



Rudolf F. Koes | Peter Taylor

Temperatures in March and April ranged from cool in the west (Alberta) to well above normal in the east (Manitoba). Accordingly, nesting activity for waterfowl was delayed in the west but early in the east. In the latter province, trees leafed out weeks ahead of schedule. Regionwide, observers lamented the general lack of migrants, with shorebirds, flycatchers, vireos, *Catharus* thrushes, and *Zonotrichia* sparrows being particularly scarce. It was thought (or hoped!) that placid weather conditions allowed the birds to fly over, without having to drop in at traditional stopover areas.

On the positive side, both Alberta and Manitoba birders were treated to a host of extreme rarities, including at least three new species for the Region (pending review by provincial records committees).

Abbreviations: Ft. Whyte (Fort Whyte Centre, Winnipeg, MB); Oak Hammock (Oak Hammock Marsh W.M.A., MB); Wascana (Wascana L. and Marsh, Regina, SK); White-water (Whitewater Lake W.M.A., MB).

GEESE THROUGH DIURNAL RAPTORS

Snow and Ross's Geese were almost completely absent in se. Manitoba, reflecting a major westward shift in their migration path during the past few years. Up to 5 Trumpeter Swans were in the Pinawa, MB vicinity 6-30 May (PT, m.ob.). There were 12+ reports of Eurasian Wigeon in Alberta, involving 16 birds, 24 Mar-10 May (TK, DK, m.ob.). Farther e., 3 were at Wascana 5 Apr (SW, BE) and one near Regina 12 Apr (GK), while a Eurasian Wigeon × American Wigeon hybrid was near Stavely, AB 29 Apr (TK). A Common Loon at Gull L., MB 4 Apr was very early (AE, PF, RN, JP). A Great Egret strayed to Wascana 11 Apr (JC, m.ob.). Manitoba hosted 5 Snowy Egrets, including a northerly bird near The Pas 25 May (BPi, EB, ph.). A Little Blue Heron was at Whitewater 31 May (KD), and Cattle Egret numbers at this hotspot had climbed to 47 by 25 May (AC, LdM, RKO). Notable at Ft.



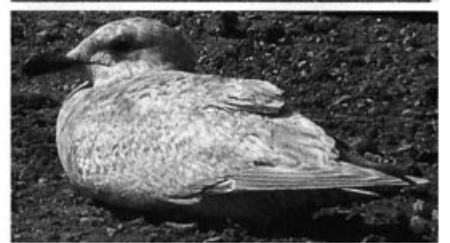
This Black Vulture, photographed at Wanless, in western-central Manitoba, 11 May 2006, furnished a first record for the province. Photograph by Darren Beecham.

Whyte were a Green Heron 24 May (AE et al.) and a Yellow-crowned Night-Heron 5 May (ph. AA). Six White-faced Ibis visited Oak Hammock 6 May (G&SG), with at least one remaining through the period, and up to 2 were at Whitewater 14 May+ (m.ob.).

A Black Vulture photographed at Wanless, MB 11 May (RL) was a potential first for the province, but details on the sighting have not yet circulated. At the Windygates, MB hawkwatch, Bald Eagles totaled 923 in 34 days of observation between 11 Mar and 18 Apr, with a provincial record-high peak of 245 on 1 Apr (A&DSc et al.). A Red-shouldered Hawk was seen on the St. Adolphe, MB hawkwatch 13 Apr (GHI et al.). The 31-day tally of Red-tailed Hawks at Windygates was 7112, peaking at 3244 on 1 Apr (A&DSc et al.), while 79 Golden Eagles passed the watch on 21 days during the same time span (A&DSc et al.). At Mt. Lorette, AB, 2918 Golden Eagles were counted between 12 Feb and 17 May. While this was the highest total since 2003, it required 1214 hours, 47% above average (PS et al.). Five active Golden Eagle nests were noted at L. Diefenbaker, SK 24 Mar (DZ).

