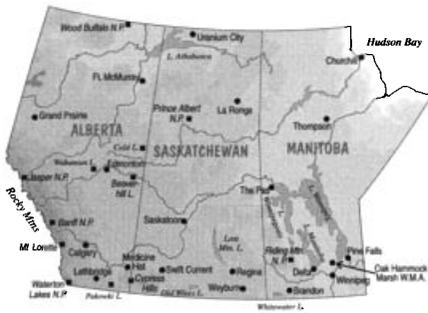


Prairie Provinces



Rudolf F. Koes | Peter Taylor

A hot and dry summer across the Prairies was followed by a mild early fall. Cold snaps in mid-October and November froze much of the water and pushed most lingering waterfowl and shorebirds out of the Region. Central Saskatchewan received much rain in September, but most of the Region remained relatively dry, except for a heavy snowfall in southern Manitoba in early November. Shorebird and passerine migration were generally lackluster; Last Mountain Bird Observatory banding efforts between 4 August and 6 October resulted in the lowest total (1665 birds) since banding started in 1992, and elsewhere many observers commented on the apparent lack of flycatchers, vireos, and various sparrows. In contrast, the South Livingstone Raptor Count (S.L.R.C.), near Crowsnest Pass, Alberta, tallied a record-high 7217 raptors, including 1247 Sharp-shinned Hawks and 4400 Golden Eagles from 27 August through 29 November.

Abbreviations: Last Mountain (Last Mountain Lake and Wildlife Refuge, SK); Sask. Landing (Saskatchewan Landing P.P., SK); Whitewater (Whitewater Lake W.M.A., MB).

GEESE THROUGH HERONS

Twenty-five Brant were at Churchill, MB 13 Sep (BA, CC); less expected was one at Sask. Landing 3 Nov (RJ). Notable waterfowl in Alberta included a Bewick's Swan at Pine Coulee Res. 21 Oct, a Mallard × Northern Pintail hybrid at Calgary 19 Nov, 1000 American Wigeons at Clear L. 27 Aug, a Mallard × American Wigeon hybrid at Clear L. 15 Oct, and 1000 Canvasbacks at Pine Coulee Res. 21 Oct (all TK). Single Harlequin Ducks were seen at Dymond L., near Churchill, MB 30 Oct (DF) and at Saskatoon, SK 4-18 Nov (RD, m.ob.). Surf Scoters were well represented, with some 20 reports involving 125 birds in s. Alberta (m.ob.) and a peak of 45 at Last Mountain 5 Oct (BL) but few in s. Manitoba. Four thousand Buffleheads thronged Pine Coulee Res. 21 Oct (TK).



Dark ibis, either Glossy or White-faced, peaked at 75 or so birds at Whitewater Lake, Manitoba in September (here 23 September) 2006. Photograph by Scott Henowitch.

Grouse apparently benefited from the dry summer; reports of high numbers of Ruffed, Spruce, and Sharp-tailed Grouse came from across s. Manitoba. Two Sharp-taileds at Dymond L. were at the n. edge of their range 5 Nov (DF, MR). Lone Red-throated Loons were at Banff, AB 20 Sep (JR, m.ob.) and at L. Wabamun, AB 19 Oct (DN), while Last Mountain was visited by one Pacific Loon 20 Oct, 2 on 25 Oct, and a Yellow-billed Loon 25-27 Oct (all BL). Ever-increasing numbers of egrets and relatives continued to make news, with the following highlights. Great Egrets peaked at 60 at Oak Hammock Marsh, MB 2 Sep (AdE, AnE, PF) and 75 at Whitewater 3 Sep (ET, BC), while 16 birds in total were reported in Saskatchewan, and up to 7 were at Tofield, AB, where at least one pair nested (*vide* GR). Up to 5 Snowy Egrets and 2 Little Blue Herons were at Whitewater (m.ob.), and singles of both species visited Last Mountain in early Sep and Chaplin L., SK 10 Aug (both AS). Whitewater also hosted up to 2 Tricolored Herons (KDS, m.ob.) and a staggering 350+ Cattle Egrets 4 Aug (RKO, PT, DW). At Last Mountain, Cattle Egrets peaked at 40 early Sep (AS), with an additional 7 reported at Stalwart Marsh, SK 10 Sep (SW). A Green Heron at Calgary 19-25 Aug was notable (AHi, m.ob.), as was a late Black-crowned Night-Heron at Frank L., AB 18 Nov (JP, AF) and a rare Yellow-crowned Night-Heron at Oak Hammock Marsh 16 Aug (AM, RP). The largest number of *Plegadis* ibis at Whitewater was 75+ on 13 Sep (C&GM), while another 10+ were at Lizard L., MB 3 Aug (CC). White-faced Ibis reports from Saskatchewan included one at Eyebrow Marsh 22 Aug (LO), up to 12 at Chaplin Marsh 4 Sep (ET, BC), and 7 at Last Mountain (no date) (AS).

