

Spring 2004 weather was dry and warm—in fact, it was often unseasonably hot, especially during April. The most significant weather impacting migrants occurred farther east during May, when a string of spring snowstorms swept across the Canadian Prairies. Many May arrival migrants that approach British Columbia from the southeast were delayed in reaching the province as a result. Please note that this Region is now comprised of British Columbia only; reports from Yukon Territory are treated in the new Northern Canada regional report.

SHEARWATERS THROUGH SHOREBIRDS

A Flesh-footed Shearwater, very rarely encountered in spring, was seen off the entrance to the Strait of Juan de Fuca 29 May (BT). The male King Eider frequenting the waters of Mud Bay to Qualicum Beach, on the e. side of Vancouver I., remained through 20 Mar (GLM et al.). Spring sightings of Ross's Geese have been increasing, but this spring, there were flocks of unprecedented size: 24 near Parson, E. Kootenays (LH) and 33 (with a single Snow Goose) in Jaffray, E. Kootenays 6 May (GR). Turkey Vultures continue their impressive invasion of the province, with a pair seen in Tofino 6 May (JW, KM). This species was once accidental at this location and was certainly never seen so early in the spring. For the 2nd spring in a row, an ad. White-tailed Kite visited the lower mainland, this time in Delta 14 May (ph. JE); it is not known whether this is a returning bird.

An impressive total of 7000 American Coots was on L. Windermere in the E. Kootenays 18 Apr (LH). An American Golden-Plover furnished the first spring record for the Okanagan in Vernon 23 May (RF). A Greater Yellowlegs was on the early side, arriving in Salmon Arm 24 Mar (THil), with the first migrant Greater Yellowlegs on the coast arriving in Tofino 20 Mar (AD). Black-necked Stilts returned to T'Kumloops marshes after a one-year hiatus 6 Apr (CR, ph. RR). A potentially territorial male was in the same location where a first provincial nesting took place in 2002. Other Black-necked Stilts included a single at Elizabeth L., E. Kootenays 15 Apr (DN), 10 there 28 Apr (DN), and a pair at Serpentine Fen 10 Apr (TH et al.). The pair of wintering American Avocets along the Serpentine R. remained through 16 Apr (JA et al.). The peak of the Whimbrel migration occurred early this year, with 235 at Grice Bay, Tofino 2 May (AD). Almost annual in spring on the s. coast, an ad. Hudsonian Godwit was at Reifel Migratory Bird Sanctuary, Ladner 18–26 May (JI et al.), with another near Tsawwassen 29 May (RTo et al.). There were unprece-

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dent numbers of Pectoral Sandpipers in Ucluelet, where more common in the fall, with 23 on 12 May (BSL) and 18 on 15 May (JuB) the high counts. A Reeve in Somenos Marsh, Duncan 25 May (DM) furnished one of few Vancouver I. records. Tofino experienced record-high numbers of Short-billed Dowitchers, such as 8000 present 28 Apr (AD). Annually in late Apr, there are thousands of dowitchers on the Tofino mudflats, but the numbers have never been known to surpass 5000.

JAEGERS THROUGH KINGBIRDS

A pair of Parasitic Jaegers, very rarely encountered in spring in the Okanagan, was seen flying over Vernon 23 May (CS). An ad. South Polar Skua at the entrance to the Strait of Juan de Fuca 29 May (BT) furnished the first spring record for the province. A basic ad. Bonaparte's Gull was very early in Salmon Arm 24 Mar (THil). Among the massive gull flocks in the Comox–Courtenay area, a first-alternate Slaty-backed Gull was located 20 Mar (JF, RTo, GLM). Franklin's Gulls are very rare spring migrants in the interior. A pair furnished the first spring record for the Nicola Valley on Stump L. 29 May (WW). Casual in spring, an ad. Franklin's Gull was at Blackie's Spit, White Rock 1 May (IP et al.); another ad. was in Delta 22 May (RTo). Two Sabine's Gulls wandered into the Burrard Inlet and were seen by a commuter on Vancouver Harbour's Sea Bus 31 May (TPi).

A surprising count of ad. Ancient Murrelets (21) came from the entrance of the Strait of Juan de Fuca during a survey from the NOAA vessel *R/V MacArthur* 22–31 May (BT). While a few individuals have been seen in small numbers in early summer off Tofino, this record adds to the growing evidence that points to an undiscovered colony s. of Queen Charlotte Is.—especially when one considers that at least 4 chicks were observed even farther s. along the Washington coast during this same survey (BT).

