

Central Southern



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Migration was generally considered poor to unremarkable, but the Parkers termed it good in Arkansas. A blocking ridge of high pressure persisted from mid-April until the second week of May and kept coastal areas hot and dry with south winds. Doves and Scissor-tailed Flycatchers continued their explosive spread. There were several interesting reports of pelagic species from shore. But certainly the birds of the season were the Clark's Nutcracker and White-winged Crossbill, both firsts for Alabama. As usual, we received more reports than we could print individually, and we thank the observers whose reports could not be included specifically here.

Abbreviations: C.F.H. (Craig Fish Hatchery, AR); F.W.B.S.F. (Ft. Walton Beach Spray Fields, FL); L.S.U.M.N.S. (Louisiana State University Museum of Natural Science).

LOONS THROUGH HAWKS

There was one report each of Red-throated and Pacific Loon, both casual to rare in the Region. The former was at Gulf Shores, AL 11 Apr (LFG,

SER, GRB, SWM) and the latter in *Escambia*, FL 18 May (LD, RAD). Six Pied-billed Grebe nests on a pond in *Lauderdale*, AL 4 May (PDK) was a good number for a rare, irregular breeder in the area. A pelagic survey by the L.S.U.M.N.S. in Louisiana waters 29 May (CCS, SWC, DLD et al.) produced the following amazing results: one Audubon's and 2 Cory's Shearwaters, 5 Leach's, 16 Band-rumped, and 67 Wilson's Storm-Petrels. The identification of all three species of storm-petrel was confirmed by specimens (*L.S.U.M.N.S.). Pelagic species are seldom seen from shore in the Region, except in association with tropical storms. This season, there were several such records, including a Cory's Shearwater in *Cameron*, LA 27 Apr (DLD, SWC), a **Sooty Shearwater** from Ft. Pickens, FL 9 Apr (p. a. LD, LDa), and an unidentified storm-petrel in *Cameron*, LA 27 Apr (DP, PC). Another Band-rumped Storm-Petrel landed on a boat 40 km s. of Pensacola Pass, FL 28 May (*vide* RAD). On 8 Apr, a Masked Booby was seen from shore at Destin, FL (JNC).

Brown Pelicans, unusual away from the coast, were reported at inland locations in Alabama, Arkansas, Louisiana, and Mississippi. The threatened American Bittern was reported from all states of the Region except Florida, with an astonishing 10 at Bald Knob N.W.R., AR 4 May (KN, LN). Jeff Wilson reports a dramatic decline, perhaps as much as 80%, in numbers of Little Blue Herons and Snowy Egrets in w. Tennessee over the last two years, whereas 282 was a good number for Little Blues at Noxubee N.W.R., MS 25 Mar (SJD). Tricolored Herons were widely reported inland, especially from

Arkansas, with four reports totaling 6 individuals. A white-morph Reddish Egret was reported from Little Dauphin I., AL 19-21 Apr (JD, GDJ, DGJ). Glossy Ibis were widely reported from Arkansas and from sw. Louisiana, as this species continues to expand westward and northward. White-faced Ibis was also widely reported inland. Ross's Goose was reported farther e than usual, with one in *Baldwin*, AL 3 Mar (KKA, BCG, HEH), and one in *Montgomery*, AL 23 Apr (LFG). An imm. Tundra Swan, found during the winter season, stayed at Noxubee N.W.R., MS until 11 Mar (R&LW, TS, m. ob.) Mississippi had the only Long-tailed Ducks, with 2 females reported from *Harrison*, MS 2 Mar (SW) and 2 males and a female in *Oktibbeha* 18 Mar (TS, MS, SJD).

Swainson's Hawks were widely reported from sw. Louisiana 19 Apr-12 May. There were also several reports from Arkansas, including 5 in *Little River* 20-28 Apr (CM, m. ob.). There was one report of Rough-legged Hawk from *Miller*, AR 1 & 3 Mar (CM, MD). The only Golden Eagle reported was in *George*, MS 4 Mar (SW) Crested Caracaras continued to be reported from *Calcasieu*, LA.

