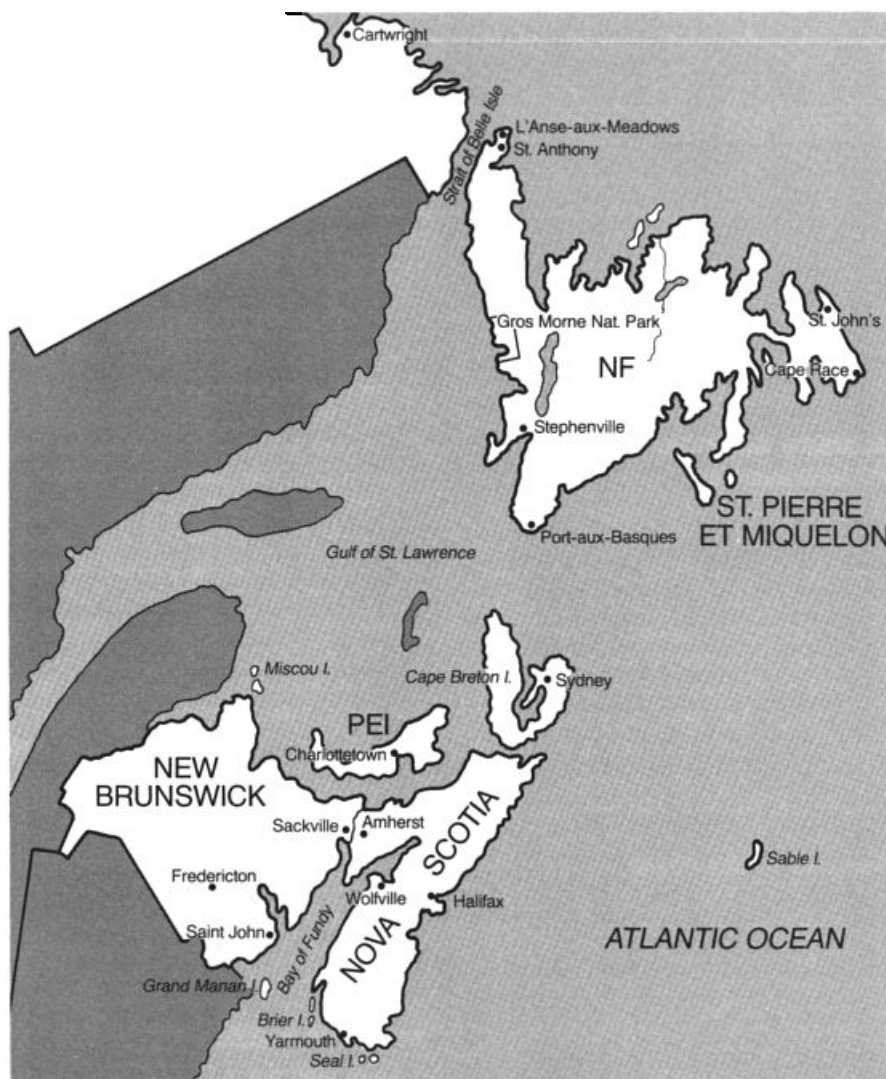


atlantic provinces region



BLAKE MAYBANK

I refuse to ascribe any odd weather to anything other than global warming (in all its controversial manifestations). A few weather events stood out from an (almost) perennially “atypical” spring. A late March heat wave in the Maritimes smashed earlier marks, by more than 9°C. in some cases, and helped propel a few record-early migrants into the Region. A low pressure system moved past Cape Cod April 9, shifted northeast (bypassing Nova Scotia), and passed directly over southeast Newfoundland the evening

of April 10, precipitating a minor fallout of southern species April 11 in Saint Pierre et Miquelon and eastern Newfoundland (hereafter “The Storm”). In May, early southwest winds helped breeding birds onto territory, avoiding coastal migrant traps favored by birders. By mid-May, predominantly northerly winds delayed subsequent migration, particularly for flycatchers, warblers, and swallows. Everyone enjoyed a pleasing array of rarities (though numbers and variety were lower than we’re accustomed to), and there were some provincial (and colonial) firsts: one each for Nova Scotia,

Prince Edward Island, and New Brunswick, two for Newfoundland, and a remarkable three for Saint Pierre et Miquelon (which also enjoyed several “seconds” and “thirds” as well).

Reporting was good for New Brunswick, Nova Scotia and Saint Pierre et Miquelon, fair from the Avalon Peninsula of Newfoundland and Labrador, and almost nonexistent from Prince Edward Island.

A word of praise for the longevity and detail of the fine reports Roger Etcheberry has been assembling for Saint Pierre et Miquelon for many years. His notes from these remote isles have helped tie together my analysis of trends and tendencies across this immense Region. He has also done much to promote the observation of birds on the islands, as opposed to the local centuries-old passion of simply shooting them. Long may his reports continue to emanate, and his beneficent influence expand! And I can attest that St-Pierre is a wonderful place for a vacation.

