

# Atlantic Provinces & St. Pierre et Miquelon



## Blake Maybank

For the Maritime provinces, the spring was warm (about 2° C above average) and mostly dry (10% of normal precipitation in March, normal in April, 80% of normal in May), with average sunshine. In May, a northeasterly air flow predominated, as was true last spring, but the strong storms and heavy rains of 2005 were thankfully not observed. Northeasterly winds are adverse for spring migration, and birds were scarce at the Region's hotspots, such as Brier Island and Grand Manan Island. Most observers continued to bemoan low numbers of migrants, and while some blamed May's easterly winds, I suspect we are witnessing the persistent effects of the massive mortality events of spring

2005 (see S. A. box, below). From St. Pierre, Etcheberry writes: "Passerine birds were once again on the low side this spring; although diversity is still there, quantities are quite low. Even Yellow-rumped Warblers were scarce. Birds arrived later than average and in lower numbers this season."

This spring marks the first season of the second *Maritimes Breeding Bird Atlas* (20 years after the start of the first atlas), a five-year survey that should increase our understanding of the changing bird populations in New Brunswick, Nova Scotia, and Prince Edward Island. Mind you, with the current rapid pace of climate change, these atlases might best be run on every five or 10 years. The atlas web site is <<http://www.mba-aom.ca>>.

**Abbreviations:** A.B.O. (Atlantic B.O.); C.S.I. (Cape Sable I., NS); G.M.I. (Grand Manan I., NB); H.R.M. (Halifax Regional Municipality, NS); SPM (Saint Pierre et Miquelon, France).

## WATERFOWL THROUGH GREBES

Few Snow Geese were noted away from their ne. New Brunswick staging areas. An unidentified swan flew eastward over St. John's 25 May (BMt). Spring Eurasian Wigeons included the wintering pair at Sullivan's Pond, NS, a handful in Newfoundland (including a pair at Arnold's Cove on the Avalon 5 Mar and a male at Loch Lomond, Codroy Valley 31 May), one on Grand Barachois, SPM 14-25 Mar, and an impressive 9 in s. New Brunswick in Apr-May. Eurasian Teal were scarce: 2 in e. Newfoundland, 2 in New Brunswick (18 Mar at Mary's Point [DC] and 29 Apr-5 May at

Saint Anselme [Roger Leblanc]), and 3 on St. Pierre. On 4 May, Tingley found an apparent Mallard × Green-winged Teal hybrid in Fredricton, NB. A Northern Shoveler on St. Pierre, a *Wilma* bird, wintered successfully.

A number of Redheads wintered, following the autumn's influx; reports from Mar/Apr included more than 20 birds on mainland Nova Scotia, including 9 at Bayport, Lunenburg 4 Mar (EM), 3 in New Brunswick, and one at Spaniard's Bay, NL. Tufted Ducks away from e. Newfoundland were limited to singles at three locations in New Brunswick. King Eiders put on a good show; 2 males at Port George, NS delighted observers through Mar, while New Brunswick enjoyed 4, including 3 passing by Point Lepreau, while 5 were noted in e. Newfoundland, including 4 at Daleys Cove in mid-Mar. The spring scoter flight through New Brunswick appeared routine, but in Nova Scotia, a male Surf Scoter and female Black Scoter spent 14-28 Apr together at Sunken L., Kings (BF et al.), an unusual inland location for either.

For the first time since 1974, Red-throated Loons were unrecorded at St. Pierre et Miquelon, and numbers were low in Nova Scotia, but the species' migration past Pt. Lepreau, NB was normal. Nine Red-necked Grebes 6 May at Broad Cove, Lunenburg, NS (EM) were slightly tardy, and low numbers were recorded at St. Pierre.

## PELICANS THROUGH DIURNAL RAPTORS

An American White Pelican began a grand tour through the Region this spring. The bird,

**SA** The traditional northbound shorebird migration routes lie w. of this Region, and our spring "flight" consists of local breeders and a few winterers. This year was different. In the latter half of May, there was an excellent spring passage noted Regionwide, especially of Black-bellied Plover and Red Knot (see table, below). The passage included Prince Edward Island and both coasts of Newfoundland, which recorded dozens of Black-bellied Plover and a few Red Knots. Ian McLaren speculates: "Perhaps long-distance over-water migrants like these shorebirds have taken advantage of the [May] wind setup, with winds offshore [that is, southwesterly] in the se. United States, and paralleling the coast nearer Nova Scotia."

