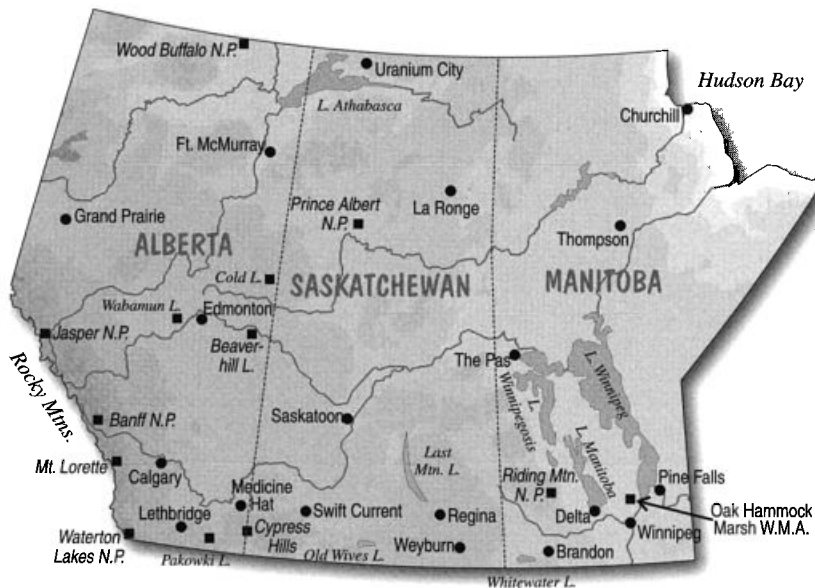


Prairie Provinces



Rudolf F. Koes

135 Rossmere Crescent
Winnipeg, Manitoba R2K 0G1
(rkoes@merlin.mb.ca)

Peter Taylor

P.O. Box 597
Pinawa, Manitoba R0E 1L0
(taylorp@granite.mb.ca)

After near-normal temperatures and precipitation in June, the Region became hot and dry in July. Drought conditions prevailed by the end of the period from southern Alberta to southwestern Manitoba, with many water bodies disappearing completely. Waders once again made the news, particularly in s. Manitoba, while surveys in the little-birded Caribou Mountains of extreme northern Alberta led to many discoveries.

Abbreviations: Oak Hammock (Oak Hammock Marsh W.M.A., MB); Whitewater L. (Whitewater Lake W.M.A., MB)

LOONS THROUGH RAPTORS

A Yellow-billed Loon, reported without details at Churchill, MB 10 Jun, was about the 8th for the province (AS). Also at Churchill, a Pied-billed Grebe 19 Jun

was rare (PB et al.). Some 120 Double-crested Cormorants at a small pond near Pierson, MB 5 Jun were far from the nearest colony (CC). At least 3 Least Bitterns were at Oak Hammock in early Jun (m. ob.). A Great Egret lingered at Calgary, AB 8–16 Jun (SM, DR, m. ob.). Whitewater L. hosted up to 3 Snowy Egrets through the summer (LV, WC, MW, m. ob.), and up to 2 were at Frank L., AB 27–31 Jul (TK, FW, m. ob.). Varying numbers of Cattle Egrets were noted at Whitewater L. through the period; breeding probably occurred, as birds were seen carrying nesting material (CC, LV, m. ob.). The Yellow-crowned Night-Heron first seen at Oak Hammock in May was last reported 4 Jun (m. ob.). Fourteen White-faced Ibis were at Frank L. 28 Jul (MMu, JP), and at least 2 summered at Whitewater L. (m. ob.). The species has become almost annual at these locations. Single Turkey Vultures at Calgary 8 Jul (AP, GY) and near Longview, AB 22 Jul (JM) were far west.

Aerial surveys revealed another three or four Trumpeter Swan nests at Riding Mountain N.P., MB after a single nest had been discovered there in late May; 20 ads. and 10 cygnets were counted in Aug (KK, WV). These represent the first known nestings in the province in nearly a century. The pair of Tundra Swans first reported in spring at Patience L., SK, far s. of the normal range, produced 2 young (GT et al.). Alberta had 2 Cinnamon x Blue-winged Teal hybrid males, 13 Jun near Dalroy and 20 Jun near Strathmore (TK). Astotin L. in Elk Island N.P., AB held 176 Buffleheads 13 Jun (AF, MMu, JP).

