

10–20% of these birds were the dark morph, well above the more usual 5% in New England waters. Good numbers of this species (up to 55) were also observed on pelagic trips to Cox's Ledge, RI (*vide* DE). Mid-January brought 2 very unusual visitors to s.e. Massachusetts: an imm. **Brown Pelican** at Nantucket Jan. 12–13 (*vide* MR), and a **Sooty Shearwater** at First Encounter Jan. 17 (BN). It is tempting to attribute the presence of these southern species in the N. Atlantic to El Niño related warmth. A count of 10,000 N. Gannets from Nantucket Jan. 22 is exceptional for mid-winter (J. Papale, *vide* MR).

Wintering herons included 12 Black-crowned Night-Herons in Massachusetts (up from seven in 1996–1997) (*vide* MR), and one in Rhode Island. A Yellow-crowned Night-Heron in Greenwich, *Fairfield*, CT, Jan. 6 provided only the 2nd winter record for the Region in the last decade (*vide* GH).

WATERFOWL

Naples, *Cumberland*, ME, played host to up to five Tundra Swans this season, and an additional bird was reported from Sanford, *York*, ME, in early December (*vide* JD). Three individuals also spent the winter on the Connecticut R. in Essex, *Middlesex*, CT (*vide* GH). Greater White-fronted Geese continue to increase in the Region. This winter singles were at Great Bay, *Stratford*, and *Rockingham*, NH, through December (m.ob.); Bridgewater, *Plymouth*, MA, Jan. 11 (*vide* MR); and Hamden, *New Haven*, CT, Jan. 24 (D. Barvir, *vide* GH). An additional three for Connecticut were at New Britain, *Hartford*, from Feb. 7 on (*vide* GH). The origin of four Barnacle Geese at Scarborough, *Cumberland*, ME, Dec. 14 is of course suspect (*vide* WT).

Eurasian Wigeon continue to hold their own in the Region, with at least 15 reported this winter. Included in this total were three from Great Bay, NH, where the species has been regular for the last 4 winters after a gap of 40 years following the last New Hampshire record. In contrast to last winter, a few dabblers lingered n. in response to the overall warmth and availability of open water. Perhaps most notable of this group was N. Pintail. Counts of over 20 were reported from Plum I. into February, a time of year when totals in the single digits are more common, and a total of six in New Hampshire was unusually high (*vide* AD). Inland, three pintails were found in Vermont (TM) and one in w. Massachusetts (*vide* SK). Canvasbacks were well represented at traditional Massachusetts sites, and

also occurred inland along the Connecticut R. into w. Massachusetts, with two in Southwick, *Hampden*, through Feb. 10 (*vide* SK), and s. Vermont at Vernon, *Windham*, Jan. 11 (*vide* JP).

Tufted Ducks were limited to Massachusetts this winter, with individuals at Plymouth, *Plymouth*; Bourne, *Barnstable*; Westport, *Bristol*; and Wachusett Res., *Worcester* (*vide* MR). Harlequin Ducks may have been slightly more common than last year, with maxima of 32 at Ogunquit, *York*, ME (*vide* JD); 59 at Rockport (v.o.); and 112 at Sachuest Pt., RI (*vide* DE). More unusual was a male at Charlotte, *Addison*, VT, Jan. 31, for the 2nd consecutive year (†TM), and another male at H.B.S.P. Jan. 4, providing only the 2nd record for Connecticut in the 1990s (*vide* GH). Unusual inland was a male Black Scoter that spent the winter at L. Waramaug, CT (*vide* GH). Numbers of Barrow's Goldeneyes were similar to last year, with Belfast, *Waldo*, ME, having up to 25 individuals (*vide* JD). Ruddy Ducks continue to increase, and a count of 120 at Stockton Springs, *Waldo*, ME, would be impressive even during migration (*vide* JD).

