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NORTH AMERICAN BIRDS • AMERICAN BIRDING ASSOCIATION • VOLUME 58 • NUMBER 4 • 2004

- | | | |
|---|--|--|
| <p>468 First record of Cape Verde Shearwater (<i>Calonectris edwardsii</i>) for North America
J. Brian Patteson and George L. Armistead</p> <p>474 The Changing Seasons: Rome Burning?
Edward S. Brinkley and Paul J. Baich</p> <p>486 Editors' Notebook</p> <p>618 First North American record of Black-Bellied Storm-Petrel (<i>Fregetta tropica</i>)
Paul A. Guris, Michael D. Overton, Michael H. Tove, and Rick Wiltraut</p> <p>622 A possible Brown Skua (<i>Stercorarius antarcticus</i>) on Sable Island, Nova Scotia
Ian McLaren and Zoe Lucas</p> <p>627 Pictorial Highlights</p> <hr/> <p>The Regional Reports & State of the Regions</p> <hr/> <p>488 Atlantic Provinces & St. Pierre Et Miquelon
Bruce Mactavish • Ian McLaren</p> <p>491 Québec
Pierre Bannon, Samuel Denault, Yves Aubry, and Normand David • Pierre Bannon and Normand David</p> <p>494 New England
Wayne R. Petersen • Wayne R. Petersen and Pam Hunt</p> <p>499 Hudson-Delaware
Robert O. Paxton, Joseph C. Burgiel, Michael Powers, Richard R. Veit, and David A. Cutler • Robert O. Paxton</p> <p>505 Middle Atlantic
Todd M. Day</p> <p>511 Southern Atlantic
Ricky Davis • Harry E. LeGrand, Jr.</p> <p>515 Florida
David J. Powell • Bill Pranty</p> <p>519 Ontario
David H. Elder • Audrey E. Heagy and Jon D. McCracken</p> | <p>522 Eastern Highlands & Upper Ohio Valley
Victor W. Fazio III and Nick Pulcinella</p> <p>527 Illinois & Indiana
Kenneth J. Brock</p> <p>531 Western Great Lakes
Peder H. Svingen • Edward S. Brinkley and Noel J. Cutright</p> <p>535 Iowa & Missouri
James J. Dinsmore</p> <p>539 Tennessee & Kentucky
Chris Sloan and Brainard Palmer-Ball, Jr.</p> <p>543 Central Southern
Robert D. Purrington • C. Dwight Cooley, Robert A. Duncan, Lucy R. Duncan, Robert D. Purrington, and Phillip A. Wallace</p> <p>548 Northern Canada
Cameron D. Eckert</p> <p>551 Prairie Provinces
Rudolf F. Koes and Peter Taylor • Peter Taylor</p> <p>554 Northern Great Plains
Ron Martin</p> <p>557 Southern Great Plains
Joseph A. Grzybowski and W. Ross Silcock • Joseph A. Grzybowski</p> <p>561 Texas
Mark W. Lockwood</p> <p>566 Idaho & Western Montana
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Sartor O. Williams III</p> <p>579 Arizona
Mark M. Stevenson and Gary H. Rosenberg • Jennifer N. Duberstein</p> | <p>583 Alaska
Thede Tobish</p> <p>588 British Columbia
Donald G. Cecile • Chris Charlesworth</p> <p>590 Oregon & Washington
Steven Mlodinow, David Irons, and Bill Tweit • Joseph B. Buchanan</p> <p>595 Middle Pacific Coast
Michael M. Rogers, Steven A. Glover, Luke W. Cole, and Scott B. Terrill • John Sterling</p> <p>600 Southern Pacific Coast
Guy McCaskie and Kimball L. Garrett • Harry E. LeGrand, Jr.</p> <p>604 Baja California Peninsula
Richard A. Erickson, Robert A. Hamilton, Eduardo Palacios, and Roberto Carmona • Daniel S. Cooper, Roberto Carmona, and Richard A. Erickson</p> <p>607 Mexico
Héctor Gómez de Silva</p> <p>611 Central America
H. Lee Jones</p> <p>613 West Indies & Bermuda
Andrew Dobson, Robert L. Norton, and Anthony White</p> <p>615 Hawaiian Islands
Robert L. Pyle and Peter Donaldson • Marjorie Ziegler</p> |
|---|--|--|



ON THE COVER: Loggerhead Shrike is declining throughout its range for reasons unknown. This *meansi* Loggerhead Shrike was photographed 15 October 2002 on San Clemente Island, California, where this subspecies is endemic. Listed as federally Endangered because of its tiny population (down to 14 birds in the wild in 1998), restricted range, susceptibility to introduced predators, and loss of habitat, its population has increased to 76 birds (2004), thanks to the San Clemente Loggerhead Shrike Recovery Project, managed by the U. S. Navy's Natural Resources Office. Photograph by U. S. Navy/Brian L. Sullivan.



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First record of Cape Verde Shearwater (*Calonectris edwardsii*) for North America

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ABSTRACT

This paper documents the first North American record of Cape Verde Shearwater (*Calonectris edwardsii*), a single bird photographed off North Carolina 15 August 2004, and provides contextual comments on taxonomy, distribution, and field identification of Atlantic *Calonectris* taxa.

FIELD ENCOUNTER

CONTEXT

On 15 August 2004, the authors and 37 others aboard the *Miss Hatteras* observed a Cape Verde Shearwater (*Calonectris edwardsii*) near 34° 52.1' N, 75° 22.2' W, approximately 49 km (26 nautical miles, 30 statute miles) southeast of Hatteras Inlet, North Carolina. The water depth is about 200 m at this location, near what is considered to be the edge of the Continental Shelf. The sea surface temperature at the time of our encounter was recorded as 26.9° C. The minimum water temperature recorded that day was 23.7° C, and the maximum was 29.1° C farther offshore,

along the axis of the Gulf Stream. We considered the water along the shelf edge to be a blend of Gulf Stream water and Shelf water.

This blended seawater had been present in the area for several days and is somewhat unusual for mid-August, when the Shelf edge south of Cape Hatteras is often inundated with clear blue Gulf Stream water. The blended water contained extensive wind-rows of gulf weed (*Sargassum* spp.) and was teeming with baitfish and larger predatory fish, including Dolphin (*Coryphaena hippurus*), Wahoo (*Acanthocybium solanderi*), and White Marlin (*Tetrapturus albidus*). Many (Atlantic) Cory's Shearwaters (*Calonectris diomedea borealis*) and Sooty Terns (*Sterna fuscata*) fed along these extensive weed-lines, along with lesser numbers of Audubon's Shearwaters (*Puffinus lherminieri*) and Bridled Terns (*Sterna anaethetus*), typical constituents of the pelagic drift community. A single Greater Shearwater (*Puffinus gravis*) had put in a brief appearance, and in trying to relocate that bird, we carefully scrutinized each flock of Cory's Shearwaters as we traveled to the northeast along the weed-line. Overcast skies made it possible to see well in all directions.

At 1042 EDT, Patteson spotted the Cape Verde Shearwater resting among a group of about 20 Cory's Shearwaters, and he alerted Captain Spurgeon Stowe to approach the flock more closely and to alert everyone aboard to look for a slightly smaller, darker bird in the flock. Though neither author had previous field experience of this species, Patteson had studied museum specimens, and both authors had seen photographs of it, and a closer look at the bird made them confident of its identity. Cameras were quickly brought to bear, so as to document the bird while it rested

on the water no more than 15 m from the *Miss Hatteras*. We observed the bird closely as it rested on the water and studied it in flight on several occasions, as it would flush with the flock when we approached within 10 to 15 m, and then resettle on the water a short distance away. After 20 minutes of continuous observation, the bird flew off and was not relocated.

DESCRIPTION AND IDENTIFICATION

The Cape Verde Shearwater was clearly smaller (by about 20 per cent) and darker above than the adjacent *borealis* Cory's Shearwaters but was otherwise roughly similar in plumage, being countershaded, brown above and mostly white below. While at rest on the water, the bird's size, head color, and the color and pattern of the bill lent it an appearance strikingly different from Cory's and indeed from other shearwaters with which we are familiar (Figures 1–5).

The color of the head was clearly darker, a neutral gray as opposed to the warmer brown or grayish-brown of the Cory's. The head looked both smaller and more angular than those of the Cory's, which have larger, more rounded heads, and its darker color contrasted more sharply with the white of the lower cheeks and throat, giving the bird a more clean-cut look—with colors more contrasting, less diffuse than the paler Cory's Shearwater. The head and bill were not as dark as would be expected in Greater Shearwater, and the bird did not appear capped, at least when at rest.

The rather slim, slender bill was markedly less bulbous than those of the Cory's; its color was dusky olive-gray at the base, with a darker, blackish subterminal band and gray tip. The bill showed no pale yellowish color, unlike the Cory's. At a distance, the wide subterminal band made the

Figure 1. The Cape Verde Shearwater (left) off North Carolina stood out in the flock of about 20 Cory's Shearwaters by virtue of its smaller size, colder plumage tones, sharper contrast of upperparts with underparts, and smaller, shallower bill, which lacked the yellow tones of Cory's, being a more dusky olive in color. All photographs taken 15 August 2004. Photograph by J. Brian Patteson.



bill look dark-tipped. While the bird rested on the water, its neck appeared rather thin, and this gave the bird a somewhat delicate aspect.

When bird took flight (Figures 6–9), its smaller size became even more obvious, and though the bird was in what appeared to be prebasic molt (with both body and wing feathers in the midst of being replaced), the upperparts as a whole were clearly darker than those of the Cory's Shearwaters. The pale area on the rump was less extensive than in nearby Cory's and contrasted more sharply with the darker upperparts. This mark is rather variable on Cory's Shearwater; on this Cape Verde Shearwater, it was a thin pale, whitish crescent, lacking in warm color and not as broad as on Cory's, which are usually a dingy, pale off-white, or even buff in color. In flight, the bird appeared darker overall than Cory's except for some pale patches in the upperwing, where the shafts of the remiges were exposed by molted upperwing coverts (see below). The underwing appeared similar to Cory's, being whitish with a brown border in the marginal coverts. The uppertail coverts were darker than in most Cory's. Subsequent examination of photographs taken of this bird revealed a long-tailed appearance

compared to Cory's in the same field of view, but this was not noted in the field.

The bird was clearly in molt of both the contour feathers and the remiges and their coverts. This full molt had commenced relatively recently, as indicated by the gap in the inner primaries (p1–p4 were dropped), the missing distal greater upperwing coverts (exposing the white bases to the secondaries), and the disheveled look of the plumage in the neck and back. Peter Pyle studied photographs of the bird in flight and suggested that the broad, rounded tips to the outer primaries, the apparent absence of retained (juvenal?) secondaries, and the probable presence of retained lesser or median upperwing coverts point toward a bird in its third calendar year or older (=ASY; at least 2 years old). He writes: "An SY bird, roughly one year old, would begin the primary molt in June (assuming a schedule similar to that of Cory's) and be molting p6–p7 by mid-August, would have browner and more pointed primary tips, and would not show older feathers of a previous generation. In hand, it might be possible to assess the retained coverts to see if they are juvenal feathers (on a TY bird) or definitive feath-

ers (on an ATY bird), but this is not possible in the field."

Porter et al. (1997) describe six identification features to look for in differentiating Cape Verde Shearwater from Cory's Shearwater:

- Bill noticeably thinner than Cory's, and gray or pinkish-gray with a black subterminal band (looking black-tipped at a distance), quite unlike the large yellow (or ivory) bill of Cory's;
- Upperparts darker and grayer brown than Cory's, with a dark 'W' (or 'M') often noticeable across the upperwings;
- A clean demarcation between the dark upper and white lower parts of the head, on some birds giving a slightly capped appearance;
- Smaller and slimmer than Cory's, with a longer tail, smaller head, and slightly narrower wings;
- Uppertail-coverts tend to show consistently more white than Cory's; and
- Flight similar to Cory's, but with perhaps less deep wing-beats and the wings held slightly more forward, with the hand at right angles to the body when gliding.

We found all of these characters to fit with the North Carolina bird, aside from the fifth item, which we believe to be variable in both species, based on study of photographs, specimens, and birds in the field. When observed closely, then, Cape Verde Shearwater should not present great difficulty in identification. Porter et al. (1997) attest that the first Cape Verde Shearwaters they encountered looked so different from Cory's that they were initially puzzled as to what they were seeing, and they likened its overall long-tailed, narrow-winged appearance to Wedge-tailed Shearwater (*Puffinus pacificus*). When seen poorly or at a distance however, identification could present a challenge because Cape Verde Shearwater is comparable in structure and plumage to two common species in the North Atlantic, Cory's and Greater Shearwaters.

DISCUSSION

STATUS AND DISTRIBUTION

Cape Verde Shearwater is one of the least-studied species of North Atlantic tubenoses. The population has been estimated at 10,000 pairs and is known only to breed on six islands in the Cape Verde archipelago (Hazevoet 1995), although the "culling" of several thousand nestlings each year by local fisherman (Hazevoet et al. 1996) could represent a significant threat to this species, and its actual population may be smaller than is currently estimated. Cape Verde Shearwaters arrive at breeding islands beginning in late February, with laying in June and July and fledging in October and November (Hazevoet 1995), a schedule similar to, but slightly earlier than, that of *borealis* Cory's that breed to the north, in the Azores, the Berlengas, the Canaries, the Salvages, and the Madeiran Archipelago (Madeira, Porto



Figure 2. Cape Verde Shearwater at center. Photograph by George L. Armistead.



Figure 3. Cape Verde Shearwater at left. Photograph by George L. Armistead.

Santo, and the Desertas). It is mostly absent from waters around the breeding islands after November and before February (Hazevoet 1995). Dispersal at sea has not been well studied, but expeditions to Senegal in October of 1995 and 1996 found it to be numerous off the peninsula of Cape Verde (within sight of land), and large numbers were observed feeding around fishing trawlers there (Porter et al. 1997). There are scattered winter reports of single birds off western Africa from Mauritania

and Guinea-Bissau (Borrow and Demey 2001), and the species has been observed during its breeding months from seavatches in and around Dakar since at least 1968 (Gaston 1970, Baillon and Dubois 1991, Marr and Porter 1992, Allport 1995, Marr et al. 1998) and in adjacent waters (Brown 1979).

Movements of Cape Verde Shearwaters in the non-breeding months are essentially unknown. It is surmised that the birds disperse south from the Cape Verde Islands

Figures 2, 3, 4. At a distance, and at certain angles, when the Cape Verde Shearwater (right, in Figure 4) was seen sitting with Cory's, its smaller size, darker bill, and slightly darker plumage recalled Greater Shearwater—or the even smaller Manx Shearwater, occasionally seen off North Carolina in August. Greater Shearwater is in fact larger than Cape Verde Shearwater, with a darker (black) bill and a neat black cap.

Figure 4. Photograph by J. Brian Patteson.



into the southern North Atlantic and northern South Atlantic (Borrow and Demey 2001). Away from Africa and related islands, we find few reliable reports of this species. On 18 February 1992, three shearwaters studied off Argentina at 38° 36' S, 53° 30' W were identified as Cape Verde Shearwaters (Curtis 1994). In May and June 1997, three Cape Verde Shearwaters were collected off the coast of Brazil (Petry et al. 2000), apparently the first documented occurrence for the Western Hemisphere, along with winter sightings off Bahia and Rio de Janeiro/São Paulo, Brazil (Olmos 2002; Olmos, pers. comm.). In North America, the only published mention of this species is of a single bird, thought to be a likely candidate for Cape Verde Shearwater, seen in a heavy shoreline migration of Cory's and Greater Shearwaters at Cape Point, Buxton, North Carolina (Davis 1993); this sight record preceded the recognition of *edwardsii* as a full species. We know of no North American specimens of Cape Verde Shearwater in museum collections.

Little has been published about the ages of Cory's Shearwaters, or the relative proportions of their age classes, observed in summer in the western North Atlantic. Because large numbers of Cory's in varying states of molt are present through the warmer months in and around the Gulf Stream off the Carolinas, we have assumed these to be birds not yet old enough to breed or possibly adults that are not breeding—all breeding colonies are too distant for foraging adults to make regular trans-Atlantic flights to feed young. Mougín et al. (1997) reported that about 10 per cent of breeding adult *borealis* in colonies on Selvagem Grande do not breed annually; most absences (58%) are for a single season, but some breeding Cory's were found to be absent for up to seven years. Because of the strong natal philopatry in the species (Rabouam et al. 1998), it is unlikely that such hiatuses involve birds simply nesting elsewhere. Because of our limited knowledge of molt schedules in *Calonectris*, and because these "sabbatical" periods away from the nesting grounds are apparently common, conjecture about movements of Cape Verde Shearwaters that might bring some individuals closer to North American waters would be premature. Cape Verde Shearwaters seen off of Senegal in early October are in an advanced stage of primary molt and have been considered subadults or nonbreeders, as juveniles do



Figure 5. At medium and close range, the dusky color of the bill and dark subterminal band were apparent on the Cape Verde Shearwater. Despite its molt of body feathers, the darker gray-brown crown and hindneck looked darker than the upperparts of adjacent Cory's Shearwaters and contrasted more sharply with the white underparts. Photograph by George L. Armistead.

not fledge until late in October or early in November (D. Newell, pers. comm.), but no other published thoughts on ages of birds observed at sea are available.

TAXONOMY OF ATLANTIC CALONECTRIS

Although we had expected the detection of this species off North Carolina (see Brinkley 2000), we were nevertheless surprised at just how different it was from Cory's Shearwater and further surprised that it had been considered conspecific with Cory's. The first ornithologists to describe *edwardsii*, Oustalet (1883) and Alexander (1898, who called it *Puffinus marianae*), both accorded it status as a full species, as did Godman (1910) in *A Monograph of the Petrels*. Later authors (e.g., Peters 1931) demoted *edwardsii* to subspecific status, though without evidence for the recategorization. Murphy (1924) also did not recognize *edwardsii* as a separate species but noted that "many ornithologists would unhesitatingly" do so based on its manifest differences, and Bourne (1955) concurred. Hazevoet (1995) was the first ornithologist in the twentieth century to re-recognize the distinctiveness of *edwardsii* as a species, based on morphology (Granadeiro 1993) and vocalizations (Bannerman and Bannerman 1968, Bretagnolle and Lequette 1990), both of which differ from those of *borealis* and nominate Cory's (see also Soldat

2004).

More recently, Sangster et al. (1998) have suggested that differences between *borealis* and nominate *diomedea* merit species-level distinction, but other sources support subspecific rank (Wink et al. 1993, Heidrich et al. 1996). Morphologically, the forms are difficult to distinguish, and apparently some gene flow occurs between the two taxa (Randi et al. 1989). More germane for the consideration of field identification is that the Mediterranean-nesting nominate form (sometimes referred to as Scopoli's Shearwater) is a smaller bird than *borealis* and thus closer in size to *edwardsii*. Even the largest specimens of Cape Verde Shearwater, however, are significantly smaller than those of the smallest Scopoli's (Hazevoet 1995). Newell and Tony Marr (*in litt.*) found that specimens of *edwardsii* were at least 10 per cent smaller than those of *diomedea*, that the depth of bill was different (*diomedea* = 12.5–13.5 mm; *edwardsii* = 9.5–9.9 mm), and that bill color and plumage colors of

nominate birds were invariably very close to those of *borealis* but not to *edwardsii*. There are at least five extant specimens of nominate Cory's from eastern North America (e.g., Levine 1998), but our limited review of specimen material suggests that most western North Atlantic specimens are of the larger *borealis* (see also Lee 1995). Birds of the nominate race, unlike *borealis* and *edwardsii*, vary greatly in size, in a cline from largest birds in the western Mediterranean to smallest in the east (Hazevoet 1995). Dick Newell and Richard Gutierrez (pers. comm.) suggest that nominate Cory's average smaller, more extensively pale on the underwing, and slightly darker around the head, with a less brightly pale yellow bill than *borealis*, but all of these characters overlap with some *borealis*, both in specimens and in the field. The field identification of Cory's Shearwater taxa is the subject of much discussion on the Internet and in birdwatching publications (Gutierrez 1998, Fisher and Flood 2004).

DETECTION BIASES AND OTHER CONSIDERATIONS

Public birdwatching excursions in North Carolina's pelagic waters differ from scientific surveys of seabirds in that littoral and Continental Shelf waters tend to get less scrutiny from birding boats. In recent years, pelagic efforts have focused more on rare gadfly petrels and storm-petrels, which



Figures 6, 7, 8, 9. In flight, the active molt of coverts and remiges was apparent in both the Cape Verde and the Cory's Shearwaters. In profile, the Cape Verde Shearwater was dwarfed by the Cory's and often looked longer of tail and narrower of wing; the wings looked narrower especially at the base, but this could have been an effect of molting secondaries. Some of the impressions of shape varied with flight style and attitude, as well as the angle of observation. Depending on the lighting, the bird's overall tones above seemed to vary from nearly as warm brown as Cory's to rather dark, more like Greater Shearwater, and the appearance of the head might appear washed out or even capped, though never so cleanly capped as a Greater Shearwater.

Figure 6. Photograph by J. Brian Patteson.

become active in salvaging storm-wrecked seabird specimens, particularly after hurricanes, so that we may better understand the statuses of *Calonectris* shearwaters in North American waters.

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occur mostly in Continental Slope waters farther offshore. Consequently, little time has been allotted to shearwater flocks, which tend to occur mostly on or near the Continental Shelf between spring and fall. The sampling of pelagic birds off of North Carolina has also been biased towards more spring and early-summer trips, a time when shearwaters are not as common as they are in late summer or fall. It is quite possible that Cape Verde Shearwater has escaped detection on previous occasions when large flocks of shearwaters have been observed. Prior to the mid-1990s, most seabirders knew little if anything about Cape Verde Shearwater, and an odd-looking shearwater might have been passed off as a Greater or a Cory's.

A more concerted effort to study shearwaters from August to October might yield more sightings of Cape Verde Shearwaters at a time when Cory's and Greater Shearwaters reach peak numbers in Shelf waters. It is also possible that tropical cyclones that originate in the eastern North Atlantic could entrain some Cape Verde Shearwaters and displace them westward. Early August 2004 was a time of considerable tropical storm activity in the North Atlantic, and it is conceivable that the Cape Verde Shearwater we observed was displaced by such a storm. It is our hope that more records of this species will come to light as more observers become aware of the species and its identification; we encourage ornithologists and birders to



Figure 7. Cape Verde Shearwater at left. Photograph by Magnus Persmark.



Figure 8. Photograph by George L. Armistead.

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Figure 9. Cape Verde Shearwater at left. Photograph by Magnus Persmark.



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THE CHANGING SEASONS Rome Burning?

“
Our holy grail—guaranteed persistence
of all American birds in natural numbers and
habitats—is indeed worthy of revolutionary fervor.

”
—John Fitzpatrick,

“The AOU and Bird Conservation: Recommitment to the Revolution”

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A Conservational Preamble: The Changing Centuries

Our birds are in trouble. And it is not simply the readers of this journal who may be aware of the fact: it is apparent to most perceptive observers, despite the daily distractions and even the efforts of some to obscure the obvious. We certainly cannot fail to see the flames smarting about us. And so rather than begin with the weather and bird news, with tales of the great Alaskan and Yukon forest fires of 2004, or with rosters of rare waders, or of wandering tropical birds, we thought we would look first at modern bird conservation, mostly in the United States, as it stands at this juncture. Accompanying the overview here are 31 “State of the Region” conservation summaries that follow the temperate-regions’ reports, smaller overviews that are intended to give the uninitiated some sense of the issues that face birds and their habitats on a regional level.

We stand at a remarkable crossroads in this new century. We have an immense reservoir of knowledge about birds and their habitats, as well as formidable resources to remedy many of the problems that face them. At the same time, our best science tells us that hundreds of species are declining in number, many of them precipitously, and some could be lost if immediate action is not taken. If it took less than a century to make five billion Passenger Pigeons disappear, will our science and its applications arrive in time to prevent more species from such a fate?



In North America, we have experienced four crises of bird conservation, crises that bracket the twentieth century. Our predecessors seriously addressed, if not clearly resolved, the first three crises. We are now in the fourth, unresolved, crisis. It took monumental endeavors to settle the three previous emergencies. Each involved a revolution of thought and action, designed to reverse the problems that beset our birdlife.

The first crisis, perceived first at the end of the nineteenth century, was characterized by the slaughter of birds, mainly for the millinery trade. In his summary for the Hudson-Delaware regional report, Bob Paxton mentions this crisis as having its roots in the Northeast. Our forebears faced the issue straight on, with the upshot being the rise of our bird protection movement, the birth of the Audubon societies, the passage of essential Federal legislation (e.g., Lacey Act of 1900), and the birth of federal bird refuges (1903). The rest, as they say, is history.

The second crisis had become apparent to conservationists by the 1930s. Wetlands, especially in America’s heartland, were in drastic

decline, led by a farm policy begun during World War I to “plow to the fences.” Widespread drainage for farmland, in combination with large bag-limits, devastated wetlands and waterfowl populations continent-wide. The ensuing response—the creation of a functioning National Wildlife Refuge “system” and wildlife management techniques to recover populations of waterfowl—was arduous but nothing short of spectacular.

The third crisis was brought about by the excessive use of synthetic pesticides, especially DDT, after World War II. Both *Silent Spring* the book (Carson 1962) and “silent spring” the reality can be viewed as essentially bird-driven. Manmade poison and the chronic failure of a federal regulatory process were finally addressed. Banning DDT (1972) and the passage of the Endangered Species Act (ESA, passed in 1973) characterized the response to this emergency, whose “avian poster children” were familiar, popular species: Brown Pelican, Peregrine Falcon, Osprey, and Bald Eagle. As this summer’s regional reports attest, their populations all continue to increase annually.

Resolution of each of these crises required a new way of thinking about nature and about birds, much like the process outlined by Thomas Kuhn (1962) in *The Structure of Scientific Revolution*. That kind of inventive thinking is required now, in the thick of this fourth crisis. As sober and thoughtful an observer and participant as John Fitzpatrick, current head of the Cornell Lab of Ornithology and a past president of American Ornithologists’ Union, can even call it a “revolution” in his *Auk* article “The AOU and Bird Conservation: Recommitment to the Revolution” (2002).

Of course, each of the three previous crises was denied, belittled, or resisted by those with clear economic interests in conflict: plume

hunters in the first case, some large farmers in the second, many chemical companies in the third. Each effort at conservation was even resisted by many who actually had an intimate interest in saving the birds—from oologists and

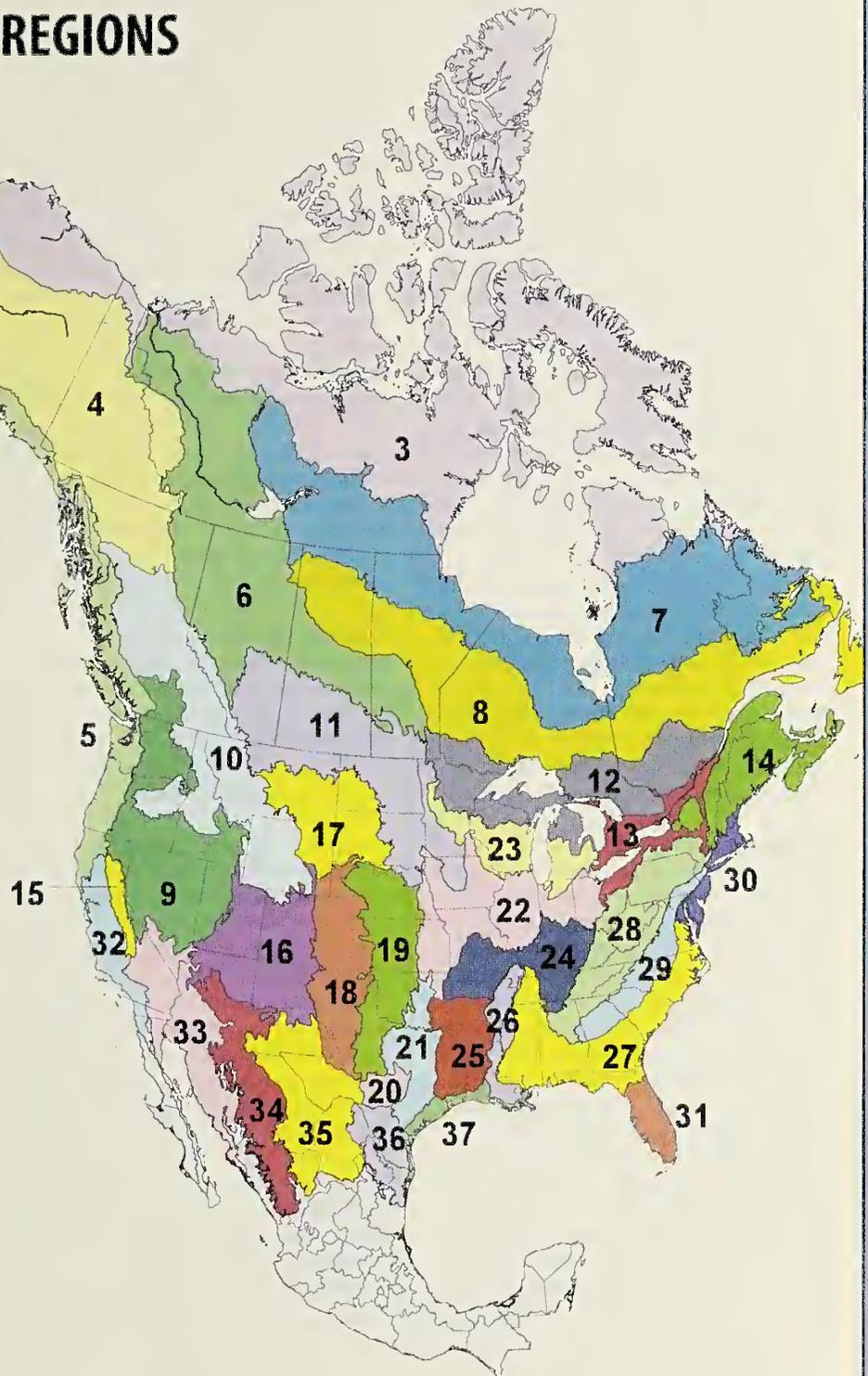
curators who feared the imposition of restraints on their activities in the first case, to impatient and irresponsible hunters who bristled at regulations on their activities in the second, to naturalists who attacked the efforts against pesti-

cides as not “scientific” or as “propaganda” in the third (Fox 1981, Barrow 1998). Resistance continued until it became obvious that there was no option but serious action, no alternative to accepting a new synthesis of ideas, a revolu-

BIRD CONSERVATION REGIONS OF NORTH AMERICA

BCRs in US and Canada

1. Aleutian/Bering Sea islands
2. Western Alaska
3. Arctic Plains and Mountains
4. Northwestern Interior Forest
5. Northern Pacific Rainforest
6. Boreal Taiga Plains
7. Taiga Shield and Hudson Plains
8. Boreal Softwood Shield
9. Great Basin
10. Northern Rockies
11. Prairie Potholes
12. Boreal Hardwood Transition
13. Lower Great Lakes/St. Lawrence Plain
14. Atlantic Northern Forest
15. Sierra Nevada
16. Southern Rockies
17. Badlands and Prairies
18. Shortgrass Prairie
19. Central Mixed Grass Prairie
20. Edwards Plateau
21. Oaks and Prairies
22. Eastern Tallgrass Prairie
23. Prairie Hardwood Transition
24. Central Hardwoods
25. West Gulf Coastal Plain/Ouachitas
26. Mississippi Alluvial Valley
27. Southeastern Coastal Plain
28. Appalachian Mountains
29. Piedmont
30. New England/Mid-Atlantic Coast
31. Peninsular Florida
32. Coastal California
33. Sonoran and Mojave Deserts
34. Sierra Madre Occidental
35. Chihuahuan Desert
36. Tamaulipan Brushlands
37. Gulf Coastal Prairie



tion, to address the emergency. While each of the three crises was grave, each had relatively simple solutions, or so it seems in retrospect. In the first crisis, the imperative was to stop the slaughter and accept that Americans could no longer proceed as though natural resources were unlimited. In the second, the goal was to reverse wetland draining and to accept newly devised wildlife management techniques to revive populations of waterfowl. And in the third, we were compelled to stop poisoning our birds and ourselves, bringing to the fore the words of John Muir at the opening of the century, "Tug on anything at all and you'll find it connected to everything else in the universe."

Today's crisis is very different from those three past crises, however—far more insidious and intricate—and pesticides, over-harvests, and wetlands loss have by no means vanished as components of the crisis for at least some species. There is no simple solution to the current conflagration, which burns on the fuel of hundreds of conspiring factors. Migrants heading to and from the Neotropics are front-and-center, whether forest species or shorebirds, but grassland songbird species are also plummeting in number. At the same time, gallinaceous birds—the prairie-chickens, Northern Bobwhite, Greater Sage-Grouse, among many—are suffering. Seabird populations are also continuously assaulted. Today's problems are enumerated in detail in the conservation summaries that follow the regional reports, along with the species most in danger. But how are the affected birds being identified? Which species are candidates for the lists of the Endangered Species Act? And how do we orient ourselves in this complex fourth crisis?

Another sort of "listing"

Since the 1970s, the Endangered Species Act (ESA) has "listed" those species that are officially designated Threatened and Endangered, species that could disappear unless serious and immediate action is taken to save them. The Act has served as a wake-up call, requiring the U.S. government to use the best available scientific data and methods to identify those species in imminent danger, designate accompanying critical habitat, and develop species recovery plans. (It is not the listing of species under the ESA that is a goal of bird conservationists, but the recovery of those species.) Canada, where similar listing had long been left to the provinces and territories, has largely followed the recommendations of the Committee on the Status of Endangered Wildlife in Canada (COSEWIC, est. 1977) in enacting, at last, the Species at Risk Act (SARA) in June 2003.

Other bird "listings" have an important and intimate lineage for us. Longtime readers of *North American Birds* and its antecedents will remember the perennial "Blue List" in the pages of *Audubon Field Notes* and *American Birds*. The regional editors took on responsibility for gathering data on declining birds from contributors and then "flagging" species that deserved spe-

cial attention by their contributors and by wildlife agencies. Back in 1996, the first serious listing of the Partners In Flight (PIF) "Watch-List" also appeared in these pages (Carter et al. 1996). The PIF listing was then adopted by National Audubon and has regularly been brought down to function on the state level, in the form of Yellow and Red Lists.

Out of the first tri-national North American Bird Conservation Initiative discussions in 1998 came the need to devise a geographic concept of Bird Conservation Regions (BCRs) and to overlay them with the listing of birds in trouble. The ensuing *Birds of Conservation Concern 2002* (USF&WS 2002) combined the species from the PIF plan, the U.S. Shorebird Conservation Plan, and the Waterbird Plan (all outlined below) overlaid by geographic BCR but did not include hunted or federally listed species. *Birds of Conservation Concern 2002* is the publication to which editors refer in their regional summaries of conservation issues. More recently, the American Bird Conservancy has distributed its own "Green List," covered in this essay last summer, which combines all the bird-plan standards and covers all bird species, hunted or not. Still, even with this remarkable proliferation of "lists," where and how are the actual issues of bird conservation being addressed?

Plans and Delivery

Since the late 1980s, the world of bird conservation has been facilitated by the move toward multiple "plans" that outline national and continental priorities. Taking their cue from the historic successes of waterfowl conservation, the plans include the following:

- North American Waterfowl Management Plan (NAWMP) • The model of science-based management plans, designed across governmental and private sectors, the NAWMP combines two plan essentials: good planning and significant resources. It was begun in 1986 and has been highly successful.
- Partners In Flight (PIF) • Launched in 1990, PIF was primarily involved in addressing declines of our migrants landbirds traveling to winter in the Neotropics, but the plan has been expanded to include all the landbirds of the United States and Canada, regardless of their migration patterns. The new North American Landbird Conservation Plan (NALCP), published in 2004, is now available and makes gripping reading.
- U.S. Shorebird Conservation Plan (USSCP) • The main goals of the U.S. shorebird plan, completed in 2000, are to ensure that shorebird habitat is maintained at the local level and to maintain or restore shorebird populations at the continental and hemispheric levels.
- North American Waterbird Conservation Plan (NAWCP) • Covering colonial waterbirds, marshbirds, some seabirds, and related species, the innovative *Waterbird Conserva-*

tion for the Americas was published in 2002. Its planning regions extend ambitiously southward to the northern coast of South America.

- Game Birds • There are congealing efforts among champions of gallinaceous birds to coordinate conservation activities, especially where they overlap with Farm Bill appropriations (see below). The Northern Bobwhite Conservation Initiative and the North American Grouse Partnership are two such efforts.
- North American Bird Conservation Initiative (NABCI) • While each plan listed above is engaging in some level of step-down planning, resulting mostly in regional plans, the plans are also involved at a higher level of consultation through NABCI. Starting at a meeting in Puebla, Mexico in 1998, and coming to fruition in the U.S. the next year, NABCI has sought to facilitate a degree of coordination between all the plans to expedite integrated bird conservation in the U.S., Canada, and Mexico, namely "all birds, all habitats." The NABCI effort, moreover, was closely and simultaneously intertwined with the development of BCRs. Another level of step-down is the initiation of state-wide NABCI-like consultations such as exist now in Missouri or Wisconsin.

The actual delivery of bird conservation work takes many forms, including the following essential vehicles in the United States:

- State Wildlife Grants (SWGs) • These grants are funding numerous ongoing wildlife-related projects through state wildlife agencies. Top among these projects are the Comprehensive Wildlife Conservation Strategies mentioned in several regional conservation summaries; these statewide plans are required to be finished in 2005 and provide great opportunities to guide bird priorities in the states. Many localities are holding public comment sessions as we go to press.
- Joint Ventures (JVs) • These coordinating bodies, an outgrowth of the North American Wetlands Conservation Act (NAWCA, see below) of 1989, are mentioned by some of the conservation summaries (e.g., in the Central Southern and Middle Pacific Coast regions). Originally formed to facilitate waterfowl and wetlands conservation, these 14 regionally based partnerships are currently moving to embrace the delivery of on-the-ground conservation action for all birds.
- Farm Bill • Once deemed the mega-distributor of excessive political "pork" and grandiose agricultural subsidies, the Farm Bill supplies crucial bird conservation funds in agricultural areas. The importance of the USDA conservation farm programs—especially the Conservation Reserve Program (CRP), the Wetland Reserve Program (WRP), and Grassland Reserve Program (GRP)—are well summarized by Jim Dinsmore and Ron Martin in their regional sum-

WEBSITE REFERENCES FOR SELECTED RESOURCES AND ORGANIZATIONS

Alliance for Zero Extinction (AZE: <www.zeroextinction.org>)
American Bird Conservancy (ABC: <www.abcbirds.org>)
American bird observatory list (<www.nmnh.si.edu/BIRDNET/OBSERVATORY.html>)
Bird Conservation Alliance (BCA: <www.birdconservationalliance.org>)
Bird conservation plans (download at: <<http://birdhabitat.fws.gov/NAWMP/plans.htm>>)
Bird Studies Canada/Études d'Oiseaux Canada (BSC/EOC: <www.bsc-eoc.org>)
Birds of Conservation Concern (BCC: <<http://migratorybirds.fws.gov/reports/bcc2002.pdf>>)
Boreal Songbird Initiative (BSI: <www.borealbirds.org>)
Conservation International (CI: <www.conservation.org>)
Cornell Lab of Ornithology (CLO: <birds.cornell.edu>)
Ducks Unlimited (DU: <www.ducks.org>)
Joint Ventures (JVs: directory at: <birdhabitat.fws.gov/nawmp/jvdir.htm>)
Manomet Center for Conservation Sciences (MCCS: <www.manomet.org>)
Migratory Bird Conservancy (MBC: <www.conservebirds.org>)
National Audubon Society (NAS: <www.audubon.org>)
National Flyway Council (NFC: <www.centralflyway.org>)
National Fish and Wildlife Foundation (NFWF: <www.nfwf.org>)
National Wildlife Federation (NWF: <www.nwf.org>)
Natural Resources Defense Council (NRDC: <www.nrdc.org>)
NatureServe (<www.natureserve.org>)
North American Bird Conservation Initiative (<www.nabci.net>, <www.nabci-us.org>)
North American Breeding Bird Survey (BBS: <www.pwrc.usgs.gov/bbs>)
North American Landbird Conservation Plan (NALCP: <www.partnersinflight.org>)
North American Waterbird Conservation Plan (NAWCP: <www.nacwcp.org/pubs>)
North American Waterfowl Management Plan (NAWMP: <www.nawmp.ca>)
Partners In Flight (PIF: <www.partnersinflight.org>)
PRBO Conservation Science (PRBO: <www.prbo.org>)
Ramsar (RAMSAR: <www.ramsar.org>)
Regional Migratory Bird Coordinators (MBCS: <birds.fws.gov/Offices.htm>)
Smithsonian Migratory Bird Center (SMBC: <<http://nationalzoo.si.edu>>)
The Nature Conservancy (TNC: <[nature.org](http://www.nature.org)>)
The Peregrine Fund (PF: <www.peregrinefund.org>)
The Sierra Club (SC: <www.sierraclub.org>)
U.S. Shorebird Conservation Plan (USSCP: <shorebirdplan.fws.gov>)
Waterbird Conservation for the Americas (WCA: <www.nacwcp.org>)
Western Hemisphere Shorebird Reserve Network (WHSRN: <www.manomet.org>)
Wings Over Water (WOW: <www.cws-scf.ec.gc.ca/birds/wb_om_e.cfm>)
World Biosphere Reserves (<www.unesco.org>)

maries. Over 40 million acres are enrolled in these Programs as of 2004.

In this national and continental overview, one must credit the inestimable efforts of non-governmental conservation groups—from the international work of the Bird Studies Canada, the Cornell Lab of Ornithology, Ducks Unlimited, National Audubon Society, The Nature Conservancy, Hawk Mountain Sanctuary, the Peregrine Fund, American Bird Conservancy, the independent Audubon groups, alongside the smaller yet highly effective regional and local groups such as the local and regional bird clubs, land trusts, bird observatories, and the state-based Important Bird Areas (IBA) led by National Audubon Society. The hard science on which bird conservation education, outreach, and advocacy rests comes from these and many other groups, from Manomet, PRBO, the many university based Centers for Conservation Biology, and from scores of citizen-science projects. We have compiled a list of hundreds of such organizations and initiatives but can provide here only a condensed list of website references (see box above), many of which have local-level links.

Opportunities to learn about the problems that face bird populations, and to engage in bird-related conservation work, are so multitudinous in North America that we may become overwhelmed by the possibilities, to the point that we tune out the information altogether. Faced with multiplying lists of birds imperiled, with solicitations for donations to worthy causes, and with on-the-ground opportunities to help birds in our local areas, we can be forgiven for some degree of disorientation, even dismay, in our attempts to prioritize all that we take in, as well as our own contributions of time and money.

But we must not, because of the deluge of information and opportunity, lose sight of the prize. Fitzpatrick's (2002) clear-sighted call-to-arms offers a compelling manifesto for American bird conservation, harmonized mainly through the multiple bird plans, that we can all understand and agree upon: "Ensure persistence of all American bird populations in their natural numbers, natural habitats, and natural geographical ranges, through coordinated efforts by scientists, government, industry, and private citizens." He proposes a ten-year program to conserve American birds and their habitats including

the following measurable goals:

- Fewer gaps in understanding population trends.
- Redundant, question-driven monitoring of all bird species.
- Effective methods for monitoring difficult-to-detect species.
- Scientific auditing of monitoring projects and conservation plans to produce adaptive responses in both.
- Habitat management in place to stabilize all high priority species in North America.
- Non-governmental organizations to shepherd bird conservation.
- Bird conservation objectives stewarded by dedicated coordinators.
- Citizens engaged in numbers befitting a revolution.

As Marjorie Ziegler, Brainard Palmer-Ball, and Chris Sloan observe in their regional summaries: conservation without funding is next to impossible. Let us suggest here, then, that the five most important bird-funding issues have already been identified, at least in the United

States. This was accomplished at a January 2003 Wildlife Management Institute conference on bird conservation priorities where over a hundred participants from across the country hammered out potentially conflicting objectives. That list of five issues could easily be our collective starting point, and this is the exact set of priorities adopted by the Bird Conservation Funding Coalition that meets and acts regularly in Washington, D.C. These are funding issues (appropriations)—not support for politicians, not requests for new legislation. This means the items are already contained in the federal budget, and we are trying to highlight their significance so that the appropriations can progressively expand. (Note: If we were stressing needs, this list would be far costlier. As Ziegler suggests in the Hawai'i summary, state wildlife funding needs alone are actually four times what the states presently receive through State Wildlife Grants.) The list is far from perfect, but here it is, in no particular order:

1. North American Wetlands Conservation Act (NAWCA) provides matching funds for conservation projects for the benefit of wetland-associated migratory birds in the U.S., Canada, and Mexico. The Act, in existence since 1989, is an excellent example of how conservation funding can be leveraged. (While authorized at \$54 million annually, appropriations recently have been far lower.) Approximate appropriations: \$38 million annually.
2. State Wildlife Grants (SWGs) fund a wide variety of wildlife-related projects by state fish and wildlife agencies throughout the country. They arose out of the popular effort to pass CARA and the work of the Teaming with Wildlife Coalition. SWGs are currently funding the state Comprehensive Wildlife Conservation Strategies, which will be very important for bird conservation and management on state lands especially. (As indicated above, real needs are much larger than current appropriations.) Approximate appropriations: \$70 million annually.
3. The Neotropical Migratory Bird Conservation Act (NMBCA) established in 2000 a matching grant program for the conservation of migratory birds in countries in Latin America and the Caribbean, as well as within the U.S. As a new and encouraging program, it is hoped that it will grow considerably, as it represents one of the best potential tools for remedying multiple conservation crises for passerines. Approximate appropriations: \$4 million annually.
4. The Division of Migratory Bird Management of the USF&WS needs funding for essential bird monitoring and research. This science support is crucial to delivering effective bird conservation, especially for basic population information. (The Division's budget has been suffering annual shortfalls recently of over \$4 million.) Approximate appropriations: \$24 million annually.

5. Joint Ventures, those regionally based partnerships of public and private organizations dedicated to the delivery of bird conservation within their boundaries, were formed to facilitate waterfowl and wetlands conservation. JVs are now moving to embrace the delivery of conservation action for all birds. As they grow, they will need increased funding. Approximate appropriations: \$11 million annually.

The budget-agenda for the Bird Conservation Funding Coalition may prove to be critical in the next couple of years, and their five-point list was the outgrowth of real consensus building. To their five items one could easily include five *additional* budget items that most knowledgeable bird enthusiasts would endorse:

1. Upcoming Farm Bill funding (due to be renewed in 2006) for CRP, WRP, GRP, and other conservation programs.
2. The National Wildlife Refuge system budget in the area of operations and maintenance, especially since the Refuge System deals so directly with birds.
3. Funding for the Land and Water Conservation Fund (approaching \$450 million each for federal and stateside elements) for land acquisition. (And assuring that the current Administration does not continue to divert that funding.)
4. The International Programs of both the USF&WS and the U.S. Forest Service, since they are budget-conscious, often bird-oriented, and very effective.
5. U.S. Geological Survey (USGS) funding where it deal with birds—increasingly integral to bird conservation, bird-banding, and related science support, especially the Breeding Bird Survey.

Taken as a whole, these ten priorities could form a bird-conservationist's funding wish-list. Of course, there are many other valued and valuable funding needs, from the Bureau of Land Management, the U.S. Forest Service, and Environmental Protection Agency work to oceans (NOAA) and recreation (National Park Service). These agencies' budgetary needs should all be addressed by bird conservation forces in due course.

Potentially, when our voices combine, we are a powerful force for change on this continent—in far smaller numbers than we now have, our predecessors confronted unsustainable practices and largely stopped them. Our most recent surveys tell us that there are upwards of 70 million Americans interested in birds (Cordell and Herbert 2002) or 46 million who have either taken trips to see birds or spend time at home watching birds (Pullis-LaRouche 2001). In the first case, the numbers are many more than voted for either of the major U. S. presidential candidates in 2004; in the second, the total at least approaches that number of voters. Yet bird conservation would

appear to motivate, or even matter deeply to, only a tiny fraction of citizens in any country in the Americas. Political candidates who energetically court comparatively minor groups for their votes rarely supply more than occasional platitudes for conservation-minded voters, and the "conservation vote" is a phrase rarely heard in campaign circles, despite the proliferation of many environmental advocacy groups. The progress made in 100 years of North American bird conservation is indeed remarkable, yet recreational birders and bird conservationists as constituencies are currently on no one's political radar. As Ron Martin concludes the Northern Great Plains regional summary: "Perhaps the connotations of the word 'conservation' are too passive. We cannot go on just documenting the declines and doing nothing because the available science does not give us the entire picture. Action is the key." And so it is up to all of us to play a part in the colossal rescue operation that invites us. For those new to the ropes of bird conservation, read a bit about your region and consider making contact with a conservation initiative or organization in your area. Get your feet wet. Make sure every B.B.S. route in your region is covered every year. Veterans: make sure your organizations are making good use of every body and every dollar. Network. Dare to accomplish enormous, even revolutionary, things. And, yes, vote—for the sake of the birds.



The Weather

Across the eastern half of the continent, our reporting regions were nearly univocal: cooler-than-normal, cloudy, and usually rainy weather prevailed north of Florida. This pattern was most pronounced in New England, the Canadian Maritimes (though Newfoundland got little rain), Québec, Ontario, and Nunavut, where temperatures were 1.5° to 4° F below average, and where above-average precipitation was recorded in both months. It was the sixth coldest summer recorded in Saskatchewan, the seventh coldest June in North Dakota, and in Manitoba, it was the coldest summer since observations began in 1875. Ontario had several record-low temperatures and heavy localized flooding from rains during its Atlas project, whereas atlassers in Pennsylvania got above-average rains and were relieved to have mild weather through June and July. From New York south to Georgia, temperatures were milder than normal and rains began in earnest mostly in July.

In the Midwest, the summer was drier but still relatively cool, with Chicago reporting June 1.3° and July 2.1° F cooler than average. June was cooler and drier than normal in Missouri and Iowa, but both states had a cooler and wetter July than usual, the twelfth coolest on record in Missouri. To the east, in Kentucky and Tennessee, both months were wet and

cooler than usual, particularly July (potentially the coolest on record there). The Gulf Coast states had a mild June, also with copious rain, but much less rain in July.

The effects of weather on bird nesting east of the Plains drew few comments except in the eastern High Arctic, where the cold apparently reduced breeding success markedly or even foiled nesting attempts altogether; a crash in some lemming populations did not help matters for jaegers and raptors. From southern New England southward, however, the mild weather favored cavity-nesting species and most raptors. From Illinois and Indiana south to the Gulf of Mexico and Texas, the tune was much the same: a pleasant season with good nesting successes for woodland and grassland species, with rare positive adjectives ("tremendous," "exceptional") from some quarters.

The weather out West was mixed, with the Montana and Alberta cool and wet but Alaska, the Yukon Territory, British Columbia, and most of the Northwest Territories warm and dry, in sharp contrast to high-latitude regions farther east. This warm, dry weather was beneficial for most nesting birds but in July worsened the most extensive forest fires ever recorded in Alaska and the Yukon. These fires, in the context of expanded logging activities in these areas, bode ill for boreal forest species, whose habitat, already diminishing because of insect plagues abetted by a warming climate, shrinks annually. On the other hand, the growing reports of high counts of American Three-toed Woodpeckers and of various sparrows moving into burned areas in the West indicate that at least a few species will benefit in the short term. The Great Basin, Arizona, and interior West generally, report continued dry conditions, and in southern Utah and Nevada, Steve Summers and Rick Fridell note that the long-term drought "is starting to produce landscape-level changes, particularly in sagebrush and pinyon-juniper habitats," with dead trees especially evident and increasingly frequent wildfires. Arizona's Pinaleno, Mazatzal, and White Mountain ranges suffered mightily from fires. Scattered areas in Colorado, New Mexico, and West Texas had nourishing rains that encouraged breeding in some species (e.g., Cassin's Sparrow) but failed to fill reservoirs.

Because almost 90% of conservation threats to birds are habitat-related, we have organized interesting seasonal reports from June and July 2004 around general habitat types, rather than taxonomically or by theme. For overviews of habitat conditions and threats in particular regions, see the "State of the Region" summaries that follow the regional reports, and check the Nesting Season report for annual Conservation Corners in future years, which will detail ongoing research and conservation efforts in greater depth. In the compendium of reports that follow, there is easily as much evidence of population recovery and growth as evidence of population declines—we should

take heart from the former and take strength and resolve from the latter.

Arctic lowlands

Cool summer weather appeared to be the culprit in the poor nesting success and survivorship noted across the eastern Arctic regions. On the northern Hudson Bay coast of Québec, summer came almost a month late. In northern Ontario, atlasers found that Tree Swallows failed to nest and that Common Loon nests were scarce, with many nestings up to three weeks late. Across that province, Internet-linked observers remarked on the unprecedentedly early arrival of adult shorebirds, presumably failed nesters, and later on the below-average numbers of juveniles. Unprecedented in southern Ontario, for instance, was a flock of 150 Black-bellied Plovers at Blenheim 9 July. Biologists on the ground in the Arctic, corresponding with birders farther south, confirmed that it was an exceptionally cold, wet summer and thus very poor year for nesting shorebirds, waterfowl, and other tundra-nesting species. At Cambridge Bay, Nunavut, Cameron Eckert reports that regular nesters such as Buff-breasted and White-rumped Sandpipers could not be found at all. To the west, snow and ice gripped the southern Hudson Bay through mid-June, causing geese and shorebirds to linger, awaiting warm-up. Rudolf Koes and Peter Taylor note that Snow Geese experienced almost complete nesting failure and that many shorebirds appeared not to nest, as large flocks of adult Short-billed Dowitchers, Hudsonian Godwits, and Silt Sandpipers had begun assembling in late June.

The decline of nearly all shorebirds—population trends are downward in the cases of all but three North American species—has also been observed, and quantified, by birders in several regions where traditional stopover habitats are regularly scrutinized. In Massachusetts, the numbers of Lesser Yellowlegs, Semipalmated Sandpipers, and Short-billed Dowitchers that use Newburyport Harbor are all sharply down from totals of 25–35 year ago, but the causes for the decline locally are unknown, possibly involving decrease in prey, possibly increased disturbance by fishermen. In New Jersey, Red Knots—in numbers almost 85% lower than 20 years ago—mostly missed the peak of Horseshoe Crab spawning, which came on 3 June this year. The cold summer could not have benefited this imperiled species, whose Atlantic migrants nest in far-northern Nunavut. In California, 50,000 Red-necked Phalaropes were estimated at Mono Lake 31 July, a date when there are usually only 3000–5000 adults present. By contrast, Joe Jehl counted only 2500 at Mono Lake in three days of boatwork in early September, a time when there are normally 50,000 present. His conclusion is that the species barely had a nesting season. Results of surveys from the Skidegaten–Prince Rupert Ferry in British Columbia 8 July were similar: 28,714 pelagic phalaropes, a high number for

so early in the season. Such widespread nesting failures in Arctic species are not without precedent, but they bear careful monitoring, including at stopover sites.

It is difficult to know what to make of the Snowy Owl in Tippecanoe County, Indiana in July through mid-August; there is no summer precedent in this area for this bird of the Arctic Plains. Surveyors in the Northwest Territories around Yellowknife reported low densities of prey and low productivity for owls. This could presage an exodus from the North in the coming winter, although if few nests were successful, a very large flight seems less likely.

Boreal forests

We receive very little in the way of overview of the nesting season in the vast boreal forests, and what little we got this season was mixed. In central Canada, Churchill and northern Alberta observers commented on the eerily silent woods, devoid even of common warblers and emberizids, particularly the less-hardy species. The spring season's cold winds, snow, and frequent rain resulted in widespread observations of massive mortality in passerines (Dinsmore and Silcock 2004), and Koes and Taylor suspect that the continuing cold of June was simply too much for some species. In Alaska, by contrast, nesting began early in the record warmth, which may have saved at least some passerines during the raging forest fires that burned 6.4 million acres of boreal forest this season, the largest burn in the state's history. The Yukon's 273 fires burned a record-high 4.5 million acres, most of it in the Wilderness Zone. When one considers that this area home to many thousands of Rusty Blackbirds, a species whose counts have dropped severely in recent decades, the losses come into clearer perspective. A bright spot in this habitat, albeit on its far southern periphery, was Michigan's first documented nesting of Great Gray Owl near Seney N.W.R.

Grasslands and agricultural landscapes

Some 70% of grassland birds in North America show declining population trends, according to B.B.S. data. In reading through the "State of the Region" summaries, one cannot help but be struck by the statistics: in many places, over 99% of native prairies are gone, and the agricultural landscape that has replaced it is comparatively depauperate for birdlife. Murphy's (2003) analysis of avian population trends in farmlands found that the current negative trends are linked strongly to changes in agricultural land use. The "cleaner" modern agriculture with less waste grain, less fallow pasture and weedy margins, fewer insects, an increasing frequency in haying, and the increase in application of harmful chemicals are probably part of the reason for grassland birds' declines, in addition to the continued loss and fragmentation of habitat. Peterjohn (2003) argues that "effective conservation of farmland birds will require innovative solutions based on current

agricultural practices that benefit the greatest diversity of farmland birds."

Ken Brock's correspondents in Illinois and Indiana found that "summer 2004 was an especially good breeding year for many species, and particularly the grassland, open country, and scrubland birds," and though these are anecdotal observations—that is, not accompanied by statistics on nesting success (as is almost always true of reports of passerines in this journal)—they fit well with other comments from contiguous regions, as far west as the Prairie Provinces. Among the species mentioned in the Midwest as having had productive nesting seasons were Dickcissel, Bobolink, Northern Bobwhite, Blue Grosbeak, Eastern Kingbird, and Eastern Meadowlark, while southern Alberta's lush growth brought up notably improved numbers of Sprague's Pipit, Le Conte's Sparrow, Nelson's Sharp-tailed Sparrow, and Bobolink. Iowa and Nebraska reported a profusion of Dickcissels and Bobolinks this season, whereas neither species was mentioned in numbers east of Appalachia, where both sometimes summer (the Dickcissels breeding, often in numbers) when droughts grip the Midwest. It is important to bear in mind that these species tend to be nomadic, that *some grassland species are apparently not declining*, and some, if declining in parts of their range, are expanding in others. As elsewhere in the world, most grassland birds respond vigorously to "ideal" conditions for breeding—just the right balance of air temperatures, precipitation, and insect abundance—but many lose out during even potentially successful seasons when fields are cut before the young have hatched or fledged. This apparently happened in Dixon County, Nebraska, where plowing of a field full of Bobolinks reduced their numbers immediately; the field was allegedly enrolled in the Conservation Reserve Program, which permits such actions under "emergency" conditions. The persistence of cold weather into summer on the North Dakota prairies (which saw frosts and 25° F readings in late June) probably qualified nesting successes in the northern grasslands.

The wet, mild summer across most of the prairies, Midwest, and East may have been responsible for the bounty of Sedge Wrens reported. Across Iowa and Missouri, the species was said to be "common," and in Illinois and Indiana, Sedges were "plentiful." The species was also recorded in above-average numbers to the east of typical range. Tennessee, which has only a few confirmed records of breeding, had 18 singing males between Montgomery County and White County. Three sang in well-studied Augusta County, Virginia, a new county record. In the Northeast, records came from New York (23, mostly in the St. Lawrence Valley), Vermont (7), Maine (2), and Connecticut, where nesting was disrupted by mowing. Single males in southern Alberta and on the Katy Prairie in Texas, where rare, sang away, to no apparent avail. Note that our explanation for the low numbers of Dickcissels and

Bobolinks east of range—that conditions in the Midwest were favorable for nesting—is here marshaled to explain the *opposite* phenomenon in Sedge Wren. (In fact: we're guessing.)

More guesswork is required to account for the increasing appearances, and nestings, of extralimital Scissor-tailed Flycatchers, which seem capable of turning up almost anywhere. The list of wanderers is longer than usual this summer: Ocracoke Island, NC 1 June; Maxwell, NM 8 June; Riding Mountain National Park, MB and Lebanon County, PA 9 June; Loudoun County, TN 12 June; Flamingo, FL 18 June; Longue-Rive, PQ 19 June; Miscou Island, NB 21 June; Fort Huachuca, AZ 24 June; St. Clair N.W.R., ON 26 June; Baie-Comeau, PQ 27–28 June; Custer, SD 3 July; Wildhorse, AB and the San Rafael grasslands, AZ 6 July; Macon County, IL 14 July; Las Vegas N.W.R., NM 15 July; Stutsman County, ND 21 July; Orangeburg, SC 23 July; and Hamilton County, TN 24 July. Nesting birds, or birds attempting to nest, were found in St. Clair and Union Counties, IL; Livingston County, KY; Bitter Lake, NM; Roanoke, VA; Gage County, NE; Edgefield County, SC; five Tennessee and four Missouri counties; and Grant, Vernon, and Caldwell Parishes, LA in June. Finally, former nesting locations in McDonough, GA, Lyon County, KY, and Monroe, NC had brief visits by single birds but no nesting noted. Western Kingbird, which has shown a weaker pattern of expansion in the East than Scissor-tailed, nested for the first time in Mississippi, in DeSoto County, in June.

Most grassland species are not expanding in number or extent of range. Loggerhead Shrikes appeared to lose ground across the continent this summer. Indiana birders could find *none* in their state's former stronghold in Daviess and Sullivan Counties. Michigan birders found *none*. Wisconsin had shrikes in three locations, Illinois at least two pairs, and Minnesota had them in 12 counties, with 13 Iowa counties also reporting them. Seven captive-raised birds were released at Breckenridge, Québec, a province from which the species has disappeared. In the West, an extralimital shrike wandered into the mountains at Bow Valley Provincial Park, Alberta, and southern California populations, already very small on the coastal slope, slipped still more, as they were trapped and relocated by predator control programs designed to benefit Snowy Plovers and Least Terns.

Another species that requires healthy populations of insects and small rodents, American Kestrel, has disappeared from many former haunts in the East and Midwest. Alarm bells were again sounded in Delaware, New York, Virginia, and in Massachusetts, where productivity plummeted in the Blue Hills Reservation and in the cranberry bogs of Plymouth County, two locations where long-term studies of the species are in place. Wayne Petersen writes: "This small falcon could be declining at a rate unequaled by practically any other bird species in New England." Other mousers of open habi-

tats scarcely occasioned comment: Barn Owls had dismal nesting in Virginia but nine broods each in Kentucky and South Dakota, while Northern Harriers were mentioned only a few times, with nesting detected in Virginia, New Mexico, and Texas, and summering birds in Tennessee, Kansas, and Missouri.

Henslow's Sparrow shows some plasticity in adapting to disturbed areas; but though its habitat requirements may be varied, it is by no means a generalist when it comes to nesting areas, and B.B.S. data indicate a decline of 96.4% since 1966. Fields in upstate New York that once had dozens are now mostly devoid of them, for reasons unknown; extensive searches found only two nesting areas around Rochester this summer. In Kentucky, the species was noted to be expanding, with a first summer record from McCracken County; several new locations were also discovered in Tennessee. Carefully monitored in their core range, Henslow's were found in 17 eastern Iowa counties (an increase), and seven counties each in Minnesota and Wisconsin, while Ohio's Wyandot County produced a count of 20 in one field—not in a strip-mined area, which have become their habitats of choice in that state and others nearby: a count of 45 came from Indiana strip mines on 8 July. Strip mining as a practice is generally of extreme concern to environmentalists, both for its destruction of biological communities and its disruption and degradation of waterways. Nevertheless, it is of interest to biologists working on enigmatic species such as Henslow's Sparrow that artificial environments can be created that will sustain populations, at least for a numbers of years. The same is true for "false prairies" of eastern North Carolina, where a population of as many as 500 Henslow's persists on the grounds of the Voice of America radio towers, a facility used to broadcast anti-Communist programming around the world. The crossroads of politics, resource extraction, habitat management, and ornithological study are manifold with this charismatic sparrow.

Grasshopper Sparrow, like Henslow's, is a species of concern because of its decline, though Grasshopper is more widespread and able to nest in a much wider variety of fields. Most reports in this journal do not involve counts from the core range in the prairies but rather outposts from the edges of the species' range. In Québec, where the status of the species has needed clarification, the Canadian Wildlife Service found 64 singing birds in June in the Pontiac region. To the east, in New England, 10 were reported on the Kennebunk Plains, a traditional site in Maine (also for Vesper Sparrow), and 15 each in Worcester County and Hampden County, Massachusetts. In Indiana and Illinois, which could be considered "core" range, the species was said to be "flourishing" this season—although the top count came not from a restored prairie but from a strip mine in Pike County, Indiana. The cooler-than-usual South Plains of Texas had a "bumper

year" and Colorado a "great year" for the species. In northwestern Pennsylvania, two were at the Erie airport, where unexpected, while near the southern edge of range in northern Mississippi, reports came from Tunica, Noxubee, Clay, and Monroe Counties. California, where the species is also declining, had significant reports in Placer, Ventura, and Sierra Counties.

For most areas east of the Mississippi River, Lark Sparrow is a species whose habitat requirements are obscure and whose history of distribution is equally puzzling. Generally, it was more numerous as a nester a century ago, before the regeneration of many of the eastern forests. Thus, as for other sparrows, conservationists question the value of preserving ephemeral islands of "artificial" habitat away from its prairie range. The reservation is well-taken, but there is also the question of what effect the widespread suppression of fire—which presumably afforded this and other species some open habitats in the East in pre-settlement times—has reduced available acreage for nesting in modern times. The only regions to consider this species in summer 2004 were Kentucky (15), Mississippi (one in Noxubee County), Alabama (6–8), Arkansas (8), North Carolina (one pair in sandhill habitat), Ohio (2), and Georgia (one, possibly a migrant). At the opposite corner of range, one singing on 4 July along the lower La Biche River in the Yukon provided the territory's third record.

Clay-colored Sparrow and Western Meadowlark had been expanding their breeding ranges at their eastern peripheries in the late twentieth century, but meadowlarks seem to have withdrawn in recent years, while Clay-colored, though irregular, continue to make gains, nesting in for the second year in a row in northeastern Illinois in Kane County (and possibly Cook County) and in Dickinson County, Iowa, that state's first documented nestings. Iowa also had reports from five other counties but no other nests reported. Pennsylvania atlasers and birders found five singing males in western and central portions of the state, including one in a strip-mine context; they also favor Christmas tree farms in the East. Clay-colored were noted to be common in a ten-year-old burn near Norman Wells, Northwest Territories, and unusually numerous in eastern Washington; one along Wilson Creek, California was a first in summer for the Mono Basin. Western Meadowlark, a declining species in many areas, has perhaps recovered a bit in Ohio, where reported in three counties, but continues to disappear in Ontario in the lush Rainy River district, where no habitat changes have been detected that might account for the decline. On the edges of range, singing (and calling!) Westerns were in St. Clair County, Missouri and Drew County, Arkansas. A camera trained on a Sprague's Pipit nest in North Dakota recorded a predator taking the young: a Western Meadowlark.

For many declining open-country species, reports are patchy, and we'll take the news anywhere we can get it. There were five broods of Greater Prairie-Chicken in Ringgold County, Iowa (where reintroduced)—the only mention of the species this season. Several double-digit counts of Northern Bobwhite in Indiana were heartening, but only three Wisconsin and 11 Michigan counties (as opposed to 20 last summer) recorded the species, which is now considered extirpated in Minnesota. Ferruginous Hawks were said to have their highest productivity at the edge of range in Manitoba since 1987. With the spring and summer rains, Baird's Sparrows moved back into many former haunts in central and eastern North Dakota; one reported in Iowa in June will be reviewed (there is no acceptable state record). In Minnesota, Burrowing Owls (state endangered) in Watonwan County departed after their burrow was excavated by a fox, but a dozen in an Archer County, Texas colony prospered. In Minnesota's Clay County, a pair of Rock Wrens produced young, a first breeding record for the state, and one sang at the summit of Mount Cain on Vancouver Island, from which there is only one previous nesting record. Still more remarkable was the Rock Wren that held court in Port-aux-Basques, Newfoundland, singing and bobbing through early July. Ghosts at the edge of former range, a pair of nesting Bewick's Wrens at Chickamauga Battlefield Park, Georgia provided one of few Appalachian records of this species (here formerly considered subspecies *altus*) in the past 15 years; another report from Tennessee awaits review.

Shrub-scrub and successional habitats

When confronted with how little we still know about how various bird species utilize successional and disturbed habitats, we should take a deep breath and accede how much we do understand and how far we have come. Michigan tallied 1341 singing male Kirtland's Warblers this season—the highest count ever made. This increase is owing, in large measure, to the careful scientific study of its use of young Jack Pine habitats and to the application of this study in the species' management. We should take this count as a point of guarded optimism for bird conservation generally, even though Kirtland's Warbler is by no means home-free: hurricanes blew through Florida during the peak of its migration to the Bahamas, where the storms also ravaged its wintering habitats. We are hopeful that next year's counts of the species will again be high. Also most heartening was the record-high tally of over 2000 pairs of Black-capped Vireos in the Wichita Mountains of Oklahoma, a count likewise bolstered by cowbird trapping and careful prescribed burns.

In the same Bird Conservation Region as Kirtland's Warbler, albeit in very different habitats, the declining Golden-winged Warbler remains a species of conservation concern, one

that is more of a puzzle as concerns its habitats and one that has the added disadvantage of a sibling species, Blue-winged Warbler, that threatens its genetic integrity. The current estimate of its population is 210,000, though this may seem high to birders who seek them in migration! In the East, nesting Golden-winged may soon be a memory. A few persist in the highlands of New Jersey (along power-line cuts) and in Addison County, Vermont; one nested in Ohio (the first successful state nesting in 11 years); and three new pairs were found during atlas work in Pennsylvania around Powdermill. One does wonder how much more we could discover with more focused effort: in southeastern Kentucky, a graduate student found 36 singing males in three counties, as well as seven active nests—the first found in the state.

In the Midwest, eastern Bell's Vireo reports were generally favorable, especially from the core of range in Ohio and Iowa, where 24 counties reported the species. One on territory in Graves County, Kentucky was at a new location, and a record 47 birds were noted in Sullivan County, Indiana, all in reclaimed strip mines. Eight counted in thickets in Prairie County, Arkansas was considered a good tally, as were counts of 15, 12, and 10 in central Nebraska counties. Even the surveys of *pusillus* Bell's Vireos in California were considered "encouraging": over 500 singing males were tallied in the Prado Basin, with outlying nesters and prospectors elsewhere. Though we received few reports on the southwestern *extimus* race, eastern Willow Flycatcher posted several increases: a nesting pair at Wheeler N.W.R. in Alabama furnished the state's first confirmed nesting, and another in Boone, Arkansas may have been nesting. Also at the southern edge of range, Red Slough W.M.A. in Oklahoma held 10 territories and at least two nests in July.

Coastal and interior wetlands

I. COLONIAL WATERBIRDS

We could do an entire issue on the ups and downs of terns, which are covered well and in detail, especially in the coastal regions' reports. Most of the tern news was good, especially after the rather poor nesting season of 2003, but it is important to bear in mind that terns' nesting success fluctuates year to year and that long-term trends are more meaningful than comparisons of a few years' data. Fortunately, monitoring of colonial waterbirds has come a long way in recent years, and most efforts are coordinated, so that our understanding of continental population dynamics is increasingly refined.

Royal Tern numbers in Florida were said to be the highest in over 120 years and included nearly 4000 pairs nesting in Tampa Bay. Large counts also came from the Chandeleur Islands off Louisiana (30,000 Royal/Sandwich), but numbers in Virginia's coast were said to be continuing a ten-year decline, possibly owing to disturbance by people and predators. Caspian Tern is little known as a nester to most of us.

The June census of the Chandeleur Islands off Louisiana turned up 585, but few others were reported from coastal areas away from the Pacific, where the species has, shamefully, become a scapegoat at the Columbia River mouth for taking "too many" salmon smolts. Three nests were found in Lake Champlain (New York and Vermont), and 1560 nests were on Little Galloo Island in Lake Ontario. In California, the Salton Sea had some 30-50 pairs, and the Monterey County's 450 adults raised 221 fledglings, over double the best count here.

Common Tern may require a name change in the future, if its continent-wide declines—estimated at 90% in recent decades—continue. At Kouchibouguac National Park in New Brunswick, the colony declined to 4335 pairs this season, a 46% drop from 2003. On Machias Seal Island, claimed by both Canada and the United States, researchers report almost complete nest failure and attribute this crash to a dearth of small baitfish (also credited for the anemic numbers of large tubenoses this summer: see the New England report). High lunar tides on 3 June and 2 July disrupted colonies in the Hudson-Delaware region, where productivity was said to be the lowest since 1976 at Barnegat Bay, New Jersey. Also in that state, the large ternery at Stone Harbor continues to be plagued by expanding Laughing Gulls (also partly a cause of Virginia's 74% drop in nesting Common Terns) and by feral cats, which are fed in the parking lot next to the colony. Thanks to careful predator removal programs, Massachusetts posted another increase in Common Terns—now up to 16,087 pairs—but managers observed that juveniles died by the hundreds in August, possibly from Salmonella poisoning. Roseate Tern, beleaguered by a recent oil spill off Massachusetts, appeared to hold its own there (declining 12%), and good news came from Long Island, New York, where 1700 pairs nested on Great Gull Island and 300 pairs colonized Cartwright Island, thanks to the canny use of decoys and site management techniques.

Least Terns received extensive (and mixed) comment from the West and from inland locations, where it is listed as state endangered in all locations. On the East Coast, the species declined in Delaware, where floods, dogs, and ORVs foiled all nestings, and New Jersey, where a house cat killed at least 20 (plus a Piping Plover). Both the Mississippi River and the Ohio River levels had no major floods, allowing for breeding on river islands by Least Terns at locations in Indiana (where productivity was nonetheless poor among 80 nests in Gibson County), but the lower Ohio River birds suffered from poor sites, and Kentucky birds nesting along the lower Tennessee River lost all 26 nests to a predator in July. On the other hand, Lee County, Florida and the Kentucky/Tennessee sites on the Mississippi River and elsewhere had good nesting success, the latter with almost 3400 nesting birds found. New Mexicans found an active colony at Brantley Lake (seven pairs) to add to their 11 pairs at Bitter Lake. In California, a few inland pairs produced young in Kings and Orange Counties,

staging birds reached a healthy 276 in Santa Clara County, and wandering singles were found at the Salton Sea and at Buckhorn Reservoir, a first Lassen County record. Oregon got its twelfth record of the species ever.

Most unexpected in the interior, Black Skimmers were detected as vagrants in Fulton County, Kentucky 22 July (state first) and Springfield, Illinois 23 July (state second); no tropical storm was involved, very unusual for inland appearances of this coastal species. Only central New Jersey reported good nesting success in this species, at Barnegat; Stone Harbor Point's colony of up to 800 suffered cat predation and flooding. As Least and Gull-billed Terns have done, skimmers have also begun nesting on flat rooftops, as in Melbourne, Florida this season; although strip malls are scarcely more appealing than strip mines as a substitute for natural habitat, this adaptation provides some hope for some of our colonial waterbirds: after all, humans are very good at building strip malls, and if sea levels continue to rise, some species will need alternatives to vanishing barrier islands. As Harry LeGrand reports from the Carolinas, however, spoil islands are no longer routinely built in many areas, and gravel roofs are no longer the standard.

Unlike some of their fellow coastal colonial nesters, Laughing Gull and Brown Pelican populations appear to be increasing on the whole, though their colonies also shift with time. Both also appear to be expanding northward, and this season saw a high count of 25 Laughings from the Bay of Fundy, where the species may soon nest. In Virginia and Maryland, banders ringed 2485 young Brown Pelicans, well above the seasonal record. The species is also increasing along the Texas coast, and inland observers are starting to see more, such as the single in Tarrant County 26 July; no one was prepared, however, for the *flock* of 35 that passed over Lake Belton in Bell County. So far, interior birds—such as the Brown Pelican in Sheboygan County, Wisconsin in mid-July or the one in Harlan County, Nebraska in late June—have not been banded, which makes mid-Atlantic provenance seem less likely, and it would seem that the Gulf of Mexico would be the most likely source.

The big pelican story was the unprecedentedly large and widespread influx of juvenile Brown Pelicans into the Southwest and up the West Coast this season. In California and the Great Basin, the birds arrived in May, earlier than elsewhere, and reached as far into the interior as Lake Mead, Nevada (28 birds!), Antelope Island, Utah (one), and California's Owens Valley and Lake Henshaw, in San Diego County. In New Mexico, one made it to Morgan Lake, but Arizona was utterly awash in pelicans beginning in mid-June, with singles flocks as large as 33 and 50 birds, and three dozen or more brought into rehabilitators. Gary Rosenberg and Mark Stevenson estimate that over 300 birds were present in Arizona; they note that these "invasions typically result from nesting success followed by food shortages in the Gulf of California. The absence of adults among grounded birds suggests that inexperience is also a factor." No pelicans were observed in the Southwest after late July, but in the coastal Pacific Northwest, flocks as large as 77 were seen in British Columbia by late June, and by late July, a new Oregon high count—of 8000 birds at Clatsop Spit—was made.

In a balanced ecosystem, raccoons are natural predators with a moderate impact on nesting birds. However, their use of human garbage enables them to reproduce in unnaturally high numbers, and they (and other mammals) have increased to levels that are now seriously dangerous for colonial waterbirds, which have few alternative nesting sites when forced to abandon traditional areas. Two large colonies in Tampa Bay, Florida—Audubon's Washburn Sanctuary and Tarpon Key N.W.R.—were abandoned because of raccoons this season. That's about 6000 pairs of herons and allies that may have failed to breed because of a few mammals. It is unknown whether the collapse of many ardeid colonies in states to the north—from Virginia to New York—can be attributed to predators, but some species' numbers have dropped incredibly rapidly. Cattle Egret, abundant in Atlantic heronries through much of the latter third of the twentieth century, is disappearing: the Delaware River's Pea Patch colony has lost 92% of its Cattle Egrets, New York Harbor

about 90%, and Virginia's coast has lost 89%. What on earth is happening to these birds? They are hardly scarce in the Gulf Coast states: estimates approaching 1.6 million for Texas are probably accurate, and Joe Grzybowski and Ross Silcock suggest the species is increasing in Nebraska. In context of overall local declines in colonial ardeids on eastern coasts (e.g., 89% at Pea Patch, 35% in Virginia), Cattle Egret's decline is less surprising, but it may be that coastal development and changes in agriculture are responsible for their particular drop. For most ardeids, surveys periods and methods are too irregular, when compared continentally, for clear inferences to be drawn from available data, but standardized surveys are soon to be coordinated for many species.

On the other hand, it would seem to be a good time to be a Great Blue Heron, a species noted to be expanding by all regions that reported it, particularly inland. New colonies were found in central North Carolina and in northern and western Virginia; more than 125 nests were found in Plymouth County, Massachusetts; and in Kentucky, a statewide survey documented some 5150 pairs—in a state that had none as recently as 30 years ago. Double-crested Cormorant is another piscivore whose numbers have been growing for some time, through most of its range. The Indiana lake-front had its first known nesting record of the species (41 nests!) this past June—and the state's first in over 50 years—and four new colonies were discovered over the summer in downstate New York. Two new colonies were found in the delta country of Mississippi, where known colonies doubled in size from 2003. Arizona's nesting population is likewise growing. This species has become the bad guy in several regions, by virtue of being *too* successful, particularly in the Northeast. In June, 6000 were "removed" from islands in Lake Ontario near Presqu'île Provincial Park, and the New York Department of Environmental Conservation destroys their nests and oils eggs on Little Galloo and other islands in Lake Ontario, so that habitat for other colonial waterbirds (e.g., Great Blue Herons) will not be destroyed by the cormorants' feces. Thousands more were slaughtered in Arkansas and Michigan.

II. PLOVERS

Closely tied to the fates of terns are those of Piping Plover, a declining species listed as federally endangered in the United States and on the SARA list in Canada. Interior Canada has essentially none left: the Lake of the Woods site in Ontario had none this year. Elsewhere in the Great Lakes region, Michigan's 55 pairs produced 93 young, but there was no nesting farther west in Minnesota or Wisconsin. One of this Great Lakes population, color-banded in 2000, turned up 9 July in Nassau County, Florida; be sure to keep watch for these banded birds and report observations. On the Atlantic coast, 490 nesting pairs in Massachusetts was the lowest since 1997, and Rhode Island had 50 pairs. The population on Long Island has doubled since 1985, thanks to careful management,



It was a summer of pelicans in the continent's interior. Juvenile Brown Pelicans from the Gulf of California irrupted en masse into Arizona, Utah, New Mexico, Nevada, and southern California, while adult American White Pelicans wandered southward and westward after abandoning their largest nesting colony at Chase Lake, North Dakota. This adult Brown Pelican took up with local Whites at the Harlan County Reservoir in Nebraska (here 20 June 2004), furnishing a sixth state record. This crossing of pelicans' paths was typical of summer 2004, in which northern species were found well south of range, while southerly species blazed trails northward. Photograph by Stephen J. Dinsmore.

but in New Jersey, disturbance by people and predators reduced nesting pairs to 133, with production down to a too-low 0.62 fledged young per pair. Delaware's population has been reduced to seven pairs, all at Cape Henlopen State Park. On the Gulf Coast, two Pippings in Alabama represented a first June record for the state. In the West, a pair of Pippings nested at Prewitt Reservoir, the first Colorado nesting away from the Arkansas River Valley since 1949.

Nebraska's boom in Piping Plovers was nothing short of magnificent—over 300 birds and over 120 nests were located at Lake McConaughy, with at least six broods elsewhere in the state—and this abundance was also seen in the scarcer Snowy Plover, whose numbers rose to 24, with at least three nests statewide. In these areas, reservoir levels are already low, and agricultural needs have pushed them even lower. So while some species of waterbird have been reduced in number, the plovers have moved in to exploit the exposed reservoir edges. This temporary phenomenon—which could quickly be ended by rising water levels and growth of shoreline vegetation—could also account for Snowy Plovers in other locations: a pair with three young in Modesto, California (second county nesting); 14 adults with three chicks at Pyramid Lake, Nevada (where rare breeders); and smashing counts of 20 on Pelican Island, Alabama 22 June, of 61+ adults (and 14 nests) on barrier islands off Mississippi, and of 255 birds at Bitter Lake N.W.R. in New Mexico 23 June. In Washington, this species is increasing, with 27 nests in Pacific County and six at Ocean Shores this season; Oregon expects up to 100 fledged young, also up from past years. With such a bounty of breeders, extralimital Snowy Plovers were not unexpected; singles turned up at Bowdoin N.W.R., Montana 11 June and in Stearns County, Minnesota 4 June, with three birds in Baylor County, Texas 18 July, the latter probably post-breeders but in an area where breeding is conceivable.

III. PISCIVOROUS RAPTORS

More good news. Ospreys returned to the Montréal area, where two active nests were found. In Vermont, 108 fledged young was even better than last year's 82, the previous high. Massachusetts's largest concentration, at Westport, saw 95 young fledged from 73 nests, the best productivity in three years. In the Midwest, Indiana's Department of Natural Resources released eight young Ospreys (the state has just eight known nests), in hopes of increasing the population, while 23 were released in Iowa (where all four of the state's nests failed). Missouri reported increasing numbers, a few were in new sites in Arkansas and Louisiana, and three nests were reported in Illinois. Only Virginia and Maryland reported reduced productivity, probably a result of the Chesapeake Bay's extreme hypoxia of the summer. In the West, Washington's numbers equaled 2003's, New Mexico had a record-high 17 nesting pairs, and California nesters were

found in new areas in Santa Cruz and Santa Clara Counties.

Bald Eagles are another success story of modern conservation, and their recovery continues essentially everywhere. They increased by 12% in New York to 84 pairs, with 111 young fledged and many new nest sites; New Jersey's 44 pairs produced 52 eaglets, and Delaware's 32 nests yielded 37 young. In the Midwest, Ohio also reached an all-time high, with 108 nests and 127 successfully fledged. An Indiana survey found 85 chicks in 44 nests, but survivorship was not known. Iowa had a record 175 nests. Of six Illinois nests, one was the first in the Chicago area in over 100 years. Out West, San Diego County had its first modern record of nesters at Lake Henshaw. If there was any truly bad news about Bald Eagles out there, it did not reach our desks.

IV. FRESHWATER MARSHLANDS AND PRAIRIE SLOUGHS

Though many species have yet to be seriously surveyed, there is guarded optimism about freshwater marsh birds in some regions, especially where restoration or mitigation projects are well underway and producing good results. The ponds maintained by Ducks Unlimited near Nicolet, Québec, for example, had up to 37 Least Bitterns in May, and tallies of 10 birds each came from Standifer Gap Marsh, Tennessee, Red Slough, Oklahoma, and Back Bay, Virginia; breeding was confirmed at Parker River N.W.R. in Massachusetts, where the species had been absent for some years. The Hudson-Delaware report also includes nestings in New York, Delaware, and New Jersey. The more remote, northerly distribution of American Bittern makes its status, especially in the Lower 48, less clear. One in Pensacola provided the first June record for northwestern Florida, and singles in Tennessee's Heritage Marsh, in Colorado's Delta County, and two Texas counties were thought to be potentially nesting birds. In Missouri, two nests were found in June at Squaw Creek N.W.R.

Like bitterns, rails are among the least known of the freshwater marshbirds, and standard sampling techniques and protocols for surveys are just now being established, so that monitoring efforts can begin to assess breeding populations in uniform ways. Little enough is known about most species (other than endangered taxa of Clapper Rail) that population estimates are not available for rails. To make matters more complicated, rails appear to be rather mobile as nesters, much as waterfowl are. Because biologists know scarcely more than birders about local populations, our work in reporting their numbers and nesting attempts is potentially very useful. The wet summer may have benefited rails, which were well reported in 2004, more so than 2003 (Brinkley 2004). Massachusetts, which has scarcely more than a dozen recorded nestings of King Rail, documented two nestings at Plum Island. Ohio, which places King on its endangered list, had four in Pickaway County, one in Lucas County, and a nesting pair with young in Franklin

County. Illinois had a pair with four young at Prairie Ridge W.M.A., Iowa had several at Clarence Cannon N.W.R., and Oklahoma had nesters at traditional locations, Hackberry Flat W.M.A. and Red Slough. Maryland reported one, and Virginia's Mason Neck N.W.R. had three, the only location away from their stronghold around False Cape. Many parts of former range are uninhabited: Minnesota, for instance, had none, and its last confirmed record is from 1992.

Common Moorhen numbers continue to hold steady in the Midwest but to decline in the East. Young were noted at six Illinois, five Indiana, one Minnesota, one Kentucky, one Delaware, one Maine, two Iowa (of seven counties with moorhens), and two Vermont locations. A few singles were in Tennessee, Minnesota, Massachusetts, New Jersey, New Mexico, and Missouri, but no evidence of nesting was reported other than in upstate New York. In western Pennsylvania, a tally of 34 in two counties was very good, but the Philadelphia area has lost the species in recent years, and the highest count from their most reliable New Jersey site, Hackensack Meadows, was only eight. Some 51 were counted at Red Slough, Oklahoma. It is not clear why this large rail should be declining in what appear to be suitable sites, but environmental pollutants at Hackensack and Tinicum could be to blame.

Small rails receive even less mention in regional reports than larger species. Nesting of Sora in Northwest Territories, Iowa, Massachusetts, and Virginia (and possibly Maryland) and Virginia Rail in California, Iowa, Tennessee, and possibly northern Virginia were the only reports of those species. A Black Rail at the Munuscong W.M.A. in Michigan's Chippewa County on the Upper Peninsula 3-4 June provided only the third state record. A marsh with six Blacks in Greene County, Georgia on that state's Piedmont, two in Seeley, California, and three in Pasco County, Florida were at new locations. Yellow Rails were reported in Ontario (near Thunder Bay, Dryden, and Ottawa), in California's Siskiyou County, and on the Liard Highway in Northwest Territories, a new location. For the second year, none were found in the Rainy River area, a regular area for the species in Ontario, or in Modoc County, California.

Pied-billed Grebes, like several other freshwater marsh birds, are becoming increasingly scarce in the East but perhaps faring better in the Midwest, and there is a suggestion in the Hudson-Delaware regional report that Mute Swans are limiting their breeding marshes. There were two nestings in Delaware, three "possible" nestings on Long Island, four confirmed Maryland nestings, and scattered summering birds from Maryland to Georgia. Pied-billed were called "plentiful" in Illinois and Indiana, with at least five breeding records in Illinois and a peak count of 160 at Horseshoe Lake in Madison County, Illinois. A group of 40 in Abilene, Texas included many young of the year, the first nesting record for Callaghan County.

Black-necked Stilts are busting out all over, still. Away from southern Alberta, where 38 graced Lake Newell, and multiple sites in British Columbia, the Canadian records included one at Cherry Hill Beach, Nova Scotia 6–8 June and a pair at Jarvis, Ontario that attempted to nest in a cornfield in May and June; the nest failed but was the province's first. Farther south, middlewestern records continue to accrue: Wisconsin had four, Ohio had four, including a probable nesting pair, Indiana had a nesting pair, and Illinois had four reports, one of 11 birds. These numbers were minor compared to Fulton County, Kentucky's 67 stilts! Palmer-Ball and Sloan note that the species appears to be established as a breeder throughout the lower Mississippi River floodplain. In the West, wanderers were widespread, notably in New Mexico. Oregon's Willamette Valley again had nesters, and five juveniles (with 12 adults) confirmed the first county nesting at Millers Creek Reservoir, Texas.

American White Pelican became the buzz of the Internet this summer season, when it was reported that the world's largest colony—28,000 birds at Chase Lake in Stutsman County, North Dakota—was suddenly deserted early in the nesting season, with adults abandoning eggs and chicks and dispersing to parts unknown. Regions to the East awaited a major influx, but none was observed. Pelicans were in "normal" summer numbers just west and just east of the Mississippi River in the Midwest, the Gulf Coast states, and Tennessee/Kentucky, with just two in Québec, three or four in Ontario, and seven along the Atlantic Coast between Massachusetts and New Jersey. The dispersing pelicans apparently went south and west, where higher-than-normal numbers were seen as far as British Columbia (145–200 per site) and Nebraska (400). Numbers were normal elsewhere on the Pacific coast and Southwest, though 32 at El Vado Lake in New Mexico 19 June were "unexpected."

Grzybowski and Silcock tied the early appearances of pelicans to those of Franklin's Gulls, which turned up in mid-June in large numbers (e.g., 730) at Lake McConaughy and smaller numbers south to Willcox, Arizona; four in northern Idaho and one in central Texas during the same period may also have been failed breeders. Counts of 186 Marbled Godwits at Lake McConaughy 20 June and 51 at Brantley Lake, New Mexico two days later may also indicate widespread nesting failure, perhaps owing to the cool prairie summer. An impressive flock of 650 at American Falls Reservoir, Idaho 10 July could have been of failed breeders, post-breeders, or both. Wilson's Phalarope, found in similar habitats, was seen in higher-than-usual numbers early in the season, as in Arizona, where over 100 were counted 29 June at Willcox. Good news for this species came from coastal Washington and Oregon, where rare nestings were documented.

Sandhill Crane appearances out of range have become almost too numerous to merit a full accounting. (But what the heck.) This season saw singles in Sackville, NB;

Rogersville, NB; Round Hill, NS; Aspen, NS; near Charteris, PQ; Mount Solon, VA; Berks County, PA; Wyandot County, OH; Branchport, NY; Erie N.W.R., PA; Grafton, NH; Rochester, NH; Stonington, CT; and Hooper's Lane, NC. In Québec, groups of cranes that did not appear to breed were in Saint-André-de-Kamouraska (2 on 12 July), Île du Grand Calumet (3–5 through the season), and at Ayimer (5 on 29 July). Two pairs in the Belgrade Lakes region of Maine (the fifth year for that site) produced one "colt," and upstate New York's pair in Wayne County produced two, the second year for that site. Pennsylvanians found a new nest site in Crawford County, which produced two young. At least four family groups were seen in Illinois and Indiana, and at least five pairs were reported in Ohio. Iowa cranes increased to 16 pairs, and scattered singles were observed in western states, with few indications of extralimital breeding, though Vancouver Island had its first nestings in 63 years. Whooping Cranes had their best nesting season in modern history: 54 nests and 41 fledglings were recorded. Most unfortunately, two of this migratory flock would be shot on 6 November 2004 in Kansas; last year's killing of a Whooping Crane in northern Texas resulted in a \$2000 fine and six months' jail time. But the population, now totaling around 450, is higher than at any time in the past 100 years.

Finally, we rarely get word on waterfowl productivity in the summer report, as productivity is best measured over the fall and winter for most species, and many sea ducks' population dynamics are poorly understood. Gadwall, one of a few waterfowl known to be increasing in North America (others are Northern Shoveler and Green-winged Teal), nested at Hennepin Lake, Illinois (and was found at three other sites in the state). In the West, where also increasing, dozens of broods were found in western Washington and two even in western Oregon, where still rare. Blue-winged Teal, which shows complex population trends across its range, was noted breeding in Massachusetts, California (first for Napa County), Kentucky, western Washington (117 birds), and at four sites in Tennessee. A pair of Common Mergansers in Bureau County, Illinois in summer suggested nesting, and rare nesting was confirmed for Virginia/Maryland along the Potomac River, when a chick was observed 30 May and a hen with six young 8 June. Four family groups located on Piru Creek, Ventura County, California were the southernmost anywhere, though the species has nested in Chihuahua, Mexico.

V. SOUTHERN WATERBIRDS WANDERING

One predicted consequence of climate change is the northward shift in the breeding or post-breeding ranges of tropical or subtropical waterbirds. The most conspicuous candidate for this thus-far speculative connection is Black-bellied Whistling-Duck, which was reported as far north as Ayer's Cliff, Québec this season. Florida and Louisiana report continued

"explosive" growth of breeding birds and overall numbers, Texas birds are now nesting north to Grimes County, and the 34 reported in South Carolina were just the tip of the iceberg: 150 are now breeding in Colleton County on private land (Harrigal and Cely 2004). Other reports came from North Carolina (8), Oklahoma (8), and Mississippi (5), all certainly potential places for nesting, which has been confirmed as far north as Arkansas to the west. Other waterbirds found north of range were Neotropic Cormorant (one in Tennessee, 2 in Kansas, 2 in Oklahoma, many in northern/western Texas and New Mexico), Roseate Spoonbill (first Mississippi nesting, 19 in Georgia, 5 each in Oklahoma and South Carolina, 3 in Arizona, singles in New Mexico, Kansas, and North Carolina), Purple Gallinule (singles in Virginia and Utah), Limpkin (one in Georgia), White Ibis (singles in Nova Scotia and New Mexico, three in Tennessee, and 321 at Red Slough, Oklahoma) and Reddish Egret (15 in Georgia at one site). These patterns seem to strengthen each summer and fall, though the northern extent of wandering shows considerable interannual variation. In a note in the Colorado & Wyoming regional report, Chris Wood and Doug Faulker caution that Little Blue Herons are rare in the interior West and should be carefully separated in the field from juvenile Snowy Egrets with pale bills and legs. From Long Island and from Lake Barkley, Kentucky came word of probable Little Blue Heron x Snowy Egret hybrids—all the more reason to be cautious in identification of rare and extralimital birds.

Northward bound

For many bird species undergoing rapid range extensions, often including many extralimital wanderings, analysis in a habitat-specific framework can be misleading, especially for species well adapted to suburban and other heavily "converted" landscapes. White-winged Dove is a wonderful example. In Canada, Nova Scotia had its twenty-ninth record at Liscombe in July (and fourth for 2004!), Brighton, Ontario had a quick visitor 30 July, Québec's eleventh was at Saint-Augustin 19 June, and Vancouver Island, British Columbia had one 12 July. Five were in Kansas, two each in Iowa and Georgia, and singles in Wisconsin, Minnesota, Montana, Nebraska, North Carolina, Rhode Island, and Massachusetts. They are expanding breeding range on the Alabama coast and central Colorado, spreading northward more gradually New Mexico, Arizona, Utah, and Nevada, and appearing along the southern California coast and Channel Islands, west of typical range.

Kites, too, are simply inevitable components of the summer seasons' reports. Although no expansion of nesting range was documented, with the exception of potentially Attala County, Mississippi, Swallow-tailed Kites appeared over Iowa City 3–5 June (the state's third modern record), at Copenhagen, Ontario 5 June, and at Block Island, Rhode Island 18–20 July. Monitoring efforts in the Pearl River basin of

Mississippi and Louisiana produced 47 nests and an aerial count of 151 Swallow-taileds 22 June; they peaked at Florida's Lake Apopka a month later, with 475 birds. (To the person who finds the first nest north of 36° N: we'll buy dinner.) Mississippi Kites showed similar trends at the northern edges of range. Iowa, Colorado, and Massachusetts had multiple wandering birds, Michigan and Wisconsin had singles, while Texans and Missourians located nests in new locations. Black Vulture also continues to appear north of known breeding range in the summer, with records from Miscou Island, New Brunswick 17 July, Saint-Thècle, Québec 6 July, and two birds at Dublin, New Hampshire 4 July; no northerly nests were reported.

Minor movements

Eurasian Collared-Doves posted fewer headlines than White-winged Doves, but many western and central regions reported new areas colonized, and Common Ground-Doves received modest but encouraging comment, at least in the West. Surprising to many will be reports of probable nesting of Ruddy Ground-Dove in Guadalupe Canyon, New Mexico, the western Phoenix Valley of Arizona, and Calipatria, California. Cave Swallows continued modest range gains, nesting in a culvert near Justiceburg in Garza County, Texas and among Cliffs in eastern New Orleans, not far from the state's second Gray Kingbird nest. The only appearances of Shiny Cowbird were in southern and northwestern Florida, coastal North Carolina and Georgia, and in Nova Scotia at Canso, for Canada's second record! Swainson's Warbler stole the show in Cape May County, New Jersey and Johnson County, Illinois, with other reports of note from the Alabama mountains and eastern Mississippi. A pair of Prothonotary Warblers at Lyme, Connecticut might have nested, but no direct evidence was found.

Raptor (re)occupations

As has been happening in Europe for several decades, North American raptors, no longer shot for sport, food, or bounty, are beginning to reoccupy former range, even moving into areas now suburban and urban. Cooper's Hawk numbers are on the increase at many hawk-watches in the United States, and reports from nesting areas are proliferating as well. In urban areas, nests were found near downtown Wilmington, Delaware and near Buffalo, New York, while Block Island, Rhode Island had a nest, one of many found in New England suburban sites. Summering birds in the Imperial Valley of California, in southern Louisiana and Mississippi, and in the Pineywoods of Texas were exceptional. Merlins can now be found in many southern Canadian and northern U. S. cities, to the astoundment of many a southerner. Eight Merlin nests were found in the urban Montréal-Laval area of Québec, and more were seen around Québec City over the summer. A pair also nested in downtown Fargo, North Dakota. With this apparent extension of range, Merlins are now showing up in

June and July away from nesting areas: four on the Massachusetts and one on the South Carolina coast in late July, one in Algona, Iowa in mid-July, one at Lake Chautauqua, Illinois in mid-June, and one in late June in Tuscaloosa County, Alabama were all noteworthy.

Final notes

It is remarkable how well, and how quickly, birders are able to detect changing trends in open-country species such as White-winged Dove and Scissor-tailed Flycatcher—or larger birds, such as Cooper's Hawks—but remarkable, too, how little our collective field time tells us about trends in most smaller forest-nesting species. In reading through the summer's regional reports, we found remarks on the potential decline of Swainson's Thrush in the Northeast, the steady but spotty counts of Cerulean Warbler in Appalachia, the widespread nestings of Red Crossbill(s) in North Carolina, West Virginia, and Texas (and probably Georgia and Kentucky), and nesting or potentially nesting Yellow-bellied Sapsuckers in Tennessee, Virginia, and Colorado. Olive-sided Flycatchers in Ohio and western Texas hinted at nesting, and atlasers in Pennsylvania confirmed three pairs of Yellow-bellied Flycatchers in Wyoming County, likely the southernmost breeders anywhere. For a sense of trends in more widespread species, we still turn to B.B.S. data (<www.mbr-pwrc.usgs.gov/bbs>) and increasingly to eBird (<www.ebird.org>), a resource that covers all seasons and that is growing in popularity and usefulness. To help our regional editors better interpret the many bird lists they receive, especially those from woodland habitats, we humbly ask contributors to archive the results of birding outings with eBird. It takes very little time, and it would add much to your regional editors' understanding of the commoner species in particular. Indeed, a habitat we scarcely mention above—western shrublands—contain the largest proportion of species listed by Partners In Flight, including many sparrows, thrashers, grouse, and neglected species like Verdin, thought to have declined by 85.6%. Perhaps 90% of western shrublands are under the stewardship of the Bureau of Land Management. We hear very little about nesting species in these habitats.

As we celebrate the solid increases in so many bird populations, we should keep mindful of the storm clouds for others. While the worst of the West Nile virus epidemic may have passed in the East (though American Crow numbers remain low), the disease continues to ravage bird populations in the West, particularly corvids. There is special concern in central California for the endemic Yellow-billed Magpie. As reported in the Southern Pacific Coast report, the University of California/Davis Center for Vectorborne Diseases found in July that half of the state's dead birds tested positive for the virus. Another report of avian disease came from the Hudson Bay coast of Québec, where an avian cholera outbreak at Ivujivik killed most of the Common Eiders. There is renewed concern for eastern Peregrine Falcons,

which experienced fairly good breeding season in New York, Ohio, and Tennessee, but only moderate success in Iowa and Virginia, where thinned egg shells were noted in a few cases. Tests on eggshells from Virginia pairs in 2001 and 2002 found high levels polybrominated diphenyl ethers—chemical compounds (used as a flame retardants) that have also been found in human milk and Great Lakes fish. Tests will again be run on cracked and thin Peregrine eggshells from failed 2004 nestings.

While the forests of our continent are indeed burning, and global climate change looms over even the most well-conceived bird conservation strategies, we must answer our title's question in the negative: Rome is not yet burning. Many conservationists will be actively putting out fires, figuratively, for decades to come, but we have no cause to give up hope that the preservation of this continent's birdlife is within our reach.

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EDITORS' NOTEBOOK

Conservation corners

The summer issue is often light in content, as it covers just two months rather than three or four, and so, in an effort to provide something innovative, the team of editors decided to offer a page of space (or so) to Regional Editors who might like to countenance their Regions' conservation challenges, especially at the level of habitat or ecoregion, for our readers who might know a great deal about rare or endangered birds in their areas but perhaps less about what threats these birds, as well as more common species, face in the present and in years to come. As is true of the Regional Reports, these conservation summaries—labeled "The State of the Region"—are heterogeneous in style and emphasis, some more essayistic, others brimming with referenced statistics. Most summaries make mention of the Bird Conservation Regions (BCRs) conceived in 2001 by the North American Bird Conservation Initiative (NABCI). If, like so many of us who help edit the journal, you have trouble keeping up with the alphabet soup of acronyms and abbreviations in the bird conservation arena, the "Changing Seasons" essay provides a partial primer on recent continental and ecoregional efforts, including a map of the BCRs. Although we do not have plans to offer a regular "State of the Region," we hope to see at least a half-page Conservation Corner as an occasional feature offered in the Regional Reports, to keep readers abreast of their Regions'

news in the race to preserve habitats and birds.

For their help in reviewing much of the conservation-oriented material in this issue, the editors thank Bruce Peterjohn, Paul Baicich, and Ken Rosenberg.

—Edward S. Brinkley

Seen a SORA lately?

Free access to literature online, called "Open-access," is currently a hot topic among librarians and publishers. Free is definitely good, but free access to one of the richest sources of knowledge on birds is better. This year, SORA—the Searchable Ornithological Research Archive (<<http://elibrary.unm.edu/sora>>)—has come on line. For readers interested searching topics in, and browsing articles on, virtually any ornithological subject, the contents of *Auk*, *Condor*, *Wilson Bulletin*, *Pacific Coast Avifauna*, and *Studies in Avian Biology* are archived; *Journal of Field Ornithology* can be searched but not browsed. Other journals will be added in the future. This is a gold mine: you can download copies of articles in Portable Document Format that stretch back to the first issues of these journals! Articles after 1999 are not yet included, so as not to disrupt subscription to the journals; recent issues are available electronically only through paid access (e.g., BioOne), which may be available at a nearby academic library for those not inclined or able to subscribe to all of these journals. Some

of the available publications are substantial tomes. For example, in the now-concluded *Pacific Coast Avifauna* series, one can download entire books, such as Grinnell and Miller's classic *The Distribution of the Birds of California* that includes a color plate of Song Sparrows by Allan Brooks.

Searching SORA can be by any or all journals, by keyword, by subject, by author, or by an article's title, and include constraining the search to any or all years. The search mechanism has some quirks, and users should be mindful that not everything published in these journals may be found by this method. Some ancillary material is there but can be hard to find. For example, many of the beautiful plates tucked into early issues are not readily found unless one browses an issue. Once an article is found, it's worthwhile to browse the issue containing the article to see what else was published at the time. One may need to look at the "Cover to Cover" feature (at the bottom of the contents for each issue) to find unreferenced material such as artwork. For example, the only way we could locate Roger Tory Peterson's plate of Bermuda Petrel in *Auk* was to browse "Cover to Cover" in the first issue for 1952 where we knew it should be. An article on the species by Robert Cushman Murphy and Louis S. Mowbray had been published two issues preceding this in July 1951, the frontispiece for which issue is a beautiful plate of juvenile Sprague's and American Pipits by Terence M. Shortt. These should not

be missed. SORA is a joint venture of the University of New Mexico's libraries and Information Technology Department, the American Ornithologists' Union, the Cooper Society, the Association of Field Ornithologists, and the Wilson Ornithological Society. In short: it is a dream come true.

As mentioned above, Open-access is an evolving movement in the information age, and those interested may wish to read Peter Suber's overview at <www.earlham.edu/~peters/fos/overview.htm>. There, one will find a directory of open-access journals (<www.doaj.org>). These include, for example, *Marine Ornithology*. Also worth checking for some bird literature is the Public Library of Science (<www.plos.org>). While ZooRecord has long been the best available link to the literature for ornithologists, subscriptions are now affordable only to a diminishing number of institutions. Nevertheless, supplements long published with *Auk* and *Ibis*, known as "Recent Ornithological Literature," recently have been incorporated into OWL, Ornithological Worldwide Literature (<egizooosrv.zoo.ox.ac.uk/OWL>). While many ornithological journals not abstracted by ZooRecord are included, the database is as yet incomplete and not very deep. The web site asks for volunteers to help with data entry; so, if you can help, please do!

Lastly, many important classic references have been digitized and are available free online. The digital archive known as *Gallica* (<gallica.bnf.fr>) at the Bibliothèque Nationale de France offers readers an unbelievable cornucopia of old literature. Perhaps the single most impressive work on North American birds, Robert Ridgway's volumes *The Birds of North and Middle America*, can be accessed by anyone. This is but one of many other sources. We welcome readers to alert us about their finds.

In Volume 56, No. 2, we mentioned that the ABA was investigating methods of making issues of this journal searchable electronically; that process has restarted under ABA's President and CEO Steve Runnels, and we hope to find a venue for this material in the near future. This journal's run began in 1947, with *Audubon Field Notes*

(Volume 1), but its precursor journal, *Bird Lore*, appeared first in 1898. We hope to forge partnerships that allow readers the convenience of deep, accurate searches and browsing of past issues' contents, back as far as is feasible.

—Louis R. Bevier
—Edward S. Brinkley

Corrigenda

We're starting to enjoy receiving corrections from contributors and readers: not only do we learn something, we see that someone is reading the fine print! Mark Robbins points out that the Fort Worth, Texas Glaucous-winged Gull (*N.A.B.* 58: 458) was not the "most extralimital" North American record: by about 90 km, depending on how one draws vectors from wintering range, it is bested in this category by a first-winter Glaucous-winged at Riverlands Environmental Demonstration Area, St. Charles County, Missouri from 6 February through 23 March 1997—certainly a bird much farther east! Vic Fazio likewise found that the caption for the winter-season Swainson's Thrush (*N.A.B.* 58: 309) was poorly worded: there is an 11 December 1991 specimen from Trumbull County, Ohio. In Terry McEneaney's article on Whooper Swans in North America, the penultimate reference in Table 1, left column (*N.A.B.* 58: 303) should read 1999 instead of 1993; Terry welcomes other corrections and data on the species.

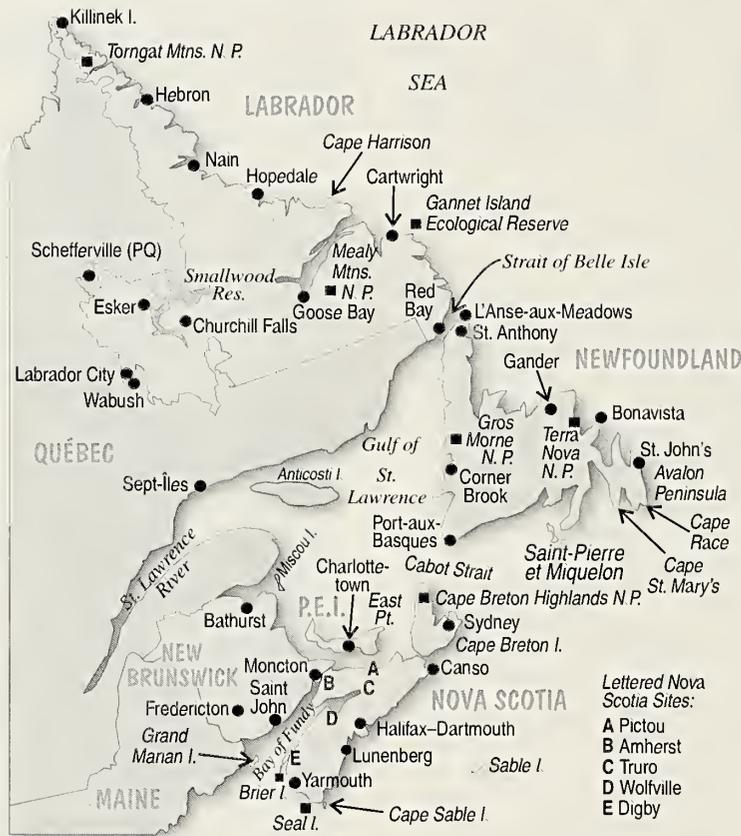
On the other hand, we wince mightily on receiving word of miscaptioned photographs. Our apologies to Geoff Malosh, whose photograph of the Pink-footed Goose in Pennsylvania (*N.A.B.* 58: 223) was miscredited. And we apologize to Mark Lockwood and John Arvin for the odd typographical gaffe that leads the caption for Broad-winged Hawk at Bentsen (*N.A.B.* 58: 251); we are still trying to find out how such an error—termed a "gremlin" by publishers—was introduced after the production and proofing phases.

—Edward S. Brinkley
—Matthew F. Sharp

STANDARD ABBREVIATIONS AND SYMBOLS USED IN THE REGIONAL REPORTS

*	specimen collected
+	bird(s) seen through end of period
†	written details on file
A.F.B.	Air Force Base
acc.	accepted by records committee
A.R.C.	Avian Records Committee
b.	banded
B.B.S.	Breeding Bird Survey
B.O.	Bird Observatory
B.R.C.	Bird Records Committee
C.A.	Conservation Area
C.B.C.	Christmas Bird Count
C.P.	County Park
cm	centimeter(s)
Cr.	Creek
Ft.	Fort
G.C.	Golf Course
G.P.	Game Preserve
Hwy.	Highway
I. (Is.)	Island(s), Isle(s)
imm. (imms.)	immature(s)
Jct.	Junction
juv. (juvs.)	juvenile [plumage]; juvenile(s)
km	kilometer(s)
L.	Lake
mm	millimeter(s)
m.ob.	many (or multiple) observers
Mt. (Mts.)	Mount/Mountain (Mountains)
N.A.	Nature Area, Natural Area
N.F.	National Forest
N.M.	National Monument
N.P.	National Park
N.S.	National Seashore
N.W.R.	National Wildlife Refuge
p.a.	pending acceptance
P.P.	Provincial Park
Pen.	Peninsula
ph.	photographed (by + initials)
Pt.	Point (not Port)
R.	River
R.A.	Recreation(al) Area
R.B.A.	Rare Bird Alert
R.P.	Regional Park
R.S.	Regional Shoreline
Res.	Reservoir
Rte.	Route
S.B.	State Beach
S.F.	State Forest
S.G.A.	State Game Area
S.P.	State Park
S.R.A.	State Recreation Area
S.R.	State Reserve
S.W.A.	State Wildlife Area
S.T.P.	Sewage Treatment Plant/Pond
subad. (subads.)	subadult(s)
Twp.	Township
v.r.	voice recording (by + initials)
vt.	videotape (by + initials)
W.A.	Wildlife Area
W.M.A.	Wildlife Management Area
W.T.P.	(Waste)water Treatment Plant/Pond

Atlantic Provinces & St. Pierre et Miquelon



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It was a wet and cloudy summer in New Brunswick and Nova Scotia. Newfoundland experienced the clouds but not enough rain to maintain adequate water levels in salmon rivers and city reservoirs. The cool weather delayed harvest of farm crops, but it was unknown what, if any, effect there was on reproduction in birds.

Summer is clearly the time for some of the most remarkable rarities of the year in the Region. This summer, a Scissor-tailed Flycatcher and a Painted Bunting visited New Brunswick; White Ibis, Black-necked Stilt, White-winged Dove, and Shiny Cowbird were recorded in Nova Scotia; and both Black-tailed and Bar-

tailed Godwits were in Newfoundland. In recent years, a pattern of truly extraordinary bird occurrences in midsummer has emerged, a pattern of species occurring outside established patterns of vagrancy. Two species found in early July fit the bill this summer: a Lewis's Woodpecker in Nova Scotia and a Rock Wren in Newfoundland, both extraordinary western vagrants detected in the middle of the breeding season. These unrelated species are part of an emerging pattern of western species found in the Region at the height of summer, when birders have not expected western vagrants. In 2003, there was a mid-summer Golden-crowned Sparrow and a Western Tanager. In recent years, Sage Thrasher and Cassin's Kingbird have fallen into this category. What will be next?

Abbreviations: C.S.I. (Cape Sable I., NS); G.M.I. (Grand Manan I., NB).

LOONS THROUGH CRANES

Red-throated Loon continues to maintain its southernmost breeding location in North

America at Miquelon, SPM where four broods were present in Jul (RE et al.). Manx Shearwaters were heard at night on Colombier I., SPM, where nesting has been suspected for more than a decade but as yet is unproven (BL et al.). Besides the usual Great Egrets, Snowy Egrets, and Little Blue Herons in the Region, mostly in Nova Scotia, a Tricolored Heron photographed 22 Jun at Saint Restis Marsh, Saint John, NB (MC) and a fresh juvenal-plumaged Yellow-crowned Night-Heron 19 Jul on a ship 240 km se. of Cape Spear, NF (*vide* BMT) were the most noteworthy of the "southern" herons reported. There was a report of a Little Egret with a Snowy Egret 8 Jul at C.S.I., but no details have been seen. An ad. White Ibis frequented backyard lawns at Westport, Brier I., NS 26-28 Jul (C. Haycock). A Black Vulture was observed in flight at Miscou I. in ne. New Brunswick 17 Jul (MD). A Turkey Vulture nest was discovered in the same cave near Hammond River, NB where the first Regional breeding record was recently confirmed (JW).

Wood Ducks just e. of the breeding range were males 12 Jun at Loch Lomond, NF (AH et al.) and 11 Jul at St. Pierre, SPM (*vide* RE). A pair of Gadwalls was present at Miquelon, SPM on the intriguing dates of 4 & 6 Jun (RE). Single drake Eurasian Wigeons were present Campbellton, NB 29 Jun (Gilles Rioux) and Grand Codroy R. estuary, NF 12 Jun (AH et al.). The annual Jun sightings of male Eurasian Wigeon suggest post-breeding birds, but as yet there is no confirmed breeding record, and Eurasian Wigeon x American Wigeon hybrids are almost unrecorded in the Region. A Ruddy Duck was at Cap Brûlé, NB sewage ponds 25 Jul (Jean-Sébastien Guénette).

A Red-shouldered Hawk near Fredericton, NB 27 Jun was the only sighting of this very scarce breeder (Diane Allain, Hal Dalzell). A few pairs of Rough-legged Hawks summered in the St. Shotts area on the s. tip of the Avalon Peninsula, NF, where they are sporadic nesters (*vide* BMT). Typical in recent years were mid-summer sightings of Sandhill Cranes: one in Sackville, NB 12 Jun; one in Rogersville, NB 20-24 Jun (*vide* BD); one in Round Hill, Annapolis, NS 3 Jun (Joe Nocera); and one in Aspen, Guysborough, NS 11 Jun (*vide* RL).

SHOREBIRDS THROUGH TERNS

Two pairs of American Oystercatchers produced young at the Region's only breeding site on The Hawk, C.S.I. (MN et al.). Once again, a single ad. American Oystercatcher frequented isolated islets off the e. side of G.M.I. during much of the summer (BD et al.). A Black-necked Stilt was present at Cherry Hill Beach, NS 6-8 Jun (SF et al.); sightings of this species are on the increase in Atlantic Canada, but it is still considered a major rarity. A Solitary Sandpiper in peatland near Minto, NB 21 Jun was probably a local breeder (Dwayne Sabine). A Black-tailed Godwit was photographed near Barened, Conception Bay, NF 8 Jun, representing the 11th for the province (Andrew Badcock, *vide* BMT). A Hudsonian Godwit pho-

tographed at Portugal Cove South, NF 14–15 Jun furnished only the 2nd Jun record for the province and one of the very few mid-Jun sightings in the Region (KK, BMT). Newfoundland's 2nd Bar-tailed Godwit was an ad. female found at Stephenville Crossing 22 Jul by Kim Eckert leading a VENT tour. It remained long enough to be viewed by local birders over the next few days. A Marbled Godwit was most unusual at Glace Bay, C.B.I., NS 14 Jul (Junior Metcalf).

A few Great and South Polar Skuas were reported from ferries and whale-watching cruises from various locations in the Region. Typically, sightings were not accompanied by details, and even the few that were are difficult to judge.

The status of the two species of skua known to occur in the Region remains as muddled as it was 20 years ago. While Laughing Gull is a regular summer rarity in e. parts of the Region, e.g., in Newfoundland, there appears to be a genuine increase in records from the s. portion, especially the Bay of Fundy. Brian Dalzell estimated up to 25 Laughing Gulls "floating around" the Bay of Fundy. Return of Laughing Gulls as a breeding species in the Region may be close at hand. Common Terns fared poorly in New Brunswick. A census of the massive colonies at Kouchibouguac N.P. revealed 4335 pairs in 2004, down from 7971 pairs in 2003 (ML); no reason for the decrease was suggested. The mixed Common Tern and Arctic Tern colony of 3200 pairs on Machias Seal I. had almost total nest failure due largely to a lack of small herring (*vide* BD). A pair of Black Terns nested in a large colony of Common Terns at Kouchibouguac N.P., NB after five years of prospecting there (ML). Two pairs of Black Terns nested for the 2nd year at Machias Seal I., NB, but both nests were unsuccessful (*vide* BD). On a positive note, breeding Common Murre numbers doubled on Machias Seal I., at least 200 nests were found (Amey Black), with an additional 125 pairs present on nearby Yellow Murre Ledge (John Drury).

DOVES THROUGH WAXWINGS

A White-winged Dove at Liscombe, *Guysborough*, NS was seen by two bird tour groups 6–11 Jul (Chris Benesh et al.). Incredibly, this is about the 29th individual observed in Nova Scotia and the 4th in 2004 (*vide* IM). Rare summer Yellow-billed Cuckoos were singles at Daniels Head, C.S.I. 13 Jun (MN) and Barrington, NS 20 Jun (MN). The first Barred Owl for Newfoundland & Labrador was a fresh road kill near North West R., Labrador on 16 Jul (John Thomas). This specimen adds credence to a report of a calling Barred Owl in the same area of rich deciduous forest in Aug 2001 (Isabel Schmelzer). Breeding Mourning Doves were again confirmed at St. Pierre, SPM (*vide* RE) and at nearby St. Lawrence, Burin Pen., NL (*vide*

BMT). Mourning Doves colonized New Brunswick and Nova Scotia in the 1970s and 1980s and are now pushing into the eastern-most areas of the Region as breeders.

A Lewis's Woodpecker at a feeder on Elgin Rd., *Pictou*, NS 1–3 Jul was a shocker (KM et al.). It was photographed and observed by a handful of fortunate birders before vanishing. The only previous record for the Region was at Cow Head, NF 14 Aug–11 Sep 1986. A rare bird in Jun, an ad. Red-headed Woodpecker was at L. George, *Yarmouth*, NS 11 Jun (Grant Milroy). A female Red-bellied Woodpecker lingered until 4 Jun at Buctouche, NB (Jean-Paul LaBlanc). Less than annual in Newfoundland, an Eastern Phoebe at Cape Race 23 Jun was unexpected in



This male Shiny Cowbird spent two days at a feeder in Canso, Nova Scotia 13 June 2004 (here) through the next day. As was true of the Region's other record, from New Brunswick in 1993, this bird was reported first as a Brewer's Blackbird. Aside from single records in Maine and Virginia, there are no other records of the species north of North Carolina. Photograph by Tom Kavanaugh.

summer (DM). A Scissor-tailed Flycatcher in ne. New Brunswick at Miscou I. 21 & 22 Jun falls within the pattern of occurrence established by the 30+ previous records for the province (*vide* DC). A White-eyed Vireo banded 8 Jun on Kent I., NB was the first Jun record for the province and possibly the Region (*vide* BD). A breeding pair of Northern Rough-winged Swallows, rare in the Region, returned to Riviere Verte, *Gloucester*, NB after a 2003 nesting (Roger Guitard).

A contender for the award for the most absurd avian occurrences in the Region was the Rock Wren singing at Port-aux-Basques, NL. Found on 3 Jul by visiting New Brunswick birder Michel Chaisson, it remained for more than a week, during which time it sang feverishly from the rock foundation of a bridge for all to see and to photograph. There is one previous record for the Region 4–8 Oct 1980. Most of the few East Coast records are from mid-autumn and winter. Singing House Wrens were at Fredericton, NB 20 Jul (BMy); Hammond River, NB 11 Jun–10 Jul (Allen Gorham, JW); Scoudouc, NB through Jun (Norm & Gisèle Belliveau); Tusket Falls, *Yarmouth*, NS 3–8 Jun (MN et al.); and Cole Harbour, NS 3 Jul (FL et al.). Twenty-five Marsh Wrens singing at the Germantown, NB marsh is probably the highest concentration

in the Region (MC). A Blue-gray Gnatcatcher 2 Jun was a late spring migrant on Kent I., NB (Corey Freeman). A Gray Catbird strayed n. to Plum Pt., Great Northern Pen., NF 20 Jun (Ivy Gibbons). As expected in recent years, Bohemian Waxwings were seen throughout the summer around Wabush in w. Labrador (Gordon Parsons).

WARBLERS THROUGH FINCHES

A Chestnut-sided Warbler singing 20 Jun in cen. Newfoundland near Grand Falls was intriguing, as the species has yet to be proven breeding in the province (Mike Parmenter). A spring Summer Tanager lingered at a Canso, NS feeder until 5 Jun (TK). A Scarlet Tanager was quite out range and habitat at St. Brides, NL 24 Jun (DM). Likewise, a male Eastern Towhee visiting a feeder at Ferryland, NL for the first two weeks of Jun was outside the late fall/early winter window of usual occurrence (*vide* BMT). A Clay-colored Sparrow singing on Kent I., NB in mid-Jun had little hope of finding a mate at that isolated location (Nat Wheelwright). A Field Sparrow was at Oromocto, NB 25 Jul (Beverley Schneider). A late spring Blue Grosbeak was at St. Pierre SPM 7 & 12 Jun (FA). A male Painted Bunting was present at a feeder near Baie Ste Anne, *Northumberland*, NB 5–10 Jul (Bill Rushworthy), about the 15th occurrence for New Brunswick, most of which have been in May and Jun.

