

Atlantic Provinces Region

BLAKE MAYBANK

After one of the most pleasant winters in years (at least in the mainland provinces), spring arrived "early," with a temperate March and April. To punish our complacency, wet snow fell across the Maritimes on each of the first two weekends in May, with amounts in New Brunswick May 7 exceeding 50 centimeters in places. It quickly melted, fortunately, and no noticeable bird mortality was reported. And judging from this spring's black fly crop, insects were not impacted either.

Newfoundland and Labrador, farther north, also enjoyed a more pleasant spring than in recent years, although it was much snowier than normal. The apparent neotropical migrant decline continues unabated, according to most observers. Migrant traps are a poor measure, of course, even in such well-covered locales like Saint



Pierre et Miquelon, where Roger Etcheberry lamented "Passerine birds were low again—will it ever be otherwise in the future?" Reporting was good for New Brunswick, Nova Scotia, and Saint Pierre et Miquelon, fair from the Avalon Peninsula and Gros Morne National Park, Newfoundland, skimpy from Prince Edward Island, and poor to non-existent elsewhere.

Abbreviations: GM (*Grand Manan archipelago, NB*); GMNP (*Gros Morne National Park, NF*); LAM (*L'Anse aux Meadows, Nfld*); SPM (*Saint Pierre et Miquelon*); CSI (*Cape Sable I., NS*)

Special Report

The island of Newfoundland conveniently shields the Maritime provinces from the worst influences of the cold Labrador current and the Arctic ice-packs—and mainlanders, who thereby bask in relative warmth, are grateful for the interception. Unfortunately for Maritime birders, however, the island also blocks the wayward dispersal of Iceland-bound spring migrants that, almost half the springs in recent years, get caught up in NE winds, and are deposited along the n.e. coasts of Newfoundland and Labrador. This spring provided yet another such vagrant influx, one of the most exciting ever, including a North American first.

A storm Apr. 25–28, with accompanying gale or

Common Redshank at Bonavista, Newfoundland, April 29, 1995. An overdue first confirmed record for North America, and part of a big storm-driven "invasion" of European birds at the end of April. Photograph/Bruce Mactavish.

storm force NE winds, deposited a number of Iceland-bound birds along the northeast-facing headlands of e. Newfoundland. The usual avian deposit is numerous flocks of **Greater Golden-Plover** (average arrival Apr. 26). This spring's flight was typical in that respect, but other wonderful birds were thrown in for good measure. The first plover was reported from Goose Bay, Labrador, Apr. 28 (GE), but later that same day Jon Joy of Bonavista flushed North America's first **Common Redshank** while walking with his daughter. Local birders searching the next day found two redshanks and other Eurasian species, including two **Pink-footed Geese**. Then the twitchers arrived, and everything snowballed. Here is a summary of the species thought to be involved in this movement; to more fully appreciate the wonder of the event, I direct you to an enjoyable account, written by Ken Knowles, in *Birders Journal*: Vol. 4:3:

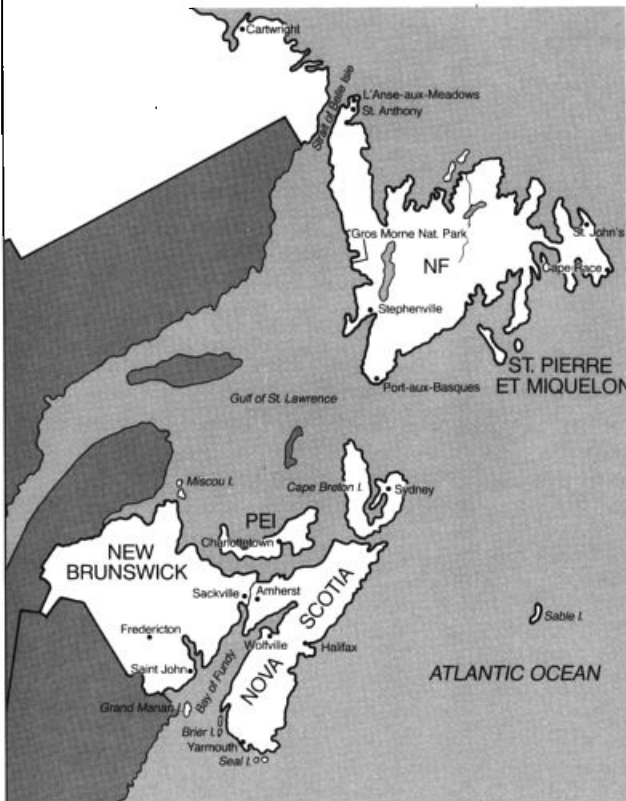
Pink-footed Goose:

- two Apr. 29–May 14, Port Union (CB, ph., m.ob.).
- one May 2–26, near LAM (BB *et al.*)
- one May 6–16, Outer Cove, Avalon Pen. (J. Pratt *et al.*)
- one mid-May–May 27, St. Anthony, (m.ob.)

The only previous Newfoundland (and Regional) record was May–early June 1980 in St. Anthony.

Garganey:

- ad. drake May 18–20, Plum Pt (J. Gibbons, *et al.*). Provided a first provincial record; the bird may not have had storm origins, as the species doesn't breed in Iceland.



"Eurasian" Green-winged Teal:

- drake May 1, Grand Codroy R. (CB)
- drake early May, Goose Bay (GE)

Eurasian Wigeon:

- drake Apr. 29–May 14, Bonavista (m.ob.)
- pair Apr. 29, St. John's (K. Hookey)
- drake Apr. 30–May 15, St. John's (m.ob.)

Greater Golden-Plover:

—14 reports totaling 90 individuals between Cape Race and Goose Bay Apr. 28–May 25. Most were on the Avalon and Bonavista peninsulas Apr. 29–May 10. The more interesting locations were:

- one Apr. 28–May 1, Goose Bay (GE)
- nine early May, North West R., Labrador (GE)
- seven May 3, Point au Mal Provincial Park, w. coast Newfoundland (CB)

Common Redshank:

- one Apr. 28–May 1, Bonavista (J. Joy *et al.*)
- one Apr. 29–May 1, Bonavista, with first bird (BMt *et al.*)
- one Apr. 29–May 7, Port Union, Bonavista Pen. (CB, m.ob.)
- one May 4–14, Cape Broyle, Avalon Pen. (ST, JW, m.ob.)

"Eurasian" Whimbrel:

- one Apr. 30–May 10, Port Union (JW *et al.*)
- one May 2, Lumsden (ST)
- one May 4, Ferryland, Avalon Pen. (ST, JW)

Northern Wheatear:

—record number (seven) and record early (Apr. 29–May 2), between Cape Race and Cape Freels (m.ob.), and therefore thought to be Iceland-bound birds, and not Labrador breeders, which migrate later. As Mac-tavish asks, "If wheatears can make it over in a raging gale, why not Meadow Pipits?" Perhaps next spring.

Barely a taste of this twitchers' banquet reached s. and w. of Newfoundland; single Greater Golden-Plovers were found on SPM in early May (RE *et al.*, ph), and on Cherry Hill Beach, NS May 13 (SF). Perhaps if Newfoundland hadn't joined Canada in 1949. . .

Pelicans to Herons

An ad. **Brown Pelican** strayed briefly N to GM Apr. 23 (W. Green *et al.*); the Region is long overdue a cooperative long-staying bird.

The Region's annually rare herons are summarized on the following chart; Great Egrets were noticeably scarce and, oddly, bypassed Nova Scotia and New Brunswick.

Table 1. Overshooting Herons

	NS	NB	PEI	NF
Great Egret			1	1
Little Blue Heron		3		
Snowy Egret	3	6		
Tricolored Heron	1			
Cattle Egret	1	1		
Green Heron	1	4	1	
Glossy Ibis	1	6		1

New Brunswick had a brief visit by a Least Bittern at GM May 23 (DSC, R. Elliott). A bird discovered May 13 at Louisbourg, NS (H. O'Shea) was initially, and understandably, reported as a Snowy Egret, but McCorquodale upgraded it to a **Little Egret**, present to the end of the period. This represents the Region's 6th record, and the 4th for Nova Scotia, assuming the repeated sightings over 4 springs and summers on Bon Portage I., NS, to have been of the same individual. Nova Scotia's 3rd, the Region's 4th, **White Ibis** was an imm. bird found by an uncredited visitor on Brier I., Apr. 18, and present through Apr. 21 (v.o.).