HAWKS THROUGH RAILS

Black Vultures in w. Connecticut are rapidly becoming trash birds. This winter, the traditional site in New Milford, *Litchfield*, hosted up to 40 birds, and Danbury, *Fairfield*, home to a single bird last winter, supported up to five. Still in the west were two more at Bethlehem, *Litchfield*, while one at S. Windham, *Windham*, in December furnished a first for e. Connecticut (*vide* GH).

Not to be outdone, Massachusetts reported 6 sightings: two from Groton, *Middlesex*, and singles from Randolph and Westwood, both *Norfolk*, Marshfield, *Plymouth*, and M.V. (*vide* MR). Two were reported to the Rhode Island rare bird alert. Farthest afield, however, was a Black Vulture seen in Scarborough, ME, Dec. 3 (†G. Carson, *vide* JD), a good indication that this species' colonization of New England is well under way.

Falling into the "largely unexplain-

able but maybe it was the weather" category was a well-described **Broad-winged Hawk** in Guilford, *New Haven*, CT, Jan. 11 (J. Zipp, *vide* GH), likely the first documented winter record for New England. Wintering Golden Eagles included two in w. Massachusetts (*vide* SK) and two in Connecticut (*vide* GH). After last year's good showing, Gyrfalcons were scarce this winter, with a single bird at Logan Airport, MA, and two in the Champlain Valley of Vermont.

Most intriguing was a report of eight Gray Partridge from Columbia, *Coos*, NH (†D&B Killam, *vide* AD). The birds were seen Dec. 10 and Jan. 5, and were reported as "wary and skittish." Northern New Hampshire is a long way as the partridge flies from n.w. Vermont and s. Québec, the nearest places where the species is established, and it seems unlikely that the origin of these birds will ever be satisfactorily resolved. Virginia Rails were at Plum I. and Nantucket in January (*vide* MR), and Block I. Feb. 6 (*vide* DE). Unusual even in s. New England, but perhaps not unexpected in such a warm winter, were two Soras that wintered in S. Kingston, *Washington*, RI (D. Kraus, *vide* DE).

SHOREBIRDS THROUGH ALCIDS

It was an excellent season for lingering shorebirds. Included in the list were a Semipalmated Plover at First Encounter Jan. 18; Am. Oystercatchers on M.V. Dec. 3 (*vide* MR) and in Westbrook, *Middlesex*, CT, Jan. 10–22; Lesser Yellowlegs in Orleans, *Barnstable*, MA, Dec. 21 (*vide* MR) and Plainfield, *Windham*, CT, Jan. 3–8 (B.



Among many lingering shorebirds in New England was this Least Sandpiper at Yarmouth, Cape Cod, Massachusetts, on January 9, 1998. Photograph/ R. S. Heil

Carver et al., *vide* GH); W. Sandpiper at Biddeford Pool, York, ME, Dec. 7 & 27; Least Sandpiper at Yarmouth, Barnstable, MA, Dec. 10–Jan. 9; and a Whimbrel, also at Yarmouth, from Dec. 9–Feb. 1 (m.ob., *vide* MR). A 2nd Whimbrel, this one of the European race *phaeopus*, was at Yarmouth Dec. 9–10. And then there were godwits. While a late Marbled Godwit at Eastham, Barnstable, MA, Dec. 21 was noteworthy, it pales in comparison to Massachusetts' first winter record of a **Bar-tailed Godwit**, present from Dec. 29–Feb. 12 in Plymouth († J. Sones, JT, v.o.).

A coastal storm on Christmas Eve forced at least 14 jaegers (at least five identified as Pomarine) and over 8700 Black-legged Kittiwakes to shore at First Encounter (JT), and another 315 kittiwakes were tallied at Rockport the next day (RH). Other jaegers included a probable Parasitic in Addison, VT, Dec. 7–8 (†TM, m.ob.) and a Pomarine s. of Block I. Jan. 10 (C. Raithe, S. Mitra). Little Gulls seemed scarce this winter, with only three individuals reported in Massachusetts, none past early January (*vide* MR), and an above-average two in Rhode Island (*vide* DE). Black-headed Gulls were also down: high counts at Winthrop, Suffolk, MA, only reached five (*vide* MR), and both Rhode Island and Connecticut had fewer than usual.

