

atlantic provinces region



BLAKE MAYBANK

It was a benign, unusually early, and warm spring, with only a decent assemblage of routine or rare birds, although there were some provincial firsts and second. Flowers appeared three-four weeks ahead of normal on the mainland. Birds arrived one-two weeks early and wasted no time in getting down to business; by season's end many were on second broods. This phenomenon was Regionwide, as Brian Dalzell noted from Labrador: "Despite upwards of two meters of snow still in the woods on 30 April, snow-mobilizing season ended abruptly on May 1st as temperatures suddenly roared into the 70s and low 80s, turning even the hard-packed snowmobile trails into a marshmallow-like consistency. The culprit was a jet stream arching high up over Labrador, as far as Ungava Bay. Within a week, the snow was mostly gone, rivers and brooks were roaring, and migrants that would generally still be in southern New Brunswick began to flood in."

With no other weather events to relate, it seems a good time to discuss the state of reporting through the Region. Newfoundland, New Brunswick, and Nova Scotia have in-province Internet discussion groups, and most birders are now "on-line." Nova Scotia and Newfoundland sites have good weekly summaries of significant bird sightings, whereas New Brunswick's is increasingly erratic, including only the rarest of the birds. Thanks to the enthusiastic efforts of Judy Tufts, Nova Scotia birders storm out in

numbers in spring to tally birds for the mysterious North America Migration Count (N.A.M.C.). Even though our data has not been used in published form by the U.S. organizers of the event, it is extremely useful in our own analyses of trends, especially for resident species.

The Nova Scotia Bird Society publishes, in its quarterly newsletter *Nova Scotia Birds*, a detailed summary and analysis of bird sightings provincially, and that summary has been timed to feed into the *North American Birds* schedule to ensure that the important information from this exciting province is included. The task of producing that summary has been given to group of volunteers, each of whom is responsible for different bird families (I do the alcids, larks, and tubenoses, for example). By sharing the load and having the whole coordinated by a stern task-master (Randy Lauff), we produce our summaries in time for use by the *North American Birds* regional editors. The situation in the other provinces is more chaotic. Bruce Mactavish assembles the significant sightings from Newfoundland, especially the Avalon Peninsula, to the extent that his busy schedule allows, but no mechanism exists to gather in sightings from Western Newfoundland, or Labrador. (For the synthesis of Labrador info this time around I am indebted to Brian Dalzell of Grand Manan, the new winter editor for Atlantic Canada.)

New Brunswick is a frustrating puzzle. There are more observers there than any other eastern province, and many cheerfully place their sightings on NatureNB, that province's Internet discussion group. Furthermore, many are active participants in various monitoring surveys, including an important sea-watch at Point Lepreau, and other sites along the west side of the Bay of Fundy. And yet, regrettably, none of these sightings is collected together and synthesized in a timely manner; some eventually appears in the *NB Naturalist* newsletter, but months too late to be included in *North American Birds*. I encourage birders of that province to put a system into place, perhaps modeled after the successful Nova Scotia approach, to ensure that the vital bird data of that singularly enchanting, bilingual province, is included in the quarterly analysis of the birds of North America. For this season I gleaned what information I could

from the NatureNB discussion group, but I fear I may have overlooked important sightings, or misinterpreted their significance.

Roger Etcheberry, as ever, has Saint Pierre et Miquelon well covered, and, as usual, there are little significant data (and almost no documentation) from Prince Edward Island; in this case, last is least.

Abbreviations: G.M. (*Grand Manan archipelago, NB*); S.P.M. (*Saint Pierre et Miquelon, France*); B.Pl. (*Bon Portage I., NS*); B.I. (*Brier I., NS*); C.S.I. (*Cape Sable I., NS*); P.E.I. (*Prince Edward I.*); S.I. (*Sable I., NS*).

LOONS THROUGH VULTURES

Without the full Pt. Lepreau database I can only report the highest Red-throated Loon count posted on NatureNB, which was 237 birds 26 Apr (K. MacIntosh). Significant numbers of Red-necked Grebes were reported only from S.P.M. Etcheberry reports that off the Cape of Miquelon, "the best site these years," there were 445 birds 20 Mar, and off Mirande L., "the usual concentration site a few years ago," there was a maximum of 163 birds 17 Apr, with numbers fluctuating greatly throughout the season. In St. Pierre there were 130 birds 15 Mar, and the last were one off Mirande L. 27 Apr and 8 in St. Pierre 1 May. Twenty-nine Red-necked Grebes 27 Mar at The Drook, Cape Race, NF, furnished a high count (TB).