Waterfowl

Two Whooper Swans were reported from several locales in New Brunswick in the latter half of May, and were assumed to be the two that disappeared from Plum I., MA, the first week of May. In the light of known escapes of this magnificent species, it will be hard to convince most observers that any sightings in the NE pertain to birds of wild origin. Brant numbers peaked at about 8000 in mid-March, roughly split between New Brunswick (on GM) and Nova Scotia (on CSI and Brier I.).

New Brunswick has more dabbling duck habitat by far than the other provinces and observers study them closely, hence the number of European ducks found there. At least four Eur. Green-winged Teal were found in New Brunswick, all but one pre-dating the European arrivals in Newfoundland. All were drakes, with females undoubtedly being over-looked. Two drakes and a possible female that had over-wintered in the Avalon Pen., NF, were last seen mid-May.

Northern Pintails, which have established a strong presence in St. John's, NF, now seem intent on dominating Sable Island, NS. Four broods were noted before the end of the period, and they will soon out-number Black Duck broods there. This species is also quite common on SPM, where 3 broods were seen before the end of the period. Pintail are not common or dominant anywhere on the mainland.

No fewer than seven Eur. Wigeon, six of them drakes, were found in New Brunswick from mid-April+. Nova Scotia had only two, one an over-wintering drake in Dartmouth last seen mid-April, the other a drake on Sable I. Apr. 4 (ZL). The over-wintering ♂ Eur. Wigeon in St. John's, NF, fell in love with the single over-wintering ♀ Am Wigeon, and the pair left in mid-May to create future identification problems for the rest of us. New Brunswick could not lay claim to any Tufted Ducks, however. All the reports up to mid-April in Nova Scotia and Newfoundland pertained to over-wintering birds (see Winter report).

Raptors to Shorebirds

The over-wintering, one-eyed **Black Vulture** at St-Leolin, NB left sometime in March, but was rediscovered on Miscou I. the last week of April. There was a large arrival of Turkey Vultures across the mainland in April and early May. Eight reports of >20 birds came from New Brunswick, while Nova Scotia had over 30 birds, including flocks of 12 at Brier I., May 4 (a few of which had over-wintered) and eight at CSI Apr. 23 (MN *et al.*). Nesting still has not been confirmed in Nova Scotia.

In an otherwise unremarkable hawk season, there were 3 sightings of Red-shouldered Hawk in New Brunswick, and an ad Golden Eagle on GM Apr. 21 (*vide* DSC) that appeared to be in distress.

Sandhill Cranes are almost annual in the Region, but never numerous. This year there were two at Lameque, NB, Apr. 22 (J Laroque).

For the 2nd consecutive year an **American Oystercatcher** reached Nova Scotia, May 8 only, on CSI (MN *et al.*). A Willet was n. and e. of its breeding range in the Region when it reached SPM May 24–28 (RE). Upland Sandpipers barely breed in the Region, in New Brunswick and PEI; four were found in each province, at known breeding sites. Elsewhere, only one was seen on Sable I., May 22-27 (ZL). Marbled Godwits have been almost routine the last several years in Nova Scotia; this year CSI hosted one May 2–5 (MN *et al.*). Two Ruffs were seen, both in New Brunswick, and both males: one at the mouth of the Keswick R., Apr. 30–May 5, and the other at Jemseg May 23–May 31 (both PP *et al.*). Two Am Woodcock, very rare breeders in Newfoundland, were performing a fine territorial display in GMNP May 4 (HD), at the same spot where one was observed a year earlier. Adverse winds in mid-May seemed to blow numerous pelagic phalaropes closer to land than normal. Red-necked Phalaropes were reported from shore at Brier I., Round Bay, Seal I., and CSI, all in Nova Scotia. An im-

Table 2. Spring Shorebird Migration

	NS	NB	SPM
Black-bellied Plover	60 (35)		2
Am. Golden-Plover	1		
Lesser Yellowlegs	1	2	
Solitary Sandpiper		4	
Whimbrel	5		
Ruddy Turnstone	30 (13)	1	
Sanderling	130 (80)	13	
Red Knot	9 (8)		1
Semipalmated Sandpiper	1		
Least Sandpiper	20	2	4
Pectoral Sandpiper	2		
Dunlin	7	1	
White-rumped Sandpiper		1	
Short-billed Dowitcher	2	3	

pressive flock of >250 Red-neckeds was seen off Point Riche, NF May 16 (BB). Two Red Phalaropes passed SPM at the same time (*vide* RE).

