower neck and onto the upper breast. When the bird faced me I could see that the chin and throat were quite pale and clean-looking, which contrasted with the brown of this "collar" on the upper breast. The lower tertials (those nearer the waterline) had dark centers and broad white fringes. Primaries were all dark, both on the swimming bird and from the underside when the bird stretched its wings. They projected quite a bit beyond the tip of the tail — longer than the length of the bill. This projection was quite striking.

Many second-winter Herring Gulls show similar patterns as did this California Gull: some dark-centered tertials with broad white tips, some dark smudges on the secondaries or coverts of a swimming bird, lack of white in the primary tips. They have a variable amount of gray in the mantle/scapulars/wing coverts, as some are quite mottled with brown and others are almost all gray. What distinguished this bird from these Herring Gulls was (1) the darkness of the gray mantle/scapulars/coverts (unlike the lighter gray or brown/gray mottled coloration of second-winter Herring Gulls); (2) the smaller body size (girth) of the bird; (3) the smaller, less flat-shaped head; and (4) the long wingtip extension beyond the tail. There were plenty of Herring Gulls of various ages, including second winter, on Lake Calhoun these evenings and it was still straightforward to find this gull in the loose flock.

The California Gull is a Casual species in Minnesota. The first Hennepin County record of this species was a first-winter bird on Lakes Harriet and Calhoun from 5–10 November 1986. It eventually died at this location (*The Loon* 58:16–18). Another first-

winter bird was found on Lakes Harriet and Calhoun the subsequent year (29–30 October 1987, *The Loon* 60:49–50). An adult was found 20 August 1989 at Black Dog in Dakota County (*The Loon* 61:153; reported as the fourth Twin Cities record, but it actually was the third such record). Another report from the Twin Cities area was a second-winter bird seen on Forest Lake, Washington County on 20 October 1993 (*The Loon* 66:45). Four out of five of these observations are of first- or second-year birds seen from the end of October through mid-November. **Paul Budde, 4612 Colfax Ave. S., Minneapolis, MN 55409.**

RUFIOUS HUMMINGBIRD IN COOK COUNTY — On the evening of 15 July 1999, Lois Eynck called to tell us she had a Rufous Hummingbird coming to her feeder. Lois lives on the shore of Lake Superior, east of Cascade State Park. The next morning at about 9:00 A.M. we waited near her feeder. At first we saw only Ruby-throated Hummingbirds. After a short wait an adult male Rufous Hummingbird arrived, chased off the other hummingbirds, and started feeding. We watched for about 15 minutes from 30 feet with 7x35 binoculars. As the hummingbird hovered and moved around we observed from many different angles the reddish-brown back, tail and sides. As the hummingbird fed from a sitting position the green primaries were noted. The gorget had a lot of orange in it, quite different from the bright red of the Ruby-throated Hummingbird's gorget. For the next five days the Rufous Hummingbird moved one house east to another feeder where a number of people were able to observe it and where photographs were taken by Jon Kettunen of the Cook County News-Herald. **Ken & Molly Hoffman, 196 County Road 44, Grand Marais, MN 55604.**



BLACK-BACKED WOODPECKER NESTING IN SOUTHWESTERN BELTRAMI COUNTY — On 6 June 1999, we were out looking for and photographing orchids in a jack pine stand in extreme southwestern Beltrami County. In the process of walking around in a stand that was located about 1/10 of a mile south of the Pine Point canoe landing on the Mississippi River we were alerted by the incessant begging of young birds. Upon investigating we found a nest cavity about 5.5 feet above the ground in a live jack pine that was approximately 8" in diameter. We were unable to determine the species or number of young due to the depth of the nest cavity so we stood back and watched the tree for a short time until a female Black-backed Woodpecker arrived with food for the nestlings. A short time later the male also arrived with food.

Although Black-backed Woodpeckers have been documented as nesting elsewhere in Beltrami County, this nest is within about one mile of Hubbard County where there is no documented nesting record for the species. On 11 June, Steve returned to the nest site and over the course of an hour or so took photographs of the adults delivering food to the nestlings. The number of nestlings was not determined, but based on the amount of begging and the observation of more than one beak at the nest hole there were at least two young.

Based on the observation that the young were coming up to the nest hole and occasionally sticking their heads out, their feather development, and their size, it was estimated that they were within a week or so of fledging. The nest tree was located in a stand of middle-aged jack pine with occasional white pine, red pine, and balsam fir. It was also a high-quality, relatively intact stand with a moss-covered ground layer, with associated herbaceous plants, and very little brush. **Steve & Carol Mortensen, Rt. 2, Box 248A, Hines, MN 56647.**



Black-backed Woodpecker at nest cavity, 11 June 1999, Beltrami County. Photos by Steve Mortensen.

TWO BLACK-HEADED GULLS IN JACKSON COUNTY —

Following reports by Iowa birders of a Black-headed Gull (*Larus ridibundus*) being seen close to the Minnesota border, Paul Hertz and I drove to the north end of Spirit Lake in Jackson County to see if this bird might also be found on the Minnesota side. On the morning of 9 October 1999 we arrived at the lake and almost immediately noticed an adult Black-headed Gull flying northward across Jackson County Road 2. It was attended by a small group of Ring-billed Gulls (*L. delawarensis*), but was not directly associating with them. Reaching a marshy area in the northwest

corner of the lake, it turned and began circling over the water and repeatedly diving to the surface. This gave us excellent looks from a variety of angles for a prolonged period of time.

The gull was in basic plumage. Its head was white with a dark auricular spot. It had a dark eye and deep red bill which was fairly straight. The mantle was a shade lighter gray than the nearby Ring-billeds. The pattern on the upper wing was similar to Bonaparte's Gull (*L. philadelphia*), being the same tone of gray as the mantle with a wedge of white on the outer primaries and a trailing line of black on the wingtips. The underwing showed much less white and included a dark patch in the inner primaries. The neck, undersides, rump, and tail were all white and the legs were deep red. Its size was considerably smaller than the nearby Ring-billeds, though a little larger than the Franklin's Gulls (*L. pipixcan*) which were also in the area.

We watched this bird for about ten minutes when it was unexpectedly joined by a second Black-headed Gull. This second bird was nearly identical in size and plumage, the only difference being that it had a light smudge of gray above the eye.



Their flight was light and dainty — unlike the heavy, more labored flight of the Ring-billed. Feeding was characterized by flying slowly in wide circles at low altitudes and occasionally diving to the surface. Often they would land on the water for brief periods of time and pick at the surface while swimming. The two gulls fed in this manner for about another 15 minutes before one departed to the Iowa side of the lake and landed on the pier that extends from the south side of the road into Iowa. There it stood and preened for about five minutes and I was able to approach close enough to photograph it (see page 89). It eventually flew back into Minnesota to join its companion at the marsh for another feeding session. **Anthony Hertzell, 8461 Pleasant View Drive, Mounds View, MN 55112.**

HOODED WARBLER, COOK COUNTY — At about 7:00 A.M. on 30 May 1999, I was



following a White-breasted Nuthatch when I began hearing a song that was different than our local birds. It had the pattern of a nearby Magnolia Warbler but with the quality of a Mourning Warbler, also singing nearby. I was able to track it down and found the bird to be a male Hooded Warbler. He was easy to identify with the bright yellow face surrounded by a black hood. I quickly got my wife Molly to join me and we watched the bird for about 20 minutes. It was very active, flitting about mostly in the brush at low levels but once or twice went

20 feet up into a black ash tree. We noted the yellow breast and greenish back in addition to the obvious hood. The warbler spread its tail often and pale edges were noted on at least the outer tail feathers. The bird continued to sing as we watched. We could not relocate the bird later in the day. We live seven miles west of Grand Marais and 1.5 miles inland from Lake Superior. **Ken Hoffman, 196 County Road 44, Grand Marais, MN 55604.**

AMERICAN WHITE PELICAN NESTING ON LEECH LAKE, CASS COUNTY — Over



the past summer while monitoring colonial waterbirds that nest on Gull and Pelican Islands of Leech Lake, I observed the successful nesting of American White Pelicans. The number of pelicans and the locations where they nest have been on the increase in recent years (Katie Haws, MN DNR, pers. comm.) On Leech Lake, it was unusual to see pelicans during the summer prior to the early 1990s, and when they were observed it was assumed they were foraging from the colony that has nested on Upper and Lower Red Lakes for many

years. Since the mid-1990s, pelicans have commonly been seen on Leech Lake during the summer, and in 1993 a single pelican egg but no nest was found on a sand bar (Leech Lake Reservation Division of Resources Management [DRM] 1993 Common Tern Colony Report). In 1998 a nest with two eggs was found on the southwest corner of Little Pelican Island, but it was soon abandoned (Leech Lake Reservation DRM 1998 Common Tern Colony Report).

On 12 May 1999, while checking the site, eight American White Pelican nests were found, again on the southwest corner of Little Pelican Island. A check of the nests on 2 June found a total of five nests remaining, each containing two eggs. By 10 June four of the ten eggs had hatched. On 30 June, six pelican chicks were seen on the nest site. As of 13 July five of the chicks were still alive and on 6 August five fledglings were observed swimming with the adults some distance from the island.

I have often contemplated how Pelican Island got its name, and I wonder if, prior to the construction of the dam at the outlet of Leech Lake in 1884, they may have historically nested on the lake. **Steve Mortensen, Biologist, Leech Lake Reservation DRM, Rt. 3, Box 100, Cass Lake, MN 56633.**

COMMENTS ON THE PAINTED BUNTING IN HENNEPIN COUNTY —



A male Painted Bunting (*Passerina ciris*) was reported to the Minnesota RBA from Maple Grove, Hennepin County, on 10 August 1999 but was apparently first seen well before that date. I heard the bird singing several times before first catching a glimpse of it as it was flushed by two people on horseback. It flew up to the very top of an elm tree where it was easily spotted but not so easily described, since it was perched almost directly overhead. I walked across the road for a better angle and had unobstructed views for about 30 seconds.

Through my binoculars, I could see its scarlet throat, breast, and belly; dark wings and tail; bluish-purple head; and obvious, thick eye ring. I had brief glimpses of its lime green back, but never saw its rump and could not detect the exact color of its eye ring. It flew toward the northeast and did not return that evening; many observers reported it through at least 20 August.

Thompson (1991) proposed that the Painted Bunting, which forms two allopatric western and eastern breeding populations, may actually represent two valid phylogenetic species. These two disjunct populations are separated by at least 550 km at the closest points of their respective breeding ranges and have completely separate winter ranges. Fall migration of adults begins about two months earlier in the western population. Thompson noted that additional studies analyzing allozyme frequencies and song structure would be necessary for evaluation of Painted Bunting taxonomy. Note that western and eastern populations do not correlate with the designated subspecies *pallidior* and *ciris* (AOU 1957) since *ciris* includes the eastern third of the western population.

The western population breeds primarily from southeastern New Mexico, northern Texas, western and central Oklahoma, west-central Kansas, southern Missouri, and extreme southwestern Tennessee south to southern Chihuahua, northern Coahuila, southern Texas, and southern Louisiana, and eastward along the Gulf Coast to extreme western Florida (locally in the Apalachicola region of the Florida panhandle) and southwestern Alabama (Lowther *et al.* 1999). The eastern population breeds on barrier islands and the adjacent Atlantic Coast, from southeastern North Carolina and central South Carolina into central Florida (Lowther *et al.* 1999).

According to Thompson (1991), most of the western population molts its flight feathers after reaching strictly migratory areas in southern Arizona and northwestern Mexico. This population then continues on to its allopatric wintering range in Mexico and Central America, as far south as Panama (Lowther *et al.* 1999). Small numbers, presumably from the western population, regularly winter along the Gulf Coast in Louisiana and south Texas. The eastern population molts its flight feathers on the breeding grounds prior to fall migration, and then winters in southern Florida, the Bahamas, Cuba, Jamaica, and Haiti (Thompson 1991).

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- Thompson, C. W. 1991. Is the Painted Bunting actually two species? Problems determining species limits between allopatric populations. *Condor* 93:987-1000.
- Peder Svingen, 2602 E. 4th Street, Duluth, MN 55812.**

Editor's Note: A male Painted Bunting was reported again at this location on 24 May 2000 and it remained in the area at least through mid-August 2000. — AXH.

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Purpose of the M.O.U.

The Minnesota Ornithologists' Union is an organization of both professionals and amateurs interested in birds. We foster the study of birds; we aim to create and increase public interest in birds, and to promote the preservation of birdlife and its natural habitat.

To carry out these aims, we publish a journal, *The Loon*, and a newsletter, *Minnesota Birding*; we conduct field trips;



we encourage and sponsor the preservation of natural areas; and we hold seminars where research reports, unusual observations and conservation discussions are presented. We are supported by dues from members, affiliated clubs and special gifts. The MOU wishes to point out that any or all phases of the MOU program could be expanded significantly with gifts, memorials or bequests willed to the organization.

Suggestions to Authors

The editors of *The Loon* welcome submissions of articles, "Notes of Interest", color slides, and color or black & white photographs. Submissions should be typed, double-spaced and single-sided. Notes of Interest should be less than two pages. Photographs should be 5"x7". Whenever possible, please include a copy of your submission in any standard format on any 3 1/2 inch computer disk.

Club information and other announcements of general interest should be sent to the Newsletter editors. See inside front cover. Bird sighting reports for "The Season" should be sent promptly at the end of February, May, July and November to Peder Svingen. See key to the "The Season".

The **Loon**

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The Western Meadowlark in Minnesota

Does it have a future?

Robert B. Janssen

The Western Meadowlark (*Sturnella neglecta*) has always been a species of special interest to birders and non-birders alike. Of the fifty states, six of them, Kansas, Montana, North Dakota, Nebraska, Oregon, and Wyoming, claim the Western Meadowlark as their state bird. It is quite obvious why the Western Meadowlark has been a favorite of so many people. Its bright yellow breast and the black "V" on the chest are prominent field marks easily seen as it perches on fence posts, fence lines and utility wires along rural roads across the countryside. Its beautiful song of 7-10 flute-like notes bubbling forth from a field just free of snow in March is a welcome sight to birders in Minnesota and elsewhere in the Midwest. When I was growing up in south Minneapolis in the 1930s and '40s, the Western Meadowlark was still to be seen within the city. It was a time when there were still fields, (we called them "vacant lots") available for nesting areas in the Twin Cities. It was a Western Meadowlark, seen in a marshy peat bog on 50th Street and Abbott Avenue in south Minneapolis that impressed me so at age five that I was hooked on birds for the rest of my life. In talking with other long-time residents of the Twin Cities, those who even had a casual interest in birds remember the presence of the Western Meadowlark within the city.

I have no intention of presenting a scientific paper on the displacement of the Western Meadowlark in Minnesota. However, I intend to document from Breeding Bird Survey (BBS) data and my own field observations, that the bird is much reduced in numbers and seems to be rapidly disappearing from the state.

Wesley Lanyon is the author of the treatise on the Western Meadowlark for the new series *The Birds of North America, Life Histories for the 21st Century* (1994). I found his opening paragraph, quoted here, most interesting (highlighting of words is mine): "The Western Meadowlark **is** one of our most **abundant** and widely distributed birds, inhabiting open country from meadows and cultivated fields of the north central United States to tidal flats along the Pacific Ocean from the Mexican Plateau to the prairies of southern Canada. Its frequent roadside occurrence, colorful plumage, and melodious song make it one of our most popular birds." Under the paragraph "Trends" Lanyon further states, "Breeding populations declining **slightly** throughout U.S. and Canada (annual rate of 0.6%) with highest rates of decline in the northeast section (Minnesota, Wisconsin, Michigan, Illinois, Indiana, Ohio, and Ontario) at annual rates of 4-9% (BBS 1968-1991). Finally, Lanyon ends by stating "Michigan's atlas project reported data supporting this general population decline over the past 20 years **perhaps** owing to changes in agricultural methods."

Bruce G. Peterjohn and John R. Sauer (1999) have this to say about grassland birds in general and the Western Meadowlark specifically, "Collectively, grassland birds showed the smallest percentage of species that increased of any Breeding Bird Survey bird group, and population declines prevailed throughout most of North America. Grassland birds have evolved in relatively harsh and constantly changing habitats, requiring considerable adaptability in order to survive

Table 1. Number of Western Meadowlarks recorded 1968–2000 along the Lakeville, Dakota County, BBS route #008).

Year	Number of Individuals	Number of Stops
1968	98	43
1969	81	44
1970	83	44
1971	106	41
1972	119	46
1973	102	40
1974	58	35
1975	78	40
1976	59	31
1977	58	39
1978	51	35
1979	35	23
1980	41	30
1981	43	27
1982	50	29
1983	49	30
1984	23	19
1985	29	20
1986	22	13
1987	40	25
1988	27	21
1989	53	25
1990	40	23
1991	33	23
1992	32	22
1993	18	13
1994	26	19
1995	16	15
1996	18	16
1997	8	6
1998	7	6
1999	7	7
2000	5	4

in this environment. With some assistance from humans, this adaptability may allow many of these species to recover if habitat availability and conditions improve. Western Meadowlarks have undergone a range expansion in the twentieth century, spreading eastward into the Great Lakes region. This expansion largely occurred before the start of the BBS, and Western

Meadowlark populations generally declined between 1966 and 1996. These declines were evident throughout most of the Western Meadowlark's range, although increases occurred from southern California across the southwestern states to Texas and locally northward along the Rocky Mountains and Great Plains."

As far as Minnesota's Western Meadowlark population is concerned, I would like to discuss several aspects of the above quotations. First, I would change the word "is" in the first line of Lanyon's treatise to "was." The Western Meadowlark was one of our most abundant and widely distributed birds. Secondly, in the last sentence I would change the word "perhaps" to "likely." I believe our agricultural practices are very likely to be a major cause in the decline of Western Meadowlark numbers in Minnesota. I would add that intense urbanization has influenced the population of Western Meadowlarks to a great extent in many areas, a factor that Lanyon does not mention.

I would like to present my field observations and BBS trend data to support and confirm that the Western Meadowlark is no longer an abundant bird in Minnesota and is rapidly declining in numbers. Most birders are familiar with the BBS, but for those who are not, I will give a short explanation of the Survey. The BBS was initiated in 1966 in the eastern part of the United States with the purpose of long-term monitoring of breeding species. In the 1970s, the survey was extended to include the western portion of the U.S. and portions of Canada. At present, the survey has also expanded to Alaska and a few areas in northern Mexico. The program was initiated by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and currently is jointly coordinated by the Biological Resources Division of the U.S. Geological Survey and the Canadian Wildlife Service. The survey uses the cooperative efforts of thousands of skilled amateurs and professional ornithologists (mainly birders) to collect the data. Essentially a survey consists of a 24.5 mile



Figure 1. Minnesota Breeding Bird Survey routes.

route along a predetermined course. There are 50 stops along the route, at half-mile intervals. The observer counts the birds seen and heard from this point for three minutes at each stop. Surveys generally take four and a half hours to complete. Routes are run during June at

the height of the Minnesota breeding season. The actual date is chosen by the observer. It is preferred that the route be run close to the same date each year. Using these methods the Western Meadowlark, which occurs along roadsides, is an excellent species to be accurately

Route	Location	Year	No.	Most Recent Year	No.	Comment
Route #1	Money Creek, <i>Houston</i>	1967	38	1999	0	
Route #2	Chatfield, <i>Olmsted</i>	1970	234	1999	1	
Route #3	Hartland, <i>Freeborn</i>	1972	77	1999	2	
Route #4	Huntley, <i>Martin</i>	1970	170	1995	5	
Route #5	Chandler, <i>Murray, Nobles</i>	1969	169	1987	68	Not run since 1987
Route #6	Blue Mounds, <i>Rock</i>	1975	85	1996	44	
Route #7	Millville, <i>Wabasha, Winona</i>	1970	71	1999	3	
Route #9	Minnetonka, <i>Hennepin, Wright</i>	1969	86	1999	0	
Route #10	Arlington, <i>Sibley, Nicollet</i>	1969	209	1999	6	
Route #11	Courtland, <i>Nicollet, Brown</i>	1978	117	1999	7	
Route #12	Redwood Falls, <i>Redwood, Lyon</i>	1978	169	1999	11	
Route #13	Maynard, <i>Chippewa, Yellow Medicine</i>	1970	137	1999	5	
Route #14	Dawson, <i>Lac Qui Parle, Yellow Medicine</i>	1974	70	1991	24	
Route #15	Princeton, <i>Benton, Mille Lacs, Isanti</i>	1975	115	1999	1	
Route #16	Osseo, <i>Hennepin, Wright</i>	1969	108	1997	8	
Route #17	Knapp, <i>Wright, Meeker</i>	1971	84	1999	0	
Route #18	St. Stephens, <i>Stearns</i>	1968	65	1995	4	
Route #19	Appleton, <i>Swift</i> (Includes Chippewa Prairie)	1978	42	1996	30	
Route #20	Gluek, <i>Chippewa, Swift</i>	1972	78	1996	4	
Route #21	Chokio, <i>Stevens, Swift</i>	1969	50	1989	51	Not run since 1989
Route #22	Crommell, <i>Carlton</i>	1967	10	1999	0	
Route #23	Wigwam Bay, <i>Mille Lacs</i>	1969	12	1995	0	
Route #24	Mille Lacs, <i>Aitkin</i>	1968	12	1998	0	
Route #25	Backus, <i>Cass, Wadena</i>	1972	10	1999	0	
Route #26	Pine River, <i>Crow Wing, Cass</i>	1970	17	1999	1	
Route #27	Edwards, <i>Otter Tail</i>	1973	80	1997	3	
Route #28	Evergreen, <i>Becker, Wadena</i>	1973	64	1999	4	
Route #29	Glyndon, <i>Clay</i>	1978	50	1999	9	
Route #30	Tenney, <i>Wilkin, Grant</i>	1978	52	1996	31	
Route #35	Floodwood, <i>St. Louis</i>	1971	3	1999	0	
Route #40	Bemidji, <i>Beltrami</i>	1967	6	1980	3	Not run since 1980
Route #41	Oklee, <i>Red Lake</i>	1981	80	1997	41	
Route #42	Debs, <i>Beltrami</i>	1973	14	1999	0	
Route #43	Beltrami, <i>Polk</i>	1976	87	1999	8	
Route #44	Wylie, <i>Red Lake</i>	1978	119	1999	44	
Route #46	Little Fork, <i>Koochiching</i>	1969	0	1999	0	
Route #47	Lude, <i>Lake of the Woods</i>	1978	30	1999	3	
Route #49	Erie, <i>Pennington, Marshall</i>	1981	109	1997	40	
Route #50	Grygla, <i>Beltrami, Marshall</i>	1976	93	1997	25	
Route #51	Badger, <i>Roseau</i>	1978	65	1999	31	
Route #52	Lake Bronson, <i>Kittson</i>	1990	115	1999	37	
Route #53	Caledonia, <i>Houston</i>	1993	9	1996	1	
Route #54	LeRoy, <i>Mower, Olmsted</i>	1993	31	1999	8	
Route #55	Austin, <i>Mower, Steele</i>	1993	20	1999	16	
Route #56	Fairmont, <i>Martin</i>	1993	1	1999	9	
Route #58	Frontenac, <i>Goodhue, Wabasha</i>	1993	36	1999	6	
Route #62	Tyler, <i>Pipestone, Lincoln</i>	1993	93	1999	68	
Route #64	New London, <i>Kandiyohi, Stearns</i>	1994	16	1999	22	
Route #65	Glenwood, <i>Pope</i>	1993	19	1996	8	
Route #66	Chokio, <i>Stevens, Traverse</i>	1993	22	1995	10	
Route #77	Lockhart, <i>Clay, Norman</i>	1993	72	1998	28	
Route #81	Warroad, <i>Roseau</i> ,	1993	55	1999	43	
Route #82	Greenbush, <i>Roseau, Kittson</i>	1993	39	1999	21	
Route #904	Big Stone NWR, <i>Big Stone, Lac Qui Parle</i>	1995	17	1999	17	

Table 2. Selected Breeding Bird Survey routes listing number of Western Meadowlarks recorded during one of the route's earlier years and number recorded in the most recent year the route was run. County names are shown in italics.

censused by the BBS.

There were 53 BBS routes established in Minnesota in 1966 (see Figure 1, numbers 1–52; routes 39 and 40 have been discontinued). Another 30 routes were added in the 1980s (Figure 1, 53–82) and an additional six routes have been added mainly on National Wildlife Refuges since that time (Figure 1, 139–140, 900, 902, 903, 904). The data received from these routes are the only reliable source of long-term estimates of population trends of birds at large geographic scales. There are approximately 3700 active survey routes throughout North America.

Coverage of the routes in Minnesota has been fair to good with an average of 70% of the routes being covered each year. The North American Breeding Bird Survey Trend Results for Minnesota show a yearly decline in Western Meadowlark populations of 5.4% for the period 1966 to 1979. This figure was based on 39 of the 52 routes where the Western Meadowlark had been recorded. For the period 1980–1998 the decline worsened, climbing to a 5.9% annual decrease along the 56 routes where the species was recorded. Both of these numbers were ranked highest on the scale of being statistically significant.

Since 1968, I have run the BBS route #008 (Lakeville), which covers an area that starts in Scott County and ends southeast of Farmington in Dakota County. When I began this route in 1968 there was only minor urbanization, mainly centered around the town of Lakeville. Over the past 33 years, the majority of the area covered by this census has become totally urbanized or intensely farmed, with the only exception being a few stops near the end of the route. The number of Western Meadowlarks recorded along this route have changed dramatically, as can be seen from the totals recorded in Table 1.

It is easily seen from these figures that the early 1970s were still good years for the Western Meadowlark in Dakota County. The recording of 119 individuals at 46 of the 50 stops in 1972 attests to

this fact. Also, it can be noted that Western Meadowlarks were still being recorded at half the stops until the early 1980s. There has been a drastic decline in numbers and recording at stops since that time. The most drastic decline has occurred since 1998. The figure for this year (2000) speaks for itself.

One could say this is just one small area near the Twin Cities, and because of the rapid urbanization one would expect this pattern. Remember, however, the BBS data showed a very significant decline throughout the range of the Western Meadowlark in the state. I have received information from the BBS office on 66 routes where the Western Meadowlark has been recorded in the state since 1967 (see Table 2). All of these routes with two exceptions show a dramatic decline in numbers. The two exceptions are routes that have only been run since the early 1990s. I will give a few examples of this decline in numbers from various parts of the state.

As mentioned above, only two counts, #56 and #64 showed minor increases. The other counts (Table 2) all show rather drastic declines. Not only urbanization but also our agricultural practices are taking their toll on Western Meadowlark numbers all across the state. Across much of this species' range in the state, corn and soybeans are the predominant crop. Crops are planted to the edge of the road, and ditches are mowed and hayed during the height of the breeding season. Thus, good breeding habitat is at a minimum. This also applies to the few meadows that still exist and the alfalfa fields that do provide some nesting areas for meadowlarks. However, many of these areas are also mowed and hayed at the height of the breeding season. As I travel around the state and see the thousands of bales in the fields I wonder how many nests, eggs and young birds are wrapped in these bales. During these travels I seldom see meadowlarks along the major roadways, and they are few and far between even on the least traveled rural roads of the southern and western areas

of the state where Western Meadowlarks used to abound.

Wisconsin also shows a dramatic decrease in the numbers of Western Meadowlarks. For the period 1966–1979 an annual decrease of 6.1% was recorded. This worsened to a most disturbing 11.2% annual decrease in the period 1980–1998.

In Iowa the situation is somewhat different. An annual decrease of 4.2% was noted from 1966–1979 but in the period 1980–1998 populations of this species were relatively stable with the possibility of a slight increase in numbers. These numbers were obtained from North American Breeding Bird Survey Trend Results. One can observe a rather significant difference in agricultural practices when one crosses into Iowa from Minnesota. There are more hedge rows, less mowing of ditches, and it seems to me that crops are not planted as close to the roads, providing some small plots of breeding habitat for nesting. The slight increase in numbers of Western Meadowlarks was attributed to an increase in land held in the Conservation Reserve Program (CRP) according to the *Iowa Breeding Bird Atlas* (Dinsmore *et al.* 1996). One should note that the overall population of Western Meadowlarks was probably less to begin with in Iowa.

In South Dakota, one bright spot in the picture, Western Meadowlark numbers actually were increasing at a 2.1% rate from 1966–1979. In recent years the numbers have been stable or declining, but certainly nothing as compared to the drastic decline in other Upper Midwest states. To find some positives in this grim picture of Western Meadowlark decline in Minnesota one must look at the public lands. Meadowlarks still exist in fairly good numbers in the state wherever there are Wildlife Management Areas (WMAs), Waterfowl Production Areas (WPAs), most state parks, Nature Conservancy tracts and National Wildlife Refuges (NWRs) such as Big Stone NWR in Big Stone and Lac Qui Parle counties. If it were not for these areas, I believe, Western Meadowlark numbers would be

much lower than they are at present. Also, in other counties along the western border of the state such as Lincoln, Lyon, and Yellow Medicine in the southwest, and Clay, Becker, Norman, and Polk in the northwest where grassland habitat exists in large tracts, the Western Meadowlark is still present in good numbers.

What can one say in summary other than the Western Meadowlark has been disappearing right before our eyes at a rapid rate, a rate which is increasing with each passing year? If it weren't for federal and state lands the Western Meadowlark could easily become a threatened species in the state.

As I stated in the beginning, Wesley Lanyon recorded as recently as 1994 "that the Western Meadowlark is one of our most abundant and widely distributed species". It is my hope that we can at least say that it is one of our more common species, but the outlook for this to be true, based on current population trends, is certainly bleak.

On the positive side, if farm surpluses continue with a resulting maintenance of, or increase in, CRP lands, and if public lands are maintained (for Western Meadowlarks and other grassland birds) the future of the Western Meadowlark in Minnesota may be secure.

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Eurasian Tree Sparrow in Northwestern Minnesota

Paul Spreitzer

My wife's family has a lake cabin in Clay County, about midway between Moorhead and the Detroit Lakes area. Sally and I manage to make a few trips up there each summer to fish, swim and visit, and in recent years we've also spent time birding the surrounding wooded areas, farm fields and ponds. Our first stop is usually at the feeders in front of the cabin, which attract a variety of birds that we city-dwellers find exciting. The seed feeders and bird baths are active all day, with visitors such as American Goldfinch, Chipping Sparrow, White-breasted Nuthatch, and the occasional Indigo Bunting. Baltimore Orioles and Red-bellied Woodpeckers enjoy the nectar feeder and oranges, and Ruby-throated Hummingbirds frequent their own feeders.

In the spring of 1998, House Sparrows were relatively new visitors to the feeders at the cabin. We tolerated them, since they were few in number and did not seem to be aggressive toward the other birds, but we also bemoaned the "urbanization" of our little plot of wilderness. Nevertheless, while keeping a close eye out for interesting birds, we spent a fair amount of time watching House Sparrows — and that is what I was doing on the evening of 6 June 1998.

A small group of sparrows was found feeding on millet seed beneath the hopper feeder when Sally and I arrived at about 6:00 P.M. I sat down at the kitchen table and scanned the surrounding trees for other birds, but to my recollection, these four or five sparrows were the only birds I could find. On closer inspection, I

noticed that one appeared different. It looked trimmer than the male House Sparrows and seemed to have a slightly different coloration. I began to feel that "unexpected bird find" excitement welling up inside, but knew that I needed to look closer. I pulled out my binoculars and re-sighted the bird. Its entire crown was chestnut to chocolate-colored, not gray like the male House Sparrow. It seemed slightly smaller, too, but I still wasn't getting a good look. Then, the bird suddenly turned its head and I saw the black patch on its cheek. "Oh my gosh!" I remember whispering to Sally and the rest, "I think it's one of those St. Louis sparrows!"

Although I had forgotten the bird's name, I was familiar with the Eurasian Tree Sparrow from my Peterson's Field Guide. I had always thought it odd that the range map for this species consisted of a little pink dot centered on St. Louis, Missouri, and wondered if I would ever get down there to see one of them. Now it looked as if the bird had come to me.

In the time it took me to dig out my guide, however, the sparrows had all flown and I was left wondering if I had really seen what I thought I had seen. No one else had observed it (they were busy doing things like unpacking, socializing and getting ready for dinner), and it didn't return that evening. I was very frustrated at being the only one — after all, it might not ever come back, and I couldn't call it a "life bird" unless Sally saw it, too (this is our little rule). *But I* was also excited, in my cautious way. Just how rare was this bird in Minnesota?

Had there been an influx of Eurasian Tree Sparrows in recent years which my 15-year-old Peterson's did not show?

My agenda for the next morning was simple: sit and stare at the feeder until the sparrows came back. I seem to recall that I sat there for some time (ignoring all of the colorful native birds) and I think I even gave up at one point, but by late morning the sparrows returned. I called Sally over, gave her a pair of binoculars and asked her to confirm my discovery. Only then did I truly believe it myself. A life bird! And possible rare bird! We made plans to call the hotline when we got back to the Twin Cities. The bird reappeared several times each day that first weekend, at morning, midday and dusk. It was always in the company of the House Sparrows and always fed on the ground.

I remember calling Anthony Hertzell the following Monday and apologizing for possibly wasting his time with my report. When he called me back that evening he assured me that such a find was worth reporting, but sounded a little skeptical — and rightly so. I was an amateur birder, and this would be only the second Minnesota record for this species. Tony asked for directions to the cabin and I immediately grew apprehensive. It seemed like an awfully long way to go to see one bird. What if I was wrong and it wasn't a Eurasian Tree Sparrow after all? And what if it didn't come back to the feeder?

Several days later, my identification was confirmed by Tony and others. This was a terrific feeling, knowing that we had made such an important contribution to Minnesota birding. Not long afterward, once the report was announced on the hotline, we realized that other birders might visit our cabin that summer. Sally's father, Chuck, was tickled by the notion of people coming out to see "our bird." He set up a little welcoming station on the picnic table, complete with a sign-in sheet and a "birds of the area" list which Sally and I had compiled. The birders did indeed come — more than we had ever

imagined — but all have been gracious and respectful guests. It was only when we saw how many people were eagerly driving out to the middle of nowhere to see this bird that we truly realized the significance of our find. Hosting visitors from all over the state (and country!) has probably been the most gratifying part of the experience. We've read their notes, shared in their excitement, and felt true disappointment for those who stayed for hours without seeing the sparrow.

Since that first sighting, we have seen the Eurasian Tree Sparrow during nearly every visit to the cabin. Each year we see it on our first visit for the season (31 May 1999 and 11 June 2000) and assume that it has been around for some time prior to those dates. We also assume that this is the same individual returning each year, but have never been able to pick out distinguishing marks to ascertain this. This bird probably winters in the area, but we typically don't visit the cabin after September. What we do know is that the sparrow now feeds as much on the feeder as on the ground. It is typically seen in the late afternoon, but we have seen it at all times of day. Only this year has it regularly come to the feeder alone, without its House Sparrow cousins. It is fairly skittish, but no more so than the House Sparrows. It seems to have gotten used to us watching from the window. Interestingly, in the three summers that this bird has been around, we have yet to hear it vocalize.

Just this morning we received news that Peder Svingen discovered a second similar sparrow at the cabin — possibly a hybrid Eurasian Tree X House Sparrow! (We promptly e-mailed Chuck to have him prepare for another round of bird watchers!) Sally and I are eager to head up to the cabin to see it for ourselves, and we hope this means that we will have Eurasian Tree Sparrows to enjoy at the cabin for years to come. The House Sparrows, of course, are another matter!

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Recent Extralimital Records of the Eurasian Tree Sparrow in North America

Peder H. Svingen

This article reviews recent extralimital occurrences of the Eurasian Tree Sparrow in North America. The second, third, and fourth Minnesota records were most likely provided by the same individual since they occurred at the same feeder during three consecutive summers. Documentation for the 1999 occurrence in Clay County is presented which supports this assumption.

The Eurasian Tree Sparrow (*Passer montanus*) was introduced into North America on 25 April 1870, when 12 pair were released in a St. Louis, Missouri city park (Merrill 1876, Lang 1992). The population spread gradually, primarily north and northeast of St. Louis, as chronicled by Flieg (1971) and Barlow (1973). Lang (1992) reviewed its range expansion subsequent to the early 1970s and mapped extralimital records through 1991. This map included Minnesota's first record (Janssen and Svingen 1990).

The Eurasian Tree Sparrow is resident throughout much of Europe and Asia. In addition to St. Louis, Missouri, it has been introduced in Bermuda, and is currently established in Borneo, Sulawesi, the Phillipines, Micronesia and Australia (AOU 1998). The introduced population is established and expanding in Illinois and Missouri (Lang 1992). Within the past decade, this species spread into southeast Iowa and nested in Des Moines County (Kent and Dinsmore 1996).

Extralimital Records

Escapes and/or releases from captivity were presumed responsible for several records during the 1980s in Vancouver, British Columbia (Weber 1987). Lang (1992) suggested that caged Eurasian Tree Sparrows in Vancouver were most likely Asian in origin. Because the subspecies introduced into North America (*P. m. montanus*) can be distinguished from the Asian subspecies (Pyle 1997), detailed



Eurasian Tree Sparrow, 17 June 2000, Parke Township, Clay County. Photo by Peder Svingen.

photographs or measurements may help resolve questions of origin.

Elsewhere in the Pacific Northwest, presumed escapes were seen for more than a year and eventually brought their young to a feeder in North Bend, Coos County, Oregon (Tweit *et al.* 1990). On the East Coast, one was found during the winter of 1995–96 at a feeder in Suffolk County, Massachusetts, but the record was not accepted due to questionable origin (Petersen 1997).

The first accepted record for Canada was near St. François Xavier, Manitoba, on 2 November 1986 through 22 January 1991 (Koes 1988, Koes and Taylor 1991). Three hybrid Eurasian Tree X House Sparrows were documented there by Lang (1992). They were the first such hybrids known to occur in North America. They look more like House Sparrows (*P. domesticus*) than Eurasian Tree Sparrows in Lang's close-up photos.

While considering this species' habitat and climate requirements, Lang (1992) stated "future expansion might proceed northward in Illinois to the latitude of Chicago, then eastward through the farmland of northern Indiana and southern Michigan, perhaps someday reaching southern Ontario." During the 1990s, there are extralimital records (Figure 1) from Rock and Door counties, Wisconsin (Granlund 1994, Frank 1996), Parke County, Indiana (Bruner 1996), Wayne County, Michigan (voting incomplete, MBRC 2000), and Bruce (Pittaway 1995) and Essex counties, Ontario (K. Roy, pers. com.). An expanding population probably increases the odds of additional vagrancy to Minnesota.

Minnesota Records

Minnesota's first record of the Eurasian Tree Sparrow occurred 27 June to 6 July 1990 in Dakota County (Janssen and Svingen 1990). Earlier in this issue, Paul Spreitzer wrote about his discovery of the state's second Eurasian Tree Sparrow in Parke Township, Clay County, on 6 June 1998. This bird was seen by dozens, if not hundreds, of grateful observers and stayed in the area through at least 2 July (Eckert 1998). A photograph that was taken by Dennis Martin in June 1998 was published in *The Loon* 71:34.

One year later, Paul Spreitzer reported that the Eurasian Tree Sparrow had been seen again on 31 May 1999! On 6 June 1999, Anthony Hertzell and I watched it over a period of twenty minutes from a measured distance of 32 feet. One male House Sparrow was in the yard at the same time and remained nearby for di-

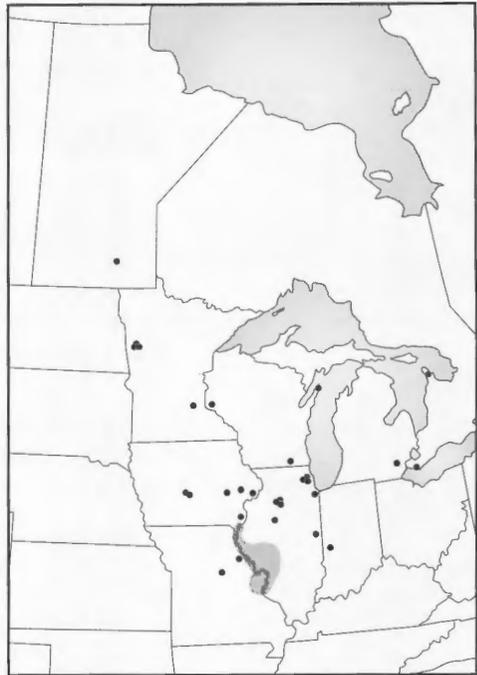


Figure 1. Extralimital records of the Eurasian Tree Sparrow (n=29). Gray area depicts permanent range.

rect comparison. Like the previous year, the Eurasian Tree Sparrow first flew in to perch in the oak trees about 40 feet above the feeder, then landed on the ground below the feeder. Unlike the previous year, it was seen leaf-gleaning in the oaks. It also captured insects while hopping through the short grass in the yard. It landed on the feeder once, but otherwise only ate the seeds that had spilled onto the ground below the feeder. No vocalizations were heard.

The Eurasian Tree Sparrow's bill was black and appeared slightly longer than the bill of *domesticus*. According to Pyle (1997), the subspecies found in North America (*P. m. montanus*) has a smaller bill than the House Sparrow although the measurements overlap slightly. The bird's irides were dark and its legs were pink.

The most distinctive field mark was the large, black, well-demarcated, circular spot on its white cheek. There was a row

of five or six tiny black dots along the base of its neck. This row of dots vaguely suggested a partial necklace and was present on both sides.

Its crown and nape were both brown, paler than the nape of male *domesticus*. Its brown forecrown color was obviously different than the gray forecrown of *domesticus*. The Eurasian Tree Sparrow's black throat patch extended only a short distance onto its breast; this patch was more distinctly demarcated than on male *domesticus* and it was narrower throughout, especially on the lower throat.

Its back was brown with black spots and streaks. It showed two thin, whitish wingbars. The upper wingbar was edged black along its anterior aspect, forming a thin, black parallel line.

The bird's rump and upper-tail coverts were grayish-brown and unmarked. Its tail was brown and squared at the tip. The underparts were unmarked pale gray, becoming buffy-gray on the flanks. Each under-tail covert showed a dusky subterminal spot, creating a semicircular pattern of dots on its crissum.

Compared to the previous summer, the Eurasian Tree Sparrow's appearance in 1999 generated minimal interest among birders. There was only one documented observation in 1999 but presumably the bird continued to frequent this feeder. The lake cabin is visited sporadically, so the bird's apparent departure date each summer is unknown.

The next report from Clay County was on 11 June 2000, the third consecutive summer at the same feeder. I went there on 17 June and, after approximately an hour of watching House Sparrows, the Eurasian Tree Sparrow called — a dull, flat “dink... dink... dink” — and came in to the feeder “as advertised” at 7:30 P.M. It was followed by a second bird which may prove to be a hybrid!

Discussion

The second through the fourth state records of the Eurasian Tree Sparrow all occurred at the same feeder in Clay County at about the same time of year.

Although differences in behavior were noted, these occurrences likely involved the same individual all three years. This assumption is supported by at least one plumage character: the tiny black dots along the base of the bird's neck, which were described in 1999 and which can be detected in one of the photographs from 1998 (*North American Birds* 52:460).

The initial observation dates for these three consecutive years do not reflect the bird's actual arrival. Although it seemed to disappear after early July 1998 and again in 1999, it probably overwintered in the area with House Sparrows. The winter hardiness and site fidelity of this species have been amply demonstrated in Manitoba (see above) and Wisconsin, where one spent five consecutive winters at a feeder in rural Pierce County (R. Domagalski, pers. com.).

Acknowledgments

I am most grateful to Anthony Lang for reviewing an earlier draft of this paper and offering helpful comments. Many thanks to Philip Chu (Michigan), Robert Domagalski (Wisconsin), and Kayo Roy (Ontario) for assistance with research on sparrows. In 1990, I received similar help from Carl Bendorf (Iowa), Rudolf Koes and Peter Taylor (Manitoba). Anthony Hertzler created the map that depicts this species' extralimital occurrences. Thanks to Chuck Heuer for granting access to his property, and to Paul Spreitzer and Sally Heuer for updates on the bird's presence.

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The Winter Season (1 December 1999 to 29 February 2000)

Karl Bardon

The quality and quantity of birds were excellent, highlighted by reports of Pacific Loon, and both Curve-billed and Sage thrashers. A massive movement of birds into the state in late February was nearly a month ahead of schedule.

For the third consecutive winter, temperatures throughout most of the winter were well above normal, especially the first three weeks of December, which were as much as 19 degrees above average, and the last week in February, which was as much as 25 degrees above average. Most of the state re-

mained snow-free until late December, and some areas were snow-free until mid-January. Although more typical snow depths were seen throughout most of Minnesota during the last half of January and the first half of February, by the end of the period the entire state was snow-free again, and drought conditions were

reported in some areas.

Casual/Accidental Species

Several Casual and Accidental species were seen this winter — but most remarkable of all was the **Pacific Loon** (a Regular species that has never before been recorded in Minnesota during winter) picked up near Marshall in early January and then later released; unfortunately, the bird died shortly thereafter, probably killed by a predator. One can only wonder where this bird had come from before it crash-landed in Lyon County!

For hundreds of observers, the highlight of the season was a potential first state record **Tufted Duck** enjoyed at the Blue Lake sewage treatment plant in Scott County. Although there was much debate about its age and sex, there was no indication of hybridization with other *Aythya*, which is always a concern when evaluating extralimital records of this species. A local aviculturist eventually came forward with the news that the bird was probably one of the individuals that had escaped from his collection, and as a result the Minnesota Ornithological Records Committee voted not to accept the sighting due to questionable origin.

The state's thirteenth **King Eider**, first found during the fall season, lingered through 9 December near Grand Marais, thereby becoming only the third winter record of this species. **Eurasian Colared-Doves** are becoming a permanent part of Minnesota's avifauna: overwintering birds were reported in New Ulm, Willmar, and Fairmont, although thus far the only documentation that has been received and accepted refers to the birds in Fairmont. The state's third **Curve-billed Thrasher** overwintered at a feeder near Breckenridge, Wilkin County, consistent with a recent pattern of individuals possibly belonging to the *T. c. palmeri* subspecies occurring in the northern prairie regions during the winter. Perhaps even more surprising, the state's eighth **Sage Thrasher** was reported in late February. Lastly, a **Gray-crowned Rosy-Finch**

made sporadic visits to a Wilkin County feeder.

