

NEW AND NOTABLE RECORDS OF SASKATCHEWAN BIRDS: 2022

Philip S. Taylor

1714 Prince of Wales Avenue
Saskatoon, SK S7K 3E5

The encyclopedic *Birds of Saskatchewan (BofSk)*¹, published in 2019, compiled all historic and contemporary information on birds of the province reported over a 200-year period, up to 31 December 2016. Following this, new records and information for more than 27 species of birds were presented by Philip Taylor to update and clarify changes in their status in the province, to 31 December 2021.²

This article includes important records of 23 species of birds encountered in Saskatchewan to 31 December 2022, in order of discovery. Detailed information updates the status of the following birds: one *new* species for Saskatchewan (Costa's Hummingbird); one hypothetical species confirmed and upgraded to *accidental* (Ivory Gull); four *accidentals* (Northern Pygmy-Owl, Hooded Warbler [two records], Green-tailed Towhee, Eurasian Tree Sparrow [two records]); and five *stragglers* (Red-bellied Woodpecker, Scissor-tailed Flycatcher, Wood Thrush, Pine Warbler, Summer Tanager). No birds were added to the provincial list of hypothetical species.

The Saskatchewan Breeding Bird Atlas project ended as of December 2021. As a result, some notable records with evidence of successful breeding or territorial behaviour are discussed (Trumpeter Swan, Black-necked Stilt, Eastern Whip-poor-will, Western/Cordilleran Flycatcher, Pacific Wren).

Accepted COSEWIC changes to the status of birds in Saskatchewan current to summer 2022 are presented. Addenda and errata to the *BofSk* and Taylor are included.

Changes to a bird's status require satisfactory documentation that has been carefully verified by a number of experienced birders. This follows the principles used in the *BofSk* and

Taylor's first update to 2021: *confirmed* species have photographs, videos, audio recordings, 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; *straggler* species have 11 to 30 confirmed records. Once a species has been recorded 31 or more times, it is considered a regular part of Saskatchewan's avifauna and is generally beyond the scope of this article, except for a few notable instances.

Nature Saskatchewan houses the complete list of rare birds for Saskatchewan, which provided the database used in writing the *BofSk*. It is inevitable that some important bird sightings were missed and not included in this article. Anyone knowing of such sightings is encouraged to pass the details on to Nature Saskatchewan or submit the confirmed records to eBird.

The Records

Tundra Bean-Goose (*Anser serrirostris*): an update. Remarkably, a bean-goose believed to be the same individual seen in Regina in the winter of 2019-20 was photographed at several different localities in eastern North America during its following, second and third, autumn and spring migrations in North America: "based on the coloration of the bill, it is probably the same individual that visited Saskatchewan in winter 2019, Ontario [14 to 19 November 2020 'Nolan Quarry, Prescott and Russell', in the company of medium sized Canada Geese] and Quebec in fall 2020 [8 November 2020 Gatineau, with Canada Geese], Pennsylvania in winter 2020-2021 [17 December 2020 to 2 May 2021, with medium sized Canada Geese], and New York in spring 2021" and southern Quebec [4 November to 5 December 2021, with Greater Snow Geese].³ The last sighting was of the bird photographed on 15 May 2022 at Cap Tourmente National Wildlife Area,

Quebec (with Greater Snow Geese). Dates and goose associations sourced on eBird and Cornell's Macaulay Library of photographs.

Eastern Whip-poor-will (*Antrostomus vociferus*): two records. I learned of a previously unreported whip-poor-will from Jan Lake on the evenings of 28, 29, and 30 June 2017. Recordings of the calling bird were made by Leanne Loran, allowing PS Taylor to confirm the identification.

Status: possible extension of summer (and breeding?) range. This location is at least 100 km north of previous records for the species around Cumberland House, which is believed to be part of the core range in the province.¹ **Remarks:** photographs (Figure 1) were taken from the area the Loran family "thought the call might have come from. This area is a high, rocky ridge a bit north of the [cottage] development with birch, various evergreen trees, raspberry, blueberry, Labrador tea and juniper bushes, mosses and lichens" (J. Loran pers. comm. 24 July 2022).

Three calling birds were also encountered on the night of 12 July 2022 by Vicki St Germaine: "heard at 1245 and 0100" along "Highway 123, EB Campbell Dam to Km 50", "between

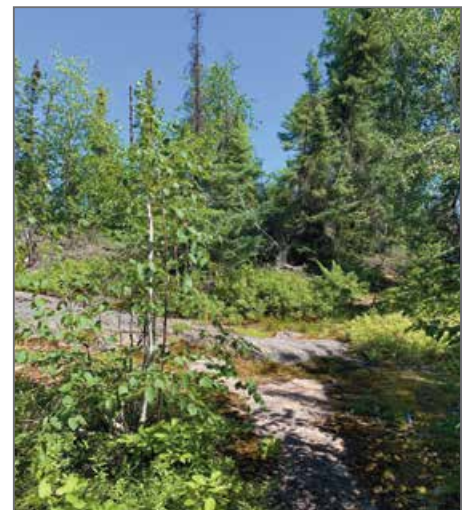


FIGURE 1. The area in which the Loran family heard an Eastern Whip-poor-will calling during June 2017. Photo credit: Janet Loran.

Dragline and Sipanok Channels, at three locations” and recordings were made (eBird S114982008). Remarks: these 2022 records are in an area traditionally used by this nightjar, but their numbers have evidently declined compared to 23 June 1989 when Bob Luterbach located 20 birds in the same vicinity.¹

Eastern Whip-poor-will is listed as Threatened under Canada’s *Species at Risk Act*.

Red-bellied Woodpecker (*Melanerpes carolinus*): six records, all single birds. A male on 16 October (Debbie Young eBird S39967781) and again on 27 October 2017 (Vicki St Germaine eBird S40209454) at Tobin Lake; a male on 9 November 2017 (Craig Salisbury eBird S54032642) to 3 December 2017 (Nick Saunders eBird S40892315) in Saskatoon; a female on 15 June 2019 east of Bergheim north east of Saskatoon (Bob Godwin eBird S57414006); a female from 16 to 18 October 2019 in Val Marie (Bruce Di Labio eBird S60679427, S60726682); a long staying male from 5 October 2021 to 7 January 2022 in Watrous found by Sharlane Toole (seen by many observers eBird S95643834 to S100286955); and another long staying male, seen by many observers, was first reported in Regina on 9 October 2022 by Susan MacDonald in Whitmore Park, where it visited several different yards in the neighbourhood and continued to be seen at least into the last week of December 2022 (eBird S120366256 to S124860950). **Status:** these six birds bring the total to 23 records for the province; the first was seen in May 1959.¹ **Straggler.** **Remarks:** this species is being reported with increasing frequency in the province as it expands its range north and west. All but one of these six records occurred in late fall and winter when they are attracted to bird feeders and are most easily observed.

Pacific Wren (*Troglodytes pacificus*): three records. On 11 July 2020 Stan Shadick made several recordings of Pacific Wren songs, suggesting “perhaps more than 1 individual was present in this area” (eBird S71582505 ML249992611 & 2731) at Fort Walsh National Historic Site,

Cypress Hills. Shadick, with the help of John Patterson, was careful to confirm that the sonograms matched Pacific Wren (PAWR), not Winter Wren. PAWRs were heard in the same location in 2020 by Vicki St Germaine on 19 July (eBird S71642387; ML250621731) and Richard Klauke (eBird S71794178) on 20 July. **Status:** rare and very locally distributed in the Cypress Hills. Breeding. Several winter records suggest it is a year-round resident.¹ **Remarks:** this small wren was first detected in Saskatchewan in 1988, then confirmed as PAWR in 2015. Breeding was inferred in 2011 then confirmed in 2014.¹ See the account in *BofSk* for details of this fascinating bird and its discovery in the province. Single PAWRs have been reported near Elkwater, on the Alberta side of the Cypress Hills Interprovincial Park in June 2020, June and July 2021, and June 2022 (eBird).