SHOREBIRDS

A pair of Snowy Plovers with a chick was reported at Fort Morgan 24 May (ECS) for a rare breeding record from the Alabama mainland. Only one Piping Plover was reported from the Region, from *Lafourche*, LA 10 Mar (PAW, RDP, DPM). A pair of Black-necked Stilts was out of place near Texarkana, AR 11 & 25-27 May (CM, MD), providing the first record for sw. Arkansas since 1960. Greater Yellowlegs numbers peaked at 96 on 1 Mar at Wheeler N.W.R., AL (DPG) and at 317 on 7 Apr in *Dyer*, TN (JRW). Lesser Yellowlegs peaked at 469 and Solitary Sandpipers at 52 on 27 Apr at Ensley Bottoms, *Shelby*, TN (JRW). Willets were reported inland in Alabama, Arkansas, Louisiana, and Mississippi. Good numbers of Whimbrels showed up in the rice fields this spring, with a peak of > 250 seen in *Vermilion*, LA 12 May (BMM, DPM). In the same area, > 50 Hudsonian Godwits were seen 11 & 12 May (JPK, JK, BMM, DPM). A count of 12 Ruddy Turnstones, rare inland, was excellent for Arkansas on 17 May at C.F.H. (MM, JN, DC) The same number was tallied 18 May (JRW) in *Shelby* and *Dyer*, TN. Sanderlings were also widely reported inland. A count of >10,000 Semipalmated Sandpipers in *Acadia*, LA 30 Apr (JPK, RJB) must have been an awesome sight. On 5 May at C.F.H., a count of 16 Baird's Sandpipers was a large number for the area (JN, MM). Baird's were also reported from Alabama and Louisiana. Pectoral Sandpipers also made a



Alabama added another new species to its state list this spring when this White-winged Crossbill was discovered in Lauderdale County on 26 April 2002 (here 7 May). Photograph by Raelene H. Cutten.

good showing, with 263 on 26 Apr from C.H.F. (MM, DC) providing the highest count ever from nw. Arkansas and 1329 on 7 Apr providing an outstanding total from Ensley Bottoms, TN (JRW). Dunlin numbers peaked at 1700 on 4 May in *Acadia* and *Vermilion*, LA (JPK, MaG). A very cooperative **Curlew Sandpiper** was found on 28 Apr in *Acadia*, LA (CW, JW, DFL). The bird was seen by many at the same location through 3 May. The same or a different bird was spotted in *Vermilion*, LA about 16 km away on 6 May (ph. PC, DP, m. ob.) and was seen through 11 May at that location. Stilt Sandpipers numbering 1600 in *Acadia* and *Vermilion*, LA 2 May provided good company for the Curlew Sandpiper. Providing only the 3rd spring record for nw. Arkansas were 2 Buff-breasted Sandpipers at C.F.H. 17 May (JN, DC, MM). These were preceded by a good count of 60 on 11 May in *Vermilion*, LA (JPK, JK). A **Ruff** in *Lowndes*, AL 17 Mar (LFG, P&Rjo) provided the 5th state record. Short-billed Dowitcher numbers peaked at 2500 on 2 May in *Acadia* and *Vermilion*, LA (JPK, JG), and Long-billeds peaked at 4830 in *Acadia* 27 May (JPK, KF). Two Red-necked Phalaropes showed up in Arkansas on 19 May, a male near Texarkana (CM) and a female in *White* (KN, LN).

JAEGERS THROUGH TERNS

Another treat from the 29 May pelagic trip was a **Long-tailed Jaeger** (*L.S.U.M.N.S.), and one in second-alternate plumage was seen in *Cameron*, LA 18 May (SWC, DLD). Laughing Gulls were seen inland in Alabama, Arkansas, Mississippi, and Tennessee. Aside from one winter holdover in *Yell*, AR 6 Mar (KN, LN), the earliest reported was 23 Mar at Reelfoot L., TN

(MG, JRW). A California Gull was reported from *Cameron*, LA 27 Apr (DLD, SWC, ph. DPM). Three **Herring Gulls** with yellow legs were seen in *Cameron* 25 & 26 Apr (BMM, CCS). One was collected (*L.S.U.M.N.S.) and determined to be a probable female in fourth-alternate plumage and presumably a "pure" *smithsonianus* (DLD, pers. comm.). A Thayer's Gull in second-basic plumage turned up at Rutherford Beach 19 May (SWC, DLD), and a Lesser Black-backed Gull was at Paris Landing, TN 17 Mar (JRW, MG, MT). Also on the 29 May pelagic trip was one Bridled Tern (*L.S.U.M.N.S.). Sooty Terns, rarely seen onshore, put in two appearances in *Mobile*, AL, with one 19 May and 3 on 27 May (HEH, KKe).

