

Atlantic Provinces & St. Pierre et Miquelon



Bruce Mactavish

To quote the chief editor of *Nova Scotia Birds*, Lance Laviolette: "it was the season of a million rarities." The remnants of Hurricane *Wilma* made sure of that, with a displacement of birds unparalleled by any other Atlantic Canada hurricane in recorded history. But even without *Wilma's* wondrous wrath it was banner year for rarities.

WATERFOWL THROUGH VULTURES

Reports of Greater White-fronted Geese included one at the sewage pond at Windsor, NS 7 Oct–9 Nov (m.ob.) and an orange-billed ad., presumably *flavirostris*, photographed at St. Shotts, NF 29 Sep–2 Oct (TP et al.). A Barnacle Goose, considered wild by some, was seen in a field with migrant Canada Geese at Lower Cloverdale, near Moncton for several days beginning on 4 Nov (ST et al.). Presumably, this is the same Barnacle Goose that has been seen intermittently in the same field in late fall in recent years. There was a small local influx of Tundra Swans to w. Nova Scotia, with 4 at West Pubnico 21 Nov (MN), 4 at Amiraults Hill 22 Nov (JN), 2 at Port Clyde 23 Nov (SAH), and 4 at Melbourne Sanctuary (RSD).

An ad. Pacific Loon at Caissie Cape, NB 24

SA Redheads staged an unprecedented influx into the Region, beginning in late Sep. Most birds then remained to late fall, which probably indicated that many of the Redheads found later had in fact arrived in late Sep/early Oct. In New Brunswick, there were at least 50 individuals, with single flocks of up to 10 (*fide* BD). There was a flock of 12 at Souris, PEI 19 Nov (David Seeler) and at least 63 in Nova Scotia. Newfoundland, for which there were only four previous records, had a dozen in St. John's alone.

Nov was the 5th for the province; this species is very rare in the Region (ST). The Stephenville Crossing, NF Western Reef-Heron discovered in Jun was last seen 6 Sep, and the Little Egret there was last seen 20 Sep (Terry Downey). A Black Vulture was at Canso 12–15 Sep (Tom Crane). Impressive tallies of Turkey Vultures from Brier I., NS included 50 on 24 Oct and 40 on 18 Nov (EM).

SHOREBIRDS THROUGH ALCIDS

A juv. European Golden-Plover at St. Shotts, NF 6 Nov was well observed and documented with photographs, a first autumn record for the province (KK, DB, JWe). Two pairs of American Oystercatchers at Cape Sable I., NS managed to rear broods of 3 and one young (MN et al.). A Long-billed Curlew was shot at Miquelon, SPM 18 Sep following the passage of Hurricane *Ophelia*, a Category 1 storm with winds of up to 80 mph that tracked rather directly from se. North Carolina to Miquelon. The head and wings are preserved. It was the first for the French islands and the only modern-day record for the Region (*fide* RE). A Eurasian Whimbrel was identified at Cape Bonavista, NF 26 Aug (Jon Joy). The only Up-land Sandpiper sightings were one at Sable I., NS 25 Sep (ZL) and one at Cape Spear, NF 28 Sep (TP). The only Marbled Godwit, at Ogdens Pond, Antigonish, NS 14 Nov+, was perhaps a *Wilma* waif (RLF et al.). The only Ruff was at Cape Freels, NF 24 Sep (Kevin Butler).

Three of the 4 Western Sandpipers in Nova Scotia were observed in Nov and were suspected to be victims of the *Wilma* displacement. Newfoundland's first well-documented Western Sandpiper was at Spaniard's Bay 7 Sep (BMT, KK). Both Curlew Sandpipers were ads. in Newfoundland: at St. John's 12–16 Aug (AH et al.) and at St. Shotts 2 Oct (DB et al.). Concentrations of phalaropes in the Bay of Fundy were good this year, with a report of 50,000 Red Phalaropes off Brier I., NS 8 Sep (EM).

