

british columbia–yukon

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A brilliant warm summer finally began the first week of August and lasted through the Equinox into the third week of October. A brief spell of cooler, showery weather the first week of September kept migrants low and easy to spot. But boy did the weather change drastically as a high-speed flow off the Pacific cranked up. The coast was constantly wet and windy through the last five weeks of the period, while the interior was occasionally so. Late-autumn temperatures remained consistent, such that a cool end of October became a mild end of November. The exception was the Yukon and far northern British Columbia, which tasted real winter during late November.

LOONS THROUGH WATERFOWL

Southern Yukon enjoyed a record showing of Yellow-billed Loons, with a juv. at Schwatka L. 3 Oct (JJ, ARo), one at Nisutlin Bay 6 Oct (CE), a long-staying bird at L. Laberge 9 Oct–20 Nov (JJ, ARo, CE, PS, HG), and one at Tagish Narrows 23–24 Nov (BD, CE). In B.C., one was off the Englishman R. Estuary in Parksville 17 Oct (*fide* Nanaimo RBA). A well-documented Western Grebe at L. Laberge 30 Oct provided Yukon's first record of an *Aechmophorus* to exclude Clark's Grebe (CE, PS). Another Western Grebe reportedly spent the summer and fall on Simpson L., se. Yukon, departing at freeze-up 21 Nov (UR).

Two Pink-footed Shearwaters, rare in Juan de Fuca Strait, were off Victoria 23 Sep (GR, RT, DEA, PL, GD). At least one Am. White Pelican wandered the Strait of Georgia during the period, with reports coming from the Roberts Bank Jetty Jun–12 Sep (m.ob.), Iona I. 13 Sep (BSc), and Campbell R. 16 Sep (CCr). Brown Pelicans put in their usual fall appearance along the sw. coast of B.C., peaking at 100+ birds s. of Pachena Bay 16 Aug (TE). A Double-crested Cormorant at Eaglet L. 29 Aug (CA) provided the only cen. interior record this year. Cattle Egrets appeared in slightly larger numbers than normal, with individuals reported from Alberni Valley 20 Oct–28

Nov (*fide* SM), Chilliwack 26 Oct–2 Nov (JO et al.), and Kamloops 16–19 Nov (v.o.). At least two were in the Duncan area Oct/Nov (DM et al.) and four were at Westham I. 27–29 Nov (J. Ireland, m.ob.). Rare in B.C., a White-faced Ibis was at Courtenay 20 Sep (*fide* V. Hansen).

By far the year's most stunning rarity in the Yukon was an ad. **Bean Goose** discovered in Whitehorse 23–24 Oct and enjoyed by many during its brief stay (CE, PS, m.ob.). A lone goose, likely this individual, had been in the area for about a week prior to its identification. An ad. **Whooper Swan** at Mamit L. 7–14 Nov (WW, ARa, m.ob.) provided one of the few records for the Region. It closely associated with a Tundra Swan and two imm. that may have been hybrids. A female Tufted Duck was at Iona I. 24 Nov and a male was there 29 Nov (both RT). An impressive 350 Long-tailed Ducks at L. Laberge 16 Oct (CE, PS) established a record-high fall count for s. Yukon. Rare migrants in the Whitehorse area, 14 Ruddy Ducks were at the sewage lagoons 9 Sep (BD, HG).

KITES THROUGH SHOREBIRDS

Hawkwatching at Rocky Pt. at the s. tip of Vancouver resulted in several noteworthy records, including White-tailed Kites 18 Aug (MP, DD, DJA, RS) and 14 Sep (DEA) and at least 25 Broad-winged Hawks through the season. A record-setting group of seven Broad-wingeds was there 7 Oct (DD et al.). An active Broad-winged nest near Chetwynd furnished one of the few breeding records for the Region. A scolding adult and a partly feathered chick were at the nest 3 Aug (MPh). The relatively recently discovered fall migration corridor along the spine of the Rockies was again investigated in 1999. From 6–9 Oct, 119 south-bound Golden Eagles were tallied (SK, LL). A wind-blown White-tailed Ptarmigan sitting on the shore at Jackfish Bay, L. Laberge, during an extreme windstorm 1 Nov (CE) provided an unprecedented lowland record for the Whitehorse area. Sandhill Crane migration over upper Sheep Cr. in the Pelly Mts. was recorded 5–6 Sep, with a total of 1,100 (RE).