Early spring waters warmed ahead of schedule, especially off the s. coast, where the first tubenoses were reported. On George's Bank, d'Entremont had an extremely early Sooty Shearwater 16 Apr, and an early Wilson's Storm-Petrel 15 Apr (but not the earliest on record). Early Leach's Storm-Petrels appeared in Newfoundland during a 6 Apr storm, with 20 at Middle Cove and one inland on Quidi Vidi L., St. John's (BMT). One or more **Brown Pelicans** made a surprising showing in Nova Scotia. Earl Meister, a fisherman in Stonehurst, Lunenburg, reported one 6 Apr, and what may have been the same bird appeared in Gunning Cove, Shelburne, on 3 consecutive mornings 10-12 Apr (D. Ensor), and at Daniel's Head, C.S.I., 11 Apr, where Nickerson photographed it (making it the first documented provincial record since 1983). Jean Morse then reported per-

Table 1
1999 Southern Heron Summary,
Atlantic Canada

	NS	NB	NF	SPM
Great Egret	13	2		
Little Blue Heron	6	1		
Snowy Egret	8	1		
Tricolored Heron			1	
Green Heron	2	*		
Glossy Ibis	2	3		

Cattle Egret and Yellow-crowned Night-Heron were unrecorded.
*Breeds regularly in s. New Brunswick in small numbers.

haps the same individual from Mader's Cove, Lunenburg, 15 Apr.

Only Nova Scotia enjoyed a significant heron flight (Table 1). For S.P.M. it was one of the worst heron springs in recent memory, with only a single Great Blue Heron 8 May (RE). Cattle Egrets went unreported, and the lone Tricolored Heron appeared on the Hibernia Oil rig s.e. of St. John's, NF, 17 Apr (B. Shoemaker), the province's 4th record. A Great Blue Heron (CD) at Wabush L. 12 May was a good find, being very rare in the interior of Labrador. A **Black Vulture** lingered on G.M. 16–27 May (ST et al.); there are 3 or 4 previous New Brunswick records.

WATERFOWL

A flock of 40 Snow Geese heading n. over Wabush, Labrador, 18 May apparently provided a first local record (CD). With them was a single Brant, also a first for Labrador. On the Acadian Pen., NB, Pierre Arseneault tallied 1000+ Snow Geese 2 May, including 10 blue morphs, the largest single flock noted in many years in the Region. A "Black" Brant was seen 29 Apr at Pond Cove, Brier I., NS (IM, EM), the first provincial and Regional record since 1970. A gathering of 150 N. Pintail (all paired!) at the outflow of Little Wabush L. in Labrador City 2 May (BD) was the largest flock of this species reported in Atlantic Canada, and indicative of their relative abundance as a breeding bird in the interior of Labrador. The prize waterfowl this spring was a male **Garganey** 22–31 May and beyond at Belleisle Marsh, NS (G&JT et al., ph), a 2nd provincial record (and first documented).

Table 2
Summary of Eurasian Duck Records
in the Atlantic Provinces for Spring 1999

	NS	NB	NF	PEI	SPM
Eurasian Wigeon	3	1	20	1	
Common Teal	3	3	9		1*
Tufted Duck	3	2	1		

*Second (and first spring) record for SPM

Several routine Eurasian ducks are tabulated rather than listed individually (Table 2); a mix of over-wintering and passage birds was involved.

Dalzell reported from Labrador that "a real surprise" was a gathering of 300 Black Scoter at Little Wabush L. 18 May, with 600 the next day (CD), another first local record. He noted that "it is probably no coincidence that the area lies directly n. of Chaleur Bay in n. New Brunswick, where the species stages in early May before heading north to (as yet) largely unknown breeding areas." Upwards of 80,000 were estimated off Dalhousie in the Restigouche R. Estuary 9 May (ML). With the scoters in Wabush 19 May were 25 Long-tailed Ducks, "good evidence of overland migration for this species, which also stages with the scoters in Chaleur Bay, the likely source of the Wabush birds" (BD).

DIURNAL RAPTORS THROUGH SHOREBIRDS

A Red-shouldered Hawk 8 May over B.I. (RBS et al.) was an excellent spring sighting; this species appears to be occurring with increasing frequency in Nova Scotia. Perhaps not coincidentally, in the wake of 5 Nova Scotia sightings last autumn, come 2 spring **Swainson's Hawk** reports: a 2nd-year bird ± 25 km e. of Wabush along the Trans-Labrador Hwy 8 May (BD), a first for Newfoundland, and an adult near Restigouche, NB, 27 Mar (MD, v.t.), also potentially a provincial first.

