

Central Southern Region

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Not much about the season can be characterized in simple terms, but it was a good spring inland, and fairly average on the coast. There were a few strong frontal passages March 26–28, April 15, and May 11–12 (GDJ). Yaukey's New Orleans migrant data recorded peaks March 28, April 16, 20, 24, and 30, and May 2. Northwest Florida birders were frustrated by the lack of access to Fort Pickens at Gulf Islands National Seashore, their best migrant trap, closed since Hurricane Opal took out the road. The increasing number, dedication, and sophistication of inland birders is correcting a migration record skewed in the past toward coastal observations, and a truer picture of Regional migration is emerging as a result. Keep up the good work!

Abbreviations: F.H. (*Fish Hatchery*); L.O.S. (*Louisiana Ornithological Society*); p.a. (*pending acceptance*).

Grebes to Cranes

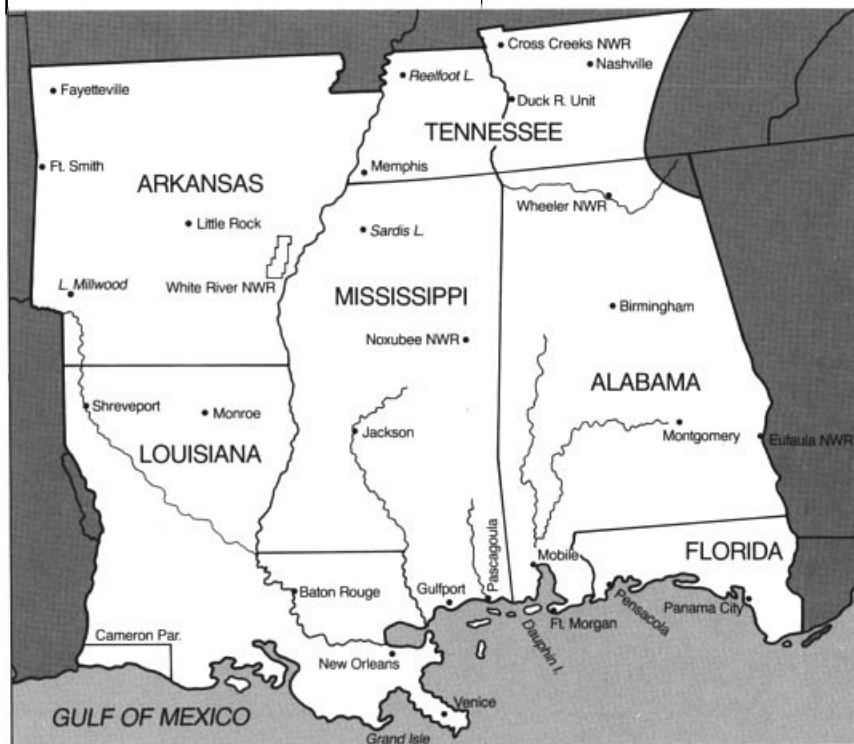
Unusual inland Eared Grebes, presumably northbound, were detected in *Madison*, MS Apr. 18 (JRW), on L. Fayetteville, AR Apr. 23 (MMI, JBr), White's L., Mar. 17–30 (WGC, MAG), on Reelfoot L., Mar. 30 (MAG, JRW), and on L. Radnor, TN May 8 (TJW). Two **Western Grebes**, representing Alabama's 2nd occurrence (3rd *Aechmophorus* sp.), in Guntersville Mar. 31 (L&DR, SWM, p.a.) would have been rare anywhere in the Region, but was remarkable for the n.e. quadrant. Two small shearwaters were noted on a May 4 L.O.S. pelagic trip out of South Pass at the mouth of the Mississippi R.; the lone storm-petrel seen was a **Leach's** (BMM, m.ob., p.a.), one of very few for Louisiana (but maybe we now know where and when to look!). Numerous reports of inland Am. White Pelicans, topped by 1800 moving N up the Mississippi R. at Enslay Bottoms, TN Mar. 23 (JRW), reflected recent upward trends among fish-eating birds. A **White-tailed Tropicbird**, observed 12 mi s. of Pensacola Pass, FL Apr. 27 (JP, p.a.) was one of few ever reported for the n. gulf, and provided a first area record. A Neotropic Cormorant strayed N to Caddo L., LA Mar. 16 (DoM, CC). To the north, Arkansas' 2nd **Neotropic Cormorant** was present Mar. 31–May 16 in *Cleburne* (K&LN, BVE, H&MP, ph). Great Egrets went N early, with record arrivals for Tennessee Mar. 3 in *Obion* (WGC) and for n.w. Arkansas Mar. 5 at Centerton F.H. (MBi). Also record early was a Little Blue Heron at Reelfoot L., TN



