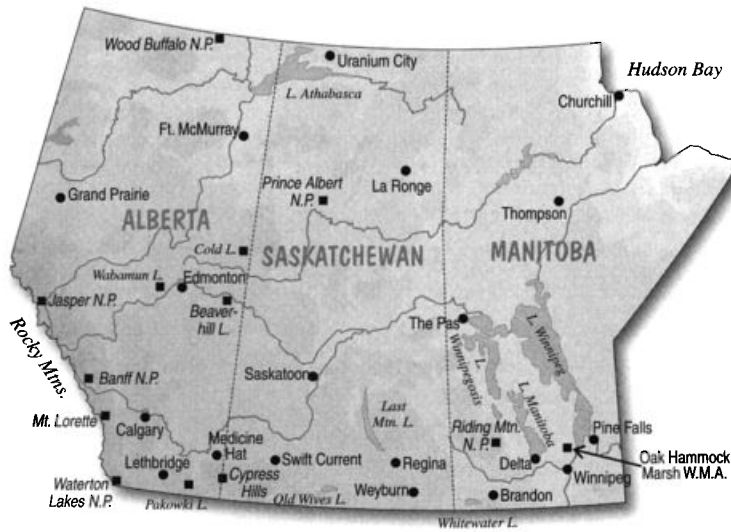


# Prairie Provinces



## Rudolf F. Koes

135 Rossmere Crescent  
Winnipeg, Manitoba R2K 0G1  
(rkoef@merlin.mb.ca)

## Peter Taylor

P.O. Box 597  
Pinawa, Manitoba ROE 1L0  
(taylorp@granite.mb.ca)

August was mainly hot and dry, with little respite until an abrupt cooling trend arrived in mid-September and brought a foot of snow to Alberta's mountain parks and pushed most non-hardy lingerers out of the Region. Conditions moderated for much of October, but wintry weather prevailed before the end of the month and persisted through most of November, so that late waterfowl and shorebirds were also scarce. The most noteworthy rarities were found in Saskatchewan and Alberta, many

of them the fruit of Bob Luterbach's persistent searching at Last Mountain Lake, SK.

Abbreviations: C.B.B.S. (Calgary Bird Banding Society); L.M.L. (Last Mountain L., SK); Whitewater L. (Whitewater Lake W.M.A., MB).

### LOONS THROUGH DUCKS

An ad. Red-throated Loon was a good find at Buena Vista Resort, L.M.L. 1 Nov (BL). Up to 4 Pacific Loons were present on L.M.L. 12 Oct–11 Nov (BL), and about 13 were reported in Alberta (m. ob.). An imm. Yellow-throated Loon graced Wabamun L., AB 25 Oct (THi, RK, FW).

Numerous Great Egret sightings in Manitoba included 30 at Oak Hammock Marsh 22 Aug (PG, MK) and up to 6 in the Delta area (m. ob.); just one was noted in Saskatchewan, at Neptune L. 26 Aug (CB, MB), while one was in Alberta at Irricana 30 Aug and 1 Sep (TK, BW). One Snowy Egret was observed at Reed L., SK 9–10 Aug (AH, BL), up to 3 were reported at Whitewater L. to 11 Sep (m. ob.), and one of the 2 present in Aug at Frank L., AB lingered to 14 Sep (m. ob.). Cattle Egrets reached unprecedented numbers at Whitewater L., with several counts of 125 to 175 birds 8–11 Sep (CC, AE, LV). An imm. near Carseland 22 Sep–1 Oct was about the 11th for Alberta (DR, m. ob., ph. TK). An imm. Green Heron at Regina's Wascana Marsh 25 Sep was a rarity in Saskatchewan (BL), while 2 visited Winnipeg's Fort Whyte Centre on or about 10

Sep (*fide* RJ). A wounded Black-crowned Night-Heron near Neepawa 29 Nov was presumably doomed (BG). This year's White-faced Ibis concentration at Whitewater L. peaked at 14 on 13 Aug (RKO, PT, RZ), while 11 were counted at High River and Frank L., AB the same day (BW).

