



## THE CHANGING SEASONS

by P. A. Buckley\*

*A winter when widespread irruptions  
by many species vied for attention  
with range-expanding introductions.*

*Steller's Jay. Photo/Verna R. Johnston, from N.A.S.*

With few exceptions, notably in the Rocky Mountains and the Great Basin, (where conditions were especially severe), and the more southerly portions of the Great Plains, temperatures during the winter, after rather widespread cold weather in early December, were extraordinarily mild, in many regions the mildest within memory. East of the Rockies occasional bursts of cold weather and, notably, heavy and severe snowfalls, were recorded over a belt extending from, and south of, Oklahoma, Arkansas, Alabama, Georgia, and North Carolina. Associated with these cold spells and ice or snow storms, many of which came during northward migration in February and March, were massive bird kills, commented on by many Regional Editors in the afflicted areas.

The extreme mildness elsewhere, and resultant open water and lack of snow, allowed great numbers of half-hardies to linger, even well past Christmas Bird Counts; at the same time, feeders were conspicuously empty of birds in these areas. This peculiarly warm, snow-free winter (Washington and Philadelphia, for the first time ever, had no snowfalls; New York City had none until January 29 and then only two inches) was owing to the meanderings of two jet streams, the familiar Polar, and the less-known Sub-tropical:

the Polar failed to move south below the U.S.-Canada border and the Sub-tropical moved north from its usual northern limit over Central America to the Gulf of Mexico, thus simultaneously cushioning most of the U.S. from the typical winter polar highs and attendant cold weather; they also provided the tracks along which most lows move from SW to NE thence out to sea, thereby sparing the areas in between the two streams. Alaska and the northern Pacific coast experienced mild weather, but the Central Pacific was extremely cold, with tire-chain warnings in the San Francisco Bay area! Except for the aforementioned storm areas in the South and Southeast, precipitation was generally low, although the Mississippi River Valley experienced some of its worst floods in history, and the Southwest and Central Pacific had record rains.

The generally mild weather induced considerable early northward migration of landbirds and waterfowl and widespread invasions of boreal and montane species—raptor and passerine, winter finch and corvid—continued the trend so apparent in the fall.

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## BOREAL AND MONTANE IRRUPTERS

*Raptors* When some 39+ Gyrfalcons (exclusive of any reported during the fall season) are recorded in the very next winter following the largest invasion known—involving some 60 individuals—it would seem to stretch the concept to call this an “echo flight”: this was a veritable invasion in its own right, possibly the second largest ever recorded. Despite one appearance in Maryland, the species seemed to stay appreciably further north than last year, and again, few data were forthcoming on age and sex categories. Ten reporting regions recorded Gyrfalcons this winter, the stated maxima being eight each in Ontario and New England-Maritime.

The Goshawk invasion continued from last Fall, the only two regions out of 21 not reporting at least one being Alaska (where it is regular), and peninsular Florida! It was generally in exceptional numbers, even reaching s. Texas and South Carolina; only in the Great Basin were numbers more-or-less average. It still seems, though, that the center of origin of the flight was in Canada north of the w. Great Lakes, and possibly the aspect of greatest biological interest was the extremely high percentage of adults, unusual in most boreal irruptive species. In the northeast, at least, Goshawk seems to be extending its breeding range southward as that of Cooper's Hawk contracts or diminishes. It will be interesting to see whether this southward winter incursion of adults results in new breeding stations to the south of its previous range. Rough-legged Hawks were in below-average or average numbers over most of the continent, absent in some regions, with few regions suggesting good numbers; one was even seen in Mexico, that country's first. Snowy Owls were almost absent (the echo being barely audible) or in their usually low, non-flight year numbers everywhere. But the boreal forest owls were almost abundant: 11 Hawk Owls, 19 Great Grey Owls and 13 Boreal Owls being recorded in s. Canada and the northern U.S. from Minnesota to New England. One roost of 3 Great Greys was found in Quebec.

