

NOTEWORTHY BIRD SIGHTINGS IN WEST CENTRAL MANITOBA IN 2022

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In 2022, noteworthy bird sightings in west central Manitoba were sparse. However, the birding environment is still very interesting, particularly if we consider a species that is returning to the area, and one that may have a tenuous grip here north of its main breeding range.

On 3 May, Cole Phillips and Ethan Dobbs located a Glaucous Gull (*Larus hyperboreus*) among the Herring Gulls (*Larus argentatus*) that frequent The Pas Landfill. An eBird list shows another Glaucous Gull three days later just south of Flin Flon.¹ Photos of those two sightings show that they are not the same individual.¹ I am aware of a few records for Glaucous Gull in the area, including a specimen collected at Reader Lake (~15 km north of The Pas) dated 15 October 1946.^{2,3} *The Birds of Manitoba* also notes that a Glaucous Gull was observed by David Hatch on 15 October 1986 at Grand Rapids, Manitoba.² I have observed Glaucous Gulls near the mouth of the Pasquia River in The Pas on three occasions: one bird on 23 October 2006, two on 29 October 2006, and one on 25 April 2009. My only other record for Glaucous Gull in the area was on 2 November 2007 at The Pas Landfill. A search of eBird Canada produced one other nearby record at Cranberry Portage, Manitoba on 13 June 2014.¹

Along with the noted records of Glaucous Gull from 2022, a couple of other species and their historical context are worthy of mention.

The range map for Chimney Swifts (*Chaetura pelagica*) in *The Birds of Manitoba* does not show them as far north as The Pas.² However, they have been documented in The Pas many times. In the collection of the Sam Waller Museum, Chimney Swifts are



FIGURE 1. Two of 15 Trumpeter Swans observed on 9 May 2023. Photo credit: David Raitt.

represented by at least four nests and one study skin.⁴ Also in the Sam Waller Museum is the following note “I noticed a few chimney swifts this year, but they seemed entirely absent last year, and fairly common in the years before that.”⁵ Note that I was unable to confirm the year or location referred to in the preceding quote, and Sam Waller did live in a number of other places over the years, but based on the other notes found with the one above, I consider it to refer to The Pas, Manitoba. The Manitoba Chimney Swift Initiative has notes on two buildings in The Pas with chimneys that were suspected or confirmed as having Chimney Swifts using them.⁶ One of those buildings has had its chimneys altered in recent years, such that they are no longer suitable for Chimney Swifts. In 2022 Joel Kayer (pers. com.), and subsequently other observers, saw Chimney Swifts entering and exiting a

chimney in The Pas that had not been previously identified as a confirmed site for Chimney Swifts. This new potential nesting location improves the likelihood that Chimney Swifts will be able to cling on to this habitat north of their typically cited range.

From near-extinction in the 1930s to recovery success story, most readers will be familiar with the history of the Trumpeter Swan (*Cygnus buccinator*) in North America. In 2003, *The Birds of Manitoba* showed the Trumpeter Swan as a rare visitor to the southeastern corner of the province.² Four years later, and hundreds of kilometres to the northwest, I was lucky to find a pair with five cygnets on a wetland near The Pas. In the past few years, the trickle of records of Trumpeter Swans in this area have increased significantly. From 2019 to 2021, I recorded Trumpeter Swans in the area on seven occasions. In 2022, my

encounters increased to 13, with nine sightings during the nesting season, including one sighting of a pair with six cygnets. A search of eBird Canada produced six reports of Trumpeter Swans in this area from four other observers in 2022.¹ Similar increases have been documented in other parts of Manitoba, particularly in Riding Mountain National Park, and in suitable habitat east of the Red River and Lake Winnipeg.⁷ Note that the local trend appears to be continuing; on 9 May 2023, in an effort to get a photograph to accompany this article, I drove approximately 33 km in suitable habitat and located 15 Trumpeter Swans (Figure 1).

Acknowledgements

Thank you to Joel Kayer, Lindsey Bylo, Ethan Dobbs, and Cole Phillips for providing information on their sightings and suggestions on which species to include. Thank you to Peter Taylor for providing editorial and content comments that greatly improved this article. Thank you to Enya Barbeau for providing access to the collections of Sam Waller Museum.

1. eBird. 2023. eBird: An online database of bird distribution and abundance [web application]. eBird, Cornell Lab of Ornithology, Ithaca, New York. Accessed 4 February 2023. <http://www.ebird.org>.


2. Manitoba Avian Research Committee (2003) The Birds of Manitoba. Manitoba Naturalists Society, Winnipeg, Manitoba.

3. Waller S (1967) Some interesting bird records from The Pas, Manitoba. *Blue Jay* 25(3).

4. Sam Waller Museum, The Pas, Manitoba, Chimney Swift nest specimens (a) PN11.72.13, (b) PN83.487.1, (c) PN83.488.1, (d) PN83.486.1, and Chimney Swift study skin PN11.74.20.

5. Sam Waller Museum, The Pas, Manitoba, 5.2.4 Birds Broadcast in Sam Waller fonds.

6. Manitoba Chimney Swift Initiative Manitoba Chimney Swift Initiative – Stewardship and outreach for a threatened species. Accessed 16 March 23. mbchimneyswift.com.

7. Koes RF (2018) Trumpeter Swan *in* Artuso C, Couturier AR, De Smet KD, Koes RF, Lepage D, McCracken J, Mooi RD, and Taylor P (eds.). The Atlas of the Breeding Birds of Manitoba, 2010-2014. Bird Studies Canada. Winnipeg, Manitoba. Accessed 8 May 2023. <http://www.birdatlas.mb.ca/accounts/speciesaccount.jsp?sp=TRUS&lang=en>. 

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