

A large flock of Rusty Blackbirds is captured in flight over a field of tall, dry grass. The birds are black with a distinctive red patch on their throat and a yellowish-orange patch on their wing. They are scattered throughout the frame, with some in the foreground and others further back, creating a sense of movement and a large gathering. The background is a soft-focus field of dry grass, and the overall lighting is natural, suggesting a bright day.

Mobilizing Two Countries for Conservation

Rusty Blackbird Spring Migration Blitz

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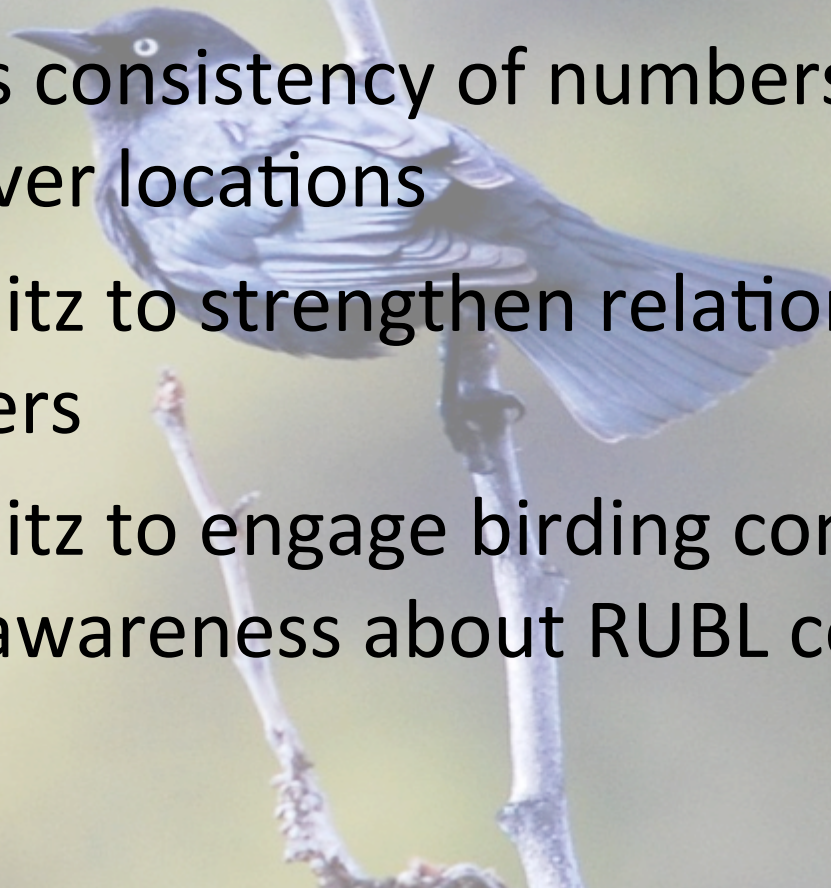
Blitz: Background

- Increased understanding of breeding and wintering ecology
- Successful Winter Blitz
- What about migration?
 - Hotspots?
 - Habitat selection?