Northern Mockingbird (*Mimus polyglottos*): in the summer of 2021, between 10 and 28 May, Orval and Beverly Beland saw and heard a mockingbird at their home 6.5 km south of Denholm. In 2022, on at least seven nights between 6 and 22 June, they again heard a mockingbird singing in the early hours of the morning in their yard: 01:15 hr to 03:30 hr. On 6 June 2022, the Belands’ neighbours, Janice and Mitchell Mazurek, told them about “a new bird that ... sang often over the following weeks during the day” in their home farmyard on the bank of the North Saskatchewan River, about 8 km south of Denholm. Photographs confirmed its identity (O. Beland pers. comm. 9 December 2022). **Status:** an irregular summer visitor and rare breeder in the province.¹ **Remarks:** finding presumably the same mockingbird in a location in the province in two successive years is unusual and suggests it might be the same individual. Intriguingly, why did it apparently sing in the day at one location and at night in another? Derrickson states that mockingbird “songs sung at night were presented in a manner most similar to the period before a female arrived on a male’s territory. Interestingly, under natural lighting conditions, only unmated males sang extensively at night.”⁴

Hooded Warbler (*Setophaga citrina*): on 28 and 29 April 2022 Morley and Paula Maier saw a striking male in full breeding plumage (Figure 2) at their farm, 10 km south of Yorkton. On both days, it was seen in the late afternoon: 17:00 to 18:00 h approx. Excellent photographs document the two encounters (first posted on Sask Birders Facebook group 28 April, fide G. Wapple). **Status:** the eighth record for the province. Accidental. **Remarks:** the bird was restless and very active, spending considerable time on the ground. Fortunately, it was not shy and was carefully observed for nearly an hour each day. This is the earliest date the species has been recorded in the province. Several days of southeasterly winds preceded this bird’s appearance. Five of our eight records for this warbler have occurred in the spring (28 April to 9 June); apparently these represent migrants overshooting their normal breeding range in eastern North America. There, Hooded Warblers are a fairly common summer resident choosing shrubby thickets within moist woodlands for nesting. It reaches the northern limits of its breeding range in southwestern Ontario’s Carolinian ecoregion where it is uncommon, although in recent years it has shown some increases in distribution and numbers.⁵ Hooded Warbler is a Threatened Species listed under Canada’s Species at Risk legislation.



FIGURE 2. On 28 and 29 April 2022, Morley and Paula Maier observed a striking male Hooded Warbler in full breeding plumage at their farm, 10 km south of Yorkton. Photo credit: Morley and Paula Maier.

Wood Thrush (*Hylocichla mustelina*): two records. On 17 May 2022 Philip and Margot Taylor watched a single bird for 20 minutes between 09:00 and 09:35 h in their backyard in Saskatoon (eBird S1105051620); five photos were submitted (ML#450054201, 4211, 4221, 4241, 4301). It was also seen briefly by Greg Hutchings (a neighbour) during the same period, although a search with Stan Shadick later that morning was unsuccessful in locating the bird. This is only the second record since the *BofSk* cut-off date of December 2016.¹ The 25th record for the province was a bird heard in Cosmopolitan Park, Saskatoon (Nick Saunders 21 May 2020; eBird S69425964; ML237298311). **Status:** 25th and 26th records add to the 24 records to December 2016 in *BofSk*.¹ **Straggler.** **Remarks:** this species has been seen in scattered locations across the southeastern part of the province, including several from Saskatoon, but it is a sporadic and irregular visitor. Wood Thrush is a Threatened species listed under Canada's *Species at Risk Act*.

Summer Tanager (*Piranga rubra*): six records. A single bird with red feathering on its face by Darleen Duce on 19 May 2022 at an acreage north of Estevan (eBird S110783013; ML451255781); a second bird with red face and upper breast was first heard by Trevor Herriot on 29 May 2022 in Lakeview, Regina (eBird S111610830), then was seen by many observers and photographed (Figure 3) (Christopher Harris, eBird S111610904; ML454487141). Four additional sightings: Forestry Farm in Saskatoon (Nick Saunders and Dan Giesbrecht 26 May 2017, eBird S37161774); Condie north of Regina (Laurie Koepke 15 May 2017, eBird S36901320); Morse (Joel Priebe 23 May 2020, eBird S69544122); 13km south of Wilcox (Laurie Koepke 17 October 2020, eBird S74997922). **Status:** straggler. **Remarks:** these six records, posted on eBird after *BofSk* was published, fit the known pattern of records and bring the total to a minimum of 28 sightings reported for the province.



FIGURE 3. A Summer Tanager, first heard by Trevor Herriot on 29 May 2022, and then seen and photographed by others. Photo credit: Christopher Harris.

Green-tailed Towhee (*Pipilo chlorurus*): in the morning of 23 May 2022 Alyson Melenchuk discovered an adult on the ground and at a feeder in her Regina backyard in Windsor Park (eBird S111103145); she posted videos of the bird on YouTube as “Sask Birder”: <https://youtu.be/d6jxALn92s> and <https://youtu.be/DO5tVgd48AU>. The following morning, 24 May, the bird was seen by Dan Sawatzky, Annie McLeod, Christopher Harris, and Fran Kerbs (eBird S111187327, S111207926, S111189052); it was photographed (Figure 4) at the same location as it scratched and fed on the ground, near shrubs below the feeder (ML452925101, 5161). **Status:** the seventh record for the province. **Accidental.** **Remarks:** five of the province's records have occurred between 15 May and 6 June



FIGURE 4. A Green-tailed Towhee was discovered by Alyson Melenchuk, in her backyard in Regina, on 23 May 2022 and observed by others on 24 May. Photo credit: Annie McLeod.

during their spring migration, having overshot their known breeding range that extends northward to south central and western Montana. The Green-tailed Towhee could attempt to nest in shrubby thickets in the southern part of the province, including riparian areas, coulees, and the Cypress Hills. However, its retiring nature, and subdued colours that help it blend with the surrounding leaf litter and tangled branches near the ground, may make it difficult to detect.

Cordilleran Flycatcher (*Empidonax occidentalis*) part of the “Western Flycatcher complex”: probably two breeding locations. These flycatchers were seen by multiple observers in 2022 between 29 May and 29 July in the Cypress Hills Interprovincial Park (CHIP), Saskatchewan. The map location feature in eBird gives two clusters of sightings about 2.5 km from each other: one along West Benson Trail (WBT 49.6114, -109.9539) and the other along Battle Creek Road (BCR 49.6283, -109.9797). Evidence of territorial behaviour, vocalizations, and nest building suggest breeding may have been attempted at both sites in 2022, though they remained unconfirmed.

