

atlantic provinces



Blake Maybank

144 Bayview Drive
White's Lake, Nova Scotia B3T 1Z1
(maybank@ns.sympatico.ca or
maybank@bigfoot.com)

In these days of unpredictable climatic patterns, fueled, I believe, by human-caused global warming, a detailed mention of "unexpected" weather seems a waste of ink. Therefore, March and April were warmer than expected and May cooler, at least on the mainland. Newfoundland did not receive its blessed Nor'easterlies (the Eurasian express), but rare birds popped up across the Region anyway, most from the south. Coverage was excellent from Nova Scotia and quite good from New Brunswick. I am indebted to Brian Dalzell of the Grand Manan Bird Observatory, who summarized the copious sightings from NatureNB for my benefit—unfortunately, observer names were omitted from the summaries. The Avalon Peninsula of Newfoundland was well-covered, but there was limited information from the rest of the island, as well as Labrador. P.E.I. continues to offer little data and no documentation.

Nova Scotian birders have enthusiastically participated in the North American Migration Count since its inception; thanks to Judy Tufts for her tireless annual organization of this event. So far as I know, the

other provinces in this Region do not participate. I am unaware of how, or if, the data we collect are used by the overall coordinator, but the data have become an invaluable tool to the various editors who collate the provincial sightings for the Nova Scotia Bird Society and so, in turn, to me for writing the spring regional summary.

Abbreviations: G.M. (Grand Manan archipelago, NB); S.P.M. (Saint Pierre et Miquelon, France); B.P.I. (Bon Portage Island, NS); B.I. (Brier Island, NS); C.S.I. (Cape Sable Island, NS); NAMC (North American Migration Count—Nova Scotia only, 13 May); P.E.I. (Prince Edward Island); PLBO (Point Lepreau Bird Observatory, NB); Sable (Sable Island, NS); S.I. (Seal Island, Yarmouth, NS).

LOONS THROUGH HERONS

Fewer than a dozen Red-throated Loons were reported in Nova Scotia, but an excellent movement of 125 birds per hour was noted at PLBO 25 Apr. The largest flock of Horned Grebes in Nova Scotia was 50 in mid-April at Petite Riviere (EM). One 7 May at Trespassey (D. Brown, T. Smith) was notable, as the species is less than annual in e. Newfoundland. Susann Meyers has been carefully monitoring the Red-necked Grebe numbers in Kennington Cove, Cape Breton, with a maximum count of 35 in mid-

April; all had departed by 20 Apr. The annual early spring concentration at The Drook, NF, peaked at 48 on 26 Mar (T. Boland). These numbers pale next to those at S.P.M., where the high counts were 565 for Michelon and 138 for St. Pierre (RE) on 7 Mar. The last birds were in St. Pierre 21 Apr.

An excellent count of Northern Fulmars occurred from the Cabot Strait ferry 21 May when RK tallied 980 birds in Nova Scotia waters. Ray d'Entremont noted his second-ever earliest Sooty Shearwater on George's Bank, NS, 31 Mar, just two days off the record. Ian McLaren *et al.*, while en route to S.I. 28 May, had a remarkable count of 150 Sooties, unprecedented for the time and place and perhaps lured inshore by a heavy squid run.

This spring furnished the finest heron flight on record, led by Great Egrets, but with other southern herons well-represented (Table 1). As might be expected, most were in Nova Scotia and New Brunswick; RK reported from the former: "This was a fantastic spring for Great Egrets. The first was seen 27 Mar at Chezzetcook, and this presaged an unprecedented invasion. Two more turned up in March, at C.S.I. and B.I., but April records came from the whole of the province, including Cape Breton. One on S.I. stayed 4 Apr–4 May. Totals peaked in mid-April; at least 45 individuals reported on 20 Apr. The species continued to be seen until the end of May, albeit in lesser numbers. How many birds were involved will never be known." Smaller (but still considerable) numbers were tallied in New Brunswick, with eight of the 23 birds from inland locations. The heron flight petered out in P.E.I., Newfoundland, and S.P.M. (with none reaching the last location), but a couple of good birds slipped through, particularly P.E.I.'s first (and the Region's 4th) **White Ibis** at Beach Pt. 13–22 May (and rediscovered in Woods Harbour in June). A Yellow-crowned Night-Heron in Ferryland, NE, 7–18 Apr provided a rare provincial spring record (BMT *et al.*)

