

(PJW) provided the Region's first migrant March records. Surprisingly, the only Brambling report came in from Gambell, where a young male appeared June 3–4 (WINGS, AK). The Ketchikan winter feeder Purple Finches (a male and two females) remained together to Mar. 31 and a female lingered to Apr. 12 (JP, SCH). White-winged Crossbills remained locally common (in the e. Interior) to nearly absent from most the North Gulf Coast (m.ob.).

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British Columbia/ Yukon Region

JACK BOWLING

The waning of El Niño allowed for some interesting weather in March—stormy on the coast during the first half, then ending with a heat wave for southern areas and a cold snap into the -30s° F for Yukon. April began unsettled but became sunny and warm during the third week as a ridge of high pressure built over Yukon and northern British Columbia. This pattern lasted into the middle of May, resulting in a prolonged episode of brisk northeast winds across the southern half of the region. The effect on northbound migrants was clear: Many of the March and early April arrivals were early, while subsequent waves became progressively later, causing much anxiety in the birding world. Also noticeable was the reluctance of many of the late-arriving songbirds to sing, almost as if they had all their strength sapped fighting the winds. There were few extralimital visitors, a Costa's Hummingbird in Vancouver being the most obvious.

Abbreviations: B.C. (*British Columbia*); D.C. (*Dawson Creek*); Ok. L. (*Okanagan L.*); Ok. Vly (*Okanagan Valley*); P.G. (*Prince George*); p.v. (*pending verification by governing Bird Records Committee*); Q.C.I. (*Queen Charlotte Islands*); Reifel (*George C. Reifel Waterfowl Sanctuary near Ladner, BC*); R.P.M.-M.S. (*Rocky Point Migration Monitoring Station, s. tip of Van. I.*); S.T.P. (*Sewage Treatment Plant*); Van. (*Vancouver*); Van. I. (*Vancouver I.*); Vic. (*Victoria*); Whse. (*Whitehorse*).

Loons to Herons

A pair of Red-throated Loons on Lacey L. near Port Alberni May 13 (MB) was thought to be nesting. Staging Pacific Loons off Reifel increased from 2500 Apr. 14 to 6000 by Apr. 25th (JJ), likely catching the last of the eulachon run at the mouth of the Fraser R. Two unaged Yellow-billed Loons were at Tofino Mar. 11 (JJ), while an immature was on Kalamalka L. near Vernon Apr. 21–May 14 (PG, MCo, C S, RJC). A single Pied-billed Grebe was at Rat L., Carcross in s.w. Yukon May 2–12 (LS, MaW, HG), the scene of the territory's first nesting last year; it was not seen thereafter. A single Eared Grebe on Arrow L. at Nakusp May 7 (GSD) was a good find. There was a noticeable staging of W. Grebes in Georgia Strait, with a peak of 3000 Mar. 26 (RSw). Another high count was of 1200 off English Bay, Van., Mar. 30 (CAi). As usual, the interior buildup of W. Grebes occurred later, as on Arrow L. at Nakusp where 455 Apr. 28, 285 Apr. 30, 1250 May 6, and >1000 May 7 (GSD) were recorded.

A flock of three Am. White Pelicans flew N over Pitt L., n.e. of Van., May 13 (†K. McEachern, LC, AM, M&E Merry), the 5th or 6th spring checklist record for which a clear pattern of mid-May visitations has unfolded. This is a bit later than the s. interior valleys, where seven were seen winging N over Ok. L. from Westbank May 9 (EF). The increased spring sightings of this species suggest the population may be increasing in the Region. A wandering single first-year Double-crested Cormorant made it to a pond on the Commonage near Vernon May 21 (CS, m.ob.), while an adult travelled far north to L. Laberge, s.w. Yukon May 25 (BD, HG), a location where one had been the previous year (BD). The bird was also seen there May 26–27 (m.ob.). A sizeable flock of 2000 Brandt's Cormorants between Gabriola I. and Duke Pt. s.e. of Nanaimo Mar. 2 (DS) was presumably feeding on spawning herring. An estimated 5000 Brandt's were in Active Pass between Salt-spring and Mayne Is. Mar 26 (CAi *et al.*), the non-breeding season Regional stronghold for the species. A new local record-high count for Burrard Inlet of 45 Brandt's Cormorants was tallied Apr. 8 (B.I.E.A.P.). At least 3 pairs of Pelagic Cormorants were seen on the cliffs on the n. end of Ballenas I. off Parksville Mar. 2 (DFF), where no nesting has been reported since 1987. Nesting Pelagics on the cliffs of Prospect Pt., Stanley Park, Van., were interrupted by blasting and scaling of the cliff face by the Parks Board during the time the birds were setting up territories. Only 10 adults were noted there during the height of the blasting Mar. 1, while 61 birds—including 10 nesting



pairs—were there Mar. 28 (MPr). The number of nests would undoubtedly have been higher if the blasting had not occurred. City boards need to be educated on the repercussions of their ignorance.

American Bitterns were noted from widely scattered locations: A single at Viaduct Flats, Saanich, Mar. 4 (RS); another at Somenos Marsh, Duncan, Apr. 12 (DM); an unusual gathering of three in Pitt Meadows, n.e. of Van., Apr. 21 (BD); and a single bird calling repeatedly from Newlands, 50 km n.e. of P.G., May 27–28 (CA, HA, JB, NK). Vernon's 25–30 pairs of Great Blue Herons nested at the established downtown colony. A windstorm Apr. 4 flipped a nest over on an incubating bird, briefly trapping the bird before the nest fell to pieces. The heron survived but not the eggs (J. Boss). The Great Egret which wintered around Abbotsford was last seen May 17 (MG). Did it head back south? Green Herons became conspicuous beginning in March, with reports of ≤four birds at a time from 5 suitable locations in the lower Fraser valley, 4 areas around Victoria, and 2 sites near Courtenay thereafter (v.o.). The two overwintering Black-crowned Night-Herons at Reifel were joined by three others Mar. 11 (JI, P&BSp) which suggested a possible influx from nearby wintering areas. The number of overwintering birds at Reifel has shown a gradual decline from the heyday of the mid-1980s, when one could see 10–11 birds along Fuller Slough. Does this reflect a real decline or just dispersal to other areas?