Abbreviations: BI (*Brier I., Nova Scotia*); BPI (*Bon Portage I., Nova Scotia*); CSI (*Cape Sable I., Nova Scotia*); GM (*Grand Manan archipelago, New Brunswick*); MSI (*Machias Seal I., New Brunswick*); PEI (*Prince Edward I.*); Seal I. (*Seal I., Yarmouth Co., Nova Scotia*); SI (*Sable I., Nova Scotia*); SPM (*Saint Pierre et Miquelon*).

LOONS TO HERONS

Eight-hundred Red-throated Loons migrated up the GM Channel Apr. 18 (BD), with 950 past Cape Enrage, NB, Apr. 29 (ST). On SPM, two Manx Shearwaters Apr. 1 were record-early by 12 days (*vide RE*).

A Great Blue Heron on SPM Mar. 24 may have been part of the same early movement that brought four to Sydney, Cape Breton, NS, on the same date. Etcheberry reports on a SPM first, a **Little Egret**, spotted by Laurent Jackman in St-Pierre May 3. Laurent managed to get the local TV involved, so the bird is now recorded on video, “thanks to their powerful lenses.” In Nova Scotia, a **Little Egret**, possibly the same one present the past 2 springs near Louisbourg,

this spring's three were welcome: adults on SI Mar 31 (ZL) and Eagle Head, *Queens*, May 31 (P. Davies, G. Hartlen), and an undocumented bird in Sydney Apr. 12 (*fide* J. Chrétien). The ad. **Little Gull** at St. Anne du Rousseau, NS, was present until Apr. 11 (*fide* MN). The overwintering Yarmouth, NS, **Mew (Common) Gull** was seen through Mar. 22 (*fide* MN), while two different ad. Mews were found in *Pictou*, NS, Mar 25–26 and Apr. 4 (both KM, CB). Newfoundland had four, a typical number.

McKenna and Brennan found a 2nd-winter **Thayer's Gull** Mar. 7 at the Trenton Power Plant, *Pictou* (ph.). Lesser Black-backed Gulls included three birds in Nova Scotia (April), four in New Brunswick (April), and more than a dozen in Newfoundland, mostly around St. John's. The only **Ivory Gull** reports came away from Newfoundland. The long-staying individual at St-Thomas, NB, remained until at least Mar. 7 (M. LeBlanc), and an adult briefly alighted in Metcalfe's backyard in Glace Bay, NS, Mar. 19, following a storm. An adult bird was seen from the Confederation Bridge, PEI, Mar. 26 (RC).

Ted D'eon's survey of the Roseate Tern colony on The Brothers islands, NS, turned up 38 nests, an encouraging number for this nationally endangered species. A **Least Tern** on SPM May 26 was a first for the islands (B. Letourneau, J-P Descontes-Desgranges).

DOVES TO VIREOS

Nova Scotia's 15th **White-winged Dove** was in Louisbourg May 31 (B. MacLeod). New Brunswick's 18th bird (and the first for the north) was near Inkerman May 28–June 1 (E. Robichaud et al.). Yellow-billed Cuckoos, unusual in spring, were on CSI May 15–18 (JN, W. Neily) and GM May 10 (C. Roberts). A **Northern Hawk Owl** at E. Bideford, PEI, Mar. 7 (RC et al.) furnished a provincial first, thereby completing a sweep of all of Canada's provinces and territories. Common Nighthawks arrived almost 2 weeks early in New Brunswick, on GM May 5 (BD), several at Williamsburg May 6 (S. Grattan), and Saint-Joseph-de-Madawaska May 9 (P. Mercier), while in Nova Scotia an exceptionally early bird was moribund on Martinique Beach Apr. 18 (K. Allard et al.). The wintering Shelburne, NS, Red-headed Woodpecker was still present Apr. 28 (MN), and others appeared Apr. 9 at Grand Pré (E. Goodstine), and mid-May at Oban (C. Murrant). One on SPM May 28 (Y. Poirier, v t) was the 3rd for the islands, the first in spring. A Yellow-bellied Sapsucker on CSI

Mar. 29 was the earliest ever in Nova Scotia by a week, and one Apr. 21 in St. John's, NF, created local excitement (KK et al.). An early E. Phoebe on SPM (the 6th there) lingered from Apr. 6–16 (D. Gouverne et al.). Western Kingbirds are regionally rare in spring, but there were two, at Miscou I., NB, May 30 and Apple R., NS, May 31 (D&D Barber). A early E. Kingbird was lively on BI Apr. 18 (CH), but one was found dead on SPM by Phillippe Hacala Apr. 19, the earliest record for the islands. A bird on SPM May 5 was 16 days earlier than average. An apparent female Scissor-tailed Flycatcher with short tail streamers, at Fredericton, NB, May 26 (D. Gibson et al) provided about the 10th spring record for the province.

