

Western Great Lakes Region

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The spring of 1996 will be remembered for its outstanding rarities. All three states had at least one new record for the Region: Minnesota had a Rock Ptarmigan, Wisconsin a Rufous-necked Stint, and Michigan contributed a White-collared Swift. Along with these extreme rarities there were numerous other excellent sightings, including first state records of Say's Phoebe in Wisconsin and Black Vulture in Michigan.

The weather was no less interesting than the bird records. Throughout the Region, March, April, and May had below-normal temperatures. Snow remained in the northern portions of the Region well into May, with new snow as late as the first week. Winter's grip was finally broken May 17 when a warm southerly breeze brought nice weather and a heavy migration of delayed migrants. After May 19 the cold weather returned and lasted through the month, with only a few brief respites. The migration was still going into early June as delayed migrants finally made their way north.

The migration from May 17–19 was one of the best in recent memory. Not only was the migration heavy and the diversity excellent, but the cool weather had retarded leaf-out and the lack of insects caused migrants to feed in unusual locations. Many observers reported arboreal birds such as Scarlet Tanagers and many wood warblers feeding on the ground with the thrushes and sparrows! What impact this stress had is not known; however, a high mortality must have certainly occurred.

This season had so many rare sightings and unusual records I was not able to include them all. I urge readers to consult each state's individual surveys in their respective journals to obtain a more complete record of the spring.

Abbreviations: M.B.R.C. (*Michigan Bird Records Committee*), W.P.B.O. (*Whitefish Pt. Bird Observatory, Chippewa Co., MI*)

Loons to Ibises

Whitefish Pt. Bird Observatory, MI, recorded 583 Red-throated Loons, with an

impressive maximum of 83 May 21. Also in Michigan were 12 reported between Apr. 18–May 31 at North Pt., *Alpena* (BG). Inexplicably, this species is much rarer in other parts of the Region. Minnesota reported an individual May 23 in *Carleton* (MS) and four May 28 in Duluth (TW). Wisconsin reported a "few" from the L. Michigan shoreline, mainly in *Manitowoc*. A record number Com. Loons were seen at W.P.B.O., with 11,738 recorded during the period and a new single-day high of 2089 May 7. Whitefish Pt. Bird Observatory had the highest concentration of Red-necked Grebes in the Region, with 334 during the season and a high of 78 Apr. 22. Wisconsin reported significant concentrations of 40–100 individuals at Wisconsin Pt. in mid- to late April (RJ et al.). Eared Grebes were more common in Wisconsin, with ten individuals between Apr. 21–May 30 from 7 sites. Michigan also had increased sightings of this species, with reports from 7 counties. Wisconsin had W. Grebe reports Apr. 23 in *Barron* (AG), May 21 in *Crex Meadows* (JH), and from May 18–31 with courtship display at L. Maria (TWO). Minnesota had a rare sighting of this species in Duluth May 19 (PB et al.), while the high total in its main range was 200 Apr. 25 in *Todd* (KL, PL). Minnesota had a Clark's Grebe May 4 in *Freeborn* (DN). Unusual numbers of Am. White Pelicans were reported throughout the Region, particularly in Wisconsin, where "hundreds" were reported between *Pepin* and *Hudson* on the Mississippi and St. Croix rivers. North of normal was a Least Bittern at Duluth, MN May 17 (DB). Also more widespread than normal were