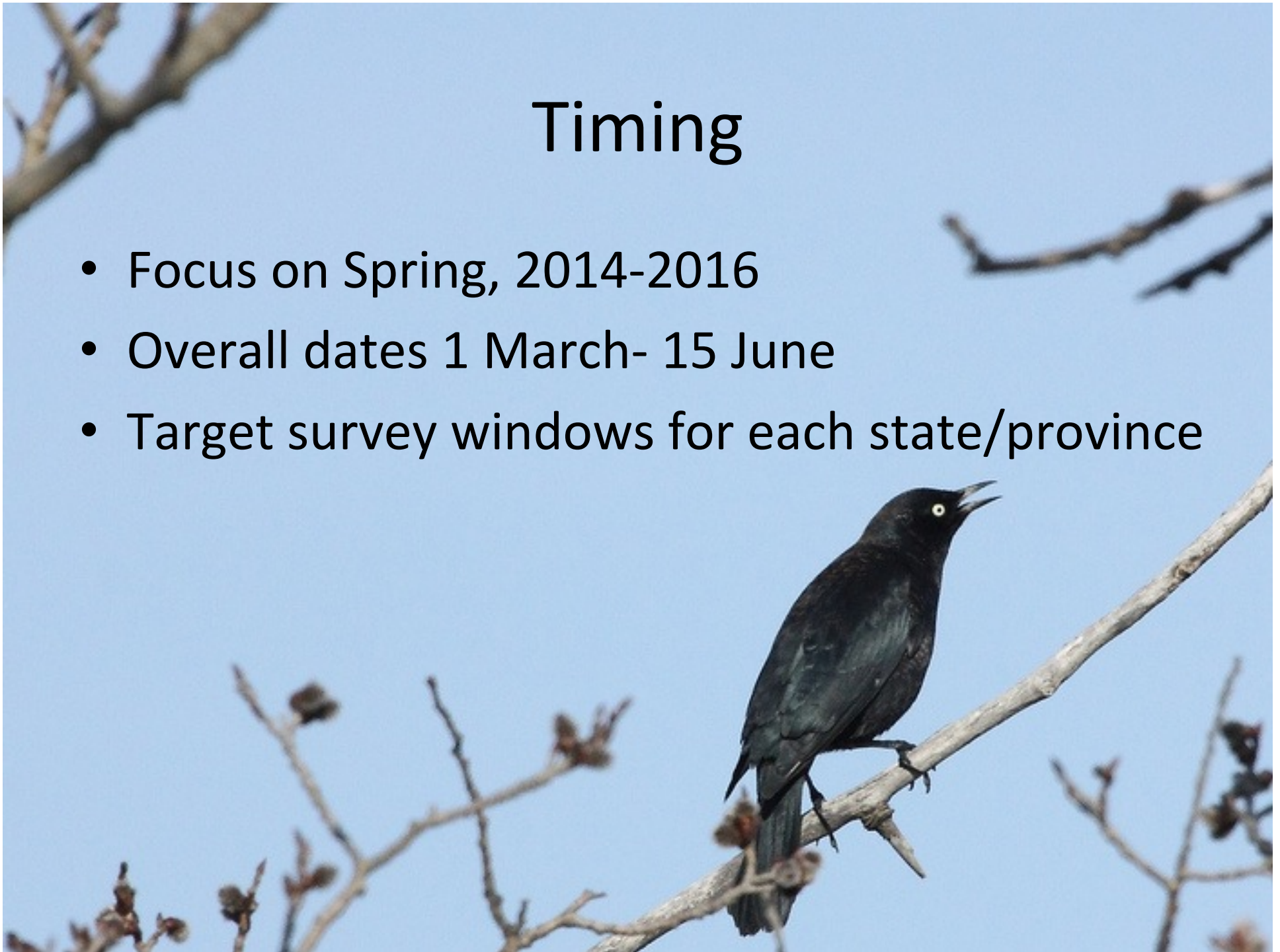
Blitz: Objectives

- Determine important migratory stopover sites for spring migration
- Assess consistency of numbers and timing at stopover locations
- Use Blitz to strengthen relationships with partners
- Use Blitz to engage birding community and raise awareness about RUBL conservation



Timing

- Focus on Spring, 2014-2016
- Overall dates 1 March- 15 June
- Target survey windows for each state/province



Participation and Structure

- 38 States, 9 Canadian Provinces, 3 Canadian Territories
- International coordinator
- Coordination committee
- ~60 State/Province coordinators
- Birders submit all data through eBird