WBT records: on 29 May 2022 David Bell and Liam Singh photographed and recorded vocalizations of a single bird along the WBT (eBird S111747979 and 7981; eight excellent photos ML455688651 to 88781 plus one audio file ML455688871). See discussion in ‘Remarks’ below. This was the same location where birds were reported in 2020 (Dan Sawatzky eBird S71350658 and several other birders) and 2021. In 2022, single birds were seen in this area by: Scott Olshanoski on 1 June (eBird S111916443); Annie McLeod took photographs on 11 June (eBird S112883753; ML459239231); Dan Tyson on 13 June who heard a “male giving distinct upslurred *we SEET* call and also observed at one point holding what looked like a fine rootlet or twig. Second bird heard calling just upstream, probably the female giving a high short *tsip* call” (eBird S114159460); Keith Miles heard one bird making seep calls along the

trail (eBird S113993204); and on 18 June Kale Worman watched a single bird “as it gathered sticks and moss and delivered them back too [sic] its nest. Not singing, only making *seep* calls” (eBird S113196739; ML460461351) (Figure 5).

BCR records: Stan Shadick reported, on his 13 June 2022 sighting, “known location from 2020-2022 ... making *See-ip* [position note] calls, yellowish undersides [seen on one bird ... at one time, 2 birds were fighting (?) in trees above us. Possible 3rd individual in area. Did not seem to be flying to any nest site [on the observable creek bank] yet. Perhaps will nest later in season” (eBird S112916582; and pers comm). Vicki St Germaine on 14 June (eBird S112938739) heard one bird give “two position calls, several minutes apart ...” but it did not show itself because of the poor weather conditions. Sharlane Toole posted a photo, dated 17 June, of a single flycatcher perched on a root, against the creek cutbank (ML461567891). On 18 June at 08:30 h, Glenda Slessor and Bob Curry saw two birds (eBird S113638479, S113637934; ML461998881 plus four other excellent photos) reporting “the male sang and called. Diagnostic second upsurred note.”; on 22 June at 08:34 hr B. L. Di Labio saw one bird calling; Keith Miles watched one bird on 28 June, “making *seep* calls” (eBird S113993204); on 28 June Makail Johannesson also saw and heard one bird (eBird S114065948); on 2 July Katelyn Luff heard one, possibly a second, along the road and recorded its distinctive call. The sonogram shows a sinusoidal call (eBird S114249546, ML464329921); on 10 July Michelle Schreder photographed two birds at the site (eBird S114831390) [no photos accompanied this post]; on 14 July one bird was heard by Lorna Aynbinder and Alan Knowles, and recordings were made but not included in post (eBird S115052694, S115052695), and Robert Baumander (eBird S115068022) who stated the “*pee-ist* call matched [the] recording of the bird”; and on 24 July John Lundgren saw two flycatchers and recorded calls of one, with sinusoidal shaped [audio] spectrograms (eBird S115667921; ML469684171), then saw a single bird on 29 July (eBird S115966485).



FIGURE 5. On 18 June, Kale Worman photographed a single Cordilleran/Western Flycatcher as it gathered sticks and moss. Photo credit: Kale Worman.

Status: the third consecutive summer these flycatchers have been confirmed in this area of the Cypress Hills. The second year when evidence was found that nesting was attempted; breeding was documented in 2020, but not in 2021. There are no reports from other locations in Saskatchewan, but individuals have been found in CHIP, Alberta (see ‘Remarks’). **Remarks:** Vocalizations are obviously important when locating and separating these birds from other *Empidonax* flycatchers that occur in the Cypress Hills. Bell and Singh report that the bird was “mostly giving high, short contact calls with occasional ‘*suwee*’ calls. As we were leaving it did typical ‘*su-dit*’ two-part call.” These two different calls, sung by the same bird, seem to have characteristics of both Pacific-slope’s “upsurred *suweet*” call and the Cordilleran’s “unslurred, rising, two-part *we seet*” call, pointing again to the Cypress Hills population being intergrades between these two taxa.⁶ Rush et al note that *Empidonax* flycatchers do not learn their songs, instead their vocalizations are innate thus reflecting the origins of their individual genetic makeup.⁷ Western Flycatchers are known to give intermediate vocalizations in the area of overlap, and Campbell et al state “unfortunately, both species in the northwest give the ‘boat-shaped’ or slurred sinusoidal note

– “*peewhitt!*”⁸ Thus, in Saskatchewan it is likely impossible to identify these birds with certainty by their vocalizations, beyond Western Flycatchers, despite what some field guides suggest.⁹ Taylor gives a brief summary of the current research concerning the co-occurrence and/or intergradation of the two sister species in the Western Flycatcher complex at the northern edge of their range, including the Cypress Hills, and the debate over the status of these two very closely related flycatchers.² Note: words describing the vocalizations of these flycatchers are *italicized* throughout this account for clarity.

Western Flycatchers appear to be relatively new arrivals in the Cypress Hills, with the Saskatchewan locations along the upper Battle Creek continuing to be the most reliable area to find these flycatchers. Earlier bird inventory work in the Cypress Hills by the National Museum of Canada in Saskatchewan in 1948¹⁰ and Alberta’s two Breeding Bird Atlases in 1987-1991 and 2000-2005¹¹ encountered no Western Flycatchers. This changed when the Calgary Bird Banding Society¹² developed and operated a banding station between 2010 and 2016, in the Elkwater Lake area of Alberta, approximately 20 km west of the Saskatchewan border. This was the first long-term monitoring

study of the avifauna in the Cypress Hills, in either province. Objectives of the *Monitoring Avian Productivity and Survivorship (MAPS)* program included gathering long-term data on population and demographic parameters of target landbird species including the “Western Flycatcher complex”. Despite banding each spring, summer and fall, and capturing hundreds of birds over the seven years, only three “Western Flycatchers” were reported for their efforts with no confirmation of them breeding. On 16 June 2010, Yousif Attia mist-netted and photographed one bird at Old Baldy banding site near Elkwater Lake: “measurements first suggested a Pacific-slope, but [were] inconclusive”, so he switched the identification to “Pacific-slope/Cordilleran Flycatcher (Western Flycatcher)” (eBird S6860802). Then, in 2013, two birds were captured (one at Old Baldy banding site, a second at Spruce Coulee banding site), but with no dates or further details.¹³ Apparently, no other “Western Flycatchers” were caught during this time, although one bird was recorded as an “unidentified flycatcher” in 2012, and another (a Hammond’s) on 5 August 2012. In 2020, a single “Western Flycatcher” was discovered on 5 July (eBird S71848434) near the Hidden Valley Ski Resort, which is close to Elkwater Lake, CHIP; another single was located and seen by several observers in the same area in 2021, between 17 July and 2 August, with photographs and audio recordings made as documentation (eBird S92287941). There were no reports on eBird of Western Flycatchers in the Cypress Hills of Alberta in 2022. The Society of Grassland Naturalists’s Southeastern Alberta Bird Checklist aptly states “Western” Flycatcher are “rare, seldom observed, but can be expected to occur annually” in spring and summer, in the Cypress Hills region.¹⁴

Observations of Saskatchewan birds in this “Western Flycatcher complex” continue to be identified as Cordilleran Flycatchers, not as probable intergrades between Cordilleran and Pacific-slope flycatchers, in contrast to the records from CHIP, Alberta. In perhaps the most detailed study so far,

Linck et al use geographic and genetic sampling of Western Flycatchers to describe the pattern of integration throughout their range in the United States, demonstrating that birds along the northern periphery (northern Washington and Idaho; and the Black Hills of South Dakota) show varying degrees of genetic mixing between the two taxa and not one or the other species.¹⁵ This coincides with the earlier findings from Canada (southern British Columbia and southwestern Alberta) by Rush et al.⁷ Though neither study sampled birds from the Cypress Hills, it seems more accurate to refer to all of these flycatchers in the Cypress Hills by the name Western Flycatchers until their taxonomic status is agreed upon. Alec Hopping summarized the current uncertainty in a paper titled “Unraveling Western Flycatchers: A Case Against the Split” that appeared in American Birding Association’s *North American Birds* (December 2022: Vol 73, No 2); unfortunately, this article is not freely accessible to non-members. In the meantime, eBird does offer suitable options for entering these records to minimize any confusion.

