

Weather-related events dominated the season, particularly in the eastern part of the Region.

March was mild and dry in Alberta but seasonable elsewhere, although an unprecedented amount of rain soaked southern Manitoba and Saskatchewan in late March. Several very early arrivals were noted. Conditions deteriorated gradually, and May was one of the wettest and coldest on record in Manitoba, with the north remaining firmly in the grip of winter through the period. Notwithstanding—or perhaps because of—these conditions, there were some outstanding rarities and great viewing opportunities.

GREBES THROUGH SHOREBIRDS

A Clark's Grebe at Medicine Hat, AB 1 May was a local first (BF, BV). An American Bittern near Chestermere, AB 3 Apr was early (DB). A Little Blue Heron near Brooks 22–25 May provided the 3rd record for Alberta (PB, m.ob.). A Cattle Egret at Reinland, MB 21 Apr was very early (*vide* AE); another was near St. Claude, MB 21 May (AC), and numbers at Whitewater L., MB built up to 30+ by late May (*vide* DF). In Saskatchewan, singles were noted near Regina 8 May (KKo) and at Weyburn 29 May (MB). A Black-crowned Night-Heron at Winnipeg, MB from 25 Mar through at least 6 Apr was record early (RO, RK). Up to 3 White-faced Ibis were at Whitewater L. in late May (m.ob.), while one ad. at Oak Hammock Marsh W.M.A., MB 18–24 May was very cooperative (RI, JBr, m.ob.). A Turkey Vulture at Waterton N.P., AB 29 Mar was both early and locally rare (D&TD).

White geese largely bypassed se. Manitoba, but Snow Goose numbers were high in se. Alberta and s. Saskatchewan, as were Ross's Geese in s. Alberta, with a peak of 28 at Frank L. 3 May (RWO, *vide* TK). Rare ducks included 2 Eurasian Wigeons in Saskatchewan: one near Gull L. 22 Apr (CBL, FR, LW, *vide* AH) and a male with an unidentified female wigeon in the Qu'Appelle Valley, SK 29 Apr (BL). A male Common (Eurasian Green-winged) Teal, probably a first for the Region, visited Frank L., AB 4 Apr (JB, BD, B&TG), a male Tufted Duck was reported without details near Flin Flon,

Prairie Provinces



MB 19 May (*vide* BS), and a Barrow's Goldeneye was seen at Harris Res., SK 24 May (AH). A concentration of 5000 Northern Shovelers at Reed L., SK 4 May was notable (TK), as was a count of 260 Red-breasted Mergansers at Fincastle L., AB 18 Apr (LB).

Raptor migration was generally lackluster, but 6 Golden Eagles at St. Adolphe, MB 12–31 Mar were above average (m.ob.), as were 8 Prairie Falcons in Saskatchewan 18 Mar–23 May (m.ob.). Likewise, shorebird numbers were low in s. Manitoba and s. Saskatchewan, with the exception of 193 Hudsonian Godwits at Thunder Creek Marsh 23 Apr (BL), 600+ Pectoral Sandpipers in the Qu'Appelle Valley 8 May (BL), and 800+ Wilson's Phalaropes at Nickle L. 10 May (CB, MB), all in Saskatchewan. Whimbrels peaked near Taber, AB 10 May at 500+, an exceptional number for the Region (LB).

GULLS THROUGH WOODPECKERS

Rare gulls were prominent, highlighted by several outstanding records from Inglewood

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Bird Sanctuary, Calgary, AB: a first-summer Iceland Gull 6–11 May (BSt, PR et al.), a first-summer Lesser Black-backed Gull 24 Apr–14 May (TK, RWO, ph.), and an ad. Slaty-backed Gull, Alberta's 2nd, 13–18 Apr (BSt, AS, RB). Elsewhere, 2–3 Glaucous-winged Gulls were in s. Alberta, and a probable Glaucous-winged was near Regina 27 Apr (BL, JC); a suspected Glaucous-winged Gull x Western Gull hybrid was at the Shepard landfill, Calgary 26–27 Mar (TK, m.ob.); up to 2 probable Great Black-backed Gulls were at Winnipeg 18 (LC) & 19 Apr (RSt); and a Sabine's Gull was seen at Cold Lake P.P., AB 22 May (GN, PR, RT).

Eurasian Collared-Dove reports came from Mortlach, SK, where 3+ were present 6–24 Apr and nesting was noted (MF, BL), Nanton, AB, where two pairs wintered and

SA A massive snowstorm dumped up to a meter of snow across se. Saskatchewan and s. Manitoba 11–12 May. Birds were seen taking refuge in barns and garages, under verandas, in nest boxes and at the bases of trees and houses—by the hundreds. Temperatures remained near freezing for the next several days, and as the snow slowly melted, the widespread mortality became evident. Dead birds were everywhere, including on roads and highways, where they had thronged on bare patches and had been too sluggish to avoid vehicles. Species as large as Mourning Doves, Northern Flickers, and American Robins were common victims, but particularly swallows, bluebirds, Yellow-rumped Warblers, and Savannah Sparrows seemed hardest hit. It stayed cold and wet for the remainder of May, and mortality continued. Flocks of Tennessee Warblers gathered like House Sparrows in Regina gutters. One feeder at Gull Lake, MB attracted 32+ Cape May Warblers (EW), while numerous feeder operators reported 10 or more Baltimore Orioles. Many observers mentioned that the woods and fields were eerily quiet in late May and early Jun. Breeding Bird Surveys may reveal the extent of the damage.



