

The Burrowing Owl

June
2021

A Publication of the Nebraska Ornithologists' Union

Dedicated to the study, appreciation, and protection of birds

Optimism: fall meeting outlook

At the time of this writing, there are plenty of reasons to be optimistic about a great many things. One of which is that it is looking very likely that we will be able to hold a regular meeting in fall 2021 after being on hiatus for 25 months because of COVID-19. The fall 2021 meeting will be held a little bit later than usual, in late October, and at the eastern end of the state at Schramm Park State Recreation Area (SRA). Timing of the meeting will hopefully correspond with the migration of waterbirds through the state and the location is designed to provide a solid based camp where birders can visit Omaha and Lincoln area reservoirs and lakes. Plus, public areas such as Schramm Park SRA, Platte River and Mahoney State Parks, provide numerous opportunities for woodland birds. It will also be very nice just to see people again. More details about the fall meeting will be provided in the next newsletter. Make sure you save the dates of 22-24 October on your calendar!

NOU's Upcoming Events

Fall meeting: Schramm Park State Recreation Area, October 22-24, 2021

Spring Meeting: Gering, May 2022

New Members

Paul Pearson, Ph.D, Logan, IA; Steve Schmitt, Omaha; Atlas Knaub, Papillion

Moving? - If you are changing addresses, please update your status by logging into your account at NOUbirds.org or let us know by sending a note to Jan Johnson at janbirder@gmail.com.

NOU Big Day: Spring 2021

By T.J. Walker

Thanks to everyone that participated in the Spring NOU Big Weekend 2021, which took place 15-16 May. You all did so well on day 1 (Saturday) this year that I thought we were absolutely going to crush the 250 species reported last year. New additions were hard to come by on day 2 (Sunday) but we did manage to top last year's species list with **a total of 252 species!** Not a bad two days of effort! Across the two years – we have reported 271 species in Spring Big Weekends, with 19 species reported in 2020 but not 2021 and 21 species reported in 2021 but not 2020.



There was at least one report for 63 of the 93 counties (60 last year) – with better western coverage this year (25 counties versus 16) and slightly lower eastern coverage (38 counties versus 44 counties), but overall numbers of reports were still heavily focused eastward. Interestingly 17 of 93 counties were not surveyed by anyone either spring with most of those in the southwest and south-central portions of the state.

There was a total of 611 eBird reports across the two days (349 Saturday and 262 on Sunday) and maybe 12-15 email reports. Most eBird checklists by county included: Lancaster (96), Sarpy (55), Douglas (54), Lincoln (38), Dixon (24), Scotts Bluff (23), Madison and Kimball (19), Buffalo (17) and Saunders (15). Most species reported by county included (county #2021 (#2020)): Lancaster 151 (149), Douglas 132 (106), Sarpy 124 (118), Dixon 117 (88), Lincoln 114 (78), Cedar 110 (38), Adams 107 (9), Stanton 100 (63), Buffalo 98 (45) and Otoe 95 (77).

The most reported species (number of counties reported in – out of 63) for 2021 included Red-winged Blackbird (53), Mourning Dove (51), American Robin (50), Common Grackle (47), Barn Swallow (46), Blue Jay and Yellow Warbler (43), Red-headed Woodpecker and European Starling and Brown-headed Cowbird (41), and Baltimore Oriole (40). A total of 29 species were reported from just one county. Main species groups (group - #species 2021, #species 2020) – Waterfowl – 22, 21; Shorebirds – 33, 30; Sparrows – 21, 18 and Warblers – 26, 30.

Surprise Finds - in my opinion

- Broad-billed Hummingbird – obviously the BIGGEST surprise of the weekend – nice job Caleb!!! A 1st State Record
- Ruby-throated Hummingbird reported in 15/63 counties – pretty good
- Sora – reported in 12 counties
- Least Tern – reported in 4 counties
- American Bittern – reported in 5 counties
- Broad-winged Hawk – reported in 6 counties
- Barred Owl – reported in 10 counties
- Black-billed Magpie – reported in JUST TWO counties (Madison and Scotts Bluff)
- Northern Mockingbird – reported in just 4 counties
- Eastern Bluebird – reported in just 7 out of 63 counties (compared to 18/60 in 2020)
- White-winged Crossbill – one reported – a good bird!
- Both McCown's (Thick-billed) and Chestnut-collared Longspurs reported
- Green-tailed Towhee – one reported – a good bird!
- Yellow-breasted Chat – reported in just 3 counties
- Warblers – Louisiana Waterthrush (4 counties), Golden-winged, Prothonotary, Connecticut, Kentucky (3 counties)
- Summer Tanager (8 counties)