*Non-raptors* Both species of three-toed woodpeckers were recorded slightly south of, or below, their normal ranges or altitudes, although generally in the area east of Minnesota and not far south of the Canada/U.S. border. Ontario had 14 Black-backed and 12 Northern, both exceptionally high counts, and one of the former species even reached Nantucket. Gray Jays were not as much in evidence as last fall, although still appreciably in incursion numbers.

The flight seemed confined to the eastern boreal population, and only Ontario and the n. Great Lakes had high numbers. Boreal Chickadees, like Goshawks, were more numerous in the Ontario/Great Lakes area than east, reaching into Ohio. Bohemian Waxwings were scarce in the Northeast, in fine numbers in Ontario, across the northern plains states and provinces, down through the Rockies even to s. Nevada & n. New Mexico, but otherwise not commented on, or in low numbers. East of the Rocky Mountains and north of ca. 37° N latitude, Red-breasted Nuthatches were generally common, although in lesser numbers than during the fall flight. Elsewhere they had largely disappeared by December.

*Western Montane Species* Clark's Nutcrackers, Piñon Jays, Steller's Jays, Scrub Jays, and magpies were recorded far from their normal range, left over from, or part of, their enormous irruptions of last fall. Two nutcracker extralimital records need be emended: the Hawkins Island (Prince William Sound), Alaska occurrence is deleted without comment, but one from Paipoonge Twp., Ont., “subsequently proved to be a Mockingbird, . . . after having been misidentified by at least 27 observers, including some thoroughly competent ones” [sic !]. Rosy finches (all three forms) were especially numerous in the Great Basin-Central Rocky Mountain Region, perhaps owing to the extreme cold and heavy snows; they were mentioned by several other editors as being present, or visible, in some numbers. One wandered to Thunder Bay, Ont., spending the winter there. Photographs apparently allowed its identification as *Leucosticte tephrocotis littoralis*.

*Winter finches* Table 1 summarizes data from across the continent on this year's winter finch numbers. [I would comment that the blank spaces in the table indicate no data on those species from those regions. While one can sometimes assume no data = no occurrences (e.g. Hoary Redpolls in peninsular Florida), and one can also sometimes assume no data = no particular highs or lows (e.g. Pine Siskins in the Northern Pacific Region), most such assumptions are unwarranted. There ought to be some groups or species for which every regional compiler is obliged to render a judgment, and for which by extension, each observer ought to be obliged to render a judgment. Quite obviously, 20 active observers in a region stating that each saw no Peregrine Falcons that season is quite different from the 20 observers' omitting men-

Table 1. Winter finch statuses across the continent during the winter of 1972-73.

	Eve. Grosbeak	Purple Finch	Cassin's Finch	Pine Grosbeak	Com. Redpoll	Hoary Redpoll	Pine Siskin	Am. Goldfinch	Red Crossbill	W-w Crossbill
NE Maritime	VG	A		VG	P		G*	E	G	P
Huds.-St. Lawrence	VG			VG	VP		G	E	A	P
Mid. Atl. Coast	G	VG		VG	VP				<u>VG</u>	VP
S Atl. Coast	VG	VG				1**			<u>E</u>	
Florida	G	E					(R)	P		
Ont.-W. New York	VG	VP/A*		G/VG	VP/P		VG*	A*	<u>F/G</u>	F/P
Appalachian	E	E		G	P		E*		<u>G</u>	P
W. Great Lakes	G	P		A	VP		G		<u>VG</u>	P*
Midw. Prairie	G	VP		P**	VP				<u>VG</u>	
Central Southern	E	VG					P		<u>E**</u>	
N Great Plains	VG		(R)		P	VP	G		<u>VG</u>	
S Great Plains	VG	E	(R)		(R)		A*		<u>G</u>	
S Texas	E	VG					G	G*	G	
N. Rocky Mtns.	VG		F	G	P*	G	VP*	G*	VP	
Great Basin	VG	(R)**	G*	F	(R)		P		(R)	
Southwest	VG	VG	VG	(R)					(R)	
Alaska	(R)*				(R)	G	VG		VP	E
N. Pacific Coast	G*	G*	(R)		F		P		VP	
M. Pacific Coast	E	VG	(R)	(R)**			G	G	G	
S Pacific Coast	P	A	A						F	

