

British Columbia & Yukon



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June began unsettled, with alternating showers and sunshine, but by the end of the month, the southern half was baking hot, as a strong ridge of high pressure built in. By the middle of July, the heat wave had enveloped the entire Region and showed no sign of waning by the end of the period. Yukoners not only enjoyed the great weather, but made trips to remote areas that produced exciting results: Yukon's first Arctic Warbler, second Dusky Thrush, and second Common Grackle, plus Canada's first Bluethroat nest! British Columbians contributed to the excitement with their first photographically documented Whooping Crane and second

Acorn Woodpecker.

LOONS THROUGH WATERFOWL

All four species of loons, including 4 Yellow-billed, were at Clarence Lagoon, North Slope 30 Jun (CE, BM). American White Pelicans are rare along the lower mainland, where 3 ads. were seen over Pitt Meadows 14 Jun (AR, TP). Most unusual both for the date and number, 55 soared above Napier L. near Kamloops 8 Jul (JS). The species also found Eaglet L., 50 km ene. of Prince George; a single was there 5 Jul (CA, MA), increasing to 51 birds in late Jul (CA et al.), with 18 remaining on 5 Aug and final departure 12 Aug. A Double-crested Cormorant, rare in the Yukon, was at Kloo L. 3-4 Jun (PS, CE).

A local record count of 75 juv. Great Blue Herons was made at Tofino 30 Jul (AD). Once an annual visitor to the Okanagan but now very rare, a Black-crowned Night-Heron was near Vaseux L. 10 Jul (AB). Herschel I. park wardens reported a pair of Snow Geese with 3 goslings 19 Jul (*fide* DC), a 2nd Yukon breeding record. The pair of Ross's Geese at Comox, holdovers from spring, lingered to 8 Jun (GLM et al.). A single Brant at Cleland I. 12 Jul (AD) was an unusual visitor for the date. A male Cinnamon Teal, casual in summer in the Yukon, was at Swan L. near Whitehorse 1 Jun (HG et al.). A flock of 9 Northern Pintails in Tofino 8 Jul (AD) had a very early southbound start. Vancouver I.'s probable first Jun record of Redhead involved a single bird 17 Jun in Port Alberni (SM, BSI). A few pairs of King Eiders seen at Clarence Lagoon, North Slope 20-30 Jun were suggestive of breeding in the area (CE, BM). A female Ruddy Duck at Two Moose L. 15 Jun and 1 Jul (CE, BM; HG) provided a first record for the Dempster Hwy. area, and a record count of 72 Ruddy Ducks was made at the Whitehorse sewage lagoons 22 Jul (CE).

RAPTORS THROUGH SHOREBIRDS

Following a series of sightings this spring, an ad. White-tailed Kite was again in Pitt Meadows 1 Jun (MPL). For such a bird to have successfully remained hidden from birders for a month seems unlikely; thus the likelihood is that this was a different individual. An ad. dark-morph Swainson's

Hawk, Vancouver's 8th, was in Richmond 4 Jun (RTo), while an imm. was in Saanich, Vancouver I. 1 Jun (JG). Two American Coots were seen 7 Jun at Two-Moose L., Dempster Hwy. (BB), at this species' northernmost known Yukon location; at Rock Island L., a nest with 8 eggs, only the 2nd recorded in the Yukon, was noted 9 Jun (CE, MC).

An ad. Pacific Golden-Plover was at Columbia Beach, French Cr., where rare, 31 Jul (GLM). One of few Kamloops nesting locations of American Avocets was discovered at 1100 m on a small lake near Knutsford, where ads. and 2 large young were observed 4 Jul (RH, RD). An alternate-plumaged Willet was on Discovery I. off Oak Bay, Victoria 5 Jun (MGS) for a rare summer record. The first arriving southbound Surfbirds were 2 at Cleland I. 8 Jul (AD). A Wandering Tattler, first found last winter at Ogden Pt., Victoria, was still present 30 Jun (MGS), while the first sign of a southbound flight came 14 Jul at Tofino (AD). Nesting was confirmed for Upland Sandpiper in the Fort Nelson area, where they have been suspected of nesting for many years, when a pair and 4 young were observed 16 Jul (MAi, DAi). A count of 58 Whimbrels in Tofino was considered high for the summer months 10 Jul (RC). This spring's ad. male Hudsonian Godwit at Reifel Refuge remained to 6 Jun (JI et al.). Semipalmated Sandpipers were more prevalent than expected on Vancouver I., with 10-14 individuals involved 30 Jun-29 Jul (*fide* GLM). Vancouver's 6th Little Stint was an alternate-plumaged ad. at Iona 27-28 Jul (MTo, ph. STo et al.).