Lingering December Migrants

As with last winter, the mild temperatures in December allowed a long list of species to linger longer than normal — especially waterbirds, since many lakes did not completely freeze until mid-month. The immature **Black-crowned Night-Heron** seen in Bloomington was only the fourth winter record in the last twenty years. Despite the large number of waterfowl present in December, there were fewer reports of sea ducks than last year. The only exception was four species of sea ducks reported from Mille Lacs in December: **Surf** and **White-winged scoters**, **Long-tailed Duck (Oldsquaw)**, and **Harlequin Duck**, the latter an immature male lingering from the fall season for over a month. A **Sora** found on the Battle Lake CBC represents only about the fourth winter record for the state and the first in the north. Late migrant **Sandhill Cranes** were noted in Stearns and Morrison counties; there are only five previous winter records.

Peak migration of **Thayer's Gulls** often occurs in December, and Dakota County remains the best place to observe this species — this year's peak was a record 13–14 birds on 14 December. Nevertheless, it was a poor season for rare gulls. Diligent scanning of the gull hordes in the Twin Cities and along the North Shore only produced two **Iceland Gulls** at Grand Marais, the usual **Lesser Black-backed Gulls** in the Twin Cities, and a **Great Black-backed Gull** at Knife River. More interesting was the documentation of an apparent second-winter "**Nelson's Gull**" at Duluth, only the third report of this hybrid (Glaucous Gull × Herring Gull) in the state.

Two more winter **Marsh Wrens** were added to the state's six previous records, but neither was documented as overwintering. Three species of warblers were reported, highlighted by a well-described and record-late **Wilson's Warbler** in St. Paul, representing the state's first winter

report. Also noteworthy was a lingering **Cape May Warbler** in Duluth, but there was (surprisingly) only a single **Yellow-rumped Warbler**. Other late passerines of interest included two **Gray Catbirds**, two **Northern Mockingbirds** (both along the North Shore), a **Savannah Sparrow** on the Cottonwood CBC, and an injured adult male **Yellow-headed Blackbird** in Renville County.

Overwintering Reports

There were several reports of unusual overwintering geese. A single **Greater White-fronted Goose** overwintered at Fergus Falls; the only previous such record for the state was from Rochester in 1968-69, although additional winter records from this location since that time may also have represented overwintering birds. Following last winter's report of a **Ross's Goose** lingering at Faribault into December, another (or the same?) was found this winter at Rochester, where it provided only the fourth overwintering record of this species.

Minnesota's winter swan nightmares have only just begun! At least 640 **Trumpeter Swans** were reported from 15 counties throughout the state, perhaps making this the default species in many locations, but other swan species are possible throughout the state and at any time during the season. Lingering **Tundra Swans** were especially widespread in December, while four **Mute Swans** were reported from a variety of dates and locations. In most cases, documentation of these winter swans was unconvincing.

Several **Ring-billed Gulls** may have overwintered at the western end of Lake Superior, since there were several reports in Duluth and Knife River during mid-winter. There are only a few previous overwintering reports, all from the Twin Cities (including one at Black Dog Lake this season), and no previous mid-winter records from the North Shore.

Mild winters continue to be conducive to the rare **Carolina Wren**; the four reports included one overwintering in Otter Tail County. Steve Carlson continues to

find **Swamp Sparrows** lingering in the Minnesota River Valley in Hennepin County; a minimum of 12 were found in January, at least two of which overwintered. A **Field Sparrow** was also found overwintering here. **Meadowlarks** were more widespread than usual; the most unusual report was a small flock which overwintered in the snowless fields of Rothsay WMA, Wilkin County. Even more surprising, a very large flock of **Brown-headed Cowbirds** overwintered at Pine Bend, Dakota County — the peak count was 185 birds!

Early Migration in February

Many observers noted a huge movement of birds into the state during the period 24-29 February. Temperatures in the 60s were reported at many locations during the last week of February (including a high of 67 degrees at Pipestone), and many lakes in southwestern Minnesota started opening up by the end of the month. Although there is often modest migration in late February when temperatures are warmer, this season's surge was unprecedented.

It is usually difficult to determine early dates for most species of waterfowl because of overwintering birds, but the immigration of multiple flocks into many south locations was unquestionable this season! By season's end, most species of waterfowl were reported from many south locations in numbers which are more typical of late March. Observers reporting early arrivals of ducks are encouraged to report exact numbers in order to further differentiate them from overwintering birds.

The early movement of geese was perhaps the most dramatic, with cumulative reports of 802 **Greater White-fronted Geese**, 3,019 **Snow Geese**, 101 **Ross's Geese**, and thousands of **Canada Geese**. The magnitude of white-fronted goose migration in late February was greater than some recent spring migrations, and the flocks of Ross's in Jackson and Nobles Counties on 27 February were not only the earliest-ever migrants, but also

included the largest-ever flock (though this record was broken shortly thereafter during early March). With only one exception, this movement of geese was confined to southern Minnesota: a record-early flock of Snow Geese was reported on 27 February from the Sax-Zim bog in St. Louis County — talk about pushing the season! Not to be outdone, a very early flock of 14 **Tundra Swans** arrived in Houston County on 29 February.

The earliest movement of ducks seemed to be 21–22 February in Cottonwood County, with noteworthy arrivals of **Gadwall**, **American Wigeon**, **Northern Pintail**, **Redhead**, and **Bufflehead**, followed by small flocks of various species in Winona County on 24 February. These included 76 **Gadwalls**, 2 **Northern Shovelers**, 1 **Northern Pintail**, 7 **Green-winged Teal**, 20 **Canvasbacks**, 2 **Red-heads**, 1 **Ring-necked Duck**, 38 **Lesser Scaup**, 9 **Hooded Mergansers**, and a **Ruddy Duck**, most of which were believed to be early spring migrants, as none had been reported overwintering in the area. Other noteworthy arrivals included 92 **Northern Pintails** in Otter Tail County on 27 February, **Greater Scaup** in several locations beginning on 26 February, and a single **Red-breasted Merganser** in Washington County on 29 February.

Early migration was not just confined to waterfowl. Dozens of **Killdeer** moved into the state during the same time period. Starting on 24 February, a steady stream of **Ring-billed Gulls** and smaller numbers of **Herring Gulls** moved up the Mississippi River into southern Minnesota; Ring-billeds had even reached Duluth by month's end. **Eastern Bluebirds** were not reported overwintering, which made their movement into the state in late February quite dramatic — several were even reported from the north, which was record early. Finally, thousands of **Red-winged Blackbirds** and hundreds of **Common Grackles** moved into the state, and with these large numbers of Blackbirds were a few flocks of **Rusty Blackbirds** and **Brown-headed Cowbirds**.

Raptors

Many raptor species were counted in record numbers. The number of **Northern Harriers** was truly impressive! In the last twenty years, the average number of reports per winter has been only seven, and as recently as 1996–97, there was none; this season's number was eighteen times higher than this average! Very large numbers of **Red-tailed Hawks** overwintered in southern Minnesota, including an adult dark morph Western race in St. Paul. This is undoubtedly the same individual that had been found as an immature at this same location last winter, since there is only one previous winter record of any dark morph Red-tailed Hawk in Minnesota. The record number of **Golden Eagles** precluded listing all reports as had been done in the past.

Like last winter, northern owls were seen in average to below average numbers, while unusually high numbers of Long-eared and Short-eared owls were reported. The near-record number of **Long-eared Owls** was once again due mostly to efforts by Anthony and Paul Hertzell. They concentrated on Washington County during this winter's searches and discovered 20 individuals. Since **Short-eared Owls** occupy similar habitat and have a similar prey base as harriers, it wasn't surprising that this species was also found in record numbers — the only difference was that nearly all Short-eared reports were from the second half of winter. Anthony Hertzell and Peder Svingen conducted a nocturnal owl survey on 27–28 February along the Stoney River Forest Road in Lake County; they recorded 2 **Boreal**, 3 **Great Gray**, 2 **Long-eared**, and 13 **Northern Saw-whet owls**, which brought the total number of saw-whets reported this winter to a record number.

Boreal Invaders

With only a few exceptions, this was not a good winter for boreal invaders. **Great Gray** and **Northern Hawk owls** were reported in only average numbers within their normal winter range, while

the total of eleven **Snowy Owls** was much lower than usual. **Three-toed Woodpeckers** were reported in above average numbers, and **Black-backed Woodpeckers** were found in record high numbers (due mostly to a high count on the Isabella CBC), but neither species strayed out of the coniferous zone. Except for the number of redpolls, the winter finch flight was unremarkable. **Common Redpolls** were widespread in modest flocks, while **Hoary Redpolls** were reported from a disproportionately large number of locations.

Summary

A total of 161 species was found, which is one short of the record set during winter 1994–95. A total of 54 CBCs was submitted, counting 367,836 indi-

viduals of 132 species — both are record highs. The CBC data are fully incorporated into this report; also, for the first time, a spreadsheet showing the cumulative CBC data for each species during the last nine years is included (data from 1993–94 are missing). As with last winter, the CBC threshold of 70 species was reached at both Bloomington and Winona; each recorded 73 species.

Acknowledgments

Peder Svingen reviewed this report and made many helpful suggestions. Betsy Beneke, Kim Eckert, and Anthony Hertzell provided data called in to their respective hotlines.

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KEY TO SEASONAL REPORTS

1. Upper case (**LEAST TERN**) indicate a Casual or Accidental species in the state.
2. Dates listed in bold (**10/9**) indicate an occurrence either earlier, later or within the earliest or latest dates on file.
3. Counties listed in bold (**Aitkin**) indicate an unusual occurrence for that county.
4. Counties with an underline (Aitkin) indicate a first county record.
5. Counties listed in italics (*Aitkin*) indicate a first county breeding record.
6. Brackets [] indicate a species for which there is reasonable doubt as to its origin or wildness.
7. Counts listed in bold (**150**) indicate total within or exceeding the top three high counts for that species.
8. Dagger “†” preceding observer’s initials denotes documentation was submitted.

The Season publishes reports of bird sightings from throughout Minnesota. We particularly invite reports from parts of the state that have been neglected or covered lightly in past reports. To become a contributor, request a report form from the Editor of *The Season*, Peder Svingen, 2602 E. 4th St., Duluth, MN 55812.

Pacific Loon

First winter report: picked up near Marshall, **Lyon Co.** on **1/5** (*vide* JSc), then released on nearby Redwood River on 1/5 or 1/6, but subsequently died by 1/7 †RgS (*The Loon* 72:178–179).

Common Loon

All reports: Late north 12/1 Beltrami Djo

and Hubbard (2) RSm, 12/6 Mille Lacs KB, AH, PS, 12/13 Aitkin KB. Late south 12/2 Wright KB, 12/3 Ramsey (Pleasant Lake) KB, 12/12 Ramsey (4 at White Bear Lake) KB, 12/18 Willmar CBC.

Pied-billed Grebe

Reported from nine south counties. None overwintered. Late south 12/18 Mankato



Greater White-fronted Goose with Canada Geese, 3 January 2000, Fergus Falls, Otter Tail County. Photo by Anthony Hertzell.

CBC, 12/21 Hennepin SC. Five reports of early south migrants beginning 2/21 Cottonwood ED (record early south, found on snow!) and 2/26 Dakota PJ.

Horned Grebe

All reports: Late north 12/5 Mille Lacs KB, AH, PS. Late south 12/2 Wright KB, 1/1 Afton CBC (2). Mid-winter report 1/15-16 St. Louis (Lake Superior) AH, PS.

Red-necked Grebe

All reports: Late north 12/3 Becker †BK, 12/8 Cook (Good Harbor Bay) KB. Mid-winter report 1/15 St. Louis (Lake Superior) AH.

American White Pelican

Two overwintered at Black Dog Lake, Dakota Co. mob; a third individual was last seen at this location on 1/9. Additional late south reports: 12/5 Lac Qui Parle FE, 12/10 McLeod RbS, 12/12

Meeker DF.

Double-crested Cormorant

Seven still present at Black Dog Lake, Dakota Co. on 12/10 KB, but only three overwintered at this location. All additional reports: Late north 12/16 St. Louis *fide* KE. Late south 12/18 Excelsior CBC (2) and Winona CBC (1).

Great Blue Heron

Reported from one north and nine south counties. Overwintered in Otter Tail and Ramsey. Peak 1/8 Ramsey (16 at traditional location on Mississippi River at Pigs Eye Lake outlet, South St. Paul) AH. Additional mid-winter report: 1/22 Waseca JZ (frozen in ice). Potential early migrants 2/20 Fillmore SDM, 2/27 Freeborn ABa.

Black-crowned Night-Heron

Reported through 12/19 Hennepin †SC,

mob; this same individual was recorded 12/18 †Bloomington CBC.

Turkey Vulture

Early south 2/26 Goodhue †ABo *et al.*, 2/27 Freeborn †RGo, †CNe, †JaW.

Greater White-fronted Goose

Overwintered in Otter Tail (Fergus Falls) †SDM, mob. Late south 12/19 Martin (2) EBK. As many as 802 migrants reported from 14 south counties beginning 2/25 Wright (Otsego) KB. Peak 2/28 Lyon (171) RgS.

Snow Goose

Reported from 1 north and 21 south counties. Mid-winter reports: 1/30 Olmsted PS, 2/9 & 2/14 Freeborn ABA. Late migrants reported from 11 south counties through 1/1 Afton CBC; peaks 12/1 BSNWR (680) BOI, and Winona CBC (155). As many as 3089 early migrants reported from 12 south and 1 north counties: earliest south 2/25 Pipestone (14) *fide* AH, and earliest north 2/26 St. Louis (27 in Sax-Zim bog) MA (record early north). Peak 2/27 Jackson and Nobles (2000) PJ.

Ross's Goose

One overwintered in Rochester, Olmsted Co. 12/29–2/27 †CJu, †PS, †DN, mob (*The Loon* 72:184). Record early south migrants 2/27 Jackson (75) and Nobles (25) PJ (extrapolated from actual count of about 40 Ross's), 2/29 Lac Qui Parle (1) †RgS.

Canada Goose

Reported from 57 counties throughout the state. Peaks 12/1 BSNWR (23,460) BOI, and the Lac Qui Parle CBC (45,000).

Mute Swan

Four individuals reported. One overwintered with a Trumpeter Swan in Faribault, Rice Co. †JL, mob; another ranged from 12/4 Old Cedar Ave. Bridge, Hennepin Co. to 12/18 Black Dog Lake, Dakota Co. (†Bloomington CBC); additional birds were reported 1/1 Afton CBC and 2/28

Wabasha CMA.

Trumpeter Swan

Reported from seven north and eight south counties. Overwintering flocks at Monticello (400) KB and Fergus Falls (175–200) SDM. Another overwintered with a Mute Swan in Faribault, Rice Co. JL, mob. Also reported through late Jan. in Wadena (Twin Lakes) and Todd. An additional 62 individuals reported through early Jan. from 10 locations including Duluth. Potential early migrants noted 2/26 Hennepin (6) OJ and 2/29 Hennepin (16) SC.

Tundra Swan

Reported from 3 north and 14 south counties. Two overwintered at Monticello, Wright Co. KB, one of which was also seen 2/1 Elk River, Sherburne Co. Late south migrants reported from 16 counties through 12/31 Houston MF. Late north (all reports) 12/9 Beltrami DJo, 12/6 Mille Lacs (186 on Mille Lacs Lake) KB, AH, PS, 12/13 Mille Lacs (12) KB. Peak 12/16 Reno Bottoms, Houston Co. (3500) KB (includes Wisconsin birds). Early migrants 2/28 Reno Bottoms, Houston Co. (14) JDa.

Swan, sp.

Birds reported as Tundras but lacking sufficient details were reported on the Warren (1) and Excelsior (3) CBCs. Another unidentified swan noted 12/11 Cass (Cass Lake) DJo. Non-vocalizing migrants noted moving up the Mississippi River at Hastings, Dakota Co. on 2/26 (4) and 2/27 (2) KB.

Wood Duck

Reported from 5 north and 13 south counties. Potential wintering birds noted in Otter Tail, Clay, Scott, Dakota, Hennepin, and Rice. Potential early migrants (away from locations where reported earlier in the season) noted 2/26 Waseca (3) JZ and 2/27 Martin (3) PJ in the south, and 2/28 Morrison (Camp Ripley) WB in the north.

Gadwall

Reported from 2 north and 20 south

counties. Only overwintering noted was in Scott and Dakota, although also reported 2/5 Clay RO. Early south migrants from more than 12 counties beginning 2/22 Cottonwood ED. Peak 2/27 Nobles and Jackson (150) PJ.

American Wigeon

Reported from 2 north and 18 south counties. One may have wintered in south metro area where reported 1/15 Scott (Blue Lake treatment plant) DF and 2/6 Dakota (Lake Rebecca) DN. Late north 12/16 St. Louis *fide* KE and 12/18 Bemidji CBC. Late south 12/18 Bloomington CBC (3), 12/23 Hennepin SC, and a peak 12/5 Hennepin (30) PJ. Early migrants from 15 south counties beginning 2/21 Cottonwood ED and 2/26 in four counties; peak 2/27 Nobles, Jackson, and Martin (100) PJ.

American Black Duck

Reported from 4 north and 24 south counties. Only western region report was on the Lac Qui Parle CBC.

Mallard

Reported from 47 counties throughout the state. Peaks 12/1 BSNWR (23,460) BOI, 12/18 Bloomington CBC (17,785).

Northern Shoveler

Reported from 1 north and 12 south counties. One overwintered at the Blue Lake treatment plant, Scott Co.; what was probably the same bird was also reported 1/8 Black Dog Lake, Dakota Co. PJ. Additional mid-winter report 2/16 Big Stone KB. Late north (only report) 12/18 Fargo-Moorhead CBC. Late south migrants from seven counties, where last reported 12/21 Hennepin (13) SC, and a peak 12/4 Hennepin (294 at Lake Calhoun) SC. Early migrants from seven south counties beginning 2/24 Winona (2) KB, and a peak 2/27 Jackson and Martin (20) PJ.

Northern Pintail

Reported from 2 north and 24 south counties. At least eight overwintered in Dakota and Scott PJ, mob. Additional

mid-winter report 2/5 & 2/20 Clay RO. Late south migrants from six counties through 12/19 †Austin CBC. Peak 12/1 BSNWR (603) BOI. Early migrants from 17 south counties beginning 2/22 Cottonwood ED. Early north 2/27 Otter Tail (93) SDM. Peak south movement 2/27 Nobles, Jackson, Martin (800) PJ.

Green-winged Teal

Reported from 1 north and 15 south counties. Overwintered at Blue Lake wastewater treatment plant, Scott Co. mob and at Black Dog Lake, Dakota Co. (45) PJ. Additional mid-winter reports 1/14 Wright PC, 1/21 Goodhue OJ, and 2/5 Rock ND. Late north 1/1 St. Louis (Duluth) PS. Late south from five additional counties through 12/18 Winona CBC. Peak 12/1 BSNWR (105) BOI. Early south migrants from at least seven counties beginning 2/24 Wabasha (7) KB (record early date).

Canvasback

Reported from 2 north and 15 south counties. None overwintered. Late north 12/14 Itasca BN, 1/1 Beltrami DJo. Late south from 10 counties through 1/1 Dakota PJ and Wabasha KB. Peak 12/16 Keno Bottoms, Houston Co (20,000) KB (includes Wisconsin birds). Early south migrants from nine counties beginning 2/24 Winona (20) KB, and a peak 2/29 Dakota, Goodhue and Washington (160) KB.

Redhead

Reported from 3 north and 17 south counties. Pair overwintered at Blue Lake treatment plant, Scott Co. mob. Additional mid-winter report 1/29 Clay RO. Late north 12/18 Bemidji CBC and 12/31 Otter Tail SDM. Late south migrants from eight counties through 12/18, when still present in three counties. Early south migrants from 12 counties beginning 2/21 Cottonwood ED, 2/24 Winona KB. Peak 2/27 Jackson and Martin (100) PJ.

[TUFTED DUCK]

One found 1/1 at the Blue Lake sewage

treatment plant, Scott Co. RJ *et al.* lingered through the season and was seen by mob, but was later discovered to be an escapee from captivity (*The Loon* 72:186-187)). There are still no acceptable Minnesota records.

Ring-necked Duck

Reported from 3 north and 17 south counties. Female overwintered at Blue Lake treatment plant, Scott Co. Other mid-winter reports 1/16 & 1/30 Olmsted CMA, PS, 1/24 Otter Tail (2) SDM, 2/4 McLeod DF. Late north 12/6 Mille Lacs KB, 12/18 Bemidji and Grand Rapids CBCs. Late south reports from 13 counties through 1/1 Afton CBC, with a peak 12/16 Reno Bottoms, Houston Co. (2400) KB (includes Wisconsin birds). Early south reports from 12 counties beginning 2/24 Winona (1) KB, with a peak 2/29 Goodhue and Dakota (341) KB.

Greater Scaup

All reports: Late north 12/7 St. Louis (Duluth) KB. Late south 12/1 Meeker DF, 12/2 Lyon RgS and Wright (15) KB, 12/4 Scott JSt, 12/10 Rice TBo, and 1/1 Goodhue KB. Early south 2/26 Dakota (2) DBS, SWe, Wabasha and Winona JSt; 2/28 Lyon (16) and Yellow Medicine (7) RgS; and 2/29 Lac Qui Parle RgS.

Lesser Scaup

Reported from 6 north and 24 south counties. One female may have overwintered in Dakota, where reported 1/10 Black Dog Lake KB and 1/22 TT. Only other mid-winter report 1/16 McLeod RbS. Late north (all reports) 12/4 Wadena PBi, 12/11 Beltrami (8) DJo, 12/13 St. Louis JSt, SL, 12/18 Fergus Falls and Grand Rapids CBCs. Late south migrants from 13 counties through 1/1 Wabasha KB. Early south migrants from 15 counties beginning 2/24 Cottonwood ED and Winona (38) KB, with peak movement 2/29 Dakota (300+ at Lake Byllesby) DBS and Goodhue (312 at Frontenac) KB.

Scaup, sp.

One female overwintering at a small

pond in South St. Paul, Dakota Co. was reported as both a Greater and a Lesser. Another unidentified scaup was seen on the International Falls CBC.

Harlequin Duck

Immature male from fall season reported through 12/6 Aitkin (Mille Lacs Lake) KB, AH, PS. Three individuals in Grand Marais harbor, Cook Co. lingered as late as 12/18 (Grand Marais CBC).

White-winged Scoter

Reported 12/5 Carver SWe, 12/13 Mille Lacs (Mille Lacs Lake) KB, and up to three seen through 12/18 on Lake Superior near Grand Marais, Cook Co.

Surf Scoter

Reported 12/6 Mille Lacs (Mille Lacs Lake) KB, AH, PS.

KING EIDER

Female/immature from fall season reported through 12/9 Cook mob.

Long-tailed Duck

North Shore reports included a peak count of 452 in Cook Co. from the Cascade River to Hovland on 12/8 KB, and one present beginning 1/9 at Canal Park in Duluth, St. Louis Co. PS, mob. Reports away from Lake Superior included 12/2 Cottonwood Lake, Lyon Co. †RgS, 12/8-13 Birch Lake Dam, St. Louis Co. SSc *et al.*, 12/13 Mille Lacs Lake, Mille Lacs Co. KB, and 2/29 Wells Lake, Rice Co. OR, JL *et al.*

Bufflehead

Reported from 8 north and 17 south counties. Overwintered in Scott (Blue Lake treatment plant) and probably nearby Dakota (Black Dog Lake); none reported overwintering along North Shore. Late north migrants from eight counties through 12/18, when still present in three counties. Late south from 11 counties through 12/18 Excelsior CBC (16) and 12/19 Hennepin PBU. Early south from nine counties beginning 2/22 Cottonwood ED and 2/26 (4 counties).

Common Goldeneye

Reported from 42 counties throughout the state. Peak 12/16 Reno Bottoms, Houston Co. (3000) KB (includes Wisconsin birds).

Hooded Merganser

Reported from 8 north and 17 south counties. Overwintered in Otter Tail (two pair), St. Louis (Virginia, 5th year), Dakota, and Scott, plus mid-winter reports from Wadena, Sherburne, and Mower counties. Late north 12/6 Crow Wing KB, 12/11 Hubbard RSm, 1/1 Beltrami DJo. Late south from seven counties through 1/3 Hennepin SC. Early south from ten counties beginning 2/22 McLeod DF and 2/24 Winona (9) KB, with a peak 2/27 Dakota (24) KB. Early north 2/29 Morrison WB.

Common Merganser

Reported from 35 counties in all regions except the northwest. Peak 12/14 Lake Pepin (8000) KB.

Red-breasted Merganser

Reported from seven north and six south counties. Only mid-winter report 1/15 St. Louis (3) PS. Late north (away from Lake Superior) 12/6 Becker BK, 12/11 Cass DJo, 12/13 Mille Lacs KB. Late south 12/5 Carver SWe, 12/6 Meeker DF, 12/16 Hennepin SWe and Houston KB. Early south 2/29 Washington (1) KB.

Ruddy Duck

Reported from 11 south counties. One female overwintered at Blue Lake treatment plant, Scott Co.; the reports on 1/8 & 2/22 Dakota (Black Dog Lake) PJ could pertain to this same individual. Late south migrants from eight counties through 12/28 Owatonna CBC. Early south migrants from four counties beginning 2/24 Winona (1) KB.

Bald Eagle

Reported from 64 counties throughout the state. Peak 2/29 along the Mississippi River, Dakota and Goodhue counties (250+) KB.



Sharp-shinned Hawk, 15 December 1999, Anoka County. Photo by Mark Junghans.

Northern Harrier

Reported from 40 counties throughout the state and throughout the season. A total of 124 reports were received (some reports may pertain to the same individual), distributed as follows: 58 in December, 43 in January, and 23 in February.

Sharp-shinned Hawk

Reported from all regions in 9 north and 29 south counties. Reports were distributed evenly throughout the season.

Cooper's Hawk

Reported from 2 north and 17 south counties, but the two north reports lacked details.

Northern Goshawk

About 20 individuals reported from seven north and seven south counties.

Red-shouldered Hawk

At least 19 individuals reported from one

north and nine south counties. Only north report 12/18 Detroit Lakes CBC, but no details were provided. Peak 12/26 St. Paul (northeast suburban) CBC (8). Most south reports appear to represent overwintering birds.

Red-tailed Hawk

Reported from 58 counties throughout the state. Adult dark morph Western race (*B. j. calurus*) reported in St. Paul, Ramsey Co. on 1/7 †EP and 1/29 †KB. Krider's (*B. j. krideri*) reported on Long Prairie CBC. Peak 12/18 Winona CBC (92), includes Wisconsin birds.

Rough-legged Hawk

Reported from 60 counties throughout the state. Peaks 12/20 Sax-Zim CBC (30) and 1/9 Aitkin (26) PP. Most unusual were the numerous western region reports (16 counties), where usually scarce or absent in winter.

Golden Eagle

At least 24 individuals reported from all regions except the north central. Reports of multiple birds included at least three between 2/5 and 2/26 in Camp Ripley, Morrison Co. †WB, 2/13 Wilkin (2 immatures) SDM, 2/19 Houston (3) SDM, and 2/27 Wilkin (3) SDM.

American Kestrel

Reported from 49 counties as far north and west as Polk.

Merlin

As many as 23 individuals reported from 15 counties throughout the state, including overwintering in Duluth. Richardson's race (*F. c. richardsonii*) reported 12/18 Otter Tail SDM, 1/10 Wilkin and Otter Tail PS, 1/14 Roseau SDM, and 2/18 Meeker DF.

Gyr Falcon

No reports.

Peregrine Falcon

Reported from Dakota, Hennepin, Ramsey, St. Louis, Wabasha, and Washington.

Most unusual was the report of overwintering at Duluth.

Prairie Falcon

Overwintered at Hiawatha Avenue grain elevators, Minneapolis, Hennepin Co. for third consecutive winter. Also reported 12/31 Otter Tail SDM and 2/13 Wilkin SDM.

Gray Partridge

Reported from the counties of Dakota, Meeker, Olmsted, and Wilkin, plus the Albert Lea (2), Crookston (3), Lac Qui Parle (3), and Mountain Lake-Windom (20) CBCs.

Ring-necked Pheasant

Reported from 40 counties as far north as Todd, Morrison and Kanabec. The report of four on the International Falls CBC probably not countable due to questionable origin.

Ruffed Grouse

Reported from 30 counties in range. Heard drumming 2/29 Todd JSK.

Spruce Grouse

Reported from four locations in Lake, with a peak 1/29–30 near Isabella (20) GSk. Also reported 12/12 Itasca (Scenic State Park) PS and 1/2 Beltrami (Red Lake Peatland SNA) DJo.

Sharp-tailed Grouse

Reported from Aitkin (24), Beltrami (18), Kittson (2), Koochiching (1), and 12/22 St. Louis (9 near Biwabik) PS. Also reported on the Baudette (39), Beltrami Island (1), Roseau (1), and Warren (33) CBCs.

Greater Prairie-Chicken

Reported from Clay and Wilkin, plus the Fergus Falls (20) and Warren (74) CBCs. Peak 1/5 Wilkin (200+) SDM.

Wild Turkey

Reported from 27 south counties. Peaks 1/6 Washington (106) AH, PH, and 12/26 St. Paul (northeast suburban) CBC (315).

Northern Bobwhite

No reports.

Sora

Reported 1/2 Battle Lake CBC (†SDM); first north winter record (*The Loon* 72:177).

American Coot

Reported from 1 north and 21 south counties. Overwintered in Otter Tail and Scott. Additional mid-winter report: 1/30 Olmsted PS. Late south migrants from 14 counties through 1/1 Afton CBC. Peak 12/9 Hennepin (400 at Lake Calhoun) KB. Early south migrants from 10 counties beginning 2/24 Winona (62) KB.

Sandhill Crane

All reports: Late north 12/8 Morrison †SDu. Late south 12/4 Stearns (Albany) *vide* AH. Record early migrants 2/29 Anoka (Carlos Avery WMA) JDa.

Killdeer

Only reports before late Feb. were from Houston (where overwintered) and 12/11 Dakota (Lakeville) MO. Early south migrants from 14 counties beginning 2/24 Winona (fly-over) KB.

Common Snipe

Overwintered in Hennepin (where reported from at least 4 locations), Houston (Wildcat and Winnebago Creeks), and probably Dakota (where reported 2/4 DBS and 2/7 SWe). Also reported 12/21 Rice TBo, plus the Austin, Long Prairie, Wild River (3), and Winona CBCs. Peak 12/16 Houston (16 at Wildcat Creek) KB.

Bonaparte's Gull

All reports: Late north 12/6 Mille Lacs Lake (721) KB, AH, PS, 12/9 Beltrami (8) DJo, and 12/13 Mille Lacs Lake (112) KB. Late south 12/6 Meeker DF.

Ring-billed Gull

Reported from 35 counties throughout the state. Several lingered into early Feb. at Black Dog Lake, Dakota Co. (and the adjacent Minnesota River, Hennepin Co.),

where one first-winter individual overwintered. Mid-winter reports from Duluth, St. Louis Co. (where two adults reported 1/17 KE and one adult seen 1/29 PS) and Knife River, Lake Co. (where one first-winter bird reported 2/6 PS) suggest overwintering in this area, which would represent the first overwintering in the north. Late north migrants (away from Lake Superior) from 10 counties through 12/18 Bemidji and Grand Rapids CBCs. Late south migrants from over 16 counties through 1/1 Afton CBC and 1/2 Hastings-Etter CBC. Peak 12/18 Bloomington CBC (2967). Early south reports from over 10 counties beginning 2/24 Goodhue (70+), Winona (1), and Wabasha (1) KB; a total of 1280 were counted moving up the Mississippi River near Hastings 2/24–29 KB. Early north 2/28 Duluth, St. Louis Co. (25) KB.

Herring Gull

Reported from 25 counties in all regions except the northwest and west central. Overwintered along the North Shore in Lake and St. Louis PS. Late north (away from Lake Superior) 12/13 Mille Lacs Lake KB, 12/18 Grand Marais CBC. Late south 1/17 Dakota SC, 1/18 Goodhue SL. Early south 2/22 Dakota (1) KB, 2/26 Ramsey (5) KB, plus four additional counties 2/28–29. By 2/28, many had returned to North Shore colonies in Cook (319) and Lake (210+) KB. Peak 12/17 Dakota (1500–2000) KB.

Iceland Gull

One first-winter individual photographed 12/1 Cook †KB, one adult seen 12/4 Cook †PC, both in Grand Marais harbor.

Thayer's Gull

Up to six individuals reported from North Shore of Lake Superior, but only report after Dec. was 2/6 Lake PS. Peak in Twin Cities 12/14 Dakota (13–14) KB, with three individuals lingering as late as 1/15 Dakota PBU, SC. Also reported 12/5–13 Isanti (3) KB, through 12/19 Hennepin (Lakes Calhoun and Harriet) mob, and 12/16–20 Wabasha (2) KB.

Lesser Black-backed Gull

Adult present in Twin Cities through 12/4 Hennepin (Lake Calhoun) mob and 12/19 Dakota (Black Dog Lake) mob. Two adults reported 12/19 Dakota AH.

Glaucous Gull

Scattered reports throughout the season from Lake Superior in Cook, Lake, and St. Louis. At least six reported from Twin Cities in Hennepin and Dakota; peak 12/17 Dakota (4 at Black Dog Lake) KB and latest 12/21 Dakota KB. Unusual was the report 1/9 Dakota AH

Glaucous Gull X Herring Gull hybrid

Second-winter "Nelson's Gull" reported 12/7 St. Louis (Duluth) †KE, †KB, and apparently again 12/18 Duluth CBC.

Great Black-backed Gull

First-winter individual reported 12/13 Lake (Knife River) †PS.

Rock Dove

Reported from 64 counties throughout the state.

EURASIAN COLLARED-DOVE

Reported overwintering in Fairmont, Martin Co. BBo, EBK *et al.*

Mourning Dove

Reported from 44 counties throughout the state. Peak Winona CBC (294), includes Wisconsin birds.

Eastern Screech-Owl

Reported from Hennepin, Houston, Kandiyohi, Rock, Todd, and Washington, plus the Albert Lea (1), Austin (2), Cottonwood (1), Lamberton (1), Rochester (4), St. Paul (2) and Winona (1) CBCs.

Great Horned Owl

Reported from 38 counties throughout the state.

Snowy Owl

Only eleven individuals reported, including only two south reports, and only one wintering in Duluth (*vide* KE).



Snowy Owl, 12 December 1999, Grand Marais, Cook County. Photo by Anthony Hertzell.

Northern Hawk Owl

As many as ten individuals reported from Aitkin, Lake, and St. Louis.

Barred Owl

Reported from 25 counties throughout the state.

Great Gray Owl

Approximately 33 individuals reported from 8 counties within the coniferous zone.

Long-eared Owl

At least 51 individuals reported as follows: Washington (20 individuals located) AH, PH *et al.*, Kandiyohi (10 at roost until late Jan.) RJF, Ramsey (max. 9 at one roost) AH, PS, 12/21 McLeod DF *et al.*, 2/28 Lake (2 calling along Stoney River FR) AH, PS, and the Bloomington, Cottonwood, Lac Qui Parle, St. Paul NE (2), and Warren (4) CBCs.

Short-eared Owl

At least 29 individuals reported from 7

north and 3 south counties, with none in the southwest, south central, or central regions. Peak 2/21 Wilkin (12 at Rothsay WMA) KB. Only two of these reports were before mid-Jan.

Boreal Owl

Reported calling as early as late Jan. along Lake Co. Rd. 2 *fide* FN. Two were heard on 2/28 along the Stoney River FR, Lake Co. AH, PS.

Northern Saw-whet Owl

At least 37 individuals reported from 12 counties, but no reports throughout the southwestern quarter of the state. Many calling by late Feb., including a peak 2/28 Lake (13 calling along the Stoney River FR) AH, PS.

Belted Kingfisher

Reported from 21 south and 5 north counties. Overwintered as far north as Otter Tail.

Red-headed Woodpecker

Very few reports: Anoka and Sherburne, plus the Albert Lea, Austin, Rochester, and Winona CBCs.

Red-bellied Woodpecker

Reported from 51 counties throughout the state as far north as Beltrami (two different birds reported), and the Warren CBC, plus a first county record in **Clearwater** on the Itasca State Park CBC (†DJo).

Yellow-bellied Sapsucker

Reported 12/26 Nicollet LF.

Downy Woodpecker

Reported from 72 counties throughout the state.

Hairy Woodpecker

Reported from 55 counties throughout the state.

Three-toed Woodpecker

As many as seven individuals reported: mid-January Cook (Lima Mt. Road) *fide*

KE, 1/16–30 Lake (near Isabella) *fide* KE, 1/17 Lake (Co. Rd. 2 and state highway 1) BrN, late Jan. Roseau *fide* AH, 1/29 Lake (FR 373) GSk, 1/29 Lake (Greenwood Lake) JLi, CM, and the International Falls CBC.

Black-backed Woodpecker

At least 30 individuals reported from 10 counties within the coniferous zone. Peak Isabella CBC (11).

Northern Flicker

Reported from 4 north and 27 south counties. Overwintered throughout the south, and as far north as Wilkin and Otter Tail.

Pileated Woodpecker

Reported from 52 counties throughout the state.

Northern Shrike

Reported from 58 counties throughout the state. Many observers reported increased numbers, and the CBC total was a record 167. Peak 2/12 Aitkin (11) WN.

Gray Jay

Reported from 12 north counties including reports farther west than normal (outside coniferous belt): Kittson (Lake Bronson SP), Marshall (Old Mill SP), and Polk (Rydell NWR) all *fide* BBe, plus the Warren CBC (6).

Blue Jay

Reported from 70 counties throughout the state. The cumulative CBC total was the lowest in many years and several observers noted greatly reduced numbers in the Twin Cities area.

Black-billed Magpie

Reported from nine counties in range.

American Crow

Reported from 76 counties throughout the state.

Common Raven

Reported from 20 counties in range.



Varied Thrush, 8 December 1999, Shoreview, Ramsey County. Photo by Gordon Hinchcliff.

Horned Lark

Reported from 57 counties throughout the state. Unusual report on the Grand Marais CBC. Peak 12/19 Cottonwood CBC (415).

Black-capped Chickadee

Reported from 69 counties throughout the state.

Boreal Chickadee

Reported from Aitkin, Beltrami, Cook, Koochiching, Lake and St. Louis.

Tufted Titmouse

Reported from Freeborn, Houston, Olmsted and Winona, plus Washington (Woodbury) *fide* AH.

Red-breasted Nuthatch

Reported from 53 counties throughout the state.

White-breasted Nuthatch

Reported from 69 counties throughout the state.

Brown Creeper

Reported from 38 counties in all regions.

Carolina Wren

Four individuals reported. Overwintered in **Otter Tail** (near Battle Lake) mob, photographed late Nov.–1/15 **St. Louis** (Fredenburg Twp.) NP, seen 12/18 Hennepin (St. Louis Park) *fide* AH, and another reported on the †Bloomington CBC.

Winter Wren

Reported 12/5–9 Hennepin (Bloomington) SC, 12/12 Fillmore NO, 12/15 Rice (2) TBo and 2/2 Renville KB.

Marsh Wren

Reported 12/3 Goodhue (2 at Frontenac) KB, and **1/16** Hennepin (MRVNR) TT. The seventh and eighth winter reports.

Golden-crowned Kinglet

Reported from 28 counties in all regions. Overwintered in Kandiyohi RJF. Only other reports after early Jan. were 12/11–1/13 Fillmore NO, 1/2–22 Aitkin WN, 1/16 Lake PS, 1/8 & 2/24 Meeker DF.

Eastern Bluebird

None overwintered. Only Dec. report was on the St. Paul (northeast suburban) CBC (3). Early migrants reported from 12 south counties 2/26–29. Early north **2/27** Otter Tail *fide* SDM and Todd JSK, **2/29** Morrison WB, both record early.

Townsend's Solitaire

Only reports: 12/2 St. Louis (Sax-Zim bog) *fide* KE, 1/29–2/12 Sherburne (Sand Dunes SF) †ABi, mob, and the Grand Marais CBC (2).

Hermit Thrush

Only reports on the †St. Paul (northeast suburban) CBC, late Dec.–1/18 Kandiyohi RJF, and 1/31 Ramsey (Fish Creek) †EP.

American Robin

Reported from 47 counties throughout the state, with excellent numbers present in the south during Dec. Peak count on the Afton CBC (736).

Varied Thrush

Ten individuals reported. Overwintered in Carlton (through mid-February in Holyoke) *fide* KE, Hennepin (12/26–2/22 at Theodore Wirth Park) †SC *et al.*, Otter Tail (Pelican Rapids) †RL *et al.*, Ramsey (Turtle Lake) mob, Roseau (Skime) JFo, mob, and Stearns HD. Also reported from Lake (near Two Harbors) where two were present at the same feeder beginning 1/18 mob, 1/15–2/8 Becker (Detroit Lakes) †JRZ, BBe, and 1/24 **Blue Earth** (Mankato) MF.

Gray Catbird

Three reports. Reported 12/8 Rock ND, 12/12–19 Hennepin (Shorewood) †DBM *et al.* (same bird as on Excelsior CBC), and the Duluth CBC (count week) *fide* KE.

Northern Mockingbird

Reported 12/1 Cook (Grand Marais) JDa, †KB, 12/2 Sherburne (Elk River) *fide* AH, and 1/7–21 St. Louis (Duluth) mob.

CURVE-BILLED THRASHER

Overwintered near Breckenridge, **Wilkin Co.** mob. Third Minnesota record (*The Loon* 72:177–178).

SAGE THRASHER

First reported in Edina, Hennepin Co. as early as 2/7, but not confirmed until 2/20. Eighth state record and first winter occurrence (*The Loon* 72:181).

Brown Thrasher

Reported 12/5 Hennepin (Wood Lake Nature Center) TT, and on the †St. Paul (northeast suburban) CBC.

European Starling

Reported from 74 counties throughout the state.

Bohemian Waxwing

Decent numbers reported from 20 counties north, plus two south reports: Afton CBC and 1/10 Ramsey (60 in St. Paul) *fide* AH. Peak 1/17 Two Harbors, Lake Co. (1000) *fide* KE.



Curve-billed Thrasher, 3 January 2000, Breckenridge, Wilkin County. Photo by Anthony Hertzell.

Waxwing

Recorded from 31 counties throughout the state.

Cape May Warbler

Immature female present 12/18–1/18 Duluth, St. Louis Co. †KE, mob.

Yellow-rumped Warbler

Only report: 2/27–29 Hennepin (Bloomington) JPo, †SC (probably overwintering).

Wilson's Warbler

Reported 12/3–4 Ramsey (St. Paul) †SWa, TT. First winter record.

Eastern Towhee

Overwintered in Otter Tail SDM. Also reported near Detroit Lakes, Becker Co. *fide* BBe, and 1/21 Freeborn ABa.

American Tree Sparrow

Reported from 46 counties as far north as Becker and Itasca, but none in St. Louis.

Field Sparrow

Overwintered 12/21–2/22 at Mound Springs Park, Hennepin Co. †SC, KB *et al.*

Savannah Sparrow

Reported 12/18 on the Cottonwood CBC (†PE). Only the third winter record.

Fox Sparrow

All reports: 12/11 Becker BK, 12/18 †Rochester (2) CBC, 12/19 †Cottonwood CBC, 1/9 Olmsted AH (same as one of the Rochester CBC birds), and 2/5–22 Hennepin (Mound Springs Park) †SC, TT.

Song Sparrow

Reported from 21 south counties. Only north reports: 12/18 Duluth CBC, 12/30 Clay RO, and 2/6 Otter Tail SDM. Minimum of four overwintered at Mound Springs Park, Hennepin Co. SC, plus additional mid-winter reports from at least eight south counties. Noted singing on 2/29 in Nicollet, Goodhue, and Hennepin.

Swamp Sparrow

Overwintered in Minnesota River Valley, Hennepin Co. SC, KB (maximum of 12 at 4 locations 1/1–15). Also reported from three other Hennepin Co. locations: 12/11 St. Louis Park SC, 1/5–16 Theodore Wirth Park SC, 2/13 Bass Ponds TT. Additional reports: 12/3 Goodhue (Frontenac) KB, 12/16 Houston (2 at Reno) KB, and 12/19 Cottonwood CBC.

White-throated Sparrow

Reported from 18 counties in all regions except northwest and south central. Overwintered in Hennepin, plus mid-winter reports from at least six additional counties.

Harris's Sparrow

Nine reports. Overwintered in Fergus Falls, Otter Tail Co. and Willmar, Kandiyohi Co. Also reported as follows: 1/1 & 2/6 Clay RO, through 1/30 St. Louis (Duluth) LER, mob, 2/14 Freeborn (dead) ABa, 2/29 Rock (4) ND, in Feb. from Old Mill State Park, Marshall Co. *vide* BBe, and on the Cottonwood, Lamberton (6), and Marshall CBCs.

White-crowned Sparrow

No reports.

Dark-eyed Junco

Reported from 55 counties throughout the state.

Lapland Longspur

Reported from 26 counties in the south and west bounded by a line from Washington to Meeker to Otter Tail to Polk. Hundreds still present in Dec. and early Jan. with a peak of 1758 on the Grand Forks-East Grand Forks CBC (of which 352 in Minnesota). Mid-winter reports from at least eight counties suggest some overwintered. Thousands noted migrating 2/27 Wilkin SDM.

Snow Bunting

Reported from 49 counties throughout the state. Peak 2/2 Renville (728) KB.

Northern Cardinal

Reported from 43 counties in all regions, with increased numbers noted at northern fringe in Otter Tail, Becker, and St. Louis, plus one report 1/26 Koochiching (Margie) KB.

Red-winged Blackbird

Reported from 35 counties as far north as Aitkin and Polk, with overwintering noted in at least 6 counties as far north as Wilkin and Polk. Large numbers (many reports of 200–500+ individuals) moved into at least 17 south counties beginning 2/24 Winona (75) KB, and peaking 2/29 Yellow Medicine (1150) RgS. Possible early north migrant 2/29 Aitkin CB.

Meadowlark, sp.

