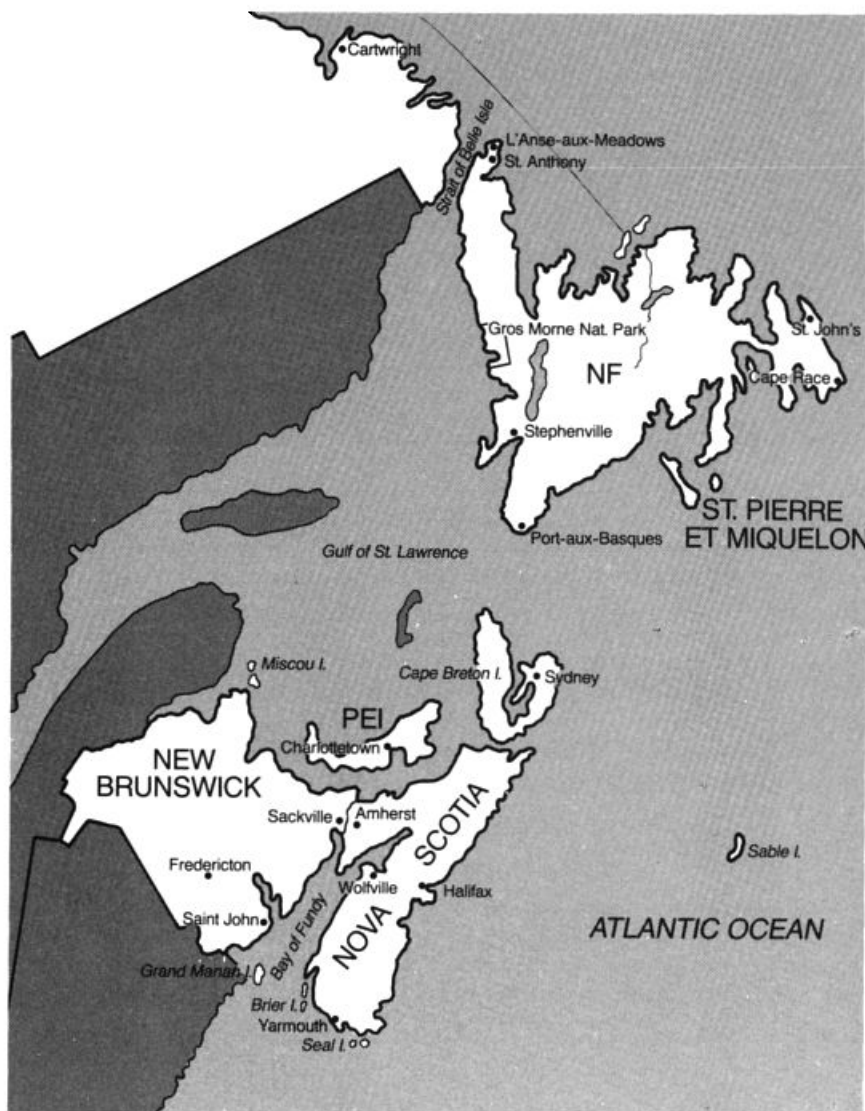


atlantic provinces region



IAN A. MCLAREN

Earlier forecasts predicted average weather in Atlantic Canada, despite El Niño. Instead, we were swept by large, lingering weather systems, bringing above-average temperatures and much rain to coastal Nova Scotia and southeast Newfoundland, and heavy snows elsewhere. Normally frozen water remained open or opened earlier, and ground feeders were more dispersed than usual where snow was lacking. Berry crops

were rated as very high in southeast Newfoundland and Prince Edward Island, although only moderate, reported Christie, in New Brunswick and Nova Scotia. Although unexceptional numbers of half-hardy laggards and vagrants remained in December, their subsequent survival was higher than usual. Bohemian Waxwings and redpolls arrived in large numbers. Most Christmas Bird Count data will only appear in local publications. Unattributed sightings are *vide* subregional compilers.

