

Atlantic Provinces Region

BLAKE MAYBANK

After one of the coldest winters in recent memory, March and April brought welcome sunshine and warmth to the mainland, opening lakes and removing snow weeks ahead of the several previous "Pinatubo" springs. Even in frosty Newfoundland the spring brought more climatological joy than they had experienced for a while. May was very wet, but not especially stormy, a distinction that Maritimers understand. The rains (with some snow for Newfoundland) were interspersed with fair migrating weather; consequently, most breeding species arrived more or less on schedule, and few large migration movements were detected.

Rarities occurred as usual, but with few of the distinct influxes we have enjoyed in recent years. Newfoundland was the exception, with two different European movements, one of which included a North American first. Other local firsts include two for New Brunswick, two for Saint Pierre et Miquelon, and one for Prince Edward Island.

Reporting was good for New Brunswick and mainland Nova Scotia, fair from Cape Breton, Nova Scotia, and the Avalon Peninsula of Newfoundland, and poor to non-existent elsewhere.

A disturbing trend in Nova Scotia is that while birding is growing in popularity, the membership in the Nova Scotia Bird Society is dropping sharply; it's from that society's newsletter that the majority of the province's sightings are received. A better system is needed to encourage people to contribute their data, for with the current increasingly spotty pattern of observations, the true status of our Maritime bird populations is becoming harder to determine.

Abbreviations: GM (*Grand Manan archipelago, New Brunswick*); SPM (*Saint Pierre et Miquelon*); CSI (*Cape Sable Island, Nova Scotia*); Sable (*Sable Island, Nova Scotia*).

Loons to Herons

Poor Regional coverage makes it hard to understand the population shift in Red-necked Grebes. Few high counts of this species were received in Nova Scotia, although less than 5% of the Atlantic coastline is regularly covered. Several hundred Red-necked Grebes

were seen in the last 2 weeks of March, however, along the s. coast of the province. Meanwhile, across the Bay of Fundy, GM hosted 350 Mar. 18 (BD). In SPM the Red-necked population shifted in May from Michelon (<50 birds) to St-Pierre (almost 100) (*fide RE*). If all the large gaps between these few observations could be filled in, we might learn more about the numbers and movements of this over-wintering bird.

The April/May southern heron scorecard was slimmer than usual. As usual, Nova Scotia and New Brunswick dominated the game. The tally follows:

Species	Province		
	NS	NB	NF
Great Egret	22	1	—
Little Blue Heron	3	—	—
Snowy Egret	13	—	—
Tricolored Heron	—	2	—
Cattle Egret	2	—	—
Green Heron	22 (extralimital)		
Yellow-crested Night-Heron	1	—	—
Glossy Ibis	2	—	1

The Little Egret on Bon Portage Island, NS failed to return for its 6th spring, but in recompense New Brunswick's first Little Egret was discovered near Saint John May 28–29 (Cecil Johnston *et al.*).

Waterfowl

Snow Geese returned to normal low numbers in New Brunswick, with but 7 reports and no large flocks. There were also two at Cavendish, PEI May 10 (L. Thomas). By contrast, a flock of 37 near Boot Island, NS April 23 was noteworthy (J. Tufts). In spring migration Brant were essentially confined to 3 locations: There were 2400 birds on CSI, 650 in the vicinity of Brier Island, NS, and 4500 around GM, all Mar. 20.