Overwintered at Rothsay prairie, Wilkin Co. mob (peak of 7 on 12/24 SDM) and in Rock ND (peak of 5 on 2/9). Also reported 1/28 Nobles (Worthington) BBo, 2/19 Clay (3) RO, and 2/27 Freeborn ABa.

Western Meadowlark

Possible early migrant heard and seen 2/29 Nicollet RJ.



Evening Grosbeak, 8 February 2000, Aitkin County. Photo by Vija Kelly.

Yellow-headed Blackbird

Injured adult male reported 12/4–15 Renville †RbS, †DF, RgS (same bird also erroneously reported as Meeker Co.).

Rusty Blackbird

Reported from 3 north and 19 south counties. Overwintered in Otter Tail and Winona, with additional mid-winter reports from Wright, Renville, and Ramsey. Flocks of early migrants (max. flock size 16) reported from 9 south counties beginning 2/25 Rice (5) TBo.

Brewer's Blackbird

Undocumented reports 12/18–1/22 from Stahl's Lake County Park, McLeod Co. DF (including 20 on the †Northwest McLeod CBC). Possible early migrants reported 2/29 Yellow Medicine (8) †RgS.

Common Grackle

Reported from 6 north and 30 south counties. Only reports after early January were from Hennepin, Winona, and Freeborn counties. Last reported in north 1/2 Otter Tail SDM and 1/9 Aitkin WN. Returning migrants reported from 13 south

counties beginning about 2/25 Houston KK, with a peak 2/29 Waseca (200) JZ.

Brown-headed Cowbird

Large flock overwintered at Pine Bend, Dakota Co. where peak of 185 noted 1/10 †KB. Also reported 12/18–24 Martin (max. 30) †EBK, †BBo *et al.*, 12/18 Morris CBC (5), 12/18 Crosby CBC (1), and 1/1–16 Aitkin WN. Potential early migrants 2/26 Olmsted †JSt *et al.*, 2/29 Yellow Medicine (6) †RgS.

GRAY-CROWNED ROSY-FINCH

One at feeder 2/17–18, 2/24–25 & 2/27 **Wilkin** (Connelly Twp.) MTB (*The Loon* 72:176–177).

Pine Grosbeak

Reported from 16 counties, all except Kittson within the coniferous zone.

Purple Finch

Reported from 42 counties throughout the state.

House Finch

Reported from 47 counties throughout the state.

Red Crossbill

Reported in reduced numbers from nine counties within the coniferous zone. Only south report: 2/24 Whitewater WMA, Winona (14) KB.

White-winged Crossbill

Reported from 12 widely scattered counties north and south. All reports away from coniferous region: 12/7 Clay (2) RO, 12/22 Meeker DF, 12/29 McLeod DF, 12/30–2/1 Jackson (2) MJC, Dec. Cottonwood ED, Long Prairie CBC (count week), 2/17 Hennepin *fide* AH, and 2/22 Rice TBo, CMa.

Common Redpoll

Reported from 56 counties throughout the state. Interestingly, there were three reports of leucistic or partial albino Common Redpolls from Kanabec (2) and Wadena †LD.

Hoary Redpoll

As many as 38 individuals reported from at least 18 counties, but only three south reports. All documented reports: 12/9 Aitkin CB, 12/18 Hubbard (Bemidji CBC) DJo, 12/18 Minneapolis CBC, 12/23 Beltrami DJo, 12/20 & 2/22 Becker BK, 12/25 Cass (3) MRN, 1/15 Lake (Two Harbors) PS, 1/21 Stearns MJ, DT, SD, 1/26 Kanabec CM, 1/29 Lake CM.

Pine Siskin

Reported from 40 counties, but absent from most of the southwest and west central.

American Goldfinch

Reported from 51 counties as far north as a line through Clay, Itasca, and St. Louis.

Evening Grosbeak

Reported from 15 counties within normal range in coniferous belt. Only south report on the NE St. Paul CBC (1). Numbers greatly reduced for second consecutive winter.

House Sparrow

Reported from 63 counties throughout the state.

Contributors

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BK	Byron R. Kinkade	JBl	Jo Blanich
BL	Bill Litkey	JDa	Jeff Dains
BN	Bill Nelson	JFo	June Foss
BOL	Bridget Olson	JH	James L. Howitz
BP	Bruce Pannkuk	JJ	Jeanie Joppru
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CK	Chuck A. Krulas	JRZ	Judy and Richard Zurn
CM	Craig Menze	JSc	John Schladweiler
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DBr	Diane Brudellie	KB	Karl Bardon
DBS	Drew & Becky Smith	KE	Kim R. Eckert
DF	Dan Floren	KK	Karla Kinster
DJe	Douglas Jenness	KM	Kim Metz
DJo	Douglas P. Johnson	LD	Lawrence Denny
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MO	Mark Ochs	RSm	Rolf C. Smeby
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MTB	Mary & Terry Boldingh	RTF	Roger & Tammy Field
ND	Nelvina DeKam	SC	Steve Carlson
NJ	Nancy A. Jackson	SDM	Steve & Diane Millard
NP	Nate Popkin	SDu	Sue Durrant
OJ	Oscar L. Johnson	SK	Scott Krych
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PBu	Paul Budde	SS	Steven Schon
PC	Philip Chu	SWa	Stuart Wagenius
PE	Paul Egeland	SWE	Steve Weston
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PHe	Paul Hetland	TBo	Tom F. Boevers
PJ	Paul Jantscher	TEB	Tom & Elizabeth Bell
PKL	Pat & Ken Lafond	TT	Tom Tustison
PP	Pam Perry	TW	Terry P. Wiens
PR	Pat Rice	WB	William L. Brown
PS	Peder Svingen	WL	William H. Longley
RbS	Robert Schroeder	WN	Warren Nelson
RGo	Rita Goranson	mob	many observers
RgS	Roger Schroeder	BSNWR	Big Stone National Wildlife Refuge
RH	Robert E. Holtz	MRVNWR	Minnesota River Valley NWR
RJ	Robert B. Janssen		

Species	1991-92	1992-93	1994-95	1995-96	1996-97	1997-98	1998-99	1999-00
Common Loon						2	1	1
Pied-billed Grebe		1	1	1	5	3	6	1
Horned Grebe	1		1					2
Red-necked Grebe			2	2				
American White Pelican	2	1	7	5	2	4	1	3
Double-crested Cormorant	4		6	1	3	3	5	9
Great Blue Heron	25	4	10	8	13	15	11	11
Black-crowned Night-Heron			1					1
Tundra Swan	6	88	18		1	340	2353	999
Trumpeter Swan		19	41	38	61	32	197	286
Mute Swan					1		2	2
Greater White-fronted Goose								1
Snow Goose	2	2	41	4		10	153	170
Ross's Goose							1	
Canada Goose	86818	71951	92750	98609	22344	107481	143947	143874
Wood Duck	16	14	21	19	9	14	34	20
Green-winged Teal	1	2	6	1		31	254	6
American Black Duck	131	110	240	110	117	73	176	194
Mallard	15846	18208	24128	33049	22915	24126	40429	51377
Northern Pintail			2	3	1	2	359	55
Blue-winged Teal				1				
Northern Shoveler			1	1	1		445	22
Gadwall	23	5	58	33	29	85	1120	250
American Wigeon	1	3	3	1	1	3	54	5
Canvasback			17	1		5	2791	56
Redhead		1	5	3	1	10	2	9
Ring-necked Duck	1	9	17	1	1	7	75	30
Greater Scaup							3	
Lesser Scaup	2	7	14	5	2	76	42	38

1991-2000 Minnesota Christmas Bird Count (CBC) species totals.

Species	1991-92	1992-93	1994-95	1995-96	1996-97	1997-98	1998-99	1999-00
Harlequin Duck	1	2	1		1	1		3
Long-tailed Duck	97	284	255	348	70	68	18	110
Surf Scoter		1						
White-winged Scoter			1				1	3
Common Goldeneye	1665	667	977	741	970	1165	995	1699
Barrow's Goldeneye				1	1	1		
Bufflehead	4	13	11	15	11	30	68	34
Hooded Merganser	4	4	6	7	14	30	279	25
Common Merganser	241	736	427	256	552	1814	5492	5776
Red-breasted Merganser	7	6	1	2	2	6	4	10
Ruddy Duck		1		3		5	16	9
Turkey Vulture		1						
Bald Eagle	112	217	259	174	326	352	673	588
Northern Harrier	1	1	5	4			19	47
Sharp-shinned Hawk	19	12	32	32	30	25	27	36
Cooper's Hawk	5	9	15	8	11	11	21	17
Northern Goshawk	31	17	11	6	6	1	4	10
Red-shouldered Hawk	5	4	5	8	6	3	5	11
Red-tailed Hawk	290	249	536	408	378	397	600	621
Rough-legged Hawk	93	22	251	64	23	13	106	138
Golden Eagle	5	5		1	2	1	11	7
American Kestrel	94	67	105	81	54	89	72	80
Merlin	7	5	6	4	4	5	7	10
Prairie Falcon	1		4			2		1
Peregrine Falcon	4	5	5	4	2	5	3	6
Gyrfalcon	3							
Gray Partridge	136	95	15	98	397	85	72	38
Ring-necked Pheasant	583	640	790	1172	2463	288	650	554
Spruce Grouse	3		3	4	5	17		
Ruffed Grouse	149	49	65	62	118	244	194	136
Greater Prairie-Chicken	42	4	3	12	18	22		94
Sharp-tailed Grouse	43			52	14	14	25	74
Wild Turkey	148	142	398	628	744	298	988	1009
Sora								1
American Coot	5	47	48	34	37	272	629	351
Common Snipe	4	7	2	6	8	1	13	6
Ring-billed Gull	147	222	272	5	10	575	4753	2967
Herring Gull	293	890	2434	353	288	2397	1272	2192
Thayer's Gull			4	2		9	3	6
Iceland Gull			1			1		
Lesser Black-backed Gull								1
Glaucous-winged Gull				1				
Glaucous Gull	3		5			8	2	2
Great Black-backed Gull			1			3		
Rock Dove	11790	16079	12869	13586	10565	12493	12441	14231
Eurasian Collared-Dove							2	2
Mourning Dove	238	334	1164	1035	986	872	1048	994
Eastern Screech-Owl	21	31	29	26	16	14	15	12
Great Horned Owl	74	114	106	88	62	105	102	67
Snowy Owl	15	4	4	9	17	9	6	1
Northern Hawk Owl	14			5	8	1	1	
Barred Owl	29	18	26	43	32	36	38	33
Great Gray Owl	18			42	9	3	1	6
Long-eared Owl		1	4			3	1	9
Short-eared Owl	1	1		2			1	
Boreal Owl				2				
Northern Saw-whet Owl	5	2	4	2	2	1	6	4
Belted Kingfisher	23	14	32	24	27	31	31	35
Red-headed Woodpecker	43	52	25	33	38	22	18	12
Red-bellied Woodpecker	382	478	463	498	469	469	579	513
Yellow-bellied Sapsucker		2	2	2				
Downy Woodpecker	1638	1801	1932	2142	2055	2371	2591	2371
Hairy Woodpecker	967	954	963	1112	955	953	1072	956
Three-toed Woodpecker	1		1	3		1	1	1
Black-backed Woodpecker	4	2	3	6	2	4	6	14
Northern Flicker	22	39	21	31	30	44	77	47
Pileated Woodpecker	173	181	203	235	192	222	214	209
Eastern Phoebe						1		
Horned Lark	675	571	890	499	76	184	3144	1188

1991-2000 Minnesota Christmas Bird Count (CBC) species totals, continued.

Species	1991-92	1992-93	1994-95	1995-96	1996-97	1997-98	1998-99	1999-00
Gray Jay	135	101	158	268	97	156	103	141
Blue Jay	5065	5084	5956	5185	5248	3972	3561	2358
Black-billed Magpie	83	23	52	69	27	41	49	72
American Crow	13088	7416	14246	10178	11966	13347	14694	19031
Common Raven	1281	770	765	975	686	1054	673	937
Black-capped Chickadee	10587	11706	12422	15733	11019	15128	13748	14780
Boreal Chickadee	15	28	37	21	17	26	20	24
Tufted Titmouse	2	3	10	19	14	11	5	10
Red-breasted Nuthatch	459	290	900	860	882	955	667	629
White-breasted Nuthatch	2101	2403	2365	2850	2004	2981	2891	3055
Brown Creeper	81	109	136	192	76	186	237	195
Carolina Wren						2	1	1
Winter Wren		3				3		
Marsh Wren						2		
Golden-crowned Kinglet	13	33	31	6	13	45	88	83
Ruby-crowned Kinglet						1		
Eastern Bluebird	2	25	2	6	7	20	48	3
Townsend's Solitaire		5	1	1	3	3		2
Hermit Thrush		1	2		1	4	2	1
American Robin	81	494	471	210	796	1186	5163	1719
Varied Thrush		3	3		2		3	1
Gray Catbird	2	1	1		2			1
Northern Mockingbird							1	
Brown Thrasher		1	2	2	6		4	1
Bohemian Waxwing	1437	559	2062	710	519	1432	8232	3124
Cedar Waxwing	348	808	3239	1442	1054	1087	1985	2459
Northern Shrike	96	69	108	146	75	59	103	167
European Starling	14058	13590	23962	16869	14622	21458	17829	25378
Yellow-rumped Warbler		4	2		1	1	3	
Cape May Warbler								1
Northern Cardinal	2194	1702	1970	1940	2347	1561	2470	1924
Eastern Towhee				2	1	1		
Spotted Towhee					1	1		
American Tree Sparrow	368	4222	3179	3486	1355	2277	5189	3327
Chipping Sparrow	4				2	2	1	
Lark Sparrow			1					
Savannah Sparrow				1				1
Fox Sparrow	4	3	2	1	17	4	8	3
Song Sparrow	16	25	10	25	30	42	12	15
Swamp Sparrow		1	7	2	2	3		1
White-throated Sparrow	48	30	17	59	45	87	68	49
White-crowned Sparrow	2	1	1	4	3		2	
Harris' Sparrow	1	8	1	5	9	5	2	10
Dark-eyed Junco	2369	3838	5174	7537	4695	6064	9184	7167
Lapland Longspur	45	152	60	74	47	68	2203	1178
Snow Bunting	5111	7678	5574	4482	4931	1552	6701	1940
Red-winged Blackbird	99	566	104	133	167	513	448	571
"meadowlark sp."		2	1	2	1			
Yellow-headed Blackbird							1	
Rusty Blackbird	14	33	101	29	6	22	18	47
Brewer's Blackbird	11	1	2	3			2	
Common Grackle	99	148	143	107	80	134	85	206
Brown-headed Cowbird	24	2	2	11	3			36
Pine Grosbeak	1659	489	1534	1444	607	1488	530	1244
Purple Finch	275	365	637	300	1500	277	804	443
House Finch	262	835	2227	2478	4920	2392	3040	2902
Red Crossbill	3	1	122	55	286	66	142	185
White-winged Crossbill	51		234	378	1547	457	201	15
Common Redpoll	13092	644	383	7490	214	4586	148	10484
Hoary Redpoll	24		2	9		5		15
Pine Siskin	652	3577	5101	3844	756	967	1017	343
American Goldfinch	1721	3705	3381	2928	3032	2825	4282	3496
Evening Grosbeak	752	895	2015	1974	2021	637	712	788
House Sparrow	34459	25648	22113	23789	27124	21572	23767	21981
unidentified individuals	3	54	44	610	602	39	102	492
Total individuals	235556	213735	264204	275470	173703	269264	362229	367836
Total species	114	117	129	125	119	129	127	132
Total number of counts	45	50	46	50	51	55	54	54

1991-2000 Minnesota Christmas Bird Count (CBC) species totals, concluded.

Count	Compiler	Date	Total individuals	Total species
Afton	Helen Lien	1-Jan-00	7944	50
Albert Lea	Al Batt	27-Dec-99	4076	46
Aurora	Chuck Neil	18-Dec-99	937	33
Austin	Terry Dorsey	19-Dec-99	5026	47
Battle Lake	Steve Millard	2-Jan-00	4460	42
Baudette	Martin Kehoe	21-Dec-99	865	22
Beltrami Island	Martin Kehoe	22-Dec-99	210	16
Bemidji	Katie Haws	18-Dec-99	2135	43
Bloomington	Mark Ochs	18-Dec-99	38551	72
Cloquet-Carlton	Larry Weber	19-Dec-99	1058	28
Cedar Creek	Helen Lien	19-Dec-99	533	30
Cottonwood	Paul Egeland	19-Dec-99	16267	46
Crookston	Tom Feiro	18-Dec-99	1578	23
Crosby	Jo Blanich	18-Dec-99	2715	36
Detroit Lakes	Bruce Besse	18-Dec-99	2600	41
Duluth	Jim Lind	18-Dec-99	8625	56
Excelsior	Dennis Martin	18-Dec-99	20952	61
Fairmont	Brad Bolduan	18-Dec-99	9199	39
Fargo-Moorhead**	Ron Nellerhoe	18-Dec-99	7452	43
Faribault	John Little	18-Dec-99	7452	43
Fergus Falls	Steve Millard	18-Dec-99	15306	53
Grand Forks*	David Lambeth	19-Dec-99	1009	15*
Grand Marais	Jeff Kern	18-Dec-99	3117	37
Grand Rapids	Janet Boe	18-Dec-99	1200	29
Hastings-Etter	Roger Field	26-Dec-99	4660	49
Hibbing	Janet Peterson	27-Dec-99	677	18
International Falls	Jim Schaberl	18-Dec-99	960	27
Isabella	Steve Wilson	2-Jan-00	836	18
Itasca State Park	Doug Johnson	26-Dec-99	598	25
Lac Qui Parle	Paul Egeland	26-Dec-99	46561	42
Little Falls	Murdoch Johnson	18-Dec-99	1206	24
Lamberton	Lee French	17-Dec-99	2079	35
Long Prairie	John & Susan Kroll	1-Jan-00	2424	37
Mankato	Merrill Frydendall	18-Dec-99	4123	34
Marshall	Roger Schroeder	18-Dec-99	1670	36
Minneapolis (north)	Terry Brashear	19-Dec-99	12305	43
Morris	Donna Oglesby	18-Dec-99	8957	29
Mountain Lake-Windom	Edna Gerber	1-Jan-00	1777	32
Northwest McLeod	Robert Schroeder	18-Dec-99	9949	43
Owatonna	Darryl Hill	28-Dec-99	7061	37
Pillager	Michael North	1-Jan-00	1839	31
Rochester	David Squillace	18-Dec-99	20989	53
Roseau	Betty Johnson	29-Dec-99	518	15
St. Cloud	Brian Jungels	18-Dec-99	2852	29
St. Paul	Fred Waltz	18-Dec-99	31717	58
St. Paul (northeast suburban)	Dick Wachtler	26-Dec-99	8007	53
Sax-Zim	Mark Stensaas	20-Dec-99	626	24
Sherburne	James Pasch	18-Dec-99	1408	36
Tamarac NWR	Lowell Deede	20-Dec-99	1710	31
Wabasha	Jon Peterson	2-Jan-00	2848	40
Warren	Gladwin Lynne	31-Dec-99	1467	33
Wild River	Tom Anderson	18-Dec-99	5674	42
Willmar	Randy Frederickson	18-Dec-99	4411	50
Winona**	Walter Carroll	18-Dec-99	12964	73
TOTAL			366140	

*Includes only species and individuals recorded in MN.

**Includes species and individuals in two states

1999-2000 Minnesota Christmas Bird Counts (CBC).

Cliff Nesting Peregrines

Harrison B. Tordoff

(Editor's Note: This article, edited slightly here, first appeared in The Raptor Center's quarterly publication, The Raptor Release, Volume 19, Summer 2000.)

When Pat Redig, director of The Raptor Center at the University of Minnesota, wrote the original recovery plan for the Peregrine Falcon in the Midwest over 20 years ago, we expected that the restored population would live in the same places as the original birds, namely on cliffs. The subsequent success of Peregrines nesting on skyscrapers and other man-made structures was gratifying but did not erase disappointment over their failure to reoccupy the cliffs along the Mississippi and its tributaries. Peregrines of the new population have nested on the cliffs around Lake Superior since 1988. This year, however, the big news is that Peregrines nested successfully on cliffs along the Mississippi River for the first time since the original population was wiped out by DDT and related pesticides in the 1950s. Five pairs held territories this year. Three of these pairs nested and all succeeded, fledging eight young. The two pairs that did not nest each included a one-year-old female, probably not yet ready to nest because of immaturity, paired with an adult male.

Across their original range in the eastern United States, many Peregrines nested on lowland river cliffs. Here in the midwestern U. S., the river pairs likely made up more than half of the total population. It is easy to understand the intense interest in the delayed return of the new population to these traditional nesting cliffs, not only those along the Mississippi and its tributaries, but also the Hudson, Susquehanna, and other lowland rivers in the eastern states. What are the circumstances leading to this exciting re-occupancy of the river cliffs? Is this

year really the first year? Where did the cliff birds come from? Why this year, instead of last year or the year before? What is likely to happen in the next few years?

We began releases of Peregrines at Weaver Dunes, near Kellogg, Wabasha County, in 1982 because about a dozen cliffs used by the falcons historically were within 20 miles of the hack site. Those releases of 40 young falcons resulted in eight nesting attempts on nearby cliffs in 1986, 1987, and 1988. All failed. At three cliff nests where adults or young were killed, evidence showed that Great Horned Owls were the predators. At a fourth nest, raccoons might also have been involved.

At Weaver Dunes, predation by owls on the released falcons was low, one Peregrine was killed in 1982 and one in 1983. None of the 23 released in 1984 and 1985 was lost to owls. The Weaver Dunes hack site was abandoned because an adult Peregrine from an earlier release returned and attacked the young falcons on their first flights from the hack towers.

We were probably too impressed with the potential of owl predation. The loss of one of the first five Peregrines released at Weaver Dunes in 1982, seemed a disaster at the time. Earlier, two of three falcons were killed by owls in an experimental hack at Maassen Bluff, south of Nelson, Wisconsin, in 1977. When the first eight cliff nesting attempts failed, owls seemed like a formidable problem, indeed. We now speculate that the owls, unchallenged by Peregrines on the river cliffs for 25 years, needed re-education to the proper state of humility required for co-existence with Peregrines. This surely has been happening over the past de-

cade, as owls along the river have encountered Peregrines with increasing frequency. The cliff nest at Lansing, Iowa, this year fledged four Peregrines in sight of a nesting pair of owls on a neighboring cliff. No one expects owls and Peregrines to live together in complete harmony. There is abundant evidence throughout North America that owls will continue to prey on Peregrines and that Peregrines will continue to harass and occasionally kill owls, but events this year show that they can once more co-exist, as they did in the past.

The return of nesting Peregrines to the river cliffs this year appears to be the result of several factors. Although Peregrines are strongly territorial, they seem to like neighbors. They attract each other. Peregrine activity along the river caused by pairs nesting on smokestacks has been increased the past few years by hacking of about 60 young falcons from river cliffs in Iowa. Wild Peregrines nesting elsewhere in the region have produced many young birds seeking nest sites. Because the best sites on buildings, smokestacks, and bridges are already occupied, these birds must look elsewhere. The river bluffs, with their many good nest sites and a fine food supply, became irresistible.

Why this year, instead of earlier? Growing population pressure, fewer unoccupied suitable breeding locations, and an increasing Peregrine river presence — these all came together this year.

Might Peregrines have been nesting on these cliffs undetected for several years? One wouldn't expect that the first step back to the river cliffs would involve five pairs. Why not first one or two, then a gradual buildup over the years? There are convincing reasons to conclude that this year was really the first. For starters, the best (for Peregrines, best usually means biggest) cliffs seem to be used first. If Peregrines nested along the river north of Iowa in recent years, they would probably have been at Maiden Rock in Wisconsin, or at Queens Bluff or John Latsch State Park in Minnesota, the biggest cliffs in that stretch of the river, and probably

would have been detected by the many good birders in the area. Further, nine of the ten individuals on river cliffs this year have a known history; the tenth is not banded. Two are only one year old. Four are just two years old, the most frequent age of first breeding. The other three are older birds that last year were known to be nesting on smokestacks along the river. To argue seriously for other cliff nesters last year, for example, requires either that they all nested on secondary cliffs and vanished this year, or, after nesting on the best cliffs, all either died over winter or were evicted by the current residents; none of these possibilities is plausible.

One of the three older cliff nesters this year nested last year on the smokestack at Alma, Wisconsin. In early spring this year, he was injured in a fight with another falcon, treated in a rehabilitation clinic, and released at La Crosse, Wisconsin. He then took up residence at Maassen Bluff, about as close as he could get to his former site, just four miles downstream at Alma. His one-year-old mate fledged in 1999 at the Colonnade, in Minneapolis. The two adults at Lansing, Iowa, nested in 1999 on a smokestack just yards from the cliff used this year. A nest box placed on the cliff enticed them to move. At Queens Bluff, both birds were hacked in 1998, one from a cliff at Effigy Mounds National Monument, Iowa, and the other from a building in Mason City, Iowa. The pair at John Latsch State Park included an adult male, not banded and therefore wild-produced, and a two-year-old female from the Ford Parkway Bridge in Minneapolis. At Maiden Rock, the male is two years old, fledged in 1998 from the containment building at NSP Prairie Island, Minnesota, and the female fledged last year from the Firstar Bank in Cedar Rapids, Iowa. An interesting mixed bag of birds, crossovers from various types of fledge sites to nesting on cliffs.

So, we can regard the river pairs with the satisfaction that comes from seeing the last of the objectives of the original

recovery plans finally met, after years of frustration and argument about solutions. Robert Anderson, Raptor Resource Project, and Dan Orr, NSP biologist, deserve credit for leading the establishment of a Peregrine presence along the river through the very successful power plant smokestack program. Anderson also joined Lowell Washburn, Irene Berry, and Pat Schlarbaum, of the Iowa DNR, and James Haack, MidAmerica Energy, in hacking young Peregrines from river cliffs and nearby buildings in Iowa. Two sharp-eyed birders first located the new pairs in Minnesota, Dedrick Benz at Queens Bluff and Dr. Ray Faber at John Latsch State Park. Ray faithfully reported the nesting events leading to the fledging of three young. At Maassen Bluff be-

tween Nelson and Alma, Wisconsin, Gary Grunwald, retired from the Minnesota DNR, discovered the pair, watched them for a few weeks, and reported them to Dave Linderud, Wisconsin DNR, in Alma. The pair at Maiden Rock, Wisconsin, was first reported at the Cargill elevator in Lake City, Minnesota, where Matt Solensky read their leg bands. Later the same day, this pair was seen across Lake Pepin at Maiden Rock, Wisconsin, by Matt, Mark Martell, and me. Matt also read the bands on the birds at the two Minnesota cliffs and at Maassen Bluff.

Bell Museum of Natural History and Department of Ecology, Evolution, and Behavior, University of Minnesota, 1987 Upper Buford Circle, St. Paul MN 55108.

Proceedings of the Minnesota Ornithological Records Committee

Kim R. Eckert, M.O.R.C. Chairman

The two most recent meetings of the Committee were held on 9 April and 13 August 2000. Besides the Chairman, in attendance at one or both of these meetings were the other Committee members: Renner Anderson (alternate), Karl Bardon, Paul Budde, Philip Chu (alternate), Bruce Fall, Anthony Hertzell, Bob Janssen (new alternate replacing Kim Risen), Peder Svingen, and Tom Tustison.

Among the items on the agendas of these meetings were discussions of certain records, including: potential first state records; those involving a question of origin; those recirculated after inconclusive first-round votes; those with completed votes which are reconsidered at the request of a Committee member; and those primarily or entirely documented

with a photograph or tape recording. The results of these discussions and votes on these records are included below with the other records handled entirely by mail.

The following records were voted on January – July 2000 and found to be Acceptable:

- Williamson's Sapsucker, 16 October 1999, Taconite Harbor, Cook Co. (record #99-62, vote 6-1, *The Loon* 72:115-118).

- Wilson's Warbler, 3-4 December 1999, St. Paul, Ramsey Co. (record #2000-01, vote 6-1).

- Eurasian Collared-Dove, 23 October 1999 (& previously), Fairmont, Martin Co. (record #2000-08, vote 6-1).

- Blackpoll Warbler, 3 November 1999, Northfield, Rice Co. (record #2000-09, vote 5-2).

• Yellow Warbler, 28 November 1999, St. Paul, Ramsey Co. (record #2000-10, vote 7-0)

• Curve-billed Thrasher, late November 1999 - 24 March 2000, Brandrup Twp., Wilkin Co. (record #2000-12, vote 7-0, *The Loon* 72:177-178).

• Sage Thrasher, 7 February - 4 March 2000, Edina, Hennepin Co. (record #2000-17, vote 7-0, *The Loon* 72:181).

• Gray-crowned Rosy-Finch, 17-27 February 2000, Connelly Twp., Wilkin Co. (record #2000-20, vote 6-1, *The Loon* 72:176-177).

• Great-tailed Grackle, 1-9 April 2000, Grover's L., Jackson Co. (record #2000-23, vote 7-0).

• Great-tailed Grackle, 9 April 2000, Sec. 29, Minneota Twp., Jackson Co. (record #2000-24, vote 6-1).

• Lark Bunting, 20 May 1999, near Clarkfield, Yellow Medicine Co. (record #2000-27, vote 7-0).

• Nelson's Sharp-tailed Sparrow, 8 October 1999, Hutchinson, McLeod Co. (record #2000-28, vote 6-1).

• Osprey, 29 March 2000, Maple L., Polk Co. (record #2000-29, vote 6-1).

• McCown's Longspur, 8 May 2000, Duluth, St. Louis Co. (record #2000-32, vote 7-0).

• California Gull, 13 May 2000, Cottonwood, Lyon Co. (record #2000-33, vote 7-0).

• Black-headed Grosbeak, 13 May 2000, Cottonwood, Lyon Co. (record #2000-34, vote 7-0).

• Mississippi Kite, 14 May 2000, Bloomington, Hennepin Co. (record #2000-35, vote 7-0).

• Pacific Loon, 6 January 2000 (& previously), Lynd Twp., Lyon Co. (record #2000-39, vote 7-0, *The Loon* 72:178-179).

• Chipping Sparrow, 4 March 2000, Silver Lake, McLeod Co. (record #2000-40, vote 6-1).

• Long-billed Curlew, 18-23 April 2000, Mitchell Twp., Wilkin Co. (record #2000-41, vote 7-0, *The Loon* 72:184-185).

• White-faced Ibis, 13-14 May 2000, Washington Twp., Le Sueur Co. (record #2000-42, vote 7-0).

• Lark Bunting, 13-14 May 2000, Stoney Pt., St. Louis Co. (record #2000-43, vote 7-0).

• *Plegadis* ibis, sp., 14 May 2000, Appleton Twp., Swift Co. (record #2000-44, vote 7-0).

• Yellow-throated Warbler, 13-18 May 2000 (& subsequently), Sibley State Park, Kandiyohi Co. (record #2000-47, vote 7-0)

• Lazuli Bunting, 16-21 May 2000, Lynd Twp., Lyon Co. (record #2000-48, vote 7-0).

• Black-throated Gray Warbler, 23-24 May 2000, Two Harbors, Lake Co. (record #2000-49, vote 7-0).

• Black-necked Stilt, 24 May 2000, Pierce L., Martin Co. (record #2000-50, vote 7-0).

The following records were voted on January - July 2000 and found to be Un-acceptable:

• Red-throated Loon, 17-21 November 1999, French L., Rice Co. (record #99-70, vote 1-6). This loon may well have been correctly identified since it was seen by many observers over a period of days. However, only two descriptions were submitted, and neither was clear or complete enough to preclude other loons. The original observer's description of its smaller size was only based on a subjective impression since no direct comparison with Common Loon is stated; the other documentation, which states direct size comparison with Commons, is difficult to judge since it was written from memory four months after the observation. The bill's actual shape as described fits Red-throated Loon well, but neither observer described the bill as anything more than slightly or occasionally uptilted. Finally, the spots on the bird's back are described as "rounded, oval" by one observer as "checkered" by the other, and this is more suggestive of a Pacific or Common loon.

• Brewer's Blackbird, 18-19 December 1999, Detroit Lakes, Becker Co. (record #2000-02, vote 3-4). The bird's "brown/gray" eyebrow and the "fairly short" tail

as described are both more suggestive of the more likely Rusty Blackbird than a Brewer's. Any winter record of a Brewer's Blackbird, especially in northern Minnesota, would be exceptional and would need to be completely described and thoroughly preclude other possibilities, and the majority felt this documentation did not accomplish this.

- Gyrfalcon, 25 December 1999, near Pillager, Cass Co. (record #2000-03, vote 0-7). The observer only had a brief and apparently "going-away" look at this raptor, and the identification was made without the use of optics. The brief first impression of the bird being a "white Rock Dove" is inconsistent with the much larger Gyrfalcon. Only the undersides of the bird are described and said to be lacking any distinct markings, although even white-morph Gyrs have dusky tips on the outer primaries. An adult Northern Goshawk would fit the description since its under-tail banding is faint and hard to see, its gray barring on the breast and belly is often faint and also hard to discern, and goshawks typically show a pointed-wing profile, especially when flying into the wind, as was the case here.

- Eurasian Collared-Dove, 6-7 January 2000, Grand Rapids, Itasca Co. (record #2000-04, vote 0-7). The brief documentation does not address any differences which distinguish this species from Ringed Turtle-Dove, and the description even suggests the bird was actually a turtle-dove, since it was "very light color, almost white, sort of a creamy color."

- Little Gull, 25 March 1972, Red Wing, Goodhue Co. (record #2000-05, vote 2-8; all ten Committee members vote on potential first state records). This previously published record (*The Loon* 44:56), which predated the formation of this Committee, represented a first state record at the time. At the request of present Committee members, this record was considered and voted on. Although the two gulls in question may have been Little Gulls, the brief description does not clearly state their size and only vaguely describes their wing pattern. Nor is it

clear that this species' distinctive blackish underwings were seen; this important feature is only mentioned in passing as an afterthought in the final sentence: "these were not black, but dark enough to contrast with the white edgings." Though two Ross's Gulls here would be much less likely than Little Gulls, it is also significant to note there is nothing in the description to preclude Ross's Gull.

- Tufted Duck, 25 January - 8 February 1976, Black Dog L., Dakota Co. (record #2000-06, vote 1-9; all ten Committee members vote on potential first state records). This record had previously been published as Unacceptable on the basis of its probable captive origin (*The Loon* 48:78), but at the time it had not been voted on by the Committee. At the request of the present Committee chair, this record was considered and voted on. Regardless of the bird's origin, the relatively brief description is not critical enough to preclude the possibility of hybridization, and documented records of Tufted Ducks hybridizing with scaup or Ring-necked Ducks occur with some frequency. Any reported Tufted Duck, therefore, would need to address and preclude a hybrid before its identification could be accepted. (Since the identification was not accepted, the question of wild vs. captive origin is moot.)

- Mew Gull, 18 December 1999, Black Dog L., Dakota Co. (record #2000-11, vote 2-5). The majority felt that the two experienced observers, who are to be commended for the honesty and thoroughness of their documentations, were simply unable to see this gull well enough for a positive identification. The gull was never studied in flight, and the observers did not concur on such key features as the exact color or pattern on the bill, eye color, and the gull's overall size; and note one observer judged the overall size as "about" the same as a Ring-billed, which is inconsistent with the average Mew Gull. There was agreement on the gull's darker gray mantle color in direct comparison with the Ring-billed and Herring gulls present, but the light

conditions at the time and the angle of the gull relative to the observers are unclear from the documentation. For such an unusual record to be accepted (there are only three previously accepted), the majority felt more certainty and consistency in the documentation would be needed.

- Tufted Duck, 1 January – March 2000, Blue Lake sewage treatment ponds, Scott Co. (record #2000-13, vote 0-10; all ten Committee members vote on potential first state records). It was unanimously agreed (vote 10-0) that the identification of this bird was Acceptable, with the possibility of it being a hybrid satisfactorily precluded. However, the record was also unanimously found Unacceptable on the basis of its origin: i.e., all felt the probability of it being an escape from captivity was more likely than it being a wild vagrant. This opinion was based on a discussion in March with a waterfowl collector in the vicinity of the sewage ponds who had Tufted Ducks escape from his care not long before the initial observation. This collector also reported he observed the duck at the sewage ponds and was confident this was one of his escaped birds (see also *The Loon* 72:186-187).

- Northern Wheatear, 7-10 February 2000, Angora, St. Louis Co. (record #2000-14, vote 0-7). No optics were used by the inexperienced observers to identify this bird, which was more likely a shrike, since a mid-winter wheatear would be clearly unlikely and unprecedented here. Though the bird was seen in flight, there is no mention in the documentation of the wheatear's distinctive tail pattern. It was also seen perching in trees frequently, which is atypical for a wheatear, and there is no mention of tail wagging behavior, which is frequent and characteristic wheatear behavior.

- Pyrrhuloxia, 24 January 2000, Andover, Anoka Co. (record #2000-15, vote 1-9; all ten Committee members vote on potential first state records). The observers, who had no experience with this species, based their identification of this bird on its mostly gray plumage

(with red limited to the crest, wings and tail) and its yellow bill. While such a description seems more consistent with Pyrrhuloxia than Northern Cardinal, it does not entirely match either a male Pyrrhuloxia (which would also show red on the face and belly) or a female (which would not show much, if any, red on the wings and tail). There is also no mention of bill shape, which is distinctive in this species. Such a record would be quite unexpected and unprecedented since the Pyrrhuloxia has no history of vagrancy to the eastern U.S. As such, a more complete and convincing description would be needed for such an unusual species.

- Brewer's Blackbird, 26 February 2000, Denmark Twp., Washington Co. (record #2000-16, vote 2-5). Since reports of this species in northern states during winter have a long history of being erroneous, the majority of the committee feels that only records with flawless documentations should be accepted. In this report of a pair of Brewer's, the dark eye of the female is mentioned, but the described light conditions seemed unfavorable enough that a Rusty Blackbird's pale iris might appear dark. And the male is said to have had a "black head and dark greenish-blue body," but this description is not entirely consistent with a male Brewer's and could fit a male Rusty in early spring just as well.

- Ivory Gull, 13 March 2000, near Hastings, Washington Co. (record #2000-18, vote 3-4). The entire description of this gull only includes mention of its entirely white plumage and its black legs and feet. If correct, this indicates the bird was an adult, which would be most unusual, especially at this time of year. Accordingly, the majority was skeptical of this record, especially since the documentation does not discuss or preclude an albino gull of some species. In addition, the bill color of the gull was not noted, and the leg/foot color may not have been accurately seen, since the gull was observed at a range of 100+ yards without a spotting scope.

- Turkey Vulture, 18 December 1999,

North Mankato, Nicollet Co. (record #2000-19, vote 2-5). This is another species with a history of erroneous reports in winter, and accordingly the committee is cautious about accepting such records. In this case, neither the small-headed profile nor the two-toned underwing pattern, which are distinctive on a vulture, were noted in the brief, incomplete and casual documentation. And, while one late-lingering vulture might be credible, the majority was skeptical that five individuals were seen.

• Osprey, 14 March 2000, near Pelican Rapids, Otter Tail Co. (record #2000-21, vote 0-7). This flying bird was only viewed from a moving vehicle without the use of optics, indicating it was not observed carefully enough for a positive identification. Accordingly, the description is incomplete and does not include size, flight profile, or anything on the bird's upperparts. The identification seemed to rely primarily on the "black streak through the eye," but this feature is also found on sub-adult Bald Eagles.

• Great-tailed Grackle, 19 March 2000, Chaska, Carver Co. (record #2000-22, vote 1-6). The two "larger" grackles were documented from memory nearly two months after the observation, since no field notes were taken at the time. The description does not state whether the Common Grackles present with them were males or females; if females, this leaves open the possibility the two larger birds might have just been male Common Grackles since it is not stated how much larger they were. In addition, the "shiny metallic green color" on their wings would seem to fit Common Grackle better than Great-tailed.

• Canada Warbler, 15 April 2000, Duluth Twp., St. Louis Co. (record #2000-25, vote 0-7). Although the description of a "black necklace and bright yellow throat and belly" would seem to be consistent with this species, the date is three to four weeks earlier than this species normally arrives in northern Minnesota. For such an extremely early date, it was unanimously felt the documentation is not

complete enough since it includes no description of the bird's back, wings, or tail, and it is unclear if there was an eye ring.

• Black Phoebe, 29 April 2000, near Elizabeth, Otter Tail Co. (record #2000-26, vote 0-7). Although the observer had experience with this species in the south-western U.S., she was unaware how unusual the species is here, which suggests the bird was not studied as critically as it should have been. In addition, the documentation is relatively brief, somewhat vague, and not as comprehensive as it should be for a second state record of a bird so far out of range. The description of the plumage only includes mention of "a grayish black back" and a "black chest." Also, the size of the bird is unclear, and there is no indication why the bird was a phoebe or flycatcher.

• Eurasian Collared-Dove, 19 April - 1 June 2000, Leota Twp., Nobles Co. (record #2000-30, vote 0-7). Although the two birds were almost certainly correctly identified, the very brief description includes nothing to preclude the possibility of Ringed Turtle-Dove.

The efforts of all those observers who document their reports of unusual species are appreciated, whether or not those records are accepted. Accordingly, the Committee acknowledges with thanks those who provided documentation for the records listed in this article: Karl Bardon, Betsy Beneke, Dave Benson (2 records), Tom Boevers, Terry Boldingh, Terry Brashear, Paul Budde (2 records), Steve Carlson, Cory Chopp, Philip Chu (5 records), Nelvina DeKam, Bob Dunlap, Kim Eckert (2 records), Paul Egeland (3 records), Dan Floren (2 records), Eve Freeberg, Colin Gjervold, Anthony Hertz, Bob Janssen (2 records), Teresa Jaskiewicz, Michael Johnson, Roland Jordahl, Vija Kelly, Matthew Kenne, Frank Kraft, Violet Lender, Sue Levy (2 records), Jim & Sharon Lind, Bill Marengo, Barbara & Dennis Martin, Michael North, Bill & Donna Ongalo, Dan Peterson, Pat Rode-wald, Steve Roman, John Schladweiler, Robert Schroeder, Roger Schroeder,

Blaine Seeliger, Peder Svingen (9 records), Tom Tustison (3 records), Stuart Wagenius, Steve Weston, and Louis Yant.

There were also other observers who documented records which were not submitted for a vote to the Committee; their

documentations, though not mentioned here, are also appreciated.

Summary: 45 records voted on: 27 Acceptable (60%), 18 Unacceptable (40%).

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Update on Albino Red-tailed Hawks of Houston and Winona Counties

Dr. Philip C. Whitford

I previously have reported several albino Red-tailed Hawks from Winona County (Whitford 1990, 1991a, 1993). Since the most recent report, there have been several changes. Three additional albino Red-taileds have been found in Winona and Houston counties, and there have been unsubstantiated rumors of the death of one of those reported earlier.

Information about the nature of albinism in Red-tailed Hawks and its occurrence in the Wisconsin-Minnesota border region has been reported previously in this journal and *The Passenger Pigeon* (Whitford 1993, 1991a, 1991b, 1992; Lauten 1991). This paper is intended to serve as a brief update on the status of our efforts to locate and identify albinistic individuals among the Red-tailed populations of southeastern Minnesota. The new sightings reported here were made by my friend and hawk-chasing associate, Sam Nottleman, of Winona. Since I moved to Ohio in 1993, Sam has carried on the tradition of personally investigating each new report of an albino Red-tailed and documenting the presence and appearance of those individuals with photographs. Detailed location descriptions, general descriptions of the appearance of each new bird and the dates of discovery or last observation for each follow.

In April a new albino Red-tailed ap-

peared almost literally on Sam's back doorstep in the town of Homer, Minnesota. Homer is on the west shore of the Mississippi river, some five miles south of Winona. The hawk was found roughly 2.5 miles west of U.S. Highway 14/61, the road that runs along the river. Follow county road 15 west to Homer township Road 19 and follow that west roughly one mile. This hawk was only 2-3 air miles from Wilson where we discovered our first albino Red-tailed (Whitford 1990). The new hawk is very like the Wilson bird in plumage pattern. However, photos and close inspection revealed slight differences in the number and placement of pigmented tail feathers and primaries. Fortunately, Sam was able to find the Wilson hawk on the same day he observed the new one at Homer, and thus was able to unequivocally determine them to be separate individuals. Sam has continued to see them both since that first sighting and they seem to have stable, non-overlapping territories. We strongly suspect they may constitute a mother-daughter relationship based on proximity and similarity of appearance.

The most recent find of a new albino Red-tailed essentially takes us back to where it all began, a mile and a half southwest of Winona, Winona County, in the town of Wilson. In fact, the bird was

seen in the very same valley where Sam and I reported our first albino Red-tailed Hawk. Sam first saw this new resident of the valley on 22 December 1998. He had gone to the site in hopes of finding the original bird and verifying its continued presence. One can only say he got more than he bargained for. The original hawk was present and perched in a familiar tree for Sam's binoculars. The characteristic tail and primary markings of this bird were still evident after ten years since we first saw it.

The surprise was the presence of a second white hawk in the same valley that day. Sam's photo, while blurry, distinctly shows that there are several dark reddish feathers in the center of the tail of this new bird. The original Wilson hawk has several light reddish feathers in scattered locations on the tail. The photo also confirms that this is not the Homer hawk mentioned earlier, though it is only a few miles away from it. The Homer hawk has two to three light red, full tail feathers and then several more at the margin of the tail that are tinted only on the distal portions of the feathers. Wing feather patterns also show variation in placement of the few dark tinted feathers each displays in flight, again confirming them as separate individuals.

The final new albino Red-tailed Hawk was also last seen on 22 December 1998, again not far from Sam's home. It resided just west of the Mississippi River in the town of Hokah, a small community 10–12 miles south of the city of La Crosse, Wisconsin, on the Minnesota side of the river. This places it about 25 miles south-east of the Homer and Wilson hawks. The hawk was seen regularly at a point three miles south on County Road 18 from its intersection with State Highway 44, appearing at a low spot between the slopes of the bluffs. Sam's photos show this hawk to be strikingly marked in a patchwork of rufous and/or black feathers on a white background that produces an overall "calico" appearance. The coloring is very much like that which we observed on hawk #4 at Stoddard in 1991

(photo of this bird was included with the 1993 *Passenger Pigeon* article). Perhaps it is not entirely a coincidence that the Stoddard hawk is only 8–10 air miles away from this newest specimen to be found.