Neotropic Cormorant (with Double-crested Cormorants for a good size comparison) at Heber Springs, Arkansas, March 31, 1996. Photograph/Max Parker.

Mar. 17 (WGC). On the unusual occasions when Tricolored Herons move inland, it's generally attributed to "post-breeding" dispersal. Thus 2 spring reports were surprising: Apr. 3 at Millwood L., AR (DA,FB) and Apr. 27 in *Oktibbeha*, MS (TLS, MS). They continued to be seen at L. Millwood until the end of the period, with a peak of six May 4 (CMi), strongly suggesting the possibility of local breeding. White Ibis were also well reported inland (m.ob.). Some 10,000 *Plegadis* arriving to roost at the Vincent Refuge Mar. 30 (SWC, DLD) was demonstrative of the abundance of White-faced Ibis (with a few Glossy) in Louisiana's ricefields. Two at L. Millwood, AR Apr. 13 (CMi) and six near Shreveport, LA May 4 (LRR, BH, MH) were unexpected inland spring strays. A Wood Stork in *Cameron*, LA Mar. 30 (M&GP) was exceptionally early for this Mexican breeder.

Large numbers of Fulvous Whistling-Ducks breed Regionally only in the ricefields of s.w. and s.c. Louisiana: Migrant concentrations of 7000 at Vincent Refuge Mar. 30 (SWC, DLD) and 1800 in *Jeff Davis* April 9 (BV) demonstrate its abundance in this habitat. More unusual occurrences were 18 in *Iberville* Apr. 26 (RH) and (at opposite ends of the state May 11): seven at the Bonnet Carré Spillway (RJS) and >50 in *Rapides* (RJ&BB), which may have been breeding in extralimital ricefields. Black-bellied Whistling-Ducks are still rare away from Lacassine N.W.R., LA, where seven were counted Apr. 27 (SWC, DLD). Good local finds were two at Vincent Refuge Mar. 30 among the 7000 Fulvous (SWC, DLD), and one with the seven Fulvous at Bonnet Carré May 11 (RJS), for one of very few ever for s.e. Louisiana. Far less expected was Alabama's 2nd **Black-bellied Whistling-Duck** in *Colbert* May 11–12 (FS, m.ob., p.a.) and 12 in *Lafayette*, AR May 22 (M&CC, SL). The lone report of Ross' Goose was at Reelfoot L., TN Mar.





Male Cinnamon Teal (with Blue-winged Teal) in Dyer County, Tennessee, March 27, 1996. Photograph/ J. R. Wilson.

30 (JRW, MAG). Two Mottled Ducks, a species almost unknown away from coastal marsh and near-coastal rice fields, were found in inland *Rapides* rice fields May 11 (RJ&BB). Rare, rarer, and rarest Cinnamon Teal were in *Cameron*, LA Apr. 6 (GG), L. Fayetteville, AR Apr. 2–May 12 (JS), and White's L., TN Mar. 17–Apr. 5 (WGC, MAG, DDP, ph. JRW). The only scoter reports were from Tennessee and inland Alabama: White-winged in *Colbert* Mar. 16–17 (DJS, SWM) and Surf in *Marshall*, AL Mar. 31 (L&DR, SWM) and at *Hatchie N.W.R.*, TN Apr. 14 (GHS).