DOVES THROUGH HUMMINGBIRDS

Eurasian Collared-Doves received little comment from most of the Region, but in Arkansas they were reported from *Cleburne*, *Howard*, *Little River*, and *White*. White-winged Doves were widely reported inland in Mississippi, Arkansas, and n. Louisiana. An Inca Dove in *DeSoto* 28 May (MF) provided the first nesting record for nw. Louisiana. Monk Parakeets are common in the New Orleans area but have been little studied. This season we received several reports documenting their presence and nesting, including an article from the *Times-Picayune* newspaper. A Black-billed Cuckoo in *Washington*, AR 20 Apr (MM, JN) was early, while another in *Stone*, AR 26 May (KN, LN) was considered a possible breeder. An ad. Chuck-will's-widow with two nestlings in *Clark*, AR 30 May (MP) was considered remarkable. The extraordinary hummingbird influx of winter persisted into spring. A Buff-bellied at Grand Isle, LA stayed through 14 Apr, a rather late date (DPM, RDP, BMM). A Black-chinned in *Lafourche* 3 May (LR, NLN) was Louisiana's latest ever. A Calliope was at Baton Rouge 1-5 Mar (DFL, CW), and another was banded by NLN 8 Mar in *Lafourche*. A Broad-tailed was banded in *Lafayette*, LA 6 Mar (DP). A Rufous remained in *Oktibbeha*, MS until 25 Mar (MC, TS, m. ob.), and another in *Lafourche* 19 Apr (LR, NLN) was very late. Four Allen's Hummingbirds were banded in s. Louisiana in Mar, including one on the 27th (NLN), which was Louisiana's latest ever.

WOODPECKERS THROUGH SHRIKES

A Yellow-bellied Sapsucker in *Oktibbeha*, MS 27 Apr (TS, MS) was the area's latest by 17 days. Joe Neal found 20 active nests of Red-cockaded Woodpeckers 20 May in Ouachita N.E., *Scott*, AR. Single Olive-sided Flycatchers were reported 7 May in *Colbert*, AL (TMH), 15 May in *Benton*, MS (VR, WRP et al.), and in *Shelby*, TN

21 May (JRW). JRW had single Yellow-bellied Flycatchers 18 May in *Shelby* and 19 May in *Dyer*, TN; one was in *Washington*, AR 29 May (JN). An Acadian Flycatcher in *Winston*, MS 16 Apr was early (SJD). Two Willow Flycatchers were calling 18 May at Grand Isle (p. a. CCS, BMM); this is a review list species in Louisiana. Two other Willows in *Carroll*, TN 27 May (MCT) were acting territorial. A Least Flycatcher in *Washington*, AR 21 Apr (MM) was quite early; 10 Leasts on 10 May and 23 the following day in *Washington*, AR (RHD) were exceptional counts. Another Least was considered a rare spring migrant in *Lawrence*, AL 5 May (DJS, JTG et al.) The Brown-crested Flycatcher wintering in *Plaquemines*, LA stayed until 16 Mar (PAW, CCS). The Great Kiskadee that has been near Venice for several years had built a new nest by 28 May (CCS, BMM, m. ob.). A Western Kingbird in *Lowndes*, MS 18 Apr (SJD) was unusual. Elsewhere, they continued to expand, with >six pairs nesting in *Sebastien*, AR (B&TB, SB), three nests in *Shelby*, TN (JRW), and several in nw. Louisiana. Gray Kingbirds are now rare in Alabama, so singles 29 Apr (DLK, SKi) and 11 May (JL, PB) in Baldwin were noteworthy. One in *Cameron*, LA 27 Apr (DFL, CW, JW) was even more so. Scissor-tailed Flycatchers were widely reported from Alabama, Mississippi, and Louisiana. In w. Tennessee, the influx was "unprecedented," with reports from six locations in four counties. Look for more information in the nesting season report. Two nesting pairs of Loggerhead Shrikes in *Benton*, AR (JN) were considered significant.

