

atlantic provinces



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The Region experienced a pleasantly warm autumn. The tail end of several hurricanes brushed by with little avian impact. The highlights of the season may seem off-the-wall and unpredictable, yet each exotic rarity and every momentous migrational event were all parts of patterns that have already been detected. Avid readers of *North American Birds* will know that the Broad-billed Hummingbird in New Brunswick and the Sulphur-bellied Flycatcher in Nova Scotia are northeastward extensions of recognized patterns. The autumn of 1999 produced many fascinating data points that strengthen and refine existing patterns of occurrence.

Abbreviations: CBI (Cape Breton Island, Nova Scotia); CSI (Cape Sable Island, Nova Scotia); GMI (Grand Manan Island, New Brunswick); SPM (St. Pierre et Miquelon).

LOONS THROUGH CRANES

A *Pacific Loon* observed from a boat one mile e. of Ross I., Bay of Fundy, NB, 25 Sep was photographed for the second confirmed provincial record (ST et al.). Cory's Shearwaters n. and e. of their usual range were three near Funk I., NF, 7 Aug (SG) and one from the Argenta ferry, NF, 24 Aug (DCa). A ne. gale sent 14,000 Greater and 6,000 Sooty Shearwaters s. past Cape Spear, NF, in four hours 19 Sep (BMt). Most note-

worthy of several Nov shearwater reports was that of 500 Greater and one Sooty in Grand Manan I. channel, NB, 23 Nov (RL). High counts of Manx Shearwater were 70 on 21 Aug, Brier I., NS (KM), and 134 on 6 Sep off Cape Spear (BMt). Fifteen thousand Leach's Storm-Petrels flew s. past Cape Spear in two hours during a ne. gale 23 Sep (BMt).

Most "southern" herons were restricted to Nova Scotia and New Brunswick, with respective totals of five and two Great Egrets, two and no Snowy Egrets, three and no Little Blue Herons, two and no Tricolored Herons, six and two Cattle Egrets, and two and one Yellow-crowned Night-Herons. Another Yellow-crowned Night-Heron was at St. Pierre, SPM, 12 Aug (BL). A phenomenal 125 Turkey Vultures were in migration over Brier I. 11 Oct (*vide* IM). The season's **Black Vulture** was at Petite-Lamèque 30 Aug–4 Sep (HC).

There was an early Gr. White-fronted Goose at Summerside, PEI, 2 Oct (DT). Three Brant were rarities at St. Paul's Inlet, NF, 6 Sep (*vide* JP). The male **Garganey** that summered at Bellisle Marsh, NS, was last seen 23 Aug (*vide* IM). An adult male **Cinnamon Teal** at Daniels Harbour, CSI, 27 Sep–7 Oct provided one of the few confirmed records for the Region (MN et al.). The only Common Teal were several during Nov at St. John's, NF (TB et al.). Eur. Wigeon were at recent norms, with totals of one in NB, six in NS, and eleven in NF. Tufted Duck totals were three in Nova Scotia and six in Newfoundland. An impressive migration of scoters was noted at Pt. Lepreau, NB, 3 Oct, with 5,403 Black, 7,445 Surf, and 1,008 White-winged Scoters (*vide* DCh). Ruddy Ducks staged the largest autumn influx in years, with minimum totals of 60 in NB, 40 in NS, and one each in PEI and NF.

Peak days of migration of Sharp-shinned Hawks at Brier I. were 200 on 26 Sep and 500 on 8–11 Oct (*vide* RN). Broad-winged Hawks peaked at Brier I. 25–26 Sep when 1,100 flew sw. out to sea (BMy). Purple Gallinules were singles at Jacques River, NB, 7 Oct (LD), Big Salmon R., NB, 10–11 Oct (*vide* DCh), and Dartmouth, NS in late Oct (*vide* BMy). Single Sandhill Cranes were at Petite-Lamèque, NB, 5–8 Sep (JC et al.), Lanark, NS, 26 Sep–30 Nov (AC et al.), and Middleton, NS, 3 Nov (RP).