Waterfowl

Differentiating wintering Tundra Swans from Trumpeters requires a lot of scope work by knowledgeable observers, and a case can be made that we really do not have a good handle on the species in the Region. A count of 105 Tundras at Tsawwassen Lands, Delta, Mar. 5 (DTy) was on the high side and indicates that the patient observer can make worthwhile contributions. Trumpeter Swans departed the wintering grounds on the s. coast in March, with 175 on the Tsawwassen Lands in Delta Mar. 5 (RSw), dwindling to three birds there by Mar. 26 (MPL). Stragglers were noted at Port Alberni until Apr. 17 (DGC), tying the latest departure record there; until Apr. 20 (HVP) at Martindale Flats, Saanich, s.e. Van. I.; and until May 21 (D. Bastaja) in the Fraser Valley at Katzie Marsh. A Mute Swan with two cygnets was in Somenos Marsh, Duncan, May 31 (DFF), at the n. edge of their Van. I. range. The farthest inland stray during the peak of the Greater White-fronted Goose passage was a single at Vanderhoof Apr. 12 (CA, LL), while another stuck out like a sore thumb in a flock of Canada Geese at Chaperon L., s. of Kam-

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VICTOR EMANUEL NATURE TOURS

loops, Apr. 23 (CC, DnW, BT, JBu, GwW). Emperor Geese continued to make news with a relatively tame blue-green banded bird on the n. shore of Shuswap L., Apr. 21–28 (the Clarks, SR, m.ob.), later confirmed as an Alaskan bandee (FK, *fide* CS). This would provide the first accepted B.C. interior record (p.v.). Another Emperor was at Somenos Marsh May 15 & 20 (S&E Watts). A healthy 6267 Brant were tallied by the Canadian Wildlife Service in the Parksville-Qualicum Beach area during the Brant Festival Apr. 3 (T. Martin, *fide* JeA). More surprising were relatively large numbers in Yukon, with 14 at McClintock Bay, Marsh L., and a tired-looking one at Schwatka L. dock May 26–27 (m.ob.). Boundary Bay harbored good numbers of staging Brant, with 1300 arriving Mar. 13 (RSw), and a peak of 3100 Mar. 27 (GAP, RSw). Thereafter numbers declined: 2500 Apr. 20–21 (Rsw), 1600 Apr. 29 (RSw), and 12 birds May 23 (RSw). The Reifel Snow Goose flock, estimated at 5000 birds Mar. 25–Apr. 15 (KL, m.ob.), had tapered to 1000 by Apr. 23 (JI). A blue-morph Snow Goose was a surprise find at Vanderhoof Waterfowl Sanctuary Apr. 1 (NK), with another more typical white-morph bird there Apr. 9 (P.G.N.C.). The ♂ **Falcated Teal** discovered at Tofino in January (RP) was last seen Mar.

28 (AD). Perhaps this is the same bird that was there in April 1994. A few notable duck crosses were a probable ♂ Hooded Merganser x Com. Goldeneye at China Cr. Park, s. Van. I., Jan. 1–Mar. 15 (BSL, R. Cripps, ph. SMcR *et al.*); a probable ♂ Com. Goldeneye x Hooded Merganser at Stoney Creek, Vanderhoof, Apr. 9 (NK, SK, ph. MPH); and a ♂ Cinnamon x Blue-winged Teal at Lewes Marsh, Marsh L., s.w. Yukon May 9 (CE). Relatively large numbers of Gadwall were seen around the Whse. area, where the species is rare in spring, with 17 individuals noted between May 13–31 (m.ob.). A ♂ Eur. Wigeon at D.C., Apr. 10 (MPh, SK) was the first recorded for the area. Lost Lagoon was a haven for Lesser Scaup during March, with a peak of 6500 Mar. 5 (MPr, N. Moores). The dusk flight of ducks into Lost Lagoon Mar. 27 (MPr) brought an estimated 3000–5000 Barrow's Goldeneyes to join the already present 4000 Lesser Scaups. The lagoon was crammed with ducks! One has to be lucky to see Harlequin Ducks in the interior valleys as they make their way from the coastal wintering grounds to the rushing mountain streams to breed. A ♂ Harlequin was seen on Grant I., Ok. L., May 3 (DB, m.ob.). Two pairs of Harlequins stopped briefly on Kalamalka L., Vernon, May 5 (AB), while another single

bird was spotted on Arrow L. near Nakusp May 7 (GSD). A large raft of about 5000 ducks made up of Surf Scoters, Black Scoters, and Greater Scaup, possibly feeding on herring spawn, was seen in the Denman-Hornby Is. area off Campbell R., Apr. 5 (M. Callahan *et al.*). A ♀ Hooded Merganser was at D.C., Apr. 25 (MPh, LL, SK) where rarely seen. A flock of 31 Ruddy Ducks was on McCoy L. near Port Alberni Mar. 11 (DGC, C. Schmidt), a species that is usually restricted to s.e. Van. I. Meanwhile, Ruddy Duck sightings continue to climb in Yukon. A ♂ Ruddy was hiding in the reeds of Rat L., Carcross, May 12 (HG). Another male was on Coot L., May 21, where the number increased to four males and one female by May 23 (HG); and a female was detected among scaup at Shallow Bay May 27 (BrB, HG).