Sam has continued to photograph the hawk at Stoddard periodically over the years and has been able to document that it is still there. His photos show a gradual decrease in the size and number of black and red feather patches with successive molts and a concomitant increase in the whiteness of the bird overall. The photographic record makes it clear that these two birds are separate individuals and that the first has not just changed locations. The similarity of feather pigment distribution between the Hokah and Stoddard birds, when coupled with their proximity to one another, leads one to suspect that they may well be another mother/daughter relationship.

The final topic for this paper is a request for information about the albino Red-tailed that resided for many years at Rollingstone, Winona County. In early fall of 1998, Sam heard rumors about this bird being killed and removed from the state, but we have not been able to substantiate that report, nor find the bird. This bird was reported by Bruce Fall (1992), and was first observed 10 November 1990. I would like to request that any birders in the area check for the presence of this hawk two miles west of the town of Rollingstone on Highway 248. It was commonly found on the north side of the road well up the incline of the road as one approached the upper bluff region. If anyone has information about this hawk, or what may have become of it, please contact me at the address that follows this note.

I wish to acknowledge the assistance of all those who have contacted us with reports of new white hawks on which to follow up on. Without such help, we never would have been able to learn as much as we have about the presence of this spectacular natural treasure in this coulee region.

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BIRDING BY HINDSIGHT

A Second Look at Field Notes

Kim R. Eckert



The first entry on page one is now sixteen-and-a-half-years old. It reads as follows: "4/6/84. *Red-winged Blackbird singing on territory also gave a series of peeping notes I've never heard before, similar to Blue-winged Teal.*"

Now I admit this nugget of wisdom is hardly profound and now may seem trivial, but at the time I was impressed. Here was a common bird I thought I was completely familiar with giving a vocalization I had never noticed before. So I wrote it down. It is now over 16 years and 103 pages later and I'm still writing.

Some birders keep a journal with a narrative of their daily experiences in the field; others maintain a paper or electronic file of trip checklists. Instead, the notebook I keep has worn green covers

with frayed edges, a duct-taped binding, and the words I.D. NOTES crudely lettered on the front. What I became interested in doing years ago was keeping track of ID information I became aware of from experience, while out birding in the field, information I wrote down before I could forget it. Here were things not learned from reading any field guides or other references, since they simply weren't there at the time.

As I thumb through my notebook, I see there were periods lasting weeks or even months without an entry, times I was apparently learning nothing particularly new or memorable. So, I wonder, what I was doing in the six months between 7/22/87 (when I was trying to describe the Wilson's Warbler chip note)

and the next entry in January of 1988 (when I found something worth noting about mynas and bulbuls in Florida)?

I also notice entries of dubious validity which were later amended, appended or discarded. (Vireo call notes were apparently giving me fits on 8/23/84: my scribbling on page 24 includes five crossed-out phrases and an equal number of inserted afterthoughts, revealing I kept changing my mind about the Warbling's, Yellow-throated's, Blue-headed's, and Philadelphia's call notes.)

Many of the notes involve vocalizations, which, after all, are generally difficult or impossible to learn from the field guides. Some of the pages are devoted to notes on birds in Texas or Arizona or elsewhere with which I was less familiar at the time. Other notes have turned up years later as items in this series of *Hindsight* articles.

What follows is a random collection of some of my other ID notes which have not yet found a place in any of the previous topics addressed in this series, although some of these might be included in a future article. Listed chronologically, this assortment of former "discoveries" of mine from years past will hopefully serve to keep you from being as surprised or unprepared as I was then if you encounter these same sights and sounds in the future.

"4/7/84. *Red-throated Loon still at Superior Entry (first seen 3/31). Even at a distance or in flight bill is clearly and consistently held up at an angle.*" Some of the entries are ID points previously learned from field guides, other references or other birders, but noted in the field for the first time. In this case I was surprised to see how easily the uptilted bill was visible at a distance and in flight. But at the time I was apparently unaware that a loon with a bill angled upward is not necessarily a Red-throated. Just a year later there is this note: "*Churchill tour, June 1985. Pacific Loons can hold their bills up like Red-throated Loon.*" (So can Common Loons, by the way.)

Subsequently, I learned to examine actual bill shape, not the bill position, in identifying a Red-throated Loon: the culmen (i.e., top edge of the upper mandible) is straight, while the bottom edge of the lower mandible itself angles upwards halfway out. The straight culmen combined with the relatively low and flat crown shape gives the Red-throated Loon a distinct profile, and the angled lower mandible combined with the uptilted bill adds to this unique head/bill shape.

So, for 15 years I thought I had it figured out: while an uptilted bill is not diagnostic, the fact remained a Red-throated "always" held its bill tilted upwards and "always" had a distinctive bill shape. Not so. The problem is that almost all my field experience with this loon has been with adults, and the bill shape on juvenile Red-throateds — and other loons — may not be fully developed. I am also beginning to learn from conversations with other birders that Red-throateds often hold their bills level.

At the time of the writing of this article it seems there is this loon swimming on the lake in front of my house that reminds me of the indecision I was having in 1984 with vireo call notes. Its plumage fits a juvenile Red-throated Loon, but I had initially and incorrectly assumed it was a Pacific Loon, which is more likely here in fall. It seems its nondescript bill shape and level bill position are failing to meet my expectations during the past three days, and as soon as I finish this article there will certainly be a new Red-throated Loon entry on page 104.

"4/23/84. *Pine Siskin gave a call note I've never heard before: a soft, squeaky, two-syllabled call which suggested a distant Water [American] Pipit.*" I had forgotten about this not particularly significant experience until now, but what makes it more noteworthy is my entry 14 years later, from July 1998: "*Heard American Goldfinch giving a flight note that sounded exactly like an American Pipit.*" This latter goldfinch reference was mentioned in a previous *Hindsight* article

(*The Loon* 71:46), but, again, I hadn't remembered then that siskins can do the same thing.

I find it curious how two closely related species can give a note essentially the same as the unrelated pipit's. The simple lesson here is if you are familiar with the American Pipit's call and think you hear one that's out-of-season or out-of-place, check to make sure there aren't any siskins or goldfinches around. Incidentally, speaking of siskin sounds, a reminder that the same page discussing goldfinch calls in that *Hindsight* article mentions there are calls of five or six other species that a vocal flock of Pine Siskins can mimic.

"4/30/84. Both Rusty and Brewer's blackbirds feeding together in driveway (males and females). . .there's a female Brewer's with a dark yellow or light brown eye present." OK, that message is clear enough: use caution when using iris color to ID Brewer's females since their eyes may not be entirely dark. And now, fast-forward 13 years to this entry: "*Newfoundland* 1997. Juvenile Rusty Blackbird with adult at Dunville; looked like fall adult but with dark iris!" Note the exclamation point, and note how Rusty Blackbird iris color is also unreliable at times.

Caution in blackbird ID is also recommended when it comes to actual plumage, not just eye color: "*April* 1999. Immature male Red-winged Blackbirds with virtually no red visible, even in flight. Plumage essentially all black." While even novice birders quickly learn not to be fooled by perched male Red-wingeds concealing their red wing coverts, more seasoned birders are probably unaware how hard the red can be to discern on some males in flight. The natural result is to assume one of these apparently all-black blackbirds must be a male Brewer's or Rusty if iris color is not noticed.

"1/7/85. Little Blue Heron immature can have yellow lores but bill and legs unlike Snowy Egret." Now here was something noticed in Florida and cer-

tainly worth noting — even if the sentence is not entirely accurate. But it is true that some young Little Blue Herons can have pale yellowish lores, and the possible result is their misidentification as Snowy Egrets.

However, there are some problems with my methods to avoid making such a mistake. At the time I thought any small white heron/egret with a bicolored bill "had to be" an immature Little Blue Heron, since Snowy Egrets "had to be" black-billed. Not true: I have learned since then a juvenile Snowy Egret's bill can appear bicolored with a pale base.

Also inaccurate is my assumption that a pale-legged heron/egret was necessarily a Little Blue Heron, since I thought all Snowy Egrets had black legs. While adult Snowys do indeed have all-black legs, juveniles can have legs which can appear all or partly greenish-yellow, just like a Little Blue.

"3/10/85. Female (possibly immature) Red Crossbill at feeder with two narrow but distinct white wing-bars. Bars were about equal width (though lower bar may have been a bit wider)." I now suspect this was an immature male, but regardless of sex it's easy to see how one of these variants could be mistaken for a White-winged Crossbill. I recall seeing such Red Crossbills a time or two since this 1985 sighting, but no further notes on this appear in my notebook. Currently, I'm uncertain how atypical it is for Reds to have wing bars; in addition, does this anomaly depend on the time of year, or on the sex or age of the birds?

"Churchill tour, June 1985. Female Greater Scaup (some but not all) had a diffuse white spot on ear coverts; strongly suggested female scoters." Here was another field mark I had previously become aware of academically but now studied in life for the first time. When present — which wasn't always the case — this scoter-like head pattern on female Greater Scaup was being advanced as a diagnostic difference from Lesser Scaup. At the time

I was eager to accept all the help I could get with scaup ID, but here was yet another field mark whose validity eroded as the years and more scaup flew by.

Eleven years later I was still clinging to this belief to some extent, although I had learned that female Lesser Scaup could have a smaller and paler version of this whitish auricular spot. As I boldly pronounced in the *Hindsight* article on ducks in the Fall 1996 issue of **The Loon**, "Female Lessers never have as bold a spot."

Sadly, however, I should have waited a year before making such a brave — and erroneous — claim about female scaup head patterns: "*June 1997. Female Lesser Scaup with male in Stutsman Co., ND with obvious white patch on ear coverts!*" Note especially the exclamation mark, since for the first time I was witnessing the demise of a dearly held belief. Indeed, there is no difference after all in the ear coverts on Greater vs. Lesser scaup.

"*Churchill tour, June 1985. Heard 'tic tic mcgreer' call of Virginia Rail for first time.*" Here, at least, is something from my first tour to Churchill I haven't had to retract — at least not yet. What I find interesting is how this call is described in the field guides and included on recordings, while at the same time it's a vocalization I seldom hear. And I hear Virginia Rails a lot, but they're always giving the "kiddick kiddick" call or that descending series of pig-like grunts or duck-like quacks. Even after all these years, I can remember hearing "tic tic mcgreer" a total of only two or three times.

What's also interesting is this may be a Virginia Rail vocalization given mostly on the East Coast, rather than in the Midwest or Texas where I do most of my listening. At least the few birders from eastern states with whom I've discussed this seem to hear this call more than I do.

And since we're on the subject of Virginia Rail calls, consider the following entry: "*North Dakota 1998. Heard Virginia Rail (also seen) doing a call note*

never heard before. It was a loud, single note suggesting a Sora or coot." Since 1998 I heard this atypical call again on one occasion, and it's another example that birders still have much to learn about the calls of Virginia Rails and other members of this secretive group.

"*11/14/85. At Superior dump saw an adult gull at close range with sun at my back with the right iris dark medium brown and the left iris clear yellow.*" This gull superficially resembled a Herring Gull, by the way, and that's the ID I eventually settled on. But if I had only been able to view the right side of this gull and only see its one brown iris, I can only assume this would have been reported as an adult Thayer's.

Here's another example, also from the Superior landfill: *12/15/97. "Adult Thayer's with different colored eyes: left eye was amber . . . and right eye was darker amber or yellowish brown."* (My notes fail to mention how I decided this was a Thayer's Gull, but presumably its outer primaries pattern was unambiguous.) I also have memories of two or three other adult Herring/Thayer's-type gulls with one eye darker than the other, and, with the ID of some gulls determined by iris color, here we have another reason to approach gull identification with awe and fear.

Other complexities of separating Herring from Thayer's gulls (and Thayer's from Icelands) appear with some frequency in my notes. Space limitations, however, preclude a complete analysis here of these ID problems — which, of course, is my way of saying I'd have no idea what I'm talking about if I tried to discuss them! Suffice it to say for now that various pages in my notebook include accounts of:

— an apparent adult Thayer's Gull with a Herring Gull-like underwing pattern (or was it a Herring with a Thayer's-like pattern?);

— an adult Thayer's with both eyes yellow (which occurs more often than most birders think);

— juvenile or first-winter Thayer's Gulls in early winter with paler bases to their bills (such a bill pattern is alleged to be indicative of Iceland Gull);

— a first-winter Thayer's Gull with patterned, not solid-colored, tertials (which also is said to indicate an Iceland Gull);

— and various Iceland, Thayer's and Herring gulls with endless variations and overlaps in their overall sizes, head profiles, bill shapes, and mantle shades of gray.

Some year perhaps, when I get enough courage, all these things might be addressed in a future *Hindsight* article.

"5/31/86. Heard a Willow Flycatcher at La Crescent with a different call note: instead of a rising 'sprrit,' it descended like an Alder — 'spreurt,' had same burry quality of a normal Willow and not siskin-like as an Alder would be." I can still remember hearing this bird's call note, which sounded as much like an Alder Flycatcher as it did a Willow. Although I thought it was easy to separate the various call notes of these two Empids as well as their songs, my confidence was somewhat shaken here. While it could have been a late migrant Alder, I admit I decided to call it a Willow mostly on the basis of where it was: a thicket where I had found territorial Willow Flycatchers singing several times before.

And 14 years later my confidence was shaken again in the same county and in the same month: "May 2000, Houston Co. At Shamrock L. [east of Caledonia] a Willow Flycatcher repeatedly gave 'shreeur' Alder-like call notes; only because it sang a few times did I know it was a Willow." This experience certainly reminded me of that bird at La Crescent, and I can only conclude that Willow Flycatchers breeding in Houston Co. have a local variation in their dialect. At least I hope this is the case — if not, it's time to give up on Alder vs. Willow flycatcher ID and go back to studying Thayer's and Iceland gulls.

"12/6/86. Immature Mute Swan's bill is gray in fall but pink by spring — but not

sure if different from other swans in winter. In fall Tundra's bill is black at the base but mostly pinkish elsewhere with no clean-cut pattern or demarcation; in fall Trumpeter's bill is black-pink-black with sharp demarcations. In spring there's no difference in their [Tundra's and Trumpeter's] bills . . . and it's unclear what difference there is in winter." Some of my entries were notes taken at ID lectures or workshops, rather than field notes per se. In this case, there had been so little written on swan ID at the time that I was especially interested in this talk about swans a MOU Papers Session meeting. Note that the speaker's comments on bill patterns did not address whether there are any differences between the three species in winter and did not cover how a Mute Swan's bill differs from the other two swans in spring.

Even today, I am aware of only a couple of useful articles on swan ID in birding journals, and these do not entirely explain the differences in bill patterns. Nor did that 1986 lecture. In reality, in fall the juvenile Mute Swan's bill can be either gray or pink with a clean-cut small area of black at the base. This is unlike the young Trumpeter's larger area of black on the base and — contra the lecture — unlike the mostly pink-based bill on the juvenile Tundra.

By late fall and winter, the young Tundra's bill becomes broadly black-based like the young Trumpeter's, so by then features other than bill colors are needed to separate these two species. By winter, though, the juvenile Mute Swan's bill pattern is apparently enough like an adult's so that it should not be confused with the other two swans. And the situation with young swans' bills in spring is the same as in winter: the Mute's is even more adult-like and different from the other two, while the then mostly black bill colors on Tundras and Trumpeters continue to show no useful differences.

"March 1987 (Platte River trip). Very pale crane seen: buffy whitish overall, about as pale as immature Glaucous

Gull, same color all over including wing tips, except for red cap." Such abnormally pale Sandhill Cranes may be rare, but they show up annually at concentration points like the Platte River in Nebraska where cranes stage in essentially countless numbers. Obviously, these whitish individuals could easily and understandably be reported as Whooping Cranes by those who forget to look for the Whooping's black primaries and different pattern of red on the head.

I've also noticed that under some light conditions a flying Sandhill Crane's flight feathers, which are a darker shade of gray than the rest of the plumage, can appear almost blackish. Such light conditions can also make a flying Sandhill appear whiter than it really is.

But other birds besides abnormally pale Sandhills or Sandhill Cranes seen under odd light conditions are mistaken for Whooping Cranes. Any large white bird with black wing tips like a pelican or Snow Goose can get reported as one — it's simply a matter of wishful thinking by someone caught up in the mystique of the Whooping Crane. This endangered species gets all the media attention, and naturally the public simply wants their "fifteen minutes of fame" by claiming to see one.

"February 1988. Sprague's Pipit has a beady black eye and tinge of yellow on cheeks (suggesting Grasshopper more than Vesper sparrow); pale, shorter, semi-thick bill (unlike American Pipit); quite mottled and pale above; very pale and grayish-buff below (not at all colorful) with a partial 'necklace'; small head and thin neck (it often 'craned' to look at us); body thickens and appears 'bottom-heavy'; easy to see if grass is short and if you carefully stalk it — nothing else looks or acts quite like it." Such were my first impressions from this species' wintering grounds in Texas, the first time I had a prolonged look at one on the ground. Previously, most or all of my experience with Sprague's Pipits had been with birds sky-larking high over their breeding grounds.

Since 1988, I've had several more excellent looks at these pipits on the ground in winter and in summer on the northern Great Plains. And I would still say "nothing else looks or acts quite like it." However, to that original description I would add this pipit has yellow on the lores, not just on its ear coverts, which contributes even more to a similarity to Grasshopper Sparrow. Also add that its mostly pale bill is actually two-toned, with the top half of the upper mandible dark.

To my eye, the Sprague's Pipit bears only a superficial resemblance to the American Pipit, and I think too many observers get distracted by trying to compare and contrast the two. For one thing, too much time is spent looking for the Sprague's pale leg color, which is usually impossible to see in the grass anyway. Besides, some American Pipits also show pale legs — and there is even an entry about this in my notebook from earlier this fall.

Of course, as pointed out in an earlier *Hindsight* article, all this descriptive information would have been unnecessary if the field guides had done their job in the first place with this species (see *The Loon* 71:109).

"Pt. Pelee trip, May 1988. Female Cerulean Warbler can have a greenish cap with grayish upperparts — very different from male." This seems to be the first time I had noticed how relatively nondescript some female Ceruleans can be, especially when compared with a male. And note this entry was in spring — you can't blame the Confusing Fall Warbler Syndrome for this potentially difficult ID. By the way, those greenish and grayish tones on the cap and upperparts of a female Cerulean are interchangeable: sometimes the cap is grayish, sometimes the upperparts are greenish.

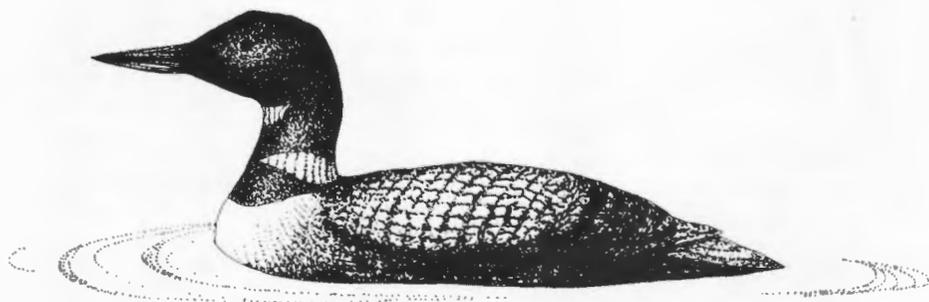
The point is, while some females look enough like a male to be recognizable, others do not, and this plumage is relatively unfamiliar to even more seasoned warbler watchers. So it's not hard to see

how one could be mistaken for something else, like a fall Blackpoll with dark legs. Or a Pine, if the distinct eyeline and supercilium aren't noticed. Or a fall Bay-breasted, if the side streaking isn't taken into account.

Well, that's it for the Reagan years, an administration they used to call the Reagan Revolution. And here have been some of the first entries of what was for

me a revolutionary approach of sorts to bird identification. Another *Hindsight* article on this subject will follow and include my entries during the George Bush administration, 1989–1992. Then we'll put to the test a paraphrase of that old adage: A bird in the handbook is worth two in the Bush years.

8255 Congdon Blvd., Duluth, MN 55804.



NOTES OF INTEREST

GRAY-CROWNED ROSY-FINCH IN WILKIN COUNTY — During late February 2000, a Gray-crowned Rosy-Finch was observed at a feeder in section 23 of Connelly Township, Wilkin County. The bird was first seen by Mary Boldingh on the 17th at about 7:10 A.M. She called Terry Boldingh and Peter Eikeland, who were working in Beltrami County that morning, via a mobile phone. She was very excited and we knew it was a new and unusual bird. However, we were out of town and away from home between the 20th and the 23rd so no observations were made on those dates.



The bird would come to the feeders with redpolls and House Sparrows. It fed alone on oil-type sunflower seeds — other birds would clear out when it entered the feeder. It appeared to be a little “chunkier” than the House Sparrows and much larger than the redpolls.

It had a heavy, yellow “grosbeak-like” beak with black over the crown of its head and about the eyes. The black about the eyes appeared a little lighter than the cap on its head. It was gray over the back of the neck and head. Its back, over the shoulders, was rust colored — very apparent in the sunlight. Wingbars were light but not really a stark white. The chest was rust colored and the tips of the pectoral feathers seemed to have a thin, black border, giving the chest a “mottled” appearance. Abdomen and area under wings were pink. Legs were black.

This bird was “at home” when feeding but would startle and fly if the sparrows

were frightened. Its last day here was 27 February. It was a nice sunny morning and the bird stayed ten minutes or more. We called Steve and Diane Millard but they arrived too late to see it after an hour or so wait. The 28th was very windy (from the south) and it did not show — Betsy Beneke and Steve Millard were waiting but had no luck. **Mary & Terry Bolding, Route 1, Box 116, Breckenridge, MN 56520.**

A JANUARY SORA IN OTTER TAIL COUNTY — While conducting the Battle Lake, Minnesota Christmas Bird Count on 2 January 2000, my wife and I discovered a Sora on the Dead River in central Otter Tail County. We first saw the bird at 9:40 A.M. The sky was overcast with temperatures in the mid-twenties, the wind was light and from the northeast. The distance to the bird was 70 to 80 feet or less. It was close to a county road, at a point where a culvert directs the river beneath the road. The current keeps this section of the river open all winter. Both sides of the river are bordered by cattails.



The stout yellow bill, blackish breast, barred belly, green legs and overall gray-brown appearance made identification straightforward. The bird was foraging along the edge of the river. At one point it swam from one side of the river to the other, a distance of 10 to 15 feet. It was obviously a healthy and active bird. We watched it for about five minutes, then left. At 3:30 P.M. we returned and the Sora was in the same area. Several visits on subsequent days failed to turn up the bird. I believe this is the first winter record for this species in northern Minnesota. **Steve Millard, 630 W. Laurel, Fergus Falls, MN 56537.**

CURVE-BILLED THRASHER OVERWINTERS IN WILKIN COUNTY — The mild winter of 1999–2000 kept many birds in west-central Minnesota from going south. One particularly rare individual actually moved north in the fall and successfully spent the winter here.

On 23 December 1999, I arrived before sunrise at the Gerald and Celine Brudvik home in rural Breckenridge, Wilkin County. Also present were Glee Dodson of Breckenridge and Betsy Beneke of Detroit Lakes. Glee had contacted me the previous day about a bird that she and the Brudviks had identified as a Curve-billed Thrasher. From the comfort of the dining room, we had only to wait twenty minutes for the bird to come in. It landed on an elevated feeder and hungrily gulped down shelled sunflower for a minute or so before flying off to roost.

Here is a description of the bird based on notes taken from my initial and subsequent visits to the site. About the size of a Brown Thrasher, overall color a soft medium olive-brown or gray-brown. Tail approximately equal to body length. Under-side of tail near tip had large white spots. Upper side of tail was darker than the body. The under-tail coverts were a soft tan or buff with very faint barring. The breast and belly were markedly spotted, heaviest on the breast and fading out on the lower belly. Two very thin wingbars were noticeable, off-white in color. The throat was white, bordered by a thin dark malar stripe. The two most obvious features were the orange eyes and the stout, curved black bill. Except for the wingbars, the bird was unmarked dorsally and uniformly colored from head to rump. The wingbars, fairly heavy spotting, and prominent tail spots marked this bird as the *oberholseri* race of the Curve-billed Thrasher. As far as is known, no vocalizations were heard by any observers.

Although different foods were experimented with, the initial offering of sunflower seeds remained its preferred food through the winter. The thrasher came to the feeder several times a day, but there were sometimes periods of several hours during mid-

day when it didn't appear. Most feeding was in early morning and late afternoon, each visit lasting one to four minutes. It spent long hours roosting in lilacs and conifers, conserving energy. I don't believe this bird would have survived a tough Minnesota winter. With the onset of very warm weather in late February and early March, it probably foraged more in the brush and leaves around the homestead. As spring progressed the thrasher used a variety of perches, probably a photoperiodic response related to territorial display. This third state record arrived 18 November 1999 and was last seen 24 March 2000. **Steve Millard, 630 W. Laurel, Fergus Falls, MN 56537.**

MINNESOTA'S FIRST WINTER RECORD OF PACIFIC LOON — A Pacific Loon



(*Gavia pacifica*) was picked up by regional Department of Natural Resources personnel near Marshall, Lyon County, in early January 2000 and later released on the Redwood River north of Camden State Park, Lyon County. Although photographs were taken, I felt it necessary to provide additional notes based on observations in the field, as there were questions raised about the possibility of this being an Arctic Loon (*G. arctica*). I observed it on the river for 15–20 minutes on 6 January 2000 under good light conditions from a distance of 30–

50 feet. It was actively feeding in the open water but often dove under the ice for fish. During the time I was there, the bird caught at least three fish on five attempts.

This was an obvious loon species, fairly large in size. When resting on the water, its neck seemed long. The head was held alert but without any upward tilt. Its bill was fairly long and lacked significant shape or thickness. The color was very dark on



Pacific Loon, January 2000, Marshall, Lyon County. Photo by John Schladweiler.

the top of the upper mandible and medium to dark gray on the remainder of the bill, perhaps with a thin dark line running along the cutting edge.

The top of its head and nape were dark, appearing mostly gray but with a tinge of brown. The cheeks, throat, and visible portion of its underparts were white. A thick, dark line separated the white throat from the dark nape, forming a loose arc down the side of its neck. The white on its cheek did not extend up over the eye. It seemed to have a faint buff to whitish partial ring around the upper two-thirds of its eye. Its dark — almost black — back had a grid-like pattern of varying sized, faint, white square-like spots. Although faint, these spots were clearly visible, and covered the middle and outer portions of the anterior two-thirds of its back. The extent of the bird's flanks that was visible while it was on the surface of the water was entirely dark except for a large white patch behind and below the folded wings. This patch was very clear and extended to the posterior end of its flanks.

On the 7th I returned to check on the bird and found it dead on the shoreline. It had been partially eaten but I could not determine whether it had been killed by a predator or died from some other cause. I took a closer look and noticed a dark, complete vent strap on its underparts. Although the white flank patch raises questions about the possibility of Arctic Loon, the presence of a dark, complete vent strap, as discussed in *Birding* 21:154–158, 22:70–73, and 29:106–115, indicates Pacific, not Arctic Loon. **Roger Schroeder, 2520 County Road 20, Marshall, MN 56258.**

FIRST BROWN COUNTY RECORD OF SUMMER TANAGER —



I was walking the Lake Hanska County Park on 21 May 2000 when at 7:30 A.M. I encountered a good amount of bird activity on the south end. There had been quite a few orioles all weekend, thus, I was not at all interested at first in what looked, from a distance, like a female Baltimore Oriole. Luckily, some small voice inside said "Check that bird — maybe it's a tanager." I got a brief (two seconds) but excellent broadside view of the bird, and sure enough, it was a tanager! It had that tanager bill, shape, size, and jizz. Also, it had a distinctly yellow-

orange color all over, no wingbars, and the wings were definitely not dark. Still, I was very disappointed when I could not relocate it after it flew. I must have searched the area and listened for 50 minutes to no avail. It was one of those situations when I really craved one more look, if only to overcome that inclination towards disbelief. I felt wretched when I should have been thrilled.

Since I had to drive by this spot on my way out, I parked in the area at about 9:00 A.M. and just waited and watched the trees where I had first seen it. My recollection is that the trees were mainly oaks. After several more false starts (real Baltimore Orioles), the tanager made another appearance. I got to study it in very good light and from a satisfactory distance for maybe 15 seconds or so, and confirmed all my initial impressions. When it turned to face me, I was struck by how much the breast color suggested a first-spring male or a really bright female Baltimore Oriole. The wings were definitely not dark, but were the same color as its back. There were certainly no wingbars, so I concluded that it was a Summer Tanager. But I am still puzzling over the plumage. This bird was not blotchy (but maybe somewhat unevenly colored on the sides and neck, and much lighter on the belly), unlike typical first-spring males (from what I have read or heard about some Fargo sightings). After reviewing the latest *National Geographic Field Guide*, I am wondering if it is actually a reddish-phase female. I would be interested to hear from others on this.

This was my first out-of-range Summer Tanager and also my first encounter with this plumage, but I consider myself fairly well acquainted with this species from when I lived in east Texas, and from a number of encounters during travels south. I also

consider myself fairly well acquainted with Scarlet and Western tanagers, and have routinely identified all three tanagers on many occasions from their call notes and songs. Thus, I think it unlikely that the bird was making a vocalization that I missed. Some field guides describe an orange-phase of the Scarlet Tanager, something I have never seen before, but I understand they still have the characteristic dark wing. **Dennis Wiesenborn, 1607 Elm St. North, Fargo, ND 58102.**

LATE TOWNSEND'S SOLITAIRE IN DAKOTA COUNTY — On 5 May 2000 between 6:30 and 8:10 P.M., I obtained numerous excellent views of a Townsend's Solitaire (*Myadestes townsendi*) in the picnic area of Thompson Park, Dakota County. The park is located 0.25 miles west of U. S. Highway 52 on the south side of Butler Avenue. The bird was almost as large as a robin but thinner, with a small, round head. Its thin bill was reminiscent of an Eastern Bluebird's bill and it had a long, thin tail with white outer tail feathers.

It was uniform gray in color, with a white eye ring. The lower center part of its wings had a small amount of buffy feather edging. This individual was quite tame, allowing me to get within 25 feet on several occasions. It spent a lot of time perched quietly 10–20 feet up in deciduous trees. It also spent time feeding on the mowed lawn beneath the trees. As sunset approached, the bird flew about 40–50 feet up into a 70–80 feet spruce tree, possibly to roost for the night since it did not reappear.

Several of the large spruce and pine trees in the park are similar in structure to the types of trees that solitaires inhabit during the breeding season in the mountain meadows of Colorado and California, where I have seen this species many times. Excluding a summer (22 June 1994) record from Cook County (*The Loon* 67:62) makes this the latest date for a spring migrant in the state. There are two previous records of Townsend's Solitaire from Dakota County: 31 March 1987 (*The Loon* 59:201) and 19 November 1990 (*The Loon* 62:227). **Dave Zumeta, 4720 E. 34th St., Minneapolis, MN 55406–2921.**

A SUMMER RECORD OF THE SCISSOR-TAILED FLYCATCHER IN DULUTH — On 10 June 2000, Judd Brink reported a Scissor-tailed Flycatcher (*Tyrannus forficatus*) near the airport on Park Point in Duluth. The weather had been foggy and cold (highs in the low to mid-40s) with gusty northeast winds, so the chance of finding it there the next morning seemed favorable. It was relatively easy to relocate on the 11th as it was flycatching from low perches on weedy stalks that were sheltered from the wind (by that time gusting to 25 mph) by the sand dunes. On a few occasions, it perched on rocks and once landed on the shoulder of the road before it was flushed by a passing vehicle.

No vocalizations were heard. Its black bill was straight and irides were dark. Leg color was not noted. Its plumage was gray on the head, nape and face, with an indistinct black line through its lores. All of the wing coverts and remiges were black with pale (whitish) edges. The bird's rump was not seen. Its long and deeply forked tail was black with a white outer edge. The length of its tail was about the same as the distance from the base of its tail to the tip of its bill, indicating that perhaps this bird was a female. Its underparts were pale gray, almost whitish on the foreneck and throat, except for a faint pink wash on its flanks. Its salmon pink wing linings flashed brilliantly in flight. Some additional pink was just visible at rest near the alula. Photographs were taken on Provia ASA 100 slide film. **Peder Svingen, 2602 E. 4th Street, Duluth, MN 55812-1533.**



HAPLESS BIRDER HONORED BY SAGE THRASHER — When I spotted this bird in my Edina, Hennepin County yard on the afternoon of 7 February 2000, it was perched in full sun on a butterfly house. It then went to the bittersweet vines on a neighbors chain-link fence. I called Don Bolduc with a description that he felt must be a Swainson's Thrush — partially based on my mis-naming the pale yellow eye as an eye-ring. It was only there for a few minutes, so I wrote it off as another of those big question marks in the sky.



A similar bird appeared on Sunday, 20 February at about 12:45 P.M. as I was starting my Backyard Bird Count for that day. Again I called Don Bolduc and he came to my aid. Though the bird was partially hidden in the bittersweet vines, he finally said, "Wait a minute! I think that's a Sage Thrasher." With a scope set up through an upstairs window, we could finally see the markings. Gray with heavily streaked breast. There was a break in the streaking at the collar line. It was ever so slightly buffy around the throat and chest. The tail flicked constantly when feeding and was white underneath and there was a little white on the corners when it flared out. The thrush-like bill curved just a bit downward. It was there on and off Sunday afternoon the 20th and was observed by two other reliable birders. Since the Chinese Bittersweet berries were in scant supply or for whatever reason, the Sage Thrasher has not returned as of this writing. **Dorothy C. Brindle, 5405 Abbott Place, Edina, MN 55410.**

UNUSUAL BALD EAGLE AND WILD TURKEY INTERACTION — During late December 1999, while I was bow hunting for deer about two miles west of Lynd, Lyon County, I witnessed a rather unusual attack. It was dusk and I was sitting in my stand at about 5:00 P.M. when I got a glimpse of a large tom Wild Turkey. It was flying down the valley and landed in a tree roughly seventy yards across the narrow ravine from me. After several minutes, he had managed to work his way up to the smallest and most flimsy branch he could find in order to roost for the night. Just then I saw movement out of the corner of my left eye.

I turned to see a mature Bald Eagle coasting effortlessly down the valley towards the turkey. I watched in wonder as the tom, seemingly unaware of the impending threat, stood in the tree. Not a moment later the eagle slammed, full force, into the turkey sending him reeling into the branches where he fell to the ground and ceased to move.

After the attack, the eagle immediately flew to my side of the ravine where he landed in a tree some fifty yards to my right and stayed for the evening. **Ryan Snodgrass, Marshall, Lac Qui Parle County.**

ALBINO/LEUCISTIC HOUSE FINCH IN HENNEPIN COUNTY — On 29 February 2000 at 11:00 A.M. in full sunlight I observed what appeared to be an albino House Finch. I observed the bird very closely as the bird sat at a feeder 15 feet from me and I examined it for ten minutes using a 45x Nikon scope.



The bird was white to slightly pinkish-tan. The tinge of color could have come from the sunlight reflecting off the tan feeder. The bird's size was identical to two male House Finches who fed with it. The bird had no distinguishable markings on any feathered portion of its body. The bill was short, thick, triangular and was a much lighter brown than the accompanying non-albino males. The bird's legs and feet were also much paler than the males' and exhibited almost a pinkish hue with tan overtones. The bill did not

have visible scaling along its connection to the bird's head as was visible on the accompanying males. This bird's eyes were also paler brown. The pupil was a darker brown with the remainder of the eyeball a light brown to almost a tan. The feathers along the face were similar to the facial feathers on the accompanying males, but appeared to be less full and more delicate at the ends. The breast feathers showed no indication of mottles or spots and displayed no indication of variation of texture or color. The wings were entirely white without any observed variation of texture or color. The tail feathers were narrow and stiff and observed to be of similar width from the body to their ends.

As the males flew away and returned in response to my hand movements on the scope, the behavior of the bird appeared to be more brazen than the two accompanying males. The albino bird looked in my direction but did not take action other than to continue feeding. The feeding habits at the sunflower feeder seemed identical to the accompanying males except for the lack of visible response to my movements. **Tom Maiello, 2725 Garfield Ave. S., Minneapolis, MN 55408.**

PARTIAL ALBINO AND LEUCISTIC COMMON REDPOLLS IN ANOKA, KANBEC, AND BELTRAMI COUNTIES

— On Tuesday, 14 March 2000 at about 7:30 A.M. my six-year-old son Danny called my attention to an unusual bird at our hanging feeder. I called my wife, Mary Anne, and our eight-year-old daughter to see the bird, but unfortunately it had spooked by the time they could get a good look at it.

What I remember seeing without the aid of any binoculars was a Common Redpoll whose head was all or nearly all white. The white extended only down past the neck. The bird had black eyes and black under the bill where he usually has the darker coloration. I think the bird was also slightly paler all over, but not much.

We are located in a rural area on ten acres of mostly wooded land. Our neighbors likewise have large lots of open and wooded property. As a general observation, we had numerous redpolls over the preceding weeks, but the majority of them were gone by the time this one appeared. This leads me to assume he was moving through. I would estimate that we had in the range of 100–150 redpolls this year at the feeder. I counted over 60 at one time. This was also by far the best year we have had for some time. About nine years ago, we had several hundred redpolls at our feeder — they consumed over 25 pounds of shelled sunflower nuts in one week! **David L. Mathews, 3650 131st Avenue N., Blaine Minnesota 55449.**

— On 30 January 2000 I had first noticed what appeared to be a very white redpoll at my feeder in Mora, Kanabec County. Unfortunately, it took a few days before I was able to get a picture and a good look at it. The best way to describe what it looked like is that it had been dumped in a bucket of bleach. The wings and tail were all white. It did have streaks on its back and down the flanks as well, but they were washed out, so to speak, as was the little red cap on top of the head and the chin or beard that's below the mandible. Overall, the bird was fairly uniform white.

Then on 22 February 2000 I had another redpoll show up at the feeders. This one only had white on its face. The top of the head had the red cap and it also had the black chin, but the rest of the face was a bright white, giving it a clown-faced appearance. **Craig Menze, 2294 – 240th Ave., Mora, MN 55051.**

— On 31 January 2000, I took a group of birders for whom I was leading a tour, to Mora, Minnesota, to look for a Hoary Redpoll reported there. Upon arrival at about 11:30 A.M. we could see several feeding stations scattered throughout the yard, all of



Two leucistic Common Redpolls, winter 2000, Mora, Kanabec County. Photos by Craig Menze.

which had attendant Common Redpolls. Within a few minutes of our arrival I spotted a very pale redpoll perched approximately sixty feet away inside the edge of a woodlot in the backyard. Although I could see few details from that distance it appeared ghostly pale compared to the Common Redpolls nearby, with little or no streaking visible on the face and sides of the upper breast. I noted that although superficially similar to Hoary Redpoll in the overall paleness of the plumage (lacking any of the brown or even dark streaking of the Common Redpolls nearby), the bird differed in several important aspects.

The bird was the same size and had the same body structure as the Commons perched immediately adjacent to it. The bill was dull yellow and was of the same size and shape as the Commons perched just inches away; the bill of Hoary Redpoll is typically smaller and more conical. Overall the contour feathers were essentially white. The head was white with no noticeable streaking on the sides of the face. Three things stood out about the face: the black eye against the white face gave the bird a very "beady eyed" look; the bird possessed a "normal" bright red cap on the forecrown/crown; and the area directly below the bill (the chin) was dark gray, not black. The bird had light grayish streaking running from the top of the crown (rear of the cap) down onto the hindcrown. The belly was white and the bird possessed relatively broad and diffuse light grayish streaking on the flanks. The back was whitish, again with light grayish streaking. In all cases the streaks were grayish, not brownish. The streaking on this bird was also not very obvious unless looked for and unless one was relatively close to it. I did not make specific note of the wing or tail patterns, nor do I recall noting the pattern of the rump or vent. Although we observed the bird from as close as eight or ten feet (as it perched in the barren drooping branches of a nearby willow tree) most of our observations were from approximately 30 feet away through a Leica telescope with a 32x eyepiece.

The field marks I saw coupled with my knowledge of redpoll identification (very familiar with Common Redpoll, with some experience over years of living in Minnesota with Hoary Redpoll) led me to the conclusion that the bird we saw was a leucistic (but not albino) Common Redpoll, not a Hoary Redpoll. **Parker Backstrom, 1310 N. Jones Blvd., Tucson, AZ 85716.**

— On 5 March 2000, Carolyn Hegland and Noel Benson reported a partial albino Common Redpoll in a flock of 200–300 redpolls at a feeding station on the southeast

corner of Grace Lake near Bemidji, Beltrami County. The bird's feathers were completely white except for a red crown patch. It stayed in the area for about four hours. — AXH.

ROSS'S GOOSE OVERWINTERS IN ROCHESTER —



On an overcast 29 December 1999, I stopped at Silver Lake in Rochester, Olmsted County, for a quick scan of the birds before heading home. In just a few minutes I found a white, duck-like bird swimming about 40 yards off shore. The size and attitude of the bird closely matched that of the dozen or so Mallards swimming nearby. Its black primary feathers helped me realize that I was not seeing a domestic duck. But the other end of the bird was less cooperative — most of the time it swam with its head nestled in its wing feathers. I began thinking that this was at

least a Snow Goose or possibly even a Ross's Goose. On the few occasions when the bird briefly lifted its head and presented a profile, I could see that its forehead plunged in a downward curve towards the bill, its bill seemed rather triangular and stout, and its neck looked short. Because these views of its head and neck were extremely short-lived and never satisfying, I dared make no firm conclusions. I had only seen one Ross's Goose and that was more than a year previous to this sighting.

When I first saw this goose, I had four field guides with me and used my 10 x 50 binoculars. But before I could feel comfortable with the identification, I needed better looks. The following days brought frustration with the bird coming in distant and late, often not appearing on the lake at all before dark. Then, early in January on another cloudy afternoon, I was driving along the northeast corner of the lake when I saw the lake's resident Greylag Goose and "my" goose swimming together among the many Canada Geese. They were fairly close to shore and this time, I had my Celestron five-inch diameter spotting scope. I got very satisfying looks at its bill — pinkish, triangular, and short — which had no dark "smile" along the gape. It was definitely a Ross's Goose!

Many other birders observed this goose on Silver Lake. It never appeared tame or lethargic — once it hit the water, it continuously swam back and forth, around and around, twisting and turning. Following it through a scope or trying to photograph it was certainly a challenge! I am aware of only one day when it spent the entire day on the lake. Occasionally, it left Silver Lake as late as 10:00 A.M., and two or three times I saw it fly in between 3:00 and 6:15 P.M. The timing for its departures and arrivals seemed totally random, with no apparent relationship to the weather or times of sunrise and sunset. Up until the fourth week in February, when it was reported on the reservoirs just outside of the city, there was never a confirmed sighting away from Silver Lake. The last time I saw it on Silver Lake was the evening of the 21st but David Neitzel reported it there on 27 February 2000. **Chuck Juhnke, 120 E. First St., #11, Stewartville, MN 55976.**

LONG-BILLED CURLEW IN WILKIN COUNTY —



On the morning of 18 April 2000 I received a call from Brett Tully, a U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service biologist in the Fergus Falls office. He told me he had just seen what he believed was a Long-billed Curlew. He found the bird quite by accident while surveying for Greater Prairie-Chickens in a wildlife area about twelve miles west of Rothsay in Wilkin County. Within an hour I was at the site and quickly located the bird. Although there was a light rain falling and the bird was 250–300 yards away, identification was easy. At that distance, the most prominent features were

the extremely long, decurved bill, tawny buff underparts, long blue-gray legs, and a "scaled" look to the brown back. I also noted a dark line through the lores, a light



Long-billed Curlew, 22 April 2000, Mitchell Township, Wilkin County. Photo by Paul Konrad.

area above the eye, and the breast appeared darker than the belly. It appeared to be approximately the size of an ibis. The bird was actively probing for food in a large stubble field.

Later in the afternoon the curlew had moved west to a smaller field adjacent to the one in which it was first sighted. Several birders were there when my wife Diane and I arrived. The weather had cleared and the bird was much closer now, only 60 to 80 yards away. At this distance with a scope, fine features could be easily seen. The throat was white, the base of the lower mandible orange. A distinct, almond-shaped light eye ring and heavily streaked dark brown crown were noted. The fine streaking on the neck and breast filtered onto the upper belly. Thin, dark vertical bars marked the flanks. The wing tips fell just short of the heavily barred tail. This bird had warm, buffy tones and striking orange-russet wing linings.

Twice I observed the Long-billed Curlew in flight. The first time it was flying with a Marbled Godwit and the curlew's larger size was obvious. Upon landing, the wings were held in a vertical position for a second or so, showing off the colorful linings. The second flight covered a few hundred feet over the feeding area, and the bird gave several loud, clear calls, giving its name "cur-leww, cur-leww" etc. Much of its time was spent feeding, and a major portion of its diet was earthworms. It probed deeply and sometimes contorted its head to a near upside-down position while trying to extricate prey.

I last saw the Long-billed Curlew in the early morning of 23 April 2000. It was a "lifer" for several people and ended a twenty-seven year personal quest for me in Minnesota. **Steve Millard, 630 W. Laurel, Fergus Falls, MN 56537.**

BALD EAGLES NESTING IN RICE COUNTY — Every year about April 1st I begin to look for the Great Blue Herons to return to the island in General Shield's Lake, Rice County. In the spring of 2000 I looked for them the last part of March, and it was on the 28th that I saw the first Great Blue Herons in Rice County, but not at the island. The Great Blue Herons began to take over the island in Wells Lake this year instead of at General Shield's Lake.



After checking the island in General Shield's Lake several times, I began to wonder why the Great Blue Herons were not returning there even though they were beginning to colonize the island in Wells Lake.