The Nisutlin Delta is s. Yukon's premier location for shorebird migration and during Aug/Sep an impressive 24 shorebird



species were recorded. Highlights included the Yukon's third record of Bar-tailed Godwit, an ad. male and female 14 Aug (CE, HG), record-high tallies of Stilt Sandpipers (50 juvs.) 14 Aug (CE, HG) and Western Sandpipers (65 juvs.) 4 Sep (CE), and the second s. Yukon Buff-breasted Sandpiper 4 Sep (CE). On 12 Sep, a careful search through 700 Pectoral Sandpipers turned up a juv. Sharp-tailed Sandpiper (CE, HG). A fallout of shorebirds at Masset 18–19 Aug produced several noteworthy sightings for the Queen Charlotte Is., including 22 Lesser Yellowlegs, a Solitary Sandpiper, and a Stilt Sandpiper (MHe, PH). On 3 Sep, a mixed flock of 75 golden-plovers at Sandspit contained 6 Pacifics and a record 69 Americans (MHe, PH). In B.C., reports of Hudsonian Godwits were more widespread, with individuals at Oyster Bay Shoreline Park 16–22 Aug (NM, AMo, m.ob.), Reifel I. 19 Aug (J. Nicholson), and Boundary Bay 23 Aug (RT). A Ruddy Turnstone at the s. end of Stump L. 21 Aug (RH, WW et al.) provided only the third record for the Kamloops area and the only interior B.C. report this year. Extremely rare in the interior, a Sharp-tailed Sandpiper was at Tranquille 8 Sep (RR, CRi). "Stint Haven," a.k.a. Iona I., produced two tiny *Calidris* rarities this fall, a juv. Little Stint 5–8 Oct (RT, DJe, SO, m.ob.) and a juv. Red-necked Stint 28 Oct–17 Nov (RT, AMi, GT, m.ob.). A juv. Buff-breasted Sandpiper frequented the n. shore of Boundary Bay and adjacent fields 9–17 Sep (RT, NH,

m.ob.). Another juv. was at Iona I. 6–9 Oct (RT, MM, MT, m.ob.). A juv. female Ruff was on the n. shore of Boundary Bay 11 Sep (RT).

JAEGERS THROUGH WOODPECKERS

A southbound light-morph Parasitic Jaeger 16 Sep was the first in fall for the Whitehorse area (JJ). A South Polar Skua, a rare visitor to inside waters, was in Juan de Fuca Strait s. of Victoria 27 Aug (BB). An adult Slaty-backed Gull in Whitehorse 1–3 Sep (CE, PS) provided the Yukon's second documented record of this species. Yukon's first documented **Ivory Gull**, a first-winter bird, was at Tagish Narrows 21 Nov (CE, PS, CLE, DE). Sadly, its health declined quickly: a rescue team 24 Nov found it had died during the previous night. The specimen was saved. As usual, there was a smattering of Sabine's Gulls reports from the interior of B.C., with single birds at Kamloops 7 Sep (v.o.), Williams L. 5–10 Sep (PR et al.), Nulki L. 15 Sep (LL, SK), and the w. end Stellako R. 13 Oct (JM). An ad. Caspian Tern at Nisutlin Delta 1 Aug provided the fifth Yukon record of the species (CE, PS et al.). Now of nearly annual occurrence on the s. coast, a Forster's Tern was at Clover Pt. 26 Aug (*vide* Victoria RBA). A Thick-billed Murre appeared at Alliford Bay 4 Nov (PH).

