

NEW RECORDS AND CHANGES IN THE STATUS OF SASKATCHEWAN BIRDS TO 31 DECEMBER 2021

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Birds of Saskatchewan (BofSk) describes the records and status of the 437 species of wild birds reported in the province to 31 December 2016.¹ And, in an addendum “As we go to press” (p. 671), significant changes to the status and names of several species were updated to May 2018.

Without an official bird records committee as a focal point to accumulate and review important new bird information for the province, Saskatchewan is left with a variety of sources where records of various provenance appear. Some are found in formal sites like eBird but others may languish in smaller, less formal, even personal e-sites. Following and sifting through this ever-growing list of scattered records is time consuming. Important ones can be difficult to find or may be missed entirely. Perhaps the best and now default review system is the Cornell Laboratory of Ornithology’s Saskatchewan eBird site, ably stewarded by Dan Sawatzky with the assistance of other reviewers.

The information presented here, in chronological order, summarizes important bird records to 31 December 2021. During this period: (1) six *new* species were *confirmed* for Saskatchewan: Tundra Bean-Goose, Crested Caracara, Fieldfare, Phainopepla, Cordilleran Flycatcher (in the “Western Flycatcher” complex), and Henslow’s Sparrow;

(2) five hypothetical species had their status upgraded to *confirmed* using photographs: Tricolored Heron, Glossy Ibis, Kentucky Warbler, Great-tailed Grackle, and Lesser Goldfinch; (3) one additional “species” was added to the *hypothetical* list: Tropical Kingbird/ Couch’s Kingbird; (4) new information is presented for another 15 species considered to occur as *accidentals* in the province: Garganey, Ruff, Least Bittern, Yellow-crowned Night-Heron, Black-legged Kittiwake, White-winged Dove, Northern Pygmy-Owl, Anna’s Hummingbird, Calliope Hummingbird, Blue-gray Gnatcatcher, Hooded Warbler, Yellow-throated Warbler, Green-tailed Towhee, Blue Grosbeak, and Painted Bunting; plus one of unknown provenance, Eurasian Tree Sparrow; (5) notable observations are mentioned for American Woodcock and Franklin’s Gull; (6) common names changed by the American Ornithological Society (AOS formerly the AOU) are given for three species²: Short-billed Gull, Canada Jay, and Thick-billed Longspur; and (7) COSEWIC status changes 2019 to 2021 for birds occurring in Saskatchewan are listed.

Each species is documented using eBird checklist ID numbers when possible. Photographs accompany only those species that are either new additions to Saskatchewan’s avifauna or have experienced a change in their status (above points 1, 2, and 3). Accidental species, with no change in status, have selected photo catalogue numbers from Cornell’s Macaulay Library (ML) collection of photos, and audio recordings, for reference. In the

case of multiple postings for a single record, I have attempted to choose those made by the person who discovered the bird, to acknowledge their contribution.

The Saskatchewan Breeding Bird Atlas will map the distribution and relative abundance of breeding birds in the province over the years 2017 to 2021. Those records are outside the scope of this paper and are not included.

Also beyond the scope of this article are birds that have escaped or been intentionally released from captivity. This includes a myriad of exotic species from small cage birds sporting bright plumage and fine singing voices (budgerigars, canaries, finches) to larger birds with attractive plumages (parrots, waterfowl, doves, pheasants, quail). In my own urban yard, I have seen several, including budgies, cockatiel, canaries, a “Ringed Turtle-Dove” (the domestic form of African Collared-Dove), and astonishingly a Golden Pheasant. The Eurasian Tree Sparrows seen in Saskatchewan may be such escapees but have more likely arrived on their own or been otherwise assisted.

The same definitions used in *BofSk* to describe species status apply: confirmed species have photographic, audio-recording, or specimen documentation; hypothetical species lack such documentation even if seen by more than one observer; accidental species have 10 or fewer records in the province. Once a species has been recorded 11 or more times it is a straggler and is not discussed, with

one exception, American Woodcock. Only records supported by sufficient documentation are presented here, which unfortunately possibly omits valid sight records made by careful and competent observers.

The Records

2014

Henslow's Sparrow (*Centronyx henslowii*): on 8 July 2014 Brandon Holden and Marie-Christine Belair encountered a single individual, 55 km east of Estevan (approximately 10 km south of Oxbow), on ungrazed grassland near the Souris River. Holden "heard a short insect like song" of this sparrow at 14:00 hr, then a few minutes later he was "reasonably confident [he heard] a second clear yet short song of the Henslow's Sparrow". Later that day, toward dusk, Holden made recordings of the sparrow singing, when the bird responded vigorously to digital recordings of Henslow's Sparrow's songs that he played (B. Holden, no date: unpublished manuscript submitted to *Blue Jay*). **Status:** the first record for Saskatchewan. Accidental.

Remarks: the two sonograms provided by Holden are comparable to songs of Henslow's Sparrow, ruling out confusion with the other secretive grassland sparrows — Grasshopper Sparrows being particularly abundant at the site. He describes the habitat: "a multi-year fallow area" of various heights of "mixed-grass prairie [grasses] that appeared to have a seep or spring widely pooling (or draining) below the vegetation". Henslow's Sparrows show a preference for damp, weedy, heavily thatched grassland and idle field habitats for breeding.³ This is the first confirmed record for this Endangered Species for western Canada; there is a believable sight

record of two birds in Manitoba in October 1946.⁴ The species is rare across its entire range with declines most evident along the northern periphery: it once bred locally across southern Ontario and occasionally into southern Quebec. In the USA, it occurs in Iowa and to the southeast, with only sporadic reports northwest to J. Clark Salyer National Wildlife Refuge, North Dakota.

2017

Northern Pygmy-Owl

(*Glaucidium gnoma*): on 28 January 2017 a single bird was relocated northeast of Cold Lake along highway #919, a short distance south of the Martineau River. It was seen and photographed by many observers (eBird Nick Saunders S34032676, ML46916541; Ryan Dudragne S63771193). This was near the location Stan and Jan Shadick found a pygmy-owl on 27 December 2016.⁵ Very likely the same male was seen south of the Martineau River by Dan Zazelenchuk on 14 February, at 17:30 hr, calling constantly from the tallest conifer (eBird S34419833). Daniel Giesbrecht on 17 February found one calling bird at 16:30 hr (eBird S35037075); (S Shadick suggested the reported location, even further south near the Cold River, may have been an artifact of eBird where only very general locations are posted for "hot spots"). On 10 April, Marten Stoffel, S Shadick and Brent Terry watched for more than two hours as one adult roosted quietly in an aspen tree, raising suspicions that a nest might be nearby. This was in hilly, wooded terrain about 2 km north of where the pygmy-owl was found in 2016 (eBird S35889488). This bird could not be relocated on 10 May (fide S Shadick). **Status:** should all or some of the four records in 2017 be considered part of the 2016

record? Breeding is possible, but has yet to be confirmed. Accidental. **Remarks:** this enigmatic species is at the eastern edge of its range, and is most likely to be found near the Alberta border. It possibly varies in abundance and local distribution from year to year as food availability changes. Marten Stoffel and others have searched for pygmy-owls in many parts of Saskatchewan, but only in the region near Cold Lake — as far east as Green Lake and north toward Beauval — have chickadees, jays and other small birds responded with agitation to pygmy-owl playback calls. This indicates their recognition of the pygmy-owl as a threat (fide M Stoffel). All sightings in this area in 2017 are of single birds with their locations clustered south of the Martineau River (fide S Shadick), suggesting they involve one individual. Males call to advertise and may defend a territory all year around, with territories reported to be up to 342 ha in size.⁶