SHOREBIRDS

A **Northern Lapwing** was fully appreciated by birders and curious tourists next to a parking lot at Cape Spear 17–19 Nov (m.ob.). A juv. **American Oystercatcher** with three adults at CSI 21 Aug was the first actual young produced in Canada after two years with unsuccessful nests (MN et al.). Five **Black-necked Stilts** put down for only 15 minutes at Windsor Causeway, NS, 17 Sep during the tail-end of a hurricane, providing the sixth provincial record (JC, BMo). Nova Scotia's second and the Region's third **Common Greenshank** was at Daniels Head, CSI, 10 Sep (MN, JN). A high of eight Marbled Godwits was reported, with singles at Castalia, GMI, 28 Aug (CC et al.) with a different bird there 6 Sep (*vide* BD); Maisonnette Dune 20 Sep (MD); St. Andrews 20 Sep (TD); Saints Rest Marsh 1 Oct (NG et al.); and in Nova Scotia with two at Big I., *Pictou*, 20–26 Aug (KM, JM) and one Dominion Beach, CBI, 6–7 Sep (AM, CM). Maximum counts of Semipalmated Sandpipers from traditional staging sites in the upper Bay of Fundy were 300,000 at Johnsons Mills, NB, 31 Jul (*vide* DCh), 200,000 at Mary's Pt., NB, 4 Aug (DCh), 300,000 at Dorchester Cape, NB, 7 Aug (BB), and 250,000 at Evangeline Beach, NS, 6 Aug (JT). Western Sandpipers, always rare in the Region, were reported in typical numbers, with four in NB and two in NS. An odd *Calidris* studied at Spaniards Bay, NF, 7–10 Sep was thought to be a hybrid White-rumped Sandpiper ~ Pectoral Sandpiper (PL, BMt et al.)! It was a banner



This stunning Curlew Sandpiper in juvenal plumage was at Spaniard's Bay, Newfoundland, 29–31 Aug 1999, with the image captured on the first date of its visit. Photograph/Bruce Mactavish

Exhibiting some unusual behavior was this juvenile Long-tailed Jaeger that fed on berries alongside Whimbrels at Cape Race, Newfoundland, 2 Sep 1999. Photograph/ Bruce Mactavish



autumn for Curlew Sandpipers, with six individuals, including two juveniles: one ad. 10 Sep at Long Pond, GMI, (*vide* BD), one ad. 8 Aug at Port Morien, CBI, (AM, CM et al.), one not aged 6–11 Sep at Hartlen Pt., NS (IM et al.), one not aged 6–26 Sep at CSI (MN, JN), a juv. 29–31 Aug at Spaniards Bay, NF (PL et al.), and a late juv. 11 Nov at Cape Race, NF (KK, JW). Regional totals of the traditional "western sandpipers" were

SA The well-above-average Regional total of 33 skuas was probably a reflection of an increased seabirding effort and luck! The breakdown by province is as follows. New Brunswick: two Great Skuas east of White Head I., Bay of Fundy, 25 Sep (ST et al.) and one Great Skua off GMI 27 Nov (AS). Prince Edward Island: one Great Skua off East Pt. 11 Sep (RC et al.). Nova Scotia: one Great Skua off Brier I. 6 Sep (JT), another in Cabot Strait 31 Oct (RK), five to eight South Polar Skuas on whale-watching trips off Brier I. in "late summer and early fall" (CH); single skuas unidentified to species were at Brier I. 9 Sep (BMy), and 10 Oct (CH) and at Cape Sable I. 18 Oct (m.ob.). Newfoundland: ne. gales produced two Great Skuas and three skua sp. at Cape St. Francis 4 Sep (JP, JW); and at Cape Spear one skua sp. 4 Sep, one Great Skua and ten (!) skua sp. 18 Sep, one Great Skua 23 Sep, one Great Skua 6 Oct (BMt). It was gratifying to receive details on most of the Great Skuas. Identifying these beasts at sea remains difficult. The status of South Polar and Great Skuas in the Region is still far from clear.

near normal, with 23 Baird's, 14 Stilts, and 27 Buff-breasteds. Single Ruffs were at Sydney, NS, 5–6 Sep (RK, SM), St. Paul's Inlet, NF, 22 Aug (MV et al.), and Cape Freels, NF, 4 Oct (KB). Details on the few Long-billed Dowitcher reports were scant, but one at CSI 27 Oct was the right time of year (MN). Unusual was the late appearance of 300–500 Red Phalaropes feeding close to shore at Cape Spear 30 Oct–8 Nov (JP et al.).