RAPTORS THROUGH WOODPECKERS

A White-tailed Kite near the Nakaneet First Nation in the Cypress Hills, SK 5 Sep furnished a first for the Region and one of only a handful of records for Canada (CS, KB, ph.). The peak Sharp-shinned Hawk count at the Whytewold, MB hawkwatch, held mid-Sep–mid-Oct, was 246 riding a strong northerly wind 8 Oct (MQ). An imm. Ferruginous Hawk at River Hills, MB 13-15 Sep was e. of its usual range (PT, ph.). A Rough-legged Hawk at Banff N.P. 15 Aug was early (JB), as was a Gyrfalcon near Elbow, SK 22 Aug (LO). A late Virginia Rail was at Birch Hills, SK 11 Nov (MM). Clear L. held 10,000 American Coots 27 Aug (TK). An ad. Whooping Crane at Ashern, MB 13-18 Aug may have been the same bird noted near St. Adolphe, MB in spring (AHo, LL, m.ob.). Two Whooping Cranes with Sandhills near Pipestone, MB 1 Oct were also rare (MT).

Shorebird migration was subpar, with 2100 American Avocets at Reed L., SK 17 Sep (TK)



This White-tailed Kite in the Cypress Hills of Saskatchewan on 5 September 2006 was a first for the Prairie Provinces Region. The few previous Canadian records have all come from southwestern British Columbia. Photograph by Keith Bell.

and 3000 Long-billed Dowitchers at Whitewater 26 Aug (m.ob.) the only notable concentrations reported. Three American Avocets



Slaty-backed Gull now occurs almost annually in Alberta. This bird was present at Calgary from 12 through 19 (here) November 2006. Photograph by Terry Korolyk.

at Last Mountain 31 Oct were tardy (BL), as were 2 Least Sandpipers at Whitewater 14 Oct (MNS), a Dunlin at High River, AB 10 Nov (PC), and a Stilt Sandpiper at Frank L. 28 Oct (MMu, KH). Purple Sandpipers are now seen annually in late fall near Churchill; particularly late were 7 on 4 Nov, with 2 still present 6 Nov (DS). Rarities included a Sharp-tailed Sandpiper at Langdon Res., AB 23-28 Sep (RB, m.ob.) and a Red Phalarope n. of Cochrane, AB 25 Oct (JP, CH, m.ob.). A Pomarine Jaeger was reported at Grand Rapids, MB 17 Sep (PM) and a Parasitic Jaeger at Glenmore Res., AB 9 Sep (AB). A Franklin's Gull at Clear L. 28 Oct was late (TK). Rare rarities included an Iceland Gull at Cold L., AB 28 Oct (TH, RK, m.ob.), a Slaty-backed Gull at Calgary 12-19 Nov (RWR, m.ob.), and a Herring Gull x Glaucous Gull hybrid at Calgary 6-11 Nov (JP, TK). About 50 Glaucous Gulls near Churchill 3 Nov may be the largest concentration ever recorded in the province (BC); 28 were noted there 6 Nov (DS). On three occasions, a second-year Great Black-backed Gull at Delta, MB 9-12 Sep was seen ambling over to, and then capturing and eating, Forster's Terns resting on the same sandbank (GH, GW, m.ob.). A Black-legged Kittiwake at Cold L. 28 Oct was rare (TH, RK, m.ob.). An ad. Ivory Gull 6 Nov and an imm. 9 Nov were highlights of the Polar Bear season at Churchill (RvM, SC, DS, ph. IT, m.ob.). Two Common Terns at Pine Falls, MB 21 Oct were late (PT, RZ), and up to 2 Arctic Terns at Chestermere L., AB 2-6 Sep were rare (MMu, KH, MS). Also very rare was a Black Guillemot at Lac la Biche, AB 2 Nov (RK).

