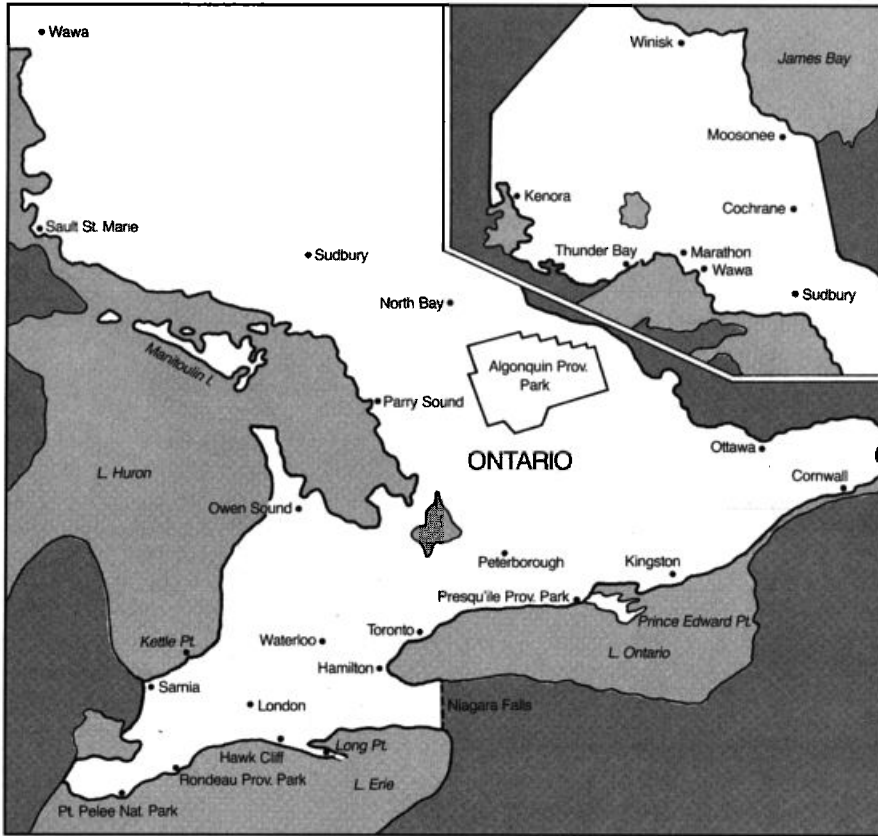


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The millenium spring arrived early in Ontario. The record-breaking mild weather of February continued well into March, and most areas—even in the north—were generally snow-free by mid-March. Snow accumulations during the winter were rather light and disappeared quickly as the mild temperatures persisted. All of these conditions resulted in a great number of remarkable early records for returning spring migrants. Snow Geese arrived at Thunder Bay and Atikokan in the northwestern part of the province on February 26, nearly four weeks early! Observers, busy with a seemingly endless list of record-breaking early arrivals, still managed to turn up a good number of rare and unusual birds including Eared Grebe, Great Cormorant, Cinnamon Teal, Lewis's Woodpecker, Cave Swallow, and Painted Bunting, capping off a most interesting and exciting spring.

Abbreviations: Pt. Pelee (Point Pelee N.P. and vicinity), P.P. (Provincial Park), S.L. (Sewage Lagoons), KFN (Kingston Field Naturalists), C.A. (Conservation Area), W.M.A. (Wildlife Management Area), LPBO (Long Point Bird Observatory), OBRC (Ontario Bird Records Committee), N.P.H. (Niagara Peninsula Hawkwatch), TCBO (Thunder Cape Bird Observatory).