Vultures to Cranes

There is strong suspicion that Turkey Vultures are now rare nesters in the Greater Van. area, perhaps an extension of the small population recently established in the central Fraser Valley. This feeling is fueled by persistent sightings over the Horseshoe Bay area of W. Van., as well as along the N. Shore Mts., such as the two seen at Mt. Seymour P.P., May 27 (AJ). A **White-tailed Kite** was seen in the Pitt L. area by many observers for a few days after its discovery Apr. 18 (PH, †DJ). This would represent B.C.'s first accepted but long overdue record (p.v.). A Bald Eagle pair built a nest in a cottonwood in downtown Nakusp this spring, with one young visible in the nest by the end of the period (GSD). A citywide Cooper's Hawk nesting survey sponsored by the Ministry of the Environment in Greater Vic. located about 12 active nests. A reminder not to fool around with nesting hen N. Goshawks was given by a bird which barely missed scalping a ducking observer imitating a Great Horned Owl call near Whse., May 27 (CE). An ad. **Broad-winged Hawk** was watched as it caught the morning sun and rose on a thermal at Grindrod, n. of Vernon, May 13 (CS, EN), providing the 2nd record of this species for the Spallumcheen/Okanagan Valleys. A Swainson's Hawk, a rare bird in Yukon, was found w. of Whse., May 26 (LK, GS). Another Swainson's Hawk overflew the P.G. airport May 19 (JB), the 2nd consecutive year that one was seen in the area since the 1940s. A detailed report was received of an ad. "Kriider's" Red-tailed Hawk near Abbotsford Mar. 25 (S. Olson), well w. of its normal range, although there are as yet no accepted records of this race in British Columbia. A gathering of 16 Red-tailed Hawks, 12 light morph, three dark, and one very pale, was watched swooping and "playing" on the thermals off the cliffs of the Kiskatinaw R. near D.C., May 21 (SK, LL, MPh). The observers

wondered where the birds could find the time during the peak of the breeding cycle. American Kestrels numbers continue to be depressed across the s. interior valleys. Only 12 were found between Vernon and Abbotsford via the Hope-Princeton Hwy Apr. 15, while only 10 were noted along the Spence's Bridge-Kamloops corridor the next day (CS). From six-eight Peregrine Falcons frequented the Greater Van. area during the period, with the only apparently site-faithful birds being one at the Tsawwassen Ferry terminal and another on the Granville 2000 building in downtown Vancouver (m.ob.). A Peregrine of the *anatum* race was at the Port Alberni Bird Sanctuary Apr. 2 (DGC). A young Peregrine Falcon was watched as it stooped on a longspur flock near D.C., May 7 (MPh, LL, SK). The bird came up empty-handed, spiralled upward to join an ad. Peregrine, and then both continued onward after some aerial acrobatics. Apparently just a failed lunch stop on the way north. A Peregrine was observed soaring over the cliffs e. of Vaseux L., s. Ok. Villy, May 21 (CC, DnW, LM, GR), and again there June 2 as it chased off a Golden Eagle and a Red-tailed Hawk. The bird is suspected of breeding in the area. A large gray-morph imm. Gyrfalcon was at the Vanderhoof airport eating voles Mar. 4-5 (HA, MPh, CA, LL). Departure dates for overwintering Gyrfalcons included Mar. 5 for the Commonage, Vernon (PG, CS); Mar. 22 Roberts Bank, Delta (P&BSp, m.ob.); Apr. 4 Martindale Flats, C. Saanich (JG); and Apr. 8 Sumas Prairie, Chilliwack (S. Olson). The Prairie Falcon which overwintered in the Boundary Bay area was last seen Mar. 15 (N. Russell, RSw).

Apparently declining in the Ok. Villy, a Chukar was a surprising discovery on the Okanagan Mt. Bird Blitz May 27 (HW). Both Rock and Willow ptarmigan were seen in suitable habitat at various locations around c. and s. Yukon in May (m.ob.), no doubt more a function of increased observer mobility as the snow melted than anything else. Ring-necked Pheasants were more widely reported around the Greater Vic. area, with numerous small coveys observed (m.ob.). Meanwhile, pheasant numbers continue to decline on the farmlands of the Delta area on the other side of Georgia Strait, with no reports received for the period. Wild Turkey has recently been removed from the Ok. Villy checklist. In a seemingly mocking gesture, a single turkey was found on McCulloch L. Road, s.e. of Kelowna, May 21 (DB, DnW, EF) at the 1000 m level. A ♀ **California Quail** at the Port Alberni Bird Sanctuary May 12 (DGC, B. Watson) put to rest the rumors that hunters had extirpated the species from the area. There were unconfirmed reports of other quail with her at times, which may have been young.

A Virginia Rail was spotted near Argenta at the n. end of Kootenay L., May 27 (GSD), an area where the species is rarely seen. Sandhill Cranes are always conspicuous on their way north. Notable flocks observed this season included 1500 high overhead Douglas L. Ranch Apr. 23 (CC, DnW, BT, JBu, GwW), three northbound over Yellowpoint Lodge, Nanaimo, Apr. 25 (DFF); and many thousands in very large flocks passing over Faro, s.c. Yukon May 8-9 (GW). More Sandhills than normal were reported from the few remaining potential nesting sites in the Lower Mainland: Pitt L., Burns Bog, and Derby Reach (m.ob.), including 5 pairs at Pitt Polder Apr. 13 (KTh). Local farmers around the outskirts of P.G. also report that cranes were "all over the place this year."

Shorebirds

A Black-bellied Plover was at Judas Cr., Yukon May 26-27 (m.ob.), a rare species in the area. Rare in spring on the coast, a single Am. Golden-Plover in S. Delta Apr. 30 (JL) and another at the n. end of Boundary Bay May 17 (M. Brown) were good finds. The largest reported Semipalmated Plover flock was 60 at Chesterman Beach near Tofino, Van. I., Apr. 30 (DGC). Migrant Killdeer totaling 239 staged at Alouette Polder Mar. 19 (KTh), including one flock of 125 birds. Six long-legged Am. Avocets were at Chichester Bird Sanctuary, Rutland, Apr. 25, with three there May 2 (CC). These may be some of the breeders from the nearby Kelowna Landfill, where 10 were seen May 21 (CC, LM, GR *et al.*). At the n. edge of their range, a mating pair of Greater Yellowlegs was observed at Tagish L., s.w. Yukon, Apr. 29 (HG, Y.B.C.), with another at Drury's farm, Whse., May 26-27 (JMcC, EM, PN, HT). After last spring's large influx of Lesser Yellowlegs into the Ok. Villy, a more usual number was recorded this season with only a single bird at Robert L., Kelowna, May 7 (CC, RC). Ten Spotted Sandpipers battling each other for a strip of shoreline at Swan Lake P.P. near D.C., May 24 (MPh, SK, LL) were likely indicative of peak movement, given its usual intraspecific intolerance.

