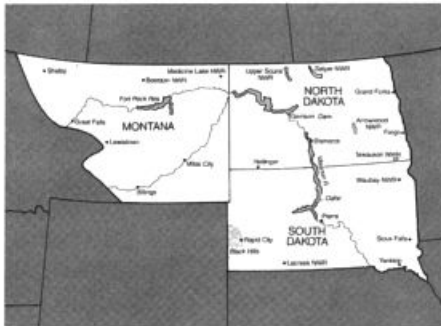


northern great plains



RON MARTIN

16900 125th Street, SE, Sawyer, ND 548781-9284 (jrmartin@ndak.net)

It was the third mild fall in a row, with November the warmest in North Dakota since 1899. The temperature topped 70°F several times in North Dakota that month. Precipitation was heavy in some areas early in the season, but rains ceased and by the end of the season it was dry in some areas. Most areas had not had snow by the end of the period and a few tractors were still in the fields in early December. All larger water areas were open at the end of the period, so lingering waterfowl were widespread. With the mild weather migrants were well distributed and many commented that, except for numerous late species, the season was rather uneventful. Notable observations included Long-billed Murrelet and Northern Wheater in Montana, Sharp-tailed Sandpiper, Eurasian Collared-Dove and Lesser Goldfinch in North Dakota, and Golden-crowned Sparrow in South Dakota.

Conventions: Sightings marked with a † are subject to review by the appropriate state records committee.

LOONS THROUGH MERGANSERS

Two Pacific Loons were noted in Montana, one 26 Oct on Nelson Res. (DP†) and another 14–19 Nov at Eureka Res. (JN, MS†). There are now 20+ records for the state. An indication of the warm season, Pied-billed, Horned, Eared, and Western Grebes were all tallied on a trip through north-central N. Dakota 28 Nov (REM).

The latest on record for S. Dakota, an Am. Bittern was in *Charles Mix* 22 Nov (LAS). Great Egrets continue to pioneer, with 15 in *Ward*, ND, 22 Aug, the largest flock ever recorded there (REM). Several record-late waders were seen in the Dakotas.

In N. Dakota, a Snowy Egret was in *Sargent* 3 Nov, six Cattle Egrets were in *Dickey* 30 Nov, and three White-faced Ibises were in *Dickey* 23 Nov (DK). In S. Dakota, eight Cattle Egrets were in *Clark* 24 Nov (BKH), a Green Heron was in *Charles Mix* 26 Nov (LAS), and White-faced Ibises were in *Brown* 30 Nov (SLS). Rare waders included a Little Blue Heron in *Sargent*, ND, 22 Aug (EEF, RGF†), and two Yellow-crowned Night-Herons in *Brown*, SD, 6 Aug (DAT).

Ross's Geese appear to comprise a larger percentage of white geese in the past few years. Again this year, Snow and Ross's Geese stayed late in Canada and many overflowed the region in the last half of Nov. Duck production in N. Dakota was the highest since counts began in 1955 and was 220% higher than the long-term average (NDGF). Three Surf Scoters were early 11 Sep at Grand Forks, ND (DOL). Casual in S. Dakota, a Black Scoter was in *Deuel*, 7 Oct (BKH†). Good peaks of 2,220 Buffleheads and 2,325 Com. Goldeneyes were tallied at Devil's L., ND, 11 Nov (DOL). North Dakota's twelfth Barrow's Goldeneye was studied at Hettinger 25 Nov (DAG, CG†). Providing the earliest record for S. Dakota, a Red-breasted Merganser was in *Brown* 21 Aug (DAT).

HAWKS THROUGH MURRELETS

By November only single N. Harriers are usually seen in N. Dakota, but this year they were common, with good numbers still present at the end of the period. Rough-legged Hawks were common in the Bowdoin area at the end of the period (DP, PG) and 50 were tallied in ne. N. Dakota 12 Nov for a new fall peak in the state (EEF). A Whooping Crane was early 18 Sep in *Ward*, ND (EH) and the state's latest was noted near Crosby during Thanksgiving week (ME).

Usually gone by late Jul/early Aug, 40–50 Mountain Plovers were in *Phillips*, MT 29 Sep (JG) and one remained on the Ft. Belknap Reservation until the first week of Oct (RS). Good numbers of Hudsonian Godwits were noted in N. Dakota, with a peak of 27 at Minot 5 Aug (REM). A rare fall migrant in S. Dakota, one was in *Brookings* 4 Sep (JSP). A Western Sandpiper 12 Oct in Grand Forks provided only the third October record for N. Dakota (EEF†). North Dakota's third **Sharp-tailed Sand-**

piper was documented 25 Aug in *Richland* (BSM, SM†).