VIROES THROUGH WARBLERS

At Grand Isle, 120 White-eyed Vireos were found 5 Apr (CCS, PAW, BMM). A Yellow-throated Vireo was nesting in *Arkansas* on the early date of 12 Apr (MW), and a Blue-headed in *Washington*, AR 18 Apr (MM) was quite early. A Warbling Vireo in *Washington* 13 Apr was early, and there were several reports from parts of Alabama and Mississippi where Warblers are uncommon. Single Philadelphia Vireos were early in *Davidson*, TN 15 Apr (JKS) and in *Lowndes*, MS 28 Apr (SJD). One in *Madison*, AL 20 May was late (DRC, RC). The Sargents banded 2 Black-whiskered Vireos in Apr at Ft. Morgan. One at Grand Isle 18 May (PAW) was a good find.

Truly outstanding was a **Clark's Nutcracker** found in *Cleburne*, AL 19 Apr (G&RJ), which stayed until 5 May (ph., m. ob.). Tree Swallows were reported nesting in three counties in Alabama and two in Arkansas. Six Bank Swallows in *Marion*, AR 11 May (RW) were considered significant. Cave Swallow reports

Prairie Provinces



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The Region was hit by the coldest spring since comprehensive records began in the 1940s. March was by far the coldest month of the winter, and much-below-normal temperatures persisted until late May. Most of the Region remained dry; violent winds whipped up dust storms and fanned forest fires, including a massive 250,000-hectare burn near Fort McMurray, Alberta. Several snowstorms occurred in May, one on the 22nd dumping up to 40 cm of snow across southern Alberta and Saskatchewan. Ponds and lakes remained frozen well into May (June in the north), and vegetation leafed out weeks behind schedule. Major migrant waves passed through the south on 11–14 April and 11–12 May, while classic “fallout” conditions on 4–5 May and 21–23 May resulted in the best viewing opportunities in memory, as aquatic birds crowded the available open water and songbirds packed in around backyard feeders.

Abbreviations: I.B.S. (Inglewood Bird Sanctuary, Calgary, AB); W.M.L. (Wascana Marsh and Lake, Regina, SK).

LOONS THROUGH RAPTORS

As in the cold spring of 1996, Red-throated Loons turned up in numbers in s. Manitoba: 15+ on the Winnipeg R. near Seven Sisters Falls 5 May (PT), one at Winnipeg the same day (AE, m. ob.), and at least 4 more on the Winnipeg R. 13 May (PT). Common Loon concentrations

included 600+ on the Winnipeg R. 5 May (PT), 200 passing by there in 2 hours 11 May (PT, RZ), 33 on the Red R. in Winnipeg 5 May (RK), and several counts of about 50 in s. Alberta (MH, TK). Grebe concentrations included 150+ Pied-billed Grebes at W.M.L. 3 May (BL, TR), with another 75 at Blackstrap Res., SK 7 May (GW, HL), 600+ Horneds at W.M.L. 3 May (BL, TR), 220 more at Winnipeg 5 May (RK), 600+ Red-neckeds on the Winnipeg R. 4 May (PT et al.), and 420+ Eareds at W.M.L. 5 May (BL, TR). A Pied-billed Grebe at Churchill 5 May was out-of-range (BCh).

The only notable waders were a Little Blue Heron (about the 16th for Manitoba) at St. Ambrose 25 May into Jun (TB, GH, ACs, m. ob.), a Green Heron in Winnipeg 28 May (R&TU), and a White-faced Ibis near Regina 24 May (*vide* LH). A Turkey Vulture at Calgary, AB 26 May (AC, m. ob.) was locally rare.

