

only Pine Siskins reported were early individuals in *Washington*, AR Oct. 2 (MM, JR) and in Baton Rouge Nov. 1 (DFL).

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# Prairie Provinces Region

## RUOLF F. KOES AND PETER TAYLOR

Weather was generally placid across the Region until an early snowstorm swept through from southwest Alberta to southwest Manitoba October 1. Pleasant weather resumed, punctuated with some strong winds, until winter started in earnest around Halloween. November was cold and snowy in most areas.

Migration was generally a week or two later than average, partly due to the mild early fall, and perhaps partly as a hangover from the very tardy spring. All three provinces were favored with an assortment of rarities.

Abbreviations: I.B.S. (*Inglewood Bird Sanctuary, Calgary, AB*); L.M.L. (*Last Mountain L., SK*); O.H.M. (*Oak Hammock Marsh, MB*); Pak. L. (*Pakowki L., AB*).

## Loons to Falcons

Two Red-throated Loons visited Calgary Oct. 9–10 (RW, WS, JR *et al.*) and a 3rd arrived Nov. 2 (RB). Seven Pacific Loon sightings in Alberta Oct. 9–Nov. 10 represented a normal total; another was at L.M.L., Oct. 28 (BL), and one lingered at Churchill Nov. 2 (GL). Single Yellow-billed Loons were noted at Saskatchewan Landing P.P., SK Sept. 22 (D&PA) and Cold L., AB Nov. 3 (RKI, SB).

A juv. W. Grebe was still small enough to ride its parent's back at Medicine Hat, AB Oct. 6 (BV). A pair of Clark's Grebes with three juveniles Aug. 1 (WS) made Pak. L. Alberta's 2nd known breeding location.

Southern herons were in short supply, highlights being two Great Egrets at Reed L., SK in August (CP, MP *et al.*); a Snowy Egret, also at Reed L., Aug. 11 (CP, SB), and ≤12 Cattle Egrets at L.M.L. from August–mid-September (*vide AS*).

Two White-faced Ibises stayed at L.M.L. from mid-July–mid-September (*AS et al.*), but Pak. L. remained firmly established as the Region's ibis capital (see below)

**SA** Pakowki L., AB, has often featured in this report, both as a stronghold for White-faced Ibises and as a botulism black spot in some years. Surveys of the inaccessible lake by W. Smith and C. Wershler this fall turned up some impressive concentrations of water and shore birds, as well as some tantalizing rarities (Table 1).

**Table 1. Highlights from surveys of Pakowki Lake, AB**

Species	Number	Date	Observer(s)
Am. White Pelican	560	Sept. 15	WS
Double-crested Cormorant	595	Sept. 10	WS
White-faced Ibis	96	Sept. 15	WS
Am. Avocet	450	Sept. 25	WS
L. Yellowlegs	1900	Aug. 2	WS, CW
Long-billed Curlew	200	Aug. 2	WS
Baird's Sandpiper	2000	Aug. 2	CW
Pectoral Sandpiper	600	Sept. 15	WS
Sharp-tailed Sandpiper	1 juv.	Sept. 15	WS
Curlew Sandpiper	4 ad.	Sept. 15	WS
Dowitcher (ssp.)	9000	Oct. 4	WS
Wilson's Phalarope	3000	Aug. 2	CW
Red Phalarope	2	Sept. 15	WS

Snow Geese were very late arriving at O.H.M., with a peak flight of 250,000 birds Oct. 12 (GH, CC *et al.*). Brant were observed regularly at Churchill Oct. 6–23 (BC, DH), with peak counts of 29 Oct. 6 and 21 Oct. 18. Less expected were two Brant at Frank L., AB Oct. 26 (JB).

Botulism struck waterfowl concentrations in all 3 provinces; the 116,000 bodies (72% ducks) salvaged at Whitewater L., MB, represented the largest recorded outbreak on the Canadian Prairies; it is estimated that only one-third to one-half of the dead birds are retrieved in such situations. Also severely hit were Old Wives L., SK (>40,000) and Pak. L. (>10,000).