RAILS THROUGH WOODPECKERS

A Sora at Oak Hammock 22 Apr was early (RKO). An unbanded yearling Whooping Crane, discovered by birders 9 May but apparently present since late Apr, thrilled observers near Niverville, MB into Jun. It became probably the most-watched bird ever in the province (CS, m.ob., ph.). A Black-necked Stilt at Purdue Marsh, SK 22 Apr was a good find (GT), but even better was Manitoba's first nest of the species at Whitewater 23 May (KD, m.ob.). Three American Avocets were n. of their usual range near The Pas 28 Apr (DR). A concentration of 1500 Lesser Yellowlegs near Shepard, AB 30 Apr was notable (TK). Whimbrel counts of 800 in the Rolling



This gull, photographed at the PR 227 dump near St. Ambrose, Manitoba 17 May 2006, was thought to be a Herring Gull × Glaucous-winged Gull hybrid. The regional editors would appreciate receiving expert opinion on this tentative identification. Photographs by Peter Taylor.

Hills, AB area (BPa, BV) and 660 in the Taber, AB area (LBe), both 14 May, were impressive. An American Woodcock at Redcliff, near Medicine Hat 7 Apr was a first for Alberta (BT m.ob., ph.). It was inadvertently flushed by an overly eager television cameraman and could not be relocated. Some 75,000 Wilson's Phalaropes massed at Reed L., SK 14 May (GK).

A Parasitic Jaeger at Manitou L., SK 7 May



This American Woodcock at Redcliff, near Medicine Hat, Alberta 7 April 2006, was nearly 1000 kilometers west of its normal range. Representing the first confirmed record for the province, it departed when a television cameraman prodded it to see if it was alive! Photograph by Brad Thicksen.



In a season that saw many rare gulls in Alberta, this Western Gull at Calgary on 4 April 2006 may have been the rarest. The identification was based on the overall heavy build, the heavy bill, dark eyes, large domed head, and drooping "skirt." If accepted, it would be a first for the Prairie Provinces. Photograph by Terry Korolyk.



Alberta's second Black-throated Sparrow visited a Bears paw yard 28 and 29 May (here) 2006. It appeared following four days of weather disturbances moving up to the province from the American Southwest. Photograph by Terry Korolyk.

was rare (B&HSc). Calgary, AB hosted a smorgasbord of rare gulls: an Iceland Gull 29-30 Mar (RW, m.ob.), a Lesser Black-backed Gull 28-30 Mar (RB, RS), a Slaty-backed Gull 28-30 Mar (BCI, ET, MM, m.ob.), a Western Gull 4 Apr (potentially a Regional first) (TK, m.ob., ph.), and a Glaucous-winged Gull 8 May (RW). Elsewhere, a Lesser Black-backed Gull was at Wascana 6-12 Apr (BLU, m.ob.), a possible Herring Gull x Glaucous-winged Gull hybrid was at the PR 227 dump in s. Manitoba 17 May (PT, RKo, ph.), and a Glaucous-winged Gull was at Edmonton, AB 1

May (DN, TT).

New locations for Eurasian Collared-Doves were Crystal City, MB (ph. BTr), Winkler, MB (LBr), and Grenfell, SK (DC). A Yellow-billed Cuckoo at Assiniboine Park, Winnipeg 27-28 May was seen by many (BCa, m.ob., ph.). Snowy Owls lingered well into spring, with singles reported as late as 15 May near Regina (BLU, SW) and 21 May at Oak Hammock (GB). A Chimney Swift battling fierce headwinds at Robsart, SK 23 May and 4 the next day at Estevan, SK were well w. of their usual range (AC, LdM, RKo).

A cooperative male Broad-tailed Hummingbird frequented a Portage la Prairie, MB feeder 16-29 May (CB, m.ob.). Seen, heard, and photographed by many, it provided the first record for the Prairie Provinces. A Lewis's Woodpecker at Ravenscrag, SK 25 May was rare (RD, JS, *fide* PS). The wintering Yellow-bellied Sapsucker at Winnipeg was seen as late as 21 Mar (MK). At Headingley, MB, 1460 Northern Flickers streamed westward along the Assiniboine R. in two hours 16 Apr (BSH).

