

Summer gave way abruptly to cold weather in late September, particularly in the east, with Winnipeg registering a record-low mean temperature of -0.5°C in October. In contrast, *El Niño* brought temperatures as high as 20°C to southern Alberta on 21 November. Some outstanding rarities, particularly in Saskatchewan, punctuated a rather lackluster season. Few waterfowl or raptors lingered after the early freeze-up, juvenile shorebirds were scarce, and only a handful of "rare" gulls could be found. Northern owls, *Catharus* thrushes, and "winter finches" were all poorly represented. In southern Manitoba, several late-migrating songbird species (e.g., Winter Wren, Ruby-crowned Kinglet, Hermit Thrush, and Yellow-rumped Warbler) were apparently trapped by the cold and stayed in numbers well beyond normal departure dates.

For the second time in a year, Saskatchewan and the Region lost one of its most prominent birders. Wayne Harris, former editor of this column, died as the result of a farming accident. We will miss his valued input.

Abbreviations: L.M.L. (Last Mountain L., SK); S.R.V. (Sheep River Valley, AB).

LOONS THROUGH WATERFOWL

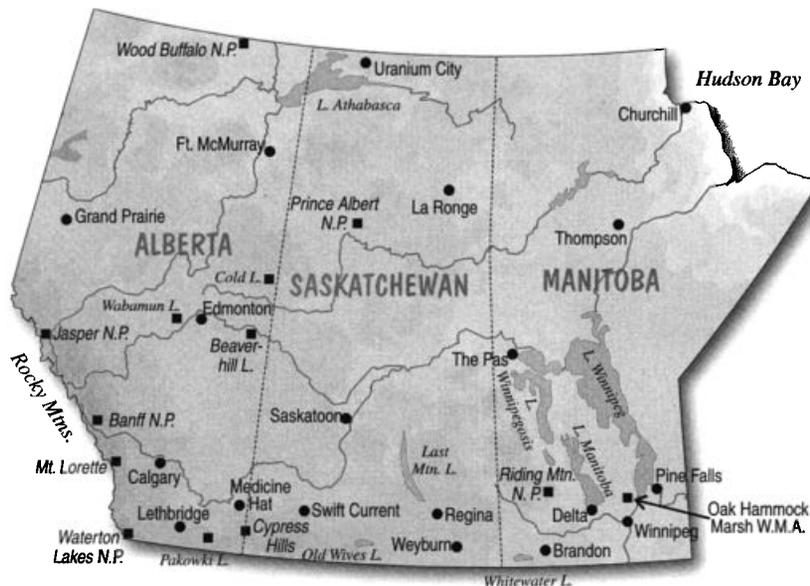
Pacific Loons made a good showing in Alberta, with peaks of 10 at Cold L. 28 Sep, accompanied by 200 Common Loons (ME, THi, RKI), and 18 on Barrier L., Kananaskis Country 13 Oct (J&MM). The only reported Yellow-billed Loon was at Seebe, AB 12 Oct (J&MM). An Eared Grebe at Pine Coulee, AB 30 Nov was very late (TK). Lake Manitoba at Delta, MB hosted 2135 Western Grebes 28 Sep (RK).

The only Great Egrets w. of Manitoba were 2 at Weyburn, SK 8 Aug (JW, CB) and one at Regina 2 Sep (BL). Cattle Egrets peaked at a record-high 51 at Whitewater L., MB 3 Aug (RP, LV, RD), dwindling to 5 by 23 Sep (RP et al.). One was at Reed L., SK 12 & 17 Aug (WH). A Green Heron at Fish Creek P.P. represented about Alberta's 9th record (D&LF); another frequented a backyard fishpond at Starbuck, MB 8 Sep (CP). A possible Glossy Ibis was studied near Balgonie, SK 23 Aug (TR, BL).

Unusually large numbers of Greater White-fronted and Snow Geese near Calgary, AB may well have been displaced by drought in se. Alberta and sw. Saskatchewan (MH). At Weyburn, an estimated 600,000 Snow Geese gathered 27 Oct (CB, MB). A Canada Goose near Churchill, MB 29 Nov was far n. for such a late date (NM, *fide* DF). Tundra Swans peaked at 7500+ at the w. end of Whitewater L. 7 Oct (CC, B.N.H.S.), while 6000 were tallied mainly at the lake's e. end 9 Oct (RK).

