



Rudolf F. Koes | Peter Taylor

Although the rest of the northern hemisphere apparently experienced another record-mild winter, the Prairie Provinces had good old-fashioned cold and snowy weather, particularly in Saskatchewan and Manitoba. Many lingerers did not survive the brutal cold of February. Northern owls, which often add spice to an otherwise quiet day of birding, went virtually unreported. On the other hand, grouse and relatives obviously enjoyed good breeding success in 2006 and were reported in high numbers. Likewise, redpolls were present in the best numbers in years.

WATERFOWL THROUGH FALCONS

Notable waterfowl included a Trumpeter Swan on the Fort Qu'Appelle, SK C.B.C. 16 Dec (*fide* GWp) and a Canvasback and 7 Greater Scaup at Gardiner Dam, SK 24 Feb (WW). Long-tailed Ducks were well represented in Alberta, with 2 at Banff N.P. 4-16 Dec (JR), one at Waterton N.P. 7 Dec (YA), and 3 on the Calgary C.B.C. 17 Dec. Also unusual were a Bufflehead × Common Goldeneye hybrid on the Calgary C.B.C. (TK) and a Red-breasted Merganser at Calgary 5-19 Dec (GY). Sharp-tailed Grouse numbers were high, notably the C.B.C. total of 390 at Lyleton, MB 4 Jan. Similarly, Gray Partridge were widely reported, e.g., six coveys totaling 66+ birds were in the Grosse Isle-Marquette, MB area (KG).

Second provincial winter records were provided by a Red-throated Loon at Pine Falls, MB 2 Dec-9 Jan (M.N.S., m.ob., ph.) and a Pacific Loon at Calgary 12-17 Dec (GY). Tardy grebes included single Red-necked at L. Minnewanka, AB 1 Dec (JR) and Bracken Falls, MB 2 Dec (M.N.S., m.ob.), 7 Eareds at Frank L., AB 3 Dec (GW), with 3 there 10 Dec (AS), 4 Horneds at Waterton N.P. 7 Dec (YA, BW), and a Western at Banff N.P. 7 Dec (JR). The last of 2 lingering American White Pelicans at Pine Falls was seen 11 Dec (M.N.S., PT, RZ, m.ob.). Great Blue Herons were at Moose Jaw, SK 8 Dec (DC), near Banff 1 Feb (JB), and at Saskatoon, SK 25 Feb (FR).

Bald Eagles wintered Regionwide in higher

numbers than usual, with a record-high 24 on the Calgary C.B.C. 17 Dec, 25+ near High River, AB 10 Feb (MSu, CS), and 26 at Gardiner Dam 18 Dec (RJ, m.ob.), plus widespread reports in agricultural areas of s. Manitoba. At least 10 Sharp-shinned Hawks were noted in s. Alberta, while Saskatchewan had two reports and Manitoba four. A Ferruginous Hawk at Maple Creek, SK 26 Feb was likely an early migrant (AH). Gyrfalcons made a good showing, with at least 10 in s. Alberta, 5 in Saskatchewan, and 7 in Manitoba. These included a white-morph bird captured and banded at Saskatoon 3 Jan (ph. MS) and another white bird near Kleefeld, MB 11 Jan+ (DF, m.ob.).