Good numbers of Swainson's Hawks in Saskatchewan included 96+ near Weyburn 3 Jul (CB, MB), but intensive pesticide spraying to kill grasshoppers was seen as a potential threat.

RAILS THROUGH WOODPECKERS

Eighteen Yellow Rails were tallied along a 12-km route in the Qu'Appelle Valley near Craven, SK 27 Jun (BL), and Virginia Rails were thought to be breeding at

SA Four birders—Wayne Nordstrom, Richard Thomas, Drajs Vujnovic, and Jul Wojnowski—conducted biological inventory fieldwork at Caribou Mts. Wildland Provincial Park in n. Alberta between 9 and 18 Jun. Among their most interesting sightings were **Red-throated Loons**, with a maximum of 7 on Wentzel L. 9 Jun and a pair with a chick near Pitchimi L. in a follow-up survey 13 Jul (L. Allen, D. Johnson, K. Vujnovic, C. Weitzel). A Pacific Loon was found 11 Jun on Wentzel L., where breeding has been suspected in the past.

First records for the Caribou Mts. included a Pied-billed Grebe 10 Jun and 9 Eared Grebes 9 Jun, all on Wentzel L., 3 Barrow's Goldeneyes at Margaret L. 15 Jun, and 2 American Coots at Wentzel L. 9–10 Jun. Also at Wentzel L. 9 Jun was a Long-eared Owl. Passerine firsts for the Caribou Mts. were an American Crow 10 Jun, 2 Philadelphia Vireos 17 Jun, a surprising Northern Mockingbird 10 Jun, and 2 Ovenbirds 17 Jun.

Also of interest were 5 Greater Scaup on Wentzel L. throughout the inventory period, a Long-tailed Duck on Wentzel L. 9 Jun, 11 Surf Scoters on Pitchimi L. 14 Jun, up to 7 Mew Gulls on various lakes, and an Arctic Tern at Rocky Islands L. 14 Jun. A pair of Northern Hawk Owls fed 2 young at Wentzel L. 10 Jun. At least 10 Rusty Blackbirds, some carrying food, were noted at Rocky Islands L. 14 Jun.

Banff N.P., AB (JP). There were numerous Black-necked Stilt reports in Alberta, while Saskatchewan had up to 21 birds, and one was at Whitewater L. in mid-Jun (*vide* GH). Shorebird migration in Manitoba was strong in Jul: 1400 Lesser Yellowlegs were near Darlingford and 400+ Stilt Sandpipers were near Bois-sevain 19 Jul (G&SG). Two Whimbrels at Saskatchewan Landing P.P., SK 21–22 Jun (M, R&LD) and 2 Buff-breasted Sandpipers near Trossachs, SK 16 Jun (V&DT) were likely late northbound migrants.

Three fly-by Parasitic Jaegers at Broomhill, MB 4 Jun—in the far sw. corner of the province near Melita—were completely unexpected (GH, AS), as was a **Laughing Gull** at Whitewater L. 13 Jul (GH, AC). Up to 14 Little Gulls were at Churchill (BC), while a California Gull there 20 Jun was rare (BD). Other notable larids included an Iceland Gull at Ft. McMurray, AB 9–10 Jun (TK), a Glaucous Gull at Blackstrap Res., SK 30 Jun (*vide* SS), a presumed Herring Gull x Glaucous Gull hybrid at Ft. McMurray 10 Jun (TK), and an amazing 93 Sabine's Gulls at Chestermere L., AB 1 Jun, with another at nearby Shepard the same day (TK). A **Black-legged Kittiwake** at Churchill 14–16 Jun was about Manitoba's 7th (BC, m. ob.). An Arctic Tern was a good find at St. Ambrose P.P., MB 3 Jun (GH, AS).

A Eurasian Collared-Dove near Blackstrap Res. 30 Jun–8 Jul was at a new location (*vide* SS). Locally rare were 3 Chimney Swifts at Estevan, SK 29 Jun (G&SW), a Lewis's Woodpecker near Longview (J&MM), and a Hairy Woodpecker at Churchill 11–23 Jun (RK, PB et al.).