LOONS THROUGH WATERFOWL

A single Red-throated Loon was found at Presqu'ile P.P., *Northumberland*, 24 Mar (CEG), a record-early spring date. Spring totals, however, were at an all-time low for Presqu'ile, suggesting that open water farther n. may have permitted most birds to fly over without stopping. Kingston, *Frontenac*, had a rare visit by another Red-throated 16 May (KFN). A Red-necked Grebe present 15–16 May off Hillman Marsh provided a rare spring record for Pt. Pelee. A pair on Kelley L., Sudbury (m.ob.), all of May indicated a possible breeding attempt. Additional individuals were noted at Pittock L., *Oxford*, 5 Apr (JMH) and 20 Apr (RSn), with another 4 at Killbear P.P., *Parry Sound*,

3 May (Jni). Three pairs began nesting in Bronte Harbour (*Halton*) in early March (GE). Sudbury observers were delighted to see an **Eared Grebe** on Kelley L. 6 May (m.ob.), the 2nd for the area. Single birds were also seen at the Forest S.L., *Lampton*, 21 May (AR, PC) and at the Grand Bend S.L., *Lampton*, 30 May (AR). American White Pelicans are increasing significantly on L. Nipigon, *Thunder Bay*. A flock of 250 was noted in early May (RS) on Wabinoosh Bay. Farther e. 12 made an appearance at Gawas Bay, St. Joseph's I., *Algoma*, 14 May (BKn). An imm. **Great Cormorant** at Port Credit Harbour, *Peel*, 2 May (*vide* BM) was joined by an ad. 16 May (*vide* BM). The same birds may have moved eastward. An imm. was in the Toronto Harbour 18 Apr (CSAM) and an ad. was at Sunnyside, Toronto, 29 May (CSAM).

A record-early American Bittern was at Presqu'ile P.P. 31 Mar (CEG). Least Bittern reports were scarce, with 3 noted 12 May at the St. Clair W.M.A. (GC) and one at Big Creek, *Haldimand-Norfolk*, 13 May (LPBO). Great Egrets were scattered across the s. part of the province and are apparently expanding slowly to the east. One turned up at Miller Creek C.A., *Northumberland*, 18 Apr (m.ob.) and additional singles were at Kingston, *Frontenac*, 23 Apr and 20 May (HM) and at Deseronto 15 May (DDG, CG). Snowy Egrets arrived *en masse* at Wheatley P.P. 16 May, when a remarkable 13 were counted. Two were at Hillman Marsh near Pt. Pelee 17–20 May (KAM et al.) and a single was noted at the Leslie Street Spit, Toronto, 7 May (GR, RBHS). Singles were also at Big Creek 13 May (m.ob.), Selkirk P.P. (JM), and Fifty Point C.A., *Hamilton-Wentworth*, 25 May (TJ). Single Cattle Egrets were found at Clear Creek, *Haldimand-Norfolk*, 5 Apr (BC) and at the Nanticoke Generating Station 26–29 April (*vide* MS). Green Herons are rare in the n. part of the province, but one was found near Sudbury 31 May (CB) and another made an appearance at Ft. Frances, *Rainy River*, 7 May (RS). A record-early Black-crowned Night-Heron was at Port Hope, *Northumberland*, 7 Mar (DS). The Lindsay S.L., *Victoria*, hosted a **Glossy Ibis** 17 May (BS, m.ob.) that remained for several days. Black Vultures are now almost expected in the spring in s. Ontario. One was seen at Beamer C.A. near Grimsby, *Niagara*, 31 Mar (NPH). Another was at Sturgeon Creek 15–17 May and then at Pt. Pelee 17–21 May (Dmi et al.). Rondeau P.P. was visited by a single bird 26 May (PAW), the 2nd record for the park. Record-early Turkey Vultures

were noted 12 Mar (RFR, EK) when 4 floated over Hope Township, *Northumberland*.

