

prairie provinces region



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The season was generally warm and dry in the south, except for a cool and damp June in the Calgary area and brief inclement spells elsewhere. The latter part of June was hot. The tardy spring migration lasted well into June, and some northern waterbirds lingered especially late.

Other fallout from the cold, late spring included greatly reduced numbers of Western Meadowlarks in southeast Manitoba, and of Mountain Bluebirds in southwest Manitoba and eastern Saskatchewan. Heavy spring run-off resulted in good waterfowl habitat, but poor shorebirding. To date, botulism outbreaks have been less severe than in the last few years, although Pakowki Lake, Alberta, and Whitewater Lake, Manitoba, were "black spots" again.

LOOKS TO FALCONS

A Red-throated Loon at Pelican L. June 6 (RKO) was s.w. Manitoba's first in half a century, and a Yellow-billed Loon was an exceptional find at Lesser Slave L., AB, July 5 (JRo, m.ob.). Three pairs and at least four juv. Clark's Grebes were at the traditional Valeport, SK, locality (BL, DV); elsewhere in Saskatchewan, five were at Cypress L.

July 6 (RKR), and one was well n. at Turtle L. June 24 (MC). A Double-crested Cormorant was noteworthy at Churchill June 10 (BC).

Single Great Egrets visited Glenmore Res., Calgary, June 14–19 (CS, m.ob.) and Edmonton June 27–July 8 (SG), and a Snowy Egret was at Pakowki L. July 19 onward (JPC). Still rare in Manitoba, single Green Herons were noted at Pelican L. June 10 (D&VF, RWi) and Ft. Whyte, Winnipeg, June 25 (RWi). White-faced Ibises were noted only at traditional locations in s. Alberta, with a peak of 12 at Pakowki L. June 19 (RWe, JRi, LV, JC).

A late Trumpeter Swan was at Sibbald Ponds, AB, June 1 (ASe). Lingering Snow Geese are not unusual in s. Manitoba in summer, but a report of 8 pairs with 25 goslings at North Shoal L. July 12 (BA, DH) was extraordinary. A "Black" Brant near Dalemead, AB, June 5–7 wore leg bands and was likely an escapee (GA, CH et al.). Three Wood Duck broods were outside the normal range at Medicine Hat, AB, in June (BV, JAR), and a single was at Cluny, AB, July 8 (WS). Only one pair of Cinnamon Teal was reported in Saskatchewan, near Maple Cr. June 20 (RKR). Lingerers at Natalie L., MB, included eight Greater Scaup June 12–13, of which about two summered;

an Oldsquaw June 11–16; and a White-winged Scoter June 12–22 (PT, RZ). Also late was a pair of Red-breasted Mergansers on Fincastle L., AB, June 13 (LB).

Low numbers of breeding Swainson's Hawks continue to cause concern in s. Alberta (DB) and s. Saskatchewan (RKR). In contrast, at least 460 sub-adults represented an impressive count in the Regina-Weyburn, SK, region in early July (CB, MB). Most encouraging, Swainson's and Ferruginous hawk productivity in Saskatchewan was the best in many years, with 2.43 and 3.23 young, respectively, per successful nest (SH). Three Ferruginous Hawk nests near Strathmore, AB, were w. of the usual range (ASl, BW, TK). Nine ad. Prairie Falcons and one active nest were found along the South Saskatchewan R. between Medicine Hat, AB, and Estuary, SK, June 15–19 (RKR).

PLOVERS TO WOODPECKERS

Eighteen Am. Golden-Plovers provided a good count at Irricana, AB, May 28 (GB). At L. Diefenbaker, SK, Piping Plovers were reduced to 46 pairs from 276 in 1991; only 21 clutches hatched, most of the other nests being lost to fluctuating water levels (PG, EW). Black-necked Stilts were reported from Kinivie Marsh, Pakowki L., and Strathmore, AB (WS), and Irricana, AB (TK); at least nine birds, including six juveniles, at Chaplin Heritage Marsh July 23–28 (MP, DV, PS) furnished Saskatchewan's 4th nesting record.

A notable shorebird concentration at Keoma Slough, AB, July 28 included 400 Lesser Yellowlegs, 400 Pectoral Sandpipers, and 500 Wilson's Phalaropes (TK). An Upland Sandpiper at Churchill June 5 (Wings tour) and a Whimbrel at River Hills, MB, July 19 (RKO) were both unusual, as was a concentration of 25 Long-billed Curlews near Taber, AB, July 4 (LB). Marbled Godwit concentrations included 100 at Countess, AB, May 29 (JRi, LV) and 92 at Beausejour, MB, June 22 (RKO, KH, PT). Four Am. Woodcock were near their range limit at Camper, MB, June 20 (KG).