Abbreviations: CBI (Cape Breton I., NS); CSI (Cape Sable I., NS); GMI (Grand Manan I., NB); PEI (without locality, Prince Edward Island); SPM (the French islands of St.-Pierre-et-Miquelon).

LOONS TO WATERFOWL

A Red-throated Loon Dec. 9 was the latest ever on SPM, and 29 on the CBC of Barrington, NS, were unusual. A well-described **Pacific Loon** was at LaHave, NS, Dec. 9 (J&S Cohrs). The species has yet to be confirmed by photos or specimens in the Region. Up to five Pied-billed Grebes wintered in Nova Scotia; one in St. John's was the first known to have done so in Newfoundland. Notable at Trepassey Jan. 24 and near St. John's Feb. 5, were individual Horned Grebes, "strangely rare in Newfoundland" (BMT). How routine were approximately 200 N. Fulmars around a fishing boat Jan. 26 on Browns Bank, NS (R. D'Entremont)? Greater Shearwaters were seen into early December off Brier I., NS (CH), and one was off GMI Dec. 10 (*vide* BD). A Sooty Shearwater s. of SPM Dec. 8 (L. Jackman) and another off Pt. Prim, PEI, Dec. 27 (E. Townsend, J. Fraser) presumably reflected open waters. Some N. Gannets, as usual in recent years, were off Brier I., NS, through winter (CH).

Even with possible misidentifications, CBCs of 35 Double-crested Cormorants in Nova Scotia, 15 in New Brunswick, and seven off SPM amplified a recent trend. At St. John's, NF, one Great Blue Heron to late January and another appearing in February were exceptional; only two were noted through winter in Nova Scotia. A Black-crowned Night-Heron on CSI to Jan. 3 (MN et al.) was the latest on record for Nova Scotia.

Up to 600 Brant arriving late January on Cape Sable I., NS, swelled to 4000 by late February (v.o.). Last fall's **Tundra Swan** on the Barrington R., NS, was rediscovered there Dec. 27–Jan. 3. Identity of another swan (no yellow on bill) Feb. 27 onward near Bartletts Beach, Digby, NS (MN, v.o.), remained disputed, most favoring Tundra, others the no-longer-impossible Trumpe-

ter. A Whooper Swan, an assumed escapee, that appeared on GMI last summer was still present Jan. 10 (PP). In New Brunswick, CBC Mallards have increased unsteadily from less than 5% of Black Duck numbers in the mid-1980s to almost 40% this winter, but less extremely in Nova Scotia: from 2% to 15%. Among the usual dabblers in urban harbors and parks were three females and six male Eur. Wigeons in St. John's, NF, and a pair in Dartmouth, NS. Thirteen male "Eur." Green-winged Teal, and presumably some females, wintered among some 45 teal in St. John's, NF.

Unusual were a female Canvasback Dec. 27 through winter in Saint John, NB, and a male Jan. 10–Feb. 8 in Yarmouth, NS (v.o.). Tufted Ducks waned a little: two females in St. John's, NF; a female and two males from Jan. 1 in Pictou Harbor, NS (K. McKenna et al.); and a male returning Dec. 27 for a 3rd winter at Saint John, NB. Lesser Scaup included eight Dec. 20 on PEI, where unusual. In Newfoundland, 51 Harlequin Ducks on the Cape St. Marys CBC were "the best result in several years" (BMT); the usual approximately 20 off Prospect, NS, and 25 surveyed at The Wolves, NB, Feb. 11 (A. MacDougall) were the only other reported concentrations. Surf Scoter numbers "jumped considerably" (DC) on New Brunswick CBCs, but no clear scoter trends were noted elsewhere. Again impressive were the 170 CBC Barrow's Goldeneyes at Dalhousie, NB.