American Woodcock (*Scolopax minor*): on 20 April 2017 a single calling/advertising male was located along Eagle Creek, west of Saskatoon by Guy Wapple and Nick Saunders; audio recordings were made (eBird Wapple S36159211; Saunders ML55203451). This bird was seen and photographed by many observers on 21 April. **Remarks:** a photo of this displaying male taken 21 April appears in *BofSk*, p. 279 (Saunders, eBird S36175824, ML55361071). This 13th provincial record is not otherwise mentioned in *BofSk*, but is of interest because it is much further west than others in the province; most records are nearer the Manitoba border. Saskatchewan records have occurred from spring to fall, 4 April to 3 September.

Eurasian Tree Sparrow (*Passer montanus*): one adult from 1 to 27 May 2017 photographed by Ken Feltn (Figure 1) at a feeder in Emerald Park, east of Regina (eBird S36454424, ML56420171). Seen by Brett Quiring on 22 May. **Status:** the second provincial record, both from the Regina area. Provenance unknown, as with the first record. **Remarks:** Feltn's photos show it was not a hybrid. It was accompanied occasionally by a male House Sparrow. The only self-sustaining population of the introduced Eurasian Tree Sparrow in North America is around St Louis, Missouri where it is an uncommon and local resident in riparian areas along major rivers.⁷ The first provincial record was a bird that lingered from 1 May through October 2015.

Tricolored Heron (*Egretta tricolor*): on 20 May 2017 a single individual was recorded on video at the Quill Lakes while LeeAnn Latremouille was accompanying Pierre Verville, host of an episode for a Quebec nature program on birds, during filming.⁸ Despite search efforts, it was not relocated until 17 July at the southeast corner of Little Quill Lake by Vicki and Warren St. Germaine. Then other observers saw it between Big and Little Quill lakes along highway #640, with the last confirmed sighting on 28 July by Dan Sawatzky (eBird S38372442). **Status:** the second record for the province. The film and a photograph by Ryan Dudragne helped move it from hypothetical to confirmed. Accidental. **Remarks:** long staying rare herons and egrets like this bird raise the possibility of them breeding at multispecies colonies at the Quills and elsewhere in the province. A photograph of this bird flying, taken near the SE corner of Little Quill Lake on 23 July by Annie McLeod (Figure 2), appears



FIGURE 1: Adult Eurasian Tree Sparrow photographed in May 2017 at a feeder in Emerald Park, east of Regina. Photo credit: Ken Feltn.

in *BofSk* (p. 671); (eBird S38292421, ML64145151&5161).

Painted Bunting (*Passerina ciris*): two records. On 20 May 2017 Cheryl Fedirko photographed one brightly coloured male that visited a feeder in Reward, southwest of Unity (eBird S37036950, ML58828401). Then, on 22 May 2017, Justin Smart photographed a single male, perhaps with slightly duller red underparts, at a feeder in Wakaw, 230 km to the east (eBird S37083613, ML59046421). **Status:** the seventh and eighth provincial records. Accidental. **Remarks:** both of these birds fit the pattern of five (of the six) previous sightings; all occurring in the spring, late April and May, and all colourful males. They appear to be examples of spring migrants overshooting their normal breeding range in the central Great Plains of the USA.

Ruff (*Calidris pugnax*): from 4 to 14 August 2017 one female, a reeve, was discovered and photographed by Ilya Povalyaev 5 km east of Elbow, along grid road #749 (eBird S38481247, ML 65407841); seen by many other observers. **Status:** the

seventh record. Accidental. **Remarks:** this bird provided excellent viewing opportunities allowing observers to compare the Ruff's field marks and behaviour with nearby shorebirds. It apparently moved freely among several wetlands in the area. Raptors including Northern Harrier, Merlin, and Peregrine Falcon were seen disturbing the shorebirds on these wetlands. In this confusion, the Ruff was easily overlooked and care was needed to find it among the other waders. Previous records are also during spring and fall shorebird migrations.



FIGURE 2: Tricolored Heron photographed near the southeast corner of Little Quill Lake on 23 July 2017. Photo credit: Annie McLeod.

Anna's Hummingbird (*Calypte anna*): over 36 days, from 1 October to 5 November 2017, a single adult female visited feeders in Don Weidl's and a neighbour's yard in Broadview. He photographed the bird (eBird S39511899, ML70581281, S39577223, ML70964511&4522, S40248153, ML73811981). It was seen by many observers (eBird Annie McLeod, S39592890, ML71078291) (Figure 3). Sheri L. Williamson confirmed the bird's identity (fide Guy Wapple). **Status:** the third provincial record. Accidental.

Remarks: this bird was remarkable not only for its lengthy stay, but also for its lateness in the season. It survived cold temperatures (down to -9°C on 14 October) and accumulating snow (12 cm fell on 4 November) before it disappeared when the temperature went to -14°C on 6 November. Anna's Hummingbirds have been expanding their range north from southern California since the 1960s and now occur along the Pacific slope and rarely the interior of British Columbia. Remarkably, it is the only hummingbird that overwinters in BC.^{9,10} There have been two other vagrant Anna's recorded in SK: the first was seen from 21 June to 8 August 1971 and the second, a female, from 20 September to 6 October 1997 (*BofSk*). Similarly, all three showed a reluctance to move onward, after finding an available food source at hummingbird feeders.

Black-legged Kittiwake (*Rissa tridactyla*): on 25 November 2017 a single juvenile plumaged bird was found and photographed by Nick Saunders and Ryan Dudragne at the spillway below the Gardiner Dam, on the South Saskatchewan River (eBird S40731576, ML76284361).

Status: the sixth record for the province. Accidental, wandering



FIGURE 3: Over 36 days, from 1 October to 5 November 2017, a single adult female visited feeders in Don Weidl's and a neighbour's yard in Broadview. Photo credit: Annie McLeod.

south from the arctic coast nesting grounds. **Remarks:** a photo by N Saunders of this bird appears in *BofSk* (p. 289), but details are not mentioned in the addendum. This record falls within the late fall, early winter pattern of the previous five records: 11 October to 7 December.