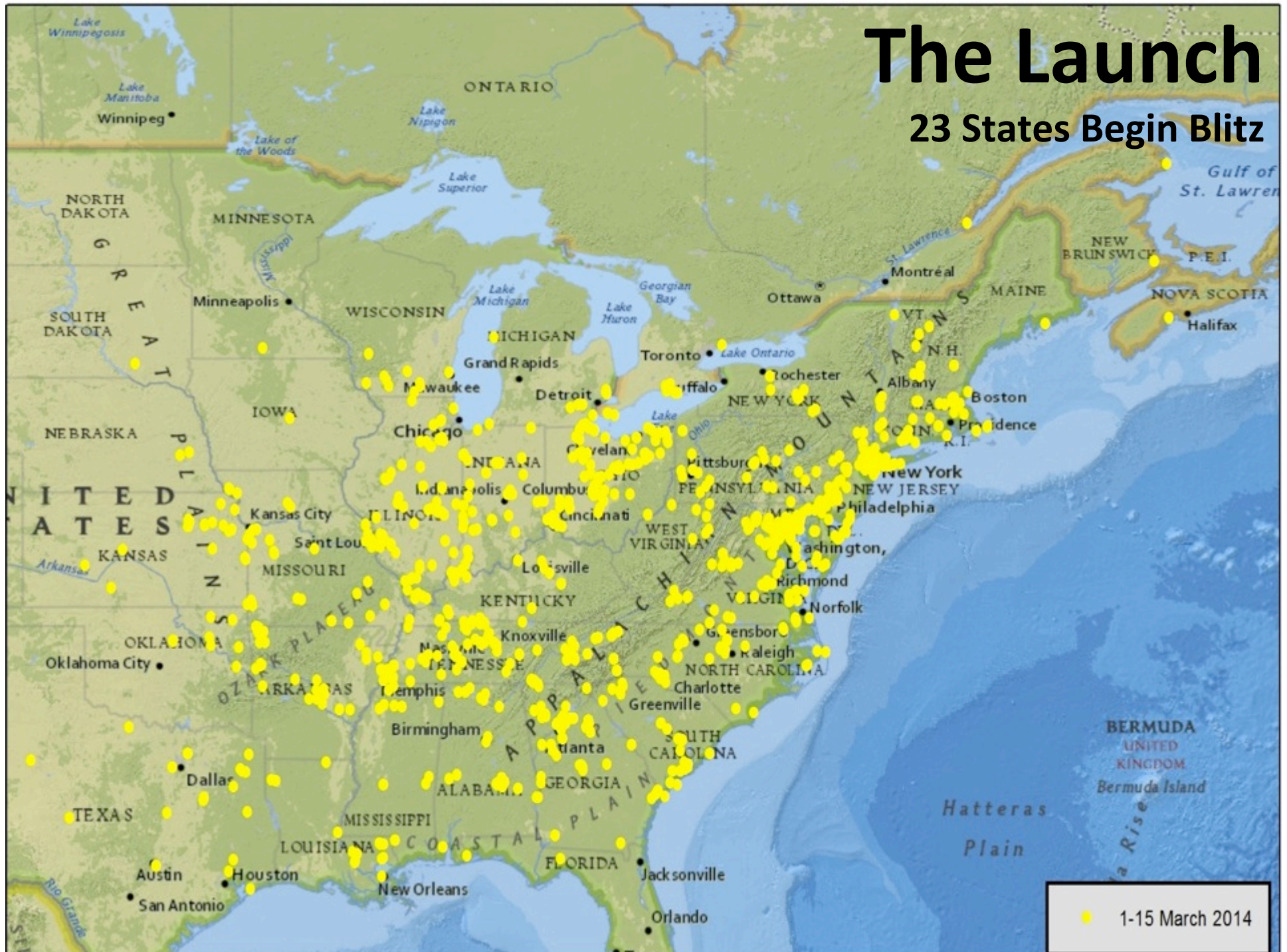


Participant Resources



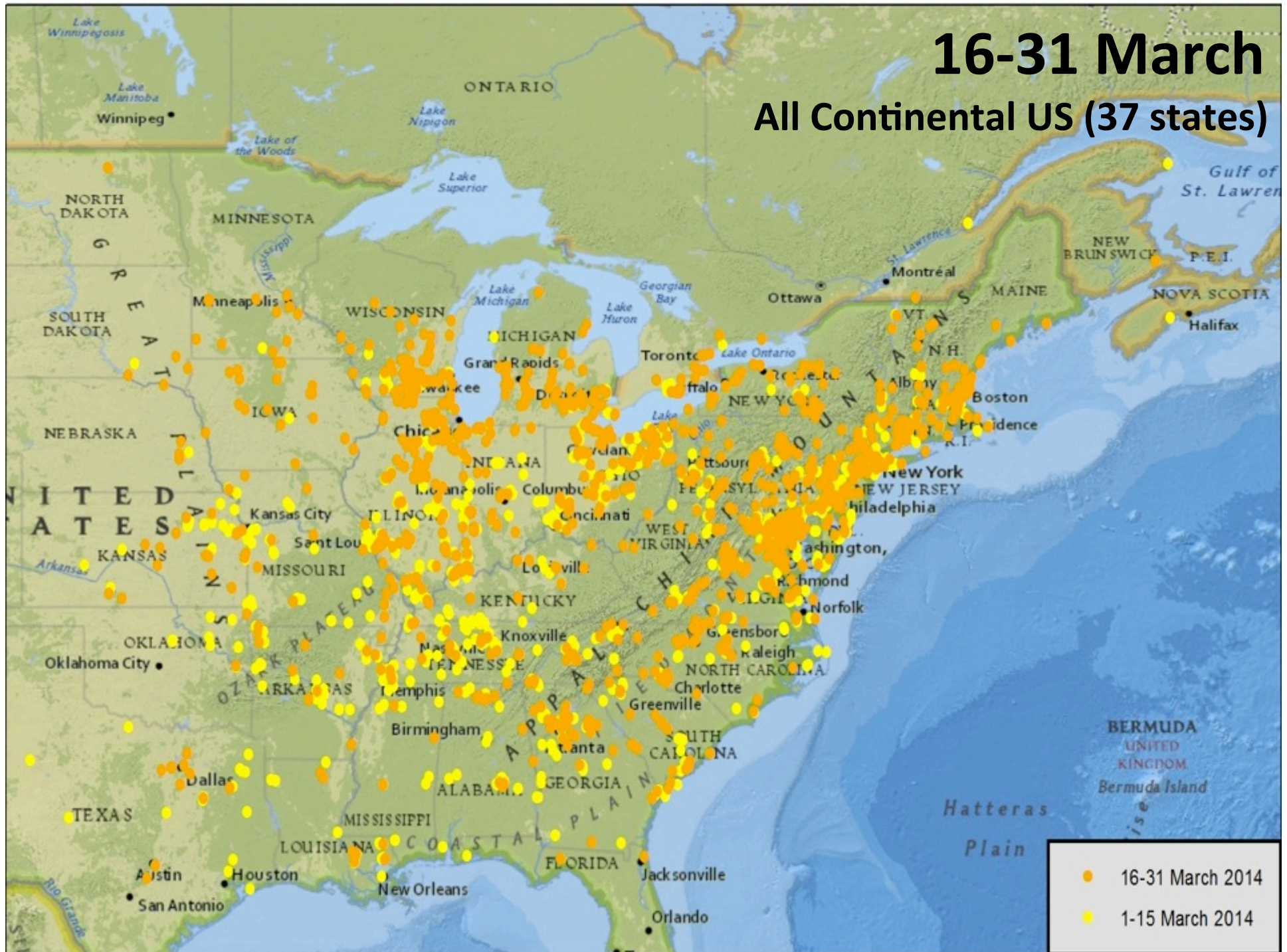
The Launch

23 States Begin Blitz



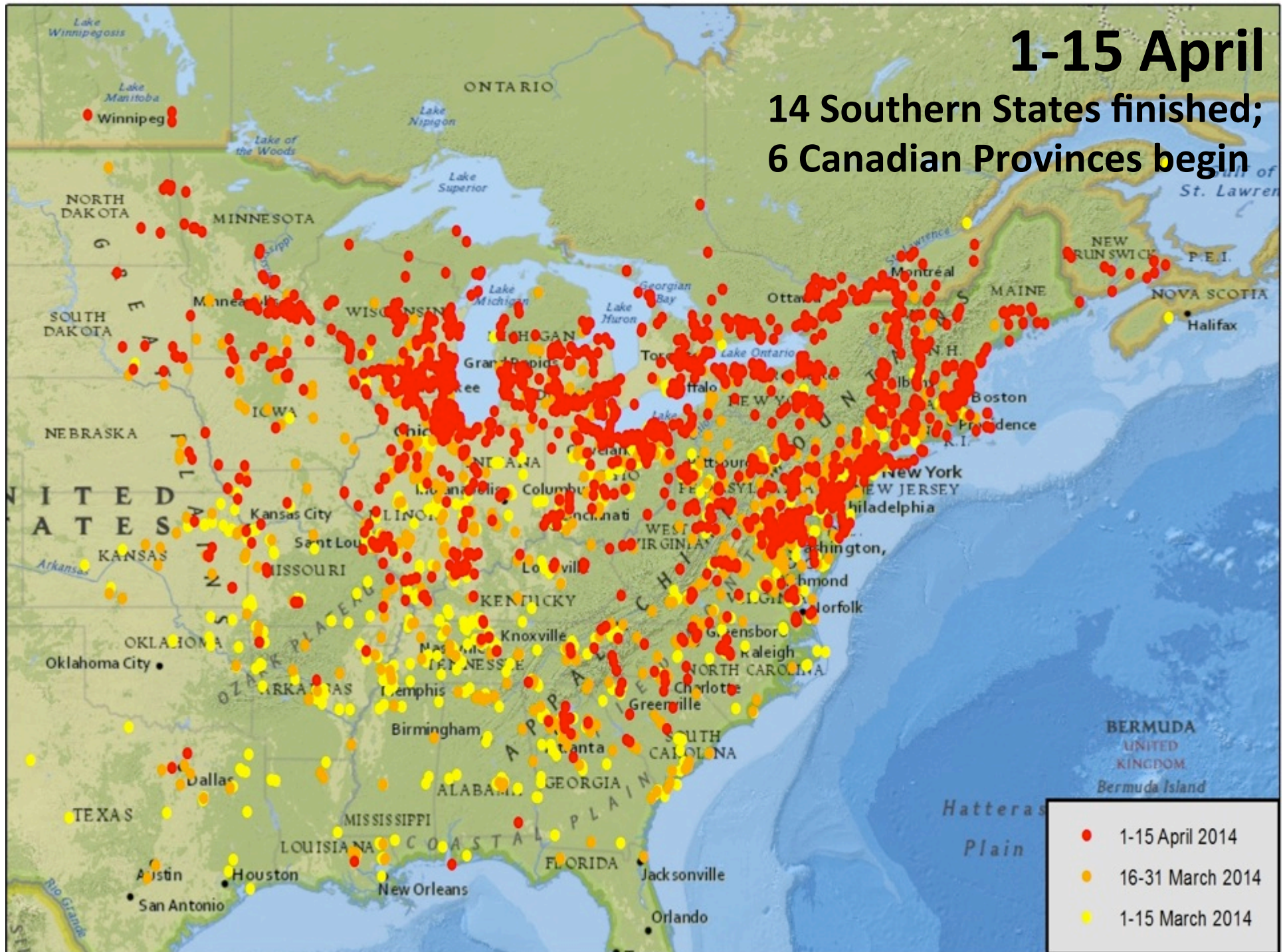
16-31 March

All Continental US (37 states)