Encouraging reports of new nesting Ospreys came from Tennessee, Arkansas, and Louisiana. Cooper's Hawk is a mysteriously distributed nester Regionwide, its presence rarely detected. The w. Florida panhandle's first confirmed nesting pair was found in *Gulf Breeze* Mar. 28 (PT). As usual, Swainson's Hawks were reported from the w. part of the Region, from a very early Mar. 20 in *Fayetteville*, AR (DAJ) to two separate individuals near *Sulphur*, LA May 15, late enough to suspect breeding (CC&IW). Four late-winter Rough-legged Hawks located in n.c. Arkansas Mar. 3–10 (K&LN) were unusual. A count of 78 Soras at the Ft. Walton Beach, FL, sewage treatment spray fields Apr. 17 (RAD) provided a rare glimpse of the abundance of this species along the Gulf Coast. Thirty-two Sandhill Cranes still present Mar. 1 in *Noxubee* (SM, DC), the largest flock ever detected inland in Mississippi, wintered in farm fields, following the pattern of Louisiana's highly localized winterers.

Shorebirds to Hummingbirds

There was little shorebird news of note from the coast, but, in general, inland numbers were good and the northbound movement was early and prolonged. Careful and regular coverage of inland concentration points by a small army of dedicated

observers is providing new insights about shorebird migration; there were too many good sightings to list them all. American Golden-Plovers were detected early and in good numbers, with an astonishing peak of >3000 at *Ensley Bottoms*, TN Mar. 17 (JRW, MZ). Several high numbers of Semipalmated Plovers were reported, spanning the period from Mar. 2 on the coast to May 26 inland. The highest total was 87 at *Centerton F.H.*, Apr. 28 (Mml, MBi), setting an Arkansas record, and accompanied by the only reported inland Piping Plover. There were several reports of rarely sighted inland Willets. A flock of 930 Whimbrels going to roost at *Vincent Ref.*, LA May 11 (PC) completed a rice field count of 1013, surely an all-time Regional high. The northbound flight path of Hudsonian Godwit is quite narrow, and in our Region they are rarely encountered away from their refueling stops in s.w. Louisiana, where 108 were censused May 11 (PC); five at *Halsey F.H.*, Apr. 20 (LA) and three in *Desha* Apr. 27 (K&LN, M&HP, D&DoH) were welcome finds for Arkansas birders. The 19 Marbled Godwits at *Ft. Morgan* Apr. 18 (RAD) furnished a new Alabama maximum. Far more unexpected were inland sightings at *Ensley Bottoms*, TN Apr. 23 (JRW) and *Centerton F.H.*, AR Apr. 28 (Mml, MBi). Baird's Sandpiper is a very low-density spring migrant through the Region, with most sightings concentrated in s.w. Louisiana. Sightings of 24 birds spanning Mar. 10–Apr. 29—with a peak of 18 Apr. 20—at *Centerton F.H.* (Mml, *et al.*) indicated that, this year at least, northbound birds passed through n.w. Arkansas in respectable numbers. Farther afield was an early record for Alabama at *Gulf Shores* Mar. 26 (AMB, GH), and one Apr. 6 and four Apr. 14 at *Ensley Bottoms*, TN (JRW, m.ob.). Buff-breasted Sandpipers east included four at *Ft. Walton Beach* Apr. 17 (RAD, LD) and in *Santa Rosa*, FL May 24–25 (CWM). Ruffs made surprisingly early appearances, with Mississippi's 5th at a catfish pond in *Quitman* Mar. 14 (FB), and 6th in another catfish pond in nearby *Tallahatchie* Mar. 23 (MOS), thought to be separate individuals. Now almost expected in the rice fields was a Reeve in *Acadia*, LA Apr. 13 (DFL, ph.).