2018

White-winged Dove (*Zenaidura asiatica*): a single bird was seen on 2 January 2018 and photographed by Marilyn Lamont, in Lafleche, south of Gravelbourg, where it remained for several days (posted on Sask Birders Facebook). Dan Sawatzky, Bob Luterbach, Annie McLeod, and Joel Cherry looked for it on 2 and 6 January without success.

Status: the fifth record for Saskatchewan. Accidental.

Remarks: this is the only winter record, with all other previous and subsequent records occurring between 24 May and 7 August.

Fieldfare (*Turdus pilaris*): from 30 March to 7 April 2018 a single bird seen and photographed by Brenda and Harvey Schmidt (Figure 4) in their yard in Creighton (eBird S44310723, ML93198591). Seen by several lucky observers, but missed by many others (names withheld to protect those disappointed birders).

Status: the first record for the province, mentioned in *BofSk* (p. 671), but with no accompanying photograph. Accidental, vagrant from Eurasia. **Remarks:** this bird was apparently seen several kilometres northeast visiting another yard in Flin Flon, MB on an undetermined number of days, before its appearance in Creighton. It fed on small fruit in the Schmidt's yard. Howell et al. state that "Fieldfares are notably nomadic and mobile thrushes of northern regions", often found in association with American Robins on this continent.¹¹ Remarkably, the Schmidt's yard hosted another, exceptionally rare, Eurasian vagrant from December 2009 to February 2010: a Rustic Bunting (*BofSk*, p. 605).



FIGURE 4: From 30 March to 7 April 2018 a Fieldfare was seen and photographed by Brenda and Harvey Schmidt in their yard in Creighton. Photo credit: Brenda Schmidt.

White-winged Dove (*Zenaida asiatica*): a single bird was seen on one day, 24 May 2018, by Steve Suik in Wadena. Photographs confirm the record (posted on Sask Birders Facebook). **Status:** the sixth record. Accidental. **Remarks:** Dan Sawatzky's attempt to relocate the bird was unsuccessful.

Least Bittern (*Ixobrychus exilis*): on 17 or 18 June 2018 Trevor Herriot heard an unfamiliar sound coming from the direction of Beaulieu's marsh, "half a mile away" on the edge of Cherry Lake, 14.5 km south of Indian Head. He initially "thought it was something mechanical his neighbour was doing in his shop". Then, Rob Wright heard the same unidentified sound on 22 June as he canoed through the wetland. On 24 June, around 17:00 h, Herriot and Brian Sterenberg heard the unknown notes coming from the marsh while doing bird surveys. Later that day, Herriot recorded videos with the sounds of the unknown bird. From these, Jared Clarke and LeeAnn Latremouille confirmed the mystery caller was a Least Bittern.

Last heard 25 June at 19:40 h (eBird S46800704; fide T Herriot). Subsequent efforts to find the bird were unsuccessful. **Status:** fourth record for Saskatchewan; the third was a bird collected some years before 1927 at Moon Lake, south of Saskatoon. Accidental. **Remarks:** this shy marsh dweller is scarcely bigger than a grackle. It frequents tall marsh vegetation showing a preference for stands of Giant Reed Grass (*Phragmites*). Manitoba is at



FIGURE 5: On 13 to 14 September 2018 a Blue-gray Gnatcatcher was found by Jared Clarke at his property near Edenwold, northeast of Regina. Photo credit: Jared Clarke.

the edge of its known breeding range where it is rare and locally distributed. Least Bitterns are a Threatened Species protected under Canada's Species at Risk legislation.

Blue-gray Gnatcatcher (*Polioptila carulea*): on 13 to 14 September 2018 one bird was found by Jared Clarke at his property near Edenwold, northeast of Regina, where it was photographed (Figure 5) (eBird S48492431, ML114798041). Seen by others. **Status:** the fourth record for the province. Accidental. **Remarks:** a confiding bird that allowed close observation. This record fits a pattern in all three prairie provinces of some individual birds dispersing northward in fall, after the nesting season. The nearest breeding areas are southern Montana and central Colorado.

Eurasian Tree Sparrow (*Passer montanus*): one adult from 14 to 20 September 2018 seen in Avonlea by Al Smith and Randi Edmonds (eBird S48505662). **Status:** the third record for the province. Status undetermined, perhaps Accidental. **Remarks:** questions about provenance for this species still arise for this species in Saskatchewan.

Blue Grosbeak (*Passerina caerulea*): from 30 September to 2 October 2018 a single bird, first winter or female plumage, was seen by Val Thomas near McTaggart, northwest of Weyburn. Seen and photographed by other observers (eBird Dan Sawatzky S48844421, ML116877321; Neil MacLeod, S48855886 ML116974561). **Status:** the seventh record for the province. Accidental. **Remarks:** The date is unusually late, with five of the other six records occurring from mid-May to early June (*BofSk*, p. 615). Straying north from its nearest breeding range in South and North Dakota.

2019

Ruff (*Calidris pugnax*): on 24 May 2019 one female seen and photographed on a slough southeast of the Last Mountain Lake NWA (51d-21m-27s N; 105d-04m-20s W), 14.5 km southeast of Arlington Beach, by Marla Anderson (eBird S56701029). ID confirmed by Ryan Dudragne and others, using the photos. **Status:** the eighth record for the province. Accidental, straying from Eurasia. **Remarks:** Anderson noted the reeve's "breast had black large spots kind of blotchy looking" and the size was "slightly larger and heavier than nearby stilt sandpiper". The small wetland where this bird was found was one of many dotting the landscape, but was attracting several species of arctic nesting shorebirds. All records have been during peak shorebird migration periods for a total of five in May, and three in August.

White-winged Dove (*Zenaida asiatica*): a single bird was seen on 8 to 10 July 2019 by Val Thomas at her farmyard near McTaggart where it was photographed at a bird bath by Dan Sawatzky, Bob Luterbach (eBird S58186606) and Laurie Koepke

(eBird S58154382, ML168078981). **Status:** the seventh record for the province. Accidental. **Remarks:** this species is expanding its range north from the southern Great Plains of the USA. Once again, Val Thomas' careful observations have been rewarded with sightings of another rare species visiting her yard.

Great-tailed Grackle (*Quiscalus mexicanus*): one juvenile or female was photographed on 11 November 2019 by Wayne Busch (Figure 6) at his bird feeder in Nokomis (eBird S61446841, ML187795571). Subsequent search efforts by many observers were unsuccessful. **Status:** second record. Moved from hypothetical to confirmed. Accidental. **Remarks:** the first record of several birds, was 14 May 1979 (*BofSk*, p. 635). This species has been expanding its range rapidly north in recent years and should be looked for in mixed flocks of blackbirds and wetlands where it might nest with other blackbirds.