Surprising Misses – again in my opinion

- Sharp-tailed Grouse
- Bonaparte's Gull
- Common Poorwill
- Western Wood-pewee ("spring" is late in the west this year which was clear with western insectivores)
- American Pipit
- Western Tanager
- (253 and 254 – two of my team members in Chadron found both Lewis's Woodpecker and Western Tanager on Monday in Sowbelly Canyon in Sioux County)

Great job everyone – while it wasn't as good as an NOU meeting, it was great to "interact" with all of you in some way.

Editor's note: A version of this summary was originally posted on NEbirds.



Remembering John Murphy, Jon Farrar, Elaine Bachel and Paul A Johnsgard

Earlier this year, the NOU lost four longtime members: John Murphy, Jon Farrar, Elaine Bachel and Paul A. Johnsgard. All of these individuals made substantial contributions to birds and birding in Nebraska, albeit in different ways. Our condolences go out to each of their families.

John Paul Murphy, 70 of Kearney passed away Tuesday, March 2, 2021 at his home. John Paul Murphy was born September 7, 1950 in Kearney, Nebraska to Charles and M. Barbara Murphy. He is survived by 12 siblings. John was a familiar face at places like Rowe Sanctuary and Calamus Outfitters, where he helped many people enjoy and experience birds. John also was a regular participant on Christmas Bird Counts. He was an easy going and very likeable person.

Jon Farrar was born August 10, 1947 and passed away March 30, 2021. Jon was born in Genoa, Nebraska, to Kenneth “Bud” and Lucycle (Truelove) Farrar. He graduated from Monroe Public High School and the University of Nebraska-Lincoln with a degree in wildlife management. In college he began working for the Game and Parks Commission as a plant propagator. He worked at Nebraskaland Magazine for 42 years as a writer, photographer, and editor. His natural history articles and photographs were published in internationally circulated magazines and books. In Nebraskaland’s 2004 “Birding Nebraska” issue, Jon wrote a detailed history about bird study in Nebraska that featured the Nebraska Ornithologists’ Union, Nebraska Bird Review and several early members of the organization such as Lawrence Bruner, Robert Wollcott and Wilson Tout. He was the author of several books, including the lovely *Field Guide to Wildflowers of Nebraska and the Great Plains*.

Elaine Bachel was born June 6, 1946, in Itasca County, Minnesota, and passed away May 22, 2021. She lived in Minnesota until she was ten. It was there that she developed her love of the outdoors, and especially the birds. Her father passed away, and so Elaine and sister and mother went to Omaha to live with her grandmother. She went to South High School in Omaha and graduated from nursing school in 1968. She worked for many years for Lincoln ENT physician Dr. Charles Barton. It was in working for him and traveling to clinics around the state that she learned to pilot an airplane. She said Dr. Barton told her if something happened to him, she needed to know how to fly. She began volunteering for Raptor Recovery Nebraska (now Raptor Conservation Alliance) in 1986. Also, she worked about two years for the state of Nebraska at the Department of Health and Human Services before retiring. She always had owls and other raptors in the basement of her home, both rescues to be released, and those who stayed with her. Her last owl was Vega, a Barred Owl, that talked to her every day, until about a day or so before she died.

Paul Johnsgard was born in Fargo, North Dakota, on June 28, 1931 and passed away May 28, 2021. Johnsgard attended junior college in Wahpeton before transferring to what is now North Dakota State University. After earning degrees in botany and zoology, he completed a master's degree at Washington State and a Ph.D. at Cornell before accepting a faculty position at the University of Nebraska-Lincoln in 1961. Once at the University of Nebraska, Dr. Johnsgard had a distinguished career that covered more than sixty years. Paul made numerous contributions to ornithology and specifically to Nebraska ornithology and natural history with his many works. He was also a tremendous mentor and inspiration to numerous students and aspiring young naturalists. A more extensive tribute for Dr. Johnsgard can be found [HERE](#).

Editor’s note: Thanks to Ruthie Stearns for providing the information about Elaine. Ruthie also added that “I certainly would have been lost learning about the birds of Nebraska without all she showed me, and all the places we went.”