RAPTORS TO ALCIDS

Last fall's two **Black Vultures** lingered at Lamèque, NB, to Dec. 27, supplying a Regional CBC first. Up to 22 Turkey Vultures through winter at Yarmouth, NS, out-matched four in their usual concentration on Brier I. Wanderers were at Sydney, NS, Jan. 2 (C. McDonald) and Fredericton, NB, Feb. 21 (D. Gibson). The 395 Bald Eagles censused Jan. 31 in Kings, NS, were below the 5-year average of 456. The CBC 68 at Black's Harbor, NB, were also notable. While N. Harriers "dropped greatly, no doubt due to early snow" in New Brunswick (DC), a record 44 were on Nova Scotia CBCs. Above-average numbers of Sharp-shinned Hawks and N. Goshawks were on Maritime CBCs, and the former were "common" (BMT) in St. John's, NF, this winter. Unprecedented numbers of Cooper's Hawks included three in Nova Scotia (two well described), two in PEI (no details), and an adult through winter at Fredericton, NB (D. Gibson, PP).

Numbers of usual buteos were about average. A well-described Red-shouldered

Hawk was at Economy, NS, Jan. 16 (F. Spalding), and another spent a 2nd winter at Shemogue, NB (v.o.). As routine in recent years, there were three CBC Broad-winged Hawks in Nova Scotia, two into mid-January (v.o.). An Am. Kestrel on SPM to Jan. 1 (B. Letournel) and a Merlin wintering at St. John's, NF, were on the fringes. Post-CBC Peregrine Falcons included the usual bird in Saint John, NB, up to six in Nova Scotia, and an ad. *tundrius* (per BMT) in St. John's, NF. Gyrfalcons in Newfoundland stalled in the north this winter (BMT), but one got to Dartmouth, NS, Dec. 9 (P. Serwylo), another to GMI, NB, in late December (*vide* BD), and two wintered around Dalhousie, NB (v.o.).

In Nova Scotia, 72 Gray Partridge on the Truro CBC compensated their near disappearance from long-occupied King's. Ruffed Grouse declined in Maritime CBCs. A weak **Clapper Rail** Dec. 26 on Miscou I., NB, died 2 days later (H. Chiasson). A Sora Jan. 25–31 at St. John's, NF (D. Phelan et al.), although not unprecedented in the Region, was the latest ever in Newfoundland (BMT). A dead **Purple Gallinule** Jan. 31 on CSI (*vide* MN) supplied a 7th January record for Nova Scotia. Two Am. Coots survived winter in Nova Scotia, and one in Saint John Feb. 28 was apparently the latest ever in New Brunswick (DC).

More shorebirds than usual lingered, especially in s. Nova Scotia. At least five Black-bellied Plover wintered on CSI, NS. A Killdeer stayed in St. John's, NF, to Jan. 26 (K. Knowles), and two were at Western Head, NS, until at least Jan. 23 (RDS). A Greater Yellowlegs was found Feb. 21 and beyond at Thomasville, NS (MN et al.), a repeat of last year's occurrence. A Lesser Yellowlegs Dec. 16–21 at Hartlen Pt., NS (IM, J. Taylor), supplied a 2nd-latest Regional occurrence. The autumn **Bar-tailed Godwit** on CSI was gone Dec. 12 (v.o.), after which one appeared at Plymouth, MA (q.v.). About 15 Ruddy Turnstones on CSI, NS, were less surprising than the few wintering on the Avalon Pen., NF (v.o.). A Red Knot Jan. 24–Feb. 4 at Renew's (v.o.) was the latest ever in Newfoundland, while approximately 30 wintering on CSI furnished a record number in Nova Scotia.

A Semipalmated Sandpiper was carefully identified Dec. 18 on CSI (JN). Three White-rumped Sandpipers stayed to Jan. 4 on CSI (MN). Purple Sandpipers on CBCs included a whopping 733 in Nova Scotia and 470+ in New Brunswick. At least a dozen Dunlins wintered in s. Nova Scotia. Two

Com. Snipe wintering in spring seepage at Sugarloaf P.P. were surprising for n. New Brunswick (M. Gallant Doyle). Of six early-winter Am. Woodcock, the most marginal was on SPM Dec. 25, and the latest in *Shelburne*, NS, Jan. 4 (MN).