SA This spring's most noticeable cold front fallout occurred in the D.C. area during the evening of May 17 (MPh, LL, SK, G&LM), grounding many shorebirds. The next day, a nearby field held 26 Upland Sandpipers, a couple dozen Am. Golden-Plovers, a single Pacific Golden-Plover (the area's first), hundreds of Pectoral Sandpipers, and at least three Baird's Sandpipers. Seventeen Upland Sandpipers lingered in a field s. of town, but had left by May 20.

Seventeen Whimbrel were observed at the Victoria Golf Course Apr. 26 (CoH), while 27 were there May 3 (MO). A soon-to-be polo field in Surrey was discovered to be a major stopover point for Whimbrel only a couple of years ago. The first bird there this year was sighted Apr. 9 (P&BSp *et al.*), and numbers increased to 282 by Apr. 28 (N. Russell, P&BSp). They made it to Yukon a few weeks later with one Whimbrel at Marsh L., May 16 (CE, HG, PSi); three between km 92–104 of the Dempster Hwy May 21–22 (HG); and six at Nares L., Carcross, May 26–27 (DRu, SRu). Rare on the s coast, one ♀ Long-billed Curlew arrived at the Alouette Polder Apr. 4, and three females and one male were there Apr. 13 (KTh). Another single was seen in S. Delta May 9 (G. Thompson), with another at Blackie Spit, Boundary Bay, May 18 (JAM, HNM, m.ob.). Curlew surveys in the area between Vernon and Enderby conducted by N.O.N.C. in April 1982 tallied 61 Long-billeds. This Apr. 15, N.O.N.C. turned up only nine birds (4 pairs and a single) in the same area, while a May 13 count totaled a dismal two–three birds. An apparent Black-tailed Godwit at Grice Bay, Tofino, May 7 (RP *et al.*) could not be relocated the next day. This would be the first accepted record for B.C. (p.v.). A sighting of another possible Black-tailed Godwit from Blackie Spit May 18 unfortunately arrived without documentation. A small incursion of Hudsonian Godwits occurred in the Lower Mainland, where they are very rare in spring, with the arrival of the first alternate-plumaged bird at the Iona S.T.P., Richmond, May 16 (TP); it was joined by another May 18 (AJ, RJC, BM), but neither was seen thereafter. Another Hudsonian was at Blackie Spit May 18–23 (HNM, JAM, m.ob.), and another single at the Roberts Bank Jetty May 21 (E. Whiteside). In Yukon, a Hudsonian Godwit showed up at Lewes Marsh May 10 (CE, PSi); three were observed at McClintock Bay May 7 (CE, PSi) with one remaining there until May 17 (HG). A couple of Hudsonians also graced the beach of Old Masset, Q.C.I., May 17–18 (MH, PH), hanging around with two Marbled Godwits. A Bar-tailed Godwit report from Blackie Spit Apr. 23 arrived without documentation. A Marbled Godwit frequented the Victoria Golf Course Apr. 29–May 6 (RS, m.ob.). However, this species is much more common on the w. side of Van. I., with 14 reported from Mackenzie Beach, Tofino, May 3 (AK) and another four in Tofino Inlet May 8 (MBe). An interesting timing differential in Red Knot arrivals was exhibited by the three birds found in the Tofino area on the w. coast of Van. I., May 6 (ph. DGC), con-

trasted with the first six observed on the e. shore of Georgia Strait at Roberts Bank Jetty May 22 (MWy). Usually only small numbers of Semipalmated Sandpipers pass through s. parts of the Region. Such was the case this year, with about 11 separate birds reported from the Greater Van. area May 6–20 (AJ, RSw, MPL, RTo); one at Robert L., Kelowna, May 4–7 (CC, RC, DB); and one at the N. Glenmore Pond, Kelowna, May 21 (SGC *et al.*). A flock of 2000 W. Sandpipers was at Grice Bay, Tofino, Apr. 30 (DGC). An extremely rare **White-rumped Sandpiper** was among 80 peeps at Lewes Marsh, Marsh L., May 15 (CE, PSi). Dunlin were abundant on the s. coast as usual, peaking at 100,000 at the Reifel fore-shore Apr. 14 (JI). Dowitchers of unstated sp., but likely mostly Short-billeds, built up from 19 at Grice Bay, Tofino, Apr. 16 to 4000 by Apr. 30 (DGC). A Short-billed Dowitcher at Robert L., Kelowna, May 21 (SGC *et al.*) was only the 2nd discovered in the Ok. Villy.

SA Rob Butler of the Canadian Wildlife Service monitored W. Sandpipers migrating N through Boundary Bay and s. Georgia Strait this spring. **Table 1 illustrates the rapid buildup and passage of this species through the area.**

It is interesting to note that the buildup occurred after the passage of a cold front, which momentarily interrupted the low level NE winds which had dominated the area the previous ten days. These numbers are the largest ever recorded in the Region and represent a major portion of the total population of W. Sandpipers. It also serves as a reminder that such tightly flocking species are at great risk of significant population loss due to either natural or man-made catastrophes.