PASSERINES

A Yellow-bellied Flycatcher at Banff N.P. 12 Jul was rare (KB), as was an Eastern Kingbird at Churchill 15 Jun (m. ob.).

A pair of White-breasted Nuthatches, with 4 recently fledged young, provided Regina, SK with its first confirmed breeding record 10 Jun (JC). Churchill had a Brown Creeper 23 Jun (PB et al.). Eastern Bluebird numbers burgeoned at the w. edge of their range in

Saskatchewan, with 10+ nesting along the Souris R., up to 8 in the Qu'Appelle Valley, and 5 in the Good Spirit L. area (BL, B&JA). Mountain Bluebirds also had a stellar year in Saskatchewan, as 500+



Aerial surveys during the summer of 2003 in Riding Mountain National Park, Manitoba revealed several breeding pairs of Trumpeter Swan, including this one with young in August. The last confirmed nesting in the province occurred about a century ago. Photograph by Wybo Vanderschuit.

fledged from 200 boxes in the Good Spirit L. area (B&JA) and another 150+ were raised from 84 boxes near Abernethy (RB). A Wood Thrush in the Cottonwood/Wascana Creek Valley 14–16 Jun was about the 20th for Saskatchewan (TH, BL, SA, m. ob.). Manitoba had 3 Northern Mockingbirds, one was near



This Snowy Egret was one of at least three present at Whitewater Lake, Manitoba during the summer (here 20 June 2003). Photograph by Ward Christianson and Marlene Waldron.

Rush L., SK 2 Jun (*vide* MP), and another visited Pakowki L., AB 29 Jun (BF, BV, TC).

Two Yellow-breasted Chats at Carse-land, AB 6 Jun were considered far w. of normal (*vide* GY). A probable female Summer Tanager was near Regina 6 Jul

(JCu), and a male Western Tanager sang at Paint Lake P.P., MB 11 Jun (JV et al.). A Lark Sparrow at Churchill 4–13 Jun was a local rarity (BS, DAS, RK et al.). Only in s. Saskatchewan were good numbers of Lark Buntings reported. A Le Conte's Sparrow at Churchill 16 Jun was another rarity (BK). Single Grasshopper Sparrows at Camper 11 Jun (KG) and at Tyndall 22 Jun (RK) were the first recorded in e. Manitoba in years. Chestnut-collared Longspurs were notably scarce in Saskatchewan and Manitoba. A Rose-breasted Grosbeak visited a Churchill feeder 6 Jun (*vide* BC).

More Lazuli Buntings than usual were noted in s. Saskatchewan, with sightings at two areas near Roche Percée, the Cottonwood/Wascana Cr. Valley, near Lumsden, and at the Eagle Creek MAPS banding station (BL et al.). Single Indigo Buntings in Kananaskis Country, AB 14 Jun (HG, BW) and at Medicine Hat 8–30 Jul (BF, m. ob.) drew attention. An American Goldfinch at Churchill 15 Jun was a first for the area (m. ob.).

Observers (provincial compilers in bold-face): Bob & Joyce Anaka, Avifauna Sweden group, Sandy Ayer, Paul Bachinski, Martin Bailey, Kevin Barker, Ron Bittner, Carol Bjorklund, Bonnie Chartier, Ward Christianson, Jared Clarke, Andy Courcelles, Tim Cowley, Jim Cummings (JCu), Cal Cuthbert, Detroit Audubon Soc., Bruce DiLabio, Mary Ann, Ryan & Larry Dudragne, Allan Fishkin, Bob Frew, Ken Gardner, Gord & Susan Grief, Horst Grothman, **Mike Harrison**, Trevor Herriot, George Holland, B. Kane, Ken Kingdon, Rudolf Koes, Terry Korolyk, **Bob Luterbach**, Joan & Malcolm McDonald, Stuart Mile, Joyce Moore, Mike Mulligan (MMu), Aileen Pelzer,

Jerry Pilny, Myrna Priebe, Dave Reid, Bob Schwartesky, Stan Shadick, Val & Doyle Thomas, George Tosh, Jay Vandergaast, Wybo Vanderschuit, Ben Velner, Liis Veelma, Marlene Waldron, Guy & Sandra Wapple, Fred Whiley, Bill Wilson, Gus Yaki. ☺