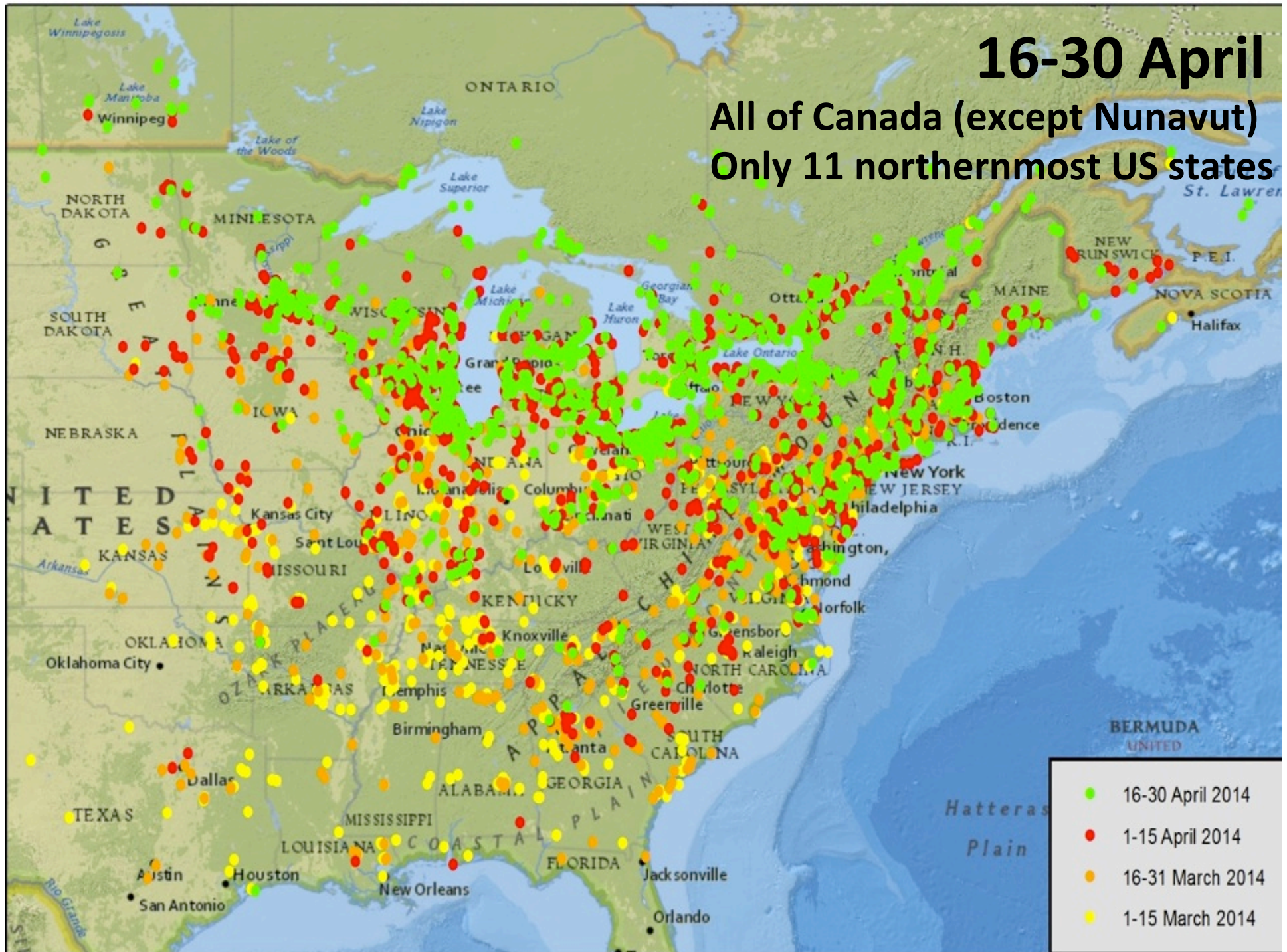
1-15 April

14 Southern States finished;
6 Canadian Provinces begin

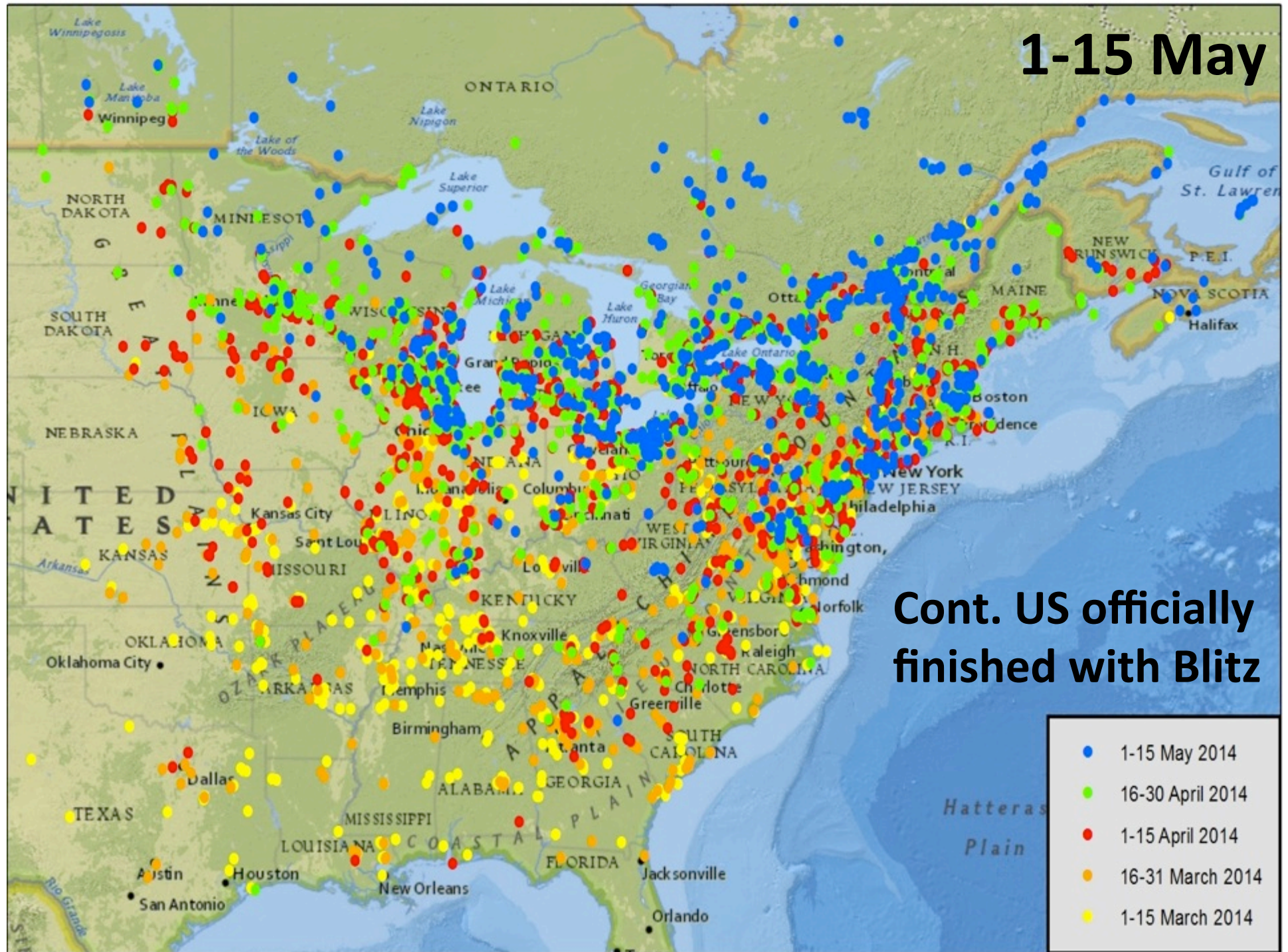


