

RECENT OBSERVATIONS

Despite winter's continued grip on the land, birds still returned at about their normal dates. The last week of March and the first of April brought in many reports of hawks, mostly Red-tails and Northern Harriers, with the largest single day total of 100 Red-tails near Lumsden. There were also a sprinkling of Bald Eagles and Rough-legged Hawks, with 31 eagles in the Qu'Appelle Valley on 9 April and 11 Rough-legs near Regina on 19 April being the most notable numbers. The first Swainson's Hawk report was 21 April from the Regina area. There have been at least seven sightings of Short-eared Owls in late April. This increase in sightings was predicted from the amount of grain left in the fields and the subsequent rise in vole population. Sandhill Cranes were seen near Broderick on 13 April and subsequently in many places. A pair of Greater Scaup (Bob Luterbach) seen near Regina were well observed — this is probably an overlooked species. Gardiner Dam had eight species of waterfowl on 31 March, although 4 Tundra Swans (Frank Roy) and 2 Northern Pintail on 20 March were more surprising. Mountain Bluebirds were first reported 23 March. Geese, American Crows and gulls were noted in Saskatoon 20 March. The gulls were later identified as Ring-billed, Herring and California gulls. A second winter Iceland Gull (Roy John and many observers) was seen in Saskatoon during an SNS field trip on 5 April and stayed to 10 April. An adult Iceland (Thayer's) Gull was found near Regina on 21 April (Bob Luterbach). A group searching for the Saskatoon Iceland Gull on 9 April found a second winter

Glaucous Gull (Guy Whapple and three observers) instead. A similar plumaged bird or the same one was seen on 12 April (Bob Luterbach). The last few days of March saw an influx of Tree Sparrows and Dark-eyed Juncos into Saskatoon and Regina and this was repeated on 20 April. The first Yellow-rumped Warblers were seen in Regina on 21 April and in Saskatoon on 23 April.

Manitoba had a wonderful influx of owls, with a peak of 57 Northern Hawk Owls on 15 March and 32 Great Grays on 2 March. There were numerous Snowy Owls present too. The Windygate hawk watch had a provincial high of 3671 Red-tails on 3 March, along with 143 Bald Eagles. Another provincial high was 8 Golden Eagles (23 March). After the blizzard they saw 1730 Red-tails (13 April) and 280 Sharp-shinned Hawks (19 April). Winnipeg has had an unprecedented five Red-shouldered Hawks this spring. Before the blizzard, on 4 April, there were Eastern Phoebe, Hermit Thrush and Yellow-rumped Warbler within the city of Winnipeg.

The first Richardson's Ground Squirrel was seen 23 March. On 20 March 11 Timber Wolves and two River Otters were watched in P.A. National Park. Another surprise was a Big Brown Bat flying in downtown Saskatoon on the 20th. Milbert's and Compton Tortoiseshells and Mourning Cloaks have appeared on schedule.

There were many opportunities to observe comet Hale-Bopp throughout March and April.