A count of 3000 Bonaparte's Gulls from Nantucket Dec. 17 (E. Ray) is among the highest counts for Massachusetts. The Mew Gull that has frequented Winthrop, MA, for at least 8 years was back in February, and a possible 2nd individual was in S. Boston,

MA, from Jan. 28–Feb. 27 (v.o., *vide* MR). Counts of Iceland, Glaucous, and Lesser Black-backed gulls were typical of most winters. Observers taking in the gull show at the Manchester, Hartford, CT, landfill were treated to a first-winter **Thayer's Gull** Feb. 13–14 (ph., M. Szantyr, P. Comins, m.ob.), only the 2nd record for the state. Downeast Maine (*Washington*) had two Ivory Gulls: one at Culter Harbor Jan. 4 and another in Eastport Feb. 23 (*vide* WT). Both these birds may have been from the large flight of this species in the Canadian Maritimes.

Overall it was a very good season for alcids. During strong coastal storms Dec. 24, Feb. 5, and Feb. 24, large numbers were observed from both Rockport and First Encounter. The Rockport flight Feb. 5 was by far the most diverse, and included six Dovekies, one Com. Murre, 63 Thick-billed Murres, 236 Razorbills, two Atlantic Puffins, and 146 unidentified large alcids, as well as 1200 Black-legged Kittiwakes (RH). Regionwide, Com. Murres were actually almost common, with three in Maine, eight in Massachusetts, and eight in Rhode Island. Dovekies were also more common than recent years, with totals of 10 in Maine, three in New Hampshire, 47 in Massachusetts, and 11 in Rhode Island. The alcid star of the season, however, was an **Ancient Murrelet** at Provincetown, Barnstable, MA, Jan. 4 (†BN, JT).

OWLS THROUGH WOODPECKERS

The only Barn Owls reported were three on M.V. Feb. 9 (*vide* MR). Snowy Owls were

down from last winter's mini-invasion, with two in Vermont, 4 transitory sightings in New Hampshire, 9–12 in Maine, eight in Massachusetts, and one in Connecticut. Almost unprecedented was the return of **Northern Hawk Owls** to Vermont and Maine after last year's irruption. Vermont's was in Jericho, *Chittenden*, from Dec. 27–Feb. 15 (m.ob., *vide* JP), and Maine hosted three: Belgrade, *Kennebec*, Dec. 21–Jan. 5; Herman, *Penobscot*, Jan. 20–Feb. 17; and Lovell, *Oxford*, Feb. 9 (*vide* JD). Long-eared Owls seemed to be everywhere (relatively speaking): up to six were at the Daniel Webster Sanctuary, Marshfield, MA, throughout the winter; singles were at Nantucket, MA, S. Kingston, RI, and Freeport, ME; and a pair overwintered in Addison, VT. A possible Boreal Owl was heard in Richmond, ME, Feb. 9 (†PV, *vide* JD), but will require final consideration by the Maine records committee.

On the heels of an unidentified nightjar on Nantucket in the fall, there comes a calling Whip-poor-will on M.V. Jan. 7. Details on the latter are sketchy, but what with Brown Pelican and Hermit Warbler on Massachusetts' offshore islands this winter, almost anything is possible. A slight decline in Red-bellied Woodpecker reports in the north continues, but may in part result from observers getting used to them. Numbers in the 3 n. states totaled five in Vermont, 10 in New Hampshire, and four in Maine. Compare this to 13 in New Hampshire and nine in Maine in the previous winter.