PASSERINES

A House Wren at Winnipeg 19 Apr was early (CC). At least 2 Townsend's Solitaires visited Winnipeg 17 Mar-7 Apr (GW, m.ob.), while single birds were noted near Elie, MB 11 Apr (DSt) and Saskatoon, SK 23 Mar (*fide* NS) and 19 Apr (SS). Northern Mockingbirds were well represented, with sightings at Winnipeg 15-21 Mar (CM, m.ob.) and 31 Mar (KE), Grand Beach, MB 28 Apr (RKO, GG, HL, PT), Kinbrook Island P.P., AB 12 May (B&LLa), Wild Horse, AB 26 May+ (RKn, GHr, HT), and Calgary 29 May (TB, m.ob.).

An Orange-crowned Warbler at Spruce Woods P.P., MB 10 Apr was very early (L&RJ). A Prothonotary Warbler at Ft. Whyte late Apr-6 May was about the 6th for the province (AM, RP, m.ob., ph.), while an undocumented report of Worm-eating Warbler came from Delta, MB 30 May (JL, *fide* KD). Amazingly far out of range was a Swainson's Warbler at Beaudry Park, near Winnipeg 8 May (ph. CA). A first for the Region, the bird unfortunately did not linger. A Field Sparrow at Regina 31 May-1 Jun was a good find (TH, m.ob.). There was a flurry of Lark Bunting sightings in Manitoba 19-30 May, with reports from Miniota, Oak Hammock, Pierson, and Broomhill. A Black-throated Sparrow at Bears paw, near



This male Black-necked Stilt was first found on 23 (here 26) May 2006 at White-water Lake, Manitoba. On 24 May, a female was discovered on a nearby nest, which later produced at least three young. This represents the first confirmed breeding of the species in the province. Photograph by Christian Artuso.

Calgary 28-29 May was the 2nd confirmed for Alberta (CL, m.ob., ph.). Between 6 and 22 Apr, the Houstons banded 343 Dark-eyed Juncos in their Saskatoon yard, the highest number in 40 years of banding. An early Smith's Longspur was near Oak Hammock 12 Apr (AE, PF, RN). A Painted Bunting was photographed at Bashaw, AB 4 May (R&YKi); its appearance fits a pattern of spring overshoots in the Region. An Eastern Meadowlark was noted near Sandilands, MB 25 May (CS).

Observers (provincial compilers in boldface):

C. Artuso, A. Aug, R. Barclay, T. Barkauskas, L. Bennett (LBe), E. Bouvier, C. Braden, L. Braun (LBr), G. Budyk, B. Carey (BCa), J. Clark, B. Clibbon (BCI), D. Cork, A. Courcelles, C. Curtis, L. de March, K. De Smet, R. Dutcher, K. Elliott, A. Ens, B. Ewart, P. Fast, G. & S. Grief, M. Harrison, T. Herriot, G. Holland (GHl), G. Holroyd (GHr), L. & R. Jansson, R. & Y. King (R&YKi), D. Knapik, R. Knapp (RKn), R. Koes (RKo), T. Korolyk, G. Krätzig, M. Krieger, C. Lake, H. Lane, B. & L. Lang (B&LLa), R. LeBlanc, J. Lemay, B. Luterbach (BLu), C. Meiklejohn, A. Mickey, M. Mulligan, D. Nadeau, R. Nickel, B. Parsons (BPa), J. Peters, B. Pillipow (BPi), R. Porteous, D. Raitt, J. Saunders, N. Saunders, B. & H. Schmidt (B&HSc), A. & D. Schmitt (A&DSc), S. Shadick, P. Sherrington, B. Shettler (BSH), D. Stepler (DSt), C. Stevens, R. Storms, G. Taylor, P. Taylor, B. Thicksen (BTh), T. Thormin, B. Treble (BTr), H. Trefry, E. Tull, B. Velner, G. Walz, S. Weir, R. Wershler, D. Zazelenchuk. 🌐

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