FIGURE 6: A juvenile or female Great-tailed Grackle was photographed on 11 November 2019 by Wayne Busch in Nokomis. Photo credit: Wayne Busch.

Tundra Bean-Goose (*Anser serrirostris*): from 7 to 9 December 2019 one was discovered and photographed by Annie McLeod and Joel Cherry at Wascana Lake, Regina (Figure 7) (eBird S62127466, ML192050691). ID was determined using salient features evident in the photos to separate it from the closely related and larger Taiga Bean-Goose (*Anser fabalis*): especially the size, shape and colour of the bird's bill and head (fide Bob Luterbach); plus, bill measurements (used by Shadick to generate ratios for comparison) described by Kurechi.¹² Seen by many observers. **Status:** the first record for the province. Accidental, straying rarely from northeastern Asia to North America and only exceptionally outside of Alaska.¹¹ **Remarks:** on 9 December, late morning, the bean-goose departed with a flock of Canada Geese flying SE and was not seen again in 2019 despite search efforts. These central arctic nesting Lesser Canada Geese (likely subspecies *Branta canadensis parvipes*) were similar in size to the bean-goose.

2020

Tundra Bean-Goose (*Anser serrirostris*): from 25 February to 27 March 2020 one individual — believed to be the same goose that was seen in 2019 — returned to Wascana Park, Regina where it was observed and photographed by many people. Last seen by Dan Sawatzky (eBird S66311630) on 27 March.

Status: the second appearance after departing 76 days earlier in December 2019; together, they are considered one record. Accidental.

Remarks: after leaving Regina, this bean-goose may have overwintered in one of the northern states along rivers, like the Missouri River in North Dakota, where large numbers of Canada Geese concentrate on open water. Howell et al state that vagrant waterfowl having arrived in North America “may attach themselves to other, usually closely related species and travel with them on the next migratory movement”; and that many waterfowl “...seem likely to have arrived in North America with congeners...”¹¹ Coincidentally, a single Tundra Bean-Goose was seen briefly during the previous winter in Lethbridge, Alberta (9 to 12 January 2019). Could this have been the same bird that appeared in Regina, one year later, thus spending two winters in North America? By examining photos of the two bean-geese, it is evident the orange, subterminal ring on the bill of each is a different pattern, indicating they are two separate individuals.

The AOU split the Bean-Goose in 2007 into two species, which had formerly been recognized as two subspecies. A recent genetic study from Europe found evidence that these two taxa diverged some 2.5 million years ago, but also found evidence of a more recent secondary contact about 60,000 years ago, resulting in “a



FIGURE 7: A Tundra Bean-Goose was discovered on 7 December 2019 at Wascana Lake, Regina, by Annie McLeod and Joel Cherry. Photo credit: Annie McLeod.



FIGURE 8: A male Lesser Goldfinch was photographed on 30 April 2020 by Robert Holtkamp at his home in Yorkton. Photo credit: Robert Holtkamp.

largely undifferentiated genomic landscape” in their chromosomes.¹³ These researchers argue that Tundra and Taiga bean-geese should be treated as subspecies. For now, they are treated as two species. Bean-Geese could be confused with the closely related Pink-footed Goose (*Anser brachyrhynchus*) and Greylag Goose (*Anser anser*) of Europe and Asia, both of which are rare vagrants to North America, primarily along the Atlantic coast.

Lesser Goldfinch (*Spinus psaltria*): on 30 April 2020 a male was photographed by Robert Holtkamp at his home in Yorkton (Figure 8) (eBird S68418802, ML230766001). For a thorough account of this record, and more photographs, see his excellent article in the *Blue Jay*.¹⁴ No other observers. **Status:** this is likely the third record for the province moving it from hypothetical to confirmed. Accidental. **Remarks:** both previous Saskatchewan records were in mid-

August. Somewhat surprisingly, this bird was the second provincial record of the “eastern form” that breeds in southern Texas; males are identified by their distinctive black head, nape, and back. The third record was a green backed “western form”, which has a range considerably closer to Saskatchewan. The western birds have been extending their range north with records in Alberta and British Columbia (where it bred in 2019). The species seems prone to wander, and should be looked for at feeders or accompanying American Goldfinches.

Green-tailed Towhee (*Pipilo chlorurus*): on the morning of 17 May 2020 Ryan Sparks photographed a single bird at his farmstead near Zealandia, northeast of Rosetown (eBird S96851864, ML383623381). There were no other observers, and it was not seen again. **Status:** the sixth record. Accidental. **Remarks:** Sparks recalls seeing this bird “following a full day of unusually strong south wind (70 km+)” (fide R Sparks). This towhee is uncommon 500 km to the south in central Montana, its closest regular breeding area in the Great Plains. There it frequents shrubby habitats including those dominated by sagebrush. Will this short distance migrant extend its range north into Saskatchewan as our climate continues to change?

Hooded Warbler (*Setophaga citrina*): on 23 and 24 May 2020 one singing male found by Ron Lawson in Glencairn, Glen Elm, Regina (eBird S69539504, ML237976321); photographed by Annie McLeod, Dan Sawatzky and Chris Harris. **Status:** the seventh record. Accidental (note “Accidental” status should replace “Straggler” status given in *BofSk*). **Remarks:** previous records are from spring, summer,

and fall. Straying from the breeding range in eastern USA and in southern Ontario where it is rare and local in distribution. It has been slowly expanding north in recent decades.

Painted Bunting (*Passerina ciris*): in late May 2020, one male in breeding plumage was discovered and photographed by Shelley and Ron Taylor, of Moosomin, at a feeder on their acreage (posted on Facebook, 8 June 2020), (fide Don Weidl, and Alvin Nixon). **Status:** the ninth record for the province. Accidental. **Remarks:** comments by S Taylor accompanying her Facebook post with four photos are “this little beauty showed up a couple of weeks ago. He only stayed a couple of days”.

Cordilleran Flycatcher (*Empidonax occidentalis*) part of the “Western Flycatcher complex”: on 4 and 5 July 2020 a breeding pair was found by James Telford along Battle Creek, Cypress Hills, West Block (eBird S71165524). Last seen on 23 July by Michelle Schreder (eBird S71766203). **Status:** this is the first record and confirmed breeding for this flycatcher in Saskatchewan. It is well supported by observations

of territorial behaviour, recordings of vocalizations, and adults feeding young in a nest. The single nest was located near the top of the creek bank, below some overhanging vegetation (Stan Shadick, eBird S71931881). **Remarks:** Telford identified the birds as Cordilleran Flycatchers with caution after careful observations, submitting photographs and a sonogram of one “position call” as supporting evidence for his discovery (eBird S71165524). At the same location on 10 July, Annie McLeod, Joel Cherry, Bob Luterbach, Chris Harris and Dan Sawatzky photographed (Figure 9) and recorded two adults feeding young at the nest; they also identified these birds as Cordilleran Flycatchers. Also on 10 July, Stan Shadick, Robert Johanson, and Melody Nagel-Hisey observed and photographed these birds; and on 11 July recorded dawn songs (given between 04:52 h and 05:11 h) and other vocalizations (eBird S71957000). These included position notes made by two adults (starting 05:24 h) that were seen visiting the nest to feed the young.