Six Wood Ducks at Gleichen, AB 2 Sep (AF, JP) and one at Cold L. 23 Sep (RKI) were

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locally rare, as was an American Black Duck near Taber, AB 24 Oct (LB). Surf Scoters were prominent in Alberta, with peaks of 65 at Barrier L. 6 Oct (J&MM) and 46 at Glenmore Res. (JB, BW), and in Saskatchewan with at least 93 between 6 Sep and 3 Nov (m. ob.). Tallies of 500+ Buffleheads 5 Oct and 200+ Hooded Mergansers 25 Oct at L.M.L. were high (BL), as were 70 Hooded Mergansers near Sandy L. 15 Oct (CC, Ornitholidays).

DIURNAL RAPTORS THROUGH ALCIDS

Northern Harriers and Rough-legged Hawks were scarce in Saskatchewan and Manitoba. Notably late were a Broad-winged Hawk near Kinookimaw, SK 15 Oct (K&GB, BL), a Swainson's Hawk near Swift Current, SK 10 Oct (MD, RD, LD), and a Ferruginous Hawk at Pine Coulee 13 Oct (TK). Swainson's Hawks had yet another dismal year in Saskatchewan, with 83% failure of 80+ nests s. and w. of Swift Current (WH); a count of 250 migrants near Champion, AB 18 Sep was therefore heartening (T&DD). At the Mt. Lorette hawkwatch, Golden Eagles peaked at 150 on 12 Oct (PS et al.) and 171 the next day (BW). A possible Black Merlin (*suckleyi*) was seen at Frank L., AB 3 Aug (TK), while a white-morph Gyrfalcon graced Weyburn 2 Nov (CB, MB, JW).

Late Soras were found near Regina 14 Oct (BL) and Saskatoon 18 Oct (AH) and in Winnipeg 5–6 Nov (PF, AE). A flock of 700 Sandhill Cranes near Oak L., MB 9 Oct contained only about 10 juvs. (RK). Lingering shorebirds included a Semipalmated Plover 23 Oct

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(PC, m. ob.) and an American Avocet 27 Oct (AF, JP), both at Namaka L., a Long-billed Dowitcher at Oak Hammock Marsh, MB 13 Nov (RK), and a Wilson's Phalarope at DeWinton, AB 15 Oct (DK). In the Calgary area, 10 Western Sandpipers were tallied between 3 and 20 Aug (TK, MH, RB). Several high counts of Red-necked Phalaropes in Alberta included 750 at Frank L. 11 Sep (DK). A Red Phalarope near Calgary 1-3 Sep was enjoyed by many (TK, m. ob.); another highlighted an outing at Ninette, MB 23 Sep (AW, CA, RP, RF).

Unidentified jaegers at Chain Lakes, AB 5 Oct (TK) and Bonneyville, AB 6 Oct (RKL) were the only ones reported. An estimated 100,000 Franklin's Gulls massed at Reed L. 24 Aug (WH), while late singles were at L.M.L. 27 Oct (BL) and Calgary 15 Nov (PSm). Rare gulls included a first-winter Glaucous-winged at Shepard, AB 20-23 Oct (TK), a Great Black-backed at Churchill 28 Oct (CA, AW), and a juv. Black-legged Kittiwake at Namaka L. 29 Sep (RB). Each province had Sabine's Gulls: 2 ads. at Namaka L. 17-21 Aug (MH, m. ob.), an ad. at Glenmore Res. 8 Sep (TK), a juv. at Namaka L. 29 Sep (RB), one at Bradwell Res., SK 25-28 Sep (AH, TB, m. ob.), and one near St. Ambrose, MB 16 Sep (JBe, TS). The perfect Arctic dream was experienced when a white Gyrfalcon chased an imm. Ivory Gull at Churchill 29 Oct (CA, AW). Saskatchewan's 2nd Ancient Murrelet, a first-fall bird at L.M.L. 15-16 Oct, was dispatched by Herring Gulls on the latter date; unfortunately it could not be retrieved (BL, m. ob.).

DOVES THROUGH PASSERINES

Eurasian Collared-Doves apparently bred successfully for the first time in the Region; 6 at Mortlach, SK 30 Sep included a juv. (MF, BL). A locally rare Eastern Screech-Owl at Regina 8 Oct became a traffic victim (*vide* BE). An early Snowy Owl was near Buck L., SK 7-9 Oct (BL); the species remained scarce Regionwide until mid-Nov, while Northern Hawk Owls and Great Gray Owls went almost unreported. Two young Great Grays at S.R.V. 17 Sep had hatched a month later than normal (WS). A White-throated Swift at Peter Lougheed P.P. 18 Aug was Alberta's 3rd ever (JP). An Anna's Hummingbird at a Lethbridge feeder through the 2nd half of Oct survived temperatures down to -24°C (K&SD).