Snow Geese moved n. early, with flocks arriving in nw. Ontario 26 Feb at Thunder Bay (NE) and Atikokan, *Rainy River* (DRE). Flocks continued to arrive or fly over through March. A blue-morph individual was noted at Taquanyah 2 May (BJ). Brant flights at Kingston were generally considered weak, with peaks of 100 on 4 May and 150 on 9 May (KFN). Tundra Swan numbers built to 10,000 in and around Pinery P.P. 18 Mar (A&MR). The following day only 550 could be found; the rest had moved on with the help of a se. wind. On 21 Mar, 24 Tundra Swans flew low over Warton, *Grey-Bruce* (JJ), while at the e. end of s. Ontario a peak count of 72 for the spring migration were noted at Wolf I., *Frontenac*, 11 Mar (J&BM). A Gadwall was found near Ft. Frances 22 May (RS), an unusual spring record. A pair near Southampton, *Grey-Bruce*, 22 & 30 May (JJ) were in suitable habitat and possibly breeding, a rare occurrence for the area. Two Eurasian Wigeons visited Robinson L. near Sudbury 17 May (*vide* JL). To the south, one was found 18 Mar (m.ob.) at Long Point, *Haldimand-Norfolk*, and a male was present 3–7 May at the Nonquan S.L. (MB). A male Blue-winged Teal at Pt. Pelee 2 Mar (AW) was record-early. Thunder Bay birders were pleasantly surprised when a male **Cinnamon Teal** was found 27 May (AH, RF). It remained in the area for several days and at one point was joined by a female-plumaged teal. As many as 3 Harlequin Ducks were at Darlington P.P., *Durham*, throughout the period (m.ob.). A pair was also seen regularly off Stoney Creek Lakeshore, *Hamilton-Wentworth*. Long-tailed Duck numbers peaked 17 Apr, with 150,000 recorded at Prince Edward Pt. (RTS). To the west, 40,000 were counted off Stoney Creek Lakeshore 23 Mar (RC,GS). Killarney on Georgian Bay had 600 on 18 Apr (JN) and 330 on 16 May (CB). A male Barrow's Goldeneye found at Toronto's Leslie Street Spit 5 Mar (*vide* JI) was later seen in close company with a female Common Goldeneye.

RAPTORS THROUGH SHOREBIRDS

A **Swallow-tailed Kite** thrilled those lucky enough to see it at Pt. Pelee 6 & 10 May (DFa et al.) as it sailed the length of the park. A 2nd individual was seen over the Wilson Tract, *Haldimand-Norfolk*, 17 May (JH). Two **Mississippi Kites** appeared in Pt. Pelee, an ad. 6 May (PJ et al.), a record-early date, and a first-year bird 8–15 May

(DF, m.ob.). Another was seen over Port Royal, *Haldimand-Norfolk*, 15 May (MC, DS). Bald Eagles continue to do well in nw. Ontario. An aerial survey of the Black Sturgeon area near Thunder Bay 6 & 7 Mar recorded 21 adults and all nests occupied (RSw). Red-shouldered Hawks also appear to be doing well in the Kingston area, where surveys recorded 32 birds 15 Apr and 23 on 30 Apr (JHE, RDW). To the north, 7 were noted on a survey route 4 May near Killbear P.P. and one was found at Burwash near Sudbury 27 Apr (Jni). A Swainson's Hawk flew over Beamer C.A. 27 Apr (N.P.H.); the same area recorded a total of 11 Golden Eagles during March and April. Peregrine Falcons returned to most of their s. Ontario urban nesting sites. An early migrant was seen 28 Mar (JMH) near W. Woodstock, *Oxford*. To the north a large female was noted in a cutover near Atikokan, *Rainy River*, 20 May (DHE).

Spruce Grouse have become quite rare in the North Bay, *Nipissing*, area; thus, a pair found near S. River 5 May (RT) was significant. A Northern Bobwhite was found 24 Apr (DD) in Windham Township, *Haldimand-Norfolk*. Yellow Rails were found at Prince Edward Pt. 21 May (KFN) and one was flushed in the Crown Marsh at the base of Long Point 17 May (DT, LB). The season's only King Rail was at Hillman Marsh near Pt. Pelee 16 May (JRC et al.). Sandhill Cranes continue to increase in s. Ontario. Pt. Pelee had several records during the period; a pair at Rondeau P.P. was presumed nesting. Several pairs also returned to nest in the Peterborough area (*vide* DS) and single migrants were noted 1 Apr at Komoka, *Middlesex* (PRe), and at Algonquin P.P. 15 Apr (RT).

