

Atlantic Canada



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I can no longer divine the meaning of a “normal” spring, but most observers considered 2007 a relatively uneventful period, especially with respect to the weather, at least in the Maritime provinces. St. Pierre and the island of Newfoundland had a colder, stormier time of it, with considerable snowfall early on in eastern Newfoundland, though nothing record-breaking. The mild weather did bode well for the birds, and the general consensus was of a modest recovery in the migrant breeding bird populations that had suffered from weather-related migration mortalities the previous two springs. The smallest jurisdictions, Prince Edward Island and St. Pierre et Miquelon, claimed the three “firsts” this year, all well documented with photographs. Embrace the digital revolution!

Abbreviations: B.I. (Brier I., NS); C.S.I. (Cape Sable I., NS); G.M.A. (Grand Manan Archipelago, NB); H.R.M. (Halifax Regional Municipality, NS); NL (the province of Newfoundland & Labrador); Newfoundland (the island of Newfoundland only); N.S.M.C. (Nova Scotia Migration Count; May 13); N.S.B.S. (Nova Scotia Bird Society); S.P.M. (Saint Pierre et Miquelon, France).

WATERFOWL THROUGH LOONS

As in 2006, few Snow Geese were noted away from their ne. New Brunswick staging areas, where the largest flock recorded was about 3000 birds 26 Apr. Brant numbers were well down in Nova Scotia, but it is unclear if the population has decreased or just shifted its migration route. There were at least two pairs of Eurasian Wigeon in e. Newfoundland, while there were 3 males in H.R.M. into mid-Apr, 4 males and a female in New Brunswick,

and one male in Prince Edward Island. The wintering male in St. Pierre lingered until 5 May. A female Northern Pintail wintered on St. Pierre et Miquelon, a rare event locally. A male Garganey was present on St. Pierre 24-31 May (LJ et al., ph.), the first for the French islands. By 31 May, it was keeping company with a female Blue-winged Teal. A freshly dead Canvasback was found during the 2nd week of Mar near Quispamsis, NB (*vide* JW), where less than annual. Of 4 Eurasian Teal reported, 3 were in New Brunswick and one in e. Newfoundland. There were still 7 Redheads at Oysterbed Bridge, PEI 7 Mar, a notable concentration (DS), while 2 lingered at C.S.I. through late Mar. At least a dozen Tufted Ducks were in the St. John's, NL area, and one lingered through 28 May (Anne Hughes). Elsewhere, New Brunswick had 2 males in Mar. The wintering Lesser Scaup on St. Pierre was last noted 9 May. Four male King Eiders were noted from e. Newfoundland in Mar-Apr, one was seen off Cape Tourmentine, NB in late Mar, and 2 were off St. Pierre et Miquelon in Apr. Observers in Nova Scotia commented on the low numbers of scoters, but the migration past Pt. Lepreau, NB was normal. Several observers in different parts of the Region suggested that Long-tailed Duck numbers were low, but the data are insufficient to confirm or refute such suggestions, so observers should make an effort to count this common wintering species more precisely. There were 2-3 Ruddy Ducks in or near Halifax Harbour through late Apr, and a well-described pair at St. Pierre 5 or 6 May (*vide* PB) makes the 5th occurrence for the islands and first in spring. Etcheberry again bemoaned the scarcity of Red-necked Grebes off St. Pierre et Miquelon, but numbers farther s. were normal and sometimes notable, e.g., 600 off G.M.A. 7 Apr (Roger LeBlanc et al.).