JAEGERS THROUGH WOODPECKERS

Observations of a few pairs of local Pomarine Jaegers in the Craig Cr. area on Yukon's North Slope 16 Jun-4 Jul (CE, BM) hinted at the possibility of nesting in the area. Curiously, a group of 17 Long-tailed Jaegers was at Wright Pass along the

SA Up until now sightings of Whooping Cranes have suffered from lack of sufficient documentation. Reports of this mystical bird are akin to sightings of Sasquatch, with those who strongly believe they have legitimately seen these birds in British Columbia and those who readily dismiss such claims. Reports of large white cranes are not unheard of, some or perhaps most of which pertain to leucistic or poorly seen Sandhill Cranes.

This summer, a pair of Whooping Cranes was found in a hayfield about 30 km n. of Prince George. These birds were videotaped 30 Jun (VB, vt. TB), providing the first photographic documentation of this Endangered species for the province. This same pair was later discovered on a sandbar near the confluence of the Salmon and Fraser Rivers, about 8 km from the original site, on 6 Jul (TtA, tHY).

Dempster Hwy. 15 Jun (CE, BM), 18 were there 21 Jun (HG), and one was at Snyder Cr., Jarvis R. area, sw. Yukon 17 Jun (MW). Ring-billed Gulls head for the coast shortly after breeding, as evidenced by Tofino's early arrivals of 6 on 29 Jul (AD, GB). A second-summer California Gull, rare in the Yukon, was at the Whitehorse landfill 30 Jul (CE, BD, HG). A third-summer Thayer's Gull at the Whitehorse landfill 12 Jun (ph. BM) and a second-summer bird there 29 Jul (HG, ph. BD) provided rare summer records. A probable first-summer Slaty-backed Gull discovered at the Whitehorse landfill 9 Jul (BM, CE, PS) remained there through Jul (CE, BD, HG); a second-summer bird made a short visit there 16–18 Jul (CE, HG). An ad. Glaucous-winged Gull at Inuvik, N.W.T. 15 Jun (CE, BM) added to the growing number of recent records from that location. Rare in summer in s. Yukon were an imm. Glaucous Gull at Haines Junction 4 Jul (LF) and an ad. in Whitehorse 18 (HG) & 23 Jul (CE).

It has been seven years since the Black Tern colony at Blind L., se. Yukon was last surveyed (25 nests recorded then): this year, 20 nests were counted 27 Jun (PS et al.). Ancient Murrelets, considered casual on the w. coast of Vancouver I., were seen regularly off Vargas I. 14–27 Jul (AD). A Horned Puffin, rare along the outer coast, was found sitting on the water among Tufted Puffins at Cleland I. 8 Jul (AD et al.). An Acorn Woodpecker furnished the first Okanagan and 2nd provincial record 16–23 Jun (KH, ph. MH) when it visited a feeder in Oliver. The previous record was also in mid-Jun back in 1996 at Maple Ridge. A White-headed Woodpecker was discovered 3 Jun (DC) e. of Oliver along the famed Camp McKinney Rd.

FLYCATCHERS THROUGH GRACKLES

Alder Flycatchers are casual spring vagrants to the lower mainland; one such individual lingered late at Pitt Meadows 16–28 Jun (†DJ). This species is increasing in the Kootenays, with singing males recorded as follows: 4 at Summit L., Nakusp 15 Jun (GSD); 2 near Edgewood 22 Jun (GSD); and 2 at Kootenay L. 28 Jun (GS). A Least Flycatcher was also at Pitt Meadows 7–11 Jun (PC et al.), where rare. Rock Wrens are very rare along the s.

coast, and breeding has not been recorded there since 1970; thus, it was with some excitement that a singing bird was discovered on Saturna I. 28 Jun (MGS, CyS).

