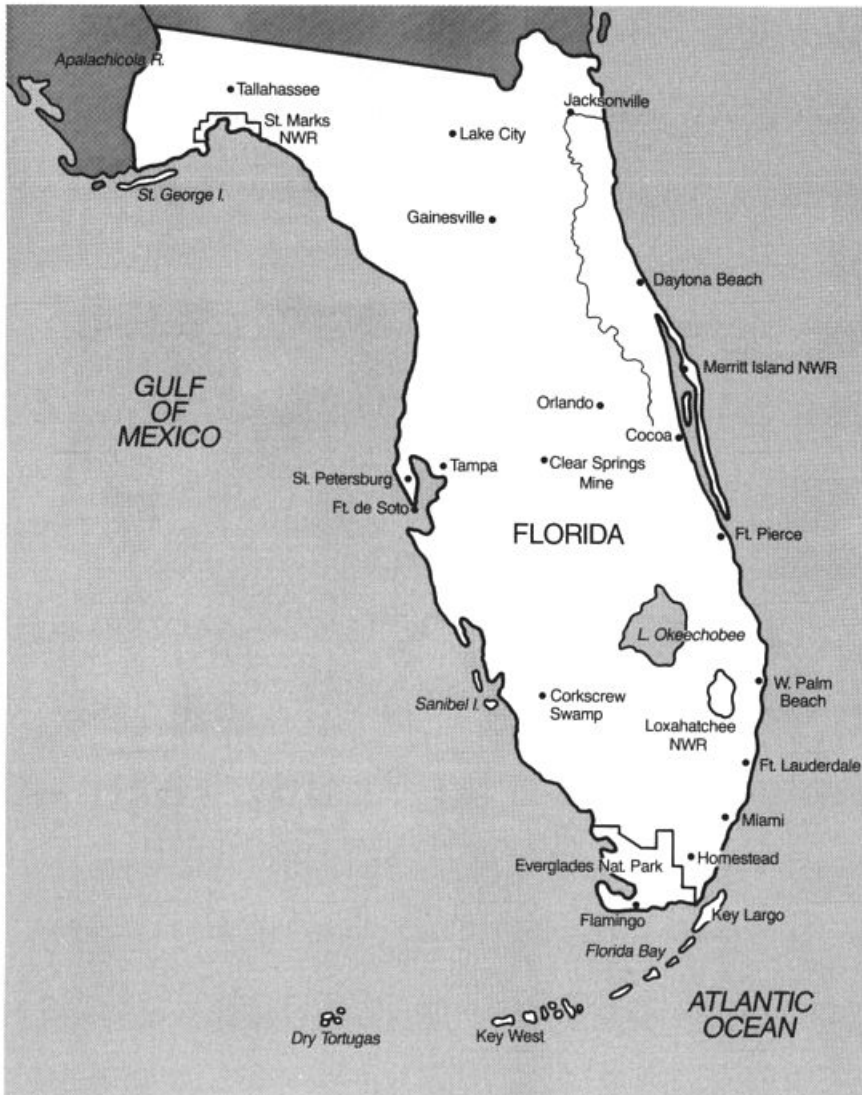


florida region



BILL PRANTY

Flallouts were relatively underwhelming this season, with a significant exception May 11–15. Most observers considered the migration to end late. As always, though, migration trends are difficult to discern, with both record-early and record-late dates obtained this spring. One trend is evident though: Connecticut Warblers made an unprecedented appearance in the Region, including more than 30 birds at Garden Key, Dry Tortugas National Park, May 15.

It is almost unthinkable that up to three birds could be added to the Florida state list in a single season, but it may happen this spring. Two of the birds, a Tropical Kingbird at Fort DeSoto County Park May 9–12, and a MacGillivray's Warbler at Sanibel Island April 5–17, were seen by numerous observers and photographed and videotaped. The third bird, an American Tree Sparrow, was observed and reportedly photographed Apr. 15 by a Michigan birder, but was not seen again. Attempts by two other visiting birders to photograph a fourth potentially new species, a Common Redpoll at Dry Tortugas National Park May 15, were apparently unsuccessful, therefore the report cannot be considered verifiable.