Present much of the winter was this Whimbrel (of the North American race) at Yarmouth, Massachusetts, on January 9, 1998. A Whimbrel of the European race had been present here briefly a month earlier. Photograph/ R. S. Heil



A highlight of the season, this Bar-tailed Godwit remained for several weeks at Plymouth, furnishing a first winter record for Massachusetts. Photograph/ R. S. Heil

FLYCATCHERS THROUGH VIREOS

Three E. Phoebes lingered into January and February in e. Massachusetts, while a bird in Connecticut Feb. 28 might actually have been an early migrant. Although Tree Swallows were found in all 3 s. states this winter, they were especially common in Rhode Island. Maximum counts of 29 at Little Compton and 32 at Napatree Pt. were the highest wintering numbers for the state since 1972 (*fide* DE). After last fall's invasion, Red-breasted Nuthatches continued in good numbers through December, but declined somewhat afterward. House Wrens were found into February at M.V. and Block I., the latter representing Rhode Island's first February record. The Sedge Wren found in E. Gloucester, MA, in late November stayed at least until Dec. 21 (m.ob., *fide* MR).

This season's **Townsend's Solitaire** appeared on the Pemaquid, *Knox*, ME, CBC Dec. 27 (*fide* JD). Despite the mild winter, Hermit Thrushes did not appear all that much more common than usual, suggesting that they moved out of the Region during the wintry weather in November. A thrush identified as a **Swainson's Thrush** was seen at Appleton, *Knox*, ME, Dec. 10 (†S. White, *fide* JD), and if accepted by the Maine records committee, would provide a first winter record for the state. American Robins were something of an enigma this winter. Although numbers were actually down in some parts of s. New England, there were several reports from previously "robin free" areas starting in mid-January. By February, the species had moved N at least as far as c. New Hampshire and Maine, suggesting some sort of facultative northward migration in response to warm weather. Four Varied Thrushes visited the Region. In chronological order, they were at Kingston, RI, from late November through Dec. 16; Ridge, *Cheshire*, NH, from mid-January through Feb. 23; Meredith, *Belknap*, NH, from Jan. 27 to mid-February; and Oakham, MA, Feb. 7–28 (*fide* DE, AD, MR). A possible fifth was reported visiting a feeder in Dixmont, *Penobscot*, ME, from December through the winter (*fide* *Winging It*).

After last year's almost complete absence, Bohemian Waxwings made serious inroads into New England this winter. In Maine, it may have been the 2nd best invasion ever, as highlighted by a maximum count of 600 in Winterport, *Waldo*, in late January, and several flocks of 50–100 from late December onward (*fide* JD). Elsewhere in n. New England, small numbers were present throughout the winter, but the

increase seems to have come in February. At this point, flocks peaked at 125 in Vermont (*fide* JP), and a group of eight even made it as far south as Pomfret, *Windham*, CT, by Feb. 12. In Massachusetts, almost all reports were of one–twenty birds, and were from along the coast between Plum I. and Cape Cod (*fide* MR). At the same time, Cedar Waxwings were more common than usual, especially in n. regions. The only lingering Blue-headed Vireo was on M.V. Dec. 7.

WARBLERS THROUGH ORIOLES

Of the 13 species of warblers reported this season, two western vagrants stand out. First was a **Townsend's Warbler** that visited a feeder in N. Conway, *Carroll*, NH, from late November to Dec. 25 (ph., E. Ellis), providing only the 3rd state record. Just before it left, its close relative the **Hermit Warbler** showed up with a flock of kinglets on M.V., where it stayed from Dec. 21 to March (M. Pelikan, m.ob.). The usual wintering warblers appeared more common than usual, presumably a result of the mild weather. Falling in this category are nine Orange-crowned Warblers (including one inland at Northampton, *Hampshire*, MA, Dec. 21–22), Yellow-rumped Warblers inland in Vermont and w. Massachusetts, above average numbers of Pine and Palm warblers, and a Regionwide total of 12 Yellow-breasted Chats, including one inland at Laconia, *Belknap*, NH, from Dec. 16–Jan. 26. Southern warblers lingering northward were a Black-throated Blue in S. Reading, *Windsor*, VT, Dec. 30–Jan 26; Yellow-throated in Saco, *York*, ME, Dec. 27–Jan 16; Prairie on Block I. Dec. 22; three Ovenbirds; and a N. Waterthrush at Wood's Hole, *Barnstable*, MA, Jan. 11.