I talked with Dianna James on 27 April, and she suggested I get in touch with Dick Misgen who lives on the northwest side of General Shield's Lake. I drove out there and talked with Dick who suggested we drive over to Gene Jacinsky's place to look for a nest. We did and were able to find a Bald Eagle nest in the top of the highest tree on the island. At Jacinsky's place we saw an adult Bald Eagle fly to the nest and apparently leave some food for the female. The mate was seen to fly around above the trees several times. Once the eagle on the nest, apparently the female, raised her body and spread her wings so we were sure it was a Bald Eagle on the nest. This is the first time I have seen a Bald Eagle nesting in Rice County. **Rev. Forest V. Strnad, 1400 Autumn Drive, #212, Faribault, MN 55021.**

TUFTED DUCK AT BLUE LAKE SEWAGE LAGOONS, SCOTT COUNTY — On 1 January 2000 I located an unusual duck while observing the hundreds of waterfowl on the Blue Lake Sewage Treatment Lagoon in Scott County. I had arrived at approximately 8:30 A.M. Skies were overcast with an occasional break in the clouds which offered better viewing conditions. There was a brisk east-southeast breeze. I parked at the southeast corner of the pond and began looking over the birds present on the water.



After a few minutes, I noticed a small duck which at first glance I thought to be a female Ring-necked Duck. However, when I got a better look at the bird I noticed a definite tuft on the back of the head which extended about a third of the way down the nape. I watched the bird for the next three hours from different angles and on different areas of the pond. After the first ten minutes of intense observation I tentatively felt I was looking at a female Tufted Duck. I did not have any field guides with me; however, about an hour into the observation Bob Williams parked beside me and showed me a picture of the Tufted Duck in the National Geographic *Field Guide to the Birds of North America*.

As I was watching the bird I dictated random notes into my tape recorder. I called a number of other observers and left the area to look for any birders who might be at Black Dog Lake. At 11:00 A.M. I returned to the Blue Lake Sewage Lagoons, refound the bird and dictated the following while the bird was in view. Bill tip black with a small sub-terminal band of lighter color, bill is grayish-brown. The head, back and tail are a deep brownish black — appears more black than brown — there is some brown in the plumage but it is very dark. The eye is yellow. The crest (tuft) on the bird extends one-third to one-half the way down the nape of the neck. (On second look a third is much closer to reality.) The crest is visible most of the time; sometimes on returning from a dive only a few feathers of the crest would be noticeable but then the whole crest would be extended.

Once when the wind blew at her back the tuft flared up like the plume on an egret. The chest and sides were well delineated (from the back and head) like someone took a pencil and sharply defined the areas. The sides were a dirty grayish



Tufted Duck, 5 January 2000, Blue Lake, Scott County. Photo by Dale Bohlke.

white and extended from the chest area to the tail. The chest was a brownish color, brownish black — several shades lighter than the head and back, but darker than the sides with very little whitish in it. It was kind of a grayish, brownish black on the chest. The under-tail was white (although I did not see this area very well, it was more of a dirty white than white.) The underbelly when the bird would preen was white. I did not see the color of the feet, the legs appeared to be gray or black. Saw the bird fly once (from one end of the pond to the other), could see a white wing stripe similar to a Greater Scaup (extended from the body to the tip of the wing) but much narrower. The only other thing I can think of is that the bill appeared large, semi-spatulate. The size of the bird was judged while it was in close proximity to Green-winged Teal, Common Goldeneye, Gadwall and a male Ring-necked Duck. The bird was approximately the size of the male Ring-necked Duck, a trace smaller; it was larger than the female Green-winged Teal, but smaller than the goldeneye. There were no scaup there for direct comparison. My guess is that from experience with the scaup this bird appeared less robust. The above are from the 11:30 A.M. observation. One very important piece that I forgot in this segment and which I mentioned earlier in the tape was the small amount of mottled white at the base of and over the bill. The European guides (which I looked at when I got home) call this feature in some female Tufted Ducks as Scaup-face. This was quite evident when viewing the bird head on which I did on several occasions. My conclusion is that this individual is an adult female Tufted Duck. **Robert Janssen, 162 Lakeview Road, Chanhassen MN 55317.**

Editor's Note: After calling several waterfowl collectors located in central Minnesota, I was able to make contact with one from the town of Lakeville, Dakota County, who acknowledged that he had lost several of his birds a few weeks earlier in a wind storm. He added that he had recently seen the Blue Lake bird and satisfactorily concluded it to be one of two Tufted Ducks that had escaped from his pens. With this information, the Minnesota Ornithological Records Committee chose not to accept this record. See *The Loon* 72:166. —AXH.

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The Minnesota Ornithologists' Union is an organization of both professionals and amateurs interested in birds. We foster the study of birds. We aim to create and increase public interest in birds, and to promote the preservation of birdlife and its natural habitat.

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The editors of *The Loon* welcome submissions of articles, "Notes of Interest"; color slides, and color or black & white photographs. Submissions should be typed, double-spaced and single-sided. Notes of Interest should be less than two pages. Photographs should be 5"x7". Whenever possible, please include a copy of your submission in any standard format on any 3 1/2 inch computer disk.

Club information and other announcements of general interest should be sent to the Newsletter editors. See inside front cover. Bird sighting reports for "The Season" should be sent promptly at the end of February, May, July and November to Peder Svingen. See key to the "The Season".

The **Loon**

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First Record of the White-throated Swift In Minnesota

Anthony X. Hertzell

On 10 May 2000, an injured White-throated Swift (*Aeronautes saxatalis*) was brought in to the Wildlife Rehabilitation Center on the St. Paul campus of the University of Minnesota. It had been picked up earlier that day near the Norwest building in downtown Minneapolis, Hennepin County, by someone who signed the Rehabilitation Center's admissions form only as "Pepper." The swift was given case number 00-1369 by clinic workers, who assessed its condition and began treatment.

The swift's admission weight was 29 grams. Injuries suffered included minor head trauma with some closure of the right eye and spinal trauma. It showed evidence of hemorrhage on the left wing consistent with impact injury and, though it was not broken, had difficulty elevating it. It was also very weak.

When a bird is in such a critical state, Center personnel simply allow it to rest in a quiet place. It was housed in a plastic basket with thin, tightly woven fabric hung from the side for it to cling to (a resting posture preferred by swifts). Because the swift was hypothermic, the basket was kept on a heating pad. Eventually, the entire basket was placed in an incubator. Initial treatment included a dose of the steroid dexamethasone. This is a steroidal anti-inflammatory that prevents swelling and pressure from accumulating in the head, and can help prevent shock. Each hour, it was given small bits of insects, grubs, meal worms, and a little water by syringe.

Throughout its stay at the center, the swift remained in what workers described as a depressed state. Notes taken at the time indicate it was never "bright

and alert" but always remained very quiet. Its health declined gradually while there, and after five days, the swift died on 15 May.

When the specimen was prepared at the J. F. Bell Museum of Natural History at the University, it was determined that the swift was an adult male (AHY — After Hatching Year). It weighed 25.3 grams, carried no body fat, and was emaciated. Its wing chord was 141 mm. The swift is now in the Museum's collection as specimen number 42739.

It is difficult to speculate as to the cause of death. The injuries were certainly consistent with some kind of impact or collision. It is possible that the swift had flown into the Norwest building either because it became confused by the reflections in the glass or perhaps to escape pursuit of a predator. A collision with a vehicle is also a reasonable possibility. The bird's internal organs showed no indications of disease. Difficulties in eating, or a refusal to eat, would explain its loss of weight and emaciated condition at the time of death.

The White-throated Swift is a gregarious bird of arid canyons and rocky cliffs in the western United States, Mexico, and Central America. In the U.S., it is found from New Mexico west to California and north to Montana, Idaho, Washington and extreme southern British Columbia. A sizable population breeds in the Black Hills and Badlands of western South Dakota (SDOU 1991).

Formerly, the American Ornithologists' Union (1957) recognized two subspecies of the White-throated Swift, *A. s. saxatalis* and *A. s. sclateri*. Oberholser (1974) gives their common names as the "Common



White-throated Swift, 11 May 2000, at the Wildlife Rehabilitation Center, University of Minnesota, St. Paul, Ramsey County. Photo by Sheila Sewell.

White-throated Swift" (*saxatalis*) and the "Idaho White-throated Swift" (*sclateri*), the latter breeding as far east as western Nebraska and the Black Hills of South Dakota, and differing from *saxatalis* primarily in slightly longer wing and tail measurements (Pyle 1997).

Finding only clinal variations, Behle (1973) synonymized these two subspecies, lumping *sclateri* with *saxatalis*. Behle presented evidence that there is only a single subspecies in the U.S., that being the nominate race, *saxatalis*. Pyle (1997) followed Behle's lead and, citing additional sources, Chantler and Driessens (1995) also follow this treatment. Another subspecies (*nigrrior*) occurs in Mexico and Central America (Chantler and Driessens 1995).

Spring migration in South Dakota peaks about the first of May (SDOU 1991) and a bird arriving in Minnesota in early May fits well into this migration pattern. The species is considered Casual in Kansas and Texas, and there are extralimital records from Missouri, Arkansas,

North Dakota, and Michigan (AOU 1998). Recently, Alberta recorded its first record in June 1999 (Koes and Taylor 1999), and what was presumed to be the same bird was refound in September 1999 (Koes and Taylor 2000). Arkansas recorded its third White-throated Swift in December 1999 (Stedman 2000).

Acknowledgments

I'd like to thank Val Cunningham and Keri Poepe of the Wildlife Rehabilitation Center for their cooperation and for providing several photographs. Karen King, Avian Nursery Coordinator, was especially helpful in gathering information from the Center as was Mark Zens, the Center's medical director. Bob Zink of at the Bell Museum of Natural History sent me the first photograph of the specimen, and Ann Kessen provided additional details. I also thank Bud Tordoff, who gave me access to the specimen. I especially acknowledge Bruce Fall, who made many useful comments and insightful suggestions to earlier drafts of this paper.

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8461 Pleasant View Drive, Mounds View, MN 55112.

Minnesota's First White-tailed Kite

Robert B. Janssen

On Wednesday, 10 May 2000, I was conducting a bird survey at Afton State Park in Washington County. Accompanying me were two Minnesota Department of Natural Resources employees, Thomas J. Polasik, Resource Management Specialist, and Ed Quinn, Resource Management Coordinator. Both are with the Division of Parks and Recreation.

During our survey, we decided to examine a remote area of the park in the Trout Brook ravine. After covering this area we returned up the trail to the upland prairie area, an area that contains a number of large deciduous trees with dead branches. It was here that Tom noticed a large bird perched on one of the dead branches. The bird was approximately 250-300 yards away. Tom asked me what it was. I looked at the bird with

my 10x42 Elite binoculars and saw a medium-sized raptor with an all white head. I said to Tom and Ed "that sure is a strange looking Red-tailed Hawk". At that time, I suggested we get closer to the bird for a more positive identification. We walked toward the bird and it didn't take long for me to recognize it as a White-tailed Kite (*Elanus leucurus*). I remembered that this species had never been officially recorded in Minnesota. I informed Tom and Ed of this fact and immediately the excitement grew among us. We approached the bird cautiously, concealing ourselves behind several large trees. When we got within 60-70 yards of the bird, Ed took out a pencil and notebook and at my recommendation, Ed recorded the following details: a medium-sized raptor, approximately the size of a

Broad-winged or Red-shouldered Hawk, but smaller than a Red-tailed Hawk, brilliant white head with a patch of irregular black around the eye and lores; hooked bill; brilliant white breast, belly and tail; a long tail extending beyond the folded primaries with white above and below; back and wings were a soft gray color with a large black patch at the shoulder of each wing.

We observed the bird in the perched position for roughly five minutes. It then appeared to become agitated and flew, giving us a great view of the black shoulder patches on the gray wings, and the gray back. From this perspective, the tail appeared all white. Some field guides show a gray center to the tail but this was not seen by us. In flight, we also saw yellow legs and the brilliant white under-parts. We did not see the underwing of the bird, so the dark wrist spots were not noted.

The kite disappeared to the east, but we relocated it at the north end of the park. We could see it perched in another tree at a distance of approximately one-half mile. We proceeded to this area but were unsuccessful in relocating it. At this point, we returned to the park headquarters and notified the Minnesota and Duluth hotlines.

The bird remained in the northern prairie area of the park for several more days and was observed by many as it hunted over the grasslands of Afton Park. To the best of my knowledge, it was not seen after 19 May 2000.

162 Lakeview Road, Chanhassen, MN 55317.

Editor's Note: There are several unaccepted reports of this species in Minnesota, including a previously published record from Wilkin County (see *The Loon* 48:180-182 and 57:119-120). — AXH

Nest Depredation at Itasca State Park

Eli S. Bridge

and

Matthew Berg, Anders L. Carlson, Melissa A. Driscoll, Bryce A. Erickson, Kevin J. Haley, Paul D. Hartzell, Lisa Haselhorst, Randy S. Hedlund, Stephanie M. Helfman, Ann E. Kessen¹, Amy L. Mertl, Sonja R. Rollag, Lydia D. Thompson, Kent C. Willette, Jessica J. Wormley, Heather A. York, and Robert M. Zink^{1,2}

Nest depredation is the primary cause of nest mortality in many bird species (Gates and Gysel 1978, Martin 1995, Hanski *et al.* 1996). Experiments to determine rates of nest depredation often employ artificial nests, usually baited with quail or chicken eggs

(Major and Kendall 1996). Artificial nests are easily manipulated and can provide large sample sizes, but some researchers have questioned their accuracy in reflecting natural depredation rates (Roper 1992, Haskell 1995). Despite such shortcomings, artificial nest experiments can

Table 1. Results for and variations among the six experiments performed at the primary study sites.

Year	Experiment	Number of nests		Covered nests		Percentage of nests depredated		
		Hard edge	Soft edge	Hard edge	Soft edge	Hard edge	Soft edge	Both sites
1997	1	32	26	none	none	72%	15%	47%
	2	33	30	none	none	94%	47%	71%
1998	1	33	30	half	none	91%	100%	95%
	2	33	30	half	all	91%	40%	67%
1999	1	33	33	half	half	97%	33%	65%
	2	33	33	all	all	100%	52%	61%

provide valuable information about how depredation rates relate to factors such as nest visibility, nest density, and habitat fragmentation.

Students and instructors at the University of Minnesota's Lake Itasca Forestry and Biological Station have been conducting artificial nest experiments in Itasca State Park (Clearwater County, Minnesota) since the summer of 1997. By placing artificial nests in different locations and arrangements, we have investigated relationships between depredation rates and forest type, proximity to habitat edges, and nest visibility. These studies were concentrated in an area east of the biological station, along a maintenance road where both forest/grassland and forest/road edges were available. In related projects, we have investigated the nest predator assemblage in the primary study area and examined nest depredation rates at a distant site in the park's Wilderness Sanctuary. The results from the first year's research were presented in Anderson *et al.* (1998). Here we follow up on this initial study, adding the results from two more years of research.

Methods

The bulk of the data presented here is the result of six separate experiments (Table 1), which were modeled after a study by Fenske-Crawford and Niemi (1997). Two experiments were conducted each year, the first in late June and the second in early July. These experiments adhered to the methods described in Anderson *et al.* (1998). Each experiment

involved dividing 63 to 66 artificial nests, each containing two Northern Bobwhite (*Colinus virginianus*) eggs, between two forest-edge habitats. We delineated three transects within both habitats such that equal numbers of nests were placed at distances of 5 m, 50 m, and 100 m from the forest edge. The nests were checked after 7 days and removed after 14 days. We chose a 14 day exposure period to simulate the incubation time of the Ovenbird (*Seiurus auricapillus*), a common ground nesting species in the area. We regarded a nest as depredated if there was any sign of disturbance to the nest (e.g. displaced eggs, overturned nest, etc.). When working in the study sites, we wore rubber boots and gloves, and we avoided creating dead end trails to decrease the effect of human scent on predator behavior. The wicker canary nests were left outside for at least a week prior to each experiment to acclimatize to the environment. The eggs were not acclimatized as the nests were, and we cannot account for how the eggs were handled prior to shipping. We did, however, handle the eggs with rubber gloves after we received them.

The two primary study sites were forest edges that we classified as "hard" and "soft" according to definitions of Fenske-Crawford and Niemi (1997). The hard edge site consisted of a relatively open grassy area that bordered a coniferous forest. The soft edge was made up of a heavy second growth forest bordered by a maintenance road. For more complete descriptions of these study sites, see

Table 2. Results from the Wilderness Sanctuary study site.

Transect	Nests	Depredations	Percent depredated	Average Survival (days \pm standard deviation)
150 m	10	9	90%	5.95 \pm 4.06
200 m	10	10	100%	3.50 \pm 0
250 m	10	8	80%	5.60 \pm 4.43
150-250 m	30	27	90%	5.02 \pm 3.52
300 m	11	9	82%	9.23 \pm 3.92
350 m	11	11	100%	7.32 \pm 3.66
400 m	11	10	91%	9.55 \pm 3.17
300-400 m	33	30	91%	8.70 \pm 3.62
TOTALS	63	57	90%	6.94 \pm 3.74

Anderson *et al.* (1998).

We varied several aspects of nest placement among the six experiments, the most straightforward of which was the visibility of the nests. We investigated the effect of covering nests with grass and leaves from the forest floor to simulate the camouflaging of natural Ovenbird nests. In some experiments no nests were covered. Others entailed covering either half or all of the nests in a study plot (Table 1).

Although we followed the same basic protocol in all six of the experiments at the primary study sites, we must note three discrepancies among experiments conducted in different years. First, it rained a great deal more in 1997 than in subsequent years while the experiments were conducted. Second, there was some degree of between-year variation in the paths taken to access the study site while distributing and checking nests. Third, we altered nest density in the soft edge. In 1997, all nests were placed 10 m apart along the transects. In 1998 and 1999, we placed nests in the soft edge 25 m apart to decrease nest density.

Besides the six experiments at the primary study plot, we conducted two related studies. In the first of these studies, conducted in August of 1998, we investigated the local nest predator assemblage

using 24 artificial nests placed in the hard edge site. We used cameras equipped with infrared sensors and clay eggs to identify predators, and we checked the nests four times daily to determine when our nests were most susceptible to depredation. In June and July of 1999, a separate study was performed in an attempt to determine depredation rates independent of any edge effects. In this study we placed 63 uncovered artificial nests 10 m apart along six transects ranging from 150 to 400 m away from the nearest edge (a road) in the remote, relatively undisturbed Wilderness Sanctuary of Itasca State Park (Table 2). As with the nests in the primary study site, the nests were checked after 7 days and removed after 14 days.

Results

After eliminating lost and flooded nests, we were left with a data set of 377 nests from the two primary study sites. Overall, few of the experimental treatments seemed to affect depredation rates (Table 3). The most important factor seemed to be habitat type: 91% of the nests placed in the hard edge site were depredated, but only 48% of the soft edge nests failed to survive the two-week period.

From our investigation of the local

Table 3. Average nest depredation values as distributed among three sets of treatment groups. The number of nests assigned to each treatment along with the corresponding number of depredations, the percentage of the nests depredated, and the average survival time are presented here. Note that these three sets of treatment groups overlap, such that the "TOTALS" row is not the sum of the columns. Average survival was calculated by averaging the estimated survival time of each nest. Because we only checked the nests after 7 and 14 days, survival time for each nest was estimated by dividing the time at which we had no knowledge of the nest's status by two. Thus, each nest had a survival time of 3.5 days, 10.5 days, or 14 days.

Treatments	Nests	Depredations	Percent Depredated	Average Survival (days \pm standard deviation)
Covered	173	122	71%	8.05 \pm 4.70
Not Covered	204	136	71%	7.34 \pm 4.80
Hard Edge	197	174	91%	5.49 \pm 3.77
Soft Edge	180	87	48%	10.05 \pm 4.69
5m	127	87	69%	7.52 \pm 4.87
50m	124	91	73%	7.14 \pm 4.71
100m	126	88	70%	8.33 \pm 4.66
TOTALS	377	266	71%	7.67 \pm 4.76

predator assemblage, we were able to identify eastern chipmunks (*Tamias striatus*), red squirrels (*Tamiasciurus hudsonicus*) and mice (probably of various species) as important nest predators, accounting for at least 76% of the overall nest depredation. We were unable to identify predators responsible for the remaining 24% of the depredations events (Figure 2). Most of the identifications were made by comparing teeth marks left in clay eggs to skull specimens from the biological station's small mammal collection. We were unable to identify mice to species based on teeth marks alone, and we only obtained one photograph of a mouse at a nest — a meadow jumping mouse (*Zapus hudsonius*). Eastern chipmunks (Figure 1) were responsible for at least 16 (43%) of the 37 depredation events observed.

The experiments conducted in the Wilderness Sanctuary resulted in depredation rates similar to those observed at the primary study sites (Table 2). In two trials involving 30 and 33 nests, 90% of the

nests were depredated after 14 days. The average survival time of these nests was 6.94 \pm 3.73 days (\pm standard deviation). Our intention in conducting this experiment was to generate baseline data on nest depredation rates independent of edge effects and human disturbance; hence, we expected depredation to be distributed evenly among the transects. There was, however, a notable difference between the depredation rates at the outermost and innermost transects. Nests on the 150, 200, and 250 m transects had an average survival time of 5.02 \pm 3.52 days, whereas nests on the 300, 350, and 400 m transects had an average survival time of 8.70 \pm 3.62 days. Interestingly, the percentages of nests depredated in these two groups after 14 days were almost identical (90% and 91%).

Discussion

Overall, the average depredation rate for nests at the primary study sites was high (71% over 14 days), and depredation did not appear to be concentrated



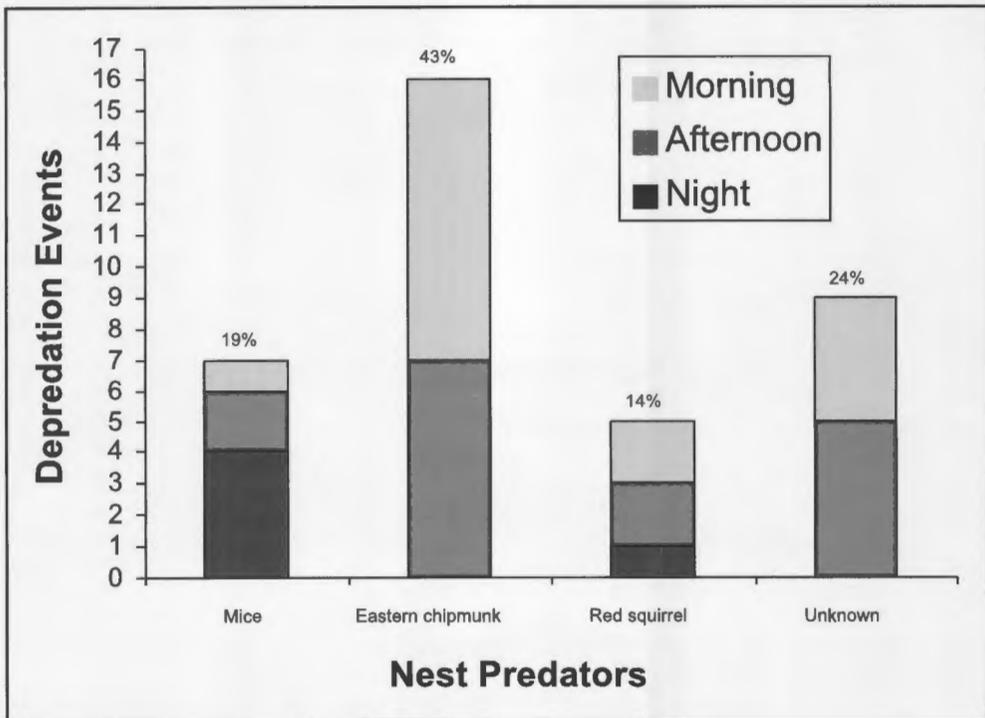
Figure 1. An eastern chipmunk attacking an artificial nest.

near the habitat edge. It is common for nest depredation experiments to lead to the conclusion that an edge effect is absent (see Major and Kendall 1996); however, such conclusions are often due to a lack of statistical power (see Manolis *et al.* in press). Obviously, it is important for us to know whether our results reflect natural nest depredation rates. King *et al.* (1996) measured depredation rates on natural Ovenbird nests in New Hampshire and found that nests located near forest edges experienced depredation rates of 54% and those in the forest interior, 37%. Hence, our estimate of the overall depredation rate probably exceeds the natural depredation rate. However, the average depredation rate of 48% observed in the soft edge is comparable to the observations of King *et al.* (1996). As for the depredation rate at the hard edge, it is possible that the unnaturally high nest density coupled with a rela-

tively open understory attracted more predators and led to higher depredation rates. Such a nest density effect has been observed in a number of studies (Martin 1988, or see Major and Kendall 1996). Furthermore, regularly spaced and highly visible nests do little to mimic the natural nesting conditions of Ovenbirds. That is, the selective placement of nests by ground nesting birds is not replicated in most artificial nest experiments.

The discrepancy between the depredation rate in the soft edge (48%) and that in the hard edge (91%) was probably the most explicit finding in this study. Why were depredation rates lower in the soft edge site? The ground vegetation was considerably thicker at the soft edge, which may limit the foraging abilities of nest predators and help to conceal nests. A number of studies have documented relatively low artificial nest depredation rates in habitats with heavy understory

Figure 2. Percentage of depredation attributed to eastern chipmunks (*Tamias striatus*), red squirrels (*Tamiasciurus hudsonicus*), mice, and unknown predators. The percentages were based on 37 observed depredation events on 24 nests (some nests were attacked by more than one predator). The differently shaded segments of each bar illustrate how depredation events were distributed among different times of day for each species.



growth and where nest visibility was low (Major and Kendall 1996).

In light of these studies, we found it surprising that covering the nests did not appear to significantly improve their survival (Table 3). However, covering nests may improve nest survival if there are uncovered nests in the same site. When covered and uncovered nests were placed in the same site, average survival time of the covered nests was 8.09 ± 4.19 days and that of uncovered nests 5.61 ± 4.88 days. This apparent interaction between covered and uncovered nests can perhaps be explained in terms of predator search images. If a predator finds an uncovered nest it might then search visually for nests, such that the uncovered nests serve to shield the cov-

ered nests from detection. Conversely, if uncovered nests are absent, predators might use non-visual cues to locate nests, negating the effect of covering them.

We plan to continue our investigation into nest depredation at Itasca State Park, refining our experiments to allow us to address the possible causes for the results observed so far. For example, we plan to reduce nest density and perform further experiments in secluded areas. We are also contemplating changing certain aspects of nest placement to create a less artificial situation. Thus far, nests were placed in specific, pre-ordained spots along the transects. One might consider choosing spots with greater potential concealment, simulating the nesting behavior we would expect of an Ovenbird.

The type of egg used as bait is also relevant. Haskell (1995) argued that Northern Bobwhite eggs are too large to be eaten by a number of nest predators including eastern chipmunks. However, many have refuted Haskell's conclusions (Craig 1998), and we collected photographic and video data showing that eastern chipmunks in Northern Minnesota are capable of eating quail eggs. Nonetheless, using canary eggs would be a useful experiment.

Based on the lower depredation rate observed in the soft edge site, our results indicate that the most important factor in minimizing nest depredation is maintaining a high degree of forest cover, especially within the shrub layer. Although some attribute inflated nest depredation rates to human disturbance (Wilcove 1985), we found little difference between depredation rates in disturbed and undisturbed areas, suggesting that the effects of trails and recreational facilities on nest depredation are minimal compared to habitat type. As nest depredation research continues in Itasca State Park, we hope to sharpen the conclusions presented here and perhaps offer new insights into the most effective ways to manage forests for birds and other wildlife.

Acknowledgments

We thank Mary Hammer, Timothy Fenske-Crawford, and Gerald Niemi for advice.

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The Spring Season (1 March to 31 May 2000)

Peder H. Svingen

*A staggering number of Accidental species was recorded in Minnesota this season. Headliners were the **White-tailed Kite** in Washington County and the **White-throated Swift** in Hennepin County. Both these first state records occurred on the same day! A cooperative **Long-billed Curlew** spent six days in Wilkin County and was appreciated by many observers. A much less cooperative **Black-necked Stilt** could not be relocated, while a female **Black-throated Gray Warbler** and a male **McCown's Longspur** made only brief appearances along the North Shore. Only in comparison to these spectacular rarities could a returning male **Painted Bunting** be considered anticlimactic!*

Within one year of an unprecedented 26 on Lake Superior, an amazing flock of **30 Red-throated Loons** was discovered off Park Point in Duluth, St. Louis County. One **Pacific Loon** in alternate plumage spent several days near the mouth of the Lester River in Duluth. There are still less than a handful of spring records in the state.

Concern about the status of **Eared Grebe** in Minnesota recapitulates earlier declines of the **Horned Grebe** as a nesting species (*The Loon* 64:75–78). Current data are needed for comparison with previous surveys (e.g., *The Loon* 59:14–16). Another **Clark's Grebe** was found on Thielke Lake in Big Stone County — in recent years, it has been most remarkable when this species does not occur here!

Unprecedented numbers of **Snowy Egrets** were recorded. This influx may somehow be related to an above-average four **Little Blue Herons** and the state's thirteenth record of **Tricolored Heron**, though the latter was not found until late May. Three reports (one undocumented) of four **Plegadis** ibises were also more than usual, even as the **White-faced Ibis** approaches Regular status. In contrast, the total of only 15 **Cattle Egrets** was very low compared to the 105+ recorded during spring 1993.

Except for geese, waterfowl migration (which was well underway by the end of

February) was relatively unremarkable. Good numbers of **Greater White-fronted Geese** were found in western Minnesota, while the litany of new record high counts for **Ross's Geese** seems never-ending. Phil Chu's report of an apparent **Blue-winged Teal X Cinnamon Teal** in Lac Qui Parle County and Bob O'Connor's discovery of a presumed hybrid of the **Green-winged Teal** in Clay County, remind us to always consider the possibility of hybridization when identifying unusual waterfowl.

Following several unacceptable sight records of the **White-tailed Kite** over the past several decades, one was finally well documented by photographs. It was seen by many observers during its ten day stay at Afton State Park, Washington County. Another feather in Bob Janssen's cap! Less unexpected was a **Mississippi Kite** at the Minnesota Valley NWR. Based on its recent history in Iowa (*Birds in Iowa*, Kent and Dinsmore 1996), this species appears to be a good candidate for future breeding in Minnesota.

Frank Nicoletti's fourth annual spring census of raptor migration over Duluth, formerly called the Enger Tower census, has been renamed. According to Frank, calling it the "West Skyline Hawkwatch" more accurately reflects use of locations along Skyline Parkway in addition to Enger Tower. Among this season's 26,550

raptors were four **Red-shouldered** and two **Swainson's** hawks, species which are rare in Duluth at any season. Table 1 (thanks Frank!) excludes 39 unidentified raptors. A most impressive 454.5 hours of observation over 85 count days resulted in nearly three times as many raptors compared to last spring! Also noteworthy was the total of 63 **Golden Eagles** at this Hawkwatch (40 last spring).

Unlike recent spring migrations in the state, shorebird numbers were fantastic! Dry conditions persisting from last fall, especially in southwestern Minnesota, provided good habitat along the edges of lakes and sloughs. Before they were flooded by very heavy rains in mid-May, 1000–2000 shorebirds could be found on any of several wetlands in the southwest and south-central, including Miedd Lake in Yellow Medicine County, Lone Tree Lake in Lyon County, Pierce Lake in Martin County, and Minnesota Lake in Blue Earth/Faribault counties. In the northwest region, conditions were not as favorable except at Agassiz NWR, Marshall County. Noteworthy high counts of shorebirds are included in the species accounts.

Among many thousands of shorebirds scrutinized by observers at Pierce Lake this spring, only one unusual species stood out — the state's fourth **Black-**

necked Stilt — which should stand out in any flock of waders! Unfortunately, it could not be relocated after its discovery. Although one could be overlooked in a flock of peeps, **Western Sandpiper** was not found in Minnesota — again. Since the late 1980s, when its status (formerly Regular, now Accidental) was reassessed, the Minnesota Ornithological Records Committee has requested documentation for all reports of Westerns. Only two have been found Acceptable! Its true status and our knowledge about its migration in the state remain shrouded in mystery.

Just like last spring, the only **Piping Plovers** were in Duluth. Good numbers of **American Avocets**, **Willetts**, and **Hudsonian Godwits** were noted. Away from the North Shore of Lake Superior, **Whimbrels** were unexpectedly found in three locations. The shorebird highlight for many observers was the cooperative **Long-billed Curlew** that lingered for six days in Wilkin County. Peak counts of **Wilson's Phalaropes** have declined in recent years, but this was the best spring migration in decades for the **Red-necked Phalarope**.

During each of the most recent five spring migrations at least one **jaeger** has been found in Duluth, but none were reported this year. Following a six-year

Table 1. Spring 2000 West Skyline Hawkwatch in Duluth.

Species	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Total	Range	Peak	Peak#
Turkey Vulture	0	13	967	101	1081	3/10–5/22	4/13	323
Osprey	0	0	167	40	207	4/02–5/19	4/23	32
Bald Eagle	113	2206	443	67	2829	2/26–5/28	3/26	554
Northern Harrier	0	11	38	7	56	3/05–5/16	4/22	11
Sharp-shinned Hawk	1	94	1627	1039	2761	2/29–5/22	4/22	250
Cooper's Hawk	0	7	33	7	47	3/05–5/16	4/13	8
Northern Goshawk	0	11	2	0	13	3/02–4/22	3/2,5	2
Red-shouldered Hawk	0	4	0	0	4	3/23–3/26	3/25	2
Broad-winged Hawk	0	0	5649	6922	12571	4/19–5/28	5/02	3472
Swainson's Hawk	0	0	0	2	2	5/02–5/16	n/a	1
Red-tailed Hawk	0	2791	3211	317	6319	3/02–5/28	3/26	1404
Rough-legged Hawk	4	119	239	28	390	2/26–5/20	3/26	35
Golden Eagle	0	52	10	1	63	3/01–5/17	3/04	13
American Kestrel	0	5	99	28	132	3/23–5/20	4/13	25
Merlin	0	3	18	3	24	3/11–5/15	4/22	8
Peregrine Falcon	0	1	3	8	12	3/17–5/15	n/a	1

hiatus when none could be located in Duluth during the spring migration, **Little Gull** was discovered for the second May in a row. The adult **California Gull** in Lyon County was at Sham Lake, where this Casual species has occurred in the past. "White-winged" and "dark-mantled" gulls were conspicuously scarce.

A continuing irruption of **Short-eared Owls** that began last spring and possibly earlier, led to spectacular concentrations of 17–20 owls in each of three counties. The seasonal total of 98 Short-eareds was more than twice that of spring 1999! But Bill Lane's nocturnal surveys for **Boreal Owls** in northeastern Minnesota found only seven singing males (15 last year, 10 in 1998).

Although predicted as a species that would eventually make its way onto the Minnesota list (*The Loon* 59:16–18), no one anticipated that the skyscrapers of downtown Minneapolis would attract the state's first **White-throated Swift**! They nest as close as the Black Hills of South Dakota and previously strayed as far east as south-central Michigan in August 1926.

Loggerhead Shrikes were reported from a total of only 11 counties (14 last spring). The number of individuals found in spring has clearly dwindled since the 1990s peak of 42+ shrikes in 1995. For spring 1996 through 2000 respectively, the totals are 35, 27, 21, 21, and 15.

An interesting trend among passerines during this migration was earlier than usual arrivals, in some cases well before recent medians and for a few species, the earliest ever. Also, a surprising number of passerines arrived almost simultaneously in southern and northern regions. As written by Karl Bardon in the last issue, winter 1999–2000 was so mild that some exceptional dates reported this spring most likely represent overwintering birds rather than early migrants. A few of the most exceptional dates for early migrants were reluctantly excluded due to lack of any documentation.

Reversing the recent trend, **Mountain Bluebird** was unreported in the state this spring. Two **Townsend's Solitaires** and

the **Varied Thrush** found in May were tardy. Fourteen **Northern Mockingbirds** was about double the number seen in recent spring migrations. Two Accidental thrashers never before seen in Minnesota during the winter, **Sage** and **Curve-billed**, both survived into March but their ultimate fates remain unknown.

Among the **warblers**, individual birds arrived earlier than normal but migration as a whole peaked in mid-May. Examples were 20 or more species in Rice County on the 12th and the 16th (TBo), 20 species in Lake County on the 13th (DKi), and 23 species in Hennepin County on the 16th (SC). Three first county occurrences were reported for the **Blue-winged Warbler**, including far out of range locations in Pipestone and Clay.

Most exciting was Minnesota's fifth **Black-throated Gray Warbler**, found by Jim & Sharon Lind near the lighthouse in Two Harbors, Lake County. This species has long been anticipated as a potential autumn vagrant along the North Shore of Lake Superior (there are numerous late fall records from eastern North America, including Newfoundland) but its cameo appearance in late May was startling.

Other highlights among the *Parulidae* included a (returning?) pair of **Yellow-throated Warblers** at Sibley State Park. Except for 1998, this species has occurred here annually since 1993 and probably nested in 1997 (*The Loon* 70:230–232). Although numbers of individuals remained low, the **Cerulean Warbler** was reported from nine counties. The U. S. Fish and Wildlife Service has been petitioned recently by conservation groups to consider listing this species as threatened throughout its range. Only one **Worm-eating Warbler** was reported, a far cry from the five found last spring, but other "southern warblers" including the **Prothonotary**, **Kentucky**, and **Hooded**, were reported in average numbers. Another rare Regular species, the **Yellow-breasted Chat**, was found only in the extreme southeast.

Three **Summer Tanagers** were well-documented and identifiable photographs

were taken of a male **Western Tanager** in Stevens County. A male **Lark Bunting** along the North Shore of Lake Superior would be unexpected there regardless of season or status, but since this species is only Casual in Minnesota and especially because it stayed put for five days, this bird galvanized observers.

Rounding out a long list of exceptional rarities in Minnesota this spring were a male **McCown's Longspur** in Duluth, a female **Black-headed Grosbeak** and a male **Lazuli Bunting** both found in Lyon County, and presumably returning to the same feeder for the second year in a row, a **Painted Bunting** in Hennepin County. **Great-tailed Grackles** were found again in Jackson County while one strayed to Cottonwood County for the first time.

Unconfirmed and/or Undocumented Reports: **White-faced Ibis** 5/11 Olmsted, **Eurasian Collared-Doves** 3/15 Yellow Medicine and (date?) Kandiyohi, **Scissor-tailed Flycatcher** 5/6 Blue Earth. For Unacceptable records, see *Proceedings of the Minnesota Ornithological Records Committee* articles.

Weather Summary: Balmy conditions continued from winter, inducing an early migration among diverse families of birds and contributing to the many earlier than normal arrival dates noted in this report.

Temperatures during March averaged 9.2 degrees above normal statewide, while precipitation was close to average. It was more than startling to see temperatures in Minnesota soaring into the 60s and 70s during March! It was soon back to reality (actually, back to normal) during April. All regions had average or near average temperatures, plus normal precipitation, except for slightly dry conditions in the southeastern quarter of the state. May temperatures were one to three degrees above normal in all nine regions. Rainfall was near average in May except for the three southernmost regions, where it was above normal — especially during the second half of the month in the southwest and south-central.

Acknowledgments: I thank Paul Budde for compiling flycatchers through finches. Additional thanks to Paul and co-editor Karl Bardon for reviewing this report. Betsy Beneke, Kim Eckert, and Anthony Hertzler summarized bird sightings called in to the MOU "hotlines" in Detroit Lakes, Duluth, and the Twin Cities, respectively. Data from the West Skyline Hawkwatch in Duluth are courtesy of Frank Nicoletti. Robert Janssen and Paul Budde compiled the early and late dates that were used to calculate median migration data. **2602 East 4th St., Duluth, MN 55812-1533.**

KEY TO SEASONAL REPORTS

1. Upper case (**LEAST TERN**) indicates a Casual or Accidental species in the state.
2. Dates listed in bold (**10/9**) indicate an occurrence either earlier, later or within the earliest or latest dates on file.
3. Counties listed in bold (**Aitkin**) indicate an unusual occurrence for that county.
4. Counties with an underline (Aitkin) indicate a first county record.
5. Counties listed in italics (*Aitkin*) indicate a first county breeding record.
6. Brackets [] indicate a species for which there is reasonable doubt as to its origin or wildness.
7. Counts listed in bold (**150**) indicate total within or exceeding the top three high counts for that species.
8. Dagger "+" preceding observer's initials denotes documentation was submitted.

The Season publishes reports of bird sightings from throughout Minnesota. We particularly invite reports from parts of the state that have been neglected or covered lightly in past reports. To become a contributor, request a report form from the Editor of *The Season*, Peder Svingen, 2602 E. 4th St., Duluth, MN 55812.

Loons to Vultures

Red-throated Loon — All reports from Park Point in Duluth, St. Louis County. First seen 5/22 (12) SWo. Two were documented 5/28 †TW. Record high count 5/31 (30) SWo.

Pacific Loon — One adult in alternate plumage reported 5/29–6/2 St. Louis (near Brighton Beach) †SL, †SWe, †KE.

Common Loon — Reported from 26 south and 22 north counties. Early south 3/13 Carver RTD, then many reports from east-central region after 3/22 Anoka RH. Numerous late March reports in north; earliest 3/23 Kanabec BA. No significant concentrations. Lingered south of breeding range to 5/28 Steele PS, Houston KE.

Pied-billed Grebe — See winter report for early migrants south. Early north 3/7 Kanabec CM, 3/17 Morrison WB. Peak count 4/9 Hennepin (93) SC. Reported from all nine regions.

Horned Grebe — Observed in 21 south and 11 north counties. Earliest south (only two March reports) 3/11 Winona PJ, DN, 3/29 Rice TBo. Early north 4/1 Traverse CN, 4/7 Lake WM. Peak count 4/15 Carver (105) RJ; very low numbers on Lake Superior. Only two May reports south, where last seen 5/13 Lac Qui Parle WM. Late north 5/13 St. Louis TW, 5/28 Polk ABo.

Red-necked Grebe — Reported from 15 south and 15 north counties but none in the southwest region. Early south 3/25 Hennepin (French L.) SC, 4/1 Swift DN and Hennepin (Bass Ponds) SC. Early north 3/31 Douglas RH and Otter Tail SDM, then no reports until 4/7 Cook WM.

Eared Grebe — Seen in 12 south and 7 north counties in all regions except the northeast. Early south 4/1 Redwood PJ, DN, 4/5 Ramsey DS. Several reports from Winona (Lewiston lagoons) in May. Only April report north: 4/29 Marshall JJ. **Note:**

None of these reports refer to more than 6–8 birds, which may indicate persistent declines in the state as noted in summer 1999 report. Please give numbers of birds for all future observations of this species.

Western Grebe — Earliest date on record 3/30 Big Stone BF, then 4/8 Lac Qui Parle BL, 4/22 in two counties. No reports from southeast or north-central regions. Early north 4/25 Clay CN, 4/28 Todd RH. Unusual location 5/17 St. Louis (Pike L.) KHu.

Clark's Grebe — One found 4/23 Big Stone (Thielke L.) †PS and presumably relocated 5/4 RJ, 5/14 †WM. The second earliest date on record, following one at Lake Traverse on 9 April 1999 (†CMa).

American White Pelican — Early south 3/11 Rice MF, 3/25 Meeker DF. Earliest north 3/29 Becker *fide* BBe, 3/31 St. Louis *fide* KE. Increasing in Duluth, St. Louis County (mob); e.g., total of 194 for the season at West Skyline Hawkwatch including 75 on 4/26 (FN). Peak counts 4/8 Martin (1100 on Pierce L.) RJ, 4/23 Big Stone (2000 at BSNWR) PS.

Double-crested Cormorant — Seen in 36 south and 21 north counties statewide. First seen away from Dakota (where 3 overwintered) 3/6 Blue Earth LF. Early north 4/1 St. Louis FN, 4/2 Traverse DN and Beltrami DJo.

American Bittern — Observed in 10 south and 14 north counties statewide, except none in southwest region. Early south 4/12 Hennepin TT, 4/15 Scott ABo. Early north 3/21 (second earliest date) Becker BBe, 4/19 Morrison WB, 4/21 in Cass, Carlton.

Least Bittern — All reports were in May and none were in the north. Early south 5/9 Hennepin SC, 5/11 Houston AH, PS; also seen in Kandiyohi, Meeker, Dakota.

Great Blue Heron — Seen in 29 south and 22 north counties. See winter report

for early south migrants. Overwintered in Otter Tail; early north migrants 3/18 Cass MRN, 3/20 Aitkin WN.

Great Egret — Reported from 33 south counties; first seen 3/12 Houston FL, 3/15 Murray ND. Early north 3/29 Otter Tail KKW, where peak of 150 occurred 4/22 (SDM). Also reported north in Grant, Douglas, Morrison, Kanabec.

Snowy Egret — Unprecedented influx (12 records) beginning 4/22 Ramsey †TN. Others documented 5/8–20 **St. Louis** (max. 4 at 40th Avenue West in Duluth) KE, †PS, †TW, 5/17+ Otter Tail (max. 4 at L. Alice) †SDM. First county records 5/12 **Stearns** (Roscoe WMA) HD, 5/14 **Scott** (New Market Twp.) CMa *et al.*

Little Blue Heron — All reports: 4/26 Scott *vide* AH, 5/13 Kandiyohi RJF, 5/14 Dakota (Vermillion Twp.) SWe, 5/18–31+ Dakota (Ritter Farm Park) CFX, mob.

TRICOLORED HERON — Adult 5/29+ **Dakota** (near Hastings) †TT *et al.* (*The Loon* 72:242–243). Thirteenth state record.

Cattle Egret — All reports were of one or two birds: 4/23 Ramsey (2) AH, 4/28 Meeker (School House L.) DF, 5/5 Dakota (Hwy 3/275th St.) DBS, TT, 5/6 Dakota (Dresden/315th St.) CGj, 5/6 Lac Qui Parle (Marsh L.) RBr, 5/8 Olmsted (pair near Potsdam) JPe, 5/12 Olmsted (CR 9 marsh) CBe, 5/13 Cottonwood BBo, ED, 5/22 Dakota (Pine Bend) BL, 5/22 Big Stone (2) CMa, and Renville (2) JE, DT. Low numbers for the seventh consecutive spring.

Green Heron — Observed in 27 south and 17 north counties statewide. Arrived near recent medians south (4/19) and north (5/4). Early south 4/23 Hennepin DF, 4/24 Anoka WL. Early north 5/3 Clay RO, 5/5–6 in seven counties.

