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# prairie provinces region



## RUDOLF F. KOES and PETER TAYLOR

**P**lacid weather with warm temperatures and low precipitation prevailed across most of the Region, with much open water remaining to the end of the period. Many water birds and passerines lingered until record or near-record late dates, sometimes necessitating unusual diets, and a good variety of rarities was found.

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

### LOONS TO FALCONS

Red-throated Loons were noted in each province: one at Regina Beach, SK, Oct. 26 (RKr); two at Silver Falls, MB, Nov. 8 (RKo, PT, RZ); and two at Calgary, AB, Nov. 9 (BW). At least eight Pacific Loons were found in Alberta Sept. 21–Nov. 15, and six in Saskatchewan Sept. 28–Nov. 10. Single Yellow-billed Loons were at Barrier L., AB, Oct. 13 (J&MM); near Bassano, AB, Oct. 13 (BG, MB); and at L.M.L. Nov. 15 (RKr, M&JP, DP). At Manitou L., SK, 125 Eared

Grebes was a large count for the late date of Oct. 17 (RKr). A few Clark's Grebes in Saskatchewan included a record-late bird at Regina Beach Oct. 26 (RKr). A Double-crested Cormorant was late at Wabamun L., AB, Nov. 23 (BoP). The only southern herons were Cattle Egrets: one at Camrose, AB, Aug. 14–30 (BoR, TT, BrR); up to 10 at the n. end of L.M.L. Sept. 21–28 (RW et al.); and one at Dilke, SK, Oct. 6–10 (JS et al.).

Nine-hundred Tundra Swans was a good count at Stirling L., AB, Oct. 25 (LB), and 400 Trumpeter Swans, including 22 neck-collared birds, provided a grand sight 20 mi. s.e. of Cardston, AB, Oct. 18 (D&TD). A collared Trumpeter Swan in Regina Oct. 17–27 had been captured in Yellowstone and released in Idaho before wandering E (DV, PSA, RKr); a second, unbanded bird was also present Oct. 29–31 (CP, RKr). At the fringes of their main migration route were 150 Ross's Geese at Sullivan L., AB, Sept. 16 (SB) and 72 at O.H.M. Sept. 20 (RKo). A "Black" Brant visited Radisson L., SK, Oct. 4–6 (AH, BL).

A Blue-winged Teal was late at O.H.M. Oct. 29 (KG). Thousands of Am. Wigeon and Canvasbacks were dispersed around



**Pacific Loon at Inglewood Bird Sanctuary, Calgary, Alberta, on October 22, 1997. A rare but regular fall migrant in Alberta, this species rarely pauses within camera range. Photograph/Terry Korolyk**

Kawinaw L., MB, Oct. 4 (PT). Five-thousand Lesser Scaup at Good Spirit L., SK, Sept. 26 (BA) was a large concentration on such an early date. Not often reported in fall, a King Eider was spotted at Churchill Oct. 20 (Ornith.). The only wandering Harlequin Ducks were singles at Delta, MB, Oct. 18 (RP, L&RJ) and Saskatoon Nov. 19–21 (BL, HL et al.). Oldsquaws made a good showing in s.e. Manitoba with 17+ birds found Oct. 25–Nov. 29, including nine at Pine Falls Nov. 29–Dec. 7 (Rko, PT, RZ, m.ob.); six were seen in Alberta Nov. 1–29, and only two in Saskatchewan Oct. 16–19. A total of 158 Surf Scoters on Chain Lakes, AB, Oct. 4 (TK) represented probably a record count for Alberta; another 42 were found elsewhere in s. Alberta Oct. 11–Nov. 6, but much fewer were in Saskatchewan and s. Manitoba. Four Barrow's Goldeneyes were found in Saskatchewan Oct. 31–Nov. 19 (v.ob.). Three-thousand Buffleheads graced Lower Kananaskis L., AB, Nov. 1 (TK).

#### **VULTURES TO WOODPECKERS**

Eight Turkey Vultures near Minnedosa, MB, Oct. 6 (NS) provided a good number on a rather late date; a pair at Medicine Hat, AB, until early October had been present all summer and apparently nested (DBa). Several Ospreys remained in Manitoba into October, the latest near Pinawa Oct. 22 (BS, RS). Fifty-nine Bald Eagles congregated at O.H.M. Nov. 9. Rough-legged Hawk numbers were generally low, except in s.w. Alberta. An early Gyrfalcon fed on grasshoppers at Buck L., SK, Oct. 4 (FrL).