Up to 10 Eurasian Collared-Doves e. of Okotoks, AB 20 Sep had been present since Jun (GY), and a single bird was at Chestermere, AB 5 Sep (BE, RW, GY). One near St. Ambrose, MB 14 Sep was at a new location (TK), while yet another bird lingered until at

least 25 Nov at Lyleton, MB (JM). Barn Owls are accidental anywhere in the Region, so a dead bird near High River, AB 8 Nov (D&JM) and one seen at Granum, AB 18 Nov (KM) were notable. While Snowy Owls appeared in fair numbers in s. Manitoba in Nov, Northern Hawk Owls and Great Gray Owls remained virtually unreported. Banding efforts at six stations in Saskatchewan resulted in the capture of 500+ Northern Saw-whet Owls (*vide* SH). A Black Swift at S.L.R.C. 29 Sep tied the latest provincial date (PS), and single White-throated Swifts at the same site 27 & 29

Sep were both rare and late (PS). A female Rufous/Allen's Hummingbird near Hodgeville, SK 1 Aug defied identification (MP). A large hummingbird, possibly a Green Violet-ear or a Magnificent Hummingbird, was reported at third hand from Quill L., SK in early Aug (*vide* BL). Out-of-range woodpeckers included a Lewis's at Sask. Landing 6 Aug-2 Sep (RD, m.ob.) and lone Black-backed Woodpeckers at Winnipeg, MB 6 Sep (JW) and Grosse Isle, MB 24 Sep (KG).

PASSERINES

A Great Crested Flycatcher at Regina, SK 25-26 Aug was a local rarity (JC, m.ob.). In se. Manitoba, Gray Jays staged the largest movement outside the boreal forest in memory. Birds became more prominent than usual near the forest edge in



Saskatchewan's first Curve-billed Thrasher visited a Dalmeny feeder from mid-November into December (here 5 December) 2006. Photograph by Nick Saunders.

early Sep and appeared in Winnipeg by mid-month. The dozens of reports that followed during the remainder of the season were re-

stricted to the Red River Valley and areas to the east. A Chestnut-backed Chickadee at S.L.R.C. 19 Sep was rare (PS), as were single Carolina Wrens at Grosse Isle 2 Sep (KG) and Gimli, MB 25 Sep into Dec (ph. BCh). An American Dipper at Calgary 1 Aug was out of season (PMi, m.ob.). Wood Thrush is very rare in Alberta, so singles at Lethbridge 14 Sep (D&TD) and at Medicine Hat 24 Sep (BV) were noteworthy. A Curve-billed Thrasher at a Dalmeny, SK feeder mid-Nov-Dec was new for the province (D&CF ph.) and may represent the northernmost record of the species anywhere. A Sprague's Pipit at Whitewater 18 Oct was not only record late for Manitoba—it even sang briefly (CC).

The warbler migration was considered fair in Manitoba, as far as numbers were con-



Although there are a few Ivory Gull specimens from Manitoba, and several sightings, this immature on 9 November 2006 at Gordon Point near Churchill may be only the second to be photographed. Photograph by Ian Thorleifson.

cerned. Regionwide there were several rarities: a Brewster's Warbler at Regina 21 Sep (JCu); 3 Black-throated Blue Warblers in Saskatchewan 5 Sep-23 Oct (m.ob.), Townsend's Warblers at Sask. Landing 25 Aug (D&TD) and Maple Creek, SK 2 Sep (AH); Alberta's first Yellow-throated Warbler at Calgary 9-10 Sep (BH, m.ob., ph.), and a Kentucky Warbler at Winnipeg 30 Aug (AdE). Lingering warblers included a Northern Parula for a week up through 30 Oct near Pierson, MB (R&MW), Black-and-whites at Saskatoon 22 Oct (PH) and Winnipeg 23 Oct (G&JG), and a Wilson's at Calgary 23 Oct (TT).