Snowy Egrets, with Minnesota having 6 reports, Wisconsin 10 reports, and Michigan reports from 3 counties, including a 2nd county record for *Berrien*. Wisconsin had reports of Little Blue Herons Apr. 25 in Green Bay (DT), Apr. 26 in Milwaukee (BD), Apr. 28 in *Ozaukee* (TU), and two Apr. 19 in *Chippewa* (JP et al.). In Minnesota, a single Little Blue was reported Apr. 22 in *Dakota* (SK). Michigan hosted the only Tricolored Herons, with one May 4 at Nayanquing W.A., *Bay* (MHu, JHu) and two May 24 at Pt. Mouillee, *Monroe* (CP). North of normal was a Cattle Egret at Lake-of-the-Woods, MN May 26 (PS). In Michigan, 14 near New Buffalo, *Berrien*, May 10 (PC) was an exceptional number for this species in the s.w. portion of the state. Far north of normal was a Yellow-crowned Night-Heron in Baraga, MI May 9 (NI et al.). Wisconsin had an adult in late April–early May in Racine, and two birds in the first half of May in Milwaukee. Michigan had a cooperative Glossy Ibis, which remained from Apr. 26–May 12 at Erie Metropark, *Wayne* (KT, WP, CP), and a White-faced from Apr. 25–27 at the same location (KT, WP). Minnesota had two White-faced Ibises May 11–12 in *Cottonwood* and one–two birds from May 12–15 at Big Stone N.W.R., *Lac Qui Parle* (*vide* AH). In Wisconsin, 14 plegadis ibises were recorded May 11 in Milwaukee (DG) and one was seen May 19 in *Door* (JR).

Waterfowl

More numerous and early in the Region were Greater White-fronted Geese. Minnesota reported its 2nd-earliest record with



ten Mar. 1 in *Olmsted*, while n. of normal for that state was a bird May 18 at Duluth. Michigan had an uncommonly large flock of 14 at Pt. Mouillee, *Monroe*, present at the beginning of the period through Mar. 14 (CP, KT). Unusual for spring was a Brant Apr. 6 at the Muskegon Wastewater, *Muskegon* (PC). Minnesota reported Ross' Goose from 6 counties, including a 2nd county record in *Hennepin* (SC, m.ob.). Wisconsin had reports from Feb. 29–Mar. 4 in Winnecone, Mar. 24 near Beaver Dam (TWO), Mar. 31 Apr. 8 at Arlington Ponds, and two Apr. 13–14 in *Dodge*. Michigan had four Mar. 29 at Fish Pt., *Tuscola* (JB, MW, TG) and another Mar. 30 and Apr. 5 at Nayanquing, *Bay* (MW, JSo). Cinnamon Teal reports in Minnesota included singles Apr. 11 in *Hennepin* (JPo), mid-April in *Chisago* (*fide* AH), and Apr. 27–28 in *Lac Qui Parle*, while Wisconsin had a male May 4 at the Mead WA (DBe). Eurasian Wigeons were reported Apr. 15–21 e. of Shiocton, WI (DNu), and another was seen from Apr. 8–May 4 at Maple River State Game Area, *Gratiot*, MI (JBa *et al.*). One–two Harlequin Ducks were reported Apr. 3 in Manitowoc, WI (DT, CS). In Minnesota the male Barrow's Goldeneye which overwintered in the Twin Cities was last seen Mar. 24 at Blue L. lagoons, *Scott* (*fide* AH).

Raptors to Grouse

A **Black Vulture** Apr. 22 in *Barry* (RA, JG) provided Michigan its first well documented record. Also in Michigan were **Mississippi Kites** May 14 & 20 at W.P.B.O. (KT). A kite species was reported from *Green* in Wisconsin in early May. Bald Eagle numbers continue to increase at W.P.B.O.; this season 218 were recorded. Also at W.P.B.O. were individual Swainson's Hawks Apr. 21 and May 5. Elsewhere in Michigan the species was seen May 10 in *Washnaw* (MK), Apr. 19 at Port Crescent S.P., *Huron* (MW), and Apr. 25 at Estral Beach, *Monroe* (WP). Wisconsin had a single report Apr. 14 in

Iron (JE). In Minnesota a Prairie Falcon was reported Apr. 17 in *Clay* (CN). Gyrfalcons were seen in Michigan at Sault Ste. Marie to Mar. 24 (WPa), and Mar. 30 at Fish Pt., *Tuscola* (JB, MW, TG). In Wisconsin, this species was seen Mar. 23 & 25 in Green Bay, while in Minnesota the Duluth bird remained to Mar. 22 (*fide* KE). Unexpected was a male winter-plumaged **Rock Ptarmigan** May 20 at Grand Marias, *Cook* (KH, MH). If accepted by the Minnesota Ornithological Records Committee, it would be a first state record and the first for the lower 48 states. Also in that state, Sharp-tailed Grouse numbers were down 24% on spring lek counts.

