

Prairie Provinces Region

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The season was generally dry, with near-normal temperatures, and no major disturbances except for widespread heavy rains in the second half of May. Water conditions were good, except in central Alberta, where Beaverhill Lake remained extremely low. The leading edge of the migration in March was a little early in Manitoba. Two major waves of passerines paused around Winnipeg: sparrows and warblers May 13 and mainly warblers May 19–23. Otherwise, migration was generally slow and sparse. Shorebirds in Saskatchewan stole the rarity show.

Hérons to Raptors

Lone Am. Bitterns were unusual at Calgary May 9 (JRi) and Banff, AB May 10 & 24 (M&DM, JRo). The rarest herons were a Snowy Egret at Jackfish L., near Edmonton May 26 (CWi) and a Cattle Egret at Last Mountain L., May 19 (BL). A White-faced Ibis was at Stirling L., near Lethbridge, AB May 23 (RM), while a possible "Bewick's" Swan was seen there May 12 (RM, LN, JP). A Mute Swan was an odd sight flying over the boreal forest at Springer L., MB May 21 (RKO, PeT, DF, GG). Thirty Ross' Geese was a good count near Vauxhall, AB Apr. 27 (JRi).

The most unusual of 6 Wood Duck records in Alberta was a count of 10 at Banff Apr. 29 (M&DM). Cinnamon Teal were scarcer than of late in the Edmonton area (*vide* PM), but 4 Saskatchewan reports involved more than seven birds (*vide* RKr), and one was at Delta, MB May 22 (PG). A ♂ Eur. Wigeon at Winnipeg May 19–31+ (KC, m.ob.) was about the 16th for Manitoba; about 10 males were reported in Alberta Mar. 8–May 12 (m.ob., *vide* PS). A hybrid ♂ Eur. x Am. Wigeon was reported at Beaverhill L., May 6 (EM, RDi), and a possible hybrid was near Calgary Apr. 12 & 16 (TB, RL). Unusual in w. Alberta were single ♂ Greater Scaup at Vermilion Lakes Apr. 22 (JRo) and Langdon May 12 (MP); 91 Harlequin Ducks were counted on the Bow R. between L. Louise and Five Mile, AB May 9 (HD). Rare in the south in spring, six Oldsquaws were scattered across the 3 provinces; a ♂ Black Scoter at Steinbach May 5 (DF) furnished s. Manitoba's 3rd spring record.

Both early and far west was a Turkey Vulture near Longview, AB Mar. 29 (BM). A dark-morph Broad-winged Hawk at Lusk Cr., AB Mar. 30 (JS, FK) was early, and one at Pinawa, MB Apr. 30 (PeT) was unusual. Red-tailed Hawk migration at Windygates, MB peaked with 2543 birds in 5 days Mar. 30–Apr. 4 (D&AS). Seven Golden Eagles at the same location Mar. 13–Apr. 9 were notable, but paled next to the 4211 reported Mar. 3–May 8 at Mt. Lorette, AB (PS *et al.*)—only slightly higher than last year's total.

Rails to Woodpeckers

Yellow Rails were found at 2 new sites near Saskatoon (JW), and eight were at the n.e. end of Pike L., SK May 31 (FR).

The traditional site at Douglas Marsh, MB held >15 Yellow Rails in late May (CCu). Over 1000 Sandhill Cranes near Pansy Apr. 24 (DF) was a very high count for s.e. Manitoba. The Black-necked Stilt continued to consolidate as a breeding species near Tilly, AB, with 12 at Kinivie Marsh Apr. 24 (R&JD) and 13 there May 7–8 (JM); six were photographed near Edmonton, with details withheld (*vide* PM).

Two large flocks of Whimbrels crossed paths with birders: 160 at Taber, AB May 11 (LB) and 52 at Oak Hammock Marsh, MB May 21 (PT, RKo, DF, GG). The outstanding bird of the season was an ad. **Rufous-necked Stint** at Pelican L., SK May 23–24 (CE, RKr)—furnishing Saskatchewan's first and the region's 2nd record. In true Patagonia picnic-table fashion, it was found by observers seeking another Saskatchewan first, a **Curlew Sandpiper** at Pelican L., May 19 & 24 (LSg, GB, BL, TH). Forty Buff-breasted Sandpipers graced Beaverhill L., May 21–22 (JRi).

A Long-tailed Jaeger was seen near Brooks, AB May 14 (*vide* PS). Over 200 Ring-billed Gulls were early at Calgary Mar. 15 (B&AK). Always a joy to find inland, a Sabine's Gull was at Hastings L., AB May 24 (PhT), and five were at St. Paul, AB the same day (RKL). Two Arctic Terns were reported at Lost L., AB May 4 (RWe, WS). An unconfirmed Band-tailed Pigeon near Steinbach in mid-May (*vide* DF) was tantalizing. Straying in the opposite direction were mountaineering Mourning Doves at Mt. Lorette May 6 (JS) and Banff May 24 (JRo).

