

british columbia–yukon region



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Even with El Niño on the wane, this was a long, hot season across the Region, with Yukoners basking in one of the sunniest, most bug-free summers in recent memory. The first six weeks of the period were warm but unsettled with the southernmost parts of British Columbia receiving the most frequent rainfalls. High summer kicked in in the middle of July as a massive ridge of high pressure gained strength along the west coast, producing frequent and widespread scorching weather. Predictably, this caused forests to become tinder dry, with numerous large forest fires scattered about. Woodpeckers should have a good crop of beetle larvae to pick through in a couple of years!

GREBES TO WATERFOWL

A Pied-billed Grebe at Coot L. near Pelly Crossing Jun 17 (RDM, WP) and July 4 (CE, PS) provided the first c. Yukon record of this species. The Eared Grebe, first found at Swan L. near Whitehorse in May, was present until at least July 1 (HG). There were very few reports of pelagic birds this season, the highlight being a well-described **Manx Shearwater** at Laskeek Bank in Hecate Strait Jun 6 (MF). An Am. White Pelican, rare w. of

the Coast Mts., was in Langley July 23 (DN). The discovery of a **Double-crested Cormorant** nest June 7 near Richthofen I. on L. Laberge (GW, MW) provided the Yukon's first and much anticipated confirmed breeding record for this species. Up to four ad. Double-crested were seen in the area subsequently. Turkey Vultures are normally restricted in range to the s. fringe of the Region, therefore the extralimital record of a single bird at Cedarvale, BC June 9 (MH, PH) was extraordinary.

An Emperor Goose was at Reifel I. June 2 (JI) and another at Porteau Cove P.P. July 19–31 (BP, m.ob.). There are no previous summer Regional records of this species. The observation of a male Eur. Wigeon at Coot L., Yukon (RDM, WP), was a very rare summer sighting. Rare at any season, a Tufted Duck was at Iona I. July 18–31 (RT, m.ob.). Six male Ruddy Ducks at Lee L. June 13 (CE, MG*i*) provided the first documented sighting for the SE Yukon.

RAPTORS TO WOODPECKERS

Extremely rare was a Swainson's Hawk seen during an alpine survey on McIntyre Mt., Yukon, in early July (MG*i*). Two ad. Sandhill Cranes with a one-quarter grown young were near the Mossvale Forest Service Rd., approximately 50 km n.w. of Prince George (TW). This was the first documented breeding record for the species in the Prince George area.

A Red-necked Stint (adult in alternate plumage), a rare but regular Asian visitor to the Lower Mainland, was at Iona I. July 2 (RT, ST, KK, TP).

On July 28, a bird identified as a **Laughing Gull** was discovered at Iona I. (CN, JL, RT). If accepted, this will be the first record for British Columbia. A first-summer Thayer's Gull at Whitehorse June 30 (CE) provided an unusual summer record for that area. An unusual inshore gathering of Sabine's Gulls was observed off the Iona South Jetty June 5 (MP). The first British Columbia record of **Least Tern** was of an adult at the n. end of Osoyoos L. June 6 & 7 (MT, KL, m.ob.). It was photographed June 7 (JAM).

Mourning Doves are rare in the Yukon. A single bird foraging on the La Biche R airstrip in extreme s.e. Yukon June 14–15 (CE, MG*i*) had apparently been in the area for a few weeks. Another Mourning Dove frequented a yard near Judas Cr. at least through the last 2 weeks of June (AH).

The **Xantus's Hummingbird**, first reported in November 1997, was still at Gibsons throughout the summer (m.ob.). At least two Rufous Hummingbirds (rare in the Yukon) frequented a Teslin L. yard July 19–27 (MGa), and at least one was doing the rounds in downtown Whitehorse this summer (JBa). A male Pileated Woodpecker, rarely reported in the Yukon, was near Upper Liard June 18 (AG).