Rails to Shorebirds

Unusual in Michigan were two Yellow Rails in *Alpena* May 27 (BG). Wisconsin reported this species from Comstock Bog, Navarino WA, Oconoto Marsh, and Crex Meadows, with numbers of \leq ten birds at some locations. Minnesota reported the species at Sax Zim bog, *St. Louis* (AH, PH, PS) for the 4th consecutive year, as well as in *Aiken* (WN) and *Kittson* (PS). King Rails were reported in Wisconsin from 4–7 sites, including four individuals at the Rat River WA. In Michigan, where the species is becoming increasingly scarce, the only observation came from Shiawassee N.W.R., *Saginaw*, May 31 (DP). Single Piping Plovers were reported in Wisconsin Apr. 30 in Milwaukee (DG), in Manitowoc May 1 & 3 (MP, CS), Ashland May 8 (JRa) and two in *Bayfield* May 15–16 (DV). Minnesota had two birds May 26 at their last breeding location at Lake-of-the-Woods (PS *et al.*). Michigan reports included individuals May 21 at Tawas Point S.P., *Iosco* (SR, GV), and May 9 & 16 at W.P.B.O., along with breeding pairs at Vermilion, *Chippewa*, and Grand Marias, *Alger*. Wisconsin had 3 sightings of **Black-necked Stilt** including one May 19 in *Fond du Lac* (DT, JBu, SB, TS), two at Horicon Marsh N.W.R. from May 22–23 (BBo *et al.*) and one May 31 at Vernon marsh (JS). American Avocets had an excellent showing in Wisconsin with between 65–70 birds at 5–6 locations and a maximum of 48 individuals at Milwaukee May 4. Minnesota also reported excellent numbers; noteworthy were 15 Apr. 27 in *Traverse* (DM, SM), 25 Apr. 27 at *Lincoln* (PJ), and 20 May 2 in *Washington* (EB, TB). Michigan had only a single record May 1 at Muskegon (ES, GW). In like fashion, Willets were very common, with Wisconsin reporting 100–115 individuals from 20 locations, and Minnesota having reports from 18 counties. Again

Michigan missed out, having only 2 reports of individuals Apr. 28 at Point Mouillee, *Monroe* (WP) and May 18 in *Alger* (DM). Minnesota reported Hudsonian Godwits from 11 counties with a high of 18 Apr. 18 in *Pipestone* (JPa). Wisconsin had 50–60 birds from various sites and Michigan had individuals in *Alger* May 18 (DM), and at W.P.B.O., May 18 & 23. Marbled Godwit reports in Michigan included one May 31 at Shiawassee N.W.R., *Saginaw* (DP) and three May 18 and one May 23 at W.P.B.O. Wisconsin had an outstanding migration with 40–45 birds from at least 10 sites, with a maximum of 23 in Madison. Western Sandpiper, a very rare spring species in the Region, was reported near Shiocton, WI May 16 (DT) and in Duluth, MN May 18 (KE *et al.*). A possible **Rufous-necked Stint** was photographed May 24–25 (Tba, JGr, MG *et al.*) at Marinette which, if accepted by the Wisconsin Society of Ornithology Records Committee, would provide a first for the state and the Region. A very rare spring visitor to the Region was a Buff-breasted Sandpiper May 23 in *Marshall*, MN (SSt). In Wisconsin a Ruff was found May 16 at Shiocton (DT).