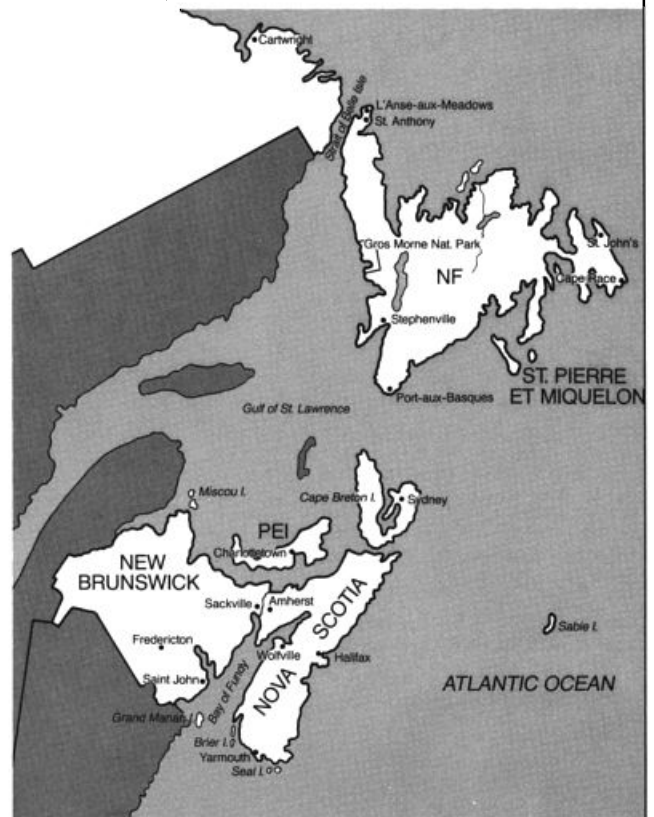
The lone "Eur." Green-winged Teal was discovered on Sable May 4–20 (AM). Eurasian Wigeon were more in evidence. The over-wintering female in St. John's, NF remained until mid-April (BMt *et al.*). Four single drakes appeared elsewhere: Lower Jemseg,

NB April 15 (M. Campbell); Big Island, NS April 22–May 1 (CB *et al.*); SPM May 2 (LJ); and Pisquid Pond, PEI May 21 (D.G. Stewart). Interesting was a well-documented ♂ Eurasian x American Wigeon hybrid discovered May 8 at Three Fathom Harbour, NS (IM *et al.*, ph.). Although this hybrid is regularly sighted (though less often documented) on the w. coast of North America, this may be the first such hybrid report from the northeast.

Lesser Scaup are rare in the Region (4 spring reports from Nova Scotia and Newfoundland), except in the Acadian Pen. of New Brunswick, where Doiron found 160 at the Tracadie sewage lagoons May 5, with smaller numbers elsewhere along the shoreline. Doiron has always found Lessers regular, not rare, in the peninsula, especially in autumn, when Lessers sometimes outnumber Greater. Better coverage, better knowledge.

Newfoundland had its first spring Tufted Ducks April 29 in St. John's, both ad. males, one remaining to May 4, the other May 9. Mactavish believed they arrived on the same weather that brought the Greater Golden-Plovers (see below), but two Tufted Ducks also escaped from CSI earlier the same month, and disappeared. If they followed other ducks north...

The Harlequin Duck (e. population, Endangered) update included 3 reports of nine birds from New Brunswick, including five that over-wintered on GM; pairs at Cape



Tryon, PEI in May, and SPM in late March; and a heartening flock of 40 at Little Point L'Hebert, NS Mar. 27 (R. Stern *et al.*). More coverage is needed to determine the true status of this scarce bird. Exotic Waterfowl: The Barnacle Geese released near GM several winters ago are still breeding on CSI. The flock is currently seven, with two pairs of breeding age. The flock migrates in autumn, and returns each spring. Another waterfowl fancier, this time on CSI, had a breakout of some unclipped birds in April, including (at least) two ♂ Cinnamon Teal and two ♂ Tufted Ducks. I wish all rarities committees the best of luck.

Diurnal Raptors to Shorebirds

Six Turkey Vultures overwintered on Brier Island, NS, their regional stronghold. Away from this locale there was a good showing, with 4 reports of five birds across Nova Scotia (CSI, Economy, Puplicover L., Apple River), and 9 reports of 19 birds in New Brunswick, including five on GM May 11 (ST). Perhaps this summer breeding will finally be confirmed in the Region.