VP= very poor P= poor F= fair A= average numbers G= good VG= very good E= excellent (R)= reported, generally without comment \*=local and temporal fluctuations \*\*=a first record for some state or region \_\_\_\_\_ (underlining)= suspected nesting.

tion of Peregrines. Were such firm data forthcoming, then numerous statistical tests could be applied to them and would have particular value in long-term trend analyses; thus they deserve careful consideration.] Virtually the only species of widespread distribution was, once more, Evening Grosbeak. It was reported good to excellent in every region except Alaska (where very rare) and the Southern Pacific. Red Crossbills moved far south, reaching the Gulf Coast in many places, and generally deserting more normal locations farther north. South of its expected area nesting was suspected—on the New York/Pennsylvania border, and at several Illinois locations—as it often is when Reds move out of the taiga. Redpolls were as erratic as ever, with Hoaries virtually absent; thus a sight record from South Carolina is not only unprecedented but strange this year; hopefully, a thoroughly documented description is on file. Numbers of White-winged Crossbills (“hundreds of

thousands, if not millions”) were reported from the Kenai Peninsula of Alaska: so *that's* where they were . . . Pine Grosbeaks were generally in good numbers across s. Canada and the northern U.S. Purple Finches were detected in flocks of Cassin's Finches in Utah for the first time. One wonders how often eastern observers have looked for Cassin's in flocks of Purples, or know what to look for.

#### PELAGICS AND LITTORALS

*Tube-noses* Laysan Albatross was recorded at sea in the Aleutians, where it might be regular in winter and also, possibly, off the Washington/Oregon coasts. Northern Fulmars continue to be seen all winter in the Gulf of Maine, and elsewhere off New England/Maritime waters but were down in California; this year one was found off Maryland. (My annual statements about lack of winter pelagic

observation except perhaps off San Diego and Monterey are, alas, as true as ever.) Virtually no pelagics were reported from the Pacific coast this winter [none seen or none reported?], but from the Atlantic Coast where ten years ago no one would have believed a winter shearwater report (other than *N. Fulmar*) came the following: Greater, 2 in Massachusetts on December 16 and 27; and 30 on March 30 in the Bay of Fundy [do they winter in the Gulf of Maine?]; Manx, Jan. 28 on Cape Cod Bay; Sooty, Mar. 11, Outer Banks, N.C.; Audubon's, 2 off e. Florida on Jan. 21. Fork-tailed Storm Petrel was the only one reported, as usual: a single off Alaska and two at Monterey after a storm.

*Pelecaniformes* A pair of Brown Boobies appeared off e. Florida in January, when Alabama's fourth Blue-faced showed up: Northern Gannets were in numbers on the Florida Atlantic coast, and along shore in Louisiana and s Texas.

Double-crested Cormorants were recorded an abnormally greater number of times, even in flocks, northward of their usual winter areas, and inland where usually totally unexpected in winter, probably due to the mild weather and open waters in these areas.

*Charadriiformes* Red Phalaropes occurred in singles, pairs and small flocks, especially in December, at various locations on the Atlantic and Pacific Coasts, inland on Lake Ontario, and in Arizona. They were in large flocks only on the central and southern Pacific coast, including 1200 on the Monterey C B C. Northerns were seen, aside from the regularly wintering flock at San Diego, in Nova Scotia and Florida in December. Such data suggest considerable revision of both species' normal winter range as listed in the 1957 "*A.O.U. Check-list*," 5th ed. Pomarine Jaegers were seen off New England (1), Middle Atlantic States (2), Florida (18) and Central Pacific Region (a few). Parasitic or unidentified jaegers occurred only off New England (1), the Middle Atlantic region (5) and the Southeastern Region (1). Those few identified as Parasitics confirm the impression that Pomarine is the more common in winter North American waters. The only Skua recorded was Maryland's second. Black-legged Kittiwakes were widespread on both coasts, and at many inland locations as well, including Nevada's first; last year saw Utah's first. Winter inland dispersal now seems to be of almost annual occurrence, but its proximate causes are still apparently unknown. Nevada's first Sabine's Gull was surprising only because it was in winter: the species is of regular occurrence inland.

