

Prairie Provinces



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Sparse June precipitation was not enough to alleviate drought conditions in the western half of the region. Many water bodies in southeastern Alberta and southwestern Saskatchewan remained dry or nearly so. In contrast, southern Manitoba and extreme southeastern Saskatchewan received copious amounts of rain, creating numerous temporary ponds but also flooding out potential nest sites. Manitoba enjoyed a rush of rarities in the first half of June, but Regionwide hot weather—plus abundant mosquitoes in the southeast—kept birding activity to a minimum in July.

Abbreviations: C.N.S.C. (Churchill Northern Studies Centre, groups I and II); N.L.A. (North shore of L. Athabasca, AB); Outpost (Outpost Wetlands Natural Area, AB); S.R.V. (Sheep River Valley, AB).

HERONS THROUGH RAPTORS

For the 6th consecutive summer, a Great Egret returned to Innisfail, AB (*fide* RH), and another

was near Calgary, AB 27 May–7 Jun (DK, BH). A Snowy Egret was a rare visitor at Frank L., AB 13 Jun (PR). Three **Little Blue Herons** visited Manitoba, boosting the provincial total of about a dozen previous reports. An imm. was seen near Woodlands 5 Jun (FB), an ad. was at Whitewater L., MB 9–10 Jun (IW, DD et al.), and astoundingly an ad. visited Churchill 4–18+ Jun (BC, m. ob.). At one point, the latter bird wandered from its favorite fishing spot at Twin Lakes into town, where it was relentlessly harassed by Arctic Terns. Whitewater L. produced a Tricolored Heron 2–3 Jun (RP, LV et al.). White-faced Ibis were restricted to a few locations, with a high count of 20 at Frank L. 22 Jul (DC, DP).

Three Brant at Churchill 14 Jun were rare spring migrants (LdM, C.N.S.C. II), while a swan there in mid-June was generally believed to be a Trumpeter (m. ob.). A pair of Trumpeter Swans with 3 young was noted at Outpost 27 Jun (D&TD). A Eurasian Wigeon at Rattlesnake Res., Medicine Hat, AB 8 Jun was late (EML, RS). A King Eider 10 Jun (PT, C.N.S.C. I) and an albino White-winged Scoter through much of Jun (BC, m. ob.) were good finds at Churchill.

Ospreys enjoyed good nesting success in Saskatchewan: 22 young were banded in eight accessible nests out of 10 found n. of North Battleford alone (SH et al.). A Swainson's Hawk at Banff N.P., AB 9 Jul was uncommon for the mountains (JR). Swainson's and Ferruginous Hawks had poor productivity in

community pastures in southwestern Saskatchewan, due to low Richardson's Ground Squirrel numbers. Ironically, they fared better in (partial) cropland with more ground squirrels. A Rough-legged Hawk summered at Oak Hammock Marsh, MB (m. ob.) A Golden Eagle at Churchill 5 & 10 Jun was rare (PT, PG, C.N.S.C. I). New raptor-banding records were set along the South Saskatchewan R. in Saskatchewan: 20 young Golden Eagles from 11 nests and 51 Prairie Falcons from 12 nests (SH et al.).

RAILS THROUGH WOODPECKERS

A Yellow Rail at Outpost 27 Jun was s. of its usual range (D&TD). A Whooping Crane lingered near Andrew, AB 29 May–18 Jun (DBv, *fide* RH) A Black-necked Stilt was at Channel L., SK 5 Jun (AS); others were at Khedive L. (DP), where two pairs with 4 fully-fledged young 7 Aug provided Saskatchewan's 2nd known successful nesting (MB, CBj, JW). Two American Avocets at Churchill 3 Jun were accidental (BC), while 252 Greater Yellowlegs provided a high count there 20 Jul (BC). Flocks of Marbled Godwits, including 250 and 100 near Brooks, AB 21 Jun (DK), 100+ at Reed L., SK 8 Jul (RKR), and 400 at Brooks 19 Jul (DK), suggested drought-related breeding failure. Single Ruddy Turnstones at Langdon 2 Jun (TK) and at Frank L. 28 Jul (D&LF), a Red Knot at Frank L. 28 Jul (D&LF), and a Western Sandpiper at Calgary 30 Jul (TK) were all Alberta rarities. A Purple Sandpiper at Churchill 7 Jun was an accidental spring migrant (C&ET, RK et al.); a 14 Jun sighting there lacked details. Manitoba's 5th **Curlew Sandpiper**, likely an ad. female, obligingly lingered at Whitewater L. 2–7 Jun (RP, LV, m. ob., ph.). Wet conditions in s. Manitoba favored Common Snipe, 52 of which were tallied at 36 stops on the Camper, MB Breeding Bird Survey 20 Jun (KG).