16-30 April

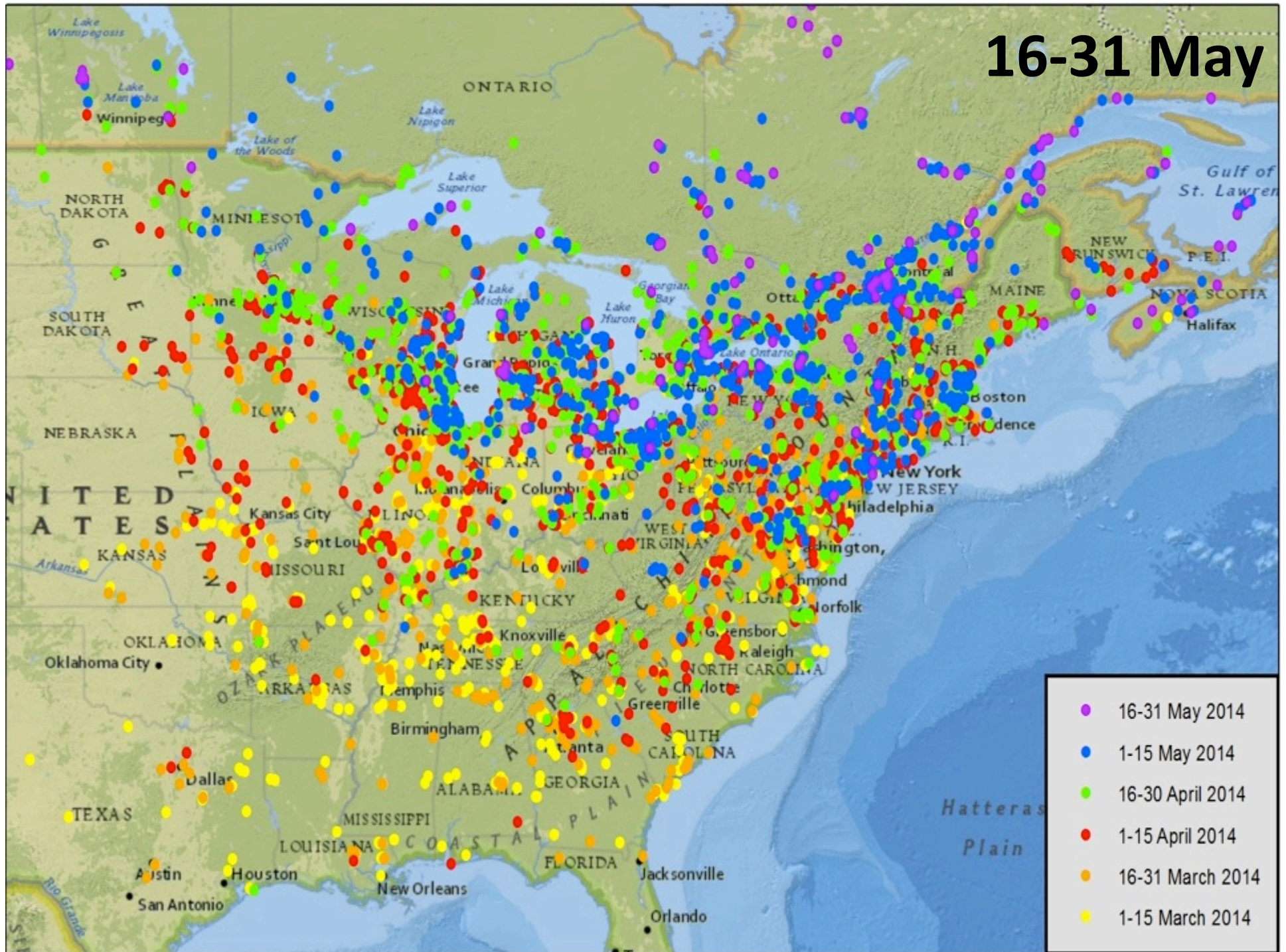
All of Canada (except Nunavut)
Only 11 northernmost US states