A record-high 272 Brant were counted at Gordon Pt., Churchill 1 Oct (PJ), with 11 more 12 Oct (BC). A survey flight over Riding Mountain N.P. revealed 11 ad. Trumpeter Swans and 7 cygnets 29 Aug (KK). One of 2 Tundra Swans hatched near Clavet L. this summer survived until fall migration (M&SL). Rarely noted in fall, a male Eurasian Wigeon visited Murray L., AB 25 Oct (PH). Unusually early were 6 imm. Harlequin Ducks at Calgary 20 Aug (AS); singles visited Victoria Beach, MB 26 Oct (CA, RP, JSw, LV), McPheat Park, L.M.L. 3–9 Nov (BL), and Cold L., AB 15–24 Nov (THi). Scoters and Long-tailed Ducks were generally scarce, except for above-average numbers of White-winged Scoters at L.M.L. (BL). Also at L.M.L., a hybrid male Common x Barrow's Goldeneye was carefully observed 31 Oct and 9 Nov (BL).

### RAPTORS THROUGH WOODPECKERS

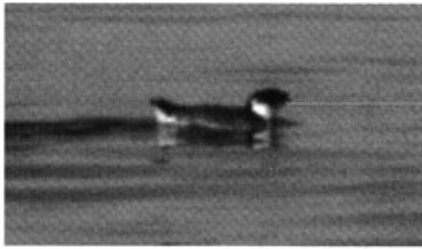
A well-described White-tailed Kite near Pigeon L. 11–12 Oct was the first ever reported in Alberta (K&LW). An Osprey was unusually late at Churchill 3 Oct (PJ). An unprecedented tally of 3495 Broad-winged Hawks migrated high over Lynchs Point, MB 13 Sep (GH, GW, JS). The latest sightings of Harlan's Hawk in Saskatchewan were near Lumsden 17 & 18 Nov (BL). Ferruginous Hawk productivity was high in Manitoba, with 3.2 young per successful nest (KDS). Few Rough-legged Hawks were reported anywhere. An unusually early Gyrfalcon was observed three times at Nickel L., SK 3–17 Sep (CB).

Gray Partridge and Sharp-tailed Grouse numbers were the highest in many years from sw. Manitoba to s. Alberta, likely benefiting from dry conditions and the huge numbers of grasshoppers (m. ob.). An impressive 12,000 Sandhill Cranes were counted at Whitewater L. 10 Sep, with 1000 unusually late near Lenore, MB 23 Oct (CC).

A probable Pacific Golden-Plover was an exceptional find at the Weyburn, SK sewage lagoon 14 Sep (CB, MB). Very late for Manitoba was a Killdeer at La Barrière Park 9–13 Nov (LK, GG). Some excellent counts of American Avocet were reported: 600+ at Luck, Reed, and Chaplin Lakes, SK 9 Aug (BL), 700 at Reed L. alone 7 Sep (TK), and 2000 at Beaverhill L., AB 16 Aug (AC, MH). One was tardy at Pine Coulee Reservoir, AB 9 Nov (TK). Three Black-necked Stilts were well north near Edmonton 31 Aug (WN).

Manitoba's first Sharp-tailed Sandpiper, a juv. near Gillam 22 Aug, was well described by the lone observer (AW); a report of an ad. from Oak Hammock Marsh 4 Jun 2000 was not confirmed. Fifteen hundred Short-billed and about 500 Long-billed Dowitchers were estimated at Luck L. 9 Aug (BL), while Short-billeds were thought to predominate in a flock of 25,000 dowitchers at Whitewater L. 10 Sep (CC). Unusually late were single Wilson's Phalaropes in Alberta near

**SA** One rare shorebird would be a highlight for anyone's season on the prairies, but Reid Barclay had amazingly good fortune, finding three exceptional species: a Curlew Sandpiper, 2 Sharp-tailed Sandpipers, and a female Ruff (along with 500 Pectoral Sandpipers) at Alberta's Langdon Res. 24 Sep. All stayed for two or three days, long enough for many to enjoy. A jet stream "arching beautifully from Eurasia and Alaska right down through the Calgary area" was thought perhaps responsible for this bonanza.



**Last Mountain Lake, Saskatchewan attracted this Ancient Murrelet from 27 September through 16 October 2003, the third recent record for this lake. Photograph by Darryl Ford.**

Strathmore 3 Oct (TK) and at Cucumber L. 10 Oct (RK).