Black-necked Stilt (*Himantopus mexicanus*): multiple records including one nesting attempt. On 3 June 2022 Philip S Taylor photographed a nest containing four eggs, 3 km north of Krydor; the two adults were first observed on this small wetland on 16 May. The nest, like another in 2013, was placed in shallow water (less than 15 cm deep) and surrounded by short emergent vegetation (perhaps 15 to 20 cm tall), which did not hide the adults while they incubated. The wetland and nest site had been flooded by 28 June, and no adults were present after heavy rains in late June (between 20 and 24 June, North Battleford got 19.8 mm; Spiritwood got more than 202.7 mm). Taylor observed seven adults at Gilles Lake, Blaine Lake on 16 May; Caitlin Acquiroff saw four on 22 June (eBird 113571541 – no photos); Harley Verbonac saw three on 5 July (eBird S114494264), and two on 6 July (eBird S114559244) “across from the Marcelin

dump”. **Status:** this is the second nesting record for the Blaine Lake area; the first was in 2013.¹ No nesting attempts further north in the province have been reported. **Remarks:** Black-necked Stilt (BNST) observations continue to increase as the species expands its range north in the province, roughly following a line from Paradise Hill eastward to Prince Albert along Highway 3. The earliest arrival date reported was of two birds 2 km south of the junction between Highways 3 and 21, east of Paradise Hill on 10 May 2022 (Dave Rhody eBird S109624156). The sightings around Blaine Lake are part of this steady advance. The northward range expansion of BNSTs has been going on for some time, but may be increasing as a result of the deepening drought in the southwestern United States that is making habitat conditions in their core range, in the Great Basin, drier and less suitable for breeding.¹⁶

Trumpeter Swan (*Cygnus buccinator*): one nesting record. On 19 June 2022 Stan Shadick and Barbara O’Neil observed a pair of Trumpeter Swans (TRUS) with five cygnets on a wetland about 8 km north of the town of Duck Lake (eBird S113402382 and S113330359; no accompanying photographs). **Status:** this new breeding location is part of an extension of this swan’s summer range in the province. **Remarks:** During the fur trade, prior to 1900, these swans were locally fairly common, spring and autumn transients; however, historic reports of breeding in the province are lacking during that era.¹⁷ From two areas, the Cypress Hills (long established nesting from at least 1953 to 1991) and Greenwater Lake (a more recent nesting area, first confirmed in 1992), the number of reported nesting attempts has slowly risen.¹ Houston, Ball and Houston describe the dramatic decline in TRUS populations across most of their range during the fur trade era due to demand for body feathers and quills for pens.¹⁸ TRUSs seem to be reoccupying long abandoned areas that supported breeding populations more than 150 years ago. TRUS numbers have increased sufficiently that it is no longer listed as a Species at Risk in Canada.

Eurasian Tree Sparrow (*Passer montanus*): one individual was seen from 15 to 18 July 2022 by Len and Angela Ferns in their yard in Rockglen (Figure 6). Photos taken on 17 July confirm the identification of a pure Eurasian Tree Sparrow (ETSP), showing no hybrid characteristics (L. Ferns pers. comm. 5 Aug phone call and 7 Aug email; eBird S119667581, ML488691691). **Status:** fourth record for the province. Presumed to be accidental. **Remarks:** many birds were attracted to the feeders and the seed scattered on the ground in the Ferns' yard. "The Eurasian Tree Sparrow was at the [largest] feeder mostly ... and it was on the ground quite a bit ... where I first noticed it." A large flock of House Sparrows (HOSP), often numbering more than 150 birds, was present during this period — most being young of the year that were "eating machines"; adults "were in the minority". The ETSP was not intimidated by these other, slightly larger sparrows: "it seemed like a cheerier bird if that makes any sense ... perhaps a little feisty" in their presence. It did not appear to be attached to any of the HOSPs, "which were intent on feeding not socializing or mixing". How many other rare birds appear might in the Fern's yard in the future? He photographed an immature or female Rufous Hummingbird there on 6 and 7 August 2022 (L. Ferns pers. comm.). Following the introduction of 12 ETSPs in 1870 in St. Louis, Missouri-Illinois, the birds underwent little range expansion for the first 100 years. As their population continued to grow, their



FIGURE 6. A Eurasian Tree Sparrow was seen from 15 to 18 July 2022 by Len and Angela Ferns in their yard in Rockglen. Photo credit: Len Ferns.

distribution extended approximately 125 km north by 1970. Between 1951 and 2014, their rate of expansion was 3.3 km per year, approximately 208 km total; yes, statistically significant but still unhurried compared to the HOSP after its introduction in 1850.¹⁹ For more information, see Taylor.²

Scissor-tailed Flycatcher (*Tyrannus forficatus*): one bird seen multiple times. Murray Adams first noticed the bird flycatching from a fence line near his farmyard in late August 2022 ["about two weeks ago" he explained to Guy Wapple on 9 September]; then Judy Jordan asked for help identifying a photograph of the bird on 4 September 2022 from the same area, near Donovan (posted on Sask Birders, Facebook), approximately 18 km south of Delisle; Sharlane Toole relocated and photographed it on 5 September (eBird S118192266, ML481693551, 3561) as the bird was "hawking" though "not always successfully as it was an extremely windy day"; Vicki St Germaine saw it on 7 September, when it was "constantly being harassed by smaller birds" (eBird S118302302, ML482200391); then Ryan Dudragne found it on 11 September (eBird S119066456, ML485788081) and with his careful observations and photographs determined it was likely an immature bird undergoing its "first cycle, preformative" moult. On 9 October Samantha Adams posted seeing a single "adult male" (eBird S120428528) in the same general area near Donovan, with no other details or photos. **Status:** 16th provincial record¹; eighth in the fall. Straggler. **Remarks:** this appears to be the longest recorded stay for a bird in Saskatchewan, just over six weeks (26 August to 9 October). The photographs point to the bird's probable age and sex: the relatively short tail is characteristic of an immature bird (in its second year perhaps?); and the extensive salmon-pink side, flank and belly feathers suggest it is likely a male.²⁰ Most Saskatchewan records are one day encounters, with birds being seen as early as 8 May to an exceptionally late bird last seen on 9 November. All have been singles in the

southern part of the province, except one found in the far north near the Rabbit Lake Mine, Wollaston Lake.¹ These flycatchers stray widely beyond their breeding range, which extends north through the central Great Plains from extreme north-eastern Mexico to the Kansas-South Dakota border.

Yellow-throated Vireo (*Vireo flavifrons*): Don Weidl found one singing bird on 12 September 2022 at Ekapo Lake in the Qu'Appelle valley, documenting it with photos and an audio recording (eBird S118575655, ML483549211, ML483699671). **Status:** third latest date on record. **Remarks:** this vireo "revives singing to some extent in September" as does the robin in autumn.²¹

Hooded Warbler (*Setophaga citrina*): Sheila Lane photographed a single male in bright plumage on 19 September 2022, which she found in McLaren Lake Regional Park, 19 km southwest of Richmond (near Surprise), close to the Alberta border (Sask Birders Facebook post, fide G. Wapple). **Status:** the ninth record for the province. Accidental. **Remarks:** this is only the second fall record for the province; the other, also a male, was seen 20 to 25 September in Saskatoon.¹ The regional park is a small oasis, with trees on the edge of a small lake, surrounded by 'dryland' agricultural fields in arid southwest Saskatchewan.