Caribbean species were observed in average numbers, with one or more "West Indian" Short-eared Owls and a Cuban Pewee at Dry Tortugas National Park, La Sagra's Flycatchers at Ft. Lauderdale and Key Largo, Bahama Mockingbirds at Ft. Lauderdale and Palm Beach, a Stripe-headed

SA Following a mild, rainy winter that was the wettest on record, the Florida Region experienced a hot, dry spring that was one of its driest ever. By the end of spring, this drought allowed the Region to experience the beginning of a wildfire season that was—from a human viewpoint—the worst in 50 years. These fires, which consumed enormous amounts of acreage in *Flagler*, *Volusia*, and *Brevard*, may finally convince foresters, other land managers, politicians, and an ever-increasing horde of human residents that we cannot "prevent forest fires," as Smokey (mis)taught us. On the contrary, suppressing fires for decades serves solely to increase their intensity once they do occur. For thousands of years, upland plant communities in the Region have evolved with fire, and most communities require fire periodically in order to be maintained. Florida's avifauna has likewise adapted to these conditions, and populations of birds that depend on fire, such as the Red-cockaded Woodpecker, Florida Scrub-Jay, and Florida Grasshopper Sparrow, decline or die out entirely when fires are suppressed. Biologists in Florida and elsewhere have long known about the ecological costs of widespread fire suppression. This year, the general public learned about the human cost. It will be interesting to see whether the wildfires of 1998 make the public more or less willing to accept the use of prescribed fire as an ecological management tool, which carries the human benefit of reducing fuel loads to limit damage caused by wildfires.

Tanager at Key West, and numerous Shiny Cowbirds from the Keys to the Panhandle.

Abbreviations: C.P. (*County Park*); D.T.N.P. (*Dry Tortugas N.P., Monroe Co.*); E.N.P. (*Everglades NP, Miami-Dade and Monroe counties*); F.D.C.P. (*Ft. DeSoto C.P., Pinellas Co.*); F.O.S.R.C. (*Florida Ornithological Society Records Committee*); H.I.S.R.A. (*Honeymoon Island S.R.A., Pinellas Co.*); P.P.M. (*Polk Co. phosphate mines*); S&A 1994 (*Stevenson and Anderson 1994, The Birdlife of Florida, Univ. Press of Florida, Gainesville*); S.G.I. (*St. George Island, Franklin Co.*); S.M.N.W.R. (*St. Marks N.W.R., Wakulla Co.*); S.R.A. (*State Recreation Area*), S.T.F. (*Sewage Treatment Facility*).

LOONS TO WATERFOWL

Red-throated Loons were at Huguenot Park, Jacksonville, Mar. 12 (NW) and Apr. 25 (ReR), and S.M.N.W.R. Apr. 11 (DMo). A Pacific Loon, becoming routine in the Region, was at S.G.I. Apr. 9 (JCa, JD). Rare seabirds at D.T.N.P. were a White-tailed Tropicbird May 16 (DO, SP et al.) and an imm brown-morph Red-footed Booby Apr 21 (PL et al.). Nine Am. Bitterns in a small part of Paynes Prairie Apr. 12 (SD) may have been migrants. Two bitterns in Big Cypress National Preserve May 14 (JGr, WP) may suggest breeding, which is undocumented in the state. A "Great White Heron" nest with two young s. of Ft. Myers Apr 28 (PH, RP, ASc et al.) was out-of-range. Escaped wading birds observed at Alafia Bank rookery, Tampa Bay, were a Scarlet Ibis Mar. 21 and a White Spoonbill Mar 17 (both ASc, RP).

Three species of whistling-ducks were found in the Region: an extralimital Fulvous near Tallahassee May 30 (JiC), an extralimital Black-bellied at St. Augustine Apr 28–29 (AM, RV et al.), and a presumably escaped White-faced Whistling-Duck (*Dendrocygna viduata*) in Polk Mar. 19–Apr. 4 (KB et al.). The population of Black-bellied Whistling-Ducks at Sarasota now numbers over 500 birds (JP), and presumed dispersers are colonizing the central peninsula and beyond. "Last" dates for rare waterfowl were Mar. 15 for the Brant at H.I.S.R.A. (WY et al.) and Apr. 2 for the Cinnamon Teal in Hamilton (DL, SD). A Ringed Teal (*Callonetta leucophrys*) was found at Delray Beach Apr. 10 (EC)—this species has been reported in large numbers at nearby Loxahatchee N.W.R. in recent years. Other interesting reports were a Eur. Wigeon in Polk Mar. 3 (RP, ASc, JJ), a Redhead at H.I.S.R.A. to May 7 (A&BH), and a Surf Scoter at F.D.C.P. May 22 (ND).