WATERFOWL THROUGH GULLS

Eight Snow Geese at P.E.I. Mar–Apr and but one in Nova Scotia paled against the estimated 1000 at the Atholville Marsh, NB, 29 Apr.

Table 1. Summary of southern herons in Atlantic Canada, spring 2000.

	NS	NB	NF	P.E.I.
Great Egret	100+?	23	3	1
Little Blue Heron	9	2	–	–
Snowy Egret	11	12	–	–
Tricolored Heron	3	1	–	–
Cattle Egret	4	–	–	–
Green Heron	15	*	–	–
Yel-crowned Night-Heron	5	–	1	–
Glossy Ibis	9	6	–	–

* breeds regularly in s. New Brunswick in small numbers

Twelve on 5 May at Labrador City was a good number for Labrador (BD). Peak regional counts of Brant were 5,000 at C.S.I. 19 Mar and 400 at G.M. 3 Apr. Gadwalls wandered offshore in May in Nova Scotia, with singles on Sable and S.I. A pair of **Canvasbacks** were seen at Conrad's Beach, NS, 23 Mar (J. Waldron et al), but were not noted subsequently (and were not documented, in any case). A pair of **Redheads** at St. Pierre 28–30 May (P. Asselin, ph.) was the first for the French Islands. Given the strong flight of Common Eiders up the w. shore of the Bay of Fundy, it should not be surprising that New Brunswick birders are locating increasing numbers of King Eiders among the migrating flocks. Nevertheless, the 31 birds noted late Mar–early May was an impressive total. The PLBO made some excellent counts of migrating scoters. Surf and Black peaked 25 Apr at 4630 birds/hr and 1284 birds/hr, respectively. The White-winged Scoter peak was 9 Apr, when 105 birds/hr passed. The NAMC totals of Surf, White-winged, and Black Scoters were 2175, 436, and 1750, some of those late migrants and others non-breeding over-summering birds. Occurrences of European ducks are summarized in Table 2.

Table 2. Summary of European ducks in Atlantic Canada, spring 2000.

	NS	NB	NF	P.E.I.
Eurasian Wigeon	6	5	10	1
Common Teal	2	3	-	-
Tufted Duck	7	3	6	-

Raptors elicited little excitement, with New Brunswick offering the most interesting tidbits, including a Golden Eagle at Campobello I. 23 Mar, a Red-shouldered Hawk at Woodside 5 Mar, and a Gyrfalcon at Woodward's Cove 18 Mar. Two Sandhill Cranes were at Havelock, NB, 6–13 May; whereas breeding seems extremely unlikely in the Maritime Provinces, one can always hope. Sandhill Cranes are less-than-annual in Newfoundland, so a bird at Goulds, 22–23 May (BMT et al.) was welcome. The spring's stellar rarity was a **Black Rail** on S.I. (C. Kenney et al.). The observers watched the bird on and off for about a week from 20 Apr as it kept mostly to a sedge-rimmed pond, flushing occasionally into nearby trees. At other times the bird came into full view at close range. The description was convincing (*fide* IM) and provides the 3rd provincial sight record, the previous two having occurred on Sable, both single-observer events. A **Purple Gallinule** in Halifax was not nearly as rare, but was much more accessible, as it was discovered 30 May on the grounds of the St. Mary's University campus