Northern Cardinal (*Cardinalis cardinalis*): four birds reported; three records from the north central part of the province. On 24 July 2022 Michelle Kasick saw a bright male 10 km southwest of Carrot River (photo in D. Sawatzky's files). On 4 August 2022 Orval Beland learned of a male cardinal "seen recently" by Zach Schmaltz, 3 km northeast of Alticane: despite not having photographs to document the record, the description of "an all red colour, with a crest on the back of the head like a Blue Jay", and its size, accurately fit the species (O. Beland pers. comm. 30 November). Marissa Berard reported a male on 26 September 2022 in Prince Albert National Park, along the Narrows Trail, noting its "full red

[plumage] with black by its bill, with the distinctive cardinal crest and a conical beak.” Berard stated “The cardinal was near a massive mixed species flock of pine siskins and goldfinches.” One blurry photo taken through binoculars accompanied the post (eBird S119477324, ML488379901). And from the Qu’Appelle valley, a female was seen 28 and 30 October at Fort Qu’Appelle by Penny Byers that was apparently seen a week earlier by her husband (eBird S121470674 ML498482781); this was presumably the same female seen on 3 November at Fort Qu’Appelle by Gwen Lafontaine (posted on Sask Birders Facebook).

Status: a rare visitor (occasionally long staying) and occasional breeder north to the transition forest. The 26 September record is the northern most report in the province. **Remarks:** Northern Cardinals continue to be reported from within the city limits of Prince Albert and immediate area (3 August 2021, eBird S92704606) where they bred in 2011, approximately 95 km south of Berard’s sighting in Prince Albert National Park.¹

Northern Pygmy-Owl (*Glaucidium gnoma*): Shelly Fisher and Dale Jefferson were fortunate to see and photograph (Figure 7) a single pygmy-owl on 26 September 2022 in Prince Albert National Park [exact location withheld to protect the bird from possible disturbance]. **Status:** only the third location where pygmy-owls have been found in Saskatchewan. This owl’s distribution and population have yet to be determined in our province, both being complicated by the irruptive nature of the species. **Remarks:** this record is 150 km SSW of the first Saskatchewan record near Lac La Ronge (12 October 2014); and more than 200 km east of a cluster of observations involving an unknown number of birds, but possibly only one individual, near Cold Lake just east of the Alberta border (27 December 2016 to 10 April 2017).^{1,2} S. Fisher describes their experience: “We were trying to get a closer look at a three-toed woodpecker when we noted many agitated black-capped chickadees, red-breasted nuthatches, and a hairy woodpecker. We



FIGURE 7. Shelly Fisher and Dale Jefferson were fortunate to see and photograph a Northern Pygmy-Owl on 26 September 2022 in Prince Albert National Park. Photo credit: Dale Jefferson.

were watching the top of an aspen tree in mixed wood forest, perhaps 40 feet high when the owl suddenly popped into the [leafless] tree top. It only stayed a few moments, but we immediately realized what it was and Dale got a photo, thankfully! It flew back where we couldn’t see it, pursued by the smaller birds. They were agitated for a while, and we waited about half an hour hoping for another look, but we didn’t see it again.”

Eurasian Wigeon (*Mareca penelope*): on 5 October 2022 Larry Hooze used a scope to observe a male, noting the key field marks of an adult in breeding plumage, at Big Gully Lake 16 km east of Lloydminster along highway 303. **Status:** only the fifth fall record compared to 26 spring and early summer records. A straggler in the fall.¹ **Remarks:** as is often the case, this bird was found on a wetland with a number of other waterfowl, including 150 geese, 20 swans, and nearly 200 ducks including 50 American Wigeon.

Baltimore Oriole (*Icterus galbula*): a male in full adult breeding plumage appeared in the yard of Philip and Margot Taylor in Saskatoon intermittently between 7 October and 3 November 2022; photographs supporting the record were

taken on 10 and 26 October, and on 3 November (eBird S120133339, S120411144, S121371422, S121795668; ML 492468521, 8531, and ML 497905531, ML 500271721). Greg Hutchings and Elsbeth Dormuth photographed the bird in their backyard on 6 November, following an intense snow storm on 5-6 November after which temperatures fell to double digit lows. There were no further sightings. **Status:** exceptionally late date.¹ **Remarks:** Baltimore Orioles complete their moult on the breeding grounds prior to migration to winter in the tropical Americas; this contrasts with Bullock’s Orioles that moult primarily during their fall migration.²⁰ When these two species were considered one, as Northern Oriole, many records were not identified to their respective forms, blurring our knowledge of each, during that time period: 1973-1995.¹

American Black Duck (*Anas rubripes*): Jean Iron and Barbara N Charlton found six on 12 October 2022 adjacent to road 786 near Marcelin (eBird S120577477). **Status:** not unusual in autumn but often overlooked. A larger number of birds found together than is usually reported. **Remarks:** these observers from Ontario have experience with this species that can be easily mistaken for female

Mallards. Detailed monitoring by the Canadian Wildlife Service, particularly of waterfowl samples submitted annually by hunters from across Canada, has shown that small numbers of American Black Ducks, primarily males, regularly move onto the prairies post breeding, and that these frequently show evidence of Mallard characteristics in their wing feathering (a white line of feathers bordering the top and bottom of the speculum), indicating varying degrees of intermixing between the two species.

Eurasian Tree Sparrow (*Passer montanus*): on 1 November 2022 Don Weidl photographed a single Eurasian Tree Sparrow (ETSP) at his home in Broadview. It was feeding on the ground in association with a group of House Sparrows (eBird S121709486; ML499765971). **Status:** fifth record for the province. Considered to be an accidental. **Remarks:** the bird appeared in good condition and was in bright adult plumage. It had no obvious signs of being an escape from captivity, such as bands or excessively worn feathers. It has been suggested that vagrant ETSPs may arrive in some locations assisted by various human activities: they are believed to arrive in Australian coastal cities carried by ocean going ships from south-eastern Asia. Could that also explain other Canadian ETSP records in coastal British Columbia, Quebec, and New Brunswick (eBird records)? And, it has been offered that inland vagrants may be accidentally carried in rail cars to different locations in North America from source populations around St. Louis. Another frequent explanation for vagrant individuals is they have escaped from captivity. While direct effects of human activities may be the source of some vagrant ETSPs, the natural tendency of some birds to disperse after breeding seems an equally plausible explanation for these occurrences. Yet even then, indirect effects of human activities appear to influence these movements, with bird feeders providing a convenient opportunity for the sparrows to renew their energy before continuing on their travels.

Costa's Hummingbird (*Calypte costae*): one record (Figure 8). This hummingbird showed up late in the afternoon of 27 October 2022 at the home of Randy and Angela Schmidt in Lawson Heights, Saskatoon. He recalled it was flying low to the ground, investigating petunias and other fall garden flowers and coming so close it “was almost bumping in to me”. He contacted Living Sky Wildlife Rehabilitation (LSWR) in Saskatoon on 29 October for advice on how to help the bird as the weather was forecast to worsen. And it did: temperatures falling from 27 October (high of 11.8 C and low -0.3 C) to 7 November (high -8.7 C and low -21.8 C), freezing rain turning to snow and strong winds, on 5 November, continuing through 6 November. From 28 and 29 October, and 1 to 6 November, the bird came to hummingbird feeders supplied by Schmidt, first outside, then inside their garage where the bird could enter and leave to feed through doors left open. Schmidt noted where it may have roosted outside at night: “It seemed to come and go from several large [blue] spruce trees in the neighbourhood. Toward the end it definitely seemed to be perching in the spruce trees” in view of the garage. They could not confirm if on the nights of 6-7 and 7-8 November the hummer stayed outside or sheltered in the garage where the temperature was 6 C or warmer.