TUBENOSES THROUGH RAPTORS

A few Sooty Shearwaters were noted off C.S.I. by mid-May, but one off G.M.A. 25 Apr was notably early. A lone Northern Gannet 5 Apr off St. Pierre was 17 days earlier than average (LJ). There was an odd pattern to the annual overshoot of herons and egrets, with 6 Great Egrets arriving in the Avalon and Burin Peninsulas of Newfoundland 11-20 Apr, with some lingering until May. There was no corresponding arrival to the s. and w., so these birds must have been caught in a weather sys-

tem that tracked e. of the Maritimes, then hit se. Newfoundland. Elsewhere in the Region, and later in the season, the Great Egret totals for Nova Scotia and New Brunswick were but 3 and one. Snowy Egrets and Little Blue Herons were not part of the early flight; provincial totals for Snowy were 5 in Nova Scotia, 9 in New Brunswick, and one in Newfoundland, and there were 5 Little Blues in Nova Scotia, 4 in New Brunswick, plus one on St. Pierre 15-26 May. No Tricolored Herons were reported, and there were but 2 mainland Cattle Egrets, both in New Brunswick in May. A Cattle Egret at Buchans, NL was both a rare spring and inland record (Dianne Reid). Glossy Ibis, however, broke the mold of this spring's tepid heron flight by staging a Regionwide arrival in the last six weeks of the season. There were at least 10 birds in New Brunswick, including an eventual group of 6 at Lower Jemseg, and a lone bird far n. at Miscou I. Four were noted together along the Glenfinnan R., PEI (Tom Duffy) 28 Apr, while 4 in s. Nova Scotia were more widely scattered. The flight extended farther n. as well, with at least 4 birds in St. Pierre et Miquelon



This male Garganey was present on St. Pierre 24-31 (here 25) May 2007. Photograph by Patrick Boez.

15-22 May, while some reached Newfoundland: 5 from 25 Apr-10 May at Bonavista, rising to 7 on 11-13 May (Jon Joy et al.), plus singles 24 May at Pasadena (Lois Bateman et al.) and the next day at Portugal Cove South (Dave Shepherd et al.).

There was belated news of a mid-winter Black Vulture near Dingwall, Cape Breton, NS (Storrs Olsen, ph.). This furnishes the 16th provincial record, of which seven have occurred during the Dec-Feb period. In Nova Scotia, Turkey Vultures staged a large movement in Apr and May away from their sw. stronghold, with more than 50 individuals noted, including 7 on C.S.I., 6 in Advocate, Cumberland, flocks of up to 11 at Canso, Guysborough, and at least 8 on Cape Breton,

including a group of 6 in Little Pond. Perhaps this year we will confirm nesting in the province. This flight also pushed a lone bird to Prince Edward Island, 9 May along China Point Rd. (John Hayden). For the first time since Etcheberry began keeping St. Pierre et Miquelon's bird records, in 1974, there were no reports of Osprey on the French islands. It is perhaps not a coincidence that the Osprey total of 111 on the N.S.M.C. was the lowest in the past nine years, down 27% over the long-term average.

RAILS AND SHOREBIRDS

At least 6 American Coots wintered in ponds around Halifax Harbour; one or 2 is the norm. Two successfully wintered on St. Pierre et Miquelon for the first time, last seen 15 Apr. There were at least 7 Sandhill Cranes reported from New Brunswick in Apr and May, though none appeared to be paired. In Nova Scotia, the Lunenburg bird wintered and was last reported in late May, while a different bird was noted at Canso, *Guysborough* in early May.