A jaeger sp. was noted 20 Nov in *Hughes*, SD (JSP, RFS†) and N. Dakota's sixth **Long-tailed Jaeger** was studied 6 Sep at Lostwood N.W.R. (*vide* BM†). Unusually large numbers of gulls were still present in N. Dakota at the end of the period; Ring-billeds and Herrings still present at Fargo were the latest ever for the area (GEN). The earliest ever for N. Dakota, a Sabine's Gull was at Grand Forks 8 Sep (DOL). The previously reported **Arctic Terns** at Bowdoin N.W.R., MT, were still courting 3 Aug (SD). A **Long-billed Murrelet** seen at close range 5 Aug at Kistner Hardy Res., *Gallatin*, MT (BS†) would furnish the first or second record for the state, depending on a re-evaluation of an earlier Marbled Murrelet record that suggests this species.

DOVES THROUGH WAXWINGS

The **Eurasian Collared-Dove** invasion continues, with N. Dakota's second documented at Grand Forks 4–7 Sep (DOL, EEF†). The individual previously reported in Malta, MT was last seen 5 Oct (JF, GF) and S. Dakota's seventh record was provided by one in *Potter* 5–6 Aug (DS†). A Barred Owl at Newton Hills, *Lincoln*, SD, was a first for that area (RFS). Seven N. Saw-whet Owl reports for the Dakotas were more than usual.

An Olive-sided Flycatcher was late 27 Sep in *Minnehaha*, SD (MJM). Rarely identified in fall in S. Dakota, two calling Alder Flycatchers were in *Union* 12 Aug (DS). A Western Kingbird 6 Oct in Hettinger, ND, provided the second-latest record for the state and the second October record (DAG, CG). North Dakota's earliest-ever N. Shrike was at Fargo 13 Sep (DPW). The status of Blue-headed Vireo in Montana is still uncertain, but one was banded at Westby 31 Aug (MS, JM†). A Com. Raven was early at Fargo, ND, 6 Oct (KRC). Providing only the third record for S. Dakota e. of the Missouri R., a Gray Jay was in *Brown* 20 Oct–16 Nov (SLS†). South Dakota's latest ever Purple Martin was noted 9 Oct in *Sanborn* (RGR).

Unusual e. of the Missouri R., a Rock Wren was in *Edmunds*, SD, 5 Sep (JDW). Eleven Winter Wren reports from N. Dakota spanned 14 Sep–1 Nov. Not only was this total higher than usual, but many were from the cen. and w. areas of the state

where the species is usually rare. If accepted, a **Northern Wheatear** in *Sweetgrass*, MT, 30 Oct would provide the first state record (DJR, JR†). A Townsend's Solitaire was far e. in *Kingsbury*, SD, 10 Nov (RGR). Early for S. Dakota, Bohemian Waxwings were in *Stanley* 23 Oct (JSP, RFS).

WARBLERS THROUGH FINCHES

The warbler migration was notable in Montana this fall. There was a good movement through Freezeout L., with at least four Palm Warblers 12–19 Sep (MS). At least 16 species were noted at Westby in late Aug/early Sep, including Chestnut-sided, Cape May, Magnolia, Black-throated Green, Bay-breasted, Mourning, and Canada, all rare or casual in Montana but probably regular at Westby (MS†). Casual in fall in S. Dakota, a Blue-winged Warbler was in *Lincoln* 1 Sep (MJM). A MacGillivray's Warbler, casual away from the Black Hills, was banded at Pierre, SD, 21 Sep (FIB).

A Scarlet Tanager was far w. in *Pennington*, SD, 20 Sep (JLB). A hybrid Eastern ~ Spotted Towhee was at Minot, ND, 13 Oct (REM). If accepted, a **Golden-crowned Sparrow** in *Meade*, SD, 5 Nov would provide only the second record for the state (AKB†). A rare migrant in the Dakotas, McCown's Longspurs were noted 27 Sep in *Bowman*, ND (MLJ), in *Fall River*, SD, 7 Oct (RAP), and in *Custer*, SD, 18 Oct (MMM). Five Smith's Longspur reports from the Dakotas spanned 2–23 Oct. Latest on record for S. Dakota, a Blue Grosbeak was noted in *Lincoln* 2 Oct (MJM). Indigo Buntings were late 8 Oct in *Cass*, ND (DPW), and in *Lawrence*, SD, 10 Oct (VDF).