A possible Kumlien's (Iceland) Gull or Kumlien's x Thayer's intergrade was photographed near Shepard, AB 28 Oct (TK). An imm. Lesser Black-backed Gull was photographed at the dump near St. Ambrose, MB 10 Sep (TK). Single imm. Glaucous-winged Gulls visited Cold L. 4 Oct (RK) and Calgary 10–25 Oct (TK). A possible Slaty-backed Gull, a second-year bird, was videotaped at Cold L. 14–15 Sep (THi, RK). Other rarities were an imm. Sabine's Gull at Marean L., SK 1 Sep (M&SL), an Ivory Gull at Churchill in Nov (RT), and an imm. Arctic Tern at Cold L. 28 Aug (RK). An Ancient Murrelet at Trestle Bay, L.M.L. 27 Sep–16 Oct furnished a 3rd record in five years for that locality and for Saskatchewan (BL, DS, m. ob., ph.).

Alberta's 2nd documented White-winged Dove stayed at Lacombe from 30 Aug to 9 Oct (DM, ph. TK). Additional records of Eurasian Collared-Dove at Mortlach, SK included an active nest 9 Aug (BL) and a peak count of 14 birds 27 Nov (MF); Manitoba's 2nd visited Landmark 18–19 Oct (FG et al., ph. CA). A Black-billed Cuckoo was an unusual visitor to Calgary 3 Aug (DB, RW). A Barn Owl carcass was found on a road near Estuary, SK 20 Sep (RW, fide TH). Snowy Owl numbers were low Regionwide, though a family was noted near Churchill in early Sep (BC). The only owl highlights were the numbers of Northern Saw-whet Owls banded this fall: 48 (plus 4 Boreal Owls) near Millarville, AB (C.B.B.S., fide MH) and 26 in Saskatchewan (fide SH).

Over 450 Common Night-hawks were seen between La Loche and Green L., SK 14 Aug (J&JA). A male Anna's Hummingbird at Sheep River Valley 26 Oct (WS) was about the 10th for Alberta. Migration at Medicine Hat, AB featured the city's first 2 Calliope Hummingbirds and above-average numbers of both Ruby-throated and Rufous Hummingbirds (PH). A Ruby-throated Hummingbird strayed to Churchill 11 Sep (PR, fide BC). A Red-bellied Woodpecker at Gimli, MB 10 Oct (BC) was farther n. than usual. Two Williamson's Sapsuckers—a male and a

female—were carefully observed near Good Spirit Lake P.P., SK 2 Sep (DFo, fide BA). A Red-breasted Sapsucker at Banff 2–4 Nov (ph. JB, m. ob.) furnished about the 5th accepted record for Alberta.

**PASSERINES**

A record-late Say's Phoebe lingered at Manitoba's Plum Marshes 25 Oct (JH et al.). In contrast with other n. predatory birds this season, a strong migration of Northern Shrikes was noted in s. Saskatchewan and s. Manitoba. Alberta's first Yellow-throated Vireo, present at Calgary's Inglewood Bird Sanctuary 2–24 Aug, was banded and photographed (C.B.B.S., m. ob.). A Clark's Nutcracker was observed at McDowell, SK 8 Oct (MB, fide SH). An excellent count of 537 Purple Martins was reported for the Kelleher–Leross, SK area 20 Aug (GWp).

One of 5 Townsend's Solitaires noted in Saskatchewan fed on live box elder beetles at Regina 15 Nov (JC, BL), while one was new for Churchill, MB on or about 25 Oct (DF). At least 7 Varied Thrushes were reported across s. Manitoba in Nov, from Boissevain to Piney and Pinawa (m. ob.). Single Northern Mockingbirds visited Minnedosa, MB 2–24 Aug (CC) and Rosthern, SK from late Oct–15 Nov (HD, fide TH).

A Yellow Warbler at Churchill 4 Oct (fide BC) would have been late anywhere in the Region. A Hodgeville, SK farmyard attracted a Townsend's Warbler 8 Aug and a Black-throated Blue Warbler 26 Sep (MP). Two Black-throated Blues turned up in Manitoba at Winnipeg's Assiniboine Park 26 Aug (GH, AM) and at Birds Hill P.P. 21 Sep (GB). Hopelessly lost in a blizzard was a Blackburnian Warbler at Dymond L., MB (nw. of Churchill) 31 Oct (DF et al., ph. JG). A Pine Warbler near Taber 9 Sep (LB) was a rarity for Alberta, while stragglers in Winnipeg included a Bay-breasted Warbler 19 Oct (MW, WC) and a Northern Waterthrush 28 Oct (GB).