Table 2 summarizes the modest spring migration of non-regionally breeding shorebirds. No information was received from Prince Edward Island. Some birds, despite high-breeding plumage, seemed intent on lingering through June. Spring migration through the Atlantic Provinces is still little understood, although more is being learned yearly. In the table, the single biggest flock is in brackets after the number.

Gulls to Alcids

Two ad. Long-tailed Jaegers seen from Sable I., May 29 (ZL) were neither unexpected nor untimely, but still rare. It was a fairly quiet spring for unusual gulls. Nova Scotia had four Laughing Gulls; a 2nd-winter bird on George's Bank May 15 (R. d'Entremont), and three in Cape Breton, two of these at Louisbourg May 26 (DM, J. McKay). The only other report was at the Newfoundland gull "hot-spot" of LAM, where one was present Apr. 27–28 (*vide* BB). Franklin's Gulls seem to prefer Newfoundland to the other Atlantic provinces; the lion's share of records are from there. This year an ad. bird was at Stephenville Crossing May 3 (C. Brown), a typical arrival time. Not to be outdone, New Brunswick birders found a Franklin's Gull near Moncton May 26–June 1 (ST *et al.*). Two Little Gulls graced us this year, an adult at LAM, NF Apr. 27–28 (BB *et al.*) and a first-winter bird

on Sable I., (date unspecified, ZL). Away from Nova Scotia and Newfoundland, where they are expected, there were 4 reports of Com. Black-headed Gull from New Brunswick. The ad. Mew (Com.) Gull overwintering in Saint John, NB was last seen in late March. Typically, Newfoundland had the most Lesser Black-backed Gulls, at least 10, while Nova Scotia and New Brunswick reported a more modest two each.

Caspian Terns may be benefiting from the gull population decline. New Brunswick enjoyed 6 reports totaling 17 birds, while a remarkable flock of 62 Caspians was seen flying past St. George's Bay, NF (*vide* BMt). Elsewhere there were single birds in Cape Breton I. and SPM. The pioneering pair of Black Terns at SPM, well n. and e. of their modest mainland range, returned for their 4th year.

Cuckoos to Flycatchers

A Yellow-billed Cuckoo, more normal as an autumn rarity in the Region, was found dead on Sable I., May 20 (B. Beck). There were two Red-headed Woodpeckers seen this spring, one at Sackville, NB May 23 (A&M Armstrong), the other at Brier I., NS Apr. 10+ (C. Haycock *et al.*).

Eastern Wood-Pewees have reached SPM 12 springs out of 22. This year's was the earliest ever by one day May 25 (RE). It was a good spring for E. Phoebes, scarce breeders throughout the mainland part of the Region. Eleven individuals spanned Nova Scotia, the first Apr. 11, while there were at least six from New Brunswick. There were only four Great Crested Flycatchers, three in Nova Scotia, and one in New Brunswick. The mild spell in mid-April on the mainland propelled a few unusually early E. Kingbirds; the first two were in New Brunswick Apr. 17, one at Bancroft Pt. (H. Dalzell), the other at St. Martins (L. Marks). About a week later, and still ahead of schedule, was a bird at Alma, NB Apr. 28 (ST), and another at Apple River, NS Apr. 26. Western Kingbirds are a regular autumn visitor to the Region, primarily in New Brunswick and Nova Scotia, with over a dozen or more some years. However, there are but 3 or 4 spring records, so a bird at SPM May 28 was notable, and locally the first for the season (M. Derible).

Wrens to Thrashers

The Truro, NS, over-wintering Carolina Wren also "over-sprunged," all the while singing vociferously, and with fertility, for a mate. All the Blue-gray Gnatcatcher sightings were from New Brunswick: eight birds in total between Apr. 27–May 30. Away from the Newfoundland influx, New Brunswick enjoyed a N. Wheatear on GM May 21–22

(PP *et al.*). While E. Bluebirds are "doing well" in New Brunswick, they are still scarce elsewhere; there were 3 reports of pairs in Nova Scotia, and one pair in PEI. Wood Thrushes remain scarce, with only four singing birds reported, split between Nova Scotia and New Brunswick. The four Brown Thrashers were similarly divided.