A possible third adult (sex unknown) was believed to be present in the same location and seen



FIGURE 9: A breeding pair of Cordilleran Flycatchers was found on 4 and 5 July 2020 by James Telford along Battle Creek, Cypress Hills, West Block. Photo credit: Annie McLeod.

passing food to an adult at the nest; then it was seen removing a fecal sac from the nest site. The sonograms resemble those made by Cordilleran Flycatchers: male songs, and call notes given by males and females (ibid Shadick). McCallum discusses some of the variation in Western Flycatcher vocalizations but has not commented on the recordings from the Cypress Hills.¹⁵

The identity of these flycatchers in the Cypress Hills remains somewhat open, in large part because the AOS has not clarified its position on the taxonomic status of the “Western Flycatcher complex” by responding to the Canadian research by Rush et al and other more recent studies, which found genetic mixing of the two taxa over a wide area across their northern range, north and south of the Canadian border.^{16,9}

The “Western Flycatcher” was split into two separate species in 1989 by the AOU: Cordilleran Flycatcher (*Empidonax occidentalis*) and Pacific-slope Flycatcher (*E. difficilis*). Southern British Columbia is at the northern edge of the ranges of these two taxa and the BC interior and southwestern Alberta is an area of overlap between pure coastal Pacific-slope and pure interior Cordilleran populations. Reports of phenotypically intermediate birds across this region, including the discovery that “many flycatchers in parts of this region have vocal features that are intermediate between Pacific-slope and Cordilleran types”, led observers to suspect interbreeding was occurring and to question their taxonomic status.¹⁶ In their elegant study, they compared multiple genetic evidence of “Western Flycatchers” from southern BC and SW Alberta with pure Pacific-slope and pure Cordilleran samples from further south in the USA. All Canadian birds sampled had various mixtures of Pacific x Cordilleran

genetic markers, indicating they were from a broad zone of contact experiencing hybridization between the two taxa. The results were clinal with higher frequencies of Pacific-slope markers to the west being replaced by higher frequencies of Cordilleran markers to the east. The most easterly Canadian samples were from Kananaskis, Alberta, 350 km west of the Cypress Hills. “A small number of the Canadian samples bordered the Cordilleran [genetic sample] cluster, but none fell within it” (ibid). More recent studies have found genetic mixing of the two flycatcher taxa in northern Colorado and east to South Dakota; they also state “many ornithologists believe further fieldwork may prove [the] ‘Western’ flycatcher split untenable”.⁹

Perhaps the challenge of identifying individuals from this cryptic species complex can be accomplished using a non-invasive technique, such as sampling fecal matter, like that presented by Goldberg and Mason.¹⁷ For the time being, it may be best to refer to the Cypress Hills’s birds as part of the “Western Flycatcher complex”, knowing that in no way does the choice of name diminish the scientific significance of this record. This is an important record, adding to the growing list of Rocky Mountain avifauna found in the Cypress Hills.

White-winged Dove (*Zenaida asiatica*): a single bird was seen and photographed on 7 August 2020 by Tammy Thomas, of Milestone, along highway #39 (posted on Sask Birders Facebook). **Status:** the eighth record. Accidental. **Remarks:** it remained only one day and was not seen by other observers, but the photos confirm the record.

Calliope Hummingbird (*Stellula calliope*): on 10 August 2020 photos were taken of single juvenile bird by Jordie Braun at his home farmstead north of Swift Current (eBird S72269140, ML255486111). No other observers. **Status:** the second record for province. Accidental. **Remarks:** the diagnostic shape of primaries allowed the identification to be confirmed by Sheri L. Williamson who suggested it might have been a juvenile male due to the heavy “5-o’clock shadow” but noted that “juvenile Calliopes can be hard to sex” (fide Guy Wapple). It was seen feeding at ornamental flowers and perching high up in poplar and willow trees. The previous record was on 22 August 1935 (*BofSk*, p. 375); both records were apparently post breeding strays. The nearest breeding range is some 600 km to the southwest, in the Rocky Mountains of Alberta.

Tropical Kingbird (*Tyrannus melancholicus*) or Couch’s Kingbird (*Tyrannus couchii*): on 16 August 2020 an unidentified Tyrant kingbird was photographed by Deborah MacEwan (eBird S72580104, ML256537431, ML256537371) along grid road #764 east of Hanley (Figure 10). S Shadick and J Patterson searched the area unsuccessfully on 18 August. **Status:** the “first record”, but evidence is insufficient for a conclusive identification of either species. Hypothetical. **Remarks:** the photos reveal it was not a Western Kingbird. The greenish back, longer heavier bill, notched tail, lack of white outer tail feathers are features shared by Tropical and Couch’s kingbirds. These two closely related species were split in 1983 by the AOU. The pattern of freshly moulted feather indicates this is an immature bird.¹⁸

Pyle (ibid) offered an index (derived from culmen length from

nares to bill tip, divided by wing length) that helps separate adults of the two species, but cautioned more study was needed to see how well it applies to immature birds. His measurements were gathered from hand-held birds. From some of the photographs, the Hanley kingbird had an index of “0.13”, comfortably within the range of the Couch’s Kingbird index (between 0.122 - 0.158) and well below the Tropical Kingbird index (between 0.145 - 0.169). While the measurements used for calculating this index are taken from photos of the Hanley kingbird, and are therefore subject to possible error, the results are intriguing.