(S.&B. Grogono). It lingered well into June, to the delight of many observers. Winds did not favour an arrival of birds from Iceland, so Newfoundland birders had to be content with 2 **European Golden-Plovers** at Cape Race 4–7 May, joined by a third on 7 May (PL, ph.). On the heels of last year's first-ever successful Canadian nesting of **American Oystercatcher**, on C.S.I., a pair returned 7 Apr, with a second pair noted by month's end and a third pair in late May. Two pairs eventually fledged young (see the upcoming summer report). Three Upland Sandpipers were found in Nova Scotia, a typical spring number, but 2 of the 3 were at Cape Breton. The third lingered on C.S.I. to the end of the period. On the NAMC, a record 392 Greater Yellowlegs were counted. A Lesser Yellowlegs at Goulds, NF, 8–13 Apr furnished a rare spring record and the first in April. Stilt Sandpipers are rare in spring, as they are thought to migrate nw. long before they reach our shores, so one in alternate/breeding plumage at C.S.I. 7 May was a noteworthy find (MN). The only Ruff this spring was in New Brunswick, a Reeve at Dune de Buctouche 8 May.

Five Common Gulls were on the Avalon Peninsula, NF, one (a first summer) through late May. It was an good spring for Lesser Black-backed Gulls, with (north to south) 15 in Newfoundland, one at S.P.M., 4 in New Brunswick, and 6 in Nova Scotia, of which one, an adult at Petite Riviere, showed characters attributed to *L. f. intermedius* (EM), the first reported in the province (there are precedent records from Newfoundland). The newly "discovered" hotspot of Ogden's Pond, *Antigonish*, NS, continues to show its mettle, this time as a favored staging area for Black-headed Gulls en route to breeding colonies north and east—RL counted a maximum of 110 on 25 Mar. The regional spring Laughing Gull total was but 7—an April bird in New Brunswick and 6 birds in May: 2 in e. Newfoundland and 4 in Nova Scotia, including 2 together at Port Morien, Cape Breton.

OWLS THROUGH WAXWINGS

A migrant Northern Hawk Owl was at G.M. 1 Apr. Here is a Boreal Owl story, as passed along by IM: "A migrant appeared on Sable 29 Apr–2 May, the third record there. ZL found it on the first morning perched in a propane shed and grasping a dead Leach's Storm-Petrel which had begun to nest there. After dark, both it and its prey were gone. This was repeated for the next three days."

Despite this hopeful sign, no birds were located in surveys in n. Cape Breton, but Bruno Letournel had a bird on S.P.M. 16 May. The earliest-ever Chimney Swift in Nova Scotia (and the Region?) was at Schooner Pond, Cape Breton, 8 Apr (CAM). Two showed up quite far n. on S.P.M. 14 & 27 May. Considering the number of spring sightings of Red-bellied Woodpeckers in New Brunswick, can nesting be far off? Five over-wintering birds (including 3 on G.M.) were joined by 4 others on the mainland. There were 3 in Nova Scotia, an overwintering bird, and 2 migrants, including a female on B.I. 10–20 May.

While many observers felt Eastern Wood-Pewees were late arriving, one in Mactaquac, NB, 16 Apr was four weeks early, as was an Eastern Kingbird in the Avalon Peninsula, NF, 30 Apr (D. Brown). Nova Scotia was featured in all the vireo news. It had its best spring ever for **White-eyed Vireos**, with 4 reported: Broad Cove 5 May, C.S.I. 8 May (GRM), NAMC 13 May, and one banded on B.P.I. 14 May. Two **Yellow-throated Vireos** were reported, one banded 30 Apr on B.P.I. and an undocumented singing bird near Chester. RK and DM reported the only Philadelphia Vireo, at Schooner Pond, Cape Breton, 19 May. It is pleasant to have Blue Jays make the news, with this report from S.P.M. by RE: "The Blue Jay is still an uncommon and irregular bird here and people are still excited about them! The first one was reported 15 Mar on St. Pierre, and was seen regularly—the maximum was 4 birds on 16 May. Three were in Miquelon village 20 & 23 May."