There was a small influx of European Golden-Plovers to Newfoundland: up to 7 in Bonavista 23 Apr–13 May (Rod Cox et al.); one at Sandy Cove, Eastport Pen. 1 May (Greg Stroud); 3 at Kilbride 2-4 May (Paul Linegar et al.); and one on the w. coast at St. Paul's Inlet 11 May (Monique Vasallo et al.). Only 4 ad. American Oystercatchers were noted on C.S.I. this spring, down from 7 a year earlier. On 14 May, LJ found and photographed St. Pierre et Miquelon's 2nd **Common Greenshank** in the same pond where he discovered St. Pierre et Miquelon's first, four years earlier. Two Willets arrived at Renew's, NL in late May, and lingered, and though they showed agitated behavior, there was no evidence of nesting. The species is rare in Newfoundland, especially along the e. coast. On the N.S.M.C., totals of Red Knot (7) and Sanderling (9) were well below their long-term average, by 82% and 95%, respectively. The high Red Knot total at Maisonnette Dune, NB was only 14 (29 May), though as with 2006 this newly discovered spring shorebird site enjoyed some Regional high counts: 140 Black-bellied Plovers (23 May); 66 Semipalmated Plovers (26 May); 46 Short-billed Dowitchers (26 May); 12 Ruddy Turnstones (26 May); and 242 Least Sandpipers (17 May). A late snowstorm in Labrador City 31 May grounded many passerines as well as a Red Knot and a Purple Sandpiper, both very out of place at such an inland location. A Pectoral Sandpiper 29 Apr at Portugal Cove South, NL (Dave Shepherd) represented a rare spring record, as did 3 in Saint John, NB,

27 Apr (MC). A Stilt Sandpiper on St. Pierre 29 Apr (ph. LJ), was unseasonable and only the 4th local occurrence.

GULLS THROUGH ALCIDS

A Pomarine Jaeger off Colombier I., St. Pierre et Miquelon 27 May (RE) provided the only local report. A Long-tailed Jaeger, the only jaeger reported from Nova Scotia and the rarest jaeger at any season, was seen off Flint I., *Cape Breton* 19 May (Cathy & Allan Murrant). May brought a small movement of Laughing Gulls into Nova Scotia, with 3 in e. Cape Breton and at least 4 in the Halifax Harbour area. The province's 18th Little Gull was noted in Pictou during the N.S.M.C.; most previous records are from autumn and winter. At least 3 Mew Gulls were present in Hal-



In New Brunswick, this Le Conte's Sparrow at Mercer Settlement in Kings County 13-30 (here 14) May 2007 represented a second record for the province. Photograph by Hank Scarth.

ifax Harbour through late Mar, including a larger-billed individual that showed traits of the e. Eurasian subspecies *heinei*, and an ad. Mew Gull was at St. Pierre the first half of Apr; one of the wintering Mews in St. John's, NL, a second-cycle bird, lingered until 13 May. A classic first-cycle **Thayer's Gull** was photographed at Sullivan's Pond, H.R.M. 4 Mar (Bernard Burke); this is the 6th convincing Nova Scotia record for this problematic species. The ad. **Slaty-backed Gull** in St. John's, first discovered in late Nov 2006, was present until at least 25 Mar. Two Dovekies lingered into Apr in Nova Scotia, and a few Thick-billed Murres were still noted in the first half of May. The only Ivory Gull reported was one at Portugal Cove South, NL. 2

Mar, stealing dog food from a dish (*vide* Dave Shepherd).

DOVES THROUGH STARLING

A **White-winged Dove** at a St. John's feeder 14-18 May (Aidan Greene et al.) was at least the 5th for Newfoundland. A **Yellow-billed Cuckoo** 23 Mar at C.S.I. provided the only report for this spring rarity and was unexpectedly early (Garvin Swim). A **Northern Hawk Owl** made a too-brief appearance on C.S.I. 23 May (Wilfred Atwood); they are reported less than annually in the province. As in 2006, two nest-boxes on St. Pierre were occupied by **Boreal Owls** by mid-Apr (RE), though one nest was subsequently abandoned. Five calling **Boreal Owls** were tallied on the West Labrador Spring Count 12 May. Although **Chimney Swifts** have now been designated as **Threatened in Canada**, there was an encouraging resurgence of their numbers on the mainland, with the highest count in Nova Scotia being 760 in *Pictou* 25 May and in New Brunswick 200 at *Ste-Anne-de-Madawaska* 23 May. Farther n. at St. Pierre there were seven reports of one to 3 birds 12-29 May. A number of **Red-bellied Woodpeckers** wintered in Nova Scotia; two pairs in Yarmouth, one bird in *Antigonish*, 4 in Jollimore, H.R.M., and one in *Queens*. Breeding was only confirmed for the province last year in Jollimore. The **Richibucto, NB** individual, first found in Nov, was last reported 25 Apr, and a migrant appeared 10-12 May at *Mary's Pt., NB* (DC).