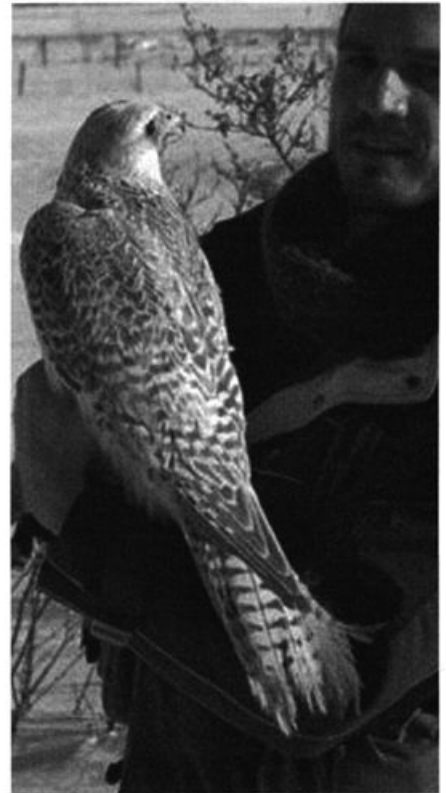
A Red-throated Loon lingered on the Winnipeg River at Pine Falls, Manitoba from 2 (here 11) December 2006 through at least 9 January 2007, furnishing the province's second winter record. Photograph by Peter Taylor.

SHOREBIRDS THROUGH WAXWINGS

There were three sightings of Killdeer in s. Alberta and 2 different Glaucous Gulls at Gardiner Dam 3 & 18 Dec (NS, RD, GWp, m.ob.). Eurasian Collared-Dove numbers were particularly high in s. Saskatchewan, with maxima of 40 at Estevan (KH) and 37 at Swift Current (MD). Of all the owl species, only Snowy Owl was reported in good numbers. Northern Hawk Owl and Great Gray Owl reports were at their lowest in years. Rare in winter were single Long-eared Owls at Strathmore, AB 2 Feb (TK) and at Winnipeg, MB 11 Feb (RW). Short-eared Owls were widespread in s. Alberta, with peaks of 14 near Calgary 31 Jan (TK) and 9 at High River 23 Feb (DS). Manitoba had four Red-bellied Woodpecker reports: at Chater, Cypress River, Grosse Isle, and Turtle Mountain P.P. A Yellow-bellied Sapsucker at Estuary, SK 4 Jan was a winter rarity (*fide* GWp).

Gray Jays continued their strong showing outside the boreal forest in se. Manitoba, but none was reported w. of the Red R. valley. By mid-Mar, the last birds departed. A Chestnut-backed Chickadee frequented a Jasper, AB feeder late Nov-Feb (JD, m.ob., *fide* JR), while a Carolina Wren at Winnipeg 28 Dec (N&JS) was not confirmed. Tardy Hermit Thrushes were at Winnipeg 1 Dec (m.ob.)

and at Regina, SK 27 Dec (B&SE). Varied Thrush numbers in s. Manitoba were unprecedented, with at least 11 birds reported in Winnipeg and many small towns; 4 were noted in Saskatchewan (m.ob.). A tardy Gray Catbird was at Winnipeg 4 Dec (*fide* RP). The Curve-billed Thrasher previously reported at Dalmeny, SK was last seen mid-Dec (DFr, m.ob., ph.). Brown Thrashers were at Good Spirit Lake P.P. 15 Dec (B&JA), Hodgeville 5 Feb (*fide* BL), and Swift Current about 12 Feb



Seeing a Gyr falcon anywhere in North America makes a birder's day. Birds in the white morph, such as this one banded at Saskatoon, Saskatchewan on 3 January 2007, are even more highly prized. Photograph by Martin Stoffel.

(*fide* MD), all in Saskatchewan. Bohemian Waxwings were especially numerous in Saskatchewan, with a flock estimated at 4000 in Saskatoon 6 Jan and 2 Feb (GK).

SPARROWS THROUGH FINCHES

A Spotted Towhee was a good find on the Saskatoon C.B.C. 26 Dec (*fide* RD). Lingerer sparrows included 4 Chippings in s. Manitoba, with the latest one noted in Winnipeg 1 Jan (G&JG), a Fox in Winnipeg 6 Jan (DB), a Song throughout winter at Portage la Prairie, MB (AS) and another at Eastend, SK 1 Jan (GWp), a Lincoln's at Winnipeg 6 Nov-5 Dec (WC), single wintering White-crowns at Kleefeld and Winnipeg, and 2 Harris's in s. Manitoba and 10+ in s. Alberta. At least 5



Varied Thrushes regularly wander east into Saskatchewan and Manitoba in late fall and early winter, but the winter of 2006-2007 saw unprecedented numbers in these provinces. This male was at Saskatoon, Saskatchewan on 17 February 2007. Photograph by Nick Saunders.