A Cliff Swallow 9 May in Labrador (BD) was rare that far north. Only three Blue-gray Gnatcatchers were reported, all in May, with 2 in New Brunswick and the other at P.E.I. The **Townsend's Solitaire** at Riverside-Albert, NB, was last reported 16 Mar. A Veery on S.P.M. 4 May (L. Jackman) was but the 3rd recorded on the islands. The same islands had only 2 Gray-cheeked Thrushes—the species was once a fairly common breeder there. Sightings of Gray-cheekeds on the mainland are rarely adequately documented. This spring, 5 were reported from Nova Scotia—2 on Sable 27–28 Apr and one banded on B.P.I. 28 Apr were well-described, but the others are suspect, given the difficulty of distinguishing from Bicknell's Thrush. A Wood Thrush at Isle Lameque, NB, 17 Apr was four weeks early. A "heavy" wave of hundreds of American Robins was noted in s. New Brunswick 26–27 Mar. **Varied Thrushes** continue to delight observers. One was in Douglas, NB, 14 Mar, while one appeared just slightly later in Nova Scotia, in

East Uniacke, 24–25 Mar (P. Bower). Newfoundland's 2nd, at first just a February rumor, became reality following a March snowfall when an adult male was discovered at a Pouch Cove feeder 19–29 Mar (D. Klaroft et al.). A Brown Thrasher spent most of March on G.M., while Nova Scotia hosted 3 in April and May. Given the heavy winter flight of Bohemian Waxwings, it is not a surprise that some were still being noted into mid-May, in both New Brunswick and Nova Scotia.

WARBLERS THROUGH FINCHES

A **Blue-winged Warbler** was on G.M. 13 May. Cape May Warblers are rare on S.P.M., but 1–2 males were seen 22 & 27 May; an equally rare Blackburnian was there 21 May. S.P.M. enjoyed its first spring **Yellow-throated Warbler**, when one patronized RE's buggy garden compost from 24 Apr–3 May (ph). Two of Nova Scotia's overwintering Pine Warblers persisted until 27 Mar in Halifax and 22 Apr in Dartmouth; 2 on S.I. 30 May were migrants (IM et al.). Three in New Brunswick lingered until 4 Mar in Sackville, 21 Apr in Fredricton and 26 Apr in Fundy NP. Nova Scotia hosted a minor invasion of **Hooded Warblers**. The earliest patrolled the beach at C.S.I. 29 Mar (m.ob.), eating spiders and tolerating close photography. Two more (undocumented) appeared on the NAMC, and a 4th was at Schooner Pond 25 May (CAM).

Summer Tanagers made their now-anticipated annual spring visit, with 4 in Nova Scotia and 2 in New Brunswick (5 of them, as expected, on s. islands). A Scarlet Tanager delighted residents of the town of St.-Pierre on S.P.M. 29 Apr–17 May and was photographed by many, including non-birders. At least one Eastern Towhee successfully overwintered in Nova Scotia, and there were 6 spring arrivals, including 4 on C.S.I. and one far n. in Louisbourg. A Chipping Sparrow overwintered in Hantsport, NS, and, more remarkably, so did one in Gander, NF. There were 7 Field Sparrows in Nova Scotia, including one far afield in Schooner Pond; there was but one in New Brunswick, on G.M. Nova Scotia's 4th spring Lark Bunting was on Sable 27 May (ZL); there are <20 records overall. Closer scrutiny of migrant Savannah Sparrows turned up at least 4 Ipswich race birds in New Brunswick, 3 between 20–25 Mar. Significant sparrow "waves" occurred 26–27 Mar in New Brunswick (mostly Song) and 4–5 May in Nova Scotia, especially on C.S.I., with a fall-out of hundreds of White-throateds and dozens of White-crowned.