An **Eastern Phoebe** was quite far n. at St. Pierre 11 May (Patrick Asselin). While searching for a **Mountain Bluebird**, Donna Crosby found a rare spring **White-eyed Vireo** in Upper East Green Harbour, *Shelburne, NS* 26 May. **Purple Martins** appear to be extirpated as a breeding bird in Nova Scotia, and a single migrant was noted, 29 Apr, in *Kings* (m.ob.). With 7 present, **Blue Jays** are now almost considered resident on St. Pierre et Miquelon. The predicted extirpation of **Black-capped Chickadees** on St. Pierre et Miquelon might have been premature, as the population on *Saint-Pierre* has risen from one to 4; the recent arrivals bring fresh hope. **Golden-crowned Kinglets** enjoyed a banner year in 2006, but this spring their numbers fell sharply; perhaps the cold winter was to blame. *Prince Edward Island* had its first **Carolina Wren** in spring 2006, but this pioneer was followed by 2 that arrived in *Summerside* in mid-Dec 2006, and they remained through at least mid-Apr. Two **Carolina Wren** sightings in *Fredricton, NB*, 30 Mar and 2 Apr, were separated by some distance, so may represent 2 individuals. Once again, *New Brunswick* had the only **Blue-gray Gnatcatchers**, 5 birds 10-23 May.

Northern Wheatears seen in e. Newfoundland included a female at Cape Spear 7-10 May (Terry Janes et al.) and a male at Bear Cove, Avalon Pen. date unknown (Terry Janes); another was on C.S.I. 25 May (Murray Newell), rather late. Vic Williams provided an accurate description of a Mountain Bluebird at Upper East Green Harbour, Shelburne 23 May (*vide* Donna Crosby); this is the 8th provincial record of this w. species. A Townsend's Solitaire at Shediac, NB 15 Apr (Stuart Tingley) and another at Tarantum, PEI 10-12 Mar (Dwayne Oakley, Dan McAskill) were both rare, though the latter bird represented just the 6th occurrence for that province. Hermit Thrush continues to be the commonest thrush on St. Pierre et Miquelon, with many more sightings (23) than Swainson's (7) and Gray-cheeked (3) combined. There was a large push of Northern Mockingbirds and Brown Thrashers into New Brunswick and Nova Scotia from late Apr onwards, with provincial totals of 3 and 9 for the mockingbirds and 15 and 14 for the thrashers, respectively. In addition, 2 thrashers and a mockingbird wintered in Nova Scotia, a thrasher reached Cape St. Mary's, NL 13 May (rare spring record; Gene Herzberg et al.), and a mockingbird reached St. Pierre 28 May.

WARBLERS THROUGH FINCHES

Two Orange-crowned Warblers wintered in H.R.M.; a rare spring migrant Orange-crowned was on G.M.A. 22 May (JW). Five Pine Warblers wintered, 3 in H.R.M. and 2 in New Brunswick. Etcheberry commented that on St. Pierre et Miquelon, in contrast to recent years, some species of warbler seemed more numerous, and the count of 17 species there this spring is encouraging. There was an impressive tanager show in May, concentrated as expected on the mainland, but with a few notably far-flung birds. Summer Tanagers arrived in numbers in Nova Scotia, with at least 10 mainland birds from Halifax southward, the first 19 Apr in conjunction with a powerful storm that swept in from the s., the rest through May. One reached Cape Breton, and there were 2 May birds in New Brunswick. Scarlet Tanagers, all in May, were more dispersed, with 4 in New Brunswick, 5 in s. Nova Scotia, and 2 in Newfoundland (one w. at Cornerbrook 3 May, one e. at St. Mary's 27 May), and the other a freshly dead male at Northwest River 20 May, just the 2nd Labrador record. Nova Scotia's 18th Western

