

British Columbia–Yukon



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Winter arrived in British Columbia on about 4 March 2002, when the Arctic air mass that had stayed bottled up in its source region decided to move southward. And move it did, with a vengeance, bringing brisk northerly winds and plunging temperatures. March and April's low-temperature records were smashed right across the Region. Precipitation was significant in places but light in others. The snowfall on the South Coast 18 March was the second-latest ever at Vancouver International airport. The month of May gradually warmed as the north winds subsided, but the month was still on the cool side. Mountain snowpacks accumulated rather than melted during the period, setting the stage for potential early summer flooding. Deciduous green-up was understandably delayed by two to three weeks everywhere. As a result, many species' arrival was delayed. Although a few hardy members of most migrant species still manage to arrive more or less on time, many were late, and it is likely that the nesting season will also be delayed.

Abbreviations: Chichester (Chichester Bird Sanctuary, Kelowna), C.I.P. (Cottonwood Island Park, Prince George), F.E.T.W. (Forests for the World, Prince George), Whse. (Whitehorse, Yukon).

LOONS THROUGH WATERFOWL

Staging Common Loons included: 180 at

Tagish, Yukon 15 May (JJ, AR) and 122 at William's L. 19 Apr (PR). A *Puffinus* shearwater was reported 9.6 km s. of Leonard I., off Tofino 5 May (DA). Interior Double-crested Cormorants included a single at William's L. 19 Apr (PR). There were few reports of Great Egret this spring, with singles at: Reifel 7 May (m. ob.); Oliver, s. Okanagan, 10 May (BL); and William's L. 26 May (SH). White-faced Ibis is very rare in the province; up to 10 seen at Elizabeth L., Cranbrook 21-25 May (m. ob.) were thus noteworthy.

A handful of Ross' Goose reports came in: a lone bird returned to its traditional field near Quilchena 22 Apr (RH), where it has been seen in 2001, 1998, and 1997, when it was accompanied by 10 others. A *Bewick's Swan* was at Guichon Flats 29 Mar near Kamloops (WW); there are only a handful of records for the Region. No fewer than 32 Eurasian Wigeon were recorded in the B.C. interior this spring. A high count of 2500 Northern Pintail was obtained at Head of the Lake 24 Mar (DGC). A male Common (Eurasian Green-winged) Teal was in Duncan 23 Apr (DM), while another male was at M'Clintock Bay 11 May and furnished the 4th Yukon record (CE). The Yukon's first **Tufted Duck**, a male, was an exciting find at L. Laberge 18 May (JJ, AR). The male King Eider, first discovered in Jan, was last reported off Denman I. 21 Mar (*vide* GLM). Rare were Black Scoters, a male and a female, at Jackfish Bay, L. Laberge 25 May (JJ, AR). Surf Scoters and Long-tailed Ducks were more prevalent in the interior than in recent years. A rare hybrid male Barrow's x Common Goldeneye was observed in the Nicola R. at Merritt 17 Mar (WW).

SA A migration watch by the Canadian Wildlife Service conducted by Jukka Jantunen and Amélie Rousseau in Whse. through the spring produced impressive totals, although some of the early spring numbers were lower than in 2001. The totals included 15,543 geese (2115 Greater White-fronted, 61 Snow, 2883 Canada, 10484 unidentified), 18,503 swans (2870 Trumpeter, 6976 Tundra, 8657 unidentified), 100 Bald Eagles, 553 Northern Harriers, 245 Sharp-shinned Hawks, 1347 Buteos (10 Swainson's, 260 Red-tailed, 229 Rough-legged Hawks, 848 unidentified), 308 Golden Eagles, 23 Peregrine Falcons; and 1128 Bonaparte's and 2664 Mew Gulls.

Rare in the Region, an ad. Ferruginous Hawk was flying over Anarchist Mtn. in the s Okanagan 5 Apr (DB), and another was seen in Nakusp 13 Apr (GSD). A Rough-legged Hawk remained late in the Vernon area 19-24 May (DGC). The Mount Lorette Raptor Count produced 3218 migrating Golden Eagles as of 15 Apr (PSh). A *Demoiselle Crane* that had apparently spent the winter in California surprised local observers in Smithers 2 May (DE, ph). This bird's strong migratory instinct and desire to remain with wild Lesser Sandhills—coupled with a lack of information that would indicate captive origin—seems to suggest that this bird may indeed be a wild bird.

SA After last spring's unprecedented invasion of at least 45 Black-necked Stilts, 28 were recorded this spring, along with the province's first confirmed nesting. Their arrival began with 12 stilts in Kelowna 5 Apr (BT), followed by a single in Penticton 25 Apr (OD); 8 were present at Columbia L., East Kootenays 28 Apr (RaH); one to 2 in Cranbrook 29 Apr+ (RG, m. ob.); and 2-3 birds were at Alki L. in Kelowna 10-29 May (LR, m. ob.). The event of the season began with the discovery of a single stilt at T'Kumlups marsh near Kamloops 10 May (IB, BD, WW), where it was later discovered a pair was present. By 17 May, the male was acting territorial, chasing other waterbirds away and was sitting on a nest (RH), and on 29 May, four eggs were seen in the nest (GG). Once considered rare in the province, this species has become a regular spring visitor in recent years.

