

British Columbia–Yukon



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It is often difficult enough to distinguish southbound from northbound birds during the summer, and the late spring caused even more confusing overlap this year than normal. We might also blame the cool weather for the reduced numbers of passerines encountered on many Breeding Bird Surveys. The Region's first nesting of Black-necked Stilt was successful, and the Northwest Territories recorded their first Black-tailed Gull. The avian event of the season, however, was the discovery of a Siberian Blue Robin in Dawson, Yukon—a first record for mainland North America.

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

LOONS THROUGH RAILS

An out-of-season Horned Grebe in alternate plumage was at Victoria 9 Jul (PL et. al.). An Eared Grebe colony that is not often successful held 101 nests at Rawlings L. 8 Jul (GSD). Another colony on Rock L., Becher Prairie, contained 549 nests (RWC, LVD). American White Pelicans were reported on several occasions at Swan L. in the Peace lowlands: 6 were present 4 Jun, 30 on 15 Jun, and 4 on 12 Jul (*fide* MC). These birds are likely wanderers from prairie breeding colonies where drought conditions persisted.

Double-crested Cormorants, away from the coast, included an imm at Waneta Dam in the West Kootenays 25 Jul (GN). William's L. was host to a Great Egret 1-5 Jun (PR), the only report received this season. A Snowy Egret was in Saanich 3-9 Jun (EP, m. ob.) for one of only a handful of Vancouver I. records. A very late Greater White-fronted Goose was near Tofino 28 Jun and 2 & 4 Jul (AD). A Wood Duck was well out of place at Lightning L., Manning P.P. 6 Jul (PL et al.). Rare in the s. interior, a

Harlequin Duck was at Okanagan Falls 4 Jul (CC, m. ob.). A Long-tailed Duck was very late at T'Kumlups Marsh, Kamloops 11 Jun (WW).

A Sharp-tailed Grouse family was near its n. breeding limit on the Dempster Hwy near Campbell L., NWT 20 Jul (BM, RH, MFa). There were a few late Rough-legged Hawks in the s. this spring, by far the latest a weak individual that died 12 Jul at Little Fort (*fide* RH). A Northern Goshawk survey on Vancouver I. discovered eight active nests in the Nimpkish drainage (*fide* MGS). A new Yellow Rail location was discovered when 3 were heard ne. of Chetwynd 10 & 23 Jun (LL, SK); there are only three known locations in the province. The w. coast of Vancouver I. had its 2nd breeding record of Sora, from the same location as the first, along the lower Kennedy R. 28 Jul (MB, DB).

SHOREBIRDS THROUGH GULLS

The Province's first nesting of Black-necked Stilts proved to be a success 21 Jul (DW) when a fledgling was observed; on 22 Jul, 4 fledglings were seen (WW). A pair of American Avocets that was first reported in May near Dawson Cr. was seen again 14 Jun (LL, SK), with one bird there sitting on a nest. Unfortunately, the nest was subsequently ploughed under, as the farmer was unaware of it. Other avocets at the Fort St. John lagoons may have been more successful; an observer here was dive-bombed and scolded by a pair 9 Jul (DW); if confirmed, this would represent the first nesting for the Peace R. area.

Whimbrels are very rare in the interior, and the ad. found in Vernon furnished the 4th record for the Okanagan 31 Jul (CS, CM). Very rare along the s. coast, a **Bar-tailed Godwit** was in Tsawwassen 12 Jun (RS). Marbled Godwits were either very late or very early at Long Beach near Tofino 27 Jun and 22-23 Jul (AD). Wilson's Phalaropes are rarely encountered on the w. coast, so 2 at Tofino 9 Jun were noteworthy (AD). Breeding was discovered at Alex L. in the Chilcotin 4 Jul (GSD, CS) where there are few breeding records.

Pelagic trips out of Tofino produced South Polar Skuas on two occasions: 2 on 21 Jun and a single 16 Jul (AD). Mew Gulls are rare in the interior but particularly so during the summer months; one found at Robert L., Kelowna 22 Jul was a rarity there (CC). The Inuvik dump, NWT produced an astounding

array of gulls, including an ad. California Gull present 1-17 Jun (BM, RHa), joined by another ad. 3 Jun (BM, RHa), well n. of breeding range. The first bird was marked with blue paint and had been seen 72 hours earlier at Norman Wells, NWT, a distance of 450 km, or at least 600 km if the bird followed the Mackenzie R. A third-summer **Black-tailed Gull** was carefully observed 4 Jun (BM, ph. JBa) outside the Inuvik dump but was spooked by a raven during its visit and never seen again despite intensive searching. Also at this dump were an ad. Glaucous-winged Gull 21 Jun (BM ph. et al.) and an ad. Sabine's Gull 18 Jun (BM et al.).

OWLS THROUGH FINCHES

Observations suggesting that mouse and vole populations were high came from many sources, among them a trip along the Dempster Hwy between Arctic R. and Inuvik that produced 17 Short-eared Owls and a family group of 6 young Northern Hawk Owls 21 Jul (BM, RHa, MFa). Eight Boreal Owls, often calling during the day, were reported from the Yukon: 2 in sw. Yukon 7-8 Jun (*vide* HG); 3 near Teslin 10-26 Jun (MG et al.), and 3 at Mt. McIntyre 8, 12 & 14 Jun (HG et al.) This summer's Spotted Owl survey tallied only 19 individuals (*vide* DTy), cause for concern for this rare owl.