RAPTORS TO TERNS

A pair of White-tailed Kites was discovered building a nest at E.N.P., Dade, Apr. 24 (BP, LM et al.). This nest appeared abandoned May 9, with eggshell fragments below the nest (BP, GB, HV). Two other kites were seen near Fish-Eating Cr., Glades, May 16 (JoR, AK). A nesting pair of Mississippi Kites at Rosewood, Levy, May 25 (RoR, TR) was at the limit of their range. Two Cooper's Hawk nests were the first in heavily developed Pinellas. One at Largo was unsuccessful, but another at St. Petersburg fledged three young in May (DGo et al.). Of many Short-tailed Hawk reports were birds at Paynes Prairie Mar. 8 (BR, TT) and New Port Richey May 10 (KT). Somewhat out of range was a Crested Caracara along SR-50 in Brevard Mar. 4 (JW).

Black Rail surveys in March located 25 birds at new sites in Citrus, Hernando, and Pasco (BP, DR, CB et al.). Other rails were singles at 2 sites in E.N.P. in late March and Apr. 30 (LM, RC), and two at Fakahatchee Strand, Collier, Apr. 30 (*fide* MC). A pair of Purple Swamphears (*Porphyrio porphyrio*), present for over a year at Pembroke Pines, Broward, were accompanied by four chicks May 16 (K&KS, ph.). In Citrus Mar. 22, Rogers found eight Purple Gallinules at Rogers Park.

Notable shorebirds at P.P.M. included 21 Dunlins May 9 (PTi, CG), 135 Am. Avocets, 140 W. Sandpipers, and eight White-rumped Sandpipers May 23 (PF), and single Am. Golden-Plovers and Ruddy Turnstones and 1050 Semipalmated Sandpipers May 24 (PTi, CG). A Willet inland at L. Arbuckle, Polk, Mar. 16 (LR) was unusual. Fort DeSota's wintering Long-billed Curlew was seen last Mar. 21 (LA), with another at Cedar Key Mar. 31 (GMc, ReR, HA). Two breeding-plumaged **Hudsonian Godwits**, casual in the Region, were at Mayport May 16 (†KK). Other notable peeps were 850 Semipalmated Sandpipers at Cedar Key May 25 (RoR, TR); 10 White-rumped at Springhill S.T.F., Tallahassee, May 5–19 (*fide* GMe); and two Baird's at H.I.S.R.A. Apr. 21–27 (DGa et al.). Eleven Pectoral Sandpipers were at Buck I. Ranch, Highlands, Mar. 23 (MM). A Ruff s. of Tampa Apr. 8–19 (EK et al.) was a surprise. A Wilson's Phalarope was in e. Polk Mar. 13 (PF) and three Red-necked Phalaropes were at sea between D.T.N.P. and Key West May 12 (BP et al.).

A *skua* sp. between D.T.N.P. and Key West May 14 (JoR, †AK) provided one of few Regional reports. A Franklin's Gull in breeding plumage was found at Springhill

Road S.T.F., Tallahassee, May 8–13 (JCa et al., ph.). Lesser Black-backed Gulls continue to increase in the Region, with two at St Petersburg Mar. 17–29 (LA et al.), 13 at Ft Myers Apr. 9 (CEL, NP), and singles at Snake Bight, E.N.P., Apr. 26 (PL et al.) and S.G.I. May 10 (JD). A very early Least Tern was in Leon Apr. 2 (*fide* GMe), up to six Black Noddies were at D.T.N.P. (*fide* WB), and 475 Black Skimmers were at P.P.M. May 9 (PTi, CG).