It should surprise no one that with increasing scrutiny of interior bodies of water, more and more reports are received of thriving species once thought rare inland. Laughing Gulls were widely reported far from the coast this spring. Easterly Franklin's Gulls were at *Ensley Bottoms*, TN Apr. 7–18 (JRW RT) and *Reelfoot L.*, May 8 (JRW, MAG). Two

first state records of California Gull were tallied: Mississippi's at *Sardis L.*, Mar. 2–3 (JRW, GK, p.a.) and Alabama's at *Ft. Morgan* Apr. 15 (RAD, CD, p.a.). A Thayer's Gull, perhaps representing Mississippi's 2nd, was at *Sardis L.*, Mar. 16 (JRW, G&SK, p.a.). Up to seven Lesser Black-backed Gulls were found in Louisiana; Alabama's 9th was at *Ft. Morgan* Apr. 20 (GDJ, p.a.). Only one Glaucous Gull was reported, at *Wilson Dam*, AL Mar. 17 (SWM, *et al.*). Unlike Lessers, Great Black-backed Gulls are more commonly found in Alabama than Louisiana. This spring, however, *Cameron's* beaches hosted at least three: one—two first-year birds Apr. 14–28 (PC, GB, m.ob.), a near adult Apr. 28 (DLD, SWC, DFL), and a different first-year bird May 5 (DLD, SWC, MiD). Alabama had only one, a first-year Mar. 26 (AMB, GH). A first-year Black-legged Kittiwake at *E. Jetty in Cameron*, LA Apr. 26 (DLD, m.ob.) was followed by a different individual at *Holly Beach* Apr. 27 (PC). Inland, Least Terns included two May 17 in *Panola*, MS (WMD) and two in *Lafayette* AR May 22 (M&CC, SL), which were probably nesting on the nearby *Red R.* Three Bridled Terns off of *South Pass* May 4 (L.O.S.) may indicate that this date is early for this species offshore Louisiana. Migrant Black Terns were well reported inland.

Eurasian Collared-Doves are continuing to leap-frog across the Region, from *Grand Isle* (DLD, SWC), *Gonzales* (KF), *Lafayette* (PC), and *Cameron*, LA (SWC, DLD) north to *Greenville*, MS (EA). A White-winged Dove, surprisingly only the 2nd for Arkansas, was in *El Dorado* May 8 (S&LS, D&DoH, K&DL, CMi). Another columbid expanding in the opposite direction—Inca Dove—put in 2 new appearances in Louisiana: two in *Ville Platte* Apr. 7 (BFo) and one in *Lafayette* Apr. 22 (TSG) near February's sighting. There were also two in Arkansas in *Sevier* Mar. 4–11 (DA), and two in *Lafayette* May 22 and June 5 (M&CC, SL). Mississippi's first Inca Dove was a pretty good yard bird in *Pass Christian* Apr. 8 (BMM, p.a.). A Whip-poor-will in *Tuskegee*, AL Mar. 29 (AMB) was early. There were two very late winter holdover Buff-bellied Hummingbirds: May 3 in *New Orleans* (JS) and May 10 in *Pensacola*, FL (JP), respectively the latest dates for Louisiana and the Region. Mississippi's 3rd Anna's Hummingbird, a first-year female, remained in *Pass Christian* Dec. 9–Apr. 9 (BMM). In addition to the Callope Hummingbirds still present from the winter in *Baton Rouge* and *Abita Springs*, there were two "new" spring sightings in Louisiana of immature males: Mar. 14 in

Baton Rouge (MiD, LCB) and Mar. 28 in Covington (NLN). A holdover Broad-tailed Hummingbirds was last seen in Baton Rouge, LA May 21 (*vide* LCB); new ones were found Mar. 28 in Baton Rouge (LCB) and Apr. 4 in Covington. Florida's **Broad-tailed Hummingbird** was last seen Mar. 9 (JP), and Mississippi's 4th was last seen in Pass Christian Apr. 21 (BMM). Among the many lingering and migrant Rufous Hummingbirds reported from Florida to Louisiana, the most interesting were banded recaptures: Mar. 14 in Baton Rouge, an ad. male first banded in the same yard in December 1993 (LCB); and Mar. 14 in Lafayette, LA, a bird banded in December 1991 in *Pensacola, FL* (*vide* PC).