## HALF-HARDY STRAGGLERS

Many of the same species tend to repeat when mild winters occur; each year's list is not that different from preceding years. Certainly, however, one does not expect *Oporornis* warblers in winter, yet only Kentucky was not recorded this winter! Mourning was collected in Massachusetts in December and seen in New York in January; MacGillivray's was collected in New Mexico; and Connecticut was seen in December in New Jersey and Florida. Caution must be exercised with this genus: even specimens have been frequently misidentified. Hudsonian Godwit was reported from Georgia and South Carolina, but one wonders how many observers would think to check carefully for either European species, possibly more likely in North America in winter than Hudsonian. Anna's Hummingbird seems to go haywire in winter, many going north instead of south. This year 16 were recorded on Oregon/Washington C B Cs, many wintering; the species wintered in Utah; and 300 came to one Berkeley feeder, if I read my copy correctly! The two that went east to El Paso and the pair or two breeding in Tuscon, Arizona at least found it somewhat warmer than last year's Cordova, Alaska, bird that finally died when the thermometer read 0°. Anna's Hummingbird would seem a prime candidate for extended physiological and migration studies. Other half-hardies included a wintering (?) Thick-billed Kingbird in s. Arizona; Western Sandpipers and a Lapland Longspur on Adak in December and February, respectively; 15 Hutton's Vireos on the Eugene, Ore. C B C, December Ovenbirds in Virginia, Kentucky, Louisiana, and Phoenix, Arizona; nine Rose-breasted Grosbeaks (but only five Black-headed) in the Central Southern region; a Red-eyed Vireo in Colorado on Mar. 4; Yellow Warblers in Nevada on Feb. 9, and one that may have wintered in San Francisco; and Solitary Vireos in December in Virginia and California (2), in New Mexico and Dallas in January, and two in Arizona on Feb. 18.

## DISPLACEMENTS

*Eastern Birds Westward* Idaho's First Green Heron wintered at Pocatello; as did three Little Blues in Orange Co., Calif; for the fourth winter in a row Alaska hosted a Black Duck, and one was in w. Washington; two pairs of Canvasbacks wintered on Adak in the Aleutians; a Red-shouldered Hawk was firmly recorded in w. Washington; the Piping Plover returned for the third winter to Boleta, Calif., and everyone

now knows it's a Piping, the first California Broad-tailed Hummingbird in winter was at San Pedro for two months; two separate flocks of 6 Blue Jays occurred in Idaho only a year after the state's first record; was this associated with last fall's massive migration and dispersal? Three more were in Washington and Oregon. A Brown Thrasher returned to the same yard as last year in Fairfax, California; and also as last year the Central Pacific Region had 4 Black-and-white Warblers; Rusty Blackbirds continue to occur widely in the west in winter, this year to Montana, e. Washington, Alaska (29), w. Washington and the Central Pacific Region; Oregon had its first Rose-breasted Grosbeak, and there were three in the Central Pacific Region, where there were five Swamp Sparrows, with one more in the Southern Pacific Region and one all winter in Washington; finally, a White-throated Sparrow wintered in interior British Columbia.

