

# british columbia–yukon region



## MICHAEL G. SHEPARD

The storms of winter whisking off the Pacific gradually died out in March, leaving a cool but dry and sunny April. April turned out to be just a transition month, though, as May saw the development of an early “cold low” season, replete with cool temperatures and frequent mountain snows. Indeed, the almost record snowpack across the southern half of British Columbia melted little through the period, leaving nowhere to go but the valleys for most higher-elevation breeding birds. La Niña treated Yukoners to one of the coldest, wettest springs on record. Conditions southeast of Whitehorse were particularly damp, while Carmacks to the north enjoyed better weather.

### LOONS THROUGH EGRETS

A Yellow-billed Loon, rare in the interior, was near the mouth of Evans Cr. on Slocan L. 9–21 May (EB, SO). A late lingerer was at Iona I. 20 May (RTo). A count of 20 Eared Grebes in the vicinity of Nanoose Harbour and Neck Pt. 14 Apr (BC) was one of the highest tallies in coastal B.C. in recent years. The substantial count of 2700 W. Grebes near Kelowna 10 May (MG) was noteworthy. Such concentrations, although not unheard of, have been reported rarely in

recent years. Iona I. had a Clark’s Grebe 18–28 Apr (DB et al.). Few tubenoses were observed this spring. A Black-vented Shearwater off Amphitrite Pt. 25 May (RVo) was noteworthy. American White Pelicans were more widely reported than usual, both on the coast and interior. Anna Roberts surmised that late thawing of foraging lakes near their Stum L. colony may have resulted in the influx to lower elevations. At Williams L., where the species was previously unrecorded in spring, small flocks foraged daily 22 Apr through May. On 15 May two Double-crested Cormorants were near Yukon’s only known breeding location at Jackfish Bay on L. Laberge (CE, YBC). A Great Egret, perhaps an annual visitor to s.w. B.C., was at Tree I., Richmond, 29 May (Mrs. Talboys, m.ob.). Somewhat more unusual were reports of Snowy Egrets at Maple Ridge 9 May (MBA) and the mouth of Moray Channel, Richmond, 15–16 May (EG et al.).

### WATERFOWL THROUGH RAPTORS

A Ross’s Goose, likely the same bird that spent much of the winter at Como L., was at nearby Colony Farm along the Coquitlam R. 20–24 Apr (LC). Two migrants, with four Snow and 17 Canada geese, were near Ft. Fraser 5 May (LLa, SK). In both B.C. and the Yukon, Eur. Wigeon were more widespread and abundant than usual. Two males, one of which was apparently paired with a female Am. Wigeon, were at Vanderhoof 11 Apr (PGNC). Yukon sightings were of single males at lower McIntyre Cr. 24 Apr (LK), Tagish Narrows 2 May (HG, YBC) and 8 May (CE, PS), and M’Clintock Bay 16 May (CE, PS). A male Tufted Duck appeared at Stanley Park 5–18 Apr (CW, JAM et al.), and a bird thought to be a female was photographed along the Nautley R. in central B.C. 17 Mar (MPh, NK). On 26 Apr, Grosvenor, Hearne, and Hamel witnessed the marvelous spectacle of 40,000–50,000 Long-tailed Ducks sitting on the water and wheeling around in clouds. The birds were s.w. of Seal Rocks in n.e. Hecate Strait and believed to be feeding on large concentrations of krill.

White-tailed Kites are pushing their

range into B.C. and are now of regular occurrence almost as far north as Puget Sound. This spring there were observations throughout the Fraser Valley, with individuals reported from Sea I. 18–20 Apr (DB, m.ob.), near Kilby 21 Apr (MBr), Aldergrove 25 Apr (KRS), and Bradner Rd., Langley, 9 May (CB). On Vancouver I. one was at Michael L. near Nanaimo 28 Apr (DW). Very rare in the Peace R. area, a Cooper’s Hawk was 25 km s.w. of Fort St. John 28 May (MPh, DGr). There are few spring records of Broad-winged Hawks in B.C. This year singles were at the n. end of Okanagan L. 13 May (RJC) and Willowbank Mt. in the Blaeberry Valley 9 Jun (DL).