Following a winter invasion of Great Gray Owls along the lower mainland, 2 remained into Mar, one at the U.B.C. Campus to 9 Mar (PC et al.), and one at Colony Farm, Port Coquitlum to 11 Mar (DS et al.). Rare along the coast, a Lewis's Woodpecker was in Pitt Meadows 24 May (PC). A pair of Williamson's Sapsuckers, first discovered 31 May (KG), successfully nested in the Kimberley Nature Park; there are few documented nestings away from the Okanagan. A Hammond's Flycatcher furnished an early record for the Comox



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Valley 9 Apr (JF) and one of the earliest on record for the province. Rare on the s. coast, a Dusky Flycatcher was at Queen Elizabeth Park 2 May (MTo et al.). A pair of Gray Flycatchers was record early in Summerland 18 Apr (LR). Western Kingbirds are occasional strays to Vancouver I.; one was found on Mt. Tolmie, Victoria 27 May (RG).

SWALLOWS THROUGH FINCHES

An early Cliff Swallow was at Serpentine Fen, Surrey 24–31 Mar (CG et al.). Single Rock Wrens have been making coastal appearances in the past few years, and this year, one was banded at Sechelt Airport 23 May (ph. JJ), for one of few Sunshine Coast records, and another was in Parksville 29 May (CSt, GLM), the latter was feeding on rooftops and gravel driveways. Coastal sightings of Mountain Bluebird are rare. Single ad. females were in Tsawwassen 24 Mar–16 Apr (RS et al.) and at Reifel Migratory Bird Sanctuary, Ladner 11 Apr (JI). Gray Catbirds had an early start, as indicated by the 27 individuals scattered around the s. Okanagan 24 May (DGC). A Northern Mockingbird, rare in the s. interior, was near Oliver 12 Apr (ED), not far from last spring's sighting. This individual was discovered after it had mocked the observer's attempts to call in a Virginia Rail.

A Loggerhead Shrike, very rare in the s. interior, was at Separation L. near Princeton 20–29 Mar (JK, MS). Richmond's wintering Blue Jay, present since Nov, remained to 12 Mar (TP et al.). The Western Scrub-Jay, present in Ladner since Oct, remained to 31 Mar (DK et al.). An Eastern Yellow Wagtail (*Motacilla tschutschensis*, now split from the Yellow Wagtail of w. and cen. Eurasia) was reportedly seen with pipits at the Long Beach Airport 23 Apr (AP); if substantiated, this would be the first spring record and the 6th for the province. With the recent A.O.U. split within the Yellow Wagtail complex (and potentially more to come), observers are encouraged to write exhaustive documentation on all wagtails in the Region.

A singing male Northern Parula, the province's 5th, was along the Grant Narrows Dyke in Pitt Meadows 24 May (†RTO, CI, BI), the 3rd record in as many years. An SY Northern Waterthrush was banded at the Alaskan Wildlife Refuge, Ladner 27 Mar (LM); unless this bird was overwintering, as an individual did nearby in winter 2002–2003, it was over two weeks early as a spring migrant. A male Yellow-breasted Chat was along the Grant Narrows Dyke Trail in Pitt Meadows 29 May (KR), one of few lower mainland sites where this species has bred in the past. A Cassin's Vireo was record early in Salmon Arm 2 Apr (THil). An American Tree Sparrow was very late at Colony Farm 24 Apr (AR et al.). The wintering Chipping Sparrow in Cloverdale remained through 2 Mar (IR et al.). A Black-throated Sparrow was briefly seen in Kelowna 21 May only (GW), for a potential 4th Okanagan record.

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Early. That was the Region's main theme this season, and early arrivals were especially noticeable in insectivorous species. Beyond the record dates noted, there were quite a few reports of early arrivals that were not quite noteworthy enough, individually, to be included. Other than that, the Region enjoyed above-average numbers of uncommon shorebirds and a nice smattering of rarities that did not form any obvious patterns. The spring was mostly warm and dry. During March, most of the Region received under 50 per cent of normal rainfall and "suffered" temperatures more than 8° F above normal. April moderated a bit, with temperatures mostly 3° to 8° F above normal and rainfall 50–70 per cent of normal. May brought a return to normal in both temperature and precipitation.

Abbreviations: F.R.R. (Fern Ridge Res., Lane); Lower Klamath (Lower Klamath N.W.R., Klamath); Malheur (Malheur N.W.R., Harney); Nisqually (Nisqually N.W.R., Thurston); N.S.C.B. (N. Spit Coos Bay, Coos); O.C.N.M.S. (Olympic Coast National Marine Sanctuary); O.S. (Ocean Shores, Grays Harbor); P.N.P. (Point No Point, Kitsap); P.S.B. (Port Susan Bay, near