

how to read the regional reports

Birds have no respect for range maps. Bird distribution in North America is constantly changing, as birds expand their ranges into new areas, disappear from former strongholds, or alter their patterns of migration.

Our knowledge of bird distribution is also changing constantly, as discoveries continue to come in. Keeping up with all these developments is a challenge for ornithologists, conservationists, and birders.

The Regional Reports, published four times a year, contain a wealth of information about North America's dynamic birdlife. When seeing the reports for the first time, they might appear difficult or technical, but they are not; anyone with any birding experience will find the reports easy to understand. We invite you to read the report from your area of the continent; we predict that the information there will alternately surprise you and confirm your ideas about birdlife in your region. To help you get started, here are answers to some questions that may occur to first-time readers.

What kind of information is included? Do the Regional Editors just report everything that's reported to them?

Regional Editors do not report every sighting of every bird. Such a list would be huge, unwieldy, and not very useful. Instead, they solicit reports from as many observers as possible, screen the records for accuracy, choose those that are most significant, look for trends and patterns of occurrence, connect scattered bits of information, and ultimately come up with a concise, readable summary of the real bird news—the important avian events and trends of the season throughout their region.

Why are there so many abbreviations in the text?

We abbreviate some frequently-used words and phrases to save space. Most of these are easy to understand and remember. (See the list of abbreviations at the end of this section.) In addition to these standard abbreviations, some Regional Editors use short-

ened versions of the names of some birding hot spots; they list these local abbreviations in a separate paragraph, just after their introductory comments and just before their main species accounts.

What do the initials in parentheses mean?

Most records published in each report will be followed by initials, to indicate the source: the person(s) who found or reported the bird(s) mentioned. The initials may be followed by *et al.* (short for *et alia*, meaning “and others”), or preceded by *fide* (literally, “by the faith of”—meaning that this is a second-hand report, and the person initialed is the one who passed it along to the Regional Editor). A dagger (†) before the initials means that this person turned in written details on the sighting.

There are good reasons for giving credit to the observers involved. Readers may be reassured about the accuracy of surprising sightings if they know who the observers were; researchers who want to know more about a certain record may be able to contact the observers directly. In some cases, when a bird was seen by many birders, the Regional Editor may add “v.o.” (for “various observers”) or “m.ob.” (for “many observers”) after the first sets of initials.

Who are the people who send in their sightings?

All observers are invited to send in notes to their Regional Editors: details on rare sightings, species that were scarcer or more numerous than usual during the season, unusual concentrations or migration, and so on. Reading the reports for your region for a few seasons is the best way to find out what kinds of information are desired. Although the Regional Editors cannot cite every record that they receive, every contributor helps them to produce a more thorough and accurate summary.

Why are some bird names in heavier or blacker type?

We use **boldface** type to draw attention to outstanding records of rare birds. General

categories of birds that the Regional Editors would place in boldface would include any species that has been recorded fewer than 10 times previously in a given state or province; any new breeding record for a state or province; or any bird totally outside established patterns of seasonal occurrence (For the most part, records are not boldfaced unless they are backed up with solid details or photographs.) Birders who like to know about rare birds (and most of us do) can get a complete rundown of the season's outstanding rarities by scanning all the Regional Reports for those boldfaced birds

Why are some of the place names in italic type?

In most of the regional reports, place names given in *italic* type refer to counties (Italics represent parishes in Louisiana, and in parts of Ontario they may refer to districts or regional municipalities.)

What are the boxes in the text marked “SA”?

“SA” stands for “Special Attention” (and, by coincidence, is pronounced “essay”). The purpose of the boxed essays is to draw attention to particularly noteworthy phenomena or trends.

Likely topics for essays include new population trends or new patterns of bird distribution, unusual invasions or migration events, field research projects that have yielded new data, specific conservation problems that have an impact on birdlife, or detailed discussion of some outstanding (or perplexing) rare bird record. Experienced readers of *Field Notes* make it a point to flip through all the Regional Reports and read all the S.A.s, even in regions where they do not read the rest of the text.