An ad. **Little Gull** Feb. 4 through the period at Eel Brook, NS (MN et al.), was unusual. Black-headed Gulls continue to winter more widely in Nova Scotia, with almost 200 on CBCs. More than usual Bonaparte's Gulls stayed in Nova Scotia, and three during February in St. John's, NF, were unexpected (BMT). Wintering Mew (Common) Gulls included four around St. John's, NF, and a first-winter in Yarmouth, NS (v.o.). **Yellow-legged Gulls** seem now a seasonal certainty in St. John's, NF. One adult was found Dec. 31–Jan. 1 (BMT et al.) and another Jan. 30 and Feb. 4 (PL et al.), both meticulously described by Mactavish as having characteristics of *michahellis*. Six Lesser Black-backed Gulls (only one adult) spent at least part of the winter in St. John's, NF (BMT et al.), while Nova Scotia had a 2nd-winter bird on CSI in late December (JN, BMy) and an adult near Canning Feb. 21 (RS).

Inshore Dovekies were notable only on Nova Scotia's Atlantic coast, especially in late January. Falk Hüttmann reported 40,000+ alcids Jan 23 at Old Proprietor Shoals, s.e. NB; roughly 5% Dovekies, 30% Com. Murres, and 65% Razorbills. Record CBCs of 750 Com. Murres and 7500 Razorbills off GMI, along with 378 of the

SA A veritable blizzard of **Ivory Gulls** in Newfoundland was monitored by Bruce Mactavish. Seventeen arrived at L'Anse-aux-Meadows Dec. 21. Then strong northerlies in early January brought hundreds to the Northern Pen. By Jan. 6, there were some 60 Ivory Gulls as far south as Bonavista, and 30+ on Avalon Pen. Birds gradually recovered from the buffeting and all were gone by the end of January. Mactavish estimated that they totaled in the low thousands, of which 85-90% were adults, close to past percentages. Four wandered farther: to the Canso Causeway, NS, Dec. 29–31 (R. Lauff et al.); to Lamèque I., NB, Dec. 27–Jan. 1 (v.o.); to St. Thomas, NB, through February (M. LeBlanc); and to *Pictou*, NS, in January, where a bird died (H. Brennan).

latter off Brier I., NS, also stress the importance of the mouth of the Bay of Fundy for wintering alcids.

OWLS TO SHRIKES

It was at best an average winter for Snowy Owls. A Long-eared Owl Jan. 25 in Dartmouth, NS, exhibited "overall paleness . . . and particularly . . . extensive white streaking on the nape" (R. Foxall), fitting the western subspecies *tuftsi*. Enquiries indicate that "pure" eastern and western birds might be separated, but individual variability is large (J. Marks). A late Short-eared Owl was at Pt. Lance, NF, Dec. 20. Nova Scotia boasted some 22, but only one was reported from snowier New Brunswick. The only reported N. Hawk Owl was on Miscou I., NB, through winter (M. David). Open water searches for Belted Kingfishers yielded CBC records of eight in PEI, and 25 in Nova Scotia (approximately 12 into January or later).

A Red-headed Woodpecker wintered at Shelburne (v.o.), and one was reported late December on Campobello I., NB. Red-bellies at Kingston (G. Thompson et al.) and Truro (v.o.) occurred throughout. A **Three-toed Woodpecker** Feb. 2 at Economy, NS (M. Peterson), was a Regional rarity. Berries and open terrain later sustained many of 50+ CBC N. Flickers in Newfoundland and 149 in Nova Scotia. A pair of Tree Swallows, presumably storm-displaced, appeared Feb. 3 at Liscomb, NS, and investigated a nest box for more than an hour (D. Croft). There is one late February precedent. Red-breasted Nuthatches were "above average" in e. Newfoundland (BMt), but after last fall's abundance, substantial numbers remained elsewhere only in s. New Brunswick. White-breasteds, scarce elsewhere in the Maritimes, were "quite numerous" in New Brunswick (DC). The season's only Carolina Wren frequented a feeder near Saint John, NB, into early February (M. Williams et al.). Individual Ruby-crowned Kinglets were near Cape St. Mary's, NF, Dec. 20 (I. Jones) and through winter in Truro, NS.