### SHOREBIRDS

Small numbers of Black-necked Stilts invaded s. B.C.. Six were at Kelowna 3 May (BT), one was at Rose’s Pond, Vernon, 11 May (PG), a female was at the Iona sewage lagoons 28 Apr–16 May (RTo et al.), and one was at Serpentine Fen 13 May (MPL). This spring’s high count of Am. Avocets was 45 tallied at the Alki L. colony in Kelowna 12 May (*vide* LG). A group of eight were at Elizabeth L., Cranbrook, 24 May (MW). The northward shorebird migration provided no major surprises. However, at M’Clintock Bay a sizeable shorebird fallout was reported 11–18 May, with 15 species identified there and a peak of about 3000 birds 11 May. Most common were Pectoral Sandpiper, Lesser Yellowlegs, Long-billed Dowitcher, Semipalmated Plover, and Semipalmated Sandpiper (CE, PS). Four Whimbels at Mackenzie 26 May (JCB) provided the first area record. Long-billed Curlews put in unusual outer coast appearances with a single bird 7 May and three 16 May near Tofino (AD). A record-setting 102 Hudsonian Godwits were tallied through May at various Whitehorse area wetlands (CE, PS), with the largest flock being 52 at Tagish Narrows 2 May (CE, HG, YBC); this species is considered rare in the Yukon. A Bar-tailed Godwit, rare at any season, was near Tofino 7 May (AD). A pair discovered at Judas Cr. 26 May (CE, HG, PS) was the highlight of the Yukon’s spring shorebird

migration, and provided only their 2nd record; one remained until at least 29 May (CE, PS, RCa). The predictable smattering of coastal Marbled Godwits was reported, but much more unexpected were two at the Maude-Roxby Bird Sanctuary, Kelowna, 11 May (GW et al.). A courting pair of Surf-birds, rarely seen in the Yukon, was noted 23 May in the mountains s.e. of Tombstone Campground along the Dempster Hwy., just s. of the known breeding range in the Oglvie Mts. (RMu).

#### JAEGERS THROUGH ALCIDS

Light-morph Parasitic Jaegers were at Judas Cr 26 May (JH, YBC) and 29 May (CE, PS); they are rare in the Whitehorse area. Two Franklin's Gull at Newlands 22 May (CA, MA) provided the first spring record for the Prince George area. Approximately 400 Ring-billed Gull nests were on Christmas I. near Salmon Arm 17 May (RJC); this colony was established only about 10 years ago. Iceland Gulls are more and more frequently observed in B.C., but spring occurrences are rare. One was encountered just n. of French Cr. during the Brant Festival Big Day 10 Apr (DEA, DC, ADM, BW). Glaucous-winged Gulls, relatively uncommon in the interior, were at the n. end of Okanagan L. 2 & 4 May (DGC, RJC). Caspian Terns are rarely observed in the c. and n. parts of B.C., so six along the Nechako R. at Cottonwood I. (Prince George) 22–23 May (MPh et al.) was noteworthy. Forster's Terns are normally restricted to the Creston area, where there is a small breeding colony. This year, individuals were at the mouth of the Duncan R., Kootenay L., 16 May (GS), Okanagan Landing 23 May (MC, PG, DGe, VS), and at Tranquille 29 May–1 Jun (SR et al.) An unusually large flock of 187 Black Terns was at Big L. n.e. of Chetwynd 28 May (MPh, DGr).

Very rarely reported in B.C., two Kittlitz's Murrelets were in Laredo Sound 11 May (BK); this species likely breeds in the province, but tends to frequent areas unvisited by birders. A Cassin's Auklet spent more than a month (4 Apr well into June) near the cruise ship facility in Vancouver Harbour (MPr et al.).

