

western Kentucky will begin to record similar movements as well.

## Summary

Additional data from states to the west, like Kansas and Nebraska, would be helpful in proving that a significant number of Whimbrels are moving north from the Gulf Coast each spring and up the Mississippi River Valley. If the data from these states should prove to be greater in volume than that of Missouri and Iowa, a southern or Gulf Coast source of birds is likely the case. It would be very difficult to argue that birds originating from the East Coast could show up in greater concentrations as you move west away from the presumed source. If the data from Kansas and Nebraska prove to be less than that of Missouri and Iowa, an east-coast source of these birds seems reasonable.

Skeel and Mallory (1996) appear to ignore all records of Whimbrel from the eastern Great Lakes, or all of the MPR records, which this paper discusses. At the most, such records are apparently considered vagrants. This paper shows a regular passage (albeit in small numbers) of Whimbrels through the Upper Mississippi River Valley. Dates of migration through Illinois and the MPR also correspond very well with dates of departure from spring staging areas along the Gulf Coast (see Skeel and Mallory 1996). One hypothesis contradicts Skeel and Mallory's (1996) statement of "no evidence of migration through interior (in spring) from Gulf." In fall, some Whimbrels likely make a 4,000-kilometer non-stop Atlantic flight from southern Canada to South America. Likewise, some Whimbrels may be taking a more direct nonstop spring flight from the Gulf Coast to their Hudson Bay breeding areas via the Mississippi River Valley, and may

occasionally be brought down into the region by storms. The fact that they have acquired the needed food reserves on their Gulf Coast staging area would explain the Whimbrel's brief stops (often a day or less) in the Middlewestern Prairie Region. Today's numbers could be the rebuilding of the much larger historic numbers that may have passed through the region with the other two curlew species and species such as the American Golden-Plover.

Observations of Whimbrels are occurring within the Middlewestern Prairie Region as never before. The ultra-rare status attributed to this species away from Lake Michigan may need to be re-evaluated. Whether the source of the spring migration is exclusively from the middle-Atlantic coast or at least partially through the Gulf Coast, MPR birders away from Lake Michigan can now expect to see an occasional Whimbrel. This paper demonstrates that a reasonable pattern is emerging as to where and especially when Whimbrels are most likely to occur, especially in Illinois.

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