A male Shiny Cowbird was photographed at the already famous feeder of Tom Kavanaugh in Canso, NS 13–14 Jun (TK et al.). This extraordinary occurrence would seem part of the northward expansion of this species, but that expansion had slowed in the past eight years or so, with only occasional singles n. to the Carolinas. There is one previous record from the Region: a male photographed at Lamèque, NB 5 Aug 1993. In both cases, the feeder operators first identified the birds as a Brewer's Blackbird. Any reports of Brewer's Blackbirds at feeders in summer should be checked. White-winged Crossbills responded to an exceptionally heavy cone crop in Newfoundland by arriving en masse in Jun and Jul, with much singing by the end of the period. A male Eurasian Siskin photographed at feeder in Lorneville, *Saint John*, NB 1–3 Jun was most likely an escapee from somewhere on this side of the Atlantic Ocean (JW et al.).

Contributors (subregional editors in boldface): Frédéric Allen-Mahé, David Christie, Merv Cormier, Brian Dalzell, Marcel David, Roger Etcheberry, Sylvia Fullerton, Anne Hughes, Tom Kavanaugh, Ken Knowles, Randy Lauff, Fulton Lavender, Mike LeBlanc, Bruno Letournel, Bruce Mactavish (BMT), Blake Maybank (BMy), Ken McKenna, Ian McLaren, David Milson, Murray Newell, Jim Wilson. ☺

State of the Region

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Despite the Region's low human density (2.4 million people, 52% urban, in 540,000 km²), there have been great impacts on terrestrial and marine environments in Canada's Atlantic Provinces. Some 60% of the land is forested and substantially owned or leased by forestry companies. Agriculture is largely localized along river valleys and coastal areas. Accordingly, forestry has had wide impacts, but agriculture has especially affected rich forests and wetlands. The sea, with some 40,000 km of coastline, has dominated patterns of human settlement and resource exploitation. Damming of rivers flowing into the Bay of Fundy has led to huge losses of salt marshes, and many elsewhere have been diked and drained. The establishment of Canada's 200-mile Exclusive Economic Zone in 1977 has not been accompanied by adequate stewardship. Species of particular concern are listed by the Committee on the Status of Endangered Wildlife in Canada (COSEWIC) and by various provincial agencies. The Species At Risk Act (SARA), passed in June 2003, now gives formal protection to many species listed by COSEWIC (see <http://www.sararegistry.gc.ca/species/CDN_SAR-May2004_e.pdf>). These, along with less-threatened species, are considered here in three groups: Seabirds, Shorebirds, and Landbirds.

Seabirds

Some 50 million seabirds live in or pass through the Region each year, including most of the alcid's wintering in the western North Atlantic. Newfoundland hosts the world's largest colony of Leach's Storm-Petrel, on Baccalieu Island, one of the world's largest colonies of Common



Bicknell's Thrush is a little-known species that nests in dense, stunted spruce/fir forests in the Atlantic Northern Forest BCR, including large areas of New Brunswick and part of Nova Scotia. As few as 25,000 pairs may exist. Only recently (1995) split from Gray-cheeked Thrush, which winters in South America, Bicknell's wintering grounds are thought to lie only in the Greater Antilles. Deforestation and fragmentation are threats in both breeding and wintering ranges. Photograph by Tim Laman/VIREO.

Murre, on Funk Island, and the largest North American concentrations of Atlantic Puffin, in Witless Bay. Catastrophic declines of commercial groundfishes off Atlantic Canada have not directly affected seabirds but may have severely reduced the abundance of forage fishes. Reduced gillnetting has lessened by-catches of birds in recent years. Off Newfoundland, collapse of cod and the increase of Harp Seals have been accompanied by reduced availability of Capelin for many surface-feeding gulls, and increased abundance of Arctic Cod as food for other seabirds. The role of oceanographic changes in this switch is uncertain. Recent analyses implicate over-fishing in a shift to a pelagic food web on the Scotian Shelf ecosystem, but effects on seabirds, which use mostly pelagic prey, are unclear. Fishery collapse and better management of garbage has locally reduced productivity in Herring Gulls but may have increased predation by large gulls on other seabirds in their colonies.

The greatest hazard to marine birdlife to continue to be the illegal flushing of oily bilge water at sea, which is estimated to kill some 300,000 birds annually, 80% murre and Dovekies. Canada's record on preventing this practice is deplorable. Aerial pollution surveillance has been some 400 hours per year, compared with about 2000 hours off California. In the United States and Europe, bilge-dumping fines of a million dollars or more have been

imposed, whereas by contrast a \$125,000 fine by a Nova Scotia court in February 2002 was unprecedented.

Seabird hunting continues to be of concern. Newfoundland entered Canada belatedly (in 1949), and its traditional murre (mostly Thick-billed) hunt remained intact, with some 200,000 killed annually. Wide publicity and local sympathy for closure of Harlequin Duck hunting seems to have worked; rated by COSEWIC as endangered in 1990, it was downlisted to "special concern" in 2001. The Canadian Wildlife Service is addressing concern about other species, such as scoters and Common Eiders, which may be subject to unsustainable harvests.

The Nova Scotian populations of the (COSEWIC, endangered) Roseate Tern, at the margin of its range, have been studied extensively. The two major colonies (76 pairs on the Brothers Island and 40 pairs on Country Island in 2004) have been sustained in recent years by wardening and predator control.

Finally, seabird populations may be affected by poorly understood oceanographic variation. A recent conference highlighted disappearance of masses of Red-necked Phalaropes from southwestern Bay of Fundy during the 1990s. This was mooted as a spillover effect of a wider, tenfold decrease in Atlantic Canada of their chief prey, the copepod *Calanus finmarchicus*. Although probably a natural, long-term fluctuation, such events can make species more vulnerable to human impacts.

Shorebirds

Wider declines of some shorebirds, including Least and Semipalmated Sandpipers, Short-billed Dowitchers, Red Knots, and Black-bellied Plovers, are reflected by censuses in Atlantic Canada. The Region supplies vital stopover sites for these and other shorebirds. In autumn, 75–95% of the total population of Semipalmated Sandpipers fatten on a single species of small crustacean on the vast tidal mudflats of upper Bay of Fundy. Another site, Cape Sable Island, Nova Scotia, hosts Canada's only breeding American Oystercatchers (a species of concern globally) and the largest and most diverse assemblage of wintering shorebirds in eastern Canada. Fortunately, some important sites are National Wildlife Areas, Hemispheric Shorebird Reserves, and Important Bird Areas, and outright destruction of coastal beaches and wetlands is prevented by land-use regulations. Effects of such activities as increasing and almost unregulated exploitation for bait of mudflat "bloodworms" (*Glycera*) need study.

Among breeding shorebirds, the Piping Plover (COSEWIC, endangered) has only some 220 breeding pairs in the Region (including the Magdalen Islands, Québec). Most egg and chick mortality is from high tides and predation, but both are partly driven by human disturbance. People, with their ATVs and dogs, continue to ignore warning signs and patrols by citizen "Guardians," and the plover population remains at best stationary. Hopefully, ongoing education will help. The saltmarsh-nesting Willet is of less concern, although its Regional population of only 2500 pairs makes it potentially vulnerable.

Landbirds

Breeding ranges of some COSEWIC-listed landbird (and wetland) species extend into Atlantic Canada (e.g. Least Bittern, Rusty Blackbird), but their welfare lies largely elsewhere. The Region does have substantial fractions of others, including the charismatic Bicknell's Thrush (special concern), and contains the entire breeding ranges of two listed subspecies. The Savanna (Ipswich) Sparrow (subspecies *princeps*, rated of special concern), nesting on Sable Island, Nova Scotia, along with other conservation concerns, could be impacted by federal plans—currently being strenuously opposed—to dispense with year-round wardening of the island. The (endangered) Newfoundland subspecies (or species?) *perna* of Red Crossbill has declined sharply in the last 50 years.

The fate of many species is linked to forestry. Although knowledge and legislation have somewhat mitigated the excesses of forestry, current pulpwood extraction exceeds sustainable, medium-term rates, and there is little old-growth left to either protect or manage wisely. The largely forested National Parks (two in each province except Prince Edward Island, in which the park is essentially seashore) help, as do some areas protected by Land Trusts or in provincially designated wilderness areas, but private land is extensive: in Prince Edward Island, over 90% of the land is privately owned; in Nova Scotia, 70% of the land is privately owned; and in New Brunswick, 50% of the land is privately owned, and most forested public land is leased to forestry. Although more remaining patches of older or unusual forest need to be set aside, and the importance of remnant snags and cavity trees is increasingly accepted, many ecologists believe that landscape-scale management is the only remaining strategy for sustaining forest bird diversity. This includes limiting the areas of intensively managed conifer plantations. Fine tuning of the scale and timing of cutting and pre-commercial thinning also holds some hope; for example, preliminary research indicates that Bicknell's Thrush in New Brunswick is most common in naturally regenerating softwood stands 5–12 years after clear-cutting, which corresponds to the period when pre-commercial thinning most often occurs in the industrial forest.

I thank Bill Freedman (forest ecology), Marty Leonard (COSEWIC), John Chardine (Canadian Wildlife Service), and Becky Whittam (Bird Studies Canada) for assistance with this summary.

With cool and wet conditions prevailing most of the time, the summer 2004 weather was quite at a variance with that of the past three seasons. As usual, the first part of June produced a few surprises, but the rest of the season was rather lackluster. In most of the Region, there were no natural phenomena—such as fires, storms, flooding, or outbreaks of disease—with notable negative impacts on birds. Thus breeding success was presumed to be good for most of the bird families. An exception was the northern Hudson Bay coast, where summer was late by as much as three to four weeks, reducing the reproductive success of many species in this region. Moreover, an avian cholera outbreak at Ivujivik killed most of the local Common Eiders (T. Gaston, *vide* YA).

GREBES THROUGH TERNS

A Horned Grebe at Rivière-Ouelle 18 Jul (CG, CA) and a Red-necked Grebe at Pointe-au-Maquereau, Gaspésie 23 Jun (PP) were out of season. An American White Pelican showed up at L. Tiblemont, near Senneterre 20 Jun (J. Bélisle). The weakening pelican was easily caught and taken to Refuge Pageau 21 Jun (J. Ferron). Also in Abitibi, an ad. turned up at L. Dufault, Rouyn-Noranda 28–30 Jun (A. Fradette et al.). Up to 37 Least Bitterns, an exceptional count, were tallied 30–31 May in the ponds maintained by Ducks Unlimited on the National Defense territory near Nicolet (BJ, LR). A Great Egret at Sept-Îles 5–7 Jun was out of range (JFL). More than 50 individuals were feeding on Île Saint-Bernard (Châteauguay) 18 Jun (L. Lord). These were presumed to have come from the expanding colony located at nearby Herons' I. in the Lachine rapids. A Snowy Egret was located at Beauport 4 Jun (JM. Giroux, JP. Ouellet, M. Lafleur). A Tricolored Heron graced Baie-Trinité 5–6 Jun (JFL, m. ob.), and most probably the same bird was rediscovered at Sept-Îles 15–25 Jun (JFL). A Black Vulture at Saint-Thécle 6 Jul was a good find (J. Brunelle).

Two Black-bellied Whistling-Ducks lingered at Ayer's Cliff from mid-May to 12 Jun (S. Leblond, *vide* B. Turgeon). Because of their unwary behavior, these were thought to be potential escapees. An ad. Greater White-fronted Goose at Grosse Île, Magdalen Is. 23 Jun–3 Jul was rather unexpected at this time of the year (F. Shaffer et al.). The designation of Cackling Goose as a full species (*Auk* 121: 985–995) has stirred interest about its status in the Region. We have been informed that, in recent years, biologists of the Canadian Wildlife Service have banded goslings of this species in the Puvirnituk region, along the n. Hudson Bay coast, establishing that the species is nesting in the Region, a fact previously unpublished (J. Hughes). In Jun of this year, 2 ads. were killed by hunters at Ivujivik (ph. YA). Single

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Mute Swans visited L. Boivin, Granby 1–17 Jun (MB, MM) and Yamachiche 4–31 Jul+ (JG, m. ob.). The description and a photograph of a yearling swan seen at Lac-Brome 13 Jun pointed to a Trumpeter Swan, the 4th modern record for the Region (J. & I. Ferrier). The only Eurasian Wigeon of the season was a male at LaSalle 21–26 Jun (D. Paquette, m. ob.). A male Garganey on the

shores of Park Ferland at Sept-Îles 3–5 Jun represented about the 15th record for the Region (JFL). A female Common Eider at Boucherville, near Montréal 9–12 Jun was locally rare (R. Calderoni, m. ob.). A male Harlequin Duck was still present at Sainte-Catherine on the late date of 4 Jun (JP. Toussignant). Four female Red-breasted Mergansers with young at LaSalle (Herons' I.) in

mid-Jul represented a high count for the Montréal area (J.C. Sorel, R. Rousselle).

Ospreys appear to have reoccupied the Montréal area. Active nests were found near Valleyfield (D. Lapierre) and at Pointe-Fortune (C. Plaisance). Two ad. Golden Eagles were feeding at least one eaglet in a nest in the Gaspésie N.P. 16 Jun, providing the first confirmation of a nest for this species in the park (D. Desjardins). At least 8 Merlin nests were reported for the Montréal-Laval area, with five for Sherbrooke, two for Saint-Hyacinthe, and two for Trois-Rivières this summer—an incredible success for this new city dweller (*vide* PB). The species was also seen regularly in the Québec City region (YA).

A Northern Bobwhite heard w. of Huntingdon 10 Jun was almost certainly escaped from captivity (GF). An American Coot at Havre Saint-Pierre 12 Jun was worthy of mention (J. Poirier, R. Benoit, A. Maloney). Out-of-range Sandhill Cranes included 2 at Saint-André-Kamouraska 12 Jul (M. Harton, M. Robichaud, *vide* L. Forest), one near Charteris 5 Jun (GF), 3 in the n. part of Île du Grand Calumet 5 Jun (BJ), 5 at the same location 17 Jul (BJ, LR), and 5 at Aylmer 29 Jul (P. Blain). A late Marbled Godwit was discovered at Saint-Barthélemy 5 Jun (Y. Gauthier, S. Morand). Ruddy Turnstones also lingered late, with 5 individuals 14 Jun at Pointe-Yamachiche and one still present there 24–25 Jun (JG, MB), unprecedented so late in Jun. At least 15 ad. Stilt Sandpipers gathered at Baie-du-Febvre 29 Jul (PB). A molting male Ruff also stopped at Baie-du-Febvre 27–31 Jul (MRG, m. ob.). An ad. Short-billed Dowitcher of the *hendersoni* race at Sainte-Martine 12 Jul was noteworthy (PB, G. Laperrrière). Ad. Long-billed Dowitchers at Baie-du-Febvre totalled 8 on 27 Jul (MRG) and 10 on 29 Jul (PB).

Single ad. Laughing Gulls appeared at Havre-Saint-Pierre 9 Jun (SD), Métachouan 19 Jun (CC, GS), La Malbaie 24 Jun (R. Gingras), and Pointe Yamachiche 25 Jun (MB, JG). An ad. Franklin's Gull was noted at Saint-Gédéon 6 Jun (CC, GS), followed by 2 at the mouth of Belle Rivière, Métachouan 11 Jun (SB). Single ads. at Pointe-Yamachiche 26 Jun (JG) and at Aylmer 6 Jun (J. Dubois, D. Dallaire) completed this species' seasonal total. Three ad. Black-headed Gulls at Pointe-au-Père 6 Jun were notable (J.

Larivée, R. Bélanger). Ad. Lesser Black-backed Gulls included singles at Lorrainville 2 Jun (J. Fréchette), Saint-Irénée 11 Jun (LM), La Malbaie 13 Jun (LM), Pointe-Yamachiche from 24 Jun–31 Jul + (JG, MB, m. ob.), and Hopetown 31 Jul (B. Arsenaute). The most intriguing gull of the season was a molting third-summer bird thought to be a possible Slaty-backed Gull at Port-Daniel, Gaspésie 8 Jun (ph., S. Belleau, P.P. G. Roy, J. Croteau). Experts who have looked at the photographs did not agree on its identity: *vegae*, pale *schistisagus*, or a hybrid of some sort were all suggested. Caspian Terns were widely reported in the s. part of the Region, but one at L. Boivin, Granby 8 Jun was locally rare (MB, MM). Another appeared at La Malbaie 18 Jun (M. Robert), while one at Saint-Gédéon 23 Jun provided a 6th record for Saguenay-Lac Saint-Jean (SB).



The most intriguing gull of the season in Québec was this molting third-summer bird found at Port-Daniel, Gaspésie 8 June 2004. It was thought to be a pale Slaty-backed Gull or a hybrid of some sort, possibly Slaty-backed Gull x Vega Gull.

Photographs by Samuel Belleau.

DOVES THROUGH BLACKBIRDS

A White-winged Dove at Saint-Augustin 19 Jun furnished the 11th Regional record (G. Cyr). A Yellow-billed Cuckoo, always rare in summer, was present well into Jun near Huntingdon

(m. ob., *vide* PB). Single Great Gray Owls were identified at Sainte-Grétrude-Manneville, Abitibi 13–15 Jun (C. Perreault et al.) and at Laverlochère, *Témiscamingue* 10 & 18 Jun (E. & J. Fréchette). Surveys conducted at night in the Rouyn-Noranda area (Bellecombe, Rollet, Beaudry, Arntfield, Mont-Brun, Évain, Cléricy, L. Duparquet) resulted in 10 records of Northern Saw-whet Owl. A nest with three eggs was found at L. Duparquet, establishing the first confirmed breeding record for Abitibi (R. Deschênes, A. Giroux). This owl is obviously more widespread than believed in the mixed boreal forest of s. Abitibi (*vide* LI). Following last spring's trend, single Red-bellied Woodpeckers were found at Île Bizard, Saint-Bruno and at Cap Tourmente in Jun (*vide* PB).

An ad. Scissor-tailed Flycatcher brightened Longue-Rive 19 Jun (R. Gilbert, A. Gosselin), while another one (or the same) appeared at Baie-Comeau 27–28 Jun (B. Pelletier, Y. Rouillard et al.). Seven captive-raised Loggerhead Shrikes were released at Breckenridge 30 Jul & 5 Aug, as a first attempt to reintroduce this species in the Region (G. Desjardins et al.). This season's only Carolina Wrens were 2 singing males at Léry

6 Jun (PB). Three young Blue-gray Gnatcatchers fledged from a nest at Carignan in Jun (R. Belhumeur). Ten American Pipits 8 Jun at La Pocatière were late (CG). Following last year's first Regional breeding record, at least two pairs of Blue-winged Warblers nested again at Lac-Brome in Jun (J.P. Sautter et al.). A Prairie Warbler heard in the Mount-Royal cemetery 15 Jun (PB) and one in Mount-Royal Park 2 Jul (P. Wery) most probably involved the same individual. Unreported for at least a decade at this locality, a Cerulean Warbler was singing on Mount Saint-Hilaire 6 Jun (C. Côté).

A male Scarlet Tanager in Jun at Lourdes-Blanc-Sablon was well n. of its range (M. Denis). Perhaps a straggler from the spring's invasion, a male Western Tanager was a surprise at Longueuil 17 Jul (N. Dubé, D. Daigneault, P. Casavant, P. Dubuc). A pair of Clay-colored Sparrows was feeding young at Saint-Philippe in Jun (PB), while a pair nested at Chesterville (J. Ducharme). A singing male at Jonquière 29 Jun–17 Jul (B. Dumont et al.) was found feeding young in the nest in the company of an ad. Chipping Sparrow (J. Ibarzabal). During a Canadian Wildlife Service project to define more clearly the status of Grasshopper Sparrow in the Region, 64 singing males were recorded 3–23 Jun at 22 different stations between Chichester and Quyon in the Pontiac region (BJ, GF). A Le Conte's Sparrow heard and seen 1 & 3 Jun at Saint-Elzéar-de-Beauce (Y. Maheu) and one 16–18 Jun at La Pocatière (CG, CA) were s. of their usual range. A male Rose-breasted Grosbeak (A. Paquet, *vide* BJ) and a Common Grackle (BJ) in late Jun at Fermont were both n. of their range.

Escapees: a pair of Chiloee Wigeon took up residence at Masson 25 Jul+ (D. Toussaint, R. Vanasse, ph. A. Cloutier). A Zanzibar Red Bishop visited a feeder at Longueuil in Jul (G. Kucharski, *vide* P. Gingras).

Corrigendum: The record-late Magnolia Warbler at I. Sainte-Hélène last fall was seen until 12 Nov, not 11 Nov as reported in N.A.B. 58: 35 (S. Mathieu).

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State of the Region

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Québec's enormous land mass stretches from the Montréal area in the south some 1700 km into the Far North, where little is known about the conservation status of most of the species nesting there. In addition to some species that are of high concern or at risk of extirpation in Québec (Table 1), we have identified three groups of birds that merit specific attention because of their declines and documented, ongoing degradation of their habitats: the boreal birds, the prairie birds, and the shorebirds.

The threat to boreal birds

Regions of boreal hardwood/transition and coniferous forest extend over one-half of Québec's land area, largely in continental Bird Conservation Regions [BCR] 12, the Boreal Hardwood Transition, and 8, the Boreal Softwood Shield. The threat to the boreal forest and its birds is perhaps one of the most disturbing conservation challenges in Québec or elsewhere in Canada. The Québec boreal forest is home to millions of migratory birds, many of which are Neotropical migrants such as warblers, thrushes, sparrows, flycatchers, and vireos. Data from the Breeding Bird Survey and the Québec data bank (EPOQ—Étude des populations d'oiseaux du Québec) have documented decreases in some boreal species, some of these very sharp decreases. Olive-sided Flycatcher, Rusty Blackbird, and warblers such as Palm, Tennessee, Cape May, Bay-breasted, and Blackpoll have all shown declines to varying degrees. Even White-throated Sparrow appears to be decreasing in the province. The various threats to the boreal forest are clear-cutting, road construction, and the building of new hydro-reservoirs and related facilities. It is estimated that in each of the past fifty years, an area of boreal forest equivalent in surface area to the island of Montréal—approximately 300 km²—was cut annually in Québec.

In 2000, the shock documentary *L'Erreur boréale* produced by writer-composer Richard Desjardins caused a stir in the population. Few people knew how bad was the situation of the forest, and many were sensitized for the first time to the importance of having a healthy forest. If nothing is changed in the near future, the fragmentation of this habitat is likely to increase. *Twenty-five years from now, all commercial virgin coniferous forests will have been*

cut. In addition to the fragmentation of the forest that results from such activities, the increase in air pollution and thus the acid level of the rain (and ultimately the waterways) is altered, which has the potential to poison the bogs, lakes, and streams of the north country, making them unusable for many species that require waterbodies for nesting.

The threat to prairie birds

Among the species that have exhibited a decline in Québec, about 15 or so are associated with the rural areas in the southernmost part of the province along the St. Lawrence Plain (Bird Conservation Region 13). Widespread conversions of multiple-use agricultural land to large-scale corn monoculture in recent years, as well as urbanization, seem to be responsible for this decline. Although some of these species are still relatively numerous—e. g., Barn Swallow, Savannah Sparrow, American Kestrel, Bobolink, and Eastern Meadowlark—their declines have been steady for over 20 years. Some of these species have really plumbed locally, especially in the greater Montréal area, where Upland Sandpipers and Short-eared Owls are no longer typical silhouettes along farm roads. Others, such as Loggerhead Shrikes, have been completely extirpated. A project is now underway to release captive-reared Loggerhead Shrikes.

The threat to shorebirds

Various threats to shorebirds have been identified, from their far-northern nesting areas (especially BCR 7, the Taiga Shield and Hudsonian Plains, and BCR 3, the Arctic Plains and Mountains), to stopover and staging sites, to the wintering grounds—a span that may include dozens of sites in scores of different countries for some species—but it is often impossible to pinpoint a specific reason for the decline documented in a given shorebird species. *It is clear that the total number of*

shorebirds stopping at staging areas during fall migration in southeastern Québec has declined markedly in the past several decades. The loss or degradation of essential staging areas remains a major threat to shorebirds, and Québec contains many such pivotal areas. The James Bay ecosystem, for instance, is a vitally important avian staging area for waterbirds and shorebirds during spring and fall migrations (see Rimmer, C. 1992. *American Birds* 46: 216–219). Such areas are susceptible to changes associated with hydro-energy projects, pollution, and probably also sea-level rise, which could also negatively impact important populations of Yellow Rail, Nelson's Sharp-tailed Sparrow, and other marsh-nesting species.

Efforts made by the AQGO and other organizations

The AQGO (Association québécoise des groupes d'ornithologues), which represents more than 30 local chapters as well as hundreds of individual members, and the Canadian Wildlife Service jointly employ a full-time biologist to conduct an annual census of 20 different species of concern (Table 1) and to study their breeding sites. Eight of these species have fewer than 50 breeding pairs in the province, and two species, the Loggerhead Shrike and the Red-headed Woodpecker, are probably extirpated as breeders. The data generated by this ongoing study are very important for defining the most important nesting areas for these species. The ultimate goal of the AQGO is to sensitize the population and political authorities to the necessity to preserve some of these sites. Several other organizations, governmental as well as private, contribute to the conservation efforts through land purchases, habitat management, and information programs: Fondation de la faune du Québec, Ducks Unlimited, Province of Québec Society for the Protection of Birds, The Nature Conservancy, Union québécoise pour la conservation de la nature, Environnement Canada, Hydro-Québec, and La Ministère des ressources naturelles, de la faune et des parcs (MRNFP).

Table 1. Bird species of concern in Québec.

Horned Grebe*	Roseate Tern*
Least Bittern	Short-eared Owl
Harlequin Duck	Red-headed Woodpecker*
Barrow's Goldeneye	Sedge Wren*
Bald Eagle	Loggerhead Shrike*
Golden Eagle	Bicknell's Thrush
Peregrine Falcon	Golden-winged Warbler*
Yellow Rail	Cerulean Warbler*
Piping Plover	Grasshopper Sparrow
Caspian Tern*	Nelson's Sharp-tailed Sparrow

(* = species with probably fewer than 50 breeding pairs)



Clearcut and fragmentation north of Amos, in the Abitibi region. About 300 km² of boreal forest, the equivalent of the surface of the island of Montréal, has been cut each year for the past 50 years in Québec. At this pace, all commercial virgin evergreen forests will have been cut by 2030. This will negatively effect countless birds: up to five billion landbirds migrate out of the boreal woods each year, and 40% of the continent's waterfowl use its wetlands. *Photograph by Pierre Dropeou.*

New England



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Unlike the previous two early-summer seasons, June 2004 was relatively cool and dry, with clear skies slightly above average. June temperatures in Boston averaged only 1.5° F below normal, while rainfall was 3.2 cm below average. July continued cool (2.9° F below normal), but in contrast to June was both cloudy and wet, with slightly more than usual amounts of precipitation; areas north and west of Boston actually received as much as 7–10 cm of rain on 25 July.

Given the reasonably temperate weather

this season, it appeared that nesting raptors (except the beleaguered American Kestrel), terns, swallows, Eastern Bluebirds, and probably most cavity-nesting species enjoyed reasonably good nesting success this summer. Piping Plovers on the other hand did not fare as well as in recent past seasons, and overall their numbers were down, though the extent to which weather was a factor is difficult to determine. Otherwise, the only seasonal generality that can be noted unequivocally was the scarcity of marine baitfish, which resulted in notably depressed numbers of seabirds in most inshore marine waters.

Among the breeding bird highlights of the season was the confirmation of Great Egret and the attempted nesting (again!) of Caspian Tern in Vermont, the established nesting of King Rails at Parker River N.W.R., record-high pair counts of American Oystercatchers and Common Terns in Massachusetts, and the nesting of Long-eared Owl in Connecticut. Most noteworthy among the rarities re-

ported was the appearance of Black-tailed Gull at two different Bay State localities. If accepted by the state records committee, these sightings will represent only the second and third time that this species has appeared in the Region.

Abbreviations: H.B.S.P. (Hammonasset Beach S.P., Madison, New Haven, CT), M.A.R.C. (Massachusetts A.R.C.), M.D.F.W. (Massachusetts Division of Fisheries and Wildlife), N. & S. Monomoy I. (Monomoy N.W.R., Chatham, Barnstable, MA), Noman's Land (Dukes, MA), Plum I. (Parker River N.W.R., Newbury/Rowley, Essex, MA), South Beach (Chatham, Barnstable, MA), S.S.B.C. (South Shore Bird Club), Stratton I. (York, ME), U.S.F.W.S (United States Fish & Wildlife Service).

LOONS THROUGH VULTURES

A lingering Red-throated Loon in a beaver pond at Durham, Rockingham, NH 15 Jun (SM) apparently ultimately succumbed to entanglement in a fishing line. Concurrent with increasing numbers of reports of Pacific Loons in recent years is an increasing number of out-of-season observations. This year an individual in breeding plumage was noted at Petit Manan Pt., Washington, ME 11 Jun (D. Larson, S. Wheelock), and another in basic plumage was definitively "digiscoped" at Rye, Rockingham, NH 9–10 Jul (SM). The only complete Common Loon breeding data for the Region this year came from Vermont, where 34 successful nests produced 54 chicks, a slight increase from last season's 49 survivors (*vide* Eric Hanson). Connecticut hosted the only reported nesting Pied-billed Grebes in s. New England at Woodbury, Litchfield and Stratford, Fairfield (*vide* GH). In the lingering department were single Horned Grebes at New Hartford, Litchfield, CT 12 Jun (S. Schrader), Rockport, Essex, MA 1–19 Jul (RH), and Easton, Aroostook, ME 7–27 Jul (BS), as well as Red-necked Grebes at Cobscook Bay S.P., Washington, ME 24 Jun (F. Hartman), Rye, Rockingham, NH 1–12 Jul (SM et al.), and Gloucester (2), Essex, MA 17 Jul (H. Pearce).

Tubenoses were in generally short supply this season, probably because the inshore abundance of bait, especially sand-lance (*Ammodytes* sp.), was apparently significantly lower than usual. Bay State whale-watching boats reported far fewer inshore whales than in recent past summers as well. Greater Shearwater, normally the most abundant shearwater in Gulf of Maine waters in summer, was practically absent on Stellwagen Bank off Massachusetts, and it was not until late Jul that up to 3000 were seen in the vicinity of Mt. Desert Rock, Hancock, ME (WT). Sooty Shearwater, usually the next most common species in Regional waters, reached a paltry inshore zenith of 210 at

South Beach 12 Jul (RH), although a single in Long I. Sound, 2 km s. of H.B.S.P. 8 Jul (P. Comins) potentially represented a first state record for Connecticut. The highest single-day count of Manx Shearwaters was 13 at Rockport, Essex, MA 14 Jul (RH). Wilson's Storm-Petrel, with a dietary preference for plankton rather than fish, was distributed in somewhat more normal numbers, although a count along the New Hampshire coast of 1585 along with 14 Leach's Storm-Petrels during a storm 18 Jul (SM) was unusually high for that littoral location. While no specific Leach's Storm-Petrel nest count information was available this season, the presence of 10+ birds at Noman's Land off Martha's Vineyard 22 Jul (AK) certainly suggested the continued presence of nesting at this recently discovered site, the southernmost colony in the w. Atlantic. A solo American White Pelican appeared at Duxbury, Plymouth, MA 14 Jun (F. Bygate), and 2 birds later showed up at Westbrook, Middlesex, CT 8 Jul (P. Comins). Considering the disruption of pelican breeding in North Dakota this summer, it almost seemed surprising that New England did not receive more pelican fallout. In keeping with a projection that a total of 2175 pairs of Double-crested Cormorants in Rhode Island's Narragansett Bay two years ago might have been nearing capacity, it may be significant that this year's summer census only produced 1735 pairs (CR, RF). A dedicated effort to establish the number of cormorant pairs breeding just in Essex, MA yielded a figure of 1250 pairs (JB).

It is encouraging to report confirmed breeding of Least Bittern this year at Plum I., after an apparent absence for a number of years (B.O.). As noted by Simon Perkins in the Spring Report, ecological conditions in the North Pool at Parker River N.W.R. on Plum I. offered optimal breeding habitat that was exploited by a number of uncommon or state-listed Bay State bird species, including also King Rail and Sora. Evidence of the continued increase in Great Blue Herons nesting in Massachusetts, some 60+ nests were noted at Middleboro (KA, WP) and 64+ nests at one in East Bridgewater (KA, WP), both in Plymouth, a region where nesting has been historically scarce. Two pairs of Great Egrets that nested successfully in a Great Blue Heron colony at Shad I., Missisquoi N.W.R., Swanton, Franklin, VT (Zoe Richards et al.) were possibly the first breeding records for the Green Mountain State, although the species nests on the New York side of L. Champlain. In Rhode Island, the annual colonial wading bird census in Narragansett Bay produced pair counts of 218 Great Egrets, 76 Snowy Egrets, 9 Little Blue Herons, 291 Black-crowned Night-Herons, and 173 Glossy Ibis (CR, RF)—numbers comparable to those of 2003. Perhaps most

encouraging was the modest increase in the number of night-herons, a species that elsewhere in the Region appears to be declining. Three Yellow-crowned Night-Herons, including a juv., at Ipswich, Essex, MA 29 Jul (JB) was intriguing, since Ipswich is one of the very few localities where this peripheral species has nested in Massachusetts. Two Black Vultures at Dublin, Cheshire, NH 4 Jul (T. Warren) were a further indication of the continuing northward spread of this species into New England.

WATERFOWL

In addition to the usual reports of single early-summer Brant at scattered coastal sites, there was an unseasonal appearance of the ever-controversial Barnacle Goose at Machias, Washington, ME 27–31 Jul (N. Famous, *vide* Kay Gammons); there are just two other summer reports of this species in North America, to our knowledge, making this bird's provenance most likely from captivity. Noteworthy among breeding waterfowl was the confirmed nesting of Blue-winged Teal at Plum I. (RH) and Northern Shoveler at Stratton I. (LB) and Easton, Aroostook, ME in late Jul (BS). The presence of six pairs of Ruddy Ducks at S. Monomoy N.W.R. in early Jul (M. Brady) led to the confirmation of breeding the following month with the sighting of 2 juvs. 27 Aug (WP). Al-



Rare at any season in New Hampshire and particularly unexpected in the middle of summer, this Pacific Loon was at "Pulpit Rocks" in Rye 9 July 2004 (here) through the next day. Most of the many photographs of this bird show its distinct white flank patches—a character typically associated with Arctic Loon. *Digitized photograph by Steve Mirick.*

ways a sporadic and local breeder in the Region, this species has not been conclusively confirmed nesting in the Bay State since the 1980s. Most notable of a cadre of out-of-season ducks were 2 Ring-necked Ducks at Easton, Fairfield, CT 15 Jul (D. Varza); single imm. male King Eiders at the Isles of Shoals, NH 17 Jun (Elizabeth Ring), Stratton I. 10 Jul (LB), Egg Rock, Hancock, ME 1–27 Jun (WT), and H.B.S.P., New Haven, CT 1–20 Jun (m.ob.); single Harlequin Ducks at Rockport, Essex, MA 18 Jun (B. Cagnina) and Chilmark, Martha's Vineyard in Jul (AK); a Bufflehead at Gay Head, Martha's Vineyard

27 Jul (AK); and Common Goldeneyes at Manomet, Plymouth, MA 12 Jun (WP) and Rockport, Essex, MA 18 Jun (B. Cagnina).

RAPTORS THROUGH CRANES

Ospreys continue their magnificent recovery from the dark days of DDT contamination. In Vermont this year, 31 nests were located just in Swanton, Franklin, and a total of 108 fledged young state-wide smashed last year's record high count of 82 (*vide* John Gobeille). At Westport, Bristol, the Bay State's largest colony, Ospreys successfully fledged 95 young from 73 active nests, the best productivity in three years (DC). A Swallow-tailed Kite at Block I., RI 18–20 Jul (M. Wagner) represented the 7th state record, while Mississippi Kites at Chickatawbut Hill, Norfolk, MA 8–10 Jun (NS) and North Truro, Barnstable, MA 22 Jun (D. Manchester) were slightly later than the more usual flush of kites in May. Also in Massachusetts, 12 active Bald Eagle nests, up from nine in 2003, produced a robust tally of 16 young this season (*vide* TF, M.D.F.W.). At Connecticut's only breeding location, Northern Harriers nested again this year at Stratford Great Meadows, Fairfield (C. Barnard). Evidence of the continuing Regional increase in Cooper's Hawks, two nests, the first-ever, were found at Block I., RI (*vide* RF), and 13 nests were located in the 7000-acre Blue Hills Reservation, Nor-

folk, MA (NS). The continued and precipitous decline in American Kestrel was equally apparent: this season witnessed no nesting in 21 kestrel boxes monitored for many years in the periphery of the Blue Hills Reservation (NS), while in 63 boxes located in cranberry bogs in Plymouth, MA, 32 active nests fledged only 92 young, the lowest figures since 1990 in this long-term study (JM). This small falcon could be declining at a rate unequalled by practically any other bird species in New England. Merlins continue to show signs of increasing in the Region; four early

migrant appearances in e. Massachusetts in late Jul (B.O.) were part of an increasing trend toward earlier appearances near the coast in late summer. Seventeen successful Peregrine Falcon nests in Vermont fledged 39+ young, which matched exactly last year's productivity (*vide* SF). In Massachusetts, eight successful nests, two of them new sites, produced 25 chicks for a new state high total (TF, M.D.F.W.).

King Rails successfully nested at Plum I. this season, with two broods of young observed 2–3 Aug (WP, RH, m.ob.). Long known to be a rare breeder in the Region,

confirmation of this species as a nesting bird in Massachusetts has happened on only 15 occasions. Less unusual but nonetheless noteworthy was the breeding of Sora at Plum I. (B.O.). The positive nesting of these two rail species, as well as Least Bittern, at the North Pool at Parker River N.W.R. is most encouraging in view of the degradation of this wetland in recent years; we hope that restoration efforts of this important site will be aggressively pursued. Common Moorhen was also noted at Plum I.; however, the only confirmed breeders in the Region were at Addison, VT at Dead Creek W.M.A. (*vide* JN) and Shoreham (A. Strong), and also at Stratton I. (S. Walsh). At least one of two pairs of Sandhill Cranes raised one young in the Belgrade Lakes region, *Kennebec*, ME (*vide* SM) for the 5th year in a row. With this breeding location now well established, an increasing number of summer reports of cranes elsewhere in the Region should be carefully monitored, such as the one at Monroe, Grafton, NH, where a single bird spent its 5th summer on the upper Connecticut R. (*vide* WT). Other scattered sightings included singles at Rochester, *Strafford*, NH 8 Jun (SM) and Barn I., Stonington, *New London*, CT 9–12 Jun (R. Dewire).

SHOREBIRDS

Coastal nesting shorebird numbers were mixed this season. In their Bay State Regional stronghold, 490 nesting pairs of Piping Plovers was the lowest total since 1997 (*vide* SM, M.D.F.W.), even though tiny Rhode Island hosted 50 pairs (RF, U.S.F.W.S.). A combination of predation pressure, wet spring weather, and indeterminate effects of last April's oil spill in Buzzards Bay may have been collectively responsible for the decrease in Massachusetts. The Massachusetts total of 191 pairs of American Oystercatchers was the highest state tally in the several years that this population has been intensively surveyed (*vide* SM, M.D.F.W.); 22 pairs were counted in the Ocean State (RF, CR). The most noteworthy counts of Upland Sandpipers were 43 at Centerville, *Washington*, ME 29 Jun (N. Famous); 16 at Hanscom Air Base, Bedford, *Middlesex*, MA 20 Jul (MR); and 11 at Chicopee, *Hampden*, MA 12 Jun (T. Gagnon).

Foremost among the rarer shorebirds reported this season was an American Avocet at Sachuest Point N.W.R., *Newport*, RI 25–31 Jul (S. Reinert et al.); a Bar-tailed Godwit (nominate race) at South Beach 5 Jun (BN); single Curlew Sandpipers at South Beach 23 Jun (BN) and Charlestown Breachway, *Washington*, RI 15–16 Jul (J. St. Jean et al.); and a Ruff at Charlestown Breachway 30 Jun (J. Murphy). Unusual by date, location, or count size was a Marbled Godwit at Reid S.P., *Sagadahoc*, ME 10 Jun (J. Adams et al.); 10

Western Sandpipers at South Beach 25 Jul (BN); a Stilt Sandpiper at Great Meadows N.W.R., *Middlesex*, MA 31 Jul (WP); Wilson's Phalarope at Popham Beach S.P., *Sagadahoc*, ME 1 Jul (P. Vickery); and 6 Red Phalaropes at Egg Rock, Gulf of Maine 24 Jun (WT).

The most notable tallies of other shorebirds were 360 summering Black-bellied Plovers at South Beach 28 Jun (BN); 500 Lesser Yellowlegs at Plum I. 25 Jul (P. Roberts); 260 Willets (including a very early *inornatus* 5 Jun) at South Beach 26 Jul (BN); 65 Hudsonian Godwits at South Beach 25 Jul (BN); 2 Marbled Godwits at N. Monomoy I. 20–26 Jul (BN) and one at Little Compton, *Newport*, RI 20 Jul (RF, G. Dennis); 800 Red Knots, 2600 Sanderlings, and 3800 Semi-



This Curlew Sandpiper at the Charlestown Breachway, Washington County 15 (here) through 16 July 2004 provided only the tenth record for Rhode Island; the species is recorded annually in Massachusetts.

Photograph by Peter Copobianco.

palmated Sandpipers at South Beach 25 Jul (BN); 900 Least Sandpipers at N. Monomoy I. 20 Jul (BN); and 2300 Short-billed Dowitchers at Eastham, *Barnstable*, MA 24 Jul (P. Flood). A point of increasing concern to longtime Bay State birders in recent years is the seeming decline in the numbers of Lesser Yellowlegs, Semipalmated Sandpipers, and Short-billed Dowitchers regularly using Newburyport Harbor, *Essex* as a major southward migration stopover site. Whether this is a function of a cleaner Merrimack River estuary, increased disturbance by fly fisherman trekking over the mudflats to the river's edge, a diminution of key prey species, or a reflection of a general shift in usage areas to other sites is not clear. It is certain, however, that summer shorebird numbers at this historically important estuary are not what they were 25–35 years ago.

JAEGERS THROUGH ALCIDS

Despite the relative paucity of tubenoses throughout most of the period, the great numbers of foraging terns from the large colony at S. Monomoy I. still managed to capture the attention of 13+ Parasitic Jaegers at South Beach as early as 12 Jul (RH). The "Wonderful World of Gulls" this summer

hardly failed to delight! Hooded gulls kicked off the parade with 1021 pairs of nesting Laughing Gulls in Massachusetts (*vide* SM, M.D.F.W.); at least 7–8 Little Gulls and 5 Black-headed Gulls present along the coasts of Maine, New Hampshire, Massachusetts, and Rhode Island (*vide* JD, SM, B.O., RF); and single early Sabine's Gulls at Eastham, *Barnstable*, MA 9 Jul (C. Goodrich) and South Beach 30–31 Jul (G. Gove et al.). Far more noteworthy, if not unexpected, were two single-day sightings of ad. Black-tailed Gulls in Massachusetts at Lynn Beach, *Essex* 11 Jun (J. Quigley) and South Beach 7 Jul (V. Laux). Because this species would be a first for the state, acceptance of these reports is pending review by the M.A.R.C. The species

has been detected in the Region in Rhode Island in 1995, as well as on multiple occasions in Maryland, Virginia, California, New Jersey, New York, and Texas, single occasions in Wisconsin, Illinois, Indiana, and North Carolina. There are Canadian records spanning from Sable Island, NS to British Columbia; Belize and Sonora, Mexico also have single records. At the close of the reporting period there was little indication of a major build-up of Lesser Black-backed Gulls at South Beach this summer, the highest count being 6 on 26 Jul (BN). Notably late were imm. Glaucous Gulls at Chappaquiddick I., Martha's Vineyard 3 Jun (AK) and Seabrook, *Rockingham*, NH 11 Jun–16 Jul (SM).

Despite repeated attempts by Caspian Terns since 2000 to nest at Young I., L. Champlain, VT, no success came this season (D. Capen, *vide* DH), and the ultimate success of one or 2 pairs that tried to nest at Popasquash I. (*vide* M.LaBarr) was uncertain. Given that there is a small, established population of Caspian Terns present on the New York side of L. Champlain, it is clearly only a matter of time before successful nesting occurs in Vermont. There were no fewer than six coastal Caspian Tern reports, northernmost of which was one at Greater Chebeague I., *Cumberland*, ME 30 Jun (M. Rogers). Sandwich Terns made unusual Regional appearances this year at Edgartown, Martha's Vineyard 3 Jun (AK), Nantucket I. 23–26 Jul (E. Ray), and Charlestown Breachway, *Washington*, RI 31 Jul (S. Tsagarakis et al.). Bay State tern colonies contained pair totals of 1523 Roseate Terns, 16,343 Common Terns, 6 Arctic Terns, 2551 Least Terns, and 6 Black Skimmers (SM, M.D.F.W.). The total of Common Terns eclipsed last season's previous modern-day maximum of 16,087 pairs, undoubtedly the result of continued predator removal and gull exclusion at the state's largest colony at

S. Monomoy I. What this increase in pairs fails to reflect is the fact that there was a mysterious die-off of juvenile terns at several Massachusetts colonies this season, with at least 1200 dead terns accounted for as of mid-August (*vide* Rebecca Smith).

Most remarkable was a report of 2 Dovekies without details from the waters e. of Mt. Desert Rock, Gulf of Maine 25 Jul (*vide* WT). While possibly correct, any Dovekie s. of Canadian Waters in mid-summer is highly noteworthy. Reports of Common Murres in the Gulf of Maine seem to be slowly, if not steadily, increasing in summer, with reports this season including singles at Isles of Shoals, NH 19 Jun (*vide* BT) and Eastern Egg Rock 28 Jun (M. Rogers), as well as 50 at Petit Manan I., Washington, ME in late Jun (*vide* WT). Two Atlantic Puffins at Isles of Shoals, NH 17 Jun (*vide* BT) were also somewhat s. of expected summer range.

PIGEONS THROUGH THRUSHES

Practically annual in the Region in recent years, White-winged Doves appeared this season at Chatham, Barnstable, MA 8-9 Jun (P. Bailey) and Block I., RI 18 Jun (M. Wagner). In the Nutmeg State, Monk Parakeets appear to be expanding from their longstanding stronghold in coastal Fairfield, with first-time nesting occurring in Old Saybrook, Middlesex and New Britain, Hartford (*vide* GH). Contributors in both Vermont and New Hampshire commented on better-than-average numbers of both Black-billed and Yellow-billed Cuckoos this season (*vide* JN, BT), which is not unexpected given the proliferation of early-season caterpillars in many areas this summer.

The nesting of Long-eared Owl at Southbury, New Haven, CT (R. Naylor, *vide* GH) was most unusual, given the fact that there was but one state breeding confirmation during the 1982-1986 Connecticut Breeding Bird Atlas period. An out-of-place Chuck-will's-widow was heard at Chesterfield, Hampshire, MA 4 Jun (G. LeBaron), and as usual the highest Regional Whip-poor-will counts were attained in Massachusetts, where 32 were tallied at Myles Standish S.E., Plymouth 23 Jun (G. d'Entremont) and 22 at Montague, Franklin 21 Jun (R. Packard). For the 2nd season in a row, a carefully monitored Chimney Swift roost in Hanover, Plymouth, MA supported 500+ swifts throughout the period, suggesting that most birds were probably non-breeding individuals (WP).

Single Red-headed Woodpeckers were noteworthy at N. Sandwich, Carroll, NH 5 Jun (J. Howe), Holden, Penobscot, ME 24 Jun (J. Markowski), and Stratford, Fairfield, CT 16-22 Jul (P. Solum). Though permanent residents in n. New England, reports of the elusive American Three-toed Woodpecker are always of interest. This season, sightings

were made in Maine at Whiting, Washington (one bird; *vide* WT), Baxter S.P., Piscataquis 8 Jun (2; M. Rolerson), and New Sweden, Aroostook Jun-Jul (2; BS). Subtle indications of modest range expansion by Yellow-bellied Sapsuckers was suggested by multiple territorial pairs at Woodbury, Litchfield and Southbury, New Haven, CT (*vide* GH) and Pepperell, Middlesex, MA (E. Stromsted).

Data sets such as the Christmas Bird Count and Breeding Bird Survey, as well as anecdotal impressions, point to the fact that American Crow has been severely declining in New England for several years. Another indication of this decline is suggested by this year's record low cumulative total of 2300 crows tallied on eight Connecticut Summer Bird Counts, a data set incorporating 10 years of survey data using eight C.B.C. circles. The average number of crows counted for the ten-year period is 3880, and the previous low count is 3154. Although the causes for the decline are undoubtedly complex, West Nile virus has been clearly identified as a causative agent in many areas. For the 2nd year in a row, a statewide survey of Purple Martins was undertaken in Massachusetts, with a total of 234 pairs tallied (D. Clapp). Although up somewhat from last year's estimated maximum of 180 pairs, indications are that this species is certainly deserving of continued surveillance and nest-box management in the Bay State. Sedge Wrens, always scarce in the Region, are most regular in northern sectors, as indicated by the presence of 7 in Vermont's Champlain Valley throughout Jul (A. Strong) and singles at Ft. Fairfield, Aroostook, ME 12 Jun (BS) and Fryeburg, Cumberland, ME 8 Jul (D. Mairs). Two Sedge Wrens attempting to nest at Ledyard, New London, CT 19-23 Jun (S. Gordon) disappeared when their nest field was mowed (*vide* GH). In s. New England, Golden-crowned Kinglets regularly maintain outlying breeding locations where planted Norway Spruces simulate their preferred Canadian Zone habitat, but a pair with young at Falmouth, MA 27 Jun (RF) represented the only known nesting site in Barnstable. Swainson's Thrush is a species seemingly declining in w. Massachusetts in recent years, so reports of 5 singing at Mt. Greylock, Berkshire 19 Jun (J. Hutchison) and 5 at Hawley, Franklin 3 Jul (ML) were encouraging. Although American Pipits have probably been regular breeders at Mt. Washington, Coos, NH since first confirmed there in 1991, reports are infrequent, so 4 displaying pipits there 24 Jun (*vide* BT) and 8 observed 11 Jul (*vide* BT) were appreciated.

WARBLERS THROUGH FINCHES

Summer season reports of warblers are particularly difficult to summarize and quantify effectively, so what follows are only the most

notable from a voluminous number of reports received. In the continuing saga of declining Golden-winged Warbler throughout New England, a report of one to 3 birds in the vicinity of Monkton, Addison, VT throughout Jun (TM) came from one of the few areas where the species seems to be holding on in the Region. Although the presence of up to 2 Magnolia Warblers at Burlingame W.M.A., Washington, RI 20-25 Jun (J. Magill et al.) was intriguing, no evidence of extralimital nesting was established. Errant and lonely probably best describes a solo male Blackpoll Warbler at Marblehead, Essex, MA 18 Jul (K. Haley), a Kentucky Warbler at Sudbury, Middlesex, MA (T. Spahr), and a Hooded Warbler at Wompatuck S.P., Hingham, Plymouth, MA 1 Jun-3 Jul (SM). Cerulean Warblers definitely nested at Pawtucketaway S.P., Nottingham, NH again this year (JB), but less conclusive were the activities of a male and a female Prothonotary Warbler at Lyme, New London, CT 13 Jun-1 Jul (T. Antanaitis, D. Provencher, *vide* GH); the only known nesting of the species in Connecticut occurred in 1946. Two male Yellow-breasted Chats at Prudence I., Narragansett Bay, RI 21-22 Jun (R. Enser) more likely represented breeding individuals.

Clay-colored Sparrows are apparently maintaining a toehold population in Vermont, where this year 3 were noted at S. Burlington, Chittendon 16 Jun (TM) and two pairs were at Grand Isle (DH). Farther s. in Massachusetts, singles appeared at Bedford, Middlesex 6-11 Jun (E. Morrier) and Mt. Greylock, Berkshire 21 Jun (I. Lynch). Equally worthy of mention are 25 Vesper Sparrows and 10 Grasshopper Sparrows at the Kennebunk Plains, York, ME 19 Jun (DL), along with Grasshopper Sparrow totals of 15 at Ft. Devens, Worcester, MA 19 Jun (R. Lockwood) and 15 at Chicopee, Hampden, MA 12 Jun (T. Gagnon). A confirmed nesting of Indigo Bunting at Martha's Vineyard 28 Jun (AK) represented a very rare nesting record for the island. Slightly less unusual but still noteworthy were nesting reports of Pine Siskins in Connecticut at Winsted, Litchfield (D. Rosgen) and Harwinton, Litchfield (P. Carrier).

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State of the Region

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New England is a region comprising some of the most densely populated areas in the eastern United States, juxtaposed with some of the most extensive wilderness north of the southern Appalachians. The tensions that result from having one foot in megalopolis to the south and the other in the huge industrial forests to the north drive much of the conservation activity in this six-state Region, which is neatly divided by the U. S. Fish & Wildlife Service (2002) between Bird Conservation Region (BCR) 14—the Atlantic Northern Forests of Maine, Vermont, New Hampshire, and westernmost Massachusetts—and the more densely populated New England coastal areas (BCR 30). The division between these BCRs is so distinct that it is visible from high altitudes and from space.

Inevitably, in areas where dense human populations meet relative wilderness there will be conservation concerns arising from population growth, development, and sprawl. New Hampshire is currently one of the fastest-growing states in the country and is losing an estimated 15,000 acres to development per year. Similarly, a Massachusetts study undertaken by MassAudubon for the period 1985–1999 determined that over 202,000 acres, or 40 acres per day, were visibly converted to new development statewide. Specifically, 31 acres of forest, seven acres of agricultural land, and two acres of open space were developed each day during that period. For many New Englanders, these numbers virtually translate to the average size of many townships (i.e., 15–20 mi²). Needless to say, much of this development is concentrated along the sea-coast or in major river valleys—areas that contain some of the richest biodiversity in the Region. At the fringe of the megalopolis in southern New England, much of the remaining habitat is already heavily fragmented and no longer supports viable populations of many forest birds, largely due to the high density of exotic species (e.g., European Starling, House Sparrow), domestic pets, human-associated mammalian predators (e.g., skunks, raccoons, coyotes), and brood parasitism by Brown-headed Cowbirds.

In spite of tremendous growth and development, many forest areas in this Region are relatively secure, due in part to the regulated industrial forests and large land tracts already preserved in the north and active land conservation efforts at the state and local level in many areas. Although efforts to save Regional forests continue, early-successional habitats such as grasslands and shrublands are rapidly diminishing. These habitats host some of the Region's rarest species and species showing steep population declines. As long as agriculture continue to decline across the Region—and as long as grasslands, shrublands, and farmlands remain targets for rapid development—bird species characteristic of these habitats face eventual extirpation in New England.

It is no coincidence that Northern Harrier, Upland Sandpiper, Short-eared Owl, Vesper Sparrow, and Grasshopper Sparrow are state-listed species in a number of New England states. In addition to development, the practice of fire suppression on natural succession in many areas (e.g., pine barren habitats) negatively impacts species like Whip-poor-will, Brown Thrasher, Prairie Warbler, Eastern Towhee, and Field Sparrow, along with most grassland species.

Besides concern over large-scale landscape changes in matrix habitats, some of the most critical Regional bird conservation issues center on the management of human activities within specialized habitats in densely populated areas. In coastal areas, barrier beaches provide nesting habitat for federally threatened Piping Plovers and support some of the largest tern colonies on the Atlantic Coast. Most notably in Massachusetts, certain estuaries and barrier beaches represent critical stopover habitat for throngs of migratory shorebirds, most of which

have been identified as seriously declining by the *United States Shorebird Conservation Plan* of 2001. Only by continued and aggressive management will these areas be able to withstand the realities of human impact by a burgeoning population. In offshore marine waters, concern is being increasingly registered over declining commercial fish stocks, by-catch issues, and the ever-present specter of major oil spills, all of which have potential implications for seabirds using New England waters.

Regional bird populations are also facing more insidious threats. Although DDT was banned in the early 1970s, Common Loons continue to succumb to poisoning caused by ingesting lead fishing sinkers and lead shot, while increasing quantities of mercury are being registered in the tissues of a number of aquatic bird species. At Lake Umbagog, one of New England's more pristine lakes, loons and Ospreys have been in decline for several years, yet no one knows why. Ongoing research at the Manomet Center for Conservation Sciences is monitoring increasingly pernicious effects of toxins on long-legged wading birds—research that could someday help explain the Regional decline of Black-crowned Night-Heron, for instance. Likewise, the impacts of West Nile virus, an infection against which native bird species seemingly have little natural immunity, is seriously impacting Regional populations of American Crow, along with an undetermined number of other species.

In very recent years, "global climate change" has moved from a theoretical construct to a well-documented phenomenon, as evidence in support of a rapid warming trend continues to accrue. Among the landscape-level changes that could result if the current trend continues are 1) a significant rise in sea level and 2) a northward shift in the extent of existing life zones across wide latitudinal areas. Since the majority of the world's population of Saltmarsh Sharp-tailed Sparrows live along the New England coast in a narrow band of salt marsh barely above the high tide line, what effect might a rise in ocean height of even a few inches have on this highly specialized species and its salt marsh habitat? Or at the other extreme: whither Bicknell's Thrush, a high-elevation treeline specialist living in a zone that is steadily moving upslope in response to global warming? Although these examples are speculative and possibly extreme, they nonetheless represent predicted, long-term effects of global climate change and should not be discounted as issues of Regional conservation concern. Every effort should be made to curb the accelerating effects of global climate change, especially those resulting from fossil fuel consumption and automobile emissions.

In response to concerns about the "greenhouse effect," the quest for alternative energy sources becomes increasingly essential. Unfortunately, developing alternative technology often generates its own suite of concerns. One of the most attractive alternatives to fossil fuel consumption is wind power. In Nantucket Sound south of Cape Cod, a proposal calling for the location of 130 wind turbines, each 425-feet high, would represent the largest offshore wind farm in the world if implemented. Yet this massive proposal currently represents one of the most controversial alternative energy projects in New England. While the issues are complex and the evidence is difficult to

gather, the wisdom of erecting so many giant turbines in waters used annually by many thousands of wintering sea ducks—and potentially in the path of hundreds of federally-listed Roseate Terns that annually make their way from major nesting colonies in Buzzards Bay to staging areas at Chatham—seems questionable from the perspective of bird conservation. Similarly, the jury is still out on the impacts on nocturnal migrants of ridgeline wind development projects, a situation paralleled by the uncertainties associated with the erection of an ever-growing proliferation of communication towers.

Although this enumeration of bird conservation challenges seems daunting, the good news for New England is that through the well-known continental bird plans, coordinated bird-conservation efforts are becoming more feasible. Regionally, some of the state-based Comprehensive Wildlife Conservation Plans, geared toward non-game species, are helping direct resources. The future is hopeful, but we must remain vigilant.



Saltmarsh Sharp-tailed Sparrow breeds along the Atlantic coast in a narrow band of salt marsh barely above the high tide line, from Scarborough Marsh, Maine (here) and vicinity south to Virginia. The Environmental Protection Agency predicts a 60 cm (2 ft) rise in sea level along the United States' Atlantic and Gulf of Mexico shores in the next 100 years; if sea levels continue to rise as predicted, this species and others restricted to this habitat would almost certainly be lost. Photograph by Derek Lovitch.

The 2004 nesting season was better than the cold, wet spring and early summer of 2003. This year, a cool, sunny June followed a pleasant spring, and nesting success was generally reported as high. The beach-nesting species, however, faced flooding by high lunar tides 3 June and 2 July, and predation from foxes, gulls, and feral cats (see Piping Plovers, Least Terns, Black Skimmers) took a heavy toll. American Kestrel, Spotted Sandpiper, and ground-nesting woodland birds, among others, continued their long-term decline.

July was very wet but without serious cold. Monthly rainfall was more than twice normal in Rochester. Over a foot of rain fell on Smyrna, Delaware 12 July and across the bay in Burlington County, New Jersey, though not in southern Delaware. Many classic shorebirding spots were flooded and remained so well into the peak of adult migration, but temporary rain pools attracted exciting shorebirds in the Great Lakes floodplain at several spots, such as Newfane, Niagara County, at the Perinton Farm Pond, near Rochester, and in a wet field near the Geneseo airport. Rarities reported included Brown Booby, Red-necked Stint, and Swainson's Warbler. Many thanks to Carl Perry and Laurie Larson for their special help with this report.

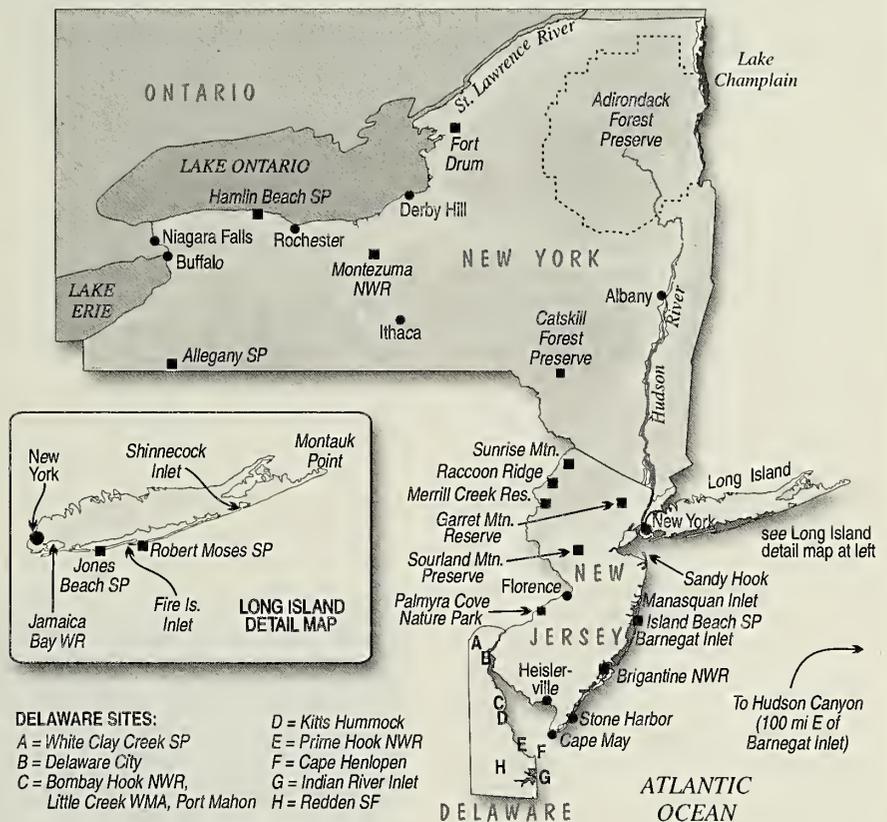
This column mourns the death on 16 September of David A. Cutler, our senior Regional Editor and a devoted supporter of *North American Birds* and its predecessors for nearly fifty years.

Abbreviations: Bombay Hook (Bombay Hook N.W.R., Kent, DE); Brig (Brigantine Unit, Edward P. Forsythe N.W.R., Atlantic, NJ); D.N.R.E.C. (Delaware Dept. of Natural Resources and Environmental Conservation); Broadkill Beach (unit of Primehook N.W.R., Sussex, DE); Jamaica Bay (Jamaica Bay Wildlife Refuge, New York City); Little Galloo (I., e. L. Ontario, off Jefferson, NY); Montezuma (marshes and N.W.R. in Cayuga-Seneca-Wayne, NY); N.J.D.F.G.W. (New Jersey Division of Fish, Game & Wildlife); N.Y.D.E.C. (New York Dept. of Environmental Conservation); Port Mahon (coastal impoundments, Kent, DE); Sandy Hook (unit of Gateway N.R.A., Monmouth, NJ); Stone Harbor Pt. (spit on n. side of Hereford Inlet, Cape May, NJ).

LOONS THROUGH CORMORANTS

Far fewer Red-throated Loons linger in summer than Commons; one in alternate plumage at Woodhull L., Herkimer, NY 30 Jun (Gary Lee) was the first for the Oneida L. Basin in summer. Since Pied-billed Grebe is in trouble in the Region, all breeding records should be reported. This summer, we learned of one certain and one possible Delaware breeding site and three possible

Hudson-Delaware



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SA A white "mystery heron" with two occipital plumes at Cupsogue and Westhampton Beaches, *Suffolk*, Long I. 4 & 8 Jun (ph. Kenny Frisch, Patrick Santinello; see image on page 501) was first thought to be a Little Egret. Occipital plumes are not unknown in breeding Little Blue Herons, however, and this bird matched second-year Little Blue Heron otherwise: head and bill shape, two-tone bill, bluish lores, dusky-tipped primaries. Peter Pyle's study of the photographs suggested two possibilities: a leucistic ad.; or a precocious second-year Little Blue that developed head plumes and bred, thus retarding the prebasic molt into blue feathers.

sites on Long Island. In New Jersey, 15 ads. with 11 chicks at the dredge spoils at National Park, *Gloucester* (PD) were gratifying, while a hardy pair raised young among tank farms and chemical factories at Carteret, *Middlesex* (Pat McNulty). Ken Feustel notes that "this species seems to prefer locations such as narrow, vegetation-choked streambeds and small ponds that are not accessible to Mute Swans." The rips off Cape May Pt. were probably the best place to see pelagic species from land. The best day was 16 Jul, when one Sooty, 5 Cory's, and 3 Greater Shearwaters were present. Sooty Shearwaters are more common early in the season before they begin their long circular voyage east and south: se. winds brought at least 10 off Shinnecock Inlet, Long I. 5 Jun (TWB). Manx Shearwaters were seen only off Long I. in ones and twos. Wilson's Storm-Petrels, the easiest tubenose species to see from shore, were often visible from e. Long I. points or at Cape May. More unusual were 12 well inside Delaware Bay off Norbury's Landing Viewing Area, *Cape May*, NJ 9 Jun.

A subad. Brown Booby was a surprise off Cape May Pt. 16 Jul (PEL et al.). Only one previous spring record exists for New Jersey, also from Cape May. American White Pelicans, once a genuine rarity, have become annual visitors since recolonizing areas e. to Minnesota and w. Ontario in the 1980s. One visited Little Galloo 21 Jul+ (ph. IM, Peter Doherty). Up to 2 were seen around w. Long I. 12 Jun (Sean Sime) through late Jul. Still another soared over Bivalve, *Cumberland*, NJ 3 Jun (Jim Dowdell, Clay Sutton). It, or another, settled at Brig in late Jun+. Brown Pelicans, annual since 1982, were scarce until 25 Jun, when 20 appeared off Cape May. Thereafter they were frequent offshore, peaking at 26 at Cape Henlopen, DE 4 Jul (Adam Dudley) and reaching n. to Smith's Point S.P., *Suffolk*, Long I. 9 Jul (Maureen Dunn). The N.Y.D.E.C. continues to oil eggs and destroy nests of Double-crested Cormorants on Little Galloo and nearby islands. In mid-Jun this year, 3964 were censused there, down from 8410 pairs in 1996 (JF). Despite control efforts, new colonies keep cropping up, for example, on Long I., at Stony Brook, on the n. shore (Joel Horman), and on the Line Is., Hempstead Twp. The 20 nests at Hempstead, a first for Great South Bay, were placed in shrubbery (JZ). They started breeding in Delaware in 2002 on channel markers in the Delaware R. s. of New Castle; eight nests were there this sum-

mer (CC). But they declined in New York Harbor for the 2nd consecutive year to 872 nests, for unknown reasons; they are a problem in the heronry because their feces kill trees (PK).

HERONS THROUGH WATERFOWL

The 20th New York Harbor heronry survey, sponsored by New York City Audubon, reported 1711 nests of eight species on seven islands, about par for the last four years but below the 2000 or so considered normal in the 1990s. This year's study also scouted foraging areas that may need protection or may be sources of pollution (PK, EJM). For the Pea Patch colony in the Delaware R., we have only rough estimates based on birds observed entering or leaving the colony. The highest Jun counts from both sides of the river total only about 2700 (CB), a far cry



As open lands are increasingly lost to urban sprawl, some bird species are adapting to other environments. Red-tailed Hawks have nested in New York City in Manhattan's Central Park (made famous by the book *Red-Tails in Love*), but this nest on a sixth-floor fire escape marks the first time that Red-tailed Hawks have nested on a building in the Bronx. The young were removed by the New York City Department of Environmental Protection (not by a state agency, as published earlier). Photograph by Deborah Allen.

from 12,000 pairs 10 years ago. Encouraging Least Bittern reports included three probable breeding sites on Long I.; up to six pairs at Palmyra, *Burlington*, NJ, on the Delaware R.; and "a better than average year" at three locations in Delaware (APE), with a maximum of 5 at Bombay Hook 14 Jul (Matt Hafner, Zach Baer). Two Great Blue Herons summered in the Canarsie Pol heronry, Jamaica Bay—intriguing because that species does not breed near the coast in this Region except at Pea Patch. Eleven Little Blue Heron nests in New York harbor were the most ever (PK), while wandering ads. were real rarities on L. Ontario at Hamlin Beach, *Monroe* 31 Jul (Dave Tetlow) and in the Adirondacks at

Bear Pond, *Hamilton* 22 Jul (Mitch Erickson). Considering the Cattle Egret crash, a straggler was remarkable at Dunville, near Buffalo 22 & 25 Jul (WW), but the maximum of 659 at Pea Patch (CB) was only a fraction of the 4000 pairs of 10 years ago. They have declined 90%+ in the last decade in New York Harbor, though six nests this summer marked a slight improvement (PK). At least two pairs of Green Herons bred again in Central Park, New York City, though they have not been found nesting in the harbor for five years. Black-crowned Night-Herons still predominate in New York Harbor, but whereas about 1000 nests have been normal, constituting 60–65% of the total, only 841 were found this summer. This reduction, which affected only some islands, remains unexplained (PK). A Yellow-crowned Night-Heron, rare north of its Long Island breeding frontier, was noteworthy at Fishkill Creek, *Dutchess*, NY 26 Jun (Binnie Chase).

Glossy Ibis have made a "remarkable comeback" in New York Harbor, where 350 nests were the most in seven years (PK). One prospected far afield at Montezuma 3

Jul (Julian Thomas). Three first-year White Ibis in the Broadkill Beach impoundments 25 Jun (Liz & Lou Dumont) reappeared 32 km n. in the Logan Lane Tract of the Ted Harvey W.A. 27 Jun (FR) and then overflowed Bombay Hook the same evening, clearly driven by a northward urge. Two White-faced Ibis at Bombay Hook (FR) and Brig in Jun were a bit below what we have come to expect. The northerly Black Vulture records of the spring continued, with one at Manitou, on L. Ontario

w. of Rochester 8 Jun (D. Niven, R. Mather). Up to 3 Turkey Vultures, not long ago very scarce after May on Long I. where breeding remains unconfirmed, hung around the East End all summer. Among the usual summering Black and Surf Scoters, a White-winged Scoter (AG) and a Common Eider at Cape Henlopen were less expected.

DIURNAL RAPTORS

The Maryland kite circus spilled slightly into nw. Delaware, with 3 single Mississippi Kites between Glasgow and Newark 3–10 Jun (AG, Eric Braun, PEL, BR). In New Jersey, while they avoided Cape May in Jun for the first time in years, one reached Sandy Hook

2 Jun (SB), following the May record there. More unexpected were 2 subads. 4–26 Jun at Bull's I., in the Delaware R., *Hunterdon*, NJ, gorging on cicadas and dragonflies (Robert Horton, Arlene Oley, FS, m.ob.). They departed when the cicadas abated. A bird that may have been one of them was nearby in Alexandria Twp., *Hunterdon* 27 Jun (FS). Bald Eagles surged again in New York by 12% to 84 breeding pairs; successful pairs grew 20% to 66, and eaglets fledged soared 28% to 111. New nests were widely distributed in the state. They included a first on the Mohawk R., new sites on L. Erie tributaries, and one far n. at Plattsburg, though, surprisingly, none has yet nested on L. Champlain (Pete Nye, N.Y.D.E.C.). In New Jersey, 44 active pairs laid eggs, 35 of which successfully fledged 52 eaglets (KC), much better than last year's 40. Delaware, which had four active nests in 1982, had 32 in 2004; 24 of them fledged 37 eaglets (CB, Kitt Hecksher).

Cooper's Hawks' newfound success in heavily populated areas is not a localized phenomenon. Successful nests were at Eggersville, within greater Buffalo, and at Yorklyn, near downtown Wilmington, DE (Jim White). Red-tailed Hawks explored man-made nesting sites beyond Manhattan, such as an electric pylon in Schenectady (*fide* Barbara Putnam). American Kestrels nest in New York City but are missing from apparently good habitat on Long I. (Ron & Jean Bourque; SM); only 3 were reported in Delaware. Peregrine Falcons increased again to 51 territorial pairs in New York, 44 of which bred, and 37 of which produced 79 young, well below the record of 96 in 2001 and last year's 88 (Barbara Loucks, N.Y.D.E.C.). A pioneering pair raised 2 chicks on an Osprey platform on Parsonage I., in Great South Bay, Hempstead Twp., Long I., outside historic breeding range. The female had been banded and fitted with a transmitter, now silent, in Virginia in 2001 (JZ).

RAILS THROUGH SHOREBIRDS

Common Moorhen continues to decline away from Montezuma. Only one possible breeding attempt was reported on Long I., and they are missing even from some good habitat farther n., such as the lakeshore w. of Rochester (RGS). Eight in the Hackensack Meadows of ne. New Jersey in late Jun, one at Cape May Meadows 10 Jul, and an ad. with 3 chicks at Dragon Run, near Delaware City 30 Jul (CC) were welcome reports. The Sandhill Crane pair that provided this Region's first nesting record last summer produced 2 more young near Savannah, Wayne, NY, in the Montezuma Wetlands complex. The "colts" were reportedly injured and disappeared (*fide* RGS). One at Branchport, Yates, NY 14 Jul (Bob Guthrie) was in an area where courtship ac-

SA Piping Plover populations have responded well to protection, doubling on Long I. between 1985 and 1999, but these obligate beach-nesters may have reached the ceiling imposed in this Region by limited habitat and proliferating predators. In New Jersey, after a string of five annual increases, they slipped 8% to 133 pairs (144 last year). Statewide productivity was only 0.62 chicks fledged per pair (0.92 last year), below replacement level (TP). The problems were human disturbance, beach flooding, and predation by foxes, gulls, and cats. At Gilgo Beach, *Suffolk*, Long I., 19 pairs fledged only 10 chicks because of foxes (Sallie Phillips). At Silver Beach, *Nassau*, Long I., only one chick escaped Laughing Gull predation (DR). Only in Delaware were things looking up, but that is because they could hardly get worse. The last breeding Piping Plovers in the state, seven pairs in Cape Henlopen S. P., followed up a banner year in 2003 (14 young fledged) with a creditable 8 chicks fledged out of 19 hatched in multiple tries (CB; HN).

tivity had been noted in spring (BO).

Our spring report noted how the crucial shorebird stopover habitat in Delaware Bay has been damaged by the rapidly expanding harvest for bait of Horseshoe Crabs, whose eggs are the shorebirds' principal food source as they fatten up for the flight to the Arctic breeding areas. This year, Horseshoe Crab spawning peaked with the full moon tide of 3 Jun. By that time, Red Knots had already begun leaving. The aerial census of 1 Jun showed 7000 still present, down from the 13,300 of late May (an all-time low, contrasting sadly with 80,000 in the 1980s).



This unusual egret photographed at Westhampton Dunes, Suffolk County, Long Island, New York 8 June 2004 appeared most like a Little Blue Heron in structure and pigmentation, but its two long, thin head plumes (aigrettes) were most similar to Little Egret. See the SA Box on page 500 for more on this bird.

Photograph by Patrick Santinello.

Numbers of other shorebird species, such as Sanderling (4000 remaining 1 Jun) and Ruddy Turnstone (31,700 on 1 Jun), were also subnormal. Many left late: "tens of thousands" of Semipalmated Sandpipers remained off Slaughter Beach, Sussex, DE 4 Jun (CB), and the final aerial census 8 Jun found 540 Red Knots.

Mid-June shorebirds are probably not "late" but non-breeders headed nowhere. There seem to be more each summer at se-

lected spots. Stone Harbor Pt., one such site, housed 10 species of shorebirds 16 Jun (PEL et al.). Notable there were the w. race of Willet, 39 Red Knots, and 10 Dunlin 12 Jun, a Marbled Godwit 13 Jun, and a Whimbrel 22 Jun. Pike's Beach, Westhampton Dunes, *Suffolk*, Long I. held 21 Red Knots, 4 White-rumped Sandpipers, and several Short-billed Dowitchers 19 Jun (TWB, Gail Benson). A Hudsonian Godwit 12 Jun at Bombay Hook (FR) probably belongs to this category. Were these birds malnourished, or simply subadult? It would help to know the plumage of all mid-summer shorebirds. Two-thirds of the Red Knots and half the Dunlin at Stone Harbor wore alternate plumage. Ad. males of some early-departing waders such as Lesser Yellowlegs and Short-billed Dowitchers, are typically already on the move by late Jun, and this year, they found many traditional stopover sites flooded by rain. Temporary rain pools attracted locally rare shorebirds, especially on the Great Lakes plain. Such a pool at Newfane, *Niagara*, NY housed an astonishing 200 shorebirds in early Jul, including locally rare Ruddy Turnstone, Stilt Sandpiper, and Wilson's Phalarope. An impressive 175–200 Lesser Yellowlegs visited a rain pool near the Genesee Airport, *Livingston*, NY 18 Jul, while one (or perhaps 2) Whimbrel there 27–28 Jul provided the first county record (JK). A male Wilson's Plover was an outstanding find 16 Jun at Stone Harbor Pt. 12 Jun (CV, Cameron Cox, ph. RC). A former New Jersey breeder, this species is now very rare n. of the Virginia Eastern Shore, where about 20 pairs remain.

An ad. Red-necked Stint retaining some alternate plumage was studied for forty-five minutes 31 Jul at Bombay Hook (MG, FR) but could not be relocated; another reported on Long I. could not be confirmed. The only Curlew Sandpipers were one in alternate plumage at Port Mahon 2 Jun (Dirk Robinson) and another in partial alternate plumage at Stone Harbor 24–31 Jul (Nicholas Haass, RC, Michael O'Brien). As usual, coastal Delaware was the best place for Ruffs. A black Ruff turned up 27 Jun in the impoundment along the road to Broadkill Beach, Prime Hook N.W.R., joined 1 Jul by a gold Ruff and by a Reeve 3 Jul (FR, Ed

Sigda, Michael Guenther). Two similar males (perhaps the same) were at Bombay Hook 10–14 Jul (BR, Matt Hafner), and one identified as juv. was there 23 & 30 Jul (Andy Urquhart). A Ruff frequented Brig off and on 18–25 Jul, along with a Reeve 24–28 Jul. In addition to the usual ones and twos along the coast, single Wilson's Phalaropes were good inland at Newfane 27–28 Jul and near the Geneseo airport after 18 Jul (JK). Red-necked Phalaropes were noticed only at the end of spring passage: a female at Fortescue, Cumberland, NJ until 1 Jun, one at Bombay Hook in early Jun (Bruce Peterjohn), and 2 in the surf at Elberon, Monmouth, NJ 6 Jun (SB).

GULLS THROUGH SKIMMERS

An ad. Little Gull on the South Amboy mudflats at Morgan, Middlesex, NJ 6 Jul (Tom Boyle) was exceptional in summer. The only Black-headed Gull reported was a first-year bird at Sandy Hook 6 Jun (SB). A few subad. Bonaparte's Gulls normally linger along the coast, but 30 at Morgan with the aforementioned Little Gull was a large number, while another was remarkable inland at Spruce Run Res., Hunterdon 24 Jul (FS). An imm. Iceland Gull was a surprise off the beach at Sea Girt, Monmouth, NJ 18 Jul (Joe Caragher). Summering Lesser Black-backed Gulls were widespread, including one on L. Ontario near Wilson, Niagara, NY 30 Jul (Jim Pawlicki, Willie D'Anna, WW), a first-year at Sagaponack, Long I. 9 Jun (HMcG), at least 6 at Stone Harbor Pt. in mid-Jul, and up to 7 at Port Mahon 17 Jul (Adam Dudley).

Stone Harbor Pt. hosted eight species of terns 22 Jun, including two pairs of Gull-billed Terns (for the 2nd consecutive year) and individual Sandwich Terns 22 Jun and 8 Jul. Roseate Terns summer there in gradually increasing numbers (maximum this summer 6 in early Jul), but breeding remains unproven in modern times between the Florida Keys and Long I. Single Arctic Terns, an ad. and a first-year, also visited Stone Harbor again (Gail Dwyer, CV et al.). This species was once almost unknown ashore s. of Cape Cod. The Stone Harbor ternery was harassed non-stop by Laughing Gulls and seriously plagued by feral cats fed from a nearby parking lot (DJ). The superlative Roseate Tern colony on Great Gull I., off e. Long I., slipped a little again but remains at around 1700 pairs (HH). On the positive side, efforts by a Great Gull I. team under Michael Male to establish an alternative to the Cedar Beach, Suffolk, colony, which was terminated by foxes in 1994–1995, appears to be succeeding. About 300 pairs, encouraged by decoys and site management, nested on Cartwright I., off the s. fork of Long I., alongside about 1000 Common Terns (HH); a few also still breed in Shinnecock Bay

(MW). Five Caspian Tern nests with eggs on the Four Brothers Is., off Willsboro Pt., Essex, NY, though ultimately unsuccessful, constituted the first breeding record for L. Champlain, following several attempts on the Vermont side (JMCP). Elsewhere, the great Caspian Tern colony on Little Galloo, founded in 1986, remained nearly steady at 1560 nests (JF). A pair bred once again on Tow I., Beach Haven Inlet, Ocean, NJ (JaB). Post-breeding wanderers arrived early, with one notable inland at Spruce Run Res., Hunterdon, NJ 29 Jul (FS).

Common Tern nesting was seriously disrupted again by flooding on the lunar high tides of 3 Jun and 2 Jul. In Barnegat Bay, NJ, it was the worst year since 1976 (JaB). Forster's Terns continue to establish themselves on Long I. The Jamaica Bay colony, founded in 1992, doubled to 150 pairs (DR), and about 335 pairs nest now in the Great South Bay, Hempstead Twp. (JZ). One was far inland at Spruce Run Res. 15 Jul (FS). Least Terns are struggling. New Jersey had about 1250 ads., considerably below last year's 1737 and below the average of the past 10 years (TP). Productivity was low (below 0.5 chicks per pair) because of predators and flooding. One colony in Hereford Inlet, Cape May, NJ was abandoned after one feral house cat left 20 pairs of Least Tern wings and a dead ad. Piping Plover (DJ). Least Terns bred only "minimally" in Delaware (HN). Once again, a few pairs tried to nest at Cape Henlopen, only to be flooded out. As for the state's other current site, South Bowers Beach, Kent, this small colony "which is found on private property was disturbed by ORVs and dogs and did not produce any young" (CB). A biannual census found about 178 breeding pairs of Black Terns (Threatened) in New York, slightly up from 155 in 2001 (IM). Six at Island Beach, NJ 5 Jun and a remarkable 5 at Merrill Creek Res., Warren, NJ the same day (Rich Kane) were very late, while 5 in Suffolk, Long I. 7–10 Jul (Carl Safina, Andy Baldelli, John Fritz) were early enough to suggest nesting failure. Stone Harbor Pt. now contains the largest Black Skimmer colony in New Jersey, with 400–800 birds. While nesting success was high in cen. New Jersey (JaB), flooding and predation reduced it elsewhere (DJ). Although skimmers hung around in Delaware, they did not nest except for the colony mentioned last summer on Fenwick I., on the Maryland line, which is censused by Maryland.

DOVES THROUGH FINCHES

A Eurasian Collared-Dove frequented Route 9M near the entrance to the Cedar Swamp W.A., New Castle, DE, in Jul (FR), some distance from the well-known population (of questioned provenance) at Selbyville near

the Maryland border. An ad. male Rufous Hummingbird visited the Craig Simon feeder in Smithville, Atlantic, NJ 19–22 Jul. As is often the case with ad. males (first to leave the breeding grounds), his stay was brief. Yellow-bellied Sapsucker seem to be expanding as a breeder in the New Jersey highlands. Although only two nests were found during 1990s atlasings, 20 were in High Point S.P. and Stokes S.F., Sussex in early Jul (Don Freiday). A Scissor-tailed Flycatcher at Hamburg, Erie 7 Jun (Doug Happ) was the third early-summer record around Buffalo; the species is expanding eastward. A White-eyed Vireo nest at the Roger Tory Peterson Institute, Jamestown, Chautauqua (Solon Morse, Jim Berry) was the first in w. New York. Sedge Wrens are widespread only in the St. Lawrence valley, with 21 reports (JBo). A few others were welcome finds in upstate New York in the Tonawanda W.M.A. (Tom & Susan O'Donnell, WW) and near Savannah, Wayne, in the Montezuma Wetlands Complex.

Golden-winged Warblers hang on in the New Jersey highlands, in the Delaware Water Gap N.R.A., Warren, and in the Pequanock Watershed, w. Passaic, where they favor powerline cuts. A Lawrence's Warbler may have bred in the Culloden forest, near Montauk Pt., Long I. (Vicki Bustamente). Yellow-throated Warblers continue to move into w. New York via the Delaware R. Valley. A nest in Allegany S.P. in mid-Jun (Tim Baird et al.) was in a historic area, but a persistently singing male in Chestnut Ridge Park, Orchard Park Twp., Erie, apparently unmated, was well n. of known breeding areas (MM et al.). The apparent Northern Parula x Magnolia Warbler hybrid reappeared in Stokes S.F., Sussex, NJ (Tom Sudol). At least two pairs of Prothonotary Warblers established for four years at Toad Harbor, West Monroe, Oswego, NY marked this species' n. limit (BP). A Swainson's Warbler sang at Higbee Beach W.M.A., Cape May, NJ 30 Jun–5 Jul (Karl Lukens et al.), a 10th accepted state record and unusually late. A Kentucky Warbler 3 Jun in the Red House area of Allegany S.P., Cattaraugus, NY (Frank Gardner) was in a historic area where this species may be reestablishing itself. A breeding pair of Hooded Warblers 23 Jun in Walton Twp., Delaware (Andy Mason) was outside this species' normal ranges in s. and w. New York. A Louisiana Waterthrush apparently on territory in Downersville S.F., Russell Twp., St. Lawrence, NY (JBo) was n. of any confirmed nesting areas.

An Eastern Towhee fledged young in Central Park for what is believed the first time since 1948 (DA). Few ground-nesters succeed there. Although Clay-colored Sparrows did not repeat last year's incursion around Rochester, they returned to recently colo-

nized areas in *Cattaraugus*, *Allegany*, and *Tompkins*, NY. Henslow's Sparrows were found only in upstate New York, and only with difficulty. Only two nesting groups were located around Rochester despite extensive searching: at Sonyea, *Livingston* (Steve Taylor) and Byron, *Genesee* (KG). The only Dickcissel was a male that seemed to be defending a nesting female Song Sparrow near Dryden, *Tompkins*, NY (BO et al.).

Single Yellow-headed Blackbirds visited New Jersey at Bivalve, *Cumberland* 1 Jun and Parlin, *Somerset* 3 July (Jarrod Ward). Purple Finches continued their recovery after the unexplained crash of 1992. Our best data come from long-term banding at Jenny L., *Saratoga*, NY, where 154 were captured during the season, many infected by the worst outbreak of conjunctivitis ever seen there (RPY). Some Evening Grosbeaks in the area also had this disease, which has decimated some House Finch populations. A few Pine Siskins remained to breed in the Appalachian Plateau (e.g., *s. Madison*, NY; Matt Young) and along the L.Ontario shore.

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State of the Region

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Arguably, North American bird conservation arose in the Northeast, and in the United States generally, around the end of the nineteenth century, when progressive urban dwellers in Boston and New York united against the slaughter of colonial and beach-nesting species whose feathers or bodies were used to adorn hats and women's clothing. The ensuing bird conservation movement's many triumphs include the end of bounties for and legalized shooting of birds of prey—a widespread rite of passage for male adolescents at Cape May and Hawk Mountain just two generations ago—and the protection of large areas of land and numerous species theretofore unprotected. In a century's time, we have moved palpably beyond the meager conservation ethos and modest efforts of 1904.

Nevertheless, the effects of human population growth in the Hudson-Delaware Region have been negative for nearly any bird species one might mention. Suburban sprawl is the most pervasive conservation problem facing the Region, which fits 10% of the nation's population into 1.6% of its space. While the average population density of the United States is 79.6 persons/mi², New Jersey's average is 1,344.4—greater than that of India, for instance. Many people in urban areas wish to live "in the country"—which usually means moving to a subdivision or a five-acre lot. Although the Hudson-Delaware states do have authentic wilderness, mostly in upstate New York, its default condition is housing tracts. In the coastal corridor, the view from the air is of unbroken development, either industrial or residential.

Good news in the "developed" parts of this Region, therefore, is more likely to take the form of species adapting to development than of development unexpectedly giving way to habitat preservation. A case in point is Cooper's Hawk, which has taken to nesting in leafy suburban yards in the past five years or so. In summer 2004, thirty species of birds nested in New York City's Central Park, including some unexpected ones: Green Heron, Eastern Kingbird, Warbling Vireo, Wood Thrush, Cedar Waxwing, and Eastern Towhee. But nesting in urban areas can have its costs. Pollution or predation may actually drain these populations. Herons have recently abandoned rural colonies in favor of predator-free islands in urban settings such as New York Harbor. The New York Harbor heronries are rightly hailed as one of

the finest fruits of the Clean Water Act of 1972, but urban colonies are inevitably exposed to a higher diversity and higher concentrations of contaminants, from oil to heavy metals. Studies began in spring 2004 of heron foraging behavior in New York harbor in order to determine whether chicks are subject to dangerous levels of toxic substances. The New York City Harbor Herons Project is a joint effort of New York City Audubon Society (E. J. McAdams), the Wildlife Trust (Dr. Scott Newman), the Littoral Society (Don Riepe), the National Park Service (Kim Tripp), the New York City Department of Parks and Recreation (David Kunstler, William Tai), and Manomet Center for Conservation Biology (Kathy Parsons).

Too, mammalian predators are adapting to suburbia even faster than birds. The overgrazing of the northeastern forest understory by deer puts serious pressure on ground-nesters such as Ovenbird and Black-and-white Warbler. Fox populations have exploded. On the Long Island barrier beach, at Gilgo, 19 pairs of Piping Plovers fledged only 10 chicks in summer 2004 because of foxes. Surely the most inexcusable predators are deliberately maintained colonies of feral cats: in 2003, someone established one inside a tern nesting area on the north shore of Long Island. The Coyote, this Region's newest mammalian predator, may at least help check the feral cat explosion.

The problem of increasing mammalian predators is compounded in this crowded Region by a lack of alternative nesting sites for colonial waterbirds. Colonial waterbirds are by nature nomadic, abandoning one colony and establishing another as predators accumulate, beaches erode, or vegetation changes. In modern times, however, alternative sites are rarely available in case of disease, disturbance, or other trouble in an established site. Long Island's Roseate Terns had become highly concentrated on Great Gull Island, off the eastern tip of the north fork, since the destruction by foxes of the great Cedar Beach colony in 1994–1995. Matthew Male and the Great Gull Island team have used decoys and site management to establish a colony of 300 pairs on Cartwright Island, between Gardiner's Island and the south fork, but few other alternative sites are available.

Human pressure is particularly intense on this Region's coastal areas, which lie in Bird Conservation Region (BCR) 30. Beach use has changed profoundly in just the last quarter-century. Year-round houses and condominium complexes have replaced the seasonal cottages that traditionally closed on Labor Day. Driving on the beach has come to seem a right. The New York State Park Commission has issued 12,000 Outer Beach Vehicle permits, mostly for use on the barrier beaches of the south shore of Long Island. Suffolk County, Long Island



Despite immense pressure from millions of beachgoers and associated real estate development, the coasts of New York, New Jersey, and Delaware are still home to many of the largest remaining colonies of beach-nesting birds in the Northeast, such as these Black Skimmers resting on the beach at Cape May, New Jersey. Most colonial- and beach-nesting waterbirds are declining in number on these coasts. Photograph by Arthur Morris/VIREO.

has issued about the same number, and townships issue thousands as well. Each year, a colossal number of vehicles use the outer beaches. In this Region, then, public ownership of habitats is no guarantee of wildlife protection, and even those colonies with fencing around them suffer the effects of persistent disturbance. Conservationists have been able to close a few areas, among them Breezy Point, at the west end of Long Island, and the tip of Long Beach, Ocean County, New Jersey, south of Holgate. Public outcry, however, limits the number of times this can be done, and some people have taken to sabotage of bird colonies. As yet unstudied is the further impact of small personal watercraft ('sea-doo's) on foraging and resting birds in the bays and salt marshes. Likewise, the impact of off-road vehicles in the mountains and forests is unknown.

Even this Region's most widespread habitats—deciduous and mixed forests—have serious problems. Most of the Region's woodlands fall under the rubrics of BCR 13 (Lower Great Lakes/St. Lawrence Plain—including most of the northern tier of New York), 14 (Atlantic Northern Forests, mostly Adirondack highlands), and 28 (Appalachian Mountains, encompassing the southern tier of New York and northwestern New Jersey). Readers will be familiar with many studies of the way forest fragmentation for access roads, recreational housing, ski slopes, and clear-cuts exposes deep-forest species to species against which they have little defense: cowbirds, raccoons, foxes, and feral cats. Forest-nesting species as diverse as Wood Thrush, Cerulean Warbler, and Acadian Flycatcher are negatively affected by such landscape-level changes. In more northerly zones, in boreal forests and bogs, Olive-sided Flycatcher and Rusty Blackbird are species of concern because of apparent population declines, the reasons for which are not yet clear.

Acid rain is only beginning to be studied as a factor in bird populations. It certainly diminishes fish populations and thins the forest, and may affect bird populations more directly by reducing calcium in the food supply (Graveland 1998, Hames et al. 2002). Addressing such pernicious, multi-source pollution matters is far more difficult even than ending long-standing outdoor recreational practices and will require far-reaching state and federal legislation to alter; the national political climate in the twenty-first century has not been conducive to positive environmental policy-making.

Forests tend to receive more attention in the Region from conservationists than do open and early successional habitats, breeding areas for some of the Region's scarcest species, including Northern Harrier, Upland Sandpiper, Sedge Wren, Henslow's, Grasshopper, and Vesper Sparrows, and Bobolink—all of which appear to be declining in open-field habitats (Loggerhead Shrike is extirpated)—and Whip-poor-will, Black-billed Cuckoo, Red-headed Woodpecker, Brown Thrasher, Chestnut-sided, Canada, Blue-winged, and Golden-winged Warblers, Eastern Towhee, and Field Sparrow, species of concern in successional habitats, which have likewise declined as a result of development and fire-suppression regimes. As mowing practices and development pressures reduce the value to birds of private grasslands, airfields and military bases have become major custodians of open habitats in this Region. Some that take that responsibility seriously are the 107,000-acre Fort Drum, north of Water-

town, Jefferson County, NY, where Henslow's Sparrows are still common, and the Lakehurst Naval Air Engineering Station in Ocean County, one of New Jersey's last breeding sites for Upland Sandpiper.

Headless destruction of freshwater marshes has created a genuine emergency for species such as Pied-billed Grebe, King and Virginia Rails, Sora, and both bitterns. The public conception that "swamps" are unpleasant wastes that need filling or draining remains deeply ingrained despite efforts to give a positive connotation to wetlands. Although some important freshwater marshes are now in public hands or belong to The Nature Conservancy, the remaining private ones, vital even when small, are hard to protect in the present anti-regulatory climate.

Among the Region's many bird conservation concerns, however, the notorious over-harvest of Horseshoe Crabs in Delaware Bay has perhaps the widest international implications. Delaware Bay plays host each spring to North America's second-largest concentration of shorebirds and its largest concentration of spawning Horseshoe Crabs. About 80% of the Atlantic Flyway's Red Knot population and over half of its population of Ruddy Turnstones and Semipalmated Sandpipers rely on Horseshoe Crab eggs in Delaware Bay to fuel their next stage of migration to the Arctic. The birds need to nearly double their weight during a stay of 8–12 days there. Traditionally, Horseshoe Crabs were harvested for fertilizer and animal food. During the 1990s, the crab harvest grew rapidly, as commercial fishermen discovered that they make

good bait for conch and eel (sold mostly to markets in Asia). Horseshoe Crab blood is also the only known source of the clotting agent *Limulus Amebocyte Lysate* (LAL), used to test the sterility of vaccines, drugs, prosthetics, and other medical devices. As the crab population has fallen and numbers of crab eggs diminished, migratory shorebirds have failed to gain the necessary weight, and their populations have plummeted. *The spring shorebird concentration in Delaware Bay has declined from over a third of a million in 1986 when aerial surveys started to about a third of that in 2004.*

There is good news, potentially, in this saga, thanks in large measure to sustained efforts by New Jersey Audubon and a coalition of conservation organizations including the American Littoral Society, the Delaware Riverkeeper Network, and the Sierra Club. Over the protests of watermen, the Horseshoe Crab harvest has been significantly reduced. The Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission, a consortium of public agencies from fifteen states, developed a Horseshoe Crab management plan in 1998. It set quotas and closed periods and established the 1500-square-mile Carl N. Shuster, Jr., Horseshoe Crab Sanctuary off the mouth of Delaware Bay, effective 7 March 2001. Since 2003, the states of New Jersey and Delaware have imposed quotas of 150,000 crabs per year, and Maryland a quota of 170,000. The crab fishery was closed in Delaware Bay from 1 May through 7 June 2004. Crab spawning seemed improved in 2004, but since Horseshoe Crabs mature slowly, the effect will be gradual. By spring 2004, shorebird numbers in Delaware Bay had reached their lowest numbers in modern times. Red Knots there were down from 80,000 in the mid-1980s to 13,000 this spring.

More reasonably good news comes from the Great Lakes, where toxic contaminants have been reduced 90% by government action since the United States–Canada accord of 1972, though some areas remain seriously polluted, according to a long-term study of Herring Gull eggs led by the Canadian Wildlife Service's Dr. Chip Weseloh (in press). Similarly, the immense Great Gull Island ternery off eastern Long Island no longer produces deformed chicks like those found in the 1970s, according to Helen Hays.

I thank Helen Hays, Paul Kerlinger, Chip Weseloh, and E. J. McAdams for assistance with information used in this brief overview.

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Following the unusual heat wave of May and the first week of June, temperatures abated to pleasant (80–90° F range), with no periods of extreme heat, as in most recent nesting seasons, and no extreme summer storms to overwhelm islands and marshes of the Eastern Shore. In short, the nesting season seemed to be a good one for most birds. The summer rains were regular, and rainfall amounts were well above normal across the Region. This led to overfilled reservoirs at Chincoteague N.W.R., which depressed counts of migrant shorebirds there considerably. Rains were not sufficient to flood agricultural fields in July—a situation that would change with the tropical storms of August and September.

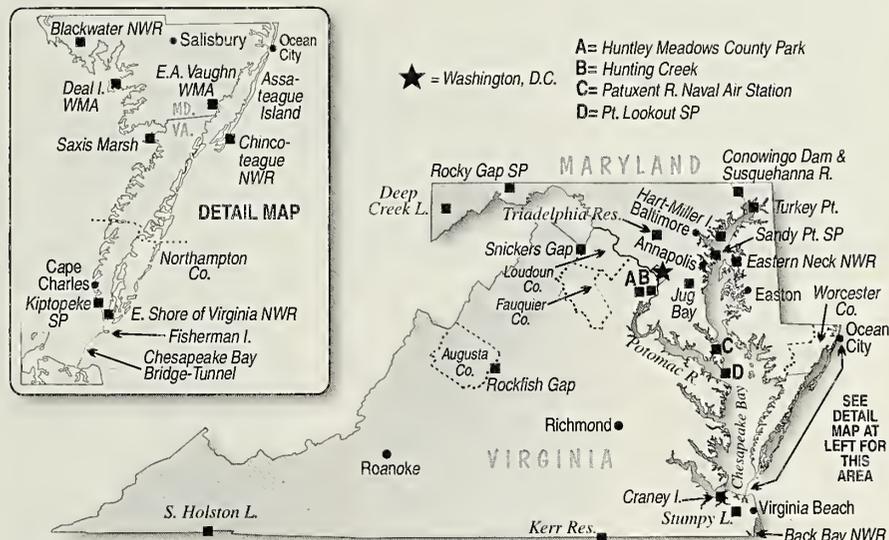
Abbreviations: Assat. (Assateague I., Worcester, MD); Back Bay (Back Bay N.W.R., Virginia Beach); Bay (Chesapeake Bay); Black. (Blackwater N.W.R., Dorchester, MD); Blandy (Blandy Experimental Farm, Clarke, VA); C.B.B.T. (Chesapeake Bay Bridge-Tunnel, s. of Northampton, VA); Chinc. (Chincoteague N.W.R., Accomack, VA); Craney (Craney I., Portsmouth, VA); D.C. (District of Columbia); Dyke (Dyke Marsh, Fairfax, VA); E.S.V.N.W.R. (Eastern Shore of Virginia N.W.R.); Hart (Hart Miller I., Baltimore, MD); Huntley (Huntley Meadows Park, Fairfax, VA); Julie Metz (Julie Metz Wetlands Mitigation Bank, Prince William, VA); Kerr (Kerr Res., Mecklenburg, VA); O.C. Inlet (Ocean City Inlet, Worcester, MD). The state for a location is noted the first time it is mentioned in the text.

LOONS THROUGH WATERFOWL

Summering Common Loons are not unexpected, but 2 at L. Moomaw, Bath, VA 14 Jul were at an unlikely location (Jim Goehring), and an imm. with a broken wing summered at L. Anna, Louisa (MRB); more unusual was a Red-throated Loon seen from Assat. 6 Jun (JLS, MB). Evidence of breeding Pied-billed

SA Since about 1970, pelagic birding trips have provided a good picture of the distribution of the Region's seabirds out as far as 120 km, in water depths mostly 500–800 fathoms; a few trips have gone into waters well over 1000 fathoms deep, most of these off Virginia Beach. Beyond the Continental Slope, however, few observers have had the opportunity to make observations of birds in the deep water and Gulf Stream in the remainder of the Exclusive Economic Zone, some 130–370 km farther offshore: Rich Rowlett conducted whale and seabird surveys here in 1980; John Bazuin was a fisheries observer with the Japanese tuna fleet in autumn 1980; and British naval officers have submitted sightings to the *Sea Swallow* as recently as 1997. Iliff got a glimpse of these waters 0930–1150 EDT on 3 Jul from the *Queen Mary II* (from Virginia waters at 37° 49.1'N, 70° 45.9'W to Maryland waters at 38° 12.29' N, 70° 41.98' W). He observed 20 Cory's, 3 Audubon's, and 3 Greater Shearwaters, one Band-rumped, 12 Leach's, and 42 Wilson's Storm-Petrels, plus 26 unidentified storm-petrels. The single **Band-rumped Storm-Petrel** (TMJ) was at 38° 01.732' N, 70° 39.806' W, in Virginia waters just s. of the Maryland line. Aside from many records of the species associated with hurricanes *Bertha* (1996), *Bonnie* (1998), and *Isabel* (2003), Band-rumped is known from about four pelagic records in Virginia 1988–2002 (totaling 21 birds). The first records of the species for North America were of 2 in Washington, D. C. 28 & 29 Aug 1893, following the *Sea Islands* Hurricane, still the only records for the District. There is just one previous Maryland record of the species (one at Baltimore Canyon, 17 Aug 1997). This storm-petrel species, along with several gadfly petrel and tropicbird species, would almost certainly be found regularly in deep waters of both states if there were more coverage of deep waters.

Middle Atlantic



Grebes is always welcomed, and this summer's reports included 2 ads. with 3 young near Queenstown, a first breeding record for *Queen Anne's*, MD (DP); two broods totaling 8 birds were found at Swan Harbor, *Harford*, MD (MH, DW); and at Hart, at least one calling bird was present 10 Jul, with an ad. seen with a stripe-headed young 24 Jul (MH, JLS et al.). In Virginia, summer reports without evidence of breeding were 2 birds 6 Jul at Bay Creek G.C., *Northampton* (TS) and one 20 Jul at Fairystone L., a first summer record for *Patrick* (CK, Alan Kessler, Ray Callahan). Maryland had a few reports, including 6 Jun and 24 Jul at L. Elkhorn, *Howard* (SN, MS), 26 Jun–5 Jul at Schumaker Pond, *Wicomico*

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(SHD), and 10 Jul at W. Ocean City pond, *Worcester* (N&FS).

Good seawatching at Assat. 5 Jun produced 3 Cory's, a Greater, and 3 Sooty Shearwaters and 8 Wilson's Storm-Petrels (JB, HH, JLS, MB et al.). Single Sooty Shearwaters were off O.C. Inlet 7 & 9 Jun (D&CB; SHD).

Since 1987, Dave Brinker, John Weske, and others have banded Brown Pelicans in the Region. This season's total of banded young on the Bay was 2485, far exceeding the previous high count of *circa* 1700. Since 1987, over 10,000 Brown Pelican chicks have been banded. The American White Pelican reported in spring at Back Bay was seen through 6 Jun (Dorrie Stolley, RLA). The Double-crested Cormorant colony on the Potomac R., *Montgomery*, MD had at least eight nests this season, seven of them producing 10 young, seen 26 Jun (Clive Harris). At Holland I., *Dorchester* 1 Jun, Armistead noted that the mixed heronries hosted all 10 of Maryland's heron and ibis species, many in good numbers. Previously undiscovered Great Blue Heron nesting colonies were found on a tributary of Bull Run, *Loudoun*, VA in a flooded beaver pond

SA In 2003, a comprehensive survey of colonial waterbirds was conducted in Virginia, 10 years after a similar survey prompted agreement to maintain a ten-year interval between surveys (Watts, B. D. 2004. Status and distribution of colonial waterbirds in Coastal Virginia: 2003 breeding season. CCBTR-04-06. Center for Conservation Biology, College of William and Mary, Williamsburg, VA). The report is highly recommended to everyone interested in colonial waterbirds in the Region. Consult the Center for Conservation Biology's website at: <http://fsweb.wm.edu/ccb/publications/publications_technical.cfm>.

In 800 surveys, 446 colonies were identified, with an estimated 79,343 breeding pairs of 24 species. Over 50,000 of these were gulls, 8399 were terns, and 15,557 were waders. Laughing Gulls comprised 56.7% of the total community. Great Blue Herons were most widely distributed, with over 200 colonies. One important conclusion of the report was that the barrier island/lagoon system of the Eastern Shore was the most important region for the majority of birds surveyed (22 of 24 species), accounting for over 70% of the breeding pairs and 35% of the colonies found. For 18 of the 24 species, this ecosystem supported over 50% of the known coastal population. Overall, a 16% decline was noted since 1993. Some 17 of 24 species showed declines, with 10 of these exhibiting declines over 40%, and four species declined over 70% (though two of them had fewer than 30 pairs in 1993, Sandwich Tern and Caspian Tern). Cattle Egret was the biggest loser, down from 1459 pairs to 166, but also severe were declines of 62% for Snowy Egrets and 61% for Green Herons. Seven species showed increases, the four most dramatic being White Ibis, Great Black-backed Gull, Double-crested Cormorant, and Brown Pelican. The Delmarva Peninsula's seaside accounted for 85% of the coastal decline, and all of the species that nest on open barrier island beaches experienced substantial declines. If there is a silver lining here, it might be that the declines appear linked to increases in predator populations, and with continued predator management, populations in these colonies should respond favorably.

14 Jul (Craig Turner) and very likely in August, discovered 19 Jul, where up to 29 ads. and imm. were seen 29 Jul, though nests have yet to be discovered. It would be the first documentation of breeding for this well-birded county, and one of few for Virginia's Mountains & Valleys (BT, YL). A Least Bittern was heard calling and seen at Airlie, Fauquier, VA 8 Jul, in a Piedmont area where at least one has summered since 2001 (TMD). A good count of 42 Cattle Egrets was at Todd's Inheritance, Baltimore, MD 29 Jul (Joel Martin). Two ad. and 4 young Yellow-crowned Night-Herons were seen 10 Jul at a nest originally discovered 22 Jun at Tinker Cr., Roanoke, VA (Allen Boynton, GE); several nests were reported at a known colony near Leakin Park, Baltimore, MD (Elise Kress); one bird was reported 15–18 Jun at McKee-Beshers W.M.A., Montgomery, MD (PW); and one was at L. Elkhorn, Howard 7 Jul (MS, Barry Miller). White-faced Ibis continues to be reported from Chinc., with the latest report 24 Jun (ESB, TMD, RH); the number of individuals here is still unknown, but more than one is suspected. A Glossy Ibis arrived at Huntley 16 Jul and remained throughout summer (Fred Bogar, m.ob.); one was also at L. Reddington, Prince George's, MD 28 Jul (Steve Noyes).

A Tundra Swan was at the Chain Bridge on the Potomac R., D.C. 17 Jun (John Beetham). A Trumpeter Swan of uncertain provenance arrived in spring at Shorter's Marsh, Dorchester, MD and was seen through 25 Jul (HTA). A blue-morph Snow

Goose summered at Crystal L., Cape Charles, VA (TS). A pair of Northern Shovelers was near New Windsor, Carroll, MD, with the drake seen through 26 Jun, the hen as late as 23 Jul, though no evidence of breeding was observed (RFR); another hen was seen at Swan Harbor, Harford, 24 Jul (MH). Four *Aythya* species were reported during summer. A drake Canvasback was at Graysonville, Queen Anne's 4 Jul (DP). Seven Ring-necked Ducks were reported: a hen was in a run-off pond in Henry, VA 26 Jun (CK et al.); 4 drakes summered at Airlie, Fauquier, first noted 18 Jun, and were watched molting throughout the reporting period (Dana Thompson, TMD); one drake was at Larriland Farm, Howard 27 Jun and 25 Jul (JS, EH); and another was seen 10 Jul at Hart (MH, JLS, HH). A Greater Scaup was at Town Cr., Talbot, MD 17 Jun (JB). As many as 5 Lesser Scaup summered at Dyke, with the last report being of 2 on 23 Jul (KG, m.ob.), while 3 drakes and a hen were at Belmont Bay 12 Jun (KG et al.), both Fairfax, VA locations; another Lesser Scaup was at Washington Channel, D.C. 24 Jul (John Hubbell), and 2 were reported throughout summer at Hart (EJS, MH et al.).

A molting hen Common Eider was at Cape Charles 25 Jun, joined by another 27 Jun (ph. ESB, TMD). Late scoter reports included a Black 13 Jun on the Honga R., Dorchester (Levin Wiley, *vide* HTA), with the remainder being Surfs: an ad. drake 12 Jun at Ft. Story, Virginia Beach (Bert Harris, Jennifer Phillips); an ad. drake on the C.B.B.T.

20 Jun (KG, KP) and an imm. drake there 3 Jul (RR); and 2 drakes on the Nanticoke R., Dorchester 10 Jul (HTA, GLA). Two lingering Buffleheads reported from spring stayed long enough to be noted in summer: the ad. male at Oyster, Northampton was last reported 1 Jun (ESB), while the bird at Dyke Marsh, Fairfax stayed through at least 6 Jun (S. Eccles); L. Elkhorn, Howard, hosted a drake 30 May–13 Jul (SN, MS, EH, Jordan Wilkerson). A hen Red-breasted Merganser was at Back Bay 6 Jun (Karen Kearney). A drake Common Merganser was at Brown's Bridge, Howard 16 Jun (EH).

RAPTORS THROUGH TERNS

In some n. parts of the Region, there was an emergence of 17-year periodical cicadas consisting of *Magicalcica cassini*, *M. septendecula*, and *M. septendecim*, beginning in May and lasting into Jun. There seemed to be a relationship to the emergence of cicadas and reports of kites, with the bulk of sightings in spring (see Spring report). Mississippi Kites are certainly gaining a foothold in the Region, and the presence of cicadas might have muddied the waters some, as it is difficult to determine whether new breeding evidence was associated with the emergence. Still, one Virginia nesting was confirmed in Fairfax, providing the northernmost nesting of the species anywhere and only the 3rd or 4th confirmed breeding attempt for the Region. Birds seen for the 3rd year at the Waynewood subdivision, Fairfax 24 Jul led observers to a nest 7 Aug. Two young were noted in the nest 7–8 Aug (ph., †Donald Sweig, ph. Bob Augustine, KG, m.ob.). At the Riverview subdivision, Prince William, the first bird was reported 16 May, with as many as 7 seen at once. A rough nest of sticks was found and photographed, but there was no evidence of incubation or young (Jim Pearson, SAH, BT, m.ob.). The last report from this location was one kite 16 Jun. Southside Virginia certainly has breeding kites; however, no nesting evidence has been reported, despite many observations throughout the reporting period. For

SA Most unusual this summer was evidence of ducks breeding that are very rarely confirmed as breeders in the Region. On 30 May, Czaplak found a small **Common Merganser** chick on a rock in the Potomac R., Montgomery, MD. From the Virginia shoreline only a few km downstream, Christie Huffman observed a hen **Common Merganser** with 6 young 8 Jun. The Potomac R. serves as the border between Virginia and Maryland, and as such it will never be determined where these birds hatched. Still, the find represents only the 5th known breeding occurrence for the Region.

While oversummering Ruddy Ducks are not uncommon in the n. fringes of the Region, breeding evidence is decidedly so. At Druid Lake Park, Baltimore, Kress discovered 3 young **Ruddy Ducks** closely following an ad. hen and 2 ad. drakes 1 Jul. The young were about one-fifth the size of the hen and were seen diving alongside her while she repeatedly defended the young from one of the drakes. This marks the first firm evidence of breeding in the Region.

the past several summers, at least one pair of Mississippi Kites has frequented Huntley, but Jul reports are scarce, the latest report for this summer was 2 on 27 Jun (KG). The Elkton, Cecil, MD kite show lasted through mid-Jun, with a single Swallow-tailed Kite through 17 Jun (Sean McCandless). Other scattered Mississippi Kite reports from Maryland were: 6 Jun near Graysonville, *Queen Anne's* (JLS, MB); 12 Jun in *Montgomery* (Rick Sussman); and 11 Jul at North East, *Cecil* (Chris Starling). The Virginia reports were: 14 Jun above the Landmark Mall, Alexandria (KP), at Altavista 4 Jul, the first summer and 3rd record for *Campbell* (J&TD); one at Dyke, quite possibly one of the Waynewood birds 22 Jul (Larry Cartwright); 3 in a yard in *Dinwiddie* 31 Jul (AD), and 5 over Annandale, *Fairfax* 31 Jul (Barbara Chambers).

There seemed an above-average number of Northern Harrier reports for summer, but only one came with details of breeding, a nest with eggs on Wreck I., *Northampton* in mid-Jun (Alex Wilkie, Deniz Aygen). A Sharp-shinned Hawk nest with one nestling was discovered in mid-Jul by a group of U.S. Forest Service workers at 1465 m in a mature Red Spruce, near Whitetop Mt. Road, *Smyth*, VA (*vide* R&LM). An ad. Sharp-shinned Hawk at Burke L., *Fairfax* 10 Jul was an interesting find (FA), as was one 24 Jun at *Dorchester* (HTA). The long-term Virginia Peregrine Falcon monitoring and management program undertaken by the Center for Conservation Biology at the College of William and Mary reports a slow but steady increase of breeding Peregrines; however, hatching rate and chick survival remains somewhat erratic. Of 19 occupied territories, there were 15 breeding attempts producing 27 chicks that survived beyond fledging. Of 14 clutches followed completely, 39 of 53 eggs hatched, and 27 of the 39 chicks fledged, albeit with success influenced by translocation of some young. Some of the eggs that did not hatch were cracked and thin-shelled. Eggs examined in 2001 and 2002 identified the presence of several different compounds, including polybrominated diphenyl ethers, which are used as flame-retardants and are environmentally persistent. Eggs collected in 2004 will be sent for potential analysis (Watts, B.D., S.M. Padgett, M.A. Byrd and E.C. Long. 2004. Virginia Peregrine Falcon monitoring and management program Year 2004 report). Osprey productivity in the Bay was

said to be extremely low, possibly owing to the anoxic conditions over most of the n. two-thirds of the Bay, hopefully, more information will become available and be reported here. Two ad. Osprey, and then later one juv., were seen mid-Jul at L. Anna, *Louisa*, possible breeders (MRB). Long-time Virginia raptor bander Mark Causey reports that pro-



Mississippi Kites gorged themselves on cicadas in areas of emergence this season, and a few lingered well away from southside Virginia, where present each year. This bird was one of a nesting pair in Fairfax, Virginia (near Washington, DC), about 2 km from the Waynewood Elementary School; the only other confirmed nesting in the Middle Atlantic region was also from suburban northern Virginia. Photograph by Donald Sweig.

ductivity among American Kestrels and Barn Owls in *Priuce William* and *Fauquier* was among the worst on record.

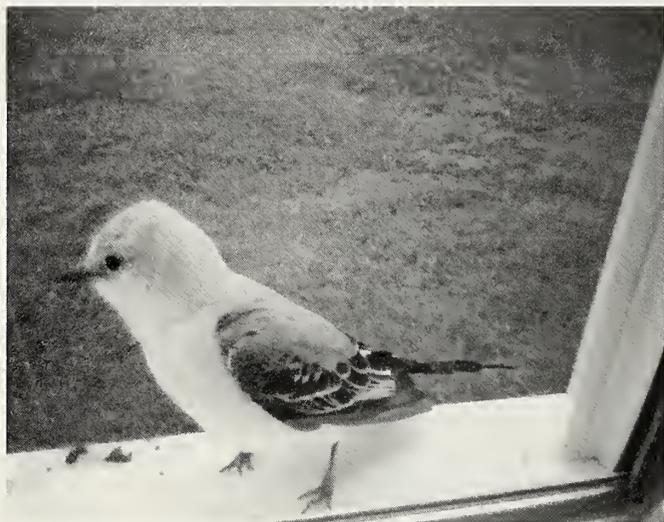
Six King Rails were heard at Back Bay 1 Jun during a weekly survey (RLA); 3 were noted at the Great Marsh at Mason Neck N.W.R., *Fairfax* 12 Jun, the latter accompanied by a Virginia Rail (KG et al.); another King was at Schooley Mill Park, *Howard* 27 Jun (Brad Lanning). This scarce species should be reported whenever detected in the Region. Two ad. Virginia Rails were seen with one chick 19 Jun at University of Maryland Central Farm *Howard* (BO, EH), and an ad. was seen there 21 Jun (EH, Robert Solem), this constitutes only the 3rd known breeding for the species in *Howard* (others in 1974 and 1992). Four juv. Soras were found 18 Jul at Blandly, where one had been reported along with a Virginia Rail 18 Jun (Jon Little, B. J. Westervelt, Dave Carr); other Sora reports were of 2 at McKee-Beshers, *Montgomery* (PW) 3 Jul and one 24 Jul at Swan Harbor, *Harford* (MH, DW). Black Rails were reported only from coastal areas this summer, with 4 at Saxis, *Accomack*, VA 2 Jun and

one on 6 Jun (MRB, Glenn Koppel, Mary Alice Koeneke); in Maryland, one juv. was found road-killed at Black. 17 Jul (Tom Miller, HTA). The Purple Gallinule reported in spring at Hughes Hollow, *Montgomery*, MD was seen sporadically through 15 Jun (PW); another was discovered 30 Jun at Oxbow L., *Anne Arundel*, and seen through 7 Jul (Jay Sheppard, SA, m.ob.). Three ad. Sandhill Cranes appeared near Mt. Solon roughly around 14 Jul, and stayed through Aug, only the 3rd record for *Augusta* (Jane Reeves, *vide* YL, ph. BT, m.ob.). Such summering birds should be watched very closely for breeding activity.

A pair of Black-necked Stilts in suitable breeding habitat 1 Jun at Back Bay (RLA) was more unusual than the 5 seen at the causeway to Chincoteague I., *Accomack* 1 & 3 Jun (ESB; MRB), and at Craney 3 Jun (Elsa Enders), one 27 Jun at Deal I., *Somerset* (MH, ZB) and 2 ads. and one juv. at Hart 31 Jul (EJS, RFR et al.) were the lone Maryland reports. American Avocets were regular at Hart in Jul, the peak being 16 on 24 & 31 Jul (EJS, MH et al.). Fourteen Upland Sandpipers were at the Salisbury-Wicomico Airport 17-18 Jul (SHD), and another was found at Alpha Ridge Park, *Howard* 19 Jun (Ralph Cullison). One Hudsonian Godwit at Hart 31 Jul was the season's only re-

port (EJS, RFR et al.). About 55 White-rumped Sandpipers at Chinc. 1 Jun was a healthy count (ESB, GLA). Mason Dixon farm near Emmitsburg, *Frederick*, MD produced a few decent inland shorebird finds, including 2 White-rumped Sandpipers 1 Jun, a Dunlin there 2 Jun, and likely the first fall shorebird migrant, a single Least Sandpiper 28 Jun (RFR, Gary Smyle). A pair of courting Spotted Sandpipers was noted there 7 Jun, and an ad. and a juv. were present 28 Jun (RFR). The Cumberland Terminus, *Alleghany*, MD hosted a Sanderling and one Short-billed Dowitcher 18-19 Jul (JBC). An injured Purple Sandpiper was picked up at the Cape Charles jetty, *Northampton* 17 Jun (Matt Ramah); summering birds are almost unprecedented in Virginia. A dozen Red Knots seen flying n. over the Bay at Cape Charles (ESB) on 15 Jul was most unusual for midsummer, perhaps a sign of a dismal breeding season. A White-rumped Sandpiper at Hart 31 Jul was a touch early (EJS, RFR et al.). A Wilson's Phalarope at Chinc. 24 Jun was late for a spring migrant but early for fall (J. Via, B. Akers).

Unusual gull sightings were limited to a second-winter Iceland Gull 23–25 Jun at Nanticoke Harbor, *Wicomico*, MD (SHD, ph. D. Broderick); a Bonaparte's Gull at Morgantown, *Charles*, MD 22 Jul (GJ); and a Ring-billed Gull 24 Jul at Staunton, a first *Augusta* summer record (AL). Three Gull-billed Terns were seen carrying food at N. Vaughn



How often does a rare bird locate a birder? This Scissor-tailed Flycatcher announced its arrival at Roanoke, Virginia by pecking on the laundry-room window at the photographer's house on 5 June 2004. This bird built a nest, laid and incubated five apparently infertile eggs, and was last observed 24 July. This marks the third attempted nesting of the species in Virginia. Photograph by Kevin Bingham.

W.M.A. 27 Jun and again 8 Jul (MH, ZB). Brinker and Weske's tern banding efforts resulted in high totals for the year. In Virginia, 2189 Royal Terns were banded between Little Fox I., *Accomack*, and Wreck I., *Northampton* in Jul and Aug, and 577 were banded at Skimmer I., *Worcester*, MD. A new state record, 122 Sandwich Terns were banded at these two Virginia locations. At least a dozen Sandwich Tern nests were at Wreck I., and three or four were at Fisherman I. (*fide* HTA). Single Sandwich Terns were reported at Eagle's Nest Campground 27 Jun (MH, ZB) and at Skimmer I. 8 Jul (DP), both *Worcester*. A Caspian Tern at Centennial Park, *Howard* 8 Jul was likely an early fall migrant (JT). A Common Tern nest was observed near Graysonville, *Queen Anne's*, with an ad. seen on the nest 4 Jul and 2 juvs. 11 Jul (DP). A Common and 12 Forster's Terns were at Anacostia Park, D.C. 19 Jul (MB, Mary Paul). Arctic Tern, rarely detected in the Region though certainly an annual migrant well offshore, was reported 5 & 6 Jun from Assat. (p.a., JB, HH, JLS, MB et al.). A Least Tern was at an industrial park pond in *Henry* 26 Jun (CK, Jim Beard et al.); there are very few inland records of the species in Virginia. An ad. Least was seen feeding 3 fledged young at Bladensburg Waterfront Marina, *Prince George's* 18–19 Jul (Mike Donovan, *fide* RH) and at Anacostia Park, D.C. 24 Jul (John Hubbell).

DOVES THROUGH SHRIKES

The well-established Eurasian Collared-Doves near Kiptopeke, *Northampton* were seen regularly during summer. Another was at Montross 26 Jul, the 2nd for *Westmoreland*, VA (TMD). Regional observers largely felt that cuckoo numbers were high, probably owing to the cicada emergence. However, 78

Yellow-billed Cuckoos were tallied during a survey at Mason Neck, *Fairfax* 12 Jun, up from 11 in 2003—in an area where there was no cicada emergence (KG et al.). Lynchburg, another area outside of the cicada emergence, reported a high count of 44 Yellow-billed 5 Jun (GS). A Rufous Hummingbird found 23 Jul near Pamplin, *Appomattox*, VA was identified by photograph by hummingbird expert Bob Sargent (ph. Florence Hix, *fide* J&TD). Yellow-bellied Sapsucker was finally documented and confirmed breeding in

Virginia with the discovery of an active nest in w. *Highland* at Bear Mountain Farm 25 May (ph., †John L. Rowlett, Patti Reum, m.ob.). Farther s., Coffey and Harrington explored high-elevation areas in Jefferson N.E. and Stone Mt., *Grayson*, VA on 17 & 19 Jun, discovering nine sapsucker territories at elevations of 1158–1290 m.