Vireos to Warblers

Two Warbling Vireos were at Granton, NS May 28 (K. McKenna *et al.*); there are only about a dozen spring provincial records. They breed in small numbers in New Brunswick, where three were reported this year. Two Blue-winged Warblers were found in Nova Scotia, both on island migrant-traps; one on Bon Portage I., May 20 (I. Paterson), the other on Brier I., May 21, heard-only (RS). Most remarkable was a singing Golden-winged Warbler in St. John's, NF May 31–June 1 (C. Bradshaw *et al.*) found by a visiting Brit birder. This provided the 5th provincial record, the 2nd in spring; it is astonishing that this is also the only species of "s. vagrant warbler" to have occurred in the province in spring—all the rest were autumn birds. On the mainland, although most s. vagrant warblers arrive in autumn, there are numerous spring sightings. Some of them follow: Miscou I., NB had this spring's only Orange-crowned Warbler (R. Doiron, ph). A stunning Yellow-throated Warbler was at GM May 20 (J. Wilson); 95% of Regional records are for autumn, and most have occurred in Nova Scotia. A Pine Warbler successfully over-wintered in Nova Scotia in Dartmouth (J. Taylor); this is only the 2nd time one has done so. There are few spring Prairie Warbler records; one was on GM May 21 (E. Pike). Record early by 3 days was a Black-and-white Warbler in Cape Breton Apr. 26 (DM). A Worm-eating Warbler, about the province's 15th, was on Bon Portage I., May 21 (S. Baillie, I. Paterson). The majority of records are from spring, not fall. A mid-May Louisiana Waterthrush, from CSI, was observed in the company of two Northerns and was fairly convincingly described (MN). There are about a dozen provincial reports, mostly sight records. To close out the warbler report, a Hooded Warbler was reported from Caraquet, NB May 29 (B. Hebert); the increasingly active birders in the Acadian Pen. of New Brunswick are turning up many interesting finds, diverting some of the provincial birding attention away from GM.

Tanagers to Finches

Summer Tanagers are now apparently annual in spring in the Region: Nova Scotia

had two ad. males, one each at Saint George's Channel Apr. 15 (P. Gillis, ph.) and Cape Sable I., May 7 (MN *et al.*); New Brunswick had two, one May 13 at Grand Digue (R.A. Maillat), and a first-year male at Shediac Bridge May 26 (I. Doyle *et al.*). Scarlet Tanagers were only slightly more common, and as they are colorful and frequent feeders, their decline is likely as real as it is apparent. There were but six birds reported, equally split between Nova Scotia and New Brunswick. It was a quiet N. Cardinal spring in Nova Scotia, with only four individuals, but they are doing much better in New Brunswick, with scattered reports across the south, including several pairs.

The spring influx of the "blues" was more subdued this year. There was only one Blue Grosbeak May 24 on GM (DSC). Indigo Buntings were about average, with a couple of dozen birds each in Nova Scotia and New Brunswick, while two reached e. Newfoundland and one was found in Prince Edward Island, where they are not looked for seriously enough. New Brunswick's 4th **Painted Bunting** was an ad. male at a Moncton feeder May 5–9 (G. Watling *et al.*). There were three Rufous-sided Towhees in Nova Scotia, one in PEL, and New Brunswick's first "**Spotted**" **Rufous-sided Towhee**, an over-wintering bird at Taymouth last seen Apr. 18. Nova Scotia's 3rd or 4th spring occurrence of **Clay-colored Sparrow**, and one of few mainland records, was at Hartlen Pt., Mar. 25 (L. Cohrs). The only Field Sparrows were in New Brunswick: one in Alma Mar. 29–Apr. 21 (R. Walker), and on GM May 20 (R. Steeves).

New Brunswick's first **LeConte's Sparrow** was found and photographed on GM May 20; there are but 3 other Regional records, all in autumn, two for Nova Scotia (both photographed), and a multiple observer sight record from GMNP. Fox Sparrows were "little noted" in New Brunswick this spring, due to too little snow cover. However, bare ground didn't prevent Nova Scotia from enjoying its heaviest influx in many years, as Fox Sparrows apparently delayed their final hop over to a Newfoundland heavily blanketed in snow (but how did they know?). Some feeders in early April reported over 2 dozen birds, while a survey along Petpeswick Inlet Apr. 8 turned up no fewer than 110 singing ♂ Fox Sparrows, a delightful and rare cacophony on a Nova Scotia spring day (BMy, R. Foxall). A week later they were gone.