In the limelight at Churchill were a Franklin's Gull June 20 (AMd), at least four Little Gulls (m.ob.), the area's 3rd California Gull July 3–6 (WC, m.ob.), and a Lesser Black-backed Gull July 6 (RKO,

m.ob.). Single Glaucous Gulls were noted in mid-June near Hecla Is., L. Manitoba Narrows, and St. Ambrose, MB (DH), and at Island L., MB, July 27 or 28 (AW). Again at Churchill, only one Ross's Gull was seen sporadically after late June; how much longer will this species keep returning? Up to six Forster's Terns in early July at Churchill made an unprecedented number for the area (m.ob.). Saskatchewan's 11th **Least Tern** visited Blackstrap L. June 23 (BL, EW et al.).

If accepted, a **White-winged Dove** visiting a Slave L. feeder (WL, JRo, ph.) would represent Alberta's first ever. A Yellow-billed Cuckoo near Whitemouth L. July 7 (GH) was about the 16th in Manitoba. Burrowing Owls were reduced to one known nest location in Manitoba, at Coulter (KDS et al.), and Stuart Houston found only one nesting pair in 12,000 km of raptor searching in Saskatchewan. Both Long-eared and Short-eared owls were widely reported in good numbers; regrettably, some Short-eared Owls were killed by traffic, farm implements, and barbed wire.

Only one Com. Poorwill was found in a 2-hour search of known localities in Cypress Hills P.P., SK, June 13 (TH et al.). Eight or more Whip-poor-wills furnished a good count near Cumberland House, SK, July 8-9 (RKr, LAI). A Red-headed Woodpecker continued to frequent Police Pt. Park, Medicine Hat (DB et al.), another was photographed n. of Wild Horse, AB, June 9 (HG), and three were found near Estuary, SK, in mid-June (RKr). Ironically, nests of both Three-toed and Black-backed woodpeckers were burned out by forest fires at Churchill in late June (m.ob.); one can only hope that the habitat is even better for them now.

PASSERINES

An Olive-sided Flycatcher was out of range at Churchill June 8 (BC), as were two apparently on territory at Cluny, AB, June 18 (RW). Western Kingbird numbers appeared to be down in s.e. Alberta (JRI, LV) and locally in s. Manitoba (KG). Eastern Kingbirds seemed scarce in s. Manitoba in June, but higher numbers in August suggested good breeding success. Over 200 Violet-green Swallows were found along the South Saskatchewan R. between Medicine Hat and Estuary June 15-19 (RKr), and outstanding Tree Swallow productivity was reported in the Saskatoon region (MH).

Four **Pinyon Jays** were reported by experienced observers in Cypress Hills, AB, June 16-17 (PM, TT, BD); we are aware of 2

previous unconfirmed reports in the Region. In nearby Cypress Hills, SK, the province's 10th reported and first confirmed **American Dipper** was documented with videotape on Battle Cr. (TH, SB, JH). Two Ruby-crowned Kinglets sang into June at a treed farmyard in a grassland area n.w. of Cypress Hills P.P., AB, and a fledgling was seen there July 13 (DB). Single N. Mockingbirds were noted in mid-June at Grand Beach, MB (WC, MW), and Matheon I., MB (DH). A Sage Thrasher was a good find 15 km n. of Medicine Hat June 17 (RKr).

A Blue-headed Vireo was unexpected at Water Valley, AB, June 13 (RW, JRI, LV), as were a N. Parula at Calgary's Inglewood Bird Sanctuary June 24 (SA, DE, DJ, JM) and a Magnolia Warbler at Churchill June 2 (AMc et al.). Single Black-headed Grosbeaks appeared at Taber May 28-June 15 (LB); Turner Valley, AB, June 14 (JRI et al.); and Cypress Hills P.P., SK, June 14 (TH et al.). Perhaps as many as eight Indigo Buntings, as well as increased reports of Lazuli Buntings, were noted in the Medicine Hat area (BV, B&RP et al., *vide* DB), and an Indigo Bunting at Churchill July 1-3 (J&MB et al.) was the 2nd for that area.

Twenty Brewer's Sparrows represented an excellent count in sage flats 15 km n. of Medicine Hat June 17 (RKr). Damp conditions probably accounted for the scarcity of Lark Buntings in both s. Alberta and s.w. Manitoba, as well as increased reports of Bobolinks in the former region. As in 1996, Smith's Longspurs were scarce at Churchill (JJ et al.). A possible E. Meadowlark was identified by song near Carstairs, AB, June 23 (TK). Among the few crossbill reports were 30 Red Crossbills at Minnedosa, MB, June 2 (CC), 100 White-wingeds at Lesser Slave L., AB, June 26 (JRo), and good White-winged numbers in the Grand Rapids, MB, area around the end of June (PT). Twenty-five Evening Grosbeaks were noted at Water Valley, AB, June 13 (RW, JRI, LV).

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