A well-described roosting **Barn Owl** was an exciting find near Regina May 3 (TS, *vide* RKr). Two W. Screech Owls responded vigorously to tapes along the Battle Cr. valley in the Cypress Hills May 11, one either side of the Alberta-Saskatchewan border (RKr, DH). Both Long-eared and Short-eared owls were unusually widespread in s. Manitoba, and 40 Short-eareds were counted at Blood Indian Reserve, AB Apr. 1 (D&TD). A N. Saw-whet Owl was in a nest-box at Spruce Woods P.P., MB as early as Mar. 5 (CCu), and more than three fledged near Stonewall, MB May 26 (KG). Rare e. of the foothills was a displaying Calliope Hummingbird in Calgary May 16 (*vide* PS). A Pileated Woodpecker in Medicine Hat, AB May 28 & 29 was a first for the city (DB).

Passerines

Unusually early were a Least Flycatcher near Lethbridge, AB Apr. 24 (LSv), a Say's Phoebe at Mt. Lorette, AB Mar. 27 & 28 (PS), and a Cliff Swallow in Calgary Mar.



30 (MP). Common Ravens fledged two young on a telecommunications tower in Brandon, MB (RWi). A Carolina Wren was seen just once at Kleefeld, MB May 20 (RDu), while a Winter Wren was an early bird at Banff, Mar. 14 (JRo). Large Am. Robin concentrations included 1000 at Turtle L., SK Apr. 17 (MC), >400 in Stonewall Apr. 22 (KG), and >1000 between Beausejour and Seven Sisters Falls, MB Apr. 23 (RKO, PeT). A Varied Thrush at Pike Lake P.P., SK was last seen Apr. 1 (KP, *fide* MW), and another remained in Winnipeg to Apr. 19 (W&JS). Becoming "rare but regular" in Alberta, single N. Mockingbirds were found at Calgary May 16 (*fide* PS) and Bow Valley P.P., May 29 (MP).

Warbling Vireos seemed more numerous than usual in s. Alberta (DB, TK). Winnipeg's best warbler wave in about 15 years included two Golden-wingeds (rarely seen on migration) in mid-May and a ♀ Black-throated Blue May 21 (all BS). The overwintering Yellow-rumped Warbler at Claresholm, AB was still present at the end of March (J&RA, JS, m.ob.). Rare in the mountains were single Magnolia Warblers at Banff May 29 (M&DM) and Bow Valley P.P., May 29 (MP), a Black-and-white Warbler at Vermilion Lakes May 20 (MM), and an Ovenbird at Mt. Lorette May 23 (PS).

Seven W. Tanagers in mid- to late May (m.ob.) was an unprecedented total in s. Manitoba. Also out of range was a Rose-breasted Grosbeak at Mt. Lorette May 23 (PS) and eight Black-headed Grosbeaks: four each in Manitoba and Saskatchewan. A heavy wave of White-crowned Sparrows paused in Medicine Hat in the first half of May (DB), while Harris' Sparrows were unusually widespread in the Edmonton-Tofield area, with 11 reports May 16-17 (*fide* PM).

Claresholm's other special winter visitor, the **Brambling**, was still present at the end of March (J&RA). A rosy finch at an Edmonton feeder May 8 (SK) was unusually late away from the mountains. The House Finch is edging up the abundance scale in s. Manitoba from rare to locally uncommon, and Saskatchewan records are also on the increase. In contrast, House Finches remain rare in Alberta; a female spent much of the season at a Calgary feeder (JH), and a male was noted in Calgary May 28-30 (CCo). One usually has to scan redpoll flocks carefully to find a few Hoaries, so reports of 175 Hoary with 75 Com. redpolls at Sheep R., AB Mar. 13 (WS, CWe) and >20 Hoaries with four

Commons at Ile-a-la-Crosse, SK Mar. 7 (RH) were notable.

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Northern Great Plains Region

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The season was generally cool and dry in North Dakota. After an early rush of waterfowl the first half of March, the later part of the month and April were cool, with most birds slow to arrive. A late spring snowstorm hit much of the Dakotas near the end of April. Eastern North Dakota had a good fallout of passerines May 13. Despite the dryness of the period, wetland water levels remained good because of last year's reserves and the spring runoff.

Montana was warmer and wetter than average, especially in May, and the migrant flow was observed as being about average.

Several interesting records for North Dakota were tallied—including two species new for the state—but numbers of migrants, especially shorebirds and many passerines, were generally unimpressive. Some observers missed usually reliable migrant species. On the other hand, with the increased water levels in wetlands, numbers of breeding waterfowl, rails, and wetland dependent passerines increased significantly. After last year's cool summer with poor nesting success, many nesting passerines appeared in reduced numbers.