**STANDARD ABBREVIATIONS
USED IN THE REGIONAL
REPORTS**

**Abbreviations used
in place names**

In most regions, place names given in *italic* type are counties. Other abbreviations:

- Cr. Creek
- Ft. Fort
- Hwy Highway
- I. Island or Isle
- Is. Islands or Isles
- Jct. Junction
- km kilometer(s)
- L. Lake
- mi mile (s)
- Mt. Mountain or Mount
- Mts. Mountains
- N.F. National Forest
- N.M. National Monument
- N.P. National Park
- N.W.R. National Wildlife Refuge
- P.P. Provincial Park
- Pen. Peninsula
- Pt. Point (not Port)
- R. River
- Ref. Refuge
- Res. Reservoir (not Reservation)
- S.P. State Park
- W.M.A. Wildlife Management Area

**Abbreviations used
in the names of birds:**

- Am. American
- Com. Common
- E. Eastern
- Eur. European or Eurasian
- Mt. Mountain
- N. Northern
- S. Southern
- W. Western

**Other abbreviations
and symbols referring to birds:**

- ad. adult
- imm. immature
- juv. juvenal or juvenile
- sp. species
- v.t. video-taped
- † written details were submitted for a sighting
- * a specimen was collected
- ♂ male
- ♀ female
- CBC Christmas Bird Count

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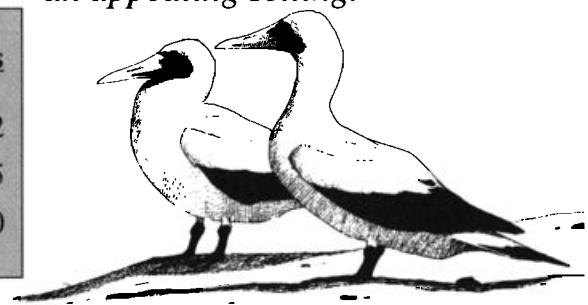


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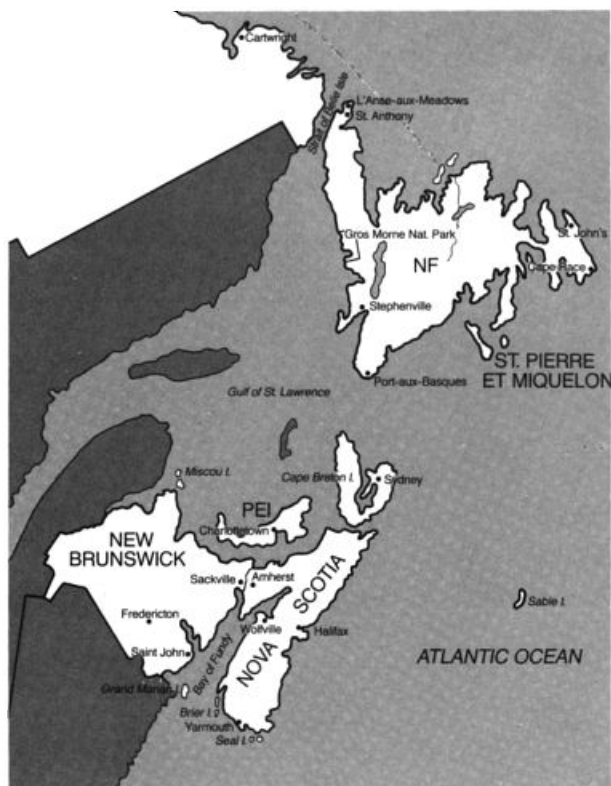
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atlantic provinces region



BRUCE MACTAVISH

Most of the Region was dry and warm. This did not have any obvious negative effect on breeding birds. Excitement revolved around two Canadian firsts. A Fea's Petrel photographed near Sable Island, Nova Scotia, provided the first sighting for Canada. American Oystercatcher nested for the first time in Canada, at Cape Sable Island. The Black-tailed Gull found at Sable Island in May reappeared in June. The first Regional breeding record of Turkey Vulture must be very close, as an all-time high count for a single location was set in New Brunswick. A liberal scattering of rarities from different parts of the checklist made it an interesting summer.

Abbreviations: GMI (*Grand Manan I.*); SPM (*St. Pierre et Miquelon*).

LOONS TO HERONS

A Red-throated Loon nest containing 2 eggs was discovered June 17 at Miquelon,

SPM, the only location s. of Labrador where the species regularly breeds (LJ). Northern Fulmar has slowly increased breeding numbers off the e. coast of Newfoundland since the first breeding record in 1973. The first breeding pair involving a dark-morph bird was found among 40 active nests on Funk I., NF (WM). A conglomeration of whales and seabirds, including 9000 Greater and 6000 Sooty Shearwaters, at Cape St. Mary's July 9 was just part of the annual frenzy of marine life feeding on spawning capelin in Newfoundland's littoral waters during July (BMt). Sooty Shearwaters, formerly outnumbered by Greater Shearwaters by at least

5 to 1, have increased dramatically in the last 10 years in Newfoundland waters. Manx Shearwaters were widely reported, with the highest count being 40 July 31 e. of St. Pierre, SPM (RE). A Fea's Petrel at The Gully, n.e. of Sable I., NS, July 7—found by whale researchers Robin Baird and Sascha Hooker—was confirmed by superb photographs for a first Regional and Canadian record (*vide* IM). Above-average numbers of Wilson's Storm-Petrels were reported by whale-watching tours on both sides of the Bay of Fundy, with more than 100 off Brier I., NS, as early as June 12 (CH), and up to 10,000 off GMI, NB, July 25 (LH).