It is possible either species could stray north to Saskatchewan.¹⁹ Tropical Kingbirds are prone to disperse post breeding, regularly heading north and NW of their summer breeding range in Mexico. Small numbers are recorded annually along the Pacific coast each fall and winter, including British Columbia. Couch’s Kingbirds seem less likely to wander away from their nearest summer range in southern Texas. They occur accidentally east along the Gulf and Atlantic coasts in fall and winter, with a very few records inland, to the north. Unfortunately, with our current knowledge, the two species can only be reliably separated in the field using their distinctive vocalizations, or in-the-hand using a combination of measurements, and even then with caution.^{18,20,21}

Franklin’s Gull (*Leucophaeus pipixcan*): on 23 September 2020 a melanistic individual was photographed by Don Weidl near Valeport provincial recreation site (Figure 11), at the south end of Last Mountain Lake (eBird S73976429, ML265206011 & 6101). **Remarks:** the bird displayed an unusually high amount of melanin in its body

feathers, making it conspicuous among the surrounding Franklin’s Gulls that had normal breeding plumage. While aberrant plumage in birds is generally rare, some species — including gulls — seem more prone to genetic mutations like albinism or leucism. However, abnormally high melanism is comparatively rare in gulls. Partial melanism has been reported for the North American Laughing Gull and Short-billed Gull, and the European Black-headed Gull. This is one of the few examples, or possibly the first, of a melanistic Franklin’s Gull.^{22,23}

2021

Garganey (*Anas querquedula*): from 8 to 15 May 2021 a single male was found by Laura Messett on Breadroot Slough – Stenen, southeast of Preeceville (Figure 12) (eBird S87580253, ML335772261). Seen and photographed by many observers, despite the bird’s increasing shyness (eBird, Guy Wapple S87884190); last sighting by Myles Sahulka (eBird S88339385). **Status:** the third record for the province. Accidental, Eurasian vagrant. **Remarks:** the first two records were also males that both appeared in May (1990, 2002). Garganey are often seen in the

company of Blue-winged Teal as was the case in 2002 and in 2021. This drake seemed to be accompanying a female Blue-winged closely. Howell



FIGURE 10: On 16 August 2020 an unidentified Tyrant kingbird was photographed along grid road #764 east of Hanley. Evidence is insufficient for a conclusive identification of whether it was a Tropical Kingbird or Couch’s Kingbird. Photo credit: Deborah MacEwen.



FIGURE 11: On 23 September 2020 a melanistic individual was photographed near Valeport provincial recreation site, at the south end of Last Mountain Lake. Photo credit: Don Weidl.



FIGURE 12: A male Garganey (right) was found by Laura Messett on 8 May 2021 on Breadroot Slough – Stenen, southeast of Preeceville. Photo credit: Laura Messett.

et al state that there are about 175 records of Garganey widely spread across North America of which 20 per cent are from the interior, away from Alaska and the West Coast, and west of the Mississippi River. Of these interior sightings “virtually all records are of males during March – June”.¹¹ One can only wonder where these birds spend the winter where pairing would usually occur.

Glossy Ibis (*Plegadis falcinellus*): on 12 May 2021 Jess Cosentino “photographed a group of 13 White-faced Ibis on Rt.15 (3.4 km) west of Kenaston” (Figure 13). Only much later did Cosentino discover one bird in the group appeared “quite different than the other WFIB” (eBird S87960745; posted on Facebook; fide J Cosentino). The birds were in breeding condition. **Status:** sixth record, moving it from hypothetical to confirmed. **Accidental.** **Remarks:** photographs of this bird show all the characteristic field marks of an adult Glossy Ibis: dark eyes; dark blue-grey facial skin with sharply defined, thin white borders, of proper size, shape, and position; and, grey legs with only slight reddening at the intertarsal

joint. Equally important is the absence of any hybrid characteristics displayed by intermediate birds, such as: redness in the eye; hints of pink or red mottling of the facial skin; or, white feathers (however few) surrounding the facial area. Glossy and White-faced ibises are closely related, requiring care for proper identification especially when intermediates are suspected. Arterburn and Grzybowski²⁴ and Grzybowski²⁵ describe several hybrid birds from Oklahoma where their breeding ranges overlap, in the central Great Plains; this follows range expansions of both species beginning 1980. The authors suggest the frequency of hybridization is low and may occur when the small number of vagrant Glossy Ibis encounter colonies of more abundant White-faced Ibis where they cannot find and pair with their own species. Fortunately, adults are most easily separated during the breeding season from March to August. A fifth record of a Glossy Ibis was not included in *BofSK*: one bird with dark legs, bill and face (with no white) was found by Wayne Harris and Susan McAdam in July 1986 and then relocated by

Don Weidl and Terry Toews on 18 July, at the southeast end of Crane Lake (eBird S27996105). Glossy Ibis have been reported in Manitoba and Alberta.

Yellow-throated Warbler

(*Setophaga dominica*): on 2 June 2021 Jared Clarke found and photographed one in Lakeview North, Regina (eBird S89497879). Seen by others: Annie McLeod (eBird S89494217, ML344653281), Joel Cherry and Bob Luterbach.

Status: the sixth record. **Accidental.**

Remarks: the faint yellow lores suggest it was probably a subspecies normally found in eastern USA. Four of the previous records have been in late summer or fall (19 August to 12 November) and one in spring (16 May 1970).

Cordilleran Flycatcher

(*Empidonax occidentalis*) part of the “Western Flycatcher complex”: from 5 June to 25 July 2021 Western Flycatchers were again found at two locations along Battle Creek, Cypress Hills. On 5 June, Dominic Cormier (eBird S89664771, ML346672671) saw one bird visit the 2020 nest site; on 21 June a pair was seen in the same area by Joshua Brown (eBird S90576962, ML354787431). Another vocal male was found at a second location, 2 km distant. No direct evidence of breeding was reported in 2021. Seen by several observers.

Status: the confirmed second record of Western Flycatcher in the province. Photos and recordings provide strong documentation. **Remarks:** whether these flycatchers have occurred undetected in the Cypress Hills in the past is unknown. Birders are now alerted to their possible presence elsewhere in the Interprovincial Park.



FIGURE 13: A Glossy Ibis photographed on 12 May 2021, among a group of 12 White-faced Ibis, on Rt.15, 3.4 km west of Kenaston. Photo credit: Jess Cosentino.

White-winged Dove (*Zenaida asiatica*): on 6 July 2021 a single bird was photographed at a back yard feeder in Denare Beach, southwest of Creighton, by Zarine Grindle (eBird S91368527, ML352719561).

Status: the ninth record for the province. Accidental. **Remarks:** amazingly, it seems this species might turn up almost anywhere in the southern half of the province. To date there has been only one winter record (January 2018), plus four early summer records (late May to June), and four mid-summer records (July to early August).

Yellow-crowned Night-Heron

(*Nyctanassa violacea*): on 1 and 2 August 2021 a single adult was discovered and photographed by Kosala Rajapaksha at the main wetland in Hyde Park in Saskatoon (eBird S92607513, ML358616061). It continued in the area until at least 7 August. Seen by many observers.

Status: eighth record for province. Accidental. **Remarks:** the bird moved around the wetland during the day, often being frustratingly difficult to find as it hid in the tall vegetation along the wetland edge. This species has been seen previously in Saskatchewan from May to September. It breeds along the Mississippi River valley, and seems to be expanding its breeding range north. Al Smith found a record of an immature bird seen on 17 October 1982, at Buffalo Pound Lake, which was not included in *BofSk*; that was the seventh record for the province (eBird S76124117).