Species	Saint-Leonard, NB (R&CL)		Dune de Maissonnette, NB (Marcel David)				SPM (RE)		C.S.I.	Atlantic coast of Nova Scotia
	19 May	29 May	22 May	25 May	29 May	1 Jun	19 May	24-30 May	20-22 May	19-26 May
Black-bellied Plover			114	128	84	105	8	38	325	175
Ruddy Turnstone			13	4	12	21		3	125	175
Red Knot			18	20	21	11		10	75	49
Sanderling					5				hundreds	
Semipalmated Sandpiper			1	2	11	113		7		25
White-rumped Sandpiper		2		2	14	11				
Least Sandpiper	38	17	4	9	8					
Dunlin	1		4	2	17	7		5 on 12 May		
Short-billed Dowitcher		8		1	31	6		1		
Red-necked Phalarope	1									

first noted 23 May at Machias, ME, popped into Waterside, NB, near Fredricton, 25-26 May (Reg & Dorothy Hoar et al.). Its tour continued with a visit to Mary's Pt., NB 27 May (DC et al.), but the following morning it moved to Black Pond Migratory Bird Sanctuary, PEI (Nancy Ching et al.), where it remained through month's end, just the 4th provincial record. It was an unspectacular spring for overshooting herons and egrets, not surprising, given the contrary winds. The Nova Scotia/New Brunswick totals were as follows: Great Egret 9/6; Snowy Egret 9/2; Little Blue Heron 4/1; no Tricolored Herons or Cattle Egrets; Green Heron 3/3; and only singles of Yellow-crowned Night-Heron (Nova Scotia) and Glossy Ibis (New Brunswick). Prince Edward Island was shut out entirely, and St. Pierre had singles of Snowy Egret and Black-crowned Night-Heron in May. Farther n., there was an unexpected influx of 5 Great Egrets to s. Newfoundland, as well as a far-flung bird in Goose Bay, Labrador 8 May (Randy Rose), just the 2nd local record. A Glossy Ibis was at Bonavista, NL 30 Apr-3 May (Jon Joy, Rod Cox). There are now at least five Bald Eagle nests on St. Pierre et Miquelon, admirable given the islands' small area. The wintering Golden Eagle at St. John's, NL was last reported 2 Apr; the only other report was from Bertrand, NB 14 May (m.ob.).

### RAILS THROUGH SHOREBIRDS

A Purple Gallinule made a brief appearance 25 May near Baxter's Harbour, Kings, NS (Lance Bishop). A Sandhill Crane at Shepody, NB 7-9 May (Ken Haggart) provided that province's only report, but 4 visited Canso, NS, where spring sightings have been regular in recent years (TK). Another was near Yarmouth, NS 12-17 Apr (John Sollows).

At Bonavista, NL, a European Golden Plover was found 7 May and 3-4 on 9-13 May (Rod Cox, JJ). An American Golden Plover at Blackhead, NL 21-23 Apr (DB et al.) furnished a 3rd spring provincial record; all have been of birds in basic plumage. Another on Martinique Beach, H.R.M. 8 Apr was remarkably early (IM et al.). Killdeer are now regular breeders on St. Pierre et Miquelon (RE), though only a few pairs are present. The same may be said of American Oystercatchers on C.S.I., where 7 returned. A Black-necked Stilt at Martinique Beach 15-20 Apr (Terry Paquet et al.) marked the 15th provincial record. The only extralimital Upland Sandpiper was at Jeddore Oyster Pond, H.R.M. 9-14 Apr (Lucas



This third-winter Slaty-backed Gull at the well-watched landfill in St. John's, Newfoundland was the second of three to show up between January and April 2006 (here 18 March). Photograph by Bruce Mactavish.

Berrigan). There were two reports of single Eurasian Whimbrel: 25 May at Cape Spear, NL (Greg Stroud, Dave Fifield) and 6 May at St. Pierre (RE). Two Ruffs in breeding attire were at Goulds, NL 12-13 May (DB, Jennifer Harding et al.). At least 5 Long-billed Dowitchers successfully wintered on C.S.I., part of Hurricane *Wilma's* bounty.

### GULLS THROUGH ALCIDS

There were eight May occurrences of Laughing Gull in Nova Scotia, well above the average in recent springs; the absence of sightings earlier in the season suggests these were not "*Wilma* waifs" left over from autumn 2005 but overshoots from the southwest. Two wintering Common Gulls in St. John's were joined by 2 migrants 19 Mar (BMT). However, a single Common Gull at Fredricton, NB 2-4 May (Gilles Belliveau et al.) generated much more excitement. The rare gull extravaganza at St. John's, NL continued into spring. A third-year Yellow-legged Gull was banded there 28 May (BMT)—perhaps the first subad. reported anywhere on the continent, and the latest spring record from the province (or the continent?) by six weeks. On the heels of an ad. in Jan, a third-winter Slaty-backed Gull was present 18 Mar-2 Apr and an identifiably different ad. 23 Apr-7 May (BMT, JC et al.). A Glaucous-winged Gull 21 Mar was thought to be the same bird as seen earlier in the winter (BMT, JC). An ad. Ivory Gull was unexpectedly inland along the Metchin R., Labrador, feeding on caribou carcasses some time in Mar/Apr (Tony Chubbs, Frank Phillips). A Black Tern 18 May at Sainte-Anne, NB might represent the first record of

the species for the n. portion of the province (R&CL). Two Forster's Terns from *Wilma* wintered successfully in Nova Scotia, possibly a Regional first.