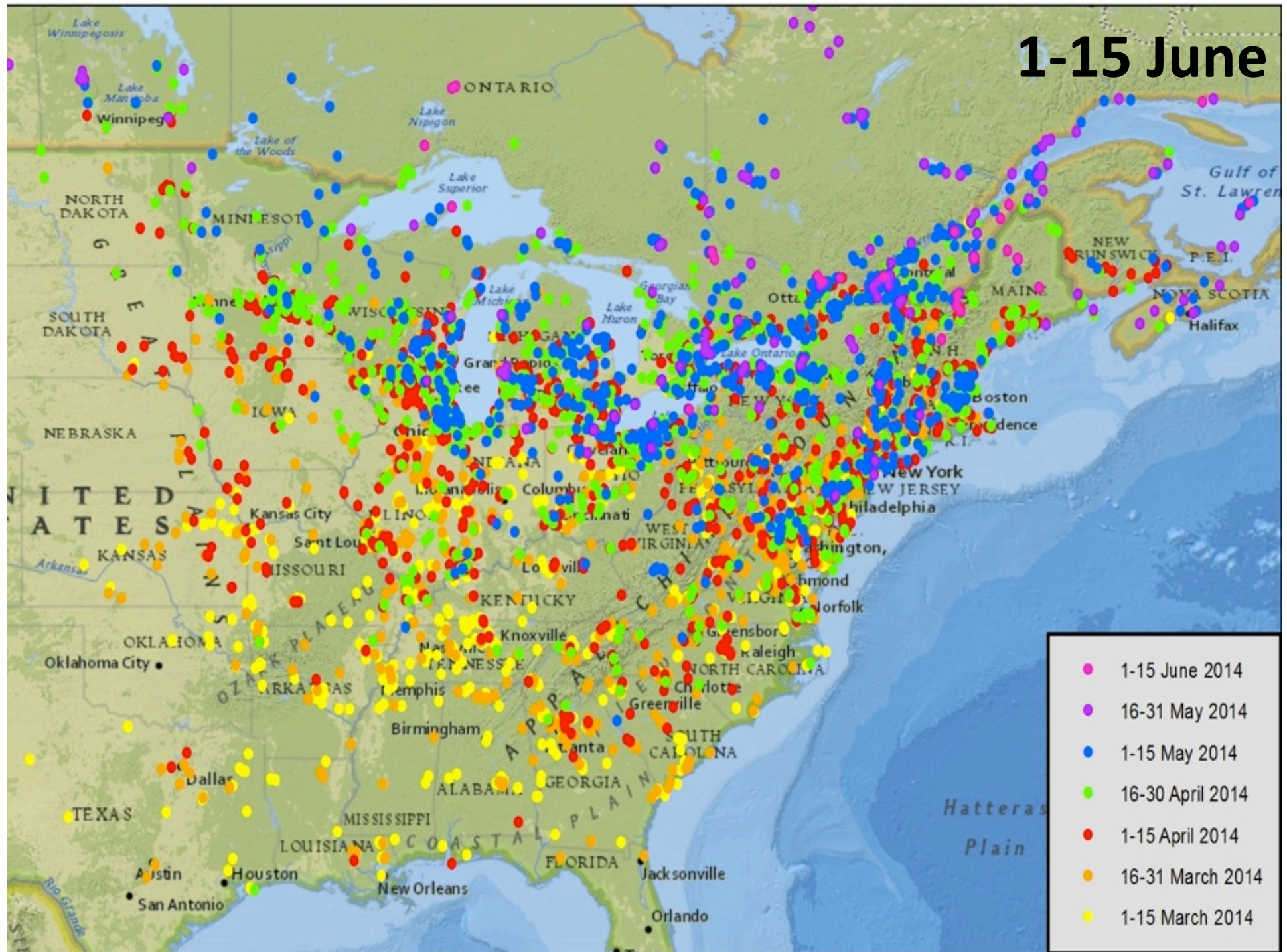
1-15 May

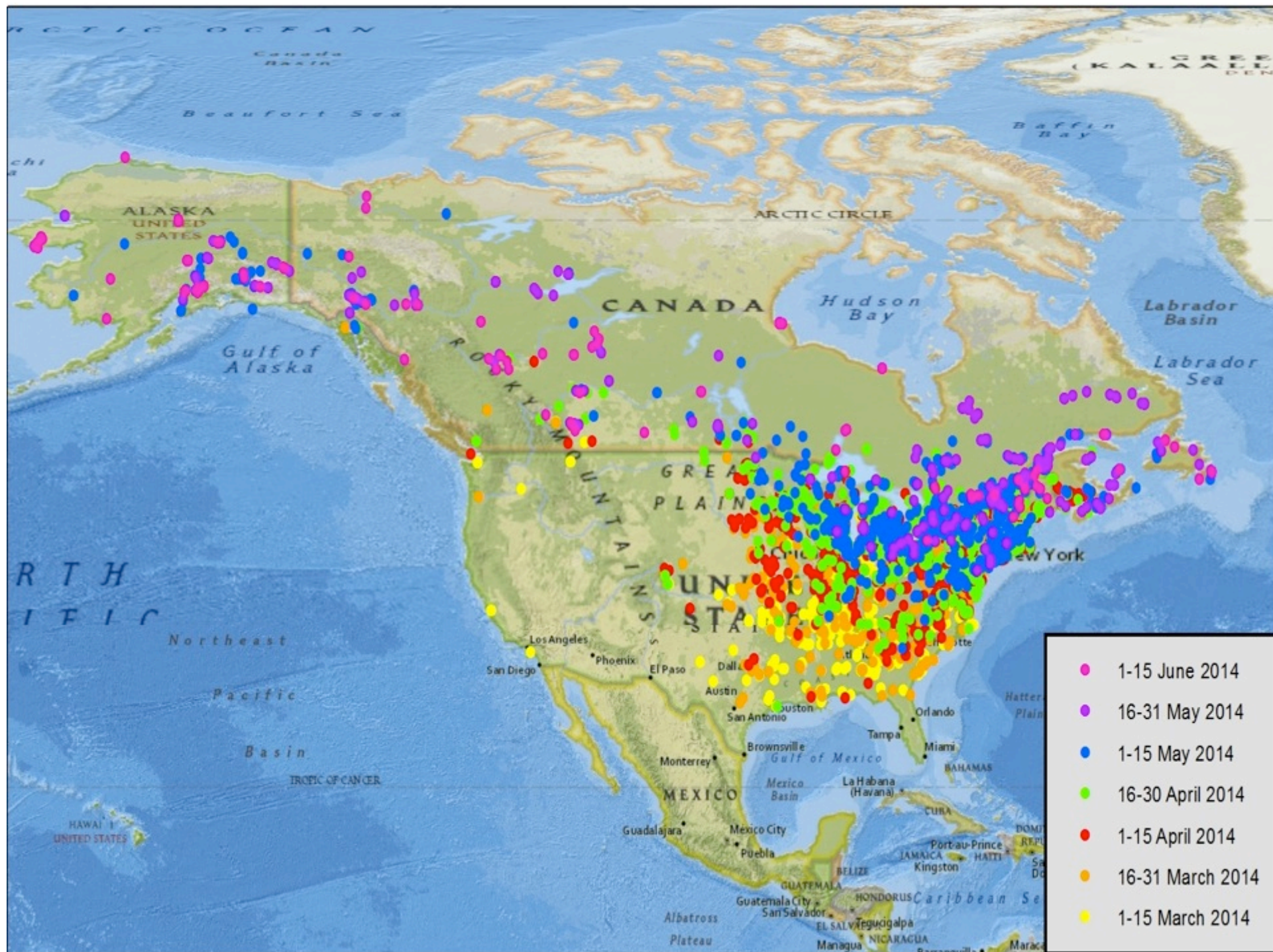


16-31 May



1-15 June

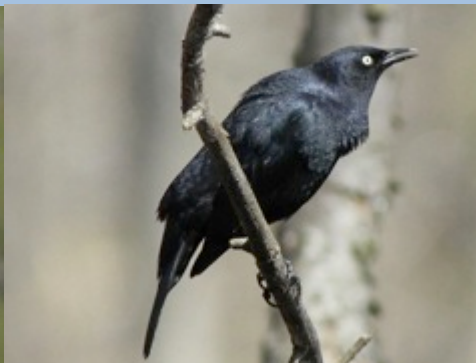




Between 1 March and 15 June 2014...