The 3rd Virginia and Regional breeding attempt of Scissor-tailed Flycatcher was discovered at Countryside G.C., Roanoke. In early Jun, an ad. (presumably) female was seen on the window sill of area birder Kevin Bingham's townhouse. The bird was seen several times at the nearby golf course during the following weeks, until 2 Jul, when a nest with five eggs was found by Kinzie. Sightings of the ad. continued until 24 Jul. On 27 Jul, the nest was examined and two abandoned eggs remained. A Western Kingbird was found at Chesapeake Farms, *Kent*, MD 6 Jul, one of few summer records for the Region (Walter Ellison, Nancy Martin). The Western Kingbird at Ft. McHenry, Baltimore was seen again 10 Jul after an absence since 31 May (Jim Peters, *fide* Keith Eric Costley). An Eastern Kingbird nest with young was seen 23 Jul at Dyke, notably late (KG, Chip Johnston). A Yellow-bellied Flycatcher was singing 5 Jun at Salt Cr. Road along the James R., a 4th for *Amherst*, VA (MRB). Often undetected during migration, Alder Flycatchers made appearances at Mason Neck S.P., *Fairfax* 12 Jun

(RR) and at the headwaters of Pomonkey Cr. 8 Jun, *Charles's* 2nd (GJ). Four occupied Cliff Swallow nests were found 10 Jun on the Nanticoke R. bridge between *Dorchester* and *Wicomico*, up from one nest in 2003 (SHD); while nests were not observed, birds were seen flying under bridges on U.S. 17 at Mt. Landing Cr. and at the U.S. Rt. 360 bridge over the Rappahannock R., both *Essex*, VA 12 Jun (TMD, SAH).

A Common Raven was well out of place at Baltimore 17 Jul (ph., vt. JLS). Red-breasted Nuthatches appeared at two feeders in Jul away from breeding areas: 8 Jul in *Worcester* (N&FS) and 15 Jul at Lynchburg, VA, the first summer record there (GS). Three Sedge Wrens were found singing at Glebe School Road 22–31 Jul, *Augusta's* 3rd overall and first summer record. While no evidence of nesting was obtained, the presence of these singing birds may indicate breeding (AL, YL, ph. BT). A disjunct population of Golden-crowned Kinglets was found 19 Jun in the Hurricane Branch area, *Smyth*, VA (JWC et al.); 3 ads. were found singing at Elliott Knob 26 Jun, *Augusta's* 2nd record (JSp, LH, AL). Some seven Loggerhead Shrike reports were all confined to the Mountains & Valleys of Virginia. Most reports likely pertain to breeders, but the only firm evidence was a family of 4 along Plantation Rd., *Montgomery* 5 Jul (Brian Kane, Peter Laver).

WARBLERS THROUGH FINCHES

A traditional spot for Golden-winged Warblers at George Washington N.E., *Frederick*, VA produced reports only of Brewster's Warblers this summer (William Leigh). Five singing male Yellow-rumped (Myrtle) Warblers, one carrying food, were seen with a female that was accompanied by 2 recently fledged young at Elliott Knob 26 Jun (JSp, LH, AL); *Augusta* has no previous confirmed breeding records. Other summer reports of Yellow-rumped were a pair at Whitetop Mt., *Grayson* 28 Jun (MRB), 7 on 3 Jul at Bother Knob, *Rockingham* (Peter Van Acker, JSp), and 2 seen 6 Jul at Mt. Rogers, *Grayson* (Ryan Smith). A Prothonotary Warbler laid five eggs in a nest-box in Roanoke, discovered 19 Jun (Alyce Quinn). An interesting discovery was an ad. male Mourning Warbler at Wakefield Park, *Fairfax*, that sang from 9 May through at least 27 Jun; this bird was well away from any known breeding areas (ph. Mike Collins). A Kentucky Warbler near Townsend, *Northampton*, VA 3 Jun was a first for that B.B.S. route; the species breeds very sparingly on the outer Coastal Plain (ESB).

It seemed an above-average year for Dickcissels in the Region. Seven reports hailed from seven counties in Virginia, most of multiple birds, while Maryland had at least eight reports from eight different counties, usually

of more than one bird, perhaps the most notable there being a pair found in Jun at Hurlock, *Dorchester* and seen again 11 Jul (HLW, LD, HTA). Aside from traditional Henslow's Sparrow spots in w. Maryland, Arnold's atlas-ing efforts revealed several venues not known prior to 2003 in *Garrett*: two spots along Pea Ridge Rd., one having as many as 8 birds singing on various visits 15 May–10 Jul; another site s. of Lancaster Hill Rd. with one singing 11 Jul; one singing at Green Lantern Rd. 23 Jun; and 5 singing at Frostburg Rd. There were several reports of late or unexpected summering sparrows. White-throated Sparrows were at Staunton, *Augusta* 6 Jun (LH); Red House Road, *Worcester* 22 Jun (SHD); Sparks Mill Rd., *Queen Anne's* 27 Jun (Scott Crabtree); and a *Howard* yard 29 Jun (JT). Dark-eyed Juncos were noted 4 Jun at the Blue Ridge Center for Environmental Stewardship, *Loudoun* (*vide* KG); 30 Jun at Boyce, *Clarke* (Charles Vandervoot); and 2 Jul at Alexandria, *Fairfax* (Renee Grebe). Three displaying male Bobolinks were near Taylorstown, *Loudoun* 19 Jun (FA); new locations in *Carroll*, MD hosted males: singles at two Keysville sites 2 & 7 Jun, 2 near Taneytown 19 Jun, and 3 at Keysville and another heard near Taneytown on 28 Jun (RFR). There were three late-Jun reports of single Pine Siskins, away from breeding areas: 22–28 Jun at a Davidsonville, *Anne Arundel* feeder (Phil Davis); 24 Jun at Bowie, *Prince George's* (Abbie Banks); and 29 Jun in Stuart, *Patrick*, VA (Eric Johnson). Red Crossbills were at Whitetop Mt., *Grayson* 10 & 28 Jun, numbering as many as 15 birds (GE, MRB, m.ob.), and were reported frequently at Glen Alton, *Giles*, VA 17 Jul–Aug (CK, m.ob.).

Addendum: A late report surfaced of an ad. male Painted Bunting that was pho-



Waterfowl that normally nest at high latitudes are occasionally observed well south of range in summer; at least some of these are injured or lead-poisoned birds. A blue-morph Snow Goose spent the season in Virginia on Cape Charles's Crystal Lake (here 13 July 2004), with a flock of resident Canada Geese, while two female Common Eiders frequented the town's jet-ties in late June (here 25 June) 2004. Photographs by Edward S. Brinkley.

tographed at a *James City*, VA feeder on or near 24 Apr, constituting about the 8th local record (*vide* Bill Williams).

Corrigendum: The caption for the White-winged Dove photographed in Suffolk, VA (N.A.B. 58: 210) should have listed Town Point rather than Eclipse as the location.

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State of the Region

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The Middle Atlantic Region separates neatly into three physiographic provinces, Mountains & Valleys, Piedmont, and Coastal Plain, all of which are portion of three NABCI Bird Conservation Regions (BCRs) of similar names, in which 55 regularly occurring species that breed, winter, or migrate through the Region's provinces are listed. In addition, Bald Eagle, Piping Plover, Roseate Tern (Regionally extirpated breeder), and Red-cockaded Woodpecker are listed as either federally threatened or endangered. In 2003, the American Bird Conservancy's Green List's included 64 species in the Region. Birds considered of highest concern on the Green List but not listed for the BCRs include King Rail, a marginal nester, and Bicknell's Thrush, a regular migrant here. These lists do not treat rare and poorly known subspecies, such as the coastal *susurrans* Henslow's Sparrow and *nigrescens* Swamp Sparrow, most of which may be considered "data deficient."

Many readers are aware of the varied and interrelated pressures on birds in the Region: habitat loss and fragmentation resulting from land conversion (but also forestry and agricultural

practices, and even hurricanes); proliferation of predators, including cats; mortality and habitat degradation caused by pollution of many kinds; habitat degradation by invasive exotic flora; and over-harvesting of cornerstone species such as Horseshoe Crabs. Species in most immediate peril are familiar from long-standing lists of endangered taxa, but more sobering is the second category on the Green List, species exhibiting steep declines over the past few decades, such as Lesser Yellowlegs and Sanderling. Planners, habitat managers, and biologists can refer to these and many other documents (including state lists of endangered and threatened taxa in Maryland and Virginia) to help guide policy-making and management practices. Nevertheless, for those of us who do not specialize in bird conservation, the effect of seeing all of these familiar, even abundant species "listed" can be disorienting and dispiriting. To bring some order to the proliferation of lists, we offer an overview of ecoregions and their habitats from east to west.

Few beach-nesting and other coastal colonial waterbirds have seen population increases in the Region in the recent decade; most have declined, some precipitously. A recent survey of colonial waterbirds in coastal Virginia (Watts 2003) emphasized the importance of the barrier island/lagoon system of the Eastern Shore for numerous "listed" species. Between 1993 and 2003, the colonial waterbird population in coastal Virginia declined by 16%. The biggest decline was in Cattle Egret, down to 166 breeding pairs from 1459 (–88.6%). Other significant losses were terns, notably Common and Royal, with Common decreasing to 1891 pairs (–72.1%) and Royal dropping to 2858 (–54.3%). Other losers include Snowy Egret (882 pairs remain, –62.1%), Black Skimmer

(1828 pairs; -41.0%), Herring Gull (4521 pairs, -48.6%), and Green Heron (-61.0%). Reasons for these declines and similar ones in adjacent regions are under investigation, but some known causes of disturbance and nest failure are depredation (Great Horned Owls, gulls, foxes, and other small mammals), illegal human activities in the colonies (visits in the nesting season, often with dogs), displacement of terns by gull colonies, and spring storms; other suspected causes include degradations of habitat, both marine and terrestrial, which would negatively impact migrant shorebirds and wading birds as well, which use the marshes and mudflats in the many thousands.

Fortunately, the outer coast of Virginia has been protected to varying degrees for decades, with most of the barrier islands and much of the Back Bay area wetlands in the hands of the federal government or The Nature Conservancy, where studies of habitat use, human disturbance, predation, and other factors are ongoing. Unfortunately, sufficient staff is not available to prevent increasing numbers of boaters from coming ashore and disrupting colonies, but this is at least a remediable problem in theory. In coastal Virginia, The Nature Conservancy has also partnered with NASA to study patterns of coastal habitat usage by stopover migrants, using the NASA Polarimetric Radar, the most sophisticated technology of its kind. There is now broad public, governmental, and private support for increased land acquisition in the outer coastal plain—not a moment too soon, as development pressures mount on the once-pristine Eastern Shore—and there exist intelligent comprehensive plans for such acquisitions. Moreover, there has been extensive public discussion in 2001–2004 of the benefits and drawbacks of proposed offshore and coastal wind-farms in this migrant-rich corridor, with the result that all such proposals have been abandoned as of 2004. Sea-level rise, should it continue, would render most conservation concerns regarding protection of salt marshes and other coastal habitats moot: it is doubtful that Black Rails and Seaside Sparrows would distract the powers that be from the large-scale inundation of high-priced real estate.

Chesapeake Bay, the largest estuary in the United States, is in very poor health (as is Back Bay), and the uncountable flocks of waterfowl of even a generation ago, not to speak of colonial times, recede further in memory with each passing year. To restore the health of the Bay even partially would require \$30 billion, a sum most political figures are unwilling to consider, despite intelligent lobbying efforts by the Chesapeake Bay Foundation and many other groups. Virginia's remarkable Chesapeake Bay Preservation Act of 1988 is under-enforced—almost unenforced—as developers and local municipalities disregard both its letter and spirit. The Bay's chief problem is that it cannot sustain healthy marine life under the current assault of nitrogen pollution (from sewage, runoff, and air pollution). In summer 2004, the anoxic "dead zone" of the Bay was the largest in the past two decades: fish and crabs died by the many thousands, red tides and harmful algal blooms were widespread, and beaches were closed. These problems have been especially severe in the Maryland portion of the Bay (see www.cbf.org). The consequences of ecological disequilibrium are clear: birds that forage on fish and other marine life or on aquatic grasses are in steep decline or absent in these waters. These declines are exacerbated by over-harvest of key prey species such as Menhaden. Although not listed as being of concern on the NABC roster, Brant, Black Scoter, and American Black Duck are on the second tier of the Green List. From a Regional historical perspective, many more waterfowl species could be added, along with Red-throated Loon, Horned Grebe, Northern Gannet, Bonaparte's Gull, and other species once more numerous on the Bay. Brown Pelican, a success story of the post-DDT era, is likewise now declining in Virginia, as is productivity in Osprey and several other larger piscivores. Bald Eagle, however, maintains its robust population in the Region, one that has increased annually since 1977, from a few dozen pairs to over 500.

Habitats of the inner Coastal Plain and Piedmont are many, but both woodlands and open habitats are being developed and fragmented at a steady pace: the Region's population has grown by over 600,000 residents since 2000, a growth rate of about 4%. Most of these people settle in the Piedmont or Coastal Plain. The effects of population growth fall both on forest species dependent on mature woodlands (Prothonotary, Swainson's, Kentucky, Worm-eating, and Black-throated Green Warblers, Acadian Flycatcher, Wood Thrush) and on upland field-associated species such as Northern Harrier, Eastern Meadowlark, Dickcissel, and Upland Sandpiper, the latter a species that has vanished from Maryland, from rapidly developing Loudoun County, Virginia, and now barely hangs on in the Region in Culpeper/Fauquier County, Virginia. Suburban growth has put residents into proximity of roosting Turkey and Black Vultures, which have

been (legally) slaughtered by the hundreds to protect suburbanites from the inconvenience of their excrement. Declines of species in these habitats are known from BBS and other data, but these are much less complete than data for endangered species and coastal colonial nesters.

The question of how to rank Regional conservation concerns for species of grassland early successional habitats (many of which are not "natural," arguably, in the Region) is an open one in both states, but in the current political climate, they receive focus because they are scarce Regionally and because their habitats are often easily identified and "managed." When considered in continental terms, however, state lists of imperiled fauna sometimes miss the forest for the fields: the Region's warblers, flycatchers, and spotted thrushes—and forest habitats generally—are probably more important from a global perspective than its breeding cardinalids and emberizids (saltmarsh sparrows aside) in disturbed habitats. If not always pragmatic, our impulse to protect or maintain diverse habitats is not misguided: the Region would be much the poorer without its few Loggerhead Shrikes, Bachman's Sparrows, and Henslow's Sparrows—declining species in need of as many outposts as we can provide them, even "artificial" ones. We should perhaps admit to ourselves that we are stewards of birds in the here and now, and that aspersions such as "artificial grassland" advance the cause of real bird conservation very little.

Like the more densely settled areas to the east, the montane sections of western Maryland and Virginia have experienced a spike in population growth since the economic boom of the 1990s, but the modification of habitat here goes back several centuries, and only about 15% of this area remains relatively unaltered, despite large tracts of national forest (the "land of many uses"). Essentially all of Shenandoah National Park (200,000 acres, 40% designated "wilderness" area), for instance, has been logged; what remains is regrowth: a faunally poor area, with few large trees and little structural complexity. Species that serve as indicators of forest complexity and health, such as Cerulean Warbler, are most at risk, but many woodland birds of northern affinity are in steep decline (or now absent, e.g., Yellow-bellied Flycatcher) as breeders in the Region. Certain valley species, such as Loggerhead Shrike and Vesper Sparrow, are declining, and Bewick's Wren has disappeared just in the past 15 years or so, for reasons unknown. Our basic inability to explain such losses is itself frightening. Even where open lands remain, changes in agricultural technology have rendered many rural farming areas sterile for breeding birds; the Region's many Mennonite farms in the Shenandoah Valley are exceptional in eschewing application of chemicals to the land.

Between the chestnut blight, over-browsing of undergrowth by deer, heavy logging of spruce, fir, oak, and other trees, acid rain, and the spread of Gypsy Moth, Spruce Budworm, and Hemlock Woolly Adelgid, few blocks of intact woodland habitat remain in 2004, though larger (but severely isolated) fragments extend from the Allegheny Front Range in the north to the Mount Rogers highlands in the south. Timber extraction and other consumptive activities continue on most of these fragments, helpful at least to some species that favor early successional habitats (e.g., Chestnut-sided and Golden-winged Warblers). If modest corridors of complex woodlands are to be re-established in the Region, a comprehensive plan for land acquisition and management should be established and implemented. The highest-elevation woodland communities, of spruce-fir, are extremely susceptible to damage by air pollutants and acid rain—worsening problems that overshadow the best acquisition and management schemes.

In this rather bleak picture, there are bright spots. Ongoing studies of species and habitats by the Center for Conservation Biology (<http://fsweb.wm.edu/cfb/>) and other groups are beginning to provide distributional data needed to identify areas of top-priority habitat. Though beset by budget cuts and worse, the many state agencies charged with conserving habitat and wildlife have produced many victories, among them a three-part Birding and Wildlife trail that spans the entire state, the first in the country and a boon to ecotourism—low-impact outdoor activities that carry economic clout. Ongoing land acquisitions and arrangements of conservation easements, by state offices of The Nature Conservancy (<http://nature.org>) and many smaller land trusts, have been successful in establishing islands of productive, diverse habitat in a shrinking natural world.

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Over the past decade, numbers of nesting Cattle Egrets have declined by about 90% on the Atlantic coast north of the Carolinas, perhaps partly as a consequence of the rapid conversion of agricultural lands to suburban housing developments, as here at Kiptopeke, Virginia. Photograph by Edward S. Brinkley.

This summer's weather was generally cool early but warm later. There were no extended periods of really hot, dry weather. Precipitation was about average until late June and July, when above average rainfall occurred, especially inland. Most observers felt that nesting success was about normal, with no major problems or failures.

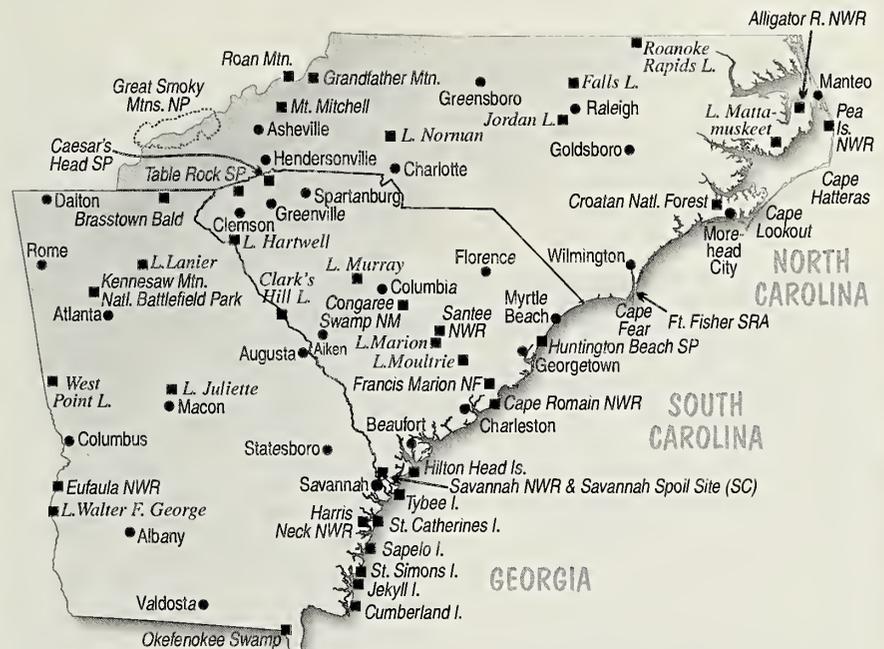
Abbreviations: C. Hatt. (Cape Hatteras, NC); E.L.H. (E.L. Huie Land Application Facility, Clayton, GA); H.B.S.P. (Huntington Beach S.P., SC); Hoop. (Hooper Lane, Henderson, NC); K. Mt. (Kennesaw Mt. National Battlefield Park, GA); L. Matt. (L. Mattamuskeet N.W.R., NC); P.I. (Pea I. N.W.R., NC); S.S.S. (Savannah Spoil Site, Jasper, SC).

LOONS THROUGH WOOD STORK

Lingering Common Loons were not as plentiful this year along the coast as last year, but there were more inland reports. There were several montane reports, with 3 at L. James, NC 8 Jul (*fide* TP), one in alternate plumage at Bass L., Blowing Rock, NC 5 Jun (A&CR), and one at L. Junaluska, NC 20 Jun (JM). Also of note were 2 at the Merry Ponds, Augusta, GA 4 & 12 Jun (AW et al.). Summer Pied-billed Grebes included a pair with young at the Goldsboro, NC W.T.P. 24 Jul (ED, GH), one in Bartow, GA 5 Jun (MD), and one at E.L.H. 17 Jul (JFI, EH). Another lingerer of note was the Horned Grebe in alternate plumage at Oregon Inlet, NC 6 Jun (R&PT). The last of the spring pelagic trips off North Carolina's Outer Banks were run in early Jun. Highlights included an impressive count of 3 Fea's Petrels off Oregon Inlet 4 Jun, single Manx Shearwaters off Hatteras 5 & 6 Jun, a subad. Red-billed Tropicbird off Oregon Inlet 1 Jun, an imm. Red-billed off Hatteras 5 Jun, and an imm. Masked Booby off Hatteras 6 Jun (BP). Other pelagics involved a White-faced Storm-Petrel off Oregon Inlet in late Jun (*fide* BP) and a subad. Masked Booby off C. Hatt. 2 Jul, observed from the *Queen Mary II* (MJ)! American White Pelicans continued to make news in the Region, with large numbers still being found in coastal s. South Carolina (e.g., 128 at Bear Island W.M.A. 2 Jul [LM]), and inland reports of up to 22 at L. Carroll, GA 8 Jun (BL, DMc) and 5 at Plant Hammond, Floyd, GA 7 Jun (*fide* MD). This season's Magnificent Frigatebirds included an imm. at Ft. Macon, NC 11 Jun (RN), an ad. male at Frisco, NC 14 Jun (MO), and a juv. inland at Falls L., NC 17-18 Jun (BB, ph. R&PT et al.). The latter bird provided only about the 3rd inland report for the Carolinas and was quite a surprise, as there were no storms present to bring this bird inland.

Rare for the Atlanta area was the Least Bittern found in Bartow, GA 5 Jun (MD). Not as rare and definitely increasing as a Piedmont breeder, Great Blue Heron had its best

Southern Atlantic



nesting report: 40 nests at the Ellerbe Creek, upper Falls L., NC heronry 10 Jun (JR). Unusual was the Snowy Egret offshore of Oregon Inlet, NC 1 Jun (BP). Reddish Egrets continue to increase. This season an impressive count of at least 15 (including 4 white morphs!) was present on Little St. Simons I., GA 18 Jul+ (BN). Other good counts included 6 on Cumberland I., GA 14-15 Jul (RW) and 2 at Portsmouth, NC 24 Jul (JF et al.). Rare mountain-area Black-crowned Night-Herons included one in Henderson, NC 10-27 Jul (MW, WF) and one at Blackrock L., Rabun, GA 25 Jul (G&BB). The best Roseate Spoonbill counts were an impressive 16 at Little St. Simons I., GA 18 Jul (BN), 5 at Bear Island W.M.A., SC 3 Jul (KO, AC), and 3 on Skidaway I., GA 26-27 Jul (RS, RW). Another good find was one at Sunset Beach, NC 22 Jul (*fide* TP). Inland Wood Storks of note involved 9 over n. Greene, GA 18 Jul (PS) and 3 along the Lumber R. near Long Branch, NC 21-28 Jul (CG et al.).

WHISTLING-DUCKS THROUGH CRANES

Black-bellied Whistling-Ducks continued their presence at Donnelley W.M.A., SC, with up to 22 there during the summer (*fide* RC), while up to 12 were present at Savannah N.W.R., SC in early Jun (*fide* PM). Elsewhere, a flock of 8 was at L. Medcalf, Sunset Beach, NC 14 Jun-9 Jul (MM), although at least one observer expressed some concern

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that these could have been escapees from a development in nearby Myrtle Beach, SC. As is typical, there were a few lingering waterfowl in the Region this summer: a Snow Goose at P.I. 6 Jun (R&PT), 2 Northern Pintails, 3 Ring-necked Ducks, a Lesser Scaup, and a Ruddy Duck at the E.L.H. throughout the period (CL, m.ob.), 2 Surf Scoters at the n. end of Wassaw I., GA 12 Jun (PS), 5 Red-breasted Mergansers at Oregon Inlet, NC 6 Jun (R&PT), and another Red-breasted, apparently injured, at Riverbend Park, Catawba, NC 3-31 Jul (DM et al.).

An Osprey was a surprise in the mountains over Hemphill Bald, Haywood, NC 20 Jun (JM); there are no known nesting sites anywhere near there. Also unusual was the Swallow-tailed Kite found sitting in an old Osprey nest at Orton Pond, Brunswick, NC 17 Jun (*fide* SC). This species has not been documented as nesting in that state; apparently the bird was using the nest as a roost site. Reports of Mississippi Kites from new areas continue to surface in the Region. This

summer, a family group of 5 (3 ads., 2 juvs.) was located in nw. Greensboro, NC 29 Jul+ (SD, HLi, ph. MWh). As the young were still being fed by the ads., breeding surely occurred not too far away. Unusual so far s. in summer, one kite at Little St. Simons I., GA 19 Jul (BN) was a complete surprise. The only breeding report of Sharp-shinned Hawk was of a nest with 3 fledglings at Miller Cr., Wilkes, NC in early Jul (*fide* RT). Cooper's Hawk reports continue to increase across the Region during the breeding season, with sightings from all three states. Always noteworthy, single Golden Eagles were at Bakers Mt. Park, *Catawba*, NC 4 Jul (JSu), at Mor-



The appearance of this juvenile Magnificent Frigatebird at Falls Lake, North Carolina 18 July 2004 was not related to the passage of a storm—unusual for an interior report away from Florida and the Southwest. It provided only the second inland report for the state. Photograph by Patricia Tyndall.

ganton, *Burke*, NC in Jun (*fide* DM), and at McDowell Prairie, *Mecklenburg*, NC 16 Jul (*fide* TP). Nesting American Kestrels were reported somewhat more than usual this summer, but the species continues to be a very localized breeder in the Region. Very rare in summer and unexpected was the Merlin seen at the Santee R. delta, SC 24 Jul (DF et al.). Another rare summer occurrence was the Peregrine Falcon seen chasing an Anhinga at Macon, GA 3 Jul (TI)!

A count of at least 6 Black Rails in n. *Greene*, GA (PWS, SH) was encouraging. Locally rare for the Atlanta area was a Common Moorhen at E.L.H. 2–24 Jun (CL). Noteworthy breeding-season American Coots involved a single at Woodlake, *Moore*, NC 25–27 Jun (R&PT) and a brood at the Goldsboro, NC W.T.P. (ED, GH). One of the rarest birds of the season was the Limpkin found at Blalock Res., *Clayton*, GA 6–8 Jun (PB, ph. DV, m.ob.). A Sandhill Crane flying over Hoop. 6 Jul was quite unusual in summer (DS).

PLOVERS THROUGH TERNS

Piping Plover counts at Little St. Simons I., GA rose during Jul, with an impressive peak of 90 on 31 Jul (BN). Black-necked Stilts were found in very unusual locations this summer. One was far offshore of Oregon In-

let, NC 4 Jun (BP), and one was inland in e. *Franklin*, NC 5 Jun (RD). These birds provided the first offshore report and about the 5th truly inland report for that state. Four American Avocets were unusual lingerers at Little St. Simons I., GA 13 Jun (BN). The first returning Upland Sandpipers included 4 at North R. farms, *Carteret*, NC 18 Jul (JF) and 3 at the Cherry Hospital, *Wayne*, NC grounds 24 Jul (ED, GH). Always noteworthy in our Region, Long-billed Curlews included up to 3 at Little St. Simons I., GA 18–31 Jul (BN) and one at Portsmouth, NC 24 Jul (JF et al.). Somewhat late spring sandpipers were 20 White-rumped and one Pec-

toral in *Bartow*, GA 1 Jun (PH). Three Short-billed Dowitchers at the Winston-Salem, NC W.T.P. 24–31 Jul (RS et al.) provided about the 3rd *Forsyth* report. Always a surprise in summer in the Region, an American Woodcock was a good find in sw. *Croatan* N.E., *Carteret*, NC 22 Jun (JF); no evidence of breeding was noted. A Wilson's Phalarope was quite late and unusual inland at a pond on Brandon Farm Rd., *Bartow*, GA 5 Jun (SB, JS). Inland gulls of note involved 2 Laughings and a Herring at L. Murray, SC 1 Jun (MT) and a Laughing at L. Hickory, NC 13 Jun (DM). Also very unusual was a second-winter Glaucous Gull on an island in the Cape Fear R. near Southport, NC 24–25 Jun (WG, CC); summering birds of this species are almost unknown in the Region. Tern highlights for the season included a Roseate at C. Hatt. 17 Jul (SBn, EE), a well-described ad. Arctic on the beach at Ft. Macon, NC 5 Jun (AG), and 2 Bridleds and a Sooty off *Savannah*, GA 25 Jun (RW). Inland tern reports of note were 2 Caspians at the Merry Ponds, *Augusta*, GA 30 Jul (LS), 2 Forster's at Santee N.W.R., SC 24 Jul (MT), a Forster's at L. Hickory, NC 29 Jul (DM), 5 Blacks on Brandon Farm Rd., *Bartow*, GA 31 Jul (SB), and 2 Blacks along the French Broad R., *Henderson*, NC 31 Jul (WF).

DOVES THROUGH THRUSHES

This summer's reports of White-winged Doves, now annual in the Region, totaled three singles: near *Watkinsville*, GA 7 Jun (PS), at *Skidaway I.*, GA 24–27 Jul (AWd, RW), and at *Beaufort*, NC 2 Jun (R&SBo). Single Black-billed Cuckoos, annual at this season in e. North Carolina, were near *Washington* 4 Jun (MJ) and near *Catfish L.*, *Croatan* N.E. 9 Jun (JF). No evidence of

breeding was noted, and these birds were most likely late migrants. Of interest was the female Ruby-throated Hummingbird found dead at *New Bern*, NC 12 Jun (*fide* SC). The bird had been banded in *West Columbia*, TX in Sep 2003, thus suggesting a circum-Gulf migration route for this individual.

Localized summer outposts of breeding Willow Flycatchers at *Macon*, GA and *Coddle Creek Res.*, *Cabarrus*, NC hosted birds again this summer. Between four and six pairs were at *Macon* for the 3rd year in a row (TI, m.ob.), and one was singing along *Shimpoek Rd.*, *Coddle Creek Res.* 15–28 Jun (JB). Scissor-tailed Flycatchers were again found summering, an annual event for the past several years. The best report was of the 5 (family group) w. of *Saluda*, *Edgefield*, SC 24–30 Jul (JG, RC, CE, DSI, MS). One was near the *Orangeburg*, SC sod farm 23 Jul (BM, BF), and one was along *Southpoint Rd.*, *Ocracoke*, NC 1 Jun (*fide* EHa). The previous nesting locations of *McDonough*, GA and *Monroe*, NC hosted only single birds this year, and those stayed only briefly.

Of interest was the young Blue-headed Vireo near the *Taliaferro/Warren*, GA county line 11 Jul (JFI, EH); this is a very localized and uncommon breeder near the Fall Line. An interesting breeding record was provided by the 2 ad. Tree Swallows with 2 young at *Big Lazar W.M.A.*, *Talbot*, GA 17 Jul (JFI, EH). This extends the known nesting range in that state a little farther w. and s. of the previous *Macon* area nesting location. Up to 2 Brown Creepers were noted in *Rabun*, GA 19 Jun (JS, BL); there are still no confirmed breeding records for that state. Probably the most unusual report of the season was of the pair of Bewick's Wrens at *Chickamauga Battlefield Park*, *Walker/Catoosa*, GA (ph. SP). The birds were apparently present since late May until early Aug, and on 24 Jul Pangle observed 2 ads. feeding 2 juvs., representing the first breeding evidence in the Region since the early 1980s. Very early migrant Veeries included one observed singing in a yard at *Beaufort*, NC 22–23 Jul (R&SBo) and one heard over *Rocky Mount*, NC 28 Jul (RD). A Hermit Thrush singing on *Grandfather Mt.*, NC 17 Jul (CW) added to the growing number of locations for this uncommon breeder in that state's mountains.

WARBLERS THROUGH FINCHES

There were several noteworthy lingering warblers found this summer. A singing male Cape May Warbler was found at *Suwanee*, *Gwinnett*, GA 14–16 Jun (ph. RTTr), and single Blackpoll Warblers were at *Augusta*, GA 13 Jun (*fide* AW) and in downtown *Atlanta*, GA 17 Jun (DH). This summer produced a few more breeding-season reports of ad. male Yellow-rumped Warbler in *North Carolina*: at *Mt. Mitchell* 19–22 Jun (SC) and at

Clingman's Dome, Great Smoky Mts. N.P. 4 Jul (MTo). Cerulean Warbler is one of the first warblers to start the fall migration, but two reports this summer were noteworthy, as the species is not often reported on migration. An imm. male was at Banks L., Lanier, GA 25 Jul (JFI, EH), providing a new early fall date for the state's Coastal Plain, and a male was singing at Southern Shores, NC 19 Jul (JL)—either a very early migrant or a wandering bird. Worm-eating Warblers made news, with one at Carter Cr., Randolph, GA 19 Jun (JFI, EH) being very far s. in that state, and one at Congaree N.P., Richland, SC 12 Jun (RC) being unusual in summer in the cen. part of that state.

Lark Sparrows are very localized in the sandhills region of North Carolina during the breeding season. Reports have been few of late, but this year, a pair was noted at Camp Mackall, Scotland 5 Jun (HL). Elsewhere, a Lark Sparrow in Turner, GA 31 Jul (JFI, EH) was most likely a very early migrant. Georgia had a few breeding-season range extensions for Song Sparrow this summer, in Columbus 12 Jun (WCh) and 3 (including 2 hatch-year birds) in n. Greene 18 Jul (PWS, SH). Very noteworthy lingering sparrows included a White-throated in Beaufort, NC all summer (!) (R&SBo); 2 White-throateds near Darien, GA 10 Jun, with one until 16 Jun (DCo); a White-crowned netted at Wassaw I., GA 11 Jun (PR, PWS), providing that state's first Jun record; a White-crowned at Emerald Isle, NC 29 Jun (SCr, JV); and a Dark-eyed Junco in ne. Atlanta, GA 15 Jun (fide TM). As usual, Dickeissel reports were spread around the Region. The best numbers were 4 at Brandon Farm Rd., Bartow, GA 5 Jun (SB), 4 at the usual Gaston, NC site 18 Jun–8 Jul (ST, JMr, JB), and two pairs in e. Franklin, NC 5 Jun (RD). Elsewhere, one near North R., Carteret, NC 11–25 Jul (JF, JFe) provided the only

breeding-season record for that county. Only one Yellow-headed Blackbird was found this season, an ad. male at a feeder near Back Cr., Carteret, NC 21 Jul (fide JF). This season's Shiny Cowbird sightings were of a male and a female on Wassaw I., GA 10–11 Jun (PWS, PR) and a male at P.I. 23 Jul+ (JF et al., m.ob.). Summer reports of Baltimore Oriole



This Limpkin visited Lake Blalock in Clayton County, Georgia 6 (here) through 8 June 2004; the species is still very rare in the Southern Atlantic region but appears to be increasing as a visitor here. Photograph by D. Vickers.

outside the known nesting range included 3 singing males at Riverbend Park, Catawba, NC 5 Jun (DM) and a male near Coddle Creek Res., Cabarrus, NC 15 Jun (JB). Rare summer House Finch reports in Georgia included a pair on Wassaw I. 10 Jun (PS) and 3 in Lowndes 25 Jul (JFI, EH). The Lowndes birds were extremely far south; the Wassaw I.

birds were the observer's first for a barrier island in that state. Interesting Red Crossbill sightings included an impressive group of about 100 near Black Balsam along the Blue Ridge Parkway, Haywood, NC 5 Jun (fide WF) and 2 visiting a feeder in Suches, Union, GA 26 Jun (fide TM). Three Pine Siskins were unusual in Cherry Log, Gilmer, GA in Jun, with one remaining all summer (TS).

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State of the Region

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The biogeography of the Carolinas and Georgia is often described using the Region's three distinct physiographic provinces, the Coastal Plain (all areas east of the fall line), the Piedmont (from the fall line west to the foothills), and the Mountains. This old tripartite division is convenient for the study of birdlife in this Region (and in neighboring Virginia), and it is used by bird conservationists to describe regional priorities, for instance in the NABCI Bird Conservation Regions, in which these provinces correspond to BCRs 27, 29, and 28, respectively. We will use those BCRs to consider the most pressing conservation concerns in the Southern Atlantic region—all of which are being addressed by federal and state wildlife and conservation agencies to some degree, but few of which appear to be well in hand.

Coastal Plain • Probably the biggest conservation concern for birds on the outer coasts is continued human population growth on barrier islands and adjacent mainland, which puts tremendous pressure on nesting colonial waterbirds, especially terns, skimmers, and shorebirds. More and more people, their SUVs, their boats, and their pets, are visiting the

barrier islands. More and more often, there are incidents involving people driving through nesting bird colonies, creating ruts in sand that impact movement of chicks (and hatchling sea turtles), unleashing their dogs into colonies, and running over nesting birds, eggs, or chicks. Although areas of nesting plovers and terns are cordoned off and posted against disturbance, these efforts at protection are often sabotaged. Education of coastal communities about bird conservation is increasingly difficult, as the coasts come to be used by transients for holiday purposes during the warm months, the most crucial time for bird reproduction. Having more people along the coast also attracts more mammals such as raccoons and opossums that feed on garbage—and on eggs and chicks of terns and shorebirds. American Oystercatchers (a species of high concern in the *U. S. Shorebird Conservation Plan*), Willets, herons and egrets, and other island-, beach- and wrack-nesting bird species, while not of highest concern, are negatively affected by the increase in disturbance and predators. Finally, the clearing of "brush"—coastal shrub-scrub habitat, increasingly fragmented and hard to find—for homes on the coast has resulted in a tremendous reduction in bird species that nest chiefly in such habitat in the Carolinas, such as Painted Bunting and Common Ground-Dove.

Adding to the problem is the increasing difficulty for government agencies to have dredge material placed on beaches or islands to help species that require very early successional beach habitat—e.g., Gull-billed, Common, and Least Terns, Black Skimmers, and

(often) Wilson's Plovers. The U. S. Army Corps of Engineers has had severe budget constraints, and beach communities now must often pay to have dredge material pumped onto their beaches to provide extra sand buffer to protect beach homes. Formerly, during routine dredging operations, the Corps placed dredge material on new islands in channels, or added to existing islands. Now, sand that is not deposited on beachfronts is often placed offshore, or in diked impoundments, sites these birds cannot utilize. The result is that the Region is seeing drastic declines in these terns, plovers, and the skimmer, though there is a bright spot for some species, such as Least Terns, which have taken to nesting on the flat rooftops of strip-malls, now an abundant artificial habitat in many beach communities. In contrast to what seem intractable impossibilities for bird conservation elsewhere, the situation on the outer coasts could be improved immediately by a multi-agency effort to increase nesting habitats, to exclude predators, and to staff monitoring agencies with full-time wardens to minimize human disturbance during the nesting season. We hope to see such an effort materialize in the near future. Overshadowing our best efforts may be the no-longer-theoretical specter of global climate change, in which sea-level rise would erase most coastal habitats, more frequent and severe hurricanes would further damage what habitat remains, and warmer climate could alter plant and avifaunal communities radically.

Away from the immediate coastlines, both Swainson's Warbler and *waynei* Black-throated Green Warbler have been species of study and concern because of their limited ranges and deficiencies of data on their pocosin habitats in the outer Coastal Plain, and Wood Thrush has clearly declined in adjacent moist deciduous woodlands. However, the major concern over the past few decades in the inner Coastal Plain has been the loss of the Longleaf Pine ecosystem. Development, fire suppression, and conversion to Loblolly Pine or Slash Pine plantations have meant a loss of habitat for resident Red-cockaded Woodpecker and Bachman's Sparrows, wintering Henslow's Sparrows, and many other animals. The exotic Fire Ant, now abundant in Longleaf Pine systems, also seems to be impacting ground-nesting species such as Bachman's Sparrow, Common Nighthawk, Chuck-will's-widow, Whip-poor-will, and Northern Bobwhite.

Although there are positive signs in terms of protection of Longleaf Pine systems and increased fire management to promote the pre-settlement fire regime, Red-cockaded Woodpeckers and Bachman's Sparrows in all three states are increasingly limited to protected sites, such as military reservations, national forests, and various refuges and parks. It is costly for conservation agencies to acquire Loblolly or Slash Pine plantations, remove such trees, plant Longleaf seedlings, and start a burning program, but this is being done on a small scale, and in order to increase the acreage of the Longleaf Pine system, this is the best option. Conservation organizations are working with private landowners, through Safe Harbor or other types of easements and programs, to provide management guidance, personnel for prescribed burning, and other assistance to have private lands better managed for species of the Longleaf Pine system. Of course, these few bird species are just the tip of the iceberg of rare species present in this system, one that contains dozens of globally rare plants, invertebrates, reptiles, and amphibians.

Piedmont • The bulk of the population in the Region lives in the Piedmont. Many millions live in the swath from Atlanta northeastward through Athens, Greenville, Spartanburg, Charlotte, Winston-Salem, Greensboro, Durham, and Raleigh. Needless to say, habitats for nesting birds are being lost at the rate of thousands of acres per day. Perhaps the biggest concern is loss of farmland and early successional habitats, especially for species requiring grassland. Of course, pastures and fields are not natural habitats in this region of 40–55 inches of yearly rainfall. But Grasshopper Sparrows, Eastern Meadowlarks, Loggerhead Shrikes, and a few other species spread eastward in centuries past, as forests were cleared for agriculture. Christmas Bird Count data clearly indicate that wintering species that utilize open-field habitats—such as American Kestrel, Northern Harrier, American Pipit, Savannah Sparrow (and other sparrows), and Eastern Meadowlark—are declining across the Piedmont as well, but no more formal study has been conducted on such declines. Most of the development today takes place in former farmland, and thus the Region is seeing steeper declines in these bird species than it is in forest-based species, though fragmentation of forests has surely also taken a toll on many passerines and near-passerines, reducing nesting success and making them more vulnerable to brood parasitism by Brown-headed Cowbird.

What can be done to slow the loss of fields and farmland to development? This is a dilemma: if human population must expand, is it better to

build homes in already cleared/disturbed land such as fields than it is in pristine forests? Certainly, homes should be built in a way that minimizes negative effects on wildlife. In most cases, conservation of farmland is most readily achievable through zoning or other governmental actions, and some conservation organizations have been acquiring easements on farmland in order to maintain landscapes in pastures and various fields. Some municipalities are creating "Piedmont Prairies," a somewhat artificial situation today but which may well have been a natural condition during drier times thousands of years ago. We all want to see Loggerhead Shrikes and other open-country birds thriving in our Region—but will this come at the expense of conservation efforts to protect forested lands and other natural habitats? This physiographic province also lacks a comprehensive plan to prioritize and set aside corridors of both field and forest for wildlife and for future generations.

Mountains • One can draw up a list of dozens of exotic plants and animals that have impacted the Carolinas and Georgia over the past 100 years—Asiatic Clam, European Starling, *Phragmites*, *Microstegium*, and Japanese Honeysuckle to name a few—but hardly any may have the impact that the Hemlock Woolly Adelgid will have over the next 10–20 years. This exotic pest has devastated Canada and Carolina Hemlocks from Virginia northward, and now hemlocks are dying in the North Carolina mountains. After having lost nearly all mature Fraser Firs on our mountaintops to the Balsam Woolly Adelgid in the late 1970s and 1980s, we now face the real possibility of losing many or most mature hemlocks in southern Appalachia. Will the White Pines, which also favor coves and cooler slopes, take the place of the hemlocks and provide enough cover, food, and cool microclimate to allow species such as Blackburnian and Black-throated Green Warblers, and more boreal species such as Red-breasted Nuthatch, Brown Creeper, and Golden-crowned Kinglet, to maintain current population levels? Will Red Spruce islands become the last refuges of these boreal species in southern Appalachia?

Biologists have detected tremendous declines in breeding birds that utilize conifers in the spruce-fir zone of North Carolina over the past 25 years. Most of the species mentioned above have either moved downslope into hemlock-shaded ravines or have disappeared locally altogether. The once thriving Appalachian mountain ecosystems have already been ravaged by air pollution and resulting acid rain, by the Balsam Woolly Adelgid, and probably by global warming, and the future of these ecosystems looks bleak at present. Fortunately, the high-elevation forests at greatest risk are mostly on public lands, where human activities are relatively controlled and modification of habitat is limited. Some would argue that concern is misplaced here, that we are in little danger of losing such spruce-fir-hemlock species on a global level, as most of them nest in the boreal zone across Canada. But that enormous ecosystem has similar problems with overharvesting of timber, climate change, insect infestations, and, increasingly, pollution. In the Carolina mountains, some agencies are releasing adelgid-eating beetles to combat the problem of the Hemlock Woolly Adelgid, but this is an expensive proposition that may save only a few acres of trees. For the sake of the marvelous biodiversity of North Carolina, South Carolina, and Georgia, we can only hope that such efforts meet with some success.



A song almost certainly never to be heard again: this male Bachman's Warbler on territory in Charleston, South Carolina 5 May 1958 was one of the last individuals to be documented anywhere. Though the causes of the species' demise are not known, the widespread alteration of lowland woodland habitats in the Southeast was almost certainly a contributing factor. Photograph by J. H. Dick/VIREO.

Rainfall in June and July was somewhat above normal, as were the temperatures. Nesting waterbirds are always in a precarious situation in Florida, and this summer was no exception. Rich Paul reports that two major colonies in Tampa Bay, containing about 3000 pairs each, were abandoned this year due to raccoon predation: Audubon's Washburn Sanctuary and Tarpon Key N.W.R. The raccoons have been removed from Washburn but remain on Tarpon Key as of this writing. As seems to always occur in Florida in the summer, either few people were out, or few people chose to send in reports, leaving the state with spotty coverage for the season.

Abbreviations/definitions: report (any observation); record (only those reports verifiable from photograph, videotape, or specimen evidence); R.A. (Restoration Area).

GREBES THROUGH SPOONBILLS

A Pied-billed Grebe was at Summerland Key, *Monroe* 5 Jun (JB, SS). Finding pelagic species off the coast of Florida can be difficult, so this summer's array of species is quite impressive. On 13 Jun in the Florida Current off Key Biscayne, *Miami-Dade*, Bithorn found one Greater, 3 Cory's, and 8 Audubon's Shearwaters along with 10 Wilson's and 2 Band-rumped Storm-Petrels. A trip to Marathon Hump, 37 km off Marathon, *Monroe* 26 Jun located a Cory's and 40+ Audubon's Shearwaters, along with a Band-rumped and 5 Wilson's Storm-Petrels (LM et al.). Two Cory's Shearwaters were found off Key Biscayne, *Miami-Dade* 24 Jul (RD). A single Wilson's Storm-Petrel was 24 km off Hillsboro Inlet, *Broward* 10 Jul (MB). Farther n., a trip out of Ft. Pierce Inlet off *Brevard*, *Indian River*, and *St. Lucie* up to 73 km offshore 3 Jul found single Cory's and Greater Shearwaters and 4 Wilson's Storm-Petrels (EH, PH). A trip out of Ponce Inlet, *Volusia* 22 Jul 160 km offshore found 23 Cory's and 7 Audubon's Shearwaters and 2 Wilson's and 1 Leach's Storm-Petrels (JP). An impressive 1629 Magnificent Frigatebirds were counted 10 Jul at ABC I. off Marco I., *Collier* (TB et al.). On a more negative note, frigatebirds have abandoned their long-time roost on Tarpon Key in Tampa Bay, likely due to the above-noted raccoon predation (RP).

For the 2nd consecutive year, mid-summer American Bitterns were found at Orlando Wetlands Park, *Orange* 19 Jun (CP), and up to 3, including a juv. (HR), were at Lake Apopka R.A. throughout the period. Also for the 2nd consecutive year, a Least Bittern was found 22 Jul at Ten Thousand Islands N.W.R., *Collier* (TD). Two juv. Great White Herons were well n. of normal at St.

Florida



Marks N.W.R., *Wakulla* 26 Jun (TC), as was a single bird 14 Jun at Huguenot Memorial Park, *Duval* (BR). Reddish Egrets nested successfully at Three Rooker I., *Pinellas* for the 2nd consecutive year (RP, MK); a juv. was inland at Lake Placid, *Highlands* 30 Jun (RP). While White Ibis numbers were down compared to their huge year in 2003, when the colony at the Alafia Bank, *Hillsborough* "borrowed" about 10,000 pairs from the Everglades, overall numbers were still good (RP). With the recent decline of Roseate Spoonbills in Florida Bay, the colony at Alafia Bank, *Hillsborough*, which contained 320 pairs this year, is now the largest in Florida (RP).

WATERFOWL THROUGH SHOREBIRDS

Black-bellied Whistling-Ducks continue to expand their range, with up to 20 in *Leon* into Jul (MR), 25 at Lake Apopka R.A. 6 Jun (HR), 15 at the *Polk* phosphate mines 4 Jul (PT, CG), 5 at Orlando Wetlands Park 19 Jun (CP), and up to 40 at Viera, *Brevard* 6-30 Jul (DF). Fulvous Whistling-Ducks

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have become harder to find, with the only reports coming from Lake Apopka R.A., where a peak of 20 was counted 9 Jun (HR). Summering ducks were scarce this summer: Blue-winged Teal reports came from four locations, and 2 male Lesser Scaup were at Springhill W.T.P., *Leon* (GM). Eighteen Turkey Vultures in heavy molt were at Garden Key, *Dry Tortugas N.P.* 19 Jun (DS et al.). Hundreds of Swallow-tailed Kites were at Lake Apopka R.A. in Jul, with a peak of 475 on 21 Jul (HR). Mississippi Kites nested for the first time in *Duval*, with a pair incubating for about three weeks in s. Jacksonville (RS et al.). Cooper's Hawks have been increasing as nesting birds throughout

cen. and s. Florida, but this summer's reports from 10 locations in the West Palm Beach-to-Miami urban corridor is quite impressive. Short-tailed Hawks were reported from four locations in mid-peninsular Florida, about average for this scarce species. While not uncommon in the prairies of cen. Florida, 42 Crested Caracaras in one pasture in *St. Lucie* 30 Jun (SC) was impressive. American Kestrels are scarce in Florida in the summer, so reports from four locations were about average.

Three Black Rails were heard 13 Jun and 5 were heard 25 Jul at Werner-Boyce Salt Springs S.P., *Pasco* (RSm), a recently discovered population. Purple Gallinules bred in both *Hillsborough* (RP) and *Pinellas* (JF), where they are quite uncommon. The peak count of Purple Gallinules at Lake Apopka R.A. was 49 on 2 Jul (HR). An American Golden-Plover was at Crandon Beach, *Miami-Dade* 22 Jul (RD). Leary found 109 Wilson's Plovers on Big Bird I., *Nassau* 9 Jul. A color-banded ad. Piping Plover, originally banded in 2000 in the Great

Lakes, made a return appearance at Bird Is., *Nassau* 9 Jul (PL). A Piping Plover 22 Jul at Crandon Beach was fairly early for that location (RD). Black-necked Stilts nested successfully for the first time in w. *Pasco* at Trinity (KT). American Oystercatchers nesting in *Hillsborough* Bay, *Hillsborough* and the Barge Canal spoil islands, *Citrus* are now believed to be declining due to erosion of island shorelines, although disturbance remains a factor. A number of pairs are now actually nesting under trees (mangroves, Brazilian Pepper, Australian Pine) in apparent response to beach loss (RP, MK et al.). Up to 12 imm. American Oystercatchers summered at Little Estero Lagoon, *Lee*, including an individual banded as a chick in Massachusetts (CE). An impressive 211 American Avocets were at the *Polk* phosphate mines 4 Jul (PT, CG). Two American Avocets were at West L., *Everglades* N.P. 13 Jun (SS), and 9 were at Snake Bight, *Everglades* N.P. 3 Jul (BR).

The first returning Greater Yellowlegs was 6 Jul at Viera, *Brevard* (DF), and the first Lesser Yellowlegs were 35 on 4 Jul at *Polk* phosphate mines (PT, CG). Single Solitary Sandpipers were at Springhill W.T.P., *Leon* 19 Jul (GM), Lake Apopka R.A.

24 Jul (HR), and in mid-*Pinellas* 24 Jul (JF). A Spotted Sandpiper was at Snake Bight, *Everglades* N.P. 3 Jul (BR). An Upland Sandpiper was e. of Nine Mile Bend, *Palm Beach* 25 Jul (BM). More Whimbrels than normal were reported, with reports from *Duval*, *Hillsborough*, *Lee*, *Pasco*, *Pinellas*, and *Wakulla*. Single Long-billed Curlews were at Little Estero Lagoon, *Lee* 1-23 Jun (CE) and Big Bird I. 22 Jul (PL). Six to 8 Ruddy Turnstones and 3-4 Sanderlings summered at Crandon Beach (RD). The



Black-bellied Whistling-Ducks are expanding rapidly in the central peninsula of Florida. These adults were photographed at Viera Wetlands, Brevard County on 18 July 2004.

Photograph by David Freeland.

first southbound Semipalmated Sandpiper was 15 Jul at Springhill W.T.P., *Leon* (GM), and the first Western Sandpipers were at Lake Apopka R.A. 24 Jul (HR). The first returning Least Sandpipers were 15 at the *Polk* phosphate mines 4 Jul (PT, CG). Three White-rumped Sandpipers at Viera 3 Jun (DS et al.) were the only ones reported. Berney found 42 Pectoral Sandpipers 25 Jul at Browns Farm Road, *Palm Beach*. Single alternate-plumaged Curlew Sandpipers were seen and photographed at Ft. De Soto Park, *Pinellas* 10 Jul (BH) and Talbot Islands S.P. 17 Jul (PL). Four Red Knots apparently summered at Little Estero Lagoon, with 2 southbound birds there 24 Jul (CE). Short-billed Dowitchers lingered at Little Estero Lagoon until 23 Jun (CE). Single female Wilson's Phalaropes in alternate plumage were found 3 Jun at Merritt Island N.W.R. (DS et al.) and e. of Seven Springs, *Pasco* 28 Jun (KT).

Leary reported an impressive 10,000+ larids at Nassau Sound 22 Jul. One Great Black-backed and 2-3 Lesser Black-backed Gulls summered at Crandon Beach (RD). Florida's first Heermann's Gull put in yet another appearance when it returned to Ft. De Soto Park 15 Jul (*vide* LA). This bird

initially showed up in Oct 2000 and has been returning at various times since then. Four Gull-billed Terns were at the *Polk* phosphate mines 4 Jul (PT, GC). Twenty pairs bred on Hillsborough Bay, *Hillsborough* this season (AP, RP). Royal Tern numbers in Florida hit probably a 120+ year high, with nearly 4000 pairs nesting in Tampa Bay alone (RP). Seventy-eight Common Terns at Three Rooker I. 25 Jun (MK) was an unusually large number for summer. Forster's Terns do not breed in Florida, so 352 at the *Polk* phosphate mines 4 Jul (PT, GC) was an impressive number. Ten Roseate Terns were seen 25 Jun at a well-reported colony at the Marathon Government Center, *Monroe* (TD, DS, CE). Least Terns had a very successful season at Little Estero Lagoon, *Lee*, with 300 birds, including about 150 juvs., present 31 Jul (CE). As their beach habitat is less available, Least Terns have taken to nesting on rooftops. Freeland found 30+ pairs on a rooftop in Melbourne, *Brevard* 8 Jul. Thirty-six Bridled Terns and 40+ Sooty Terns were seen on a pelagic trip to Marathon Hump, *Monroe* 26 Jun (LM et al.). Three Bridled and 750+ Sooty Terns were seen 160 km e. of Ponce Inlet, *Volusia* 22 Jul (JP). Two Sooty Terns were seen off Hillsboro Inlet, *Broward* 10 Jul (MB). Returning Black Terns were seen 25 Jun at Three Rooker I. (MK) and St. Petersburg, *Pinellas* (RoS). But in which direction was the alternate-plumaged individual found 8 Jun at Gullivan Bay, Ten Thousand Islands N.W.R. (TD) going? Five pairs of Black Skimmers nesting on a rooftop were noted in Melbourne, *Brevard* 8 Jul (DF). At a more traditional beach nesting location, 75 chicks hatched at Big Bird I. 22 Jul (PL).

DOVES THROUGH FINCHES

Twenty-five White-crowned Pigeons at Southern Glades Wildlife and Environmental Area, *Miami-Dade* 10 Jun (RD) was a high number away from the Keys. A Yellow-billed Cuckoo was at Garden Key, Dry Tortugas N.P. 20 Jun (DS et al.). Seven Antillean Nighthawks at the Marathon Airport, *Monroe* 25 Jun (DS, TD, CE) were to be expected at what might be the easiest place to see this species in the United States, but one at Frog Pond W.M.A., *Miami-Dade* 12 Jun (RD) was unexpected, as this species is rare on the mainland. A female Belted Kingfisher at Largo, *Pinellas* 26 Jun (KN) was either summering or very early. Scissor-tailed Flycatchers are regular winter residents, but one at Flamingo, *Everglades* N.P. 18 Jun-3 Jul (BM, BR) was quite unusual. Even more unusual was a Fork-tailed Flycatcher 23-31 Jul at St. Petersburg, *Pinellas* (LA et al.). An impressive 2850 Purple

Martins were at Lake Apopka R.A. 20 Jun, with 2180 still there 23 Jun (HR). Single Cliff Swallows were at Lake Apopka R.A. 4 & 18 Jul (HR). Barn Swallows are a scarce but increasing breeder in Florida, so the presence of 40+ on each of the 17 dates that Robinson censused Lake Apopka R.A. is particularly noteworthy, as were the 290 he recorded on 24 Jul. Also of note was a Barn Swallow at Garden Key, Dry Tortugas N.P. 19 Jun (DS et al.).

Singing male Wood Thrushes were recorded at eight sites in Leon during the season (GM). American Robins are very scarce in Florida during the summer, so three reports from Leon, with a juv. at Springhill Road W.T.P. (GM), were notable, if not unexpected. Totally unexpected was the singing robin 11–12 Jun at Homestead, Miami-Dade (LM). Out-of-season

Gray Catbirds were at Boyd Hill Nature Trail, St. Petersburg 2 Jun (RoS) and Matheson Hammock, Miami-Dade 13 Jun (DS). Common Mynas are increasing in Florida. Their center of abundance has been the Homestead area, but they have now spread throughout the Keys, becoming much more common in the past year (JB). The status of this species is uncertain, as they have not been sufficiently monitored to determine breeding success and population size.

(They are certainly more common than Red-whiskered Bulbul and Spot-breasted Oriole, two species already on the official list for Florida.) A Black-and-white Warbler 12 Jul at Key Largo, Monroe (BMu) and a Yellow-throated Warbler at Miami Shores 11 Jul (AH) were both early. A Yellow War-



Two Curlew Sandpipers were found in Florida in July 2004. The first was at Fort De Soto Park, Pinellas County 10 July, the second at Talbot Islands State Park, Duval County 17 July (here). Photograph by Patrick Leary.

bler fluttering around a boat ca. 57 km ne. of Ft. Pierce Inlet 3 Jul (EH, PH) was slightly early as a migrant. The first returning Yellow Warbler was at Lake Apopka R.A. on 18 Jul, while a late northbound American Redstart was there 2 Jun (HR). An impressive 32 Yellow-breasted Chats were at Lake Apopka R.A. 2 Jun (HR).

Three Chipping Sparrows were s. of normal at Avon Park, Highlands for most of Jun (AB). A juv. Lark Sparrow was at Hugh

Taylor Birch S.P., Broward 31 Jul (MB). Blue Grosbeaks and Indigo and Painted Buntings were present throughout the season at Lake Apopka R.A., with max counts of 33, 49, and 6 respectively (HR). Robinson had up to 3 Dickcissels at Lake Apopka R.A. 2 Jun–4 Jul. As is normal, blackbird numbers increased as the season progressed, but 182,000 Red-winged Blackbirds and 97,000 Boat-tailed Grackles at Lake Apopka R.A. in late Jul (HR) were truly impressive counts. Shiny Cowbirds were reported from Flamingo, Everglades N.P. 8 Jun (B&LC) and Alligator Pt., Franklin 11–17 Jul (JM). Bronzed Cowbirds seem to be increasing in Florida in the summer, with reports of summering birds from three locations in Miami-Dade and one in Collier. An alternate-plumaged male American Goldfinch was at Altamonte Springs, Seminole 14 Jun (PHu).

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State of the Region

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Bounded on three sides by ocean, sea, and gulf, Florida has long been recognized as a "prolific reservoir of biological diversity" (Fitzpatrick 1991). The state supports 81 natural communities, including some of the most diverse forests and grasslands in North America. Overall, Florida supports over 3600 native plants and 700 native vertebrates, with 8% and 17% of these, respectively, endemic. Florida's avifauna (479 native species) is the largest of any state east of the Mississippi River and includes one endemic species and several endemic subspecies. In the past 100 years, the state has lost the Passenger Pigeon, Carolina Parakeet, Ivory-billed Woodpecker, Bachman's Warbler, and Dusky Seaside Sparrow. Currently, 66 other taxa are considered endangered, threatened, rare, of special concern, or of undetermined status (Rodgers et al. 1996). Recent well-publicized conservation initiatives in Florida such as the restoration of the Everglades and the Kissimmee River and the reintroduction of Whooping Cranes have overshadowed the needs of numerous other taxa, for which in many cases even basic biological data are lacking. Because all of Florida's terrestrial and wetland habitats are under siege, it is difficult to rank conservation priorities (see box below), and the relevant NABCI Bird Conservation Regions—BCR 31 (Peninsular Florida) and BCR 27 (Southeastern Coastal Plain, for



This Dusky Seaside Sparrow photographed at Merritt Island National Wildlife Refuge, Florida was one of the last of its kind. In the Everglades, the endemic Cape Sable Seaside Sparrow, a very distinctive taxon also formerly (and potentially again to be) considered a separate species, maintains a toehold, but its habitat is threatened by changes in hydrology and plant communities, severe hurricanes, and sea-level rise. Photograph by Paul W. Sykes, Jr./VIREO.

northern Florida and the Panhandle) do not shed much light on the complexity of ecoregions, especially subtropical habitats, in the state. By way of an overview, five important phenomena affecting Florida birdlife and bird conservation are considered in brief here.

Land protection • Florida gains one million residents every three to four years, a rate of 700–900 residents/day. The population increased from 2.7 million residents in 1950 to 15.9 million in 2000. Approximately 165,000 acres of habitat annually—19 acres per hour—are destroyed to accommodate the expanding human population. This growth has reduced cutthroatgrass seeps by 99%, Miami pine rocklands by 98%, Longleaf Pine flatwoods by 97%, unimpounded Brevard County salt marshes by 95%, Lake Wales Ridge scrub by 85%, Florida dry prairie by 81%, and Everglades marshland by 65%. The massive reduction of these habitats makes the remaining fragments all the more vulnerable to damage by landfalling tropical cyclones and other unpredictable events. Noss and Peters (1995) ranked Florida as the most ecologically endangered state in the Union—the only state to earn “extreme” ratings for every category measured (overall risk, ecosystem risk, species risk, development risk, development status, and development trend), and Florida contained the most endangered ecosystems (nine). To counteract such massive losses of native flora and fauna, Florida has led the nation in public-land acquisition. Between 1964 and 2000, over \$3.7 billion was spent to protect 4.7 million acres of land. Florida’s current primary land-acquisition program, Preservation 2000, will commit an additional \$3 billion through 2009. Currently, over 9.27 million acres of land—more than 27% of the state—is publicly owned or under perpetual conservation easement, and this amount increases by more than 200,000 acres each year (Jue et al. 2001, FDEP 2004).

Exotic species • Like other subtropical areas, developed parts of Florida have been landscaped with vegetation native to many parts of the world. Most species are benign, but 67 forms are ranked by the Florida Exotic Plant Pest Council as Category I invasive species that have invaded and disrupted native communities (FLEPPC 2004). Exotic animals are also generally benign, but there are exceptions. Among the 200+ species of exotic birds reported from Florida, few are impacting native species (Pranty 2004). Perhaps the greatest danger is posed by feral Mallards, which are (increasingly?) hybridizing with Mottled Ducks. Moorman and Gray (1994) warned that “if no preventative management action [against feral Mallards] is taken, the Mottled Duck as a discreet entity has a questionable future.” Simberloff et al. (1997) is a good source for the issues concerning Florida’s exotic flora and fauna.

Cowbird brood parasitism • Although not a major concern presently, brood parasitism by Brown-headed Cowbirds bears watching. Local declines in populations of Black-whiskered Vireos and Florida Prairie Warblers along the central Gulf Coast and of Painted Buntings along the northern Atlantic Coast have been blamed on cowbird brood parasitism. Bronzed Cowbirds are increasing and seemed poised to begin breeding in Florida (in fact, observations during summer 2004 suggest that it is already occurring), but Shiny Cowbirds remain rare in the state, with breeding not yet documented.

Sea-level rise • Given the slight topographic relief of Florida (its highest point is 345 feet above mean sea level), the effects of rising seas could be devastating. Emslie (1996) documented that a one-meter rise would inundate 5.8% of the peninsula; an increase of 10 m would eliminate 53%. Recently, Williams et al. (1999) documented a replacement of coastal hydric hammocks by salt marsh at Waccasassa Bay, Levy County, during 1992–1995. They attributed forest loss to increased soil salinity as a result of a mean sea level rise of 1.5 mm/year between 1939 and 1994. A warming ocean is also expected to produce more frequent and stronger hurricanes; Florida habitats were severely damaged by Charley, Frances, Ivan, and Jeanne in 2004.

West Nile Virus (WNV) • The documented impacts of WNV on corvids elsewhere in the United States created alarm in Florida for its endemic corvid—the Florida Scrub-Jay. Scrub-jay populations have decreased an estimated 90% in the past 100 years due to loss and fragmentation of habitat and fire exclusion. However, the effects of WNV in Florida seem minor, perhaps because the abundance of mosquitoes in the state may have allowed animals to have built up a natural resistance or immunity against some mosquito-borne diseases such as WNV (Reed Bowman, pers. comm.). However, continued monitoring of WNV in Florida certainly is warranted.

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The following bird taxa, grouped by habitat, are among those that are particularly deserving of increased management and/or research efforts:

Beach/dune species (Cuban Snowy Plover [*Charadrius alexandrinus tenuirostris*], Wilson’s Plover, Piping Plover, American Oystercatcher, Roseate Tern, Least Tern, Black Skimmer, and other breeding or wintering larids). Threats: severe disturbance—many species have begun to nest on gravel rooftops, with variable success and unknown long-term consequences; continued oceanfront development; sea-level rise.

Saltmarsh species (Black Rail, Florida Clapper Rail [*Rallus longirostris scottii*], Mangrove Clapper Rail [*R. l. insularum*], Wayne’s Clapper Rail [*R. l. waynei*], Marian’s Marsh Wren [*Cistothorus palustris marianae*], Worthington’s Marsh Wren [*C. p. griseus*], MacGillivray’s Seaside Sparrow [*Ammodramus maritimus macgillivrayi*], Scott’s Seaside Sparrow [*A. m. peninsulæ*]). Threats: lack of basic demographic data for nearly all taxa; sea-level rise.

Freshwater marsh species (all wading birds, Snail Kite, Cape Sable Seaside Sparrow [*Ammodramus maritimus mirabilis*]). Threats: rookery/roost disturbance (wading birds); improper water regulation; mercury contamination (wading birds); nutrient-rich water discharged from sugar cane farms; exotic plants (Cape Sable Seaside Sparrow).

Mangrove-breeding species (wading birds, Mangrove Cuckoo, Gray Kingbird, Black-whiskered Vireo, Florida Prairie Warbler [*Dendroica discolor paludicola*], Cuban Golden Warbler [*Dendroica petechia gundlachi*])—disturbance (wading birds); raccoon depredation (wading birds); lack of basic data (upland species); potentially cowbird brood parasitism (upland species).

Dry-prairie species (White-tailed Kite, Crested Caracara, Florida Burrowing Owl [*Athene cunicularia floridana*], Florida Grasshopper Sparrow [*Ammodramus savannarum floridanus*], Bachman’s Sparrow). Threats: habitat loss and fragmentation; adverse land-uses or management such as grazing and silviculture (Florida Burrowing Owl and Florida Grasshopper Sparrow); dormant-season fires (Florida Grasshopper Sparrow).

Longleaf-pine species (Southeastern American Kestrel [*Falco sparverius paulus*], Red-cockaded Woodpecker, Brown-headed Nuthatch, Bachman’s Sparrow). Threats: severe habitat loss and fragmentation; fire suppression and dormant-season fires; intensive management needs (Red-cockaded Woodpecker).

Xeric oak-scrub species (Florida Scrub-Jay). Threats: habitat loss and fragmentation; fire exclusion; potentially West Nile virus.

Throughout Ontario, it was “the summer that wasn’t.” The months of June and July were consistently wet, cool to cold, and cloudy. In many parts of the province, particularly the northwest, record low temperatures were recorded repeatedly. In other areas, extremely high amounts of rainfall caused localized but serious flooding. The adverse weather seemed to have had some effect on bird breeding activities. Again in the northwest, Tree Swallows simply gave up fighting the weather and did not nest. Common Loons were up to three weeks later than normal hatching young, and many observers commented on the general scarcity of young loons. Ontario Breeding Bird Atlas volunteers spent time along several of the far northern rivers that drain into Hudson Bay and James Bay, adding considerably to the understanding of bird numbers and species composition in the huge, remote, and rarely-birded northern parts of the province. Of note was the weather-related unprecedented early appearance of southbound adult shorebirds and subsequently rather small numbers of juvenile shorebirds. Also remarkable, but anticipated, was the first known attempted nesting of Black-necked Stilt in the province.

LOONS THROUGH VULTURES

Common Loons experienced a poor breeding season across the n. of the province, with observers reporting few young and late hatching into the 3rd week of Jul. Red-necked Grebes continued to nest in the busy Bronte Harbour, with 2 pairs present Jul+ (GE). American White Pelicans wandered widely in the province, with singles at Amherst I. 28 Jul (KH, CEG, JMcM), Presqu’île P.P. 25–26 Jul (FH), Point Pelee N.P. 5 Jun (AP), and Muddy Creek near Wheatley Harbour 21 Jun–9 Jul (EK et al.) Double-crested Cormorants continued to increase in Algonquin P.P., with 42 active nests counted on Gull I. in L. Opeongo 6 Jul (MR). In 2002, there were four nests in the colony. In Jun, 6000 Double-crested Cormorants were “removed” from islands in L. Ontario near Presqu’île P.P. as part of a controversial plan to reduce cormorant numbers in an attempt to retain habitat for other colonial nesting birds such as Great Blue Herons.

A single nest on the Leslie Street Spit, Greater Toronto Area (hereafter, G.T.A.) contained 4 young Great Egrets 1 Jul (RBSH, WP). Individual Great Egrets were found at Ottawa 16 Jun (JD) and at the Britannia C.A. 17 Jun (DM, m.ob.), while a total of 7 was seen on the Bruce Pen. during the period (JJ). A Snowy

Ontario



Egret was at Ashbridge’s Bay, G.T.A. 14 Jun (AD), and 3 in fine breeding plumage were noted at Kettle Pt. 6–9 Jun (AR). Rarely seen in the Ottawa area during the summer, an ad. Black-crowned Night-Heron at the Britannia C.A. mid-Jun–21 Jul was joined by another ad. 16 Jul (JS, m.ob.). A Yellow-crowned Night-Heron chose an unlikely place for a short rest: surprised observers noticed it on the balcony railing of a 6th floor apartment in Bronte (VMcN, GE).

WATERFOWL THROUGH SHOREBIRDS

An imm. male Harlequin Duck summered at Humber Bay Park, G.T.A. 5 Jun–25 Jul (MC, Toronto Field Naturalists), and a Bufflehead at the Amherstview S.T.P. 27 Jul was well s. of normal breeding range (BR). A flock of 100 Red-breasted Mergansers was found along an isolated section of the L. Ontario shoreline near McGlennon Pt. 23 Jun, an unusually high number for the time of year (CEG). Ruddy Ducks appear to be increasing in the Ottawa area, with up to 34, including several young, at the Alfred S.T.P. (DM, m.ob.), and up to 41, mostly ad. males, frequenting a pond at the Trail Road landfill (m.ob.). A molting Ruddy

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Duck was noted at Chub Pt. 18 Jun, the 4th summer record for the area (CEG).

A Swallow-tailed Kite was a very pleasant find 5 Jun near Copenhagen (WJR, RK). Two nests of Bald Eagle in Middlesex fledged a single young each (PR). A pair in Algonquin P.P. also fledged a single young, first seen in the nest 30 Jun and then perched nearby 21 Jul (GB, GF), only the 2nd breeding record for the park. A Peregrine Falcon was quite unexpected 4 Jul in the n. town of Pickle Lake (WM). The Yellow Rail colony in the Richmond Bog w. of Ottawa did well, with 5 singing males noted 21 May and 2 heard 4 Jun (BL, JD). Yellow Rails were also noted in early Jun in a marsh just n. of Dryden, with at least 4 heard at one time (DS). Another was heard 13 Jun and seen 16 Jun in a marsh at the mouth of the Wolf R. on L. Superior e. of Thunder

SA In early Jul, observers in the s. part of the province began seeing large flocks of southbound shorebirds, consisting of mainly adult birds. The return of these birds so soon after the spring northward movement was an indication that shorebirds in general may have had a poor breeding season in the Canadian Arctic. On 9 Jul, a flock of 150 Black-bellied Plover flew southward over the Blenheim S.T.P. (IW, DSm), an unprecedented date for the area. In a flock of 450 Semipalmated Sandpipers at the Townsend S.T.L. in early Aug, only a single juvenile could be found (KMcl). Similarly, 500 Lesser Yellowlegs at the Grand Bend S.T.P. in mid-Jul included only 4 juv. birds (AR).

The suspicion of a poor breeding year was confirmed by observers along the Hudson Bay coast and in the more northerly Arctic islands. The spring and summer weather conditions all across the Arctic were consistently and exceptionally wet, cold, and windy. Shorebirds that did attempt to nest were late starting and had very low hatching rates. In many areas, breeding was simply not attempted. Large mixed-species flocks of shorebirds were noted loafing at favored coastal sites on dates when they should have been spread across tundra breeding areas. In addition to weather conditions, shorebirds attempting to nest were subjected to greater-than-normal predation. Small mammal populations were coincidentally very low, and predators such as foxes, jaegers, gulls, and owls were hard-pressed to find food and exploited every opportunity, including shorebirds and their nests. Snow and Canada Geese also had a very low reproductive season. The effect of a poor breeding year on shorebirds in the long term is likely negligible, as Arctic species are well adapted to weather-related "boom-and-bust" cycles.

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Bay (BMo, NEG). Curiously, for the past two years, no Yellow Rails have been found n. of Rainy River, where they have been regular in the past (DHE). A King Rail was found in a roadside ditch 13 Jun near Wheatley (MKM).

Piping Plovers were not found this breeding season at the se. corner of the Lake of the Woods, the last known nesting site in the province. Two Semipalmated Plovers were noted near Hobo L. in Algonquin P.P. 15 Jun, a late date for the park (RT et al.). Observers were surprised to count 500+ Killdeer at the Grand Bend S.T.P. 23 Jul (AR); the flock had been building slowly throughout the month. First found 18 May at the Jarvis S.T.P., a pair of Black-necked Stilts attempted to nest in a nearby cornfield. The nest failed, and the birds were last noted 5 Jun (BJ). It was the first breeding record for the species in Ontario. Single American Avocets were noted at the Grand Bend S.T.P. 2 (AR) & 7 Jul (KE) and at the Tollgate Ponds, Hamilton 22 Jun (JH, m.ob.). A Willet was at Bluffer's Park, G.T.A. 28 Jul (GLKJ), and 5 were noted at Wheatley Harbour 31 Jul (MBR). A Whimbrel made an unexpected stop to feed on a front lawn at Minnitaki 2 Jun (CE). A pair of Wilson's Phalaropes fledged young in late Jun at the Grand Bend S.T.P., for one of a very few breeding records for *Lambton* (AR); an early southbound early migrant was found near Peter's Corners 18 Jul (RZD). Unexpected was a group of 7 ad. Red-necked Phalaropes at Des Chenes Rapids on the Ottawa R. 1 Jun (JDu).

GULLS THROUGH CROWS

An ad. Parasitic Jaeger 19 Jul at Van Wagners Beach, Hamilton was record early (EH). An ad. Laughing Gull, sick or injured, was at Wheatley Harbour 22 Jun (DW), and a first-summer bird was at Pelee I. 26 Jun (DW). Franklin's Gulls were common all summer at the se. corner of the Lake of the Woods (m.ob.), and

a first-summer bird was at Pelee I. 26 Jun (DW). A second-summer Lesser Black-backed Gull was at the tip of Point Pelee N.P. 5 Jun (STP et al.), and a first-summer bird was at Pelee I. 26 Jun (DW). A Glaucous Gull at Cobourg Harbour 2 Jun furnished the 2nd summer record for the area (CEG), and a Great Black-backed Gull on Caribou I. in L. Superior 2-8 Jun was well n. of usual breeding range (SB, MB). Caspian Terns are rare in the Ottawa area, so 2 at a pond near the Trail Road landfill 1 Jul (TB, m.ob.) and 4 on the Rideau R. 7 Jul were noteworthy (BMcB).

A White-winged Dove spent a short period 30 Jul at a feeder near Brighton after a night of heavy rainfall (FA). Great Gray Owls made sudden appearances n. and w. of L. Superior during the summer, but none appeared to be breeding (m.ob.). A Red-headed Woodpecker 21 Jun in Thunder Bay provided an unusual summer record. A Scissor-tailed Flycatcher was a very nice find 26 Jun at the St. Clair N.W.R. (CV). Cliff Swallows are considered rare breeders in the Point Pelee N.P. area; a concerted effort 12-15 Jun to locate colonies resulted in a total of nine found occupied by 36 pairs, an unprecedented number (AW). An example of avian adaptability was provided by a colony of Bank Swallows that had 325 nest holes in a huge pile of ash at a coal-fired electric plant in Toronto 6 Jun (GC).

TITMOUSE THROUGH FINCHES

Tufted Titmouse continued to do well in n. *Lambton*, where an estimated 100 pairs reside (AR). A nest with six eggs found 6 Jun near Hobo L. in Algonquin P.P. was the first confirmed breeding record for the park (DT). A Northern Mockingbird, rare in the Ottawa area, was found 16 Jun near the Trail Road landfill, where nesting has occurred in the past (KH). A Northern Parula nest was found 26 Jun on Amherst I., well s. of the normal breeding range for the species in the province (RDW). An ad. and 2 juv. Palm Warblers

6-17 Jul at the Mer Bleue Bog provided the first Ottawa area breeding record in over 100 years (MB, LS). Hooded Warblers are rare e. of the G.T.A., so the presence of singing males near Codrington 26 Jun (RF) and near Grafton 21 Jul (CEG) was of interest. A Dickcissel sang persistently near Port Elgin 12 Jun (RJ) but could not be found thereafter. A territorial Eastern Meadowlark was very active at Sturgeon Creek most of the summer: it may have been part of the only breeding pair in the Point Pelee N.P. area, even though a female was not seen (AW et al.). Western Meadowlarks continue to decline in the Rainy River area. Since there has been no obvious change in habitat in the area, whatever is causing the decline may be occurring during migration or in wintering areas (DHE). A Yellow-headed Blackbird in Pickle Lake in early Jun was well n. of normal breeding areas (LC).

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State of the Region

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Ontario is a vast province with an extremely diverse array of biomes, from the Carolinian forest zone in the extreme southwest, through the Great Lakes deciduous forest, and north through the extensive boreal forest to the sub-arctic tundra of the James Bay and Hudson Bay coasts.

The primary challenge facing bird conservation in Ontario is habitat alteration, with much variation in the nature, cause, and impact of such alteration across the province. In parts of the Hudson Bay lowland area (Bird Conservation Region [BCR] 7), chronically high Snow Goose populations have resulted in severe degradation of coastal tundra habitat, to the detriment of breeding shorebird species. In southern Ontario (BCRs 12 and 13), the lowland plains around the Great Lakes have seen widespread changes in agricultural practices, including intensification of farming methods and a substantial decrease in the extent of agricultural grasslands, which have severely impacted the populations of almost all grassland-dependent bird species, including Upland Sandpiper, Northern Bobwhite, Vesper Sparrow, Grasshopper Sparrow, Eastern Meadowlark, and Bobolink among them. Urbanization in the extreme southern portion of the province meanwhile devours thousands of hectares of rural habitat each year. In the vast boreal forests of northern Ontario (BCR 8), considerable attention is now being focused on the impact that widespread forestry activities and other industrial development may have on birds and bird habitats.

Over the past 20 years, there has been a significant and widespread decline in many species of aerial-foraging insectivores in Ontario. This guild contains several diverse species, including swallows, Purple Martin, Chimney Swift, Common Nighthawk, and Whip-poor-will. Negative population trends for these birds as detected by the Breeding Bird Survey are echoed strongly by decreases in distribution being reported by the ongoing second Ontario Breeding Bird Atlas project. Causes of the observed declines in common species such as Barn Swallow and Bank

wetland habitats and wetland birds. Perhaps more worrying, there have been a series of avian botulism outbreaks on the lower Great Lakes in recent years, tentatively linked to the spread of exotic species of mussels and fish. In the past, such outbreaks were very rare events. Annual outbreaks of Type E botulism on the lower Great Lakes between 1999 and 2004 resulted in the deaths of tens of thousands of fish-eating birds, primarily Common Loons, Red-breasted Mergansers, and several gull species. The introduction of exotic insect pests into the province's forests is another growing threat. Most recently, considerable attention has been focused on the potential havoc that the Asian Long-horned Beetle and the Emerald Ash Borer may have on Ontario's deciduous forest communities. West Nile virus and other avian diseases also continue to be of concern.

Another emerging regional concern is the rapid expansion of the wind-energy industry. Over the next few years, the number of wind turbines in Ontario is expected to increase from a handful of pilot installations generating some 15 Megawatts (MW) of electricity to encompass several wind farms, each with 10 to 100 turbines, with a total capacity in excess of 300 MW, and the provincial government has set a target of generating 10% (2700 MW) of Ontario's energy capacity from renewable resources (including hydro, solar, and wind) by 2010. Due to the favorable combination of high winds and high demand, most proposed wind farm developments are located on or near the shorelines of the lower Great Lakes. As do the ocean coastlines, these shorelines concentrate millions of migrant birds, especially raptors and passerines, which funnel through the Great Lakes each spring and fall. Although the impact of wind-farm developments on migratory birds is believed to be relatively benign compared to some other threats, there is growing concern about the cumulative impact of the proliferating communication towers, wind turbines, large glass-walled buildings, and other structures that are known to be deadly obstacles to migratory birds.

Two species currently of particular management concern in Ontario are Loggerhead Shrike and Double-crested Cormorant. Small numbers, now fewer than 30 pairs, of the *migrans* subspecies of Loggerhead Shrike continue to breed in southern Ontario. A captive breeding program has been underway for several years. In 2004, some 35 pen-reared young shrikes were released to augment the wild population, but we still do not have a firm understanding of why shrike populations in Ontario and elsewhere are doing so poorly. By contrast, Double-crested Cormorants are of management concern because the species is increasing exponentially. Various non-lethal management techniques, including oiling of eggs, have been used in recent years to curb this expansion—with limited success. In 2004, a cull of adult cormorants was carried out at one nesting colony on Lake Ontario, but the effectiveness of this method remains doubtful.

Weather records and climate change models indicate that weather patterns in Ontario have changed and will continue to change. Alterations in mean temperatures are expected to particularly affect very large water bodies such as the Great Lakes, James Bay, and Hudson Bay, which in their turn influence weather and precipitation patterns across the entire Region and beyond. Although the net impact of climate change on bird populations is unknown, the potential for major

problems is real, particularly since many bird species reach their northern or southern range limits in Ontario.

In broad perspective, we feel strongly that insufficient scientific attention is devoted to understanding the forces that drive bird populations to increase or decrease—on both the regional and continental levels. Identifying cause and effect should be a fundamental first step in the science that supports bird conservation. Until we are able to firmly "connect the dots," we will probably continue to watch species decline without knowing why.



Annual outbreaks of Type E botulism on the lower Great Lakes between 1999 and 2004 resulted in the deaths of tens of thousands of fish-eating birds, such as this Common Loon at Long Point, Ontario in 2002. In the past, such outbreaks were very rare; the increase in such catastrophes has been tentatively linked to the spread of exotic species of mussels and fish. Photograph by Steve Timmermans.

Swallow are not known, but aerial foragers as a group are particularly vulnerable to severe weather events that reduce their food supply or ability to forage. The fact that species in this guild utilize diverse habitats, are mostly very widespread in Ontario, and winter in different parts of Central and South America suggests that habitat factors are not the primary cause of these recent declines. Are overall insect populations declining—and, if so, why?

The spread of exotic species presents another major threat to Ontario's birds. The introduced Mute Swan population is expanding rapidly in southern Ontario, to the detriment of

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The season saw the commencement of the second *Pennsylvania Breeding Bird Atlas*, a five-year survey of the state's breeders. Early indications of range expansions were seen for Sandhill Cranes and Clay-colored Sparrows. The wet early summer put interior shorebird habitat at a premium, although the mild temperatures made the searching bearable. After a drop of over a meter during the previous six years, Lake Erie is again near maximum

levels, inundating shallows of the Western Basin that have been host to tremendous shorebird concentrations.

Abbreviations: B.I.W.A. (Big Island W.A., Marion, OH); C.V.N.P. (Cuyahoga Valley N.P., Summit/Cuyahoga OH); Hoover (Hoover Res., Delaware/Franklin, OH); G.M.L. (Glen Morgan L., Berks, PA.); O.D.W. (Ohio Division of Wildlife); O.N.W.R. (Ottawa N.W.R., Ottawa/Lucas, OH); P.I.S.P. (Presque Isle S.P., Erie, PA); P.V.P. (Peace Valley Park, Bucks, PA); S.N.P. (State Nature Preserve); S.R.C.F. (Susquehanna R. at the Conejohela Flats, Lancaster, PA).

LOONS THROUGH HERONS

The usual few Common Loons lingered into the season, with singles 24 Jun at Woodbury W.A., Coshocton OH (S. Hull) and P.I.S.P. (BCo), 29 Jun in Richland, OH (G. Cowell, Jr.), and 13 Jul in Hancock, OH (B. Hardesty). Unusual was a Horned Grebe 29 Jun near Bayshore I. on the Susquehanna R., Dauphin, PA (PS). In Ohio, single American White Pelicans remained from the spring season at the Paradise Fish Farm, Mahoning through 17 Jul (B. Jones, CH), through the summer in

Berlin Twp., Huron (fide M. Rutger), and another appearing 12 Jul at Farnsworth Park, Lucas (J. Fosnaugh), while 4 birds appeared at Metzger 19-22 Jun (A. Osborn, SB). Seven Least Bitterns were found at G.M.L. 4 Jun (KL). Post-breeding dispersal of Great Egrets into Pennsylvania was evident at P.V.P., with 20 on 11 Jul (C. Crunkleton, ER) and at S.R.C.F., with 85 on 31 Jul (DH). At least 20 ad. Snowy Egrets occupied breeding sites in the Western Basin of L. Erie (m.ob.). Elsewhere, one was seen at Sandy Ridge Metropark, Lorain 5 Jun (TF). Up to 3 Little Blue Herons were present at O.N.W.R. through the period (m.ob.). A post-breeding wanderer was discovered 23 Jul in Delaware, OH (J. McCormac, J. Switzer). Cattle Egrets away from L. Erie included 2 at Pickerington Ponds, Franklin/Fairfield, OH 2 Jun (J. Watts). A Yellow-crowned Night-Heron at Maumee Bay S.P., Lucas OH 17-24 Jun (D. Bollin et al.) was unexpected. An imm. *Plegadis ibis* was seen near Albany Twp., Berks 25 Jul (L. Simpson).

WATERFOWL THROUGH RAPTORS

A pair of Snow Geese summered near Oley, Berks, PA. Three imm. birds from this family group moved on in Jun (RK). A pair of unmarked Trumpeter Swans continued from the spring season in Lawrence and n. Beaver, PA (m.ob.). A Tundra Swan was noted at S.R.C.F. during the last week of Jul (DHo et al.). Inland Ohio Mute Swans were reported from Wayne, Ashland, Knox, Hamilton, and Clinton. Wood Ducks in se. Pennsylvania numbered 300 at G.M.L. 15 Jun (KL). A hen Gadwall with 5 young at Conneaut 6 Jul may represent a first breeding record for *Ashtabula*, OH (CH). An American Wigeon remained in Hamilton, OH 20 Jun (RF). Errant Northern Pintails included a male in Adams, OH 9 Jun (GMi) and 2 males at Funk Bottoms W.A., Wayne OH 27 Jun (SS). The latter site held a male Green-winged Teal the same day. Ring-necked Duck males in Ohio lingered in Holmes 25 Jul (SS), Delaware 23 Jun (RL), Ottawa 19 Jun (JL), and Lorain 9 Jun (TF). A male in Plain Grove Twp., Lawrence, PA 6 Jun (MV) rounded out the reports. A male Lesser Scaup was at the latter location 27 Jun (MV). A male Canvasback was at Bayshore I., in the Susquehanna R., Dauphin, PA 29 Jun (PS). A male Surf Scoter was at Yellow Creek S.P., Indiana, PA 1 Jun (MHi et al.). A rare breeder in se. Pennsylvania, a female Common Merganser with 8 young was observed along the Delaware R., Bucks in late Jun (m.ob.); 2 females along the Schuylkill R. near Shoemakersville, Berks 20 Jul could not be confirmed as breeders. The species remains unconfirmed as a breeder on the Cheat R. in West Virginia, but mid-summer counts

SA In 2004, Ohio's Bald Eagle population reached a modern-day record, with 108 Bald Eagle nests in the state—the first time ever that Ohio has recorded over 100 nests. This is the 16th consecutive year that the state's eagle population has increased both its numbers of breeding pairs and the number of offspring produced. Of those 108 nests, 73 successfully produced young eagles for a total of 127 eaglets fledged in 37 Ohio counties. In addition, 21 new nests were identified in 15 counties. Six of those counties (*Hardin, Harrison, Muskingum, Pickaway, Putnam, and Richland*) recorded their first eagle nests in modern history. With so many eagles, nests sites may be at a premium in some areas. This year saw a pair successfully fledge young from a goose platform (see photograph below). Initially built on the surface of an ice-covered pond, the nest was moved to the platform after the spring thaw. Two young hatched, but on the morning of scheduled banding of the young and placement of boards under the nest to allow for branching, one young jumped off the nest, became entangled within a mat of algae, and drowned (O.D.W.).

of up to 20 at Rowlesburg (GF) fuel anticipation. Single late Red-breasted Mergansers were at P.V.P. 7 Jun (SF, A. Mirabella) and P.I.S.P. 12 Jun (MV). Inland Ruddy Ducks were limited to 3 into late Jun in Wyandot, OH (RC) and a pair 10 Jun in Franklin, OH (JWa), with no reports of broods.

A few of the spring-season Mississippi Kites continued into summer in Pennsylvania, with a single bird at Yellow Creek S.P., Indiana 1 Jun (MHi et al.) and another on the same date in East Drumore Twp., Lancaster (TA). The Brood X cicada irruption in Bucks, PA attracted a pair of Mississippi Kites 19–27 Jun (ph. ER, ph. T. Ford-Hutchinson, m.ob.). The birds were seen to feed almost exclusively on cicadas. A Mississippi Kite soaring over Morgantown, WV 2 Jun († B. Johnson) provided a rare record for the state. Remarkable numbers of non-breeding Bald Eagles remained in Ohio, with an unprecedented 39–42 gathered at Metzger 20 Jun–1 Jul (SB, JL). There were at least 75 Bald Eagle and 14 Peregrine Falcon pairs nesting this season in Pennsylvania (*vide* D. Brauning). A Peregrine Falcon that was shot near Tullytown, Bucks, PA did survive but cannot be released. The bird was originally banded as a nestling on the Throg's Neck Bridge, NY. Adding to recent summer appearances by the species in Ohio, a Merlin was seen 16 Jul in Lake (JP).

RAILS THROUGH SHOREBIRDS

Listed as "State Endangered" in Ohio, King Rails were much in evidence this season. Two sites hosted up to 2 birds each in Pickaway, while a pair and 3 young were widely viewed at Prairie Oaks Metropark in adjacent Franklin (JWa, m.ob.). The only L. Erie report involved a single bird at Mallard Club Marsh W.A., Lucas, OH 1 Jul (JL). Thirty-four Common Moorhens in s. Lawrence and n. Beaver, PA in late Jun was a good total (B. & G. Dean). However, this species continues to decline in se. Pennsylvania. None were found breeding this year at John Heinz N.W.R., Philadelphia, a site that historically contained up to 10 pairs. American Coots continue to do well at

G.M.L., with 8 ads. and 2 juvs. 15 Jun (KL). Sandhill Crane continue to expand its breeding range within the Region. In Pennsylvania, a new nest site in Cambridge Springs, Crawford had 2 ads. and 2 juvs. present through Jun (m.ob.). Unusual were singles seen flying past Trexlertown, Berks, PA 16 Jun (M. Wlasniewski) and near Erie



This Mississippi Kite was one of two at Lake Galena, Peace Valley, Bucks County, Pennsylvania 19–27 June 2004 (here 20 June) that fed very heavily on emerging Brood X cicadas but apparently did not attempt to nest. All states in the region recorded kites in 2004.

Photograph by Thomas Ford-Hutchinson.



The burgeoning population of breeding Bald Eagles in Ohio has resulted in some nesting pairs accepting "nontraditional" nest sites. Without precedent, a pair at Killdeer Plains Wildlife Area in Wyandot utilized a fibreglass "goose tub" just a meter off the pond's surface (here 20 May 2004). Photograph by Tim Danick/Ohio Division of Wildlife.

N.W.R., PA 29 Jul (K. Goodblood & J. Stanley). In Ohio, Medina saw its first confirmed nesting (*vide* LR). In Lorain, nesting was unsuccessful, while a bird to the w. in Erie 8 Jun was novel (J. Bednarik). Successful nesting took place in Williams at a new locality (JP), where 2 young were noted 27 Jun. A lone bird in Wyandot through 5 Jul apparently remained unmated (RC), while at nearby B.I.W.A., 2 birds 28 Jun were in suitable nesting habitat (B. & C. Long).

The spring Black-necked Stilt flight carried over into the summer. A male and female lingered at B.I.W.A. 9 Jun (J. Fry, m.ob.). The pair was suspected of a nesting attempt before heavy rains flooded the site. An individual was also present at O.N.W.R. 6–7 Jun (E. Pierce, R. Hinkle). A final sighting came 12–21 Jul from Pickerel Creek W.A., Sandusky, OH (ph. SZ). A flight of American Avocets was detected early across the Region. The 14 Jul arrival saw 2 birds in Williams, OH (JY), 2 in Hamilton, OH (RF), and a single in Cleveland (GL). Another wave had singles at P.I.S.P. 22 Jul (BC) and Metzger 23 Jul (J. Estep). Also 23 Jul, 3 set down in Caesar's Creek S.P., Warren, OH (LG), while up to 4 birds were intermittent at Conneaut 21–31 Jul (W. Shaffer, BCo). The Pennsylvania flight also included a bird at S.R.C.F. 30 Jul (DHo) and a pair at Hidden Hollow G.C., Schuylkill (T. Clauser et al.). A Semipalmated Plover at Cowan L., Clinton, OH 11 Jun (LG) was a late spring migrant, but a 19 Jun Black-bellied Plover at O.N.W.R. (JL) was harder to categorize, being on the cusp between the two migration seasons. Lesser Yellowlegs peaked at P.I.S.P. with 200+ on 31 Jul (BCo). Twelve Solitary Sandpipers was a good count at Ambridge

SA A **Lesser Nighthawk** was found alive 28 Apr at the base of the handball court wall at the Federal Correctional Facility in *Gilmer, WV*; it died shortly after being discovered. Prison staff contacted an inmate there with extensive birding experience (and 745 birds on the ABA Area list). Recognizing it was not a Common Nighthawk, the inmate made use of field guides in the prison library to determine that it was a Lesser Nighthawk. Prison authorities made arrangements for wildlife rehabilitation center staff to pick up the specimen, which was subsequently reviewed by the West Virginia Bird Records Committee. It was accepted as a first state record and also constitutes the first Regional report.

Res., *Bedford, PA* 23 Jul (MV). Up to 3 Willets were found at P.I.S.P. 4–31 Jul (BCo, JM, MV), one of them possibly the Willet on the nearby Conneaut mudflat 21–31 Jul (W. Shaffer). A pair of Upland Sandpipers

Conneaut with 55 birds (CH), while no more than 30 Least Sandpipers were reported from any one locality. A spring flock of 6 White-rumped Sandpipers 4 Jun in Bryan, *Williams, OH* was the best tally (JY).

A flock of 5 Stilt Sandpipers in *Berkeley* 31 Jul (MO) was the shorebird highlight in West Virginia.

GULLS THROUGH OWLS

The scattering of inland Laughing Gulls included at least 2 at P.I.S.P. 12 Jun and 10 Jul (MV). The only Franklin's Gull dropped into Buck Creek S.P., OH 9 Jul (DO). Extraordinary as a mid-summer record from the Western Basin of L. Erie, a Little Gull was present on Kellys I., *Erie, OH* 18 Jun (TB). Mid-summer Lesser Black-backed Gulls are annual in Pennsylvania, but this year's numbers were interesting, with 17, including 2 ads., at the Penn-Warner Tract, *Bucks* 11 Jul (DF) and up to 19 at Martin's Creek, *Northampton* (RW). A single bird was also present at P.I.S.P. 21–31 Jul (JM). Pennsylvania's newest Herring Gull nesting site at Dashields Dam on the Ohio R at Pittsburgh produced 6 young (m.ob.). A Least Tern was found at S.R.C.F. 19 Jul (DHo). Spring migrant Black Terns on 1–2 Jun were at L. Nockamixon, *Bucks, PA* (A. Koch) and at Ohio sites in *Hocking* (J. Fry) and *Williams* (JY).



This male Black-necked Stilt was one of a pair in residence at Big Island Wildlife Area, Marion, Ohio 20 May through 9 (here 4) June 2004—part of an unprecedented influx of the species into the Eastern Highlands & Upper Ohio River Valley region. Photograph by Jay Lehman.

was confirmed nesting in *Butler, PA* (GW), one of the few nesting sites in the state. At least 2 Whimbrels frequented P.I.S.P. 18–31 Jul (BCo, JM), possibly contributing the single at Conneaut 23 Jul (D. Sanders). Singles appeared farther w to *Cuyahoga, OH* 30 Jul (GL) and Metzger 19 Jun (SS et al.), the latter an exceptionally rare mid-summer record. Away from L. Erie, a flock of 9 was found at the Penn-Warner Tract, *Bucks* 23 Jul (DF). A Marbled Godwit was at S.R.C.F. 31 Jul (DH). Eight Red Knots were at P.I.S.P. 31 Jul (JM). A Dunlin in alternate plumage 12 Jul at Pickerel Creek W.A., *Sandusky, OH* (SZ) continues the string of mid-summer records well before the normal fall arrival of the species. The small *Calidris* flight, whether late spring or fall, was exceptionally weak, as birders and birds alike were hard-pressed to find suitable habitat. The maximum count for Sempalmated Sandpiper came 26 Jul at

A pair at Hartstown Marsh, *Crawford, PA* 19 Jun (M. Byler) was likely breeding. A fallout of Black Terns across five sw. Ohio counties 31 Jul involved more than 200 birds. The largest concentration was of 100 birds at East Fork S.P., *Clermont, OH* (D. Morse, Jr.). This flight was also evident in Pennsylvania, with 9 at Bald Knob, *Allegheny* 30–31 Jul (R. Gallardy, B. Smith). A well-described Eurasian Collared-Dove appeared in a Wilmington, *Clinton, OH* backyard 7–10 Jun (LG), if accepted, this would constitute a 2nd state

record. Numbers of both cuckoos, especially Yellow-billed, were exceptional in se. Pennsylvania, possibly owing to the irruption of the Brood X cicadas. Barn Owl numbers in Pennsylvania have dropped dramatically in recent times, so a successful fledging of 6 young from a box in Rehrersburg, *Berks* was encouraging (R. Bonnett). The *Wayne/Holmes* population in e.-cen. Ohio fared well, with 19 nests producing 84 chicks (*vide* O.D.O.W.).

FLYCATCHERS THROUGH WRENS

A singing Olive-sided Flycatcher 30 Jun–1 Jul at Hogback Ridge, *Lake* (JP) was intriguing. Ohio's last breeding record was in 1932. Another Olive-sided at Big Bailey Wetlands, *Athens, OH* 7 Jun (B. Placier) was a late migrant. Three pairs of Yellow-bellied Flycatchers were at Coalbed Swamp, *Wyoming, PA*, the state's only nesting location (D. Gross). South of normal breeding range, an Alder Flycatcher was present for several weeks near Oley, *Berks, PA*. A Scissor-tailed Flycatcher was found in *Lebanon, PA* 9 Jun (ph. C. Bethoud, ph. T. Johnson et al.). The *Adams, OH* outpost for the species hosted a Loggerhead Shrike 10 Jun (GMi), but completely unexpected was a bird in *Logan, OH* 9 & 26 Jul (T. Shively). Bell's Vireos fared well in Ohio. Apart from the annual *Clark* site, pairs were recorded at Stage's Pond S.N.P., *Pickaway* 16 Jul (DO) and near Columbus 20 Jun–19 Jul (R. Thorn, S. Landes, m.ob.). A record 20 Blue-headed Vireos were found on three *Huntingdon, PA* B.B.S. routes in Rothrock S.F. (GG). W. Pennsylvania's 2nd Fish Crow nesting colony was discovered in Jul in North Braddock, *Allegheny*. The site contained two pairs with 2 young each (M. Fialkovich, G. Malosh, D. Wilton). A Red-breasted Nuthatch near Rector, West-



This Scissor-tailed Flycatcher was found and photographed 9 June 2004 in Lebanon County, Pennsylvania, about the thirteenth for the state. The species has been appearing in summer more frequently to the north and east of breeding range in recent years. Photograph by Tom Johnson.

moreland, PA in mid-Jun was a good find (ML), and one in District Twp, Berks, PA 10 Jul was s. of the known breeding range (RK). Another s. to Van Wert, OH 31 Jul (J. & J. Perchalski) may have presaged an early irruption. Twelve Golden-crowned Kinglets, including 8 downy young, were in Shelocta, Indiana, PA in Jul (MHi). Two pairs of Brown Creepers at Hoover in cen. Ohio 1 Jun (C. Bombaci) were noteworthy. The 6–8 singing Sedge Wrens in Butler, PA in Jun (GW) were part of a shift eastward that included 3 at Funk Bottoms W.A., Wayne, OH through 25 Jul (SS, m.ob.) and a territorial bird in Morgantown, WV through 7 Jul (GF). A count of 17 Marsh Wrens at Conneaut Marsh, Crawford, PA 26 Jul was considered high (RFL), and an odd summer record of the species came from Paulding, OH 20 Jun (D. & M. Dunakin).

WARBLERS THROUGH FINCHES

Three pairs of Golden-winged Warblers were located in a small breeding plot near Powdermill, Westmoreland, PA in early Jun (ML). A Yellow-rumped Warbler 17 Jun in Cleveland (GL) was a late migrant. But what does one make of a closely studied male in s. Ohio at Buzzard's Roost S.N.P., Ross 24 Jun (K. Sieg, D. McFadden)? A Black-throated Blue Warbler 3 Jun in Cleveland (GL) was a late migrant. Cerulean Warblers appear stable in Pennsylvania; in the Ligonier Valley, Westmoreland, good numbers were detected in several Atlas blocks (RCL, ML). Late Blackpoll Warblers were at Hawk Mt., Berks, PA 23 Jun (C. Waters) and 15 Jun in Cuyahoga, OH (LR). Several marginal/potential breeding species were noted within the Oak Openings park system of Toledo: a Mourning Warbler and a Black-throated Green Warbler were found 18–21 Jun (RN et al.), while a Blackburnian Warbler was present 16 Jun (M. Anderson). One pair of Blackburnian Warblers found in Coalbed Swamp, Wyoming, PA 14 Jul marked the 11th consecutive year this species has been found at the state's only breeding locale (D. Gross). Prothonotary Warblers continued to be found in new areas, including a pair breeding at Churchville Res., Bucks, PA (C. Steiber, M. Corn). A record-tying 183 Ovenbirds were listed on three Huntingdon, PA B.B.S. routes at Rothrock S.F., but the 9 American Redstarts recorded was well below average (GG). A late Northern Waterthrush was banded at Powdermill Banding Lab, Westmoreland, PA 6 Jun, and an early fall migrant arrived there 18 Jul (A. Leppold, RCL, B. Mulvihill). The species was also early in nw. Ohio, where banded 30 Jul in Seneca (TB). A late Connecticut Warbler report involved a singing male at

H.B.S.P. 2 Jun (R. Hannikman).

Summer Tanagers surged into the far nw. of Ohio, with 9 birds in the Oak Openings, Lucas 18 Jun (G. Links). Clay-colored Sparrows continue to chart new ground in cen. and w. Pennsylvania, with a bird "all summer" at Black Moshannon S.F., Centre (N. Bolgiano), 2 singing males at Snow Shoe, Centre (G. Young), one at Keystone



This Dickcissel spent about a week in Lancaster City Park, Lancaster, Pennsylvania 8 (here) through 26 June 2004; it was the only bird of its species present here and did not nest. Photograph by Tom Amico.

Res., Armstrong 26 Jun–3 Jul (MHi), and another at Gipsy strip-mine area, Indiana (MH). Wayward Lark Sparrows were e. to Ashland, OH 29 Jun–1 Jul (D. Spreng, T. Leslie) and s. to Hamilton, OH 3 Jul (P. Wharton). Two Grasshopper Sparrows at Erie International Airport, PA 13 Jun–6 Jul were unusual (JM). Away from their strip-mine haunts, Henslow's Sparrows may be increasing: 20 occupied a single field in Wyandot, OH 24 Jul (RC). A male White-throated Sparrow in early Jun in Athens, OH (M. Boyd) was outdone by a bird in Hamilton, OH 28 Jun (S. Corbo). A late migrant White-crowned Sparrow 1–6 Jun was at Sugar Creek, Tuscarawas, OH (J. Miller), while a singing male at Marblehead, Ottawa, OH 2–4 Jul (E. Tramer) was altogether lost. A first summer record for Medina, OH, a Dark-eyed Junco was on territory through 19 Jun (R. and S. Harlan).

At least 3 male Blue Grosbeaks were found at the Penn-Warner Tract, Bucks, PA 27 Jul, a local stronghold (DF). Remarkably, away from the enclave in s. Ohio, this species may be more readily found in the Oak Openings on Michigan's doorstep: 7

were found 15 Jun (RN) in but one section of the park system. The species bred north to Union and Pickaway, while an individual was e. to Tuscarawas, OH (E. Schlabach). At the Philadelphia Airport, where this species has nested for many years, none could be found (JCM). A Rose-breasted Grosbeak in Preston, WV 25 Jun may have represented post-breeding dispersal (GF).

A Dickcissel frequented the Lancaster City Park, Lancaster, PA 8–26 Jun (ph. TA). The species also appeared s. to Jefferson, WV 21 Jun (MO). After a decline in the late 1990s, Western Meadowlarks appear to be stable in Ohio, with birds in Wood through Jun (C. Anderson), Williams 27 Jun (JP), and for the first time since 1946, Summit 20 Jun–2 Jul (D. Vogus, m.ob.). Unusual was a Red Crossbill at Spruce Flats Bog, Westmoreland, PA 5 Jun (D. Tetlow). Pine Siskins, including 8 young, were found in Johnstown, Cumberland, PA in Jun (K. Georg), and fledglings were observed at Powdermill, Westmoreland, PA in early Jun (ML). Non-breeding single birds in Pennsylvania were noted in Erie 16 Jun (D. Peters) and Indiana 3 Jun–6 Jul (M. Cunkleman), with 4 in Monroe (RW). Both Red Crossbills and Pine Siskins were widely reported in West Virginia in Jul (m.ob.).

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State of the Region

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The Eastern Highlands & Upper Ohio Valley form a complex Region, comprised, in crude terms, of the eastern highland forests (Bird Conservation Region [BCR] 28, the Appalachian Mountain region), which covers West Virginia and most of Pennsylvania, the western prairie peninsula (BCR 22), and the plains along the southern edge of Lake Erie (BCR 13); southeasternmost Pennsylvania has modest areas of Piedmont (BCR 29) and even Coastal Plain around Philadelphia (BCR 30). The Region straddles two major flyways, the Mississippi River in the west and the Atlantic flyway in the east. In between, the contorted Appalachian and Allegheny ridges of West Virginia and central Pennsylvania are famous for passages of migrant raptors and songbirds.

The Prairie Peninsula was the easternmost portion of Eastern Tallgrass Prairie (BCR 22) that extended into the western half of Ohio. These original grasslands have been reduced to 1% of their original expanse, having largely been converted to agriculture. Many of the species tied to this habitat have disappeared (Greater Prairie-Chicken) or have dwindled substantially (Upland Sandpiper) in Ohio. Much of these lands still lie along a major flyway adjacent to the Great Lakes basin, a critical corridor for waterfowl, shorebirds, and songbirds; the restoration of habitat within this area is thus a continued high priority, despite the near-absence of native prairie. Through the 1990s, substantial acreage was brought under the auspices of the Conservation Reserve Program (CRP) in the Farm Bill, and there was some amelioration in populations of several grassland species. However, it has become apparent that only 50% of the lands within the program in Ohio are compliant with an important component of the conservation requirement of the program (S. Hull, O.D.N.R., pers. comm.). Half the CRP lands in Ohio are mowed mid-season at about the peak of the breeding cycle for many grassland nesters. Unexpectedly, the salvation for some grassland species in the Region has been the reclamation of strip mine lands along the foothills of the Allegheny Mountains. Here Henslow's and Grasshoppers Sparrows—both species in decline in the suburban states of the East—are very much at home. Wet prairie restoration, in the form of wetland mitigation projects, has been modestly successful in some areas. The Big Island—Killdeer Plains complex is the largest such wetland in Ohio away from Lake Erie. In recent years, several innovative restoration techniques have been introduced at Big Island, where dikes are left open-ended, permitting a variety of water levels to persist; this has resulted in a remarkable increase in avian diversity.

Lake Erie conservation efforts must take into account the different avifaunas of the lake's three bathymetric divisions—the Western, Central, and Eastern Basins. Only a small portion of our Region involves the deep Eastern Basin. In recent years, deaths of hundreds of waterfowl and dozens of loons have been documented within this basin. While botulism is the likely culprit, exactly why it should now exhibit a greater lethality than in the past—and what may hold it in check elsewhere in Lake Erie—is a mystery.

In the Central Basin, a shoreline long impacted by the industry and urbanization of the Lorain—Cleveland Lakefront, successes in habitat conservation are small and hard won. What "progress" there has been—a greater number of lakefront parks, for instance—has largely been offset by their status as "multi-use facilities" (read: open-lawn recreation), which results in the removal of "unsightly" vegetation that once sheltered migrant songbirds. A new threat on the horizon may be the installation of wind turbines in the offshore waters: it was recently announced that a demonstration turbine will be built on the Cleveland lakefront. While it remains to be seen just what obstacle these structures may represent with regard to migrant waterfowl (e.g., the quarter-million Red-breasted Mergansers that stage each November between Huron and Cleveland), Ohioans share the concern that has been voiced elsewhere in the country over the potential negative impact such turbines may have.

The shallow, marsh-fringed Western Basin is the greatest single Important Bird Area (IBA) identified in the Region, home to Ohio's greatest numbers (and greatest diversity) of

passerines and non-passerines alike. The Western Basin has been the focus of any number of national and regional conservation plans, with notable successes here, though many challenges lie ahead. Shorebird data gathered in the past decade have supported the recent designation of the area as a regionally significant component of the Western Hemisphere Shorebird Reserve Network. The Magee Marsh Boardwalk now rivals Point Pelee National Park in Ontario for viewing warblers and other Neotropical migrants in the spring.

Slowly, a recognition of the import of Ohio's resources has seeped into the consciousness of officialdom, and a more nuanced understanding of the conservation priorities of this Region has materialized with the Ohio Bird Conservation Initiative, which brings together a wide variety of interested parties. As this consortium proceeds, it will find that habitat is very much at a premium, with significant dollar amounts now attached. And of that extant natural habitat that may be available, there is little if any that has not been negatively impacted by invasive species (e.g., Zebra Mussel, *Phragmites*). Questionable management practices have produced further impediments. Several expansive wetlands counted on Ohio's rolls are far from the avian productivity one might anticipate: the history of many wetlands—such as a marl bog stripped of that substrate, leaving nothing but bedrock; or the past application of copper sulfate to reduce the "threat" of cattails choking—is especially disturbing given that Ohio has suffered greater wetland loss than any other state. The Ohio Department of Natural Resources' revised numbers put the loss of wetlands at 94%, a figure greater than that usually cited for California.

Montane deciduous and mixed forests cover much of southeastern Ohio, West Virginia, and Pennsylvania, and the conservation concerns there are more familiar, especially in Appalachian forests proper. The usual threats such as logging and fragmentation of habitats exist on scales both large and small, and with them come attendant problems of invasive,



The deadly effects of West Nile virus on raptors is here represented by birds (mostly Great Horned Owls) turned into a single wildlife rehabilitator, Mona Rutger, from around Sandusky Bay, Ohio between 20 August and 20 September 2002. The mass mortality of raptors across the Region may have resulted in rising raccoon populations and an increase in rabies cases. Photograph by Mona Rutger.

exotic plants, deer over-browsing, cowbird penetration of mature forests, and feral cats. Population woes in the highlands may not match those on the East Coast, but growing human populations are an issue in eastern Pennsylvania, where land conversion continues unabated, and bird species tied to open country and early successional habitats are almost uniformly in decline except where reclaimed strip mines provide patches of habitat.

Energy demands in more densely settled areas are high, and several wind farms are in operation or under construction along the mountain ridges of the Allegheny Front in Pennsylvania and West Virginia. Bird mortality at cell towers throughout the Region, such as those lining the Lake Erie shoreline outside Toledo, has as yet to be investigated, though their heavily guyed structures stand within the path of many migrant songbirds. Television towers such as that in Youngstown, Ohio kill scores of Ovenbirds and Red-eyed Vireos, among other species, each autumn (G. Meiter, pers. comm.), but their owners are not required to mitigate such losses of protected species. While the issue of bird strikes at wind farms and cell and television towers requires a watchful eye, it pales in comparison to the steady loss of most of the important bird habitats in the Region.

It was a cool, dry summer. In Chicago, June was 1.3° F cooler than average, and precipitation was 3.3 cm below normal, whereas the average July temperature was down 2.1° F and precipitation was 2.2 cm below average. However, high moisture levels from spring precipitation were ample to keep most vegetation lush throughout the summer.

In western Illinois, Larry Hood deemed the weather "quite good for nesting birds." He noted good breeding success for a number of species including Northern Kingbird, Yellow-billed Cuckoo, Eastern Kingbird, Dickcissel, and Eastern Meadowlark. Lee Sterrenburg, who birded extensively in south-central and southwestern Indiana, noted the expansion of Dickcissels, Blue Grosbeak, and Bell's Vireos. Many others shared these sentiments, suggesting that summer 2004 was an especially good breeding year for many species, and particularly the grassland, open country, and scrubland birds.

Two points cast a cloud over the season. First, extensive searching of southwestern Indiana's traditional Loggerhead Shrike turf yielded no shrikes nor any evidence of their presence. This is especially disturbing, as most of the state's former breeding birds were in this area. Secondly, the mid-July appearance of an apparently healthy adult Snowy Owl in central Indiana was both surprising and unsettling. Oddly, this happened to be the state's first record in the past 29 months. A previous hiatus of this magnitude has occurred only once during the last half-century. In light of recent suppositions about the impact of global warming on Arctic regions, it is conceivable that these observations are linked to habitat disturbances far to our north.

Abbreviations: Carl. L. (Carlyle Lake, s. IL); I.B.S.P. (Illinois Beach S.P., Lake, IL); Chau. (Chautauqua N.W.R., Mason); G.L.N.T.C. (Great Lakes Naval Training Center, Lake, IL); L. Cal. (L. Calumet, s. Chicago); L.M.S.F. (Lowden-Miller State Forest, Ogle, IL); Mill. B. (Miller Beach, IN, the southernmost point on L. Michigan); T.N.C.K.S. (The Nature Conservancy Kankakee Sands wetland, Newton, IN).

LOONS THROUGH VULTURES

Single nonbreeding Common Loons were reported in both states, a typical pattern for the Region. Pied-billed Grebes were plentiful, with at least five breeding records reported in Illinois and a peak count of 160 at Horseshoe L., Madison, IL 18 Jun (FHo). A very tardy Horned Grebe still lingered off Rainbow Beach, Chicago 4 Jun (DFS). The expected mid-Jul influx of American White Pelicans brought good numbers to w. Illinois, where the peak count was 532 at Chau. 29 Jul (RBj,

Illinois & Indiana



SBj). Extralimital pelican reports included 3 at L. Cal. 30 May through 12 Jun (WJM), a flock of 9 at that site 13 Jun (WJM), and a single in Union, IN 7 & 11 Jun (WHB). On 7 Jun, 41 Double-crested Cormorant nests, most containing 3-4 eggs, were discovered at the ISPAT Inland Steel night-heron colony in East Chicago, Lake, IN (ph. JSC). This is the Indiana lakefront's first known nesting record and the state's first successful breeding in more than 50 years.

Encouragingly, above-average numbers of American and Least Bitterns were reported in both states during the breeding season. In ne. Illinois, an estimated 20 Great Egret nests were present and at least 3 Little Blue Herons fledged at the L. Cal. rookery (WJM). The established rookery at Alorton, IL contained 20 Snowy Egret nests (9 young banded) and 200 Cattle Egret nests (39 young banded) 18 Jun (VK et al.). Black-crowned Night-Herons apparently fared well this breeding season, with 200 nests reported during the season at L. Cal. (WJM) and another (100) at Alorton, IL 18 June (VK et al.). Breeding Yellow-crowned Night-Herons

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were reported at Granite City, IL, where three nests fledged 3-4 young each (FHo). Black Vultures peaked at 28 in Franklin, IN 13 Jun (WHB); an extralimital bird in Kane, IL 8 Jun (RHo) was most unexpected.

WATERFOWL THROUGH CRANES

Mute Swans bred successfully in the L. Cal. area: 34 ads. and 22 young were counted there 31 May (DFS). Numerous Wood Duck broods were reported in both states. A decade ago, summer Gadwalls were quite rare in the Region, but this year there were four reports in Illinois, including a female with a brood of 8 at Hennepin L., IL 29 Jul (DFS). The latter site also yielded a male Northern Pintail 3 Jun and a female Redhead

with a brood of 4 on 15 Jul (DFS). Quite unusual for the date and s. location was a Bufflehead at Horseshoe L., *Madison*, IL 1–8 Jun (FHo). Multiple Hooded Merganser broods were reported in both states. Quite surprising was the occurrence of several Common Mergansers, including a male in *Will*, IL 3 Jun (DFS), a male in *Bureau*, IL 15 Jun, and a pair at the latter location 2 Jul (DFS). Also unexpected were female-plumaged Red-breasted Mergansers at *Hennepin L.*, IL 10 Jul (EWW) and at *Mill. B.* 13 Jul (MTo). The Region's largest concentration of breeding Ruddy Ducks was at *Hennepin L.*, IL where 102 ads. and young were reported 15 Jun (DFS).

In Jun and Jul, the Indiana Department of Natural Resources' reintroduction program released 8 Ospreys in each of the following counties: *Jasper*, *Kosciusko*, *Sullivan*, and *Crawford* (JSC). Elsewhere, at least eight Osprey nests were reported in Indiana and three more were in Illinois. A peak count of 45 Mississippi Kites was made at *Thebes*, *Alexander*, IL 5 Jun (DMK, TAM); both chicks at the established *Warrick*, IN nest site died 14 Jul when a storm destroyed the nest (Midge Lechner, *vide* JSC). An early Jun aerial survey of Indiana Bald Eagle nests revealed the presence of 85 chicks in 44 nests (JSC); there were also at least six nests in Illinois, including one on the Little Calumet R. that provided the first Chicago-area nesting record in more than a century (WJM). Red-shouldered Hawks were reported on the increase in ne. Indiana (Haw). At the regular nw. Illinois breeding site, two Swainson's Hawk territories were located in nw. *Kane* and two more in sw. *McHenry*, but no fledglings were reported (John Bergstrom, *vide* RMo). Most unusual was a summer-period Merlin at *Chau.* 11 Jun (RBj, SBj).

The Region's Wild Turkey population appears to be flourishing, as numerous reports of young came from both states. A number of double-digit Northern Bobwhite reports also suggest that this species is on the upswing; the peak tally was of 47 in *Sullivan* and *Greene*, IN 4 Jul (LWS). The season's only breeding King Rail report consisted of 2 ads. and 4 young at *Prairie Ridge W.M.A.*, IL 8 Jul (BSh). The largest Virginia Rail count was of 3–4 at T.N.C.K.S. 26 Jun (JHz); agitated pairs at L. Cal. 5 & 12 Jun (WJM) were suggestive of local nesting. Breeding-period Common Moorhen numbers continue to improve, with young noted at six Illinois and five Indiana locations. Sandhill Cranes nested in Illinois at *Lock & Dam 13*, *Whiteside*, where a pair and fledgling were noted 10 Jul (EWW); nesting also occurred in *Garden Prairie*

Slough, *Boone*, IL 15 Jul (DTW), and two family groups (ads. plus single chicks) were observed in *Kosciusko*, IN 25 Jun (JSC).

SHOREBIRDS

A molting Black-bellied Plover in *Fayette*, IL 25 Jul (DMK) was a trifle early. Reports of the endangered Piping Plover included an unbanded ad. at *Mill. B.* 29 Jul (JKC, DSt) and a single bird in *Madison*, IL 31 Jun (*vide* DMK). A concentration of 1500 Killdeer at



This Black Skimmer was photographed 23 July 2004 in Springfield, where it made a one-day appearance; it provided only the second Illinois record. Photograph by H. David Bohlen.

Carl. L. 16 Jul (DMK) constituted a remarkable count for Jul. The largest of four Illinois Black-necked Stilt reports consisted of 11 in w. *Alexander* 18 Jun (KAM). This species likely nested in *Greene*, IN, where a pair of ads. was found at *Goose Pond W.M.A.* 11 Jul (LWS) and 2 juvs. were observed 20 Jul (Peter Scott, *vide* LWS). The Region's only American Avocet report consisted of one at *Chau.* 14 Jul (RBj, SBj)—surely the Region's poorest showing in more than a decade. Selected high counts of migrant shorebirds included 1027 Lesser Yellowlegs at *Chau.* 29 Jul (RBj, SBj), 42 Solitary Sandpipers at *McGinnis Slough*, IL 30 Jul (WSS), 8 Willets at *Mill. B.* 27 Jul (MTo), 250 Semipalmated Sandpipers at *Rice Lake W.M.A.*, IL 31 Jul (TAM et al.), 972 Pectoral Sandpipers at *Chau.* 29 Jul (RBj, SBj), and 275 Stilt Sandpipers at *Rice Lake W.M.A.*, IL 31 Jul (TAM et al.).