Black-crowned Night-Heron — Seen in 13 south and 7 north counties, and in all regions except the north-central. Arrived

south near the recent median (3/29) on 4/1 Rock ND. Early north 4/10 Otter Tail DST, then no reports until May.

Yellow-crowned Night-Heron — Only reports: 4/9 Hennepin (near L. Hiawatha) TT, 5/11 Cottonwood (Mountain Lake) ED, 5/28 Houston (La Crescent) KE *et al.*

WHITE-FACED IBIS — Adult in alternate plumage reported 5/3–18 **Le Sueur** (Washington Twp.) WS, †PC, mob. Two unidentified *Plegadis* seen 5/14 Swift (Appleton Twp.) †WM were most likely this species.

Turkey Vulture — Reported from 32 south and 17 north counties. See winter report for early south migrants! Early north 3/4 Otter Tail SDM, 3/5 Kanabec BA, 3/10 St. Louis FN, 3/18 Wadena PBi. These were record early — the previous earliest north date was 3/19!

Waterfowl

Greater White-fronted Goose — Seen in total of 27 south and 7 north counties. Continuing trend noted in winter season, excellent numbers reported throughout southern regions, including 3/4 Lincoln (1500+) PJ, DN, 3/11 Murray (710) RgS, 3/11 Freeborn (1500) PJ, DN, 3/19 Lac Qui Parle (768 in Perry Twp.) PC. First county record 3/3–5 **Dodge** RJ, JSt. Early north (excluding Otter Tail where one overwintered) 4/1 Traverse CN and Clearwater DJo, 4/2 in three counties. Unusual location 4/27 **St. Louis** (Whitewater L. near Hoyt Lakes) AE.

Snow Goose — See winter report for early migrants. Also arrived 3/2 St. Louis *vide* KE. Peaks 3/2 Jackson (11,000) KB, 3/3 Watonwan (2000) ED, 3/4 Lincoln (10,000) PJ, DN, 3/11 Murray (2350) RgS.

Ross's Goose — Approximate statewide total of 575 Ross's reported from 22 south and 2 north counties! See winter report for early south migrants; also arrived 3/1 **Pipestone** (2 at Split Rock Creek S. P.)

RgS, 3/2 Jackson (93 at Round L., plus 5 at Sioux Valley WMA) †KB, 3/3 Steele (2) RJ. Record high counts 3/4 Lincoln (100+ at Shaokatan WMA) †PJ, †DN, and 3/11 Freeborn (198 at Bear L.) †PJ, †DN (see also *The Loon* 72:248–249). Record early north date 3/1 Otter Tail (3 at Neuman WPA) †SDM; only other north report 4/2 Traverse PJ, DN. In addition to Pipestone, first county records 3/11 **Murray** (5 at Current L.) RgS, 3/14 **Blue Earth** (23 at Lieberg L.) RJ, 5/12 **Stearns** (Paynesville) HD. Unlike previous years when a few migrants lingered into late May, the Stearns record was the only report after mid-April.

Canada Goose — Reported statewide.

Mute Swan — Only seen in Rice. One that overwintered with a Trumpeter Swan in the city of Faribault moved to Shields Lake by 3/7 (JL) and remained through at least 5/20 (TBo).

Trumpeter Swan — Reported from 24 south and 14 north counties, mostly in central regions, ranging from Martin and Freeborn in the far south, to Clearwater and Itasca in the north. Also reported throughout east-central region, but only Cottonwood and Jackson in southwest, and St. Louis in northeast. Seen for the first time (since becoming Regular) in at least eight counties.

Tundra Swan — See winter report for early migrants and overwintering south. Early north 3/11 Otter Tail SDM, 3/18 Aitkin WN. Late south 4/8 Isanti DMP, 4/9 Sherburne LC/RN. Late north 5/19 Aitkin CB, 5/29 Marshall JJ. Peak count 4/9 Polk (3169 along CR 2) EF.

Wood Duck — Observed in 24 south and 14 north counties. See winter report for early migrants.

Gadwall — Seen in 39 south and 18 north counties. Early north 3/5 Clay (5, not overwintering?) RO, 3/26 in Douglas, Kanabec. Also see winter report.

American Wigeon — Reported from 38 south and 15 north counties. See winter report for early south migrants. Early north 3/5 Clay (2) RO, 3/6 Otter Tail SDM, 3/7 Kanabec CM.

American Black Duck — Reported from 16 south and 6 north counties, including 5/19 Becker RJ, BK, 5/28 Pennington ABo. None in southwest region and only Grant (3/11 SDM) in west-central. Late south 4/21 Chisago RH, 4/22 Hennepin SC, 5/1 Dakota SL.

Mallard — Seen throughout the state.

Blue-winged Teal — Reported from 42 south and 20 north counties statewide. Arrived before recent median dates south (3/12) and north (3/30). Early south 3/7 Le Sueur NWi, then 3/11, 3/12 in south-east. Early north 3/25 Wadena PBi, 3/26 Aitkin WN, 3/27 Otter Tail KKW.

Cinnamon Teal — First spring report since 1997. A pair seen 4/10 Lac Qui Parle (Louisburg Rd.) LE. The report of a male lingering for several weeks on a pond in Manfred Twp., Lac Qui Parle County, may actually refer to the presumed hybrid Blue-winged Teal X Cinnamon Teal which was carefully identified and documented by Chu on a nearby wetland 5/6.

Northern Shoveler — Seen in 41 south and 22 north counties. See winter report for early south migrants. Not known to overwinter north, where first seen 3/1 Otter Tail SDM, 3/16 Douglas KKW.

Northern Pintail — Reported from 37 south and 13 north counties statewide. See winter report for early migrants. Also reported 3/5 Clay RO, but seen there in February.

Green-winged Teal — Observed in 35 south and 19 north counties statewide. Early north 3/5 Wilkin and Otter Tail SDM, 3/7 Kanabec CM, also see winter report.

Canvasback — Reported from 35 south and 13 north counties throughout state but none in northeast. See winter report for early south migrants. Early north 3/13 Beltrami JJ, 3/26 Douglas SWa, GrK.

Redhead — Seen in 31 south and 14 north counties. Early north 3/3 Otter Tail SDM, 3/5 Clay (same bird as 1/29?) RO, also see winter report.

Ring-necked Duck — Observed in 41 south and 22 north counties. Early north (recent median 3/20) 3/4 Aitkin WN, 3/5 Otter Tail SDM, then daily arrivals 3/6–8 in other locations. Also see winter report.

Greater Scaup — Reported from 20 south and 10 north counties statewide. See winter seasonal report for early south migrants. Early north 4/1 Clearwater DJo, 4/9 Polk (265) EF. Late south 5/2 Dakota SWe, 5/14 Freeborn JSt. Late north 5/25 St. Louis DN, 5/28 Clearwater ABo.

Lesser Scaup — Seen in 38 south and 22 north counties throughout the state. See winter report for early south migrants. Early north 3/3 Grant KKW, 3/5 Otter Tail SDM and Clay RO, 3/7 Kanabec CM.

Harlequin Duck — All reports: 4/8 Cook (pair at Paradise Beach) WM, 4/15 Lake (female in Two Harbors) JLi, 5/7 Cook (female still in Paradise) PS.

Surf Scoter — One report: 4/15 Lake JLi.

White-winged Scoter — One individual seen 4/6–20 Dakota (Lakeville) BSe, mob.

Black Scoter — No reports.

Long-tailed Duck — All reports: 3/1–14 Hennepin (male at Bass Ponds) SC, PJ, mob, 3/14 Big Stone (female in Otrey Twp.) DHe, 3/21 Kandiyohi RJF, 5/20 St. Louis (2) DBe *et al.*, plus several reports from Cook through 5/27 (DN).

Bufflehead — Observed in 40 south and 20 north counties. Early north 3/5 Otter

Tail SDM, 3/15 Cass MRN. Many April reports south, where the latest was 5/14 Hennepin SC.

Common Goldeneye — Reported from 30 south and 18 north counties statewide. Late south 5/3 Hennepin CMA.

Hooded Merganser — Seen in 36 south and 16 north counties. See winter report for migrants and overwintering. Also seen early north 3/4 Aitkin WN and Kanabec CM, 3/6 St. Louis AE, followed by 3/10, 3/11, 3/12, 3/13 in various locales, all earlier than recent median north (3/21).

Common Merganser — Observed in 39 south and 14 north counties, and in all regions, but only Becker in northwest. Unusual high count for southwest region 3/2 Jackson (1105) KB. No south reports during May except in Hennepin, where last seen 5/23 (SC).

Red-breasted Merganser — Reported from 27 south and 12 north counties in all regions, but only Becker in northwest. Early south 3/1 Dakota and Hennepin RH, 3/4 Jackson PJ, DN, but see winter report. Relatively early north arrivals (the recent median is 4/2) on 3/23 Morrison WB, 3/26 Otter Tail SDM. Unusual number of May reports south, where last seen 5/23 Hennepin (male) SC, 5/28 Dakota (female) TT, 5/30 Hennepin (same bird as 5/23?) CMA.

Ruddy Duck — Seen in 32 south and 14 north counties. Early south 3/1 Pipestone RgS, but also see winter report. Early north 4/2 Traverse and Grant DN, 4/18 Kanabec CM. Unusual location 5/20 St. Louis (3 in Biwabik) AE.

Raptors

Osprey — Reported throughout the state from 21 south and 16 north counties. Early south (where recent median arrival 3/29) 3/20 Meeker DF, 3/22 Washington DS. Early north 3/23 Aitkin WN, 3/29 Polk †EF.

WHITE-TAILED KITE — First state record 5/10–19 **Washington** (Afton S. P.) †RJ, TP, EQ, *et al.* (*The Loon* 72:193–194).

MISSISSIPPI KITE — Adult seen 5/14 **Hennepin** (Minnesota Valley NWR) †S, †TT (*The Loon* 72:245–246).

Bald Eagle — Reported from 33 south and 23 north counties in all regions. DF found unusual concentrations in Meeker County during late March, including 146 on 3/21. Most of these were at Pigeon L., Collinwood Twp., and Mud L., Ellsworth Twp. Also note peak count 554 on 3/26 in St. Louis (Table 1).

Northern Harrier — Observed in 32 south and 19 north counties statewide. Several north reports during the first few days of March may represent migrants, but see winter report.

Sharp-shinned Hawk — Seen in 25 south and 18 north counties. Early dates uncertain, many winter reports statewide. Apparent migrants last reported 5/20 Lac Qui Parle DN, 5/21 Houston Mfo.

Cooper's Hawk — Reported from 26 south and 13 north counties. Early north 3/5 (second earliest north) St. Louis FN, 3/18 Wadena PBi.

Northern Goshawk — All north reports: 4/10 Morrison WB, plus Aitkin, St. Louis, Cook. Reported without details from four south counties.

Red-shouldered Hawk — Reported from 17 south and 9 north counties in all regions except southwest and northwest. Early north 3/5 (ties earliest north) Otter Tail SDM, 3/7 Morrison WB, 3/18 Cass MRN. Also reported north in Douglas, Clearwater, Mille Lacs, Aitkin, Itasca, and 3/23–26 St. Louis (total 4 at West Skyline Hawkwatch in Duluth) FN. Unusual location 4/23 Lac Qui Parle PS.

Broad-winged Hawk — Peak migration during late April throughout Minnesota.

Early south 4/18 Rice TBo, 4/21 in three counties, 4/22 in four. Early north 4/13 St. Louis (Hoyt Lakes) AE, 4/19 St. Louis (Duluth) FN, 4/21 Clearwater ABo, 4/22 in four counties. Details needed for 3/24 Meeker, 3/25 Hennepin, since median south arrival two weeks later (4/7).

Swainson's Hawk — Observed in total of 11 south and 4 north counties, mostly in the west. Early south 3/22 Freeborn ABA, 4/8 Lyon RgS and Lac Qui Parle BL. Reported in May from Cottonwood, Rice, Ramsey, Washington, Dakota, Mower. All north reports: 4/22 Traverse RJ and Otter Tail EF, 4/27 Becker BBe, plus unusual location 5/2 (adult dark morph) and 5/16 (immature light morph) St. Louis (West Skyline Hawkwatch in Duluth) FN.

Red-tailed Hawk — Seen throughout the state. Also see Table 1.

Ferruginous Hawk — Only report: 5/18 Wilkin (Manston WMA) †PS.

Rough-legged Hawk — Reported from only 12 south and 14 north counties, but also see winter report. Late south (where median is 5/12) 5/10 Dakota SL, SWE. Late north 5/20 St. Louis (Duluth) mob. Many April reports in north away from Duluth, especially 4/10–21, but the only other May reports were from the West Skyline Hawkwatch in Duluth.

Golden Eagle — More reports than usual, continuing a trend from the winter season. Late south 4/22 Carver (3) †RTD, 5/1 Stevens (adult) RJ; also observed in Dakota, Isanti, and Nobles. Reported north from Carlton, St. Louis, Morrison, Roseau (2), Wilkin (2), and 4/19 Clay (near Downer) RO. The latter was the only April report north away from the West Skyline Hawkwatch in Duluth, St. Louis County where an amazing 63 were counted for the season, including a peak of 13 on 3/4 (FN).

American Kestrel — Observed in 44 south and 26 north counties.

Merlin — Reported from eleven south and six north counties in all nine regions except southeast. One report of *richardsonii* away from its expected occurrence in western regions, on 3/11 Dakota TT. Late south 5/12 Rice TBo, 5/14 Washington JL, 5/16 Kandiyohi RJ, but also see *The Loon* 72:72–75.

Gyr Falcon — No reports.

Peregrine Falcon — Seen in 14 south but only 5 north counties. Early south migrant (away from Twin Cities area) 3/8 Freeborn ABa. Early north (excluding city of Duluth, St. Louis Co.) 4/17 Traverse RJ; also seen in Otter Tail, Becker, Marshall, and St. Louis. At least 10 reports 5/9–17 in southwest and central regions suggest timing for migration in the south.

Prairie Falcon — No reports.

Partridges to Cranes

Gray Partridge — Reported from total of 22 south counties but none in east-central region and only Houston in southeast. Only north reports: Polk, Wilkin.

Ring-necked Pheasant — Observed in 41 south and 10 north counties, as far north as Clay, Wadena, Carlton, plus 4/1 Clearwater (3) DJo.

Ruffed Grouse — Reported from 10 south and 18 north counties within range.

Spruce Grouse — No reports.

Sharp-tailed Grouse — Seen in Roseau, Polk, Aitkin (max. 26, WN), Carlton, and St. Louis (Sax-Zim bog).

Greater Prairie-Chicken — Reported within usual range from Otter Tail, Wilkin (max. 24), Clay, and Polk (Pembina Trail Prairie, EF).

Wild Turkey — Observed in 31 south counties, including largest flock of 17 in Carver RTD. All north reports: Traverse (3

locations, DN), Douglas RH, Otter Tail mob, 3/30 Clay (3) RO. The latter may refer to recently released or escaped birds, though populations are flourishing in nearby Sheyenne National Grasslands of southeastern North Dakota.

Northern Bobwhite — One report: 5/28 Houston (near Bee) PS.

Yellow Rail — All reports: 5/16+ Aitkin (McGregor) WN, 5/20 St. Louis (CR 319 in Sax-Zim bog) PBu *et al.*

Virginia Rail — Reported from 13 south and 6 north counties. First migrants 4/9 McLeod DF, 4/13 Hennepin (location?) TT. No north reports before 5/8 Kanabec CM. Exceptional reports from Hennepin on 3/5 (Bass Ponds) PJ, 3/14 (Old Cedar Ave.) †BBa, 3/15 (Bass Ponds) and 3/21 (2 at Bass Ponds) SC, suggest overwintering although none were reported here during winter season. Compare recent median arrival (4/19) and dates of earliest known migrants: 4/3 (1993, Dakota) and 4/5 (1998, Anoka).

Sora — Observed in 23 south and 17 north counties throughout. Arrived within five days of recent medians. Early south 4/8 Rice JL, 4/18 Hennepin SC. Early north 4/24 Kanabec CM, then 4/25, 4/26.

Common Moorhen — Four reports of single birds: 5/16–22+ Dakota (Vermillion Twp.) KG *et al.*, 5/17 Kandiyohi (Prairie Woods near Willmar, same location as 1999) RE *et al.*, 5/20 Rice (near Circle L.) TBo, 5/29 Wabasha (Whitewater WMA) MBW.

American Coot — Seen throughout the state. Early north 3/1 Otter Tail SDM, but also overwintered. See winter report.

Sandhill Crane — Reported from 19 south and 20 north counties in all regions except the southwest. Early south 3/2 Sherburne LC/RN, 3/3 Rice TBo, but see winter report! Early north 3/13 (earliest ever) Aitkin CB, 3/18 Otter Tail SDM and



Greater Prairie-Chicken, April 2000, Bluestem Prairie, Clay County. Photo by Vija Kelly.

Cass MRN, 3/19 Todd PHe. Lingered south through at least 5/26 in Houston where recently seen during summer, but most unexpected 5/19 Dakota (2) DBS, 5/20 Rice TBo.

Shorebirds

Black-bellied Plover — Observed in seven south counties, first seen 4/26 Waseca JSt, 4/29 Freeborn ABA. Early north 5/7 St. Louis PS. Like last spring, reported from only three north counties, including peak 5/22 St. Louis (18) DZ.

American Golden-Plover — Reported from nine south and three north counties, earliest 4/22 Lac Qui Parle (47) TT, 4/23 Wilkin SDM. Peak flock size smaller than normal: 5/13 Murray (75) ND. Unusual location 5/26 Houston RJ.

Semipalmated Plover — Reported from 18 south and 9 north counties throughout. Early south 4/7 Hennepin OJ, 4/15 Dakota BL. Peak count 5/8 Meeker (75) DF. Only April report north 4/22 Wilkin CM.

Piping Plover — All reports were from Duluth, St. Louis County. One was at Hearing Island 5/7–8 (PS), followed by a different individual at the 40th Ave. West/Erie Pier area 5/9 (†CB *et al.*).

Killdeer — Observed in 48 south and 25 north counties throughout the state. See winter report for early south migrants. Early north 3/4 Otter Tail SDM, 3/7 Wilkin *fide* BBe. No significant counts.

BLACK-NECKED STILT — Fourth state record 5/24 **Martin** (Pierce L.) †MK (*The Loon* 72:240–241).

American Avocet — All south reports: 3/31 (record early date) Lac Qui Parle (2 at Salt L.) BF, 4/15 Steele (2 near Rice Lake S. P.) BrT, 4/23 Dakota (L. Byllesby) JDa, TT, 4/30–5/14+ Lac Qui Parle (pair at Thielke L.) PC, PS, WM, 5/22 Yellow Medicine (Miedd L.) CMA. All reports for the north: 4/21 Clearwater ABo, 4/22

Traverse (14) RJ, late April Becker (4 at HSNWR) *fide* BBe, 5/3 St. Louis (Duluth) *fide* KE, 5/15 Traverse (nesting pair) WM (*The Loon* 72:239–240), 5/28 Polk ABo.

Greater Yellowlegs — Reported from 36 south and 14 north counties statewide. Early south 3/7 (record early date) †CMA, 3/25 in four counties, then 3/26, 3/27. Early north 4/2 Traverse DN, 4/9 Polk EF.

Lesser Yellowlegs — Observed in 39 south and 16 north counties statewide. Early south 3/11 (no details, earliest ever) Rice TBo, 3/19 in three counties, 3/23 Freeborn ABA. Early north 3/26 Kanabec CM, 4/2 Traverse DN. Peak counts 5/6 Lac Qui Parle (75) PC, 5/13 Yellow Medicine (85) Lyon RgS.

Solitary Sandpiper — Seen in 27 south and 15 north counties throughout the state. Early south 4/19 McLeod and Meeker DF, 4/23 Fillmore NO and Scott ABo. Early north 4/29 Kanabec CM, 4/30 Otter Tail SDM and Polk EF.

Willet — Statewide total >120 individuals found in 16 south and 5 north counties. Reported in all regions except the north-central. Early south 4/8 Nobles (L. Bella, through at least 4/23, PS) KE *et al.*, 4/22 Murray (6) ND. Peak count 5/19 Yellow Medicine (31 at Miedd L.) DBM. Total of 35 between 5/2 and 5/15 in Dakota (L. Byllesby) DBS, including 15 on 5/5. Unusual concentration 5/14 Hennepin (13 at L. Calhoun) PBU. Early north 4/30 Otter Tail SDM, 5/7 St. Louis PS.

Spotted Sandpiper — Seen in total of 28 south and 20 north counties. Arrived on time south and north (recent medians 4/20 and 4/29, respectively). Early south 4/22 Renville TT and Hennepin SC. Early north 4/29 Polk DJo and Wadena PBi.

Upland Sandpiper — Observed in 11 south and 8 north counties in all regions except southeast and south-central. Only April report: 4/29 Swift ABo (median south 4/26). Early north 5/1 Clay NWi.

Only two reports from northeast region: 5/8 Lake (1) JLi, 5/20 St. Louis (2) mob.

Whimbrel — Three unusual locations: 5/16 **Dakota** (6 at L. Byllesby) DBS, 5/17 **Big Stone** (1 in Toqua Twp.) †PS, 5/24 **Becker** (single at HSNWR) mob. All other reports were along North Shore of Lake Superior in May as expected, and all were from St. Louis except 5/25 Lake JLi. Peak count 5/20 St. Louis (25) DBe.

LONG-BILLED CURLEW — One found by USFWS employee BTu seen **4/18–23** Wilkin (near Manston WMA) †SDM, †mob (*The Loon* 72:184–185). This was the first occurrence in the state since 1987–1991.

Hudsonian Godwit — Statewide total more than 280 individuals in 18 south and 8 north counties. Reported from all regions but only Goodhue in southeast, Aitkin in north-central, St. Louis in northeast. Early south 4/22 Yellow Medicine (5) TT, near median arrival date (4/21). First county record 5/13 **Waseca** JSt. Only April report north 4/23 Wilkin (1) CM, then 5/9 St. Louis JLi. Concentrations reported during mid-May at Miedd L. in Yellow Medicine (peak 75 on 5/13, RgS), Lone Tree L. in Lyon (peak 43 on 5/17, PS), and Pierce L. in Martin (peak 80+ on 5/18, FL).

Marbled Godwit — Reported from 15 south and 13 north counties, including St. Louis in northeast, but none in southeast region. Arrived exactly on median dates south and north. Early south 4/13 Meeker DF, 4/18 Renville DF and Stearns PC. Early north 4/13 Otter Tail SDM, 4/17 Wilkin RJ. First county record (no date) **Benton** HD. Peak 5/18 Martin (40–50 at Pierce L.) FL.

Ruddy Turnstone — All reports were in May. Early south 5/13 Olmsted mob, also seen in Lyon, Kandiyohi, Dakota, Goodhue. Early north 5/7 St. Louis PS, also observed in Douglas, Becker, Crow Wing, Mille Lacs. Only significant count 5/29 St. Louis (115 in Duluth) PS.

Red Knot — All reports: **5/12** Faribault (2 in Lura Twp.) PS, 5/21 St. Louis (Duluth) *vide* KE.

Sanderling — Early south 5/10 Meeker (2) DF, close to median arrival (5/8). Also reported south from Jackson (9), Renville (1), Faribault (6). Early north 5/7 St. Louis (3) PS, 5/17 Clay WM, with subsequent reports in Wilkin and Norman. Numbers down in Duluth PS.

Semipalmated Sandpiper — Reported from 22 south and 10 north counties in all regions except southeast. Early south **4/1** (ties record early date) Lincoln PJ, DN, **4/8** Lyon RgS, 4/22 Meeker DF. Early north 4/30 Kanabec CM, 5/7 St. Louis NWi. Peak 5/8 Lyon (189) RgS.

Least Sandpiper — Observed in total of 27 south and 15 north counties. Arrived south near median date (4/19), first seen 4/18 Meeker DF. Early north 4/23 Wilkin SDM, 4/29 Polk DJo. Peak counts 5/10 Hennepin (301) SC, 5/13 Lyon (248) RgS.

White-rumped Sandpiper — Seen in 15 south and 4 north counties. Early south **4/7** (record early by more than two weeks!) Renville KE, 4/30 Big Stone and Lac Qui Parle PC, PS. Arrived north on time, where first seen 5/15 Traverse WM. Peak 5/19 Lyon (45) PC.

Baird's Sandpiper — Reported from 18 south counties, though not in southeast. Early south 3/26 Dakota (1) TT, 4/2 Lac Qui Parle (3) PBU, TT, then 4/8, 4/9 — compare with the recent median south arrival date (4/7). All north reports: 4/23 Clay (2) RO, 4/29 Polk (20) DJo, then Wilkin, Morrison, Kanabec. Peak counts 4/24 Lac Qui Parle (111) PC, 4/30 Lac Qui Parle (149) PC, PS.

Pectoral Sandpiper — Observed in 30 south and 9 north counties in all regions except north-central. Early south **3/18** (record early) Waseca DBM, 3/25 Stevens SDM, 3/26 in two counties, 3/27 in three. Compare these arrivals with the recent

median date (4/1). Arrived north on time, where first seen 4/22 Wilkin mob. Peak counts 4/29 Lyon (409) RgS, 5/17 Yellow Medicine (~400 at Miedd L.) PS.

Dunlin — More observations and higher counts than usual. Reported from 24 south and 12 north counties throughout the state. Early south 4/8 Nobles KE *et al.*, 4/26 Houston KK and Meeker DF. Early north 4/30 Kanabec CM, next seen 5/9 in two counties. Many reports during 5/13–19 in Yellow Medicine, including a record high count 5/17 (450 at Miedd L.) PS, with 141 still present on 5/19 (PC). Other noteworthy counts 5/12 Faribault (125) PS, 5/13 Lyon (113) RgS, 5/17 Big Stone (185) PS.

Stilt Sandpiper — Seen in eight south and two north counties. Early south 4/20 Meeker (1) DF, 5/3 Dakota DBS, 5/6 Lac Qui Parle PC. Only north reports: 5/15 Traverse WM, 5/19 Becker RJ.

Buff-breasted Sandpiper — Only report 5/13 Blue Earth (1) AH.

Short-billed Dowitcher — Reported from 18 south and 9 north counties. Early south 4/26 (no details, ties earliest date on record) Meeker DF, 4/28 McLeod DF, 4/30 Lac Qui Parle CM. Early north 5/7 Clay WM and Marshall JJ, then 5/15 in two counties. Peak counts 5/13 Lyon (45) RgS, 5/13 Yellow Medicine (62) RgS, 5/16 Dakota (45) TT, 5/19 Becker (40–50) BK.

Long-billed Dowitcher — Observed in 15 south counties but none in southeast. Early south 4/1 (earliest ever by 12 days!) Lincoln (3) †PBu, †TT, 4/6 Dakota (2) NJ, 4/19 McLeod DF. Peak counts 5/8 Dakota (23) DBS, TT, 5/13 Lyon (18) and Yellow Medicine (53) RgS. Last reported in south 5/14 Carver CMA and Freeborn ABA.

Common Snipe — Seen in 33 south and 18 north counties. Overwintered south. Early north (median 3/26) 3/24 Otter Tail DST, 3/26 Aitkin WN. Peak counts 4/8 Lyon (43) RgS, 4/16 Dakota (50) SWE.

American Woodcock — Exceptionally early migration. Reported from 19 south and 11 north counties in all regions, but only Big Stone in west-central. Early south (where recent median arrival 3/15) 3/2 Anoka JH and Dakota DBS, 3/3 Rice TBo, 3/5 Scott CMA. Early north 3/7 Becker *fide* BBe, 3/9 St. Louis (Duluth) TD, 3/11 St. Louis (Hoyt Lakes) *fide* AE, 3/16 Aitkin CB — the latter ties the previous early north date!

Wilson's Phalarope — More reports than usual but peak counts lower than normal. Reported from 19 south and 14 north counties. Early south 4/22 Lac Qui Parle (3) TT, 4/30 Big Stone (56) PC, PS. Early north 4/22 Wilkin CM, 4/30 Otter Tail SDM. WM counted 230 in western Minnesota 5/14–18, including a peak 5/18 Norman (121 at Ada lagoons). Other noteworthy counts 5/13 Yellow Medicine (77 at Miedd L.) RgS, 5/13 Polk (98 at Crookston lagoons) BBe.

Red-necked Phalarope — Best spring showing in at least 20 years! Reported from 15 south and 6 north counties, mostly in western regions — none in north-central and northeast, and only Fillmore (4 on 5/13, NO) in southeast. Early south 5/12 Faribault (4) PS and McLeod (3) DF. Early north and peak count 5/13 Polk (24) BBe. Additional noteworthy concentrations 5/13 Lyon (21) RgS, 5/13–14 Hennepin (max. 11 at French L.) mob, 5/15 Traverse (19) WM, 5/18 Norman (18) WM. Except for 5/29 Meeker and Renville DF, all reports south and north were from 5/12 through 5/22.

Jaegers to Terns

Parasitic Jaeger — No reports.

Franklin's Gull — Reported from 17 south and 10 north counties. Early south 3/2 Jackson (adult, ties earliest date) KB, 4/1 Lincoln DN, 4/3 Meeker CMA. Early north 4/2 Traverse DN and Wilkin PBu, TT, 4/19 Polk EF. No significant counts and reported as scarce (RJ). One unusual

location 5/20–21 St. Louis (Duluth) mob.

Little Gull — Only report: 5/13 St. Louis (two adults in Duluth) PS, one relocated 5/14 (AH).

Bonaparte's Gull — Seen in 20 south and 7 north counties. Early south 4/2 Lac Qui Parle P Bu, TT, 4/3 Renville C Ma. Early north 4/2 (ties second earliest north) Traverse PJ, 4/11 Beltrami DJo. Peak 5/14 St. Louis (800 in Duluth) TD. No south reports after 5/10 Hennepin SC.

Ring-billed Gull — Seen in 31 south and 20 north counties. Early north 3/6 Otter Tail SDM, but see winter report.

CALIFORNIA GULL — One adult 5/13 Lyon (Sham L. near Cottonwood) †PE (*The Loon* 72:242).

Herring Gull — Reported from 25 south and 13 north counties. See winter report for migration summary.

Thayer's Gull — Reported without details 4/5 Dakota SL, SWe.

Iceland Gull — No reports.

Lesser Black-backed Gull — None.

Glaucous Gull — Only report: 3/19 St. Louis (4) PS.

Great Black-backed Gull — No reports. In recent springs, this species has usually been found in Duluth.

Caspian Tern — Reported from total of 16 south and 9 north counties, mostly in central and eastern regions. No reports from the southwest, and only Clay in northwest. Early south 4/29 Lac Qui Parle NWi, followed by 5/2 in three counties. Early north 4/21 Crow Wing MRN, 5/7 Cook (Good Harbor Bay) PS, 5/8 Lake (Gooseberry S. P.) JLi and Kanabec CM. Peak count 5/13 Hennepin (43) P Bu.

Common Tern — Observed in 12 south

and 8 north counties in all regions. Early south 4/29 Lac Qui Parle FE, 5/5 Stevens RJ and Hennepin ABo. Early north 4/21 (second earliest north) Mille Lacs (4) MRN, 4/28 Cass MRN. Peak count 5/21 St. Louis (350 in Duluth) PS.

Forster's Tern — Seen in 25 south and 10 north counties statewide. Early south (median 4/10) 4/12 Freeborn ABa, 4/15 Hennepin TT. Early north (median 4/20) 4/17 Traverse RJ, 4/22 Kanabec CM.

Black Tern — Reported from 29 south and 14 north counties statewide, but only St. Louis in northeast. Only April report 4/30 Lac Qui Parle OJ (median south date 4/27). Also arrived north near median date (5/8) where first reported 5/5 Douglas RH. Peak 5/13 Cottonwood (550) ED.

Doves to Kingfishers

Rock Dove — Occurs in all regions.

Mourning Dove — Seen statewide.

Black-billed Cuckoo — Reported from 10 south and 7 north counties statewide. Arrived within two days of recent median dates south and north. Early south 5/8 Freeborn ABa and Fillmore NO. Early north 5/14 Otter Tail DST and Kanabec CM. Also reported north in Becker, Red Lake, Clearwater, Aitkin, St. Louis.

Yellow-billed Cuckoo — First seen 5/11 Houston AH, PS, 5/13 Nicollet SL; also reported from Swift, Kandiyohi, Dakota. No north reports.

Eastern Screech-Owl — All reports south: Murray, Meeker, Freeborn, Hennepin, Ramsey, Washington. Only one north report: 5/19 Otter Tail (Maplewood S. P.) AH, PH, PS.

Great Horned Owl — Reported from 30 south and 12 north counties statewide..

Snowy Owl — Two reports: 3/6 Dakota *fide* AH, 3/20 Douglas JJ.



Long-eared Owl, 28 May 2000, Spencer Township, Aitkin County. Photo by Warren Nelson. See Note of Interest on pages 244–245.

Northern Hawk Owl — One wintering near Kimberly was last seen 3/1 Aitkin mob. Also reported 3/2 St. Louis (Hwy 53) KSu, 3/15 St. Louis (I-35 at Midway Rd.) *fide* AH.

Barred Owl — Observed in 19 south and 10 north counties, and in all regions except southwest, but only Otter Tail in west-central and Becker in northwest.

Great Gray Owl — All reports: late April near ANWR in Marshall County *fide* BBe, 5/23 Roseau (3 along Hwy 310) MB, 4/2 Aitkin (near Tamarack) CB; 4/9, 5/7, 5/10 Aitkin WN; late March in St. Louis (five locations, Sax-Zim bog) *fide* KE, 5/28 Lake (near Isabella) JLi, 5/27 Cook (off Gunflint Trail) DN.

Long-eared Owl — All south reports were in March or early April. Observed in Sibley (2), Rice, Olmsted (2), Hennepin (3). All north reports: 5/18 Mahnomen (Waubun marsh) WM, Marshall (nesting

pair near ANWR and roosting at Old Mill S. P.) *fide* BBe, 3/15–4/30 Kanabec (2) CM, 3/29 Lake JLi, and St. Louis mob.

Short-eared Owl — Best migration in many years. Grand total of about 98 owls reported from 8 south and 11 north counties, mostly in the west-central and northwest regions. Apparent migrants (please see winter report) 3/10 Kandiyohi RJF, 3/11 **Sibley** DBM, 3/19 Meeker DF. Also reported in Nobles, Lac Qui Parle, Stevens, Watwonwan, and 5/7 Brown JSp. Peak counts 3/29 Wilkin (**18+** near Rothsay WMA) SDM, 4/16 Polk (**20** in prairie areas of Kertsonville Twp.) EF. WN mapped a total of 17 owls for the season in Aitkin. All other north reports: Otter Tail, Becker, Clay (4 locations), Red Lake, Marshall (near ANWR and Old Mill S. P.), Kittson, Kanabec, St. Louis.

Boreal Owl — All reports: 3/18 Lake (3 near Isabella) JLi, 3/18 Lake (same birds as 2/28, see winter report) AH, 4/8 Cook

(Sawbill Trail) WM. Number of territorial males (7) surveyed by BLa down from previous two springs.

Northern Saw-whet Owl — Reported from five south and nine north counties. All south reports: Kandiyohi RJ, 3/2–23 Rice TBo, 3/5 Dakota SWe, 3/6 Scott WM, 3/13 Hennepin CMA. Many reports from northeast region including 3/18 Carlton JLi. Also reported from Otter Tail, Polk, Wadena, Beltrami, Kanabec.

Common Nighthawk — Observed in 25 south and 15 north counties throughout the state. Arrived near recent median dates south (4/29) and north (5/9). First reported 4/27 Carver RTD and McLeod DF, then no reports until 5/3 Brown JSp. Early north 5/6 Aitkin WN, then 5/13–15.

Whip-poor-will — Reported from six south counties beginning 4/26 Nicollet MF, only April report. Early north 5/16 St. Louis MH, 5/19 Becker AH, PH, PS, 5/23 Lake (Two Harbors) JLi.

Chimney Swift — Seen in 35 south and 16 north counties. Arrived on time. Many reports in late April after 4/23 Hennepin PBU and Ramsey AH. Early north 4/30 Otter Tail SDM, 5/2 St. Louis FN.

WHITE-THROATED SWIFT — First state record 5/10 **Hennepin** (Minneapolis) picked up injured, subsequently died on 5/15 (*The Loon* 72:191–193), specimen at the Bell Museum of Natural History (RZ).

Ruby-throated Hummingbird — Seen in 27 south and 20 north counties statewide. Arrived before median dates south (5/5) and north (5/9). Early south 4/30 Houston MFo, 5/1 in three counties, 5/3 in three more. Early north 4/29 Otter Tail EE, 5/4 in three counties, then 5/5–9.

Belted Kingfisher — Observed in 39 south and 22 north counties. The reports 3/2 Douglas KKW and 3/4 Aitkin WN probably refer to overwintering birds (see winter report). Apparent migrant reported

3/23 Itasca BN.

Woodpeckers to Kingbirds

Red-headed Woodpecker — Reported as scarce by mob, though seen in 30 south and 11 north counties as far north as Pennington, Koochiching, St. Louis. Very few overwintered (see the winter report), possibly due to poor acorn crop (JH). Apparent migrant 4/30 Waseca JSe, followed by more than a dozen south reports during the first week in May. Early north 4/10 (ties earliest north date) Koochiching (near International Falls) DS, then no north reports until 5/7 Todd CM and Aitkin WN.

Red-bellied Woodpecker — Seen in 36 south and 13 north counties as far northwest as Pennington (pair in Thief River Falls, JJ) and Marshall (Old Mill S. P., *vide* BBe). Also consistent with recent trends, multiple reports from northeast region, including 3/29 St. Louis (near Orr) LRO, 4/13 St. Louis (Hoyt Lakes) AE, late April in Lake (Little Marais) *vide* DBE, 5/20 St. Louis (Duluth Twp.) mob.

Yellow-bellied Sapsucker — Observed in 29 south and 20 north counties in all regions. Arrived on time. Early south 3/31 Meeker DF, then daily arrivals elsewhere 4/6 through 4/16. Early north 4/2 Otter Tail SDM, 4/9 Aitkin WN.

Downy Woodpecker — Seen throughout the state.

Hairy Woodpecker — Also throughout.

Three-toed Woodpecker — No reports.

Black-backed Woodpecker — All were in late May: Clearwater (2) mob, Beltrami DJo, and St. Louis (3 along Hwy 11, plus Lakewood Twp. near Duluth) AE, TW.

Northern Flicker — Reported from 36 south and 22 north counties statewide. The report 3/5 Clay RO probably refers to an overwintering bird, since known to

do so in Otter Tail (see winter report) and median north arrival 3/27. Probable early north migrant 3/31 Becker BK, then 4/2 in three counties.

Pileated Woodpecker — Observed in 26 south and 17 north counties, and in all regions, but only Lyon in southwest.

Olive-sided Flycatcher — Seen in 19 south and 4 north counties, mostly in southeast quarter of the state. First seen 5/6 Meeker DF, then observed in seven counties 5/9–13. Also arrived north on time, where first reported 5/11 Clay RO.

Eastern Wood-Pewee — Reported from 17 south and 13 north counties, and in all regions except the southwest. Early south 4/30 McLeod DF, then none before 5/5. Early north 5/15 in two counties (recent median 5/13).

Yellow-bellied Flycatcher — Migrants in four south counties beginning 5/14 Washington †DN. Only north reports 5/20 St. Louis †PBu, †TT. Reported without details from additional ten counties throughout state, except no reports from southwest or northwest regions.

Acadian Flycatcher — All documented reports: 5/11+ Houston (3 at Beaver Creek Valley S. P.) AH, †PS, 5/17+ Rice (Nerstrand Woods S. P.) †TBo, †PS, 5/23 Hennepin (Elm Creek Park) †SC.

Alder Flycatcher — Early south (recent median date 5/12) 5/16 Rice †TBo, 5/18 Hennepin †TT. Early north 5/20 St. Louis †TT. Also reported without details from all regions except southeast.

Willow Flycatcher — Early south 5/12 Faribault †PS, 5/19 Dakota †TT; others vocalizing late May in Cottonwood †BBo, Rice †TBo, Hennepin †SC. **Note:** During spring and fall migration, undocumented records of silent *Empidonax* flycatchers are not published in this report. Please be sure to note singing or calling birds on the Seasonal Report form.

Least Flycatcher — Early south 4/30 Brown †JSp, 5/1 Rice †TBo. Numerous reports 4/30–5/2 suggest a concentrated surge into the state this spring. Early north 5/4 Kanabec †CM, 5/6 Cass †MRN and Crow Wing †PP.

Eastern Phoebe — Reported from 29 south and 22 north counties statewide. Early south (recent median 3/23) 3/11 Scott ABo, 3/23 in four counties, 3/24 in four more. Arrived north on time, where first seen 3/30 Morrison WB, followed by daily arrivals through 4/7.

Great Crested Flycatcher — Seen in 24 south and 18 north counties statewide. Early south 4/22 Cottonwood ED, then on time during first week of May (15 counties) beginning 5/1 Dakota SL. Early north 5/4 Morrison WB, then 5/6, 5/7.

Western Kingbird — Observed in 13 south counties though none in southeast. Early south 5/1 Kandiyohi (2) RJF, then no reports before 5/12 Dakota DBS. All north reports: 5/13+ Clay CN *et al.*, 5/13 Pennington JJ, 5/15+ Traverse WM, RJ.

Eastern Kingbird — Reported from 26 south and 20 north counties throughout the state. Early south (recent median date 4/26) 4/15 Jackson (30) MJC, then none until 5/1 Rice JL. Arrived north on time, where first seen 5/4 Beltrami DJo.

Shrikes to Swallows

Loggerhead Shrike — Approximately 15 individuals found in 10 south counties, plus Clay. Numbers down for the fourth consecutive spring compared to previous five-year average (1992–1996) of reports from about 20 counties. Early south 3/18 Fillmore (near Forestville S. P.) DN, 3/19–25 Dakota (pair along 140th St.) TT. All other south reports: Pipestone (Osborne Twp.), Lac Qui Parle (Manfred Twp.), Kandiyohi (Roseville Twp.), Meeker (Ellsworth Twp.), Brown, Scott, Rice, Washington (Grey Cloud Is.), plus singles in three additional Dakota locations. Only

north reports: 4/24+ Clay RO, mob. **Note:** Please continue to give exact locations and numbers of birds for all seasons (per instructions on Seasonal Report form) so that accurate totals can be determined.

Northern Shrike — Continuing a trend from fall and winter, more reports than usual. Observed in 16 south counties through 3/31 Meeker DF, and 9 north counties through 4/20 Aitkin CB.

WHITE-EYED VIREO — One seen and heard 5/21 **Otter Tail** (Glendalough S. P.) CMA (*The Loon* 72:250). This was only the second occurrence in northern regions. The first was in Clay County on 28 May 1989 (*The Loon* 61:148–149).

Bell's Vireo — All reports were within expected range. First seen 5/19 Ramsey DCn, 5/19+ Dakota TT, PS. First county record 5/28–29 **Steele** (Somerset Twp.) NT, DBM. Also observed in Blue Earth (Minneopa S. P.) MF, RJ, Waseca ABa, and Winona MBW.

Yellow-throated Vireo — Reported from 22 south and 16 north counties in all regions, but only St. Louis in northeast. Arrived within three days of recent medians south (5/2) and north (5/10). Daily arrivals in multiple south counties beginning 5/4 Brown JSp and Rice TBo. Early north 5/7 Wadena PBI, but mostly arrived in north 5/14–19.

Blue-headed Vireo — Observed in 20 south and 12 north counties. Arrived on time. Early south 4/29 Hennepin PBu, TT, then multiple arrivals over the next four days. Early north 5/1 Clay RO and Kanabec CM, then 5/3 in two counties. No south reports later than 5/25 Hennepin SC.

Warbling Vireo — Seen in 24 south and 16 north counties in all regions. Arrived within two days of recent medians south and north. First reported 4/29 Swift OJ, then multiple arrivals over next several days. Early north 5/7 in three counties.

Philadelphia Vireo — Reported from 13 south counties though none in southwest or southeast. Early south 5/4 (ties earliest date) Freeborn ABa, 5/5 McLeod RbS and Hennepin TT, 5/7 in two counties. Reported from only four north counties, where first seen 5/15 Kanabec CM. Last reported south 5/21 Sherburne LC/RN.

Red-eyed Vireo — Observed in 24 south and 21 north counties statewide. Arrived slightly before median dates south (5/7) and north (5/10). First seen 5/4 Hennepin mob, then daily arrivals south 5/5–9. Early north 5/4 Morrison WB, then daily arrivals 5/6–9.

Gray Jay — Reported within usual range from Aitkin, St. Louis, Lake, Cook.

Blue Jay — Occurs throughout the state.

Black-billed Magpie — Observed in four northwest counties, plus Clearwater, Cass, Aitkin (14), St. Louis.

American Crow — Seen statewide

Common Raven — Reported throughout the period from 10 north counties, plus 4/1 Sherburne JJB, 5/19 Anoka DZ. Peak count 3/2 St. Louis (101 at West Skyline Hawkwatch in Duluth) FN.

Horned Lark — Observed in 29 south and 13 north counties, and in all regions except northeast. On 3/13 RgS counted 1063 while driving from Marshall, Lyon County to Hutchinson, McLeod County.

Purple Martin — Seen in 24 south and 15 north counties statewide. One early arrival (recent median 4/4) 3/23 Washington PHe, then no south reports until 4/8, 4/9. Early north (recent median 4/13) 4/8 Otter Tail SDM, then 4/9, 4/11.

Tree Swallow — Arrived well before the recent medians south (3/21) and north (4/4). Early south 3/7 (ties earliest date) Hennepin PJ, 3/10 Washington TEB, then in 13 counties 3/23–27. Early north 3/25

(second earliest north date) Otter Tail SDM and Cass MRN, 3/26 Grant GrK, SWa and St. Louis *vide* KE, then 3/31.

Northern Rough-winged Swallow — Reported from 29 south and 11 north counties in all regions, but only Clay in northwest and St. Louis in northeast. Early south (where recent median 4/14) 4/6 Carver RTD, then 4/13. Arrived north on time, where first seen 4/21 in three counties. Peak 5/31 Dakota (180) NWi.

Bank Swallow — Observed in 22 south and 12 north counties throughout the state, but only St. Louis in northeast. First seen on about the same date south and north. Early south (median 4/18) 4/23–24 in four counties. Early north (median is 4/30) 4/24 Clay SDM, 4/30 Polk EF.