It was another fine spring for White-crowned Sparrows. New Brunswick reported nine birds, Prince Edward Island had two, SPM had one, while 18 more graced Nova Scotia, including some Regionally rare subspecies found on Sable I.; a *gambelii* Apr 28–May 1 (ZL) and a *leucophrys* May 21–26 (IM).

Eastern Meadowlarks struggle on, with 2

reports each from New Brunswick and Nova Scotia, totaling five birds. A rare spring ♂ Yellow-headed Blackbird was at Sackville, NB Apr. 6 (C. Cormier). A large grackle seen for 20 minutes in the company of Com. Grackles May 3 at Glace Bay, NS was either a Great-tailed (one previous record) or a Boat-tailed (no records, but expected) (H. Metcalfe); the details were not definitive. Observers across the Region reported a downward trend in the number of Brown-headed Cowbirds; there were fewer than 2 dozen mainland reports, plus two birds on SPM. While no one pretended regret, one proposed cause of the decline was simply fewer nests available for cowbird parasitism.

Five was a typical count for May Orchard Orioles; three were in New Brunswick, the remainder in Nova Scotia. Northern Orioles were more scarce than normal; the number did not even reach the double digits in either Nova Scotia or New Brunswick. White-winged Crossbills were widespread across the Maritimes, and settling to breed. Red Crossbills were one-tenth as numerous, but encountered on most trips to suitable habitat. Evening Grosbeaks may have been hard to find at feeders in any numbers, but in the forest they were easily heard and seen, setting up territories across the Maritimes.

Corrigendum

The following table was misprinted in last spring's report.

Table 3. Overshooting Herons

	NS	NB	NF
Great Egret	2	2	1
Little Blue Heron	3		
Snowy Egret	1	3	
Tricolored Heron	2		
Cattle Egret	2	2	
Green Heron	2	2 (extralimital)	
Yellow-crowned Night-Heron	1		
Glossy Ibis	2	1	

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Quebec Region

Y. AUBRY AND P. BANNON

In southern Quebec, March was very mild and dry with very little snow left on the ground by mid-month. Although April and May brought some rains, the water level in the main watercourses continued to be low throughout the spring. Lowlands normally flooded at this time of the year remained dry, with the consequence that concentrations of waterfowl and shorebirds were much reduced at certain key localities. Raptors were also low in number—especially Broad-winged Hawk, which had one of its poorest flights in years. On the other hand, there were some spectacular fallouts of passerines in May, especially in the Montreal region. Several birders reported 10–15 species of warblers in their backyard May 15, and the Blackpoll Warbler made a very strong showing May 24. These events were definitely weather related; in both cases a mild and still night was followed by fog and rain early the next morning. As it is often the case in spring, it was a very different story east of Québec City, where the six-foot deep snow-cover of early March did not disappear completely until mid- to late May, particularly on the Lower North Shore and the Gaspé Peninsula.

Loons to Waterfowl

Normally the Red-throated Loon shows up in the province during the 2nd week of May; prior to this year, our earliest sighting was Apr. 15 at Bonaventure I., *Gaspé*, in 1920. This year early arrivals included single birds at Côte-Ste-Catherine, *La Prairie*, Mar. 25, (PB, R. Piché); Chandler, *Gaspé*, Apr. 9 (PP), and Gros-Cap, Magdalen Is., Apr. 18 (DGG, BV). Unusually large concentrations of 1500 and 1000 birds occurred respectively at Rivière-Ouelle, *Kamouraska*, (CA) and I. aux Basques, *Rivière-du-Loup*, May 21 (COQ). A verbal description was obtained for a breeding-plumaged **Eared Grebe**, providing the 6th Regional record, seen briefly at Valleyfield Apr. 11 (B. Lazoni). Unfortunately, the bird could not be relocated. A N. Fulmar strayed to Beauport, *Québec City*, Apr. 29 (C. Nadeau, JLaC). The only out-of-range Great Cormorant was at I. aux Basques May 5 (M. Loiselle).

Well e. of its range, a Least Bittern was heard calling at L. Macpès, *Rimouski*, May