On 8 November, with day and night temperatures well below freezing, Ron Jensen captured the hummingbird at the request of LSWR, and took it to them for care. He took measurements and photographs of the bird but was unsure of its identity. Jensen shared the body measurements, taken from the bird on 8 November, with Jared Clarke who recognized that they fell within the normal ranges for a Costa's Hummingbird. But some uncertainty continued with several characteristics needing confirmation. So, on 11 November, R. Jensen remeasured the hummingbird (wing, tail, bill) while Philip Taylor witnessed and photographed the process, and Jeff Jensen observed. Together they examined the bird closely, noting many details (see Remarks).



FIGURE 8. A Costa's hummingbird showed up late in the afternoon of 27 October 2022 at the home of Randy and Angela Schmidt in Lawson Heights, Saskatoon. Photo credit: Krista Trinder.

R. Jensen posted five photos on 17 November 2022 (eBird S122560573). **Status:** this is the first provincial record. Accidental. **Remarks:** R. Jensen was initially struck by the bird's “surprisingly calm” behaviour compared to Ruby-throated Hummingbirds that he had banded, which are often quite active when handled; and by the eye-catching colourful gorget, which is displayed by male hummingbirds.

Details confirming the bird's age, sex, and species: Pyle²⁰ states that “all species of hummingbirds can be aged for at least 5-9 months after fledging by the extent of the corrugations along the lateral portions of the upper mandible”, after which these are lost in most individuals as the bill hardens. Jensen noted the “reasonably long bill” and that it lacked corrugations (longitudinal grooves, sometimes called striations) found on bills of young, hatch-year, birds. Also noted were the greenish crown feathers, some still with buff edges that had not worn off completely, characteristic of a hatch-year hummingbird, likely more than nine months of age. Several other plumage characteristics identified the bird as a young male Costa's Hummingbird including: obviously the gorget's luminescent pale purple-violet iridescence feathers extended over the throat, though not covering it completely, with some feathers beginning to lengthen on the lower

corners; a few feathers at the back of the crown near the nape showed the same iridescent colour as the gorget. This differs from Anna's Hummingbird's distinctive rose-red gorget and Black-chinned Hummingbird's darker purple gorget. Also evident was the iridescent green back; the greyish underparts and very white upper chest; and the short, slightly forked, all black tail with narrow outer tail feathers, curved inward toward the tip (compared to Ruby-throat's being straight and wider), all of which agreed with it being a Costa's. Its body condition was good, with detectable fat accumulations. The body measurements taken from the bird on 8 November were: wing chord (43.3 mm), tail (23.4 mm), exposed culmen/bill (17.7 mm). Measurements retaken on 11 November were: wing chord (43.5 mm), tail (22.2 mm), culmen (17.8 mm). When compared with data in Table 2 in Pyle²⁰ these measurements excluded Anna's Hummingbird as a candidate. Photographs of the relaxed, perched bird, show its wingtips barely extend past the tip of the tail, also ruling out Anna's and Black-chinned hummingbirds; both of those species having longer tails that extend noticeably past the tips of their wings when perched.

Together, all the bird's measurements and key bill and plumage characteristics indeed identified it as a maturing, hatch-year male Costa's Hummingbird. Sheri L Williamson affirmed that identification (fide G. Wapple 14 November 2022).²²

Costa's Hummingbirds breed from late February to mid-June in the deserts and arid scrublands of southwestern United States and northern Sonoran Mexico, and occasionally as early as November.²³ Most withdraw a short distance to winter in dry north western Mexico. Records along the North American Pacific coast are erratic but increasing; most involve males, in spring, that are more easily identified than females that may go unnoticed among other hummingbirds. Confirmed sightings extend into the southwestern coastal lowlands of British Columbia where they are accidental (33 records in BC from 1972 to 2018)^{6,24} and even as far

north as southern Alaska (eBird). Records from the interior of the continent are even more unusual. They have occurred in Alberta (three records, 1988 to 2015) (eBird, <https://royalalbertamuseum.ca/collections/life-sciences/ornithology/birds-list/taxonomy>), but not in Manitoba.²⁵ eBird reports one sighting for Montana and none for North Dakota.

Pine Warbler (*Setophaga pinus*): a single bird was seen in Martensville on 7 November 2022 by Chrystal Dawn (posted on SaskBirds Facebook; fide Stan Shadick and Guy Wapple); several excellent photographs show the bird at a suet feeder. Status: straggler. Remarks: records for this species in Saskatchewan extend from 9 May into late fall, with one bird even attempting to over winter from early December 2015 to 27 March 2016.¹ The true status of this warbler in Saskatchewan has yet to be determined. Some records point toward its possible, rare attempts to breed in the province, while many others fit a pattern of an occasional spring or fall migrant. See *BofSk* for an interesting discussion on this species.¹

Ivory Gull (*Pagophila eburnea*): a single, immature Ivory Gull was photographed 400 m offshore from Sunset View Beach, Turtle Lake on 15 December 2022 by Cliff Nesbitt (Figure 9). It was very tame, attracted to ice fishing activities on the lake where it fed on fish scraps and bait minnows, lying on the ice surface, which were provided by the anglers (posted on Facebook by C. Nesbitt, fide Nick Saunders). On 16



FIGURE 9. On 15 December 2022, an immature Ivory Gull was photographed by Cliff Nesbitt 400 m offshore from Sunset View Beach, Turtle Lake. Photo credit: Cliff Nesbitt.

December, Nick Saunders and Philip S Taylor confirmed the bird's presence (Figure 10) in the same location, with C. Nesbitt's kind assistance (Saunders eBird S124065597, ML 513681061, 83011, 96391; Taylor eBird S124474054 ML 515843211, 43221, 43231, 43241). The gull flushed at a distance of several hundred metres then landed again on the lake surface, or occasionally atop an ice fishing shack, before flying toward distant shacks scattered over the snow-covered lake and out of view. Sightings continued into the last week of December along the east shore of the lake, including Indian Point - Golden Sands Beach where many anglers and enthusiastic birders viewed this increasingly confiding bird (eBird). It is not known where the bird found a safe place to roost at night. Night time temperatures dropped to bitterly unseasonable lows on several nights in the region: minus 33.8 C on 21-22 December at North Battleford.²⁶ Increased human activity on the lake over the Christmas and New Year holidays may have disturbed the bird causing it to change its behaviour after 28 December, the last confirmed date it was reported. It is uncertain if it will stay in the area. **Status:** the third record for the province. The species is moved from hypothetical to confirmed, supported by many photographs. **Accidental. Remarks:** this bird displayed all the diagnostic characteristics of a lightly marked, first winter juvenile: black tipped primaries and tail feathers (these dark markings were less extensive than on some more heavily marked individuals of the same age); dark freckling on the upper, leading



FIGURE 10. Immature Ivory Gull, in flight, on 16 December 2022. Photo credit: Nick Saunders.