SKUAS THROUGH ALCIDS

A juv. Long-tailed Jaeger fed on berries with Whimbrels at Cape Race, NF, 2 Sep (KK, BMt). Five Laughing Gulls were reported regionwide, close to par, with one in NF and two each in NB and NS. Little Gulls reported were one 6–7 Sep at Cap Brulé, NB, (RM), one 10 Oct at Miscou I. lighthouse, NB (RG), and three 20–30 Nov at Ogdens Pond, NS (*vide* BMy). The autumn peak of Black-headed Gull at well-watched St. John's was a mediocre 90 on 3 Nov (TB). An impressive 50,000 Bonaparte's Gull were between Campobello I., NB, and Eastport, ME, 16 Nov (NF). An ad. **Black-tailed Gull** was the star attraction at a ball-field in N. Sydney, CBI, 21–24 Oct (RT et al.); it was the second individual for Nova Scotia and third for the Region. An early first-winter Common Gull arriving 15 Oct at St. John's was joined by another first-winter and an adult in Nov (BMt). The only other Mew Gull was an ad. 6–13 Nov at Glace Bay, CBI (RK et al.). There has been a distinct increase in Lesser Black-backed Gull in the Region in last two years. This season's totals were eight in NB, three at PEI, 14 in NS, and 15 in NF. The only Sabine's Gull was a juvenile 24 Sep at East Point, PEI, where very rare (PJ).

Presumably displaced by a hurricane, single **Royal Terns** were at CSI 23 Sep (JN) and Sable I., NS, 24 Sep (ZL). Unexpected was a non-storm-related **Sandwich Tern** in n. New Brunswick at Miscou I. 2–4 Aug (HC, MD et al.). Consistently rare over the decades in the Region, a Forster's Tern was at Sable I. 28 Oct (ZL). A ne. gale at Cape Spear 14 Nov caused a large flight of alcids, including 25,000 Dovekies and 6,000 Thick-billed Murres during the first two hours of daylight (BMt).

DOVES THROUGH WAXWINGS

It was a banner autumn for **White-winged Dove**, with one 13–17 Oct at Pointe-Verte, NB (RG), one 19 Oct at Sable I. (ZL), and one 10–14 Nov at Miquelon, SPM (RE et al.). It was a huge autumn for Yellow-billed Cuckoo, with the peak influx 20 Sep–5 Oct. They were virtually common in New Brunswick, including 25 on GMI 27 Sep (BD). All told, 61 were reported in Nova Scotia and nine in Newfoundland.

The bird of the season was a female **Broad-billed Hummingbird** at Keith Warren's feeder near Elgin, *Albert*, NB. Probably appearing in late Sep, it was not brought to the attention of the birding community until 19 Oct (DCh, MM). It was viewed by 200 observers until it was captured 25 Oct and brought into a greenhouse for care. It was a first for the Region and a second for Canada. A male **Rufous Hummingbird** was at Barrington, NS, 23 Aug (*vide* JN). Whereas there was a high total of seven Red-headed Woodpeckers in New Brunswick, surprisingly the species was not reported in Nova Scotia. Red-bellied Woodpecker staged a good late Oct flight into the sw. part of the Region only, with ten in NB and five in NS. A **Sulphur-bellied Flycatcher** seen well and photographed on Sable I. 21 Sep provided a provincial first but amazingly the third for the Region (ZL). There were six W. Kingbirds, one in New Brunswick, four in Nova Scotia, and one in Saint Pierre et Miquelon. All areas reported good numbers of N. Shrikes beginning in late Oct.

White-eyed Vireos were singles at McAdam, NB, 11 Oct (JL), Halifax, NS, 31 Oct (DC, AV), and Sable I. 1 Nov (ZL). Two swallows casually identified as Cliff Swallows at Cape Jourimain, NB, 8 Nov, could have been part of the extraordinary northward incursion of Cave Swallows documented in Ontario and the Northeast at that time (*vide* DCh). Newfoundland's fourth Marsh Wren was at Blackhead 17–18 Oct (DB). Although Blue-gray Gnatcatchers

were considered unusually scarce, a surprising five were at East Point, PEI, 24 Sep (PJ). The only two N. Wheatears were at Grand Barachois, SPM, 9 Sep (LJ, RE) and St. John's 19 Sep (MR). All areas reported more N. Mockingbirds than normal. A probable Yellow Wagtail was seen briefly at Cape Spear 19 Nov (DB); the record is pending approval by the Newfoundland Records Committee. Bohemian Waxwings staged an early and large flight. Some were present all summer in Newfoundland. The first migrants hit New Brunswick in late Sep. During the last ten days of Oct and into Nov, they were common in n. New Brunswick and Nova Scotia. By the end of Nov a flock of 2,000 had accumulated in St. John's.