### DOVES THROUGH STARLINGS

A White-winged Dove appeared 24 May on C.S.I. (Johnny Nickerson), there are 35 previous provincial records, including one from the same feeder. Newfoundland's 4th White-winged Dove appeared 19-22 May at a Clarenville feeder (Cliff Briffet et al.) Yellow-billed Cuckoos are very rare Regionally in spring (and perhaps even more so following the massive mortality from Hurricane *Wilma*), but G.M.I. hosted no fewer than 3 birds 20-21 May (ST, m.ob.), and a bird was tallied 13 May in Nova Scotia (North American Migration Count). An Eastern Screech-Owl 8 May near Avondale, PEI (Dan McAskill, RC) furnished just

the 8th provincial record. An unexpected Great Gray Owl delighted birders 5-11 Mar near Juniper, NB (Tiffany Thornhill, m.ob.) Two nesting boxes on St. Pierre were occupied by Boreal Owls by mid-Apr (RE). A lone Common Nighthawk reached St. Pierre 17 May; the species is noted here in spring just one year in three. More remarkably, a Chimney Swift appeared 22 Apr at St. Lawrence, NL (Gail & Norman Wilson); the species is very rare on Newfoundland, and this is an extremely early record for anywhere in the Region. Numbers of Common Nighthawks and Chimney Swifts in Nova Scotia were distressingly low, the latter perhaps due *Wilma* mortality last autumn. Two Red-bellied Woodpeckers were reported in New Brunswick, and a pair was near Halifax, but we have no report of a nest as yet. A Yellow-bellied Sapsucker wintered successfully for the 2nd time at Hantsport, NS, while one on St. Pierre 10 Apr was locally rare and rather early (Michelle Borthayre). The only Willow Flycatchers reported were in Grand Falls, NB 17 May (Paul Mansz, MC) and near Savage Harbour, PEI 27 May (DS).

On 23 May, Jill Cooper-Robinson observed a strange hummingbird in her flower garden in downtown Halifax. The most striking features were its red bill and iridescent green body with darker underparts. The description matches Broad-billed Hummingbird. The lack of any reddish on the wings was noted but not the whitish undertail coverts, which can be hard to see on perched birds. There are a few records of the species in e. North America, including one in New Brunswick in late Oct 1999, but apparently

none for spring. There was no feeder on the property, and the bird only stayed for a few hours. A presumed Ruby-throated Hummingbird was seen 18 May on St. Pierre by Philippe Autin, who reported that the hungry bird confused red gloves for (absent) flowers and tried to feed on each finger (*vide* RE). Two Warbling Vireos were found in late May in Nova Scotia: 28 May at Port William, Kings (Richard Stern) and 30 May on Brier I. (EM). The last Purple Martin colony in Nova Scotia, at Oxford, had only a few males this spring;



This adult Slaty-backed Gull was the third of its species to be found at the St. John's landfill in 2006; it was present 23 April (here) through 3 May. Photograph by Bruce Mactavish.

the species is declining in New Brunswick as well. However, 2 reached Newfoundland, where very rare: 12-16 Apr at Bonavista (JJ) and 15-16 Apr at Clarendville (Dan Myers), both sightings very early. One at St. Pierre 24-26 May (Pascal Asselin) was rare but more seasonable. Two Cliff Swallows 22-27 May at Allisary Creek, PEI were considered locally rare (DS). The Black-capped Chickadee population at St. Pierre has been reduced to a single male, noted sporadically 10 Mar-8 May (PB). Prince Edward I. enjoyed its first Carolina Wren 10 Apr+ in Charlottetown (Kevin Teather, Andy Horn). Nova Scotia's 13th Carolina Wren took up station in Spryfield, H.R.M. 30 Mar-8 May (FL et al.), and another was singing at Crystal Crescent Beach P.P., NS 25 Apr (HT).