A Great-tailed Grackle in *Turner* 26 Nov provided the latest record for SD (LS). Seven White-winged Crossbill reports were tallied for N. Dakota and Montana, all in Nov and involving only one–three individuals per report. Com. Redpolls made a good showing and Hoary Redpolls were already in Montana and N. Dakota by mid-Nov, with the earliest Hoary in *Grand Forks*, ND, 10 Nov (EEF). Providing the third record for N. Dakota, a pair of "green-backed" **Lesser Goldfinches** came to a feeder in Minot 5 Aug (JK, *vide* REM†). Three Evening Grosbeak reports from N. Dakota were all at the e. edge of the state.

Contributors (state editors in boldface): MONTANA: **Charles Carlson**, Steve Dinsmore, Glen Flatt, Judy Flatt, Paula Grouse, John Grensten, Jeff Marks, John Nordrum, Dwain Prellwitz, Doris Jean Robbs, Jack Robbs, Michael

Schwitters, Bob Sisk, Ron Stoneberg. NORTH DAKOTA: Keith R. Corliss, **Corey D. Ellingson**, Monte Ellingson, Eve E. Freeberg, Carolyn Griffiths, David A. Griffiths, Eric Hogarth, Mayme L. Johnson, Jon Kerian, Daphne Kinzler, David O. Lambeth, Ron E. Martin, Ben S. Meeks, Spencer Meeks, Bob Murphy, Gary E. Nielsen, N. D. Game and Fish, Dennis P. Wiesenborn. SOUTH DAKOTA: Jocelyn L. Baker, Anna K. Ball, Farm Island Backers, Vic and Donna Fondy, Bruce K. Harris, Lake Andes Staff, Mark and Jessica

Mahnke, Michael M. Melius, **Jeffrey S. Palmer**, Richard A. Peterson, Robert G. Rodgers, Sand Lake Staff, Robb F. Schenck, Lee Schoenewe, Dave Swanson, Dan A. Tallman, J. David Williams.



southern great plains



JOSEPH A. GRZYBOWSKI

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

It is difficult to quickly summarize patterns of fall bird occurrences for the Region except to say that it was good—even darn good. This column is much too short to include all specific examples for over-summering ducks, the many early and tardy migrants, or all of the routinely observed but rare species. But the Region maintains the excitement of being a continental hiatus. That may be the season's special note, along with the graces of multi-annual benevolent weather continuing to help populations of marsh and water birds. If there was some contrast to good news, it comes for populations breeding to the north. Numbers of Greater Scaup, Peregrine

Falcons, Piping Plovers, and Sabine's Gulls took a lull in reporting from previous good seasons. Time will judge the nature of these pauses.

Abbreviations: Cheyenne Bottoms (*Cheyenne Bottoms W.M.A., Barton Co., KS*); Hefner (*Lake Hefner, Oklahoma Co., OK*); McConaughy (*L. McConaughy, Keith Co., NE*); L. Ogallala (*L. Ogallala, Keith Co., NE*); Quivira (*Quivira N.W.R., Stafford Co., KS*).

LOONS THROUGH DUCKS

Pacific Loons, once dubbed exceptional, appeared at *Scotts Bluff*, NE, 16 Oct (SJD); at least 11 more were reported in Nebraska through 23 Nov (SJD, LR, RH), with two others in *Kingman*, KS, 30 Oct (CG) and two in *Noble/Pawnee*, OK, 24 Nov (JWA, JSi). Most surprising was an imm. **Yellow-billed Loon** photographed on shore at Hefner 12 Aug (JAG, JWA). Although not observed again, it may have been the same individual present the previous winter and spring. An imm. Red-necked Grebe was documented at L. Ogallala 6 and 19 Nov (SJD); an ad. was observed in *Tulsa* 23 Nov (JWA). Continuing an astounding trend of increase over the past decade were the 35,000 W. Grebes estimated at McConaughy 26 Sep (SJD). Carrying capacity may be a more appropriate concern in these times. Surprisingly, reports away from w. Nebraska included only four singles in e. Nebraska and Oklahoma. Eleven Clark's Grebe were at McConaughy 26 Sep (SJD), with two 15 Aug and up to three 26 Sep–18 Nov in *Scotts Bluff*, NE (SJD). Double-crested Cormorant numbers are also burgeoning, with 5,000+ in *Harlan*, NE, 5–16 Oct