Cliff Swallow — Reported from 28 south and 20 north counties statewide. Arrived simultaneously south and north. Daily south arrivals (recent median date 4/19) beginning 4/21 Freeborn RJ. Early north (median 4/26) 4/21 Hubbard and Wadena ABo, 4/22 Aitkin WN.

Barn Swallow — Seen in 29 south and 18 north counties. Arrived on time. Early south (median 4/12) 4/14 Hennepin DBo, TT, 4/15 in two counties. Many reports north during late April, where first seen 4/21 in four counties.

Chickadees to Gnatcatchers

Black-capped Chickadee — Observed throughout the state.

Boreal Chickadee — Only reports from Aitkin and St. Louis (4 locations in Sax-Zim bog, PBU *et al.*).

Tufted Titmouse — Reported within range from Fillmore, Goodhue, Houston, plus 3/12 **Faribault** (present for about one month at feeder in Kiester) ABa.

Red-breasted Nuthatch — Observed in 16 south counties through 5/13 Hennepin

TT, 5/26 Brown JSp. Also seen throughout usual range in north regions.

White-breasted Nuthatch — Reported from all regions, but only St. Louis in northeast.

Brown Creeper — Observed in 23 south and 13 north counties statewide. No peak counts. Late south 5/20 Dakota SWe, 5/29 Scott (singing at Murphy-Hanrahan Park) SC, TT. The latter may represent potential breeding, which has occurred in several nearby counties.

Carolina Wren — Reported from **Otter Tail** EE, where one successfully overwintered and laid five apparently infertile eggs before disappearing in early May (**The Loon** 72:243–244).

House Wren — Seen in 31 south and 19 north counties statewide. Arrived close to recent medians south (4/19) and north (4/30). Numerous late April reports south beginning 4/21 Lac Qui Parle FE and Wabasha JLU. Early north 4/26 Kanabec CM, then 4/27, 4/30.

Winter Wren — Arrived on time south and north. Reported from total of 14 south counties beginning 3/23 Rice TBo, and 8 north counties beginning 4/4 Grant SDM. No reports from northwest region and only Cottonwood (4/24, ED) in the southwest. Late south 5/12 Faribault PS.

Sedge Wren — Observed in 24 south and 16 north counties throughout the state. Early south 4/27 Rice CGj, 4/29 in two counties. Early north (where recent median 5/4) 4/30 Otter Tail SDM, then daily arrivals 5/6–10.

Marsh Wren — Reported from 22 south and 12 north counties statewide, but only St. Louis in northeast. Early south 3/24 (second earliest date) Steele (Rice Lake S. P.) †CGj, then no reports until more than one month later! This may have been a previously undiscovered wintering bird. Next seen 4/26 Meeker DF, then daily

arrivals 5/3–7. Early north 5/6 Marshall JJ, then 5/8, 5/15.

Golden-crowned Kinglet — Observed in total of 22 south and 10 north counties statewide. Early south 3/23 Freeborn ABa and Rice TBo, then multiple reports from nine additional counties within one week. Arrived north on time, where first reported 3/25 Aitkin WN, but see winter report regarding observations there.

Ruby-crowned Kinglet — Seen in 32 south and 15 north counties throughout state. Arrived south on time, where first reported 3/26 Rice TBo and Hennepin SC. Early north (recent median 4/6) 4/2 Clay RO, then 4/12, 4/18. Lingered south through 5/27 Renville DF.

Blue-gray Gnatcatcher — Reported from 24 south counties beginning 4/23 Brown JSp. Early north 5/6+ Cass MRN, 5/13 St. Louis (Stoney Point) DBe. All other north reports: Douglas, Otter Tail, Becker, Wadena, Kanabec, plus 5/21–22 St. Louis (Park Point in Duluth) *vide* KE.

Bluebirds to Waxwings

Eastern Bluebird — Seen in 33 south and 17 north counties throughout the state. See winter report for early migrants south and north.

Mountain Bluebird — No reports.

Townsend's Solitaire — Only reports: 4/23 St. Louis DBe, 5/5 (latest date ever) Dakota DZ (*The Loon* 72:180).

Veery — Observed in 16 south and 16 north counties, though none in southwest and only St. Louis in northeast. Arrived within two days of recent medians south and north. Earliest south 4/29 Meeker DF. Earliest north 5/8 Kanabec CM.

Gray-cheeked Thrush — Reported from 19 south and 10 north counties, and in all regions except northeast. Migration confined to May as expected. Early south 5/3

Hennepin SC, then daily elsewhere through 5/10. Early north 5/6 Otter Tail SDM. Last reported 5/26 Brown JSp and Hennepin TT. Late north 5/20 Otter Tail CMa.

Swainson's Thrush — Seen in 29 south and 19 north counties statewide. Early south 4/26 Hennepin SC, 4/28 Houston DS. Arrived north on time, where first seen 4/30 Clay RO and Otter Tail SDM. Lingered south into late May as usual, last reported 5/30 Hennepin TT.

Hermit Thrush — Reported from 24 south and 14 north counties. Arrivals and departure (from south) were within one day of recent medians. Early south 3/28 Washington RJ. Early north 4/10 Clay RO. Late south 5/14 Sherburne ABo.

Wood Thrush — Observed in 19 south and 6 north counties but only Aitkin in north-central region, and none in southwest or northwest. Arrived within four days of median dates. Early south 4/28 Fillmore NO and Houston DS. Early north 5/5 Kanabec CM.

American Robin — Seen in 50 counties.

Varied Thrush — One new individual found 5/7 Hennepin WM brought the 1999–2000 seasonal total to 14 birds. An overwintering male that was erroneously attributed to Stearns (see winter report) was actually in Benton through 3/21 (east of St. Cloud) *vide* HD. One overwintering in Ramsey (see winter report) reappeared 3/3 after an extended absence.

Gray Catbird — Reported from 29 south and 16 north counties statewide. Arrivals were concentrated in early May. Early south 5/1 Carver RJ, daily in 17 counties 5/2–7. Early north 5/5 Kanabec CM and St. Louis TW, then daily through 5/11.

Northern Mockingbird — No fewer than 14 individuals were reported in 9 counties. All were in May except those seen intermittently from 1/7 (see winter report) through 3/9+ St. Louis (Duluth)

JHf and 4/13 Cottonwood (near Typhoon WMA) BBo. Also reported south from Kandiyohi (2), Anoka, Hennepin (2), and Mower. All additional north reports: 5/5 Marshall (Thief L.) †CHE (*The Loon* 72:249–250), 5/20 Beltrami (2) †PBD, 5/8 Lake (Knife R.) JLi, 5/15–19 St. Louis (Park Point, Duluth) FN *et al.*, and 5/20–22 St. Louis (Duluth Twp.) mob.

SAGE THRASHER — Eighth state record (*The Loon* 72:181). One from February (see winter report) was documented 3/1 Hennepin †VK, 3/4 †RJ.

Brown Thrasher — Observed in 29 south and 15 north counties statewide. Arrived one day before recent medians south and north. Early south 4/14 in two counties with peak migration 4/21–27. Early north 4/25 in two counties followed by daily arrivals through the end of April.

CURVE-BILLED THRASHER — Third state record overwintered through 3/24 Wilkin (*The Loon* 72:177–178).

European Starling — Seen everywhere.

American Pipit — Reported from nine south counties, including earliest ever on 3/12 Scott ABo, then 4/1 Lincoln DN, 4/8 Dakota TT. Early north (median 4/27) 4/23 Morrison RgS, 4/30 Wilkin NWi. Late south 5/7 Renville (20) KE, 5/28 (ties the latest south) Hennepin SC. Reported from only five north counties, last seen 5/18.

Bohemian Waxwing — All reports from St. Louis, through 4/22 (50) PS. Peak counts 3/23 (620) and 3/26 (825) FN at West Skyline Hawkwatch in Duluth.

Cedar Waxwing — Observed in 35 counties statewide. Although reported north during winter (see winter report), analysis of spring dates suggests an influx into northern regions beginning mid-May.

Warblers

Blue-winged Warbler — Reported from



Northern Mockingbird, 13 May 2000, Fridley, Anoka County. Photo by Marcus Martin.

19 south counties, including first county records 5/3 **Pipestone** (Split Rock Creek S. P.) ND, 5/7 **McLeod** (Hutchinson) †DF. Early south 5/2 in three counties, then daily arrivals through 5/8. Only reports in the north: 5/15 Douglas RH, 5/30 **Clay** (Moorhead) †RO (*The Loon* 72:241).

Golden-winged Warbler — Observed in 14 south and 12 north counties, and in all regions except southwest, but only Otter Tail in the west-central. Early south 5/1 Dakota SL, 5/3 in three counties. Early north 5/6 Kanabec CM, then daily arrivals 5/7–11. Lingered through 5/30 Rice TBo. “Brewster’s” hybrid reported 5/20 Nicollet (Seven Mile Creek C. P.) LF, MF.

Tennessee Warbler — Seen in 30 south and 18 north counties throughout the state. Arrived within two days of median dates south and north. Earliest 4/30 McLeod DF. First north reports: 5/6 in three counties. Late south 5/30 Hennepin

TT, also see summer report.

Orange-crowned Warbler — Reported from 24 south and 14 north counties statewide. Extreme migration dates were all within two to four days of the recent medians. Early south 4/23 Scott ABo and Hennepin SC. Early north 4/28 Clay RO. Late south 5/22 Dakota TT. Last reported north 5/29 Carlton SL.

Nashville Warbler — Seen in 23 south and 19 north counties throughout state. Early south (where recent median 4/29) 4/22 Carver †RTD, then 4/29–30 in seven counties. Early north (median 5/4) 4/30 Kanabec CM, then 5/2.

Northern Parula — Observed in 13 south and 8 north counties in all regions, but only Cottonwood (5/13, BBo, ED) in southwest and Swift (5/16, RJ) in west-central. Arrived within three days of the recent median dates south (5/2) and north (5/9). First seen 4/30 Dakota PJ, only April report. Early north 5/6 St. Louis SS. No south reports after 5/16.

Yellow Warbler — Reported from 32 south and 22 north counties statewide. Early south 4/23 Hennepin SC, PJ, then daily arrivals beginning 4/29. Arrived north 5/3 Becker BBa, then 5/6 in four counties.

Chestnut-sided Warbler — Seen in 20 south and 20 north counties. Early south (recent median 5/6) 5/3 in two counties, then 5/4, 5/6. Early north (median 5/9) 5/4 Morrison WB, 5/6 in four counties.

Magnolia Warbler — Observed in 23 south and 13 north counties. Early south 4/23 (second earliest) Mower RRR, 5/5 Rice TBo, then daily through 5/14. Early north 5/6 Otter Tail SDM and Cass MRN, then daily arrivals 5/7–11.

Cape May Warbler — Reported from 12 south and 13 north counties statewide. Arrived almost simultaneously south and north. Early south 5/3 Blue Earth MF and Freeborn ABa, 5/4 Hennepin mob, then

5/6–8. Early north 5/4 St. Louis AE, then daily arrivals 5/7–9. Last reported south 5/22 Lyon CMA.

Black-throated Blue Warbler — Only reports from Lake beginning 5/14 (JLi), plus 5/23 St. Louis JLi.

Yellow-rumped Warbler — Seen in 34 south and 20 north counties. Early south 3/24 Washington DS, 3/27 Hennepin *fide* AH (but see winter report). Early north 3/30 Aitkin WN, then no reports until daily arrivals starting 4/13. "Audubon's" Warbler reported 5/29 Lake SS *et al.* No south reports after 5/21 Washington SL.

BLACK-THROATED GRAY WARBLER — Fifth state record 5/23–24 Lake (Two Harbors) †JLi, SLi, †KE, †PS (*The Loon* 72:241–242).

Black-throated Green Warbler — Seen in 23 south and 13 north counties in all regions. Arrivals concentrated during first week of May statewide. Earliest 4/29 Freeborn ABa, then eight south counties through 5/6. Early north 5/2 St. Louis AE, followed by five counties 5/3–7. Probable migrants 5/29 Scott TT, 5/30 Rice TBo.

Blackburnian Warbler — Reported from 16 south and 11 north counties in all regions, but only Houston in southeast. Arrived two to three days before recent medians south and north. Early south 5/2 Freeborn ABa, followed by daily arrivals 5/4–7. Early north 5/5 St. Louis AE, then 5/6, 5/10. Last reported south 5/24 Anoka SC.

YELLOW-THROATED WARBLER — One to two adults reported 5/13+ Kandiyohi (Sibley S. P.) RE, RJF, †PS.

Pine Warbler — Observed in only six south and seven north counties, mostly in east-central and north-central regions. Early south (where recent median 4/26) 4/21 Hennepin TT, 5/1 Goodhue BL. Early north (median 4/27) 4/25 in three counties, 4/29 in two. Only report from

western regions: 4/25 Becker BBe.

Palm Warbler — Seen in 25 south and 19 north counties. Arrived within three days of recent medians south and north. Many late April reports south, beginning 4/23 in three counties. Early north 4/29 Wadena PBi, then daily in ten counties over the next week. Last reported south 5/19 Dakota SL and Waseca JSe.

Bay-breasted Warbler — Reported from total of 11 south and 8 north counties in all regions, but only Murray in southwest and St. Louis in northeast. Arrived up to four days before recent medians. Early south 5/6 Goodhue SWe, followed by daily arrivals 5/11–16. Early north 5/11 St. Louis AE, then daily reports 5/15–18. Late migrant 5/27 Meeker DF.

Blackpoll Warbler — Observed in 22 south and 17 north counties. Early south 5/4 Hennepin SC, TT, then many reports on a daily basis through 5/9. Early north (where recent median 5/10) 5/6 Polk EF, 5/7 Marshall JJ. Last reported 5/28 Rice PS in south, and 5/28 Aitkin WN in north.

Cerulean Warbler — Reported in low numbers from nine south counties. All south reports: 5/4+ Rice (location?) TBo, 5/4 Hennepin (Old Cedar Ave.) SC, 5/7+ Scott (max. 3 at Murphy-Hanrahan Park) SL *et al.*, 5/11+ Houston (max. 4 at Beaver Creek Valley S. P.) AH, PS *et al.*, 5/12 Carver WM and Washington DS, 5/13 Fillmore (Forestville S. P.) PS, 5/15 Le Sueur (Sakatah Lake S. P.) PS, 5/20 Kandiyohi RJF, 5/28 Rice (Nerstrand Woods S. P.) PS.

Black-and-white Warbler — Seen in 24 south and 18 north counties. Early south 4/6 (second earliest) Freeborn ABa, 4/21 Meeker DF, then eight counties 4/28–30. Early north 4/30 Clay RO and Kanabec CM, then daily arrivals 5/3–8.

American Redstart — Observed in 27 south and 21 north counties. Early south 4/30 Lac Qui Parle OJ, then daily arrivals

in eight counties through 5/6. Early north (recent median 5/8) 5/7 in five counties.

Prothonotary Warbler — Arrived south 5/4 Hennepin SC, 5/5 Nicollet JSp. First county record 5/7 **Kandiyohi** (Willmar) RJF. Also reported in Brown, Scott, Rice, Dakota, Goodhue and Houston. No north reports.

Worm-eating Warbler — Only report: 5/13 **Meeker** (Darwin-Dassel Park) †DF.

Ovenbird — Reported from 25 south and 22 north counties statewide. Early south (median 5/1) 4/26 Washington RJ, then three counties 4/29–30. Early north 5/3 Becker *fide* BBe, 5/4 in four counties.

Northern Waterthrush — Seen in 24 south and 13 north counties. Early south (median 4/26) 4/22 Houston DN, then in five counties between 4/25–30. Early north (median 5/5) 4/30 Otter Tail SDM, 5/1 Clay RO and Kanabec CM. No south reports after 5/28 Houston NWi.

Louisiana Waterthrush — All reports: 4/22+ Houston (max. 6 at Beaver Creek Valley S. P.) mob, 4/29+ Winona (White-water S. P.) CBe *et al.*, 5/8+ Fillmore NO, RJ, 5/12+ Rice (Nerstrand Woods S. P.) TBo *et al.*, 5/22 **Scott** (Sand Creek Twp.) BSt.

Kentucky Warbler — All reports: 5/10+ **Blue Earth** (max. 2 at Williams C. P.) MF *et al.* (ph. PS, 5/13 †SL, 5/14 †PC), 5/20 **Blue Earth** (Minneopa S. P.) MF, 5/28 Rice (Nerstrand Woods S. P.) PS.

Connecticut Warbler — Reported from total of nine south and six north counties, mostly in central regions. No reports from the southeast or west-central. Early south 5/9 Steele RJ, 5/15 Nicollet PS. Early north 5/20 **Red Lake** JJ and St. Louis mob, 5/22 Clay RO. Late south 5/29 Rice TBo, 5/30 Hennepin TT.

Mourning Warbler — Observed in nine south and ten north counties. Early south

(recent median 5/11) 5/7 Rice TBo, 5/8 Washington RJ. Arrived north on time, where first reported 5/16 Aitkin WN, 5/17 in three counties. Late south 5/31 Brown JSp, but see summer report.

Common Yellowthroat — Seen in 30 south and 22 north counties statewide. Early south (median 5/4) 4/28 McLeod DF, 4/30 Meeker DF, then 5/3. Arrived north on time, where first seen 5/7 in two counties.

Hooded Warbler — All reports: 5/13+ Scott (traditional location at Murphy-Hanrahan Park) DN *et al.*, 5/17 Hennepin (Old Cedar Avenue) JPo, 5/22 Morrison (7th consecutive year at Camp Ripley) WB, 5/24 Anoka (2 at Linwood L.) SC.

Wilson's Warbler — Reported from 20 south and 11 north counties throughout the state. Arrived at about the same time south and north. Early south 5/5 Murray ND, followed by daily arrivals over the next week. Early north 5/6 Otter Tail SDM, 5/8 in two counties. Last reported south 5/28 Hennepin SC.

Canada Warbler — Observed in 13 south and 7 north counties, but none in the southwest. Early south 5/6 Meeker DF, then daily arrivals 5/12–19. Early north 5/17 in three counties. Late south 5/29 Scott TT and Hennepin SC.

Yellow-breasted Chat — Only report: seen and photographed 5/11–14 Houston (Freeburg S. F.) †PS, †AH *et al.*

Tanagers to Snow Bunting

Summer Tanager — Three documented reports: 5/3 **Nobles** (male near Leota) †ND, 5/11–16 **Cook** (imm. male photographed near Grand Marais) †NBr, †KMH, 5/21 Brown (female at Lake Hanska) †DWi (*The Loon* 72:179–180). Two were reported without details from Houston.

Scarlet Tanager — Observed in 20 south and 17 north counties. Early south



Yellow-breasted Chat, 11 May 2000, Freeburg State Forest, Houston County. Photo by Anthony Hertzell.

(recent median 5/7) 5/1 Dakota SL, 5/4 Freeborn ABA. Early north (recent median 5/12) 5/9 Becker MWy, 5/11 Kanabec CM. Peak migration 5/6–9 south, 5/15–19 north.

Western Tanager — Male photographed 5/13 Stevens (Morris) †DSt. The second county record (see *The Loon* 40:57).

Spotted Towhee — All reports: 4/30 Lac Qui Parle (Louisburg Rd.) PS, 4/30 Otter Tail TJa, SDM.

Eastern Towhee — Reported from 15 south and 6 north counties. Arrived two days after recent medians south and north. First seen 4/18 Freeborn ABA (south) and 5/7 Lake JLi (north). Two reports from western regions: 5/14 Lac Qui Parle WM, 5/16–17 Clay RO, WM.

American Tree Sparrow — Seen in 27 south and 16 north counties. Many late April reports south and north, but exodus completed by end of the month. Late south 4/30 Lac Qui Parle FE. Late north 4/27 St. Louis TW. Recent medians 5/1



Lark Bunting, 14 May 2000, Stoney Point, St. Louis County. Photo by Anthony Hertzell.

and 5/14, respectively.

Chipping Sparrow — Observed in 32 south and 21 north counties. Earliest date on record 3/4 McLeod †DF accepted by records committee; two additional reports on this date were undocumented. Next reported 4/6 Freeborn ABa (median date 3/26). Early north (where median 4/16) 4/8 Aitkin WN and Kanabec BA, 4/16 in two counties.

Clay-colored Sparrow — Reported from 21 south and 20 north counties in all regions except southeast. Early south (recent median 4/22) 4/20 Lac Qui Parle FE, 4/24 Jackson PS. Early north 4/22 (second earliest) Becker MWy, 4/30 Otter Tail SDM, then daily arrivals through 5/5.

Field Sparrow — Observed in 25 south counties beginning 4/4 Scott RJ, then daily arrivals 4/8–16. Early north (recent median 4/24) 4/22 Cass MRN. Also seen in Douglas, Otter Tail, Clay, **Polk** (5/3

near Maple L., EF), Todd, Morrison.

Vesper Sparrow — Reported from 27 south and 14 north counties in all regions except the northeast. Early south (median 3/29) 3/21+ Meeker DF, 3/29 Renville DF. First reported north (median 4/11) 4/14 Douglas RH, then 4/18.

Lark Sparrow — Observed in 11 south counties within usual breeding range, plus 5/31 **Kandiyohi** RJF. Early south (recent median 4/23) 4/21 Chisago RH, 4/22 Dakota SWe. All north reports: 5/13 **St. Louis** TW, 5/14 **Lake** JLi, 5/15 Douglas RH, 5/20 Otter Tail SDM.

LARK BUNTING — One male was well-documented 5/13–17 **St. Louis** (Stoney Point) RKO, †DBe *et al.*

Savannah Sparrow — Seen in 25 south and 19 north counties. Arrived two to three days earlier than recent medians south and north. Early south 3/31 Meeker DF, 4/4 in two counties. Early north 4/15 Aitkin WN, 4/21 in three counties.

Grasshopper Sparrow — Reported from only 11 south and 6 north counties. Early south 4/16 (second earliest date) Freeborn ABa and Dakota SWe, then no reports until 5/3 Sherburne LC/RN. Early north (where recent median 5/8) 5/15 Douglas RH, 5/16 Clay WM and Todd RH. Also reported north from Otter Tail, Becker, Morrison.

Henslow's Sparrow — Reported 5/18+ Rice (2 at Faribault WMA) TBo, JL, 5/22 Goodhue (Frontenac S. P.) BL, 5/26+ Winona (6–12 at Great River Bluffs S. P.) mob, 5/28 Fillmore (2 at Beaver Creek WMA) PS. None were documented.

LeConte's Sparrow — All south reports: 4/13 Brown JSp, 4/25 Dakota BBa, 4/29 through 5/8 Hennepin TT, 5/11 **Houston** (west of Hokah) AH, PS. Reported from seven north counties, mostly in northwest region. Early north (where recent median 5/3) 4/26 Cass WB, 5/7 Marshall JJ.

Nelson's Sharp-tailed Sparrow — All reports: 5/22 Marshall (ANWR) MB, 5/30+ Aitkin (McGregor) WN.

Fox Sparrow — Observed in 21 south and 14 north counties. Presumed early south migrants (please see winter report) 3/2 Carver RJ, 3/8 Rice TBo, 3/9 in three counties. Early north 3/14 (earliest north date on record) Otter Tail SDM, 3/26 Aitkin CB, 3/27. Left state within three days of recent medians south (5/2) and north (5/1). Last reported 5/3 Hennepin CMa, 5/4 St. Louis NJ.

Song Sparrow — Seen in 30 south and 20 north counties throughout the state. See winter report for early south. Arrived north on time, where first reported 3/25 Aitkin WN, 3/27 in two counties.

Lincoln's Sparrow — Reported from only 17 south and 9 north counties. No reports from southeast region. Arrived later than recent medians south (4/7) and north (4/26), except for undocumented report in mid-March (earliest date on record is 3/29). Early south 4/13 McLeod DF, 4/24 Yellow Medicine RgS. Early north 4/30 in two northwest counties.

Swamp Sparrow — Observed in 26 south and 12 north counties. Although known to overwinter in several Hennepin locations (see winter report), TT reported migrants elsewhere in the county on 3/9 (earliest ever). Also seen 3/11 Dakota TT and Wabasha DN, 3/12 Freeborn ABa. Early north on time, where first reported 4/16 Aitkin WN, 4/23 Clay RO.

White-throated Sparrow — Reported from 27 south and 18 north counties. Probable migrants 3/30 Washington DS, 3/31 Meeker DF, but see winter report. Though not reported from the northwest region during winter season, 3/24 Clay BK may have overwintered, since recent median arrival 4/10. Next reported 4/6 St. Louis DZ, 4/13 Kanabec CM. Late south 5/31 Hennepin TT, also refer to summer report.

Harris's Sparrow — Seen in 18 south and 13 north counties, and in all regions except southeast. Earliest migrants not separable from overwintering birds (see winter report). Peak migration 4/30–5/6 in south and 5/4–12 in north. Departed within three days of medians south and north. Late south 5/22 Washington WL. Late north 5/20 St. Louis TT.

White-crowned Sparrow — Observed in 19 south and 15 north counties state-wide. Early south 4/15 Jackson MJC, 4/23 McLeod RbS. Early north (where recent median 4/21) 4/30 Otter Tail SDM and Pennington JJ. Although not seen anywhere in state this past winter, reports from Aitkin on 3/11 and 3/26 (WN) likely refer to an individual that overwintered, since earliest north date on record 4/12. Peak migration 4/30–5/2 in the south and 5/3–7 north. Departed state on time. Late south 5/22 Dakota TT. Late north 5/27 Beltrami PBD.

Dark-eyed Junco — Seen in 33 south and 20 north counties. Observed in all regions during the winter season, but DJO noted migrants 3/31 in Beltrami. Flock of 500 grounded after snowstorm 4/10 Becker *vide* BBe. "Oregon" Juncos seen in four counties, including 4/16 St. Louis †TW, 5/28 Houston †NW1, mob.

MCCOWN'S LONGSPUR — Adult male reported 5/8 St. Louis (40th Ave. West/Erie Pier area in Duluth) PBe, †DBe, †PS *et al.* (*The Loon* 72:246–247). Third Minnesota occurrence in past 100 years!

Lapland Longspur — Seen in 14 south but only 5 north counties. See the winter report for early migrants. RJF reported thousands migrating through Kandiyohi during early March. Late south 5/2 Dakota DBS, 5/14 Dakota SL, SWe. Late north (median 5/17) 5/20 St. Louis mob.

Smith's Longspur — No reports.

Chestnut-collared Longspur — Only reports from Clay (Felton Prairie) where



Lazuli Bunting, 19 May 2000, near Lynd, Lyon County. Photo by Peder Svingen.

first seen 4/24 (RO).

Snow Bunting — Reported from only six south and nine north counties. No south reports after 3/23 Renville DF. Seven April reports in north through 4/9 Aitkin PJ, then 5/16 St. Louis PS.

Cardinals to Orioles

Northern Cardinal — Seen in 27 south and 10 north counties, as far northwest as Polk (4/30, EF). Observed in Cass, Crow Wing and Aitkin in north-central region, and St. Louis in northeast (still increasing in Duluth, KE).

Rose-breasted Grosbeak — Seen in 30 south and 23 north counties. Arrived at about the same time south and north. First reported 5/1 Freeborn ABa and Hennepin SC, but seen in 17 additional south counties 5/2–7. Early north 5/3 Polk EF and Kanabec CM, then 12 north counties 5/4–9.

BLACK-HEADED GROSBEAK — Only documented report: 5/13 **Lyon** (female in Cottonwood) †PE (*The Loon* 72:140).

Blue Grosbeak — Exceptional report of male photographed at feeder 5/14–16 **Cook** (Grand Marais) †NB, KMH. All south reports: 5/20–21 Rock PS, BL, 5/30 Murray ND.

LAZULI BUNTING — Male seen 5/16–20 Lyon (near Lynd) RM, documented 5/19 (†PC, †PS) at the same feeder where pair occurred in spring 1997 (*The Loon* 69:151–153).

Indigo Bunting — Reported from 28 south and 14 north counties. Arrived at about the same time south and north. Early south 5/4 in four counties, 5/6–7 in six more. Early north 5/6 Becker BK, then 5/7–8 in three counties.

PAINTED BUNTING — Presumably the same bird returning from last summer, an adult male appeared 5/5+ (*vide* KE) at the Novak's feeder in Hennepin (Maple Grove). It was first documented 5/25 (†KE) and exhibited territorial behavior.

Dickcissel — Early south (median 5/10) 5/6 Meeker DF, 5/13 Cottonwood ED. Also reported from Rock, Murray, Freeborn, Dakota, Fillmore. No north reports.

Bobolink — Observed in 28 south and 21 north counties. Arrived simultaneously south and north. First reported south 5/3 Freeborn RJ, 5/4 Meeker DF, 5/6 in five counties. Early north 5/3 Aitkin WN, then daily arrivals in eight counties 5/6–10.

Red-winged Blackbird — Seen in 31 south and 22 north counties. See winter report for early migrants.

Eastern Meadowlark — Reported from 22 south and 11 north counties, mostly in central and eastern regions. No reports from the southwest, and only Douglas in west-central region and Becker (3/26, BK) in northwest. Presumed migrants first reported 3/7 Houston MFO, 3/8 Dakota DBS (south), and 3/18 Aitkin WN, 3/20 Kanabec CM (north).

Western Meadowlark — Reported from 27 south and 17 north counties, and in all regions, but only St. Louis in northeast. See winter report for possible early south migrant 2/29; probable migrants in eight counties during the first week of March, including 3/1 Pipestone and Lincoln RgS. Observations on 3/4 Clay and 3/5 Wilkin may refer to birds from winter season. Early north (where median 3/17) 3/18 Cass WB, MRN and Wadena PBi.

Yellow-headed Blackbird — Observed in 26 south and 17 north counties in all regions, including unusual location 5/18 Lake JLi. Early south 3/12 (record early) Freeborn ABa, 3/13 Sherburne LC/RN, then 3/23; most arrivals 4/20–30. Early north (recent median 4/9) 4/13 Otter Tail SDM, then 4/14.

Rusty Blackbird — See winter report for early south migrants. Overwintered north in Otter Tail; apparent migrant 3/5 Grant SDM, then no reports until 4/1 Clearwater DJo. Partial albino seen 4/9 McLeod DF. Departed before recent medians south and north. Late south 4/29 Hennepin PBu. Late north 4/28 Beltrami DJo.

Brewer's Blackbird — Seen in 26 south and 14 north counties throughout state, including a late migrant 5/28 Houston †NWi where unexpected during breeding season. Arrived approximately 12 days before recent medians south and north. Early south 3/1 Pipestone RgS, 3/6 McLeod DF, also see winter report. Only March reports north: 3/20 Otter Tail SDM, 3/26 Kanabec CM.

Common Grackle — Reported from 52 counties statewide. Early north 3/4 in three counties, 3/5 in three more.

GREAT-TAILED GRACKLE — Reported 4/1+ Jackson (Grovers L.) †PBu, TT *et al.*, also documented nearby in section 29, Minneota Twp. on 4/9 (†KE). Stay tuned for the summer season! One male photographed 5/14 **Cottonwood** †BBo.

Brown-headed Cowbird — Seen in 51 counties throughout the state. See winter report for overwintering birds and early south migrants. Early north 4/7 St. Louis AE, 4/8 Aitkin WN.

Orchard Oriole — Reported from 20 south counties beginning 5/5 Houston NO, 5/7–8 in two counties, then 5/10–14 in ten. All north reports: 5/15–18 Traverse WM, RJ, 5/20 Clay SDM and Otter Tail CMA, 5/21 Cass WB.

Baltimore Oriole — Observed in 31 south and 22 north counties throughout the state. Early south 4/24 Hennepin OJ, 4/29 Fillmore NO, 4/29–30 Hennepin mob. Daily arrivals north 5/3–7 in ten counties, starting with Aitkin and Becker.

Finches to Weaver Finches

Pine Grosbeak — Reported through mid-March in Hubbard, Itasca and St. Louis, plus 4/7 Lake of the Woods DS.

Purple Finch — Seen in 41 counties and in all regions, remarkably similar to the winter season. Late south 5/1 Dakota SL, 5/4 Fillmore DZ. Also observed near the periphery of breeding range 5/22 Chisago DZ.

House Finch — Seen in 49 counties throughout the state.

Red Crossbill — Only reports: 4/8 Lake of the Woods DS, 5/28 Clearwater ABo.

White-winged Crossbill — Only two reports: 3/4 Aitkin WN, 4/16 Becker *vide* BBe.

Common Redpoll — Reported from seven south counties, where last seen 4/1 Dakota DBS. Seen in 16 north counties through 4/27 St. Louis TW.

Hoary Redpoll — Observed 3/12 Aitkin †CB, 4/1 Clearwater †DJo, plus several undocumented reports from St. Louis.

Pine Siskin — Reported from total of 27 counties statewide including Lyon, otherwise unrecorded in southwest or west-central regions (see winter report). No south reports after mid-May except 5/22 Lyon CMa.

49 counties throughout the state.

Evening Grosbeak — Seen in 11 north counties, mostly in north-central region, but also Becker and Pennington (4/28, JJ) in northwest.

American Goldfinch — Reported from

House Sparrow — Observed statewide.

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MKe	Matthew Kenne	TP	Thomas Polasik
MRN	Michael R. North	TT	Tom Tustison
MWy	Mary Wyatt	TW	Terry Wiens
NBr	Nick Brisson	VK	Vija Kelly
ND	Nelvina DeKam	WB	William L. Brown
NJ	Nancy A. Jackson	WL	William H. Longley
NO	Nancy Overcott	WM	William Marengo
NT	Nels F. Thompson	WN	Warren Nelson
NWi	Ned Winters	WS	Wally Swanson
OJ	Oscar L. Johnson		
PBD	Pat & Bob DeWenter	ANWR	Agassiz NWR
PBe	Pamela Benson	BSNWR	Big Stone NWR
PBi	Paul J. Binek	HSNWR	Hamden Slough NWR
PBu	Paul Budde	HRNR	Hawk Ridge Nature Reserve
PC	Philip Chu	MBW	Minnesota Birding Weekends
PE	Paul Egeland	TNWR	Tamarac NWR
PH	Paul Hertzell	mob	many observers

Last Stand of the Yellow-headed Blackbird in Ramsey County

Doug Jenness

Since 1993, I've conducted an annual survey to determine the number of sites in Ramsey County where Yellow-headed Blackbirds (*Xanthocephalus xanthocephalus*) nest, I also obtained an approximate figure for the number of nesting birds.

The unfortunate conclusion of this study is that both the numbers of nesting sites and nesting birds have declined. From five sites seven years ago (and a report of at least one more shortly before then), there is now only one definite site and possibly two more remaining.

Even though Ramsey is the smallest and most densely populated county in Minnesota, there remain many lakeshores, ponds, and potholes with extensive cattail vegetation that could provide nesting sites for the Yellow-headed Blackbird. I examined more than 40 locations, some of them many times. I undoubtedly missed a few spots, possibly including some that may have nesting birds. Moreover, there are two locations that I was unable or only partially able to investigate — North Oaks and the Twin Cities Army Ammunition Plant (TCAAP) in Arden Hills. The North Oaks Company and the Hill family denied a request that I made to investigate the undeveloped areas of North Oaks. In the TAACP, I was able to observe both the areas around Sunfish and Marsden lakes from outside the fence that surrounds the plant. In addition, the plant was opened twice in 1995 for public viewing and I took advantage of those opportunities.

All my observations were done from shore without the benefit of watercraft. A more accurate count of nests would have been possible with access by water. Another consideration in counting birds is

that Yellow-headed Blackbirds are polygynous and males may breed with more than one female in their territory. At the same time, nesting groups may have nonbreeding males. This means that it's invalid to assume that for each male observed, there is also a female (or vice versa) as there will likely be a disparity in the number of males and females.

Responses to a notice I submitted to the March–April 1993 *MOU Mouthpiece* asking for information about sightings of Yellow-headed Blackbirds proved to be very helpful. Eleven people responded with information about nine possible nesting sites in Ramsey County and two in neighboring Washington County. Three of these sightings — Martha Lake in Shoreview, Harriet Alexander Nature Center in Roseville, and County Road B and Fairview in Roseville — were apparently of wandering or transient birds. Immediate investigation and follow-up in subsequent years revealed no sign of nesting. I had a report of nesting in recent years around a pond at the north-eastern corner of the intersection of Lexington Avenue and County Road E, but since my investigation began in 1993 there has been no sign of nesting there.

The five locations where I have observed nesting Yellow-headed Blackbirds are: Howard Johnson Park (in Roseville off Ramsey County Road C between Hamline and Lexington Avenues); Oasis Park (in Roseville between Snelling and Fairview Avenues south of Lydia Avenue); Sunfish Lake (in Arden Hills in the TAACP); Black Tern Pond (in Little Canada near intersection of I-694 and Rice Street); and Matoska Park (in White Bear Lake). The following are detailed data on each site:

1. Howard Johnson Park. A note from Valerie Cunningham of St. Paul reported that she recalled seeing 10–12 male and female birds in 1988, and at least three pair in each of the four years through 1992, in the small pond and wetland in this park. In 1993, I observed only one pair and its nest at this site. Since that year, there has been no sign of Yellow-headed Blackbirds.

2. Oasis Park. In the pond and marshy area around this location, I observed four males and one female in 1993. In 1994, the most males and females seen were two each. I also observed one of the females sitting on a nest and on another occasion she brought food to the nest. In 1995, I saw only one male on three occasions between 1 May and 20 June, but no females. In subsequent years, I've neither seen nor heard any Yellow-headed Blackbirds in this location.

3. Black Tern Pond. This site was first brought to my attention by Joan Galli in 1994, when I saw as many as five males and two females at one time. In 1995, I again saw five males and one female. In 1996, I saw as many as six males and two females. In 1997, I made only one trip in which I saw two males and two females. In 1998, I saw five males and two females. Then, in 1999, there was a sudden reduction of the cattail marsh on the western end of the pond where they nested. I observed one pair on 26 May, but on two subsequent visits in June, neither saw nor heard any sign of them. In 2000, the cattails had virtually disappeared on this side of the pond and there were no Yellow-headed Blackbirds. (The Ramsey–Washington Metro Watershed District refers to this site, unnamed on Ramsey County maps, as Black Tern Pond as it is also a nesting area for Black Terns).

4. Sunfish Lake. This small pond located near the Hamline Avenue gate of the TAACP has a small clump of cattails at its eastern end. With binoculars, this site can be observed with some difficulty. Since 1993, I've seen at least one male at

this location every year except 1995. I've never definitely seen any females. In 1993, I saw two males on one visit; and in 1994, between 22 April and 10 May, I saw three males on one visit; two on each of two visits; and one on each of three visits. Since 1994, I've never spotted more than one male except on one visit on 26 May 1999, when I observed two. In 1995, I was able to walk through the TAACP and observe this cattail marsh close up. That year, however, a controlled burn of grassland in the arms plant destroyed all the vegetation along the east edge of Sunfish Lake, and there was no sign of Yellow-headed Blackbirds during that nesting season.

5. Matoska Park. A cattail marsh that stretches along White Bear Lake's western shore south from Matoska Park is the largest remaining colony of nesting Yellow-headed Blackbirds in Ramsey County. Since I started observing this area in 1994, the peak numbers from 12 visits are: 18 June 1994 — 15 males, 8 females, 3 nestlings; 13 June 1996 — 10 males, 12 females, 3 nestlings; 12 June 1998 — ten males, ten females, and two fledglings; 26 May 1999 — 12 males and 4 females. In 2000, the cattail marsh was reduced some, apparently due to higher water level, and there were fewer birds. On a 20 June visit, I spotted six males and three females. Over the past seven years, I have observed at this location nest-building activities, females brooding, and females bringing food to nestlings and to fledglings just out of the nest. I have also heard the cheeping of young from nests that I couldn't see.

As I didn't know at the beginning of this study what, if any, trends would be revealed, I didn't start with the aim of probing the causes of the decline of Yellow-headed Blackbirds in Ramsey County. Such a review would require more rigorous scrutiny than I have conducted. A thorough examination of the productivity of the water in the nesting sites — acidity, depth, number of aquatic insects, and presence of insect predators

— would be required. However, a few observations can be made.

In all the sites where Yellow-headed Blackbirds have been observed in the past seven years, Red-winged Blackbirds continue to nest. Other studies have convincingly demonstrated that Red-winged don't drive the Yellow-headed out of their nesting territories. Yellow-headed Blackbirds are larger and more aggressive and will drive the Red-winged out of tracts they have laid claim to. Therefore the reasons for the decline have to be elsewhere.

Yellow-headed Blackbirds are more selective about their nesting sites than are Red-winged. They prefer emergent vegetation (in our area, cattails). As Orians (1980) noted in *Some Adaptions of Marsh-nesting Blackbirds*, Yellow-headed Blackbirds "breed only on high productivity lakes and marshes. They raise their young mostly on aquatic insect prey and they seldom forage in trees." Either the drying up of the water in cattail marshes or an increase in the water above the cattails' tolerance level can eliminate suitable Yellow-headed habitat.

There has been a rise in the water level in Black Tern Pond that has led to a dying off of the cattails on the Yellow-headed nesting site. The effect this is having on other species in this wetland is not yet clear. This location has been a nesting site for Black Terns, Mallards, Wood Ducks, Pied-billed Grebes and, at least for the past four years, a pair of Common Loons. Numerous other species feed here, including four kinds of heron, Forster's Terns, and on one occasion an immature Bald Eagle. When I queried the Ramsey-Washington Metro Watershed District this year about the cause of the water level rise, they indicated that the pond has no outlet and any increase in run-off will raise the water level. They are looking into how to resolve this problem. I have observed a similar development at Laddie Lake in Blaine just a half mile or so north of the Ramsey-Anoka County line. Until the mid-1990s, as many as 40-50 Yellow-headed Black-

birds were in the marshes around that lake during nesting season, but due to the virtual decimation of cattails on the northern side of the lake, only a few birds still nest there.

The cattails at Oasis and Howard Johnson parks don't appear to have changed much in the past seven years. It's possible city construction around the rink and arena near the edge of the marsh at Howard Johnson Park may have affected the conditions in that nesting site. The pond and marsh at Oasis Park lie just north of a large circuit board factory that may have operations that are adversely affecting the habitat there.

It increasingly appears that in a short time this handsome bird will no longer be found nesting in Ramsey County. This will indeed be a loss.

Acknowledgments

I appreciate the reports of sightings and possible nesting sites received from Craig Andresen, Don Crotty, Valerie Cunningham, Joan Galli, Burton Handy, Alice Herrington, Marea Rose Jenness, Leslie Peterson, M. Schultz, Stephanie Summers, and Ellen Seveningsen.

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BIRDING BY HINDSIGHT

A Second Look at MORC

Kim R. Eckert



It's time for a quiz! Put your books under your desk, get out your No. 2 pencil and a sheet of paper. There will be 12 questions, all of them True or False. And no cheating — keep your eyes on your own paper!

1) True or False: The acronym MORC stands for Mean Old Rejections Committee.

Contrary to popular belief and the perceptions of some, the answer is False. It actually stands for the Minnesota Ornithological Records Committee, a committee of the Minnesota Ornithologists' Union (MOU). And for extra credit, without looking, try to spell "Ornithological" and "Ornithologists", and tell me which word belongs with MORC and which one with MOU. Now, I've been a member of MORC since its inception in 1974 and a faithful MOU member since the 1960s, but I'll be the first to admit that for many these names are unwieldy, confusing — and how am I supposed to remember where that apostrophe goes, anyway?

2) True or False: MORC has no business telling birders what they can or cannot put on their personal lists.

That's absolutely true, and be aware this is something MORC has no interest in, has never done and never will. As a committee of MOU, the state bird club, MORC only acts as an editor of sorts, deciding which unusual records are included in MOU's historical record of bird sightings in the state. This historical record includes MOU's archives filed at the Bell Museum of Natural History in

Minneapolis and all those reports published in this journal and other MOU publications. Note, though, that one of these publications is an annual list supplement — and when a list is published it is no longer "personal", but subject to editing, just like any other published material.

3) True or False: MORC is the only records committee birders have to deal with.

Hardly. Almost all states and Canadian provinces have similar committees collecting and editing what birders report within their geographical boundaries. And within Minnesota, in a very real sense, there are literally as many records committees as there are birders. Really! You are your own personal committee, making a judgement each and every time you place an identity on a bird, deciding what to include on your personal lists.

Another example: did you participate on a Christmas Bird Count? Whatever you reported was submitted to another sort of one-person records committee — i.e., the CBC compiler. Indeed, although MORC is the only such entity reviewing this state's bird sightings on behalf of the MOU, birders could certainly form their own records committee on a more local level. Why? In order to edit and publish a checklist for your county or local nature preserve, or to decide which sightings to print in your bird club's newsletter.

Actually, the possibilities are endless and enticing. Here in Duluth we could

form DORC (although I suspect birders would just call us names). Fridley or Fairmont could create FORC, and when rejecting a record they could say, "Put a FORC in it, this record is done." And Pipestone's committee, PORC, might only accept dubious records "When pigs fly!"

Finally, keep in mind that no one is ever required to submit anything to MORC for review. Ideally, of course, every unusual sighting is documented so it can be included in the MOU's historical record of bird records, and the efforts of all birders who do so, no matter what the vote, are important and appreciated. But there will always be birds — some correctly identified, some not — which will only exist in someone's memory or personal records.

4) True or False: There must be some alternatives to having a records committee judge what birders see.

True, though they are hardly "Acceptable" options. (Get it?! MORC either votes Acceptable or Unacceptable. . . Never mind.) One alternative would be to include everything reported in *The Loon* or the MOU's archives without being edited — both fact and fiction together, with no way to distinguish the two. The opposite choice would be to publish and file only photographic or specimen records — all sight records by birders disregarded.

5) True or False: MORC has little interest in birds regularly found in Minnesota since it only votes on Casual and Accidental species and other rarities.

False, although on the surface this might seem true. In reality, MORC does evaluate lots of reports of Regular species when they involve birds out of season, out of their normal Minnesota range, or those which are rare and often subject to misidentifications. There are also many more documented reports of Regulars not considered by MORC which are reviewed by seasonal reports editors.