The summer's largest Upland Sandpiper tallies consisted of 11 at the *Universal* mine in *Vermillion*, IN 9 Jul (LWS) and 5 at *Decatur*, IL 22 Jul (TAM, KAM et al.). The Indiana lakefront experienced another strong Whimbrel flight that yielded five records involving 7 birds. The only other Whimbrel was an inland bird at *Carl. L.* 23 Jul (DMK et al.). Alternate-plumaged Red Knots are quite rare in the Region; consequently, the single birds observed in *Marshall*, IN 29 Jul (MH, ph. SK) and at *Mill. B.* 31 Jul (JKC) were noteworthy. Early Baird's Sandpiper reports included singles in *Union*, IN 17 Jul (WHB), at *Carl. L.* 23 Jul (DMK), and in *Boone*, IN

29–31 Jul (RLH et al.). A single ad. Long-billed Dowitcher—noted with 7 Short-billed 20–21 Jul in a *Boone*, IN industrial pond (CLH, RLH, LPv)—provided one of very few summer records for the state. Migrant Wilson's Phalaropes included one at *Grand Kankakee Marsh*, IN 15 & 17 Jul (BJG m.ob.), 2 juvs. at *Carl. L.* 16–26 Jul (DMK et al.), 2 juvs. at *Rice Lake W.M.A.* 31 Jul (TAM et al.), and one in *Jefferson*, IL 31 Jul (BSh). The season's only Red-necked Phalarope was at *Rice Lake W.M.A.*, IL 31 Jul (TAM et al.).

GULLS THROUGH HUMMINGBIRDS

Laughing Gulls' numbers were typical, with 3 in Illinois and 2 in Indiana. Some 5000+ Ring-billed Gull nests were reported at the L. Cal. colony this season (WJM). Once again, Ring-billeds nested on rooftops in *Des Plaines*, IL, where 60 nests were counted and 102 young banded 17 Jun (VK, AA et al.). Summer Lesser Black-backed Gulls are rare in the Chicago area; consequently, the single bird observed at *Montrose* 20 Jul (UG) was noteworthy. The presence of numerous Caspian Terns in fresh juv. plumage along the Indiana lakefront suggests that nesting at the Indiana steel mills was successful this year. No information was received about the G.L.N.T.C. Common Tern breeding colony that was active last year. Four Least Tern reports from Illinois did not involve breeding birds; however, some 80 nests were counted at the *Gibson*, IN breeding site, though productivity remained low there (JSC). One of the summer's best finds was Illinois's 2nd Black Skimmer, which appeared in *Springfield*, IL 23 Jul (ph., †HDB, BD, TAM, KAM).

The peak tally among scores of Eurasian Collared-Dove reports consisted of 14 in *Granite City*, IL 24 Jul (FHo). The Region's most impressive dove report, however, involved 2000 Mourning Doves at *Sauget*, IL 17 Jul (DMK). During the season, some 99 Monk Parakeet nests were counted in s. Chicago and adjacent suburbs (WJM). Perhaps related to the spring's cicada eruption, cuckoo numbers were up this season. Across the Region there were eight Black-billed reports in Illinois and another seven in Indiana. Yellow-billed Cuckoos were also unusually prevalent, with seven double-digit counts and a maximum tally of 20 in *Monroe*, IN 5 Jun (RBr).

Indiana had its first summer report of a non-injured Snowy Owl. Ben Vineyard first saw this ad. in *Tippecanoe* 15 Jul (though some reports suggest it had been present for two or three weeks), and a Department of

Natural Resources officer subsequently re-found the bird 26 Jul near I-65 in White, where it was confirmed the following day (LPV, LAB). The owl remained at this site until it was hit by a vehicle on 15 Aug and ultimately died in rehabilitation. Peak Chuckwill's-widow counts included 5 at Ferne Clyffe S.P., IL 4 Jul (EWW) and 3 in Monroe, IN 3 Jun (LWS). Additionally, one was heard in Sullivan, IN 3 Jun (LWS), providing a first county record. The largest Whip-poor-will tally, by far, consisted of 18 in Monroe, IN 2 Jun (LWS). A remarkable 500+ Ruby-throated Hummingbirds (94 of which were banded) were at Siloam Springs S.P., IL over the period (BSt).

FLYCATCHERS THROUGH WARBLERS

An Alder Flycatcher was seen in Chicago's Lincoln Park 16 Jun (GAW), the last of the migrants, but a singing bird at Beverly Shores, IN 26 Jun (JKC et al.) might have been on territory. Willow Flycatchers were quite plentiful, as indicated by maximum counts of 23 at Herrick L., IL 5 Jun (ES) and 19 at Beverly Shores, IN 12 Jun (JKC et al.). Western Kingbird reports were restricted to Illinois, where up to 2 inhabited the East St. Louis nest site 12 Jun-19 Jul (DMK, KAM) and another was reported in Madison 1 Jun-20 Jul (FHo). Also in Illinois, unsuccessful Scissor-tailed Flycatcher nests were reported at Lenzburg (*vide* DMK) and in Union (DMK, KAM, m.ob.). Another Scissor-tailed sighting came from w. Macon, IL 14 Jul (TAM). Although Loggerhead Shrike reports in Illinois included at least two pairs with young in Edwards (EWW) and a peak of 5 at Carl. L. 22 Jul (DMK), this species was disturbingly scarce in Indiana. Despite systematic searches throughout former Loggerhead stronghold areas in Daviess and Sullivan, IN, no shrikes, nor any evidence of impaled prey, could be found this summer (LWS, KBu). A remarkable 47 Bell's Vireos were counted in the reclaimed Sullivan, IN strip mines 4 Jul (LWS). Most surprising was a singing male Blue-headed Vireo at Pokagon S.P., IN Jul 8 (Haw, FHe, SS), which provided a 2nd Jul record for ne. Indiana.

The largest swallow concentrations included 425 Purple Martins in Springfield, IL 24 Jul (KAM et al.), 800+ Tree Swallows in Fulton, IL 11 Jul (LHo), 2500 Bank Swallows at Chau. 25 Jul (TAM), and 300 Cliff Swallows at Carl. L. 10 Jul (DMK). Quite unexpected were at least 2 Red-breasted Nuthatches that remained in Chicago's Morton Arboretum from late May through 2 Jul (ES, EWW). Sedge Wrens were plentiful, as evidenced by eight double-digit counts across the Region. A fine Marsh Wren tally of 20+ was logged at Garden Prairie Slough, Boone 3 Jul (DTW). In Illinois, the L.M.S.F. remained quite productive, yielding a hefty

count of 24 Veerys on 5 Jul (DFS). On 5 Jul Lisa and Gary Bowman discovered and photographed Indiana's first Sage Thrasher at the reclaimed Universal Mine in Vermillion. A tardy Nashville Warbler was observed in Chicago's Lincoln Park 9 Jun (GAW). Unusually large breeding-season warbler tallies included 19 Northern Parulas in Oconee, IL 9 Jul (DMK), 122 Yellow Warblers at Kankakee W.M.A., IN 5 Jun (JKC et al.), 39 Prothonotary Warblers along a 16-km drive at Kankakee W.M.A. 5 Jun (SRB et al.), and 43 Ovenbirds at L.M.S.F. 5 Jul (DFS). Most unexpected was a singing Magnolia Warbler in Pokagon S.P. 3 Jul (BB, DR, FW). Black-throated Green Warblers continued their infiltration of the Region's breeding avifauna, with 10 reports in Indiana and two in Illinois. A territorial pair of Pine Warblers summered in an Indiana Dunes S.P. pinery. A male was seen 5 Jun (SRB, JKC, LSH, KJB), the first summer lakefront record in 100 years, and was heard singing 15 Jun (RJP). J. J. McCoy saw the pair 3 Jul and a juv. on 12 Aug. This constitutes the first Jul record for the Indiana Dunes in 130 years. Peak Cerulean Warbler tallies included 9 at L. Monroe, IN 3 Jun (MCI) and 8 in Mississippi Palisades S.P., IL 11 Jul (EWW). Fourteen Worm-eating Warblers were recorded on a B.B.S. in Hoosier N.E. 7 Jun (LWS). An exciting report of a Swainson's Warbler in Johnson, IL 29 Jun-5 Jul (AS, BSh, LHa) was not accompanied by documentation. A male Mourning Warbler was found at I.B.S.P. 1 Jul (EWW), and a first-year female, identified in the Indiana Dunes 25 Jul (SRB), was presumably an overeager migrant, besting the previous early fall date of 6 Aug 1988 by almost two weeks.

SPARROWS THROUGH FINCHES

For the 2nd consecutive summer, Clay-colored Sparrows nested in ne. Illinois. This year, an ad. and 3 young were observed in Aurora West Forest Preserve, Kane 23 Jul (ES). Another Clay-colored was reported at Orland Grasslands, Cook, IL 26 Jun (WSS). The Region's Grasshopper Sparrow population appears to be flourishing, as evidenced by counts of 42 in a Pike, IN reclaimed strip mine (JID) and 33 at Hennepin L., IL 2 Jul (DFS). Henslow's Sparrows were also plentiful, with a peak tally of 45 in the w.-cen. Indiana reclaimed strip mines 8 Jul (LWS). As occurred last summer, a White-throated Sparrow lingered, this one at Chicago's Montrose Harbor 20 Jul (UG). A very late Dark-eyed Junco was observed in Poplar Grove, Boone, IL 21 Jun (AB). Prior to 2004, Blue Grosbeak was casual to accidental on the Indiana lakefront. On 3 Jul, a pair was discovered in scrubby interdunal vegetation just inland from Mill. B. and w. of the Lake Street parking lot (MTo, JJM), with one or 2 record-

ed at that site through the end of the period (m. ob.). This represents a major breeding-season range expansion in the state. The male Painted Bunting at East St. Louis, banded in 2003, was present again this summer 3 Jun-19 Jul (KAM, DMK, m.ob.); 2 males were reported at that site 10 Jul (DTW).

It was another fine season for Dickcissels, with peak tallies of 186 in w.-cen. Indiana 4 Jul (LWS) and 102 in Jamestown, IL 2 Jun (DMK). Bobolinks were also widespread in good numbers; peak counts included 32 at Orland Grassland, IL 3-4 Jun (WSS, GAW) and 25 at the Burnidge Forest Preserve, IL 27 Jun (UG). Noteworthy meadowlark tallies included 64 Easterns in Beaucoup, IL 1 Jun (DMK) and 18 Westerns in Atkinson, IL 19 Jun (DFS). Yellow-headed Blackbirds successfully nested at L. Cal. (Eggers Woods), where a pair and 2 young were observed 26 Jun (WJM). Breeding also apparently occurred in DuPage, IL, as 3 ads. and a juv. were seen in Pratts Wayne Woods 4 Jul (UG). The largest Brewer's Blackbird concentration was in s. LaPorte, IN, where 17 were counted 19 Jun (JJM et al.). Orchard Orioles were widespread and abundant, with peak tallies of 10 in Columbia, IL 18 Jun (KAM) and 9 in LaGrange, IN 9 Jun (JKC). A late departing male Purple Finch lingered in Monroe, IN until 3 Jun (*vide* J&SH). The northernmost Eurasian Tree Sparrow was detected in Bond, IL, with one there 27 May (CM).

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State of the Region

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To borrow a realtor's cliché: in the Illinois & Indiana Region, the three most important concerns for bird conservation are habitat, habitat, and habitat. An informal survey of almost two-dozen veteran Regional birders revealed that, without exception, habitat loss was considered the major threat to species of special concern and to more numerous, widespread species. Indeed, habitat preservation and restoration topped every correspondent's list of priorities for bird conservation. Habitats in these two states, now vastly altered by two centuries of European settlement, are comprised of hardwood forests in the extreme south (Bird Conservation Region [BCR] 24), agricultural lands once correctly called the Eastern Tallgrass Prairie (BCR 22) in the center, and the Prairie-Hardwood Transition (BCR 23) in the northern margins. Changes to habitats in these areas are most profound in farmland and urban centers, but in fact very few fragments of "intact" habitat remain in the Region.

Human population growth and one of its major consequences, urban sprawl, were identified as the chief forces driving habitat loss. Numerous correspondents mentioned the permanent loss of former prime habitat to housing developments and shopping malls as economic growth, especially during the 1990s, vastly expanded the suburbs of most large cities in Illinois and Indiana. In Illinois alone, forests have been reduced from 14 million to four million acres since 1800, and what remains is mostly fragmented, favorable for generalists and species that use or tolerate edge-habitats well, such as Blue Jay, Northern Cardinal, Indigo Bunting, and Downy Woodpecker, but not for specialized species of the forest interior such as Worm-eating Warbler or Acadian Flycatcher. The rise in the number of summer homes, usually in forests and along lakeshores, has contributed to the loss and fragmentation of forest. Even in open habitats, rural building disrupts nesting birds: Judy Pollock points out that development in Kane County in northeastern Illinois threatens the only nesting population of Swainson's Hawks east of the Mississippi River. Human development and its infrastructure almost invariably fragment and degrade natural habitats, as well as bringing an increase in mammalian predators (domestic and wild), cowbirds, and in some cases exotic flora. Wood Thrush, once common in the hardwood forests, has declined drastically here, according to Breeding Bird Survey data; it is susceptible to multiple types of forest degradation. Jeff Walk points out that, in the absence of natural disturbances, historically provided by fire, the composition of Illinois forests is also being degraded by the growth of maples and exotic flora such as buckthorns and honeysuckles. Roger Hedge noted recent research that suggests that these spreading exotic plants provide little in the way of nutrition for native birds and thereby also negatively affect avian productivity. Natural or prescribed burning could help alleviate this problem. In many areas, the rapid increase of deer populations wreaks havoc with birds that breed in the forest understory and on the ground, such as Whip-poor-wills, Ovenbirds, and Black-and-white Warblers.

The agricultural fields and grasslands that remain in the central portions of Indiana and Illinois are but a shadow of the 40+ million acres of prairies present in the middle of the nineteenth century: essentially nothing remains of native prairie in these states, perhaps just 0.01%. In 1889, Robert Ridgway wrote: "we searched in vain for the characteristic prairie birds [...] and left our beautiful prairie with sad heart, disgusted with the change which civilization had wrought. [I]t will probably not be many years before a prairie in its primitive condition cannot be found within the limits of Illinois" (*The Ornithology of Illinois*). Greater Prairie-Chicken, the flagship species of this marvelous habitat, has declined from an estimated population of some 10 million birds to fewer than 80 in Illinois. The once-abundant Upland Sandpiper and Loggerhead Shrike, also tied to native prairie, are listed as either Endangered or Threatened in both states, as are Northern Harrier and Short-eared Owl. Shifts away from hayfields and livestock toward more sterile, modern row-crop agriculture, along with intense application of herbicides, insecticides, and rodenticides, has contributed to the decline of even generalist grassland birds. As in agricultural prairie states to the west, such as Iowa, there is some hope that careful management through the judicious use of mowing and burning and the avoidance of over-grazing could markedly improve our grasslands, at least for habitat generalists such as Grasshopper, Savannah, and Vesper Sparrows, Dickcissel, Bobolink, and both meadowlarks, some of which seemed to be declining despite federal programs such as the USDA's Conservation Reserve Program (CRP) within the Farm Bill. To be



A disappearing songbird that has received much attention in recent years, Henslow's Sparrow (here at Goose Lake Prairie State Park, Illinois) is classically a species of eastern tall-grass prairie, but it can adapt to reclaimed strip-mined land and other disturbed habitats, though not with the flexibility of its congener Grasshopper Sparrow, whose populations are also declining continentally. In Illinois and Indiana, suburban sprawl and modern agriculture limit the areas that might be restored for this and other prairie birds. Photograph by Christopher L. Wood.

effective, grassland conservation efforts for birds must involve relatively large contiguous blocks of structurally diverse habitat with minimal edge, controlled encroachment of woody plants and invasive exotics such as Garlic Mustard, and no mowing during the breeding season (a devastating practice permitted by a loophole in the CRP). Even with well-maintained grasslands, birds of true prairie—such as Henslow's Sparrow—derive very little benefit from fallow farm fields. Though there is surely some conservation benefit to be realized in making unfarmed fields more productive for grassland species, the restoration of native prairie is far more time-consuming and expensive; efforts in this direction are still in their infancy in Illinois and Indiana. A useful publication for interested parties is *Illinois Prairie, Past and Future: A Restoration Guide*, available from the Illinois Department of Conservation, Division of Natural Heritage.

Economic factors, often linked to regulatory agencies and governmental land-use policies, have profound and far-reaching impacts on birds and their habitats in this Region. John Castrale notes, for example, that in Indiana changes in the farm economy (affecting which crops are planted), agricultural technology and practices, and farm programs (mainly the federal Farm Bill) all have tremendous consequences for birds, especially grassland species. Similarly, Keith McMullen notes that recent changes in federal regulations have rendered isolated prairie wetlands vulnerable to filling without the requirement of a permit. Travis Mahan comments that in some cases habitat "enhancement" projects are too frequently aimed at producing more huntable wildlife, rather than having balanced biodiversity as the goal. Outside the hunting season, naturally, some habitats developed for game species can provide suitable habitat for shorebirds, marsh-birds, and waders.

The degradation of native wetlands and waterways is cause for alarm in both Indiana and Illinois, with many of the remaining wetlands being choked out of existence by Purple Loosestrife and *Phragmites*. In the open waters of Lake Michigan, Zebra Mussels would appear to be a boon to sea ducks and bay duck, but in fact these introduced mollusks extract plankton, which severs the lake's food web at its very foundation. Moreover, it appears likely that Zebra Mussels' tissues concentrate toxins, including potentially bio-accumulative substances that in the long term could damage birds that consume them. Pollution, including that produced by mosquito spraying, along with industrially produced base metals and various organic compounds (many of which currently remain trapped in aquatic sediments), poses a continuing environmental problem, one poorly addressed at the federal level at present.

One group of birds cited frequently by correspondents as in need of immediate attention was shorebirds. Shorebird management sites are sorely needed to provide feeding and resting sites for these long-range migrants. Dan Kassebaum suggests initiating a plan to incorporate shorebird management areas, proactively, into the various reservoirs developed by the Corps of Engineers. Because their stopover habitat requirements are relatively clear—and their habitats simple and inexpensive to establish and manage—this concept would seem worthy of implementation, especially given the dramatic losses of floodplain habitat in the age of river management.

Finally, correspondents also listed a number of conservation concerns that are less specific to this Region. Foremost among these were window kills, the impact of feral cats, and the increased numbers of bird strikes at communication towers. Estimates of the number of birds killed annually by flying into glass exceed one billion. The heavy toll taken by feral and domestic cats is well known and, more specifically, may be a factor in depressing Northern Bobwhite populations. The proliferation of cell-phone and television towers, well-documented hazards for nocturnal migrants, also contributes to avian mortality.

Despite all of these dark clouds, it is worth emphasizing that a number of important bird conservation successes have been achieved. Fine examples in the Greater Chicago area include The Nature Conservancy's recent wet prairie restoration at Kankakee Sands in northwestern Indiana and the grassland restoration efforts in Cook County, Illinois. According to Judy Pollock, it is estimated that Chicago's *Lights Out* program and Chicago Bird Collision Monitors will save the lives of over 10,000 migratory birds per year. Farther afield, reclaimed strip mines in the southern parts of the Region have been an unexpected bonus for grassland species, including specialists like Henslow's Sparrow. Recognizing that we will forever face entirely new and unexpected challenges in bird conservation, such as the recent epidemic of West Nile virus, Walter Marcisz suggests that our most critical challenge is to remain intellectually vigilant, to imagine creative, effective solutions to unanticipated conservation problems before they arise—and to be prepared to implement these solutions in a timely manner. In such a shift from the reactive to the proactive, bird conservation on this continent may yet hold promise.

duced 8 young in *Brown*, MN (PH et al.); Minnesota's only other report was one in *Stearns* 16 Jul (BU).

SHOREBIRDS

The only southbound Black-bellied Plover reported was at *Horicon* 30 Jul (SF). Eleven American Golden-Plovers at *Mud L.* 3 Jul (PCC) possibly attempted to summer; the Region's first unequivocal fall migrant was in *Green*, WI 24 Jul (ME). Minnesota's 8th Snowy Plover was at *Albany W.T.P.*, *Stearns* 4–5 Jun (ph. †KJB, m.ob.), the first to be found since one at *Lake of the Woods* in 1982! Piping Plovers fared well in Michigan, with 55 pairs producing 93 fledglings (*fide* JTW); nesting was not documented in Minnesota or Wisconsin.

Two Black-necked Stilts lingered at *Horicon* through 17 Jul (JBa et al.), and 2 more visited *Jefferson*, WI 28 Jul (p.a., JBi). American Avocets nested again in *Big Stone*, MN (PCC, PHS). Difficult to classify was an avocet at *New Buffalo*, MI 29 Jun (JTW), but 2 near *St. Joseph* 13 Jul (WEJ) and 2 in *Milwaukee* 30–31 Jul (m.ob.) represented first fall migrants in Michigan and Wisconsin, respectively. A Solitary Sandpiper was late in *Ozaukee*, WI 25 Jun (JF); 42 in *Big Stone*, MN 18 Jul (PCC, PHS) was a record high for Minnesota. Willets peaked at 9 in *Berrien*, MI 13 Jul (*fide* JTW), following many reports 20 Jun–31 Jul. Wisconsin reported Willets in *Milwaukee* 25 Jul (SL) and *Sauk* 28 Jul (AH). Another high count was 132 Spotted Sandpipers at *Muskegon* 26 Jul (PCC). Rare in fall, up to 4 Hudsonian Godwits transited *Mud L.* 30–31 Jul (KJB, PCC et al.). Marbled Godwits visited *Berrien*, MI 14 Jul (JS) and *Horicon* 8 Jul (DT, MP).

Unusual for Michigan was the Semipalmated Sandpiper summering at *Pte. Mouillee* (AMB). A Western Sandpiper was reported at *Horicon* 8 Jul (p.a., DT). Single White-rumped Sandpipers were documented in *Big Stone*, MN 18 Jul (PCC, PHS), *Lac Qui Parle*, MN 22 Jul (BU), and *Berrien*, MI 25 Jul (TB). Seven Dunlin summered at *Pte. Mouillee* (AMB), while singles at *Horicon* 16 Jul (TP) and 30 Jul (SF) were deemed early migrants. An injured Buff-breasted Sandpiper in *Big Stone* 26 Jun (PCC) furnished only the 2nd mid-summer record for Minnesota. An ad. male Ruff in *Big Stone*, MN 25–29 Jul (PHS, JMJ, m.ob.) unfortunately disappeared just before the start of the *Big Stone N.W.R.* shorebird workshop. Short-billed Dowitcher counts peaked at 267 at *Pte. Mouillee* 23 Jul (ATC). An ad. Wilson's Phalarope with 4 chicks at *Shiawassee* 18 Jul (BG, CS) furnished Michigan's first nesting record in many years. Two Wilson's were southerly in *Walworth*, WI 18–19 Jun (KD, WR). Two Red-necked Phalaropes were early at *Horicon* 8–31 Jul (DT, TW, TP).

GULLS THROUGH HUMMINGBIRDS

Presumably the same Laughing Gull visited *Milwaukee*, WI 9 Jun (SL), 25 Jun (KJ), and 28 Jul (JI); an apparent Laughing Gull x Ring-billed Gull hybrid was also reported on the latter date (JI). An ad. Laughing Gull frequented the beaches in *Berrien*, MI 26 Jun–13 Jul (m.ob.). Franklin's Gulls stayed in three Michigan and four Wisconsin locations. Wisconsin hosted the Region's only Little Gulls in *Manitowoc* 26 Jun (RH) and *Brown* 10 Jul (PS). Small numbers of mostly imm. Bonaparte's Gulls normally summer in n. Minnesota, but the flock of 216 in *Roseau* 27 Jun (PHS) was extraordinary. Amazingly early was a Sabine's Gull in *Sauk*, WI 28 Jul (p.a., AH). Establishing Michigan's 10th record was a pair of Least Terns at *New Buffalo*, *Berrien* 8 Jul (p.a., TR).

Eurasian Collared-Doves were at six Minnesota locations, including nesting in *Dakota* (TN) and *Houston* (ph. FZL, KAK). In Wisconsin, single collared-doves cooed in *Columbia* 8 Jun–10 Jul (KB, TP), *Green* 11 Jul (QY), and *Milwaukee* 28 Jul (BA). Visiting a feeder near *Duluth* 16 Jun (CE et al.) was Minnesota's 6th White-winged Dove—also the 3rd for the state this year. Another White-winged strayed to *Kenosha*, WI 26 Jun (p.a., EH). A pair of Burrowing Owls in *Watsonwan*, MN disappeared after their burrow was dug out by a fox (*fide* AXH). Michigan's first Great Gray Owl nesting was confirmed near *Seney N.W.R.*, *Schoolcraft* (RB, KA). More widespread than usual were Great Grays in nine Minnesota counties. Two Chuck-will's-widows from spring were still in *Vernon*, WI 6 Jul (DJ, DT, MP, DB). Poor-quality digital images of an alleged Magnificent Hummingbird in *Anoka* 12 Jun (CR) were astutely recognized as Minnesota's first Green Violet-ear.

FLYCATCHERS THROUGH THRASHERS

Acadian Flycatcher extended its breeding range in Wisconsin to *Eau Claire* (JP). Loggerhead Shrike was absent from Michigan this summer and appeared in only three Wisconsin locations, but shrikes occurred in 12 Minnesota counties as far nw. as *Kittson* 28 Jun (SSP). Casual in Minnesota yet establishing the 3rd *Clay* record was a White-eyed Vireo banded at *Buffalo River S.P.* 5 Jun (GEN, ph. JGa). White-eyed were in four Michigan and four Wisconsin counties, including one as far n. as *Marathon*, WI 5 Jun (DB). A Philadelphia Vireo in *Berrien*, MI 1 Jun (AV) was a bit behind schedule.

Inspiring were 18,000 Tree Swallows at *Shiawassee* 14 Jul (LA, BG, CS). May's Rock Wren at *Felton Prairie*, *Clay*, MN attracted a mate and produced 4 young (PCC), providing Minnesota's first breeding record. The range of Carolina Wren has contracted throughout the Region; Michigan had the

species in nine counties (17 last year), while Wisconsin and Minnesota managed only one report each. Red-breasted Nuthatches ranged farther southward than usual in Michigan and provided a 2nd breeding record for *Berrien*; also unusual was a Red-breasted in *Milwaukee*, WI 12 Jun (MB). Northern Mockingbirds were in eight Michigan counties, including *Marquette* in the U.P., but only half that many Minnesota and Wisconsin locations. Adroitly photographed in flight was Minnesota's 11th Sage Thrasher at *Dodge Nature Center*, *Ramsey* 26 Jun (DN).

WARBLERS THROUGH FINCHES

Tennessee Warblers in *Sheboygan*, WI 15 Jun (SB) and at *Shiawassee* 25 Jun (LA, BG) were apparently still northbound. Fall migrant Tennessees normally first appear in late Jul, e.g., one in *Portage*, WI 17 Jul (JSc). Unusually late were Black-throated Blue Warblers in *Anoka*, MN 16 Jun (JG), *Dane*, WI 19 Jun (CM), and *Sherburne*, MN 23 Jun (P&JG). Wisconsin had several tardy Blackburnian Warblers, including one in *Ozaukee* 7 Jul (JF). Yellow-throated Warblers were confined to *Berrien*, MI (m.ob.) and *Grant*, WI (MP, TW, JI). Michigan's 1341 singing male Kirtland's Warblers was the highest total since the first census in 1951 and included 9 males in four U.P. counties. Inexplicable was a male Bay-breasted Warbler in *Berrien*, MI 8 Jul (MW). Encouraging were Cerulean Warblers in 12 Minnesota counties, including one as far n. as *Todd* (BU). A Worm-eating Warbler visited *Warren Dunes S.P.*, *Berrien*, MI 1 Jun (JTW). Early Jun Kentucky Warblers were in all three states. Out of range was a Kentucky in *Big Stone*, MN 24 Jun (BU). Wisconsin had Hooded Warblers in *Ozaukee* 13 Jun and *Fond du Lac* 20 Jun (both WM). At *Murphy-Hanrehan*, 22 Hooded Warbler territories were mapped; six parasitized nests failed, one unparasitized nest fledged 3 young, and a recently fledged brood was seen (BAF). Michigan's only Yellow-breasted Chats were in *Hillsdale*, *Van Buren*, and *Washtenaw*, while Wisconsin had one in *Waukesha* 13 Jun (DG), 2 in *Rock* in mid-Jul (AP), and up to 4 in *Dane* (m.ob.). Chats in five Minnesota locations represented that state's best summer showing in 25+ years.

Male Summer Tanagers in *Dakota* (JPM et al.) and *Scott*, MN (BAF, m.ob.) were presumably the same individuals that paired with female Scarlet Tanagers at these locations in 2003, as their territories were virtually identical. If accepted, a male Western Tanager at *Gobles*, *Berrien* 24 Jul would furnish Michigan's 2nd summer record. A Lark Bunting could not be refound in *Burnett*, WI 9 Jun (p.a., GJ). Henslow's Sparrows were in seven counties each in Wisconsin and Minnesota, including *Otter Tail* 10 Jun+ (CB et

al.) and Polk 25 Jun (KLP) in nw. Minnesota. Wisconsin's only Nelson's Sharp-tailed Sparrow was in Burnett, WI 19 Jun (AP). Twenty Lincoln's Sparrows comprised a unique breeding population in Sanilac, MI; a nest with 2 eggs was found 10 Jul (DF, KO, NS). White-crowned Sparrows lingered in all three states; the latest was in Racine, WI 8 Jul (TK). Also tardy were single Dark-eyed Juncos in Monroe, MI 24 Jun (GL) and Milwaukee, WI 4 Jul (SS). For the 2nd consecutive summer, Chestnut-collared Longspur was found s. of its traditional Minnesota location at Felton Prairie: single males were in Yellow Medicine 9 Jun and Lac Qui Parle 11 Jun (both BU).

An ad. female and a first-year male Blue Grosbeak established Michigan's first summer record in Constantine Twp., St. Joseph 19–26 Jul (ATC, JG, m.ob.). The male Lazuli Bunting in Leelanau, MI lingered until 16 Jun (GS) and has been accepted as that state's first record. The influx of Painted Buntings continued in Minnesota with an ad. male in Lyon 9–11 Jun (P&RD et al.) and an imm. male at Rochester 17 or 18–22 Jun

(ph. RLE, m.ob.). All but four of Minnesota's 16 records have occurred within the past 10 years. A pair of Great-tailed Grackles was at last year's location in Rock, MN in Jun (ph. CBR). Evening Grosbeaks were found in four Wisconsin and five Michigan counties, including Crawford and Iosco in the n. Lower Peninsula.

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State of the Region

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Many of the bird conservation concerns that face Wisconsin, Minnesota, and Michigan are shared with surrounding regions: the impact of feral cats, brood parasitism by cowbirds, window and building strikes, and over-browsing by deer will undoubtedly surface repeatedly in other conservation summaries. We err if we assume that these concerns are "global" rather than regional issues, unlikely to be improved by actions at the state level. In fact, were each such issue to be addressed and remedied seriously at the state level as well as the national, the benefit to birdlife would certainly be remarkable. We do not mean to minimize the importance of such issues in giving them only a brief mention here, but we will focus in this summary more on the specifics of bird conservation in the three Western Great Lakes states.

The avian biogeography of Minnesota, Wisconsin, and Michigan is similar: in the south, the Prairie Hardwood Transition (BCR 23) of the Upper Great Lakes Plain is predominant, with broadleaf forests and oak savannahs, while in the north, the Boreal Hardwood Transition (BCR 12) forests are a heterogeneous matrix of oaks, maples, birch, pines, spruces, tamarack, and balsam fir, with aspen a common early successional species. Minnesota's western and southwestern reaches differ from the other two states in having extensive Prairie Pothole (BCR 11) country, and there are small sections of southeastern Michigan and southeastern Minnesota with Eastern Tall-grass Prairie habitats or habitat potential (BCR 22). Not treated explicitly in these BCR labels, but of vital importance for bird conservation, are the tremendous lacustrine habitats of Lakes Superior, Huron, and Michigan, shared with the enormous province of Ontario. The Great Lakes affect both regional climates and forest community composition and deeply affect human settlement patterns as well.

The three-state area contains only three federally listed species: Bald Eagle (Threatened), Piping Plover (Endangered), and Kirtland's Warbler (Endangered). The warbler has been one of the key species in public relations and awareness campaigns for endangered species generally, and it is the most endangered American songbird, with 1341 singing males in 2004—the highest count since surveys began in 1951. This species provides a clear model for species-based bird conservation: it has been carefully studied, its breeding ecology is well understood, the management of Jack Pine habitats and the exclusion of cowbirds have been measurably successful in increasing productivity, and the ecotourism developed around the species has been carefully managed as well. But there are many other bird species (Table 1) whose populations are small, declining, or otherwise imperiled in the three states. Some of these species are birds that reach the edges of range in the Region, whether from the prairies, eastern woodlands, or boreal forests. Others, however, include species whose regional populations are significant in continental terms—Baird's Sparrow, Golden-winged Warbler, Yellow Rail, and Henslow's Sparrow, for instance. Some of these species are monitored by state Department of Natural Resources agencies, often in partnerships with other organizations; some of these, and other species, are included in long-term monitoring studies as well. Species on other lists, such as the IIF WatchList and the AOC's Green List, occupy what might be called the next



Kirtland's Warbler is a benchmark species for conservationists seeking to understand local, specialized passerines. Though some of the management issues for this warbler are particular to its Jack Pine habitat, lessons learned from its successful recovery have broad applications and implications for other songbird conservation efforts.

Photograph by Olin Sewall Fettingill, Jr., WNEO.

level of concern; we will attempt to incorporate consideration of some of those species, by crude habitat type, in what follows, as they complement state lists in several important respects.

Forested and early successional habitats

Loss, degradation, and fragmentation of woodland habitats by land conversion, sprawl, timber harvest, and other uses have combined to produce alarming reductions in species considered relatively common, both in northern and southern forests of the Region. Although the total forested acreages in northern Wisconsin, for instance, may be close to those of precolonial times, the age, composition, and fragmentation levels are drastically different. Many of the industrial forests and other private lands are being rapidly subdivided into increasingly smaller ownerships, with more houses and roads—and fewer opportunities for large-scale conservation or restoration. In addition to such clear causes of habitat loss, there are documented failures of certain forests (e.g., hemlock, White Cedar) to regenerate fully, but whether such failures are caused by herbivory or altered fire or hydrological regimes is unclear.

Cerulean Warbler, whose forest habitats are threatened by invasive plants in this Region, is a familiar species from recent awareness campaigns concerning declining Neotropical migrants. It is less well known that Hermit Thrush, Brown Creeper, and Eastern Wood-Pewee are declining in parts of the Region. These and others—among them, Winter Wren, Common Yellowthroat, Scarlet Tanager, Veery, White-throated Sparrow, and Song Sparrow—do not figure on most lists of threatened fauna, but all feature on the WatchList of the Natural Resources Research Institute (University of Minnesota/Duluth: <<http://www.nrri.umn.edu/mnbirds/>>) because of documented drops in their populations from 1991 to 2002 on National Forest lands, including Chippewa, Superior, and Chequamegon. It is perhaps disturbing that no single theme links these ten species; seven nest on the ground, but their nesting and wintering ecologies differ. The NRRI suggests that the overall increase in edge habitat and the decrease in the size and quality of forest patches are potentially responsible for some of the observed declines. In Wisconsin, there is some evidence that changes in predator communities may be responsible for documented declines in ground-nesting woodland birds. The Priority Species list of the Great Lakes Bird Conservation group (<<http://www.uwgb.edu/birds/greatlakes/>>) includes a further 18 woodland species of the Laurentian mixed forests, among them Least and Yellow-bellied Flycatchers, Wood Thrush, Rose-breasted Grosbeak, and 10 additional warbler species. Consult these websites for more details.

In savannahs and in early successional habitats, patchy and scarce (in part owing to fire suppression practices), Golden-winged Warbler joins Kirtland's as a key species of concern, and the Region may in fact hold much of the world population of this species, estimated at some 210,000 individuals. Bell's Vireo (here at the northeastern edge of range), Field Sparrow, Red-headed Woodpecker, Black-billed Cuckoo, Whip-poor-will, Willow Flycatcher, and Orchard Oriole are also species of concern in more open forested habitats (see <www.partnersinflight.org>).

Aquatic, wetland, riparian, and lakeshore habitats

Habitats associated with water are some of the most fragile and threatened, both globally and in the Western Great Lakes. The past century in the Great Lakes has seen changes in fish populations; contamination by myriad pollutants; the proliferation of detrimental exotic species (such as carp); increases in shoreline development and recreation; losses of nesting trees and cavities for waterbirds; and the filling and draining of wetlands of all sorts: 75% of Michigan's wetlands are gone (or about 11 million acres), 57% of Minnesota's (roughly 9 million acres), and 45% of Wisconsin's (4.5 million acres). Species such as American Black Duck, Le Conte's Sparrow, and Sedge Wren that nest in wetlands—especially the shallow wetlands, wet prairies, and sedge meadows in agricultural landscapes—have all surely undergone declines in the Region, but data are most reliable for waterfowl and grebes, which have suffered especially steep declines in the pothole country, where restoration projects are ongoing. Additionally, many wetlands and wetland plant communities along lakeshores are suffering from development and high water. A number of high quality emergent wetlands have been lost because of unnaturally high water levels in flowages, reservoirs, lakes, and other waterbodies. In Wisconsin, portions of some wetland impoundments (at Horicon N.W.R., Crex Meadows N.W.R., and Mead W.A., for example) are now set aside and managed for shorebird migration, in addition to regenerating the wetland plants for waterfowl nesting and feeding. Grant programs under the North American Wetlands Conservation Act and several Joint Ventures have restored many Regional wetlands, and future efforts will increasingly incorporate species other than waterfowl. Endangered species, such as Piping Plover, recovering in Michigan, and Whooping Cranes, now being reintroduced in Wisconsin, make popular flagship species for their respective lakeshore and wetland habitats.

Grasslands and agricultural habitats

Almost half of the arable portions of the Upper Great Lakes Plain is planted to soybeans or corn, with another quarter devoted to pasture, hay, and other crops; 95% of this region is in private hands, which makes coordination of preservation and restoration efforts very difficult. Agricultural practices over a century ago led to the demise of Greater Prairie-Chicken in the Region, with the exception of central Wisconsin, where a few thousand persist, thanks to tenacious early conservationists. Populations of the similarly specialized Henslow's Sparrow are much reduced in the Region, as well, while generalists in medium-height fields such as Dickcissel and Bobolink are widespread but still diminished from past abundance. Loggerhead Shrike continues to decline in each state, for reasons as yet unknown. Surprisingly, Upland Sandpiper figures on no state's list of imperiled species; its preferred short-grass habitats are patchy and declining Regionwide. Likewise, the scarce Northern Harrier is missing from such lists, though the ecologically similar Short-eared Owl is represented on two lists. These and additional species are included in the

Partners in Flight Bird Conservation Plan for the Upper Great Lakes Plain, which can be downloaded at the organization's website. Of all the habitats represented in the three states, prairie habitat is both the most altered Regionally and the most threatened globally.

Ongoing initiatives

In addition to those mentioned above, there are many promising efforts underway that will aid bird conservation in each state. The Wisconsin Breeding Bird Atlas project (<www.uwgb.edu/birds/wbba/>) mustered 1604 participants to map nesting birds in that state; these data help guide conservation decisions by several agencies. The Wisconsin Bird Conservation Initiative (<www.wisconsinbirds.org/>) set goals of developing a comprehensive bird-monitoring program by May 2003, a forest inventory system by 2004, and a statewide bird assessment by 2006 that includes trends in bird populations and their habitats, management opportunities, and management priorities. The results of these assessments will be provided to land managing partners for potential integration into planning efforts and should help refine conservation priorities at the state and landscape levels. Recently, the similar Michigan Bird Conservation Initiative (<www.nabci-us.org/michigan/>) was also launched. We hope that the spirit of increasing cooperation among natural resource agencies and private organizations brings forth, in the near future, successful efforts to identify and restore large tracts of high-quality habitat across all three states. Time is of the essence.

Thanks to David Ewert and Andy Paulios for assistance with this summary.

Table 1. State-listed endangered (E), threatened (T), and special-concern (C) bird species in the Western Great Lakes.

Species	State List Status		
	Wisconsin	Minnesota	Michigan
Common Loon	•	•	T
Horned Grebe	•	T	•
Red-necked Grebe	E	•	•
American White Pelican	•	C	•
Great Egret	T	•	•
Snowy Egret	E	•	•
Yellow-crowned Night-Heron	T	•	•
Least Bittern	•	•	T
Trumpeter Swan	E	T	T
Red-shouldered Hawk	T	C	T
Osprey	T	•	T
Merlin	•	•	T
Peregrine Falcon	E	•	T
Spruce Grouse	T	•	•
Greater Prairie-Chicken	T	C	•
Yellow Rail	T	C	T
King Rail	•	E	E
Common Moorhen	•	C	•
Marbled Godwit	•	C	•
Wilson's Phalarope	•	T	•
Franklin's Gull	•	C	•
Caspian Tern	E	•	T
Common Tern	E	T	T
Forster's Tern	E	C	•
Barn Owl	E	•	E
Burrowing Owl	•	E	•
Long-eared Owl	•	•	T
Short-eared Owl	•	C	E
Acadian Flycatcher	T	C	•
Sprague's Pipit	•	E	•
Loggerhead Shrike	E	T	E
Bell's Vireo	T	•	•
Yellow-throated Warbler	E	•	T
Prairie Warbler	•	•	E
Cerulean Warbler	T	C	•
Worm-eating Warbler	E	•	•
Louisiana Waterthrush	•	C	•
Kentucky Warbler	T	•	•
Hooded Warbler	T	C	•
Lark Sparrow	•	•	T*
Henslow's Sparrow	T	E	T
Baird's Sparrow	•	E	•
Nelson's Sharp-tailed Sparrow	•	C	•
Chestnut-collared Longspur	•	E	•

* = assumed to be extirpated; will be listed as Threatened if refund.

• = not listed for that state.

Iowa & Missouri

In June, temperatures and rainfall were somewhat below average in Iowa; Missouri was also cooler than normal and about average in rainfall. July in Iowa was cool and wet, with temperatures below average and rainfall above average. In Missouri, it was the twelfth coolest July on record, whereas rainfall was slightly above normal. Both states had little flooding or other severe weather, and nesting conditions seemed good for most species.

A Baird's Sparrow in early June was a first for Iowa. Two other accidental species were reported in Iowa, Swallow-tailed Kite and White-winged Dove. Among nesting species, Iowa's first report of Pine Warbler nesting and the first documented report of nesting by Clay-colored Sparrow were highlights. A Cinnamon Teal and Laughing Gull were highlights in Missouri. Nesting Piping Plovers and Least Terns, continued increases in nesting populations of Bald Eagles in both states, and the continued success of several grassland species were also good news.

Abbreviations: C.C.N.W.R. (Clarence Cannon N.W.R., Pike, MO); Colo (Colo Ponds, Story, IA); Coralville (Coralville Res., Johnson, IA); C.W.T.U. (Columbia Wetland Treatment Units, Boone, MO); E.B.C.A. (Eagle Bluffs C.A., Boone, MO); F.G.C.A. (Fountain Grove C.A., Livingston, MO); R.E.D.A. (Riverlands Environmental Demonstration Area, St. Charles, MO); S.C.N.W.R. (Squaw Creek N.W.R., Holt, MO); S.L.N.W.R. (Swan Lake N.W.R., Livingston, MO).

LOONS THROUGH FALCONS

One or 2 Common Loons summered at Spirit L., IA (LS, AB), and one was at Binder L., Cole, MO in early Jun (m.ob.). Pied-billed Grebes nested at S.C.N.W.R. (DE), where they have been found previously. Red-necked Grebes continued their pattern of summer appearances, but no nesting was noted; one or 2 were at Eagle L. Hancock, IA 1 Jun-5 Jul (RG, PH, m.ob.), one was seen 12 Jun at Union Slough N.W.R., Kossuth, IA (MK), 2 were present 9-10 Jun at Cheever L., Emmet, IA (SP, KP), 2 were at East Twin L., Hancock, IA (AB, SP), and one was seen 31 Jul at C.C.N.W.R., MO (EW). Two Eared Grebes were noted 3-10 Jun at Colo (HZ, JD, MD), and single Western Grebes made brief appearances 1 Jun at Ventura M., Cerro Gordo, IA (RG, PH) and 5 & 8 Jun at East Twin L., Hancock, IA (AB, SP). American White Pelicans summering in n. Iowa included 444 in Dickinson 20 Jun (LS). Migrants appeared in Jul, with 2300 on 14 Jul on the Mississippi R., Allamakee (DA) and 2500 on 30 Jul at Coralville (MD). In Missouri, a peak of 300 was at R.E.D.A. 12 Jun (JM, CM), and up to 200 were near S.L.N.W.R., F.G.C.A., and in Bates (KM). Besides the usual summering Double-crested Cormorants, 38 nests were at Coralville (MD).



Two American Bittern nests at S.C.N.W.R. 9 Jun (DE) were the first documented for Missouri since 1986. Cattle Egrets were observed at several Iowa sites in Jun, with 24 on 19 Jun in Polk (BE) the most reported. Some 18-30 Little Blue Herons were in Thompson, MO in Jun (SK), and 100+ were in Clay, MO 3 & 6 Jun (KM). Black-crowned Night-Herons were found in several Iowa counties, but no contributor mentioned nesting of the species. Eleven Yellow-crowned Night-Herons were in Bates and St. Clair, MO 25 Jul (KM); the only Iowa reports were of one in Polk 6 & 8 Jun (BE, m.ob.) and 2 in Wayne 13 Jun (AB). A White-faced Ibis 9 Jun at Colo (HZ, JD) was late.

Lingering waterfowl in Iowa, all single individuals, were few: an American Black Duck 4 Jun in Allamakee (DC), a Bufflehead 6 Jun in Audubon (RA, PA), and Common Mergansers 17 Jun-24 Jul in Woodbury (BH) and 19 Jun in Emmet (LS). Late waterfowl in Missouri, all at R.E.D.A., included Cinnamon Teal 5 Jul (m.ob.), 2 summering Canvasbacks (m.ob.), and Common Goldeneye in Jun (m.ob.). Nesting waterfowl included broods of Green-winged Teal at Colo (HZ) and Canvasback in Hancock, IA (MP, PH,

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AB). As in 2003, Ruddy Ducks were common in both states, with 40 on 6 Jun in Kossuth, IA (MK), 30 summering at Colo (HZ), and 12 on 16 Jun in Nodaway, MO (DE). Broods were found as far s. as Polk, IA (BE).

Osprey nesting attempts at four Iowa sites were all unsuccessful, a setback after last year's success. This year, 23 young were released (PS). In Missouri, Ospreys continue to expand their range (AF). Iowa's bird of the summer was a Swallow-tailed Kite near Iowa City 3-5 Jun (†JS, †JE, †CE, †AB, †MD, m.ob.), furnishing the 3rd modern Iowa record and the first since 2000. Mississippi Kites continued to expand their range in Missouri, with several found near St. Louis (m.ob.) and a nest in Boone (SHe). In Iowa, up to 3 were seen in Des Moines, but no one noted nesting (JG, AB, MP). Bald Eagles



The first to be found in Iowa since 2000, this Swallow-tailed Kite near Iowa City, Iowa was photographed 4 June 2004—only the third Iowa record of the species in modern times.
 Photograph by Jay Gilliam.

continued to expand their nesting range in both states; nests are now known from 67 of Iowa's 99 counties, for a total of at least 175 nests (BEh). A nesting Northern Harrier in Jun at Dunn Ranch, Harrison, MO (JZ, EZ) and singles in Jasper, MO (LH) and St. Charles (JU) indicate a bit of a comeback. Swainson's Hawks continued to nest near Springfield, MO (DI, RM). Iowa's only Swainson's Hawk was one 18 Jul in Clay (AB). A Golden Eagle entangled in a fence in late Jun in Woodbury represented Iowa's 2nd summer record (ph. KK). A female Merlin of the nominate race at Algona, Kossuth 11 Jul (MK) provided a rare Iowa summer record. With nine occupied territories, Peregrine Falcons had a fairly good year in Iowa. Three urban pairs plus one in Louisa fledged 13 young. Three other pairs did not lay eggs and, most disappointingly, two pairs on natural cliffs in Allamakee both produced eggs but fledged no young (PS).

GROUSE THROUGH TERNS

Scattered reports of Gray Partridge indicated its continuing presence in n. Iowa. Outside of its ne. Iowa stronghold, one Ruffed Grouse was found in Monroe in s. Iowa, where it has been reintroduced (AB). Reintroduced prairie grouse in Iowa did well, with five broods of Greater Prairie-Chickens in Ringgold (Mel Moe, *vide* BEh) and three broods of Sharp-tailed Grouse in Woodbury (EWe). King Rails were reported at C.C.N.W.R. in Jul (m.ob.). Virginia Rails and Soras were found

at several sites mainly in n. Iowa, within their traditional ranges, as well as C.W.T.U. (BG). Common Moorhens were found in seven Iowa counties; broods were reported in Hancock (MP, PH) and Story (WO). In Missouri, moorhens were found at S.C.N.W.R., C.W.T.U., and St. Charles (DE, BG, KM, JU). Sandhill Cranes in Iowa continued to increase, with 16 pairs reported (PS).

A Black-bellied Plover 1 Jun in Polk, IA (RT) and 2 American Golden-Plovers 20 Jun in Kossuth, IA (MK) were late. Nesting Piping Plovers had a good year in Iowa, with some 10–12 birds near Council Bluffs (BS) and 9 fledglings in Woodbury (BH). Singles 29 Jul in Story, IA (SP, KP) and 30–31 Jul at Coralville (MD, KN, m.ob.) were far from their usual Missouri R. migration route. Two Piping Plovers 31 Jul at E.B.C.A. (BG) provided the only Missouri report. A Black-necked Stilt 5–10 Jun at Colo (HZ, JD, MP) continued this spring's invasion. In se. Missouri, good numbers of stilts were found at several locations (m.ob.). An American Avocet 22–24 Jun at R.E.D.A. (TB, m.ob.) constituted Missouri's 2nd Jun record. Possibly summering were a Lesser Yellowlegs 17 Jun and 2 on 27 Jun at Colo (HZ, MP); the same was possibly true of single Pectoral Sandpipers 17 Jun at Colo (HZ), 20 Jun in Clay, IA (LS), and 27 Jun in Polk, IA (BE). A Willet 11 Jul in Boone (MP, BP) and one Marbled Godwit 26–27 Jun at Colo (HZ, MP) were the only Iowa reports. Upland Sandpipers were found in 22 counties covering all except

ne. Iowa (m.ob.). The 16 Sanderlings 1 Jun in Cerro Gordo, IA (PH, RG) made a high count for so late. A Semipalmated Sandpiper 25 Jun in Woodbury, IA (BH), a Least Sandpiper 16 Jun at Colo (HZ), and 2 Least in Pottawattamie, IA 24 Jun (MP) defied easy categorization. In Iowa, 11 White-rumped Sandpipers in Clay 20 Jun (LS) and 2 in Woodbury 25 Jun (BH) were late, while one in Story 29 Jul (+SP & KP) was early. A Dunlin 17 Jun in Woodbury, IA (BH) was late, and a Short-billed Dowitcher 28 Jun at R.E.D.A. (CM, JM) was early. A Wilson's Snipe 5 Jun at Colo (JD) was s. of its usual nesting range. A juv. Wilson's Phalarope 18 Jul at Colo (HZ) was suggestive of local nesting.

A Laughing Gull at R.E.D.A. 12–13 Jun (DR, m.ob.) was rare for summer. Late migrant Franklin's Gulls included 400 in Cerro Gordo, IA 2 Jun (MK) and 12 at R.E.D.A. 4–6 Jun (JU). A few summered in Iowa, such as 235 on 19 Jun at Spirit L. (LS); 800 on 16 Jul in Dickinson, IA (LS) were the first south-bound migrants noted. Iowa's only Ring-billed Gull colony in Dickinson had 175+ ads. and several juvs. 2 Jun (JD). As usual, a few summered, but an amazing 4500 on 14 Jul on Pool 19, Allamakee (DA) was unprecedented for Iowa in summer. Several Herring Gulls in Iowa were all along the Mississippi R. (PVN, DA). Small groups of Forster's Terns were found in Iowa throughout the summer, but no one mentioned nesting. Least Terns nested near Council Bluffs, IA, with 26 ads. and 5 young on 20 Jun (AB), the

most in several years. In Missouri, their numbers were up on the Mississippi R., and a nest at R.E.D.A. was flooded (m.ob.). After several years with little evidence of nesting, Black Tern eggs or young were found at three sites in *Hancock* and *Winnebago*, IA (AB).

DOVES THROUGH THRUSHES

Eurasian Collared-Doves continued to expand their range in both states (m.ob.). They have been found in almost half of Iowa's 99 counties. Single White-winged Doves in late Jun in *Humboldt* and *Marshall*, IA (†JN, †MP, BP) attest to the continuing spread of this species. Both cuckoos were reported from numerous Iowa counties, suggesting greater abundance than generally thought. Black-billed Cuckoos were found in *Harrison* and *Saline*, MO (KM, EW), where expected. Several Greater Roadrunners were found in the w. Ozarks, MO (m.ob.), where they are regular. Iowa's only reported Barn Owl nest in *Tama* was successful (BEh). A Short-eared Owl in *Kossuth* was Iowa's first summer report in several years (Ryan Harr, *vide* JD). One or 2 Chuck-will's-widows were at the usual *Fremont*, IA site (AB, MP, m.ob.). Yellow-bellied Sapsuckers were found in the several of the n. Iowa counties in which they are established (m.ob.).

An Olive-sided Flycatcher in *Taney*, MO 5 Jul (BB) was summering or very early. Typically late migrant flycatchers in Iowa included an Olive-sided 4 Jun in *Bremer* (DM), a Yellow-bellied 2 Jun in *Marshall* (MP), and an Alder 12 Jun in *Dickinson* (KP). Least Flycatchers in Jun in *Clayton*, *Hancock*, and *Worth*, IA (DA, JD, CF) were all likely nesting. Away from w. Iowa, where regular, Western Kingbirds were at two cen. Iowa sites in *Polk* (m.ob.); pairs were found near Jefferson City and in *Boone* (JR, SHa) in cen. Missouri. Scissor-tailed Flycatchers in *Andrew*, *Buchanan*, *St. Louis*, and *Scott*, MO (DE, LL, CM, JM, JU, CB) were out of the usual sw. Missouri range. Loggerhead Shrikes were found in 13 mostly s. Iowa counties (m.ob.). A few White-eyed Vireos were found in six Iowa counties (m.ob.), the most in recent years. Bell's Vireos were reported from 24 counties covering all except ne. Iowa (m.ob.). A few Black-billed Magpies were seen in Jun in *Plymouth*, IA, where they have nested in recent years (Scott Moats, *vide* JD). Sedge Wrens were common in grasslands statewide in both states (m.ob.). A few Veeries were found in seven counties in e. Iowa (m.ob.). Wood Thrushes were found statewide in Iowa, even reaching the nw. corner (m.ob.).

WARBLERS THROUGH FINCHES

A Tennessee Warbler was in *Hancock*, IA 2 Jul (RG), a puzzling date. A singing Yellow Warbler 8–10 Jun in *Shannon*, MO (KM)



This nest of American Bittern with five eggs—one of two nests at Squaw Creek National Wildlife Refuge, Holt County, Missouri—provided the first evidence of breeding in the state since 1986. (See the Pictorial Highlights for a photograph of the female at the second nest.) Photograph by D. A. Easterla.

was s. of the species' usual range. Chestnut-sided Warblers 12 Jun in *Winneshick* and *Allamakee*, IA (DK) were probably nesting. A male Pine Warbler was found feeding up to 4 young at Shimek S.E., *Lee* 5–12 Jul (†RD, †MD, †CE, m.ob.), the first report of nesting and the first summer report for Iowa. Cerulean Warblers were found in 13 Iowa counties (m.ob.), all in the species' usual range. Single Black-and-white Warblers in *Louisa*, *Monroe*, and *Warren*, IA (CE, AB, MP) were all in areas where this species might nest. A Hooded Warbler 19 Jun at Castlewood S.P., *Franklin*, MO (JM, CM) was outside the usual nesting range.

Other than one in *Winneshick* 1 Jun (EB), all Iowa reports of Summer Tanager were in the s. third of the state, where expected. Clay-colored Sparrows had a great year in Iowa, with three nests in *Dickinson* (AH); along with a previously unreported nest there in 2003, these are Iowa's first documented nests. Additional Clay-colored Sparrows were in *Clay*, *Dickinson*, *Emmet*, *Lyon*, and *Palo Alto* (m.ob.), all in nw. Iowa and likely nesters as well. A Baird's Sparrow heard and seen 4 Jun in *Cherokee* (IA) is the first for Iowa. With reports from 17 counties mostly in e. Iowa (m.ob.), Henslow's Sparrows are much more common than thought just a few years ago. Three Le Conte's Sparrows singing 5–6 Jun in *Clay*, IA (v.r. SP, KP) were likely late migrants. A Harris's Sparrow 2 Jun at *Norwalk*, *Warren* (AJ) constituted Iowa's 4th summer record. A Dark-eyed Junco 8 Jul in *Franklin*, MO (CB) was very late.

A pair of Painted Buntings at Katy Trail

S.P., *St. Charles*, MO (BR) and several others in sw. Missouri (DR, LH, AF) represented the Regional limits of breeding range. Both Dickcissel and Bobolink seemed common in Iowa this summer. Nesting Bobolinks were at F.G.C.A. (SK) and in *Clinton*, MO (LL) at the s. edge of breeding range. A singing Western Meadowlark 10 Jun in *St. Clair*, MO (AF) was s. of typical nesting range. A Pine Siskin 15 Jul in *Winneshick* (DC) provided Iowa's first summer report since 2000.

Cited observers (subregional coordinators in boldface): Danny Akers, Pam Allen. Reid Allen, Bob Ball, Ellen Bell, Aaron Brees, Chris Brown, Torrey Burgess, Dennis Carter, Robert Dick, James Dinsmore (Iowa), Michael Dooley, Dennis Easterla, Chris Edwards, Bruce Ehresman (BEh), Bery Engebretsen (BE), Carolyn Fischer, Andrew Forbes (Missouri), James Fuller, Jay Gilliam, Bill Goodge, Rita Goranson, Ambere Hall, Susan Hazelwood (SHa), Larry Herbert, Paul Hertz, Steve Heying (SHe), Bill Huser, Ann Johnson, Matthew Kenne, Steve Kinder, Darwin Koenig, Kathy Koskovich, Larry Lade, Charlene Malone, Jim Malone, Rebecca Matthews, Kristi Mayo, Dan Mehner, Jacob Newton, Kent Nickell, Wolf Oesterreich, Katy Patterson, Shane Patterson, Beth Proescholdt, Mark Proescholdt, Jim Rathert, David Rogles, Bill Rowe, James Schcib, Bill Scheible, Pat Schlarbaum, Lee Schoenewe, Dorothy Thurman, Rick Tricf, Josh Uffman, Paul Van Nieuwenhuyse, Edge Wade (EW), Ed Weiner (EWe), Hank Zaletel, Ellen Zellmer, Jim Zellmer. An additional 25 uncited individuals contributed to the report; all have our thanks. ☺

State of the Region

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Iowa and Missouri contain three major habitat types that are reflected in the NABCI Bird Conservation Region (BCR) designations. In north-central Iowa, the Prairie Pothole country (BCR 11) provides habitat for diverse waterfowl and other species tied to freshwater ponds and marshes. Much of the rest of Iowa, along with most of northern Missouri, is categorized as Eastern Tallgrass Prairie (BCR 22), though less than 1% of native prairie still exists in this Region. Most of southern Missouri is wooded, classed with the Central Hardwoods (BCR 24) of western Tennessee and Kentucky, northern Arkansas, and southern Illinois.

Birds in the Iowa & Missouri Region face numerous conservation threats in each of these BCRs, starting with continuing habitat loss and including the typical list of habitat fragmentation, use of various pesticides, and the general encroachment of humans into previously productive habitats. The various large towers for television and cellular communications, as well as wind turbines, that are popping up like mini-forests across both states, pose a new set of concerns for bird mortality. The usual response to these threats has been to attempt to mitigate the losses, to protect more habitat for birds and other wildlife, usually by purchasing key areas. Various federal, state, and local governmental agencies along with private conservation organizations are able to purchase some land, but typically those purchases total only a few thousand acres yearly, a tiny proportion of what might be hoped for. Most of the land in these two states is privately owned, including more than 60 million acres in farmland, and it is easy to feel discouraged. However, here, as in other states with large acreages of farmland, several programs of the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) provide opportunities to manage land in a way that is beneficial for birds and other wildlife without the expense of purchasing the land. All of the USDA programs relate to agricultural land in Iowa and northern Missouri, in BCRs 22 and 11.

One of the most important USDA programs in this region is the Conservation Reserve Program (CRP). In 2004, 1,899,000 acres in Iowa and 1,558,000 acres in Missouri were enrolled in CRP. This is about 5.3% of the area of Iowa and 3.5% of Missouri. For Iowa, more land was enrolled in CRP than was available in all publicly owned land in the state. Missouri has more public land than Iowa, but much of that is in southern Missouri, whereas much of the CRP land is in the northern half of the state. Most land enrolled in CRP is planted to grassland cover, and with more than three million acres in CRP in these states, that program provides an appreciable portion of the grassland cover available. One of the best features of CRP is that land is taken out of agriculture production for 10 years, allowing the landowner to establish a good stand of grasses and other plants on the land. Prior to CRP, most set-aside programs lasted only one or a few years, and good stands of cover were seldom established. Land enrolled in CRP, if properly managed, has the potential to provide tremendous amounts of habitat suitable for a variety of grassland species of conservation concern, including Dickcissel, Bobolink, Grasshopper Sparrow, and Sedge Wren. Henslow's Sparrow, by contrast, does not make extensive use of CRP land.

Despite the value of CRP for birds, sometimes the program does not work as well as it might. In the early years, many large blocks of land were enrolled in CRP in northern Iowa. Since then, the rules have changed somewhat, leading to a shift of much of the CRP land to southern Iowa and to somewhat smaller blocks of habitat. Also, CRP rules allow for grazing or haying on these lands in times of emergency. Unfortunately, such "emergencies" seem to occur fairly often, and the value of these lands to wildlife is sometimes compromised by those activities. Much existing CRP seeded to one or a few species of grass becomes senescent after 4 or 5 years and has diminished wildlife value. New provisions

requiring mid-contract management for some recently enrolled CRP lands should help reduce this concern.

CRP faces another major threat in the coming years. At the end of the standard 10-year CRP contract, the landowner can leave the program and return the land to row crops or other uses. Shifts in enrollment tend to follow crop prices, so that in years when prices are high, many landowners do not re-enroll their land. Such a rapid change in enrollment may occur in Iowa and Missouri soon. In the years 2007–2009, 60% of the CRP land in Iowa and 71% of the CRP land in Missouri are up for contract renewal. Just in 2007 alone, the two states could lose a combined 1.3 million acres of land that is now in CRP. And nationally, more than 50% of the 34.8 million acres in CRP are up for re-enrollment by 2008. Re-enrollment also depends upon availability of federal funding. With rising federal deficits, there has been concern that the program faces future cuts. Recently Washington has given some assurances that landowners will be able to renew their CRP contracts. Despite those assurances, renewal will depend upon funding being available as well as landowners wanting to commit their lands to the program for another 10 years. The loss of CRP would be a major loss for grassland birds in the Iowa & Missouri region.

CRP is not the only USDA program that is important in these two states. The Wetlands Reserve Program (WRP) provides protection for low-lying land, especially in riparian areas. In this case, much of the land has been protected through long-term easements rather than the 10-year contracts of CRP. Another fairly new USDA initiative provides protection for strips of vegetation (buffers) along the edge of waterways. The buffer-strip initiative has the potential to protect considerable natural vegetation, but, unfortunately, much of the land is in long narrow strips, which somewhat reduces its value as wildlife habitat. In Iowa, both of these programs provide habitat for Dickcissels, Sedge Wrens, Common Yellowthroats, and other species.

Opportunities for protection and restoration of wetland and woodland habitat continue to be a challenge in both states. Many drained wetland basins in the Prairie Pothole portion of Iowa (BCR 11), some of them on CRP land, have been restored to wetland conditions and now provide nesting habitat for Least and American Bitterns, Sora, Virginia Rail, and other marsh species. Maintenance of large blocks of forests suitable for nesting Cerulean, Hooded, and Kentucky Warblers and other woodland species continues to be

an issue in both the Prairie Hardwood Transition of northeastern Iowa (BCR 23) and the Central Hardwoods of southern Missouri (BCR 24). In southern Missouri, large blocks of such habitat persist in the Ozarks but continue to face loss from timber harvest and rural home development. Creative partnering of governmental agencies and private conservation groups is needed to prevent those losses and to begin restoration programs.

Efforts in Missouri aimed at suites of riparian/bottomland species and oak-hickory forest birds are heartening. Typical bottomland and moist-slope forest species, such as Red-shouldered Hawk and Cerulean and Yellow-throated Warblers, can benefit. Parallel and characteristic species of oak-hickory habitat (e.g., Broad-winged Hawk, Worm-eating Warbler, and Ovenbird) are potential beneficiaries of those restoration and management efforts. Also, an innovative restoration effort is taking place in Missouri to bring back the pineries that once covered many ridges and dry slopes in the Ozarks. The Missouri Department of Conservation, the Department of Natural Resources, the U. S. Forest Service, and The Nature Conservancy are all cooperating on coordinated pine savanna and woodland restoration. It will take many decades to restore adequate acreage to support Red-cockaded Woodpeckers again (last reported in appropriate pine habitat in the late 1940s), but the long-term effort is admirable.

There are many encouraging on-the-ground activities occurring in both states—from the creative IBA program in Iowa (with an integral stewardship vision) to the Missouri Bird Conservation Initiative (MoBCI) effort, which embraces dozens of organizations across the state. Moreover, both states benefit from a tradition of state-supported, if not state-driven, conservation.



In a Region with more than 60 million acres of farmland, one of the most important conservation projects currently in place is the USDA's Conservation Reserve Program (CRP). About 5.3% of the area of Iowa and 3.5% of Missouri is currently enrolled in CRP, most of it grassland habitats suitable for generalists such as Dickcissel, here photographed in southwestern Minnesota just north of the Iowa border. Photograph by Brad Bolduan.

SA A cooperative statewide survey of heronries in Kentucky yielded further evidence of a marked increase of Great Blue Herons in the Region. As of the early 1950s, about 900 pairs of nesting Great Blues were known from eight sites in Kentucky (more were probably present but unknown to ornithologists of the era). During the DDT era of the late 1960s and early 1970s, this species apparently disappeared from the state as a breeding bird and was seldom seen at other times of the year. However, nesting birds returned in the late 1970s in the w. portion of the state, and a gradual increase commenced soon thereafter. A cooperative survey of active heronries conducted in 1994 documented the presence of more than 1750 pairs at 24 sites. In 1999, more than 2500 pairs were found at 48 distinct colony sites. The 2004 survey yielded a remarkable total of more than 5150 pairs now present at more than 70 sites! Banning of organophosphate pesticides like DDT, recent wetland protection regulations and initiatives, and adaptation to reservoirs and other manmade water bodies apparently are all contributing to this remarkable recovery.

ports for Tennessee represent an above-average number. Lingering waterfowl included a male Gadwall, a male Ring-necked Duck, 2 female Greater Scaup, at least 16 Lesser Scaup, and a pair of Bufflehead—most or all likely injured—on L. Barkley, Lyon, KY 3 Jun (BP, EC et al.); a male Ring-necked Duck in Ohio, KY 20–31 Jul (DR, RD, HC); 3 Gadwall and an American Wigeon at White L. 10 Jul (WGC, KL, BLg); one to 2 Northern Pintails at White L. 23 Jun–23 Jul (WGC, KL, BLg); a male Green-winged Teal at White L. 20 Jun–28 Jul (WGC, KL, JRW); one to 2 Northern Shovelers at Ensley 1 May–17 Jul (JRW, CBu, VRe), plus another at White L. 27 Jun–11 Jul (WGC, KL, BLg, JRW).

A Northern Harrier in Bradley, TN 19 Jun furnished a surprising summer record (BJ). Sharp-shinned Hawks are uncommon summer residents, especially in w. Tennessee, so single individuals in McNairy 2 Jul (MG) and Dyer 21 Jul (CBu, VRe) were noteworthy. An imm. was noted in Hamilton, TN 19 Jul (JSL). Five pairs of Peregrine Falcons again nested along the Ohio R., KY in Jefferson, Trimble (2), Carroll, and Greenup, with successful fledging of one to 4 young from all locations except one of the Trimble sites (TC, SV). In Tennessee, one fledgling was still hanging around the nest site with 2 ads. at Chickamauga Dam, Hamilton 1 Jun (fide KC), and 2 fledglings and 2 ads. were observed near the nest site at Alum Cave Bluff, Great Smoky Mountains N.P. 28 Jun (SH). Three Virginia Rail nests were found at Standifer Gap Marsh, Hamilton, TN 21–29 Jun (DPt); one bird at Heritage Marsh 1 Jul (DDo, SJS) suggested breeding at that location as well. Common Moorhens again nested at the Sauerhcher Unit Sloughs W.M.A., Henderson, KY (CC); single individuals were present at Ensley 13–19 Jun (CBu, VRe, JRW) and Shelby Farms, Shelby, TN 21 Jun–2 Jul (CBu, VRe, MW).

SHOREBIRDS THROUGH TERNS

Unprecedented numbers of Black-necked Stilts appeared in w. Fulton, KY in early Jul, with up to 67 counted (49 at one location alone) and four nests observed 5 Jul (JRW, HC); receding water levels likely caused failure of most nests (JRW). What must be con-

sidered the only extralimital observations (now that breeders seem established all along the Mississippi R. floodplain) were a male in s. Warren, KY 2 Jun (DR, NR) and 2 birds in Ballard, KY 1 Jul (CW). An American Golden-Plover was likely an early fall migrant in Dyer, TN 20 Jun (WGC, KL); another was noted to be in basic plumage in w. Fulton, KY 5 Jul (ph. JRW), likewise very early. The shorebird highlights of the season were 2 different Hudsonian Godwits in Tennessee: one at White L. 2–4 Jun (WGC, KL, NM) and an ad. female at Ensley 5–6 Jun (JRW, QBG). Among unusually early “fall” transient shorebirds were a molting ad. Dunlin in Lake, TN 11 Jul (JRW) and a Wilson's Snipe at Ensley 17–18 Jul (JRW et al.). There was a noticeable movement of Willets in late Jun and early Jul along the Mississippi R., with single birds noted in Dyer, TN 22 Jun (WGC, KL), at Ensley 4 Jul (JRW), and at the Shelby Farms, Shelby, TN 8 Jul (WRP), as well as 6 at Ensley 10 Jul (JRW). Noteworthy early-season peak shorebird counts included 1387 Least Sandpipers at Ensley 17 Jul (JRW) and 1060 Pectoral Sandpipers and 52 Stilt Sandpipers at Ensley 27 Jul (JRW). A Semipalmated Plover at White L. 7 Jun (WGC, KL) was a late spring transient.

An ad. Laughing Gull was present at Kentucky Dam Village S.P., Marshall, KY 6 Jun (HC, CP), and one was at Ensley 26 Jun (JRW). Eight Caspian Terns were still in the vicinity of Kentucky Dam 6 Jun (HC, CP). A first-year Forster's Tern lingered in Marshall, KY to 18 Jun (BP). Quite out of place were 7 ad. Common Terns at Barren River L., Allen/Barren, KY 29 Jun (DR); one at Chickasaw N.W.R., Lauderdale, TN 5 Jul (JRW) was also an unusual find. It was a mixed season for Least Terns. Populations on the lower Ohio R. again endured near or complete failure of nesting attempts due to a lack of optimal sites. At least 26 nests were initiated at a Marshall, KY industrial pond site along the lower Tennessee R. as of 18 Jun (BP), but a predator had destroyed all nests by 9 Jul (BP) and the colony was not reestablished (BP, EC). On the Mississippi R., the story was much better: a 22 Jul survey detected nesting at the three traditional sites in Kentucky in Carlisle (125 birds), Hickman

(420), and Fulton (141) (KJ et al.). The same survey continued downriver 22–23 Jul and documented confirmed nesting at 11 Tennessee sites in Dyer (3 sites), Lake (2), Lauderdale (3), Shelby (one), and Tipton (2) involving just over 2100 birds (19–649 birds per site) (KJ et al.); also, over 600 birds were noted in Tipton, TN 12 Jun (JRW). A noticeable early-season movement of Black Terns occurred 30–31 Jul, with 4–20 reported at four locales in Kentucky (RD, ER, TB, fide HBr, HC) and 3 at Ensley 31 Jul (JRW). What will become a first state record if accepted by the Kentucky B.R.C. was an ad. Black Skimmer observed loafing and flying around a sandbar along the w. margin of Kentucky Bend, Fulton 22 Jul (†JR, KJ).

CUCKOOS THROUGH STARLING

The only Black-billed Cuckoo reported was one heard in n. Livingston, KY 18 Jun (BP). It was a banner season for Barn Owls in Kentucky, with nine broods reported, some of which were disrupted by a variety of natural events and human activities; broods were reported in Carlisle (DB), Jefferson (DPr), Hart (E&SG), Henry (FM, fide EW), Madison (MSc, fide EW), Marion (DJ), McCracken (SL, fide EW), Shelby (JH, fide EW), and Simpson (RB, fide EW). A calling Yellow-bellied Sapsucker in Monroe, TN 11 Jun (DV) and two pairs with young in Carter, TN in late Jun (DHt et al.) furnished first county breeding records for this uncommon Southern Appalachian breeder.

A relatively late Olive-sided Flycatcher was heard at Mammoth Cave N.P., Edmonson, KY 5 Jun (J&PB et al.). A Willow Flycatcher nest discovered 4 Jun at Standifer Gap Marsh, Hamilton, TN (DHo, BC) furnished the first confirmed breeding of this species in se. Tennessee in at least 10 years. Two Least Flycatchers in the Cumberland Mts.—one on Bootjack Mt., Campbell, TN early to mid-Jun (LB) and one on Fork Mt., Anderson, TN in mid-Jun (LB)—were remarkable in that this species has historically been limited as a breeder to extreme upper e. Tennessee. Continuing the trend of recent years, five Western Kingbird nests were found at Ensley 10 Jul (JRW). Similarly, Scissor-tailed Flycatchers bred widely across the Region, with nests in s. Livingston, KY (m.ob.), Bledsoe, TN 12 Jun (RS), Maury, TN 29 Jun (TE), Rutherford, TN 3 Jul (TW et al.), S. Pittsburgh, Marion, TN 15 Jul (JJ), and President's I., Shelby, TN 24 Jul (JRW). Apparently unpaired birds were seen in Lyon, KY (a former nesting site) 3 Jun (BP, EC), at the Brainerd Levee, Hamilton, TN 24 Jul (J&VL), and at Ft. Loudoun Dam, Loudoun, TN 12 Jun (KDE).

A Bell's Vireo singing at Mayfield, Graves, KY 21 Jul (GL) represented a new county summer record. For the 2nd consecutive

year, one was found at Black Bayou W.M.A., Lake, TN 5 Jun (NM, WRP). Two Red-breasted Nuthatches were observed at the traditional nesting area in Wolfe, KY 26 Jun (FR). At least 17 Sedge Wrens were on territory at Ft. Campbell, Montgomery, TN 29 Jul (DM); this is a remarkable concentration for the Region, and especially for Tennessee, from which only a handful of confirmed breeding records are known. One at Heritage Marsh 20 Jul (SJS, DDo) was also suggestive of breeding. Single Swainson's and Gray-cheeked Thrushes at Land Between the Lakes, Lyon, KY 3 Jun (BP) were relatively late. A potential first report for Kentucky was a non-cavity, globe-shaped nest of European Starling situated in the dense interior cover of a red cedar tree in Shelby in Jun (ph. HBr).

WARBLERS THROUGH FINCHES

An Eastern Kentucky University graduate study following up a 2003 Golden-winged Warbler atlas project in se. Kentucky resulted in the recording of 36 territorial males (23 in Bell, 2 in Harlan, 11 in Whitley) and the discovery of seven active nests (one each in Bell and Whitley, five in Bell) (LP et al.); the nests are the first ever reported from Kentucky. The same graduate study located 8 territorial male Brewster's Warblers (4 in Bell, 4 in Whitley) (LP et al.). Quite unusual was a basic-plumaged Chestnut-sided Warbler at Mammoth Cave N.P., Edmonson, KY 21 Jul (SK). Surveys for Cerulean Warblers in the Land Between the Lakes N.R.A., KY/TN during May and early Jun resulted in the documentation of only 13 territorial males (MB, BP, VRo). The most remarkable aspect about this total is that despite several weeks of field work, only that many were found on a large public parcel containing more than 60,000 hectares of potentially suitable forest land habitat! A relatively late Connecticut Warbler was seen and heard in Jefferson, KY 1 Jun (BP); likewise, a relatively late female Mourning Warbler was band-

ed at Edwin Warner Park, Nashville, TN 2 Jun (SB).

A very impressive total of 17 territorial male Bachman's Sparrows and three confirmed breeding pairs was tallied at Fort Campbell (Trigg, KY and Stewart/Montgomery, TN) during Jun (DM). Also impressive was the tally of 6 territorial male Lark Sparrows, plus three probable breeding pairs and one non-singing bird found on Fort Campbell (Trigg, KY and Stewart, TN) in Jun (DM). Two Lark Sparrows were also reported from a somewhat traditional nesting area in w. Boyle, KY 11 Jul (*fide* BK). Henslow's Sparrows continue to expand; a small colony in McCracken, KY in early Jun (AW, HC) represented a new county summer record. Likewise, small colonies in Coffee, TN (DDa) and at Heritage Marsh 11 Jul (SJS, EL, DDo) established new breeding locations for Tennessee. A singing male White-throated Sparrow lingered in a yard in Jefferson, KY to 8 Jun (v.r., ph. BW).

Two small colonies of nesting Bobolinks were followed through the season in Boyle and Mercer, KY (DW, DPe). A male Yellow-headed Blackbird at the Mercer, KY Bobolink nesting locale 3 Jun (†DW, DPe) was certainly out of place. Unprecedented for Kentucky was the presence of one to 2 Purple Finches (what appeared to be a female and a first-year male) that lingered through Jun at a feeding station in se. Jefferson (E&JH), with one last observed there 3 Jul (ph. E&JH). Early in the summer, at least one of the birds had conjunctivitis, which may have been in large part responsible for their presence so late in the season. Also unprecedented for Kentucky was a juv. Red Crossbill that was picked up dead in a yard in Fort Mitchell, Kenton 14 Jul (CBr, *fide* MVi). It is unknown if the bird was of local origin, but suitable breeding habitat is present in the form of several groves of large conifers in at least one nearby cemetery (*fide* FR). Pine Siskins are rare in summer in Tennessee, and

even rarer breeders, so up to 18 at two locations in Carter, TN (BS, TM) in Jun and Jul were noteworthy.

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State of the Region

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Bird conservation in Tennessee and Kentucky faces a number of challenges in a continuing environment of fiscal conservatism and an economy largely based in utilization of natural resources. This largely rural, forested Region is of below-average economy, with a landscape heavily utilized for agricultural purposes, especially in the flatter portions, which have been largely cleared of native prairie and woodland. Resource extraction—for forest products, coal, oil, and natural gas—also remains a mainstay of the economies in both states. With the dearth of significant non-consumptive economic activities, jobs involving natural resources remain the primary source of personal income, which places immense strains on the quality of the natural landscape.

With such stake placed in the extraction of natural resources, environmental regulations remain too weak to protect the landscape from significant changes in the foreseeable future. For example, a continued lack of a state endangered species list in Kentucky hampers efforts by state regulatory agencies to protect a host of species from a variety of threats. Also a problem is the fact

that state and federal natural-resource and wildlife-management agencies in the two-state region remain inadequately funded and staffed, limiting their abilities to fully implement initiatives that might help conserve habitats on scales large enough to bring about positive trends in bird populations. In most cases, only federally threatened and endangered species (of which there are only a handful in the Region) have traditionally received substantive funding for conservation projects.

Forests

First and foremost among conservation concerns in the Region is the need to halt or at least slow the pace of habitat loss, primarily mature forest types. Once mature and diverse in composition, the Region's forests have been greatly diminished in quality and extent by more than two centuries of harvest and conversion to farmland and settlement. About 90% of what remains is privately owned and especially subject to overuse and neglectful management. Profound events such as the appearance of chestnut blight and Dutch elm disease have removed dominant canopy trees in some regions. Logging and other disruptions of forest structure have brought about an increase in Brown-headed Cowbird brood parasitism that likely has been at least partly responsible for a decline in songbirds such as Cerulean Warblers in parts of the Region. Where natural communities are disrupted, exotic plant species have also become a problem, if not to the extent seen in other parts of the continent.

One recent phenomenon that affected the Region's forests greatly was a devastating outbreak

of the Southern Pine Bark Beetle in the early 2000s. This infestation occurred across the Cumberland Plateau and Ridge and Valley subregions and spread out into the Highland Rim and Blue Ridge. The result was the near total loss of a "short-leaf" pine component to upland forests throughout a wide area, which will affect the landscape for many decades to come. Upland forest habitats with a significant pine component had been whittled away and mismanaged over the course of decades, and the beetle infestation was a final blow. The most specific loss from this event was the extirpation of the Region's last remaining Red-cockaded Woodpeckers, which were trapped and translocated to suitable habitat in other states. The U. S. Forest Service has pledged to restore the mixed pine-oak habitat type used by the woodpeckers, but it will be nearly a century before that can be accomplished.

Despite diminishing reserves, coal remains a primary product of the Region, and its extraction will bring considerable loss of additional forested land for some time to come. The most significant threat from mining continues to be the removal of forests at higher elevations, including vast mountaintop areas, in the Appalachian Mountains region, in the eastern third of both states (Bird Conservation Region [BCR] 28). And whenever a new marketable wood product arises, the Region's forests are touted as a source of revenue for local economies.



Once mature and diverse in composition, the forests of Kentucky and Tennessee have been greatly diminished in quality and extent by over two centuries of harvest and conversion for farmland and settlement. Diseases such as chestnut blight and Dutch elm disease, invasions of exotic flora, and extreme mining practices have wrought further changes. The declines of many Neotropical migrant passerines such as Cerulean Warbler (here at Rockport, Texas) are probably tied to the overall decline in forest quality and to increases in brood parasitism by Brown-headed Cowbird. Plans for mountain-top removal (for coal extraction) are projected to eliminate forests used by almost 140,000 Ceruleans in the next ten years; the world population is estimated at under one-half million.

Photograph by Barth Schorre/VIREO.

The cumulative effect of all of these impacts has left the Region's forests lacking in heterogeneous structure (primarily because of the lack of mature trees and canopy gaps) and diminished in species diversity, which has caused a decline in some species that require complex forest structures, such as Cerulean Warbler. The future holds promise of additional plant pathogens (such as the fungal blight *Phytophthora ramorum*) and insect infestations (e.g., Hemlock Woolly Adelgid) that will further alter the forest composition. Such threats will endanger sensitive forest types such as those in the higher elevations of the southern Appalachians that already have been devastated by a host of human impacts including logging, blights, and acid rain. As the Region's forest blocks have become more fragmented and isolated, the need to restore corridors for dispersal and genetic connectivity has increased. Fragmentation does not always occur by conversion of native forest to open lands; the establishment of permanent monocultures of commercial pine is also a problem in the more southern and western portions of the Region.

Wetlands

Prior to European settlement, wetland habitats were prevalent primarily only along the larger river floodplains and were composed mostly of bottomland forests, swamps, and sloughs, with a lesser amount of marshland and open, shallow water pools and mudflats. The loss and degradation of what amounted to several million acres of these natural wetlands through conversion for agricultural use and settlement has had a profound effect on the abundance of waterbirds and many wetland-associated species in the Region. The creation of reservoirs and waterfowl-management units have mitigated a certain amount of this loss, but some wetland species—e.g., marsh birds such as Least Bittern, American Bittern, King Rail—remain greatly diminished in number as breeders in both states.

Given what must have been the overall lack of migratory shorebird habitat in the region prior to European settlement, it is likely that this group of birds is actually now more prevalent in the

Region than it was 200 years ago. Suitable human-created habitats such as agricultural land and impoundment margins are utilized by migratory shorebirds; however, the Region's currently relatively minor contribution to shorebird conservation could be increased if additional habitat was created and managed more efficiently. Unfortunately, in large part due to traditionally scarce funding for non-game species, management schemes on most public land remain focused primarily on game species. Until long-term funding for non-game species is secured, many real opportunities to affect significant non-game conservation goals (such as migratory shorebird management) will remain underutilized. To this end, it is hoped that recently established funding opportunities (e.g. State and Tribal Wildlife Grants program) will help resource management agencies undertake more comprehensive wildlife management in the future.

Early successional and other naturally open habitats

Savannah (open canopy woodland), early successional (scrub/shrub), and grassland habitats once covered large portions of the central and western areas of the Region (primarily BCR 24, Central Hardwoods, and BCR 27, Southeastern Coastal Plain). Most of these open and transitional (between grassland and woodland) areas have been converted to agricultural use and settlement, while the suppression of fire has resulted in the loss of much of the remainder. Currently, recent human activity actually may have resulted in an increase in early successional habitat in the traditionally more heavily forested eastern portions of the two states, where timber harvest and mining have dissected and diminished the woodlands. Restoration of developed areas to open natural habitats in the flatter central and western portions of the Region would seem unlikely on a large scale, as the land here has been heavily developed and carries relatively high value.

Mining in the Region, especially surface and contour mining for coal, presents a double-edged sword. The loss of natural habitat, primarily woodlands, and the pervasive impacts to aquatic systems downstream from the mining activities is profound and probably irreversible in some cases. However, reclaimed mine land now provides one of the largest and most significant components of grassland and shrub-scrub habitats present in the Region, beneficial for Henslow's Sparrows and other species of non-forested habitats.

Growth and development

Urban and suburban growth continues in the Region at an alarming rate. Population growth and associated development consume tens of thousands of acres of land each year. Much of this development is focused around cities and towns, where the natural landscape was converted to farmland many decades ago, but the loss of farmland, a valuable bird habitat in and of itself in many cases, is also progressing at an alarming pace, especially near urban centers. Government programs such as the USDA's Conservation Reserve Program that compensate farmers for taking acreage out of row-crop production (predominantly for corn, soybeans, and wheat in this Region) have benefited some species tied to grassland and early successional habitats by creating habitats that are otherwise diminishing due to development. In the short term, the availability of these open habitats appears to have resulted in an increase in some species, such as Northern Bobwhite and Henslow's Sparrow. Also of concern to migratory birds is the recent proliferation of communication towers: mountain ridges in the eastern portion of the Region are now

being investigated for wind-powered energy potential.

The Future

Despite the poor prospects for major shifts in land-use trends in the Region, there is reason for some degree of optimism. For example, among the Region's most threatened bird species, there have been a number of notable successes. Numbers of nesting wading birds (especially Great Blue Herons and Great Egrets) and raptors (most notably Bald Eagles, Ospreys, and Peregrine Falcons) are increasing. BBS data indicate that while some birds continue to decline at alarming rates, others that were showing significant declines for more than a decade may now not be declining at such significant rates. This may be at least in part a response to resource agencies' efforts to implement regional wildlife conservation. A variety of habitat preservation efforts are under way in the Region, most undertaken by state government resource-conservation and wildlife agencies. Many of these efforts are funded primarily through a relatively recently designated series of federal government programs (State and Tribal Wildlife Grant, Landowner Incentive Program, various Farm Bill programs). These programs hold some promise to provide a relatively stable or increasing funding source in the near term, especially for increased monitoring and small-scale management and habitat protection projects. Federal agencies and private entities in the Region are also participating in projects that involve continued inventory of wildlife populations to identify high-priority areas, conservation of remaining natural areas, and restoration of declining habitats. The hunting community also remains supportive of a diverse array of wildlife (including bird) conservation activities and partnerships continue to widen in scope as national bird conservation plans and coordinated efforts provide momentum.

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By the end of a wet and mild June, much of the Region was well ahead of normal rainfall totals, and New Orleans was 46 cm over average rainfall. July reversed this trend, with normal or below-normal rainfall, largely because of two cool fronts that penetrated all the way to the Gulf coast, beginning a dry pattern that would continue into August. The absence of tropical cyclones meant there were no real meteorological highlights but also no factors that could negatively affect nesting, including on the barrier islands along the Gulf coast, which are vulnerable to overwash during tropical weather. This would change in September.

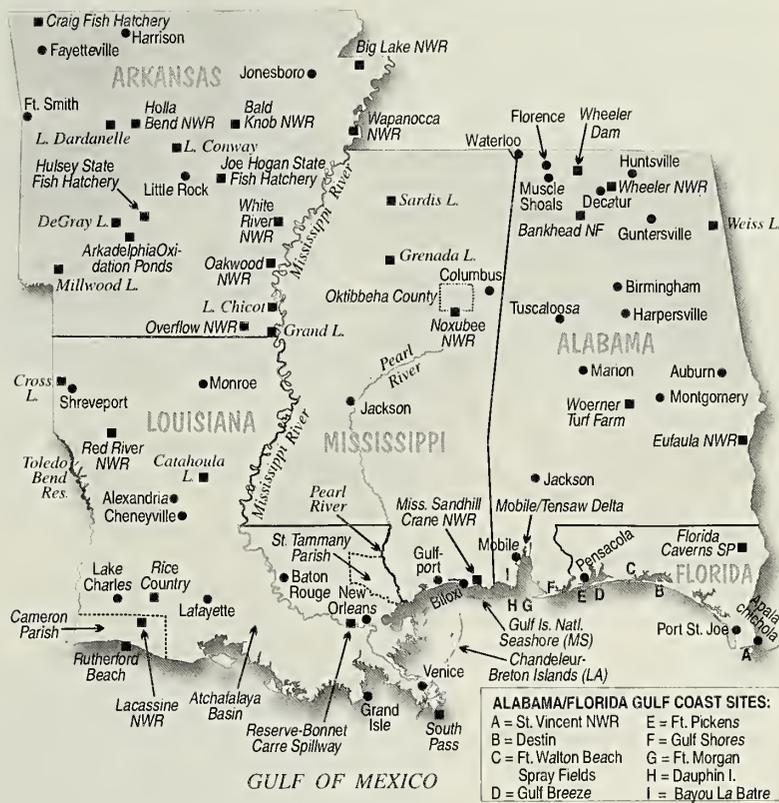
Sometimes there seems to be precious little information on actual breeding in these reports, which are often dominated by late spring and early fall migrants, post-breeding wanderers, and pelagic species (in some cases, "wintering" on the waters of the northern Gulf). This season, however, almost exactly half of the records received involved actual or probable nesting, and there were some notable breeding records to report. Contributors are reminded that it is difficult for the Regional editors to be familiar with the status of every species in every corner of the Region and that without contextual notes, an otherwise important record may be passed over or an unimportant one given undue emphasis.

LOONS THROUGH WATERFOWL

There were four reports of late Common Loons: 11 Jun in *Yalobusha*, MS (GK, SK), 21 Jun in *Baldwin*, AL (FF, SF), 5 Jul in *St. Clair*, AL (PB), and 2 on 10 Jul on *L. Pontchartrain* at New Orleans (DM, JH). A pelagic trip out of Venice, LA 6 Jun yielded a single Audubon's Shearwater, 2 Wilson's and 3 Leach's Storm-Petrels, and a Masked Booby 37-95 km off South Pass of the Mississippi R. (SWC, DLD, DM, MM, PC). A first-year Northern Gannet 22 Jun in *Mobile*, AL (DD, CD, ph. HEH) was very late. American White Pelicans, rare away from the coast in mid-summer, were seen 30 Jun-31 Jul in *Oktibbeha*, MS (TS), 6 Jul in *Faulkner*, AR (HR; 80+), and 1 & 7 Jul from *Colbert*, AL (TMH, m.ob.) and *Hale*, AL (JS, DS), respectively. A Brown Pelican in *Oktibbeha* 1 Jul (TS, MS) established only the 2nd record for the Starkville, MS area. Double-crested Cormorant, rare anywhere in Louisiana in the breeding season, was a surprise 6 Jun in *Rapides* (JH). Reports of Anhinga included 20 nests in *Noxubee*, MS Apr+ (TS, DR) and Jun sightings in *White* and *Howard*, AR (SB, CM). Approximately 900 Magnificent Frigatebirds were encountered in the vicinity of New Harbor and North Is., LA in the *Chandeleur* chain 9 Jun (DLD, SWC, MM, CS).

An American Bittern 15 Jun in *Pensacola*, FL (MC) established the first Jun record for

Central Southern



nw. Florida. White Ibis apparently nested in the Starkville, MS area for the 5th year in a row, based on birds of the year seen in *Noxubee* 16 & 27 Jul (TS). The first confirmed nesting of Roseate Spoonbill for Mississippi was documented on 5 Jul when a single nest with 3 chicks was found in *Yazoo* (MSt, DMcK); a single bird had been seen there the week before. There were also the usual post-breeding records of spoonbills away from their coastal breeding grounds. Seven reports of Wood Storks were received from Louisiana and Mississippi, the earliest being 2 each in *Copiah*, MS 6 Jun (MS, KH) and *Noxubee*, MS 7 Jun (TS). Highest numbers were 88 on 8 Jul (JK, SZ) and 265 on 25 Jul (JK, ES), both in *Vermilion*, LA.

The explosive expansion of the breeding range of Black-bellied Whistling-Duck was reflected in nine reports, all but one from Louisiana, including in *Ascension* 3 Jun (DPT; 2 ads., 4 juvs.), at Bayou Sauvage N.W.R. 12 Jun (PW), up to 4 in *St. Martin* in late Jun (DMD), 2 in *St. James* 21 Jun (JH), 2 in *Vermilion* 2 Jul (JH), a pair in *St. Tammany* 7 Jul (DLM,HL), one in *Ascension* 10 Jul (JH), and 2 in *Caddo* 14 Jul (NM, JB). Five in *Holmes*, MS 17 Jul (MSt) were also possibly breeding. A Ross's Goose in a suburban park in *Jefferson*, LA on 2 Jul (JS) had

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been present since the late winter. Whatever its status, the bird was clearly not crippled, which is always a question to be raised in connection with summering waterfowl (lead-poisoned birds, however, often show no outward signs of distress). Twelve Blue-winged Teal in *Desha*, AR 31 Jul (KN, LDN) clearly were summering. A Redhead in *Jefferson*, LA 2 Jul (JS) was able to fly, but most other reports of summering ducks did not include details of injury or illness. Other records included a Northern Pintail throughout the period in *Hancock* (NB, JB); the first summering record for the Mississippi coast, a Ring-necked Duck in *Red River*, LA 20 Jun (NM, JB), and a Lesser Scaup in *Ascension*, LA 10 Jul (JH). Three records of Ruddy Ducks—20 Jun in *Tunica*, MS (GK, SK; a pair), 25 Jul in *Vermilion*, LA (JK, ES; a

SA The saga of **Herring Gull x Kelp Gull** hybrids—locally called the “Chandeleur Gulls”—continues on Louisiana’s Chandeleur Is. In a two-day census 8–9 Jun covering the entire chain, 38 such hybrids were counted, including 18 pairs and a number of nests (DLD, SWC, MM, CS). A 19 Jun trip to just the s. part of the chain (S. Breton, S. Gosier; Curlew Is.) yielded 33 hybrids there alone (DPM, RDP). No pure Kelp Gulls were seen on either trip. There were also no pure ad. Herring Gulls present and have not been for some time. It is possible that Kelp Gull no longer exists in Louisiana, based on regular visits by Cardiff and Dittmann and the others mentioned above. If that proves to be the case, pure Kelp Gulls will turn out to have been documented in Louisiana for just a little over a decade.

This hybrid or backcross of Kelp Gull and Herring Gull and this hybrid gulls’ nest were photographed 19 June 2004 in the Chandeleur Islands, Louisiana, where summer surveys found no pure adults of either species. Photographs by Dan Purrington.

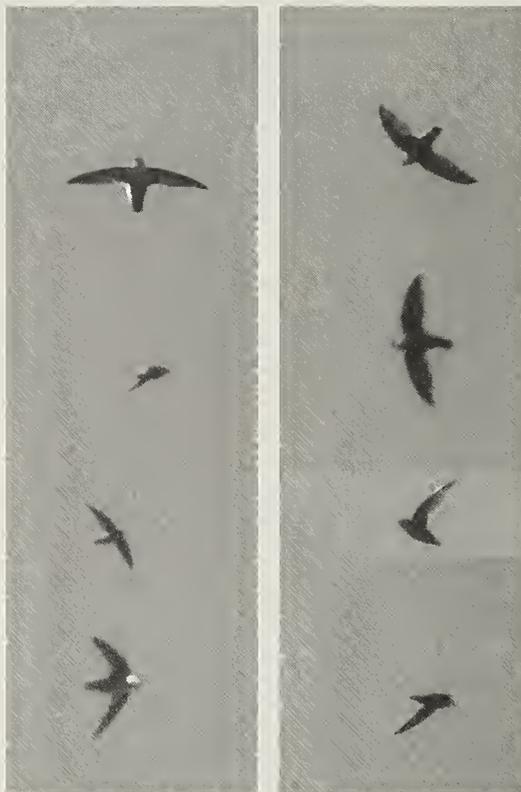


pair), and 10 including 9 males in *Desha*, AR 31 Jul (KN, LDN)—represented rare but regular summering birds.

HAWKS THROUGH RAILS

Although Ospreys breed somewhat sparingly in sc. Louisiana, one 6 Jun in *Orleans* (PW) and another on the New Orleans lake-front throughout the period (DM) were unusual, and one 13 Jun in *Lincoln*, AR (LA) was in a location where breeding has been attempted the past five years. Jennifer Coulson monitored 47 Swallow-tailed Kite nests during the summer of 2004, including 28 in the lower Pearl R. basin (23 in Louisiana, 5 in Mississippi) and 17 in the Atchafalaya basin. An aerial census 22 Jun in the lower Pearl R. basin yielded 151 individuals (JOC, SAD, PS). Among other records for the season, one 25 Jun in *Attala*, MS (TS, MS) stood out. If it was nesting on the nearby Yocknookany R., as Schiefer suspected might be the case, it would represent a northward range expansion in Mississippi. A count of 27 Mississippi Kites 11 Jun in *Elmore*, AL (TAP, TB) was noteworthy, and one 5 Jul in *Bibb* (GDJ) was unusual for the Mountain region. Of Bald Eagle reports, three were from the s. part of the Region, where summer records are rare: 9 Jun in *Rapides* (JH) and 1 & 15 Jul in *New Orleans* (CB). The others included a bird of the year in early Jun in *Oktibbeha*, MS, which had fledged on 30 Apr (TS), one 28 Jun in *Lincoln*, AR (LA), and sightings in *Lee*, *Bibb*, and *Talladega*, AL (TH, GDJ, DGJ, ECS). A juv. Northern Harrier 31 Jul in *Lowndes*, AL (TAP) was—if one assumes it was a fall migrant—the earliest ever for the state. Cooper’s Hawks continue to be found summering, or even breeding, in new locations, as they reoccupy their former nesting range. There were several records from s. Louisiana and Mississippi, including at least 2 taking birds at feeders in *Hancock* (NB) and *Harrison*, MS (SS)

through the period. One on a *Bossier*, LA B.B.S. route 13 Jun (LRR) was unprecedented. There were six reports of Swainson’s Hawks, normally seen in summer only in nw. Arkansas (and rare even there). Arkansas records both came from *Benton*, in the extreme nw. corner of the state, 3 (MMI; 2 ads.) & 11 Jul (JN, MMI; one ad.), but



This series of images from 31 March 2004 compares Vaux’s Swifts (left) with very similar Chimney Swifts (right); all were taken between the University Lakes and Highland Road in East Baton Rouge Parish, Louisiana, where at least 24 Vaux’s spent the winter, the last bird being observed 12 April. On the two upper left images, note the relatively straight trailing edge to the wing, the translucence in the secondaries, and the contrastingly pale rump. At right, the Chimney Swifts’ wings appear longer and broader, with a bulge through the trailing edge and no distinct translucence in the secondaries. The Vaux’s at lower left shows the throat and breast a very pale ashen color. Photographs by Daniel Lane.

there were also four reports from sw. Louisiana: one in *Calcasieu* and another in *Cameron* 23 Jun (GG), one 8 Jul in *Acadia* (JK), and 2 more in *Calcasieu* 21 Jul (GG). A Merlin 27 Jun in *Tuscaloosa* (JJ) established only the 3rd Jun record for Alabama.

Purple Gallinules produced several interesting records away from the coast, where most summering occurs, including 6 young in three broods in *Noxubee*, MS (TS), three pairs 20 Jun in *Howard*, AR (CM), one on the same date in *Red River*, LA (NM, JB), and 4 ads. 31 Jul in *Arkansas* (KN, LDN). Common Moorhens nested at Noxubee N.W.R. for the 5th consecutive year (TS), and three nests were found 20 Jun in *Howard*, AR (CM).

SHOREBIRDS THROUGH TERNS

Even though only three species nest regularly in the Region, shorebirds attract attention during Jun and Jul as the last spring migrants hurry north to breed, almost encountering the earliest southbound migrants. Furthermore, a not-insignificant number of non-breeding individuals linger throughout the period, especially on the coast in the interstitial period of about 10 Jun to 5 Jul. An American Golden-Plover 18 Jul (LW, BD) in

Lowndes, presumptively southbound, was the earliest ever in fall for Alabama; one was seen nearby 31 Jul as well (TAP). While 20 Snowy Plovers 22 Jun on Pelican I., *Mobile* (DD, CD, HEH) represented a maximum count in “recent decades,” 2 Piping Plovers with them established the first Jun record for Alabama (DD, CD, HEH). Southbound migrants were noted 30 Jul in *White*, AR (KN, LDN) and the next day in *Prairie*, AR (KN, LDN) and in *Lee*, MS (WP). A total of 520 Black-necked Stilts 25 Jul in and around *Vermilion*, LA (JK, ES) was of note, as were the 80 American Avocets in *Vermilion* the same day (JK, ES). Of several reports of the almost strictly coastal Willet, the most interesting were of singles seen 25 Jun in *Lafayette*, MS (GK), 28 Jun in *Lauderdale*, AL (TMH), 11 Jul in *Caddo*, LA (NM, JB), and 30 Jul in *White*, AR (KN, LDN). Records from *Orleans*, LA (PW, DM) and from *Vermilion* were also of interest. Whimbrels were found lingering in coastal Louisiana throughout Jun, including one on the unprecedented date of 27 Jun in *Lafourche* (ph. RDP). One 27 Jul in the same area (DPM) may have been an early fall migrant or a “summering” individual. While a Western Sandpiper 9 Jun in *Benton*, AR (MMI) was marginally late, 2 White-rumped Sandpipers 22 Jun in the same location (MMI) were quite late but still

presumably moving north. Less easy to categorize was one seen nine days later on the coast at Grand Isle, LA (LR, JP), adequately described. Although the species is a very rare fall migrant, there are three previous "summer" records for se. Louisiana. Pectoral Sandpipers on 13 & 16 Jun in Benton, AR (MML) were late northbound migrants.

A light-morph imm. Parasitic Jaeger was seen 14 Jun flying along the beach at Ft. Pickens, FL, and another in the same plumage was seen in similar circumstances 23 Jun (RAD). A Laughing Gull 1 Jul in Colbert, AL (TMH, m.ob.), almost on the Tennessee line, was very far inland. A first-summer Franklin's Gull 13 Jun in Benton, AR (MML) was exceptionally late for a species whose migration here is usually over by mid-May; a first-summer Ring-billed Gull 14 Jul in Caddo (NM, JB) was similarly unusual in nw. Louisiana.

Roof-nesting Gull-billed Terns in New Orleans attracted considerable attention this season, in part because of the total abandonment of what had been the largest colony, numbering 150 pairs or more, at a Metairie shopping center (RDP). On the other hand, they nested on other rooftops, including the University of New Orleans campus, and were generally widespread during the breeding season (DPM, RDP). A total of 247 was counted on the 8-9 Jun census of the Chandeleur Is. (SWC, DLD et al.), along with 585 Caspian Terns, mostly paired. The Royal Tern and Sandwich Tern colonies at the lower end of the Chandeleur Is. 19 Jun had an estimated 30,000 individuals, with Sandwich present in twice the numbers of Royal (DPM, RDP). Although 6 Common Terns were found on S. Gosier and Curlew Is. (where they have twice nested) 8-9 Jun (SWC, DLD, MM, CS), none seemed territorial. A total of 150 in Cameron 8 Jul (JK, SZ) represented a high number for midsummer. A Forster's Tern 24 Jun in Noxubee, MS (TS) was the latest ever for that area by a week. Possibly breeding Least Terns were seen inland 20 Jun in Tunica and Tallahatchie, MS as well as 5 Jul in Concordia (JH) and 28 Jul in Pointe Coupee, LA (CB); another was seen 10 Jun inland in Lauderdale, AL (TMH). A Sooty and 11 Bridled Terns were seen 6 Jun off South Pass (DLD, SWC, MM, DPM, PC). The 8-9 & 19 Jun trips to the Chandeleur Is. yielded 10 and 4 Sooty Terns, respectively, from S. Breton to Curlew Is. Some were clearly on nests. Past totals here have reached as high as 30 pairs. Three separate reports of migrating Black Terns in n. Mississippi 31 Jul (GK, WP, TS) all noted large numbers, ranging from 30 to 148.

DOVES THROUGH MIMIDS

Reports of Eurasian Collared-Doves by Marion Schiefer 12-13 Jul from Perry, Greene, Jones, and Newton documented the continuing expansion in this part of Mississippi. Single White-winged Doves, which are expanding as breeders on the Alabama coast, were noted 17 Jun in Mobile and 20 Jun in Baldwin (TS, JS, HEH). At least two Inca Dove nests were carefully watched in opposite corners of Louisiana, at Grand Isle mid-Apr+ (m.ob.) and 29 Apr-5 Jun in Shreveport. A pair of Common Ground-Doves, probably nesting, was seen 12 Jun in Greene, MS (MS). The first Buff-bellied Hummingbird for the season in Louisiana was a very early one 5-7 Jul in Baton Rouge (MMA, CMA), and the first



This Gray Kingbird at New Orleans 17 May 2004 was found very near the site of the second nesting record for Louisiana from 2003. Photograph by Phillip Wallace.

Calliope and Rufous Hummingbirds arrived in the last few days of Jul: an ad. male Calliope 30 Jul in Covington (LK, LB) and an imm. male Rufous 28-29 Jul in Slidell (PS, JS, LB). At a previously unknown location were 4 Red-cockaded Woodpeckers near Mandeville, LA 22 Jun (CB).

Three Willow Flycatchers, including 2 singing, at Wheeler N.W.R. 9 Jun+ (CDC) apparently represented the first confirmed nesting for Alabama. Another in song 10 Jun in Boone, AR (JS, PS) was in an area where they have nested; a silent Willow/Alder Flycatcher 25 Jul in Washington, AR (MML) was presumably a transient. A singing/calling Least Flycatcher 5 Jul in Morgan, AL (DJS) established the 2nd summer record for the state. Of an Eastern Phoebe 17 Jul in Baldwin, AL (CK), Jackson commented that summering might be becoming more frequent in the species, and another was seen 30 Jul in St. Bernard, LA (RS); there were no previous se. Louisiana records between early May and late Sep. A very "late" ad. male Vermilion Flycatcher 8 Jun in Pope, AR (MF) was hardly less unusual. The first known

nesting of Western Kingbird in Mississippi was established on 6 Jun in DeSoto (ph. JRW); 4 nestlings were noted on 18 & 20 Jun. For the 2nd year in a row, Gray Kingbirds nested along the New Orleans lake-front. As reported in the spring, ads. were found 16 May (EW) and a nest five days later (NN). That nest was abandoned, perhaps because of heavy rains, but a new nest was found 3 Jul, with 3 or 4 nestlings (DPM). An ad. and 2 fledged juvs. were seen as late as 29 Jul (ph. DPM). There are no other nesting records for Louisiana. Scissor-tailed Flycatchers were found during Jun, probably breeding, in Grant, Vernon, and Caldwell, LA (RS, JH). Breeding had not been confirmed in any of those parishes for the Louisiana Breeding Bird Atlas.

Although the species is an uncommon but regular breeder in Arkansas in open-countryside thickets, a total of 8 singing male Bell's Vireos 21 & 24 Jun in Prairie (LY, WS) was noteworthy. Apparently territorial Black-whiskered Vireos were noted in nw. Florida 4-7 Jun at Gulf Breeze (RAD, LD, BT) and 10 & 22 Jun at Ft. Pickens (JL). Two Tree Swallow nests 10 Jun in Talladega, AL (ECS) were at a new breeding site, and a pair 4 Jul in Shelby, AL (GJH, JG) was probably nesting. Cliff Swallows continued to nest in new localities in Grant and Vernon, LA (JH), and 2 Cave Swallows in Jun among Cliffs at the Chef Menteur Pass bridge in e. New Orleans (MP, PW, RDP) established only the 2nd record for se. Louisiana. Gray Catbirds, which breed erratically in the s. part of the Region,

were noted in Hancock, MS, where six pairs were noted throughout the period (NB, JB, JoP, JaP), and 9 Jun in Tangipahoa, LA (RM, DM; 2 ads., 3 juvs.). A single catbird was seen 27 Jun in Benton, MS (RP, CB, SV).

WARBLERS THROUGH ICTERIDS

Two Blue-winged Warblers 24 Jul in St. Tammany, LA (CB) were the earliest ever for se. Louisiana by about a week, and a Nashville Warbler 22 Jun in Macon (TH) was the first ever in summer in Alabama. In e.-cen. Mississippi, Schiefer had the latest-ever Yellow Warbler by five days, on 1 Jun in Oktibbeha, and an arrival on 22 Jul that missed being earliest ever by two days. Single birds 12 Jun in Chicot and the next day in Lincoln, AR (LA) were well away from the Ozark Mts., where they breed sparingly. A singing male Chestnut-sided Warbler 3-4 Jun in Macon (TH) was likely a late migrant, but a territorial male 29 Jun in Newton (MML) was at what would be a new breeding location for the species in nw. Arkansas. The same was true of a male Black-throated Green Warbler 19 Jun in Franklin, AR (MML, RAB), and an

ad. male 29 Jun in *Bibb*, AL was very far s. for a possible breeder. While it was unclear whether a Cerulean Warbler 11 Jul in *Talladega*, AL (GJH, JG) was an early migrant or a local breeder, one 23 Jul in *Lee*, AL (LW) was surely a migrant. Probably nesting was a pair of Worm-eating Warblers 22 Jun in *Macon*, AL (TH), well se. of normal breeding range. The "high priority" Swainson's Warbler, which is uncommon in e.-cen. Mississippi, was recorded in three separate localities (5 birds) during the period in *Okibbeha*, MS (TS). Six were counted on a B.B.S. route 10 Jun in *Talladega* (ECS), in Alabama's Mountain region. A singing male Wilson's Warbler 3 Jun in *Washington*, AR was a very late migrant.

Two pairs of Scarlet Tanagers 25 Jun in *Macon* (TH), presumably breeding, would be the southernmost for Alabama, while 6 were seen 29 Jun in *Bibb*, AL. A singing male heard 27 Jun in *Benton* (WRP) was near the s. limit of its breeding range in Mississippi. Bachman's Sparrows were reported from Noxubbe N.W.R., MS in Jun-Jul (TS), and 2 were heard 18 Jun in *Franklin*, AL (DJS). A Lark Sparrow 6 Jun in *Noxubee*, MS (TS, MS) was near the s. limit of breeding range; 6-8 in *Autauga*, AL 2 Jun (TAP) were of interest; and 8 seen 18 & 25 Jul in *Benton* and *Washington* (MML, JN) evidently provided evidence of the timing of southward migration in nw. Arkansas. Three reports of Grasshopper Sparrow were received from *Tunica*, *Clay*, and *Monroe* in n. Mississippi, at the edge of breeding range, in late Jun-Jul+ (WRP, GK, SK, TS). Well w. of

normal breeding range were singles at three places 6 Jun in *Noxubbe*, MS (TS, MS) and 2 on the Dundee B.B.S. route 20 Jun in *Tunica*, MS (WRP). A singing and calling Western Meadowlark 12 Jun in *Drew*, AR (LA) was



This nesting Willow Flycatcher at Wheeler National Wildlife Refuge, Alabama 9 June 2004 furnished the first confirmed nesting record for the state. Photograph by C. Dwight Cooley.

320 km w. of normal breeding range. An ad. male Shiny Cowbird was present 2-25 Jun at Ft. Pickens, FL (RAD, LD, LC), and a female was at Gulf Breeze 23 Jun (JF).

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State of the Region

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In the face of increased development and human demands for food, housing, jobs, and recreation, bird populations in the Central Southern Region are being forced into smaller areas of habitat and into marginal or degraded habitats, where they are subjected to increased competition for food resources, higher predation and incidence of disease, and increased risk from phenomena such as drought and hurricanes. While we may have little influence on natural events and their impacts on bird populations and habitats, we can reverse or lessen the impacts of what is called "development." The following phenomena are of tremendous conservation concern.

Forested Wetland Loss and Fragmentation Before the arrival of European settlers, there were more than 390 million wetland acres in what is now the United States of America. Since the 1700s, approximately 53% of U. S. wetlands have been drained, dredged, filled, or altered, and over the past 200 years, approximately 89% of all wetland losses have occurred in the area that is now the southeastern United States (Tiner 1984). Wetland losses in the Mississippi Alluvial Valley (Bird Conservation Region [BCR] 26) have been particularly insidious and have impacted many bird species. The valley stretches for 700 miles through seven states, from Cairo, Illinois to the Gulf of Mexico. Approximately 80% of the predominately forested wetland floodplain has been dramatically altered for navigation, flood control, and agricultural production. Nowhere has habitat loss and degradation been more noticeable than in the Lower Mississippi Valley (LMV). Wetland losses have averaged 165,000+ acres annually (Tiner 1984). Habitat loss reached its zenith between 1950 and 1970, when over 30% of remaining wetlands were converted to other uses (Mitsch and Gosselink 1986), primarily agricultural production. Riparian habitats rich in passerine diversity at all seasons, broad floodplains used by shorebirds, and vast wooded swamplands have all been casualties of the taming of the Mississippi River. The Central Southern Region's more upland forests—in the Ouachitas and plains of western Louisiana and southwestern Arkansas (BCR 25), in the southern terminus of Appalachia in northeastern Alabama (BCR 28), and in the hardwood forests of northern Alabama and Arkansas (BCR 24)—have all been subject to fragmentation, resource extraction, and other types of degradation, which bring with them problems of invasive, exotic flora, increased cowbird parasitism, and greater exposure to mammalian and other predators.

Coastal Wetlands Loss and Marine Environmental Degradation Coastal wetlands and beaches are being destroyed or altered at an alarming rate. Historically, marshes, coastal

prairies, pitcher plant bogs, and barrier islands of the northern Gulf of Mexico provided habitat for large concentrations of marsh-, beach-, and colonial-nesting waterbirds. In Louisiana alone, coastal marshes have declined at an average rate of almost 25,000 acres annually (Tiner 1984). Depending on the authority consulted, it is estimated that the state loses an area of coastal marsh equivalent to a football field every 15 minutes (Davis-Wheeler 2004) to every 38 minutes (LDNR 2004), a product of altered siltation patterns and sea-level rise. Authorities agree that Louisiana lost about 2000 mi^2 of land in the twentieth century and expect that the state will lose another 500 mi^2 in the next 50 years. To put this in continental context, Louisiana currently has 30% of the total coastal marsh and accounts for 90% of the coastal marsh loss in the lower 48 states. Almost \$40 billion is predicted to be lost in the seafood industry alone by 2050, not to mention staggering losses of foraging habitat for wading species and breeding habitat for marsh birds (Davis-Wheeler 2004). With the warming of oceans, too, hurricanes are predicted to become more frequent and more powerful; *Ivan* of September 2004 devastated habitats in western Florida and Alabama, both at the coast and inland. In addition, with the increase in human population along coastal areas, many traditional shorebird and wading bird staging and nesting areas are being disturbed by human recreational activities. Marine waters of the Gulf of Mexico have suffered tremendously from over-harvest of marine resources and especially from pollution and excess sediment from the Mississippi River, from industrial and residential build-up—both on the coast and offshore (oil-drilling platforms)—and from ship traffic.

Coastal Maritime Forest and Chenier Loss

Development of coastal areas and loss of habitat has been rampant over the past 50 years. In addition to forested and coastal wetland loss alluded to above, loss of important staging and stopover habitat along the northern Gulf of Mexico is significantly impacting landbird migrants during spring and fall (Barrow et al. 2002). Research has demonstrated that forested habitats in the Gulf Coastal Prairie (BCR 37) and cheniers of southwestern Louisiana, as well as the shrub-scrub habitats to the east, are extremely important to landbird migrants. Radar studies conducted by Gauthreaux (1971) demonstrated that on any given trans-Gulf event during periods of good weather, approximately 10% of spring migrants land in near-coast wooded habitats in coastal Louisiana. However, during periods of inclement weather, up to 80% of migrants land in these same habitats. When one considers that more than 50% of the U.S. population now resides and works within 50 miles of the coast and that recently, 40% of all new commercial development and 46% of all new residential development has occurred near the coast (NOAA 2004), the implications for migrants and for coastal nesters are apparent. The endangered *pallidus* race of Sandhill Crane endemic to the pine savannas of coastal southeastern Mississippi has been reduced to a just over 100 individuals, most of these captive-reared.

Longleaf Pine Ecosystem Decline One of the most biologically diverse of all forest systems in North America, Longleaf Pine was once the dominant forest-cover type over much of the southeastern U. S. coastal plain (BCR 27), an ecosystem that extended in an estimated 90 million-acre unbroken swath from Virginia to east Texas (Crocker 1987). Landscape-level fires that raged through most sites every three to five years maintained not only the Longleaf Pine but also diverse fire-dependent plant and animal communities (Gjerstad and Johnson 2004). Today, fewer than three million acres remain, a decline of almost 97%. In these and similar lowland habitats, Fire Ants have been a plague on ground-nesting species over the past 25 years, and the suppression of fires has meant a decline in forest health and overall species diversity.

Data-deficient Issues ~ Water Use • Though not yet recognized as a significant conservation concern in the southeastern United States, the danger signals are out there. Regulatory and conservation agencies have noted an upswing in reservoir projects aimed at providing water for a number of uses. The inevitable siting issues, particularly in floodplain areas, are of consequence to nesting, migrant, and wintering birds. **Communication Towers** • The impact of towers on bird mortality during migration is well documented. In 1999, the Federal

Communication Commission estimated there were more than 75,000 towers in the United States tall enough to interfere with aviation (Wiedensaul 1999) and countless more that were short enough not to interfere with aviation. With the advent of cellular telephone and digital television technologies, the number of communication towers dotting the landscape has increased dramatically. More importantly, digital television technology will require the construction of thousands of additional lighted towers, most of them taller than 1000 feet. In light of the U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service's estimate in the 1970s that towers taller than 200 feet killed minimally 1.2 million birds annually, there is great cause for concern. **Wind Turbines** • Wind turbines have been constructed in numerous environments to provide an alternative source of energy; in the Central Southern Region, there has been a proposal to retrofit unused oil rigs off Louisiana with "wind farms"—the turbines and towers would be in the path of millions of trans-Gulf migrants. Some studies indicate mortality in migrating birds can be significant around wind farms, particularly in traditional migration corridors influenced by weather and terrain, but much more study is needed, ideally conducted by entities not connected financially to the wind industry.

The projected increase in the human population virtually ensures a future of continued habitat destruction. Fortunately, more and more agencies and citizens seem more cognizant now of the impact habitat destruction is having on natural resources. Several landscape-level habitat initiatives that address past habitat losses are currently underway in the southeastern United States. The LMV Joint Venture has been successful in protecting 280,000+ acres of remaining wetlands and restoring or enhancing another 115,000+ acres (Loesch et al. 1994). Recent partnerships under the U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service's Terrestrial Carbon Sequestration program are making headway in reforesting large acreages. In 1999, Ili-nova Corporation donated \$13.7 million to the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation, allowing the Foundation to work with Environmental Synergy, Inc. to reforest 100,000+ acres in the LMV over five years. In addition, landowner incentives contained within several USDA programs will result in the restoration or enhancement of large acreages in the LMV. The non-profit Longleaf Alliance has been successful in demonstrating the importance of both the economic and ecological values of the Longleaf Pine ecosystem, and has facilitated the management and restoration of Longleaf Pine not only on public lands but also on private lands. Broad-based collaborative efforts such as these hold the key to bird conservation and are, at present, our best hope for the future.

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Historically, a 90 million-acre swath of Longleaf Pine forests extended unbroken in the Coastal Plain from southern Virginia to eastern Texas. Today, fewer than three million acres remain, a loss of almost 97%. One of the most biologically diverse of temperate forest systems, the health of this habitat depends upon a regime of regular fires. Species such as Bachman's Sparrow and Red-cockaded Woodpecker, along with a host of other organisms, rely upon the remnant patches of Longleaf Pine woods for their continued survival.

Photograph by Elaine Ryan.

Northern Canada



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Northern Canada experienced the best and the worst of this year's dramatically variable summer weather. These conditions had a pronounced impact, both positive and negative, on breeding productivity. In the western part of the Region, the Yukon enjoyed one of the warmest and driest seasons on record, with early nesting, good productivity, and tremendous forest fires. A late spring in the Northwest Territories resulted in a late nesting cycle for many species, while early summer (June) was very dry, with parts of the Deh Cho in the southwestern Northwest Territories receiving only about one-eighth of average monthly rainfall. By contrast, the eastern parts of the Region suffered a cold and wet summer, which had a dramatic negative impact on the breeding success of a wide range of Arctic species from swans and geese through shorebirds, gulls, and songbirds. Small mammal populations influenced productivity of local bird populations. For example, an absence of lemmings at Cambridge Bay, Nunavut was associated with low numbers of jaegers and

raptors. It is not clear what the driving force was behind the amazing number of species seen well beyond the nw. extent of their ranges in the Yukon and Northwest Territories. As always, observer coverage is sparse in the North, and there really is no "beaten path." Surveys of forests and wetlands along the Beaver River and La Biche River in the extreme southeastern Yukon continued to expand our knowledge of this very remote and productive region of the boreal forest. Observers at Cambridge Bay and the distant reaches of the eastern Arctic provided our first reports for Nunavut.

Abbreviations: Albert Cr. (Albert Creek Banding Station, se. Yukon), NWT (Northwest Territories), Whse. (Whitehorse, Yukon).

LOONS THROUGH SHOREBIRDS

An ad. Yellow-billed Loon in alternate plumage lingered 2–12 Jun on the Yukon R. in Whse. (BS, m.ob.). An estimated 2900 Northern Fulmars were seen 30 Jul during a trip from Kiliniq I., Nunavut, through the Button Is., n. Gray Strait, and Hudson Strait (MJI). Two American White Pelicans on or about 1 Jul at Wool Bay, sw. of Yellowknife, NWT (GR) were unusual that far n. of their breeding areas on the Slave R. Tundra Swans, Canada Geese, Brant, and King and Common Eiders were all in low numbers at Cambridge Bay, Nunavut 28 Jun–13 Jul, with little or no signs of nesting (JR); harsh

weather appeared to be the primary cause. An imm. Bald Eagle seen at Port Burwell, Nunavut 30 Jul was cautiously identified (ph. GA, MFa, PSR). An ad. Broad-winged Hawk seen perched at km 431 Mackenzie Hwy., NWT 21 Jun (THE) was well n. of its nearest known nesting area near Ft. Liard. After two good years, Peregrine Falcon nesting productivity took a downturn this year for the Yukon R. population; the driving factor is still unknown (*vide* DM).