Kentucky Warbler (*Geothlypis Formosa*): on 5 to 9 October 2021 a single bright plumaged male was found and photographed by Bob Godwin along the bank of the South Saskatchewan River in Chief Whitecap Park, south of Saskatoon



FIGURE 14: On 5 October 2021 a bright plumaged male Kentucky Warbler was found by Bob Godwin along the bank of the South Saskatchewan River in Chief Whitecap Park, south of Saskatoon. Photo credit: Bob Godwin.

(Figure 14) (eBird S95731099, ML375803861). Observed at close range by many (John Lundgren eBird S95894737, ML376511301).

Status: the third record for the province. Moved from hypothetical to confirmed. Accidental. **Remarks:** it remained in the area for several days, actively foraging and moving about the leaf litter on the ground and among the low branch tangles and shrubbery often near several water seeps and springs. The two previous records were 25 September 1971 and 14 July 1989. It is a declining but still fairly common species requiring large tracts of hardwood forest within its breeding range in southeastern USA. It has shown signs of expanding northward.

Crested Caracara (*Caracara plancus*): on 5 October 2021 (and a few days prior) a single bird of undetermined age, was discovered by local farmer, Randy Torrie, near Saltcoats, southeast of Yorkton. Several observers found the bird and it was photographed by Donna Bradford (*in Gerri Knudsen, Sask Birders Facebook, 5 October 2021 post*). It could not be relocated on 7

October (Dan Sawatzky, and others). However, earlier that year, Randy Slater found and photographed a caracara on 20 July near Pierceland (Figure 15) (posted by Kevin Kardynal on 7 October 2021 on Sask Birders Facebook).

Aaron McKague took a clear photo of a caracara on 25 October, north of Paradise Hill northeast of Lloydminster (posted on 26 October 2021, also on Sask Birders Facebook). **Status:** the first record for Saskatchewan; very possibly two records. Accidental. **Remarks:** the question remains, were more than one Crested Caracara present in Saskatchewan in 2021? The summer



FIGURE 15: Randy Slater found a Crested Caracara on 20 July 2021 near Pierceland. This was one of three caracara sightings that year, representing the first record for Saskatchewan, but very possibly two records. Photo credit: Randy Slater.

record at Pierceland and fall record at Paradise Hill are less than 100 km apart, suggesting they were the same bird; but these are 600 km or more distant from the fall Saltcoats record raising the rather amazing possibility of a second bird's involvement. In recent years, a few individual Crested Caracaras have been recorded straying into Canada (British Columbia 1998, 2008, 2011, 2018; New Brunswick 2002, 2017; Nova Scotia 2013; Jasper NP, Alberta 2015; Ontario 2016) far north of their nearest breeding range, in the USA. The Texas population has been expanding north in the central plains and "as the population increases in Texas, more records well to the north seem likely".²¹

Phainopepla (*Phainopepla nitens*): from 21 October to 17 November 2021 a single bird (feather moult pattern indicates a hatch year individual, but its sex cannot be determined with certainty) discovered in his farm shelterbelts by Ryan Sparks (Figure 16), 7.5 km west of Zealandia (eBird S96551312, ML383611751; fide R Sparks). Seen, photographed and vocal recordings made by many observers. **Status:** the first record for province. Accidental. **Remarks:** Sparks writes "The Phainopepla arrived on Oct 21, and was seen daily up to the morning of 17 Nov, other than one day [of absence]. She showed up again the next day, late in the afternoon. We had a couple of nights down to -15 C that she seemed to do alright with. As it got colder, she started coming down to the ground to catch bugs in the grass. There was a blizzard here on Nov 16, and she was still here eating berries in the snow. I saw her one more time the next morning, and that was the last." It was seen catching flying insects and foraging among small ornamental



FIGURE 16: Ryan Sparks discovered a Phainopepla in the shelterbelts of his farm, 7.5 km west of Zealandia, on 21 October 2021. The bird's feather moult pattern indicates a hatch year individual, but its sex cannot be determined with certainty. Photo credit: Ryan Sparks.

fruit trees in the farmyard shelterbelt: buffaloberry and Siberian crab-apple. Photos taken by Alan Knowles (eBird S96793057, ML384585451, ML383260971) show the moult pattern of the flight feathers and wing coverts clearly, allowing the bird's age to be determined.¹⁸

This is apparently only the second record for western Canada with one previous sight record from Manitoba in June, 1962.⁴ There are another two records from southern Ontario 1975, 2010 (eBird map). Some Phainopepla populations in the SW USA undertake interesting post-breeding migrations, travelling from the dry deserts of interior Arizona west in mid to late summer to wetter coastal California where some may breed a second time. Then they return east in late winter and very early spring to the interior to breed again. Current research is attempting to unravel this behavioural phenomenon, which may involve the birds seeking ripening mistletoe berries, an important food source.²⁶ A keen observer, Ryan Sparks has found other rare avian visitors to the same yard including a Green-tailed Towhee in 2020 (see page 25).

Other Updates

Changes to the common names of birds by the American Ornithological Society (AOS): **Canada Jay** (*Perisoreus canadensis*) - name was changed back from "Gray Jay" after persuasive lobbying efforts by Canadian ornithologists (AOS, May 2018). **Thick-billed Longspur** (*Rhynchophanes mccownii*) replaces "McCown's Longspur" (AOS, August 2020). Unfortunately, this decision seems to be based on an *ad hominem* argument that attacks him personally rather than recognizing his contributions to ornithology, which included collecting three species new to science: Ash-throated Flycatcher, Olive Sparrow and the longspur. Still, a more descriptive name might have been "High Plains Longspur", rather than shifting from the scientific species name to the genus name for a reference. **Short-billed Gull** (*Larus brachyrhynchus*) with its range in the Americas, is split from the **Common Gull** (*Larus canus*) found across Eurasia; together they were previously known as "Mew Gull" (AOS, 2021).

Species at Risk assessments by COSEWIC (2019 to 8 December 2021)²⁷: status reviews of birds which

have occurred in Saskatchewan, resulted in upgrades from Threatened to **Endangered** status for **Ross' Gull** (2021), and **Chestnut-collared Longspur** (2019); an upgrade from Special Concern to **Threatened** status for **Short-eared Owl** (2021); and down-grades from Threatened to **Special Concern** for **Ferruginous Hawk** (2021), **Barn Swallow** (2021), and **Canada Warbler** (2020). **Henslow's Sparrow** retains its Endangered status (2011).³

COSEWIC revisions from April 2017 and April 2018 are given in *BofSk* (p. 671).

Discussion

The origins of these 27 species seen rarely in Saskatchewan show some interesting patterns.^{2,28,29,30}

The four species from northeast Asia are true vagrants to North America: Tundra Bean-Goose, Garganey, Ruff, and Fieldfare. All of these displaced birds have spent at least one winter on the "wrong" continent separated from their traditional breeding and wintering areas. One species wandered south from its Nearctic coastal breeding grounds as a naïve juvenile: Black-legged Kittiwake.