A Parasitic Jaeger at N.L.A. 11 Jun was rare for summer (RT), while a Franklin's Gull at Churchill 9–10 Jun was accidental (JN, EI, PT et al.). Twenty-five hundred Franklin's Gulls, hawking insects while moving w. at S.R.V. 20 Jun, were likely displaced by drought (WS). Best of the Churchill gulls included up to 8 Little Gulls in mid-June (BC, m. ob.), single Mew Gulls 17 Jun (m. ob.) & 8 Jul (BC), a "Nelson's" Gull 8–9 Jun (PT, RK et al.), a Great Black-backed Gull 6 Jul (PS), and a maximum of 3 Ross's Gulls 31 Jul (MBr et al.). Also of note for Alberta were 2 Mew Gulls at N.L.A. 11 Jun (WN, RT, DV) and 3 at the confluence of the Slave and La Butte Rivers 16 Jun (RT), a Sabine's Gull at Ft. Chipewyan 10 Jun (RT), and 150 pairs of Caspian Terns—the province's largest colony—at Egg Island, L. Athabasca 11 Jun (WN, RT, DV).

Manitoba's 2nd **White-winged Dove** was a well-described one-day visitor to a Stonewall yard (D&LO, K&BG). A Mourning Dove at Ft. Chipewyan 9–10 Jun was n. of its known range (RT, DV). A Black-billed Cuckoo at Chain Lakes P.P., AB 19 Jun was rare (TK); the only Saskatchewan record was at Tyvan 30 Jul (BL), but above-average numbers were present in extreme se. Manitoba (PT). Manitoba had only one known pair of Burrowing Owls, near Oak L (KDS, m. ob.). Rare in Alberta's mountains was a Long-eared Owl at Canmore 23 Jun (KB). Saskatchewan observers shared Manitobans' concern about the precipitous decline of Common Nighthawks (RKr et al.). A Whip-poor-will at Regina, SK 7 Jun was the city's first (CP, RKr et al.). A Ruby-throated Hummingbird nest at Earl Grey, SK 8 Jun was one of few ever found in the area (S&RE, CB, RKr). Lone Rufous Hummingbirds wandered e to near Taber, AB 23 Jul (M&RB) and Medicine Hat 27 Jul (DB). A female **Red-bellied Woodpecker** at Earl Grey 6–7 Jun was Saskatchewan's 7th and first since 1991 (CB). For the 2nd summer in a row, a pair of Pileated Woodpeckers summered well s. of the usual range at Balgonie, SK (RL).

PASSERINES

There were four Olive-sided Flycatcher reports at Churchill 7–13 Jun (m. ob.). A Yellow-bellied Flycatcher at S.R.V. 13 Jun was rare (WS). Three Eastern Kingbird sightings at Churchill 3–6 Jun possibly involved the same bird (DBg, C N.S.C. I, BC, m. ob.). A Loggerhead Shrike near Camper 20 Jun was unexpected so far n. (KG). Singing male Cassin's and Blue-headed Vireos held territories less than one mi apart in Calgary in late Jun (ASl). Although still abundant along the U.S. border, there was concern about the continued decline of Horned Larks elsewhere in s. Saskatchewan (RKr). An undocumented Rock Wren at Churchill 4 Jul represented the 3rd local report in five years (RJ et al.). Poor Mountain Bluebird productivity resulted in the lowest number of young banded in Saskatchewan since 1983 (SH et al.). A Wood Thrush was rare near Winnipeg 12 Jun (DBy), as was a Varied Thrush near Lac la Biche, AB 2–3 Jun (FM, RT). Northern Mockingbirds were at Churchill 5 Jun (m. ob.), at Chaplin, SK for most of the period (JB et al.), and near Saskatoon, SK 7–10 Jun (D&CM, *vide* SH).