A calling Yellow Rail was tape-recorded 17 Jun at km 250 on the Liard Hwy. (THE, GK)—a new location for this rare species in Northwest Territories. A Sora nest with five eggs and a chick at the lower La Biche R. 30 Jun (BB, LC, CE) provided one of the few breeding records for the Yukon. Despite a somewhat late start to the nesting season, Whooping Cranes in Wood Buffalo N.P., NWT/AB produced a record number of 54 nests and 41 fledged chicks (MBra). Low numbers for all shorebird species and a complete absence of White-rumped and Buff-breasted Sandpipers were recorded 28 Jun–13 Jul at Cambridge Bay, Nunavut (JR). A total of 21 calling Whimbrel were recorded 22 Jun at two nesting sites in Vuntut N. P., as part of a newly established monitoring program for the species (*vide* DH). A late but noteworthy report was of a Long-billed Curlew at the Ft. Smith airport, NWT in May (ph LM). Also rare was a Marbled Godwit seen 2 Jun in Yellowknife, NWT (MBro). Short-billed Dowitcher is a very rare breeder in s. Yukon, and new nesting sites are always noteworthy; four pairs and one nest (four eggs) were discovered 18 Jun at a wetland near Crag L., s. of Whse. (CE); on 24 Jun, the nest contained 3 tiny young and one egg (HG, SH, PS). Two pairs of Short-billed Dowitchers were noted 16 & 21 Jun at a suspected nesting site at Judas Cr., s. of Whse. (CE).

GULLS THROUGH FINCHES

A crash in the lemming cycle at Cambridge Bay, Nunavut was associated with low numbers and an absence of nests for Parasitic Jaegers as well as low numbers of Long-tailed Jaegers, although two nests of the latter species were found 28 Jun–13 Jul (JR). An imm. Thayer's Gull at treeline in Asi Keyi 23 Jul (ph JM) provided a rare summer record, also the first record for sw. Yukon. Two Sabine's Gull nests (fewer than normal) were found at Cambridge Bay, Nunavut 28 Jun–13 Jul (JR). Dovekies were abundant and Thick-billed Murres were seen regularly in Davis Strait from the mouth of Cumberland Inlet n. to cen. Baffin I. 31 Jul–1 Aug (MJI). An estimated 600 Black Guillemots were seen 31 Jul at Monumental I., Nunavut (MJI). A record low of eight nest boxes were occupied at the Black Guillemot breeding colony on Herschel I., Yukon this summer; the colony peaked at 36 occupied

boxes in 1992–1994 but has been declining steadily since 1999 (*vide* DC).

A single Mourning Dove, a rare but regular wanderer to the Region, was seen in Ft. Simpson, NWT 20–22 Jun (EC, HP). Surveys of owl nests in the Yellowknife area, NWT indicated low productivity this year, and although too few nests were monitored to suggest widespread patterns or trends, small-mammal trapping indicated low populations of prey species (THi). Observation of at least 2 Long-eared Owl fledglings in Ft. Simpson, NWT 26–31 Jul (DT) established the area's first confirmed breeding record.

Yellow-bellied Flycatchers were found at two new Yukon locations this year: one was singing along the North Klondike Hwy., 32 km n. of McQuesten 9 Jun (PS, LC), and one was singing at the lower La Biche R. 24 Jun and 2 Jul (CE, LC). The known range of Dusky Flycatcher in the Yukon was extended about 150 km northward, with observations of 3 singing birds along the North Klondike Hwy. between McGregor and McCabe Creeks 4 Jun (PS). Three male Pacific-slope Flycatchers, the first for the Yukon Territory, were recorded singing on territories at the Beaver R. Hotsprings 25–27 Jun (ph., v.r. CE, LC). Philadelphia Vireo is rare anywhere in the Region; 2 were singing along the lower La Biche R., Yukon 24 Jun (LC, CE), and a single was seen 29 Jun in Ft. Simpson, NWT (DT, AL). Red-eyed Vireos were recorded well w. of the species' normal range in the Yukon, with 2 at Albert Cr. 10–11 Jun (TMK, RiB), one singing at the Watson Lake airport 23 Jun (LC, CE), and one singing 11 Jul in Whse. (WN). A Clark's Nutcracker, the first seen in the Yukon in over a decade, was at Printers Pass in the Ruby Range 11 Jun (TKM); this sighting was followed by 2 more at different Yukon locations in the fall season. A female Barn Swallow at Cambridge Bay, Nunavut 5 Jul (JR) was well beyond its normal range.

A singing Winter Wren, very rare in the Whse. area, was at Porter Cr. 17 Jul (WN). Marsh Wren is very local in Northwest Territories; one was heard singing briefly 19 Jun at km 200 Liard Hwy. (THE, GK), and another was heard singing 21 Jun at the e. end of Ekali L. (THE, GK), a new location for the species. A Northern Mockingbird, the 2nd for Northwest Territories, was seen frequenting a residential area beside the Mackenzie R. in Ft. Simpson 21–29 Jun (vt.

DT, HP, GW). Cedar Waxwings, an irregular species in s. Yukon, were common during late Jun–Jul in the Watson L. area (SC, CE; TMK) and along the lower La Biche R. (CE, LC). Tennessee Warblers were noted in higher-than-normal numbers in the Yukon from Watson L. to Whse.: 40 were banded at Albert Cr. 30 May–13 Jun (TMK), and 3 were at Judas Cr., near Whse., 21 Jun (CE). Cape May Warblers were noted far w. and n. of the species' normal range, with one singing at Albert Cr. 8 Jun (TMK), one singing along the Lubbock R., s. of Whse., 20 Jun (LC, JS), and one singing at Inuvik, NWT 20 Jun (PS). Intensive breeding bird surveys in s. and cen. Yukon partially filled the hole in the Townsend's Warbler's Yukon range: a total of 14 was recorded on seven of



The Yukon Territory's third record record of Lark Sparrow was found 4 July 2004 near the lower La Biche River in the southeastern part of the territory. Photograph by Cameron D. Eckert.

10 B.B.S. routes 5–22 Jun (PS, SH); additionally, 4 were singing at Moose Cr. Campground, km 559 North Klondike Hwy. 10 Jun (CE, PS). A female Bay-breasted Warbler banded at Albert Cr. 7 Jul (TMK), a first for the Watson L. area, was about 150 km w. of the species' usual range. A MacGillivray's Warbler, rare in the Watson L. area, was banded at Albert Cr. 9 Jun (TMK). The Yukon's first Canada Warbler nest was an exciting find at the lower La Biche R. 4 Jul (ph. CE, BB, LC).

Western Tanagers were unusually common in both the Yellowknife (RoB, MFO, m.ob.) and Ft. Simpson, NWT (DT) areas this summer. In the Yukon, Western Tanagers were noted well beyond the species' normal range: one seen singing near Little Atlin L., s. Yukon 2 Jun (HG) was 300 km w. of typical range, and one singing along the North Klondike Hwy., 10 km n. of McQuesten 9 Jun (LC, PS) was an amazing 600 km nw. of usual range. Four Brewer's Sparrows seen 22–25 Jul in Asi Keyi, sw.

Yukon (LC) were near the far nw. edge of the species' range. A Lark Sparrow, the Yukon's 3rd, was seen 4 Jul at the lower La Biche R. (ph CE, LC). A ten-year old burn s. of Norman Wells, NWT hosted an abundance of sparrows this season, with Chipping, Clay-colored, Savannah, Lincoln's, and White-crowned all found to be common (CS et al.). A Le Conte's Sparrow singing in a sedge meadow near the site (CS) could represent a significant range extension if breeding is confirmed there. A total of 8 Le Conte's Sparrows was counted at the lower La Biche R., Yukon 23 Jun–4 Jul (CE, LC, BB); this number is consistent with counts at that location 10 years ago. Single singing Nelson's Sharp-tailed Sparrows, rare in Northwest Territories, were found at km 250 Liard Hwy. 19–20 Jun (GK, THE) and at km 383 Mackenzie Hwy. 21 Jun (GK, THE). A White-throated Sparrow seen singing 4 Jun at McCabe Cr., s. of Pelly Crossing (PS, LC), was well beyond its range. A pair of Smith's Longspurs was seen below the Natazhat Glacier in Asi Keyi, sw. Yukon 22 Jul (LC). Rose-breasted Grosbeaks, uncommon in Northwest Territories, were encountered more than usual this season in both Yellowknife (RoB) and Ft. Simpson (DT, HP). Rock Island L. may well support the Yukon's largest breeding concentration of Red-winged Blackbirds; a count of 51 was made there 4 Jun (LC, CE, SH), while a post-breeding flock of about 100 was seen in a field at Upper Liard, Yukon 20 Jul (CE). A male Rusty Blackbird at Herschel I. on the Yukon's North Coast 13 Jun through at least 23 Jul (DC; BD) provided the 2nd record of the species for the island.

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State of the Region

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Northern Canada offers both fantastic opportunities and enormous challenges for bird conservation. In an increasingly urbanized world—whose citizens may consider woodlots and inner-city parks to be “wilderness”—the North stands out as remarkably different. Northern Canada features true wilderness landscapes with diverse and productive ecosystems, naturally regulating predator–prey relationships, vast areas of intact boreal forest, and a wide range of species that live nowhere else on Earth. The scale of landscape-level disturbances is unlike anything known in the south. In the Yukon, the awesome forest fires of 2004 covered 180,000 km² (70,000 mi²)—an area almost as large as the state of Utah. The connection between northern people and the land is direct, and often intimate. Despite our remoteness, the Region of Northern Canada shares with the southern provinces multiple deep concerns about the changing state of the environment and the health of wildlife.

Climate change has serious and far-reaching implications for the North. It is a point of discussion and alarm in virtually every northern community, and especially among First Nations. The North is seen as the “first and worst” with respect to the global impacts of climate change. This concern is not without cause. People on the land are seeing rapid and dramatic changes. Scientists are making the connection between climate change (e.g., changing precipitation and winter temperatures) and landscape-level ecosystem processes (e.g. ice-pack melt, spruce beetle populations, forest fires). Researchers at Cambridge Bay, Nunavut have found drastic population declines in Ivory Gull and Glaucous Gull, and in the eastern Canadian Arctic, reduced productivity among Thick-billed Murres. Similarly, the Pacific Common Eider population has declined by 50% in just 20 years. While scientists struggle to determine the cause for such changes, investigating hypotheses that involve everything from contaminants to shifts in ice patterns, the long-term prognosis for Arctic species like Ivory Gull is dire.

In the southwestern Yukon, a spruce beetle population that began to expand in 1994 has resulted in the death of mature White Spruce forests over an area exceeding 2,500 km² (965 mi²). The potential effects on forest bird populations have not been fully explored. Winter woodpecker surveys in southwestern Yukon have turned up exceptional densities of American Three-toed Woodpeckers. Researchers in adjacent areas of Alaska have found that highly elastic foragers such as Yellow-rumped Warbler do well in beetle-killed forests, although there is concern for habitat specialists such as Townsend’s Warbler. There remains a poor understanding of the relationship between beetle-kill and forest bird populations. Yet forest managers clutched at straws for a solution have come up with the ineffective scheme of simply cutting more trees—thereby ensuring a negative outcome in the form of habitat loss and forest fragmentation.

Conservation of boreal forests and wetlands is a priority across the North (see <www.borealbirds.org>). Creeping habitat loss and fragmentation driven primarily by logging, mining, and petroleum development are major threats to northern birds. Too often it seems that resource managers ignore the mistakes of the south in favor of boom-and-bust economies—to the detriment of both people and the environment. In the Northwest Territories, a rapidly growing web of seismic lines, roads, and cutblocks now dominates areas that were considered pristine just a decade ago. Similarly, many of the

Yukon’s watersheds are experiencing increasing development related to forestry and petroleum industries, with only token recognition of the needs of the Region’s wild species. Researchers have established that habitat specialists such as American Three-toed Woodpecker, Boreal Chickadee, and Townsend’s Warbler require mature White Spruce forests. Continent-wide monitoring programs have detected declines in boreal songbirds such as Olive-sided Flycatcher, Blackpoll Warbler, Bay-breasted Warbler, and Rusty Blackbird. Yet it is an intense and often unsuccessful struggle to implement long-term conservation planning and true ecosystem-based management. The concept of permanently set-aside forest reserves is just not part of the management agenda. Following the belief that all potential industrial impacts can be mitigated, the suggestion that operational “no go” zones be applied to the Region’s critical wetlands has been consistently rejected by development planners. Recently, the establishment of protected areas in the Yukon has occurred only through First Nation land claims.

The scale of northern landscapes and the complexities of environmental change and population dynamics are inherent conservation and research challenges. Basic questions about species’ ranges and habitat associations are still unanswered. Assumptions about species’ life histories and habitat associations cannot be borrowed from the south. In the North, we know Upland Sandpiper as a tundra breeder, and Dusky Flycatchers inhabit subalpine shrubs. The breeding grounds of declining shorebirds such as Red Knot and Buff-breasted Sandpiper are thinly distributed and extremely remote. A search for a Surfbird or Wandering Tattler nest requires a well-provisioned trek by an experienced hiker. There is no army of volunteers to call, no network of roads that can be utilized to answer these questions, and in some cases, monitoring populations of far-northern species seems nearly impossible. Pieces of the puzzle fall into place slowly, through decades of work.

The interaction of environmental detriments over time, and the scientific apprehension of their cumulative effects,

pose profoundly complex conservation challenges for the present and the future. Rigorous research is required to establish even a basic understanding of the impacts of climate change, habitat loss, and contaminants, especially those that reach the North through long-range transport. Their combined effects are predicted to have dramatic and unpredictable consequences for species and ecosystems. Given the prevalence of toxic elements associated with resource extraction and other forms of economic “development,” it is difficult to imagine positive scenarios for our bird life at present.

The intact nature of some northern ecosystems represents enormous potential for success; however, every conservation achievement requires extraordinary and persistent dedication by Northerners. Environmental organizations such as the Yukon Conservation Society, Canadian Arctic Resources Committee, Yukon Bird Club, Ecology North, Canadian Parks and Wilderness Society, and Southeast Yukon Proper Land-Use Society have worked tirelessly, both directly and indirectly, towards the conservation of northern birds and their habitats. For example, Yukon organizations have advanced the La Biche River Forest Ecosystem Network to protect the range of habitats for forest birds and other biodiversity in that exceptionally rich watershed. Yet despite the very modest size of the network, the governments involved have shown a stark lack of responsibility and foresight in their reluctance to implement this basic conservation measure. The North has so much to offer in terms of conservation and at such a negligible cost—indeed a benefit—to the economy. The protection of a major boreal forest watershed, such as the Beaver River in southeast Yukon, would be a gift to the planet. The ability to make profound contributions toward biodiversity conservation is still easily within our reach but is slipping away quickly.



In the southeastern corner of the Yukon Territory, the Beaver River is a wilderness area that contains diverse boreal-forest and wetland ecosystems, all with exceptionally productive breeding bird communities. Canada’s boreal forest is the heartland for 290 nesting bird species, among them many declining species such as Lesser Scaup, Solitary Sandpiper, Olive-sided Flycatcher, Bay-breasted Warbler, Le Conte’s Sparrow, and Rusty Blackbird. The forest is rapidly losing extent and quality to many forms of resource extraction, but coalitions such as the Canadian Boreal Initiative and Boreal Songbird Initiative are addressing conservation concerns in this habitat. *Photograph by Cameron D. Eckert.*

A miserable May evolved into one of the worst summers on record, ranging from cool and wet in southern Alberta to the sixth coldest on record in Saskatchewan and the coldest in Manitoba since regular observations began around 1875. Wind and rain prevailed. Populations of many species, passerines in particular, had little chance to recover from the losses suffered in May's snows.

The Hudson Bay lowlands were still snow- and ice-bound in early June, causing geese and shorebirds to linger until mid-month. Few birds initiated nests and those that did suffered high predation. Snow Geese experienced total failure, and the success rate of Canada Geese, ducks, and shorebirds was not much better. Large flocks of non-breeders (e.g., Hudsonian Godwits, Stilt Sandpipers, Short-billed Dowitchers) were present by late June. The woods were also deserted; even Yellow-rumped Warblers and Dark-eyed Juncos were scarce. Some of the comments of long-time Churchill observers included "it is so quiet that it is scary" (BC) and "there were just no birds around" (JJ).

In northern and central Alberta, songbird numbers were down at Calling Lake (PM) and the lowest in 14 years of visits to Sir Winston Churchill P.P. (RT). Neotropical migrants seemed especially hard hit, but so were "half-hardy" species such as Ruby-crowned Kinglet and Chipping Sparrow (*vide* MH). A curious byproduct of conditions appeared to be the high incidence of mixed pairs of Eastern and Mountain Bluebirds in Manitoba, with as many as eight such pairs noted on one bluebird nest box trail near Brandon (BR). It would appear that bluebirds had difficulty finding partners of the same species after high mortality in May.

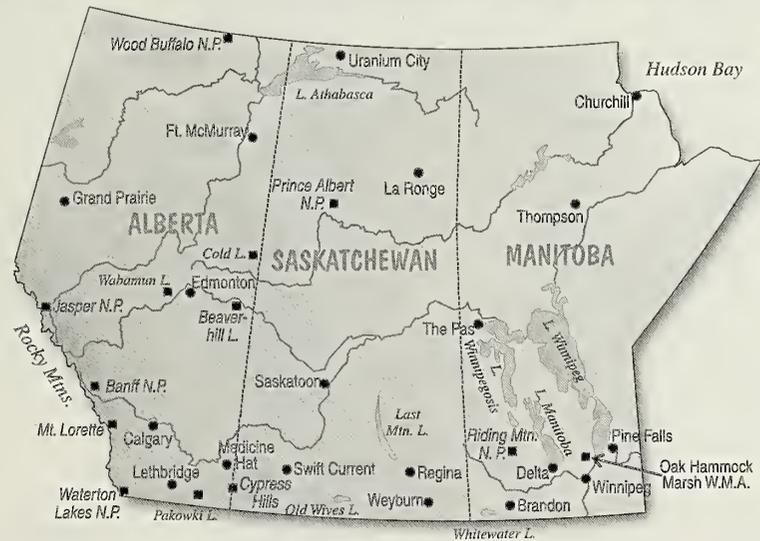
If there was a silver lining to the rain-clouds, it was lush growth on the Alberta prairies, which seemed to benefit species such as Sprague's Pipit, Le Conte's Sparrow, Nelson's Sharp-tailed Sparrow, and Bobolink; all were present in higher numbers than during the past few years.

CORMORANTS THROUGH FALCONS

A Double-crested Cormorant at Churchill, MB 15 Jun was a local rarity (BD, LB, LK). Only in Manitoba were rare waders reported, all at Whitewater L., where there were 2 Snowy Egrets 5 Jun (BD et al.), several Cattle Egrets in early Jun (m.ob.), and 4 White-faced Ibis 5-8 Jun (BD, DF, m.ob.). A concentration of 75+ Black-crowned Night-Herons there 8 Jun was also notable (DF); one at Churchill 16 Jun was the 2nd ever there (BD).

A Greater White-fronted Goose at Churchill 13 Jun was a locally rare migrant (RK et al.). Flocks of white geese at Churchill contained up to 40% Ross's Geese in early and mid-Jun (RK et al.). A Mute

Prairie Provinces



Swan at Buffalo Pound L., SK 8-11 Jul was unbanded and believed to be from a wild population (BL, DH, CB). Out-of-season Tundra Swans in Saskatchewan included 2 at the Clavet Mine ponds 23 Jul (where a pair bred last year) and 7 at Davidson 25 Jul (ML, GK). A pair of Wood Ducks near Lac la Biche, AB 19-20 Jun was well beyond normal range and may have bred locally (GN, RT). A count of 30+ Cinnamon Teal near Stavely, AB 12 Jun was high (TK). Also near Stavely was an odd-looking duck, believed to be a Northern Shoveler x teal hybrid, 26 Jun (TK). A pair of Harlequin Ducks near Churchill 8 Jun was at Goose Cr., an unusual location for the species (RK et al.). Ferruginous Hawks in sw. Manitoba had their highest productivity since monitoring started in 1987, with an average of 2.0 young raised to fledging in 44 nests (KD). A melanistic Prairie Falcon at Sheep River Valley, AB 2 Jun may be unprecedented (WS).

SHOREBIRDS THROUGH WOODPECKERS

Black-necked Stilts were widespread in s. Alberta, with 35 ads. and 3 juvs. at L. Newell, Brooks 8-9 Jul being the highest number reported (GN, RT). A pair of Lesser Yellowlegs at Shepard, near Calgary, AB 3 & 9 Jul appeared to be on territory, far s. of the usual breeding range (ph. TK). At the n. edge of their range were 10 Marbled Godwits near Athabasca, AB 2 Jul (DS). A count of 400 Wilson's Phalaropes at Clear L. near Stavely 26 Jun was high for the time of year (TK). A Red Phalarope in the Souris R. valley 24 Jul (CB) and a Parasitic Jaeger at Rafferty Dam 1 Jun (GM) were both Saskatchewan rarities. Churchill hosted a Great Black-backed Gull

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3 Jun (BFz) and 2 Black Terns 10 Jun (RK et al.).

Other than sightings at Mortlach, SK—now a traditional area—the only Eurasian Collared-Dove report, involving 2 probable birds, came from Fort Macleod, AB 27 Jun (TK). Common Poorwills reach the n. limit of their breeding range in and near Cypress Hills P.P., which straddles the Alberta-Saskatchewan border. With few if any observations in recent years, it was heartening to receive poorwill reports from both provinces this summer (DD, MO, BFw, BV, AH). Sightings included what may be the first confirmed Alberta nest, containing two eggs, on 22 Jul (MO, BV, BF). Chimney Swift sightings in Regina, SK in Jun were indicative of possible local breeding (m.ob.). Red-headed Woodpeckers made a strong showing in the w. parts of the Region, with reports

from Etzikom, Jenner, Onefour, Rosemary, and Wardlow, AB and from Eastend, Tyvan, and Val Marie, SK (m.ob.). A Downy Woodpecker in the Twin Lakes burn 18 Jun was a first for the Churchill area (BD, LB); on the same date, a Hairy Woodpecker was also there, a locally rare species noted in the area since at least 1999 (BD, LB, LK).

PASSERINES

An Olive-sided Flycatcher at Medicine Hat, AB 21 Jun was likely a late migrant (JM). Wandering Scissor-tailed Flycatchers reached Riding Mountain N.P., MB 9 Jun (BF et al., ph. NM) and the Wildhorse, AB area 6 Jul (DD, MO). A Loggerhead Shrike at Bow Valley P.P., near Camrose, AB was unexpected in the mountains (K&MB). An Eastern Bluebird at Medicine Hat 17 Jun was rare (JM), as was a Western Bluebird pair through the period near Coleman, AB (BP,

m.ob.). A Sedge Wren, very rare in s. Alberta, appeared to be on territory near Turner Valley 5 Jul (WS). Four Northern Mockingbird observations in Alberta (Banff N.P., Calgary, Millarville, and Rosemary) 2–19 Jun were more than usual (m.ob.). A belated report of a Sage Thrasher at the Clifford E. Lee Nature Sanctuary near Devon, AB 24 May involved a well-documented bird far n. of its usual range in the extreme se. of the province (C&MM, ph. CM).

Locally rare warblers included a Nashville at Churchill 4 Jun (BFz), a Black-throated Blue at Saskatoon, SK 1 Jun (MW, RJ), and a MacGillivray's at Regina 4 Jun (GK). A Scarlet Tanager at Moose Mountain P.P., SK 3 Jun was a good find (CL). Also of note were 6 Western Tanagers in s. Saskatchewan, s. and e. of the breeding range, 6 Jun–21 Jul (GT et al.), as were 7 extralimital Black-headed Grosbeaks in s. Alberta 3 Jun–4 Jul (m.ob.).

A Field Sparrow near Lauder, MB 16–24 Jul was seen by many (KD, m.ob., ph. CA). A Harris's Sparrow at Kleefeld, MB 22 Jun was out of season (C&LP). An Eastern Meadowlark was on territory at Ste. Genevieve, MB 2 Jun–3 Jul and possibly later (GB, m.ob.).

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State of the Region

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While the term "Prairie Provinces" reflects the importance of agriculture to the Regional economy, former or actual prairie occupies only about a fifth of this portion of western Canada, as defined by the Prairie Potholes Bird Conservation Region (BCR 11). Three forested BCRs are strongly represented in the three provinces: from southwest to northeast, they are the Boreal Taiga Plains (BCR 6), the Boreal Softwood Shield (BCR 8), and the Taiga Shield and Hudsonian Plains (BCR 7). Three other BCRs are marginally represented, namely the Boreal Hardwood Transition (BCR 12) in southeastern Manitoba, the Arctic Plains and Mountains (BCR 3) in a narrow coastal strip north of Churchill, Manitoba, and the Northern Rockies in southwestern Alberta (BCR 10). Some species approach their breeding range limits within these regions, thus adding substantially to the Prairie Provinces' overall biodiversity, but they are perhaps less significant from a continental perspective.

Without doubt, of all these ecoregions, the Prairie Potholes have seen the greatest changes since European settlement, and many bird populations have risen or fallen dramatically with the advance of the plough from the 1880s onward (Criddle 1929). Habitat alteration favored range extensions for a number of species (e.g., Mourning Dove, Barn Swallow, Western Kingbird), and some native grassland birds sustained high populations (e.g., Western Meadowlark, Savannah Sparrow). The fortunes of a few, such as the Greater Prairie-Chicken (now extirpated) and Black-billed Magpie (now common and widespread again), fluctuated immensely with changing agricultural practices (Houston 1977, 2002). For many species, however, suitable habitat has become increasingly fragmented, and their populations and breeding ranges have contracted sharply: Ferruginous Hawk, Burrowing Owl, Long-billed Curlew, Loggerhead Shrike, Sprague's Pipit, Lark Bunting, Baird's Sparrow, Chestnut-collared and McCown's Longspurs have all declined in the southern prairies. Fluctuations and longer-term cycles of water levels sometimes cause range limits to oscillate, masking long-term trends, but there is little question that all of these species have declined substantially.

Increasingly intensive agriculture, and especially the encroachment of cultivation onto vestigial prairie, have accelerated these declines to the point that some grassland birds—Burrowing Owl and Loggerhead Shrike are examples—may well disappear from one or more of the Prairie Provinces in the near future. Some other species, which were abundant until recently, are also now showing disturbing declines (e.g., Horned Lark, Upland Sandpiper). Bucking this trend are occasional success stories such as the re-

establishment of Ferruginous Hawks in southwestern Manitoba since the 1980s, and the ongoing, general success of nestbox projects for both Mountain and Eastern Bluebirds.

More mechanized farming methods often eliminate locally important areas for both breeding and migrant birds, such as road allowances and small woodlots, potholes, and marshy spots. Waterfowl and shorebirds, in particular, are adversely affected by increasingly aggressive water-management (mostly drainage) practices, though this is partly offset by a number of wetland restoration projects. Declines of many waterfowl species that raised concern in the mid-twentieth century have largely been stemmed or reversed, with a few disturbing exceptions, notably the sharp drop in scaup and scoter populations and the ominous northward retreat of White-winged Scoter's breeding range.

Bird population trends in the three forested BCRs are, with few exceptions, very difficult to evaluate. Human populations are sparse, access is limited, and historical information is scarce to non-existent, especially for small passerines. Furthermore, many of the permanent resident species (grouse, woodpeckers, owls) are difficult to monitor, and several have cyclic or fluctuating populations that make overall trends difficult to measure. Dramatic local changes in habitat and avifauna are evident from the piecemeal expansion of agriculture, mainly at the southern boundary of the Boreal Taiga Plains region, and from forestry activity that now extends well onto the Boreal Softwood Shield. Most of the accessible portions of these BCRs are mosaics of second-growth, and one can only speculate about bird populations in mature forest prior to European settlement. The regions are poorly represented in Breeding Bird Surveys, Christmas Bird Counts, and other surveys, but recent research indicates a general decline in species diversity at the southern fringe of the boreal forest (Cumming et al. 2001). There are concerns about the possible impacts of increasing resource extraction and recreational activities on bird populations, and these are addressed to varying degrees in development plans, but post-development surveys and long-term trends are usually lacking. There are fears, too, that boreal ecosystems are particularly vulnerable to ongoing climate change.

The Boreal Taiga Plains region includes a number of major lakes and associated waterbird colonies, some of which are globally important (Vermeer 1970). Populations of Double-crested Cormorants and American White Pelicans have increased dramatically from mid-twentieth-century lows, while most gulls, terns and other fish-eaters also appear to thrive (Koonz and Rakowski 1985). There is a politically difficult situation, however, with depressed lake fisheries—and with those who see the birds as being in conflict with their livelihood, who sometimes launch devastating raids on remote bird colonies (Koonz 1982, Hobson et al. 1989).

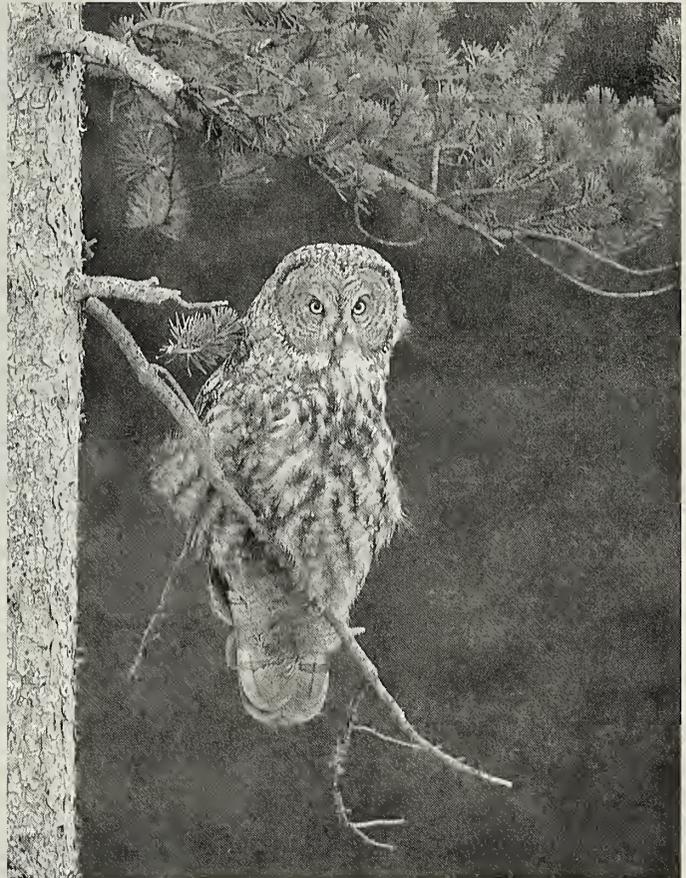
Because of the Churchill area's importance for ornithological research, as well as

being a major birding destination, population trends are better known for parts of the Hudson Bay coast than for the boreal forest (Jehl 2004). Evidently, this relatively remote region is not immune to change. Disturbing recent developments include dramatic declines in breeding numbers of Semipalmated Sandpiper and Lapland Longspur; it is unknown whether these are due to local climate change, to associated changes in vegetational communities, or to problems in these species' winter ranges or along migration routes. Also mysterious is the apparent, prolonged continent-wide decline of the Rusty Blackbird (Greenberg and Droege 1999), whose breeding range includes much of the northern Prairie Provinces.

In conclusion, true prairie ecosystems and their associated avifaunas are the most altered and vulnerable within the Prairie Provinces region, largely because of the continuing intensification of agriculture. Bird population data for most boreal forest species are too sparse to detect many significant trends, but perceived threats include expanding resource extraction and climate change. Colonial waterbird populations are currently healthy but are a controversial source of conflict with lake fishing interests. Even in the far north, some bird populations are declining and/or retreating for reasons that remain unclear but that appear to accord with models of global climate change.

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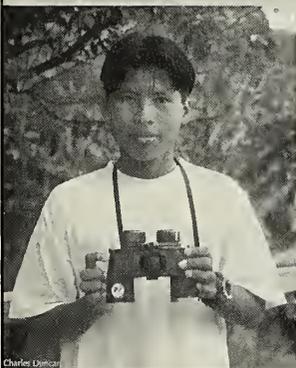


The term "Prairie Provinces" for Alberta, Saskatchewan, and Manitoba is somewhat misleading, as only about one-fifth of the provinces' land area was (or is) prairie. The rest is composed of a variety of forests, tundra, or wetlands. Perhaps no species is more emblematic of this wild northern country than Great Gray Owl, a species occasionally observed well south of the boreal forest during "flight" years. Photograph by Larry R. Lynch.

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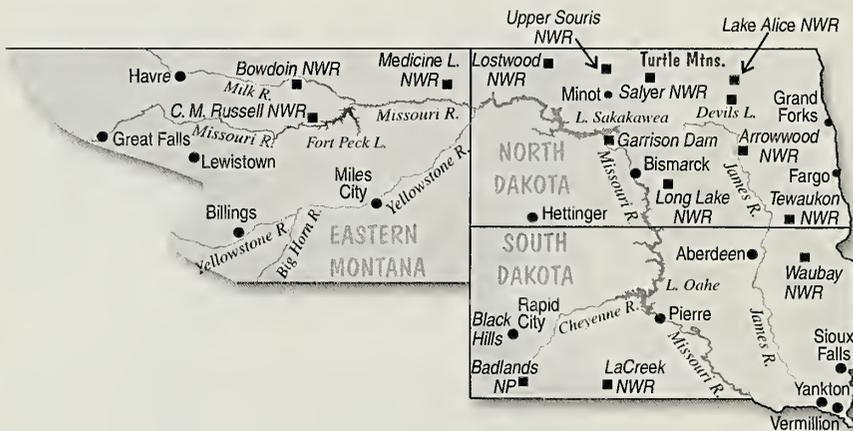


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Northern Great Plains



Bald Eagles continue to proliferate in the Dakotas. First county nestings were recorded for *Grand Forks*, ND 12 Jul (EEF, DOL) and in *Haakon*, SD 8 Jul (DB). Golden Eagles were noted nesting in *Morton*, ND 18 Jul, the first recorded nesting in cen. North Dakota in modern times (*vide* HCT). Merlins nesting in Fargo provided the first record for Cass, ND 7 Jul (DOL, KRC).

SHOREBIRDS THROUGH OWLS

A possible 6th record for Montana, a Snowy Plover was at Bowdoin N.W.R. 11 Jun (p.a., SJD). In South Dakota, a Mountain Plover was photographed 13 Jul in *Pennington* (p.a., BB, EC). This furnished the first record since 1977 and only the 2nd since 1950. A Whimbrel in *Kidder*, ND 6 Jun tied the latest date for a spring migrant in the state (p.a., GK, LK). A Hudsonian Godwit was at Freezeout Lake N.W.R. 21–25 Jul (p.a., BM); Montana records are now nearing 20.

Up to 2 Lesser Black-backed Gulls in Pierre, SD 1–20 Jun furnished the first summer records for the state (p.a., KM, RDO). Providing the first Jul and 2nd summer record for South Dakota, a Black-legged Kittiwake was seen in *Lawrence* 2 Jul (p.a., TJ, DGP); the bird was later found dead. The

first Jun record for North Dakota, an ad. Sabine's Gull was in *Grand Forks* 12 Jun (p.a., EEF, ph. BF).

White-winged Dove reports seem to be on the increase. This season, a single in *Phillips* 18 Jun would provide the 5th for Montana (p.a., SJD). Also in Montana, Eurasian Collared-Doves were recorded at five locations, with nesting confirmed in Miles City and Malta (LP, DP). The Barn Owl saga continued in the Region. After two reports this spring in North Dakota, another bird appeared in a Mandan yard 22 Jun (p.a., VG, ph. HCT).

Usually considered a rare summer resident in South Dakota, Barn Owls were detected nesting in an astounding nine locations along L. Oahe in *Sully and Hughes* (KM). Short-eared Owls were present in good numbers in North Dakota, w. South Dakota, and ne. Montana.

NIGHTHAWKS THROUGH KINGLETS

Several observers in Montana noted their first Common Nighthawks of the year from mid- to late June. A Ruby-throated Hummingbird in Malta 17 Jun was a very unusu-

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“Cool” was the operative word for the summer season. Glasgow, Montana saw its third coolest June on record, and Grand Forks, North Dakota marked the seventh coolest on record. July was also below average across most of the Region. Much of North Dakota saw frost in late June, with a low of 25° F in Hettinger. Precipitation was average in most areas, but southwestern North Dakota and western South Dakota remained dry. Rainfall was also well below average in northeastern North Dakota.

Vireo and warbler migration was still heavy the first week of June, and Common Nighthawks were very late moving into Montana. Several observers commented on the better-than-average shorebird migration. Nesting was generally very late, with many species still singing at the end of the period. Production was thought to be low for most passerines. Duck nesting was also late and not very productive in North Dakota. Changing water levels at Freezeout Lake National Wildlife Refuge in Montana resulted in almost total nesting failure for many waterbirds.



Providing only the sixth record for Montana, this Snowy Plover was photographed on 11 June 2004 at Bowdoin National Wildlife Refuge. The species may well have benefited from drought conditions in the West in recent years. Photograph by Stephen J. Dinsmore.

IBIS THROUGH RAPTORS

A Glossy Ibis 14–20 Jul at Freezeout Lake N.W.R. furnished the first record for Montana (p.a., JN, ph. MS). A Trumpeter Swan at the Hillsboro, ND sugar beet ponds 6 Jun continued the now regular sightings of this species in the state (ph. DOL). A bird thought to be a possible Cinnamon Teal x Mallard hybrid was documented 17 Jun in *Grand Forks* (EEF). Also in *Grand Forks*, a male Long-tailed Duck 7 Jun provided the 2nd summer record for North Dakota (p.a., EEF).

SA Chase Lake N.W.R. in *Stutsman*, ND is the site of the largest breeding colony of American White Pelicans in North America. Over a period of days early in the season, the entire population of 28,000 birds abandoned eggs and young and dispersed from the colony. The reason or reasons for this abandonment are still unknown.



This adult Sabine's Gull on 12 June 2004 at Grand Forks, North Dakota provided a first summer-season record for the state. Photograph by Bob Freeberg.



Sightings of Barn Owl appear to be on the increase in the Northern Great Plains region, much in contrast to the sharp decline of the species in the East. This bird was photographed 22 June 2004 in Morton County, North Dakota. Photograph by Clark Talkington.

al record for summer in Montana (p.a., EA). About the 9th report for South Dakota, a Calliope Hummingbird was in *Pennington* 19 Jul (p.a., JF, JB). Broad-tailed Hummingbirds were seen for the 3rd consecutive summer in the Black Hills, with three reports 7 Jun–17 Jul (JC, RDO).

A new high for North Dakota, 9 Olive-sided Flycatchers were in *Grand Forks* 3 Jun (EEF). Providing the 5th and 6th reports for Montana, **Great Crested Flycatchers** were near *Medicine L.* 27 May (p.a., SS) and at *Westby* 7 Jun (p.a., BM, MW). A Cassin's Kingbird in *Phillips*, MT 1 Jun was well n. of known breeding range (SJD). The 8th report for North Dakota, a Scissor-tailed Flycatcher was in *Stutsman* 21 Jul+ (p.a., RK, DNS, ph. REM). In South Dakota, a Scissor-tailed Flycatcher in *Custer* 3–21 Jul provided the 12th report for the state (p.a., TJ, m.ob.).

A Common Raven at *Medicine Lake N.W.R.* 17–18 Jul was far from known nesting areas (EM). Brown Creepers were feeding young at *Pierre* 12 Jun (KM); this constitutes the first nesting record for South Dakota away from the Black Hills. Blue-gray Gnatcatchers continue to increase in South Dakota. This summer, the species was found nesting in three of the four corners of the state. A first for *Roberts*, a nest was found 26 Jun (p.a., JSP). In *Union*, nesting was confirmed 20 Jul (DS), and the Black Hills got its long-awaited first nesting in *Custer* 17 Jul (p.a., JB, DGP). The 3rd nesting for North Dakota, **Golden-crowned Kinglets** were feeding young in *Ward* 18 Jun (p.a., REM).

THRUSHES THROUGH GROSBEEKS

A Wood Thrush 15 Jun along the *Tongue R.* in *Custer* would, if accepted, furnish the 5th record for Montana (p.a., JM). A Sprague's Pipit nest being monitored with a camera at *Bowdoin N.W.R.* was depredated by a Western Meadowlark (PG).

An Orange-crowned Warbler carrying food for young in the *Pembina Gorge* 20 Jul provided the first confirmed nesting for this locally fairly common species in North Dakota (DOL). Small numbers of Lark Buntings appeared ne. of the *Missouri R.* in North Dakota, and the species was noted in *Minnehaha*, SD 31 Jul (RD). Baird's Sparrows have begun to reoccupy areas in cen. and e. North Dakota where they had been absent during the recent wet years. Le Conte's Sparrows were noted in low numbers in North Dakota, but Nelson's Sharp-tailed Sparrows had another banner year. Just the 5th Jun report for North Dakota, a White-crowned Sparrow was at *Valley City* 23 Jun (JL). For the 3rd consecutive year, Blue Grosbeaks were found in *Emmons*, ND; a rare breeder in the state, 2 were noted 7 Jun (JM).

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This Scissor-tailed Flycatcher, in *Stutsman County*, North Dakota 21 July 2004 furnished only the eighth report of this species for the state and the first since 1998. Photograph by Keith Corliss.

State of the Region

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The Northern Great Plains may be divided into two ecoregions: the Prairie Potholes (BCR 11) of the eastern and southern portion of the Region, and the Badlands and Prairies (BCR 17) of the western and northern portions. Common to both ecoregions are grasslands—probably the least understood and least appreciated ecosystem in North America. While perhaps not as glamorous as rainforests, native grasslands contain a great diversity of plant and animal life. Most people have little firsthand experience with grasslands and their unique species and therefore lack understanding of the complex relationships that characterize this dynamic ecosystem.

In recent decades, grassland birds have declined more precipitously than any other group of North American birds. These declines are due to degradation, fragmentation, and outright loss of prairie by conversion to agricultural cropland. Large tracts of quality native grassland are rare in the eastern Dakotas, and these tracts are becoming increasingly uncommon in western areas due to conversion. Much of the native grassland that remains is highly degraded by overgrazing, excessive rest, fire exclusion, and tree expansion. Statistically, many acres of grassland exist in these areas, but much of this grassland is a product of reseeding efforts via the Conservation Reserve Program (CRP) of the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA). These grasslands are not, however, the same as native prairie.

It could be argued that the Conservation Reserve Program, begun in 1988, was the worst thing that could have happened to native grasslands. Until 2002, farmers could plow native grasslands, crop them for a few years, and then enroll them in the Program. The loss of native grasslands in this era is truly lamentable. These lands have, however, benefited wildlife and certain grassland passerines. Widespread breeders such as Savannah Sparrow, Grasshopper Sparrow, Le Conte's Sparrow, and Bobolink have shown signs of recovery in the Northern Great Plains since the advent of this program. At the southern edge of the Region, Dickcissels have also benefited. However, the lack of defoliation of these areas makes them undesirable to key endemic mixed-grass prairie species such as Ferruginous Hawk, Burrowing Owl, Sprague's Pipit, Baird's Sparrow, and Chestnut-collared Longspur. And now, in a twist of fate, even this habitat created by the CRP is threatened because Congress and the USDA may no longer fund the program at previous levels of support through the Farm Bill, which will be revisited in 2007.

An emerging threat to native grasslands is the recent arrival of genetically modified plants for use in the Northern Great Plains. Genetically modified dryland soybeans are now seeded directly into native sod in some areas and treated with herbicide. In addition, increases in the acreage of row crops like corn and soybeans in conventional farmland is also trending upward. While some grassland birds do use fields of small grains, these species seem to be absent in row-cropped areas. Changes in agricultural programs that encourage overproduction are needed to stem the tide of conversion that continues today.

The diversity of extant native grassland areas has also been reduced due to the con-

tinued decline of small colonial mammal populations. Burrowing Owls are now nearly extirpated east of the Missouri River, due (in part) to the extermination of Richardson's Ground Squirrels, on which they depend for breeding burrows. Similar declines have been noted west of the Missouri River due to the continued loss of Black-tailed Prairie Dog colonies.

An often under-appreciated threat to grassland birds is excessive rest of prairies. The northern prairies evolved with frequent disturbance by herds of large herbivores, as well as fire. Many of the sites managed for "wildlife" in the Northern Great Plains are misguidedly protected from both large grazers and fire. As a result, these sites are often characterized by expanses of matted, exotic grasses invaded by exotic trees and forbs. As such, these areas support few grassland birds. Even the wetlands in such areas support relatively little wildlife due to the choking influence of unchecked cattail growth.

Despite their small percentage in terms of land area in the plains, woodlands are also a critical topic when considering prairie ecosystems. Many plains people have a strange relationship with trees, including a perverse desire to plant them in habitats where they

do not belong and to destroy them in riparian areas where they are critical to migrant and nesting passerines. Many riparian areas in the Region are severely degraded, and the looming specter of tamarisk (salt cedar) only adds to the problem. As woody vegetation has expanded over prairie lands, we have created massive landscape-level changes. This landscape favors habitat generalists like Red-tailed Hawks and Great Horned Owls to the detriment of the mixed-grass species previously mentioned. These generalists were surely only a minor part of the original prairies but are now the dominant raptors in these communities. The trees not only fragment the prairie but also encourage the proliferation of mammalian predators that were not part of the original prairie landscape. This in turn leads to higher nest predation of grassland birds. To illustrate the threat of increased forestation on the prairie, consider that the number one habitat recommendation of Greater Prairie-Chicken researchers is to maintain large, treeless expanses of native prairie. Sadly, state and federal agencies encourage these tree expansion practices, paving the way for the creation of a poor copy of Ohio in the Great Plains.

There are, however, bright spots in this otherwise dismal picture. The model for grassland restoration and preservation pioneered by Karen Smith and the staff at Lostwood National Wildlife Refuge in northwestern North Dakota over the last 25 years offers hope for the acres that remain. The model they have created attempts to mimic the defoliation patterns of pre-European settlement. Using adaptive management, this model is now being modified regionally for application in other areas. The use of fire and cattle in this model has detractors in various environmental

and ranching groups, but attitudes are changing.

Another Regional bright spot is a conservation program entitled *Grasslands for Tomorrow*, supported by Ducks Unlimited member donations. The funds from this program are used by the U. S. Fish & Wildlife Service for grassland easements on private lands. The program pays ranchers to keep their land in native prairie and to refrain from converting it to cropland. This prairie not only supports the pothole-breeding species that hunters value but also the grassland species of concern to conservationists and birders. If funded sufficiently, this program has an excellent chance of preserving a way of life and a functioning grassland ecosystem for future generations. The ambitious goal of this program is to enroll 2.4 millions acres. Here is an opportunity for the birding community to step up and match the efforts of hunters by directly contributing to habitat conservation.

Perhaps the connotations of the word "conservation" are too passive. We must step forward and use the science and experience available to us. We cannot go on just documenting the declines and doing nothing because the available science does not give us the entire picture. *Action is the key.*



The Northern Great Plains is truly a realm of grasses, both native and exotic species. In recent decades, due to degradation, fragmentation, and conversion of prairie to farmland, grassland birds as a group have declined more precipitously than any other group of North American birds. Burrowing Owls (here in Valley County, northeastern Montana) are now nearly extirpated east of the Missouri River, due in part to the extermination of Richardson's Ground Squirrels, on which they depend for breeding burrows. Photograph by Stephen J. Dinsmore.

The persistent drought, coupled with a late, cool, and wet spring to our north, appear to have affected nesters both within the Region and beyond this season. Apparent nest failures in some plain-nesting pelicans and charadriiforms may have caused the higher concentrations of American White Pelicans, Marbled Godwits, and Franklin's Gulls observed away from nesting areas in July. In contrast, drought conditions may have benefited the dry-flats nesting plovers—Snowy and Piping—in Nebraska. But drought may also have caused a paucity of hummingbirds, which usually become more evident in the fall reporting season. In general, marsh birds were scarcer than in wet years but possibly more concentrated towards the southeastern reaches of the Region. Perhaps a pattern is the more evident summering in the Region by species that nest on the tundra or muskeg, e.g., Red-throated Loon, Harris's Sparrow.

Abbreviations: Hackberry (Hackberry Flat W.M.A., Tillman, OK); Harlan (Harlan County Res., Harlan, NE); McConaughy (L. McConaughy, Keith, NE); Quivira (Quivira N.W.R., Stafford, KS); Rainwater Basin (playa wetlands of s.-cen. Nebraska); Red Slough (Red Slough W.M.A., McCurtain, OK); Salt Plains (Salt Plains N.W.R., Alfalfa, OK).

LOONS THROUGH WATERFOWL

Nebraska's 4th spring Red-throated Loon in Scotts Bluff remained through 2 Jun, when it was mostly in alternate plumage (PEL, JO). Unexpected so far s. in summer was an Eared Grebe at Hackberry 18 Jul (JAG). The best count of Western Grebes this season was 1715 at McConaughy 19 Jun (SJD), a breeding location; most were probably non-breeders or failed breeders. Up to 7 Clark's Grebes were at McConaughy through 20 Jun (*vide* WRS). More American White Pelicans were in the Region this season, perhaps due to the nesting failures in North Dakota. About 1000 were reported in Nebraska (*vide* WRS), with 350–400 in Platte 19 Jun (TJW). A Brown Pelican at Harlan 20 Jun (ph. SJD) through 10 Jul (LR, RH) furnished the 6th documented Nebraska record, all in the period 12 May–10 Jul. Up to 2 Neotropic Cormorants were noted again this year in Coffey, KS 19 Jun (NL); up to 2 were at Hackberry, where also rare, 13–28 Jul (VF, m.ob.). The 21 Anhingas at Red Slough 13 Jul (DA, m.ob.) made an excellent tally, with one as far n. as Muskogee, OK 10 Jul (KMy).

A species rare and patchily distributed in the Region is Least Bittern; 2 were in Douglas, KS 20 Jun (DS) and 8–10 were at Red Slough 8–30 Jun (DA, m.ob.). Single Least were noted in Oklahoma 26 Jul (DMo) and Tulsa 13 Jul (JL, PS). Generally rare in the Region, presumed post-breeding Tricolored Herons included a single at Quivira 18 Jul

Southern Great Plains



(PJ) and up to 2 at Red Slough 21–27 Jul (DA, m.ob.); at least one pair continues to nest at Salt Plains (PJ, m.ob.), where juvs. were also noted (RS, JWA, JC, JS). Wandering northward was a first-year Yellow-crowned Night-Heron in Knox, NE 9 Jun, the 3rd for n. Nebraska (MB); 5 ads. were in Douglas, KS 20 Jun (DS) and 2 in Jefferson, KS 25 Jun (JB). Still amazing were the 321 White Ibis at Red Slough 13 Jul, the high count there for the season (DA). A single Glossy Ibis at Salt Plains 16 Jun (MK) was joined by 2 others 21 Jun (JWA, JC, JS, PJ), a lower total than expected there in recent years. With them were up to 2 birds judged to be Glossy Ibis x White-faced Ibis hybrids 21 Jun (JWA, JC, JS). Three *Plegadis* were at Red Slough on 10 Jun (DA). Unexpected in Kansas was a single Roseate Spoonbill at Quivira 22 Jul (TA, MRo), while Red Slough had 2–5 birds, the first 2 appearing 15 Jun (DA, m.ob.). As with White Ibis and Roseate Spoonbill, Wood Stork is expected in the Region only at Red Slough, where 14 arrived

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Snowy Plovers fared very well in the Southern Great Plains in summer 2004. This bird at Lake McConaughy, Keith County, Nebraska 19 June 2004 was one of at least 20 in the area, where at least three nests were discovered this season. Photograph by Stephen J. Dinsmore.

15 Jun and as many as 42 were present through 30 Jun (DA, m.ob.).

Red Slough also hosted 2–6 Black-bellied Whistling-Ducks through the period (DA, m.ob.); 2 straggled n. to *Sequoyah*, OK 2 Jun (LF). A small “Canada Goose” summering in *Clay* was identified as a Cackling Goose (JGJ), providing a first summer record for Nebraska. Mid-summer sightings of diving ducks away from their breeding ranges are few; these included a female Canvasback at McConaughy 19 Jun (SJD) and a Ring-necked Duck at Red Slough 21 Jun (DA, m.ob.). Quite unexpected in Jun, single Red-breasted Mergansers were in *Riley*, KS 9 Jun (DM), in *Shawnee*, KS 7 Jun (DM), and at Harlan 20 Jun (SJD).

RAPTORS THROUGH SHOREBIRDS

An Osprey in *Lincoln*, NE 23 Jul (TJW) was rather early. Mississippi Kites were breeding n. to *Johnson*, KS, with a single chick and 2 recently fledged young in late Jul (ML, MG). A female Northern Harrier was observed on mined land in *Linn*, KS 13 Jun (MM), possibly breeding there. Summer records of Sharp-shinned Hawk in c. parts of the Region are intriguing; singles were in *Nemaha*, NE 13 Jun (JSt) and at Red Slough 21 Jul (DA). A Broad-winged Hawk in *Ellis*, KS 25 Jul (PJ, GF) was likely an early fall migrant, also somewhat westerly. The Omaha, Nebraska Peregrine Falcons, Zeus and Amelia, fledged 3 young (JD); this same

pair has been present since 2000. A single Peregrine was in *Olathe*, KS for most of the summer (*vide* LM).

King Rails, relatively rare in the Region, were reported at Red Slough 30 Jun (an ad. with 4 imms.; DA) and at Hackberry 26 Jul (onc; DB, VF, JW). Common Moorhens were found only at Red Slough, where the peak count was an impressive 51 on 13 Jun (DA). Very exciting was the major increase in numbers of breeding Snowy Plovers at two major reservoirs in Nebraska, where drought conditions and irrigation draw-downs exposed extensive sandy flats. As many as 20 individuals and three or more nests were located at McConaughy (GW, *vide* SJD), with 2 pairs 20 Jun at Harlan (SJD). Record numbers of Piping Plovers were also at McConaughy this summer: 300+ individuals and 120+ nests were found (GW, SJD). At Harlan, five broods were present 20 Jun (SJD), and in *Scotts Bluff*, a pair had a nest 19 Jun (SJD). The “latest” spring date for Semipalmated Plover in Nebraska was established by 2–3 at McConaughy 19–20 Jun (SJD). Black-necked Stilt numbers are also increasing rapidly in the w. Sandhills of Nebraska, with about 55 individuals and eight breeding pairs, 6 confirmed with chicks, at several wetlands in *Sheridan* and *Garden* 3–5 Jun (JGJ). An additional two pairs of Black-necked Stilts bred in *Scotts Bluff*, NE, producing at least one brood (KD, PEL, JO,

AK). Other good stilt counts were up to 70 at Hackberry 25 Apr–5 Jun (L&MT, K&SM) and 17 in *Sheridan*, NE 5 Jun (JED). High counts of American Avocet were 300 in nw. *Garden*, NE 5 Jul (JGJ) and up to 73 at Hackberry 15 May–5 Jun (L&MT, JT).

Greater Yellowlegs at Salt Plains 21 Jun (JWA, JC, JS) and Harlan 22 Jun (G&WH) were about on time for first fall migrants; late for spring was one at Hackberry 5 Jun (L&MT). A good Willet count was 60 in s. *Sheridan*, NE 14 Jun (JED). A Spotted Sandpiper at Red Slough 6 Jul (DA) was a bit earlier than expected for fall migrants. An excellent tally was the 200 Long-billed Curlews in *Garden*, NE 12 Jul (JTo). A Long-billed Curlew dallied until 5 Jun at Hackberry (L&MT). Marbled Godwit may have suffered a serious setback in breeding within its normal range, as large numbers appeared in Nebraska beginning with 5 in *Garden* 9 Jun (CNK) and 18 in *Sheridan* 14 Jun (JED) and an amazing 186 at McConaughy 20 Jun (SJD, WRS, KN).

As always, sorting out the status of mid-summer shorebirds can be guesswork (i.e., late spring, early fall, or summer lingerer). Perhaps record late were 3 Semipalmated Sandpipers at McConaughy 19 Jun (SJD). The 3 Least Sandpipers at McConaughy 19–20 Jun (SJD) and one at Harlan 20 Jun (SJD) were probably southbound. Any White-rumped Sandpiper in the Region would seem more likely to be a late spring migrant: one in *Clay*, NE 26 Jun was extremely late, if northbound at all (JGJ). Also on the cusp of the migration seasons were single Baird’s Sandpipers at McConaughy and Harlan, an injured Pectoral Sandpiper at Harlan, 3 Stilt Sandpipers at McConaughy (and one injured at Harlan), and an alternate-plumaged ad. Long-billed Dowitcher at Harlan—all 20 Jun (SJD). An ad. Dunlin at Hackberry 11 Jul (L&MT) was likely a summer vagrant. Four Stilt Sandpipers at Hackberry 5 Jun (L&MT) were very late for Oklahoma. Rare were 5 Short-billed Dowitchers at Red Slough 21 Jul (DA, JSi, SJ). Unexpected were a Wilson’s Phalarope at Salt Plains 22 Jun (JWA, JC, JS) and 2 male Red-necked Phalaropes at McConaughy 19 Jun (SJD).

GULLS THROUGH HUMMINGBIRDS

Rare but regular, ad. Laughing Gulls were reported at Salt Plains 21 Jun (JWA, JC, JS), in *Scotts Bluff*, NE 18 Jun (WRS, KN), and at McConaughy 20 Jun (SJD, WRS, KN), the latter displaying to uninterested

Franklin's Gulls. As with white pelicans, Franklin's Gulls also appeared in unusual numbers in midsummer, indicative of failed breeding, with 730 at McConaughy 20 Jun (SJD). A single Franklin's Gull was unexpected in *Wagoner*, OK 27 Jun and 3 Jul (JWA). A first-alternate Bonaparte's Gull at McConaughy 19 Jun (SJD) was a potentially record-late spring date for Nebraska. The best count of California Gulls was from McConaughy, 21 on 20 Jun (SJD). Two Californians were in *Scotts Bluff*, NE 2 Jun (PEL, JO). An ad. Herring Gull at McConaughy 19 Jun was the first Nebraska record of an ad. during summer; it was accompanied by 5 juvs. (SJD, WRS, KN). Other summer surprises were a first-alternate Lesser Black-backed Gull at McConaughy 19 Jun (SJD, WRS, KN), and a much more surprising first-summer Great Black-backed Gull 15–16 May and 19–20 Jun (SJD, WRS, KN). Common Terns of uncertain status were a single in *Scotts Bluff*, NE 13 Jun (KD) and 7 at McConaughy 20 Jun (SJD).

A White-winged Dove, now passé in Oklahoma, was in *Sarpy*, NE 4–18 Jun (JA); 5 were reported in Kansas (*vide* LM). Black-billed Cuckoos, all from Nebraska, included singles at two different locations in *Lincoln* 5 & 9 Jun (TJW) and in *Dixon* (JJ). Rarely reported in se. Oklahoma, up to 2 Barn Owls were at Red Slough 21–27 Jul (DA, JP). The only reported Long-eared Owl nesting was in *Sheridan*, NE 7 Jun (Sjo).

The rarest bird of the summer had to be the female Magnificent Hummingbird photographed at the Dailey farm in *Chautauqua*, KS 11–18 Jul (M&EC, m.ob.), the 3rd for Kansas and the Region, all in the period 18 Apr–18 Jul (*vide* MT). Westerly were 2 Ruby-throated Hummingbirds in *Lincoln*, NE 9 May–13 Jun (TJW). The earliest Nebraska fall record for Broad-tailed Hummingbird was furnished by one in *Scotts Bluff* 16 Jul (KD). Rufous Hummingbirds appeared Regionwide in small numbers by late Jul; the earliest was in *Logan*, OK 22 Jul (BL).

PASSERINES

An apparent migrant Western Wood-Pewee was e. of typical range in *Scott*, KS 1 Jun (T&SS). Single Eastern Wood-Pewees in *Harlan*, NE 5 Jun (G&WH) and in *Furnas*, NE 10 Jul (LR, RH) were westerly, with one northwesterly in *Custer*, NE (TJW). Southeastern was a singing Least Flycatcher in *Saunders*, NE 19 Jun (CNK). A developing s. outpost for Willow Flycatcher is Red Slough, where 10 territories were mapped 6 Jul (DA, m.ob.) and two nests located. A migrant Willow Flycatcher appeared in *Blaine*, OK 27 Jul (JAG). An unexpected appearance of Say's Phoebe occurred in *Dixon*,

ne. Nebraska 9 Jul (JJ). Previous westward expansion of Great Crested Flycatcher in Nebraska had been along well-wooded riparian corridors, but several sightings in Jun were of birds using non-riparian shrub-woodland. There were 10 birds located in *Lincoln*, NE 5 Jun (TJW), 3 in *Franklin*, NE 6 Jun (LR, RH), and one in *Sheridan*, NE 9 Jun (CNK); a pair nested in *Scott*, KS (T&SS). Rare in extreme se. Oklahoma, 2–6 Western Kingbirds were in *McCurtain* through the period (DA, m.ob.). Scissor-tailed Flycatchers expanding northward into Nebraska included a pair nesting in *Gage* first noted 9 Jun (B&LP).

Cowbird trapping and prescribed burning in the Wichita Mts., OK has clearly created a haven for Black-capped Vireos; over 2000 pairs were estimated from this year's territory mapping (JAG, VF, SW, RW et al.); nevertheless, this remains essentially an isolated population. Bell's Vireo numbers in cen. Nebraska were excellent: 15 were in *Valley* 13 Jun (LR, RH), 12 singing males were in *Lincoln* 4 Jun (TJW), and 10 were in se. *Lincoln* 5 Jun (TJW). Late migrant or vagrant Plumbeous Vireos were in *Sioux*, NE 5 Jun and 26 Jul (HKH). Totally disoriented was a Blue-headed Vireo in *Osage*, OK 26 Jun (DH). At the edge of their expanding range in se. Kansas, 3 Fish Crows were in *Wilson* 14 Jul (GP, DS) and one in *Montgomery* 18 Jul (SS, MR).

A juv. Red-breasted Nuthatch with 2 ads. in *Cherry*, NE 12 Jun (KP) was the first breeding report there since 1980. Only the 2nd Jul record for Nebraska, a Ruby-crowned Kinglet was in *Sioux* 26 Jul (HKH). A Wood Thrush in *Ellsworth*, KS 26 Jun (MR) was quite far w. of the usual summer range, while the still far-out-of-range male Curve-billed Thrasher in *Sioux*, NE persisted into its 2nd year there (LFr, AK), this summer feeding Common Grackle and American Robin fledglings (LFr). Very rare during summer in Oklahoma were 2 Cedar Waxwings in *Delaware* 27 Jun (E&FH).

A Tennessee Warbler was tardy in *Washington*, NE 2 Jun (JTo). Extensive surveys of likely Cerulean Warbler breeding habitat in e. Nebraska yielded only 5–7 singing males, with only one female detected (WRS, BFH). A first-ever Jul record of Wilson's Warbler for Nebraska was furnished by one in *Sioux* 29 Jul (HKH). Although usually a late migrant in spring, a Canada Warbler in *Tulsa*, OK 22 Jun (JL, PS) was clearly pushing the limit.

Well w. of expected were up to 6 Scarlet Tanagers in *Osage*, OK 26 Jun (DH). Certainly westerly was an Eastern Towhee in *Lincoln*, NE 5 Jun (TJW). A Bachman's Sparrow at Red Slough 21 Jun (DA, M&LM) was a rare find there. Far from its taiga home, a singing Harris's Sparrow in a

Dixon, NE yard 23 Jun may have been the same bird as noted there 8 Jun 2003 (JJ). Was the Dark-eyed Junco eating spilled bird seed inside a Wal-Mart store in Omaha, NE from the winter through 22 Jun (DSt) part of a marketing ploy? Granivores (and not just House Sparrows and House Finches) are observed very commonly in such large "box" stores throughout the continent.

Westerly Rose-breasted Grosbeaks were in *Sioux*, NE 2 Jun (PEL, JO) and at a *Scotts Bluff* feeder—with a Black-headed Grosbeak family—24 Jul (KD). Quite unusual during summer was a Black-headed Grosbeak in *Oklahoma*, OK 26–27 Jul (TU). An easterly Lazuli Bunting (that appeared not to be of hybrid derivation) was in *York*, NE 19 Jun (LR, RH), and similarly "pure" Indigos were westward in *Dawes*, NE 22 Jun (SA) and *Scotts Bluff*, NE 17 Jul (AK). An excellent Bobolink count was of 125 in *Cherry*, NE 8 Jun (CNK), but plowing of Conservation Reserve grassland in *Dixon*, NE reduced numbers there (JJ). An early migrant slightly e. of usual, a Yellow-headed Blackbird was in *Tulsa* 13 Jul (PP). Also easterly was a black-backed male Lesser Goldfinch in *Sedgwick*, KS 25 Jul (BR); this form is reported more often in the Region than the green-backed form.

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State of the Region

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The Southern Great Plains Region receives 20–40 inches of rain per year and is thus largely dominated by grassland habitats, but among the states of Nebraska, Kansas, and Oklahoma there exists a remarkable diversity of both grassland and woodland habitats, represented by six ecoregions or Bird Conservation Regions (BCR). Sadly, most places in the Southern Great Plains have been so altered since the start of European settlement that relatively few carry traces of historical habitats. A Plains traveler of 150 years ago would have found broad horizons and remarkable abundances of wildlife: the seemingly limitless seas of grass were continuous across the major river systems in most western areas, with countless bison and prairie-chickens, unimaginably extensive prairie dog colonies, and inestimable numbers of spring migrant American Golden-Plovers and Eskimo Curlews. The Ozarks and Ouachitas of eastern Oklahoma (BCR 24, 25) were extensively forested, and Ivory-billed Woodpecker, Passenger Pigeon, and Carolina Parakeet were documented in the Region. Washington Irving, in *Crayon Miscellany* of 1835, commented on traveling for endless days in 1825–1826 through an incredibly dense maze of Post Oak and Blackjack scrub, only to break out onto treeless plains in what is now central Oklahoma. An early account from Kingfisher County, Oklahoma in the late 1800s commented on the harvest of riparian Cottonwood for firewood—and on the subsequent need to burn buffalo chips, after the Cottonwoods had been logged out.

The tall-grass prairies (BCR 22) that once dominated the eastern border of the Region have been largely converted to agricultural fields and grasslands of exotic species. Few intact patches of true tall-grass prairies exist, totaling less than 5% of past area, and what remains is severely fragmented. The prairie-chickens have been reduced to a tiny fraction of past abundance, while Henslow's Sparrows persist at perhaps 1% of historical populations. Likewise, the short-grass plains (BCR 18) on the western border of the Region and the central mixed-grass prairies (BCR 19) that cover most of the centers of Nebraska, Kansas, and Oklahoma are similarly fragmented and degraded, owing to intensive monocultural agriculture, especially wheat in western Kansas and cotton in western Oklahoma, and related development. That region's rich soils were swept away in the Dustbowl years of the 1930s, a devastating period for the biotic communities of the western Plains. Though awe-inspiring flocks of cranes, geese, and other transient and wintering species are still to be seen across the Region, gone, for the most part, are the Region's bison herds, while prairie dogs have been reduced to less than 2% of their original numbers. In the short-grass regions, with the decline of prairie dogs has come a comparable decline in raptors, especially prairie specialists such as Ferruginous Hawk, and also a near-eradication of Burrowing Owls, which rely on prairie dogs for burrows. Mountain Plover, Long-billed Curlew, McCown's Longspur, and Lark Bunting have also declined precipitously in these mixed-grass habitats: the early descriptions of the bunting's abundance defy imagining. The mixed-grass prairies farther east have also seen declines in representative breeding species such as Upland Sandpiper. Collectively, these ailing specialist species hint at larger problems for grassland ecosystems as a whole.

Grassland birds are clearly among the most imperiled of North American birds, as evidenced in the persistent and continuing declines of both Greater and Lesser Prairie-Chickens, both birds of truly open prairies. The issues they face are symptomatic of the general patterns of change occurring in the plains and prairies. Evolving in a system of endless grasslands, prairie-chickens could undertake mass local, even perhaps distant migrations in search of optimal habitat. Human encroachment now severely limits such movements. Both the increase in the human population and the changes in ownership patterns have fragmented suitable habitat, most of which is marginal to begin with. With more plots now falling under corporate ownership—where sterile, modern agriculture is a rule, and where such industries as pig and chicken farms have become vast assembly-line processes—prairie-chickens have declined or disappeared across many recent strongholds. In addition, center-pivot irrigation has made once inhospitable areas now suitable for more intensive agriculture, with its broad application of pesticides, rodenticides, herbicides, and fertilizers. The range-wide decline of Loggerhead Shrike is poorly understood, but some researchers attribute it to this chemical manipulation of the landscape for agriculture. Though hardly common here, Loggerhead Shrike's stronghold lies arguably in the plains and prairies.

Another insidious factor in the decline of these flagship prairie species is woody encroachment, a consequence of fire suppression. In addition, the continuing increase and expansion of junipers, essentially weed species in this environment, can convert prairie to cedar-brake in a generation. Fire suppression also allows junipers to encroach and to dominate in cross-timber habitats, where the junipers replace fire-adapted scrub oaks capable of regenerating from their rootstocks after a wild fire. Even the oaks now reach heights probably not maintained in recent historical times. While this encroachment may benefit the spread of some woody and scrubland bird species, fire suppression has also played a prominent role in the decline of the very local Black-capped Vireo in BCR 21 (Oaks and Prairies) of central Oklahoma—an endangered species whose populations are reduced but now stable in Oklahoma but extirpated from Kansas. Along the Platte River, and possibly other river corridors in the Region, fire suppression has resulted in cottonwood encroachment along river banks, with a resulting loss of shallow wetlands that are used by migrating Whooping Cranes and other wetland species.

But the inverse of fire suppression is perhaps a more immediate threat to prairie-chickens and other species: the recent practice of intensive spring burnings and cattle-stocking in the Flint Hills and Osage Plains of Kansas, described in a recent article in this journal (*N.A.B.* 56: 239–244), has clearly caused prairie-chicken populations to plummet in their stronghold. *The decline in prairie*

species on land used in this manner demands immediate action by conservation organizations: the Flint Hills, for instance, contain the largest remaining tract of tall-grass prairie.

The recent construction of wind-farms presents another potential threat to prairie birds. The understanding of wind-farms' impacts on birdlife is still developing, but such farms are already recognized as disruptive and detrimental to prairie-chickens' reproductive success. Their prominence in some of the highest terrain and most wind-swept areas also poses potential threats to foraging raptors and to many migrating birds, particularly those that fly close to the surface, such as some shorebirds, waterfowl, and Franklin's Gulls. At under 400 feet tall, they probably pose much less threat to nocturnal migrants than do the proliferating television, cell-phone, and radio towers, although they occur in conglomerates numbering several hundred. More research is needed to determine the impacts of such "green" technologies on prairie birds, but it is clear that such wind-farms should never be placed in ecologically sensitive areas.

Water bodies, once rare in this relatively dry Region, now collectively surpass even the 10,000 lakes of Minnesota, but the increase in artificial lakes and reservoirs has come at the great expense of native riparian habitats in many areas. Overall, as is true over most of the West, issues of water use and allocation are currently—and will continue to be—contentious matters on the western Great Plains. For instance, the re-licensing of power production at Kingsley Dam, which impounds Lake McConaughy in Nebraska, has taken many years, the main sticking points being allocation of impounded water between recreation, wildlife, and agriculture, with control of stream flows paramount. The regulation of water flows on the Platte River in Nebraska is currently a hotly debated topic. High spring flows scour the main channel, leaving sandbars for nesting Piping Plovers and Least Terns and roosting Sandhill Cranes. But a myriad of demands for this water supply, from irrigation to recreation needs, dampens flows. The result is a loss of critical habitat, which is particularly acute in drought years. Some reservoirs, of course, create major and significant new habitats for a great variety of waterbirds and shorebirds, even marsh birds. Tenkiller Lake in eastern Oklahoma has become a virtual Mecca for loons, where four species now normally winter. And even the dynamics of drought in such environments can have positive impacts, as on numbers of Piping Plovers and Snowy Plovers in the Region, where the drying flats around reservoir beds create expanses of important breeding habitat.

One cannot, finally, summarize conservation issues on the Plains without raising the complex matter of cowbirds and other icterids. The historical stronghold for the cowbird has been the Great Plains; when the Plains teemed with bison, the cowbirds followed these nomadic herds. The conversion of most of the Region's prairies to agricultural lands—with essentially sedentary cattle and other livestock, as well as an abundance of grain—has made the cowbirds' modern environment more predictable, widespread, and constant. The result has been that their practice of brood parasitism, once more localized, has become widespread, to the detriment of many prairie species. Most readily noted in this context is the decline in Black-capped Vireo (with its very limited range), but Bell's Vireo and Orchard Oriole have also declined, while some species such as Prairie Warbler have become more restricted in range. Other icterids such as Common and Great-tailed Grackle have increased or invaded; both depredate significant numbers of nests, possibly limiting some marshland birds (e.g., Least Bitterns) in the case of the large Great-tailed.

Although all of the issues mentioned in this overview are far more complex than can be countenanced here, the conservation priorities for this three-state Region could not be clearer: to preserve existing native grasslands and prairie, and to restore as much agricultural and other degraded land to native habitat as possible, so as to ensure the survival of prairie birds into the future.



A flagship species of the short-grass prairies, Lesser Prairie-Chicken (here near Arnett, Oklahoma) has declined in number an estimated 97% since the nineteenth century; from 1963 to 1980, the global population—now restricted to fragments of habitat in Kansas, Oklahoma, Colorado, New Mexico, Texas—declined by 78%, and most remaining birds are on private land. The High Plains Partnership for Species at Risk has tried to create voluntary grassland restoration projects to benefit this and other species, and The Nature Conservancy recently purchased the Creamer Ranch in New Mexico, with 40 leks of the species, which is listed as "Vulnerable" to extinction by BirdLife International. Photograph by Joseph A. Grzybowski.

The summer of 2004 was generally a wet and cool one in Texas, particularly in June, although July was much drier in the eastern portions of the state. Much of the western part of the state that has experienced drought conditions over the past several years saw a return to normal precipitation patterns, and some areas saw rainfall amounts well above the norm. As a result, there were reports of tremendous breeding success in most areas of the state, and particularly so in the Trans-Pecos and South Texas.

Many of the rarities of the spring remained into the summer season, including the United States' first Black-headed Nightingale-Thrush. Following the spring record of Greater Flamingo on the upper coast, another was discovered near Port Isabel. This marks the third year out of four that one or more flamingos have been documented along the Texas coast. One has to wonder how many others have been around, with over 500 km of coastline and thousands of hectares of inaccessible habitat available.

Abbreviations: T.B.R.C. (Texas B.R.C.); U.T.C. (Upper Texas Coast). The following are shortened names for the respective local, county, state, or national parks, and wildlife refuges, etc.: Anahuac, Bentsen, Big Bend, Big Bend Ranch, Buffalo Lake, San Bernard, and Santa Ana.

LOONS THROUGH STORKS

Providing a rare summer record was a Pacific Loon in Matagorda Bay, *Calhoun* 1 Jun–8 Jul (BFR). A Least Grebe at Brazoria N.W.R., *Brazoria* 23 Jul (DJa) was further evidence that this species is now an annual visitor to the U.T.C. Far more unusual was a nesting pair of Least Grebes at Richland Creek W.M.A., *Freestone* 1 Jun+ (CLa). This pair produced two broods, with eggs in one nest while still caring for the 5 chicks produced in the first clutch (HH, JGu et al.). A concentration of 40 Pied-billed Grebes at the Abilene W.T.P., *Callaghan* 31 Jul (LBI) included many juvs., providing a first nesting record for the county. Out-of-place Eared Grebes included single breeding-plumaged birds at Granger L., *Williamson* 15 Jun (TFe) and Temple, *Bell* 22 Jun (RPi). Also of interest were up to 30 Eared Grebes through the period at McNary Res., *Hudspeth*, where breeding was anticipated but never materialized (JPa).

The 16 Jul pelagic trip out of South Padre I., *Cameron* produced 71 Cory's Shearwaters and 36 Band-rumped Storm-Petrels (JA, BMc et al.), both good counts for Texas waters. With the recovery of Brown Pelicans along the Texas Coast, inland wandering individuals have become expected during the summer, but totally unprecedented was an apparent flock of 35 over L. Belton, *Bell* 6 Jul (RKO). A Brown Pelican on L. Arlington, *Tarrant* 26 Jul (*vide* GK) was well n. of the normal dispersal pattern.

Texas



Neotropical Cormorants again nested in El Paso, but this year's 15 nests represented a considerable increase. This species continues to increase during the summer on reservoirs in cen. and n.-cen. Texas, with numerous birds present in *Bell* 15 Jun–31 Jul (RPi, RKO) and at scattered locations n. of there, including 2 at Millers Creek Res., *Baylor* 18 Jul (BG, GCo) that provided a first county record. Unexpected summer records of Double-crested Cormorant were provided by singles at Galveston Bay, *Galveston* 18 Jun (WB) and Stillhouse Hollow L., *Bell* 4 Jul (RPi). The numbers of Magnificent Frigatebirds present on the U.T.C. have increased dramatically in recent years, as evidenced by 75–100 at Smith Pt., *Chambers* and 200+ in Galveston Bay during the season (WB).

Two sightings of American Bittern were of particular interest, one at Hornsby Bend, *Travis* 6 June (J&AB) and another at Anahuac N.W.R., *Chambers* 26 Jun (KA), where the species nested last year. The Great White Heron at Texas City, *Galveston* was last report-

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ed 21 Jun (*vide* SL). A first for the Panhandle was a nesting pair of Great Egrets in Amarillo, *Potter* (KS): two pairs were discovered 28 Jul, including one bird apparently brooding; by 10 Aug, the nest contained two young. The closest known breeding locations for this species are approximately 320 km away. Snowy Egrets were unusually common on the South Plains, with a high count of 37 at Lubbock 12 Jul, while 14 near Idalou, *Lubbock* during the period were thought to be nesting (AF et al.). Noteworthy Panhandle heron sightings included a Little Blue Heron in *Briscoe* 21 Jul (JST), a Tricolored Heron near Middle Water, *Hartley* 3 Jul (SC, MR ph.), and a Yellow-

crowned Night-Heron at Canyon, *Randall* 19 Jul (JJ). Three Tricolored Herons were noted at Richland Creek W.M.A., *Freestone* 19 Jun (PB), with one lingering until 25 Jul (DDC, DL et al.). Providing possible evidence of local breeding, imm. Black-crowned Night-Herons were found in Salado 15 Jun and at nearby Temple, *Bell* 28 Jun and 15 Jul (RPi). Yellow-crowned Night-Heron discoveries of note included one in *Baylor* 18 Jul (BG, GCo) and 2 at McNary Res., *Hudspeth* 23 Jul (VE, BZ). A very early wandering White Ibis was Hagerman, *Grayson* 8 Jun (LL, m.ob.). White-faced Ibis were surprisingly numerous on the South Plains this season, with scattered sightings over much of the area and high counts of 36 near Olton, *Lamb* and 54 at Idalou, *Lubbock* (m.ob.). Early inland wandering Roseate Spoonbills included one at Waco, *McLeiman* 13 Jun (AJ) and 5 at Richland Creek, *Navarro* 19 Jun (PB). A total of 125 Wood Storks at Brazoria N.W.R. 6 Jun was a high total for so early (TC), as were 40 at Richland Creek 19 Jun (PB). On the heels of the spring U.T.C. record, another Greater (Caribbean) Flamingo was at the Bahia Grande (near Port Isabel), *Cameron* 24 Jun–29 Jul (JFr, †m.ob.).

WATERFOWL THROUGH FALCONS

Black-bellied Whistling-Ducks established themselves in *Grimes* for the first time this summer: up to 7 appeared regularly near Bedia (BC); the only prior county record is a single bird found on last winter's C.B.C. The Long-tailed Duck that spent the winter and spring at Amarillo, *Potter* was seen again 12 Jun (BPi). As usual, there were a few summering *Aythya* around, including a Canvasback at Meadow L., *Williamson* 24 Jul (KM) and single Lesser Scaup at McNary Res., *Hudspeth* 11 Jun (JPa) and Richland Creek W.M.A., *Freestone* 19 Jun (PB). Up to 100 Ruddy Ducks were at McNary Res. through the period, but breeding was not confirmed there (JPa).

Single Ospreys provided unexpected summer records near Fort Davis, *Jeff Davis* 10 Jul (JK, JMu), L. Amistad, *Val Verde* 28–29 Jul (JMu), L. Somerville, *Burleson* 20 Jul (CLi), and L. Buchanan, *Llano* 30 Jul (TFe). A Swallow-tailed Kite in *Bastrop* 18 Jul (SH, DD) was at the w. edge of the typical migration path. Mississippi Kites again had a very good breeding season in the Central Brazos Valley, with many nesting pairs discovered in *Brazos* and *Washington* (m.ob.) and a few to the s. in *Austin* (SR, BiB, WM). Also noteworthy was a single Mississippi Kite at L. Somerville, *Lee* 19 Jun (CLi) and a nesting pair at *Bastrop*, *Bastrop* (DR). A rare breeder on the U.T.C., Northern Harriers nested on w. Galveston I., *Galve-*

ston, producing 4 young (JSt). Also of note were single Northern Harriers near Wills Pt., *Van Zandt* 6 Jun (DDC) and Marathon, *Brewster* 19 Jun (BSt). Nesting records of Cooper's Hawks this season included one near Garrison, *Nacogdoches* (JPD, m.ob.), only the 2nd for the Pineywoods in 30 years, as well as at White Rock L., *Dallas* (KC, m.ob.) and *Denton* (PP), where the species was only confirmed as a



Band-rumped Storm-Petrel appears to be the most common storm-petrel species in the Gulf of Mexico. This Band-rumped was one of 36 seen in deep water east of South Padre Island, Texas 16 July 2004. Photograph by John Arvin.

nester in n.-cen. Texas last year. That Common Black-Hawk again nested at Rio Grande Village, *Brewster* is not news, but that they successfully fledged 2 young (MF) was very noteworthy, as one fledgling is more the norm for this species, and this pair has not always been productive. Broad-winged Hawk is a rare



Furnishing one of only four records of Tricolored Heron for the Texas Panhandle, this bird was found on a small pond near Middle Water, Hartley County on 3 July 2004. Photograph by Martin Reid.

breeder on the U.T.C. w. of Beaumont, so one at Jesse Jones Park, *Harris* 5 Jun (LO et al.) and 2 ads. over the Cypress G.C., *Harris* 10 Jul (WN) were of interest. Following the trend of recent years, ad. light-morph Short-tailed

Hawks were present at Bentsen, *Hidalgo* 19 Jun (†BSu) and Santa Ana, *Hidalgo* 20 Jun–4 Jul (ph., †BSu, DJo). There were numerous Swainson's Hawks sightings suggestive of local breeding in the Blackland Prairies area from *Bell* and *Williamson* s. to *Guadalupe* (TFe et al.). Also of interest were single Swainson's near Chappell Hill, *Washington* 20 Jun (DVo) and *Waller*, *Waller* 28 Jul (FC). An American Kestrel at Austin, *Travis* 14 Jul (CS) was well away from any known breeding areas. Peregrine Falcon is certainly breeding in the Franklin Mts, *El Paso*, where 2 ads. were present 20 Jun (BZ) and another was at nearby Ft. Bliss 30 Jul (BZ). Odd summer sightings of Peregrines included singles in *Floyd* 10 Jul (AF, AH), *Swisher* 11 Jul (JST), and at Balmorea, *Reeves* 26 Jun (ML, JPa). Single Prairie Falcons in *Randall* 22 Jul (KS) and *Bailey* 31 Jul (AF, BPh, LV, HWu) were also unexpected.

QUAIL THROUGH TERNS

Three quail identified as Montezuma Quail were sighted near Panther Junction in Big Bend 6 Jul (MPa), providing one of the very few reports for the park since the failed 1983 reintroduction attempt. Apparently healthy Sandhill Cranes were noted at Cactus L., *Moore* 19 Jun (BPi) and near Round Top, *Fayette* throughout Jul (GS). A Black-bellied Plover at Fort Hancock, *Hudspeth* 27 Jul (JPa) was a Jul first for the El Paso area. Snowy Plover is not known to breed in n.-cen. Texas, so 3 discovered at Millers Creek Res., *Baylor* 18 Jul (BG, GCo) were of particular interest. Twelve ad. and 5 juv. Black-necked Stilts at Millers Creek Res. 18 Jul (BG, GCo) provided a first breeding record for the county. A Willet on the Katy Prairie, *Waller* 19 Jun (BH) seemed out of place, as were early migrants near Floydada and South Plains, *Floyd* 9 Jul (JST). Either a very late migrant or a summering bird, an Upland Sandpiper was in *Williamson* 15 Jun (TFe). Summer sightings of Spotted Sandpiper included 2 at Muleshoe N.W.R., *Bailey* 17 Jul (BBe), 2 in *Lubbock* 18 Jul (BBe), and one at different *Lubbock* location 24 Jul (EM). Two Whimbrels spent the summer at Bolivar Flats, *Galveston* 19 Jun+ (JGr), an unusual occurrence. Long-billed Curlews were found at Fort Hood, with one in *Coryell* 22 Jun (SJ) and 3 in *Bell* 5 Jul (JR), both providing first summer records for the military base. Large gatherings of Long-billed Curlews in the Panhandle included 510 in *Deaf Smith* 2 Jul, with 459 at the same location 3 Jul and 560 still present 12 Jul (JST). Providing only the 2nd Jul sighting for the South Plains, a Marbled Godwit was near Hale Center, *Hale* 7 Jul (JST), and another ear-

ly migrant was at L. Belton, *Bell* 14 Jul (GCr). A good find was a Red Knot at Cactus L., *Moore* 20 Jul (KS). Semipalmated Sandpipers are always nice finds in the Trans-Pecos, and this season found singles at McNary Res. 23 Jul (VE, BZ) and Ft. Bliss 30 Jul (JPa). Five Least Sandpipers at Port Arthur, *Jefferson* 13 Jun (JW) were either late or spending the summer. Five White-rumped Sandpipers at Boca Chica Beach, *Cameron* 19 Jun (JA) were presumably very tardy migrants. Although alternate-plumaged Dunlin have been noted in previous summers, 20 at Bolivar Flats, *Galveston* 10 Jul was remarkable (CTL). A Stilt Sandpiper at Beaumont, *Jefferson* 13 Jun was late (John Whittle). A Wilson's Snipe at the Katy Prairie, *Waller* 19 Jun (BH) was the first summer sighting for the U.T.C.

Laughing Gull is a very rare but annual visitor to the Trans-Pecos in summer, and this year's singles were at Balmorhea L., *Reeves* 27 Jun (RKO et al.) and at McNary Res. 23 Jul (VE, BZ). Two Franklin's Gulls were at Granger L., *Williamson* 15 Jun (TFe), and one was noted at Hornsby Bend, *Travis* 21–24 Jul (RKA, LF), both surprising summer records. A very early arriving Ring-billed Gull was at Sikes L., *Wichita* 25 Jul+ (TMc, JMc). A first-summer Lesser Black-backed Gull at Bolivar Flats, *Galveston* 10 Jul+ (ph. CTL) represented the first summer-season record for Texas. A Caspian Tern on L. Livingston, *Polk* 15 Jun (CS) was early, and 2–8 on Gibbons Creek Res., *Grimes* 11–31 Jul (DPH) was a very good count. Common Terns of note included 3 at Lubbock 5–6 Jun (AF, JBr) and one at Gibbons Creek Res., *Gibbons* 31 Jul (DPH). There was a spate of summer records of Forster's Tern around the state, including singles at L. Somerville, *Burleson* 19 Jun (CLi), near Cotton Center, *Hale* 7 Jul (JST), at L. Sweetwater, *Nolen* 24 Jul (JaP, LP), at L. Fort Phantom, *Jones* 25 Jul (LBI), at Lewisville L., *Denton* 29 Jul (KL), with 2 at Sikes L., *Wichita* 25 Jul (JMc). There were several interesting sightings of Least Terns in n.-cen. Texas: 2 at Richland Creek W.M.A., *Freestone* 19 Jun (PB), one at L. Waco, *McLennan* 24 Jun (EH), 2 at Dundee State Fish Hatchery, *Archer* 18 Jul, 9 at Iowa Park, *Wichita* 18 Jul (BG, GCo), and one at Lewisville L., *Denton* 29 Jul (KL). Four Black Terns were at Benbrook L., *Tarrant* 25 Jun (DPo), most unexpected in summer there. A Bridled Tern was seen on the 16 Jul pelagic out of South Padre I. (BMC et al.). Up to 6 Sooty Terns were regularly seen in Matagorda Bay, *Calhoun* 26 Jul+ (BFR).

PIGEONS THROUGH WOODPECKERS

Perhaps the most astounding record of the sea-

son was the single Band-tailed Pigeon at Mont Belvieu, *Chambers* 2 Jun (ph. BPe), providing the 2nd record for the U.T.C. For reasons that are not readily apparent, Greater Roadrunners were reported with much greater frequency in the Central Brazos Valley than in previous seasons, and a single individual was near Hagar, *Waller* 24 Jul (FC), providing just the 3rd



Prior to the discovery of this first-summer Lesser Black-backed Gull at Bolivar Flats, Galveston County 10 July 2004 (here), there were no summer-season records of this species for Texas. Photograph by Gin-Ty Lee.

county record. What was believed to be a Northern Pygmy-Owl was heard calling in the Guadalupe Mts., *Culberson* 24 Jul (†RKO, BBe); surprisingly, Texas has just two well-documented records. Ferruginous Pygmy-Owls appear to be recolonizing the cen. Low-



This female Red Crossbill was discovered in a yard in Seguin, Guadalupe County, Texas on 1 June 2004. Its plumage was heavily worn, so much so that it could no longer fly; it was brought to a wildlife rehabilitator. Photograph by Greg Lisciandro.

er Rio Grande Valley; in addition to the birds that have been present at Bentsen S.P. for the past two years, another pair was at nearby Chihuahuas Woods Preserve, *Hidalgo* (JA). Up to 12 Burrowing Owls at a Prairie Dog town in *Archer* 18 Jul (BG, GCo) was a high number for that area. Only the 2nd reported nesting for the Panhandle, a Barred Owl nest with one young was discovered in *Donley* 5 Jun (BPI). The only Broad-billed Hummingbirds found this season were at the same location: an ad-

female was in the cen. Davis Mts, *Jeff Davis* 29 Jun+ and was joined by an imm. female 25 Jul+ (M&ME et al.). A female White-eared Hummingbird was also there 21–30 Jul (†M&ME, RPi). A Buff-bellied Hummingbird along Caney Cr., *Matagorda* 12 Jun (DS) was well e. of the known breeding range, while another in *Austin* 24 Jun (SR, BiB) was equally out of range but in an area where the species has been found regularly in recent years. Ad. male Allen's Hummingbirds appeared in *Hays* 19 Jul+ (ph. SS) and the Davis Mts. 25 Jul+ (M&ME, ML et al.). A Red-headed Woodpecker in Lubbock throughout the season (JST et al.) and another near Texline, *Dallam* 3 Jul (SC, MR) were well out of range. Up to 4 Hairy Woodpeckers were at the Plano Outdoor Learning Center, *Collin* during Jun (PA). Pileated Woodpeckers were noted near Hempstead, *Waller* 17 Jul (DVo) and in ne. *Waller* 24 Jul (FC), a county where the species is inexplicably rare.

FLYCATCHERS THROUGH JAYS

Two male Olive-sided Flycatchers were vigorously singing in the cen. Davis Mts. 4 Jun (KB, ML, DaP), hinting at possible breeding. A notoriously late migrant, single Western Wood-Pewees were at Buffalo Lake, *Randall* 6 Jun (KS) and near Texline, *Dallam* 12 Jun (BPI). A solitary Eastern Wood-Pewee was along the Lampasas R. near Belton, *Bell* 11 Jul (RPi), where the species is not known to nest. An apparently late migrating Willow Flycatcher was discovered near Texline, *Dallam* 8–12 Jun (LSa, BPI), but no evidence of nesting could be discovered. A very late migrant Least Flycatcher was at Plano, *Collin* 17 Jun (PA), while one on w. Galveston I. 15 Jul (JSt) tied the early fall date for the U.T.C. Very early records for migrant *Empidonax* were provided by a Dusky Flycatcher at Ft. Bliss, *El Paso* 31 Jul (JPa, BZ) and a Cordilleran/Pacific-slope Flycatcher at the same location on 30 Jul (BZ); both provided first Jul records for the El Paso area. Buff-breasted Flycatchers once again nested at the Davis Mts. Preserve, with the nest located 10 Jun (KB) and 3 young fledged by early Jul. Interestingly, the pair moved 1.1 km from the location where the male was initially located during the spring; and perhaps equally surprisingly, only one pair has been found. Errant nesting Eastern Phoebe have been found in the Palo Duro Canyon S.P. of late, and this year four pairs nested (KS). Summer records of Eastern Phoebe in the cen. Brazos Valley continue to increase: this season, four singles were located in *Madison* and four others in *Walker* on a single B.B.S. route 20 Jun (DVo). Always a welcome sight, a Vermilion Flycatcher was near Shallowater, *Lubbock* 17 Jul (AF, AH), and

a pair was in *Archer* 18 Jul (GCo, BG), where nesting was suspected. The Dusky-capped Flycatchers reported during the spring at Big Bend remained until 17 Jul (m.ob.), although it is not clear that a pair was present during the summer. Two territorial male Dusky-capped Flycatchers were located in a remote canyon on the Davis Mts. Preserve, *Jeff Davis* 15 Jun (†KB, DaP et al.), and further investigation on 5 Jul revealed *three pairs* were present (†KB, ML)—an unprecedented occurrence in Texas.

It was a banner year for Great Kiskadee on the U.T.C., with 3 each in Port Arthur, *Jefferson* 27 Jul (CW) and in Baytown, *Harris* 29 Jul (HT, DCo), while 2 others continued through the period on the Katy Prairie, *Harris*. A very early migrant Cassin's Kingbird was found near Shallowater, *Lubbock* 17 Jul (AF, AH). A female Rose-throated Becard was observed briefly at Santa Margarita Ranch, *Starr* 6 Jun (†JA). A Yellow-throated Vireo at Big Bend's Boot Spring 29 Jun–21 Jul (T&BS, ML, BZ) provided a very unexpected first summer record for the park, as did a Red-eyed Vireo at Cottonwood Campground 20 Jul (VE, BZ). Two male Yellow-green Vireos were discovered at Sabal Palm Sanctuary, *Cameron* 7 Jun+ (†JA, m.ob.); at least one attracted a mate and successfully nested. Two imm. Green Jays made an unlikely appearance in Pasadena, *Harris* 29 Jul+ (HT, DCo). This species has been reported in this area several times over the past few years, and many believe the source of these birds to be a nearby flea market, where Green Jays have previously been for sale. The pair of Tamaulipas Crows and one fledgling that had been reported in the spring from Brownsville, *Cameron* remained in the area until 27 Jul (JO, m.ob.).

SWALLOWS THROUGH WARBLERS

Tree Swallows again nested at Granger L., *Williamson*, with 21 juvs. present 15 Jun (TFe). Cave Swallows were discovered occupying two roadside culverts near Justiceburg, *Garza* 13 Jun (PK); this is the same area where the species was discovered in 2002. Away from their typical canyon habitats, up to 9 Bushtits were at Buffalo Lake 13–14 Jul (KG, WH), and 4 were in Amarillo, *Potter* 31 Jul (LaS). A wandering Red-breasted Nuthatch was near Lorenzo, *Crosby* 15 Jul (RL). Perhaps resident in the area, White-breasted Nuthatches were reported 28 Jun at Hilltop L., *Leon* (BMa, JCo). A

Carolina Wren at Ft. Bliss 30–31 Jul (JPa, BZ) was the 5th for *El Paso*. A Sedge Wren was heard singing on the Katy Prairie, *Harris* 8 Jun (DaP), providing the 2nd summer record for the U.T.C. Four Blue-gray Gnatcatchers at High I., *Galveston* 25 Jul (DVe) set the early fall arrival date for the U.T.C. The Black-headed Nightingale-Thrush discovered at Pharr, *Hidalgo* during the spring remained through the period, to the delight of many traveling birders (JO, †m.ob.). Singing Wood Thrushes in areas where the species is not known to nest included singles at Houston, *Harris* 1–16 Jun (JGr), Gibbons Creek Res., *Grimes* 12 Jun (DPH), and White Rock L., *Dallas* 22 Jun (CR). Belatedly, we learned that the Clay-colored Robin at Lake Jackson, *Brazoria* was re-found 17 Apr and remained through the summer (TMO); one has to wonder whether it ever left. A pair of American Robins nested in Corpus Christi, *Nueces*—the first nesting record in many years (PY). A pair of Gray Catbirds successfully raised one young in Spring, *Harris* (D&SM), the first confirmed nesting for the U.T.C. This species was also reported from two *Galveston* locations, 5 & 18 Jun, as well as at Anahuac N.W.R., *Chambers* 20 Jun (DVe), indicating this species may nest elsewhere in the Region. Far w. of its normal summer range, a Brown Thrasher was at Muleshoe N.W.R., *Bailey* 31 Jul (AF, PK et al.). The long-present Blue Mockingbird in Pharr, *Hidalgo* continued to be seen irregularly until 17 Jul (JO). A pair of Phainopeplas at Independence Creek, *Terrell* 15 Jul (JMa) were just e. of the known breeding range.

A first-year male Tennessee Warbler in Pharr, *Hidalgo* 15 Jun (JA) was perplexing. A female Northern Parula feeding 2 fledglings at Granger L. 25 Jul (TFe) may have provided a first nesting record for *Williamson*. The male Yellow Warbler of the *erithachorides* ("Mangrove Warbler") group reported during the spring at Boca Chica, *Cameron* was last seen 5 Jun (TW). Four Yellow Warblers at Ft. Bliss 30 Jul (JPa) provided the first Jul record for *El Paso*. A late migrant Magnolia Warbler was at Sims Bayou, *Harris* 5 Jun (DS), but it was easily eclipsed by another near Abilene, *Taylor* 16 Jun (LM). Early migrant warblers were noted at two Trans-Pecos locations, providing first Jul records for several species, among these a Townsend's Warbler at Ft. Bliss 30 Jul (JPa) and

a Hermit Warbler at the same location 30–31 Jul (JPa, BZ) and single Black-throated Gray, Townsend's, and Hermit Warblers at Boot Spring, *Brewster* 31 Jul (CLy). A late Black-throated Green Warbler was in *Anderson* 4 Jun (CS). A Yellow-throated Warbler near Brenham, *Washington* 12 Jun (DVo) was a surprise there. A first Jul record for the South Plains was furnished by a Black-and-white Warbler at White River L., *Crosby* 24 Jul (AF, AH, JST, LV, HWu). Prothonotary Warbler has been suspected as breeding in the cen. Brazos Valley, and this season a pair was observed feeding at least 2 fledglings near Chappell Hill, *Washington* 2 Jun (DVo). A record-late Ovenbird was found dead following heavy storms in Dallas, *Dallas* 5 Jun (MAL). A late migrant Hooded Warbler was in Lubbock 5 Jun (AF). For the 3rd year in a row, Yellow-breasted Chats nested near White River L., *Crosby* (AF, AH).

TANAGERS THROUGH FINCHES

A male Scarlet Tanager at Ft. Davis 28 Jun (S&CK) was a great find. A singing Canyon Towhee in s.-cen. *Throckmorton* 18 Jul (BG, GCo) provided more evidence of a local population there. Over much of the South Plains, it was a bumper year for Grasshopper Sparrow (*vide* AF). An astounding find was 2 White-throated Sparrows at Memorial Oaks Park, *Tarrant* 19 Jun (GM), providing a 4th summer record for the state. Northern Cardinal is a casual visitor to *El Paso*; this season, a pair was present at one location through the season (BZ), and a male was present at another 21 Jun (JSp). Producing a first Jul record for the Austin area, a male Rose-breasted Grosbeak was in Austin on 6 Jul (MBM). Very unexpected was a Black-headed Grosbeak in *Taylor* 15–17 Jun (JCa), and another was very early in Canyon, *Randall* 24 Jul (RM). Far e. of expected, a male Lazuli Bunting was on the Gene Howe W.M.A., *Hemphill* 26 Jun (BPI). The westward expansion of the Indigo Bunting continues, and the species' presence is becoming consolidated in several areas of the South Plains and s. Panhandle, including in *Kent*, *Lubbock*, *Motley*, *Crosby*, *Bailey*, and *Randall*. A male Varied Bunting at Hueco Tanks State Historic Site, *El Paso* 20 Jun (RH, BJ) was a nice find. A male Bronzed Cowbird in Clairmont 26 Jun (AF, MLe) was a first for *Kent*, while 2 others were observed at L. Six, *Lubbock* 20 Jun (AF). Following the discovery of a nesting pair of Red Crossbills in the Davis Mts. in the spring, juvs. were seen in several other locations, indicating more widespread breeding (KB). A very worn female Red Crossbill was found in Seguin, *Guadalupe* 1 Jun (GLI) and was taken to wildlife rehabilitator.

Cited observers (subregional editors in bold-face): Keith Anderson, John Arvin, Peter Assmann, Julie & Andy Balinsky, Peter Barnes, Billie Bernard (BiB), Brandon Best (BBE), Lo-

SA The Gray-crowned Yellowthroat continued through the period at the Sabal Palm Sanctuary, *Cameron* (m.ob.). There has been some speculation that this bird could be a Common Yellowthroat x Gray-crowned Yellowthroat hybrid, based on song variation with this individual. However, the bird is a first-summer male, and there has been an obvious shift in the bird's song type, a change that would appear to be based on perceived competition with the local Common Yellowthroats. During Feb and Mar, the bird sang a typical Gray-crowned Yellowthroat song, but by Apr and May, it was singing an odd mix between the songs of a Gray-crowned and a Common. By midsummer, it was singing a very good imitation of a Common Yellowthroat song. Considering that Common Yellowthroats are known to learn their advertising songs, it appears that this individual abandoned the "correct" species-specific song and adopted the song of what it interpreted as its competition. Structurally and behaviorally, the bird appeared to be a typical Gray-crowned Yellowthroat in every way.

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State of the Region

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As a result of an agreement with the United States when Texas joined the Union, conservation actions in Texas are heavily dependent on private land initiatives: approximately 97% of the state is privately owned. In 1836, there was thus very little public land set aside, and the vast majority of the state's land area has been under some kind of agricultural use ever since. Texas is an ecologically diverse state, with bird conservation issues unique to each of its ten physiographic regions (divided into eight Bird Conservation Regions and nine ecoregions by Texas Partners in Flight). An exhaustive list of the challenges in conserving natural heritage in Texas would span hundreds of pages, but there are three main issues that seem to be equally applicable to all regions of the state. The first is urbanization, as Texas has one of the most rapidly growing populations of any state. Much of the growth is focused in the IH 35 corridor, along the coastal prairies between the Louisiana border and Kingsville, and in the Lower Rio Grande Valley. Although only about 5% of the state is considered to be under urban development, that percentage is growing, and urban/suburban sprawl is a significant concern in these areas. The second issue that faces the state as a whole is a function of population growth: competition for water resources. While urbanization may be perceived as a localized concern within the vastness of Texas, water is an issue that pits the needs of urban residents, agriculture, and industry against the basic requirements of ecological systems in the state—the very existence of many freshwater systems, including riparian corridors, the inflow of freshwater into saline estuaries, and so forth. The final statewide issue is the continued modification of natural habitats: Texas's history of land use means that very little of the state has not seen significant habitat modification since 1900.

I will focus here on several areas familiar to birders, who visit the state in such large numbers that they may be said to have significant economic impact—enough to make the state government aware of the benefits of ecotourism and thus habitat conservation.

An area visited by thousands of bird enthusiasts each year, the Lower Rio Grande Valley confronts a variety of conservation problems, most of which come under the rubric of habitat modification. Agriculture was the primary industry in the region for much of the 1900s, and the rich soils of the Rio Grande Delta (what is generally referred to as "The Valley") were very prosperous for growing cotton and citrus in particular. Most of the Tamaulipan scrublands present away from the direct floodplain of the Rio Grande and the associated riparian woodlands of the river were removed for row crops. The construction of reservoirs along the Rio Grande has eliminated the flooding cycles that maintained those habitats. During the past two decades, agriculture has waned in extent, and urban/suburban sprawl is now the chief threat to what remains of these habitats. Though there exist fragments of habitat along the river corridor, many of these are in jeopardy. Arid-adapted species are becoming

more dominant, and the overall area of riparian woodlands has diminished. Nevertheless, there are long-term plans to increase the extent of native riparian habitat along corridors between Brownsville and Falcon Dam, and it is to be hoped that these plans bear fruit in years to come.

The Edwards Plateau, or Texas Hill Country, is characterized by mixed Ashe Juniper-hardwood woodlands that are the habitat of the endangered Golden-cheeked Warbler. Habitat fragmentation is a concern for the long-term population stability of this species, but another equally important factor that is less often highlighted is the continued recruitment of hardwoods in these forests. High populations of White-tailed Deer and exotic deer species result in increased browsing pressures in these woodlands, which are not a traditional habitat for the deer. Recent studies have shown that recruitment of oaks and

other hardwoods in these mixed forests is well below what is needed to maintain the character of the forest. The long-term prognosis is higher and higher percentage of Ashe Juniper in the woodlands. This decreases the quality of the overall habitat from the standpoint of avian population dynamics. Enclosure experiments show that removing the browsing pressures allows the hardwoods to rebound rather quickly.

Grasslands are benefited, and maintained, by fire regimes. The suppression of fire, coupled with grazing pressures, generally allows woody plants to invade grasslands. This is certainly evident on the Coastal Prairies of Texas, where exotic species are spreading as well. Chinese Tallow (*Sapium sebiferum*) and Macartney Rose (*Rosa bracteata*) have become serious problems as invasive exotics because of their rapid growth and prolific reproductive potential. Tallow spreads quickly and has the potential to turn native prairie into a near monoculture in a few short years. Barrow and Renne (2001) report that tallow spread in Galveston County alone from just five acres in 1970 to over 30,000 in 2000. Everitt (2002) reports that Macartney Rose has become a severe range management problem on over 200,000 hectares of southeastern Texas. Universities and conservation groups are working on ways to control these exotic plants, and prescribed fire appears to have some successful application.

Although these are significant conservation challenges and there are many others, the picture for Texas is not all doom and gloom. There are conservation initiatives underway in all areas

of this state. Demonstrable progress has been made over the past 50 years in habitat and bird conservation. Some of these programs have been species-specific, such as the reestablishment of breeding populations of Brown Pelicans along most of the coast from a single small breeding colony near Port Aransas in the late 1970s to over 3,500 nesting pairs today. Other actions have included conserving important stopover habitats along the coast, and there have been large-scale conservation lands acquired, such as The Nature Conservancy's Davis Mountains Preserve and associated conservation lands. Conservation in Texas is certainly moving forward thanks to the actions of a diverse group of people and organizations.

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Nesting habitat of Golden-cheeked Warbler, an endangered, endemic breeder in the Texas Hill Country (Edwards Plateau, here at Colorado Bend State Park, 18 May 1994), has been steadily lost to development and fragmentation. Brood parasitism by Brown-headed Cowbirds (the nestling in the photograph) is not considered as serious a threat but is a concern where habitat quality has declined. Photograph by Mark W. Lockwood.

Idaho & Western Montana



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The Region's summer temperatures were mostly average to above average, and precipitation amounts were near to slightly below normal. Noted exceptions occurred in parts of southern Idaho and southwestern Montana, where a serious and persistent five-year-long drought continued.

Abbreviations: A.F.R. (American Falls Res., Bingham/Power, ID); Camas (Camas N.W.R., Jefferson, ID); Latilong (area encompassed by one degree latitude and one degree longitude used in mapping bird distribution in both Idaho and Montana).

LOONS THROUGH NIGHTJARS

Especially rare in summer was the imm. Yellow-billed Loon in *Kootenai*, ID 16 Jun (EK). Although Clark's Grebes are increasingly reported away from breeding areas in s. Idaho, 2 in Idaho's *Benewah* and *Kootenai* 4–20 Jun (m.ob.) were far n. of typical range. Apparently American White Pelicans continue to wander northward: a flock of 12 at Priest L., *Bonner*, ID 20 Jun (BB) provided a rare record for Latilong 1. A Broad-winged Hawk that stopped at Camas 2 Jun (CW) represented a first for Latilong 21. Only two other local records for Ferruginous Hawk preceded one reported in *Kootenai*, ID 21 Jun (JW). A record-late Rough-legged Hawk was identified near Camas 4 Jun (MCR).

The best shorebird of the season was a rare Whimbrel seen at Camas 5 Jun (MCR). Marbled Godwits staged in impressive numbers at A.F.R., with a peak count of 650 there 10 Jul (MCR). At least

4 Franklin's Gulls strayed to n. Idaho 5–20 Jun (CS, WW), where they are locally rare. The only report of a Band-tailed Pigeon was in *Benewah*, ID 6 Jun (LS). Reports of Eurasian Collared-Doves at new locations in Idaho included 2 in Twin Falls and a singleton in *Jefferson* 1–8 Jun. A Common Poorwill found sw. of Three Forks, MT 1 Jul (JP) provided the first record in Latilong 38 in over 30 years.

CUCKOOS THROUGH GRACKLES

A Yellow-billed Cuckoo in *Kootenai*, ID 9 Jun (JW) provided a 2nd local record and was the first reported there since 1895. Another Yellow-billed was a rare migrant at Camas 30 Jul (DCI). A singing Alder Flycatcher in *Lake*, MT 21 Jun (MS) provided the first record for Latilong 14. Three Northern Mockingbirds were reported in s. Idaho, where they are rare but annual breeders. A flock of 10 Sprague's Pipits s. of Three Forks, MT 20 Jun (JP) represented the first report for Latilong 38 in 32 years. A wayward Black-throated Gray Warbler near Challis, ID 25 Jul (DF) brought in a first record for Latilong 13. The bird of the season was a well-documented Prairie Warbler in *Park* 19 Jun (ph., †EH) that furnished Montana's 3rd record. Camas hosted a rare Ovenbird and Idaho's 4th Hooded Warbler 1 Jun (MCR, CT). Apparently the spring season "invasion" of Rose-breasted Grosbeaks continued into summer, with an excellent total of 5 reported throughout the period. A singing male Blue Grosbeak was notable in *Oneida*, ID 8 Jul (HK); where they are scarce and irregular breeders. Noteworthy Common Grackle sightings included one well n. of expected Idaho range in *Nez Perce* 14 Jun (HK), and a report of fledglings in Somers, MT 23 Jul (DC) that documented a first breeding record in Latilong 2.

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State of the Region

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Avian populations in the Idaho and Western Montana Region face many threats, among the most serious of which are the degradation or loss of habitat from agriculture, unsustainable logging and mining, poorly managed grazing, drought, fire, invasive non-native plants, and urban development. The Region is divided into two ecoregions or Bird Conservation Regions (BCR), the Northern Rockies (BCR 10) and the Great Basin (BCR 9), both of which harbor a number of habitat types both stark and subtle, from the alpine meadows of Glacier National Park in northwestern Montana to the sagebrush flats of southern Idaho. All of the Region's habitats are threatened in some respect.

Agricultural Impacts • Millions of acres of native grasslands, sagebrush desert, wetlands, and forests have been converted to croplands in the Region's valleys, and virtually all surface waters in arid areas have been tapped, channeled, or diverted for irrigation. As a result, sensitive riparian obligates such as Willow Flycatcher and Yellow-billed Cuckoo have suffered very steep population and range losses over the last century, but even relatively common riparian species such as Yellow Warbler have declined. The winners, if any, have been species that can coexist with humans—e.g., Rock Pigeon, American Crow, European Starling, and House Sparrow—but even some of these birds are scarce or absent in modern irrigated crop fields. Other agricultural impacts that threaten birds and their habitats include pesticide use and water-quality problems that stem from irrigation return flows.

Logging Impacts • According to forest bird expert Sally J. Hejl, little is known about the specific relationships of western U.S. coniferous forest birds and logging. In addition, few studies have shed light on the distribution and habitat use of these species, and almost nothing is known of their demographics. Even with this tremendous knowledge gap, it appears that we can safely say that populations of uncommon and resident cavity-nesters—such as Black-backed Woodpecker, Pileated Woodpecker, and Brown Creeper—have been adversely affected by logging, fire suppression, and the creation of fragmented forests. On the flip side, studies show that salvage logging and fires may benefit some species that forage in open areas, such as Lewis's Woodpecker, Tree Swallow, and Western Bluebird. In any case, there is a critical need for more studies that will monitor forest bird populations and their responses to various silvicultural practices and fire.

Mining Impacts • The mining industry has left tragic and permanent scars on vast areas of Idaho and Montana. A nightmare of problems—large open pits filled with toxic water and mine wastes, extensive areas of soils laced with arsenic, lead, and other heavy metals, contaminated surface and groundwater—are of such a scale as to defy technology and the financial resources necessary for cleanup and remediation. Over time and with reclamation efforts, bird habitats have been re-established in some areas. But many others, such as the sparsely vegetated spoil piles throughout Idaho's Boise Basin, remain virtually birdless, even though they were mined a century ago. Even more ominously, heavy metal-laced wetlands in north Idaho continue to take a deadly toll on Tundra Swans and other birds that visit these deathtraps each year.

Unsustainable Grazing and Invasive Non-native Plants • Overgrazing of private and public rangelands by livestock is a very serious conservation problem and a highly politically charged issue throughout the West. Improper rangeland management has eliminated native plants and allowed the introduction and invasion of non-native plant species over many thousands of acres. Even worse, these invasive plants (such as Cheatgrass Brome and Spotted Knapweed) now form veritable monocultures across huge portions of the Region. Furthermore, cheatgrass has the ignominious property of providing fine fuels for catastrophic range fires that help maintain the viability of this invader. Of all the bird

species in the Region, grassland birds have likely suffered the steepest population declines in the past century. Even formerly plentiful species such as Greater Sage-Grouse and Sage Sparrow are now in trouble, and populations of rare and local breeders such as Mountain Plover and Upland Sandpiper are in drastic decline in the Region and are in danger of Regional extirpation in the near future.

Drought • As in other areas throughout the world, the Region's climate appears to be warming. The past five years have seen significant environmental responses to this trend, and most of them have been ominous: record-high summer temperatures, unusually dry and mild winters, reduced snowpack and stream recharge, and an increasing incidence of fires. Rangeland and forest bird species, already beleaguered in this Region, have been negatively impacted by drought and fires, and nesting success for waterfowl on many of the Region's lakes and reservoirs has been much reduced.



Western Tanager—here in the Daggett Creek drainage of Boise County, Idaho—is still relatively common in forests of the Rocky Mountains. Nonetheless, virtually all of the bird conservation challenges in the Idaho–Western Montana Region have relevance for the conservation of this species, and there is no better time to protect a species than when it is still numerous. Photograph by Colleen Sweeney.

Urban Development • The Region's human population centers are among the fastest growing in the West. This factor alone undoubtedly provides one of the greatest single challenges for bird conservation, since the impacts of urbanization are permanent. Other impacts on wildlife associated with urban areas include unregulated pesticide use on lawns and gardens and predation by house cats.

Final Thoughts, Possible Solutions • With the Region's avian life in grave danger from so many threats, is there anything that we can do to slow or stop the losses of our bird populations? Perhaps the formation of "regionally-based, biologically-driven, landscape partnerships"—as advocated by the various bird conservation plans—can meet the conservation challenges ahead. Any solution with likelihood for success will also need new and increased funding for bird conservation objectives, as advocated by the NABCI Action Plan. But ultimately, the solution will have to come from all who cherish birds and cannot imagine a world without them. As the National Audubon Society and others suggest, each one of us can help by adopting a local Important Bird Area, petitioning lawmakers for increased funding of the Land and Water Conservation Act and State Wildlife Grants Program, defending the Endangered Species Act, and participating in citizen-science projects.

Colorado & Wyoming



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By almost any measure, the summer of 2004 was sensational. There were mega-rarities, some bizarre lingering birds, and several other noteworthy breeding records. Temperatures were several degrees cooler than average over most of the Region, while precipitation varied considerably by locale. Many of the reservoirs are still well below capacity.

Abbreviations: E.K.W. (Edness Kimball Wilkins S.P., *Natrona*, WY); Seedskadee (Seedskadee N.W.R., *Sweetwater*, WY); Yellowstone (Yellowstone N.P., *Park & Teton*, WY). Due to reporting biases, all locations can be assumed to be in Colorado except that each Wyoming location is noted as such the first time it appears in the text.

LOONS THROUGH TERNS

Casual in summer, 2 Pacific Loons were reported, one at Saratoga L., *Carbon*, WY 15 Jun (FB) and one at Jumbo Res., *Sedgwick* 17 Jun (HA). Six Common Loons were found in e. Colorado, furnishing one of the highest summer totals for that portion of the Region. Very rare in summer, a Horned Grebe was at Big Johnson Res., *El Paso* 1 Jul (TL, MP). American Bitterns summered at Fruit Growers Res., *Delta* (m.ob.); this species is only occasionally noted in summer on the West Slope away from Browns Park N.W.R., *Mof-*

SA it seems that almost every year during late Jul and Aug, there is at least one report of a juv. Little Blue Heron following the fledging of Snowy Egrets. This year was no different, with 2 juv. Little Blue Herons reported at Timnath Res., *Larimer* 28–29 Jul (RH, CW). While many of these reports are likely correct, the majority are clouded with controversy due to the difficulty and subjective nature of separating pale-billed and pale-legged juv. Snowy Egrets (seen most frequently in younger birds) from Little Blue Herons. It is relatively easy to clarify this matter by documenting these birds photographically, something we should make a more concerted effort to do.

fat. The only Least Bittern was found at the now-traditional location near Ft. Lyon, *Bent* 29 Jun (MP). A Great Egret at Trout Creek 8 Jun (P. Gould) established a first record for *Teller* and a very rare mountain record. Other unexpected Great Egrets were seen well to the nw. at Hayden, *Routt* 19 Jun (FL) and a pond along Harmony Lane, *Albany* WY 17 Jun (DF). Green Herons apparently bred at Connected Lakes, *Mesa* where ads. were observed feeding fledged birds (LA). There are fewer than 10 documented breeding records of Green Heron in the Region, and this established only the 2nd for the West Slope. Equally surprising was a Green Heron at Seedskadee 1 Jun (LG). The only Glossy Ibis reported was at Metro L., *Colorado City*, *Pueblo* 24–25 Jul (DS, DJ). Two White-faced Ibis in *Pitkin* 3 Jul (T. Patrick), were the first ever noted in this dry county.

Lingering and summering waterfowl were many this summer. A Greater White-fronted Goose at Denver City Park was the first to successfully summer in the Region (NL). Other unusual lingerers at Denver City Park included a Redhead and Common Merganser, both 4 Jun (NL). Also very rare, an injured Snow Goose summered at Pueblo City Park (m.ob.). A male and female Greater Scaup near Pinedale, *Sublette* WY 22 Jun (ph. TA) furnished only the 2nd summer report for Wyoming. A White-winged Scoter at the Jackson Treatment Plant, *Teton*, WY “sometime around 22 Jun” (BJ) furnished the first mid-summer record for the Region. Small numbers of summering Hooded Mergansers have become predictable in e. Colorado, with reports this season from *Weld* and *El Paso* counties. A female at L. DeWeese, *Custer* 9 Jul (MP, BKP) was surprising.

Mississippi Kites continued their expansion. Up to 5 were found in *Sterling* 11 Jul (GW). One at Barr Lake S.P., *Adams* 25 Jul (J&KS) was the first reported in that county. Most outstanding was a Mississippi Kite at Norwood, *San Miguel* 19 Jun–3 Jul (GS, KG, CD, ph. BW). Sizeable flocks of molting imm. Swainson’s Hawks are regularly seen in summer, but at least 120 s. of Tri-county Airport, *Broomfield* 9 Jun (BIS, PP) was one of the highest summer counts to date. A pair of

Sandhill Cranes remained to the s. at Nucla all summer, but no young were ever seen (CD, BW).

An alternate-plumaged American Golden-Plover at Thurston Res. 29–31 Aug (DN) was exceptionally early. Up to 4 Snowy and 2 Piping Plovers were seen at Prewitt 10–25 Jul (MP, NK et al.), this including at least one Piping chick on 10 Jul (NK). Colorado's first Piping Plover nest was found here 26 Jun 1949, a nest that was destroyed a few days later, and no subsequent breeding attempts were known in the state away from the Arkansas R. Valley until this summer. Suspected breeders were 2 Willets at Fruit Growers Res. all summer (LA, CD) and 2 at Juniper Hot Springs, Moffat 12 Jun (FL). The only Ruddy Turnstone was found at "The Puddle" in Casper, WY 24–25 Jul (CM, SB, BR). An ad. Short-billed Dowitcher was well documented at Prewitt 25 Jul (ph. BS, TF). There were few large counts of shorebirds anywhere in the Region, and none away from Prewitt. An estimate of 5000 Baird's Sandpipers at Prewitt 25 Jun (TF, BS) was slightly above average, while 200 Semipalmated Sandpipers there the same day was exceptional (TF, BS).

Many unusual gulls and terns were found this season. A second-summer Thayer's Gull remained at Cherry Creek Res., *Arapahoe* until 3 Jun (ph. JO), furnishing the first summer-season report for the Region. Establishing another first summer record for the Region was a worn and tattered second-cycle Lesser Black-backed Gull at Prewitt Res. 10 Jul (ph. CLW, TL et al.). A Royal Tern was documented at Big Johnson Res., *El Paso* 16–17 Jun (ph. MP, JP, AB, m.ob); the only previous Regional record was in *Kiowa* 15–16 Jul 1997. One to 3 Common Terns were at Big Johnson Res. on the unusual dates of 17–20 Jun. More typical were single ads. at Pueblo Res. 23 Jul (BKP) and at Prewitt 25 Jul (TF, BS). Two ad. Arctic Terns were found this summer: one at Big Johnson (MP) 25 Jun and one at L. Cheraw 30 Jun–1 Jul (MP, TL). Approximately half of Colorado's records of Arctic Tern fall between 30 May and 1 Jul.

DOVES THROUGH THRASHERS

At least 16 White-winged Doves were found in Colorado, highlighted by the first known nesting of White-winged Doves away from the Arkansas R. Valley. In Littleton, a pair nesting in a birch tree fledged 2 young in Jun

and 2 more in early Aug (D&CL); 2 ads. in Colorado Springs produced at least one juv. that came to a feeder 29 Jun (MP). Black-billed Cuckoos were found at three widely separated Wyoming locales: 2 were along Brunner Rd., *Converse*, WY 22 Jun (D&D



Although Lesser Black-backed Gulls now appear annually in Colorado, this second-summer bird at Prewitt Reservoir on 12 July 2004 was the first to be documented in the summer. Photograph by Christopher L. Wood.

VonHoldt, SB), and one was along Upper Clear Creek Rd., *Johnson*, WY 19 Jun (PH, K. Behrens). Most unexpected was a Black-billed Cuckoo at Tower High Bridge, *Yellowstone* 12 Jun (ph. E. Hendrickson), which could have been a migrant. The only Yellow-billed Cuckoos on the West Slope were "present most of the summer" in Grand Junction (LA) and Hotchkiss (AR).



Furnishing only the second record for Colorado, this adult Royal Tern delighted observers at Big Johnson Reservoir, *El Paso* County, Colorado from 16 June 2004 (here) through 20 June 2004. Photograph by Mark Peterson.

Along the Front Range, Black-chinned Hummingbirds now appear to be regular breeders in small numbers as far n. as the s. Denver–Metro suburbs, with reports this summer from Waterton Canyon, *Jefferson* and Cherry Creek Res., *Arapahoe*. In general, hummingbird numbers were down at most feeding stations, and very few were seen on the plains. This is probably attributable to the return to average and even above-average wildflower displays in much of the

Region. Furnishing a first for *Lake*, a Red-headed Woodpecker was found at 2760 m on 10 Jun (RLi). A male Acorn Woodpecker w. of *Gulnare*, *Las Animas* 29–30 Jun (TL, MP) was about 13 km from where an Acorn Woodpecker was found this spring. Perhaps this species is again breeding somewhere in the remote pine-oak woodlands of *Las Animas*. A report of a male Yellow-bellied Sapsucker from Coller State Wildlife Area, *Mineral* (JB) was unprecedented for the summer season and its West Slope location. A male Ladder-backed Woodpecker at Flagler State Wildlife Area, *Kit Carson* 11 Jun (MP, LE) was completely unexpected and only the 2nd found outside of se. Colorado. An impressive concentration of at least 23 American Three-toed Woodpeckers was near Seven Lakes in the Mount Zirkel Wilderness Area, *Jackson* 3–4 Jul (CLW). A blow-down in Oct 1997 triggered a spruce beetle epidemic that has now spread throughout much of the Mount Zirkel Wilderness Area and Park Range, *Jackson/Routt*.