Ten nicely plumaged American Avocets visited Hillman Marsh 14 May (AJ et al.). Others were at Rondeau P.P. 22 May (SC, KJB) and Selkirk P.P., *Haldimand-Norfolk*, 7 May (SW). Willets passed through Pt. Pelee in good numbers, with a maximum of 9 at Wheatley Harbour 12 May (WGL et al.). To the east one was on Amherst I., *Addington*, 16 May (MV, GFV) and one visited Mission I. at Thunder Bay 17 May (NE). A Spotted Sandpiper arrived a record four days early at Pittock L., *Oxford*, 11 Apr (JMH). Two Hudsonian Godwits were at Hillman Marsh 13–16 May (JB et al.) and may have moved to Kingsville, *Essex*, 18 May (RZD). Thunder Bay had one 26 May (GH, DM). An impressive and unusual flock of 25 Marbled Godwits flew over Mission I. at Thunder Bay 21 May (BM, PR). Western Sandpipers are rare spring visitors to the

SA Low water levels in the Great Lakes created excellent shore-bird habitat and provided birders with a great opportunity to see and study large concentrations of shorebirds. The following records are from the Pt. Pelee area and are an example of the high numbers of birds seen: 675 Black-bellied Plovers 13 May (and 620 on 15 May); 49 Semipalmated Plovers 7 May; 96 Lesser Yellowlegs 7 May; 9 Solitary Sandpipers 7 May; 35 Red Knots 16 May; 260 Least Sandpipers 7 May; 6 White-rumped Sandpipers 16 May; 1200 Dunlins 20 May; 65 Pectoral Sandpipers 7 May; and 300 Short-billed Dowitchers 15 May (JI *vide* AW).

province. One 20 May on Amherst I. (VPM) provided only the 3rd spring record for the Kingston area; another was at Hillman Marsh 29 Apr (GTH). Stilt Sandpipers, also rare in spring, appeared individually at Hillman Marsh 13 May (AGC) and 27 May at the Long Point causeway (DT). Ruffs appeared in two locations: a female 5–6 May at the Blenheim S.L., *Chatham-Kent* (KJB et al.), and a male 3 May at the Nonquan S.L. (SD). On 18 May birders visiting the Powasson S.L., *Parry Sound*, found a female Wilson's Phalarope. A female Red-necked Phalarope was at the same site 20 May (RT); both species are unusual for the area. Another female Red-necked was at the Tavistock S.L., *Oxford*, 16–19 May (JMH).

GULLS THROUGH CROWS

Toronto's amazing **Heermann's Gull** was present throughout the period. It apparently wandered to Hamilton 6 Mar (RZD) and to Bronte Harbour 16 Apr (MJ). Several Laughing Gulls reached s. Ontario in the latter part of May. An adult was at the tip of Pt. Pelee 21 May (BCh) and another or the same was at Wheatley Harbour 26 May (DM). Erieau, *Kent*, had one 19–20 May (SC et al.) and a sub-adult was at Turkey Point, *Haldimand-Norfolk*, 25–26 May (RR, SW). Manitoulin I. hosted its 3rd Franklin's Gull, one at the Gore Bay S.L. 29–30 Apr (CB, TL). Pt. Pelee had an ad. 11–17 May (RT), with another ad. at nearby Hillman Marsh 26–27 May (AHR). Two imm. Little Gulls were at Turkey Point 26 May 26 (RR, IR), one was at Amherst I. 17 Apr (RKE, FKE), and 2 adults and 2 first-alternate birds were at Rondeau P.P. throughout May (m.ob.). The season's only Black-headed Gull was at Hillman Marsh 21 May (KAM). On 12 May, 25 Bonaparte's Gulls were found near Atikokan (DRE), where they are rare spring migrants.

A first-alternate Iceland Gull spent the period at Rondeau P.P. and another was at Cobourg at the rather late date of 25 May (CEG). Lesser Black-backed Gulls were widespread, with 2 at the Azilda Landfill 29–30 Apr, a first record for the Sudbury area (BB, JL), and another at Gore Bay 16 Apr, only the second record for Manitoulin I. (CB, TL et al.). An ad. and a first-alternate imm. were at Rondeau P.P. throughout the period (m.obs.). Cobourg had 2 on 2 Mar, a single 10 Apr, with another 6 Apr at Presqu'île P.P. (CEG). Sudbury had a late Glaucous Gull at the Azilda Landfill 5 May (RM). Common Terns returned early to Toronto's Leslie Street Spit, where 22 appeared 15 Apr (GC). A remarkable 5500 were counted on the tip of Pt. Pelee 15 May 15 (AW et al.) Arctic Terns were noted at Amherst I., with 2 on 27 May (JHE et al.) and another at the La Salle Marina in Hamilton Harbour 27–28 May (KAM).