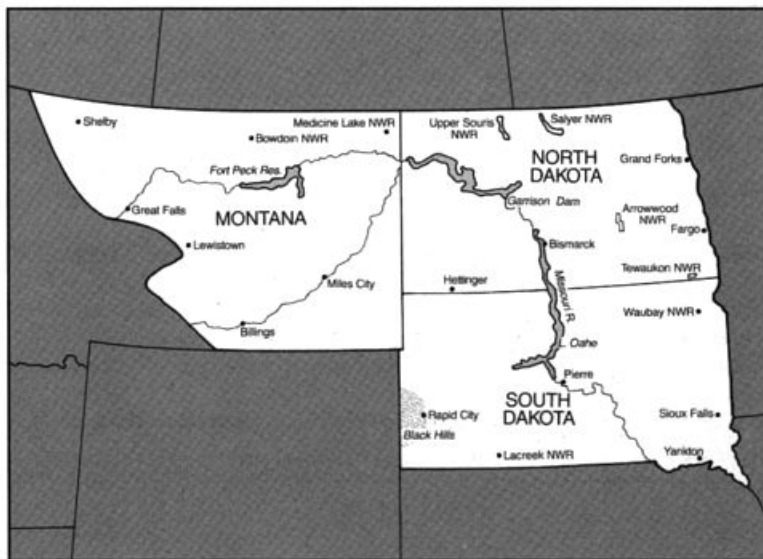
Single Cape May Warblers at S.R.V. 6 & 27 Jun were the first observed there in summer (WS). A Black-throated Green Warbler at Churchill 8 Jun was locally very rare (JC et al.). A Black-and-white Warbler at S.R.V. 6 Jun was new for the valley (WS). Yellow-breasted Chat

numbers were higher than usual near Medicine Hat, AB (PH). Unidentified tanagers, thought not to be Western, were noted near Claresholm, AB 19 Jun and at Calgary 28 Jun (TK). Lark Bunting numbers were low, even in the arid southwest of Saskatchewan (RKr, CP, m. ob.). The reported scarcity of Le Conte's Sparrows across the Region contrasted with higher-than-usual numbers of Nelson's Sharp-tailed Sparrows. The latter species appears to have extended its range in s. Alberta in recent years (MH). Another species in well-above-average numbers at Medicine Hat was the Lazuli Bunting (PH). A Common Grackle was a rare visitor to Churchill 12 Jun (C.N.S.C. II). Locally rare in summer was a Cassin's Finch at S.R.V. 16 Jul (WS, RW).

Observers (provincial compilers in boldface) M. Bailey, D. Baresco, K. Barker, D. Barry (DBy), C. Beckel, M. & R. Bennett, J. Bilyk, C Bjorklund (CBj), F. Blouin, D. Boutang (DBg), D. Bovel (DBv), M. Bruscia (MBr), D Campbell, B. Chartier, J. Coons, D. Danyluk, L de March, K. De Smet, D. & T. Dolman, S. & R Ewart, D. & L. Flynn, B. Gardner, K. Gardner, P Grief, **M. Harrison**, B. Holland, P. Horch, R Hoscheit, S. Houston, E. Ilvonen, R. Joss, D Knapik, R. Koes, T. Korolyk, **R. Kreba** (RKr), R Long, B. Luterbach, E. Mah-Lim, D. & C. Miller, F. Montaine, W. Nordstrom, J. Normaja, D. & L. Oakford, R. Parsons, D. Petryk, C. Pollock, J Rogers, P. Roxburgh, P. Scott, A. Slater (ASl), A Smith, W. Smith, R. Storms, P. Taylor, R Thomas, C. & E. Turner, L. Veelma, D. Vujnovic, I. Ward, R. Wershler, J. Whittell.



Northern Great Plains



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As has become the pattern in recent years, it was a fairly wet season. July was particularly wet, with above-average precipitation in most areas. However, with the preceding five months very dry, many areas were still below

average for the year. Water levels in the eastern Dakotas remain very high. A severe storm hit the Fort Peck, Montana area 24 July, and many injured birds were noted.

Among the numerous significant breeding records noted this season were first nestings for Golden-winged Warbler and Henslow's Sparrow in South Dakota, Black-throated Gray Warbler in Montana, and Henslow's Sparrow in North Dakota.