There are now 40 known nesting locations of Black Phoebe on Colorado's West Slope, with two nests along the Colorado R. in *Mesa* providing first nesting records for that county (CD, RL, BW, D. Wright). On the e. side, there were at least two successful nesting pairs of Black Phoebes in *Fremont* (SM, RM), plus one Black Phoebe along Burnt Mill Rd., *Pueblo* 30 Jun (MP, TL). It was also a good year for Eastern Phoebes. Most remarkable was a straggler to Upper Beaver Meadows, *Rocky Mountain* N.P. 25 Jun (BoS) and a probable nesting pair e. of Kersey, *Weld* 10–15 Jun (CLW, TL). Single Ash-throated Flycatchers at Doudy Draw 23 Jun (JT) and Walden Ponds 29 Jul (EZ) add to the growing number of reports from *Boulder*. The surprise of the season was a Brown-crested Flycatcher reported from private property in *Kiowa* 26 Jul (DN); there are no previous records anywhere in the Region. Equally unanticipated was a Thick-billed Kingbird at a ranch outside Parker, *Douglas* 3 Jul (ph. PJ&GM). Scissor-tailed Flycatchers remained s. of Lamar until at least 1 Jul (DAL), and one was again seen at the junction of Woodmen and Black Forest Rds., *El Paso* 17 Jun (DAL). Other Scissor-tailed were n. of *Las Animas*, *Bent* 8 Jul (DN), and between *Timpas* and *Rocky Ford*, *Otero* 5 Jul (SO). A Scissor-tailed s. of *Alamosa* 28 Jul (JS) furnished one of about half a

dozen reports for the San Luis Valley.

A White-eyed Vireo sang along the Canon City Riverwalk, *Fremont* (RM) on the odd dates of 11–20 Jul. A singing Yellow-throated Vireo at Two Buttes Res., *Baca* 10–11 Jun (MA) was a bit late for a spring migrant. What were presumably very early fall migrant Cassin's Vireos were noted at Teton Science School, *Teton* WY 12 Jul (CMe) and E.K.W. 17–18 Jul (AH). Red-eyed Vireos were widely noted along the Front Range, where they are uncommon breeders, but a singing male in Grand Junction 20 Jun–early Aug (LA) was surprising. A Blue Jay wandered w. to Grand Junction 19 Jul (LA) and another to Glenwood Springs 18–19 Jul (AD). Two male and 2 female Purple Martins attended active nests in the Sierra Madre Mts., *Carbon* (ph DF, RL), establishing the first Wyoming nesting record since the 1930s.

A Pygmy Nuthatch outside its pine habitat in Grand Junction throughout the summer was unusual (LA). Bushtits once again bred in the e. Denver Metro Area, with ads. feeding young at the Denver Tech Center, *Arapahoe* 19 Jul (CB). While possible at any season, Carolina Wrens are least expected in summer; one enlivened L. Beckwith, *Pueblo* 16 Jul (DS, DJ). A singing Winter Wren in the Bighorn Mts. 14 Jun (PH) was away from the known Wyoming nesting locales in the Tetons. A Curve-billed Thrasher at Grand Junction 9 Jun (P&FD) was only the 2nd to be found on the West Slope.

WARBLERS THROUGH FINCHES

The parentage of a bird that appeared to be a male Blue-winged Warbler at Gregory Canyon, *Boulder* 5–20 Jun (JT) was hotly debated. A singing Nashville Warbler near the Laramie R., *Larimer* 5–9 Jul (NK, CW) was one of very few summer reports from Colorado. Equally surprising was a Virginia's Warbler far to the nw. at the Teton Science School 14 Jul (CMe). Northern Parulas put on appearances along Sand Creek, *Crook*, WY 9 Jun (SJ) and Mineral Palace Park, *Pueblo* 10–23 Jun (VT). Female Chestnut-sided Warblers were found along the S. Mesa Trail, *Boulder* 23 Jun (TF) and Lands End, Grand Mesa, *Mesa* 15 Jun (DW). A migrant Magnolia Warbler hung on at Crow Valley Campground, *Weld* 2 Jun (JPB). A singing male Black-throated Blue Warbler in Gregory Canyon 14 Jun (JT) was particularly odd. A male Pine Warbler at Fairmount Cemetery in Lamar 24 Jul (DAL) was about the 5th found in late summer or early fall. The Kentucky Warbler in Rock Canyon, *Pueblo* remained until 12 Jun (BKP). Hooded Warblers summering in the foothills outside Boulder are now nearly annual, with at least one male and female this summer

11–20 Jun and later (CLW). Far less expected was one along the Big Sand River, *Sweetwater*, WY 2 Jun (K&DP) and a female in Hooper, *Alamosa* 17–18 Jun (JM, MM). Most astonishing was a female Hooded Warbler feeding a fledgling 27 Jul–3 Aug (RA) at the Lower Piedra Campground, *Archuleta*. At least one Hepatic Tanager returned to Pryor, *Huerfano* 6 Jun (LE), where first found last summer. Scarlet Tanager is exceptionally rare in summer, so one wonders how many birds were responsible for three different reports of a male Scarlet Tanager in s. *Boulder* 2–26 Jun (PHa, LK, EZ; M&SP).

It was a good sparrow season throughout much of the Region, with several species w.



Discovering a Brown-capped Rosy-Finch nest anywhere is sure to be memorable, but this nest above South Gap Lake in Wyoming's Snowy Range, found 10 July 2004, was apparently the first ever found in Wyoming. The nestlings were banded 15 July, when this photograph was taken. Photograph by David McDonald.

of usual. Up to 15 Cassin's Sparrows were near Florence, *Fremont* 10 Jun–9 Jul (MP). Equally unexpected was one s. of Niwot, *Boulder* 10 Jun (TL). Scattered Lark Buntings were widely noted, with reports as far nw. as Jackson, WY and Grand Teton N.P. throughout Jun. It was also a great year for Grasshopper Sparrows, with several in *Boulder*, *Elbert*, and even to *Custer*, where 3 were found singing outside Westcliffe 27 Jun–7 Jul (MP). A Slate-colored Junco at Flagler State Wildlife Area 11 Jun (MP, LE) was perhaps the first ever found in Colorado during the summer. At least 14 Rose-breasted Grosbeaks were seen this summer, highlighted by 2 ads. feeding fledged young at the Canon City Riverwalk (DP), which established the first breeding record for se. Colorado. A singing male Painted Bunting was once again present at Cottonwood Canyon,

Baca/Las Animas 8–9 Jun (MA). Dickcissel made it as far w. as Canon City (m ob.).

White-winged Crossbills were again widespread, but numbers in Colorado appear to have dropped from last year, while numbers around Yellowstone were excellent. There is a handful of recent reports of migrant Lesser Goldfinches from Lamar, but one 30 Jun was still unexpected (DAL). A European Goldfinch, certainly an escapee, visited an e. Denver residence 20 Jun–13 Jul (EJ). While there are several reports of probable breeding, Wyoming's first Brown-capped Rosy-Finch nest was found 10 Jul above South Gap L. in the Snowy Range, *Albany* (DM et al.). Four days later, observers were able to climb to the nest and band the nestlings.

Undocumented: The following review species were reported without documentation: Bar-tailed Godwit at L. Henry, *Crowley* 16 Jul; Little Gull at "The Puddle" 24 Jul.

Cited observers (subregional compilers in boldface): Mymm Ackley, Robert Andrews, Henry Armknecht, Larry Arnold, Tim Avery, Jim Beatty (sw. Colorado), Francis Bergquist, Chris Blakeslee, Sophia Bogart, Allan Burns, Coen Dexter (w.-cen. Colorado), Paul and Fran Didier, Lisa Edwards, Doug Faulkner, Ted Floyd, Lamont Glass, Kathy Graff, Roy Halpin (RHa), Ann Hines, Rachel Hopper, Paula Hansley (PHa), Pete Hosner, Dave Johnson, Brian Jones, Ellie Jones, Loch Kilpatrick, Hugh Kingery (Denver Audubon), Nick Komar, Jim & Gloria Lawrence (statewide R.B.A., Wyoming), David A. Leatherman, Norm Lewis, Tony Leukering (R.M.B.O.), Rich Levad, Roger Linfield, Forrest Luke (nw. Colorado), Dolores and Chuck Lopushansky, Josiah Malueg, Micah Malueg, David McDonald, Terry McEneaney (Yellowstone), P.J. and Gerry Mestas, Chance Mendenhall (CMe), Chris Michelson (Casper, WY), Rich Miller, SeEtta Moss, Duane Nelson, Jerry Oldenettel, Stan Oswald, David Pantle, Susan Patla (Jackson, WY), Brandon K. Percival (se. Colorado), Mark Peterson (e.-cen. Colorado), Kit & Drew Phlughoft, Pete Plage, Myron and Suzi Plooster, Bert Raynes (Jackson, WY), Betty Rickman, Andrea Robinsong, Blake Schmidt (BIS), Bill Schmoker (Colorado Front Range), Jim and Karen Schmoker, Bob Schutsky (BoS), Larry Semo (ne. Colorado), Dave Silverman, George Steele, John Stump, Joyce Takamine, Van Truan, Glenn Walbek (n.-cen. Colorado), Cole Wild, Christopher L. Wood, Brenda Wright, Dave Wright, Eric Zorawowicz. Some 30 other observers contributed information to this report but could not be personally acknowledged here; they all have our thanks and appreciation. 🐦

State of the Region

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Colorado and Wyoming have exceptional diversity, from rolling sage flats to 14,000-foot peaks, from vast expanses of short-grass prairie to dark spruce–fir forests, from playa lakes to open park-like Ponderosa Pine forests. The threats to these natural communities are as diverse as the communities themselves.

Grasslands

As is the case in so many habitats, the central conservation issues in the short-grass prairie (BCR 18) of eastern Colorado and southeastern Wyoming and prairies and badlands of north-eastern Wyoming (BCR 17) are habitat loss and habitat alteration. In Colorado, much of the habitat conversion and degradation is a result of rapid population growth and accompanying



Partners in Flight has identified grassland and western shrubland habitats as being of highest conservation priority in the United States, as populations of a number of bird species in these habitats have experienced declines. In short-grass prairies of Wyoming, Montana, and Colorado, Mountain Plover is one of a suite of species that is of conservation concern. State and federal agencies and conservation organizations are working together with private landowners for the conservation of Mountain Plover and other bird species.

Photograph by Stephen J. Dinsmore.

land development. Much of that development is concentrated in Denver and its surrounding counties, where population densities are as high as 1180 people/km² (3050/mi²). For comparison, the human population density in Kiowa County, in the short-grass prairie of the eastern plains, is just 0.4 people/km² (1/mi²) (USDC 1991).

Although Wyoming does not have the same human population density as Colorado, short-grass prairie conversion is still of primary concern. Aside from a small number of BBS routes, little is known of prairie bird populations in Wyoming, where even basic distributional information is lacking. The only current long-term population study began in 2002 (Faulkner and Giroir 2004).

Situated in the rain shadow of the Rockies, much of the short-grass prairie is too dry to farm without irrigation. As a result, the proportion of plowed land is low compared to mid-grass and tall-grass regions, and much of the short-grass region is still grassland (Weaver et al. 1996). In Colorado, an estimated 67% of the historical short-grass prairie still exists (Knopf 1994), although some sources suggest that only 20% of the original short-grass prairie exists in an unaltered state, the rest having been degraded by introduction of exotic plant species or by overgrazing. Managing short-grass habitat for grazing by domestic livestock, while preserving an area as grassland, nevertheless can alter the habitat by changing plant height, vigor, and community composition.

Habitat loss and alteration have contributed to population declines among short-grass bird species to the extent that grassland habitat is now arguably the highest conservation priority in the United States. As a group, grassland species have shown steeper, more consistent, and more geographically widespread declines than any other behavioral or ecological grouping

of North American species—including Neotropical migrants (Knopf 1996). Species of greatest concern include Greater and Lesser Prairie-Chickens, Mountain Plover, Long-billed Curlew, and McCown's and Chestnut-collared Longspurs.

Forests

Over the past 100 years, humans have altered western coniferous forests in six basic ways: fire exclusion, timber harvesting, grazing, residential development, chemical applications, and introduction of exotic diseases, plants, and animals (Hejl 1994). The effects of these actions on bird populations are understudied and poorly understood, although more is known about the first two than the others. Fire exclusion has resulted in some forest landscapes overstocked with small trees or heavy fuel loads of dead and down trees. This is especially true in Ponderosa Pine habitats, which in many areas had a long history of frequent, low-intensity fires that regularly removed small trees and woody fuels. Fire exclusion has resulted in less frequent fires, but the overstocked stands and heavy fuel loads have caused fires to be larger and hotter.

For many years, timber harvesting was driven by economics and expedience, with little thought given to ecological consequences. Even in this more enlightened age, timber harvesting still has significant ecological impacts. For example, at a local scale, harvesting reduces the density of large snags, to the detriment of cavity-nesting species. At a landscape scale, even-aged timber harvest techniques such as clear-cutting move forested habitats toward homogeneity, rather than the more natural landscape mosaic of uneven-aged stands. Compared to regions in North America that serve as strongholds for industrial forestry, Southern Rocky Mountain forests (BCR 16) in western Colorado, as well as the Northern Rocky Mountain forests (BCR 10) in western Wyoming, are drier and experience shorter growing seasons. As a result, forests here do not regenerate quickly after harvesting. Both aggressive fire suppression and timber harvesting require a network of back-country roads. Increases in road density have resulted in fragmented forest habitats, with unknown impacts on bird populations. Species of conservation concern in this ecoregion include Flammulated Owl, Lewis's Woodpecker, Pygmy Nuthatch, and Grace's Warbler.

Plateau

Extensive tracts of land in western Colorado (BCR 16) and portions of Wyoming (BCR 17) are managed for livestock grazing, and the timing, duration, and location of grazing regimes are all significant bird conservation issues. The degradation of riparian and other habitats by grazing and the removal of sagebrush and pinyon–juniper woodlands for improved livestock and big game forage have significant impacts on birds.

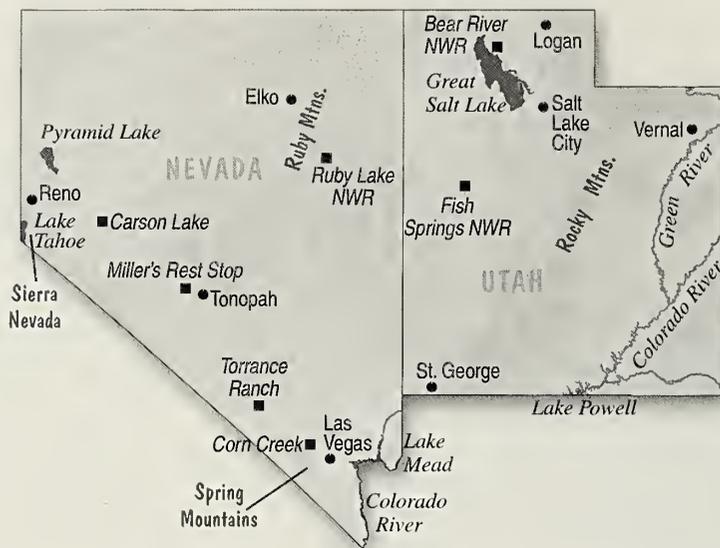
The manipulation of water in this semi-arid region, including irrigation and dam building, and the resultant land uses (orchards, farms, industrial, residential) have created major threats to bird habitats. This is especially true in lowland riparian areas, where water storage has flooded critical stream-side habitats and significantly altered natural stream-flow patterns, thereby reducing Cottonwood regeneration and encouraging invasion by exotic plants such as salt cedar and Russian Olive. On the other hand, irrigation has expanded waterbird habitat in places. More recently, a prolonged drought has left Pinyon Pines throughout the Region vulnerable to pine beetle infestation. In many areas, mortality is approaching 100%. The long-term effect on pinyon-dependent bird species remains to be seen.

The widespread recreational use of lands in this region also creates several conservation issues, including disturbance to wildlife from off-highway vehicles and habitat destruction from trail proliferation. The species most in need of conservation actions in this region include Gunnison Sage-Grouse, Pinyon Jay, Juniper Titmouse, and Gray Vireo.

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Great Basin



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The ongoing drought continued in the Great Basin this summer, with most of the Region experiencing less-than-normal precipitation. The drought is starting to produce landscape-level changes in many areas in southern Utah and Nevada, particularly in sagebrush and pinyon-juniper habitats. Large tracts of dead mature trees and shrubs are prevalent, and wildfires are increasing in frequency. Although, these factors will likely result in changes in avian populations, species composition, and distributions, the short- and long-term impacts of the ongoing drought are difficult to predict. Even with the drought, there were several significant observations throughout the Region. Highlights of the summer period included many immature Brown Pelicans at Lake Mead N.R.A., Nevada and an adult

Purple Gallinule at the Jordanelle Wetlands in Utah.

Abbreviations: Antelope I. (Antelope Island S.P. & Causeway, Davis, UT); Bear River (Bear River Migratory Bird Refuge, Box Elder, UT); Corn Creek (Corn Creek Unit, Desert N.W.R., Clark, NV); H.B.V.P. (Henderson Bird Viewing Preserve, Clark, NV); Lake Mead (Lake Mead N.R.A., Clark, NV); Lytle (Lytle Ranch Preserve, Washington, UT); Miller's R.A. (Miller's Rest Area, Esmeralda, NV); Ouray (Ouray N.W.R., Uintah, UT); Pyramid L. (Washoe, NV); Quail Creek (Quail Creek S.P., Washington, UT); Red Hills (Red Hills G.C., St. George, Washington, UT); Zion (Zion N.P., Washington, UT).

PELICANS THROUGH WATERFOWL

The inland invasion of imm. Brown Pelicans witnessed during the spring season continued to gain momentum during the summer in the Great Basin. Incredibly, 28 were observed at Las Vegas Bay, Lake Mead 14 Jul (MB), and up to 20 remained through the end of the season (J&MC et al.). Additional reports came from n. Utah, with an imm. confirmed at Antelope I. 18 Jul (CW). Green Herons, rare in the n. portion of the Region, were confirmed nesting and successfully fledging 3 young at the Jordan River Parkway, Salt Lake, UT (JHo et al.). Two White Ibis were reported near the Salt Lake Airport, Salt Lake, UT 15 Jul (p.a., DF); these would be a first for Utah. With the success of the reintroduction program in Arizona, sightings of California Condors continue to increase in s. Utah. Up to 6 of these spectacular birds were observed spending the summer

in the area around Lava Pt., Zion 30 Jun–31 Jul+ (DS, KW, ph. RF, ph. SS). A male Lesser Scaup and a pair of Hooded Mergansers were surprise residents throughout the summer at Gunlock S.P., Washington, UT (LT).

HAWKS THROUGH TERNS

Common Black-Hawks are rare breeders in the s. portion of the Region, so a juv. observed along the Santa Clara R. near Veyo, Washington, UT (ph. LT) was noteworthy. An ad. Harris's Hawk photographed in a backyard in Draper, Salt Lake, UT 23 Jun (TW) was likely an escaped or released falconer's bird. Imm. Red-shouldered Hawks were reported in Nevada at Corn Creek 17–30 Jul (TL, MMe et al.) and at Rancho San Rafael, Reno, Washoe 26 Jul (FP). A pair of Zone-tailed Hawks was observed near Lava Pt., Zion 24 Jun–31 Jul+ (ph. RF, JF, KW). One of the biggest surprises of the season was an ad. Purple Gallinule seen 24–27 Jul at the Jordanelle Wetlands, Wasatch, UT (C&CJ et al., ph. MMo, ph. CN, ph. JBa, †EH)—just the 3rd documented in Utah and the first since 1939!

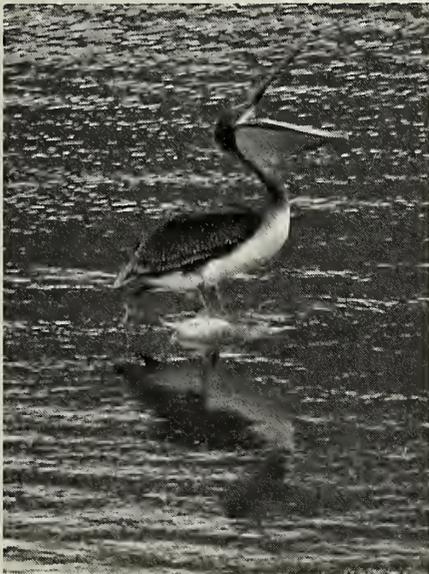
Snowy Plovers are uncommon to rare breeders in the Region, so 14 (including 3 downy young) at Pyramid L. 13 Jul (MMe) were notable. A Whimbrel was a nice find at Antelope I. 19 Jul (ph. CW); it was observed through 23 Jul (CN). Two Sanderlings observed at Soda L., Churchill, NV 25 Jul (ph. MMe, TL) were somewhat early. Single Semipalmated Sandpipers were also observed there 25 Jul and at two Utah locations: Antelope I. 20 Jul (CN, TA) and Bear River 23 Jul (CN). A Short-billed Dowitcher was reported from the seldom-birded West Wendover S.T.P., Elko, NV 23 Jul (CW). An imm. Herring Gull visited Sand Hollow S.P., Washington, UT 11–13 Jul (RF, CS). Two migrant Common Terns were at the Lee Kay Ponds, Salt Lake, UT 1 Jun (TA), and a single Least Tern was observed at Mona Res., Juab, UT 19 Jun (p.a., BS et al.).

DOVES THROUGH WOODPECKERS

The recent colonization of Eurasian Collared-Doves throughout the Great Basin has been nothing short of remarkable. They were first documented in Utah in spring 2000 and were found in Nevada shortly thereafter. Over the past few years, they have been observed throughout Utah and Nevada, and significant numbers are now regularly observed in small rural towns and agricultural areas. Wandering White-winged Doves were observed in several areas n. of their typical range in Utah, including the Topaz Mts., Juab 1 Jun (MMi), North Ogden, Weber 10 Jun (MSo), and Cedar City, Iron 18 Jul (SH). Two White-winged Doves were also observed 10–23 Jul at Indian Springs, Clark, NV (BG). Yellow-billed Cuckoos, rare in the Region, were observed at two Nevada locations: 3 at Moapa, Clark 13 Jun (JW, BL et al.) and one at Corn Creek 18–19 Jun (J&MC, RS). Singles were also observed in

Utah at Bear River 5 Jun (JCa et al.), Deseret Ranch, Rich 10 Jun (MSa), and Provo Airport Dike, Utah 17 Jul (MMn, J&KB).

A Black Swift was observed flying over Seegmiller Marsh, Washington, UT 11 Jun (KC, RF). Sightings of Anna's Hummingbirds continue to increase in the s. portion of the Region; however, ad. males at Alum Canyon, Washoe (6 Jun, RB) and Oxbow Park, Reno, Washoe, NV (25 Jul, FP) were n. of typical range. Pileated Woodpeckers were found again this summer along the Chimney Beach Trail,



Remarkable numbers of Brown Pelicans were observed throughout the inland West in spring and summer 2004. This juvenile, photographed at Newcastle Reservoir, Iron County, Utah 17 May, was the first of many observed in the Great Basin this year. Photograph by Rick Fridell.

ne. shore of L. Tahoe, Washoe, NV 15 Jun–31 Jul+ (JE, NB, JT, C&RT).

FLYCATCHERS THROUGH WARBLERS

Although few vagrant flycatchers were reported during the summer season, there were some significant sightings. A singing Eastern Wood-Pewee was observed at Corn Creek 7–9 Jun (JHm, *fide* MMe, JCl). A Least Flycatcher was reported from Deseret Ranch, Rich, UT 10 Jun (MSt), and a Scissor-tailed Flycatcher was observed along I–15 n. of Parowan, Iron, UT 18 Jun (DA). A singing White-eyed Vireo found at Green River, Emery, UT 24 Jun (p.a., †DC) will likely be Utah's 3rd accepted record. Red-eyed Vireos were observed at Porter Spring, Pershing, NV 4 Jun (DT), Deseret Ranch, Rich, UT 10 Jun (MSt), and along the Riverdale Parkway, Weber, UT 27 May–22 Jun (KP et al.). A female Purple Martin was observed at the West Wendover S.T.P., Elko, NV 23 Jul (CW). A singing Winter Wren was observed near Silver L., Salt Lake, UT 5 Jul (J&KB). Although there are very few documented records, Winter Wrens may be rare breeders in the mts. of Utah. Late-migrating

Swainson's Thrushes were reported from Miller's R.A. 14 Jun (JW, DM) and Gunlock S.P., Washington, UT 18 Jun (LT). Wayward Gray Catbirds were found at Miller's R.A. 5 Jun (GS) and at Porter Springs, Pershing, NV 16 Jun (JW, F&GP, DM). Two very unusual observations of Bendire's Thrasher occurred a month apart during the summer reporting period, both from high-elevation areas in n. Utah: near Randolph, Rich 14 Jun (CR) and from the Uintah Mts., Summit 14 Jul (H&CR). Two Phainopeplas were also observed n. of typical range at Cove Fort, Beaver, UT 6 Jun (SC).

As usual, vagrant warblers made a good showing during the early-summer period. A female Northern Parula was observed at Corn Creek 12 Jun (RS). Chestnut-sided Warblers were found at three Nevada locations: males at Porter Springs, Pershing 3 Jun (JW) and Miller's R.A. 5 Jun (GS), plus a female at Rancho San Rafael, Reno, Washoe 11 Jun (†D&RS, F&GP). A singing male Black-throated Blue Warbler observed at Marlette L., Washoe, NV 8 Jun (WR, NW) provided one of only a handful of spring records in the Region. A male Yellow-throated Warbler at Porter Springs, Pershing, NV 3 Jun (p.a., JW) was another exceptional find. A Black-and-white Warbler was also at Porter Springs 3 Jun (JW), and another was found near Cedar Mesa Campground, Capitol Reef N.P., Garfield, UT 22 Jun (TC). An American Redstart that was captured and banded in 1999 at the Jordanelle Wetlands, Wasatch, UT returned for its 6th consecutive summer 27 May–18 Jul (AH et al.). Additional American Redstart sightings included a female at Corn Creek 3 Jun (J&MC) and a male at Deseret Ranch, Rich, UT 10 Jun (MSt). Rounding out the warbler observations was a single Ovenbird at Corn Creek 10 Jun (JC, RSc).

SPARROWS THROUGH FINCHES

Several observers noted higher-than-normal numbers of Lark Buntings in n. Utah this summer. For example, over 60 were observed on the Randolph B.B.S. route, Rich 2 Jun (BB), and several were observed at Bear River 6 Jun+ (BO). A White-throated Sparrow graced a yard in Taylorsville, Salt Lake, UT 17 Jun (CD). Singing male Rose-breasted Grosbeaks were observed at Rancho San Rafael, Washoe, NV 8 Jun (FP et al.) and 13 Jun at Moapa, Clark, NV (JW, BL et al.), with 3 at Lytle 11 Jun (LT). Male Indigo Buntings were reported from Corn Creek 12 Jun–17 Jul (C&RT et al.), Lytle 13 Jun (LT), and Moapa, Clark, NV the same day (JW, BL et al.).

A female Bobolink at Corn Creek 4 Jun (JHm *fide* MMe) and a male at H.B.V.P. 2 Jul (MK, *fide* JBo) were out of range. There were several observations of Great-tailed Grackles n. of expected range, including a male at Ran-

cho San Rafael, Reno, Washoe, NV 1–8 Jun (FP), 10 at Miller's R.A. 6 Jun (JW), and 2 at the West Wendover S.T.P., Elko, NV 23 Jul (CW). A male Bronzed Cowbird was located at Corn Creek 7 Jun (JHm *fide* MMe). Three Scott's Orioles reported from the Topaz Mts., Juab, UT 1 Jun (MMi) were in an unusual location, as was a flock of 7 Red Crossbills observed flying over Dinosaur N.M., Uintah, UT 22 Jun (RH et al.). Up to 4 White-winged Crossbills were regularly observed in the Wasatch Mts., Salt Lake, UT 3 Jun–27 Jul (LG, DS, TB, BC, SC). Seven American Goldfinches, including courting males, were observed in the Independence Mts., Elko, NV 20 Jul (CW, *fide* TF), suggestive of a possible Nevada breeding location for this species.

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With the success of the California Condor reintroduction program in northern Arizona, observers once again have the chance to experience the sight of these regal birds aloft. This summer, up to six condors thrilled observers in the Kolob/Lava Point area of Zion National Park, Washington County, Utah, where this photograph was taken 10 July 2004. Photograph by Rick Fridell.

Meyers (MMe), M.J. Mitts (MMi), Don Molde, Mike Monson (MMn), Milton Moody (MMo), Jens Munthe, Colby Neuman, Bridget Olson, Fred Petersen, Gail Petersen, Kristin Purdy, Will Richardson, Cal Robbins, Hal and Cathy Robins, Rick Saval (RSa), Rita Schlageter (RSc), Greg Scyphers, Dennis and Rebecca Serdehely, Charlie Sheard, Bryan Shirley, Dennis Shirley, Mark Stackhouse (MSt), Mort Somer (MSo), Steve and Priscilla Summers, Jane Thompson, Carolyn and Richard Titus, Larry Tripp, Dennis Trousdale, Neal Walker, Jack Walters, Kevin Wheeler, Trish Wlodarczyk, Chris Wood. ☺

State of the Region

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In approaching the matter of bird conservation in Nevada and Utah, two fundamentals of human demography need to be borne in mind. First, these two states, taken together, are by far the fastest-growing region of North America. In annual population growth, Nevada far exceeds all other U.S. states, and Utah is not far behind. Second, and often surprising to easterners, is that this region is by far the most heavily urbanized in the nation. The "Rural West" is a complete and utter myth. A much larger proportion of the people in Nevada live in cities than is the case in New Jersey or New York. One more time: The people of Nevada and Utah live in large metropolises that are metastasizing at unprecedented rates; and all efforts at bird conservation in the region must acknowledge this fact.

The basic challenge of life in the West is to move resources—water, wind, cows, etc.—from uninhabited wilderness to places where people live. The result has been an astonishing, and ongoing, transformation of the Western landscape. Deserts have gotten drier, and cities have gotten greener. Large lakes have dried up, and vast irrigation networks have sprung up. Whole ecosystems have been replaced. The result: across very broad geographic and taxonomic levels, bird populations in the West are highly dynamic and presumably unstable. Case in point: in Nevada, there are about 250 species of breeding birds, approximately 100 of which have shown population declines during the past half-century, and *more than 100 of which* have shown population *increases* during the same period (Floyd et al. 2005). The list of increasing species is long and sprawling—everything from Anna's Hummingbird to American Crow, from Bald Eagle to Blue-gray Gnatcatcher, from Double-crested Cormorant to Bewick's Wren, from Chukar to Clapper Rail.

Management and conservation priorities:

I. Phenomenological

Sagebrush conversion • Grazing-induced conversion of biologically rich sagebrush deserts to cheatgrass monocultures was compellingly documented as early as Leopold (1949). The crisis has become especially acute in recent years, with more than 1.5 million acres of sagebrush in Nevada—2% of the state's total landmass, an area twice that of Rhode Island—consumed by flames in 1999 alone (Hunt and Stiver 2000). And there seems to be no end in sight to the damage. Indeed, many experts (e.g., Knick et al. 2003) are now seriously entertaining the possibility that *we may lose the sagebrush ecosystem outright*. Two courses of action are being considered: (1) protection of existing high-quality sagelands; and (2) restoration of degraded or destroyed habitat. The second option is prohibitively expensive at any ecologically sensible spatial scales. Thus, the first option, which has the potential to create considerable hardship for humans, is our only realistic choice.

Water diversion • The massive translocation of bodies of water in the West is well known. Quite simply, the recent growth of the West could not have happened without engineering marvels such as the L.A. aqueduct, Hoover Dam, and so forth. But there have been terrible consequences for the region's birdlife, famously documented for the Great Basin in works such as Gaines (1988) and Williams (1991). Unlike the sagebrush crisis, the water disaster is a rallying point for community and government activism. In particular, the federal courts and government agencies (especially the U.S. Bureau of Reclamation and the U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service) have achieved recent successes on behalf of beleaguered waterways in the Great Basin. It is an uphill battle, though, as future human population increases in the Region will necessarily be accompanied by intensifying demands for the Region's limited water.

Riparian habitats • Clearly related to the problem of large-scale water diversion, riparian habitat quality is nonetheless usually treated as a separate problem. Typically, the problem is approached on an acre-by-acre basis, rather than at the landscape level of water diversion. And solutions tend to be of the sweat-blood-and-tears sort (tearing out tamarisk, planting cottonwoods, restoring stream banks, etc.), rather than of the court-mandated variety. Major culprits include grazing (the region's "wild horses" are arguably more of a problem than are range cattle), exotics (especially tamarisk and Russian Olive), canalization, and residential development. An impressive plan of posi-

tive, proactive approaches to protecting, restoring, enhancing, and creating riparian habitat in the Region is provided by Neel (1999).

Management and Conservation Priorities: II. Avian Guilds

Sagebrush obligates • Host-plant specificity in birds is uncommon worldwide, and rare in North America. Yet sagebrush (*Artemisia*) species have five so-called obligate bird species: Greater Sage-Grouse, Gunnison Sage-Grouse, Sage Thrasher, Sage Sparrow, and Brewer's Sparrow. (It is best to term these five taxa "near-obligates" or "oligotropes," as they are not specialists in the strictest sense.) Greater Sage-Grouse is the poster-child for bird conservation in the Great Basin, and creative grassroots-and-government partnerships for sage-grouse conservation have been on the table for several years now (Stiver 2001). Protection of the Gunnison Sage-Grouse, whose range barely extends into southeastern Utah, is being overseen primarily by government and citizen interests based out of Colorado. And among the sagebrush-obligate passerines, it is the Brewer's Sparrow—with its well-documented population declines—that is receiving the bulk of the attention (Neel 1999).

Colonial and gregarious waterbirds • The lower elevations of the Great Basin consist essentially of an ocean of desert with islands of wetlands. And these "islands," in turn, host some of the most astonishing concentrations of waterbirds in the world. A (very) short list includes: Eared Grebe, Snowy Plover, and Wilson's Phalaropes at Great Salt Lake, Utah (Manning and Paul 2003); Common Loon and other deepwater species at Walker Lake, Nevada (McIvor 2003); Western Sandpiper and Long-billed Dowitcher at the Carson Sink, Nevada (Chisholm and Neel 2002); White-faced Ibis and other long-legged waders in the Lahontan Valley, Nevada (Neel 1999); and even overland pelagic migrants at Pyramid Lake, Nevada (Mack 2000). There have been recent waterbird conservation successes in the Great Basin (Neel 1999, Chisholm and Neel 2002), but considerable challenges remain, foremost among which is the preservation of existing habitat.

Riparian dependents • Riparian habitat is—and always has been—scarce in the Great Basin, yet it supports a greater diversity of bird species than any other sort of habitat in the Region (see Rich 2004). Riparian-dependent birds in the northern Great Basin are a major element in The Nature Conservancy's Great Basin Ecoregional Plan (Nachlinger et al. 2001), but it is really in the southern portion of the Region that riparian-dependent birds are a hot-button issue. In particular, riparian-dependent birds are a centerpiece of the controversial, unprecedented—and successful—Clark County Multi-Species Habitat Conservation Plan (see Fleishman et al. 2003). It is significant to note that the major players here are designated primarily at the subspecies level: *yumaensis* Clapper Rail, *occidentalis* Yellow-billed Cuckoo, *extimus* Willow Flycatcher, *arizonae* Bell's Vireo, for instance.

Management and conservation priorities: III. Methodological

From monitoring to implementation • There is a fundamental problem in the contemporary approach to bird conservation: bird monitoring (and birding) is fun, whereas implementation (e.g., digging pits, girdling trees, building dikes) is not. Thus, in so much of North America, we are spinning our wheels—running our point-count surveys for *yet another* year, attending *yet another* seminar on DISTANCE sampling, devising *yet another* method for aerial surveying of heron colonies. Felicitously, bird conservation in the Great Basin really has moved wholeheartedly into the realm of active, on-the-ground implementation of bird-conservation strategies. Neel (1999) was a landmark publication that identified quantitative, measurable, tangible on-the-ground implementation strategies for each species of concern in Nevada, and today the proactive, implementation-based approach to bird conservation continues under the energetic leadership of John Swett, Genny Wilson, Elisabeth Ammon, Jim Parrish, Larry Neel, and others.

Adaptive management • Bird conservation in the Great Basin needs to get away from the pipe dream of "population stabilization," "long-term objectives," and so forth. That is because bird populations are inherently dynamic, and because birds live in increasingly unstable human-dominated



Greater Sage-Grouse has declined up to 80% over the past 20 years because of the loss and degradation of its sagebrush habitats, which are under additional development pressures from oil and gas industries. In 2003, at least 27 deaths from West Nile virus were documented in sage-grouse. Fortunately, the Bureau of Land Management, the largest owner of sagebrush habitats, is moving to protect the species on its lands, and the U. S. Fish & Wildlife Service is considering petitions to list this species under the Endangered Species Act, but political machinations may undermine its prospects.

Photograph by Bret M. Whitney/VIREO.

landscapes. Instead, bird conservation needs to be guided by the adaptive management paradigm, compellingly articulated in our region by the Clark-County Multi-Species Habitat Conservation Plan. The idea, in a nutshell: it is absurd for wildlife managers to plan for the future in and around fast-growing Las Vegas; instead, we must make policy, we must *adaptively manage*, as we go; and we must have the full power of the courts and agencies behind us as we do so.

Recognition that bird populations are dynamic • The idea of a "balance of nature," that populations are stable, is really as fallacious as the notion that species are immutable. All efforts at bird conservation in the Great Basin, and elsewhere, must accept the reality that bird populations are spatially and temporally dynamic.

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Summer 2004 brought widespread and occasionally heavy rains to much of the state, providing at least temporary relief from persistent drought and allowing extended breeding by many species.

Abbreviations: B.L.N.W.R. (Bitter Lake N.W.R.); Bosque (Bosque del Apache N.W.R.); G.B.A. (Gila Bird Area, riparian habitat on Gila R. below Riverside); K.K. (Katfish Kove, private ponds and trees adjacent to Mimbres R., nw. Luna); L.V.N.W.R. (Las Vegas N.W.R.); Maxwell (Maxwell N.W.R. and vicinity); R.G.N.C. (Rio Grande Nature Center, Albuquerque); R.G.V. (Rio Grande Valley).

GREBS THROUGH RAPTORS

There was news both good and bad for nesting grebes in n. New Mexico. Eared Grebes fared well in Rio Arriba, with 225 nests at Horse L., 125 nests at Stinking L., and 10 nests at Stone L. 18–20 Jun (DS), and with reproduction noted in Jul but failed in Colfax, where 24 nests at Stubblefield L. 23 Jul and nine at Maxwell 7 Jul (DC) were all lost to high water by late Jul. Up to 45 Western Grebe nests were at Stone L. 20 Jun, and ads. were feeding young there 1 Jul (DS). A Western Grebe nest at Stubblefield L. 6 Jul (ph DC) produced at least one young, but four Clark's nests there by 23 Jul (ph. DC) all failed when flooded.

Unexpected were 32 ad. American White Pelicans at El Vado L. 19 Jun (DS) and 15 at nearby Heron L. 1 Jul (DS); noteworthy were 33 migrants at Red L., McKinley 24 Jul (CR, BN). An imm. Brown Pelican wandered to Morgan L. 24 Jul (CR, BN), where it remained into Aug (AN); another imm. Brown was captured near Las Cruces 2 Jul (P. Hinde). A Great Blue Heron nest with a nestling near Bloomfield 2 Jul (*vide* TR) was at a new San Juan breeding locale. A flock of 265 Cattle Egrets was near Lemitar 23 Jul (DH). Rare in the

New Mexico



state, an imm. White Ibis visited Bosque 27–31 Jul (G. Parker, JEP, ph. JO). An imm. Roseate Spoonbill was at B.L.N.W.R. 21–28 Jun (GW), the 3rd consecutive year the species has appeared there. Summering Wood Ducks where seldom reported included 2 below Conchas Dam 15 Jun (WW) and others at San Juan Pueblo throughout Jun (DS). The irrigated fields of s. Luna remained a Mexican

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Duck stronghold, with 80 there 23 Jul (JEP). A female Ring-necked Duck with 7 ducklings at Berland L., San Juan 24 Jul (CR, BN) established breeding for the Chuska Mts.; other apparently summering Ring-neckeds included 4 at Red L., McKinley 24 Jul (CR, BN), 2-4 near San Gregorio L. 6 & 10 Jul (CR, JO), a pair at Bear Canyon L. 20 Jun (JO), and singles at Moon Ranch, Grant 24 Jun (SOW) and Bosque 20 Jun (SW). Possibly taking advantage of nest boxes, Hooded Mergansers again produced young at Bosque, with 2 juvs. on a pond 27 Jun (JO) and up to 4 juvs. on another pond 24-31 Jul (JEP, ph. JO).

A record 17 Osprey pairs nested in n. New Mexico, but only seven were successful, fledging 14 young (DS). Often overlooked in the breeding season, a Northern Harrier nest with large nestlings was near Morgan L. 25 Jun (R. Kellermueller). A Gray Hawk pair established a territory in the New Mexico portion of Guadalupe Canyon, where it was well documented 19-25 Jun (m.ob., ph. JO) and where an ad. and a large nestling were found 25 Jul (C. Lundblad). Common Black-Hawks continued to appear far n. of expected, including singles at Cochiti Dam 31 Jul (MW) and on the Cimarron R. near Cimarron 29-31 Jul (DC), the latter a Colfax first; in the middle R.G.V., black-hawks again summered at Isleta (K. Johnson), and one was at Sevilleta N.W.R. 24 Jul (T. Kennedy).

PTARMIGAN THROUGH TERNS

Single White-tailed Ptarmigan were on Jicariita Peak 11 & 13 Jul (CB, E. Rominger), and 3 were there 27 Jul (JBe). A female Blue Grouse with young was on the Rio Quemado e. of Truchas 25 Jul (WW). Unusual were 2 Gambel's Quail in the Jemez Mts. near Ponderosa 25 Jul (CR). One to 2 Common Moorhens were n. to B.L.N.W.R. 3 & 21 Jul (JEP, JO, GW).

Noteworthy for Quay were up to 4 Snowy Plovers at Hudson L. and up to 3 at Ute L. Jun-Jul (DC); high count at B.L.N.W.R. was 255 on 23 Jun (GW). Unusual n. to Colfax were single Black-necked Stilts at Stubblefield L. 24 Jun (ph. DC) and Eagle Nest L. 10 Jul (DC). An apparent Spotted Redshank in black breeding plumage was with Greater Yellowlegs at B.L.N.W.R. 25 Jul (R. Lewis); there are no previous reports and, unfortunately, this individual was not photographed. Solitary Sandpipers where rarely noted were singles w. to Berland L. 24 Jul (CR, BN) and L. Roberts 14 Jul (LM). Unseasonal were 9 Willets at Brantley L. 22 Jun (RD). Unusual for the lower Pecos Valley were several apparently territorial Spotted Sandpipers at Brantley L. 9 & 22 Jun (WH, RD). A remarkable 51 Marbled Godwits were at Brantley L. 22 Jun (RD); other mid- to late Jun reports included 2 at Springer L. 22 Jun (ph. DC) and 4 at B.L.N.W.R. 23 Jun (GW). Single Sanderlings were at Maxwell 19

Jun (DC) and Stubblefield L. 23 Jul (DC). A Semipalmated Sandpiper was w. to Bosque 28 Jul (JO). A White-rumped Sandpiper was w. to Wagon Mound 4 Jun (JO); notably late White-rumped were 3 at Stubblefield L. 19 Jun (ph. DC) and singles at Springer L. 22 Jun (DC) and Ute L. 23 Jun (DC). One to 2 vocal Wilson's Snipe summered at Springer L. and nearby Ponil Cr. (DC) and at Mora (NC).

Although no nesting was discovered, California Gulls again summered at Eagle Nest L., with 15 there 25 Jun (JEP) and 25 on 17 Jul (DC); other Californias were 12 at Heron L. 18 Jul (CR) and 23 at Morgan L. 24 Jul (CR, BN). Also at Eagle Nest L. were up to 15 Ring-billed Gulls 25 Jun (JEP) & 10 Jul (DC). A significant discovery was an active Least Tern colony at Brantley L. 9 Jun (WH), where low water provided habitat for up to seven pairs, which produced fledglings by Jul (RD), providing a nesting first for Eddy and the first for New Mexico away from B.L.N.W.R. Eleven Least Tern pairs nested at B.L.N.W.R. (GW); wandering Least Terns were singles at Ute L. 3 & 23 Jun (ph. DC), Bosque 12 Jun (CB), and Holloman L. 10 Jun (J. Smith). Unseasonal were 4 Forster's Terns at Springer L. 22 Jun (ph. DC) and singles at Maxwell 25 Jun (JEP) and at B.L.N.W.R. 23 Jun and 7 Jul (GW).

DOVES THROUGH WOODPECKERS

Eurasian Collared-Doves were found statewide, including areas up to 2100 m elevation at El Rito 11 Jun (JO) and Ranchos de Taos 3 Jul (JO). White-winged Doves were n. to La Plata 5 Jul (TR), Los Alamos 12 Jun (JO), and Maxwell 7 Jul (DC). Encouraging were up to 4 Common Ground-Doves in Guadalupe Canyon 12-26 Jun (JO, JEP, SOW) and 2 in the Carzalia Valley e. of Hermanas 23 Jun (JEP). A male Ruddy Ground-Dove was singing in Guadalupe Canyon 19 & 25 Jun (JEP, ph. JO). Yellow-billed Cuckoos where seldom noted included singles at Zuni's Blackrock 5 Jun (JO), near Farmington 24 Jun (TR), at Los Luceros near Española 14 Jun & 4 Jul (MM), Eldorado 2 Jun (ph. DW), Clayton L. 27 Jul (NC), the Canadian R. near Logan 26 Jul (NC), and near Gila Cliff Dwellings 15 Jul (K. Brodhead), but few were found on the lower Pecos R. near Carlsbad, where spraying to kill saltcedar had destroyed much suitable habitat (SW). Maintaining their Eddy beachhead were 8 Elf Owls in lower Last Chance Canyon 8 Jul (SW). The state-first Barred Owl, discovered at Galisteo in late May, persisted in cottonwoods along Galisteo Cr. into Aug (JBa et al.). Northerly Whip-poor-wills were 2 in Hausner Canyon, Zuni Mts. 4 Jun (JO), 2 at Doc Long Picnic Area, Sandia Mts. 8 Jun (DW) and 2 Jul (CR), and one on the Vermejo Ranch in Crow Canyon, n. Sangre de Cristo Mts. 13 Jul (v.r. DC).

Hummingbirds were widely reported. Broad-billed Hummingbirds in the Peloncillo Mts. n.

of Guadalupe Canyon were 3 in Cottonwood Canyon 12 Jul (WW), one to 2 in Skeleton Canyon 12 Jun-8 Jul (SOW, JEP, JO), and one to 2 in P.O. Canyon Jun-Jul (CL). Violet-crowned Hummingbirds were notably scarce in Guadalupe Canyon, with only 2 there 12 Jun (SOW) and none found later. Single Blue-throated Hummingbirds were in Cottonwood Canyon 12 Jul (WW) and at Queen 5 Jul (SW). A female Magnificent Hummingbird was n. to the Pajarito Ski area above Los Alamos 4-5 Jul (JEP, ph. JO). Up to 4 ad. Lucifer Hummingbirds were reported Jun-Jul in P.O. Canyon (CL), where a female gathered nest material 22 Jun (K. Scholes) and 2-3 fledglings were noted 27-31 Jul (CL); elsewhere in the Peloncillos, 2 were in Skeleton Canyon 28 Jun (SOW) and one in Cottonwood Canyon 12 Jul (WW). Other notable hummingbirds were an early Anna's in P.O. Canyon 30 Jun (CL), a Costa's banded at L. Roberts 28 Jul (JD-M), and single Calliope e. to Ute L. 28 Jul (DC) and B.L.N.W.R. 16 & 20 Jul (GW). A mysterious but well-documented hummingbird at Bosque 25 Jul (m.ob., ph. G. Froelich, ph. JO) likely was a Calliope Hummingbird x Rufous Hummingbird hybrid. Earliest Rufous was a male in the Manzano Mts. 23 Jun (TH); one to 2 others were at 10 sites statewide 25-30 Jun (m.ob.), and 7 were banded at L. Roberts 1 Jul (JD-M). Six Allen's Hummingbirds were banded in the L. Roberts area 18-31 Jul (JD-M), and a probable male Allen's was at Las Cruces 10-17 Jul (D. Griffin).

An Elegant Trogon pair was found nesting in the cen. Peloncillo Mts. 28 Jun and 8-9 Jul (SOW, PM). A pair of Lewis's Woodpeckers was nesting at Santa Fe's Fairview Cemetery 27 & 30 Jul (DW, JS). Far n. were 2 Acorn Woodpeckers at Cedar Springs Campground e. of Gobernador, Rio Arriba 17 Jul (JO), where first reported in May; other Acorns in the nw. were singles near Cuba 18 Jul (JO) and in the Chuska Mts. near Crystal 24 Jul (CR, BN). Ladder-backed Woodpeckers are unexpected in the nw., so noteworthy was one near Ambrosia L., McKinley 11 Jul (CR); another was n. to Maxwell 7 Jul (ph. DC). Scarce in the Sacramento Mts., an active Downy Woodpecker nest was near Clouderoft 12 Jun (WH). American Three-toed Woodpeckers were much in evidence in the San Juan, Sangre de Cristo, and Jemez ranges (m.ob.), including the San Pedro Park area near Cuba 7 & 10 Jul (CR, JO); unusual was one at Little Walnut Picnic Area near Silver City in mid-Jul (fide D. Zimmerman).

FLYCATCHERS THROUGH BUSHTITS

Single Hammond's Flycatchers were singing in aspens in the Zuni Mts. near Coddington 8 Jun (HS) and near Ojo Redondo 25 Jun (HS); an ad. with a begging juv. was in upper Cimarron Canyon 10 Jul (DC). Ten Dusky Flycatchers were detected on a three-km transect along Bluewater Cr., Zuni Mts. 24 Jun (HS). Gray Flycatchers continued to pop up most every-

where, including singing birds s. to the Burro Mts. (JD) and Sawtooth Mts. (SOW) in Jun and a record 8 in the Gallinas Mts. near Corona 18 Jun (HS). Black Phoebe are now well established n. to *San Juan* and *Colfax*, with two successful pairs at Farmington in Jun (AN, ph. TR) and pairs with fledglings at Cimarron 12 Jun (DC) and Springer 15 Jul (DC); providing additional evidence of range expansion were singles on the Animas R. near the Colorado line 16 & 23 Jun (TR) and near Bluewater Campground 24 Jun (HS), a pair at El Rito 11 Jun (JO), and one in the Sacramento Mts. at 2160 m 12 Jun (WH). Summering Eastern Phoebes were w. to the Mills Canyon area (LS), both Cinta Cr. and Manga Cr., *San Miguel* (CR), and Sumner Dam (GK) in Jun, and a juv. was at Santa Rosa 15 Jun (WW). Noteworthy for the Black Range were 4 Dusky-capped Flycatchers along upper Las Animas Cr., *Sierra*, 10 Jul (WW). Brown-crested Flycatchers were unusually numerous in Guadalupe Canyon (m.ob.) and made a good showing elsewhere, with 4 in Skeleton Canyon 20 Jun (JO) providing a local first, one n. to Glenwood 21 Jul (JO), 4 at K.K. 25 Jun (JO), 2 on upper Las Animas Cr., *Sierra* 10 Jul (WW), and one in the Tres Hermanas Mts. near Columbus 10 Jun (LM); a large *Myiarchus* at La Mesa, *Doña Ana* 8 Jun (GE) may have been this species. A Sulphur-bellied Flycatcher was in Guadalupe Canyon 11–12 Jun (SOW), the 3rd consecutive year for the species there. Only one Thick-billed Kingbird was in Guadalupe Canyon 19 & 26 Jun (JEP, JO), where many of the large sycamores favored by this species were dead or dying. Far w. were single Scissor-tailed Flycatchers at Maxwell 8 Jun (ph. KG) and L.V.N.W.R. 15 Jul (MR); a pair was nest-building at B.L.N.W.R. 27 Jun (GW).

Single Bell's Vireos were n. in the R.G.V. to La Joya 14 & 23 Jun (JD) and in the Pecos Valley to Bosque Grande n. of Roswell 9 Jun (WH). Three Gray Vireos were singing near Piñon 10 Jun (WH), and 2 at Red L., Guadalupe Mts. 5 Jul (SW) furnished a new locale; searches for nests in *Socorro* found four in the Ladrona Mts. 24 Jun, two at the Socorro Box 28 Jun, and four (plus a pair feeding fledged cowbirds) in the Quebradas area 28 Jun (JD). The Yellow-throated Vireo found at R.G.N.C. in May remained until 5 Jun (m.ob.); far w. was another in the G.B.A. 10 Jul (JBa). Singing Red-eyed Vireos were w. to Cimarron 31 Jul (DC) and Albuquerque's South Valley 17 Jun (DH). Several corvid species in the R.G.V. appear to have suffered steep declines in recent years, with West Nile virus the suspected culprit. Western Scrub-Jays were considered common in the Cochiti area in 2000 but were scarce or absent there in 2004, and reports of "dead blue jays" were received from the area (MW). In the Española area, monthly counts of Black-billed Magpies at one site declined from 35 in 2002 to 15 in 2003 to zero

by Jul 2004 (MM). Similarly, American Crows have declined sharply on standard transects in the middle R.G.V. (DH). Northwest of expected was a Chihuahuan Raven near San Ysidro, *Sandoval* 8 Jul (CR). Purple Martins returned to the recently-colonized Sangre de Cristo Mts., including one n. to the Raton area 24 Jul (DC), 2 above Gallinas, *San Miguel* 5 Jun (CR), and singles near Elk Mt. 6 Jul (WW), at Cowles 16 Jul (JEP), and Iron Gate Campground n. of Cowles 26 Jun (DW); noteworthy in the w. were five active nests in Cebolla Canyon, *Cibola* 3 Jul (DK). About 25 Tree Swallows were using nest boxes at Eagle Nest 12 Jun (DC); others suggestive of local breeding were at Iron Gate Campground 26 Jun (DW). Cave Swallows colonized an abandoned garage at White's City, where there were five nests 23 Jun (SW). Unusual at 3030 m were 15 Bushtits on Elk Mt. 16 Jul (JEP).

NUTHATCHES THROUGH TANAGERS

Red-breasted Nuthatches began appearing in numbers (up to 7 daily) in the middle R.G.V. by 22 Jul (DH), and the species was "common" in the Burro Mts. 24–25 Jul (JD), where absent in Jun; unusual was one at K.K. 25 Jun (JO). One to 2 Pygmy Nuthatches descended to the R.G.V. at Albuquerque 22 Jul (DH). House Wrens apparently invaded the Gallinas Mts. near Corona following a large fire in 2001; this season, 8 were singing and a pair was feeding young 18 Jun (HS). Ten Black-tailed Gnatcatchers were tallied in the Tres Hermanas Mts. 10 Jun (LM); far from expected range was a Black-tailed at the Gila Cliff Dwellings 16 Jul (DK). A lone Veery singing along the Rio Pueblo, *Taos* 22 Jun–11 Jul (WW, JEP, JO, CB) provided the only report of the species. Late for the Peloncillo Mts. was a singing Swainson's Thrush in P.O. Canyon 17 & 19 Jun (CL). A white American Robin was at Socorro 10 Jul (vt. T. Mitchusson); a juv. was at Artesia 1 Jun (SW), where breeding is rare. Nicely described was a female Varied Thrush at Las Cruces 3 Jul (L. Schulte). A Brown Thrasher was nw. to the Animas R. 7–18 Jul (J. Wells, *fide* TR). At the e. fringe of the range were one Crissal Thrasher n. of Roswell at Bosque Grande plus 2 more near there 9 Jun (WH); one at Piñon 10 Jun (WH) provided a local first. Establishing breeding in *San Juan* were two Cedar Waxwing pairs that nested in Russian Olives along the San Juan R. below Navajo Dam 12 Jun–10 Jul (TR et al.); one nest apparently failed, but the other pair was feeding nestlings in Jul (ph. TR). Elsewhere, up to 4 Cedar Waxwings were seen daily at San Juan Pueblo throughout Jun (DS), where nesting was first documented in 1995. Single Phainopeplas wandered n. to *San Juan*, with one along the La Plata R. n. of Farmington 25 Jun (ph. TR) and another at Chaco Canyon 30 Jun–7 Jul (ph. B. Shattuck); others of note were singles n. to Los Lunas 16 Jul

(DH) and near Mayhill, *Otero* 30 Jun (SW).

A singing Olive Warbler was n. to Hausner Canyon, Zuni Mts. 1 Jun (JT), and 2 were in the San Mateo Mts. near Springtime Campground 11 Jun (HS); ads. were tending fledglings in the Burro Mts. 22 Jun (JD) and 18 Jul (DK). North in the R.G.V. was a pair of Lucy's Warblers at San Acacia 16 Jun (RD). A singing Northern Parula in P.O. Canyon 3 Jun (CL) furnished a local first, as did a male Chestnut-sided Warbler there 13 Jun (CL). Single Black-and-white Warblers were at Maxwell 25 Jun (JS) and at G.B.A. 10 Jul (JBa). Late American Redstarts were singles at R.G.N.C. 2 Jun (C. Davis) and Bosque 3 Jun (DH), plus a female at B.L.N.W.R. 3 Jun and a male there 5 Jun (GW); perhaps summering were a female near Cimarron 5 Jul (DC) and a male there 31 Jul (ph. DC). As in several recent years, an Ovenbird was singing along El Rito Cr. 11 (JO) & 26 Jun (JEP). Surprising was a singing Kentucky Warbler in the Sacramento Mts. sw. of Sacramento, *Otero* 23 Jun (MMS); in the same general area were a singing Hooded Warbler 9 Jun and a pair of Hoodeds 23 Jun (MMS). An ad. Wilson's Warbler with a fledgling was in a willow carr above Serpent L. 26 Jul (Jim Nelson-Moore), and several Wilson's were detected on transects in the nearby Santa Barbara Ridge area 27 Jul (JBe). Northerly Red-faced Warblers were singles in Hausner Canyon, Zuni Mts. 1 Jun (JT) and in the Sandia Mts. 4 Jun (J. Jokela). Two Painted Redstarts were n. to Sawmill Canyon, Magdalena Mts. 17 Jun (A. Rominger). Scarce in the Manzanito Mts., a singing Hepatic Tanager was at Cedro Peak 5 Jun (JEP); nicely documented was a nesting pair of Hepatics at Crow Canyon near Cimarron 25 Jun–3 Jul (ph. DC). Summer Tanagers summered n. to Galisteo, where there were one to 2 on 12 Jun (JO) and 13 Jul (JBa), plus a stub-tailed fledgling 25 Jul (JBa); in ne. *San Miguel*, up to 7 Summers along Atarque Cr. 3 Jun–29 Jul (MM) represented a significant range expansion. A molting male Scarlet Tanager was near Ponderosa 20 Jul (WW).

SPARROWS THROUGH FINCHES

Responding to wetter conditions, Cassin's Sparrows were widespread and conspicuous, including in the nw., with one near San Antonio Mt., *Rio Arriba* 4 & 6 Jul (*fide* JBe), several near Pueblo Pintado, *McKinley* 30 Jun (JS), plus 2 there 11 Jul (CR), 8 in the Ojito area, w. *Sandoval* 27 Jun (CR), and 2 on Albuquerque's West Mesa 4 Jun (JEP). In the middle Animas Valley, Botteri's Sparrows have been slow to recover in areas that were both burned and grazed but have rebounded in unburned areas following cattle removal; a high 61 territories were mapped there 5–8 Jul (SOW, PM). Surprisingly far n. was a Black-chinned Sparrow in the La Jara Cr. drainage near Gobernador, *Rio Arriba* 19 Jun (JBe), not far from the Colorado line. Lark Buntings responded positive-

ly to plentiful rains in *Colfax*, *Union*, and *Harding*, where they were common to abundant Jun–Jul (LS, DC). Few Savannah Sparrow nests have been documented in New Mexico, so noteworthy was an ad. incubating eggs at Eagle Nest L. 13 Jun (DS). Prolonged drought coupled with excessive livestock grazing have spelled bad news for Arizona Grasshopper Sparrows in s. *Hidalgo*, where standard transects produced only 21 in the s. Animas Valley 10 Jun (down from 109 in 1992) and none in the West Playas Valley 11 Jun (down from 41 in 1992), where apparently extirpated (SOW). Exciting was news of singing Fox Sparrows in willow carrs in the Pecos Wilderness 27 Jul (JBe)—one above Serpent L. and 2 in the upper R. Santa Barbara drainage; the species is not known to nest in New Mexico. At least one Song Sparrow pair was nesting s. to the Zuni Mts. along Bluewater Cr. 24 Jun (HS). Some 48 Lincoln's Sparrows were detected in the San Pedro Park area 6–8 Jul (CR), a surprising density for New Mexico. At least six Yellow-eyed Junco territories were documented in the Burro Mts. Jun–Jul (JD), including a nest with eggs 3 Jun and ads. with fledglings on various dates 4 Jun–25 Jul (JD). Also in the Burro Mts. were at least two pairs of *dorsalis* Gray-headed Juncos, with fledglings noted 21 Jun (JD); this is the only site where the two taxa breed sympatrically.

Northern Cardinals in the ne. were singles at Santa Rosa 15 Jun (WW) and Tucumcari L. 26 Jul (NC). Ad. Pyrrhuloxias were feeding fledglings at Deming 17 (LM) & 31 Jul (CR). Single male Rose-breasted Grosbeaks lingered in the R.G.V. at Escondida 16 Jun (DH) and near Radium Springs 7 Jun (MS, JZ). Indigo Buntings continued to encroach on Lazuli habitat in the north; Indigo Bunting x Lazuli Bunting hybrids were noted on the Animas River 23 Jun and 6 Jul (TR) and near Cimarron 5 Jul (DC). A male Varied Bunting in P.O. Canyon 5–7 Jun (CL) provided a local first. An Eastern Meadowlark was nw. to the Cabezon Peak area, *Sandoval* 27 Jun (CR), and another was n. to Philmont, *Colfax* 16 Jun (DC); 13 were in the Rosebud area of *Harding* and s. *Union* 10 Jun (C. Hayes). Single Bronzed Cowbirds were n. to Albuquerque 13 Jun (JEP), B.L.N.W.R. 4 & 20 Jun (GW), and Portales 25 Jun (GK). An active Orchard Oriole nest was at Ute L. 9 Jun (DC), and another was near Pep in mid-Jun (*fide* TM). A probable male Baltimore Oriole was near Española 18 Jun (M. Orr); another was at B.L.N.W.R. 16 Jun (ph. GW). Cassin's Finches were notably scarce, but Red Crossbills were present in good numbers in the northern two-thirds of the state, including 250 in the San Pedro Park area 6–8 Jul (CR), 50 on Elk Mt. 6 Jul (WW), 26 in the Zuni Mts. 25 Jun (HS), and 40 at

Emory Pass 24 Jul (JEP). A male White-winged Crossbill with a juv. in the Latir Peaks area 19 & 27 Jun (ph. D. DiTommaso) likely nested locally (*fide* C. Benkman); other White-wingeds were 6 in the Brazos Ridge area 7 Jul (*fide* JBe), a male above Serpent L. 17 Jul (JEP), one in the upper R. Santa Barbara drainage 26 Jul (JBe), and 3 at the Santa Fe Ski Basin 27 Jul (WW). An American Goldfinch visited a feeder along the Animas R. near Cedar Hill 16 & 23 Jun (TR), and 2 were at Bosque 4 Jul (DH); up to 5 Americans were on the Cimarron R. near Cimarron 29 Jul (DC), where singing and flight displays were noted.

Initialed observers: Jonathan Batkin (JBa), Jason Beason (JBe), Celestyn Brozek, David Cleary, Nancy Cox, Joan Day-Martin, John DeLong, Robert Doster, Gordon Ewing, Kathy Granillo, David Hawksworth, William Howe, Tyler Huning, Greg Keller, David Krueper, Carroll Littlefield, Martin MacRoberts, Larry Malone, Tish McDaniel, Patricia Mehlhop, Alan Nelson, Bruce Neville, Jerry Oldenettel, John E. Parmeter, Tim Reeves, Mary Ristow, Christopher Rustay, Lawry Sager, Hart Schwarz, Marcy T. Scott, Dale Stahlecker, Mike M. Stake, James Stuart, John Trochet, Gordon Warrick, Mark Watson, Steve West, William West, David White, S. O. Williams, James Zabriske. ☉

State of the Region

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Blessed with a vast land area, a favorable geographic location, and a wide diversity of habitats, New Mexico is home to one of North America's largest avifaunas—510 species at last count, of which some 300 breed in the state. And, owing to the low human population density (15 people/mi²), many New Mexico habitats vital to birds are in functioning or at least restorable condition. Nevertheless, declines are evident in many bird species, with 32 species listed as endangered or threatened and another eight species listed as of special concern by the State of New Mexico.

New Mexico encompasses parts of four Bird Conservation Regions (BCRs): the Southern Rockies/Colorado Plateau that covers most of the northern and central portions of the state (BCR 16), in which Lewis's Woodpecker, Gray Vireo, Pinyon Jay, and Black-throated Gray Warbler are representative species of concern; the Shortgrass Prairie in the east (BCR 18), along the Texas/Oklahoma border, with Lesser Prairie-Chicken, Mountain Plover, Long-billed Curlew, and Lark Bunting; the western-central Sierra Madre Occidental (BCR 34), with Montezuma Quail, Whiskered Screech-Owl, Elegant Trogon, and Red-faced Warbler; and the Chihuahuan Desert across most of the southern third of the state (BCR 35), with Lucifer Hummingbird, Sprague's Pipit, Baird's Sparrow, and Varied Bunting. In addition to these flagship species, numerous other species that occur in New Mexico have suffered documented range-wide or local declines, and so have been designated as priority species by Partners in Flight or other bird plans. Causes for these declines are typically interrelated and often complex, but leading the list is habitat loss, alteration, and/or fragmentation resulting from increasing human pressures on the environment.

Progressive loss of riparian systems is a leading challenge facing many resident and migratory bird species in New Mexico. Water is key to life in New Mexico and elsewhere in the arid Southwest, yet water is scarce and, consequently, is intensively managed. Unfortunately, virtually all water management is geared toward human needs (flood control, irrigation, domestic use, industrial use), leading to increased demands on riparian systems, resulting in lowering water tables, altered hydrology, stream desiccation, and loss of streamside habitats and associated bird species (Yellow-billed Cuckoo, Southwestern Willow Flycatcher, Bell's Vireo). Included here is the rampant poisoning or other "control" of exotic plants such as saltcedar (*Tamarix*) with no regard for the biological consequences of such actions.

Progressive loss or degradation of native grasslands, owing largely to excessive livestock grazing, presents an important challenge to many New Mexico birds, including breeding species (Botteri's Sparrow, Grasshopper Sparrow, Eastern Meadowlark), migrant and/or wintering

species (Sprague's Pipit, Baird's Sparrow, McCown's Longspur), and other species, such as Aplomado Falcon, that require healthy grassland ecosystems to survive. When excessive grazing is combined with periodic drought, grassland degradation can be severe and in some cases probably irreversible. Another threat to the integrity of grasslands as well as other habitats is increased energy development activities throughout much of New Mexico and adjacent western states.

Owing to widespread fire suppression activities in past years, wildfire is now a recognized threat to New Mexico's woodland and forest ecosystems and to many of the birds that depend on them. Especially vulnerable are forest species that require extensive mature forests, such as Northern Goshawk and Mexican Spotted Owl. Included here is the danger inherent in inappropriate (but politically palatable) "management" activities, such as increasing timber harvest to prevent fires.

Encompassing many of the challenges to birds is the continuing failure to recognize—or admit—that New Mexico is, in fact, a very arid region. What some refer to as "long-term drought" may more realistically be seen as a return to long-term norms. Continued reliance on drought as an excuse to continue unsustainable land and water management policies will not resolve the challenges facing life in the Southwest.

Finally, underlying all of the above is a relentlessly growing human population which, if it proves incapable of developing the wisdom to alter its "growth for the sake of growth" philosophy, has the potential to disrupt native ecosystems—ranging from local habitat destruction to global climate change—that both we and our birds depend upon.



Common Black-Hawk is listed as a Threatened species in New Mexico and as a Priority Species by Partners in Flight, largely because its limited habitat—undisturbed riparian corridors with large trees—has been impacted by water diversion projects, development, and disturbance. This photograph was taken in New Mexico's Gila River Valley in July 1969. Photograph by Dale and Marian Zimmerman.

Arizona

Fires took a toll on forests in the Mazatzal, Pinaleno, and White Mountain ranges. Quenching monsoon rains arrived late and were subpar in many parts of the state, providing little relief from the prolonged drought. Southbound marsh-nesting migrants appeared early, and a wave of juvenile Brown Pelicans appeared in late June and wandered the state through July. Ruddy Ground-Doves nested for the second time in the state's history, Wilson's Warbler possibly for the first, and a distinctive subspecies of Yellow Warbler was added to the state's avifauna.

Abbreviations: A.V.S.T.P. (Avra Valley S.T.P.), B.A.N.W.R. (Buenos Aires N.W.R.), H.R.P. (Hassayampa River Preserve, Wickensburg), L.C.R.V. (Lower Colorado R. valley), N.I.R. (Navajo Indian Reservation), S.C.L. (San Carlos L.), S.P.R. (San Pedro R.), Sweetwater (Sweetwater Wetlands, Tucson).

GREBES THROUGH SPOONBILL

Marking the return of water to the ponds at Kino Springs, a Least Grebe surfaced there 8–15 Jul (M. Hysell, JLD, ph. MMS). It was the first to be documented in Santa Cruz since 1976. The Tucson Least Grebes submerged again: the Sam Lena Park bird was last reported 1 Jun (MMS) and the Sweetwater bird 8 Jul (m.ob.) A few Eared Grebes summered across s. Arizona at Casa Grande S.T.P., S.C.L., and Willcox, but there was no indication of nesting (DJ, DS, MMS). Single Western Grebes at Willcox 9–11 Jun (GH) and Maricopa 11 Jul+ (DJ) and 2 Clark's Grebes at Willcox 2 Jun (GH) were away from expected summering areas. At S.C.L., Clark's Grebes accounted for the majority of up to 300 summering *Aechmophorus* (KK et al.).

At S.C.L., 7 Neotropic Cormorants provided a first for Graham 8–17 Jul (KK, DS); this species continues to spread. One was seen 5 Jul at Gillespie Dam (TC), where seldom reported. Double-crested Cormorants nested again at Greer, with 12 nests occupied 29 Jul (MMS et al.). Sixty birds at Crescent L. 30 Jul (MMS et al.) reflected the recent growth of the White Mt. summer cormorant population. An imm. Magnificent Frigatebird over L. Havasu City 6 Jul (M. Pierce, *vide* TC) was a casual visitor from the Gulf of California.

There are surprisingly few reports of Tricolored Heron from the L.C.R.V., so one at Yuma 9–13 Jul (ph. JC, HD) was notable. Elsewhere, they put in a good showing, with individuals at Green Valley 22 Jun (L. Halsey), A.V.S.T.P. 9 Jul+ (BH, MPO, ph. MMS), and Paloma 30 Jul (BG). Reddish Egret numbers were impressive, with one at A.V.S.T.P. 28 Jun–6 Jul (R. Freeman, ph. MMS), up to 2 at Paloma 2 Jul+ (ph. BG et



al.), and singles at Willcox 8 Jul (*vide* D. Jasper), Dateland 9 Jul+ (JC, ph. HD), Tucson 9–22 Jul (ph. MMS), Maricopa 11 Jul (+DJ), and B.A.N.W.R. 18 Jul (A. Whitman)—nearly equaling the state's total prior to 2000. At the Paloma rookery, up to 200 Cattle Egrets including fledglings were present 5 Jul (TC). Causing a stir was an ad. apparent Glossy Ibis x White-faced Ibis hybrid at Willcox 18 Jul (ph. JLD, J. Yergler). There remains only one accepted record of Glossy Ibis for Arizona. Also exciting were 3 juv. Roseate Spoonbills in nw. Tucson 22–23 Jul (R. Welter, ph. MMS), less-than-annual wanderers from the Gulf of California.

DUCKS THROUGH TROGON

Among the ducks of summer were a few standouts: a female Wood Duck at A.V.S.T.P. 8 May+ (m.ob.), a Bufflehead at Willcox 11–22 Jun (MPO, ph. MMS), and the first Arizona summer record of Surf Scoter, a second-year male at Casa Grande S.T.P. 11 Jul–3 Aug (DJ, ph. DS). The only White-

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SA The phenomenon of the season was a deluge of **Brown Pelicans** across the state, beginning in mid-Jun. Unprecedented numbers appeared from Yuma to Safford to the Grand Canyon. High counts included **50** at Topock Marsh 29 Jun, **33** on L. Havasu 30 Jun (both K. Blair), **24** brought to the Arizona–Sonora Desert Museum, Tucson (M. Powell-McConnell), **15** over the Yuma Marine Corps Air Station 30 Jun (*fide* JC), **13** brought to Liberty Wildlife in Phoenix (A. Peyton), and **10** at Dateland 7 Jul (*fide* JC). By late Jul, most of the birds had disappeared. While it is difficult to assemble a precise total, it is likely that over **300** pelicans were involved, more than double the previous high. Such invasions typically result from nesting success followed by food shortages in the Gulf of California. The absence of adults among grounded birds suggests that inexperience is also a factor.

Emblematic of the widespread summer invasion of Brown Pelican in the Southwest, this juvenile hitched a ride with a commercial raft trip in the Grand Canyon near Grapevine Rapid, Arizona on 24 June 2004. At least three pelicans were observed in the Grand Canyon, where they are casual. Photograph by Frank Talbott.

tailed Kite reported was in the Amado area 19 & 27 Jul (K. Groschuf, J. Raffin). A Mississippi Kite wandered southward along the upper S.P.R. to Hereford 20 Jun (JB). Apparently still resident, a Red-shouldered Hawk was reported from H.R.P. 5 Jun (JP). In the Chiricahua Mts., 2 Short-tailed Hawks continued over Barfoot Park through the period (m.ob.). In the Huachuca Mts., a single Short-tailed was seen 9 May+ over Miller and Carr Canyons (B. Feltner, †D. vander Pluym, CDB), where they have appeared sporadically since 1999. A juv. Virginia Rail at Sweetwater 22 Jun (ph. MMS) was away from known nesting areas. A lone Sandhill Crane summered again at Luna L. (SH).

Early southbound shorebird highlights included a Black-bellied Plover at S.C.L. 24 Jul (RW et al.), a Semipalmated Plover at Dateland 9 Jul (JC, HD), a Lesser Yellowlegs at Willcox 22 Jun (DS), a Marbled Godwit there 18 Jun (JM), and a Wilson's Snipe at Green Valley S.T.P. 28 Jul (DP). A Snowy Plover at S.C.L. 8–17 Jul (MMS, DS) was unexpected in midsummer; another was at Willcox 9 Jun (GH). Whimbrels are casual away from the L.C.R.V. Early singles were at Paloma 2 Jul (ph. BG) and S.C.L. 8 Jul (ph. DS). Single Semipalmated Sandpipers were reported (without details) from Willcox 18 Jul (TC) and Green Valley S.T.P. 28 Jul (DP). A Short-billed Dowitcher at Gilbert Water Ranch

11 Jul was thought to be of the subspecies *caurinus* (†P. Moulton et al.). Although *caurinus* is not unexpected, only *hendersoni* has been physically documented in the state. At Willcox, 2 *hendersoni* were studied 22 Jul (RW); an ad. there 27 Jul was not identified to subspecies (MMS, KK). Two Long-billed Dowitchers at Cow Springs L. 17 Jun were casual for the date (CL). Although southbound Wilson's Phalaropes are expected by mid- to late Jun, early numbers were higher than usual this summer, notably at Willcox, with up to 25 there 15 Jun (JM), 80 on 25 Jun (MPo, MMS) and 100+ on 29 Jun (J. Higgins, DS).

Inland-nesting larids also appeared early. Small numbers of Franklin's Gulls were at Willcox 15 Jun–6 Jul (m.ob.) and at S.C.L. 3 Jul (KK). At Round Rock L., 9 ad. California Gulls on 25 Jun were exceptionally early migrants (CL). Singles summered at Willcox 18 Jun+ (MPo, ph. MMS) and S.C.L. 3–24 Jul (KK et al.). A Caspian Tern at Big L. 2 Jun (SH) and 2 at Sunrise L. 9 Jun (ph. SH) were apparently firsts for the White Mt. region. Elsewhere in *Apache*, one at Round Rock L. 25 Jun was exceptional in midsummer. At Patagonia L., one was present on the odd date of 20 Jun (S. Kennedy). Early Forster's Terns included 2 at Cholla L. 23 Jun (J. Videle), singles at Willcox 28 Jun and 24 Jul (GH, P. Salomon), 9 there 15 Jul (GH), and singles at S.C.L. 3, 8, 17 & 24 Jul

(KK, DS, RW). Late migrant Least Terns were at Willcox 9 & 18 Jun (*fide* GH; ph. MMS) and A.V.S.T.P. 11 Jun (BH). Early Black Terns were one at Willcox 27 Jun (GW), 7 at A.V.S.T.P. 28 Jun (BH), and one at Sunrise L. 9 Jul (M. Kehl).

Inching northward, 3 White-winged Doves were in Overgaard 6 Jun (K. Penland), and one was in Cameron 12 Jun (CL); they have become regular in Springerville (GC, DR). A few Ruddy Ground-Doves in the w. Phoenix valley since spring were suspected of nesting. On 9 Jul, a male was seen carrying nesting material (RMJ). There is only one prior Arizona nesting record, from H.R.P. At Red Rock, up to 2 were seen through the summer (m.ob.). Casual in the state, a Groove-billed Ani was in an Arivaca yard 16 Jun (vt. B. & C. Sparks). Buff-collared Nighthjars remained at Oro Blanco Mine though the period. A single late-arriving and apparently unpaired Buff-collared called at Proctor Rd., Madera Canyon 6–18 Jun (B. Sullivan et al., †MMS), while at Brown Canyon, B.A.N.W.R. (where access is limited), one was heard 27–28 Jul (D. Krueper). Here at the n. periphery of the nighthjar's range, the known Arizona population declined through the 1990s; an increase may be underway.

Overall hummingbird numbers remained down in se. Arizona. Among the less common hummers, up to 3 White-eared Hummingbirds were reported from Miller Canyon 13 Jun+ (T. Beatty, m.ob.), and single hybrid hummingbirds of presumed Berylline parentage were in Ash, Miller, and Ramsey Canyons (MJB, TB, MPo). Violet-crowned Hummingbirds were again present in small numbers in eastside Huachuca Mt. canyons (MJB, TB, BB, J. Hirth, MPo). At the w. edge of their range, a Violet-crowned was in Brown Canyon, B.A.N.W.R. 25 Jun (D. Krueper). Unexpected was one visiting a feeder at 2200 m in the Santa Catalina Mts. 10–11 Jul (B. Bickel). Following recent trends, Lucifer Hummingbirds summered in eastside Huachuca Mt. canyons (MJB, TB, BB), while in the Chiricahua Mts. the only Lucifer reported was a female in Paradise in early Jun (J. Lewis). Rufous Hummingbirds arrived early: single males appeared in Flagstaff 19 Jun (J. Hildebrand), Sedona 20 Jun ("Lazuli"), Eagar 25 Jun (DR), and Miller Canyon 26 Jun (TB). Southbound Allen's Hummingbirds turned up on schedule at Willow Canyon, Santa Catalina Mts. 3 Jul (RT, B. Bickel), Ramsey Canyon 9 Jul (MP), Madera Canyon (2) 12 Jul (GW), and Arivaca 13 & 27 Jul (GW).

Although not far from nesting areas in Sycamore Canyon, an Elegant Trogon observed all summer in California Gulch was

unexpected in such marginal habitat (D. Sutherland, SH, m.ob.) Another in the Patagonia Mts. s. of Harshaw 22 Jul (T. Army) was one of very few ever reported from that range.

FLYCATCHERS THROUGH PHAINOPEPLA

A Northern Beardless-Tyrannulet at H.R.P. 2 May–13 Jun (PD) was n. and w. of its normal breeding range in the state. A number of Gray Flycatchers appeared as early fall migrants in late Jul, including one in riparian at Canyon de Chelly 16 Jul (CL), one at Oak Flat Campground 28 Jul (M. Kehl), and one along the Gila R., e. of Winkelman 29 Jul (MMS). Also very early were calling Pacific-slope Flycatchers at Sycamore Canyon, Santa Cruz: one 20 Jul (S. Hampton), and another there 28 Jul (DS et al.). Similarly, silent Pacific-slope/Cordilleran Flycatchers were found earlier than usual for migrating birds at Patagonia L. 11 Jul (SH), Sweetwater 16 Jul (RT), and Sabino Canyon 25 Jul (SF et al.). It was a good year for Buff-breasted Flycatchers in the Chiricahua Mts., with no fewer than seven pairs breeding at three different locations; the species has become more common in this range during the past 10 years (DJa et al.). Scarce anywhere on the N.I.R., Black Phoebes were found at Canyon de Chelly 11 Jun (CL) and at Tuba City 19 Jul (CL). An Ash-throated Flycatcher at Greer 30 Jul (MPo, MMS) was at an odd location and likely an early migrant. A Sulphur-bellied Flycatcher at Brown Canyon 27 Jul (D. Krueper et al.) was at the w. limit of this species' range in the United States, and possibly only the 2nd report ever from the Baboquivari Mts.

A pair of Thick-billed Kingbirds found at H.R.P. 5 Jun–1 Aug+ (JP, T. Linda, TC et al.) represented only the 2nd *Maricopa* record and the first nesting report there. An Eastern Kingbird, casual in the se. during the summer season, was reported at the San Manuel crossing of the S.P.R. 10 Jul (D. Laush). Also casual in Arizona during the summer, Scissor-tailed Flycatchers were reported at Fort Huachuca 24 Jun (S. Rottenborn) and in the San Rafael Grasslands 6 Jul (D. Brown).

Red-eyed Vireos were reported in E. Whitetail Canyon (Chiricahua Mts.) 9 Jul (RT) and in Miller Canyon 28 Jul (B. Schram et al.); this species is still considered casual in the state at any season, particularly during the middle of the summer. A Western Scrub-Jay along the Ruby Road w. of Nogales 12 Jul (JLD et al.) was at an odd location for the species in s. Arizona. American Crows were found nesting at Canyon de Chelly, a new breeding location for the species in n. Arizona (CL).

Early migrant Tree Swallows were de-

tected at a number of locations in s. Arizona during the first week of Jul, the largest concentration being 20+ at S.C.L. 8 Jul (DS, MMS). Likewise, Bank Swallows were moving southward in numbers during the first week of Jul, with a noted increase during the 2nd week (m.ob.); this movement for both species was at least two weeks earlier than usual. The pair of Black-capped Gnatcatchers at Patagonia L., present all summer, was seen nest-building for the 2nd time by 2 Jun (m.ob.); imms. were noted during Jul, but it was unclear whether the young present were from the nest found during the spring, or from the subsequent attempt. A single female was reported from near Proctor Rd. below Madera Canyon 25 Jul (K. McBride). Townsend's Solitaire is not known to breed in s. Arizona, but one singing on territory near Rustler Park, Chiricahua Mts. 6 Jun (WR) and 2 in the same mts. along Morse Canyon Trail below Johnson Peak 2 Jul (DS) suggested at least a breeding attempt this summer; there is an old published summer sight report for this species from the Chiricahuas from 11 Jul 1956 (*Birds of Arizona*).

Gray Catbirds were away from normal breeding areas in n. Arizona at Canyon de Chelly 30 Jun (CL) and at Eagar 12 Jul (DR). Bendire's Thrasher is considered a rare breeder in n. Arizona, so 6 along To Nahakaad Wash near Cameron 15 Jun (CL) were of interest. Crissal Thrashers were again noted along the Little Colorado R., w. of Cameron, where their distribution is still poorly understood (CL). Phainopeplas are normally only sporadically reported from n. Arizona; therefore several individuals at scattered locations along the Little Colorado R. near Cameron 12–17 Jun (CL) perhaps represented new breeding locations for the species.

WARBLERS THROUGH ORIOLES

A juv. Orange-crowned Warbler reported near Barfoot Park, Chiricahua Mts. 30 Jun (RW) was intriguing, as the species is not known to breed in this range; it does nest in small numbers in both the Santa Catalina and Pinaleno Mts. Lucy's Warblers were noted at several locations at higher-than-usual elevations, including Rustler Park 6 Jun (WR) and at several spots along the Little Colorado R. near Cameron (CL). Before last year, Yellow Warbler was not known to breed above the Mogollon Rim in ne. Arizona, so one singing all Jun at Canyon de Chelly (CL), 3 at Cow Springs L. 17–19 Jun (CL), and a fledgling at Keams Canyon 17 Jul (CL) suggest that this species likely breeds in proper riparian habitat at lower elevations in n. Arizona. Certainly the bird of the season was Ari-

zona's first record of a Yellow Warbler of the *erithachorides* subspecies group (often called Mangrove Warbler), a very worn individual netted and photographed near Roosevelt L. 31 Jul (P. Newall, ph. N. Banfield; *vide* E. Paxton). The closest this subspecies gets to Arizona is the mangroves along the Gulf of California in n. Sonora, Mexico, where it is considered a resident; the subspecies at this location is *rhizophorae*. The Arizona record represents only a 5th report of this complex from the United States, the others coming from s. coastal Texas. Chestnut-sided Warbler is casual at best during the summer in Arizona, so singles at Flagstaff 16 Jun (C. Holm), Madera Canyon 17 Jun (J. Scheib), and Whitlow Dam 8 Jul (JB) were all of note. A report of a singing subad. male Magnolia Warbler in the Santa Catalina Mts. 20 Jun (WR) represents one of the few Jun records for the state. A Townsend's Warbler at Chiricahua N.M. 1 Jun (JM) was likely a late migrant. A Hermit Warbler at French Joe Canyon 29 Jul (SH) was earlier than usual. Always a great find in Arizona, a Yellow-throated Warbler was at Ramsey Canyon 3 Jul (†J. Morlan); this individual was identified as the subspecies *albilora*.

Black-and-white Warblers put in appearances at Canyon de Chelly 30 Jun (B. Marshall, *vide* CL) and at Sweetwater 25 Jul (S. Hampton). American Redstarts, casual in summer, were reported from Tucson 11 Jun (†R. Lindley), South Fork of the Little Colorado R. (a singing male where this species has nested in the past) 28 Jun (DR, GC), and Las Cienegas 20 Jul (J. Whetstone). Quite amazing were 2 Ovenbirds netted at Las Cienegas 8 Jun (J. Whetstone et al.). Hooded Warbler is almost annual in the state in Jun; this year, one male was in French Joe Canyon 17 Jun (M. Kehl) and another in Madera Canyon 2 Jul (†R. Romea). Intriguing was a singing male Wilson's Warbler at Sheep Crossing, White Mts. 2 Jun, and an ad. with 2 imms. there 26 Jul (D. Touret et al.); although this does not definitively confirm nesting in Arizona, it is certainly suggestive. Another male in willows at Greer 30 Jul (MMS, MPo) was perhaps just an early migrant. The Rufous-capped Warblers at French Joe Canyon were last reported 27 Jun (JB); with several negative reports thereafter, perhaps ending a great run for that species at this n. outpost. One was reported from Sycamore Canyon, Santa Cruz 20 Jul (S. Hampton), and 2 were found there 28 Jul (MMS, KK; ph. v.r. DS); despite the apparent resident status of this species in recent years in French Joe Canyon, it remains a rare vagrant to Arizona from Mexico.

The pair of Flame-colored Tanagers

found nesting during the spring at Madera Canyon successfully fledged 2 young and were seen through 31 Jul+ (m.ob.). A Green-tailed Towhee in a Scottsdale Yard 12 Jun (JB) was very late and represented the first Jun *Maricopa* record. A Northern Cardinal in Prescott Valley 10–15 Jun (J. McCasland) represented one of the few Prescott area reports. Rose-breasted Grosbeak reports in Arizona have increased noticeably in Jun and Jul of recent years; this year, no fewer than 18 were reported during the period, again confirming this change in relative abundance. Typically, Jun is an “off”

month for migrant Lazuli and Indigo Buntings in se. Arizona; a male Lazuli was at Madera Canyon 19 Jun (JB), while single Indigos were at Ramsey Canyon 5–6 Jun (J. Hirth) and Madera Canyon 19 Jun (JB). A male Varied Bunting at Whitlow Dam 8 Jul (JB) was n. of its usual range in s. Arizona. Late Jul brought the usual reports of Painted Buntings in se. Arizona: males were reported from upper S.P.R. 27 Jul (M. Marsden), Portal 28 & 31 Jul (DJa; C. Comeau), and Miller Canyon 31 Jul (CDB). A flyover Dickcissel, casual during the summer season, was reported at A.V.S.T.P. 24 Jun (DS).

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State of the Region

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From its high desert temperatures to its title as the second-fastest-growing state in the United States, Arizona is known for extremes. Here one can find lush riparian habitat bordered by arid grasslands, and snow-capped mountains surrounded by cactus-clad deserts. Arizona is a meeting point for several major biogeographic provinces. The Rocky Mountains from the north meet the Sierra Madre Occidental from the south; from the east, the Chihuahuan Desert blends with the Sonoran Desert from the west. This mixture of ecosystems translates into a wide range of habitats and a very diverse avifauna: 529 species of birds have been documented breeding in,



The Breeding Bird Survey is the chief source of information about bird populations in North America, particularly about passerines. According to B.B.S. data, Verdin has declined by over 85% in the desert scrub habitats surveyed over the past several decades, almost certainly because of the degradation and loss of these habitats. Few data exist on desert and grassland species in adjacent northern Mexico. Photograph by Arthur Morris/VIREO.

migrating through, or wintering in Arizona, including 10 listed as Endangered, Threatened, or Candidate through the Federal Endangered Species Act (ESA).

Within Arizona are parts of three Bird Conservation Regions: the Southern Rockies/Colorado Plateau (BCR 16) encompasses the northern and central parts of the state, where Partners in Flight Watch List species include California Condor, Lewis's Woodpecker, Pinyon Jay, and Gray Vireo; the Sonoran and Mojave Deserts (BCR 33) cover the southern and western part of the state and provide habitat to Watch List species including Bell's Vireo, Le Conte's Thrasher, Lucy's Warbler, and Abert's Towhee; the Sierra Madre Occidental (BCR 34) climbs north from Sonora into the southeastern part of the state, where you can find Watch List species such as Scaled Quail, Band-tailed Pigeon, Mexican Spotted Owl, Elegant Trogon, Arizona Woodpecker, and Red-faced and Grace's Warblers. In addition to species on the Partners in Flight Watch List, which includes those that face the greatest range-wide concerns, Arizona also provides habitat to many “stewardship species,” which merit special attention for conservation action, either

through management or long-term planning, such as Lucifer Hummingbird, Black-tailed Gnatcatcher, Black-throated Sparrow, and Scott's Oriole.

Threats to habitat in Arizona are as varied as the number of bird species that occur there. Water use is one of the most pressing issues in the state, and those working in conservation struggle to deal with the conflicts of a rapidly growing human population and the needs of birds and their habitats. Groundwater pumping deficits are status quo throughout the state, and many areas that once supported rich riparian habitat are now dry creek beds. Riparian habitats in southeastern Arizona support an amazing diversity of birds, including the largest population of Yellow-billed Cuckoos in the western United States, but water use by humans continues to increase and draw down the water table, threatening the long-term survival of these habitats and the birds that depend on them. As the needs of agriculture, recreation, and residential and industrial water users increase, birds that depend on riparian habitats, such as Gray Hawk and Southwestern Willow Flycatcher, consistently lose out.

Development is another urgent conservation issue in Arizona. As the state's population continues to grow, developers extend their reach farther out into fragile habitats. In the southern part of the state, homes, businesses, and roads now occupy large areas of what was once essential desert habitat for a variety of sensitive bird species, including Cactus Ferruginous Pygmy-Owl and Rufous-winged Sparrow. Fragmentation brought on by development further challenges birds that are dependent on large stretches of contiguous habitat for nesting, for foraging, or for migratory habitat. Adding to the primary impact of habitat destruction brought on by development is the increased demand for water resources that a growing population brings.

Some habitats in Arizona evolved along with the natural fire cycle and have developed mechanisms to survive and even thrive with occasional burns. Similarly, the bird species that use these habitats have evolved along with the ecosystems. Changes to the natural fire cycle have had negative impacts on both habitats and the birds that use them. Control and alteration of fire regimes have resulted in habitat fragmentation, affecting birds such as Elf Owl. Fire control has also led to intense shrub encroachment on grasslands, negatively affecting species such as Swainson's Hawk, Sprague's Pipit, and Baird's Sparrow. Catastrophic fires, brought on by the combined pressures of timber over-harvesting, drought, and encroaching development, threaten Arizona's extensive pine forests and bird species, including Northern Goshawk, Spotted Owl, and Cordilleran Flycatcher. Other plant communities in the state are not adapted to fire and cannot tolerate burning, such as Sonoran desert uplands. Development has led to the spread of invasive non-native grasses in areas that naturally are largely bare of ground cover. As development presses on, the likelihood of fire increases. In habitats where native plants are not fire-adapted, fire-induced changes may be harmful to some bird populations.

Grazing management in all habitats is a major issue for bird populations. Overgrazing is a problem throughout the state, particularly with the drought conditions of recent years. Historic eradication of Black-tailed Prairie Dog by ranchers has negatively impacted populations of grassland birds, including Ferruginous Hawk and Burrowing Owl. In riparian areas, overgrazing has led to increased erosion, incised stream beds, decreased water quality, and removal of or change in vegetative structure necessary for many riparian bird species.

Arizona is a major migratory pathway not only for birds but for people as well. Migrants from Mexico and elsewhere in Central and South America make their way into the United States, many crossing into the country through various points in Arizona, impacting bird habitat and leaving behind trash. The largest Border Patrol station in the country was recently built in Douglas, Arizona, in the southeastern part of the state. The effects of Border Patrol activities on birds and other wildlife is little known, and it will be important to assess the consequences of the use of off-road vehicles and the powerful lights that illuminate the border area each night. This issue, in particular, drives home the point that conservation is not simply a matter of good science. In order to find solutions to the myriad issues that face bird populations in Arizona, it is critical to take into account the complex interactions of the environment with social, economic, and cultural factors in the Region.

Alaska



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As the later phases of spring break-up accelerated in April and May, the summer 2005 season unfolded quickly under warming and dry conditions Regionwide. Most of the Region fell under a continuous unseasonably warm and storm-free spell that spanned the summer. Record-high temperatures, with several stretches for days in a row, punctuated the summer across mainland Alaska. These conditions suited widespread early onset of nesting of up to two weeks ahead of normal, especially for shorebirds in Western Alaska. Residents, however, showed little to no early nesting, although at least Common Redpolls and Pine Siskins did double-clutch in parts of South-coastal Alaska. An extension of sub-par precipitation totals from the 2003 water season persisted through July most everywhere, and the 2005 fire season was the worst in Alaska's history. Some 6.4 million acres of mostly boreal forest burned this year, mostly in the second half of the season, which may have spared this year's breeding success. The dry conditions certainly benefited ground nesters, but few data were submitted for this report on the season's nesting

trends. As in past summer seasons, input and documentations from bird tours and from Alaska's periphery was sporadic. Our knowledge of movements of wandering non-breeders across the Region, and the timing and onset of post-breeding forms, remains irregular, so it is essential that visitors and Alaska birders submit summer-season highlights. As always, good North Slope coverage again produced surprises and extralimitals in June and July.

Abbreviations: S.E. (Southeast Alaska); S.C. (South-coastal Alaska). Referenced details, specimens, photographs, and videotape are on file at the University of Alaska Museum.

LOONS THROUGH CRANES

At least two pairs of Arctic Loons were again noted from coastal stretches along the road e. of Nome 14–16 Jun (VENT, Field

SA United States Fish & Wildlife Service staff surveyed longitudinal transects within 5 km of shore off Yakutat 6–15 Jul with significant results, highlighted by a Pink-footed Shearwater off Ocean Cape 13 Jul and at least 5 Manx Shearwaters, mostly between Cape Fairweather and Lituya Bay 8–10 Jul (ph., †PS). Pink-footed has only recently been elevated to the main Alaska list, with photographs from the North Gulf. This trip produced decent photographs of one of the Manx, which, unfortunately, were not detailed enough for a definitive documentation. With these Manx reports, we now have upwards of 15 Alaska sight records since the first 1975, nearly all from the North Gulf and most from the e. sections, in the vicinity of these transects. Also interesting during these surveys were counts of up to 20 Yellow-billed Loons, an unusually high summer concentration for the North Gulf and probably related to the area's high productivity. Scattered non-breeding Yellow-billeds are found in summer from Glacier Bay and into S.E. Surprisingly abundant in the survey lines were Ancient Murrelets, with 1000 estimated mostly s. of Dry Bay 8–13 Jul (PS). These numbers clearly reflected the peak fledgling movements from adjacent nest sites. This section of the North Gulf of Alaska has always been productive for seabird concentrations, and it has provided for some of the Region's better tallies of our rarer pelagic bird species.

Guides), where they have been consistent for the past several years. A Western Grebe inshore n. of Juneau 4 Jul (GVV) provided a rare summer record for the Region and likely was an individual that did not depart one of the Region's wintering areas. Cruise ships crossing the w. Aleutians/Bering Sea interface continue to turn up Short-tailed Albatross, with 3 documented 12 Jun around upwellings se. of Shemya I. (JP, MB, ph. RC, ph. NM), where a few have been noted fairly consistently over the past four years. The only other Short-tailed report was an imm. w. of St. Matthew I. in the cen. Bering Sea 14 Jul (RAM). The same Aleutian cruise reported the season's peak of 20 Mottled Petrels off the se. corner of Attu earlier the same day (fide MB).

Another lone Turkey Vulture was reported this year from the North Slope along the beach at Barrow 19 Jun (p.a., Field Guides; †MEC). This would be the Northern section's first report and about the 5th overall for the state with details—and one of the latest, as most come from May and early Jun. Summer waterfowl highlights are frequently meager, with drought displacements often producing extralimital reports, which this season centered on the Seward Pen. In the Safety Lagoon vicinity, a mid-Jun influx of mostly dabblers included the following, most of which are rare to uncommon here: a pair of Gadwalls 16–23 Jun, 4 Eurasian Wigeons 16–28 Jun, an amazing 250 American Wigeons and 500 Northern Pintails 17 Jun+, a pair of Blue-winged Teal e. of Nome 5 Jun (4th Seward Pen. record), 25 Canvasbacks 16–17 Jun, and a single drake Redhead 17–18 Jun (†MJI; all VENT, Field Guides, WP, PB). Elsewhere, a casual-in-summer Bean Goose settled into St. Paul I. 3–14 Jul (St. Paul), while 2 drake Redheads 23 & 29 Jun (GVV, PS) and a male Cinnamon Teal 28 Jun–3 Jul (PS) were rare season finds for S.E. A Northern Shoveler pair at Kalsin Pond on Kodiak I. Jun 22 (SB) may have been investigating nest sites; they are not known to nest in the archipelago and are almost unknown in Jun/Jul. Three Ruddy Ducks were the season's lone report, from Kenny L. in the s. Interior/S.C. interface 3

Jul (RLS), where there are few prior observations. For at least the 4th consecutive summer, a waif ad. Steller's Sea-Eagle appeared along the Nushagak R. in the Dillingham area 28 Jun (*fide* RM), while the Taku R. Steller's went unreported this summer. Observation of a female White-tailed Ptarmigan with young discovered at 1350 m elevation on Mt. Juneau 12 Jul (MB) provided a first confirmed breeding record for the Juneau area. Other than early Jun sightings of the returning bird near Wasilla (RW), only one other Sora was reported from Keny L. 3 Jul (RLS).

PLOVERS THROUGH ALCIDS

With such widespread storm-free and mild conditions, the southbound shorebird passage was characterized by few concentrations, ill-defined arrival dates, and few highlights across the Region. Only a few Asian species dropped into St. Paul I., where favorable weather can produce good diversity in some years. Highlights there (all St. Paul) were a single Lesser Sand-Plover 15–24 Jul, perhaps up to 6 wandering/southbound Wood Sandpipers 11 Jun–10 Jul, a casual Bering Sea Short-billed Dowitcher 14–29 Jul, and Alaska's first summer-season Jack Snipe (St. Paul, ph. GB), photographs of which were not diagnostic.

Other shorebird finds of consequence were widely scattered, mainly extralimitals. Another Killdeer overshot n. to Barrow 11 Jun (Field Guides), in line with most of the other half-dozen North Slope records. Kayakers located an American Avocet on an islet near Haines in n. Lynn Canal 20 Jun (SL, CK, *fide* AD), where it was refound 30 Jun (AD) and 2 Jul (DE, ph. SZ), only the Region's 2nd ever, following the first from May 1981 in Valdez. Fair details accompanied an account of 3 ad. Black-tailed Godwits on the North Slope along the Colville R. delta Jul 23 (†JH), which, if accurate, would represent a first for Northern Alaska and one of few for the Mainland. An injured Bar-tailed Godwit summered in the Gustavus area 10 Jun–9 Jul (ph. ND), a rare event for S.C. Several parties noted above-average numbers of Least Sandpipers in the greater Nome area between the Kougarok Rd., Pilgrim Hot Springs, and the Teller Rd., 30 May–17 Jun+, including a pair with a downy chick at the Penny R. crossing 17 Jun (VENT). Least are at their w. periphery in the e. Seward Pen. and rare and local farther west. A dozen Buff-breasted Sandpipers near Barrow 11–12 Jun (Field Guides) was a decent pre-lek count of probable arrivals in an area where they are known to breed in small numbers.

An ad. Franklin's Gull was at Womens Bay on Kodiak I. 2 Jun (ph. RAM, BQ), the season's only report and about the 4th for S.C. overall and 2nd in summer. An ad Black-tailed Gull was documented 15 Jul



This Western Kingbird 4 June 2004 at Hyder, Alaska, followed by two there on 7 June, were earlier than most other records from the southeastern mainland of Alaska; a casual species in the state at any time of year, Westerns are mostly recorded in the second half of June. Photograph by Gary H. Rosenberg.

well n. in the Bering Sea (ph. RAM), where it spent most of the day on and around a vessel near the U.S./Russian border w. of St Matthew I. Two new Mew Gull nest locations were discovered on Revillagigedo I. in the greater Ketchikan area, at Lower Silvas L. 13 Jun and in the Traitors Cove drainage 22 Jun (SCH, CF), where they are distinctly rare. A second-year Mew Gull was unusual for the North Slope near Barrow 26 Jun (BPG, VENT), where most of the few reports are after early Jul. The annual mid-season arrival of Ring-billed and California Gulls in S.E. included a single and 2 juv. Ring-billeds in Juneau 17–19 Jul (PS) and Ketchikan 30 Jul (SCH), respectively, and a count of 40

Californias in Ketchikan 18 Jul (SCH). Harbors and coves between Petersburg and Ketchikan produce the Region's best concentrations of these regular non-breeding visitors each summer.

The summer's peak count of dispersed Caspian Terns was a group of 14 in Gustavus 5 Jul (ND, PV). Three *longipennis* Common Terns at St. Paul I. 15 Jun constituted the season's only report (St. Paul), while the White-winged Tern that hung around St. George I. 3–8 Jun+ (p.a., *fide* GVB, MR, †HR) follows last year's Fairbanks bird. Hikers flushed a Marbled Murrelet off an active nest on a ridge at 120 m elevation on Shuyak I., off Kodiak I. 24 Jun (*fide* RAM, ph. JW), one of few documented breeding records for the Kodiak Archipelago.

DOVES THROUGH PIPITS

Always noteworthy are Western Screech-Owl reports; 2 fledglings on Douglas I. in early Jul were in the same area as an active nest last year and represented one of few successful Juneau area nest attempts. An ad. and a juv. Barred Owl appeared in an area of Ketchikan where this rare S.E. breeder has nested previously 28 Jul (DP).

The Juneau area, the Region's most consistent spot for Cassin's Vireo, was the only locale reporting the species: 2 singing males 6 & 15 Jun (SM, MB, PS). A Tree Swallow at Barrow, where casual, 27 Jun (BPG, VENT) was the best of only a few extralimital swallow reports. A new Cliff Swallow colony with nine nests discovered near Juneau 16 Jun+ (GVV) was certainly newsworthy. Cliff Swallows are rare but regular migrants across Mainland S.E., and usually singles are found mostly in Jun around S.E. communities. Locals continue to piece together a better understanding of Black-capped Chickadee summer occurrence in n. S.E., particularly in the Glacier Bay–Gustavus area, where perhaps 4 birds were seen around Russell I. 4 Jun–30 Jul (ND), in areas

SA Sampling unique habitats of birch/willow/alder copses interspersed on steep, open slopes in the w. White Mts. in the cen. Interior near Eureka out the Elliot Hwy n. of Fairbanks, biologists found a fairly large assemblage of territorial *Empidonax*, which included Alder, Hammond's (from an area where few breeding data exist), and an enclave of **Yellow-bellied Flycatchers**. Through most of Jun, they located "perhaps dozens" of singing Yellow-bellieds and an active nest with four eggs (Alaska's first ever; PM) and later 4 young (PM, DDG), all along the accessible sections of habitat along the local access roads. Given the breadth of the habitat type and the number of birds occupying territories, the presence of Yellow-bellieds here must surely be a regular phenomenon. Was this a singular event or an isolated breeding "colony" in the Interior? Or, if similar patches of habitat span the area between this area and known nesting areas in the Yukon, is the breeding range contiguous? This will be difficult to assess because of the remoteness of the country, but it is distinctly possible that the species is far more widespread than suspected previously. The few previous Alaska summer records from considerably farther e. in the upper Yukon R. watershed were originally thought to be w. outliers in the species' Canadian breeding range, which may extend n. and w. into the cen. Yukon, in areas of the extreme upper Yukon watershed. A single vocal Yellow-bellied in Juneau 29 Jun–4 Jul (RG, MB, PS, SZ) was a local first and followed a handful of summer S.E. reports.

where they had been located only last summer. Most coastal sites in this zone of transition between S.C. and n. S.E. are void of Black-capped in summer.

Up to 3 singing Arctic Warblers in the willow thickets on the w. face of Kasugi Ridge near Ermine Cr. 11 Jul (TT, LJO) were at the poorly understood s. limit of their known cen. Alaska Range distribution. I know of no sites in the cen. Alaska Range s. of this area where Arcotics have held territories. The Region's first mid-summer Dark-sided Flycatcher (p.a.) and one of few post mid-Jun Gray-streaked Flycatcher reports emanated from St. Paul I. 24 Jun and 18 Jun, respectively (St. Paul). One other Dark-sided had been photographed there in early Jun. Of the few remnant spring migrant Siberian Rubythroat observations, a single female at Barrow 3 Jul (JB, DF, DMT, BPG) would be the most significant as the North Slope's first and one of few from the Mainland. Also rare on the North Slope was a Varied Thrush at Barrow 7 Jun (DW, BW), where it is not annual.

WAGTAILS THROUGH FINCHES

Difficult to judge as a spring or fall migrant was a single Eastern Yellow Wagtail at St. Paul I. 5 Jul (St. Paul); there are few Bering Sea or Aleutian reports past the 3rd week of Jun and prior to mid- to late Aug. Cedar Waxwings were common and widespread in S.E. following the first arriving migrants detected in Hyder in early Jun. They were relatively well dispersed around Juneau 5 Jun-Jul, with a local one-day maximum of 12 on 18 & 20 Jun (GVV, MBr). Several pairs appeared to be searching for nest sites at that time. Farther n. in the Gustavus area 7-30 Jul, where there were only three prior records, a local peak of 14 was counted 18 Jul (BP). An active nest was observed 7 Jul+, with young seen through 23 Jul (ph. ND). Although the species is certainly a rare and irregular nester on parts of Mainland S.E., these Gustavus observations represent the Region's northernmost.

Tennessee Warblers were well represented around Juneau, where they are typically at best an occasional late spring migrant, with at least 10 birds on ephemeral territories along the road system 5 Jun-14 Jul (MS, GVV, GB, MB). These may be the most ever from one location for the Region. Another Tennessee surfaced at Gustavus 18 Jul (BP). A Palm Warbler holding a song territory in W. Alaska near Dune L. on Kanuti N.W.R. 19-21 Jun (†CH) was a total fluke and the Region's 2nd mid-summer report of this rare migrant. Although we have records from all sections of the Region, nearly all come from coastal sites between mid-

Sep and Oct. Chipping Sparrow was documented breeding in the Kenny L. area in the extreme s. Interior, when an ad. was found carrying food 3 Jul (RLS). The long established B.B.S. here has recorded Chippings



This Cassin's Vireo was one of two territorial singing males found at Hyder, Alaska in spring 2004. This individual was present 29 May through 5 June (here 30 May). Photograph by Gary H. Rasenberg.

along the Edgerton Hwy. sporadically since the mid-1980s. The closest known nesting or suspected nesting areas are considerably n. of here in the Mentasta Mts. and the Tok R. valley. A White-throated Sparrow wandered to the Chukchi Sea coast near Barrow 5-7 Jul (BPG, DMT, JB), where there is at least one previous Jun report.



Spring and summer 2004 in Alaska saw numerous Tennessee Warblers (at least 10) around Juneau, one at Gustavus, and this one at Hyder 1 through 6 (here) June. Photograph by Gary H. Rasenberg.

On the heels of this spring's and the past few summers' reports came another Black-headed Grosbeak, a male in the Juneau area 13-17 Jun (*vide* SZ, GB, VM). After the first Alaska sight record from fall 1982, this species has steadily increased to its current status as an annual visitant in late spring and early summer in S.E. Following the historic

pattern of an appearance every two to five years, 2 Yellow-headed Blackbirds were reported, one at Anchorage, a 2nd local report there 21-10 Jul+ (SS, DWS), and one at Gustavus, a first there 20-22 Jul (JB, JD, BP).

The season's only Bramblings were 3 together at St. Paul I. 7 Jul (St. Paul). Bramblings are casual and not expected in midsummer. A male House Finch was a one-day visitor to Hyder's only feeder 18 Jun (ph. JD, SZ). A wail Red Crossbill was odd offshore in the Bering Sea at St. Paul I. 17 Jul (St. Paul), all the more so because this was not a flight year like the summer of 2003. White-winged Crossbills did exhibit an irruption northward beginning in mid-Jun, at least into the Alaska Range, where they were ubiquitous in spruce forests from the Kenai Pen. to Denali N.P. A few Red Crossbills were noted in this flight, but the only out-of-place birds were in the Anchorage area in mid-Jun (TT).

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State of the Region

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With dozens of appropriate geographic superlatives, Alaska has historically been considered immune to broad-scale environmental threats. With mounting evidence of both direct and secondary impacts from global warming, to consider the state beyond the reach of such problems would now be contrary to research findings from across the state. Perhaps because of the Region's position in the hemisphere, spanning nearly 20 lines of latitude, climate change and its associated negative effects are especially visible in Alaska bird populations and habitats. Indeed, already chronicled are continual declines in wholly insular populations, including Steller's and Spectacled Eiders, which remain poorly understood and unresolved. Coupled with cumulative local and larger-scale human induced stressors—for instance, chronic, low-level, and catastrophic hydrocarbon pollution in sections of the coastal zone, commercial fisheries methods and over-harvests, timber production and related infrastructure—Alaska's traditionally harsh and dynamic environ-



Steller's Eider was listed as federally "Threatened" in 1997, after a lengthy review period. Population estimates are difficult to compare, but the population in Alaska appears to have declined from about 200,000 in 1965 to 126,000 in 1991. Intensive aerial surveys in the past five years have located just a few thousand pairs, mostly limited to the private lands around Barrow and in the western Arctic Plains in the area designated the National Petroleum Reserve, an ecologically sensitive area that the Bureau of Land Management approved for oil-drilling and development by ConocoPhillips on 12 November 2004. Photograph by J. P. Myers/VIREO.

ment and tenuous growing seasons coincide to create a nexus of problems unimagined even a generation ago. What makes these looming conservation threats still more ominous is our collective lack of understanding of many environmental variables in the North: for many sections of the state, and for many avian populations, we are in a race to understand the basic dynamics and statuses of bird populations, even as they change rapidly in response to the effects of climate change.

Among Alaska's alterations arising from climate change are: landscape-level shifts in plant communities and structures; persistent, devastating insect infestations; loss and retreat of permafrost; changing ice-free seasons; transformations in the dynamics and location of sea ice; and long-term droughts and local drying conditions in wetlands and ponds. How these and other environmental stressors will interact with and alter the dynamics of bird communities is only marginally understood and in many cases yet to be addressed. Some representative examples of climate-change impacts to Alaska birds include the following, indexed to Bird Conservation Regions (BCR):

- Documented declines in the Kittlitz's Murrelet population around the Kenai Peninsula (in BCR 1), where recent significant glacier retreats have led to diminished or compromised breeding habitats, leading to the species' listing as Critically Endangered by the IUCN;
- Documented and presumed declines in certain White Spruce forest breeders in South-coastal Alaska (BCR 5)—such as Townsend's Warbler, thrushes, White-winged Crossbills—where tremendous loss of mature trees has continued during the longest spruce bark beetle outbreak ever recorded (devastation of over 2.3 million acres);
- Lengthening of the fire season and increase in the extent of burns, the result of drier conditions, longer, warmer summers, and shorter, warmer winters; the summer 2004 fire season burned some 6.4 million acres, a record amount (BCRs 4, 5). Coupled with growing logging efforts, old-

growth forests are doubly impacted; and

- Documented changes in the pack-ice seasonal advances and retreats in the Bering, Chukchi, and Beaufort Seas (bounding BCRs 1, 2, 3) relative to timing and distribution of migrant staging sites and coastal nesting. The extent of sea ice has shrunk by 15–20% in the Arctic in the past 30 years and is predicted to disappear by 2100 (Arctic Climate Impact Assessment (ACIA)).

Direct and secondary affects on birds in Alaska from various aspects of global warming and local climate changes were particularly evident in 2004. Following a trend from the past two decades, summer 2004 produced near-record warm conditions across the Region. These circumstances emphasized how quickly breeding season conditions and even habitats can be altered, and how, if these continue, Region-wide environmental changes could affect populations of Alaska's birds. For instance, summer-season temperatures on Alaska's North Slope (BCR 3), the Arctic Plains and Mountains) have been consistently warming, with an annual average increase of five degrees Fahrenheit. The ACIA, funded by the United States, Canada, Russia, Denmark, Sweden, Iceland, Finland, and Norway, finds that Arctic temperatures are rising at twice the global average and may top a 13° F increase by 2100. Local habitat changes, including northward advances in the *Salix*-shrub communities, earlier and widespread melting of permafrost soils, and flooding and drying microhabitats parallel these temperature fluxes in a manner that may, rather quickly and abruptly, affect breeding chronologies and successes of many summer visitors. Anecdotal evidence is mounting that, at least in Western (BCR 2), South-coastal (BCR 5, the Northern Pacific Forest), and Northern Alaska (BCR 3), there is a continuing advancement of early-spring conditions—in some cases as much as two weeks ahead of what had been considered a consistent historical trend. Certainly, these habitat issues related to annual and cyclical weather patterns may prove to be ephemeral, but there is growing scientific consensus otherwise. There is also growing evidence that these conditions are modifying breeding chronologies such that new or pioneering species are out-competing traditional breeders in certain areas—e.g., Horned Puffins vs. Black Guillemots on the North Slope islands.

Other prominent pressing bird conservation issues in Alaska relate to direct habitat losses from timber harvests. Timber extraction throughout the Region ebbs and flows with market conditions, but Alaska may now have more widespread existing or planned logging in all of the main forest types than ever before. Because such logging targets old-growth forests, we are seeing an advance of and replacement by seral forb, shrub, and mainly deciduous stages. And timber harvest and related infrastructure also contributes to habitat fragmentation, which is quite severe in some locations. Surveys are starting to show population effects for especially resident and migrant breeders of the climax/old-growth forests. Fourteen of the state's priority species use mature coniferous or mixed forest types, all of which are being negatively impacted or are threatened by logging actions. Because projections show that upwards of 25% of Southeastern Alaska's old-growth forest (BCR 5) could be harvested in the next 100 years, there is cause for major concern for those species, including already threatened Neotropical migrants and Marbled Murrelet. The current federal administration is moving to permit logging in the Tsongas National Forest, as well as oil extraction in the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge.

Many of Region's anthropogenic impacts and climate-change problems combine in ways that threaten birds in complex and compounded aspects—e.g., Townsend's Warbler, whose mature White Spruce forest type is both logged and severely declining because of a persistent spruce bark beetle epidemic. Originally this beetle's presence was cyclic and short-lived, as beetles were killed back in colder (historically average) winters. Since the late 1980s, warmer winters have failed to limit these infestations, and vast spruce forests in South-coastal Alaska (BCR 5) have been killed. Additionally, with colonization by aggressive grasses in these dying forests, these forests are in the midst of dramatic long-term changes.

In the marine environments, the combination of commercial over-harvests, pollution of many sorts, and sea-temperature fluctuations may be wreaking havoc on both summer and winter prey and on nesting conditions for many of the Region's seabirds.

Alaska Boreal Partners in Flight have identified 30 smaller landbirds as priority species for conservation across most biogeographic regions. The Alaska Watchlist comprises 37 species or races, taxa that are threatened by phenomena outlined above, or with populations so localized such that singular events such as marine oil spills could impact an entire population (Whiskered Auklet, Pribilof Rock Sandpiper). On a positive note, land managers and others are working on protection methods for sites that support certain of these populations, including a statewide Important Bird Area program. The fact that millions of acres of Alaska's bird habitats fall under some form of conservation protection provides some long-term hope for stability and protection for most of Alaska's avian populations. Research efforts and monitoring for population status, the dynamics of external threats to populations and life cycles of numerous species, and related methodologies are underway across the Region. Results of these efforts are already producing effective and relevant positive answers for bird conservation.

British Columbia

Hot, dry weather ruled across the Region through the whole period, courtesy of a strong ridge of high pressure that gave way to only a few minor rain events. Brown Pelicans were more prevalent than at any time since the fall of 1999, with near-record numbers along the west coast of Vancouver Island. Exciting finds in the way of breeding birds included the discovery of a Black Swift nest near Whistler and the return of breeding Sandhill Cranes to the northern tip of Vancouver Island.

LOONS THROUGH ALCIDS

A remarkable inland concentration of loons was discovered on Hodder L. 6 Jun (ph GR, TT), with 1100 Pacific Loons, 25 Common Loons, and 3 Yellow-billed Loons. Very rare in summer, a Yellow-billed Loon was on Sloan L. near Silverton 21–22 Jun (EB). A Manx Shearwater seen from a cruise ship in Hecate Strait furnished a 3rd Regional record 20 Jul (†MLPR). This summer, American White Pelicans were found n. and e. of their usual summer loafing areas, with 18 over McBride on 1 Jul (CL); 4 on Eaglet L. 2 Jul (CA) and 12 there 13 Jul (MA), and 30 on Carrier L. 8 Jul (KG, RD), with an astounding 145 there 15 Jul (DW, SS). Perhaps at least some of these birds were failed nesters from Chase L., ND, where a mass abandonment occurred in early Jun. The numbers of summering pelicans in the Creston area had also grown to more than 200 (LVD), which may or may not be related to the Chase L. abandonment. Brown Pelicans staged a strong invasion, with singles at Carmanah Pt. 2 Jun (RR), Clover Pt., Victoria 27 Jun (BB, MGS), and Metchosin 24 & 30 Jul (DA, JJ). An impressive 77 flew by Carmanah Pt. 27 Jun (JH, BG, JE), with another 29 on 28 Jun and 27 on 29 Jun. Were it not for these



Broad-winged Hawks nested near Tabor Lake, 12 km east of Prince George, British Columbia (here 25 July 2004); this is one of three juveniles that fledged successfully. Two other pairs were located in the vicinity this summer, making Prince George an important nesting area away from the species' typical range in the northeastern part of the province. Photograph by Ted Zimmerman.

high counts, the 3 birds noted in the Vancouver area in late Jul would have been thought to pertain to the same individual.

Very rare in summer, a few swans lingered on Vancouver I.: an imm. Tundra Swan, present since spring, remained in Comox through the period (NH, JF), an ad Trumpeter Swan furnished the first summer record for the Nanaimo area at Nanoose Estuary through the period (GLM et al.), and 2 Trumpeter Swans, an ad. and an imm., were in Comox 14 Jul (GLM). Although no breeding was confirmed, a pair of Ring-necked Ducks provided the first summer record for the Nanaimo checklist area as they spent the summer in Buttertubs Marsh (GLM et al.). Broad-winged Hawks were, until fairly recently, known to nest only in the Peace R. area. One of their best strongholds away from traditional nesting in the ne. has been the Prince George area, where three pairs were found this summer (*vide* JB). One nest with 3 chicks was discovered on the w. side of Tabor L. 20 Jul (TN, JW, DW, ph TZ). Several nests of Sandhill Crane were discovered ne. of Port Hardy 7–11 Jul (PL, MGS), the first confirmed nestings on Vancouver I. in 63 years.

Single ad. Hudsonian Godwits were at Carmanah Pt. 2 Jun (ph JE), Oyster Bay 4–5 Jun (ES, BBr), and Tsawwassen 12 Jun (RT, JF et al.). Sandy I., off the e. coast of Vancouver I., has recently been recognized as a great shorebird location; it now holds one of the Region's high counts for Ruddy Turnstone, with 26 there 17 Jul (GLM). The returning pair of Black-necked Stilts at T'Kumloops marsh was finally discovered incubating 11 Jun (BD, WD); by that date in 2002, hatching had already occurred, which suggests there was likely an earlier failed attempt, as the birds had been present since 6 Apr (CR). On 6 Jul, there were 3 chicks present (RR, SR). Unfortunately, the nesting pair at Alki L., Kelowna was less successful: the birds were incubating a nest with three eggs in mid-Jun (RyT), but there was insufficient water in the lake, and the birds abandoned the nest and the site. This does constitute the first breeding attempt for the Okanagan, and one of only three for the province. A high count of 10 Upland Sandpipers was recorded near Fort St. John 1 Jul (FG, KA). Of the three phalarope species, Wilson's is the rarest to be found on Vancouver I., a female present in Victoria 6 Jun (RS) was the only one reported. Edye Pass, on the Skidegate–Prince Rupert Ferry is a known staging area for Red and Red-necked Phalaropes, surveys conducted 5 Jul (PH, MH) produced 8000



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birds and a record-high 28,714 phalaropes on 8 Jul (PH, MH).

An ad. Forster's Tern was at Iona I., Richmond, where very rare, 6 Jun (MTO, STo et al.). Although Cassin's Auklets breed on Cleland I., near Tofino, they are rarely seen near shore. This summer, a few birds were seen in the vicinity of the island: one on 19 Jun, 6 on 9 Jul, 3 on 10 Jul, 11 on 1 Jul (all AD); and 2 were seen off Victoria from the M.V. *Coho* 18 Jul (RS). Accidental along the s. coast, 4 Tufted Puffins were seen from the Tsawwassen Ferry Terminal 19 Jul (BS, PS).

DOVES THROUGH FINCHES

A White-winged Dove, a species recorded five times in the past 10 years, was discovered on the Brooks Pen., a remote, uninhabited stretch of coastline along the w. side of Vancouver I. 12 Jul (ph JC). This peninsula is considered by many to be a potential vagrant trap but is very rarely visited by birders. Flammulated Owls are essentially restricted to the Okanagan Valley and Thompson Basin, yet a pair was heard calling on Mause Cr., near Cranbrook 3 Jun (DN), where the species is considered accidental. A Yellow-billed Cuckoo was found in Jordan River, sw. coast of Vancouver I. 30 Jun–1 Jul (CSa, DR, GLM).

An Alder Flycatcher was observed 14–18 Jun at Grant Narrows Dyke (CG et al.).