Gulls to Woodpeckers

Single Parasitic Jaegers were seen over Georgia Strait May 10, 18 & 23 (RSw), with three off White Rock May 27 (FC). A Long-tailed Jaeger was observed at close range along the Dempster Hwy, Yukon, May 22 (HG). The only noteworthy stray Franklin's Gull was an immature at the Kelowna Landfill May 20 (CC). Active Pass is a major area for Bonaparte's Gulls as attested by flocks numbering 2700 Mar. 23 (R Sw, MBe), 10,000 Mar. 26 (CAi *et al.*), and 6000 Apr. 23 (CAi). Flock sizes remained high even as the gulls moved inland to their taiga lake breeding sites, with 600 feeding on flying insects over Swan L., Vernon, May 28 (CS), and 270 over a pond at 108 Mile near Lac La Hache May 1 (CA). A flock of 180 Ring-billed Gulls seen flying W over downtown P.G., Apr. 21 (NK) was likely headed to the closest breeding site at Ellis I., Fraser L., 150 km to the west. There was only one report of Thayer's Gulls: 30 birds at Iona S.T.P., Mar. 6. This species is suffering from observer *ennui* and is certainly more common than reports would indicate. A well-documented **Iceland Gull** was sighted along River Road, Ladner, Mar. 5 (AJ, MWy). The rumored lumping of Iceland with Thayer's would certainly lessen the circulation of such documentation to records committees. The **Slaty-backed Gull** overwintering at the Delta Landfill was last reported Mar. 11 (RJC, BM) and was well into pre-alternate molt by that time. Western Gulls are rare around the Greater Van. area, but five separate birds were reported from the area between Mar. 6–Apr. 8 (AJ, N. Moore, MPr *et al.*). A first-year Glaucous-winged Gull was observed along the Yukon R., Whse., Apr. 23 (JeB, CE, PSi), while a 2nd-year bird was there May 7 (CE, PSi). Glaucous Gulls found Van. I. to their liking this season, with many more reports than usual. Six birds of both adult and 2nd-year

Table 1. Western Sandpiper Migration

Date	Location	# of birds	status	observer
Mar. 11	Boundary Bay	1	overwintering	DTy
Mar. 13	Roberts Bank	27	overwintering	RSw
Apr. 17	Boundary Bay	1000	arrival	EMcB
Apr. 26	Roberts Bank	500,000	staging	RB
Apr. 27	Roberts Bank	1,000,000	staging	RB
Apr. 28	Roberts Bank	750,000	staging/passage	RB
May 11	Beach Grove	400	passage	RSw
May 18	Blackie Spit	12	passage	HNM, JAM <i>et al.</i>

ages—five at Duncan (DM), and one from Saanich (KG)—set a new one-day record for the Victoria Checklist Area. Another Glaucous Gull was found the same day at Jordan R. west of Victoria (DM). “Tens of thousands” of gulls at Parksville Mar. 23 included one Glaucous Gull (DM), while another was at Deep Bay Apr. 7, and four more were at French Cr. Marina Apr. 9 (BB, DS, ML). Meanwhile, on the other side of Georgia Strait there was only one report of a single unaged bird from Chilliwack Apr. 3 (DJ). Caspian Terns are becoming increasingly common along the s. coast as evidenced by the first returning bird at Spanish Banks Apr. 21 (MPR, KI) building to 175 at the Iona Causeway June 9 (HM). May 28 was the day for terns at Swan L., Vernon, with eight Caspians passing through to the north and three ad. Forster’s Terns remaining the whole day (CS). Four Black Terns at Iona I., May 13 (DMacK, EW) and another at Boundary Bay May 21 (FC) may have been heading for the only known coastal nesting site at Pitt L.

Marbled Murrelets are thought by many to be on a downhill slide. Doing nothing to dispel that feeling were 2 sightings only (from the last winter reporting period): a single bird at Fisherman’s Cove, W. Van., Feb. 5 (DTy) and two there Feb. 11 (JL, DTy). Although this species is likely under-reported, a concerted observing effort will be needed to ensure a representative survey, and observers are encouraged to report all sightings.

A Rock Dove was seen 100 km off the w. shore of Van. I. during the first week of May (DAn). An escaped shipboard bird or just one out for a cruise? There was a report of a single Barn Owl from the Black Cr. area, n. of Coutenay, e.c. Van. I., May 23 (DWI, J&BL), the n. edge of its range on the island. Precious few nests of Greater Van.’s urban Barn Owls have ever been discovered. Noteworthy, then, was a nest with an adult and two young under the Coquitlam R. Bridge, Coquitlam, May 31 (LCo). A nocturnal survey of the Bear L. Forest Service Road on the west side of Ok. L., May 26 (CC, m.ob.) opposite Kelowna turned up at least five calling Flammulated Owls in the preferred mix of young Douglas Fir (for roosting) and old flicker cavity-riddled Ponderosa Pine snags (nesting). This species has recently been surveyed extensively throughout the s. interior and was found to be the most populous raptor species in this habitat type and quite possibly the most populous raptor period across the dry south (*vide* RRH). At least seven Great Horned Owl nests were discovered around the Vernon area this spring in both rural and semi-urban sites, with at least 2 broods fledging by the end of the first week of May (CS). A N. Hawk-Owl was observed

at Swan L., Yukon Mar. 26, Apr. 1 & 14 (HG). In the space of 5 days from May 31–June 3, three N. Hawk-Owl nests were discovered in the area of the Sikanni Chief R., 100 km s.e. of Fort Nelson in n.e. B.C. (TG). This doubles the number of nests previously found in the province. A local Victoria newspaper reported that a **Burrowing Owl**, a vagrant to Van. I., was picked up in Campbell R. sometime in March. The bird had an eye injury and was taken to a local wildlife Hospital. A Great Gray Owl on a snag over Indian Arm, n. of Van., Mar. 5 (†LE) provided a rare coastal sighting. Another Great Gray Owl was spotted at J-Springs Ranch 25 km n.w. of Kamloops May 21 (GSD, RRH, NM), and a pair was observed exchanging rodent prey at a nest 100 km s.e. of Fort Nelson May 30 (TG). Two Long-Eared Owl nests were found in the D.C. area, one of which was a rare ground nest (MPH, SK, LL). D. Anderson may be accused of releasing birds if this keeps up: He spotted a Short-eared Owl 70 km off the w. coast of Van. I. during the first week of May! Perhaps a new marine subspecies? Five Short-eared and four Boreal owls were seen throughout s. and c. Yukon during the period (m.ob.). The last sighting of a N. Saw-whet Owl at Reifel was Apr. 4 (JI).