DOVES TO VIREOS

Numerous White-winged Doves were reported: in Leon Apr. 11 (DJ, SJ), H.I.S.R.A. Apr. 25 (JKi), S.G.I.S.P. May 1 (JCa), F.D.C.P. May 9 (LA, CEL), and Jacksonville May 21 (MF) & 27 (RSt). All three cuckoos were found at F.D.C.P. (v.o.), with Black-billed Apr. 25 (RSm et al.) and May 1–4 (LA et al.), and a Mangrove from Mar. 22–Apr. 25 (LA et al.). Another Black-billed was found at Sanibel Lighthouse Park May 11 (VM). A pair of Burrowing Owls with a juvenile discovered at Albert Whitted Airport in downtown St. Petersburg May 25 (LSn et al.) were the first recent report from Pinellas. According to airport personnel, the birds have been present for at least 2 years. "West Indian" Short-eared Owls were found at D.T.N.P. the 2nd half of April (WB et al.) and May 16 (DO, SP). A perched Lesser Nighthawk was a great find at S.G.I.S.P. Apr. 29 (JCa).

An imm. Black-chinned Hummingbird was identified at Key West Mar. 15 (JO) and wintering Rufous Hummingbirds departed Volusia Mar. 17 (GD) and Tallahassee Mar 20 (LSh). An ad. Red-headed Woodpecker at D.T.N.P. Apr. 13–25 (LM, PL et al.) suggests that a few birds winter s. of the U.S. Another island-hopping adult was at F.D.C.P. Apr. 22 (WY, DGa).

Among 13 flycatcher spp. this spring were a **Cuban Pewee** at D.T.N.P. May 13–17 (SB, WBR et al., v.t., ph.), an apparent Willow Flycatcher calling at D.T.N.P. May 10–11 (BP, WB et al.), a wintering Brown-crested Flycatcher at E.N.P. to May 3 (SB et al.), and La Sagra's Flycatchers at N. Key Largo Apr. 26–May 31 (WH et al.) and Birch S.R.A., Ft. Lauderdale, Apr. 30–May 1 (WG, JBa, SE et al.). A **Tropical Kingbird** was at F.D.C.P. May 9–12 (LSn et al., v.t., ph.). The kingbird will be the first verified record for Florida, pending F.O.S.R.C. acceptance. Less noteworthy flycatchers included a late Acadian at D.T.N.P. May 10 (JGr et al.), a wintering Least Flycatcher at E.N.P. to Apr. 25 (SB et al.), and a silent *Empidonax*, possibly a "Traill's," at Bald Pt ,



Tropical Kingbird at Fort DeSoto County Park, Florida, May 12, 1998. Following several plausible past sightings, this may be the first fully confirmed record for the state. Photograph/ Ken Tracey

Franklin, May 29 (JD). Other kingbirds included 18 Westerns in s. *Miami-Dade* Mar. 21 (LM) and three at D.T.N.P. to May 18 (DO, SP et al.), Easterns were at F.D.C.P. (one) Mar. 17 (LA) and Buck I. Ranch (two) Mar. 22 (MM), and Grays at Key West (five) and Homestead (one), both Mar. 23 (JO, LM). Wintering Scissor-tailed Flycatchers lingered at Ruskin, *Hillsborough*, to Apr. 4 (*vide* D&HH) and Key West Apr. 15 (JO), and migrants appeared at D.T.N.P. May 10–11 (GW et al.) and F.D.C.P. May 11 (KN et al.).

A flight of Bank Swallows occurred in early May, with an amazing 971 near L. Harbor, *Palm Beach*, May 9 (AL). A Cave Swallow was at S.G.I. Apr. 9 (JCa), and four Am. Crows were very rare at P.P.M. May 23 (PF). At Gainesville, an early nesting Carolina Chickadee pair fledged five young Apr. 14 (ReR). Red-breasted Nuthatches were at Monticello, *Jefferson*, Mar. 23 and Apr. 15 (RA et al.), and at Jacksonville to Apr. 7 (NW). A Veery at Crystal R. Mar. 26 (TR) and a Swainson's Thrush at Buck I. Ranch Mar. 20 (MM) were the state's earliest reports (S&A 1994), while single Hermit Thrushes at Bald Pt. May 7 (JD) and Tallahassee May 9 (SJ, FR) were very late. A Bicknell's Thrush was at Ft. Clinch S.P., *Nassau*, May 18 (JoR, AK, †). Rounding out the thrushes, an Am. Robin in *Sarasota* May 30–Jun. 1 (JP) was late or lost. Single Bahama Mockingbirds were one-day stands at Birch S.R.A. May 2 (WG, SE) and Palm Beach May 9 (CPL). Repeating their 1997

performance, two Com. Mynas nested in a Food Lion sign at Ft. Pierce in May (JBr). The state's earliest Black-whiskered Vireo (S&A 1994) was found at Birch S.R.A. Mar. 5 (WG).