Canada's 2nd and the Yukon's first record for Arctic Warbler was a singing male in the Craig Cr. area on the Yukon's North Slope 28 Jun (†CE, ph. BM). The quest to find Canada's first Bluethroat nest



This Acorn Woodpecker visited a feeder in Oliver, British Columbia 16–23 June 2003, where it furnished a second provincial record. Photograph by Kurt Hutterli.

was a stunning success: 8–10 male and 2 female Bluethroats were in the Craig Cr. area on the Yukon's North Slope during surveys 16 Jun and 1–4 Jul, and a nest with six eggs was discovered 22 Jun (†CE, BM et al.). Even in an area as rich and diverse as Craig Cr. on the North Slope, a singing Dusky Thrush, the Yukon's 2nd, seemed over-the-top 28 Jun–1 Jul (†BM, †CE, BB). Single Northern Mockingbirds were discovered: on Mayne I. near Bennet Bay 2

Jun (PSP, BSp), at Becher Prairie, Riske Cr., in early Jun (KW), and just n. of Powell River 26 Jun (NHu), where rare. Three Yellow Wagtail nests found in the Craig Cr. area 16 Jun–4 Jul significantly added to the few nests documented in Canada (BB, CE, BM).

Casual along the coast, a Tennessee Warbler was singing 3 Jun in Vancouver (†TP). A singing Cape May Warbler was at Albert Cr. Rd., Upper Liard 23 Jun (TMK), at the exact same spot where it was found last year, Yukon's westernmost location. A small wave of extralimital Black-and-white Warblers was noted, with one in Whitehorse–Mary L. 28 May (WN, BD, HG) constituting a first Whitehorse record; one banded at Albert Cr. Rd., Upper Liard 4 Jun (TMK) provided a first Watson L. area record; and one singing at Swede Johnson Cr. in sw. Yukon 5 Jun (MG) was 850 km w. of its known Yukon range. American Redstarts were unusually numerous along the s. coast, with first-year males at Lois L., Powell R. 7 Jun (DB), Maplewood Conservation Area 7 Jun (QB), Pitt Meadows 15 Jun (2; RTo), and Gibson's 4–11 Jun (JJ), which was joined by a female 11 Jun (JJ). Yellow-breasted Chats continue to maintain a toehold in the Georgia Depression, with at least one bird present 14 Jun–1 Jul (IO et al.).

Lazuli Buntings were thought to be nesting in Abbotsford, where 2 males were seen chasing a female with food 12 Jun (JV). Male Rose-breasted Grosbeaks provided rare sights in Port Coquitlum 1 Jun (†DBu), between Oyama and Vernon 19 Jun (PM, HM), and at Burnaby Mt. Park 1 Jul (DP et al.). Vesper Sparrows are very local breeders at few sites along the coast; thus tantalizing was a report of a singing male on Saturna I. 28 Jun (MGS, CyS). A female and 2 male Smith's Longspurs along with a nest were discovered in the foothills of upper Craig Cr. on the North Slope 25 Jun (†CE, BM).

A rare female Brewer's Blackbird was at Nisutlin Bay Marina 14–19 Jun (MG, ph. B&DG). A Common Grackle, rare away from the Peace R. area, was at Invermere 3–4 Jun (LC). Were it not for a distance of 800 km and a few mountain ranges, the Yukon might have had its first breeding record for Common Grackle: the territory's 2nd and 3rd records for the species were afforded by a male at Lhutsaw L. near Pelly Crossing 10 Jun (PS et al.) and a female at Craig Cr. on the North Slope 25 Jun (†CE, BM).

Addendum: A sighting missed from the spring report, an Ovenbird was banded at Albert Cr. Rd., Upper Liard 29 May (TMK) for a first record in the Watson L. area and over 200 km w. of its known range in the Yukon.

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