This Northern Hawk Owl at a Winnipeg, Manitoba park 13 May 2004 was both late and out of range. Photograph by Christian Artuso.

nesting commenced mid-May (*fide* MH), Calgary 23 May (GY, m.ob.), and the Chestermere area 29 May (D&LF). As last year, a "Ringed Turtle-Dove" frequented a Brandon Hills, MB feeder 4–18 May (RW). A Northern Hawk Owl at Winnipeg 13 May was out of range (ph. CA), as was a Great Gray Owl at Oak Hammock Marsh W.M.A.



Manitoba's sixth record of Brambling was provided by this female at Winnipeg 7–8 May 2004 (here 7 May). Like all Manitoba Bramblings before it, this one was at a feeder. Photograph by Christian Artuso.

1 Apr (TG, MK). Lone Red-bellied Woodpeckers were noted at Winnipeg 8 May (T&RU) and at Kleefeld, MB 20 May (T&EW).

PASSERINES

A Say's Phoebe at Douglas Marsh, MB 28 Mar was exceptionally early (CBr), and another at Grant's L., MB 10 May was well out of range (KG). A Scissor-tailed Flycatcher was seen at Kinbrook Island PP, AB 30 May (YA), and another was near Chatfield, MB 18 May (JM, *fide* DD). Vireos were still virtually absent by the end of May. Saskatchewan's first Plumbeous Vireo sang at Val Marie 21 May (PT, RBi), and another was reported in Regina (date unknown, DN, *fide* TH). Notable swallow concentrations, all over bodies of water, were 3000 mostly Cliff and Tree

Swallows at Chestermere L., AB 22 May, 2500 mainly Tree Swallows at Glenmore Res., AB 22 May, a mixed flock of 3000+ at Pine Coulee, AB 23 May (all TK), and 1500+ mostly Tree, Barn, and Bank Swallows at Gull L., MB 20 May (RK).

Southern Saskatchewan had 6 Townsend's Solitaires 21 Mar–21 Apr. A Wood Thrush at Starbuck, MB 16 May was seen by many (CP, m.ob., ph. CA); with fewer than five records for Alberta, one at Ralston 16 May was rarer still (TC, BF, BV). Large, early concentrations of American

Robins included 200+ at Grosse Isle, MB 27 Mar (KG) and 500+ at Weyburn 3 Apr (MB, CB). At least 6 Northern Mockingbirds were noted in se. Manitoba 7–26 May (m.ob.). A Golden-winged Warbler observed briefly near Ponoka, AB 15 May (R&AB) was accidental, and another good find was a Black-throated Blue Warbler at Saskatoon, SK 30 May (MW, *fide* RJ).

Western Tanager made a good showing in Manitoba, with one at Winnipeg 12–17 May (D&JD), a male at Ste. Agathe 21–25 May (KE) and a female there 28 May (ACs, L&AL), and another near Beausejour 27 May (RS). A Spotted Towhee took refuge from the elements at a Medora feeder 11–12 May (KD), while a feeder at nearby Pierson had 4–5 birds during the same period (R&MW). A Savannah Sparrow near Calgary 26 Mar was very early (TK), as was an

Indigo Bunting at Grosse Isle 8 May (KG). A

Northern Cardinal at Edmonton, AB 20 May was far nw. of the species' usual range (WF). Saskatchewan had its 4th Painted Bunting, a male, at Regina 26–29 May (M&AF, ph. GK). A Brambling at a Winnipeg feeder 7–8 May was the 6th for Manitoba (RN, m.ob., ph. CA). Common Redpolls remained late in the s., with large flocks noted, e.g., 1000+ at Wasagaming, MB 16 Apr (KK).

Observers (provincial compilers in bold-face): C. Artuso, Y. Attia, M. Bailey, R. Barclay, R. & A. Barrett, L. Bennett, R. Bisson (RBi), C. Bjorklund, J. Black, C. Blenkin (CBl), C. Braden (CBr), D. Brown, J. Brown (JBr), P. Bulman, L. Cocks, A. Cormier, A. Courcelles (ACs), T. Cowley, J. Cummings, D. Danyluk, K. DeSmet, D. & J. DeWit, D. & T. Dolman, B. Donnelly, K. Edwards, A. Ens, D. Fast, M. & A. Fines W. Finlay, M. Flack, D. & L. Flynn, B. Frew, K. Gardner, B. & T.



Although Wood Thrushes appeared frequently in Manitoba from the late 1970s through much of the 1990s, usually in the south in springtime, they have been rarer in the Prairie Provinces during this century. This bird was at Starbuck on 16 May 2004. Photograph by Christian Artuso.

Goulet, T. Gregg, M. Harrison, A. Hartley, T. Herriot, R. Iverson, R. Johanson, M. Kading, K. Kingdon, R. Koes, T. Korolyk, K. Kozij (KKo), G. Kratzig, L. & A. Layman, B. Luterbach, J. Mallman, D. Nadeau, R. Nero, G. Newton, R. Oberlin, C. Penner, P. Roxborough, F. Roy, B. Schmidt, R. Sinnott, A. Slater, R. Staniforth (RS), B. Storms (BSt), Phil Taylor, R. Thomas, T. & R. Underwood, B. Verner, E. Waller, R. & M. Wang, T. & E. Wiens, R. Will, M. Williams, L. Wooding, R. Worona (RWo), G. Yaki. ☺



This male Painted Bunting at Regina on 29 May 2004—with Mourning Dove, White-throated Sparrow, and House Sparrows—provided Saskatchewan with its fourth record. All sightings of this species in the province have been recent. Photograph by Greg Kratzig.