WOOD-WARBLERS TO RED-POLLS

Noteworthy warblers on the North America Migration Count May 9 (*vide* ReR) included 75 Black-throated Blues, 93 Blackpolls, 345 Am. Redstarts, and 114 Ovenbirds in *Palm Beach*, and 106 redstarts in *Alachua*. Other high counts of Blackpolls were 70 at F.D.C.P. Apr. 25 (PF et al.), 80 at Jacksonville May 4 (JuC), and "many hundreds" at D.T.N.P. May 15 (WBR et al.). Three Swainson's Warblers were in *Broward* Apr. 12 (WG et al.). An injured Yellow-rumped Warbler remained at *Sarasota* to May 16 (EM, JaC). Other late warblers were a Blackburnian at Tallahassee May 25 (FR), a Cerulean at F.D.C.P. May 11–12 (LA et al.), and a Louisiana Waterthrush, the latest Florida report (S&A 1994), at Key West May 17 (JO). A Kentucky Warbler at s.w. Gainesville May 31 (BR) was outside its breeding range and probably represents another record-late date (S&A 1994).

If last spring in the Region was The Year of the Dickcissel, this season must be The Year of the Connecticut Warbler. Strong W winds the 2nd week in May created ideal conditions for finding this elusive species. Over 70 were reported between May 8–21 in *Brevard*, *Broward*, *Lee*, *Miami-Dade*, *Monroe*, *Pinellas*, and *St. Lucie*. High counts were seven in *Broward* May 11 (WG et al.), eight in *Brevard* May 13 (SH), six at F.D.C.P. May 16 (LA, PB), and an incredible 30+ at Garden Key, D.T.N.P., May 15 (WBR, DO, SP et al.), the highest count for Florida (S&A 1994). Many of the birds at D.T.N.P. were in bad shape and likely succumbed; Robertson picked up two of the birds in his hands and heard of another rescued from the moat.

Also at D.T.N.P. May 15 was an ad. male Mourning Warbler (DO, SP), occasional in spring. Rounding out the *Oporornis* was an ad. male **MacGillivray's Warbler** at Sanibel Lighthouse Park Apr. 5–17 (NP et al., v.t., ph.). Identified tentatively by a Chicago birder Apr. 5, it was re-found and identified Apr. 10 and observed by many over the next week. Pending F.O.S.R.C. acceptance, this will be Florida's first verifiable record. A Hooded Warbler at Seminole, *Pinellas*, Mar. 13 (JF) and a Canada Warbler at Mead

Gardens, Orlando, Apr. 19 (CPi) were both very early. Apparently two different Yellow-breasted Chats found near Crystal R. were just outside their known breeding range: Apr. 26–May 2 (TR) and May 6 onward (A&BH et al.).

The male "Northern" Stripe-headed Tanager at Key West Apr. 30–May 4 (JGo, JO et al.) was far from its usual range in the Region. Western Tanagers were reported from 3 locations: singles at Sanibel I. to Mar. 26 (DK) and at Melbourne, *Brevard*, Apr. 2–4 (BHi, SH), and three at S.G.I. Apr. 10–11 (JL et al.). Also wintering at Sanibel was a Rose-breasted Grosbeak seen last Mar. 20 (DK). An **American Tree Sparrow** found by Bell (ph., †) at S.M.N.W.R. Apr. 15 will be the first Florida record pending F.O.S.R.C. acceptance. Four Chipping Sparrows that remained in n. *Leon* to May 9 (LB) were late, but the bird at Key West May 31 (JO) came within a day of tying the Region's late date (S&A 1994). Single Dark-eyed Juncos at H.I.S.R.A. Apr. 5–8 (PTr et al.) and F.D.C.P. Apr. 10 (RSm) were quite rare in *Pinellas*. The highest Bobolink count was 2000 e. of *Sarasota* May 2 (EM, JaC).