Flycatchers to Finches

Non-Acadian empid reports were scattered: Yellow-bellied in *Obion*, TN May 8 (JRW), and L. Fayetteville, AR May 12 & 18 (Mml); "Traill's" at Starkville, MS May 9 (TLS); Alder at *Pulaski*, AR May 12 (K&LN); Willow at Decatur, AL May 12 (SWM), two at *Cleburne*, AR May 14 (K&LN), and two territorial birds in *Lake*, TN May 25 (JRW); and Least Flycatcher in *Cameron*, LA May 5 (DLD, SWC). Note that all except the Least were inland, and that all were in May, toward the end of, or after, the peak passerine migration. The migration path seems to be strongly western circumgulf and late enough that non-Acadian empids are rarely grounded by spring cold fronts. Astonishing is the report of *two Say's Phoebes* in *Crittenden*, AR Apr. 28 (BF). Trans-Mississippi W. Kingbirds were found in *Madison*, MS Apr. 21 (JRW), *Cleburne*, AR May 1 (K&LN, TB, MD); and a late stray in *Santa Rosa*, FL May 23 (CWM *et al.*). Two Gray Kingbirds strayed W of Dauphin I. to *St. Charles*, LA Apr. 27 (DPM, PY, RDP) and *Jackson*, MS May 16 (WRP). Easterly Scissor-tailed Flycatchers were on Grand Isle, LA Apr. 27 (PY, RDP, DPM); *Itawamba* Apr. 28 (CJ, AJ, SE) and *Oktibehha*, MS May 1 (JA, JAJ); and, farthest afield, in *Gadsen*, TN May 4 (MAG).

A Bank Swallow in *Iberville*, LA May 21 (JVR) was very late. An early Rough-winged Swallow was in New Orleans Mar. 9 (PY). Alabama's 10th and earliest **Cave Swallow** was at Ft. Morgan, AL Apr. 5 (RAD, LRD); 3 days later n.w. Florida's first was at Ft. Walton Beach (RAD, PT, BB). Early inland Barn Swallows reached *Conecuh*, AL Mar. 3 (LFG) and *Oktibehha*, MS Mar. 5 (TLS). Red-breasted Nuthatches were still being detected well into April, with the latest in New Orleans Apr. 28 (GO). The all but late-

lamented e. Bewick's Wren was found in Fayetteville, AR Mar. 17, 23 (Mml) & 31 (DC), and once where really unexpected in *Baldwin*, AL Apr. 10 (LRD, RAD). The 200 White-eyed Vireos at Ft. Morgan Mar. 26 (AMB, GH) provided an exceptional number, the highest on record for Alabama. Warbling Vireos show no trans-gulf movement; the migrants radiate from the upper Texas coast through the n.w. half of the Region. Southeasterly individuals were noted at Tishomingo S.P., Apr. 25, Noxubee N.W.R., Apr. 27 (TL&MS), Granada L., MS Apr. 28 (FB), and, most unusual, in *Iberville*, LA Apr. 26 (JVR). Four presumed breeders were detected on the Tallahatchie, MS BBS May 31 (FB). A bird found in *Rapides* May 31 (RJB) may have been a vestige of the once-thriving breeding population in Louisiana.