In Manitoba, a male Scarlet Tanager at Pinawa still had begging young in tow 16 Sep (RZ), a Spotted Towhee used a Virden feeder for a few days from 18 Nov (M&CS), and a Field Sparrow visited Grosse Isle 19 Sep (KG). A Lincoln's Sparrow was extremely late at Canmore, AB 29 Nov (KB). Among many declining grassland species, McCown's Longspur appears to be decreasing in sw. Saskatchewan, so easterly records of one near Trossachs 2 Aug and 7 near Maxim 26 Aug were noteworthy (CB, MB). Also feared to be declin-

ing, Rusty Blackbirds were well represented, with flocks of 400+ near Tofield, AB 30 Sep (FW), 400+ in Grosse Isle, MB 24 Oct (KG), and 180 near Minnedosa 29 Oct (CC). A probable family of 4 Bullock's Orioles near Weyburn, SK 12 Aug and one bird near Trossachs, SK 30 Aug were noteworthy (CB, MB). Thirty Cassin's Finches furnished a high count for Alberta at Sheep River Valley 5 Oct (WS, RWe). White-winged Crossbills staged a strong migration Regionwides and Common Redpolls were numerous across the s., while Pine Siskins were generally scarce.

**EXOTICS**

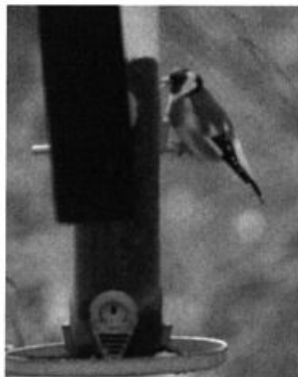
Interesting feeder visitors in Manitoba were a Ringed Turtle-Dove at Brandon Hills 1 Aug (T&RW) and a European Goldfinch at Gimli 31 Oct (BC).

Observers (provincial compilers in boldface):

Jody and Jessie Allair, Bill Anaka, Christian Artuso, Martin Bailey, Reid Barclay, Kevin Barker, Jill Beleyne, Lloyd Bennett, Carol Bjorklund, Dave Brown, Garry Budyk, Bonnie Chartier, Ward Christianson, Amanda Cole, Jim Cummings, Calvin Cuthbert, Hertha Dahl, Ken De Smet, Mary Ann Dudragne, Adolf Ens, Dennis Fast, Mary Flack, Darryl Ford (DFo), Ken Gardner, Fran Giesbrecht, Bob Grant, Gordon Grief, Paula Grief, Michael Harrison, Al Hartley, Trevor Herriot, Ted Hindmarch (THi), George Holland, Jean Horton, Stuart Houston, Reinhard Jansson, Paul Jones, Michele Kading, Ken Kingdon, Lorne Klassen, Richard Klauke, Rudolf Koes (RKO), Terry Korolyk, Steve Lane, Bob Lutzbach, Doug Matagio, Al Mickey, Wayne Nordstrom, Robert Parsons, Myrna Priebe, Murray & Carole Sangster, Dan Sawatzky, Janice Smith, Wayne Smith, Robert Storms, Jo Swartz (JSw), Peter Taylor, Robert Taylor, Liis Veelma, Marlene Waldron, Adam Walley, Gene Walz, Guy Wapple (GWp), Ron Wawryn, Ray Wershler (RWe), Fred Wiley, Tom & Renee Will, Bill Wilson, Rob Wright (RW), Reto Zach. ☺



**Manitoba's second Eurasian Collared-Dove of the year (and ever) was this bird at Landmark 18 through 19 (here) October 2003. Photograph by Christian Artuso.**



**Although this European Goldfinch probably escaped from captivity, it was still a welcome guest at a Gimli, Manitoba feeder on 31 October 2003. Photograph by Bonnie Chartier.**



**Though still one of the rarest gulls in Manitoba, Lesser Black-backed Gull is being reported with increasing frequency there. This immature (center) was photographed at the landfill on PR227 near St. Ambrose 10 September 2003. Photograph by Terry Korolyk.**