There were 50,000 Bonaparte's Gulls feeding in the tidal rips at Campobello I., NB 22 Sep (Norm Famous). Record-high numbers of Black-headed Gulls went through St. John's, with peak days in Nov hitting 200 (PL, BMT). There were up to 3 nominate Mew Gulls in St. John's in Nov, including an individual that arrived on 25 Sep (BMT). An ad. Yellow-legged Gull 12 Nov was early for St. John's, NF (BMT, TP). A Sabine's Gull photographed off St. Pierre,

SPM 8 Sep was amazingly a first record for the French islands (*fide* RE). Newfoundland's first Sooty Tern was an ad. freshly killed and mostly eaten by a Peregrine Falcon near Cape Race on 18 Oct (Julie Cappleman). No tropical storm could be called to account for its presence there, but a strong southerly wind 17 Oct may have been responsible for its occurrence. A Forster's Tern was rare at Grand Manan I., NB 17 Sep (*fide* BD).

DOVES THROUGH FLYCATCHERS

Why is it some feeders routinely get White-winged Doves? The birds probably aren't the same individuals coming back every year. Doreen Rossiter's feeder at Alma, NB had yet another on 5 Sep. Not to be outdone, Tom Kavanaugh's feeder at Canso, NS, no stranger to White-winged Doves, had 3 in the time period 19 Oct–30 Nov. Yet another White-winged Dove was at a feeder at Portuguese Cove, NS 2–30 Nov (HT). Even before the effects of *Wilma*, it was already deemed a big year for Yellow-billed Cuckoo across the Region, with too many reports to keep track of. A Barn Owl found in a moribund condition at Buctouche, NB 25 Nov was the 7th for the province (*fide* BD). A young male Rufous/Allen's Hummingbird was at a feeder at Shippagan, MB 5 Oct–11 Nov (Valmond DeGrâce et al.). Back to a more normal routine, there were 2 Red-headed and 9 Red-bellied Woodpeckers reported in the Region,



After Hurricane *Wilma*, several Black-necked Stilts appeared in eastern Canada, including this adult male on Seal Island, Nova Scotia 28 October 2005.

Photograph by Michael Bentley.

mainly Nova Scotia.

It was a phenomenal fall for Say's Phoebe, with singles at Miscou I., NB 16 Sep (Robert Doiron); Three Fathom Harbour, NS 10 Sep (SM); Cape Sable I., NS 23–30 Sep (MN et al.); Cole Harbour, NS 24 Oct (Gail MacFarlane); and St. Pierre, SPM 12–14 Nov (RE et al.). New Brunswick's 7th Ash-throated Flycatcher was well observed by a group at Cape

SA Hurricane *Wilma* resulted in the most significant avian displacement of any hurricane in the history of birding in Atlantic Canada. Atlantic Canadian hurricanes, or the remnants of hurricanes, have produced stronger winds, more property damage, and more Laughing Gulls and Black Skimmers, but none have brought the sheer volume of birds and diverse species list approaching the magnitude of *Wilma*. Hurricanes typically affect a small area where the eye comes ashore. *Wilma* affected the entire south-facing coast of the Region from the westernmost to the easternmost areas.

Wilma spent a week in the Caribbean and Gulf of Mexico before picking up speed and crossing the s. end of the Florida Peninsula during the early hours of 24 Oct. In the next 24 hours, it traveled northeastward at a remarkable speed (up to 90 km/h) to lie 200 km sw. of Sable I., NS on 25 Oct. Here *Wilma* merged with a low-pressure area over Nova Scotia. The center of the new low became an oblong, dumbbell-shaped system aligned east-west over Nova Scotia. On 26 Oct, the system was centered on the Grand Banks, se. of Newfoundland, before it headed across the Atlantic, bringing American vagrants by the score to the Western Palearctic.

Wilma-transported birds were first noted on 26 Oct in Nova Scotia and 27 Oct in St. Pierre et Miquelon and Newfoundland. The initial signs of a major avian event were the large numbers of Chimney Swifts, swallows, and Yellow-billed Cuckoos. A summary of sightings follows.

Magnificent Frigatebird. Seven individuals. Three at Pubnico Harbour, Yarmouth, NS 26 Oct (RSD); one at Seal Harbour, Guysborough 26 Oct (D. Randall); one dead at Sable I., NS 29 Oct (ZL); one at Centreville, Cape Breton I. 10 Nov (AM, CM); and one at St. Pierre et Miquelon 18-25 Nov (RE et al.). It is possible the Cape Breton I. bird and St. Pierre bird were the same individual. Some of the frigatebirds observed were confirmed by photographs as Magnificent; others were presumed to be this species.