PASSERINES

This summer, a number of *Empidonax* species were observed well outside their usual ranges. A Yellow-bellied Flycatcher was at km 33 Dempster Hwy. June 11 (RDM, WP); a Willow Flycatcher was 70 km s.w. of Dawson Cr. July 8 (RE, AF); and four Dusky Flycatchers were in the Kotaneelee Range June 20 (CE, MG*i*). Purple Martin nest box programs were quite successful. It appears that martins have been dispersing from Vancouver I. and setting up house-keeping in the Lower Mainland. Three color-banded martins at Blackie Spit June 16–July 31 (*vide* DT) apparently originated at Vancouver I. colonies. At the Maplewood Flats Conservation Area, 12 nest boxes produced 40 young (Roberts 1998).

Three **Marsh Wrens** were discovered at Lee L. June 14 (CE, MG*i*), providing just the 2nd record for the Yukon. Three completed nests were found there, but did not contain eggs or young and therefore fell short of a confirmed breeding record. The N. Mockingbird invasion that began in May continued through the summer, with reports coming from as far north as Prince George. Six Yellow Wagtails were at Shingle Point on the Yukon Coast in mid-June (RDM, WP). Three Cedar Waxwings seen June 27 at L. Laberge were the first reported from the Whitehorse area since 1995 (CE, PS).

A female Chestnut-sided Warbler, rare in BC, appeared at the Cheam Wetlands near

Rosedale July 14 (SG). Just 99 years after the first Yukon record of the species, a pair of **Townsend's Warblers** feeding one dependent young at the Yukon R. Campground in Dawson City July 7 provided the Yukon's first confirmed breeding record for this species (CE, PS). Other sightings of Townsend's Warbler included two at McIntyre Mt. June 7 (CE) and one at Jake's Corner in late June (PS). **Blackburnian Warblers** are vagrants w. of the Rockies. One was found dead at the Thuja Lakes on the Cariboo Plateau in the 3rd week of June (*fide* RRH). A single Palm Warbler at Vancouver International Airport July 18 (MKM) provided an unusual coastal summer record.

Rare on the coast, a Vesper Sparrow turned up at Colony Farm, Coquitlam, June 19 (JG). Unusually dry conditions in the extreme s.e. Yukon may have been responsible for the complete lack of Le Conte's Sparrows at their usual location along the La Biche R. airstrip. However, one Le Conte's was heard at the Beaver R. wetland June 12 (MGi), and four were singing at a higher elevation wetland just w. of the La Biche R. June 17 (CE, MGi). Quite extraordinary was the occurrence of three *Zonotrichia* species:

White-throated Sparrow, White-crowned Sparrow, and Golden-crowned Sparrow, which could all be heard singing on territories from one location at treeline in the Kotaneelee Range June 20–21 (CE, MGi).

The summer of 1998 produced a rash of male Indigo Bunting reports in the Victoria area, the first being reported from Mary Hill, Metchosin, June 30 (MGS). Another male was in the Upper Clearwater Valley near Wells Gray Park July 31 (TG).

Subregional compilers: Cameron Eckert (CE), Yukon; Danny Tyson (DT), Vancouver; Helmut Grünberg (HG), Yukon; Jack Bowling (JCB), Prince George and weather summaries; Peter Hamel (PH), Queen Charlotte Islands; Richard Cannings (RJC), Okanagan; Michael Shepard (MGS), Southern Vancouver I.; Steve Baillie (SJB), Nanaimo. **Other Cited Observers:** Alex Gray (AG), Al Hughes (AH), Bonnie Plunkey (BP), Claude Nadeau (CN), Dale North (DN), Gerry Whitley (GW), Jo Ann MacKenzie (JAM), Jeremy Baumbach (JBa), Jude Grass (JG), John Ireland (JI), Jacques Lachance (JL), Ken Klimko (KK), Kevin Lydford (KL), Michael Force (MF), Margaret Garolitz (MGa), Mike Gill (MGi), Margo Hearne (MH), Martin K. McNicholl

(MKM), Michael Price (MP), Mike Toochin (MT), Mary Whitley (MW), Pam Sinclair (PS), Doug McRae (RDM), Roger Foxall (RF), Rick Howie (RRH), Rick Toochin (RT), Simon Gavin (SG), Sharon Toochin (ST), Trevor Goward (TG), Tom Plath (TP), Tony Waycheshen (TW), W. Peterson (WP).

Literature Cited

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