High counts of Wood Ducks included 202 in Winnipeg Oct. 4 (GG) and 22 at

Katepwa L., SK Sept. 28 (TR). At Medicine Hat, one in a flock of 15 was surprisingly captured in flight by a Red-tailed Hawk Oct. 6 (BV). A ♂ **Eurasian Wigeon** at Gardiner Dam Sept. 26–28 (FR, SS, MC) furnished Saskatchewan's 2nd fall record.

Southern Manitoba's 5th **Common Eider**, an imm. male at Patricia Beach Nov. 2–5 (RKO *et al.*), paled in comparison with Saskatchewan's unprecedented eider "invasion." At least three Com. Eiders visited L.M.L., Nov. 8–16 (BL, m.ob.), one was at Blackstrap L., Nov. 12 (GW, m.ob.), and yet another was at Riceton Nov. 18 (*vide* RKr). All the Saskatchewan birds resembled *borealis*, whereas the Manitoba individual was thought to be *v-nigra*. Two **King Eiders** also graced L.M.L., Nov. 9–11 (DV, PSa, m.ob.), and a 3rd was at Boundary Dam, near Estevan, Nov. 14 (BL). In contrast, other "sea ducks" made only an average showing in the south.

In keeping with recent years, Saskatchewan birders found ≥five Barrow's Goldeneyes Aug. 29–Nov. 16. Two Red-breasted Mergansers were extremely late at Churchill Nov. 2 (GL). There was a good concentration of 750 Ruddy Ducks at Irricana, AB Sept. 29 (TK).

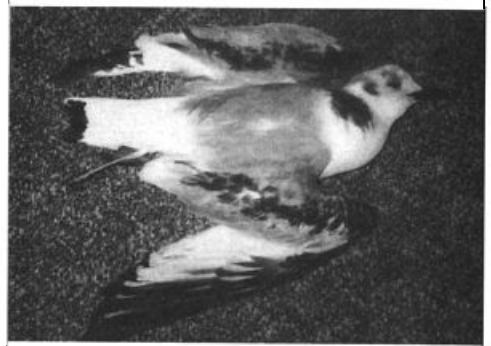
A Turkey Vulture visited Edmonton Aug. 8 (EL). Four Ospreys in Manitoba Oct. 8–12 and two in Alberta Oct. 4 & 9 were late departures. Totally enigmatic was Saskatchewan's 4th Mississippi Kite in a snowstorm near Regina Oct. 1 (CP). Cypress L., SK, hosted 100 Bald Eagles Nov. 4 (TH). At Windy Point, AB, Sharpshinned Hawks peaked at 103 Sept. 13–14 and 184 Oct. 4–6 (WS). Northern

Goshawks were scarce Regionwide. Late individual Ferruginous Hawks at Hargrave, MB Oct. 26 (KG) and Tyrrell L., AB Nov. 2 (LB) contrasted with early-arriving Rough-legged Hawks in September in all 3 provinces. A steady daily movement brought 3749 Golden Eagles past Mt. Lorette, AB Oct. 2–Nov. 9 (PSh). Almost as bizarre as the kite were two Prairie Falcons in the forest-tundra transition zone at Seal R., MB, from Aug. 14 into September (DF, MR).

### Sandpipers to Woodpeckers

The star shorebird of the season was a **Wandering Tattler** at I.B.S., Sept. 3–5 (CH, m.ob., ph.). Oddly coincidental were late Upland Sandpipers at Lorette, MB Sept. 10 (RKO) and Mt. Lorette, AB Sept. 11 (JS). Five W. Sandpipers were found in Alberta Aug. 4–Sept. 15 (v.o.). Five hundred each of Semipalmated and Baird's sandpipers were estimated at Frank L., Aug. 4 (RB). Four **Purple Sandpipers** provided a Churchill highlight Oct. 20 (DH). Peak counts of 100 Buff-breasted Sandpipers at O.H.M., Aug. 8 (LdM, RCI) and 90 near River Hills, MB Aug. 25 (PT, RZ) were heartening. An imm. ♂ Ruff was photographed at Sadler's Slough near Calgary Sept. 2–3 (J&MM *et al.*). Further good totals were >2000 Long-billed Dowitchers at Valeport Marsh, SK Oct. 5 (RKr, LAI *et al.*) and 2000 Wilson's Phalaropes near Eagle L., AB Aug. 4 (JS, PSh, LV). A Red-necked Phalarope was late at Lac du Bonnet, MB Oct. 25 (RZ).