The only errant Blue-gray Gnatcatcher survived in St. John's, NF, to Dec. 13 (m.ob.). The season's only Townsend's Solitaire was on Miscou I., NB, Jan. 11–24 (J. Laroque et al.). A **Redwing** found Feb. 11 in St. John's, NF (PL), was spotted by a few others Feb. 16 and again in early March, supplying a 6th Regional record, 5th in Newfoundland, and 4th in St. John's. It was elusive among approximately 2000 Am. Robins, sustained by the bumper crop of mountain ash berries. There were also "very

high numbers" of robins in PEI (DM) and large flocks in s.w. Nova Scotia. A thrush with an injured leg sampling fruits at a Salisbury, NB, feeder in early December had field marks of a Veery (J&L Decoste). Of three Gray Catbirds in Nova Scotia, the latest was on CSI Jan. 1–4 (v.o.). A Brown Thrasher wintered at a feeder in Ferryland, NF (v.o.), but another at Midgic, NB, disappeared in early January.

Unusual for SPM were one or more Am. Pipits to Feb. 7. Bohemian Waxwings staged probably their biggest invasion ever in Newfoundland, where flocks totaled around 12,000 in St. John's (BMt). While Nova Scotia boasted flocks of 1500+, the only huge gathering in New Brunswick was approximately 2000 Dec. 1. Although they persisted elsewhere in numbers, they were rare after mid-February in St. John's, even with much food remaining (BMt). Cedar Waxwings were also exceptionally numerous in Nova Scotia (v.o.), "very high" (DM) in PEI, but only "above average" (DC) in New Brunswick and "moderate" in s.e. Newfoundland (BMt). Numbers of N. Shrikes were average or below average throughout.

VIREOS TO FINCHES

A Blue-headed Vireo was tardy in St. John's, NF, Dec. 5–9 (BMt). An unusually high proportion of near-record numbers of laggard and vagrant warblers survived winter (*Table 1*). Some deserve further comment. December Orange-crowneds in Dartmouth, NS (RS), and Saint John, NB (J. Wilson), were rated bright enough to be *lutescens*, while two in New Brunswick were considered more plausibly *orestera* or yellow extremes of *celata* (DC, ST). In New Brunswick, they fed on juice from unpicked apples. The Nashville wintering in Yarmouth, NS, was diagnosed as eastern (B&E Ruff, v.o.). A carefully identified Blackpoll Warbler was on CSI, NS (MN et al.). A Palm Warbler Dec. 12–20 in Pictou, NS, was western (C. Brennan et al.), whereas one Feb. 16 at Broad Cove, NS, was eastern (SF). The Jan. 6 individual was the latest ever on SPM. Black-and-white Warblers supplied record-late dates for both provinces; the latest in St. John's, NF, was "never known to go to feeders" (BMt). A male Wilson's Warbler photographed in Halifax Dec. 14 (IM) was bright enough for *pileolata*, although this would need measurements. The SPM Yellow-breasted Chat was a first there for winter.

A hapless **Summer Tanager** gleaned apples and suet Dec 8–24 in Riverview, NB

(S. Hunt et al.). On CBCs there were some 33 N. Cardinals in New Brunswick and a record 26 in Nova Scotia, mostly in s. localities. A northerly pattern of fall vagrancy is suggested by four Dickcissels in St. John's, NF, still alive early January at least two through January in Summerside, PEI (DM); and the fact that six of seven on Nova Scotia CBCs were on CBI. One in Yarmouth, NS, remained until March. More than usual numbers of E. Towhees stayed at feeders: two in s.e. Newfoundland, three in New Brunswick, and five in Nova Scotia, including three through winter.