WARBLERS THROUGH FINCHES

Numbers of southern warblers were deemed low across the Region, probably a reflection of weather patterns rather than population changes. Blue-winged Warblers were at GMI 25 Aug (BD), Baccaro, NS, 22 Aug (*fide* AHO), and St. Anthony, NF, 8 Sep (DF). A Golden-winged Warbler was at GMI 10 Sep (*fide* DC). Yellow-throated Warblers were at Sable Island 1 Sep (ZL), Kingston, NS, 29 Nov (PG), St. Pierre, SPM, 7–27 Nov (PA), and St. John's 6 Oct (TB) and 13–30 Nov (PL). A imm. female Cerulean Warbler was photographed 30 Aug at Brier I. (LL et al.). Prothonotary Warblers were at Sable I. 15 Sep (ZL) and Rainbow Haven, NS, 2 Oct (*fide* AHO); a much-appreciated male appeared 16–26 Oct at Bear Cove, NF (BMT et al.). Two Worm-eating Warblers were at CSI 12 Sep (MN). Hooded Warblers appeared 6 Sep at Pubnico Pt., NS (RD), 15 Sep at Sable I. (ZL), and 22 Oct at St. John's (DB). A Pine Warbler was far e. at St. John's 13–25 Nov (JP et al.). Prairie Warblers and Yellow-breasted Chats were in average to slightly below average numbers.

Late Scarlet Tanagers were 4–6 Nov at Campellton, NB (BG), 7–12 Nov at Charlottetown, NF (*fide* GS), and 10–13 Nov at St. John's (AHu et al.). Summer Tanagers were one 13–16 Oct at Brier I. and two 20–21 Oct at Seal I., NS (*fide* DMcC). It was a better-than-average autumn for Clay-colored and Lark Sparrows, with respective provincial totals of four and seven in NB, nine and four in NS, and one and two in NF. A Field Sparrow at Blackhead 17 Oct–2 Nov was one of the few ever in Newfoundland (DB, TB). The annual late Oct and Nov influx of N. Cardinals into s. New Brunswick and Nova Scotia was the strongest since 1995. Blue Grosbeak totals were back

to normal after a couple of banner years, with five in NB, three in NS, and one in SPM. Dickcissels were seen in somewhat above-average numbers, being too plentiful for contributors to accurately total. An E. Meadowlark was rare at St. John's 15–30 Nov (BMT et al.). Nova Scotia scored the most Yellow-headed Blackbirds, with seven individuals spread over the province Aug–Nov; New Brunswick and Newfoundland each had one. The only Orchard Oriole was a late bird in early Oct at CSI (AM, CM). A massive flight of Com. Redpolls was noted in NB and NS beginning \pm 20 Oct and continuing through Nov. Other finch species were in poor to fair numbers.

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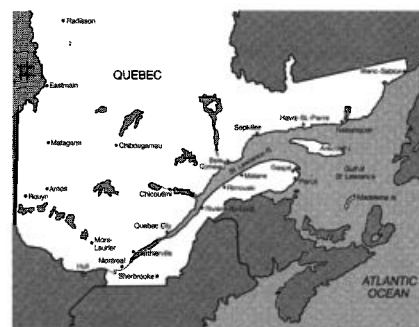
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Fall temperatures continued to be above average with the exception of October. The summer drought, which lasted until early September, came to an end after remnants of Hurricane *Floyd* dumped up to four inches of rain in some parts of southern Québec. October and November were also quite wet. It was an excellent autumn for rarities, with the addition of three new species to the Québec list of birds: Common Crane, Cave Swallow, and Swainson's Warbler.

LOONS THROUGH DUCKS

Not seen every year in s. Québec, single Pacific Loons in Cacouna 11 Oct (L. Messely) and in Newport 31 Oct (PP, D. Mercier, J. R. Lepage) were welcome sightings. *Procellariidae* made a good incursion into the St. Lawrence estuary in late Sep and early Oct.



A round-trip aboard the Trois-Pistoles-Les Escoumins ferry 2 Oct produced seven N. Fulmars, one Greater Shearwater, one Sooty Shearwater, and one Manx Shearwater (JPO, ML). Other trips made during the same period were also quite productive. The Matane-Godbout ferry yielded two Wilson's Storm-Petrels 11 Aug (L. Roy) and one was detected from shore in Rivière-Saint-Charles 19 Oct (JFR, S. Blais).

A white pelican seen from a great distance in Rivière-Ouelle 22 Aug could not be identified to the species (JFR, I. Simard) but one videotaped in Lac des Iles, near Mont-Laurier, 25 Jul, was undoubtedly an Am. White Pelican (P. Moffatt). Last year's respectable count of 10 Great Egrets in St.-Timothée was almost trivial compared to 30 that gathered in the same area throughout Aug (m.ob.). Flocks of 14 and 17 individuals appeared in Saint-Barthélemy 7 Aug (LS) and in Notre-Dame-de-Pierreville 28 Aug, respectively (ND, D. Jauvin). Smaller flocks were seen in different localities and one strayed e. to Cap-des-Rosiers 11 Aug (I.