A Least Bittern was out of place at Little Harbor, *Shelbourne*, NS, during the first week of June (DY). An unprecedented concentration of Great Egrets occurred at St. Martins Marsh, NB, with five July 29 and six July 31 (TS, MC). All other sightings of Great Egret were singles: May 22–June 15 at Cape Brûlé, NB (JP et al.); June 1 at Gagetown, NB (*vide* LC); early June at New Harbor, *Guysborough*, NS (*vide* BMy); and July

14 at Kentville, NS (*vide* IM). Intriguing was a long staying pair of Snowy Egrets at Eel R. Bar in n. New Brunswick June 17 to late July (A&SN et al.). They regularly visited a nearby Great Blue Heron colony, raising speculation of a breeding attempt! Other Snowy Egret reports were from Nova Scotia, with singles June 8 near Digby (*vide* BMy) and June 18–July 8 at Conrad's Beach (JWo et al.). Newfoundland had the only Little Blue Herons, with an adult at St. John's May 19–June 19 (MP et al.) and an immature at Bonavista June 14 (JJ). A Tricolored Heron was at the Caribou I., NS, causeway June 22 (CH). The only Cattle Egret was at Bonavista late May to mid-June (JJ). A Green Heron strayed E to St. Pierre, SPM, July 7 (RE). Adult Yellow-crowned Night-Herons were at Hampton, NB, June 6–9 (*vide* DC) and Hartlen Pt., NS, June 12 (CS). A Glossy Ibis was at Glace Bay, NS, June 2 (*vide* BMy).

WATERFOWL TO CRANES

A Whooper Swan at White Head I., NB, June to late July was assumed to be one of the escapees from Massachusetts (AM). A late blue-morph Snow Goose was with a flock of Canada Geese June 8 at St. Andrews, NB (TD). There were three male Eur. Wigeons in New Brunswick: June 1–3 at Bouctouche (MLE), June 5 near Riverview (RC), and early June at Saint John (*vide* DC). A brood of eight Harlequin Ducks was at Charlo, NB, in mid-July, the site of last year's first provincial breeding record (JC, MLu). Non-breeding White-winged Scoters congregated at traditional sites on the Avalon Pen., NE, with 500 at Pt. La Haye and 100 at St. Vincent's June 21 (KK, JW).

Still very rare, but increasing, Black Vulture sightings included one June 24–29 at Seal Cove, GMI, NB (HS et al.), and one July 3 at Campobello I., NB (JD, CD et al.). The summer population of Turkey Vultures continued to grow in New Brunswick, without divulging the first nesting record. The hotbed of activity is the farmland n.e. of Saint John, NB, especially around Hammond R., where a Regional record-high count of 21 (mostly mature birds) were attracted to a dead calf July 3 (JWi). Five Turkey Vultures at Bridgewater, NS, June 22

were away from the usual Nova Scotian hot spots (JT).

A Sora calling from a marsh at Goose Bay, Lab., June 11 was well n. of the known breeding range; however, there are other summer records from c. Labrador (BMt). A Yellow Rail was calling near Nicholas-Denys, NB, June 14 (PD, LD). Another heard at Glen Margaret, near Halifax, NS, June 8–10 was at a most unexpected location (*fide* BMy). An ad. Sandhill Crane was at Hammond R., NB, May 28 (CJ).

SHOREBIRDS TO ALCIDS

The near lack of Piping Plover reports probably reflects fair news in view of nesting success across the Region.

SA The most exciting event of the season was the first Canadian breeding record of **American Oystercatcher**. A nest with 3 eggs was found at the s.w. corner of Nova Scotia at Cape Sable Island June 24 (JN et al.). All 3 eggs hatched July 14. The breeding pair, first seen in May, was joined by another pair June 24. By July 14 up to six adults were present! Over the last 10 years Am. Oystercatcher has become a regular summer visitor to Nova Scotia in tiny numbers. Breeding was anticipated when a few individuals began prolonging summer visits to several weeks, particularly at Cape Sable. This is a significant jump in the breeding range from the previous northern limit in Maine.