Nebraska's Next Ten – 2021 edition

In the November 2017 edition of this publication, Mark Brogie and Ross Silcock shared a list of ten species, ranked from 1 (most likely) to 10 (least likely) that they believed would be added to the official list of the birds of Nebraska. That article is pasted to the right. In less than four years, Nebraska has added three new species to its list: Fulvous Whistling-Duck, Black Phoebe, Great Kiskadee. Broad-billed Hummingbird appears destined for the state list after a female was

documented in Wilderness Park near Lincoln in May 2021. Thus, Brogie correctly identified three of the four new species and Silcock was correct on two species, which is remarkable. With these species added to our state's avifauna, it is time for these two sages to update their lists. Below are the ten species they expect to be added next to the Nebraska list.

Nebraska's next species?

Anna's Hummingbird was the most recent addition to Nebraska's official list and Pacific Wren will now be up for consideration by the Records Committee. Thinking about what good birds have made it to Nebraska makes one wonder, what's next? To entertain that question, we reached out to two venerable experts, Mark Brogie and Ross Silcock, to provide us with 10 species, ranked from 1 to 10, with 1 being the most likely to be added next, that they believe are most likely to occur in Nebraska in the future and will be added to the state list. Their lists are below.

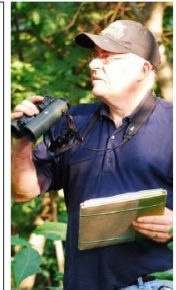


The Brogie Ten

1. Slaty-backed Gull
2. Fulvous Whistling-Duck
3. Rivoli's Hummingbird
4. Broad-billed Hummingbird
5. Fork-tailed Flycatcher
6. Ivory Gull
7. Flammulated Owl
8. Painted Redstart
9. Black Phoebe
10. Gull-billed Tern

The Silcock Ten

1. Fulvous Whistling-Duck
2. Slaty-backed Gull
3. Long-billed Murrelet
4. Rivoli's Hummingbird
5. Lesser Nighthawk
6. Black-backed Woodpecker
7. Black Phoebe
8. Woodhouse's Scrub-Jay
9. Western Bluebird
10. Painted Redstart

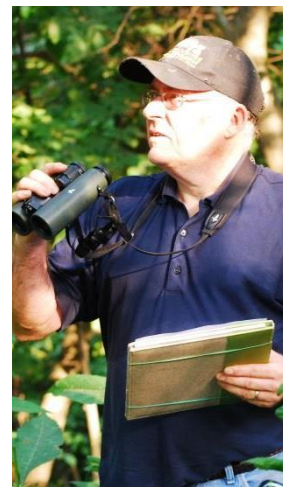


The Brogie Ten (2021)

1. Slaty-backed Gull
2. Rivoli's Hummingbird
3. Heerman's Gull
4. Fork-tailed Flycatcher
5. Flammulated Owl
6. Ivory Gull
7. Painted Redstart
8. Mexican Violetear
9. Barnacle Goose
10. Woodhouse's Scrub-Jay

The Silcock Ten (2021)

1. Slaty-backed Gull
2. Rivoli's Hummingbird
3. Woodhouse's Scrub-Jay
4. Allen's Hummingbird
5. Painted Redstart
6. Flammulated Owl
7. Bushtit
8. Mexican Violetear
9. Fork-tailed Flycatcher
10. Lesser Nighthawk



As can be seen, there is a lot of overlap in their two lists, which should not come as a surprise given the dwindling number of likely additions that can be expected in the future. To shake things up, I (Joel Jorgensen) assembled my own list (right) that takes some high risks and goes for broke with species that are arguably less likely to occur in the state than those identified by Brogie and Silcock. As I stated the last time around, if anyone else wants to take their shot and provide their list of the next ten species, I will be happy to publish it in an upcoming edition of *The Burrowing Owl*. A lot of boasting is at stake and the future awaits.



The Jorgensen off-the-wall Ten

1. Gray Vireo
2. Mexican Whip-poor-will
3. Rufous-crowned Sparrow
4. Purple Sandpiper
5. Juniper Titmouse
6. White Wagtail
7. Limpkin
8. Arctic Loon
9. Siberian Accentor
10. Greater Roadrunner



Kid's Page



Now is the time of year when birds are building nests in which to lay eggs. Nests are built in many different ways by birds. One species of bird will always build the same type of nest. Here are a few types. How many can you find in your neighborhood?

Find these bird names and nest type in the word find below.

Swallow	bracket
Goldfinch	cupped
Oriole	pendant basket
Woodpecker	excavation
killdeer	ground scrape
Burrowing owl	ground burrow
hawk	stick



There are also seven hidden bird names. Can you find them?



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