Tanager successfully wintered in West Pubnico, Shelburne, but the provincial total was then augmented by 3 additional birds: a male 19 Apr at C.S.I. (m.ob.); a female in Canso 22-23 May (TK); and a male in Halifax's Public Gardens 30 May (ph. Tim Venters). Labrador's first Western Tanager (male), and the province's 3rd, was a media sensation in Happy Valley/Goose Bay 10-26 May (Tony Chubbs et al.).

There were 5 Eastern Towhees in Nova Scotia in May, plus three sightings of perhaps the



Furnishing a first record for Prince Edward Island, this Harris's Sparrow was at Corran Ban 18 May 2007. Photograph by Dwayne Oakley.

same individual on Machias Seal I., NB 9-15 May (Ralph Eldridge). A Chipping Sparrow near Mirande L., St. Pierre 29 Apr was three weeks earlier than average and the earliest ever on St. Pierre et Miquelon by four days (RE). There were but 2 Clay-colored Sparrows reported Regionwide; one wintered in Canso, NS, where routine, but more notable by far was St. Pierre et Miquelon's first and long-overdue Clay-colored Sparrow, present 23 May near Mirande L., well appreciated and photographed by local birders. Field Sparrows were scarce, with three reports in May, two in Nova Scotia, and one in New Brunswick. The Stellarton, NS Lark Sparrow wintered until 23 Apr, and there were 2 other early Apr birds in the province, both thought to be migrants. New Brunswick's 2nd Le Conte's Sparrow was a cooperative singing male, discovered 13 May+ near Mercer Settlement, Kings (Richard Blacquiere et al., ph.). Prince Edward Island enjoyed a one-day visit by its first Harris's Sparrow at Coran Ban; the bird was identified by Vince MacIntyre, who spread the word quickly enough for many of the province's birders to enjoy it. The Lunenburg, NS Harris's Sparrow (8th for the province) successfully wintered and was last reported 17 Apr. A variety of the commoner sparrows arrived on St. Pierre et Miquelon about a week earlier than

average (RE). The Golden-crowned Sparrow found last Dec on St. Pierre et Miquelon remained through 4 May, and though it remained frustratingly elusive, it was eventually photographed. For the 2nd spring in a row, an Oregon Junco reached Cape Breton, NS, this time in remote White Pt., where it lingered 7-13 May (Lisa Dixon et al.).

There was a memorable influx of colorful grosbeaks and buntings into the Region. More than 100 Rose-breasted Grosbeaks were reported across Nova Scotia, and 12 reached St. Pierre et Miquelon, an impressive count for the French islands (totals were not monitored in New Brunswick or Prince Edward Island). St. Pierre et Miquelon also enjoyed late May visits by a Blue Grosbeak and 2 Indigo Buntings. Apr/May mainland records for these two species were as follows: Blue Grosbeak 9/5 (NB/NS); Indigo Bunting 9/31 (NB/NS). Just one Indigo Bunting was reported from Prince Edward Island. Many of these birds were noted in conjunction with the intense mid-Apr storm that moved up the coast from the United States.

The only Yellow-headed Blackbird was an imm. male on C.S.I. 20 May (MN et al.). A Brown-headed Cowbird was notable 5 May in St. Lewis, Labrador (Eva Luther), where the species is less than annual. Six Common Grackles in Labrador in the last week of May also were noteworthy. Twelve Orchard Oriole sightings in May were split evenly between New Brunswick and Nova Scotia, but the rarest oriole was a male Bullock's Oriole 25 May in Argyle, Shelburne, NS (Ted d'Eon), the 11th provincial record. The Labrador West Spring Count found 94 Rusty Blackbirds, an encouraging number for this species in decline.

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