For the 7th spring in the last 16 years Greater Golden-Plovers were recorded in Newfoundland, the 2nd or 3rd biggest wave yet. The actual numbers and distribution of the movement are impossible to assess, given the lack of observers away from St. John's, but at least 205 birds were encountered between April 20–May 14. The precise date of arrival is unknown. Some maximum counts from scattered locales: 23 April 20, Ramea; 75 April 26, St. John's; 20 May 7, Cape Race; 23 May 9 Cape Bonavista (all *fide* BMT). There were also 12 birds in May at SPM (*fide* RE). There is an enormous amount of suitable unchecked habitat between these sites; who knows how many really arrived? The conditions needed to propel this movement seem to be at least 2 low pressure areas in tandem between Newfoundland and Iceland that funnel strong NE winds between the 2 locations.

Undoubtedly tied in with this movement was North America's first Eurasian Oystercatcher at Tors Cove, NF May 22–25 (C. Brown, PL *et al.*, ph). The bird was discovered by kayakers, with word not reaching birders until late May 24. An Am. Oystercatcher would have been treat enough, but the bird was correctly identified the morning of May 25, unfortunately the last day of its stay.

In retrospect a much more mundane American Oystercatcher was discovered at Three Fathom Harbour, NS May 8 C. Cameron, K. Tutt, m.ob., ph.), the 5th provincial record since 1920, and the 4th in recent years. The bird was present at least a week. "Eurasian envy" followed the discovery of the Newfoundland bird.



A first for North America was this Eurasian Oystercatcher at Tors Cove, Newfoundland, May 25, 1994. Photograph/Bruce Mactavish.



American Avocet at Linden Marsh, Nova Scotia, April 24, 1994. Photograph/Ken McKenna.



Black-tailed Godwit at St. John's, Newfoundland, May 18, 1994. Eighth record for the province. Photograph/Bruce Mactavish.

An American Avocet, photographed at the Linden Marsh, NS April 24 (KM), was the 14th provincial record.

The last bird of the European wave was an ad. Black-tailed Godwit of the Icelandic race at St. John's May 18–20 (BMT *et al.*). This is the 8th provincial (and Regional) record, the 6th in spring.

Gulls

There was but one spring Laughing Gull, one on Machias Seal Is., NB May 28 (JS). Although numbers of Com. Black-headed Gulls have sharply declined in Newfoundland, their numbers in Halifax, NS remain near normal; 40 were seen in a not-too-thorough search Mar. 20 (BMy *et al.*). Considering that the species has yet to be confirmed breeding in the province, a count of 2500 Ring-billed Gulls along the Nor-

thumberland shore, NS was impressive (FL *et al.*). A Mew (Common) Gull in Saint John, NB April 2–14, was a first provincial record for this sub-species (*fide* JE).

How to explain the flip in Lesser Black-backed Gull records? Newfoundland and Nova Scotia usually dominate, and this spring reported three and two birds respectively. But New Brunswick went berserk, with at least 16 different birds reported from diverse quarters between April 12–May 25.

Doves to Flycatchers

A most unusual first island record was provided by a N. Saw-whet Owl on Machias Seal Is., NB May 29 (JS, J. Hudson). An early and rare Whip-poor-will was calling at Green Bay, PEI April 5 (J. Waddell). The only known breeding site for this species in Nova Scotia—at Long Pond in Herring Cove—was active again by May's end.

A Red-headed Woodpecker was discovered in Westport, Brier Island, NS May 22, remaining through the period (v.o.). A record-early Yellow-bellied Sapsucker on CSI Mar. 24 (MN *et al.*) succumbed a week later. Encouraging was a Pileated Woodpecker near Boughton R., PEI April 18 (R. Conohan); the species had been considered provincially extirpated.

A Willow Flycatcher was discovered on territory near Avonport, NS, where two singing birds were present last year (*fide* RS). This is the 4th provincial record.