SA Although numerous last year, the meadow vole population in the D.C. area went ballistic this spring. The little rodents were everywhere. Raptors benefitted: Red-tailed Hawks, N. Harriers, and Am. Kestrels were around in good numbers. Even Gray Jays were occasionally witnessed carrying off the little mammals. However, perhaps no species responded more obviously than Short-eared Owls. They were rarely seen just a few years ago when rodent populations were low. After this spring’s first returning migrant Short-eared was seen Apr. 27 (MPH, SK, LL), they soon became preposterously common. The birds could be seen hunting over virtually any stubblefield, and later in the season it was not difficult to see seven or more perched on posts along a short stretch of road. Given the abundant food supply and decent weather, brood production is expected to be high, provided nests escape destruction from agricultural activities.

The first returning flock of 45 Black Swifts was noted over S. Van., May 17 (AJ). As last year, Vaux’s Swifts demonstrated remarkable arrival synchrony, with returnees noted at both Vic. (DA) and Van. (AJ, LCo), Apr. 29 and two at Tofino Apr. 30 (DGC). Anna’s

Hummingbirds have long been a feature of the Greater Vic. area, but now seem to be taking a shine to the Greater Van. area as well. At least 4 sites reported Anna’s during the period, with one feeder hosting 11 at one time! It was thought that there was a nearby nest at this location. The star of the hummer show was a ♂ **Costa’s Hummingbird** at a feeder in Port Coquitlam, NE of Vancouver, the local checklist’s 3rd record of this desert munchkin. The bird arrived May 2 (KB) but was not reported to the birding community until June 2 (I have this strange purple hummingbird at my feeder...)! Many observers subsequently studied the bird. Calliope Hummingbirds also showed up on the coast, with singles mist netted at R.P.M.S.S., May 9 & 13 (COBr). The species is considered accidental on Van. Island. A ♂ Calliope at Cypress Bowl P.P., May 2 (MPR, KI) courting a ♀ Anna’s Hummingbird was trounced and sent packing by a territorial ♂ Rufous Hummingbird! Just to show the preferred habitat of Calliopes, no less than 50 were tallied along a 3 km stretch of road in Ok. Mt. P.P., s. of Kelowna May 27 (DB *et al.*), exceeding last year’s total by 16! A ♀ Rufous Hummingbird, a rare bird in Yukon, was caught in a Whse. garage May 3 (RA, CE, HG, PSi), allowing observers close looks before it found the open door. A well-described Red-naped Sapsucker, a casual visitor to Van. I., was seen at a N. Saanich residence Apr. 18 (SM, m.ob.), and off and on until May 24 (†BB) Red-breasted Sapsuckers are uncommon nesters in the Lower Mainland. Exhibiting territorial behaviour were six birds at Mt Seymour P.P., N. Van., Apr. 16 (P. Duval) At the n. edge of its range, a ♂ Downy Woodpecker was observed at “its usual spot” at Swan L., Yukon May 7 (HG). Always a good find, a ♀ Black-backed Woodpecker was observed along the Venner Meadows Rd., e. of Okanagan Falls May 13 (CS, RS), while another Black-backed was at Fish L., s. Yukon Mar. 3 (CE, PSi). There were 7 reports of Pileated Woodpeckers from the Greater Van area in their usual “big tree” habitats. However, one report from Reifel Apr. 26 (JI) seemed rather out-of-habitat, with only a few large cottonwoods around.

Flycatchers to Finches

Least Flycatchers are extremely rare in the N. Ok. Vly, with one at Boltres Cr. gully, s. of Vernon, May 28 (PG). The debate rages whether the exponential increase in Hammond’s and Dusky flycatcher sightings over the past decade along the n. and e. fringes of their ranges is due to range expansion or an increase in informed observers. Of course that argument has no solution, and thankfully the records just keep on coming. The first Hammond’s Flycatcher returned to the

D.C. area, where still a very rare bird, May 16 (MPh, SK, LL), with two others noted there during the period. The first Hammond's returned to the Whse. area Apr. 26 (CE), with ≤ 10 seen or heard at the Fish Farm May 26–27 (m.ob.), while another was at Whse./Riverdale the same day (JeB). A Dusky Flycatcher was at Mt. McIntyre, Whse., May 24+ (HG, BB,) while the D.C. area's first-ever Dusky Flycatcher was heard May 28 (MPh, SK, LL). A Pacific-Slope Flycatcher at Port Alberni Apr. 17 was record early by one month for the area. Rare Say's Phoebe sightings included two at Giscome, 50 km n.e. of P.G., Apr. 16 (SK, LL), and one at Grant Narrows, Pitt L., Apr. 18 (DJ). A detailed description of an ad. ♂ **Vermillion Flycatcher** at Richmond May 30 (†MFM, p.v.) will require the full-blown scrutiny which a potential new record for the Region deserves. Two W. Kingbirds, rare on Van. I., were seen at R.P.M.M.S., May 9 (COBr). What was likely one of the W. Kingbirds that had nested for the first time at Colony Farm, Coquitlam, last year returned to try it all again May 11 (LCo). A pair was seen at the previous nest site May 28 (MWy, E. Harvalias, LCo) along with another single bird.