Loggerhead Shrike is now rare enough to warrant boldface—a well-documented bird was on SI Apr. 29–May 1 (ZL).

The only vireo sightings of note were a **White-eyed Vireo** on GM May 16 (ST et al.), the 3rd New Brunswick spring record, and a Warbling Vireo May 23 at BI (B. Forsythe).

CORVIDS TO PIPITS

A **Eurasian Jackdaw** Mar. 10 St. John's, NF (BM, PL), is presumed the same bird first seen there in December 1994; this was the first sighting in 11 months. A surely doomed female Purple Martin was reported from sea, 65 mi s.e. of Seal I. Apr. 3 (G. Surette), while four in late May at The Goulds, NF, furnished 4 times the usual spring provincial complement (PL et al.). One was in SPM May 9–26, where the species occurs roughly every other year. Tree Swallows took a hit in Labrador in late May; in Wabush, Davis's cat brought in three frozen birds May 23, following a 15 cm snowfall, likely indicating that many more perished in the inclement weather. The only extralimital N. Rough-winged Swallow was on Seal I. May 25–27 (RF, SF et al.). In Nova Scotia, two Cliff Swallows on BI Apr. 2 were record-early by 19 days (CH); the description ruled out Cave Swallow.

Dalzell writes of an unprecedented flight of White-breasted Nuthatches which took place across the Region Mar. 28–29, with birds turning up along the s.w. shore of Nova Scotia, the n. shore of New Brunswick, and the Gaspé pen. of Québec: Reports flooded in over the next week, mostly from feeder watchers who had never seen the species in their yards before. Many hundreds of birds must have been involved. How they managed to choreograph the movement, and from where it originated, are a mystery. Had most of the birds not

turned up at feeders, it is likely the flight might have gone unnoticed. Reports persisted until about mid-April. The species appears to have been generally increasing in New Brunswick and Nova Scotia over the past decade (BD).

A Carolina Wren on GM Mar. 27 (N. Wheelwright) was probably a spring arrival; perhaps the same bird was found elsewhere on GM Apr. 11–May 16 (R. LeBlanc et al.). Despite some 30 records in s. New Brunswick since 1974, there is no suggestion of breeding. Two of three New Brunswick Blue-gray Gnatcatchers were in the north, at Miscou I. May 30. St. Pierre et Milqueon's 2nd Blue-gray Gnatcatcher, the first for spring, was early Apr. 29 (PA). Nova Scotia had an encouraging 6 nesting pairs of E. Bluebirds, with a scattering of single birds. A **Townsend's Solitaire** at Riverside-Albert, NB, Mar. 8 was likely present all winter (R. LeBlanc, AC); it provided the 10th provincial record. The 4th **Wood Thrush** for SPM was photographed on the remarkably early date of Apr. 12 (PA). Newfoundland's first **Varied Thrush** was elusive at Bristol's Hope, Conception Bay (T. Dunn et al., ph.), Mar. 4–25. A very early Gray Catbird was on SI Apr. 20 (ZL). Unsurprisingly, given the magnitude of the winter Bohemian Waxwing flight, flocks of more than 100 were still seen in New Brunswick and Nova Scotia into mid-April, with a few birds lingering until the Spring Migration Count May 9.

WARBLERS TO FINCHES

Three Orange-crowned Warblers overwintered in Nova Scotia, as did one in New Brunswick. For the first time, a Nashville Warbler also survived winter, to at least Apr 18, in Yarmouth, NS, helped by suet (E. Ruff et al.). Early Yellow Warblers in Nova Scotia were two at Wolfville Apr. 18 (J&B Morrow) and one at Sheffield Mills Apr. 25 (JT et al.). Two Yellow-throated Warblers were in Nova Scotia: a *dominica* at Cape D'Or Apr. 21 (J&M Mills, ph.) and another (undescribed lores) from CSI May 18 (MN). Seven Pine Warblers overwintered in Nova Scotia, (including three in Louisbourg), and one in New Brunswick. A Worm-eating Warbler was on CSI Apr. 25–28 (v.o., ph.). An Ovenbird on SI Apr. 25 (ZL) tied the earliest ever provincial arrival date for the species.

Lucas celebrated May Day with a **Hooded Warbler**. However, that celebration paled next to one in SPM, where birders enjoyed their first ever Hooded Warbler on the remarkable date of Apr. 6. "One male was observed by Didier Desbois trying to

pick insects across the windows of his greenhouse in St-Pierre. He managed to have the bird enter, where it fed on insects until it was found dead Apr. 9, possibly because insecticides were used in the greenhouse. It would probably not have survived outdoors anyway! The bird, a new species for us, was first identified by Jackman and seen and photographed by several observers" wrote Etcheberry. A male and female Wilson's Warbler were in SPM (M. Dérivable) Apr. 12. SPM's 5th Canada Warbler was photographed May 30 (PA).