Jaegers to Terns

An excellent find was an ad. Parasitic Jaeger May 26 at Duluth (DB), one of <10 spring records for Minnesota. At W.P.B.O., where this species is annual in spring, Parasitics were seen May 26 & 27. Laughing Gulls made a major incursion into Wisconsin with records Apr. 20 at Green Bay (RM), May 13–20 in Port Washington (TU), May 22 in Madison (BH), between May 21–28 in Milwaukee (MKo, SD), May 19–23 & 29 in Manitowoc (CS, DT, JR), May 27 and in *Ozaukee* (BD). Michigan had a very unusual record of a first-winter bird which remained at the Muskegon Wastewater from Mar. 8–18 (KT, JG, m.ob.). Little Gulls were reported in Wisconsin from May 16–19 in Milwaukee (MK, DG) and at Manitowoc from mid-May into June. Michigan had an individual reported May 29 at Tawas Point S.P., *Iosco*. Wisconsin had large numbers of Bonaparte's Gulls this season, with concentrations of 5000–15,000 birds at various harbors along L. Michigan. An ad. **California Gull** Mar. 30 in *Otter Tail* (DM, SM) was Minnesota's earliest arrival for this species. Lesser Black-backed Gulls continue to spread through the Region. Michigan had reports from 6 counties, while Wisconsin had individuals from 6 sites. Minnesota, still on the fringe of the range expansion, had a 3rd-summer bird from Apr. 5–13 in



A first for Minnesota [and apparently a first for the Lower 48 States] was this male Rock Ptarmigan at Grand Marias May 20, 1996. Photograph/Ralph Latham.

Dakota and *Hennepin* (KB, SC *et al.*). Very rare in the Region in spring was an imm. **Black-legged Kittiwake** in Wisconsin Apr. 3 in Manitowoc (DT) and again Apr. 14 in Two Rivers (RM *et al.*). Observers at W.P.B.O. reported a flyby ad. Ivory Gull Apr. 28 (KT, MK, JRo *et al.*). The bird seen at several hundred yards was identified on flight pattern, shape, all white appearance, and dark bill. The record is pending acceptance by the M.B.R.C. A **Royal Tern** found May 26 at Milwaukee (DB) provided Wisconsin with only its 5th record. Less rare in that state were **Arctic Terns** May 14–19 at Oconto (KS, JSm) and May 26 at Manitowoc (BD). Casual in Minnesota was a **Least Tern** May 16 in *Winona*.

Owls to Raven

The major invasion of n. owls from the winter continued well into the spring. Minnesota is still tabulating the results and will publish them at a later date. Wisconsin reported two N. Hawk Owls in the Brule area, and one in *Douglas* lingered to mid-March. Great Grays in that state reached record numbers, with 67 documented sightings, of which 32 were in the spring. Boreal Owls also reached record numbers, with 27 birds reported, 15 of which were found dead. In Michigan, six N. Hawk Owls were reported at W.P.B.O., including three May 14, two of which were doing courtship displays. Great Gray numbers at that location were also impressive, with 28 seen between Apr. 23–May 22, with a peak of five May 13. Sixty-one Boreal Owls were reported at W.P.B.O., which although impressive is still well below the record year of 1988, when 163 birds were banded. More unusual were the 17 banded between Apr. 5–27 near Rogers City, *Alpena* (BG), as well as numerous other reports well s. of their normal winter range. Long-eared Owls were reported from 11 counties in Minnesota, including a first record for *Waseca* Mar. 22 (RG). Also in that state were 42 Short-eared Owls from 11 counties, including a report of 13 migrating within 45 minutes in *Wilkin* Apr. 6 (DM, SM). In Michigan this species was also quite conspicuous, with reports from 14 counties.

