

# Prairie Provinces Region

## RUDOLF F. KOES AND PETER TAYLOR

It was by far the best summer in three years, with near-average temperatures and rainfall overall. June was the wetter month in Alberta and Saskatchewan; Manitoba received more rain in July. With few exceptions it appeared to be a good breeding season for waterfowl, raptors, and songbirds alike. There were few major rarities, and one of the best was unfortunately out-of-bounds for most birders.

Abbreviations: I.P.G. (*International Peace Gardens, MB/ND*), P.F. (*Provincial Forests*).

### Grebes to Falcons

Eight pairs of Red-necked Grebes nested in the Regina area (CB, BL), and this species appeared to have a very successful season near Minnedosa, MB (CC). Non-breeding Am. White Pelicans were numerous across the Region, from Calgary, AB (MV) to the Winnipeg R., MB (PT); one wandered N to Churchill June 23 (JC, FMcL).

Single Great Egrets visited Killam, AB July 2 (NJ), and Pelican L., SK June 24

(LSg). Four Snowy Egrets were found at Chaplin L., SK July 15–16 (MP), and one was at Namaka L., AB June 13 (JB, LP). Six Cattle Egrets were at Eyebrow Marsh, SK July 11–15 (BH), where two remained July 22 (BL, CB, MB); singles were seen near Lac La Biche, AB May 31–June 1 (EQ), at Pelican L., SK June 4 (FR), and near Regina July 13 (KR, RT). Surprisingly, no egrets were reported in Manitoba, which usually dominates the Region's "southern heron" scene. The first White-faced Ibises for Taber L., AB were an adult and immature July 12–15 (LB); 15–20 were found at Frank L., AB (NA).

The newly established population of Trumpeter Swans in e. Saskatchewan continued to prosper and expand: 13 adults and nine cygnets were found in the Porcupine P.F./Greenwater P.P./Northern P.F. region (RB). A pair of Cinnamon Teal stayed at St. Alphonse, MB June 11–18 (AC, LL *et al.*), and one was at Oak Hammock Marsh, MB June 19 (AC); 10 Saskatchewan reports were more than normal (*vide* RKr). Locally rare were a Redhead at Churchill June 22 (*vide* RKO) and a Greater Scaup near Calgary June 9 (TK). Two ♂ Harlequin Ducks graced Clearwater L. near The Pas, MB June 5–8; there were unconfirmed reports of a pair mating elsewhere on the lake (FW). A ♂ Barrow's Goldeneye was a highlight at Churchill June 25 (RKO *et al.*), and a female was reported at Fort Qu'Appelle, SK June 18 (RH).

Eight Turkey Vultures was a good count in the Cypress Hills, AB June 19 (PH). A Broad-winged Hawk at Sandy Beach, AB July 30 (IH) was rare for the Calgary area in

summer. A wet June was bad news for Swainson's Hawks, which suffered another poor season in Saskatchewan (m.ob.). In contrast, 57 Ferruginous Hawk nests in the Kindersley, SK area produced 158 young, the 2nd-highest total in 25 years (SH, *vide* PW). A lone Ferruginous Hawk at Elm Cr., MB June 19 and July 24 (R&TW) was well e. of the breeding range, and a Rough-legged Hawk was a summer rarity near the Cypress Hills, AB July 15 (LSv). Low numbers of Am. Kestrels are causing some concern in Manitoba.

### Grouse to Woodpeckers

Sage Grouse could not be found in s.w. Saskatchewan this summer; a steady decline at a Manyberries, AB lek has seen displaying males dwindle from 34 about 7 years ago to five this year (OD, JR). About 10 Yellow Rails were found near Craven, SK July 12 (BL), and the species was heard at several other Saskatchewan locations, but was apparently absent from Churchill. Up to three Virginia Rails at Frank L., AB June 26–July 14 (WSm) were locally rare.

In Alberta, Black-necked Stilts totaled 20 at Kinivie Marsh, near Tilly June 5 (AS) and four at Stirling L., June 20 (RMO), while a pair accompanied three almost-fledged young near Cassils July 27 (WSc). A Black-necked Stilt at Oak Hammock Marsh June 8–Aug. 10 (MS, m.ob.) provided Manitoba's first report since 1981, and 5th ever. Four pairs of agitated Lesser Yellowlegs in the Jumping Pound Cr. area, AB June 10 (JS) indicated breeding s. of the known range. Noteworthy shorebird concentrations included 1000 Hudsonian Godwits at Luck L., SK July 23 (FR); 160 Marbled Godwits at Fincastle L., AB July 10 (LB) and another 150 at Frank L., AB July 14 (WSm, CW); and 800 Sanderlings near Estevan, SK May 29 (PL *et al.*) and 2782 counted at Old Wives L., SK June 1 (BL). A Reeve visited Churchill June 6 (*vide* BC), and an Am. Woodcock approached its range limit at L. Audy, MB June 22 (MD, *vide* CC).