Two Summer Tanagers were reported in Nova Scotia, down from six in each of the past 2 springs; BI Apr. 30–May 6 (CH) and CSI May 14 (J. Jones). The fourth for SPM arrived Apr. 11 (D. Drillet) and was found dead the following day. The same weather brought a Scarlet Tanager to Grand Beach, NF (*fide* JP); it also succumbed. Three of the five Nova Scotia E. Towhees came from CSI, including the earliest Apr. 25 and the latest May 31 (MN et al.). A male at a GM feeder, seen Mar. 1 (J. Foote), had probably passed the winter undetected, for the first successful wintering record from that well-birded island.

A Clay-colored Sparrow May 18 on CSI (WA) provided one of the few spring records for the province. Oddly, the only Nova Scotia Field Sparrow was also the earliest on record, on BI Mar. 30–31 (CH). In New Brunswick, two Field Sparrows survived the winter at a Hillsborough feeder, and two migrants were noted in Alma Apr. 19 (RW) and May 14 at Edmundston (B. Clavette). Dalzell is of the opinion that "Vesper Sparrow numbers have declined [in New Brunswick] by more than 50 per cent over the past decade, and are now seldom noted, even in migration." There were only three individuals noted there this spring. By contrast, Vesper Sparrow numbers are increasing in Nova Scotia, as they have taken a liking to commercial wild blueberry fields, which are proliferating (at the expense of forests and hayfields) at an alarming rate. Even so, the species is rarely noted here in migration. An ad. male Lark Sparrow at Alma, NB, May 26–27 furnished only the 3rd spring record for the province (RW). Haycock noted a strong migration of Savannah Sparrows through BI Apr. 30, with more than 200 seen in just a small portion of the village of Westport. The Wolfville, NS, **Le Conte's Sparrow** was last reported Mar. 8.

A male Rose-breasted Grosbeak on SPM Apr. 26 (LJ) was 23 days earlier than average. The Storm brought another male Rose-

breasted Grosbeak, record early, to Dildo, NF, Apr. 11 (*fide* BMt), and a Blue Grosbeak to Whitbourne, NF (*fide* PL). Elsewhere there were but three Blue Grosbeaks in Nova Scotia, including the earliest-ever arrival by 22 days, an imm. male Mar. 15–27 in Halifax (T. Allison), followed by males at Port Joli Apr. 13 (A&L Dean) and W. Pennant, Apr. 22 (G. Burns). New Brunswick hosted four, two in the north, at Tracadie-Sheila Apr. 18 (D. Benoit) and Pt. La Nim Apr. 19 (ML). It was May before they turned up in the south, with one at Rosevale May 10 (A. Wissink) and a 2nd at GM May 16 (AC).

It was a modest spring for Indigo Buntings, with a dozen or so in New Brunswick from mid-April, and more than 20 individuals across Nova Scotia, the earliest Apr. 18 and the latest May 30. One Indigo Bunting was flung by the Storm to Newfoundland Apr. 11, in St. Catherine's (KK). At least one Dickcissel overwintered in Nova Scotia, until Mar. 22 in Hebron (MN).

A male Brown-headed Cowbird well beyond the n. limit of its breeding range at Davis's Wabush, Lab., feeder Apr. 21–28, died shortly thereafter from salmonellosis contracted from Com. Redpolls. Another male at a SPM feeder Mar. 27–Apr. 12 fared better (*fide* RE). Nova Scotia enjoyed the lion's share of Orchard Orioles, with the earliest a first-year male at Cherry Hill May 2 (SF et al.), followed by other immature males on CSI, BI, and Seal I. The only ad. male was a singing bird in Dartmouth May 27 (D&I Learmonth). Neither crossbill was reported in great numbers, but observers across the mainland reported the makings of an incredible cone crop, involving all coniferous species. Stay tuned. . . .

The large winter Com. Redpoll flight continued into spring, with sizable flocks of 100+ into early April. They moved N, where Davis counted hundreds at Wabush, Lab., Apr. 21. Many found dead at feeders there died from salmonellosis, likely brought north with the birds from New Brunswick, where the problem was prevalent in many areas during March, especially in the southeast. As might be expected, several Hoary Redpolls were reported in with the Commons across the Region, although few convincingly. However, Davis's Mar. 8 photo of a Greenland race *hornmanii* at her Wabush feeder left no doubts. A male Eur. Goldfinch that first visited a feeder on Kelly's Mt., Cape Breton, NS, May 9 (J. Turner) and then 3 days later at a feeder in nearby Catalone (H&M MacLeod), sported a blue band, assuring a captive origin.

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