A male Red-winged Blackbird was studied carefully at D.T.N.P. Apr. 24 (PL et al.). Migration of E. Meadowlarks was indicated by singles at F.D.C.P. Mar. 23 (LA et al.) and nearby Egmont Key N.W.R. Apr. 23 (JS, JCh). The Yellow-headed Blackbird near *Sarasota* remained to Mar. 22 (JP et al.). Shiny Cowbird reports included birds almost daily at D.T.N.P. (v.o.); males at F.D.C.P. Apr. 22 (*vide* RP) and May 5–12 (LA et al.); Largo, *Pinellas*, May 3 through the season (KN); S.M.N.W.R. May 22 (DP); and two at Bald Pt. May 10 (JD). The 13 Orchard Orioles at Ruskin (KT) and 17 at H.I.S.R.A. (WY), both Apr. 10, were migrants, but the bird near Crystal R. May 2 (TR) may have been a breeder. A Troupial Oriole (*Icterus icterus*) enlivened Sanibel Lighthouse Park Apr. 20 (VM), and six Purple Finches were at Tallahassee Mar. 11 (FR). House Finches continue to extend into the c. Peninsula, with males at Longboat Key, *Manatee*, Mar. 25 (*vide* RP) and Haines City, *Polk*, to Apr. 18 (A&HW); a pair at Jacksonville through the season (JaR); and a nesting pair at Ocala that fledged two young Apr. 19 (MP). Last, but certainly not least, was the report by Rose and Kristensen (†) of a **Common Redpoll**, a species that has been reported only once before in the Region. Even more surprising, the bird was seen May 13, at D.T.N.P., of all places!

CORRIGENDA

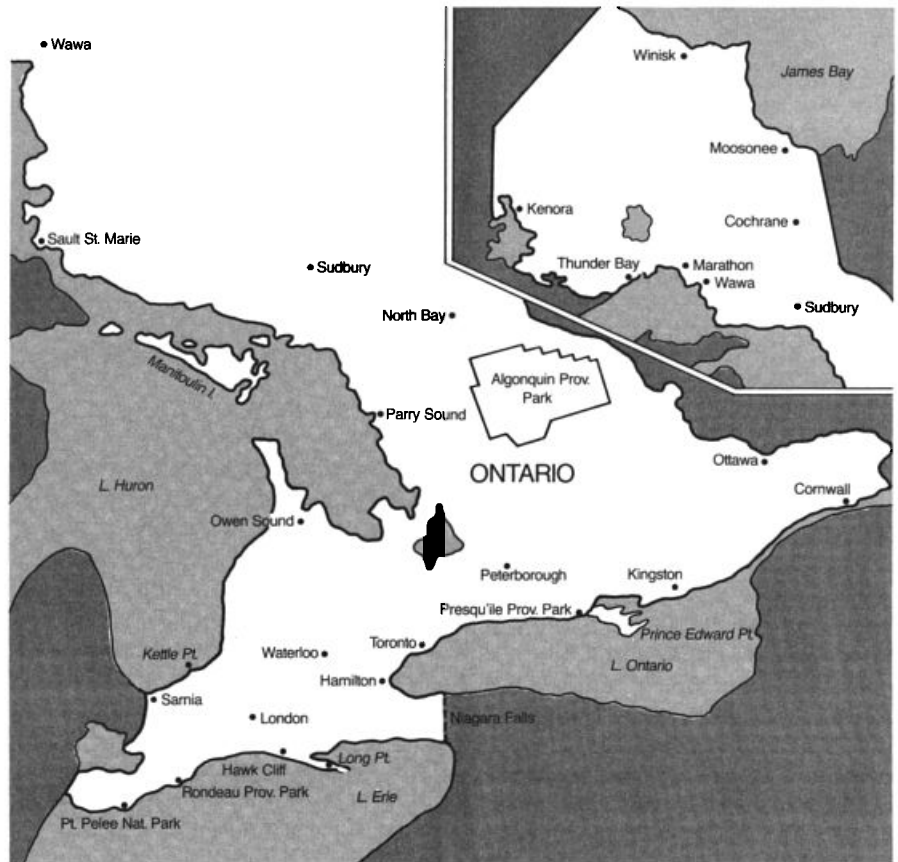
The Purple Sandpiper at Big Pine Key (FN 51:861) was found originally by Jo and Tom Heindel Apr. 16, 1997. The thrush fallout reported by Wilfred Yusek et al. (FN 51:861) was at H.I.S.R.A., not F.D.C.P. The Florida Grasshopper Sparrow reference (FN 51:990) should read, "41 nests . . ."