Perhaps the greatest rarity in the Region was the **White-collared Swift** observed in Michigan May 19 at Tawas Point S.P., *Iosco* (JD, JB, TC, DL). This species has only been recorded a few times n. of the Rio Grande in coastal states such as Texas and Florida. Therefore the Tawas bird represents not only the farthest north record, but also the first inland sighting. A *Say's Phoebe* May 16 in Bayside, *Milwaukee* (FH) would constitute a first state record,



Record numbers of Boreal Owls were found during winter 1995–1996 in Wisconsin, where this bird was documented March 8, 1996. Photograph/Mark Peterson.

if accepted by the Wisconsin Society of Ornithology Records Committee. Another in Michigan May 21 in *Keweenaw* (LB) will provide that state's 9th record, if accepted by the M.B.R.C. Western Kingbird reports in Michigan include individuals May 18 at W.P.B.O. and May 19 at North Pt., *Alpena* (BG). In Wisconsin individuals were reported May 18 in Milwaukee (DG, PSu) and May 29 in *Grant* (DT). A **Scissor-tailed Flycatcher** was seen in Wisconsin intermittently from May 13–15 in w. *Shawano* (RS, SO *et al.*). In Minnesota, Com. Ravens in *Houston* Mar. 23 (DK) and in *Wilkin* Apr. 7 (DM, SM) were s. of normal, and both constituted first county records. This species seems to be expanding southward in the Region.

Thrushes to Warblers

A **Mountain Bluebird** was observed in Wisconsin Apr. 4 near Appleton (MBr). In Minnesota, individuals were seen in *Todd* Mar. 14 (JKr, SKr), in *Martin* Mar. 16–17 (BB), in *Marshall* Mar. 20 (*fide* SSr), and in *Kanabec* May 5 (KR). Minnesota recorded a **Townsend's Solitaire** in late April in *Olmsted* (DA), while Wisconsin had an individual at Bailey's Harbor Mar. 18–21 (JR). A **Varied Thrush** was seen Apr. 1–26 in *Pennington*, MN (SST, GM), while individuals lingered in Wisconsin to late March in *Ozaukee* and May 2–8 in Door (RSt, RSo). **Loggerhead Shrikes** continue to be rare in the e. portion of the Region. Wisconsin had only one report, a pair s. on Monroe, *Green* (JSm, KS *et al.*). Michigan had one near Hersey, *Osceola* Mar. 24–Apr. 14 (LS) and one on nest in *Allegan* May 11 (JG). Minnesota had reports from 17 counties, down from last year's 24 counties, although that number

may have been inflated by a statewide publicity campaign.

Casual in Minnesota, a **White-eyed Vireo** was reported in *Rice* May 25 (JL), while Wisconsin had reports in Virmond Park, *Ozaukee* Apr. 28 (TWO), and on territory in Governor Dodge S.P. A **Townsend's Warbler** made a brief appearance at W.P.B.O., May 18 (KT); if accepted by the M.B.R.C., it would represent the 2nd state record. Minnesota reported a **Yellow-throated Warbler** in *Kandiyoh* Apr. 26 (MH, m.ob.). In Wisconsin, individuals were reported in Dane May 25 (SRo) and on territory in Wyalusing S.P., *Grant*. In Michigan, individuals were back in *Berrien* at the traditional nesting areas, with other reports of migrants, or possible nesters, in *Allegan*, *Kent*, and *Hillsdale*. In Wisconsin, **Prairie Warblers** were found in Navarino WA May 18 (MP) and on territory at Wyalusing S.P., May 29 (DT *et al.*). In Michigan, the species was more widespread than normal, with reports from 5 counties. Seven **Worm-eating Warblers** were reported in Wisconsin, including birds on territory in Brooklyn WA (PA) and Hemlock Draw (TWO). In Minnesota, an individual was seen in *Scott* May 20 (*fide* AH), and in Michigan one was reported in *Allegan* May 11 (JG). **Kentucky Warblers** were reported in *Scott* May 20 (*fide* AH), and returned to *Nicollett* in Minnesota. Michigan had reports of this species in *Kent* May 18 (JP), in *Wayne* May 20–22 (JC), in *Berrien* May 21 (KM) and two in *Hillsdale* after May 24 (JR). In Wisconsin, good numbers were found on territory at Wyalusing S.P. **Hooded Warblers** in Minnesota included individuals May 9–11 in *Rice* (TBo), May 12 in *Hennepin* (SC), and May 18 in *Scott* (DN). Also in that state were **Yellow-breasted Chats** in *Houston* May 26 (KE *et al.*) and in *Rice* May 26 (JL).