Northern Cardinals were reported in s. Manitoba, where the species seems forever poised to become a regular breeder. More unexpected were 2 at Lumsden, SK throughout the period (*vide* BL) and one at Olds, AB 7 Feb–Mar (CL, m.ob., ph.). A first-year male **Indigo Bunting** at a Nanton, AB feeder 2 Dec provided the Region's first winter report (BW). Most notable of lingering blackbirds were 24 Rusty

Blackbirds on the Lyleton C.B.C. 4 Jan, 10 on the Pike Lake, SK C.B.C. 2 Jan, and 8 at Millarville, AB 26 Jan (DK).

Single Gray-crowned Rosy-Finches were at Swan River, MB 15 Dec–24 Jan (NJ, m.ob., ph.), Pike L. 18 Dec (*vide* RD), Regina 23 Dec–Feb (BL), and Prince Albert, SK mid-Jan–23 Feb (*vide* BL, ph.). Pine Grosbeak numbers were high across the Region, whereas Red and White-winged Crossbills continued to be scarce. The latter species was noted nest-building at Regina 12 Feb, but the nest was later abandoned (BL). Redpoll numbers, including those of Hoary Redpoll, were high throughout the

Region after a dismal showing last winter. A flock of 1500 redpolls was at Frank L. 10 Feb (MSu, CS), and in Saskatchewan they were in their highest numbers since 2004. Conversely, few Pine Siskins lingered.

Addenda: Several notable records, all from spring through fall 2006, have come to light recently. A White-winged Dove was seen

briefly near Val Marie, SK 6 Jun (MM). A **Whip-poor-will**, found at Calgary 28 Oct, recovered during rehabilitation and will be released in spring (SN, ph.). It provided the first fully documented record for Alberta. A first for the Region was an **Acorn Woodpecker** at Sundre, AB Jun–Jul (G&RW, ph.). A **Summer Tanager** at Pike L. 17 May was about the 4th for Saskatchewan (BG, ph.).


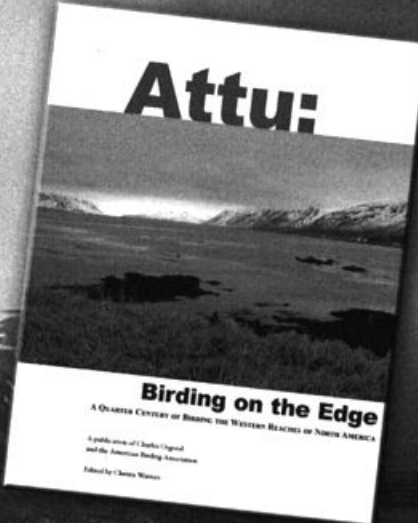
Observers (provincial compilers in boldface): B. & J. Anaka, Y. Attia, D. Barry, J. Beelyme, W. Christianson, D. Cork, J. Davis, M. Dudragne, R. Dudragne, B. & S. Ewart, D. Fast, D. Fraser (DFr), K. Gardner, B. Girvan. G. & J. Grief, M. Harrison, A. Hartley, K. Hedegard, R. Johanson, N. Jonsson, D. Knapik, T. Korolyk, G. Krätzig, C. Linnard, B. Luterbach, Manitoba Naturalists Society, M. McDavit, S. Noble, R. Parsons, J. Rogers, F. Roy, N. Saunders, N. & J. Schouten, A. Simm, D. Smith, C. Southward, M. Stoffel, M. Suretti (MSu), P. Taylor, G. Wagner, G. Wapple (GWp), R. Wiebe, B. Wilson, W. Wilson, G. & R. Wyna, G. Yaki, R. Zach. 🌐

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