On Cape Sable Island, Nova Scotia, this nest of American Oystercatchers established the first documented breeding of the species in Canada. The nest was found June 24, 1997, and all three eggs hatched July 14. Photograph/Johnny Nickerson

A migrant Upland Sandpiper was at Cape Sable I., NS, July 8 (BMy, JN). A Willet was far east of its Nova Scotian breeding range at Renewes, NF, July 13–18 (MP et al.). An impressive 150 Willets and 3000 Short-billed Dowitchers were censused at Cape Sable I., NS, July 7 & 8 (MN, BMy, JN). A widespread early arrival of Whimbrel was detected, with one at Cape St. Mary's, NF, June 24 (JP, JW); one June 26 and 12 June 30 at The Isthmus, SPM (RE, DL); and one at Cape Sable I., NS, June 29 (MN). High counts were of 250 at The Isthmus, SPM, July 27 (RE), and at least 200 at Argentia, NF, July 28 (*fide* BMt). A "**Burasian**" Whimbrel was at The Isthmus, SPM, June 27–30 (DD, RE, DL). An early Hudsonian Godwit was at Cape Sable I., NS, June 29 (MN), while 40 near a fish plant in Shediac, NB, July 13 represented a nice count (NP). A high count of Semipalmated Sandpipers from a traditional Bay of Fundy stopover was 50,000 July 26 roosting at Johnson's Mill, NB, with at least 100,000 flying S and high over the bay at the same time (KP). Two shorebird species rarely seen in July were a Baird's Sandpiper at Lamèque, NB, July 19 and a W. Sandpiper in breeding plumage at Maissonette, NB, July 21 (AD). A black Ruff was at Chezsetcook, NS, July 20 (*fide* IM).

About a dozen each of Parasitic and Porarine jaegers were seen harassing kittiwakes feeding on capelin on the Avalon Pen., NF, during July (*fide* BMt). Single Great Skuas were reported on whale-watching trips off GMI, NB, June 29 and

July 29 (LM). A South Polar Skua was reported on a whale-watching trip on the opposite side of the Bay of Fundy at Brier I., NS, June 29 (CH). Following the spring influx of Laughing Gulls, above-average numbers were reported during the summer months. New Brunswick had four on Machias Seal I. in the last week of June (EP et al.). Cape Sable I., NS, had two adults June 13–15 (MN) and three adults and one sub-adult July 8–13 (MN, JN). At least two adults were around St. Pierre et Miquelon June 17–July 9 (RE et al.). In Newfoundland, a tour group found two adults at St. Vincent's and one adult at Cape Race July 12. Little Gull sightings were all from n. New Brunswick: one first-summer bird at Lamèque July 19 (AD), and three (one adult, two first-summer) at Tetagouche R. July 28 (AC, RG). Summering non-breeding Bonaparte's Gulls in n. New Brunswick were joined by migrants in late July, with counts of 493 at Beresford and 700 at Tetagouche July 27 (PD).

The **Black-tailed Gull** (*Larus crassirostris*) present on Sable I., NS, May 8–22 was seen again June 24–30, when it was nicely photographed (ZL). The only Lesser Black-backed Gulls reported were 3rd-summer birds at St. Vincent's and Portugal Cove S., NF, July 4 (BMT, KK). A small colony—12 nests—of Black-legged Kittiwakes on a sand cliff at the e. end of Sable I., NS, was for a brief time the southernmost colony in the n.w. Atlantic, beating out The Wolves, NB, by a hair; the cliff crumbled before the young fledged (ZL). A **Black Skimmer** put in a brief appearance at Cape Sable I., NS, July 6 (*fide* MN). Rare summer Dovekies included one in breeding plumage July 12 at The Wolves, NB (KM), and two July 25 off GMI, NB (LM).

DOVES TO WAXWINGS

Two Eur. Turtle-Doves (*Streptopelia turtur*) arrived in Halifax, NS, June 16 on the deck of a ship. The ship was "several hundred kilometers" e. of Portugal when the birds boarded. Unrestrained, they were fed by the crew until arrival in Halifax, after which they were never seen again—at least not yet! A Snowy Owl lingered at Argentia, NF, June 20–July 8 (HH, BMt). Three Com. Nighthawks at Goose Bay, Lab., in late July supported speculations of nesting at this n. locality (BMt). A Chimney Swift was well e. of the breeding range at St. John's June 5 (JW). A pair of Ruby-throated Hummingbirds at a feeder in Avondale, NF, throughout June was a rare event for e. Newfoundland (JP, JW). The only report of