New Brunswick birders found the only Blue-gray Gnatcatchers this spring—at Saint John 1 May (MC) and on G.M.I. 22 May. There was an unprecedented spring movement of thousands of Black-capped Chickadees through Brier I., NS 5-30 May (m.ob.); most moved on, but many lingered on the island into Jun. Presumably, this flight involved returning individuals from the heavy autumn movement recorded throughout se. Canada and New England. The e. coast of Newfoundland enjoyed a small influx of Northern Wheatears: one at Broad Cove 11 May; one at Bonavista 14 May; 3 at Cape Race 14-15 May; and one at Cape Spear 26 May. Hermit Thrush has become the commonest thrush on St. Pierre, far surpassing Gray-cheeked Thrush,

which is now very uncommon and local (*vide* RE). A Townsend's Solitaire, Nova Scotia's 15th, was belatedly identified at Chezzetcook 27-30 Mar (Brenda McAloney) but had been present for some weeks. A Gray Catbird 27 Apr on St. Pierre (Patrick Hacala) was the earliest arrival on record. The only Brown Thrasher sightings were 4 in New Brunswick in mid-May.

## WARBLERS THROUGH FINCHES

There was but a single rare warbler this spring, a Yellow-throated Warbler in Annapolis, NS 13 May (Donald Barnes). Etcheberry noted that Northern Waterthrushes arrived in low numbers and nine days later than average on St. Pierre. The annual Apr-May "rainbow show" of colorful passerines suffered from lack of southerly winds this spring: there were no Summer Tanagers and but 2 Scarlet Tanagers, both in Nova Scotia, plus a male Scarlet on St. Pierre 2-7 May, followed by a female 31 May (PB). Three Eastern Towhees,

including a pair, wintered in Lunenburg, NS. Clay-colored Sparrows appeared only in New Brunswick, with sightings of singles at l'île de Lamèque 29 Apr (Hilaire & Rose Aline Chisasson) and on G.M.I. 20-21 May (ST, m.ob.). Two Field Sparrows wintered in H.R.M., and there were six May sightings split equally between New Brunswick and Nova Scotia. A Vesper Sparrow in the Forest Hill area, PEI 7 May was locally rare (RC), and a Swamp Sparrow wintered on St. Pierre. Three White-crowned Sparrows wintered in Kings, NS, as did 2 in New Brunswick. Golden-crowned Sparrows made the news in the Region this spring. New Brunswick's 4th successfully wintered in Memramcook (until 22 Apr), but then a 5th (or the same?) bird was found 28 Apr-9 May at a Quispamsis feeder, in full song (Geraldine Black). In Nova Scotia, the Barrington bird wintered (last seen 22 Apr, just as with the Memramcook bird), but the province's 9th was found in Wolfville 15 Apr (Jim Wolford et al.), where it lingered until 22 May. An Oregon Junco was nicely documented 13 May in Sand Lake, Cape Breton, NS (ph. Cathy Murrant); there are only a few previous records in Nova Scotia.

Rose-breasted Grosbeaks were thought to be in normal numbers in the Maritimes, but farther n. there was a good flight, with 10-12 noted across Newfoundland and at least 8 reaching St. Pierre. Remarkably, there was but a single Blue Grosbeak, in May in Lunenburg, NS, and the Indigo Bunting totals were sub-par, 15 in Nova Scotia, 6 in Newfoundland, 3

in New Brunswick, 2 on St. Pierre, and one on Prince Edward Island. Nova Scotia's 18th Painted Bunting, which arrived in Lunenburg in Feb, remained through 13 Apr. Dickcissels were few: just 3 in Nova Scotia and one in New Brunswick.

A male Yellow-headed Blackbird at Peck Meadows, Kings, NS 5 May (Bernard Forsythe) could have been the same as the male reported in nearby Windsor almost two weeks later. Rusty Blackbirds continue their decline across the Region, with few in Nova Scotia and two reports from St. Pierre, where relatively rare (RE). There were only four May Orchard Oriole sightings in Nova Scotia and just one from New Brunswick. A Eurasian Siskin at a Mary's Point, NB feeder 29-30 Apr (ph. DC; <<http://homepage.mac.com/maryspt/PhotoAlbum9.html>>) was well documented and just a 2nd for the province. The New Brunswick Bird Records Committee has yet to rule on the report, but records of Common Chaffinches and Bramblings have been accepted. There was little to report regarding other "winter finches" except that American Goldfinches are now wintering on Miquelon; they had already begun doing so on St. Pierre.

**Addenda:** Several Nova Scotia sightings from summer 2005 were inadvertently omitted from the Regional report. A Least Tern was found and photographed at C.S.I. 24 Jul (Murray Newell); a small tern seen fleetingly at Canso 21-22 Jun (Tom Kavanaugh) was likely a Least as well. A Boreal Owl in a Guysborough nestbox produced 2 fledglings, for the province's first mainland nesting of this enigmatic species. A Chuck-will's-widow was flushed twice in Guysborough 9 May (†Fulton Lavender); another was heard at Williams L., H.R.M. in late May (Kris Allinson) and confirmed 23-29 Jun; locals reported having heard the same bird the previous summer! These represent the 10th and 11th records for the province.

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