A Pomarine Jaeger drew crowds at Calgary Oct. 8–10 (RB, RW, m.ob.); another was shot at High River, AB Nov. 13 (*vide*



At Pine Falls, Manitoba, this immature **Black-legged Kittiwake** found road-killed **November 16, 1996**, provided the second inland record for the province. Photograph/Peter Taylor.

RD), and a 3rd was seen at Regina Beach, SK Nov. 7–11 (BL, RKr, RM *et al.*). A light-morph Parasitic Jaeger visited Namaoka L., AB Sept. 2 (IH) and a dark one kept gulls on their toes at Victoria Beach, MB Oct. 19 (PT).

**Little Gulls** blessed all 3 provinces: one immature at Beaverhill L., AB Sept. 14 (JDx, LT); one near-adult at Blackstrap L., SK Sept. 16–21 (RJ, RKr, BL), ≤two at Victoria Beach Sept. 27–Oct. 14 (PT, RKO) and one at Patricia Beach Oct. 20 (RKO). Thayer's Gulls showed the expected gradation from 8 reports in Alberta to 5 in Saskatchewan and 2 in Manitoba. An unexpected gull bonanza at Pine Falls, MB peaked Nov. 16 with one Thayer's, one Iceland (Kumlien's), four Glaucous Gulls, and a road-killed (!) **Black-legged Kittiwake** (PT; kittiwake \* to University of Manitoba). These birds gathered with 800 late-departing Herring Gulls, having apparently vacated L. Winnipeg in the face of an approaching blizzard. On Sept. 23, lone imm. Sabine's Gulls visited I.B.S. (RB) and Blackstrap L., SK (SS *et al.*). A record-late Com. Tern was minutely examined at Victoria Beach Oct. 26 (GG, RKO, PT, RZ).

Both rare and late was a Band-tailed Pigeon at Mt. Lorette Sept. 28 (PSh). Medicine Hat's E. Screech-Owl was seen again Sept. 30 (DB). Northern Hawk Owls moved to the edge of the boreal forest Regionwide from mid-October+. Great Gray Owls started to appear in s.e. Manitoba as snow accumulated in November; a report of 40–50 banded in the Redwater–Opal, AB area was extraordinary for October and November (RCr). Five scattered, late Long-eared Owls Oct. 30–Nov. 25 (v.o.) included a rare Churchill sighting Oct. 30 (JF, WD). Short-eared Owls were widely reported in Alberta, including >20 near St. Albert Nov. 7 (DN *et al.*).

Black Swifts were observed almost daily at Mt. Lorette Aug. 6–Sept. 20, with a





**Adult Red-headed Woodpecker at Carburn Park, Calgary, Alberta, August 16, 1996. Photograph/Terry Korolyk.**

maximum of 16 Aug. 27 (PSh, JS, DA); one Sept. 29 (JS) was record-late. Nine White-throated Swifts at Mt. Lorette Sept. 13 (PSh, TB, BE) were the first documented in Alberta, although just 100 km from their nearest breeding locality in British Columbia. An ad. Red-headed Woodpecker was far out of range at Calgary Aug. 11–25 (SK, m.ob., ph.), and one of the Medicine Hat birds was still present Sept. 28 (BV).

#### Passerines

**SA** The generally late migration was best exemplified by flycatchers and warblers. Many flycatcher species were reported well into September, highlighted by an Olive-sided in Winnipeg Sept. 22 (GH), a Hammond's at Mt. Lorette Sept. 20 (PSh), and an E. Kingbird at Aitona, MB Sept. 29 (GG). All swallow species were also present in low numbers to early September at least. Warbling Vireos are usually fairly early migrants, but there were records after Sept. 20 in all 3 provinces, together with good diversity of lingering warblers. Extremely late neotropical migrants included a Swainson's Thrush in Edmonton Nov. 10 (RD, PM) and a Magnolia Warbler at Medicine Hat Oct. 29 (DB, CGa). Five of seven Black-throated Blue Warblers Regionwide were seen in October, and included two window-kills in Canmore, AB Oct. 20 & 29 (fide MT, BB, JG).