Hawkwatchers at Windygates, MB counted 423+ Greater White-fronted and 100 Ross's Geese 13 Apr (RK et al.); a flock of 31 Ross's Geese at Whitewater L., MB 25 May was late (DF). Above-average concentrations were reported for many of the commoner ducks, especially in Saskatchewan. Twenty-three reports of Eurasian Wigeon in Alberta 24 Mar–8 May included three hybrids (*vide* MH). Single hybrid Blue-winged x Cinnamon Teals were found at Irricana, AB (AS) and at Thunder Cr. Marsh, SK (BL, JC), both 4 May. A male Garganey near Cymric, SK 23–27 May was seen by many (*vide* ASm). At least 50 Greater Scaup were at Brightwater Marsh, SK 21 Apr (*vide* RJ). One of 2 wintering Long-tailed Ducks at Calgary remained until 21 May (GY). Yet another hybrid was a probable Common Goldeneye x Bufflehead at Chestermere L., AB 28 Apr (TK, J&MM), likely the same bird that was seen nearby in spring 2000.

In Stonewall, MB, a Cooper's Hawk was seen pulling a Purple Martin from a martin house 9

May (KG). A remarkable 60 “Harlan's” Hawks, including 9 rare light-morph birds, passed Sheep River Valley 10 Apr (WS). The diurnal raptor migration in s. Manitoba was diffuse and protracted, without spectacular peaks.

GROUSE THROUGH WOODPECKERS

A Virginia Rail, locally rare, was noted at Medicine Hat, AB 26 May (PHo). The only Whooping Crane reports came from Reston, MB 12 Apr (*vide* DB) and Cedoux, SK 18 Apr (CB), with 2 birds in each case. Black-necked Stilts are now regular in s. Alberta, but duos in Saskatchewan at Thunder Creek Marsh 27 Apr (PJ, BL) and near Ogema 13 May were noteworthy (NH). Five early American Avocets were near Outlook, SK 13 Apr (WG), with singles the next day at Oak Hammock Marsh, MB (JS) and near Brandon, MB (MR, MY). Three hundred Whimbrels at Taber, AB 17 May represented one of the highest counts ever on the Canadian Prairies (LB); notable Manitoba counts included 31 near Pinawa 23 May (PT), 45+ at Whitewater L. 23–24 May (KD), and 20 at Oak Hammock Marsh 25 May (ACs, GH). Other high shorebird counts were 360+ Hudsonian Godwits 27 Apr at Thunder Creek Marsh, Reed L., and Chaplin L. (BL, PJ); 2000+ Sanderlings at Chaplin L. 17 May (DS); and 83+ Buff-breasted Sandpipers at Buck L. 28 May (BL). Lone Western Sandpipers were near Chestermere L. 7 May (TK) and at Frank L. 26 May (IH, m. ob.). Three Baird's Sandpipers near Manitou, MB 13 Apr were remarkably early (CA, RP, JS, LV).

An ad. Little Gull was enjoyed by many near Irricana 4–10 May (AS, m. ob.); there are fewer than 10 records in Alberta. Herring Gulls peaked at 610 at I.B.S. 20 Apr (TK). An Iceland Gull at W.M.L. 15–16 Apr (BL, m. ob.) was followed by 2 at I.B.S. 20 Apr (TK). Manitoba's first **Slaty-backed Gull**, videotaped 11 May at the PR. 227 dump ne. of Portage la Prairie (DF), is awaiting review. Five Glaucous-winged Gulls were spotted in Alberta between 27 Apr and 29 May (RW, BW, TK, TH, RKL), and a Great Black-backed Gull visited the PR. 227 dump 25 Apr (PT, RK). Four Arctic Terns at Calgary 19 May were rare (CW, RW).

The Band-tailed Pigeon seen in early winter at Brandon, MB was rediscovered there 21 Apr (AW). Eurasian Collared-Dove reports came from Mortlach, Val Marie, and Eastend, all in sw. Saskatchewan (MF, SL, HJ). Twelve active Great Gray Owl nests were found in se. Manitoba, compared with none last year (J&PD). A wintering Red-bellied Woodpecker in Regina remained until at least 8 May (TR, m. ob.), and 2 were seen in sw. Manitoba (JJ et al.).

PASSERINES

Saskatchewan's first **Cassin's Vireo** was banded