*Western Birds Eastward* Three Arctic Loons were seen in Massachusetts, also the location of three Western Grebes; the latter was also recorded in Kentucky, South Carolina, Mississippi and up to seven in s. Texas; the Ross' Goose at Pea Island on the Outer Banks of North Carolina returned for the sixth (not fourth) consecutive year, and a few were seen in the lower plains and Mississippi Valley; a single Mountain Plover (plus a flock?) was in Alabama; neighboring Louisiana had a Band-tailed Pigeon; a Lewis' Woodpecker leftover from last fall was in Ontario in February and March; Wied's Crested Flycatcher was found this winter in w. Florida and Louisiana as well as the Everglades area: where are they coming from? A Sage Thrasher appeared on Long Island, N.Y. for a week in January; and a Townsend's Solitaire was in Wisconsin; two (Audubon's) Yellow-rumped Warblers were in New York, and another in Louisiana; (Bullock's) Northern Orioles continued to be represented in the east by numerous typical males: the occasional collection of a mis-called female that proves to be something else hardly vitiates reality; and finally, a Grey-headed Junco was reported seen in Minnesota, as were several "Pink-sided Juncos" on the Atlantic Seaboard: a specimen of the first would be essential for such an extralimital record, and I know of no valid specimen of "Pink-sided Junco" (presumably the race *mearnsi*) east of Nebraska, all collected "pink-sided" Oregons having thus far proved to be the highly variable *montanus*. In this regard, some of the field guides do a disservice.

*Northern Birds Southward* Nevada's first Yellow-billed Loon on Lake Tahoe was in addition to nine along the Pacific Coast; Trumpeter Swan reached s. California, Emperor Goose n. California; excellent numbers (up to 40) of Rock Sandpipers were on Victoria Id.; numbers of "Arctic Horned Owls," presumably *wapacuthu*, were seen near Aberdeen, S. Dak., and one was near Chicago; Saw-whet Owls reached Alabama and Kansas, probably part of the great boreal exodus; and the first Oklahoma specimen of Snow Bunting was taken this winter. Other northern birds moving southward were, of course, discussed earlier.

*Southern or Southwestern Birds Northward or Westward* A Wood Stork appeared in Arizona in December; White Ibis are beginning to winter as far north as Cape Lookout, N.C. and Glossies are wintering, irregularly, north to New Jersey and Long Island, N.Y.; White-tailed Kite continues its expansion, Arizona recording its second, following one (unpublished) last year, Inca Doves spread northward in Texas and Oklahoma, and they are still established (how, originally?) at Key West; a big post-breeding wandering of Groove-billed Anis from s. Texas was probably the source of South Dakota's first specimen; a Coues' Flycatcher wintered in California's Imperial Valley; Louisiana's third Curve-billed Thrasher seemed almost normal beside the one resident in Wisconsin since last summer that has tried a (solo) nesting attempt, a Great-tailed Grackle was on a Missouri C.B.C. this species is expanding its range in several directions; Pyrrhuloxia is also expanding, apparently into s.e. California; and finally, this winter again there were several extra-limital, unseasonal Painted Buntings: Massachusetts (1), New Jersey (1), Virginia (3), North Carolina (2) and s. California (1). There is no *a priori* reason to consider any of these escapes, and regional editors and observers alike are urged to publish all properly documented records.

## INVADERS

*Eurasian* A Whooper Swan family was on Adak, as were 4 Bean Geese; (Greenland) White-fronted Geese appeared at several locations in the eastern U.S., and a Lesser White-fronted Goose (*Anser erythropus*), believed wild, was shot in Delaware: this is a regular vagrant to the British Isles, so even though a reasonably common goose in wildfowl collections, it might well be a genuine accidental; at least 23 (Eurasian) Green-winged Teal were recorded in many areas along both Atlantic and Pacific

Coasts this winter, as were many Eurasian Wigeon; only 9 or 10 Tufted Ducks were recorded, a low number, and except for one near Chicago and two on Long Island, all were on the Pacific coast; a female Steller's Eider was on Adak with a Smew; only 3 Ruffs were recorded, both probably north-bound migrants, in March, in Delaware and in Nova Scotia; good counts of Slaty-backed Gulls came from the Bering Sea and 6 Lesser Black-backed Gulls were seen from Nova Scotia to Texas; only two (European) Mew Gulls appeared this year, in Newfoundland and Massachusetts. Black-headed was in excellent numbers (150+ in the New England/Maritimes) all the way to Florida and to inland Illinois; and Little Gull appeared in 11 of 21 reporting regions, including the Atlantic, Gulf, and Pacific coasts and the Great Lakes. An addendum to the Alaska report notes that two cuckoos recently collected there and thought to be Oriental Cuckoos (*Cuculus saturatus*) were determined to be the first North American Common Cuckoos (*C. canorus*); two Fieldfares were well seen this winter, one in Newfoundland, the other in suburban Westchester Co., N.Y., and Finch updates the species' status in North America, following its invasion of Greenland in 1937, including some recent, unpublished records from Nova Scotia: this is a species that bears watching and looking for in the Maritimes; finally, a White Wagtail, appearing to be of the race *ocularis*, was near Vancouver, B.C. for the month of March: one of the very few North American records for this species.