Swallows to Starling

Tree Swallows are recovering their numbers on the mainland after recent harsh springs, but in SPM Etcheberry still described them as very scarce. Extra-limital N. Rough-winged Swallows were at Seal I., NS May 3 (BMy, JT), and Glenwood, NS May 14 (*fide* RS). Out-of-range Cliff Swallows were on Sable May 20 (AM), and Portugal Cove South, NF May 14 (PL, J. Pratt).

The only spring House Wrens were on GM May 14 & 22 (ST). While Winter Wrens were widespread on the mainland, Etcheberry considered the 2 SPM sightings much below the long-term average. A single Carolina Wren was at Riverview, NB Mar. 28, an early date (J. Locke).

According to Stern in Nova Scotia and Etcheberry in SPM, Golden-crowned Kinglets were low in numbers compared to recent years. In suitable mainland habitat only a few singing birds were encountered daily, instead of the dozens of 2 years ago.

It was a good spring for Blue-gray Gnatcatchers. Nova Scotia had three: Yarmouth April 18 (H. Hall); Seal I., May 1–2 (BMy, JT); and Kentville May 31 (RS). There were ten different birds in May in New Brunswick, nine in the last 2 weeks. Rare in spring, a

N Wheatear was long-staying at Kouchibouguac N.P., NB May 24–30 (A. Clavette). Edsall described E. Bluebirds as increasing in New Brunswick, but provided no numbers for comparison. They remain rare in Nova Scotia, with only one confirmed nest this spring, at their traditional site on Brier I. A Gray-cheeked Thrush on CSI April 29–30 (BMy, JT *et al.*) was either *minimus* or *aliciae*; *bicknelli* is the local breeder in the province. Ten in SPM May 5 was considered an excellent number for that location (*vide* RE).

A **Fieldfare** on Langlade May 7–13 (LJ) was a first for SPM. It may have arrived with the European wave, but recall that Nova Scotia's first Fieldfare occurred this past winter.

Brown Thrashers were seen in force this spring. The over-wintering bird in Bedford, NS departed April 28 (B. Chalmers); there were three spring migrants elsewhere in the province, and many in s. New Brunswick, where they are rare breeders, including a respectable eight in GM.

The massive winter invasion by Bohemian Waxwings trickled to a halt, with the last sightings April 21 in Nova Scotia, and May 22 in New Brunswick. Not normally a feature of this report, Eur. Starlings made news by reaching Sable, 160 km offshore, where a flock of 50 were reported by McFarlane. One hopes they were just migrants.

Vireos to Warblers

Yellow-throated Vireos are very rare in spring, but two reached us this year; one May 22–28 on GM (P. Pearce, RD), and the other a well-described, single-observer sighting from PEI May 27, a first for the province (R. Cooke).

Two Blue-winged Warblers made a rare spring Regional showing, one seen and heard on GM May 21–22 (ST *et al.*), and one banded on Bon Portage I., NS May 22 (JC). More unusual in any season, a **Golden-winged Warbler** graced GM May 21–23 (JE *et al.*).

Doiron's patch includes the Caraquet, NB sewage ponds which, with their attendant flies, attract numerous warblers feeding before heading N across the Bay of Chaleur. An Orange-crowned Warbler was seen there May 29 (M. David), but more impressive was Doiron's conservative count of >10,000 Yellow-rumped Warblers May 23. Does his sighting answer Etcheberry's plaintive inquiry from SPM, "Where are the hundreds and hundreds of Yellow-rumps we used to see?" An ad. ♂ **Hermit Warbler** on GM May 14–15 (ST *et al.*), was a provincial first, but Regionally not unprecedented for spring. Canada's first 2 records were females from Sable in late May

and early June 1975. There are 2 autumn records from Newfoundland. A **Yellow-throated Warbler** was sighted at Fundy N.P., NB May 16 (FL); it is Regionally very rare in spring. Edsall described Pine Warblers as increasing breeders in New Brunswick, especially in the Fredricton area. An extra-limital ♂ Pine was on Sable May 12–16 (*vide* ZL). As with Pines, Prairie Warblers are much more common in autumn than spring, making a singing bird at Caraquet, NB sewage lagoons May 21 noteworthy (RD, ph.). Also rare in spring was a ♀ Prothonotary Warbler on Seal I., NS May 3 (BMy, JT). Remarkably, a **Yellow-breasted Chat** on Brier I., NS May 22 (*vide* KK), was the first May record for the province, and only the 2nd for spring; there are hundreds of autumn and early winter records. Two chats on GM May 30 were similarly rare (*vide* BD).