In addition to the Hermit and Townsend's warblers, several other western Emberizids found themselves in New England this winter. In taxonomic order they were a male **Western Tanager** in Portsmouth, *Rockingham*, NH (Dec. 13 through March; J. Grant, m.ob.); **Black-headed Grosbeak** in Hamden, *New Haven*, CT (Jan. 19 through March; J. Buck, m.ob.); and Lark Sparrows in Wellfleet, *Barnstable*, MA (Dec. 29–Jan. 9), and Norwalk, *Fairfield*, CT (Jan. 18–March). A **Bullock's Oriole** was in W. Goshen, *Litchfield*, CT, from October through mid-February (*fide* GH), and another visited a feeder in Wakefield, *Middlesex*, MA, from Dec. 22–Feb. 19 (*fide* MR). This latter bird is likely the same individual that appeared in neighboring Reading Feb. 26, where it remained into March

Two Rose-breasted Grosbeaks appeared at feeders in February, one at Falmouth, MA, Feb. 9 (*fide* MR), and the other far to the north in Bangor, *Penobscot*, ME, from Feb. 9 into March (*fide* JD). A male **Painted Bunting** was in Seekonk, *Bristol*, MA, from Dec. 29–Feb. 15 (R. Leonard, *fide* MR, DE)

A Lincoln's Sparrow in Chatham, *Barnstable*, MA, Dec. 21 was noteworthy (*fide* MR), but one in Concord, *Merrimack*, NH, from Dec. 28–Jan. 31 furnished a record late date for the state (R. Quinn, *fide* AD) By mid-February, blackbirds had arrived even in the 3 n. states, and by month's end numbers were more typical of mid-March in some regions. Four Baltimore Orioles were reported from Massachusetts over the course of the season, and another was present in Winterport, ME, from late December to at least Feb. 4 (*fide* JD).

FINCHES

After arriving in numbers in the Region in the fall, northern finches showed a variety of patterns over the course of the winter. Pine Grosbeaks were exceptionally abundant in the north, where total numbers on Maine CBCs were over twice the highest totals since 1979 (*fide* JD). After the CBC period, most flocks contained less than 50 birds, and numbers averaged lower s of Portland. The species was well reported in Vermont and New Hampshire as well, again with higher numbers in the north and at higher elevations. Nowhere in n. New England was there any apparent seasonal pattern to grosbeak abundance and distribution. In s. New England, the highest numbers occurred in December and January, in w. Massachusetts and n. Connecticut. The high count was a flock of 125 in Windsor, *Berkshire*, MA, from Dec. 20–25 (*fide* SK) Counts in Connecticut were never over 25, and only scattered sightings of less than five birds at a time came from e. Massachusetts (*fide* GH, MR).

Crossbills were on the move throughout the winter, as revealed by regular monitoring of a stand of ornamental pines at H.B.S.P. (C&S Rafford). At this site, birds were regularly observed moving completely through the area in a matter of hours, and always from east to west. Red Crossbills numbered less than 10 through mid-January, but then often reached 50–100 in late January and February. White-winged Crossbills were very rare before late December, after which point they began to occur in flocks of up to 50. In Rhode Island and e. Massachusetts, a presumed source for westward-moving Connecticut crossbills,

White-winged outnumbered Red throughout the period, with numbers tending to decrease from December to January (*fide* MR, DE). The latter observation is temptingly consistent with the later influxes of birds to coastal Connecticut. Away from the coast, both species were apparently rare in s. New England, and only slightly more common in Vermont and New Hampshire, where White-wingeds outnumbered Reds by up to ten-to-one. In Maine, Red Crossbills occurred in flocks of up to 10 birds, and were more common after December. White-winged Crossbills were more common, although flocks rarely exceeded 30, and showed no obvious changes in abundance over the course of the season (*fide* JD, WT). It is thus unclear whether crossbill movements in n. New England had any effect on numbers in the south, or if instead the entire Region was subject to influences from beyond its boundaries.