Rare on Vancouver I., a Long-billed Curlew was at Somenos Marsh, Duncan 16–17 Apr (DM), furnishing a 2nd local record. Another was in cen. Saanich 4 May (m. ob.), and even more outstanding was an individual at Dawson Cr. 25–26 Apr (MP). Rare along the s. coast, an alternate-plumaged Hudsonian Godwit was at Iona I. 28 Apr (m. ob.); another was found at Boundary Bay 11 May (m. ob.). Rare shorebirds in the Yukon included a Ruddy Turnstone at Army Beach, Marsh L. 22 May (JJ), a Stilt Sandpiper at Lewes Marsh 23–24 May (JJ, AR), a Buff-breasted Sandpiper at Shallow Bay, L. Laberge 24 May (CE)—and likely the same bird at a different location on L. Laberge 25 May (JJ)—and the Yukon's first Ruff, a female, at Lewes Marsh 19 May (JJ, AR, m. ob.). Single White-rumped Sandpipers were at L. Laberge 25 May (JJ), Lewes Marsh, Marsh L. area 26 May (JJ), and Judas Cr. 28 May (JJ, AR). An extremely early Baird's Sandpiper was in Kelowna 9 Apr (WW). A very high count of 73 Red Knots was recorded in Tofino 14 May (AD).

A sighting more typical of the fall was a gathering of 12 Parasitic Jaegers off Iona I. 9 May (RT0). A very early ad. Bonaparte's Gull was present in Vernon 29 Mar (DGC). Rare gulls at the Whse. landfill included a Ring-billed Gull 11 May (CE) and an ad. Thayer's Gull 9 May (CE). This winter's ad. Iceland Gull and the second-basic Lesser Black-backed Gull were last reported from the mouth of Vernon Cr. 8 Mar (HV), and an ad. of the latter furnished a 2nd Vancouver area record 6 Mar (DJ, RT0) in Delta. An ad. Slaty-backed Gull remained in Delta until at least 10 Mar (m. ob.). Very rare during spring in the interior, an ad. Sabine's Gull made a brief appearance over Swan L., Vernon 24 May (DGC, DB). Rare along the s. coast, 6 Black Terns were at Pitt Meadows (RT0). A Snowy Owl was a surprising find 18–24 May in Lavington (PG, MC, DGC ph.). An interesting winter for Northern Hawk Owls continued, with one in downtown Whse. at least through 19 Mar (m. ob.), one at Meadow L. in Whse. through 12 Mar (JJ), one at Mendenhall 15 Mar (JJ), one at the Takhini Burn 23 Mar (CE), and 2 at Fox L. on 30 Mar (CE, PS), and numerous birds seen along the N. Klondike Hwy. between Pelly Crossing and the Minto Burn (MO'D). A pair of hawk owls nested again in the same tree in Becher Prairie near Riske Cr. 18 May+ (m. ob.). The Yukon's 2nd Northern Saw-whet Owl was calling at Haunka Cr., Atlin Rd. 15 Apr—mid-May (JJ, m. ob.).

A Black-chinned Hummingbird was rather early in Kaleden 27 Apr (DO), and an early female Calliope Hummingbird was there 2 Apr (DO). Calliope Hummingbirds are being noted with greater frequency in the lower mainland (there were at least 4 birds sighted this spring);

whether this is due to a change in status or observer effort is unknown. An Alder Flycatcher was a rare sight at Pitt Meadows 30 May (*vide* CG). The first overwintering Pacific-slope Flycatcher in the province remained in Victoria to 20 Mar (m. ob.). An Eastern Phoebe near Chopaka furnished the Okanagan's 3rd record 27 May (CC).

Rare at any time of year, a Loggerhead Shrike was near Osoyoos L. 19 Mar (DB). A pair of Blue Jays were winter holdovers at Comox, Vancouver I. 27 Mar (NH). The Western Scrub-Jay present in Port Coquitlam since Dec was last observed 2 Mar (FV, MV et al.). This species is a casual visitor along the s. coast. The extraordinary wintering Barn Swallow phenomenon continued, with 17 birds at Reifel 1 Mar (*vide* LC) and 2 at Serpentine Fen 1 Mar (JAM). On Vancouver I., one was at Blenkinsop L. 15 Mar. The single bird along Mission Cr. 4 Mar (CC) provided by far the earliest record ever for the Okanagan Valley. An extremely early Northern Rough-winged Swallow was with other swallows over Okanagan L., Kelowna 2 Mar (DTy, JL).

The male Mountain Bluebird that wintered near Duncan remained to 1 Apr (DM); another was rather early at Johnson's Landing 10 Mar (SV). Sage Thrashers are very rare outside of the s. Okanagan, a single at Creston 29 Apr (m. ob.) was a delight. An early American Pipit was at Robert L. Kelowna 27 Mar (RyT). Rare on Vancouver I., a Nashville Warbler was in Saanich 4 May (m. ob.). Rare in the s. interior, a male Tennessee Warbler was found singing in Vernon 26 May (MC, CS). Kelowna's overwintering Palm Warbler remained to 4 Apr (MF). Rare in the lower mainland was a singing male Blackpoll Warbler at Jerico Beach Park 19 May (AG). Also rare were 3 Black-and-white Warblers at Cranbrook 20 May (TM, MM). At least one Northern Waterthrush was still present at Reifel I. 7 Apr (RT0, MME). A male Yellow-breasted Chat was at Upper Hat Cr. (1200 m elev.), the first record for the Lilloet area (PMc). A Clay-colored Sparrow was discovered in Cowichan Bay 26 May (DM), one of few Vancouver I. records. A Lark Sparrow was well n. at William's L. 23 May (AS). A Brewer's Sparrow of the interior form was at Clover Point Victoria 14–17 May (m. ob.) and furnished the 2nd record for Victoria. Rare in the s. interior, a male Rose-breasted Grosbeak visited a Vernon feeder 21–23 May (MC). Rare on Vancouver I., a male Yellow-headed Blackbird was in Parksville 13 May (GG). Kelowna's Great-tailed Grackle remained through the period (m. ob.). Common Grackles are rare away from the Peace R. area; a single was at Johnson's Landing 2 May (GS). A Snow Bunting was very late at Johnson's landing 6 May (GS).

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