It was a good spring for the normally easterly Cape May Warbler on the Louisiana coast, with multiple records from Grand Isle to Cameron. One of Louisiana's few inland sightings occurred Apr. 23 in *Iberville* (JVR). More inland still were two birds at Reelfoot L., TN Apr. 28 (JRW S&RS) and another there May 8 (JRW, MAG). The 40 Blackpoll Warblers in *Obion*, TN May 8 (JRW, MAG) provided an event of coastal proportions. A Yellow Warbler recorded on the *Tallahatchie*, MS BBS May 31 (FB) may have been a rare Regional breeder. Connecticut Warblers were at Reelfoot L., May 7-8 (MAG, JRW), in *Shelby* May 11 (WRP), and in *Rutherford*, TN May 17 (TJW). Most unexpected was a male at Ft. Morgan, AL May 8 (RAD). The very brief sighting of an ad. **Painted Redstart** on Grand Isle Mar. 24 (RDP, p.a.), representing Louisiana's 3rd, must have been as exciting as it was frustrating: The bird, and the flock it was with, disappeared. Conjecture isn't worth much, but surely it wintered locally? The only reported W. Tanager was, surprisingly, non-coastal: Apr. 22 in *Iberville*, LA (DLD). If any were detected in *Cameron*, the only place in the Region where they are almost annual in spring, observers were too blasé to report them. A single Black-headed Grosbeak was reported, a winter feeder holdover in *Oktibehha*, MS Jan. 22-Mar. 23 (JB, TL&MS). A ♀ **Lazuli Bunting** at Ensley Bottoms, TN May 3-6 (JRW, MAG, p.a.), was the state's first and one of a handful for the Region. A Spotted Towhee was found, also at Ensley Bottoms, Apr. 12 (JRW); another report was received without comment from Eagle Lake W.M.A., TN Apr. 18 (AJT). One assumes that this distinctive form, casual at best throughout most of the Region, was usually reported during its sojourn below

species rank. Nevertheless, now that it is back to a full species, it will be searched for, and observers should be aware that separation is not always trivial.

Northwest Arkansas saw a plethora of normally scarce Clay-colored Sparrows, with 27 reported between Apr. 25-May 6 (DAJ, MML *et al.*); one was farther east in *Cleburne* Apr. 28 (KN). The only coastal sighting was at Ft. Morgan, AL Apr. 23 (RAD). A Lark Sparrow in *Lauderdale*, AL May 3 may have been a scarce migrant; two birds in *Lawrence* May 26 were at a known breeding site (SWM); a singer in *Tallahatchie*, MS May 2 (FB) was at a suspected breeding site. Usually undetected, migrant Henslow's Sparrows were found near Mobile. AL Apr. 27 (AMB, GH) and at Ensley Bottoms, TN May 5 (JRW). Another rarely detected migrant *Anmodramus*, Leconte's Sparrow, was found twice inland May 5-8 at Ensley Bottoms, TN (JRW, MAG, CK) and in *Cleburne*, AR May 11 (K&LD). Six W. Meadowlarks present Mar. 3 at Ensley Bottoms, TN (JRW) were not unprecedented. This seemingly anomolous pocket of e. winterers may be associated with one of the e. pockets of breeders to the north. Early Yellow-headed Blackbirds in Memphis, TN Mar. 20 (MM) and Ft. Morgan, AL Mar. 28 (RAD) suggested movement by local winterers. The only Shiny Cowbirds were a male and female at Ft. Morgan, AL May 8 (RAD). Echoes of the fairly good finch winter were widely reported. A very late coastal Pine Siskin seemed out-of-place singing in New Orleans Apr. 18 (PY). Purple Finches lingered into late April-early May in n. Mississippi and e. Tennessee (m.ob.). American Goldfinches swarmed feeders in April, and a few held on, with notable late records in Baton Rouge, LA May 25 (DAW) and Pass Christian, MS May 31 (BMM). Several reports of Evening Grosbeaks, many away from feeders and migrating, came from Mississippi, Arkansas, and Tennessee.