A large low pressure system in the middle of the Atlantic Ocean pumped winds from Ireland and Iceland to Newfoundland 31 Mar–4 Apr. The result was two Eur. Golden-Plovers at Salvage 5 Apr (*vide* G. Stroud), with four at Rocky Harbour 10 Apr (B. Bradbury), and North America's 2nd **Eurasian Oystercatcher** at Eastport 3 Apr–2 May (anonymous woman, D. Chaffin, m.ob.). A wintering **Common Redshank** at Happy Adventure 6 Mar–22 Apr (K. Butler, m.ob.) furnished the 6th North American record, the previous 5 from Newfoundland in May 1995. Nova Scotia's pair of **American Oystercatchers** returned to C.S.I. 9 Apr for their 4th spring, the northernmost known breeding site in North America. Another was in neighboring New Brunswick 25–29 Mar, at Wishart's Pt., Acadian Pen. (T&M Greathouse). Prince Edward Island's **Black-tailed Godwit** was last seen 6 Mar (D. Christie et al.). A **Curlew Sandpiper** on S.I. 16 May (ZL) furnished the first spring Nova Scotia record, the previous earliest being 2 Jul A

female **Ruff** in St.-Pierre 14–15 Apr (P Asselin, RE et al.) provided the first for S.P.M.; there was one hypothetical record many years ago at Langlade.

SKUAS THROUGH GULLS

A Great Skua was reported from the LaHave Basin, NS, 24 May (RD), a rather late date, and no description was provided to rule out the more expected (for that time of year) S. Polar Skua. An individual of the latter species was found dead on the beach at Sable I. 28 May (ph. ZL, specimen kept). Two Long-tailed Jaegers were seen off Langlade, S.P.M., 5 May (m.ob.) Nova Scotia's **Black-tailed Gull** returned to Sable I. for a 3rd year, where Lucas saw it 12 Apr. She believes it spends long periods at sea feeding, only occasionally visiting the island. The only Laughing Gull reports were a group of three birds (one an adult) at Cherry Hill Beach, NS, 30 May (EM), and two at St. John's, NF, 28 Apr through May (P. Linegar et al.). The only Mew (Common) Gulls were in Newfoundland, where three birds (two adults) over-wintered in St. John's. Lesser Black-backed Gulls were tallied as follows: four in Nova Scotia, one in New Brunswick, and ten in Newfoundland, and a single adult on Michelon, SPM, described as being almost as dark-backed as a Great Black-backed Gull (RE et al.).

DOVES THROUGH VIREOS

Dalzell reports again from Labrador that the Mourning Dove is "quickly consolidating its toehold in Wabush–Labrador City, with about 10 pairs present. The first sightings in the area date back to about 1989. There was an abundance of meadow voles in w. Labrador this winter and spring, especially along the Trans-Labrador Hwy (TLH). A full night of owling (BD, CD) in early May along a 50-km stretch from the Quebec border e. easily turned up 38 calling Boreal Owls, five Short-eared Owls, and three N. Hawk Owls. It was quite gratifying to find a pair of Short-eared Owls on territory" every ± 10 km along the highway during daylight hours 8 May. Observers at P.E.I. were pleased with four Short-eared Owls in April–May, and a locally rare Long-eared Owl at Dromore 29 May (RC et al.). The N.A.M.C. data from Canada is a popular and useful local tool in Nova Scotia. This spring a remarkable number of owls were counted, including 59 Great Horneds, 153 Barred, and 79 N. Saw-whets. New Brunswick reported the only "red" woodpeckers, where feeders hosted three different Red-headed and three Red-bellied (including a

pair) in the first half of the season. Pileated Woodpeckers are scarce on agricultural P.E.I., so a bird at Stanhope 30 Apr was significant (D. McAuley). A Chimney Swift at Labrador City 6 May provided one of few Labrador sightings (BD, CD). A Philadelphia Vireo was a good find 29 May at Indian Bridge, P.E.I.