This White-winged Dove, only the fifth for British Columbia in the past 10 years, was found along an uninhabited stretch of the west coast of Vancouver Island, on the Brooks Peninsula 12 July 2004. This site may be a good vagrant trap but is rarely checked. Photograph by John Coulson.

where very rare; another singing male was in Lavington 12 Jun (DGC). Most remarkably, an Alder Flycatcher was seen at Salmon Arm feeding 2 recently fledged young, with another Alder calling nearby 25 Jul (†TH). If accepted, this would be the southernmost nesting recorded in the province. An Ash-throated Flycatcher was at Half Moon Bay, Sunshine Coast, where considered casual 18 Jun (ph JJ, AR). A Western Kingbird, rare along the w. coast, was on Gabriola I. 3 Jun (LJ). An Eastern Kingbird was as far w. as it could get in Tofino 10 Jun (GB). Purple Martins have a very limited distribution along the extreme s. coast and along the e. coast of Vancouver I. Two females at the Salmon R. Estuary in Sayward were at the n. edge of their range 8 Jun (MGS). The Region's largest colony, in Maplewood, has grown substantially, thanks to the work of volunteers. The recently rebuilt nest boxes produced record-high numbers this year, with 49 pairs and 163 fledglings (*vide* DMA). Hopefully this level of success will continue and may lead to more sightings and perhaps breeding colonies in new locations.

A Western Scrub-Jay was in Squamish 23 Jun+ (MD, ph. GD). A Black-billed Magpie was at Cheewhat Beach on the w. coast of Vancouver I. 21 Jun (JH), and another was in Vancouver 16 Jul (MM). A Black Swift nest was discovered 26 Jul+ (PL) at Brandywine Falls PP, near Whistler, one of very few nests ever recorded in the Region. Calliope Hummingbirds are very rare spring visitors to the coast; a male in Langford 12 Jun (DA) furnished one of few Victoria records. A Rock Wren singing near the summit of Mt. Cain 24 Jun (PL) adds to the growing evidence that Rock Wrens are now more widespread on Vancouver I. There is, as of yet, only one confirmed breeding record for the island. House Wrens are annual in the Vancouver area, but nesting is seldom noted; a pair that nested in Delta 1 Jun+ was the only area nest reported (RT to et al.).

A Veery singing at Grant Narrows Nature Dyke Trail 14–20 Jun (CG et al.) was in an area where very rare. At least 5 Northern Mockingbirds were found this season: 2 near Tofino 19 Jun (GB, AD), one in Sooke 26 Jun (RS), a singing male in Kelsey Bay 28–29 Jun (GLM, TR), and one on Triangle I. 9–14 Jul (LS). A Sage Thrasher was found singing near White L. in the s. Okanagan 1 Jul (RJC, RC). A Brown Thrasher near Salmon Arm 21 Jul (†TH) would constitute the first Jul record for the Region and the 19th regional record.

Victoria's 2nd record of Ovenbird—but first record of a live bird—was of a singing male on Mount Newton 10–11 Jun (SM, DA); another was at Nelson 11 Jun (JA). An ad. male Chestnut-sided Warbler was at Camo-



This Black-throated Sparrow in West Vancouver, British Columbia 15 June 2004 was characterized as a spring "overshoot." Photograph by John Wei.

sun Bog, Vancouver 17–20 Jun (CA, ph. PC).

A Rose-breasted Grosbeak was a banding highlight at Rocky Point B.O. 18 Jul+ (JM, AN et al.) and furnished a first local record; there are only a handful of records for Vancouver I. A young male Rose-breasted Grosbeak that had just flown the nest was rescued from the middle of the road at Willow River 50 km ene. of Prince George 6 Jul (ph. CB), evidence of a first local breeding record. A singing ad. male Indigo Bunting was in Cheam Wetlands, Chilliwack 11 Jul (IO). There are only a few records for the Vancouver area, and almost all of them are in Jun. A Black-throated Sparrow was in West Vancouver 15 Jun (ph. JW); this is the second spring overshoot this year, with the first in Kelowna in late May, for this very rare visitor to the Region. A male Lark Bunting was at Scotch Creek, near

Salmon Arm 4 Jun (†TH), and the same or perhaps another male was later in Summerland 17 Jul (IC). Although there are numerous summer records of Gray-crowned Rosy-Finch on Vancouver I., no nesting had ever been confirmed. This summer, 6 ads. and 2 recently fledged young were found on Mt. Myrah, Strathcona Park 25 Jul (GLM, JL).

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A recently fledged Rose-breasted Grosbeak photographed 6 July 2004 in the Prince George area furnished a first local nesting record and one of very few such records away from the Peace River area. Photograph by Northern Raptor Preservation Society.

State of the Region

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British Columbia, a vast Region with a land mass of nearly 900,000 km², encompasses a multitude of different habitats. Major habitat types found in the province include thousands of kilometers of coastline, coastal estuaries, vast temperate rainforests, coniferous, deciduous and mixed forests, semi-arid shrub-steppe, wetlands, alpine tundra, grasslands, riparian lowlands, lakes and rivers, and offshore waters. Each of these habitats has undergone dramatic changes during the last century due to resource extraction, population growth, and natural occurrences. The province has adopted a wildlife listing that places taxa either in the Red List (endangered), Blue List (threatened), or the Yellow List (species of concern). Many taxa have been assigned to one of these lists for a plethora of reasons. British Columbians are now faced with many daunting challenges on the conservation front, only the most acute of which will be summarized here.

The offshore waters of the province are the subject of much recent study, and they harbor many tubenoses and alcids of concern. The chief threat to these birds is probably oil spills, which could threaten a huge percentage of the world population of Cassin's and Rhinoceros Auklets, as well as Fork-tailed Storm-Petrels. Over-harvesting of several marine species and seabird entrap-



Across western Canada and in Alaska, millions of acres of White Spruce have been lost to a persistent outbreak of Spruce Bark Beetle, which may be connected to apparent population declines in species such as White-winged Crossbill, several thrushes, and Townsend's Warbler. Normally, cold winters kill back the beetles, but warmer-than-average winters since the late 1980s have permitted them to spread across vast areas of forest. When the impact of the bark beetle devastation is combined with that of intensive logging activities, the loss of habitat could bring about rapid declines in otherwise healthy populations of spruce-obligate nesters. Photograph by Joe Fuhrman.

ment in fishing nets both continue to be conservation concerns for marine fisheries.

Most of the province is covered in deciduous, coniferous, and mixed forests. Although the harvest of timber is essential to the sustainability of the provincial economy, the result of widespread logging has been catastrophic for organisms that depend on the forest ecosystems. Although clear-cutting has been proven to be environmentally undesirable, over 90% of cut blocks in British Columbia, in the 1997–1998 period, continued to be clear-cuts. While some species do benefit from clearcutting (e.g., Chipping Sparrow, American Kestrel), a decline in avian diversity of between 50 and 60% has been noted in clear-cut areas in British Columbia. The opening of the forests also allows predators and Brown-headed Cowbirds to inhabit areas previously unoccupied. The forest fragmentation that is the result of clear-cutting leads to direct negative impacts on nesting birds such as Marbled Murrelet and Spotted Owl, both inhabitants of old-growth, coastal rainforests and both topics of hot debate between loggers and environmentalists. Another management topic, the cutting of snags for safety reasons, is worthy of note. Lewis's Woodpeckers and other cavity-nesting birds have suffered declines due to the lack of suitable nesting habitats in their valley bottom riparian habitats.

While clear-cutting poses one of the greatest threats to birds in British Columbia, the emerging Mountain Pine Beetle epidemic also looms on the horizon of forestry conservation in the province. Mountain Pine Beetle outbreaks are natural and have occurred for many thousands of years throughout the pine forests of western North America. Over the past decade, winter temperatures have been milder than those recorded in recent history, and entomologists forecast what may be a catastrophic outbreak by 2008 if current trends continue. Sustainable winter temperatures of around -40° C are needed to kill the beetles, and these temperatures have not materialized, perhaps due to global warming. In 1999, 165,000 hectares of provincial forests were infested with Mountain Pine Beetles. In 2003, the number had ballooned to 4.2 million hectares of infested forest. Although woodpeckers, with their insatiable appetites for wood-

boring insects, may be experiencing population growth, many other resident and migratory birds are losing much of their habitat in the central interior of British Columbia.

With the average global temperature on the rise, British Columbia's forests are now much more susceptible to forest fires than they were as little as 10 years ago. A number of devastating wildfires have torn through the dry forests of the interior since the new millennium, and in 2003 alone, over 260,000 hectares of forest was destroyed in the province. These fires change the species composition remarkably, but they are natural and essential in the rejuvenation of the forest. Following the fire season of 2003, when hundreds of homes were destroyed by flames, prescribed burning and the clearing of the underbrush of many forested areas close to populated regions has occurred. This has essentially left vast expanses of open forest devoid of undergrowth, impacting many species that depend on the forest understory for nesting (e.g., Spotted Towhee and MacGillivray's Warbler). Unfortunately, few studies have been conducted to assess the long-term avian trends that occur following prescribed burns in the province. On a positive note, woodpecker populations are benefiting greatly from the increased food sources and nesting opportunities created by forest fires. The clearing of forest understory cannot be pinned down specifically to prescribed burning, however. Cattle are allowed to wander free range throughout many forested regions. The cattle consume the grasses and much of the ground cover throughout the woodlands in which they roam.

The single greatest threat to bird populations in British Columbia is population growth and the urbanization and adjacent agricultural activity that results from an expanding population.

It is an unfortunate reality that most British Columbian cities are found in valley bottom situations, where the climate is inviting and agriculture can thrive. British Columbia is a mountainous region with just 10% of its landmass comprised of valley bottom habitat. It is in these valley bottoms where vast marshes once existed along with extensive tracts of untouched riparian bottomlands and meandering streams and rivers. The draining of marshes, channeling of rivers, and cutting of riparian forests have had irreversible effects on many birds and animals associated with those habitats. The areas of biggest concern include the Fraser River Lowlands, Vancouver Island, and the Okanagan Valley.

Over 55% of the population of British Columbia lies within the Fraser River Lowlands (2.2 million). Once an area of extensive wetlands and riparian woodlands, over half of the 64,500 hectares of those habitats have been lost since the 1890s, and currently at least 10 bird species are at risk due to habitat loss, including Sandhill Crane, Short-eared Owl, and Hutton's Vireo (Fraser et al. 1999). An estimated 1.4 million birds utilize the Fraser River delta during migration, and some of these birds now depend, to a degree, on the agricultural lands as a substitute habitat (Butler and Campbell 1987). In recent years, the growth of ginseng crops and the implementation of large-scale greenhouse operations have been especially degrading in that they render the habitat useless to birds and animals.

Human population growth is a large contributing factor to habitat loss on Vancouver Island as well. The concentration of people along the southeastern shore of Vancouver Island has resulted in increased development pressures on natural habitats. The vast Douglas Fir forests, once draping the mountains of Vancouver Island, have been reduced to a remnant, due to logging and development. All but one of the major estuaries on Vancouver Island's east coast have lost habitats. Hundreds of thousands of waterbirds winter and gather off of these estuaries, and continued habitat loss may reduce the productivity of these ecosystems. At least 13 at-risk bird species inhabit eastern Vancouver Island, including Brandt's Cormorant, Green Heron, and Barn Owl, and the Queen Charlotte Islands archipelago, an important wilderness for both plants and animals, have three endemic bird taxa, subspecies of Northern Saw-whet Owl, Steller's Jay, and Hairy Woodpecker.

The Okanagan Valley in southern British Columbia is home to more species of plants and animals than virtually anywhere else in Canada. Many of these species are now threatened because of urbanization and an explosion in agricultural activity. Vast expanses of shrub-steppe habitat have been converted into immense vineyards, ginseng crops, orchards, and other monoculture crops, putting nearly 20 species of birds at risk in the Okanagan. The widespread draining of over 85% of the valley's wetlands has occurred due to urbanization, and over 60% of the grassland habitats have been altered. As a result, only 9% of the valley remains in a natural, undisturbed state (Redpath 1990). With the population expected to reach over half a million people with the next few decades, the pressure is on to preserve and protect the Okanagan Valley and its unique array of organisms.

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Oregon & Washington



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The summer of 2004 was memorable for the continued increase of interior wetland species west of the Cascades, including Clark's Grebe, American White Pelican, Gadwall, Blue-winged Teal, Red-head, Lesser Scaup, Black-necked Stilt, and Wilson's Phalarope—some of these breeding, others just occurring in ever-larger numbers. From the past few years, Great Egret, White-faced Ibis, and Black Tern could be added to this list as well. Are these increases simple range expansions or movements forced by drought elsewhere? Probably both. The summer's weather was hot and dry, somewhat so in June, but especially so in July, when almost the entire Region had just half its normal rainfall and temperatures averaging 3–6° F above normal. Summer was splendid for rarities, including first state records for both Oregon and Washington. Best represented among this lot were eastern passerines, though there were several seabirds and shorebirds of interest.

Abbreviations: FR.R. (Fern Ridge Reservoir, Lane, OR); Malheur (Malheur N.W.R., Harney, OR); N.S.C.B. (N. Spit Coos Bay, Coos, OR); O.S. (Ocean Shores, Grays Harbor,

WA); P.S.B. (Port Susan Bay, Snohomish, WA); Ridgefield (Ridgefield N.W.R., Clark, WA); W.W.R.D. (Walla Walla R. delta, Walla Walla, WA); Y.R.D. (Yakima R. delta, Benton, WA). *Eastside* and *westside* indicate east and west of the Cascade crest, respectively.

LOONS THROUGH CRANES

A gathering of 96 Pacific Loons at Clatsop Spit 10 Jul was most unusual for mid-summer (MP). Now nearly annual during summer, a Yellow-billed Loon was at Swantown, Island 26 Jun (SM, D. Koeppel). Two Clark's Grebes at Vancouver L., Clark 16 Jul furnished w. Washington's 2nd summer record (TA); notably 34 Western Grebes, quite rare on freshwater during summer in w. Washington, were also present, and courtship behavior was observed (TA); neither species is known to breed in w. Washington. A Clark's Grebe at Fernhill Wetlands, Washington to 23 Jun was also out of place (HN). Three pelagic trips off Westport (26 Jun, 10 Jul, 31 Jul) and one off the Columbia R. mouth 31 Jul furnished fairly good summer coverage. The 26 Jun venture was an excellent one for albatrosses. In addition to a stunning 993 Black-footeds, there was a Laysan and a Short-tailed Albatross (BLB, G. Revelas, ph. MDo); Laysan is very rare during summer and the Short-tailed was the first for summer since 1889! Northern Fulmars were present in low numbers but above their pitiful spring totals, averaging about 100 per trip. Manx Shearwaters maintained their presence in the Region with 2 off Matia I., San Juan 11 Jun (MDo), 2 near Kalaloch, Jefferson 7 Jul (†CW), and one at Ft. Canby, Pacific 28 Jul (†T. Guy).

American White Pelicans have become a regular, albeit scarce, part of the westside's avifauna over the last decade; this summer 22 were reported from three w. Washington locations and 49 at 2 w. Oregon sites. A count of 8000 Brown Pelicans at Clatsop Spit 31 Jul was likely a Regional record (R. Lowe). In Washington's interior marine waters, Brown Pelicans are rare before mid-Aug, so 10 at Port Townsend 25 Jun (D. Johnson) and one at Olympia 4 Jul+ (JP) were noteworthy.

A Cattle Egret at FR.R. 10–13 Jul furnished an extremely rare summer record for the westside (E. Cantor). Rare on the eastside, a Green Heron graced Bingen, Klickitat 12 Jun (KK). Black-crowned Night-Herons made an unprecedented showing in the Willamette Valley, with 13 birds reported from seven sites, including 6 that summered at FR.R., again raising speculation that they are nesting (m.ob.); the last westside nesting record was from 1951. The only White-faced Ibis remaining in Washington/w. Oregon after this spring's modest incursion were 3 at Iowa Beef, Walla Walla 2 Jun (NL) and one at Baskett Slough, Polk 5 Jun (R. Kepler).

SA For birders, discerning the end of "spring shorebird migration" and the beginning of "fall shorebird migration" has always been challenging. For the contiguous U.S., most assume that shorebirds before 10 Jun are northbound and those after 19 Jun are southbound. Close observation of shorebirds through the course of the summer is generally difficult, but the reserve at Port Susan Bay, limited to approximately 100 acres of wetlands, allowed more detailed study than possible at larger wetlands, where birds range far and wide. KW, JW, TA, SM, and DD regularly surveyed this area. Interestingly, outside of breeding species, overwintering shorebirds are considered quite rare in the Puget Trough. Nonetheless, some birds were clearly doing just that. These included 59 basic-plumaged Black-bellied Plovers, 4 alternate-plumaged Greater Yellowlegs, an alternate-plumaged Western Sandpiper, and an alternate-plumaged and a basic-plumaged Short-billed Dowitcher. Quite surprising was a slew of apparently record-early southbound birds, including 3 basic-plumaged Semipalmated Plovers 16 Jun+, 2 alternate-plumaged Lesser Yellowlegs 16 Jun+, a basic-plumaged Western Sandpiper 16 Jun+, 2 basic-plumaged Least Sandpipers 16 Jun+, and a basic-plumaged Dunlin 19 Jun. Far more baffling was the appearance of an alternate-plumaged male Pacific Golden-Plover 16 Jun followed by a different male Pacific Golden with an alternate-plumaged female on 19 Jun. Mid-Jun records of Pacific Golden-Plovers are almost unprecedented in the Region. Equally rare, or perhaps even more so, were 2 alternate-plumaged Red Knots 13 Jun (one to 16 Jun). And finally, an alternate-plumaged Long-billed Dowitcher, considered very rare during mid-Jun, made a one day appearance 13 Jun. In which direction were these mid-Jun transients headed? Is it possible that a Long-billed Dowitcher or a Red Knot passing through Washington on 13 Jun might actually make it to the Arctic to breed? Their bright alternate plumage seems to suggest some intent in that arena. And do a few southbound members of some species, such as Lesser Yellowlegs and Least Sandpiper, regularly appear as early as mid-Jun? Are these failed breeders, or are they first-year birds that had no intention of nesting?

A Greater White-fronted Goose, very rare during summer, lingered at P.S.B. to 13 Jun (SM, TA). A rare breeder in w. Oregon, Gadwall broods were found at Fernhill Wetlands, Washington (GG, HN) and Baskett Slough, Polk (BTi). In w. Washington, Gadwalls have become such common breeders that they are essentially disregarded by today's observers, but as recently as 1987 only four broods of Gadwall were found in the Puget Trough (*American Birds* 41: 1478). By comparison, 15–20 broods were found this summer just in the vicinity of Stanwood, Snohomish (SM). The Region's 3rd summer record of Eurasian Wigeon was provided by 2 males at Gutierrez Ranch, Crook 12 Jun (CG); surprisingly, all summer records have been from the eastside. Another species that has increased greatly on the westside is Blue-winged Teal, with a record high count of 117 at P.S.B. 10 Jun (SM); consider that a tally of 8 in w. Washington was worthy of publication in *American Birds* during summer 1988. Two broods of Northern Shoveler, a very rare breeder on Washington's outer coast, were found at Markham, Grays Harbor and at O.S. (PtS, RS). Scarce breeders on the westside, Green-winged Teal raised a brood at P.S.B. (SM, TA), Ridgefield (TA), Fernhill Wetlands (GG), and N.S.C.B. 13 Jul (TR). Unprecedented for summer was a Green-winged Teal x Common Teal at P.S.B. 15 Jul (†SM, DD). Redheads are very rare in w. Washington from mid-Jun through early Aug, and there was only one breeding record, from 1998 at Kent. This summer, 2 broods were located at Post Office L., Clark 16 Jul (TA), and a lone female was at Everett 2 Jul (SM, DD). In Oregon, Redheads bred for the 2nd consecutive year at F.R.R. (DDW), while Ring-necked Ducks again bred at their only known outer-coast site, N.S.C.B. (TR). Five Greater Scaup were at Soap L., Grant 2 Jun, with one lingering to 9 Jun (TA, DSc); they are very rare on the eastside during summer. Lesser Scaup, rare breeders in w. Washington, were noted with broods at Deer Lagoon, Island and Stanwood, Snohomish (SM). Much more noteworthy was w. Ore-

gon's first breeding record at Baskett Slough 3 Jul (BTi). Virtually unprecedented for the eastside lowlands during summer were 2 Harlequin Ducks at Soap L. 2–9 Jun (TA). The eastside's 3rd summer record of Surf Scoter was provided by a bird at Soap L. 6–9 Jun (K. Andrich), and on the westside huge numbers again summered on Padilla Bay, Skagit, with a maximum of 2540 on 31 Jul (SM, C. Beachell). Astonishing was a Black Scoter on a small pond at Monroe, Snohomish 9 Jun (J. O'Connell); they are very rare, even in marine habitats, during summer. Rare breeders in Washington, a Bufflehead raised a brood at Teal L., Okanogan (M. Fleming).

Matching last year's total, there were 30 active Osprey nests in Everett this summer (E. Schulz); consider that there were only six in all w. Washington in 1978 (*American Birds* 32: 1200). A Bald Eagle at Horn Rapids, Benton 1 Aug furnished the first summer lower Columbia Basin record in 30 years (*vide* NL). A Red-shouldered Hawk near Kelso, Cowlitz 4 Jul will provide Washington's 2nd summer record, if accepted by the B.R.C. (†Simone Lupson-Cook). Single Red-shouldered were at Tumalo Res., Deschutes 15 Jul (WH) and Malheur 26 Jul (LR); this species is a rare, primarily fall, visitor to e. Oregon. Mysterious is the sudden appearance of Gambel's Quail in e. Washington. A pair was well documented at Lyons Ferry, Franklin 6 Jun (†P. Lott), while 3 more were described far away at Cottonwood Campground, Yakima 29 May–1 Jun (†C. Sisson, †T. Sisson); state and federal agencies deny having released this species in Washington, so private individuals or clubs are likely the source. One wonders, "How many are wandering around among e. Washington's numerous California Quails, and could this species be established?" Single Sandhill Cranes near Riverside, Okanogan 26 Jun (M. Hansen) and at Turnbull N.W.R., Spokane 22 Jul (M. Frobe) were well away from any known breeding locale.

PLOVERS THROUGH WOODPECKERS

A Black-bellied Plover at Soap L., Grant 1–2

Jun provided e. Washington's first Jun record (DSc). A record-early American Golden-Plover visited P.S.B. 21 Jun (TA); they usually don't arrive until early or mid-Aug. Per normal, a couple of Pacific Golden-Plovers arrived in late Jul, with singles at Bottle Beach, Grays Harbor, 27 Jul (T. O'Brien) and O.S. 31 Jul (PtS, RS). Amazingly, Snowy Plover numbers in Washington seem to be increasing, with 27 nests found at Midway Beach, Pacific and 6 at O.S. (after near-extirpation there); similar good news came from Oregon, where a record 80–100 young are expected to fledge (D. Lauten). For the 5th consecutive year, Black-necked Stilts nested in the Willamette Valley, with young found at Baskett Slough, Polk (BTi) and F.R.R. (DF). An American Avocet, rare during summer on the westside, was at F.R.R. 20 Jun (R. Robb). Washington's first Spotted Redshank was found by a pair of visiting Swedish birders at Blynn, Clallam 10 Jul (†M. & F. Linde); Oregon has one record, and there are several from sw. British Columbia, all 1970–1982. For the 4th consecutive summer, Solitary Sandpiper numbers were much higher than the long-term baseline, with 16 from 4 Jul+. An Upland Sandpiper, found last summer near Spokane, was seen again this spring. Summer reports, however, suggested that there were 2–3 birds, last seen 19 Jul (m.ob.); breeding has not been documented in Washington since 1993. In Oregon, this species' tiny population clings to existence, with 2 at Bear Valley, Grant 22 Jun (M.A. Sohlstrom) and one near Juntura, Malheur 24–28 Jun (S. Wilson). Whimbrel is among the earliest southbound migrants, but almost all Jun records are from the outer coast, so one at Tacoma 19 Jun was noteworthy (M. Roening). Two Long-billed Curlews were near Sequim, Clallam 17 Jun–23 Jul (TA) and at Blynn, Clallam 14 Jul (BN), while one was at F.R.R. 18 Jul (DDW); this species is rare on the westside away from the outer coast. Marbled Godwit sightings, not annual on the eastside during summer, included 9 at W.W.R.D. 10 Jul (MD, MLD), 3 at Thief Valley Res., Union 10 Jul (PaS), and another at Summer L. 23 Jul (MD, MLD); rare in the

westside's interior, 2 Marbleds also graced F.R.R. on the late dates of 3–4 Jun (R. Sinnett, E. Cantor). A very late northbound Semipalmated Sandpiper was at P.S.B. 5 Jun (GB), while an early southbound bird was there 24 Jun (SM, DD). This summer's total was 3 for Oregon and 93 for Washington, mostly in the n. Puget Trough, with a maximum of 12 at P.S.B. 17 Jul that consisted almost entirely of ads. (SM); the usual surge of juvs. in late Jul was subpar. A Baird's Sandpiper at Summer L. 6 Jun furnished only the 3rd Regional record of a northbound bird during Jun (DI), while one southbound at P.S.B. 30 Jun was exceptionally early (JW, KW); subsequently, a goodly 10 were reported from Washington and 11 from Oregon, 12 Jul+, including one at Paradise, Mt. Ranier 29 Jul (R. Merrill). Eight Pectoral Sandpipers 15 Jul+ was above average. A Dunlin at Summer L. 6 Jun was late for the eastside (DI). The recent trend of extremely early southbound Dunlin continued; in addition to the 19 Jun bird mentioned above, alternate-plumaged birds were found at P.S.B. 30 Jun (KW, JW) and Crockett L., Island 5–10 Jul (KA). As typical, a few over-summered on the outer coast, with a maximum of 18 at Florence, Lane 9 Jul (D. Pettey), but a Dunlin at the Yakima Indian Reservation 5 Jul was only e. Washington's 3rd for summer (K. Turley). An alternate-plumaged Curlew Sandpiper at Summer L. 17–21 Jul was Oregon's 11th and the eastside's 2nd (†DI, ph. NS, ph. S. Maulding); most of the Region's records have been late Jul–early Oct, with three prior Jul sightings. A Stilt Sandpiper at Crockett L. 10–17 Jul furnished a very rare record of a southbound ad. (SM). A Short-billed Dowitcher, not annual during summer on the eastside, was at Hatch L., Stevens 11 Jul (MH), and 2 were at Summer L. 23 Jul (MD, MLD). An alternate-plumaged Long-billed Dowitcher at Paterson Slough, Benton 14 Jun provided a very rare mid-Jun record (BW, NL). Wilson's Phalaropes historically bred, at least intermittently, on the westside, but there were almost no breeding records from the 1970s and 1980s; after increasing during the 1990s in w. Oregon, Wilson's Phalaropes were found breeding at five sites this year: F.R.R., N.S.C.B., Junction City, Lane, Baskett Slough, Polk, and Pioneer Villa wetlands, Linn. In w. Washington, Wilson's Phalaropes bred at P.S.B. last year, providing only the 2nd breeding record since 1975; they nested again this year, with 6 males engaging in distraction displays 26 Jun and 4–8 young successfully fledged (SM, D. Koepfel). The maximum tal-

ly of ads. was 44 on 19 Jun (SM, DD). Four early southbound female Wilson's were near Edison, Skagit 19 Jun (SM, DD).

South Polar Skuas numbers were high offshore, with 7 found on four trips. Pomarine Jaeger counts, however, remained low following the poor spring passage, with only 10 total. A Long-tailed Jaeger at Summer L. 21 Jul was about the 15th for the eastside overall and the 5th for summer (†N. Pieplow, D. Heyerly, A. Heyerly). Washington's 4th Laughing Gull visited Kalaloch, Jefferson 17



This molting adult Curlew Sandpiper at Summer Lake, Oregon 17–21 (here 19) July 2004 was the nineteenth for the Oregon & Washington region but only the second east of the Cascade Mountains. Photograph by Sylvia Maulding.

Jul (†BN); two of the prior records were from the outer coast Jun–Aug. Five Franklin's Gulls were at Sprague L. 10 Jun (TA), and 2 were at L. Lenore, Grant 2–6 Jun (TA); this species was not an annual visitor to e. Washington until the mid-1980s. A Franklin's at Gold Beach, Curry 24 Jun provided a very rare westside summer record (DM). Single Little Gulls at Hobuck Beach, Clallam 23 Jul (†CW) and Hood Canal, Jefferson 25 Jul (†J. Bryant) provided Washington's 4th and 5th summer records; additionally, the Clallam bird was only the 2nd for Washington's outer coast. Heermann's Gulls again appeared in good numbers, highlighted by 5500 at O.S. 4 Jul (CW). A Mew Gull at P.S.B. 19 Jun was about two weeks early and furnished only the 5th Jun record during the last decade (SM, DD). Herring Gulls, typically very rare during summer, were reported from Whitman, Grant, Franklin, and Walla Walla. Extremely rare in the Great Basin, a Glaucous-winged Gull at L. Abert 23 Jul was Lake's first (MD, MLD), while one at Y.R.D. provided a most unusual summer record for the Columbia Basin (NL).

A Caspian Tern calling loudly over Snoqualmie Pass (elevation nearly 1000 m) 9 Jul was certainly out of habitat (J. Meyers). Three Common Terns at Colville, Stevens during early Jun furnished an extremely rare eastside summer record (MF). After an apparent absence last year, 4 Arctic Terns were again found at Everett 16 Jun–24 Jul (SM), with a nest found in an abandoned parking lot 17 Jul (G. Aslanian); this tiny colony, first noted in 1977, has never numbered more than 5 pairs, and is 1300 km s. of the nearest breeding area. Amazingly, 3 Arctic Terns were also rumored to have attempted breeding on Dungeness Spit, Clallam adjacent to a colony of Caspian Terns, with the nest destroyed by predators (*vide* BB). Forster's Terns again lingered at F.R.R., with 3 there 4 Jun (DF) and 2 on 11 Jul (T&A Mickel, DDW); this species is a rare summer visitor to the westside. Oregon's 12th Least Tern was at Malheur 5–6 Jun (RCH, AC); all previous Regional records have been from the westside. A Black Tern was near Sedro Woolley, Skagit 17 Jun (GB), and 3 visited P.S.B. 19 Jun (SM, DD, G. Toffic); Black Terns are very rare in w. Washington mid-Jun through early Aug. A Long-billed/Marbled Murrelet was in the Columbia R. near Brewster, Okanogan 8 Jul (H. Stout); there are currently no Marbled Murrelet records e. of the Cascade/Sierra Nevada divide. Five Xantus's Murrelets, all *scrippsi*, off Westport 10

Jul provided the 6th Regional summer record (BT, ph. S. Mills); most records of this rare visitor are Aug–Oct, and the only earlier one was of a bird found dead on an Oregon beach 26 Jun. Two Ancient Murrelets off Westport 26 Jun added to the recent flurry of late spring/summer records (BLB). Cassin's Auklets enjoyed a very successful breeding season in Oregon (*vide* R. Lowe), with a high count of 7000 off Cape Blanco, Curry 14 Jul (D. Pitkin, D. Ledig); numbers on pelagic trips, however, were low, averaging only 12 per outing.

After this spring's strong showing, a Eurasian Collared-Dove was at Rome, Malheur 6 Jun (RCH, AC), and 2 summered near Merrill, Klamath (C.A. Kising). However, a Eurasian Collared-Dove × "Ringed Turtle-Dove" hybrid in Everett early Jul–2 Aug demonstrated that care should still be taken when identifying *Streptopelia* doves in the Region (G. Kadish, vt. SM); this individual's appearance was more that of a collared-dove, but its song was clearly turtle-dove. Now annual in Harney during late spring/early summer, a Yellow-billed Cuck-

oo visited Malheur 12 Jun (LR, M. Murphy). A Long-eared Owl at Ridgefield 1 Aug was suggestive of local nesting, a very rare event in w. Washington (ph. J. Williams). At Salt Creek Falls, the traditional Oregon Black Swift breeding colony, up to 30 birds were noted throughout the summer (DI). Rare in w. Oregon, single Black-chinned Hummingbirds were at Central Pt., Jackson 27 Jun (J. Harleman) and Toledo, Lincoln 2 Jul (D. Faxon). Extremely rare in ne. Oregon, an Anna's Hummingbird graced LaGrande, Union 19 Jul (†Trent Bray). Still not annual during summer, single Costa's Hummingbirds appeared at Chiloquin, Klamath 1 Jul (W. Stone) and Portland 3 Jul (T. Murray). Perhaps somewhat overdue, the Region's first Red-headed Woodpecker appeared briefly near Cascade Locks, Hood River 5 Jul (†J. Gatchel). An Acorn Woodpecker near Balch L., Klickitat 25 Jul demonstrated that this species persists in Washington (BT). A white-bellied Downy Woodpecker with heavily spotted wing-coverts at Fortson Mills, Snohomish 13 Jun appeared to be one of the interior races, which are completely unexpected in w. Washington during summer (SM, DD). Prior to 2002, there were no reports of summer flickers bearing Yellow-shafted characteristics, but for the 3rd consecutive summer integrate Yellow-shafted Flicker x Red-shafted Flickers were located in Seattle, with 2 noted 22 Jul (TA); this change is undoubtedly due to increased observer diligence.

FLYCATCHERS THROUGH FINCHES

Washington's 2nd Alder Flycatcher graced Marblemount, Skagit 20–27 Jun (S. Atkinson, ph. RS, vt. SM). Eleven Least Flycatchers this spring was about average, with most records coming from the e. slope of the Washington Cascades, the Okanogan Highlands, and ne. Washington; however, one at Dixie 16 Jun–1 Jul was a Walla Walla first (P. Rossi), and another at Cold Springs N.W.R., Umatilla 27 Jun–5 Jul was quite rare for ne. Oregon (CC, JC). A count of 50 Pacific-slope Flycatchers in Grays Harbor's Wynootchie Valley 20 Jun was exceptional (JP). Furnishing ne. Washington's 2nd record, a Cordilleran Flycatcher was at Granite Pass, Pend Oreille 29 Jun (†MM, G. Sheridan); substantially closer to its known Washington range in the Blue Mts. was one at Lewis and Clark S.P., Columbia 25 Jun (G. Hunn). Rare in e. Oregon, a Black Phoebe at Malheur 30 Jul was about Harney's 4th (LR). Oregon's 8th Eastern Phoebe, first found in May, fruitlessly sought a mate near LaPine, Deschutes into early Jul (H. Horvath). For the 12th consecutive year, Eastern Kingbirds bred near Troutdale, Multnomah, their only known w. Oregon breeding location (J. Fitchen); rare elsewhere in w. Oregon, one

was below Fall Creek Dam, Lane 22 Jun (DF). A Scissor-tailed Flycatcher near Beaverton 18 Jul was a Washington first and about the 19th for Oregon (†S. Hill); most have been May–early Jul.

Oregon's 2nd Yellow-throated Vireo appeared near Brookings, Curry 3 Jul (†DM); the first was at Malheur 9 Jun 2000. Oregon's 3rd Philadelphia Vireo visited Malheur 3 Jun, less than a fortnight after Oregon's 2nd and Washington's 3rd this May (RCH, F. Schrock). Still rare in Pacific, a Western Scrub-Jay was at Menlo 27 Jun (JP). A pair of Purple Martins nesting at 1000 m near Goose L., Skamania 4 Jul was remarkably high (C. Flick, S. Fletcher). Amazingly, an estimated 650 pairs of Purple Martins now breed in Washington (S. Kostka), compared with 39 pairs during summer 1980 (*American Birds* 34: 924); the increase is partly due to more intense surveying but is largely the result of an active nestbox recovery program. A swarm of 2000 Violet-green and 8000 Cliff Swallows at Sprague L. 10 Jun likely set a record high count for Cliff and a record summer tally for Violet-green (TA). Two Pygmy Nuthatches along Coppei Cr. 11 Jun furnished Walla Walla's 4th record (BW); the 3rd record was just this spring, raising the possibility that this species is extending its range westward from Columbia.

A Rock Wren was near Port Angeles 4 Jun–30 Jul (J. Mullaly); this species is extremely rare during summer in the westside lowlands. More expected, though still rare, were sightings from four locations on the w. slope of the Cascades from Clark, Washington, south; nesting was documented at Hoodoo Ski Area, Linn 4 Jul (DI, L. Irons) and Timothy L., Clackamas 14 Jul (N. Wallwork). Rare in the Willamette Valley, a Blue-gray Gnatcatcher appeared on the s. slope of Mt. Pisgah, Lane during late Jun, where they have bred in the past (B. Campbell); this site has Oregon's northernmost patch of Narrow-leaved Buckbrush (*Caenothus cuneatus*), a favored breeding habitat of these birds. A pair of Western Bluebirds with 2 young near Elkhorn Cr. 19 Jul provided Pacific's first breeding record (A. Richards). Up to 2 Veeries were noted at that species' only westside breeding location: County Line Ponds, Whatcom 13 Jun–7 Jul (SM, DD, S. Terry). A concentration of 18 Swainson's Thrushes at Windust Park, Franklin 2 Jun was most unusual for the Columbia Basin, where scattered singles are the rule (CW), while a tally of 142 in Grays Harbor's Wynootchie Valley 20 Jun was a Washington record (JP). Five Northern Mockingbirds in Oregon and 4 in Washington was well above average and included a nesting pair at Malheur (L. Hammond).

A Chestnut-sided Warbler, about the 46th for Oregon, was at Malheur 6 Jun, a fairly typical date (RCH, AC). A Magnolia Warbler

at Fields, Harney 1 Jun was about Oregon's 37th (M). Washington's 5th summer Myrtle Warbler was at Windust Park 2 Jun (CW). American Redstarts were first suspected of breeding in w. Washington in 1982 and have been detected annually since 1995 at the County Line Ponds, Skagit/Whatcom; this year, 9 males and 3 females were found there 13–29 Jun, likely a westside record (TA, SM, DD). Downstream, singing males were found near Marblemount 22 Jun (W. Weber) and near Conway to 11 Jun (K. Ranta), while clearly lost birds appeared on Vashon I., King 2 Jul (E. Swan) and at Estacada, Clackamas 13 Jul (R. Robb). Three Ovenbirds in Oregon was better than average, with singles at Winter Ridge, Lake 9 Jun (J. Fontaine), Hines, Harney 18 Jun (L. Hammond), and Gatesville Res, Douglas 3 Jul (*fide* DV); the latter was exceptional for being from the westside interior. A Northern Waterthrush at Yellowjacket Cr., Kittitas 4 Jul was in potential breeding habitat but far away from this species' established range in ne. Washington (S. Downes). Washington's 4th Hooded Warbler graced Sun Lakes S.P., Grant 6 Jun (†SM); of the three prior records, two were from Dec and one was from Jun. Yellow-breasted Chats, rare in w. Washington, were found at two Thurston locations and one in Clark; this species seems to be returning to w. Washington after decades of absence. Perhaps related to this tentative range expansion was a chat at Seaside 19 Jun, a rarity for Clatsop (MP). Washington's 3rd Summer Tanager was near Chiacum, Jefferson 21–24 Jun (ph. B. Kinchen).

Clay-colored Sparrows were unusually evident in e. Washington this summer, with 8 reported from Stevens, Spokane, and Lincoln, including one carrying food along Stroup Rd., Spokane 4 Jun (JA) and a pair feeding a youngster at Silver Hill, Spokane 30 Jul (M. Woodruff). A Vesper Sparrow was at Gearhart, Clatsop 18 Jul (PaS); they are rare on the outer coast n. of Curry, especially outside of migration. A Lark Sparrow at Portland 6 Jun was similarly rare for nw. Oregon, though it was probably a late migrant. A Black-throated Sparrow at Chiloquin, Klamath 5 Jul was somewhat w. of its normal haunts (W. Stone). Up to 30 Thick-billed Fox Sparrows were noted near Mann Butte, Skamania at elevations of 1000–1200 m on 3–4 Jul (KK, M. Brece); their presence in Washington only came to light last summer. A Gray-headed Junco in the Trout Creek Mts., Harney 9 Jun (M) furnished about the 7th Oregon record, though this taxon probably breeds annually in small numbers in se. Oregon (M). Rose-breasted Grosbeak numbers continue to rise quickly. Four were found in nw. Washington 2 Jun–18 Jul, and in Oregon there were 11 ads., including 3 to

gether at Port Orford, Curry 26 Jul (L. Miller) and a male feeding young of questionable parentage at Myrtle Point, Coos 26 Jul (B. Martin, TR). Consider that w. Oregon acquired its 5th record of this species as recently as the summer of 1988 (*American Birds* 43: 157) and that 10 were recorded there this summer alone. A female Indigo Bunting was at Redmond, Deschutes 23 Jul (TK. Owen); the majority of Oregon's approximately 50 records are of males from mid-Apr to mid-Jun. A male Indigo Bunting x Lazuli Bunting graced Dorena Res., Lane 29 Jun (ph. DF. M. Ewald); the prior Oregon record of this hybrid combination came from Lane during Jun 1997.

The only Washington Tricolored Blackbirds were 2 at Othello 6 & 23 Jul (BF), while in s. Oregon a small flock near Sutherlin 3 Jun was a Douglas first (J. Hein). Yellow-headed Blackbirds apparently bred near but not at P.S.B. (SM); there are only three

known active nesting locations in w. Washington, none of which are in Snohomish. Coming to light only in Jun, a Great-tailed Grackle, Washington's 4th, has resided at a Liberty L., Spokane park since approximately 1 Jan and was still present at summer's end (R. Dexter, ph. T. Munson); this bird was almost certainly the grackle reported at a nearby Liberty L. parking lot during Jan (ph. T. Munson, MH). In Oregon, the only report was from Fields, Harney 3 Jun (M); Oregon averages about 3 per summer. A pair of Hooded Orioles summered at Central Pt., Jackson (B. Kleine); most records of this rare Oregon visitor are from mid-Apr to early Jun. The only sighting of the peripatetic White-winged Crossbill came from Mt. Salmo, Pend Oreille 4 Jul (L. Schwitters). A visiting Wisconsin birder found Cowlitz's first Lesser Goldfinch in Woodland 24 Jul (S. Fitzgerald); this species' range appears to be expanding in Washington.

Initialed observers (subregional editors in boldface): Kevin Aanerud, Tom Aversa (WA), Gary Bletsch, Bob Boekelheide, Alan Contreras, Merry Lynn Denny, Mike Denny (ne. Oregon), Don DeWitt (DDW), Michael Donahue (MDo), Dennis Duffy, Joe Engler (*Clark*), Dan Farrar, Mike Force, Chuck Gates (*Crook*), Greg Gillson, Denny Granstrand (*Yakima*), Wayne Hoffman, Mark Houston, Rich Hoyer (RCH), Ken Knittle, Bruce LaBar (BLB), Bill LaFramboise (lower Columbia Basin), Nancy LaFramboise, Maitreya (M), Tom Mickel (*Lane*), Don Munson, Harry Nehls (OR), Bob Norton (Olympic Pen.), Michael Patterson (*Clatsop*), Jason Paulios, Luke Redmond, Tim Rodenkirk (*Coos*), Doug Schonewald (DSc), Noah Strycker, Patrick Sullivan (PTs), Paul Sullivan (PaS), Ruth Sullivan, Bill Tice (BTi), Dennis Vroman (*Josephine*), Jan Wiggers, Keith Wiggers, Bob Woodley, Charlie Wright. ☉

State of the Region

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Many wildlife habitat types are found in Washington and Oregon, including a variety of coniferous, mixed-coniferous and hardwood forests (from low elevation to subalpine), grasslands, shrublands, shrub-steppe, desert playa, open freshwater (lakes and rivers), freshwater wetlands, riparian areas, coastal beaches and dunes, coastal headlands and islets, bays and estuaries, and several zones of marine waters. This rich diversity of habitat types has been subjected to intensive resource extraction, conversion, or recreation activities associated with a rapidly growing human population, resulting in myriad conservation challenges involving a great number of bird species. This account will briefly summarize these conservation issues.

The Oregon & Washington Region contains parts of three Bird Conservation Regions (BCRs). The region west from the Cascade Mountain crest is referred to as BCR 5 (Northern Pacific Rainforest); the east slope of the Cascade Mountains, central Washington and southeastern Oregon comprise a portion of BCR 9 (Great Basin); and the mountainous areas of northeastern and southeastern Washington and northeastern Oregon are included in BCR 10 (Northern Rockies).

Coniferous forests in Washington and Oregon are among the most productive in the world. A substantial loss of mature and old-growth forest to timber harvest has impacted populations of listed species such as the Spotted Owl, Marbled Murrelet, and other species associated with late-successional forests. The U. S. Department of the Interior recently stated that Marbled Murrelet populations in Washington and Oregon were not "distinct population segments" relative to larger populations in British Columbia and Alaska. The status of the murrelet will soon be reviewed, and any subsequent reduction in protection status would likely exacerbate the ongoing Regional population decline. Other species strongly associated with older forests—for example, cavity-dependent birds like the Pileated Woodpecker and Vaux's Swift—have become scarce across millions of acres of non-federally-owned forests managed to produce timber, but not snags, on 50-year rotations. Regional specialties such as Hermit Warbler fare quite well in younger-aged forests; densities of nearly one territory per acre have been reported.

Fire suppression in the dry forests east of the Cascade Mountain crest has altered tree species composition and forest structure, and made some forests more susceptible to catastrophic fire and the effects of forest insects and disease. Conversion of these forests to more sustainable conditions (via timber harvest or fire, etc.) would impact Spotted Owls by removing closed-canopy forest, but would benefit White-headed Woodpeckers, Flammulated Owls, and other species found in generally open Ponderosa

Pine forests. Several catastrophic fires in the last decade eliminated forests used by these species but created opportunities for Black-backed Woodpeckers, a species found in very low densities except in recent burns. Some forests may become more vulnerable to catastrophic fire as the effects of global warming become more severe.

Shrub-steppe and grassland habitats have been converted or significantly degraded throughout the Region. Ferruginous Hawks, Greater Sage-Grouse, and Sage Thrashers have all experienced population declines in Washington's Columbia Basin, where shrub-steppe conversion, largely to agriculture, has eliminated about 50% of the estimated 15 million acres of shrub-steppe habitats present at the time of European arrival. The Greater Sage-Grouse population in Washington declined by about 77% between 1960 and 1999, and population estimates since 2000 have ranged between 730 and 1080 birds. In western Washington and Oregon, prairie grasslands and oak savannahs have been similarly converted for agricultural or other purposes. Formerly common species such as Lewis's Woodpecker, Slender-billed White-breasted Nuthatch, and Streaked Horned Lark are now much reduced or Regionally extirpated. As modern agriculture practices become more specialized (e.g., pattern tiling of fields to control flooding) in the Willamette Valley, even use of agricultural fields by some species has diminished.

Coastal and marine habitats and the species they support are vulnerable to many threats. Dune and estuary conversion has been well documented. Exotic vegetation in coastal dunes (European beach grass in both states) and estuaries (e.g., *Spartina*, particularly in Willapa Bay) reduces the area of habitats used by nesting Snowy Plovers and foraging shorebirds, respectively. A rapidly growing list of exotic invertebrates, some known to alter the structure of invertebrate communities elsewhere, has been documented in coastal estuaries. The influence of these invertebrates locally is unknown but potentially serious for shorebirds and other estuarine species. El Niño events and oceanic warming have been linked to massive changes in populations of Common Murres. El Niño events in the last 20 years have been more severe than earlier ones, and the recent discovery of an oxygen-poor "dead zone" off the Oregon coast may be an indicator of longer-term changes in the marine environment. These changes may be related to recent observations in the Region of wayward forms of marine life and birds such as Manx Shearwater and Elegant Tern. Finally, the ocean has become a dumping ground, intentionally or otherwise, for just about anything. Chief forms of marine pollution are plastic particles, which when ingested by Northern Fulmars and other species may cause health problems, and oil from spills, which have the potential to indiscriminately kill massive numbers of birds along the outer coast, in Puget Sound, and along the Columbia River.

These are not the only conservation challenges. Additional issues include grazing in the arid interior of the Region, conversion or alteration of freshwater wetlands, urban and suburban development, bird collisions with towers and wind turbines (scores of turbines are present in southeastern Washington, and impacts to birds there have not been well documented), and various forms of pollution. In addition, West Nile Virus is on the horizon and will undoubtedly take its toll on a broad range of species in addition to those—such as corvids, Greater Sage-Grouse and some raptors—



Perhaps nothing for birders is more evocative of the mystery of the humid old-growth forests of the Pacific Northwest than the thought of a Marbled Murrelet on its nest, high in the canopy of a giant conifer. These forests, vital for the survival of a host of species including the rapidly declining Northern Spotted Owl, are also of economic value, which has pitted the conservation community against the timber industry. Photograph by Tom Hamer/VIREO.

known to be particularly vulnerable. New species are regularly added to the Region's avifauna, and some establish breeding populations with varying levels of fanfare. The invasion of Barred Owls through the Region has increased the complexity of Spotted Owl conservation and management efforts. Lastly, non-consumptive recreation by humans has become a well-documented source of disturbance to the wilds around us. Outdoor recreation has increased by an estimated 10% per year over the past several decades. Rock climbers disturb cliff-nesting birds, beach-walkers or their dogs flush roosting shorebirds, and boaters (with or without motors) push waterbirds from feeding or resting areas. The list of human disturbances goes on, but the ecological effects are not well understood in many cases.

The past ten years have witnessed a surge in avian conservation planning and action. Bird conservation initiatives (e.g., Partners in Flight, the United States Shorebird Conservation Plan, Waterbirds for the Americas) have emerged to create conservation strategies increasingly

designed at the scale of BCRs. These initiatives are joining forces and, by integrating existing waterfowl management plans, are working on comprehensive "all-bird" strategies and partnerships (NABCI) with which to coordinate bird conservation and even seek expanded conservation funding. Bird conservation has become more efficient, more effective, and has a higher profile. Conservation strategies focus on a wide range of endeavors: identification of Important Bird Areas, ecoregional planning to prioritize important areas, purchase or easement of important habitats, development of best management practices, education, outreach, development of partnerships (including international efforts to address Neotropical migrants), and identification of funding opportunities. Certain larger issues—human population growth, global warming, pollution, aspects of forest management, and invasion of exotic species—require more attention and policy involvement due to the greater political and economic complexities associated with these issues.

Middle Pacific Coast

Last summer we lamented a lack of notable rarities; this summer we celebrate a surfeit of them. Perhaps the most unexpected was the state's first Common Eider, although several surprising species were reported. The amazing influx of warblers, many from the Southeast, which began in spring, continued unabated into summer, not just along the coast but also well inland in places like Mono. Suddjian reported that it "was one of the more interesting summers on record for Santa Cruz," and that assessment could be applied to the Region as a whole.

Abbreviations: B.S.O.L. (Big Sur Ornithology Lab); C.B.R.C. (California B.R.C.); C.R.P. (Cosumnes R. Preserve, Sacramento); C.V. (Central Valley); FI. (Southeast Farallon I., San Francisco); O.S.P. (Open Space Preserve); P.R.B.O. (Pt. Reyes Bird Observatory); S.F. (San Francisco). Reports of exceptional vagrants submitted without documentation are not published. Documentation for C.B.R.C. review species will be forwarded to Guy McCaskie, Secretary, P.O. Box 275, Imperial Beach, California 91933. Birds banded on FI. should be credited to Point Reyes Bird Observatory (P.R.B.O.) and those banded at Big Sur R. mouth to the Big Sur Ornithology Lab (B.S.O.L.) of the Ventana Wilderness Society.

GREBES THROUGH DUCKS

At least 13 ad. and 2 juv. Clark's Grebes at San Pablo Res. 6 Jun (RSa) represented a first nesting for *Contra Costa*, where breeding by Western Grebes remains unconfirmed. We have much to learn about *Aechmophorus* grebe ecology and behavior in the Region. The only storm-petrels reported included one Wilson's, 3 Fork-tailed, and 128 Ashy near Cordell Bank, Marin 24 Jul (RS, SBT et al.). Large numbers of American White Pelicans were reported from the Region starting in early Jun. Breeding Brandt's Cormorants had a banner year on the Coast Guard Jetty,



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Monterey, where 208 active nests, many of which contained 3 young, were counted 25 Jun (DLSH).

A Little Blue Heron returned briefly to Salt Pond A4 n. of Sunnyvale, *Santa Clara* 21 Jun–1 Jul (Kira Od, *fide* LCh, Roland Kenner, Pat Kenny, Dave Weber). A belated report of a breeding-plumaged Glossy Ibis in a nesting colony of 5000 White-faced Ibis at Sutter N.W.R., *Sutter* 29 May (ph., †Michael Peters) was intriguing, given the possibility of breeding in such circumstances; this provided only the 2nd record for the Region. Two wandering White-faced Ibis at the Lake of the Pines S.T.P. 20 Jul (Dennis Biladeau, Rudy Darling) were thought to be the first for the w. slope of the Sierra Nevada in *Nevada*. Coastal birds included 5 at the Napa–Sonoma Marshes W.A., *Napa* 26 Jun (MBe), one at Bodega Harbor, *Sonoma* 7 Jul (AWgh), and another at Zmudowski pond, *Monterey* 10 Jul (JB, NJM).

We received three unusual summer reports of the recently split Cackling Goose: one lingered in *Santa Cruz*, *Santa Cruz* through 1 Jun (SGe), *Santa Clara*'s first summer record was at the Coyote Creek G.C. 6 Jun (MJM), and one was at Roberts L., *Monterey* 21 Jun (RC). A male Eurasian Wigeon with an injured right wing on Salt Pond A2W 5 Jun (ph., †WGB) was likely the same individual that summered along nearby Guadalupe Slough last year in *Santa Clara*. *Napa*'s first brood of Blue-winged Teal, reported last season, survived to at least 26 Jun (MBe). A Cinnamon Teal at the Hayfork S.T.P. 8 Jul (JLx) was only *Trinity*'s 5th. A female Northern Shoveler with one small young in the Napa flood plain 6 Jun confirmed the 3rd instance of breeding in *Napa* (MBe). Redheads nested at Hayward R.S., with young seen 4–16 Jul (m.ob.); this is the first breeding in *Alameda* since 1916. Multiple broods of Lesser Scaup were again observed at Hayward R.S., *Alameda* (4 Jul; RJR) and Sunnyvale W.T.P., *Santa Clara* (ph. WGB, Peggy Don; 19–25 Jul). Completely unexpected, especially in summer, was an ad. or near-ad. male Common Eider in Crescent City, *Del Norte* 5–18 Jul (ph. Chuck Vaughn, ph., †m.ob.). This first state record was of the orange-billed Pacific race *v-nigra* and represents the first documented record s. of British Columbia, although another (or the same?) male was found 3 Aug+ at Port Angeles, Washington, for that state's first record. A summering male White-winged Scoter joined the resident Harlequin Duck at Coyote Pt., *San Mateo* 27 Jun–23 Jul (RSTh, AME). Summer Long-tailed Ducks were at Bodega Bay, *Sonoma* 7–31 Jul (AWgh, RS, BBu), Moss Landing, *Monterey* 5–24 Jul (YG et al.), and Crowley L., *Mono* 29 Jul (AWgh). A Hooded Merganser at Foster City 3 Jun (RSTh) furnished only the 2nd summer record for *San Mateo*, and a Red-breasted

Merganser at *Trinity* L. 8 Jul (JLx) constituted the first summer record for *Trinity* (and only the 6th ever).

RAPTORS THROUGH SHOREBIRDS

Two pairs of Ospreys nesting at Loch Lomond, *Santa Cruz* 27 Jul (Chris Berry) constituted the only modern nesting confirmations for the *Santa Cruz* Mts. area away from the established site at San Vicente Cr. near Davenport, which was also active this year. Two ads. with 2 juvs. off Black Road above Los Gatos 8 Jul were thought to have nested nearby (*fide* KPa), although nesting is still unconfirmed in *Santa Clara*. A White-tailed Kite at Lower Roberts Res. 9 Jul was one of very few records for *Modoc* (JLx). Ad. and juv. Swainson's Hawks in McArthur 13 Jul represented the first probable breeding in *Shasta* in over 20 years (B&CY). A Crested Caracara frequented a deer carcass e. of Valley Ford, *Sonoma* 17 Jul–1 Aug (DN, LLu, CLu, †RAR, ph. AWgh, m.ob.); the status of this species in the state is still being debated by the C.B.R.C., but this was a first county record, whatever its origin.

At least one Yellow Rail was still being heard near the town of Mt. Shasta, *Siskiyou* 22 Jun (Janet & Art Cupples), but no reports were received of this species in *Modoc* this year. An imm. Virginia Rail in Diamond Valley 23 Jul constituted the first breeding record for *Alpine* (ph. TEa). A pair of Snowy Plovers with 3 precocial young at the Modesto S.T.P. 30 Jul (JHG) was only the 2nd breeding confirmation for *Stanislaus*, the last being in the 1980s. Two pairs of American Avocets bred again at Humboldt Bay N.W.R., *Humboldt*, with the young successfully avoiding raven predation until at least 13 Jun (DFx, JCP et al.). Three nesting pairs at the Mud Lake S.T.P. represented the first breeding for *Alpine* (EP, m.ob.). Early returning Lesser Yellowlegs included one at Laguna Cr. Marsh 24 Jun (two weeks earlier than *Santa Cruz*'s previous earliest fall record; DLSu) and another 8 km w. of Corning 30 Jun (one of only a few from *Tehama*; JLx). Only 2 Solitary Sandpipers were reported: one 24–25 Jul at American R. Parkway, *Sacramento* (Dave Johnson) and another 29 Jul at Crowley L., *Mono* (AWgh).

Three Whimbrels at South Lake Tahoe 20 Jul (TS) were the first documented in *El Dorado*. Long-billed Curlews were confirmed breeding in *Shasta* for the first time, with distraction displays observed near McArthur 12 Jun (B&CY), and young birds in the same area 17 Jun (Red & Nancy Modeen). A Bar-tailed Godwit was reported from Bodega Harbor, *Sonoma* on the record-early date of 6 Jul (†RyT). A record-high count of 352 Surfbirds was obtained at the same location 29 Jul (RS); most of the previous triple-digit totals of this species have been from spring, although in recent years, large numbers of al-

ternate-plumaged ad. Surfbirds have been staging on mudflats at this location. Once again, mid-summer Red Knots were found on s. San Francisco Bay in Alviso, *Santa Clara*, with 2 found 1 Jul (RWR, FV). Five ad. (14–29 Jul) and 10 juv. (22–31 Jul) Semipalmated Sandpipers were detected, with a mix of inland and coastal birds. Ten Baird's Sandpipers, all coastal, were found 13–31 Jul. Only 2 Pectoral Sandpipers were located: an unseasonal bird near Kettleman City, *Kings* 24 Jun (JSy) and an ad. at Moonglow Dairy, *Monterey* 25–28 Jul (RbF, ADeM). Four Stilt Sandpiper reports were equally split between inland and coastal counties 14–24 Jul. Three different Ruffs, 2 males and a female, graced New Chicago Marsh in Alviso, *Santa Clara* 11 Jul+ (AME, Dean Manley, ph. WGB, ph. MMR, m.ob.); these are likely all returning birds. Two hundred Short-billed Dowitchers at the Davis Wetlands 11 Jul (JKn) tied the previous *Yolo* high count and formed an impressive concentration for any inland location in the Region.

GULLS THROUGH ALCIDS

A very high number for so early in the fall migration, 900 Sabine's Gulls were observed on six 16–24 km aerial transects, each about 150 meters wide, from Monterey Bay to Big Sur, *Monterey* 29 Jul (JND, Laird Henkel, Brad Keitt). Extrapolation indicates that there were thousands off the *Monterey* coast on that date. All 13 Franklin's Gulls reported occurred in Jun. A Laughing Gull at Pescadero Marsh 10 Jun was the 3rd for *San Mateo* (BDP, AWgh, J. R. Blair) and a well-documented, first-summer Little Gull present at the same location 8 Jun–6 Jul (RSTh, m.ob.) represented a county 2nd. There are now approximately 20 Little Gull records for the Region. A very worn, first-summer Mew Gull at Eureka, *Humboldt* 6–31 July+ (MWa et al.) was one of only a few well-documented summer records of this species in the Region. The San Joaquin Valley supports the only documented inland breeding locations of the endangered California Least Tern. From 1999 to 2003, there was a colony of one to 3 pairs near Kettleman City, *Kings*, and during the past two years, breeding has also occurred in *Kings* approximately 25 km se. of this location, where two pairs produced at least 2 young this season (RH, JSy). Elsewhere in the Region, inland Least Terns remain quite rare, and an ad. at Buckhorn Res. 15 Jun (†TDM) was a first for *Lassen*. The only large breeding colony of Least Terns in the Region occurs on e.-cen. San Francisco Bay in *Alameda*. Post-breeding Least Terns stage, to varying degrees, in south San Francisco Bay, where a record 276 were found on *Santa Clara* salt ponds 28 Jul (SCR et al.). There was good news from the Salinas R. mouth, *Monterey* Caspian Tern colony, where 221 fledglings among over 450 ads. 17 Jul

SA In what may be a grim harbinger, the University of California–Davis Center for Vectorborne Diseases reported that 128 out of 251 dead birds from California tested in July 2004 tested positive for West Nile virus (WNV). While southern California continues to be hardest hit (with more than 94% of the 1229 total cases in 2004), the Region's 51 positive test results were 40% of the 128 positives in Jul. The cases were spread widely among the Region's counties: *Butte* (17 birds), *Shasta* (7 birds), *Glenn* (5), *Santa Clara* (4), *Alameda* (3), *Fresno* (3), *Sacramento* (3), *Humboldt* (1), *Marin* (1), *Mendocino* (1), *Placer* (1), *Solano* (1), *Sonoma* (1), *Stanislaus* (1), *Tehama* (1), and *Tulare* (1). These are the first WNV positive dead bird results from the counties of *Alameda*, *Glenn*, *Humboldt*, *Marin*, *Placer*, *Solano*, *Sonoma*, and *Stanislaus*. Of the 51 birds, corvids are extremely over-represented, with 86% of the cases, as indicated by the following totals: Yellow-billed Magpie (16 cases), Western Scrub-Jay (15), American Crow (9), Common Raven (4), Cooper's Hawk (2), and one case each for Barn Owl, Northern Mockingbird, Brewer's Blackbird, House Finch, and House Sparrow. The high number of magpies affected is of particular concern, given the isolated, relatively small global population of this California endemic.

(DR) was more than twice the previous high for this intermittent colony.

An apparent pair of mostly alternate-plumaged Long-billed Murrelets was well seen and photographed off Salmon Cr. mouth, *Sonoma* 7 Jul (†RyT, ph. Michael Donnellan). This species is now annual in summer and fall in the Region, and this observation adds fuel to the speculation that small numbers of this Asian species may breed in North America. Another was reported without details 15 Jul off *Humboldt*. An alternate-plumaged ad. Horned Puffin was present in the surf at Capitola, *Santa Cruz* 14–15 Jul (Alex Jones, Alison Markiewicz, RgW, †DLSu).

CUCKOOS THROUGH FLYCATCHERS

A window-killed Yellow-billed Cuckoo at lower Mill Cr. 22 Jul provided an unexpected mid-summer *Mono* record (Carin Sorisio). A Great Gray Owl 20 Jul was a rare sight on the Yosemite Valley floor, *Mariposa* (JTz, Rebecca Green). Yet another intensive survey of former Black Swift nest sites in *Santa Cruz* was undertaken during the summer breeding season, and though there were 11 sightings, there was once again no solid evidence of nesting (DLSu, CGE, SGe). A vagrant Chimney Swift, just the 4th for *Santa Cruz*, was at Big Basin Redwoods S.P. 26 Jun (†DLSu). *Humboldt's* female Magnificent Hummingbird made a surprise return to a Eureka feeder 21 Jun and was reportedly present for "several days" (D. Wattenbarger, L. Carro). A male Costa's Hummingbird at a Napa feeder 14–18 Jun furnished a rare *Napa* record (DeH, DvH). An ad. *Selasphorus* hummingbird, presumably an Allen's based on location, was found feeding juvs. 22 Jun at C.R.P., providing just the 2nd nesting confirmation for the C.V. (JTr).

A singing Eastern Wood-Pewee at Putah Cr., *Solano/Yolo* 26–27 Jun would furnish a rare record for the Region if accepted by the C.B.R.C. (AEn, SCH). As usual, early to mid-Jun brought a trickle of Willow Flycatchers to the Region; one near the mouth of Redwood Cr., *Humboldt* 29 Jun was surprisingly late (KI). A singing Least Flycatcher was near Orick, *Humboldt* 21 Jun (KI). A briefly seen Great Crested Flycatcher at C.R.P. 5 Jul

would represent the first Jul record for California and a first for the C.V. if accepted by the C.B.R.C. (JTr, †CCo, †Terry Ronneberg). The vast majority of California records have been in Sep and Oct. Unseasonal *Santa Cruz* flycatchers included a wandering Say's Phoebe at Moore Cr. Preserve 23 Jul (almost six weeks ahead of typical coastal arrival dates; †SGe) and 3 Western Kingbirds on the coast in Jun, the latest of which was near *Santa Cruz* 24 Jun (DLSu). A Western Kingbird at the Redwood Cr. mouth, *Humboldt* 26 Jun was similarly unseasonal (KI). Eastern Kingbirds were at Trinidad Head, *Humboldt* 19 Jun (Michael Morris), Mud Lake S.T.P. 26 Jun (*Alpine's* first; †JLx), and at Blue L., *Lassen* 19 Jul (SAbb, BWb).

VIREOS THROUGH THRUSHES

The unsurpassed spring for vagrant vireos continued deep into summer. White-eyed Vireos, normally very rare in the Region, were at Big Sur R. mouth, *Monterey* 3–15 Jun (singing male; †RbF, Pascal Cauchois, †SBT et al.), Big Basin Redwoods S.P. 15 Jun (first for *Santa Cruz*; †DLSu) and near Bradley, *Monterey* 22 Jun (banded; B.S.O.L.). Singing male Yellow-throated Vireos were at Big Sur R. mouth 3–14 Jun (†RbF, Pascal Cauchois, m.ob.) and near Orick 16–26 Jun (5th for *Humboldt*; KI, m.ob.). Single Philadelphia Vireos were at Big Sur R. mouth 14–15 Jun (MtB, RbF et al.), near Orick 18 Jun (BS), and along the lower Mad R., *Humboldt* 1–3 Jul (KI; ph. RLeV et al.). Prior to this spring, only 2 or 3 spring Philadelphia's had ever been detected in the Region away from Great Basin oases, with nearly all California records coming from Sep and Oct. It was a banner spring for Red-eyed Vireos, with no fewer than 8 found coastally 3 Jun–5 Jul. Three inland reports, all on the summer date of 20 Jul, were more noteworthy: 2, including a singing male, were at C.R.P. (JTr, Dave Feliz, Kurt Miethke), and an ad. was banded near Hopland, furnishing a long overdue first for *Mendocino* (CEV, RJK, Becky Eisen, Lars Talleklint).

Three Pinyon Jays at McArthur 12 Jun were surprisingly just the 2nd ever found in *Shasta* and the first in 20 years (B&CY). Bank Swallows have never been confirmed

nesting in *Humboldt*, so a pair thought to be prospecting for nest sites near Fernbridge 16 Jun was an intriguing find (KGR). Apparent Barn Swallow x Cliff Swallow hybrids were well-described from Redwood Shores, *San Mateo* 11 Jul (†RSTh) and Moore Cr. Preserve, *Santa Cruz* 23 Jul (†SGe). Unseasonal Red-breasted Nuthatches included one at the Big Sur R. mouth, *Monterey* 13 Jun (SRv) and a rare Jul C.V. record at Woodland, *Yolo* 31 Jul (JCS). A belated report of a pair of nesting House Wrens at McKinleyville in May provided a "remarkable" coastal nesting record for *Humboldt* (Jake Houck). A post-breeding dispersant at Natural Bridges S.B. 26 Jun was the earliest such record for *Santa Cruz* (SGe). One of the Region's rarest vagrant songbirds and a first for *Mono*, a Veery was banded at lower Rush Cr., *Mono* 19 Jun (ph. P.R.B.O.). Recently hatched Hermit Thrushes banded in *Sacramento* at Stone Lakes N.W.R. 1 Jul (Stan Wright, Beatrix Treiterer) and C.R.P. 6 Jul (P.R.B.O.) were both thought to have been produced nearby. If so, they represent the first breeding for the C.V. A Varied Thrush at Alviso, *Santa Clara* 16 Jun was an unusually late migrant (Karl Fowler).

MIMIDS THROUGH WARBLERS

Three Gray Catbirds made an impressive summer showing: 28 Jun at Big Sur R. mouth, *Monterey* (RbF, DVP, RyT); 9 Jul at Blue L., *Humboldt* (KI); and 21 Jul at Pescadero (†GrH), a first summer record for *San Mateo*. A Brown Thrasher 21 Jun at Chadbourne Gulch (RLeV) was just the 2nd for *Mendocino*, following the first record this spring; one at Big Basin Redwoods S.P. 22 Jun was *Santa Cruz's* 3rd (†DLSu).

The amazing warbler spring became the amazing warbler summer in the Region, with 23 species reported. Suddjian reports that 11 species of vagrant warblers were found in *Santa Cruz* alone this spring and summer—twice the previous high of six species, and nearly three times the previous 10-year average (3.7 species). The county total of 30 individual vagrant warblers compared to a previous high of nine and was more than six times the previous 10-year average (4.8)!

Among our Region's more common migrants, there were a remarkable 24 Northern Parulas (including 2 or 3 at C.R.P. 24 Jul; JTr), 11 Chestnut-sided Warblers, 2 Blackpolls, 11 Black-and-white Warblers (5 in *Monterey*), 16 American Redstarts, and 7 Ovenbirds (notably, one 12 Jul along lower Lee Vining Cr., *Mono*; Leah Culp). Many of these birds were present for substantial periods, in suitable nesting habitat, and we can only speculate on how many actually bred. One pair of parulas was confirmed nesting at Big Sur R. mouth, *Monterey* 13 Jun, with eggs hatching 1 Jul, but the young were presumably predated, as all were gone by 5 Jul (RbF, SBT, LTer, MtB, m.ob.). A Cape May Warbler

SA With all the superlatives used up in reporting the rest of the Region's warbler invasion, how do we describe the unprecedented 23 Hooded Warblers this season? The last major invasion of Hoodies was May–Jul 1992, when more than 80 birds were reported in California, including 29 in the Region, 13 in Jun–Jul (*American Birds* 46: 478; 1176). This summer, breaking that 12-year-old mark, Hoodies hit the coast in a big way, with (from south to north) 5 in *Monterey*, 10 in *Santa Cruz*, 5 in *San Mateo*, and 2 in *San Francisco*; this is in addition to the 6 Hoodies reported from May. Contrast this to recent history: *Santa Cruz*, for example, previously had only six total spring/summer records, and the 1994–2003 average was just 0.3 per year (DLSu). Birders eagerly anticipated breeding with this level of activity, and they were not disappointed. At the Big Sur R. mouth, *Monterey*, which had a total of 6 Hoodies this spring/summer (including a male banded 28 May, reported last season), Fowler found a just-fledged juv. on 6 Aug that confirmed the first successful nesting of this species in the Region. After intriguing sightings all summer, breeding was also confirmed in *Santa Cruz* at the Soquel Demonstration S.F. 10 Aug, when a female was seen feeding a begging fledgling (†SGe, DLSu). Three singing males along Gazos Cr., *San Mateo* 6–27 Jun (RSTh, D5g, m.ob.) and a female at Gazos Cr. mouth 17 Jun (RSTh) led to speculation that there might also be breeding in *San Mateo*, but this was not confirmed. Males were also at Mt. Davidson, S.F., 1 Jun and 18 Jun (both David Armstrong). Finally, a singing male was inland at C.R.P. 17 Jun (JTr).

was at E.I. 30 Jun (P.R.B.O.). Bay-breasted Warblers were at Elk Head, *Humboldt* 19 Jun (KI) and E.I. 21 Jun (P.R.B.O.). An astounding 4 Prothonotary Warblers included singles at Big Sur R. mouth, *Monterey* 9–15 & 12–15 Jun (RbF, SRv, SBT, LTer) and Carbonera Cr., *Santa Cruz* 12 Jun (DLSu); even more unexpected was a singing male 4 Jun at Adobe Ranch, *Mono* (†KNN). A Northern Waterthrush 7 Jun at Rancho Del Oso (CGE) was just the 4th spring record for *Santa Cruz* and the first since 1987. A well-described Mourning Warbler was at Big Sur R. mouth, *Monterey* 5–6 Jun (†RbF, †SBT, TAm); one was reported without details from E.I. 29 Jun–8 Jul. A Canada Warbler 8 Jun at Big Sur R. mouth (Jeremy Bird, †RbF) was the first-ever spring record for *Monterey*; one 19 Jun near Trinidad (KI) was only the 2nd spring record for *Humboldt*. Black-throated Green Warblers were at E.I. 19 Jun (P.R.B.O.) and Pescadero, *San Mateo* 20 Jun (RSTh).

While most of the warbler action was along the coast, several species were also found inland. Chestnut-sided Warblers in the Sierra Nevada included males 11–12 Jun at Carson R. Road, *Alpine* (ph. TEa, Bill Hart) and 22 Jun at Carman Valley, a first summer record (and only the 2nd overall record) for *Sierra* (JMMc, Jim Steele, Doug Perez, Mat Cool). Lower Rush Cr., *Mono*, had a spate of rarities, including a Magnolia Warbler 2–18 Jul (P.R.B.O.) and a Blackburnian Warbler 19 Jun (ph. Kelly Grady, P.R.B.O.). On the coast, *Humboldt* had a Magnolia Warbler at McKinleyville 24–26 Jun (KGR, MMo, KI) and a Blackburnian Warbler at the Redwood Cr. estuary 18 Jun (KI). A Magnolia was also at E.I. 19 Jun (P.R.B.O.). Three Yellow-throated Warblers included one singing 8 Jun at Lassen Volcanic N.P., a first for *Shasta* (†John Mariani); one 8 Jun with no details from the Little R. estuary, *Humboldt*; and one singing at the Big Sur R. mouth, *Monterey* 13 Jun (†SBT, LTer, †MtB, †RbF).

The vagrants were not just from the east and southeast. A Grace's Warbler, found in mid-May at Chimney Peak Campground, *Tulare*, stayed through 29 Jun (ph. Bob Steele, RAB). Nor was the warbler action limited to vagrants, as there were remarkable records of our more common species as well. Yellow-rumped Warblers nesting w. of Castle Rock S.P. and at Long Ridge O.S.P. in the Santa

Cruz Mts. provided the first confirmed breeding records for *San Mateo* (DLSu). Nesting was also confirmed in *Napa* at Robert Louis Stevenson S.P. and near Bateman (MBe); the only previous *Napa* nesting records are from 1930, 1932, and 1972. MacGillivray's Warblers were confirmed nesting 15 Jul at Upper Van Ness Cr. (MBe), the first *Napa* breeding record since 1949. A female Townsend's Warbler 19 Jun–19 Jul at Big Basin Redwoods S.P., *Santa Cruz* (DLSu) is apparently only the 2nd confirmed summering record for this species in California (see *N.A.S.EN.* 50: 994).

TANAGERS THROUGH CROSSBILLS

Five Summer Tanagers were along the coast, and 2 were found 24 & 31 Jul, respectively, at C.R.P. (JTr, AEn, Irene Torres). A first-year male Scarlet Tanager 11 Jun at Mt. San Bruno C.P. was a first for *San Mateo* (ph. Herb Brandt, CLo, JM). Two family groups of Western Tanagers at Long Ridge O.S.P. 5 Jul confirmed the first known breeding in *San Mateo* (DLSu).

A Clay-colored Sparrow along lower Wilson Cr., *Mono* 10 Jun (River Gates) was a first for the Mono Basin. Just one Black-chinned Sparrow was reported: 6 Jun at Loma Prieta, *Santa Clara* (Tom Olson). None was found in *Santa Cruz* despite coverage of known nesting areas (fide DLSu). A Grasshopper Sparrow 22 Jun at Carman Valley was a first for *Sierra* (Jim Steele, JMMc, Doug Perez, Mat Cool); an ad. with 3 juvs. near Sheridan may be the first confirmed breeding for *Placer* (CIH). An injured White-throated Sparrow in San Jose, *Santa Clara* was last seen 28 Jun (Laurie West Roberts); another White-throated at E.I. 23–24 Jun was completely unexpected (P.R.B.O.). A well-described Dark-eyed Junco showing the characteristics of the Slate-colored Junco group was reported 24 Jun from Natural Bridges S.B. (†SGe), the first in *Santa Cruz* outside of fall or winter.

A whopping 45 Rose-breasted Grosbeaks were reported—mostly from the coast, but including single records from *Mono*, *Nevada*, *Siskiyou*, *Tulare*, and *Tuolumne*—some 50% higher than our record of 30 reports of this "rare" species in the summers of 2000 and 2001. We have questioned in these pages (*N.A.B.* 54: 421) whether the increased reports were the result of range expansion or of better reporting; with steadily rising numbers over

the years, it seems range expansion may be the answer. Indigo Buntings were also widely reported, including a male 11–16 Jun at Crystal Basin (TEa, TS) that was probably the same bird found there 17 May (*El Dorado's* first; SAG). A Red Crossbill at E.I. 29 Jul–2 Aug provided the earliest fall record there, with the previous early record being 8 Sep (P.R.B.O.). Observers: Steve Abbott, Tim Amaral, Robert A. Barnes, Murray Berner, William G. Bousman (*Santa Clara*), Matthew Brady, June Buntin, Betty Burrige, Rita Caratello, Les Chibana, Luke W. Cole (*Kings*), Chris Conard (*Sacramento & Yolo*), Jeff N. Davis, Al DeMartini, Bruce E. Deuel (n. C.V. counties), Todd Easterla, Mark W. Eaton (*San Francisco*), Alan M. Eisner, Ray Ekstrom (*Siskiyou*), Chris G. Emmons, Andrew Engilis, David Fix (*Humboldt*), Rob Fowler, James H. Gain (*Stanislaus*), Steve Gerow, Yohn Gideon, Steven A. Glover (*Contra Costa*), David Hamilton, Denise Hamilton, Steve C. Hampton, Rob Hansen, Garth Harwood, Cliff Hawley, John E. Hunter (*Trinity*), Ken Irwin, Robert J. Keiffer (*Mendocino*), Jon King, Robin L. C. Leong (*Napa & Solano*), Ron LeValley, Cindy Lieurance, Leslie Lieurance, Jim Lomax, Calvin Lou, Michael J. Mamoser, Timothy D. Manolis (*Lassen*), J. Mac McCormick (*Plumas & Sierra*), Nancy J. McMahon, Peter J. Metropulos (*San Mateo*), Joe Morlan, Mark Morrissette, Dan Nelson, Kristie N. Nelson (*Mono & E.I.*), Ed Pandolfino (*Placer*), Kathy Parker, Benjamin D. Parmeter, Jude C. Power (*Humboldt*), Robert W. Reiling, Robert J. Richmond (*Alameda*), Don Roberson (*Monterey*), Michael M. Rogers, Kerry G. Ross, Stephen C. Rottenborn, Steve Rovell, Ruth A. Rudesill (*Sonoma*), Barry Sauppe, Rusty Scalf (RSa), Jeff Seay, Debra L. Shearwater, Dan Singer, Rich Stallcup, John C. Sterling (*Alpine, Calaveras, & Modoc*), Tim Steurer (*El Dorado & Amador*), David L. Suddjian (*Santa Cruz*), Linda Terrill, Ryan Terrill, Scott B. Terrill, Ronald S. Thorn, Jim Tietz, John Trochet, Steve Umland (*Tuolumne*), Kent Van Vuren (*Merced & San Benito*), Chuck E. Vaughn, David Vander Pluym (*Mariposa*), Frank Vanslager, Matt Wachs, Bruce Webb, Jerry R. White (*Lake*), Alan Wight, Brian Williams (*Nevada*), Roger Wolfe, Bob & Carol Yutzy (*Shasta*). Many more observers are not specifically cited; all are very much appreciated. ☺

State of the Region

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The Middle Pacific Coast Region encompasses a wide variety of bird habitats and ecogeographic regions ranging from Great Basin deserts to coniferous forests to annual grasslands and oak savanna to coastal estuaries and sandy beaches. With this variety comes a host of bird conservation challenges. The region has experienced great historical transformations of natural landscapes into agricultural/silvicultural as well as urban/suburban landscapes that have not only reduced important habitats for many species, but that have also created the conditions for new threats that are currently impacting bird populations. The issues that confront current conservation and land management programs are summarized here in two sections: Historical Actions and Current Conservation Challenges. These are by no means exhaustive lists but are major and are representative of the whole range of issues.

The legacy of past environmental degradation is not just the new conservation challenges that have arisen but also a host of conservation initiatives and laws implemented to stop and reverse the destructive trends. These include environmental protections, impact avoidance measures, and habitat restoration efforts through a national and state regulatory framework that includes but is not limited to: the National Environmental Policy Act, the California Environmental Quality Act, the International Migratory Bird Treaty Act, various wetland protection regulations, and the federal and state Endangered Species Acts. Among those factors that have provided traction in the efforts to restore some of the state's lost natural heritage are the California Partners In Flight initiatives and habitat-based bird conservation plans, four Joint Ventures that include the Region (<birdhabitat.fws.gov/navmp/nort.htm>), and lawsuits forcing government agencies to adhere to sound natural resource extraction practices. Looming ahead, however, are potential threats to these laws, funded programs, policies, and regulations by unscrupulous federal and state governmental employees and lawmakers. Of profound significance for bird conservation is the recent, increasing disregard in some sectors of government for scientifically based policy and management recommendations.

Historical Actions

• Destruction and fragmentation of riparian habitat in the Central Valley

During the past 170 years, the original hydrologic systems and well over 90% of the riparian habitat has been destroyed in the Central Valley, with most of the remaining habitat in degraded condition (Katibah 1984). This has directly resulted in the severe reduction in the populations of many riparian-obligate birds. Representative species affected include Yellow-billed Cuckoo and Yellow-breasted Chat.

• Destruction of freshwater wetlands in the Central Valley

During the past 170 years, most of the wetlands in the Central Valley have been destroyed (Frayer et al. 1989), ultimately through the development of the water transport and flood control system that led to the damming of most river systems, the erection of extensive levee and stream bank stabilization systems, and the rerouting of water to the agricultural (mostly cotton) fields in the southern San Joaquin Valley and the southern California metropolitan areas. This new water management infrastructure served as a catalyst for the increased development of agriculture and urban centers throughout the valley. Representative species negatively affected include Least Bittern and Black Tern.

• Destruction of wetlands in the San Francisco Bay estuary

During the past 170 years, approximately 85% of the wetlands bordering the San Francisco Bay Estuary have been filled to support urban growth or transformed to artificial, diked ponds for the development of the salt industry (Marshall and Dedrick 1994). Representative taxa negatively affected include Black Rail, and the Alameda, Samuel's, and Suisun subspecies of Song Sparrow.

• Logging

The extensive historical logging of the old-growth coniferous forests in the north coast ranges and the Sierra Nevada has led to the reduction of bird populations that reach their highest densities in these forests. It has also created a mosaic of even-aged stands of various successional stages, including vast brushlands where soil loss has been exacerbated by unsustainable clear-cutting logging practices. These silvicultural landscapes are more susceptible to catastrophic wildfire than the natural landscape of old-growth forests. Representative species negatively affected include Marbled Murrelet, Spotted Owl, and Vaux's Swift.

• Past wildfire suppression efforts

The suppression of wildfire throughout the forested regions has created an "unnatural" fire regime. Because of the heavy accumulation of vegetation, wildfires are fueled to catastrophic levels that have already completely destroyed vast acreages of forests. Representative species negatively affected include Pileated Woodpecker and Hermit Warbler.

• Agriculture

The development of intensive agriculture in the Central Valley as well as in other inland valleys includ-

ing Napa, Salinas, and Sonoma, has greatly reduced or eliminated native habitats in these agricultural landscapes. Although many species of birds have adapted and even flourished in some agricultural areas (especially in flooded rice pastures and alfalfa fields), many others have not. Representative species negatively affected include Le Conte's Thrasher and Grasshopper Sparrow.

Current Conservation Challenges

• Logging

In addition to the direct effects from the loss of habitat described above, the alteration of the forest structure from logging practices has enabled Barred Owls to colonize California within the past two decades. Barred Owls have been documented to eat, harass, and displace the threatened Spotted Owl. Logging practices may also include the removal of large snags that are not currently protected as valuable wildlife habitat, especially for nesting Vaux's Swift.

• Livestock overgrazing

Livestock overgrazing has increased soil erosion, degraded springs, initiated the transformation of wet montane meadows to dry scrubland, severely impacted recruitment of blue oaks, and has denuded lower vegetation strata in riparian habitats. Representative species negatively affected include Willow Flycatcher and Song Sparrow.

• Sudden Oak Death Syndrome

This is a relatively new threat that has already killed many thousands of hardwood trees in the central coast region of California. It is not known if this disease will spread further and how much of an impact it will ultimately have on the state's forests. Representative species negatively affected include Hutton's Vireo and Oak Titmouse.

• West Nile virus

This disease first entered northern California in 2004, and its future impact on bird populations is unknown. However, elsewhere in the country, crows, jays and magpies have been especially affected by West Nile virus, so there is great concern over its impact on bird populations, particularly on the state's two endemic bird species, both corvids: Yellow-billed Magpie and Island Scrub-Jay.

• Fire in sagebrush ecosystems

Degradation of the sagebrush steppe ecosystem in northeastern California by overgrazing of cattle, invasive species of plants that increase fire rates and effects, the fuel buildup in old stands of sagebrush and mountain mahogany, and the current six-year long drought has created conditions for catastrophic wildfires, which have already destroyed millions of acres of sagebrush in neighboring Nevada. Representative species negatively affected include Greater Sage-Grouse and Sage Thrasher.

• Starling competition for nest sites

The European Starling invaded California during the twentieth century, and has greatly increased its population especially in agricultural areas. Starlings aggressively compete with and often outcompete other secondary-cavity nesting birds for cavities. They are known to expel occupied nests of native species, even woodpeckers. Representative species negatively affected include Purple Martin and Western Bluebird.

• Cowbird brood parasitism

Brown-headed Cowbirds also invaded California west of the Cascade-Sierra divide during the twentieth century. With riparian areas already highly fragmented, cowbirds have been able to penetrate many

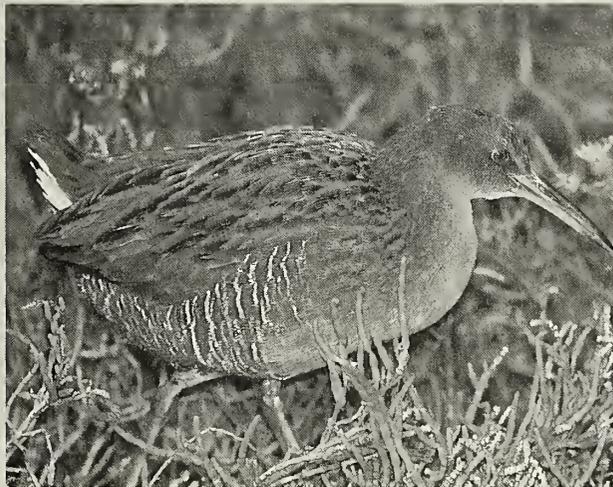
of these residual patches to parasitize broods of Least Bell's Vireos, Yellow Warblers, and other susceptible songbirds. This led to the regional or local extirpation of some of these riparian-obligate species.

• Degradation of the marine ecosystem

The overfishing of species that are critical to the food web of the ocean and that are also important prey of a variety of seabirds, along with the effects of pollution and the recent warming of sea temperatures, may have a profound long-term impact to the state's nesting seabirds as well as to the many seabirds species that migrate through and/or winter along the California coast (Ainley et al. 1994). Representative species negatively affected include Ashy Storm-Petrel (nearly the entire global population) and Common Murre.

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The California Clapper Rail (subspecies *obsoletus*) is listed as federally "Endangered" because of its small population—as low as 300 birds in 1991—which faces threats from introduced predators (such as Red Fox), development, and habitat fragmentation. Most surviving birds, now numbering about 650, are found in the marshes of southern San Francisco Bay, where most of 15,100 acres of salt ponds will be restored to wetlands in starting 2005, increasing habitat for the rail, Black Rail, and Marbled Godwit. This bird was photographed at the Palo Alto Baylands of Santa Clara County. Photograph by Peter LoTourrette/VIREO.

Southern Pacific Coast



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Highlights of the season included a nesting attempt by Hooded Warblers and the presence of several summering Northern Parulas, following a spring in which these and other species of southeastern origin were recorded in relatively high numbers, and the Region's southernmost nesting of Common Merganser, which followed this spring's unprecedented successful nesting of Hooded Merganser. There was a resurgence of nesting efforts by fish-eating birds at the Salton Sea, and, although breeding success was mixed, this was testimony to at least the short-term resilience of the Sea's ecosystems following cutbacks in the agricultural water that feeds it. West Nile virus hit the Region hard for the first time this summer, although by the end of the period there were only anecdotal accounts of diminished populations of crows and other species.

Abbreviations: B.S. (Butterbredt Spring at the s. end of the Sierra Nevada above Cantil, e. Kern); C.L. (China Lake Naval Air Weapons Station, extreme ne. Kern); F.C.R. (Furnace Creek Ranch, Death Valley N.M., Inyo); G.H.P. (Galileo Hill Park in extreme e. Kern); N.E.S.S. (n. end of Salton Sea, Riverside); P.P. (Piute Ponds on Edwards Air Force Base, ne. Los Angeles); S.C.R.E. (Santa Clara R. Estuary near Ventura, Ventura); S.E.S.S. (s. end of Salton Sea, Imperial); S.F.K.R.P. (South Fork Kern River Preserve near Weldon, Kern); V.A.F.B. (Vandenberg A.F.B. in nw. Santa Barbara); V.C.G.P. (Ventura County G.P., near Pt. Mugu Naval Air Station, Ventura). Because virtually all rarities in s. California are seen by many observers, only the observer(s) initially finding and identifying the bird are included. Documentation for species on the California Bird Records

Committee (C.B.R.C.) review list is forwarded to the C.B.R.C. Secretary and archived at the Western Foundation of Vertebrate Zoology in Camarillo.

LOONS THROUGH RAPTORS

An alternate-plumaged Pacific Loon inland at N.E.S.S. 14 Jun (TMcG, MSanM) was an exceptionally late spring migrant. A few Northern Fulmars remained along the coast through the summer, as indicated by single birds at Newport Beach, Orange 31 Jul (BED), off La Jolla, San Diego 12 Jul (MBi), and at San Clemente I. 23 Jul (JMM). Moderate numbers of Cook's Petrels (up to 6/hour) were seen during a CalCOFI survey 276+ km off the coast in late Jul (KNN).

The only Red-billed Tropicbirds reported were 2 over the Cortez Bank well off San Diego 28 Jul (GT). A Masked Booby at China Pt. on San Clemente I. 13 Jul+ (ph. BLS) was believed to be the same individual here last Aug. A major influx of Brown Pelicans to the Salton Sea and Lower Colorado River in early Jun primarily involved young of the year dispersing after very successful nesting in the Gulf of California; individuals pushed northward into the Owens Valley 1–10 Jul (BKS, T&JH) to establish the first record for Inyo, and westward to L. Henshaw in the mts. of San Diego 27 Jun (ELK). The only Magnificent Frigatebird was an imm. at S.E.S.S. 24 Jul (HBK, GMcC).

The only Little Blue Herons reported away from the resident population in coastal San Diego were an ad. on Upper Newport Bay, Orange 24 Jul (BJ), a "calico" bird at Point Mugu, Ventura 13 Jun–18 Jul (MR), and a juv. in Carpinteria, Santa Barbara 11 Jul (LM). Imm. Reddish Egrets on the Santa Ana R. in Huntington Beach/Costa Mesa, Orange 26 Jul+ (MMcL) and at Bolsa Chica, Orange 29 Jul+ (BED) were the only ones reported. The earliest Wood Stork at S.E.S.S. was one on 12 Jun (KLG), with numbers there building to 32 by the end of Jul (GMcC).

A Canvasback, rare in summer, was at S.E.S.S. 3–10 Jul (GMcC), and at least 5 Ring-necked Ducks, also rare in summer, were in the Owens Valley during the summer (T&JH), with additional singles at C.L. through 29 Jul (SS) and near Seeley, Imperial 9 May–27 Aug (GMcC). A Bufflehead successfully fledged a duckling at Tinemaha Res. near Big Pine, Inyo in Jun (T&JH) to establish one of the southernmost nestings in California (see *Western Birds* 29: 36–40). The Harlequin Duck found on Mission Bay in San Diego in Mar 2001 was still present at the end of the period (MBi). A Surf Scoter inland at Salton City, Imperial 20 May–11 Jun (GMcC) and a White-winged

Scoter at S.E.S.S. 9 May–10 Jul (GMcC) were evidently attempting to summer locally; 2 of the Surf Scoters found at N.E.S.S. in early May remained through 6 Jun (CMcG), the White-winged Scoter through 27 Jun (JFG), and one of the Black Scoters through 4 Jul (HBK). A Long-tailed Duck in Santa Barbara 23 Jun (DMC) was evidently summering locally. A Hooded Merganser near Glendale, *Los Angeles* 11–24 Jul (RB) was believed present since May. The presence of four family groups of Common Mergansers, including a female with 14 ducklings, on Piru Cr. above Piru L., *Ventura* 8 Jun (JG) established the s. limit of the species' breeding range.

A pair of Bald Eagles that fledged 2 young at L. Henshaw in Jun (NB) established the first modern-day nesting record for *San Diego*. Since there are very few breeding records for Sharp-shinned Hawk in s. California, one at Montana de Oro S. P., *San Luis Obispo* 13 Jun (JLR) was noteworthy. A Cooper's Hawk near Westmoreland, *Imperial* 4 Jul (CAM, MSanM) was one of a very few recorded in the Imperial Valley in summer. A Red-shouldered Hawk near Seeley 17 Jul (GMcC) established the earliest date for a fall migrant/winter visitor around S.E.S.S.

RAILS THROUGH ALCIDS

Up to 2 calling Black Rails were present near Seeley, *Imperial* through the summer (GMcC). An ad. Black-bellied Plover was at C.L. on the unexpected date of 29–30 Jun (SS). An American Oystercatcher was photographed on Anacapa I. 6 Jun (JF), and a black-and-white oystercatcher on Santa Cruz I. 5 Jul (DH) was believed to be the same bird present since Mar. A Lesser Yellowlegs at S.E.S.S. 17 Jun (GMcC) established the earliest date for a fall migrant at the Salton Sink. The first Solitary Sandpipers of the fall were at C.L. 30 Jun (SS), near Lakeview, *Riverside* 21 Jul (CMcG), F.C.R. (2) 22 Jul (JLD), P.P. 25 Jul (JF), Baldwin L., *San Bernardino* 27 Jul (MBy), and on the Los Angeles R. in Long Beach, *Los Angeles* 30 Jul (MSanM). Casual in *Inyo*, a Whimbrel at Owens L. 25 Jul (BS, SS) coincided with large numbers passing southward through the Salton Sink. Two Black Turnstones at S.E.S.S. 3 Jul+ (GMcC) were either summering locally or exceptionally early fall migrants. Single ad. Semipalmated Sandpipers were at P.P. 21 Jul (TMcG, MSanM), C.L. 29 Jul (SS), and Goleta 20 Jul (WTF); a juv. in Goleta, *Santa Barbara* 29 Jul (WTF) and 3 on the Los Angeles R. in Long Beach 31 Jul (KGL) were the earliest this fall. Southbound Western and Least Sandpipers reached the Salton Sea early, with 15 Westerns and 3 Least on 17 Jun (GMcC) establishing the earliest dates for fall migrants at the Salton Sink. An ad. Baird's Sandpiper was at the mouth of Villa Creek, *San Luis Obispo* 21 Jul (GPS), and another was at Lancaster the same day (TMcG, MSanM); the first juv. was one on the Los Angeles R. in Long Beach 31 Jul (RB). Three Short-billed Dowitchers in Goleta 23 Jun (NAL) were early fall mi-

grants. A male Ruff in alternate plumage at V.C.G.P. 1 Jul (DDesJ) was an early fall migrant. A Wilson's Snipe in the Prado Basin, *Riverside* 30 Jun–2 Jul (JEP) was an exceptionally early fall migrant.

At the Salton Sea, several pairs of California Gulls and 35–50 pairs of Caspian Terns successfully nested on Mullet I., but 117 pairs of Gull-billed Terns along the s. shore experienced a high level of disturbance and predation; nearly 400 pairs of Black Skimmers were on nests at the end of the period, so their success has yet to be determined (KCM). A Laughing Gull near Imperial Beach, *San Diego* 26–27 Jun (TH) was on the coast, where rare. Two Franklin's Gulls at C.L. 9–10 Jun (SS) were late spring migrants, and one there 29 Jul (SS) was the first for the fall. A second-summer Western Gull in the Prado Basin 23–30 Jun (JEP) was far inland. A worn second-summer Glaucous-winged Gull at N.E.S.S. 13 Aug (TL) had obviously summered locally, one of a very few to have done so on the Salton Sea.

Two alternate-plumaged Arctic Terns inland at Fig Lagoon near Seeley 3–4 Jul (GMcC, CAM) were evidently exceptionally late spring migrants. A pair of Forster's Terns that attempted unsuccessfully to nest at Tinemaha Res. near Big Pine in late Jun (T&JH) represented the first breeding attempt in *Inyo*. A pair of Least Terns successfully nested about 24 km inland on the Santa Ana R. in Anaheim, *Orange* in Jun (DRW); 2 were much farther inland at N.E.S.S. 6 Jun (CMcG), and 2–3 were at S.E.S.S. 23 May–17 Jul (GMcC). Two Xantus's Murrelets of the s. race *hypoleucus* 120 km w. of San Clemente I. 17 Jul (KNN) were early for this far north.

DOVES THROUGH VIREOS

A White-winged Dove in Hermosa Beach, *Los Angeles* 22 Jun (LC) and another on San Clemente I. 30 Jun (SWS) were w. of the species' normal range. Ruddy Ground-Doves remained near Calipatria, *Imperial* through the period and were suspected of nesting. The first of the breeding Yellow-billed Cuckoos reached S.F.K.R.P. 16 Jun (BB); single birds at Ridgecrest, *Kern* 5 Jun (LS), Borrego Springs, *San Diego* 13 Jun (MBi), Blythe, *Riverside* 14 Jun (RH), and Morongo Valley, *San Bernardino* the same day (MAC) were migrants away from known nesting localities. Northern Pygmy-Owls in the San Bernardino Mts. at Bluff L. 27 Jul (MBy) and Heart Bar campground 31 Jul (AH, VH) were at the s. extreme of this species' known range in California. Calling Whip-poor-wills, a species yet to be proven to nest in California, were around Heart Bar and Fish Creek campgrounds in the San Bernardino Mts. in Jun (DK, ES). The only Chimney Swifts reported were single birds over Inglewood, *Los Angeles* 9 Jun (RB) and Long Beach 22 Jun (KGL). Up to 2 male Broad-tailed Hummingbirds frequenting a feeder at Heart Bar campground in the San

Bernardino Mts. 11–31 Jul (DL, HBK, AH) were w. of the species' normal range.

Just how late the spring migration of Willow Flycatchers can be is illustrated by a count of 60 at B.S. 10 Jun, with the species "abundant" at nearby G.H.P. the same day (KNN). In contrast, the subspecies *extimus* is nearly extirpated as a breeder in the Region; in addition to the small population at S.F.K.R.P., a territorial male was in Fillmore, *Ventura* 4 Jun (JG). A Willow Flycatcher at Fig Lagoon near Seeley, *Imperial* 24 Jul (GMcC) established the earliest fall record for the Salton Sink. A calling Least Flycatcher was at S.F.K.R.P. 11 Jul (AS). A Pacific-slope Flycatcher at Bolsa Chica, *Orange* 30 Jun (RAE) was well away from any known nesting area. A pair of Vermilion Flycatchers nested successfully again this year in San Bernardino, *San Bernardino*, with 2 young fledging in Jun (TB). Two pairs of Brown-crested Flycatchers were at Borrego Springs, *San Diego* through the period (MBi, GMcC); a vocal bird was at China Ranch, *Inyo* 22 Jul (JLD). Eastern Kingbirds were at Carpinteria, *Santa Barbara* 18 Jun (LRB) and ne. of Bishop, *Inyo* 21–23 Jul (J&DP).

Loggerhead Shrikes continue to decline on the coastal slope, with the tiny populations in *San Luis Obispo* and *Ventura* impacted by predator-control programs designed to protect nesting Snowy Plovers and/or Least Terns. One on the Morro Bay sandspit, *San Luis Obispo* 4 Jul (RF) was away from recent breeding sites. Shrikes bred at Carpinteria in Jul for the first time on the e. coast of *Santa Barbara* (DMC). A locally-fledged bird at Ormond Beach, *Ventura* 31 Jul (WW) was in a known nesting area from which birds have been trapped and relocated to protect nesting Least Terns. Only one certain nesting pair was reported from the *Los Angeles* coastal lowlands, in Cudahy in Jul (RB).

In contrast to shrikes, the recovery of Least Bell's Vireo (*Vireo bellii pusillus*) populations in the Region continues at an encouraging rate: over 500 territorial males were in the Prado Basin, *Riverside/San Bernardino* this summer (DP). Atypical was a family group in Irvine, *Orange* 1 Jul in non-native *Myioporium/Eucalyptus* landscaping along a freeway border (DRW). At the n. end of the species' range in the Region, one was at Wildrose Ranger Station, *Inyo* 4 Jun (T&JH), and another was at China Ranch, *Inyo* 22 Jul (JLD). A Hutton's Vireo on San Clemente I. 12–13 Jun (BLS) was the 2nd to be found on that island. Yellow-throated Vireos, casual in California, were found in Palm City, *San Diego* 21–22 Jun (GLR) and in Vandenberg Village, *Santa Barbara* 4–5 Jul (MAH et al.). A migrant Red-eyed Vireo was in Los Angeles 5–12 Jun (RB), and another bird summered at Huntington Beach, *Orange* 4 Jul–14 Aug+ (LO et al.).

SWALLOWS THROUGH WARBLERS

Two Bank Swallows at S.E.S.S. 24 Jun (GMcC)

were very early fall migrants. A California Gnatcatcher at the Thousand Oaks Botanical Garden 19 Jun–8 Aug (RSw) was some 15 km s. of the small remnant *Ventura* population in Moorpark. A Ruby-crowned Kinglet in the fir forest on Clark Mt., *San Bernardino* 10 Jul was in one of the few areas of the Region with multiple mid-summer records (CC). Western Bluebirds continued their range expansion in the coastal lowlands; this summer, they nested on the Palos Verdes Peninsula and in West Los Angeles and Inglewood, *Los Angeles* (RB, KGL), as well as at Huntington Beach, *Orange* (D&PC). A Swainson's Thrush near El Centro, *Imperial* 31 Jul (KZK) was difficult to categorize, as it was a full month earlier than the earliest desert records of this scarce interior fall migrant. A Hermit Thrush at Palomar Mt. S. P., *San Diego* 19 Jun (PU) was well s. of the species known breeding range. Cedar Waxwings routinely linger in the Region until early Jun, but a bird in Laguna Niguel, *Orange* 18 Jun (LL) was very late.

Up to 2 Virginia's Warblers on Clark Mt. 7 Jun–10 Jul (DG, CC) and a pair with 2 fledglings at 2526 m near Onyx Summit in the *San Bernardino* Mts. 25 Jun (RLMcK) were in areas for which at least sporadic nesting is documented. Early fall migrant Lucy's Warblers were found coastally at Harbor Regional Park near San Pedro, *Los Angeles* 10 Jul (KGL) and e. *Anaheim* 31 Jul (DRW), and on the deserts away from breeding areas near Seeley 17–25 Jul (GMcC) and at C.L. 28 Jul (2; SS). A pair of Northern Parulas remained at Eaton Canyon, *Los Angeles* 10 Jun–25 Jul, with the male present to at least 8 Aug (JF), and a male at Harbor Regional Park 12 Jun+ was associating with a female on 10 Jul, with a possible juv. observed in Aug (KGL); additional birds not included in the spring report included 5 in coastal *Orange* 1–8 Jun (DRW), one in Poway, *San Diego* 17–18 Jun (KGr), one at Prado Basin, *Riverside* 18 Jun (JEP), up to 3 at S.F.K.R.P. 10 Jun–12 Jul (AS, LS, MBr), one in Ridgecrest, *Kern* 10–11 Jun (JS), one n. of Bishop 6 Jun (J&DP), one at F.C.R. 19–26 Jun (V&GW), and one in Blythe 21 Jul (RH). A singing Chestnut-sided Warbler at S.F.K.R.P. 22 Jun was a late spring vagrant (TS). Three pairs of Yellow-rumped Warblers at Cuyamaca Rancho S. P., *San Diego* 5 Jun were at the s. end of the California breeding range (PJ). A well-described male Blackpoll Warbler at L. Fulmor in the *San Jacinto* Mts., *Riverside* 25 Jul (J&MT) established an unprecedented mid-summer record. Black-and-white Warblers were on Pt. Loma 14 (MBi) & 24–25 Jun (JW, DF) and on *San Clemente* I. 27 Jun (WMF). American Redstarts were at Oso Flaco L., *San Luis Obispo* 24 Jun (CF), *Santa Barbara* 19 Jun (RSm), *Goleta* 26 Jun (JHo), near *Imperial* Beach 23 Jun (DRW), and G.H.P. 10 Jun (KNN). Late spring Ovenbirds were on *San Clemente* I. 8 (JMM) & 17 Jun (BLS), at *Palomar Mt.* S. P. 19 Jun (PU), and in Man-

hattan Beach, *Los Angeles* 23 Jun (RB). A singing Northern Waterthrush was in *Bautista Canyon*, *San Jacinto* Mts. 3–4 Jun (CMcG).

A male Kentucky Warbler was in *Webb Canyon* in *San Dimas*, *Los Angeles* 27–30 Jun (JEP). In addition to Hooded Warblers at V.A.F.B. 16 Jun (DMC) and Prado Basin, *Riverside* 21 Jun (JEP), a male summered at *Huntington Beach* 1 Jun+ (LRH), and a pair was in *Goleta* 21 Jun–17 Jul (DMC et al.), with the male present through the period; the *Goleta* pair nested, with three warbler eggs and two Brown-headed Cowbird eggs found on 3 Jul but the nest was abandoned by 17 Jul (nest to *Santa Barbara* Museum of Natural History). Wilson's Warblers summered and apparently bred at Harbor R.P., with 2 drab imm. with a singing male 26 Jun (KGL); one near El Centro 28 Jul (KZK) established the earliest fall record for the *Salton Sink*.

TANAGERS THROUGH FINCHES

A pair of Hepatic Tanagers was at *Arrastre Cr.* in the *San Bernardino* Mts. through at least 18 Jul, with an active nest found 20 Jun (M&NF, TEW); another pair was on *Clark Mt.* 7 Jun (DG, SJM), with 2 males there 10 Jul (CC). The only spring vagrant Scarlet Tanager was a second-year male at *Oso Flaco L.* 3–5 Jun (AFS). At least six pairs of Summer Tanagers were found in riparian woodlands in e. *San Diego* this season (PU); among the scattering of birds away from breeding areas was a second-year male in atypical oak-conifer habitat at 2000 m at *Chilao* in the *San Gabriel* Mts., *Los Angeles* 26 Jun (AB).

A Green-tailed Towhee at only 900 m elevation on *Sulphur Mt.*, e. of *Ojai*, *Ventura* 16 Jun (BSi) was below expected breeding elevations. An unseasonal Brewer's Sparrow was on *San Clemente* I. 1–2 Jun (IR). A Black-throated Sparrow at *Ramer L.*, *Imperial* 18 Jul (HBK) was an early wanderer into the *Salton Sink*. A Lark Bunting at *Montana de Oro* 17 Jun (BAB) established the first summer record for *San Luis Obispo*. Breeding populations of Grasshopper Sparrows in the Region are often ephemeral and generally declining, so of note were at least 5 territorial males in *Fagan Canyon* near *Santa Paula*, *Ventura* 6 Jun (MSanM). A White-crowned Sparrow of undetermined subspecies on *San Clemente* I. 22 Jun (SWS), and a Golden-crowned Sparrow lingering to 20 Jun in *Thousand Oaks* (RSw, WW) were both exceptionally late.

At least 14 Rose-breasted Grosbeaks were found at scattered sites in the Region 3 Jun–9 Jul. Many of the 10 Indigo Buntings found in the coastal counties during the period were summering birds; nesting was suspected but not proven at *Eaton Canyon*, *Los Angeles*; on the n. deserts, a male was near *Bishop* 16 Jun (C&RH). A Bobolink on *San Clemente* I. 8 Jun (BLS) was a typical date for a spring vagrant of this species; a Tricolored Blackbird there 9 Jun (JMM, ELK) was the 2nd to be

found on the island. Up to 4 Bronzed Cowbirds (2 males, 2 females) were at the w. edge of their range in *Borrego Springs* 9 Jun+ (RT, MBi), and a male in *Twentynine Palms* 1 Jun (EAC) was n. of the normal range. American Goldfinches in *Big Pine* 13 Jun (T&JH) and *Independence* 30 Jun (RAH) were considered very late for *Inyo*.

EXOTICS

A flock of at least 10 Peach-faced Lovebirds (*Agapornis roseicollis*) in *Blue Gum Eucalyptus* woodland in *Nipomo*, *San Luis Obispo* on 9 Jul confirmed the continuing existence of this small population (TME). A nesting pair of Red-shouldered Parrots (*Amazona autumnalis*) fledged 2 young in *Orange* in Jun (LE).

Cited observers (county coordinators in boldface): Larry R. Ballard, Bob Barnes, Richard Barth, Nick Basinski, Tom Benson, Mark Billings (MBi), Bill A. Bouton, Matt Brady (MBr), Ann Brooks, Martin Byhower (MBy), Dick and Pat Cabe, Eugene A. Cardiff, Mark A. Chappell, David M. Compton (*Santa Barbara*), Clark Conrad, Lori Conrad, Brian E. Daniels, Don Desjardin, Jon L. Dunn, Tom M. Edell (*San Luis Obispo*), Loretta Erickson, Richard A. Erickson, Wendy M. Fair, Jon Feenstra, Craig Fiehler, Rosemary Flamion, Mary and Nick Freeman, Wes T. Fritz, Dave Furseth, Kimball L. Garrett (*Los Angeles*), David Goodward, Kathy Granillo (KGr), Jim Greaves, John F. Green (*Riverside*), Loren R. Hays, Tom & Jo Heindel (*Inyo*), Roger Higson, David Hill, Jim Hodgson (JHo), Mark A. Holmgren, Andrew Howe, Vernon Howe, Robert A. Hudson, Terry Huenfeld, Barbara Johnson, Paul Jorgensen, Doug Karalun, Eric L. Kershner, Howard B. King, Alexander E. Koonce (*San Bernardino*), Dan Langhoff, Kevin G. Larson, Lucy Lee, Tim Lenz, Nick A. Lethaby, Curtis A. Marantz, Liz Mason, Guy McCaskie (*Imperial*), Chet McGaugh, Todd McGrath, Robert L. McKernan, Mike McLaughlin, Jimmy M. McMorrin, Kathy C. Molina, Bob Miller, Stephen J. Myers, Kristie N. Nelson, Jim and Debby Parker, Dharm Pellegrini, James E. Pike, Isabel Robichaud, Geoffrey L. Rogers, John L. Roser, Martin Ruane, Mike San Miguel, Larry Sansone, Alan F. Schmierer, Brad K. Schram, Joyce Seibold, Tim Shelmerdine, Brad Sillasen (BSi), Gregory P. Smith, Ron Smith (RSm), Edward Stanton, Bob Steele, Susan Steele, Sam W. Stuart, Brian L. Sullivan, Ashley Sutton, Roger Swanson (RSW), Robert Theriault, Jennifer & Michelle Tobin, Gerald Tolman, Philip Unitt, Walter Wehtje (*Ventura*), Douglas R. Willick (*Orange*), John C. Wilson (*Kern*), Vicki and Gerry Wolfe, Joseph Worley, Thomas E. Wurster. An additional 30+ observers who could not be individually acknowledged submitted reports this season; they have our thanks and appreciation. ☺

State of the Region

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Southern California might be considered the poster child for the collisions that result from the superimposition of an immense human population on a region of high biodiversity and endemism. The numbers are staggering. The human population of the Southern Pacific Coast Region is close to 22 million and rapidly growing; 73% of these people live in the three coastal counties of Los Angeles, Orange, and San Diego. All but three of the Region's eleven counties experienced human population increases of over 10% from 1990 to 2000, with this growth exceeding 30% in Imperial and Riverside Counties (USCB 2004)! The Region's bird list stands at some 572 species, and all eleven counties in the Region, four of them landlocked, boast lists over 400 species and thus exceed the species totals for several entire states. Indeed, San Diego at 493 and Los Angeles at 488 have the highest bird species lists of any counties in the entire United States (Morlan 2004). The Region boasts one endemic bird species (Island Scrub-Jay) and many others (e.g. Xantus's Murrelet, Ashy Storm-Petrel, California Condor, Allen's Hummingbird, Nuttall's Woodpecker, California and Le Conte's Thrashers, Lawrence's Goldfinch) whose breeding ranges are centered in the Region but extend into adjacent ones; endemism is especially high at the subspecies level, a legacy of the Region's complex topog-



The biggest single threat facing birds and their habitats in the Southern Pacific Coast Region is urbanization—which brings with it not just the obvious impact of direct habitat loss but countless other threats, from disturbance by outdoors enthusiasts to global climate change. In southern California, coastal lowland and foothill habitats have seen the most impact from urbanization: it is estimated that 90% of coastal sage scrub, home to the nearly endemic California Gnatcatcher, has disappeared. Photograph by Herbert C. Clarke/VIREO.

raphy, coastal/desert transition, and offshore islands. Two Bird Conservation Regions are involved here, those being the Mojave Desert (BCR 32) in the east and Coastal California (BCR 33) in the west, but the native habitat types within these divisions are numerous and complex, and artificial habitats—several of which are now important for bird conservation—are also legion.

From the above, it should be clear that the biggest single threat facing birds and their habitats in the Southern Pacific Coast Region is urbanization, a sprawl that is now enveloping even inland counties at a prodigious rate. But the issues are far more complex, since urbanization embodies a great many interlocking threats to habitats, from the obvious impact of direct habitat loss, to the grave but more subtle effects of habitat fragmentation, changing fire regimes, massive water transfers, introduction of exotic species, recreation pressures, and, ultimately, global climate change. Coastal lowland and foothill habitats have seen the most impact from urbanization, with estimates of habitat loss (examples of impacted species are indicated in parentheses) of up to 85% for coastal estuaries (Clapper Rail, *beldingi* Savannah Sparrow) and 90% for coastal sage scrub (California Gnatcatcher, coastal populations of Greater Roadrunner and Cactus Wren). Even more striking have been near-total losses of lowland riparian (*extimus* Willow Flycatcher, *occidentalis* Yellow-billed Cuckoo) and freshwater marsh (bitterns, Tricolored Blackbird) habitats through drainage and large-scale stream channelization, and of native grasslands and coastal prairies (*actia* Horned Lark, Grasshopper Sparrow), and natural undisturbed beaches (Snowy Plover, Least Tern). Even degraded open lowland areas on the coastal slopes are succumbing to urban infill development, with associated steep declines of Burrowing Owls and Loggerhead Shrikes.

Water issues • Most of the water that sustains urban and agricultural development in the region comes from elsewhere, especially the Colorado River, the eastern Sierra Nevada/Owens Valley,

and the Sacramento River system. The impacts of such water transfers are profound, both within the Region (where, for example, Owens Lake is now essentially dry and the lower Colorado River has little water or functioning riparian habitat) and outside of it (e.g., massive environmental change in the Sacramento and Colorado River deltas and, threats to Mono Lake). Countless aquifers within the Region have also been drawn down to the point of serious environmental degradation of surface habitats. Recent transfers of water allocations from inland agricultural regions in the Imperial and Coachella Valleys to urban areas will have a profound effect on the Salton Sea, arguably the Region's most important waterbird habitat. Robbed of much of its freshwater input, the Sea will shrink dramatically; current engineering proposals to mitigate these impacts seem geared more toward economic viability, urbanization, and recreation than toward preserving or enhancing critically important wildlife habitats.

Fire Regimes • Fire is a critically important abiotic factor regulating many of the habitat associations in the Region, with regeneration of many plants dependent on regular burns. Recent fire regimes in the Region, however, are far from natural. The combination of decades of fire suppression to protect human dwellings (and in a misguided effort to improve the "health" of woodlands and forests) and the unnaturally catastrophic fires that inevitably result from such suppression have led to dense, brushy forest, loss of mature trees, and even the long-term conversion of pine forests to oaks and, most dramatically for sensitive lowland species, conversion of coastal sage scrub and low-elevation chaparral to exotic grasslands.

Changes in Marine Ecosystems • The commercial and recreational over-harvesting of key species that form important links in marine food chains, along with pollution, long-term ocean warming, changing regimes of sediment deposition, and other factors have resulted in major changes in the marine ecosystems and estuarine spawning grounds of the California Current and the Southern California Bight. The lingering impacts of DDT and its breakdown products continue to impact bird species high in the marine food chains, including Bald Eagle, which no longer nests successfully on the Channel Islands.

Other Threats • Habitat change and degradation in the Region stem from a host of additional perturbations. The spread of exotic invasive plants through desert and coastal grasslands, coastal sage scrub, riparian habitats and the Channel Islands has fundamentally altered large areas. Introduced predators such as Red Fox have threatened ground-nesting birds in many coastal habitats, but control of such predators involves overcoming a vocal and misguided societal element that favors protection of individuals of exotic species over populations of native species. Extractive industries have greatly impacted montane forests (logging) and deserts and inland valleys (mining), while historic over-grazing has left its mark locally in the Region, particularly in the Inner Coast Ranges in the north and on the Mojave Desert.

Human recreation pressures mount as "open space" becomes a playground for humans at the expense of wildlife. Twenty-two million people can clearly love the land to death! There seems to be little political will to preserve open space unless it can be used for active recreation, and open desert scrub, desert and coastal dunes, and many other habitats are being severely impacted by off-road vehicles and other destructive recreational practices.

Conservation Initiatives • Despite the above litany of threats to birds and their habitats, many parts of the Region enjoy varying degrees of protection, particularly in the Channel Islands, higher mountains, and portions of the deserts. Three national parks, numerous state parks, and several national wildlife refuges have been designated, along with many small-to-moderate-sized private reserves (of The Nature Conservancy and other NGOs). Large areas of the mountains and deserts are controlled by the Bureau of Land Management or the Forest Service (but policies regarding habitat protection on those lands shift with the political climate). Audubon California's Important Bird Areas program (Cooper 2004) holds promise for recognizing and preserving important habitats, and Audubon's new emphasis on urban nature centers may ultimately result in a more environmentally aware populace. The California Department of Fish and Game is completing a new review of "Bird Species of Special Concern" (PRBO 2004), which might spur conservation action. Rapidly urbanizing counties such as San Diego, Orange, and Riverside now have in place formal habitat conservation planning that aims to identify large, connected tracts of habitat for preservation while simultaneously reducing restrictions on development in other areas; these programs, however, have met with mixed success, and the monitoring and refinement of such planning efforts will be crucial to the preservation of habitats in the most populous portions of the Region.

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Baja California Peninsula



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It was a quiet season generally, with most observations coming from the northwestern and northeastern portions of Baja California, as is usual. However, some interesting birds were seen in the southern Gulf of California, where reports are typically rare.

Abbreviation: C.P.G.P. (Cerro Prieto geothermal ponds).

LOONS THROUGH TERNS

Clark's Grebes nested at C.P.G.P. for the 2nd consecutive year: a nest with one egg was

there 20 May (ph. MJI, RAE). Fifteen Pelagic Cormorants at Islas Todos Santos (both islands) 11 Jun were nesting near the s. edge of their breeding range (EP et al.). White-faced Ibis were recorded in the nw. and ne., including a high count of 55 at Presa Rodriguez, above Tijuana 11 Jul (MSM et al.). Modest numbers of Gadwalls, Mallards, Cinnamon Teal, and Ruddy Ducks were found nesting in the nw. (m.ob.). Ducks more unusual in summer included a male Blue-winged Teal s. of Playas de Tijuana 11 Jun; a male Northern Pintail at Presa Emilio López Zamora, above Ensenada 11 Jun; and a male Ring-necked Duck on the Maneadero Plain 10 Jun (all RAE). Most unusual were 3 Green-winged Teal at Presa Rodriguez 11 Jul (DSC et al.).

Ospreys nested at El Sauzal in 2002 and 2003, and a lone Osprey was seen at the nest site on 1 Jul (RAE). The season's only Northern Harrier pair was at La Salina 10 Jun (RAE). Two Clapper Rails heard at "Balandra Bay" 22 Jun were the first to be found on Isla Carmen (v.r. MG). An aseasonal Greater Yellowlegs was on the Maneadero Plain 11 Jun (RAE). Single Wandering Tattlers, apparently summering in B.C.S., were at Isla San José 13 Jun (LS, RC) and at Isla Santa Catalina 17 Jun (MG). An estimated 10–15 Red Knots were at C.P.G.P. 24 Jul (KAR, CR).

A South Polar Skua near Los Islotes in the s. Gulf 4 Jun (MG) fit the incipient Regional pattern of records in May–Jun and Oct–Nov. At least 63 ad. Laughing Gulls were at C.P.G.P. 3 Jul, where small numbers occasionally nest; 2 ad. Yellow-footed Gulls were also present (both KLG, KCM). More unexpected was an ad. Herring Gull there 24 Jul (KAR, CR). The nw. coast has built up a smattering of spring and fall Gull-billed Tern records, the latest pertaining to an ad. at Estero Punta Banda 10 Jun (RAE); nesting birds in sw. *San Diego* regularly cross the border to forage along the shore (*vide* KCM). Notable terns at C.P.G.P. included 2 Elegants 20 May (ph. MJI, RAE) and 3 Commons, a Least, and 100–120 Blacks 24 Jul (KAR, CR).

DOVES THROUGH WAXWINGS

Several species of columbids are common in the Mexicali Valley, but a count of 500 White-winged Doves along the Río Colorado near Algodones 24 Jul (KAR, CR) was exceptional. Eurasian Collared-Doves continued to consolidate their status mid-peninsula: 5 were at Villa Jesus Maria 24 Jun, and 4 were at Guerrero Negro in Jul (AG). Belted Kingfishers are early fall migrants, as shown by individuals in the nw. at La Misión 12 Jul (DSC et al.) and in the Vizcaíno Desert at Misión San Borja 16 Jul (RC, JAC). Among the last of the spring migrants was the season's only reported Willow Flycatcher, at La Salina 10 Jun (RAE). Pacific-slope Flycatchers were found in several low-elevation oak-

Absent Lower Río Colorado River Specialties

SA Although there have been no likely reports of the U.S. Endangered Southwestern Willow Flycatcher (*E.t. extimus*) in the Region since the mid 1980s (*Monographs in Field Ornithology* 3: 131), hope remains that nesting birds will be found. Extensive surveys along the U.S. portion of the lower Colorado River revealed 218 individuals in 2001 (R.L. McKernan and G. Braden. 2002. Status, distribution, and habitat affinities of the Southwestern Willow Flycatcher along the Lower Colorado River: Year 6 – 2001. unpubl. report to the U.S. Bureau of Reclamation, Boulder City, NV.) and aerial surveys of the Mexican portion of the river suggest that an ample amount of suitable habitat is available, at least in wet years (McKernan, pers. comm.). Among other species of concern reported by McKernan and Braden on the Arizona side of the river south of Yuma were the following, all unrecorded recently—or ever—on Mexican portions of the river: Elf Owl, Gilded Flicker, Brown-crested Flycatcher, Lucy's Warbler, and Summer Tanager.

riparian situations in nw. Baja California 12–13 Jul (MSM et al.): San José de la Zorra; above San Antonio Necua (including juvs.); and Arroyo San Carlos, near Maneadero.

Bell's Vireos were recorded at new locations in addition to those listed in the spring report: km 65.5 on Hwy. 3, s. of Tecate, 11 Jul (including juvs.; MSM et al.); above San Antonio Necua 13 Jul (MSM et al.); and in the Vizcaíno Desert at Misión San Borja 16 Jul (5 birds, including a fledgling; RC, JAC). More unusual was an aseasonal bird on Isla San Francisco, n. of La Paz, 10 Jun (JAC, AC); however, note a similar record from Isla Cedros in Jul 1999 (*Monographs in Field Ornithology* 3: 223). Single Tree Swallows at Presa Rodríguez 11 Jul (DSC et al.) and C.P.G.P. 24 Jul (KAR, CR) were likely fall migrants, but Barn Swallows on the n. coast at Cantamar 1 Jul (2; RAE) and La Joya 11 Jul (MSM et al.) might not have been, as the Region's only confirmed nesting site is nearby Islas Los Coronados. Far from its boreal breeding range was a Ruby-crowned Kinglet on Isla San José, B.C.S. 11 Jun (†LS, DS), representing the first summer report for the Region away from I. Guadalupe. Following the spring report, another Blue-gray Gnat-

catcher was found in low-elevation nw. Baja California, above San Antonio Necua 13 Jul (DSC et al.).