A female Spruce Grouse accompanied four small, late-hatching juveniles at Duck

Mt. Provincial Forest, MB, Oct. 1 (IG). A rarely reported resident, 13 Blue Grouse were at Windy Pt. Sept. 3 (WS). Two-hundred Sharp-tailed Grouse in the Manyberries area, AB, Oct. 24 (JR) made an encouraging total after a few low years.

A Lesser Yellowlegs was late at Taber P.P., AB, Nov. 6 (LB), as were single Spotted Sandpipers at La Ronge, SK, Oct. 2 (PT) and St. Adolphe, MB, Oct. 4 (LdM). Lone W. Sandpipers were noted at Irricana, AB, Aug. 14 (TK) and Langdon Res., AB, Sept. 20 (RB). Now almost annual at Churchill, a Purple Sandpiper was found Oct. 21 & 23 (BCh, Ornith.). A **Curlew Sandpiper** at Calgary



**At Dalemead Reservoir near Calgary, Alberta, on September 21, 1997, this jaeger was carefully identified as a dark-morph juvenile Parasitic. Photograph/Terry Korolyk**

**SA** Intensive coverage of raptor migration in Alberta provides an interesting contrast between the new eagle lookout at Plateau Mt. (PSh et al.) in the front range of the Rockies and the high-foothills count at Windy Pt. (WS et al.). Windy Pt. is about 30 mi n. of Plateau Mt. and about 2700 feet lower in elevation. The 2 sites lie on parallel streams of raptors about 10 mi apart. As expected, Plateau Mt. had the lion's share of Golden Eagles and a smaller majority of Bald Eagles, but nearly all other raptor species were better represented at Windy Pt., as shown in the table. Late movements of 52 Golden Eagles at Plateau Mt. Nov. 16, and 71 Nov. 17 were exceptional.

<b>SOUTHWESTERN ALBERTA RAPTOR MIGRATION TOTALS AND MAJOR PEAKS *</b>		
<b>LOCATION</b>	<b>Plateau Mountain</b>	<b>Windy Point</b>
<b>PERIOD</b>	<b>Aug. 30 – Dec. 4</b>	<b>Aug. 21 – Dec. 3</b>
<b>DAYS (HOURS)</b>	<b>85 (858)</b>	<b>64 (555)</b>
Osprey	5	36
Bald Eagle	604 (47, Oct. 28)	352 (52, Oct. 27)
Northern Harrier	69	79
Sharp-shinned Hawk	577 (59, Sept. 25)	1408 (112, Sept. 22)
Cooper's Hawk	38	337 (80, Sept. 20)
Northern Goshawk	18	140
Broad-winged Hawk	0	374 (160, Sept. 20)
Red-tailed Hawk	102 (62, Aug. 30)	592 (56, Sept. 20)
Swainson's Hawk	1	8
Ferruginous Hawk	1	5
Rough-legged Hawk	210	443 (115, Oct. 28)
Golden Eagle	3853 (532, Oct. 14)	1144 (292, Oct. 19)
American Kestrel	23	297
Merlin	20	53
Peregrine Falcon	15	8
Gyrfalcon	9	5
Prairie Falcon	15	31
Unidentified	20	218
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>5580</b>	<b>5530</b>

\* Bold-faced totals are provincial records



**A rare stray north of its breeding range, and most extraordinary as a feeder visitor, was this Scissor-tailed Flycatcher at Riverton, Manitoba, on October 14, 1997.**  
**Photograph/Roy and Carol Gudmundson**

Aug. 14 (TK) was well described; when flushed, it was joined by a second, similar bird. Moderate shorebird concentrations included 750 Long-billed Dowitchers near Brooks, AB, Sept. 30 (PT). Late single Red-necked Phalaropes were near Taber (LB) and at Tyrrell L., AB (WG), on Oct. 25. A Red Phalarope was also near Taber Oct. 2 (LB), and another was late at Churchill Oct. 21 (Ornith.).