... 4570 birders submitted 13,398 checklists with RUBL observations

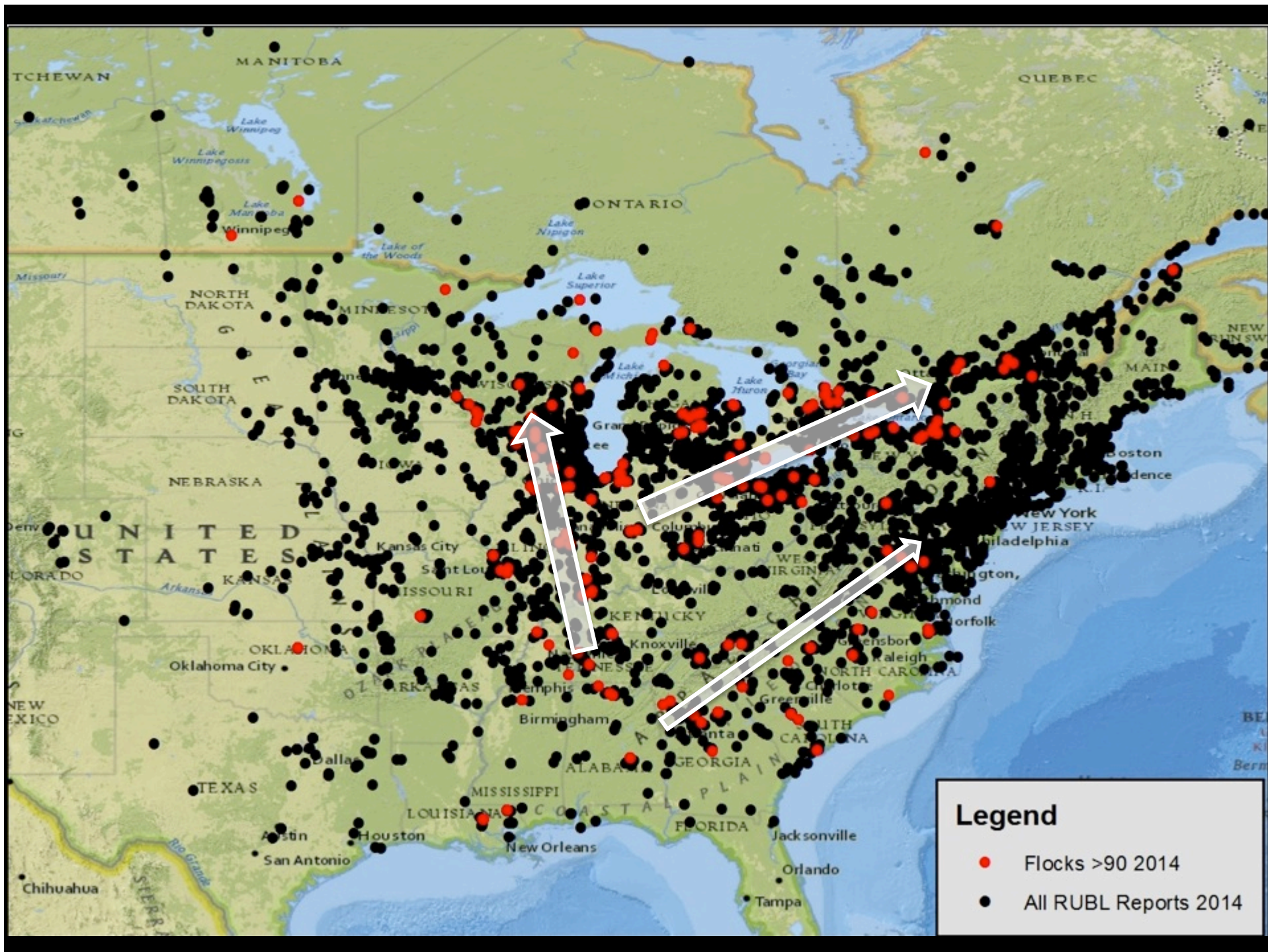
... # of checklists reporting RUBL increased 61%, compared with the same period in 2013