Ardeids and ibis. There was a smattering of s. herons across the Region immediately after the passage of *Wilma*, including at least 15 Great Egrets and 21 Snowy Egrets in Nova Scotia. There were also a few Little Blue Herons, Black-crowned Night-Herons, and Glossy Ibis. One ibis seen in Halifax may have been White-faced Ibis or a White-faced Ibis × Glossy Ibis hybrid.

Blue-winged Teal. Minimum totals of 7 in Nova Scotia, 7 in St. Pierre et Miquelon, and 10 in Newfoundland in late Oct/early Nov were likely *Wilma*-borne.

Black-necked Stilt. Six individuals. Nova Scotia's 10th through 14th records were singles at Seal I. 28 Oct (FL, IM, MB); Antigonish 3-27 Nov (B. Stevens et al.); Lower Rose Bay, Lunenburg 3-6 Nov (JH et al.); Port Joli, Queens 6 Nov (L. Dean et al.); and Pondville Beach, Richmond 19-20 (V. Keerd et al.). One at Ramea, NL 27 Oct furnished a 2nd provincial record (Richard Northcott, *vide* BMT).

Other shorebirds. American Avocet: 10 Nova Scotia, some staying through Nov (typically one or 2 per fall in Region). **Stilt Sandpiper:** 37 in Nova Scotia, many staying into Nov, with record-late dates of 26 & 27 Nov at separate locations (normally rare after mid-Oct in the Region). **Long-billed Dowitcher:** unprecedented numbers; minimum of 140 at 19 locations in Nova Scotia 26 Oct-end of Nov, some into Dec; 21 at Covehead, PEI 13 Nov (Dan Kennedy); and Newfoundland's long overdue first was at St. John's 6-7 Nov (m.ob.). **Wilson's Phalarope:** one 28-29 Oct at Cape Race, NF, extremely late (KK et al.).

Laughing Gull. Approximate totals were 5 in New Brunswick, 300+ in Nova Scotia, 9 in St. Pierre et Miquelon, and 25 in Newfoundland. A marked arrival on 26 Oct in New Brunswick and Nova Scotia and 27 Oct in St. Pierre et Miquelon and Newfoundland. Many birds lingered through Nov, nearly all departed by early Dec.

Franklin's Gull. A remarkable 18 total: 3 in New Brunswick, 12 in Nova Scotia, one in St. Pierre et Miquelon, and 2 in Newfoundland (typically not an annual fall vagrant in the Region).

Gull-billed Tern. Four individuals. Three singles in Nova Scotia were at Long Beach, Cape Breton I. 27 Oct (CM, AM); Morien Bar, Cape Breton I. 28 Oct (CM, AM); and Cow Bay 31 Oct (Leigh Ogden). One at St. Vincent's beach, NF 1-7 Nov furnished a 2nd provincial record (PL et al.).

Caspian Tern. Totals of "several" in New Brunswick, 73 in Nova Scotia, 10 in St. Pierre et

Miquelon, and one in Newfoundland. Almost none after first week of Nov.

Royal Tern. Twenty-seven individuals, the most ever recorded after a hurricane in the Region. Twenty-four in Nova Scotia, nearly all 26-31 Oct. Three at St. Pierre et Miquelon 27 Oct were the first for the French islands (RE et al.).

Sandwich Tern. About 33 individuals, all in Nova Scotia, all but one 26 Oct-1 Nov. Fifteen, including 10 dead, were on Sable I. (ZL). There were only three previous records of Sandwich Tern in Nova Scotia! A yellow-billed Sandwich Tern closely observed in a parking lot at Clarke's Harbour was apparently a **Cayenne Tern** (subspecies *eurygnatha*) from the s. Caribbean.

Common Tern. An incredible 1600+ were tallied in Nova Scotia 26 Oct-30 Nov (*vide* EM). Newfoundland had about 30, and there were a few in New Brunswick and St. Pierre et Miquelon. Common Terns normally leave the Region by mid-Oct.

Forster's Tern. Astounding total of 56 individuals, 52 in Nova Scotia and 4 in St. Pierre et Miquelon (first for French islands). Most were observed 26-31 Oct, with some lingering until the end of Nov. Typically one or 2 per autumn in the Region.

Least Tern. One at Canso, NS 27 Oct was a late date for this Regional rarity (TK).

Black Tern. Five in Nova Scotia between 29 Oct-5 Nov (*vide* EM) furnished late dates for this scarce Regional species.