CORVIDS THROUGH PIPITS

The St. John's, NF, **Eurasian Jackdaw** disappeared in April, maybe to nest with the Am. Crow with which it seemed to be paired (*fide* BMT). A jackdaw was reported 11 Apr from Grand Desert, NS, without details; no subsequent sightings were obtained. A Cliff Swallow on S.P.M. 22 Apr (*fide* RE) is the earliest on record for the islands. A N. Rough-winged Swallow at Pembroke, Yarmouth, 2 May was both rare and unusually early (MN). Etcheberry noted the absence of 2 species on S.P.M. this spring, Red-breasted Nuthatch and Swainson's Thrush, the latter particularly notable, as it has been recorded in 24 of the 26 previous springs. An extremely early and well-documented Marsh Wren was found by Tony Erskine at the Amherst Pt. Bird Sanctuary, NS, 10 Apr, long before the spring arrival of three on 30 May. Three Blue-gray Gnatcatchers popped into New Brunswick: 28 Apr in Sackville (D&L Grecian), 9 May at Atholville (MD), and 22–26 May on G.M. (m.ob.). Prince Edward Island had a rare Brown Thrasher at Monticello 16 May (G. MacDonald).

WARBLERS THROUGH FINCHES

Over-wintering warblers were reported only from Nova Scotia, with three Pines and, astonishingly, a Black-throated Green (J. Nocera). Yellow-throated Warblers were on G.M. 25 Apr (A. Clavette) and 22 May (MD), the 3rd and 4th archipelago spring records. A single Prothonotary Warbler from the B.P.I. banding station 5 May provided Nova Scotia's only rare warbler this spring. A remarkable report of a **Swainson's Warbler** from Monticello, P.E.I., 25 May (RC), was not documented—it would be the 2nd regional record if confirmed. By contrast, an excellent study was made of New Brunswick's first **Louisiana Water-thrush**, on White Head I., G.M., 15 May (ST et al.).

It was another lackluster Nova Scotia spring for tanagers, with but three Summer Tanagers, all on C.S.I. 15–16 May (v.o.). An exceptionally early Scarlet Tanager was found 31 Mar in Clarence, **Annapolis** (D. Morrison). An E. Towhee lingered for more

than a week in late May in Halifax (P. Chalmers). A singing Field Sparrow spent one day in a Fredricton, NB, backyard 11 Apr (S. Sloat). Two Vesper Sparrows overwintered in s. Nova Scotia. A Lark Sparrow in St. John's, NF, successfully overwintered, a provincial first. An Ipswich Savannah Sparrow at Pt. Lance, NF, furnished the 4th provincial record (BMT, ph). An overwintering White-crowned Sparrow on S.I. gradually molted into a distinct Gambel's race, one of only a few such Regional records (ZL). No Rose-breasted Grosbeaks were noted on S.P.M., where they have been seen 23 of the past 26 years, but five were found across Newfoundland, including one far north at Plum Pt. 29 May (J. Gibbons). The Nova Scotia **Black-headed Grosbeak** stayed at its preferred Antigonish feeder until 12 Apr. It was a desultory spring for Blue Grosbeaks, with Nova Scotia having the lion's share (albeit a small lion) of 5 sightings, the earliest 17 Apr on S.I. A young male seen and heard singing in Miquelon, S.P.M., 24 May (RE et al.) was the farthest individual afield, and but two were in New Brunswick. New Brunswick reported only one Indigo Bunting, and P.E.I. two, with 15 provincewide in Nova Scotia, the earliest 24 Apr on B.I. (D. Pugh). Nova Scotia reported the only Dickcissels, three in total, all in March, and all likely overwintering birds. A single female Brewer's Blackbird spent 20 May on S.I. (ZL). Nova Scotia hoarded most of the Orchard Orioles, seven on offshore islands, while New Brunswick had a "pair" at Hopewell Cape 6 Apr (K. Tingley).

Finches have been thorough in their consumption of cones, but the N.A.M.C. still reported a count of 84 Pine Grosbeaks, 100+ Red Crossbills, and 400+ White-winged Crossbills in Nova Scotia. It was a quiet redpoll spring, after a quiet winter, so a flock of 15 Commons with two Hoaries at Schooner Pond, **Cape Breton**, 21 Mar was unexpected (C&AM, RK). Evening Grosbeak numbers are recovering in Nova Scotia, with more than 1000 counted on the N.A.M.C. A Eur. Goldfinch sporting a snazzy blue leg band was seen at several NB feeders in March and early April, reminiscent of a similarly banded bird in Nova Scotia last spring.

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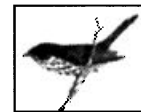


Place names that are frequently mentioned, but very long, may be abbreviated in a form such as "C.B.B.T." or "W.P.B.O." Such local abbreviations will be explained in a key at the beginning of the particular regional report in which they are used. Standard abbreviations that are used throughout *North American Birds* are keyed on page 251.

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