Next Step: Identifying Hotspots

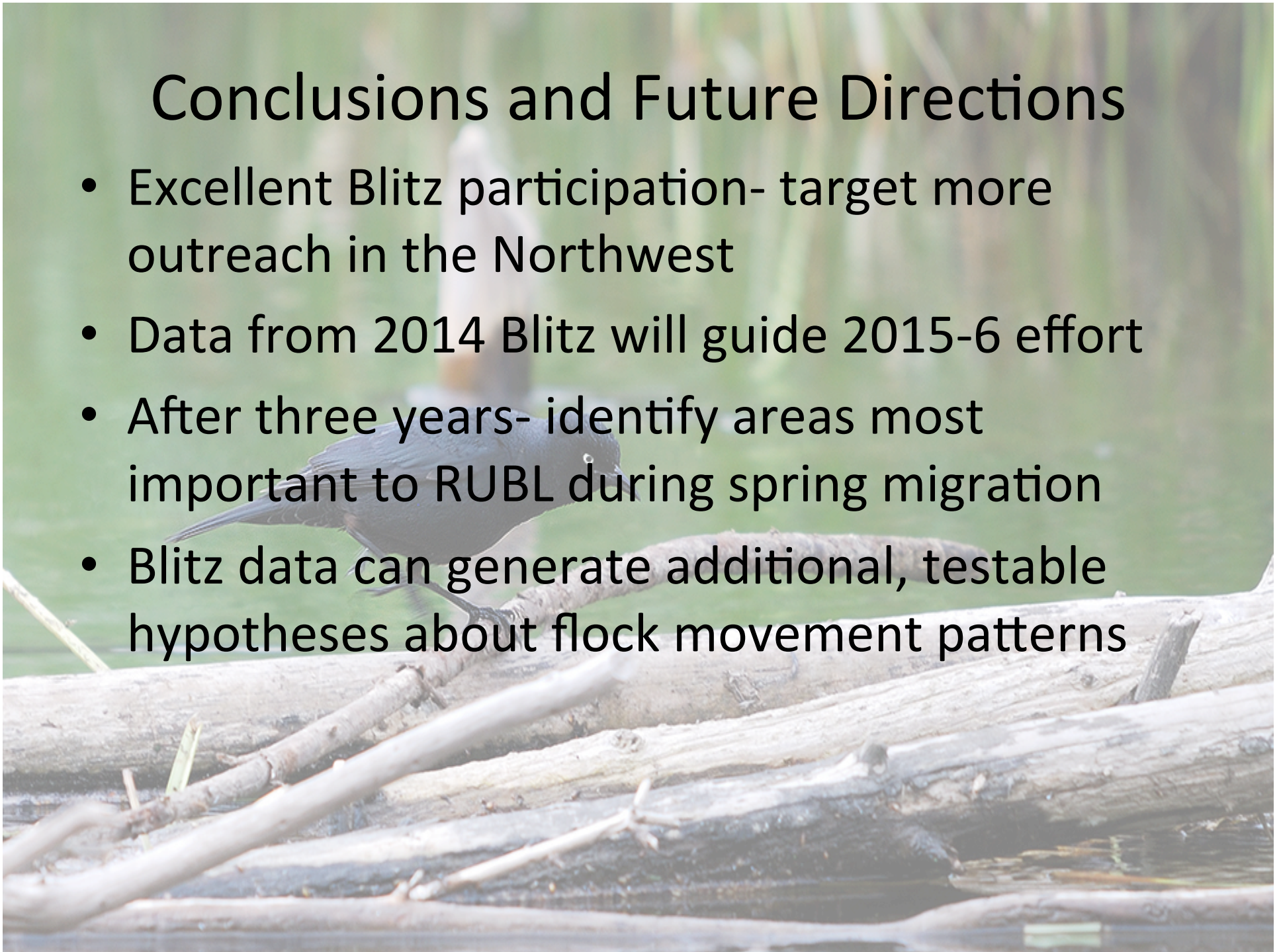
- Need to identify potential hotspots to direct birder effort in 2015
- IBA criteria for Rusty migration: 90+ individuals





Conclusions and Future Directions

- Excellent Blitz participation- target more outreach in the Northwest
- Data from 2014 Blitz will guide 2015-6 effort
- After three years- identify areas most important to RUBL during spring migration
- Blitz data can generate additional, testable hypotheses about flock movement patterns



Acknowledgements

- USFWS, CLO, eBird, KY Dept of Fish and Wildlife, PA Game Commission, NH Audubon, DEC Newfoundland and Labrador
- State and provincial coordinators
- 4750 birders