Unusually tardy were a Belted Kingfisher at Saskatoon 22 Nov (AH) and single imm.

Red-headed Woodpeckers at Grand Beach, MB 2 Nov (m. ob.) and near Stonewall, MB and Grosse Isle, MB to the end of Nov (both KG). An Eastern Phoebe lingered in Winnipeg 10-23 Oct (RK, GBu). A Say's Phoebe in Winnipeg's Assiniboine Park was well e. of



This Red Phalarope, here with two Lesser Yellowlegs, was present near Calgary, Alberta, from 1 to 3 (here 2) September. Photograph by Terry Korolyk.

its range 2 Sep (AM, GH, CCs). A Great Crested Flycatcher at S.R.V. 13 Sep was a local first (WS).

Loggerhead Shrikes had a disastrous breeding season in Saskatchewan and most departed early (WH, CB, m. ob.). About 1500 Bank Swallows gathered at Chain Lakes, MB 11 Sep (CC et al.). Nesting activity of Cliff Swallows, much delayed by the cold spring, was noted up to 6 Sep in Winnipeg (GH). A Winter Wren at Weyburn 6 Nov was late (GB); the latest of numerous Manitoba reports was at Lac du Bonnet 21 Nov (PT). Also tardy were a Marsh Wren at Minnedosa, MB 2 Nov (CC), a Ruby-crowned Kinglet in Winnipeg 6 Nov (CA, AW), and lone Mountain Bluebirds at Brandon Hills, MB 15 Nov (TW) and at Saskatoon 24 Nov (HV).

Catharus thrushes "went virtually unnoticed" in the Calgary area. A Swainson's Thrush in Winnipeg 2 Nov was remarkably late (CA, RP, LV, AW), while a Hermit Thrush at Delta 3 Aug was about six weeks earlier than usual (D.M.B.O.). Hermit Thrushes lingered well into Nov in Manitoba, the latest at Victoria Beach on the 18th (GG). Other lingerers included single Gray Catbirds in Winnipeg 19 Nov (GG) and up to 30 Nov (RBe), and a Northern Mockingbird at Edmonton, AB from late Oct into Dec (JM).

Warbler migration was considered good in s. Alberta but unremarkable for numbers elsewhere. Major highlights were a male Yellow-throated Warbler of the *albiflora* race at Weyburn 24 Oct and 9 & 11 Nov (GB, m. ob.), the 3rd for Saskatchewan, and that province's first confirmed Prairie Warbler, a male at Saskatoon 18-20 Oct (RW, m. ob.).

Late stragglers included a Tennessee at Creighton, SK 15 Oct (B&HS), a Yellow at Regina 13 Oct (BL), a Cape May at Cold L. 1-11 Nov (*vide* THi), a Yellow-rumped at Lac du Bonnet 21 Nov (PT), a Blackburnian at Winnipeg 18 Oct (AW), a Pine in Winnipeg 8 Nov (RK), an American Redstart at Cold L. 14 Oct (*vide* THi), and single Wilson's Warblers at Bow Valley P.P., AB 24 Oct (RWe) and at Calgary 27 Oct (MR). Black-throated Blue Warblers—annual but rare throughout the Region—were found at Medicine Hat, AB 8 Sep (DB, BV), in Winnipeg 18 Sep (CA, RP, AW), at Kinbrook Island P.P., AB 8 Oct (KH), at Regina late Oct and 11 Nov (BD, K&GB), and at Saskatoon 24-27 Nov (KW, m. ob.).

Noteworthy were a Summer Tanager at a feeder s. of Winnipeg late Oct—9 Nov (*vide* LdM), a Scarlet Tanager at Brandon, MB 4 Nov (HP, JH), a Spotted Towhee at Spruce Woods P.P., MB 10 Sep (CC et al.), and another at S.R.V. 13 Sep, the latter the first for the valley (WS). A Lark Sparrow at Luck L., SK 1 Oct was a full month later than usual (TB et al.). Also late were a Savannah Sparrow at Grosse Isle 15-18 Nov (KG), a Song Sparrow at Regina 15 Nov (TH), and a Chestnut-collared Longspur at Whitewater L. 23 Sep (RP, AW). A Pine Grosbeak at S.R.V. 8 Sep (WS, RWe) was very early. In general, winter finches were few and far between in the s. parts of the provinces.

Observers (provincial compilers in boldface):

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