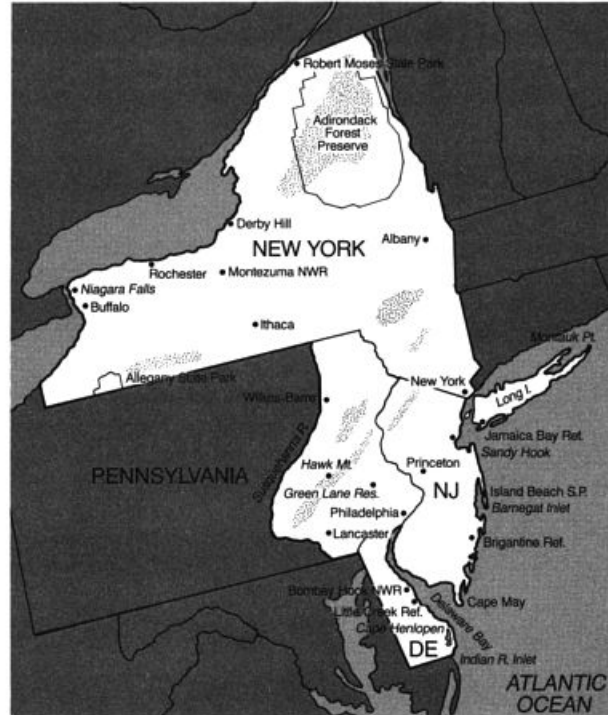
The final invader of 1997–1998 was the Com. Redpoll, although numbers were generally not as high as during the previous irruption in 1995–1996. Redpolls occurred in flocks of up to 200 in the north and west, but rarely exceeded 50 in s. coastal areas. After peaking in December (in conjunction with their late fall arrival), redpolls declined through January in most areas, only to reappear in February, perhaps as birds started to move back north. As expected during a redpoll year, there were several reports of Hoary Redpoll, including four in Vermont, five in New Hampshire, at least 10 in Maine, and one in w. Massachusetts. Written details were not available for all these individuals, but some remained at feeders for extended periods, and it is reasonable to assume that there were at least a few of this hard-to-identify species in the Region this winter. On the flip side, Purple Finches were generally scarce Regionwide, and both Pine Siskins and Evening Grosbeaks were below average.

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HUDSON-DELAWARE REGION



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We thought last winter unusually warm, but it was nothing compared to the winter of 1997–1998, which was one of the two or three warmest in the twentieth century for most of the Region. Precipitation was again well above normal, and included some early and heavy snows in the northern and western parts of New York. After mid-January, however, even the north was essentially snow free. For the southern parts of the Region, including all of Delaware and most of New Jersey, there was no significant snowfall during the entire winter, as temperatures averaged 5–10 degrees above normal.

The major weather event of the season was the Great Ice Storm of 1998 in early January, a three-day hell of frozen rain that wiped out forests in Québec and northern New England, but affected only the northern tier of counties in upstate New York,

sparing most of the Adirondacks. As compiler Peterson notes, the end of the millennium may see a subsequent surge of Mourning Warblers and Indigo Buntings as second-growth woodland succeeds the devastation. Two back-to-back nor'easters January 28–29 and February 3–4 caused extensive flooding and beach erosion in coastal New Jersey and Delaware.

Ornithologically, it was an unspectacular season, although the first major winter finch invasion in years reached as far south as Delaware, then petered out with the beginning of the new year. Many late-lingering and half-hardy species, lulled into a sense of security by the warm fall and early winter, were detected on Christmas Bird Counts, with a good percentage successfully completing the season. Top rarities of the season were New York's second Yellow-billed Loon and Pennsylvania's second Townsend's Warbler. Other highlights included Yellow Rail, two Ash-throated Flycatchers, Bohemian Waxwing, Le Conte's Sparrow, and Golden-crowned