Northern Hawk Owls appeared in the Thunder Bay area, with singles noted 11 Mar (PR, BM) and 7 Apr (AH). Great Gray Owls appeared suddenly across the nw. part of the province after a general absence through the winter. Birds were noted at Rainy River, Fort Frances, Atikokan, Sioux Lookout, Thunder Bay, and Nipigon during the period, indicating a significant movement. Single Chuck-wills-widows called briefly at Wheatley P.P. 11 May (RT et al.) and 14 May at Pt. Pelee (MT et al.). Whip-poor-wills seem to have declined significantly in the central part of the province. Calling birds at Eau Claire, Nipissing (RT), and at Parry Sound 19 Apr (JN) were reported as welcome returnees. One of the best birds of the season was a **Lewis's Woodpecker** that visited a Hilliardton, *Timiskaming*, feeder 17–19 May (*vide* BM). The TCBO had the only Western Kingbird of the season, on 18 May. A well-documented **Cave Swallow** 18–19 May at Pittock Lake (JMH et al.) was definitely one of the season's highlights. The report has been sent to the OBRC and is of interest relative to the species' invasion last fall. **Fish Crows** again reached Ontario, with one at Rondeau P.P. 15 & 20 May (SC, JTB et al.) and another at the tip of Pt. Pelee 16 May (MM et al.). The southward expansion of Common Raven continued, with birds apparently breeding in the Emily Forest Tract, *Peterborough*, 5 Apr (DS, BL) and along the Indian River Gorge near Warsaw (GD).

THRUSHES THROUGH FINCHES

A Mountain Bluebird wintering at Fisher's Glen was last seen 27 Mar (HMc). Another

was found near Ft. Frances 16 Apr (RS). The Varied Thrush wintering at Thunder Bay was still present 21 Mar (JA). Northern Mockingbirds continued to expand into the Toronto area, taking advantage of habitat along railway and hydro rights-of-way. Highlighting the many reports were 7 birds, 2 singing, 23 Apr at Colonel Samuel Smith Park (SH). Wintering Bohemian Waxwings had left s. Ontario by mid-April. A lingering flock of 50 was noted in Peterborough 25 Apr (HD). A male **Townsend's Warbler** at Thickson's Woods, *Durham*, 20–23 Apr thrilled the many observers who braved cool and rainy weather to see it. Single Yellow-throated Warblers were at Pt. Pelee 14 Apr (FJU) and 22 May (GB). A Prothonotary Warbler, rare for the Port Hope area, was found 13 May (SM, AT). Worm-eating Warblers were found at Prince Edward Pt. 18 May (RTS) and Rondeau P.P. 20 May (JTB), while a reliable singing one was near St. Williams, *Haldimand-Norfolk*, 17–30 May (CF).

Lark Sparrows appeared across n. Ontario: 2 at a Dryden feeder 2 May (Bd, CE), one at Mountain Chutes Camp, *Timiskaming*, 7 May (BK), and one at TCBO 13 May. A pair of Northern Cardinals appeared to be getting ready to breed in Atikokan in mid-May, likely holdovers from the incursion into nw. Ontario in late fall 1999. Both birds suddenly disappeared (DHE). And imagine glancing out at your feeder and seeing a bird of almost unbelievable colouring. This is what happened in Dryden, *Kenora*, where a male **Painted Bunting** appeared 10 May; it stayed only one day (B&DB). A Yellow-headed Blackbird, rare in ne. Ontario, was at New Liskeard, *Timiskaming*, 18 May (*vide* BM). Common Redpolls lingered in n. Ontario well into April. Many observers noted sick birds at feeders and a form of salmonella was suspected (DHE).

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