Up to four Parasitic Jaegers were in the Calgary area Sept. 19–Oct. 2 (CH et al.), a Long-tailed Jaeger was a rarity at Beaverhill L., AB, Aug. 16 (CF, JA), and an unidentified jaeger was near Elk Island N.P., AB, the same day (BCa). Although they nest in n. Alberta and Saskatchewan, Mew Gulls are always noteworthy migrants: one was at Edmonton Aug. 18–24 (BrR, TT) and at least five were found in s. Saskatchewan Sept. 27–Nov. 3 (RKr, CE, MW et al.). A Ring-billed Gull roost at Wascana L., SK, peaked at 7500+ birds Oct. 13 (RKr).

In addition to the usual Regionwide sprinkling of Thayer's and Glaucous gulls, a first-winter Iceland ("Kumlien's") Gull visited Regina Oct. 21–31 (RKr et al.), an ad. **Glaucous-winged Gull** (Saskatchewan's 5th) was also in Regina Oct. 27–30 (RKr et al.), and a first-year Glaucous-winged Gull

was in Edmonton Nov. 11–16 (PM, RT, TT, RD, BrR). A subadult Great Black-backed Gull flew over L.M.L. Nov. 1 (RKr). Two **Black-legged Kittiwakes** strayed to Alberta: a first-winter bird at Astotin L. Nov. 5 (BCa) and an adult at Grassland Nov. 28 (NL). One of two Sabine's Gulls in Calgary Sept. 12 remained until Sept. 19 (SMc, RD et al.), and a third was at Blackstrap L., SK, Sept. 19–20 (BL, m.ob.). An imm. **Ivory Gull** thrilled watchers at Churchill Oct. 23 (DW et al., Ornith.). A Caspian Tern was locally rare and exceptionally late at Upper Kananaskis L., AB, Oct. 18 (TK), and three Black Terns were also very late at O.H.M. Oct. 5 (LdM).

Except for some mid-October reports in the Medicine Hat area (*vide* DBa), Snowy Owls were generally late, arriving in rather low numbers in early November. Contrasting with last winter's invasion in Manitoba, just one N. Hawk Owl was reported, at Vimy, AB, Oct. 12 (EF). There were also very few reports of Great Gray Owls. Saskatchewan's 2nd (first confirmed) **Anna's Hummingbird** resided at Springside from mid-July to Oct. 6 (RMe, FA, BA, m.ob.), when it was captured and transported to Vancouver, but died before it could be released. A Calliope Hummingbird was rather late at Windy Pt. Aug. 29

(WS). A *Selasphorus* (probably Rufous) Hummingbird visited Wakaw, SK, from late September to mid-October (NO, BL, AS), and a Rufous Hummingbird was quite late at Calgary Sept. 16 (DJ). Wandering woodpeckers included a Black-backed in Regina Oct. 27–Nov. 30+ (TR, FrL et al.) and single Pileateds at Medicine Hat Oct. 12 (BV) and near Lethbridge Oct. 15 (D&TD).

#### PASSERINES

A male W. Wood-Pewee, e. of its normal range at Patricia Beach, MB, appeared to be paired with an E. Wood-Pewee at a nest with three young Aug. 15 (PT, RZ, m.ob.). An E. Phoebe was exceptionally late at Stonewall, MB, Oct. 31—unless, as the observer noted, it was a junco in a Halloween costume (KG). Single Great Crested Flycatchers were out of range at Calgary Aug. 21 (TK) and 30 (J&MM). A W. Kingbird was late at West St. Paul, MB, Sept. 21 (GG), but the most unusual flycatcher of all was a Scissor-tailed Flycatcher photographed at a Riverton, MB, sunflower-seed feeder Oct. 11–16 (R&CG)!

Rare away from the mountains in Alberta were a Steller's Jay in Calgary Nov. 12–22 (NF, CS), a Clark's Nutcracker in Sherwood Park Nov. 2 (*vide* PM), and a Mt. Chickadee in Edmonton Oct. 1 (L&HO). Red-breasted Nuthatches staged a good migration in the Winnipeg-Stonewall area (RKO, KG) and 39 were counted between hawks at Windy Pt., AB, Sept. 6 (WS). Brown Creepers were generally scarce. A Rock Wren furnished Churchill's 3rd record Sept. 20 (RMu). Unusually late were a Winter Wren in Winnipeg Nov. 7 (RKO) and single Marsh Wrens at O.H.M. Nov. 9 (RKO) and Nama-ka L., AB Nov. 30 (TK). Saskatchewan's 11th **American Dipper**, but only the 2nd away from the Cypress Hills, was found in Saskatoon Nov. 17, rediscovered 4 mi away, and remained to Nov. 30 (BrP, GW, m.ob.).