edge of the wings (marginal coverts) evident in flight; dark mottled feathers on the forecrown, throat and loreal area between the eye and bill; dull grey eye ring; blue-grey bill with a small reddish smudge behind the pale tip; dark eyes; short black legs; and small black webbed feet and toe nails. The previous two records were both in September. Fred Bard saw five “dove-like gulls”... “pure white except with black-tipped flight feathers (primaries and some secondaries) giving a slightly speckled, dark-bordered effect on the wings”²⁷ on Nemeiben Lake on 16 September 1976 — this description fits immature birds, not adults as mentioned in *BofSk*. And, Frank Brazier saw one — apparently an adult — at Wascana Centre, Regina on 4 September 1989.¹

Ivory Gull has Endangered status under Canada’s *Species at Risk Act*. Their numbers in Canada have declined a precipitous 80 per cent between 1986 and 2006, leaving an estimated 500 to 800 breeding individuals in the eastern High Arctic; this is about 10 per cent of the world population. Ivory Gulls winter just south of the permanent pack ice in cold waters along ice edges of the north Atlantic, with the high concentrations in Davis Strait and the Labrador Sea.^{28,29}

COSEWIC status changes that affect Saskatchewan birds

The following species recently assessed by COSEWIC are eligible for addition to SARA Schedule 1, reclassification (upgrades or downgrades to status), or removal from the list (January 2022).³⁰

Lesser Yellowlegs (*Tringa flavipes*): eligible for addition to schedule 1(6): as Threatened status (November 2020).

Red Knot (*Calidris canutus*): note - there is clarification for populations within the Red Knot subspecies *rufa*, based on a 2019 report to COSEWIC. Now recognized are three distinct populations within *rufa* that migrate through Saskatchewan, but winter in different areas, and each has been given their own status under SARA (November 2020): Caribbean wintering

population (including southeast USA and Gulf of Mexico) up-listed from “Threatened to **Endangered**”; northeast South American wintering population down listed from threatened to **Special Concern**; Tierra del Fuego wintering population confirmed **Endangered**. Clarification is needed if these different populations can be reliably separated in the field — by date, by plumage, or only by measurements taken in the hand.

Short-eared Owl (*Asio flammeus*): up-listed from Special Concern to **Threatened** (May 2021).

Addenda and Errata

to the Birds of Saskatchewan¹ and the update by Taylor.²

1) **Least Bittern** (*Ixobrychus exilis*): recordings made by Trevor Herriot were shared with Jared Clarke and LeeAnne Loutremouille who helped confirm the record (addendum).²

2) **Surfbird** (*Calidris virgata*): credit is due to Josh Bilyk who discovered the Surfbird at Quill Lake on 19 August 1998; an omission in the *BofSk* account (p 260) (pers. comm. A.R. Smith) (addendum).¹

3) **Ivory Gull** (*Pagophila eburnea*): Fred Bard described seeing five immature plumaged birds at Nemeiben Lake, not adults, as mentioned in the *BofSk* account (p 289) (errata).¹

4) **Kentucky Warbler** (*Geothlypis formosa*): species name “*formosa*”, should not be capitalized; “a spell check” error introduced late in the editing process (errata).²

5) **Henslow’s Sparrow** (*Centronyx henslowii*): sonograms of the recordings, made by Brandon Holden on 8 July 2014, accompanied the draft article submitted for publication in *Blue Jay*. These sonograms were reviewed by C Stuart Houston, Peter Taylor and others, and together with the detailed habitat descriptions identify the bird conclusively as a Henslow’s Sparrow, confirming its Accidental status in Saskatchewan. It is

unfortunate that the complete article has yet to be published (A. McLeod pers. comm.) (addendum).²

6) **Lesser Goldfinch** (*Spinus psaltria*): the correct date of the Holtkamp reference is 2020 (not 2021) (errata).²

Discussion

The one new and four accidental species all have origins in North America, so although seldom reported in Saskatchewan, they are regularly encountered in other parts of the continent.^{31,32} The juvenile Ivory Gull, a very rare vagrant from its High Arctic breeding grounds, is also exceptional because of its Endangered status. The Costa’s Hummingbird, from the dry shrubland deserts of far southwestern United States, is perhaps most surprising vagrant because of the very late date and distance from its regular range. Spring migrants overshooting their normal breeding ranges best describe the April Hooded Warbler, the May Wood Thrush, and Green-tailed Towhee records. Post breeding dispersal may explain the wanderings of the fall Hooded Warbler, the Eurasian Tree Sparrows, Northern Pygmy-Owl, Red-bellied Woodpecker, Scissor-tailed Flycatcher and Pine Warbler.

Many bird populations around the world, including species that breed in or migrate across Saskatchewan, continue to decline, some at alarming rates. The exceptions include some waterbirds and waterfowl (ducks, geese and swans). The North American Bird Conservation Initiative (NABCI) issued a report on 12 October 2022 titled the *State of the Birds 2022* focusing on the USA, but relevant to Canada because we share the continental bird populations (<https://www.stateofthebirds.org/2022/>). Of particular interest may be the species that have declined most alarmingly, down over two-thirds in numbers in the past 50 years. These are discussed in “Bird Declines Are Reaching a Tipping Point – State of the Birds 2022” (<https://www.stateofthebirds.org/2022tippingpointspecies/>). Included are species that occur annually within

Saskatchewan: Black Scoter, Greater Sage-grouse, Yellow Rail, American Golden Plover, Lesser Yellowlegs, Whimbrel, Hudsonian Godwit, Ruddy Turnstone, Stilt Sandpiper, Buff-breasted Sandpiper, Pectoral Sandpiper, Semipalmated Sandpiper, Short-billed Dowitcher, Chimney Swift, Sprague's Pipit, Chestnut-collared Longspur, LeConte's Sparrow, Harris's Sparrow, Bobolink, and Evening Grosbeak. And some rare species: King Eider, Yellow-billed Loon, Ivory Gull, Great Black-backed Gull, Mountain Plover, Least Tern, Rufous Hummingbird, Pinyon Jay (Hypothetical in our province - H), Bendire's Thrasher (H), Prairie Warbler, Henslow's Sparrow, and Black-rosey Finch (H). Records of these species will be particularly important to document, and submit to formal sites like eBird, so conservation organizations can monitor changes in their numbers and distribution.

The advent of the Cornell Lab of Ornithology's "Merlin Bird ID app" in 2009 has been a boon for birders, especially those new to the activity and people with hearing loss. When properly used it can accelerate the process of identifying birds, even those hidden from view. Promotional phrases like "Merlin's ability to identify birds seems like magic" making it the "most updated field guide you can put in your pocket" have rapidly increased its popularity. However, as marvelous as Merlin's artificial intelligence process is, it still must be used with caution, only as a means to assist in finding and identifying birds not as the final, conclusive arbiter for an identification. Why? An increasing number of misidentified and "impossible" birds are being "discovered" and even posted on eBird, by people who perhaps naively place all their faith in the app's wizardry. Birders must be prepared "to verify the presence of each species using other means" (Harold Fisher pers. comm.) otherwise it can be a shortcut that is lined with pitfalls. It is not a substitute for careful study of birds in the field, using good field guides, taking notes or photographs, and seeking the help of experienced birders. Dan Sawatzky

writes "there is important information on Merlin Sound ID best practices that can be found under the eBird help section. The main point being, if you are uncertain of an ID, please do not add a record to eBird."

Special mention is due for the discovery of the Ivory Gull at Turtle Lake. Without the interest of Cliff Nesbitt, the presence of this rare vagrant to Saskatchewan may have gone unnoticed. Every person interested in this endangered species, especially those who made the long trip to see their first Ivory Gull, owe him a big *thank you* for willingly sharing his marvelous find.