Three species of warblers and a sparrow are spring overshoots or fall wanderers, normally found in eastern North America: Yellow-throated Warbler, Kentucky Warbler, Hooded Warbler, and Henslow's Sparrow. Not surprisingly, the largest number of species (14) straying to Saskatchewan have their breeding ranges to the south of our province, in the central Great Plains. Some regularly breed fairly near the Saskatchewan border. Five of these depend on wetland habitats for breeding, some perhaps following the Mississippi River drainage north: Tricolored Heron, Least Bittern, Yellow-crowned Night-Heron, Glossy Ibis, and Great-tailed Grackle. Another four of these

use shrubby habitats for nesting: Blue-gray Gnatcatcher, Green-tailed Towhee, Blue Grosbeak, and Painted Bunting. And five of these accidental species have breeding ranges in the arid south-central plains of our continent including Mexico: Crested Caracara, White-winged Dove, the *Tyrannus* kingbird (Tropical or Couch's), Phainopepla, and Lesser Goldfinch. Three species recorded in Saskatchewan have come from the west where they breed in the Rocky Mountains over to the Pacific coast: Anna's Hummingbird, Calliope Hummingbird, and Western Flycatcher. The Northern Pygmy-Owl also has its core breeding range in the Rockies and westward to the Pacific coast, but small numbers do occur east into the western Boreal Forest of Alberta.

The White-winged Dove is the clear winner for the most records of any vagrant, with five sightings in the past five years. If this trend continues the dove could attempt to breed in the province. In second place is the Painted Bunting, recorded three times in the same period. The Ruff and the Eurasian Tree Sparrow were each recorded twice.

The origin of Eurasian Tree Sparrows in our province remains unresolved. Unlike its close relative the House Sparrow, another introduced species that has spread widely since its release in New York in 1850, the Eurasian Tree Sparrow has expanded its range very little after being introduced around St Louis, Missouri in 1870. Historically, Eurasian Tree Sparrows were kept as cage birds and escapees were thought to account for some of the early records away from Missouri. And perhaps today? More recently the occasional long-distance wanderers are usually seen in winter, north of the present breeding areas.⁷ The two records for Manitoba include one male mating

with female House Sparrows (in two different years) and producing hybrid young. The first Saskatchewan record showed characteristics of both Eurasian Tree and House sparrows. Assisted travel in railway freight cars has been suggested to account for some of the records away from Missouri.⁴ Perhaps the simplest explanation may be that these birds wandered to Saskatchewan on their own.

There are many reasons why birds show up in areas where they are not normally expected. Navigation errors during migration including a wrong compass heading, weather systems pushing birds off course, overshooting the target, tagging along with the wrong companions, the inexperience of young birds, and post breeding dispersal, account for many. Vagrants from other continents to North America are much rarer occurrences and are

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examined in detail by Howell et al.¹¹ In Saskatchewan, northern finches vary in number between years as their food supplies fluctuate across the boreal forest. Some species, like redpolls move south from their northern breeding grounds becoming abundant in so called “irruption or flight years”.³¹ Could these influxes carry rare Eurasian vagrants like the Brambling and Rustic Bunting with them? Climate change may be allowing several bird species to try to expand their ranges into Saskatchewan, which offers birders an exciting opportunity to look for “rare birds” and carefully document any breeding attempts.

We are fortunate that with experience, most birds can be identified with the help of current field guides, and modern optical equipment, when well seen. However, there are some closely related species that are very difficult to identify in the field: our bean-goose, kingbird, and Western Flycatchers being perfect examples. Recent genetic studies are illuminating these relationships, revealing remarkable stories of their evolutionary history. Taxonomists and birders are struggling to adjust to these new findings as species continue to be lumped, then split, only to be lumped again. We can take comfort in knowing we are learning that the slow process of evolution is continuing all around us. Today’s subspecies may be tomorrow’s species.

It is very possible that some important recent bird records or sightings made within Saskatchewan have been missed. Anyone who does not contribute to eBird, with knowledge of new information on birds of our province is encouraged to send the details, plus any supporting material such as photographs and recordings, to Nature Saskatchewan at info@naturesask.ca. From there,

records can be added to other data banks for long-term safekeeping.

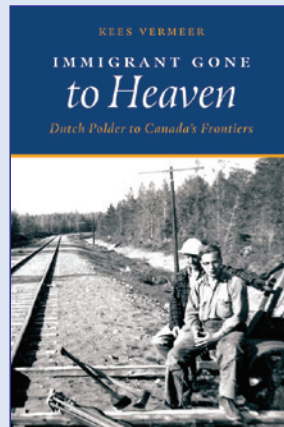
Acknowledgements

I would like to thank all the people who so carefully observed and reported their bird sightings. Many are named, but because of space limitations, even more are not. Each of you has made an important contribution without which this article would be impossible. Al Smith and Dan Sawatzky have provided the indispensable role of “keepers of Saskatchewan’s bird records” for many years and both provided sage advice and essential record details. Dan reviewed all the eBird checklist and Macaulay Library numbers to ensure their accuracy, adding others where needed. Don Weidl and Annie McLeod did some wonderful sleuthing to uncover obscure sightings that would have otherwise been missed or forgotten. Stan Shadick’s efforts to sufficiently document new and rare birds in the province are exemplary, and have added much to our knowledge of Saskatchewan’s birds. Guy Wapple traced old communications threads on his computer, to answer my questions, and caught several errors. Experienced birders like Bob Luterbach have mentored many new and veteran enthusiasts encouraging them to refine their skills thus enabling them to report rare birds with confidence. Spencer Sealy kindly reviewed the manuscript, making suggestions for its improvement. Worthy of special mention are Harvey and Brenda Schmidt, Val Thomas, and Ryan Sparks who remarkably have seen two rare vagrants reported here, in their respective yards. And finally, without the *Blue Jay* editor’s kind and careful attention to detail, this manuscript would not have been published. My grateful thanks to each and every one of you.

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IMMIGRANT GONE TO HEAVEN by KEES VERMEER



Immigrant Gone to Heaven is a remarkable book. It grips the reader from the moment the author joins an Emigration Training Centre in the *Biesbosch* region of the Netherlands with the goal of moving to Canada. We follow his experiences as he lands in Canada and works his way up from farm-hand to obtaining a doctorate in Zoology. The section of the book detailing his explorations in ornithology are as fascinating as the stories of immigration and the memories of World War II. The book takes the reader on a riveting journey of exploration in many facets of social history and science as viewed through the lens of an inquisitive and always optimistic upbeat man. I strongly recommend this book to anyone interested in learning more about World War II, immigration, bird behavior or even just in how a life's journey can unfold with all its unexpected twists and turns.

Tom Bijvoet

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