*West Indian / Mexican* A female Masked Duck appeared briefly at Everglades National Park; one of the very few s. Texas reports of Aplomado Falcon was of one seen on and off during the winter at Laguna Atascosa N.W.R.: this species is now practically unknown in the U.S.; the Jaçana colony at Manor Lake, Brazoria Co., Texas, continues to prosper; Green Kingfishers were reported from Texas and Arizona; the disputed kingbird returned again to Islamorada in the Fla. Keys, and there now seems no doubt it is a Loggerhead, *Tyrannus caudifasciatus*, the first for North America; a Clay-colored Robin showed up for a day at Laguna Atascosa N.W.R., and at Falcon Dam a Rufous-capped Warbler, *Basileuterus rufifrons*, was the first for the U.S.; Stripe-headed Tanagers seem established and probably breeding on Hypoluço Island, near Lantana, Fla., and a single bird was on the Keys: this seems a natural, unassisted range expansion; finally, near

Mission, Tex., an Orange-breasted Bunting (*Passerina leclancherii*), was mist-netted for the first U.S. record.

## RARE AND ENDANGERED SPECIES

A new location for Mexican Ducks, with 43, was found in the Davis Mountains of w. Texas, Whooping Cranes were down 8 to 51 this winter, with no explanation for the serious loss; Everglades Kites are doing very well; up to about a dozen were easily visible for most of the winter from the Tamiami Trail, and a good colony was flourishing at Lake Okeechobee; counts of 150 and 73 "California Clapper Rails" from San Francisco Bay were extremely encouraging

## INTRODUCED SPECIES

A Scarlet Ibis in brilliant plumage at Loxahatchee N.W.R. might have been from those introduced at Greynolds Park in North Miami Beach, where introduced birds have been hybridizing with the native White Ibis; Mute Swans are spreading out from the New York area a count of 69 in Delaware is high, but 2 in w. Pennsylvania, six in Michigan and one in Wisconsin might be local releases; Ringed Turtle Doves seem to have reached the Florida east coast from their only known location in the St Petersburg area; Spotted Doves at Fresno were the first north of Bakersfield, Calif.; Canary-winged Parakeets (*Brotogeris versicolor*) are established in the Miami area, with a new report from Pinellas Co.; they seem to be well on their way to success around New York City, where they must compete with several species of *Psittacula* and of course with Monk Parakeets (see below); Skylarks may be declining on Victoria I., but seem on the increase on the San Juan Is.

*Monk Parakeet* Reported from seven regions, it seems to be spreading. But there is good evidence that repeated local releases/escapes are responsible for much of the supposed "Range extension" currently underway. [Cf Rosche's account for the Western New York Region.] Regardless of how they are appearing, they are going to present a problem because they are (1) fruit eaters (2) highly social, noisy, flocking birds that adapt only too well to suburban conditions, and (3) among the relatively few truly temperate zone parrots, well able to withstand winter's climatic rigors: I photographed a pair building a nest/roost on Long Island in early January 1971 on a day when the temperature reached as high as 4°F and I could hardly hold