Acknowledgements

Thanks are extended to many people for help with this article. Guy Wapple and Don Weidl for flagging rare bird records posted on the Sask Birders FaceBook site. Al Smith and Dan Sawatzky for discussions about the everchanging status of birds in the province and tricky ID questions. Dan S. for help navigating and mining eBird data. Ryan Dudragne for finding references on several species. Ron Jensen provided information for the Costa's Hummingbird account. Jocelyn Hudon, Curator of Ornithology, Royal Alberta Museum, who explained the difficult identification issues within the sapsucker complex. Spencer Sealy's advice helped to improve the text. Annie McLeod's careful editorial assistance was much appreciated.

And my grateful thanks to all the observers, whose careful documentation of their sightings contribute so much to our knowledge of Saskatchewan birds. Best wishes for your future birding adventures.

1. Smith AR, Houston CS, Roy JF, Eds (2019) Birds of Saskatchewan. Nature Saskatchewan.
2. Taylor PS (2022) New records and changes in the status of Saskatchewan birds to December 2021. *Blue Jay* 80(3):18-33.
3. Davis A (2022) Pictorial Highlights: fall 2021-winter 2022. *North American Birds* 73(2):48-64.

4. Derrickson KC (1988) Variation in repertoire presentation in Northern Mockingbirds. *Condor* 90:592-606.
5. COSEWIC (1993, 2000) COSEWIC assessment and status report on the Hooded Warbler *Setophaga citrina* in Canada. Committee on the status of Endangered Wildlife in Canada. Ottawa. www.sararegistry.gc.ca/status/status_e.cfm.
6. Cannings RJ, Aversa T, Opperman H (2016) Birds of British Columbia and the Pacific Northwest. Heritage House Publ. Co. Ltd. Victoria, B.C.
7. Rush AC, Cannings RJ, Irwin DE (2009) Analysis of multilocus DNA reveals hybridization in a contact zone between *Empidonax* flycatchers. *Journal of Avian Biology* 40:614-624.
8. Campbell RW, Dawe NK, McTaggart-Cowan I, Cooper JM, Kaiser GW, McNall MCE, Smith GE (1997) The Birds of British Columbia. Vol 3: Passerines: Flycatchers through Vireos. UBC Press, Vancouver.
9. Pieplow N (2011) The "Western" Flycatcher Problem. Earbirding. Accessed 5 Dec 2022. <https://earbirding.com/blog/archives/2996>.
10. Godfrey WE (1950) Birds of the Cypress Hills and Flotten Lake Regions, Saskatchewan. Bull. No. 120, Biological Series No. 40. National Museum of Canada.
11. Federation of Alberta Naturalists (FAN) (2007) The Atlas of Breeding Birds of Alberta: A Second Look. The Federation of Alberta Naturalists. Edmonton, Alberta.
12. CHIP MAPS program - 2013 (2013) "New bandings during MAPS at Cypress Hills Interprovincial Park 2013" [see Table 6: p67].
13. Collister D, Hornbeck G, Potter M, Taylor B (2018) Calgary Bird banding Society, 2013 Annual Technical Report. CBBS, Calgary, Alberta. Accessed 8 July 2022. <https://www.calgarybirdbandingsociety.org/documents/ATR/CBBS%20ATRnew%202013.pdf>.
14. Society of Grasslands Naturalists (2013) Southeastern Alberta Bird Checklist. Society of Grasslands Naturalists and Alberta Tourism, Parks and Recreation.
15. Linck, E et al (2018) Dense geographic and genomic sampling reveals parapatry and a cryptic lineage in a classic sibling species complex. *Systematic Biology* doi:10.1093/sysbio/syz027. Accessed 12 December 2022. <https://doi.org/10.1101/491688>.
16. Williams AP, Cook BI, Smerdon JE (2022) Rapid intensification of the emerging southwestern North American megadrought in 2020-2021. *Nature Climate Change* 12:232-234. <https://doi.org/10.1038/s41558-022-01290-z>

17. Houston CS, Street MG (1959) The birds of the Saskatchewan River, Carlton to Cumberland. Saskatchewan Natural History Society, Special Publication No. 2. Regina, Sask.

18. Houston CS, Ball T, Houston M (2003) Eighteenth-Century Naturalists of Hudson's Bay. McGill-Queen's University Press, Canada.

19. Burnett JL, Roberts CP, Allen CR et al (2017) Range expansion by *Passer montanus* in North America. *Biological Invasions* 19:5-9.

20. Pyle P (1997) Identification guide to North American birds. Part I. Slate Creek Press. California.

21. Saunders AA (1951) A guide to bird songs. Doubleday & Co, New York.

22. Williamson SL (2001) Hummingbirds of North America. Peterson Field Guides. Houghton Mifflin Co.

23. Boyarski D et al (2020) Multiple broods, simultaneous nesting, and autumn nesting by Costa's Hummingbirds (*Calypte costae*). *The Wilson Journal of Ornithology* 132(3):791-797.

24. Toochin R, Fenneman J, Levesque P, Cecile D (2018) British Columbia Rare Bird List: Casual and Accidental Records. 4th Edition: 197 p. Accessed 7 July 2022. ibis.geog.ubc.ca.

25. Manitoba Avian Research Committee (MARC) (2003) The birds of Manitoba. P Taylor, Editor-in-Chief. Manitoba Naturalists Society, Winnipeg.

26. Environment Canada and Climate Change (2022) Accessed 23 December. climate.weather.gc.ca.


27. Lahrman FW (1977) Ivory Gulls at Nemieben Lake, Saskatchewan. *Blue Jay* 35(1):49.

28. COSEWIC (2006) COSEWIC assessment and update status report on the Ivory Gull *Pagophila eburnea* in Canada. Committee on the status of Endangered Wildlife in Canada. Ottawa. www.sararegistry.gc.ca/status/status_e.cfm

29. Environment Canada (2014) Recovery strategy for the Ivory Gull (*Pagophila eburnea*) in Canada. *Species at Risk Act* Recovery Strategy Series. Environment Canada, Ottawa. www.sararegistry.gc.ca

30. COSEWIC (2022) Part 2: The list of species eligible for an amendment: January 2022. www.canada.ca

31. Dunn JL, Alderfer J (2011) National Geographic field guide to the birds of North America. National Geographic, Washington, D.C.

32. Howell SNG, Lewington I, Russell W (2014) Rare birds of North America. Princeton Univ. Press. 

Nature

SASKATCHEWAN

SPRING MEET 2023

JUNE 16-18, 2023 KINDERSLEY, SK

Friday, June 16

6:30 p.m. Registration at the Kindersley Inn
Refreshments will be available; coffee, tea, baking

7:30 p.m. Speaker TBA

Saturday, June 17

8:00 a.m. Board the bus at the Kindersley Inn to depart to the Meyers Nature Sanctuary, outside of Leader, to do a bio blitz

Lunch break - sandwiches, veggie trays, beverages, etc.

Afternoon: Touring locations TBD

5:00 p.m. Cocktails at the Kindersley Inn

6:00 p.m. Banquet at the Kindersley Inn

7:00 p.m. Speaker TBA

Sunday, June 18

8:00 a.m. Breakfast buffet at the Kindersley Inn

9:00 a.m. Annual General Meeting at the Kindersley Inn

SUGGESTED ACCOMMODATIONS

Kindersley Inn

601 - 11 Avenue East

1-306-463-6555

Group block reserved under **NatureSask** until June 1, which includes discounted room rates

Additional details, as well as a registration form, will be available in the next issue of the *Blue Jay* and on the Nature Saskatchewan website as soon as they become available.