Quite unexpected were three **Clay-colored Sparrows** at feeders in s.e. Newfoundland, one surviving to March in Ferryland (v.o.). Of five Field Sparrows in New Brunswick, two persisted at a feeder at Edgett's Landing (D. Biggar). Nova Scotia had the winter's only Vesper Sparrow, in *King's* Feb. 8–9 (RS, BF), and individual Lark Sparrows were at feeders at Pig Pond, CBI, through January (J. McNeil), and Port La Tour in late January (G. Smith). A more remarkable **Lark Bunting** came to a feeder Jan. 10 in Avonport, NS (EU). The most exciting sparrow was a **Le Conte's Sparrow** spotted by Forsthye Dec. 25 along sea dikes at Wolfville, NS, and seen by many into spring; apparently a winter first for Canada. Along the same dykes into early January were a Nelson's Sharp-tailed Sparrow thought to be *alterus* (F. Lavender et al.) and a Seaside Sparrow (RS et al.). Oddly, s.e. Newfoundland often retains most Regional Lincoln's Sparrows; five there (BMt) matched the total found elsewhere, all in Nova Scotia. Of three White-crowned Sparrows in Nova Scotia, only one was noted through winter. An "Oregon" Dark-eyed Junco appeared late February at a Hampton, NB, feeder (*fide* ST).

Single Yellow-headed Blackbirds visited feeders at Buchans, NF, to mid-February (D. Burton); Matane, NB, Dec. 8–13 (*fide* R. Wilson); and Avonport, NS, to mid-January (EU). Two wintering Com. Grackles were unusual on SPM. All told, approximately 25 Baltimore Orioles lingered for CBCs, but apparently only one in St. John's, NF, survived into March. Most winter finches were in low to average numbers throughout, but Pine Grosbeaks were more plentiful in Nova Scotia and in 30-year record numbers in New Brunswick (DC). Red Crossbills increased in New Brunswick and Nova Scotia, and White-wingeds were abundant in the latter. This redpoll winter included the usual sprinkling of Hoary Redpolls, some well documented. The warm, wet

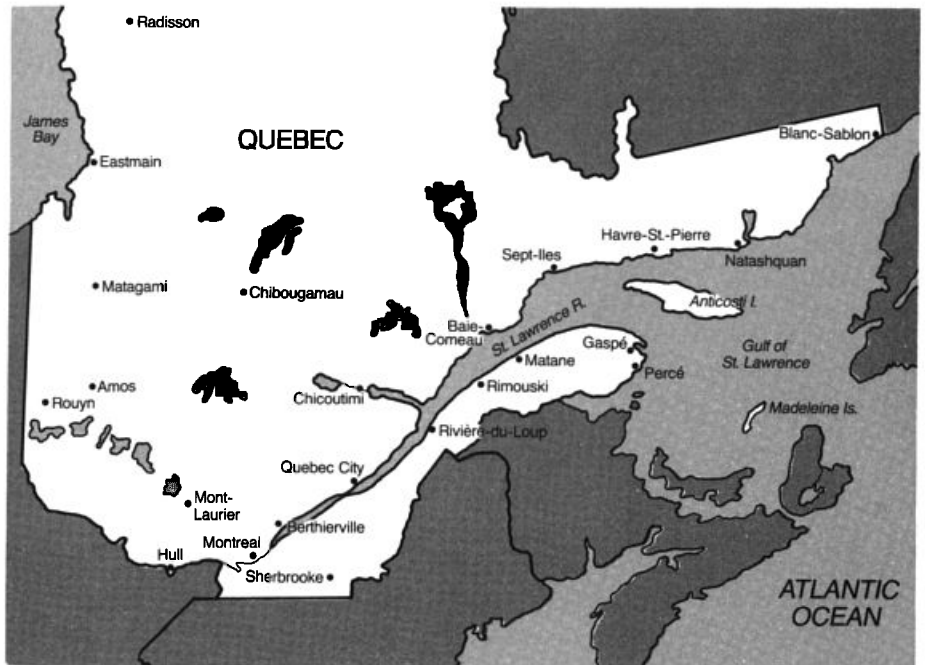
weather in February abetted sporadic and localized redpoll deaths from salmonella infection in New Brunswick and Nova Scotia, leading to broadcast promotion of dismantling of feeders; most saw no signs of the problem.