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Prairie Provinces Region

RUDOLF F. KOES AND PETER TAYLOR

The whole Region was unseasonably cold through most of the period, with snow and ice remaining almost a month later than normal. As a result, migration was consistently two to three weeks late until the final catch-up in late May and early June. Ice conditions led to some large, local concentrations of waterbirds in April and early May, while many winter visitors remained later than normal. Shorebird migration was diffuse, due at least in part to abundant standing water on the prairies in May.

A widespread, heavy migration of sparrows, along with the first wave of warblers, occurred as conditions haltingly improved in mid-May. This extended across much of Saskatchewan and Manitoba, north to Thompson. Frank Roy described it as one of the richest spring migrations of warblers and thrushes on record at Saskatoon, and several other Saskatchewan observers reported likewise. There was an exciting spell of rare bird reports in mid-May.

Abbreviations: I.B.S. (*Inglewood Bird Sanctuary, Calgary, AB*); O.H.M. (*Oak Hammock Marsh W.M.A., MB*).

Loons to Raptors

An unprecedented 20 Red-throated Loons at Natalie L., plus one at nearby Eleanor L., May 11 (PT *et al.*) equalled the total of all previous sightings of this species in s. Manitoba. They coincided with a concentration of >600 Com. Loons on Natalie L., and hundreds more in the Pinawa-Otter Falls area. Ice conditions presumably pushed these birds S and W of their normal migration route. Bucking the season's trend were exceptionally early Pied-billed Grebes picked up near Rennie, MB Mar. 12 (*fide* NB) and Winnipeg Mar. 14 (BJ), and an Eared Grebe near Winnipeg Apr. 9 (Rko). One-thousand W. Grebes, along with two Clark's, were hemmed in by the ice at Delta, MB May 20–22 (GG, PG, SG *et al.*).

Great Egrets were well represented Regionwide, including \geq seven birds in



Great Egret near Calgary, Alberta, May 31, 1996. One of several in the Prairie Provinces this spring. Photograph/Terry Korolyk.

Saskatchewan (v.ob.), one at Rochon Sands P.P., AB May 26 (RA), and one near Calgary May 30–31 (MH, TK*). A Cattle Egret visited Alameda, SK May 19 (JP), and one near Estevan, SK May 23 was joined by a 2nd May 30 (CD). Single Green Herons were seen at 2 Calgary localities, May 30 & 31 (AS, DS). An ad. White-faced Ibis was at St. Germain, MB May 12–13 (B&JS, m.ob.).

The Trumpeter Swan's recent range expansion in e. Saskatchewan was emphasized by 22 birds seen near Greenwater P.P. in May (*fide* BL). Snow Geese shunned O.H.M. this spring, but a concentration farther south near Carman peaked at 130,000 birds Apr. 25 (GH, CC). Four-thousand late white geese at Beaverhill L., AB May 18 were >90% Ross' Geese (RDk, EM). About 20 Cinnamon Teal were reported in Saskatchewan, including 3 pairs near Cypress L., May 23 (FR) and 2 pairs near Dilke May 18 (D&VL).

Fewer Eur. Wigeon than usual were reported in Alberta, but a male was a rare find at Lac du Bonnet, MB May 12 (RZ, PT). Rare in spring were a pair of Black Scoters in Pinawa May 14–22 (RZ, PT) and a flock of 11 Surf Scoters at Edmonton May 15–16 (BD, MP). Single ♂ Barrow's Goldeneyes visited Manitou L., SK May 24 and Reflux L., SK May 30 (BL).

Late snowcover resulted in a late but excellent hawk migration along Manitoba's Red and Pembina Rivers, monitored at St. Adolphe and Windygates, respectively. Peak counts are tabulated below. Rarities included single Red-shouldered Hawks at St. Adolphe Apr. 7 (GH *et al.*), Windygates Apr. 13 (A&DS *et al.*), and near Pinawa Apr. 8 & 23 (JN, PT).