Tanagers to Finches

From mid-April–mid-May there were 4 Summer Tanager reports, three in Nova Scotia and one in New Brunswick, for an average count. By contrast, Scarlet Tanagers were hard to find; there was only one sighting on GM, and but 4 records from across Nova Scotia.

After the Region's best-ever winter for N. Cardinals it isn't surprising that 5 pairs were found nesting on GM. Elsewhere there was a score of sightings on mainland New Brunswick, and a couple dozen in Nova Scotia, mostly in the south.

After last spring's influx, Blue Grosbeak numbers returned to normal: five in New Brunswick, three in Nova Scotia, all between April 15–May 5. Indigo Buntings were equally scarce, with eight birds in New Brunswick and three in Nova Scotia in the same period—it's not often New Brunswick bests Nova Scotia in the battle of the blues. New Brunswick also out-performed Nova Scotia in the Rufous-sided Towhee competition, with 6 sightings to Nova Scotia's one.

A rare spring Dickcissel was at New Ross, NS May 24–25 (G. Graves, J. Parker).

Field Sparrows were elusive, with two sightings in both New Brunswick and Nova Scotia, all in mid- to late May, save for an early bird in Alma, NB April 12 (R. Walker). A **Lark Sparrow** on SPM April 27–May 1 provided the first local spring record, and was perhaps the earliest for the Region; there are fewer than 8 Regional spring records. A very early Sharp-tailed Sparrow was resting on a lobster pot on CSI May 4 (JC). In an echo of last autumn's impressive migration, there were many sightings of White-crowned Sparrows through the Region, all between May 3–23, peaking May 10; >40

birds were reported from New Brunswick (the majority from GM), with a further seven birds in Nova Scotia. An "Oregon" Dark-eyed Junco was at Saint John, NB April 1 (*vide* JW).

The region's sole Yellow-headed Blackbird was a male near Kennetcook, NS May 27 (D. Harvey). There was a good flight of N. Orioles across New Brunswick and Nova Scotia, with dozens reported, but Nova Scotia alone hosted Orchard Orioles, with 5 sightings April 30–May 8.

Newfoundland's second, and the Region's seventh, **Common Chaffinch** was a female at a feeder in Middle Cove, Avalon Pen., May 21 (K. Knowles, ph.). The species is accepted on the Canada list, but has never been submitted to the A.O.U. or A.B.A. checklist committees, perhaps because of the potential taint of "escape." This bird is a good candidate for a valid vagrant, as the record was flanked by the aforementioned Black-tailed Godwit May 18–20, and the Eur. Oystercatcher May 22–25, both also on the Avalon Pen. The bird was extremely wary, and showed no sign of cage wear.

House Finches are still slow to take hold in Nova Scotia, not necessarily a bad thing. There were only 7 reports, just 2 suggesting possible nesting, in Overton and Halifax. Red Crossbills were widely reported across New Brunswick and Nova Scotia, and many had established territories by the end of May. The typical n.e. race seemed to be involved. White-winged Crossbills, by contrast, were almost absent.

After their abundant winter presence, Com. Redpoll numbers decreased across the region, with the last flocks in late April–early May. The only documented Hoary Redpoll was at a feeder in Tracadie, NB April 5 (RD, ph.). Finally, to feed the fascination many have with the comings and goings of winter finches, Pine Siskins and Evening Grosbeaks were both widespread and fairly common.

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