#### OWLS THROUGH THRASHERS

The status of Snowy Owls in n. Yukon during spring is unknown, so one on the Old Crow Flats 25 Apr (SW) was noteworthy. A warden's patrol at Vuntut N.P. produced one of few n. Yukon records of Great Gray Owl 20 Apr (DF, DH, AL, RMa). Costa's Hummingbirds, casual visitors to B.C., were

observed at feeders in Sooke 9–13 Apr (GL) and Sardis 15–23 May (JS, BSk et al.). An imm. Yellow-bellied Sapsucker was discovered in the Nanaimo area 4 Mar (GM). Of rare occurrence in the Queen Charlotte Is., a Downy Woodpecker was at Juskatla 28 Mar (MH, PH); it is rare on the coast at any season, and normally winters far s. of B.C. Dusky Flycatchers are turning up more frequently on the coast, particularly during spring migration, but there are still few records for Vancouver I. One observed 22 May (DEA) provided the 3rd record for Rocky Pt. Another flycatcher in the news was an E. Phoebe found at the Alaksen W.M.A., Delta, 31 May (KDG, WE), one of only a handful of coastal B.C. reports. A Say's Phoebe near Port Alberni 18 Apr (RCr, BSI) was somewhat out of range. American Crows barely make it into the Yukon, but at least two roamed the Whitehorse area in May (m.ob.). A cloud of 1500+ Tree Swallows was at Cluculz L. in the c. interior 11 May (LLa, SK). A window-killed Golden-crowned Kinglet at Mary L., Yukon, 30 Mar provided a record-early (albeit short-lived) spring arrival (KKn). A male Mt. Bluebird at Sandspit 4–5 Apr (MH, PH) provided the first spring record for the Queen Charlotte Is. Throughout the interior of B.C. Townsend's Solitaires were reported in greater than usual numbers; eight were at Johnsons Landing 8 May (GS). A Sage Thrasher at Iona I. 8–13 May (LJ et al.) provided only the 2nd record for the Vancouver area; it was followed by one at Pitt Meadows 24 May (JL, DT, RTy).

#### WARBLERS THROUGH FINCHES

Several species of warblers rarely found on the coast in spring were observed this year, including a singing Nashville Warbler near Port Renfrew 8 May (DEA), a Tennessee Warbler at Rocky Pt. 16 May (DEA), a Hermit Warbler at Queen Elizabeth Park, Vancouver, 6 May (MT), Palm Warblers at Sea I. 4 May (MKM) and Iona I. 8 May (JAM), and a N. Waterthrush near the Dinsmore Bridge in Richmond 19 May (MKM). At Marsh L., a singing male Audubon's Yellow-rumped Warbler 29 May (PS, CE) provided one of few documented Yukon records. Unusual in s. B.C., male Black-poll Warblers were at Queen Elizabeth Park 9 May (BGS) and Vaseux L. 31 May (RWe). A Yellow-breasted Chat, a species of irregular occurrence on the Lower Mainland, was found at Sea I. 31 May (KKI, GT et al.). An Am. Tree Sparrow, rare in spring on Vancouver I., was at Port Alberni 29 Apr (SA). According to Anna Roberts, Clay-colored

Sparrows have increased in the Cariboo over the last 20 years to occupy almost all suitable habitat. This spring, a one hectare site close to an industrial development in Williams L. was home to 7–8 pairs (*vide* AR, PR). A Black-headed Grosbeak, unusual in c. B.C., was in Prince George in early May (BR). Rare n. of the southern interior, a Lazuli Bunting was in Vanderhoof 25 May (LLe). A Bobolink at Mackenzie 22–23 May (GH et al.) was outside its normal range; it was photographed, thus providing the first documented record for that area, and one of the northernmost for the province. A female Yellow-headed Blackbird at Queen Charlotte City 11–12 May (BE, JW, MH, PH) furnished the first record for the islands. Leftovers from last fall's Brambling irruption were reported 5 Apr in Campbell R. (HA) and 8 Apr in Port Clements (AL, BL).