At least one Mt. Chickadee was at Cypress Hills P.P., SK Nov. 9–Dec. 15+ (RJ, PB *et al.*). A Red-breasted Nuthatch was far north at Seal R., Aug. 13 (DF). Manitoba's 4th Blue-gray Gnatcatcher spent Oct. 20 at Grand Beach, MB (RKO, m.ob., ph.). At least 31 E. Bluebirds were still at Stonewall, MB Oct. 24 (KG), while a

flock of 300 Mt. Bluebirds was a stunning sight at Cypress Hills, AB Sept. 11 (DM, FW). Normally seen outside the mountains as scattered singles, Townsend's Solitaires were found in groups of  $\leq$  six in Medicine Hat, Sept. 13–Oct. 6 (BE, PH, BV, DB). A noteworthy stray in the other direction was a Sprague's Pipit at Mt. Lorette Sept. 20 (PSh). Bohemian Waxwings were seen in fair numbers from late October–mid-November, most apparently moving on.

Alberta's first Blue-winged Warbler, at I.B.S., Aug. 18, was thoroughly documented (SM, JR). Over 100 Orange-crowned Warblers gathered in Medicine Hat Sept. 23 (PH). Single Nashville Warblers were out of range in Alberta at Mt. Lorette Aug. 29 (JS), I.B.S., Sept. 3 & 24 (JS, RB, JR), and Edmonton Sept. 21 (BD), as were Chestnut-sideds at Taber Aug. 25 (LB), Park L., Aug. 25 (T&DD), and I.B.S., Aug. 27–29 (RB *et al.*). Rare in the mountains were a Magnolia Warbler Sept. 5 (JS) and a Mourning Warbler Aug. 22 (LV) at Mt. Lorette; rarer still was a Black-throated Gray Warbler at Vegreville, AB Sept. 16 (CGr).

Two ad. and two juv. N. Cardinals at Grand Beach from Sept. 27–November (PT *et al.*) furnished a rare Manitoba breeding record. An imm. Black-headed Grosbeak visited Estevan, SK Aug. 21 (JDn, ST). Noteworthy were a late Clay-colored Sparrow at Pinawa, MB Oct. 24 (RZ), a Field Sparrow at Headingley, MB Sept. 22 (BS), four juv. Lark Sparrows Sept. 1 and a late adult Sept. 7 in Stonewall (KG), a Le Conte's Sparrow at Taber Sept. 4 (LB), and a local first Nelson's Sharp-tailed Sparrow at Pak. L., Aug. 1 (CW). Also at Pak. L., a Chestnut-colored Longspur was late Sept. 15 (WS).

There were 4 Red Crossbill reports in Alberta, and 25 seen at the International Peace Gardens, MB Aug. 22 (JDn, ST). White-winged Crossbills remained numerous at the edge of the boreal forest in s.e. Manitoba, but scarce elsewhere. Common Redpolls were anything but, and few Evening Grosbeaks were reported, except in their usual Manitoba strongholds.

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Fast, Jeff Foote, Bob Frew, Corlaine Gardner (CGa), Ken Gardner, Janet Gill, Gordon Grief, Carl Grosfield (CGr), Ian Halliday, David Hatch, Trevor Herriot, Cedric Hitchin, George Holland, Phil Horch, Lee-Ann Irvine, Roy John, Steve Kassai, Richard Klauke (RKL), Rudolf Koes (RKO), Terry Korolyk, Robert Kreba (RKR), Ed Larsen, Greg Lasley, Bob Luterbach, Donna Maclean, Pat Marklevitz, Joan & Malcolm McDonald, Steve Mlodi-now, Ron Myers, Dave Nadeau, Curtis Pollock, Myrna Priebe, Mike Reimer, John Riddell, Tom Riffel, Frank Roy, Pat Sargent (PSa), Stan Shadick, Peter Sherrington (PSh), Bob Shettler, Al Smith, Wayne Smith, John Steeves, Lisa Tackett, Sue Tackett, Peter Taylor, Maurice Tissandier, Ben Verner, Dan Vetter, Lynn Vogt, Guy Wapple, Cleve Wershler, Ray Wershler, Frank Westgarth, Reto Zach.

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