Pomarine Jaegers visited Churchill in exceptional numbers, with high counts of 11 June 5 (JJ) and 10 June 8 (PL *et al.*); there were numerous other reports to June 27. An imm. Parasitic Jaeger visited Turtle L. Nature Sanctuary, SK July 4 (MC). An imm. Little Gull was found at Delta June 11 (RKO), and a Mew Gull was at Churchill June 26 (RKO *et al.*). Up to six Ross' Gulls were found at Churchill this year; eggs hatched at one nest June 29, and one male tried fruitlessly to mate with a slightly injured Bonaparte's Gull (BC *et al.*).

Eight eggs in Manitoba's first Barn Owl nest, at Springsteen, proved to be infertile



(RN, ph, DF). The nest was in the attic of an occupied house, hence the location could not be publicized; remarkably, three birds had been present in April. The Burrowing Owl's decline in Saskatchewan continued unabated; the only bright spots were Kronau, where 4 pairs accompanied 10 juveniles July 22 (BL), and the Moose Jaw area, where 6 pairs raised over 30 young (*fide* LK). Both Long-eared and Short-eared owls presented a brighter picture in s. Manitoba, with above-average numbers at many localities. Also heartening were  $\geq$ three N. Hawk Owl nests near Churchill (BC). June 23 was an unusual date for a Boreal Owl to be calling near Wood Buffalo N.P., AB (WN).

A probable ♀ **Anna's Hummingbird** at Highwood Junction, AB June 19 & 23 was carefully described (TK). A Whip-poor-will was at the fringe of its range at Nipawin, SK June 29 (SS); well beyond the fringe was a **Red-headed Woodpecker**, present for 2 weeks in June at L. Louise, AB (JH, ph.). Somewhat out of range were two Black-backed Woodpeckers at Churchill in early June (*fide* PL, BC).

#### Passerines

At or beyond their range limits were an E. Wood-Pewee near Regina July 5 (PC), a Willow Flycatcher near Stonewall, MB June 17 (KG), a Least Flycatcher at

Churchill June 18 (B&E, *fide* BC), and a Great Crested Flycatcher near Edmonton June 12 (*fide* PM). Twelve E. Kingbirds near Banff, AB June 2 (M&DM) was a good count for the mountains. Rare outside the mountains in summer was a Clark's Nutcracker at Calgary July 25 (JPr). The continuing advance of Com. Ravens out of the forest was especially prominent in the Qu'Appelle Valley, SK (m.ob., *fide* RKr).

Two extralimital **Ruby-crowned Kinglet** nests were found at I.P.G., one either side of the Manitoba/North Dakota border, July 2 (RMA, GB); they followed an initial sighting June 2 (BG). Three pairs of E. Bluebirds raised  $>$ six young n.w. of the Cypress Hills, AB (BF, BF, DB); there is only one previous Alberta nesting record. Several nesting pairs of Mt. Bluebirds at Lac La Biche, AB represent a range extension in the wake of forest clearance. At Churchill, Bohemian Waxwings were unusually scarce (m.ob.), and a Cedar Waxwing around June 23 (DH, RK *et al.*) was rare there.

The most unusual warbler record was a ♂ **Golden-winged Warbler** at Porcupine Hills (RMO), furnishing Alberta's 2nd sight record. Also noteworthy were a Nashville Warbler at I.P.G., June 7 (PL *et al.*), about four Chestnut-sided Warblers in Calgary June 6–July 19 (m.ob.) and one

near Kananaskis Village June 13 (RD, BW), a territorial Yellow-rumped (Myrtle) Warbler at I.P.G., MB July 2 (RMA, GB), and a Blackburnian Warbler in Calgary June 4 (CS).

A ♀ W. Tanager was reported at Churchill June 18 (B&E, *fide* BC), and a singing ♂ tanager in Grass River P.P., MB June 24 (PT) was almost certainly this species. A ♀ N. Cardinal was still at St. Albert, AB June 4 (EO). A ♂ Black-headed Grosbeak sang in Moose Mountain P.P., SK June 5 (BL), and singing birds were also noted in Cypress Hills P.P., SK: one June 12 (BL, TH) and two July 19 (JPO). A Lazuli Bunting nest at Lethbridge, AB was the first for that area (m.ob., *fide* LSv). A northerly Indigo Bunting n. of L. Winnipegosis, MB June 23 (PT) was the second bird spotted in 3 runs of a Breeding Bird Survey route. A **Black-throated Sparrow** near Olds May 27–31 was photographed to furnish Alberta's 2nd documented record (TL). Lark Bunting numbers were greatly reduced from recent levels in s.w. Manitoba and s.e. Saskatchewan, presumably reflecting improved conditions in their core range; one wandered E to Delta, MB June 1 (GM).