Northern Cardinals continue their move

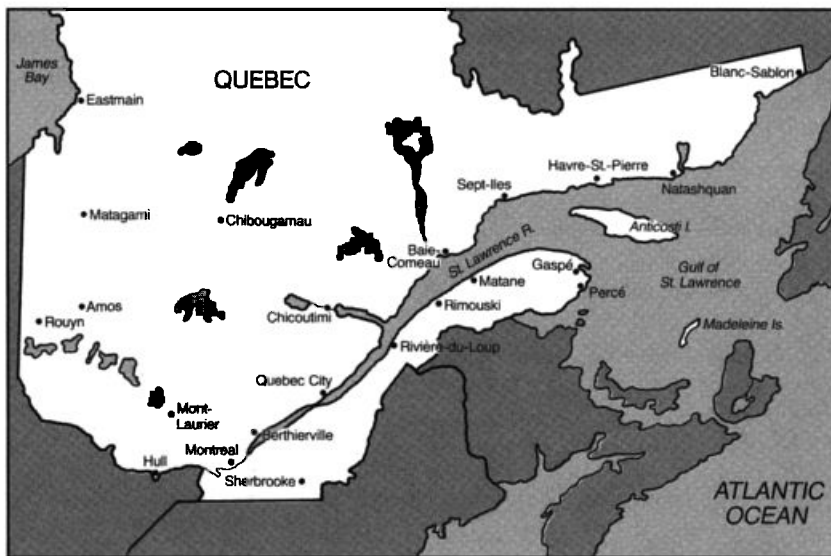
into Nova Scotia, with more than 30 birds reported in spring, many on territory, and doubtless many more not reported. Rose-breasted Grosbeaks made early arrivals across the region. Nova Scotia's first was 10 Apr at Hemeon's Head (average 1 May), and 9 more were found later in April. New Brunswick also had an early bird 23 Apr, on G.M. This early arrival was mirrored in Newfoundland, where a pronounced southerly air flow 24–25 Apr propelled many early migrants to the Avalon Peninsula, including 9 Rose-breasted Grosbeaks, a Red-eyed Vireo, 2 Scarlet Tanagers, and 4 Indigo Buntings, as well as the Eastern Kingbird mentioned earlier. New Brunswick and Nova Scotia each had 4 Blue Grosbeaks, an average number, and each had a good May flight of Indigo Buntings, with more than 30 in both provinces. Just one Indigo was reported from P.E.I. A male **Painted**

Bunting briefly visited a feeder 21 May in Kings, NS (M.&L. Norden). P.E.I.'s first Painted Bunting, a male, was a Marshfield May 24–30 (V.C. MacDonald, et al.). Three Dickcissels overwintered in Nova Scotia. Bobolinks were last seen on S.P.M. in 1991, so this spring's appearance of 4 males and 2 females 21 May was most welcome. The spring's oriole flight was disappointing, with but a single Orchard in Nova Scotia and 3 on G.M. And regarding wandering "winter" finches: all quiet on the western front.

Contributors (subregional editors in bold-face): Brian Dalzell, Fred Dobson, Raymond d'Entremont, Roger Etcheberry, Sylvia Fullerton, Andy Horne, Richard Napton, Randy Lauff, Zoe Lucas, Bruce Mactavish (Bmt), Blake Maybank (BMy), Dave McCorquodale, Ian McLaren, Eric Mills, Cathy & Allan Murrant (CAM), Murray Newell.



québec



Normand David

11931 Lavigne, Montréal, Québec H4J 1X9
(ndavid@netrover.com)

Samuel Denault

75 Beauchemin
Saint-Basile-le-Grand, Québec J3N 1J6
(samuel.denault@videotron.ca)

Pierre Bannon

1517 Leprohon
Montréal, Québec H4E 1P1
(pbannon@total.net).

Following the spring-like weather of late February, March continued very mild,

which led to numerous record-early arrivals. By the end of March, 57 migrant species had been recorded in the Montreal area, six of them record-early for the Region and 32 the earliest for the last decade. A noticeable change in the weather pattern took place in April and May when cool and wet conditions prevailed. Although an important storm on 9 April dumped up to two feet of snow on s. Quebec, there was no evidence of a major bird mortality, although there was undoubtedly some mortality among the early insectivorous migrants. Although