the movie camera The State of New York has adopted a policy of eradication, by whatever euphemism it might be called, and I am told New Jersey has just done likewise. Virginia has already begun to "remove" them from several locations. Observers should also be aware that this species, the only psittacid that is not a hole nester, commonly builds roosting nests, so nest construction is not, *ipso facto*, proof of "breeding." And all free-flying parrots should not also be automatically assumed to be Monks: unfortunately, they are just part of the burgeoning parrot problem. At any rate, what are believed to be genuine Monks are reported this winter (!) from the Hudson-St. Lawrence Region (first for Vermont; 2 in the Connecticut Valley of Massachusetts; and several in upstate New York); the Middle Atlantic Coast Region (first Virginia records in 3 localities; also in Maryland and the "Delaware Valley" [New Jersey? Delaware? Pennsylvania?]; the Southern Atlantic Coast Region (from four widely separated areas in Georgia); w. New York (read Rosche's column); the Appalachian Region (from Pittsburgh and a reported flock of 30 in Rote [Co. ?], Pa.; and at Asheville, N.C.); from the Western Great Lakes Region (8 locations in the Detroit area); and from the Southern Great Plains Region (a pair built a nest/roost in Norman, Okla.). Very careful attention should be paid as this species attempts to establish itself in North America.

*House Finch* Continues to expand outward from its eastern center of origin in the New York City region. Virginia reports good numbers and solid establishment; in South Carolina it has reached Sumter and is in good numbers in many locations; in w. New York it seems to have stabilized, with some local "filling in"; in the Appalachian Region a big push seems underway across and through the mountains: it is established in s.w. Virginia; is in at least two Tennessee locations; and is across the Alleghenies—a previous barrier—to Allegheny Co., Pa.

#### OTHER TRENDS, MOVEMENTS, AND CHANGES

*Waterfowl* So-called "field-feeding" (= grazing) of Whistling Swans is increasing dramatically in the Chesapeake Bay area: why? Brant were in the poorest numbers in years on the Atlantic Coast, and waterfowl biologists are genuinely worried, although only Scott commented on this situation. Up to 2500 Fulvous Tree-Ducks were at Loxahatchee N.W.R. in Florida, and a few appeared elsewhere in the

east and in s. California as this crazy bird continues its inexplicable explosions. Data from the New York City and Philadelphia regions suggest that Ruddy Duck populations may be declining almost unnoticed: do other areas show the same decrease?

*Diurnal Raptors* (Harlan's) Red-tailed Hawk continues to be identified at widely scattered extralimital (?) locations, with several editors wondering about identifications. Eagles, particularly Golden in the east, seemed to have had a good winter. Caracaras were apparently attempting to nest in Florida in mangroves. Although actual comparative figures for past years are not available, counts of Merlins and Peregrines seemed generally high and widespread.

*Gulls* Thayer's Gull was reported from Dallas, Tex; cf. my comments on this species' identification in *Amer. Birds*, 26: 574. Twenty Ivory Gulls were reported from the Bering Sea, and both Glaucous and Glaucous-winged reached the Lake Mead/Las Vegas area of Nevada. Readers should read and absorb Finch's pithy and long-overdue comments on "Iceland" and "Kumlien's Gulls" on p. 589

*Alcids* It was a good winter, generally, in the northeast down to Virginia. A high count of 6000 Crested Auklets came from the e. Aleutians; and 274 and 450 Ancient Murrelets were seen at Vancouver, B.C. and Saanich, Wash., respectively.

*Band-tailed Pigeon* Staged a huge invasion down from the mountains along the entire Pacific coast from British Columbia to s. California, 5000 were seen along a 12-mile stretch of the Sacramento River.

*Ravens* Were present in numbers in the n. Great Plains and in the northern Rockies, sustaining last fall's incursion into these areas.

*Varied Thrushes* Reported in good numbers in its normal winter range, and with extraordinary frequency as a vagrant to the east except that, curiously, this year it was almost absent from along the immediate Atlantic Coast (but see immediately below).

*Harris' Sparrow* Reported from 14 of 21 regions, in record numbers everywhere, even where a (somewhat regular) winter feeding station vagrant. Probably its absence from the New England to Southeast coast was owing to the general lack of snow cover, and the markedly low incidence of feeding station attendance for all species, commented on by most regional editors.