Black Skimmer. Eighteen individuals at 17 locations, all in Nova Scotia. Eleven occurred 26-31 Oct. The latest, 19 Nov at Wallace, was the only bird on Northumberland Strait shoreline (*vide* EM).

Yellow-billed Cuckoo. A minimum of 350 in Nova Scotia, including counts of 50 at Bon Portage I. 26 Oct and of 45 at Cape Sable I. 27 Oct. Many were found dead or weak during the first week after the passage of *Wilma*. The last was 17 Nov. Actual numbers must have been staggering. Interestingly, this flight was hardly noticed outside Nova Scotia (but counts on Bermuda were very similar).

Chimney Swift. Perhaps the most significant single species event of Hurricane *Wilma* was the displacement of thousands of Chimney Swifts. One can only imagine the real numbers involved. Many were found dead, and it is probable the majority died. Who knows how many died at sea? Record numbers were carried on to Bermuda and to Europe. It will be interesting to see if a drop in the breeding population of e. North America is detected in summer 2006. The largest numbers were observed in the first week after *Wilma*. But small flocks survived into late Nov and even early Dec. Maximum counts follow. New Brunswick: 500+ on Grand Manan I. beginning 26 Oct. Last date 21 Nov. A report of "five buckets full" shoveled out of one chimney (BD et al.). Nova Scotia: hundreds roosting on house and nearby tree on Red I., Cape Breton I. night of 26/27 Oct; 300 roosting in chimney at Baddeck, Cape Breton I. 28 Oct; 400 (300 asphyxiated), Blanche, Shelbourne 28 Oct; 400 at a church in Dartmouth 30 Oct-2 Nov; 100+ at a courthouse in Liverpool 30 Oct-2 Nov (*vide* IM). St. Pierre et Miquelon: 350 observed 27 Oct, 108 corpses picked up 29 Oct, last observation 10 Nov (*vide* RE). Newfoundland: 250+, including 150 at Cape Race 27 Oct and 35 entering a chimney at Ship Cove, Placentia 29 Oct, 17 dead in the morning (*vide* BM).

Cave Swallow. Three at Broad Cove, Lunenburg, NS (SC); one at Cow Bay 26 Oct (DC et al.); and one at Bayswater Beach, Lunenburg, NS 27 Oct (BMy). These were certainly related to *Wilma*. Singles photographed at Canso, NS 10 Nov (TK) and at Murray Corner, NB 11-12 Nov (ST et al.) were probably related to a different weather pattern.

Other swallows. Significant numbers of Tree and Barn Swallows were carried to Atlantic Canada by *Wilma*. There were numerous sightings in Nova Scotia, with maximum concentrations for each of 50. Most occurred 26-31 Oct, but both species were widespread in low numbers to the end of Nov. Pale by comparison, yet still unprecedented for the season in Newfoundland, were 10 Tree, 16 Barn, and one Bank Swallow at Cape Race 28 Oct (KK et al.). Nova Scotia had totals of 19 Northern Rough-winged, 15 Bank, and 88 Cliff Swallows 26-31 Oct (*vide* HT). There were 2 Purple Martins at Second Pen., Lunenburg, NS 26 Oct (*vide* HT).



A Laughing Gull (center) and two Franklin's Gulls were at Hartien Point, Nova Scotia 6 November 2005, part of the remarkable displacement of thousands of birds by Hurricane Wilma. Photograph by Blake Maybank.

Jourimain 20 Nov (Tony Erskine et al.). Western Kingbird totals were 5 in New Brunswick and 7 in Nova Scotia. A Scissor-tailed Flycatcher was photographed at Brier I., NS 7 Aug (Linda Thurber).

It was an average year for the *s. vireos*, with single White-eyed Vireos in both Nova Scotia and Newfoundland. Yellow-throated Vireos were one in New Brunswick, 2 in Nova Scotia, and 2 in Newfoundland. For the 2nd consecutive autumn, above-normal numbers of Townsend's Solitaires were found during autumn migration, with singles at Restigouche, NB 17 Nov (Roger Guitard); Seal I., NS 28 Oct (MB, FL, IM); and Canso, NS 26 Nov (TK). A male Varied Thrush on Sable I., 21 Oct was a nice find during migration (*vide* ZL). A significant wave of reverse migrants in Nova Scotia on 18 Oct featured Gray Catbirds: 25 at Crystal Beach, NS 18 Oct (MN) and 30 at Sandy Cove, NS (FL). There was an unprecedented number of catbirds lingering through Nov and eventually into winter in Nova Scotia. Black-capped Chickadees are often observed in migration in New Brunswick. One thousand moving through a backyard in one morning (3 Oct) at Shediac constituted a huge movement (ST). An ad. and 2 young Carolina Wrens at Fredericton, NB 7 Aug represented a rare breeding record but was not unexpected for the local area (Peter Pierce). Northern Wheatear reports came from Black Brook, NB 3 Sep (Roy & Charlotte Lapointe) and Cape Race, NF 28 Oct (KK et al.).