Sparrow migration was a mixed bag. In se. Manitoba, high numbers of Chipping, Fox, and White-throated Sparrows and Dark-eyed Juncos were noted, with generally low numbers of Lincoln's and White-crowned Sparrows. Most *Zonotrichia* sparrows and juncos bypassed Saskatoon (SH). An American Tree Sparrow at Delta, MB 14 Sep was early (GB, JW), while a Field Sparrow at E. Shoal L., MB 9 Sep was rare (KG), as was a Smith's



The highlight of the 2006 Alberta fall migration was the province's first Yellow-throated Warbler, present at Calgary on 9 and 10 (here) September 2006. Photograph by Terry Korolyk.



This immature Black-headed Grosbeak at Alonsa, Manitoba, present from early November 2006 until the 17th (here), provided the province with its latest record. Photograph by Harry Harris.

Longspur at Banff 31 Oct (JR). A Black-headed Grosbeak at Alonsa, MB early-17 Nov was record late (ph. HH). Rusty Blackbird is a species of concern, so good numbers reported from Manitoba's s. Interlake region, including 300+ at Grosse Isle 13 Oct, were encouraging (KG). A Common Redpoll was banded at Delta on the early date of 21 Aug (HdH). From mid-Oct+, good numbers of both redpoll species appeared in the s., in sharp con-

trast to their near absence in the previous fall season.

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Northern Great Plains



usual of late, gulls made a good showing in the Region. Redpolls staged an early flight, and Gray Jays invaded North Dakota. South Dakota had a number of late shorebirds. However, across the board, numbers of migrants were low.

WATERFOWL THROUGH LOONS

A Black-bellied Whistling-Duck was photographed and seen by many at the Jamestown Sewage Lagoons, ND 10-16 Sep (SS); this represents the first record of the species for the state. A rare blue-morph Ross's Goose was at Long Lake N.W.R., ND 10 Nov (DNS). Rare in fall in the Dakotas, a Cinnamon Teal was in Grant, SD 12 Oct (BU). Unbanded, but probably an escapee, a White-cheeked Pintail was shot by a hunter in Stutsman, ND 4 Nov (p.a., SC). Besting the previous state high of 2, a flock of 5 Harlequin Ducks was at the Fargo Lagoons, ND 22-24 Oct (p.a., DWR, CDE, REM). An average flight of Surf and White-winged Scoters included a nice peak of 12 Surf Scoters at Cooney Res., MT 5 Oct (BJ). Black Scoters made a good showing in North Dakota, with six reports 8 Oct-10 Nov. They were noted in



Furnishing the first record for North Dakota, this Black-bellied Whistling-Duck was at the Jamestown Sewage Lagoons 10-16 (here 12) September 2006. Photograph by Dave Lambeth.

Ron Martin

The warm and dry weather of July continued through mid-September. The second half of September brought some precipitation and moderating temperatures. By contrast, October was cold and wet, with some snow late in the month. The warm and dry weather returned in November, and most of the Region had no snow cover by the end of the season. Some larger water areas that froze in October reopened in November, only to freeze again by month's end.

The parade of vagrants that began in spring in North Dakota continued unabated. Two possible first state records were documented. Montana recorded a good number of eastern strays, and one state first was recorded. As

two South Dakota counties 22 Oct-10 Nov, and a single was at Cooney Res., MT 5 Oct (BJ). Long-tailed Ducks staged a good movement in North Dakota, with an early bird 22 Sep at the Minot Lagoons (RJL) and a peak of 4 in McLean 26 Nov (REM). A new high count for North Dakota, 6000 Common Goldeneyes were in Ramsey 19 Nov (EEF).

The 10th report for North Dakota, up to 2 Pacific Loons were on L. Audubon 18-25 Oct (p.a., REM, CDE). A Pacific Loon in Pierre, SD 15 Oct-2 Nov furnished about the 15th report for the state (p.a., KM, RDO). If accepted, a distant Yellow-billed Loon on L. Audubon, ND 24 Nov would furnish the 2nd