WARBLERS THROUGH FINCHES

Orange-crowned Warbler is a local summer resident in the nw. corner of the Region, and more than usual were reported this season. One at El Sauzal 10 Jun was followed the next day by one at Islas Todos Santos and an ad. feeding a juv. at Presa Emilio López Zamora in Ensenada (all RAE). Later, 2 were on Arroyo San Carlos 12 Jul with one above San Antonio Necua the following day (all MSM et al.). Nine singing Yellow Warblers were at scattered locations from s. of Playas de Tijuana to se. of Maneadero 10–11 Jun (RAE), and nesting was confirmed on Arroyo San Carlos 12 Jul, when a male was photographed feeding a juv. (AH et al.). For the 3rd consecutive spring, an American Redstart was found on one of the n. Pacific islands, this time on Islas Todos Santos 11 Jun (RAE).

On 10 Jun, a Chipping Sparrow was singing in the same olive grove on the Maneadero Plain in which nesting was confirmed in 2003 (RAE). Away from breeding areas in nw. Baja California, a Black-chinned

Sparrow in cultivated land at Misión San Borja 16 Jul (RC, JAC) was unexpected on that date. Away from the major estuaries, Belding's Savannah Sparrows (*P. s. beldingi*; Threatened in Mexico, Endangered in California) were reported this spring/summer at the Río Guadalupe estuary, La Salina, Islas Todos Santos, and El Rosario, all known localities. Five Scott's Orioles, involving one or two family groups, were at Arroyo San Carlos 12 Jul (DSC et al.); this is the northernmost site near the coast at which the species has been found nesting in recent years (cf. *Western Birds* 26: 152). On 12 Jul, 5 American Goldfinches were at La Misión (MSM et al.), a location from which we are aware of no previous records.

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Important Bird Area: the Lower Río Santo Tomás

SA The oak and riparian woodland along the lower Río Santo Tomás has long been recognized as an important area for nesting landbirds such as the Least Bell's Vireo. Less well-known are some of the river's other attributes, such as its scrub-bird community and desert species. Comrack and Howell visited the valley 7–8 May and shared some of their highlights. Confirmed and presumed breeders included Say's Phoebe, Vermilion Flycatcher, Bell's Vireo (11 males), Violet-green Swallow, Cactus Wren, California Gnatcatcher, Orange-crowned Warbler, Yellow Warbler (11–12 males), Yellow-breasted Chat (23 males), Black-chinned Sparrow (3–4 males), Sage Sparrow (3–4 males), Grasshopper Sparrow, Black-headed Grosbeak (12 males), Blue Grosbeak (two pairs plus 2 males), Tricolored Blackbird (10 flyovers), Scott's Oriole (pair plus singing male), and Lawrence's Goldfinch. They were pleased by the Brown-headed Cowbird's relative scarcity, with only 9 observed. The mouth of the river does not support a large saltwater marsh, but the endangered Light-footed Clapper Rail (*R. l. levipes*) has been recorded there on a few occasions in fall. Along with other areas on the rapidly developing nw. coast of Baja California (e.g., lower Río Descanso, lower Río Guadalupe, La Salina, Lagunita El Ciprés, Estero Punta Banda/Maneadero Plain), this area deserves protection.

State of the Region

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The Baja California Peninsula is one of the wildest places in North America and is immediately adjacent to one of the continent's most urbanized (and still rapidly-growing) regions—southern California. An effort to catalogue the areas of Mexico most important to birds—paralleling the Important Bird Area approach of BirdLife International and Audubon—has resulted in the identification of 35 "AICAS" (*Áreas de Importancia para la Conservación de Aves*) on the Baja California Peninsula (Benitez

et al. 1999). Most of the sites mentioned below are AICAS, with the notable exception of the scrub and riparian habitats of northwestern Baja California (which are included as the southern terminus of Bird Conservation Region 32—Coastal California).

The most threatened location in the Region is Isla Guadalupe, 280 km off the Pacific coast. Six endemic bird taxa and four additional populations are extinct, and Stattersfield et al. (1998) estimated that thousands of feral goats still ravage the island. Though goats are currently being eradicated in a project conducted by the NGO Grupo de Ecología y Conservación de Islas, the Mexican Secretary of Natural Resources, the Mexican Navy, and the island's fishing cooperative (B. R. Tershey, pers. comm.), the goats' effects on birds were most recently described by Ceballos et al. (2000) and Unitt (2000), who confirmed that, of an historically endemic-rich forest avifauna, only the Guadalupe Junco remains. Two other endemic subspecies remain common: the generalist House Finch and Rock Wren, which probably has benefited from the devastation.

Also highly degraded is the Delta Río Colorado, where a maze of tamarisk-lined drainage channels has replaced much of the cottonwood-willow forest and freshwater wetlands interspersed with seasonal alkali lakes. Recent work (*N.A.B.* 57: 549) has documented the persistence of a semi-intact desert riparian bird community, albeit one strongly dependent on cyclical flood events that partially compensate for the water diverted to human uses upstream. The decline of fish-eating waterbirds at

the Salton Sea just across the U.S. border—an integral part of this ecosystem—is expected to impact avian use of the delta (e.g., recent observations of “thousands” of American White Pelicans on the Rio Hardy; D.W. Anderson, pers. comm.).

The islands off both coasts of the peninsula are important breeding grounds for about 30 species of seabirds, due to the availability of nesting sites, high marine food productivity, and relative isolation from human disturbance (Anderson 1983, Carmona et al. 1994, Velarde and Anderson 1994). These include endemics and quasi-endemics such as Black-vented Shearwater, Black and Least Storm-Petrels, Yellow-footed and Heermann’s Gulls, Elegant Tern, and Craveri’s and Xantus’s (*hypoleucus* race) Murrelets (Everett and Anderson 1991, Velarde and Anderson 1994, Wolf 2002). Also present are exceptionally large nesting concentrations of Brown Pelicans, Brown and Blue-footed Boobies and, at Bahía Magdalena, the world’s largest colony of Magnificent Frigatebirds.

Despite the aforementioned isolation, human disturbance has resulted in the decrease or even extirpation of several nesting colonies. These activities are often associated with temporary fishing camps erected on otherwise uninhabited islands. U.S.-based sport fishermen also regularly visit colonies when in the Region, and when the visits coincide with the breeding season, the effects can be detrimental and lasting, particularly for large species such as Brown Pelican. The best hope of addressing this problem may be with the internalization of “best conservation practices” by tourist guides, although many visitors arrive on private vessels. Commercial sardine and anchovy harvesting has been correlated to changes in marine bird diet and prey-length (Velarde et al. 1995), though the long-term effects of these changes are unknown. The most serious problems on these islands result from introduced invasive fauna (pigs, goats, dogs, cats, rats, and mice), which have had particularly dramatic effects on cavity-nesting taxa and endemic landbirds. Fortunately, one or more introduced mammals have been eradicated from 24 islands in the Region (Tershy et al. 2002; B. R. Tershy, pers. comm.).

Back on the mainland, in the northwestern corner of Baja California, urban expansion along the border and the northern coast (the latter mainly for tourism) has already led to the degradation of irreplaceable, endemic-rich coastal landscapes, though surprisingly large blocks of intact sage and succulent scrub are still available for conservation. As the population of Mexico and northern Central America shifts ever northward (Tijuana is one of Mexico’s largest cities), demands for housing and recreation will continue to drive growth here. For birds, this has major ramifications on the persistence of endemic scrubland and grassland taxa such as San Diego Cactus Wren (*C. b. sandiegensis*). Though some taxa (e.g., California Gnatcatcher) are now believed to be widespread within this ecoregion, the status of others, such as Grasshopper Sparrow, is much less well known (Wurster et al. 2001), and fieldwork is needed to identify breeding and wintering populations for conservation activity.

Endemic and/or imperiled taxa of northwestern (= Californian) riparian systems, such as Least Bell’s Vireo (*V. b. pusillus*) and Yellow Warbler, persist locally in numbers depressed by agriculture, gravel extraction (e.g., Rio Guadalupe, Rio San Carlos), and groundwater pumping. Disturbingly, though, recent fieldwork has shown extirpation patterns similar to those in Alta California, in that these drainages have lost the most sensitive taxa such as *occidentalis* Yellow-billed Cuckoo and *extimus* Willow Flycatcher. However, the same fieldwork has revealed remnant populations of Black Rail (*N.A.B.* 56: 361), long extirpated from southwestern California.

At the opposite end of the peninsula, the Cape Region is urbanizing from Cabo San Lucas northward. Threats include tourism-associated recreation and urbanization, which lead to degradation of isolated freshwater wetlands (critical for Least Grebe and Belding’s Yellowthroat) and coastal environments such as Estero San Jose. Some of the most intact palm oases are found here (and locally farther north through the desert clear to the U.S. border). Their importance to birds—particularly as stopover habitat for migrants—is poorly understood, but threats include water extraction, arson, over-grazing, dumping, and off-road vehicles (Arriaga and Rodriguez-Estrella 1997). Agricultural expansion in central and northern Baja California Sur is impacting native desert scrub, and this is also a concern farther north in the San Quintin area.

Coastal wetlands are at least as threatened in the Region as they are in the United States. The northwestern coast has two mid-sized estuaries: Estero Punta Banda, near Ensenada, and San Quintin; both are heavily used by sensitive birds and are essentially unprotected. Their large populations of Light-footed Clapper-Rail (*R. l. levipetes*) and wintering Brant may be most threatened by tourism/recreation use and by resort development. At mid-peninsula, the sprawling, twin estuaries of Ojo de Liebre and San Ignacio continue to fight off proposals for salt extraction and shrimp aquaculture, despite their location within the Vizcaino Biosphere Preserve and their popularity as ecotourism resorts (mostly for whale-watching). To the south, a third massive Pacific estuary complex, Bahía Magdalena, is not currently protected. It must be noted that for birds—especially shorebirds—certain modified wetland habitats such as salt ponds are extremely attractive (Danneman et al. 2002); problems arise when they replace native, intact salt marsh and mangrove swamp.

Finally, unforeseen threats appear unexpectedly, often the result of development proposals for relatively pristine natural areas. Recent efforts to site a liquefied natural-gas terminal (alternately



Isla Guadalupe, 280 km off the Pacific coast, was home to six endemic bird taxa and four additional populations that are now extinct. Of the island’s historically endemic-rich forest avifauna, only the Guadalupe Junco remains. Two other endemic subspecies, of House Finch and Rock Wren, are still common; both may have benefited from habitat destruction by feral goats. Shown here is the island’s endemic Guadeloupe Cypress forest. Photograph by Bradford D. Hallingsworth.

proposed for Is. Los Coronados and for the long sweep of maritime scrub north of Ensenada) exemplify the problem, as does the push to establish a chain of ports and associated infrastructure along the Pacific coast (the “Escalera Nautica”), which has already carved wide, new roads through previously-untouched scrub habitats rich in endemic plants and animals.

We wish to end on a positive note, acknowledging a still-growing appreciation of natural resources by the Mexican people and their government, as shown by the establishment of several large protected areas (biosphere reserves; the protection of most islands in the Gulf of California) and by the work of private organizations such as Conservación de Islas, Niparaja, ProEsteros, ProNaturra, and Terra Peninsular. Works by Caballos and Márquez Valdelamar (2000) and Gómez de Silva and Oliveras de Ita (2003) are examples of recent additions to the Mexican literature. Binational conservation efforts are also underway and will be especially important in lowland habitats closest to California and Arizona. With sufficient effort, the Region’s existing avifauna—so rich in endemism—will be preserved.

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The common denominator this summer throughout Mexico was the heavy rain. Beatty and Pérezgasga report from Coahuila that the historic "Laguna de Mayrán"—which in the last few centuries has been a desert—was dotted with ponds this summer.

Mexico

NORTHERN MEXICO

A juv. Cooper's Hawk was seen hunting the numerous White-winged Doves in the

Brush-Finch was along Hwy. 16 at km 260, w. of Yécora, Son. 15 Jul (KLG). Several Worthen's Sparrows were singing in a weedy field near San Rafael, N.L., and in

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Alameda park at Saltillo, Coah. 25 Jun (HGdS, LASG); Saltillo's introduced Green Parakeets and Lilac-crowned and Red-crowned Parrots may potentially be food sources as well. Ten Double-striped Thick-knees were seen in Rancho Los Santos, e. of Ciudad Mante, Tamps. in mid-Jun (GW). An American Avocet was seen 7 Jul feeding in a roadside puddle in the desert between San Pedro and Cuatrociénegas, Coah. (WB). An alternate-plumaged Stilt Sandpiper at Estero Tastiota, Son. 21 Jul (KLG) provided one of few published records for Sonora, though the date is typical for a fall migrant. Two Eurasian Collared-Doves were 10 km s. of Ciudad Obregón, Son. 17 Jul, and one was w. of Guasave, Sin. 18 Jul (KLG). On 31 Jul, a group of 12 Military Macaws was seen near Salto del Agua Llovida waterfall, s. Dgo., at 2500 m elevation (FVP), and the local inhabitants say that there are many active nests in neighboring limestone cliffs; this is a privately-owned nature reserve and a well-preserved woodland of fir, cedars, junipers, and pines. Anna's Hummingbirds continue to be seen in Bosque Venustiano Carranza, the urban park of Torreón, Coah. Males were observed through the summer chasing one another, and females, though less noticeable, were also seen regularly (WB); this species has been seen there year-round for the past two-and-a-half years (WB, FVP). A Gray-crowned Woodpecker in thornscrub and willow riparian habitat along Hwy. 16 at km 215 at Tecopa, Son. 15 Jul was in an unusual habitat (KLG). A Rufous-capped

native bushes bordering the Mexican Prairie Dog colony in Zona Sujeta a Conservación Ecológica La Soledad, N.L. 26 Jun (HGdS, EIE, HB, AP).

Observers (area compilers in boldface): William Beatty, Humberto Berlanga, Kimball L. Garrett, Héctor Gómez de Silva, Eduardo Íñigo Elías, Arvind Panjabi, Luis Antonio Sánchez González, Francisco Valdéz Pérezgasga, Gary Waggenerman.

wise stated, records are from central Veracruz.

Abbreviations/elevations: C.A. (Cerro de Acatlán, 1700 m elevation); E.E. (El Esquilón, 1100–1200 m elevation); L.C. (Las Cañadas, 1100–1200 m); L.E. (La Esmeralda, 1100–1200 m); L.H. (Los Humeros, 2300 m); L.M. (Las Minas, 2100 m); L.P. (La Piedra, at sea level); L.V. (La Vequia, 1100–1200 m); El Mirador (1100–1200 m); Panamacani (1100–1200 m); Totutla (1100–1200 m); Xalapa (1300 m); Zacamitla (1100–1200 m).

Two Brown Pelicans were high at Jalpan Res., Qro., at 860 m elevation, 3 Jul (RP). An ad. Cooper's Hawk was seen at the se. edge of Totutla 6 Jun, a rare record during the breeding season but part of a small resident population in the mts. An ad. Black Hawk-Eagle was seen outside of Ixhuatlan del Café 6 Jul, probably the first record for cen. Ver. in 60 years. Good numbers of American

CENTRAL MEXICO



June and July were wet in central Veracruz, more than normal for recent decades, which made for a good breeding season, with a lot of insects. Some areas visited in July (e.g., coffee plantations around Xalapa and Huatusco) had experienced good showers and thunderstorms, and many plants and grasses remained green throughout the dry season (unlike in the last few years). Unless other-

Kestrels were seen at L.H. in Jul, part of a small population that breeds in the valley. A few Peregrine Falcons were seen at L.M. 3 Jul, possibly a pair. Three Bearded Wood-Partridges were observed in an undisturbed cloud forest at 1840 m in the Joya del Hielo area of the Sierra Gorda Biosphere Reserve, Qro. 8 Jun (RP).

A flock of around 40 Military Macaws

was seen in the canyon of Arroyo El Chuberte, Qro. 11 Jun; they flew in from the ne., the direction of Sótano del Barro (this species' main breeding and roosting area in Qro.) and remained for around half an hour, presumably feeding on acorns, before flying back toward the ne. (RP). Small flocks of White-fronted Parrots were seen at L.E. and El Mirador in Jun and Jul, escaped birds now breeding around the area. Several Blue Ground-Doves were heard at Zacamitla 25 Jul, above the altitude given by Howell and Webb (1995). Several Gray-fronted Doves were seen and heard 6 Jul near Zacamitla, again above the altitude given by Howell and Webb (1995). Three Black Swifts were reported from L.P. 29 Jul, far below the elevation given in Howell and Webb (1995). A group of 6 White-naped Swifts flew over the sw. part of Mexico City, D.F. 9 Jun (MG).

An ad. Green Violet-ear was at L.C. 23 Jun, far e. of mapped range. A male Sparkling-tailed Hummingbird was reported from Chapultepec Primera Sección, D.F. 11 & 14 Jun (EHP). A male Magnificent and 3 male Bumblebee Hummingbirds were feeding on flowers of a wild bean in a clearing in humid oak forest near Jalpan 4 Jul (RP). A female/immature Broad-tailed Hummingbird was seen 5 Jul at Teocelo, e. of the mapped range and below the species' normal altitude.

Singing Yellow-olive Flycatchers were found around Xalapa, L.V., El Mirador, well n. of mapped distribution. A rather tame Steller's Jay was in the U.N.A.M. botanical garden 19 May (HGdS) and 15 Jun (MG), perhaps an escapee. Two ad. Black-crested Titmice were feeding 2 young at L.V. 22 Jun, outside their mapped distribution. A singing White-bellied Wren was in a shade coffee plantation near Mata Obscura (between Paso de Ovejas and Huatusco) 18 Jul at 1200 m, far above its expected elevation. Several Bewick's Wrens were defending territories at L.H. 3 Jul, e. of normal range; if breeding can be confirmed, it would be a new nesting species for Ver. Several Brown-backed Solitaires were singing and carrying food at L.C. 23 Jun and 17 Jul, e. of mapped breeding range; 3 were singing at Panamacaní (below 1400) 1 Jul, also e. of mapped range. Three Bananaquits were at L.C., above "normal" elevation and n. of the mapped range for the species.

A pair of Cinnamon-bellied Flower-piercers nesting at C.A. were seen 5 Jun, e. of mapped range and one of few records for Ver. (probably the first breeding record). At least 10 were in the U.N.A.M. botanical garden 15 Jun (MG), and several were at and around Chapultepec Primera Sección through Jun (HGdS). Many Black-headed Grosbeaks were singing at C.A. 5 Jun and at L.M. 3 Jul, e. of mapped breeding range. There were many records of Blue Grosbeak

from various parts of cen. Ver., from singing, territorial males to pairs feeding young, all outside mapped breeding range. A single male Indigo Bunting was seen 5 Jul singing and defending a territory, at Teocelo, possibly an escaped bird. Many individuals were seen during Jun and Jul above 1000 m, in localities such as L.E., El Mirador, Teocelo, Xalapa, all higher than elevations published for breeding birds. Several Black-headed Siskins were seen at E.E. (5 Jun) and Teocelo (5 Jul), e. of mapped range.

Contributors (area compilers in boldface): Jorge Montejo, Amy McAndrews, Héctor Gómez de Silva, Manuel Grosselet, Edmundo Huerta Patricio, Roberto Pedraza. Uncredited observations are by Jorge Montejo and Amy McAndrews.

SOUTHERN MEXICO



In Oaxaca, a wet summer followed the wet spring, said to be the normal pattern, though most recent years have been drier. Observations are from Oaxaca unless otherwise stated.

Abbreviations: E.C. (El Chilar, 5 km s. of Cuicatlán); M.A. (Monte Albán); S.F.P. (San Felipe Park, Oaxaca City).

Two male Blue-winged Teal were possibly summering or very early migrants in the large wetland on the s. side of Hwy 200 e. of La Ventosa 11 Jul (MDC). An imm. White-faced Ibis was reported 18 Jul at a pond near Ocotlán. An early or summering Osprey was at the Huitzo dam 30 Jul (TAC, MAP). A Cooper's Hawk was seen soaring above San Miguel de Suchixtepec 3 Jul (MDC). Over-summering were up to 25 Common Terns 2–5 km off the coast of Puerto Angel 4 Jul (MDC). At least 2 Sparkling-tailed Hummingbirds were at M.A. 11–19 Jul. A pair of Sulphur-bellied Flycatchers was seen 1 Jul at Tomellín, the first reported for the Cañada. A White-throated Flycatcher on territory was at km 58 above Valle Nacional 14 Jul (MDC). A Brown-capped Vireo was at the upper Mirador of Hwy. 175 3 Jul (MDC). Ten Barn Swallows feeding over the large meadow se. of San Cristóbal de las Casas, Chis. 9 Jul were early migrants (MDC). An American Dipper was seen at the stream

crossing on the way up to La Guacamaya 3 Jul (MDC).

An ad. Common Raven was seen 2 Jul feeding a single imm. near E.C. A small flock of Boucard's Wrens was high at around 3000 m near Cuajimuloyas 18 Jun. Several White-lored Gnatcatchers were seen 1–2 Jul around E.C. An ad. Dwarf Vireo was seen attending nestlings 3 Jul near San Andres Huayapan. A pair of Golden Vireos was reported building a nest 15 Jun near the entrance to M.A. (JM, PR), and many were seen and heard around E.C. 1–2 Jul. A Louisiana Waterthrush was seen 14 Jul near Yuvila (MDC); this is a month earlier than prior records for cen. Oax. (Forcey 2002) but within the dates of records from se. Ver (Wilson & Ceballos 1993) and elsewhere. At least one male Hooded Yellowthroat was seen singing vigorously near the entrance to S.F.P. 14–16 Jun, the first report of the species from this location and an unusually

low elevation at about 1750 m. Two pairs of Yellow-winged Tanagers were recorded 1–2 Jul near E.C. and Tomellín. A Yellow Grosbeak was seen 2 Jul near E.C., a first summer record from the Cañada. A pair of Varied Buntings seen 2 Jul near E.C. were the first summer record for the species from the Cañada. Streak-backed Orioles were very common around E.C. 1–2 Jul. A single female Orchard Oriole was near Puerto Arista, Chis. 10 Jul (MDC).

Observers: Roque Antonio, Teresa Avena-daño Calvo, Michael D. Carmody, John Forcey, Jim Mountjoy, Miguel Angel Pérez, Pauline Roberts. Uncredited observations are by Roque Antonio, John Forcey, and Miguel Angel Pérez.

YUCATÁN PENINSULA

Abbreviations: R.S.S. (Rancho San Salvador, R.L.B.R.); Coz. (Cozumel, Q. Roo); P.T. (Peten Tuchá, R.L.B.R.); S.F. (San Felipe); R.L. (Río Lagartos); J.B.P.M. (Jardín Botánico Puerto Morelos), R.L.B.R. (Ría Lagartos Biosphere Reserve, Yuc.).

BOOBIES THROUGH WOOD-QUAIL

The observation of 3 subad. Brown Boobies 10 Jul on an offshore rock at s. end of Cozumel adds a new species to the island list (PL, SM). Immatures of this species are



known to wander after nesting on Banco Chinchorro and Arrecife Alacranes, showing up in coastal areas around the peninsula in low numbers. Seven American White Pelicans were reported at Celestún, Yuc. 9 Jun (DB), and 3 others were in the estuary there 22 Jul, one of which was missing a wing (BM, LG). This particular group had been reported there since Jun (LG). There is a record of one on the sandbar with flamingos 7 Jun 1979, when the species was known only as a transient through the peninsula. An ad. Black-crowned Night-Heron reported 11 Jul on Coz. along the beach at Occidental Cozumel Resort (PL, SM) adds yet another species to the island's list. To date, nesting of this species on the peninsula has only been confirmed in the Laguna de Términos area, Camp. Two subad. Jabirus were observed feeding with a flock of herons and egrets in a pond just s. of entrance to P.T. 11 Jun (BM). Sightings of this species in the area during the past year suggest that one pair is nesting successfully nearby. Five ad. and one juv. Lesser Yellow-headed Vultures flew low over road near entrance to P.T. 11 Jun (BM). The numbers of juvs. indicate that it nests in the area, along with Black and Turkey Vultures. Approx. 3000 Greater Flamingos were feeding at Uaymitún 29 Jul (BM). This year, 12,000 flamingo chicks hatched at R.L.B.R., after two years of no reproduction due to high tides and the intrusion of a jaguar. There is also evidence that many flamingos crossed over from the Zapata peninsula, Cuba to nest as a result of extreme drought conditions there.

Five resident Black-bellied Whistling-Ducks were seen flushing from a pond at R.S.S. 11 Jun (BM). A single ad. Crane Hawk was observed being harassed by Yucatán Woodpeckers and Yucatán Jays 16 Jul along paved highway about midway between Xcalak and Mahahual, Q. Roo (DM). Two pairs of Common Black-Hawks, one with a juv., were observed in R.L.B.R. 29 Jul (BM). One Great Black-Hawk was perched on a snag at Rancho Xpanatoro, 4 km s. of entrance to San Felipe, Yuc. 11 Jun (BM), and a pair was similarly perched at R.S.S. 12 Jun (BM). A single Zone-tailed Hawk with very worn tail feathers was observed at Ce-

lestún 20 Jul (AD), and a Merlin was reported there on 9 Jun (DB), quite an unusual date. A covey of 3-4 Spotted Wood-Quail was seen on a rural road running through undisturbed forest near Laguna Bacalar, Q. Roo 18 Jul (DM).

PLOVERS THROUGH TERNS

Ten Wilson's and 4 juv. Semipalmated Plovers were on a sandbar in the estuary at R.L.B.R. 29 Jul. They were all considered to be migrants, as resident Wilson's Plovers are usually found in small family units. Later the same day, a total of 30 Wilson's, combined with Semipalmated Plovers, were at Uaymitún (BM). Interestingly, 12 Semipalmateds were reported as early as 17 Jul at various spots along the beach between Xcalak and Mahahual, Q. Roo (DM). A Killdeer observed in a roadside field at R.S.S. 11 Jun (BM) was from the small local population that nests in the area. A Greater Yellowlegs near P.T. 11 Jun (BM) and another near Celestún 21 Jul (BM) were apparently overwintering in the area, while the Willet in R.L.B.R. 29 Jul (BM) and 2 others at Uaymitún 29 Jul (BM) were migrants from the north. One of the earliest shorebird arrivals each year is Spotted Sandpiper, of which 3 were still in breeding plumage at Celestún 17-20 Jul (AD). Ruddy Turnstone is another species that summers in the Region, but the 6 at Uaymitún 29 Jul, in transitional plumage, may well have been returning migrants (BM). Some 50 Least Sandpipers in R.L.B.R. estuary 29 Jul and 20 at Uaymitún 29 Jul were clearly returning migrants (BM).

Two days after a heavy storm hit the central Q. Roo coast, a probable Pomarine Jaeger was seen over the beach at Maroma, Q. Roo 12 Jun (BR). A single Forster's Tern was reported at Celestún 9 Jun (DB), and 4 Least Terns were observed in Uaymitún 29 Jul (BM). Two pairs were reported on the beach at Punta Maroma 7 Jun; one had 2 chicks in a nest (BR). Several appeared to be nesting 8 Jul at the s. end of Coz., while 5 Bridled Terns and 15 Brown Noddies were both at rest and flying around on the offshore rock nearby 10 Jul (PL, SM).

HUMMINGBIRDS THROUGH MUNIAS

A female Ruby-throated Hummingbird at R.S.S. 12 Jun was very late returning northward—or else was spending the summer in the area (SF). Belted Kingfishers, often early migrants, were reported twice: single females at Celestún 17 & 20 Jul (AD) and at R.L.B.R. 29 Jul (BM). Another new species for the R.L.B.R. was a single Northern Barred-Woodcreeper sighted in a forested area behind El Cuyo 26 Jun (SF). A single Piratic Flycatcher was seen at Carwash Cenote on the road to Cobá, Q. Roo 13 Jul (DM). This South American migrant is a rarity in the state of Yuc. but may be expected in the forests of Q. Roo. A late Eastern Kingbird moving northward was seen perched at San Felipe 11 Jun (SF). A difficult-to-find Thrush-like Schiffornis was located at Punta Maroma 9 Jun (BR). A Black-crowned Tityra was reported 14 Jul on Hwy. 307 in good forest between Felipe Carrillo Puerto and Limones, Q. Roo (DM). Purple Martin and Barn Swallow appear to be in constant migration over the peninsula. Three Purple Martins were perched on wires on the road between R.L. and S.F. 12 Jun (SF, BM), while 3 Barn Swallows flew over R.S.S. 11 Jun (BM); about 30 more (mostly juvs.) were on wires 10 km to the w. on 11 Jun (SF, BM), and 2 flew over the estuary at R.L.B.R. 29 Jul (BM).

A rare report of a Critically Endangered species, a Cozumel Thrasher was seen in flight across the road 10 Jul between the Occidental Cozumel Resort Hotel and the large pond about 2 km to the n. on the e. side of the road (PL, SM). On 9 Jul, Villanova University and the American Bird Conservancy announced that a team of field biologists, working in conjunction with the Mexican counterpart of the Island Endemics Institute, spotted a single Cozumel Thrasher in Jun (<<http://oikos.villanova.edu/cozumel/status.html>>). The most recent confirmed sighting of the species had been in 1998. A single Black Catbird was found at Celestún 9 Jun (DB).

Other early migrants this season included 2 Yellow-throated Warblers at Celestún 5 Jul in mangroves at the Visitors' Center (FC, LG, RL). Another was seen on Coz. 11 Jul (PL, SM). A male Black-and-white Warbler was at Celestún 21 Jul along with a male Prothonotary Warbler (FC, RL). An extremely late date was registered for 2 male Scarlet Tanagers at Hacienda San José Cholul, e. of Mérida, Yuc. 13 Jun (JA). A male Crimson-collared Tanager, possibly an escapee, was found 7 Jun at J.B.P.M. (BR); this is a species not previously recorded for the peninsula. Blue-gray Tanagers seem to be making a comeback in n. Yucatán. Three were reported in the park plaza at Celestún



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YUCATÁN PENINSULA

1 Jun (DB) and 2 in Mérida 13 Jun (JA). Others were reported in Mérida in May. Another late migrant was a male Indigo Bunting at Celestún 4 Jun (DB). More reports of the introduced Tricolored Munia, first reported on the peninsula in 1993, included 10–12 birds in tall, rank grasses along the beach road just s. of Mahahual, Q. Roo 14 Jul and 2 just n. of Xcalak, 30–35 km away (DM).

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With each passing season, our understanding of both the resident and non-resident avifauna of six of the seven countries that comprise Central America increases incrementally (Nicaragua still awaits a dedicated local field ornithologist), but there is still much to learn. We are adding species to the list of known resident avifauna at a rapid pace. How many of these were there all along? How many are recent arrivals? Which ones are actually resident, as opposed to seasonal? Four years ago, we thought Rufous-necked Wood-Rail and Hook-billed Kite were resident wherever they occurred; now we have reason to believe otherwise. For years, it was thought in Belize that Gray-breasted Martin and Brown-crested Flycatcher were year-round residents. Now we know they are seasonal residents only. And hummingbirds: how many are truly resident? How much more seasonal movement, even limited migration, takes place among the tropical and subtropical hummingbird species than we are presently aware of? To what extent are the distributional patterns changing as a result of human alteration of the landscape? And the most important and difficult-to-answer questions of all: How many are in serious decline locally? Which species have been recently extirpated or nearly so? It is always hardest to prove a negative—that something is no longer present.

June and July are the months when the winter visitors and most migrants are absent, that is, the best time of year to learn more about local resident populations. Yet these are the two months when the least amount of field research is accomplished. I was dismayed, but not surprised, to find that this season's report is the briefest yet for Central America. But, as brief as it is, the number of country firsts continues to accumulate at a steady pace. Belize had its first Southern Lapwing, El Salvador had its first Tricolored Munia (a sign of things to come?), and Costa Rica may have recorded its first Black-vented Shearwater.

SHEARWATERS THROUGH STILTS

Practically any pelagic trip at any season off either coast of Central America is likely to add new information to our knowledge of Central American birds. Such was the case when eight intrepid birders explored the Pacific Ocean off Golfo Dulce, Costa Rica on 31 Jul. Although relatively few species were tallied, one, if correctly identified, would be a first for Costa Rica. A small black-and-white shearwater seen at close range and carefully studied about 30 km offshore from the mouth of Golfo Dulce 31 Jul (†JRZ, RD, AG, LJ, HK, DM, PN, AO) appears to have been a Black-vented Shearwater. The only species with which it is likely to be confused (e.g., *Puffinus gavia*, *P. huttoni*, *P. yelkouan*) are far less likely to occur here. Two of five other shearwaters seen 15–30 km offshore were identified as the more expected

Central America



Audubon's; 3 more were unidentified.

In El Salvador, a flock of 24 American White Pelicans flying over Chaguantique Forest, *Usulután* 27 Jul (CF) were probably summering in Central America; and in Belize, a lone Brown Pelican flying over Belmopan, well inland, 21 Jun (PB) adds support to the supposition that there is little, if any, seasonality to this species' occurrence inland. Two Anhinga nests with chicks and 8 Boat-billed Heron nests were found in the mangroves behind El Icacal Beach, *La Unión* 28 Jul (NH, EM). El Icacal is a previously unknown nesting area for these two rare species in El Salvador. Monthly visits to the Estero El Tamarindo, *La Unión* produced a maximum of 30 Roseate Spoonbills, including immes., on 28 Jul (RI, MS). Although the birds were at the site of last year's nesting colony, no nests were evident this year. At the other end of El Salvador in *Ahuachapán*, 50 spoonbills at the mouth of the Paz R. during a 6 Jul aerial waterbird survey (NH) established a high count for the country. A flock of 57 Wood Storks feeding at the confluence of the Sumpul R. and "5 de Noviembre" Res., *Chalatenango* 14 Jun (NH) was at an unreported location for this species in El Salvador.

Two Black-bellied Whistling-Ducks at a swamp in Guatemala near Rubelsanto, *Alta Verapaz* 8 Aug (KE, SL) were noteworthy, as the species is uncommon there. Also at the same locality on the same day were 2 ad. Purple Gallinules (KE, SL), suggesting that the species may be breeding locally. This species was seen at the same site in May 2003 (KE). Rumors of a Southern Lapwing at Crooked Tree Wildlife Sanctuary, Belize began circulating as early as mid-Apr (fide GA). More specific information emerged in May (RC), but the bird's identity remained in doubt and at-

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tempts to photograph the bird at that time failed. Although visiting birders later recorded a digital image of the bird, they left the country before contact information could be obtained to properly record the photograph. Finally, on 15 Jul a detailed description of the bird was obtained (†RB), thus establishing the first record of this species in Belize. In Jul, Black-necked Stilts were documented breeding for the first time on Caye Caulker (J&DB). This species breeds locally in n. Belize.

GULLS THROUGH MUNIAS

The 31 Jul pelagic trip off Golfo Dulce produced an ad. Sabine's Gull about 15 km offshore and 2 Brown Noddies 6–7 km offshore (JRZ et al.). The gull, while not unusual, may have established the earliest fall record for the species in Costa Rica; fall migrants typically arrive in Central America in late (?) Aug. Not much is known about the seasonal status of Brown Noddy in Costa Rica, but these may represent the first Jul records away from the Cocos Is. where the species nests. A Black Skimmer, rare in Panama, was at Santa Isabel in e. *Colón* 27 Jan (CE, LS).

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Very rare in the Caribbean lowlands was a Violaceous Quail-Dove 30 Jul, only the 2nd reported from La Selva (JA, JC). Although probably resident in El Salvador, as it is in surrounding countries, a pair of Blue Ground-Doves observed 29 Jul in the Chaguantique Forest (NH, EM, MR) established the country's first late summer record.

Following close on the heels of a spring sighting of Pale-billed Woodpecker at Pantano de Mehotique, *Usulután* was the report of one in Chaguantique Forest 13 Jun (NH, MR). This species is now rare in e. El Salvador where, until recently, it was thought to have been extirpated. La Selva's first record of Slaty-capped Flycatcher came 31 Jul+ (RiG). This species is common above 500 m elevation only a few km from La Selva. Purple Martin is Belize's earliest arriving fall migrant, so several seen 10 km w. of Belize City 27 Jun (PB) were right on schedule. Honduras' 3rd record of Black-capped Swallow was established when 7 were seen at Guisayote Biological Reserve 15 Jun (RoG). Tropical Mockingbirds are on the increase in Costa Rica. One was seen 27 Jul at Rancho Quemado between Hatillo and Matapalo (JRZ), representing the 2nd record from the s. Pacific region of Costa Rica. There was an unconfirmed report by tourists earlier in the year of 2 birds at a nest in a highway sign in this same area. At least 3 male Slate-colored Seedeaters were singing along wooded streams next to mature rice fields along the highway at Matapalo in the Pacific lowlands of Costa Rica 31 Jul (JRZ), about as far n. as the species has been reported on the Pacific slope. This erratic and unpredictable species is worth reporting any time it shows up. Twenty Orchard Orioles observed in mangroves at Chaguantique Forest 29 Jul (NH) may have established the earliest fall arrival date for El Salvador. The Tricolored Munia invasion would seem to be upon us. El Salvador's first record came 3 Jul, when at least 12 individuals, and possibly many more, were found in sorghum fields adjacent to Chahuantique Forest (CF, RP, MR, EM, NH). The birds remained through the period. Belize had its 3rd record in less than a year, with a single in Sarteneja, *Corozal* 20 Jul (ZW, PW).

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West Indies & Bermuda

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The highlight of the season has been the successful translocation of Bermuda Petrel chicks to a new breeding site. Translocation had been agreed upon even before Hurricane *Fabian* (5 September 2003) destroyed a number of nesting burrows. Of 29 fledglings this year, 14 chicks were translocated to Nonsuch Island, and all fledged successfully. The same practice will be continued in coming years and gives hope to a continuing increase in breeding pairs in more suitable habitat. In the Lesser Antilles, Bob Wallace spent several days hiking in the Vermont Rain Forest on St. Vincent and the Edmunds Rain Forest Preserve on St. Lucia. After leaving St. Vincent on a bareboat charter, he visited Bequia, the Tobagos, Union Island and Petite St. Vincent, covering 160 km or more by water.

GREBES THROUGH TERNS

A pair of Pied-billed Grebes again nested at Somerset Long Bay N.R., Bermuda (DBW). A lone Greater Shearwater was found ashore on Lucaya Beach, Grand Bahama 19 Jun (ph. EG). Sailing between St. Vincent and the Grenadines, Wallace noted an Audubon's Shearwater 14 Jun; on 26 Jun, he saw 150

Cory's, 250 Greater, and 350 Audubon's Shearwaters around the convergence of the Antillean Current and the Gulf Stream, some 115 km nw. of Walker's Cay, Bahamas—more Cory's and Greater Shearwaters than all the previous documented Bahamian records combined (†BW)! On 3 Jul, 3 Greater and 7 Cory's Shearwaters were noted 40 km n. of the Little Bahama Bank (PH).

Six pairs of White-tailed Tropicbirds were nesting on Shroud Cay, Exuma Cays Land and Sea Park in the first week of Jun (LG). A first-year White-tailed Tropicbird was found on Fortune Cay Beach, Grand Bahama 11 Jun (ph. EG). An ad. Red-billed Tropicbird was seen at Nonsuch I., Bermuda 21 Jul (JM), possibly the same bird as in 2001 and 2003; there are fewer than 10 local records of this species. Peter Merritt reported large numbers of Brown Booby, Magnificent Frigatebird, Sooty Tern, and Brown Noddy, and smaller numbers of Bridled Tern and White-tailed Tropicbird nesting in Graham's Harbour, San Salvador in Jul; also present were 4 ad. Red-footed Boobies (2 of each morph), plus a chick on 19 Jul. Sailing between Bequia and Canouan, St. Vincent and the Grenadines 14 Jun, Wallace counted 20+ Red-footed Boo-

bies. The presence of 50+ Double-crested Cormorants on Man-O-War Bush Cay, Abaco 24 Jul suggests that they continue to nest there (PC).

Two American Bitterns were heard calling at South Westridge Estates and Harrold and Wilson Ponds N.P., New Providence 6 Jun–16 Jul (PD). A Least Bittern was at the Treasure Cay G.C., Abaco 10 Jul (EB). A long-staying Little Egret was present in Bermuda to 31 Jul+ (DBW). Three Reddish Egrets were on Chub Cay, Berry Is. 11–19 Jun (SS). Green Herons, first found breeding in Bermuda in 2002, bred in a number of new locations, with a total of about 12 pairs (AD). At St. Martin, one Black-crowned Night-Heron was found at Galis Bay 23 Jun (AB/EPIC). For the 4th year in a row, Greater Flamingos failed to nest successfully on Great Inagua because the water level on L. Windsor was too low (HN). Aerial surveys 12–13 Jun found 1500–2000 flamingos on North Andros but none on South Andros. There was no sign of nesting (MB, NC, PD). A Snow Goose remained at Outerlea Farm, Bermuda through 31 Jul+ (AD). A male Wood Duck was at Pembroke Marsh, Bermuda 20 Jun (PHo, SR). A female Hooded Merganser at Spittal Pond, Bermuda



This first-summer Lesser Black-backed Gull (at left) present at Rivière Sâlée 25 and 26 (here) July 2004 was the first to be identified in Guadeloupe in more than two decades. Photograph by Anthony Levesque.

28–31 Jul+ (DBW) provided the first summer record. Two pairs of Ospreys were nesting at Pipes Creek, Exumas in early Jun (LG). The pair of long-staying Red-tailed Hawks was seen throughout Jun over Morgan's Pt., Bermuda (AD, DBW). On 10 Jun at Soufrière, St. Lucia, Wallace observed 3 Broad-winged Hawks, with several also at Georgetown, St. Vincent on 14 Jun. A Purple Gallinule was found dead in Southampton, Bermuda 23 Jun (DBW).

Frank Rivera-Milán, who discovered nesting Double-striped Thick-knees on Great Inagua last year, searched for them extensively in May 2004 but did not find any Shorebirds on Bermuda included 3 Black-bellied Plovers and 4 Whimbrels at Bermuda's airport (EA, PW), a single Sanderling on Nonsuch I. (JM, DBW), and the first summering record for Pectoral Sandpiper at Spittal Pond (AD, EA), all in Jun. Bermuda's first fall shorebirds were noted in early Jul, with Lesser Yellowlegs at Spittal Pond 3 Jul (EA), Spotted Sandpiper in St David's 10 Jul (PW), Western Sandpiper at Spittal Pond 19 Jul (DBW), and Pectoral Sandpiper at Compston's Pond 9 Jul (AD). Black-necked Stilts departed North Pond, Bermuda 23 Jul (DBW). On 23 Jun at St. Martin, Adam Brown (EPIC) counted 32 Semipalmated Plovers, 4 Black-bellied Plovers, 27 Ruddy Turnstones, a Whimbrel, and 8 Willets. On 26 Jun, single South Polar Skuas were found at 27° 40' N, 78° 30' W and at 28° 00' N, 78° 40' W near the Antillean Current–Gulf Stream convergence (ph. BW), one was with 2 Sperm Whales. The photographs confirm the first record of the species for the Bahamas and one of the few from the West Indies.

Three imm. Laughing Gulls were at Dockyard, Bermuda 6 Jun (AD). A seasonal first for Guadeloupe was a Lesser Black-backed Gull on the coast along the Rivière Sâlée 25 Jul+ (AL). A Franklin's Gull was picked up dead at Clearwater Beach, Bermuda 1 Jun (GP), and a Gull-billed Tern was at North Pond, Bermuda 18–21 Jun (EA). Counts of 59 and 43 Roseate Terns on Rose I., off New Providence, Bahamas on 5 & 6 Jun respectively (NM) suggest that the terns are nesting there. On 14 Jun, Wallace saw several flocks of



This Palm Warbler was present 30 May (here 31 May) through 1 June 2004 at Petite-Terre Nature Reserve, Guadeloupe—a most unseasonable record for a normally very early spring migrant. Photograph by Anthony Levesque.

Roseate Terns over bait near shore at Bequia, Lesser Antilles. A Roseate Tern was in Castle Harbour, Bermuda 10 & 21 Jul (DBW, JM). Hurricane *Fabian* must have devastated the local breeding population of Common Terns, as only six of the 17 pairs returned in 2004, and these failed to breed. In 50 continuous years of observation (DBW), this is the first record of total breeding failure here. Least Terns (three+ pairs) nested successfully just off the runway on Chub Cay, Berry Is. 11–19 Jun

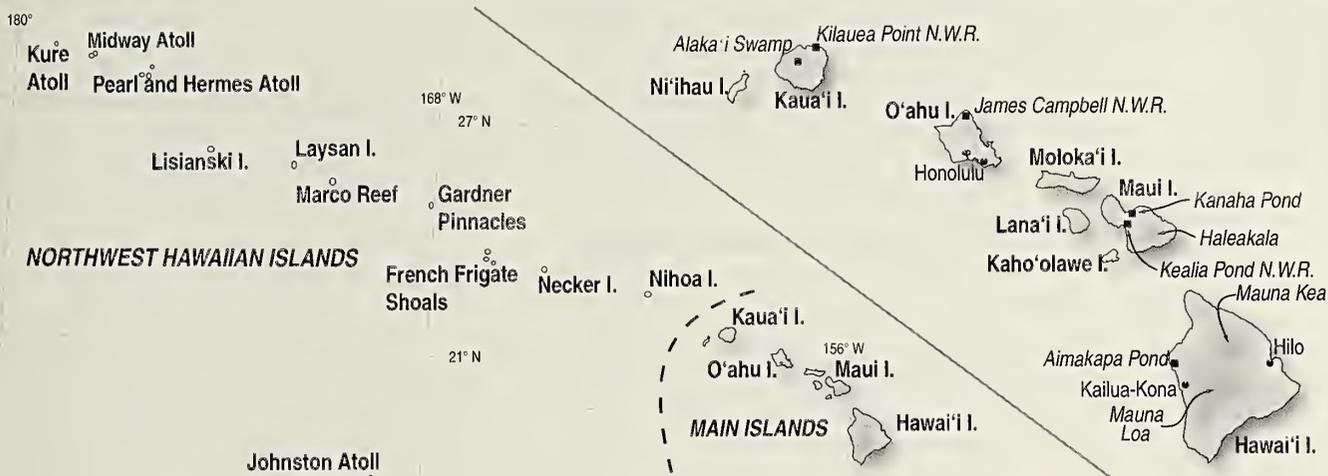
(SS). On 21 Jul, 50+ Least Terns were feeding young on the spoil island near Great Guana Cay, Abaco (EB OB). Erika Gates saw 100+ Bridled Terns at Peterson Cay, Grand Bahama 28 Jun; she found 20 nests, but there were undoubtedly many more.

PARROTS THROUGH ORIOLES

Five St. Lucia Parrots, including one juv., were well seen 11 Jun at Edmonds Forest Preserve; many more were heard on the e. side of the mountain but none on the w. (Soufrière) side of the pass (BW). The Eurasian Collared-Dove found on San Salvador 31 May was the 2nd for the island (WH, FH). Four Zenaida Doves were on Chub Cay 11–19 Jun, a species not noted here in previous years (SS). Some 15–20 Zenaida Doves were along the road to Barbary Beach, Grand Bahama 28 Jun (EG). Ten White-winged Doves were found at the destroyed resort on Scrub I., e. of Anguilla (AB). At Loterie, St. Martin, a single Yellow-billed Cuckoo was found 9 Jun (AB), the species was heard several times on San Salvador in early Jul (FH, WH). An ad. White-eyed Vireo at Bahama Star Groves, Abaco 15 Jul was probably an early fall migrant (EB). Bahama Mockingbirds are uncommon on Grand Bahama, so 4 at the Casuarina Bridge 28 Jun was a good count (EG). At the Edmonds Forest Preserve, 2 St. Lucia Pewees (a recent split from Lesser Antillean Pewee), 2 St. Lucia Black Finches, and an Antillean Euphonia were noted 11 Jun (BW). A pair of White-breasted Thrashers, a species with an estimated world population of 150 pairs, was found near Praslin, St. Lucia 12 Jun (BW). An early Black-and-white Warbler was at the Retreat, Nassau 19 Jul (EC, CW), and a late American Redstart was at Lucayan N.P., Grand Bahama 2 Jun (BR). Another late straggling or over-summering American Redstart was found at Loterie Farm, St. Martin (AB, EPIC) on 9 Jun and 3 Jul. West Indian orioles are threatened from a number of sources, including pollution and habitat loss. St. Lucia Orioles were seen both at Edmonds Forest Reserve near the parrots and at the Pitons near Soufrière 11 Jun (BW).

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Hawaiian Islands



Rainy spring weather continued into summer, with record rainfall in some locations. The rainy weather promotes plant growth and an abundance of insect prey but also promotes avian diseases such as bird pox. This season was notable for a number of overwintering shorebird species, some never before recorded in summer. Pelagic trips provided some other unusual records.

Abbreviations: H. (Hawai'i I.); Hakalau (Hakalau N.W.R., Hawai'i I.); Hanalei (Hanalei N.W.R., Kaua'i I.); Honouliuli (Honouliuli Unit of Pearl Harbor N.W.R., O'ahu I.); K. (Kaua'i I.); Kanaha (Kanaha Pond, Maui I.); Kealia (Kealia Pond N.W.R., Maui I.); Kii (Ki'i Unit of James Campbell N.W.R., O'ahu I.); Kokee (Koke'e S.P., Kaua'i I.); K.P. (Kilauea Pt. N.W.R., Kaua'i I.); M. (Maui I.); Midway (Midway Atoll N.W.R.); O. (O'ahu I.); Pouhala (Pouhala Marsh Wildlife Sanctuary, O'ahu I.); Waiawa (Waiawa Unit of Pearl Harbor N.W.R., O'ahu I.); Waikamoi (Waikamoi Preserve, Maui I.).

ALBATROSSES THROUGH EGRETS

Laysan Albatrosses nesting at K.P. and Princeville, K. had good success, with 50 chicks fledging at K.P. and 8 at Princeville (BZ). Laysans at Kakiu Pt., K. were attacked by dogs that killed 6 ads. and all 8 chicks (BZ). Efforts are being made to fence the area. Laysans also fared poorly at Kaena Pt., O., where bird pox decimated the colony (JP). Fifteen Hawaiian Petrels (Endangered) were seen e. of O'ahu 26 Jun (HS), and 6 were seen in the same area 28 Jun (PD, HJ, HS). Around 100 Bulwer's Petrels were reported on a boat trip e. of O'ahu 26 Jun (HS). This is the highest count recorded in the Region. At least 50 Bulwer's were counted e. of O'ahu 28 Jun (PD, HJ, HS).

Fewer than 100 Wedge-tailed Shearwaters were viewed e. of O'ahu 26 (HS) & 28 Jun (PD, HJ, HS). There were thousands of Wedge-taileds in the same area a year earlier (HS). Seven Christmas Shearwaters were observed w. of Kaua'i 1 Jun (DK), and around 20 were counted e. of O'ahu 26 Jun (ph. HS), the latter being the highest count at sea from the vicinity of the main islands. Twelve of the Christmas Shearwaters seen 26 Jun were around a fish aggregation buoy in the late evening, and a single bird lingered around the same buoy for hours 28 Jun (PD, HJ, HS), the only one seen on that date. Five Newell's Shearwaters (Threatened) were reported w. of Kaua'i 1 Jun (DK), 2 were seen e. of O'ahu 26 Jun (HS), and one was observed e. of O'ahu 28 Jun (PD, HJ, HS). Two pairs of Newell's nesting in artificial cavities at K.P. were raising single chicks Jun+ (BZ). Only one Band-rumped Storm-Petrel was reported, a bird spotted w. of Kaua'i 1 Jun (DK). Single all-dark storm-petrels seen w. of Kaua'i 1 Jun (DK) and e. of O'ahu 28 Jun (PD, HJ, HS) may have been Tristram's but were not positively identified. Tristram's breed on the Northwest Hawaiian Islands but are very rarely reported around the main islands.

The number of Cattle Egrets at Midway reached 42, far higher than any previous count there (TB). Cattle Egret numbers on Midway seem to decrease in winter and increase in summer, suggesting a seasonal migration (MJ), but at least some of the increase this year may have been due to local breeding. Three Cattle Egret nests were found among Red-footed Boobies in a tree on Eastern I. (JK), the first record of Cattle Egrets breeding on the Northwest Hawaiian Islands. A single Cattle Egret was seen on Lisianski I. in late Jul (RJ), and 2 were observed on French Frigate Shoals 27 Jul-8 Aug (CE, EJ, AP). Cattle

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Egrets are common on the main islands but have been rare on the Northwestern Islands and French Frigate Shoals.

IBISES THROUGH GULLS

At least 4 White-faced Ibis, out of a flock of 11 counted during the spring, remained at Hanalei Jun+ (BZ). Some of the birds may have wandered to other islands. At least one ibis was spotted at Kealia several times between late May and late Jul (MN) and on 30 Jul (BH). Hawaiian Hawks (Endangered) were seen regularly in cen. Hawai'i I. Jun+ (H.F.T., JE), with up to 3 seen at once at Hakalau (JE). Common Peafowl, long established in the Region, have become more abundant recently in e. Maui I. and have been heard calling near the center of Makawao (F&KS). Peafowl have become more abundant enough in some areas of O'ahu to prompt calls for control of these beautiful but loud and aggressive birds.

A pair of Hawaiian Moorhens (Endangered) that had already raised two broods of chicks in

Feb and Apr managed to raise another brood in Jul at the state-managed wetland in Hamakua Marsh, O. (JP). Hawaiian Stilts (Endangered) appeared to have pretty good nesting success this year (PD, MN, BZ). After a very early start to the nesting season, most chicks had already fledged by 31 Jul, but a few broods of chicks and one nest remained at Honouliuli (PD). A count of 133 Pacific Golden-Plovers (in both transitional and complete alternate plumages) in Waipahu O. 3 Jun (PD) made the highest Jun count for the Region. The date would be very late for departing birds and very early for returnees. Some Pacific Golden-Plovers remain in the Region every summer but usually in small numbers. A single Lesser Yellowlegs studied at Honouliuli 4 & 18 Jun and 20 Jul (PD) represented the only record for the species in either month. A single dowitcher was observed at Honouliuli 4 & 18 Jun and 20 Jul and at Waiawa 24 Jul (PD). The bird was silent and in basic plumage. There are no previous Jun records for dowitchers in the Region and only three Jul records.

A single Franklin's Gull in alternate plumage seen at Honouliuli 16 (MS) & 18 Jun (PD) was the only gull reported over the summer. Franklin's Gulls are uncommon but regular in the Region in late spring. Single Caspian Terns, uncommon in the Region, were spotted at Kii 23 Jul (PD) and at Kealia 30 Jul (BH). Small terns, probably either Least or Littles, were reported in several locations, with 4 observed on Midway (JK). Both Least and Little Terns have nested on Midway, but it is not known if any nesting occurred this summer. A group of 3 small terns on French Frigate

Shoals late Jul, 2 ads. and one juv., were photographed (AD), but it is hard to tell from photographs of the perched birds if they were Least or Littles. A Gray-backed Tern was seen e. of O'ahu 26 Jun (HS), and 4 were observed in the same area 28 Jun (PD, HJ, HS). Gray-backed Terns breed on Moku Manu, a small island near O'ahu, but are seldom reported.

An adult Slaty-backed Gull lingered on Midway 1–17 Jan (vt RD, DS, KL, v. ob.). A Black-legged Kittiwake that arrived on Midway 10 Jan (DS, KL) was found dead the next day.

DOVES THROUGH PASSERINES

At least 6 Mourning Doves were seen at Honouliuli 3 Jul (PD, RM), providing more evidence that the species is becoming established on O'ahu. Short-eared Owls were found much more easily on Hawai'i I. this summer than during the spring, when they were reported to be unusually scarce. Four to 8 were seen daily in w. Hawai'i I. mid-Jun through mid-Jul (RD), and 5 individuals were spotted in cen. Hawai'i I 2 Jul (H.F.T.).

A pair of O'ahu 'Elepaio (Endangered) was discovered along Aiea Trail, O. 19 Jun (PD, PH). Heavy spring rains caused many nest failures for introduced passerines such as Japanese Bush-Warbler, Red-billed Leiothrix, and Japanese White-eye on e. Maui, but after the weather turned drier in Jun, these species ended up having a successful summer breeding season (JF). Japanese Bush-Warblers have been established on O'ahu for more than 70 years and have become established on the other islands within the past 25 years or so. They were reported to be abundant on Moloka'i I. in late Jul (JF) and in Waikamoi Jun+ (JF, LT)

and were also common in the Waianae Mts., O. in late Jun (JF) but not as common as on Moloka'i or Maui. In contrast, bush-warblers were scarce in the Ko'olau Mts., O. Jun+ (PD).

As usual, Palila (Endangered) were found regularly at Pu'u La'au, H. Jun+ (H.F.T.). One Maui Parrotbill (Endangered) was studied in Waikamoi 9 Jul (LT, JF). 'Akiapola'au (Endangered) were seen regularly by researchers at Hakalau Jun+ (JE) and by tour groups at Pu'u 'O'o Ranch, H. Jun+ (H.F.T.). Hawai'i Creeper (Endangered) and 'Akepa (Endangered) were reported to be common and easy to see in Hakalau Jun+ (JE). 'Iwi apparently had a great breeding season on Maui I., where many first-year birds were observed in Waikamoi (JF). We received no reports this season of any of the rare native forest birds on Kaua'i

Red-cheeked Cordonbleu and Black-rumped Waxbills, the rarest exotic finches established in the Region, continued to be regularly seen in nw. Hawai'i I. in Jun (RD). A flock of 200 African Silverbills was counted in nw. Hawai'i I. 24 Jul (RP). This was the first big flock reported in the area in several years.

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State of the Region

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In Hawai'i, a remarkable array of plants, animals, and natural communities evolved in nearly complete isolation over millions of years. But in the relatively short time humans have occupied the islands—approximately 1500 years—much of the original forest, grassland, and wetland has been destroyed. Clearing for human habitation, large-scale agriculture in the prehistoric and historic periods, logging, modern land development, and the ongoing invasion of non-native species have resulted in more species extinctions and endangerment than anywhere else in the United States.

Roughly half the native Hawaiian landbird species are extinct, including 64 species known only from the fossil record (having gone extinct after Polynesian arrival but prior to Western contact) (James and Olson 1991, Olson and James 1991). Among the extant Hawaiian birds are 33 federally-listed threatened or endangered species, at least 10 of which have not been observed in more than a decade (Pratt, pers. comm.; Table 1). Invasive species and global warming are two of the most significant ecosystem-level threats to Hawai'i's native birds that remain.

The federal Office of Technology Assessment declared Hawai'i's alien species problem the worst in the nation (OTA 1993). Introduced feral goats, pigs, sheep, Mouflon, Axis Deer, and Black-tailed Deer are managed by the State of Hawai'i for public hunting. These animals occupy natural areas from near sea level (e.g., goats on Na Pali Coast, Kaua'i) to over 2700 m elevation (e.g., Mouflon on Mauna Kea and Mauna Loa). Feral and domestic cattle are also present in State Forest Reserves and private watersheds. These browsing and grazing animals are excluded from native ecosystems only where fences have been constructed and maintained. They are capable of transforming entire native ecosystems to weed-dominated wastelands by consuming native plants, trampling roots and seedlings, accelerating erosion, and promoting weed invasion. They threaten streams, wetlands, and coral reefs as well. Introduced predators, such as feral cats, mongooses, and three species of rat,

can cause ecosystem-level disturbances by eliminating key species. A single feral cat can destroy an entire breeding colony of Hawaiian Petrels.

The interaction between invasive animals and plants can also have a significant effect on native systems. Feral pigs consume and distribute the seeds of invasive plants, including strawberry guava and passionflowers and disturb soil areas, creating conditions for seed germination and seedling growth (Vitousek 1992). Pigs also knock down and eat native tree ferns (mainly *Cibotium* spp.). Hollowed out tree fern logs collect rainwater and serve as breeding areas for introduced mosquitoes that carry avian malaria and avian pox. Pigs also create wallows, which serve as breeding areas for introduced mosquitoes that carry avian malaria and avian pox. In drier regions, goats consume native vegetation and cause severe erosion, opening areas to invasive weeds.

One of the most serious threats to native Hawaiian birds and habitat is the introduction of the Brown Treesnake (*Boiga irregularis*), a species responsible for the extinction of nine of 13 forest bird species on Guam. Brown Treesnakes occur in high densities on Guam, and there is a significant risk that they will be transported to Hawai'i in military or civilian cargo. The U.S. Department of Agriculture anticipates up to a 50% reduction in snake containment at Department of Defense ports of exit on Guam beginning October 1, 2004 (Martin 2004). Funding for treesnake interdiction efforts has not increased significantly since the program was established 11 years ago. Military operations on Guam probably will increase over the next few years, ensuring more opportunities for accidental snake introductions to Hawai'i.

Global warming and climate change also pose ecosystem-level threats, affecting native birds and their habitat from sea level to Hawaiian cloud forests. The low-lying basalt islands and coral atolls of the Northwestern Hawaiian Islands provide habitat for 90% of Hawai'i's seabird populations (Rauzon 2001). Approximately 14 million seabirds live there, including 5.4 million breeding pairs of 18 species. The disappearance of Whale Skate Island is one of the more dramatic examples of global warming impacts to Hawai'i's native birds at sea level. The island was 4–6 ha in size and covered with vegetation, nesting seabirds, Hawaiian Monk Seals, and Green Sea Turtles. It no longer exists as a result of erosion and rising sea levels. Global warming, coral bleaching, and drought resulting from El Niño events affect ocean productivity and food availability for seabirds as well.

Studies indicate that global warming may also allow mosquitoes to breed year-round at higher

elevations than they do now, eliminating suitable habitat for native upland birds. Mosquitoes are the vector for *Plasmodium relictum*, a pathogen that transmits avian malaria to native forest birds. The threshold temperature for transmission of avian malaria to Hawaiian birds is estimated to be 13° C, whereas peak *Plasmodium* prevalence in wild mosquitoes occurs in mid-elevation forests where the mean ambient summer temperature is 17° C (Benning et al. 2002). Mosquitoes also transmit avian pox directly to native forest birds. Modeling of climate change on the islands of Kaua'i, Maui, and Hawai'i indicates that as temperatures rise by just a few degrees, suitable forest bird habitat will be lost as the mosquito zone shifts upslope. Birds occupying high-elevation forests currently free of diseases will become infected as temperatures rise. Scientists also predict that the "species temperature-tolerance zones" for native and introduced species will likely be shifted upward in elevation (Loope and Giambelluca 1998). Plants and animals may have to relocate upslope, and native cloud forests may be reduced in size. Global warming and climate change may also cause changes in frequency and intensity of hurricanes, windstorms, drought, and fire, which may favor invasive plant species over native ones.

Inadequate funding hinders species conservation and the extent to which the impacts of invasive species and global warming can be mitigated. *The Hawai'i Department of Land and Natural Resources receives less than 1% of the state budget to manage and protect all of Hawai'i's cultural and natural resources.* There is no dedicated source of funding for the Natural Area Reserves System (NARS), which includes some of the best remaining native ecosystems on State land. On average, only \$11 per acre per year is spent managing the Reserves on the ground. At the federal level, at least four times the current \$75 million federal appropriation for all 50 states is needed under the State Wildlife Grants program.

On a positive note, Hawai'i still has some of the highest densities of forest birds in the tropics (Pratt, pers. comm.). Upper-elevation forests are relatively free of weeds. High-elevation pastures are being converted to native forest in conservation areas and as commercial forests, increasing habitat for native forest birds above the mosquito zone. Efforts to reintroduce endangered Hawaiian birds are meeting with various levels of success, and essential habitat is protected in the NARS, National Parks, and National Wildlife Refuges. Predator control on the Main Hawaiian Islands is helping to ensure that bird populations survive, and all of the Northwestern Hawaiian Islands are now rat-free. Habitat on private land is managed in preserves under State-private partnerships, and since 2001, thousands of additional acres have been managed under the Watershed Partnership Program.

However, state and federal funding is still inadequate, and policy changes are needed to take advantage of the conservation opportunities at hand. Increases in base funding in the state budget and in dedicated funding for species conservation, a dedicated funding source for the NARS, and more flexibility in state and federal funding are needed to protect Hawai'i's native birds and habitat. Invasive species and global warming are two of the more prominent threats to Hawai'i's native birds among a host of others, including land development, coastal water pollution, depletion of marine food resources, and public indifference. Without a stronger commitment to providing the necessary funding for species conservation, the future for Hawai'i's native birds is not promising.

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Federally Listed Threatened and Endangered Hawaiian Birds • November 5, 2004

Status	Common & Hawaiian Name	Scientific Name	Total Population Estimate
E	'Akepa, Hawai'i	<i>Loxops coccineus coccineus</i>	14,000 birds
E	'Akepa, Maui	<i>Loxops coccineus ochraceus</i>	Last detected 1970
E	'Akialoa, Kaua'i	<i>Hemignathus procerus</i>	Last detected late 1960s
E	'Akiapola'au	<i>Hemignathus munroi</i>	1,163 birds
E	Albatross, Short-tailed	<i>Phoebastria albatrus</i>	1,990 birds
E	Coot, Hawaiian ('Alae Ke'oke'o)	<i>Fulica alai</i>	2,100 (5-year average)
E	Creeper, Hawai'i	<i>Oreomystis mana</i>	12,500 birds
E	Creeper, Moloka'i (Kakawahie)	<i>Paroreomyza flammea</i>	Last detected 1963
E	Creeper, O'ahu ('Alauahio)	<i>Paroreomyza maculata</i>	Last detected 1985
E	Crow, Hawaiian ('Alala)	<i>Corvus hawaiiensis</i>	40 birds
E	Duck, Hawaiian (Koloa)	<i>Anas wyvilliana</i>	2,200 birds
E	Duck, Laysan	<i>Anas laysanensis</i>	459 birds
E	'Elepaio, O'ahu	<i>Chasiempis sandwichensis ibidis</i>	1,970 birds
E	Finch, Laysan	<i>Telespiza cantans</i>	8,500-12,000
E	Finch, Nihoa	<i>Telespiza ultima</i>	1,500-3,200 birds
E	Goose, Hawaiian (Nene)	<i>Branta sandvicensis</i>	1,275 birds
E	Hawk, Hawaiian ('Io)	<i>Buteo solitarius</i>	1,400-2,500 birds
E	Honeycreeper, crested ('Akohekohe)	<i>Palmeria dolei</i>	3,800 birds
E	Millerbird, Nihoa	<i>Acrocephalus familiaris kingi</i>	155 birds
E	Moorhen, Hawaiian Common ('Alae 'Uia)	<i>Gallinula chloropus sandvicensis</i>	314 birds (5-year average)
E	Nukupu'u, Kaua'i	<i>Hemignathus lucidus hanapepe</i>	Last detected 1960s
E	Nukupu'u, Maui	<i>Hemignathus lucidus affinis</i>	Last detected 1979
E	'O'o 'a'a (Kaua'i 'O'o)	<i>Moho braccatus</i>	Last detected April 1987
E	'O'u	<i>Psittirostra psittaceae</i>	Last detected 1979
E	Palila	<i>Loxioides bailleui</i>	3,390 (16-year average)
E	Parrotbill, Maui	<i>Pseudonestor xanthophrys</i>	500 birds
E	Petrel, Hawaiian ('Ua'u)	<i>Pterodroma phaeopygia sandwichensis</i>	several thousand to 34,000
E	Po'ouli	<i>Melampusops phaeosoma</i>	2 birds
T	Shearwater, Newell's Townsend's ('A'o)	<i>Puffinus auricularis</i>	84,000
E	Stilt, Hawaiian (Ae'o)	<i>Himantopus mexicanus knudseni</i>	1,350 (5-year average)
E	Thrush, Large Kaua'i (Kama'o)	<i>Myadestes myadestinus</i>	Last detected 1989
E	Thrush, Moloka'i (Oloma'o)	<i>Myadestes lamaiensis rutha</i>	Last detected 1988
E	Thrush, Small Kaua'i (Puaiohi)	<i>Myadestes palmeri</i>	300 birds

Olson, S. L., and H. F. James. 1991. Descriptions of thirty-two new species of birds from the Hawaiian Islands: Part I. Non-Passeriformes. *Ornithological Monographs* No. 45:1-88. The American Ornithologists' Union, Washington, D.C.

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The endangered Po'ouli (*Melampusops phaeosoma*) clings to existence in the Hanawi Natural Area Reserve on the slopes of the Haleakala Mountain, Maui. Only two individuals of this species are believed to exist, but these have not been seen in several years, and the species may already be extinct. Photograph by Paul Baker/U. S. Fish & Wildlife Service.

First North American record of Black-bellied Storm-Petrel (*Fregetta tropica*)

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ABSTRACT

This paper documents the first North American record of Black-bellied Storm-Petrel (*Fregetta tropica*), a single bird photographed off North Carolina 31 May 2004, provides context for this record in the North Atlantic Ocean, and summarizes field identification of *Fregetta* storm-petrels.

FIELD ENCOUNTER

On 31 May 2004, the authors and 16 other observers aboard the sport-fishing boat *Country Girl* observed a Black-bellied Storm-Petrel (*Fregetta tropica*) approximately 77 km southeast of Oregon Inlet, North Carolina. The bird was observed from 1420 to 1450 EDT, at distances as close as 30 m while it flew and fed amongst 135 Wilson's (*Oceanites oceanicus*), five Leach's (*Oceanodroma leucorhoa*), and two Band-rumped (*Oceanodroma castro*) Storm-Petrels over a

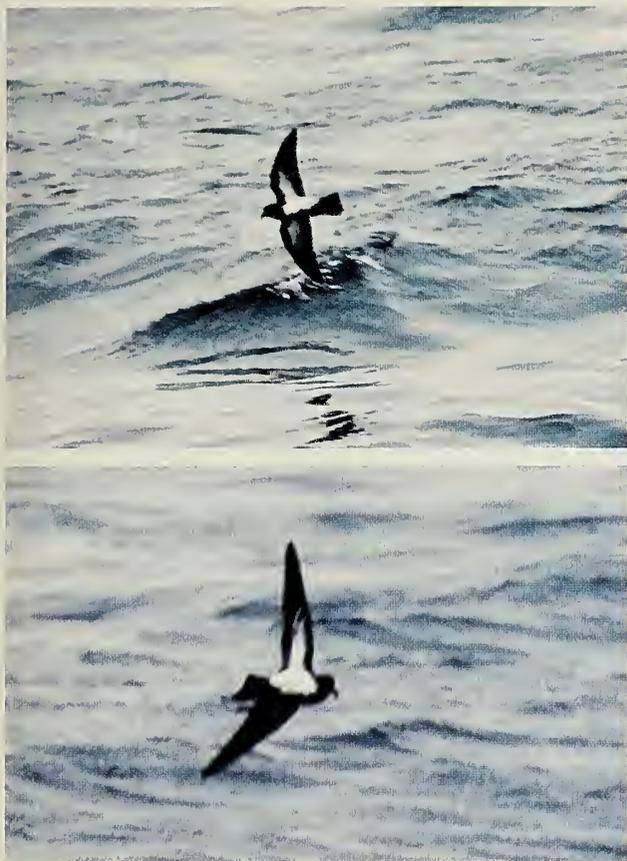
slick of fish oil we had set out to attract birds. The location of the initial discovery was approximately 35° 22.5' N, 74° 47.5' W (LORAN-C 26777, 40511). The water depth here is approximately 1566 m (870 fathoms; 5220 feet). The seawater temperature in the vicinity of the observation was approximately 72° F. Seawater of this temperature and color is usually called "green water" by local fishermen, in contrast to the "blue water" of the nearby Gulf Stream, which is warmer and clearer. The water in this general area is often a mixture of warmer Gulf Stream and cooler Labrador Seawater Current water.

The Black-bellied Storm-Petrel was first noted by the boat's mate, John Gallop. The bird stood out among the surrounding Wilson's Storm-Petrels due to its stockier build, dark hood, white belly, black undertail coverts, and white underwing coverts. At the time of observation, we identified this individual as a White-bellied Storm-Petrel (*F. grallaria*), as we were not able to discern the black belly stripe. Fortunately, several on board managed to obtain videotape footage and still photographs (Figures 1–9), some of which clearly show the ventral stripe (e.g., Figures 3, 4, 8) and thus leave no doubt as to the identification. Although the blackish ventral stripe would seem an obvious field mark, it was not clearly observed, probably owing to unfavorable angles of observation and the bird's low flight profile. Moreover, when the bird was observed in profile, the stripe probably "disappeared" against the dark seawater, leaving the impression of a white belly (Figure 9; see comparative illustration by P. Burke, in Jaramillo 2003). Several observers who thought they saw this stripe in the field discounted it as shadow while the bird was under observation. Our collective impressions of the bird in the field, as well as from photographs and videotape studied subsequently, are digested below. The marks described are clearly discernable in Figures 1–9.

"Proportions and body rather stocky compared to Wilson's Storm-Petrel. In slow feeding flight, wing shape appeared broad, not particularly long, with a gently rounded carpal joint. In direct flight, wing appeared longer than the accompanying Wilson's but still showed a rounded carpal angle. Feet appeared black, extending beyond tail. Mantle, scapulars, and back dark charcoal gray-brown. Flight feathers black. Upperwing coverts dark gray-brown, with paler tan-brown tips to greater coverts forming a distinct pale carpal bar. Median upperwing coverts with much narrower pale tips, apparently indicating fresh plumage. Upper-tail coverts white. Tail blackish.



Figures 1, 2. Black-bellied Storm-Petrel, off Oregon Inlet, North Carolina 31 May 2004 (all figures). The dorsum of the storm-petrel showed blackish flight feathers that contrasted with brownish upperwing coverts, a thin paler brown carpal bar formed by the tips of the greater uppersecondary coverts, white uppertail coverts, a blackish tail, and feet that projected well beyond the tail. Most sources note that the feet of Black-bellied project about one centimeter beyond the tail but do not project beyond the tail in White-bellied. Photographs by Rick Wiltraut.



Figures 3, 4. The ventral surface of the North Carolina Black-bellied Storm-Petrel showed a dark blackish-brown hood, blackish leading edge of underwing, dark flight feathers, white underwing coverts with tips of median and greater underprimary coverts dark, a heavy blackish line of uneven thickness running down the center of the belly and connecting with blackish undertail coverts, and blackish tail.

Photographs by Rick Wiltraut.

"Head, including chin, nape, throat, and breast blackish brown, ending in a distinct, irregular line at the lower breast, giving the bird a distinctly hooded look. Belly white, longitudinally divided by heavy blackish bar extending from the dark breast to the dark undertail coverts [the latter mark was noted first in photographs and videotape]. Underwing's leading edge and flight feathers blackish, remaining underwing coverts white, except for a thin black line near the base of the primaries (median underprimary coverts).

"Flight active and erratic, with some side-to-side rocking noted. The bird pattered and 'dragged' its feet on the water when feeding in flight and regularly 'slapped' the water's surface with its wingtips as well; it occasionally splashed its body against the water and pushed off with its feet."

DISCUSSION

IDENTIFICATION

The combination of dark upperparts, white rump, dark hood, and white belly rules out most species of the world's storm-petrels except the closely related White-bellied Storm-Petrel. Other remotely similar species are easily eliminated. For instance, White-throated (Polynesian) Storm-Petrel (*Neso-*

fregetta fuliginosa) is larger, with a narrower band of white in the uppertail coverts and a white throat. Gray-backed Storm-Petrel (*Garrodia nereis*) is much smaller and has pale gray lower back, uppertail coverts, and upperwing coverts. The recently rediscovered New Zealand Storm-Petrel (*Oceanites maorianus*) can apparently be ruled out by its small size, lack of longitudinal belly-stripe, and narrow dark streaks leading out of the dark breast onto the white belly (Saville and Stephenson 2004). Other dark-backed, pale-vented storm-petrels are far more different and would not be confusable with the North Carolina storm-petrel; a partially leucistic Wilson's Storm-Petrel would not differ structurally from conspecifics.

Identification of White-bellied and Black-bellied Storm-Petrels at sea is difficult. Much has been written, and rumored, about problematic plumages in individual *Fregatta*;

nevertheless, Harrison (1985) and subsequent authors have noted that virtually all individuals closely and carefully observed can be confidently identified to species. We can unequivocally eliminate White-bellied Storm-Petrel in the case of the North Carolina bird by the presence of a black stripe down the center of the belly that connects the dark breast with the blackish undertail coverts, especially in concert with other plumage characters (Marchant and Higgins 1990). Other supporting field marks for Black-bellied include darker upperparts than White-bellied (Harrison 1985, Shirihai 2002, Jaramillo 2003), a less "scaly" appearance of the upperparts in fresh plumage (Murphy and Snyder 1952, Shirihai 2002), and an irregular (rather than straight) border between dark hood and pale breast (Jaramillo 2003). The slightly more extensive dark borders of the underwing and the presence of dark feathers in the underprimary coverts favor Black-bellied (Bourne 1960, Shirihai 2002,

Jaramillo 2003), but at least one published photograph of an apparent White-bellied (Plate 243, Harrison 1987) shows a dark crescent of feathering in the underprimary coverts. Most sources (e.g., Marchant and Higgins 1990, Jaramillo 2003) state that the feet projecting beyond the tail can be used to separate Black-bellied from White-bellied in flight, but this has been questioned in some cases (Saville and Stephenson 2004), and Shirihai (2002) notes that the feet of Black-bellied project well beyond the tail but that at most just the tips of the toes project beyond the tail in White-bellied. The white bases to the feathers of the throat have sometimes been mentioned as a field character separating Black-bellied from White-bellied, presumably when exposed by wear (Harrison 1985, Marchant and Higgins 1990, Jaramillo 2003), but at least one author questions the value of this mark (Clancey 1981). Only one observer, Overton, noted a faintly paler chin (not throat) in his field notes, but this is not visible in photographs.

Although there exist intermediate and dark morphs of White-bellied Storm-Petrel (Marchant and Higgins 1990), these do not match the appearance of the North Carolina individual. Atypical Black-bellied Storm-Petrels that appear to show a reduced (or even absent) belly stripe have also been reported (Bourne 1960); this plumage also does not match the North Carolina individual. Confusion over a supposedly white-bellied subspecies ("*melanoleuca*") of Black-bellied Storm-Petrel breeding on Tristan and Gough Islands in the South Atlantic probably arose from the presence of White-bellied Storm-Petrels there (see discussion in Marchant and Higgins 1990). Given this, Black-bellied Storm-Petrel is probably best considered monotypic. We are not able to



Figure 5. The greater and median upperwing coverts of the Black-bellied Storm-Petrel showed very crisp, apparently fresh pale edges. We conclude that this individual is not a breeding adult, which would probably show more wear in the plumage and should be beginning complete post-breeding molt by June. Note that not all images of this bird depict the projection of the feet beyond the tail.

Photograph by Michael H. Tove.



Figures 6, 7. The flight behavior of *Fregetta* storm-petrels is usually distinctive for the genus. Depicted in Figure 6 (top) is the peculiar foot-skidding behavior, in which the bird flies while dragging one foot through the water. Figure 7 shows the bird launching itself with both feet from the water after retrieving a piece of beef fat. Photographs by Michael H. Tove.

age or sex the North Carolina Black-bellied confidently, as sexes and ages appear alike in the field identification; the very fresh plumage of the bird, however, suggested to us that it was not a breeding adult, which should be worn and commencing post-breeding molt after departing the breeding

The various flight behaviors observed in the field and subsequently seen on videotape are described for the species but also for its sibling White-bellied Storm-Petrel, including side-to-side rocking, splashing breast-first into the water (Harrison 1985, Marchant and Higgins 1990), and foot-

areas around mid-April (Marchant and Higgins 1990).

Several authors have stressed the difficulty of identifying extralimital *Fregetta* at sea (Bourne 1960, Chapman 1982, Marchant and Higgins 1990), particularly with regard to the visibility of the dark belly-stripe in *tropica* at even moderate distances (Bourne and Dixon 1975). Thus, many sight reports of *Fregetta* are treated with caution and not differentiated to species (e.g., Chapman 1984, Bourne 1989). This is especially true for sight records made from large vessels, where observations are from high vantage points. Even with the advantages of a comparatively small vessel, close views, and relatively shallow angles of observation, we were impressed with the challenge of this identification at sea.

dragging or -skidding (illustrated; Jaramillo 2003). Black-bellied Storm-Petrel is said to be attracted to ships but to "take little notice of scraps" of food (Marchant and Higgins 1990; but see Figures 6, 7); Leveque et al. (1989) describe the species as "strongly attracted to cod liver oil." The oil used to attract this bird was that of Atlantic Menhaden (*Brevoortia tyrannus*), with ground beef fat used as additional bait. Marchant and Higgins (1990) speculate that the species "may be associated with cool currents." All of these behaviors and circumstances fit the species identification.

Distribution

With an estimated world population of about 150,000 pairs, Black-bellied Storm-Petrel is a circumpolar breeder on islands in Antarctic and Subantarctic waters, dispersing northward in the nonbreeding months to subtropical and tropical waters in the Atlantic, Pacific, and Indian Oceans (Enticott and Tipling 1997). Much of what is known about the distribution of the species in the nonbreeding season has been gleaned from observers on naval and merchant-marine vessels, from which views are usually distant unless the birds come on board ships, as Black-bellieds occasionally do (Bourne 1997, Young 1985). The northern extent of the species' regular range in the northern hemisphere is 17.7° N in the Arabian Sea/Indian Ocean (Cheshire 1991, Bourne 1989, Bourne and Dixon 1975), 11° N in the Atlantic (Bourne and Dixon 1973), and northern Peru (about 2° S) in the Pacific (Marchant and Higgins 1990). As is the case for many seabirds, the occurrence of the species in the western North Atlantic has been predicted (Brinkley 2000) based on the species' distribution and dispersal in the



Figures 8, 9. These images clearly depict the importance of the angle of observation for the identification of *Fregetta* storm-petrels. Figure 8 shows the flying bird mostly perpendicular to the water, with ventral area mostly exposed to view; the heavy belly-stripe connecting the dark plumage of the breast to that of the ventral area is obvious. However, Figure 9 shows how quickly the dark stripe can disappear or be much less apparent against the underwing and ocean, almost an optical illusion. Note in both images, however, how uneven the border between the dark breast and white belly appears—a plumage character typical of Black-bellied rather than White-bellied. Photographs by Michael H. Tove.

nonbreeding season, on its large population, as well as on possible sight reports of the genus in the western North Atlantic. The nearest sight record of a bird of this genus, believed to be of a Black-bellied, was documented from 11 May 1968 at 32° N, 44.5° W by Captain P. W. G. Chilman, returning to Hamburg, Germany from the United States and the Caribbean (Bourne and Dixon 1973). This location is about 2900 km from Hatteras, North Carolina and 1900 km from Bermuda, well outside the territorial waters of both countries.

There is a previous enigmatic report of Black-bellied Storm-Petrel from North American waters, but in addition to the identification being uncertain, the locality is doubtfully correct. Seven birds were reportedly caught on hook-and-line from a vessel at anchor in the harbor at St. Marks, Florida. A single specimen was said to have been preserved and sent to the Academy of Natural Sciences in Philadelphia, but its present location is unknown (Lawrence 1851, in A.O.U. 1998; Howell 1932). Bourne (1962, 1964) inferred from the specimens' measurements reported by Lawrence (1851) that all pertained to White-bellied Storm-Petrel. Nevertheless, the difficulty in interpreting measurements made by different workers using different techniques precludes certainty in such cases, especially given the slight differences in size of the two species. It is difficult to imagine why Lawrence (1851) would ascribe these individuals to Black-bellied Storm-Petrels if all lacked the definitive plumage character of that species.

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A possible Brown Skua (*Stercorarius antarcticus*) on Sable Island, Nova Scotia

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ABSTRACT

This paper considers characters of a skua photographed 13 May 1996 on Sable Island, Nova Scotia, which the authors identify as a possible Brown Skua (*Stercorarius antarcticus*), a species not yet confirmed in the western North Atlantic but recently documented by molecular evidence in the eastern North Atlantic.

FIELD ENCOUNTER

In mid-day on 13 May 1996, Lucas found a skua sitting on the beach at Sable Island, a 45-km long crescentic sandbar some 160 km from the nearest mainland of Nova Scotia. This skua was approachable, to within about 5 m, allowing two photographs to be taken in full sunlight before it stood up, took off, circled and flew away. Because of its overall bulk and dark ventral plumage—with what appeared to be warmer tones than had been observed on South Polar Skuas (*Stercorarius maccormicki*)—it was initially identified in the field as a Great Skua (*S. skua*).

DISCUSSION

SKUAS IN CANADIAN ATLANTIC WATERS

Balch (1981) focussed attention of birders on summer presence of South Polar Skuas in North Atlantic waters. Although earlier literature indicates otherwise, three sum-

mer (June–August) specimens in Canadian museums collected prior to 1980 in Atlantic Canada have been critically identified as South Polar Skuas (Michel Gosselin, National Museum of Canada, pers. comm.; University of Western Ontario [see below]). All Great Skua specimens have come from the Grand Banks: an immature in late August 1961 (D. McAlpine, New Brunswick Museum, pers. comm.) and several adults in September (M. Gosselin, pers. comm.). The Great Skuas listed for Sable Island by McLaren (1980) were not critically identified. Nova Scotian observers have attempted to distinguish the two species since at least the early 1980s. Since 1992, Lucas has studied six live Great Skuas on Sable Island at fairly close range and has found five tideline carcasses (two salvageable as specimens), all between September and January. These were identified by their bulk, presence of distinctly cinnamon or rufous underparts, and pale or rufous streaks on backs. She has also found two dead South Polar Skuas and closely observed a live one, all in late May. These were typical light- or intermediate-morph birds, dark-backed, evenly brownish gray below, and with pale nuchal areas. McLaren has similarly identified South Polar Skuas off Seal Island in August 1983, Great Skuas during a pelagic trip off Halifax, Nova Scotia, in October 1990, and both species during a pelagic trip off Halifax in late September 1990, and on a research cruise on the Scotian Shelf in late September 1997.

Because the photographs of the May 1996 bird on Sable Island do not easily accord with either of the two regularly occurring skua species, we have been led to consider other possibilities. For several decades, skuas outwardly similar to the Sable Island bird have led observers in the North Atlantic to suspect that a third species, Brown Skua (*Stercorarius antarcticus*) wanders to the North Atlantic. This suspicion has been supported by recent molecular evidence from the United Kingdom (Scott 2002, Moon and Carrington 2002). Information on skua identification,

in both published articles and material posted on the WorldWideWeb, has indicated to us that the Sable Island bird strongly resembled Brown Skua, although deficiencies in this information lead us to leave it formally unidentified.

BACKGROUND ON CONFIRMED AND POSSIBLE BROWN SKUAS IN THE NORTH ATLANTIC

Even after Chilean (*S. chilensis*) and South Polar Skuas were recognized as distinct species, the three other skua taxa in the Southern Hemisphere continued to be classified as forms of Great Skua (e.g., Devillers 1977). Brown Skua, however, has become generally recognized as a distinct species with three subspecies (e.g., Olsen and Larsson 1997): Falkland Skua, nominate *antarcticus*, of the Falklands Islands and southern Argentina; Tristan Skua, *hamiltoni*, of Tristan da Cunha and Gough Islands in the South Atlantic; and Subantarctic Skua, *lonnbergi*, of the Antarctic Peninsula and islands from South Georgia across the Southern Ocean to New Zealand. The future may bring further rearrangements in systematics of the southern skuas (Blechschmidt et al. 1993), and the evolutionary relationship between Great Skua and Pomarine Jaeger (*Stercorarius pomarinus*) is apparently close enough (Braun and Brumfield 1998) that the American Ornithologists' Union (Banks 2000) has recently merged genus *Catharacta* into genus *Stercorarius*, although this reclassification has not been made uniformly in the world ornithological community.

Brown Skua has long been known to wander north of the equator in the Indian Ocean (Higgins and Davies 1996), but in the western North Atlantic, our lack of specimens and limited criteria for the discriminating skuas within the *antarcticus/lonnbergi/hamiltoni* complex have thwarted identification of several suspected Brown Skuas. Single skuas photographed at the Hudson Canyon off New York/New Jersey on 28 May 1977 (photograph in *American Birds* 32: 1108; Balch 1981) and 29 May

1987 (Brady 1988) were thought to be Brown Skuas, the former a probable Subantarctic Skua, while the latter bird was identified by world authorities at the time as a Tristan Skua. Off North Carolina, records from 22 May 1992 (Brinkley 1994) and 29 May 1993 (M. O'Brien, pers. comm.; see Figures 6, 7) perhaps pertain to Subantarctic Skua. Several more recent candidates from the Gulf Stream off North Carolina have also been posted to websites (<www.patteson.com/skuas/skuas.htm>, and <www.magikcircle.com/birds/image.asp?title_id=457>). At present, no North American bird records committee has admitted any taxon of skua other than *macormicki* and *skua* to its official list, although the North Carolina Bird Records Committee has considered reports of Brown Skua (H. LeGrand, pers. comm.).

In the eastern North Atlantic, Brown Skua has now been confirmed twice: on the Scilly Islands, 7 October 2001 (Scott 2002) and in Glamorgan, 3 February 2002 (Moon and Carrington 2002). The identification of these skuas from mitochondrial DNA did not exclude the possibility of either being a hybrid with paternal South Polar Skua, but this was deemed very unlikely from population estimates and morphology (Votier et al. 2004). There are no other confirmed records of Brown Skuas from North Atlantic waters, but more may come from the eastern Atlantic Ocean off Senegal, where only Great Skuas had been thought to occur. Numbers from that region have been photographically identified as South Polar



Figure 1. Skua on Sable Island, Nova Scotia, 13 May 1996. Photograph by Zoe Lucas.

Skuas (Newell et al. 1997), but others have raised the possibility of Brown Skuas among some of the more robust intermediate- and dark-plumaged individuals (Jiguet 1997).

We can no longer assume that all skuas in the North Atlantic are either Great or South Polar, and records committees should now review all past reports of skuas, just as they did in the 1970s, when South Polar Skua was accorded species status. Until more is known about the identification of Brown Skua from observations or photographs, morphometric or genetic determination from birds in the hand remains nec-

essary. The May 1996 bird on Sable Island is therefore described here as a plausible but unconfirmed record, in part to advance the question of skua identification.

APPEARANCE OF THE SABLE ISLAND SKUA

In diagnosing the Sable Island bird (Figure 1, 2), we consulted photographs, illustrations, and descriptions of the various species and subspecies of skuas by James (in Higgins and Davies 1996), Olsen and Larsson (1997), and Shirihai (2002), along with numerous web-posted photographs.

• Ageing

The reference taxa for the Sable Island skua were naturally Great and South Polar Skuas. At this time of year, a Great Skua born in 1995 would be at least almost one year old, whereas any southern-hemisphere skua could be considerably younger. The lack of pale feathering around the bill, the uniformly dark bill (some paleness apparently from light reflection), and the blackish rather than grayish or mottled tarsi indicate that it is a post-juvenile. No matter what the species, there are no indications that this individual was under one year of age. Beyond that, it is not possible to age this bird on present knowledge, although we suspect that this individual is not in the "definitive" plumage of an adult of any taxon, given its rather uniform dorsal plumage. The bird might therefore best be considered a subadult, an imprecise label but one suited to the uncertainties surrounding skua plumages (see comments based on molt below).

• Comparison with plumages of Great Skua

The lack of strongly rufous tones below or



Figure 2. Skua on Sable Island, Nova Scotia, 13 May 1996. Photograph by Zoe Lucas.



Figure 3. An apparent intermediate or pale/intermediate juvenile Great Skua, captured by Lucas on Sable Island, Nova Scotia, on 2 January 1995 and brought to the mainland for rehabilitation. Note the dark hood, tawny underparts, and pale rufous markings within covert feathers, all typical of juvenile Great Skuas (but see text). Photograph by I. McLaren.

in dorsal streaking and the lack of dark cap or strongly marked hood on the head is at variance with most Great Skua plumages at any age (e. g., Figure 3). However, the possibility of dark-morph Great Skua is important to consider. Bearhop et al. (1998) noted that some captive juveniles from Orkney in Scotland had "very dark, sooty plumage, with very little contrast between in tone between their head, neck and underparts, or between their wings and body," and that "some of the darker birds show[ed] virtually no rufous tones at all." In addition, the "the two-toned [bill] pattern became less evident as the juveniles became older and by February (ca. seven months) was hardly detectable on several birds." Votier et al. in a 2002 web-posted essay on the Scilly Islands Brown Skua (www.surfbirds.com/mb/Features/skua-identification.html) stated that dorsal feathers of "all of the juvenile Great Skuas that we have closely examined (probably 1500+ birds) show a rather distinctive internal pattern... although this may be restricted to the median and lesser coverts of the darkest birds, [consisting] of a series of complex fine pale speckles, usually just short of the tip of the feather." They further commented: "almost all all-dark sub-adult Great Skuas showed a small amount of paler, mid-brown edging to the greater coverts..." No such markings are evident in Lucas's photographs (Figure 4). Rather, there are narrow pale areas along shafts of some scapulars, ending in exposed quills on some worn ones, and what

appear to be, at most, very narrow paler margins on some fresh covert feathers.

The most telling evidence against Great Skua may be the condition of bird's plumage. What can be seen of the flight feathers (Figure 4) suggests that primaries, secondaries, and median coverts are moderately fresh, but some scapular and

lesser and greater covert feathers are variably ragged and others fresh. This indicates that the bird had only partially renewed its wing plumage, which would better fit a Southern Hemisphere schedule, although timing of molt is not fully understood, especially among subadult skuas. (Steve N. G. Howell [pers. comm.] conjectures that one very worn feather in the lesser coverts may be a retained juvenile feather, indicating three generations of coverts and suggesting that the bird is starting its second prebasic molt, in its third calendar year.) Typical Great Skuas observed in waters off Virginia, Maryland, and North Carolina in late February through April have all completed wing molt and show uniformly fresh remiges and coverts by late winter (J. B. Patteson, pers. comm.; Brinkley 1994).

• **Comparison with plumages of Chilean and South Polar Skua**

The markedly rufous Chilean Skua, which also almost always has a strong cap, has never been reported in the North Atlantic and is ruled out on plumage, at least on present knowledge. However, nonadult plumages of Brown Skua are more difficult to distinguish from darker plumages of South Polar Skua (particularly presumed subadults). The blackish-brown wings do resemble those of South Polar Skua, but there was no hint in the field (nor in the photographs) of the pale nape and fore-mantle generally found in intermediate



Figure 4. Wing area enlarged from Figure 1 and much brightened to highlight contrasting details. Note the apparently fresh primaries and secondaries, the mix of worn and fresh scapulars and coverts, the white, exposed shafts on some worn scapular feathers, and the lack of pale internal markings on fresh covert feathers. Photograph by Zoe Lucas.

(e.g., Figure 5) and dark-intermediate birds, and often in dark-morph individuals (photographs in Howell 2004). Also, the chestnut cast to the ventral plumage, with whitish fleckings and feather margins, are not characteristic of South Polar Skuas. A dark-morph South Polar Skua should show less apparent contrast between the blackish upperparts and paler underparts (e.g., Figure 3 in Howell 2004) than the Sable Island bird. Its apparent robustness, long, flat-crowned head, and large bill would also argue against South Polar Skua, and the tarsus, even from the angle shown in Figure 2, seems relatively longer than expected for that species.

• Comparison with plumages of Brown Skua

The remaining candidate species is Brown Skua, which the Sable Island bird resembles in both structure and plumage, especially nonadults, which can have little or none of the pale blotching usually found on mantle and wings of older birds (James, in Higgins and Davies 1996; cf. Figures 6, 7). The pale fringing of contour feathers is typical of *lonnbergi* Brown Skuas photographed in November–January on Antarctic breeding grounds (J. Brian Patteson, E. S. Brinkley, pers. comm.; Figure 8). The narrow, pale streaks around the exposed white shafts of scapulars and unmarked coverts comport with the *lonnbergi* illustrated by Olsen and Larsson (1997: Figures 14, 15). Its apparent bulk and long, flat head also suggest this largest subspecies. Nothing in the photographs is at variance with identification as Subantarctic Skua. In the photographs, the lack of pale-streaked neck or capped/hooded appearance, typical of *hamiltoni* and *antarcticus*, makes this bird less likely to be of those subspecies of Brown Skua, although much remains to be learned about SY plumages of these taxa.

Hybrid skuas must also be considered. The incidence of hybridization among southern skua taxa is said to be rather low (Parmelee 1988, Votier et al. 2004), but recent studies by Ritz et al. (2004) indicate widespread hybridization between *lonnbergi* and *maccormicki* between 61° 05' S, 55° 10' W and 64° 46' S, 64° 03' W—apparently a broader hybrid zone than known in the 1980s (Parmelee 1988). Based on a banding return of a *lonnbergi* x *maccormicki* hybrid from Brazil, Parmelee (1988) suggests that hybrids might tend to disperse farther north in the Atlantic Basin than do pure Brown Skuas. The only recovery of a known hybrid in the Atlantic Basin north of Brazil is one said to be a second-generation South Polar Skua x (South



Figure 5. This South Polar Skua (specimen 488, Zoology Museum, University of Western Ontario) is like others seen in Nova Scotia waters during summer. Scott (1959), who collected it off Lockeport, Nova Scotia on 7 June 1957, perceptively noted that its measurements were "less than the minima recorded for the . . . Great Skua . . ." (the ruler is 20 inches, or about 51 cm) and wondered if it could be one of the Southern Hemisphere forms. Its small bill, paler around its base, cold, brownish-gray underparts, and pale nuchal area are characteristic of a pale intermediate-morph, probably subadult, South Polar Skua. Photograph by Sarah Lee.

Polar x Chilean Skua) nestling banded 25 January 1997 at Station Jubany, Antarctic Peninsula, which was found dead at sea 1 October 2000 at the Flemish Cap, about 600 km east of St. John's, Newfoundland, some 12,264 km from the nest (Reinhardt et al. 1997, Köppen and Scheil 2001). The existence of *lonnbergi* x *maccormicki* hybrids poses a stumbling block for confirmation of Brown Skua in the western North Atlantic, at least for sight and photographic records such as the Sable Island individual. In the absence of measurements that would confirm Brown Skua—particularly tarsal length, which in large female *lonnbergi* is much greater than in other taxa—and in the absence of confirmatory genetic evidence, we must consider this record to be of an unidentified skua that resembles the known phenotypes of Brown Skua.

More needs to be learned about variations in skua plumages before Brown Skua can be definitively claimed from photographs taken in western North Atlantic waters. Two photographs of a bird on Sable Island, Nova Scotia, in May 1996 suggest that this species, and in particular the subspecies *lonnbergi*, may be occurring in the western North Atlantic. Observers of skuas, of any species, are encouraged to make extensive photographic records of their observations and to archive these with appropriate committees. Even variation in Great Skua plumages should be documented exhaustively. Any observer fortunate enough to find a skua on the beach, especially a tideline corpse or a live bird in condition suitable for rehabilita-

tion, should see that tissue or blood samples are secured from such birds for molecular-genetic determinations.

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Figures 6, 7. This large skua, tentatively identified as a juvenile Brown Skua, was observed off North Carolina's Oregon Inlet 29 May 1993. The tones of plumage were uniformly deep, warm brown with a ruddy cast in some parts (especially the coverts), very different from the colder tones and gray cast of juvenile South Polar Skua. The uniformity of color and freshness of plumage, as well as the shape of the remige tips, indicate a juvenile skua, but spring date rules out juvenile Great Skua and rules in a skua of the Southern Hemisphere. Its overall dimensions—particularly the heavy body, large, deep bill, and long legs—appeared too robust for South Polar Skua to the observers and perhaps even heavier than Great Skua, thought to be mostly a winter visitor to these waters. Other suspected Brown Skuas have been observed 1992–2001 in North Carolina waters, but none has been proved. *Photograph by Michael O'Brien.*

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Figure 8. Brown (Subantarctic) Skua (*S. a. lonnbergi*) at Grytviken, South Georgia Island, South Atlantic Ocean, 2 December 1995. South of Elephant Island and north of Palmer Station on the Antarctic Peninsula, Subantarctic Skua hybridizes with South Polar Skua. Some hybrids resemble Brown Skuas in the field, enough so that identification of vagrant Brown Skuas must rely on morphometric or molecular data, at least on present knowledge. *Photograph by Edward S. Brinkley.*

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www.americanbirding.org/mtgs/conferences/2005michigan/



Photo by Ron Austing

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Artwork by Keith Hansen

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Are you ready for birding in the tropics? Would you like to see brightly colored tanagers and tropical toucans? We have five exciting days of field trips planned amid the forests of Panama's Canal Zone. Birding at the world famous Pipeline Road, up on the Canopy Tower, in the dry forest habitats near town, in both Atlantic and Pacific Forest habitats, and one day in the cooler foothills, is all included in the conference itinerary. Combine birding opportunities on the 340 acres of the 4-star Gamboa Rainforest Resort with our guest evening speakers who really know Panama and its wildlife well and the results should prove to make this conference an experience of a lifetime. During the short week we should record over 300 bird species. In addition there will be frequent flybys of huge blue morpho and other brightly colored butterflies, sleepy sloths in cecropia trees, caiman and crocodiles basking in Gatun Lake, four species of monkeys are possible, and there are always surprises. Tour companies will offer both pre- and post-conference trips to areas outside of Panama's Canal Zone for those who want a complete emersion into the avifaunal possibilities that beautiful Panama has to offer.



Photos by Bill Maynard



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Pictorial Highlights



This Lewis's Woodpecker frequented a feeder in Pictou County, Nova Scotia 1 through 3 (here) July 2004; the only other record of the species in the Atlantic Provinces region is from Newfoundland, in early autumn of 1986.

Photograph by K. McKenna.



Arriving too late for inclusion in the spring issue, this fine photograph of a Northern Wheatear was taken 21 April east of Lake Champlain in the town of Georgia, Vermont, one of few recorded south of the Arctic in spring 2004.

Photograph by Rod Vallee and Betty Vallee.



During past emergence years of *Magicada* cicadas, Mississippi Kites have shown some extensions of summer range. This subadult female at Bull's Island, New Jersey (here 20 June 2004) was accompanied only by an immature bird, and no breeding attempts were recorded in the state. The birds fed heavily on the cicadas, though how cicada wings ended up set in the undertail coverts (inset) is unknown.

Photographs by Elaine Ryan.



Previously unrecorded in Guilford County, North Carolina, Mississippi Kite made its county debut by nesting: three adults and two just-fledged juveniles were present to the northwest of Greensboro 29 July through at least 17 (here 6) August 2004. Though no nest was discovered, the nest was probably not far from this location.

Photograph by Melissa Whitmire.



This female Lesser Nighthawk specimen collected at a men's correctional facility in Gilmer, West Virginia 28 April 2004 represents a first state record and one of few extralimital records away from Gulf Coast states and the southern Great Plains—Ontario and Alaska have the only other confirmed records well out of range. Photographs by Gary Felton.



This adult King Rail with one of its three chicks was photographed at Prairie Oaks Metropark, in Franklin County, Ohio 27 July 2004. The species is listed as Endangered in Ohio and as a species of "Highest Continental Concern" by the American Bird Conservancy. Photograph by Brian Zweibel.



Extremely rare anywhere in Appalachia since the mid-1980s, Bewick's Wren was discovered nesting at Chickamauga Battlefield Park in northwestern Georgia between late May and early (here 6) August 2004. On 24 July, two adults were seen feeding two juveniles, for the first confirmed breeding in the Southern Atlantic Region since the early 1980s. *Photograph by Sandy Pangle.*



An apparently healthy adult Snowy Owl was found in rural Indiana 15 (here 31) July and remained through 15 August 2004, when it was struck and killed by a vehicle. Such a summer record is without precedent for the state. *Photograph by John K. Cassidy.*



At Squaw Creek National Wildlife Refuge in Hoit County, this female American Bittern was at one of two nests found 9 June 2004, the first nests found in Missouri since 1986. *Photograph by D. A. Easterla.*



Indiana's first Sage Thrasher made a one-day appearance in Vermillion County on 5 July 2004. The species has been recorded out of range in the East and Midwest with increasing frequency lately. *Photograph by Lisa Bowman.*



An apparent first-year Glossy Ibis at Freezeout Lake Wildlife Management Area 14-20 (here 19) July 2004 would provide a first record for Montana if accepted. *Photograph by M. T. Schwitters.*



The Yukon Territory's first confirmed breeding record for Canada Warbler was provided by a pair nesting along the lower La Biche River (here 4 July 2004) in the southeastern part of the territory. *Photograph by Cameron D. Eckert.*



Field Sparrows show up infrequently in southern Manitoba, which is just north of the species' breeding range. This bird was on territory near Lauder from 16 through at least 24 July (here 19) 2004 and was seen by many. *Photograph by Christian Artuso.*



This nestling Common Nighthawk was photographed 27 June 2004 at Wichita Mountains Wildlife Refuge, Comanche County, Oklahoma, where its coloration precisely matched the colors of the local soil. *Photograph by Victor W. Fazio, III.*



This female Magnificent Hummingbird photographed 11 July 2004 in rural Chautauqua County, Kansas provided the third record for the Southern Great Plains region; the species has been increasing as a vagrant out of range in recent years. *Photograph by Mark Corder.*



Central Oklahoma has only a handful of summer records of Black-headed Grosbeak, among them this adult male in Edmond, Oklahoma County on 27 July 2004. *Photograph by Terri Underhill.*



Maintaining a territory at the Sabal Palm Sanctuary, Cameron County, Texas from early February 2004 through the summer was this male Gray-crowned Yellowthroat, here photographed 11 July. During its stay, its vocalizations shifted from typical Gray-crowned song toward songs that closely resembled those of the nearby Common Yellowthroats. *Photograph by Mark W. Lockwood.*



One of the more interesting finds of the summer season was this pair of Least Grebes at Richland Creek Wildlife Management Area, Freestone County, Texas (here 26 July 2004). Not only did this represent the northernmost nesting record for the state, but the adults were still feeding young birds while brooding their second set of eggs. The northernmost nest record from the continent comes from Imperial County, California in October 1946. *Photograph by Jeff Gunnells.*



This Thick-billed Kingbird was found at a private residence outside of Parker, Douglas County, Colorado on 3 June 2004. The state's only previous record of the species is from 23 October 1992. *Photograph by P. J. Mestas and Gerry Mestas.*



A male Purple Martin peers out of one of two nests cavities found in the Sierra Madre Mountains in southern Wyoming on 21 July 2004. Breeding martins had not been found in Wyoming since the 1930s. *Photograph by Doug Faulkner.*



This worn male Yellow Warbler of the *erithachorides* ("Mangrove Warbler") subspecies group was netted near Roosevelt Lake in central Arizona 31 July 2004, representing a first Arizona record of this usually sedentary form that is normally restricted to mangrove habitat. The nearest area of regular occurrence of this species is coastal northern Sonora, Mexico. Photograph by Nathan Banfield.



This Purple Gallinule graced the Jordanelle Wetlands, Wasatch County from 24 to (here) 27 July 2004—only the third documented in Utah and the first in 65 years. Photograph by Jim Bailey.



Ash-throated Flycatcher is a casual early-summer or late-fall vagrant along the southern coast of British Columbia. This individual, showing the diagnostic adult tail pattern, was photographed 18 June 2004 at Half Moon Bay. Photograph by Jukka Jantunen.



These three Roseate Spoonbills graced a golf course pond in northwestern Tucson, Arizona, here photographed 23 July 2004, the last day of their two-day visit. The species is a casual visitor to the state, almost certainly from the Gulf of California. Photograph by Mark M. Stevenson.



This juvenile Short-tailed Albatross appeared with a Laysan Albatross some 41.6 km off Westport, Washington, on 26 June 2004—the first of the species during summer there since 1889! Before feather hunters took their toll in the late nineteenth century, this species was a regular visitor off Washington's coast, often close to shore. Almost all recent records are from pelagic rather than littoral waters. Photograph by Michael Donahue.



A first state record long expected—if not in summer—if not in summer—this molting adult male Common Eider of the declining western race *v-nigra* spent 5–18 (here 6) July 2004 in Crescent City, Del Norte County, California (shown here at Pebble Beach). No Common Eider had ever been found on the West Coast south of British Columbia, though another (or the same?) male Common turned up in August 2004 in Port Angeles, Washington. Photograph by Mike San Miguel.



Constituting only the second nesting record for Guadeloupe, this Antillean Nighthawk with a single egg was photographed 13 June 2004 at Belle-Plaine. Photograph by Anthony Levesque.

Short Trips for Target Species

Colorado Chickens: White-tailed Ptarmigan, Sharp-tailed Grouse, Greater Sage Grouse, Gunnison Sage Grouse, Lesser Prairie-Chicken, Greater Prairie-Chicken. Most are seen on leks at good range. Three rosefinches at feeders. Blue Grouse is usually seen, as well. From Denver, with Nick Komar leading. 8-14 April and 16-22 April 2005.

Black-capped Vireo, Golden-cheeked Warbler: Travel into the Texas Hill Country for the two target birds at the time of year when they are vocalizing and the fields are ablaze with wildflowers. We usually get some "Valley" species such as Cave Swallow. From San Antonio. P.D. Hulce leads. 17-20 April 2005.

Collina Warbler, Gray Vireo, Montezuma Quail, Common Black-Hawk: travel through Big Bend National Park and on to the Davis Mountains for the target species plus Lucifer Hummingbird and Varied Bunting. From Midland-Odessa, Texas, led by P.D. Hulce. 20-25 April 2005.

Black Rail, Swainson's Warbler, Bachman's Sparrow, Red-cockaded Woodpecker, and other southern specialties. New Bern, North Carolina, led by John Fussell. 28 April-1 May and 5-8 May 2005.

Bicknell's Thrush, Boreal Chickadee, and both Sharp-tailed Sparrows: We quickly see the sparrows in seaside marshes and proceed to the Mt. Washington area in New Hampshire. In addition to Bicknell's Thrush, we usually find some boreal species at the southern limit of their range, including Black-backed Woodpecker. From Portland, Maine. Bill Drummond leads. June 11-14, 2005. Contact: Bob Odear at OBServ Tours, Inc., 3901 Trimble Road, Nashville, TN 37215; (615) 292-2739; observtours@bellsouth.net; www.observtours.com.

North Dakota Prairie Birds: Le Conte's, Baird's, Nelson's Sharp-tailed Sparrows; Sprague's Pipit, six species of grebes, and woodland songbirds such as Mourning Warbler and grosbeaks; Ferruginous and Swainson's Hawks, and much more. Schedule your personalized tour now. Contact: Buffalo Commons Birding Safaris, 2704 10th Avenue NW, Mandan, ND 58554; (701) 228-5271 or (701) 663-4980; tgbisson@ndak.net; barnhart@btinet.net.

Eastern Oregon Malheur Weekends. Spring trip features Trumpeter Swan, Prairie Falcon, Ferruginous Hawk, Cray Flycatcher, Rock and Canyon Wrens, Sage Sparrow, Bobolink. 28 April-1 May 1 or 19-22 May 2005. Fall trip includes visit to Steens Mountain for Black Rosy-Finch, Chukar, Greater Sage-Grouse, Red-naped Sapsucker, plus many migrant raptors and songbirds at Malheur NWR. September 15-18 or October 13-16 2005.

Woodpecker Wonderland Weekends. Three-toed, White-headed, and Black-backed Woodpeckers, up to 6 Empids, Calliope Hummer, Pinyon Jay, Cassin's Vireo, Northern Pygmy-Owl. As many as 11 species each of woodpecker and flycatcher are possible. 9-12 June or 23-26 June 2005.

Washington Coast "Surf-and-Turf" Land and sea combo includes pelagic trip in search of Black-footed Albatross, Pink-footed Shearwater, all 3 jaegers, and 6 alcids; more than 18 species of shorebirds are possible, include Pacific Golden-Plover, Sharp-tailed Sandpiper, and Wandering Tattler. Also Heerman's Cull, Band-tailed Pigeon, Hutton's Vireo, Chestnut-backed Chickadee, Red-breasted Sapsucker. 8-11 September 2005. Contact: Steve Shunk, Paradise Birding, 541-408-1753; steve@paradise-birding.com; www.paradisebirding.com.

Canada, North America, ABA Area

South Florida and the Dry Tortugas
We visit at the height of spring migration for Florida specialties, exotics, seabird colonies and possible Caribbean strays, including a three-day trip to the Dry Tortugas. Led by Adrian Binns. 17-26 April 2005. Contact: Jaeger Tours, (215) 364-4407; binns@jaegertours.net; www.jaegertours.net.

Gambell, Nome, and Pribilofs
Bird spring migration at the Pribilofs (St. Paul Island), Gambell, and Nome with a small group of hearty birders. Peak time for vagrants and Alaskan specialties. Stay in Siberian Yupik Eskimo home in Cambell; search for Bristle-thighed Curlew outside Nome; seabird colonies and fur seals rookeries on St. Paul. Small group, reasonable price. Pribilofs, 23-25 May 2005; Cambell and Nome, 27 May-4 June 2005. Contact: Wilderness Birding Adventures, 5515 Wild Mountain Road, Eagle River, AK 99577; (907) 694-7442; wildbird@alaska.net.

Adak, Alaska
This tour offers a great chance to see spring migrants at this western Aleutian island, with Whiskered Auklet, Laysan Albatross, and Asian strays possible. Maximum 14 participants, with longtime Alaska resident Dan Wetzel and another leader. 22-29 May, 2005. Contact: Dan L. Wetzel, NatureAlaska Tours, (907) 488-3746; dwetzel@alaska.net.

Churchill and Manitoba
Follow the spring north from Winnipeg for prairie specialties like Baird's Sparrow, northern woodland nesters at Riding Mountain, waterbirds like Snowy Plover and Clark's Grebe at the southern shores of Lakes Winnipeg, and an air trip to Churchill to search for that settlement's remarkable birds, including Ross's Cull and Hoary Redpoll. More than 200 species are expected. Limited to five birders and led by Derb Carter. 10-20 June 2005. Contact: Bob Odear at OBServ Tours, Inc., 3901 Trimble Road, Nashville, TN 37215; (615) 292-2739; observtours@bellsouth.net; www.observtours.com.

Newfoundland
From Saint John's in the southeastern corner of the province to Deer Lake/Cornbrook on the west coast. Visit Cape Ste. Mary's, Wildes Bay, Terra Nova, Cros Morne, L'Anse aux Meadows, and the Codroy Valley for alcid and gannet colonies, possible pelagics from shore, and Boreal breeders such as Mourning Warbler and Rock Ptarmigan. Although European settlement came early to Newfoundland, much of Newfoundland remains stunningly unspoiled in its natural beauty. Led by Ken Knowles. 11-20 June 2005. Contact: Bob Odear at OBServ Tours, Inc., 3901 Trimble Road, Nashville, TN 37215; (615) 292-2739; observtours@bellsouth.net; www.observtours.com.

Alaska Outer Islands and Russia
Cruise from Nome to Homer, Alaska, aboard the Clipper Odyssey. This cruise offers a great chance to see Whiskered Auklet, other alcids, and various seabirds, along with the possibility of ABA-area rarities. Visit King Island, both Little and Big Diomedes, Ostrov Ytygran, St. Lawrence, St. Matthew/Hall Islands, and the inner Aleutians. A great cruise for birders. 19 July-2 August 2005. Clipper Cruise Line, (800)814-9393 x6813 or (800) 456-0020; csperry@intrav.com or grupres@intrav.com.

Caribbean

Island Endemics
OBServ Tours, Inc. has put together a package of Caribbean birding tours that focus on island endemics.

Dominican Republic Endemics: Our oldest West Indies tour takes you to the southwest portion of the country, where dry thorn forest covers the lowlands and moist forest clothes the great Baharuco Mountain range. There is even a huge salt lake below sea level. As always, diversity of habitat leads to diversity of bird species. There are 25 Dominican endemics, and we usually find a total of approximately 100 species. Led by Kate Wallace. 7-13 April 2005. Contact: OBServ Tours, Inc., 3901 Trimble Road, Nashville, TN 37215; (615) 292-2739; observtours@bellsouth.net; www.observtours.com.

Mexico

Southern Veracruz
And the Tuxtlas. At one time this area produced the highest Christmas count in the world. The parts of the area have been converted to agricultural uses, but this remains one of the most productive birding areas in Mexico. We cover the coastal plain as well as the Tuxtla volcanic complex. There are 26 species of special interest. Bob Odear and Bob Straub lead. 16-22 March 2005. Contact: OBServ Tours, Inc., 3901 Trimble Road, Nashville, TN 37215; (615) 292-2739; observtours@bellsouth.net; www.observtours.com.

Northeastern Mexico
This is an area of desert and high forested mountains. We begin in Monterrey and go immediately to the high, dry plateau near Saltillo for three endemics. We next head south along the base of the Sierra Madre Occidental to the famed area around Rancho Cielo and finally to mountains west of Ciudad Monte in southern Tamaulipas and San Luis Potosi. Approximately 30 endemics are possible. P.D. Hulce and Bob Odear lead. 7-14 May 2005. Contact: OBServ Tours, Inc., 3901 Trimble Road, Nashville, TN 37215; (615) 292-2739; observtours@bellsouth.net; www.observtours.com.

Veracruz "River of Raptors"
Witness the world's greatest raptor migration, where single days counts have exceeded 700,000 birds! More than 325 species possible, including 30 raptors, 20 hummingbirds, and 35 warblers. Led by Bob Straub and Adrian Binns. 24 September-6 October 2005. Contact: Jaeger Tours, (215) 364-4407; binns@jaegertours.net; www.jaegertours.net.

Central and South America

Galápagos Islands
Join this short cruise among the Enchanted Isles aboard the Santa Cruz, built for exploration of these islands. Many of the islands remain the same as when Darwin himself saw them. Come see Darwin's finches and other island endemics. 22-28 May 2005; dates to be announced. Contact: Intrav, (800) 456-0020; csperry@intrav.com or grupres@intrav.com.

Cruising in the Chilean Fjords
Cruise the remote, icy waters off southern Chile. More numerous than Scandinavia's fjords, Chile's magnificent fjords are virtually unknown. The Chilean Inside Passage offers spectacular scenery and a chance to see Chilean seabirds. Stop at the spectacular Torres del Paine National Park and voyage into the Beagle Channel. Clipper naturalist will lead walks on landings. Post-trip to Machu Picchu available. 29 October-12 November 2005. Contact: Clipper Cruise Line, (800) 814-9393 x6813 or (800) 456-0020; csperry@intrav.com or grupres@intrav.com.

Costa Rica and Panama
Cruise on the Yorktown Clipper from Costa Rica to Panama, including this region's great engineering spectacle, the Panama Canal. This is an excellent introduction to tropical birding with multiple daily stops in both countries

for birding along rich lowland rainforest trails. Expert onboard naturalists. Very birdy pre- and post-cruise extensions available. 16-24 November 2005. Contact: Clipper Cruise Line, (800) 814-9393 x6813 or (800) 456-0020; csperry@intrav.com or grupres@intrav.com.

Europe

North Wales and Norfolk
Highlands, islands, and wetlands: the contrast of the mountains, oak woods, and moorlands of North Wales and the coastal plain of North Norfolk may offer the most diverse range of habitats currently available on a United Kingdom tour. All of the highlights from of spring in these remarkable regions can be found, with the potential for turning up some somewhat unexpected rarities, as well. Breeding species include Black Grouse, Hawfinch, Ring Ouzel, Red Kite, Red-billed Chough, Stone Curlew, Golden Oriole, Bearded Tit, Pied Avocet, Wood Lark, European Nightjar, and Corn Bunting. With ample time to enjoy the beauty of these unspoiled regions, this tour offers a first class introduction to birding in the UK. Led by Neil Donaghy and Steve Gale. 7-20 May 2005. Contact: Neil Donaghy, Celtic Bird Tours, 84 Coity Road, Bridgend CF31 1LT, Wales, UK; telephone (+44) 01656 645709; cell (+44) 07971 983227; Birds@celticbirdtours.com; www.celticbirdtours.com.

Scotland: Highlands and Shetlands
A two-week trip to one of the most scenic parts of the world to explore the birds, mammals and flora of Scotland's highlands including the Caledonian forest and Cairngorms as well as the seabird colonies of the Shetlands. Led by Adrian Binns. 24 June-9 July 2005. Contact: Jaeger Tours, (215) 364-4407; binns@jaegertours.net; www.jaegertours.net.

Pacific Ocean

Eastern Australia
Australia has more endemic bird species (238) than any other country, and nearly all of Australia's remaining 500 species are likely to be new to first-time visitors. Our tour takes in the absolute best of the east from top to bottom. We start with the Great Barrier Reef, the tropical and highland rainforests, and the savanna grasslands of northern Australia, then we head south to the cloudforests of Lamington NP. Continuing on to New South Wales, we visit the Eucalypt forests around Sydney, coastal heathlands, and the Mallee Bushlands farther west. We finish the trip in possibly the most magical place of all, Tasmania. 12-30 September 2005. Contact: Tropical Birding, 17 Toucan Tropics, 26 Willow Road, Blouberg Rise 7441, South Africa; tel/fax +27-21-556-4124; cell: +27-83-296-0147; info@tropicalbirding.com; www.tropicalbirding.com.

Asia

China
This expedition explores China's geographical diversity. Join us as we visit many of the best birding locales in China. Led by some of China's foremost ornithologists. April/May 2005. Contact: Siemer & Hand Travel, 750 Battery St. Suite 300, San Francisco, CA 94111 (800) 451-4321; (415) 788-4000; fax (415) 788-4133; travel@siemerhand.com.

Africa

Morocco
Morocco boasts the richest bird life in North Africa, and along with its endemic, rare, and specialty birds, its Moorish and Berber culture and stunning scenery make this trip truly memorable. Led by Adrian Binns. 3-19 March 2005. Contact: Jaeger Tours, (215) 364-4407; binns@jaegertours.net; www.jaegertours.net.

South Africa
"Fairest Cape to Kruger". South Africa is a mega-diversity country. In the southwest, it contains two habitats found nowhere else in the world: the heath-like fynbos and the semi-desert Karoo. Both these systems hold a host of endemic species (South Africa has 58 endemic and near-endemic birds, more than any other African country, and most of these will be seen on our safari). Included are sensational birds, among them a suite of small endemic bustards and at least 30 species of endemic larks and chats. In its northeast, South Africa metamorphoses into bush and savanna vegetation similar to that in East Africa, and here species diversity increases dramatically, with possibilities of hundreds of species a day. We can expect to see at least 400 species on this trip, and 450 or more are possible. 12-25 November 2005. Contact: Tropical Birding, Africa and Asia Division, +27 (0) 82-400-3400; fax +27-21-556 4124; www.tropicalbirding.com; tropicalbirding@telkomsa.net.

Antarctica

Antarctica and the Falkland Islands
Join the crew of the Clipper Adventurer in the icy waters of the spectacular Antarctic Peninsula. Scenery and abundant wildlife, including penguins, seabirds, and marine mammals, along with some endemic birds of the Falkland Islands, will be the highlights. 20 November-5 December 2005. Contact: Clipper Cruise Line, (800) 814-9393 x6813 or (800) 456-0020; csperry@intrav.com or grupres@intrav.com.



May Migration Madness in Michigan



The 2005 ABA Regional Conference will be based in Midland Michigan, 16–21 May—the best time for spring migration in the Saginaw Bay area. Kirtland's Warblers will have arrived and will be singing on territories. Tawas Point State Park, “Michigan's Cape Cod” with only 200 acres has a bird list of 290 species and seeing 25 species of warbler on a fallout day is not uncommon. If you want to see migrants and you are tired of the crowds at Pt. Pelee, the ABA Saginaw Bay Conference may be the ticket. In addition, we will visit Nayanquing Point State Wildlife Area (Yellow-headed Blackbird), Pincomming County Park (waders), Shiawassee National Wildlife Refuge (both bitterns and Prothonotary Warbler), Harwick Pines State Park (old growth eastern white pine and eastern hemlock with Black-billed Cuckoo), Houghton Lakes Wildlife Area (Yellow Rail), and local parks in Midland Michigan (Cerulean Warbler). Mark your calendars for May in Michigan with the ABA.

Lighthouse photograph by Bill Maynard



Photograph by Ron Ausling



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