The flock of Gray-crowned Rosy-Finches frequenting a feeder at Jakes Corner through the winter peaked at a record setting 140 birds (mostly interior, with 2 coastal race) 12 Apr (CE). On the B.C. coast they were unusually widely reported in the lowlands, with up to 27 (8 May at N. Burnaby; HC) at a time, and a few lingering into late May. Perhaps the heavy snowpack at higher elevations kept the birds down. Birders in s. Yukon wondered why some Com. Redpolls were not leaving their feeders and heading n. in early May. The answer came 16 May with the observation of an adult feeding a recently fledged, dependent young at M'Clintock Bay (PS). A pair frequenting a Whitehorse feeder appeared with four recently fledged (still slightly downy) young in the last week of May (PS, CE). These breeding records are the first documented for the lowlands of s. Yukon.

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Place names that are frequently mentioned, but very long, may be abbreviated in a form such as "C.B.B.T." or "W.P.B.O." Such local abbreviations will be explained in a key at the beginning of the particular regional report in which they are used. Standard abbreviations that are used throughout *North American Birds* are keyed on page 251.

# oregon- washington region



## BILL TWEIT, GERARD LILLIE, and STEVE MLODINOW

**F**ollowing an extremely wet winter, the spring weather was actually somewhat drier than average in most parts of the Region, but it was also cool and windy so that both humans and birds seemed to regard it as more winter than spring. Throughout the west side, temperatures for much of March and early April were as much as 10 degrees below normal. There was snow on the Willamette Valley floor in late March and the freezing level dropped to ~1000 ft. in the northern Willamette Valley 8 April. Below normal temperatures continued into May, when they averaged 5.8° F. below normal in Portland, 6.4° below in Eugene, and 6.1° below in Medford. The cool climate delayed snow melt in the mountains, where a deep snow pack had accumulated with many sites reporting record snow depths.

The weather played a major role in migration. Many species arrived at expected dates, but numbers were small compared with the rest of their populations. It seemed that the majority of land bird migrants were

one to two weeks late. Very late snowmelt held up dispersal of mountain species once they arrived, maybe by as much as three weeks. On 8 May, Gillson had none of the obvious forest birds (Mountain Chickadee, Red-breasted Nuthatch etc.) at Lost Lake in the Oregon Cascades and on 11 June there was still three–five feet of snow at Santiam Pass with no Fox Sparrows or Nashville Warblers, generally common by that date. Lowland observers remarked on *very* large numbers of Western Tanagers. Westside observers were treated to unusual numbers of montane and interior species in the lowlands, some lingering quite late: Calliope Hummingbirds, Ruby-crowned Kinglet, Varied Thrush, Hermit Thrush, Townsend's Solitaires, Golden-crowned Sparrow, and Lincoln's Sparrow.

The oil spill created by the grounding of the *New Carissa* off Coos Bay, Oregon, apparently caused some level of Snowy Plover mortality, and necessitated more frequent beach surveys for dead birds. As of 10 March, two Horned Puffins, two Parakeet Auklets, two Ancient Murrelets, 13 Rhinoceros Auklets, one Short-tailed Shearwater, one+ Fork-tailed Storm-Petrel and one+ Leach's Storm-Petrel were found (BL0, RL). Some of these mortalities may have been unrelated to the oil spill.

**Abbreviations:** D.F. (*Detroit Flats, Marion Co., OR*); F.R.R. (*Fern Ridge Res., Lane Co., OR*); Fields (*Fields, Harney Co., OR*); Malheur (*Malheur N.W.R., Harney Co., OR*); O.S. (*Ocean Shores, Grays Harbor Co., WA*); S.J.C.R. (*s. jetty of the Columbia R., Clatsop Co., OR*); W.W.R.D. (*Walla Walla R. delta, Walla Walla Co., WA*).

## LOONS THROUGH FALCONS

Pacific Loon migration was heavy throughout May: 3000+ passed Heceta Head, Lane, OR, in 30 minutes 2 May (RRb) and 200+/hour passed Boiler Bay, Lincoln, OR, 25 May (PP). Yellow-billed Loons at Sequim Bay, Clallam, WA, 18 Mar (GK) and at Tulalip