WARBLERS THROUGH FINCHES

An astounding 5 Townsend's Warblers were seen, including New Brunswick's first at Fundy N.P. 4–11 Nov (JWi et al.) and another at a Quispamsis feeder 29 Nov–9 Dec (Paul Murray et al.). Newfoundland had its 10th through 12th records, all in St. John's in

widely separated areas: 30 Oct–19 Nov (TB et al.), 5 Nov–5 Dec (DB et al.), and 4 Dec (BMT). Southern warblers are sought-after prizes of autumn birding in the Region; a summary follows. Blue-winged Warbler, all in Sep: 4 in New Brunswick; one in Nova Scotia, one in St. Pierre et Miquelon, and 2 in Newfoundland. Golden-winged Warbler: one on Grand Manan I., NB 3 Sep (JWi et al.) and one at Schooner Pond, Cape Breton I., NS 1 Oct (AM, CM). Yellow-throated Warbler: 2 in New Brunswick, 2 in Nova Scotia, one in St. Pierre et Miquelon, and 3 in Newfoundland. Prairie Warblers

were particularly numerous, with totals too confusing for compilers to track. Cerulean



Following Hurricane Wilma, three Gull-billed Terns were found in Nova Scotia and one in Newfoundland. This bird was at Port Morien on the Morien Bar, Cape Breton Island, Nova Scotia 27 October 2005. Photograph by Allan and Cathy Murrant.

Warbler: one at Whites Lake, NS 28 Sep (BMy). It was a banner year for Prothonotary Warbler, with 7 in Nova Scotia and 3 in Newfoundland. Worm-eating Warbler: 3 in Nova Scotia, all in Sep. Kentucky Warbler: one at Saint John, NB 23 Aug (RB) and 2 in Newfoundland, where oddly more regular. Hooded Warbler: 5 in Nova Scotia and 2 in Newfoundland. There were many Yellow-breasted Chats.

A male Western Tanager was well seen and photographed at Westfield, NB 9 Nov (Carol & Bill Sutton). A female or first-fall male Western Tanager was on Sable I., NS 25 Sep (ZL). It was a good fall for Summer Tanagers, with one at a feeder in Saint John, NB 9 Nov (Barb Rossly), 4 in Nova Scotia 19–26 Oct, one at St. Pierre, SPM 28 Oct

(*vide* RE), and 2 in Newfoundland in late Oct.

Nova Scotia had an above-average 20 each of Clay-colored and Field Sparrows. A Field Sparrow at Cape Race 10 Oct was a provincial rarity (DB). It was an above-average fall for Lark Sparrow, with about 15 reported in the Region. A Le Conte's Sparrow was reported without details on Cape Sable I., NS 18–19 Sep. An imm. Golden-crowned Sparrow was photographed at Herring Cove, Fundy N.P. 12 Oct for the 3rd provincial record (ST et al.). A Seaside Sparrow was well seen across the road from the above-mentioned Golden-crowned Sparrow at Herring Cove, NB 12 Oct (ST et al.). Fifteen Blue Grosbeaks in Nova Scotia was not considered a major fallout. It was an above-average autumn for Dickcissel. Remnants of a tropical depression 18 Sep brought exceptional numbers of Baltimore Orioles to the s. coast of Nova Scotia, with flocks of up to 50 reported. Among them was an Orchard Oriole at Cape Sable I., NS 18 Sep (EM). A very late Orchard Oriole was the same location on 10 Nov (MN).

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Black Skimmers were transported to Nova Scotia by Hurricane Wilma in numbers not seen since Hurricane Gladys of October 1958. This one obliged observers for several days at the docks of Shearwater military base, Dartmouth (here 1 November 2005). Photograph by Cindy Creighton.