A late Ruby-crowned Kinglet near Taber Nov. 1 (LB) was outdone by two in Saskatoon Nov. 18 (BL, HL). Three E. Bluebirds were a rare find in Cypress Hills P.P., AB, Aug. 15 (MM). Six Townsend's Solitaires were reported well away from the mountains in Alberta, about five in Saskatchewan, but none in Manitoba. A late movement of Hermit Thrushes in s.e. Manitoba ended with 3 Winnipeg sightings Nov. 3, 5, & 9 (CC, RKO). Alberta's 2nd **Wood Thrush** was banded and photographed in Edmonton Oct. 12 (EK). Few Varied Thrushes strayed far from the mountains: just two in Alberta Oct. 2 and one at L.M.L. Sept. 18–20 (RW, AS). A N. Mockingbird

visited Brandon, MB, Oct. 15 (BaR). A Bohemian Waxwing was early at Windy Pt. Aug. 21 (WS), as were 10 near Pinawa Aug. 29 (PT). Northern Shrikes were scarce Regionwide.

Uncommon away from the mountains was a Cassin's Vireo in Calgary Aug. 30 (SMI). Also in Calgary, five or more Nashville Warblers Aug. 23–Sept. 10 made a high total. Cape May Warblers are rather frequent lingerers; one was in Winnipeg Oct. 28 (LdM), another in Edmonton Nov. 22–26 (GK, TT, BrD et al.), and a third in Selkirk, MB, from early October into December thrived on specially made berry jam (JM)! Single Black-throated Blue Warblers appeared at Calgary Sept. 17 (CW) and Yorkton, SK, Sept. 20 (BA). Saskatchewan's 2nd **Black-throated Gray Warbler**, an ad. female, was found in Regina Oct. 22–23, barely half a mile from the site of the first record in 1965 (AB, FeL, DBr, RKr et al.). Two Townsend's Warblers were in Regina Aug. 10–11 (BiD, FeL, FrL, DV et al.), and a third was near L.M.L. Aug. 19 (RW). Further late records in Winnipeg were a Blackburnian Warbler Oct. 19 (IW) and a Black-and-white Warbler taking peanut butter at a feeder to Nov. 20 (Y&HK, RKo). Another Black-and-white Warbler lingered in Regina Nov. 1 (JF). Manitoba's 3rd (first confirmed) **Prothonotary Warbler** skulked in dense vegetation at St. Adolphe Oct. 3–6 (AC, m.ob.). A Com. Yellowthroat lingered at Taber to Oct. 25 (LB). Four Canada Warblers were more than usual in Calgary Aug. 21–30 (m.ob.).

A probable Scarlet Tanager was late at Winnipeg Oct. 11 (RKo), and a **Western Tanager** at Lynch Pt. Sept. 6 (CC, GH, IM, GW) furnished Manitoba's first fall record. A late report of a **Blue Grosbeak** at Biggar May 30–June 3 (AE) was Saskatchewan's 4th. A female Indigo Bunting wandered W to Porcupine Hills Forest Reserve, AB, Aug. 3–11 (J&RA, GN, RQ) and one was late at St. Adolphe, MB, Sept. 20 (AC). A **Dickcissel** at a feeder in Landmark Oct. 31–Nov. 1 (L&EP, m.ob.) was, surprisingly, Manitoba's first for fall.

Single Clay-colored Sparrows were late at Windy Pt. Oct. 18 (WS) and in Winnipeg Nov. 3–5 (RKo). A Field Sparrow paid a flying visit to Winnipeg Sept. 25 (GH, CC). Rarely reported in fall, a Grasshopper Sparrow was at Regina Sept. 24 (AB). Swamp Sparrows at Winnipeg Nov. 3 (RKo) and O.H.M. Nov. 12 (KG), and McCown's Longspurs near Taber Sept. 13 & 24, were all late (LB). More than 20,000 Lapland

Longspurs swirled over the countryside between Regina and Buck L., SK, Sept. 23 (RKr, GE). Over 100 Smith's Longspurs allowed very close approach near Lumsden, SK, Oct. 3–5 (BL, DV, PS, CP). A Pine Grosbeak lingered north at Churchill Nov. 10 (RMu). Unusually early individual Com. Redpolls appeared in s.e. Manitoba at Pinawa Sept. 5–14 (RZ) and Victoria Beach Sept. 6 (DF).

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