Willow Flycatcher involved two singing during June at Nashwaaksis, NB (PP, SS). Singing Least Flycatchers e. of the breeding range included one at St. John's, NF, June 19 (JW), and one at Langlade, SPM, June 12 (RE, DL). A Great Crested Flycatcher at St. Pierre, SPM, June 26 was an overdue first for the French islands (RE, DL). **Scissor-tailed Flycatchers** were found at *Restigouche*, NB, May 31–June 1 (*vide* ID) and Burnt Coat Head, Hants, NS, July 5 (*vide* BMy). Late spring vagrant swallows in the east were single Cliff Swallows at St. John's June 4–8 (KK et al.) and St. Pierre, SPM, June 2–12 (RE), and a Purple Martin at St. John's June 2 (DP). Eighty Barn Swallows feeding over a pond near St. John's, NF, June 4 provided a record-high count for e. Newfoundland (KK). Summer N. Rough-winged Swallows included a pair at Fredericton Junction, NB, through June (*vide* DC), one June 8 at Cornhill, NB (HF), and one July 8 at Conrads Beach, NS (DM).

A Carolina Wren was at St. Martins, NB, July 27 (TS). A singing male House Wren at Williamstown, NB, Jun 15–30 (GM) should have met up with an unpaired female that built a nest and incubated infertile eggs in Fredericton, NB (SS). A singing male N.

Wheatear was out of habitat and breeding range on the sand dunes of Sable I., NS, June 15 (IM). A Wood Thrush was equally out-of-range at Sable I., NS, June 21 (IM). A one-day search in June for Bicknell's Thrush in Cape Breton Highlands N.P. found 16 singing males (FL). Late spring Blue-gray Gnatcatchers were singles at Prospect, NS, June 6 (*vide* BMy); Schooner Pond, Cape Breton I., NS, June 6 (*vide* BMy); and Cape Jourimain, NB, June 1 (AMf). Gray Catbird continues to build a breeding presence in the e. extremity of the Region, with a nest found in St. Pierre, SPM (RE et al.), and singing males at Trepassey and St. John's, NF (TB, BMT). Brown Thrashers away from known isolated breeding sites included two at Campbellton, NB, May 20–June 2 (RC, CR) and Green I., *Yarmouth*, NS, June 8 (*vide* BMy). A male Bohemian Waxwing was feeding an ad. female in a nuptial display near Nain, Lab., July 22 (BMT). Several pairs were noted in the same area in the summer of 1996, suggesting that breeding is occurring in the rich wooded river valleys of n. Labrador.

VIREOS TO FINCHES

Red-eyed Vireos were numerous at Goose Bay, Lab., with at least eight singing males in late July (BMT). A singing male Golden-winged Warbler at Gaspereau, NS, May 31–June 12 was intriguing (*vide* BMy). Scarce, non-breeding warblers at SPM included Nashville Warbler June 12 (RE), N. Parula June 2 (PA), and Cape May Warbler June 2 (RE). In Labrador, a singing Ovenbird at Goose Bay June 11 and a singing Com. Yellowthroat at Churchill Falls June 9 were both n. of the breeding range (BMT). A singing Canada Warbler at Pasadena, NF, June 24 was in potential breeding habitat (TB). A first-summer male **Western Tanager** visited a feeder in Saint John, NB, May 31–June 10 (WL et al.). Two male Indigo Buntings were at separate feeders in St. John's, NF, in early June. Another male was at St. Pierre, SPM, June 6 (CF). A male **Painted Bunting** at St. Martins, NB, June 17–19 was at the same feeder where one visited in June 1996 (DH)! A Clay-colored Sparrow was in n.e. New Brunswick at Bertrand June 5–6 (AP). Two White-crowned Sparrows on the summit of Meat Cove Mt. in n. Cape Breton I., NS, June 12 indicated breeding, which is unconfirmed in the Region s. of n. Newfoundland (*vide* BMy). An out-of-season male Lapland Longspur was photographed June 21 at Cape Race, NF (KK, JW). After

three Yellow-headed Blackbirds in New Brunswick during spring, there were two more in June: singles at Grand-Digue June 16 (AP) and near Campbellton June 29 (RG et al.). Pine Siskins were common in e. New Brunswick and Newfoundland. White-winged Crossbills began an invasion into Newfoundland in mid-July. American Goldfinch seems to be setting solid roots in the e. limits of the Region; St. Pierre, SPM, had a 2nd confirmed nesting in as many years (RE), and the species was again fairly common around St. John's, NF, during the summer.

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Place names that are frequently mentioned, but very long, may be abbreviated in a form such as "C.B.B.T." or "W.P.B.O." Such local abbreviations will be explained in a key at the beginning of the particular regional report in which they are used. Standard abbreviations that are used throughout *Field Notes* are keyed on page 965.

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