Eurasian Skylarks were noted from 5 locations on the Saanich Pen. this spring with a total of 103 birds (BB). Large flocks of Horned Larks are rare spring sights in the c. interior of B.C. Noteworthy, then, was a flock of 32 at Tachick L. near Vanderhoof Apr. 9 (NK, SK, MPh). Purple Martins returned to the s.e. Van. I. sites in good numbers with selected sightings: first return Cowichan Bay Apr. 19, with 13 birds there May 1 (DM); 22 birds at Ladysmith Harbour May 31 (DFF); and four birds at West Bay Marina, Vic. Harbour, May 6 (DP). The martins were a bit later returning to the N. Van. site at Maplewood Flats, with the first sighting May 12 (D. Beard, *vide* E. Sing). Two males and one female were checking out last year's nest sites there May 22 (MWy). Near the n. edge of its range in the Region and at a reliable location, a N. Rough-winged Swallow was at the Fish Farm in Whse., May 10 (GK, LK) & 26–27 (m.ob.). The Barn Swallow which overwintered at Reifel was still there Mar. 1 (JI). The Steller's Jays which invaded s.e. Van. I. last fall made news again this season. The jays apparently started moving away from their winter territories in mid-April. On Apr. 23, Begg checked Moses Pt., N. Saanich on the n.w. tip of the Saanich Pen., where they had congregated after the 1992–1993 invasion, and found 24 jays. She later found 65 there May 20 and 38 birds May 20. Residents were regularly counting flocks of >60 jays prior to May 15 (T&LA). Biologist Andrew Stewart of the Ministry of the Environment banded many of the birds and found that the majority

stayed there through the reporting period. As with the last invasion, the birds were apparently very reluctant to head out across the inlet. A **Scrub Jay**, accidental in the Region, was reported from s.w. Van., May 22 (†JoA, p.v.), a location within 3 blocks of the previous sighting of July 1993. At least six of the Blue Jays which accompanied the Steller's Jays into the Greater Vic. area last fall were seen throughout this spring at various locations, including one bird staging with the Steller's at Moses Pt., May 7 (AS). Another Blue Jay was seen with three Steller's Jays at Shelley, 10 km n. of P.G., Apr. 11 (BN). There have been no reports of Clark's Nutcrackers from the P.G. area for many years, so a report from s.e. of town of "two sleek light gray birds, similar to Gray Jays, but with white flanges on the tail" Mar. 12 (ELF) is intriguing. An extremely rare **American or Northwestern Crow** was observed on a gravel bar of the Yukon R. in Whse., Apr. 26–27 (BrB, CE, HG). Three White-breasted Nuthatches overwintered at their favorite feeder at Shelley near P.G., with the last two seen there Apr. 11 (BN). Both the origin and dispersal of these birds are still unknown.

American Dippers are rarely seen in the Greater Van. area, thus one at the mouth of Nelson Cr., W. Van., Mar. 5 (AM) and another opposite Croker I. in Indian Arm Apr. 8 (R. Cooley, B.I.E.A.P.) were noteworthy. A single Golden-crowned Kinglet out of habitat at Iona S.T.P., Richmond Mar. 26 (CH) and 30 at Crescent Pk., Surrey (JAM, HNM) were obvious migrants. A Ruby-crowned Kinglet at Alliford Bay, Q.C.I., Mar. 6 (PH), a very rare visitor to the Charlottes, was quite possibly an overwintering bird since the first arrival in P.G. was not noted until Apr. 11 (SK, LL). A probable N. Wheatear seen at Burnaby L., Burnaby, Mar. 12 (†HC, p.v.) would represent one of very few records for the local checklist area. Seven N. Wheatears were seen between km 64–74 of the Dempster Hwy, Yukon May 21 (HG, GJ). Two ♂ and one ♀ W. Bluebirds at Nakusp Mar. 18–19 (GSD) were rare visitors to the interior wet belt. Mountain Bluebirds are rare spring transients through the Greater Van. area. Good numbers were seen this year, though, with 16 birds observed at 6 locations Mar. 20–Apr. 28 (MPo, m.ob.). A large flock of 21 Mt. Bluebirds was seen near P.G., Apr. 13 (SK, LL). A good passage of Townsend's Solitaires was noted through the s. coast where it is a rare spring transient, with at least 15 separate birds from 11 locations around the Greater Van. area (D. Bastaja, m.ob.), and nine birds from 3 locations in the Greater Vic. area (BRG, ET, PP). A ♀ Am. Robin at a N. Saanich residence May 1 (BB) was watched as she dropped a beakful of dry grass and pine needles in the birdbath, swished them around

a bit, and then flew into a nearby thicket, no doubt to a nest under construction. Varied Thrushes were plentiful around P.G. beginning Mar. 17 (SK, LL), with "lots" reported downtown the week of Mar. 23 (DgW) and they were "heard in abundance" on the Troll L. ski trails Apr. 18 (KC). The only N. Mockingbird report was of one observed at Golden May 7 (*vide* EZ). A rather large flock of >70 Am. Pipits spent the winter flying about the farmlands of the Fraser Delta around Boundary Bay, Tsawwassen, and Ladner, making detection of northbound migrants difficult. However, the first pipit on its way N was likely the one seen in S. Van., Apr. 12 (AJ). Large numbers of N. Shrikes moved through Yukon, with seven along the Alaska Hwy near Takhini R., Apr. 12 (LK, Y.B.C.), and five at Swan L., Apr. 14 (HG). The last sighting of a N. Shrike in the Greater Vic. area was of one at Mt. Douglas, Saanich, Apr. 22. A convincing description of a Loggerhead Shrike at Brackendale near Squamish May 7 (A. de la Chevrotiere) was received. The bird was observed ground feeding on nuptial carpenter ants, a typical foraging strategy of Loggerheads. Four Crested Myna nests were found in S. Van. during the period (JL, DTy, EW) as the species struggles to hold on. A report of a myna pair nesting in a hollow tree in Aldergrove some 50 km e. of Van. will have to be checked out.