## WEATHER KILLS

The severe weather so far south this year, and much of it so late—in February and March—was responsible for vast kills of birds in the following regions, to which the reader is referred for details: Southern Atlantic Coast; Florida; Southern Great Plains; and South Texas. One curious weather-induced anomaly was the occurrence in Minnesota, in Indiana, and in Missouri, of Red-shouldered Hawks coming regularly to feeders to eat suet.

## PATHOLOGY

Some unknown disease(?) wiped out 60% of House Sparrow populations in Western New York, and the recently-arrived-in-North America Dutch duck plague (= duck viral enteritis) reached the Central Flyway at Lake Andes N.W.R., S. Dak., killing some 40,000 ducks.

## PLUMAGE ABERRANCIES

All white, or partially white, birds that lack the pink eye of albinos are *not* albinos: they are leucinos, partial or complete. The modifying adjective is leucistic. A fully leucistic Red-tailed Hawk was reported from Ontario, as was a Rosy Finch (*tephrocotis* ?) from Montana, and an American Wigeon from w. Washington.

## HYBRIDS and such

(continued from p. 577)

ment is most sincerely appreciated, but the demands of a busy banding station and other publication commitments will prevent continuance in her work for *American Birds*. As a successor, we are fortunate in having the services of Robert Janssen, editor of the Minnesota ornithological quarterly *The Loon*. Summer season reports should be sent to him at 14321 Prince Place, Hopkins, Minn. 55343. He will share this assignment with Al Maley.

In a third change, made just before this issue went to the printer, Ned Boyajian resigned as Regional Editor of the Hudson-St. Lawrence Region. Mr. Boyajian, who has served ably in this post for several years, is moving to California, and we thank him and wish him well in his new habitat. To replace him as editors in this region will be P. A. Buckley, 74 Clarke Drive, East Northport, Long Island, N.Y. 11731, to whom all summer reports should be sent, and Thomas H. Davis, 94-46 85th Road, Woodhaven, N.Y.

was in Palo Alto, Calif., intergrades/hybrids between the Eurasian and American races of Green-winged Teal were reported from w. Washington and British Columbia, although some caution is advised here: the vertical and horizontal stripes characteristic of the two races are not always so visible, and can be absent during certain molt stages; a debated American x Eurasian Wigeon was seen in Florida; two Common Goldeneye x Hooded Merganser hybrids were reported from the scene of last year's single such bird in Ontario; an area of northern Ontario previously thought to contain hybrid Sharp-tailed Grouse x Greater Prairie Chickens was reported this year to have "pure" Grouse; a possible American x Black Oystercatcher (population ?) was reported from Santa Cruz Id., Calif.; two different, putative Glaucous x Herring Gull hybrids were reported from New England; yet another (Slate-colored) Dark-eyed Junco x White-throated Sparrow hybrid was reported from Pennsylvania; and finally, a plethora of so-called "hybrid" or vagrant, extralimital flickers appeared in many editors' columns. These are rarely if ever true hybrids (except in the Great Plains hybrid zone) or true vagrants; they are merely introgressants, and readers are referred to my comments in *Amer. Birds*, 25: 546. Lastly, let me be at pains to point out that *every one of the above reports of hybrids is based on a sight record: no specimens were obtained*. While these identifications are probably correct, this should not be forgotten.

H. Davis, 94-46 85th Road, Woodhaven, N.Y. 11421. Dr. Buckley, a Research Zoologist with the National Park Service, is well known to readers of *American Birds* as a keen field worker, an authority on the Royal Tern and pelagic migration, and as our Winter Changing Seasons Editor. Mr. Davis, a former President of the Linnaean Society of New York and "The Voice" of the New York Rare Bird Alert, is an expert birder, bander, and photographer. We welcome them both.

BREEDING Bird Censuses are due their editor on September 1, 1973, and should be addressed to Willet T. Van Velzen, 540 Gentry Street, Eugene, Ore 97402.