Contributors cited: Howard Adams, Roger Atchison, Lyn Atherton, Jocie Baker (JBa), Gian Basili, Sonny Bass, Robert Bell, Wes Biggs, Clay Black, Paul Blair, Leonard Brennan, Jane Brooks (JBr), Kathy Byers, Eugenia Carey, Janet Carlock (JaC), Jim Cavanagh (JCa), Jules Chicoine (JCh), Dan Click, Julie Cocke (JuC), Mort Cooper, Jim Cox (JiC), Richard Cunningham, Gail Dombroski, Nancy Douglass, Jack Dozier, Scot Duncan, Susan Epps, Charlie Ewell, Paul Fellers, Judy Fisher, Mike Frase, Denys Gardiner (DGa), Chuck Geanangel, Wally George, Dave Goodwin (DGo), Jeff Gordon (JGo), Jon Greenlaw (JGr), Al & Bev Hansen (A&BH), Bob Henderson (BHe), Bill Hills (BHi), Shirley Hills, Paul Hinchcliff, John Hintermister, Brett Hoffman (BHo), Wayne Hoffman, Dotty & Hank Hull (D&HH), Janet Jackson, Dean Jue, Sally Jue, Joyce King (JKi), Katrina Knight, Dick Konz, Andreas Kristensen, Jerry Krummrich (JKr), Ed Kwater, Jay Lavia, Paul Lehman, Doug Levey, Al Liberman, Larry Manfredi, Greg McDermott (GMc), Vince McGrath, Mike McMillian, Doug McNair (DMc), Gail Menk (GMe), Edith Miller, Amanda Morgan, Don Morrow (DMo), Kris Nelson, David Okines, Joe Ondrejko, Mike Paczolt, Jeff Palmer, Rich Paul, David Pereksth, Neil Pettis, Cheri Pierce (CPI), Stuart Pimm, Cynthia Plockelman (CPI), Will Post, Bill Pranty, Larry Riopelle, Bryant Roberts, William B. Robertson, Don Robinson, Ron Rogers (RoR), Tommie Rogers, Joshua Rose (JoR), Jamie Ross (JaR), Rex Rowan (ReR), Fran Rutkovsky, Lillian Saul (LSa), Ann Schnapf (ASc), Kevin & Kim Schnitzius (K&KS), Lavinia Short (LSh), Jerry Shrewsbury, Ron Smith (RSm), Lee Snyder (LSn), Rea Stoll (RSt), Terry Taylor, Pete Timmer (PTi), Ken Tracey, Paul Trunk (PTr), Sandy Turner, Roger Van Ghent, Helen Violi, Noel Wamer, Doug Wassmer, Joseph Weidlich, Adair & Harriet Wheaton (A&HW), Glen Woolfenden, Wilfred Yusek. Special thanks to Holly Lovell.

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ontario region



RON RIDOUT

What an unbelievable spring it was . . . if you like summer! Record-breaking temperatures arrived early and continued throughout much of the season across the Region. Combined with lower-than-normal precipitation, conditions were perfect for a speedy migration for most species. Observers across the province declared it the worst spring ever for finding birds. Fortunately, most have come to realize that clear, dry skies are to blame and not declining populations (in most cases). Provincial observatories reported numbers not significantly different from average.

As mentioned in the winter report, waterfowl migration began in earnest in February and was pretty well finished, in southcentral regions, by late March. Some notable concentrations came from scat-

tered locations across the southern Great Lakes. Passerine migration began in early April with late-spring temperatures ushering in a rush of record-early arrivals. This report is littered with many examples. Of course, with such ideal conditions, very few weather-related fallouts were noted and, compounded with vegetation leafing out two to three weeks ahead of schedule, led to some very difficult and, at times, frustrating birding. A well-tuned ear was a necessity by early May.

Despite the warm spring, "southern overshoots" were found in low numbers. Perhaps the warm temperatures began too early to push these "rarities" north of their usual range in one sudden rush, as is usual in the first weeks of May. Exceptional rarities were few, though they included Ferruginous Hawk, two Black-necked Stilts, Sage Thrasher, Sprague's Pipit, and Painted