A high count of 30 Orange-crowned Warblers was made at R.P.M.M.S., Mar. 31 (COBr). A **Nashville Warbler**, a rare visitor to Van. I., was in Saanich May 12 (MGS) and perhaps the same bird remained in the general area with 4 subsequent sightings of single singing males through May 22. A Black-and-white Warbler at Campbell Valley Park, Surrey, May 12 (MPL) was a very rare find for the s. coast. The Com. Yellowthroat which successfully overwintered at Iona I. was seen there Mar. 6 (AJ, N. Moores). Western Tanagers returned quite early, with a single bird heard at Campbell Valley Park, Surrey, Apr. 9 (JAM, HNM); and they were around the Greater Vic. area in good numbers after mid-April. Lazuli Buntings have colonized the Van. area over the past several years, with the first returning male seen in S. Van., May 13 (DMacK). Other males were seen back at known nesting sites at N. Van., May 22 (D. Bastaja), and at Colony Farms, Coquitlam, May 23 (M&M Griffin). The story seems far from over, though, with ♂ Lazulis spotted on Van. I. twice: the first at Tofino May 12–13 (RP), and the next at Strathcona P.P., c. Van. I., May 29 (†S&EW). When will the first nest be found on Van. I.? American Tree Sparrow is a rare visitor to Van. I.; notable, then, was a bird found at Cumberland Marsh Apr. 30 (†VBC, MM, BMS). Perhaps one day someone will figure out just what it is that

Chipping Sparrows do not like about the Greater Van. area. It seems to be one of the few urban areas around the Region without breeding Chippies. They do pass through, however, with one at N. Van., May 9 (Q. Brown). Clay-colored Sparrows are usually sparse autumn, not spring, migrants through the Lower Mainland area. Surprising, then, was a single bird on Sea I., Richmond, May 26 (†TP *et al.*). A singing ♂ Lark Sparrow at Meadow Cr., Kootenay L., was a rare visitor. Fox Sparrows are quite habitat-specific through their range in the Region, with different races occupying different niches. The breeding birds of the Greater Van. area are mountain-dwellers, with two singing males noted at Cypress P.P., W. Van., May 20 (MPR, KI) and another at Mt. Seymour P.P., N. Van., May 27 (AJ). A Song Sparrow, very rare in Yukon, was reported from Judas Cr., May 26–27 (TA, LK, GS). The last reported Swamp Sparrow from the Greater Vic. area was from Viaduct Flats, Saanich, Mar. 10 (M. Carson). The Harris' Sparrow which overwintered at Reifel was last seen Apr. 17 (S. Mlodinow, JI, m.ob.). A heavy passage of Dark-eyed Juncos was noted in the Fraser Canyon near Yale Apr. 11–12, with flocks of ≤ 500 birds recorded both days. Snow Buntings are the harbinger of spring everywhere in the interior n. of 53N latitude. They arrived right on time and in a big way with a flock of 250 at Vanderhoof Mar. 4 (HA, MPh). Another locally large flock of 46 Snow Buntings was seen at Shallow Bay, Yukon Apr. 13 (CE, PSi). The Rusty Blackbird which had overwintered with Brewer's Blackbirds at Port Alberni, the local area's first, was last seen Mar. 11 (DGC). Gray-crowned Rosy-Finches were widely reported this spring, with two near P.G., Apr. 11 (SK, LL); eight at Minnekhada Park, Richmond, Apr. 14; 200–250 at Kimberley Apr. 15–30 (MiW); four at Jericho Park, Van., Apr. 18–20 (J. Selferts, KI *et al.*); 12 at Haley L., w. of Nanaimo, May 13 (A. Bryant); and four at km 92 Dempster Hwy, Yukon, May 20 (LC, HG, PSi). Purple Finches are a subject of concern in the Greater Van. area, with very few reports over the past few years. Perhaps they have all moved inland, because they were abundant around the P.G. area, e.g., flocks of 20 males at a feeder in Giscome by the end of April (MA). A ruby-topped ♂ Cassin's Finch, the local area's first, showed up at a P.G. feeder May 7 (†JB, ph. CA, HA) among Purple Finches, and remained singing in the area for a couple weeks. Common Redpolls remained scarce in the c. interior, with a measly two birds 15 km s.e. of P.G., Mar. 24 (SK, LL) and one on Nechako Bench, P.G., Apr. 20 (DgW). A Hoary Redpoll was seen at a Whse. feeder 3 times Mar. 19–Apr. 1, while two were there Apr. 14 (HG).

SA Table of early arrival data for Vancouver area: the 12-year average (courtesy of Michael Price)—

SPECIES	ARRIVAL	# DAYS EARLY
Violet-Green Swallow	2/23	8
Rufous Hummingbird	3/05	6
Osprey	3/16	23
Sandhill Crane	3/16	16
Mountain Bluebird	3/19	10
Brown-Headed Cowbird	3/19	5
Savannah Sparrow	3/19	12
Yellow-Rumped Warbler	3/20	3
Cliff Swallow	3/21	13
Sora	3/27	19
Orange-Crowned Warbler	3/28	2
Turkey Vulture	3/28	10
Common Yellowthroat	3/29	10
Greater Yellowlegs	3/31	12
N. Rough-Winged Swallow	3/31	10
Barn Swallow	4/01	6
Long-Billed Curlew	4/04	2
Solitary Vireo	4/09	4
Western Tanager	4/09	23
Whimbrel	4/09	4
Overall Avg.		10 (9.9) Days

Table of late arrival data for Dawson Creek area: four year average (courtesy of Mark Phinney)—

SPECIES	ARRIVAL	# DAYS EARLY
Lincoln's Sparrow	5/01	4
Western Wood-Pewee	5/16	7
Wilson's Warbler	5/21	12
Black Tern	5/22	4
Ovenbird	5/22	7
Northern Oriole	5/23	5
Olive-Sided Flycatcher	5/24	5
Rose-Breasted Grosbeak	5/24	7
Common Yellowthroat	5/29	9
Philadelphia Vireo	5/30	9
Red-Eyed Vireo	5/31	9
Overall Avg.		7 (7.1) Days

Corrigendum

The 19 Clark's Nutcrackers reported as seen at Sroat L., Sept. 24 by Sandy McRuer (*FN* 49:1) were actually seen at the Klitsa Plateau by Donald G. Cecile.

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