Tanagers to Finches

Summer Tanagers were more common than normal in Michigan, with reports in



Male Western Tanager examining a bird feeder in Butte des Morts, Wisconsin, May 12, 1996. Photograph/Bill Rolf.



Male Smith's Longspur at Whitefish Point, Michigan, May 26, 1996. First spring record for this hotspot. Photograph/Jim Granlund.



Although the White-winged Crossbill has been presumed to breed in Minnesota previously, this was apparently the first actual confirmed nest, in Rice County March 22, 1996. Photograph/Jon Little.

Inkster May 3 and at Oakwoods Metro-park May 11, both in *Wayne* (AC), in *Berrien* May 10–12 (MWa), in *Kalamazoo* May 12 (PD, JT), in Port Huron May 13 (BBo), in *Delta* May 18 (CT), and in *Oakland* May 14 (GB). Wisconsin had a single record May 18 in *Milwaukee* (DG). Minnesota had one in late May in *Olmsted* (JTh) and another May 5–10 in *Duluth* (NB). *Western Tanagers* were reported in Wisconsin in *Butte des Morts* May 6–12 (BR), in *Waukesha* May 11 (VA), and in *Sheboygan* May 13–17 (EK). In Minnesota, this w. stray was found in *Wabasha* May 10–11 (*vide* CSc), and two in *Aiken* May 15–20 (MGe, m.ob.). A *Rose-breasted Grosbeak* in *Hennepin* Apr. 7 (DC) was the earliest arrival of that species in Minnesota. Wisconsin had *Blue Grosbeak* sightings from May 11–12 in *Cedarburg* (GH) and May 18 in *Waukesha* (TSc). A *Lazuli Bunting* in *Wabasha* May 20 (GS, m.ob.) was a very rare visitor to Minnesota. A female *Painted Bunting* was photographed in Port Huron, MI May 13 (DD). In Wisconsin, the male *Spotted Towhee* remained in *Shawano* into early

May, while a female was seen in *Milwaukee* Mar. 31–May 9 (FH). A *Lark Sparrow* in *Washtenaw* May 18 (MK, m.ob.) provided a first record for that Michigan county. Also in that state were reports of 20 *Sharp-tailed Sparrows* May 16 (CT) and two May 18 (BA, DM) in *Delta*. *Harris' Sparrows* in Michigan included birds in *Berrien* May 14 (DVi), in *Marquette* May 18 (CW, SW), and in *Keweenaw* May 18–20 (LB). A male *Smith's Longspur* May 25–28 provided W.P.B.O. with its first spring record (JG, m.ob.). A *White-winged Crossbill* nest found in *Rice* Mar. 9 (JLa, JL) provided Minnesota its first confirmed nesting for this species, although evidence, such as fledged young, has suggested it for years. *Common Redpolls* lingered well into the season throughout the Region, in Michigan being found through the period at W.P.B.O. There were numerous *Hoary Redpolls* from all 3 states. A *Eurasian Tree Sparrow* was present in *Ellison Bay, Door*, Mar. 30 (CY), one of few records for Wisconsin.

Addenda

The maximum count of *Great Gray Owls* for Michigan in the winter of 1995–1996 was 14 in the vicinity of *Sault Ste. Marie, Chippewa*, Feb. 22 (RB). The Minnesota Ornithological Records Committee has determined the documentation for the *W. Sandpiper* in *Fairbouldt* May 12, 1995, and the *Wilson's Plover* in *Cook* June 8, 1995, lacked sufficient documentation and should be deleted from the respective surveys.

Table 1 in *AFN* Vol. 50, page 57, should read "Broad-winged Hawk 51,048," not 1048. In that same issue, page 58, credit for the *Glaucous-winged Gull* record should read *Bardon* and not *Barton*.

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