Rarely encountered s. of the cen. interior, single Alder Flycatchers were noted at Pitt Meadows 29 May—15 Jun (TP et al.), near Merritt 2 Jul (WW), and near Edgewood 16 Jun (GSD), where 2 singing males were seen. A Willow Flycatcher was upstream from Tahsish Inlet along the Artlish R., extending its known Vancouver I. range 21 Jul (MGS). Least Flycatchers have become scarce but regular visitors to the s. interior in recent years. Breeding was confirmed in the Okanagan when a nest was discovered along Mission Cr., Kelowna 21 Jun (CC). A singing Least was well n. at the Inuvik sewage lagoon 8 Jul (BM). Say's Phoebes are occasionally encountered in the Northwest Territories. Singles were at Inuvik 6 Jul and the Inuvik airport 8 Jul (BM). A few Western Kingbirds ventured well w. of their range, with one in Ft St James 17 Jun (RR) for the first time in 10 years, and another was near Tofino 1 Jun—30 Jul (AC, CC) for a first summer record.

Loggerhead Shrikes are very rare on the coast. An ad. was discovered at Iona I. 4 Jun (RTo, MM) and furnished the first local summer record and first Vancouver record since 1989. As a result of the cold, late spring, many passerine numbers were down on

Breeding Bird Surveys. One observer in cen. British Columbia found a sharp reduction in Swainson's Thrush and American Robin numbers, with 22% and 35% fewer this summer, respectively—much higher than the usual interannual variation (*vide* JB). A well-documented male **Siberian Blue Robin** was closely observed as it foraged in a garden in Dawson, Yukon 9 Jun (NC, †AS). Northern Mockingbirds are very rare in the s. interior; one was reported from Keremeos 7 Jun (ED), and another was at Kaslo 19 Jun (DR). Sage Thrashers are very rare away from the s. Okanagan; one was seen briefly at Leach L., Creston 30 Jul (MAB). A Cedar Waxwing, a rare Yukon breeder, was seen at Upper Liard 18 Jul (HG).

Rarely encountered w. of the Rockies, a **Chestnut-sided Warbler** was in Fort St. James 5 Jun (RR). A few Magnolia Warblers establish territories in the Kootenays but have yet to provide convincing evidence of breeding. Three singing males were at Summit L., Nakusp 26 Jun (GSD) and another singing male near Hills 8 Jul (GSD). A pair of Cape May Warblers at Upper Liard 7 Jul (HG, TMK) provided the Yukon's westernmost record. A **Black-throated Blue Warbler** was discovered near downtown Victoria and furnished the 2nd local record and the 8th record for the province 28 Jun (DA). A male Black-throated Gray Warbler was upstream from Tahsish Inlet along the Artlish R. 21 Jul (MGS), extending its known Vancouver I. range. A Black-and-white Warbler was a rare find at William's L. 5 Jun (AR). Connecticut Warblers are localized breeders in the Peace R. area, but confirmed nests are quite rare; a nest found sw. of Dawson Cr. 14 Jun contained five eggs 19 Jun, and by 9 Jul, 5 young had fledged (MP). Yellow-breasted Chats are very rare on the s. coast, where there is one breeding record. Thus it was with some excitement when 2 birds were discovered at Pitt Meadows 4 Jun—2 Jul (MW et al.).

Single Rose-breasted Grosbeaks, very rare summer visitors to the s. interior, were at a feeder near Rossland 26 Jul (JBe) and at William's L. 3 Jun (SH). A male Black-headed Grosbeak was upstream from Tahsish Inlet along the Artlish R., where this species is not known to occur (MGS). Lazuli Buntings continued their northward and westward expansion with at least 4 discovered on Vancouver I. The first male arrived 1 Jul (m. ob.) and was joined by a female 2 Jul on Mt. Tolmie, Victoria (m. ob.); by 18 Jul, 2 males, a female, and 3 juvs. were present (RS) and furnished the first breeding record for Vancouver I. Farther n. on the island, a male

was in Nanaimo in early Jul (m. ob.). Very rare in the province, a male Indigo Bunting was at Gang Ranch near 100 Mile House 8 Jun (TG, PR). The Province's 6th **Green-tailed Towhee** was found in Lillooet 7 Jul (HD). Lark Sparrows, rare in the Kootenays and in the North Okanagan, were at Skookumchuk 25 Jun (one; GR, RG) and near Winfield 7 Jul (2; TF). A Lark Sparrow that was discovered at Churn Cr. 8 Jun (TG) was later found with another ad. and a recent fledgling 5-7 Jul (GSD, CS) this would constitute the most northerly and westerly breeding. The Province's 7th **Chestnut-collared Longspur** was seen near Clearwater 1 Jul (CR, m. ob.); unfortunately, it was not relocated despite many attempts on subsequent days. Kelowna's **Great-tailed Grackle** was seen sporadically this summer season (m. ob.). Rare away from the Peace R. area, a Common Grackle was at Invermere 4 Jun (LC, RaH).

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