A vagrant Yellow-billed Cuckoo turned up at Duck L., Creston, 20 Oct (EM). Rather far n., a Barn Owl was in McBride late Nov (LT). An apparent brief mini-invasion of Great Gray Owls around Whitehorse included one at the Annie L. Road 30 Sep (RA), one at South M'Clintock, Marsh L., 3–5 Oct (DP, DS), and one in Whitehorse-Hillcrest 7 Oct (RI). Two Long-eared Owls roosting in a willow thicket at Giscome 22 Aug (JB, CA) provided only the fifth record for the Prince George area. A record-late Com. Nighthawk was over downtown Whitehorse 16 Sep (JJ). A spectacular migration of Rufous Hummingbirds was noted at Rocky Pt.; over 150 of these little mites were mist-netted late Jul to mid-Aug (DD et al.). A very cold Yellow-bellied Sapsucker in Whitehorse 2 Nov smashed Yukon's previous late date by nearly two months (LK).

FLYCATCHERS THROUGH GROSBEAKS

An E. Phoebe, a rare species w. of the Rockies, was at Mackenzie 6 Aug (DB, DL). Ash-throated Flycatchers are rare but regular on the s. coast. However, their invasion

into the lower mainland Aug/Sep was unprecedented. Two juvs. were at Burns Bog 16–17 Aug (MG), with one staying until late Aug (m.ob.), and lone juvs. were at Cheam L. Wetland 3 Sep (GG), Tsawwassen 28 Aug (CK), and Reifel I. 5–6 Sep (PC, CRu, JI, m.ob.). There was only one Tropical Kingbird report this fall, at Jordan R. 17 Oct (DJo, DM). A Blue Jay was at Ft. Nelson 18 Oct (MS), rather far n. for this time of year. Rare in the n. Rockies, a Clark's Nutcracker was on Morfee Mtn. near Mackenzie 20 Aug (VL, JL, DL). Fifty Purple Martins at Deer L., Burnaby 8–12 Sep (GC, RF) was perhaps the largest number ever recorded in the Lower Mainland. A Gray Catbird heard calling at Rocky Pt. 30 Sep (DD, RT, DEA) provided only the second record for Vancouver I. Individual Red-throated Pipits, rare transients in B.C., were in Central Saanich 23–24 Oct (KT, DEA, DJA, GD, RT) and Sandspit 31 Oct (PH).

Abundant aphids drew a small horde of warblers to a Whitehorse yard 28 Aug, with six Orange-crowns, six Yellows, 20 Yellow-rumpeds, a Townsend's, eight Blackpolls, a N. Waterthrush, and 30 Wilson's (CE, PS). A late imm. Yellow Warbler was at Brunswick Pt. 29 Nov (RT, DJe, EJ). Noteworthy coastal reports of Am. Redstarts included an imm. banded at Rocky Pt. 5 Aug (ph. DD, DEA) and one at Burns Bog 1 Sep (RT). Black-and-white Warblers, rare w. of the Rockies, were at Kalimoir Park in the Okanagan 13 Oct (EF, LR) and at Sandspit 4 Nov (PH). A N. Waterthrush at Reifel I. 3 Oct (MHa) furnished the only coastal report this season. A Com. Yellowthroat in Whitehorse 1 Nov (JJ) provided a late Yukon record for this species. A record-late juv. Chipping Sparrow frequented a Whitehorse feeder 30 Sep–6 Oct (CE, PS). Clay-colored Sparrows almost never make it as far w. as Vancouver I., but an imm. was at Rocky Pt. 3–4 Sep (DEA, DJA). Virtually unheard of on the coast, a Com. Grackle put in a two-day appearance in Central Saanich 14–15 Nov (KT et al.). A Dickcissel, a species from e. of the Rockies, was at Rocky Pt. 9 Oct (DEA). An imm. male Rose-breasted Grosbeak at Ucluelet 23 Nov+ (BSI et al.) provided a rare coastal report of this species. During summer White-winged Crossbills responded to a heavy spruce cone crop with a major irruption, primarily in the interior B.C. Large flocks were reported widely well into Sep, with numbers gradually decreasing through the end of the period.

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