If you stop and think about it, there are certainly many more Regular species seen and reported (and misidentified) than there are Casuals or Accidentals, but obviously birders do not have the time to

document every bird they see. Nor does MORC have the time to vote on them. After all, when there is an erroneous report of a normal species within its normal season and range, its impact is negligible within the context of all the other accurate reports of this same species. (Another way to rationalize all this: if, for example, a Song Sparrow is misidentified as a Savannah, odds are sooner or later this will be offset by a Savannah mistaken for a Song.)

6) It's been said that having a record judged Unacceptable is nothing to be ashamed of or to get angry about — that, after all, most MORC members have had records of theirs rejected? No way!

Way! All birders make ID mistakes, and almost all MORC members have on occasion submitted records which were not accepted. While no one likes being judged or having their sightings excluded from the official record, remember that an Unacceptable vote only means the documentation provided was insufficient on its own to support the identification. It does not necessarily mean the observer didn't see the bird, that anyone misidentified anything. There are times when MORC has to reject a record's documentation even when it's thought the observer's identification was probably correct. And even if a mistake were actually made, we are supposed to learn from our mistakes: thus, an Unacceptable vote can be something constructive, not something to "grouse" about. (Get it?! Grouching about a bird record. . . Never mind.)

7) Wait a minute. This *Hindsight* series of articles is supposed to provide bird identification help — none of this stuff about MORC is relevant.

False. Since MORC reviews descriptions of birds, some correctly identified and others not, there is much to learn from these reports about the ID difficulties birders encounter, about those elements of written documentations which have the greatest import. And these records considered by MORC are easily found, and have been for 20 years. Without exception, since the Fall 1981 issue, every Spring and

Fall issue of *The Loon* has included an installment called "Proceedings of the Minnesota Ornithological Committee."

Want to improve your ID skills? Simply study these *Proceedings* articles, which include a summary of those records found Unacceptable and why. Study these and learn which species someone found difficult to identify, which similar species were not precluded, which field marks should be noticed and described the next time that species is encountered. You will also notice the reports of some species are turned down more than others. Obviously, then, it would be a good idea to take a second look when you encounter these species especially, and use care in your ID and documentation.

8) True or False: The three most important parts of documentation: Description! Description! Description!

You bet. Unless the bird you see is described as completely as possible, nothing else matters. Ain't no good at writin'? A simple field sketch is fine and typically more informative than a written description. Artistic talent isn't necessary — what is necessary, though, is that your sketch or description is of the actual bird you saw in the field, not what the bird looks like in the book.

Besides the actual description, however, there are other aspects of correct identifications and convincing documentations to be aware of, aspects MORC considers with the records it reviews:

—Are there similar species with which the bird in question could be confused? Unless the observer considers these other possibilities, MORC is left wondering if it could have been something else.

—Does the observer have experience with the species and those similar to it? As in everything else in life, there is no substitute for experience in the skill of bird identification.

—Did the observer know it was an unusual bird? If not, there's a good chance the observer did not carefully study and ID it. There's always a better chance of a cautious and critical ID when the observer is aware of the importance

of the find.

—How much time passed between the observation and the documentation? The less, the better. Trying to remember exactly what something looked like hours or days previously is difficult at best; field notes written during or just after the observation are always preferable and more convincing.

—Was a field guide used during or after the observation? Of course, most birders use a field guide to help identify what they see, but there's a natural tendency for the guide to unduly influence what was really seen. Especially after the passage of time, even if it's only a minute or two, the mind tends to remember the field guide picture more than the bird itself. MORC is especially suspicious when "it looked just like it does in the book."

—How well was the bird seen? Birds seen without binoculars, in poor light, at great distances, or for only a few seconds are sometimes reported but often misidentified.

—And how difficult is the species to identify (an Ash-throated Flycatcher report is more difficult to document than a Scissor-tailed); how unusual is it in Minnesota (thus, MORC will more critically examine a second-state-record Ash-throated than a near-Regular Scissor-tailed); and does the bird have a history or pattern of misidentifications (e.g., the Swainson's Hawk holds a dubious distinction — see below).

9) True or False: MORC has reviewed the documentations of 1,686 bird records.

False! By my count, there have been only 1,685 such votes. In truth, though, my count might be off some since MORC's filing system of records and votes in the earlier years, 1974-1980, was not as organized as it has been in the last 20 years when those *Proceedings* articles have been published on a regular basis. Also note this number only includes votes on identification (not on things like wild vs. captive origin), and that some records over the years have been considered more than once (but counted here only once).

Of these nearly 1,700 records, 477 were judged Unacceptable. These include: 225 votes on species now classified as Regular (some of which were formerly Casual or even Accidental, and thus voted on more often); 85 votes on Casual species; 132 on Accidentals; and there were 35 Unacceptable votes involving 22 species not currently included on the Minnesota list.

There is a point to reciting these numbers, by the way. And now brace yourself for a few more. Of the 313 species on the current Regular list, 84 have been voted on at least once and found Unacceptable. Of the 26 Casual species, 22 have had records rejected — I find it interesting that MORC has yet to turn down any records of King Eider, Red Phalarope, Burrowing Owl, and Rock Wren. And of Minnesota's 87 Accidentals, 77 of them have had Unacceptable records.

Again, as mentioned earlier, these data on Unacceptable records can play a role in improving your ID skills: the more often a record of a species is turned down, the more likely it is birders have difficulty with it, and the more attention and study paid to its field marks the better.

10) OK, it has to be reports of raptors, shorebirds, gulls, flycatchers, confusing fall warblers and sparrows that are turned down most often by MORC. True?

Well, that's mostly true, but it's not quite that simple. Remember that the number of Unacceptable records of a species is a function of more than just its ID difficulty. For one thing, Regular species are involved with relatively few votes. While all Casuals, Accidentals, and potential first state records require a MORC vote to be admitted to the historical record, generally a vote on a Regular species occurs only when seen out of season or out of range.

With this in mind, there have been these Unacceptable votes:

Raptors (including vultures): 84 votes, 17 species; gulls: 59 votes, 14 species; warblers: 45 votes, 19 species; shorebirds: 21 votes, 12 species; flycatchers: 19 votes, 11 species; sparrows: 16 votes, 8 species.

That raptors and gulls present so many ID problems and result in so many rejected records comes as no surprise. But it is difficult to explain why so many warbler records are turned down, especially considering hardly any of them have been so-called Confusing Fall Warblers. In fact, the warbler species with the most Unacceptable votes (7) is the Yellow-throated, whose ID is about as easy and straightforward as they come.

There are also other surprises to be found within this list of Unacceptable records. Why have there been so few such votes over the years on swans (3), accipiters (2), shrikes (1), thrushes (1), Chipping Sparrow (1), blackbirds (4), and Hoary Redpoll (0)? Part of the explanation is that all are Regular species (i.e., misidentified more often than they are voted on), but at the same time they all present real identification challenges for many birders.

Conversely, some species appear relatively and surprisingly often on the list. As a formerly Casual species, the now-Regular Western Tanager (9) used to be documented with some frequency, and its ID is not as easy as many think: molting male Summer Tanagers get mistaken for Westerns, and sometimes juvenile/female Scarlets have Western-like wing bars. And when the House Finch (11) began showing up as an Accidental in Minnesota around 1980, it was usually at someone's feeder, and the resident was typically a casual birder not used to documenting bird records. I find it less easy to explain, however, the number of rejected Black-headed Gull and Barn Owl records (6 each) — neither seems that much of an ID challenge.

11) True or False: This is just plain depressing, thinking about all these records MORC turns down.

Well, not really. On balance, there is actually some improvement in adequately documented records, in the sense that several species are turned down less often than they used to be. In part, this is due to several species attaining Regular status and requiring fewer votes. But

looking at the last ten years (1991–2000) and comparing them to MORC's previous years (1974–1989), there are now clearly fewer Unacceptable votes than before of these species: Clark's Grebe, Ross's Goose, Swainson's Hawk, Ferruginous Hawk, Prairie Falcon, House Finch, California Gull, Black-headed Grosbeak, Whooping Crane, Barn Owl, MacGillivray's Warbler, and Anhinga.

There are, though, a few species which show the opposite trend — more rejected records in the last ten years than previously: Red-throated Loon, Gyrfalcon, Laughing Gull, Sprague's Pipit, Western Sandpiper, and Black-headed Gull. It would appear, unfortunately, that birders' skills at identifying and documenting these six have been declining.

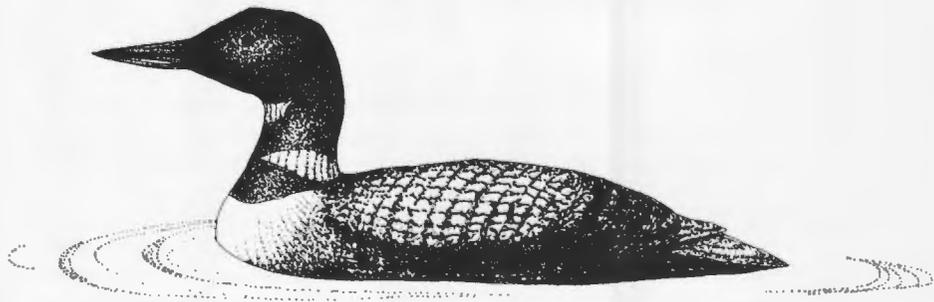
12) There's something missing here, isn't there? I smell another *Hindsight* sequel in the works!

True enough. What's missing, of course, is the list of birds for which there

are the most Unacceptable records — i.e., the species which have a noteworthy history of being misidentified and/or inadequately documented. Until Part II of this *Hindsight* installment appears, see if you can guess what they are: there are 17 of them (some already named earlier in this article) which have been involved with seven or more rejected records.

So, how did you do on the quiz? If you answered all the questions correctly, mail your test paper to the Chairman of MORC, c/o the address below, and you will receive one free 7–0 Acceptable vote on the next record you document. And if you didn't do so well, if you got less than half the answers right, come up to the blackboard after school and write 1,685 times: "I will not confuse Ornithological Records Committees with Ornithologists' Unions."

Class dismissed! **8255 Congdon Blvd., Duluth, MN 55804.**



NOTES OF INTEREST

AMERICAN AVOCETS POSSIBLY BREEDING IN TRAVERSE COUNTY — On 15 May 2000, I was birding in southern Traverse County when I spotted an American Avocet sitting on a small "island" in a temporary wetland. For the next 20 minutes, while I scanned for ducks and shorebirds, the avocet never moved from its position. A Common Grackle then showed up near the avocet. The avocet defended its territory by making four "rushes" at the grackle to drive it off. After the grackle moved off, a second avocet appeared. The second avocet then sat on the exact same spot while the first avocet proceeded to feed nearby.



Finally, the "light went on" and I realized that they might have a nest on the island. This island was mostly bare ground with sparse grasses and other vegetation. The nest was adjacent to a small (4-5") shrub in a tuft of vegetation (grass, etc.) and was about 100 yards distant from the road. The wetland was located 1.5 miles north of the Big Stone County line on Traverse County road 9.

Although I was unable to see any eggs, based on the pair's behavior I have to believe that this was a nest site. I am unaware of the outcome of this nest. I watched the pair for another 15 minutes and then left with the second bird still sitting on the nest. Also, there were two other avocets seen from county road 9 on a lake about one mile west from here. I saw two avocets on two different parts of the lake but did not see any evidence of nesting.

American Avocets were recorded nesting in Minnesota in the summer of 1999 when six adults were found with eight young in Big Stone County (*The Loon* 72:22).
William Marengo, 15670 - 92nd Pl. N., Maple Grove, MN 55369.

FEMALE BLACK-HEADED GROSBEAK IN LYON COUNTY — On 13 May 2000 at



about 1:00 P.M., I found a female Black-headed Grosbeak in Cottonwood, Lyon County. It was seen with five male Rose-breasted Grosbeaks and was about the same size. I first thought it might be a male Black-headed because it had such a bright yellow-buff breast and belly, but further viewing revealed that it was a female.

I watched the bird through 8X Swarovski binoculars from a distance of about 30 feet. It had very light black streaks on the sides of its breast. There were only two or three streaks on each side. It had a

dark bill, white eye stripe, and a light median stripe on its head. The cheek was brown. The back was an even brown. The wing bars were not very bright.

After about 45 seconds viewing time, it flew down the windbreak. I returned to the area to look for the bird a couple of hours later. I did not relocate it but did see two female Rose-breasted Grosbeaks. The contrast between these birds and the previous one was remarkable. The Rose-breasted had dirty white breasts with extensive dark streaks across the whole breast. Their beaks were much lighter colored. Also, their heads and back were more mottled brown. I have seen Black-headed Grosbeaks on several occasions in the Black Hills of South Dakota, and in Arizona and California.
Paul Egeland, 8633 Harrison Circle, Bloomington, MN 55437-1610.

BLACK-NECKED STILT IN MARTIN COUNTY — On 24 May 2000, I found a Black-



necked Stilt (*Himantopus mexicanus*) at Pierce Lake in Rolling Green Township, Martin County. I arrived at the boat landing on the east side of the lake just after 7:00 A.M. Almost immediately, I spotted the bird walking towards me along the shore from the north, about 100 yards away. It was breezy, sunny, and about 60 degrees. I watched the bird work its way towards me for some time through my spotting scope.

I then searched the rest of the lake for other birds and occasionally returned to look at the stilt, which was alone. I wandered south along the shore for awhile and returned to the boat landing at about 7:45 A.M. The stilt was now directly off the landing, about 30-40 yards away. I walked past the landing and continued birding along the shore. The stilt gave several loud "chap chap chaps" when I passed by but it did not fly. I scanned the area when I returned to the boat landing at about 10:30 A.M., but did not see the bird again.

Field marks noted during observation, without use of references: very long reddish-pink legs; long neck; deep black back, wings, hindneck, top of head, and eye patch

connecting to back of head; white below, with white spot above red eye; white passing over the top of its black, needle-like, slightly upturned bill that was longer than the head. I have seen this species in California during the winter, but never in Iowa or Minnesota. **Matthew Kenne, 709 N. Phillips, Algona, IA 50511.**

POSSIBLE BREEDING GOLDEN-CROWNED KINGLETS — In both June (with John Wallner) and July (with Susan Anderson) of 1999, I observed a pair of Golden-crowned Kinglets in the Rice Creek Chain of Lakes Park Reserve near Centerville in Anoka County. On the west side of Centerville Lake there is a small spruce tree plantation. It is difficult to describe its exact location because the footpath leading into it is barely noticeable from the road.



On 7 June, John Wallner and I were doing an Anoka County count and discovered the kinglets. On 1 July, Susan Anderson and I were also doing an Anoka County count and found the kinglets in the exact same area. This time they were quite agitated. However, because of time constraints and a host of mosquitoes, we only spent a few minutes in the area and did not discover a nest or any young.

Although Golden-crowned Kinglets are primarily boreal forest breeders, Janssen, in *Birds in Minnesota*, states that an old record indicates historical breeding at Lake Vadnais in Ramsey County. We suspect, but did not confirm, a possible breeding record for Anoka County. **Robert Holtz, 668 Overlook Dr., Roseville, MN 55113.**

BLUE-WINGED WARBLER IN CLAY COUNTY — Just before noon on 30 May 2000, I heard a call in Gooseberry Park, Moorhead, Clay County, that I have heard three times in the last ten years while birding across the Red River in Fargo, North Dakota. The call, a sneeze-like "aaah-choo," had turned out on two of these occasions to be a Blue-winged Warbler but once it was a "Brewster's" hybrid.



After following the bird along a row of high trees, I got a good look at what was clearly a male Blue-winged Warbler in full breeding plumage. The forehead, throat, and underparts as far down as I was able to see were bright yellow. From the thin beak, a black line ran back through and beyond its eye. Its back was fairly dark green and the wings gray, with white wingbars. These field marks were even clearer when the bird flew to an evergreen near a picnic pavilion and jumped from a branch perhaps fifteen feet off the ground. I observed the bird for two minutes or so in good light with Leica 10x binoculars. I believe this would be a first Clay County record, but an overdue record given the Fargo sightings. **Bob O'Connor, 1625 Third St. S., Moorhead, MN 56560-4176.**

MINNESOTA'S FIFTH BLACK-THROATED GRAY WARBLER — On the evening of 23 May 2000, while birding with my wife Sharon, I discovered a Black-throated Gray Warbler (*Dendroica nigrescens*) on Lighthouse Point in Two Harbors, Lake County. The bird was first seen in direct sunlight (with the sun at my back) at 6:30 P.M. I first noticed the yellow dot on its lores and two white facial stripes, one superciliary and one mustachial, with a broad black line through its eye. The back was light gray and the throat was a mottled gray, rather than solid black.

Other than the dot on its lores, there was no yellow anywhere on the bird. It was similar in size to nearby (within 40 feet) Magnolia, Black-throated Green, and Yellow-rumped warblers. It lacked the "no-neck" appearance of a Black-and-white Warbler and it did not forage close to the trunk of the white spruce where



it was initially seen. I did not note leg color but given such a close view (~12 feet away and 3–4 feet off the ground), I'm sure I would have noticed if it had pink legs like a Blackpoll Warbler.

The second observation was about two hours later with three other observers — Kim Eckert, Sharon Lind, and Peder Svingen. Sharon first relocated the bird about 30 feet up in a white pine. I again noticed the yellow dot on its lores and the two bold facial stripes. The second observation was longer than the first (about 5 minutes vs. 30 seconds) but the viewing conditions were better the first time. The bird did not vocalize and it did not respond well to pishing.

According to Dunn and Garret (*A Field Guide to Warblers of North America*, 1997) this species feeds nearly exclusively on insects by “deliberate gleaning and reaching, with occasional hover-gleaning and short sallies.” This is consistent with the behavior observed in Two Harbors. In the Midwest, the majority of vagrant records pertain to fall birds or those attempting to overwinter, and in the northeast “about two-thirds of the roughly 75 records through 1995 are for fall, eight are for winter, and 13 are for spring” (Dunn and Garret 1997). This is only the fifth record for Minnesota. The four previous records are 24 April 1938 in Hennepin County (*Birds in Minnesota*, Janssen 1987), 14 May 1956 in Lac Qui Parle County (*The Flicker* 28:166), 31 August 1991 in Hennepin County (*The Loon* 63:272–273), and 29 October 1994 in Chisago County (*The Loon* 66:207). **Jim Lind, 320 2nd Avenue, Two Harbors, MN 55616.**

ADULT CALIFORNIA GULL IN LYON COUNTY — At 8:00 A.M. on 13 May 2000, I found an adult California Gull at Sham Lake, approximately one-half mile east of the town of Cottonwood in Lyon County. The bird was sitting on a sandbar about 30–40 yards from the road. Since this was directly north of the highway, viewing conditions were excellent. I watched it for about 15 minutes through 8x Swarovski binoculars and a 30x Kowa scope.

This was a moderately large gull in comparison to four nearby Ring-billed Gulls. It appeared to be about 20% larger and was an adult in breeding plumage. Head was white, mantle was dark gray — much darker than the Ring-billeds, but not as dark as the slate gray of Lesser Black-backed Gull. The tail was white.

Its bill was larger than a Ring-billed's but was not a large, heavy bill. The color was deep yellow. It had a distinct but small black spot at the end of the lower mandible. Behind this spot was a larger red spot (very obvious), again only on the lower mandible. Both eyes were dark. The legs were grayish-green.

This bird did not fly while being watched. I returned about an hour later but it had left the area. **Paul Egeland, 8633 Harrison Circle, Bloomington, MN 55437-1610.**

TRICOLORED HERON IN DAKOTA COUNTY — During the mid-afternoon on 29 May 2000, I found a Tricolored Heron (*Egretta tricolor*) at the Bullfrog Pond just south of Hastings, Dakota County. I first observed the bird in flight over the pond at about 250–300 yards for approximately 30 seconds before it disappeared from sight behind a line of trees. I knew that I had just seen a Tricolored Heron because of its white belly. Because I knew the bird was rare and probably had not been seen before in Dakota County, I tried to find a way to get a more definitive look at the bird. It was then that I noticed a paved bike path that took me around the line of trees that had initially blocked my view. When I walked down the path, I came upon the bird standing in a lagoon.

It was now about 150–175 yards away, so I observed the bird quite well. I first



noticed the large sandy or beige-colored patch on the lower back. From a side view, the head and neck were dark slaty blue-gray, shading to maroon or chestnut-maroon at the shoulder area. The wings were dark and about the same shade of dark blue-gray as the head and upper neck. There were two whitish head plumes that were very distinctive. From a frontal view, it showed one or more thin whitish stripes that ran vertically along the front of its neck. When viewed head on, the upper breast was a chestnut brown and the lower belly was white.

Its bill seemed gray throughout, with perhaps a slightly darker tip. The leg color was not specifically noted, as the bird was standing in fairly deep water. The bird seemed roughly the same size as a Snowy Egret or a Little Blue Heron. It moved cautiously while feeding, but I did see it once make a quick lunging move. The total observation time was about 15–25 minutes under favorable conditions from an angle above the bird.

Many observers, including Karol Gresser, Jeff Dains, John Futcher and Dick Ruhme, were able to see this first Dakota County record over the next several days. **Tom Tustison, 2165 Watson Avenue, St. Paul, MN 55116.**

CAROLINA WREN VISITS OTTER TAIL COUNTY— On 21 November 1999, we



observed a Carolina Wren feeding on the ground near our bird feeders. The wren was eating cracked corn and small pieces of suet that had fallen off of a hanging suet cake. While the bird foraged on the ground, it held its tail in an upright position, similar to other wren species. Other characteristics that distinguish the Carolina Wren from other wren species include the reddish-brown on the head and back, the buffy tan with a slight hint of orange on the flanks, and a distinctive white eye stripe.

We knew that the wren would need to eat more than cracked corn and small pieces of suet to survive the winter in Otter Tail County. After consulting with Leslie Kotke from Rochester, Olmsted County, we built a 12" x 8" x 8" heated mealworm feeder. The feeder had three holes, one on each end and one in the back. The front of the feeder was plexiglass, so we could observe the wren while it was feeding. We placed a small ceramic bowl wrapped with heat tape in the mealworm feeder to ensure that the mealworms would stay warm and active throughout the day.

We were concerned that the wren would not fly into the holes of the mealworm feeder, so we purposely left the plexiglass off the front. But our concerns were unfounded. The wren began using the feeder the first day we put it in out, using the entrance as well as the holes.

Throughout the winter, the wren was a regular customer at the mealworm feeder. We observed the wren feeding there up to fifteen times in one day. Each time the wren visited the feeder, it would consume at least nine medium-sized mealworms. During the coldest part of the winter, we would place about 150–170 mealworms in the feeder daily. Even though we observed Black-capped Chickadees and White-breasted Nuthatches stopping at the feeder periodically, we believe that the Carolina Wren ate the majority of the mealworms. Like clockwork, the wren continued to visit the feeder daily until 22 February 2000.

During late February through April, the wren was never observed in the area or feeding on the mealworms. Even though we continued to put mealworms in the feeder, they remained untouched at the end of each day. Then on 18 April 2000, we observed the Carolina Wren foraging in a wood pile in our front yard. Once the wren reappeared in the yard, it began using the mealworm feeder daily, though on a more sporadic basis.

On 12 May 2000, just by accident, we noticed the wren fly into the small hole in

the protective cover of the propane tank that fuels our house. We opened the propane tank cover to investigate and found an igloo-shaped nest made of moss, leaves, pine needles, and various grasses. Inside the nest we discovered five white eggs speckled with small brown spots. The wren was observed visiting the nest for the next week, but then abandoned it shortly afterwards.

We wondered where the Carolina Wren had gone during her two month disappearance. Had she gone somewhere to find a mate? We never saw two Carolina Wrens at the same time in our yard, nor did we ever hear a singing male. Since the nest was abandoned and the eggs never hatched, we can only speculate on what happened. Our best guess is that due to hormonal changes in her body and her good physical condition she instinctively built a nest and laid eggs. She just forgot one important ingredient — a mate! The last day that we saw the Carolina Wren in our yard was 24 May 2000. **Eddy & Judy Edwards, 23808 Big Buck Road, Underwood, MN 56586.**

RECORD OF GROUND-NESTING LONG-EARED OWLS IN AITKIN COUNTY —



An owl was flushed from its nest in a small tamarack/alder bog at the back of my property in Spencer Township in Aitkin County on 25 May 2000. The brief view from the rear gave no clear field marks, but I was able to see the brownish back of a medium-sized owl. I also thought I observed an ear tuft that would mean Long-eared Owl. My sister Cindy, who also observed the bird flush, talked to Warren Nelson, who suggested it might be a Short-eared Owl, since Long-eared Owls are not generally known to be ground nesters. The nest was about nine inches across in the middle of the base of an alder bush. It was made of just a few sticks arranged loosely in a circle, and contained four white eggs.

Uncertain of the identification, I returned alone to the nest on the evening of 26 May, where I again flushed an owl off the nest. This time the owl landed in a tamarack tree about 25 feet from the nest and 40 feet from me, where it proceeded to hiss and click at me. I had a clear view of its face in sunlight with 7x35 Nikon binoculars for about five minutes. The facial disk was a pale rust color on the outside of each yellow eye, gray between the eyes, and black above and below the eye. Lighter gray whiskers surrounded the black bill. Ear tufts that were equal in length to the distance from the top of the head to the eyes, were present approximately above each eye. Although the body was mostly concealed, I thought I could see the bark-like pattern on the breast and belly. When it flew again, the dark wrist patches were apparent. It certainly looked like a Long-eared Owl to me, but in 13 years of birding, I had never seen one!

Luckily, when I returned to the house, Warren Nelson was on the phone to ask if he could come see the nest and confirm the identification. So, on 28 May, a small party of observers went off once more. Hoping to get a picture of an adult on the nest, Warren and I sneaked to within about twenty feet of the nest. I looked into the alder for several minutes, and was just about to conclude that the owl was not on the nest when it flushed again. This time it did not go far before landing and clicking at us. A second adult owl also appeared and made noises at us. This owl, while obviously another Long-eared Owl, had a much paler face, with virtually no trace of orange in the facial disk. Both owls stayed close to the nest. The paler one even did a bit of a broken wing display low in a tamarack to try to draw us away from the nest.

After Warren photographed the adults, we moved forward to photograph the eggs in the nest. Much to my surprise, there were two white, fluffy owlets in the nest. A third egg was cracked all around, although the owlet had not yet broken though. The fourth egg was mostly hidden under the other young owls. My wife Peggy, son Matt, and Cindy walked in to see the nest, and after a quick look and a few pictures, we



Long-eared Owl nest on the ground, Spencer Township, Aitkin County, 28 May 2000. Photo by Warren Nelson.

left the scene. A friend of Warren's, who did not enter the alders, also got a look at one of the agitated adults flying around the tamaracks. **Tom Jones, Route 4, Aitkin, MN 56431.**

ADULT MISSISSIPPI KITE IN HENNEPIN COUNTY — At about 7:00 A.M. on 14 May 2000, I found an adult Mississippi Kite near the northeast corner of Long Meadow Lake at the Minnesota Valley NWR, Hennepin County. The bird appeared from over the treetops east of me, flying roughly 60 feet above the ground and directly toward a row of large dead trees. As it passed within about 70 yards, I saw an all-grayish raptor-like bird, about Peregrine-sized, with pointed wings and a fairly long squared-off tail. My first thought was, "That looks like a kite." Since a White-tailed Kite was being seen at this time in the Twin Cities area I considered that species, but this bird looked darker and too uniformly-colored.



The bird landed near or at the top of one of the dead trees. It perched at approximately a 60 degree angle, and looked thin relative to the Red-tailed Hawks that I saw on these same trees. It was close to the size of an American Crow that dived at it. With 8X binoculars I could see from my distance (estimated at about 200 yards) that the bird was definitely a kite. The wings were long, so the bird looked falcon-like when perched. Its body plumage appeared pale gray, darkening toward the tail. In contrast the head, which looked disproportionately small, was very white. Because of its coloration, I was now almost sure this was a Mississippi Kite, but I wanted to get a good look at its tail. After a couple of minutes, it flew back in the

direction from which it had first appeared. As it dropped from its high perch, I concentrated on the tail and saw that its upper surface was blackish-gray, contrasting strongly with the paler rump and back.

Other than the white head, blackish tail, and an impression that the bird was darker toward the wingtips when perched, I only saw the bird as gray. I saw no brownish tones in its plumage. Tom Tustison visited the area that afternoon and watched the kite flying near the Minnesota River, in both Hennepin and Dakota counties, for a total of 25 minutes between 2:30 and 3:45 P.M. Others were unable to relocate the bird later that day. This is the first acceptable record of this Casual species for Hennepin and Dakota counties. **Steve Carlson, 3904 Xenwood Ave. S., St. Louis Park, MN 55416.**

POSSIBLE EARLY FALL NORTHERN GOSHAWK IN RAMSEY COUNTY — On the morning of 29 September 1999, I was birding in the Upper Lake end of Crosby Park. From the boardwalk which divides the marshy area between Upper Lake and Crosby Lake, I noticed a fairly large raptor which I observed for three to five minutes on the dead branch of a tree at the edge of a wooded area. The bird had a long tail, dark brown tail bands, and breast and belly streaking.

Using my *National Geographic Field Guide*, I puzzled between Cooper's Hawk and Northern Goshawk. The brown streaking in front went down as far as I could see, but I couldn't tell for sure if it went down over the entire belly. However, two things made me choose Northern Goshawk over Cooper's Hawk. This bird appeared larger than any Cooper's Hawk I have ever seen. Secondly, the supercilium was reasonably distinct, running all the way to the base of the bill.

When reviewing other field guides, plus *National Geographic* again, I noticed the similarities with also the Red-shouldered and Broad-winged Hawks. However, the bird I observed appeared to definitely be too large for either of those two. **Robertz Holtz, 668 Overlook Dr., Roseville, MN 55113.**

McCOWN'S LONGSPUR AT 40th AVENUE WEST IN DULUTH — Shortly before 6:00 P.M. on 8 May 2000, Pamela Benson and I were walking around the perimeter of the impoundment at the 40th Avenue West/Erie Pier area in Duluth, St. Louis County. I was on top of the dike and Pam was on the road, when she pointed and shouted that something had flown ahead of her. I scanned the road with my binoculars but didn't notice anything unusual. I kept going, and then a bird flew up and landed between a couple of the puddles left by the rainstorms of the previous night.

As the bird flew, I knew that it wasn't just another of the many Savannah and Song Sparrows that were present that day. Something about the tail flashed the idea of Northern Wheatear into my head, but I also heard a weak longspur-like call and Pam agreed that it must be one of the longspurs. I spotted it sitting completely still in a depression on the road. The first thing I noticed was a chestnut or rufous patch on its "shoulder." I called this out to Pam and verbalized what I could see: a black cap that became lighter at the back of its head, grayish nape, gray face with a dark eye, and black "mustache stripe" extending down and backward along the lower part of its face.

By this time, Pam had reached me and was also looking at the bird. The first thing she commented on was the shoulder patch. The bird scurried forward a bit and gave us a better view as it came onto slightly higher ground. Its back was streaked brown and gray, and when it faced us head on, we could see a large black patch on its

breast. This patch came up to a straight, horizontal border with the gray of the face and throat. The main impression of the facial markings was very gray, with the limited black described above. The eye looked beady and completely surrounded by gray, i.e., not connected to any of the darker markings. The bill shape was sparrow-like.

We moved closer and the bird flew. Again it gave a soft, rattling note. Most striking was the extensive white on the outer margins of its tail. This extended almost across the entire tail at the middle, but curved out towards the corners so that the tail tip was mostly dark (in retrospect, this must have suggested wheatear when I first saw it). The chestnut wing patches were quite noticeable in flight. The manner of flight was low to the ground, with a floating, swooping movement as it moved along the dike.

Something about this bird seemed very familiar. I have much more experience with fall/winter longspurs than with breeding birds, so was struggling to remember breeding plumages of the various longspurs. I knew that the extent of the white in the tail might be significant, and that those chestnut patches and the facial pattern would be important. When I got home, I opened Rising's *The Sparrows of the United States and Canada* and the adult male breeding-plumaged McCown's fairly leapt off the longspur plate. I uttered a gasp as I slammed the book shut and asked Pam to start writing down what she had seen. I regret not making notes on the spot, but have no doubt that it was, in fact, a male McCown's Longspur.

The light conditions were ideal since the overcast had broken and the late afternoon sun lit up the bird clearly without glare. It stayed in the short grass near puddles or on the road itself. We watched it for about ten minutes from a distance of about 30 feet. Several birders including Tim Dawson, Dave Grossheusch, Sarah Kohlbry, and Peder Svingen were able to relocate the bird that evening but extensive searching the next day brought no additional sightings.

This is only the third recorded sighting of McCown's Longspur in Minnesota during the past 100 years! The other two records are 11 June 1982 in Grand Marais, Cook County (*The Loon* 54:195) and 19–20 October 1986 at 40th Avenue West in Duluth (*The Loon* 58:198–199). **Dave Benson, 427 N. 16th Avenue E., Duluth, MN 55812-1268.**

OBSERVATIONS OF RED AND GROUND SQUIRREL PREDATION ON BIRDS VISITING A FEEDER —



Observing birds at a feeder is relaxing, amusing, and educational. The feeder often becomes the focus of activity not only for birds but also other animals in search of an easy meal. During the summer of 1999, I had the opportunity to observe a number of instances of squirrel interactions with birds at two different feeder sites.

One morning in June 1999, my Columbia Heights, Hennepin County, backyard feeder (filled with black oil sunflower seeds) was being visited by Black-capped Chickadees, House Finches and House Sparrows. Many birds wait their turn at the lone feeder perched on wires strung between two poles. Gray and red squirrels had been observed using these lines to gain access to the feeder. As I watched the activity, a red squirrel emerged from a nearby spruce tree and stood on one of the poles. A chickadee was perched approximately one meter from the pole between the squirrel and the feeder. Without warning, the squirrel ran across the wire and grabbed the bird with its front paws. Feathers were pulled out as the small bird struggled to free itself. The confrontation lasted only seconds as the bird managed to escape. The squirrel then proceeded to the feeder. I am unsure whether the squirrel was attempting to kill the bird and it escaped, or it intended only to chase the bird from its path and when it did not fly away, grabbed it to frighten it away.

On 23 August 1999, I observed a 13-lined Ground Squirrel eating a bird. The



Ground Squirrel with a bird's wing, August 1999, Plymouth, Hennepin County. Photo by Frank De Santo.

rel catch a bird, but during the week of 23–27 August, four dead birds (all headless and either female House Sparrows or female House Finches) were seen outside of the same hole. No other predators were observed during this time. Additionally, the squirrel was observed eating parts of the birds on numerous occasions.

On 22 September 1999, a second ground squirrel was observed. Both individuals were seen near the burrow entrance at the same time. They were about the same size and it is unclear which, if either, was the alleged predator. Perhaps both? **Frank M. De Steno, 990 – 9th Avenue NW, New Brighton, MN 55112.**

ROSS'S GEESSE: A COMMON SIGHT DURING THE SPRING 2000 WATERFOWL MIGRATION —

Following last year's experience of finding at least some Ross's Geese (*Chen rossii*) in most of the large concentrations of migrating Snow Geese that we observed (*The Loon* 71:223–228), we were not surprised by similar observations during the spring migration of 2000. We observed migrating Ross's Geese on multiple dates, including a new record high count of **198** on 11 March 2000 in Freeborn County!



Our counts of Ross's and percentages of Ross's among the mixed flocks of "light geese" are conservative numbers based on careful identification. In many cases, additional Ross's Geese were undoubtedly present but could not be picked out due to distance, the density of the flocks, or other factors. This year's influx began as Paul found unusual numbers of Ross's Geese on the record early date of 27 February in Jackson (75) and Nobles (25) counties (these numbers extrapolated from an actual count of about 40 Ross's).

On 4 March 2000, we traveled together through southwestern Minnesota and found Ross's Geese in five different counties. The first was a single Ross's among a flock of about 100 Snow Geese just south of Fox Lake, Martin County. On Round Lake, Jackson County, we estimated that approximately 8,000 Snow Geese were already in the middle of the lake in a dense raft. As we watched, several hundred Snow Geese flew in and joined the raft — we counted at least 24 Ross's among the birds in flight and there were probably many more out on the lake. Elsewhere in Jackson County, we found 5 Ross's on the edge of a flock of 800 Snow Geese on the south side of

squirrel was outside of one of its holes in a grassy area along side of the building where I work in Plymouth. I walked out to the area and observed the remains of two birds outside of the hole. The next day, the carcasses were gone. An employee told me that crows had taken them. That afternoon, I observed the squirrel eating yet another bird. As I watched the squirrel over the subsequent days, it seemed to stalk the ground-feeding birds below a feeder. As there are only a maximum of four feeding stations on the feeder, many birds feed on the ground directly beneath. This tends to concentrate the birds in a small area under the feeder. On two occasions, I observed the ground squirrel charge into a small, mixed flock. All the birds flew away. I did not observe the ground squirrel

Skunk Lake WMA. Our next stop was Ocheda Lake, Nobles County, which was covered with several thousand Mallards and a raft of 2,500–3,000 Snow Geese. There were at least six Ross's on the periphery of this raft.

We continued on to Rock Lake in Lyon County, where about 2,000 Snow Geese were resting on the edge of the ice, and identified at least 10 Ross's. Late in the afternoon we returned to Shaokatan WMA, Lincoln County, where we had found 70 Ross's Geese during the 1999 spring migration. For approximately 1.5 hours, waves of Snow, Greater White-fronted, and Canada Geese flew over the WMA, heading to the northwest. We estimated approximately 10,000 Snows and 1,500–2,000 White-fronteds. Flock sizes ranged from less than a dozen to over 500 birds. We stopped counting obvious Ross's Geese at 30 and began estimating the percentage of Ross's among the flocks of light geese. Ross's consistently made up 1–5% of these flocks.

The following weekend we established yet another record high count for Ross's Geese in Minnesota. During the evening of 11 March, we positioned ourselves just west of Bear Lake, Freeborn County, as thousands of ducks and geese were leaving the lake to feed in nearby fields. Wave after wave passed over our heads, mostly within 200–300 yards. We estimated that about 5,000 Snow Geese passed over our location and counted a total of 198 Ross's Geese in this concentration of birds. Only obvious Ross's Geese were included in this total — we observed many more “small white geese” that could have been Ross's, but were not seen in enough detail to differentiate them. As noted in southwestern Minnesota the week before, 1–5% of many Snow Goose flocks were actually Ross's. However, we observed one flock of approximately 75 light geese that contained 50 Snows and 25 Ross's.

Subsequent observations on 1–2 April 2000 included the following ratios of Ross's to Snow Geese in western Minnesota: 3 of 100 at Shaokatan WMA, Lincoln County; a single among 150–200 at Salt Lake, Lac Qui Parle County; 20 of 1,000 near Otre Lake, Big Stone County; a single among 20 flying over Big Stone Lake, Big Stone County; and 5 of 50–75 at Mud Lake, Traverse County. We also found 4 among a flock of about 75 Greater White-Fronted Geese near Wheaton in Traverse County. These data seem to confirm that 1–5% of the flocks of light geese migrating through western Minnesota are Ross's Geese. **David F. Neitzel, 7716 Upper 24th St. N., Oakdale, MN 55128, and Paul E. Jantscher, 7533 15th Ave. S., Richfield, MN 55423.**

NORTHERN MOCKINGBIRD IN MARSHALL COUNTY — On the morning of Friday,



5 May 2000, I observed a Northern Mockingbird in northeastern Marshall County. The single bird was on a power line along County Road 49, about a quarter mile north of the intersection of County Road 49 and County Road 6. This is the main road approaching the headquarters of the Thief Lake Wildlife Management Area (WMA). The bird was on power lines adjacent to the highway, where the lines were close to the farm shelterbelt for the first farm on the west side of the road. I was driving north along the highway at about 10:00 A.M.

when I noticed the slender, long-tailed profile of a medium-sized bird that did not match the profile of any “power line” birds that would be expected in that area — like Mourning Doves or American Kestrels. I stopped, backed up, and was delighted to see my first Minnesota mockingbird.

The bird was not calling, but was hawking insects every few minutes and provided ample opportunity to observe its slender gray body, pearly gray breast, white patches on the wings, slender tail and slender slightly decurved bill. I observed the mockingbird for about 20 minutes as it allowed me to set up my tripod and photograph it with a 400 mm telephoto lens. A dark, cloudy sky prevented recording fine detail, but the distinct profile and white wing patch were apparent. The location was the east side of

the SE 1/4 of Section 5, Township 157 North, Range 41 West. The staff at Thief Lake WMA said that a mockingbird had been seen south of the refuge headquarters the previous summer. **Carrol L. Henderson, 640-119th Lane NE, Blaine, MN 55434.**

EASTERN SCREECH-OWL IN ST. LOUIS COUNTY— While banding Northern Saw-



whet Owls on my property in Rice Lake Township in St. Louis County, just outside the city limits of Duluth, I netted and banded a gray morph Eastern Screech-Owl on 9 October 1999 at 2:40

A.M. The bird's weight was 249 grams, wing and tail measurement were 165 and 81 mm, respectively. There was no sign of molt and it appeared in generally good health. The bird was heard calling several times on the following nights, and it was last heard on 14 October at 12:45 A.M.

This is only the third occurrence of Eastern Screech-Owl in St. Louis County. There are two unpublished records from the archives of the Minnesota Ornithologists' Union. The first record is of a bird found dead by G. C. Kuyava and R. R. Cohen on 11 November 1958 in downtown Duluth. The second record is from the town of Payne when a bird was found dead on 6 February 1964 by J. W. Gawboy.

Green and Jansen's book *Minnesota Birds: Where, When, and How Many* mentions three records. The third sighting was a casual reference of a Screech-Owl in Duluth "many years ago" with no details. **Frank Nicoletti, 4739 Chicago Ave, Duluth, MN 55803.**



Eastern Screech-Owl, 9 October 1999, Rice Lake Township, St. Louis County. Photo by Tim Dawson.

WHITE-EYED VIREO IN OTTER TAIL COUNTY — Early in the morning on 20 May 2000, I heard and then saw a White-eyed Vireo in the campground at Glendalough State Park, Otter Tail County. The bird began to sing around 5:00 A.M. I had heard this species in numerous locations in Texas only three weeks earlier. At about 5:15 A.M., I was able to observe and identify it visually but it flew off after about five minutes and could not be relocated.



This bird had a thick, black bill, dark legs, and a prominent light-colored eye. The top of its head was green. There was a dark line between the bill and eye, and a light yellow line above this dark line.

It had an olive-green back with two white wingbars and a yellow wash on its sides (flanks). This is a first Otter Tail County record and only the second occurrence in northern Minnesota. One was seen near Moorhead, Clay County on 28 May 1989 (*The Loon* 61:148-149). **Craig Mandel, 10211 Cedar Lake Rd #120, Minnetonka, MN 55305-3245.**

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Anthony X. Hertzelt and Ann M. Hertzelt

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Corrections to *The Loon*

Volume 71:

Under "Two Fatal Peregrine Falcon Territorial Fights" (*The Loon* 71:182-186), add to column 1, page 182, the states of Indiana and Ohio, and delete Oklahoma.

Corrections to "The Season"

Volume 64:

Change date from 10/26 to 10/27 for the **BLACK-LEGGED KITTIWAKE** in Cook and add additional record 11/18 Cook (mouth of Temperance R.) KB, SSt, Fall 1991 report (*The Loon* 64:90-91). The latter is published as a Note of Interest (*The Loon* 64:124).

Volume 69:

Delete the **Eared Grebe** breeding record in *Rice*, Summer 1996 report (*The Loon* 69:14).

Volume 71:

Add **Clark's Grebe** 4/9 (record early date) Traverse (L. Traverse) CMA, Spring 1999 report (*The Loon* 71:191).

Add **Ross's Goose** 4/17-18 **Benton** (near Rice) HD, Spring 1999 report (*The Loon* 71:192).

Change date from 4/30-5/1 to 4/23-24 (record early date) for the **Western Tanager** in Kandiyohi, Spring 1999 report (*The Loon* 71:210).

Add **LARK BUNTING** 5/20 Yellow Medicine (male, Normania Twp.) PE, Spring 1999 report (*The Loon* 71:187-215).

Delete the **Brewer's Blackbird** overwintering in Becker, Winter 1998-99 report (*The Loon* 71:143).

Volume 72:

Add new county breeding record for **American White Pelican** 5/12-6/30 *Cass* (Leech L.) Steve Mortensen, Summer 1999 report (*The Loon* 72:17).

Change the county of the Birch Lake dam **Long-tailed Duck** from St. Louis to Lake, Winter 1999-00 report (*The Loon* 72:146).

Delete the **Red-shouldered Hawk** breeding record in *Goodhue*, Summer 1999 report (*The Loon* 72:20).

Change **Black-backed Woodpecker** breeding from probable to confirmed in Beltrami (photographs) Steve Mortensen, Summer 1999 report (*The Loon* 72:26).

Add **Long-billed Dowitcher** 7/18 Big Stone (calling) TT, Summer 1999 report (*The Loon* 72:23).

Change **Varied Thrush** location from Stearns to Benton (east of St. Cloud) HD, Winter 1999-2000 report (*The Loon* 72:153).

Delete the **Western Meadowlark** in *Lake*, Fall 1999 report (*The Loon* 72:103).

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Purpose of the M.O.U.

The Minnesota Ornithologists' Union is an organization of both professionals and amateurs interested in birds. We foster the study of birds. We aim to create and increase public interest in birds, and to promote the preservation of birdlife and its natural habitat.

To carry out these aims, we publish a journal, *The Loon*, and a newsletter, *Minnesota Birding*; we conduct field trips;



we encourage and sponsor the preservation of natural areas; we hold seminars where research reports, unusual observations and conservation discussions are presented. We are supported by dues from members, affiliated clubs and special gifts. Any or all phases of the MOU program could be expanded significantly with gifts, memorials or bequests willed to the organization.

Suggestions to Authors

The editors of *The Loon* welcome submissions of articles, Notes of Interest, color slides, and color or black & white photographs. Submissions should be typed, double-spaced and single-sided. Notes of Interest should be less than two pages. Photographs should be 5"x7". Whenever possible, please include a copy of your submission in any standard format on any 3 1/2 inch computer disk.

Club information and other announcements of general interest should be sent to the Newsletter editors. See inside front cover. Bird sighting reports for "The Season" should be sent promptly at the end of February, May, July and November to Peder Svingen. See key to the "The Season".



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