Several Saskatchewan observers noted increased Bobolink numbers in response to improved moisture levels; one was a rare visitor to Churchill June 10 (CM). Two

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pairs of House Finches nested in one spruce tree in Winnipeg (E&NJ)—surely nesting habitat is not at a premium already? One nest was deserted when young fledged from the other. At least one pair of House Finches nested successfully in Regina (BL), and a pair summered at Whitewood, SK (JPo). There were several reports of Red Crossbills on the move in Saskatchewan in July, including 20 at Duck Mountain P.P., July 12 (RK); 24 brightened a lunch break near Pinawa, MB July 15 (PT).

**Observers (subregional compilers in boldface):** Neil Almond, Martin Bailey, Dennis Baresco, Rhys Beaulieu, Lloyd Bennett, Gordon Berkey, Carol Bjorklund, Jody Blythe, B&E (Bishop & Elder; first names not given), Muriel Carlson, Bonnie Chartier, Paul Chytky, Judith Collinge, Andy Courcelles, Calvin Cuthbert, Mike Denny, Olga Droppo, Rodger Dunn, Dennis Fast, Bob Frew, Ken Gardner, Bruce Glick, Joel Hagen, Ian Halliday, David Hatch, Brian Hepworth, Trevor Herriot, Ron Hooper, Phil Horch, Stuart Houston, Edna & Norm Jagger, Joseph Jehl Jr., N. Johnston, L. Knight, Rudolf Koes (RKO), Terry Korolyk, **Robert Kreba** (RKr), Lou Layman, Paul Lehman, Thelma Lissel, Bob Luterbach, Colin MacDonald, **Pat Markdevitz**, Ron Martin (RMA), Mike & Dianne McIvor, Francis McLean, Glenn McMaster, Ross Monroe (RMO), Robert Nero, Wayne Nordstrom, Eldon Olstad, Barry Plante, John Pollock (JPo), John Price (JPr), Myrna Priebe, Leslie Pringle, Ernie Quintal, John Riddel, Keith Roney, Frank Roy, Carol St. Amour, Lyle Saigeon (LSg), Liz Savoy (LSv), Wilf Schurig (WSc), Stan Shadick, **Peter Sherrington**, Martin Siepman, Andrew Slater, Wayne Smith (WSm), John Steeves, Peter Taylor, Ron Tillie, Mike Vernon, Cleve Wershler, Peter Whelan, Renee & Tom Will, Bill Wilson, Frans Woons.

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# Northern Great Plains Region

## GORDON BERKEY

The eastern and southern parts of the region had good precipitation, but eastern Montana and extreme northwest North Dakota were quite dry, and many potholes were dry by the end of the season. In contrast to the disastrous breeding season of last summer, reproduction was very good for most species. Wetland species greatly increased, and birds preferring wet meadow habitat also benefited from the vigorous vegetative growth. Passerines in general thrived on the increased insect populations.

The American Birding Association convention at Minot June 13–19 brought 600 birders and increased birding activity to North Dakota and the region.

Abbreviations: I.P.G. (*International Peace Gardens*); T.R.N.P. (*Theodore Roosevelt N.P.*).

## Loons to Rails

A pair of Com. Loons with young at Snake Cr., July 19 provided the first breeding record for *L. sakakawea* (GE). Pied-billed Grebes quickly returned to former abundance and a few Horned Grebes reoccupied their former breeding range in North Dakota. Western Grebes made a strong come-

back, although many nests were not initiated until July. A pair of Clark's Grebes with two young was at Minnewaukan, ND July 30 (EF), a nest was photographed at Waubay L., SD June 21 (JDW), and a mixed pair were feeding young s. of Malta, MT July 21 (CC). Clark's increased at Freezeout L., MT this summer (MS). American Bitterns thrived, with  $\leq 15$  calling birds per day reported by some observers. A Green Heron in *Sheridan*, ND June 4 provided a first county record (REM). A Snowy Egret, unusual in e. Montana, was at Bowdoin N.W.R., June 8 (TF). Little Blue Herons were in *Sanborn*, SD June 25 (JP) and *Cass*, ND July 9 (RO). A ♀ Cinnamon Teal with young in *Morton* July 9 supplied only the 2nd breeding confirmation for North Dakota (GB); it followed a spring with increased sightings of the species. Waterfowl nested in large numbers and were very successful. Summer non-breeding waterfowl in North Dakota included Tundra Swan, Snow Goose, Greater White-fronted Goose, and Greater Scaup.

Osprey returned to the breeding site at Pactola Res., SD, and a N. Goshawk nest with young was also found in *Pennington* July 21 (NW). An Osprey was seen at Heart Butte Res. in *Grant*, ND (CT), and they were again present at Icelandic S.P. Bald Eagles nested successfully in *Brown* and *Gregory*, SD (*vide* DS). A Bald Eagle was unexpected in *Cass*, ND July 14 (JOH). Northern Harrier populations increased; 12 nests were found at Lonetree W.M.A., ND. A June Merlin was surely on breeding territory in the Turtle Mts. (TB), where there are no definite breeding records.

It was great year for rails. Coots, Sora, and Virginia Rails were seemingly everywhere, but most amazing was the explosive increase in Yellow Rails in North Dakota. Some sam-