Observers (subregional compilers in bold-face): David Christie, Brian Dalzell, Fred Dobson, Roger Etcheberry, Bernard Forsythe, Sylvia Fullerton, Carl Haycock, Andrew Horn, Paul Linegar, Bruce Mactavish (BMT), Blake Maybank (BMy), Dan McAskill, David McCorquodale, Eric Mills, Murray Newall, John Nickerson, Peter Pearce, Richard Stern, Stuart Tingley, Eva Urban, Rob Walker.

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québec region



WARBLERS APPEARING OR REMAINING AFTER DECEMBER 1

Species	Province *	Number	Latest
Tennessee	NF	1	Dec. 3
Orange-crowned	NF	4	Dec. 26
Orange-crowned	NB	3	Feb. 22
Orange-crowned	NS	6+	March
Nashville	NS	1	March
N. Parula	NS	1	Dec. 5
Yellow	NF	3	Dec. 13
Townsend's	NF	1	Dec. 18
Yellow-throated	NS	2	Jan. 12
Pine	NS	±16	March
Pine	NB	8	March
Palm	SPM	1	Jan. 6
Palm	NB	1	Dec. 30
Palm	NS	4	March
Blackpoll	NS	1	Dec. 20
Black-and-white	NS	3	Jan. 28
Black-and-white	NF	4	March
N. Waterthrush	NF	1	Dec. 8
Com. Yellowthroat	SPM	1	Dec. 12
Com. Yellowthroat	NS	3+	Jan. 27
Wilson's	NF	1	Dec. 1
Wilson's	NS	2	Dec. 14
Yellow-breasted Chat	NB	1	Dec. 5
Yellow-breasted Chat	SPM	1	Dec. 24
Yellow-breasted Chat	NF	3	Jan. 10
Yellow-breasted Chat	NS	12+	Jan. 26

* SPM is, of course, French territory. All records from Newfoundland are for the Avalon Pen., most from St. John's, and *vide* BMT.

PIERRE BANNON and NORMAND DAVID

The 1997–1998 winter was milder than usual. Precipitation was above normal for December and January, but February turned out very dry, except for the eastern part of the province. Although true, this laconic climatological report overlooks one of the most dreadful weather systems to hit the Region in living memory. The shocking aftermaths of the early January ice storm were still being felt by the southern Québec population three months later. To appreciate the impact of this storm on human activities, nothing has more suggestive power than the following hard facts: Up to four inches of ice accumulating over a period of five days, 25 storm-related fatalities, 3.5 million persons without electricity at the peak of the storm, some of them without power for a month, 320 hydro towers and over 30,000 poles knocked down, millions of trees severely damaged, and so on.

Although one can imagine the consequences of such a storm on human and economic activities, it is yet impossible, three months later, to identify with certainty any impact—negative or positive—on bird life. In any cataclysm, two types of impacts can be anticipated, including first a

short term impact affecting the survival of resident species. The general impression, however, was that such a negative impact was probably minimal. Some feeder owners noticed that birds were more numerous at their feeders in the days and weeks following the storm. An unpublished study made by Environment Canada revealed a higher seed consumption at feeders newly set up within the affected area after the storm, as compared to controls.

Intermediate and long term effects will certainly take more time to assess. What will be the effects of the destruction of the canopy for nesting raptors and other canopy nesting species? What will be the effects of the mass of broken branches lying on the forest floor for ground nesting species? In the latter case, very long term effects can be expected as these branches may take up to 20 years to decompose. Obviously, very informative studies can be worked out, but in this difficult economic period, will the financial and human resources be sufficient to complete such long term studies?

GREBES TO WILD TURKEY

A Red-necked Grebe at Les Escoumins Jan. 3 provided the Region with a rare winter record (CA, CG). A N. Gannet at Laval Dec. 14 was the only one wandering upstream